



FRIENDS OF FORT JESUS

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>

NEWSLETTER – APRIL and MAY 2019

Dear Friends,

The Memory of World (MoW) is a programme started by UNESCO in 1992, as an initiative to protect documentary heritage the survival of which is under threat of disappearing due to wars, natural disasters and wilful destruction, often arising from ideological differences, or simply lack of proper storage facilities. For documents to qualify for inscription they must be authentic, unique and of world relevance.

Currently, the MoW register has 181 inscriptions from Europe and North America (including the Magna Charta), 80 from Asia and Pacific but only 14 from Africa. None are from Kenya. Tanzania has two inscriptions; German records of National Archives and a collection of Arabic manuscripts and books from the Zanzibar National Archives.

In order to sensitise the stakeholders on this programme a meeting, organised by the Kenya Heritage Training Institute, was held on 21st March. FFJ were invited. A presentation by UNESCO staff explained the background criteria needed for inclusion and to initiate a process of identifying documents suitable for submission. Some UNESCO funding is available for the initial stage. Stakeholders welcomed the initiative but expressed the need for increased resources and manpower for NMK to engage in this programme effectively.

Any organisation or individual can nominate items for inscription. The advantage of this listing is improved conservation, to encourage digitisation and make for easy access and transfer of information.

A UNESCO WoM programme citation sums it up well:

"People the world over are creating [memories] in forms that are less and less permanent—be it sound recordings, film, videotape, newsprint, photographs, or computer-based documents. It must be said that the output of the present century alone is probably greater than the total output of all previous centuries put together; and ironically and tragically, it is being lost faster than ever before. It is a tragedy indeed, for what is at stake is the recorded memory of mankind".

While on the subject of archives we are pleased that Coastweek newspaper has decided to donate their entire archives of past 40 years to the Friends of Fort Jesus Photographic collection. There were several contenders keen on acquiring this valuable information. The archives are in two tranches; (i) original photographs that appeared in printed edition and (ii) copies of every edition published by Coastweek.

The photographs which number several thousand (full count pending) are for addition to the FFJ collection that is currently in the custody of Fort Jesus Museum. This is a substantial boost to the collection that already has some 2500+ photos. However, accessing the information in its current analogue state is difficult, given that the material is fragile. The next task for the Fort Museum is to digitise the entire collection and have it accessible online, an exercise that the Fort have pledged to start off as soon as possible. This is a huge

undertaking but worthwhile. Online access to this resource will be a great boon to historians, researchers, etc. and a source of income for NMK.

Events of interest

- Alliance Française de Mombasa is hosting an art exhibition titled 'Safari ya Sanaa' from 18th to 21st April at the cultural centre in Moyne Drive, Nyali. The exhibitors, known as 'MyTribelsArt' are all up-coming home-grown artists who intend to not only showcase their creations but also hope to sell their artwork. An auction night is on 19th April from 6-9pm, free entry. The exhibition is mixed media with paintings, sculpture, photographs and graffiti art. For more details of opening ceremony go to <https://allevents.in/mombasa/safari-ya-sanaa-mombasa/20001714887714>
- Another art exhibition is by the veteran coast artist Allan Green whose paintings are on display at the Fort Jesus museum.
- Allidina Visram High School, one of the oldest educational institutes in Kenya is celebrating 100 years since the start of school construction. Last year we had a very interesting visit to see the magnificent building. Many of our members have an association with the school. A commemorative book to mark the centenary is in the pipeline. We have received a request from the school for any contributions in the form of articles, photos or other memorabilia. If you are able to help please contact Philip Owino who is coordinating the publication on 0722 880651 or 0780 880655.

This is a combined newsletter for April and May. We do not have any activities in May, except the bird walk, due to Ramadhan. We wish all our Muslim members, 'Ramadhan Kareem'.

Taibali Hamzali, Chairman

PAST PROGRAMMES

Saturday, 16th March

Bird Walk at Msumarini, Kikambala

The prevailing drought has also not spared the vegetation around the village including the school compound. Bushes, which used to provide a safe habitat for avifauna have either fallen victim to fire or

are on the verge of completely drying up. Under these conditions our bird walk wasn't that productive; nevertheless we managed to record 29 species between Msumarini & the beach.

We spotted Eurasian Golden Oriole, which suffered under the House Crows as these palearctic visitors were subjected to harassment by not allowing them to perch peacefully in a tree! Village and Golden Palm Weavers were foraging in Acacias while we heard calls from Zanzibar Greenbuls and a Black-crowned Tchagra; surprised a Grassland Pipit and African Pied Wagtails. The shoreline had some waders, like Common Greenshank,



Views of the Violet -backed Starling.
Photos: Doris Schaule

Whimbrel, several Dimorphic Egrets and a few Sooty Gulls passing by. A very nice surprise was a flock of Violet-backed Starling perching next to the road and allowing us to watch them for a few minutes.

It is this time of the year when migrating birds are heading Northwards through Kenya! Let's go out and see who is stopping over in our neighbourhood before moving on. There have been some amazing sightings this last few days (Irania at Nguuni, first official record on the Coast)....one only has to go and find them!! (Doris Schaule)

Tuesday, 19th March

Useful plants of Kaya Kauma and Kaya Tsolokero Illustrated talk by Drs Jolly Rajat, Pwani University

Friends of Fort Jesus were privileged to hear a talk by Drs Jolly Rajat of Pwani University. She described her research into the plants and trees of two Kaya, sacred forests of the Mijikenda people. Through painstaking investigation often carried out on her hands and knees carefully avoiding the snake, she and her team identified and documented the many unique plants and trees that grow there and are used by the local people as food and medicines.

She showed in slide after slide, the stages in her research as she collected and later identified the plants by their scientific names. Her unique research into one of nature's miracles reminded us that if the forests are not protected for future generations, they will be lost forever. We were reminded of the importance of not just enjoying nature's bounty but preserving it for the future.

Jolly works in close association with local communities. Her research shows that the transmission of traditional knowledge from the elders to the younger is poor. A project that Jolly is keen to implement is setting up medicinal garden in the schools around the forest to disseminate awareness. Our thanks to Jolly; we hope to take up her offer of a guided tour of the Kayas. (Martin Nelson)

FUTURE PROGRAMMES

Tuesday, 16th April

Talk: 'The Jews of Africa' by Dr Martin Nelson

Ever since Biblical times, the Jewish people have had ties with Africa, beginning with the captivity of the Hebrews under the Pharaohs. In the 7th century Jews fled persecution in Spain and settled in Byzantine cities along the Mediterranean coast. Remnants of communities remain in Morocco, Algeria, Libya Tunisia Sudan and Egypt although their number have dwindled following the Arab Spring (2010-2012)

What constitutes a Jewish community? Anthropologist use a list of simple tests to determine whether a people is Jewish or not. These include; the use of Hebrew or Hebrew words in the common language; the practice of rituals including dietary laws; readings from the Torah; the practice of Mikvah, the forbidding of marriage outside the group etc.

In sub-Saharan Africa we can identify two groups, firstly the black communities that trace their origins to the migration from Israel and consider themselves to be part of the ten lost Tribes and secondly white communities which have become established as a result of trade or persecution.

The communities to be discussed include The Ba-ba tribe (CAMEROON), Beta Israel (ETHIOPIA), Sefwi Wiawso (GHANA), Laikipia (KENYA), Yeber (SOMALIA,) Ashkenazi (SOUTH AFRICA), Abayudaya of UGANDA and Lemba (ZIMBABWE).

This is an intriguing subject and promises to be a fascinating talk. Please do try and attend.

Saturday, 20th April
Bird walk at Nguuni Nature Sancuary

This month's bird walk is at Nguuni Nature Sanctuary. We will be exploring the upper part of the sanctuary. Meeting point is at the ticket office at 3.00pm sharp. Please note there is a 300/= entry fee.

For more information see our Facebook page or contact: Doris Schaule Tel: 0722 277752. Email: dorischau@gmail.com

Saturday, 27th April
Visit to Base Tiomin, Kwale

Base Tiomin, started in 2013, is the largest mining operation in Kenya. Ilmenite and Zircon are among the minerals mined. The mines border forests that are part of the East African Coastal Forests which are biodiversity hotspots. Besides the mining operations the company has an extensive Biodiversity and Conservation programme carried out in cooperation with NMK, KFS and KWS. The areas exhausted by mining are being rehabilitated to reinstate the endemic flora and fauna as well as the endangered species of plants and animals.

We will have a tour of the mining operations, the extensive nurseries and see the rehabilitated forests. We are expecting a more detailed itinerary from BT and will circulate as soon as it arrives.

Meeting point is at the Base Titanuim factory at 9.30am. We will organise shared transport (at 1,200/= per person, assuming full van). If interested please confirm with Taibali, Email: thamzali@gmail.com or by SMS 0733 980 540, no later than 16th April.

Saturday, 18th May
Bird Walk

Venue to be confirmed.
Please check with Doris Schaule
Tel: 0722 277752. Email: dorischau@gmail.com

DIARY FOR APRIL and MAY

Tuesday, 16th April
Jews of Africa: Talk by Dr Martin Nelson

Saturday, 20th April:
Bird Walk: Nguuni Nature Sanctuary

Saturday, 27th April:
Visit to Base Tiomin, Kwale

Saturday, 18th May:
Bird Walk: Venue to be confirmed

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