Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to all!

Last year was a very active one for FFJ with many interesting events, thanks to the hard work and cooperation of the council members. We look forward to an equally interesting year ahead.

The holiday period brought in a record number of local and overseas visitors. For the Fort staff and tour guides is was the busiest time of the year. Fort Jesus is one of the six World Heritage sites in Kenya and probably the one that attracts the highest number of visitors. However there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to enhance visitor experience. The museum display is out-dated; an upgrade is long overdue. The chaotic traffic outside the Fort needs better management. The defunct cafeteria should be revived – its business potential is very promising. The list of improvements is long. Over to NMK!

Construction work on the much talked about sea wall to protect the rock face edging the Fort Jesus from destruction by the sea waves has commenced and is progressing rapidly. It appears to be a substantial intervention that involves land fill in front of the Fort.

The initial proposals for the project to protect the foundations of the Fort were presented at a well-attended stakeholders meeting on 25th October 2016. The plan to landfill an area of nearly two acres to create a recreational park (with buildings and a swimming pool) and water transport hub in front of the Fort raised a number of concerns including the impact of increased human and vehicular traffic around the fort (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and the loss of the public beach which is a popular and well used recreational area. Another issue raised was the impact of the sea waves on the structures that are near to the edge of the sea wall.

Stakeholders were informed that the final proposal will mitigate the concerns raised and we hope that this has been the case. As there were no further stakeholders meetings to review the final proposal it is not clear what the current scope includes.

For the World War buffs there is an offer of an interesting 12 day ‘Guerrillas of Tsavo WWI Commemorative Patrol’ to commemorate the East African war campaign. This cross country trip commences in Dar es salaam on 16th November 2018 and ends in Mbala/Kasama, Zambia on 28th November.

If you are interested in joining the group led by James Wilson, historian and WW expert, an early indication of interest (by 15th January) is essential as the logistics involved are complex.
For more details contact:

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(Taibali Hamzali, Chairman)
PAST PROGRAMMES

Saturday, 18th November
Bird Walk at Nguuni Nature Sanctuary

This 3rd Saturday of the month saw us visiting Nguuni’s wetland, which is within easy reach from the gate.

Our small group of 5 were welcomed by a handsome Scarlet-chested Sunbird that showed us it’s brightly coloured chest from high up a tree but with the help of our binoculars we could clearly see its features. Brown-hooded Kingfisher and Grey-backed Caramoptera made their voices heard on our way to the habitat of Open-billed Storks, Reed Cormorants and Water Thick-knees. The surprise visitor from the palearctic regions was a female Western Marsh Harrier, which we could well identify by its white cap. It circled the reed bed a few times before it flew out of sight. Allen’s Gallinule, African Jacana and White-faced Whistling Ducks were busily foraging on the water lily leaves together with their juvenile off-springs. It is such a pleasure to see these water fowl successfully breeding at Nguuni Nature Sanctuary; just like the Red-fronted Tinkerbird! We watched it nervously flying from branch to branch with an insect in its beak and only after we gave it more space it dashed to a dry tree trunk and into a hole. When it re-emerged it was carrying in its beak what looked like a tiny piece of waste. So, it must have been feeding it’s chick before it “carried the trash out”! Aren’t birds just amazing creatures?? By the time we wound up our exciting bird walk the list of 31 species included those we could not see but identify only by their voices.

Join us next time! Watching birds in their natural habitat is such a rewarding activity....you will be surprised!

Tuesday, 21st November
Book Launch: ‘The First Road to Nairobi’

There was a delayed start to the programme occasioned by late arrival of Shel Arenson who got stuck in Mombasa’s famous traffic jam on the Malindi highway. Shel presented an excellent power point highlighting the various aspects of the book and how it came about. The book, published by Old Africa Publications is small, 80 pages in black and white with many of the late Sadiq’s Cockar’s original drawings that were made after his retirement from recollections of his earlier days.

We had a good turnout. Many thanks to the FFJ council members who worked very hard to organise the launch and in particular to Rehana and Issa Khediwalla for the excellent catering.

Saturday, 25th November
Visit to Coastal Bottlers and Jumba Ruins

Our group was very warmly received by Mr. Virendra Nagori and his team. We started off with an introduction to Coastal Bottlers and their relationship with their parent company, Coca Cola, to whose strict standards the production must adhere. We were then taken round the plant and saw the entire process; from the manufacture of plastic bottles to the final product. This is a state of the art facility that operates with quiet efficiency.

After the visit some of us proceeded to Jumba ruins where the Curator Hashim Jumba gave us a succinct tour of the ruins and explained the rise and fall of this
Swahili settlement believed to have been built in the 14th century but was abandoned by the early 15th century supposedly due to lack of water and attacks from hostile tribes. ‘Jumba la Mtwana’ translates to ‘large house of slaves’. The ruins depict large houses and a Great Mosque with elaborate water supply systems.

Later we enjoyed a very pleasant picnic at the beach as we dodged the aggressive house crows. Thanks to Madhvi for arranging the visit.

**Wednesday, 29th November**

**Opening of Art exhibition by Swahilipot Hub artists**

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‘EYE LOVE PWANI’ - an exciting new art exhibition by a group of twelve talented upcoming artists from the Swahilipot Hub was officially opened by Ms. Fatma Twahir, Principal Curator on Wednesday, 29th November at Fort Jesus Museum. The very well attended launch was a colourful ceremony with traditional Mijikenda music and songs.

The works on display are about Pwani in all its aspects, through the medium of photographs, paintings, pen and ink drawings and collages. There are a series of brilliant large panoramic photographs - ‘birds eye’ views of Mombasa centre that capture the street life and architecture in captivating detail. Portraits, romantic encounters, daily chores and hilarities are deftly captured. The ubiquitous tuk-tuks, hogging the fast lane, feature in a perfectly timed photo. Besides, there are works with a geometric theme. A series of colourful glittering mandalas add a mystic note.

The Swahilipot Hub, located near the Butterfly House, is an innovation hub providing young artists with co-working spaces with high speed WiFi at nominal costs. Here the tech savvy and the artistically inclined meet, exchange ideas and are mentored by the more experienced.

Ms. Fatma Mkwariza, Co-Chair of SH was upbeat about the exposure and moral support that this exhibition has provided to the artists. She thanked FFJ for initiating and sponsoring the exhibition and NMK for their support.

The exhibition runs till mid-January 2018 and is displayed in the veranda of the Museum building.

**FUTURE PROGRAMMES**

**Tuesday, 9th January, at 7.00pm at the Fort**

**Disappearing World: The Rendilles of Marsabit**

**Talk and film by Anders Grum**

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Anders Grum, an architect by profession who practiced in Kenya for many years, has a passionate interest in the cultures of Kenya. In 1974 he took a break from working and decided to go and stay with the Rendille camel pastoralists in Marsabit district to study their way of life, in particular, their houses, settlement patterns and migrations. In 1976, together with a team from British Granada television, he made a film that was screened as part of the ‘Disappearing World’ series.

Anders is now retired and lives in France but is here for a short visit and has kindly agreed to talk to FFJ about his time with the Rendilles and the making of the film.
After a brief introduction by Anders we will see the film showing aspects of Rendille communities daily life and the preparations for an important ceremony - nabo - which takes place only every fourteen years, and after which an age-set of young men can marry. We will see the spectacular ceremony and preparations of one of the marriages. In between, there are brief interviews with a leading warrior, Gaigombe, and his uncle Wambile, the leader of the Rendille in 1975. This promises to be a very interesting and informative evening. Please try and attend and note early start time: 7.00pm.

Saturday, 20th January
Bird walk at Bamburi

This month’s walk is at a site that is new to FFJ birders. The meeting point is outside the gate to ‘Cowrie Shell Apartments’ at 3.00pm. To get there follow the red sign to ‘Go Karts’ along the Mombasa- Malindi highway. For more information see our Facebook page or contact Doris Schaule Tel: 0722 277752. Email: dorischaule@gmail.com

Sunday, 21st January
Visit to the Diani Regatta

We have been regular sponsors of this annual event organized by the South Coast Community Ecotourism Association (SCCEA), a dynamic group that have done much to promote eco-tourism and responsible management of natural resources. The day’s programme starts at about 10.30am with a mama lessso contest and a series of boat races interspersed with cultural dances, acrobatic shows, handicrafts bazaar, etc. There will be snacks and drinks on sale with a special Swahili lunch featuring local delicacies. The event ends at 4.30pm. The past regattas have been very well organized with tremendous support of the local tourism and business sectors.

The venue is Safari Beach Hotel, Diani Beach Road. Those coming in their own cars can do so at any time. For those interested in shared transport (at 1,100/= per person, assuming full van) please confirm with Kalim Hassanali. Email: kalimhassanali@gmail.com or by SMS 0735 209 814, no later than 18th January.

DIARY FOR JANUARY

Tuesday, 9th January
Talk and Film: The Rendilles by Anders Grum

Saturday, 20th January
Bird Walk at Bamburi

Sunday, 21st January
Outing to Diani Regatta, South Cost

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