



the Generals VOICE

TIM LUKIN SHELLHOLE
NEWSLETTER



No: 02 of 2026

Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it most never use it.
Anonymous

MARCH 2026

From the General's Desk

The top table ran lean for this meeting. It was just the Old Bill and Pay Bill holding the fort down. The Deputy Old Bill was under the weather, while the Adjutant had personal matters to attend to,



The Shellhole had received 18 apologies, with 3 members on sick leave and 3 on long-term absence.

Figure 1: Moth Supporter Irene inducted by Old Bill Colin



Despite this, 30 members and 3 visitors gathered for the meeting, proving the Shellhole's spirit runs deeper than a half-empty top table.

INDUCTION

A warm welcome to Irene Blaikie, inducted on 1 March 2026, a familiar face finally made official. Irene has long supported the Tim Lukin Shellhole, and it's fitting she now takes her place as a full Moth Supporter.

Welcome Irene!

REMEMBERING OUR FELLOW MOTHS



The meeting closed on a solemn note. A plaque honouring Moth Grant Devine was unveiled at the Wall of Remembrance.

We will remember him!

STEPPING DOWN (BUT NOT STEPPING OUT)

After more than four years as Adjutant, Moth Vincent Marino will be stepping down at the end of the current Moth year, but he's not going anywhere. He'll remain an active floor member, ready to offer support and the occasional well-timed comment from the sidelines. 😊

Members are encouraged to consider suitable candidates for the role. If multiple nominations come forward, a vote will be held by show of hands or ballot.

Here's to a great year ahead. 🍷



INTRODUCTION

Over the next few issues of our newsletter, we will be featuring a series of personal recollections from Moth Athol, who has kindly shared some of his experiences from his time serving in the police force in Zimbabwe.

These stories offer a glimpse into life and policing during that period, told in Athol's own words. They provide both historical insight and a few remarkable encounters along the way.

I hope you will find Moth Athol's stories as interesting and engaging as I did when reading them, and I look forward to sharing them with you in the coming editions.

PART 1: ARRIVAL IN FILABUSI

I was transferred from Zimbabwe Republic Police Nkayi to Filabusi shortly after the independence of Zimbabwe. If memory serves me correctly, it was late 1980 or early 1981. The move itself was something of an adventure. I had borrowed a Bedford five-ton truck from my late father-in-law, a cattle rancher, because the professional removal company would not transport the small collection of livestock we had accumulated at Nkayi—chickens, a pig, and a couple of sheep—along with our pot plants and gas cylinders.

I arrived at Filabusi late one weekday afternoon, driving the rather conspicuous Bedford through the entrance of the police station. According to Mrs Val Robey, who was the civilian clerk at the time and affectionately known as "Granny Robey," my arrival caused quite a stir. She later told me that she and Dorothy Bing, a local Woman Field Reservist who was deeply involved with the station, were enjoying tea when Dorothy glanced out of the window overlooking the station yard.

Her reaction was immediate and alarmed. A large Bedford truck was driving straight into the police station grounds. Dorothy was aghast and demanded to know who on earth would arrive at a police station in such a fashion. She knew every farmer in the district and was



Figure 2: Moth Athol Estment receiving his 25 yrs award

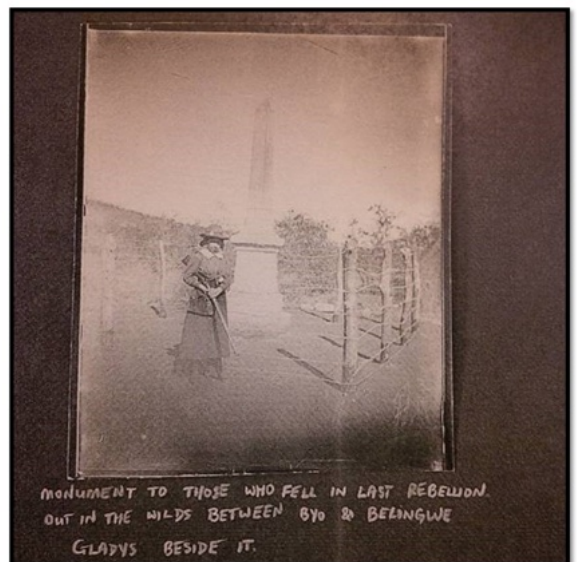


Photo taken about 1910 at the Filabusi Memorial (courtesy of Ken Wilson)

quite certain this driver was not one of them. Granny Robey calmly explained that the fellow behind the wheel was the new Officer Commanding Filabusi. That, apparently, was my rather unconventional introduction to the district.

I had barely settled in when the community began extending its usual country hospitality. The following Friday I met Vance Amos, a loyal police reservist and well-known local figure. He invited my wife Jeannie and me to attend a meet-and-greet supper at the Filabusi Golf Club the next evening. It sounded like the perfect opportunity to meet the local farming community and introduce ourselves properly.

On the Saturday evening we were almost ready to leave for the golf club when the PABX line at my house rang. The duty constable reported a road accident. As we were about to walk out the door, I initially told him to call the duty patrol officer. His response was blunt: "No, sir—this is serious."

He was right. It was a fatal road traffic accident, and a devastating one. One of the drivers from the ADF mine had earlier been persuaded to transport several Filabusi schoolchildren to a rural school near Gwanda for inter-school sports. During the day the driver found himself a supply of beer and became intoxicated. Despite this, once the sporting events ended, he loaded the children—aged roughly between ten and sixteen—into the ADF Crocodile vehicle for the journey back to Filabusi.

Somewhere along the back road home the driver lost control of the vehicle. It overturned, with catastrophic consequences. Twenty-six children were killed.

Instead of enjoying an evening at the golf club and meeting the community, I spent that night dealing with the aftermath of one of the worst tragedies the district had seen in years. It was a grim and sobering introduction to Filabusi.

PART 2: THE HERMIT OF THE KOPPIE

A few weeks later, once life at the station had begun to settle into routine, I started working through the old station files. In those days every police station kept a remarkable collection of lever-arch files covering all manner of topics—nearly ninety of them if memory serves correctly.

While paging through the Station History file I came across a letter written in the early 1960s by a Constable Oldknow. The letter was addressed to the Officer Commanding District and requested that a certain Dougal Fletcher be removed from the list of residents who were to be visited during monthly rural patrols.

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Oldknow's explanation was simple enough. He had recently attempted to visit Fletcher, who was described as a hermit living on top of a koppie on Fletcher's Farm. Riding his patrol motorcycle, Oldknow had arrived at the shack but could not find Fletcher. He called out several times and then set off on foot to search the surrounding rocks and bush. Receiving no reply, he eventually returned to the shack—only to discover that the tyres of his motorcycle had been slashed. Fletcher was the only person living there, so the constable had little doubt about who the culprit was.

The unfortunate result was that Constable Oldknow had to push his motorcycle all the way back to the station. The letter made it very clear that he had not enjoyed the experience.

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Later, during a casual tea-room conversation, I mentioned this curious story and wondered aloud what had become of this hermit after so many years. To my astonishment, Granny Robey informed me that Dougal Fletcher was still living exactly where he always had—on top of the same koppie, on the boundary between Fletcher's Farm and Nash Farm.

Apparently, he was also known to throw stones at John and Peter Nash when they brought their cattle to the dip located at the foot of the koppie. The dip sat below a steep precipice, which made the whole situation rather hazardous for the farmers below.

That revelation immediately captured my curiosity.

At the next Friday night club supper I met Peter Nash, who confirmed that Fletcher was indeed still living there, continuing his solitary existence as a hermit. By this stage I had become quite determined to meet the man.

I was advised that Fletcher's nephew, Ian Fletcher, worked at the mill on Epoch Mine and that I would be wise to speak with him before attempting to approach the hermit myself.

I found Ian at the mine the following week and explained that I would like to meet his uncle. Ian was sceptical. He warned me that Dougal valued his privacy and disliked strangers—especially policemen. Nevertheless, he agreed to raise the matter the next time he visited his uncle with supplies, which he did every Sunday.

True to his word, Ian contacted me the following week. After some persuasion, Dougal had agreed to meet me. However, there were conditions. I was not to arrive in a police vehicle, I was not to wear police uniform, and Ian himself had to be present during the meeting.

We arranged to meet the following Sunday at the Fletcher farm homestead.

(Part 3 and 4 in the next edition of the Tim Lukin Newsletter)

ST PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION

Ninety guests joined us on 14 March at the Edenvale Bowling Club for a festive celebration of Irish craic that gave our South African spirits a well-deserved boost.

The evening delivered lively entertainment, a warm Irish atmosphere, and laughter that only good friends, family, and true Shellhole camaraderie can create. Thank you to everyone that attended and supported this worthy cause. All money raised goes to helping one another.



BIRTHDAYS — MARCH 2026

Happy Birthday to our Moths:

- 🎂 Wayne Henry 24th March
- 🎂 Ray Jeffery 13th March

🍷 **Cheers to all — and thank you for keeping the spirit of MOTH alive and thriving!**



In Closing...

"Through you Old Bill" – What Does it Actually Mean?

If you've attended a Moth meeting, you've almost certainly heard it. A member wants to make a point or respond to something raised on the floor, and out comes the phrase: "Through you, Old Bill."

It's a familiar refrain — but where does it come from, and does it still matter?

Rooted in Parliamentary Tradition

The practice traces its origins to parliamentary systems modelled on the British Parliament, and it has since travelled well beyond the chamber. Today it turns up in corporate boardrooms, non-profit organisations, and professional associations, anywhere meetings are governed by Robert's Rules of Order or similar procedural frameworks.



Robert's Rules was first published in 1876 by Brigadier General Henry Martyn Robert, and it remains the cornerstone of governance for organisations the world over.

Why Speak Through the Chair?

At its core, directing remarks through the chairperson — rather than straight at another member, keeps meetings orderly, fair, and respectful.

It's not mere formality for its own sake.

The practice actively:

- 🎯 **Reinforces the authority of the chairperson**

- ⊗ Ensures every member gets an equal opportunity to participate
- ⊗ Prevents personal disagreements from hijacking proceedings
- ⊗ Gives the chair the standing to steer debate, restore order, or close the floor

Does It Still Belong in Modern Meetings?

That's the honest question worth asking. The way we work and communicate has shifted considerably, and rigid formality doesn't suit every setting. Some organisations thrive with it; others may find that relaxing the rules opens up faster, more candid conversation.

But the answer needn't be all or nothing. Where procedure, clear rules, and impartiality are non-negotiable, speaking through the chair remains as relevant as ever.

For less formal gatherings, a lighter touch may serve just as well.

The goal, ultimately, is the meeting stays productive.

JOIN THE MOTHS - WE NEED YOU!

Ever wondered what happens behind those Shellhole doors? It's not all parades and poppies, there's plenty of laughter, friendship, shared stories, and good-hearted banter too!

Whether you're a veteran or simply someone who values camaraderie, service, and remembrance, you'll find a warm welcome in the MOTHS. We're always looking for good people who believe in *True Comradeship, Mutual Help, and Sound Memory*. These are the values that hold our Order together.

Curious? Come see for yourself!

If you'd like to learn more or attend a meeting, reach out to your local Shellhole for details.

**For information on how to join TIM LUKIN MOTH Shellhole
Contact: Deputy Old Bill Jose: 082-561-2990**

USEFUL & INTERESTING LINKS

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[MOTH Beginnings](#)

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GUEST SPEAKERS WANTED FOR 2026

(WARNING: AUDIENCE MAY LAUGH, LEARN, OR CRY)

Got a story to tell?

Know something fascinating, obscure, or oddly useful?

Can you hold a room hostage, like in a good way, for 20–30 minutes?

Tim Lukin Shellhole is on the hunt for guest speakers to keep our 2026 meetings lively and entertaining.

If you've got tales of military history, unusual adventures, or specialist knowledge we never knew we needed (but now can't live without), step forward.

Don't be shy! The floor is yours and we promise to listen...

Interested? Contact Moth Martin on 084-371-8120.

We'd love to hear from you!

