



the Generals VOICE

TIM LUKIN SHELLHOLE
NEWSLETTER



No: 03 of 2026

"Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting the bull not to attack you because you are a vegetarian." - Dennis Wholey

APRIL 2026

From the General's Desk

A last-minute rescheduling of this month's meeting was pushed back by a full week to accommodate the Easter weekend. It left several members caught unaware, resulting in a lower-than-usual muster of 30 members on parade. A total of 13 formal apologies were received, while 6 members were reported in sickbay, and 3 long-term apologies remain on the books.

Despite the disruption, Tim Lukin's growth shows no signs of slowing. One prospective member is poised to submit his application at the upcoming meeting, with a further two candidates expected to come forward at the next Sunday meeting.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: SPECIAL GUEST FROM KOEVOET TO ADDRESS NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, scheduled for Sunday, 3 May, promises to be a landmark occasion.

A special guest with ties to the legendary Koevoet — the elite South African counterinsurgency unit that operated during the Border War will be in attendance. All members, families, and interested guests are warmly encouraged to attend what is set to be a memorable and historically significant gathering.

Do not miss it.



PART 3: THE MAN ON THE KOPPIE



Moth Athol continues with his personal recollection of his time while serving in the police force in Zimbabwe.

In preparation for the visit I purchased two packets of Kingsgate 30 cigarettes and a bottle of brandy from the Marvel Store. I had also found a couple of outdated one-man ration packs in the station storeroom, which I added to the bundle.

On Sunday I met Ian at the Fletcher homestead. We left my police Land Rover there and continued in the farm

vehicle, climbing a rough track that wound between large granite boulders toward the summit of the kopje. Eventually we reached the top.

Dougal's home was little more than a rough three-sided stone shelter. The walls were shoulder-high and the front stood completely open. A sagging thatched roof drooped over the structure, clearly overdue for repair. Nearby a small fire smouldered inside a circle of rocks that served as a cooking place. But no sign of Dougal.

Ian called out and went searching among the rocks. After a while he returned and told me his uncle had probably changed his mind about meeting me. Just then I noticed a figure emerging slowly from behind one of the boulders. My first impression was that I was looking at the personification of Father Time. The man had a long white beard reaching his waist and hair that fell well past his shoulders. He wore a polypropylene sack with holes cut for his head and arms, secured with a rough leather riempie belt. On his feet were simple leather pads strapped around his ankles.



The sudden appearance startled me enough that I must have stared. Once I regained my composure, I stepped forward and introduced myself as Athol Estment. Dougal shook my hand cautiously and invited me to sit beside the smouldering fire. Ian settled onto a small carved wooden stool while the two of us sized each other up.

To break the ice I handed Dougal the cigarettes I had brought. He wasted no time lighting one using a glowing stick from the fire. I lit one myself and set my matches aside. When I left later the matches had mysteriously disappeared.

Conversation was slow at first. Ian wisely remained silent, watching how his uncle reacted to this stranger in his domain.

Eventually I produced the bottle of brandy and the ration packs from my satchel. That had the desired effect. Dougal fetched two tin mugs—actually jam jars fitted with wire handles—and poured generous measures of brandy.

I am not a brandy drinker, but declining would have been discourteous. When I peered into the jar I noticed it had clearly not been washed. Dougal must have seen my hesitation because he added some water from a rather questionable jug. The result was the worst brandy I have ever tasted.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere improved rapidly as the bottle level dropped. Dougal showed me sheets he had made from flattened Kingsgate cigarette packets. On them he had written his thoughts—observations rather than a diary. It was clear he was an educated man. One note explained his belief that tarred roads helped prevent soil erosion by sealing the ground surface.



By the time the brandy bottle was half empty Dougal had become far more relaxed. I suggested to Ian that we should leave him for the day and asked Dougal whether I might visit again. He agreed readily—no doubt with the expectation of more brandy.

Two weeks later I returned with another bottle and a few supplies. This time Dougal showed me around his domain, including the cliff overlooking Nash Farm where the cattle dip lay below. He spoke rather disparagingly about the Nash family, hinting at an old feud.

He also showed me his well. I could hardly believe there was water at that elevation, but Dougal explained that he had dug the well himself years earlier. When the shaft became too deep to climb out, he would lower a bucket on a rope, climb down using the rope for support, fill the bucket with soil, and then climb back out to empty it. When he dropped a stone into the well we soon heard the splash of water far below.

A couple of goats wandered nearby, while his vegetable patch was protected by a crude fence of interwoven sticks to keep them out. Dougal clearly took pride in the life he had built for himself.

PART 4: THE STORY BEHIND THE HERMIT

Over time Dougal grew comfortable with my visits, particularly when I arrived with cigarettes and brandy. Eventually he even relaxed his rule about police vehicles and the need for Ian to accompany me.



Central Gweru featuring the Midlands Hotel and the landmark Boggie's clock

I discovered that Dougal had once been a scholar at Plumtree School, where he served as cricket captain, rugby captain, and head boy. He later attended university in South Africa, probably studying something related to mining. Naturally I wanted to know how such a man had ended up living as a hermit.

One day I brought along a set of 1:50,000 survey maps of the Filabusi district. Dougal studied them with great interest. When I asked where he had once worked, he traced a route across the map with his finger, weaving around koppies and along streams until he reached a symbol marking a disused mine.

He explained that he had once worked that small diggings with several African labourers. One day he discovered that one of them had stolen gold. Convinced of the man's guilt, Dougal decided to administer his own justice. He tied the labourer to a tree and gave him a sjambok thrashing. The man went straight to the police station in Filabusi and laid a charge of assault. Dougal was fined twenty-five pounds. In his mind he had simply disciplined a thief, and the intervention of the police left him deeply resentful of the authorities. That resentment never entirely faded.

During another visit I asked whether he had encountered any guerrillas during the Rhodesian war. He told me that one night he woke to find three armed men standing near his shelter carrying AK-47 rifles. Whether they had stumbled upon his fire or deliberately approached his home was unclear. Dougal spoke fluent Ndebele and promptly berated them for disturbing him. When they asked for food he told them bluntly that food was where one found it. The men departed quickly, perhaps unnerved by the strange sight of a white hermit with a long beard living alone on a rocky summit.

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At one point I suggested taking him down to see the modern Filabusi town. After some hesitation he agreed. I even found some worn khaki clothing for him to wear. But when he climbed into the Land Rover he paused, looked around the cab, and quietly said he had changed his mind. He stepped back out and returned to his koppie.

Not long afterwards my own time in Filabusi came to an abrupt end. I had fallen out of favour with the local ZANU political chairman, Sani Chasi. On a Monday morning I received a telephone call informing me that Biddulphs Furniture Removals would collect my belongings on Thursday. I was being transferred to Gweru. I later learned more about Dougal's background. During the Second World War he had served with the Rhodesian military contingent. He rarely spoke about his experiences, but he once told me, "If that is how humankind behaves, I want no part of it."

After demobilisation in the late 1940s he returned to the family farm in the Filabusi district and withdrew from society altogether. His family had influence as well. Patrick Bisset Fletcher, who owned Fletcher Farm and was related to Dougal, served as Minister of Agriculture and Lands in the government of Southern Rhodesian Government from 1946 to 1951. It was through this connection that Dougal was officially recognised as a hermit—a rather unusual status even in those days.

Years after I left Filabusi, my friends Charles and Ginny Truscott—then working at Epoch Mine—told me what eventually happened to him. One Sunday Ian Fletcher found Dougal lying in great pain with a swollen ankle. He had been bitten by a cobra.

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**

Ian insisted on taking him down to the farmhouse for treatment. There was a doctor in Filabusi, but when Dougal heard that the doctor's name was Chaka he refused to see him. Instead, Ginny, who was a qualified nursing sister, treated him. While Dougal was incapacitated, Ian destroyed the old shack and burned much of what remained there, forcing his uncle to stay at the homestead. Dougal lived quietly in the workshop thereafter, still keeping very much to himself.

Some time later, I was told, he passed away—having survived the snakebite but not the passage of time. Looking back, I often wondered whether Dougal had truly escaped the world or simply found his own way of living within it. For all his isolation, he remained one of the most memorable characters I encountered during my time in the Filabusi district.

Moth Athol Estment served as Officer in Charge, ZRP Filabusi, from late 1980 to late 1981.

BIRTHDAYS — APRIL 2026

Happy Birthday to our Moths:

- 🎂 Sharon Visser 01st April *Being born on April 1st is both a blessing and a curse. Nobody ever believes you when you say you're a year older!*
- 🎂 Dawn Ray 07th April *You're not getting older. You're just becoming a limited edition classic. Keep shining brighter than the sun!*
- 🎂 Brad Gee 08th April *Just remember: with great age comes great responsibility... to buy the next round! 🍺*
- 🎂 Chris Mulinder 14th April *You're not old, you're just "vintage Mulinder" now, highly collectible and improving with age.*
- 🎂 Kevin Fenton 18th April *They say age is just a number, but in your case, it's a pretty high one, so well done for still looking this good!*
- 🎂 Brenda Boyall 21st April *You're proof that fabulousness has no expiry date. Keep being the legend you are!*
- 🎂 Maria Anna Botha 25th April *Another year wiser, and sassier. May your day be filled with laughter, zero responsibilities, and cake so good it should be illegal. 🍰*
- 🎂 Niki van den Heever 26th April *May your year be filled with adventures, good coffee, and people and friends who don't remind you how many candles are on the cake. 🍷*
- 🎂 Angelo Laight 27th April *Be like a fine bottle of sparkling water, getting clearer, fresher, and more sparkling with every year. May your day be filled with zero hangovers.*



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

In Closing...

BRING 'N BRAAI ROSTER — THE TROOPS HAVE RALLIED

In a show of camaraderie a number of generous members have stepped forward to volunteer their time and effort in collecting provisions for our ever-popular post-meeting Bring 'n Braai. We are pleased to publish the roster for the remainder of the year, and extend our sincere thanks to each and every volunteer for keeping the fires burning.

Date	Volunteer(s)
Sunday, 3 May	Dennis
Sunday, 7 June	Kevin
Sunday, 5 July	Jeannie & Athol
Sunday, 2 August	Marianne & Ronnie
Sunday, 6 September	Debbie
Sunday, 4 October	Irene
Sunday, 1 November	Jean
Sunday, 6 December	Dave & Louise

Your contribution ensures that the fire remains one of the “highlights” of our meetings. Members not yet on the roster are encouraged to consider volunteering for future dates.

The fires won't light themselves.

USEFUL & INTERESTING LINKS

[Visit M.O.T.H. Home Page](#)

[MOTH Beginnings](#)

[Tim Lukin Shellhole Facebook Page](#)

[Tim Lukin Shellhole Official Page](#)

[MMA's Facebook Page](#)

[Military Veteran Websites to Visit](#)

[East Rand District Dugout](#)

[Platinum Provincial Dugout](#)

[MOTHWA Home Page](#)

[Moth Roll Of Honour](#)

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!

