



# Friends of Smuts House (FoSH)

## 2024 Newsletter

### Big House Projects

Dear Friends,

#### 1 FoSH PROJECTS

- 1.1 Restoring the **Cadillac** is gaining momentum with certain actions and key figures almost in place, but more water needs to run into the sea before actual restoration can commence.
- 1.2 **Total 150 students have signed up for 40 hours each for their joint community projects as a module for their academic record at the Big House this year.**

Some projects of last year were taken a step further and we have embarked on new projects as well like installing the display in the milk room and royal tour display in the main bedroom.

Reflecting on our report of August 2023, the 3 major leaks are repaired and intact after heavy showers since December. Other roof leaks, however, need fixing this year.

Without the donations and support of the supper talks of The Friends of Smuts House, we would not have been able to complete these projects. We are extremely thankful that we are able to support the students with hardware for their projects.

#### 5 Garden tools

We have received a generous donation for maintaining the garden around the house, which includes a lawn mower, grass trimmer, spade, garden fork, etc. The museum has dedicated a garden worker once a week to maintain the garden around the house under heritage supervision. The museum manager supplied us generously with a hose pipe for cleaning the gutters and downpipes of the Big House once a month and for watering the garden.

We still would like to acquire a tall ladder, wheel burrow and pruning scissors for larger plants. Two chain saws (hand / petrol) will be extremely important. Alien invasive trees in category 1 and 2 in certain areas on site need to be tackled. This task will ensure we reduce fire risks but will also allow the original natural Bankenveld veld to flourish. Kindly WhatsApp a photograph

of garden equipment to 072 799 5959 (Chair - Christo) so we can arrange collection. Old used tools are good options!

## 6 Milk room

The request for objects for a display inside the milk room behind the house has surpassed our wildest expectations and delivered authentic cans, separators, etc. Thank you to Chris and Annie Challis and friends for the beautiful dairy collection and thank you to those who want to remain anonymous. The student group which is assigned with this task will now be able to complete it. Isie Smuts used to make butter in this room behind the house and we want to display something of the farm industry of milk separating and butter making history.

Pictures below show now the display racks inside the milk room, installed by a student project.



## 7 Big House furniture



- Left We need a similar dressing table of the 1920's in the "dark room". This one is on loan from another museum and is not an original Smuts furniture piece. This will ensure that the Smuts Foundation has better control over own objects in future.
- Right This 1917 photograph of the foyer at Smuts House shows chairs around the table. We need to replace 6 current chairs on loan with something similar.

## 8 Water reservoir and cattle water trough near the pine plantation (next to GEM village)

Invasive trees too close to these Smuts period farm features were removed and the structural cracks were fixed with cement.



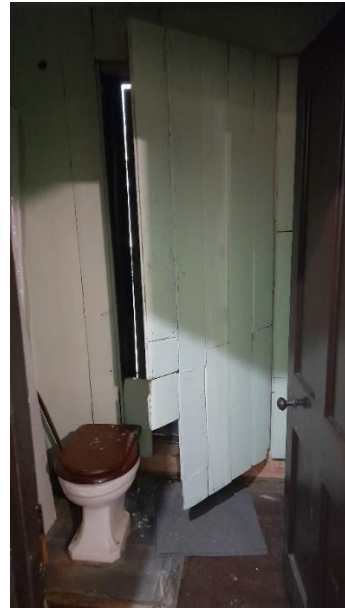
## 9 MOTH shell hole roof

Thank you for the Jan Smuts MOTH shell hole for sponsoring paint for their roof! The students invested a lot of time in preparing the surfaces before they coated it with anti-rust and then with paint. The door, gutters and window sills were also painted to link with the Big House's historical colours.



## 10 Enlarging the reference library capacity

We have received a generous donation which enabled us to fireproof, and burglar proof a section of our facility. We are still in process to install more shelves to maximise the facility.



## 11 Smuts Study: viewing cubicle

The viewing cubicle was enlarged to allow for at least 15 visitors at a time to enter during house tours. This allows for a more satisfactory experience as tourist guides will be able to embroider in more detail here on Smuts' statesmanship and his status as intellectual.

The original glass panels were repositioned, and the white lines indicate the original size and position of the cubicle.



A view on the Smuts Study from inside the glass cubicle

## 12 Bee removals behind the Smuts study

The bee colony inside the study wall was removed and re-established by a professional beekeeper. The Smuts Foundation has paid several large amounts to protect the books inside the Smuts study against the extreme heat, residue, honey and fumes caused by the bees. Access to free scaffolding, thanks to our previous Exco chair Rodney Wood's contact, reduced the cost of the project.



Bee cones inside the wall cavity.



After removal our students cleaned out the cavities of the eastern wall of the study and filled it up with isotherm which will prevent bees from returning. More important - the inside temperature of the study is reduced. The students had to close the corrugated iron again and repaint the wall.



Opening the cavities and refilling



### 13 More bee removal at office spaces

Assignment: Cleaning out residue in the wall cavities, filling up with isotherm; closing the shell and repaint.



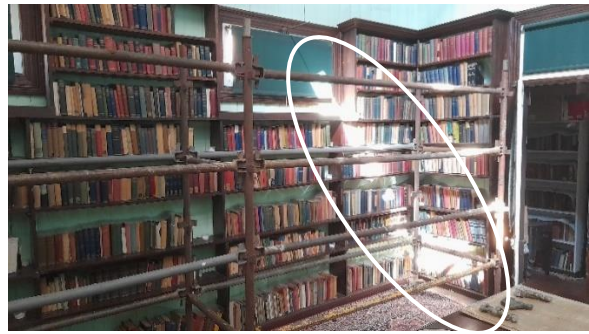
### 14 Repainting the inside of the study wall due to bee activity inside the wall.

Assignment: Moving scaffolding inside and erect it safely; Remove paint residue and repaint in correct colour tone and move scaffolding for next project to middle of the study.



## 15 Installing shutters in Smuts study

The northern upper window of the study has been a long outstanding challenge on our wish list. Our previous chair of the Friends, Marion Mengell will be smiling upon us for this project to be completed at last due to the high costs. We just could not tolerate direct sun and ultra-violet on the inside of the study anymore.



## 16 Security of bronze sculptures and bronze plaques

Broze and metal sculptures and objects on site have been removed to the courtyard. This is a safer venue due to the raiding of sites for scrap yard cash. A canopy was provided last year.



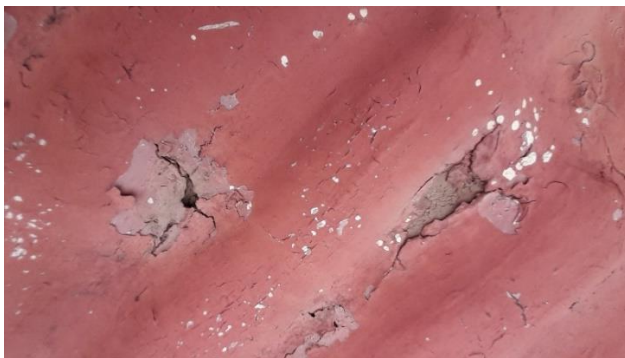
## 17 Security

Burglar proof has been upgraded on the last 6 windows and 3 exterior doors with security gates. Thanks to Ron Mengell for the donation of a security gate. That saved us the expenses of almost R1,000. The group on the photograph also fixed the step on the northeastern verandah.



## 18 Staff kitchen roof

The condition of this section of the roof speaks for itself. Corrugated iron sheets had to be removed and replaced. The 'valley channel' for the furrow where the two sections of the roof meet, was installed incorrectly in the past and caused water to overflow inside underneath the corrugated iron sheets and onto the ceilings inside. New sheets and a valley gutter were installed, painted with anti-rust and then coated with roof paint. Sections of the old sheets were repurposed at the new long drop toilet.



## 19 Ceilings underneath the staff kitchen roof

Due to the above leaks, the ceilings of the staff kitchen and adjacent areas looked in a bad state. Students had to scrape the paint loose, clean up the floors and painted the ceiling again. The leaks also damaged some of the plank walls, which were also restored.



## 20 Protecting the 'Milton' mulberry tree

Low retention walls were built to keep the running water back as it started to expose the tree's roots. Jan Smuts brought a cutting of this tree from the "Milton mulberry" in Cambridge and it still flourishes here. Other mulberries, however, are not tolerated on premises.

Benches were also installed by the students (not on the photograph yet). We decided on advice, not to place the benches too close to the tree as the soil will be compacted too much, should many people walk there in future, and we were afraid to damage the tree's roots.



## 21 Gutter cleaning

The gardener from the museum, who is available to us on Saturdays, clean the gutters at least once a month. Overflow of gutters and blocked downpipes caused too many issues in the past to the house.



## 22 Conservation: Two WW II tanks

### Assignment 1:

Clean the corrugated iron, prepare the poles and roofs with sandpaper; paint with anti-rust and apply a layer of roof paint afterwards.

### Assignment 2:

Recycle the old bags of cement from the middens; dig a shallow foundation and pour screed in in and place the bags back to resemble a military barricade. The purpose was to keep the running water and mud away from underneath the tanks. It caused too much rust and piling up of mud on the tank on the left's tracks. Last year student groups already restored the tracks.



23 The infamous long drop toilet from our past

Old and new corrugated iron and timber were used to recreate this structure and make it look old. The corner poles were planted first and then the casting of a cement floor could be done. The original long drop was in this vicinity, probably behind the MOTH hall.



Thank you for attending walks and talks and assisting with donations! It assisted us this year to make a difference.

Next year we need to start attending to category 1 and 2 invasive plants, trees and shrubs on premises especially between the Smuts koppie and the Big House. This will reduce the fire threat and will enable the original grass veld to flourish. Larger trees will not be removed as well still need shade on the Oubaas Trail.

Kind Regards

FoSH committee

Chair: Christo

End October 2024