
QUARTELY NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2026

Introduction

Welcome to September in Zimbabwe, known as the windy month and characterised by smoky, hazy skies where the horizon is indistinct. In this edition we are full of gratitude to generous donors, sharing the link for a blog about our tropical gardens exchange with colleagues from St. Helena, details of the annual INTO conference, sharing our tree planting plans, details of the refurbishment programme of the La Rochelle orchid houses and the rare flowering of a very exotic orchid, installation of new interactive smart board at the Museum and an update on the building of the educational centre at Muruwahs' Hill.

Gratitude

Mrs Innes Grainger of the Don Grainger Memorial Fund for funding for display cases Nyanga Museum.

Machinery exchange for their long standing monthly donations to pay the salary of the curator at Nyanga Museum.

The Solon Foundation, please see Rhodes Museum.

Orchid Society of Zimbabwe, please see La Rochelle.

Ms Caitlyn Snyman very generously donated 2 trimmers and 2 bush cutters to La Rochelle to assist in removing the exotics that are strangling the indigenous plants and trees.

An anonymous donor paid for a months' worth of causal labours to do undertake the exotics blitz at La Rochelle.

Membership Benefits

A little reminder that NTZ members enjoy:

- Receiving our quarterly E-Newsletter
- Free entrance to NTZ properties in Zimbabwe
- 10% off accommodation at La Rochelle Country Hotel. See www.larochellecentre.com and
- Free access to overseas National Trusts with whom we have reciprocity

visit INTO 'Passport to Places' scheme www.into.org/places/
Please note that car parking fees are additional.

INTO Community of Tropical Gardens

Thanks to support from INTO, Ms Helena Bennett and Ms Martina Peters had the opportunity to travel to Zimbabwe in May 2026 to spend a week with colleagues from the National Trust of Zimbabwe.

As the closest National Trust in the group to St Helena geographically, it was a rare and exciting opportunity for in-person knowledge exchange. The NTZ is very excited to share this blog from Helena Bennett, Director of St. Helena National Trust with you.

<https://www.into.org/inspiration-ideas-and-action-national-trust-of-zimbabwe/>

INTO Annual conference

The 2026 INTO conference will bring together the global family of National Trusts to explore how heritage can serve communities, foster connection and shape a sustainable future.

The theme this year: 'Places with purpose Community, connection and the case for heritage'.

We are thrilled to announce that the NTZ has received part funding from the INTO for a member of the Executive Council to attend the four day gathering which offers a vibrant mix of discussion, discovery and hands on learning shaped by the priorities of our global movement. The Trust will proudly be showcasing Zimbabwe and its glorious properties.

Tree planting

We are super pleased to say that we are busy planning our first ever tree planting project at World's View, Nyanga and Murawhas' Hill, Mutare and also, In conjunction with the Solon Foundation, at Mabukawne Nature reserve in Bulawayo.

The sites will be visited to carry out a preplanning exercise in November and then again to plant the trees in December in celebration of just how awesome trees are at the same time supporting the National Tree Planting Day.

We can't wait to tell you about the process, species planted and numbers and share the photographs of the trees in situ with you.

LA ROCHELLE COUNTRY HOUSE

We have some very exciting news to share with you: the and only Lady Virginia orchid (*Vanda lombakensis Virginia Courtauld*) a rare natural hybrid Vanda orchid named by Sir Stephen Courtauld for his wife, Lady Virginia Courtauld, has just flowered!



Buds on their way



The big reveal: 25th September 2026

The orchid is exceptionally rare and has only flowered a handful of times in recorded history, famously making headlines when it bloomed in October 2016 for the first time since 1973. It has bloomed more regularly annually including 2023, 2024 and 2025. The NTZ would like to express its sincere gratitude to the orchid team at La Rochelle for their total dedication in nurturing the stunning rare exotic orchid and their expert care and respect it has required over all the years.

The protection and maintenance of the shade houses is important and makes announcements like the flowering of Lady Virginia possible.

The NTZ, in collaboration with very valuable assistance and expertise from Kate van Deventer, Secretary of the Zimbabwe Orchid Society, has just undertaken a refurbishment programme of the La Rochelle orchid houses. It was noted that some work was more urgent and together with Kate, it was decided that time was of the essence and action was needed to commence.

The NTZ does have options to pursue overseas donor funding but the applications are very site-specific and trying to source donor funding for such an operation would have been more time-consuming than we could afford.

It was decided to tackle the smaller and more manageable jobs first, with labour materials and available locally, primarily being the much-needed shade-cloth, the wire mesh, the tying wire, the potting medium (pine bark) and some extra tools and equipment.

Through Kate's contacts within the Society we were able to secure a generous donation of rolls of shade-cloth, to replace the existing shade-cloth which has become covered in lichen. This shade-cloth will be carefully removed and treated in order that we may be able to use it again and hopefully for NEW shade-houses going up in the future, as we progress towards a far more financially sustainable collection for the Trust. Nothing goes to waste!

Kate sprang to action and arranged to hold a raffle, with prizes coming from the La Rochelle Orchid Collection. Tickets were on sale through the Zimbabwe Orchid Society as the meeting and at their last Spring Show and the lucky winners are: T Denton-Karen Williams-Debra Waghorn-Sylvia Rodrigues-Francis Pickering and Montana Nicholson.

Our grateful thanks go to Mr Ian Russell-Smith of Webtex, for the very generous donation of shade-cloth and to Mr Dale Crous of 'Sign of the Times' for donating the Webtex banner.

The NTZ is currently collaborating with Eltham Palace (English Heritage) in London, UK, the former original home of Sir Stephen and Lady Virginia as they are very keen to eventually house and display some of the orchids from the heritage collection at La Rochelle at Eltham, especially the Vanda species. The NTZ would very much like to support Eltham Palace with this significant move and return some of the orchids back ensuring the Courtauld's legacy continues in the UK by creating a living link to their story. This will put a spotlight on La Rochelle and on Zimbabwe.

One of the remaining challenging jobs is to now identify and catalogue the entire collection. The only way to do this is going to be to number each and every plant and photograph every plant as it blooms. Identification will most likely entail having to enlist the assistance of overseas growers and collectors over a period of about two years or more and develop the Courtauld collection to world standards.



One of the recent blooming Cymbidiums at La Rochelle An unnamed Cattleya hybrid blooming at La Rochelle

We are pleased to report with the help of a generous donor the Dell area has been cleared of invasive weed species and some of the previously closed pathways have once again been cleared and opened up, allowing visitors to walk through the meandering pathways originally designed by Sir Stephen.

MABUKUWENE

Springtime at Mabukuwene is delightful with aloes in the aloe garden bursting with flowers and indigenous trees in bloom in brilliant hues of pink, red, amber, and rustic brown. As the weather is warming up the nature reserve is fast becoming a haven for resident and migratory birds as they become highly active in the spring time.

In addition to the star attractions of flora and fauna historically Mabukuwene was the former village of one of the Ndebele indunas (chiefs) in the precolonial era, probably dating to between 1870 and 1890. One can see some of the ruins of the village. Wander around the many paths and stand on an outcrop and admire the view from 1442 meters (4730 feet) above sea level that affords a 360 ° view point of the area including the City of Bulawayo. The nature reserve is open to special interest groups, for further information and to book your special outing please contact us. We look forward to seeing you soon.



Entrance Gates to Mabukuwene

MURAWHA'S HILL



We are very happy to announce that the building of the new Educational Centre, wall and toilets is now at an advanced stage and we are on schedule for the centre to be ready for the grand opening to the public in December. We would like to sincerely thank the Helen Hyslop Trust for the hugely generous donation and to Eng.junga for managing this project in most efficient and professional way.



for the education centre

The final stage of the project is the building of the pillars

The traditional Africa design of the centre will create an accessible community space where school children and adults can explore topics such as flora and fauna, the geology of Mutare, early history: The Stone Age and the recent pre-colonial past in small groups. There are plans for the centre to host conferences/meetings in the future. Imagine the view!

We will forward you details of the opening and would be most pleased if you could join us in celebration what we have achieved at the site.

NYANGA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The museum continues to enjoy visitors from the area, regionally and internationally. Visits from school children tend to be the most represented of groups. There was high activity over the Heroes Holiday weekend. The Museum was very proud to receive a high tech 65 inch interactive smartboard donated by The Solon Foundation. We are greatly thankful to Mr. Willie Dhlandhlara for standing with the museum and supporting our work. The new display will help to ease congestion and allows us to go digital with exhibits.



Mr Naboth Muchopa, Chair, with a representative from Fusertech

Infrastructure

A new wheelchair ramp was constructed. The committee agreed to replace the timber ramp that had been in use for the past 7 years. This will greatly improve accessibility for all our visitors.



New wheelchair ramp

New intern

We would like to introduce you to our new intern: Angelina Karimazondo from the University of Zimbabwe studying Multi Cultural Heritage and Tourism, she will be assisting us in several areas especially creating content for the new interactive screen, as she learns on the job.



Visitor Feedback

Our recent visitors have expressed that they are *very happy with the museum* and the improvements made.

Ongoing Projects

We are currently working on the setup to install videos and information on the new interactive smart board. This will enhance the visitor experience and make our exhibitions more interactive and with less queues.

WORLDS VIEW

Worlds View had great rains last season leaving the whole site beautiful and green for the dry winter months. It certainly was a cold dry winter but with great visibility in the months May to end August.

Currently it is very dry and with the fire season underway, pretty hazy viewing in the afternoons but with spectacular sunsets. Best viewing times this time of year for visibility are the mornings.



The Heroes weekend in August where we get more visitors than usual the weather was fantastic and clear, making for spectacular viewing and climbing of Nyamatoro.



The View in summer months





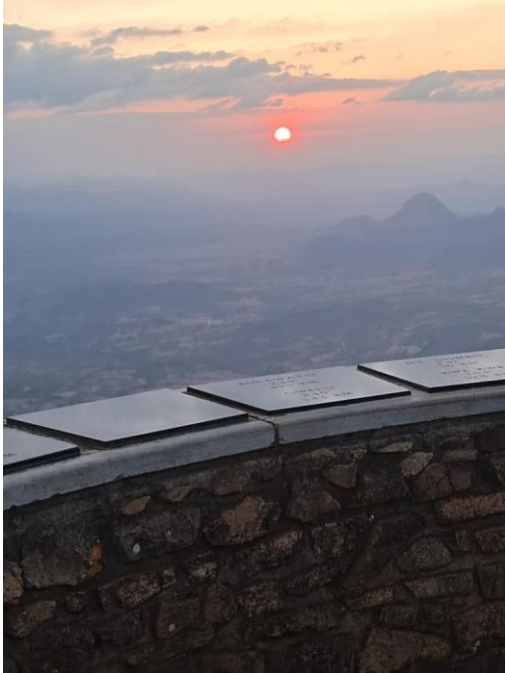
The view at dusk



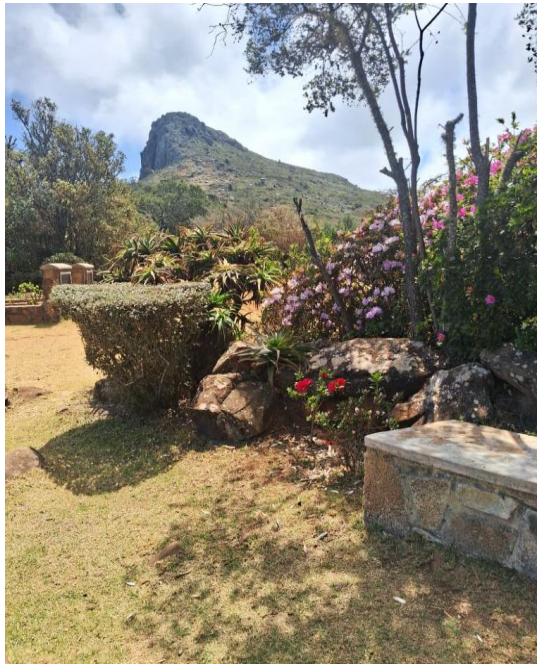
Aloes have been planted on the slopes going down from the Hide and the Luke Kanera Bench has been completed up the eastern side of Nyamatoro with fantastic views of the valley below.



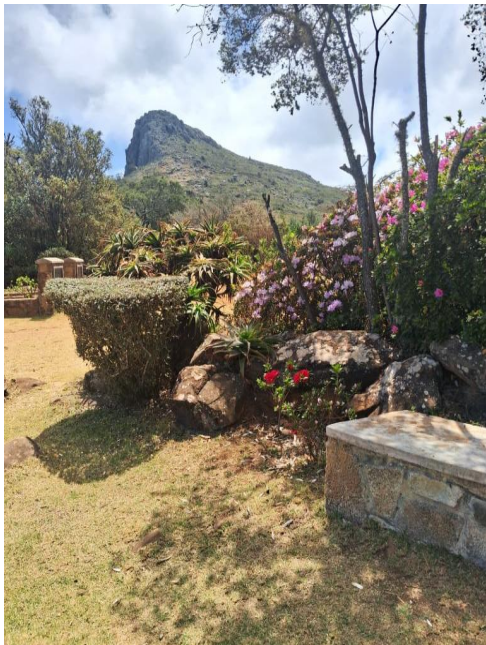
Sunset from the Toposcope



Nyamatoro August 2026



Gardens spring 2026



Gardens winter 2026

Wagon wheel bench with the Protea pin cushions out



We would like to tell you about our future plans that include the following:

- Update of picture gallery with adequate lighting and displays
- Plant sales to be moved from next to the toilets to next to the Sculptures
- Geological and ecological information of the site (ref Prof Tony Martin)
- New flower selling display
- More and better equipped dustbins
- Ruins to be totally cleared and
- Pathways to the ruins to be made

**We thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter,
we hoped that you enjoyed it.**

We welcome your contribution.

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ntoz.org**

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