

Editorial

Change and continuity, often opposing forces, are themes in this issue of Toposcope Journal. In looking back at all five previous editions that I've edited, two changes stand out: one, the cover; and from 2022, the suggestion from Rod Hooper Box that we include an article about an interesting historical woman explorer/diarist. We carry both forward in this issue: Bella is back on our cover, and Rod's account of teenager Augusta Uitenhage de Mist's explorations in 1802/3 has immediacy and is a fresh, charming story. (And yes, her father did indeed give his name to the town.)

In the past year your LAHS Committee has pondered the future of the Journal. How pleased and relieved we are now to tell you that a new Committee member, Trish Middlebrook, will take over as Editor from 2026. Here, change and continuity go hand-in-hand: the Journal in its current form goes forward.

Much more work and upheaval were experienced in relocating the contents of the Kowie Museum to the Bathurst Agricultural Museum. This major change – with its happy ending – is described in Heather Howard's article: a cherished treasure is assured of a new chapter.

Another of our Committee members, Daphne McNeill, tells the fascinating story of her grandfather 'Vukani' Trollope, who during a colourful career helped establish many of South Africa's best known game reserves. In similar vein, the article by Professor Julia Wells shines a new light on 1820 maverick settler Thomas Stubbs. Jane Ritchie, Head of Diocesan Girls Junior School, looks back at the institution's 150 years. We also cruise down the Kowie, walk the old roads of Bathurst with David Forsdyke, and spend time at our province's first seaside resort, Kasouga, with the Guest family. And then - we dig deep for fossils with Dr Rob Gess at Waterloo Farm, outside Makhanda. There is an incredible fossil archive there and what an honour to feature Rob's expertise and the far-reaching implications these fossil finds have for palaeontology. Who would have guessed that protests in the apartheid era and a Sunday braai of local scientists would lead to the discovery of the most extraordinary archive of Late Devonian fish, tetrapod and plant fossils in Africa? This important article also touches on history, geology, ecology and biogeography.

Our Vice President, Prof Pat Irwin, writes comprehensively on the history of communication, providing context for his article on the old forts and signal towers of our region, some of

which the Society has visited. Closely related to this is a report on a SAMHSEC outing to historical sites in the Fish River Valley late last year.

Of all the portfolios shared among LAHS Committee members, that of Toposcope Editor is surely the prize. How else could I have discovered so many rich historical accounts that have both broadened and deepened my understanding of local history? I have visited sites and met storytellers I might never otherwise have encountered. What a privilege and pleasure it has been to bring all this to our readers.

Thanks to all contributors, also LAHS Committee members (especially Heather Howard, and the Crothalls) who either cheered from the sidelines, proofread or gave IT help to once again get our Toposcope Journal into print.

Sue Gordon