

# DUMELA



Newsletter from Botswana Sweden Friendship Association

No 2/2010

## Dear BOTSFA members!

From full winter to an exploding spring, the season we all have longed for, with flowers everywhere, people working in gardens, some sneezing when trees »open up« their leaves and causing allergic reactions. In my hometown Strängnäs, the shore walk Strandpromenaden path along lake Mälaren is being renovated to give the inhabitants a nice feeling when slowly strolling along.

Every year I am amazed by the changes in nature, particularly after a long and cold winter, to see how Mother Nature opens up and embraces us all. So, instead of the usual picture of me, I have chosen a »Vitsippsbacke« for this issue of DUMELA Newsletter.

If any of you are surprised that I am still the Chairperson of BOTSFA, I can tell you that I reconsidered my decision a month before the AGM, after having suddenly realized that I would miss the Chair. So, here I go for one more year during which I hope that BOTSFA will grow and that the younger generation also will participate in working in the Association to keep it vividly alive! Not the least we warmly invite students who are doing/have done Minor Fields Studies in Botswana (MFS) to come

and tell us about your experiences.

And, of course, not only students but the whole younger generation!

The Annual General Meeting 2010 was held on March 20 at Etnografiska Museet in Stockholm. I would like, in this context, to thank everybody present for all support given to me, and re-electing me Chairperson for another year. It warmed my heart!

Many members had replied to DUMELA's call for members' opinion on the way of distribution of DUMELA Newsletter. Everybody who expressed her/his opinion »voted« for DUMELA Newsletter to be sent by e-mail as PDF file to the members.

The previous issue of DUMELA presented a new book *Tsodilo Hills Copper Bracelet of the Kalabari*. DUMELA has met with Alec Campbell, a well known person living in Botswana since long, and one of three editors of the book. We are happy to publish a Portrait of Doctor Alec Campbell, written by Kerstin Jackson Main, who also lives in Botswana. Enjoy reading the story.

The portrait of Alec Campbell replaces a previously planned report on Bright Faces Daycare Centre, run by Neo Chitombo. This report will be presented in the next issue No. 3/2010,

towards the end of this summer. This and other interesting news will be published then. For example, Mr. Alexander McCall Smith, author of the No. Ladies Detective Agency series, will be visiting the International Book Fair in Göteborg. There will be other events for the fall.

Until the next issue of DUMELA Newsletter, don't forget the BOTSFA Photo Competition! Details are on the website. And, please, pay your membership fee!

The summer is coming! Enjoy!

Best regards,

Ulla Odqvist

BOTSFA's Chairperson

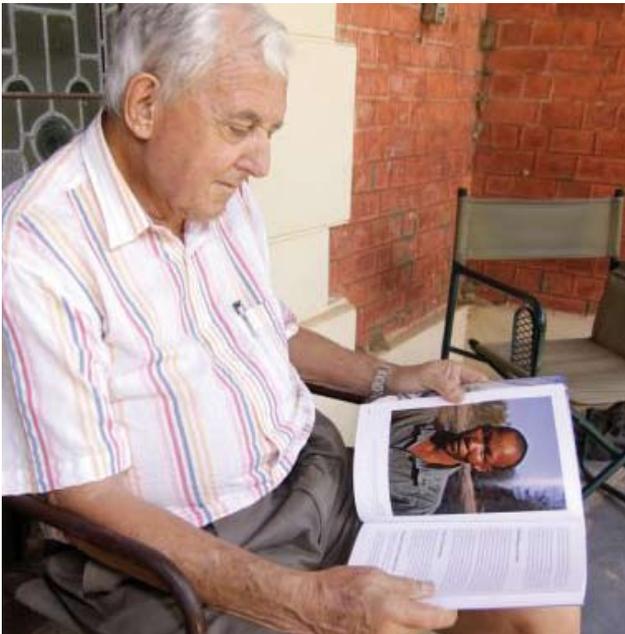
Ulla Odqvist



### MEMBERSHIP FEE

Dear Members, it is high time to pay the membership fee for 2010. Please make your payment as soon as possible. BOTSFA has both a Plusgiro-account (851039-8) and a Bankgiro account: (428-6472). Other relevant details is found on [www.botsfa.nu](http://www.botsfa.nu).

# A portrait of Doctor Alec Campbell



**Many years ago, I visited Tsodilo Hills together with colleagues from the Educational Broadcasting Division of Radio Botswana. We were there to make a radio programme for schools about the hills, the rock art and the people in the area.**

Photos: Ulf Nermark

**W**e were met by a young guide from the Museum. This was long before any buildings were there, no museum and only a few tents for the Museum staff. The young guide was very pleased to see us; there weren't many visitors in those days.

We had a lot of questions and I suspect he found us quite demanding during the interviews. The guide struggled and after a while he told us that we should really be putting these questions to 'Mr Botswana'. We would then get informative and correct answers.

–Who is Mr Botswana?, we asked.  
–Oh! His name is Alec Campbell, he told us.

**Who is Alec Campbell**, where does he come from and what has he been doing to get a nickname like Mr Botswana? To find out I went to see Dr Alec Campbell at his farm outside Gaborone, where he and his wife have lived for many years, raising a family of three children.

Before I tell you about Alec I have to say something about the HOUSE where Alec lives. It was built in 1902 by an adventurous German who had come to Africa to hunt seals! He made

a fortune out of that and eventually he bought a huge piece of land in Bechuanaland Protectorate and built this rather remarkable farmhouse where he lived until his death in 1955. He is buried in the garden. Just before the 1st World War the farmhouse was refurbished as a lodge for Kaiser William who was supposed to come to Africa to hunt, but that never happened. The house has stained glass windows, painted wooden ceilings, wooden floors and a verandah all around it. It is a beautiful and haunting colonial relic.

When Alec and his wife Judy bought the house in 1970 it was a total wreck, termites are very efficient; disinterested humans can also cause great destruction. After a two year rebuilding project Alec and Judy could move in and you can easily say that the founder of the National Museum in Botswana also lives in a museum of his own.

## How did it all start?

When Alec turned 18, conscription still applied in England and the army drafted him as a stores clerk. This didn't appeal to Alec so he looked around for a way out and found that he could join the British South Africa Police for 3 years and by doing so he would be exempted from the Army.

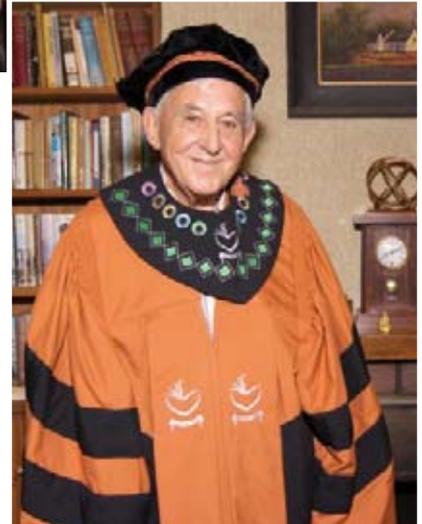
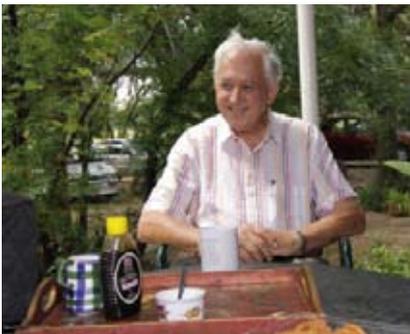
He got on a boat to South Africa and travelled to Rhodesia where he served his 3 years. He never got the exemption though, the Army had forgotten all about him. Alec liked the three years he had spent in Rhodesia.

–I hated the Police but I loved Africa, so I never went back, he says.

Alec studied African languages at Rhodes University and met his wife Judy there. The two of them came to Botswana in 1962 where Alec had been offered a job with the Bechuanaland Protectorate Administration as District Officer stationed in Ghanzi.

This job was no challenge: there was little to do with no money available to improve minimal school facilities, to build even a single clinic for remote villagers or even help the indigent. He resigned but was immediately offered the job of organising and running the first house to house national census. He organised house and cattle post mapping throughout the country, trained 29 teams of enumerators and travelled to every corner of the land. He was given 9 months to produce population figures for every area so that constituency delimitation could commence for the first national elections due to be held in 1965.

It was while doing this in 1963 that



he fell in love with Tsodilo Hills.  
 –One look at the hills was enough to create a love bond between them and me. It was not just their beauty and not their uniqueness in desert sand dunes. I think it was the spirits there as well, he says.

**Alec founded the Botswana Museum** in 1966 using his own collection of artefacts. Government suggested he start the museum in his spare time while he was Senior Game Warden in the Game Department later to be called Department of National Parks and Wildlife. After Alec retired from the Museum in 1987 he worked as a consultant for them and a lot of that work took place at Tsodilo Hills.

Together with Larry Robbins, an accomplished American archaeologist, Alec started excavating parts of the Tsodilo Hills and to record the paintings.

1992 saw the beginning of an extensive cooperation between the Museum and Sweden's Ethnographic Museum. The project was funded by SIDA. Alec was hired to make sure that all the rock art at Tsodilo was to be recorded. Together with a photographer and staff from the Museum a plan was created and the work was done. 405 sites were recorded and

4 000 paintings documented.  
 Alec has a lot of respect for what the Swedes have done for the Museum.  
 –The Museum wouldn't be where it is today if it hadn't been for the Swedes, he says.

When Alec talks about rock art he radiates enthusiasm and knowledge and then he asks you to think about rock art and about when writing started 5000 years ago. You understand that rock art is the way people saw themselves and how they communicated, how they saw the world, drawn on the rock 10 000 years ago.

Over the years lots of people have been drawn to the hills and a significant number of scientific papers have been written about the hills and the rock paintings.

To make the hills known to a bigger public Alec and Larry Robbins decided to write a book about them. They wanted it to be in a non technical form and include the history, the rock art, the people and the spirits. This work started in 1980 and is presented in the book they recently launched »Tsodilo Hills-Copper Bracelet of the Kalahari«. The very book I should have had all those years ago when I needed information about the hills.

*Kerstin Jackson Main*

### E-mail to BOTSFA

Just a note to thank you for the information you provided us on our Botswana trip. We stayed at Brackendene Lodge in Gaborone, following your suggestion. It is very centrally located and was ok. We had an enjoyable and adventurous 10-day visit.

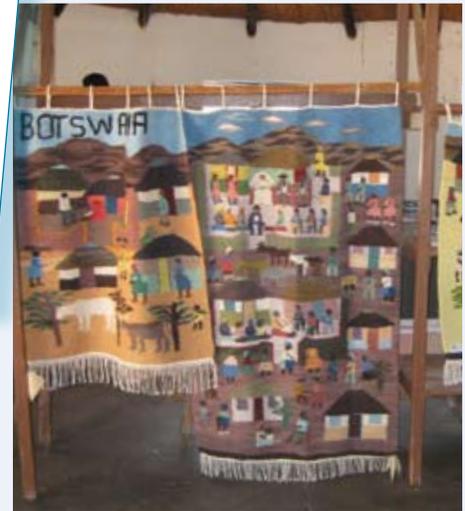
It was very interesting and great fun to see the developments that have occurred since we were last in Botswana, including investments in infrastructure, schools, hospitals, etc. Quite a difference from a number of other countries in Africa where there is very little progress in economic development. The developments, of course, presented an orientation challenge for us. We struggled to find our way around our »home village«, Molepolole. We were happy to see »our« house and the trees we had planted – they were huge.

We drank rooibos tea with Mma Ramotswa on the balcony of President Hotel and visited many other places named in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective books. And we, of course, visited the beautiful nature and abundant wildlife in Chobe – a fantastic experience. We drove 2400 kilometres and with no problems – very good roads throughout.

Botswana is a very different country from when we lived there, 30 years ago, but the openness and warmth of the people remain unchanged.

Re itumetse.

*Thomas and Birgitta Dahlgren (lived and worked in Molepolole 1975–1978)*



**BOTSFA  
Photo  
Competition**

**Time to send in your pictures!**  
For rules and more information see [www.botsfa.nu](http://www.botsfa.nu)

**Information on lodges in  
Botswana**

[www.botswanaturism.co.bw](http://www.botswanaturism.co.bw)

**Click on accommodation  
destination on map**