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Introduction

The very last week of summer saw everyone holding their breath as Cyclone Freddy barrelled across Madagascar and into the Mozambique channel. The damage wrought by Cyclone Eloise is still fresh in our minds, and so it was with great relief that we did not experience the full extent of the cyclone. We were on the periphery of the storm and enjoyed two days of soft rainfall. Overall, the rainfall was unusual and periodic this summer, we are hoping for more rain during autumn. Have a look at the Finsbury Estate blog page https://finsburyestate.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_28.html to see the estate's rainfall data as well as Jimmy's excellent blog posts.

Summer always brings about a change in our activities. As the rains increase the team have to start spending more time cutting lawns, pathways and road verges. Repairs on water supply catchments to houses after heavy storms is a regular task. Road maintenance and repair work accounts for a large portion of work hours in summer. We were very fortunate to have a team from Bamboo Rock Construction come down and do maintenance work on the roads.

During the long stretches of rainy days in February the team were able to use the time to chop firewood. The shed behind Finsbury House, where the firewood is stored, really aided our efforts and provided the team with a dry working environment.

In line with continually upgrading staff accommodation we were able to do some upgrades to the contractor's accommodation. We anticipate it being a busy year with contractors, so the upgrades are timeous.

The last newsletter included information about the raid carried out on the illegal miner's camp. It has come to light that there are still illegal miners at the old diggings on the eastern slope of Mount Formosa, which is outside of Finsbury. We are conducting regular patrols on our eastern boundary closest to the area and to date have not found any fresh activity inside Finsbury. A local group consisting of concerned and affected parties are currently liaising with relevant policing officials on this matter. In the meantime, please be careful while hiking the mountains, hike in groups and report any suspicious people immediately.

Donald MacCrimmon

Road maintenance

Each rainy season it is imperative to conduct maintenance work on our internal roads and the access road. Annual maintenance work includes opening of drains and pipes, filling in of potholes and building drainage humps. This work is repetitive and needs to happen every year to ensure that there is good water drainage off the roads.

Every once in a while, we are able to do a project that enables us to break the cycle of repetitive maintenance/repair work and construct a lasting solution. One such project, just completed, is the building of concrete strips on a particularly rough section of road on the upper Kliprots. Every year this stretch of road is subjected to water flowing down the road when the river is at its peak. Fortunately, the bed of the road was rock solid, which allowed us to put the concrete strips directly on top of the old road surface and not have to dig down into the ground. Rocks left over from work on S6 last year were then deposited both between the strips and on the sides in order to have a level surface across the whole width of the road. The concrete strips are a long-lasting solution to this particular stretch of road.

As part of the long-term maintenance plan of the access road and internal roads, a team from Bamboo Rock Construction came to the valley. The team had a grader, roller and water truck. The previous two exercises with BRC, in 2018 and 2020, were projects that really laid the foundation for the excellent roads that we have currently. On those occasions the team had an excavator, bulldozer and tipper trucks in attendance. This year the road only required light work to keep it in good condition. We extend a huge and heart felt thank you to Gerald Chapman for bringing his team down and overseeing the project.



K33

Since we widened the primary spillway at K33 there has not been a day where we have seen water flowing over the emergency spillway. However, there hasn't been a big flood since the repair work and so with the "big one" always in mind we felt it was prudent to add a concrete layer on top of the emergency spillway in order to prevent any future maintenance issues on the wall.

During the time of the repair work after Cyclone Eloise a layer of top soil was added onto the top and side of the wall. A tightly knit grass layer on dam walls is essential to the health and strength of the wall. The recovery of the grass on the wall is encouraging to see. What is also encouraging to see is how the old coffer dam upstream from K33 has self-rehabilitated. The team removed the wire mattresses and bidim last year. Within another two years it should be completely covered over by vegetation.



Contractors village

Upgrades to the contractor's village took place in January. The old donkey boiler and wood fired stove were removed. The donkey boiler was replaced by an electric geyser (controlled by a timer) and the wood fired stove was refurbished and will be placed in the main village. Contractors will need to provide their own cooking appliances. The kitchen was fitted with insulation and ceiling boards and painted. The use of the village will now have a daily rate. Please contact us well in advance of any required usage to enquire about the daily rate and availability.

