

MOUNT ELGON FOUNDATION

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2019

MOUNT ELGON FOUNDATION IS BORN!

The **Mount Elgon Foundation** was registered as a U.K. charity on Friday, 29th November. Its main aim is to help preserve the beautiful natural and ancient cultural heritage of Mount Elgon. The founding trustees, who all have strong connections with Mount Elgon, are **Aiden Doyle, Antony Jarvis and Christopher Powles**. They will be joined by **Dr Emmanuel Ndiema**, as a trustee, who is Senior Research Scientist and Head of Archaeology at the National Museums of Kenya. Emmanuel's ancestors lived in Elgon's caves and, as part of his wider work, he leads a programme of archaeological research and recording of cultural heritage on Mount Elgon. The trustees are assisted by Antony's uncle in Australia, **Charles Kerfoot**.

NEWS FROM THE MOUNTAIN

The Foundation's initial focus is the **Mount Elgon Elephant Project (MEEP)**. MEEP's initial work began in May 2017 and is now in an expansion phase. We started with three part-time scouts setting camera traps in three of the caves in the forest and now have four full-time scouts, all from the local community. They have moved on to using a mobile phone app called Cybertracker to record mapping information.



After training in July, the scouts were deployed in September. The first results are flowing in. The main objective is to find out the facts on the ground – to locate all the elephant caves, the key elephant movement routes, where the new farming areas are, where there is indigenous forest / plantations and where human-elephant conflict is happening. The scouts are also reporting back to the Kenya authorities if the elephants are in trouble. Just now, there is an obviously sick elephant which they are monitoring and we hope a government vet will attend. We don't know for certain, but it may have been harmed by a snare, like one in January 2018 that was so emaciated from a snare round its leg it had to be euthanised.

VISITING MOUNT ELGON

We encourage you to visit Mount Elgon National Park and the surrounding area below the mountain. There is lots to do, not least a visit to the Park to see Kitum Cave where the elephants penetrate 150m into the mountain to mine salt. Close by is Chepnyalil Cave – a lead site for Emmanuel's archaeological research. There is accommodation (self-catering) in the Park in the form of individual bandas and a guest house while regular scheduled flights to Kitale make the area much more accessible these days.

Charles Kerfoot in Australia and Richard Northmore in London are promoting tourism to Elgon and would be delighted to advise anyone interested in going. In each of our newsletters we will describe places to stay and things to do.



Koitoboss guest house, Mount Elgon National Park

Charles and Richard can be contacted, respectively, on charleskerfoot47@gmail.com and richard.northmore@oxygensecure.co.uk.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HISTORY



Chepnyalil Cave

In 2006, a team from the National Museums of Kenya together with Peter Powles who grew up at Chorlim Farm, by Mount Elgon National Park, surveyed a number of caves on Mount Elgon, looking for evidence of early humans. At Chepnyalil Cave they found two ancient rock art paintings, old pottery, a roof blackened from fires and a wicker enclosure at the rear made by modern people using the cave at night. A preliminary dig and later ones

up to 2013 have revealed a wealth of stone artifacts in the mouth of the cave dating from 23,000 years before present. What was discovered was a manufacturing site for mid to late stone age tools.

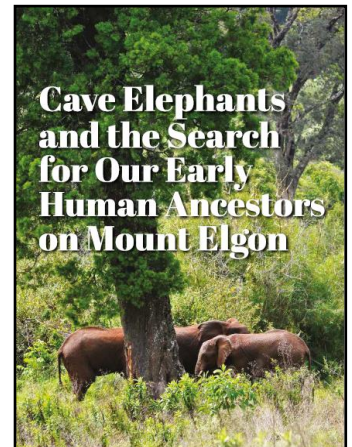
The above has been a major part of the cultural history research on Mount Elgon. Another key site is at Kakapel off the south-western slopes of Elgon. Here there is a profusion of stunning rock art. A dig in the area is planned for the first quarter of next year.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Christopher Powles has now spoken about Mount Elgon three times – at a Kitale School alumni lunch, to the University of Oxford Exploration Club and at the Oxford Natural History Museum. He and Emmanuel Ndiema join forces on **29th January 2020** to speak at the **Muthaiga Club** in Nairobi on ‘Cave Elephants and the Search for Our Early Human Ancestors on Mount Elgon’. All are welcome. It is an East African Wild Life Society event and Rose at the Society on Rose.Chemweno@eawildlife.org would be delighted to provide details. Please be in touch with Aiden, as below, if you know of any other opportunities for us to speak.

SWARA MAGAZINE

MEEP is an **East African Wildlife Society** project. Christopher and Emmanuel are giving the lecture mentioned above as part of the overall arrangements with the Society. The Society publishes **SWARA Magazine**, which is very much the leading voice of conservation in East Africa. The October-December edition of SWARA has a beautifully presented six-page article on Mount Elgon, its elephants and the archaeological research. If you don't have access to a copy let us know and we can either email it or sent you a reprint.



SWARA article

HOW YOU CAN HELP

To date, 18 Kitale School alumni and 17 other private individuals have generously supported MEEP as Founder ‘Friends of Mount Elgon’. Many thanks once again to you all. Please help further by encouraging friends and family to support us as well. Others wishing to help can visit our crowd funding web page (as below) to make a one-off donation – or maybe you can ask your family to do so as a Christmas or birthday present? Also, when the Foundation is registered with the U.K. tax authorities, we will set up a programme for Friends to donate a small regular standing order. This will, importantly, give the Foundation a base level of recurrent income and hence financial stability. Please email Aiden, as below, if you would like to support the Mount Elgon Foundation in this way, and we will contact you when we are ready.

Crowd funding page: www.gofundme.com/f/mt-elgon-elephant-project

Email contact: aidendoyle@gmail.com

Aiden, Antony, Christopher and Emmanuel