
THE HISTORY OF THE THORNYBUSH NATURE RESERVE

1991 to 2019



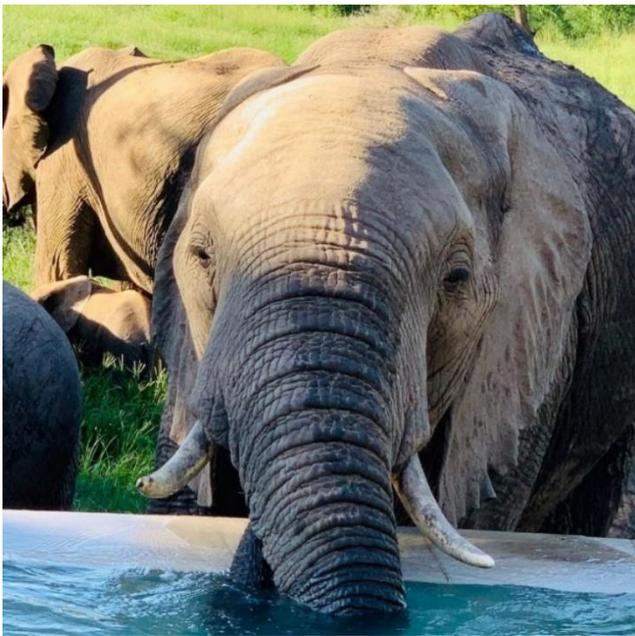
TREVOR JORDAN

Introduction

LITTLE DID I know when I first set foot on the original Thornybush portion in the early 80's, that in years to come, I would have achieved my no-fences-big-game vision for the Reserve!

An elephant is gulping noisily from the infinity pool at the luxury River Lodge@Thornybush, just a few metres from where I am seated enjoying an alfresco breakfast on the deck. Bongs, the lodge butler is engaged in a lively discussion with the visibly animated guests, whose social media accounts are fraught with modern world focuses like elephant-eggs-benedict-selfies!

Time stands still as I reflect momentarily on the remarkable story behind the development of the Thornybush Nature Reserve.



Fresh water, courtesy of the River Lodge infinity pool!

The private reserve has a fascinating and diverse history dating back to 1990, when the original Thornybush farm, {Portion 19 of Thornybush 78 KU) measured just 1640 hectares!

This farm belonged to the Testamentary Trust of F.J. Dyason (senior) represented by Elsa Dyason; the property was subject to a 99-year lease in favour of Thornybush Game Lodge (Pty) Ltd, a company owned 51% by Frank J. Dyason (junior) and 49% by the Testamentary Trust. The farm was originally purchased by the late Col. F.J. Dyason in 1955 from Mr. French and was subdivided into five x 1000

Morgan portions, totaling 5000 Morgan (4,200ha). In time, three portions situated to the north and east were sold off. Today these are part of the Timbavati Nature Reserve.

Colonel Dyason constructed the original lodge in 1961. It was one of the pioneer safari lodges in South Africa and operated as a mixed-use destination; hunting and photo safaris. It was not a Big-5 Reserve as the Kruger fence was erected in 1961, effectively cutting off all private properties to the east. At the time, most of the properties around Thornybush were mixed game and cattle farms, although Thornybush had always been a game farm.

The lodge was managed and sub-leased to numerous operators through the years until 1982 when Colonel Dyason passed away. It was then run by Frank Dyason (junior) on behalf of Thornybush Game Lodge (Pty) Ltd.

In 1983, Frank Dyason approached me with the view to doing a deal to either; sell, lease or enter into a joint venture. After a seven-year saga of lengthy, difficult and protracted negotiations between Frank, The Dyason family and me, a deal was concluded in mid- 1990, on the basis that the 1640ha property would be re-subdivided into a northern and southern portion. Each subdivision was 820ha, with the southern portion retained by the Family Trust and the northern portion by Frank, who immediately sold the property to a consortium headed by me. The other members were GT Ferreira, Paul Harris, Grant Thomas and Miles Lapperman.

An agreement was entered into between the new owners of the Lodge portion and the Dyasons' represented by Elsa Rauch, wife of the late Colonel Dyason and her four children; Elma, Roger, Ernest and Alex. The parties agreed to manage both properties as one unit with no fences between the two and with reciprocal traverse rights. Thornybush Lodge would manage the whole property, excluding the Dyason family camp and run the commercial lodge and all fauna and flora. The traverse agreement was in place for 50 years.

Both parties also agreed that the ultimate goal was for the properties to be incorporated into the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, realizing that for conservation and commercial reasons, the land area had to be increased and big game had to be introduced.

My wife at the time, Jeanette was appointed Managing Director of the Lodge Company sometime in 1990 and immediately started renovating and upgrading the lodge. She was also in charge of commercial tourism and opened a marketing office in Johannesburg, successfully building up the name of the business from scratch. Bob Manthe and his girlfriend Darryn were appointed as the management couple at the Lodge, but in time, Bob battled with the staff and I secured a more suitable and senior position for him as the senior warden at Welgevonden Game Reserve, a Jordan Properties development in the Waterburg.

Peter and Zingra Hanley were to replace Bob and Darryn, however the hand-over day dawned with the devastating news that Bob had committed suicide, gassing himself on the reserve. On arriving at the Lodge, Peter sarcastically remarked "mmm this job must be a tough one!"



Jeanette (left) and my PA, Nita Dalziel, entertaining guests in the boma at Main Lodge

Protrack

As I was responsible for the reserve development and land management, I was approached by Vincent Barkus in 1993 who was setting up a private anti-poaching business at the time.

Rhino poaching was not a problem in those days; however, protein-poaching was a major problem. Vincent and his five-man team, who looked like a bunch of bush-guys from another planet offered to barter an anti-poaching deal, mainly snare-sweeping in return for food! Believing however, that if they were not paid, they would also start hunting for food, I agreed to a small wage and so Protrack, as we know it today, was born!



Vincent Barkus and his Protrack team 1994!

My main objective, however, remained! To incorporate the Thornybush properties into the Timbavati Nature Reserve. A prolonged period, commencing in 1990, of emotional and political negotiations ensued between me; representing Thornybush and the Timbavati Chairman at the time; Dr Dawid Griesel, who made his hostile intentions quite clear from the outset!

It was patently obvious that there was grave resistance on the part of the Timbavati to incorporate Thornybush, even though it made complete conservation sense; the ethos of large unfenced areas etc. These initial negotiations finally broke down toward the end of 1992, when Dr. Griesel confirmed that a payment of R 2 million was their objective. This was a vast sum of money in those days! They were also fiercely against any commercialization, feeling it was invasive and unexclusive. Dr. Griesel stipulated this as a further condition of incorporation, believing this stance would put Thornybush Nature Reserve out of business!

Proudly, today the Thornybush Reserve offers secure employment to over 600 people. I made sure that Dr. Griesel was aware of this fact when I bumped into him some years later. I told him that Thornybush would be building a monument in his honour, as had it not been for his hard-arsed stance, Thornybush, as we know it today, would never have developed! This remark was not well received!

In the time being, the period 1991/1992, the Thornybush team continued to pursue other opportunities. We realized very early on, that to stay in business, we had to offer guests better game viewing experiences by increasing the area and specie numbers and variety. Five white rhinos were

purchased as well as small herds of buffalo, eland and waterbuck. The property was obviously too small at that stage to introduce lion and elephant.

Traverse rights were also negotiated over the farm, Lekkerlag, a hunting farm (Guernsey; Portions 8, 9 and 52) now known as Waterside, which belonged to Mr. Theo Erasmus. He also very kindly erected a gate and allowed the Thornybush guests to traverse the south-western corner, "Castle Corner" of his property. Permission was also obtained from the southern neighbour, Mrs. Nicci Potgieter to cross over the corner of her property onto Lekkerlag. This avoided a long roundabout way, via the Guernsey road tobacco sheds and cattle-pens, onto Lekkerlag and a return drive of approximately 20kms!



Nikki Potgieter

Thornybush Game Lodge's future was semi-secure, but not big-5 of course, compliments of its kind neighbours; the Potgieters and Boy Erasmus. It now had traverse rights over approximately 4000ha. However, these were mostly hunting properties with very skittish game, and no elephant or lion. This arrangement lasted less than a month when Mrs. Nicci Potgieter informed us that she had to withdraw her consent for Thornybush Game Lodge guests' and personnel to pass over 50m² of their property, effectively cutting our traverse area by 60%! Her two brothers, who were equal shareholders of their farm, were negotiating with our "dear friend" Dr. Griesel from the Timbavati to sell him the Potgieter farms. He had instructed them to withdraw their consent to

cross the corner immediately otherwise he would not proceed with the purchase of the brothers' shareholding. This was a high priority for them from a financial viewpoint!

The pressure was now on both Thornybush Game Lodge and Nicci Potgieter who was about to lose the family farm, which had been purchased by her father in the 1940's. Her brothers, who were in the majority, were entitled to dispose of their shareholding. Nicci would therefore be left as a minor partner with a hostile major partner. Fortunately, she had a clause in her agreement that gave her a right of pre-emption to match any outside offers. This had to be exercised within 30 days. Nicci met with me and a deal was struck.

Tangala: Remainder of Portion 87 Tangala and Guernsey 12 (± 3900ha)

My company, Rand Consolidated Properties advanced Nicci the money, thanks to a loan from GT Ferreira, via Rand Merchant Bank (RMB). During the negotiation period, I had also proposed the idea to GT of a corporate share-block scheme on the property. Nicci was then able to purchase the brothers' shareholding on the basis that the loan would be for a period of one year, at normal commercial rates and no repayment during the period. A further condition was stipulated, that the Thornybush Consortium would be given an option/right of first refusal to purchase the entire property or portion thereof. This gave Nicci a year's breathing space and Thornybush Game Lodge would continue to cross the corner onto Lekkerlag. It also meant that Dr. Griesel's ill-conceived plan had been thwarted for good!

Very soon after signing the agreement; Nicci and I negotiated a deal whereby her two farms were subdivided and Rand Consolidated Properties purchased her northern property; the 1600ha Tangala for the value of the loan advanced, along with a traverse right in favour of Thornybush Game Lodge and a 5-year traverse over Guernsey 12 (De Hoop). Game ownership and management agreements were negotiated and the fence between the two properties was removed. Nicci stayed on in the old farm camp situated on the Tangala property for a further 2 years. The Potgieter family camp was built on the remaining extent of Tangala and later converted to a

commercial operation, known as Tangala Lodge. It was originally managed by Nicci's son, Eugene Potgieter, until it was handed over to an outside company in 2012.

With the incorporation of the above properties in 1992, Thornybush Game Reserve totaled 5440 ha, with the Main Lodge traversing the entire area.

An important milestone had been reached, as we now had enough land to carry big game. Lion and elephant were immediately introduced, elevating the reserve to Big-5! This was a very busy and exciting time, although the first elephant relocation, whilst offering many humorous and entertaining encounters was fraught with anxiety and tension, and the first lion introduction ended in complete disaster!

"Trevor, kom haal julle beeste!"

I had been approached by two vet friends of mine who knew I was looking for a group of elephants for Thornybush. They knew of a mixed group that needed a home but as they consisted of ex-Zimbabwean and South African cull-orphans, they asked me if I was prepared to be involved in re-homing a family group of "tame" elephants, that excluded a matriarch!

With the necessary permits in hand, thanks to the help of Dr. Piet Botha and Lampies Lamprecht (Department of Transvaal Nature Conservation) the two elephant experts; Doctors; Kobus Du Toit and Richard Burrows embarked on the very first translocation ever of a mixed group of adult and juvenile animals. We kept the elephants in a specially built boma for a week, which proved unnecessary, especially as they were tame animals.

Once released, they headed straight for a caravan that Lampies Lamprecht was using as his office, whilst researching the elephant relocation. With no guard watching over the caravan, it was quickly and without remorse converted to a high-speed, one metre high caravan! They sat on it, lay on it, dribbled it and punched holes in it, searching for maize-meal and other treats that they had become accustomed to in their previous homes. From here they moved to a water-drilling rig, which was also modified, the hydraulic pipes were removed as were all the rear-view mirrors!

One morning, Elias, our foreman who helped with the maintenance at the Thornybush Lodge called me just in time to witness my beloved 6-seater Centurion aircraft being carried off the Lodge runway and re-

positioned in a thicket. Although there was no mechanical damage, the cowling resembled an irrigation sprinkler by the time the elephants had finished with it.

A few days later Nicci Potgieter's gate-guard noticed a snow-white elephant walking down the road toward him. When he arrived home that evening, he discovered his mealie-meal had been stolen with absolutely no accountability by the thief!

There were many times that the herd would pay us a visit during our boma evenings. A trunk would surreptitiously appear in the dark, snaking its way over the side of the boma wall in search of something tasty!

On one occasion they visited the Monwana Lodge kitchen. After crashing through the kitchen door, they discovered a tray of hot food, waiting service to the guests. The resident chef was greeted on return from his menu presentation, with remnants of his carefully prepared dinner scattered around the kitchen.

In addition to all these antics, they also kept trashing the fences and breaking out. I would receive a call with regular monotony from the Timbavati ranger "Trevor, kom haal julle beeste, Trevor come fetch your cattle!" I got poorer, as the Nelspruit helicopter operator got richer and the elephants would be herded by air back to Thornybush! The final straw came when I received a call to say that my elephants were at N'tsiri, 50 kms away. A Venter trailer belonging to one of the homeowner's had also been modified to allow easy access to the groceries inside! Despite the collar, which could identify the herd, I flatly denied they were my elephants!

These are just a few of the elephant-antics we endured with that first herd. Eventually it dawned on me that they were never going to work on a "wild and authentic" tourism reserve and I had little option but to find them other homes.

I believe some of them eventually ended up at Lawrence Anthony's Thula Thula and became the focus of his best-seller "The Elephant Whisperer" in which they were portrayed as rogue elephants. This saddened me as they were never rogue elephants, just a very naughty and playful group who needed a bigger space to roam.

Following Anthony's death in 2012, there were

reports that some of the elephants came to his family's home in accordance with the way elephants usually mourn the death of one of their own!

Four partially tame (unbeknown to me at the time) orphaned lions from Lolly Sussens were introduced to the reserve. This was a huge disaster as three of them were either lost or killed within the first week, confirming that hand reared lion introductions must be avoided at all costs, unless of course, you are in the circus business!

I made sure thereafter that any future lion introductions were from wild prides with no affinity whatsoever to humans and managed to secure a small pride from another Reserve. The "Black Dam" pride that continues to thrill guests at Thornybush today, descends from the original group that was introduced in those early years.



Semi-tame lions on their way to Thornybush in 1992

Back to the Reserve history

Jordan Properties (Pty) Ltd in partnership with Thornybush, conceptualized, built and launched the four Tangala Share-blocks; a product designed specifically for the South African corporate market and sold them to the following;

- 1 N'kaya - Engen Ltd.
- 2 Shumbalala - Malbak Ltd.
- 3 Monwana - Group 5 and Rand Consolidated Properties.
- 4 Serondella - Kenochem (PTY) Ltd.

Engen Ltd still owns N'kaya today.

Shumbalala changed hands in 1995 and is now owned

by the Snyman family; the 8-bed Lodge is managed privately, whilst Serondella and Monwana were purchased in 1999 and 2002 by the Van Der Lely and Cordia families. Both 8-bed lodges are currently managed and marketed by the Thornybush Collection.

Since the purchase of the Lodge properties in 1990, until the incorporation of the Potgieter owned properties in 1994; I persisted doggedly with my Timbavati negotiations, determined that one day the Thornybush Game Reserve could drop its fence and become a member of the greater area.

My dream of Greater Kruger!

My greatest wish was for all fences to be removed between all the game reserves and the privately owned properties to the west of Kruger, and that the greater game area would include all the private properties between the Phalaborwa tar road in the north, the main R40 in the west and the Orpen Gate road in the south as Phase One; an area of $\pm 250\ 000$ ha. I envisaged that Phase Two would include the properties east of the main north road, and up to the Drakensburg Mountains to the west and further north, incorporating the private farms in the Mica/Gravelotte area.

My idea gained momentum as a result of a timely conversation with philanthropist, conservationist and co-founder of the SA Nature Foundation (predecessor of WWF SA) Dr. Anton Rupert. He had called on me for assistance relating to the donation of land by his friend, Mr Hans Hoheisen. Hoheisen had donated approximately 14000 hectares to the SA Nature Foundation in the southern Timbavati Nature Reserve. This was to be managed by the KNP and included the land on which the Wildlife College and the Hoheisen Research Centre is situated today.

The process had however, been halted by the owners of the adjoining property, Ngala Lodge, who stood in the way of the donation because of an alleged long-term traversing right they claimed they had in favour of Ngala Lodge over the Hoheisen land. My advice to Dr. Rupert was simple; go to court or buy Ngala as I knew it was for sale. He chose the latter option, as he did not want to see his friend Mr Hoheisen fighting a court case as a result of a generous donation, believing his dignity and his health could be compromised. He also requested that I execute the

transaction on their behalf.

Although all this information may seem irrelevant to the history of Thornybush, this matter allowed me the opportunity to get to know the key individuals at the Kruger National Park (KNP) and in the National Parks Board.

I took the opportunity to discuss my concept to incorporate private land into the greater KNP. Dr. Rupert was keen to support my idea of the KNP western fence removal and at my request organized a meeting for me with the chairman of the Parks Board, Mr. Naas Steenkamp, and the CEO, Dr. Robbie Robinson.

Of course, top of the agenda was the NGALA transaction, but more importantly to me, discussion turned to my plan for the removal of the KNP western fence line, to incorporate all private land to the west with the ultimate vision of including the private land up to and including the escarpment.

This idea appealed to both of them, even more so after I had flown them over the area from the Kruger to the Drakensberg. They asked me to motivate the initiative with the private sector and TPA Department of Nature Conservation and to come up with ideas to resolve the stumbling block, caused by populated areas such as the village of Hoedspruit, the inhabited community areas and the pockets of commercial agricultural farms. I suggested these areas become fenced-off islands amid the greater conservation area. As for the R40 and the railway line, our immediate idea was to construct underground tunnels or bridges over the road for the passage of game. We were mindful however of various game parks in Africa with major national roads and railways passing through them. All of these are simply managed by cattle grids at ingress and exit points with stringent speed controls.

Excited, Mr. Naas Steenkamp and Dr. Robinson asked me to further motivate the plan and to gauge the interest of the various private stakeholders and other participants. They would assist with the process and I sought the support of the Transvaal Department of Nature Conservation, then under the directorship of Dr. Piet Mulder and Lampies Lamprecht. The Administrator of the Transvaal, Danie Hough, was to play a catalytic role in the process. Their support was critically important to the project, as all private game areas of the entire Lowveld region fell under their

jurisdiction. I had already suggested the idea with the administrator, two years earlier on a 1989 blue-train trip to Dullstroom to commemorate the launch of another one of my projects; Millstream.

Armed as I was with a mandate from the two main participants, as well as from the private landowners outside of the formal reserves, I was in a strong position to negotiate. I remained mindful however, that to some Parks Board representatives, the removal of the fence would be perceived as forfeiting control.

After many meetings and consultations with all the interested parties, we set aside 10 and 11 August 1991 for what was to become known as The Thornybush Conference, officially "Die bewarings toekomst van die Laeveld" - The Conservation Future of the Lowveld.

THORNYBUSH CONFERENCE (TBC) 10 & 11 AUGUST 1991

The conference was sponsored by the Thornybush Main Lodge and held in our brand-new conference facility. It was attended by 47 delegates, 27 private and 20 from the public sector.

Directed by the chairman of the Parks Board and president of the Wildlife Society, Mr Naas Steenkamp (and a trustee of Dr. Rupert's South African Nature Foundation (SANF)) a wide range of subjects were covered, in main the proposed KNP western boundary fence removal and the incorporation of private land, followed by how and under whose authority the area would be managed. The following departments were represented respectively:

- 1 The KNP - SA National Parks - Dr. Robinson.
- 2 Transvaal Department of Nature Conservation - Lampies Lamprecht.
- 3 SA Department of Veterinary Services - Dr. Bosman (The veterinary fence)
- 4 The Independent Landowners Association (ILOA) - Trevor Jordan.
- 5 The independent private reserves, represented by their respective

chairpersons:

Klaserie - Mr Daantjie du Preez
Timbavati -Dr Dawid Griesel
Umbabat - Mr Brian Thompson

The Sabi Sand withdrew, stating that although they wished us luck, they had no interest in our region and would conduct their own negotiations down south.

After a full day of robust discussions, a task team was assembled to co-ordinate the process of removing the western fence of the KNP, to incorporate all the private land to the west. It was clear that all the decision makers were behind the process, especially when Dr. Bosman confirmed that from a veterinary point of view, their Kruger veterinary fence that had been erected in the belief that it would control the scourge of foot and mouth disease had failed.

The Timbavati Chairman, Dr. Griesel remained negative however and informed the meeting that the three independent reserves had established a formal association; The Association of Private Nature Reserves (APNR) and were already in discussions regarding their incorporation into the greater area, despite the Transvaal administrator confirming that he had never heard of this association or claimed initiative! It was then generally accepted that the APNR would be the forum representing all the private landowners in the future.

Independent Landowners Association (ILOA)

I expressed my concern knowing that this would leave the multiple landowners to the west without representation and delay the process of incorporating all the western private properties and reserves. I lodged a stern objection, concerned that these private landowners would be excluded in the negotiations. Mr Naas Steenkamp (NPB) and Lampies Lamprecht (TPA Nature Conservation) assured me however, that the private landowners would not be excluded and suggested I form an independent association to represent them. Consequently, the Independent Landowners Association (ILOA) was duly established, under my chairmanship.

Unfortunately, the NPB fell for the story of the APNR, who had convinced them to treat the incorporation

of the three APNR reserves as a trial run, and once this process was complete, the remaining private landowners could apply to join the respective neighbouring reserve.

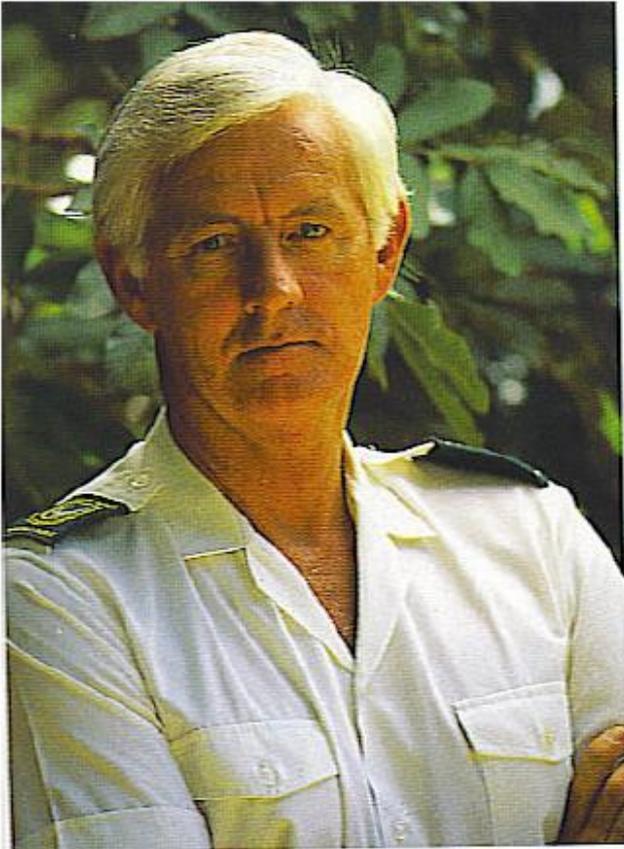


Naas Steenkamp - Chairman of the Parks Board

It was patently apparent that the Timbavati and Klaserie wanted to maintain control over their western boundaries and despite much communication on this matter, a deal by the NPB with the APNR was closed, which excluded the ILOA.

The initiative crumbled and the ILOA disbanded 6 months later with the APNR becoming the representative body for the three private reserves; Timbavati, Klaserie and Umbabat, excluding the individual landowners and reserves to the west!

I became disillusioned after all the effort expended, and realizing it would take years, if ever, to re-motivate the initiative, I stopped driving the process. The direction and management of the National Parks Board also changed significantly as the Board Chairman; Naas Steenkamp and Dr Robbie Robinson, the chief director left the Parks Board to make way for the new order, with the political changes prevailing in the country at the time.



Dr Robbie Robinson, the chief director of the Parks Board

The total area of approximately 200 000 ha of the three reserves that had been incorporated did not significantly widen the KNP and fell far short of my original vision of including all the private land to the west and up to the escarpment.

A detailed account of the western boundary fence story entitled "The Dream of a Greater Kruger" by Trevor Jordan is available on request.

Elephant Introduction 1992 - 1998

There were other important and interesting events that took place at Thornybush during this period:

The afore-mentioned tame elephant family- group was successfully relocated, a significant and historical event, as this was the first time that a group of mixed-aged elephants had been translocated in South Africa, experimenting with a newly developed drug. Aptly named, "Kannieworrienie" the cocktail of drugs enabled the partial immobilization of adult elephant. This drug is now registered and still in use today!

The relocation of the tame elephant group triggered the first sizeable translocation of adult elephant from Gonarezhou, in Zimbabwe, to Madikwe the following year and from the KNP two years later.

Over 180 elephants were moved to other farms in Africa and abroad (1994). Of these; eight females were relocated to Thornybush, five of which were pregnant. They were first known as the Shingwedzi herd, a particularly relaxed and untroubled family group that became one of the most desirable sightings on Thornybush. They later became known as the Madala herd and still call Thornybush home!

Sibala

I had complained for years to anyone that would listen about the mediocre sized elephant bull that the KNP had given to Thornybush with the Shingwedzi herd! So much so, that eventually the Parks vet, Dr. Douw Grobler called on me to select another bull. "Provided" he said, "that it's not one of the famous big tuskers!"

My son, Patrick and I set off early one June morning in 1998, on the most magical helicopter flight, organized by Douw, over the Kruger. It didn't take long for us to spot 'Sibala' who was later transferred to Thornybush. At 7,5 tonnes, Sibala was the largest elephant ever relocated. World renowned elephant expert, Dr. Anthony Hall Martin expressed his concern that a simple game fence would not stop an elephant of this size and he would soon return next door to his childhood playground in Kruger. Sibala, however was evidently very happy with the Shingwedzi group of girls on Thornybush and sired many offspring during his eighteen-year tenure on the reserve.



Patrick (14 years old) and Sibala on capture day



KNP vet, Douw Grobler and his team of helpers secure a sedated Sibala, ready for relocation to Thornybush

Sadly, Sibala did start breaking out and his habitual visits to the community of Acornhoek were not very well-received. This led to his tragic demise, a very sad day in the history of Thornybush, as Sibala had become a much loved, and revered big daddy of them all!

The translocation of the Shingwedzi herd was another historical milestone for the Thornybush Game Reserve, as it was the first time the Kruger National Park had completed any conservation programmes in partnership with the private sector. The "Madala herd" translocation was shown on over 170 television stations around the world. This coverage led to an invitation to me to address a sub-committee on elephant conservation at the House of Lords in London in 1994! This proved to be a perfectly timed invitation as South Africa had just been re-admitted to the Commonwealth and won their first cricket test at Lords against England. A great week for the nation!



Shingwedzi girls - here I come!



Sibala- released and off to find his new herd of girls!

White wildebeest

A recessive-gened white wildebeest was born on Thornybush; the first such phenomena since 1933. The story appeared on Good Morning - South Africa (GMSA). The "poor guy" didn't last long, instantly targeted by the lions.

Louis Liebenburg

Thornybush backed the well-known tracking expert, Louis Liebenburg and assisted him with his business structure (1992-1993). He converted from a die-hard communist into a capitalist, through launching his tracking- school, a commercially driven project.

Leopard study

A leopard study and relocation was carried out in conjunction with the Department of Nature Conservation Transvaal (1994-1996). Numerous leopards were introduced and studied; the result of this proved that leopard relocation is impossible! A tracking collar fitted to one of them indicated that he returned over 500 kms to his original location in the Britz area!

A.R.C.

In conjunction with Karen Trendier -A.R.C. (Animal Rehabilitation Centre) Thornybush researched various bird types and released many species of previously injured, rehabilitated animals on the reserve.

Bushbabies

Nagaapies (Bush-babies) from Kwazulu Natal were successfully released. Their families are still seen around the main lodge today!

Pangolin Research

Fairly extensive research was done on pangolin and several wild-cat releases were undertaken.

Community projects

Thornybush Game Reserve was also involved with various local authorities and central government, community leaders, charity organizations and political groups on environmental educational projects, which resulted in ongoing awareness-creating campaigns.

Further highlights of the period - 1990 - 1994;

Nicci Potgieter won the 1994 T.P.A. annual conservation prize, along with Mr. Mike Ratray of Mala Mala; they were recognized for their respective donations to the conservation authorities for allowing their properties to be used for environmental education and awareness campaigns. This operation was to expose and educate the new National Leadership and groups with the view to promoting the importance of conservation and ecotourism; funds for this cause were also donated by Thornybush Game Lodge and Engen, to construct the National Leadership's camp.

In 1994 / 1995 a further important project was the Independent Development Trust and Thornybush Game Lodge joint-venture pioneer bush-clearing project. This was a scientific, educational, employment-creator, in partnership with the local Acornhoek and Bushbuckridge communities. The FW De Klerk I.D.T. Fund contributed R875 000 and Thornybush Game Lodge R1 million, creating over 100 jobs for the extremely needy and unskilled members of the community. Over 1000ha of dense vegetation was cleared. This was a great PR exercise for Thornybush Game Reserve, but unfortunately this bush-cleared area was not maintained by the reserve and today it is overgrown. From a scientific point of view, vital research work was conducted, and scientific data was collected, under the directorship of the late Dr. Joe Venter.

Chris De Burgh bush-bash

1995 also saw the Chris De Burgh Bush-Bash; an exclusive concert was staged in the middle of the reserve and attended by 100 Thornybush Game Lodge invited guests. This exercise was an important contribution to the Thornybush awareness program, an event which those who attended, will never forget!



*Trevor Jordan, Chris De Burgh and Paul Harris
at the Thornybush Concert.*

All the above projects gave the reserve much publicity over the years. The quarterly newsletter and various other press releases also helped Thornybush's awareness campaign.

Jabulani Properties: Portions 68, 69, 70, 71, 72 Guernsey (±700ha)

Up until 1994, the main entrance to the lodge was via a servitude road, which was from the Guernsey road over Viljoen's property (Portion 67 Guernsey). Guests travelled between fences, past old tobacco sheds, cattle and sheep pastures and entered Thornybush at Umbili Lodge (Portion 72- Guernsey) where the main reserve gate was situated. This was hardly conducive to promoting a good first impression to guests and had to be changed at all costs.

Negotiations took place between the Thornybush Game Lodge consortium and the owners of the Jabulani Properties; there were ten portions totaling 700ha. A deal was struck in 1995 to incorporate Jabulani on the following basis:

- An orderly constitution, governing the behaviour of members and property ownership, was drafted by the Thornybush Game Lodge consortium and signed by the Jabulani members; a limitation on building and commercial development had to be undertaken, etc.
- A non-reciprocal traverse right was granted to Thornybush Game Reserve members.
- A suitable entrance gate and crossroad was granted in favour of Thornybush Game Reserve and its guests.
- The properties had to be run and managed as a single entity.

In exchange for the above, Thornybush Game Reserve would incorporate Jabulani into the Reserve and remove the boundary fence between the properties. A close working relationship was forged between Chapungu Lodge, which was owned at the time by the 'cheetah man' William Van Duyn, and Thornybush Game Lodge. Chapungu was granted certain access rights in exchange for marketing and management benefits. Will assisted with the reserve management and oversaw management of the Jabulani land.

Skunky

I recall a most embarrassing event that happened during this time. I was showing one of the newly incorporated farms to a prominent businessman with a view to selling it to him. News of the failed lion introduction and the naughty elephant herd had hopped around the game reserve gossip circuits and he was very concerned that most of the game I had introduced to Thornybush were circus- type animals. "No" I assured him, "they are wild animals, it's not a zoo, it's an authentic wild reserve!" With that we rounded a corner to witness a wildebeest in hot pursuit of a cheetah! The relief on the cheetah's bewildered face was unmistakable as she bounded over to the game vehicle, her savior from a tormenting wildebeest had timeously arrived! She leapt onto the passenger seat and proceeded to rub herself against me, purring all the while in true feline fashion! "Skunky" was Will's first domesticated cheetah, who eventually did return to the wild.

Today there is a game-drive road named in Skunky's honour on the Jabulani portion. Needless to say; Skunky stopped that sale dead in her tracks!



A young Patrick Jordan with a very tame Skunky!

Currently, the 16-sleeper Chapungu Luxury Tented Bush Camp is owned and managed by the Thornybush Collection (Inzalo).

Jackalberry: Portion 214 Guernsey (1170ha) and Portion 73 Guernsey (550ha)

These properties were purchased by Ngangeni Game Ranch (Pty) Ltd in June 1996, headed by Allan Mansfield on behalf of the Mansfield Family Trust, Arnold Fair Family Trust and the Trevor Jordan Trust. The property's 16 bed game lodge (Jackalberry Lodge) was purchased as a going concern and immediately upgraded in all aspects.

After seven years as Chairman of the Thornybush Landowners Association, I resigned, passing over chairmanship in 1997 to Allan Mansfield, who held the position for 3 years. Phil Biden accepted the role in 2000, handing over to Roger Dyason after his term. Richard Napier succeeded Roger. Allan Mansfield returned to the post after Richard's tenure, passing on to Roger again, and latterly Andy Payne, the current Chairman.

In 1998 an owner's camp; Kayatula was erected at Cheetah Dam on the Jackalberry farm. Kayatula is still privately owned by the Mansfield and Fair Trusts.

Sale of Thornybush Game Lodge

Another important event in 1997 was the sale of the Thornybush Game Lodge to a consortium; comprising Alan Payne, Jennifer Fox, Richard Napier and BOE Ltd. (Now Nedbank) In 2015, GT Ferreira and Andy Payne bought out Nedbank's interests. Today the consortium is represented by a board; Richard Napier, Andy Payne, Glen van Heerden, Joanne Dixon, who replaced Nick Griffin in July 2019 and me.

Malewane Portion 92 and Guernsey 110 (±1420ha)

In 1998, the properties to the east of Guernsey 13 (Jackalberry) and south of Guernsey 12 (De Hoop) were purchased by Ngangeni from Wikus Slabbert and Frikkie Botha. These properties were utilized extensively for hunting but had been eyed by me for incorporation into the Thornybush Game Reserve for many years. They were known to have above average rainfall and high carrying capacities with exceptional winter veld. Improvements were paltry; just an old farm- house, a run-down hunting camp, a tobacco barn (containing thousands of empty gin bottles!) and a disused runway. Once purchased, immediate improvements were made; the Jackalberry runway was restored and a house was built for the Ngangeni general manager.

Royal Malewane

A short while later, the smaller Malewane property (Portion 19 Guernsey (560ha) was sold by Ngangeni to Phil Biden and Willem Werth.

A luxury 12-bed lodge was constructed at the beginning of 1999. Today, Royal Malewane is a highly acclaimed, world-renowned luxury lodge accommodating 32 guests.



The alfresco deck of the internationally acclaimed 7-star Royal Malewane luxury Lodge.

Guernsey Portion 19 (± 708ha) and Portion 217 (Remainder of Portion 19) (208ha)

This property was purchased by Phil Biden (Bushwillow Trust) and Trevor Jordan (Plantation Forest (Pty) Ltd) in 1998 and was immediately subdivided. Bushwillow Trust holds the larger Portion 19, measuring ±500ha and Micawber (Pty) Ltd holds the original Plantation Forest Portion 217, which measures 208 ha.

The River Lodge

A luxury 12 bed lodge branded The River Lodge @ Thornybush was built on Portion 217 in 2009. The Lodge was run initially as an owners' retreat for exclusive use by its partners; GT Ferreira, Peter Hobbs and Trevor Jordan. However, in 2016 the Thornybush Collection acquired a management contract on behalf of the Micawber shareholders and the River Lodge now forms part of the Thornybush Collection portfolio.



Special visitors, joining guests for a drink at the infinity pool at The River Lodge @ Thornybush

Xilutsi: Portion 18 Guernsey (± 900 ha)

Situated to the west of Bushwillow and south of Portion 73 Guernsey, Xilutsi was purchased in 1999, by the Mansfield Family Investments and me. It was home to a herd of over 150 buffalo, which complemented the existing Thornybush gene-pool. It offers superb bush from a consumptive and aesthetic point of view and has over 4km's of Timbavati River frontage. Clive Vlotman bought the property in 2002,

when it was incorporated into Thornybush, and later sold to the Moletele Community Trust in 2013.

Waterbuck: Portion 190 Guernsey (± 500ha)

This property situated to the west of Xilutsi shared a boundary with Thornybush of approximately 3km's. The 500ha portion belonged to Ernie Els' uncle, Marius and was purchased by a consortium of existing southern Thornybush owners'; Mansfield Family Investments, Grant Thomas and me in November 2000. This was an obvious extension to the reserve especially due to the riverine system, which feeds into the Timbavati. It teemed with game and introduced hippopotamus to the reserve for the first time. There was also a hybrid zorse resident on the property, the result of a successful union between a domesticated horse and a zebra. The originally named "Zorse" only lasted about six months after the fence was dropped, falling prey to the inquisitive "Black Dam" pride of lions.

The shareholders developed an eight-bed luxury lodge; Waterbuck in June 2001, which was syndicated. Waterbuck is currently managed by the Thornybush Collection. A second lodge, Xymunghwe was built on the same property for private use by Grant Thomas.

M'Keppies: Guernsey Remainder of Portion 4 (± 900ha)

This property was purchased in 2006 by Inzalo (Pty) LTD from the Mostert family.

Approximately 900ha was incorporated into Thornybush, where a self-catering lodge called Nkelenga Tented Camp is situated. It is owned and managed by the Thornybush Collection (Inzalo).

Ilkley: Portion 216 (± 300ha)

The Ilkley Education Centre; a facility that accommodated 180 children was built on the property adjoining the Orpen Gate road to the south. This portion (Portion 216 Guernsey ±350ha) originally formed part of Portion 19 Guernsey, which was owned by Mr. Peter Evertse. His objective was to develop a world class childrens' wildlife education facility. This presented a great opportunity in which the Thornybush Game Reserve could become involved; a project which was necessary for the long-

term assurance of future conservation as well as an excellent public relations opportunity. This portion was purchased by Steven Gerondeanus in 2012 and was officially incorporated into Thornybush Nature Reserve at that time. 67 hectares of this portion, which is excluded from the TNR, was sub-divided and fenced in order to provide a buffer-zone against the Orpen Gate Road

Kapama: Guernsey Portion 210 (± 2188ha)

This 2188-hectare property originally owned by Boy Erasmus was purchased by the Roode family in the mid 90's was known as Small Kapama and later sold to Lions' Lair Property Ventures; part of a Canadian Hedge Fund. Javelin Capital (Phil Biden and David Petit) subsequently became 50% shareholders in Lions' Lair and the property was incorporated into the Reserve in 2011. It has a 40-bed lodge, situated alongside a dam, aptly named Waterside Lodge. This popular lodge is also managed and marketed by Inzalo and forms part of the Thornybush Collection portfolio.



The aptly named Waterside Lodge.

Once incorporated, Lions' Lair was subdivided; creating four, 22-hectare portions each and the larger 2,100-hectare portion. The following sales and developments have taken place:

- The sale and subsequent upgrade of Nyala House to a Royal Portfolio group company;
- The sale and subsequent development of the exclusive 10-bed Kubili House on the banks of Nyala Dam, by Plantum, a company controlled by Mr. Julian Koski from New York;
- The sale and subsequent development of Nkwe Lodge by Resume SA, a company operated by Mr. Friedrich Nitsche from Austria.

- The remaining 22-hectare portion has recently been acquired by Mr. Danni Suskin and is awaiting development.

Guernsey Portion 73 (±550ha)

This was a new sub-division of 550ha purchased from Justin's Wildplase in 2016, it was originally 856ha. The balance of 301ha was consolidated onto Guernsey 13, Ngangeni Game Ranch (PTY) Ltd, which currently totals 1140ha. Portion 73 was purchased by the River Lodge (Micawber 579 (PTY) Ltd) consortium of; GT Ferreira, Peter Hobbs and Trevor Jordan. It has the commercial rights for an 8-sleeper Lodge but as yet, it is not developed.

Saseka Lodge

The luxury 20-bed tented camp, Saseka, meaning 'beautiful' in Tsonga was completed in 2019, on the original Thornybush portion along the banks of the Monwana River, under the directorship of the current Chairman, Andy Payne.



Saseka, meaning beautiful in Tsonga, the latest addition to the Thornybush Collection



Andy Payne – current chairman of the board

The Farmstead

A newly built 14-bed commercial lodge on Xilutsi, The Farmstead opened its doors on 1 May 2019. It is operated in conjunction with the Moletele Trust and Royal Malewane.



The Farmstead, a part of Phil and Liz Biden's Royal Portfolio, opened its doors on 1 May 2019.

Thornybush Rhino

Sadly, the Thornybush Reserve has not escaped the poaching onslaught that reached epic proportions in the greater Kruger area toward the end of the last decade.

The first rhino poaching incident on the TNR was recorded in January 2014; since then a total of 23 rhinos have lost their lives as a direct result of poaching on the Reserve. Further collateral losses have included unborn fetuses and calves that have died as a result of poaching tragedies. The latest incident was recorded in August of this year (2019), when the butchered carcass of a pregnant black rhino cow was discovered by a tracker on the Waterside property.

Twelve white rhinos were successfully moved for safe keeping to Welgevonden in the Waterburg in July 2016 on a calf-share deal. It was believed that Welgevonden is a far safer area, than the Kruger surrounds and had not suffered from the extreme draught that plagued the Lowveld during this time.

Incorporation of Thornybush into the Greater Kruger National Park

My dream and original objective to become part of

the greater Kruger area was finally achieved in February 2017, twenty-seven years after the initiation of the Thornybush Reserve assembly. It was a historical and momentous occasion as 20km's of the eastern and northern boundary fence with the Timbavati was removed.

With this, Thornybush became a member of the Association of Private Nature Reserves (APNR) and part of ±2.5 million ha of the Greater Kruger region. Extending the boundaries to include all the aforementioned properties should still be our aim; this would place the Thornybush Nature Reserve amid the greatest conservation area in the world! Most importantly, the zebra and wildebeest east-west migration patterns of the olden days (when sawn off tree stumps demarcated reserve boundaries) would be restored!

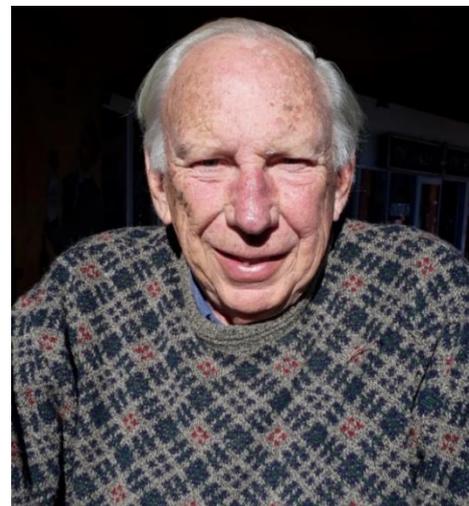
This expansion should be embarked upon by all the role-players creating an even greater conservation area, which could ultimately gain World Heritage Status!

All the Thornybush transactions and property incorporations were conducted by Jordan Properties, apart from the Small Kapama/Guernsey incorporation in 2011, which was concluded by Javelin Properties.

Whilst I relentlessly drove the initiative of developing the Thornybush Nature Reserve, I could never have achieved a successful outcome without the help of many people; some need a special mention; GT Ferreira, Allan Mansfield, Grant Thomas and my ex-wife, Jeanette who sadly succumbed to cancer in 2017.

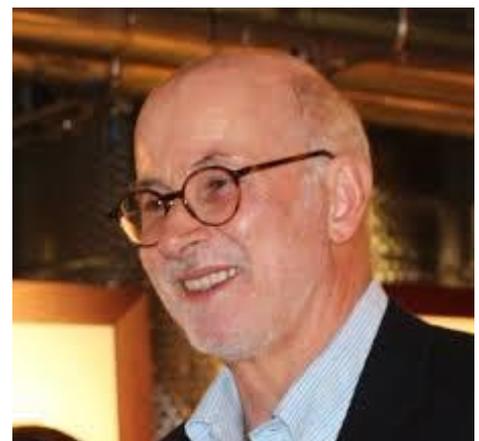
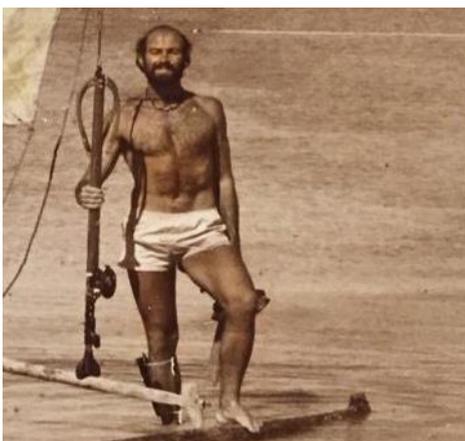


Trevor Jordan, Founder; Thornybush Nature Reserve



Allan Mansfield, an investor in the vision of Thornybush

Before and after photographs of GT Ferreira, Thornybush stalwart, partner and friend, Fisher of men, Banker of projects!



JORDAN PROPERTIES LEISURE DEVELOPMENTS

- Vygeboom Game Farming 1978
- N'Tsiri Game Reserve and Share block 1980
- Roodekrans Game Reserve and Share block 1982
- Ingwelala Game Reserve & Share block 1983
- Lake Longmere Country Estate 1988
- Millstream Trout Timeshare 1989
- White River Golf Country Estate 1989
- Finsbury Trout Share block 1990
- Thornybush Private Game Reserve 1991
- Welgevonden Game Reserve 1995
- Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary 1999
- Raptors View Wildlife Estate 2000
- Khaya Ndlovu Game Reserve 2004
- Wild Rivers Nature Reserve 2005
- Blue Canyon Game Conservancy 2008

JORDAN PROPERTIES LODGE DEVELOPMENTS

- Thornybush Main Lodge – 1991
- Tangala Corporate Lodges – 1992
- Kayatula Lodge – 1995
- Jackalberry Lodge – 1995
- Waterbuck Lodge Syndication – 2000
- Dugong Lodge, Vilanculos – 2001
- Ilha Linene Lodge, Vilanculos – 2003
- Raptors Lodge – 2003
- The River Lodge @ Thornybush – 2009
- Khaya Ndlovu Manor House – 2010

JORDAN PROPERTIES CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Kruger National Park fence removal and incorporation of private land 1990-1994:** Initiator of the western boundary fence removal incorporating the private land, west of KNP.
- **UK House of Lords Sub-Committee 1991:** Presentation on the status of elephant conservation and management in South Africa.
- **Elephant Relocation:** Instrumental in first ever relocation of adult elephant family groups between private reserves and from KNP to private reserves in 1991/2.
- **Dugong Trust 2002:** Founder trustee of marine protection initiative in Vilanculos, Mozambique.
- **World Summit 2002:** Presented a paper on the protection and sustainable development of Marine and Terrestrial Systems in 3rd world countries using the Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary as the model.
- **Tanzania and Mozambique Parks Board Consultant:** National Parks consultant on sustainable commercialization models for their National Parks.
- **Rhino Revolution 2011:** A co-founder and trustee of Rhino Revolution, an NPO whose objective is to assist private rhino owners to protect and conserve the critically endangered species. Instrumental in the construction of a state-of-the-art rhino rehabilitation centre for the facilitation of orphaned rhino calves.
- **Wildlife Properties – Developer of numerous Game Reserves:** Conceptualization, development and sales of wildlife reserves and estates e.g. Thornybush Nature Reserve, Welgevonden Game Reserve, Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary, Blue Canyon Conservancy.