



FOUNDED 1891



# Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

ESTABLISHED 1919

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## NEWSLETTER

## Jan/Feb/Mar 2017



*Eagle Mountain Game Ranch*

*Photo: Gavin Peckham*

### Club News

*by Carl Dreyer*

- **Membership:** Since the last update, the following people have been accepted as members: Nigel Tonkin, Dale McKenzie, Gail Gayer, Rory Kleu, Tim Kleu, Allen and Isla Still, Chris Keit, Fay Morris, Andrea Icely, Peter Pittendrigh, Bindu Singh, Celine Hanzen, Garret Cunningham, Guy Cooke, Kate Rich, Marco Plebani, Merv Gavin, Paul Cooke, Sean & Karen Dalton, Simon Vickers, Liam Vickers and Leigh Collins.
- **Club Web Site:** A new website is in the planning and development stage. The committee will be calling on members to provide content in the form of photos and documents. Watch this space.
- **The Committee Extends Thanks To:** **Carl Dreyer** for stepping in to chair Committee meetings in the absence of the President who relocated to the UK during the course of the year. **Mark McTaggart** for the excellent Club T-shirt designs, and to **Sonja Hofmann** for organising them.
- **Congratulations Go To:** **Gavin Raubenheimer** on being awarded a most well deserved life membership of the Club. **Steve Cooke** who has been elected as the National Convenor of Search and Rescue. And finally to **Carl Dreyer** and **Mark McTaggart** who achieved the Brian Godbold Award by climbing seven of the ten listed 'Berg peaks.
- **Expedition Funding:** A new policy is currently being formulated by the Committee.
- **Discount:** Southern Rock Climbing Gym offers members a discount. Please support them.

- **Newsletter Editor:** The current editor will be stepping down after this issue. Please contact him if you are willing to take over and do justice to the position.
- **Annual General Meeting:** This was held on Saturday, 11 March at the Chantecler Hotel. The key points will be mentioned (belatedly) in the next newsletter. The new Committee members and their contact details are listed under "Contacts" on the back page.
- **Contributions for the 2016 Journal:** This is a call for contributions for the 2016 Journal. These may be sent to the Editing Team at: [jennyapaterson@gmail.com](mailto:jennyapaterson@gmail.com). Before making any submissions please refer to the Guidelines and Style Sheet on the national website. These may be viewed at: <https://sites.google.com/a/mcsa.org.za/mcsa/home/journal>

## Sale of Monteseel Hut

*by Mervyn Gans*

When the Club originally purchased the Monteseel property around 1960, the N3 freeway had not been built and the club at the time decided this would improve access by providing camping accommodation. In addition there were concerns that the area could become built up so a servitude linked to our title deeds for the Western Cliff was registered.

In the 1970s the Club built the hut to improve accommodation, and this worked very well initially. Many of the older members will recall the Xmas parties, night climbing etc. held there. As the road infrastructure improved, together with the development of sports climbing and other local trad areas, the demand on the hut reduced. It became difficult finding members willing to mow the lawn etc. This started becoming a liability and we tried renting out the hut with varying success. The decision was therefore taken a few years ago to sell the hut while preserving our climbing servitude. We were advised that the most secure way to achieve this was to subdivide the property, sell the section containing the hut, and enter into a long term lease with the purchaser to maintain our section.

After finalizing the subdivision, the hut was sold to a club member, Luke Wijnberg, for R 510 000 and he entered into a 10 year lease of our section. The rent was set to cover our direct costs, such as rates, and it was not our intention to make any profit on the rental.

We are pleased to announce that the Trustees approved the sale agreement towards the end of last year and the transfer was registered on 12 January 2017. After the various deductions we received R 500 904. Capital gains tax is still due which will have to be paid by the end of the current financial year. Luke has requested permission from the club to build a temporary structure on our property, initially for them to live in while the hut is being renovated, and ultimately to provide accommodation for visiting climbers.



*Monteseel Hut*

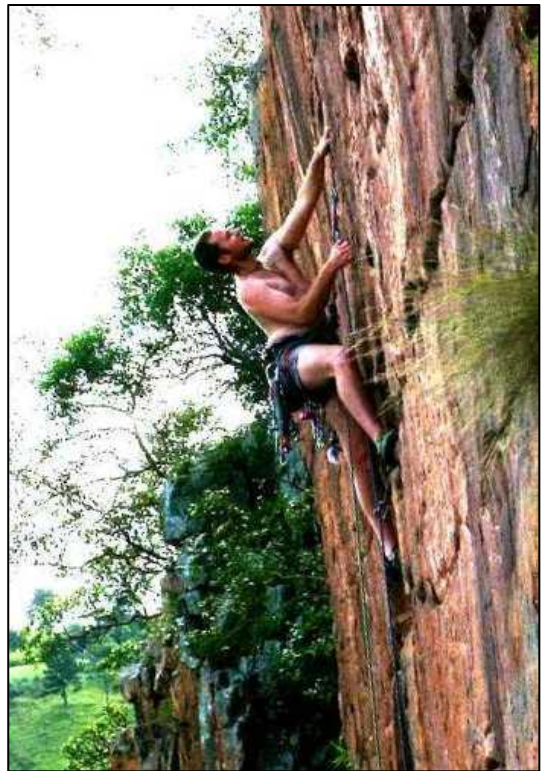
*Photo: Gavin Raubenheimer*

## **Old Shongweni Update** *by Carl Dreyer*

The landowner, Mr Craig Dixon, a longstanding friend of MCSA-KZN Section has recently purchased the land across the road from the Old Shongweni Crags and has kindly allowed us access to climb and develop the cliffs there.

Further to this Mr Dixon has very generously offered us the use of his pool and braai area as an extension to your climbing day out on his property. Please treat these new offerings with respect as they are a privilege and not a right. Usual access conditions apply – see previous newsletter.

*Greg Wooding on Painted Desert (26)*  
*Photo: Gavin Peckham*



## **White Umfolozi River Update**

*by Gavin Peckham*

Since the venue has been under new ownership, there have been significant improvements to the available facilities. For access and booking details please see the previous newsletter. Apart from recent improvements to the facilities, there has also been a significant increase in the number of new routes – mainly in the harder grades and mainly opened by Hallam Payne who has usurped Gavin P as the "driving force" at this magnificent venue.



*Upper Warrior Wall*

*Photo: Mervyn Gans*

The most recent route guide for rock climbing at the White Umfolozi River on Klipkloof Farm has been sold out. However, copies in .pdf format are available free of charge from [gavin.peckham{at}gmail.com](mailto:gavin.peckham@gmail.com). The latest updates for Klipkloof and a .pdf route guide to rock climbing at the Ongoye Forest Reserve will accompany any request.

## Everest & Swinburne – latest contact details

by Sonja Hofmann

**Everest:** Info at: [info@goeverest.co.za](mailto:info@goeverest.co.za) or [www.goeverest.co.za](http://www.goeverest.co.za)

Sadly the campsite has been closed. "Backpacker" accommodation is available for R240 pp or R180 pp if there are a minimum of four people. Various chalets may be hired. Details are available on the Everest web site. A rock climbing guide is available at [www.climbing.co.za](http://www.climbing.co.za)

**Swinburne:** R90 pppn - Barn (backpacker-style accommodation - bring own linen). R80 pppn for camping. R200 pppn for a double room (min 2 nights) R200 pppn in the house (min 2 nights). R50 pp for day visitors. Contact Annelie Morrison: [appingquestfarm@gmail.com](mailto:appingquestfarm@gmail.com) or on 072 401 6711. She prefers to be WhatsApped or phoned. A rock climbing guide is available at [www.climbing.co.za](http://www.climbing.co.za)

## July Camp 2017

July Camp in the Drakensberg is hosted and organised by the Kwazulu-Natal Section of MCSA and will double as this year's National Meet. This is the Camp that provides everything and that does mean 'everything'. You just bring your personal hiking kit and tent and snacks and favourite tipple – we supply the rest, and more!

This year July Camp will set up just off Mike's Pass in the Cathedral Peak area of the Drakensberg, an area we have not visited since 2006, so a return is long overdue. The dates are Saturday, 8 July to Saturday 22 July, or any part thereof.

Although it will be a July Camp with a difference, we are back to the old pattern of a July Camp with a proper 'stretch your legs' walk in. For the longish walk in you are advised to carry your basic hiking kit, especially warm clothes and a torch! The remainder of your kit will be transported for you to the Camp site up the Mike's Pass notwithstanding the fact that the pass is officially closed.

The Officer-in-Charge, of the Cathedral Peak Park and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife are being very supportive allowing us into the area, even though Mike's Pass is closed.

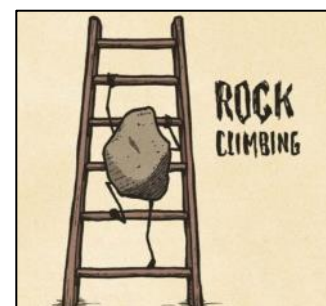
Do come and join us in one of the iconic parts of the Berg with fabulous hiking, memorable climbs and pleasurable scrambles, mountain biking trails and incredible views with enticing pools, dramatic waterfalls, Bushman paintings, caves and more - come and see for yourselves.

There are a few details yet to be sorted out and the full brochure will, hopefully, be released by Easter. In the meantime, for further information, contact Rikki Abbott Wedderburn on: 082 538 5389 or e-mail her at, [ronwedd@netactive.co.za](mailto:ronwedd@netactive.co.za)

## Nostalgia / Wishful Thinking

by Mallory (Basher) Attwell

Another year has passed  
And we are so much older  
Just put me back on rock  
To witness something bolder



## **Do We Really Care About the Environment?**

*by Dr Sonja Hofmann*

With the world up in arms about climate change or the denial thereof, I think it is time that we man up and do something about our own impact before we whine about potential environmental catastrophes on the other side of the globe.

On a fantabulous climbing weekend last year with fellow clubbers, I was flabbergasted by the amount of waste we produced on those couple of days. Google says that waste in the USA is well managed and there is enough space to go big for a loooong while(\*). Sweden is running out of rubbish for its waste-to-electricity plants, however, I don't see that same reality here with us.

My proposal would be that we all work towards "Zero Waste" but it might not be everyone's reusable cup of tea. This is, after all, the first commandment of "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle"; therefore give it some thought for your sustainable approach to life, especially when buying food for your next hike - which is notorious for the excessive packaging. Isn't "Conservation" part of the MCSA mantra?

But, my current most urgent plea with the Mountain Clubbers is towards recycling: At home we meticulously separate the glass from the plastic from the paper, but come the weekend away, that is forgotten. On camping weekends, like Wumf, we should set up separate bags for glass, tins, paper, plastic etc. and take them with us home at the end of the weekend, to the big city with its recycling depots. Extra effort needed: close to zero. Environmental feel-good brownie points earned: loads.

Now that you're all enthusiastic recycling converts; who is joining my next camping and climbing meet?

(\*)[www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/the\\_green\\_lantern/2011/02/go\\_west\\_garbage\\_can.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/the_green_lantern/2011/02/go_west_garbage_can.html)

## **Mountains Great and Small**

*by LLM Mbatha*

(Submitted by Bruce Sobey)

What makes such deformations so admirable?

On an otherwise smooth face of the planet

Such beautiful names given

To but towers of rock and sand

Sometimes dressed up in green

Another nature's accident!

Unmovable, and themselves moving nothing

Ah! Some are even labeled, 'holy'!

What inspired the gods, and men the same

To find dignity in such natural misprints

Perhaps 'tis the same thing

That inspired the ancient Egyptians to move

Tons of stone across the desert

Having a mere aim of constructing with mathematical precision

Such unnatural misprints on a rather even desert surface

## **Dry Mouth Guild, Monteseel**

*by Jon Sargood*

Sunday, 29 January, 2017

I have an interest in rocky vertical places, cliffs, mountains, crags that some may consider a touch obsessive. I will go wildly out of my way whilst incurring significant personal cost and discomfort in the interests of facilitating a climbing sortie or visit to the Berg. I am ashamed to say in the distant past I happily spent next month's rent and food money on a ticket to climb. My kids think I am weird; the minister of home affairs keeps my life insurance up to date and tolerates my habit. In my defence I did warn her when we were dating. We have an arrangement; I climb mountains she climbs barstools. So, when I tell you that I lead the recent DMG at Monties and sat prostrate on a rock at the foot of Think, without even attempting a pitch, you may consider this somewhat out of character. Whilst I languished, relegated to tea making duties, I did however enjoy Hallam's flawless and seemingly effortless lead of Think. I stirred myself, raising the energy to make a brew and, as I waited for the kettle to whistle to life had a chat with Bruce Tomlinson as he cruised up Cain. Been a long time since we last spoke - good to catch up Bruce.

Meanwhile Gavin R and Trevor were busy on Tiny's Toddle, a tough one for the grade and most certainly no doddle. As proof of their exploits Gavin posted a disturbing picture on the DMG group and then had the audacity to complain about the instant coffee I served him when he joined us. No thanks to me but a big thanks to Bruce Sobey and Pierre Bill who had recently cleaned Tiny's Toddle and Mother's Day, both routes that are well worth doing! All in all, an enjoyable morning. When I left Hallam was busy on Think Twice and Gavin's young friend, whose name escapes me, was working Powder Finger.

And my lame excuse? Well the day before, after a 4 am start, a drive to the Berg, a manly ascent of the Eastern Arête of the Rhino, back the same day a shower and then onto a dinner party, I was done. Could have been the haul up the Rhino or, perhaps, one too many glasses of red, who knows? Or just maybe I am getting old.

## **Gxalingenwa Cave Hike**

*by Mavis Morris*

4 - 5 March, 2017

Six of us set off from Cobham at 8.30 am on Saturday 4 March. For Kate, Aline and Celine, all new MCSA members, it was a weekend of many firsts! Dave, Gordon and Mavis were only too happy to introduce the young ladies to the beauty and secrets of the lovely Cobham area. Our first treat was to see a huge herd of eland near Bypass ridge only about 45 minutes hike from the campsite. There were at least 50 eland grazing in the long grass and we stopped for quite a while to watch and photograph them. We then hiked along the plateau above Ngwenya pools and passed through the most beautiful mountain slopes of orange flowering Watsonias. After lunch next to a bubbling stream we dropped down to the Gxalingenwa river and could not resist swimming in the pools - clear cool water on a hot summer's day and the first mountain stream skinny dip for some - I don't know about Dave and Gordon upstream but us girls were very happy downstream. We then climbed up a rather eroded ridge onto the plateau below Baboon rock and then headed off toward Gxalingenwa Cave. Well done to Dave for finding the

path up to the cave and we were so happy to be safe and dry before the evening mist and light drizzle set in. This was the first sleep in a berg cave for our three new members and a lovely cave it was - plenty of water from the waterfall outside the cave and even some pools to dip in. We all sat around the large "table" at the entrance to the cave and brewed tea, had supper and solved all the world's problems until it was time to roll into our sleeping bags. Sunday morning dawned with clear skies and we stopped at Pinnacle Rock to explore and view the rock art. Down to Emerald stream and more swims in the pools created by the meandering river. We stopped for lunch overlooking the Pholela river and finally headed back to the cars (after our "last" swim in some pools on the river - the best pools of the weekend)! It was a relaxed weekend. We covered about 24 km in total with plenty of stops, swims and tea brewing along the way.



*Entrance to Gxalingenwa Cave  
Photo: Mavis Morris*

### **Climbing Everest Over a Weekend**

*by Sonja Hofmann*

17 – 19 February, 2017

Sound epic? It was. It was not the tourist-trampled Mount Everest in the Himalayas, but the lesser known Mount Everest, near Harrismith in the Free State. The meet leader (me) had insisted upon all participants wearing tights and all but a couple of crusty old stick-in-the-muds obliged.

Enthusiastic climbers dropped into the campsite on Friday evening, excited to sport their colourful tights the following day. The over-enthusiastic decided to ignore all advice and use the last rays of the setting sun to climb Gavin P and Gavin R's classic multi-pitch route "Big Sky". This turned into a mostly nocturnal, but still a fun climb. (*Ed. comment: Aka an "epic".*)

Saturday was a colour extravaganza - with blindingly bright coloured tights everywhere - I think they're here to stay. The morning belonged to the boulders, where newbies learned the ropes and not-so-newbies also got to try some challenging climbs on the Ostrich Egg and on the Bonny Boulder.

In the afternoon we headed out to climb the "Rhino on the City Hall Steps". The views were stunning and we all made it back before dark - bonus. Some fun souls tried the fuffie slide (Does anyone know the correct spelling?) or took an amble in the reserve to admire the game. (*Ed comment: The correct spelling is "foefie" my dear.*)

Everyone gathered around the central fire pit in the evening and had some delicious Sangria or a freshly fire-baked bread roll with blue cheese or even pizza (yay, not vegan). The potjies took over the fire from the braaiers and the usual chaos and fun prevailed.



*Some of the motley crew in their tights.*

*Photo: Céline Hanzen*

On Sunday, most of us decided to squeeze in another climb before the predicted storm. Some went to the boulders, and my group decided to tackle the "Men Behaving Badly". Whereas "Rhino" had been my first time leading a pitch (albeit very easy) on a multi, this was my first time screaming with terror and last bit of strength, on the traverse on the second pitch. But still fun - I loved it. As the last member of our group pulled over the top of the final pitch, the clouds rolled in and the wind greeted us. We abseiled in the nick of time, and had some good rain falling on us for the last few meters whilst running back to the car. Excellent timing.

The weekend was a great success - many new friends and new climbers made. And, even though I'm not a fashion expert, I think the tights are here to stay.

### **Climbing Monk's Cowl**

*by Carl Dreyer*

First published on-line at: [www.vertical-endeavour.com/forum/drakensberg](http://www.vertical-endeavour.com/forum/drakensberg)

Somebody once told me that a sure sign of aging is when ambition and ability depart. I'd prefer that to read "A possible sign of lack of fitness" but either way our plans, as so often happens, were severely curtailed once we were out in the mountains. What our ambitious plans were is a whole other story so let's rather focus on what actually did happen.

In our relatively short climbing career, Monk's Cowl is, until now, the only 'berg peak we have had a failed attempt on, although I am sure there will be loads more. Our first attempt was when we got to the top of Cowl Pass only to be stopped in our tracks by a metre deep snowpack and an iced up "grassy traverse". After several other 'berg climbs we finally managed to settle on the 16 December long weekend for a second attempt on the highest free-stander in the Republic.



Mac and I set off at a leisurely pace from the car park on Friday morning with our packs weighing a lot less than previous climbing trips due to our minimalist approach - no tent, no mattress, minimal clothing, bivvy bags etc - you get the idea. This made a big difference on the approach hike and we were fortunate to have misty weather for most of the day. Part of our ambitious plan was to approach from the Cowl Fork side but the mist was low and we decided to change plans and go via Keith Bush Camp in order to avoid potentially frustrating navigational challenges. The water levels were all up but not too high to necessitate taking off boots whilst crossing the Mhlwazini. The gradual but sustained incline of the Mhlwazini valley passed by surprisingly faster than we both had anticipated and we soon found ourselves stopped for a lunch break and nap at Keith Bush Camp.

After lunch we pushed on to the river crossing, which is also the last water, before starting the long slog up the slope below the nek between Monk's Cowl and Cathkin. Not long after this and with the forecasted poor weather threatening, we decided to call it a day about a third of the way up the slope and found the nearest "reasonable" bivvy spot. The term reasonable is of course exceptionally subjective and dependant on the surrounding terrain. What I'm trying to say is our bivvy spot comprised about half a square metre of flat ground with the rest sloping by about 40 degrees. It required building a "platform" utilising boots and backpacks, covered by a groundsheet which then enabled a really bad sleep exclusively in the foetal position. Ok, so I am jumping the gun a bit and before any sleep and "platform" building was attempted we set up our bivvy spot against a rock wall of sorts using a second ground sheet - held taut with some cams and accessory cord tied to plants - as a cover from the rain.

We had just set everything up when it started to rain and rain it did - with many showers and downpours through-out the evening and that night. Despite our rudimentary shelter we remained quite dry, but as mentioned above did not sleep very well at all and at about 3 am we decided we had had quite enough sleep and started the usual morning routine of coffee and breakfast by headlamp before setting off at around 4 am up the remaining slope making the nek in time for second breakfast and a short sit-down in the sun to dry our dew-soaked trousers.

After a brief break we set off along the grass traverse that was impassable four months earlier. This grass band contours around the South side of Monks Cowl and although it gets narrow at one point it is nothing like the Camel Pass route or the approach to Roland's Cave. Once around Monks you enter a final grass gully of about 60 m that tops out between Monks and Champagne Castle. The two caves are visible from here and it is a short walk from here to the start of the climb.

The climb starts opposite Cowl Cave "at the highest point of the grass band". It was now time to put on sunscreen, harnesses and our big-boy pants, the whole reason for the trip was about to start.

The climbing went well overall and we made good time to the summit with the weather changing constantly due to mist blowing up from the north that resulted in a disappointing view from the top. Ok, yes I agree that seems like a very boring and standard summary - an answer almost pre-recorded in response to the question of "How was the climb?" Well in truth 'berg climbing always entails a bit more than "it went well".

The interesting thing about climbing is how it challenges you on so many levels and demands constant decision making. What do you take up with you on the climb and what do you leave at base camp or the base of the climb? How much and what protection to take? Eight cams or four cams? How much abseil cord? Do I take my boots? How much food and water will we need, how long will we be? Jackets? Warm gear? What is the weather doing? How much time is left? What contingencies do I have if we get stuck or become benighted on the peak? Then you need to make route-finding decisions whilst hanging on to a piece of basalt. Left or right? Is this piece of rock safe to pull on? Are you sure we are on the right track? What does the route guide say? Dig around in your pocket for the piece of paper with the route guide on it – try not to let it blow away or disintegrate in your increasingly sweaty hands – “better chalk up my hands – ah damn I left my chalk behind”. Keep going . . .

Despite climbing well within our physical abilities and dealing with the mental aspect mentioned, there is also an emotional game playing out with thoughts ranging from “This is great” and “need to be a bit careful here” to “this is not fun anymore” and “what the hell am I doing here? I want to go home”.

Climbing is an all-encompassing sensory experience. In no other aspect of life have I ever learnt to fight and face fears as with climbing. You learn to put away the irrational fear (with practice) and deal with and assess the actual risks and the potential rewards thereof.

Now all of the above can be experienced every time you head out and soon becomes the norm which then leads to seemingly nonchalant answers like “Ja, it went well thanks”. At the end of the day if you go out, tag the summit and get back safely, it’s always remembered as a successful trip. So in summary the climb went well and was a success!

Monk’s Cowl standard route is made up of 3 pitches of climbing and some scrambling higher up – some of which may require roped climbing if very wet. We underestimated how much of the route was left after the actual climbing and it seemed to go on a bit - not unlike this write-up!

Once we touched back down at the base of the climb, we collected our gear, high-fived each other and set off back the way we had come, tired yet elated at finally ticking off this climb. We made good time back down to Keith Bush Camp for yet another, even wetter, night of bivvying, with the difference being



*Carl Dreyer leading up the Std. Route  
Photo: Mark McTaggart*

this night was at least spent on level ground. Although it rained hard early on in the evening, by midnight it had cleared completely and a very bright moon came out to play – so bright in fact, that I had to pull a buff over my

eyes. Nevertheless a reasonably good night's sleep was had. Oh, and we remained quite dry in our bivvy bags.

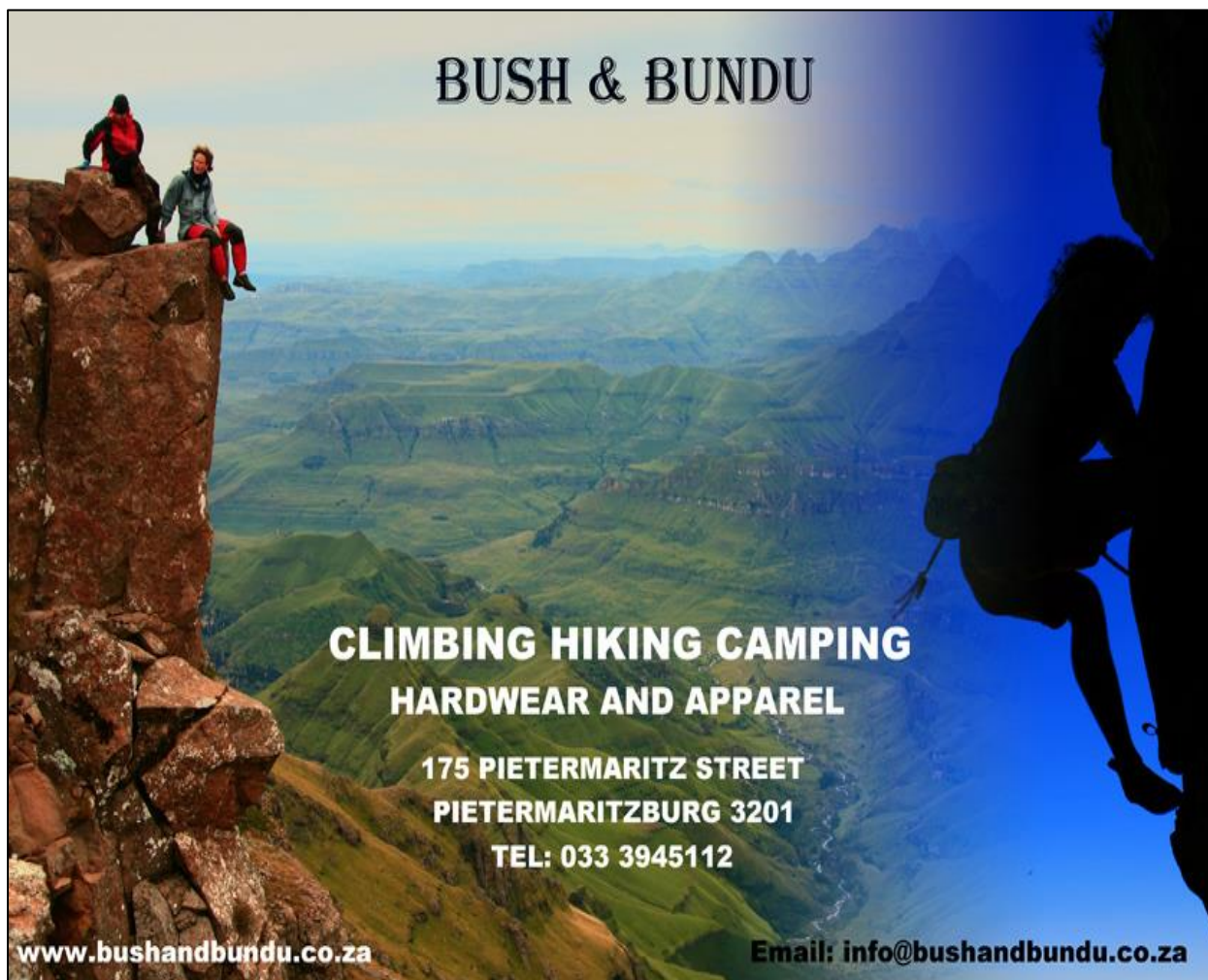
The next day we "slept in" a bit and took our time packing up for the last very hot 14 kms back to the car park. A shower and something to eat at the Purple Giraffe rounded off another great berg trip and a successful year's 'berg climbing.

## **Rescue Report**

*by Gavin Raubenheimer*

Four members of the Rescue Team recently attended the retirement function of Col. Graham Chisholm of the SAAF and presented him with a MCSA Rescue Jacket.

Since the last report there have been four minor incidents and then on Friday 17 March, a call was received from two German rock climbers on a multi-pitch route at Mt Everest. They had got into difficulties while abseiling down the route and did not know how to prusik their way to safety. A three person rescue team was dispatched by road in the afternoon and the climbers were hoisted to safety after dark. Fortunately there is nothing more serious to report.



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