



FOUNDED 1891

Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

ESTABLISHED 1919

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NEWSLETTER



December 2015

Club News

• Well, fellow club members, despite the fact that I had hoped to fade into relative obscurity after stepping down from being the Editor of the club newsletter last March, certain members (who shall remain nameless) persuaded me to put together an end-of-the-year edition, so this will be a bit of an overview of events that have taken place during the year.

• New members who joined the Mountain Club during the year are as follows: Andrew Loots, Kate Brown, Gunther Dell, Dillon Holm, Joshua and Elisti McMinn, Berndt van Velzen, Karen Miller, Gerhard Venter, Peter O'Farrell, Matthew Gibbon, Mark McTaggart, and Rose Sobey. Jonathan Sargood and Stan Mitchell have re-joined the Club. Welcome to all of you, and may you enjoy your years with the Mountain Club!

• In August we were sad to learn of the passing away at the age of 96, of one of our oldest, and longest standing members, LORNA PEIRSON. She was a person of many talents, being an accomplished musician, artist, sculptor, carpenter, cook and a mountain climber of note. Lorna was in the opening party of four Berg climbs – Singati Wall 1949, Middle and Eastern Triplets in 1951, and Sherman's Route in 1955, as well as many other climbs in the Berg, ranking alongside Martin Winter, Des Watkins and Sherman Ripley. Lorna was also very much involved with July Camps, and is fondly remembered for the Song Book which she wrote for the Club, which included songs she had herself had composed.

So another Legend has left us, with nothing but admiration for all that she accomplished in her lifetime. Her pioneering spirit was there, and more.....

• The National Search and Rescue training Meet at Restmount in the Southern Berg, was attended by seventy members of the MCSA, consisting of six regional teams, plus air crew from 15 Squadron and 87 Helicopter Flying School.

• Cambalala Cottage near Mike's Pass, has seen much maintenance work done this year, thanks to the loyal and ongoing support of Clem Robins and a willing group of volunteers – the cottage looks really great, and thanks are due to you all for keeping it going!

• The 2016 July Camp will be at Lotheni in the Southern Berg – see page 6.

• **IMPORTANT REMINDER: to let me know of any change of address or contact details, or change of membership category.**

• **May I also remind those of you who have not yet paid your SUBS – these MUST BE PAID by the 31 December 2015, otherwise you risk being struck off the membership list.**

Which leaves me to say, have a HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a wonderful NEW YEAR!!

Anne Rodwell

Hike to Daniel's Cave

by Thomas Mann

It is hard to turn people away when planning a hike, especially an easy hike to the likes of Daniel's Cave. Six-and-a-half kilometres is quite achievable for my seven year old daughter if I keep her mind off the trudging by taking swims and feeding her sweets ad-lib; also catching the odd legless skink helps. Daniel's Cave is not shown on the map and I was last there more than ten years



ago, so a bit of help was most welcome from Iona Stewart and James Voortman who said that it should sleep eight!

The hiking party slowly grew and shrunk, almost in waves, until on Saturday morning we had 14 hikers ranging in age from seven to 70-ish, how wonderful to have such a renaissance! A few tents were packed and contingency plans drawn; possibly Vast Cave, possibly bivvy, but after a pleasant hike and a fierce thunder storm, we took shelter in, unbeknown to us, Surprise Cave! It had a good flattish floor and provided enough shelter so we decided to spend the night there.

Kerry, Hannah, Bugs, Tor Åge, Pam, Carol, Kayleigh, Amy, Kevin, Mike, Bridget and I fitted into the cave with me having the occasional spray being blown onto my face by the wind, while Martin and Steve opted to find another shelter in the rock band above us.

Sunday morning dawned clear so we decided to explore and it was then that we found the right cave about 300 metres further up the valley! Our walk out was also exploratory, with a visit to Vast Cave and then following the valley down to the Ngwangwane River which flows past the border post. I'll end the report by saying that any prospective meet leaders should consider leading similar easy, lazy hikes as there are many hikers in their twilight years and some in their youth who are yearning to take a stroll in the hills but aren't up to anything strenuous! Here endeth the lesson.

WORLD MOUNTAIN DAY CELEBRATED

by Iona Stewart

16 – 18 January 2015

Due to administrative glitches, we celebrated International Mountain Day over the weekend of 16 to 18 January, rather than in December. We all arrived at Cobham during Friday afternoon. Suzie and Uschi arrived late, having come all the way from Mtunzini, and were delayed by an accident on the highway, then a monster storm near Pietermaritzburg. Sue and Christine chose to stay in the Pholela Hut, sharing it with a very jovial group of Durban Amblers – all 30 of them. The Zululanders had to pitch their tent in the rain, but fortunately many hands went to their aid.

We met at 08:00 on Saturday morning, and set off on the day's hike. We crossed the bridge over the Pholela and met the Giant's Cup Hiking trail via By-pass Ridge. It was a pleasantly cool morning, the veld looking beautiful with many flowers to be seen. As the sun was still hidden behind cloud and mist, the little blue Moraea were hardly discernible. Later, on our way back with the sun shining, the veld in places had a blue tinge, thanks to all the little Moraea which were open. The views along the way were spectacular. Except for a young reedbuck ram and some baboons in the distance, we saw no other animals, which was surprising. Sadly though, we hiked through many brambles, even at 1800m.

We made our way to the Ngwenya Pool where we had an early lunch. We retraced our steps back as far as the By-Pass Ridge path and then continued on the Giant's Cup Trail. By now it was hot, so when we crossed the river that comes from the Trout Back, Uschi and I stripped off and had a glorious swim. The hikers ahead did not know what they were missing! We were in camp by 16:00, having hiked a leisurely 16km.

Meantime, the two who were staying in the hut, Sue and Christine, had been far more ambitious. They had hiked past Boundary Rock, gone to the Whale Back and beyond to the Tittie and home via Ssongweni, a lovely energetic walk. We all joined forces at suppertime, sitting around and braaiing on a lovely fire, thanks to Charl Brummer who joined us for a short while.

Sunday dawned wet and misty. We had planned to meet again at 08:00 so we decided to postpone departure time to 09:00 - good decision - it was dry though still cloudy by then. The plan was to go to Emerald Stream, and possibly climb Emerald Dome. I had not bargained for a relatively strong flowing Pholela, and we needed to cross it. Anyway, all was well. George and Norman, Suzie and Liz, and Lindsay remained there, photographed flowers and studied things of interest. Meantime the remaining six of us waded across the river, each assisting another, and hiked up the beautiful Emerald Valley. At one point we had stopped to enjoy the view and partake of a little sustenance when 18 of the Amblers came ambling past. There was the usual banter and chat between us and they walked on. We went a little further, stopping beneath Grandma before turning around. Just then, Minaret peaked through the clouds. Next was the turn of Hodgsons Peak South, giving us some perspective of the mountain heights around us.

Back at the river crossing, we met with our compatriots and all hiked back to camp. It had turned into a lovely day, to end a great weekend of good company, beautiful scenery and a very laid back berg trip.

The hikers were: Sue von Maltzen, Liz and George Zaloumis, Bugs Sprouse, Gordon Jenkins, Norman Mitchell Innes, Suzie Raymond, Uschi Wessels and myself. Our visitors were Christine Harris, Lyndsay and Claire.

A HERITAGE DAY TRADITION

by Iona Stewart

24 September 2015

Heritage Day in the spring offers very dicey weather, but this year we were fortunate; it was hot but not unpleasantly so. Eighteen mountain club members (mostly) gathered at the Everglades Hotel in the KZN Midlands to climb Nhlozane, a lovely little free stander surrounded by working farmland.

We set off in dribs and drabs from 09:30. It is very easy hiking over veld and then a rocky, steeper part over a stone dyke. Even though it was a bit hazy, the views were stunning. Once past the stone dyke it wasn't as steep and

over a couple more rocky rises, there was the beacon, 1845m above sea level, according to my watch!! The front hikers saw some eland down below, and all over the top were beautiful butterflies in the process of changing their winter brown colours into summer blue.

We were all on top by 11:00. The group consisted of 18 adults, a dog (Corrie Cooke) and a three year old child (Tate Osbourne). Corrie was let off her leash once we were off hotel property and she became joy personified. Tate walked 99% of the way, enjoying the flowers, the butterflies and almost anything else of interest. Corrie was not the only canine hiker with us. A dog we found at the hotel offered her services as a guide.

The idea for the MCSA to make a meet of climbing this iconic peak came to us last year when a few of us climbed it. It had been such a lovely event, despite colder weather last year, we had wondered at the feasibility of it becoming a tradition. Judging by this hike which was greatly enjoyed by us all; the limping, the young, the older and the furry, the request is to have Heritage Day marked on our calendar as an annual event. We actually climbed up 400m. The Everglades Hotel is very accommodating, allowing us to park there for a fee of R10 per person. When we descended we lay about on the hotel lawn, eating some more and generally swapping stories about previous mountain exploits, some real and others a little embroidered!

Attending the first Annual Heritage Day Mountain Club Ascent of Nhlozane were: Bridgie and Mike Richmond from Hillcrest, who brought three others including Derek Robins and Li-juan, Felicity Kromhout and her running friend Margaret, Robert and Saskia Osbourne and the intrepid Tate, Carl Fatti who limped his way up the mountain (in just a few weeks he was to undergo a hip replacement). Paul Hoepfl, who sadly could not stay afterwards owing to school duties; Steve Cooke and his great buddy Corrie; Hans Salisbury and daughter Laura and son-in-law David, Dave Pullen from Howick, also Norman Mitchell Innes and myself.



A XENOPHOBIC WEEKEND IN THE BERG

by Iona Stewart

Ten members of the Mountain Club spent the last weekend of November 2015 on a killing spree at Cobham. There was a grand response from members when a notice went out earlier in the month, calling for volunteers to participate in a massive assault on American brambles (*Rubus sp.*)

Some of the group arrived at the campsite on Friday afternoon, which gave time for discussion, and a recce, on how and where to launch the bramble attack, which meant that when the rest of the party arrived on Saturday morning, we were ready to roll.

We chose as our initial battlefield, the valley west of the camp, the area between the Troutbeck trail and By-Pass Ridge. However, of all things during a very severe drought, it rained or drizzled all through Friday night, leaving the vegetation sodden. One cannot use herbicide on wet leaves! By eight o'clock on Saturday morning, the misty conditions were beginning to lift, but very slowly, making us wonder whether there would be time to do anything at all.

By 10 o'clock at least the leaves on the trees were dry, so we set off, though our feet and boots were soaking wet in no time from the grass. Thomas Mann, Kerry Kee, Arnulf Kanzler and myself went up the By-Pass Ridge path, armed with a bottle of Garlon, a sticker and bright red dye. We used a little stream just below a waterfall as our base. From there, having drawn water to dilute our herbicide mixture we progressed back along the path, two on either side of it. When our ammo (herbicide) was depleted, we just returned to the stream to re-arm. In this way we gradually covered that whole ledge, leaving the vegetation smothered in pink dye, and hopefully dying.

Meantime, just off the Troutbeck path, Gerhard and Cheryl Venter, Liz and George Zaloumis and Pam McNamara launched their attack, working uphill and using blue dye with the herbicide. Norman Mitchell Innes was the quartermaster, keeping them supplied with ready mixed ammo.

By lunchtime, we returned to the campsite for a bite of lunch, except for George who really had it in for the aliens, hitting them with another salvo before he retired. After lunch, with the weather still looking fair though with heavy cloud, we set out once more, returning to our stations, ever mindful that we must stop well over an hour before any chance of precipitation occurred. Charl Brummer in the meantime, had delivered a generous heap of fire wood and a braai for us for Saturday night. It was a very pleasant and sociable evening.

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny, so we all set off once more to complete the operation, Paul Hoepfl standing in as quartermaster. By lunchtime, that whole area, too many hectares for me to guess, had been thoroughly trounced. It now remains to be seen how much will have to be repeated in the follow up, which will take place in the late summer, in February or March.

A trip to the berg, no matter for what reason, is not complete without a swim. The water babies among us did just that before lunch, and then the homeward journey. Our mascots for this vital skirmish were Hannah Mann and Ella Hoepfl, without whom our spirits may have flagged. In fact there was a cheerful energetic atmosphere among all participants. I think the

general feeling was it had been a very worthwhile and fun weekend, despite the anti-brambling efforts by us all!

In all, we used 428 litres of the herbicide mixture, which came to roughly 2.5l of herbicide and nearly as much sticker. The Mountain Club sponsored the sticker and face masks. We are very grateful to Charl for giving us the Garlon, and the loan of pangas (Thomas made a diversion to attack some mighty wattles and paint their stumps with herbicide) and knapsacks for spraying.



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"JULY CAMP 2016" ADVANCE NOTICE

Hooray, the dates for July Camp have been set and are Saturday 2nd July to Saturday 16th July, 2016. This means that, as requested by parents,

The Camp will begin on the second Saturday of the school holidays.

At the moment we are planning to hold the Camp at Lotheni, in the Southern Berg.

Further details will follow after the recce.

In the meantime, we look forward to welcoming you and your family to a venue we have not visited for 20 years!

The Committee is hard at work looking for leaders willing to commit to leading trips, especially trips to the top and traverses. So if that is your scene, please contact us!

Please, diarise July 2 to July 16, 2016 for the July Camp. See you there!

The July Camp Committee also wishes you a blessed Christmas and a mountain-filled New Year with July Camp as the peak of your mid-winter activities!

**For further details contact - Rikki Abbott Wedderburn on 082 538 5389
or email: ronwedd@netactive.co.za"**

Cambalala Cottage

Cambalala Cottage offers a unique experience in the Cathedral Peak Nature reserve. The cottage is situated near the top of Mikes Pass with access to the high berg via Organs Pipes Pass. Easy walks around the cottage, visit to the Vulture's restaurant, walks to the river below the house and walks to the Ndedema Valley to visit the bushman paintings, are all part of the attraction. There are great mountain-biking trails as well.

The cottage is comfortable with 3 bedrooms sleeping 7 persons, a gas geyser in the kitchen and bathroom, a gas fridge, plus a wonderful view of the Berg!

Costs

The cottage costs R 80.00 per night and R 50.00 per night for members
And R 90.00 per night for non-members

Booking

Phone: Clem Robins (H) 031 7834965 (Cell) 084 500466

Email: clemrobins@ymail.com

(Please note: **NOT** gmail.com)

**BEFORE THE
RESTORATION
WORK BEGAN.....**



**AND
AFTER.....**

A GREAT JOB – CLEM AND HIS TEAM HAVE DONE THE CLUB PROUD!

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Drakensberg – 5 day weather forecast	082 231 1602			
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