



FOUNDED 1891

# Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

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## NEWSLETTER JAN/FEB/MAR 2014

### Club News

- A Happy New Year is wished to all members and friends of the Mountain Club! May the year 2014 be a successful one in terms of mountaineering, hiking, camping and exploring...

- Two important events took place towards the end of 2013; the one being the first visit to South Africa by Frits Vrijlandt, the President of the UIAA, and the other, a return visit combined with a lecture tour of our country by well-known British mountaineer Stephen Venables.

Frits Vrijlandt had been invited by the South African Government to attend a Sports Conference (Sports & Events Tourism Exchange) in Durban. Anne and Fred Rodwell spent some time with Frits after the Conference, and the following day, he was taken by Gavin Raubenheimer for a morning's climbing at Monteseel crags. He flew back to Holland that evening.

Stephen Venables – who was kindly hosted by Mervyn and Allison Gans – gave an illustrated talk at the University of KZN. It was his first visit since the previous one 17 years ago. He was an interesting - also humorous speaker, and the talk was much enjoyed by all those who attended.

- The Brian Godbold Award is an incentive scheme to get local KZN climbers to bag Drakensberg Peaks. The award is for people who summit any 7 of the following 10 peaks via a technical rock or ice climb:

Sentinel, Devil's Tooth, Mponjwana, Bell, Pyramid, Monks Cowl, Western Injisuthi Triplet, Giant's Castle, Column, and the Rhino.

In November, Thomas Mann and Kerry Kee were awarded the Brian Godbold Award Certificate for climbing the following peaks:

Sentinel (Angus Leppan route), Bell (Hooper's Route), Pyramid (Standard Route), Monks Cowl (Standard Route), Giants Castle (Schole's Route), Column (Escarpment Arête), and Rhino (S route).

Congratulations to you both on your achievement!

- Volunteers are asked to come forward and offer their services on the Committee – remember that (to borrow the late President Kennedy's words) it is not what your Club can do for you, but what YOU can do for your Club!

**The AGM will be held at 2:00pm on Saturday 15 March 2014**, at the Assagay Hotel, Shongweni – see you there!

Notices and nomination forms will be sent out closer to the time.

**The 2014 Subs statements will be sent out shortly; PLEASE would members state their name and membership number when making their subs payments, otherwise time and money is wasted trying to find out who has made payments, and for what.**

**Any members who have changed their address or contact details, must please contact Anne Rodwell AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:**

**Email: faraway@chillibyte.com      Fax: 086 544 3755**

**This also applies to members who want to (or need to) to change their membership status.**

**Apology:**

Apologies to Gavin Peckham, who has drawn attention to an error in the KZN Section Annual Report in the current (2012) MCSA Journal, which states that he was paid R20 000 "as a donation towards his new Umfolozi River and Ongoye Forest climbing route guides". Correctly speaking, this should have read "that he was paid R2,000 for an advertisement in the climbing route guides". An unknown gremlin placed an extra zero in the quoted amount, as well as stating that the amount was a "donation" and not "payment", hence the error.

*Anne Rodwell*

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## **Rescue News**

by Gavin Raubenheimer

Rescue Alert: On the 17th of December 2013, at 8pm, the Mountain Club received a call via the Provincial Health Operations Centre regarding 3 adult hikers lost in the area of Gxalingenwa Cave. After talking directly with the leader of the party, it was established that they could not find the cave, and had no tent and the weather was very bad. The case was handed over to Sani Search Volunteers who went out that night and found the subjects. They were walked out in the early morning.

Rescue Alert: On the 18th of December 2013 a female hiker broke her ankle near Sterkspruit Falls. The MCSA helped organised a stretcher party from Monk's Cowl to fetch the patient.

Rescue Alert: On 27th of December 2013 a female hiker and her female guide from Qwa Qwa, had not returned from the source of the Tugela River. They returned the following morning after being caught in bad weather and had to stay the night in a Basotho Hut.

Rescue Call-out: On the 6th of January 2014 a 18 year old German female injured her back near the top of Tugela Falls. She was in great pain and had lost some feeling in her one leg (probably a slipped disc). She was moved to Mont Aux Sources Hut by members of her party. The weather was bad that afternoon and evacuation by air was not possible. The forecast for the next day was also not good. Two teams of MCSA and Ezemvelo staff, including the officer-in-charge of Royal Natal National Park (who is also a paramedic), hiked up to the patient at various stages of the night. The weather the following morning was again bad and the patient had to be carried to the top of the escarpment and then lowered down Beacon Buttress Gully and from there to Sentinel car park. This carry-out took 6 hours and in total about 19 people were involved in the carrying at different stages.

## **Meeting Ueli Steck at Annapurna**

*by Rob Sprouse (Bugs)*

In September I was trekking around the Annapurna Massif in Nepal. Near the end of the trek I went up to Annapurna South Base camp, where I had heard there was an expedition going on, but no other information. I arrived at the Base Camp at 7.35am and I saw the expedition tents just beyond the trekking hostel. Near the tents were dozens of people, including a camera crew, Sherpas, etc. I talked to a cameraman, who said it was a Swiss-American climbing team and that they were financing the film themselves due to the controversy on Everest in April. The two climbers were further forward of everyone, one looking through a telephoto lens. I went up to the climbers and talked to Don Bowie. He gave me some information. The guy behind the lens looked over at me. I said to Don, "That looks like Ueli Steck" and he said "that is Ueli Steck". I was stunned but regrouped and started talking to Steck. I said: "About 30 years ago, I read Bonington's book on the British expedition of 1970 to this site. Have you read it?"



South Face of Annapurna 1

Photo: Des Porter

He replied: "Yeah." I said: "That was the best expedition to the Himalayas up to that time, wasn't it?" He replied: "Yes, that was the first expedition to do a technical climb on an 8,000m peak", and he added that he intended to do the same climb but in alpine style. I talked a bit more about Don Whillans and the British expedition. Don Bowie later told me that they would be on the 4,000m almost vertical wall for three to four days. I asked him where they would sleep. He smiled and said "anywhere we can".

Well, since returning to South Africa I was astounded to learn that Steck had solo-ed the route. I don't know why there was a change of plans, as I had assumed that they were climbing the wall together to the summit. It was an awesome achievement and I don't know if anything of this magnitude has been done before. To make things even more memorable, a few minutes later there was a big avalanche falling about 3,000m down the face to the left of the Annapurna South face, dropping tens of thousands of tons of rock and ice at the base. None of the Sherpas had seen such an avalanche before.

In Kathmandu I went to The Rumdoodle Bar and Restaurant, named after the great 1956 book, 'The Ascent of Rumdoodle'. Our crag in Kloof Gorge was named after this book, back in the 1970's.

If there are any questions, I can be contacted on 081 789 7726.

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**Quote:** "I didn't become successful in my field because I'm bigger or more intelligent than others. No, I became successful because I had the willpower to fail, and to try it again, again and again."

*Reinhold Meissner*

## **Mt Everest and the White Umfolozi**

*By Gavin Peckham*

It interests me how many climbers will, at the drop of a hat, head north up the N3 to Mt Everest, when hitting the N2 to the White Umfolozi is closer, cheaper and offers a wider variety of climbing. **Please** don't get me wrong. Mt Everest is an incredibly climber friendly venue. I have climbed, opened and bolted a significant number of routes at this excellent venue. It is just that I can't understand why a trip to Everest seems routine whilst a trip to the White Umfolozi seems like an expedition into the heart of darkest Africa for most climbers. Please have a look at the stats tabled below and reconsider your climbing agenda. This is definitely **not** an attempt to cast any aspersions on Mt Everest as a climbing venue but, rather to try and get climbers to realise that the White Umfolozi is a really viable alternative that should be considered more often. Keep climbing!

	<b>Mt Everest</b>	<b>White Umfolozi</b>
Travelling time from Durban	About 3h30	About 3h00
Toll fees from Durban	About R 100	About R 40
Camping fees	R 70 pppn in tents	R 50 pppd in hut with bedding.
No. of sport routes	About 140	About 120
No. of trad routes	About 20	About 150
No of multi-pitch routes	About 12	About 5
Rock quality	Friable	Superb
Weather	Unpredictable in all seasons.	Utopian in winter. Hot but manageable in summer.
Route guides	Available from Gavin P	Available from Gavin P
Climber friendliness	5 stars	5 stars
Overall rating	4+ stars	5 stars

### **MCSA JOURNAL 2013**

This is a call for submissions to the 2013 Journal (No. 116) to be published by the Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA).

(<http://cen.mcsa.org.za/home/journal>).

Contributions for the 2013 Journal should reach the Editing Team through the Journal Co-Coordinator ([journal@mcsa.org.za](mailto:journal@mcsa.org.za)) **by 31 January 2014.**

Late submissions will not be accepted after 31 March 2014, except by prior arrangement (best via email so that there is a written record).

Submissions missing information as requested will also be returned to authors.

## **Jack and the Beanstalk**

*by Gavin Raubenheimer*

I climbed Tony van Tonder's new route at Garden Castle, with Sharon Cox. The route is called "Jack and his Bean Stalk".



Sharon Cox on *Jack and his Beanstalk*

Photo: Gavin Raubenheimer

## **VERGELEGEN, 5/6 OCTOBER, 2013**

*by Iona Stewart*

Vergelegen is just that –it lies far away! As a result it is delightfully remote, compared to some of the other berg areas we frequent, and therein lies its charm. On 5<sup>th</sup> October, nine of us left my house at 07:00, arriving at Vergelegen more than two hours later, where we met Thomas Mann, Kerry and Hannah. The weather was good and an easy, laid back weekend was anticipated. What was particularly good was having Graham Smith and Rikki Abbott join us. They were there to recce Vergelegen as a possible July Camp site for 2014.

On arrival we were met by Domisani, the new Ranger-in-charge, who could not have been more welcoming and helpful. His camp-site was burnt down in 2009 and he has not been able to have the camp-site ablution

facilities re-built. Thus he graciously showed us the staff toilets and shower, and invited us to make use of them!

We lunched then set off for Rooibessiebos, a delightful bit of natural bush about four km from the camp, up stream of the Mlahlangubo. The July Camp contingent hiked with us which was special, meaning we too were ostensibly helping them locate a suitable site to hold July Camp.

It was a warm afternoon, and mountain hikers cannot resist the temptation of pools beckoning from a stream, so we stopped for a swim. Feeling refreshed, we continued up the hill and arrived at Rooibessiebos. An amazing sight greeted us. The rocky slope within the bush was covered in many, many *Haemanthus natalensis* (Natal paintbrush) plants, almost all in flower. I believe that at any other time of the year, we would not have even known they were there, let alone in such profusion.

Inevitably, out came the snacks and a long chat about this and that while we lounged among the rocks. When the bosberaad was over, we wound our way down the hill again, Norman gallantly going ahead to accompany Rikki who had waited at the bottom of the hill.

The following day, the July campers went with Domisani to check out a potential spot, downstream. Hannah was very keen to play in the river so she and Thomas, Kerry and did that, and judging by the screams, they had a grand time. Erica and her boys did their thing exploring around and about the camp site. Gavin, Norman, Pamela, Carl and I followed the Umkhomazi, sort of, (because the leader was confused by the choice of imaginary paths), and arrived at the confluence of the Mkhomazi and the KaNtuba streams, another potential July camp venue. After a swim and some snacks, and seeing some threatening black clouds in the south, we wandered back to camp, having had a lazy but happy weekend in the berg.

Our party consisted of Erica Croskey and her son with his friend, Pamela McNamara, Carl Fatti, Norman Mitchell Innes, Gavin Heath, Thomas and Kerry and Hannah and me, Iona Stewart. It was such a good move to have Rikki and Graham, the July camp committee members, with us and perhaps that combination should happen more often.

**NOTICE:**

At the present moment, Iona Stewart is storing spare hiking equipment belonging to the club (which is loaned out), and would like someone else to store it as she needs the storage space.

If you can help, contact Iona direct:

(H) 033 330 4942 or Cell: 082 990 3968

Email: [iona@sai.co.za](mailto:iona@sai.co.za)

**CONTACT LIST – MCSA KZN COMMITTEE 2013 - 2014**

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<b>MCSA - KZN Section Website</b> <a href="http://kzn.mcsa.org.za">http://kzn.mcsa.org.za</a>	<b>MCSA (National) Website</b> <a href="http://www.mcsa.org.za">www.mcsa.org.za</a>		<b>Drakensberg</b> – 5 day weather forecast: 082 231 1602	