

FOUNDED 1891

Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

P.O. Box 50649
Musgrave Road
DURBAN 4062

E-mail: mcsakzn.secretary@gmail.com

Website: <http://kzn.mcsa.org.za>

NEWSLETTER April/May/June 2013

Club News

Anne Rodwell

- A warm welcome is extended to the following new members who have joined the Club: Andrew Gemmell, Candice Bagley and Kimberley Bingel – may you enjoy a long and pleasant association with the Club!
- On Saturday 9 March 2013, the Club held its 93rd Annual General Meeting at the Assagay Hotel, Shongweni, which was attended by 26 members

Thanks to all members who made the effort to attend the meeting, it was good to see you there!

- Thank you to all the members who have paid their 2013 MCSA subs, most particularly those who made a donation towards club funds; much appreciated.

Mountain Biking in the Berg

Iona Stewart

At the monthly mountain club evening recently, we were entertained to a Down-Hill-Mountain-Biking video and slide show. It was fascinating and certainly gave me an adrenalin rush just sitting in my chair. The whole exercise took place in the Alps and has been operating there for the last four years.

The ski slopes take advantage of the summer by allowing/charging intrepid downhill mountain bikers to use the ski-lifts to carry their bikes to the top of the slopes. Then the bikers ride them, down the slopes again. It looked like great fun, and I could envisage our younger members of the audience picturing doing the same thing down our berg slopes. This is when my alarm bells rang.

We are used to seeing the pretty picturesque postcard pictures of the Alps, covered in snow with just some quaint buildings and a few trees dotting the scene. However, the pictures we saw were of somewhere in the Alps in

summer, and the erosion and degradation from the mountain bikes was frightening, and in only four years. Some of the paths may have been there originally. However, the bikers go to a lot of trouble to make new paths, and some that we could see being negotiated were already dongas.

My big concern is that we must all do our best to prevent this kind of degradation from happening in our Drakensburg. Ezemvelo, and they are the custodians of the berg, have stated that mountain bikes are only allowed on certain paths and of course, for the Giants Challenge. But we all know and understand that Ezemvelo are unable to police the entire berg and hence implement this ruling. I appeal to all bikers visiting the berg to honour Ezemvelo's ruling, and in fact to discourage any such potential irreparable damage.

Fortunately we do not (as yet) have any cable ways or ski lifts to help carry bikes in an upward direction. However, seeing the damage done in the Alps should serve as a wholesale deterrent of any kind of cycling on the wrong paths in our mountains.

Mountain Festival in Chamonix

The Mountain Club of South Africa has received an invitation from a group of enthusiasts in Chamonix, organising the Chamonix Mountain Festival, 1 - 8 June 2013. They have the official backing of a number of organisations, including the Alpine Club, and local companies.

There is a group of keen volunteers in Chamonix to welcome visiting climbers for this event. They have interest from all over the world and have indicated that any South Africans will be very welcome. The common language will be English.

It is a good season for the Alpine classics, ski touring and rock climbing. At the core of the meet, the accommodation and lift pass will be provided at a discounted cost to participants (€60/day). Experts will be on the spot to give advice on conditions, and there will be an information desk providing information about possible routes. At the fringe, they will have talks, and testing of gear.

The website for the event is not yet up and running but anyone interested can contact Francoise Call at email address: francoisecall@yahoo.co.uk

When we were at Injasuthi, so many hikers came back from the Wonder Valley Cave area and asked why we had not been there for so long, and if we would arrange for a Base Camp in the aptly named Wonder Valley. You asked and we now can offer you the 2013 July Camp in Wonder Valley, on the farm, Maatshappij, in the Cathkin Valley area and giving access to Champagne and Monks Cowl portion of the Berg.

We have liaised with the new and very generous owners who have offered us a delightful site for Base Camp about 4 kilometres upstream from where we camped in 1999, almost directly below the start of the zigzags up to the Cave!

The owners Jonathan Bass and Colin Barrow have gone out of their way to make us welcome, and offered us a choice of not only one, but three, stunning sites. Two other generous and supportive landowners in the area have agreed to help us. Ed Salomons has agreed to let us park at his Inkosana Lodge and Ron Henderson of Strathyr has agreed to let us have the Camp kit depot on his property.

So that's a real treat for everyone, but especially for our younger Campers who want to do a one or even two nights out from Base and a bit of exploring!.

Bearing the school-goers and their parents in mind, we've moved the dates to overlap, as much as possible, with the school holidays, so you'll see that the Camp starts on June 29 and runs until July 13. We really hope to see families (parents or grandparents) bringing the next generation to the Camp.

Entry forms are available on the Website at www.kzn.mcsa.org.za. Do remember, that all the food, hot water ablutions, coffee in bed at Base Camp, and transport for Campers' kit (limited quantities) to Base Camp are supplied and that Campers need only bring their snacks, preferred drinks AND fuel. The closing date for applications will be Monday June 3, 2013.

Quote:

“He that mounts the precipices wonders how he came thither, and doubts how he shall return.....”

His walk is an adventure and his departure an escape. He has a kind of turbulent pleasure, between fright and admiration.

Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Berg Meet 15-17 December 2012:

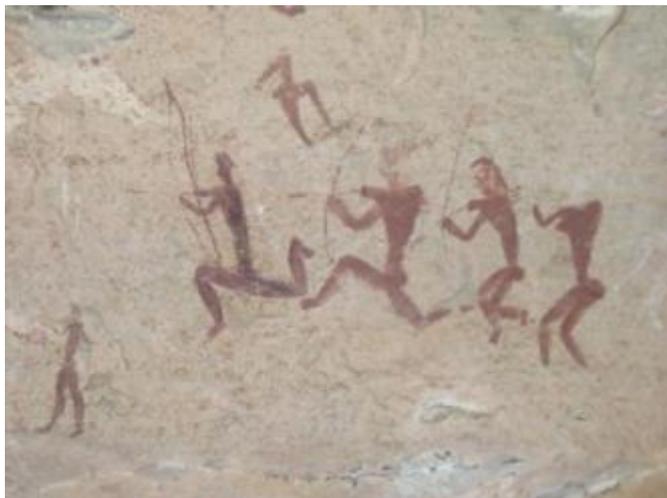
6 of us, all youngsters, [average age under 65] hiked up to Tseketseke hut on the Saturday in the hope of climbing the Pyramid the next day.

Overnight in the hut was pleasant as it is still standing and has a level floor [no floorboards though]. Next morning we were unable to see our cowardly objective which was hiding in thick mist. We boulder hopped nevertheless up the Tseke riverbed which has been scoured by a major flood in a recent year, but were then put off trying to climb by a steady drizzle. We declared the score to be Pyramid 1; climbers 0 and returned to the hut for more tea and snacks.

A hike along the rather overgrown and in places washed away contour path took us later to the very steep descent route to Xenie cave. There we spent another pleasant night. After a difficult boulder hop down the full riverbed we hiked pleasantly back to Cathedral Peak hotel for celebratory drinks.

Berg Meet 21-23 December 2012:

14 of us, ages from teenage to 70 something, camped at Highmoor [on top of the little berg south of Giants Castle] on the Friday night. The weather was beautiful and we did a good hike the next day to the viewpoint above Caracal cave. Swimming in the dams cooled us off beautifully in the hot weather.



On the Sunday some of us visited a large overhang cave in the upper Mooi River towards Kamberg where we saw very beautiful rock paintings. The slog of several hours from the [car] campsite was well worth it!

Figure 1 Rock art - Upper Mooi River Valley Picture: Carl Fatti

New Climbs in Winston Park Area – Normandy CragBruce Sobey

Access is as for the Giba Gorge Crag. Travel to the stop street, after the lane of trees, at the end of Jan Smuts. There is an open Eskom Servitude on your right. Turn right into Bradley Road and right again at the T-junction with Mountbatten Place. Go through the gate at the end of Mountbatten and then turn left (sometimes the grass is long) and park under the old pylons overlooking Giba Gorge.

To access the Normandy crag from the bench at the top take the path going diagonally left (South) down the hill. Go around the trees at the top of the gully and get back to the path at the top of the crag. About 50 m further there is a tree on the hill and a large tree on the face. The climbs are in the corner before the tree on the face.

GPS Co-ordinates: 29°48'53,9"S; 30°47'6,9"E

To access the climbs you can abseil down in the corner. There is a bolt and a perfect slot for a No 4 nut to back it up. Otherwise you can scramble down about 50 m further on and make your way back along the base.

Mulberry (12)

First Ascent Bruce Sobey and Pier Bill 8th July, 2012

Mulberry is the obvious route up the crack in the corner. Being a crack it is well protected.

Juno (17) 5b

First Ascent Bruce Sobey and Bugs Sprouse, 23rd December 2012

This is the only bolted route in the area and is on the face to the North of Mulberry. Easier to clip if you are tall, but consistent at the grade and clean rock. Could probably be tradded.

Omaha (14)

First Ascent Bruce Sobey and Bugs Sprouse, 23rd December 2012

This climbs the wall to the 8m to the right (South) of Mulberry. Start diagonally right under the overhang and make your way up past the tree which is used for protection. It is reasonably well protected, mostly with small cams.

Overall the routes are not long, or overly difficult, but they are interesting enough and there is enough climbing for an afternoon's outing.

Rory Lowther Memorial Challenge 2013 *Hannelie Pickering*

Since Josh runs the Climbing Gym in Pietermaritzburg and we've been encouraging everyone else to go to the Rory, we kind of felt obliged to go ourselves. Both of us have been once before, me for rescue and Josh as a sponsor, but this was our first Rory as participants. I have to admit that I was pleasantly surprised!



Figure 2 At the Rory-Lowther.
Picture: Des Porter

It was quite a sight seeing Van Reenen's Kop Mountain sneaking through the mist while we were having breakfast after a night of rain! After 3 and a half pitches of *A Time to Climb*, Josh and I admitted defeat against the wet, slimy rock. Feeling a bit disheartened, having wasted half the morning, we decided to simul climb *Long Bolt to Freedom*. Another team was already on the first pitch and in the true spirit of the event, they were very happy for us, and another team (who had to bail off *Wolf Mother's Wall Paper*), to climb past them. We got to the top in under an hour, exhausted, but totally exhilarated! I just loved sitting on top of the

mountain, listening to and looking at the people climbing on *Spearhead* boulder! After abseiling safely we went to join the crowds on *Spearhead* and it was great to be part of the vibe, especially listening to the excitement of the kids! Everyone made their way to the finish line around 3pm in the afternoon, where there was a buzz of people trying to work out which routes they climbed and how many points they scored. Hearing totals around 8000 was cool, but at the prize giving we heard that the winners scored more than 40 000 points!

For years I have been the first to condemn any kind of competitive climbing, slowly but surely I am coming around. I think it is an amazing event, where we, and especially kids, can get excited about climbing again.



Figure 3 The Start at Rory-Lowther. Picture: Des Porter

EAGLE MOUNTAIN

Murray Sanders

Great success was had with the Eagle Mountain meet, drawing a crowd of 23 people from the KZN MCSA section as well as having a few members of the Gauteng section in attendance. Amazing weather assisted with lots of climbing being fitted into the weekend. Most of us drove up on the Friday

evening and made ourselves comfortable in the campsite and chalets, which have been kept in good running order due to the effort, put in by the new owners of the Reserve.

Saturday had the Old-Guard group attempt the *'Pumping Peacock'* route on the Eagle's throat while the Young-Noobs group was put through their belaying paces on some of the smaller boulders around the campsite, then on to *Serengeti Slab*. A few beginners were shown the way up *'Rhino on the City Hall Steps'* in the afternoon which they all enjoyed. Thundershowers were dodged by a few groups who climbed the traditional *'Big-Sky'* route at sunset to abseil down in the dark after a few sundowners. A lekker braai and kuier-vuur saw to the end of Saturday and we wound up with some tall stories around the flames.

Sunday was spent showing another group of beginners up Rhino while the others tried some easy routes on the lower boulders around the area.

Many thanks must go to members who lent a hand, tips and some gear to the beginners... this led to a few inquiries about membership and future meets... keeping the Mountain Club alive!!



Figure 4 Climbing at Mt Everest (Eagle Mountain) Picture: Alex Baxter

The Dragon's Missing Thumb

Jonathan Newman

We arrive at Giant's Castle to see mist at around 2000m. When we hit the contour path the mist was really thick. We agreed that we shouldn't try to find the pass in thick mist, so opted to detour on the contour path to Langalibalele Pass (aka Langies).

As we traversed to Langies the mist continued to rise. We were plagued with intermittent rain throughout the day.

We stop for lunch just past the waterfall at the start of the pass. There is no dry spot, so we all sit on the best spots we can find. Most of our shoes are wet, team morale is low.

Langies took over 3 hours. I knew the spot where I wanted to camp and decided that my GPS would only assist in getting us lost. We simply traversed at the altitude of the top of the pass until we hit the river, found a good spot on the river and set up camp.

It continued to rain off and on throughout the night.

The next morning it was wet and cold outside, but for the first time during daylight there was no mist around. The stunning view from our campsite became clear. We headed off from our campsite just after 7.

Soon we were slogging up the Senqebethu Ridge. It's a tough ridge, but the view from the top of Bannerman Face Peak (3235m) is well worth the effort. I highly recommend this one.

After enjoying the view for a while we hid our packs and headed off to summit the great Senqebethu peak (3301m). The view from the summit was incredible. From the summit we could see Bothlolong, Ship's Prow, Champagne Castle, Mafadi, Judge, Giant's Castle and various other peaks.



Figure 5 The group on Bannerman Face Peak (3235m). Picture: Jonathan Newman

We soon began the walk into the valley. As we came off the ridge the escarpment became very misty. This didn't concern me as I know this area quite well.

I decide to head toward the escarpment edge to find North Hlubi Pass. What

do you know; there in front of me is the unmistakable summit gully of North Hlubi Pass. It's distinct from the south pass in that it runs parallel to the

escarpment edge above it for the first short section, as opposed to the south pass which runs perpendicular to the escarpment edge for its top gully.

The weather decides to be nasty – it begins to hail! The hail is the size of marbles, but the quantity falling is high. Sbonelo suddenly pulls out a large tarp and starts putting it over the group. We use 2 trekking poles and 2 of us hold ends of the tarp. This works well.

The hail begins to slow down. As we get to the narrowest part of the pass (straight below the large cave) I begin to fall behind the group as I worry about Kim and Mike – both of them don't seem to be in good shape.

We head over a very exposed and slippery grass traverse on melting hail. I reach the highest point of the traverse. The footholds are small. There is a small stream flowing over this spot and I look down at the river far below me. This route would not be necessary or particularly difficult in dry weather.

As I look down my worst fear is realised – I watch 12 year old Mike slip and fall. It's at least 10 metres. I fear the worst. Somehow he remains feet first and pack against the rock. He hits the rock at the bottom and falls into the riverbed. I hear him say something - I am relieved to know he is ok.

Suddenly my fears are realised once more – my focus on the events below caused me not to focus on my own footholds and I began to fall. By reflex I smash my trekking pole into the ground and manage to stop my fall. In retrospect I don't know how I was actually staying on the ledge as I only held a few blades of grass in one hand and had a pole in the ground on the other side. The only thought I have is "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip" (Psalm 121:2-3). I have no other explanation for not taking the same fall that Mike had just taken.

I get to a more stable spot and Simon confirms that Mike is ok; he stands up, looking very shaken, but still able to walk. The fall has shaken all of us, but North Hlubi Pass in itself is not a dangerous pass.

The rest of the hike is uneventful. We eventually hit the contour path and are relieved to finally have a good path to walk on.

From the contour path we followed Langies Ridge to get back to the car park. Nothing major to say about this part of the hike.

So, overall, was the hike a success? Other than the goal of climbing Thumb Pass we achieved all our goals and no one was seriously injured. So my opinion, yes it was a success!

Full write-up at <http://www.vertical-endeavour.com/forums/8-drakensberg-hiking/55226-the-dragons-missing-thumb.html#56073>

On the 19 -21 February a joint training exercise was held with the SA Air Force, NSRI and SAPS in the Port Edward area.

A cliff training session was held at Monteseel on the 10th of March.

14-17 March, five KZN members attended the National MCSA rescue training session in the Magaliesberg.

On Wednesday the 9th of January at 4.20pm, the rescue team received a call for assistance from Ezemvelo at Cobham, saying that a male hiker had been bitten by a puff adder at Kaola Cave in the Vergelegen area. The patient had been bitten on the foot while near the river below the cave. A team of 4 MCSA rescue team members and a paramedic from EMRS took off from Oribi airport after dark on board a 15 Sqn Oryx helicopter. The aircraft had to dodge major thunderstorms to and from the mountains and involved hoisting personnel and a stretcher outside of the cave at night in windy conditions. The patient was taken to St Anne's hospital in PMB and has made a full recovery. It appears, from his symptoms, that it was actually a Berg adder bite.



Figure 6 MCSA Rescue Team did sterling work at the Rory Lowther Picture: G.Camp

CONTACT LIST – MCSA KZN COMMITTEE 2013 - 2014

Name	Home No.	Work No.	Cell No.	Email
President James Voortman	031 785 1928		082 466 1731	mcsakzn.president@gmail.com jamesv@icon.co.za
Hon. Secretary Anne Rodwell	031 767 2038		073 1748 369	mcsakzn.secretary@gmail.com faraway@chillibyte.com
Hon. Treasurer Beth McLeod	031 764 1991		082 820 1100	mcsakzn.treasurer@gmail.com mcbeth@iafrica.com
Rock Climbing & Mountaineering Trevor Johnson	031 466 2121		076 123 6196	mcsakzn.climb@gmail.com trevorjohnson83@gmail.com
Sport Climbing Murray Sanders	033 701 1772		082 568 5178	mcsakzn.sport@gmail.com murraymsanders@yahoo.com
Hiking Iona Stewart	033 330 4942		082 990 3968	mcsakzn.hiking@gmail.com iona@sai.co.za
Rescue Convenor Gavin Raubenheimer	033 343 3168	033 343 3168	082 990 5876	mcsakzn.rescue@gmail.com gavin@peakhigh.co.za
Meets Convenor				mcsakzn.meets@gmail.com
Access Murray Sanders	033 701 1772		082 568 5178	mcsakzn.access@gmail.com murraymsanders@yahoo.com
Conservation Iona Stewart	033 330 4942		082 990 3968	mcsakzn.conservation@gmail.com iona@sai.co.za
PR & Durban Socials				mcsakzn.pro@gmail.com
Assistant PR Eric Penman	031 708 3553		074 867 9972	
July Camp Rikki Abbott	033 330 3921		082 538 5389	ronwedd@netactive.co.za
Cambalala Hut Clem Robins	031 783 4965	031 450 6061	084 500 4666	robinsca@telkom.co.za
Cambalala Bookings Alison Misselhorn	031 764 2692	031 260 8081	082 488 8391	misselhorn@ukzn.ac.za
Webmaster Dan Ryding	031 764 0685		076 819 2486	mcsakzn.webmaster@gmail.com dan.ryding@virgin.net
Newsletter Editor Felicity Kromhout	033 344 3052		072 239 2842	felicity@satweb.co.za
Maritzburg Socials Ian Bailey	(h) 033 345 7501	Fax: 033 345 7501	083 269 6201	ianbailey@telkomsa.net
Mountain Rescue KwaZulu-Natal	082 990 5877 / 10177 (in KZN) / Toll Free: 0800 005 133			
Drakensberg – 5 day weather forecast	082 231 1602			
MCSA - KZN Section Website http://kzn.mcsa.org.za			<i>MCSA (National) Website</i> www.mcsa.org.za	