



FOUNDED 1891



Mountain Club of South Africa

KwaZulu-Natal Section

ESTABLISHED 1919

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NEWSLETTER

Oct/Nov/Dec 2016

Having introduced various Committee members in previous newsletters, here are three more who contribute to the efficient functioning of our Club.



Carl Dreyer
Access Convenor



Eric Penman
Assistant PR



Ian Bailey
Maritzburg Socials

Cambalala Cottage

by Clem Robins

Cambalala Cottage offers a unique experience in the Cathedral Peak Nature reserve. The cottage is situated on top of Mike's pass with access to the high Berg via Organ Pipes pass. Easy walks around the cottage, a 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 people, gas geyser in the kitchen and bathroom, a gas fridge and solar lighting as well as wonderful, panoramic views of the berg.

Costs: The cottage costs R80 per night with an additional R60 per person per night for members and R100 per person per night for non-members

Booking: Contact Clem Robins: 031 783 4965 (H); 084 500 4666 (C) or e-mail: clemrobins@ymail.com.

Access Details for Various Popular Climbing Venues by Carl Dreyer

Monteseel: Access to the whole of the Eastern Buttress and lower Middle Buttresses is unrestricted. The Western Buttress lies partly on land owned by the Durban municipality and partly on private land owned by Mr Ketringham. Mr Ketringham owns most of the Western Buttress but the MCSA has a servitude to the top and bottom of the cliffs in this area. He lives in the large white house on top of the Western Buttress and the MCSA has good relations with him. **Please do not be tempted to climb over the concrete wall which runs between the western and eastern buttresses.** To gain entry to that part of the western buttress, simply drive to the unmarked gate in Albert St and hoot loudly. One of the stable-hands will open the gate by remote control. Park in the space just inside the gate on the right. To get out again simply hoot once again.

Howick Falls: The public has free access to this venue.

Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve: An entrance fee of R40 must be paid at the Wessa office on arrival. The gates are open from 6 am to 6 pm. Telephone 033 330 3941 for general enquiries.

Hilton College: These crags are on private property owned by the school. For access, email Rowan Welsford (rw@hiltoncollege.com) or Deren Coetzer (dwc@hiltoncollege.com) at least THREE days in advance.

Krantzkloof Nature Reserve (Kloof Gorge): An entrance fee of R25 must be paid and the climbing register must be signed at the office BEFORE setting out to climb at any of the various crags in the reserve. The gates are open daily from 6 am to 6 pm.

Shongweni Dam and Nature Reserve: An entrance fee of R40 must be paid by CARD at the gate on arrival. No cash is accepted. For general information phone 031 769 1283, email Shongweni@msinsi.co.za or see <http://msinsi.co.za/shongweni>.

Old Shongweni Crags: These crags are on private property. Access is free but please contact the landowner, Mr Craig Dixon, prior to any visit in order to obtain permission and access via the security gates. Phone 082 729 2770 or email dixonbrokers@telkomsa.net.

Klipkloof (White Umfolozi River): These crags are on private property. It is essential to book in advance. Contact Mrs Maryna Lingenfelder on 082 446 1777 or email her at maryna902@gmail.com. Day trips cost R50 pp, camping costs R80 pppn and well equipped huts cost R150 pppn.

White Umfolozi. Photo: Anthony van Tonder



Swinburne: These crags are on private property. It is essential to book in advance. Contact Mrs Anellie Campher on 072 401 6711. Day trips cost R50 pp, camping costs R70 pppn, beds in the barn are R80 pppn and rooms in the huts or house cost R150 pppn.

Mt Everest Game Farm (Harrismith): Check in and pay at the office on arrival. Day trips cost R80 pp, camping costs R80 pppn and a selection of chalets is also available. For further information phone 079 886 3101, email info@goeverest.co.za or see <http://www.goeverest.co.za>.

Drakensberg Ice Season 2016

by Thomas Mann

"Now is the winter of our discontent..." (Shakespeare, Richard III). "As was last winter and the winter before that." muttered local ice climbers in unison.

This ice climbing thing is not quite a play but more of a waiting game. The last few years have been dismal and 2016 probably ranks as the worst I can remember. The countrywide drought left the usual escarpment drainages dusty, although we had many heavy snowfalls, none of them amounted to water ice. A few trips to Sani Pass were cancelled, no one from KZN ventured to Bokong in Lesotho as far as I know and there was only one trip to Giant's Castle on the meet sheet.

More on the latter, five of us undertook the annual pilgrimage to South Africa's most reliable ice on the last weekend of July. Kerry Kee, Tor Åge Schunemann, Gerhard Lamprecht, a friend of his, Jonty, and I ventured up Giant's Pass for a very short trip despite warnings that heavy snow was forecast. We decided to walk up on Thursday night after work as the moon was nearly full, we set out from the office at 6:30pm and reached our camping spot for the night at 10:00pm. The weather was so mild and wind free that we decided to sleep under the stars (I'm lazy and didn't want to unpack and repack the tent) so we drifted off to sleep with the Milky Way and the full moon above us.

Waking up at our bivvy spot on the contour path.

Photo: Thomas Mann



Friday morning dawned clear and we were packed and walking by sunrise and easily made the top of the pass in time for elevenses (in 2015 Ezemvelo decided to burn the pass with us in it so we were probably faster than with the flames licking our heels, even though the smoke was choking us). Our first thought was to head to Makhaza to show the beginners the correct technique for ice climbing but the wind was so gusty and strong that we couldn't stand. I would get blown over by a gust and no sooner had I regained my balance and footing than the next gust would send me stumbling like a drunkard. After staggering out of the jet-stream we made our way to the nursery ground campsite, which is what we term the stream that feeds some of the ice falls closer to Lotheni. Rather than waste an afternoon we headed to climb Madiba's Pride, then Pigs Can Fly and Walkie Talkies. Three (short) routes in an afternoon aren't bad, and still there was no bad weather! On Saturday we planned to climb the Main Lotheni Couloir, all three pitches of world class, bullet hard water ice. I had two beginners with me and, I admittedly do assume too much, but I figured why not throw them in at the deep end? Trying to get five people to abseil down three pitches of ice and scramble over boulders while wearing crampons and then reverse the process has been known to take a full day or longer. Bearing in mind the severe weather warning I didn't want to spend all day and then

some on the route, so I planned to take two sets of ropes so that while people were still abseiling on a higher pitch I could set up and abseil the next.

Saturday dawned clear, still no heavy snow as predicted. We had breakfast and broke camp, packing away wet tents and only getting away after 8h00. We reached the top of the route, hurriedly set up V-thread anchors and abseiled in with our heavy backpacks. Sadly, packs have been stolen in the area before and, whilst hauling heavy packs out later didn't rate high on my list of "exciting things to do", it does beat spending a fortune buying new gear after being robbed. Kerry and I got to the bottom first and decided to lead the first pitch before the others reached us, saving valuable time and so we climbed the second pitch too, essentially splitting our party in two. Having our packs at the bottom of the third pitch did have its advantage; we had lunch and boiled a kettle for tea while waiting for the rest of the party whose take on the route was one of awe. We ended up completing the route by 3:30 pm and by 4:00 pm we were heading for the pass in what had turned to thick mist with a promise of rain. We descended the pass in twilight with ten meter visibility and reached the contour path by 8:00 pm, pitching tents in the rain.

During the night the rain turned to snow and we were woken by what I thought was some creature scratching around the tent, upon investigation it was mini slab avalanches off the side of the tent and being South Africans we all woke up to play in the snow at 1:00 am. The next morning 20 cm of snow had fallen on the contour path and was falling still. I patted myself on the back at the decision to walk down the pass the previous night. In falling snow and 100 m visibility we walked back to Giant's camp with smiles on our faces and I had a spring in my step after another amazing weekend in the hills I call my home.

*Thomas Mann leading Pitch 3 of the Main Loteni Couloir.
Photo: Tor Åge Schunemann*



**Quote: "Everybody free-solos. When you walk to the store, you're free-soloing. It's just a matter of the difficulty of the route."
John Bachar.**

1-2-5 Climb MCSA Anniversary Event

by Sonja Hofmann

MCSA-KZN Section members organized the following events to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the MCSA.

1. 1 October: Pizza and Poker on Popple - Jonathan Newman

A team consisting of Farouk Omajee (Mountain Backpackers Club) and myself, (KZN Section) hiked up Popple Peak, SA's 13th highest summit. We went up the very obscure Gypaetus Pass and went down South Hlubi Pass. An epic weekend indeed!

2. 8 October: Sterkhorn - Carl Dreyer

Eight members and three friends of the KZN Section of the MCSA climbed all three summits of Sterkhorn in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the MCSA. (See the following article for further details.)

3. 15-16 October: Ndumeni Dome - Sonja Hofmann

After spending a hugely comfortable night in Cambalala hut, with yummy treats for dinner provided by non-members as "payment" (hint for future Cambalala usage), we trudged up the hill to the old lookout on Organ Pipes Pass. After that uphill battle, it was mostly smooth sailing (with some wind) to the top of the escarpment. There was trembling anticipation of the entrance to Roland's cave, but its reputation exceeds the reality; even the self-proclaimed most "height-scared" person made it in without a panic attack... but avoided balancing out during the night for any loo breaks.

Dinner was a butter-themed, three-course spread, some of which even overflowed into breakfast and lunch on day two... nothing like garlic naan with Nutella.

Early out on Sunday, we bolted up to the summit of Ndumeni Dome with new-found energy, branded our stylish MCSA buffs and took the obligatory selfies (no selfie-sticks).

For the route down, we chose Camel Pass for variety and were once again rewarded with magnifique views. Once the thigh-burning downhill were ticked-off, we were treated to an invigorating pool and promptly made use of it - something that I believe should be made compulsory for Berg hiking.

4. 22 October: Champagne Castle - Sonja Hofmann

To extend my trail running career, I decided to go big. Going big and starting really early go together, which translated into leaving Maritzburg before 4 am. But these sacrifices are sufficiently rewarded by endorphins in the Berg. The running was a great alternative to hiking and so time efficient (the German in me peeping out!). The breath-taking views were great excuses to catch our breath again from the breath-taking uphill. Champagne Castle branded no Champagne, but a good dose of sense of achievement. Luckily the downhill are faster and less strenuous, but the contour path still felt eternal. That evening my legs felt every one of the 44 kms.

But, I will definitely be back running, another peak, another day.

Quote: "He who remains calm while those around him panic, probably doesn't know what's going on." (Anon)

Sterkhorn – Three Summits

by Carl Dreyer

8 October 2016

Eight members and three friends of the MCSA-KZN Section summited Sterkhorn via all three summits in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the MCSA.

After overnighting at the Monk's Cowl campsite on Friday night, the party set off at first light in misty conditions. After a few hours hiking the party split into three groups just below the North summit. From here three climbers geared up to climb South summit, two climbers tackled the Middle summit and the remaining three members and the three guests climbed the North summit via the standard scrambling route. The South summit climb took much longer than expected. This group was the last to leave the peak for the long trek back to camp, arriving at just after 6 pm. A few welcome beers and a braai were enjoyed to celebrate the occasion.



Sterkhorn: South Peak summiteers.

Photo: Tor Åge Schunemann

Dry Mouth Guild – Monteseel

by Bruce Tomalin

30 October 2016

2016 has been a very poor climbing year for me, but due to some deft arm-twisting, a couple of DMGs have gone down, this being one.

Having been abandoned by all but one of my off-spring I rounded up the youngest survivor, who required the presence of the current (since retired) boyfriend. Keeping an eye on goings-on in the back of the bakkie, I wound my careful way up the bicycle infested back lanes. Surprisingly, someone else was there climbing! Actually they were just warming up for the rescue meeting a few hours later. So we pottered around on Cain and Adam, placing some gear, not getting particularly "dry in the mouth", but having a good time nevertheless. Escaping before we were "volunteered" to be rescued, we ended up having a good day out. Before receiving the boot, the boyfriend was still talking about it!

Anchor Replacement / DMG - Old Shongweni

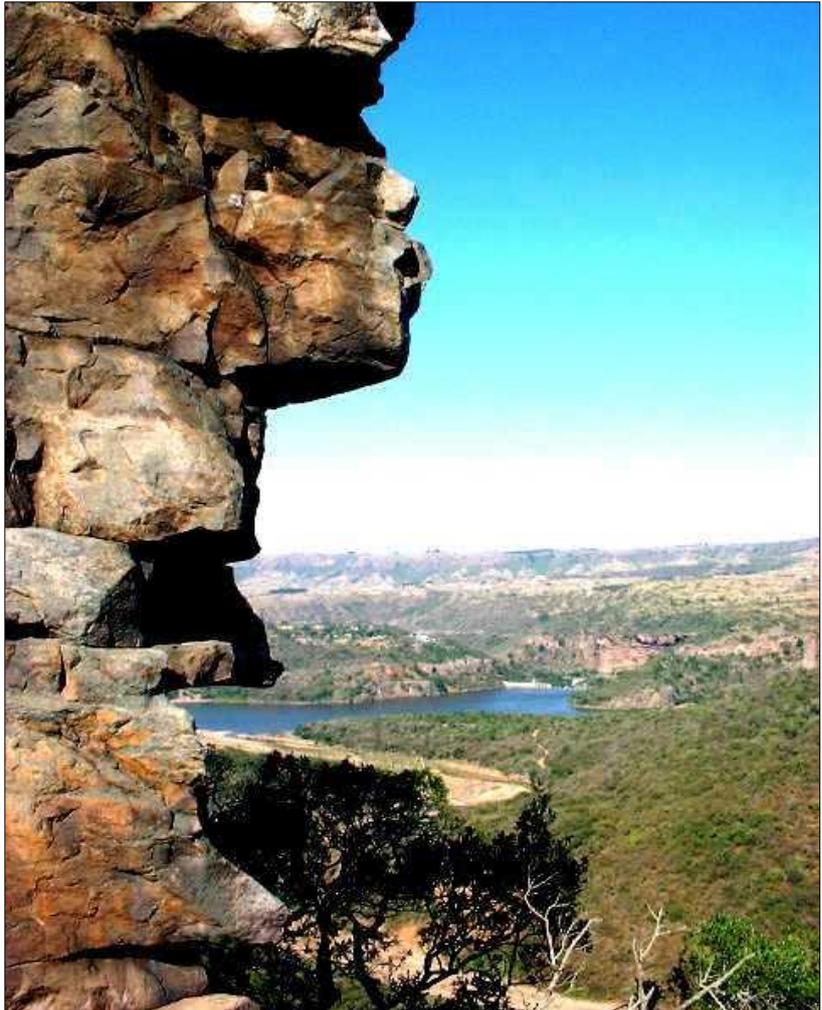
by Hallam Payne

26 - 27 November, 2016

This much-neglected venue has seen quite a bit of activity of late, with ad hoc visits from various people in October, and a scheduled meet at the end of November.

The moderate and easier bolted routes have seen most activity, with a few attempts on some of the harder routes, and even some trad climbing on some of the more moderate routes. The first task of the newly-constituted KZN Anchor Replacement group turned out to be easy work. Although many of the chain-and-washer arrangements at Old Shongweni were quite rusted; on closer inspection the bolts themselves were found to be in pretty good

condition, and it was decided that it wasn't cost-effective or efficient to replace anything with glue-ins, as had been the plan. Four sets of rusty washer-connected chains were removed and replaced with proper hangers, maillons and new chains. Further chain replacements are planned for a future visit. One poorly seated bolt was removed with a couple of light hammer taps, and will also be replaced. The anchors replaced were on the routes: Fizzgig Fandango (12), Genghis Khan (17), Rubbers in the Surf (17), and Shaking the Grass (18). The pumpy and virtually gear-free trad route Gay Cats Gone Crazy (20) will also soon be retro-bolted, with the permission of the first ascensionist and a couple of new (trad) routes are planned in the obvious cracks 50 m to the right of Rolling Stones (21), at the southwest corner of the crag.



If anyone knows of any unrecorded routes in this area, please let me know.

Part of the Jungle Bunny Arête (14) with Shongweni Dam in the background. Does anybody else see a facial profile here? Photo: Gavin Peckham

The Heritage Day That Wasn't

by Iona Stewart

26 November, 2016

The traditional Heritage Day (24 Sep.) climb up nHlozane Mountain in the iconic KZN-midlands was postponed due to the forecast of bad weather. The trip was rescheduled for Saturday, 26 November. The week preceding this day offered nothing but bad weather with the promise of more of the same over the up-coming weekend. Yet, despite this, we decided to sally forth.



nHlozane Mountain. Photo: Gavin Peckham

There were four of us; Inky Daley, Norman Mitchell Innes, Steve Cooke and myself plus Bella the Great Dane and Corrie the Border collie. We left home in drizzle and mist, barely seeing anything when we got to the mountain. Accompanying Steve Cooke were many of his church friends, so all in all we were a big and joyful crowd wandering up into the unknown.

Every now and then on the way up, the mist would swirl and reveal the faint outline of rocks above us. Some of those who had not climbed here before would ask in excited tones, "Is that the top?" Of course, it wasn't; mountains are like that, we see a top, but there is yet another beyond it.

nHlazana is not very high and there is nothing difficult about it, which means young and old, fit and unfit are capable of getting to the top. The flowers were beautiful, the rocks interesting and very negotiable, and the top large enough for a crowd to assemble upon it. The usual summit photos were taken, with only the beacon as a back drop as everything else was masked in mist. Just as we were about to descend, the mist lifted momentarily and lovely views of the dams and fields could be seen way down below.

We were back at the hotel by noon, having set off at 09:30. It was a great outing, enjoyed by dogs and hikers alike. The church group stayed on for a lunch prepared by the hotel which is a thought for future Heritage Days on nHlazana.



The Summit Party - as detailed above. Photo: Steve Cooke

Swin-burning it!

by Sonja Hofmann

3 - 4 December, 2016

I'm the self-proclaimed FOMO champ. (Ed. Comment: For the uninitiated, FOMO is an acronym for the Fear of Missing Out.) In the MCSA KZN, this translates into wanting to climb the Berg. So, with my friendliest smile, puppiest eyes (ha, ha) and, possibly, shortest skirt, I bugged the soon-to-be Godbold Award climber of the club to take me climbing. Combining my absence of experience, minimal skill and impatience in attaining either, he chose a "climbing the Berg for dummies" peak – namely, the Sentinel. Perfect. Throw in some more friendly people and the weekend is made.

First on the action-packed December weekend's agenda was some climbing at Swinburne. Super recommendable spot! After the guys had a good laugh at my (already two year old) rope and quick draws (all still in their packets with labels), these had their inauguration on my first lead climb - I am amazed at the different perspective this brings to climbing. Fun for all - hope to see you there next year.

Sunday had Sentinel on the horizon. Except for the award climber, this was everyone's first Berg route; and to prevent him from getting a heart attack, we went - with great fun and success - up the standard route. The summit

book was dutifully adorned with our names, but we realised that our group contained too many goody-two-shoes without a lighter, so we could not take a victory puff on the cigar that someone had so generously left in the book. Where are the smokers when you need them?



Rensburgkop, Swinburne. Photo: Gavin Peckham

A Blast From the Past - Schooled at Swinburne

by Bruce Tomalin

Some years ago, after returning from two bruising encounters with German bureaucracy in Pretoria, my daughter and I needed a break. The barn at Swinburne made an ideal interlude on our trip back to Durban. We arrived in the evening, as mist flowing off the Berg turned Rensburg Kop into a sinister shape-shifting ogre in the pale, intermittent light of the needle moon. It took three quarters of a bottle of fine red to settle down for the night . . .

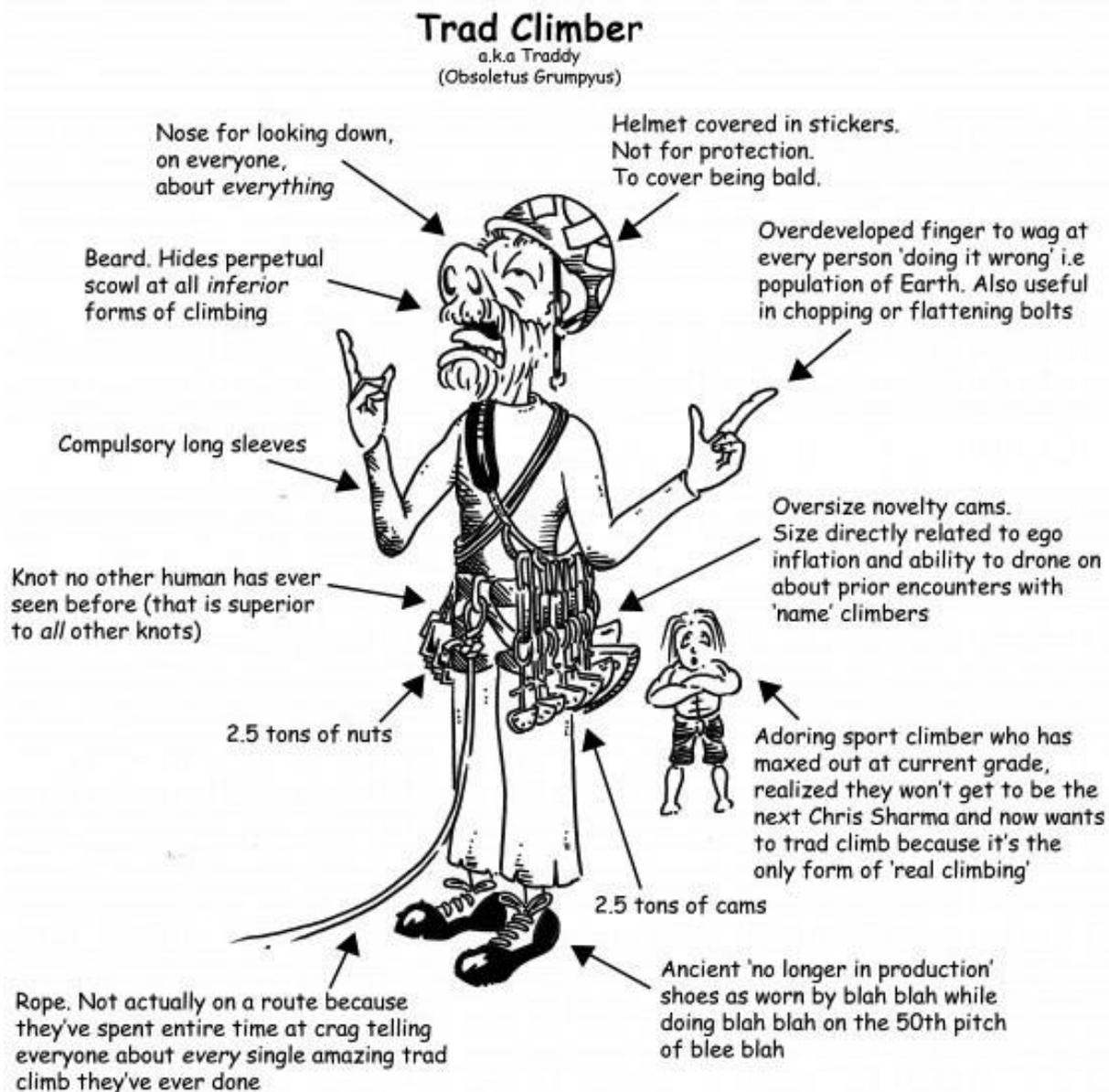
The next morning we stumbled up to a misty Pyramid Boulder and slithered through the wormhole looking forward to the selection of slab climbs that start off the Pyramid's warm and welcoming eastern ledge. As I clipped the 2nd bolt of "Anubis" there was a close and LOUD booming bark.

Startled, I saw peering over the northern end of the ledge, a pair of close-set yellow eyes framed by wild hair being billowed upwards by the cold north wind. Below the glaring eyes was a set of 3-inch, bared canines belonging to an extremely indignant, adult male baboon. What were these skinny, hairless creatures doing on HIS sunning ledge! Emmaline curled into a ball protecting her newly acquired six month study visa; tears had already been spilt over that piece of paper, perhaps blood would be required too? The whole troop now scampered nonchalantly up "Welcome to Borneo" (a grade 16 route on the north face), then peered over the top, hair flying in the wind, eyes

blazing and flicking from side to side, weighing us up. The majestic leader, considering my climbing to be most poncified, now gave a master class in the art of dynamic climbing. Bounding furiously from ledge to ledge, he used the odd intermediate hand or foot hold to leap 3 to 4 m at a time, all four limbs off the rock, up, down and sideways, stopping to roar at us every few minutes. For 20 minutes we were petrified. I eventually hit on a strategy of cowering and averting my eyes when he was further away, and feigning confidence and standing up when he got within about 3 m. Eventually his point was made and he followed his troop over the top, producing the odd deep bark to remind us just who was boss around here.

Shaken, I managed a few of the easier routes with distant barking greeting me from the main cliffs each time I topped out. There were no dynamic movements from me - so the troop leader's master-class was wasted.

However, walking down the knee jarring, flower filled slope with Emmaline, the deeper lesson of being shown our place in a beautiful wild world started to sink in. And seven months later when Emmaline, pale, exhausted and wiser, returned from the human infested northern countries, we spent another night at Swinburne remembering our place under the Kop.



Rescue Report

by Gavin Raubenheimer

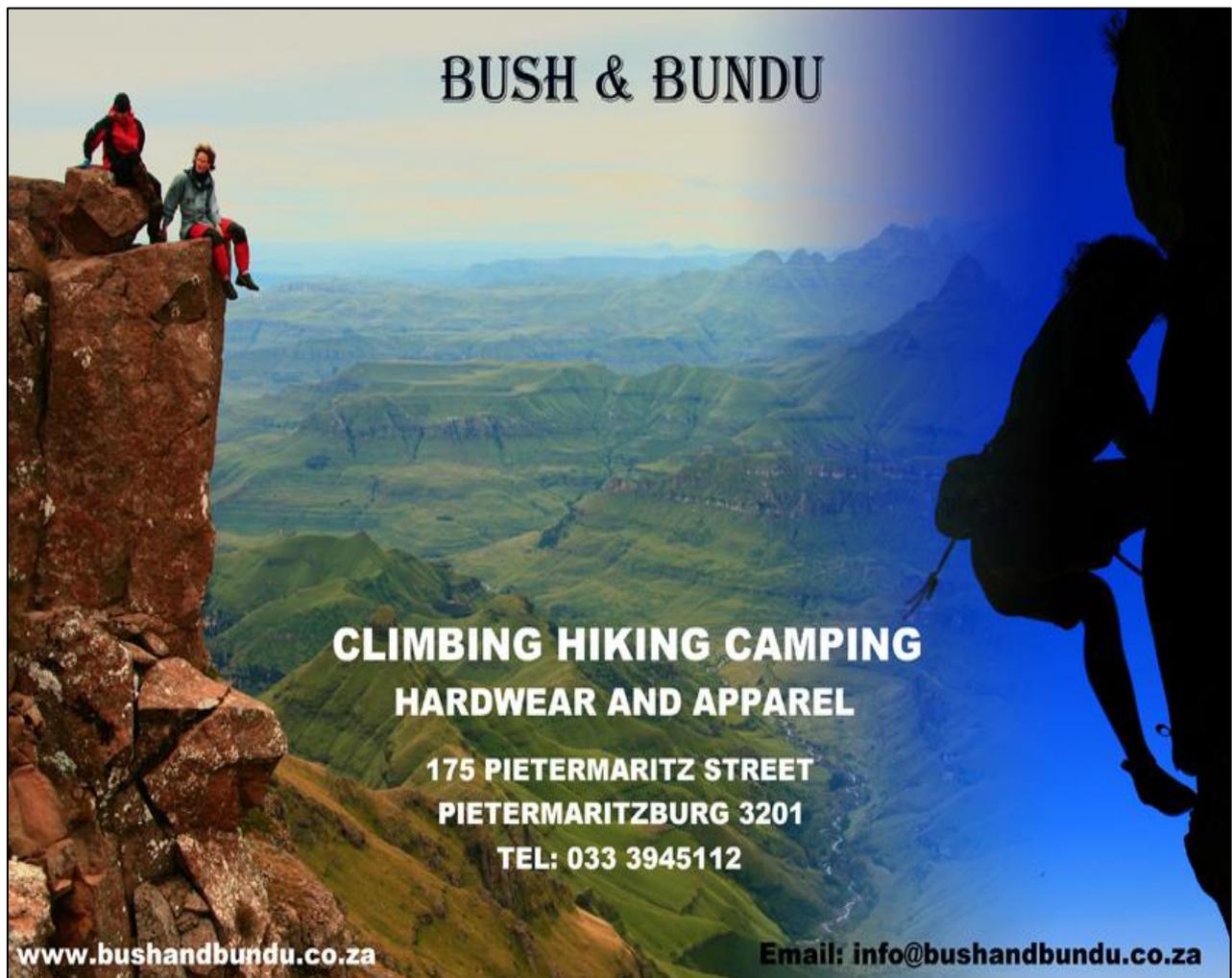
On 27 September, 2016, a female hiker fell and broke her wrist in Mlambonja Pass. Although not a very serious injury, there were SA Air Force aircraft training in the area and so she was fetched and taken to Cathedral Peak office, from where she was driven to a medical care facility.

On 9 – 11 September, 2016, there was a Rescue Alert situation which later resulted in a call-out. The problem was a hiker who was separated from his group in bad weather near the top of Judge Pass. He eventually spent two nights out away from his group, before managing to meet up with them again. The rescue team, including the SA Air Force and SAPS Airwing had been put on alert and a ground based team were on their way to the 'Berg but were called home after the hiker reported that he was OK.

There were another four Rescue Alerts which did not result in any actual operations.

The Rescue Team has purchased two more *Rescue 540* belay devices. The Rescue Team now has three such devices – one for each of the Club's technical rescue bags. The *Rescue 540* is a vital piece of equipment used in belaying heavy rescue loads on semi-static ropes.

The Sani Search Volunteer group which is based in Underberg, has made an application to be incorporated into the MCSA rescue structures, to effectively become an extra branch of the KZN rescue team. Negotiations are on-going.



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Drakensberg – 5 day weather forecast	082 231 1602			
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