



FOUNDED 1891



Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

ESTABLISHED 1919

P.O. Box 50649
Musgrave Road
DURBAN 4062

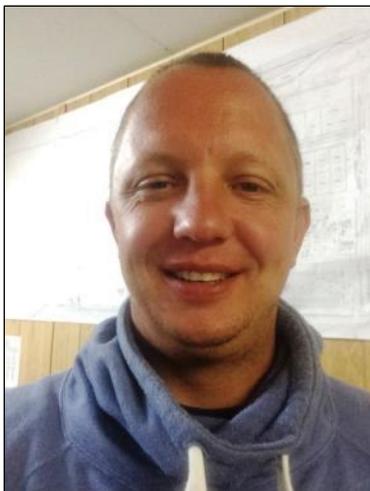
E-mail: mcsakzn@gmail.com

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

NEWSLETTER

Jul/Aug/Sep 2016

After introducing various Committee members in previous newsletters, here are three more Committee members whose efforts contribute to the efficient functioning of our Club.



Trevor Scott Johnson
Rock & Sport Climbing
& Mountaineering



Jan Phelan
Conservation



Dr Sonja Hofmann
Hiking

Club News

by Rikki Abbott

- **Membership:** Amber Burnett, Keith Rasmussen, Matthew Salt and Stephen Wagner have been accepted as members. We welcome them and hope they will have many pleasant and memorable times with the Club. Meridy Pfothenauer has been accorded honorary membership in recognition of her sterling work with the communities in the Mweni area.
- **Committee:** Murray Sanders (Club President) is overseas until December but remains keenly involved. In the meantime, Trevor Scott Johnson is chairing the Committee meetings.
- **Electronic Membership Applications:** At a special general meeting held on 31st August at Old Main Brewery, Hilton, members approved a proposal to amend the constitution to allow application for membership to be submitted electronically and added a provision for acceptance of membership to be

considered by the committee by e-mail discussion. This will facilitate processing of membership applications between committee meetings offering better service to prospective new members.

- **Sale of Monteseel Hut:** 26 members attended a special general meeting held on 31st August at Old Main Brewery, Hilton. Trustee, Mervyn Gans, gave a short feedback on the sale of Monteseel Hut which is proceeding well. The club has accepted an offer to sell the subdivision with the hut to Luke Wijnberg for R 510 000. The buyer has agreed to lease the portion of the subdivision that the Club retains (and to which the climbing servitude is attached) for 10 years with the option to renew for a further 3 years.

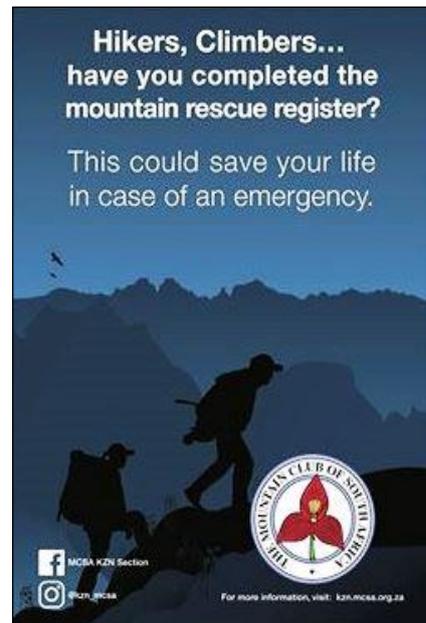
- **Mountain Rescue Register Signs:** Dr. Sonja Hofmann ran a most successful competition for the design of A3 metal signs to be displayed at all hiking entry points to the Berg in order to alert hikers and climbers to the importance of completing the Mountain Rescue Register. The competition was won by Maria Simitopoulos and her winning design is shown on the right.

- **Access Details:** Carl Dreyer has compiled a document listing access details for crags in and around KZN. This was circulated on the Club e-mail list and is available from Carl on request.

- **1-2-5...Climb. 8 Oct 2016:** The Magaliesberg Section has organised this country wide event to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the MCSA. The aim is for Sections to encourage members, friends and the public to climb at least 125 routes and peaks during October, especially on 8 October 2016. By doing this we hope to have some fun and to raise awareness about our Club and our mountains. See details on page 9.

- **Mnweni Cableway:** Jan Phelan reports: Four members of MCSA KZN Section attended the Cableway Conference from the 3rd to the 5th of April. Prior to the conference a Sub Group of the KZN Section prepared an Information Pack on issues that would require attention should the proposed cableway go ahead. The Sub Group also prepared a number of questions to be posed at the conference if opportunity arose. In the week following the conference the Information Pack was e-mailed to all delegates. It is intended than an article on the outcomes of the conference be submitted to the media. A combined report of the views of club members who attended is being prepared.

The EDTEA (Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environment Affairs) has been e-mailed to ask which consultant has been appointed to do the Full Feasibility study, and if there has been any progress on deciding which consultant would do the EIA if the Cableway was found to be feasible. We await a reply to these questions. Aside from an initial report in the paper that the conference had taken place, there have been no further reports in the media on the proposed cableway. Roger Porter, who was involved in the motivation for the Maluti-Drakensberg to be proclaimed as a World Heritage Site, is prepared to speak to the Sub Group on his views as to the potential impacts on the status of the World Heritage Site if the



Cableway was to go ahead. The date for this has not yet been confirmed. More details on the proposed cableway may be found on the MCSA-KZN web site at: <http://kzn.mcsa.org.za/Resources/Drakensberg-cableway-challenges>

- **Newsletter:** Hardcopies of the newsletter are increasingly expensive to produce and to mail. It would be very greatly appreciated if current recipients of hardcopies who have access to e-mail, or to the Club web site, would contact the Editor (see back page) and ask to have their names removed from the hardcopy mailing list.
- **Annual Subscription Fees:** People with outstanding membership fees are again requested to pay these as soon as possible.

July Camp 2016

by Rikki Abbott Wedderburn

This year July Camp was held at Lotheni in the Southern Drakensberg and, by all accounts, was a most enjoyable event.

We continued the happy trend of recent years of hosting an increasing number of very young Campers. We strongly believe that this ensures not only the future of July Camp, but also of the Mountain Club. In this regard, it was very pleasing that about a dozen people asked for MCSA KZN membership forms.

Grateful thanks go to our President, Murray Saunders, who shared the concern of the July Camp organisers over the low number of KZN Section members who attended July Camp. He started by pro-actively challenging all the KZN Section Committee members to attend the opening weekend and had a very pleasing response. This in turn rubbed off on Section members and we had more Section members attending than has been the case for many years. A special surprise was a non-member who had been to the PMB Slide Show where Ian Bailey, who organises and presents these monthly events, mentioned July Camp. This so appealed to him that he and his young son came along on the off-chance that they would be accepted, but brought all their own food, just in case. July Camp has a happy tradition of not turning people away, so he was accepted into the body of the kirk. He has already applied for membership and been accepted! We also had more overseas visitors than in the past which was rather fun.

It was also special in that, at last, we have broken through the colour bar. Thanks to the commitment of Taffy, Miles and Afifa, and their intention to come back again next year with more of their hiking friends. We hope that that they will become regular July Campers and that their numbers will grow. Thanks to three special people.

Another happy first was that after years of trying to establish contact with the Scouts and Cubs, this year we seem to have pushed the right button and had a thrilling response. A party of 25 Cubs, Scouts, leaders and parents came for the second weekend of Camp. They all seem to have enjoyed it very much and are eager to be back again next year. They scored a huge hit with the Organisers when some of them came back on the last day of the Camp to help with dismantling the Camp. Any help in this regard is always much appreciated.

In the end, despite having had a very slow start to the bookings, the Camp was well attended with the final number of man-nights increasing during the Camp as we welcomed first-timers and old friends who made spur of the moment decisions to join us. Fortunately, we had sufficient food and our chef, Vusi Ndlovu, son of the legendary Ishmael Ndlovu, took all in his stride and produced tasty and satisfying meals that astonished newcomers and kept the regulars coming back for second helpings.



The Dinner Bell

Photo: Lesley McGwynne

Graham Smith led a very fit young party to the top of the escarpment and all returned very pleased with their trip. Other sub-camping parties were led by Norman Owen Smith, Liz Warren, Gerhard Venter and Rod Saunders. Every day saw at least one day-hike party going out and these were led by Dave Morgan, Rachel Saunders, Kate Davies, Liz Warren, Margaret Brown, Andy Hackland and Roger Paul.

An innovation at the 2016 July Camp was a trial, one-day Navigation Course run by Trevor Scott Johnson. It was well received and will be expanded next year. Hallam Payne was there exploring to see if there were convenient rock routes nearby. He hopes to come back next year and lead a climbing party.

Since we had so many first-timers this year, it seemed appropriate to record what impresses them the most about July Camp. On arrival, it seems to be the fact that we have bathrooms with hot water, if not 'on tap', then certainly by the jug-full. As the first day progresses, so they enjoy the tasty meals that satisfy healthy Berg appetites and the fact that for dinner we serve a three course meal under solar lights! Next morning, they are wakened by the traditional call of "Coffee please" as they are served coffee at their tents, usually while still in their sleeping bags. As they set out on their first hike, so they become acquainted with a firm July Camp culinary tradition, Vusi's pickled pork.

An outstanding feature of this Camp was the exceptional hospitality we received from the Ezemvelo KZNWildlife staff. Sibongiseni Micca Khoza, the Acting Officer-in-Charge of Lotheni Nature Reserve, visited us almost every other day, just to make sure that we did not need anything and Bongiwe Duma, the Receptionist at Lotheni was a most gracious and caring hostess. We thoroughly enjoyed their visits and were able to reciprocate by inviting them to share several meals with us. Another pleasant surprise was a visit from Dumisane Mpontshane, the Officer-in Charge of Vergelegen, the July Camp venue of two years ago.

The last time we had been at Lotheni was some 20 years ago when we experienced 'The Big Snow'. This year, however, the weather was relatively mild, with most days being typical for July, cold in the mornings until the sun reached the Camp site (at about the end of breakfast), then warming up until it was quite warm to hot at mid-day and during the earlier part of the afternoon, and then suddenly dropping when the sun left the Camp site at afternoon tea time. The evenings were still and certainly cold enough to

ensure that we needed campfires. We were lucky in our timing; the next weekend was extremely cold with rain and snow! It would have been quite beastly trying to strike camp in those conditions.

Every time I sit in the group of July Campers around the camp fire, I am immensely grateful to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife for the unique privileges they accord to July Camp. Such is the relationship that we have built up with them over the years that we are allowed to have three fires at July Camp, the essential cooking fire (although we do take gas in case the weather prevents the wise use of a kitchen fire), the fire under the hot water 'donkey' down by the river which provides the hot water for our baths and the camp fire (weather permitting). This year we had wonderful camp fires and enjoyed their warmth that encouraged chatting and singing.

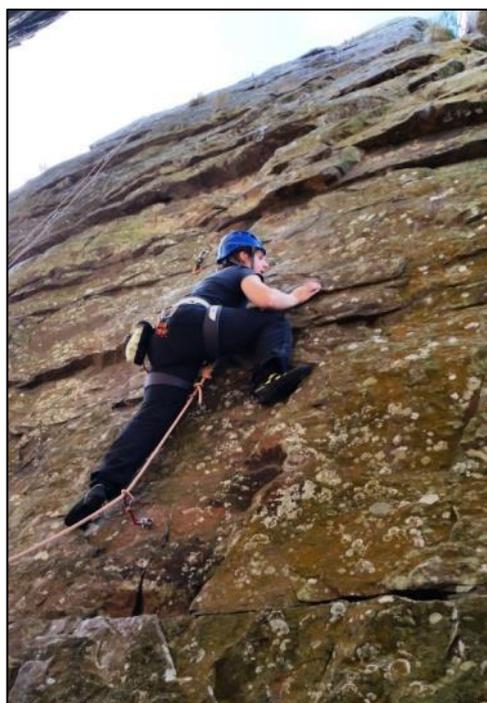
After such a successful Camp, surely every July Camper must have left Lotheni refreshed in body and spirit.

Beginners' Meet : Rumdoodle

by Hannelie Pickering

13 August 2016

I love hosting beginners' meets. I love getting newbies out on rock. But the frustration of people not being able to commit, is almost enough to make me stop hosting them. The week leading up to the meet had me super excited about the number of keen people and down in the dumps when all but two cancelled by Friday morning. I nearly cancelled myself. Luckily I didn't and by Saturday morning we had ten people at the parking lot. James and Chris were already there putting up ropes and there were plenty more arriving (I have no idea who they were, just too many people to keep track of). Gerald Camp says that when he arrived in the late afternoon to do some bolting, he met six people on the path and there were still plenty of people climbing – how cool is that!!!



*Climber at Rumdoodle
Photo: Janey Cramer*

Scott was happy to abseil down into The Ravine first and play fireman, so I could take care of the safety at the top. There were a few interesting moments when some of the less experienced climbers started the abseil but, in the end everybody got down safely. A lot of time was spent on the nice 12s, 15s and 17s. Janey did her first outdoor climb and just loved it. It was a fantastic opportunity for people to learn to lead. We had four guys do their first or one of their first leads, which is always a treat. Scott, James, Chris etc. did some of the harder routes and Scott in particular took a stunning fall. This is exactly how I feel MCSA meets should be; everyone sharing ropes, belays and joking with each other. It was such a fantastic atmosphere and everyone looked like they were having a great time. Thanks for being awesome guys and ladies!

North London Mountain Club : Winter Climbing Meet *by Colin McCoy*

One of the many benefits of being a MCSA member is being able to make use of the good relationships we have as a club with the large number of mountaineering organizations around the world. The most recent of which is the reciprocal agreement between the MCSA and the North London Mountain Club.

My good friend, Rob Powell, who now resides in London, is a member of both the MCSA and NLMC. As such I got an invite to attend the NLMC winter climbing meet, originally planned to take place in Scotland but at the last minute, due to poor conditions and high avalanche risk the venue was changed to Cogne.

*Colin McCoy on Coupé Money
Photo: Paul Henderson*



Cogne is in the Italian Alps on the opposite side of Mont Blanc to Chamonix. There are two main valleys, the Valnontey Valley and Lillaz Valley. We stayed in a hotel in the Lillaz Village, the closest route is probably about a 30 minute walk from the hotel. With such easy access you can get quite a lot done in a day, however it is still good to get an early start due to avalanche risk in certain areas in the afternoon.

The first two days I teamed up with different partners from the NLMC. As we arrived just after midday on the first day we headed straight out to get a route under the belt. We chose a two pitch route close by called E Tutto Relativo II 4.

All the rest of the routes I did during the week were long, so at least five pitches each. On day 2 I teamed up with two guys that haven't done much leading, it was great for me as I got to lead everything. We climbed Pattinggio Artistico II 3. I then had to suddenly rush off to a business meeting in Rotterdam for the next two days. After that Paul Henderson, also an MCSA member, joined us for two days. Paul and I climbed Lillaz Gulley II 4, a very fun route with some mixed climbing on the top pitches where you do some cool hook moves on tree routes.

The following day Paul and I headed to Coupé Money II 4+/5. This was at Rob's suggestion as he had climbed it the previous day. As the climbing in Cogne is so easy to access, the routes can get quite stepped out making them become even easier as the season goes on. Coupé Money was quite a long walk up the Valnontey Valley so when Rob climbed it there had been no sign of previous parties, putting it into a solid grade 5 condition. Admittedly I never looked at a route guide, we just walked in and Rob pointed it out to me and said something along the lines of "You'll totally crush it dude, it's grade 4".

It was only after the fact that I learned the real grade, it definitely felt hard and there were certainly a lot of dry mouth moments. I'm grateful that Rob has faith in my abilities as I don't think I would have tried it knowing the grade and of course I'm super stoked to have climbed a personal best.

The next day I teamed up with Rob. We walked up the Lillaz Valley looking for something that neither of us had done yet that looked good. At the end of the valley we agreed that nothing really appealed so we would head down to the Valnontey Valley and do Patri de Gauge II 4. This is a very popular route and arriving there so late in the day there were probably ten other parties at various places along the route.

I took the first pitch and very soon got frustrated with having other slower parties on the route and over crowding at belays. Rob joined me at the belay and I got my first lesson at properly simul climbing, I belayed Rob until the rope ran out and then started to climb together, Rob would place a tibloc on the runner before a hard section to protect both of us if the other person fell. We passed a number of teams very quickly and set up a belay again at the base of the last pitch. Whilst I was belaying Rob, a party above us who were abseiling down the route, knocked off a large block of ice which hit me on the foot, for the first few minutes I couldn't move it but after a bit of time the pain slowly subsided. I followed the pitch very carefully then abseiled down the route and hobbled back to the car.

The last day my foot was still very tender and weather was deteriorating so Rob and I drove down to Aosta to the ski area of Pila. With the support of a ski boot the pain in my foot was tolerable enough to spend an awesome day skiing to round off a fantastic week of climbing.

Thanks to Rob for organizing the meet, my climbing partners and the North London Mountain Club.

Mnweni Fun

9 – 11 September, 2016

We were on the road earlier than Joburg commuters, on this Friday, 9th September. But our goal was fun, adventure and views in the Northern Berg. The first adventure came charging right at us; in the form of a bull. Confident that the "domestic" animals roaming around were used to humans, I ignored the bull at first, but then realised with a high-pitched shriek (and a bolt in the other direction) that this bull was really making his way towards us. Luckily, Mavis, knows about cattle and quickly put the bull back in its place.

The rest of the day was spent toiling up Mnweni Pass, with the obligatory swim (or rather splash) at lunch time - it was a scorcher. Ledger's Cave was a decent reward - views to dream of. We'd reached the cave just in time before darkness set in; and with it the misty clouds came and covered us with dew overnight. Nice.

by Sonja Hofmann



Photo: Carl Dreyer

Day two was a haze. Literally. The GPS ruled. By lunch, things looked up again. We had made good time and could chill by the river in the sun and sneak a skinny-dip while Carl napped.

Easter Cave showed promise of providing better protection from the elements and provided a comfy night. In the evening, with the blanket of cloud, we enjoyed the view from the peak above then, the next morning views of the sprawling lower 'Berg.

The three of us hiked well together, chit-chatted comfortably, discussed the club going forward with fervour, and loved our own comfy beds once we were back home.

Jack and the Beanstalk : Garden Castle

by Hallam Payne

10 – 13 June, 2016

Five hikers including two complete novices (and an Italian) made the short slog up to Sleeping Beauty cave on the Friday after work, after stopping at the Birds in the Barley in Bulwer for toasted sandwiches and a view of the most compensatory chainsaw in the world. The hike up to the cave was uneventful, but a cold night left us less than enthusiastic about tackling the 5-pitch route "Jack and the Beanstalk" the following morning. Being snowed off the first pitch completed our rout, so we turned the day over to waiting for the sun to come out (it did), eating, bouldering, exploring, and making squirrel nests in the cave. Sunday turned out crisp and clear with snow dusting the high 'Berg. Three of the party went up "Jack and the Beanstalk" quickly and without incident, and were rewarded with lovely views of a snow-covered Rhino. The other two pretended to watch us while dozing in their sleeping bags. After another freezing night in the cave, and we hiked out on a frosty Monday, under the chilly eyes of the Monk, and through trees laden with icicles. Not a bad long weekend.



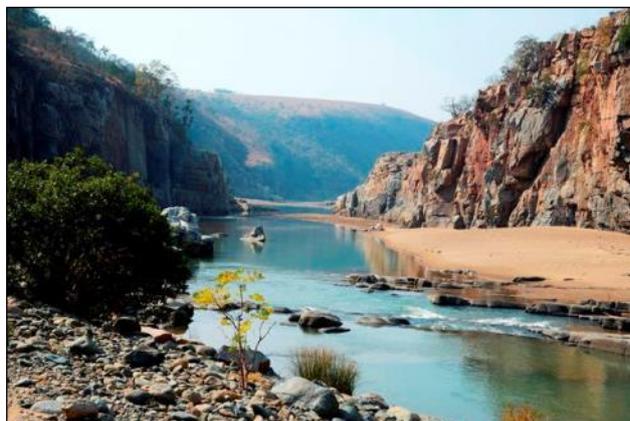
*Marco Plebani on J & the B
Photo: Hallam Payne*

White Umfolozi

by Hallam Payne

15 – 19 June, 2016

A most successful weekend was held at White Umfolozi for the June long weekend. So many people signed up for this that there were fears of overcrowding! However, Johannesburg section ended up not arriving after all, and lots of people car-pooled, so there was ample parking space. The new ablution facilities held up admirably, and there were enough beds, camping and sleeping spaces for all arrivals, expected or



White Umfolozi. Photo: A van Tonder

otherwise. Nearly thirty people turned up, some from as far afield as Canada. A large variety of climbs were done, both trad and sport, adventurous and less so. Some people even managed to explore the Buffalo face and Mkhize's buttress, two stunning areas that get much less traffic than they ought to, on account of being a bit of a hike. Among notable events was Ziggy Snyman's ascent of "Mfecane", a very thin and slabby 23 which is always a daunting prospect. On the development side, Gavin Peckham explored another new route and finished bolting his extension to "A Bit on the Side", while Hallam Payne completed the bolting of two projects on the Power Wall, then promptly got too ill to work on them. Expect first ascents from these two notorious characters sometime in the next year or three. As usual, the campfire antics were boisterous and entertaining, culinary horizons were expanded, and volumes of words were spoken, with little being said. Many thanks to all for coming, and to the new curators of the venue for the upgraded facilities. Booking details for this magnificent venue can be found on the MCSA-KZN website.

1-2-5 Climb Events in KZN

1–2 October, 2016. Popple Peak. Leader: Jonathan Newman.
Contact details: jonathan.the.ghaznavid@gmail.com ; 084 494 4920
Enjoy Pizza and Poker on Popple Peak.

7–9 October, 2016. Sterkhorn. Leader: Carl Dreyer.
Contact details: carldreyer5@gmail.com ; 084 527 9985
Arrive at Monks Cowl Friday after work, set up tents etc. Climb Sterkhorn and hike on Saturday with very early start. Braai back at camp in evening. Relax and return home Sunday.

8–9 October, 2016. Garden Castle. Leader: Hannelie Pickering.
Contact details: pickering.hannelie@gmail.com ; 0844862949
Climb south route on Rhino.

14–16 October, 2016. Ndumeni Dome. Leader: Sonja Hofmann.
Contact details: speckwurst@gmail.com ; 082 835 9435
Medieval Butter Tasting.

22–23 October, 2016. Cathedral Peak. Leader: Dave Gay.
Contact details: cougar1@telkomsa.net ; 031 764 0298
Cathedral Peak Dinner Party.

29–30 Oct 2016. Underberg, Bamboo Mountain. Leader: Iona Stewart.
Contact details: iona@sal.co.za ; 082 990 3968
Climb Bamboo Mountain in your Crazy Hat.

Events planned for KZN may viewed at: <http://kzn.mcsa.org.za/meets>

A Blast from the Past : A Tale Not Yet Told *by Iona Stewart*

Sometime back in 2001 James Voortman was scheduled to lead a trip to Zulu Cave. At the last minute he was unable to take it so Steve Cooke stepped in and did the honours. The weather was good, the hike to Zulu cave even better and the company, well, the best.

Cave activities were as per usual, setting out bedding in the cave, some braving a shower in the *en suite* waterfall, preparations for supper and a lot of banter.

The following day we left the cave at about 8 am, going down through Cat Cave and into the Umhlazana river valley. We did encounter a very dicey move around a very slippery rock, particularly tricky for the more vertically challenged hikers among us, Felicity Kromhout and Jane Dickenson being the most affected. It required a very wide step around the rock with nearly no foothold at all and wet. How fortunate that we had Gordon Jenkins with us, whose long legs found no challenge in the obstacle at all. I have often wondered how we shorter mortals would have ever got beyond that point if there hadn't been help at hand.

Sobeit. We pressed on down the valley and then up into the forest and headed towards Stable Cave. Somewhere along the line we stopped for lunch on the side of the path then continued on our merry way. Poor Dylan Salt had developed some very nasty blisters on his feet, but not to worry. Once up on the ridge, there was a route down the cliff face that James had assured Steve was a quick and easy descent to the cars. What's more, it was clearly marked on the map!? Surely we were close to that point by then, and Dylan would be able to relieve his feet of their boots.

Well, after much backing and forthing, hunting for this infamous route, it was just not findable. Time was getting on, and the mist was beginning to waft over the high berg. Steve, having had decades of experience in the berg, then announced what we were all hoping he was not going to announce. It was late, the mist was closing down on us and it will soon be dark. It would be the height of recklessness to try and find an unknown route down a cliff under such conditions. We were to turn around and retrace our steps. We got to the contour path, back to Blind Man's Corner and down to Breakfast Stream. By this time it was no longer a joll, for some. With the mist came rain and sheer darkness. We all had torches, but that did not make for easy hiking. Because of the mist and the irritating way our torch lights simply reflected light off the water droplets back into our faces, we had to stick very close to each other, and make sure no-one fell down the steep slope beside the path.

For a brief moment we had coms so family members waiting anxiously for our return, were quickly called and told "Don't worry about us - we are in good hands". Most of us were actually enjoying this epic, but not the feet of poor Dylan. He was one very relieved hiker when we reached the car park.

We arrived at the cars at 11:30 pm, having hiked for 15.5 hours and covering some 27 kms. It was a great weekend. The intrepid hikers were Steve Cooke (substitute leader), Gordon Jenkins, Felicity Kromhout, Jane Dickenson, Cesar de Carvalho and myself, Iona Stewart. I am not sure why this great epic has been kept under the radar for so long!

Rescue Report

by Gavin Raubenheimer

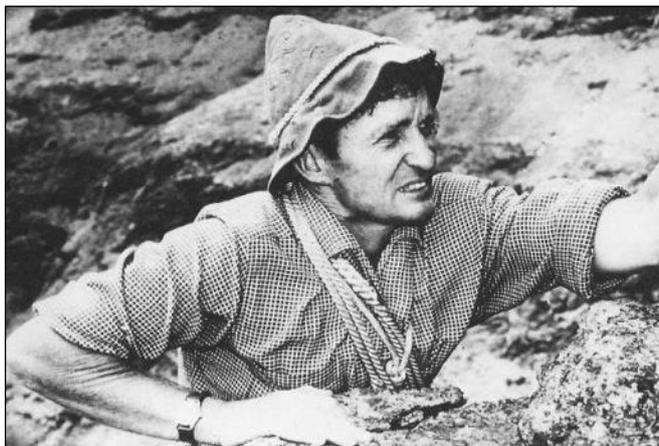
Two operations have taken place since the last newsletter. On 5 August the rescue team and the SA Air Force were involved in the rescue of four people from a light helicopter crash at Tseketseke Pass. On 11 August the rescue team and the SA Air Force rescued two hikers and their guide from the top of Langalibalele Pass who were unable to descend the heavy snow in the pass.

A helicopter rescue training day took place with 15 Squadron at Himeville.

Obituary : Martin Winter

by Steve Cooke et al.

The club is sad to announce that Martin Winter passed away peacefully on 17 June. Martin's climbing exploits in the Drakensberg were legendary in the 1950's and early 60's. He sought out and led or helped lead some 15 recorded first ascents. He was also a rescue organiser before the days of helicopters, and was involved in some very tough and arduous berg rescues.



Martin was born on the 8th May 1928. He joined the MCSA KZN Section in July 1949 – so was a member for 67 years. He was awarded Life Membership in September 2003 and was given a scroll to commemorate the occasion.

The President, Committee and all members of the KZN Section convey their most sincere sympathy to Martin's wife Lenora, their family and friends. A memorial service was held on Sunday 3 July at Martin's farm Klipfontein near Estcourt.

Martin's exploits are remembered in the words of the July Camp song:

Young Martin climbs the E and F G routes,
To him the toughest climb is but a jaunt,
Austerity's his motto when his party's on the move,
He brings them back to base camp lean and gaunt.

An advertisement for 'BUSH & BUNDU'. The background is a scenic view of a mountain range with green valleys and blue skies. In the foreground, two people are sitting on a rocky ledge on the left, and a silhouette of a person is climbing a rock face on the right. The text is centered and reads:

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CONTACT LIST – MCSA KZN COMMITTEE 2016 - 2017

Name	Home No.	Work No.	Cell No.	Email Address
President Murray Sanders			071 301 5844	murraymsanders@yahoo.com mcsakzn.president@gmail.com
Hon. Secretary James Voortman			082 466 1731	jamesv@icon.co.za mcsakzn.secretary@gmail.com
Hon. Treasurer Beth McLeod	031 764 1991		082 820 1100	mcbeth@iafrica.com mcsakzn.treasurer@gmail.com
Rescue Convenor Gavin Raubenheimer	033 343 3168	033 343 3168	082 990 5876	gavin@peakhigh.co.za mcsakzn.rescue@gmail.com
Rock & Sport Climbing & Mountaineering Trevor Scott Johnson			076 123 6196	trevorjohnson83@googlemail.com mcsakzn.climb@gmail.com
Hiking Dr. Sonja Hofmann			082 835 9435	speckwurst@gmail.com mcsakzn.hiking@gmail.com
Meets Convenor Clem Robins	031 783 4965		084 500 4666	mcsakzn.meets@gmail.com clemrobins@ymail.com
Access Carl Dreyer			084 527 9985	mcsakzn.access@gmail.com carldreyer5@gmail.com
Conservation Jan Phelan	033 330 2948		082 876 0003	mcsakzn.conservation@gmail.com mwplanit@mweb.co.za
Administrators Dan Ryding and Scott Sinclair			076 819 2486 083 235 4938	dan.ryding@virgin.net scott.sinclair.za@gmail.com
PR & Durban Socials Scott Sinclair			083 235 4938	scott.sinclair.za@gmail.com mcsakzn.pro@gmail.com
Assistant PR Eric Penman	031 708 3553		079 936 7666	ericpenman1940@gmail.com
July Camp Rikki Abbott Wedderburn	033 239 2374		082 538 5389	ronwedd@netactive.co.za
Cambalala Hut Clem Robins	031 783 4965		084 500 4666	clemrobins@ymail.com
Cambalala Bookings Clem Robins	031 783 4965		084 500 4666	clemrobins@ymail.com
Webmaster Dan Ryding	031 764 0685		076 819 2486	dan.ryding@virgin.net mcsakzn.webmaster@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor Gavin Peckham	035 792 4543		084 587 6995	gavin.peckham@gmail.com
Maritzburg Socials Ian Bailey	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			MCSA (National) Website www.mcsa.org.za	