



Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

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EXPLORE • DISCOVER • CONNECT • PROTECT

NEWSLETTER

Oct/Nov/Dec 2010

Club News

The following new members are welcomed to the Club: Sharon Cox, Joshua Gaylard and Christian Pera – may you enjoy your years with us. Three members have resigned: Peter Keartland, Trish Quayle (Joslin) and Waldo Schumann.

Congratulations to Ewan and Nicky Olds, who had a little daughter born in August.

Some 'Milestone' Birthdays are coming up towards the end of the year, namely those of: Derek Hughes on 12 December (70 years), Lorna Peirson on 25 December (90 years) and Jeanne Watkins on 30 December (80 years). Congratulations and very best wishes to you from us all!

The long-awaited July Camp Cookbook has been printed at last; it looks really good and the A5 format is a convenient size. Details regarding orders for the cookbook are on the back page of the newsletter.

There has been a fair amount of activity in the Club just recently, the highlight of which was the Sentinel Centenary, in which the Sentinel climbed by a record (?) number of climbers; no mean feat! Celebrations were had afterwards at the Witzieshoek Hotel and great fun was had by all.

A reminder to members: if you have any spare or unwanted hiking/climbing/camping equipment for donating to the Club, please let Hannelie (084 4862949) or Iona (082 9903968) know, thanks!

Wanted: Volunteers to assist at the Work Meet at Cambalala on the weekend of 22-24 October, to erect the new Pozzi Hut, cut grass etc. Contact Clem Robins: 082 7712514 or email: robinsca@telkom.co.za

AND NOW – WOULD THOSE MEMBERS WHO HAVE NOT AS YET PAID THEIR SUBS, **PLEASE DO SO**, OR RISK BEING STRUCK OFF AT THE END OF DECEMBER 2010 – SOMETHING WE ARE RELUCTANT TO DO, BUT THE CLUB COSTS HAVE TO BE MET, AND IMPORTANT PROJECTS SUPPORTED.

Banking details: Standard Bank, Musgrave Road
Branch Code: 042626 **A/C No:** 051 207 141
Name: MCSA KZN Section

(Remember to state your name & number when making the deposit)

Hiking News

HIKING AT HIGHMOOR - 24/25 July 2010

Iona Stewart

The drive to Highmoor was delightful as we travelled through interesting and mostly progressive farming country, gradually approaching the foothills of the Berg.

There is very little Ezemvelo infrastructure at Highmoor, but what is there is more than adequate. The campsite is partly partitioned by means of *Leucosidea* (Ouhoud, umTshitshi) bushes, each campsite equipped with a braai facility and a tap for every four or five sites.

We arrived in time to have a quick brew of tea, whilst erecting tents, then set off for Aasvoelkranz. It is a gentle walk, past a lovely dam (very swim-able in summer). The veld had been burnt, which made the hills look bleak and desolate, yet with a stark beauty common to that part of the Berg.

After a couple of hours of very easy walking, we sheltered behind some rocks overlooking the krantz, with the cave to our right barely in view. As we were eating our late lunch, three bearded vultures slowly flew over us, following the path of the krantz. What a privilege to just sit there and watch them going about their business of living!

Ambling back to the camp, we saw eland and baboons, despite the barren and burnt veld. The next day (Sunday), we hiked in the opposite direction, to the Plaque, again a very easy but pleasing hike. The first joy was seeing a griffin (Cape vulture) above us, being harassed by a much smaller bird - too small to identify. Passing a small area of wetland, we saw two wattled cranes, which at a later stage flew over us. And then not much further on, as we climbed over a small ridge, we came across a couple of oribi. It was hard to believe that we had seen four endangered species in less than 24 hours!

This benign hike was not without its little drama. On setting out on Sunday morning, we met a man seemingly coming back from the high ground - he had gone there to pray, he said. It turned out he had a woman with him who was in fact busy lighting a fire. She had a couple of live fowls beside her and this was all for some ceremony. What concerned us, besides the fate of the fowls, was the lighting of a fire in the park, as we all know that it is forbidden. Checking that the surroundings had been burnt, and hence not too much danger in case of a runaway fire, we pressed on, not wanting to cause a scene. However, we did not leave it at that, especially as when we returned, there were still burning embers left. So we alerted the authorities and measures were taken to deal with this incident.

The point of relating this incident is to remind us all that we are the surrogate eyes and ears of the custodians of our berg and it is very helpful to them to report whatever we consider to be of importance.

This hike was led by Gavin Heath and in the party were Bronwyn Hanes, Mirjana Povic (from Serbia) and myself.

CATHEDRAL MEET AT GARDEN CASTLE **7-9 August, 2010**

by Iona Stewart

A meet to Cathedral Peak was scheduled for the Women's Day long weekend, but evidently at this time of the year, ice climbing was a greater draw-card. There was only one taker for Cathedral - then, because of other unforeseen circumstances, the long weekend was reduced to a one-nighter. Result? Gavin Heath, the meet leader, and Iona Stewart headed for Garden Castle where they camped for the night, at the official campsite.

This camp-site is very well equipped with benches, a concrete slab, braai and rubbish bin at each site. The ablution block offers flush toilets and hot showers. Tents were pitched in time for a leisurely supper, in preparation for an equally leisurely hike the next day.

Having struck camp, the two of us started our hike at about 9:30, crossed the river and went up towards Sleeping Beauty. It was actually a beautiful, clear day, though a little chilly. Some flowers were beginning to show small buds and there was a hint of spring in the air. The cave was inspected, but not being a feature of great beauty, us two hikers carried on further before stopping for refreshments. Two other hikers were on their way down and showed us a digital photo taken earlier that morning in that same valley, of what looked very like a bushbuck ram. Sadly, the only animals our two hikers saw were a few rather thin horses grazing near the burn.

After a four and a half hour hike, the Gavin and I went home. Although this was not a strenuous or challenging hike, it was a very pleasant way to spend a 24 hour break, with many possibilities for introducing children and novice hikers to the joys of the Drakensberg.

Climbing News

Kranskop Meet 27-29 August

by Gavin Raubenheimer

It was like a return to a sacred place!Kranskop in the Free State near the little town of Memel. Nowadays the route descriptions can only be found in the old guide books of the early 90's and before. The land

owner had stopped access some 12 years ago and all seemed to have been lost. Then over the last few months, rumours began to be whispered that some access was possible as long as the correct channels were followed. That was enough for me to make a firm booking via the Amajuba Section of thKranskop is a lone mesa type mountain which rises out of the Free State plains south of the village of Memel. The crags are formed from Free State series sandstone and are about 50m-70m in height, much like Eagle Rock and Swinburne, but of a better quality and with more natural protection points available. The climbing is all Traditional in style and consists of long evenly graded routes of great quality. The boulders on the pediplain below have about a dozen Sport-routes but unfortunately with mainly sub-standard type bolts.

Kranskop is probably best known for the Classic route *Lunatic Fringe*. This line is only graded 13 with a second pitch of grade 11. Its status comes from the first pitch that takes an amazing line across a



Gavin R. on 2nd pitch of *Retina* photo by Bruce Sobey

huge face and then turns up and follows a steep arête on perfect holds and good exposure.

So it was with great excitement that a party of nine KZ-N and four Amajuba members arrived late on the Friday afternoon. There was a great rush upon arrival, as four people including myself, set out there and then to "get a route in" before dark. The objective was *Brain Drain* (15) for me and Bruce Sobey on *Lunatic Fringe*, seconded by Allard Welter and Josh Pickering. Needless to say the routes were completed but the abseiling was in the dark.

The next day started out as a fine winter's day and much climbing was done, which included Josh leading *Pavement Pizza* (16) Hannelie did *Brain Drain*, and Allard lead *Lunatic Fringe*. Bruce Sobey, Allard and I all did *Retina* (15) and *Ecclesiastic* (15) followed by a hard jamming session on *Tigerjam* (20) . By midday the usual Free State wind had come up and was howling across the plains which made climbing a bit unpleasant.

Sunday, the last day, came all too soon and we had only half a day to get things done. Hannelie (Die Staal Poppie) had backed off *Tessitura* (21) and almost did the same on *Brain Drain* the day before and so was put onto *Longinquos*, a grade 17 with a bit of a bight. Her reputation was thus kept intact. Bugs and Bruce Tomalin climbed "The Fringe" alongside and offered encouragement.

Note: Access is still restricted to Kranskop and all arrangements must be done via the Amajuba Section, as relations with the owners are fragile. The base is now in a private cottage about one kilometer from the original camping area and farm house. No climbers may arrive without going through these channels or all else access could be closed again.

Our thanks to Thea and Richard from Amajuba Section who came along and climbed and obtained permission for us to visit.-

MCSA Sentinel Centenary

4 September 2010

by Hannelie C Morris

Mervyn Gans sent me a NOT so innocent email last year, mentioning that the Sentinel was first climbed in 1910 and perhaps something should be organised to celebrate the 100 years since the first ascent. While on a DMG (Dry Mouth Guild) lead, I convinced Bruce Tomalin that he could take over the job from me. About two weeks' later, when I mentioned it again, he could only just remember..! Bruce



Terence Jonker, Iona Stewart & Cyndi Jonker on the Sentinel *Photo: Mike Coke*

followed through, advertised, psyched everyone up and at one point we had 70 people wanting to go up the standard route of the Sentinel. Everyone said - "Half will cancel, don't worry!" Well, they never did!!!

What a weekend though - we had 55 people ascend the Sentinel via the *Standard Route*. Both Bruce and I felt that it was a real privilege to be able to give all those people the opportunity to get on the mountain. Some had never climbed before, others thought that it was their last chance to climb a Drakensberg Peak (well I hope we proved you wrong and that you will have another go after



Bruce Tomalin, John Hone, Gavin R. and Tony van Tonder on Sentinel *photo by John Hone*

this) and others just enjoyed the day - having fun walking and climbing with other mountain lovers from all over the country and quite a few foreigners. There were two parties up the ever favourite *Angus Leppan* - the one party only topping out at 8 in the evening and then still had to walk down... And we had the *Brave 4* on the *Eastern Arête* (all of them thinking someone else was going to pull them through). Two of them bailed very early and went up the *Standard Route*, the other two begged a 100 m top-rope a few hours later!

From my side: Thanks to everyone who helped with the safety aspect - we could not have done it without you! All the belayers, those who offered beforehand (Bruce Tomalin, Gordon Jenkins, Ian Bailey, Cyndi and Terence Jonker and Che Jagger), those whose dads offered their services (Warren Gans) and those who got roped in on the day - literally (Iona Stewart, Mike O'Reilly, Gillian McGregor, Brian Godfrey and Rev. Kev). Witsieshoek treated us to an excellent braai in the evening - it was such a special evening, great to see the camaraderie - old friends meeting again and new friends being made!

Before you start thinking: "*When is the next Centenary?*", rather start thinking: "*Who will organise the next Centenary?*". I have a feeling Bruce might be otherwise occupied the next time I ask him to go climbing with me.....

Rescue Report

by Gavin Raubenheimer

5th August 2010 - An operation with SAAF assistance took place where a Treverton schoolboy was airlifted from the iNjisuthi area to Oribi airport after he developed a severe pain in his knee and became immobile.

19th August 2010 – A joint operation involving MCSA, EMRS and Sani Search Volunteers (SSV) took place in the Sani are, when a call was received from a local guide whose client, an American visitor, developed severe pain in her ankle and back and was unable to continue. The MCSA team was in Underberg at the time of the call, for rescue training with the SAAF and SSV, but this had been stood down due to bad weather. The joint team of 10 walked in to the patient and carried her down on a stretcher just before nightfall in very cold and wet conditions.

On the 19th to 20th August a joint rescue training session took place at Himeville. It took place in conjunction with the Sani Search Volunteers (SSV) EMRS and the SAAF.

On the 28th of August there was a Standby to search and rescue a lone male hiker from a gully on Cathedral Peak. He was later rescued by members of KZ-N Wildlife.

90th July Camp Report, 2010

by Rikki Wedderburn

It really seemed that everyone went all out to make this July Camp extra special – to celebrate the fact that it was the 90th anniversary of what we believe may be the world's longest running annual mountain camp!

It is not easy to capture all the highlights in this short report:

- More than 70 people attended the Camp
- Eight members travelled from Worcester and four of them were inexperienced younger hikers (paired with four experienced mentors) for their first Drakensberg Escarpment experience
- They brought with them the most delicious wine with which to toast the July Camp's 90th Anniversary
- Campers of all ages participated - from 2 to over 80!

- There were unforgettable escarpment trips and a successful trip to climb the Rhino
- Sub-campers delighted in memorable and evocative Little Berg trips
- Superb day walks ranged far and wide in all directions and weather conditions
- The new state-of-the-art wind and weatherproof loos and bathrooms designed by a Engineering Ph.D
- This is the year of the woman in MCSA with Amajuba, Magaliesberg and KwaZulu-Natal all having women at the helm, and MCSA itself having a woman as Deputy President **and all** these women attended the 90th July Camp
- Stunning new recipes were tried, tested and approved

Special thanks go to the gallant kitchen crew, the Advance Party, the leaders and most of all, thanks go to every July Camper since it is they who provide us with the reason to continue holding this extra-special event.

Roll on the next ten years that will bring the Centenary of July Camp!

P.S. The dates for the next July Camp are set – 2 to 16 July, 2011 and we plan to recce possible new sites in October 2010.

Book News

'JULY CAMP COOKBOOK' – is available from Rikki Wedderburn at a cost of R75.00 (collected) or R85.00 (posted).

Enquiries: Cell: 082 538 5389 or **email:** ronwedd@netactive.co.za

'AFRICAN SURVIVAL' by renowned DSTV TV Presenter and MNET's SURIVIVOR series contestant HEIN VOSLOO, on survival tips and techniques in the African bush, has just been published.

This unique field guide, which retails at R179.00, is an excellent reference source for Mountaineers, when out in the bundu, in the event of emergencies or just very useful climbers' reading material.

'MOUNTAINS IN THE SEA' by John Yeld and Martine Barker, which retails for around R295. It is a very interesting book about all the aspects of Table Mountain National Park and the flora and fauna within - the photographs are stunning.

FOR SALE:

LADIES BLACK K-WAY ANORAK

Windproof, waterproof, breathable. Size 'M'. Never worn.

Was R800 new, offered at R500.

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