

Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

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NEWSLETTER

July/Aug/Sept 2008

Membership

Welcome to the following new members who have joined the KZN section:

Simon Lowe, Justin de Jongh and Bernard Carr.

Dwayne Marx and Sonja Parnell have applied for membership.

Club News

Firstly, statements are being sent out to those members who have not paid their 2008 subs. Would you PLEASE PAY THEM, to keep the club coffers filled! Also remember your NAME and NUMBER on your deposit, for reference!



Cliffhanging in the UK - Hannelie's way!

Hannelie Morris – who was one of two MCSA climbers chosen by Cencom to attend - has recently returned from the BMC International Rock Climbing Meet at Plas Y Brenin, Wales. She enjoyed wonderful climbing experiences in Wales, Cornwall and the Peak District – and lived to tell the tale! (See inside newsletter for her article on the trip).

Iona Stewart, Carl Fatti and James Voortman are currently taking part in a climbing meet in Peru – we look forward to hearing about their experiences when they return.

This year's July Camp at Duart Castle in the Loteni/Vergelegen area is taking place from the 5th to the 19th July - all good wishes to Rikki Abbott and Ron Wedderburn for a successful camp and brilliant weather!

Congratulations and best wishes are extended to Ewan Olds and Nicky Coghlan on their recent marriage.

Rock Art Course:

Rikki Abbott is in contact with AMAFA who will be presenting a short course on Rock Art Conservation in August 2008, in Pietermaritzburg.

They are aware of the interest that many MCSA members have in the subject, and see this as an opportunity for co-operation. As she understands it, one will not be allowed to take people to painted caves, nor visit such caves, unless accompanied by someone who has done the course.

Anyone interested in the course can contact Rikki for further information.

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MCSA Journals

A number of MCSA journals have been returned to the club post box, due to 'non collection'. PLEASE would the following members arrange to pick up their Journals from the clubhouse at the next social/slideshow, or give Anne Rodwell (faraway@chillibyte.com) the name of someone she can give the journal to, for collection:

Paul Leslie-Smith

Mark Astrup

Mike Carter

Mark Leslie-Smith

Norman Harte

Hiking News

GARDEN CASTLE HIKE, 5/6 April, 2008

The rock climbing sector of the group, under the guidance of Gavin Raubenheimer, arrived at Garden Castle on the Friday night. Due to being kept late at work for some, the rest of the party spent the night at The Brae mountain club half-way house, (Iona's place) with the intention of leaving for Garden Castle at 05:30 on Saturday morning, arriving in time to join the climbers. Somehow, this did not happen, and this tardy bunch only got there at 09:00!! By then the climbers were on the rock face.

Having pitched their tents, (a little too close to the city campers for their comfort), the late comers, Lorna Backhouse, Glynis and her cousin from Johannesburg, Colin Brenner and Iona Stewart had a pleasant hike up the Sleeping Beauty valley, up to 2300m where the scenery was exquisite - definitely a place for a future mountain club meet. We ate our lunch on a rock with a view, and just thoroughly enjoying the privilege of being right where we were.

We finally vacated our rock, did a little unsuccessful exploring in search of a short cut to the base of the 'Monk', and then wandered back to the camp. Lorna forged ahead, in time to meet James Voortman and his bike and the two then went for a ride. The campsite was very comfortable, with steaming hot water for showers and clean adequate ablution facilities.

Sunday morning, James' birthday, dawned somewhat cold and wet. Glynis and Colin went for a bike ride while James, Lorna, Gavin, Hannelie and I, made a first ascent on a rocky peak to the north of the camp and called it P4P - Preparing for Peru - (2000m). It was a marvellous peak, with good views of the main berg and the lowlands.

The Garden Castle campsite is a lovely venue for a meet that has hikers

and climbers - lots for both groups to do. However, it is not so pleasant for other campers, who have left their city homes for the peace and tranquillity of a weekend in the berg, only to be subjected to a bunch of rowdy albeit jubilant, mountain clubbers!

Iona Stewart

Thabana Ntlenyane May, 2008

We left my house (The Brae, MCSA's half-way house) early, as I knew we would have a long haul in, and needed to get to about 2200m on the first night. We arrived at Vergelegen and set off at 10:00, Bill Small having joined us, just for the walk until lunch time when he turned back, as planned. It was a cool, partly cloudy day, perfect for hiking. We had new-comers with us, including Laura from USA, a friend of Kerri's, who had never hiked before, rather a daunting introduction to hiking in the berg! Also new to the club were Gordon Jenkins, an experienced climber/hiker and Saskia (dubbed the Ukrainian mail-order bride) from Himeville who joined us by default - she thought we were the Sani Saunter group. The only other men were Cesar, Andre and Rob Osborne. Also in the party were two more Hilton Harriers, Jan Phelan and Jane Dickinson, both members of the MCSA, Diana from Nottingham Road, ex-Jhb section and Glynis Jones.

About an hour into the hike, poor Laura suffered from terrible blisters and had to discard her borrowed boots and carry on in her running shoes. After a quick lunch, and an even quicker swim for some, we had to move on as we were now behind in time. Once we had all crossed the last river and climbed above the zig-zags, Rob, Cesar and Lorna were asked to go ahead and find a good camping spot, with water nearby. They found an excellent place for us to pitch our tents, but unfortunately, due to the slowness of our progress, we were at least 200m lower than we should have been to ensure a successful summit the following day.

We left our camp promptly at 07:00 on Sunday, and headed for the Umkomazi pass. It is a lovely pass really, very easy to negotiate, and the left-over snow from the previous week's fall, offered distracting entertainment for those up front, who were waiting for the tail-enders. Rob was at the back with me, helping and encouraging Laura. But after a couple of hours, I realised that not every one was going to make it at the rate we were going. So I sent a message up front with Rob to ask Cesar to take charge and move on. (It is a pity I had not done that an hour earlier).

Those nine got to the top of the pass, (Andre chose to go no further) and then Rob took charge of some while Cesar went ahead with Lorna and a couple of others. The mist was coming down and it was so important that the people of the two groups stuck together, which they did.

Meantime, on the pass, Laura was battling. She was very tired, and since she had been living at sea level, was feeling the altitude.

During one of her rests, I looked back and there to my surprise was Glynis and Gordon, slowly making their way - I had been told they had turned back long before. Laura and I waited until they caught up and then the four of us continued our very slow progress together.

We made it to the top of the pass just after noon and sat next to some rocks trying to shelter from the biting wind that was coming off the snow. Other than the cold, it was lovely up there, the Lesotho landscape all speckled with snow. We delighted in the thought that at least the others were on top of Thabana Ntlenyane!

The four of us then made our way down very slowly and headed back to camp. The mist was beginning to swirl and approach which made me very anxious that we did not split, even apparently so close to camp.

Meanwhile on top, Cesar, Lorna and Rob had decided on a cut-off time when no matter what, everyone would turn around. Cesar, Lorna, Jan, Kerri and Diana reached the base of the peak, the summit looking invitingly close, but turn around time had come, so that is exactly what they did, knowing it would take longer than expected, to summit. Their descent was uneventful and a ridge or two before we descended to camp, we could see them all coming, with the mist close behind them. I could hear their cheerful chatter a good five minutes away, and it was such a relief to count all eight of them!!

There was lots of laughter and joking in camp that night. Laura no longer had it in for me; in fact she was so thrilled with what she had achieved that day, it was good to hear her comments. Nobody had got to the top of the mountain, but the leaders had made the right decisions. Everyone was safely back in camp. However, if someone was to be singled out as star of the excursion, that was Laura. It was her first ever hike, in trainers, and to the top of a pass.

All that was left was the long trek out on the Monday, and the scratches through the brambles. It was a happy group, a great weekend and despite what non-climbers may think, it was a very successful meet. *Iona Stewart*

Hike up Tshepeng Pass 10/11 May, 2008

Four eager explorers, James, Gordon, Saskia and myself, had a wonderful weekend exploring the Tshepeng Pass area between Rhino and Hidden Valley. Friday night was spent in Underberg with Saskia who plied us with delicious butternut soup and gluhwein. After some negotiation and compromising, it was agreed to leave Underberg by 7am and start hiking by 8am. The plan originated on another occasion, when Iona and myself had been exploring past Sleeping Beauty Cave and decided we had to return to explore further. Unfortunately due to injury, Iona could not join us.

The idea was originally to hike up Wilson's Pass, but a good path led to the left of the ridge and we decided to stick to the path until "just round the corner". Wow - up ahead were 2 incredible ice lines winding their way up the escarpment to the top. James and I decided we would go, but the non-climbers in the party persuaded us to err on the side of caution and it was agreed we would go up Tshepeng Pass instead.

Well, we didn't quite make it up there. We got into the main gully and missed the gully to the left that was Tshepeng. But we had a grand time! There was snow and ice for me to kick through then we veered off right and went straight up the escarpment on a C grade scramble. Saskia did fantastically for her first rock climbing experience and James and Gordon were great in navigating and assisting us upwards through the rock bands.

We eventually made it to the top by 4pm then ambled across to find Mzimude Cave. The day was awesome, with the clouds changing constantly. We were never too sure if it was about to snow, rain or clear up completely. But the sunset was spectacular and we spent a fair bit of time just enjoying the solitude, peacefulness and incredible colours, before we settled into the cave for the night.

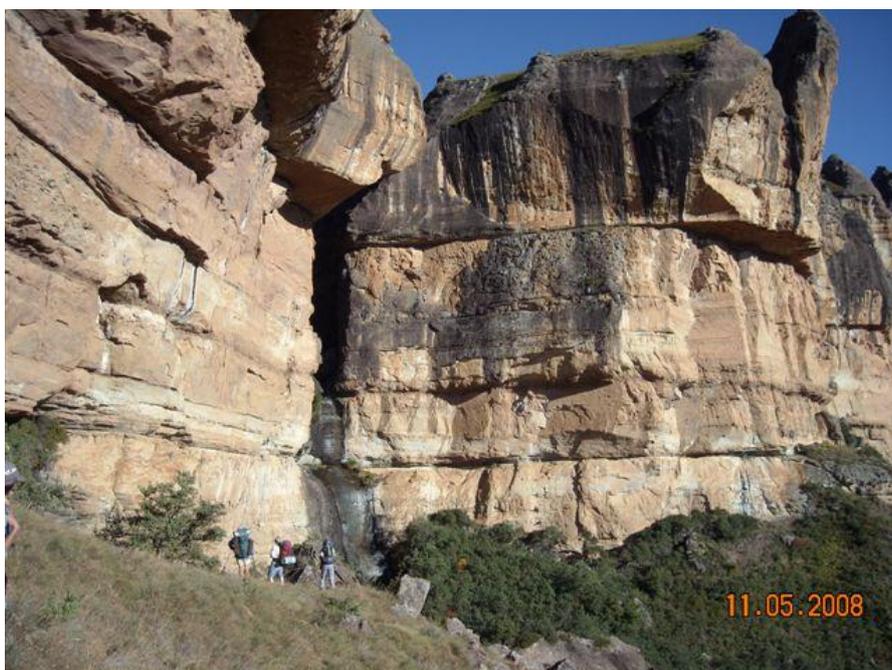
The morning saw a very slow start and best memories are of lying swathed in down solving the world and its problems. We wound our way down Mzimude Pass, took what looked like a good path that ended up going nowhere - so simply scrambled straight down the ridge. After a fantastic swim and lunch we were all revived and shot off for the last stretch. The only highlight being a puff adder that Saskia almost stood on, that was reported to be HUGE! For that reason I stuck very close behind James after that, following his every footstep....

It was a great hike, loads of laughing, good exercise, great friends but the best was exploring a totally new area without paths, cairns or people around.

Lorna Backhouse

Hike to Whytes Cave, 10/11 May 2008

After nearly cancelling the meet because of lack of support, six of us set off at 9:30 with a few threatening clouds coming in from the south-west. There were two other MCSA members, myself and Carl Fatti and three non members, Sue von Maltzen, Jenny Reynolds and her brother Peter - a nice number. The bad weather kept away and at lunchtime we



stopped at Painter's Cave where we enjoyed the paintings, and again at White Horse cave. We reached Whyte's Cave in good time and settled in comfortably .

On Sunday we retraced our steps in beautiful weather with no untoward incidents. Baboons, reedbuck and one large skAAPsteker were seen during the weekend.

There was a small amount of litter (toilet paper) in the vicinity of the cave. Last year on two visits to the cave large amounts of litter were found. This was reported to the officer at Bushman's Nek, who said he would have the litter cleared up. I feel it would be better to find the culprits. There were no records of other hiking groups having used the cave. However, the officer at Garden Castle thought that adjoining landowners were allowing friends access to the area, probably into Hidden Valley.

So not only are these people not paying for a permit, they are polluting the area as well.

Iona Stewart

Mount Helga - May 2006

Mount Helga is a free standing peak (2702m) overlooking the mLambonja river, in the Cathedral Peak area. Seven of us set off at a civilised time - about 11:30 - aiming for Xeni Cave, which is only about 6 km from the hotel. Well, we made a meal of the hike in, climbing up a very steep grass face after a scramble through a forest, only to find there was no cave at the top. So we descended again, and after our leader and his cohort had done a little recce, we continued further upstream, boulder hopping and bush-whacking our way to the real cave. It was getting quite late but no problem - we arrived just before dark. The timing was perfect actually, as James and Lorna had just arrived from their more ambitious hike from Organ Pipes.

Now we were nine - Carl Fatti who led the hike, Bridget and Mike Richmond, Gordon Jenkins, Glynis Jones, Saskia from Himeville, Lorna Backhouse, James Voortman and myself, Iona. The cave is like a community hall, so space was no problem, and we spread ourselves out comfortably. Supper was a cheerful affair and then Carl led the singing, which may not have been such a happy affair for some. It was better not to ask!

Before turning in Carl told us that we were to get up at first light, as we were to summit Mt Helga the following morning. The rooster on my cell phone was used to call everyone, to good effect. We moved off at 07:30, leaving Glynis and James as car guards - they had wisely chosen to take it easy for the day.

What a hike! We scratched and scraped our way through bush and undergrowth, punctuated with boulder hopping up the mLambonja until the foot of Mt Helga. Then it was a near vertical grass slope to the first knob on Mt Helga. The views were spectacular and though the mist swirled around, it did not hamper our progress. Mt Helga offers a panoramic view of the escarpment, and down the whole valley.

The climb taking longer than was anticipated, we gradually dribbled our way down, Lorna and James racing ahead as Lorna still had to get back to Johannesburg. Carl and the Richmonds were the only ones with real staying power, making it to the top and back to the cave by 15:30. But they did it the hard way. Like so many short cuts, the long way round would have been easier and quicker! Instead, they got an extra dose of bushes and scratches because they bombed straight down the mountain to the river, and then scrambled up to the cave! It meant they hiked out by bundu-bashing in the dark for the last 15 minutes. Meantime, Saskia and I, having left the cave earlier, had an invigorating swim on the way down. By the time we had all assembled together again, it was after 19:00, and raining, but it was a happy and satisfied group that headed for home.

Thanks to Carl for leading us, but no thanks for all the scratches, cuts and bruises!!

Iona Stewart

Rock Climbing

CLIMBING THE MONK AT GARDEN CASTLE 5/6 APRIL, 2008

Mutatis mutandi, ring leader Raubenheimer eventually headed for the "Monk" with Colin, Trevor, Hannelie and Cesar in tow. The morning steadily matured along with the plod of weighty feet, winding up the precipitous grass slopes of well-fed water catchments, capped by eccentrically formed

sandstone pinnacles. By the time the group reached the base of the climb, the sunrays were already furious.

The take-off point resembled an aviary; hither and thither - drinking, pecking, picking at protection pieces, generally doing anything to avoid looking up at the awesomely stonking full length vertical crack. Finally the cocks' combs were strapped on (except Hannelie, {being of the hen persuasion} donned a regal red ecrin roc!). Thus with protected cranium, Gavin elected to take off first. Colin and Trevor clawed their way up next.

Hannelie (yster poppie) took full advantage of Gavin's handiwork, and promptly free climbed the crevice, using the pre-placed protection. Cesar had the not-so-envious task of cleaning the pitch of the pro that Gavin enthusiastically fused into the rock! Everyone had a chance to alternately lead pitches (comprising two separate teams).

The weather turned fickle. Morning clear blue sky was tinged by noon with grey thunderstorm clouds. Storms were seen distantly at various localities, but the group were only subjected to minimal rain. The elements provided spectacular subjects for the cameras.

With the summit registry concluded, the abseils were summarily completed. The beer pack at base camp beckoned. Cesar and Gavin wasted no time chasing their probosces that had caught a whiff of the malt and ran back to the campsite! The juvenile members, naturally a lot softer, slinked back, arriving at sunset.

Iona Stewart

Demolition at oNgoye !

It has apparently never happened before, but some recent visitors left their Land Rover Discovery at the birders' lodge and spent a couple of hours wandering through the forest. On their way back they heard the calls of ground hornbills. These calls grew louder as they approached their vehicle. When they arrived they found that the hornbills had attacked the vehicle, put a myriad of substantial dents in virtually every panel and had ripped one of the bumpers half off. The damage came to about R30 000. On your next visit I suggest you take a shotgun (or a baseball bat if you want to get more personal) and a Weber braai - seriously though, please be aware of this possible problem, especially if you happen to hear these magnificent birds in the vicinity of your vehicle!

Gavin Peckham

BMC International Rock Climbing Meet @ Plas Y Brenin in Wales, May 2008

Except for the language, the route starts with an all too familiar trend in my life - "Crikey, how am I suppose to get off the bloody ground?" I manage somehow, I'm moving - "just KEEP moving", I repeat to myself. A layback, a couple of crimps, a bridge here and a jam there - no one told me that I'll have to jam - I hate jamming. It's **Cenotaph Corner**. Since I saw this crack 8 years ago and heard the "not so true" account of Joe Brown's first ascent (having to down climb the 40m crack, since he dropped his peg-hammer and knocked his belayer out), its been my dream to climb this crack in Llanberis Pass. It's everything I hoped for. No, it's way better!! This is why we climb. Getting a bit tired, pumped, I look down and guess I must be near the top, I look up and realise that I'm not even halfway yet! What a climb!! It's a never ending dream crack with everything you could want - sustained, interesting, keeps you thinking, with beautiful views and a road at the bottom of the valley to remind you just how high you really are. Then, when you do

get near the end - what they do? The climbing gods through in the crux! I tap my helmet (the secret language of a select group of KZN climbers) to tell my host for the day, Andy, to watch me, but they speak a different language here. No chance of hearing "You can do it Haans!" - How I miss home! Praying that the Pommie does know how to belay, I take a deep breath, jam my fingers in the crack, pull through and shout down to my belayer: "Andy - do you think I may lead this again?".

And this was just a couple of minutes of my trip...

As seems the tradition - the International Meet had a week of sunshine. On the first evening, one of the organisers said: "Please don't feel that you HAVE to climb every day" and everyone laughed - *of course* we want to climb every day. By day four, people started praying for rain... We went all over Wales - Llanberis Pass, Gogarth, Rhoss Colin, Tremadog - wow, how amazingly different each of those were. I loved the sea cliffs - especially multi pitch sea cliffs, waves crashing at your feet, hanging belays, with nothing under you for meters!!! Tremadog, where you start in the shade and climb up and up and up, till you can look over the treetops - ending the day at Eric's cafe. The Brits know what's important in life - every crag has its local cafe or pub!

I have wonderful memories - it was one of the most amazing experiences ever!!! I ate like a king at Plas Y Brenin, met people from all over the world, made a couple of new friends. We all ate, drank and slept climbing for 6 days!
Hannelie Morris

New Routes by KZN Members

by Gavin Peckham

Club members have been quite active of late and have opened many new routes both in this province and further afield. Here is a summary of routes opened so far this year.

Cape Town: Silvermine Crag. Gavin Peckham and Brian Lambourne opened the excellent line "Mantra (RIP)" (14) with 12 bolts and chains.

Eastern Cape: Andrew Scott has opened several new routes in this province - details are not available at this stage.

Eastern Cape: Pinnacle Gorge. Gavin Peckham and Derek Marshall recently opened 28 trad routes at this superb venue in grades between 12 and 17. If you've never been to Pinnacle Gorge, do yourself a favour and get yourself there!

Winston Park: Tollgate Crag. Dave Drummond has opened two sport routes, "Temptation" (23) and "Attack of the Killer Caterpillars" (21), as well as a trad route, "Magic Far-away Tree" (14). Dylan Salt and Dario Tedeschi opened the bolted line "Thuggery" (19) whilst Andrew Scott opened another sport route, "Badger Farming" (20). Bruce Tomalin is working on a good line - come on Bruce, shake a leg! At the opposite end of these crags Bruce Sobey and Gerald Camp have opened a grade 13 trad line.

White Umfolozi: Apart from five short sport routes and two trad routes on the upper tier of the Bushy Buttress Gavin Peckham and Bruce Tomalin have

also opened "Hell Bound Infidels" (18) and "Devil in Disguise" (17) on the Friction Wall as well as "Carnivore" (18) in the Promised Land area. The last three are all 20+ m sport routes.

oNgoye: We wait with breathless anticipation for Anthony van Tonder to open his two top-roped "test pieces" at this unique venue.

Kloof Gorge: The Gutter. Andrew Scott and Dave Drummond opened "Arachnophobia" (17) and are working on a couple of other sport routes.

Umgeni Valley: Gavin R and various belay bunnies have opened three trad routes whilst Roger Nattrass has opened four sport routes in grades from 18 to 27. He is currently working on a project graded 32 – not bad for a 40+ geriatric!

Shongweni: Wave Cave. Roger N has opened "Silverback" (28) to add to the other superb sport routes he has opened at this "hard man's" venue.

Obituary

"Mantra" (RIP) climbing shoes, designed by Roger Nattrass and crafted by Rowan Winter have passed into history. It is my humble opinion that these were the best entry level climbing shoes ever designed. Come on guys, how about reviving this excellent product which has stood beginners and hacks in good stead for so many years? These were really magic shoes! If anybody has a pair of Mantra's, about size 9, in usable condition, I'm prepared to put my hand deep into my pocket – contact Gavin Peckham.

SOME CLIMBING TERMS.....by Gerald Camp

Sport climbers know of the terms flashing and red-pointing. A non-climber must wonder what this means, thinking of some sexual connotations - especially a new term coined by Roger Nattrass called 'G-Pointing'. This is when a climber successfully overcomes the rigors of parenthood and growing waistline and manages to re-climb routes that they had done many years before. It seems a G-point has proven to be harder and more fulfilling than a red-point! Please note that no climber can qualify for a G-point climb until they have reached 40 years.

Gerald successfully G-pointed Communiqué (25) at the Canyon after 2 hard days of work and negotiation with Alison over the tricky business of looking after the kids.

Most notable however is Bugs Sprouse, who red-pointed the same route. It is now his hardest route and it is an awesome achievement considering he is approaching his 6th decade of what seems to have been a charmed life. (Sorry Bugs - couldn't resist it!)

Rescue News

On Monday the 21st of April a Club member and 2 other adventure racers were airlifted from Indumeni Cave after heavy snow and an ankle injury. It was a joint operation between the MCSA, EMRS and the SA Air Force. On Sunday the 27th of April a 74 year old male broke a leg on the contour path near Gatberg. After some confusion, the rescue was done by EMRS helicopter and crew. This was done against regular protocols. No direct MCSA involvement.

The same day, a female broke her ankle near Yellow Wood cave at Lotheni. She was carried out with the help pf KZN-W staff and a private ambulance company.

On Thursday the 22 of May and 18 year old male from the UK and his female companion from the Netherlands, were caught out after dark while descending from Sterkhorn. They lost the path just above the 'Sphinx'. In trying to get down, the 18 year old walked off the main sandstone layer and fell about 20 meters, and then tumbled down a steep grass slope for about 30 meters. He sustained 2 broken legs, a punctured lung and a broken lower back. The accident occurred at 9.30pm.

A combined rescue took place with KZN-W, a private ambulance company and the MCSA. The patient was lowered down the slope and then carried out. A long night for everyone involved! At the time of writing, he was still in a very serious condition in hospital.

Gavin Raubenheimer

THOREAU

The scenery.....is surprisingly grand. You are steadily advancing into an amphitheatre of mountains.

Explore your own higher latitudes.....be a Columbus to whole continents and worlds within you.

We could not judge correctly of distances on the mountain, but greatly exaggerated them.....we no longer thought and reasoned as in the plain.

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Maritzburg Socials Ian Bailey	(h) 033 345 7501	Fax: 033 345 7501	083 269 6201	ianbailey@telkomsa.net
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Drakensberg – 5 day weather forecast	082 2311602			
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MCSA (National) Website	www.mcsa.org.za			