

# Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

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## NEWSLETTER

## April/May/June 2008

### Membership

A warm welcome is extended to Margaret Merry (ex. Capetown Section), and Matthew Becker, who have joined the Club.

Ten members were struck off, and one member (Skapie van Niekerk) has transferred to the Magaliesberg section.

Thanks to all members who have paid their subs, also to those who have made donations to the Club.

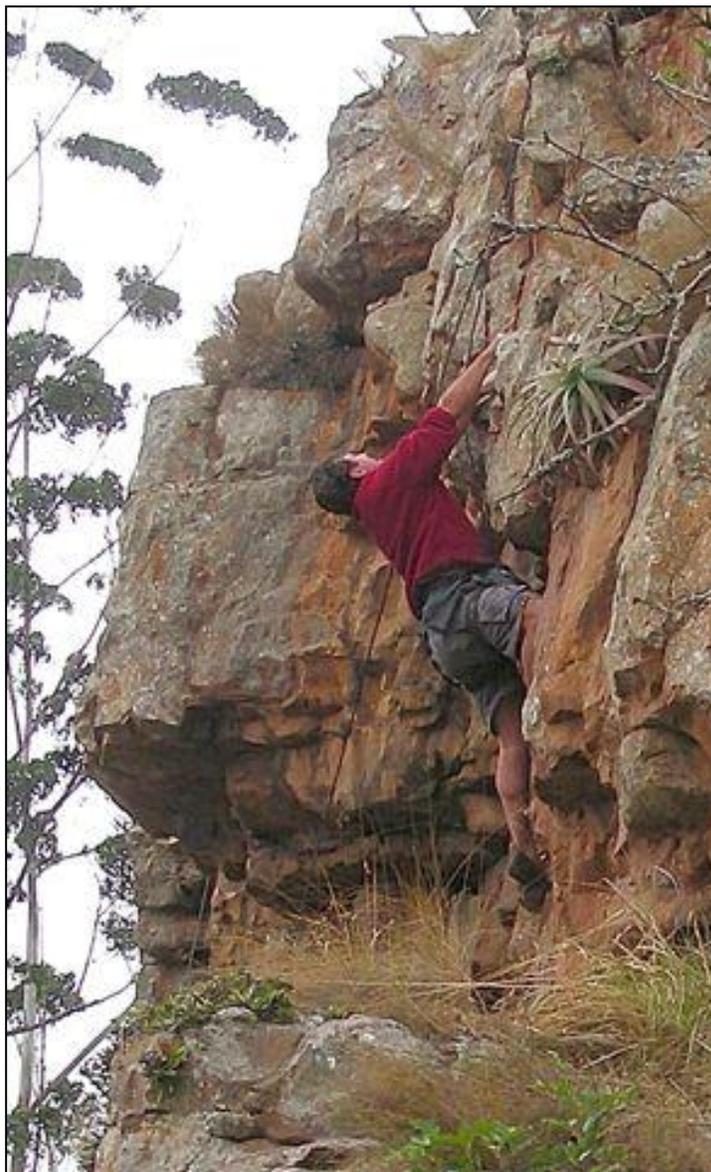
**A reminder, PLEASE! to the remaining members who have not yet paid their subs, to pay them.**

### Club News

The 2008 AGM was held on the 15 March at the Assagay Hotel, Shongweni, and was well attended, with some members having travelled a long distance to be there. Thank you for your presence!

Scott Sinclair remains as President, with other committee changes being: Colin McCoy who replaces Tony van Tonder (Rock Climbing & Mountaineering) and Angus McFarlane, who replaces Western King (PR & Socials)

*(See the back page of the newsletter for Committee Members' names and contact numbers).*

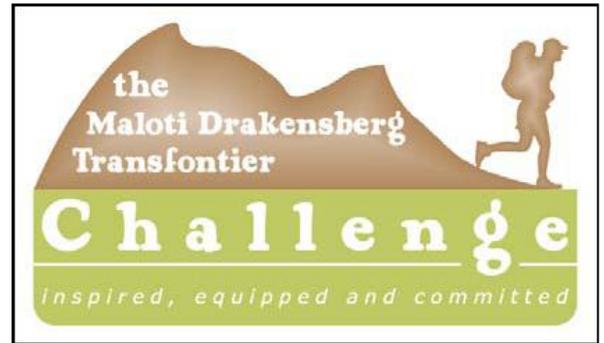


Gerald Camp at Winston Park Crag

Bruce Sobey

## **Grand Traverse:** **Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Challenge**

On the 19th April 2008, three adventurers will commit minds and bodies in an attempt to establish a new world speed record for the Grand Traverse of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains. The Grand Traverse starts at the Sentinel Car Park, near the Chain Ladder in the eastern Free State Province, and ends 200km later at the Bushman's Nek Police post south of Underberg in southern KwaZulu Natal, taking in the six highest peaks south of Kilimanjaro on the way. The attempt is being made to encourage youth to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle, and to raise funds and awareness for the development of an annual multi-day stage race: The Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Challenge.



### **Current Record:**

The existing record for the Traverse is held by Gavin Raubenheimer, current Rescue Convenor for the Mountain Club of South Africa, and his brother Lawrie. Gavin and Lawrie were the two finishers of a three person team in 1999 and established the speed record at 105 hours and 39 minutes. More can be read about their record at [www.peakhigh.co.za](http://www.peakhigh.co.za). There have been five attempts to challenge the record since then but not one has completed the route.

The established record allows for no seconding, support, food drops or re-supplies.

### **The team:**

Deon Chiesman and Nic Shaw are keen recreational runners and hikers, fit as proverbial fiddles thanks to hours of training, and share a passion for the mountains.

#### **• Deon Chiesman**

Deon runs a rope access company in Durban and is making the attempt because it seems like a perfectly reasonable thing to do. He discovered running in 2006 as a weight management activity and has since developed a passion for fitness. He is a keen cyclist and believes he has the strength of will the Transfrontier Challenge will require.

#### **• Nic Shaw**

Nic lives in the central Drakensberg & is attempting the Traverse to “knock Gavin off his pedestal”. Nic owns a successful environmental and outdoor education centre in the Giant's Castle area and has always pursued an active and healthy lifestyle. He believes that the team's thorough preparation will make them successful.

The third member of the team had to drop out due to personal reason so a fit, adventurous and suitably skilled woman is being sought as the final team member.

### **The mission:**

The team will depart the Sentinel Car Park at 05h00 on 19 April 2008. They will carry with them a tracking device that will transmit the team's location in real time. This data will be recorded on the website [www.drakensberg-adventure.com](http://www.drakensberg-adventure.com).

Starting in the beginning of March 2008, interested observers can log onto the website and make a prediction (R100 per prediction) about the arrival time in an hour:minute:second format. The closest predictions will be drawn for prizes including an all-expenses weekend in the Drakensberg and a selection of outdoor clothing and equipment. All monies raised will be utilised for the development of the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Challenge.

### **The plan:**

Running with a backpack at an altitude of above 3000m above sea level is possible but very difficult and not sustainable over large distances. For this reason the team will use a technique known as “fast-packing” – moving as fast as the terrain allows – downhills and flats are jogged, uphill are walked as fast as possible. The attempt is timed to coincide with a full moon rising

shortly after sunset and setting shortly before sunrise...twenty four hours of light. The team will cover as much distance as possible during the day (at least 50km), rest for a while and complete the necessary distance during the night.

The first part of the Traverse climbs from the Sentinel Car Park and heads for the Chain Ladder. After a substantial climb to the top of the escarpment the route heads over a relatively flat plateau to Mont-Aux-Sources, the first of the six “checkpoint” peaks. From here through some substantial ridges – topping out at over 3200m – the next checkpoint is at Cleft Peak. The third checkpoint is Champagne Castle and from there over some massive ridges to Mafadi, the second highest peak south of Kilimanjaro and the highest point inside of South Africa. After Mafadi comes Giant’s Castle – a major “dog-leg” ending at 3314m – then toward the Sani Pass area and Ntabana ntlezana, the highest point south of Kili. The final push is to Thamathu Pass and down to the police post at Bushman’s Nek.

The terrain on top of the escarpment – in the Maloti mountains – is rocky, uneven and broken and there are no clear paths. It is unlikely that the team will encounter rain at this time of year but snow is always a possibility. The team is using Garmin GPS navigation tools and the Mapsource 1:50000 Topographical map suite.

#### **Publicity:**

The backbone of the awareness and publicity is the website [www.drakensberg-adventure.com](http://www.drakensberg-adventure.com). However, the team will also be making releases to all the major newspapers, adventure and outdoor magazines as well as popular radio stations and adventure-related television programmes.

The team is also linking with organisations and companies that promote adventure- and activity-based lifestyles.

#### **Friends, supporters and sponsors:**

All sponsors and supporters will be acknowledged with a logo and detailed acknowledgement on the website and all promotional material. The team members will be photographed in their branded equipment and these pictures may be used for the sponsors’ own marketing.

**Team members have financed the training and equipment requirements themselves and are not dependent on personal sponsorship.**

Sponsorship is being sought for prizes to attract prediction “bets”.

Approaches for sponsorship are being made to:

- Salomon
- First Ascent
- Cape Storm
- USN – Ultimate Sports Nutrition
- Cathedral Peak Hotel
- Supersport
- Garden City Motors
- Cozahost

#### **Technical advisors:**

- Gavin Raubenheimer (Professional mountain guide and current record holder)
- Andrew Porter (Record holder: Mnweni Marathon)
- Gary Mortimer (Airborne Adventures Africa)



Nic and Deon near Sani Pass during training.

## **JULY CAMP 2008 – DUART CASTLE**

This year the July Camp (Saturday 5 July to Saturday 19 July, 2008) will be held at the Duart Castle Camp Site, an area we first used in 1989 and then again in 2000. The Base Camp lies between the Loteni and Vergelegen Nature Reserves at an altitude of 1640m

The Base Camp is situated on land originally belonging to the McLean family, and is now part of the uKhahlamba World Heritage Site. It lies in rugged grassland and, from the car park, will be approached by a fairly short walk (about 45 to 50 minutes) along a track with wonderful views of the southern flank of Giants Castle and the main escarpment to the south of Giants Castle. The Base Camp offers a range of escarpment hikes, rock climbing opportunities and superb day walks, all with dramatic scenery and some challenging terrain.

### **July Camp 2008 will offer:**

- some well-known climbs of varying grades (including Scholes, South Ridge and Gable routes on Giants Castle)
- sandstone cliffs nearby for those who would like to do some bouldering, without carrying climbing equipment to the Escarpment
- superb sub-camps and long hikes in the Little Berg and/or on the Escarpment
- satisfying day walks with views, forests, waterfalls, streams and spectacular rock formations
- excellent opportunities for birdwatching and Berg photography

**OTHER INFO:** No private cars (including 4x4's) may be taken beyond the car park. Campers' kit will be transported between the car park and Base Camp at specified times. However, in the event of very bad weather, if the tractor transport cannot negotiate the track, it may be necessary for campers to carry all their own kit to and from Base Camp. Campers arriving, or leaving, at times other than those indicated above, must be prepared to carry all their own kit to and from Base Camp. Camp fees include a standard selection of food for all meals in Base Camp and on day trips. Pre-packed, lightweight food for sub-camping. is provided. Note that children are admitted under certain conditions.

For full details, costs and bookings, get the application form from the July Camp Treasurer (083 735 8080; 033-330 8412; ronwedd@netactive.co.za)  
Applications close 7 June 2007.

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### **Quote:**

'Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms, their energy; whole cares will drop off like Autumn leaves''.

*John Muir*

## Hiking News

### SIPHONGWENI, February 2008

Sixteen hikers set off for Siphongweni, two of them being potential ambulance cases, saying they would probably only hike for an hour or two then return. An hour and a half later we reached Boundary Rock where we swam, and joy of joys, the ambulance cases were feeling better already and chose to continue the whole way with us. The power of the Berg!

It was a steep climb up from Boundary Rock, but as there was no hurry or pressure, each hiker took it at his or her own pace. Part way up is a

delightful little 'cubby-hole' cave which gave some of us a chance to rest in the shade and settle the problems of the world.....

We found a nice spot for the tents, below the paintings and facing the escarpment and particularly Hodgsons Peaks. The remainder of the afternoon was spent doing our own thing, including 'Killing the Aliens' for two of us.

On Sunday morning, while the ambulance cases acted as tent - guards, not that that was necessary, the rest of the party climbed Siphongweni. We had lovely views in all directions, and also saw some eland and a reedbuck, and two horsemen out on patrol. By the time we got down again, the tents were dry, we packed up camp and headed for home, having a couple more swims on the way.

This was the first MCSA trip when we were able to make an assault on the brambles, part of the 'Kill the Aliens' project. I took 50ml of a Garlon/sticker concentrate with me, plus two spray bottles and we were able to spray virtually all the brambles we could see either side of the path to Boundary Rock, plus a 10x10meter square patch where we camped and a few other spots in the vicinity. Our efforts evoked such enthusiasm from some of the other hikers; I will take more bottles next time!

In the party were: Andre Bouer, Margaret Brown, Jane Dickinson, Carl Fatti, Glynnis Jones, Pam MacNamara, Gavin Heath and Bronwyn, Suzie Raymond, Ushie Wessels, five members of the Salisbury family and myself, Iona Stewart.



Iona & Suzi 'Bramble Bashing'

## **Annual Mooihoek Weekend**

Many people wanted to come and many had to cancel, but those who came will be back..... especially those who slept under the stars!! Typical Mooihoek slave-labour - most people were woken up at 5:30 on Saturday morning, to go and watch the beautiful morning view from the Rooinekkie - just a pity that most of the view was still in cloud-cover! So we walked through the indigenous forest, climbed the enormous Wild Fig tree, took lots of photos and then walked home for mieliepap.

Most of Saturday was spent on the way to and at, the beautiful pool in the river called Bootklipkuil ("River-Rock-Pool"). We swam, lay in the sun, had a great time in the jacuzzi, toasted sandwiches next to the river and some of us even 'killed' a few wattles.

On Sunday morning the party split into two, some of us walked the longer way, bundu bashing and swimming our way down to Oom Rudolph's pool in the river and others walked straight there. Fun was had playing in the water, trying to climb some boulders from the water (no feet allowed!) and others found some peace and quiet in the shade.

After lunch most of us had to leave, but the lucky ones had an afternoon nap and another night under the stars, next to the fire.

*Hannelie Morris*

## **Rock Climbing**

### **Rumdoodle Beginners Meet**

On the morning of 13 January, 6 brave beginner - climbers, 2 helpers and I arrived at Rumdoodle. After a pep-talk, we walked to the crag. There might have been second thoughts while we were putting up the safety rope and teaching basics, as everyone had to abseil to get to the bottom of the crag. No one was brave enough to mention this though, so every one was sent down to the bottom - what a way to start your rock-climbing career!

Four top-ropes were put up and people were taught to climb, belay and for some, there was a little revision on threading the rope... I calculated that a total of about 25 pitches were climbed between the 9 of us - not bad for a group of real beginners. But I suppose the prize would go to 11 year old Samantha who climbed 4 routes, including a 17 - I have high hopes for you Sam!!

Thanks to all the beginners - you were a great fun to teach. I hope this was the beginning of your hands seeing lots of chalk. And thank you especially to Cesar and Glynnis - I have no idea what I would have done if you hadn't offered to help me!

*Hannelie Morris*

## **New Climbs in New Winston Park Area – Old Man’s Crag**

As far as I know, this is in a totally undeveloped climbing area. To access, go to the stop street after the end of the plane trees at the end of Jan Smuts Avenue. There is an open Escom Servitude on your right. By car, turn right and right again at the T-junction. Go through the gate and then turn left (sometimes the grass is long) and park under the old pylons overlooking Giba Gorge. From the pylon follow a path going to the right (facing out) below a new fence. After 10m take the path on the left hand side down the hill to come out at the top of the climb. The climbs are close to some strelitzias on the cliff edge. They are on the direct line between the pylon and the second house from the left on the opposite hill. Abseil down on the face to the side of two large cracks using the three large blocks as anchors. Take long slings or cord for this. Although the strelitzias have been used to abseil off, it is not recommended.

Alternatively there is a scramble about 50 m to the left of the gully (South side), which you will have seen on your left as you descended. This is not recommended. It gets hot working one’s way back along the base of the cliffs. The gully has been sealed with corrugated iron and is not an access route.

### **B&B**

*First Ascent Bruce Sobey and Bruce Tomalin - 14 April 2004*

B&B is the route up the cracks. There are two parallel cracks. The climb is up the better left hand crack (facing the rock). Start on the right hand crack to avoid the broken rock at the bottom. Traverse left under the tree at the first opportunity and ascend to the top. Apart from the usual gear you will need large friends (no 4) or hexes although there are some good chockstones as well. Well protected, but a strenuous crux. An interesting off width if you avoid using the opposite face.

Grade 17, maybe an onsight grade 18, depending how much the opposite face (and tree) are used. Probably a grade or two higher if the opposite face is not used at all at the crux.

### **New Lease of Life (13)**

*First Ascent Bruce Sobey and Gerald Camp - 12 January 2008*

This climb goes up to the right of B&B. Start on the face to the right of the right hand crack and traverse right to the arête and climb straight up to the top. The protection is good. The last move is the crux which can be protected by a small wire on the right.

There is scope for many more trad routes in the area as well as some good bolted routes.

*Bruce Sobey*

## **White Umfolozi News**

New routes are still being developed at the White Umfolozi. Gavin Peckham and Bruce Tomalin have recently opened seven new sport routes on the Upper Tier of the Bushy Buttress. These range in grade from "Bats" at grade 10 with 5 bolts and chains to "Jungle Jane" and "Magic Mushroom" at grade 14 with 6 bolts and chains. Gavin P, Bruce T and Anthony van Tonder are also working on an excellent new route on the Friction Wall called "Hell Bound Infidels" at about grade 18 with 12 bolts and chains. There are rumours that another group of club members is working on new route called "I Believe in Fairies" which is apparently located on a straight line between "The Powers That Be" and "The Promised Land" at a distance of about 30 m from the first named route – reliable evidence about the existence of this route seems to be lacking!

There are currently 96 fully equipped sport routes at the White Umfolozi and it is hoped that the magic 100 mark will be achieved or exceeded this year. This makes the Umfolozi KZN's premier sport climbing venue in terms of sport routes over a wide range of moderate grades. Whilst the Wave Cave with its limited number of 30+ routes will continue to attract the 'hard men', the White Umfolozi is the ideal venue for the average climber, family groups and those who enjoy the wilderness experience in addition to their climbing.

As winter approaches the temperatures and water level are dropping and the White Umfolozi is coming into excellent condition for climbing. The venue is becoming ever more popular, so if you are planning a trip here you had better ring Mr Gerhard Greef on 082 495 4943 and book well in advance! Full details about the venue may be found on our web site at: <http://kzn.mcsa.org.za>

## **oNgoye Update**

In the last newsletter we reported that the concrete strips on the approach to the oNgoye Forest Reserve have been completed and that the Reserve can now be safely reached (with careful driving) by normal sedans – although a 4 x 4 is still needed to access the tracks through the main forest area. There is a camping site near the office enclosure, but this (currently) has no functional facilities whatever.

The good news is that a "birders' lodge" has now been opened to the public. The lodge is easily accessed by "normal" vehicles and may be booked by contacting Sue Anderson of BirdLife Travel on 082 777 7202 or at [travel@birdlife.org.za](mailto:travel@birdlife.org.za). The rates are R150 per person per night with a minimum charge of R450 per night. The lodge has 3 bedrooms with twin beds. Bed linen and towels are provided. There is also a bathroom with a bath, shower and toilet and an open plan lounge, dining room and kitchen. The kitchen has a gas fridge, gas stove and sufficient crockery and cutlery for 6 people. There is no electricity and lighting is provided by paraffin lamps. Outside there is a veranda and braai area. If you book the lodge you need to bring your own food, torches, toiletries and braai wood.

If you plan to camp you need to be entirely self sufficient and bring everything you need including water. Even if you only pop up for the day, please make a point of going to the office and paying your R10 entry fee. Further information and details of the 25 routes that have been opened so far will be found on our club website at: <http://kzn.mcsa.org.za>

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## **Rescue News**

On the 4th of February a massive ground and air search was started for a 73 year old male who went missing in the Cathedral Peak area. Michael Hetherington, a retired school teacher from Scotland was deemed to have gone missing already on the 2nd of February whilst walking somewhere fairly close to Cathedral Peak Hotel.

A search lasting 9 days in total and involving the MCSA, KZN-Wildlife, the SAPS Dog Unit, Dive Unit, Airwing and a private aircraft, has to date had no success in finding the missing man. The search goes on by KZN Wildlife Field Staff and periodically by the SAPS.

On the 8th of March a Search and Rescue symposium was held at Hilton College. It was well attended by KZN Wildlife staff, MCSA and SA Police members.

There have been 2 alerts for overdue hikers in the last 3 months.

*Gavin Raubenheimer*

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## **Snap Link Karabiners on Top Anchors     *by Bruce Sobey***

Some time back, after rescue practice at Monteseel, I was climbing with a friend and put him on his first trad lead up Adam. I asked the experienced climbers hanging around at the top to help him set up the top anchors. So when I followed on up I was somewhat disconcerted to find that the anchors had been set with a clove hitch on a snap link karabiner. Now, way back when I had been taught to climb by Eckhard Haber and the boys of Northern Natal, I was taught to always use a screwgate on a top anchor and to make sure that the gate was screwed up.

When I spoke to the person that had set up the belay (a more experienced climber than myself), I was told that everyone in the States set up a belay that way. My response was that I had read in a climbing book that a clove hitch can walk off a snap link. I had also seen it twice, once on my own belay where I distinctly remember setting both loops, but when I got up to climb on, found only one loop on the karabiner. Another time I had seen it happen to someone else's top rope setup at Monteseel. His response was that he could not see how this would happen.

This has continued to bug me, so I did some investigation. All climbing books say to use a screwgate karabiner, or snaplinks back to back, for anchors. The reasons given are that a screwgate is stronger, a snaplink can be knocked open in the event of a fall weakening it further, even if it stays clipped (a snaplink with an open gate is not very strong), or it can become unclipped. But I could not find the specific article that discussed the issue of a clove hitch on a snaplink (maybe it was in that book I lent out and never got back). So I did some of my own investigation.

The mechanism whereby a clove hitch comes off a snaplink is actually remarkably simple. Firstly the knot walks up over the gate (see Photo 1). Believe me this will happen sometimes in a setup. Then a tug on the line opens the gate and bingo, no more knot (see Photo 2).



Photo 1 - Knot over the gate



Photo 2 – A Tug opens the Gate

Malcolm Creasey in his book "The Complete Rock Climber" has a safety checklist for a good belay, which will have all of the following:

1. Tight ropes leading to two or three strong anchors.
2. Equal tension on each rope.
3. The stance will be stable and adjustable from where the belayer stands.
4. Screwgate (locking) karabiners or snaplinks back-to-back on all anchors.

**Maybe it is good to be reminded about safety every now and then.**

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<b>Drakensberg – 5 day weather forecast</b>	082 2311602			
<b>MCSA-KZN Section Website</b>	<a href="http://kzn.mcsa.org.za">http://kzn.mcsa.org.za</a>			
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