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1.From the editor:

There were a number of trips and expeditions that took place since the last newsletter; these being Alard's trip to Mexico and the ex-Witsie/Witsie/MCSA meet to Nepal. Alard's been too busy to give me an article and Bruce sent me an equipment list. (this seems to run in the family – Karin sent me a medical aid list when I wanted an article on Bolivia). But with enough persuasion he did eventually send an article.

From our down under contingent of MCSA members (and these seem to be growing) we have an article about a trip some ex-Seffricans did in NZ.

In the last edition of the newsletter the bolting debate issue was brought up. We now have some results from that poll given to us by Duncan Souchon.

Revel Mason gives his view on the dog issue.

Being the start of the year, it is a very good time of the year to plan ahead. I have found that unless one plans and importantly commits right at the beginning of the year to some major trip, the year goes by and nothing big happens. So unless you decide right up front, and go out and make it happen, it doesn't. As the well known author Robert Kiyosaki advocates, it should not be a case of "I can't afford it", but rather "how do I afford it", which is paramount here. (and plus the Rand is getting stronger.)

Roland Magg

2.Land & Access

Mountain Sanctuary Park:

Please observe the opening and closing times of Mountain Sanctuary Park. Gates open at 8am and close 18h30 summer and 17h30 winter. It has been brought to our attention that members are late to leave. This is not acceptable and the committee will take action against members who do not observe these times.

PATROLLERS at Cedarberg /Tonquani : if you are able to help patrolling- especially over the many holidays in April, please contact Uschi.

HAMERKOP WEEK: 3 June to 10 June. Members wishing to make use of the section's week at Hamerkop please speak to Uschi re booking. Fees are payable for the use of the house.

Once again a reminder that members may take **one guest**. Apply for permits if you have more than one guest.

Restaurant:

Gustav reports that due to concerted efforts of the police and "tourism monitors", there have been no further instances of crime at the crags. But please remain vigilant.

3.Conservation

We will be doing some work at Tonquani over the next few months but right now want to appeal to everyone visiting there to co-operate as follows:

1.Path leading from campsite into the kloof: please stay on the path! (Visitors/users are in the process of making another next to the original by stepping off in places.)

The lunch spot down in the Kloof needs some restoration. (i) 2. Please DO NOT move the rocks that we will be re-locating there! (ii) The ground has compacted too much and that will be loosened. (iii) We also need all the leaf litter that is going to fall there soon - please do not clear leaves away.

3.Kitchen Gully: minor stabilisation will be done there - please be careful when you're going up or down the Gully and allow the work that will be done to settle.

MANY THANKS! with your help we can do it.

4.Climbing

MCSA Tharpu Chuli and Singu Chuli Expedition, Nepal

By Bruce Spottiswoode

In December 2002, a group of eleven of us set out to climb two of the Nepalese "Trekking peaks" in the Himalayan winter. Tharpu Chuli (5663m) and Singu Chuli (6501m) stand proud in the middle of the impressive bowl of peaks known as the Annapurna Sanctuary. With the majority of us being students, we cheaply opted to fly into Delhi and to make our way overland to Kathmandu. Barely had we touched ground in Delhi before we boarded a train and rattled our way east. We spent two days in cramped transit, gazing out of windows at blurred landscapes and at the colourful sheer humanity of Northern India.

A frenzy of organisation followed our arrival in Kathmandu: peak permits; trekking permits; porters; food; last minute gear; a sherpa/guide, and what-the-hell-let's-splash-out, a cook too. We'd been cold, lost and starved on too many previous trips and we were determined to get it right this time!

The walk up to the Annapurna Base Camp (4150m) took five mellow days, and involved an ascent of over three kilometres. Despite this being one of the most popular treks in Nepal, we hardly saw a soul. The first two weeks of December form a window of clear, crisp skies and relatively few trekkers. We found these Himalayan foothills to be similar in shape to those of the familiar and friendly Drakensberg. These monstrosities are, however, bloated to tremendous proportions, and they dwarf the local villages to the point of ridicule. The trek follows a river up its colossal valley, which is cut with progressively steeper and more imposing sides as one nears the Sanctuary. The walls eventually fall away and one is discharged into the magnificent splendour of the Annapurna Sanctuary.

We established a base camp at 4500m, across a rubble-strewn glacier from the Annapurna base camp. Our cook immediately sprang into action and his tent became a steaming cove of culinary activity. Our various trips across the glacier to cart food and gear were spurred on by thoughts of the countless cups of tea that would come rushing out of the mess-tent as we staggered into camp. Over time, the base camp also became known as "Hospital Camp", and many days were collectively spent there nursing the effects of altitude, flu and small stomach-dwelling Indian families.

Tharpu Chuli, our "acclimatisation peak", proved not to be the gentle jaunt that our guide had implied. The snow was deep and dry, and it took numerous attempts over a number of days to plough our way to the top. The route involved wading across a woolly glacier to a ridge, establishing 160m of fixed-lines up 60 degree ice, and negotiating the wonderful knife-edge that contorts its way up to the summit. Although technically fairly easy, the climbing was aesthetic and satisfying, and has the wonderful consequence of revealing a complete parabola of spectacular peaks from its focal point. Partially as a result of it being so late in the season, we were fortunate enough to be the only climbers in the entire Sanctuary. We hadn't seen other people for at least a week and it felt like it was ours, ours, ALL OURS!

Once we were all back at base camp, the group split, with some of its members taking in a good portion of the Annapurna circuit, others making a beeline for the cold, bitter beer in Pokhara, and the rest of us remaining in the bitter cold for our attempt on Singu Chuli. Our guide's wife had taken ill, and he had gone down, leaving us with little to no idea about how to approach the peak. We had only four days left to attempt it, and opted to "pack light and go fast!" Needless to say, we soon found ourselves breathlessly shuffling through the snow with the equivalent of a small elephant draped over each shoulder. We spent the night camping on a glacier at 5200m.

From our dramatic vantage point the next morning, our route up Singu Chuli seemed obvious and we planned a relatively straight course towards it. After channelling across the glacier for a few hours in the direction of the distant peak, we were firmly halted by a treacherous and previously unseen valley that would have taken us a good day to negotiate. Succeeding this, we would still have to surmount a 400m section of steep rock before gaining the majestic summit ridge. As a rippled tribute to the flutings falling away on either side, this ridge promises a further 800 vertical metres of fantastic climbing. With simply no time left to undertake this task, our only chance would be to gain the ridge binding Tharpu Chuli to Singu Chuli, and attempt to follow its uncertain course along to Singu Chuli. We skirted along the base of the ridge away from Singu Chuli until we found a line of weakness – a large scoured-out groove of broken rock leading up to the ridge from a steep snow cone. We established a camp on the glacier at the base of this cone and set the last of our falling stoves to work at melting snow. The paraffin that we'd been burning had been steadily clogging our stoves and already two were irreparably suffocated. With our water supply so fragile a factor, the option of establishing camps on the ridge to Singu Chuli was out of the question.

At 2am on the morning of the winter solstice, primed with as much water as could be salvaged, our three strongest climbers set off with a 24 hour summit push in mind. By 9am, they were standing on the summit of Pancha Chuli (5700m), an intermediate peak on the ridge strung between Tharpu Chuli and Singu Chuli. The climbing had been relatively technical and they were going far slower than was anticipated. Seeing the perilous nature of the path to the distant Singu Chuli summit ridge, and taking into account their limited water supply, they were forced to accept a sensible defeat and descend.

Singu Chuli had obsessed our thoughts for a year of eager preparation, but now it was with submissive exhaustion that we turned our backs on this shapely summit and headed for warmer climes. After a bushman-style feast in Pokhara, we slid into our swimsuits and set off on a two-day rafting trip on the melt waters of Annapurna I (8091m) and Dhaulagiri (8167m). So much for a chance to unwind and defrost - we charged headlong into moments of sheer terror and cold like we had not experienced in our entire three weeks in the mountains! Following a beer-swilling new year's bash in Kathmandu, we slowly meandered back to Delhi, soaking up Varanasi, the Taj Mahal, and the exhilarating charm of the Indian culture.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our sponsors who made this trip possible: MCSA Johannesburg and Cape town sections, MCSA central committee; Vuarnet; First Ascent; Cannon; Technibloc; PVM; Sportsmans Warehouse; and Nolac.

Southwest Ridge of Mt Aspiring, Southern Alps, New Zealand

By Ed Liddle

"So who's going to lead it?" Silence. "Is anyone keen?" More silence. Then Dave says, "Well...I said I would do the leading if we did this route...". Relief, and instant action, this is starting to take longer than it should and the wind is picking up. "OK here are the ice screws" "Maybe you should rack the snow stakes over your shoulder" "No, they'll get in the way - just strap them to the side of my pack - I'll probably only want them at the belay". As we tie in to the ropes I am sure we all feel the same nervous apprehension as we tackle the final, and most technical, obstacle on the route.

The thought of having to retreat from this position is somewhat daunting. We have spent the last few hours daggering and front-pointing up a sublime arete of hard snow and ice. The line is classic, and wills you upwards, but to downclimb it would require a marathon effort of concentration and care. This arete has now run out into the steep rockband protecting the West aspect of the summit. A couloir breaks through the centre of the rockband, and the guidebook said three pitches of 60 degree ice (maybe some rock) up this couloir brings you onto the final few metres of the standard NW Ridge route to the summit. We are tied in to a bomber snowstake and an ice screw, huddled on tiny chopped out ice ledges, with the West Face dropping 500 metres down to the Bonar Glacier below. We are nicely protected from debris falling from above by a bulge at the start of the couloir, but this bulge also hides the route ahead. In anticipation of some rock, Dave dons the pruned rock rack. "Rock moves at grade thirteen" said some of the beta received in days preceding the trip. "More like seventeen", said one source. But is this grading making allowances for climbing in plastics? With or without gloves on?

Dave cinches up the leashes on his axes and traverses a few metres across to the break through the bulge. "How's it look? Is there ice?" "Can't see much" "Better put a screw in before you go up" "Yeah" The first three attempts either hit rock or air, but finally Dave places a screw he can convince himself is not totally worthless. Finally he makes the first vertical progress for a while. As his boots disappear over the bulge we try and build some confidence: "Howzit going?" "Still ice, bit hollow, OK though", then he is gone, the wind blows away any more previews. "Halfway" we shout uselessly into the wind. I unclip from the belay, traverse out from the relative safety of the belay and get my first view of the couloir. The ropes disappear over the bulge, but it looks good - all blue ice, no rock, yeeehah. Amazing how solid climbing water can feel...yeah right! The bulge goes more easily than it looks, a half-dozen moves up a diagonal break in the angle and then I am off the steep stuff and can see Dave, ropes run out to his belay in the middle of the final slopes to the summit ridge. I get to Dave, chop a little ledge for my foot, thwack both tools in, clip them and myself to Daves icescrew belay, and turn to get some shots of Steve coming up.

We re-group, share some comments on how it appears the worst is over, awesome route, but what about the wind, and then Dave is off up the next pitch. Halfway he stops, messes about with a screw for a while, and then gives up and continues. The rope runs out, Dave stops, sets up belay and gives the tugs. "I couldn't get any screws in", he says. "I can see", I say, admiring his belay consisting of two firmly planted tools. One more ice pitch gets us to the easier final slopes of the NW Ridge. We can see others descending the standard route below us into the spindrift. A ropelength above us appears to be the summit- hope it is not a false summit. The wind is fair howling now and we untie and stash the ropes.

Dave carries on up, but then turns back a few metres below what appears to be the summit, and comes down. Steve is on all fours against the slope. "What's wrong" I shout as we pass - "Too windy, we'll get blown off" "Is it the summit?" "Don't know", Steve is carrying on though, but Dave says he is going down; he will wait below out the wind. I struggle on up, trying to keep balanced in the wind, making sure of each foot placement in the rimed ice slope. It IS the summit, and bonus, a small semi-sheltered platform in the lee-side. Steve and I snap a few summit shots as the cloud boils up from below, a quick snack and then back down to Dave. "What took you so long - I thought you got blown off".

We race after another pair going down, intent on following them down the standard route. We catch up "Did you come up The Ramp?", we ask. "No, out of condition, rock slabs, found another way onto the ridge." "Can we follow you down?" "Sure, though it may not be the best route down." "Fine by us, we don't fancy trying to pick a route down the long, rocky NW Ridge. The gentle angle of the rocky ridge begins to steepen after an hours descent, and then another hours exposed rock scrambling and traversing on chossy schist gives way to some steep soft snow slopes (yuck!) down to the glacier.

Finally, we can relax, we're pretty much off the mountain, time now to savour the remains of an awesome day. The other group steams on back to the hut while we crash on a rock island on the glacier for a siesta. There is no comparison - the standard route gets you a Southern Alps summit, whereas the SW Ridge route gives you an awesome, direct climb with a summit as a bonus. To add to it all, an aurora was up to greet our alpine start, and we had clear weather and glorious views all the way up the ridge to the crux. The summit white-out and chossy descent was the only blot on one of my best days in the mountains... still get a buzz thinking back on it.

Other vital info:

Mount Aspiring also known as Tititea (Maori name), 3033m, 44deg20'S 168deg43'E

Expedition members:

Glorious leader, original aspirant: Steve Norman (MCSA Jhb Section, country member, now resident in Sydney, Yuckstralia)

Rope-gun, logistics: Dave Walden (ex-MCSA Jhb Section member, now resident Lake Hawea, NZ)

Assistant aspirant and *part-time* author: Ed Liddle (MCSA Jhb Section, country member, now resident in New Plymouth, NZ)

(Remember, most of these articles are posted, along with pictures on the MCSA Jhb section website.)

Bolting Debate

By Duncan Souchon

For the past two or so months you have been invited to vote on how you feel about bolting and the ethics surrounding drilling in South Africa. The major issue that brought this debate about was the bolting of some small routes on Melville Koppies in Johannesburg late last year. I have published the article in the Rock and Sports (of Supersport).

The results followed as such:

The majority of voters (54%) felt that bolting Melville was okay. Many voters (36%) felt that bolting should be only allowed in certain areas. A minority of voters (4%) felt that bolting should be banned; and a similar figure (5%) felt that the bolting at Melville Koppies was wrong. (There were about 200 votes in total.)

So it seems unanimous that most of us who voted can at least tolerate bolting in our country. The results seem to indicate that many climbers feel that bolting is okay, with a minority feeling it is not. To respect the minority, certain areas or climbs should not be bolted, a system which has already been put in place and respected for years now.

The real issue at hand is the ethic of bolting an area that previously was not bolted. This focus can be divided into two subsections. Firstly, 'newly discovered climbing areas' and secondly 'established areas'. 'Newly discovered areas' I feel is the easier of the two to resolve, as often the type of rock, nature and length of the climbs as well as the position or location of the crag will help decide how it should be climbed. For instance, a new crag in the Magaliesberg, a protected reserve and traditionally a trad climbing area, will most likely remain trad. A new area in Boven on the other hand, would most likely be bolted. When a new crag is discovered, there is usually a lot of interest and hype around it, and a suitable agreement to how it should be approached is established.

Hence the debate can be again narrowed down to areas that for years have been climbed but are not bolted. It is important to remember that once a route is bolted it is bolted, and the essence of the traditional climb is lost...even if you remove the hangers or glue over the holes. Furthermore, as with the Melville Koppies incident, once bolting has begun it spreads through the crag and is difficult to stop.

So who decides what should be bolted or not? And more importantly, who decides when or if an established unbolted climbing area should be bolted. Were those who bolted the Melville Koppies wrong, did they break some sort of un-said rule? If the majority of climbers think it is okay to bolt, with only a minority saying otherwise, was bolting the Melville Koppies such a bad thing?

Again, I feel that the minority voice must be heard and respected. The truth remains that certain climbers feel otherwise to areas been bolted and they have a right to appeal if these feelings are threatened. I feel by simply bolting an area without letting the rest of us know removes the opportunity for those who feel otherwise to raise their voices and state their case. It is quite likely and most probable that if it is discussed before bolting takes place, an agreement may well be reached.

Ethics around bolting will always be a tricky subject, but I feel to simply just bolt as and how one feels is unfair. Before you bolt, let the climbing community know. It seems the best way to me, and appears to reflect how a lot of you feel too.

(Note from the Newsletter Editor: Two letters were received via snailmail on the issue of bolting, both expressing the need for "discrimination" when bolting.

Also, one needs to put some perspective on the issue of voting on-line. It is difficult to say whether the people who voted on-line would have a specific bias due to the self-select sample. What might be true is that people who voted on-line are typically the younger folk and might be more pro-bolting. But, to say for example that pro-bolters would have been more likely to vote seems unfounded, due to the fact that more often than not, people who feel strongly against something are more likely to voice their opinion than those for. In any case, the on-line voting method must at best be seen as an indication of opinion out there, rather than a well performed statistical analysis)

5. Club News

New Members

We welcome the following new members: Susan Blanche, Andrew Blanche, Neil Shackleton, Zoë and David Jewell.

Applications received from: Diana Foden, Chris Sherlock, Janice Quin, Henk Thiar.

Subs for 2003

These were due in January. Thank you to members who have paid their dues. If you have not paid please do so asap.

Committee Meetings (Provisional Dates)

24 Febr

AGM 12 March 2003

24 March

12 April – Cencom Meeting

5 May

17 June (Tuesday)

28 July

8 September

20 October

1 December

Dog Issue:

(The current ruling is that no dogs are allowed on the areas we own.)

"Many thanks for your invitation to talk about dogs . My words are limited to MCSA properties in Magaliesberg:

1.I took my dogs all over Magaliesberg from 1947 till 1987 and they never did any damage or made a nuisance.Since the MCSA ban on dogs came in I have taken my dogs to Ronnie Bartlett's part of Grootkloof and also to Berghem.Here also my dogs never did any damage.Increasing crime in SA is probably going to lead to some MCSA member being attacked and killed somewhere in the Magaliesberg.As you suggest, dogs could prevent an attack or robbery.

2.I suggest the following rules:

Dogs should be limited to the higher parts of the mountain away from kloofs where they could pee or crap into water.

Dogs should be tied up on long leashes attached to backpacks at all times to prevent them from investigating snakes or baboons which could easily kill dogs.Leashes would prevent dogs from chasing dassies or buck, or making a nuisance of themselves with passing strangers.

For me and many other MCSA people dogs are a big part of getting onto the mountain, an experience which goes back about 15000 years. With best regards and thanks,"

REV MASON

What do you the members say?A poll will be put up on the website.<http://jhb.mcsa.org.za>

6.Events

March 5: **SEVENTH SUMMIT SENDOFF** for Alex Harris and Mount Everest expedition team Cheese and Wine evening at the Clubroom.The MCSA is giving Alex and team a little party to wish them well on their expedition.

7.General

FOR SALE:

Route Books:

Andrew Porter has been busy.He has put together **HARD COPY ROUTE BOOKS** with revised maps of Upper Tonquani and Cedarberg, Lower Tonqs, Boulder Complexes.They are available from the club at a cost of R20 and R30 respectively.(He is now taking off time to recover in Thailand...)

Andrew gets his updated route info from Joffrey's www.saclimb.co.za website.Thanks Joff for having a database driven site like this.

Discount: Outdoor Warehouse, Hikers Paradise and Drifters offer a discount to members.Please remember that your subscriptions for the current year must be up to date i.e. have the 2003 sticker to qualify for the discount.

Book Review

"POEMS-from the Edge" – Dennis Gray

Dennis is a well known figure in British (and worldwide) mountaineering circles, having climbed with some of the great British climbers.Here, in a short book he publishes his first book of verse.Many of the poems have already appeared in Alpine Journals which is testament to their broad appeal.The range of poems is as wide as the man's thoughts and emotions over a multitude of areas, climbs, difficulties, successes and laughter.It inspires to not only get out there and climb, but also to "skilled or unskilled we *all scribble poems*" – Horace.

Websites:

All the MCSA Websites have been down since early December when the server on which they were running was struck by lightning. ©.This is not a cool state of affairs.Firstly it's a bother for members and the public who have become used to looking on the website for information, and secondly it does nothing for the professional image of the Club.The Central MCSA committee is currently looking at alternative options for hosting and upgrading the Main Website in general.One of the big issues here, is whether the time has come to pay for hosting and pay people to upgrade and maintain the sites, and thereby hope for more up time and a groovier website with more functionality.

In the meantime the JHB section site has been mirrored to:

<http://mcsajhb.bigaficanadventures.com> (no www)

FIRST AID COURSE:

Members who are interested in taking part in a First Aid Course Level 1 offered by ANT (Africa Nature Training) **please contact Robert McCarthy 082 337 9216** who is co-ordinating this course.The cost is R380.00pp.The section will subsidise part of the cost of trainers and meet leaders.The course runs over 16 hours with a 30 minutes evaluation per student.Tentative dates 2 week duration starting March 4, or March 24. May 5.

Advertising

Anyone wishing to advertise in the JHB Section's newsletter please contact the editor, Roland, on 656 6544.

CONTACT DETAILS

If any of you have changed any of your contact details, i.e. email, postal or home address, telephone numbers, etc, please inform the administrator (Uschi).Lotsa people moan about not getting timely (or any information) on club events, but most of the time it is **your fault** if we do not have the correct (or any) details for you.We send out reminders via an email mailing list to do with many things, like slide shows, change of access info, sales, break-ins, etc, but if we do not have your email address you'll never know. So Pleeeaaase.

Elements Travel

presents

MOUNT ARARAT EXPEDITION (5165m)

Mount Ararat, a mystical mountain, rich in history and legend. The alleged landing site of Noah's Ark, it was from this peaceful place that the cycle of life continued after the great flood. Largely unpopulated, Eastern Turkey is one of the most beautiful and unspoiled areas of this magnificent country. The meadows in spring and summer are blanketed with wild flowers and the air is filled with the sounds of migrating birds.This remarkable itinerary offers a taste of the wonderful trekking available up to the summit of Mount Ararat and an insight into the cultural and religious background of Anatolia.

10 days -moderate trek including 2 days sightseeing.Price:R9799excluding airfare

(Subject to change due to currency fluctuations)

Also available :White Water Rafting Expedition on the Coruh River (one of the big five in rafting), which can be either added to the mountain expedition or done separately.

Availability: Minimum 8, maximum 16 persons at a time. Offer available from the beginning of July to end of August.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

NICCI084 – 5138602or 011 - 7267013

nicci@elementstravel.co.za

Rock climbing, mountaineering and all other forms of outdoor activities are inherently dangerous and carry significant risk of personal injury or death.Any activities undertaken in conjunction with or on the property of the MCSA are participated in at own risk.The MCSA, its members, the occupiers or owners of any land on which such activity takes place accept no responsibility for any loss injury or damage to person or property, howsoever arising, whether

through negligence or otherwise. The MCSA does not recommend that anyone participate in these activities unless they are experts, seek qualified instruction or guidance, are knowledgeable about the risks involved and are willing to, and do, personally assume all responsibility