



February 2005

"Earth and sky, woods and fields, lakes and rivers, the mountain and the sea, are excellent schoolmasters, and teach some of us more than we can ever learn from books."

-- Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913), British banker, politician, naturalist.

1. FROM THE EDITOR (Well the stand-in, temporary, not for long editor)

Ha! Thought you had seen the last of me as editor. Bumped me upstairs to be Chairman. Mmmm? Well, I'm back. But only for a short while, as Peter Adrian is busy getting married, honeymooning and such.

This newsletter has a bunch of the usual interesting stuff, not the least being an article on the Indian Bouldering Mecca of Hampi, by Chris Zirane. There's lots of club news both for the Josie section as well as other sections so read on.

However, I have the keyboard now, so allow me to editorialise if I may. (Chairman's privilege and all that).

I have just spent some time preparing for the Cencom (Central Committee) Meeting to be held in April this year. And I had a quick look at the overarching objectives of the mountain club which are to:

1. Organise and facilitate mountaineering.
2. Procure and protect real rights in and access to mountains and mountain areas.
3. Initiate and support actions towards protecting the natural beauty and wilderness character of mountains and to promote their effective conservation management.
4. Promote the safety and training of mountaineers.
5. Organise search and rescue parties.
6. Promote the study of mountains and their environments, the preservation of historical and archaeological sites on them and the dissemination of information on mountains and mountaineering.

And while most of these objectives are met without too much hassle, it seems to me that more and more of our committee's efforts are centred around objectives two and three, namely access and protecting the mountains.

While this focus of effort might seem to be a sign of the times, I believe we are losing the battle: There is more pressure on mountain areas from developers of "weekend leisure activity brokers" (my own term), game ranchers, mountain adventures, weekend hiking trails and on and on. Not to mention other organised groups like mountain bikers and adventure racers. All of whom want to use the mountains.

Our biggest problem is that the MCSA doesn't actually represent a lot of people who use the mountains. We don't represent most sport climbers, boulderers, and some trad climbers. We don't have meaningful relationships with Adventure Racers, Mountain Bikers and Paragliders and the like – but we may be called to rescue them when the paw-paw hits the fan (or the body hits the cliff – depending how descriptive you want to be). We also don't have the same objectives as the average land-owner has, because let's face it, we are into land ownership to preserve our access only – if we could *guarantee* access without buying property, I doubt if we would own a single hectare. And what about the government? Land-claims may be one thing, but if I were in government I would be looking at effective utilisation of all land in the country. And if I were in the government I would say that mountain areas should be better utilised. Oh, and by the way, how many black climbers do we have in the club?

So here we have a club which doesn't represent the majority of the mountain users, and which owns a bunch of land, land which we may or may not use on the weekends...we might be considered elitist, don't you think?

Is there an answer? There always is, but it will be hard work. I believe the time is right to set up a South African mountain user's group, which represents all interested parties who use mountain areas. This user's group needs to be able to distil the objectives of all mountain area users, and to represent these objectives as a legitimate voice of their constituency. And that's what I will be talking about at Cencom. It's early days, but I believe the MCSA needs to be central to this initiative. (*Do it to yourself before someone does it to you* may be the maxim running in my head).

Can you help? Always. Because we are a voluntary organisation, we need people who have some time and skills to bring to the table in this domain. Come to the AGM and volunteer. Or don't come to the AGM but still volunteer. We have our work cut out for us.

Terry White

2. LAND, ACCESS, CONSERVATION and all things earthy

Membership Cards: PLEASE members carry your MCSA cards on you when visiting our areas. If you have lost yours, contact Uschi to get a new one. Please remember you may take ONE guest on your membership. Any extra guests please get permits if it is a permit area. Permits are R20 per adult per day, R12.50 for high school scholars and students and R5. for small children. Apply in time.

Mountain Sanctuary has mentioned that there are people claiming to be members who are not. If members do not comply with our request to carry their MCSA cards with them could be turned away from MSP.

Patrol Easter weekend and all the holidays: at Tonquani and Cedarberg: members going to Cedarberg and Tonquani during the many holidays in March, and who are able to patrol, please do so. If possible let Uschi know otherwise just do the patrol. It is difficult to allocate dates to members during these times.

Hamerkop house users:

Alarm system: an alarm system has been installed at the Hamerkop house. Please note that if members use a week of a beneficiary to PLEASE contact a Hamerkop committee member to get the code etc.

WEEK 22: Jhb section's week 31 May to 6 June: A club meet will be held from Friday 3 June to Sunday 5 June. Members who wish to use the remainder of the section's week from Tuesday 31 May to Friday 3 June please contact Uschi to book. Fees payable.

Help us keep our access rights:

Please familiarise yourselves with the correct access information - as stated in the meet list or phone the Land & Access convenor or the administrator.

3.IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT...

Well, there we were...It had gotten dark without us noticing.We were all huddled together, the storm raging outside. We knew we couldn't stay there much longer, but no-one could decide what to do.It was looking bleak, we'd already lost Andrew and Rance, and it didn't look like Julia would be with us much longer.Then Terry said it was the end of the committee meeting and we all went home.

4.CONSERVATION

Pompom Weed in Castle Gorge

A VERY big thank you to all who helped in this year's effort to clear the vleiland up in Castle

Gorge of Pompomweed. There were more plants

than we suspected - they really spread extremely quickly - so we had to go three times. The last day Rand Water Board very generously helped us by providing a bakkie to take us up, saving us the time and effort walking up & down with heavy spades. Good news is that Working for Water has now approved a project for the Weeds Group at PPR1 on Pompomweed and at the moment Stefan and colleagues are in Argentina and Brazil looking for suitable natural enemies of the weed. It will take a number of years for such insects to be tested and approved for release, so in the meantime we still need to do it manually.

News on Crofton Weed [Mexican Devil] is that Castle Gorge is actually quite clean except for a few odd young plants, one bad gully and at the waterfall. Please, everyone, pull them out when you see them. Unfortunately a project on this weed has not been approved and that means we will have to start lobbying the powers to be again.

Thanks again to Stefan, Michael Stiller, Lettie Morris, Reuben & Adel

[MAG Section] and Piers & Corne, Peter Otto, Anette Salter and Martin & Margaret [JHB], and two patrollers from JHC, who all came to help, some more than once, and some in pelting rain!

The Magaliesberg says thank you!

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5.HAMPI INDIA - A BOULDERER'S PARADISE- Chris Ziraneke - 31st January 2005

Imagine a place where you can look out in one direction and for 180 degrees and as far as the eye can see, all you can see granite boulders. There are thousands of them, if not tens of thousands of them. Now imagine the ruins of an ancient capital from the 14-15th century scattered over kilometres between the boulders. This is Hampi.

Chris Prinsloo and I had just completed our ascent of Mt Kenya in early January 2004, and we were relaxing on the Mombasa coast before the long drive back. This was the second Christmas and New Year that we had been away from our families on climbing trips, and we were both feeling a little bit guilty. I was reading Simon Yates's book, 'Against the Wall'. He mentioned Hampi as one of the most amazing climbing venues he has been to, but gave very little detail. Though I had never actually been to the place, I had been to India twice previously, and on both occasions passed through the general vicinity. Chris and I discussed the option, and very soon it became the destination for December 2004. The bonus was that we could satisfy our families' demands and take them with.

My factory closed on 10th December and on 11th, we were flying to Mumbai (Bombay). Travel in India is relatively easy, cheap and safe. Travelling by train is a must, as the roads are narrow, slow and very hectic. We took the train south, first to Goa, with its beautiful coast line. Then trained to Hospet and hence Hampi.

Hampi is a small place, 15 km from the nearest main town and rail station of Hospet, about 600km SSE of Bombay.

That is the charm of Hampi. It is off all the railway and main roads. A lot of travellers pass through the place. But it retains its village feel, and is, as a consequence, much less intense than the rest of India, even quite peaceful.

As far as the climbing was concerned, for Chris and I, Hampi was a disappointment. Neither of us are into bouldering. We had lugged all of our climbing gear, including full trad racks, half way across the world, only to find that all we needed was rock shoes and a chalk bag. Even the crash mats can be hired there. There are a few bolted routes, but these are few and far between. Nevertheless, we could see that for the boulderers, this place would be heaven as you could spend weeks and months here, and never have to repeat a single problem.

Rest days could be amply filled with visits to the extensive and truly amazing ruins of Vijayanagar, once the capital of one of the largest Hindu empires in Indian history. From this point of view, Hampi was, for me, a real jewel of India.

We met Andrew, a British boulderer. He had spent a month in Hampi, gone off, and had returned for his second month. He told us that a few more boulderers were now visiting the place as a result of a newly produced climbing video called 'The Pilgrimage' and a few articles in climbing magazines. For us, he suggested some other crags at Badami, about 130kms away. Chris and I eventually settled for the beaches of Goa, which were not too difficult to relax into.

6.ROC RALLY 2004

Held at Waterval Boven on 24th and 25th September 2004

I am not keen on competitions, but my climbing partner, Chris Prinsloo, had no reservations. It had been very successfully held for the first time last year, with 39 teams of 2 entering. Mark Seuring and Alard Hufner of 'Team Eating Pap' had won on that occasion. This year, 58 teams entered.

So it was that Chris and I became 'Team C2', and together with 114 other competitors, waited in the Elandskrans Resort hall for the start on the first day, still wondering at our entry. But whenGustav gave us the all go, there were climbers running everywhere.

The idea was that each climber climbed to their own handicap, scoring points for **each pitch that they completed**. Bonus points were given for 'onsite ascents' and 'number of crags visited'. The team that scored the highest during two 6-hour periods on Friday and Saturday won the competition.

At the end of day one, 'Team Subterfuge' (Alex Harris and Dirk Uys) had everybody amazed by their huge push. At that point, their lead seemed almost unassailable. They had truly added a high degree of competitiveness to the event.

Day two had local Police Inspector, Alwyn Venter, and his son Peet (Local A-Team) pushing hard on the heels of 'Team Subterfuge', but just unable to catch them. In the end, and to everyone's surprise, 'Team Eating Pap' made a miraculous comeback and completed an incredible total of 114 routes between them over the 2 days. They also picked up an enormous bonus from visiting 21 different crags. 6 weeks of hard training for the event had paid off, and they just pipped 'Team Subterfuge' at the post.

The final results for the top 5 places were

Team	Climbers	Total Routes	Crags	Points	Position
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Eating Pap	Mark Seuring	114	21	163851	
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Alard Hufner
SubterfugeAlex Harris991162252
Dirk Uys

A-TeamAlwyn Venter701758103
Peet Venter
LaybackXander Human54345204
Gerome Cooke
9 Inch MalesWillem le Roux911044405

It was interesting to note that Chris and I came in 7th with a score that would have won last year's event. Clearly, this year, the competition was much stiffer, and strategy played a significant role.

Filed footage of the 2 days preceded the prize giving. The sponsors had been generous. Claire Taylor narrowly clinched best female from Marianne Pretorius by a mere 10 points. Dirk Uys took home best male category with Claire Vincent and Deon Willis for youngest entrants. Cape Climber Deon Hugo scored the highest average grade for the event.

Gustav had been up at 4.30 on the first morning to place numbered tags at the top of selected climbs to be claimed by that route's first ascending climber. The local community kindly sponsored spot prizes including dry woks from the slaghuis, a haircut at the salon, wine from the bottle store, and even 2 litres of milk and 12 eggs from the café.

I really feel that the organisers should be congratulated for an exceptional event. Gustav and Alex van Rensburg, together with the embryo of the new Mpumalanga section of the MCSA based in Nelspruit, including Nicole and Craig, had organised an outstanding competition. I hope that it takes a permanent place on the years climbing calendar.

RORY LOWTHER MEMORIAL CHALLENGE February 2005

"Memorial Challenge a salute to a friend and all participants"

25 teams took part in the Rory Lowther Memorial Challenge at Swinburne, Harrismith, on Saturday 5 February. It was a day of bouldering, climbing and hiking in perfect weather conditions - overcast and cool. If you had seen the weather the night before (very cold and rainy) with the mountain covered in mist, you'll appreciate the organiser's relief when the event got underway with a bang. No, really, Shane, the phyrotechnician, made sure no one was sleeping!

The Memorial Challenge was organised by Eric and Debbie Lowther in memory of their son, Rory - who cranked many of the routes at this magnificent mountain and the boulders surrounding it, and who, sadly, lost his life to the sport he loved. The day was a fitting salute to Rory and to all who share his passion for rock climbing. He had often spoken about the lack of competitions and the opportunity of events that would appeal to enthusiasts from both Natal and Gauteng. The weekend attracted 125 people. Eric and Debbie would like to thank all who made the event possible - the committee, the participants, the sponsors, the workers, friends, the owners of the farm - and their bull, which arrived in the midst of the prize giving, considered adding a new and spontaneous dimension to the challenge, but decided that the cows in the nearby field were more interesting!

Full results & pics on the web-site www.rorylowther.za.net "

7. CLUB NEWS

2005 Subscriptions: subs are due now. Thanks you to members who have paid. To those who have not, please do so as soon as possible.

Donations received: we thank members who have made donations to our various Funds.

New members:

We welcome the following new members: Brandon Abdinor, Dan Sonnenberg, Catherine Pantazopoulos, Dale Heyne, Lynette Frick, Ian Kotze, Andrew Tyler, Warren Gilmour, Brad Clarke, Genevieve Standley, Ben Young, Peter Cole, Loren Kaplan, Hugh Harrison, Diane Arvanitakis, and family members Jeremy & Jonathan van der Riet.

Transferred to other sections: David & Genie McMachlan to Stellenbosch; Charles (Snort) Edelstein to CT, Mark Campbell to CT, Gerhard Benade to Free State.

Resigned: Chris Barclay and Samantha Ryan.

Eric Hunter: we sadness we wish to let members know that Eric passed away suddenly on 9 February. Our sincere condolences to Leanne, family and friends.

Marion Landgrebe passed away on 22 February. Our deepest sympathy to Herko, Anja, Waldo and Helmut, family and friends. We shall miss Marion at our campfire and sing song meets.

John Gordon Maddox, who joined our section in 1955, passed away in December.

Bolting News

*A number of routes in Tonquani and Boven were bolted more than ten years ago and for **safety reasons** the bolts need to be replaced. First ascent parties will be consulted **and no additional bolts will be placed**. Any experienced bolters who are willing to assist with this project can contact Neil Margetts on 083 669 3028. Some bolting training will be offered shortly for those who want to learn how to bolt correctly but numbers are limited.

*See meets schedule

8. GENERAL MCSA NEWS

International Climbing Meet in April: The MCSA, and more specifically the Johannesburg Section, is organising an international climbing meet during the last week in April.

We will be using Cederberg Kloof as a base and from there facilitate climbing trips to other kloofs in the Magaliesberg as well as to Blouberg, Hanglip, Krantzberg, Wilgepoort, Waterval and the Drakensberg.

We are looking for climbing leaders and other volunteers to provide transport between the various climbing venues and to act as climbing partners/guides when necessary. The cost of fuel will be subsidised substantially by the MCSA. If you are familiar with one or more of these areas and would like to show off our crags to climbers from overseas, please contact Ulrike on ukiefer@icon.co.za. You may join for a day only or a couple or for the whole week from 23.4.05 to 1.5.05.

National Meet 2005: "Explore the Highlands: North Eastern Cape Witteberg / Drakensberg

The Free State Section invites members of all sections to join us for a National Meet (Mini-camp) in the remote Witteberg/Drakensberg area of the North Eastern Cape in the Rhodes / Barkly East district. The venue is 360 km from Bloemfontein, 760 from Johannesburg, 630 km from PE and 1100 km from Cape Town.

This area, where the Witteberg Mountain range meets the Drakensberg / Maluti range, is characterized by deep valleys and ravines, prominent basalt cliffs and peaks, beautiful sandstone formations, many waterfalls, crystal clear trout streams and bearded vultures soaring above. It has a Drakensberg / Maluti Mountain character and the altitude varies between 1800 m and 2800 m asl, with Ben MacDhui being the highest peak in the area at 3001 m. The Tiffendell ski resort is situated in this area and is accessible by car (in dry weather). Some of the hikes will start or end there.

Dates: Arriving Sunday 27 March, through to Saturday, 2 April, leaving on the morning of 3 April (the Easter Weekend is from 25 to 28 March).

Activities:

- A self-catering braai on the Sunday evening, 27 March
- Day walks from base camp through the valleys, to waterfalls and to rock paintings
- Overnight hikes, from 2 to 6 days in duration through the valleys and to the higher parts of the area
- Rock climbing possibilities on unclimbed faces, depending on availability of leaders.
- A catered braai at the end of the camp (Saturday evening, 2 April)

Base Camp: On the farm Reedsdell, near Wartrail / Lundin's Neck area. The base camp will be alongside a stream with some nice trees, but with no facilities besides a field toilet and some firewood. Water from the stream. Only some of the hikes will start at the base camp and we will need some of the camp attendees' vehicles to transit hikers.

Limitation On Numbers: 60 persons maximum

Cost Per Person: R150.00.

This covers the facilities for the first night's function, the braai at the end, camp fee, firewood, a camp guard and a map of the area. The rest of the camp will be self-catering.

Closing Date For Applications: 28 February 2005

Application Forms: Available at all Sections of the Mountain Club and on the Free State Section's Web Site: <http://vry.mcsa.org.za> or from the organiser at derekrits@mweb.co.za

Are you a survivor?

We received this e-mail recently, any ideas?

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a TV Producer with O'Darlow Smithson Productions' an independent television and film production company based in London. We recently made a documentary drama called, 'Touching the Void' which is the true story of two climbers and their perilous journey in the Peruvian Andes in 1985.

We are now embarking upon a 10 part TV series in the same vein. I am looking for remarkable survivor stories and thought that the Mountain Club of South Africa might be able to advise me.

If you can offer any assistance or suggest anyone whom you think might be able to help me with this I'd be very grateful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Erika Dodd

Producer

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9.FOR SALE:

Expedition bags: a few still left R390 (plus R35 if you want it posted).

MCSA shirts: cotton: only medium and small left R120.

Contact Uschi