



Newsletter August 2011

Dear Johannesburg Section Members,

Welcome to the latest edition of the Johannesburg Section newsletter.

Over the past few years, our membership base has progressively migrated from traditional snail mail to e-mail correspondence.

In tandem with this move into the electronic age, we have begun to publish and circulate the weekly reminders by e-mail and the MCSA newsletter is also published and distributed in electronic format. Both these publications contain the latest news, articles, meet schedules and pertinent updates. Moreover, our Section web site (http://mcsa.org.za/jhbjoom/) and the central MCSA web site (http://cen.mcsa.org.za/) also carry this and more information about our climbing community in South Africa and developments in climbing circles abroad. They provide rich and varied content.

Around 11% of our members still receive the newsletter through traditional post. We would like to encourage these members to have access to e-mail and internet facilities, and make use of these forms of communication, as they are quicker and more efficient than traditional forms of written communication. The weekly Reminders will also be posted on the notice board at the club house and we look forward to seeing you at Wednesday evening club meetings to catch up on the latest news and views.

Sincerely Yours

Dobek Pater

Chairman, Johannesburg Section, MCSA

NEWSLETTER: Please send your newsletter items to mcsanewsletter@gmail.com

CLUB NEWS

SECTIONS 80TH ANNIVERSARY was held on the 8th May at Glenburn Lodge. We repeated the first walk our section undertook in May 1931 to the top of Swartkops. After the walk we enjoyed a scrumptious buffet lunch at the Lodge. An immense 'thank you' to Jenny Paterson for organising this event.

CLUB EVENINGS: As the attendance at club evenings has been very poor, the committee decided to only have club evenings on the first Wednesday of a month and the third. However, sometimes we have to change the one or the other date. These dates are detailed in the weekly Reminders.

CLUB EVENING PRESENTATIONS: We had excellent First Aid Talks by David Stanton from Netcare, a talk on lightning by Mike Grant and CPR demonstration by Arthur and Teresa Morgan, as well as the ever popular Alard and Shelly on their trip Cape Town to London. Thanks to them and all the others who have given a presentation.

If you have an interesting presentation suitable for a club evening, please contact Vernon or Uschi.

COOK-A-THON: This popular event will again take place in October. Please contact Natasha on 083 444 3991 if you wish to enter. Prizes and fun.

COMMITTEE: We still do not have a Secretary and appeal to members to come forward if you can help in this portfolio. We also do not have a member to take over the Meets portfolio. Sadly Brigid Schutz, who ran the Orientation Portfolio so well, has resigned. So we do need a person to take on Orientation.

ALIEN PLANT ERADICATION: Thank you to the stalwarts who assist with this task.

NEW MEMBERS: We welcomenew members: Kelly Ann Sommer; Florentia Belvedere; Nati and Lindi Stander; Karin Epstein and children Ethan and Jenna; Magdaleen and Francois Enslin; Marc Dewrance; Justine Cole; and family member Aine Egan (daughter of Bronwyn and Vincent Egan).

JOURNAL 2009: Many were posted and over 40 were returned by the Post Office - 'unclaimed' / 'box closed'. If you have not received your 2009 Journal, please contact Uschi to collect.

PATROLLING: Johannesburg Section patrols Cedarberg / Tonquani and now also Mhlabatini. Please help to look after our properties by doing your patrol.

FIRES: Please be very careful when lighting stoves. There is a lot of dry grass out there and with the winds we usually experience at this time of the year, fires can easily get out of control.

UIAA YOUTH EVEREST BASE CAMP TREK

The Nepal Mountaineering Association will host a UIAA Global Youth Summit meet from 14 to 30 September 2011 in Nepal. It will involve a trek for peace for youth between the ages of 16 and 25 to the Everest Base Camp (5 364m) with an option to climb Phokalde Peak as an add-on. Participants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult guide and only 4 participants per mountaineering federation are allowed. The cost of the Everest Base Camp Trek will be US\$995 per person (does not include international airfare).

At this stage, the final documentation is not yet available. Anyone interested should e-mail the MCSA's UIAA Youth Commission Corresponding Member, Jenny Paterson

(jpaterson@iburst.co.za) to start the ball rolling.

Some financial assistance could be made available from the Centenary Journal Youth Fund. This is a unique opportunity for Youth Members to participate in one of the most spectacular treks in the world!!!

UIAA GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT MEET IN THE BERG

The second UIAA Global Youth Summit Meet hosted by the MCSA in the Drakensberg was a great success.

Feedback by one of the participants can be read on the MCSA web page: http://cen.mcsa.org.za/home/youth/gys-2011.

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Also, another participant from the Waterford International School in Swaziland, has updated his blog. See it on: http://elimedvescek.blogspot.com/

Koaswane Lodge

Thank you all for your support for the MPA's court case against the Kgaswane Lodge. The case will take place in the Mafeking High Court on 4 and 5 August 2011, and we are getting our ducks in a row well beforehand. Our submissions have all been submitted to the court and we have an excellent legal team fighting for us.

Financially things are still tight and we are grateful for all the donations that have been made to the MPA to help fight the case. I would be most grateful if you could now transfer the donations that have come in to your club, but have not yet been passed on, to the MPA trust account at our lawyers. The account details are given below, and I will be grateful if you could let me know when you have done so and what the amounts are.

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Regards,

Paul Fatti

Chairman, Magaliesberg Protection Association

Donations should be deposited in the Cameron Cross Inc. trust account at Standard bank:

 Trust account number:
 410 290 351

 Branch:
 Centurion

 Branch Code:
 012 645 40

Reference (must be included): MPA718

Please e-mail Melissa van Dyk at Cameron Cross (This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it.*>+addy_text23320+') when you have made the deposit, with a copy to the MPA Secretary, Barbara Reid (reidb@iafrica.com)

This is especially for those members who do not receive our weekly reminders by email to take note of a number of land and access matters.

Tonquari South (ie the former access via Mr Otto Bertram's farm). The farm was bought by Mr Guiseppi Plumari. Mr Plumari has fenced his properties as he will be introducing game and as a result the access to Upper Tonquari has changed. Please contact the Land & Access convenor or Uschi for the latest access information.

Mr Plumari has also built a track to the nek at Upper Tonquani. Please DO NOT use this track, parking remains as before. Please, pay R20 per car either by EFT or giving it in cash to Uschi.

UTOPIA: Members (no non-members) wishing to access Tonguani via Utopia please observe the new arrangement

- 1. A new tag system has been implemented at Utopia. Members can get the tags from either Erik Manson or Uschi they have one each.
- 2. During the week the gate at Utopia is manned between 6am and 6pm you do not need a tag.
 - 1. Week-ends and public holidays: members need to phone Natasha or the office on 014 534 0118 before 16h00 on Fridays or the day before a public holiday. The system will be activated when Natasha receives your call. Please, state your name and membership number. Members can enter and leave at any time during the week-end / holiday.
 - 2. Members need to hold the tag up to the 'reader'. The gate will open and you have 10 seconds to get through
 - 3. Tags to be returned the day after your visit.

Any queries, please contact Uschi on 011 807 1310 weekday mornings or Erik Manson on 082 450 8169.

MOUNTAIN SANCTUARY PARK

Day visitors (non-mountain club members) will be charged as follows: R50 per adult, R30 per child (ages 2-12 years) and R20 per vehicle.

Please, remember to let everyone know that if non club members book permits through the mountain club, they will still be expected to pay the daily visitor rates on arrival.

This charge by Mountain Sanctuary is in addition to our permit fees, at present. Permits are available for the areas Castle Gorge, Mhlabatini, Cedarberg / Tonquani, Grootkloof and Dome

MCSA permit fees 2011:

R35.00 per adult per day

R25.00 for students and high school scholars

R15.00 for children under 13 years

CHOSSPILE: MOUNT AMANZI RECEPTION

Please, make sure the following procedure is followed for all climbers / walkers who wish to access at Chosspile:

- Every person must sign the indemnity.
- 2. 2. Every person must pay R30 (Those who want full access to all facilities of Mount Amanzi pay R55). TBC that MCSA and other clubs only to pay R27.00
- 3. Those who buy year passes must have their name on the list. The pass expires when the date expires.
 - 1. Every person must be a member of one of the following clubs and show the membership card with current date sticker on reverse:
 - 1. Mountain Club of South Africa
 - 2. South African National Climbing Federation
 - University Student Card with the climbing club sticker on the reverse of the current year. (Pretoria Univ., WITS, UJ, Potch Univ., UKZN, Rhodes, UCT). Note: These university clubs can gain free entrance if they take groups of under-privileged people climbing. They also get a number of free entrance credits. This must be arranged in advance with Mount Amanzi.
 - 4. Each member may take one guest, who must also sign in and pay R30.

For information on the procedure for car guards and to access the climbing map, please go to our website.

A sampling of the knots and rock in the Czech Republic

by Andrew Porter

The Sharp End DVD contains a scene about climbing in the Czech Republic. They portray a climbing community that uses knots stuffed into cracks for pro, drinks a lot and generally considers broken bones to be a way of life. In July 2011, I went on a mission to see if this was true. In five days of climbing, I managed to climb in five different areas, in two parts of the country. Conclusion: this is not a place for sissies.

Day 1:

Cragging on the towers and cliffs above the town of Tisa. Here, I learnt that pulling down on a sloping crimp without chalk is a mean feat. No chalk with 5m between bolts also creates a lot of messing about, trying to find which pockets to use / avoid. The only knot I attempted to place in a crack came straight out again, so I skipped that in favour of long runouts. I did, however, thread slings – the fun part here is tying a knot in the sling after threading it with only 1 hand. Most of the routes have huge ring bolts on them, but these are almost always 5 – 10m apart, and the first one is always 10m + above the ground.

Day 2:

A trip to the Elbe river valley. On the warm-up route, I learn that "classic" = Czech for "no gear". The route was great fun, but not for sissies. On pitch 1, I clip a ring bolt 20m above the ground and then have to run it out up a slab to the stance a further 20m up. Pitch 2 took no gear, and on pitch 3, I placed only 1 sling. The next route was a great face climb. 80m long, with about 12 bolts, and the name once translated to English is "bolt after bolt after bolt". In the afternoon, I did one of the most fun arêtes I have ever climbed, but there were only 2 slings / knots and 3 bolts in 60m of climbing. By now, the mind was blown and could not take the leading anymore, but the arms had not yet even warmed up.

Day 3:

Rain forced us to change plans slightly, so we started out again in the Elbe valley, on a route named "Big Wall". This is an overhanging crack 80m long, and goes at about grade 23. I did not even try to lead it! The first piece of gear is a bolt 20m up, with grade 21 or so moves just below it. After that, you climb 10m to a really cool stance inside a cave. Pitch 2 then breaks through the roof of the cave and continues up an overhanging headwall for another 30m, with fun jams, good crimps and amazing exposure. Ur, and knots stuffed into the crack for pro. I think, it is one of the best crack climbs I have ever done.

Day 4: (after a day of rest, and now 300km further north east)

Adrsprach. This is the scene of much of the climbing in the Sharp End DVD. For the 2nd climb, we do a really fun 4-pitch route up a tower. It is a classic route, opened in 1928, so every warning bell in my mind is ringing out loud. The first pitch has no gear, so I just sucked it up and grovelled up the (wet) chimney and off-width. For pitch 2, you have to 'fall across' a 1.5m wide gap that is 25m deep, and then do some really hard friction moves up to the next ledge. I find it desperate seconding this pitch. The next pitch is fine (everything is relative of course). Pitch 4 was initially done via the tried and tested method of standing on your belayer's shoulders. We do the free climbing variation a few meters right, that is again desperate on top rope. I do a few other routes, mostly on top rope, and find the friction moves in this place utterly desperate. On a grade 25, I successfully pull the one-finger pocket move (with no feet), but fall repeatedly on the "easy" friction moves above.

Day 5:

Teplice. Similar rock to Adrspach, but lots of cracks. On the first route, I suck it up to try it on lead. It is much harder than it looks. I start up a dripping corner system, and then enter a wet chinney. I protect psychologically the chinney with a knot stuffed into a rail. I nearly put in an opposing knot to make it really bomber, but then I realise that if fall I will hit the ledge anyway, so stop worrying. At the top of the chinney, 20m off the ground, I now clip a ring bolt, and look at the crack above. It is not a hand crack as expected, but a horrible looking off-width. I decide to lay back it, so off I go. 8m up, I clip the next ring bolt, and then keep going to the next bolt a further 10m up. About here, the crack widens a bit, and I burrow into it for a rest. I decide to continue up the next 10m to the top using jams rather than lay backing. About 5m up this, the crack gets wet again, and 3m higher up, I can no longer go up. I am not willing to jump for a 20m+ fall, so I find a way to down climb and down slide to a point where I can place a knot to lower off. Tomas rescues the gear. We do a few really fun climbs after that, and my final climb there is a perfect hand crack up a corner system. 40m long, with 2 bolts and 1 fixed knot. This place has an awesome-looking, 80m high overhanging arête – but it goes at about grade 30, so it will have to wait until another day.

Basic Facts

There are two main regions of sandstone tower climbing in the Czech Republic.

The first is about 2 hours north west of Prague, in the vicinity of the town Decin. Here you can climb on towers overlooking the Elbe River valley before it flows into Germany, near the city Dresden. Decin is a large enough town to have decent shops, a few ATMs and so on. 20 minutes drive away is a village called Tisa. Tisa has a climbing shop, a decent campsite, at least 3 pubs and pretty good climbs 5 minutes' walk out of town. The routes here are up to 30m long. The rock is a softish, but featured sandstone that reminded me of Red Rocks in the USA. You climb mainly faces on pockets and crimps. Between Tisa and Decin is an area known as Ostrov. Ostrov has a larger campsite that is apparently used by lots of climbers, and has a pub, also frequented by climbers. I did not climb here, but the rock (and towers) looks good. The Elbe River valley has climbs of up to 80m long on both sides of the valley (so you can always get sun or shade). The rock here is also featured, but a lot stonger, almost as good as the rock in the Western Cape.

Alternatively, you can visit an area near the village Adrspach (which is close to the town Trutnov), which is about 2 hours north east of Prague.

The towers immediately outside of Adrspach are up to 100m high. This rock is less featured, and climbs tend to follow cracks, chimneys and arêtes to get to the summit. It is typical to pull through a bulge or climb vertical rock on pure friction holds, so be warned – the Boven jug is far, far away. There is a climbers' campsite called Camp Stransky, near the U Tosovasa pub.

20 minutes away from Adrspach is an area known as Teplice. Teplice is a slightly larger town, and also has a campsite. The towers here are equally good, but this area is best known for the cracks. Yosemite style cracks abound, so this is the place to try out those knots.

You can access most of the climbing via buses and/or trains, and camping is possible at all the climbing areas. There are more pubs than churches.

The best time of the year to visit is the autumn in September / October. During this time, the temperatures are fairly cool, giving you good friction. It is not recommended to visit before May as many of the areas will be closed to climbing because of nesting birds. Summer is okay, as there are always shady cliffs to climb on.

Tradition does not allow for the use of nuts or cams in the cracks. There are two ways to protect a climb. Sometimes, out on the blank faces, you will encounter a large ring bolt. The bolt is large enough that even with 20 years of rust, you will feel very comfy about it. At other points, you can thread a sling through a hole in the rock, or you can tie a knot in a short piece of rope or sling and stuff that into a constriction in a crack rather like a nut placement – bombert Bolts are always 5m or more apart, the first bolt can be as high as 30m off the deck, and the slings take a lot of effort to place for the marginal pro they actually offer. You will climb well above gear in this place. All climbs are established ground up. So, there will never be a bolt on the crux itself, as nobody could hang on to place the bolt here.

Myth busted

Many of the routes in the area have been opened without the use of chalk. Nowadays though, chalk is being used in the areas by some of the local climbers. Some of them use chalk on newer routes only, respecting the style of the original ascent. I suggest only using chalk if it is obvious that climbers before you have done the same. But chalk on a route is a sure sign that is will be hard.

Drink vour grade

In the Czech Republic, they use their own grading system. At first, I tried to convert from that to the French system, but I do not know that either, so in the end I gave up and split it into 3 grades:

- I am willing to lead this.
- It looks like I can get up on top rope.
- W.T.F.

There seems to be a tradition here, or at least that is what they tell the foreigners, that you must drink your age. I mistakenly top roped with many falls, a lxc, so that night I had to drink 9 beers. Thank heavens they do not use the SA grading system, or I would have been about 25 beers down.

Route guides

It is rather desperate to find a route of climbable grade and suitably safe by just walking around and looking at the rock, so you will want some kind of a route guide. Perfectly good guides do exist for the areas and can be bought easily enough at the entrances to the climbing areas. They are published only in the local Czech language. In keeping with "trad type" tradition worldwide, even the locals struggle to convert this info into finding a specific climb.

Finding someone to climb with

Go to the local pubs in the evening. If you can find someone who understands English, go for it.

Alternatively, the following guides can be used. They have an excellent knowledge of the area, and can get you onto the best routes for your climbing abilities.

At Tisa / Decin: Ondra Benes, +420724846179, info@easyclimbing.cz

At Adrspach / Teplice: Tomas Pucha, +420775158538, tomadventure@email.cz

Croatian Limestone: A Climbing Trip to Paklenica, July 2011

by Chris Ziranek

Where shall we go this year? Paklenica in Croatia sounds great. But we did limestone last year. Wait, the route guide shows 350m multi-pitch bolted climbs. OK, I'll book the flights if you book car hire and hotel.

A buddy asked how we could afford to just take off like that. Chris had no hesitation in joking 'because we are rich.' This response totally cut through the expected archetypal shoestring climber syndrome.

And so, with the law courts closed and the looming strike action in the Metal Industries, Chris Prinsloo and I flew via Paris to the Croatian Capital, Zagreb on 29th June, collected our hired car, and drove about 250km south to Stariorad, close to Zadar. We had two weeks to check out the climbing and the country.

Croatia is part of what used to be Communist Yugoslavia, situated east of Italy and on the Aegean seaboard, which forms part of the Mediterranean. Yugoslavia was formed around WW2 and has always been a troublesome area. When their President Tito died some 30 years ago, the whole area dissolved into civil war, with many atrocities being committed. Yugoslavia then split up on more ethnic lines, resulting in a fronta in Croatia.

However, the area now seems to have settled down with little evidence of the strife. The people are generally friendly and many speak English. The road system is excellent, and prices are comparable to those in SA.

Starigrad is a small coastal town (it has a slightly Cape west coast feel) and is a popular holiday destination for local Croatians. It forms the gateway to Paklenica National Park, an area of great natural beauty, attracting climbers and hikers alike. The whole area is limestone of generally excellent quality, generally quite hard and sometimes very sharp. There are some 340 climbing routes, mainly bolter, adequately described in a route book available of the net, or at most places in town.

The park entrance is some R30.00 per day, and is within 5 minutes' walk of a steep-sided gorge where many of the single pitch routes are situated. Only about 20 minutes further is the north face of Anica Kuk (720m), which offers bolted routes of up to 350m and in the shade (very important in the heat of the summer).

We took 2 x 60m half ropes (rather than a 60m single) twoplus a limited trad rack. Having the 2 ropes gave us more confidence with the sharpness of the rock, and gave us more options for abbing, especially when considering that many of the pitches were in excess of 30m.

We started off slowly in the gorge, with several short routes, getting a feel of the rock and their grading. But soon I was chomping on the bit for the big wall stuff. So it was an early start for our first climb on Anica Kuk. We chose the classic Mosoraski, a 10 pitch, 350m bolted route with a max grade of 5c (SA grade 18). It was a splendid climb on good clean rock. We were advised to take some trad gear 'to help the brain' (as some fellow Austrian climbers suggested). We were glad we did, as some of the bolts were rather spaced out, seemingly more to show the route than for protection at strategic points. However, we did feel that although the crux pitch was well bolted, it was a bit under-graded. We were to find this to be the general pattern.

Nevertheless, it was amazing to be able to attempt and complete a route the height of Blouberg in 7½ hours and top out in glorious daylight

Then we found Ante's Restaurant. The menu in most of the restaurants in Starigrad was much the same, with a fair selection of seafood dishes, steak and Wiener schnitzel. What differed was the preparation. And Ante's was the best, with sea bass being top of the list, washed down with Karlovacko and Ozujsko beer. After a hard day's climbing, Chris and I sat most evenings there, peacefully watching the world go by and the sun set over the sea. We worked our way through the whole menu, but always came back to the sea bass.

And so we would sometimes climb in the gorge, doing single pitch stuff, and sometimes do the multi-pitch climbs. On the multi-pitch side we climbed D. Brahm (13 pitch 300m 5c), Leva Trziska (5 pitch 120m 6a) and Centralni Kamin (7 pitch 180m 5a).

It was interesting that Chris and I successfully climbed many 6a and 6a+ grades in the valley floor. But when we multi-pitch climbed on Anica Kuk, we felt that we were missing some technique as 6a or even 5c sections were extremely hard especially at the crux pitches. We felt they were under-graded by as much as 2-3 full grades. At these sections, we would dog, stand on bolts and old pegs, pull on draws, anything, just to get through. Chris was very proud of his 'worm grovel' at the top of the crux pitch of D. Brahm, in his determination to get to the stance of the crux 5(5A grade 18) pitch.

However, I subsequently spoke to a friend, more familiar with European climbing ways. He explained that in those parts, climbers would not have a problem using aid to get through, and not necessarily adjust the grade accordingly. I was very relieved to hear this, as I thought my climbing ability had suddenly taken a big dip.

The weather is always an important factor. It started off slightly overcast, with temperatures around 25C; perfect conditions for climbing. Then one day it rained most of the day leading to clear hot conditions when the temperatures soared to 36-37C. Whilst it was cooler in the gorge, folks would climb early, siesta, and then climb in late afternoon. We did have the advantage of their long summer days, getting light at 5am and dark at 8.30pm. On reflection, spring and autorum would have been a better time.

On our off days, we visited the towns of Zadar and Split, with their history going back to Roman times. We also took in two of their other national parks of Krka and Plitvicko Jazera, both with their lake systems and stunning terraced waterfails. One of the locals proudly stated that the Plitvicko Jazera NP was the most beautiful park 'in the whole of Croatia'.

We were told that the islands off the southern Croatian coast were outstanding, particularly Vis and Korcula. Plus there is definitely climbing further south. But alas, we did not have the time.

In the 11 days we had in Paklenica, we climbed on 7, completing some 59 pitches (each often over 30m), amounting to some 1.6km vertical height. My hands had become like leather from the rough, sometimes sharp rock, and my thumbs ached from numerous pinch grips.

Though we did not travel on a shoestring, Croatia offers the budget climber plenty of cheap accommodation options, including plenty of apartments and campsites

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE CLUB CONTACT: Uschi Magg (Administrator), Tel 011 807 1310, weekdays 8am – 10am. Email: admin@jhb.mcsa.org.za

MCSA Johannesburg Section

2011/ 2012 Committee Members Contact Details - as at 8 August 2011

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ALL PERSONS TAKING PART IN CLUB ACTIVITIES DO SO ENTIRELY AT THEIR OWN RISK AND HAVE TO ADHERE TO THE RULES OF THE MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA JOHANNESBURG SECTION. Please note that you must inform the Meetleader if you wish to participate in a meet by the Friday before by 13h00.

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE CLUB CONTACT

Uschi Magg (Administrator) Tel 011 807 1310 weekdays between 8 - 10am

Email: admin@jhb.mcsa.org.za

Postal address : P.O.Box 1641 Houghton 2041.

Clubhouse: Waverley Girl Guide Hall, cnr Scott & Stirling Str (entrance in Stirling Str) Waverley

Club evenings - see 'events and meets'