

Christmas Greetings

2013 has certainly been an eventful year, with our Club becoming richer in another beautiful property – Wilgepoort, Petro Grobler becoming the first female President of the MCSA, our members exploring new corners of the globe, and Nelson Mandela – the icon of democratic South Africa – passing away.

We hope that 2014 proves just as exciting; preferably dominated by pleasant events, but we are always ready to face another challenge and to relish in the unknown. Our Section Committee would like to wish you memorable holidays, whether you're spending them mountaineering in the big mountain ranges of our world, rock climbing in the crags around Jo'burg, or scaling dunes on your way to the sea from the beach-front hotel. We also wish you a joyous Merry Christmas, and success in all your endeavours in the New Year!

Dobek Pater, Chairman

Wilgepoort access now secure



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On 25 March 2013, Wilgepoort was registered in the name of the Mountain Club of South Africa, having been purchased outright by the Johannesburg and Magaliesberg Sections.

It had been a few decades since its discovery by Magaliesberg Section members.

Since then Wilgepoort had been on the two Sections' club meet lists.

The discovery opened up the area to other climbing venues along the Wilge River such as Tagatikoof, Magageni, Scheeperskloof and Rooipoort.

However through the years, access to these latter venues was curtailed one by one.

Wilgepoort was the only venue in the area the club had some access to. However it had its own share of access problems over the years, ranging from being completely out of bounds to alternative access to limited access.



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At a Magaliesberg Section Forum held in 1999 the importance of securing access to Wilgepoort by buying it, was reaffirmed. However, the property owner proved to be a very resistant seller.

On 13 December 2012 at a Special General Meeting, MCSA Johannesburg voted in favour of buying Wilgepoort.

Long known as a winter climbing venue, Wilgepoort is now also valued for its summer climbing, deep water soloing and slack-lining at Big Pool, and car camping. See more info about Wilgepoort [here](#).



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Permits

Permits to visit MCSA areas will increase from 1 January 2014.

Johannesburg MCSA, Magaliesberg MCSA and the Johannesburg Hiking Club will ask the following permit fees:

Members: no charge for access, but a parking fee may apply.

Non Members: Applicable parking fees plus permits fees at Adults R40.00 pp per day; Students and high school scholars R30.00 pp per day; children under 13 years R20.00 pp per day.

Boer War Hike 21 July to the Nootgedacht Battlefield



© Therese van Wyk

On a beautiful day in July, we retraced the events of the night of 12 December and 13 December 1900 in the southern Tonquani area.

For us it was easy - no braving of bullets with nowhere to hide, no leading of horses across the mountain in the dead of night. Andre Wedepohl took us through the story of that battle as we walked the area of the battle field.

Andre writes: "The Battle of Nootgedacht, which took place on 13 December 1900, was by far the most significant military action which took place in the Magaliesberg during the Boer War.

We followed the route taken by General Beyers and about 250 of his men to the battlefield.

We paused at the spot from which this group of Boers launched their attack against the British, and traced the path of their courageous charge, under intense rifle fire, across the open veld.

Then we visited some British fortifications and walked to the edge of the escarpment, enjoying a panoramic view of the rest of the battlefield in the valley below.

"As we looked out over the valley, a small group of vultures circled slowly above us, reminding us of the devastation of



Crofton weeding... and crocodile



In May a crocodile went walk-about in the Magaliesberg. Meanwhile, a group of MCSA members from the Magaliesberg section were working on fire-breaks and getting rid of Crofton weed in the same area.

Otti Nesper writes: "A few of us saw it Saturday late afternoon when they went for a quick visit to the pool. They took a photo, but of course the rest was extremely sceptical and suspected a practical joke.

"That was until Sunday morning when we arrived at Junction Pool in Tonquani to do some upstream Crofton weeding. Weeding was forgotten for a while."

After many photos they did actually go weed-hunting. The croc didn't move at all.

Just as the last MCSA members were leaving in the early evening it lifted its legs and shifted position. The crocodile was carried out of Tonquani some time later by a team of eight people in a big net.

Tonquani fire sweeps all before it

On Sunday October 6 the Tonquani area was hit by fire, which devastated the Utopia Nature Resort. One of those who lost virtually everything in the fire, journalist Terence Kennedy, writes:

"Three of Utopia's resident families saw their homes and virtually all their possessions go up in smoke, and eleven other Utopian owners lost their unoccupied chalets. The fire had been burning for at least three days across the mountain. By the Sunday night it had worked its way from Breed's Nek and through the Tonquani Gorge, past the Nootgedacht communication towers. It was heading steadily towards Barnardsvlei, when around 9 pm a sudden powerful wind sheer turned it and drove it with enormous force down the ridge past Mr Mike Joubert's game farm, and towards Utopia with little warning."

Fireballs over the river

"The gusting winds drove fireballs and sparks across the river where they quickly set four chalets ablaze as well as carports and a car. The wind continued to drive walls of fire up the hill to engulf another nine homes. Fortunately two of the three families of permanent residents affected managed to flee in time (the third family was on holiday), though all lost almost everything in the process. It would appear that fire-breaks made no difference, because of the sheer force of the wind driving burning matter through the air horizontally. At least one home was set ablaze long before the main fire reached it."

Afire in ten minutes

"On-site opinion was that the extent of land cleared around the destroyed homes, as well as the fire-breaks, were completely irrelevant during this blaze. In fact virtually all the houses (mostly but not exclusively thatched) burned from the top down, which would not have been the case had the fire jumped 'inadequate' firebreaks.

"From the time the wall of flames began heading down the ridge and across the river, it was perhaps 10 minutes before the first chalets went up in smoke in the gusting wind."

Jumping the road

"The blaze then jumped Utopia's main road and the devastation continued on that side, taking less than half an hour. There is little disagreement from those affected that fire-beating or watering would have been an utterly futile gesture in all cases, given the strength of the wind and the driven flames.

"A fund started to support those who had lost everything in what local people believe is the area's worst fire devastation in living memory, saw donations of everything from food, clothing and money to offers of accommodation."

The Johannesburg Section of the MCSA expresses its sincere condolences to all who lost their homes.

Safety in the mountains - help us patrol

This year started with several incidents, says Grant Rens. "There were several muggings, followed by a raid on Sparkling Waters reception by a gang of organised thugs. Shortly thereafter there was a similar incident at Mountain Sanctuary offices. Then the Police took action and apprehended a large group of suspects. The outcome of this action is unclear but it would appear that several of this group were deported. Subsequent to this it was winter. During this period no incidents were reported. As we have come into the summer season there are reports of sightings of trespassers and there are definite signs of people living on the land, particularly in the Grootkloof area. "

"At this point things seem to have improved. However members need to remain vigilant and be careful with belongings. One also needs to think carefully about the items you bring along into the mountains. Security Patrols will continue to take place. I encourage all members to assist in this regard so that we can watch out for you." Please contact Grant with your questions at 082 353 9662.

Membership

New Members:

We welcomed the following new members in 2013: Julia Wakeling (transferred) , Matthias Ryf, Kerry Williams, Alex Neethling, Ryk Croucamp, Nickey Knox, Fiona Ridgwell, Phillip Ridgwell, Piet Badenhorst (transferred), Christian Graeser, Simon Kehagias, Edward Burke, Coert van Vreden, Sylvia Thompson, Nipper Thompson, Bernice de la Croix, Veronique Mahe, Rob Thomas (transferred), Roger Paul, Kirsten du Toit, Cayla du Toit, Connor du Toit, Justine Cole, Raymond Branch, Jan Bradley, David Wade, Jonathan Jubber, Emma Archer, Dawn Coville, Jenali Skuse, Marco Coelho, Craig MacDonald, Paul Fouche, Johan de Bruyn, Ernst Karner, Michael Karner, Daniel Rimbault, Michael Dawson, Zach de Beer, Brian Weaver, Douglas Heher (transferred), Kate Joseph, Laura van Nunen, Kelvin Tam, Robert Powell, Jaco Smuts, Paul Marketos, Ingrid Sabbagh, Komala Pillay, Geoffrey Moore, Jessie-Lou Workman, Zele Angelides, Jahne Theron, Stacie Martin, Gareth Raath, Paul Fouche, Gareth Gregory, Nic Paidas, Laura Unterstak, Gary Bernstein, Duncan & Ashley Barker, Neil Harris, Emilie IOB, Yan Eric Douvier, Melalite Ayenew.

Passed away:

Laurie Venter, Demos Anastasiades, Jean Patchitt, Ronnie Fox, Ted Scholes, Mike O'Reilly.

Our sincere condolences to the respective families and friends.

Annual General Meeting

... of the Mountain Club of South Africa Johannesburg Section will be held on Wednesday 12 March 2014 at the Waverley Girl Guide Hall.

Committee members for 2014

Members who would like to serve on the General Committee please contact Dobek or Uschi.

Subscriptions for 2014 reminders have been sent out. Thank you to members who have paid already. Stickers will be sent by post, alternatively make arrangements to collect from Uschi.

Meets and events 2014

We have a great programme of events scheduled for January to March next year.

Check it out in our website at "[Upcoming Events](#)."

See you there!

And send us your stories and photos - we'd love to feature these on our website at www.mcsajohannesburg.org and in our newsletters.

The meet programme includes:

January: Upper Tonquani, Trident, Mhlabatini, a hike across Mhlabatini and Fernkloof, Blouberg

February: Chosspile, Dome, Boulderkloof, Grootkloof, Search and rescue and first aid presentation at club house.

March: Wilgepoort fun day, Magalies wild flower walk, Kranskloof, Kransberg.