

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER – MAY 2020

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1. PRESIDENT’S PIECE

We seem to have got a little bit out of sequence with these sort-of-monthly National Newsletters. Personally, I blame Covid-19 – it seems the easiest thing to do!

Certainly, the Covid-19 Pandemic is a seriously disruptive factor in all our lives and the most serious thing is that we cannot get out into the mountains! But as a short film I saw yesterday puts it – the hills remain. They are still there and will be long after we are gone...

As I noted last month, I found myself kind of “volunteering” to stay on as President for one more year. This was partly because of the current situation and partly because I have two or three things/projects that I would dearly like to see through to the logical conclusion. I will touch on these in the next issue of the National Newsletter.

In the interim, on Saturday last, we had the MCSA National AGM and National Committee Meeting. It was, of course, a “virtual” meeting via Zoom – and I am pleased to say that it worked very well. The AGM took all of 10 minutes and we got the essential business done – the boring stuff like approving minutes, financial statements and the elections for the executive for the coming year.

As I noted above, I will be staying on as President for the next year and Jenny Paterson and Lester Coelen will also be staying on as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. The other members of the executive committee are Carl Dreyer (KZN) as Deputy President and J B van Eeden (Worcester) and Francois Searle (EP) as the other two members. My really sincere thanks to all of them for agreeing to stand.

At this point, an additional hearty thanks to my two fellow executive members, Jenny and Lester, who do an incredible job in their respective rôles. There is a great deal of work that goes on behind the scenes and they are involved in most of it!

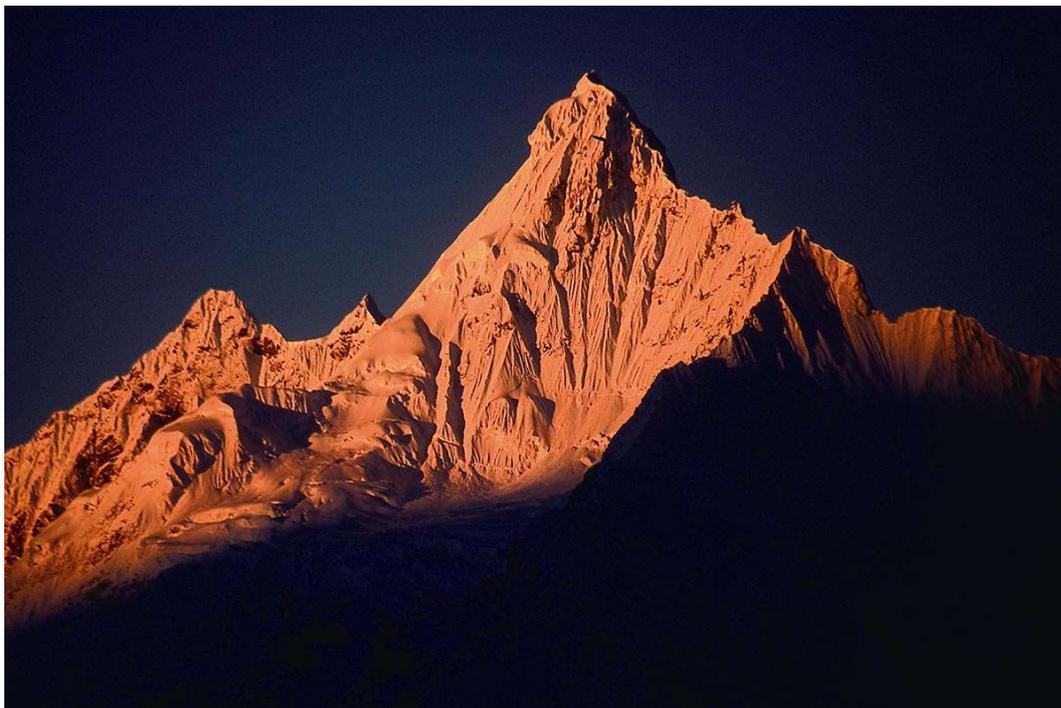
The other members of NatComm. – that is all the Section chairs – are also deserving of thanks, both “sectionally” and nationally. The meeting on Saturday was successful because of the efforts that they all put in to the discussions (some of them fairly, er, lively) and in the decision-making process. You will see the results of some of those discussions over the next weeks/months.

Of course, the immediate concern is the current lockdown and the Club’s reaction to it. It is, as I am sure you can imagine, a somewhat delicate issue and we are being careful to tread lightly in our response. There are currently two initiatives, One, involving the search and rescue people who, together with the air transport people are doing their best to ensure that they remain current such that in the event of accidents in mountain areas, they can be comfortable in their role as rescuers.

The other part of our Covid-19 response was initiated by the Magaliesberg Section and morphed into a National response. It became apparent that some of the MCSA properties absolutely needed to be maintained (fire-breaks and the like), and we thus made submission to national government for this work to be designated as “essential”. We trust that this will be a successful application.

All of this – together with our well-known (to government) outreach activities, will hopefully give us the exposure that will allow us to make an application to government on behalf of all mountain users for access to the hills once more – when the time is right!

Finally, I had to share this picture with you...



Unclimbed..!!!

2. COVID-19 REGULATIONS

While it is absolutely appreciated that not being able to go to the mountains appears to be punitive, it is emphasised that following the government regulations is essential if South Africa is to come out of the other side of this crisis.

Additionally, if we, as an organisation, are not seen to be following the rules then we may well damage our Club’s image in the eyes of government and of the vast bulk of the people of this country.

Please stay at home!!!

3. MCSA NATIONAL AGM

As noted in the President’s Piece above, this was held (virtually) on Saturday 16 May and went off very well.

The following were elected:

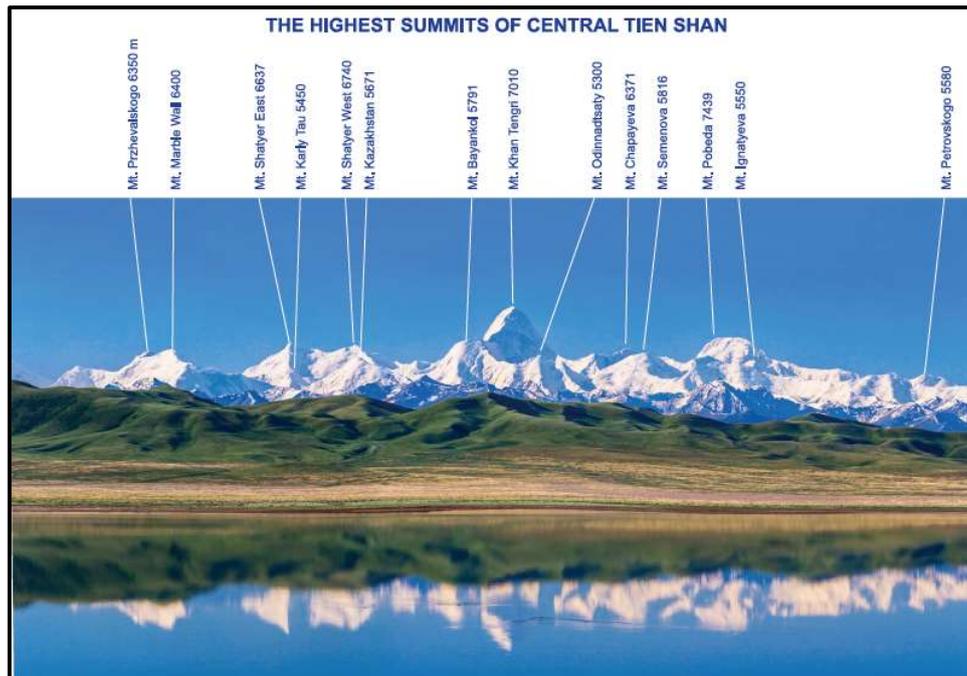
- President – Greg Moseley
- Deputy President – Carl Dreyer
- Secretary – Jenny Paterson
- Treasurer – Lester Coelen
- Additional Members – J B van Eeden and Francois Searle

4. KAZAKHSTAN INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL

It is of course, highly likely that this festival – which promised to be a great event – will probably have to be cancelled. Members are urged to keep abreast of developments as we are sure that the Kazakhstan association will try and re-schedule for a later date.

The purpose of the Festival is celebrating the recognition of alpinism as “Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Humanity” (resolution of the General Assembly of UNESCO IN 2019).

The objectives of the Festival is to invite all interested parties over the world to visit the foot of the highest peak of Kazakhstan – Mt. Khan Tengri; ascend to “5000m+” peaks by simple snowy routes and ascent by new routes on “6000+” peaks of Meridian range and Khan Tengri peak, 7010m.



5. UIAA UPDATE

The UIAA Annual Report should be available by mid-May. Members are encouraged to go on line and read this report to see what the UIAA has been doing.



5.1 COVID-19

For a large number of the member federations, the COVID-19 situation continues to be the dominating challenge in both private and public life.

The UIAA is fully aware of the hardships, and in some cases the intense suffering, brought about by the pandemic. A Covid-19 working group has been set up to provide support for member federations where applicable.

The UIAA is conscious that many federations have already taken courageous and far-reaching action. We wish to express our gratitude and admiration to those who have shown leadership, solidarity and compassion. In the coming days, the UIAA will create a dedicated COVID-19 page on its website to showcase member initiatives and stories. In this time of need, we can inspire each other.

The UIAA wishes to repeat its statement published on 13 March: we encourage strict compliance with the measures implemented by your national, regional and local authorities in order to contain the spread of the virus. Social distancing and confinement directives apply to all climbers, hikers, walkers, mountaineers and practitioners of mountain sports. Respect for these measures also ensure that medical and rescue services are dedicated to those most in need.

We ourselves have seen on positive thing out of this in that a UIAA-registered facility in China which is now manufacturing masks, decided to donate 10 000 masks to a needy hospital. The hospital chosen was the Frere Hospital in the Eastern Cape. Our thanks to all concerned for this generous donation.

5.2 UIAA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

This was also a “virtual” meeting with participants from a large number of countries including New Zealand, Japan, China, Mongolia, Argentina, Canada and a number of European countries – plus the MCSA at the bottom end of Africa!



5.3 2019 UIAA MOUNTAIN PROTECTION AWARD

While this has been one of the unfortunate casualties of the Covid-19 pandemic and was been cancelled for this year, we will need to take the opportunity to enter our Club’s outreach programmes as a contender for the award in 2021. Your President will be leaning on the leaders of our outreach programmes to put together an entry. Check out the UIAA web page on this one: <https://www.theuiaa.org/category/2019-uiaa-mountain-protection-award/>

Following on from the item that was included in the last National Newsletter (above), The MCSA National Environmental Convenor, Maretha Alant (who is also on the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission), sent the following message:

“As a reminder, the 2020 Respect the Mountains movement has been launched and it would be much appreciated if you could spread the word. The Respect the Mountains flyer and the Registration Guidelines are attached. There is an online registration form that needs to be completed.

I suggest Sections list potential projects for inclusion and send a brief description with photos to me. Let’s aim to get 5 MCSA projects on the website for 2020. I can complete the online registration when we have the projects ready for submission”

The links are: <https://www.theuiaa.org/the-uiaa-mountain-sustainability/respect-the-mountains/> and <https://www.theuiaa.org/uiaa/fresh-impetus-for-the-uiaa-respect-the-mountains-movement/>

Maretha and the MCSA President have been talking around this subject and hope to be able to post something on the UIAA website at the earliest opportunity

5.4 TRAINING IN THE NEW NORMAL

Owing to the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic all onsite courses scheduled by the UIAA Training Panel have been postponed until further notice.

In response to the lockdown currently impacting most areas of the world, the UIAA is having to adapt to the new normal and is using the opportunity to make progress on projects which can be managed remotely and from home.

To cite an example, the UIAA Training Panel President Steve Long and his team of national Heads of Training are enhancing their teaching material and course handbooks. A current focus is the syllabus content for the Personal Skills Training programmes. Work is also ongoing with the Petzl Foundation to finalise the Winter Skills handbook, a companion to the existing Summer Skills publication.

6. FACEBOOK AND WEB PAGES

6.1 National: abbreviated link for the national MCSA Facebook page: www.facebook.com/MCSA125/

6.2 Links for all the sections’ web pages are on the MCSA national webpage.

7. NEWSWORTHY ITEMS

Please send any newsworthy items for inclusion in MCSA National News Letter with Greg Moseley at: moseleyg@zsd.co.za

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

To paraphrase:

“Because it will be there again”

With apologies to George Leigh Mallory