



OCTOBER 2021 NEWSLETTER



Picture by **Gerald Camp**.

Introduction from the Editor

This issue is bursting at the seams. In fact, I barely have space to write a decent intro! So instead, I'll thank you all for the fantastic reception this newsletter has received. It's been pretty amazing, and I'm thrilled to watch this space grow.

So! Gavin Raubenheimer regales us with tales of past glory and fresh adventures on page 3, Merv Gavin mutters around Bushman's Nek on page 4, and Jess McTaggart shares her supermom skills on page 5. We honour the memory of Roy Wood on page 8, and on page 6 we take a look at this year's photo comp winners (and my personal favourite pick—because why be the editor if I can't abuse my power, right?).

Let's head in.

~ Karen Runge

UPCOMING MEETS:

NOVEMBER

Friday 19th - Sunday 21st
End of Year Party & Camping
Glenhaven, Underberg
Karen Miller

DECEMBER

Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th
Cambalala Work Meet
Cambalala
Clem Robins

Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th
Pine Busters Meet
Wonder Valley
Roger Mantel

Sunday 5th
Cliff Rescue Training
Monteseel
Colin McCoy

Thursday 16th - Wednesday 22nd
Eastern Cape Peak Bagging
*Climb: Compasberg, Murch Point,
Groot Winterberg, Cocks Comb*
Jonathan Newman

(Kindly refer to the latest Meet Sheet for more information on all upcoming meets and club events.)

From Under the President's Desk

Dear Members,

We're into the final quarter of the year, and with that comes that most famous of annual traditions: betting which shop gets out the Christmas décor first. The holiday season is a time of gifts and good news, though—so, to any aspiring members wobbling on the fence of indecision, join the Club now and get 2022 included! Our existing members get something for Christmas too, of course: I'm glad to inform you that we won't be increasing our fees at all for next year.

On the subject of memberships, we welcomed Erofil Grappas and Luis Perera to the Club in October, taking us to 308 all in. My thanks to the honourable secretary/administrator for managing the membership database so well. Reminders have been sent out to members regarding outstanding fees for 2021, as well as for the collection of journals. Check your email and WhatsApp for the info if this applies to you. A quick mention here also for our members who may not know: the Club offers a subsidised Mountain Leader Course—all we ask in return is that you lead a meet or two. These courses are advertised throughout the year, so keep your eyes open.



This year's photo competition awards were held at the German Club towards the end of the month, and the photo entries exceeded all expectations. Well done to all the entrants and to the winners.

During this month, that "C" word raised its head again. Some sections began flirting with vaccine requirements, and I asked members to share their views. I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of feedback I received, and will be responding formally soon. This exercise has taught me that we need to promote controversial topics in order to maximise member participation. With this in mind, we will be running a meet at Sentinel Peak in January, where we will investigate the effects of the vaccine on one-handed full moon free soloing, whilst debating the merits of identity politics and their contribution to coalition governments. Please make every effort to attend.

Another request for effort to attend is the annual year-end function, held this time at Glenhaven on 19-21 November. We expect a good turnout from the locals in whose back yard it will take place! For those who have never joined, the Underachiever Awards alone are worth the trip, and it's generally a good craic all round. Distracted thought—I wonder how many people read these newsletters in their entirety.... Let's find out. If you read this, then pop me an email with the subject "I am newsletter attentive" within two weeks of publication, and I will put you in a lucky draw for a weekend at Cambalala.

Well, let's leave it at that for now—and remember to keep the rubber side down.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl".

Carl Dreyer

President

KZN Section, MCSA

PLATBERG RETRO MEET

WORDS AND PICTURES BY GAVIN RAUBENHEIMER

'Kruger Day' 1986, the old public holiday held on October 10th. It's a day I remember well, recalling how I gulped for oxygen as I made for the exit path. I was crossing the final metres to the top of Platberg, in the infamous Harrismith Mountain Race. Just ten months before, I had been introduced to the world of rock climbing—a world and life that would later become a passion, dwindling my running career down to an occasional shuffle around the block.



Running up the exit gully of Harrismith mountain, one encounters sheer dolerite walls, many metres high. It was always a fascinating place and one which I promised myself I would someday return to explore. It took some 33 years and countless trips past Harrismith before I finally met that promise.

My research and asking around in the intervening years revealed that in the late '70s and early '80s, the area where the path ascends to the flat plateau had been climbed and many routes opened. Climbing seemed to have come to a halt, though, after a visiting UK climber was killed by a falling rock in November '81. Subsequently, the route descriptions had been mislaid and the area largely forgotten.

On September 25th of this year, eight of us gathered for an MCSA meet at the south end of Platberg. The drive up Donkey Pass was a minor adventure in itself, as we got one 2x4 bakkie up a road intended for 4x4s only. A pleasant drive and short walk then brought us to the top of an old climbing area. Platberg has miles and miles of untouched rock—but we headed for the top of the ascent gully where most of the climbing had taken place decades before.

The rock that runs along the western face of Platberg is very steep, and in many areas stands well above our pay grade of climbing. As a starter on this short day-trip, we set about climbing on the true right of the ascent gully where the grade is easier and less committing.



In all, we climbed four routes within 100m of the top of the gully. As they were all fairly obvious routes, they had probably been opened many years ago. All were in the grade 13 to 15 range.

As mentioned, Platberg has a top layer of very hard and sheer dolerite. The mountain varies from 20m in height to about 80m on the southern buttress. Under this layer is softer Freestate sandstone. The 4x4 road gives easy access to the top, from where it is very easy to get around to different cliff sectors.

Entry to the area is R25 per car and R15 per person—and well worth a follow-up trip. ▲

The Mighty MUTTER

by Merv Gavin

“

The area south of Bushman’s Nek is often overlooked by hikers, myself included. So when I was invited to the unofficial MUTTER trail run at St Bernards Lodge last year, I was very keen to see some new parts of the Berg. The weather did not play along, though, and all I saw was mist on a freezing day out... but the snow on the peaks the next morning partially made up for it.

The weather for the 2021 edition was perfect, as the official MUTTER was back on October 9th.

The challenge comes in two versions: the 35km

MUTTER and the 65km Mighty MUTTER. Participants are advised to go in groups due to the remoteness and to aid with navigation, so myself and Michelle Gordon took on the 65km.



The ‘Mighty’ has five designated checkpoints (the furthest being the arch in front of Devil’s Knuckles). Those aside, self-navigation is required, following a variety of paths, animal tracks and other types of unpredictable terrain. The route heads up a pass to Thule beacon on the escarpment, then traces the border to the top of Bushman’s Nek before moving on to the arch in Sehlabathebe National Park. It then drops down the Tsoelikane river, past the falls and back up towards the Lesotho/SA border before heading further south. Runners also dip into the Eastern Cape, heading along the ridge that separates the two provinces, before making a final steep drop back down to the hotel.

This year the escarpment was particularly wet, which made for slow going through swampy areas and large sections with no paths to speak of. Thankfully the weather was clear and warm, which made for a great day out—and although slower than we had planned, we made it back well before sunset, in time to take full advantage of the hotel’s buffet. It turns out we had cause to celebrate, too—MCSA KZN’s very own Kate Quin took first place in the ladies’ 35km race.” ▲



Our Babies in the Woods: *Hiking with Kids*

BY JESS MCTAGGART



So how do you even begin to imagine a life with kids? You think things won't change much, of course—but then it happens, and things do change. Drastically. And then you wonder, *How will I ever get back to the things I did before?* The short answer: is you adapt. You re-evaluate the hows and whats, and you find ways to include your children. You work to expand their sense of adventure, and you share yours with them. You get them as excited about heading out as you are. The long answer, though, is that it will take a little while to get there.

When I was pregnant with Rachel, we never imagined much would change. I stayed as active as possible, and although I got slower as I became heavier and hiked less frequently, I knew we wouldn't let it change us. By the time Rachel was 18 months, she had already been camping ten times, with her first camp out at only three months. We walked a lot with her. Her first overnight cave was at 18 months, first visit to Cambalala at four months, and she joined her first Pine Busters meet at 17 months! She was easy, and she was adaptable. As long as

kids have somewhere to sleep, things to eat and drink, and you, it doesn't matter where they are. Rachel loves the outdoors and she loves the mountains already. Now she actually asks to go there.

Having a second kid was a bit more of a challenge. However, Riley took her first cave hike in utero at seven months. This was slow going, but so much fun for us all. Her first camping trip was at three months, her first Pine Bust at eight months, and Cambalala at seven months. The past couple of years have been slightly more difficult with Covid, the unrest, and with us learning how to manage two—but we try to get out there when we can.

Life does change, and children change you. But the outdoor adventures don't have to stop. They may become more about looking at flowers, finding worms and chasing waterfalls, but you still get out there. Your reason for loving the mountains changes—it becomes something for them, to give to them and teach them about this beautiful place we share.

The best advice I can give a new parent is not to stop your outdoor adventures. Invest in a good child carrier hiking pack, and start small with easy walks and camping trips. Your babies won't be little forever, and before you know it you'll be doing regular multi-day missions and cave stays. So take a step back, strap on your carrier pack, and smell the flowers again! ▲



MCSA KZN Section Photo Competition: The Winners

Judged by Stuart Gray



3rd Place:

Desert Sunset-Saguaro Tucson Mountain Park, Arizona-USA, April 2021

Photographer: Sonja Hofmann

Judge's comments:

“Great landscape in a beautifully desolate region. Captures the moment of the sunset, drawing you into the photograph. The cactus does not detract from the focus of the hill in the distance. Good exposure balance brings up the foreground without blowing out the sunset. The red of the sunset contrasts nicely with the green of the vegetation. I like the focus on the vegetation; the eye then easily follows the other cacti and the leading lines from the side to the hill.”



2nd Place:

Exposed on 'Purple Rain', Morgan Bay, January 2021

Photographer: Gavin Raubenheimer

Judge's Comments:

“Lovely action shot, and hats off to the photographer (probably perched on some outcrop and/or also climbing). Fantastic negative space on the right without distraction, and the photograph gives a bird's eye view of the intensity of the action. Subject is at approximately 1/3 from the left, and the rule of thirds works in this picture with the negative space. The rock features and cracks create natural leading lines, drawing the eye to the subject: the climber. Well-deserved second place.”

1st Place Winner:

Dusk at Marble Baths, Injasuthi, November 2020

Photographer: Sean McKenna

Judge's comments:

“Really a wonderful picture. This was posted as a landscape, and one would not expect a landscape to be in portrait orientation—but the style works for this photograph. The colour and light balance are really good, and the leading lines (river, hills and rocks) pull the eye into the picture. There is a lot of detail and colour on the rocks, with reflections in the pools. As a result of the detail, an observer will remain engaged with the picture, and keep looking for more before moving on (this is sometimes referred to as ‘stickiness’). The clouds are crisp, and their orange and pink tones contrast very nicely with the greens and browns of the vegetation and the greens and blues of the water. There is a little movement of the water on the right, which could have been enhanced with a slower exposure time—but the inclusion of the river and the water over the rocks still indicates movement in the picture. The clouds break up the sky, keeping it from being bland and flat. Their smaller size and position leading outwards also keeps the observer’s attention in the picture. *A well-deserved winner.*”



Newsletter Editor's Pick:

Mark Willment, MSAR Pick Up, March 2021

Photographer: Iain Rennie

Judge's comments:

“Great action shot; lovely drama. Great capture of the moment.”

A note from the organiser:

This has been my last photo competition, and we are looking for someone to take over the process (as well as run the Durban Socials—although the two can be done separately).

If anyone is keen to take on the role, please come forward. If no one puts their hand up, these events will cease to exist. And that would quite sad.

Regards,

Neil Williamson

Mountains in Memoriam:

ROY WOOD: 11/05/1976 – 06/10/2021

From Alex de la Rouviere:



“It is with great honour and sadness that I write about Roy Wood, who recently passed away.

For Roy, as founder and co-owner (with his wife Kerry) of *Rigology*—a bespoke production company specialising in stunt rigging for live events—ropes and bolts were his profession. But spending time in the mountains was his passion, whether honeymooning in the Andes; rock climbing in Cape Town, Montagu and Waterval Boven; or hiking in his beloved Drakensberg. Joining the MCSA made him

feel right at home, sharing his joy of high places and wide-open spaces. He shared his technical skills for rescue and safety drills, and was always excited by a new hike, new gear or a new adventure.

A wonderful friend and inspiring Mountain Man, you will always be in our hearts.”

From Bruce Sobey:

“I did not climb much with Roy—however, I always enjoyed being around him. He was always cheerful and encouraging. Despite not climbing together very often, we did open some routes together. I and his other climbing friends will miss his cheerful presence.” ▲



Meet Our New Member: Pierre Jordaan

Pierre Jordaan joins us from MCSA Magalies, where he has been a member since 2016. Previously a corporate flyer, he grabbed an opportunity with our revered Gavin Raubenheimer to do a guiding course—and on being retrenched during lockdown, he began his new career. He now lives in Pietermaritzburg, and is keen to become a part of the KwaZulu-Natal community.



“I have a deep love of the Drakensberg,” he tells us, “and spend most of my time running along the escarpment, or looking for rare orchids along the slopes and cliffs of various Berg passes.”

“It was a week of pure bliss. We had the most perfect weather, and the whole Berg to ourselves.”

An all-round outdoor adventurer, Pierre is happy mountain running, adventure racing, mountaineering, rock climbing, hiking, mountain biking... embracing “basically any form of movement in nature.” On the more sedate side, he also has a passion for mountain flowers and birding. “I love the absolute and complete freedom that comes along with being outdoors,” he says. “Appreciating all the animals, flowers and birds that have adapted so well to such a harsh environment.”

Beyond mere hobby appreciation, Pierre strives to live “a self-propelled life, conserving all things natural and free.” In May 2021, he also completed the Grand Traverse with his partner. “It was a week of pure bliss. We had the most perfect weather, and the whole Berg to ourselves.”

For someone with such diverse interests and a well-rounded love for the wild and the beautiful, there is indeed a lot of bliss to be found in the Berg. Welcome, Pierre! ▲



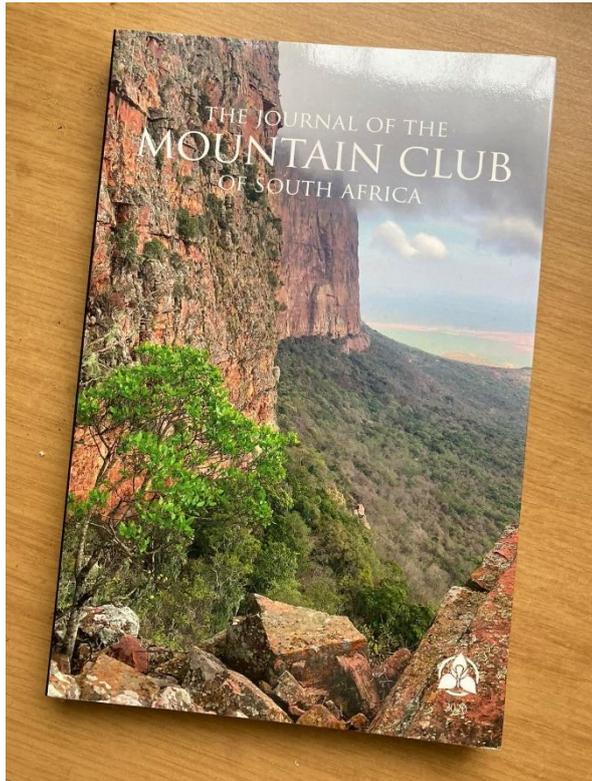
If you have been thinking of joining the KZN section of the MCSA, there is no better time! Between now and the end of the year, any new members will get the rest of 2021 PLUS 2022 all for the current 2021 fee.

If you know someone who might be keen to join, do spread the word.

Contact us if you would like a membership form, or to find out more information.

kzn.mcsa.comm@gmail.com

Other Stuff, Etcetera...



Hey, our journals have arrived!

Collection points if you are in DBN and surrounds:

The Fitness Factory

Northwood School

140 Adelaide Tambo Drive

Durban North - Collect and sign at reception

Gillits Medical Centre

15 Old Main Road

Gillits - Collect and sign at reception

Collection points if you are in PMB and surrounds:

Bush & Bundu

175 Pietermaritz Street

Pietermaritzburg - Collect and sign at the counter

Mark and Jess

4 Amberlea

Cherry Lane

Hilton - Please WhatsApp/SMS Jess on 072 2299 406

before you collect



STAY AT CAMBALALA COTTAGE



Cottage: R100 per night (required as deposit)

Additional fees:

Club members: R70/night

Non-Club members: R120/night

Children over the age of 14 are considered adults. Deposit to be paid at time of reservation. Charges include gas.

Contact Clem: 084 500 4666

My sincerest thanks to everybody who sent me words or images for inclusion in this issue.

The newsletter serves to chronicle our experiences in the mountains we enjoy, and each contribution enriches that record. Please help me keep this newsletter alive by continuing to share the things you do, the things you know, and all the outdoor things we love.

Until next month, safe adventures everyone!



Karen Miller

Hey Mountain Club Members

Have a suggestion or idea for inclusion in the next issue?

Is there anything you want to correct, or maybe there's something you'd like to see changed?

Why not drop the editor a message?

(Just be nice about it!)

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