

Durban Ramblers *Hiking Club*



PO Box 1063 Durban 4000

Affiliated to the Hiking Foundation of South Africa

APRIL & MAY 1990

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 2



Some of the Ramblers at "The Crack" --- Metsi Matsha Trail

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DURBAN RAMBLERS HIKING CLUB - COMMITTEE 1990

CHAIRMAN:	Scotty Valance	296409 (h)
SECRETARY:	Margaret Kirsten	441467 (h)
TREASURER:	Regina Billiet	813672 (h)
DAY HIKES:	Bill Hyslop	7018996 (h)
BERG HIKES:	Dick Billiet	813672 (h)
TRAILS:	Phillip Gatenby	213592 (h)
PHOTOGRAPHY:	Mike Morrillion	7011758 (h)
ENTERTAINMENT:	Graham Hammond	222676 (h)
EDITOR:	Joyce Harper	213040 (h)

NEW MEMBERS:

We would like to welcome the following new members and wish them many hours of happy hiking with the club:
Mr J Bologna, Mr & Mrs Grant, Mr J Howie, Richard Bissett, Mr G Phipson, Miss V Wilson, Gertrude Well and Paula & Malcolm Jaros.

ADVANCE NOTICE: (in conjunction with the Wild Life Society)

26 - 30 AUGUST UNFOLOZI TRAIL -
Cost has not been determined at this early date but as this is a very popular trail and the bookings are hard to get it would be wise to book early.
Contact: GRAHAM HAMMOND Tel: 222676 for more details.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Hi there!
Having been newly elected to this position, I will be battling with the keyboard for the next couple of issues, so please bear with me. Guida set a precedent which will be a hard act to follow and I hope to make future issues just as interesting and informative. With this in mind I have started off with a slightly different look for the newsletter and with my limited artistic talent I will try and add a bit of creative flair where time and space allows. To make this possible I need some help and hope all my fellow hikers will come forward with some interesting write-ups on recent hikes, useful hints for all our new hikers, anecdotes, jokes, photographs, in fact anything which I can use for the newsletters. So come on, give me a call and help to make the next issues better than ever!



Joyce

HIRING OF EQUIPMENT

Tents and backpacks can be hired at a nominal fee
CONTACT: Graham Hammond - Tel:22670

BERG TRIP COSTS

Due to the rising cost of petrol and maintenance, an average fee of R30 per person is payable to the driver.

OUTDOOR INN, in Argyle Road, offer Rambler members a discount on all equipment.

DEPARTURE POINTS FOR DAY HIKES

DURBAN: Musgrave Park parking area - corner Berea/ Musgrave Rds.

PINETOWN: Union Main Centre - Old Main Road - outside Tiffanys (formerly Big Bite)

PLEASE BRING THE CORRECT CHANGE!!

VENUE FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETS

Randall Scout Hall, Milner Road (behind Cowey Centre)

IN MEMORIAM

George Wrapson, aged 83, died tragically on 8 March of injuries he received when assaulted by intruders in Umlaas Road. It is heartbreaking that such a gentle and peace-loving person had to meet such a violent end.

English by birth, George adopted South Africa without reservation as his home. His most treasured memories always related to his exploits in the Berg. A keen walker and bird watcher, he was most happy when camping in the wilds.

He and his wife Lil, in their younger days, organized many Easter camps for the Ramblers.

Those of us who were privileged to know George will long remember him as a modest, fine gentleman and true companion. His spirit will remain in the Berg he loved so much.

R I P by Vic Conrad

PROGRAM FOR APRIL 1990

- SUN 1 UMHLATUZANA CIRCUIT Marianhill area
New, medium hike through peaceful landscape with a mixture of riverside, forest, hill and boulder hopping. Leader: Mervyn Oliver Tel: 300252(w) & 293501(h) Depart Durban 8 am, Pinetown 8.30 am. Cost R4 (members) R5 (non members)
- SAT 7 Afternoon hike & braai at STEINBANK NATURE RESERVE. Bring the family & friends & make it a pleasant social outing. Leader: Margret Kirsten Tel: 441467(h). Depart Durban only at 2 pm for 2.30 pm at Steinbank. Cost R3 (members) R4 (non members)
- 6/7/8 SIMES COTTAGE Loteni
Day hikes from comfortable cottage.
Leader: REGINA BILLIET Tel. 813672
- SUN 8 & 15 Long weekends, no day hikes have been arranged.
- EASTER WEEKEND:
13/14/15/16 SANI PASS TO LOTENI
Low traverse in the Little Berg. Tents required. Physical fitness recommended.
Leader: DICK BILLIET Tel: 813672
- AS ABOVE: There may be vacancies on the PMB Ramblers camp at Lorna Doone (NGELE). There are already two cars leaving from Durban. Phone: SYLVIA Tel: (0331) 57652 immediately.
- WED 18 PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETING AT 7.45pm.
R1.00 per person, includes refreshments.
Subject: "On The Trail" by various authors.
PHOTOGRAPHERS.....SUPPORT YOUR CLUB!
- SUN 22 MONTESEEL Valley of 1000 Hills area. Medium hike but moderately strenuous. Pleasant rock & valley scenery, cutting out the bundu-bashing, but still finishing at the pub!
Leader: Steve Watson Tel: 214512 (h). Depart Durban 8 am Pinetown 8.30 am. Cost R6 (members) R7 (non members).
- 21/22 ROYAL NATIONAL PARK:
Day walks from camp in mountain splendour. perfect for beginners, or relatively unfit!
Leader: SCOTTY VALANCE Tel: 296409
- 20 - 24 RHINO WALK Lake St Lucia (in conjunction with the Wildlife Society). Cost R160 each, take own food. Pack horses supplied. Limited to six people only, so don't dawdle over this one! Full payment with booking required.
Contact: GRAHAM HAMMOND Tel: 222676 for more details.
- SUN 29 HAMMERSDALE HEIGHTS & FALLS. Medium to long hike which includes two waterfalls, finishing with sociable food & drink at the Hammersdale Club. Leader: Bill Hyslop Tel 7018996 (w) Depart Durban 8 am Pinetown 8.30 am.
- 28/29 TARN CAVE Bushmans Nek Area
One of the most beautiful caves in the Berg over - looking Devils Knuckles. Passport required. Tents for Friday night.
Leader: JACK AUMOND Tel. 423245

PROGRAM FOR MAY 1990

- 4/5/6 MT CURRIE NATURE RESERVE Kokstad
A weekend of day hikes, based at the lovely lakeside camp. Main objectives are: Mt Currie, Bushy Peak and Mt Fifty, but opportunities for most pleasant short walks for those who can only arrive on Saturday afternoon. Dinner at the hotel on Sat. evening (noted for its' enormous helpings!) Advise leader in good time to arrange cars. Leader Bill Hyslop Tel: 7018996 (w). Cost: Camp R8 per person per night, plus R2.50 entrance fee.
- 12/13 UMKOMAZI WILDERNESS EXPLORATION
Also exploring Nzinga Falls, Settlers Pass, around and about then down to Cyprus Falls. Physical fitness essential. Tents required.
Leader: DICK BILLIET Tel: 813672
- SUN 13 MPOSANE NORTHERN PEAK Bothas Hill area. New hike fairly strenuous with rewarding views. Leader: Steve Watson Tel: 214512 (w & h) Depart Durban 8am. Pinetown 8.30am. Cost R7 (members) R8 (non members)
- WED 16 PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETING AT 7.45 pm
R1.00 per person, includes refreshments
Donald Seaton will entertain with 16mm films of 'New York' and 'Scandanavia'. See you there!
- Sun 20 LAARGER FARM (original route.) Mike tells us that this will be a longer hike than recent visits to Laarger Farm, with a good mixture of hill and valley scenery. Leader: Mike Morrillion Tel: 7011758 (h) Depart Durban 8 am. Pinetown 8.30 am. Cost R8 (members) R9 (non members)
- 19/20 MZIMKULWANA HUT COBHAM AREA
Friday night stay Pholela hut. Easy walk to Mzimkulwana hut, with plenty of swimming spots. Optional visit Siphongweni Cave. Ideal for beginners.
Leaders: RICHARD BISSETT Tel: 212242 (work)
or JOYCE HARPER Tel: 213040 (evening)
- SAT 26 AUDREY'S AMBLE Leader Audrey Vickers who would like to know how fast you are! In the good old days the amble was annual event and Audrey would like to revive it. The object is to find out who is the fastest walker over 10kms. Separate prizes for the ladies and men (who must be paid-up members) No seconding allowed- you carry your own refreshment. Meet at LOWER BURMAN BUSH NATURE RESERVE, DURBAN, at the Information Desk at 2 pm.
- SUN 27 MOLWENI UPPER SECTION Kranskloof area. A shortish, but very popular specialty of Margrets, combining woodland and riverside scenery. Leader MARGRET KIRSTEN Tel: 441467 (h) Depart: Durban 8 30 am. Pinetown 9 am. Cost R5 (members) R6 (non-members).
- 25/26/27/28 For more information please contact:
DICK BILLIET Tel: 813672
- 31 MAY - MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS TRAIL GARDEN CASTLE AREA
1/2/3 JUNE Distance covered 24kms, (21kms on paths)
Altitude 1800-3051 metres. Cost: R30 - R45.
Contact: PHILIP GATENBY Tel 213592

3/4 February **METSI MATSHA TRAIL** Leader: Dick Billiet

This is a relatively new and little known trail from Witzieshoek Mountain Resort to a dam on the Lesotho side of the Berg and back - a round trip of about 25 kms. However being an insatiable hiker, Dick undertook to lead us on a much longer, and up till now, an unexplored route from Royal National camp site to Oliviershoek...a walk which proved to be quite a challenge, but more of that later!

Our party of twelve spent Friday night at cottages in Bergville, but only ten did the trip. The other couple, having spent a sleepless night being attacked by mosquitoes left for home the following morning. Some of us had also spent the night swatting mozzies but that didn't deter us though Ramblers.

We left the camp site at 9H45 - three of the men took the cars to Oliviershoek and managed to get a lift back to the camp site to follow us some time later. From the start the path led continuously uphill and being a very popular part of the berg we passed many day strollers, stopping frequently to admire the Amphitheatre in the distance and mop sweaty brows. The strenuous climb up "The Crack" (whoever gave it that name?) involved scrambling over huge wet slippery rocks and up chain ladders.



Finally we made it to the pool and falls, I think it's called Igudu, about two hours later, although in distance it was only approximately 4 kms. We spent a long lunch break there waiting for the men to catch up and swimming in the lovely pool. Regina brought us back to reality by announcing that there was still about 15 kms to cover and together with the men, having had a much shorter break than us, we set off towards Broome Hill - stopping briefly to look down into the valley below.

Locating the "footsteps" was easy and being numerous at the onset were simple to follow, but they soon dwindled out and we had to hunt for the rest! On and on we went - up and down, up and down. Water became pretty scarce, so we were happy to see the dam in the distance and descending off the shoulder into the lower lying plateau, thought longingly of the hut and rest. However the hut was nowhere in sight and not knowing which way to go to the right and left of the dam, which stretched forever into the beyond, we sort of zig-zagged our way across, though long grass stopping off to fill up with at one of the ponds, and disturbing a few storks in the process.

Fortunately someone stumbled over a "footstep" and we were soon back on the right track - to the right of the dam. There was a jumble of rough shacks on the far side with a sort of bridge made out of rafts from one side of the dam to the other. The valley itself was quite barren with no trees and criss-crossed with cattle tracks.

It was getting fairly late by the time the hut was found and most people were worn out by now and looking forward to settling in for the night. But this was not to be as the door was well and truly padlocked. Fortunately the windows weren't and, although quite small and high, allowed the more agile access. We toyed with the idea of either using the windows as our exit and entry but this

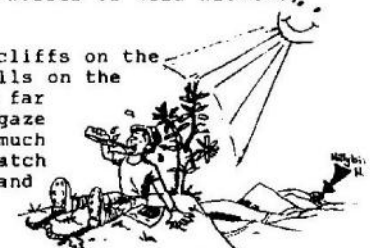
would have proved disastrous for any night time nature calls or alternatively finding a flat place to pitch tents. Then, with a bit of German ingenuity, Adolph with a knife and a pair of pliers (don't know who carried them!) managed to pry open a link and thankfully we all surged inside and within minutes the hut turned into the normal chaos in which only hikers can be comfortable!!

The hut was set a long way from the dam in sheltered valley which, during winter I imagine, would be warmer than next to the water. A stream nearby provided water and bathing and there was also a toilet - which was already broken.

We set off about 8 am the next morning to cover about 20 kms, although we didn't know it then, to the "Hillbilly Hotel" at Oliviershoek. The weather was a bit overcast but after numerous uphill and downhill we, and the weather, had hotted up. We mainly followed cattle paths and it was quite hard going.

Eventually we climbed over yet another fence to be faced with a sheer drop into the valley below. We took a vote to either stay on top or go down into the valley and cover the remaining distance to our destination, which we could see - "past the farthest mountain range sticking out, there's that little hill with a hump, well behind that to the right, see that clump of trees? We have to go a bit further and we'll be there - Okay?" We opted for the latter, which hours and kilometers later proved to be the wrong choice! Dick found a well-worn path down the mountainside and hedged in on both sides by lovely aromatic bushes and masses of wild flowers, picked our way down into the foothills.

The route was wonderful with the craggy cliffs on the left and panoramic views over the foothills on the right, but it was also very hot and very far and we didn't actually have the time to gaze at the scenery around us. There wasn't much shade and lunch was taken on a rise to catch a breeze with the noon sun beating down and forcing us to find what shade we could. Talk about mad dogs and Englishmen.



Up and down, on and on....!! Mid afternoon found us all collapsed in some shade and still a long way to go and even Dick admitted that he was bushed. The general opinion was that the hike would be better spread over 3 days so that we could go slower and take in the lovely scenery.

Eventually our destination was in sight. Richard, who, fed up with the endless walking, being left far in the rear and vowing to give up hiking for good, suddenly appeared far in front of us and was actually sitting on the grass, cold beer in hand, by the time the rest of us came straggling in at about 5 o'clock. Packs and boots eased off worn out bodies had to be quickly retrieved out of reach of the many portly pigs that came foraging and snorting around us! The (extended) Metsi Matsha Trail was a very interesting, although exhausting, hike over a little known part of the Berg and I'm sure every one of us felt a sense of achievement. Richard has sworn to sell his hiking gear but I'm sure he'll be back! Thanks Dick for another great hike.

25/2 - 2/3/90

TSITSIKAMMA TRAIL

By MARGRET KIRSTEN

If you are a keen hiker, then the Tsitsikamma Trail is a must. The main attractions are a large variety of fynbos and proteas, many were still flowering, and numerous patches of shady indigenous forests, with large areas of tree ferns, the size I have not seen on any trail before. Needless to say these areas have a high humidity, being relatively close to the coast. The main species in the forests were, of course, the various yellowwoods, stinkwoods, older candlewood and many others.

Halea is one of the main unwanted invaders in the area, we learned from Irene, easily recognizable and grows into a sturdy, prickly tree, which can only be pulled out by hand if still very young. The trail runs high above the coast with splendid views into the valleys and mountain peaks, of which Formosa is the highest and can be seen from many sides as you advance on the trail. Every now and then one also gets a view of the Indian Ocean, but for swimming we had to be satisfied with the few swimming spots, which were a welcome relief and great fun.

On the second day the trail passes through Benebos, also indigenous. Only six months ago a display cabinet was placed here, donated by an old-time inhabitant of the area. It houses the mortal remains of an elephant, once the majestic monarchs of the Tsitsikamma, just over a hundred years ago.

The huts are basically all the same and very comfortable. The days were sunny and hot, nights varied from warm to cool. We were very lucky with the weather as rainfall is at it's highest in March. In fact we never had a drop of rain or any mist until the day we drove home.

The trail starts at Natures Valley and ends at Storms River Mouth, so it is advisable to have cars at both ends, it makes life much simpler.

I recommend this wonderful trail, but.....only for the fit!

Thanks to Audrey, Irene and Vic for your company to make it a most pleasurable trail.

TAILPIECE

(from Scotty)

A pretty Rambler, who became a new stewardess, was asked by the seasoned pilot if she'd become a member of the "Mile High Club" yet. "I've never heard of that club. What kind of club is it?" she asked. "It's an exclusive club for airline employees who've made love a mile high" he explained. She pondered this for a moment and then asked shyly: "How high are the Drakensberg Mountains?"
