

Durban Ramblers *Hiking Club*

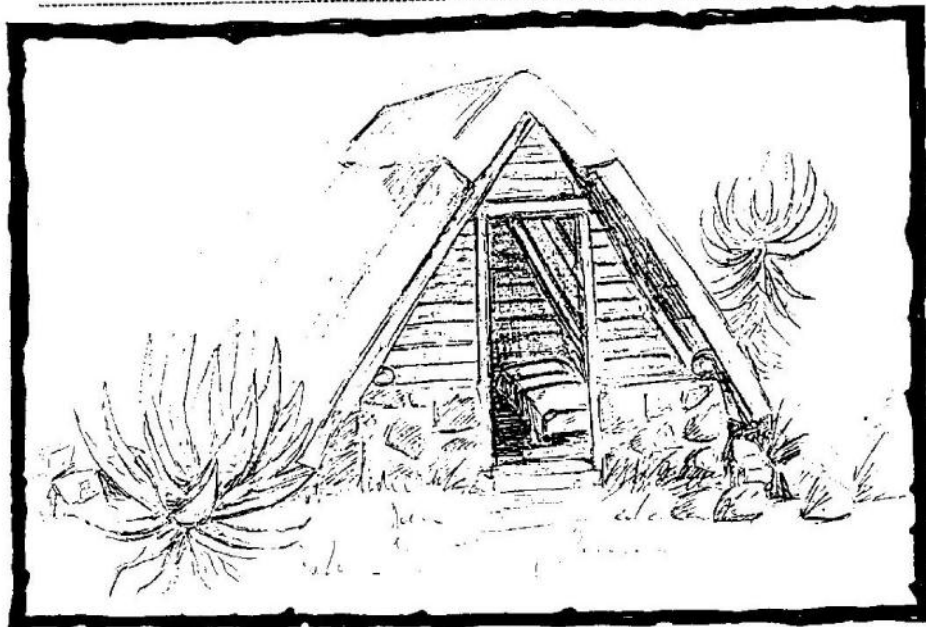


P.O. BOX 1063 DURBAN 4000
Affiliated to the Hiking Foundation of South Africa

DECEMBER 1990 - JANUARY 1991

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 6



Ntenjwa Bush Camp - Spionkop Dam

READ IN THIS

CLUB NEWS	pg 2
MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN	pg 2
PROGRAM FOR DECEMBER	pg 5
PROGRAM FOR JANUARY	pg 7
ARTICLES: Ntenjwa	pg 4
Ngele Trail	pg 9
Rock Haven Farm	pg 11

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

NEW MEMBERS: We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members and wish them happy hiking with the club:
Joane Colder, Anthony Zarenoc, Jean Rowley, Tracey Jacobs, Jack Schaffer, Pat Read, Nikki Harper, Pamela Gould and Wendy Burden

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We are now 3/4 ways through our term of office and I wish you to know your committee has been hard at work providing you with many new and beautiful walks for day hikers as well as a great variety of weekend expeditions in the Berg and elsewhere.

We have had a number of successful outings, the Fish & Chip Evening and the get together at McConnell's Farm being two of the most successful occasions. If you missed out try not to let it happen again.

The next three months will provide ample opportunity for all to partake in something exciting. I do think you owe it to yourselves, if not to your committee, to get involved with many of the ventures - and at least you will get your body - with a little hard work - back into shape and with a sound body and mind you will be better prepared to face the future and the New Year which is fast approaching. We'll take this opportunity to wish all our members, their families and friends a Really Great New Year for 1991.

If by some strange twist of fate we fail to see you hiking we trust you will prove your enthusiasm for your Club by attending the Annual General Meeting on 12th Feb 1991.

Take care

Scotty

ADVANCE NOTICES: PLEASE PUT INTO YOUR NEW 1991 'ARY!
The AGM will be held at the WHIRLING HEELS CLUB, ARBUCKLE ROAD (off Umgeni Road) on TUESDAY 12TH FEBRUARY. To make an evening of it, there will be a braai and drinks available at the bar. Everyone must attend - Scotty said!!

FEBRUARY 16 - 17 BULWER SHORT WEEKENDER
Half day hike on Saturday, whole day on Sunday: Hotel accommodation at special rates.
Leader: MIKE MORILLION Phone: 7011758 (b)
Cost: Down payment with booking: R20. Balance later.

HIRING EQUIPMENT:

Our club has now acquired some new backpacks, stoves and mats which can be hired at very reasonable rates.

BACKPACKS	-	R3 per day.
MATS	-	R2 " "
STOVE (+FUEL)	-	R2 " "
TENT	-	R3 " "

Should any equipment be lost or damaged (fair wear and tear accepted) then that person will be liable for full cost of replacing item. Items not returned within 3 days of hire period will be charged R5 extra.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

As this is the last edition of the Newsletter for 1990 and my 5th effort as the editor, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has offered help and advice; contributed interesting articles and in particular I would like to thank Richard for the use of his computer and typist and all my family who assisted in despatching the newsletters and without whose help I could not have managed!

I would like to wish you all very best wishes and happy hiking over the Festive Season which for me will be spent gliding in a mokoro in the Okovango Delta and roughing it through the game reserves on our long-awaited holiday.

See you next year!

ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER AT McCONNELLS FARM 11 NOVEMBER 1990

Margaret Kirsten

Once again this was an excellent event with about 70 happy hikers. The past few years we have been unlucky weatherwise, this year however, the weather was most perfect. Approximately 20 people took part on the Saturday afternoon hike at Karkloof Estates...the green pastures were too beautiful for words under a sweltering sun. The evening was relaxing with everyone enjoying a few drinks and braais, before retiring for the night in various parts of the farm building.

In the early hours of Sunday, many Ramblers were seen admiring Mick and Gloria's garden, which was a real splendour and joy to everyone's eyes. By 10.00 am more Ramblers had arrived and again had a wonderful hike which ended with a refreshing swim in the pool and super lunchtime braai.

Many hiking friends once again had a wonderful time and our thanks to Mick and Gloria for opening up their home to us all yet again.



Last minute preparations completed, we wait anxiously for Dick in his trusty combi to come and pick us up. The wagon loaded, and a couple of phone calls made we shoot off to load up our next victim, Jackie. But we run into trip efficiency snag, the whereabouts of Marcia are unknown. With tyres squealing we make it back to Dick's place to pick up the rest of the troop, still Marcia is missing! With Peter, Jackie, Chantal, Darren, Regina, Dick and not forgetting myself, all loaded up we decided to try Marcia's place of labour. Lo and behold, there stands the one and only Marcia. The whole gang present we finally set off for our destination, Spionkop Dam.

With a good bit of low level flying we make our deadline just in time. After driving to one campsite, where the toilet facilities had been locked we headed off to the other side of the dam where we finally found one open. After pitching tent we soon had a roaring fire on the go and as, with all typical hikers, the booze began to flow freely. Smack in the middle of feeding our faces we got a visitor, one of the parks' Game Rangers, who had come to tell us that we were camped in the construction team's area, and to be careful of our equipment. But then again we were only staying for the night so were not really bothered that we might have a bulldozer come crashing in on us at any moment.

Saturday saw the start of our Great Trek. The path that we followed took us about a kilometer inland up onto the top of a hill that overlooked Spionkop Dam. With the scenic view on our right we walked another couple of kms before the descent began. We were only too relieved to finally reach the bottom and also the cool breeze coming off the dam. The rest of the hike was a lot more pleasant as the path was but a few meters from the water's edge. Barging and scrambling our way through the undergrowth with the wonderful scent of decaying carcasses of buck filling our nostrils we at long last saw our destination through the trees. Never has a log cabin looked so inviting and we were soon speeding our way along the path only to collapse at the end in a pile of kit, arms and legs.

The journey over and the settling in done, we took to eating again. As the day wore on everyone went off on their own missions. Darren, Chantal and myself decided to try out the murky waters of Spionkop. With the clattering of Jackie and Peters' paddles in the background (they had decided to try out their talents at rowing that afternoon,) we took to the waters but not for long as your imagination can play weird games with your mind. After battling off the imaginary Loch Ness monsters it was back to camp where everyone was assembling, alcohol inclusive, for a short walk up the hillock behind the bushcamp for "sundowners on the rocks." With the dam stretching off into the distance, friendly conversation, a couple of cold ales and a packet of chips we all watched in awe as the sunset behind the distant mountains. With the darkness settled in over the countryside a huge bonfire was the next order of the day. Dick, voted "fireman" for the evening soon had one blazing away. The more alcohol the belly wants the faster the tongue likes to waggle and conversation soon turned onto politics with Marcia on the one side and Dick on the other, with the rest of us throwing in the odd comment here and there. Coming off the morbid matters of life we were all soon munching our way through sizzling steaks and boerewors. As the evening hours ticked by a few of us decided to lay out a fishing line or two.



cont/...pg 8

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL DAY HIKES START FROM DURBAN (MUSGRAVE PARK PARKING AREA) AT 8 AM AND FROM PINETOWN (UNION MAIN CENTRE) AT 8.30 AM UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETINGS ARE NOW HELD ON THE 4th WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH. (THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN DECEMBER)

- SUNDAY 1** VICTORIAN PICNIC - St. Helier area
The originator of this scheme will be back in the UK thinking about you on this day. The format is as before: hike in the morning to the "Mystery Spot" where everybody's food & drink has been driven in the "luncheon car". On arrival, you get out the double damask table-cloths & the cut-glass decanter, the tables & chairs and the champagne buckets. Food and drink is pooled and we ask the gentlemen to be as inventive over the drinks as the ladies are with the food. Having eaten and drunken to your fill, the ruthless leader then sobers you up on the return hike. If you have a picnic table (+ tablecloth) please bring it!
Leader: TOM DE WAAL Phone: 474766
Cost: R4 (members) R5 (non-members)
- WEEKEND 1 - 2** HIDDEN VALLEY EXPLORATION - Mzimkulwana area of the Berg
Beautiful rock formations, cool forest paths and lots of places to swim. Tents required
Leader: JACK AUMORD Phone: 423245
- SOCIAL** 7.30 onwards. Venue - brought back by popular demand - the lovely old pub in Canongate. Delicious "breyani" will be served. Bring your own booze (ice will be supplied) Cost R10 per person
Phone: Marie Gurr on 422041 (during office hours)
- SUNDAY 9** VERNON CROOKES NATURE RESERVE
Our old favourite again, yet each time we go we discover something new and your leader has promised a completely different route.
Leader: TOM DE WAAL
Cost: R10 (members) R12 (non-members)
LEAVE ONLY FROM MUSGRAVE PARK DURBAN AT 07.30 HRS.
- WEEKEND 8 - 9** ZULU CAVE from Monks Cowl
Hike in beautiful scenery, visiting the famous Bushman's "Lion" paintings at Cat Cave.
Tents for Friday night.
Leader: STEVE WATSON Phone: 298511
- SUNDAY 16** TOPPS NEEDLE and INANDA DAM
Another well-known hike, now enlarged to make it more interesting, with a fair amount of ups and downs.
Leader: STEVE WATSON
Cost: R6 (members) R7 (non-members)

WEEKEND 15 -16 **INJASUTI CAMPSITE**
Day hikes from comfortable campsite, exploring the mountains on the eastern side of Injasuti. Lots of swimming, walking and braaing.
Leader: TOM DE WAAL Phone: 474766

THERE WILL BE NO WEEKEND OR DAY HIKES ON 22 - 23 AND 29 - 30 DEC.

WEDNESDAY 26TH **BOXING DAY SPECIAL**
On Boxing Day, Audrey Vickers will arrange a "post-indulgence" hike to sober you up. Meet at the usual times and places for Sundays.

TRAIL 29 - 1 JAN **MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS TRAIL** -Cobham Mzimkulwana area
At a loose end after the Christmas festivities? Then walk off those extra kilos in the beautiful mountains.
Phone: PHILIP GATENBY 213592

29 DEC - 6 JAN **9 DAY, NEW YEARS SAFARI TO THE NORTH EASTERN CAPE**
We start near Maclear, hiking the Woodcliffe Trail on Graham and Phyl Sephton's farm. We then proceed to Rhodes to celebrate the New Year at this beautiful old village, staying 3 days in quaint old house, exploring Ben Mc Dui, after which we return to Woodcliffe to enjoy the mountain splendour.
Leader: DICK BILLIET Phone 813672

GREETINGS



Best Wishes for
Christmas & the New Year
and may 1991 be your best
hiking year ever!



PROGRAM FOR JANUARY

SUNDAY 6 **BEACH HIKE** - Ndhloti area
An easy day to loosen you up gently after the Christmas indulgences.
Leader: GRAHAM HAMMOND Phone: 222676
Cost: R7 (members) R8 (non-members)
DEPART ONLY FROM MUSGRAVE PARK, DURBAN, AT 08.30 AM.

WEEKEND 5 - 6 **NO LOCAL HIKE THIS WEEKEND**

SUNDAY 13 **SALIMBA FARM** - Natal Midlands area
A new hike in this beautiful area, moderately strenuous.
Leader: LAURIE PODMORE (contact PAM PODMORE at: 212070)
Cost: R10 (member) R12 (non-member)

3 DAY 12 - 13 - 14 **MINI NGELE TRAIL** visiting the new hut
This is a "Blueberry pie and wild mushroom eating expedition" (so don't forget the cream!)
Leader: REGINA BILLIET Phone: 813672

SUNDAY + WEEKEND 19 - 20 **EMON FOREST** - Richmond area
Beautiful forest and hills staying at KA-HELLA-HELLA in the Umkomas Vally. Combined with Sunday hike.
SUNDAY HIKE LEAVES DURBAN AT 7.30 AM & PINETOWN 8.00 AM.
Leader: DICK BILLIET Phone 813672

WEDNESDAY 23RD **PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETING** at 8.00 pm
R1.50 per person, includes refreshments.
Club member Tom De Waal will entertain with "Gems of the wild", (wild flowers taken on hikes & trails), and Mike Morillion with slides of hikes, trails, and socials: **SUPPORT YOUR LOCALS!** and see how photogenic you are!
Phone: MIKE MORILLION 7011758

SUNDAY 27 **SORA'S POOL**
A favourite hike for a hot day because of the water sports it affords. Short to medium in length. Come and support Jean in her first hike as leader.
Leader: JEAN FOSTER Phone: 721539 (h) 234370 (w)
Cost: R6 (members) R7 (non-members)

WEEKEND 26 - 27 **NDEDEMA GORGE CIRCUIT**
A beautiful hike visiting Leopard Cave and Poachers Cave.
Swimming holes and lovely scenery.
Leader: IAN STEWART Phone: 728065

SUNDAY
3 FEB

REVISIT THE AREA OF THE OLD INANDA GAME PARK

A nostalgic hike through this pleasant landscape, noting how quickly nature has "taken over" once the game park was closed. Short hike with steep "ups and downs".

Leader: BRUCE MEDWAY Phone: 235895

Cost: R8 (members) R9 (non-members)

NOTE START TIMES: Leave Pinetown and Durban at 8.30 to meet on northward turn-off on N2.

WEEKEND
2 - 3

EXPLORATION PHOLELA CATCHMENT BASIN

This weekend will be an extensive exploration of the upper reaches of the Pholela Catchment Basin, returning via Lakes Cave and the Siphongweni Ridge. Tents required for Friday and Saturday nights.

Leader: TERRY LUBBE Phone: 288422

NTENJWA - cont/...

Sunday: Plan of action, a "short" trip upstream
Destination: To seek out the source of the Tugela River!!!

Once all the canoes were waterbound we set off across the vast expanse of Spionkop, on our final mission of the weekend. After what seemed like hours of sheer torture to some of us, with the blistering sun on our backs, we finally came to a place where we could no longer use water transport. Advancing on the most modernized mode of transport, our feet, we walked a few kilometers further upstream. Chantal, suffering from blistered feet decided to call it quits and sat down to rest in the shade of a Willow tree along with Darren and myself. With the rest of the party in the distance we amused ourselves by running through sinking sand which was discovered by Peter earlier on. Enough of that, I suppose I had better tell you something about the scenery! Low cliffs hung over cold pools of water which lapped onto the beach like sand where we were standing. On the opposite bank were tall reed-like plants and trees. Paddling back, dodging the skeletal trees in the water and fighting against the howling wind we finally made it back to the safety of camp.

All that was left to do was of us to pack up, clean up and wash up. Luckily for us Dick had organized for us to once again take to the water but this time in a motorized boat. An hour later after 1 x broken engine and a bumpy ride we reached land again.

We all piled back into the combi and no worse for wear, except for the blisters and sun burned shoulders, we headed for home.

Thanks to Dick for leading the party and to everyone else for making it a success and a weekend to remember.

Brad Harper

NGELE TRAIL

DATE: 5 October - 10 October 1990

GROUP: Philip (Leader), Marie, Joan, Chanelle, Marcia, Lynda, Lesley, Belinda, Diane and Gerald.

DAY 1: DURBAN - BLACK WATER - KWA SHWILI

The two loaded cars left Durban together at 5.30 am, arriving at Black Water at about 8 am. The dramatic splashes of shocking, white and apricot azalea bushes surrounding the house, against the green of the Weza Forest and the grey sky, reminded us that spring had arrived. At 9.15, after much photo-taking, we set-off. First we hiked through pine plantations (silently, to spot animals), and later through rotting and flourishing indigenous forests of stately yellow-wood trees, covered in green moss and coloured lichen - the route winding upwards all the way. Lunch was in a rocky nook in one of these indigenous pockets of vegetation. After lunch, we started climbing again, up grass slopes, the forests slipping behind us, below. The weather worsened and the mist got thicker. The gaps between group members increased. The leader wasn't at all confident of our time of arrival, distance and direction, as this was a new route leading to a new hut. But full marks to the State Forestry people, for the well-maintained paths, clearly marked white footprints and yellow distance tags. At about 4 pm the new log-cabin loomed at us through the mist. After 18 km we had arrived - wet but relieved. We arranged ourselves some bunks, leaving some for the group of 13 from Westville, also doing the trail; the last of whom arrived at about 7 pm. As the cabin was recently completed, there were some 50 kg bags of cement lying around - many of us convinced that our backpacks weighed just as much! We turned in early that night somewhat drier.

DAY 2: KWA SHWILI - FAIRVIEW FALLS - KING'S LODGE

After breakfast, we set out at about 8.30 am with the Westville 13. It was truly a scene from "Wuthering Heights": desolate cabin, howling winds over the exposed grass-covered slopes, shifting mists and straggling humans in formless rain-capes. As the route was well and conspicuously marked, each went at his/her own pace, meeting-up again at the Fairview Falls, which in our case were invisible (though audible) due to the impenetrable mists; we didn't dawdle here too long as it was getting colder. After this stop, we barely rested, even for lunch, as the hike had developed into a race between "Us" and "Them" for the choice accommodation at King's Lodge. After a longish comfortable descent from grass to pine plantation, we arrived at our destination at about 1.30 pm, having covered about 15 km. We spent the rest of the day seated around the log fire in the lounge, wet shoes and steaming socks lying around to dry. Those who didn't chat either read the ever-present Gideon's Bible or Lynda's copy of the most recent issue of "People": rather cosy, like a scene from a north European winter! We finally got to know the adult members of the Westville 13.

DAY 3: KING'S LODGE - BLACK WATER

We ventured out at about 9 am, after the Westville 13. It was a vile day: windy, dense with cloud and cold. We descended through pine plantations and grass slopes to Blackwater, to spot Philip's and Gerald's cars parked under the trees where they had been left. We had arrived at our destination in time for lunch, having covered 9 km. The afternoon was spent washing (clothes and ourselves), as hot water was available once the log fire had got going; due to some technical complication, there wasn't much cold water. The Univa wood stove was turned into a Christmas tree, "decorated" with socks, shorts, shirts and smalls, hung-up to be dried in the snug kitchen. After the afternoon thunderstorm, we ambled through the countryside, around the house. On our return we had to avoid the increasingly active bees on the patio. The evening meal was quite a civilised affair, seated at table with an enormous flower arrangement. This was the subject of much photo-taking. Our choice of what to take to a desert island proved quite humorous.

DAY 4: BLACK WATER - MACKTON - MIDDLEBROOK

At about 8.30 am, we drove from Black Water to Mackton (20 mins), where the two cars were to be left overnight under the trees. Here we also met Mr Fanie Botha, from State Forests, who was involved in the construction of the new trails we had followed and would be covering in the Weza Forest. He informed us that we were the first group to use the new Mackton-Middlebrook trail since the Forest had been opened on 1 October, for the new hiking season. We passed through the magnificent redwood and yellow-wood indigenous forest. Thanks to Lesley for hauling out her guide to help us identify other numbered trees. At "Lynda's Folly" we stopped for a break and chance to marvel at the vegetation. Then on through grassland and plantation and across the N2 to our lunch spot overlooking Goose Dam, though not a dam any longer, as its broken wall has remained unattended. The clear white foot-prints, our path indicators, were now beginning to look like exclamation marks, rather than prints. We continued on to Middlebrook, a newly renovated forester's house perched on a hillock, overlooking a valley. We arrived here at about 3 pm, after 15 km trail. A really magnificent house of yellow-wood floors, ceilings and fire-places in all 6 bedrooms: space was no problem here! The garden was a glorious riot of colour of daisies, azaleas, wisteria and magnolia. Everything seemed to be crying out for some TLC. After a relaxing afternoon of reading Lynda's "People" and warm showers (courtesy of ESCOM), we had supper and an exciting game of Polludo, a sort of nature conservation game based on snakes and ladders; we improvised for the lack of dice. The game was eventually won by Joan. Soon afterwards, we all retired, some of us sleeping on the spacious veranda, now that it was a bit warmer.

DAY 5: MIDDLEBROOK - MACKTON - DURBAN

We awoke early, with Philip stomping around on the wooden floors in his boots, informing the dawdlers that we had only one and a half hours in which to get ready. We left at 7 am on time! After some photo-taking, we started out on the newest section of the trail - some of which had only been marked but no path as yet existed. After walking through patches of plantation and indigenous forests, with the odd fleeting glimpse of buck, we started climbing to reach the contour path, which would take us back to Mackton. Up and up we continued, with some very long-winded (and hard-puffing!) zig-zag paths on exposed grassy hillsides. The heat was increasing steadily. We took many breaks, when we found the odd shady spot. We were beginning to miss the yellow tags telling us how many kilometres we had done. At one rocky outcrop, we disrupted a troop of vociferous baboons, who backed swiftly into the plantation, though made their presence known loudly enough. As our water rations were becoming depleted, with no sign of water sources on the new route, we voted at a brief lunch stop to follow the nearby old route, relying on Philip's memory as our guide. Despite the old weather-beaten route markers, we found the known and welcome water sources. We continued on the old, cooler route, until it linked up with the new one again. We then switched to the new route which now took us on an exploratory route of another pocket of indigenous growth. After some grumbling at this "optional" detour, we retraced our steps to the old route, and descended sharply to Mackton, through plantations and narrowly missing treading on a sluggish puff-adder: spring hadn't yet sprung for him, obviously! After our longest route of about 24 km, we left Mackton at about 5 pm, to get Marcia back to Durban to her Playhouse show at 8 pm. We said goodbye to the countryside and each other. We arrived in Durban at about 7.30 pm, and stopped for a takeaway of fish & chips from "Skippers".

In conclusion, mention must be made of the good humour and enthusiasm of the nine other companions, some of whom, unwittingly, produced some extremely amusing scenarios. A big "thank you" to Philip, for leading us astray only sometimes! We have really earned our "stripes", especially Chanelle for carrying her "Boulder" for most of the 80 kms!

Belinda Eisenhauser

GEORGE ARCHIBALD'S HAVEN ROCK FARM

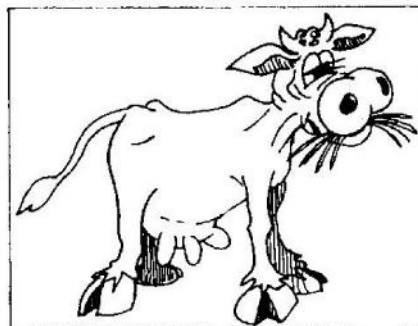
26 - 28 October 1990

GROUP: Tom (Leader), George (Guest-Leader), Hennie, Dick, Regina, Malcolm, Paula, Chris, Tracy, Mara and Belinda.

FRIDAY EVENING: All ten of us congregated at Haven Rock farmhouse at about 6.30 pm, having driven southwards from Durban in our respective cars. Thanks to the magnificent setting of the homestead on its high hill, we were shrouded in autumnal mist in the early evening, so we enjoyed a drink and supper in the lounge, leaving the restless bats and nesting swallows free run of the surrounding verandah. Then, to our surprise, George produced home-made (by his Mum) apple and steak pies for the repast. We poured cream, floating centimetres deep on the freshly delivered jersey milk from his family farm, Montezuma, on the apple pie. Despite the chill of the evening, we were very snug, due to the fact that the house was built entirely of mud, not brick, George pointed out. Haven Rock Farm itself was a recent acquisition; it adjoined the family farm, so was added as a cattle farm. Having located the "strategic rooms" and satisfied our stomachs, we turned-in to our carpeted, spacious rooms and our mattresses, leaving the cloud to settle more densely on the cactus garden, lawn and lumps of rose-quartz, standing guard at the entrance of the homestead.

SATURDAY: After waking and a leisurely breakfast, we clambered into the farm's white Japanese bakkie. We hiked in dull weather conditions, from Lewisdale to Stewart's Ruins, where we enjoyed lunch and a ziz. Those of us not yet worn-out enough for a snooze, having spent all morning plant and tree identifying, took a quick and strenuous walk to the Indian temple along the riverside. From Stewart's Ruins we continued to the Montezuma Dip, to be confronted by some rather aggressive cows of various breeds, very protective of their young. From there we followed the farm-track ever-upward to Haven Rock homestead on its majestic hill, arriving there at about 3.30 pm. Some of us "city slickers" decided that we wanted to watch the 4 pm milking of the jersey cows at Montezuma; but - oops! - we'd left behind the bakkie earlier that morning. So Malcolm drove George to its parking situation. On returning, we were again loaded there-in, to watch "life down on the farm".

We were shown all over the spotless dairy, with a commentary from George on the various procedures. We were enthusiastically informed that it took 7 and a half minutes to milk each of these cows mechanically on the rotating platform: aah! the sight of the contentment of the faces of the cows was really quite therapeutic! We shuffled along to watch the feeding



of the cows in the adjoining shed. We were quite startled and amused (or bemused?) by the rather bizarre "games" some of these contented ladies played with their powerful black tongues. At George's suggestion, we wandered over to the calve's shed, to fondle the now-born creatures. On turning the corner we discovered we were in the same pen as the jersey bull! My word, did we leap when he bellowed, charged and pawed the earth! Shrieking, we dived into the shed, closing the door behind us, watching him through the window. Useful hint for city-dwellers when confronted by a fractious bull: grab his nose-ring (personally, I wouldn't want to try!)

Soon after that we had the pleasure of meeting George's father, Tom, who related to us his experiences of being charged and knocked unconscious by a bull some thirty years earlier. We strolled back to the Montezuma homestead to meet George's mother, who had just

emerged from the hen-run, where she had been collecting eggs. As it was growing dark and misty, we declined the kind offer of tea, ready to head back for Haven Rock. On our return, the braai fires were awaiting us, thanks to those who had remained behind. After a pleasant night's braai-ing, we drifted to our various rooms with Regina declaring that theirs was more like an island in the middle of the freeway!

SUNDAY: We left the farmhouse at about 8.20 am via Vangazaan stream (a tributary of the Mpanbanyoni River) to Terrapin Lake, on the way spotting zebra and impala resting in the shade of the thronbush. It took sharper eyes to spot the terrapins in the weed-filled dam of that name. We continued, to come upon a noisy, confused and dusty herd of mooing cows and running calves of all colours and breeds: the five bulls on the other side of the fragile barbedwire fence added their baritones to the general fracas. Evidently, someone had left the interleading gate open the day before, so the calving programme had been somewhat turned upside-down. We had a break to wash away the dust on the Vangazaan Peninsula, where it meets the Mpanbanyoni River. George took time to relate the "joys" of rafting down that flooded river to its mouth.

All through the morning George pointed-out some superb examples of their on-going programme of lantana eradication, whereby it is cut daily all day, by tractor, and then poison, by hand, is applied to the remaining stumps. The results really made one sit-up.

We continued walking through the Mpanbanyoni River, to a suitable shady site for lunch and a shallow dip. We may have found it shallow, but the graceful night-adder managed to swim effortlessly through the quieter areas, undisturbed by our presence. We then continued to Mabel View, to be picked-up by Tony in the noble bakkie, having been contacted by radio. After a rather amusing and bumpy ride home, through some splendid views of the Vernon Crookes Nature Reserve, we rushed indoors to collect the mattresses to load onto the vehicle. We then collected our belongings and departed at about 4.30 pm. Thanks to George, with his unflagging enthusiasm and hospitality, and the group's amiable nature, another enjoyable Ramblers' week-end had ended.

Belinda Eisenhauer

HARRINGTONS FARM - BOSTON

20 - 21 OCTOBER

A memorable weekend, not too strenuous, not too far to travel and accommodation in a lovely thatched farmhouse on Jane and Roys beautiful cattle farm. Although the rain and cold of previous days threatened to mar the planned hiking, it cleared miraculously on Saturday to let us enjoy the wonderful scenery of the Natal Midlands.

Rolling green hills and krantzes of thickly wooded indigenous forests made ideal walking territory... a beautiful waterfall dropping into a series of deep pools... a magnificent majestic yellowwood reaching above us to the grey skies, (reported to be the second largest in SA, it took 4 1/2 of us, arms outstretched, to embrace its circumference) the nest of a Black Eagle could be seen with evidence, in the form of a red fresh-picked skull of a dassie at the foot, that they were in residence. As a backdrop to all this beauty, the Drakensburg from Cathkin to the distant south could be seen heavily shrouded in a white mantle of snow.

Sunday brought a cloudless blue sky, hot sunshine, green hills and ridges washed bright green by the rain and the most beautiful view of the snow-covered Berg - truly a breathtaking sight.

The hike this day took us over rushing streams, and sun washed ridges towards the Everglades, taking in the occasional glimpse of fleeting buck, three rare oribi, a large troop of baboons and soaring lammergeyer and the curious stare of contented brown cows. Another lovely day and greatly enjoyed by the six of us.

Many thanks to Jane and Roy for being such charming and enthusiastic hosts.

We'd love to come back, if you let us!

Joyce Harper