

# Durban Rambblers Club



MAY, 1968.



THE ART OF RAMBLING.

If a newly appointed Committee Member asks you if you know your three "hs," I would advise you to say "No." They have a whole lot of new ideas up their sleeves and may even ask you to try and write an article for our magazine too!

The member I had the misfortune to meet was rather adamant, so I asked (among other things) if Ramblers would be interested to know about my experiences in a Lebanese harem. He looked at me blankly, so I had to explain that white slave trade still exists ..... However, he said he thought as Ramblers were outdoor types, they might prefer to know more about the hazards of hiking.

For the uninitiated a ramble with the Durban Club is an occasional Sunday outing in the undulating Natal countryside, which starts and finishes with a ride in an overloaded ark, and leaves you as stiff as a board for about a week afterwards. It is an occasion when you wish you had brought a bathing costume, a hat, a water bottle, and orange peels. What I have never discovered is which part of the anatomy gets the greatest amount of exercise - jaws or legs.

My first outing was with the Ramblers in Cape Town. I arrived at the Market Square at 8.30, just as we do here, and learned to my cost that it is an unwritten law for girls to wear shorts, boots and long socks. An average turn out there is 40 members and instead of the omnibus, private cars are used. Unless Table Mountain is the venue, a journey of at least 30 miles across the "Flats" is undertaken before itchy feet get moving.

Summertime rambling in the Western Province usually means a boulder hop up a river to a lovely rock pool, where the rest of the day is spent relaxing and suntanning. Unfortunately, our Bilharzia infested

streams prevent this. In the wintertime there are plenty of mountains to be conquered. Unfortunately, my first hike took place in November when it was still considered cool enough to climb. "Paddakop," towering over the Franschoek Valley, was the venue. How I wished I was not so unfit or such an attraction to a plague of flies, as the leader of the party plodded relentlessly on heavenwards, never stopping for a breather or to examine the lovely wild ericas, watsonias and proteas. Had there been streams or a river on the Paddakop hike, we would have stopped for morning and afternoon teas - a ritual down south!

During the course of conversation on my first hike, I made the fatal mistake of admitting that I had never been up Table Mountain. A trip was arranged for the following weekend, as a couple of keen mountain climbers were eager to make amends. The route - Falcon - a 'D' climb with ropes!!! My heart nearly missed a beat as I saw rock ledges towering above me, and nearly stopped beating altogether as we neared the summit and beheld Camps Bay 2,000 feet below - but what a wonderful adventure. I have since conquered Table Mountain at least half a dozen times by a variety of picturesque routes, but never again with ropes!

If you can brave the oft inclement weather in the United Kingdom, rambling there can be great fun. The season changes are always fascinating to behold. Public transport is often used to reach the countryside, and pubs may be visited when water bottles have been left behind.

One thing that all ramblers seem to have in common is a love for outdoor life, and another, of course, for congenial company.

SHIRLEY YSEBRAND.

MYSTERY HIKE OF SUNDAY, 17TH MARCH, 1968.

At 8.30 a.m. it certainly was a mystery hike, as there was no leader and no one knew where we were going. Eventually our leader arrived, bleary eyed and a little late. Was it due to the previous night's activities, Dick? The fresh air on the back of the lorry soon brushed away the cobwebs and, having picked up the Pinetown group, we alighted at Kloof Falls at approximately 10 a.m. and merrily followed the leader down Kloof Gorge.

It was a beautiful day and the hot sun shone down. Fortunately, we were protected by the shady trees that lined the gorge from the heat that built up later in the day. We had been hopping along merrily, when we were brought to a halt by the enthusiasm of a keen photographer who wanted to photograph a splendid specimen of a spider. The party waited while Ton and Jill set up the camera to take a shot of the spider. The sun, however, disappeared at the crucial moment. Perhaps another time, Ton.

Scrambling on, trying to stay on our feet, we rounded a curve to come upon Rags, on a high rock, about to be pushed over for his crimes. A last minute reprieve was granted by some high authority, as he had not yet paid for the day's hike and we couldn't let him get away with that.

As the day wore on, so more and more Ramblers fell prey to the slippery rocks, with the resulting increase of wet and muddy behinds. One of the unlucky victims was Arthur who struggled gamely along, and upon coming to a particularly slippery rock, went down with a thud and lost his watch in the process. The word was passed back to look for Arthur's watch. Viv, coming to the rock, slipped and fell, disappearing from view down between two rocks. All we heard was, "here is your watch," and, looking down, there he was, with his normal smile, holding up the watch.

Gales of laughter and a very happy Arthur.

Eventually we arrived at Boulder Pool, our leader having first led us past it, and sat down gratefully resting our weary feet. Those who had bathing costumes dived into the pool. One fellow, to prove that combat boots don't slip, ran along the rocks, couldn't stop and had to dive fully clothed, hat and boots, into the water. He had a wet trip home.

At 3 p.m., after a good rest, we set off in the sun to climb out of the gorge. Many people found this rather strenuous and, as many were walking barefoot, progress was slow. Arthur threatened to resign, as he maintained it was too much for him, and I doubt if he would have made the top if it hadn't been for the constant cheerful encouragement from Afra behind him. A few of the visitors found it tiring and the sight of the lorry helped them up that last bit. The most unlucky Rambler was Jill, who sprained her ankle. However, she hobbled gamely along and arrived at the lorry not very long after us.

On the way back we stopped at the McConnells'. Some had tea while others enjoyed a water fight. We arrived back safely and the sale of detergents rose on Monday morning when the shops opened. This can be attributed to the fact that the Ramblers had been out on Sunday and had slipped and slid their way down Kloof Gorge.

C. WEBB.

#### THE WELWITSCHIA PLANT.

I wonder how many of us are conscious of the countless varieties of flora we see on our hikes through the plush Natal countryside. One plant we will not see is the rare Welwitschia Mirabilis or Welwitschia Painesii as some people - botanists

usually - call them. A minor controversy has sprung up as to who first set eyes on the plant, but as Dr. Welwitschia, a German, had the more fascinating name, the honours are his. He found his first specimen in the south of Angola, whereas Mr. Baines saw several during his explorations south of the Kunene River.

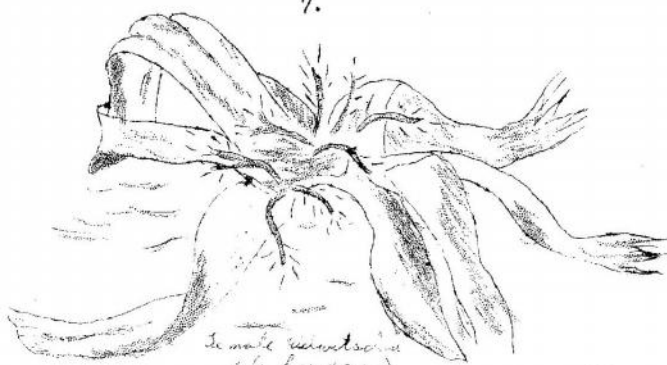
The primitive plant has adapted to the arid climate of the Namib Desert and can be found in the desert area between Mocamedes in Angola and the Kuisib Canyon in South West Africa. Large quantities may be examined on the Welwitschia Plains east of Swakopmund, but finer specimens may be seen by those who know the country well and have a well sprung Landrover.

The Welwitschia is a coniferous plant with exposed seeds that are winged and pollinated by the wind and insects. There are male and female plants which flower after the first summer rains. The pale yellow blooms of the female are most insignificant, while the males grow cones at the same time that the female has flowers. The leaves absorb moisture from the humid sea breezes that chill the desert at night. The roots are heavily branched and basket shaped, and stretch down through the hard gravel floor of the Pre-Namib in search of water.

In its adult stage the plant has only two parallel-veined evergreen leaves which get torn by the wind. The leaves grow up to 30 feet in length and may be up to 6 feet broad at the base. The leaves afford shelter for desert animals like scorpions, ants and snakes, and gemsbok and sheep are fond of eating the leaves.

The age of the "giants" among the Welwitschias is estimated at 2,000 years, but an average sized plant would be about 300 years old.

I am sure there are many Ramblers who would love to explore South West Africa, but rambling conditions



*Le melle succulentum*  
*(the barman's)*  
are very extreme - very hot by day and quite cold by night, with lots of powdery dust to chew and dry river beds to cross. Other plants of note are the desert succulents, the Mopanis, the Omumborumbongo trees, the Umwamas, Kookoboom from which Bushman quivers are made, and the amazing Sprogies Woud which is an isolated forest of trees (cousins of the Baobab) in the Etosha Pan, that looks haunted. The trees have diminutive spoon-shaped succulent leaves and the bark of course is fibrous.

SHIRLEY YSEBRAND.

CLICK-CLACK AND OTHER NOISES.

The March meeting was held at Harry and Amy Tripe's residence on the 20th of that month. Yours truly made a successful attempt to reach the venue 10 minutes before time, only to find 11 members already there and the projector set up. Such is the keenness of some! After a few false starts (the "wedge-road crew" and others having lost and found themselves again), the meeting got under way in the usual manner.

Unfortunately, one of our judges, Mike Wigley, has had to resign because of studies, and therefore, after some discussion, Margaret Moore agreed to, and was elected as an "alternate" judge.

31 Slides were entered for the competition (subject: "People") and the results were as follows:-

1st	Vic Chodura,	"Self Portrait,"	68.75	points
2nd	Marge Parr,	"Water Babies,"	68.25	"
3rd	Vic Chodura,	"Bride and Bridegroom,"	66.50	"

Neil Oellermann entered the one and only "black and white" photo, viz., "Portrait," and scored 63 points.

The judges for the evening were Harry, Charles, John and Bob.

Harry then showed some interesting cine films of the Royal Natal National Park area. Thanks again, Amy and Harry, for the lovely spread and the show.

NEIL.

The next meeting of the Photographic Section will be at Margaret McMartin's on the 15th May. After the judging of the slides, Fox hopes to show a film that will share with us the delights of canoeing down the Umgeni in the Pietermaritzburg/Durban canoe marathon.

All those who took photos at Easter Camp, how about having all your printing and/or developing done by the end of May, when a private get-together can be organised?

A LAMENT ON THE ASCENT.

To Nagle Dam  
We all set off  
To wend our wandering way,  
Oh dear, our party in its haste  
Has surely gone astray?

For suddenly  
We find ourselves  
In Maritzburg, oh hell!  
We missed the turn-off, turn back Dave  
To Cato Ridge, pell mell.

Five score or more  
Legs start the ascent  
With eager marching pace,  
But soon to find the going tough,  
Is this a walking race?

Puff, puff, choof, choof,  
We'll make it yet  
There's just another hill  
Beneath a tree, alas! I find  
Some bodies lying still.

But lo! they move  
And on they plod  
Some say a short cut they know  
Or so they think, we're at the top  
Ha! Fa! they're far below.

And as we blazed  
Our blistering trail  
Across the grassy plain,  
We then did find that we had lost  
The gang, we searched in vain.

But hark! what's that,  
I hear a blast  
A whistle loud and clear,

It's Philip and he's found the way  
There's nothing more to fear.

And after that  
We set off home  
Much worse for wear and tear  
Ouch! slithering down the mountainside  
Our aches will last a year!

Through mielle fields  
And native kraals  
We wend our weary way  
But all of us must truly say  
We've had a well spent day.

ANGELA.

MEMORANDUM

From: Entertainments Committee.  
To: All Ramblers, old and young and their friends.

Subject: SCAVENGER HUNT

Date: Saturday, 8th June, 1968

"Proceed to the house with white gables .....  
after 2.1 miles ..... etc."

So make a note in every diary now for this, the  
best informal social of the Ramblers' Calendar.

Other details: Cost: a mere 40 cents.  
Meeting place: at the market place  
at 4.30 p.m. and bring a torch.

WANTED

Any Ramblers (especially new) who are interested

11.

amateur dramatics are asked to contact either:

Marlene Kobus ... 881357  
Mike Castleden .. 857434

RUBBISH.

An appeal by the Natal Section of the  
Mountain Club of South Africa.

The M.C.S.A. point out that many complaints have  
been received about litter scattered in the Drakens-  
berg in caves, at camp sites, in huts and on the path.  
Places are becoming disgusting!

Mountain Club members are requested to take their  
garbage back. Containers are normally a fraction of  
the full weight. We Ramblers - that is you - are  
asked to do the same! Will you co-operate? It will  
make your trip to the Drakensberg more enjoyable for  
others.

Camp Captain.

P.S. For hike leaders only.

Empty tins put on a dead fire do not disintegrate  
overnight! ..... Sorry, I did not realise that you  
wanted a beacon for the next time.

IT HAPPENED AT THE TOGA PARTY.

Centurians, senators and Roman ladies, after  
forgathering in Durban, soon assembled at the forum  
of Kathy Regnard's parents in Pinetown. With bunches  
of grapes and various Roman inscriptions hanging  
inbetween columns of marble, and under a leafy pergola,  
they soon adapted themselves to the atmosphere of  
twenty centuries ago.

That is to say, in all respects except the dancing which, although very much with it, bore no resemblance to the Romans'. Vino and flavoured aqua were in abundance at a nominal price, as well as the most expensive liquor of all - beer. And then, what was this? In true Roman (or rather Italian) style, hot slices of delicious pizza pie were served to the guests. Full credit here to our lady cooks.

Now a word from the sponsor, Regina Laurence - "All Roman gentlemen are requested to parade before Caesar with their spouses." But it must have been a difficult task for the judges, because most people had taken a lot of trouble with their costumes. However, one couple stood out above all others, namely, Heather and Dave. They had obviously gone to great lengths to produce replicas of Roman garb. I hope we shall see a lot more of you both.

All too soon the magic hour of twelve had come and gone, and in twos and fours the guests began to mend their way homeward. And, as with any good party, I am told that some Romans were rather loathe to leave the convivial company of their refreshments.

In conclusion, I'm sure that all seventy guests will agree with me that the party was a swinging success, and here thanks are due to the untiring efforts of Dave and his willing band of helpers, and also (although last, by no means least) to Mr. and Mrs. Regnard for the loan of their garage.

MIKE.

SOCIAL NEWS.

Congratulations to Fred and Barbara Clark and also to Gloria and Micky McConnell on the birth of their daughters.

Sometimes news seems to travel very slowly. This item has taken six months to reach the editor of our magazine. Congratulations to Gary and Val Rabie on the birth of a daughter last year.

We would like to offer Priscilla Wassung our condolences and sympathy on the death of her mother.

New Members: Miss Sharon Gans, Miss Starr Pritchard and Mr. E. O. L. Kuhn. Welcome to the Club.

EDITORIAL.

Why is the magazine so late this month? The reason is that some articles were in in good time, but by the third Tuesday I did not have enough for a magazine. So please, if you agree to write up an outing or social, do so as soon after the event as possible. It is far easier to write it up while everything is still fresh in your mind. Deadline for the June magazine is May 21st.

This month the free hike for the best article in last month's magazine goes to L. M. Peasley.

Editor.

