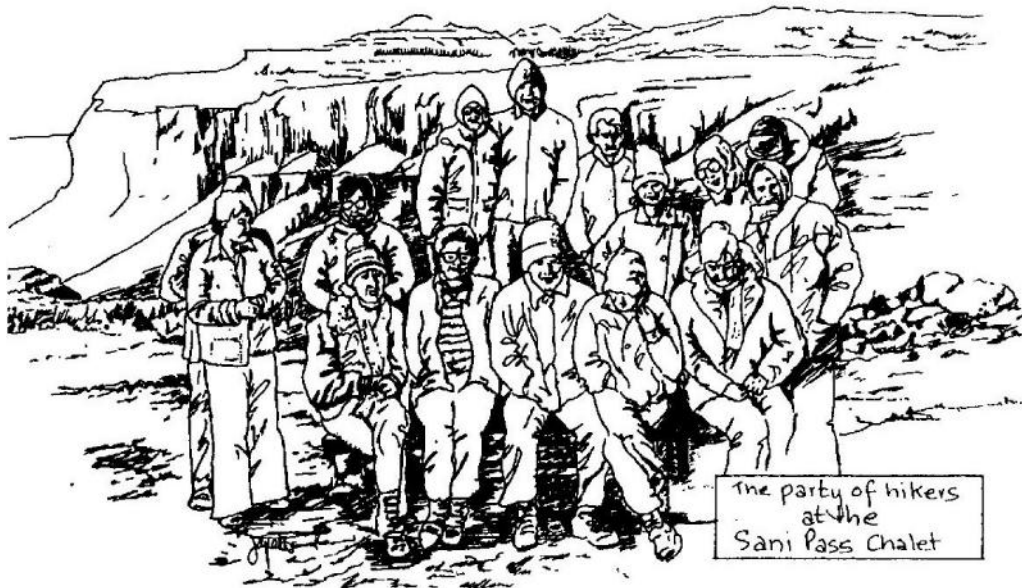


Durban Ramblers *Hiking Club*



PO BOX 1063 DURBAN 4000
Affiliated to the Hiking Foundation of South Africa

OCTOBER + NOVEMBER 1990 NEWSLETTER VOL.5



The party of hikers
at the
Sani Pass Chalet

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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 welcome the following new members and wish them many hours of happy and rewarding hiking with the club:
 Jenny Mostert, Charles Levin, Nola Schultz,
 Sharon Moraitis, Apey van Eijk and Chanelle Robinson

HIRING OF EQUIPMENT: Backpacks and tents can be hired from
 GRAHAM HAMMOND Tel: 222676

SUBS: There are still some subs outstanding. It's such a small fee so please pay up!!

OUTDOOR INN In Aliwal Street, offer all members a discount on all equipment

ARTICLES: I'm very pleased that some members and members friends, thank you very much, have contributed articles for the newsletter, but I would like some input from the day hikers ... I'm sure you have some interesting stories to relate!!

* * * * *

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

This is a MUST for all old and new members to put in your diary.... On the 10 and 11 November we are having the ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER at "McMuddles," Crawford Farm, Curries Post. Our gracious hosts, as always, Mick and Gloria Mc Connell.

On Saturday at 2 pm there will be a short hike, followed in the evening, by a braai. On Sunday, starting at 10 am, we will head for the hills with a bracing walk to clear the heads! Overnight stayers bring your own tents, breakfast and refreshments. Braai-ing facilities will be available on both days.

A recommended fee of R10 per person is payable to drivers to cover petrol costs.

For further information please phone:
 MARGRET KIRSTEN 441467 or MARGE BLAKE 863216

* * * * *

A MESSAGE FROM THE DAY HIKE ORGANIZER:

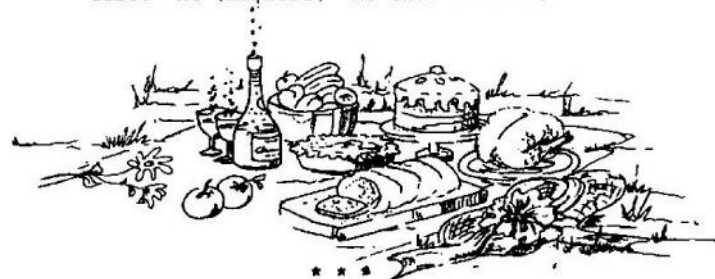
Our hike organizer has endeavored to find 52 hikes - mainly new - for the 52 Sundays of the year. He doesn't expect much thanks, but he asks you not to grumble, if, on occasions, you see - horror of horrors - a black face! He reminds you that this is a multi-racial society and a multi-racial club and anyone who cannot stand this had better stay at home and hide under the bed !!

On a more agreeable note, your aforesaid hike organizer congratulates and thanks the ladies who made such a pleasant occasion of Dave Easton's final lead before returning to the UK. They prepared a surprise picnic, full of tasty morsels, to send him off rejoicing. Dave was touched by the friendly gesture, and so was your irascible hike organizer. It shows that Dave's kind of hike generates at least as much camaraderie as "tea & toddle" outings.

* * * * *

ADVANCE NOTICES

DECEMBER 2 VICTORIAN PICNIC - St Helier area
 The organizer 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 and drink has been driven in the "luncheon car." On arrival, you get out the double damask table cloths, the cut - glass decanters, the table and chairs and the champagne buckets! Food and drink is pooled and we ask the gentlemen to be as inventive with the drinks as the ladies are with the food. Having eaten and drunken to your fill, the ruthless leader then ushers you up on the return hike. Leader: TOM DE WAAL Phone: 474766
 Cost: R4 (members) R5 (non members)



* * *

DECEMBER - - some time before the 16th - we anticipate a visit to the Playhouse to see Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. Details to follow - even the Playhouse doesn't have an opening date yet!

* * * * *

DECEMBER 29 - JAN 1 MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS TRAIL
 Explore the remote regions of Cobham and Mzimkulwana Nature Reserve. 50 - 64 kms, Altitude: 1600 -2500 mts. all on paths. If you are at a loose end between Christmas and New Year let me know in good time and we may be able to organize this trip with two departure dates and two parties - ie: a 4 day trip and a longer, more relaxed one over the same route, the two parties coming together on 30 December.
 Phone: PHILIP GATENBY at 213592

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WHERE HAVE ALL THE PORTERS GONE?
Rory Burke

I have just seen the film "Mountains of the Moon" which is based on Burton and Speek's search for the source of the Nile. The exploring expeditions of that time seem to be symbolized by what appears to be an excessive number of porters walking along the sky-line carrying everything bar the kitchen sink.

Having recently trekked in the Himalayas and Central Africa I have become used to having Serperias and porters are freely available. On the Kilimanjaro hike for example it was a prerequisite that you had to take porters and guides. Six of us teamed together to climb the mountain, our porter needs were organized by the hotel, this turned out to be six porters to carry our packs (one per person), plus four porters to carry our food for five days, plus two guides, plus a further two porters to carry the food for the other porters. Fourteen in all, I felt as if I was mounting a major expedition into the darkest depths of Africa, not a straight forward walk up a well marked path with furnished huts to stay in.

So why is it there are no porters here in South Africa? The mention of it in walking circles meets with condemnation and indifference. Even when I point out the advantages of walking up the mountains carrying nothing more than your camera, water bottle, binoculars and a bird book, which will allow you to be more relaxed and able to take in the scenery, the benefits do not seem to be fully appreciated.

Unfortunately I fear the truth of the matter lies within a reversed apartheid condescending attitude. The thinking may go something like this: I do not want to take advantage of the blacks so I will carry my own pack. Unfortunately this superior attitude is often counter productive because it denies the black person any recognition of his ability and undermines his self-esteem. He is denied the opportunity of being your guide/porter and the pleasure of experiencing the highland areas of his own country. How much longer will they be downgraded to remain a nation of maids and gardeners.

How about giving the chap a break.

* * * * *



"I don't think I'll go on a hiking holiday with you again, Stanley."

PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER

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.

SOCIAL BRAAI
FRIDAY 5 TIME: 7.00PM. Please come and join us and bring as many friends as possible to a braai at the Umbilo Congella Bowling Club, 645 Umbilo Road (opposite Logan's book shop) R5 cover charge. We'll supply everything except your meat - please also bring condiments and braai tongs if you have. Please note that in terms of the liquor licensing laws, we should buy drinks, not bring our own. There is a full bar and the prices are very reasonable. To assist with catering, please give MARIE a call if you anticipate being there. (Tel: 422041 ext: 2050 or 2057)

TRAIL NGELE TRAIL near Harding, Southern Natal
6 - 10 Beautiful indigenous forests, comfortable farmhouse accommodation. 60 kms on paths, alt: 1000 - 1700 mts. Cost: R50. Phone PHILIP GATENBY 213592

SUN 7 NHLAZUKA (sometimes known as Mount Misery, because it was from it's summit that Shaka had young maidens thrown down, in order to propitiate the rain gods.) It is the dominating mountain of the Natal Midlands; clearly visible from most of our hikes. Magnificent views across the Umkomaas Gorge and the charming Ilovu river valley. Medium to long hike and moderately strenuous.
Guest Leader: PETER KARSTEN
Associate Leader: MELVYN OLIVER Phone: 3002042
Cost: R10 (members) R12 (non member)

WEEKEND WHITES CAVE - Bushmen's Nek area
6 - 7 Rock painting galore, waterfall and lovely swimming spots. Tents required for Friday night
Leader: STEVE WATSON Phone: 298511

SUN 14 CHANTECLER SKYLINE A new hike and relatively easy one starting from the "pub" and finishing there early enough to enjoy a sociable jar or two before leaving. The hike does the circuit of all the high points surrounding this peaceful valley.
Leader: BILL HYSLOP Phone: 7018996
Cost: R6 (members) R7 (non members)

WEEKEND SINCLAIR SHELTER from Umkomazi Wilderness area
13 -14 We re - visit this wild and remote part of the Berg. Tents required for Friday night.
Leader: DICK BILLIET Phone: 813672

- SUN 21 **MUSTANG MOUNTAIN** Another new hike and moderate in length. It explores the small hills and valleys which lie between Cato Ridge and Hammersdale.
Leader: MELVYN OLIVER Phone: 283501 (h) 3002052 (w)
Cost: R6 (members) R7 (non members)
- WEEKEND **HARRINGTON'S FARM** Boston
20 -21 Day hikes on private farms, over rolling hills, through verdant indigenous forests, seeing magnificent yellow - woods. Braai on Saturday night.
Tents required.
Leader: RICHARD BISSETT Phone: 213040 (h) 212242 (w)
- WED 24 **PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETING** at 8 / 8.15pm.
4th WED R1.50 per person, includes refreshments.
Dr Preen will entertain with interesting audio visuals on: " Namaqualand Miracle", Umfolozi Wilderness Trail, Ropberg Trail and "Land of the Dragon" (featuring the beautiful Drakensburg.)
Phone: MIKE MORRILLION 7011758
- SUN 28 **CLIFTON CANYON** Yet another new hike which is the fruit of much exploration. It follows the gorge which marks the mid - section of the beautiful Umhlatuzana river, several waterfalls (including the MacKenzie Falls) and a final hill-top are features of the route. Medium length and a little strenuous.
Leader: IAN STUART Phone: 7640313
Cost: R7 (members) R8 (non members)
- WEEKEND **GEORGE ARCHIBALD'S HAVEN ROOK FARM**
27 28 Extensive hiking on large cattle ranch, near the headwaters of the Umpanbanyoni river. Accommodation for 12 max. in comfortable farmhouse. Braai on Saturday night.
Leader: TOM DE WAAL Phone: 474766

SURVIVAL TIP NO 3
(this is a serious one)

Never pitch your tent
in a dry river bed.
A thunderstorm can
cause a flash flood...
with dire
consequences.



PROGRAM FOR NOVEMBER

- SUN 4 **UMGENI BEND** Only visited once before, this will be a new hike to many members. It gives opportunities for seeing the Umgeni at close quarters in a peaceful setting. A medium hike with one hill climb.
Leader: BILL HYSLOP Phone: 7018996
Cost: R8 (members) R9 (non members)
- WEEKEND **RUGGED GLEN** Royal National area
3 -4 A combined Durban and Johannesburg Ramblers camping weekend to be enjoyed by all in this lovely camp. 15 members from each club required to complete the "jol"
Leaders - Durban REGINA BILLIET Phone: 813672
Johannesburg MARJA McINTYRE
COME AND CHECK OUT THE JOBURG CHICKS !!!
- WEEKEND **McCONNELL'S FARM** Annual get - together
10 - 11 for all hikers.
Please refer to "SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT" on page 3
- TRAIL **MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS TRAIL**
12 - 16 Champagne / Cathedral - Little Berg
Come walk the contour paths with us and see the beautiful green hills as viewed by the bushmen centuries ago. A fairly easy, yet rewarding trip for beginners with little fitness and lots of enthusiasm.
51 kms, alt: 1500 - 2000 mts. all on paths.
Phone: PHILIP GATENBY 213592
- SUN 18 **KARKLOOF FALLS** please see the following item
- WEEKEND **UMGENI VALLEY NATURE RESERVE & KARKLOOF FALLS**
17 - 18 Combined weekend and Sunday hike.
The weekend hike will commence on Friday night at CYCAD CAMP in the nature reserve. On Saturday a strenuous circular hike will take place at 10 am. On Sunday the weekend group will meet the day hikers at the KARKLOOF FALLS turnoff, and hike around the most spectacular falls in Natal through shady woodland paths.
Weekend group limited to 12 max.
Sunday group unlimited.
Sunday hike cost: R10 (members) (R11 Non members)
Plus entrance fee approx. R2
NORMAL DEPARTURE TIMES AND VENUES
Leader: DICK BILLIET Phone: 813672
- SUN 25 **RICHMOND** A new exploration of this pleasant part of the Natal Midlands.
Leader: SCOTTY VALLANCE Phone: 296409
Cost: R10 (members) R12 (non members)

WEEKEND UMTANVUMA NATURE RESERVE Port Edward
24 -25 Hike in the beautiful riverine forests and gorges, and swim in the clear warm waters of this Natal paradise. Comfortable accommodation at Tony Abbot's Resource Centre. 12 hikers maximum
Leader: TOM DE WAAL Phone: 474766

WED 28 PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETING at 8 / 8.15 pm
R1.50 per person, includes refreshments
Jeremy Woodhouse, a very successful exhibitor at the recent Wildlife Expo, will be showing his outstanding wildlife slides taken at Etosha National Park, Kalahari Gemsbok Park and Sussusvlei in the Namib Desert. This is an evenings entertainment not to be missed!
Phone: MIKE MORRILLION 7011758

AND THEN ON TO DECEMBER

SUN VICTORIAN PICNIC St. Heller area
1 DEC Day hike combined with scrumptious lunch in an ideal setting.
See Club News for details

WEEKEND HIDDEN VALLEY EXPLORATION Mzimkulwana area of the Berg
1 -2 Beautiful rock formations, forests, lots of swimming and cavorting!!
Tents required
Leader: JACK AUMORD Phone: 423245

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A FEW USEFUL PHRASES

ENGLISH	ZULU	SESOTHO
Hello / good day	Sawubona	Lumela
I do not understand	angizwa ukuthi ithini	He ke utloe
I wish to go ...	Ngifisa ukuya ...	ke batla hotsamea...
What do you want?	ufunani ngani?	O batlang?
Thank you	ngiyabonga	keea leboha
Go away	hamba lapha	tleha mona
There is no food	Akukho ukudla	Ha ho lijo
Please help me	ngicela ukuba ungisize	Nthuse hle
Have you seen people dressed like me?	wake wababona abelungu abaqgoke njenqathi?	O ke ba bone batha batha ba apere tje?

You never know when you might need a couple of these handy phrases!

* * * * *

SANI PASS CHALET

28 -29 JULY 1990

We had already spent a week at Bushman's Nek getting in a fair amount of walking, enjoying good company, sunny days and very cold nights.....the Berg was covered in snow and we were anxious to witness it first hand at the top of Sani Pass.

Having arranged to meet the rest of the party at the Sani Pass Hotel, at 9.30am on Saturday, I was most concerned when one car -load of fellow hikers failed to show up by 10.30 but fortunately they were waiting for us at the Police Post! Last minute packing, passport formalities finally over with and we were on our way at last.

A point to remember for future reference...PASSPORTS are a MUST for overnight stops at the chalet. Book of Life is not acceptable, as Rae and Ian found to their disappointment. However they decided to go up for the day and because of the lateness of the hour rushed ahead of us up the pass.

Sani Pass is named after a chief Rafolatsane who ruled this part of the Berg 100 years ago. Travellers were expected to pay their respects to him. The old bridle path was called The place of Rafolatsane, but as this was a bit of a mouthful it has been abbreviated to Sani Pass. The pass, at 2865 mts, is the highest in South Africa and takes you over the border to the plateau of Lesotho - 3 kms above sea level. In 1913 a donkey train from Mokhotlong pioneered the pass, but it wasn't until 1948 when the first 4x4 undertook the route and had to be manhandled every few yards taking 14 hours. Over the years the road has been improved tremendously but only 4x4 vehicles are allowed beyond the police post. It took us about 4 hours.

It's an 8km walk up the pass and is pretty strenuous, to say the least! The scenery is spectacular, the steep slopes still surprisingly green with pockets of ice in the uppermost gullies. Despite numerous signs against littering the route was strewn with rubbish which spoils the beauty, but there was little traffic and we had the pass more or less to ourselves. About an hour from the top, Rae and Ian galloped past us on their return journey, stopping briefly to tell us how nice the chalet was and how cold the beer which by this time was a good enough incentive to push on as fast as we could.

The gradient now was very steep and the two wrecks gave testimony to the treacherous hair-pin bends. We passed a waterfall completely frozen over...an amazing sight. The last pull onto the top was rewarded with the welcome sight of the chalet on the right and a distant view of Hodgsons Peaks. The plateau itself is desolate with a hotch - potch of dwellings, a handful of local inhabitants draped in drab blankets, not a tree or shrub in sight and an overall feeling of poverty and greyness. However the border officials were friendly and cheerful and the chalet pleasantly comfortable, if rather shabby, with plenty of warm blankets, quaint iron heaters, but, horrors, no running water and definitely no hot baths!! It does boast a pub and it wasn't long before Lesotho woman, Elizabeth, who runs the place, was urged to open up. Bags unpacked, beds made, fires lit against the cold evening by Sharp Shoot (the old and rather frail looking handy man) and we were all set for a great evening.

After grub we all congregated in the cosy lounge around a big coal fire (there isn't any wood up there) and had a sing song. We South Africans were thoroughly put to shame by our four Swiss visitors whose repertoire and singing talents far out-shone ours. Even Gerald's song sheets weren't much help and most of our efforts dwindled into an embarrassed mumble!!

During the night a strong wind got up and brought a big change in the weather. Peering through the window into the early grey morning, while a chilling draught eased itself under the door, we were amazed and thrilled to see snowflakes falling. Excited yells got everyone up and rushing to put on their warmest gear. Some of us went outside but it was bitterly cold and very windy so we didn't stay long.

The snow fell for a while, enough to cover the ground. After breakfast we went outside as by this time the snow had stopped and the sun was trying hard to shine and we all fooled around throwing snowballs and acting like a bunch of kids. Even the Swiss accustomed to the snow covered Alps joined in the fun!



Some of us then decided to go for a walk towards the nearest snow covered ridge leaving the not-so-brave in the chalet. While the men tackled the climb, we ladies wandered off across the plateau, but after an hour the sleet and freezing wind got up again and it was a relief to get back into the warmth of the chalet. Joe, Marilena, Ann and Liz decided to leave earlier and after piling on all their warm clothes set off down the pass, followed a short while later by Jenny, Françoise and Annemarie. The rest of us sat around eating and drinking coffee and waited for the men to get back from their walk. Apparently the snow at top of the ridge had been pretty deep and they'd had fun sliding about on their backsides!! By the time they got back, ate and got ready, the rest of the party, apart from Di and Gerald, had departed and when we got going the sleet was again falling and it was incredibly cold, but enjoyable anyway and we paused on route to take more photographs. I decided to do my bit towards "cleaning up the environment" and started collecting rubbish from the side of the road. The others thought I was out of my mind but it wasn't long before they joined in and by the time we reached the police post we were laden down with a black rubbish bag and 5 plastic bags of refuse!!! Naturally the police were delighted and asked when we were going back. I'd like to think that all our hard work had a lasting effect, but I'm sure that by the following weekend it was just as bad.

In closing I think an enjoyable weekend was had by all.

Joyce Harper

Leader: Regina Billiet

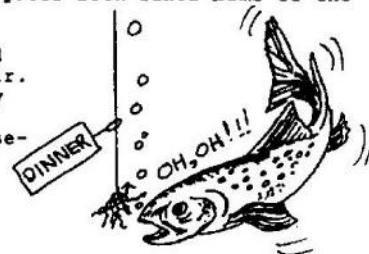
Dick picked Di and I up at 5:05 pm. and proceeding to his home, the balance of passengers boarded. Eight in total we were under way.

"Spook and Diesel" along with Joyce and Darren were met in the bar at Bushmans Nek Hotel. After beers and snacks or light meals, all were ready to hit the hay. John and Robin preferring a soft bed in a caravan to tent accommodation.

Morning dawned bright and clear. All eleven of us Ramblers passed through passport control and began walking on a well worn donkey track. Two water stops later at a fork in the path, two day hikers caught us up and went on to Twin Pools. Taking the other path to the ridge, with a huff and puff, we toiled up hill. Scenery was uninteresting being too dry with very little greenery. Arriving at the lunch spot under a rocky overhang away from the wind, the valley view could be admired with the police post and hotel seen in the distance. Terrain from here was much flatter with only a gentle climb up to the border fence. After a down hill stretch and a long z - bend the Lodge could be seen nestling below the escarpment. A treeless, grassland area with only a little vegetation next to the lodge itself. Opening the door one was greeted with a cosy new carpet, and not wanting to soil it, most of us took our boots off outside. Everyone soon settled down with a cuppa or a beer in the lounge. John and Robin went off to explore ruins seen from here.

Luxury is certainly the highlight of the lodge. Slightly marred as the light faded by maintenance problems... gas lights requiring attention and only two of the four geysers worked. Gas supply also failed at this point. Our running repairs soon fixed some of the faults. Guess who?

Our Chef de Cuisine, Dick, was called to prepare a superb four course affair. At the dinner call we were greeted by the elegant setting. The meal began with Pottage Spiced Mushroom. Supposedly to be followed by deep fried Rainbow Trout, wishful thinking!



Peter and Dick's earlier fishing attempts were so near, yet so far, when a fish jumped out after Dick's bait but didn't get hooked. At the main course: Saute Chicken de Macaroni a la Sehlabathebe, our eyes were bigger than our stomachs. Finishing touch: Creme chocolate sweet...to be drunk not eaten after it went a little wrong!... rounded everything off.

Radiated heat from the lounge coal fire soon had us all getting into form with a little alcoholic assistance of course. Dick along with Spook and Diesel soon had jokes flowing fast and furious. Poor old Darren was asked where was the rest of "diesel." Replying it was finished and complaining the coke mixer was double the amount of the cane and he wasn't a pack donkey!

By this time the very adequate meal and warmth was having its effect on us and, feeling sleepy, it was time for bed.

Morning was windy at first, improving later. Making breakfast a field mouse was seen to be observing the activity from outside the kitchen window. Peter tried without success to catch that elusive trout. Filling in the Visitors book and taking a photo of the two women caretakers, our party got under way.



Ruins, upon investigation, were made of stone blocks built into the wind and water hewn overhanging cliffs. Of particular interest was a horse-shoe shaped cave, with a hole in the roof, next to a dry tarn... supposedly formed by a gas bubble in the molten stone. Passing more tarns, we reached the boundary-fence with a view of the snow covered mountains. Walking under a rocky overhang, brought us to the point of descent.

Tarn cave being the next stop. Eland were seen in a small group as we made our way down to the contour path and "Cedrics Pool" the lunch spot.

Peter, Adolf and yours truly went in for a dip, short, too cold! Warm in the sun, several folk sun-tanned on the rocks. Richard, feeling mischievous, annointed Adolfs ???? with cold water much to his consternation. This signaled time to beetle for home. Reaching the police post, Dick was seen arriving with the combi to collect us. Computer Passport entries delayed things a bit. Saying our goodbyes to Richard, Joyce and Darren we departed for home at 3:30 pm.

Thanks to Regina for an excellent trip and Dick for his culinary efforts and safe journey home.

Gerald Hall

"Social Pub Evening"

The 'olde worlde' charm of this interesting and historical pub was well chosen for this social gathering. What could be more fun than eating fish and chips with your fingers: a glass of your favourite drink at hand, seated on ancient, well worn wood and iron chairs and surrounded by momentos of by-gone days...not to mention the good company of fellow Ramblers?

Well organized by Graham Hammond and his team of lovely ladies, Marie, Pam and Jean, the evening proved to be a great success and enjoyed by over 64 members and friends. Entertainment was provided by Mike Marillian who got everyone singing-along with some old time favourites. Proprietor, Pat Moran, ran the bar; lucky people drew horses in the Gold Cup and won a few rand and if anyone didn't have a good time, they only have themselves to blame!!

Although the evening was financially less rewarding than anticipated (by-the-way WHO ate fish & chips without paying?!?) the evening was such a success that we look forward to a re-run in the not too distant future!