



go hiking

MIDLANDS HIKING CLUB NEWS

Volume 2 No. 1

20 September 2011

*It is not the mountain we conquer,
but ourselves.*

Sir Edmund Hilary

YOUR COMMITTEE 2011/12



*From left to right: Brigitta Simpson, Chris Simpson,
John Fourie, Carolee Thompson, Kevin Ross-Davies,
Rod Hart, Brian Henwood*

Editor's Letter

Dear Hikers!

What would *you* like to see in the newsletter? Remember, this is *your* newsletter. Please feel free to contribute to your heart's content. As you can see, you have a totally new look in front of you and hopefully brand new content will follow in the next issues. In this issue, you can read about a book related to hiking and outdoors and laugh at a hiking cartoon. The hiking reports are as always the heart of the newsletter. Please write to The Editor if you feel burdened or elated about matters related to hiking and if you wish to sell something, you can advertise it in this publication.

So, until next time, go hiking! ***-Brigitta***

CONTENTS

**YOUR COMMITTEE, EDITOR'S LETTER, CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER, CARTOON,
4 YOU TO READ, WE HIKED TO ...**

MIDLANDS HIKING CLUB COMMITTEE

*Chairman: Brian Henwood Vice Chairman: John Fourie Treasurer: Kevin Ross-Davies
Secretary: Carolee Thompson Activities Organiser: Chris Simpson Newsletter Editor: Brigitta Simpson
Member: Mark Nellist*

Chairman's Chatter

by Brian Henwood

Annual General Meeting

I thought that placing two proposed constitutional amendments on the AGM agenda would have raised levels of interest and brought a few more members along to the AGM. It was not to be. In fact our attendance was down from last year but nevertheless we all enjoyed the lively interaction at the meeting and the finger supper that followed.

Somewhat disappointing was the negative feedback from our members which meant that the committee was not able to secure a mandate to arrange mountain bike rides as an additional activity.

We did however agree unanimously that an additional member on the committee was acceptable. Although we did not give the new portfolio a title, we did earmark it for a member that would promote our activities and encourage our members to join the hikes. We feel our members, and in particular our new members, need someone who can give advice on the suitability of hikes for their level of

fitness. We also feel that our members need a gentle nudge from time to time. If you feel you would like to assist our members in this way, your committee would like to hear from you.

Equipment Hire

John Fourie has offered to pursue the idea of creating a pool of hiking and camping equipment that could be made available for hire to our members. If you have some equipment in reasonably good condition that you would like to donate to the pool, or offer for hire, then please contact John on 082 041 4565.

Upcoming Fixtures

Your committee has once again put together an interesting variety of hikes, some with camping and caving options. Keith is leading two cave hikes, one in October and the other in November. If you are thinking trying something as different as sleeping overnight in a cave then contact him. He will tell you what you need.

The night hike along Treasure Beach at spring low tide is really worth considering. You

won't be disappointed. Contact Bushy now on 083 757 2660 for details.

We have a few places available for the hike to the highest mountain in Southern Africa in November. This one will be fun. Driving up Sani Pass then camping overnight at the base of the mountain in Lesotho. Contact Teresa Whitfield to check if the last place has been taken, or not?

Whale Trail at last

After many enquiries we have now secured a booking for 12 to do the Whale Trail starting 28 March 2012. If you have always wanted to do this scenic Trail near Cape Agulhas but never seem to find the time then put your name down now. Don't miss this opportunity. Teresa is our leader. Contact her on 082 374 1793. She is a teacher at Hilton College so in the evenings is the best time.

Happy hiking!

We hiked to ...

... SWIMAN HUT
5-7 August
by Keith Ashton

Hikers: Keith Ashton (Leader), Margaret Ashton. Peter Wedge, Anica Adams, Miriam De Kock, Max Ramseier, Sarah McMaster, Manqoba Sabela, Simone Dale, Rick Gutierrez, Anita Gutierrez, Mark Gutierrez and Paul Gutierrez.

It was a weekend experienced in ice and snow. Out of the abo 13 participants, 11 braved the bitter cold, deep snow under foot, falling snow & mist on our way to Sleeping Beauty Cave (Peter had severe blisters from hiking with Keith & Margaret at Bushman's Nek so missed these hikes).

Although we had harsh conditions and were unable to see any tracks due to the deep snow

it was a spectacular hike in a truly magnificent winter wonderland.

All enjoyed the absolutely fantastic experience.

Annual club subscriptions are now due. The subscriptions remain unchanged at R70 for ordinary members and R110 for family members. Our banking details are Nedbank cheque account no. 1519007299. The branch code is 151925. When doing an eft or deposit please give your name as the reference.

We hiked to

THE BLUE GROTTTO by John Fourie

Hikers:, Trish, Ingrid, Roy and Rose, Chris and Brigitta, Christi, John, Apollo, Max and Keith (leader).

The name "Blue Grotto" sounds wonderfully romantic and conjures up images of a hazy mediterranean hideaway. However, the Blue Grotto I am talking about is right here on our doorstep, about 14 kilometres from the Dragon Peaks Holiday Resort. And this was the destination of our hike.

The list of applicants for the weekend numbered twenty three with the compliment at departure being thirteen. Members from Ramblers and Mountain Backpackers participated.

The weather was overcast, cool, with an occasional short misty drizzle which dissipated as the day progressed.

The group visited " Barry's "

grave. He died in 1938 at the age of twenty two, a grim reminder that the mountains are not to be trifled with. The haunting skeleton of a burnt tree stands sentinel over this site.

Higher up we encountered signs indicating left to Cleo pools and right to the Blue Grotto. We turned right, and traversed a contour path for some distance before a steep decent to Blue Grotto at the base of a ravine.

Loud whoops and shrieks above us and above the trees' canopies displayed a youthful group of individuals enjoying a cable ride which required traversing various cable stages for the adventure.

At the Blue Grotto we were introduced to a lovely setting for our lunch break. An enchanting waterfall cascaded and fed into a deep pool, whilst we fed ourselves. We were sheltered by large protuding overhangs which created the illusion of a large, wide cave big enough to contain a large group of people. What goes down, must some

times go back up again. This is what we did, passing through a section of indigenous forest, before decending and exiting at the. . . .Drakensberg Sun Hotel.



**WELCOME to
our NEW mem-
bers ...**
Brian & Marie
Drury
& Miriam de
Kock

We hiked to

LAKE ELAND 13-14 August by Linda Bruss

Ten member traveled down to Oriibi Gorge n Friday afternoon and camped or stayed in huts or chalets overnight.

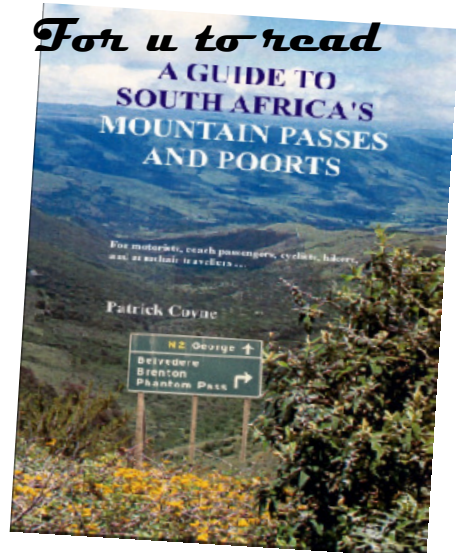
Saturday morning was crisp and perfect hiking weather. We hiked along the mountain bike

tracks on the edge of the gorge, where the views were spectacular and the birdlife also kept us enthralled-fish eagles, vultures, blue cranes and even common old crows. There was also a large expanse of grassland where we saw blesbok, wildebeest, giraffe and two oribi. We went down 383 steps to bushmen caves and inspected the new zip line similar to canopy tours consisting of ten lines criss crossing the gorge, totaling three kilometers of "foofie"

slide. Then we went across the swing bridge and had lunch at a view point called Eagles Nest and finally hiked back to the vehicles in time to watch the rugby. In total we covered about 16 kilometres.

Sunday morning was a leisurely breakfast and everyone did their own thing before heading home.

Thanks, Bushy, for a lovely weekend.



A GUIDE TO MOUNTAIN PASSES AND POORTS

By Patrick Coyne

South Africa's roads are rich in magnificent mountain passes and poorts, any one of which can turn a journey into a memorable experience. Passes were formidable obstacles for vehicles of the past, but nowadays we can enjoy them without worrying whether we shall be able to make it to the top. Information about passes and poorts is not easily available to travellers. Very often it is buried in awkwardly large reference books, or in separate Internet addresses that are inconvenient, even on your laptop. Hence this book, which is compact enough to fit into a bag or car cubby-hole.'



We hiked to ...

PLEASANT PLACES at Lidgetton, 3 September 2011
by Brian Henwood

“A place to stroll, and to gaze, a place of peace, of quiet reflection, a place to browse, listen to music, to eat and to sleep”. This is how John and Linda Hall describe their Pleasant Places B&B in the Lidgetton Valley just 23 km out of Howick.

On our arrival John gave us a few hiking options and we chose the 16 km roundabout hike via Swissland Cheese, Mole Hill and the Fifehead Dairy. After hot coffee and

muffins, in a rather chilly morning, we were more than ready to tackle the well-marked trail through natural vegetation and along private farm roads. After a casual 2 hour walk we arrived at Swissland Cheese perched on a ridge overlooking the beautiful Lidgetton Valley. This was an ideal spot to relax with smoked goat cheese and garlic-flavoured melba toast while sharing the warm sun with the white goats that were already lining themselves up for their afternoon milking session.

We continued our hike passing another well-known Midlands Meander destination, the Mole Hill, where we briefly stopped to browse the shops, glass studio and art gallery.

Then it was back along farm roads flanked by lush green pastures to the dairy where we were able to watch the mechanised milking of 800 fully-laden udders of friesland cows. The cows exit at about 10 second intervals. This is one of the most productive dairy farms in the Midlands.

This 6-hour hike is to be recommended for our members looking for a ‘not too strenuous’ hike. Christie Exall has agreed to lead this hike again soon. Look out for it in our next fixture list.