

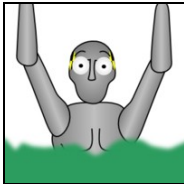
# Gough Bunting

January 2008



## A new year!

Starting the year with a bang.



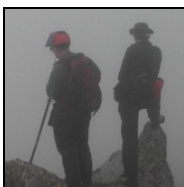
## The Gough Island 3-step

Life is hard on an island. Serious Broe!



## Fishing

Mel expresses her feelings for this age old pass-time.



## ALBATROSS

Marking of the new nests in the mist.



## Appreciation

“You are not my mate, go back to where you came from”. Female Tristan Albatross chasing away a male trying its luck.

## A new year!

This is a new year and I am still enjoying myself on Gough! Getting homesick and getting over it in due time, that is part of life. In the beginning of January, Jack and I went for a walk along the river, just above Swemgat (our own waterfall). Yes, we experienced the summer here (not the same as at home, but it sure felt the same!). The outing to the Skua's meeting place, as I called our destination, was a good one, we talked a lot. Jack decided that I should take a picture and to get to the other side was easy, but getting back means that you have to walk through the water. If the water gets into your boots, you have to struggle to get the boot off and then dry your sock to put it back on or walk with wet socks.



The next hot day was one Friday after skivy when Sarel went fishing and Jack, Mel and I decided to go as well. Let me tell you this! We decided that on one of the hottest days on Gough! The wind at the sea was a cool breeze which made us forget about the heat. Yes, we like walking when it is really hot. While we were at Diesel Point we saw someone lying in the cool air. It was one of the massive sea lions.

Mel and I decided on a Friday morning right after skivy to sand and paint the shelves in the main bathroom. It was dusty work, sneezing (hateeshoe) all over the place. We painted the first coat and we had to wait until the next day for the second coat of varnish. After all the hard work, we can now look at it and say that we did it and it looks good!



It is also almost time for the Sagina team to go back to South Africa! All the best with the heat waves in South Africa, here I can not complain because for every hot day we get three non stop raining days, some hot some cold. Till next month!

-Charlene

## The Gough Island 3-step

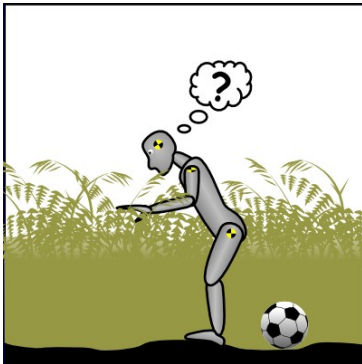
Gough is the place to be outdoors. It has a "few-have-ever-been-here" quality you cannot find in South Africa any more. There are places where you could very well be the first to set foot.

But, families and friends of Gough expedition members often see photos of the island and then ask "Why don't you guys play soccer?" or "Wouldn't that open field next to the base make a nice cricket pitch?"

This article is for those people.

There are numerous tennis and cricket balls in the camping store eagerly awaiting use, Also next to the house there is a large open field with something which looks like slightly lumpy grass: The perfect place for a game of Touchies or Soccer.

The true conditions of the playing field however only become apparent after you leave the house and explore the pitch from close up.



### Hazard number 1

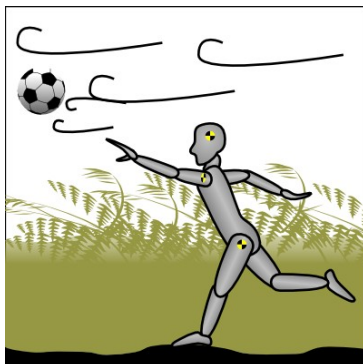
The entire field is made up of plants, all growing about hip-height.

Walking through this is quite exhausting. Playing across it is neigh on impossible. Losing the ball amongst all of this is very easy

So you think ok we'll have to use a bigger ball. Something with bright colours which is easy to see and difficult to miss.

**Hazard number 2**  
Hidden amongst the plants are small birds called "Petrels". Don't worry the chances of you accidentally stepping on one is small, however to escape predatory birds they burrow into the soil. Experience suggests no matter where you step you are always about half a step away from a deep hole. That is if you did not step into it in the first place.

So the game will have to be reduced to a kicking game. Maybe a game of throwing Frisbee. Then the weather will change with astonishing speed and reveal...



### Hazard number 3

Gale force winds.

The winds bring much appreciated relief from the hot stagnant heat which develops on the island during the summer months (24°C is considered hot here) But during a game it tends to dampen things down a bit. A simple rule applies here: If it is in the air, it will not land here.

About the only thing left to do is hiking. And we do plenty of it. And with a view like that who wouldn't.

Why then you ask is this the Gough Island 3-step?  
Simple: as you run/hike/stroll/walk across the terrain you almost never see the holes between the bushes. So you will step in one every once in a while. Your body will then make an obligatory 3 step before you hit the ground.

Happy Hiking :-)  
-Johan Hoffman



P.S. No dummies were injured in the making of this article.

## Fishing

January 2008

Not for compliments. It doesn't work anyway, as I discovered after Brian cut my hair into a very flattering Beatles pot-on-the-head sort of style (oh, please let it grow out quickly!). The other kind. For actual fish. With scales. And fins.



Sarel, Jack, Charlene and I tried our hand at that the other day. It really was a lovely, hot, sunny Friday afternoon. The kind that you don't get very often on Gough. The kind that ol' Rome's went on about to his Jules (sorry, Will). Sarel left right after lunch, after the four of us slaved and cleaned this whole big base by ourselves (the others went out counting chicks. Men!). Jack, Charlene and I went after Jack's duties were done. I didn't expect the fishing spot to be so close to the base. As usual, getting anywhere on Gough involves ropes and crawling around on knees and belly.





When we got there (two minutes after setting out), Sarel had caught exactly 0 fish. But before you could say “useless fisherman”, he showed us that the fish were spawning (is that the correct term?). I don’t think Sarel had anything to do with that, although it’s obviously not for lack of trying. As I said: “Men!”. You can’t live with them. And for some vague, unsatisfactorily explained reason you can’t drop-kick them into the sea, either.

The Met team didn’t do any actual fishing. We just hung around, offering moral support and giving Sarel valuable tips at the tops of our voices. For some unfathomable reason he hasn’t invited us to join him again.

Until next time!

-Mellany



## Appreciation

Being here on the island is a life changing experience. One has come to appreciate quite a number of things such as playing soccer alone on the helipad, looking at the clouds and saying "wow" this is beautiful, watching sunrise or sunset, walking down to the crane point just to spend few minutes watching the water as far as one's eyes can reach towards the horizon, or seeing the Wandering Tristan Albatross gliding gracefully above the ocean next to the base on very special and quite rare occasions and so far I only saw them once.

It is a very quiet and peaceful world, free of worries such as walking the streets of Pretoria be it day or night, going to a train station early in the morning, in the train itself, coming back home in the evening wondering about one's safety or being late for work due to traffic congestion in cities or long queues at taxi ranks (people commuting to Menlyn or Centurion for example, will know what I am talking about).

Back to business, Johan and I paid John and his team, who were joined by Kholekile a day after they went camping at Gonydale, a visit. We took it nice and easy but at one point I was wondering how long it was going to take before we'd reach the top of the mountain. We finally got there, saw John and Richard who were heading our way, joined them on the walk up and down the hills as they marked nests and banded first time breeders on the colony. I would say I saw more than 50 Tristan Albatrosses that day, even getting the opportunity to touch and feel those beautiful feathers. I was hoping to see the team's campsite but never got a chance. We also did not get to see Kholekile and Brian who we were told were working on the other side of the hills (South Peak). We left John and Richard some time around 13:30, made our way back which was quicker with lots of stumbling and falling.



Our parcels have arrived and I would like to thank Sydney Marais and the Edinburgh but that also marked the end of the visit by John, Brian and Richard. It was really great having them here and I wish them all the best in their next endeavours and hopefully we will see John again in September. A big thank you to the South African Weather Service for the gifts

Sorry about the black outs, hopefully the problem will be sorted out soon.  
So long, God bless!

-Nkoane Jack Mathabatha



## ALBATROSS

This has been a very interesting month. I had the opportunity to help the Sagina team when they were marking new nests of the Tristan albatross. We were also able to explore the Island and have a few days of camping.

If I may tell you, there are no words to describe the beauty of this island. We are really enjoying our time.

Till next month.

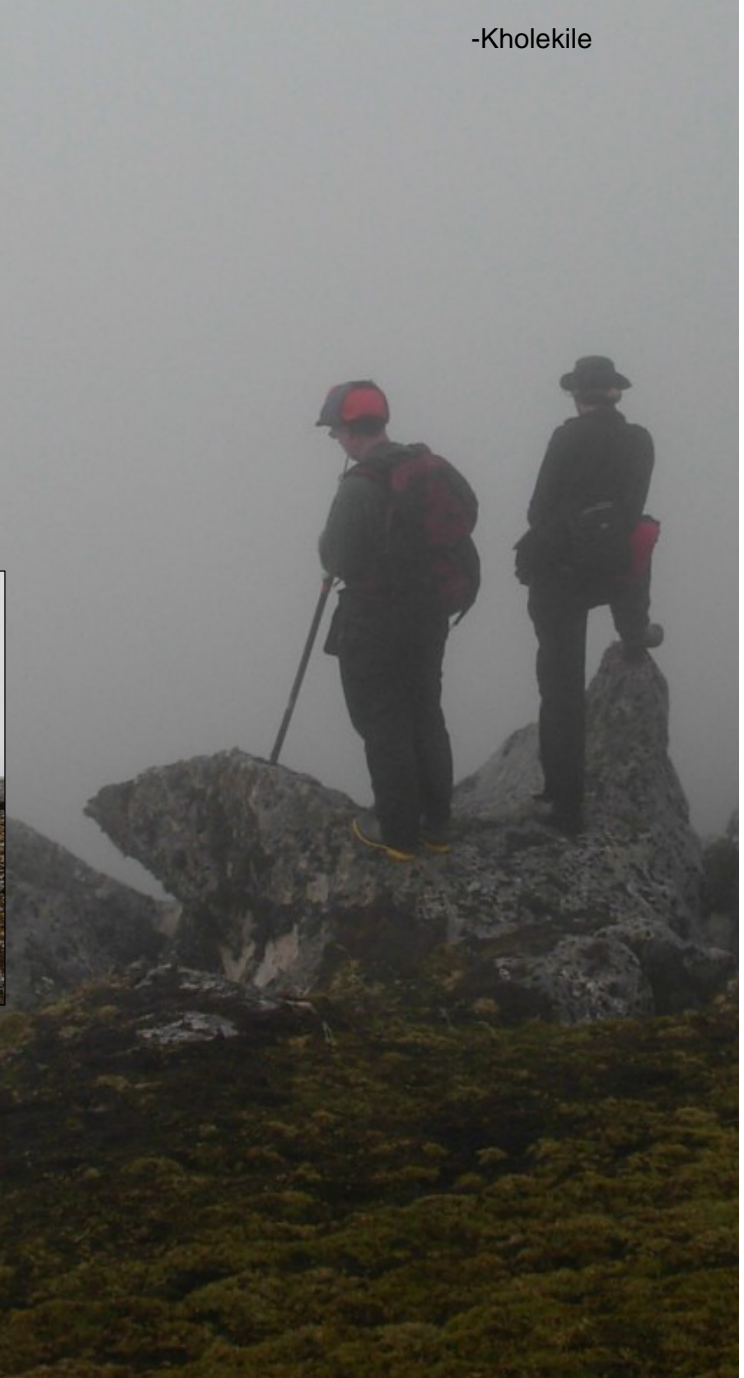


Richard holding a very patient Tristan Albatross while John measures it.



Me and Johan standing on Expedition peak.

-Kholekile



## Climate Stats: January 2008

### Pressure

Ave. Max	1013.8 hPa
Ave. Min	1008.3 hPa
Average	1010.9 hPa
Maximum	1022.9 hPa
Minimum	998.4 hPa

### Temperature

Ave. Max	19.3°C
Ave Min	13.0°C
Average	16.1°C
Maximum	25.2°C
Minimum	6.2°C

### Humidity

Average	79%
Maximum	95%
Minimum	27%

Max Wind Gust	32.8 m/s or 118.1 km/h
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### Rainfall

Total	276.8 mm
Highest in 24h	48.4 mm
Total days with rain	20 days
Total days >1mm	15 days
Total sunshine	174.0 hours

## Gough 53 team members

Charlene Oppel – Meteorologist

Johan Hoffman – Radio Technician

Kholekile Cita – Medic  
(Deputy Leader)

Mellany McPherson – Meteorologist(snr)

Nkoane Mathabatha - Meteorologist

Sarel Steyn – Diesel Technician  
(Team Leader)

## Sagina team members

John Cooper – Project Leader

Brian Schultz – Rope Access Tech

Richard Halsey – Rope Access Tech