

GOUGH BUNTING



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER

SANAP

2012

OCTOBER 2012

Dearest friends, family and sponsors

The containers were all unpacked, inventories were taken and slowly but surely everyone started to get the hang of their duties on the island – as instructed by their counterparts they took over from.

But before you can become part of Gough, you need to have a close interaction with the Gough creatures that have been keeping guard over those who dare to stay behind on the island...



“DO YOU WANT TO BE AN ISLANDER??”

Initiation is something that no-one can escape. It is an island tradition and it builds character – at least that is what everyone will tell you before they hose you down with icy cold water from the Atlantic Ocean. Never-the-less – we all survived it and are happy to call ourselves true islanders now.





From left to right: Christiaan, Jasper, Gerard, Oceanographer, Marilette, Godfrey, Snare and William

Next on the list of things to do before we can finally take over the island and put our stamp on it... Take over function...



G58 taking over the duties and responsibilities from G57

There was good food, good drinks, good music and a lot of dancing, laughter and fun that night. And the next day it was all back to business as usual...

G57 was finishing up packing their last container, the helicopter engine was running and it was about time for the old team to leave the island.

As we all stood at the helipad, saying our goodbyes, reality started to kick in and it was about to get real – we are here on Gough Island and this will be home for the next 13 months...



S.A. Agulhas II sailing away...

We waved the S.A. Agulhas II goodbye from the front door and stood there until she disappeared into the distance. There was quiet and everyone was standing there – taking in the silence and calmness after the “storm”...

Talk to you soon again!

Marilette & “Happy”

SANAP

FROM THE DIESEL MECHANIC

It is the beginning of our expedition and I am worried about my weight gain. I have gained 5kg from Cape Town to Gough and fortunately there is a Gym in the Island and I will do my best to avoid becoming **fat & short**.



Thulani was getting hands-on training on refrigeration by Paul with Ian & Mathew behind. (Above)



It was Camy's birthday and we were enjoying a smoked fish and lobsters with NPWD crew (Above).

I am enjoying myself to be part of G58 and hopefully the year ahead of us will be enjoyable with lots of fun.

“WE CARE” - PROJECT OF THE MONTH



For October, we've picked to support Breast Cancer Awareness.

Once again, I'm so proud to be part of such a great group of people. There was a notice on the board, a date was set and there was the option to either shave or spray your hair with pink spray. And the whole team took part!

First to sit in the barber chair was Gerard... He decided that he wants to look just like Thulani – and that earn him the nr.1 blade of the shaving machine. In Gerard's own words "our hair will grow back and at least we show the world that we care".

Second in the chair was Christiaan. He decided to follow Gerard's lead and also opt for the nr.1 blade...

Last but not the least, was the fearless leader of G58... If they guys can do it, so can a girl... There was a bit more mercy and the nr.1 blade was exchanged for a nr.4 blade (but trust me – it's still very short!)

After all the shaving was done, the can of pink hair spray came out and everyone got a spray, or two or just the whole head...



I can for sure say: G58 DO care!!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

10 October – Namhla's mother (Nokuzola)

11 October - Mara's niece (Zoe)

14 October – Thulani's daughter (Kwasa)

19 October – Marilette's friend (Karen)

27 October – Mara's nephew (Zac)



17 October

And a BIG welcome to Martin & Deb's 1st baby – Alex Sebastian Pugh



GET WELL SOON!

Kit Halliwell – we're all thinking of you and wishing you strength while you get better

A couple of first's for G58...

4 October – 1st day alone on the island

5 October – 1st mice caught in trap

6 October – 1st month after we've departed Cape Town

9 October – 1st fire alarm

10 October – 1st week alone on the island after SA Agulhas II returned to Cape Town

11 October – 1st batch of biltong ready for consumption

22 October – 1st whale witnessed in the bay

AWARD OF THE MONTH



Christiaan

A WORD FROM THE FIELD ASSISTANTS...

BIRDS, BOGS and SUNSHINE

Arriving in the spring time on Gough is very fitting. Within days of stepping ashore we were witness to hordes of penguins coming back to the beaches to lay their eggs. The Yellow-nosed Albatross finding and repairing their nests among the Phyllica bushes after the long winter away. Most spectacular of all, the dusk swarming of many thousands of Great Shearwaters returning from all corners of the Atlantic Ocean, to croon their weird song and find their partners underground.

SANAP



Photo: Rockhopper Penguins nest building at Tumbledown, Gough Island.

During the Takeover period we had a crash course in 'how-to-run-things-right', and luckily we were in safe and expert hands, having Karen and Sylvain from Gough 57 to give us the aid of their year or experience, Jan and Robert from South Africa to teach us ropes, as well as John Cooper, the God-Father of Gough, and Paul Visser, bane of all Snoek, to give us the big island picture.



Photo: Left to Right, Karen (Gough 57), John Cooper, Paul Visser, Chris, Sylvaine (Gough 57), Alex and in front Mara.

Easy living in Cape Town and then being pampered on the SA Agulhas II, had not prepared us physically for our work on Gough. We began to fear Thulani's warning that we should become,

'short and fat' on the rich and plentiful food available on the island, (lack of fruit and vegetables is of little concern to South Africans as long as there is meat and mealie pap to enjoy). Luckily for us, between the work schedule prepared for us by our chiefs at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (based in the UK) and Cape Town University and the hard terrain of Gough, the worry of getting 'short and fat' quickly fell away, though the pain of getting back into condition in the meantime is great.

Some species on the island start their breeding season very early to get a head start, particularly those at the top of the food chain. Skuas and Giant Petrels may not be everyone's favorites given their taste for eating other seabirds. But in their world it pays to hatch your chicks early, and it was a great pleasure to see the very first young ones appear in mid October. Then again, some chicks have been around on the island for a very long time, namely those of the Tristan Albatross of last season, only now shedding their down and stretching their wings up on the high and windy plateau and still months from fledging!



Photo: Freshly hatched Subantarctic Skua chicks.

Keeping on top of all that is going on in the natural world is a challenge, but it has been nobly aided by our team mates who have been keen to get out and explore the island with us. Below you can see the challenges that Christiaan faced on his first big expedition to Low Hump. Admittedly this is a damp and boggy place and as a South African Christiaan had little experience of peat bogs, but by the time we excavated him, the mire looked like the escaped Rondevlei hippo had been wallowing in it.



Photo: Christiaan finding out what high country is like.

So far the island had been kind and shown us her best face, much to the disgust of the weather-jockeys who pray for storms and other extreme weather phenomena (Jasper has been seen sighing over satellite images of cyclones in the Indian Ocean). We aren't fooled and always keep an eye on the treacherous skies during our outings, we know that Gough Island is both beautiful and dangerous!

Loads of love to all, and more news next month!

Chris and Mara

FROM THE WEATHER OFFICE...

Gough Island forms part of the Tristan da Cunha islands, which are located in the South Atlantic Ocean. It was probably discovered by the Portuguese sailor Goncalo Alvarez in 1505. After the island was discovered commercial interest in especially its wild life grew, with sealing activities initiated during the 19th century the predominant commercial interest. While these activities led to the accidental introduction of foreign wild life such as mice, the island ecosystem is still described as one of the least disrupted of its kind.

Though I have come to Gough as a Metkassie, I've been lucky enough to take responsibility for environmental issues on the island too, and so I'm taking a deeper interest in all things natural on the island. The wild life of the island is strikingly impressive, and during the initial part of our stay I especially took notice of the birdlife.

During a trip to the beach with the seal scientists, my first encounter with Gough beach life was of the feathery kind, and more specifically rockhopper penguins as shown below.



During a visit to low hump, a study area of the bird scientists Chris and Mara, I also encountered the Giant Petrel, as shown below.



A further feature of the birdlife on Gough is its tame nature, as illustrated below by a human and a breeding yellow nose albatros co-habiting a relatively small space.



The most striking feature of Gough birdlife for me has probably been their sounds. My first night on Gough did not feel like a visit to one of the remotest places on earth, which was not caused by the presence of ancient undiscovered tribes, but the multitude of birds making all kinds of noises around the base.

It is truly a privilege to visit Gough.

Christiaan Crous (Metkassie)



They always said that every great dream begins with a dreamer. The strength, patience are within me and the passion to reach for the stars and change the world. Believe me dreamers initiatives in reaching those dreams, never been an easy task...I now know clearly. When time to leave and chase the running train of dreams has come. All things stand still, this is my feeling on the 6th September 2012. The sun seems to set while rising, Miriam Makeba idling patiently. In my mind came the day of interview...one question from the panel "are you sure you want to go to this place" loud and confidentially I said, "yes that's what I've been looking for"

With the chase of dreams so sad was the moment, having dinner with Mom, Aunt, holding tears the whole morning, looking and longing for that cause to flood-off my eyes, but none showed.

First day on Board.....Immediately after I cried, voice came in my mind saying "I'm I really going", I looked the V&A Waterfront as we slowly moving away, I finally knew that I am really leaving home. While lying down at the Helipad, I rang my Almighty God for little chat ... "I lay all my trust in you, I'm not afraid, for I know that it's your perfect grace that has brought me to this ship". Hours went on someone got seasick, days pass-by, strong winds of Atlantic, blew in anger. The unpleasant moment to everyone, if you really want to see how people fears death and how instantly can believe In God....take them for sailing and watch when that moment comes. An off trip to Tristan Da Chunha was a fine relief for everyone from the

frightening motion of the ship. Suddenly we reached our new home, first sight from the ship window, I shed a tear that I am still trying to find its significance.

Happily in few days, we felt the cold Gough water directly on our bodies, I have long believed that only pigs enjoy whirling in mud but my voyage to Gough proved me wrong, as I was happily crawling under those diesel tanks....



I never had been in a place like this where nature seem to be therapy of all body suffering. The topography and climate are promising to keep me well and being a Metkassie I vow to take care of them as well.

Coming to this Island will make me face my greatest fear (birds), which are everywhere.

That which doesn't kill me makes me stronger...!

Namhla Mkiva

Metkassie

SANAP

Wow. One month has already passed and it still feels like we're settling in. I know I still have to unpack half the stuff in my trunk. It feels easier just to leave and forget stuff in your store room than to bother moving everything around. And that's one thing I enjoy immensely, having my own store room.

Currently, my room is the one closest to the mountain. An area of slight isolation from the rest of the base, but also close enough to the bar. I like to think to myself that I may just have picked the best damn room on this entire base! There's even an outside door next to my room, I'll have absolutely no problem should the base suddenly burn down. I can't say the same for anyone who'll choose to live near the kitchen. Especially when Thulani is busy "boiling" eggs on the stove. I fear the eggs will have their revenge on us yet.

I still have to get used to cooking for the entire team. Back in Pretoria, I only fed one person. And that person was incredibly patient, understanding and naturally super awesome. It was no problem dealing out tuna with Provitas, pasta and sauce or Tupperware-in-the-back-of-fridge surprise. Having to put more than 3 ingredients together makes things too heavy man.

The team has been getting out more this month. Chris and Mara are almost always out and the Metkassies grab an outing whenever we deem the weather to be good. While accompanying the Birders the other day, I got a good look at the pristine river that feeds our base. I also got a good look at some less pristine carcasses floating in it. I've always wondered how our water got its dead Prion tang.



JJ Stone



CLIMATE STATS

Ave. Max Pressure	1019.6 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	1012.4 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1015.9 hPa
Max Pressure	1030.9 hPa
Min Pressure	997.8 hPa
Ave. Max Temp	14.3 °C
Ave. Min Temp	8.4 °C
Ave. Temp	11.4 °C
Max Temp	18.6 °C
Min Temp	3.7 °C
Ave Humidity	79%
Max Humidity	96%
Min Humidity	48%
Max Wind Gust	32.8 m/s or 118.08 km/h
Total Rainfall	231.2 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	48.4 mm
Total days with rain	22 days
Total days >1mm	13 days
Total Sunshine	38.2 hours



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