

# ICE TIMES – SANAE 38

The Monthly Publication from Vesleskarvet, Antarctica - July 1999

## Sun

Life in Antarctica is dominated by the sun. The bulk of our research is on the interaction of the sun and the earth's atmosphere. Two and a half months ago the sun went away. Last month we celebrated the returning of the sun. This month the sun came back.

The actual date of the return of the sun will always be controversial. The extremely dense Antarctic air and the perpetual temperature inversion causes much refraction, leading to many mirages. Objects far away seem much nearer than they are, and that includes the sun.



First post-winter Sunrise (25 July 1999)

The first time the sun was actually seen was on the 25th of July, when cloud conditions allowed us to see half the disc of the sun clearly visible above the northern horizon. In fixing the official date we trusted our astronomical software, which indicated the 28th of July.

Readers should not imagine an Antarctic winter sunrise as a ball of fire crossing the eastern horizon and climbing into the sky. Rather, look north an hour or two after first light and see a bright spot on the horizon moving from right to left, gradually brightening and growing into a disk. After clearing the horizon its leftward drift

slants slightly, and slowly the visible portion of the disc becomes smaller and soon disappears, leaving behind a twilight glow that lasts for two more hours.

Although we are glad to see the return of the sun, we will miss the indigo skies of late winter, and the moon kissing Lorentzenpiggen to the south at noon.

Weather on the 27th of July allowed us to mount an excursion to complete the first-ever winter circumnavigation of Vesleskarvet. It was a counterclockwise walk, and included the first bumslide of the season: not as exciting as it can be, because the ice is too cold to be really slippery. It was only just a winter night event: there was clearly sunlight shining on the nearby mountaintops.

The sunrise was celebrated in style and the themes for this celebration was, of course, sun, colours, brightness and growth. After a hearty meal of chicken and turkey, we retired to the bar to smoke the ceremonial and traditional pipe of peace and brotherhood.



SANAE 38 Cheering the return of the sun.

At the conclusion of festivities, Niel, Duncan and André departed on the first-ever night circumnavigation of Vesleskarvet. We set out

on the clockwise walk by the light of a spectacular aurora competing with the bright full moon. The fine weather that prompted this excursion brought an unexpected bonus. The magical moment of zero wind made the night quiet. While pausing in the bottom of the windscoop we could clearly hear the movement of the small glacier that runs from the gully. This was not a grinding or squeaking sound, but a spaced-out series of cracks, sometimes like the shaking of a dishcloth, sometimes as loud as the crack of a bullwhip.

### **Moon**

The return of the sun coincided with a lunar eclipse. The moon did disappear, but behind cloud, and not in the shadow of earth.

### **Birthdays**

In July nobody was born at Vesleskarvet, so we didn't celebrate a birthday.

### **Darts**

*SANAE thrash Neumayer.* In the second SANAE/Neumayer darts game this winter, SANAE emerged the victors. SANAE took the lessons they had learnt in their first defeat to heart. They had their team ready, they knew what the difference between a dart and an arrow is, and nothing could stop them. Neumayer played their usual professional game, but it just was not enough. Total score 1324 to 1023.

#### **Southern Ice Services.**

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### **The glass**

A call went out for wineglasses to serve in the Antarctic. Two dozen were chosen, crated, and shipped. It was a hazardous journey, and a full fourteen did not survive. Their active service started at SANAE, and as the campaign continued their numbers dwindled despite the exercise of all due care, and during July only a single survivor was left.

The team then took mercy on him, and to protect his integrity a decree was issued and

agreed upon, that whosoever would break that glass would be liable to a penalty. The penalty was set to be 3 (three) days of cooking duty. Under the protection of this decree and the care of the day's cook, the Last Glass soldiered forth.

Not more that a week had passed when the Illustrious Leader (to relieve the building tension - Ed.) reacted so vigorously to an offer of wine that the poor glass was set on its foot too soundly, the stem gave way and the bowl shattered. The end of the Last Glass had come to pass. We now drink our wine from tumblers (or converted jam tins).

The Illustrious Leader took his punishment in good grace and cooked for three days, giving the rest of the team a brief respite from the grinding 10-day duty cycle. We do not know why his wife entrusted him with as fragile a thing as a mug with a picture of a cat on it.



**Tomb of the Last Wineglass**

### **Ground-breaking Research**

A certain scientist at SANAE, inspired by the comment of a certain mechanic, has calculated that there are 3.6 million bubbles in a glass of champagne.

### **Mechanical Engineer in Hot Water**

What can be worse than a cold shower in Antarctica? For far too many (about 5) days in the last month we had **no** (zip, zero, azikilo, niks) hot water. During repairs to the water system the hot water system swallowed some air, and presto! No hot water. Everybody turned into an expert plumber of the armchair variety, and advised and suggested, but in the end it was the mechanical team that turned the valves and engaged the gears and locked the switches, got the baby to burp, and gave us our hot water back.

## Hoe?

Antarctic mystery no. 555321:

"Hoe het die sout in die koeksisterstroop gekom?"

## Trouble Brewing

The Vesles apple crop this year has been so abundant that we could not possibly eat all of it. Fortunately Ryan and Karel are not scared to experiment, and after an evening of chopping and mincing produced a drum of fizzy apple juice. André is still drinking milk to get rid of the heartburn it caused.

## Insect Trouble

For the first time since the occupation of SANAE IV we have observed the dreaded ice ants busy around our base. In a few nooks and crannies we have seen the ice they carry from their nests and drop outside the entrances. Fortunately SANAE IV is founded on rock, so their nesting will not undermine the base. Also, because the base is too hot for them, they will not get into our food.



Ice ant excavation rubble.

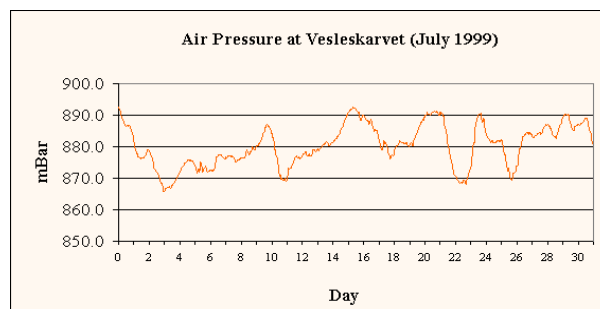
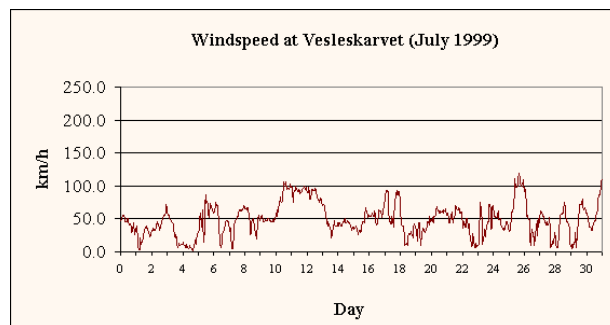
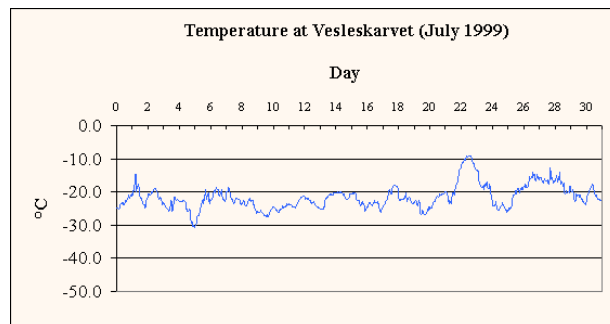
## Stay tuned

Next month in ICE TIMES:

oppiNUNATAK Rock Festival: New artists! New songs! New Instruments! For all the details read ICE TIMES next month!

## Weather

	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Temperature/ °C	-31.3	-21.5	-8.0
Wind speed/ km/h	0	49.5	128.6
Wind Direction/ °	0.05	123.7	358.9
Air Pressure/ mBar	865.6	880.4	892.8



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(Any problems? Tuffies!!)

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