

38 Ice Times

Vesleskarvet, Dronning Maud Land, Antarctica *March 1999*

ALL MEMBERS STILL ALIVE!

AMAZINGLY, we have all managed to survive the first real month of our now total isolation – and with flying colours! Yes, the month has come and gone with great haste. This, however, cannot be said for activities inside the base...

General routines now differ greatly from their structured counterparts of a month ago. The only steady activities have been the evening dinner, videos afterwards and going outside if the weather is good.

Some members have proved to be much more than just alive and have shown marked horizontal increases in the mid-body. Many excuses are presented, the most plausible being the presence of the Temptation Table.

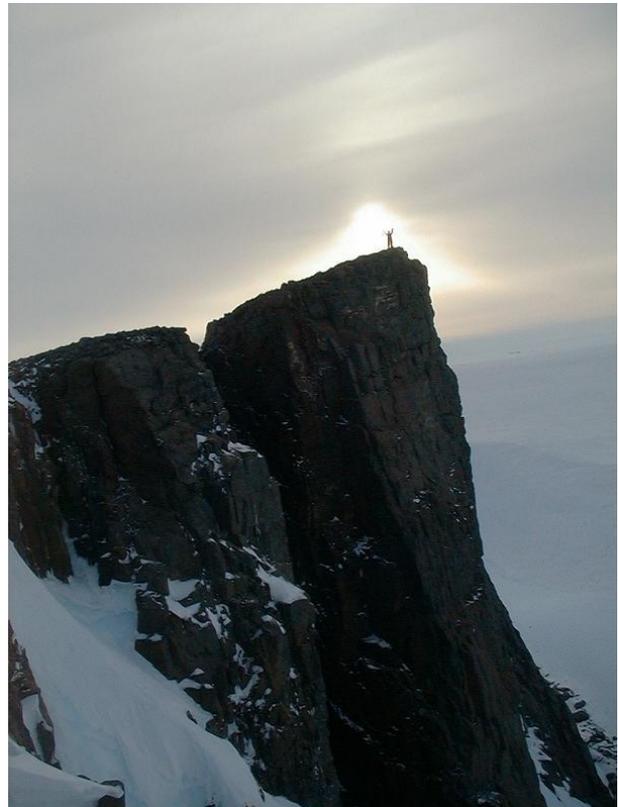
STRANGE LIGHTS OVER BORGA

On the late afternoon of 2 March 99 a strange light spectacle was witnessed in a southern direction from the base. Witnesses include respected scientists and other members of the S38 team.

According to the members, a very bright spot of light moved initially from east to west, stopping abruptly on two occasions. After moving still further and slightly higher the light "...seemed to split into two." Shortly afterwards the lights seemed to move southward and quickly grew smaller until they vanished over the horizon.

No explanation can be offered by any of the three scientists who witnessed the incident. Leading research expert in the area, Conrad Mashlase, rejected the possible cause being an Aurora-type feature saying that this 'light' was "...both focussed and very bright. Above this it was moving very rapidly. There was way too much ambient light around anyway to witness any Auroral occurrence."

Other witnesses appeared notably stunned afterwards. To date there has been no feasible explanation.



Sonsondergang op Kleinbergie (foto: Duncan Cromarty)

'n Paar verkennings toere was onderneem op die goeie weer dae in Maart na areas omligend Vesleskarvet. Hierdie sluit in Kleinkoppie, die 'Windscoop' en ook Kleinbergie (wat beslis nie so klein is nie).

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SANAE TOP 5 VIDEOS

1. – Mary Poppins
 2. – The Thing
 3. – Godfather
 4. – Basic Instinct
 5. – Buffy The Vampire Slayer
- SUN, MOON AND EQUINOX...**

March 99 was known for its beautiful sunrises and sunsets. This provided the early rises with some spectacular photographic opportunities. Residents sleeping on the eastern side of the building were often woken up with a stunning light show on the horizon outside their windows.

Spectacular moonrises were also witnessed with full moon on 02/03 and the blue moon on 31/03.

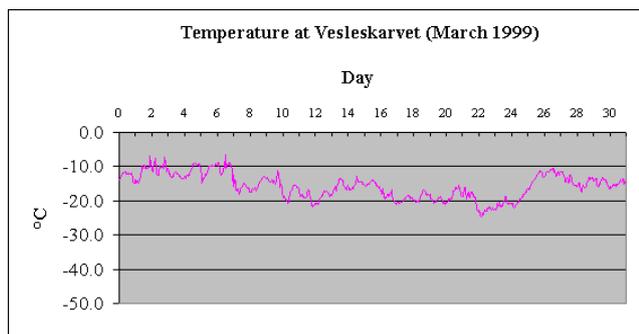
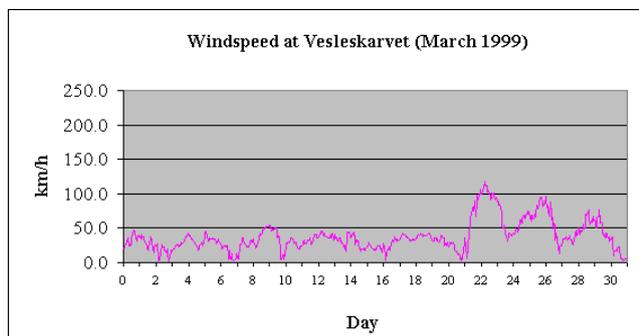
March 21 saw us pass through the Vernal Equinox, during which the sun moves over the equator from south to north. This signifies equal day and night length and from now on our daylight will only diminish until the sun no longer rises. According to team leader, Duncan Cromarty, the sun rises four fingers more toward the north every morning. (???)

Vesleskarvet Weather – 03/99

Our first katabatic windstorm was experienced this month. Wind was from the south and speeds of up to 142 km/h were recorded. Shortly after this, a snowstorm followed from the NE, raging on for two days with visibility of 3–4 m.

Max Temperature:	-5.4°C
Average Temperature:	-15.7°C
Min Temperature:	-24.9°C
Min Windchill Temperature:	-54°C
Max Windspeed:	129.6 km/h
Average Windspeed:	38.4 km/h

Note: Above values are hourly averages



Cooking Corner

THE standard of the evening meal has been especially high lately. Three course meals have not been uncommon and the selection of wines has been very high. Dishes included: Bobotie, Marinated Ribs, various Stews, Chicken Breast de General and many more. Bread and bun baking has also not lagged behind with new members trying for the coveted trophy of “*Chef le Vesles*”.

CROCODILE ON THE LOOSE!

Sniffings of the notorious CROC (legend of the Gobbos) has been experienced in various places in the base. Intelligence sources report that the feared creature is using the ducting throughout the building to move around undetected. Witnesses generally report the animal giving them a distinctive blow to the nose whereupon they hastily retreat to fresher surroundings.

Where is SANAE IV???

71° 40,42'S
02° 50,45'W

From the Past....

“In the old days polar personnel were selected firstly with the appointment of competent and charismatic expedition leaders. The leaders were then free to use their own preference for the type of person who would be ‘homogeneous and make living at close quarters tolerable’. Amundsen sought highly experienced dog handlers and skiers who were nimble and mobile, ‘with a flamboyant fatalism to which risk appeals’. Mawson, himself an academic geologist, selected graduates ‘with the dash and recuperative power of youth’.

By A.J.W. Taylor from *ANTARCTICA the Ross Sea region*

E base trips

Two trips were undertaken to E-Base near the coast to collect the last of our essential supplies for the year and to take some of the remaining construction items and domestic rubbish back to the bukta where it will be collected at the end of the year for returning to South Africa.

The trips were both short as E-base had already been shut down for the winter. On arrival at there it was found that all items left on the tables had frozen up solid, including all tinned and bottled items and even the washing up detergent (only **one** exception - a bottle of whiskey).

The bukta was cleared up, sledges parked in rows and the whole depot mapped out. That days work was rewarded with a phenomenal sunset from what is left of the ice-shelf ramp. While standing in the ramp, just to remind us about who is in charge down here, a huge piece of the ice-shelf broke loose. This was accompanied with much grinding and groaning before dropping into the sea 30 meters below. It was fairly close to where we were standing, much too close for comfort.

On the way back to e-base from the bukta the moon rose through a thin layer of clouds in a most spectacular display that will not easily be forgotten.

SANAE III

While at E-base we also made a quick recce of the old SANAE III base. This base was occupied from 1980 to 1993 and although constructed on the surface of the snow is now at a depth of about 30 meters. For those that lived there during its 12 years of useful life it would be almost unrecognizable. The living areas and all the work areas are severely crushed and buckled with the only parts still in fair shape being the kitchen/lounge complex, the power shack and parts of the long passage



The kitchen of SANAE III today
(photo: Duncan Cromarty)

Another phenomenon that we could count on seeing from E-base was the early morning mirages of the icebergs and even the sea itself. As the temperatures increased (??) the mirages would fade away and the surroundings would appear to be



completely different a hour or so later.

Sunset from the ramp at the bukta
(photo: Duncan Cromarty)

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Greetings from the deep south

SANAE 38

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