

38 Ice Times

Vesleskarvet, Dronning Maud Land, Antarctica

September 1999

SPRING?

What spring?

The only sign of spring being in the air was at supper when our illustrious leader, Duncan surprised us all at dinner by having made a lovely bouquet of flowers out of cardboard and wire. These were then sprayed with all the different aerosol colours that we have in the base and it looked very pretty. Instead of the fresh smell of the real thing though a heavy smell of thinners hung in the air.

The so-called spring day, September 1st was celebrated in the normal rowdy fashion in the games room after supper. Everyone was having fun playing pool, table tennis, darts and arcade soccer. Of course a lot of elbow lifting took place and stocks have dwindled to very sad levels, but hidden surprises constantly appear.



Fresh flowers from the garden

The continuous storm consisting of strong winds and zero visibility and cold temperatures lashed the base for the last three weeks. The atmospheric pressure dropped so low that you had to lie down on your stomach to see it. Any lower and it would have been right off the paper on the recording barometer!

At last there was a break in the weather. The wind dropped low enough for us to be allowed to go

outside but the visibility was not more than a few hundred meters so the obvious damage of the storm was not yet noticeable. On an inspection stroll outside though, it was seen that the wind was a serious force to be reckoned with. Serious damage to the radar antennae has left six out of sixteen antennae unserviceable; their top booms having been bent. The goniometer mast had snapped in half, the radio mast on the roof of the building was lying horizontal, its bracket having snapped off. The other antenna on the radio mast (a tower on the western side of the building) was also standing at a 45-degree angle, its base also buckled from the continuous force of the wind on it.



A wind damaged radar antenna.

The riometers also had a lot of antenna elements missing, which were found on our walk about. They were all pegged into the ice and it looked as if there had been an attack by Impi warriors. A strange phenomenon was discovered, in that the repairing of the riometers is related to bad weather. Everytime that Neil repairs them you can be sure that bad weather is to follow. On the helideck heavy metal plates had been lifted and lay scattered all over the deck. Sleds that weigh well over a hundred kg had shifted. The wind responsible for all these doings had gusted to well over 200km/h, a force to be recond with indeed.

The spring has sprung the grass has ris
I wonder where the boidies is
They say the boid is on the wing
But that's absoid
The wing is on the boid

At last it seems the spring may have arrived but there is no sign of any birds yet.

Ski-ing?

One of the team members, Ryan was so pleased that the weather had cleared that he decided to go skiing. Unfortunately though, with the cold temperatures the surface becomes so hard that it is almost impossible to ski properly and he returned not too impressed with a slightly dented ego (or is that butt!).

Sastrugi Sundowner!

It was a totally calm evening and it was decided to have a sundowner on the huge sastrugi on the lee side of the building. A small table was placed in the snow and drinks (in the form of heart-warming sherry and port) and snacks were served. The cold night air had a serious nip to it and unprotected ears and hands soon became numb. After a bit of fooling around everyone fled inside for a hot dinner.

Longer Days!

There has been a marked difference in the length of daylight. It gets light at about 04h30hrs and the sun only sets at about 21h00hrs. From now on the sun shines about 15min longer every day until Nov.11 after which we have 24 hour sunshine till early February. The only problem that a lot of team members have with this is that it is becoming more and more difficult to get in your compulsory eighteen hours of sleep per day!

Gone fishing?

Yes believe it or not, two team members Fanus (Kaalpoot) and Andre (Scribe) decided to spend a Saturday afternoon after their skivvies were completed, fishing in a pond at Kleinbergies Windscoop. They each caught a fair sized Antarctic cardboard fish as well as a crevasse scare! Despite

the brisk wind that came up, both members had a good time.



Fishing at the popular Kleinberg spot (note the fish).

Vesleskarvet circumnavigation record attempt!

The weather was perfect, warm (-13°C) and no wind. One team member thought it was a perfect opportunity to try and beat an unofficial record, which stood at 45 min!

However the attempt was unsuccessful as he only managed a time of 1hour 6min although that was with boots zootsuit and rucksack. He also ran around anticlockwise which meant he had to climb up the wall of the windscoop.

At another attempt the same team member ran clockwise and managed a time of 57 min! Getting there but still a long way to go.

Auroras

Some excellent Auroras were observed during this month and we would like to thank Conrad in finally getting the order right.

New ski slope found

Due to the strong winds that we have been blowing, the Vesles Karvet windscoop is no longer of any use for sliding down due to the steepness of the slope and the irregularity of the surface, however certain team members found a beautiful slope at Kleinkoppie with a surface as smooth as a babies bottom. This particular slope has given many speed freaks a good adrenaline rush, as well as some bruised ribs.



The new perfect snow slide

Radar boom and braai

Due to the damage to the Radar antenna, a boom had to be removed and brought into the hanger so that measurements could be taken and sent to South Africa to have new ones made. We were treated by getting a good day (little wind and temperatures above -20°C) and seized the opportunity to take down a boom.

It was also a good chance while the crane was in operation to lift the skidoos onto the ice, as they overwintered in the base.

The successful day was celebrated by having a delightful braai on the heli deck. The brave team members even removed their shirts to absorb the sun's rays on very white bodies!

Birthdays!

Three team members, Duncan Niel and Mike were born in this month. Duncan received a birthday cake in the form of a camera and guess what, just like all the other camera's in his possession he broke it!

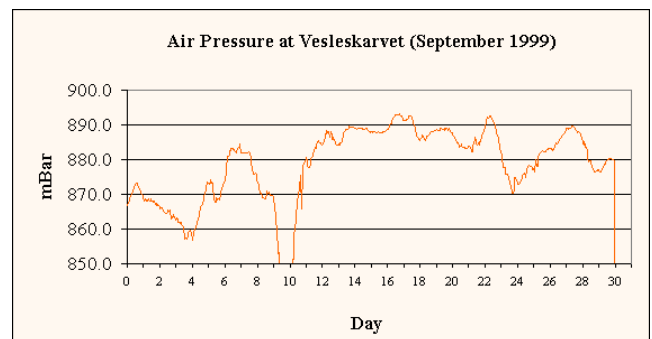
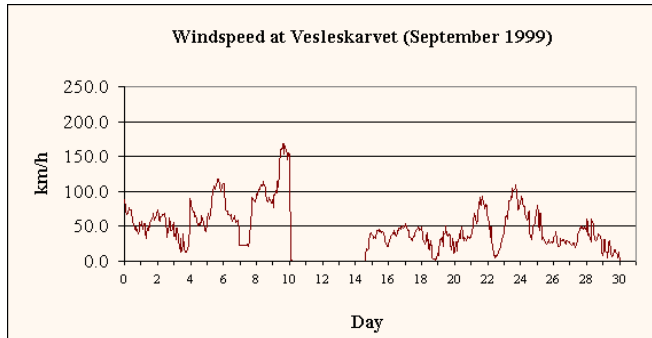
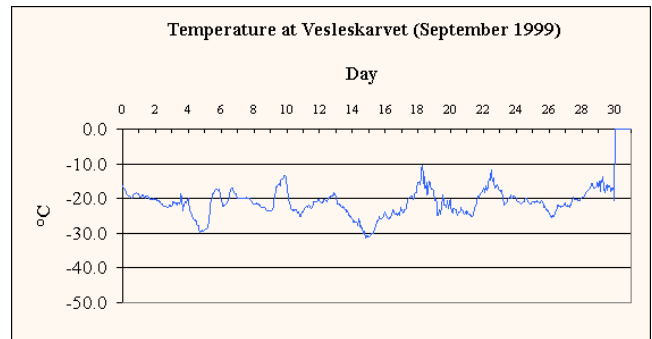
Quote of the month!

Niel: As dit nie met geweld werk nie gebruik jy nie genoeg nie, and he is not even the mechanic!

Weather

It was bad, real bad.

	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Temperature/C	-31.47	-21.29	-10.09
Wind Speed/ km/h	0	43.99	211.32
Wind Direction/	2.08	111.22	359.27
Air Pressure/ hPa	751.14	878.77	893.31



Done by Andre: edited by Duncan: digital photos by Agfa

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