

SANAE53

South African National Antarctic Expedition

Newsletter #6



Bye-Bye Sun!!

Praise be to Aladeen!

ESKOM SANAE Style

Camping

Man's Best Friend

Moroccan Evening

'Much to do about nothing'

Comrades

Praise be to Aladeen!

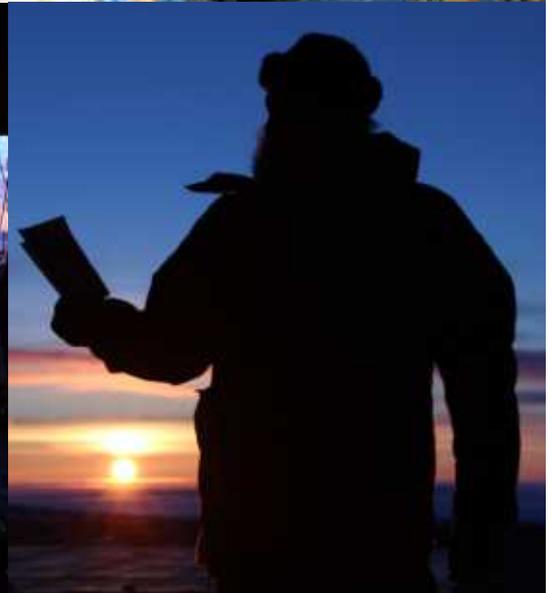
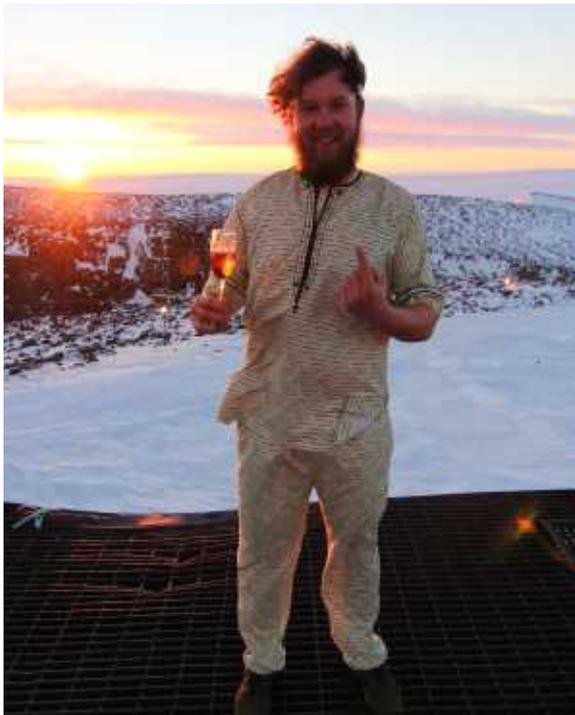
Patrick

After a glorious summer, we were heading into a dark winter, which would be without sunshine for 2 months. 16th May was supposed to be the last day that the sun would peek above the horizon, until mid-July. Of course, this was reason for celebration (or for some, commiseration). 16th May was declared an unofficial SANAE public holiday and henceforth named Aladeen Day.

Around noon, when the sun rose in the North, the whole team gathered in the hangar to say goodbye. Fortunately it was a clear day without too much wind, so with the hangar door wide open, the sun's warm rays shone right in.

There was a smorgasbord of snacks thanks to Sonja's skills in the kitchen. The feast included pitas, humus, cheese sticks, blue cheese crackers, garlic bread and ever-popular Aladeen Balls. Sinister shooters and exotic cocktails, inspired by the sun, kept the team well lubricated as the festivities proceeded. Team members took turns reciting poems, sonnets and odes to the sun. We were even treated to a German duet by Hendrik and Cornelia. The avid photographers amongst us snapped photo after photo to try and capture the beautiful sunset with which we were spoilt.

And thus we said farewell to the sun, as it slowly set again in the North.



ESKOM SANAE Style

Charles

As South Africa is going through the usual problems of cable theft, power cuts and load shedding, we here at SANAE IV base have our own ESKOM. Our power stations provide us with enough electricity to run a city or two, but we keep it here to ourself in case of emergency (load shedding). We have three power stations with a standby power station, the three power stations come in the form of three ADE generators of 200kva and our standby is a Scania generator, also 200kva. Load shedding (planned load shedding) only happens once a year to test the Scania and how quickly our technicians can get the back-up power



station running. Even during routine maintenance we do not have load shedding or power disruptions, as our power stations work in-sync with each other to provide electricity 24/7/365. Even in the event of a breakdown, our technicians are here in a flash and sort out problems quick. So, SA enjoy your load shedding (Ooh and it's winter too), we will be thinking of you as we switch on our lights and take a warm shower, not stumbling in the dark with a torch or candle and taking a cold shower because of load shedding or cable theft.



Unequaled Extremes : Antarctica

Raymond

Antarctica is a planet on its own and has no equals. It's recorded that this is the coldest, driest and windiest place on earth. This continent is covered by an immense ice sheet, over 95% of the continent is covered by layers of ice, immense bulks sometimes almost 4.8 kilometers thick. An estimated 70% of the planet's fresh water is locked up in those frozen crystals. Despite the water, Antarctica is technically a desert as less than 50 mm of precipitation fall a year, about the same as in Africa's Sahara. But while most deserts are hot, Antarctica is anything but. The lowest temperature ever recorded on this planet was -90°C and wind speeds up to 320 km/h. In some places, the wind scours every crystal of snow and grain from the surface sculpting rocks and ice into weird shapes and haunting towers. Not surprisingly,



the combination of wind and cold makes Antarctica one of the most inhospitable places on earth. The creatures that live in this area, from



penguins to seals to seabirds, have figured out remarkable ways to survive. Even people have found methods to establish small communities and a base

where they can stay warm enough to conduct scientific studies even in the dead of polar winter. But even these high-tech bases are at whim of the weather which cuts them off from the rest of the world for months at a time. There are quite a few things that Antarctica does offer and to me it has one of the most beautiful sunsets on the horizon.



West Dromland's Strongest Team

Cornelia

Having sent out the challenge to tests endurance to the other bases before, this time the Norwegians from Troll Station came back with a challenge of their own – which amongst the denizens of Antarctica have the strongest team?

Never the type to say no to a chance at victory we started training in earnest, with our resident strongman Christiaan as our coach. The rules were straight forward; teams of three compete to lift the most at bench pressing, but with tables to adjust for body weight to make it fair on all.

After an afternoon of much encouragement, new personal bests, and bravado we eagerly awaited to hear the results from Troll...

Crushing our hope of everlasting fame, we learned that one of Troll's teams had a combined score of 181.45, whereas our best team only managed a score of 178.00. By no means an embarrassing victory, and we take comfort in the knowledge that our strongest man Christiaan (with a score of 81.68 or 134.1 kg) bested their best man KG (with a score of 74.59).



We eagerly await the next challenge to prove our mettle.



Camping

Sonja



While I'm heading back to the base after shovelling snow in -31°C and 30 knots of wind, I know why the last camping trip before the winter was the last. For the last while, no-one has headed out without wearing our full cold-weather gear, as the temperatures have plummeted. The days are basically gone, with the last sunrise and -set about a month ago. During summer I would occasionally see someone with shorts or only overalls outside - at comfortable -10°C , and it would be sunny for 24 hours a day. But, as they say, "those days are over".

Any camping trip needs proper preparation, and even more so if your life depends on being protected from the cold. The preparation for our trips would take a good full two days. Our destinations? Groenehogna and Schumachersfjellet. Although these names suggest Norway, and the climate resembles Norway in deepest winter, my destinations are on the other side of the world: Antarctica.



As any memorable camping trip starts with a road trip, so did our "weekends away". Our vehicle was a 30-ton "Challenger" Caterpillar, towing a 5-ton sled with tents, two snow mobiles and a 3000l diesel tank. The other vehicle had towed our sleeping quarters, the "caboose": an insulated container with six bunk beds, a table with benches, a stove and a plastic-bag toilet - and most importantly a diesel-powered generator.

Groenehogna, or lovingly called Groenies, was the destination at the beginning of March and outside the temperature a friendly -15°C . On arrival - after making sure that we were not too close to the ablution blocks - ha ha - we gladly drank a cup of coffee to warm our hands. As Murphy predicted, as we went outside to pitch the "Scott's Pyramid" tents, the wind picked up to 20 knots and it took all of us five to get the tents up - which then looked accordingly crooked. But the night can still be wonderfully warm, thanks to the incredible, but huge, down-filled mummy sleeping bags. On a windless night, I slept on the roof of the caboose and enjoyed the sparkling night sky, thanks to the



toasty warmth of said sleeping bag.



No camping trip is complete without a braai; a rule which also applies to Antarctica. Those who enjoy a beer at the fire, should however note that it does tend to freeze if not either drunk or put next to the coals.

Part of an Antarctic camping trip is the exploration of the area. Due to the danger of crevasses in unknown areas, it is advised to be "roped-up" when exploring. This means wearing a climbing harness, enough carabiners, slings, prussek loops, mechanical ascenders, ice screws and pulleys to hoist yourself or someone else out of a crevasse in case of falling into one.

Then a rope is used to tie two people together, each gets an ice axe and off you go. Should the terrain be very icy, crampons are also advisable.

The area around a nunatak - a mountain whose tip protrudes from the kilometer thick ice - usually contains a wind scoop. This is a "half-pipe" hollowed by the relentless wind - yes, the windiest continent on earth is Antarctica, not Cape Town. Often there are also frozen "ponds" between the stones on a level area: beware - very slippery.



Unlike temperate climate camping, everything freezes. Your tinned peas, the apples and bread, your water bottle and beer; even the dishwashing liquid is a green block of ice. Food gets stored in a cooler box to prevent it from getting too cold. Forget about showers - that is for what wet wipes were invented.

If your gear fails, the trip can become complicated. Groenehogna was marked by a non-functional heater - essential in this cold. Luckily we had brought another portable heater along, which became the most precious commodity. Schumachersfjellet was complicated by an electrical fault on the generator and therefore no power. The caboose was heated and lighted with gas, which turned out to be not such a good idea after everyone woke up with a head ache and feeling weak. I cut the trip short to prevent more carbon monoxide accumulation, fearing it could end badly.

These camping trips seem to be in a different world, where the camper contends with different



challenges - freezing hands and feet, frozen food and water, going for a pee in - 20°C, thinking your butt will freeze off. These trips make our base, SANAE IV station, seem like a luxury hotel and a warm shower like the best invention since chemical hand warmers. Will I do it again? Yes, come summer in October, and a group of four or five of us will once again wave good bye to the rest of the team, to go camping for a few days at an unexplored nunatak.

Mans Best Friend

Leonard

It is a great pity that man's best friend was banned from being with man at the place he is needed the most. Although it was done with great consideration and good intend to nature. Humans are the ones that suffer the most due to its implementation.

Before I go any further I just want to say that I am only trying to convey my love for dogs in this article and it is not my intension to anger any conservation movement or individuals

For 50 years from 1944 until 1994 the Husky was the main form of Antarctic transport pulling sleds which was mostly used to transport cargo. A good team of 9 dogs could travel 30 miles a day pulling heavy loads. These dogs mostly came from Greenland and other places in the Arctic and was used due to a lack of reliable mechanized ice transportation in that era.

Mechanical transportation came to Antarctic much later than the rest of the world due to cargo shipping to this area. Even after transportation was mechanised dogs were still being retained as backup for transport and recreational purposes and many generations of Antarctic personnel on scientific bases regarded their experiences in Antarctic as being greatly enhanced by the presence of the dogs and the possibility of sledging trips with them and I am also sure that they felt a lot safer with the knowledge that there was always a backup transport system in case of mechanical failure.

I did some research on the internet to find out why Dogs was removed from the continent and here are some of the most popular answers:

- Sled dogs are an important part of the lore of Antarctica: in 1911 they hauled the supplies for Norwegian explorers led by Roald Amudsen, who were the first people to reach the South Pole. But dogs have not been used in Antarctica since 1993 because the Antarctic Treaty bans them. This action was taken because of evidence that the canine disease Distemper was spreading to Antarctica's seals.
- The Madrid Protocol prohibits the introduction of non-indigenous animals to Antarctica. The idea being to protect the native animals. While sled dogs are a minor threat to native animals, they had to go.
- "Yellow Snow Syndrome"

And some less popular answers of course:

- They might get eaten by polar bears.

DUH...Just goes to show how little some people know about Antarctica..



Whether these answers are true or not is not for me to say but I can only speak for myself when I say that having a dog around would surely have made a great difference in my daily live and I am sure it could have cured many psychological ailments that occasionally arise in many stressful situations in Antarctic Overwintering bases.

I could not determine the exact date that the last dogs teams were extracted from Sanae but that they were used by field teams is evident in a newsletter I found on the internet written by the New Zealand Antarctic Society where in September 1965 there is an article about the team at Sanae and their interaction with Huskies as well as pups that was born at the base. Well worth reading. The Huskies were kept outside during winter and survived. Wow. And there was a budgie called Piet that was there for 4 years. According to Team photos at Sanae it also seems that there was quite a lot of dog team activity between 1974 and 1976 where teams can be seen posing with their dogs. This could however be very misleading and I would really like to see some portraits of dog teams on Sanae walls. So if any ex Sanae members want to be nice to us. Please send us such portraits of dog teams. After all the dogs were also



team members which should be forever remembered.

team members which should be forever remembered.

In the meantime I heard some rumours that some dogs belonging to team members were tired of waiting for their owners to get back and decided to have some party fun of their own ..

With Devastating subsequence's:

While some of the more lucky ones were able to be taken along on outings with friends to go do what dogs really like to do.



Vanaand gaan ons Groot gaan



And that does definitely not include being kept in a flat or small backyard... So I long for the day that I will once again be able to enjoy the great African weather with my dogs running along in the sunshine.



Moroccan Evening

Francois

Heading towards the end of May with winter providing its coldest temperatures, we held a Moroccan evening to take our minds to the warmth of the Saharan desert. The evening started casually with some snacks and drinks. It was a dress-up occasion which added some talking point. New talking points in a Big Brother scenario after 6 months are great after most general topics have been exhausted. The entertainment started with a multiple choice quiz on general knowledge about Morocco. Wrong answers were rewarded with drinks poured in small containers.



The scene was nicely set with candlelight and Moroccan belly dancing music in the background. The dinner was served by Cornelia: Moroccan Harira soup and Ras El Hanout

flavours served with Moroccan chick pea flat bread. Everyone enjoyed this spicy meal with plenty of flavour. After dinner the first person attempted a belly dancing routine which ended up in a comedy act involving most of the team.

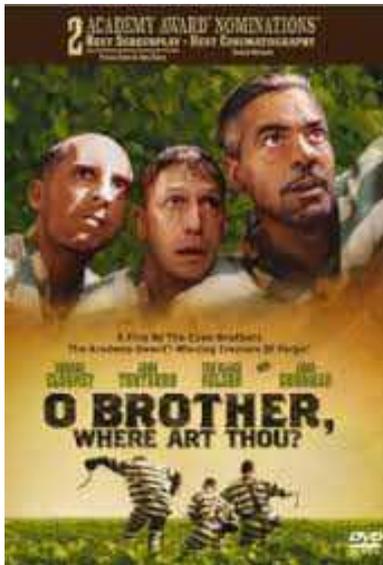


'Much to do about nothing'

Christiaan

Battle lines are drawn, new heroes emerge, and old enemies live under the same roof. Be it table tennis, wall climbing or chess, bragging rights are like having your favorite South African food at a SANAE dinner. Months on end are spent contemplating would haves and should haves, with each day a golden opportunity to declare 'once more into the last good fight we go'.

And when we get tired of bitter rivalries, we revert to torpedo - and banana kicks. Kicking balls all over Vesleskarvet - to places few rugby balls have gone before. Places like the smelly, summer depot, diesel bunkers and Kleinkoppie. And finally the rugby ball wants to go where no ball has gone before. It wants to go to winter depot - a long and arduous journey full of perfectly timed kicks.



In the quintessential long arduous journey movie, 'O Brother, where art thou', one of the main characters has a frustrating shopping experience. His frustration stems from out of stock goods and the shopkeeper's insistence that all unavailable goods, regardless of locality, can be ordered and available in 2 weeks time. This leads the shopper to remark about the shop's geographically odd



location - 2 weeks from everywhere. Which in turn reminded me of our own odd location - south from everywhere.

While north from everywhere has the northern lights, south from everywhere has the southern dim. It is not as famous as the northern lights, and is also not on display in the book of 100 things to see before you die. It is the muted glow and faint last gasp of a seemingly dying death star. It is dusk and dawn rolled into one. It's just another pleasant surprise in the seemingly endless Antarctic supply of colorful surprises.



Comrades

Hendrik



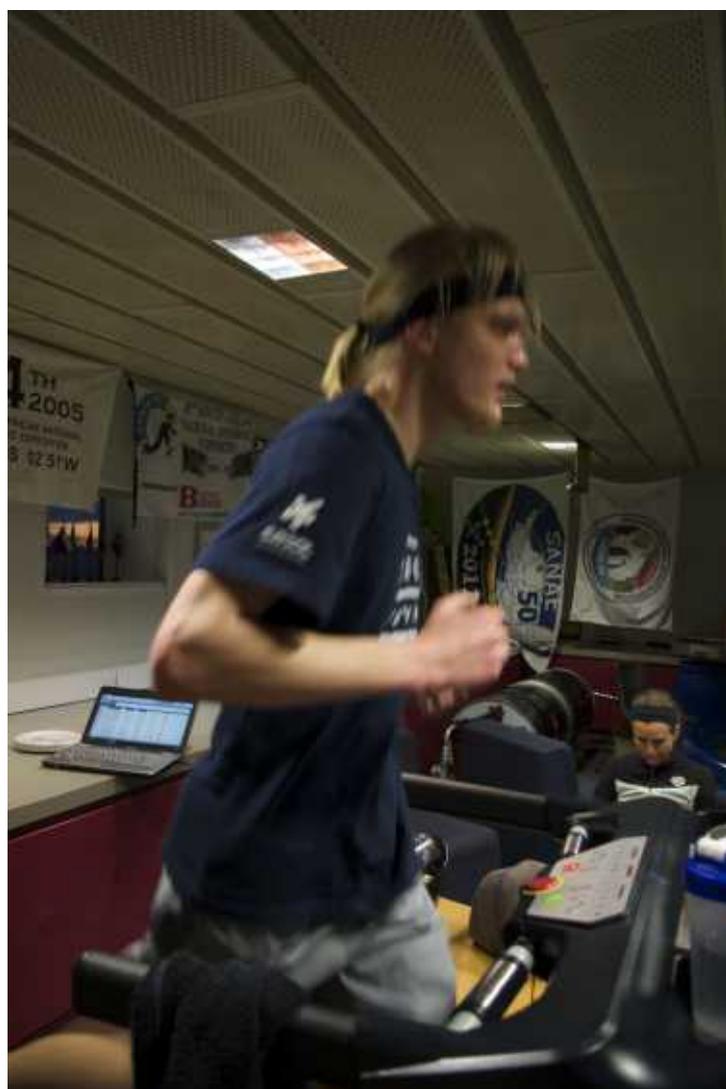
THE ULTIMATE HUMAN RACE

To prevent us from rolling of the boat at the end of the year, we decided to participate in the ultimate endurance run, the Comrades Marathon. But we are a team, so the individualistic hard-coreness running where each member doing the 89 km on his own is plain nonsense. Moreover, we also had only one working treadmill. So, the camaraderie decides that each member will take a turn and run for half an hour at their own speed, until the 89 km are completed. This is what you call true teamwork!

We started very early on 1 June, 50 days before sunrise, at 7h30. We knew that we will be able to do it in less than the cut-off time of 12 hours, but we didn't expect to do it under 10 hours. But wrong we were. Each member put out their utmost effort and each and every one of my comrades did better in their second half hour session than their first one, which was already incredibly. We completed the comrades in 9h13.

Our average speed was 9.64 km/h that equates to 6.22 m/s. During the race we were really impressed with ourselves until we look at the comrades record. For men the down course was completed in 5h20. That is running at an average speed of 16.86 km/h. It is faster than the fastest speed on our treadmill.





There was only 3.69 km left after each one of us completed their second session. Sonja and I decided that we want to try and run at elite class speed. We did each a half of the distance that is left and run at the treadmill's maximum speed, which is 16 km/h. That was not a good idea, we were completely exhausted.



Quote of the Month:

"I'll lick it in private" Cornelia

"Die ander ouens het met die graaf gedans, ons dans met Hendrik" Francois

Song of the Month:

YMCA - The Village People

Movie of the Month:

4 Corners

F-Ups of the Month:

Igloo Chief - Loosing the igloo

Christiaan - The Library

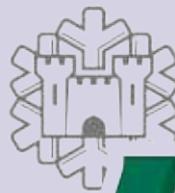
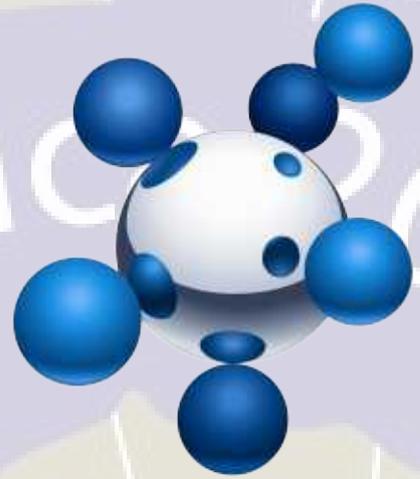
Weather statistics for 16 May - 15 June 2014:

	Maximum	Minimum	Average
Pressure	898.7 (2 nd Jun)	865.1 (10 th Jun)	884.8
Temperature	-10.9 (12 th Jun)	-33.8 (4 th Jun)	-20.7
Humidity	95% (25 th May)	28% (12 th Jun)	67%
Wind gust	36.7 m/s (25 th May)		
	71.3 knots		
	132.12 km/h		

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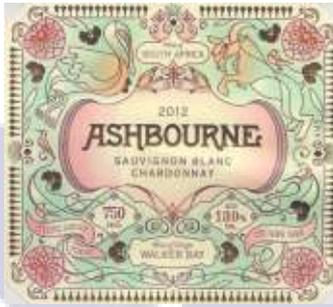


Wine



Est. 1704

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CREATION

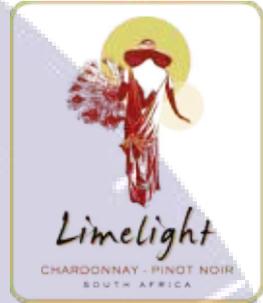
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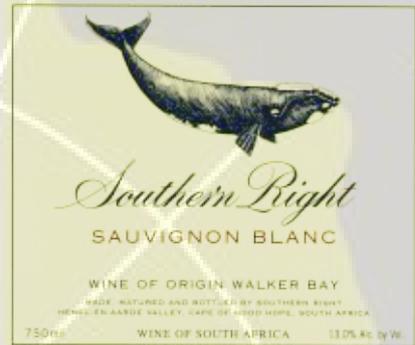


DE WETSHOF ESTATE
SOUTH AFRICA

SPRINGFIELD ESTATE



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N

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Food



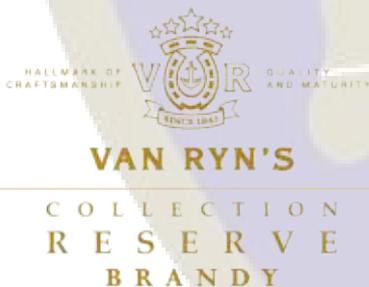
Hot Beverages



Comics & Board Games



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