

# SANAE 51



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 51st SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL ANTARCTIC OVERWINTERING EXPEDITION



## ENDLESS SUMMER SUN

Summer is back, and with it comes CAT-trains, birthdays, and a few more adventures before the base is invaded by the summer crew..

### WHAT'S WITH THE RED SOCKS

Jon Ward

Coming to a place like Antarctica brings with it certain expectations; many people back home want to be a part of your adventure, to stay connected with you and to share in your experiences.

In addition to this, you have 10 individuals, each with their own friends and family, coming from different parts of the country to spend a year together in the most isolated place on the planet.



#### In this issue:

Whats with the red socks.....1	First visitors.....8
A little trip into Antarctica.....3	Braam's birthday.....9
20 Questions - Part 2.....4	RSA Bukta trip.....9
Getting in shape for summer.....7	SANAE trends.....11

How does one keep in touch with all these loved ones back home and how do we, as a team, keep in touch when we inevitably return to our lives back in civilisation? It is so easy to lose contact, especially when life gets busy.

I am not really the kind of person who likes to take photographs and video of everywhere I go and everything I do. I prefer to live in the moment and experience things with my own eyes, rather than through the lens of a camera.

I am not really a sentimental person either but I wanted to find a good way to keep the memory of my times in Antarctica alive as well as the memory of my team-mates and my friends and family back home. Photographs and movies are nice, but I wanted something different.

So before I left Cape Town, somebody told me a story about two friends who served in World War II and were prisoners of war in a concentration camp. These friends made a pact with each other that if

any of them made it out alive, they would wear red socks to remember each other, when the war was over.

Many years' later people began to notice that year after year, on Memorial Day, at a particular school in the Eastern Cape, a gentleman would always arrive and lay a wreath, while wearing red socks. This, of course, became quite a talking point until one day a group of people plucked up enough courage to approach and ask this gentleman the story behind his red socks.



His inspiring story led this group to decide to also wear red socks, in memory of each other and their loved ones, every Friday, because Friday is a good day to do crazy things! One of them used his knowledge of social media to bring the story out into the world and started a charity and a website based on the premise of people wearing red socks every Friday.

I really liked the idea. So I purchased a whole bag, stuffed with red socks, and told everybody I knew that I would be wearing red socks every Friday, while I was in Antarctica, and that if they wanted to join in, they should get a pair for themselves. I also gave a pair of red socks to each of the overwintering team members and told them the same story.

The great thing about wearing red socks is that it can mean anything you like. It's a pact between you and somebody close to you. To borrow a few lines from the official website ([www.iwearredsocksonfridays.com](http://www.iwearredsocksonfridays.com))...

*"I wear red socks on Friday's is a movement dedicated to making a difference, being passionate, inspiring others and being inspired, staying positive, remembering friends and expressing yourself. It is a journey, a sentiment, a cause, a statement and a tribute..."*

I can think of no better way of celebrating this time and cherishing these awesome memories, while keeping your loved ones close to your heart, so I am proud to wear my red socks as often as I can. It makes a statement, gets people's attention and bonds you together. If I was you, I would start wearing red socks too! 🧦



# A LITTLE TRIP INTO ANTARCTICA

Braam Beukes

After the start of spring most of the team was longing for some new surroundings as the winter pretty much restricts movement away from the base. To enable the team to evaluate the readiness of the vehicles for takeover, a field trip is usually undertaken by the team. This ensures that the vehicles have had a test run before taking them on long trips to the ice shelf.

Grüne Hogna was the destination decided on and after permission was obtained from the powers that be, preparations

were made. Vince, Stef, Johan and I would be the first group to go to Grüne Hogna and then Vince, Jako, Jon and Elrich would do their trip shortly after our return. As is the usual case in Antarctica the deciding factors for any excursions are the weather and the time available for doing what you set out to do. We had a rough idea of when we wanted to go and worked towards that date. When the weather was favourable we finished up outside preparations as best we could and when the weather was less than kind we assembled the food and other equipment inside the base.

Finally on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October we left the familiar surroundings of the base and headed out into the great beyond. It was a wonderful

sunshine day and the trip of about five hours was filled with scenery of mountains that seemed to pop up from the white sheet of ice we were travelling on.

Arriving at Grüne Hogna you are somewhat expecting traces of the old Sarie Marais field base to still be around but none were visible. The only reminder that remains

of human activity in the area is a pole erected on the side of the mountain. Looking out into the distance you get to see a whole new angle of mountains that were



a normal part of your familiar surroundings. The stillness is the other thing that you come to realise and appreciate. It provides time for you to reflect and enjoy what is around you.

After spending our first night at Grüne Hogna we decided to do some hiking. Roping up as usual we headed for the side of the mountain. We later walked through a small valley that was skirted by mountains on either side giving you the impression that they were looking down on you. A little further, the valley opened up and you were presented with sheets of blue ice. The blue ice appeared to have clear bubbles in it which are caused by tiny stones melting their way through the ice as they are



heated by the sun, which was something we have never seen before.

After a wonderful night's sleep we were packing again and headed back to the base. Thankful for the opportunity to see a little more of a continent most people will never

see or experience. You wish you could have had family and friends present to share the experience with. With that in mind you hope the photographs will give them some idea of what it was like taking a trip into Antarctica. 🐼



## 20 QUESTIONS - PART 2

..continued from the previous newsletter.

11. How did you change this year?
12. Knowing what you know now, what else would you have brought with?
13. What is the worst habit a teammate could have?
14. How long do you think you can go without communication to the outside world?
15. What is the worst skivvy?
16. What is the best skivvy?
17. If you could go home now, would you?
18. If you could have anything delivered on a plane tomorrow, what would it be (people not included)?
19. What is the best thing you brought with?
20. What was your best Antarctic experience?

MUGSHOT	ANSWERS
	<p><b>Jako Bester</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>11. Hopefully I grew up for a change</li><li>12. I would have brought less</li><li>13. Euphemistically put: "Idleness"</li><li>14. I would pass through a phase of withdrawal after a week or so, but then I probably could go for the entire year once acceptance has set in</li><li>15. Kitchen floor</li><li>16. Bar and games room I suppose...the one where no mop is involved</li><li>17. Not yet</li><li>18. Avocado</li><li>19. My Bible</li><li>20. Grunehogna field trip!</li></ol>
	<p><b>Vincent Rademeyer</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>11. I grew a beard</li><li>12. Fish tank</li><li>13. Not cleaning after himself</li><li>14. 3 months</li><li>15. Kitchen</li><li>16. Library and TV lounge</li><li>17. No</li><li>18. A dog</li><li>19. Jacques Cousteau collection</li><li>20. Whiteout</li></ol>



### Braam Beukes

11. Learnt a little about myself
12. Olive oil, muffin mix
13. No comment
14. 2 weeks
15. Kitchen
16. Smelly
17. Yes
18. Fresh fruit
19. Camera equipment
20. Hiking in Antarctica



### Jonathan Ward

11. Much more patient, and more appreciative of the luxuries back home such as running water and Engen Quickshop
12. My PC/X-Box
13. Sulking/lack of sense of humour/having a face that says "I'm pissed, and I'm not done yet cause there's just a lot to be pissed with. Go away."
14. 1 month – internetlessness is a real disease
15. Links – includes sweeping, mopping, cleaning toilets and vacuuming in one session
16. Library/TV room – requires only Mister Min and maybe some floor cleaning
17. No
18. 'Moar' TV Series (Note: Moar is pronounced 'more' but in a rough voice, like you are shouting)
19. Good gloves and mittens
20. Crystal palace excursion with the "SANSa digging team" and Stellenbosh "Windpompers" – have never laughed more in my life



### Johan du Plessis

11. I hopefully grew up a little, but I do not feel much changed
12. I brought too much, but maybe a Band Hero set for the PlayStation
13. Self-righteousness or getting more pleasure from undermining the team than from this very unique experience....stay home next time
14. With the Internet everywhere I think we are all more dependent on it than we realise
15. Kitchen surfaces, it never gets clean
16. Games room and bar, a very quick skivvy and you can listen to tunes while doing it
17. I am bit of a pragmatist and think I experienced what I came for but we are also here for work so probably not
18. I would think maybe enough KFC for 20 people but we might get sick after not eating junk food for a year
19. Bialetti coffee maker with frother, what is life without cappuccino
20. First Cat train where we got to a spot where we were surrounded, as far as the eye can see, by flat white emptiness. It is mind blowing.



### **Elrich Delpert**

11. More tolerant toward others and also get to know my inner self better
12. Sport, fishing and nature magazines or DVDs
13. Bad table manners
14. Would say about 14 days
15. Kitchen duty
16. Personal house keeping
17. No
18. Another pair of Rocky's and gloves
19. My one pair of open shoes that has been glued, stitched and inners replaced
20. Up to now, the trip to Grunehogna!



### **Mcabango Biyela**

11. To be in an ice continent, enjoying life with less spending on my daily expenses like petrol, shopping etc.
12. Don't judge someone's choices without first knowing their reasons
13. Bad reporting and rumors that harm morale
14. Two weeks, like we had this year
15. None
16. Smelly
17. Yes
18. Fresh vegetables and fruit
19. Not to change my attitude
20. To be on a weird continent, experiencing a whiteout and inverse of dark



### **Stefanie Strachan**

11. Maybe grew up a bit, I'm not sure, you'll have to ask the parents once I'm back
12. Maybe a Wii and magazines, but in general I brought way too much stuff (I'm totally blaming it on the fact that I'm a girl)
13. Theoretically, having someone that shies away from their assigned tasks would suck
14. Without comms I think more than a month, but without Google, probably only a few weeks
15. Kitchen surfaces and appliances, also, having to clean the urinals in the link bathroom is not fun (especially since I can't even use them)
16. The Bar – you can play music seriously loud while vacuuming
17. No
18. Strawberry Yogi Sip
19. Buff and Goose down duvet
20. My first skidoo ride on the first day we set foot on the ice

# GETTING IN SHAPE FOR SUMMER

Johan du Plessis

So the year on the ice progressed to a point where we needed to prepare for the next summer crew to arrive. All our work needed to be completed and the base needed to be in tiptop shape. For an overwinterer this is the start of the 'umbilical cord' being cut. This base, which protected you through winter and started feeling like home, needs to be readied for the next team. What felt like your possession now needs to be prepared, to be handed over.

The handover period normally starts with an inspection so this should set the tone for your preparation. Unfortunately all people have different thresholds for when they can no longer procrastinate so it was a stressful time, for some more than others. Eventually everyone got involved in finishing off the preparations.



Seeing that we expected a large number of geologists we needed to service all the skidoos. The

skidoo fleet is rather old to say the least and we needed to ensure that they are as reliable as possible and that summer personnel will not be hampered in their scientific work.

Also the cargo that was stored in the winter depot needed to be dug open and pulled to the summer depot. A depot in Antarctic terms is simply an allocated spot where cargo can be stored in a manner where the gradual build up of snow will not bury the cargo and where it can be easily moved from. Fortunately we have bulldozers at our disposal and digging out does not include the use of shovels, mostly not anyway.

Then disaster struck. With the continual settling of snow, the roads around the base keep rising. We periodically doze some snow away to keep an acceptable clearance under the bridges connecting the different



structures on base. With all the frantic preparations our one diesel mechanic did not pay enough attention to the decreasing clearance and drove a crane through the bridge connecting the base with the Satellite dome. This bridge housed our link to the outside world, to our diesel bunkers and the pipe that discards wastewater over the cliff edge. Suddenly our to-do list, which seemed to never end, was swamped with additional work. Fortunately we had a spell of really good weather so everyone jumped into action and within a day or two we restored our communications, made temporary arrangements for diesel to be fed into the base and also for wastewater to leave the base.

The renewal of the structure took a bit longer and after roughly a week of long hours for some, we had access to our parking lot again and all the cables and services were connected once again.

The preparation for handover also includes a Cat train to our summer station, where the SA Agulhas will make landfall (or icefall rather). With the repairs needed to the structure, our departure to summer station was delayed by almost a week but eventually some very tired Antarcticans got into the CAT's to go and welcome the summer crew. ☺



# FIRST VISITORS

Stefanie Strachan

Date: 6 December 2012  
Days since we have last seen people: 287  
Teammates still alive: 10

It was already quite the hectic week with all the preparations for the summer station CAT train, as well as the repairs to the base structure, when the call came in that we might have a plane landing at SANAE to refuel. A team was quickly assembled to prepare the fuel sledge and get the skiway ready for landing. A few hours later the news came crackling over the radio - the plane would in fact only be coming the next day, arrival time still to be confirmed. A little disappointed, we dragged ourselves back to the base to continue helping with the repairs.

The next morning the base was abuzz with questions on if and when the plane would be coming, and how many fuel drums and people will be going to the skiway, etc. Our questions were finally answered when we got the call to confirm that the plane will definitely be landing at SANAE to refuel, along with the estimated time of arrival. The three skidoos and dozer that was not stuck in the parking lot by the fallen structure was quickly 'shotgunned' by eager team members that had not yet



seen a plane land on the ice. By 2pm, the wind was picking up and since there is nowhere to hide from it, the eagerness of the onlookers might have dwindled a bit. Finally,

When the two pilots and three passengers finally got out, some's \*cough-Braam-cough\* excitement could almost not be contained.

After helping the pilots with the fuel drums and refuelling the plane, everyone stood around chatting for a bit and we even got some snacks, bought from Cape Town, as presents. Probably the most interesting part of the whole meeting was seeing the different people react so much differently to the strangers. Some were already out of things to talk about after the fifth minute, while others were just chatting away until the very last second. Finally the pilots decided that it was time for them to be off, and just like that they were gone and we were back to being just the ten of us..all alone.. ☺



we saw a black speck in the clouds towards the South. The speck quickly grew into a toy sized plane, and then before long we could hear the roar of the engines as it did a fly-by before finally landing.

The excitement of seeing and meeting new people only grew after the plane came to a standstill and we were forced to wait for the 'safe' signal before approaching.



# BRAAM'S BIRTHDAY

Jon Ward

Braam celebrated his Birthday on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October. It was a little troubling having to prepare a cake for Braam, since he had taken it upon himself to prepare all the birthday cakes this year and he had gotten rather good at it. But in the end I think we presented him with a pretty good birthday cake, which we all enjoyed in the afternoon. Somebody also managed to



sneak some 'magic' candles onto the cake, which then caused a lot of smoke and set off the fire alarm, which was actually a good thing as it drowned out our terrible singing.

Braam was also lucky enough to have good weather on the day and we were able to give him his snowbath immediately. Braam was very worried about capturing the 'moment' and wanted there to be as many cameras

rolling as possible. He even dragged a locker outside so he could mount his own camera but he was so excited that he forgot to charge the battery.



All in all, it was a very enjoyable day. Congratulations on surviving your birthday in Antarctica and I hope the footage is to your satisfaction. 🍷

# RSA BUKTA TRIP

Jako Bester

Early in November our team received the duty to go and inspect the ice-shelf and fuel depot at Penguin (RSA) Bukta (Norwegian for 'bay') about 160 km away from our base, SANAE IV .

In previous years South Africa offloaded its cargo at Penguin Bukta for the SANAE IV base . In recent years, the ice-shelf here has become too high to offload the heavy cargo, and the previous solution to this

problem, dozing a ramp, has become too dangerous. The cargo operations has now been moved to Atka Bukta where the new German station Neumayer III is situated. This is approximately 300 km away. South Africa however continues to perform their fuel operations at

Penguin Bukta as the distance to Vesleskarvet, where the SANAE IV base is located, is shorter (almost half the distance) and when multiple fuel pumping trips are required, it saves a lot of time and fuel.



Each year the overwintering team is tasked with inspecting the fuel depot where some of the programs' diesel bowsers (diesel tanks on sledges) are stored. At the end of each takeover large ramps are dozed and the sledges pulled on top with a winch. This is to ensure that the snow buildup does not bury the sledges entirely.

Our duty was to go and assess the snow buildup as well as the content and seals of these tanks and whether any snow got into the tanks during the winter. Furthermore we had to check the stock and equipment of the pump caboose (where all the pumps and hoses are kept).

Any field trip in Antarctica takes a lot of logistical planning and preparation. For a team of 10 overwinterers this can take somewhat of an effort as it entails a bit of work. Once our 4 sleeper caboose was packed and stocked with food, gas and emergency equipment and all the spares and fuel for the trip was in order, we finally observed a possible weather gap in the weather predictions and we departed. The timing of this field-trip was also a bit tricky as we had to complete this in time before the ship departed (so they could prepare for any equipment and stock contingencies) yet it still fell within the last part of our windier and stormier months. The trick was to depart as to have the best weather at the location of the ice-shelf to perform the inspection yet also have good enough weather to complete our final preparations and depart. Fortunately all fell into place, but it took some faith. As we neared our destination we were driving in a near white out and bad contrast... which can be quite nerve wrecking as in the back of your mind you know that there is a possibility that the ice shelf may have broken off and that the GPS

location you are driving to may just be located in mid air above open sea water. Fortunately the weather and contrast improved and we were able to locate the depot with no problems.

On our way there we were also tasked with testing our repeater antenna which had recently been repaired. This antenna has the duty of extending the range of our VHF radio communications. We performed a few tests at different locations/distances along our journey and were fortunately successful 75% of the time.



Along our journey we were also able to observe the ice buildup during the winter as the sign posts for the different GPS locations that were placed during the previous takeover were nearly buried.

On our arrival at the fuel depot approximately 6km from the ice-shelf, we took some time to set up our accommodation, prepare some food, and settle down for the



remainder of the early morning hours. At around 07:00am, the cloud cover started to clear and the contrast improved and we began our inspection of the fuel depot and its equipment.

During the late morning and midday, the weather conditions seemed to be at its best and we decided to use this opportunity to complete the most hazardous part of our journey - to inspect the ice-shelf itself. We prepared two skidoos and a sled with emergency equipment, tent and climbing gear and after making sure everyone knew their responsibility and where the emergency beacons, SAT phone etc was, we departed. It was an incredible ride, but we had to unfortunately leave two team members as backup and the skidoos at 1 km GPS distance from the ice-shelf and continue roped up on foot.

This was quite a trudge through some thick snow, but we finally arrived to be greeted by a



brehtaking sight - a blue ocean, clear from any pack-ice and a few ice-bergs on the horizon. The view of the ocean for the first time in maybe 11 months did wonders for morale. Remaining a safe distance from the edge we took some time to take in the view and take some photographs for reporting purposes before we turned around to commence our long trudge back to the skidoos.



Upon our return it was decided safe to allow the other two team members to also get the

opportunity to complete the last kilometer to experience the view which immediately had its beneficial effect and everyone's mood seemed to be lifted ten times - summer was here and we are almost going home! Yet we all took the time to savour the opportunity of a lifetime.

After a braai for lunch we proceeded to inspect the pump caboose and the equipment. Thereafter, we settled in for the evening after all the cargo was strapped and packed and the vehicles refueled.

The next morning we proceeded to clear some snow from within the diesel tanks and then prepared for our departure.

We however hit a slight snag when we found that none of the vehicles wanted to start. This raised some

concern as we were totally isolated and 160 km away from any backup in one of the most remote and extreme environments in the world. Michael our diesel 'mac' confidently worked some of his magic and got one of the vehicles running and then proceeded to swop out a battery or two to get the second vehicle going again.

The trip back home proceeded uneventfully and we arrived back at SANAE IV with an incredible sunset and moonrise. ☺



## SANAE TRENDS

### Temperature

Maximum	1.5°C
Average Max	-7.0 °C
Average	-9.8 °C
Average Min	-12.5 °C
Minimum	-16.1 °C

### Pressure

Maximum	898.9 hPa
Average Max	890.0 hPa
Average	886.9 hPa
Average Min	883.8 hPa
Minimum	872.5 hPa

### Humidity

Maximum	100%
Average	75%
Minimum	23%

### Wind speed

Mean	22.0 Knots (44.0 km/h)
Maximum Gust	86.2 Knots (172.4 km/h)

### Daytime lengths

Average day length	24 hrs
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### Quote of the month

Singa: "It's not for my heart, its for my health."

Vince (after discovering the lolly line damage): "#h&\*, &u%\$, \*%i@, \$@#k!!"

### Movie of the month

Perfume, the story of a murderer

### Song of the month

Running up that hill - Placebo

### Dish of the month

Quality street

# THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS:



MEERLUST



Support also by the following individuals:  
 Homemade Buffs – Mrs du Plessis  
 Homemade Ginger Biscuits – Mr and Mrs Knoesen, Mrs Bester