

# Gough Bunting

February 2007



*February has been a good month on Gough Island. The visiting biologist were still with us, by the time you read this however they should be on their way back to Tristan and then onto Mzantsi. We have had to adapt to the number of people in base doubling from 6 to 12. It has been good to share the last four weeks of island life with our visitors. Cooking skivvies also became a two person affair. I must say the food that has been coming out that kitchen the last four weeks has been very impressive. We are definitely eating well on the island.*

*As you may or may not know, Gough Island is a world heritage site and we have finally erected the World Heritage Site plaque outside the front door of the base. On 16 February we had a plaque unveiling ceremony which was quite an important event for Gough Island. We were fortunate to have a few more guests from the Edinburgh Ship to share the day with us. John Cooper made it all formal with a speech and James Glass from Tristan da Cunha unveiled the plaque. The chocolate cake and 12 year whiskey afterwards was excellent.*

*The weather has started to change and summer seems to be on its way out, this however did not stop us from going for walks around the island. I hope you enjoy the newsletter.*

*Ed.*



*All the dignitaries at the plaque unveiling*

## Month of love

February is a short month, and to us here it has been faster due to the fact that we have visitors. In the middle of it we were celebrating Brian's birthday as well as Valentine's Day. Well, talking about valentines, to us here it was just like any other day, yes we did call our loved ones, send e-mails as we always do, and we did receive so many more calls than usual.

This word "LOVE" means a lot to every human being, and it doesn't really matter who's giving it to you, it might be the love you get from your family, friend, colleague, and or your hubby \ wife. The funny part of it is that we all need love but at the other hand we are scared to give it back in return (relationship wise).

It is a very nice feeling knowing that there is someone who loves you and the bad part of it is when you give it to the wrong person, wow, you will feel the heat. Us as women we are scared to fall in love thinking that these skuas will break our heart, I guess this is one risk we have to take 'coz being scared to fall in love is like being scared of life itself. At times if I am sad, I wish I was a man coz to them it is fine to have as many women as possible. It is considered ok if a man

does this, but being a woman doing the very same thing, they will call you names. It sucks.

I guess there's nothing we can do about that, we just have to live with it. I don't know why it is like that and the more I give it a thought, the more confused I get. At times I wish that those skuas can understand that we also have one heart and feelings just like them and we hate to share just like they do. Anyway who am I to complain about all that, it doesn't make any difference.



### *Let me talk about Brian's birthday.*

Since we came here we never had a birthday party and having it on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Feb it was beautiful. We knew what he liked, so it was easy for us to prepare a party for him and we had his favourite dish for supper, it was cool.

This is the pic I took with this handsome man, I should have taken him out on his special day, it just slipped my mind, I guess this thing of being the only lady amongst them, it makes me to be one of them, so I tend to forget my task as a lady, it's bad very bad.....!

Dineo



## A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

On the last day of January I retired from employment with the University of Cape Town – after over 35 years of working with seabirds, including albatrosses. I spent my 60th birthday, and my last day of full-time employment, hiking from the Gough meteorological station to Waterfall Camp at the foot of Edinburgh Peak, the highest point on the island. In my pack was a birthday cake, brought all the way from Cape Town for the occasion, to share with my fellow hikers. To my mind, a fitting way to round off a seabird working career, and far better than attending a retirees' dinner back on the campus and listening to a boring farewell speech.

My first visit to Waterfall Camp (and for the same purpose, to count Tristan Albatrosses) was in 1982, fully a quarter of century earlier. The locality has not changed since then but I have aged of course, and I walk a little slower now.

What has not changed is Gough's weather. In 1982 we were rained and misted in for two nights and days, as we were again this year. Back then I passed the boredom by writing the words with a felt pen "There are no hard bogeys on Edinburgh Peak" on the internal lining of the Black's Mountain tent we were using. This time I did not sully our brand-new K-Way Makalu Expedition tent, but my nose still sniffled as it did all those 25 years ago.

*John Cooper*

*Gough Island Sagina/Albatross Expedition, January – March 2007*



*The birthday boy with his Birthday Fruit Cake at Waterfall Camp*



*The sagina multiple ladders erected near the base to allow easy access for the sagina eradication team to the beach below*

## My Days in Gough Island!!!

The month of February was interesting because we had visitors from Mzantsi who came to the Island for Scientific Programs. I also received some gifts and wishing cards from my lovely wife Xoliswa. I miss my wife and my children big time.



The picture above is of me & Justin. I'm planning to fit a Nature Reserve World Heritage Site plaque for Gough Islands & Inaccessible Islands which came with John Cooper and his Crew.



The fitting of the plaque has been completed and it has been opened by John Cooper & a Tristanian Representative.

I'm looking forward to Easter holiday where we will not notice any difference because we are only 6 personnel in the whole Island. There are no shops, no church, no banks, no post office etc. I'm enjoying my stay with the team that I have. We respect and love each other.

I wish all my family & friends all the best for 2007. May God bless you.

*Thuls*



## Twenty-five souvenirs from Gough Island

1. A Sooty Albatross absent-mindedly preening a meter away from me, then standing up and walking a little closer (exaggerated steps, like a child at the seaside trying to walk in flippers, stopping briefly to puzzle at its pale pink feet) and gently nibbling at my outstretched hand
2. Rain and wind hammering rudely on the tent at Waterfall Camp, making it hard to hear myself reading out loud
3. The wind merrily waltzing and tango'ing a renegade yellow and green tent across Goneydale and up the slopes of South Peak
4. Another spontaneous dance - the Team boys hopping and shuffling 'The Bus' in perfect time
5. Holding a Tristan Albatross: an armful of warm, soft bird, heart pounding, sweet-smelling and slightly musty, feet like chamois leather
6. The sky at sundown filling up with birds, swarms of them like bees on the horizon
7. Standing outside the bird lab at night, listening to the whooping and chucking and croaking and groaning and sighing of burrowing birds, the sound of small children playing or wee ghosties calling all around me
8. Yellow-nosed Albatross chicks sitting bolt upright like little monarchs on their nest mounds, the shape of their three-toed webbed feet outlined on their soft grey downy bellies, viewing me through black and white harlequin masks with mild amazement and some disapproval
9. Old fashioned Yellow-nosed Albatross adults bowing coyly to each other and fanning their snow white tails; black eyeliner smudged in the heat of passion but yellow bill-liner perfect, down to the hint of pink on the tip
10. "Bye bye White Ball!" and uproarious laughter accompanying a groan of despair as the errant ball rolls inexorably towards the corner pocket of the pool table
11. A Tristan Albatross duo absorbed in a passionate courtship display, circling each other with enormous wings arched over their heads and barrel chests thrust forward in a slow strut
12. A young Sub-Antarctic Skua flying off with a neglected ski-pole, then dropping it 100 m away down a steep gulley
13. Laughter, chocolate cake and Famous Grouse whiskey shared with island visitors in the Base kitchen
14. Our sudden appearance out of the mist causing a skua to fly up in panic, feet waggling and wings flailing to correct its inelegant sideways wobbles
15. A fat Sub-Antarctic Tern chick, a speckled black and yellow and grey fluffball, cheeping piteously: "Hungreeee, feeed meeee!" while its elegant black-capped parent poses nearby, arching itself into an X, white tail and red bill pointing up, grey wings and red feet pointing down
16. Lasagne and bobotie and crayfish starters and ribs and fish braai and sago pudding and ice cream with hot fudge sauce; freeze-dried meals Milo and energy bars and provitas and cheese and Clifton
17. A Sooty Albatross silhouetted against the sky, directing skyward a crazed white-rimmed eye and a blood-curdling yell towards its partner swooping low overhead
18. A sleek oily black whiskered fur seal porpoising soft as soap ("Ten, ten, ten!" the terns cry the score while hovering frantically overhead) into wild foam-webbed reef-churned sea
19. A tender green and silver Blechnum frond tentatively uncurling into the sunlight out of the darkness of a prion burrow
20. The elusive minty smell as you brush your way past feather-soft Phylica trees
21. Seen from a cave mouth (sighing, "Oh!"), albatrosses effortlessly riding thermals on a blue blue sky
22. A Gough Moorhen, balanced delicately on one leg as it scratches the base of its flame-coloured beak with a scaly claw
23. Two young bully boy blonde-and-charcoal fur seals barking and sparring, teeth bared and pink mouths gaping
24. Goney Plain - a giant camo-blanket heaped up on three sides in pleated folds around a snug albatross-filled hollow
25. Bogferns - green fingered branches radiating protectively around a cluster of slowly uncurling brown-maned caterpillar fronds

## Kitchen Skivvy

Its 3am just after my night shift and me and Thuls are watching a movie. We don't sleep at night (as we've become accustomed to). It's an interesting movie seeing that it's my second time watching it. Later on today it's the two main skuas turn to cook and at this point in time we have no menu. Thus the question is posed what we will cook with the answer whatever you come up with. As the movie continues the menu was finalized, lasagna, we will make lasagna. After the movie we went to bed with the menu settled and a time decided upon when to start.

At 3pm we start cleaning the kitchen and getting all the ingredients, pots and pans together. I went to take a shower whilst Thuls was enjoying a movie with Dineo and Fish. I finished just in time for my nightshift where after we started the lasagne experiment.

We followed the recipe on the box and made some alterations for we were cooking for ten. In some instances we used our experience judgement in adding and exclusion of other ingredients. With the recipe in one hand and ingredients in the other and a bit of imagination everything seemed to fall in place. At the end we were pushing for time to get everything ready. Dinner was served a bit late, but it was thoroughly enjoyed. It must be mentioned that the two chefs deserves some lipstick as well as a nice evening gown for the effort and energy they put in to prepare the meal. Who knows what other plans are devised in the early morning.



*The Skuas in the kitchen*

JK

## The Loving Month.....

February 14: Valentines Day. Even though some people don't take it seriously, lets face it; Valentines Day is one of the special days for lovers. Here at Gough Island though it was all about friendship because the loved ones are at home.

Everyone knows how important a birthday party is in island. As our visitors are still here, one of them celebrated his birthday on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February. He is one the quietest guys in the base so far (Matthew Green from Tristan da Cunha). He is quite an amazing guy who, on his birthday, decided to stay in his room. We were not going to let him stay in the room – we wanted him to celebrate his big day the Gough style. We baked him a lekker cake and he also got our famous “straffdop” (he had to drink it because he is at Gough). Way to go Matthew, happy birthday.....



*Matthew receiving his Birthday cake from Fish*



*Matthew cutting his Birthday cake*

Just a day after Matthew's birthday and two days before valentines, we were planning one for Brian. It did not come as a surprise when guys planned a computer games and cabling party because this guy is all about computer (I think most of his dreams when he sleep are computer related). I think he enjoyed the cake more than the party because he slept very early, but anyway, happy birthday “Brain”. (By the way, how old are you?)

Valentines Day quote: **He, who would have beautiful roses in his garden, must have beautiful roses in his heart...**

*Till next time  
Tshifhiwa-wa-Vho-Nthaduleni.*

## Vrouens:

Spandeer tyd in enige groep mans en die gesprek verander een of ander tyd na vrouens. Op die eiland dink ek gebeur dit meer gereeld as mening ander plekke. Selfs sport kan nie eers soveel verskille, menings, argumente, ens. ontlok as 'n gesprek oor vrouens.

Die HAT verwys na vrou/ e as volg: vroulike persoon. (*Persoon – mens, individu, enkeling wat selfstandig handel/ optree*). Geen ander onderwerp beskik ook oor soveel teenstelling as die onderwerp oor vrouens nie. Selfs die HAT is 'n bewys hiervan. Die woord voor vrou is vrot en die woord daarna vrug.

Met verdere navorsing het ek net besef hoe kontroversieel menings oor vrouens is:

Daar kan met reg verwys word na vrouens as the good, the bad & the ugly. (Ek werk nog aan die laaste een). Boeke is hieroor geskryf en ek sal 'n paar aanhalings gee:

*Their value:*  
*All women are good*

*Their impulsiveness:*  
*A women either loves or hates in extremes*  
*A women's thoughts are afterthoughts*

*Their wilfulness:*  
*Women will have their will*  
*Swine, women and bees cannot be turned*

*Their capriciousness:*  
*A women's mind and winter wind change often*

*Their dissimulation:*  
*Women naturally deceive, weep & spin.*

Verder word baie literatuur gewy aan die behoeftes, pligte en anatomie van vrouens:

*Their needs:*  
*Women, priests and poultry, have never enough*  
*A ship and a woman are ever repairing*

*Their duties:*  
*A woman's work is never done*

*Their tongue:*  
*A woman's sword is her tongue, and she does not let it rust*

Selfs oor hoe om vrouens te hanteer:  
*Dally not with women or money*  
*A women and a glass are ever in danger*  
*Women and music should never be dated*

Die meerderheid verwysings dui egter op die gevare van vrouens:  
*Women are snares of Satan*  
*There is no devil so bad as a she – devil*  
*Women and dogs set men together by the ears*  
*No war without women*  
*Hell has no fury like a woman scorned*

Longfellow summarised women well:  
*When she was good*  
*She was very, very good*  
*But when she was bad, she was horrid.*

*Petrus*

## Saddle Rock

As I sit in my office there are two maps on my wall. Firstly a world map, which I like to look at occasionally to realize how in the middle of no-where I am, and there is also a map of Gough Island. It's a rather old map from a Scientific Survey that took place from November 1955 to 1956. I find that we (as humans) always like to familiarize ourselves with our surroundings. Besides the kilometers of sea that we see from the base there is also a whole island to explore full of places with names that we only heard about once we got here. It's funny how some names have now become part of our daily vocabulary.

Goney Dale, Tafelkoppie, Edinburgh Peak, Quest Bay, Hag's Tooth, Green Hill. The last

name in question is the subject of this story, Green Hill. Petrus and I had decided to camp in Goney Dale (or in laymen's terms "The Valley of the Tristan Albatrosses"). After we surprised ourselves with our apparent increase in fitness by flying up the path to Goney Dale with full packs, we set up our tent. We scoffed down a lunch of two minute noodles, tomato paste, sugar, sardines and the all important ingredient of Tabasco. Plan for the afternoon was to explore Green Hill.



*The "Fortress" on Green Hill*

Green Hill is one of the hills surrounding Goney Dale that has some of the most incredible rock formations. The rocks rise out of the ground as if a great walled fortress had been built there years before. It's great fun to go exploring around these walls of rock, finding small holes to crawl around in. After sharing a nip of some very good 12 year old single malt whiskey courtesy of Petrus's hip flask, we decided to head further south along the ridge of Green Hill to check in with the base via radio. We were filled in with all the news in the base which included the preparing of

a roast leg of pork and lamb.

When exploring around the island I often get the feeling of making the most of the place we find ourselves in since we don't know when we will be back again. I told Petrus that I would like to walk

to the next hill further south. So we toddled on along the ridge to see the view. From there I suggested maybe to walk down the eastern side to another rocky outcrop I saw 500 metres below. Petrus had been telling me about Saddle Rock, an island just off the coast near where we were walking, unfortunately I still could not see it from the rocky outcrop. I could see a cliff edge further down and feeling super energetic I told Petrus that I would be back soon, and I hopped and skipped my way down. As the view started to unfold I could



sort of see Saddle Rock from the cliff edge, but it wasn't a great view so I decided to follow the cliff edge further north to another rocky outcrop hoping to get a better view. The view did get slightly better, but I saw that if I followed the cliff edge further down I would get an even better view.

Eventually I ended up on the cliff above the beach, granted it was probably the highest point of the cliff above the beach but I had descended a substantial amount but the view was worth it. I let out a shout of joy that scared off a skua. I got a great view of Saddle Rock as well as Scott's Cove, Repetto Bay and Rockhopper Point. A few more names to add to my

vocabulary. Unfortunately in life sometimes what goes down must go up, and I thought I better head back because Petrus has lost sight of me at the first cliff that I viewed Saddle Rock from. I started my slow slog uphill. The soft mushy stuff is great to descend down but walking up it is quite a slow process, sort of like walking up a sand dune. Eventually, out of breath I met up again with Petrus and we headed up back to Green Hill and into Goney Dale to enjoy our supper of two minute noodles, mushroom soup, tinned corned beef and the all important ingredient of Tabasco.

*Brain*



*The view of Rockhopper Point, Repetto Bay and Saddle Rock*

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*The Team enjoying Spicy Chicken Strips, KFC Sauces and Chips courtesy of **Kentucky Fried Kitchen***



*Dineo modeling the team's **Cadbury** Chocolate*

*From the Weather Office*

**CLIMATE STATS: February 2007**

<b>Ave. Max Pressure</b>	1014.3 hPa
<b>Ave. Min Pressure</b>	1006.2 hPa
<b>Ave. Pressure</b>	1010.0 hPa
<b>Max Pressure</b>	1025.8 hPa
<b>Min Pressure</b>	988.4 hPa
<b>Ave. Max Temp</b>	19.0 °C
<b>Ave. Min Temp</b>	12.0 °C
<b>Ave. Temp</b>	15.5 °C
<b>Max Temp</b>	24.2 °C
<b>Min Temp</b>	7.3 °C
<b>Ave Humidity</b>	77 %
<b>Max Humidity</b>	94 %
<b>Min Humidity</b>	50 %
<b>Max Wind Gust</b>	26.4 m/s or 95.0 km/h
<b>Total Rainfall</b>	167.7 mm
<b>Highest in 24 Hours</b>	58.9 mm
<b>Total days with rain</b>	24 days
<b>Total days &gt;1mm</b>	14 days
<b>Total Sunshine</b>	179.7 hours

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