

Gough Bunting

November 2007



Snoek anyone?

Sarel tried his hands at catching snoek. The fish were biting so easily, they bit off all the hooks he threw at them. The nett result was that at the end of the day precisely zero fish were caught and all hooks were lost. A bit of a let down considering replacement hooks have to come from South Africa.



Going to the Beach

We had a little excursion to the local hangout. (for the seals) With a crane, a camera and dash of adventure we stepped over the edge. (Full story see page 3)



Gonydale

Walk, slip, stagger, walk, fall, walk. That was the pattern followed during our hike up to Gonydale. It is not particularly far nor dangerous to get to Gonydale, but the struggling through the thick underbrush nearly stopped us from reaching it. On top of the hill is a beautiful panorama and everyone made good use of their cameras.



Grass cutting

Yes. This chore is not confined to the quiet suburbs of world. Even in the ocean wilderness the “lawn” must be maintained. Aesthetics however is not the aim. The pathways around the base need to be kept clean, so that it is possible to move freely around the base. The weather here is ideal from plants and if left can easily overgrow the base.



The Sagina Monologues

Thursday John Cooper and two rope-access technicians arrived from Cape Town on-board the Kelso. Brian Shultz and Richard Halsey will be assisting John in the eradication of the Sagina plant off the affected cliff faces on Gough.

Birthday's Birthday's

The month of November began with my birthday! Mel was next in line! It was a good weekend! The guys however decided that they will make the day special. The day of my birthday they were very busy in the kitchen, baking cakes and preparing stuff for the evening! I mean what is a birthday without a cake, how can you celebrate without a cake! Dinner was a braai, we all stood outside with Sarel being the braaier. They made the bar into a place where we could sit and talk and eat, with decorations. The dinner also included soft music by R Kelly. My birthday was a very special one for me on an island with great people and lots of presents, some even handmade!

One evening after dinner when we looked out of the window we saw a lot of birds coming in from the sea; it was a view to remember. I am now waiting for the chicks to hatch, I am like an expecting mother waiting to give birth! Well till next time!!!



Charlene Oppel

Going to the Beach

Nearly everything we do on Gough is interesting and new. Something even as simple as going to the beach turns out to be an almost once in a lifetime experience.

Our diesel mech came up with the idea one day of using the crane to give us a better view of what goes on beneath the base. Before the helicopters were used this was the only way onto the island. It is still used during the year when we need to receive visitors and supplies. The harness seen in the photo is the designed people carrier (or PC) which is used for these operations.

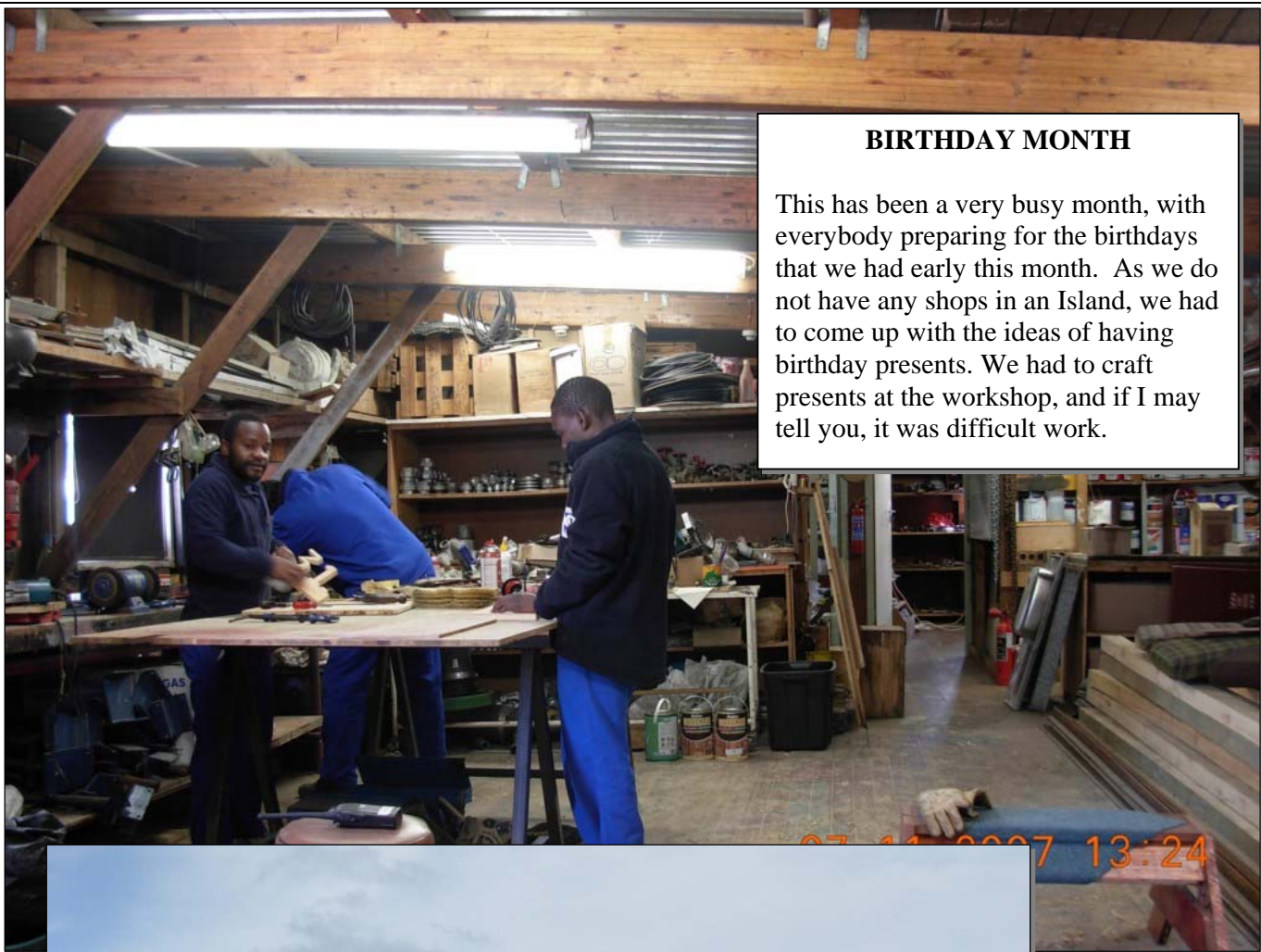
With full protective clothing and a little help from our friendly diesel mech we were on our way.

Gough is a volcanic island and for the most part it has sheer cliff faces all the way round. At the crane point is no different. Despite this the rocks are alive with sea birds. The Sooty Albatross (*Phoebetria Palpebrata*) is especially common and lots of nests can be seen if you just look for them. They are very graceful fliers, but not graceful landers.

It is quite some distance down an all the way down there are sheer cliffs surrounding you. They extend all the way down right to the sea floor. This meant, Yes no beach, but this was OK. We hung there a few meters above the crystal clear blue water and just marvelled at what was around us.

-Johan Hoffman





BIRTHDAY MONTH

This has been a very busy month, with everybody preparing for the birthdays that we had early this month. As we do not have any shops in an Island, we had to come up with the ideas of having birthday presents. We had to craft presents at the workshop, and if I may tell you, it was difficult work.



Jack. Sarel & Kholekile at Snoekgat

Although the month was hectic, we never forgot to chill out as the guys. We went to so many places and we even managed to go for fishing, although it needs lots of patience. We are enjoying each an every minute in this Island. Write to you next month.

PEACE!!!

Kholekile

When you are stranded on a deserted island with absolutely no chance of catching 7de laan for 14 whole months (!) you have to make do. And what is there really to do on an island chock and block full of birds, birds and more birds? Here's an idea: go climb a mountain! Kholikele, Jack and I decided that it sounded like a good idea. It was the single most horrible experience of my life and I can't wait to do it again. The word that comes to mind when I want to describe the way to South Peak, is "up". Seriously. And when you come back, it's "down". I know, mind-boggling. Well, on a place 14km long and 6 km wide (or is it the other way around?) the landscape would have to go somewhere, doesn't it?

Like the heroine in a bad eighties movie, I had to fall over every single bush, and Gough has an abundance of those. Through all this falling (gracefully, of course) and panting, we had to bob and weave our way through homicidal Skuas. I hate those beady-eyed birds. As if fighting off one at the Stevenson screen every morning isn't enough. But it is little Skua season and I suppose the mommy Skuas have to protect their "precious". Like anyone would want such an ugly, fluffy little squeak.

Anyway, onward and ever upward. The views from way up there were spectacular. I have to admit that when I saw the speck that was our base, I had serious doubts of reaching it before the weekend, let alone that afternoon! So I put my faith in my companions and they rewarded me by taking a detour on the way back. To the caves. I had to fight off more Skuas. Delightful.

Whining aside, I had a wonderful day and reached my goal! It was a great feeling to sit at the top of South Peak, knowing that I made it all the way. Grunting and groaning, yes. But I still made it!



Mellany McPherson

Diary of an Islander

This month time seemed to be passing by way too fast, I guess that has everything to do with the events and activities we engaged in since the early days of the month.

Just three days into this month, myself, Sarel and Kholekile, took a little trip to Admirals and Snoekgat. At Snoekgat Sarel did some fishing and as nothing was happening, Kholekile said this is "Snoekless gat" and we all thought that way since Sarel caught only one snoek and that was long since we have been there, but otherwise it was fun, Edinburg also came passed us there.



We had two Saturdays of grass cutting, Charlene and Mellany's birthdays and of course, the exploring of the island. Since I did not bring any presents from home, I found myself in the brown store, cutting and

crafting wood to make birthday presents for the ladies and that was not easy and there was a time when I wanted to give up but I am glad I didn't. It would have been really bad not to give them something on their birthdays.



Having two birthdays in one weekend was really special, we had a great time baking the cakes, braaing, cooking, decorating the bar and most importantly, celebrating the most precious days in their lives.

One Sunday morning there was a trip to Gonydale and I was the only one left in the base as I was working day shift. We all

knew that someday this was going to happen, so, it didn't bother me to be left all alone for more than half of the day.

Just a day after the Gonydale trip, myself, Kholekile and Mellany went to South Peak. When we were resting at the top, there came a curious Gough bunting, it started jumping around Mellany's backpack and even went as far as too close to her. We even saw Edinburg sailing on the south west side of the island. On our way back we went to the cave, it wasn't easy and it seems soon the cave is going to be inaccessible. All in all, we had a wonderful time that day.

On the latest, Thursday 29/11/2007 we were at the crane point by 5 o'clock in the morning to meet our guests, John Cooper, Brian and Richard who will be with us here for 3 months. It is a great pleasure having them here even though we won't see much of them due to their work.

So long, God bless!!!

Nkoane Mathabatha



Warning to all smokers: smoking can cause this allergic reaction.

A very busy month is now behind us. Hiking, grass-cutting, arrival of John Cooper and two birthdays were some of the highlights, but there is many more not mentioned.

The team members are all well and are proud to submit the November “Gough Bunting”

Everyone back in the civilisation going on leave during the summer holidays must enjoy it and be safe.

From the crew here on Gough, have a pleasant festive season and prosperous New Year.

Sarel Steyn

Climate Stats: November 2007

Pressure

Ave. Max	1017.5 hPa
Ave. Min	1008.8 hPa
Average	1013.2 hPa
Maximum	1035.3 hPa
Minimum	990.2 hPa

Temperature

Ave. Max	15.7°C
Ave Min	9.6°C
Average	12.7°C
Maximum	21.6°C
Minimum	4.3°C

Humidity

Average	74%
Maximum	94%
Minimum	34%

Max Wind Gust	37.3 m/s or 134.3 km/h
---------------	---------------------------

Rainfall

Total	160.0 mm
Highest in 24h	61.6 mm
Total days with rain	15 days
Total days >1mm	14 days
Total sunshine	226.3 hours

Gough 53 team members

Charlene Oppel - Metkassie

Johan Hoffman – Radio Tech

Kholekile Cita - Medic

Mellany McPherson – Chief Metkassie

Nkoane (Jack) Mathabatha – Metkassie

Sarel Steyn – Diesel Tech (Team Leader)