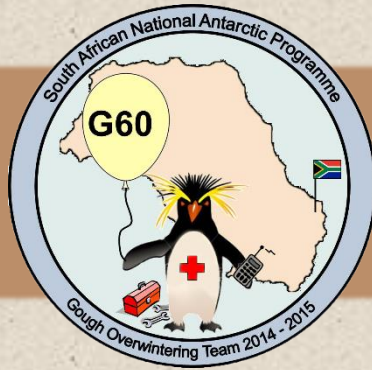


# G60



# Gough Bunting

November 2014



Northern Rockhopper Penguin chick

Summer is in the air and chicks are hatching

## From the editor

The end of November brings us to two months on the island. In the last month we have had our first birthday party- Chris turned 24 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November and we had a Halloween themed birthday bash. With summer in full swing we have had a lot less rain and a lot of activity with the seabirds. We have seen Skua chicks, Southern Giant Petrel chicks, Rockhopper Penguin chicks and on one occasion a Broad Billed prion chick.

We are going to run a cutest chick competition for our time here on Gough. Another competition that we are excited about is the photo of the month competition where the team members have chosen their favourite photos of the month, and we ask you, the readers, to please email your favourite photo selection through to

[mish.risi22@gmail.com](mailto:mish.risi22@gmail.com) and the winner of this month will be announced in the following article.

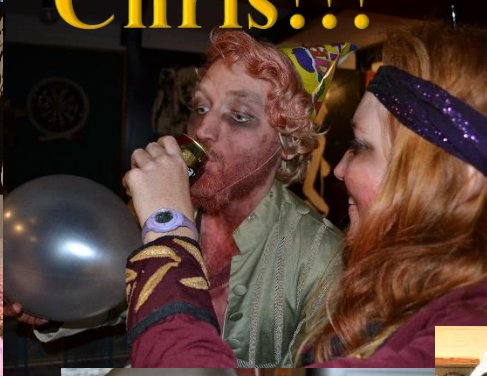
Another exiting event from this month was the arrival of the Edinburgh ship which bought us some packages from home. Over the last month there has been a noticeable improvement in the cooking of all team members and baking has also become a regular pastime.

Before the next Bunting is published it would have been past Christmas and New Year so G60 would like to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and prosperous 2015.

Michelle











## From the Team Leaders Office

Eleven weeks has passed since we have left Cape Town and we only have an estimate of 46 weeks left before we put foot ashore the mainland again! I am not really counting the days but since I am also running the food store I need to constantly work out the usage and projected usage and ration accordingly. For example; more popular products like cheese I will have to work out the amount of stock on hand and then I will know I have 2 per week available and will make it available accordingly.

Some of the items were handed out to the team members like for instance the chocolate slabs, quality street chocolates and crisps and some fruit juice. Everyone was therefore treated fair and of course this is also then referred to as 'Island currency' as you can bargain and trade between team members. Not all of us have a sweet tooth and I have already seen a couple of happy trades and handshakes, all in Great Spirit!

We have also celebrated Chris's birthday on the first of November which was a great event. Birthdays are always 'big' and special on the Islands!

The Edinburgh (fishing vessel) arrived at the Island and we have received some service parts for our generators along with some herbicides for the field workers in their ongoing fight against the alien plant- *Sagina*.

However; great surprise was 'pressies (gifts) from Tristan da Cunha Island'!! Trevor and Tina Glass as well as George Swain have treated each of us with a nice new wool beanies, field guides, 2 x chocolate cakes which never made it passed our dining table, a few fresh banana breads and fruit cakes as well as 'date slices' (which was also hijacked

and parked next to the coffee table). There was also Tristan Crisps (homemade crisps better than well-known brands on the mainland!) All I can say is once again to all the friendly people of Tristan; 'on behalf of Gough 60 Thank you very much'!

A couple of team members also made use of the opportunity to receive some parcels from loved once back in SA. Mine came all the way from Brits where my kids took a gift to Fritz (Fritz anglers paradise), a very good old friend of mine in Pretoria. I purchased some fishing tackle from him and he made up the final parcel and couriered it down to Cape Town. From there a friend took it along with David's parcel to the shipyard and a few weeks later, happiness!

When the ship arrived we were excited like children in front of a Christmas tree! We made radio contact with Captain Clarence and it was so nice to hear his voice again! I have to make a point of one day meeting him in person and shaking his hand. He is an old time hero of teams over the years and has brought a lot of smiles, and like the modern people say 'a good aura' along with his voyages!

We went down to crane point, and then Werner's radio failed for some reason and he was our spotter on the lookout ledge! Luckily the coxswain of the little boat knew exactly what was going on and he gave me hand signals which I relayed back to David (the crane operator) as he has to perform blindly. The operator can't see over the edge of the cliff. We managed to get everything safely ashore and hauled it back up to the house. A lot of excitement after weeks in isolation on the island.

I end this with a feeling which is hard to put down on paper; a feeling of being humbled by the love of people around us that enjoy to walk the extra mile and to put in a tad of extra care to make one feel special. Thank you to





all of you out there who are understanding and supportive, Gough60 really does appreciate you all!



## Trial by fire

*By Werner Kuntz*

Gough Island has many traditions, from men refusing to shave, to earning the right to become a Gough Islander. The right of an islander is earned by partaking in a rite of passage, in our case completing the gauntlet of the king of Gough.

It is customary for any newcomers to Gough to accept the challenge to face the gauntlet. The rite of passage is a tradition dating back to the first expeditions to Gough Island. This used to be compulsory for everyone, but in recent years DEA has exempted everyone from compulsory participation, and the tradition still lives on, and everyone feels that this is a tradition too important to let die. Almost everyone new to Gough Island took part in the initiation, and those who did not, had valid reasons not to. The rite of passage was not limited to Gough 60 members, but also included PWD, as well as support personnel such as the doctor, and the Chaplain.

This is an eye witness account of the event that took place on Gough Island on 23 September 2014.

The story of Gough 60 take over rite of passage some say happened as follows. Whether it is true or not, no one will truly know what happened that day. All I can say is, no one was the same afterwards.

On the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September fear was instilled into every new initiate. Propaganda played over the intercom, warning us about the “suffering” that we were going to have to endure. This psychological blow made many of the new initiates weep, although no one wept in the open to appear strong to his fellow man, one could see the fear in everyone’s eyes. The propaganda went on throughout the day,





until 3 pm, when all initiates were summoned to the lounge to wait for the king of Gough to summon each person.

We were met in the lounge by the king's most loyal and powerful witchdoctor, whom some said was responsible for the good food on the island. He taunted us, and inspired fear known by few.



First to be summoned was the veteran leader Tom Mc Sherry, who bravely accepted the gruelling challenge again as a testament to his support to the Gough 60 team. One by one each initiate was summoned, granted a privileged audience with the king. The king's commands were delivered by the king's steward, whom was well versed for the task.



For those of us remaining in the lounge as the first people were summoned, could only hear screams of our comrades as they left the lounge. All we could do at that point was speculate what horrors awaited us as we passed through the door into the next room.

When summoned, you were taken to the tavern, where on his couch the king of Gough ruled with an iron grip.



A very pragmatic man, with gold gilded breast, the envy of all, and a cape that extended to the floor. Always wearing his war helmet, this instils fear to all who gaze at it. The king firmly holding his 5'3 sword.

At his disposal the king's lackeys waited for the opportunity to do the king's bidding.



Once in front of his majesty, the king demanded to know what you were doing on







his island. After attempts to explain what your purpose was, the king demanded of each person to reveal a unique talent. Once the king was satisfied with the results, he gave his blessing.

After a moment of reflection we were whisked away by the king's men. We had to



drink from the king's cauldron, a traditional potion that gave men courage, much needed for the rest of the gauntlet. After consuming the potion, we were taken outside to be

cleansed in the pool of old Jacuzzi. We were



commanded to dunk our heads into the cleansing water of the old Jacuzzi. Some people got overwhelmed by the situation, and completely jumped into the pool of old Jacuzzi. At the point of a sword we were taken to the end of the catwalk, and were instructed to hold onto a long rope. One of the king's men, hosed the unworthy as they ran past to take their places at the



rope. Once all were assembled at the rope we were force marched down to the pit of despair.



The fear very visible in each person's eyes. The final part of the gauntlet was to cross the pit of despair. This would have each person crawl on all fours underneath ten diesel tanks. This was through mud ice-cold to the touch, through a passage that was only about 50cm high.

Each person braved the final part, hoping that they would be able to make it through the icy mud, with all limbs still attached in the end.

Words cannot express what these pictures convey.





Upon completion, at the end after getting up from the tenth diesel tank, each member emerged, part of the alumni of the old



Gough tradition. Each member feeling part of the Gough legacy, knowing that the Gauntlet had proven them worthy to be called Gough Islander.

The Gough Island rite of passage has once again proven the extraordinary people that partake in expeditions to better the lives of South Africans.







## Midlife Blessing

*By Tom Mc Sherry*

Six years ago I left this Island with mixed feelings, like others must have experienced before. We all get our chances and opportunities in life and sometimes we walk away content, but sometimes a bit reluctant as if something went missing. Sometimes life throws an unexpected blow, and sometimes (more often the truth) we just allow opportunities to slip past us.

I will speak a bit about both as it is relevant to my last visit to Gough Island.

My dad was my best friend ever; it hasn't always been like that but as he grew older it somehow just happened. The little wisdom I still have today was inherited from him. He unfortunately passed way too early in the last days of my last expedition on Gough Island. It was hard for me, but like 3 other team members who went through the same trauma that year I also had to cope. The day that we flew over from the Island to the ship I never knew if I would see this Island again and could not stop a tear that rolled over my cheek, nor did I try to hide it.

We slowly sailed around the Island on the way back to SA and we left Gough Island in the mist as commonly seen behind.

The second part I was referring to was the things that we do have control over:

When you come down to the Island as 'base personnel' you have the opportunity to either participate in field programs although it is not required and definitely not compulsory. None of us have too much work either although most islanders are very disciplined and self-driven and will always do what is expected and printed in contracts with pride. Islanders can normally function sufficiently without direct supervision, which is a must have and great characteristic.

Let me no longer drag this out and come to the point! Last time around I had a few visions and expectations but unfortunately not always made use of opportunities that came along and sometimes opted the easy way out by either reading a book or watching a movie. I haven't spent enough time out in the field, and I haven't participated enough with field projects like data capturing.

Little did I know that there will be another change, another go at life where I can make a choice to make a more productive and positive change and contribution! Yes, being happy is mostly a choice. Some people will fall in sorrow, and again quite often by choice. Yes we don't deny that depression, PTSD and stress doesn't have some effect in life. However, the only one that can help you is you yourself. Whatever weight one is carrying around the ankles can mostly be shaken off by choice.

Anyway, this is not a medical or motivational article but just a happy one with a good ending 😊

I have been already to places on the island I haven't seen before on my previous expedition. I intend to visit quite a number of places and to take lots of photos although I have never considered myself as a good photographer. It doesn't matter, as long as we live a productive life and feel content on the end of the expedition....or even the journey. Who knows when life's journey finally ends and how would you like to be remembered?

Here are a few favourite pics!







## Hello from *Thembile* "Thembs" Shazi

Hope you are all doing well. It's that time where I get to keep you updated about what I've been up to this past month. Well I've seen a lot of beautiful creatures here.

I went onto the field with field workers to do some bird work. We did yellow-nose albatross and I have to admit I've never seen such beautiful birds in my life!



This is an Atlantic yellow-nose albatross :) so beautiful.

On that same day we also went up to a mountain which is about 960ft high, I have got to tell you I thought going up that

mountain was a mission! But when I got up there, I didn't regret one bit it has the most beautiful view, and on top of that, I'm sure I shed about a thousand calories that day. Getting back down was so easy though, it's always easier to go down than up. On our way back, we checked up on some Skua nests, and both the birds kept on flying above us and making that angry sound like warning us off. I have to admit those birds kind of freaked me out, and the fact that they eat other birds. Total turnoff. But anyway, as they say, it is part of an eco-system.



Meet the Skuas people!

As you all know that we get turns to cook, yep my turn came and I was so worried that I'll cook terrible dinner. My brothers always complain about my cooking and I was so terrified about cooking for people who I have known for like a month! But I did my best, the first time I prepared spaghetti and mince and then the 2nd made fries and fish and some green beans which was quite nice, I think and easy to prepare. So far so good and I think by the time I get home, I'll be a better cook than I was. And maybe even learn how to braai :)





And there I was :) in the kitchen.

I started going to the gym in October and it's been great, helps me keep fit, as you all know I'm not a gym freak but prefer to hit the road than run on a treadmill but what else can I do, you can't run here since there are no roads but catwalks and I'm enjoying the treadmill, you only need to imagine that you are running outside, works for me :). I'm not on a weight loss mission or something but just want to be in shape and keep fit. I want to break that "everyone who goes onto the expedition gains weight". Hopefully I will keep running until the last day I am here. I don't want people to not recognise me when I get back home, LOL. And by the way I can run in a speed of 8km/h speed for up to 40-45 minutes! Which is pretty cool because when I get back at home I'll be wanting to increase the speed and duration of my runs.



That's the gym :)

I also went to out to do a bird count with Werner one of the field guys, we had to count birds from two areas. What we had to do was count the birds that were on their nest and the other ones that were just wandering around. I was helping with writing down on a notebook, whether the bird was breeding or

just wandering around. We had to cross a river with slippery rocks, was scared that I might slip and fall but I didn't and thank God the river was not full, thought it was going to be since it was raining the previous night. By the end of that bird count I was tired but again easy calorie shedding ☺

Yep, I went up to up a mountain and if you look at the pic from the left hand side, you can actually see the base in the background :)



The other night I was working night shift, and after releasing the balloon from the upper air room, I saw a little cute bird next to the hydrogen tank. It must have seen the light and was drawn by it, I think it was a little bit stunned. I took it out side, wanted it to fly but it just stood there on my hand not wanting to fly. But after a moment or so it did fly away. It was actually great to have it in my hand :). And the following night I kept on thinking it might come back! But sadly it didn't.





That's the little bird I was telling you about!  
Cute hey

At the end of the month, Tom, Michelle and I went to Seal Beach. And my, it's so beautiful. I didn't know that seals were like crocodiles, like when you get between them and their habitat they attack you because they see you as a threat. But being there, I now know what to do before passing onto penguins, you just need to clap your hands and they run and then you can pass through, interesting stuff eh :) I was so lucky to find that the elephant seal was still around, that thing is so big, but yet so interesting! I saw it yawn, and can you believe it covered its mouth while yawning!! Unfortunately didn't get a pic of it while it was yawning, that would have been so cool to see. We then went on to the penguins, I was so excited to see them, and I mean who wouldn't be. It was my first time actually seeing penguins live not on TV for a change :) and the most interesting thing about them is that they don't run away when you get close to them, you just have to approach them in such a way that they don't feel threatened. They are such beautiful cute fluffy little things! It was great to actually see them up close. I'm so going to go there more often and hopefully I'll see their chicks, and maybe I'll make new friends :). I had a really great time at Seal Beach and will go back soon. It's so peaceful down

there, next time I might actually bring a book with me to read while sitting with penguins.



Every day I see this beautiful nature that surrounds me here I think of how great God, Jehovah is for creating such beautiful living and non-living things that we see on earth.

**Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created."**

I know that recently hasn't been a great month for you all, losing two family friends that I've known my whole life has been hard on us all but we shall not fear for God is with us and he sees what the devil has done, and you all know that his time is short now. **1 Peter 5: 8, 9 and 10** states that we must take a stand against him, by having solid faith in Jehovah and he will make us strong and firm. We'll get through this. My condolences to the Dlamini and the Biyela families. I know what they are going through.

So, that is all for now my dear loved ones. Till next time. Keep well. I love you all and miss you very much. Sending all my love to you all. Stay safe till we see each other again.





## Message from the bird lab

*By Michelle Risi*

Summer is a busy time for us in the bird lab as many of the seabirds on Gough Island are summer breeders. So we have decided to dedicate an article every month to one of the seabird species that we work on. For the month of November we have chosen to tell you about the Northern Rockhopper penguin. This is the only penguin species that breeds on Gough Island and has the largest crest of crested penguins.



Curious Rockhopper nibbling on boots.

These penguins return to the island in September and pairs can be spotted sitting together on rocks (the male generally has a larger beak than the female).



Some Rockhopper pairs and loafing individuals at Seal Beach.

Egg laying starts near the end of September. Each nest generally has an A egg which is small and usually fails and a B egg which comes out later and generally has the “fittest” chick. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November we saw the first hatched chick and we return to the monitoring colony at Seal Beach every 5 days to record the status of marked nests and do measurements of the chicks. Skuas have quite an appetite for Penguin eggs and chicks and so some nests fail due to being preyed upon by Skuas.



No surprise which chick is the A chick and which is the B chick?

Chicks grow incredibly quickly and some assume the shape of a beach ball after feeding (see picture below in cute chicks category). For now there is always an adult on the nest with the chick but when the chicks grow large enough the adults will leave them to go and feed and the chicks form crèches where several chicks run around together (will have to post pictures of this in a later article).

Looking forward to December when the Sooty Albatrosses and Atlantic Yellow Nose Albatross will start hatching.

Have a great one.





## Medical backup on the Island

*By Thomas Mc Sherry*

If you have a loved one on the Island, or maybe considering to come down yourself I am sure the thought must have crossed your mind what the medical backup would be like? As all the team members got sent to attend a level one first aid course during team training one would hope that there will be some better level of medical care available!

Since the early days of these expeditions into the remote ocean and islands, the Department of Environmental Affairs have always backed it with qualified doctors on the ship, paramedic on the island and a very well equipped clinic with limited dental care as well.



The medic will go on additional training courses such as; 'dental emergencies at Simons town', ATLS (Advanced trauma life support), ITLS (International trauma life support) as well as informal X-Ray training. With the technology nowadays one can mail X-Rays to a radiologist who will give specialist advice on the required treatment.

We have a wide variety of medications; from normal sinus allergies and headaches all the way to scheduled sedatives in the unlikely event, should we ever will need it. We also have ventilators, ECH monitors and enough

oxygen to maintain a medical or trauma case for weeks.

Now for another tricky question: What will happen if a field worker let's say break his/her leg high up in the volcanic mountains, a few kilometres away from base? As we all know hiking is more than a challenge on this muddy and slippery terrain with all the bird borrows which will always catch you out when least expected! Well, although it will take some time the medic will hike with a rescue team up the mountain trail all the way to the patient, stabilize the patient and most likely pitch a tent and stay the night before an early morning attempt to start carrying the patient down the slopes back to base in a stoke (basket) stretcher. However, let's hope it will never be necessary although we will always be prepared should anything happen.

Health and Safety on the Islands is also playing a major roll nowadays and during take over we had some lectures by Mr Talip who also left us with enough study material and also contribute with long distance advice.

Medical support is also available from doctors and specialist on request, and in the most extreme case where we will need to CASEVAC a patient back to a medical facility in SA the Department will assist with one of many support vessels.

Rest assured, the team has got good medical support!







## Flourishing Follicles

*By Christopher Jones*

Days filled with splendid scenery, a fresh wind on your face and the sounds of birds in your ears. Countered by cool, sometimes starry, nights with a warm drink in hand sharing anecdotes among the team. Indeed the best of times. Although times that seem to induce certain grooming choices that seem to be a sort of tradition on islands. I am alluding to head and facial hair proliferation if you were thinking about something else.

Looking around Gough house one sees many old team photos of wild woolly men, the type of men that could survive days in the bush with just the bush on their face. I was told that letting your head/facial hair run riot started with a bet between team members to see who could be most unrecognisable to their family and friends when returning to South Africa. Seems like a good enough reason...

This expedition, it seems only Werner and I are the ones who are transcending shaving, perhaps appropriately so for those chilly evenings up at Gonydale. Considering the advent of the internet and social media, means we most likely won't be fooling anyone when we arrive back home. So we're not doing it as a bet but probably just to see how hairy we can become. Surpassing the itchy phase I think we are well on our way to resembling the long hair and bushy beards in the old photos. The next follicular update will be in about 3 months to document our progress.







## Cutest chick competition.....



A: Southern Giant Petrel Chick



B: Northern Rockhopper  
Penguin Chick



C: Sub-Antarctic Skua Chick





Photo of the month  
competition!



Yellow-Nose Kisses



Soaring with Sooty Albatrosses





## Final thought.....

If ever you don't have icing sugar and you feel like making a delicious cake, but you do happen to have some Strawberry Nesquik lying around. Have no fear.

Chris MOST EXCELLENT Jones discovered this month that Strawberry Nesquik is 96% sugar and so can easily be used in place of icing sugar for making icing, the end result is a pink delicious strawberry icing. We <3 island cakes.

