



# **SANAE 47**

**47<sup>TH</sup> SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL  
ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION**

# **NEWS**

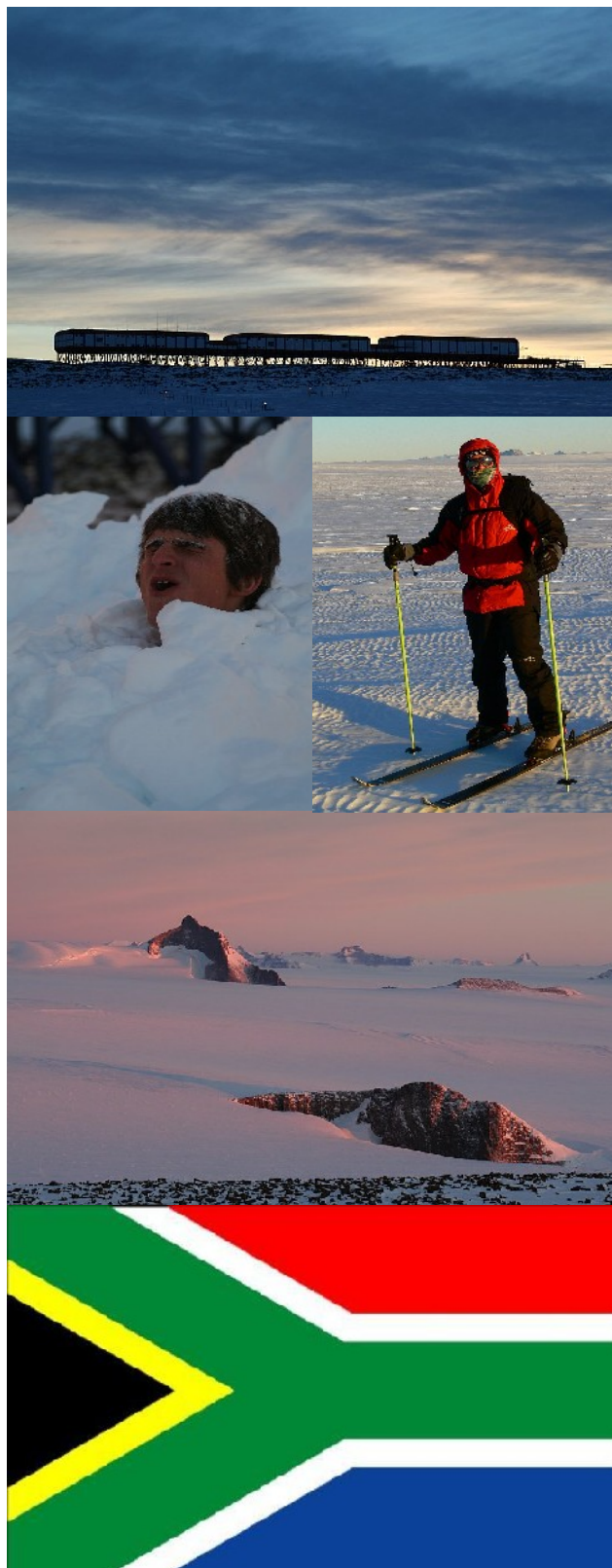


## **APRIL 2008**

## In this Newsletter

- **The Month in Focus** – we look back on the April that was, and remember the highs and lows.
- **Birthday Boy** – we celebrate with Morgan under a starry sky as the team's youngest member gets a little older.
- **Medicine in Antarctica** – Ross describes an event which has become Antarctic legend, and the challenges of tracking down the original story.
- **Supporters** – Who's back home making our stay on the ice a pleasure?
- **How can I learn more?**
- **Weather** – Statistics for April
- **Parting shot** – A taste of the beauty of Antarctica.

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This newsletter reflects the experiences of the individuals in the overwintering expedition team. Opinions may not reflect the official policies of the SA Government, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism or the Directorate: Antarctica and the Islands.



## The Month in Focus

As the days started to shorten and the temperatures dropped steadily, we made our final preparations for the winter. Memorable moments included...

...the April Fool's Day pranks, with magical appearance of glad-wrap everywhere, objects in front of doors, mysterious fizzy sugar and a polar bear attack...

...the stunning aurora of the 4<sup>th</sup>, filling the southern sky with bands of colour (see the picture on the front page)...

...medical training for the team, helping them become assistants for surgery or minor procedures in the case of an emergency...

...bringing in the heavy vehicles and most of the skidoos for the winter, and the challenges of working with the synchrolift and hangar door which were coated in ice from heavy storms...

...finally settling the question of what would win in the battle of Skidoo vs Challenger – and then marvelling at the robust nature of the humble Alpine skidoo that survived anyway...

...learning the basics of cross-country skiing up and down the ice road to the depot, and then getting some serious exercise in two walk/ski excursions around Vesleskarvet...



...repairs to the riometers, HF radar and magnetometer, all damaged by hurricane-force winds and static electricity buildup...

...Movie Marathon Week, in which we all presented favourite movies – Daleen with the French-language and quirky 'A Very Long Engagement', Santjie with the animated 'A Bug's Life', Morgan choosing 'A Knight's Tale', Ross with Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing', Richard and 'Fried Green Tomatoes', Saz bringing us home with 'Tsotsi', Lewellyn's 'The Matrix' and then the bonus movie 'Caveman'. The week was ended with the Antarctic special, 'The Thing', - a horror movie set on an Antarctic research base...

...games nights, with raucous Balderdash, Trivial Pursuit and Noot vir Noot...

...'mowing the lawn' (also known as removing excess snow build-up in front of the base), with four 'dozers moving in sweet simultaneous symmetry...

...multiple unsuccessful attempts to locate the SANAE IV geocache – curse you, Haggishound!

By the end of April, daylight was limited to only a few short hours, and we will be plunged into the permanent polar night in mid-May. Who knows what the winter has in store?

## Birthday at the Base – Celebrating under Stars

It's been two and a half months since the summer members left us for good, and the mood signaled a time for a good team get together. The opportunity presented itself when our youngest team member had his birthday. This year 13th of April fell on a Sunday, and Morgan had all the luck in the world to turn 24 in one of the most beautiful places on Earth.

With Morgan living with his head between the stars most of the time, Santjie decided that it was fit to have a Space Party, where team members would be allowed to dress up as anything OUT OF THIS WORLD!

The happy occasion was planned as a big surprise, with the biggest challenge keeping the young man in the dark. Preparations started early with Anton making three dimensional planets and Richard cutting out and spray painting stars. Ross was the dedicated person to keep him busy, and distracted him with a prolonged inspection of the scientific installations. With them enjoying themselves, the rest slaved away to turn the Sastrugi Bar into a celestial wonderland. A glowing orb (or aurora dome, depending on the observer) of soft light illuminated the intergalactic plane of stars, planets and other unidentified flying objects. In between decoration, food preparation and costume design the time was flying past, hastening for the big moment to arrive.

At 7 o'clock on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, various creatures were trotting the corridors of SANAE IV, hiding from the birthday boy. With his costume ready, the food prepared and the expectations high, the only thing missing was Morgan. Four interesting characters marched to the top physics lab to arrest an innocent individual. Darth Vader (Ross) and Bubblewrap Man (Llewellyn) escorted Morgan to the bar, with a space cadet herald (Daleen) doing the talking as APO II (Santjie), a technologically advanced space rocket, handed Morgan his

Astronaut suit. The mission has been launched with success!!

Dinner was served with a flourish, where nebula fillet with supernova pepper sauce was orbited by creamy potato bake, leading to a perfect Hubble picture of culinary pleasures. Gerhard, Neels and Anton masqueraded as the three Space Musketeers, with Saziso ready for outer space temperatures in his red freezer suit and Richard the first Green Indian from Outer Space. We were warped into a parallel universe, where space-time was bent into an endless night of fun and games. The fun and games got damped a bit after I kicked by foot against the wall and dislocated a toe. X-rays showed no permanent damage, and the 12 o'clock birthday celebrations commenced with laughter and merriment. A quick run through the snow and a looking at the distant stars at -18°C, emblazoned this memorable evening into our memories until the Milky Way fades and dies.

The next day, on the actual birthday, Morgan was treated to a traditional snow bath. Lying in a 3 foot hole, covered in snow and ice, he was reminded of his first living hours in the world, but maybe not as warm as he would've wished to be. A cake in the shape of the SANAE base, with a distinct pink tint in the icing, closed off the occasion.

We hoped you had the best birthday ever Morgan!!

-Daleen Koch



## Medicine in Antarctica – Chasing Down a Legend

Down here in Antarctica with a reasonable amount of free time, it is easy to let the mind and body slowly descend into the sweet abyss of ennui. I'm especially conscious of what this year means to my career; certainly it is an unparalleled life experience and I'm learning many skills (leadership, management, paperwork, snow-shovelling), but medically it has the potential to be a vacuum. Coming from a hectic ER job into a setting where I have to consult once or twice a week might sound wonderful, but I'm acutely aware that each passing day in Antarctica is at the expense of 30-100 patient's worth of experience and procedures that I would have been performing back home. To counter the inevitable rust, I have made several promises to myself: I spend time doing minor tasks with surgical implements to maintain dexterity; study for specialist examinations; take part in online discussions and tutorials; and read as many relevant journal articles as possible.

Of course, most of the articles that cross my computer screen are in the fields that I favour - emergency medicine, anaesthesia and critical care, trauma, wilderness, remote and isolated medicine: it's easier to pay attention to a paper if I can apply it to my current environment. While reading a paper on the management of appendicitis in remote environments I came across a reference to an event which has become Antarctic - if not urban - legend. A doctor at a remote base contracted appendicitis, and lacking any other medical-trained help, had to remove his own appendix under local anaesthesia. I had heard the story through enough sources to believe there must be truth behind it, and when I saw the reference I immediately became obsessed with getting my hands on the original article.

As one might expect, finding an online source of an article published in 1964 in a Soviet journal is not a simple task. I was able to find sources that quoted the reference, and obtain a 2004 article in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons that quoted the text, but Rogozov's original eluded me. However, I have a source in times of need - the [international Critical Care Mailing List](#). CCM-L is a collection of brilliant (and sometimes eclectic!) minds, and has brought me many hours of learning and amusement. The doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied professionals on the list as a collective are also incredibly resourceful, multi-skilled and internationally situated: many odd requests have successfully been solved by this hive mind. I duly posted my request and sat back to watch the fireworks.

Over the course of a few days the story unfolded - two separate CCM-L'ers found physical copies of the journal listed with libraries in Washington DC and at Canterbury University in New Zealand. Incredibly, a member was good friends with Vladislav Rogozov, a Czechoslovakian anaesthetist, who is the son of Dr Leonid Rogozov, who had performed the operation on himself on 30 April 1961. The story was published again in an article written by Rogozov junior in a Czech popular science magazine (*Vesmir*, 2004), which had photographs of the event and the surgeon/patient playing with a penguin during his subsequent recovery. Interestingly, Leonid Rogozov was 27 at the time of the surgery - close to my own age - and the event occurred at the Novolazarevskaya base, which is the closest Russian base to SANAE IV (about 800km away) and now a major local air hub during the Antarctic summer.

At that time, a fellow CCM-L'er was amazed by how small the world seemed to be, remarking *"Truly this shows how small the world has become when a South African physician living in Antarctica can make a request on an American*



*listserv that is answered by a Czech anesthetist who happens to know the son of the Russian surgeon about whom the article was published. (Now all we need is for one of our Kiwi colleagues to say he left it in the home of one of our Indian compatriots.)" ... little did he know...*



Another dedicated list member was working on the Washington DC library angle, so I turned my attention to New Zealand. Via the Canterbury University library website I was able to find the reference and contact the librarian via email. In the meantime, another prominent New Zealand ICU specialist was on the case, and had contacted a fellow critical care specialist who also just 'happened' to have an appointment at Canterbury's engineering department (yes, I know, I couldn't make this weirder if I tried) to have a look when he was on campus. However, the library archivist beat him to it, and a scanned copy of Leonid Rogozov's 1961 article arrived in

my email - sent from New Zealand, by a Malaysian librarian. It is a very small world indeed.

In plain, almost emotionless language, Rogozov describes the diagnosis and preparations for the operation. He recognised his own illness and worsening condition, but realised that the absence of a support aircraft and inclement weather precluded evacuation to another base. Appendicitis can be rapidly fatal if the appendix is allowed to burst, so the course of action was decided: with the team's meteorologist holding the retractors, a driver to hold the mirror and other scientists passing surgical implements, he sat in a reclined position and cut out his own appendix under local anaesthetic. During the operation he passed out, but was able to continue and complete the procedure in a little less than two hours. He records his post-operative condition as 'moderately poor' but goes on to say that he made a full recovery and had resumed all duties in two weeks. Truly, the man deserves his position in Antarctic legend.

Other stories of feats of medical ingenuity in Antarctica exist; the American doctor at the South Pole who diagnosed her own breast cancer by biopsy is a more recent example. The great Antarctic continent seems to culture creativity amongst those who dare to occupy it: scattered as we are into insignificance in the great emptiness, it is humankind's ingenuity rather than our technology which shines brightest.  
-Ross Hofmeyr



## SANAE 47 Supporters

The team of has been privileged to have enthusiastic support of individuals and companies back home in South Africa, who have shown their personal and social commitment to furthering scientific knowledge through applied research. Although the team's necessities are met by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's Directorate: Antarctica and the Islands, under which SANAE falls, we have had many personal donations of comfort items, specialised clothing and equipment to make our long year of isolation more enjoyable. In no order of importance, our supporters include:



**First Ascent** ([www.firstascent.co.za](http://www.firstascent.co.za)) are a South African company who have a long history of making top quality mountaineering and outdoor clothing used by many of SA's top climbers and outdoor enthusiasts. They were delighted to support the team as we expanded on our already extensive wardrobes of issued clothing, making sure that we'll all be warm, dry and comfortable while working in the world's harshest environment.



Specialist suppliers **RAM Mountaineering** ([www.rammountain.co.za](http://www.rammountain.co.za)) gave us incredible support in acquiring outdoor equipment of the highest quality, from headlamps through to crampons.

**BondiBlu** ([www.bondiblu.co.za](http://www.bondiblu.co.za)) make eyewear

strictly for the adventurous, and have a strong tradition of supporting the Antarctic teams. They donated a pair of high-quality sunglasses to each team member...and then threw in sun and skin-care products as well, keeping our eyes and skins safe from the intense radiation in summer.

Adventure film-makers **Fresh Air Crew** gave each member of the team a peak cap, warm fleece beanie (a real favourite) and a t-shirt in support. See some of their prize-winning work at [www.freshaircrew.com](http://www.freshaircrew.com).



**Kanu Wines** are a well-known wine farm between Cape Town and Stellenbosch, and have won several awards for their produce. They donated wonderful wines, including the sublime Limited Reserve Merlot which has blown off our woolly socks.

Cape Town author **Greg Hamerton** kindly donated a copy of his new fantasy novel "The Riddler's Gift" to the team, which will be added to the SANAE IV library. The book, published by Eternity Press ([www.eternitypress.co.za](http://www.eternitypress.co.za)) is the first in the Lifesong trilogy, an epic fantasy tale.



Previous SANAE expedition leader and doctor **Farouk Parker** (SANAE 40) contacted us out of the blue with a donation of hundreds of movies and many hours of music, which has been added to the base library to be enjoyed in the dark winter months.

Businessman **Tom Cook** donated a new set of weights and exercise equipment to the base, to supplement the excellent gym. Hopefully by the time summer comes around again we'll be fit enough to lift all the boxes of new supplies ;)

## ORMS MIKE ORMROD PRO PHOTO WAREHOUSE

**Orms ProPhoto** in Cape Town has a longstanding relationship with the Antarctic Expedition, and honoured this as usual with very competitive rates on all types of camera equipment for the team. Considering some of us spent several month's salary making sure we have the best kit to record our expedition for posterity, the generosity of Mike Ormrod and his excellent team was well appreciated. They can be found online at [www.orms.co.za](http://www.orms.co.za)

**Pepperdew Piquanté Peppers** make something special, a fruit somewhere between a tomato and a red pepper. If you haven't tasted pepperdews, you don't know what you are missing. Perfect on pizza, we despaired at the thought of leaving them behind, until Pepperdew donated enough peppers and pepperdew sauce to last us through the year. Awesome!



**Allesverloren Wine Estate** is well-known in the Cape, and jumped at the opportunity to donate wine to the team, which has been a firm favourite.

Cape Town artist and graphic designer **Jacob Krynauw** of **K2 Design** produced the wonderful SANAE 47 logo *pro bono*, and then went on to design the striking expedition t-shirts which have become very sought-after.



The shirt, of course, would be incomplete without the perfect Antarctic cartoon, supplied by freelance cartoonist **Royston Robertson**. See more of his work at [www.royston.dircon.co.uk](http://www.royston.dircon.co.uk)

**JP Bredell Wines** donated some of their fine wines and incredible John Platter 5-star port to the team. Their dark label brings immediate smiles to the dinner table.

An entire box of **new books** was donated by the **Kane Book Club**, which has been added to the base library to be enjoyed by teams for years to come.

**Caturra Coffee** is behind many of the best cups of coffee you've tasted at restaurants around SA, and now they are helping us wake up with a smile in Antarctica as well. With 100kg of their finest coffees, we'll be warm in the darkest winter months, ensuring 'a lifestyle with taste'.



**KWV** is a well-known South African cellar who have supported the Antarctic teams many times in the past, and we were luckily no exception. To stave off the cold they donated some of their excellent 5-year brandy and sweet Red Muscadell.

**Peninsula Beverages** made a very kind donation of cases of soft drinks including Coke, Fanta, Sprite, etc. Although we have large supplies of food and drink, there is something wonderful about opening a cold Coke so far from home – it becomes a real treat.

You can always trust **South African Breweries** to come to the party – they donated cases of assorted beers to the team, for the end of those hot days out in the blazing sun....uh, well, you get the idea.

Ask any South African to name things unique to our beautiful country, and it won't be long before they mention **Mrs Balls Chutney**. Mrs Balls is an institution of its own, and has spread around the world. When they heard of the expedition they immediately sent hordes of chutney and personalised Mrs Balls tops to show their support.





**Weltevreden Wine Estate** jumped at the opportunity to provide some fine wines for the team, which have complemented our dinners and brought warmth and mirth. I imagine I can taste the smells of Africa...



The **Overberg Paragliding Club** gave each team-member a long-sleeved shirt, perfect for wear around the base or as a base-layer when venturing out into the cold. Find out more about paragliding and the club at [www.overbergparagliding.com](http://www.overbergparagliding.com)

**Rosendal Private Cellar** are best known to our team for their beautiful rosé wine, but came to the party and donated many wonderful bottles.



**Martingraphix** ([www.martingraphix.co.za](http://www.martingraphix.co.za)) are a Cape Town company specialising in graphic design, advertising and promotional items who were absolutely indispensable in getting the

shirts, badges, stickers and banner done for the team, at discounted rates. We couldn't have done it without them!

**Clinique** very kindly donated skincare products to the team, to keep our mug's healthy and hearty.



**McGinty's Pub** in Benoni were so taken with the idea of the project that the owner immediately pledged his support – thanks guys, we'll have one on you!

(Please, if I've omitted you from this list, contact me immediately so that I can rectify my egregious mistake. Mail Ross on [ross.hofmeyr@sanae.sanap.ac.za](mailto:ross.hofmeyr@sanae.sanap.ac.za))

## How Can I Find Out More About the Expedition?

The Antarctic Expedition is full of interesting aspects, encompassing the scientific work we do, the logistics of working in such a distant and isolated location, and the human factors of being alone for so long. We love to hear from you and grow public awareness of the projects, and for you to be involved. Here are some ideas to learn more:

- Visit the official SANAE website at [www.sanap.org.za](http://www.sanap.org.za) and learn more about the base, the logistics, the science and the people.
- Email the team at [sanae@sanap.ac.za](mailto:sanae@sanap.ac.za) with your questions or news.
- Email team-members directly, using the format below:

[firstname.lastname@sanae.sanap.ac.za](mailto:firstname.lastname@sanae.sanap.ac.za)

- Visit the websites of our sister projects at

Marion and Gough Islands:

[marion.sanap.org.za](http://marion.sanap.org.za), and

[gough.sanap.org.za](http://gough.sanap.org.za)

- Many of the organisations involved have their own pages, and some team-members have personal blogs.
  - The links page on the official SANAP website has plenty- <http://www.sanap.org.za/links.html>
  - The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) – [www.scar.org](http://www.scar.org)
  - The Hermanus Magnetic Observatory - [www.hmo.ac.za](http://www.hmo.ac.za)
  - Ross' blog about living in Antarctica - [www.doctorross.co.za](http://www.doctorross.co.za)

Finally, you can CALL US at normal South African telephone rates by dialling:

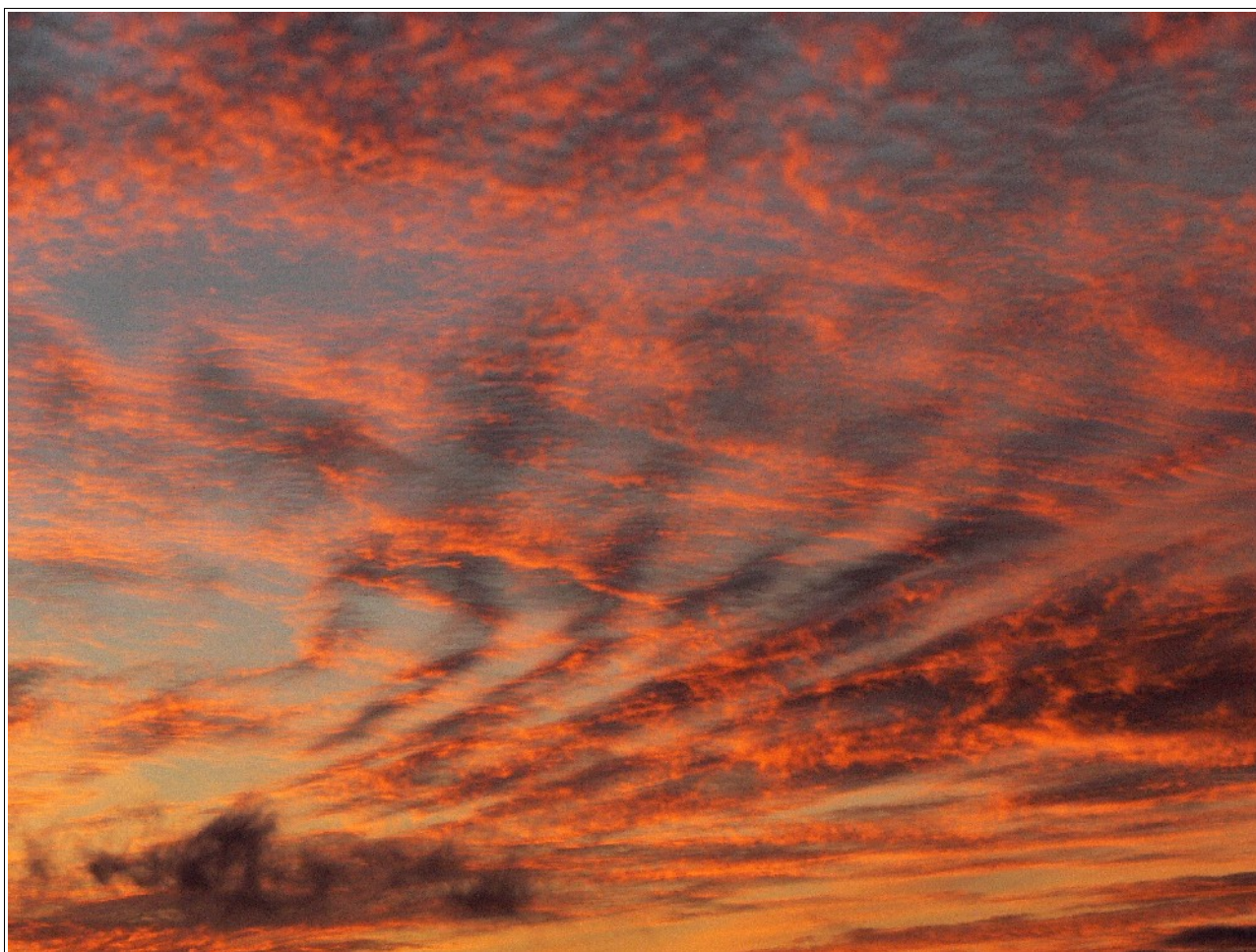
**021 405 9428/9**

## SANAE IV VESLESKARVET

WEATHER STATS: APRIL 2008

	Maximum	Minimum	Average
Pressure	909.4 hPa 24-Apr	858.0 hPa 02-Apr	885.0 hPa
Temperature	-4.7°C 23-Apr	-27.7°C 20-Apr	-14.7°C
Humidity	100% 01-Apr	12% 26-Apr	58%
Wind Gust	42.3m.s <sup>-1</sup> 01-Apr	(152.3km.h <sup>-1</sup> )	

## Parting Shot - Sunset over Vesleskarvet



photograph © Santjie du Toit 2008