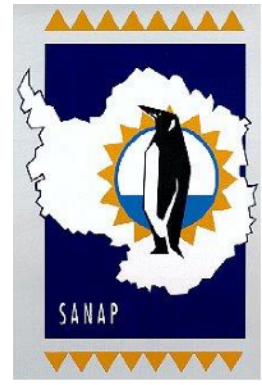




71° Below

SANAE 57 Newsletter
October 2018



Good day everyone! I hope you enjoy this latest newsletter. It contains an article about the base itself, which I've not yet shown in detail! But first lets meet our youngest team member.

Stephanus Schoeman



My name is Stephanus Schoeman. You might also know me by Stephan, Muchacho, Oom, 42, Farnie or Meneer Schoeman. I'm one of the two electronic engineers employed by SANSA (South African National Space Agency) to look after some of their scientific instruments and systems for a number of experiments currently being run here at SANAE IV. Specifically, I am responsible for the SuperDARN HF Radar, GNSS Scintillation receivers and the Ozone Radiometer.

I graduated in 2016 and had just started teaching when I received the advertisement for a position on the S57 team. The opportunity for adventure and exploration immediately

grabbed my attention and soon I was swept along in a frenzy of preparation, excitement and new experiences. Leaving the school where I was teaching was difficult, even though I've only been there for six short months. I learned a lot during that time, including the fact that being a teacher is much more difficult than everyone thinks it is!

Our time in Antarctica is nearly at an end now, except for the considerable mountain of takeover work still lying ahead of us. By now I am really looking forward to seeing some new faces, but also feeling a bit apprehensive of the sudden change. When things get a little overwhelming, though, having fresh onions, tomatoes and fruit again should serve as a big enough distraction.

This past year wasn't easy and posed some challenges, both expected and unexpected. The toughest part was being so extremely far away from my family and friends back home, especially after my brother passed away. It was a long, dark winter. There's a lot I could say about the bad stuff, but ultimately all I can hope for is that we've all learned something - about ourselves, each other and this mad life - and that we will somehow emerge as better, stronger people.

Now the good stuff! I've made some wonderful new friends, whom I got to know to a degree you only get to know someone after having lived with them in a box for 12 months. Out of all the good things that happened, this was the best thing. I've also learned a lot about cooking and baking, including the fact that I really enjoy spending time in the kitchen. Furthermore, I've learned a whole bunch about space weather, Unix systems, electronics and programming. Last, but not least, is the magnificent Antarctic landscape and the Aurora Australis, which we are so privileged to have seen. The pure and humbling sense of awe, peace, ecstasy, serenity and respect as one looks out over the whiteness, or at the mountains in the distance, or up at the crisp night sky, is something I will definitely miss and most certainly never forget.

There's a lot to look forward to back home, too: Reunions with friends and family, a string of holidays and road trips, a few months back at SANSA in Hermanus (such a lovely town that I grew fond of during my training period there), my best friend's wedding and, of course, all of the food - glorious, fresh, different, new, delicious food. Also on the list, but probably not as important, is the sound of crickets at night and birds in the morning, my piano, shopping, YouTube, dogs, plants, a sun that does what its supposed to, and going outside without having to kit up EVERY TIME.

It's been quite the year. Even with its ups and downs, I am grateful for the opportunity - and everyone who played a part in it - to have such a unique and life changing experience.



Weather news

We are still seeing some extreme weather, but the periods between storms are getting longer. And we are hoping to go camping soon! Pictures to follow!

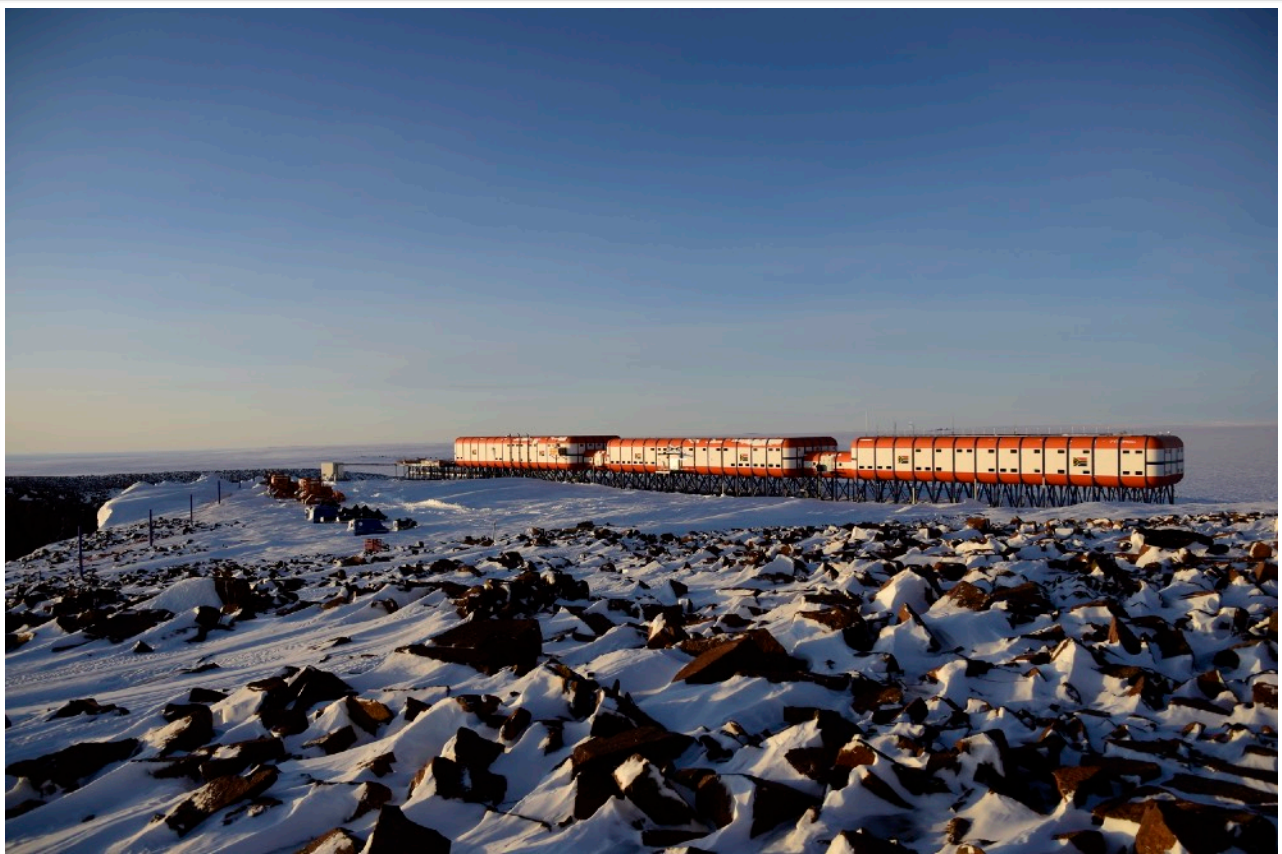
Maximum temperature: -10.0°C
Minimum temperature: -34.2°C
Average temperature: -21.0°C
Strongest wind gust: 39.2m/s (141.1 km/hr or 76.2 knots)

Here's a short clip we made getting into our outdoor gear, as well as a taste of what a moderate storm here is like: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-or8RMda_aDEOr-YxNeBV73Ko78KQhp

Base Tour

Here are a couple of pictures of the base, just to give you a bit of a tour of our home, before it fills up again with the madness of take-over!

The whole base is made up of three double storey structures standing on 4m pylons that allow the snow to blow underneath. The blocks are joined together by the links, which are the main access to the base via stairs that go down to the ground.



A-block is to the far right, B-block in the middle, and C-block on the far left. You can see the heli-deck protruding from C-block. The AB and BC links connect the main blocks. The small white box structure next to the heli-deck is the radar dome, our connection to the world!

The upper level of A-block contains seventeen 2-bed rooms, a communal bathroom, one of the science labs, and a laundry. The lower level contains another science lab, science offices, the medical centre and pharmacy, and the communications office.



Left: Typical A-block bedroom, with 2 beds.
Right: A-block communal bathroom



Top left: Doctor's office and examination room

Top right: Communications office

Bottom left: Chemistry lab where Lux tests the waste water for various parameters

Bottom right: Cobus in his Cosmic Ray office

B-block is the main living area. The upper level holds eleven 4-bed rooms, another communal bathroom, the library and a small lounge, our movie theatre, and the linen store. The lower level holds the dining room, kitchen, dry store rooms, walk-in fridge and freezer, and the waste room where we separate our waste to be transported back to SA.



Left: Typical B-block bedroom.

Right: Lounge area, just next to the library



Left: Linen and laundry store room
Right: Our movie theatre



Top left: Our dining room. We turned the other half into a chill area (**top right**) but during take-over, when there are significantly more people on the base, then this is filled with rows of tables and chairs for mealtimes.
Bottom left: Sastrugi Inn, our barroom. A sastrugi is a basically a pile of windblown snow, which we have experienced...a lot!
Bottom right: Our kitchen. In a word, industrial!

C-block is the technical area. It contains the helicopter hangar (currently filled with snowmobiles, which are stored there during the winter), technical offices, plumbing, electrical, mechanical and the CAT engine storerooms (we need spares for everything on base), the waste water treatment plant, and the vacuum plant which generates the vacuum for the toilets (like on a plane). The gym is also here in C-block.



Top left and right: Our gym, resplendent with a bouldering wall. Sadly none of us are very adept at climbing.

Bottom: The hangar after a storm. We realised that the hangar doors (which are to be replaced this coming take-over) might not be sealing perfectly. That took quite a while to clean up!

So that's the base, in a nutshell. I hope you all enjoyed the picture tour. If you have any questions about the base please don't hesitate to ask!

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A huge thanks to our sponsors who generously donated some of their quality products to the overwintering team to make our winter more homely

