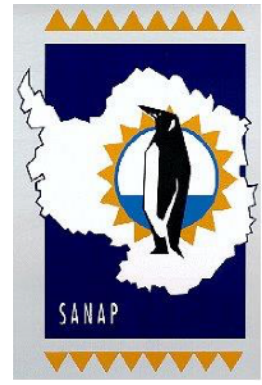




# 71° Below

SANAE 57 Newsletter  
December 2018



So much has happened since the last newsletter that I don't know where to begin! As I am sure you must have guessed take-over has begun! The base is buzzing and there are a whole bunch of new faces around. The construction and maintenance team is also here, with some familiar faces from last year. The new team has also arrived and have started learning their roles in preparation for their upcoming expedition. In this newsletter I want to show some of the activities taking place around the base with the construction crew and the upgrade project. I hope you enjoy!

## Stores and more stores

One of the biggest tasks that needs to happen is the moving out of old stores and bringing in the huge amounts of things that will sustain the take-over crew, as well as the new team that will be living in the base for the rest of the year. A huge proportion of this is the food. We have three food stores in the base, namely the dry food store, the cold store (basically a large walk-in refrigerator), and the walk-in freezer. Expired food is removed from the stores and is shipped back to SA where some of it is able to be donated to charities. Then the enormous task of bringing in the new foods must happen. Each storeroom basically has it's own 6m shipping container. The fridge and freezer containers are refrigerated, which keeps them cool on the journey down south. Once they have been transported to the base then we bring them in one at a time on different days. The container is parked at one of the links and then everyone on the base arrives to help out. A long human chain is formed from the container, up the stairs, along the corridor, and into whichever storeroom is being unloaded. This food will feed the ninety people on the base for the take-over period as well as the nine new over-winterers for the coming months.



### Clockwise from below:

- The team enjoying fresh fruit for the first time in many months! It was a strangely emotional experience.
- The fridge now, packed to the ceiling!
- The human chain carting in tons of stores from the container parked outside. Those outside and in the container are wearing full outdoor gear!
- The dry food store. Lots of sorting to do in there now!



## Take Over Activities

It has been quite an adjustment having so many people on base, after so many months with just the 10 of us. But it's also been fantastic to meet the new team members, and reconnect with friends from the previous take-over. I am seeing the base and the beautiful environment through new eyes and I realise how privileged I have been to be here for this last year.



The view south of us, bathed in the low sunlight that happens around midnight. Lorentzenpiggen to the left in the foreground, Groenehogna in the far distance, and Schumacher to the far right, middle distance.

That being said it has been frenetic! The construction and maintenance crew hit the ground running, arriving on the base and starting immediately with the long list of things that need to be sorted out within a short time frame! New hangar doors, upgrades to the generator cooling system, laying new flooring in C-block and in various places around the base. The hangar itself, having spent the winter housing the snowmobiles, is now protecting 2 helicopters which are to do flights to the various bases during the summer.

The new team are learning their new jobs from the old team. There is a lot to get to grips with within a short time, especially the technical team. And not only the technical aspects, but also the base functioning, the spectacular but dangerous environment, the vehicles, cooking, their new team members, and on and on!



**Left to right:** Sipho learning about the waste water treatment from Pierre; S58 having some cooking lessons from the chefs; snow mobile training from yours truly (thanks C. De Kock for this pic).

The winter depot has been mostly emptied now and summer depot is filling up with sledges, containers and fuel, all busy being used and sorted. There is a lot of waste that needs to be removed from the base and taken back to the ship, which is all sorted in the summer depot. There is a whole team of experienced drivers that arrived with the ship and they have largely taken over this task. Our team did need to do the first two trains to the ice shelf, taking the empty fuel bowzers on the first run, and then a large waste cargo to meet the ship on the second trip. It was a great run. Just six friends on a drive across the ice sheets, dealing with issues that arose, enjoying the scenery. I realised how competent we had all become during the year.



The first CAT train before the ship arrived. We took the empty bowzers to the ice shelf in preparation for take-over.

Cooking for ninety people is no small task and there are two chefs, Chad and Thembi, who are also part of the take over team. That being said, after a month in base, they were quite tired. So to give them both a well deserved day off S57 stepped in and cooked for a day, preparing all three meals. It is a daunting task as we were used to much smaller cooking sessions! But it went well and everyone complimented the food! The new overwintering team will do the same in a couple of weeks time to show off their newly acquired cooking skills.



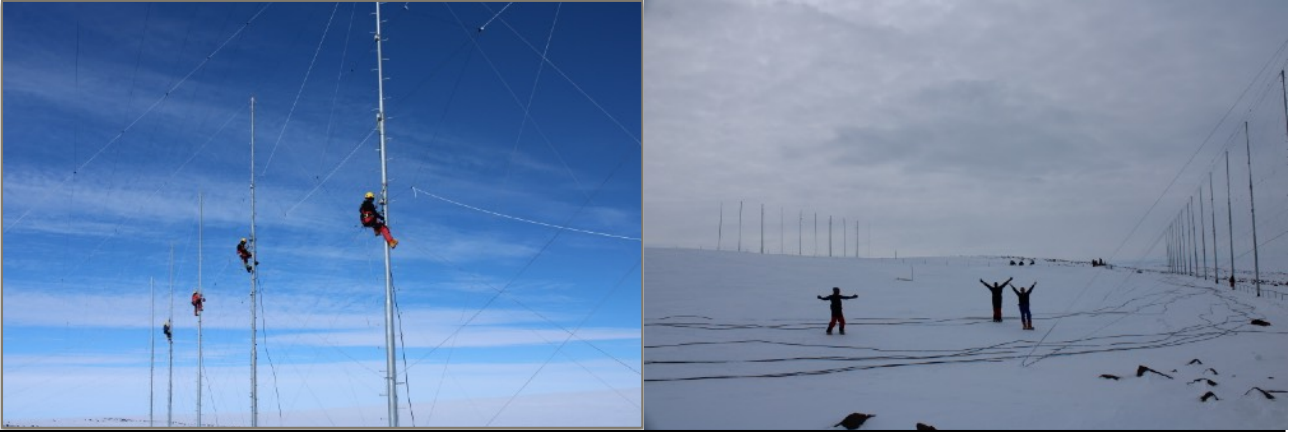
S57 cooking for the day! Left and middle: Breakfast, starting at 4am with Bo making the bacon, and Elias getting tucked into a fish dish. Elias also helped with the sourdough bread which was for lunch. Right: Stephanus, Foster and Cobus doing a fantastic lasagne, as well as a chocolate pudding for supper.

Dozing is a full time job for three people, removing the huge amount of snow that has accumulated over the last year. If this isn't done then slowly over time the base will be buried. Both sides of the base, all around the diesel line and the diesel bunkers, and around the smelter all need to be dozed as flat as possible. It is a huge job which is quite technically skilled and also requires long hours behind the controls.

On top of all these activities SANSA (South African National Space Agency) has sent Kagiso, who is an engineer and has overwintered on Marion previously, to manage a large upgrade project to the superDARN radar, as well as other maintenance to the scientific equipment out here. He brought along a contingent of volunteers to assist. Stephanus and Foster have also been busy handing over to their replacements, Travis and Mpati.



Deep furrows in the parking lot during the dozing, pushing tons of accumulated snow over the cliff. Thanks C. De Kock for the photo!



**Left:** The SANSA team climbing the radar masts, replacing the old cables and laying new cables. **Right:** There are 16 radar masts, all needing new cables, and all the cables needing to feed into new cable trays which need to be dug into the ice, and all leading into the radar hut which collects all the information. Oh, and all the cables need to be exactly the same length to within a few millimeters! Thanks C. De Kock for the photos, once again.

## Recreation

It's not all work and no play! We find time to have a break, relax, and enjoy down time with the new people on the base.



A SANAE IV tradition! Mr Heine Smith (right) prepares a large braai for the whole base every Saturday. He has been doing this every take over for years. Heine is a project manager for the National Department of Public Works and has been coming to Antarctica (and the other islands) on and off for 38 years. He was part of the team that constructed SANAE IV in the early 90s. It's always a pleasure talking to him and hearing his stories! This take over he is ably assisted by Nico Fryer (left) who is an engineer with the consulting company that designed the upgrades for this renovation. Thanks C. De Kock for the pic.



Stephanus and his replacement Travis, and the SANSA volunteers, decorate the dining room for Christmas.



**Left:** There is always an excuse to have a party. Ewald (S58's comms engineer) has a fancy karaoke setup. So here's myself, Cobus, Hloni and Heine giving a stirring yet unrecognisable rendition of a song we all barely know!

**Right:** An ancient Antarctic tradition, the birthday snow bath! Here's Phil, one of the helicopter flight engineers, celebrating his birthday, Antarctic style!

## Weather news

As you can see from the below stats the weather is getting ever warmer. On still days it's possible to go outside for long periods of time with just a light jacket. Sunburn is becoming an issue, as the sun is very harsh. Also, because of the snow and ice it reflects into weird places like inside the mouth and on the underside of the nose.

Maximum temperature: 0.6°C  
Minimum temperature: -14.4°C  
Average temperature: -7.0°C  
Strongest wind gust: 30.6m/s (110.1 km/hr or 59.5 knots)

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