

## THEBUS KOP

Roelof Scholtz, Steynsburg : 7.2.(19)33

The following was written in 1933 by the father of Mrs. Valda Bower (née Scholtz) and given to me for safe-keeping, she being elderly and having no family remaining in South Africa.

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cision by three of the younger Alford's, the youngest a girl of 12, to see what they could do where so many others had failed. Once decided they did not wait long, so one day last month, after informing their parents what they were about to do, they set out to climb Thebus Kop. There were several visitors staying on the farm at the time, so Mr. Alford, finding that the youngsters were determined on the climb, made up a party to accompany them but in reality to see that they came to no harm. Strenuous though the climb was up the slope the youngsters lost no time in attacking the krans when they reached it. It was the little girl, the youngest of the party, who soon picked her way up and directed the others and in a comparatively short time she had all but one or two of the party on top. And so it happened that this little girl had the laugh over all those who for so many years looked upon Thebus Kop as most difficult if not impossible to scale.

Steynsburg  
7.2.33.

*Roelof Scholtz*

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Thebus Kop, from which Thebus Siding, near Steynsburg, gets its name, is not only a well known landmark in these parts but also enjoys a fairly wide reputation all its own. To look at it is very much like so many other Karroo koppies, with its almost perfectly round base and its dolerite krans at the top, but it also differs from its many sisters in the Karroo in that the krans in this case, which is calculated to be 150 feet high, is almost perpendicular all round and is practically unscalable, except by the party of baboons who make their home on top and consider themselves safe from human interference.

It was early in 1911 that I first saw Thebus Kop and was at once struck by the beauty of this perfect piece of nature's handiwork. I soon learned all there was to be told about this Kop; how it was believed that very many years ago someone scaled the krans and was never heard of again; how during the Boer War a British Tommy was said to have climbed the Kop and was rescued four days later with the utmost difficulty by a party of engineers. No one could, however, give me the assurance that any of these stories were true, but I am inclined to believe the one about the British Tommy for the reason that to a this day a ladder-like contrivance made of wire lies at the foot of the krans.

Shortly after my arrival here I made the acquaintance of Hugo Lambrechts, who had arrived here from Cape Town not long before me and who was a member of the Mountain club. Lambrechts was most pleased to hear that I was interested in Thebus Kop and immediately began to discuss the idea of climbing the Kop. When our friends heard of our plan many of them warned us that we were only looking for trouble or, even, death, but all that made us all the more keen. On the 3rd September, 1911, therefore, Lambrechts, another friend and I set out to climb the Kop. The climb proved to be all we expected of it, but we won, or, I should say Lambrechts and I won through, but our third friend Stopped when about 20 feet up the krans and here we found him two hours later clinging to his small ledge of rock almost in hysterics. We had to help him down by means of ropes. On our part, too, we found the descent even worse than the climb itself and I have often since, when questioned about Thebus Kop, declared that I would not care to do the climb again.

For some time after this our climb was talked about as a nine days' wonder, when gradually all interest in Thebus Kop seemed to fade, and for a number of years the Kop was hardly discussed from a mountaineer's point of view. I know of no one who tried the Kop until in 1932, exactly 21 years later several attempts were made to scale the krans, all of which proved unsuccessful. One party set out from Steynsburg early in the year but had their spirits damped at the very commencement of the rock climb. One of the party, a well known rugby Springbok, made the mistake of relying on a loose piece of rock which could not hold his weight. The result was that he came down with several times his weight of rock after him. It was his good fortune (?) to find himself landed in a prickly pear bush, which checked his fall and probably saved his life, but which left him

well studded with thorns.

Later in the year a party from Middelburg, Cape, made an attempt, but came to the conclusion that the rock was not for humans to climb. On their way home they heard of my climb of 21 years ago and, although *they could* not quite accept the story, one of the party wrote to me and I replied giving him a full description of the climb, which I believe he accepted as genuine.

Meanwhile there has been living near the Kop for a number of years now a Mr. Alford with his family, and it is not unlikely that the various accounts of the attempts to climb the Kop were discussed within the *family* and also when visitors came to the farm and gave expression to their admiration of this lovely kop. All this discussion led to a decision by three of the younger Alfords, the youngest a girl of 12, to see what they could do where so many others had failed, Once decided they did not wait long, so one day last month, after informing their parents what they were about to do, they set out to climb Thebus Kop, There were several visitors staying on the farm at the time, so Mr. Alford, finding that the youngsters were determined on the climb, made up a party to accompany them but **in** reality to see that they came to no harm. Strenuous though the climb was up the slope the youngsters lost no time in attacking the krans when they reached it. It was the little girl, the youngest of the party, who soon picked her way up and directed the others and **in a** comparatively short time she had all but one or two of the party on top. And so it happened that this little girl had the laugh over all those who for so many years looked upon Thebus Kop as most difficult if not impossible to scale.

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