MONDAY MONTHLY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN NEWSPAPER

SEPTEMBER 2015





editorial



This image was taken at the annual lantern parade during Clanwilliam's Spring Festival. Facilitated by UCT's departments of drama, art and music, this event celebrates the rock art heritage of the area. For more images, see our photo essay at www.uct.ac.za.

HERITAGE IN THE EVERYDAY

Heritage on the big stage came to the fore with the recent unveiling of a new human ancestor, *Homo naledi*, in the Cradle of Humankind – this after some 1 550 fossil bones were found at the Rising Star (or Naledi) cave in Maropeng in October 2013.

It is no coincidence that this discovery was announced in the month we celebrate our heritage, which is the theme of this edition of *Monday Monthly*, and is illustrated by the jigsaw of images on our cover. The heritage we're celebrating and interrogating is the kind expressed through everyday living.

The idea, really, is to get ourselves to think about what we mean by heritage and by history, and if a 'heritage' can be claimed by any one group, or if there's more to it than heirlooms and custom.

In this spirit we asked people on campus about their names – what their associations are, and what their names suggest about their heritage. Read the responses we received on p6.

Dr Maanda Mulaudzi from historical studies advocates resistance to capitalists' hijacking Heritage Day (24 September) and reducing it to 'Braai Day'. He is also uncomfortable that the idea of a shared heritage seems to mean that we avoid debating what that heritage might be, and how our common history has affected us in many different ways. Mulaudzi explains that while renaming important historical sites after 'heroic' figures can show the right intent, its effect can be diluted if the renaming is not done alongside a deliberate and critical engagement with the ideas and values of the people who are being remembered.

To bring heritage back to the bigger canvas we highlight the work done by UCT archivists in preserving history. UCT Libraries' Special Collections houses more than 1 300 sub-collections, with a cache of books and pamphlets exceeding 85 000 items, and is home to one of the most extensive troves of African film in the world. Discover a handful of the treasures hidden in this archive on our centrespread, as we look at just a few of the most interesting collections.

There's also a short preview of UCT's Recruitment, Development and Retention programme, which launches in late September. You can read about it on this page.

We end off with an adventurer who has not only trekked in the Himalayas on numerous occasions, but also has a penchant for paragliding (not off any Himalayan peaks, mind). The Department of Paediatrics and Child Health's Hilary Barlow regales us with her tales from high places.

The Newsroom Team









RECRUIT, DEVELOP, RETAIN

An institutional culture based on trust, respect and appreciation is what DVC Professor Francis Petersen hopes will come from a new programme aimed at academic staff.

The Recruitment, Development and Retention Programme (RDR) will be launched on 29 September 2015. It has at its centre a triangular relationship between an academic staff member, his/her head of department (HOD), and a mentor (a senior staff member). This programme is not only for new appointees, but will be available to all academics.

The function of the triangular relationship is to assist academics to progress in their careers. For each academic, an agreed career track with clearly defined milestones will be outlined within the context of this relationship.

"We hope the programme will contribute to a more open, inclusive and transparent institutional culture where all members of the academy feel heard and supported," explains Petersen.

The ad hominem promotion process will be reviewed to increase transparency and to reduce subjectivity. Work in this area has already begun, with changes being implemented to the composition of faculty ad hominem promotions committees, to make them more representative in terms of rank, gender and race. The criteria for promotion will also be spelt out more clearly.

Another feature of the programme is the ongoing support offered to those within the triangular relationship. Existing support programmes for academics, such as the New Academics Practitioner Programme (NAPP) and the mid-career Programme for the Enhancement of Research Capacity (PERC), are being looked at to see where improvements could be made. Mentorship programmes across the university will provide the opportunity for mentors to improve their service, while support programmes for HODs are also in the pipeline.

Communicating the programme and reporting on its progress is another central tenet of the RDR.

The pilot project to kick-start the RDR programme will involve a select group of 36 academics. The goal of the project is to increase the number of black South African staff in the professoriate.

"Transformation is a key focus of the university. So as much as this programme is about contributing to



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changing the institutional culture at UCT, it is also about transforming the professoriate," said Petersen.

CORRECTION

The UCT Women in Numbers table last month mistakenly said 46% of staff in the "lecturer" bracket were women. This should have read 59%. We also incorrectly said 60% of total staff were female and 40% male. The correct numbers are 43% (female) and 57% (male) respectively. For the corrected table see http://www.uct.ac.za/ mondaypaper/?id=10067.

MONDAY MONTHLY

Monday Monthly started out in 1982 as a weekly staff newsletter. Since then, it's grown into a monthly publication covering a broad variety of campus life – from research, to student initiatives, to human interest. If you have an interesting perspective on the university, or a great story to tell (whether in words, pictures or any other medium), mail us at newsdesk@uct.ac.za. If you're looking to advertise in the classifieds, or subscribe to our mailing list, drop us a line at Ads-MondayPaper@uct.ac.za. For general information, contact Sharifa Martin at 021 650 5816.

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RENAMING: OPPORTUNITIES AND PITFALLS

Dr Maanda Mulaudzi, a UCT historian and member of the university's Naming of Building's Committee, shared his views with Monday Monthly about the politics, opportunities and potential pitfalls of names in heritage.

Story by Yusuf Omar Photo by Michael Hammond

How does renaming a building or place fit into our idea of heritage in a post-apartheid South Africa?

In many ways, the names we have for buildings, places and streets reflect a particular aspect of our complex history. So for us, as UCT and the country in general, the issue ought not be that we just replace the names of what are now considered unfashionable or unheroic people, but [that renaming forms] part of an ongoing process to transform the institutional culture of the university and society.

This renaming is already under way at UCT, and indications are that in the wake of recent events on campus, it has gained momentum. How we do that is part of the current and ongoing debate. For some it might simply mean the replacing of one name with another. For others it forms part of a critical engagement with that history, and recontextualising it and saying, "Well, what does this mean?"

I'm persuaded by the model adopted on Constitution Hill in Johannesburg; instead of completely erasing the Old Fort Prison and its brutal and oppressive history, it has been integrated into the Constitutional Court. And what this signals is a continual dialogue between the present and the past.

Dr Neville Alexander would have been very uncomfortable with having a building named after him because it would be contrary to his radical politics. So the politics of renaming aren't simply a repetition or replacement of what we're trying to change.

It's important that we address symbols of the past, but with a different politics of commemoration. Leavings things as they are is not an option either.

How does the Naming of Buildings Committee come to the decision of naming a building after a particular person?

In renaming buildings and spaces, it is tempting to take the easy option. We don't want to simply do that: just name a building after some hero, but if you're not really thinking about the more important issues, [like the] visions that these people represent, I'm not sure that that process will necessarily advance transformation.

Is there a risk of deifying a person in naming a building after them, but not critically engaging with their ideas?

Exactly. That's the other thing. The conventional politics of memorialisation is canonisation. Done in this way, though, you effectively tame their ideas while elevating them in some fashion.

Can we live up to their ideas? Can we critically engage with their ideas and see how they fit our changing situations? To what extent are we realising their vision? That to me is how you truly live up to somebody's name.

Do we simply want competing nationalisms, where you replace the previous nationalism with a new version, or do we want something more radical? Renaming ought not to be an event, but a process by which we commit to critically engage with their ideas rather than foreclose that process.

I'm not sure building monuments is the best way to do that, either. That becomes a quick way to domesticate the radical politics with which they are associated, but without fully embracing them at the same time. Imagine a Fanon monument, or look at the Mandela Square monument in Sandton; that's an appropriation rather than an engagement with his ideas.





Dr Maanda Mulaudzi is a lecturer in UCT's Department of Historical Studies.

On competing nationalisms, some argue that renaming is merely throwing out someone's history and replacing it with another group's.

I suppose it's possible to think that if the politics of renaming are not rethought.

For me, it's a process that begins to rethink Cecil John Rhodes, for example, and recontextualise his presence among us now. His history is not just of one group, nor even of just one country. His statue was a celebration of imperialism, of his 'achievements' and of the continued dominance of that legacy. That's the narrow history of some people.

It's not so much that you are replacing or rewriting other people's history. It's telling them that the history that you think is yours is much more complicated than that.

But it will become a case of competing nationalisms if all you do is replace that statue

To what extent can history and heritage be used as euphemisms for privilege that we might want to maintain?

Again, it comes down to saying that something can't be changed because it's my tradition. A black person calling a white man baas: that used to be somebody's tradition. Who wants to maintain that?

It is important for us to know the history of privilege, and white privilege particularly, which continues to the present and which some people are not even aware of.

Think about the old South African flag. It's important to know what it looked like and what it represented, but to wave it and celebrate everything it stood for - that's not going to take us anywhere except to the unexamined past.

It's interesting that we've quickly fastened onto the word 'heritage' rather than history.

The Constitutional Court, where the old prison was integrated into the space as a way of remembering the past. Photo by Andre-Pierre from Wikimedia Commons.

with another statue, without thinking whether that's the best way to commemorate the past. If you put Mandela where Rhodes was, you're simply putting Mandela in this context that remains unchanged.

The part I'm uncomfortable with is that heritage is supposedly meant to be something we agree on. I'm not sure it is a common heritage because we agree on heritage. It is heritage because it is part of our common history, but how history shaped us might be very different, and we can and should continue to debate that heritage and history.

But the way I hear heritage spoken of, it's as if it's something that's beyond debate.

And what do we have as heritage? Braai? Again, I think we can do better than that. And some people are already doing so in various and important ways.

"It's important that we address symbols of the past, but with a different politics of commemoration. Leavings things as they are is not an option either."

REFLECTIONS

History not only tells us where we come from, it also contains valuable lessons. Thus, the process of preserving history through the archive is vitally important. Recognising this, UCT recently launched Humanitec, which saw the digitisation of more than 14 000 objects from the 14 archival collections housed at UCT Libraries. Here is a snapshot of what is available through Humanitec, and in some of these collections.

Compiled by Abigail Calata

JACK AND RAY SIMON COLLECTION

UCT is home to an archival collection considered to be one of the most heavily used primary sources on South Africa's liberation struggle. Consisting of numerous items, the Jack and Ray Simon collection is a testament to the academic, professional and political spheres of this activist couple, says UCT archivist Clive Kirwood.

Jack Simon (1907-1995), a committed communist, was an associate professor of African Studies at UCT until 1967. His wife, Ray Alexander Simon (1913-2004), was a trade unionist and political activist. Simon was served banning orders in 1964, and together with his wife, went into exile in Zambia for 25 years. They continued their political activities and built up an archive of their political work there.

According to Kirkwood the collection's strength lies in the sections on trade unions and the women's movement, with valuable information on organisations such as the ANC, PAC and SACP.

"It also contains information on the liberation movements in other African countries; and a notable treasure is found in the struggle-era pamphlets, many of which were bound in false covers for clandestine use," he adds.



BLEEK LLOYD COLLECTION -

At the heart of this collection, listed in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, is a record of the life, language and folklore of some of southern Africa's first people.

Starting in 1870, German linguist Dr Wilhelm Bleek interviewed |xam prisoners, originally from the Northern Cape, who were incarcerated at the Breakwater Prison (today UCT's Graduate School of Business). Some of these prisoners were released into Bleek's custody and lived at his home in Mowbray, where he recorded their language and folklore with help from his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd.

Lloyd taught Bleek's daughter Dorothea the |xam and !kun languages. Dorothea's record of vocabularies, genealogies and rock art from as far away as Tanzania is also contained in this archive. Her major achievement was the publication of a dictionary, in 1956. Other items in the collection, which spans the period from 1848 to 1956, include family records, diaries, obituaries, and albums of photographs.

Bleek arrived in Cape Town in 1856. He married Lloyd's sister Jemima in 1862, which was also the year in which Lloyd moved in with the newly married couple. He developed a phonetic script for transcribing the characteristic clicks and sounds of the |xam language, which linguists use to this day. Lloyd played a leading part in founding the South African Folklore Society, and established the *Folklore Journal* in 1879. Her major publication was *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*.

The collection was digitised by the Centre for Curating the Archive and can be accessed at lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za.



Documents from the Bleek Lloyd collection, with pictures of Dr Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd.

?) DID YOU KNOW?

UCT's African film collection is among the most extensive in the world, with over 3 000 films available for viewing and research. There are over 1 300 sub-collections of unique manuscripts and personal papers in UCT Libraries Special Collections. On African studies alone the collection of books and pamphlets exceeds 85 000 items.

ON HISTORY

MONICA AND GODFREY WILSON PAPERS _

Contained within this collection, which forms part of UCT's Special Collections, is correspondence between Monica Wilson, UCT's first female professor, and Archie Mafeje, her student.

Wilson, a social anthropologist who was also the first woman to become a professor in South Africa, met Mafeje in 1959 when he joined her class in social anthropology.

According to Andrew Bank, who wrote *Archie Mafeje: The Life and Work of an African Anthropologist*, theirs was a unique relationship. Mafeje was a regular visitor at Wilson's house in Rondebosch; he also befriended her two sons, who were fellow students.

Mafeje was a field worker in Langa for one of Wilson's research projects in the early 1960s. According to researcher John Sharp, "Mafeje's long hours in the field provided Wilson with the detailed case studies of life in Langa that had been sorely lacking before he came along." Folders containing the interviews and notes by Archie Mafeje from this time can also be found in the collection.

Mafeje was central to a very painful incident in UCT's past. In May 1968, the UCT Council unanimously approved his appointment as a senior lecturer in social anthropology. A month later, after pressure from the apartheid government, the council withdrew this appointment. The decision was met with vehement protest from student leaders and some academic staff. In August 1968, about 600 UCT students began an occupation of the Bremner Building which lasted for nine days, demanding that the council reconsider. Instead, the UCT Council agreed to establish an Academic Freedom Research Award in honour of Mafeje and placed a plaque in the library recording that the government had taken away its right to appoint lecturers at its own discretion.

Sources:

 Archie Mafeje: The Life and Work of an African Anthropologist by Andrew Bank

• Mafeje and Langa: The start of an intellectual journey by John Sharp



1968: Students protest against UCT's withdrawal of Archie Mafeje's appointment following pressure from the apartheid government.



Some of the actual recordings made by Ernst Westphal contained in the Westphal collection.

CALDI/WESTPHAL COLLECTION

A selection of rare audio recordings made by pioneering South African linguist Ernst Westphal is now available online, bringing several extinct and endangered African languages into public circulation again.

This digital archive is gleaned from UCT's Special Collections, and contains rare audio tapes recorded between the 1960s and 1980s. Westphal was professor of African Languages at UCT between 1962 and 1984, and is best known for his contributions to the studies of non-Bantu click languages, lumped together under the misleading cover term 'Khoisan' by other scholars.

Of exceptional importance are tapes of languages such as //Xegwi and Kwadi, which Westphal recorded with the last speakers. Several of the recorded languages have become extinct since then. Language diversity is one of Africa's most essential intellectual treasures, yet the majority of the approximately 2 000 languages on the continent are spoken only by small communities. Many of these languages are no longer acquired by children, and as a result are destined to vanish. In southern Africa, several Bantu languages have borrowed clicks from non-Bantu click languages spoken by hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. Among the more than 500 Bantu languages spread over most of Africa south of the equator, only 12 southern Bantu languages have borrowed clicks.

Yeyi has been described as possessing the largest number of distinct clicks among the Bantu languages. Even though there is a rapid language shift underway, with younger people no longer acquiring Yeyi, it is a popular language in music. There are pop songs in Yeyi, and well-known artists sing in Yeyi – thus you may listen to Yeyi songs on the radio, but at the same time it is less and less spoken. The number of speakers usually cited is 20 000, but nobody really knows how many people in Botswana and Namibia still speak Yeyi.

Thanks to the Humanitec project, the Westphal recordings are freely accessible online in digital form, and can be accessed at www.digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/humanitec/ caldi.

KIRBY COLLECTION _____

Through the Humanitec project the Kirby Collection, a musical treasure, is now also available online.

The Kirby Collection is made up of rare musical instruments that pre-date urbanisation. Most of these 600 instruments were used in southern Africa before 1934. The physical collection is housed on the ground floor of the South African College of Music, but through meticulous documenting of every instrument, people all over the world now have access to this unique collection.

Scotsman Percival Robson Kirby arrived at Wits (then University College) in 1921 to found the Music Department. Shortly after his arrival he began travelling around southern Africa to research indigenous musical practices. Kirby almost achieved his goal of acquiring one of every indigenous instrument that was available in southern Africa, and took great care to preserve these instruments.

When he retired from Wits in 1954, he loaned his collection to the Africana Museum (now Museum Africa), where it remained even after his death. UCT purchased the collection in the early 1980s.

Curator Michael Nixon, a senior lecturer in ethnomusicology at UCT, says, "This historic collection's potential for understanding the history and complexity of Southern Africa's music – and indeed, the world's music – is inestimable. Our work is to care for the instruments as best we can, and to make them accessible to all."

To see and learn more about this unique collection go to www.digitalcollections.lib.uct. ac.za/humanitec/kirby.



A Venda man blows on a traditional wind instrument known as a phalaphala, made from a gemsbok horn.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What does your name say about you and your heritage? And what are your associations with your name? In Heritage Month, Helen Swingler asked members of the UCT community to reflect on their names.



People call me Aditi, which is a Sanskrit name that means 'Mother Earth, mother of the gods'. 'Aditi' also

means 'free'. Being a Sanskrit name referring to a Hindu goddess, it reflects my Indian heritage. Names give us a sense of belonging to a particular family, clan and region. This said, today 'cultural' boundaries are much more fluid, and names are seen to transcend these boundaries. I like my name - it inspires me to emulate the virtues of this personality. It is also short, which makes it easy to use, especially when filling out forms! Names are interesting as they not only define who we are, but also carry aspirational values. Individuals are named after prophets, apostles, saints, stars, in the hope that their existence will be as fulfilling as the exceptional figures after whom they're named.

My full name is Jennifer Caroline van Wyk, but people call me Jenny.

I love my name. It means 'The fair one'. My name doesn't reflect my heritage. When I was born, my parents hadn't vet chosen a name - and they named me after the name on my baby blanket: Jenny.





My name is Asonzeh Ukah.

I have never met or heard of anyone else bearing the name. I hope I meet someone in future. I don't have a nickname, but some of my siblings sometimes call me 'Aso' or 'Nzeh'. 'Nzeh', in Igbo (from eastern Nigeria), means a title-holder, such as a chief or king. 'Asonzeh' is the middle form of a longer, 15-letter name. 'Asonzeh' is Igbo: it means 'Do not fear a king'. (The fuller, longer name is still a mystery I would rather leave as such!) Most West Africans who have read Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart could easily identify my names as Igbo-Nigerian. It's deeply a core aspect of my heritage and my identity. While many would not have met or seen anyone bearing the name 'Asonzeh', it is easy to understand that 'Nze(h)' relates to the titled nobility in Igboland. I'm proud of my name and wouldn't change it to any other name. It has become a strong part of my symbolic DNA, as anyone who Googles 'Asonzeh' will find that every hit is associated directly or indirectly with me!



My name is Steffne Elizabeth Hughes and my nickname is Steff.

My name means 'Crowned in victory'. It doesn't really reflect my heritage, but came as the result of a book my mother loved as a child. The character was a princess with a golden voice. My mom loved the character and the name, but didn't like the way it was spelled; so she changed it from Stephanie to Steffne. I love my name, even though it means that I have to spell it out for people. I am forever grateful too that my parents chose not to use family names for us. My maternal grandmother was Mona Wilhelmina! I've often wondered whether people 'live up to' their names, either consciously or subconsciously. If you're named after a family member or a famous person, do you take on aspects of their personality? Do you deliberately avoid any similarities?



My name is Salvatore Mancuso.

Salvatore means 'The person who saves', which comes from Jesus Christ, the one who saves. My surname reflects my roots in that it's a Sicilian dialectal version of the Italian word 'mancino', meaning 'left-handed'. I wouldn't change my name - though it did cause some problems a few years ago, as I share a name with a Colombian paramilitary leader. Once I flew to Colombia via Bogotà airport for a friend's wedding. I expected problems, but the official who checked my passport smiled and waved me through. The other Salvatore Mancuso had just been jailed!





My full name is Ntobeko Ayanda Bubele Ntusi.

Strangely, I have managed to get to adulthood without ever having had a nickname! People always use my first name to address me. I always sign my emails with the letter 'N', the initial for my first name, and some of my friends have recently taken to referring to me as 'N'. 'Ntobeko' means 'humility'. Clearly my parents had high expectations of me from a tender age! It is a big ask to expect a child to always be humble. I am proudly Xhosa. Since antiquity, Xhosa names have always had a meaning. That is part of the beauty. The Xhosas have always believed that each one of us is brought into this world for a purpose. The name, in part, encapsulates part of what we are meant to aspire towards. So my name truly reflects my Xhosa heritage. I love my name; it's a central aspect of my identity. I often fear that I do not live up to it. Names and personal identity carry such significance, in every culture. Our names not only identify us as being separate from others; they often resonate with the different roles we play in life.

My name is Anwarul Haq Suleman Mall.

I prefer people to call me Anwar. Anwarul Haq means 'The Light of Truth' ('Haq' means 'truth'). 'Suleman' is the Arabic version of the Hebrew 'Solomon', 'The Wise'. Solomon was a king of Israel, the son of David, renowned for his wisdom. Its roots are from the Hebrew 'shalom'. meaning 'peace' - from the Hebrew name המקש (Shelomoh) which was derived from Hebrew ais (shalom), or 'peace'. 'Mall' in Urdu means 'goods' or 'possessions'. So the surname has Indian/Pakistani roots.

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CONVERSATIONS IN COMMUNITY

SECOND WIND

Neonatal nurse trainer, midwife, paraglider, animal lover and high-mountain trekker Hilary Barlow of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health is next up in our series of getting to know the people of UCT.

Story by Helen Swingler Photo by Michael Hammond

"We thought there would be a great valley release that afternoon, and went up to take off. But the valley release wasn't happening and I spent 45 minutes on an almost vertical zigzag climb in strong winds, flying away from the mountain, and then descending very slowly to land. In light conditions it should take less than 10 minutes, as it's a height of only 450m and a distance of only 1.4km. "That's the reality of living life outside the

envelope. I used to say to my children: if anything happens to me, I want you to know I died doing something that I absolutely love. And they just said, 'Ja, no, right, mom!""

Her yellow 26m² paragliding canopy folds neatly into her backpack, making her very mobile. She's flown all over Europe: Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia, Norway and Germany in the Alps, and around Bassano in Italy.

"It gets you travelling. It's a close community, and we watch out for each other. We're all a bit like nomads.'

Does she get scared?

"If you don't get scared, then you should be worried. So, ja - I still get scared."

Out on a ledge

The heights that do scare her are ledges. Barlow has helped UCT ornithologist Dr Andrew Jenkins ring peregrine falcon chicks that nest on a ledge at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, where she works.

Jenkins has been ringing 'peries' for some time. (There were peregrines nesting on the Athlone cooling towers; and only once the chicks had flown did Jenkins give the go-ahead for demolition.)

At home Barlow has three feral cats, adopted from outside the hospital's oncology ward, and 11 common Cape angulate tortoises (yes, she has a permit to keep them).

The oldest, Josephine, has been with her since 1982, and has a penchant for gazanias.





The walnut cake and cappuccino at Café de Hunza in Karimabad, a small settlement on the Karakoram Highway, almost surpasses the view of the Hunza Valley, 2 440m above sea level in Gilgit-Baltistan, northern Pakistan.

To the south-east is Nepal, where the Himalayas boast eight of the world's 10 tallest mountains.

Hilary Barlow has trekked in both countries. First was Pakistan, on the Biafo Glacier to Snow Lake, continuing over the Hispar Pass (5 150m) to the Hispar Glacier; and then to Karimabad, from where her group visited their guide Momin's family in the village of Shimshal.

"It's the best thing you can imagine after two weeks of trekking," says Barlow, remembering the walnut cake. The coffee-and-cake tip-off had come from two students climbing in the Hispar Glacier region.

Dangerous and extreme

After three days in Kathmandu they flew to Lukla, whose unofficial title induces some misgiving: the World's Most Extreme and Dangerous Airport. Only small, fixed-wing aircraft like the Dornier Do 228 manage the steeply-angled drop onto a runway with no turning circle, and a sheer drop at its southern

Waiting for the mist to lift before the flight, Barlow, a seasoned paraglider, experienced some disquiet. Once they were airborne, the airhostess came around with a tray of cotton wool balls (for the noise) and sweets

"I thought we were going to die!" Barlow recalls.

In Dingboche, altitude sickness put an end to her trekking partner's trip, and Barlow continued up the Khumbu Valley to Kala

Canopy of delight

Paragliding started with her love of the mountains.

Her first training flight was in the Wilderness, now a favourite spot. Harnessed and running up the beach to pull the glider up, there was that first moment when her feet lifted off the ground.

"You're on the beach and there's a little dune, and beyond that a big dune. It's almost intuitive; once you've run down the beach and you've felt the weight coming off your feet, then you go a little higher, and you actually fly for a few seconds."

The next weekend saw her at Porterville, near Piketberg

"That was quite scary, because that's about 450m above the landing.'

"The café is a bookshop – with maps, so you can sit there and just take your mind back on your journey."

The Hunza valley invites reflection; its beauty is thought to have to have inspired the Shangri-La of James Hilton's novel Lost Horizon.

In 2013 Barlow and a friend returned to the region to trek in Nepal, a land of teahouses, yak caravans, Hindu temples and prayer wheels, mani stones and Buddhist stupas.

Patthar (5 550m), the 'black rock'.

"Here I had a perfect view of Sagarmatha [Everest, in Nepalese] and then trekked down the Khumbu and up the Gokyo valley for another more distant view of 'Mother Goddess of the Earth' from Gokyo Peak, at 5 360m. Then it was the downward trek back to Lukla, and Kathmandu.'

In Kathmandu Barlow visited the local hospital to see its shipshape neonatal unit, and was delighted to find a young Tibetan mother and father providing kangaroo care for their newborn twins.

"It gets you travelling. It's a close community, and we watch out for each other. We're all a bit like nomads."

But she lost her nerve for flying at Porterville after a friend died there, paragliding in strong winds.

"It wasn't flyable; conditions were horrible. He shouldn't have been flying, but he was on the crest of a wave. He'd got the award for the best flying that year..."

Hilary has lost two good friends to pilot error and bad weather conditions.

Outside the envelope

That said, she's philosophical about the dangers.

"One December we were in Porterville flying in a competition. There's a phenomenon known as 'valley release' that happens in the right conditions at the day's end. Warm, buoyant air from the valley is released as the sun's angle drops to the horizon, and you can have a really wonderful flight.

On high: Hilary Barlow on Signal Hill in Cape Town with her paragliding gear.