



the
MOUNTAINEER

JULY

COX BIGHT BEACH — SOUTH WEST TASMANIA — Photo: John Chapman.
REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O. FOR TRANSMISSION BY POST AS A PERIODICAL CATEGORY "B".

BUSHGEAR PTY. LTD.



KAREN ROBERTSON SUMMIT OF MT. KOSCIOSKO — Photo: Jol Shelton.

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ROCKCLIMBING, CAVING, SKI-
TOURING AND OTHER
OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT
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THE MOUNTAINEER

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Like any well planned trip to South West Tasmania it was organised in December. That is a date was set to meet Crumb and Goon (Peter and Cathie) on Cox Bight Beach in January; that was all the prior planning!

Early January saw a quick food buying sortie in Hobart, after just getting out from Precipitous Bluff. Davey Street was the scene of another food packing marathon. The next morning four bodies and 25 days food squashed into a light plane. Ragged low cloud obscured most views on the flight in. Luckily Ross and I obtained fair views of the Old River Valley, our route out after South West Cape. From the air the Cox Bight beach is a narrow strip of sand walled by scrub and white-capped waves. Landing on this natural airstrip is enthralling, but quite uneventful. The pilot in his patent leather shoes and suit looks very out of place in the remote South West. Crumb and Goon were found camped at the other beach after walking in along the South Coast Track.

The plan was to leave a food dump here, to be collected after completing South West Cape. An eating orgy of fruit cake and other delights filled in our wait for the remainder of the party. Next time we must remember to bring double of each luxury. Drizzle and low cloud were down to sea level the next day. By mid-morning it seemed that Don would not be able to fly in. However, Donbat flew in about lunchtime and with him came Peter and Polly. They were off to do South West Cape as well so the party swelled to nine. With the food dump hidden, it was packs up to leave the marked tracks. A steep, quick climb over the New Harbour Range led directly to New Harbour beach. In fine weather the views from the top are tremendous but in brief, violent showers and icy winds it's not so great. The South West is just reminding us to appreciate the fine days.

A great campsite with beautiful grassy banks at New Harbour. Abalone hunting and fishing was tried. An hour was spent without success until it was discovered that abalone hide on the underside of rocks. With this discovery many were quickly found.

These abalone are tough. They require tenderizing which means belting hell out of them with a stone till they are really pulverized. Fried with butter and spices they make a tasty treat. If you forget to belt they're bloody tough.

The packs were again lifted for another half day walk. Some amusing steep scrub-bashing led off the beach on to open headlands again. Fine views obtained as we drop into Hidden Beach for lunch. Here we met some strange Sydneysiders.

"Who's you're leader?", nicknamed Il Duce.

"We haven't got one." (of course).

"We've even got a deputy leader. You've done well considering you haven't got a leader." My God, what a bunch of over-organized pricks. It turned out they had been here before so we went on to Ketcham Bay to occupy the best campsite.

A really great place this. A lagoon for swimming on the creek. Fishing off the rocks and successful cray fishing when the swell's are down. So beautiful we could have stayed here. One full day wasn't really enough.

The cray fishing is easy, but landing them was difficult. The crayfish showed a strong aversion to being out of the water. A couple were caught after many hours. Ross got a soaking while lying on a rock. A fishing boat in the bay saved us and we swapped 14 crays for some sticks. A great feast was then held over two days.

The party now began to split up. Ross and myself continued in shocking weather over to Wilson Bight. A really well sheltered campsite exists there and the wild rocky bays and sand beaches makes this an interesting place. Peter and Marie joined us later that day with the news that the others had to turn back to catch their plane on time.

A fine warm day. Very steep climbing led on to Mt. Koromu and South West Cape lay before us. Packs were dropped and two of us headed out on to the scrubby granite headland of the Cape. What a wild place to camp at! The very end eluded us due to insufficient time and we had not brought the all-important rope.

Back on Mt. Koromu the weather worsened to an icy wind and mists: a classic example of swift weather changes. An epic walk led north along the South West Cape Range. Camp at Window-Pane Bay was eventually made in gathering darkness after 11½ hours walking.

Next day, mist down to sea level. Impossible to go anywhere. The day after was again poor but we left anyway. A lucky break enabled us to follow a rough track north to the sweeping sand, at Noyherer Beach. A really sheltered camp was found here. The thigh deep wade over the creek didn't help but it was pleasant there. Big surf on the beach ruined the cray fishing. The stormy beach had its own magic though as we walked around to Stephens Beach.

When the weather cleared two days later we headed east over two small ranges to the Port Davey Track and on to Melalueca. An easy but very long day over fairly open country.

Denis King welcomed us with his always generous hospitality. We sat in the hut there all with our own thoughts of the wild and beautiful wilderness around South West Cape. Someday we will return but now the party will again split to go out to civilization and milkshakes etc. Peter and Marie by the South Coast Track, Ross and myself by the Old River.

The party: Ross Stevens
Peter Megens (Crumb)
Cathie Seccombe (Goon)
Peter Nelson
Marie Francken
Don Hird (Donbat)
Peter Cameron
Polly Foster
John

TO GO ORIENTEERING YOU

firstly find out where the coming Sunday's event is being held. Either go to the Clubrooms and read the 'Coming Events' page in the current Orienteering magazine which will be pinned on to the Orienteering notice-board, or ring the Orienteering convenor (see page 1). Of course you need the right gear - any available bush-bashing clothes, plus plastic bag (and compass if you have one; they can be hired at 20¢ each). Arrive at the venue any time between 9.30 a.m. and 1.00 p.m., fill in a registration card, nominate a start time and pay \$1.50. In other words, it is a minimum preparation activity, requiring a minimum of organization from participants.

"BORHONEY GHURK" - APRIL 30th

Organised by M.U.M.C. Orienteers, this event held in the scrub free, but mine-shaft dotted, terrain of Borhoney Ghurk (south of Ballan), attracted 460 orienteers. Twenty-eight M.U.M.C. orienteers helped on the day with organisation, course laying, retrieving etc. With this number, everyone managed to get a 'run' as well as do his bit on a table: a far cry from a few years ago when events were handled by 4 to 10 people, who were generally exhausted at the end of the day.

WORLD TEAM SELECTION

M.U.M.C. Orienteer, Geoff Lawford has been selected in the teams of six men and six women to represent Australia at the World Championships in Norway later this year.

MAPPING ACTIVITIES

Field work for the second and improved printing of Borhoney Ghurk is nearing completion. Preparations are continuing for the mapping of the steiglitz area used previously by M.U.M.C. using old black and white maps. If you are interested in helping, please contact:

Geoff Lawford	24 2200
Ron Frederick	870 4033
Tony Kerr	874 2726

If you have heard the comments about the recent searches for people missing in the bush you will remember comments such as: "Bushwalkers cost the community too much when they have to be rescued." If you are an experienced walker or ski-tourer and possess at least overnight equipment, please join the M.U.M.C. section of the Federation of Victorian Walking Club's Search and Rescue Section.

In the event of a call-out you would be contacted by telephone and can always refuse a call-out if you are busy. Come to the Clubrooms for information or ring Nik Dow on 341 6406 (W).

All existing members of Search and Rescue should please:

- (a) check that they are members of M.U.M.C.
- (b) check the listing of names and phone numbers on the Club notice-board for errors.

We also need another Club Contact: a person of stable address who is able to call M.U.M.C. members out in the event of a search and pass information between the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs and the M.U.M.C. members of Search and Rescue.

ROCKCLIMBING

Peter Martin

High grade climbing has continued within the club over the past month. Not only are "seasoned" climbers climbing well, but newcomers Nick Tapp and Jim Van Gelder have joined the growing number of M.U.M.C. climbers capable of grade 17 leads, with ascents of Conscientious Pontius (17) and Blue Tongue (17) respectively. Nick completed Conscientious a thin hand jamb crack at Werribee Gorge after taking a fall of over 20 ft., stopping just short of the deck. Despite its growing reputation as merely a "training ground", Werribee is still a very serious cliff from a leader's viewpoint. Perhaps it should be treated with a little more respect.

Jim Van Gelder led his 17 at Boroomba rocks in the A.C.T. He also completed Peter Pan (15) and Blood On His Lips (16).

A trip to the Grampians over the May vacation enabled Nick Tapp, Jim Van Gelder and Richard Moore to complete a series of climbs, including Pollux (8) and Scarab (11) at Bundaleer, Exam Crack (9) and Bechervaise's Route (5) at Tower Hill and the first pitch of The Stinger (15) at Mt. Rosea. It is very encouraging to see first-year climbers organizing their own extended trips. A minor epic occurred whilst in the Grampians when Nick backed his car into a tree, sealing the boot, which contained all the food. The trip proved economical if somewhat hungry!

Howard Cooper is also climbing well, top-roping several hard routes at Werribee and making solo ascents of S.P.Q.R. (9), Execution (12) and Persecution (12).

Several weekend trips visited Arapiles which may become even more popular following the publishing of Keith Lockwood's excellent new guide by the V.C.C.

Cathie Seccombe is climbing consistently well with ascents of Marmot's Mall (15), Toccata (14) with Mark Moorhead, and Yo-Yo (15) with John Chapman.

Kestrel (11) and Nero (15) were climbed by Robyn Storer before following Nick Reeves and Ed Neve up Watchtower Crack (16).

The magnificent Skink (18) has received two ascents by M.U.M.C. parties in the last month, Reeves, Neve and Megens in the May vacation and Tony Marion with Jane Landman only a few days later. All were impressed with the sustained climbing encountered.

Tony and Jane spent most of the May break driving in search of cliffs that weren't wet! Their "grand tour" included Baroomba in A.C.T., Mt. Piddington in N.S.W. and finally Arapiles. At Arapiles they showed leads on Stoat Steps Out (18). Tony seconded numerous grade 20+ climbs and is arguably the best technical climber in M.U.M.C.

An energetic weekend at the end of May saw a most impressive list of climbs completed. At Black Ian's Rocks in the Northern Grampians, Nick Reeves led Prosecutor (19) and Objection Sustained (18) in strong style. Ed Neve found Malicious Intent (21-22) too steep and rather than aid the last 10 ft. finished up a variant (14). Peter Megens led Decree Nisi (17) and was seconded by Cathie Seccombe. Decree Nisi was also led by Andy Rothfield with beginner Peter Darby following. Jim Mitroy led the difficult start to Gallup Poll (16) before top-roping many of the harder routes. Peter Martin led Prosecutor (19) Objection Sustained (18) and Barbed Tongue (17). Barbed Tongue was then top-roped by everyone except "Mergs" who wanted a smoke!

The Saturday over, and all fiery the trip proceeded to Arapiles via the Natimuk pub where the liquid consumed seemed to brighten rather than quench the fire! The following day saw Megens lead The Great White Hope (18); Martin, Seccombe and Rothfield ascend Witch Hunt (15) and Peter Darby lead The Parsons Nose (9) at Mitre Rock. A short "rally-cross" enabled everyone to reach Campbell's Kingdom, at the back of the main Arapiles cliffs. Ed Neve led the sustained and thin Coeur de Lion (19) whilst Nick "I'm a gun now" Reeves led Vegemite, his first (2). Mitroy climbed Snorkler (11) and Rothfield a wandering variation on The Seven Year Itch (13).

Many notable climbs have been completed in the short time since the last Mountaineer. The standard of climbing in M.U.M.C. is higher than ever before. Judging by the performance of the first year climbers it is bound to improve still further.

CASCADE SADDLE THE HARD WAY

George Raitt

OR CAN YOU SEE THE NEXT CAIRN?

The interesting thing about sounding out trips from other people in M.U.M.C. is the variety of information you get. For instance we were told about the Cascade Saddle: "Can be dangerous, people have been killed there" (Nick Reeves); "Easy, six inches of snow" (Andrew Rothfield); "Six feet of snow fell as we were approaching and we had to turn back" (Ian Moore).

Undeterred, and spurred on by the Club's Alpine Instruction weekend at Feather-top, we planned a six or seven day trip to take in the Cascade Saddle. Our equipment included rope and ice axes, mainly as a precaution (there is no permanent snow at the saddle but then still may be snow in January). The steep snow grass slopes on the Matukituki side, especially treacherous when wet and slicked down like thatch after snow melts, were a problem to be solved later as was the correct route down that side, where numerous bluffs lead to 1000 ft. drops for the unwary. (The N.Z. Lands and Survey map of Mt. Aspiring National Park NZMS 273 - has the route from Cascade Saddle to the West Matukituki incorrectly marked).

Transport to or from civilization at each end of the walk is a problem. We eventually settled for the bus that takes people to the eastern end of the Routeburn Track. On this bus we met several other Australians who were in a hurry to get over to the West Matukituki to do a mountaineering course held near Mt. Aspiring. They decided that the Rees River valley would be quicker. This entailed crossing the Rees Saddle over to the Dart River valley and then up to the Cascade Saddle. (The Dart and the Rees both flow into Lake Watatyin, and a common walk is up the Rees, over Rees Saddle, and down the Dart.).

The bus let us off 11 km. short of Paradise, a non-place at the end of the road. Our first day was spent walking along gravel roads through flat sheep grazing country and later through large forest clearings used for cattle grazing. We camped at Dans Paddock in view of Chinaman's Bluff, with Mt. Nox nearby flying a flag of cloud billowing out, trapped on the lee side of the peak.

The walk up the valley is through beech forest with its characteristic mossy and ferny floor. The scenery is dominated by the snow-clad Barrier Range. Water in the Dart River is a milky colour being "glacial flour" (ground-up rock) from the Dart Glacier. Beaches along the river are mostly grey pebbles with silver mud from the settled glacial flour. There are several large grassy flats along the river, previously used for grazing. We were interested to see the airstrip shown on the map at Cattle Flat. This 5 km. long clearing is far from flat: there are several grassy terraces cut through by gullies every hundred metres or so. It was not the easy walking we were hoping for. The airstrip was a very bumpy uphill section, bounded by ditches running across the flat, with red flags pegging it out. As there was no wreckage we guessed it hadn't been used recently.

A great natural resource of New Zealand is sand flies. When Captain Cook visited the south-west coast he noted the beautiful scenery and the sandflies, and then left. We were informed by locals that sandflies live off the sap in the beech trees. Nevertheless, they also like blood. Fortunately the sandflies go away at night, when it is cold, so you can sleep without being constantly bitten.

Dart Hut is an NZAC hovel about 40 km. upstream from Paradise. We arrived there on our fourth day since leaving the bus and found that the other party which went up the Rees had set off for the Saddle that morning. There were quite a

few people camped around Dart Hut: most had come up the Rees; and some had come over the Cascade Saddle from the other side. At Dart Hut you are above the tree line and the country is very stark, dominated by snow, rock and scree. The hills close around the hut are dotted with large white alpine buttercup with its large round green leaves (which look like water-lily leaves). There is also a large sword-grass variety called "horrid spaniard". The spikes at the tip of each blade, and on the flowers, are very sharp and are not avoided even by putting on over-trousers.

The valley floor upstream from Dart Hut flattens out with moraine and scree material, and the scenery is more awesome. Small glaciers hang down the side of 7000 ft. to 8000 ft. mountains, and the Cascade Saddle looms up in the distance over undulating grey gravel heaps that cover the lower part of the Dart glacier. Distance is hard to judge: everything looks very close but is really quite distant. About every fifteen minutes we could hear great cracking, booming noises as ice broke away from the ice-falls on the other side of the valley, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ km. away according to the map. But when we looked around there would only be a small white trickle of crushed ice down the face.

Moir's Guide describes this section of the track as having more cairns per hectare than any other area in New Zealand. Our experience was that there certainly were a lot of cairns, but generally where they were least needed. The route skirts the glacier by keeping to the moraine and scree to the south-east edge. There are many large, steep-sided gullies cutting through this area. As we later found out the best route is lower down near the glacier; however, we kept higher, traversing up towards the saddle all the time, and spent a difficult half-day going up and down scree slopes in the gullies and crossing a "scree" slope consisting of chunks of rock about a metre thick. Meanwhile the view up the Dart Glacier becomes more impressive: the neve is surrounded by a horseshoe ring of 8000 ft. peaks; at the opening of the horseshoe the glacier splits into a magnificent icefall; and then it flows down and around in a sweeping turn leaving exposed a polished rock face on the outside of the turn.

Having reach the relative security of the snow grass near the saddle, after taking about 7 hours to cover about 10 km., we continued on, now following short thin marker stakes that would have been easily covered by heavy snow. Cascade Saddle is not a true saddle: it is a razorback ridge with a low point. On the Matukituki side the ground falls away almost vertically for about 1000 ft. before continuing steeply down for another 3000 ft. to the West Matukituki River. This is spectacular to say the least. The way down is to traverse south around this drop and cross the Cascade Creek basin. There were large drifts of melting snow around this area, which provided us with some amusement and a chance to get out the ice axes for fun. The basin, with its clear, swift creek provided yet another impressive sight: the last thing you would expect in such steep country. About 3 km. from the saddle we camped on snowgrass in Cascade basin and wondered what the notorious descent to the Matukituki would be like.

Before commencing the descent you have to climb 700 ft. to the ridge above Cascade Creek. This ridge was covered with large snow drifts and the first 200 ft. of the descent from a prominent track marker was through snow. There are excellent views of Mt. Aspiring and surrounding peaks from the ridge and most of the descent until you reach the tree line. The dreaded snow grass below was dry and by playing spotto, the marker stakes were found and followed down a steep descent which we decided was not as bad as we had been led to believe. Feeling that we had passed the worst of it, we camped below the tree line that night and finished the descent to the West Matukituki the next morning.



OUT OF JOHNSTON'S HUT TOWARDS EDMONDSON'S HUT — Photo: Jol Shelton.

WINTER 1978

It was surprising how easy rockclimbing by torchlight was; we moved rapidly upward. There was only a minimal sense of exposure, the lead-torch beam merely disappeared into the void below.

We had started on a climb which we hoped would take us 5,000 ft. up from De La Beche hut to include the summits of Mt. De La Beche and the East and West Peaks of the Minarets. It was 4 a.m., the sky was studded with stars and there was not a breath of wind.

Within an hour we had reached the snow: a bombproof freeze! We paused to strap on crampons and rope up for glacier travel. Ten pointing across the 30 - 40° snow slope that dropped off into the valley of the Tasman Glacier was one of the most enjoyable moments I have ever had in the mountains. As dawn broke Mt. Cook slowly burned golden red: first from a tiny patch on its ice summit then spreading rapidly downward to include the peaks of Tasman and Dampier to its right. We continued to traverse, always gaining height. We wound our way through several crevassed areas, then, by crossing a large shrund over one of many snow bridges, gained a large snow arete, which we had chosen months earlier from across the valley at Malte Brun hut. We had belayed across the snow bridge and now continued to belay up the arete. In retrospect it would have been better to continue moving together, but belaying offered alternate rests which seemed to over-ride the need for speed.

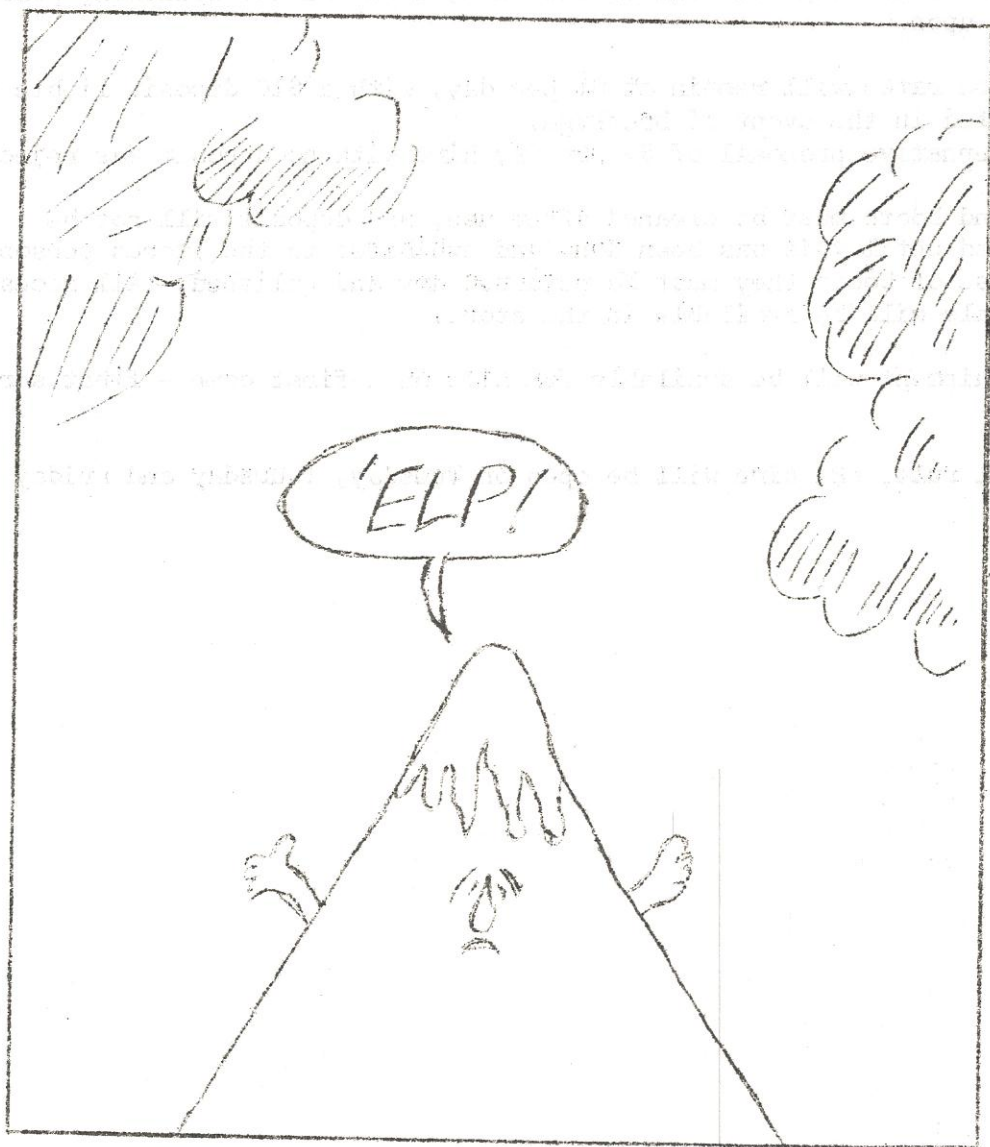
The hours were quickly slipping by and the route ahead did not seem straightforward. The reve of the Ranfurly Glacier which we had just traversed had been very heavily crevassed; the area ahead above another small glacier seemed to be in a similar condition. Therefore we decided to climb to the top of the main ridge, cross over this and hopefully find easier ground on the Westland side.

Several very fiery (at least for me) pitches over water, ice and frail rock enabled us to stand atop the ridge at about 8,500 ft. It is hard to express the utter frustration of pulling over the top of the ridge to see not gentle snow slopes but 80° rock slabs consisting of frail, shitty rock that jumped off the cliff if you so much as looked at it.

Again we began traversing. The climb was easier than anticipated although the rock was still shithouse. We alternated running out full rope lengths, placing a nut, and then belaying. We came across a few slings left in place. Obviously some incompetent had been here before us!! A few more pitches, the odd abseil and we at last reached the gentle snow slope that led to the plateau between the summit of De La Beche and the twin peaks of the Minarets.

It was 4.00 p.m.! What an epic! The weather was superb, although a small amount of high cloud had drifted in from the Tasman Sea. After a break for lunch (?) and a chance to reassess the situation, we left our packs on the plateau and climbed the last 1000 ft. up fairly easy ground to the summit of the Eastern Minaret. We were rewarded with a superb view out across Westland National Park to the Tasman Sea. From the Eastern peak we descended about 300 feet before climbing the lower Western peak.

At about 6.00 p.m. we reached our packs again. The weather was still perfect. As it had taken so much effort to get here we decided to climb De La Beche as well. We paused briefly on the summit to admire the sunset before descending once more to the plateau. We had been climbing for about 16 hours. It was now 8 p.m.



'ELP SAVE AN ALP!

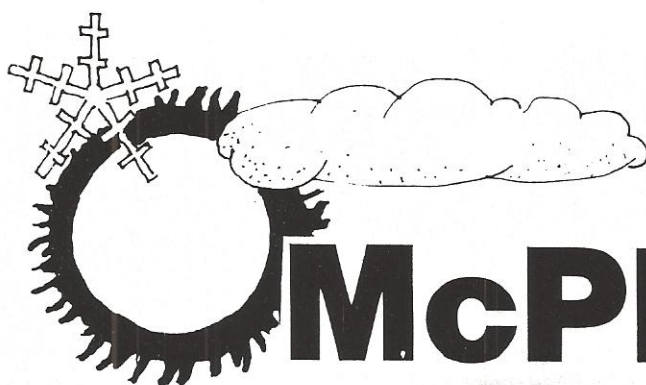
It's not too late!

The L.C.C. has extended the closing date
for submissions on the Alpine area to 31st July ...
so use the information, paper and envelopes we
have given you, now! Write to L.C.C.,

464 St. Kilda Road,
Melbourne, 3004

TRIPS LIST

- JUNE 17 - 18 SKI-TOURING
 Beginners Trip: should have attended meeting on 13th June.
 Mt. Stirling or Mt. Baw Baw
 Leader: George Raitt. 762 6335
- JUNE 21 (Wed.) SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
 8.30 p.m. Sisalkraft Theatre,
 Architecture Building.
 Called to discuss Treasurer's Report and result of audit.
 Constitutional amendments will also be raised.
- JUNE 24 - 25 THE 24 HOUR WALK
 Destination: unknown Standard: as easy/hard as you like.
 Bookings now being taken at Clubrooms
 Leader: Andrew Walker. 725 9765(H) 64 4126.
- CAVING
 Narracoorte Dinner VSA/CEGSA
 Contact: Nick White. 328 4154(H) 387 4211(W)
- JULY 1 - 2 BUSHWALKING
 Walhalla area. Standard: medium.
 Leader: Ross Stephens. 380 4730
- SKI TOURING
 Beginner's follow-up trip
 Bogong High Plains or Mt. Stirling
 Leader: George Raitt. 762 6335
- SKI-TOURING
 Probably High Plains. Standard: Medium
 Leader: Andrew Rothfield. 20 8500
- JULY 5 (Wed.) PHOTO COMPETITION AND PIE NIGHT
 6.00 p.m. Sports Pavilion,
 Melbourne University.
- JULY 7 - 8 BUSHWALKING
 Wilson's Promontory
 Two trips, one of easy standard and the other medium
 Leader: Neil Blundy. 347 7905
- ROCKCLIMBING
 Mt. Arapiles or the Grampians
 Leader: Hugh Foxcroft. 24 2084
- JULY 19 (Wed.) BUSHWALKING
 Instruction night for Beginner's Snow Walk
- JULY 22 - 23 BUSHWALKING
 Beginners Snow Walk and Camp
 Van Transport - book early.
 Come and learn how to survive in the snow
 Leaders: Andrew Walker 725 9765(H) 860 2241(W)
 Dave Caddy 528 3840(H)
 Chips O'Beirne 26 6961(H)
- JULY 29 - 30 BUSHWALKING
 Grampians
 Leader: Richard Serpell. 20 3781(H)



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OUTDOOR SCENE

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Paddymade, Mountain Mule, Berghaus.

TENTS — Bushgear, Paddymade, Freetime, Bergans.

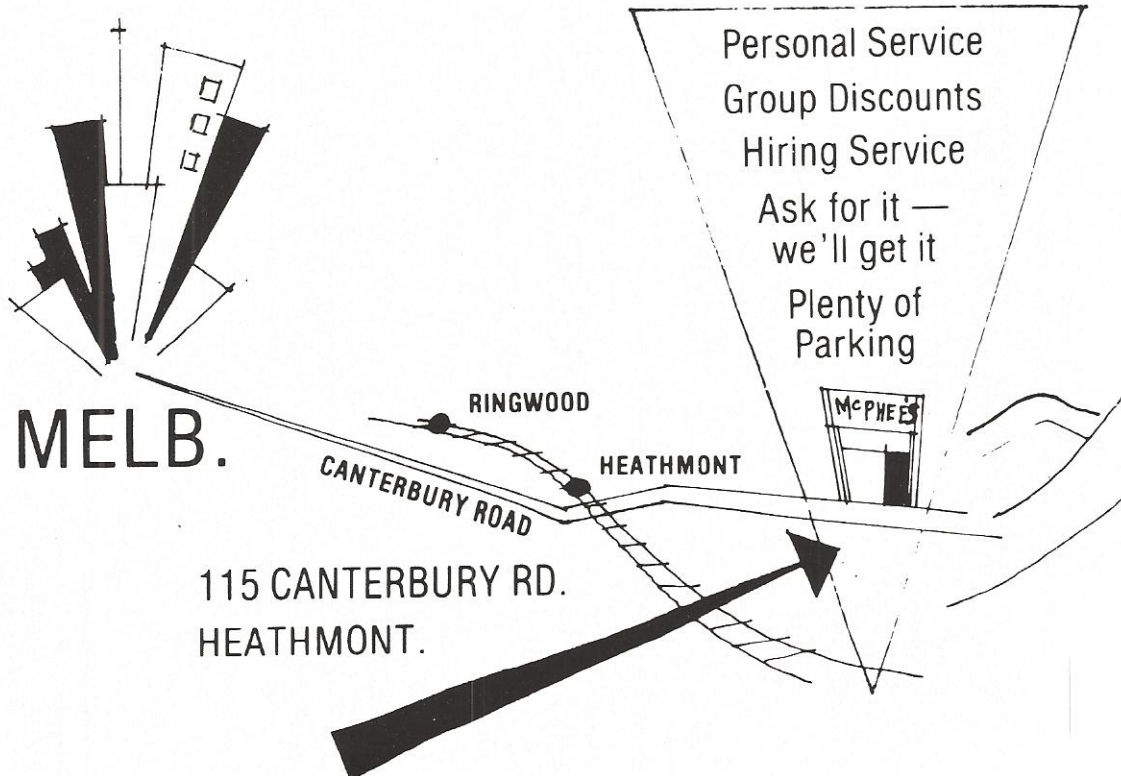
SLEEPING BAGS — Paddymade, Hallmark,
Puradown, Starlite, Mountain
Designs.

CLOTHING — Japaras, Cagjacs, Woollen Shirts, Jumpers,
Socks, A Large Range of Boots, Gaiters, etc.

FOOD — Dehydrated, Freeze Dried, Ration Packs.

MAPS & BOOKS — Algona, V.M.T.C., Forest Commission
and Nat. Maps.

SKIS — Nordic & Downhill.



A sub-committee meeting was held on 7th June, 1978 and the following policy was decided upon:

- (1) Ski hire rates will remain at \$1 per day, with a \$10 deposit liable to be forfeited in the event of breakage.
An alternative proposal of \$2 per day hire with no deposit was rejected.
- (2) Skis and boots must be cleaned after use, and deposit will not be refunded until this has been done and exhibited to the stores person. In the case of boots they must be returned dry and polished. All necessary materials will be available in the store.
- (3) Ski equipment will be available for hire on a first come - first served basis.

As a general rule, ski hire will be open on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday lunchtimes.

I. WAXLESS SKIS

To many ski-tourers the suggestion that waxless skis give good performances is heresy. The response "Waxless skis do not perform as well as properly waxed skis" is almost a cliché with many of our waxing purists. Considerable advances have been made in recent years with waxless skis and they should be given serious consideration. For difficult waxing conditions (especially around 0°C) many racers have waxless skis as part of their armoury. At the 1976 Olympics, Bill Koch -the 30 km. silver medalist used waxless skis on his leg of the 4 x 10 km. relay: he put in an outstanding time. That performance should convince anybody that these skis can give excellent performance.

The advantages of waxless skis are fairly obvious:

- (1) No waxes and associated paraphernalia need be carried on trips, thus reducing the weight that has to be carried: a decided advantage on extended tours.
- (2) One is spared the drudgery of continually changing waxes during the day as the snow changes. In Australia where we are particularly prone to rapid changes in snow conditions this is a decided advantage.
- (3) Some conditions are extremely difficult to wax for e.g. dry powder beneath a breakable crust or many grassy patches showing through the snow: grass invariably sticks to wax causing very bad performance.

There are many types of waxless surfaces available now and their performances vary widely:

- (a) MOHAIR: Mohair skis are laid in the base of the ski with the hairs lying along the ski. When pressed down the hairs grip the snow to prevent slipping. When slid forward they lie flat and present less friction. These skis perform very well on icy conditions but have major disadvantages (i) the strips wear out and become useless (they are replaceable though) (ii) they are prone to icing up in wet snow. I would not recommend them.
- (b) FISHSCALE PATTERNS: These skis have an indented pattern of overlapping discs, the grip being provided by the rearward edge. The best of these are:
 - (i) 'TRAK' - the fishscales project below the side of the ski. The more recent models (1977 on) have a deeper pattern under the foot than at the extremities and perform better than earlier ones.
 - (ii) 'PLENK' - the fishscales are incised into the ski sole. They are reputed to have exceptional climbing ability with quite acceptable glide.
- (c) STEP PATTERNS: Step skis have their soles cut in a sawtooth pattern, so that there is a series of notches running along the ski with a vertical face to provide the grip. Their performance under hard-packed or icy conditions is not as good as mohair.
- (d) DIAMOND PATTERNS: This indented pattern is used only by a few manufacturers. Its performance is only mediocre.

(e) MICA BASE: This is a very recent development. It consists of mica flakes embedded in a regular polyethene base. It has two reported advantages:

(i) the base can be waxed. The wax can then be removed without affecting the no-wax properties.

(ii) the holding effect does not deteriorate with wear.

This base awaits testing in Australia.

All machined bases are noisy. They all emit a buzz, the pitch of which varies with the particular base and the snow conditions. Waxing purists abhor such noises.

II. SKIS FOR THOSE WHO LIKE TO WAX

How Wax Works: There are three basic principles behind understanding how wax enables skis to stick to the snow when weighted and yet still glide freely.

- (1) The static coefficient of friction between two objects is always greater than the dynamic coefficient. i.e. it takes more force to get an object moving than it does to keep it moving.
- (2) When one object slides over another the friction creates heat. Hopefully this heat will melt the snow under the ski to produce a very thin water layer which serves as a lubricant.
- (3) Snow is a crystalline material which can 'bite' into a wax of the correct softness thus creating a braking effect.

The third principle is the most important in understanding the basic elements of waxing. The 'sharpness' of the snow crystals and hence their ability to penetrate a given wax is determined by the temperature, the sky conditions, the age of the snow and the number of times the snow has been skied on. Snow crystals which have been rounded by use or through melting will not bite into a hard wax as well as a soft one.

A. HARD WAX: Hard wax is used for all fresh fallen and fine grained snow. The type to use is best decided by following the manufacturers directions. Thus for SWIX:

WAX	SNOW TYPE	TEMP. RANGE	APPLICATION
POLAR	Fresh and fine-grained snow	-15°C to -30°C	Polish to thin film
SPECIAL GREEN	Fresh and fine-grained snow	- 8°C to -20°C	Polish to thin film
GREEN	Fresh and fine grained snow	- 3°C to -10°C	Polish to thin film
BLUE	Fresh and fine grained snow	- 1°C to - 5°C	Polish to thin film
EXTRA BLUE	Fresh and fine grained snow	- 0°C to - 2°C	Polish to thin film
VIOLET	Fresh and fine-grained snow	Around 0°C	Smooth out carefully
RED	Slightly wet, old snow	+ 2°C to 0°C	Spread evenly
YELLOW	Slightly wet, new snow and glazed tracks	- 2°C	Dab on - spread evenly

For Australian conditions the choice will usually be between the softer waxes. Green is used rarely: special green every few years and Polar virtually never! Blue, violet, red and yellow are the hard waxes of most use.

If uncertain as to which wax to use, start with the harder one. The reason is that a soft wax can easily be applied over a hard one but it is difficult to apply hard wax over a soft one.

Apply the wax evenly over the ski bottom as though you were using a crayon. If your skis have a wood sole, wax the entire bottom. If they have a plastic base, apply wax only to a three ft. section of the ski under the binding.

Next, apply heat so the wax can flow into the pores of the ski bottom. This is best done by rubbing with a piece of cork or plastic foam. An iron will work but it makes the wax act as if it were a harder wax.

Once the skis are waxed, let them cool to the air temperature (ten minutes should be enough). Ski on them for a couple of hundred yards and decide if the wax is right. If the skis don't quite 'bite' in enough just wipe the snow off the ski bottom and apply another layer of the same wax as before. Putting on a thicker layer makes the wax act as if it were softer because the thicker layer serves as a cushion for the snow to bite into. If this still does not work, use the next softest wax, applying it first to a short area under the binding - the part of the ski used most in the kick part of the stride, and least affects the glide. Make this layer longer or thicker as required.

B. KLISTER; Klister is a very sticky wax which comes in tubes. Anytime snow has been metamorphized, changed by melting and refreezing, Klister is called for. Ice, crust, granular or corn snow, and slush all demand Klister.

Again the best place to start in making the choice as to the type is to follow the manufacturers directions.

KLISTER	SNOW TYPE	TEMP. RANGE	APPLICATION
GREEN	Coarse, corn snow & ice	-8°C below	Apply at room temp to thin film.
BLUE	Ice and crusty snow	0°C to -8°C	Apply at room temp. to thin film.
VIOLET	Changing conditions dry to moisty, coarse grained snow	+3°C to -4°C	Apply at room temp. to thin film.
RED	Wet, coarse grained old snow	+5°C to +2°C	Apply at room temp. to thin film.
SILVER	Wet, dirty corn snow or changing from wet to dry corn		Apply at room temp. to thin film.
YELLOW	Wet, new fallen snow	+4°C	Apply at room temp. to thin film.

Klister is very soft when warm and very, very hard when cold. A source of heat is almost always needed to apply Klister. A torch is very handy here but body heat is better than none. A thin strip of Klister should be applied to each side of the groove (NOT IN THE GROOVE). Spread the Klister into an even layer using heat and/or a spreader. Rub the Klister with your palm until it smooths out (do not use waxing corks).

Cleaning Klister off skis is not pleasant - a full length layer of it is not recommended. Both wood and synthetic skis work just as well with a fairly heavy layer of hard wax on the tips and tails with Klister on only a two or three foot strip under the binding. On ice and frozen corn snow (blue klister snow), the hard wax will wear off quickly. Corn snow is very abrasive, so check for wear, and rewax where necessary.

Klisters lend themselves to experimentation. They may be put on in shorter or longer strips, thicker layers and may also be mixed to good effect. Experimentation with waxes will solve many problems. It is willingness to experiment which separates good waxers from the rest. Waxing isn't complicated and the satisfaction of having 'good skis' on a difficult day makes the whole thing worthwhile.

The techniques of waxing and helpful hints regarding the finer points of the art are well covered in John Caldwell's latest book "Cross Country Skiing Today".

THE BALLAD OF 9TH JUNE

by: Debbie Tyler

T'was Andy Rothfield who though it up,
to have a protest walk
To take to the streets and shout and chant
- do something more than talk.

A lot of people shook their heads,
And said it would harm the cause
"To 'elp save an Alp, was not after all
As important as uranium or nuclear wars."

"Young student radicals," t'was cried,
"Should not be seen or heard."
But to do nothing seemed a far worse crime,
So we shouted back "Absurd",
June 9th saw it happen
And we really were relieved
To see the hundreds that had come along
And that something was achieved.

They came on foot, bicycles,
They wore mittens and boots and skis (poetic licence)
They carried packs and banners,
Some even came as trees!

They walked and shouted "Save an Alp"
And then sat down in the mall,
Being careful not to block the trams
- that wouldn't do at all.

In the "Age" next morning, it was really no surprise
That there was not one word
Of Alps, or Parks or Marchers,
- some coverage was deserved.

So write,
And tell them what you think
Tell them that they and the L.C.C. both stink.

The Mountain View Picnic Shelter between Mt. Beauty and Bogong accumulates cross-country skiers most Friday nights in the snow season. After a five hour drive from Melbourne there is not much to do around a dark cold shelter where no camping is allowed, except to get into a sleeping bag under a table and get some sleep before an early start. In the light of the morning it is a surprise to find so many people packed in under the tables, and on the tables as well. There is intense activity as stoves start chuffing with breakfast, gear is packed, and ice is removed from car windscreens.

At Falls Creek there is chaos as people park cars and then look for the other members of their group. Vehicle tracks and the previous day's iced up ski tracks present the immediate problem of when to stop walking and put on skis. Is the snow going to be this icy out there?

Yet it is. That side slip out-of-control feeling alternates with small drifts of powder snow that slow down the skis with a jerk. Somewhere along Heathy Spur, at a steep upgrade, the ice is smooth and about 2 cm. thick. Sliding down it in a tangle of skis, stocks and pack is no fun: hard to stop and even harder to get back up again. Some of us take skis off and walk up, kicking steps with our heels: the only way to break through the ice. Somebody calls down from the top that it's easier with your skis on. No comment from us. Thoughts like - maybe metal edges would make all the difference, or it must be easier with skins, come to mind as we plod on in a bad mood. We reach the top, where there is snow again. The weather has taken the opportunity to snow and the wind has sprung up. Visibility has dropped; there won't be much of a view.

We all have tents, but it is very windy. Maybe there will be room in Edmonson's Hut. Follow the leader, zig-zag down a steep gully. Can't see very much. Is it the mist or just the goggles fogging? The leader goes straight up the other side of the gully. We take a less steep route and through the snow gums at the top is the hut. There is 20 cm. of powder snow on the ground and more going by horizontally in the wind. A good time to go inside and have lunch.

The wind and snow keep on through the afternoon and evening. We ski around the hut in the shelter of the trees. Out in the open the snow is blown away and the ground has many icy patches. Others arrive at the hut. Some camp, their tunnel tents seem to take the wind quite well. Others arrive. There is room for us too, they say. Plenty of room in the ceiling. Everybody likes a cheery fire to stand around and dry out by. Everybody tries to stand around it and cook dinner at once. The people camped outside come in to cook dinner. It is only fair.

Six of use cram on to a shelf meant to sleep four. It is the top bunk. Pity the people on the edge. Rolled up tents make terrible pillows. Our boots are stiff with cold the next morning, even kept under our pillows inside the hut. The wind and snow are as strong today as they were yesterday.

Others ski off to Mt. Nelse and Johnston's Hut for an excursion. Later we try too, but turn back as we don't know the area well enough. Visibility is so poor it is hard to judge whether you are skiing across a slope or down it. The wind blows away your tracks and the isolation is complete. Better save our energy for skiing back to Falls Creek.

WE WENT TO THE MOUNTAINS
We leave the hut, having swept out the snow tracked in earlier. Out in the open beyond the trees the wind, now coming from the north, seems stronger. Arms outstretched we glide along: is the wind really pushing us or do we imagine it? The white ground has no contrast with the flying snow. It is hard to tell whether you have stopped or not. A snow pole line looms up. They are comforting if you can't see the person in front of you. As you reach one pole the next appears in the distance, part of this strange blurry world. Patches of wind smoothed ice alternate with small drifts of powder snow. That is the worst: first skating then plunging into a drift. Side on to the wind the cold on your face is stinging, unbearable. The pain goes away. Is this frostbite or just the iced up balaclava now keeping the wind out?

In Watchbed Creek gully it is calmer and easy gliding downhill in the tracks made by people in front. Even out of the wind the senses, perception, seem shocked into withdrawal. Huddled deep inside your parka your actions seem remote as if you were inside, the driver of a machine. Communication with others is minimal, encouraging introspection.

Crossing the Rocky Valley dam wall is the last hurdle: the wind rips up the valley and hits you side on. No hanging around here. Anticipation of getting rid of the pack makes it enjoyable just skiing down the road to the car park. Ziping sounds from the skis tell you the snow is too thin to cover all the stones, so you better walk now. And then the car needs to be dug out. An interesting weekend.

This year I.V. was held at Wyangla Dam in N.S.W. The slalom rapid was grade 2 (and a bit) but had sufficient water. The downriver race consisted of mud flat water and tree filled rapids. Immediately between the two was a large drop (about 5') with an immensely powerful stopper wave. Several of Sydney Uni's Mens team heroes had done spectacular loops attempting it so they were surprised when Melbourne Uni arrived to paddle it too.

David Danks successfully skipped his lightweight "Alternativ" K1 over the stopper but Jol Shelton dropped right into the wave, surfed the stopper and was spat out losing his paddle and wrenching his neck on an underwater rock.

For the downriver race we had borrowed proper downriver racing boats: two "Bullets" (K1) and a "Spezial" (C2). These boats are very fast but also unstable so practice before the race, although very short, was useful.

Neil McGilp and David Danks were beaten only by 4 seconds after they eddied out in a rapid in the Spezial. Bill Cruickshank and Prue Dobbin did well despite a rather unstable method of approaching the trees by Bill (side-ways?). Leo Cussen and Di Coon and Andrew Wilson and Mike Slade also did well in the C2's.

On the day of the slalom it was wet and miserable: similar to last year. Notables such as Gary Nelson, Timothy R. Hughes, Dyke Coon and Anna Von Lottkowitz were there. The course was very tight and our "Gemini" C2 did well due to its extreme manoeuvrability.

David Danks did very well in all events and Prue Dobbin and the Ladies Teams also did well.

The presentation dinner provided by Sydney University was enjoyable with unlimited chicken and wine although the T-shirt printing had a very high failure rate.

Other notable events were those of:

- * Leo Cussen whose jeans caught fire and avoided a second Team C2 run by sticking wire through his foot.
- * N.S.W. Uni whose boats and canoe trailer disappeared overnight to be found up in trees, swings, on the lake etc.
- * David Danks going beserk as Prue lined up rocks with his boat in the slalom.
- * Avis truck super-driver Bill who had everyone hanging on tightly.
- * Kay-Hertz car rental who finally admitted "sorry no car" when we arrived to pick it up.

Overall, a really worthwhile event which shows the vast improvement in canoeing standards.

INTERVARSITY CANOEING RESULTS - 1978

DOWNRIVER RACE

MEN'S K1 (19 competitors)

Bill Cruickshank 5th
Jol Shelton 7th
MELBOURNE UNI 3rd

LADIES K1 (11 competitors)

Prue Dobbin 3rd
Anna Lottkowitz 5th
MELBOURNE UNI 3rd

OPEN C2 (10 competitors)

David Danks/Neil McGilp 2nd
Mike Slade/Andrew Wilson 6th
MELBOURNE UNI. 2nd

MIXED C2 (8 competitors)

Leo Cussen/Di Coon 2nd
MELBOURNE UNI. 3rd

OVERALL RESULT - DOWNRIVER RACES - MELBOURNE UNI. 3RD

SLALOM

OPEN K1 (27 competitors)

David Danks 2nd
Neil McGilp 12th
Bill Cruickshank 15th
Andrew Wilson 18th
Jol Shelton 20th
MELBOURNE UNI. 4th

LADIES K1 (17 competitors)

Prue Dobbin 1st
Anna Lottkowitz 4th
Di Coon 10th
MELBOURNE UNI. 2nd

C1 (15 competitors)

Neil McGilp 6th
David Danks 7th
Leo Cussen 14th
MELBOURNE UNI. 4th

OPEN C2 (15 competitors)

Neil McGilp/David Danks 5th
Mike Slade/Andrew Wilson 11th
Bill Cruickshank/
Leo Cussen 13th
MELBOURNE UNI. 4th

MIXED C2 (11 competitors)

Neil McGilp/Prue Dobbin 4th
Di Coon/Leo Cussen 9th
Anna Lottkowitz/Jol Shelton 12th
MELBOURNE UNI. 4th

OPEN K1 TEAM (5 competitors)

David Danks)
Andrew Wilson)
Bill Cruickshank)
MELBOURNE UNI. 4th

LADIES K1 TEAM (3 competitors)

Prue Dobbin)
Anna Lottkowitz)
Di Coon)
MELBOURNE UNI. 1st

OPEN C2 TEAM (5 competitors)

Jol Shelton/Prue Dobbin
Di Coon/Leo Cussen
David Danks/Bill Cruickshank
MELBOURNE UNI. 4th

OVERALL RESULT - SLALOM - MELBOURNE UNI.. 4TH

1. PROPOSED ROCKY VALLEY SKI-TOW

A letter was sent to the director of the Ministry for Conservation requesting an Environmental Effects Statement be prepared for the proposed new ski lift. The letter pointed out that the Ministry's publication 'Guidelines for Environment Assessment' would require such action because the project is controversial, effects a delicate alpine ecosystem, and is being proposed by a government department - the SEC. A very disappointing reply from the Director was recently received. This concluded '... having examined the issues involved, and having due regard for the rights of the State Electricity Commission as landlord for the area and the stringent environmental conditions and provisions laid down by the Soil Conservation Authority, I would advise that an environmental investigation and report does not appear justified in this case.'

This situation is typical of many concerning governments and politics. We have a series of reasonable guidelines drawn up to protect the environment but somewhere in the fine print appears the statement that whether or not these guidelines will be implemented is up to the Director of Conservation. This allows the Director to effectively nullify all the guidelines as has just happened with the Rocky Valley ski-tow.

The Rocky Valley ski-tow is still caught in a complex web of protest. As far as we can ascertain, the proponents of the tow have lodged an objection with the Town & Country Planning Appeals Tribunal over the Bright Shire decision not to allow them to build their first proposed lift. Their second tow proposal, which involved merely a shortening in the length of the tow by about 30m., was allowed by the Shire but has been objected to by a company wishing to build flats near Rocky Valley Reservoir! The FVWC has sent a letter to the Appeals Tribunal supporting the Bright Shire in their decision not to allow the first proposal to go ahead, and objecting to the second proposal as well.

2. LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

The LCC is now studying the South Gippsland Study Area, District 2 (Wilsons Promontory and adjacent areas), and the Ballarat Study Area (Ballarat-Ararat-Lake Colac area) and is looking for information. If anyone has any information about these areas, please send it to the LCC.

3. SOUTHWEST TASMANIA

A government sponsored Southwest Tasmania Resources Survey has been set up and wishes to evaluate the recreational usage of SW Tasmania. M.U.M.C. will be co-operating with this survey and requires all members to keep a record, from now on, of the following aspects of trips to SW Tasmania:

- a) date of visit and time spent in the Southwest
- b) expenditure incurred (travel, equipment, food, accommodation)
- c) destination areas
- d) routes
- e) motives (e.g. specifically to see the Southwest)
- f) activities (e.g. walking, touring, canoeing)

Please help us - accurate information will be very valuable in helping to reserve the Southwest as park or wilderness.

4. NEW ROAD IN THE UPPER WONNANGATTA VALLEY

The commencement of logging in the Mt. Despair area, Upper Wonnangatta Valley around 1970 caused the largest (to that date) protest over logging activities in the Alps. Numerous organizations got together and protested to such an extent that a meeting was held on 20th September, 1972, between conservationists and the then Minister for Forests, Mr. E. R. Meagher, and representatives of the Forests Commission. At this meeting, the Minister stated: "the country east and west of the (Mt. Despair) logging area would be maintained in a primitive roadless state. This included . . . the Mt. Howitt - Terrible Hollow area". (Report of the Meeting, 16/10/7. J.G. Mosley).

In January 1978 the Forests Commission bulldozed a new road through the head of the Upper Wonnangatta linking up the Mt. Despair logging road to the Wonnangatta road system, right through the area which was to have been kept in "a primitive roadless state". According to Dr. R. Grose of the Forests Commission at a V.N.P.A. meeting on 10th May, 1978, the decision to put the road through was made by the Minister for Forests, Mr. Granter. Below we reproduce, without comment, correspondence between M.U.M.C. and the Minister over this issue. You can draw your own conclusions.

M.U.M.C. to Hon. F. J. Granter (Minister for Forests) 6/3/78:

"Dear Sir,

Members of this club were appalled to recently discover a new road bulldozed up the Wonnangatta valley in Gippsland to connect the existing road networks in the Wonnangatta valley and in the Mt. Speculation - Mt. Despair area. This road cuts right through the heart of one of the few remaining wilderness areas in the Victorian alps and was put through (this January) at a very critical time as the Land Conservation Council are currently studying the area. There appears to have been no really pressing reason for constructing the road. There was one fire in the area but this was not a major one and was only at one end of the road near an existing fire access track. All the available evidence leads us to conclude that the road was put in before the L.C.C. finished studying the area in an attempt by the Forests Commission to ensure the existence of a road regardless of the outcome of the L.C.C. deliberations. If so this is deplorable - and we point out that there is no evidence contrary to this point.

We regard this road as an abomination which has partially destroyed one of our few remaining wilderness areas. The trail bike and 4 wheel drive owners who will soon use the road will complete the destruction of this wilderness. Words fail to express our anger and disgust with the Forests Commission for having built this road. Day by day with one example after the other of such selfish thoughtless actions by the Forests Commission, bushwalkers become increasingly angry and frustrated. We request that this road be immediately closed, then ripped up and revegetated."

Minister of Forests to M.U.M.C. (14/3/78):

"I have your letter of 6 March 1978 concerning recent track construction in the upper section of the Wonnangatta river valley.

The assumptions and inferences expressed in your letter about the track are quite wrong, and I must emphatically reject your imputations about the Forest Commission's motivations for constructing the track.

For your information, the track was constructed after thorough examination had determined the essential need for it in the forest fire situation that prevailed at the time. The decision taken to construct this particular track included that it was a temporary fire-access track and that it would be closed and allowed to revegetate; and that is precisely what will happen.

May I add two further comments. I am astounded at the selfish attitudes apparent in your letter with respect to your Club's appreciation of what is required to cope with forest fire situations such as existed in the Buffalo, Wonnangatta and Moroka rivers in January. Secondly, had it not been for the strategies adopted and the tremendous endeavours of hundreds of men fighting the Buffalo and Wonnangatta river fires, the wilderness to which you refer would now be burnt out."

* * * * *

M.U.M.C. to Minister of Forests (28/3/78)

"We feel compelled to reply to a letter you recently sent us (14 March, 1978) in response to a letter we sent you concerning the construction of a new road in the upper Wonnangatta valley.

We are pleased to hear that this road is to be closed but we urge you to ensure that this is done as soon as possible. Having seen the fire and the area in question we are still convinced that the road was not necessary for fire fighting purposes. The damage the road has done to the area far outweighs the damage done by the fire in our opinion. We would like to make it quite clear that we would prefer any day to walk in burnt out forests in the area concerned than to walk through unburnt but roaded forests, as we now have.

You accuse us of having selfish attitudes. We fail to understand why. It is not us, but rather those who continually deny us the opportunity to experience wilderness, who must be considered selfish. There were no property values or probably human lives at risk by the Wonnangatta fire, but there were certainly wilderness values to consider. The lack of consideration shown to wilderness values in this, and all similar instances, clearly illustrates the selfish attitudes of those who are apparently incapable of considering the wilderness user. We would add that this road affects us as deeply as if someone had driven a bulldozer right through our back gardens.

There is so little wilderness left in Victoria for the greatly increased numbers of people who wish to experience it that, whenever another remnant disappears, the situation becomes increasingly intolerable."

* * * * *

Minister of Forests to M.U.M.C. (12/4/78)

"I acknowledge your letter of 28 March and in reply must state, as I did in my letter to you of 14 March, that I am astounded at the attitude and lack of understanding expressed by your Club about the most dangerous fire situation that existed in the mountain forests during January. Your statement that "there were no property values or probably human lives at risk" shows complete ignorance of what can happen in an extreme drought when fires run uncontrolled through Victorian forests.

I find your attitude even more remarkable because it comes from an organisation which I would expect to be better informed. One only has to know something of the disastrous fires of 1939 and 1965 in Victoria to realise that the fires last January posed an immediate threat to life and property, as well as complete devastation of forests and wildlife.

If your members are not aware of the reality of the situation then I suggest they read the Report of the Royal Commission into the 1939 bushfires and the book written last year by W.A. Noble, "Ordeal by Fire - The week a State burned up", and try to understand that there is more involved than the interests expressed in your letter. The Government fully appreciate and supports the concept of wilderness but realises that it cannot do so to the exclusion of all other interests."

* * * * *

M.U.M.C. to Minister of Forests (24/4/78)

"Our club views with concern the comments you have made to us in recent correspondence concerning the construction of a road in the upper Wonnangatta. We believe you have been misinformed because some of the comments in your last letter (12th April) are simply not true.

You stated in this letter that the fires last January posed "an immediate threat to life and property as well as complete devastation of forests and wildlife". This is not true. Where were the lives and property threatened? The nearest permanent residence was many km away from the Wonnangatta fire. If there were any people in the area at the time they would have had ample time to escape because the fire, we repeat, was not a particularly serious one. We have walked through the area burnt by the fire - from valley bottom to ridge-top. Absolutely nowhere did we see any crowning which occurs with the most extreme fires. In many areas the crowns of the trees were not even touched, only the understorey was burnt. We did not see a single dead bird or animal - not even a skeleton. We saw many ants, lizards, and birds. We saw banksias seeding and new shoots of grass everywhere. Obviously, the fire did not threaten complete devastation of forests and wildlife. The fire was not that serious because it did not crown. It even went out of its own accord when it came to some gullies.

You ask us if we have read the Report of the Royal Commission into the 1939 bushfire or the book written by W.A. Noble. We ask you if you have read the submission by the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs to the L.C.C. concerning the Alpine Area in which fire management in wilderness areas is discussed, or the articles referred to in the F.V.W.C. submission - articles by Mutch et al. or the numerous articles in the Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference No. 14, or other work by Stankey on wilderness fire policy or articles in the Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference No. 15. All of this research was conducted during the 1970's. All of this research has been carried out in forests every bit as inflammable as ours, and all of this research comes to one conclusion - in wilderness areas it is undesirable to put all fires out.

Fire fighting techniques and knowledge of fire behaviour and ecology have all changed dramatically in the last 30 years. Land use problems have also become more complex so that what was appropriate in the 1930's or 40's is not necessarily appropriate today. The road in the Wonnangatta represents an antiquated, clumsy, and uninformed approach to the fire problem. The decision to build it was selfish, due to the lack of consideration of wilderness values and is highly regrettable. It has caused nothing but bitterness among bushwalkers, most of whom believe the road was not necessary to fight the fire but was put in for other purposes. We condemn it and will continue to do so until it is ripped up and allowed to revegetate.

Paddy Pallin

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