

MOUNTAINEER

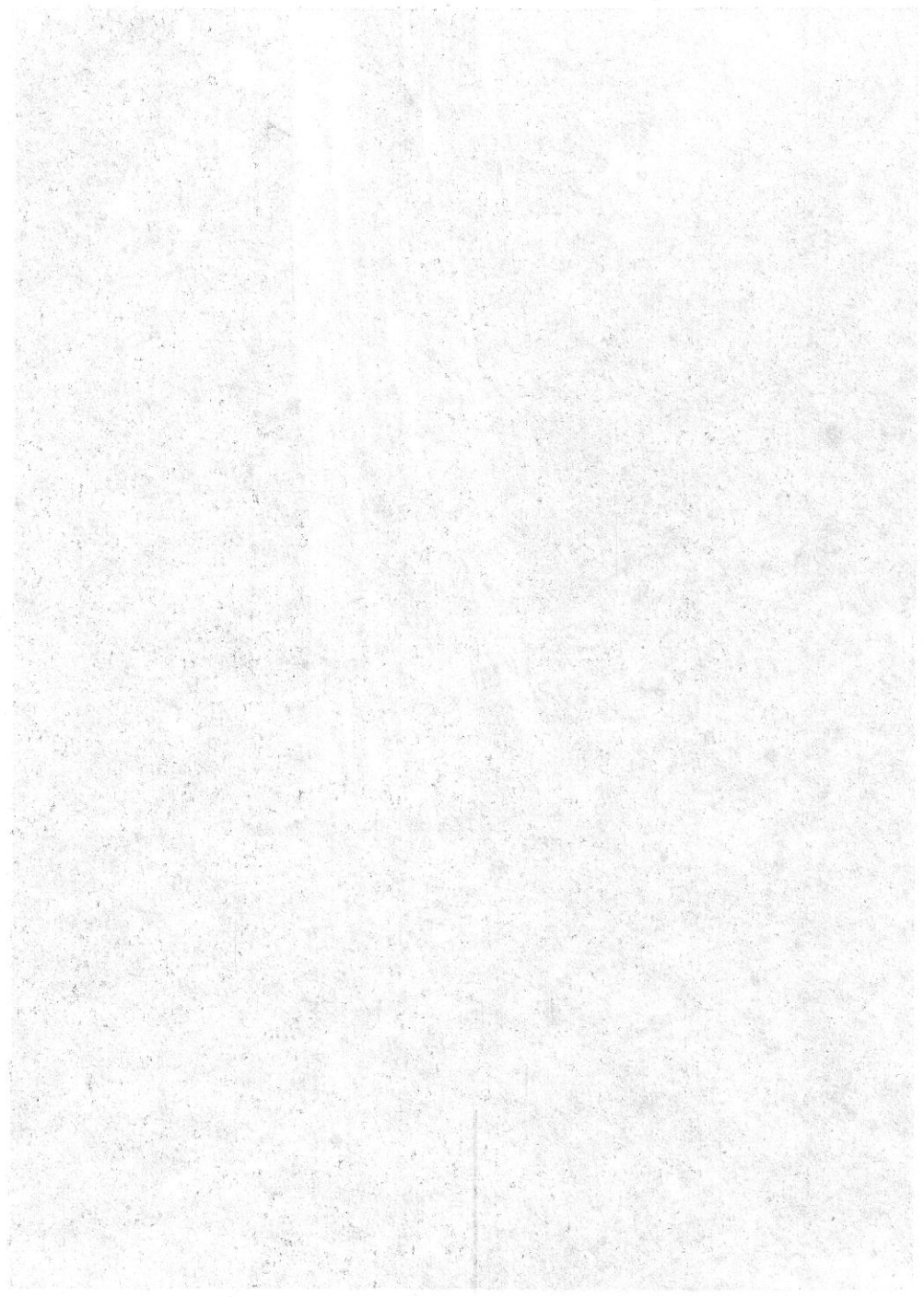


THREAT TO EAST GIPPSLAND FORESTS SEE PAGE 6

MARCH 1984

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MOUNTAIN VIEW



REPORT TO EAST AFRICAN JOURNALIST BY THE A

THE MOUNTAINEER

JOURNAL OF THE
MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

MARCH 1984

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MUMC COMMITTEE POSITIONS 1983

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MUMC - What We're All About

-Janet Rice

So you've paid your money, received your membership card, and are now a fully-fledged member of M.U.M.C. A brief rundown on what the club has to offer and what we're all about, is thus in order.

M.U.M.C. exists primarily as an organisation where people with an interest in virtually all outdoor activities can meet others of similar persuasions and, with a minimum of fuss and expense, get on with whatever takes their fancy. Those of you who don't yet know exactly where your fancy lies will doubtless be pleased to know that the 'Let's-try-something-new-this-weekend' (alias 'Discover-your-very-own-outdoor-pursuit') ethos is not only alive but encouraged.

The club's hive of activity, be it for planning trips, drinking tea, meeting friends or reading noticeboards, is undoubtedly the clubrooms. If, by the end of this article you feel the 'Everything-you-always-wanted-to-know etc.' angle has failed you in any respect, ask questions of someone in the clubrooms (open every lunchtime during term). They'll have a good chat to you, even if they haven't the foggiest notion of the answers to your enquiries.

A guided tour of the clubrooms could well start at the noticeboards. Here you'll find all sorts of information about everything we're into. If you want to know who to contact about BUSHWALKING or CLIMBING or CAVING or CANOEING or ROGAINING or ORIENTEERING or SKI-TOURING or CONSERVATION the noticeboards will tell you.

To know more details about exactly what trips are being planned (and trips in all but the last of these activities are held most weekends) one's attention must gravitate towards the trips book. This unassuming (some might even say tattered) orange folder contains details of all trips currently planned. If you find one you want to go on, write your name on the appropriate list and ring the leader, (or see her/him in the clubrooms). Again, the odd-bods sittins and standing around will probably be able to give you any details you require that aren't written on the trip's sheet. If all else fails (and even if it doesn't) ring the leader.

Experience required to join these trips range from absolutely none to lots - this information is given on the trip's sheet. Some trips (but by no means all) are also advertised in the daily Activities sheet.

Other information you'll get out of the trips book are details about any social occasions coming up. These include Pub Nights, Slide Nights, Pie Nights, B.B.Q.'s, talks, and 'All-you-want-to-know-about' occasions. Hopefully, this year we'll have regular lunchtime slide shows or talks.

Other facets of the clubrooms *raison d'etre* are the equipment store for bushwalking, ski-touring, climbing and caving gear, the library, map library and printing room (yes, from where this 'Mountaineer' emanated).

All of this requires some organisation of course. Thus, the committee. The powerful(?) bureaucrats who keep some semblance of order(?) over everything last year are listed on page two. Their 1984 successors will be decided at the Annual General Meeting on March 27. Nominations are now open for all positions. Non-committee positions include a first aid officer, duplicating officers, Librarian, map librarian, Hut warden (of the M.U.M.C. Memorial Hut on Mt Feathertop) and Assistant Stores Officers, and are also vital to the running of the club. Committee meetings are held approximately once a month and are open to all.

President's Report

-Janet Rice

Well folks, welcome to 1984. For those new to the club, welcome to MUMC - may you all get thoroughly involved in the club, have a wow of a time and still pass your exams; for everyone else, ditto!

This year is our 40th anniversary as a club - we've got a few things planned to celebrate this accumulation of years. Some of our original members are planning a dinner in August or September and the 1983 committee will follow some of them up, with help from anyone else. I won't be able to be on the committee this year, but I am willing to get involved in the 40th anniversary celebrations. Keep your eyes open for MUMC 1944 - 1984 badges!

I've enjoyed my year as president - I only wish I'd had more time to spend on organising the club, as well as studying working and getting away walking on weekends. Some issues which I'm passing onto my successor include getting Orienteering up and running again in the club - any potential convenors out there? - and have a serious go at organising plenty of social events. I'll still be around a bit this year - Tuesday nights at the clubrooms between 7:30 and 8:30 pm will be a good time to catch up with me and have a yarn. See you then!

Climbing Report

-Adrian Bloch

MUMC climbers had a good year. Not in the sense of putting up lots of bold new routes. We didn't. But we did go on lots of great climbing trips to many places, enjoyed the classics and stabbing at the desperates with plenty of flying practice. We had trips to such places as Arapiles, the Grampians, Werribee Gorge, the You Yangs, Hanging Rock, the Cathedral Range, even Frog Buttress in Queensland. Many of these trips catered expressly for beginners and bumbles: you don't need a great wealth of experience to enjoy climbing, all you need is a general interest. Hopefully, many more club members will be introduced to climbing this year, and continue to support the club and continue their experience by organising many more club trips.

Conservation Report

Janet Rice

MUMC has an active interest in conservation. We are a member group of the Conservation Council of Victoria, and have been, and will continue to be involved in many conservation issues, both in conjunction with CCV, and other conservation groups, and on our own.

Last year began, of course, with the blockade on the Franklin. Many past and present MUMC members were involved in this action, and the immense political work which backed it up.

During last year we were concerned with a number of issues, including the stopping of further development at Bluff Hut, and the Land Conservation Council's Special Investigation of the alpine area. Club members have responded to a proposed management plan for the Bogong National Park, and have had some input into the State Conservation Strategy.

This year, the big issue in conservation in Victoria looks like being East Gippsland. This is the latest round in a long fight to get some of the internationally significant areas of East Gippsland rainforest, and mountain ash forest set aside as National Parks. The recent controversy over the 'blockade' organised by a very loosely knit group of people calling themselves first the Nomadic Action Group, then the Forest People, didn't really bring to the public's attention the significance and importance of some of the areas of East Gippsland. The Forest people are really only 'Johnny-come-latelys' onto the scene of conservation, and conservation politics concerning East Gippsland. The Native Forests Action Council, the Conservation Council of Victoria, and the Australian Conservation Foundation have been working towards the declaration of parks in this area for quite a number of years. Last November a significant victory was had, when the government went against the wishes of the Forests Commission, and declared a two year moratorium on logging in the Rodger River catchment. This is pristine forest, never logged, and with very few roads.

The fight for Errinundra goes on. There are areas here of international biological and ecological significance which are due to be clearfelled by the Forests Commission. The declaration of the significant areas as reserves would only affect five percent of the timber reserves of the plateau.

There are many things you can do in the fight to save this area. In the near future we will be organising a speaker from NFAC to fill people in about the background to this campaign, and stir you all to action. More details about this soon. In the meantime, if you want to know how you can get involved, either in the East Gippsland campaign, or on other conservation issues, contact:

Janet Rice

663 1561 (b.h.)

347 3394 (a.h.)

or John Chambers

26 4572

Canoeing with MUMC - Peter Freeman

Canoeing activities are concentrated in two areas at MUMC - whitewater touring and canoe polo. Members also occasionally participate in whitewater competition events, surfing during the summer, and flat water competition. Trips vary in standard from beginners through to expert, and we hope that you can gain the experience and competence that you require by participating in the trips program.

Touring trips are usually day or weekend affairs, with the occasionally longer sortie on long weekends and during the vacation periods. One trip not to be missed is the annual Snowy River Bludge Cruise held late November or early December.

Canoe polo is a fast growing sport played in special craft called 'bats' on indoor swimming pools. MUMC enters teams at several levels in the competition, including Men's and Ladies' Novice when interest is shown by the 'novice' paddlers. You will often find us practicing polo on a Tuesday evening in the swimming pool at the Beaurepaire Centre, 8pm to 10pm. These training sessions are held most Tuesday evenings, but there are some nights when we are playing competitive games at Richmond, so check before coming to watch.

Beginner trips will start early in March (see the program in this issue). In addition to the day trips, we have set aside a number of Tuesday evenings for novice instruction. For these nights, just turn up at the Beaurepaire with bathers and towel, and a little cash if you want to join the group for pizza and drinks after the gear has been put away. Otherwise, there is no cost for these evening sessions. The beginners' day trips start early, and you will need to bring lunch packed in plastic bag, bathers, towel and a t-shirt or similar to keep the sun off your back, woollen clothing or wet-suit if the weather looks cool, sunscreen cream and 5-10 dollars to cover canoe hire and transport costs. Further details will be given when each trip is finalised. Once you have attended at least one day trip, you can tackle some of the easier weekend trips, or the Easter trip if you are progressing well. Equipment for a weekend trip costs 5 dollars per person, and once again you must pay your share of the transport costs.

The highlight of the first half of the year is undoubtedly Intervarsity Canoeing. This competitive and social gathering of canoeists is occurring during the week of May 13-18 this year, with Univ. of Sydney hosting the event. The venue is not yet known. Everyone from beginner to expert is welcome, so keep this period free for a great week of paddling and partying.

Come and give canoeing a go. We all look forward to seeing you on the water.

CANOEING PROGRAM - TERM 1 1984

- March, Tuesday 13th: Beginners session in the Beaurepaire Pool. 8pm - 10pm.
- Saturday 17th: Yarra River, beginners day trip.
- Sunday 18th: Goulburn River, beginners day trip.
- Saturday 24th: Yarra River, beginners day trip.
- April, Sunday 1st: Beginners day trip - venue to be decided.
- Tuesday 3rd: Beginners session in the Beaurepaire Pool. 8pm - 10pm.
- Saturday 8th/
Sunday 9th: Weekend trip, venue to be decided
- at least one day trip's experience needed.
- Tuesday 17th: Beginners session in the Beaurepaire Pool. 8pm - 10pm.
- Easter: Snowy River trip. (4-5 days).
- May, Tuesday 8th: Beginners session in the Beaurepaire Pool. 8pm - 10pm.
- Week 13th-19th: Intervarsity Canoeing.

The highlight of the first half of the year is undoubtedly Intervarsity Canoeing. This competitive and social gathering of canoeists is occurring during the week of May 13-19 this year, with Univ. of Sydney hosting the event. The venue is not yet known. Everyone from beginner to expert is welcome, so keep this period free for a great week of paddling and partying.

Come and give canoeing a go. We all look forward to seeing you on the water.

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BUSHWALKING TRIPS LIST 1st TERM 1984

DATE	LOCATION	STANDARD	LEADER	PHONE
March 3,4	Baw Baw	Med.	Nick Hallebone	5090378
10,11	Wilson's Prom.	Easy	Janet Rice	3473394
11	Donna Buang	Med.	Andrew Rothfield	3475241
17,18	Bogong High Plains	Med	Mark Durre	4175805
18	Cathedral Ranges	Easy	Peter Whetton	3473394
24,25	Cobbler	Med.	Peter Campbell	
March 30				
-April 1	Bluff-Mt. McDonald	Med	Owen Morgan	3384323
April 7,8	Howitt	Hard	Peter Smillie	3473394
14,15	Grampians	Easy	Tim Dyall	3472770
15	Dom-Dom	Easy	Peter Freeman	
20-24	Easter Van Trip		Location, standards and areas to be decided, 5 trips at least.	
20-24	East Gippsland	Easy	Janet Rice and Peter Whetton	3473394
May 5,6	Jericho-Red Jacket	Med	Rod Costigan	3875136

Nepal

Kim Adshead

I lay there in the tent, wondering if this was what it was like to die. The strong smell of garlic filled the air, and if I moved my head to the right or left, an unbearable pain seemed to fill it, and make me cry out. The light filtering in through the tent door silhouetted the figures of a very worried trek leader and an unusually serious sherpa, and burned into my eyes. So here, in the fourth week of our trek was another new experience- altitude sickness.

The trek had begun in a very different place in these high mountains. Six of us from all different parts of Australia had booked with a popular trekking company, and we were a pretty mixed bunch. I was the youngest at 22; Janice, a doctor was 24 years old. Nick and Pierre, a freelance journalist and a lawyer were in their early forties, then Bob and Rod were approaching 50. The oldest on our trek was John, a computer operator, who was 63.

We had left Kathmandu at the horrific hour of 4am, the six of us and our trek leader Veronika, 5 sherpas, two sherpanis and all our gear in a typical Nepalese bus - brightly painted with eyes, nose, flames, a little modelled god in the driver's compartment, and the driver stoned, and judging by his constant smoking, likely to stay that way. The steps on the back of the bus were a mystery, as was the very high back seat, until, a couple of hours out of Kathmandu, a sherpa disappeared out of the back window of the moving bus, up the stairs, and onto the roof where he sat happily singing. Before long we were all up there, watching the country-side pass by. On one side of the bus were the foothills of the Himalaya, on the other side the wide, flat plains of India stretching away to the horizon.

Our trek was to take us to the far east of Nepal, to a village in the foothills named Dharan. From there, we were to follow the huge Arun River north towards Makalu, then turn suddenly west through the middle hills and over some high passes till we went north again just before the village of Lukla. Here we would meet trekkers on the way to Mt Everest from Kathmandu. The route would then take us through the Sagarmatha (the Nepali name for Mt Everest) National Park, through the Sherpa capital Namche Bazaar, to Kala Pataar, a hill in the Khumbu glacier valley near Everest base camp that would give excellent views of Mt Everest and the surrounding peaks. This way we would get a good idea of the diversity of country in Nepal - from the 'Terai' plains, to the highest peaks.

In the evening the bus pulled into a small village for refuelling. A walk through the village main street seemed like a good idea. The place was bustling, even late at night, but my presence set off an unexpected reaction. From behind stalls, houses and shops people appeared and quite unashamedly watched every move I made. Through the crowd the word quietly passed - 'Memsahib, memsahib'. This was in direct contrast to the sherpa people I was later to meet in the higher hills, who would smile and call out. 'Namaste didi!' (I salute the divine qualities in you, big sister!) When

a crowd of villagers started following me along the dark street, I decided it was time to go back to the bus.

Trekking began the next day, and the scenery shattered all my preconceived expectations of Nepal. No snow-capped mountains in this area, no smiling sherpas or wandering yaks. Here was the stuff of geography lessons at school; rice paddies, water buffalo, bamboo houses, chickens, dogs, children in rags, wierd unpleasant smells, tropical vegetation, and it was hot! A week later and I was converted. I could drink chang (millet beer) after requesting it in Nepali, could walk as hard and fast as anyone, I could beat little Nepali boys at swimming races in the river, and could find a direct route through a rice paddy field along with the best of them. I could even cross a bridge of roughly lashed together slippery bamboo poles with only a few terrified yells, could throw stones at interfering dogs the way the Nepalis did, and I knew I had really made it when I started washing my clothes on rocks in rivers in a makeshift sari in appropriate dobi (washerwoman) like pose.

Each day brought some special highlight, one day it was a village funeral where we were told a very old man had died of malaria. Turned out he was 53 years old! His body was carried past us to the river to be burned and the ashes thrown into the water. A man following the funeral procession blew a conch-shell trumpet, and the eerie sound it made filled the village. That night no-one forgot their malaria tablets. Another day the highlight was a tiny girl of about 3 or 4 years old who nonchalantly wandered past behind a dozen huge water buffalo, occasionally tapping one to keep it in line with the others. She wasn't even as tall as the buffalo's stomachs.

The days soon fell into a steady routine. We were woken at about 6am by a sherpa cook bringing tea and washing water. It was then a matter of packing up gear, and helping to take down the tents. Luggage would be given to one of the fourteen porters hired at the start of the trek who would strap an enormous load together to be carried in large cane baskets supported by a strap around his forehead. We would then walk till lunchtime, at about 11am. Food was generally local vegetables and breads, soups, stews, mueslis, rice, or tinned goods. The cooks attempted to westernise the traditional Nepali recipes, usually with disastrous results. Everyone lost weight. We would walk until about three in the afternoon, then it was off to the nearest teahouse until dinner, at about 6pm. Tea houses were often dimly lit, and due to the usual absence of a chimney, were incredibly smokey. It was quite a common occurrence to find yourself about to sit on a chook in the poor light, and also to be served by young children, rather than their parents. This was because the children had learnt, or were learning english at a school usually built by Sir Edmund Hillary, and so had a much greater knowledge of the language than did their non-educated parents. A visit to one of these schools, did, however, reveal all seven pupils sitting under the table giggling. After dinner

it was back to a teahouse, or a chance to talk, or play soccer with one of the sherpa guides, write a diary, or letters, or read. An early night then followed as everyone seemed always exhausted after the day's walk.

Walking away west from the Arun River the days continued hot, though the nights began to get cooler. The middle hills were more steeply terraced than before, and the bamboo houses began to give way to mud dwellings. The rice paddies too, were at a more advanced stage, with the rice almost ripe. By the time we reached the Khumbu Valley we were to see the complete cycle of growth, from just planted young plants to harvesting and threshing in the higher and drier parts of the country. Each week's walk was like walking into a new season. Rainforest began to give way to pine and juniper forests. Higher still, rhododendrons appeared and one night we set up camp below our first snow-covered peak. The Rai people's houses of the lower and middle hills became intermingled with Sherpa houses, obvious because of the brightly painted windows and doors, and prayer flags waving from rooftops or poles. Walls of prayer stones known as mani walls began to appear, all bearing the carved Nepali or Tibetan words 'Om mani Padme Hum' - 'hail to the jewel in the lotus flower', pronounced 'Om Mani Pamay Hung' by our sherpas. We walked over our first high pass, Salpa Pass, at about 12 000 feet, and saw our first chorten - a stone structure of religious importance, giving blessings for a safe journey. Chortens are placed on the very top of a pass, and are usually decorated with marigold flowers. It was getting very cold now, and down jackets were essential in the evenings.

One day in the fourth week of the trek, we entered the Sagarmatha National Park, recognized by the sign 'Wel Come to Sagarmatha National Park'. We were on the tourist trail now, and guest houses also had 'Wel Come' signs for travellers. Two days later we were in the Sherpa capital of Namche Bazaar. What luxury! Hot showers (two kettlefuls of warm water), cakes, chocolate, non-fried bread, fried rice, and lemon tea. Here we had a rest day which was spent showering, washing clothes, meeting other trekkers, and especially eating. It was a sort of Nepali equivalent of an Australian pub-crawl, but with food the main attraction. Tea house after tea house was tried. Late at night I ate my last item, a yak steak smothered in garlic and onions. Still later that night I paid the price for such rich food, and was very, very sick. Exhausted from vomiting, I crawled into my sleeping bag, and had just got to sleep when I was woken by a very discordant drone which got louder, and louder, and louder. When it stopped, another similarly discordant drone started. The local monks had chosen 4am to celebrate the Mani Rimdu festival by playing long horns, similar to alpenhorns, over the whole village. The village dogs especially appreciated it, barking along happily....

Next day we set off for Thangboche monastery, walking towards the beautiful mountain of Annapurna. We were fortunate enough to be shown through Thangboche monastery by a lama. Beautiful old paintings covered the walls, one small one including a picture of a yeti which the sherpas all swear exist, or did exist. Four modern framed pictures hung on a rafter. They presented rather a mix of influences, the King and Queen

of Nepal, the Dalai Lhama, Mahatma Gandhi, and a certificate acknowledging the contribution of the Sherpa people to the British Everest expedition team, presented by the British in 1954. The Monastery itself must once have been a beautiful, remote haven amongst some of the most spectacular peaks in the world. Sadly it is now so well visited that one of the monks had even set up a stall selling goods to tourists just outside the entrance!

Walking higher and higher, the villages got fewer and the ground more barren until we felt we were walking on the moon. We had left our porters in Namche Bazaar and had hired yaks with bells around their necks to let people know they were approaching. These bells rang out over the quiet, bare landscape, prayer flags flapped hollowly against walls of buildings. Occasionally ice in the rivers cracked.

The air was thinner now, mild headaches common, rest days frequent. The spectacular Khumbu glacier was reached, a thunderous avalanche seen, and sleep was harder and harder to get with the smallest movement at night leaving you gasping for breath.

Camped outside a high altitude tea house I wake up with a headache. Damn! Have to get to Kala Pataar, our highest point today. Walking on and on, head getting worse, grumpy with everyone. Stupid rocks keep getting in the way, but what an amazing sight! Glacier stretching away to the foot of Nuptse, bits falling off, watch it, nearly fell into a crevasse. Hell, stupid head hurts, have to rest. Why are all these people moving so fast? Feel like I'm going to be sick. Yeah, yeah, I'm O.K., leave me alone please. Finally at 17 000 feet, I am at the bottom of the hill. Have two Panadol. They don't do a thing. Never make it up the hill, have to go back. Oh, now this is good, head floating right off, can't feel anything really. Stupid rocks still getting in the way. Avalanche off Nuptse. Stop to watch. God, I'm falling sideways. Oh, I feel terrible! Keep walking. Someone on my left hand side. Hello, yes, it is nice - oh no! I'm crying. Have to sit down. Goodness, I've upset the poor fellow. He's going for help. Come back with someone. He runs, but I float into rock after rock. Keep having funny thoughts. Getting close now, nearly at the camp. The sirdar comes to guide me back. He jumps from rock to rock over an ice stream. I jump on one, and slip, and end up wading the rest. Here we are. I'm told to get into my sleeping bag to keep warm. Given lots to drink. Keep up fluids for altitude sickness. The trek leader arrives, and the sirdar decides to try an old Nepali remedy. A minute later he's back with a large garlic bulb. He begins rubbing garlic cloves into my forehead. It burns, but is very soothing. A wide cloth band is tied very tightly around my head, which is massaged. Strangely, the pressure is a relief. Garlic rubbings again, garlic under my nose, garlic soup arrives, and I must drink it. Some time later I am being sick, then I sleep.

Next morning I am well again. This pleases the sherpas very much, and they run around saying over and over 'Nepali medicine is very good!' If I had got worse I would have had to have been taken down in the night to a lower altitude in a cane porter's basket. I am also pleased I am better!

My toothpaste and deodorant are frozen, a hot cup of tea has ice in it after six minutes. It's -20°. Waterfalls are particularly interesting at this height, with ice suspended between rocks. We walk down, down, down till we reach the village of Lukla. Here we wait while the runway is cleared of people and animals so a small plane can land. Someone cheerily tells us Lukla has the worst history of flying accidents in the world, and someone else adds that Sir Edmund Hillary's wife and daughter were killed in a plane accident here. I give Tikkarum, a very musical sherpa who has become a good friend, my tin whistle; he is delighted with such a present. We then board the plane, leaving sherpas, cooks and yaks behind, manage to clear the runway and not crash into the mountain in front, and after only twenty minutes, are back in Kathmandu city.

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Boots and all

Diana Rice

It was deep in the throes of a November swat vac that I realised the control they had over me. Sitting at my desk fighting with realms of illegible, incomplete lecture notes I'd sense they were looking at me, tongues lolling pathetically. Snug just inside my wardrobe door they'd sit gleaming, trying their utmost to seduce me away from my studying. Beautifully "Snosealed" with only a hint of mud sticking to their soles those wretched boots pleaded with me to take them walking.

I resisted, my running shoes laced firmly to my feet and Explorer socks abolished to the back of my cupboard. To think that a pair of boots could be so demanding! Why, the weekend before I'd even treated them to a trip halfway around a rogaie, only to find that blistered feet cringed long before Erodium and rocky terrain had begun to scratch their enthusiasm. Even the North West spur (twice), with snow, had failed to dishearten them; recovering with superb speed once cleaned and "Snosealed" while I limped on. Could nothing daunt my rapscallion Rossis? Was I forever doomed to a life of slavery?

And then, the last exam was over and I no longer had a conscience for my boots to prey upon. With ruthless determination I tightened their laces, leather squealing in pinched agony, and strode into four months of leisure. Pawns of my activities, my boots buckled under.

Alas, now, what horror!

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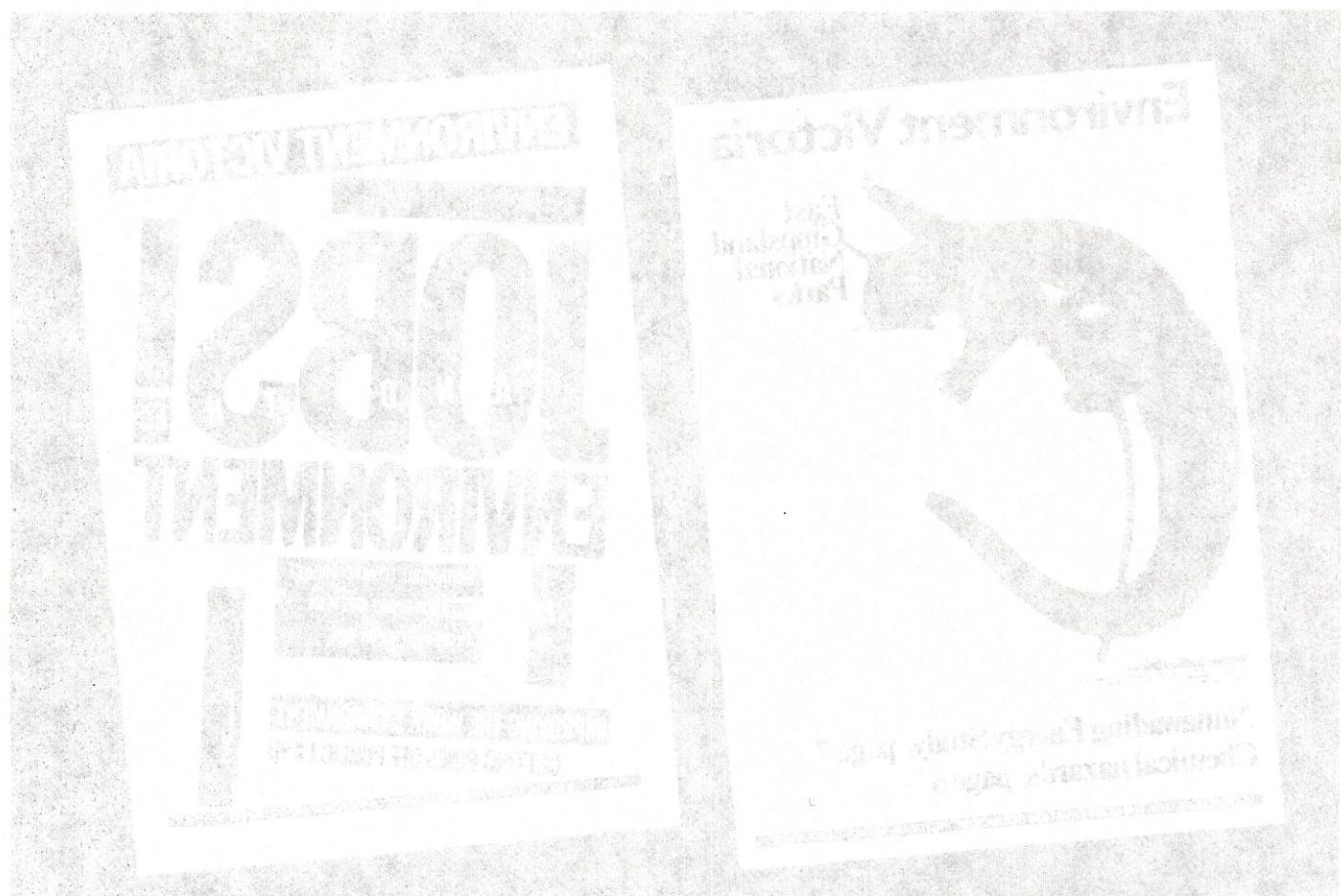
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