

STOP
GROUPELLING
WHIMP !!

RECEIVED

1907

RECEIVED

1907

Silent Appreciation

A cool breeze tickled the whiskers on my face. From within me came a rich, broad smile. I was delighted by the gentle gesture of this harsh environment. Such tenderness is not often shown on Thwaite's plateau.

Suspended at thirteen-hundred metres above sea level, Thwaite's is about as big as two football fields joined end to end. In fact you could play footy here if you did not mind the twenty degree slope in some places. Most of the plateau is covered by a blanket of snow grass. The presence of this delicate but hardy vegetation indicates that the plateau, as a place which affords superb views across the subpolar oceans south of Tasmania, finds itself subject to the worst weather that the westerlies can muster.

That evening was one of those few occasions when the almost indefatigable harshness of Thwaite's plateau was replaced by an inviting tenderness. These were the thoughts which were calmly soothing me when another person appeared.

He sat on a flat rock near me. Up until then I had been alone. Surprisingly, I did not mind this sharing of personal space. A small twinge of resentment was quickly dissolved without much effort.

We did not speak to or look at each other. There did not seem any need to. Neither of us was being anti-social. It was just that the situation we were sharing required communication far more subtle and far more saturating than the coarseness of words or the intensity of eye contact. This type of communication has to be felt before it can be understood. It occurs where the communicators share the same experience and whilst no words are spoken each person is conscious that the other or others are experiencing similar emotions. I was quietly pleased, and surprised, as this sharing occurred. Not even with Hobby, in the two summers that we had spent together in south-west Tasmania, had I been able to communicate in this way. I was loving it.

Suddenly John, as he introduced himself, apologised for intruding. Softly, I reassured him that he was not intruding. A friendly silence once again enveloped us. As we gazed over the foothills stretching to the ocean the sun dropped beneath the thin layer of cloud that hovered just above the horizon. The fluffy belly of this cloud bank took on a golden hue whilst the glowing ball, into which the sun had transformed, offset the successive rows of foothills by giving each of the three rows a different shade. The effect of this was to make each row seem like a cardboard cutout superimposed on the row behind it. Unexpectedly, a white dot dropped out of the peaks which towered on our right. This bird skillfully carved a majestic hyperbola through

I was eased out of this wonderful situation as the sun descended beneath the horizon. John and I smiled at each other, a gesture of thanks and appreciation, and departed separately. Returning to my tent I thought about the crazy people who had remained within the sheltered confines of the scoparia forest campsite. These people were crazy because they had missed an opportunity to really live. "People can be really dumb sometimes," I thought to myself.

A LONG WEEKEND IN NOVEMBER
(dedicated to a clapped out Subaru)

The greatest weekends paddling since arriving in Victoria was at high water levels on the Swampy Plains and the almost legendary "Murray Gates", a wonderful section of river on the upper Murray with several kilometers of almost continuous rapids ranging from grade 3 to hard grade 4/arguably grade 5. This trip was the subject of an article in an early "Wild" magazine, which wet my appetite way back then. In retrospect, the review was a bit exaggerated. Nonetheless it was distressing to see the number of people on the river who ought not to have been there, including one character in a blow-up canoe who had chosen not to wear a helmet and another clever individual who asked if we could spare a length of rope so he could tie his paddle to his boat "like a surf-skier"!!

Both the Swampy Plains and the Indi (as the Murray is called at its headwaters) drain the western edge of the divide underneath the shadow of Mt. Kosciusko. The drive in affords spectacular views of the snow-clad Main Range and winds through a lower alpine forest full of spring regrowth. Tom Groggin campsite, the starting point for the Indi trip, is only a scant twenty minutes drive from Thredbo village.

These rivers require only a single day each, if the party is experienced and reasonably early starts are made, but in both cases the trips are mentally as well as physically exhausting.

From the start the Swampy Plains is a kayaker's delight: the water is always moving, always turbulent, requiring constant attention to direction, adjustments of strength and length of stroke.... The first few kilometres follow the edge of Swampy Plains, past Ceehi hut and several other of the historic huts now cared for by the Kosciusko Huts Association until it is met by a logging track, which was marked by a particularly inane experience.

A very official sign on the bank reads "WARNING, ENTER AT OWN RISK, DANGEROUS WATER". Erected beside said sign was a large, canvass, beach-holiday-type tent, complete with three-tiered gas stove, deck chairs, lanterns, dog, excited children and bear-bellied men asking questions along the lines of "are yous goin' down da rapids?" and "do ya think it'll be exciting?" I pulled out to adjust the bracing on the Club's new White-water Europa, which I was paddling for the first time. They seemed to be unaccountably interested in the proceedings, until I noticed the slab of Fosters cans in the water over which I must have paddled to the bank.

Shortly thereafter the country closed in and for quite some time the river twisted and plunged through magnificent features - boulder gardens, drops and narrow chutes abounded, the granite rounded and smoothed by the water and the banks a pocket of temperate palm forest. Devil's Grip Gorge gave us the best runs, the large volume of water squeezing through the most choked features, at one point diving completely down a sink hole under a boulder comparable with those marking the beginning of "the Liftover" rapid on the Nymboida - the only absolutely essential portage of the trip. Even through to the finish the interest rarely waned and we were sorry only for the overcast and occasionally windy weather, though that is almost a fact of kayaking life down here.

Among the many attractions of paddling in this region are that the rivers are so close together. The Indi runs almost parallel to the Swampy Plains, separated by a few ridges, so we were able to complete the car shuffle for it that afternoon before climbing the Alpine Way to Tom Groggin, dinner, beer and bed.

contributed such important information as that Dr. Sir Joh had been reelected, the Queensland Canoe Polo team had come second in Sydney, the week-end before and that the Thredbo river was worth looking into for a paddle while we were in the region. We let them gain a good margin before setting off.

Although the surroundings of the Indi are much less attractive than the Swampy Plains, the paddling more than makes up for it, being considerably more demanding. A seal launch from the bridge shortly downstream resulted in a broken paddle and a run back to the car for our spare for Warren. The distance to be travelled is also much greater on the Indi and, apart from the bridge and an early stopper, it takes quite a while for the river to show its teeth. Nevertheless, the volume of water demanded our constant attention, combining with the sunshine and blue skies to make a very happy party.

When the country finally closes in and the "Murray Gates" themselves are reached, the experience moves out of daze and into dream mode, the compressed water over the drops making rolling pressure waves of pure joy - the rock of the boat, the paddle in your hand, the spray in your face and the sun on your back; feeling, seeing, hearing, tasting and even smelling the water in motion, truly what kayakers live for... (Ed. Who does this guy think he is? Solo man?)

There are no totally unpaddleable sections on the Indi, but much of it is very demanding. In particular a rapid called "Hole in The Head" and the sections following it require well-developed skills in reading the water, selecting suitable lines and adhering to them through water which is big, white and fast. The paddler must be able to read and react to the forces in the water as they move, instantly and correctly. One is often submerged, frequently spun around or tilted and always alert to steer and guide the boat.

I was very glad to be in the Europa. though it was an unfamiliar boat, it certainly came out of the weekend test run with flying colours. With its high volume and sizeable rocker, I would put it second only to the Dancer in plastic white-water boats, while the amount of gear it could carry would make it superior for extended trips. I have yet to see how it handles when loaded up. The only criticism is that even in the white-water version there is insufficient bracing, which contributed directly to an unintended and quite unnecessary swim when I attempted to roll out of a pin - the indignity! We passed the Sydney specimens about half way; one badly-damaged boat, several minor injuries and frayed nerves already, with the "best" part yet to come! We also came across a gentleman paddling, portageing and dragging his kayak upstream. Apparently he had taken his helmet off for some reason when doing the trip the previous day and had placed it on his splash cover. It had promptly been washed overboard and sunk, leaving him with an eight hour walk out to get another one. He had returned with it the next day to retrieve his boat, but being alone, had decided against continuing down the river and so was trying to reach a track some distance back upstream. Our offer to take him with us was declined. We did not have the heart to tell him about the infestation of blackberries around the next corner.

(Ed. This person, who will remain nameless also went out with a prominent female canoeist in the club)

The indication that the Thredbo river might make for a good paddle prompted us to check it out on Monday, since we knew that it followed through some beautiful snowgum country and was close to the road for quite some distance.

from Dead Horse Gap where it meets the Alpine Way to Thredbo village and for some distance beyond was quite definitely too shallow and would be a very difficult river indeed when there was enough water. Further down it gave more promise, but was still too shallow, considering that two of our party were in fibreglass boats. We also gave some thought to paddling the Goobragandra river near Tumut, which is reputed to be a good paddle, but the temptation of substantial amounts of snow still lying on the high country finally decided us to put them off for another day in favour of some walking for everyone except me; I had to go to Cooma for car repairs. (So what's new!)

From Cooma, our way home lay via Khancoban, a Snowy Mountains Authority life support village with an enticing pub.

So that's the story; we had a quick run on the King river in Victoria on the way home and won the best canoe polo match I had played in that night back in Melbourne.

TORSTEN KREBBS

INDI RIVER 0.95m.
SWAMPY PLAINS RIVER 1.5m.

"You bastard, I'm going to miss another epic on the Shoalhaven, a potentially suicidal one at that!" Maybe I could resign again, although there's always an alternative ... a blackberry infested drain called the Indi with the Swampy Plains thrown in for aesthetic value.

The road from Khancoban appeared to breed innumerable wombats and kangaroos as we swerved, skidded and hallucinated our way to Tom Groggin before crashing out for 6 hours prior to paddling. The first two hours on the river found us at Hermit Creek with an A.H.E. group instructing aspiring solo men/river guides in the finer points of the American accent and not much else. A long rapid towards the end of 'Murray Gates' signalled the end of the most exciting section, Bill and I both emerging from the stopper with a tailstand.

Lunch was a mixture of spaghetti, tuna and cheese jaffles amid rapidly retreating blackberries as Bill indulged himself in the latest craze of blackberry bashing. Meanwhile I contemplated the overrated 'Hole in the Head' rapid paddled earlier in the day wondering why we had bothered looking and hoping the Swampy would be better tomorrow. The final two hours to Biggara was inconsequential, noone died, the pub at Khancoban a welcome sight as we stocked up on supplies for a 'mega' meal at Geehi Bridge.

The Swampy Plains was similar to the Indi in the upper reaches with the blackberries in abundance; however the snowcapped Snowy Mountains provided a spectacular backdrop.

The sign on the riverbank 'WARNING: ENTRY BEYOND THIS POINT AT OWN RISK. DANGEROUS WATER', adds a certain aura to the river for those who haven't paddled it before. Entering Devils Grip Gorge sees the river change dramatically with sparkling clear water and enormous sculptured granite boulders of which Michaelangelo would have been proud.

The Cranka's C2 encountered some problems resulting in a few portages and a very pale Robyn. "You don't want to stuff up here", I said to Greg and Julie as the river disappeared under a boulder further downstream. Nevertheless valient attempts to institute an epic were thwarted as both Chaplins managed to recover after being swept the wrong way down the rapid. The short portage around the blockage is a easy training session for aspiring Franklin paddlers culminating in an optional seal launch for reentry to the river.

A snack break enabled me to display my photographic stupidity as I leapt from one boulder to another in an attempt to capture the Gorge on film only to receive two corked thighs, much to the amusement of the remainder of the party. Robyn also had difficulty with the rocks preferring to slide into the river rather than walking.

The river continues its scenic, turbulent journey through relatively easy rapids towards Khancoban. The drive to Melbourne was a good 6 hours, although if you run out of petrol it may be considerably longer. An excellent weekend was had by all, however the next trip will need to be well over 1.0metre to be worthwhile.

A more recent trip to the Indi at 1.3m was significantly better the rapids being truly Grade 4 and enjoyable.... the day the V.A.C.A. put out a more realistic Canoeing Guide instead of overrating rapids canoeists will be much better off! Overrating rapids in Victoria can lead to problems if people venture interstate to such rivers as the Nymboida and Shoalhaven, believing mistakenly that they have paddled sufficiently highly graded rapids to enable them to tackle these rivers.

A final warning though... inexperienced paddlers should not be on Grade 4

Wacky White Waterers (Mitchell Trip)

This was it!! The first test. A rapid called 'SLALOM'. Carol, Frank and I jelly kneed, butterflied stomached psyhed each other up. One by one we faced the throthing peril. Remember weight down stream, keep paddling and don't panic!!!! It seemed like something that you see kayakers paddle on T.V. except this time there was the sensation of the water. It was very exhilarating and this gave us the ego boost that we needed to conquer the rapid ahead.

AMPHITHEATRE (this name was made kayakers tremble in their wet suits) was the meanest rapid that we came across. The beginners were going well.....except for a fall in over a piece of chocolate???????? We watched motionlessly as the big men tumbled. Ian was pushed sideways by a pressure wave then became unbalanced and toppled over....but after a couple attempts at rolling he finally recovered. (Who needs to practise their rolling!!!!!!) The beginners were tossed, tumbled and battered around in this rapid. It was great that the camp was just around the corner.

At camp we got to know everyone more intimately. Torsten (sunshine coast layabout) will have to start bleeching his hair!!! ...it's tough trying to be a surfer in Victoria. Devo's scientific brain was at work (I thought Yogi did law???) studied the relationship between the amount of wood on the fire relative to the diameter of fire circle. (his paper is coming out soon!!) Carol found kayaking on the Mitchell was a "Vesta Situation". Maffo showed his support for the Aussi farmers in their economic hardship by buying and consuming 3 kg of steaks!!!! (what about the vegie farmers!!!) I preached the right for life to the non-believers (I think Tim is going to come around because he said he liked my lentil burgers and he had a vegie countermeal!!!!). Frank was following his intuition....and it lead him to do this trip???????? (a word of advice...don't follow it.... it's dangerous!!!!)

You could tell the story of that nite. They were the ones to bite the water in the first half an hour after entering their kayak the next morning.

This paragraph is dedicated to the dare devils, thrill seekers and suicidalists that lurk within us all. The oldies added another dimension to kayaking by plummeting in their kayaks off a 10m ... or was that 100m???? I didn't know that Ian did aerobatics!!!! His boat twisted so that he was facing head first into the water!!!! His face was a burnt beetroot colour. Maffo showed us what Ian was trying to do and Tim added his own style by going in backwards. I am looking forward to this being an Olympic event!!!!!!!!!!!!

The trip was suitably finished off by the beginners thanking the oldies for their aches, pains, cuts, scratches, sprains, bumps, scraps and bruises!!!! We showed our appreciation by presenting them with some cold beers!!!!...which would you believe we found growing on a tree!!!!!!!!!!!!

LOTS OF WACKINESS, WHITE WATER AND COLD BEERS

X

(of no fixed address!!!!!!!!!!!!)

ROCKCLIMBING IN VICTORIA - A Review of some Lesser Known Cliffs

by Adrian Bloch

Heyfield, in Central Gippsland, is the gateway for walkers and ski-tourers to some of the best parts of the Alps for their sports. A lesser recognised fact is that Heyfield is also the gateway to some of the best rockclimbing features in the State. The Victorian Alps are dotted with dozens of major cliffs, as well as literally hundreds of smaller ones. The generally accepted adage about climbing here is that the cliffs are mostly too crumbly or impossible to get to. Hearing someone say that, its a good bet that they haven't done terribly much climbing in the Alps. The almost endless supply of cliffs range in quality from falling down to excellent, access ranges from death-march to 3 minute walk, and route quality range from mediocre to three star. There is, in fact, something for everyone, from the first-time bumbly to dedicated hard-man. The best part of it is that most of the cliffs await discovery and development.

LANIGANS CLIFFS

Just outside Heyfield, right next to the road. Drive North out of Heyfield along the road to Coongulla (not the Licola Road). As you cross the Macalister River just below the Glenmaggie Wier, one set of cliffs is immediately obvious on the right. A small track leads to the base. This has a number of good hard problems, about grades 15-22, mostly tope-rope problems though due to the nature of the rock, and the aquaduct. No restrictions on climbing here, as the owner, who lives at the top of the cliff, is a climber himself. Another set of cliffs about 1 km further downstream (walk along south bank from road) has a number of good, well protected beginners and medium routes, as well as some more bouldery tope-rope problems. The climbing here is also quite worthwhile. The third set of cliffs is upstream of the bridge, on the north bank. Better to leave this cliff to the scouts who abseil down it, as its crumbly as all hell. Map reference - NATMAP 1:100,000 Maffra DU 833049. SUMMARY - No climbs over 25 metres in length. Good quality climbing if you're in the area or passing through, but not worth driving from Melbourne for.

THE SENTINELS / GABLE END

Looming above Lake Tali Karng & the Wellington Valley is a system of cliffs with potential for literally hundreds of quality new routes. The rock generally appears good though most of it has yet to be climbed. The routes are generally well protected. Logistics are more of a problem here. Its on the NATMAP 1:100,000 Maffra sheet ref DU 825432 approx. You have to walk in from MacFarlane saddle (a few hours with all your gear)(the 4WD tracks are closed except to management vehicles and cattlemen). Descending to the base of the Sentinels is not so bad, but bush bashing around the Gable End can be a real horror. A trip of three or more days is the go if you want to do a lot of climbing, due to the time consuming access. You

want to be prepared for rough weather, freezing cold and high winds, and snow even in summer. At 1500 metres in altitude, the area is under snow for much of the winter, so you'll want to pick the right time for your trip. Sleep in tents on the plains behind the Sentinels or in the luxury of Miller's Hut 1 hours' walk away (note: Cattlemen still use this hut, as do millions of bushwalkers). Being up in this part of the country is certainly rewarding, even if you don't get too much climbing done.

SUMMARY - Excellent climbing potential, no crowds or punks, beautiful views, access mostly straightforward but long. Extended trips a good idea, rather than weekends. Some notes and descriptions in Iain Sedgeman's guide "The Seventy Best Climbs in the Rest of Victoria" (copy in clubrooms - please photocopy it and leave original behind).

THE WATCHTOWER / NEILSONS CRAG

Also in the Alps, close to the Sentinels, is the stunning Watchtower, good views of which can be got from the east end of the Snowy Range Airstrip. The Watchtower is at NATMAP 1:100,000 Howitt mapsheet ref DU 852638 approx, near the 1351 m survey mark. You can drive a 2WD to within a couple of hundred metres from the Watchtower - leave the car behind at the final steep downhill & uphill or you might not retrieve it. The Watchtower is a superb feature, with good rock but bold climbing required, with not so many well protected routes. Access is heaps better than for the Sentinels, the climbing as good, but not quite so much potential as the latter. A half hour's bush bash further NNE to Neilson's Crag brings some broken cliffs, stunning views of Snowy Bluff, but not as good climbing, more awkward access, and generally seems less worthwhile than the Watchtower.

SUMMARY - Challenging, quality climbing. No beginners trips here. Better access than Sentinels and most other Alpine cliffs - weekend trips worthwhile, same driving time as for Grampians or Arapiles. Alpine environment here - nights are freezing. However you can camp out of the car. An all round nice place.

LITTLE RIVER GORGE - EAST GIPPSLAND

Literally acres of vertical rock. One of the biggest cliffs in Victoria, as well as one of the most difficult to get to. For the experienced, keen, well prepared party, this cliff has one of the best, three star, all time classic routes to be found anywhere. The Grand Old Duke of York has variety, challenge, fun and seriousness as well as quality all the way, and the problem of access makes you appreciate it even more. The route is well documented in "Mountaineering 78", "The Mountaineer, April 1986" and in Iain Sedgeman's guide (all in Clubrooms). Only two routes are on this cliff to date, but the rhyodacite type of rock does not produce great natural lines, so any new routes will require some considerable study and imagination, and will go at a high standard. The height of this cliff (900 feet) gives the climbing here a big time atmosphere. There are also many smaller cliffs with much easier access in the same gorge, below the lookout particularly. It will be many years before

this area becomes close to being climbed out, development being sporadic to date. In addition to Little River, there are large, cliffed gorges in most of the river valleys in the Snowy River region, such as Boundary creek, Stony Ck, Mountain Ck, Meadow Ck, Rodger River. Rock here will provide endless opportunity for the 'wilderness' type climber prepared to travel.

SUMMARY - Beautiful climbing and beautiful surroundings, access, however, is fraught with difficulty in the steep terrain a long way from home. The Sedgeman guide contains the classic 'Duke', but otherwise only scratches the surface of climbing here. Another climb on the main cliff is the 'Dirty Old Duke' 15 205m, which takes the vegetated gully 20m right of the 'Grand Old Duke'. A helmet in these regions is useful. This is as close to wilderness climbing as one can get in Victoria, and has all the problems, rewards and dangers of any remote place.

NEWS & VIEWS

TRAVEL COSTS

In undertaking any of the rucksack sports within the club, probably the most significant variable cost of a trip is that incurred in transportation to the bush. The combination of long distances and often sub-standard roads with a heavy load in the vehicle means that car maintenance costs can be as significant as the petrol cost.

In detailed studies over many trips, MUMC has established how various items of maintenance and wear contribute to the actual cost of a long trip. Incorporation of costs of oil, tyre wear, registration and insurance and other items has brought the following conclusions:

- a simple division of petrol costs among the car's occupants is not a good reflection of the real cost of travel. It leaves the owner of the vehicle with a significant deficit
- a division of petrol costs among the passengers only is also not a true reflection of the actual cost involved, as this varies with distance
- as petrol consumption varies from car to car, it would be fairest to sum the totals of petrol and maintenance costs separately.

For some time now, the club has recommended that travel costs be shared by splitting the petrol costs of the journey among all occupants, in addition to splitting a maintenance cost per kilometre among all the occupants. In this way, all participants contribute equally to the real cost of a trip, irrespective of distance. This does not, of course, account for increased maintenance costs due to heavy loads or rough conditions, but these factors are somewhat difficult to assess. A flat cost per distance ensures that the driver or owner is compensated realistically as simply as possible.

Having considered the rising costs of living, the Club has recently modified its policy of a maintenance charge of 4cents per kilometre to 6 cents per kilometre. While the Vic Government is looking to peg prices to 6% rises, the massive increase on our side of the fence is due to the fact that it's been some years since the 4c/km was first recommended, and in 1987, 6 c/km is a much more realistic figure.

In summary, trip travel costs, as recommended by MUMC, are:

$$\frac{\text{Total petrol cost} + 6 \text{ cents per km}}{\text{Number of occupants in car}}$$

CALENDER OF EVENTS

April 17-21

EASTER VAN TRIPS - Bushwalking (easy, moderate & gun)

The traditional van trip sees heaps of members head off together into a part of Victoria's bush, with 5-6 different trips of all standards being led. Come along - a great opportunity to learn, expand your experience, or simply to meet more walkers.

Canoeing and rockclimbing trips head off in their own directions over Easter, usually with much exertion, though not so much related to the activity as the nightlife. Details - come to the clubrooms.

May 30-31

LEADERSHIP INSTRUCTION SEMINAR WEEKEND

Designed as an introduction to leadership skills and theory, as well as a reinforcement of leader's duties. Potential and existing leaders will hopefully obtain much by discussing and reflecting on leadership skills on this weekend workshop. For details, ring the club's Conservation Convenor, Antony Harvey - 861 5882

May Holidays

INTERVARSITY CONOEING

This is a great opportunity to show off finely tuned skills, and learn even more about whitewater over the space of a week, on an unfamiliar interstate river, competing against other university clubs.

11-12 July (full moon)

The ANNUAL MUMC 24-Hour Walk - event of the year.

This year's event will be in a setting of 50-50 open forest and farming land, making for an interesting, unobstructed course, about 130 km from Melbourne. First held forty-one years ago, this event, the M Melbourne University Mountaineering Club 24 Hour Walk was among the first rogaining/orienteering type events. In contrast to the scores of competitors who enter this event now, the first 24-Hour saw five enthusiasts struggle through the night in a bizarre test of skill and endurance, the eventual winner being the organiser of this event! Such were the origins of the now popular sport of rogaining.

Our event is a great opportunity for club members to meet others, test their navigational skills, eat heaps of vegie burgers and other good tucker, and to participate in a tradition. This year, an 8-hour event is planned to cater for all interests. Keep this date free.....

August 8-9

The FEATHERTOP MIDNIGHT ASCENT

Another annual bonanza event - Victoria's premier alpine peak is climbed by the light of the full moon, to be accompanied by a formal black tie dinner on Saturday night at Victoria's most plush high country hut, the MUMC Memorial Hut. Start training now to be fit enough for the climb and the festivities

Late August

ALPINE INSTRUCTION WEEKEND

MUMC offers an introduction to alpine climbing at Mt Feathertop, for both rockclimbers and non rockclimbers. This course is an excellent taste of what mountaineering in the alps of New Zealand, Europe and the Himalaya can give to the prospective alpinist.

Last Saturday in September

VFL GRAND FINAL TRIP

Spend the weekend on your favourite activity as far as possible away from the seething hordes and all the hype they create at the MCG. Spend the weekend on Bard, or at the Snowy, down Scrooges Vault or on the Razorback (Trips for climbers, paddlers, cavers or walkers)

November (Post-exams)

SNOWY BLUDGE TRIP

The canoeing social event of the year - the perfect panacea to forget about those February Special exams!!!

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CLUBROOMS - The MUMC clubrooms, situated on Tin Alley between the Sports Union and St Mary's college, are open each lunchtime (1-2pm) during term, and usually on Tuesday nights as well.

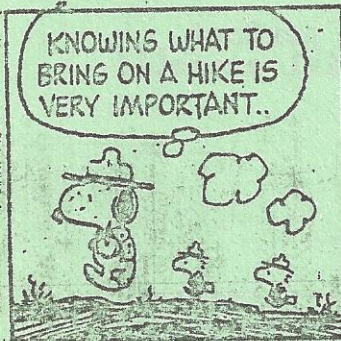
Come in any time its open, to meet fellow climbers, walkers, paddlers and hangers-on.

The club is well stocked with equipment for bushwalking and mountaineering, and this is available at a reduced cost. Please note that it is strict Club policy that Club equipment may only be used by MUMC members and only on official Club trips. There is no exception.

LEADERSHIP

WEEK-END

PEANUTS



watch out for more details...



It was three hundred metres of vertical elevation from the river to the rim. We were at the bottom of the Shoalhaven Gorge in N.S.W. There was only road access to the top. There needed to be a massive haulage of boats and equipment..... an invigorating way to finish a 3 day canoe trip. With our rabbit, Andrew Maffett, having been despatched to fetch the car(another fire-side yarn) the three of us remaining set about the task of lugging the last two fully loaded boats to the top.

After a short discussion, we decided that the best way of carrying both boats in one trip(thus finishing the job in one load) was to tie the back of the first boat to the front of the second and proceed up the track in Indian file. Like three savagers carrying two freshly killed boars each slung from a pole through the jungle and back to the village, we made a start on our monumental task.

The aim was to rotate positions.... the lineup in order to share the burden. It was obvious that the middle position would be the heaviest. Rowan, the youngest and thus requiring the most character building, bore the honour of starting in the middle. He didn't last long!!!! This position(infact the whole set up) was excruciating. Breaks were called every three minutes as the tendons knotted progressively tighter and tighter.

Two hours and many negroes later we were stewing in the filth of our own sweat and still going up!!!! The top just came to view as the sun was setting.

"Aaarrgghhh!!" a cry of pain, relief, anguish then outright horror as the rope tying the two boats together broke. One of them went crashing and slithering away down the 45° slope in the darkness. Silence of the shock followed as we considered the prospect of bringing the boat onto the track from its position 50 metres below. We decided that Rowan and I should take the remaining boat up the final 15 minutes to the top and return with the torch and rope to perform the rescue.

"Oh no!!!!"
Bump, crash, slide.....crash, slither, slither.....slide, crash, bump.....silence. The boat we were carrying had fallen. This time it had fallen so far that we couldn't see it in the gloom. Thanks for the hero antics McKenzie.

Rowan and I hurried back with the torch and rope. Still can't see it. Rowan looked decidedly pale as his new boat lay some undetermined distance down into the gorge.

Another hour went by with Rowan throwing stones and yelling, "And don't come back until you've found it!!!!"
We finished totally exhausted.

Maffo, after running 30 km, returned shortly after with the car. He accused us for being wimps(more likely fucking idiots!!!!).

DEVO

Climbing at a Tropical Resort

Gladstone, as a town, would seem to have everything going for it. Look on the map - its on the Queensland coast, at the Tropic of Capricorn, and close to the Barrier Reef. Roll into the town, after driving about 40 hours from Melbourne, and you'll find much more - a massive cement factory, Queensland's largest Power station, and Australia's biggest alumina factory. It felt strange, then, for us to be wanting to get out a town so quickly after having driven so long to get there.

We'd come to Queensland, we'd climbed at Frog Buttress, and we'd climbed at Kangaroo Point (the Qld equivalent of having climbed at Arapiles and Hanging Rock), so we knew what climbing was about up here. Or so we thought. It was the lovely resort of Gladstone which proved us wrong in our expectations again. For there, visible between the clouds of smog and power pylons, as you speed away from your dream town towards Yarrun, a miniature Half-Dome with 200 metre cliffs emerges above the sleepy pawpaw and mango plantations. Having been totally unprepared for this discovery, Mt Larsen looked like it could make the drive through Gladstone worthwhile after all.

Like eager young boy scouts, we dived out of the hot, steamy Holden and bounded along the walking track in the direction of the peak, some miles in the distance, and some considerable altitude above us. After an hours' walk in and out of countless rainforest gullies and up and down steep slopes, we caught sight of the peak again, still way off in the distance. As is the normal case when one thing goes wrong, everything else does too. Five of us had left the car, but there were only four of us now, with no trace of McGee. To make matters worse, we'd given him to carry the bag with all the junk food, our only nourishment. We pushed on regardless.

The slope of the track increased in no uncertain terms, and only after much wheezing and gasping between expletives, did we find ourselves close to the cliff. Here our worst fears were realised - we would have to bush bash to the base. Queensland's vegetation is very diverse, and this place is no exception. The variety of thorny, spiked pricklebushes would make any thick skinned botanist drool - I myself was certainly happy that I was wearing my strongest pair of shorts. We really had no choice - we'd come all this way, so in we went.

We stood at the base of the cliff, a variety of criss-cross patterns etched into our bright red legs. We could see the great central line that we'd been eyeing from far away - it looked tempting. Not so tempting was the 20-30 metres between it and us, separated by vicious man-eating scrub and pricklebushes. We abandoned the line and decided we should start climbing from where we were.

We lifted our eyes to peruse the cliff above us. The slab was smooth, blank, with no protection to be seen. The situation called for some rational thinking. With all the boldness of the intrepid, hard-man-type rockclimber, I

suggested to Matt that he should go first. His enthusiasm was overwhelming.

Up he went, zig-zagging left & right, looking for a break, a crack, a chance for a runner. I casually paid out the rope despite the redundancy of my position as belayer as Matt climbed 10 metres, 20 metres, still without any runners. Our tropical holiday became a bit more serious. Slow, careful climbing was the key. 30 metres, and a potential marginal placement seemed more trouble than it was worth, so it was better to keep on climbing than to place a runner that would pop out anyway. 35 metres, and bingo - a No 1 Friend placement at last. The renewed enthusiasm of a second chance in life got Matt motoring up the cliff to the end of the rope.

At 45 metres, Matt still had 10 metres to go to a convenient belay. Not wishing to alarm Matt, I had to move quickly. Quietly, I undid the belay, packed the rucksack, and started moving up the cliff, climbing in tandem until, after a short while, he could stop and belay me. Not recommended in the text books, but a convenient tactic nonetheless.

The second pitch was a joy, and all mine. The rock had changed character - was more technically difficult but well protected, with little of the seriousness of the first pitch. Intricate route-finding, blind moves around bulges, delicate face moves combined with friendly cracks accepting many runners. The magnificent view opened up, with the sea thousands of feet below. An eagle glided by. This was three-star climbing, on a cliff which was ours alone (Asking Queensland climbers later seemed to confirm the originality of our discovery - none of them had even heard of this place).

After 100 metres of climbing we could unrope and scramble the steep slope to the top. As we neared the summit, I felt a wave of exhilaration cross me with an exciting thought - there could be no better way of capping off a superb day's climbing on a new cliff than to stand atop the remote summit of a distant mountain, far away from any breath of civilisation. My pace quickened. Just a few more steps to go. And suddenly, there we were, on the summit of this 'wild' peak, complete with Telecom repeater station, rows of solar cells for power, and if that wasn't demoralizing enough, the bloke up there out for a walk with his dog brought me back to earth with a thump. Submissively, we wandered back down the track, through the rows of pawpaws, and made our way back to the lovely resort of Gladstone.

Adrian Bloch

Sick & tired of the chlorinated Tuesday night scene, we were keen to paddle a real flowing river again, so Devo's trip to the Mitchell seemed to be the way to go.

Exams, low river level and good snow conditions combined to limit trip numbers to the desperados. Two of the Chaplin clan and ourselves decided we'd leave early Saturday morning while Devo & Gerry had gone down (almost certainly!) the night before.

Rendezvous with Devo went off smoothly and we headed off for the dam site. After stuffing clothes in bag, stuffing bags in bags and stuffing bags in boats we finally finished stuffing around and hit the water about 11:30 - incredibly young Matthew Chaplin is even more of a handful for Julie to organise than Grigor!

Paddling was uneventful except for the sub-zero temperatures and constant threat from the floating pack-ice. The playful polar bears (????-ed) delighted in upturning the red 'placky boat' on a couple of occasions, leaving a rather cold paddler.

The Amphitheatre provided some entertainment with Devo wedging his polka-dotted sieve across the main flow. A bit of assistance and a handroll later & Devo made it to the bottom only to contemplate the fate of his paddle. The ensuing search retrieved the wayward paddle without casualty. The Chaplins were in fine style with Matthew showing how its done.

Deciding that a low level Mitchell trip wasn't the time to wreck our relatively new Penetrator, we partook of a grade 4 portage (and we all thought these were real canoeists!-ed).

Camp was pleasant, with ample firewood for a blaze of Chernobyl proportions - the theory being that the resulting updraft would clear the sky of clouds and ensure a perfect Sunday. Surprisingly, theory proved correct for once and the next day was indeed perfect - no more of those polar bears or pack ice, and the sunshine made up for the lack of water.

Lunchtime & Glenaladale coincided, encouraging our intrepid leader to suggest a walk to the Den of Nargun. The walk stimulated some highly intellectual discussion on the origins of Margun & geological formation of the cave - reinforcing the reputation of canoeists as terrific bullshitters.

A group of boy scouts were also at Glenaladale so, ignoring Gerry, Devo trotted off with his bag of boiled lollies to spend lunchtime with the young boys (It pays to be prepared, eh Devo!).

On that note ended yet another low level Mitchell trip, with much of our gelcoat left behind on rock after rock as testament to the ability of the Mitchell's beauty to attract frustrated paddlers. Thanks to all 4 for their company.