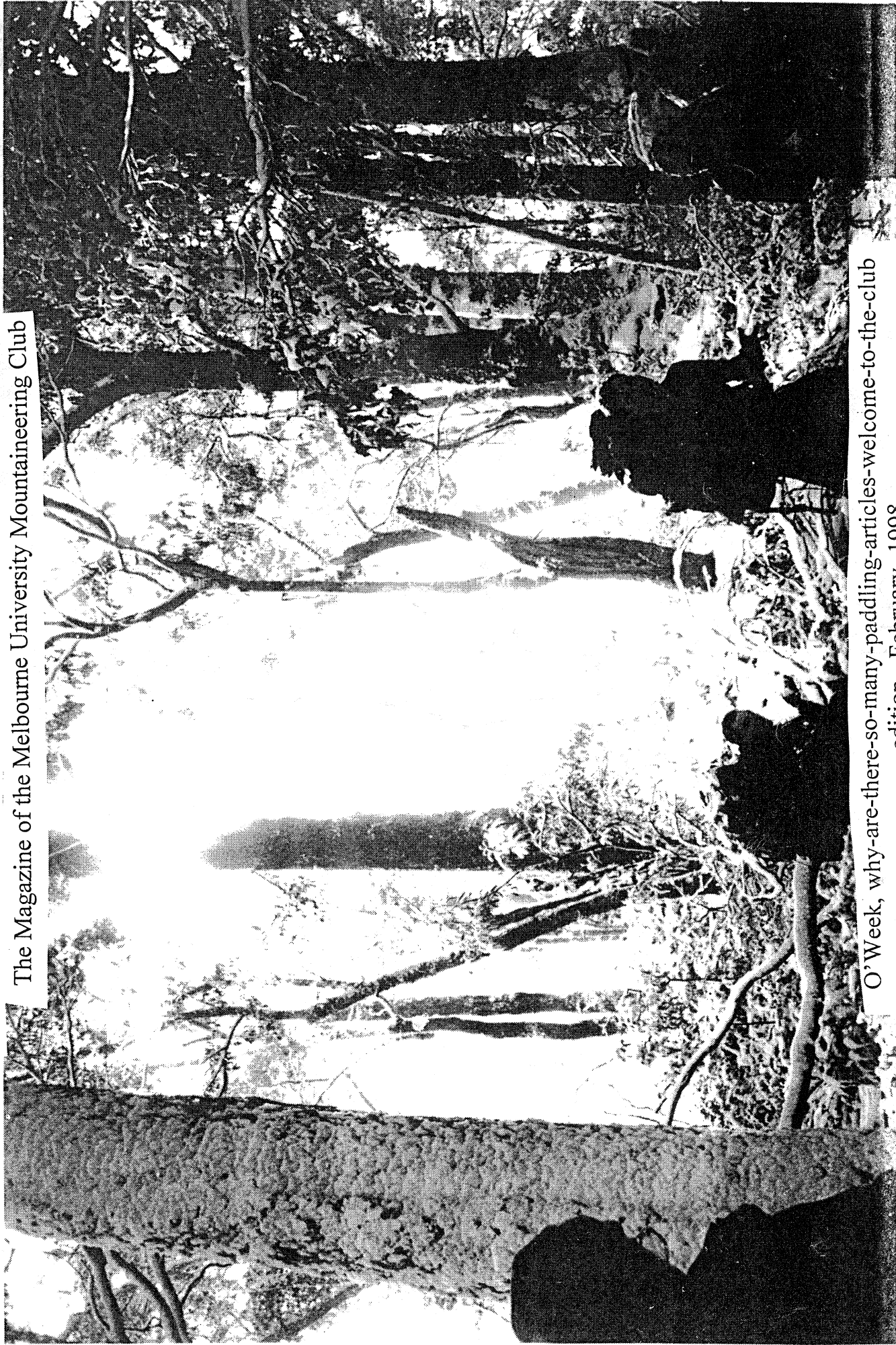


MOUNTAINEER

The Magazine of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club



O'Week, why-are-there-so-many-paddling-articles-welcome-to-the-club
edition. February, 1998.

Editor's Responsible O'week Introduction Blurp

For many people joining the Mountaineering Club for the first time, the O'Week edition of the "Mountaineer" is the first place to learn about one of the biggest and most active clubs on campus. Not only is this club very popular, with a membership base of around 500 each year, but it is also one of the best equipped, with the latest gear available for hire (at minimal cost) for club trips.

The range of activities is one of our biggest drawcards. Essentially, our name is not completely accurate. While our origins stem from mountaineering, it is the far more accessible sports such as hiking, climbing, skiing, caving, kayaking, canoe polo and rogaining that keep MUMC alive. Trips are run every weekend in most of these areas, and with suprisingly little effort you can find yourself skiing the deserted back bowls of Mt. Feathertop knee-deep in powder, creaming a grade 4 waterfall in a gnarly play-boat, or hanging off a roof somewhere at Mt. Arapiles.

The joy of it is that you go with people your own age, with the same interests, at your own pace, without paying an arm and a leg, and that you can see and experience places you never knew existed and do things you never thought you were capable of.

This is the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club and you have chosen to be a part of it. Don't let the precious years of university slip by only to realise in your final year what you've been missing out on. Get involved, talk to people, go to the clubrooms during lunch and check out upcoming trips. If you put in the effort, this is the most satisfying Club on campus.

Tom Stringer
Publications Officer

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A Message from the President

Catherine Kent

Welcome back everyone and welcome to new members. 1998 is promising to be a year full of adventure, excitement and activity.

Over the last few days I've been trying to think of what to write for this column, not having been away for a couple of weeks I was getting caught up in café lattes and traffic jams. Then last weekend we camped under the stars at the top of the North Jawbone in the Cathedral Ranges. It was then, staring up at the Southern Cross, listening to the owls and the cicadas, swotting mosquitoes and drinking port with friends that it all came back to me. This is what it's all about - getting away from the city to the calm of the Australian bush; waking up in the morning to the brilliant orange and red sky of the rising sun; climbing, kayaking, skiing, walking... whatever your sport - its about getting out there and doing it.

To me that is what the club is about - getting out there, pushing my limits on a rapid, a cliff or trying to do those teles; scaring myself, trying something new, sharing these experiences with friends - and getting away from traffic jams and café lattes.

N.B. 1998 is the Official "MUMC year of Getting Out There".

"Wild Places, Wild Times"

Where to find us:

- ** Follow the map in your uni diary to the Queen's College arrow at A9.
- ** When you get to the cricket oval with the white picket fence, follow it around to the green pavillion buildings at the North end.
- ** MUMC clubrooms have a big sign hanging on the front. Come in and check out the trip folders, your passport to all MUMC excursions.

“WELL IT’S ONLY SLEEP; EH... “

THE STORY OF 3 DIE-HARD PADDLER’S WISHES TO DRIVE A BLOODY LONG WAY TO PADDLE A BLOODY BIG RIVER.

Stuart “Goose” Richardson; Nigel “Niiliige” Prior and Sam “Iceman” Maffett.

- 5:55pm Nige and Goose return home from a hard day at work, have one final check through the house and step into the car.
- 6:00pm One Holden Barina loaded with three boats, seven paddles (yes we were expecting some breakage's!), five spay decks, helmets, buoyancy vests and all other paddling gear... plus a box of food leave Miller street, West Melbourne.
- 6:15pm All four wheels send up a column of smoke as an accident is only just avoided while both occupants are busy looking at the map of Northern NSW trying to find where it is that they are supposed to be driving.
- 6:30pm Iceman enters the car after a quick pit stop at his house; armed with twenty more CD's and a slab Melbourne Bitter he says that if he's going to die on this river he wants to have at least one final taste of home before saying farewell to one and all.
- 6:35pm With wheels and CD's spinning in unison, this vehicle of young kayaking fame seekers sets off in search of big water in far removed places. Water that flows only once every two or three years from the artificial walls of the Gwydir rivers restraining damn located in far northern NSW.
- 7:30pm Oh yeah we're-a-driven...
- 8:30pm With the speed of water in a grade five rapid and the precision of a play-boater carving it up we have our first stop for 5 minutes to make a quick hit on the Shepparton Bergs for a bite of take away food and a mouthful or two of caffeine enriched coke. Other than the in car pack of extra strong mints this is to our fuel for the next 24hrs.
- 9:30pm The already apparent monotony of the car is broken for a short instant as the drivers window falls out.
- 9:35pm Paddlers quote: "With a bit of gaffa tape, some wire and a length of rope, anything can be strapped back together"
We're on our way again...
- 10:30pm My my, driving is fun fun fun...
- 11:30pm These reflectors on the side of the road are quite mesmerising...
- 12:30am A Jewel is discovered and enjoys a spin, providing entertainment for all...
- 1:30am Drive'n...
- 2:30am ooooooh, yeah.
- 3:30am This river better be good.
- 4:30am What is brown, runny, smelly and may sometimes be seen pouring from the back of a laden cattle truck?
(I'll give you one clue, it makes a hell of a mess of the car when you're trying to overtake).
- 5:30am We pull in for a petrol stop at Narrabri, a town with a road running through, a couple of pubs, a twenty four hour petrol station and a lot of flat farming land surrounding it. (I am now really beginning to wonder where the hell this river is; for this is not mountainous, high volume, pumpy water, action countryside.)
It is amazing just who you meet on the road, the people and their far fetched tales are what run this country out in the back blocks of inland Australia. It

was one such person we met at 5:30am in Narrabri; a surfboard shaper from Philip Island. He was heading up the coast with his son, his tools and his trusty blue healer "red", and it was after telling him our own story that he uttered the words of the trip. Having been driving for 11 hours non stop these words really summed up what we were going through, they captured the essence of the situation in a beautiful yet softly poetic way and provided for even the uninitiated to comprehend the beauty of the time, "...well its only sleep eh..."

Thanks mate.

6:30am We've been going for twelve hours and with the cumulative total of stopping time sitting at 30 minutes, Goose turns off the sealed road and onto the dirt for the final 100 km to the river. It is to the increased sound of the road and the loose pebbles hitting the undercarriage of the car that Iceman awakes from his dozing and offers the now rather comatosed Goose some rather slurred words of advice, "... eerr... don't crash now Stu..., not now... not now that we have come so far... don't crash now... we don't want to be the next TAC add..." before promptly falling back asleep.

7:30am "...errr... where are we... what's going on... we're stopping... why are we stopping Stu... must keep driving... must keep driving... driving...driv..."
"Iceman, shut up... We're here, we made it, we are still alive and yep there are our friends from Sydney to meet us.... we made it."

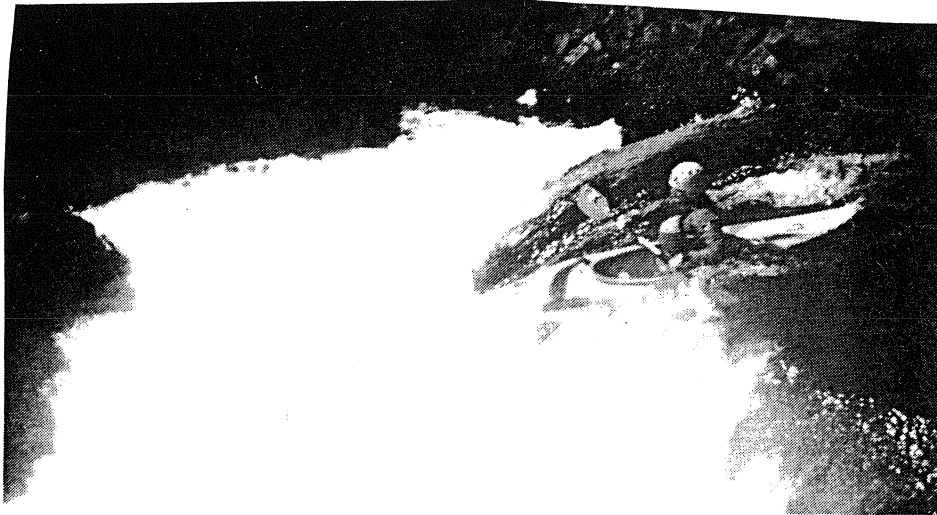


Paddler's preparing to face the water

To the rather amazed looks of our paddling counterparts from Sydney we roll out of the car, say, "fuck yeah we're here", and then promptly fall asleep on the grass beside the car.

While our friends set up the car shuffle by driving a car to the bottom of the section of river we are to haplessly throw ourselves down, we drift in and out of sleep for an hour or so. Although it is times like these when you become aware of your body's inadequacies, of its faults, and times like these when you can think of some additions you would add should you build a person bit by bit in the future. I just could not get top sleep, you know how it is, you are dog tired, have been going flat out for ages and your body really needs a rest. You lie down, be it at home in bed or on the grass beside

a car...! to sleep and you just damn well can't enter the land of sleepy bliss-fullness; you try lying on the left, on the right, on your back... It just doesn't work. My addition to the body in light of these experiences would be a simple on/off switch. One that you could hit and your body would readily turn off... sleep... and relax... with the simplicity of pushing a button.



Andy Lean Shows his style at the Nymboida

More advanced models would have a count down timer to switch you back on because it would become annoying having to have someone switch you back on again!

We were given a rather urgent wake up call at the end of the first rapid of the river when, after we had all paddled down without incident, we firstly met someone from another group dragging his boat up the bank with a broken paddle and a gash above the eye requiring 6 or more stitches and secondly, three of our friends out of their own boats in the middle of the rapid and in need of desperate help to rescue both themselves and their gear. The resulting situation being one lost boat, three lost paddles and two people walking out of the river with the other guy deciding they were not up to it and were happy to pike.

Needless to say over the next three days we paddled some epic water, water that pushed our limits of technical ability as it tried to push us into big recirculating holes or sharp edged undercut rocks. Rapids such as Double Trouble, More Trouble and Real Trouble proved a concern while the rather unimaginatively named rapids; A, B, and C proved more difficult than their name would imply. Despite a case of the-sucked-off-helmet-while-being-looped-in-boat-in-hole we paddled the river clean and renewed our confidence that we could paddle good, big Australian grade 4-5 water after driving 1300km in 13 hours on half a pack of extra strong mints and without out sleep for more than 31 hours.

...LIFE IS SHORT; PADDLE HARD;
AND REMEMBER;
SLEEP IS OVER RATED...

ICEMAN

MEDIA ALERT

Airborne engineering feat makes remote Alpine area accessible

An area within the Alpine National Park will soon be easily accessed thanks to a new footbridge flown in by helicopter as a joint effort by Parks Victoria and the Melbourne University Mountain Club (M.U.M.C).

The aircrew and helicopter, Bell 205, are stationed at Benalla for the fire season but the skills and ability of all involved will be tested during the operation which will see the slinging of nearly 7 tonnes of gear including 4 steel, 12 metre long, beams.

Dense forest with a canopy height of 45 metres prevents the helicopter from landing at the bridge site. Long cables will allow the loads to be lowered through the canopy to the waiting ground crew.

The grant is part of a Department of Natural Resources and Environment initiative and designed to encourage volunteer groups to undertake practical projects, which contribute to the conservation of Victoria's natural resources and cultural heritage. The grants are intended to assist groups to carry out projects which they would not otherwise be able to undertake.

Through this grant the M.U.M.C. is able to continue its valuable work which has previously included hut and track maintenance in the area surrounding Mt. Feathertop. Of particular note is the involvement of Andrea Kneen as the groups Convenor. Andrea's father, Tom Kneen, was tragically killed in an avalanche on Mt. Feathertop in the 1985. The walking track on the North-West Spur is now dedicated to his memory.

Mitta Mitta Conservation Trip

It was a long drive but after a refuelling at 'Burgs', a few windy roads to settle our stomachs and the rescuing of a joey, Cath, Ruth, Lizzie, Cameron, Vinca, Amy, Matthew, Rich and Jenny arrived at the Joker campsite on the Mitta Mitta River.

The Mitta Mitta conservation weekend (27th – 29th Sept.) was organised for the fourth time by the DNRE in conjunction with the Friends of the Mitta Valley. About 60 people volunteered their time to contribute something positive to the environment of the Mitta Valley as well as to experience the beauty of the river and the area. The nine of us who went up from the club did the day of rafting (or kayaking for 6 of us) on the Saturday and the day of hands-on conservation work on the Sunday, joined up by a night around the fire, good food, good talk and good scotch....

As expected the day of paddling was great – beautiful weather, beautiful river, beautiful people???? On the Sunday we became greenies (although some of us were already feeling green enough due to the previous night's frivolities), planting *Eucalyptus mannifera* – Brittle gum, *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* – Red stringybark, *Bursarua spinosa* – Sweet bursaria and a few Banksias at an old quarry site. This planting was contained in a fence (built on the Saturday) in the hope of rehabilitating the site which desperately needed some sort of make-over or disguise.

We all had a fantastic weekend (apart from the joey's mother that fell victim to Matthew's white Volvo) and I hope that some people volunteer their time next year. It's important that we all realise the value of our environment and that even a little bit of extra care makes a lot of difference in the long term. Thanks to all who came!

Jenny Johnson

Conservation? I'm not convinced: Richard Kjar and Jen Johnson



The West Coast

Memories of New Zealand

Dave Kjar

Ah! The West Coast. The power of nature under no-ones control.

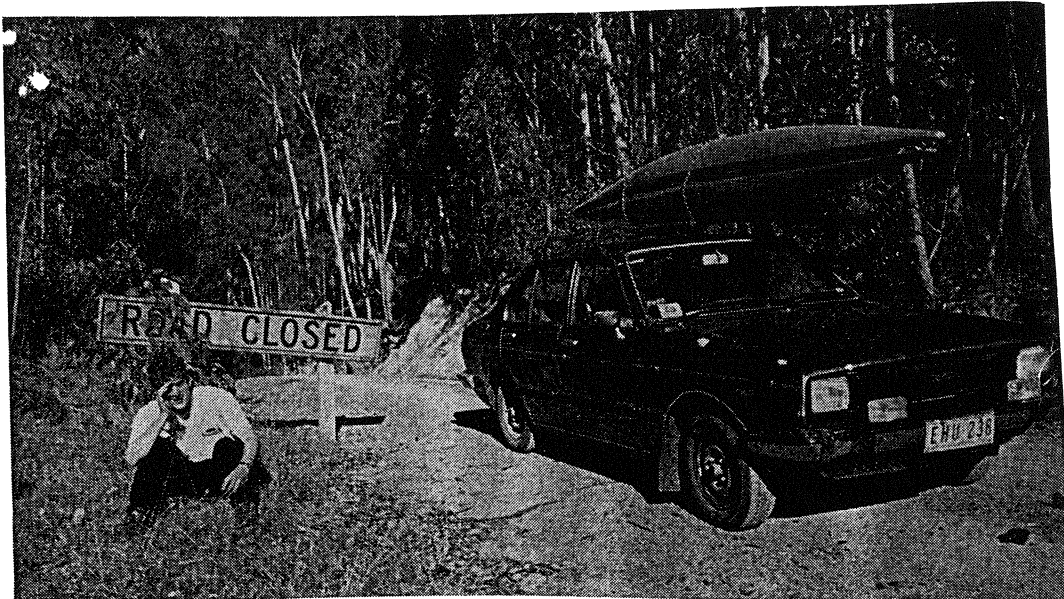
Kayaking becomes a serious adventure sport. All eyes on the weather, but no-one has a forecast. What's the point? It's going to rain. Cats & Dogs. Sometime in the next few days.

Its a judgment of personal ability against the elements of the day:

Variability in the weather may be correlated with river levels, which may or may not be related to river grade, determined by gradient, rock type or gorge constriction. But has anyone been here before?

Ability might be affected by endurance, strength, food, sleep, heat or the beat. Group dynamics that is. Who the hell said this isn't a team sport?

Its not just you and me wandering around in a rugged wilderness. We're looking for performance, making the moves, style, carving waves, locking into that eddy, riding the wash, pushing the line; some semblance of control.



An Old photo, but it kind of works.

Who's cooking dinner? What are we doing tomorrow? Where do we camp? Who's got the chopper? Which pilot? Do we change our mind? Forge ahead? Has the river level risen? What are these other guys like? Is this guidebook accurate? Will the van get through this creekbed?

No wonder I don't know what day it is. Who cares? We've got some boating to do!

Have you seen more class than the Karamea, more hospitality than the Buller, better postcard perfect gorge than Hokitika, grandeur than Wanganuhi, holes than Tuoraha, more intensity than the Hollyford? Have you noticed the vegetation change going south?

No. It is possible at a higher level. Its been done. If you have a death wish, that is, and a Mars Bar on the betting table. Maybe its just more training, more, more, more. Maybe then, as well as the untouched one waiting a short chopper ride over that mountain range.

Sound like a kaleidoscope of special moments?

It was.

Don't forget beers in the sunset, ice cold waterfalls, hotsprings, bacon & eggs, and a whole range of the usual extras.....!



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A - Z OF THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

A - Arapiles - For the uninitiated, it sounds impressive, for the fanatic it is Mecca. Mt. Arapiles is the climbing capital of Victoria, if not the country.

B - Beginners: If you're one of these, don't panic! In every one of the club's activities, training trips for all standards are run by competent and experienced leaders. Don't be afraid to admit any lack of experience.

C Canoe Polo: One of the more bizarre sports you're ever likely to see. Basically, we're talking about water polo in canoes. If you're interested, training takes place on Tuesday nights from 8:00 pm in the Uni pool.

D Danger: If you're looking for it, you can find it in every activity we provide. But if you follow the rules and don't do anything stupid, danger will merely be a background buzz that adds enjoyment to just about everything.

E Environment: Not only are we one of the most active clubs on campus in terms of outdoor sports but we also lead the way in maintaining and protecting the environment. Thanks to the efforts of our conservation convenors we have seen many planned attacks on our beloved High-lands beaten off and many improvements added to walking tracks and bridges around the country.

F Fun: Sounds pathetic but that's what it's all about. While the challenges are out there if you want to accept them, it all comes down to the fact that being out in the wilderness - be it up a cliff, or in a hole in the ground - is just plain enjoyable.

G Grollo: MUMC Enemy #1. Apart from his recently approved concrete phallus, this big name developer has come up with such great ideas as turning Mt. Stirling into a baby Mt. Buller complete with 2km cable car and bulldozed downhill runs, and widening the lift capacity of the High Plains by extending further than the already sacrificed fringes.

H High-Plains: Where most of the action happens. This is our home and the site of some of the most spectacular countryside anywhere in the world.

I Image: Forget it. Then again, if it's thermals, polartecs and climbing shoes you're after then all the better for you!

J Jargon: Spray-deck, jumar, cows-tail, cable-binding, stopper, carabina, nuts, eddy-line, magnetic north, knoll, nose-stand, tail-turn, snake-skin, Petzl, sling, belav point. anchor etc.....etc.....

K Kayak: For those of you wanting to float your way down some gnarly rivers in the future, these should be the vehicles for doing so. Rafters will *never* get the same feeling of being right in the middle of it!

L Line: It may be a safety rope, a climbing route, or that vital point in a rapid, but somewhere along the line (no pun intended), you'll come across one.

M Mountaineering: perhaps the most expensive, dangerous, spectacular and rewarding sports you could ever do and we have the expertise and gear to get there. All you need is plenty of guts and determination and a VERY healthy balance.

N Night: There's nothing like it. Sitting under the stars, eating your pasta with the sauce you went through five days of hard slog to carry, fire crackling at your feet, good conversation, good company, awesome stars and complete isolation. That's what it's all about.

O O'Week: Where your association with MUMC begins. Check out our canoe polo demonstrations, video and slide shows and awesome abseiling. Most important, have a chat!

P People: With an average membership base of 500, the mix is bound to be pretty diverse. Without this mix and a core of dedicated members MUMC could not possibly be the success it has been for over 50 years.

Q Quiet: Something that you can never really experience in the city. Get out there and see for yourself. Silence can be as awesome as the places you will see.

R Rogaining: surely the sport for masochists. This high-fitness-level-would-be-good-but-not-absolutely-necessary sport involves up to 48 hours of orienteering competition with other teams from all over the country and state.

S Snow: The stuff many MUMC member's dreams are made of. Contrary to the popular myth that Australia doesn't have any decent snow, the High-Plains have produced some of the best snow conditions to be found anywhere in the world, and the beauty is that it's all hidden and waiting for those who are willing to put in the effort to get to it.

T Telemark: If snow is the stuff of dreams, telemarks are the turns of every skier's wildest fantasies. Once you get your teles happening, you'll not only be the most stylish skier on the mountain, but the satisfaction is more intense than...well...something that's really intense.

U Underground: Is where all the caving happens. If you enjoy tight squeezes, lack of oxygen and muddy holes, this is the place for you. Beware the baby oil...

V Vertical: Be it a tail or nose stand, a nasty drop, a grade 22 granite wall, the O'week abseil or a mean cornice, at some stage as an MUMC member, we all get vertical.

W Winter: When the rain falls, the rivers run, the snow falls and the MUMC hibernaters come out to play.

X Xtreme: O.K., soft option, but if you want it, we've got it.

Y Y: Because we want to.

Z Z (Madam): The caving guru and all-round dodgy guy (yes - she's a he).
Anyone wanting to know more, refer to U



Where we're coming from...

The Melbourne University Mountaineering Club is no 'Spring Chicken'. It is probably older than your parents, yet it's still young and adventurous. So what have we been doing all these years?

'The Club', as it will be fondly referred to from here onwards, was formed in 1944 by a couple of students, Marjorie Awburn and Niall Brennan. They roped in Professor Cherry and Dr Loewe (pronounced 'Lurva') to share their skills and experience. Dr Loewe had, so the story goes, lost his toes to frost bite whilst (unintentionally?) wintering in Greenland.

During its first few years the Club ran several day walks, weekend camps and guest 'lectures'. However the third such meeting, arranged for the 15th August 1945, was cancelled because "Unfortunately, peace broke out on this day..."



The club's origins are in the Mountains.

With the end of the war the University changed dramatically. From a small campus where students and staff shared their clubs and 'Union', the University grew rapidly to accommodate many Returned Service Men and Women. Bill Bewsher was one such Returned Service Man. From day one Bill had his priorities set: he joined the Club *before* he enrolled in his courses and became the Club's first and most famous 'full time' member.

With Professor Cherry, Bill Bewsher organised many of the Club's earliest forays into South West Tasmania, in friendly competition with clubs in Geelong and Hobart for 'first ascents'. Without tracks, maps, waterproofing or stoves, men and women of the Club walked for ten to forty-five days at a time, exploring the wilds of the wettest region in Australia.

Bill remembers one unusual walk which was so dry that he and two others had to squeeze water from the mosses to cook with. On another, Ann Douglas woke up to find an animal eating the remains of her dinner, unperturbed by her presence. Only later did she realise that it was a Tasmanian Tiger. Her sighting remains unreported as she has never been sure who to tell.

The Bush we spend our time in...and we love it!



Adventuring is only part of 'what it's all about'. In 1948 the first post exam trip was held at the Sugarloaf, known as the 'Loaf' weekend for good reason. The social side of the Club developed strongly in its first decade. In addition to a regular Club table in the Union 'Caf' (easily located by yelling 'Oxo', the Club's call sign to which the table would respond), house parties and even weddings were common.

In the 1960s the Club built a hut on Mt. Feathertop to commemorate Club members who had died mountaineering. Building the hut, a geodesic dome designed by Club member Peter Kneen, was a mammoth effort involving two to three hundred people, carrying over five tons of building materials and two tons of food more than three kilometres in a year.*

Each decade some activities and events have been added to the Club's range whilst others have been lost, reflecting the changing interests of Club members. Guest lectures, for example, no longer seem relevant now that information about outdoor skills has become so accessible. Still, the fundamental aspects of the Club remain. 'Oxoman', the Club's mascot devised in 1946, wanders ever onwards, cheerful and capable. Although the activities have changed we are still an active, young and enthusiastic group looking for *Wild Times*, and *Wild Places*.

-- Welcome to 'the Club' --

p.s. Bill now lives in Windsor, Melbourne, and would love to share his tales of mishap, adventure and "Ginger Mick" if you have a spare hour or four.

Ruth Paterson, a member with chronic itchy feet, spent some time last year delving into the Club's archives and interviewing former members all in the name of 'study'. She's now living in Vancouver but will be back for 1999.

** David Hogg, "A History of Melbourne University Mountaineering Club 1944-1972". Ruth would like to thank David Hogg, a life member from the 1960s, for his invaluable book. A copy is kept on the Club room's book shelves and is well worth reading.*

WHITE WATER PUBERTY RITES

We guzzle beer and munch on salty potato chips in the northern New South Wales half light. Aching muscles readily melt into the cracks and depressions of the worn out wooden pub chair. Laughter comes easily. But as the talk trails off and another game of darts finishes in the back room, The River intrudes on my thoughts. Not threateningly, but just there – the tannin brown waters sloshing about in my head, the sound of Big White Water in my ears.

For me at least, paddling the Nymboida has been some sort of an initiation.

* * *

Its Easter 1997 and the Bunny's got calici virus. I'm not in the mood for chocolate anyway.

Fidgety fingers fumble with the neoprene spray deck as we float past unfamiliar vegetation surrounding an unfamiliar campsite on the banks of a very unfamiliar river. Paddling too seems foreign, and I kind of don't know whether I should practice a few rolls, do some stretches, or just drift cocky and (over)confident in the calm and indifferent waters above the first rapids. At least the sun is out.

If I'm not a little worried about the hostile nature of northern New South Wales whitewater already, then the site of two fellow kayakers hiding behind full face mask helmets and paddling in (albeit colourful) bombproof bathtubs does little to settle the stomach. The appearance of a spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*) does, however, satisfy my need for distraction.

A few tailturns and a dunking on an early playful rapid do wonders for the frame of mind. And then all too quickly, that familiar, but this time louder, sound of rushing water ups the heart rate. Moving out of the current towards the shore, I get out of my boat to have a look.

Definitely a tricky approach, but the drop looks kind of harmless all the same – fun even. (Am I convincing you ?) Back in the boat, and again I struggle with the deck in an eddy just a little too small, so that accelerating water tugs and drags the nose of my boat out and away. Sweep . . . draw, (a combination that surely looks as awkward as it feels) hard left, over the falls . . . bubbles, a mouthful of water and then cleaned up by a raft for my troubles. Whoooop!

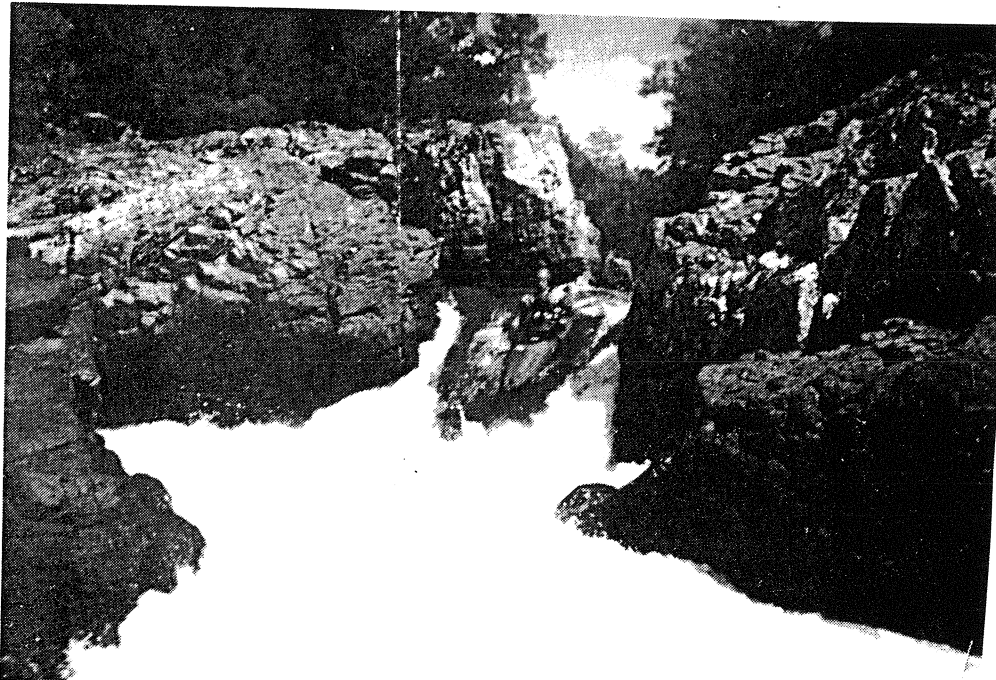
You're totally pumped, the spirit is soaring, there's just enough uncertainty to keep you on edge and there is nothing that gives you more satisfaction than nine awesome (MUMC) paddlers creaming that drop.

Floating, floating and then you come round the next corner. You paddle round that bend and the river opens up and there's no longer anything between you and the drop, between you and the sound of plunging water. With more urgency this time we beat a path to the closest eddy. I scurry up and down the bank nervously, hopping precariously from rock to water worn rock. I can just see the water accelerating as the river narrows. It curls around to the left, hemmed in by large boulders. The water maintains form this far and further – a small wave curls off a rock to the right, but otherwise the flow is scary smooth and consistent, right over the falls. The base is boiling.

Stu, with the briefest inspection (not necessarily a bad thing), hits the lip hard, follows the flow to its base, upright, and careering into an ugly and previously unnoticed undercut rock – The Rock Bar. Somehow he manages to scoot round its base. Hmmmmm.

Two more follow with scarcely more style. Then one gets munched. Then another – upside down with pulsing white water pushing them into (under ?) The Rock Bar. Oh Shit.

I'm quaking in my boots.



Unidentified Oxo person running a shoot on the Nymboida

There's a couple of us weighing up our options. We have two. Paddle or pass. Those who have already gone are getting impatient. I *am* taking too much time. Logic played no part in my decision.

This time I have no trouble with my spray deck. It latches onto the rim of the cockpit with a satisfying "Thwack !" I stretch, but briefly, and all of a sudden a host of Thompson and Yarra (our beloved Yarra) trips kind of seem woefully inadequate preparation for an eminently awesome river such as this. I paddle a little too hard out into the current, and leaning downstream (remember: always lean downstream) manage to catch the moving water with my paddle blade. Straightening up, I hit that shitty little wave on the right and without really trying or really knowing what's going on at all, the water pushes me over the drop. I'm upside down in the mess at the bottom. I'm outahere.

I swear my heart stops every time I reach for the tag on my spray deck. Maybe this time I forgot to put it on the outside, where my desperate hands now search frantically no, not this time. I grab it hard and the deck's off cleanly in split seconds. And then all I remember is bubbles and noise. Soon I'm plastered up against The Rock Bar. My boat completes the sandwich – aha . . . between a boat and a hard place! Fuck me.

I'm kind of not going very far in a hurry. I'm sweating cold. I can see a hand (Thanks Rich) and a foot and I think a throw rope and lots of rock and more bubbles (how come there can be so many bubbles down here and no air to breathe?) and I'm gonna lunge for that hand one more time . . .

By the time I get flushed out the other side, most of what I remember is bubbles.

And now, as Andy struts around the pub's pool table in his wetsuit booties, it is the bubbles in my beer I am preoccupied with. . . and I can't wait til tomorrow.

