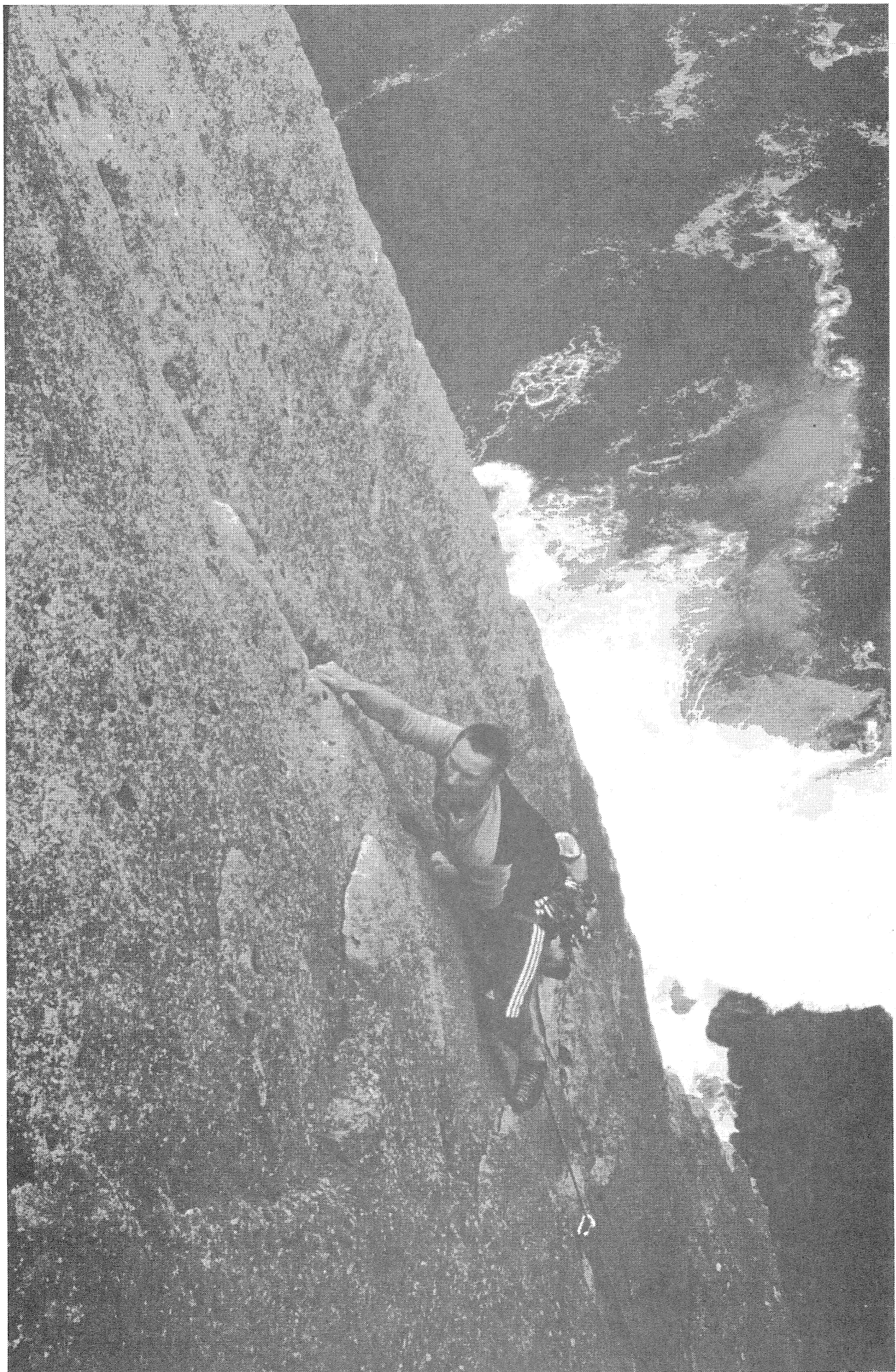


# THE MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of the Melbourne University  
Mountaineering Club, February 2002





*Climbing at Point Perpendicular. Photo: Andy Selby Smith*



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The Journal of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club,  
February 2002

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Editor: Stuart Dobbie

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Kylie McInnes, Enmoore Lin and Katie Webby for editorial assistance, and to all the contributors for your great stories and awesome photographs. Sorry I was unable to credit every image to the photographer, next time write your name on the back before submitting!

Cover: *Descending down the Little River Gorge, Gippsland. Enmoore Lin*

Back-Cover: *Flying into The Fox Glacier, New Zealand. Dave Kneen*



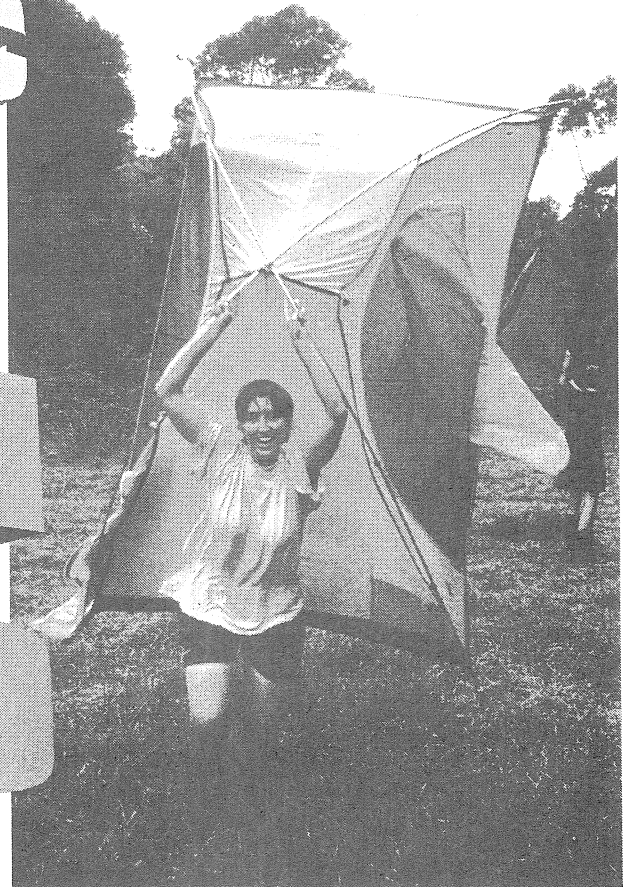
# WELCOME



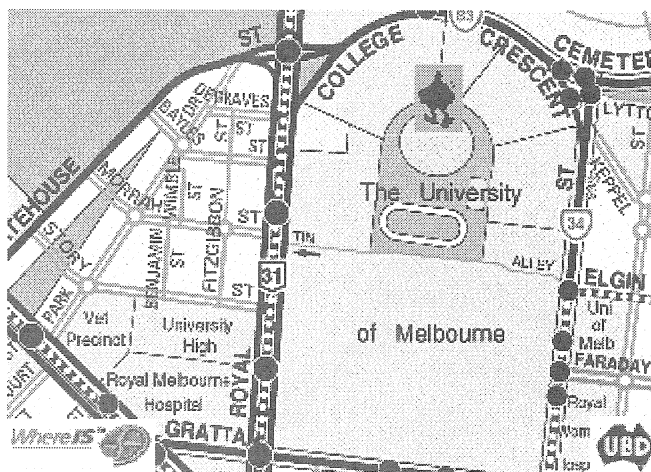
**So you've paid your membership fee, got your membership card for those discounts, and (if you were game enough!) abseiled the Redmond Barry Building. That's good... ...but now it's time to get out there on some club trips. But where on earth do you start?**

**Read on to find out where the clubrooms are, how the trip folders work, what sports the club is in to, and other important stuff. Don't worry, soon enough you'll be on your way to becoming a true oxoman or oxowoman.**









*The clubrooms are open at lunchtimes during semester and at 7pm on Tuesday nights all through the year.*

*He's the oxoman, the club symbol.  
The oxoman is forever walking off  
into the distance, carrying a full  
pack, heading for adventure in the  
hills. We all aspire to be true  
oxomen and oxiwomen*

*All trips are announced a few weeks beforehand on “trip sheets” located in several green folders that can be found in the clubrooms. If you are interested in a trip, put your name down on the trip sheet, and note the details listed including the trip meeting date and the contact number for the trip leader. Make every effort to be at the trip meeting, there you can ask any questions, and you’ll find out what to bring, organise car pools and hire any club gear.*

## 6

## How are trips run?

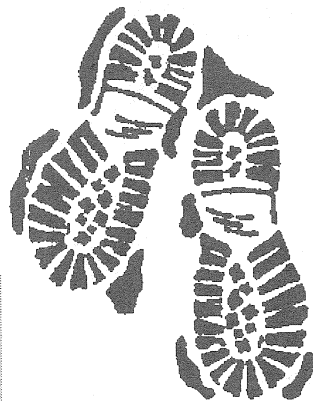
*The organisation is done by trip leaders, who are just club members wanting to share their enthusiasm and experience with others. If you've never done some of this stuff before, come on a beginner trip and we'll teach you the ropes.*

*We're just a club! Your enjoyment and safety on a trip depends on you. There are generally three levels of difficulty, to give you an idea of what you are in for. Beginner – learning stuff, Intermediate – getting better at it, and Advanced – just getting out and doing it!*

*If you reckon you're pretty handy at some of this stuff, or you're coming up through the ranks, consider attending the "Leadership Weekend" in April. This is a course designed and run by MUMC, which hopes to improve the quality, enjoyment and safety of club trips. Although not mandatory, this course is a good start to running your own trips with the club.*

*The club owns most equipment you'll need on club trips, from kayaks to climbing ropes to bushwalking packs. That means you can experience a sport first without having to go out and buy your own gear. The hire rates are nominal. Unfortunately we can't hire out equipment for non-club trips, or to people who aren't club members.*

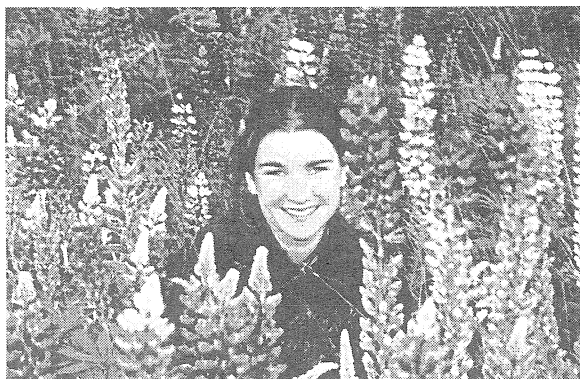
## What's the deal with club equipment?



**Will my academic studies, future career, and ambitions for material well-being and social status, all fall by the wayside if I become an Oxo?**

*Yes, but who cares! Who said Uni was for study anyway!?*

# Come Meet The Family



← Kylie McInnes:  
“El Presidente”

Keeps the show on the road  
and ensures everybody is  
doing their thing.



Anna Hyland. →

Secretary

Answers letters, takes  
minutes at meetings, and  
throw out lots of  
advertising junk mail.



← Fiona  
Russell

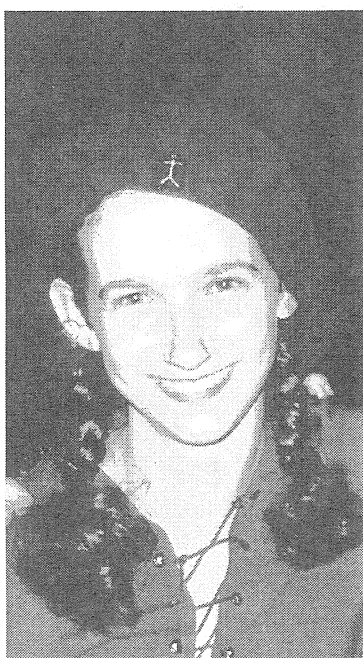
One-half of the  
conservation  
convenor. The  
only committee  
member  
assigned to  
save the planet.



← Cameron Quinn

Vice President

Does all the politics stuff with  
the Melbourne Uni Sport.



Sarah Neumann →

General committee member. Gets lumped  
with organising the social events.



← Alison Thompson

Treasurer and fashion model for Snowgum.



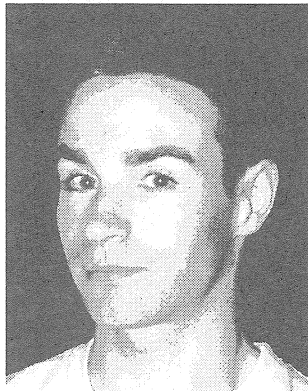
Deanna Stevens →

Assistant Treasurer



Jac Cutter →

Caving & Canyoning Convenor. Likes getting dark and dirty underground.



David "Dogga" Law  
Kayaking Convenor

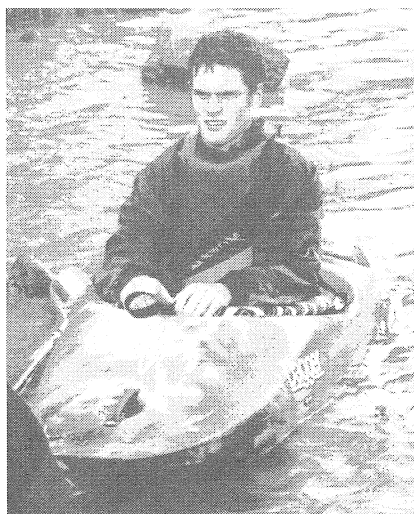
← Richard Salmons

Mountaineering Convenor.  
Likes climbing big cold mountains.



Dimitri Pappanaou ↓

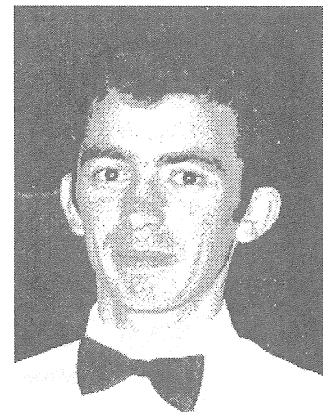
Skiing Convenor and club legend.



Matt  
Thomas



Hut Warden  
and  
Rogaining  
Convenor



Andrew ↙  
Oppenheim

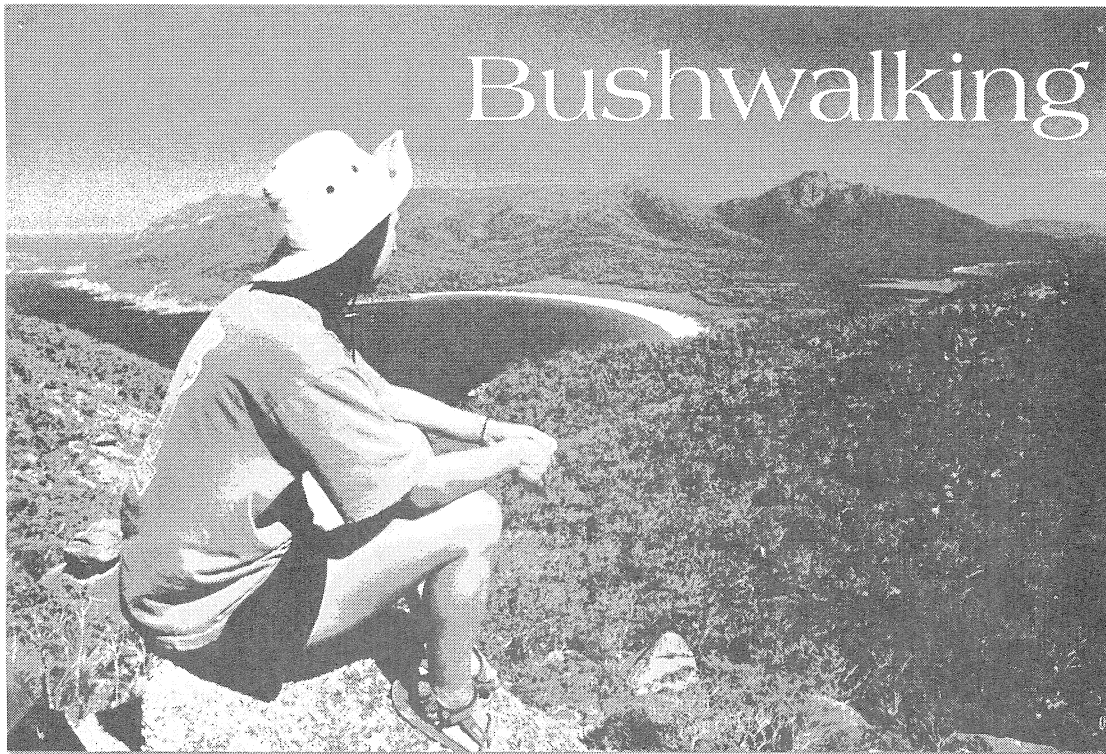
Bushwalking Convenor

↖ "Evil" Tim Wallace

Climbing Convenor  
(Spot the contradiction.)

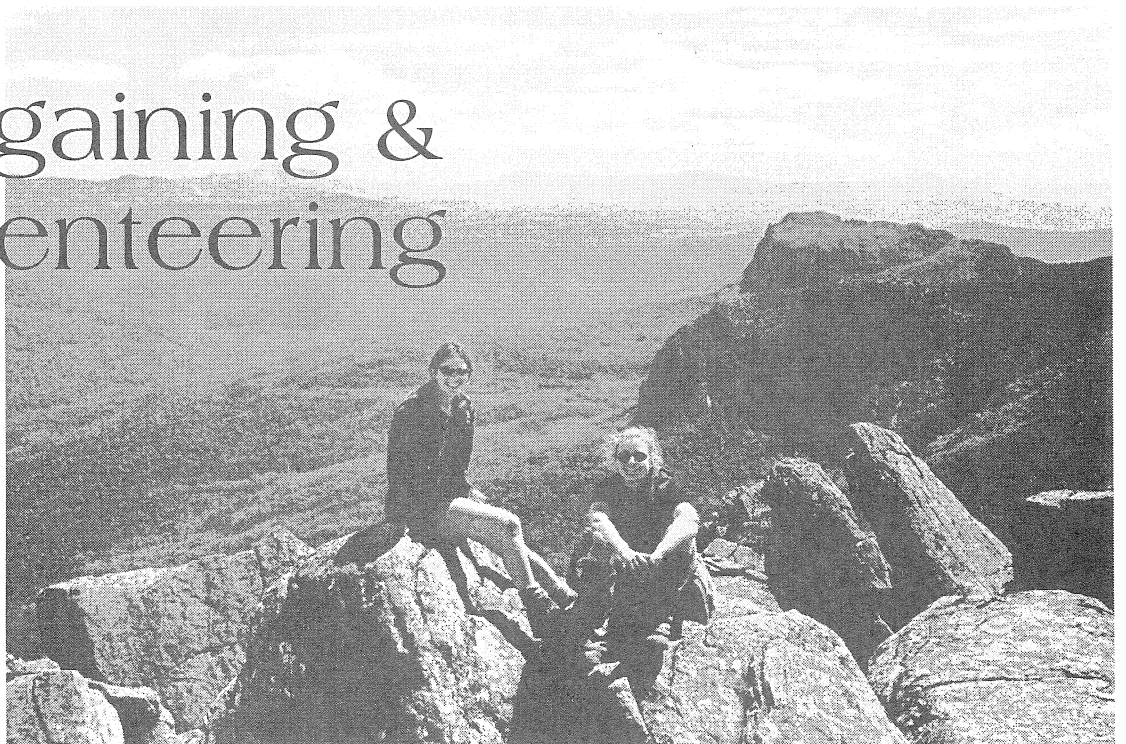


Of course there are stacks of other people without impressive committee titles, who help out about the place keeping the club going along. You know who you are.



Pack a backpack with a jacket, tent, sleeping bag, munchies and a map, and go explore some wild place. Bushwalking is for everybody. You don't need any experience, and an average fitness will do. There are bushwalks run throughout the year. Season and weather generally determines where trips are run: to the Alps in summer, to the deserts in winter. All those tents, backpacks, sleeping bags, rainjacket, etc. can all be hired from the club. But you'll need a good pair of boots.

## Rogaining & Orienteering



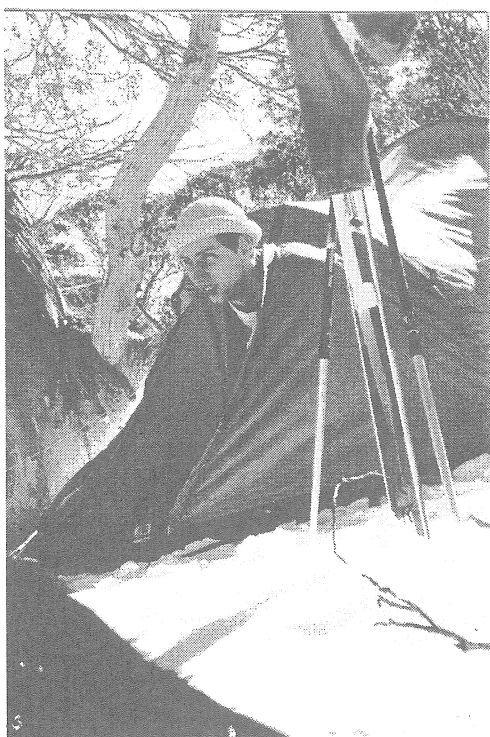
Rogaining and Orienteering are competitive cross-country navigation sports. Orienteering courses are short; obvious and generally run the entire length. Rogaining events last 6, 12 or 24 hrs and competitors choose their own route between hundreds of possible markers.

# Ski-Touring

In winter the Victorian Alps are covered in glorious white snow, a wonderland to explore and enjoy.

Skiing cross-country with a pack on might be intimidating to your average down-hill resort bumbly, but the experiences are well worth the effort.

There are also plenty of beginner trips to the cross-country resorts of Lake Mountain and Mt. Stirling, to perfect that snow-plough or tele before heading out backcountry.



## XC-Downhill

Ski-touring? That's for cous-cous-eating bushwalkers! The telemark snobs of the club think going backcountry is just about finding your own virgin slope to carve up.

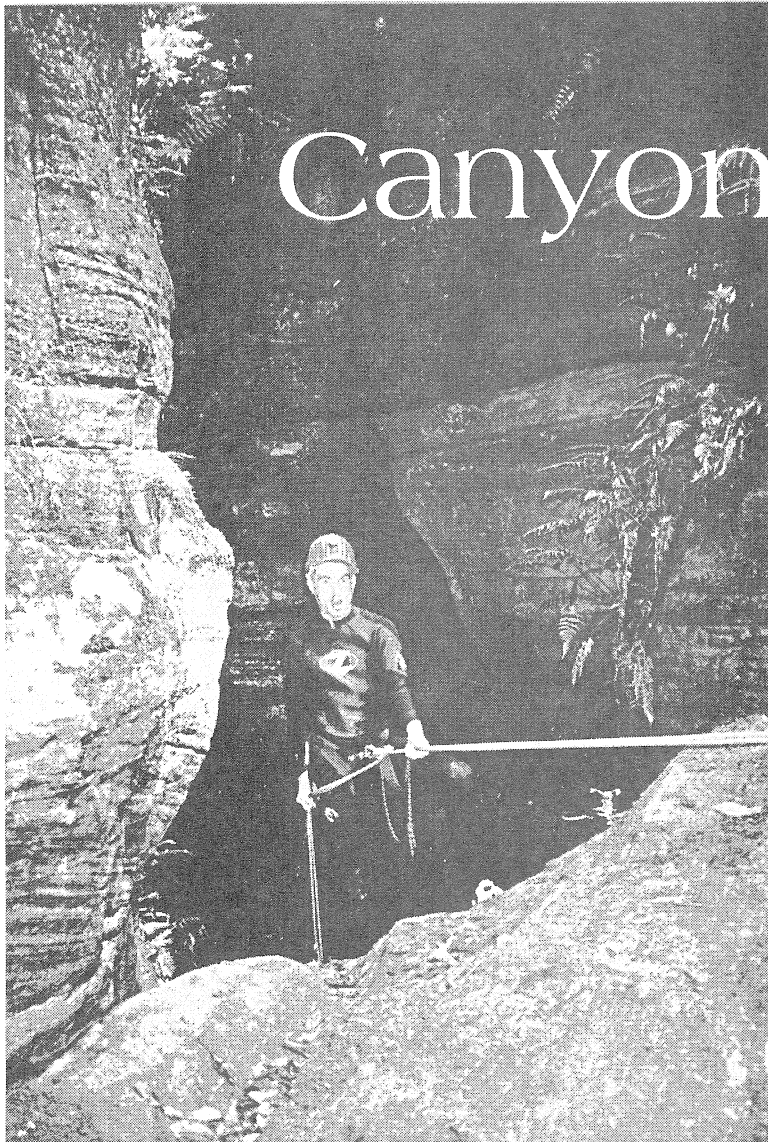


# Caving

Ever wanted to get down and get dirty? Well it's time for some good, wholesome, mud-wallowing fun. Caving not just about stalactites, stalacmites and other cool formations, it's also about crawling round, under, over, through, and between them. Yes, it's dark. And yes, it's dirty but what's not cool about the biggest, most awesome jungle gym around?



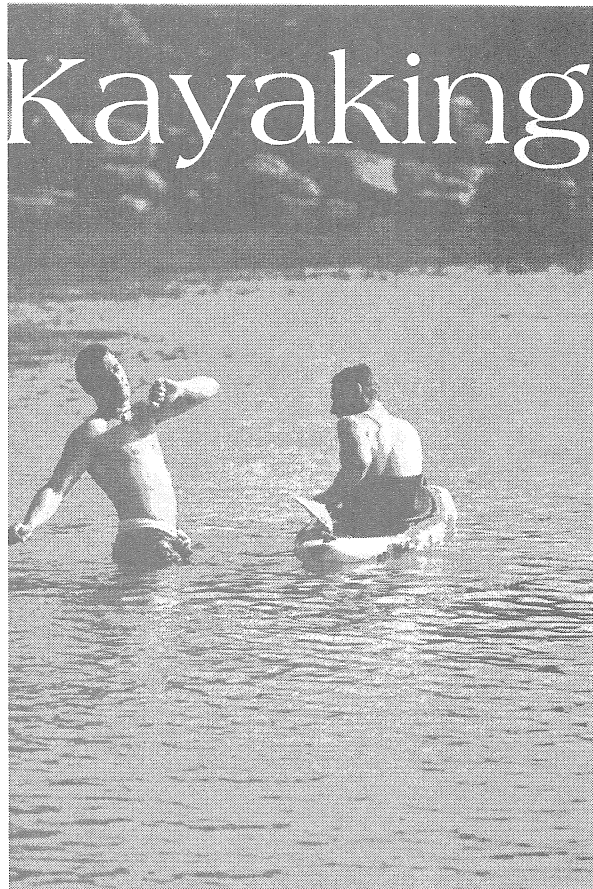
# Canyoning



Combining the skills of many of the other sports offered by MUMC, this intense sport will see you abseiling down waterfalls, sliding down logs and jumping into deep pools as you follow the canyon from beginning to end.

For weeks at a time, canyons from MUMC journey north to the great summer playground (also known as the Blue Mountains) for some fun in the sun and a bit of a 'swim'.

So, hone your skills and keep your wetsuits handy. Next summer's not too far away!



# Kayaking

## Flat-Water

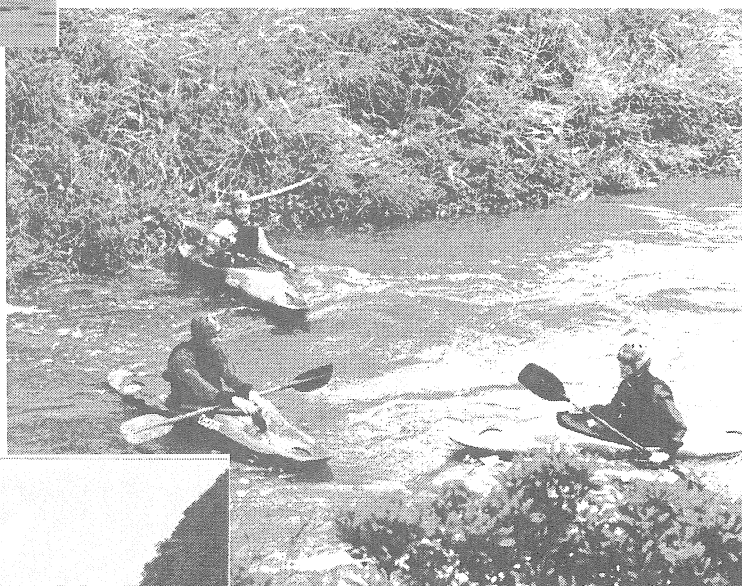
There are plenty of rivers in Victoria without rapids that make for exploratory paddles. The Yarra River is a favourite haunt. A few club members have competed in the Murray River marathon, from Yarrowonga to Swan Hill.

## White-Water

Flatwater!? That's the boring bit between the rapids! Most kayaking in MUMC is white-water. These rivers are graded I to V, which takes in to account danger and the difficulty of rapids encountered. There are beginner trips to easier rivers early in the year. In late winter the harder rivers of Victoria and NSW pick up and the fun begins. Playing in the surf with white-water boats is also gaining popularity during the warmer months.

## Canoe Polo

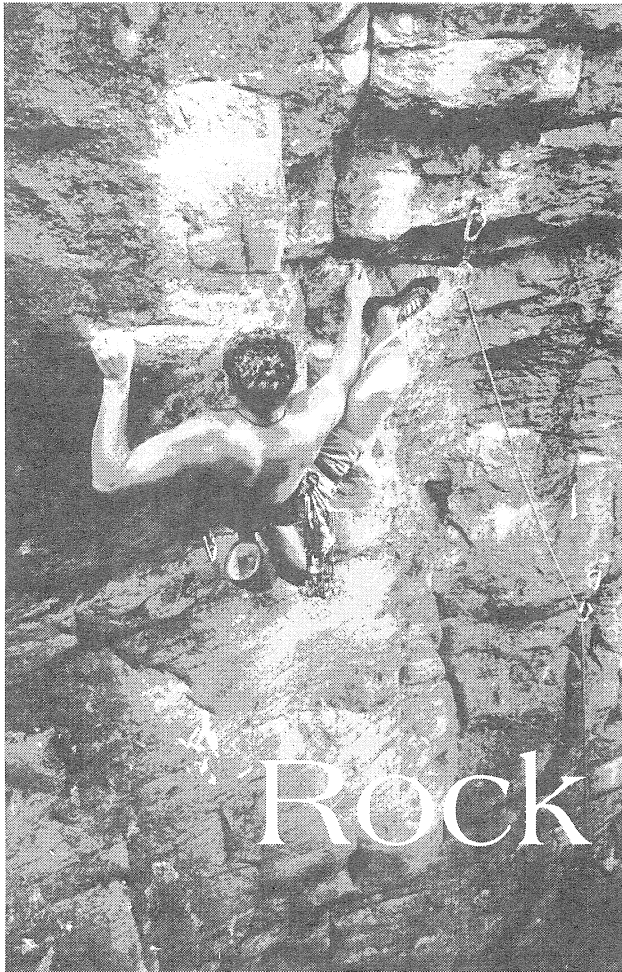
Canoe-polo is a competitive sport played in swimming pools around town. It's like soccer, except you're in a kayak in a swimming pool! Currently MUMC has several teams who compete on various nights of the week.



Sea kayaking is becoming more popular in the club. There have been several trips in New Zealand and far north Queensland.

## Sea Kayaking





Australia's mountains may not be as grand and daunting as the great mountain ranges of the world, but they sure make it up with variety and quantity of quality rock, perfect for cragging.

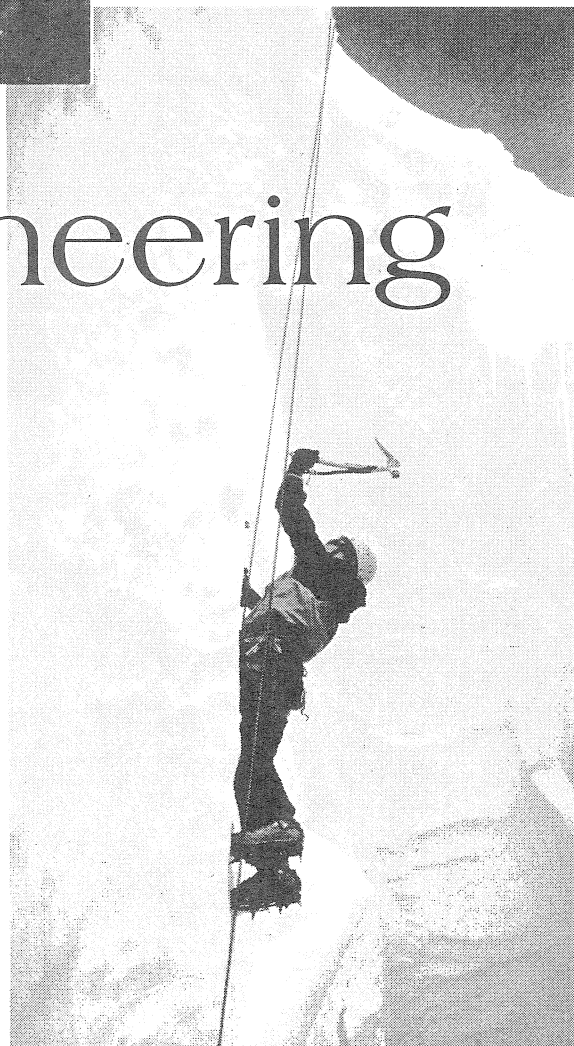
The majority of climbing in the club is 'trad', using natural protection. Some sport climbing is done too.

# Rock Climbing

# Mountaineering

Although we're called "The Mountaineering Club", climbing big cold icy mountains - i.e. real "mountaineering" - is just one of the many sports club members get up to.

If the grandest peaks of the Himalayas, the Andes or the European Alps beckon you, MUMC can be an opportunity to get there... eventually. Start out by rockclimbing with the club - rope and rock skills will be invaluable. Then there is the Alpine Instruction Weekend in August at the MUMC Hut on Mt. Feathertop. Keen for more? A Technical Mountaineering Course (TMC) in New Zealand will set you on course.



## Pie & Slide Night

The most prestigious competition on the MUMC calendar, club members enter their favourite photographs and bid for various prizes and ultimate fame and glory. Previous winners are to be found hung on the walls of the clubrooms.

## Bushdance

Don't miss the annual bushdance. A great night with yummy food, toe-tapping music and energetic dancing. This social event is also a chance to cross-pollinate with other university outdoor clubs.

## Conservation

Australia's wilderness places are constantly under threat of destruction at the hands of developers and short-sighted politicians. MUMC is active in preserving the few remaining wilderness areas, by participating in environmental projects, and through protests and letter-writing to government and corporate organisations.



The MUMC Hut on the north-west spur of Mt. Feathertop provides the perfect venue for the most celebrated of club functions: a black-tie dinner known as the Midnight Ascent. Patrons must ascend the mountain by night, often trudging through deep snow, carting packs laden with alcohol, dinner jackets or evening dresses, and gourmet hampers.

## The Midnight Ascent





# What a complete bunch of boneheads!

## Victoria Farmer reflects on her first ever trip with MUMC.

I can always rate a wild night out drinking by the number of mysterious bruises I had acquired. Though the beginner's walk to Mt. Howitt has little in common with a drunken rage, based on the above criteria, it was definitely a wild trip.

This is the story of how twelve people, all endowed with scroggin and daggy thermals, reached the top of Mt. Howitt and came back unscathed.

### Our Objective

It is often said by those that do not know the mountain, that Howitt is, technically speaking, easy. Yet our achievement must not be taken lightly. Our objective was to complete a circuit over a period of four days, that would begin at Seven Mile flat on the Howqua River, and encompass Mt. Howitt, the Blow Hole, the Bluff and finish via Rocky Ridge. It began as an easy stroll. Each one of us unaware that a day from now we will have become lost, injured, hungry, cold, dehydrated, fatigued, and thoroughly wet. Fortunately we did not experience this all at the same time. This was a beginner's trip after all.

### Our Team

We varied greatly in age, experience and card playing ability. Yet we were all successful summiteers. Over the four days that we were together we developed a team spirit essential for any successful expedition.

Robyn "the pace setter" Selby-Smith was once convinced by her sister that she was adopted. She also reckons that "paddling is pretty scary when you go over a waterfall backwards and upside down." No kidding!

Jesse Bulger is a fun lovin' chick whose brother ran away from home because she sang so badly. Inga Sitzman is doing a PhD in Information Systems but you couldn't tell. Peter, a med student, got lost with me two out of three occasions that I got lost. In this case that's an average of losing oneself every 32 hours. Kate became famous for her rainbow thermals. She is certain they are an essential coordinate for any occasion. She wears them to pick up... which leads me on to ... Dave, a second year scholar who is an avid musician and thespian. He spent the trip planning his eighteenth birthday Cocktail party and drinking out of a plastic wine glass. Yet

another is Jane, a familiar face from the last Wilson's Prom trip. Mary Pat was my tent buddy from the west coast of U.S.A. Her parents practice organic farming and had two years supply of provisions in preparation for the Y2K bug as well as a machete to defend them. Mary Pat's housemate, Andrew, is a doctor who claims he can't recall much of what he learnt at uni. Mmmmmmmmm.

We cannot forget our trip leader Matt. A veteran to this area, he lent words of wisdom such as "not too far, not too fast", "follow that prominent spur" and "you can never have too much port". Finally I must acknowledge Jack Lovick, known as Jack Lovick the one cow musterer. A man with a lot of stories to tell.

### The Walk

Bushwalking is like photography. Out of the whole film you might get one good picture but it's always worth it. During a walk there is the occasional joke, good view, one or two sticky situations, and an overall sense of achievement. The rest of the walk you can pretty much imagine for yourself. In comes the theme tune from "The Man From Snowy River", the odour of sweaty thermals, curry pasta and eucalyptus. Listen to the birds caw, and the rain on your jacket hood. Think about where to pitch a tent given an area with six slushy cowpats to every square metre. Feel every muscle in your body; and scratchy bushes that only grow above your gaiters and below your shorts. See crisp white stars in clear black skies. Stretch your lungs.

### Sticky Situation Number One

A constant concern throughout the entire trip was the quest for water and who was going to retrieve it. Fetching water on more than one occasion became an ordeal. It was very time consuming and tiring when our side trips down various gullies to find a stream were unsatisfying. One particular evening the water was 200 vertical metres below our designated route. By the time we found some water it was dusk. Andrew, Peter and I hurried back up the slope to camp while Matt went back for Kate and Dave who were behind us. It became dark within ten minutes and we were making slow progress in dense bush at chest height. We bush-bashed beginner style. We had to hold the water bottles because we had not thought of bringing a pack for them and we didn't

have torches. None of us had been in this situation before. An initial rush of excitement quickly gave way to feelings of vulnerability and frustration with not getting anywhere fast and not being able to see where I was going. So this is what it's like to walk in Tasmania! Eventually Matt made it back to camp and we were able to head for his torch light. Everyone was safe except for Water Bottle. Water Bottle was never seen again!

### Sticky Situation Number Two

Just as an MUMC member never expects to start a trip on time, never do they think its over when they are back at the car park. As beginners, the sign of a white Subaru finalised the walk. The first chair in four days beckoned. But when the car didn't start, our trip was definitely not over. Two men tried to start the car while we entertained their children. They hadn't fixed it after two hours so we thought it unlikely that they ever would. Most of us crammed into Matt's car to go an hour to Mansfield to alert the RACV. Andrew and Mary Pat stayed with the car. Whilst we waited an hour for the RACV to get ready, a plan was formulated in between games of 500. I would accompany the RACV guy back into Seven Mile Flat so that I could show them where the car was. He would fix the car and then Andrew, Mary Pat and I would travel home and have showers. Now here comes the sticky bit... The RACV guy, Scott. After a meat pie, mars bar and doughnut for his dinner he offered me a seat in his semi-trailer and we set off down the road. I found out Scott was married, "but he doesn't regret his kids". Oh and that he "would love to lead me up the garden path, if you know what I

mean". I pretended not to know what he meant.

Although I hadn't signed up for a four-wheel drive trip, the unsealed, windy road back to Seven Mile Flat presented the opportunity. Scott, a formula one wannabe drove the semi-trailer at 60km/hr round tight bends on the narrow road in the dark. We hit bumps that sent me flying off my seat into the dashboard. A small gasp invoked a "not scared are you?" from Scotty.

We found Andrew and Mary Pat at the campsite of the two men who had tried to help earlier. They had had dinner and kept warm by the fire. It turned out that the car engine was "flooded" with petrol. Scott started the car with a stick and we were on our way home five minutes after he arrived. End of sticky situation, and of trip, and the beginning of many more!!!

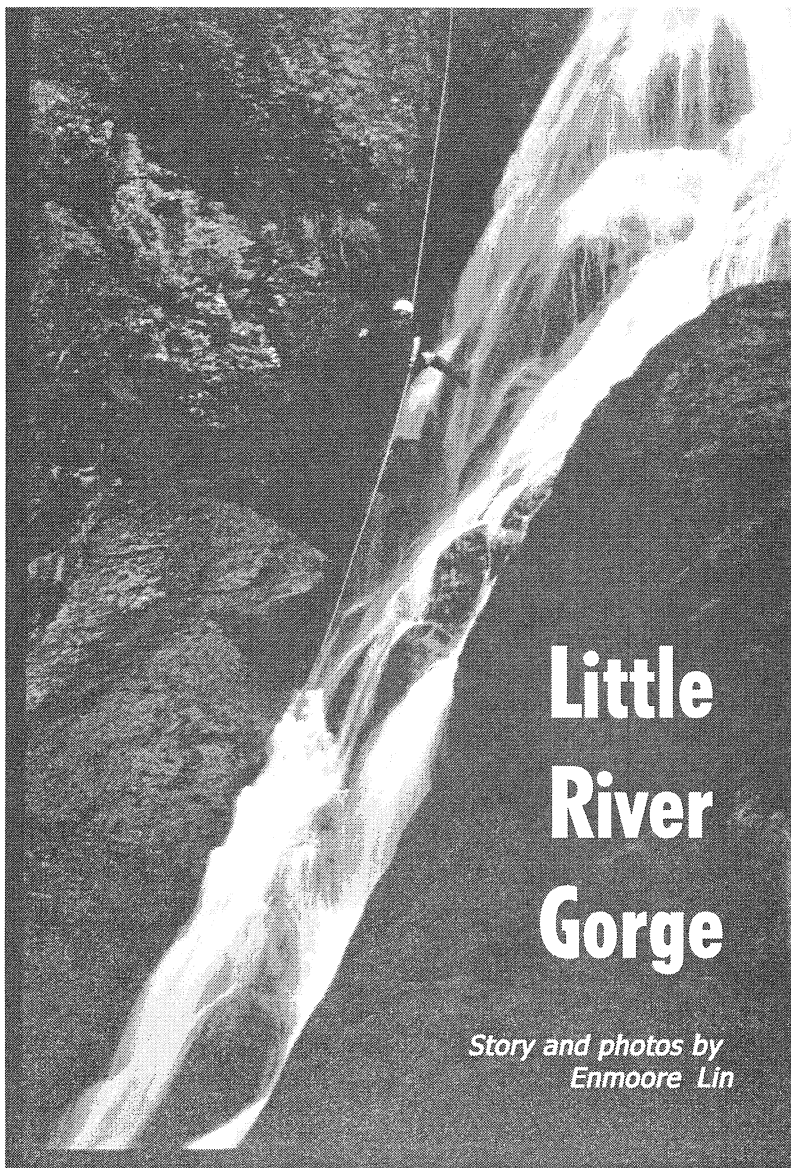
### The Aftermath

After my fourth trip with MUMC I was hooked! The rest you know. Also last July I was in Arkaroola, Flinders Ranges, when I saw one of the men from the campsite who had tried to fix the car. His family was there to see the sights. Andrew had sent him a bottle of wine to thank him. A lovely gesture I thought.

*Victoria Farmer has been active with MUMC for several years now, particularly with regards to conservation, organising many tree planting, track maintenance and joint conservation trips with Parks Victoria and other organisations. She is currently cycling across Canada.*



*Vic in New Zealand. Photo: Enmoore Lin*



# Little River Gorge

Story and photos by  
Enmoore Lin

*How did "little" ever get  
in the name of this place?*

*- Katie*

With a depth of up to 500m, the Little River Gorge is the deepest gorge in Victoria. From Little River Falls to its junction with the now not so mighty Snowy, the Little River drops 610m in just 14km. Most of this height is lost in the 4km long gorge. All we knew was that it was possible to walk, swim and canyon down this stretch of the river. We wanted to go exploring and had deliberately avoided reading about the route, which featured in "The

Mountaineer" articles from the late '70s.

From the map, we knew that there were two marked waterfalls that we would need to either abseil down or walk around. Our carefully laid plans to scout out these falls from the top of the gorge were hopeless. The three lookouts and vantage points that we had chosen did not even reveal a glimpse of a cliff. All that we could see was a tiny ribbon of water, snaking past tumbled boulders, far away at the bottom of the valley. So began the adventure into the unknown...

And boy did we get off to a great start... not! With a stash of

alcohol and gourmet food calling, we were determined to get back to the cars for the New Year celebrations. That gave us four days to go down Little River; we had to walk a whole 3.5km a day, all of which was downhill. After the first day, however, even this meagre mileage seemed to be well beyond our collective grasp.

In twelve hours, we managed to cover a grand total of two kilometres - that roughly works out to be three metres per minute, or in other words, pretty damn slow! To be more accurate, it only took four hours to bush-bash the relatively flat two kilometre section from Little River Falls to the start of the gorge. This stretch of scrub was infested with spiders that were surely delighted by the endless screams and yelps that they attracted. And how did we manage to spend the remaining eight hours? Sunbaking perhaps? Swimming?

Yeah, right! We spent that time having a minor epic abseiling over the series of waterfalls that guarded the entrance to Little River Gorge.

After an hour discussing how to anchor our first abseil, we were about to get moving, when we spent another hour having the same heated debate all over again. We finally agreed to stake our lives on a lonely gum-tree clinging tenaciously to the side of the cliff, rather than the dodgy boulder jammed at the top of the falls. While the rockclimbers amongst us had heart palpitations at the thought of rapping off a single anchor, Laurence soloed the airy traverse to our abseil tree and



set up a fixed line to facilitate the pack passing. Despite doing out utmost to "go light" by taking tarps rather than tents, and choosing to cook on open fires instead of fuel stoves, our packs were still too heavy to comfortably carry for some of the rock scrambling. Our first rap of about 20m over the dry cliff-face beside the falls went smoothly and we all dropped into a deep pool of water at the bottom.

The second abseil passed straight into the waterfall. We all thought that the Little River did not have much water in it, but that perception quickly changed in the middle of the rap when we were bombarded by torrents of water. Enmoore enjoyed the abseil so much that she prussiked back up and did it again. Actually, one of the ropes was caught under a pool of submerged rocks three-quarters of the way down and failing to free it, she headed back up for help. Laurence headed down next to try his luck. He managed to free the rope, but in the process needed to submerge his face to reach around and untangle the 3 coils of rope from beneath the rocks. With packs attached to harnesses with slings, the rest of the group proceeded to slip and slide down the 50m waterfall as the sun disappeared over the gorge walls.

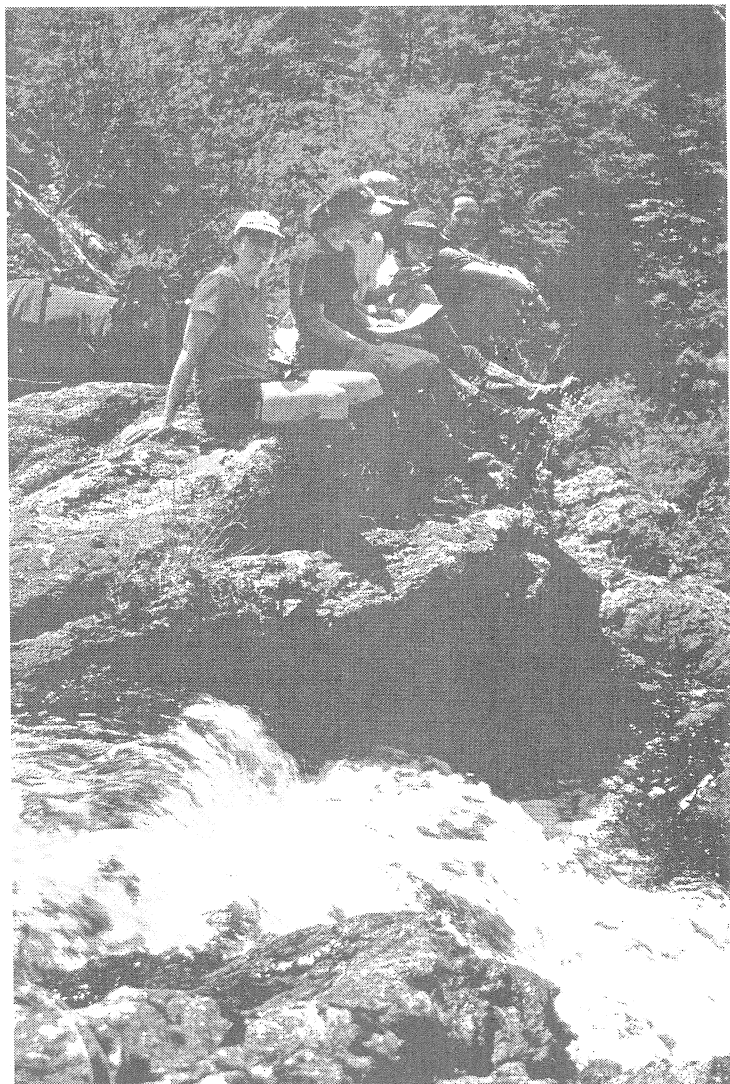
With dusk approaching, we faced the prospect of spending the night camped on top of a small bed of blackberries or completing another abseil to the bottom of the falls, where there was an inviting patch of flat grass only 200m downstream. Funnily enough, the abseil won our votes. And oh what fun, abseil number three was! We went over rock lips and were sent crashing into blackberry bushes, whose thorns became embedded in both skin and ropes. Katie, Kath and Marty were sent off ahead to our

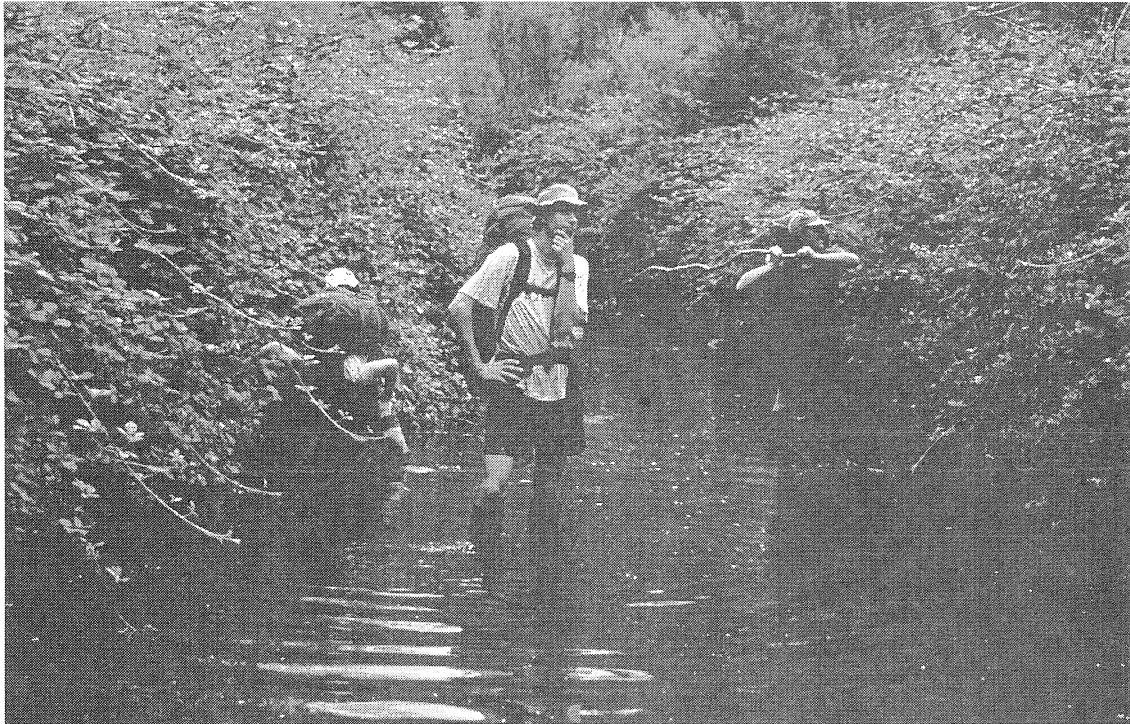
chosen campsite to begin preparing a sumptuous dinner for us all to gorge on. Anxiety over our ability to light a cooking fire proved to be groundless. We were in the rain-shadow of Mt Gelantipy and in one of the driest areas of the State. The tinder-dry wood only needed to be near a match to catch on fire. Laurence, Andrea and Enmoore finished the delightful blackberry abseil as night fell. After a struggle pulling down the ropes, the head-torches came on for the scramble down-river and the plunge into the pool of deep, black water that was the final barrier before the welcoming campfire.

Day Two saw the gorge become more and more

"gorgeous". The rock walls narrowed and became steeper as we followed the river along its tortuous path around enormous boulders and over small drops. Many swims, rock-hops, pack-passes and gorge-puns later, we emerged at the top of the second marked waterfall, a high-volume, single drop cascade. We followed a faint foot pad down the side of these falls and found a large, deep pool at the bottom that was perfectly designed for swimming. With the sun blazing overhead in a cloudless sky, it was a beautiful spot for a rest.

We set a scorching pace on the second day and covered 5km, which brought us out of the gorge. Laurence had the





unenviable experience of opening up his pack at camp and finding that its contents had become absolutely saturated during our many swims. His drybag-like packliner had sustained a hole and unlike the rest of us, who did not trust our flimsy plastic packliners, he had not bothered to double-bag neither his clothing nor his sleeping bag. Lucky for Laurence, it was a warm night and the absence of a sleeping bag posed no problems.

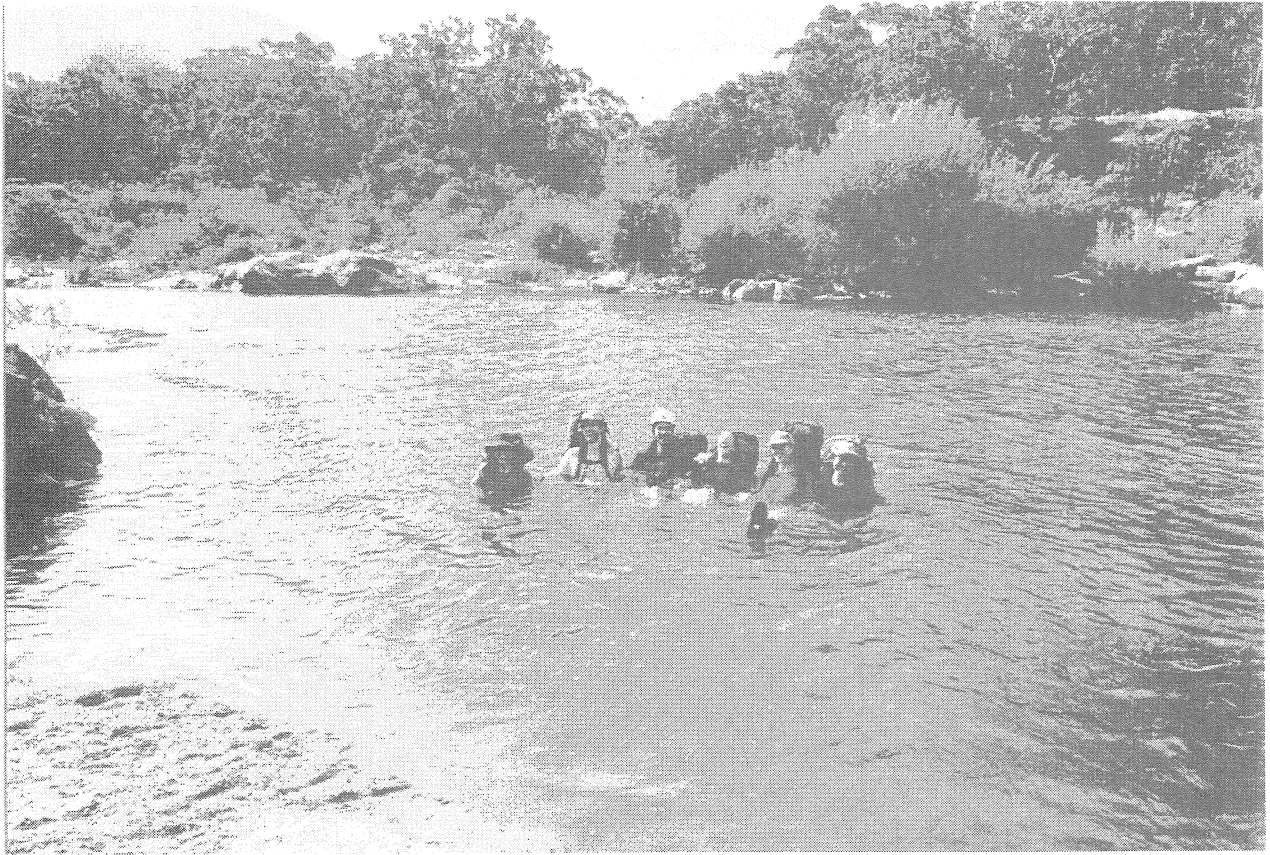
As we travelled downstream, the river became more shallow and seemed to be stagnant in places. The blackberries growing beside the river became thicker and taller. Rather than bash through the thorny scrub on either side, we found that it was easier to swim and walk down the sluggish river. Walking, however, is not a very accurate description of our progress as we constantly stumbled and fell over on the slippery riverbed. It was at times tempting to bail and bash to the McKillops Bridge Rd that we knew was only a few

kilometres uphill. Even that option soon disappeared when we found ourselves in the middle of the river and ringed in by wall-to-wall blackberries three metres high. It was too early for the blackberries to be in season, so we could not even gain any gourmet benefit from our predicament.

After some memorable crawls mid-stream on hands and knees to pass under overhanging blackberries, we finally reached the junction with the Snowy River at the end of the third day. Even with just one percent of its natural flow, the Snowy River was an awe-inspiring sight after spending the past day in the algae filled stream. Sandy beaches lined both banks of the clear and occasionally deep river. We were not quite sure what the surprised car-campers made of us. Six people carrying fully laden packs, walking fully clothed down Little River and then swimming, still with packs on, across the Snowy River! New Year's Eve at McKillops Bridge saw us meet up with Jim

Andersen's group, who had been paddling down the Snowy River. Just when we thought we could relax and swing into party-mode, there was one last moment of excitement. Marina scared a brown snake on her way back from the toilets and while she jumped up and down yelling "snake!!", it promptly slid towards the tarp that we were all sitting on. With a warning like that and with a glimpse of the snake hurtling straight towards us, it did not take long for all six of us to jump up and clear out. For Marty, even the edge of our campsite several metres from the tarp did not seem to be far away enough. We had seen the snake slither under the tarp but nobody had seen it leave. As the only person wearing shoes, Bryce, who we had just met, was unfairly volunteered to deal with the snake. After some careful prodding with a stick, and a few heart-stopping moments, Bryce "our hero" managed to locate the snake and scare it out into the Snowy River.

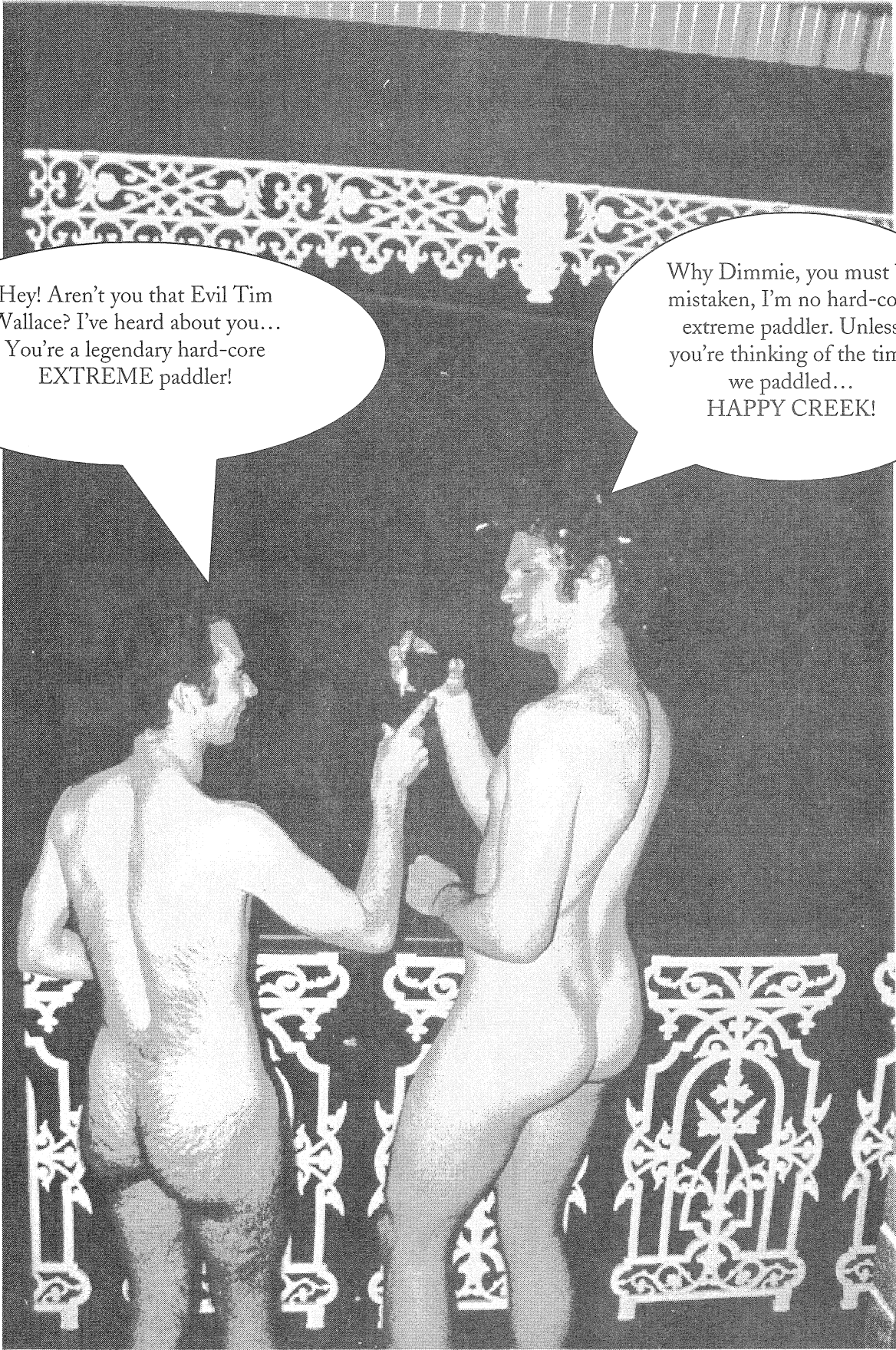




*The team in the river (above) and on dry land (below). From left, Enmoore Lin, Kath Hommand, Laurence O'Neill, Marty Meyer, Andrea Kneen, Katie Webby.*







Hey! Aren't you that Evil Tim Wallace? I've heard about you...  
You're a legendary hard-core  
EXTREME paddler!

Why Dimmie, you must be mistaken, I'm no hard-core extreme paddler. Unless you're thinking of the time we paddled...  
HAPPY CREEK!

# THE LEGEND OF HAPPY CREEK

FEAR, DANGER AND WHITEWATER, by *Tim Wallace.*

As a learner driver, I have learnt that club trips are a very good place to find people who will willingly let you drive their car for extended periods as they sit back and relax, or, as is usually the case, don't relax. Such was the case as I drove Kate's car through the dark and wet roads of Gippsland one Friday. We were on our way to meet up with the rest of our group who had left earlier in the evening, and would presumably be at Coopers Creek when we got there. Driving around Coopers Creek at eleven p.m. none of the cars looked in any way familiar, so we pitched our tents and set about sleeping. Just as the tent started to leak, we started to nod off and the peace was interrupted by a cavalcade of cars whose occupants promptly set about erecting a tent and going to bed, that is, all except for British Dan and his underlings. Dan, who upon realising how late it was, had to drink really quickly in order to get drunk before going to bed.

I awoke to a nice sunny day a few hours later. I took it upon myself to ensure that the rest of my group also enjoyed the sunny morning too, by making as much noise as possible in a deliberate attempt to get them out of bed. I was also keen to see the days paddling escapades begin.

Eventually everyone was coerced out of his or her dry

sleeping bag and we headed off to the put in for the Tunnel section. A good day was had by all, however the level was a bit low (around 35cm I recall) so there wasn't much action to speak of.

When the paddling ceased, some spirited cooking action began in a makeshift shelter we constructed to keep out the rain. This consisted of two station wagons, a tarp, some rope and the vestibule of a tent.

In my youthful enthusiasm, I looked to the rain to do something to the river, however, according to doubtful paddling convenor, Cam, the Thomson never flooded.

After too long, dinner was ready and myself and an increasingly wet and miserable Anna were only too happy to rip in to our souvlaki + bottle of red + beer + cask of red. After dinner was over and the dirty pots were thrown a sufficient distance away from the tent, we settled down to what I reckon was the most miserable night in a tent in my life (and it was worse for Anna!).

We got out of our tent as soon as it was light (I hesitate to say 'got up' or 'awoke', as this would imply that some sleep occurred over the course of the night) and surveyed the mess that was the campsite. Everything was wet and had mud splattered on it and the tent had formed a kind of dam

(which might explain, along with the visible holes in the roof, why we got so wet). In my enthusiasm I ran down to the river to have a look, to see if there was any reason to not be miserable. Indeed there was so I hurriedly returned to the campsite.

"Cam, Cam get out of your tent now!"

"Go away Tim."

"The river. It's flooding!"

"I don't believe you."

"No, it really is. It's up at least three quarters of a meter and the water is brown and fast and there is a hole next to the take out...and..."

"OK, I'm getting dressed"

Word spread that, yes, indeed there was actually water in the river today and for the next few minutes a procession of tired, wet but excited people returned to the campsite to confirm that no, Tim was not full of shit *this time*.

After a hurried breakfast it was decided that a stronger group would go and paddle it, whilst the other group would play around near the take out, and wait for the stronger group's verdict.

So we drove. Quite quickly in fact. Upon reaching the put in it was evident that the river was flooding but something else caught our attention.





"Hey Dan, look at that", I said, pointing to a creek that was feeding in to the main river "Lets go and have a look at it."

So we did. We drove up the road towards Walhalla, delicately avoiding several landslides that had blocked the road and occasionally peering over the edge when the trees cleared enough to see the creek, which appeared to be running quite nicely. As enthusiastic as we were, it was decided that the other car that was a few minutes behind us may not be able to work out where we'd gone, so we drove back to the put in, to the waiting car.

*[brown car pulls up next to gold car]* "Follow us."

*[gold car]* "Where are we going?"

*[brown car]* "You'll see."

*[brown car drives away]*

*[gold car follows]*

We drove along the road until just before the township of Walhalla and parked opposite the scenic railway depot, the put in. Sorting out our gear, Jasmine and Yvonne actually got to see the creek from close up and decided that they would sit this one out and would wait for us at the take out. At this point it is worth pointing out that we were not a particularly strong group. . .Of course *Übermensch* paddler Dan and *El Presidente* Dave are strong paddlers but the rest of us were perhaps pushing the envelope (but as it turned out, so were Dan and Dave but I'll get to that...).

Finding a nice gravel road that went straight in to the creek, we hopped in our boats and received some handy instructional pointers and helpful hints from Dan & Dave; This would take some time. No swimming. Eddy hopping the whole way. You must make eddies. And then it began.

The first 200 meters or so were fun, but not too trying. Basically a very fast run, hopping from eddy to eddy with almost constant wave trains. Then I saw Dan, he was pointing, he was also screaming at me which is something that anyone who knows Dan will realise is quite unusual:

"GET IN TO THE EDDY!!!"

There was no eddy, but by holding on to the blackberry bushes on the bank you could usually stay in one place for long enough. After about ten seconds I saw a boat go past. Upside-down. The next thought I had was 'crap. . .why doesn't Matt roll back up'. In the meantime Dogga joined me at the blackberry bushes and there were more instructions from Dan:

"GET OUT OF YOUR BOAT!!!"

We got out and carried our boats about 10 meters up the steep slope to the scenic railway. The tracks ran parallel to the creek, something that would prove to be invaluable later.

As it turned out, Matt had tried to roll but the water was too shallow and fast and he exited and clambered up the bank, above the thing that Dan had been compelling us to avoid going over. Looking at it from the top it didn't look too deadly, I mean I would not have wanted to go over it, but it wasn't till I could see it from the top that I realised just how fucked (Can I say that in Mountaineer?) we would have been. The creek which had been on average 3 or 4 meters wide narrowed to a gorge about half a boat length wide, went round a left facing corner and dropped 3 meters. International paddler and cask wine connoisseur Dan reckoned it would go at about grade 4+ to 5 and was contemplating going back up to give it a shot but made the quite

reasonable decision not to run it on the basis of the overall standard of the group.

We wandered down the railway for about 30 meters until we got to a bridge, where we spotted Matt's boat. Dave and I scrambled down the steep slope to the creek. Dan, Matt and Dogga found a ladder and had a much nicer time. When everyone was assembled, we brainstormed about what might be a good way to recover the boat, eventually deciding on: attach a throw bag to Dave and with his makeshift rescue harness, belay him out to the boat. There he would attach another throw bag to the boat and we would pull it out from underneath the strainer that it was caught on. (Who ever thought that a strainer could be a good thing?).

All went to plan and the boat was hastily recovered from its entrapment. However a curious thing happened as we were freeing it, the foam pillars that provide support for the boat and buoyancy for a flooded boat floated out! Luckily just downstream, next to one of the pylons of the bridge was the creek's solitary eddy (in as much as it looked like an eddy and you could actually fit some boats in it). It was collecting all the material ejected from Matt's boat, including a dry bag and foam pillars. We recovered the pillars (which, I might add were bloody hard to get back in and gave us a good insight in to the incredible power of the water), and contemplated our next move. We had two choices, either walk back over the bridge to the other bank and put in, or put in where we had recovered Matt's boat. The latter would require a ferry glide across some very fast messy water, avoid getting strained against the bridge's support pylons (like half the logs that had gone down the

creek) and make some very tight fast moves to the other side. We decided walking would be nice.

So we carried the boats and the ladder across the bridge, put the ladder down on to the bank, and climbed down. By this stage we realised that no matter what happened next, this was going to be epic and Dave started to regret not having any booties.

We paddled down the nice tight, fast, wave train dominated creek for about 300 meters until presented with another strainer. This one was not particularly nasty and could be paddled around with some care, however, when Matt pulled in to the 'hang on to the blackberry bush' eddy with Dogga to have a look at it, he knocked Dogga's hand against his boat causing him to drop his paddle. Dan promptly noticed the paddle and chased after it, and Dogga had to walk a bit until the bank became large enough that we could sit down, have a break and get out the split paddle.

With everyone back in their boats and Dave's level of regret regarding the booties growing exponentially with every minute, we paddled off down the creek. For the next 100 meters the creek was quite nice, wandering left and right, constant wave trains with the odd hole, some of which would have made awesome play spots except for a distinct absence of eddies and an overwhelming prevalence of blackberry bushes. Then Dogga saw Dave's waving paddle.

We all pulled in to a blackberry bush and waited for Dave. We were to come one at a time. I broke out first, wandering around the corner, I assumed that there would be an eddy to get out into but this was a vain hope. Dan and Dave



were positioned on the bank on a patch of cleared forest that was just next to a train station for the scenic railway, with paddles and throw bags. What I had to do was break out of the current, pretending as if I was getting in to an eddy and they would grab my boat and pull me out. I'm still unsure how Dan got out without any assistance. I missed them by a meter or so, but with some furious paddling managed to get in to one spot for long enough that they could help me. Matt and Dogga had similar

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*...with a fair degree of fighting  
I got out of the cockpit, slowly  
emerging from the brown  
depths that had tried to make  
me a permanent fixture...*

---

experiences but we all managed to get out eventually. Dan had found Dogga's paddle, but it was going to be a team effort to get it back.

We all positioned ourselves on the bank near the lost paddle, which was caught in a strainer in the middle of the creek. Dan paddled down and beached himself on a sand bar

in the middle of the creek, and without too much trouble was able to reach it and pass it to Dogga, without getting dragged into the dangerous current.

After the train station the gradient and speed of the current increased noticeably and the wave trains and holes got larger. We all crammed in to a small eddy just above a small drop and discussed our next move. We decided on Dave and Dan leading, the rest of us about 30 – 50 meters behind. When they were out of sight, I broke in to the current, and, underestimating its speed was promptly pinned under the water against a partially submerged tree stump. Yay. Pinned with the current blasting against my deck I realised there was no way I could get unstuck myself and keep on paddling, so I pulled the deck. The boat immediately flooded, but getting out was not a simple matter of floating to the top. The power of the current was preventing me from getting out of the boat and it was with a fair degree of fighting that I got out of the cockpit, slowly emerging from the brown depths that had tried, (unsuccessfully so far) to make me a permanent fixture. I was fortunate in as much as the

current that was holding my boat against the tree stump was also holding me against the boat, and with my head above the water I was reasonably comfortable. Matt threw me a throw bag, which I tied to the boat and to my paddle (I let go of the paddle under the water, but in a stroke of luck I found it pinned against the stump). And as we only had one throw bag, hauled myself hand over hand against the current to the eddy. Once in the eddy, Matt and Dogga and I were very relieved. Dogga related that he was about to jump in and attempt to rescue me just as my head emerged and we began to contemplate recovering the boat. There were several theories thrown about but eventually it came down to either attempting to haul the boat in to the eddy, or free it and let it float downstream

Dogga figured that if we pulled on the throw line, it would break, but we rationalised that this was all that we could do and if it broke, well, it broke – but there was the slight chance that we might

be able to pull the flooded boat free. So we gave it a go. To our surprise with some extremely strenuous hauling the boat came free and we were able to pull in to the eddy. Yay! With the boat emptied we were about to paddle down to rejoin Dan and Dave when Dan appeared on the other bank:

**“GET OUT OF YOUR BOAT, AND GIVE ME THE THROW LINE”**

After several failed screaming contests we eventually worked out that Dan wanted the throw-line because Dave required rescuing and I had stolen his to help rescue Dogga’s paddle. Yay.

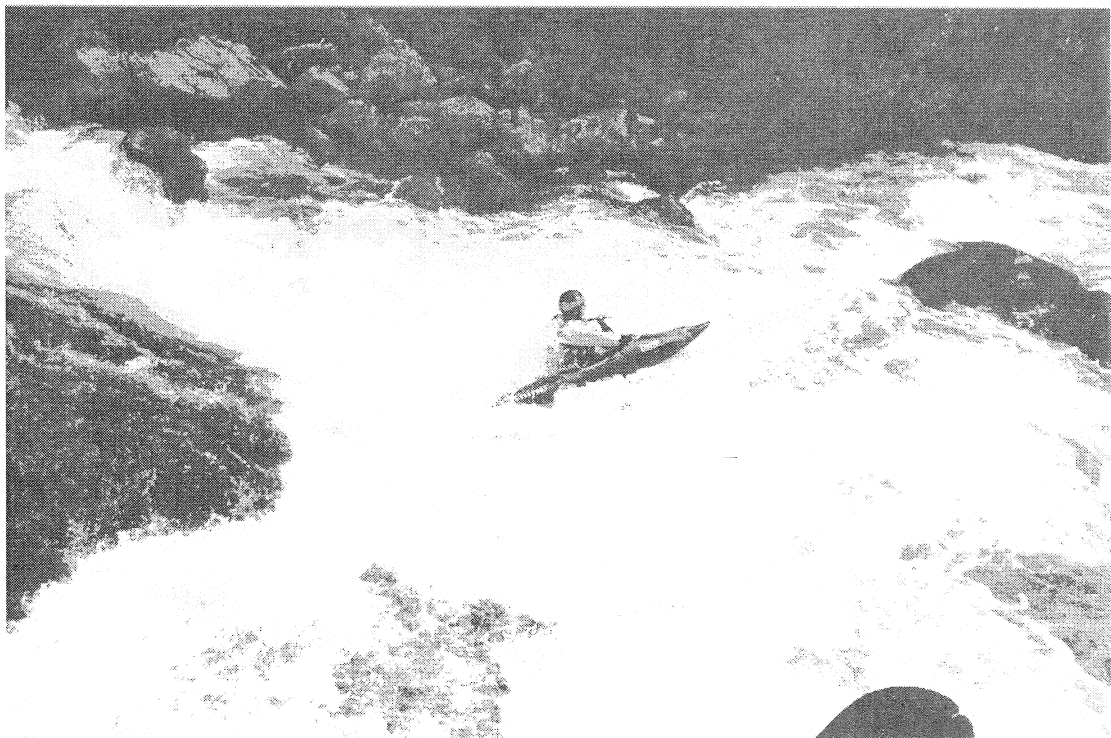
We walked upstream to a reasonably flat section of the bank and waited. After about twenty minutes Dan and Dave reappeared and we found out what had happened.

Dave had paddled down first and had perched himself on a rock precariously above a very, very nasty looking hole. Not wanting to paddle it on sight, he waited there. Dan, a

little while behind him, observed Dave’s predicament, and had to get the throw bag from us to rescue Dave. Dan explained why he was not going to run the next bit:

“I reckon it’s about grade 4, it doesn’t look that bad. I’ve had a look, and ‘bout sixty meters downstream around the corner is a very nasty looking drop which is a good grade 5... you could run it, but I don’t think I will, there are no eddies between the two hard bits so if you fuck up you’ll end up in a bad situation.”

At this point, everyone was getting to the stage where the suggestion to walk out along the scenic railway was greeted with some enthusiasm (especially when a local walking his dog along the track told us there was only about 500m to go!), so we shouldered our boats and headed on downstream. After about twenty minutes of walking we came upon the bridge, the put in for the tunnel section and the other members of our team who had been patiently waiting for





the last four hours.

By this stage it was about 3pm, but given the fact that the Thomson was running at 1.3m (!) we figured the tunnel section would not take to long, so we eagerly jumped back in our boats for some more action. Yvonne and Dogga decided to opt out of paddling so the remaining group jumped in and continued the adventure. The sections of river that had involved groveling along water coated gravel the day before were now well under water and the boring flat sections passed quite quickly. Previously tame, meandering sections of river were now pumping wave trains and we stopped to play on a couple of good waves. When we got to the tunnel (of which about the top 20cm was visible) we fantasized about the portage being flooded and were extremely excited to find when we got there that yes, it was indeed flooded! [For anyone who is interested, the best way to paddle the portage is on river

right].

With the portage quickly and comfortably disposed of, we arrived at a bubbling cauldron of white water where the contents of the tunnel spewed in to the river. With careful selection of a line

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*Jasmine showed off with some impressive tail squirts off the tops of the waves ... later she assured me that they were not deliberate.*

---

through this mess, no problems were encountered and we paddled on. The next major rapid (which is usually paddled down a chute on river left) now had two options, a fast steep chute with a super-munchy hole at the bottom or a wider big volume channel on the right that was producing some impressive waves. Everyone except me made it through successfully and Jasmine showed off with some impressive tail squirts off the tops of the waves (although

speaking to her later she assured me that they were not deliberate).

This was the last of the major rapids although the rest of the river was by no means boring and within an hour of leaving the put in we were at the take out. For most of us this was the end of the trips excitement and everyone headed off.

The weekend which had looked like it would just be another low flow meander down the Thomson produced some very interesting surprises and a fun weekend was had by all. In retrospect, the decisions that we made regarding when to inspect things or portage were almost flawless and made for a much safer more enjoyable trip.

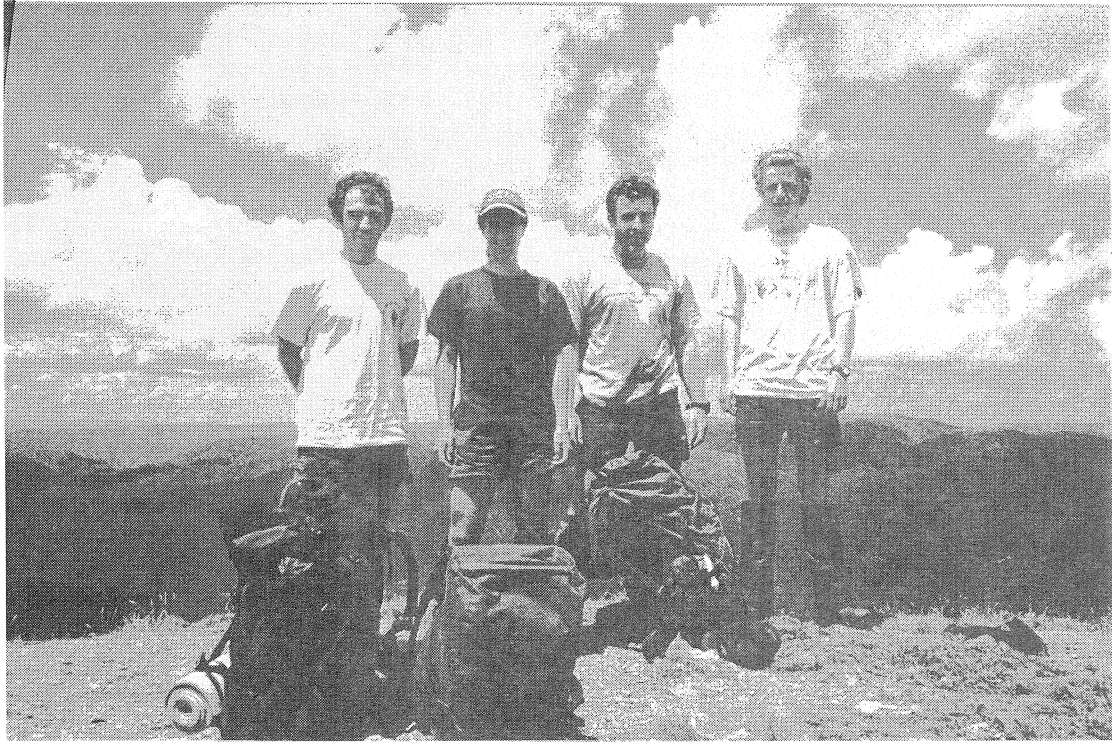
Until next time,

Evil Tim



# The Twenty-Four Hour Walk.

By Dimitri Papaioannou



Life is littered with many examples of ideas which in the conceiving must have appeared to have been inspired to the creator, only later to be bemoaned in the execution by the self-same individual and those he or she manages to convince. For instance, going to the theatre must have seemed like an excellent notion to Abraham Lincoln; just as I'm sure that Ned Kelly didn't see any harm in having just one more beer while staying at the Glenrowan hotel. And in this category of ideas does the 24 hour walk fall. Specifically, a 24 hour walk between Mt. Feathertop and

Mt. Bogong – some 80km in distance.

The 24 hour walk was a common occurrence in the early days of the club: when men were men and the women made “oxo-men” badges for the men to sew onto their packs. Indeed the MUMC 24 hour walk was the progenitor of Rogaining during the 1970's. Over time though the popularity of ‘the walk’ appeared to dwindle, becoming a memory handed down through the generations as an example of the hardiness and endeavour of early club members and sometimes used to imply that a contrast

exists between those members of the past and us today.

It was Matthew Thomas, who with such a keen sense of club tradition, initiated the resurrection of this long extinct activity and with myself, Joel and Andrea the four of us recreated history, to experience first-hand the hardship faced by those of the past. Much like when Angry Anderson, Collette Mann and other various luminaries of mid-morning variety television walked the length of the Kokoda track; as documented by that renowned example of journalistic integrity and

excellence, A Current Affair. Anyway the four of us left Melbourne on the Friday evening of the Australia Day long weekend, with Andrew 'Mustafa' Oppenheim agreeing to be our taxi driver for the trip.

Question: when and where does a 24 hour walk start and end? Ideally the start would have been at the summit of Mt. Feathertop at midday on Saturday and the finish on the summit of Mt. Bogong the following Sunday (at midday) with travellers in between. In actuality the start was at the bottom of Mt. Feathertop at 1:00am on Saturday morning with the well-known crawl up the NW spur to MUMC Memorial hut (approximately 8km with 1,100m gain in elevation – nice). Joel had forgotten his head torch and in sympathy the rest of us made the rather admirable sacrifice of also walking without our torches, relying only on natural light which was by no means ample. The five of us made it to the hut by about 4:30am and with little formality went to bed to get between five and six hours of sleep. Even though we woke at about 10:00 later that morning and in spite of our best intentions, we only managed to get to the summit of Feathertop by about 12:20pm, making our planned 12:00pm start a little difficult. Re-scheduling the start time to 1:00pm, we used the 40 minutes at our disposal to play 500. Matthew and I against Andrea and Joel. Matt had to hold onto the seat of his pants whilst I single handedly shoved us out the back door in two rounds. Regardless of what the others might say about this though I still reckon I was unlucky.

Anyway by this time 1:00pm was just five minutes away. So packing up, taking a group photo of the four walkers and saying cheerio to Mustafa (who was heading back down to the taxi) we commenced walking at 1:01:27pm (or something like that). Heading towards the Diamantina spur, we ran into seemingly endless groups of Andrea's relatives (those Kneens, they breed like flies in a long drop dunny without self-composting facility) each encounter requiring a pause for light conversation, using up what I felt at the time to be precious minutes and seconds. The afternoon was getting quite hot and sticky as we descended Diamantina Spur, where we met our first and only hitch, when we lost the track near the bottom of the spur and had to bush bash for half an hour. Apologies go to Andrea for being right about the correct location of the track. After reaching the West Keiwa River we headed up-stream, with the temperature dropping to a more comfortable level by this time. However, we were all suffering from the heat earlier on and the walk up Mt. Feathertop the night before so we had our first of many breaks before starting the climb up onto the Bogong High Plains. We also stopped a second time at Weston's Hut about two-thirds of the way up the High Plains, four hours into the walk. By 7:00pm that evening we'd made it onto the plateau in perfect conditions: mild temperature, a slight breeze and the stunning late afternoon light in the sky reflecting off the pools of water dispersed across the plains. With such fortunate weather and on relatively flat ground we

managed to set a cracking pace: something in the order of 6km/hr by Matt's calculation. Whilst making our way to Cope hut in the dusk I recall the faint but uniformly illuminating effect of distant lightning from thunderstorms that had by some freak of nature managed to avoid us completely. In retrospect I'm sure this was critical to our success, for if it had been raining heavily it is quite likely that we may have decided to give up. By around 9:00pm we made it to Cope hut where we stopped for 1½ hours for tea and yet another rest. The rate at which we were covering ground combined with what turned out to be an ideal summer night left us all in relatively good spirits for the next leg of our walk. We met Andrew at the half-way mark of our walk with another half-hour wait whilst Matt went to chat with someone from the VRA leaving Andrea, Joel and myself to crouch on the ground and freeze each of our respective bits and pieces off. Re-commencing our walk just after midnight we started towards Mt. Nelse in eerily shifting winds that alternately blew delightfully warm then chillingly cold air around us as we progressed. At Mt. Nelse Andrea suggested we stop for a short sleep. Nobody argued. It proved to be the best two-hour sleep that I can remember ever having.

When Matt woke us at 3:00am, the moon had set and the temperature had dropped considerably. Those two hours between then and dawn proved to be the most difficult: it was cold and walking with very little light (remember no torches allowed) was wearing us down.



Just after dawn, we commenced our descent off the High Plains towards Big River. Matt and I left Andrea and Joel to go climb somebody or other's bloody lookout. To be honest I couldn't give a damn about getting our first good view of Bogong, but I'm a fool for one-up-manship. Coming off the lookout, with me dawdling behind Matthew who was on his second wind, I managed to tread on a large unstable rock which flicked up and belted me on the shin: give me a break I'm already licked I thought. But I was offered no pity by the trees around me so I just kept hobbling down the hill. I didn't catch up to the others till I got to Big River where we stopped once again for another half an hour. I wanted to vomit and made this known to the group. Andrea offered some sympathy by way of also expressing similar sentiments. By this time it was about 8:00am so we put

our boots back on our tired, damp feet and started the final ascent up Quartz ridge. The walk up felt surprisingly good. We stopped halfway where I cunningly found a bull ant to sting me on the backside. It put fire in my belly, gave voice to my throat and re-invigorated my limbs.

The rest of the walk proved to be uneventful and we reached the monumental cairn on top of Bogong just after 11:00am on Sunday. It took us a total of 22:05:57. Andrea, Joel and Matt decided to sleep right there on the summit, but after fidgeting about for a while I started walking down Staircase Spur to sleep at Bivouac Hut in the shade. When I finally got there I laid my mat down in a comfortable spot and spent the next hour being attacked by march flies and mosquitoes – I just couldn't take a trick. Some time later the others came down, and

we were met by Andrew who brought fresh oranges: a good man. Walking down Staircase Spur was by far and away the most tiresome part of the trip. Joel's knees were giving him trouble and we were all knackered. Nonetheless we finished the day more than satisfactorily at the Tawonga South Hotel where Joel and I each ate the steaks of our respective dreams. Amazingly though, I didn't manage to eat till I hurt as I had done on the previous two rogaines I'd competed in.

*The 24 hour walkers were: Matthew Thomas, Andrea Kneen, Joel Bartley and Dimitri Papaioannou.*



*Asleep on the summit of Mount Bogong*



# A Short Walk In The Arthurs Range

*Andy Selby Smith* describes a memorable walk in South-West Tasmania

There's something about sitting in an office for a year that gives one a nasty case of itchy feet. I started working in March 2000, and after a year of it, felt that it was high time that I had a decent holiday.

The idea of a Tasmanian trip originally began as a thought experiment; I wondered just how I would handle going on a long walk with a small group of people I did not know well. I knew from past experience that quiet but ambitious trips, with small numbers of people usually suited me, as it was possible to "keep up" socially without having to struggle too much. Anything that I might miss was balanced out by shared experience resulting from the aims of the trip. In large groups, however, I tended to become isolated, and frustrated, in a noisy crowd. I've adapted strategies over the years to enable me to maintain a social life without getting too frustrated, and balanced out the effort involved by spending periods of time each day exclusively doing my "own thing"; which is where running comes in. I was curious to know how well and quickly things could settle down with a small group of new people, where I was not "tuning out" for long periods of time each day. The Wilds of Tasmania was the perfect setting for such an experiment.

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I'd seen the great shark's tooth of Federation Peak from many places in Tasmania on past walks. The siren call of that rugged and remote peak had grown ever stronger until I was stirred to action, and took the irrevocable step of putting a trip sheet in the folder... After the first few people had put names down, a

diary and commitment comparison session saw a 2 week period chosen in mid February.

After a bit of negotiation and discussion at the Clyde Pub, we settled on a route - a full traverse of the Arthurs, from Scotts Peak to Farmhouse Creek. It was ambitious, and it was obviously going to be no pleasure cruise, but we felt that we were capable of doing it. We all realized that aiming for the goal of the full traverse would be important - achieving it would turn the two weeks from something to be enjoyed, into a very special trip. Often that is what time in wilderness seems to be about - a search for special moments, for shared experiences that mean something, even after the inevitable return to the humdrum reality of normal life. The names on our new maps quickened the pulse and promised rugged walking and excitement - Lake Charon, Mt Hayes, Procyon Peak, the Crags of Andromeda ... the names, coming from mythology and astronomy, kept on whispering: "This place is special".

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Ok, everyone ready? Right, let's go!" With those words, Marty, Chee, Al, and I hoisted heavy packs onto fresh shoulders and slowly trundled off into the South Western Wilderness from Scott's Peak Dam car park. The weight of the packs was not unexpected, but it still took a little while for our shoulders and hips to settle down under the load. The weather was grey with the threat of rain, the question not being a matter of whether, but when.

We walked off along a soft path through typical Tasmanian forest, our senses slowly adapting to the quiet, soft greenery of the Tasmanian bush after the roar of the bus for the past few hours. After 10 minutes we emerged onto a buttongrass plain and the first of many sections of boardwalk. We

continued for an hour or so in light wind and occasional fine rain.

After a light lunch, we walked on to Junction Creek in slightly improving weather (the sky was still grey, but it wasn't raining - which is good - for Tassie) and after scrubbing down our boots at the creek washdown station to prevent the spread of polythophora root rot, another half hour saw us reach a quiet, well sheltered campsite in an island of trees on the buttongrass plain.

Amongst the trees, it was as though the scrub had been lifted on poles to become trees, leaving a bare dirt floor that made for comfortable and sheltered camping, on a dry, soft, surface. The acoustic conditions of that campsite were perfect for me. *[Andy is partially deaf. - Ed.]* There was no background noise, no air conditioning hum, no voices in the background, no echo. The easy conversation resulting was a wonderful experience. That quiet, unexceptional evening was one of my highlights of the trip. Wilderness has the power to make common moments, and experiences, become special.

The following day we climbed up Moraine A onto the western end of the range, thrilling with excitement at what we might find, and feeling that the long climb marked the real start of the trip. A few hours saw us having lunch on the summit of Mt Hesperus in cloudy but still weather, surrounded by a fantastic panorama. Ahead of us we could see the crazy jumble of peaks of the Western Arthur Range, but Federation Peak itself was not yet visible, hidden behind the double headed bulk of Mt Hayes. After lunch, we scrambled off past Lakes Fortuna and Cygnus, and along an intervening ridge, to a small saddle behind a gendarme on the side of Mt Hayes. Here we dumped packs and made a quick assessment of our remaining water supplies. They were getting worryingly low. We



decided to climb Mt Hayes anyway!

The sensation of climbing, through scrub and over rock, unencumbered by the weight of the packs, was bliss. It was an anticipatory group that scrambled to the top, excited at the prospect of what we might see from the summit – and Federation was visible as the furthest thing away on the eastern horizon, a stunning, instantly recognizable shape. Excitement, and a small degree of apprehension, bubbled over in all of us. Deep down, I knew that there was no other place I wanted to spend the next two weeks, and that these people were who I wanted to be with. Marty, Chee, Al, and I had gelled quickly and easily into a cooperative and sociable team.

Even now, conversations from a month ago remain clear in my mind: "If we spent as much time talking about sex as we do about food, we would obviously have a serious problem!". "Tell you what, guys, let's have prizes for Gin Rummy – first prize can be one week in Tasmania with Andy. Second prize can be two weeks in Tasmania with Andy...". Al's giggles of amusement as she recounted how her relatives were shocked that she was going away walking with three guys for two weeks: "...and none of them is my boyfriend!!!" The teasing as the others called me Grandpa, the three twenty year olds gleefully rubbing in my 24 years of age.

The next two days gave us exciting and strenuous walking, as we traversed into the roughest and most inaccessible part of the range – first travelling from Square Lake to High Moor; via Lake Oberon, and then the sharp ridge connecting Mts. Pegasus, Capricorn, and Columba. The weather was cool and overcast, but dry. At times the track plunged down improbably steep gullies, with no exit visible until a traverse line became possible under enormous cliffs. Descending from Mt Capricorn, the track became terrifyingly steeply on tenuous dirt and root hand and footholds; and always it would zig-zag back and forth seeking out the easiest line through gendarmes, scrub, and boulders. Unexpected cliffs, gullies, pillars of rock, sharp ridges, rough summits, and other

secrets of the topology were slowly revealed as we sweated on. Towards the end of the first day, the track faded out in thick scrub, leaving us to battle over and through the scoparia-covered boulder field on the side of Mt Columba, until we emerged onto a wonderfully soft and open moor, curving gently up against the sky between Columba's twin peaks. The welcome campsite followed shortly after.

The following day we left High Moor for Haven Lake, via the connecting ridge to Mt Taurus and beyond. The walking was similar, but the two days could not have been more different. It rained all day, making the traverse of the Beggary Bumps, and the descent of

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nerve.*

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the Tilted Chasm, a scary and unnerving experience. The handholds and footholds were wet, tiny edges in a fine rock strata, often overlaid with a loose scree that called for complete concentration and careful movement, mindful always of the dead weight of our packs. The wind and the rain changed the mood of the range from one of spectacular, rugged beauty, to one of wild weather.

Water dripped off the rocks and the greenery, and ran down the cliff face. Fine droplets of water were visible in the air, dancing wildly on the gusty wind. There seemed to be no sky above us – it had been replaced by thick cloud. The colours of our packs were wet and muted, and the daylight was grey and flat. Our feet were wet, inside soft, damp boots. The personal discomfort, and dampness, were a small price to pay for the experience, and memory, of that day on the range.

When we woke the following grey morning, the continuing rain, wind, and cloud were all the excuse we

needed to call a rest day, and relax in the warm, dry sleeping bags, play cards, talk, laugh, read, and eat.

During a short, hurried expedition to fill the water bottles during a lull in the weather, a black shape flitted across the muddy track in front of me, and vanished back into the vegetation. It had been so quick and unobtrusive, that I had almost missed it. The local potoroo declared his presence that night, by helping himself to Chee and Al's muesli.

The following two days it rained off and on, continually promising to improve but never actually doing so. We took a short, cold day to traverse to Promontory Lake, where we found sloping, damp, windy, and exposed campsites on the open moor. Despite our initial apprehension, we pitched the tents well, and had a comfortable night's sleep, hoping for improved weather for the following day's long and exposed traverse to Lake Roseanne. The next morning we started worryingly late, delayed by indecision as to whether to call a rest day, or push on. Although initially improving, the weather became the wettest and windiest yet. The climb up West Portal, after the traverse of Centaurus Ridge, felt uncomfortably exposed, with no shelter for a lunch stop, or even a tent site apparent anywhere. Navigation was difficult in the thick cloud, and several times I wondered if we had got lost, or had missed the turn off to the north and were instead climbing up towards the summit of West Portal – but no, the ridge and the track had twists and turns that were not apparent on the map. Late in the afternoon cold and tiredness forced a late and hurried lunch in the Craggs of Andromeda, eaten standing up, and leaving the dips, salami, and cheese for a special evening treat.

The next day, after a night at the bizarre campsites close under the Lake Roseanne pinnacle, was the beginning of a spell of fine weather that lasted for 4 days. We completed the Western Arthurs traverse down to Pass Creek via the scrubby and elusive Lucifer Ridge track, and washed in the creek, before a leisurely lunch.

We were surrounded by a gear shop's worth of drying clothes and gear, under a warm, benevolent sun. We stripped down to various stages of undress in order to wash and dry gear, and Marty's blue terry towelling hat made its first appearance, to general hoots of derision.

That afternoon, we climbed the steep ridge up onto the Eastern Arthurs, sweating freely and becoming slightly grumpy in the unaccustomed heat. The group was moving worryingly slowly, although a glimpse of Federation did much to compensate. Towards the end of the day, as we approached Stuart Saddle, I was becoming acutely conscious of our low water supplies, and the fact that the previous day's trickles of water and ponds appeared to be drying up. I was making mental notes of each small pond that we crossed, and each trickle of water over rock. However, to our enormous relief, we arrived at the saddle to find a full water tank, and the campsite to ourselves. Over the low surrounding scrub, we could see the stunning blade of Federation, just a long day's walking away. The mood of the group was jubilant and excited. Dinner that night was a cheerful and celebratory affair, topped off by our cheesecake and my

production of a secret bottle – 750 mL of Baileys!

The following day we rose early to a perfectly clear, cold sky, and scurried off, lured on by a summit now excitingly within reach.

We traversed past the Needles, across Goon Moor, past The Gables, past Four Peaks, and on to Thwaites Plateau. The track was a beaten path in comparison with the Western Arthurs. Federation was now only a kilometre away, unbelievably close, sharp, and clear. Late in the afternoon, having dumped the packs near Devil's Thumb, we climbed up the south face gullies of Federation Peak, acutely aware of the stupendous exposure below. So intense was the experience, and the anticipation, of climbing to the summit, that I instinctively knew that these were some of the defining moments of my life. The feeling of climbing, of joy in movement over stone, tingled in every nerve. Life was wonderful; beyond measure.

The summit itself was not a disappointment. All around us was the vast South West Wilderness of Tasmania. Faraway peaks on the horizon were old friends from past trips. To the north, Mt Anne reared up in a prominent summit pyramid behind the huge bulk of the Mt

Eliza plateau, with Mt Lot to the right. To the south, Precipitous Bluff reached up in front of the endless vastness of the Southern Ocean, a mountain at the end of the world. To the east, Mt Wellington was barely visible in the haze of distance. To the west, we could just see the surf of the Southern Ocean breaking on the beaches of the west coast, white lines slowly fading and reappearing, far, far away. Above, the sky was hazy with high cloud. In every direction we were surrounded by range upon range upon range of mountains, seeming to stretch away forever.

Everyone was bubbling over with excitement, and happiness, and exultation. Chee busied himself with his camera for posterity. Marty pulled out a huge bag of M&M's that he had been hoarding for this moment. Al pulled out the summit logbook for a read, curious to know who else had been up here in this place, and what their impressions had been. I was delegated, as trip organizer, to write the entry for our group, and to draw the traditional Oxo. Some inspiration came from Marty's t-shirt: "Western Arthurs Traverse 2001 – How can one group be so great? All the way in one hit! OXO!" Searching back through the logbook afterwards, we came across the "Bumming Across the



Arthurs" entry left by Andrea, Alex, Sophie, Kath, Katrine, and Andy over two years before. Somehow, I felt as though they were all there with us, through shared experience in other places and at other times.

I then found the entry left by Warren McDonald, and tears were in my eyes as I read his entry out aloud, standing in that special place. His final words were perfectly chosen: "Thankyou, Tasmania, for the Southwestern Wilderness - may it forever remain wild and free." Sitting at Lake Geeves later, I wrote in my diary: "Sitting waiting for dinner to cook on a grey evening - sore feet, feeling tired, but quietly very happy." Even now, I can't find any words to express it better.

Although two days of walking remained to the road head, watching the sun set over the Southern Ocean from the summit of Geeves Bluff, the day before we started walking out, was really the end of the trip. We were all emotionally and physically sated, wanting and needing nothing. Overhead the sky subtly changed colour, from blue to white to a grey tinted with undefinable pastel hues, as the sun sank towards the horizon. Below, Hanging Lake was dark in the fading light. The

surrounding ranges were like paper silhouettes of single colours, but each one a different shade of grey, fading away towards the horizon. The Western Arthurs were prominent, a long jagged range, with the double summit of Hayes distant but clearly visible, and forming a completion to our moments on that summit, seemingly an aeon ago. Deep within me, I felt eternity, that these ranges would be here forever, even after we were long gone and forgotten.

The sun slid on down, fading to brilliant orange. Touched, slid further, changed shape, melting into a bar of shining gold on the far western horizon - melting, slowly dwindling, gone...



### Styx Valley, Tasmania

The Styx Valley in Tasmania is a stronghold of the mighty *Eucalyptus regnans* - the tallest hardwood trees and flowering plants on Earth. Large areas of this forest are currently being clearfelled, mostly for woodchips to be exported to Japan.

The Styx provides important habitat for many plants and animals that depend on the hollows and holes in old growth forest for nesting and shelter. These include owls, pygmy possums, bats, cockatoos and gliders. When trees grow back after logging, there is still no habitat for the above animals because it takes 100 or more years for suitable hollows to develop in old growth trees. Regrowth forests are cut down again after 90 years - and often as little as 25 years.

In some sections of the valley, sections are burnt in preparation for plantations, replacing the forest forever.

Tasmania exports more woodchips than all other Australian states combined. Now the Tasmanian Government wants a fifth woodchip mill - to be located in the Huon Valley.

For more information search for "Styx Valley" on the internet.





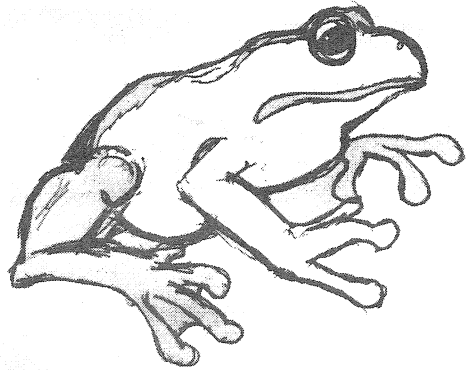
# CONSERVATION

Picture a rock. It's a big rock. Actually, it's a cliff. You're climbing this cliff and you're nearly at the top. The sun's warm on your back, and, although you're tired, you know you're going to make it. As you rest for a moment, you turn to look at the view. You can see forever across the plains.

Picture some skis. Or a pair of old boots. You're laden down with a large pack, and wondering whatever possessed you to put that tent in your pack. Surely you could have done without it... Suddenly, something catches your eye. It's a snow-covered wombat – out for some reason. Or it's a small skink. You've startled it so much that it's now sitting in the bottom of a shallow pool gazing up at you. You grin, and keep skiing/walking.

Picture a river. Picture a river with fast flowing rapids and huge waves to play in. The water's freezing, but crystal clear, and has smoothed the surface of the boulders over years of bubbling and boiling. It's a perfect paddling day.

MUMC is about many things. It's about friendship, physical activity, and adventure, however, it's often the lure of the environment itself that's as important as anything else. Most areas we visit are vulnerable to pollution and degradation, be it vandalised rock, logging or blackberries and bank erosion. Conservation is caring for the places we travel to. We want to do this by running our trips so that they have a minimal impact. Although at the time it may seem tedious placing toilet spots 100m from water, and adhering to fuel stove only zones (for example) are critical. As conservation convenors we hope to provide many opportunities for everyone to be involved in remedial actions such as revegetation, cliff-care, and litter collection etc. In this way we can all give something back to preserving the environment. As a club we keep informed of political decisions regarding our wilderness areas.



Taking a stand against detrimental development is also incredibly important. We are able to show that we care about the future of these areas and that we are committed to maintaining them in a wild and beautiful state for others to enjoy.

This year we plan to get as many people involved in conservation as possible. It is such a rewarding experience seeing your efforts improve the state of an area that you regularly visit. Some of our plans include:

- ◆ 3<sup>rd</sup> March - Dights falls Clean up Australia day litter collection and paddling
- ◆ Throughout the year - Aiding Parks Victoria, and Friends of the Prom with revegetation
- ◆ Listen out for various political decisions which we consider would adversely affect the club's activities, such as development at Mt McKay.

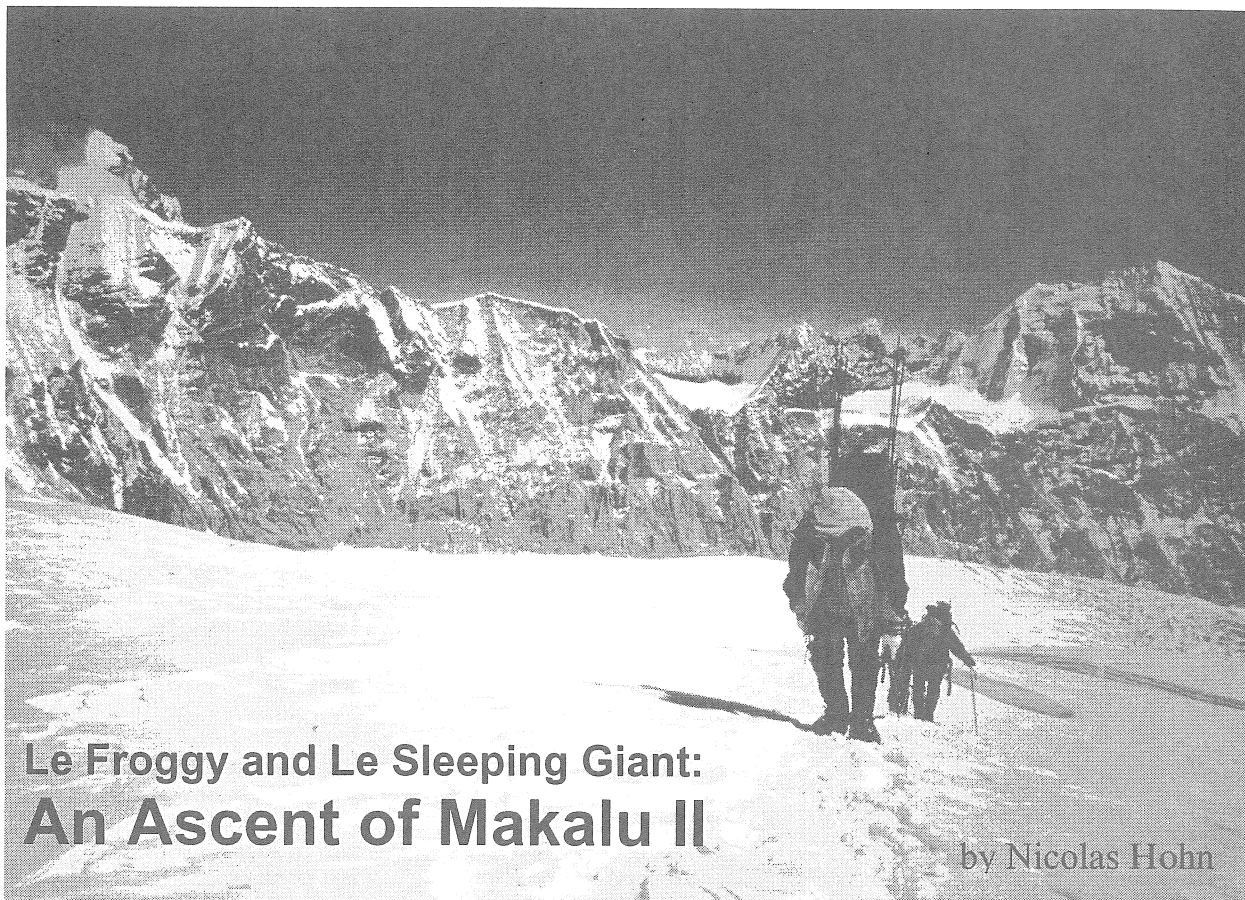
Keep a close eye on the conservation folder and the website. Come into the clubrooms and talk to us! Any suggestions will always be welcome. So go on, get out there and enjoy the environment.

Your Conservation Convenors Fiona and Jasmine

## Timber harvesting near King Saddle

*"... timber harvesting is scheduled to commence in the State forest to the north of King Saddle in early November 2001... It is envisaged that this operation will continue through until mid- to late-January. [Clear fell of about 25 hectares, burn in autumn] ... the Circuit Road will be closed between Mt Number Three Road and King Basin Road, while harvesting is in progress. This road closure will be in place between 6 am and 6 pm from Monday to Friday, ...[with appropriate signage]."*

from VicWalk (newsletter of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs)



## Le Froggy and Le Sleeping Giant: An Ascent of Makalu II

by Nicolas Hohn

*Following the foot steps of famous French mountaineers Lionel Terray and Jean Franco, who were the first to ascend Makalu II (7678m) in 1954 and Makalu I (8463m) in 1955, I went to Nepal in September 2001, joining a French expedition attempting to climb the lower of the two peaks. This mountain is also known as Kangchugtse, which means 'Sleeping Warrior' in nepali.*

Another freezing cold morning at 6800m. After a good night sleep I am ready to seize another day on the mountain. I struggle to get one arm out of my 1300g sleeping bag, fight with the frozen tent zip and finally manage to get it open. Across the valley, the summits of Lhotse and Everest are already in the sun, while we are still in the shade on the West face of Makalu I. It will probably be another two hours before we get any sun. Way too

early to get out. I lay back and think about the day ahead. Today is a big day: we are climbing up to Camp 3 at 7400m, on our way to our summit bid. The weather is perfect. Things are looking really good.

It has been 25 days since we left Kathmandu. It seems an eternity. So many things have happened since! Attacked by giant leeches in the tropical forest; ransomed by Maoist warriors; forced to transform ourselves into canyoning-loving people to cross flooded creeks; rained on for days due to a cyclone over the Indian ocean; out of breath due to the relatively thin air found above 5000m: it is a sort of a miracle that everybody made it to Base Camp (5400m) after 13 days of trekking. Once at Base Camp, our 44 (!) porters went back down the valley to more hospitable places. The nine of us stayed with three high altitude sherpas, one cook and two kitchen boys at the foot of

the mountain. After lots of carries up the mountain, we are now ready to attempt the summit in two groups. I am in the first group, while the second group is following us one day behind.

Everything here is of giant proportions and makes us feel very tiny and fragile. First of all the 3000-metre cliff of Makalu I, but also the never ending moraine and the scary noise of avalanches every afternoon. This is certainly not a place for man to stay long. Fortunately, none of us is planning to spend more time than necessary on the mountain. I don't want to think too much about what would happen if the 'Sleeping Warrior' suddenly woke up and decided that we were not welcome on the mountain any more. Storms up high on the mountain are pretty scary things. We saw a huge one on Everest and Lhotse a couple of nights ago and got some pretty strong winds as a result. Luckily this has been the only

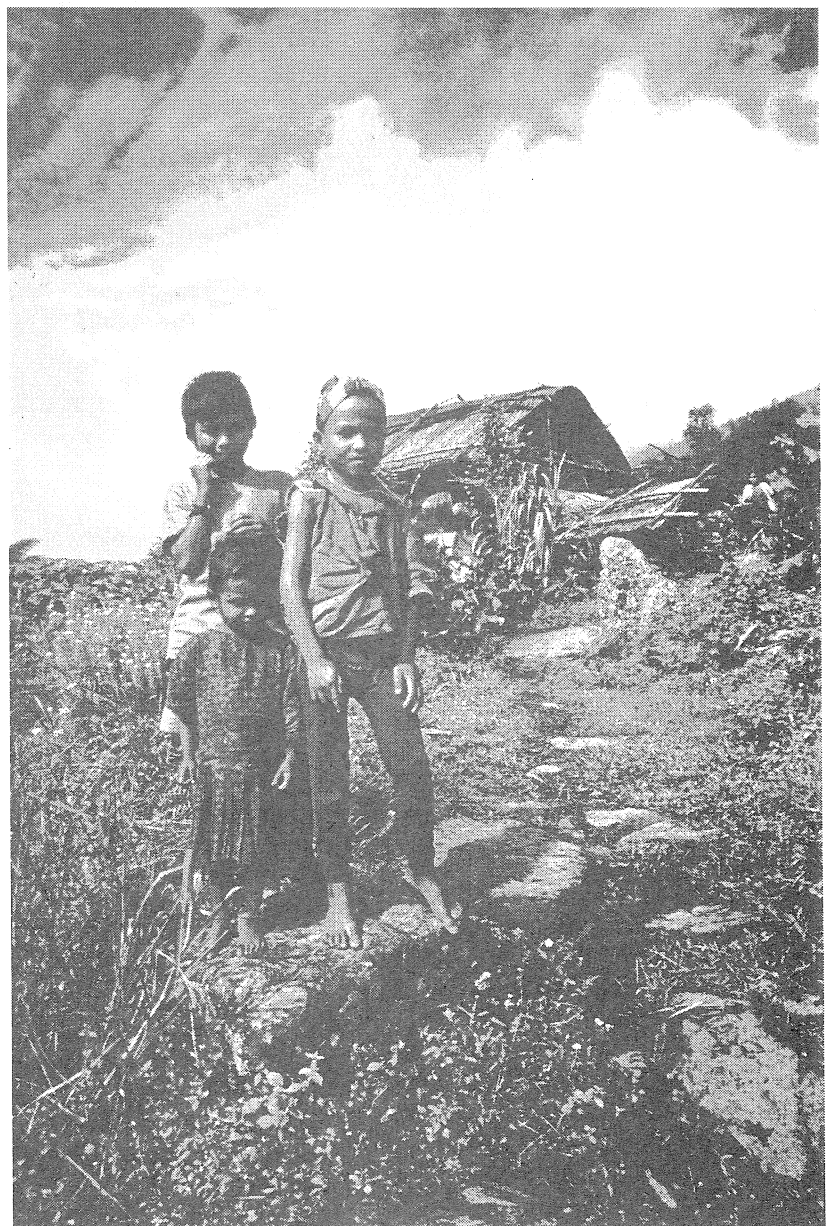
episode of bad weather since we got to Base Camp.

Even though today is not summit day, it is probably the most important day of the whole trip. We all know that if we manage to climb up the 'wall' all the way to the plateau at 7400m; if we manage to get some sort of a rest overnight despite the cold and the extreme altitude; and if the weather is nice tomorrow: then we might have a slight chance to reach the summit. Maybe... For the moment, there is nothing to think about, apart from putting one foot in front of the other. Jumar in one hand, ice axe in the other hand, I slowly make my way up the fixed ropes. It is bitterly cold, despite all my equipment. I cannot hold the jumar properly because my massive down gloves do not fit in. Anyway, I am happy to get some really steep slopes. It is easier to see the progress on the altimeter. After 3 hours of strenuous climbing, I reach the half way mark at 7100m, just above the rock band. From here, it is another 4 hours of endless climbing to the col. It is hard, really hard. Probably the hardest thing I have ever done physically speaking, but there is just no way I am going to give up now. And there it is. An incredibly large plateau at 7400m on the Tibetan border. Makalu I on the right, which still looks scary despite the fact that I am looking at it 2000m higher than in base camp, and Makalu II on the left. The wind is picking up. I hurry towards the camp. 'Hurry' is a bit of an exaggeration. I am too exhausted to move fast. I simply try not to stop every second step. We have a bit of a struggle to put the tent up, but we finally manage and can start the endless process of melting enough snow for 3 people on the 'altitude sick' stove.

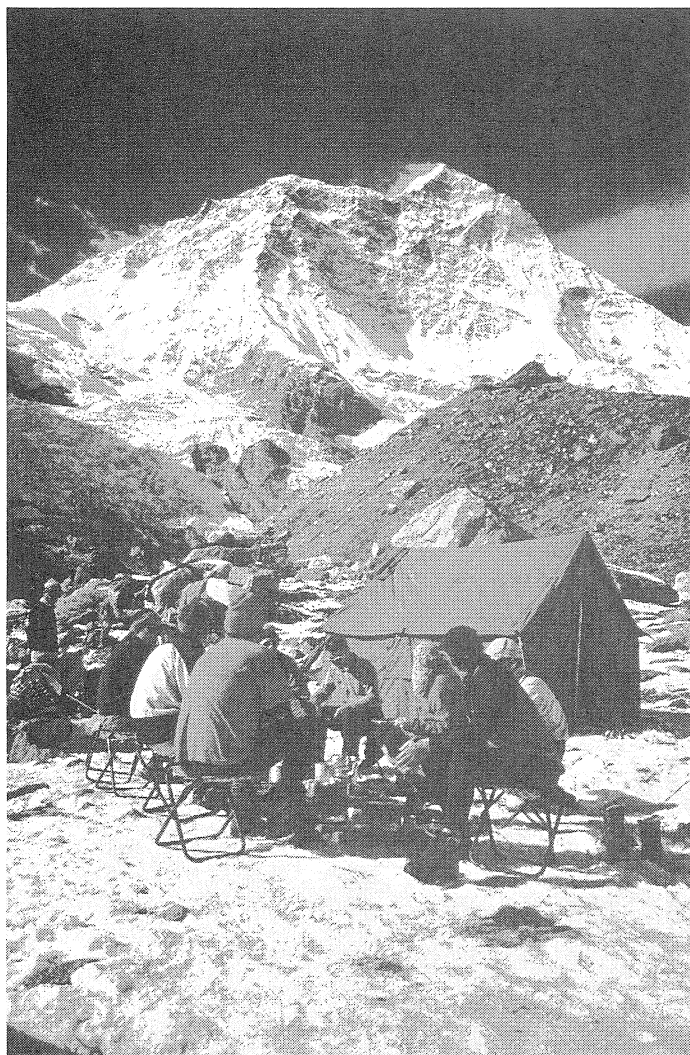
After a surprisingly good night (10 hours of uninterrupted sleep at 7400m!), I feel regenerated, and ready to tackle the beast. Things are a lot easier than yesterday despite the higher altitude. I walk steadily up the slope, in the footsteps of the two high altitude sherpas who left an hour earlier. These two guys are just incredible. They have both summited Everest without oxygen twice, in addition to a few other 8000m peaks: Daulaghiri, Manaslu, Annapurna, etc. As they told me at Base Camp before we left for the summit push: "Makalu two - easy,

Makalu one - hard". Funny guys...

After two hours of steady climbing, I reach the fine ridge that leads to the summit. The top is just there! I know that from here no one and nothing will prevent me from reaching it. It is all a bit too much for my oxygen deprived body: I stop just below the ridge and start crying. Tears of joy fog my sunglasses and freeze on my cheeks. It is an incredible feeling. But I must go on and join my friends at the top. We all hug each other and take lots of photos. The weather is great:







no wind, perfect visibility. One foot in Nepal, one foot in Tibet, I look around at the nearby giant mountains: Makalu, Everest, Lhotse, Kanchenjunga. Looking down, I can see four dots above Camp 2: the rest of the group going up the fixed ropes. They left one day behind us, and will summit tomorrow if every thing goes according to plan.

After nearly one hour at the top, it is time to go back down. Ciao-ciao Tibetan plateau. Back to Camp 3 for a hot drink. We cannot stay long. We have to abseil down to Camp 2. Using the figure of height with down gloves is not that easy and I am careful not to drop it. After a long series of abseils I can see

the three yellow tents of Camp 2 not far below. I am starting to feel quite tired: the altitude is taking its toll. I fall through a snow bridge and end up hanging on the (rather loose) fixed rope in the bergschrund. Luckily, the dodgy South Korean static rope bought in Kathmandu is pretty strong. At nearly 7000 meters, after a long day, climbing out by myself is another 'interesting' moment. No time to rest yet. The day is not over: we have to start digging out one of the tents so we can take it down the following day. I thought that topping the mountain was an achievement. It definitely is, but digging out a tent that has been caught in the ice for a week at 6800m is another one.

It requires both strength and skills to break the ice without tearing apart the expensive North Face tent. Only after having packed the tent can we get in the tent for a well-earned rest.

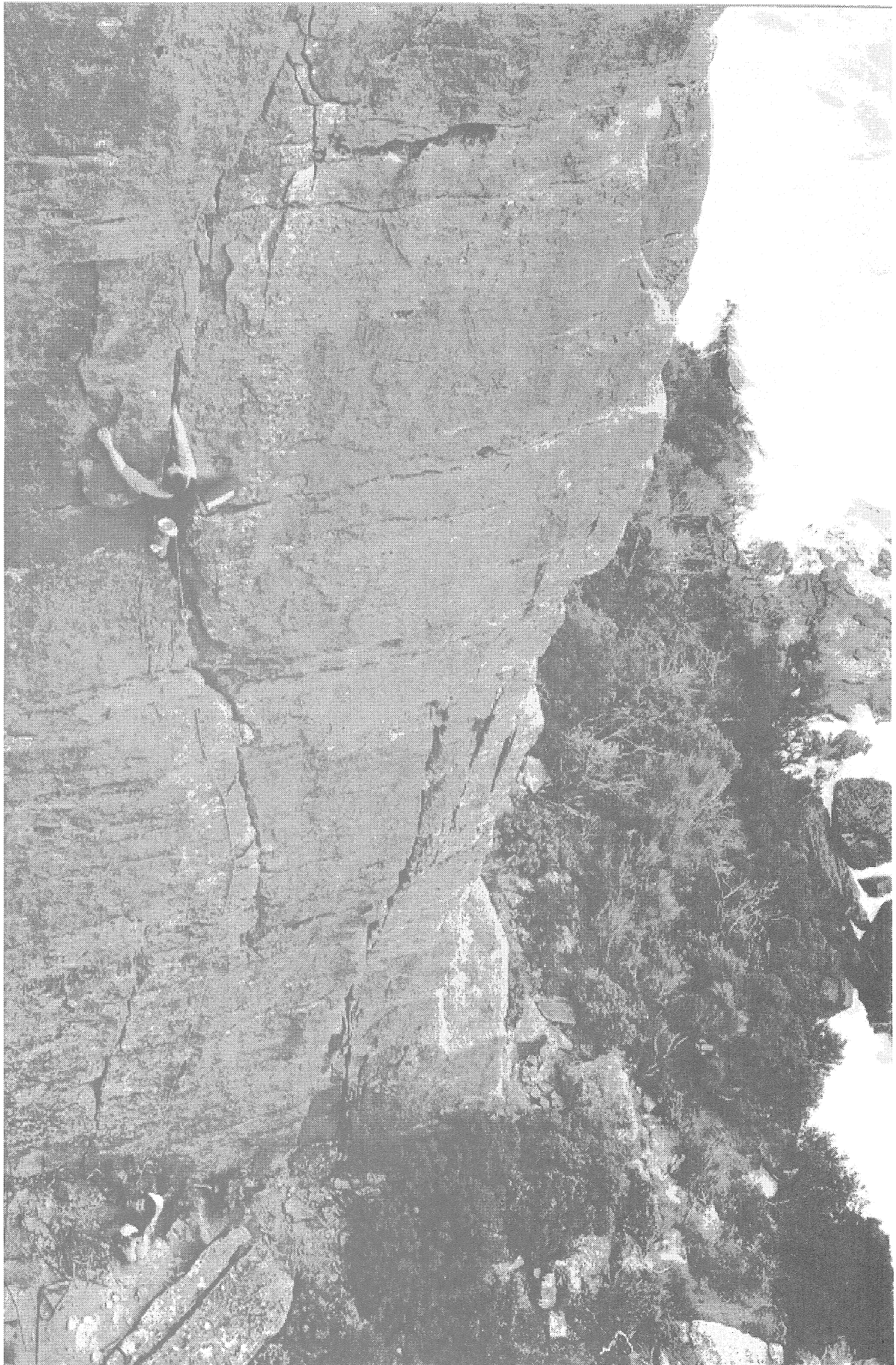
I reached Base Camp the following day and was warmly greeted by the cook with an endless supply of tea and Dal Bhat. This is when I fully realised how wasted I was. I sat down, drank, and then ate as much as I could. It was so good to be back down after all what we had experienced up high on the mountain. The Base Camp, that looked so hostile when we first got there, was now a warm and friendly place compared with the rest of the mountain. I heard on the radio that the second group had also managed to reach the top, though in pretty marginal weather conditions. They only spent one minute on the top due to rapidly deteriorating weather.

When everybody is safely back at Base Camp tomorrow night, we will have a party, open the Bordeaux wine that I saw in one of the blue plastic drums if it has not frozen too badly, drink the remaining of my 'Genepi' (homemade French liquor with alpine flowers) bottle and simply celebrate our amazing trip. We were lucky that we did not wake up the 'Sleeping Warrior' and that the mountain Gods let us climb the mountain safely. Hopefully we will keep the good luck for the next climb.









*Climbing at Point Perpendicular. Photo: Andy Selby Smith*



# The Last Word

At the time of writing this item, it was in the belief that the editor intended to put a photo of myself in a less than seemly situation on the back cover of this edition of *The Mountaineer*, contrary to my own wishes. This reminded me of when I was a first year, during O'Week on club day, looking at the MUMC display. I recall looking at the photos of people doing various things and in particular, a picture of somebody stark naked running barefoot across a glacier. I had never been encouraged to do any physical activities whilst at high school and consequently I never imagined that I would have the ability or talent to do anything like rock climbing, skiing or for that matter, running barefoot and naked across glaciers. And though I thought this particular photo was quite amusing and that the activities looked like lots of fun, I was intimidated by what was presented to me, and joined the Liberal Club instead. Thus in the space of one hour I made two of the biggest mistakes in my university life. Needless to say I was soon to find that the Liberal Club was full of knobs (actually let's be honest: dickheads) who took themselves and life too seriously (and before those of you reading this who are thinking of making your entrance to the left of centre in student politics laugh too heartily at my folly, be under no illusions that red-ragger student polities are any less knobby).

For two years I languished in the Liberal Club as an almost anonymous face sitting at the back of Theatre A in the Old Arts building every Monday at lunch time. It wasn't till third year that I'd re-discovered the Mountaineering Club and joined up thinking I would become a 'white water rafter'. However I was to find paddling to my distaste and wound up spending my first summer with the club rock climbing...something that my mum hated. I had also been skiing twice that year; my first visit to Mt Stirling was a fitting introduction to Australian skiing: more time

spent walking rather than skiing, a breakable icy crust on soft, wet snow and freezing rain. I also found that I was uniquely shit-house at skiing and I had the bruises to prove it. This initial foray was followed about two weeks later by a second trip to Lake Mountain with three other equally talentless skiers (being Kath Hammond, Matt Thomas and Leanne Haupt). I can still hear the words ringing in my ears almost as clearly as if I'd just spoken them: "...how do you turn left again..." whilst following Leanne down one of the two black runs on offer. And although today that same run looks pitifully flat (it's more of a 'walk' rather than a 'run'), we'd used our initiative, took ourselves on an unsupervised trip (smack, smack) and surprise of surprises we had a thoroughly enjoyable time. Indeed it was on this afternoon, for we managed to arrive quite late, that I'd sown what appeared at the time to be the fairly sickly, wrinkled up seeds that took root and sprouted (I am reluctant to say blossom, yer might think I fancied meself a bit) into the skier that I now am.

What has come to pass between that day and now is largely immaterial; my real message to all new-comers is to not be intimidated by what the Club has to offer. Always believe that you are capable of anything if you are willing to apply yourself. By doing the opposite, you may just miss out on what could become one of the greatest adventures of your life.

Well now that I've got all of that sloppy stuff out of the way, allow me to introduce you to skiing in MUMC. **WE ARE NOT 'DOWNHILL' SKIERS.** If you want to be a downhill wanker then you're in the wrong place: go join Wankski where you can talk a lot about how good you're clothes look, how much you had to drink the night before which is why you can't ski today (usually no more than two shandy's before you were chundering all over the place in a Mt Hotham nightclub because you're such a weakling) and how

cool a car you've got. Instead we at MUMC go 'cross-country downhill' skiing, using the divine touring ski with the enlightening free-heel binding; in the wholesome, manly fashion that God intended. Imagine seeing yourself skiing with vigour in your heart and clean air in your lungs as you stride purposefully across vast flat plains (which are sometimes even covered with snow) using flawless Nordic technique whilst carrying a 20kg pack and wearing a flannelette shirt, shorts and gaiters. Attempt for a moment, if you will, to comprehend the unparalleled experience of linking seemingly endless 'Telemark' turns down a perfect slope as you glide past members of 'MUST' who are all too busy preening themselves. This is what MUMC can offer you. Indeed the club can teach you how to become a skier in such an expert fashion that you may not even need to go skiing. Before you know it you'll find yourself spending Tuesday nights in the Clyde whinging about 'yet another pitiful winter season' with the best of them; and mistaking white plastic bags and toilet paper for snow as adroitly as almost anybody in the club (actually only I would do this). If you are interested in skiing, please take the opportunity to visit the clubrooms and peruse the skiing photo board. And if you have any questions or would like to know more then don't ask Nic, he won't know the answer.

by Dimitri Papaioannou  
(Ski Convenor)



