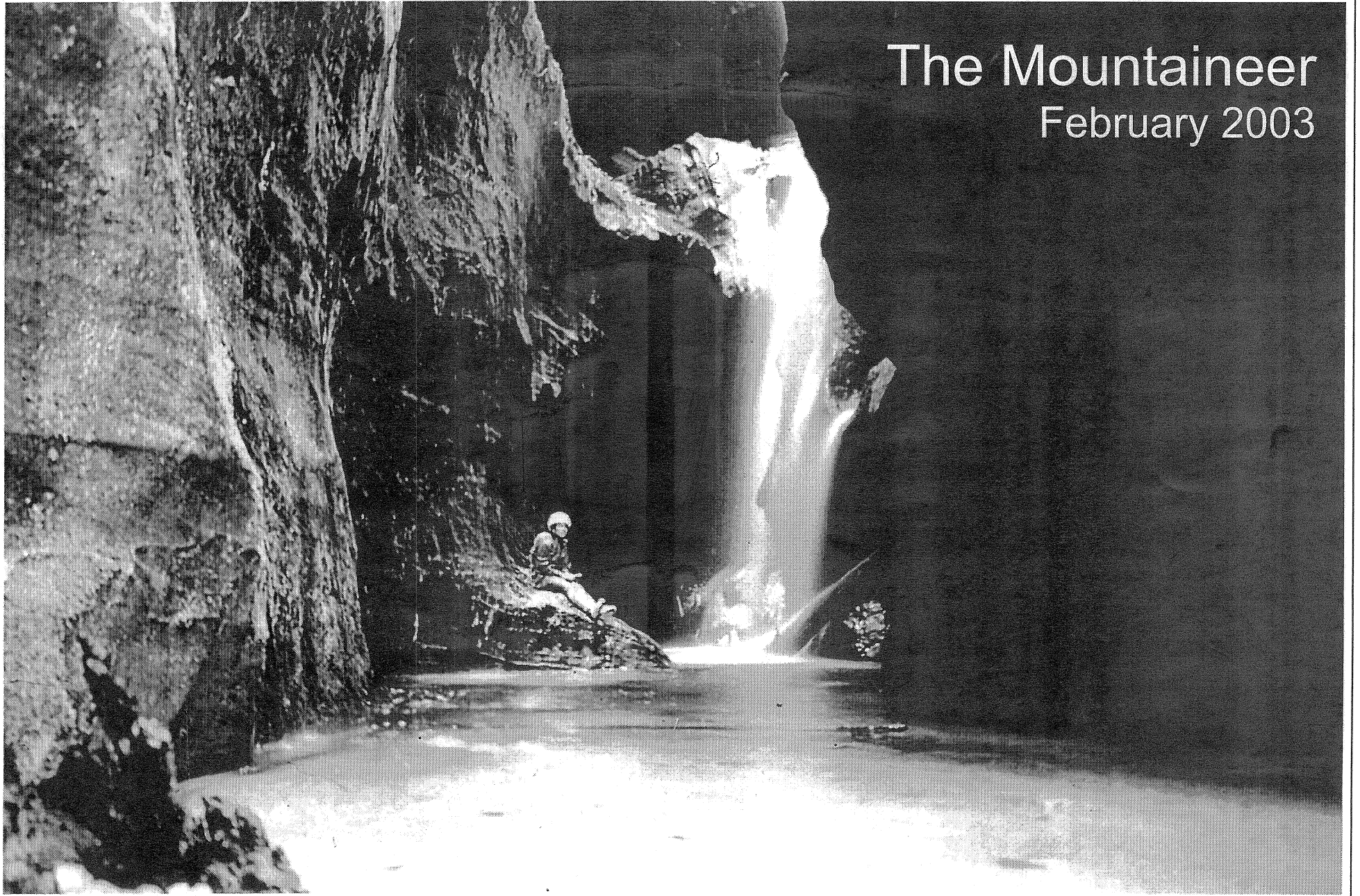
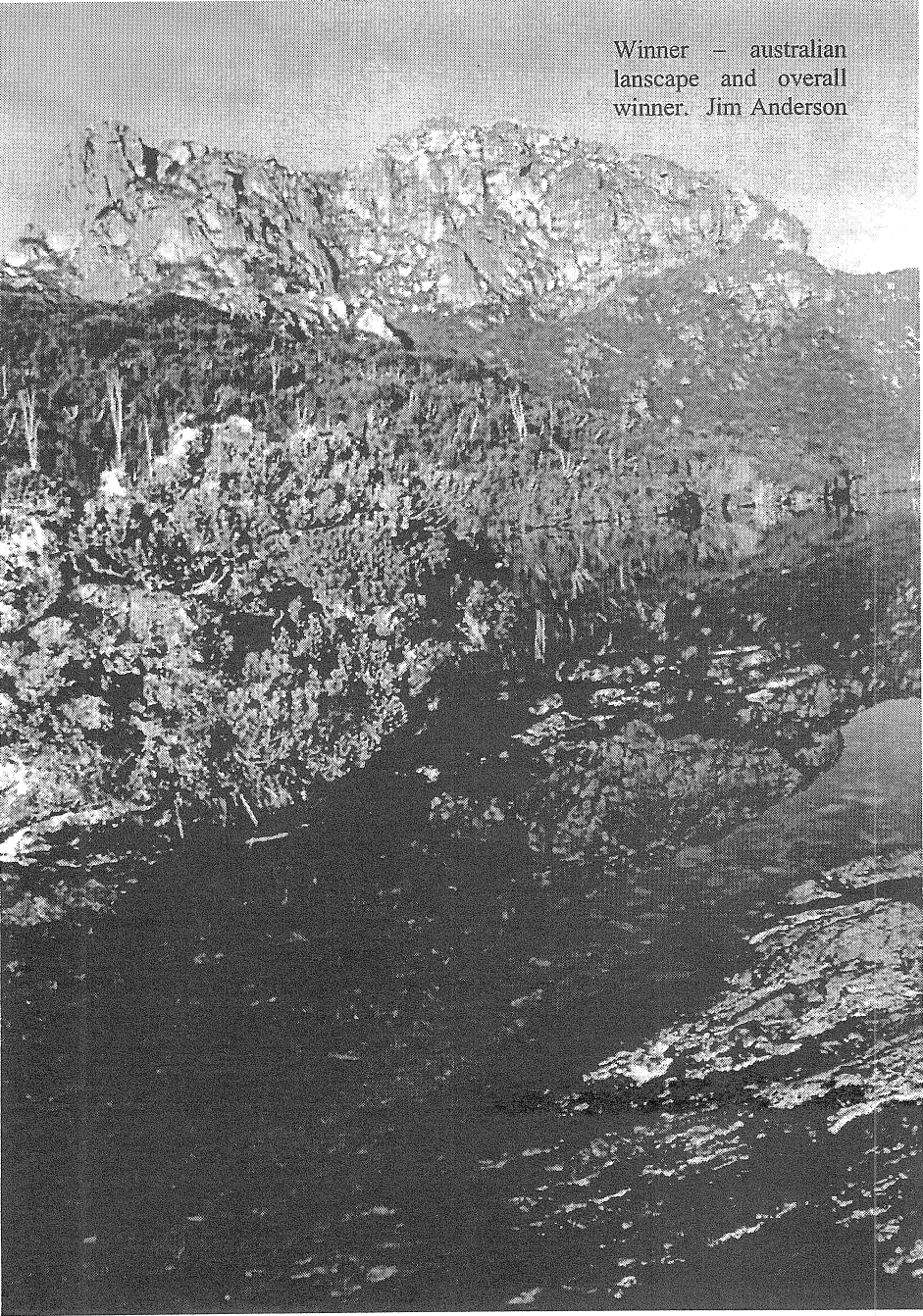


The Mountaineer

February 2003





Winner – Australian
landscape and overall
winner. Jim Anderson

The Mountaineer

O'week edition – February 2002

In this edition

Jasmine Rickards talks about beauty

Bradley Dent discusses aspects of underwear

Enmoore Lin updates on searches

Jim Anderson gives the lowdown on how alpine fires affect us

Helen Cumming shares her beginner climber experiences

Jac Cutter explores South America – and not just the outdoors

See some pics – especially pie and slide night winning photos

If you're new to the club or want to get involved – come to the clubrooms 1 – 2 pm during term time, and 6-7 pm Tuesdays all year. Chat about our activities and sign up on a trip. We climb, cave, canyon, bushwalk, cross-country ski, ski-tour, rogaine, mountaineer, kayak, play canoe polo and generally have fun in the outdoors. New members are always welcome! Look out for the start of year beginner trips in the folder in the clubrooms by the sports pavilion.

WANTED – articles and photos for the next edition. Email them to bdent@amrad.com.au or kmcin@unimelb.edu.au

Humour, trip reports, descriptive, fiction, routes, guides etc are all welcome, as well as awesome outdoors photos.

WANTED

THE RINGLEADERS

Name: Cameron Quinn

AKA: El Presidente, Grand Pooh-Bah

Known Accomplices: The Dom, Squidgy

Description: Wiry and fast, this individual has often been sighted dashing between the Earth Sciences and Maths Buildings. Rarely seen during daylight hours, the Grand Pooh-Bah is reportedly best approached on Tuesday evenings. Secret meeting locations vary from week to week, so keep your ears to the ground.

Wanted for: Various Capital Offences

Name: Dimitri Papaizouannou

AKA: President of Vice, Big X

Known Accomplices: Curly, Spangler

Description: Not often sighted during the summer, this individual tends to frequent cooler climes. Do not pursue this individual into the mountains as he is armed and dangerous.

Wanted for: Escape

Name: Min Goh

AKA: The Treasurer, Money Bags

Known Accomplices: The Biscuit, Spanko

Description: Last sighted trying to smuggle numerous spiky instruments onto an aeroplane. Reported to be involved in the allocation and spending of small amounts of money.

Wanted for: Embezzlement

Name: Hannah Lockie

AKA: The Secretary

Known Accomplices: Cat, Mouse

Description: Unassuming and polite, the Secretary was last sighted in several places at once. Travels extensively throughout south-eastern Australia. It is rumoured that she is lethal with a pen and paper clip.

Wanted for: Mail Fraud

THE GANG

Name: Carys Evans

AKA: Assistant Money Bags

Known Accomplices: The Treasurer

Responsible for: Making Cents

Wanted for: Money Laundering

Name: Sarah Neumann

AKA: The Climber

Known Accomplices: Ted

Responsible for: Defying gravity, smuggling goods up vertical rock faces

Wanted for: Treason

Name: Tim Wallace

AKA: Evil Tim

Known Accomplices: Werner

Responsible for: River-based getaways

Wanted for: Generally being evil

Name: Alison Thomson

AKA: Muddy, Squidgy

Known Accomplices: The Penguin

Responsible for: tunnelling, all underground activities and canyon hideaways

Wanted for: Wallowing.

Name: Kat Martin

AKA: Mouse

Known Accomplices: The Secretary

Responsible for: Temporary accommodation, navigation equipment and rainwear.

Wanted for: Grand Larceny

Name: Matt #1

AKA: Matthew

Responsible for: Promising snow to ski on

Wanted for: Not providing any

Name: Matt #2

AKA: Jeppo

Responsible for: Convincing people to go bushwalking

Wanted for: Piracy

Name: Bradley Dent and Kylie McInnes

AKA: Brain and The Body

Responsible for: Propaganda and general shit-stirring

Wanted for: Libel

Name: Grant Schuster

AKA: Canoe Polo Convenor

Known Accomplices: Pool Pony

Responsible for: Organising a fun little game with boats in a pool

Name: Amanda Bush and Adele Bailey

AKA: Amanda and Adele

Responsible for: Rogaining

Wanted for: Bushranging

Name: Anna Hyland

AKA: The Greenie

Known Accomplices: Evil Tim

Responsible for: Conservation

Wanted for: Espionage

Name: Richard Salmons

AKA: Bond, James Bond

Known Accomplices: Various
Responsible for: High Altitude Adventures, Mountaineering, Curling

Wanted for: Adultery

found something that looked like a path, followed it one direction and then the other. The light began to fade and we were very late for the rendezvous. We began to check every crack in the cliffs systematically to see if they were climbable and didn't simply end in another eighty metre drop. Night fell and of course it began to rain. Lucky we had all had a talk about taking gear so we had torches and at least a mildly warm top. I must admit that the vibe of the group was fabulous, no arguing, no one was stressed, scared or even a tiny bit anxious. That was helped by the fact that both leaders, Kia and Ben were obviously competent and we weren't quite lost, we knew where we were and where we had to be - we just couldn't get there!

Finally the decision was made to bush bash as far as we could down one of the cracks of the cliff and then abseil the rest of the way down. Now when was the last time I abseiled? Oh yes! Seven years ago in the broad daylight on a clean cliff. Now comes real abseiling, it is dark, cold and wet, the abseil down was between two pieces of cliff and plugged by scrub. Graceful was not the word to describe our descent! In fact we needed three separate descents to get down. All this time we were periodically cooeing and flashing our torches to try and get the attention of someone below. Ben was the first down the second descent. He called back the happy news that he had made contact with the wonderful Sarah and Kylie who had waited behind and wandered up and down the base of the cliffs looking for us. The mood had been fabulous all along but perhaps it got a bit lighter now as we knew we were almost home safe.

It was still night and raining and we began to get cold. As we all got to the bottom of the second decent, Ben had us beginners huddle with John in a crack in the rock to stay out of the rain and try to keep warm. One small crack and three cold bodies soon became three warm and happily bonded friends. I have a fabulous memory of Ben and Kia setting up the last abseil down to Sarah and Kylie below; all in black and white due to the white light from their head torches. We were on a small ledge between two fifty metre cliffs. The cliff was black behind them with white slashes of rain flying across my field of vision. The last abseil was magnificent, I was told to enjoy it so I did. The rope went through a hole and underneath was an open drop of about twenty metres, and Sarah and Kylie had their torches lighting the rocks from below. It was like slowly falling into an enormous torch lit cavern. I could never do it justice on this page but it was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. There we were all safe and sound at the bottom of the cliff. It turned out the entire trip group had waited for us at the rendezvous which was absolutely wonderful of them!

I guess that the whole message of this experience was that even though I'm not sure about climbing, I love the Mountaineering Club!

Pie 'n' Slide Winner

Flora and Fauna

Andrew Selby-Smith



Search and Rescue Report

Lake Mountain Search – August 5-7, 2002

By Enmoore Lin

Bushwalkers Search & Rescue had a busy winter in 2002, with two call-outs for searches at Mount Hotham and one for Lake Mountain. Only the search at Lake Mountain, for a man who failed to return from a walk to retrieve a lost glove, made it into the field. This turned into a three-day search.

MUMC was well represented at Lake Mountain with ten, mainly 'old-fart' searchers. For Kylie McInnes and Matt Jeppesen, it was their first search - and did they pick a tough one! It was an unusual search in many respects. There were successive call-outs on all three nights, which undoubtedly caused some major sleep deprivation for club contacts and for all those on the call-out list. Searchers were also given the option of returning home after one or two days in the field, partly as a result of the difficult conditions and the late night finishes. All four BS&R groups camped out on the first night, which rarely happens. Searchers are typically sent out for the day, although they must be sufficiently equipped to spend a night out in the open, and usually return to stay in community halls overnight.

The terrain and weather conditions at Lake Mountain were some of the worst that had been encountered on any search in recent years. Conditions were cold with scattered showers and the odd hailstorm. The rainforests below Lake Mountain are filled with steep hills, thick scrub and giant, rotting logs that needed to be climbed over. At any other time, a walk through the carpet of ferns surrounded by the rich, damp smell of humus would have been quite enjoyable.

Lake Mountain was a textbook search that always seemed as though it would be resolved within the next hour. I, for one, did not expect it to last the full three days. On day one, a party of ski patrol and Police S&R Squad members located tracks heading down to Koala Creek. A boot was found that afternoon thirty metres away from the creek. Big pats on the back go to the ski patroller who spotted the boot, which was a small object to find in the vast search area.

Over the next two days, intensive general searching of the hillsides of Jubilee Ridge, Lake Mountain and of Koala Creek was performed. The area around the boot was line-searched. On days one and two, searchers were split into the usual groups of four with specific tasks allocated to each group.

After failing to find the man in the first two days, it was decided that intensive line searching in the vicinity of the boot would be performed on day three. It was reasoned that a man with only one shoe could not have travelled far. The bulk of the sixty or so searchers travelled in one party directly to the site where the boot was found. Once at Koala Creek, searchers were split into four large groups that line-searched the area both upstream and downstream of the boot on either bank. To ensure a very thorough search of the area, searchers were spaced only a couple of meters apart.

A BS&R member, who waded down Koala Creek, located the body of the missing man about 200 metres downstream of where the boot was found. The cloud fortunately lifted, allowing a helicopter evacuation. All the searchers were undoubtedly relieved to avoid a carry-out to the Cambarville Road, one and a half kilometres away.

MUMC Searchers

Rod Costigan, Jim Grelis, Nic Hohn, Matt Jeppesen, Enmoore Lin, Kylie McInnes, James McIntosh, Matt Thomas, Ross Waller and Frank Zgoznic

For more information on Bushwalkers Search and Rescue or how to become involved, please visit the clubrooms or contact Enmoore, MUMC's Search and Rescue Delegate.



Fire: Past, Present, Future and Us

by Jim Anderson

The bushfires of 1939 have been unmatched in area burnt for as long as records have been kept. The Royal Commission set up to investigate the cause of these fires pointed the finger directly at the careless attitudes and activities of humans and concluded that humans were entirely to blame. These fires had such a devastating impact on rural communities, attitudes and activities that it was widely believed that such fires could never happen again. Since 1939, the use of fire as a land management tool has become tightly controlled; fire brigades are better equipped; fire detection and suppression techniques are more effective and efficient; and the introduction of water bombing and repel crews means that highly trained firefighters can be mobilised quickly to remote fires to contain them before they have time to grow into a big problem.

So how have such widespread fires occurred again? Like the 1938/39 fire season, South East Australia is in a prolonged drought. But without ignition sources a drought does not necessarily result in a severe fire season. Unlike 1939, the fires of 2003 started from dry lightning. A storm on January 8th ignited a series of fires in remote areas in eastern Victoria and south-east NSW. Fires south of the Great Divide were contained as these initially posed greatest risk to property. However, the number of fires in remote locations combined with dry forest fuel and hot dry weather negated any chance of early suppression for fires further north. Thus, these fires grew until one by one they joined to form one giant complex of fires not before seen in recorded history, with the exception of 1939.

The Victorian fires of 2002/3 have thus far caused little property damage relative to those of 1939. But just as chance events result in massive forest fires, another set of chance events that lead to catastrophic property loss and loss of life occurred in Canberra recently and in the devastating Ash Wednesday fires of 1983 where over 2500 houses and 76 lives were lost. Such events typically occur when fires at full fury enter residential districts with little or no warning, catching people off guard and unprepared. Fortunately, this second set of chance events have not (yet) occurred in Victoria this season as a result of the massive forest fires, but other effects of the fires will take their toll. Graziers have suffered stock losses and, where livestock has been saved, pasture has been destroyed in a drought year when fodder is already in short supply and graziers can least afford to purchase feed. For many townships that rely on the tourist trade, the prolonged threat of fire entering townships during the peak holiday season could result in the loss of earnings for many businesses.

We too, as frequent visitors to the north east, will be affected by these fires long after they are extinguished. For us, the most obvious effects will be the loss of huts and the lack of definable walking tracks (so be prepared to use your navigation skills) and the possible prolonged exclusion of visitors from the Alpine Parks. Long term information on how long visitors will be excluded from the burnt areas is not yet available but we can make some educated guesses based on previous fires. Fire activity will continue until soaking rains arrive so there is little point trying to visit these areas before then.

It is possible that visitor exclusion could continue for up to a year. Where new tracks have been carved by bulldozers to make fire breaks, rehabilitation works will be required to prevent erosion and to stop them becoming 4WD havens. Five years ago, during the Alpine National Park Fire, 150km of new tracks were formed. However, the fire remained in remote country with limited access, making visitor exclusion possible. Due to the extent of this years fires exclusion will be difficult to patrol and therefore may be limited to certain sections of the fire area. In the short term, information on Park closures is available on the Parks Victoria website (parkweb.vic.gov.au). Note that many parks not in the fire area have also been closed due to fire risk. For NSW Parks information, see the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service site (npws.nsw.gov.au).

The normally quiet Mitta Mitta Valley has been subjected to the worst of the Victorian fires, but while the paddlers can rejoice in the news that the Blue Duck Inn has been spared we should spare a thought for Jimmy Brown (who serves us

Mount Feathertop memorial hut saved

Firefighters saved the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club hut, known as 'Mumsee', as fire raged around Mount Feathertop near Bright on Tuesday.

The dome-shaped aluminium structure was built in the 1960s as a memorial to Melbourne University students who died mountaineering in New Zealand. It is used by hundreds of bushwalkers and ski-tourers every year.

Widespread alpine fires in Victoria and New South Wales were ignited by lightning last week in national parks, state forests and crown land....

(Source: *The Age*, Thursday January 16, 2003)

Climbing by Torchlight

Helen Cumming

I have always loved climbing rocks - the whole idea of finding out what's on the other side, or what the view is like from up there, has always appealed to me. I made it my aim to try real rock climbing at least once, and after being a member of the Mountaineering Club for seven months, I finally got my A into G and went on a trip. I was teamed up with a car group who were absolutely fabulous (thanks to Mike and Edward, sorry I got us a wee bit lost on the way!) I even got a tent to myself!

The Saturday dawned magnificently bright, sunny and warm. I was all pumped to try my hand at the rocks. I'll let you in on a bit of a secret: I'm short and bottom heavy, so for months before going on the trip I worked out at the gym to try and get a bit of upper body strength to compensate. As you can imagine I was pretty keen to try out my efforts. First off we did some top rope climbing, for those not in the know (like me) this is just like indoor climbing except way more fun. We had an absolute ball. I was stoked to find out that I was mildly competent (for a beginner) and everyone was extremely helpful. "Ummm guys, I think I'm stuck..." "No nooooo you're just fine! there's a hand hold just over to your left... that's it!"

But this isn't *real* climbing! Real climbing happened on Sunday and wasn't that a shock to the system. I was paired up with the fabulous Kia; she was leading the climb and I was seconding. I had tried seconding briefly the day before and I must admit I was a bit daunted. It's all well and good hanging off a rock when you have every limb available and you can choose your route. Being a

second, however, means you have to remove the gear the leader has put into the rock to prevent her from falling to her death (useful stuff when the rock doesn't come out as well, but that's a story for poor bruised Kylie to tell.)

We all travelled to the base of a mountain and trekked to the base of the cliffs. In the car we were joking that we were going to climb the really enormous set of cliffs jutting out the side. We realised after a while that we WERE going to climb those ENORMOUS cliffs. This was the point that I began to get a tad worried.

We began, Kia and I climbing a seventy-five metre grade 11 climb. As a top rope climb I know that I can handle up to about grade 17, but looking at the size of the cliff (and getting neck strain craning that far) I was REALLY pleased that it was just a grade 11. I was strapped in as belayer down the bottom and up went Kia. As we were short on time and the ropes were long enough, she decided to turn a five pitch climb (which means climbing the rock in five stages making an anchor at each stage) into a two pitch climb, each pitch lasting almost forty metres. The first pitch was relatively easy, long, tiring but manageable. The rocks were interesting structures and the shrubbery was a bit of a challenge. About twenty metres to our right another group were climbing - Ben was leading and he was seconded by both John (who has had some experience) and Edward (another beginner and my car buddy). This was really comforting and fun because there was plenty of cross talk between the groups. Of course we also got to watch when both Ben and John lost

whole hand and foot holds as the rock peeled away from the cliff face!

The second pitch was a bit more challenging - actually I found it almost impossible. At one point I was seriously considering just how embarrassed I would be when they had to call in the helicopters to rescue me. Kia did an amazing job leading, sometimes climbing for metres without any place to put gear in. Here is where I make a confession: it was while I was attached insect-like to the underside of a small overhang, shaking and sweating, trying to figure out which of my limbs I might be able to move to catch the next teeny hold, that I realised I don't like real rock climbing. I don't get an adrenaline rush from the fear, I just get scared and I don't actually like getting scared for a couple of hours at a time.

But enough of that: we all made it to the top and I was so proud to have made it. In fact, we made it in great time so we took a few moments out to take some artistic photos of nature.

All that remained was the journey back down the mountain. About this time I remembered that I had volunteered to write an article for the mountaineering newsletter and it was going to be pretty damn boring. Funny how the world sometimes arranges itself for you. Easy! we thought, the guidebook didn't even describe the descent path so it must be really obvious. We bush bashed for about forty-five minutes until we came to the waterfalls and a very long vertical drop. No point going any further along the cliff as we were already a long way off course. We backtracked,

Mountains?

So we climbed a few mountains, did a bit of trekking and saw some really amazing and beautiful places that precious few people will ever get to. This was an awesome feeling that I will always remember but once in the mountains I found it really easy to forget where I was and how far I'd come to get there. For me, it was the whole experience of learning the language and the history of the area, trying to understand the culture and mixing with the locals that made it a true South American adventure and not just another climbing trip.

Oxfam Trailwalker April 4th, 5th and 6th, 2003

This 100 km walking/running endurance event has many similarities to the original MUMC 24 hour walks, from which Rogaining took its origins.

Teams of four (non-relay) cover a 100 km course over a period of 48 hours. The Melbourne trail starts in Ferny Creek, finishes in Marysville and includes: the Warburton trail; a climb to the summit of Mt Donna Buang; the Yarra Ranges State Forest; and the Black Spur.

This fundraising event supports Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, and promises to be fun and to challenge your fitness and endurance. Visit www.caa.org.au/trailwalker for more information.



the beer), whose house was not spared. We can also assume that the fence we helped to build on the 'Friends of the Mitta Valley' weekend last year was also burnt. (The author is disappointed that a large pine tree next to the river within national park is now probably dead, negating the need to remove it by axe).

No simple answer can be given for the effects the fires will have had on the vegetation because of the variation in vegetation communities, topography and weather conditions. For example, from Harrietville to Mt Feathertop there are at least 4 major vegetation communities, which represent most of vegetation communities of north-eastern Victoria. These are:

Open Forest (dry sclerophyll), such as from the Trout Farm car park to above the "Steep Descent" sign on the North-West Spur track. Open forests dominated by stringybark gum and peppermint eucalypts are common to most of north-eastern Victoria. These forests burn readily and are thus well adapted to surviving fire. These forests will typically survive fire by revegetating from dormant buds under the bark (epicormic) or in the case of a severe fire from buds underground (lignotuber).

Tall Open Forest (wet sclerophyll), dominated by Alpine Ash. Ash forests are typically located on the moister southern slopes where the growing conditions are more favorable. As a result they are seldom dry enough to burn and fires are infrequent (The Ash forests are also the most important timber species in SE Australia, nearly all of Victoria's ash forest were killed in the 1939 fires). The Ash forests are much more fire sensitive and are killed by all but low intensity fire. However, these forests regenerate vigorously from seed after fire and can not regenerate without fire. But just as exclusion of fires from ash forests will bring about their demise so too will frequent fires. If a second fire kills the regrowth forest before it is mature enough to set seed then these species will be lost from such locations. This situation is likely to take place at the southern end of Mt Buffalo which also burnt in 1985. If such a scenario eventuates, an Acacia scrub may form, however 18 years is approaching the borderline age for seed set.

Snow Gum Woodland, as seen in the vicinity of the MUMC hut. Snow gum is tolerant to moderate fires but the harsh climate (in which snowgums succeed over other species) often masks their age and the older trees lose their ability to regenerate vegetatively. If we look at the Alpine National Park fire of 1997/98 we have reference to a large fire burning in similar conditions and environment to this years fires. This fire burnt in similarly rugged country and through varying weather conditions over a two week

period, thus varying fire intensity. While extreme fire weather occurred on only day two and three, 80% of the 35,000ha burnt in this fire occurred on these two days. As a result most of the area burnt was from high intensity fire which killed vast areas of alpine ash and snow gum from Mt Arbuckle to Mt Wellington.

Alpine Environments (above the treeline) as found around the summit of Mt Feathertop. Alpine environments are diverse and include sphagnum moss bogs, alpine herbfields and snow grass. Alpine vegetation consists almost entirely of non-elevated fine fuel, as a result all the vegetation can burn leaving a moonscape devoid even of plant skeletons (stems). Alpine herbfields are extremely vulnerable even to fires of low intensity. Grasses will reshoot more readily, but in this zone the climate is harsh, thus recovery is always slow. Reports from the Bogong High Plains indicate that the fires there have burnt in a mosaic; some parts are extremely burnt while patches remain unburnt and others singed.

To date (14/2/03), this year's Alpine fires have burnt 1,080,000Ha of parks and forest in Victoria and an additional 75,000Ha of farmland. This season 1,300,000Ha of parks and forest have been burnt state-wide so far compared to 1,380,000Ha in 1938/39 fire season. While the fires have lost favour in the media, they are still active and are moving slowly south and east stretching from the Dargo High Plains to the Snowy River. For more information and updates on this fire season see the Department of Sustainability and Environment website (nre.vic.gov.au).

To the best of our knowledge the status of huts in the Alpine National Park is:

Saved	Confirmed Burnt	Probably Burnt
Wallaces Hut	Federation Hut	Bivouac Hut
Edmondsons,Hut	Ropers Hut	Michels Hut
Johnsons Hut		Kellys Hut
MUMC Hut (toilet has been burnt)		Fitzgeralds Hut
		Dibbins Hut
		Derrick Hut
		Spargos Hut

The status of many other huts is unknown. For information on huts in the Kosciusko National Park see the kosciuskohuts.org.au website for an up to date list. This site also has a list of Victorian huts, which differs from the list above. Until assessments have been completed, much of the information on huts will remain speculative.

Adrift on the Franklin

By Tim Wallace

For ten days over new years 2001 - 2002, four OXOs and two Wild Men (Is this what you would call Monash Bushwalking Club people?) journeyed, mostly in their Kayaks, down the remote and spectacular Franklin river in Tasmania's South West. This is my version of their story.

For six or so months, we planned and poured over many beers, paddled a few rivers (ask about the Kiewa incident next time you're in the pub, or how many boats you can fit on top of a Suby) and generally got ourselves in the mood for a trip that, when all was said and done, was generally excellent.

Our adventure began at Dave's place on the 26th of December, 2001. Most of the posse congregated and drank beer into the early hours, only to get up at an early hour and make our way to station pier. It was a relief to finally get on the Ferry at around 7:30 and in six short (agonisingly long if you were a parent with a vomiting child) hours we arrived at Georgetown. From Georgetown we made our way across northern Tasmania, via Launceston, where we picked up some literature (apparently \$11.95 is good value for three Penthouse magazines) , navigated our way down through the central plateau using whatever maps of Tasmania we happened to have and eventually arrived at the put in on the Collingwood River. Unlike the rafters who had put on two days earlier we found that the river was running at an ideal level and after some car based jiggy-pokery and some extensive shoving and squashing, the car shuffle was set up and our boats packed.

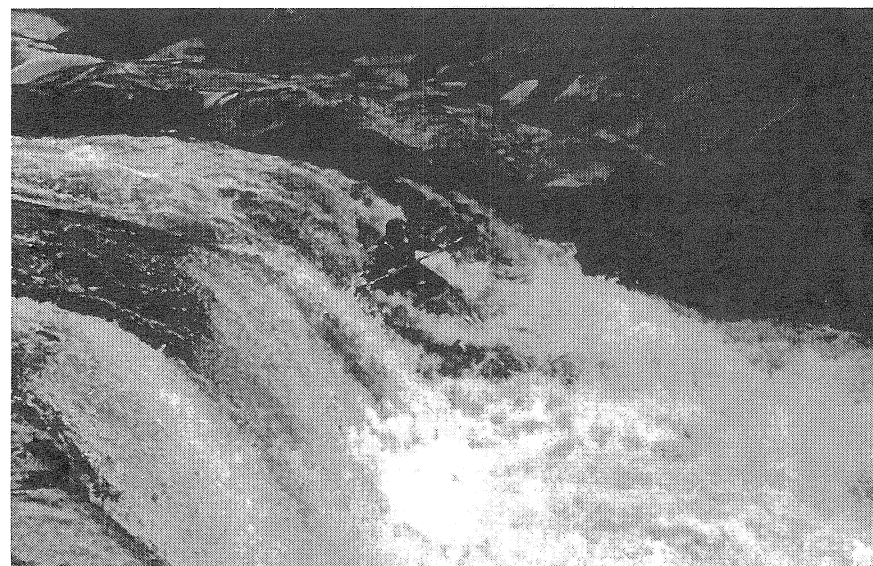
Between 0.8m and 1.2m is generally regarded as an ideal level to put on to the Collingwood River (2.4m is not. See "Missing Rafters recovered after Franklin ordeal" in the Hobart Enquirer, 27/12/01) and the first couple of hours down to our campsite at the Franklin/Collingwood confluence passed at a leisurely rate [at 0.9m]. Over the next few days we paddled at moderate river levels, passing such rapids, blockups and portages as "Nasty Notch" and "Log Jam", through the spectacular Angel Rain cavern, in to the unnamed class II rapid that I swam on (It wasn't my fault) and down to the beginning of the "steepest most challenging part of the Franklin": the Great Ravine.

Until the Great Ravine, our progress had been leisurely, paddling at most four hours a day and generally relaxing, getting used to a heavy boat & taking in the varied and beautiful sights and sounds including cascading waterfalls roaring in to the Franklin and high-walled, boxed in canyons on gentle class II - III water with the odd class IV rapid. Once we entered the Great ravine, both the tempo and the water level picked up. We entered the great ravine and camped just below the first major rapid, The Churn. The Churn is a committing, serious rapid and, just like the book said, it was a portage for us. Perhaps at a different time, less removed from help and burdened down by heavy (unboofable) boats we might have run it, yet the lower chute of the Churn just

before our campsite provided plenty of excitement and a good prelude to what was in store for us the following day.

The water levels began to rise almost as soon as we entered the Great ravine, noticeable at first by the surging of the water. The river had risen over 30cm when we awoke on New Years day, as some of us nursed Vodka Jelly, Scotch and Muscat induced hangovers. We began with a portage around the top of the Corruscades, a series of five large drops, which was not running high enough to wash over the death strainer on river left. The lower section of the Corruscades were some of the nicest rapids on the whole river and continued for several hundred meters from below the portage.

The next rapid, which it was recommended to portage, was called Sidewinder. We failed to locate it for certain and presumably paddled straight past/through/around/under the nasty "raft wrap rock". The next portage we encountered was around a rapid called "Thunderrush". A beast of a rapid, Thunderrush consists of big holes, large drops, much pin potential and more holes. Luckily the river, although visibly rising, was not high enough to have to utilise the high portage, which the guidebook suggested was more dangerous than the rapid (Ross and I checked this out. It's true). As we searched in vain for Greg's drain plug, an increasingly concerned young man (Pete) watched the river visibly rise around him as he sat in the eddy below



After a month in Ecuador, Marc and I travelled to Peru where we made a real effort to try all the local foods, even venturing into the dark alleys of Cuzco in search of Alpaca. We found it. It tastes like duck. We also tried Cuy (Guinea pig) which tastes like chicken and our favourite was Humita which was sort of like a cake made out of ground corn and wrapped up in corn leaves. It can be sweet or salty but the sweet ones were definitely the best.

The excessive amount of chicken, eggs and milk consumed in Peru was a direct reflection of the large numbers of chickens and cows. They were all free ranging and tasted great. There's no shortage of other animals in South America and they find all sorts of uses for them. While I remain appreciative of the tiny donkeys that carry heavy loads (namely Marc's and my packs) and cows which produce enough milk for late style coffees to be the norm, I am sceptical about a range of products made from frogs.

Shopping

Markets in South America are not for the faint hearted. It is quite common to see entire pigs sitting on the grill, rows of chickens lying feet up in the air or people walking along carrying a cow's head on their shoulder. The worst for me though was in a market in Huaraz, Peru where we saw a small store selling the previously mentioned frog products. Next to the displayed range of these products was a tank of live frogs and next to that... a blender!

Markets can also be a lot of fun. There were an overabundance of woven or ceramic items aimed at tourists which were seriously over-priced but nobody ever pays full price. The whole bartering thing took a bit of getting used to but with practise we got quite good at it and we managed to talk one guy down to half the original price! Bartering is expected (and sometimes invited), is a lot of fun and something to get into – soon it became a challenge for Marc and I to out-do each other. Shopping for fruit and veg became quite an educational experience as we practised our Spanish on the overly helpful local ladies.

Getting about

I found South American transport to be one of the scariest parts of my whole trip. Road rules either don't exist or are very different to here. It appears that the lines are painted on the road for decoration, double lines just mean toot your horn if you're going to overtake and red lights are only relevant if there's more than ten other cars around. While there were no seat belts in the back (which was scary in itself) I found that option preferable to being able to see what was happening on the road!

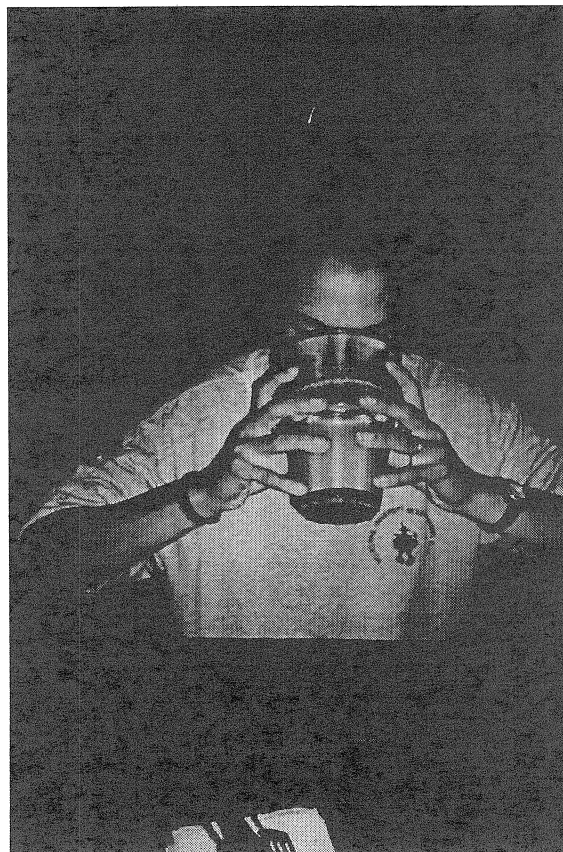
A TAXI is any car on the road that has a sign (from texta scratching to neon lights) saying TAXI. None of them have meters - and if they do they don't use them. So once again it is necessary to barter for the best price. This is not always easy if you don't know where you're going or how much it should cost. Once you agree on a price and get in, it becomes apparent that the driver doesn't know either so I guess it goes both ways.

Buses are different again. Most of them are combi vans with someone shouting out a name of a place. If it sounds like where you want to go, wait for it to slow down and pull into the curb and jump on. Don't expect it to stop cos it won't. You'll probably be joined by half a dozen locals, kids, mums, dads selling anything from food to sewing kits. I guess someone has a use for all that stuff.

Turista

An important thing I learned though was that no matter how independent you think you are, don't rule out the touristy things just on principle. They may not seem very adventurous but there's a reason why they're touristy and that's because they're damned impressive. The Iguazu

Falls on the border of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay were simply mind-blowing. Up to 6,500 cubic metres of water per second pours over them - they took us two days to see and explore properly. Machu Pichu, the Inca trail and the whole area around Cuzco was definitely the highlight of Peru for me. Not just because of the amazing constructions of the Inca people but also because it gave me an understanding of the history of the country.



More than Just Mountains

Jac Cutter

When you tell a fellow club member that you're going to South America, their first response will usually be "awesome, what're you going to climb?" (although an equally good question would be "where're you going to cave?") and fair enough too. South America is home to some of the most spectacular and 'out there' places in the world and is the ultimate playground for those of us with a passion for the extreme. When you've spent every weekend honing your skills closer to home while preparing for your big expedition, it's easy to believe that epic climbs and remote places are what the whole adventure is about. But as I recently found out, the differences in culture, language and lifestyle can often be the biggest challenge.

Language Barriers

For my first real travel experience I threw myself in the deep end, planning to spend a total of three months in South America despite not speaking a word of either Spanish or Portuguese. Travelling through Brazil with Turi for the first month we relied on Turi's Spanish to get us by as we both found Portuguese more difficult than we expected. Even when I read the phrases straight from the phrase book, they still had no idea what I was talking about. I just couldn't get my mouth around the sounds. But apart from ordering dicks each time we went to the bakery instead of bread (didn't find that out 'til it was way too late), I don't think we offended too many people.

After a month in Brazil I flew to Ecuador to meet up with a very cute (but rather fury) Marc. Having always turned to Turi for translations every time someone spoke to us I was a little bit daunted by the fact that I immediately found Marc doing the same to me. A bit daunting since he was the one who'd spent a month in Bolivia and I'd never even heard Spanish spoken before. Knowing that me and Turi would have been pretty much stuffed in Brazil if things had gone any more wrong than they actually did (the inevitable South American experience of getting mugged), the first thing we did was book ourselves in for a one-week Spanish course (clases de Español). I was amazed at how much more we got out of travelling afterwards, even with the very minimal Spanish we learnt. It

gave us the confidence to try and communicate and soon we were able to ask for what we wanted and got ripped off a lot less. We even started being able to have real conversations with the locals. It was usually the same conversation but we got better at it each time.

Food and Drink

In each country during my travels I tried to 'experience' something typical of the area. In most cases this ended up being the locals' favourite alcoholic beverage. In Brazil this was a cocktail called Caipirinha made from Cachaça (distilled from sugar cane. I picked up a 750ml bottle from a supermarket for the equivalent of \$3 which has to be saying something), lime, sugar and ice. In the jungle in Ecuador it was something similar but not as strong, mixed with cinnamon and drunk hot. The worst was the Chicha in Cuzco in Peru which is made from corn and comes in a glass the size of a bucket and is still fermenting as you drink it!

It's weird the things you miss when you're away from home for a long time. It wasn't long after leaving home that I started missing proper food. Travelling Brazil with a vegetarian didn't make it the most exciting of culinary experiences. They didn't really seem to understand the concept and as our budget was modest to say the least and

hostels rarely had cooking facilities, the end result was almost a month of avocado, cheese and tomato rolls. We did splash out occasionally and go to a restaurant for dinner where we usually got food by weight - you help yourself to what you want and pay by the kilo. A bit bizarre but seemed to be the most common and cheapest way to eat out.

Once in Ecuador with Marc, with the freedom to eat as much meat as I wanted, I couldn't get away from it. Unfortunately, every day was pretty much the same: breakfast was bread and jam, eggs and milk with coffee; lunch was a meaty soup then meat of some sort with rice; and dinner was another soup, more meat and more rice. Variety is not a big aspect of the Ecuadorian diet. Vegetarians pretty much got eggs instead of meat each time. Don't know what you get if you don't eat eggs either. Since each meal only cost us a couple of dollars I can't complain.

...apart from ordering
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the Thunderrush portage (above a large, powerful intimidating class IV rapid...). Eventually we gave up trying to find the drain plug and put in at the eddy where Pete had been waiting patiently. Dave used this rapid to modify his boat (the nose now looked like the gaping jaws of a crocodile) and when we all congregated in an eddy at the bottom where some quick gaffa repairs were made so that he would not sink (too quickly).

I took my second swim on the last rapid of the Great Ravine, the Cauldron. After some cliff-top scouting and lunch, I probed the left-hand line of the Cauldron. I successfully negotiated the tricky and deceptively steep lead in rapid (we thought class II from the cliff-top...more like IV) and prepared for the crux, a four meter waterfall. Gathering up as much speed as I could (not much at all) I ran the waterfall, dropped straight in to the powerful hole at the bottom, did a few cartwheels, eventually found the tag on my deck, pulled it, flushed out, got sucked back in, balled up and eventually flushed out in to an undercut rock wall. My boat had not tired of the hole and was still pulling ends when I was able to climb part of the way up the cliff that we had scouted from and give Pete my paddle (Pete was only ten or twenty metres from me, however he was also twenty metres vertically above me on a cliff-top). Unfortunately my climbing was rusty and the rock wet, so I had to jump back in to the river and swim down to Dave (who had portaged, not willing to endanger his delicate boat) and who had already collected my boat. It was decided by the rest of the group that a portage was in order. We paddled on to Rafters basin, where we were met by the Rafters (funny about that) with whom we shared stories (mainly about the Gumby-nuffnuff rafters who'd been rescued) and borrowed some more gaffa tape. Dave also took the opportunity to repair his boat by welding it back together with his MSR stove and they took the opportunity to tell us about the person who died the year before running the Cauldron.

We awoke to a swollen river, up at least 1.5m overnight, and the next days paddling was unlike anything I had ever experienced, consisting of huge yet simple rapids, massive boils, fast current and big holes (not to mention the logs in the eddies). A common experience was to be all paddling along in a line, perhaps five metres apart. Suddenly a traffic jam would erupt and boats like Pirouettes and Dancers got squirted in the massive, confused boils. Anyone who is familiar with these types of boats will realise that it is quite unique to achieve play moves in them.

Perhaps the biggest rapid of the trip was encountered around this time, Newlands Cascades, on which Dave impressed all by probing it and living. Pete earned himself the Barry Bream award after he was backlooped in a huge hole then swam out of his boat after he had flushed out! I was quick to realise (and admit) that this was unlike anything I had ever paddled before and it scared me, so I portaged...though after slipping on a rock and hearing my back crack, I thought that the rapid might be a safer option, but I eventually decided to go with my gut feeling and the half a kilometre boat

drag. Although Newlands Cascades scared me, it did not scare me as much as it did Rob. Rob got stuck in a large hole just before our campsite (in a class II "gravel-race" rapid, the river was so big that no-one new this, or could see him) which he was only able to get out of when his paddle got stuck in some rocks and he pushed himself out with it.

We set up camp amongst the subtropical rainforest that seems to be a consistent arboreal theme in this area and Pete, being Pete, set his camp up in a large siphon hole through a cliff (a tunnel that the water had carved through the cliff basically), though when the river rose overnight and started lapping at his sleeping bag, he relocated to underneath Greg's hammock (Greg only mentioned later that in the middle of the night he did not care much for actually getting out of bed to have a piss...)

Once we were on to day two of the Franklin, BIG water style (when the river rose another metre) I was much more relaxed about the whole thing and we continued on. Over the next couple of days we passed increasingly few rapids, and some, owing to the massive amount of water running through (such as "Big Fall"), were non-existent, whilst others were very large. Gradually the river flattened out and we encountered the lower Franklin, passing many caves and mountain views, until we eventually reached the confluence of the Franklin and Gordon rivers. A short flatwater paddle later we landed at Sir Johns Falls, where we quickly located the beer left for us and drank it. Owing to our fast progress through the lower Franklin we were a day early and we spent this day doing nothing except eating, sleeping and mooning the planes that flew by on a regular basis. The next morning, the Stormbreaker docked at Sir Johns Falls and picked us up for the ride back to Strahan and civilisation (and breakfast beers).

Tim's Tips:

- Do not carry glass (such as a bottle of Johnny Walker and pickled vegetables in a glass jar), especially in the footrest of your boat. This is a very safe place to store fragile items, however it takes an hour and a lot of ingenuity to get them out. Use a scientist if you have one.
- Fully laden boats do not boof (at all) very well
- Plastic boats do break (eg. Volettas, Pirouettes)
- Do not get on the Collingwood River if it's running at 2.4 meters
- Sea planes are to be mooned
- The hardest person on the trip (Ross) is the one who willingly swims in the Franklin for fun
- The Wavesport DESCENTÉ is King

The Caving Underwear Dilemma

Bradley Dent

Most people have a favourite pair of underwear.

It seems that we all have at least one pair of those really comfy undies set aside for when we need elegance or comfort, such as a job interview or for horse riding. There's nothing quite so undignified or uncomfortable as digging around "back there" trying to grab hold of a bit of fabric to rescue those knickers before they vanish.

Now caving is one time when comfy undies are truly delightful and, some would argue, necessary. Crawling around in tight places gives those little pieces of modesty cloth ample opportunity to get in where they aren't wanted. Wearing the wrong underwear down a cave almost inevitably leads to them becoming much too involved in the sport. Caving is all about exploring passages, but it's a little unsettling when it's your own back passage that's being explored.

Caving harnesses can be quite uncomfortable. There is a theory that early cavers were masochistic, and thus harnesses were designed for maximum pain from minimum effort. (I have evidence to support this theory, but unfortunately it cannot be aired in a G-rated journal such as *The Mountaineer*.) So really, the last thing needed when hanging in mid-air, waiting for the person above you to get off the rope with your harness cutting off your circulation, is for your undies to start doing their own thing around your unmentionables.

The moral of the story appears to be "wear your comfy undies down a cave." But wait! Here's the twist: caving is bad for underwear. Labertouche mud turns all your clothes brown, and Buchan mud leaves a lingering odour and colour that will last through many a wash. For those of us who like to try to wriggle through the smallest holes and grovel under the lowest flatteners, considerable damage can be done to underwear (yes, even when wearing overalls). Let's face it, the last thing we want is for our favourite, most comfortable, best loved undies to be soaked in smelly mud, stretched and twisted, torn and generally abused.

Which brings us to the dilemma: do we destroy our favourite undies in the name of comfortable caving or do we sacrifice the cheap old tatty undies and allow them to become really involved in the caving experience? Unable to make up my own mind, I sought the opinions of some seasoned cavers.

"Actually, I find the fragrance and colour of mud from granite stream caves such as Labertouche quite appealing," says Alison T, a caver of no little stature in Victoria. "In fact, I make sure that I am wearing a new, white pair of knickers and a matching bra every time I go caving there or at Britannia Creek. Now I have quite a number of sets of appealing brown underwear with an oh-so alluring odour that drives my man quite wild!". Another experienced caver, Kylie M, sees things rather differently. "I value my underwear, as we have quite a close and special relationship. I also have a close and special relationship with caves, and I really need to keep these two loves separate. That's really the main reason why I like to cave naked. There's nothing quite like the feeling of cool mud against bare skin!"

Other cavers, who have declined to be identified, said that old underwear is an integral part of the caving experience. One young man said: "When my underwear starts getting involved, I know I'm in for a truly mind-blowing cave. In fact, one of my favourite caving moments was when my undies ended up twisted tightly around my neck and I started to lose consciousness. What a thrill!" Eyewitnesses confirm that this moment was exciting for all present.

Clearly there is a range of opinions on this topic. Quite close friends may be completely at odds over this issue while still agreeing on all other aspects of caving. It seems there isn't a single correct solution. So what advice for new cavers? One option for those who know they will be caving for a while is to invest in some dedicated comfy-caving undies. At first, they fit well, covering all the right places. As the caver grows in skill, the underwear will grow and change with him. Eventually, he won't dream of caving in anything else.

Caving underwear really should be a caver's first purchase, before harness, helmet or rope. Most gear can be easily hired from our club, but unfortunately we do not have room in our budget for underwear for all shapes and sizes. Furthermore, sharing underwear is generally considered an unsafe practice, only to be undertaken by advanced cavers.

Remember: caving underwear will have a distinctive appearance and odour, so it's recommended that you don't wear them on the town when you're hoping to score (unless your target is also a caver)!

Health and Beauty with MUMC **Therapy to suit the seasons**

With special tips from this year's experts
editor-in-chief Jasmine Rickards

Worried about your skin? Maybe you have too much time on your hands. Let the MUMC beauty salon help. The MUMC beauty salon is for guys and girls just like you who are worried about how they look. MUMC has devised a skincare regime for you. In no time you'll be feeling great. You might not think MUMC has a lot to offer in terms of beauty therapy but find out just how seriously we take it. You won't know until you try. It is important to suit your look to the time of year. Because of this we have brought out these special packages.

Spring

Tim will plunge your face into the coldest creek he can find

Feel it refreshing your skin (even if you can't feel your fingers)

Marinate your feet in old sneakers, and give (helmet)

shape to your hair

We also offer the saline option to clean out your sinuses

Autumn

Feeling lost, maybe you are...Let Matt Jeppo help

Restore your circulation with extreme temperatures

Give your clothes (and especially boots) an aroma that others will notice Discover the therapeutic qualities of sweat

Feel where your shoulder muscles were knotted. Or if they weren't, discover what you are missing.

Summer

With the lovely Sarah

Get some Arapiles dirt all over your body

Exfoliate your fingertips (and perhaps your knees and elbows, or your whole body in the squeeze at night)

Add some nutrients to your bellybutton with a touch of port.

Fly free (and hope your belayer catches you)

Winter

With Matthew Thomas

Test your flexibility by twisting your skis behind your head

Know you're alive (and let all your companions know they're alive too) with snow in your ear

Find out that fat is really good for you by bouncing down the mountain Remove unwanted layers of skin quickly and painlessly (until you thaw out) sliding with your jacket untucked

There is always the option of liposculpture with your ski poles

Year round

Variations on the mudpack

Make yourself as pretty as a painting, let your body wear the canvas....

Immerse yourself in the dark

Add some colour to your eyes with a late night drive

Get the Crolls out of your cupboard and Alison will show you how to redirect (and re-belay) your life

And the luxury package:

Let your pores breathe easier with crampons

Coat yourself with the slippery silk of sun cream

Peel away those outer layers and extremities to discover the true you.

Of course the more you use this stuff the better you'll feel! Choose your favourite or try them all. Leave it on for weeks at a time. Even if you can't get into it the first time we're sure to give you something to perspire to. At least you'll be smiling more, and that is really the best thing to put on your face.

