

MOUNTAINEER

Celebrating 60 years of MUMC

December 2004



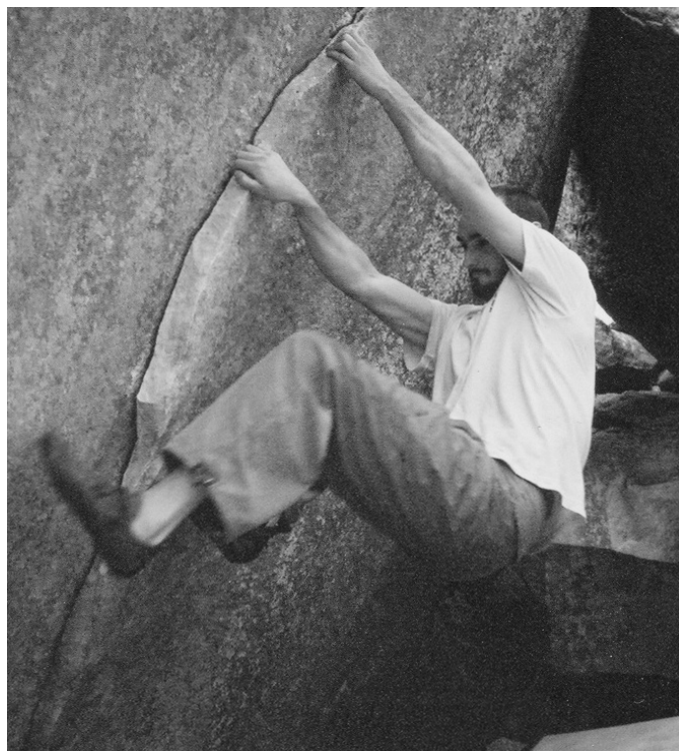


Above: Robin Scott (our UK import) dropping off a seven metre waterfall in Leven Canyon, Tasmania
– Grant Schuster

Front Cover: Collage of previous Mountaineer covers
– Dylan Shuttleworth and Laura Kneen

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Show us your muscles!! El President, Mac, bouldering at the Grampians – Claire Davy

Congratulations to Grant Schuster for winning the bottle of Baileys (selected randomly from everyone who submitted an article to this Mountaineer)

Remember to submit articles for the next O'week edition!!

Convenor Reports

Bushwalking Ned Rogers

This spring has seen many MUMC members bushwalking in several states. Eight people enjoyed good weather and spectacular scenery on Tasmania's Overland Track in the semester break. There was also a trip to the Croajingalong and Nadgee wilderness coast during the break. There have been many day walks, including trips to Werribee Gorge and the Brisbane Ranges. A walk along the narrow Mornington Peninsula National Park provided the novelty of being able to navigate using a Melways.

Summer will see people walking in exotic locales like the South Island of New Zealand and Tasmania. If you are keen to take part in a longer, more challenging walk, make sure you come into the clubrooms and see about getting involved. If you are stuck in Melbourne, don't despair. There will undoubtedly be trips to interesting locations in Victoria.

Conservation Felix Dance

Conservation is all about preventing change and so far, apart from the Mitta Valley planting weekend, things haven't changed much for MUMC conservation since the AGM. HOWEVER, there are some exciting things coming up – a Bogong track work weekend on the 20th/21st of November, some mooted work with the Regent Honeyeater Project in December and more National Parks stuff in March and May. The conservation contingent of MUMC has been working closely with the VicWalk conservation team to bring you interesting and worthwhile ways to assuage your greenie guilt. Look out for trips and stuff in the dedicated, if often ignored, folder in the clubrooms. In the meantime, complain bitterly about Alpine grazing – it sucks.

Mountaineering

Dale Thistlewaite

The summer of 2004/2005 is shaping up as a great season for mountaineering in the MUMC. Nine members are making the journey to NZ to mountaineer in one form or another, and a great winter snow base is promising fine conditions for all. Writing a convenor's report for mountaineering in November is a bit of a challenge, but here goes... So far we've been focussed on preparation. To this end we recently held a mountaineering skills and information session for interested members. During the evening we discussed and looked at some examples of clothing and equipment, equalising anchor systems, the mysteries of the NZ alpine grading system, the use of the rope in alpine climbing, avalanche phenomena and forecasting, hazard management and route selection. Everyone had a go at roping up for glacier travel... with mixed levels of success. I would like to thank Stuart Hollaway for providing his expertise in running this evening, and all the club members and other interested people who came along to find out a bit more about mountaineering; I hope you found it helpful. Now all that remains is for these brave souls to strap on their crampons and bring us back some tales of adventure. Good luck to all. We wish you a successful and safe summer.

Paddling

Grant Schuster

Tassie! Far North Queensland! Uganda! Zambia! Western Sydney! South Eastern Freeway! Are but a few of the exciting places we have flown, driven, carried, pushed, dragged and thrown our kayaks to in this last year. Not forgetting plenty in North East Victoria. Since becoming convenor a couple of months ago I have only spent one weekend in Melbourne, and that still involved paddling on the Sunday at Anglesea (NB: anything that is less than 2 hours away is close enough to be considered the local neighbourhood for Victorian paddlers). We have hopped on tubing waves on the Zambezi, thrown ourselves off 13 metre waterfalls in Tassie, raced in Xtreme races, thrown down with the world's best at Penrith and generally had plenty of super weekends away.

Are you a beginner wanting to get into paddling? Now is an excellent time to get started on the skills. With summer coming up there will be plenty of time spent at the beach and down at St Kilda in the evenings mid week (cough after work cough). There will also be trips to the Goulburn which is great for learning on. Annoy myself or Timmy (our resident river level expert and hairy boater) to find out when we are doing things, come along, have a paddle, have a swim, have a roll and then come to the pub afterwards for a beer (or orange juice). See you on a steep creek.

Rock-climbing

Lachlan Hick

There's been lots of activity in climbing recently with several trips to Mount Arapiles and the Grampians. And there's a whole heap of trips planned for next year. Lots of people have been learning to lead this year. And many people are coming on the Christmas trip to hone their skills. We'd love to see more people partaking in the fantastic activity that is climbing.

I hope everyone can come on the first beginners trip in 2005. Hopefully it will be a great one like the 2004 trip. It'll be a great place to meet new people and re-acquaint yourself with old friends.

There is always room for climbers of all standards on all of the trips as we'll try to incorporate something on everyone's level on all of the trips. The best way to learn how to climb is to come climbing.

Some of the trips planned for next year include: bi-weekly indoor climbing, Arapiles, Grampians, Mount Buffalo and many more...

Skiing

Jasmine Rickards

Friends, we are coming into a very sad time. One often referred to as 'between ski seasons' or 'summer'.

I know that we will all find it hard to cope, some people may attempt to pass the time with idle pursuits such as rock climbing or bushwalking, otherwise going overseas is not a bad option. Really this is a time of anxious waiting. When will it happen, that first big dump of powdery white goodness? This year the snow just kept on falling. From Lake Mountain to Lake Louise, and Bogong to Banff, MUMC was carving it up. If you weren't out skiing this year then where the hell were you? It was AWESOME, but it'll all be happening again next year from April... or august. Skiing is that perfect set of telemark tracks on an untouched slope, it is snowgums and mountain huts, blizzards and blue skies, hot chocolate and face plants. So that's why as soon as it snows, even if you don't know one end of a ski from another (the pointy end is the front), everyone should come skiing!

Here are my handy hints for the ski season:

When there's snow you've gotta go.

Thanks to Jeppo for breaking his foot so it dumped snow. If you forget to wax your skis the salami off Dan's Pizza roll works really well.

No one from Norway is 'an intermediate skier'.

When you are snow camping you can carve your own furniture.

In a total white-out get someone else to ski first.

See you next year!

A Year with the Mountaineers

Claire Davy reflects on her first year in MUMC

First Impressions

It's the first week of uni and I've wandered past the oval in search of the MUMC clubrooms. Ever since first year I'd planned on joining, mainly with the goal of doing some overnight bushwalks. I'd signed up in O'week, handed my money over and abseiled down the side of the Redmond Barry building before promptly forgetting all about the Mountaineering Club. Now, four years later, I'd finally decided to put the effort in.

On entering the clubrooms I found myself faced with a roomful of strangers and a general air of mayhem. After a few seconds of standing in the doorway looking suitably lost, someone presented me with a piece of paper and a pen. This I filled out and exchanged for a membership card and flyer on some beginner trip to the Cathedrals. Apparently there were only a few places left, so I took the plunge and filled one of them. I was signed up for my very first trip and it had only taken ten minutes. So far so good...

Cathedrals

A few weeks later and I was cruising down the Maroondah Highway en route to the Cathedrals. In my car I had Tom, Severin and my sister Jane who I'd bullied into coming along. It was quite dark when we arrived so we headed to the nearest camp fire and introduced ourselves. Everyone

was very friendly and welcoming, however a few minutes later it became apparent that they also had no idea who or what the Melbourne mountaineering club was. We said our goodbyes and headed off in search of a more appropriate camp fire.

This we did by following the trail of parked cars with huge white circular 'oxo' stickers stuck to the back. After confirming we were in the right place this time, we settled in for the night. The problem with meeting people for the first time in the dark is you don't recognise anyone the next day despite having spent hours around a campfire talking to them the night before.

Although I had some vague notion that the club also did other things outdoors as well as bushwalking, I don't think I realised to just what extent this is the case. Bushwalking is in fact only a small part of what the club does. It was on this introductory trip that I had my first taste of what else was on offer.

I spent Saturday morning kayaking, something I'd never had the chance to do before. The beautiful weather meant that even going for an unplanned swim in the Goulburn was fun. The next day's rock climbing was equally as fun, if slightly more nerve racking. I'd had a ball of a time and been left wanting more.

Arapiles

However, it wasn't until the Easter long weekend that I managed to get away on another trip. This time it was the annual beginners' climbing trip to Arapiles, another big club trip to another place I'd never heard of.

The highlight was definitely the chance to go multi-pitching, something not usually on offer to complete climbing newbies like myself. Despite a rather inelegant ascent (note to self: the rope is not a handhold) and being hauled up a metre or two (thanks Ian), reaching the top of such a long climb gives a real sense of accomplishment. I was beginning to see how climbing could become addictive.



Gourmet cooking at the Grampians
Hugh, Mac and Min – Claire Davy

The Pub

I was rather stumped with what to do next. There were no more big club trips to sign up for, just a few smaller trips here and there. Faced with too much choice and no obvious direction to go in, I made the rather indecisive decision and went on none of them. I had, however, just discovered another favourite pastime of the mountaineering club. It involved a pub (in this case the Clyde), some beer (actually often lots of beer and a coin) and Tuesday nights.

The bush dance had also been organised so I spent an evening dusting off my heel and toe dancing skills and sliding around in piles of hay. It was a great night and by now I no longer was confronted with a sea of strangers whenever I walked into the clubrooms.

Day tripping

I was sitting at work during the uni holidays when I received an sms about a paddling trip being run that weekend. Although I'd been on another climbing day trip to the You Yangs a few weeks earlier I'd yet to go kayaking since Cathedrals. I resisted the lazy urge to say no and agreed to go.

We were headed to the Big River (which despite its name is not really that big) and by the clumps of snow on the roadside it was becoming obvious going for a swim this time was not going to be as nice and refreshing as the Goulburn had been a few months earlier. After a slight detour and a few fallen branch removal sessions (a group effort due to the storm the night before) we arrived at the put in.

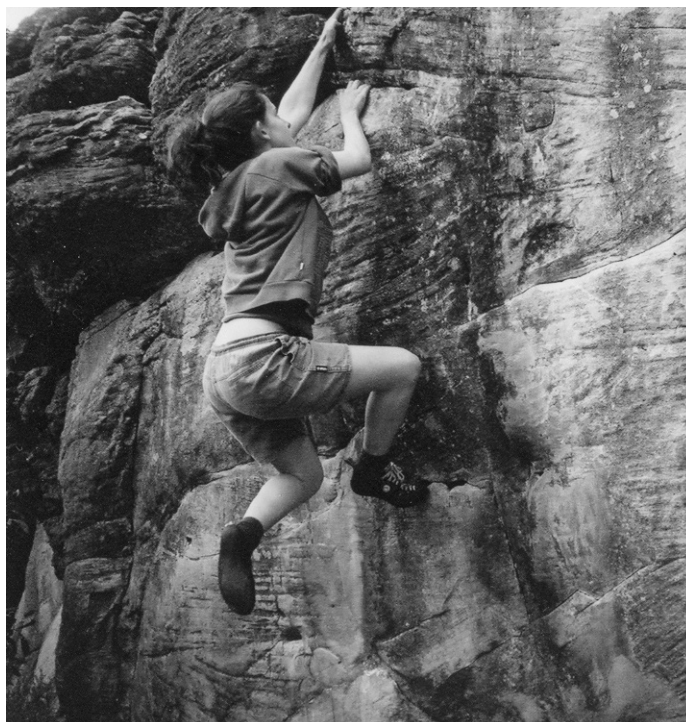
Although not as wide, the river was much colder with faster flowing water and slightly bigger rapids than the Goulburn. Despite many near misses, a close encounter with a rock, getting pinned to a log and finding myself going backwards down a rapid, I somehow managed to stay in the kayak. The day ended at a pub (where else?) warming ourselves by the fire.

By now the ski season was well and truly under way and I had yet another sport to try out. Cross country skiing was firmly in my sights and after a few false starts I eventually had another day trip lined up, this time to Lake Mountain. Having only seen snow twice before, skiing was something of a treat. So was the chance to build a snow man and throw snow balls around.

Midnight Ascent

I'd been kayaking, climbing and cross-country skiing but I still had yet to go bushwalking with the club. My next trip would fix that.

Try telling your friends you intend to start walking at midnight for six hours up the steep side of Mount Feather-top in the dark, only to get dressed in formal evening wear (in the snow) and attempt to cook a gourmet dinner on a Trangia (or alternatively simply lug a Weber barbecue



Min bouldering at the Grampians – Claire Davy

up the mountain with you). For most people it sounds like insanity, but for the mountaineering club it's their annual formal dinner, Midnight Ascent.

The hike up the northwest spur to the MUMC hut was a form of hell on earth. It's very steep, and it's constantly steep for over six kilometres. The weekend as a whole was brilliant with a toilet with a view (and not much else!), a sauna in a nearby igloo, beautiful weather and lots of relaxing in the sun.

More adventures

With winter coming to close, suddenly climbing was back on the agenda. Although I've been on quite a few climbing trips since, the highlight would be a five day trip to the Grampians in the mid-semester break. With lots of bouldering and climbing over a relatively sustained period I was finally beginning to improve. With Min and Mac cooking me gourmet dinners and three-course breakfasts, bouldering mats as couches and \$5 showers at the Royal Hotel in Horsham, camping had become almost civilized.

The year's drawing to a close but my adventures with the mountaineering club are only just beginning. I'm always looking forward to my next trip away, Tuesday nights have become a regular fixture and my bank balance is getting lower and lower as I find myself buying more and more gear.

My advice is don't wait until you're nearing the end of your university career. Get amongst the action right from the start. You won't regret it!

Jumaring with Jetstar

An out-of-the-ordinary club caving trip

Kylie McInness

'I'm sorry, you're 18kg over the weight limit. You'll have to pay for excess baggage', the lady at the Jetstar check-in counter looked vaguely smug. Pete, Kat and I stared at our pile of luggage on the belt. We hadn't planned to take anything on the plane as hand luggage, but this was obviously going to have to change. We certainly hadn't planned to pay excess baggage for our weekend trip to Hobart. After a dramatic amount of baggage reshuffling, we managed to fit most of the ropes into a few of the cave packs to carry on board. The thoroughly confused check-in attendant eventually let our bags go and handed us our boarding passes. At this stage, it was just after 8.30pm on Friday night. On any ordinary club caving trip, we'd have just struggled our way out of the city in peak-hour traffic and would probably be just pulling up to the Blue Dolphin fish and chip shop in Warrigal.

At around 9.30pm, we boarded the plane. The hostess grinned at me and pointed to the helmet I was carrying, saying 'is that for extra protection if the plane crashes?' (who ever said that Jetstar take jokes about safety seriously?). I suddenly became worried about our cheap internet fares and wondered if I'd prefer to be stuck in a car driving to Buchan for the weekend – especially when the engines sounded more like model aeroplane engines than those of a jet – but the plane did make it to Hobart on schedule and the pilot even did a few laps around Hobart airport before we landed, just for fun.

Not long after 11pm, we arrived at Pete's parents' place in Hobart and we were asleep by midnight. On any ordinary Buchan trip, we'd probably just be leaving the supermarket in Bairnsdale and we'd be lucky if we were in bed by 1am.

At 8am on Saturday, we pulled up behind a red ute with orange flashing lights on the roof that was parked on a gravel shoulder of the Huon Highway. As Alan Jackson stepped out of the ute, we were mildly surprised – considering the average age of the interstate cavers that we'd met, we were expecting him to be at least ten years older! After exchanging pleasantries, we agreed to follow him to Dover. As we parked at the gate to Arthur Clarke's property just out of Dover and swapped gear around between the cars, it was just after 9.30am. On any ordinary club caving trip, we'd probably just be arriving at the Potholes Reserve near Buchan, tired from the long drive and tugging up to go down an old Buchan classic like Honeycomb or Oolite (again).

By mid-morning, Alan, Kat, Pete and I were standing at the entrance to Midnight Hole, having spent the best part of 45 minutes wandering through Tasmanian wilderness

under a glorious blue sky. It wasn't long before we were at the bottom of the first twenty-something metre pitch, pulling down our ropes and putting our faith in the knowledge of Alan, a local caver, to help us find our way through to the Mystery Creek streamway passage and ultimately the upstream exit, some 140 vertical metres below us.

Five awesome hours of caving later, we were sitting in a large chamber

Kylie in less muddy times (at the near the entrance 60th anniversary dinner) – Laura of Mystery Creek Kneen

Cave, lights off, gazing at the thousands of glowworms decorating the roof above the river. And to think that on any ordinary Buchan trip...well, unfortunately there's nothing at Buchan that quite compares to this.

After a leisurely walk out from the cave entrance, we returned to Arthur's house. If you've read the Harry Potter books, picture the Weasley's house, perched on the side of a very bushy hill at the end of a dirt road, overlooking several rows of fruit trees and a beautiful ferny gully. With its large gabled roof, heated floor and ambling living room-kitchen-dining area, the house is a friendly, comfortable and obviously well-loved hideaway for cavers. Caving club newsletters, caving books and paraphernalia haphazardly decorate the house, along with plenty of photographs, stories and maps. Even before we'd met Arthur, we were glad we'd accepted his kind offer to let us stay the night, and it was easily the most amazing place I've ever stayed on a caving trip. I'd also highly recommend the Wood-Fired Pizza shop in Dover – it was slightly pricier than regular pizza, but worth every cent.

We spent a few hours poring over cave maps on Saturday night, trying to decide what we were going to do on Sunday. We had hoped to do a bounce trip down Mini Martin



cave, but, much to our disappointment, we discovered that the 160m of rope we'd brought over with us wasn't going to be quite enough to reach the bottom of any of the caves in the area that were more than about 50m deep. We came up with several plans before ditching them all and agreeing that even though our ropes wouldn't reach the bottom, we should be able to get down to an interesting section in Milk Run, a cave that Alan had recently re-bolted. After another walk through some pretty Tasmanian bushland, we arrived at the entrance to Milk Run. After a short scramble up a relatively steep muddy slope, Kat, who'd been fighting a cold for two weeks, was trying very hard to cough up a lung. We realized at this point that we might not make it very far down the cave at all, primarily because jumaring up 160m of rope requires a reasonable amount of oxygen – something Kat seemed to be having difficulty obtaining.

Not to be deterred, Kat still wanted to go caving, so we dropped the first rope in and headed on down the 40-metre entrance pitch. Alan waited long enough to see us safely underground before returning to the cars and Hobart. I descended the first pitch, and rigged the next few short drops while Pete and Kat came down behind me. At the bottom of the first pitch, Kat agreed that she wasn't too well after

all and decided to head out of the cave. Pete and I quickly explored the pitches that I'd already rigged before joining Kat on the surface, where we agreed that the cave looks pretty spectacular and that we'd have to come back again soon with more rope.

We ambled back to the car just as it began to rain. In true Tasmanian style, it continued to rain all night. We arrived back in Hobart not long after dark, and after a lazy dinner and having sorted the muddy caving gear into checkable and carry-on baggage, we retired to bed shortly after 10pm.

Early Monday morning, we watched the dawn light hit a freshly snow-coated Mt Wellington through the kitchen window at Pete's parents' house before we headed to the airport for our flight home. On the drive back to Melbourne from Tullamarine, I changed into my work clothes and we added up our costs for the weekend. It worked out slightly more expensive than an ordinary weekend trip to Buchan and I was an hour or so late for work, but the caves in Tassie are anything but ordinary and it was worth it for such a great weekend.



Tim Ford on the Snowy River (Munyang section)
– Grant Schuster

The Overland Track in September

Marina Carpinelli



Marina, SS, Felix, Jane, Elisa, Oli, Merrielle and Jim at the Labyrinth – Felix Dance

On the first Friday night of the mid-semester break eight young bushwalkers met at the clubrooms to taxi to the airport. This is when we realised that taxis are not easy to hail from College Crescent on a Friday night. Felix had just handed in an important essay at 5pm, just as the relevant person was leaving the building. Elisa's boots had been stolen half an hour before so a detour was made to my house to pick up a spare pair, which were only a little too big. We had decided to leave the three club snowshoes available to us behind (a good decision).

Two significant things happened on the bus to Cradle Mountain. At Launceston, I was pleasantly surprised to realise that McDonald's sells apples for 50c each as part of their new 'healthy' menu (the apples are the only thing on the 'healthy' menu that's actually healthy). Later at one of the many 'mural towns' Felix asked to borrow a pocketknife with a Phillip's Head Screwdriver on it. We were all curious as to why he wanted this but were relieved to observe that he only wanted to improve the business of the

one petrol station in town by decreasing the price of petrol on the sign out the front by 10 cents. Our initial surprise at his actions was tempered by the fact that he had just drank 2 litres of iced coffee (traditional before any bushwalk for Felix) and thus his actions may have been a consequence of the caffeine.

When we reached the start of the track about 10:30am, I led off when everyone except for Felix was ready, keen to keep the large group moving. Little did I realise that Felix's pack was too small for his food and he had to set off carrying a supermarket shopping bag in each hand. Jim was second last and took some gear off Felix including fuel and lemonade. We had bought way too much fuel (four litres of shellite for two MSRs and two litres of metho for one Trangia for seven nights) (a bad decision).

On the first day we devised a five stage system for describing wet feet which we fine-tuned over the course of the trip.

Stage 1: dampness from sweat only.
 Stage 2: some water has got in from outside.
 Stage 3: when socks wrung out water would drip off.
 Stage 4: water squelching between toes when walking.
 Stage 5: as wet as when have just walked through a river/creek in boots

We didn't manage to come to an agreement as how to add in factors such as cold (ie. boots contain snow) and asymmetry, such as one wet and one dry foot. At this point Jane displayed asymmetry by tripping over on the track and covering the right side of her body completely in mud while her left side remained clean. On this day we discussed plans to make the overland track one long airport style escalator with icecream shops every few kilometres and to get someone to bake cookies for passing walkers in Echo Point Hut.

The next day, hopeful of finding a spot to shelter from the constant drizzle for lunch, we tried a commercial hut. We were dismayed to discover that the only shelter was where the overflow from the toilet was stored under the verandah. We chose to eat lunch in the rain sitting in some deckchairs on the helipad and drinking Felix's lemonade. It occurred

bad luck in that his water bottle decided to detach itself from his pack while he was on the bridge. The water bottle disappeared under a log and although Oliver went swimming in the icy water to look for it the bottle was never recovered.

Those who have travelled to Tasmania may know that the huts are renowned for rats that will eat through packs to get to food and that it's recommended to hang all your food bags from the ceiling. Our groups got around this problem by leaving all our food all over the place in the huts overnight. Therefore we had no problems with rats chewing into our packs. Also very little of our food was stolen – maybe those rats hibernate in winter. I was shocked to observe in Pelion Hut that even chocolate had been left unprotected from hut rodents (and probably more importantly from other members of the group, especially ones that get up early) on the hut table overnight.

On the fifth morning we arrived at Pelion Gap with Mt Ossa on the right and Mt Pelion West on the left. Mt Ossa, the highest mountain in Tasmania, was veiled in cloud while Mt Pelion East, a lesser peak, was clear. Most of the group decided to climb Ossa despite the weather, while Jim, Jane and I decided to climb Pelion East. An hour or

two later, our group realised we had made the wrong decision when Mt Ossa became bathed in sun and we could see the others tobogganing in the snow on top. Jim skipped lunch and followed the others up Ossa, while I followed Jim after lunch. When I got to a steep slope covered in snow I experimented with snow walking and sliding and discovered it was fun. While making a cache of snowballs I was interrupted by Felix and Jim sliding down the snow at high speed while taking videos of each other on Felix's digital camera. Their movie making became so elaborate that while Jim slid down the snow at high speed into some bushes and I threw a snowball at him, Felix slid next to him with the camera focussed on him, and someone else

we met on the track slid in front of Felix, guiding him away from rocks. Unfortunately he guided Felix right over the top of some rocks, causing painful bruising to Felix's coxix bones. Back at the gap, we discovered that the first aid kit contained a) nothing of any use to Felix and b) a single tampon. This led to much discussion of how useful one tampon would be to a girl caught with an unexpected period on an extended bushwalk.

That night in Kia Ora hut we had a coal stove for heating. This is when Felix discovered a new evening entertain-



Relaxing for lunch
 – Felix Dance

to me at this point that this was unusual for a bushwalk. Although Jim's pack was already heavy, he was very tempted to carry a deckchair on the rest of the trip for the comfort of the back support when sitting down each night. I managed to talk him out of it.

We spent the second and third nights in Pelion Hut, or 'Pelion Palace' as the ranger referred to it on the phone. This hut is huge, and is similar to a youth hostel inside except it's in the middle of the bush. While crossing the Douglas River near Pelion Hut Oliver experienced some



Jim – Felix Dance

ment, called ‘throwing shellite on the fire’. This entertainment quickly caught on in the group and, despite the excitement of many MSR hairy moments when one of the stoves seemed about to blow up, was repeated by various members of the group every night from then on. This entertainment’s popularity was probably partially because we had about twice as much shellite as we needed and people didn’t want to carry the extra weight.

From Pine Valley Hut we climbed the acropolis and waited at the top while it snowed on us for Jim to take photos. We climbed back down and ate lunch on a rock. During lunch it was sunny, then cloudy, then raining, then snowing, then sunny again. We kept eating, adjusting our gortex hoods as the weather required. The next morning the sky was completely clear and Jim took some photos from the helipad as the sun came up. We then went to the labyrinth, which really is very difficult to navigate in. Felix and Jim stayed there a bit longer than the rest of the group, looking for an epic but eventually got hungry and came back down.

The risk of the hut catching fire peaked on the final night in Narcissus hut. As I went to bed I observed that two people were throwing shellite on the fire, the remaining shellite was sitting in bottles near the fire, Felix’s stove had caught fire and water had been thrown on it spilling shellite all over the table and floor. The hut didn’t catch

fire though. On the last morning Felix and Jim decided to make a large fireball using all the remaining shellite and metho. I didn’t stay to find out how this went but apparently it was disappointing as a lot of the fuel soaked into the ground. After a 19km walk around Lake St Clair we reached the visitor centre and had much enjoyed showers and pub-style lunches. We had a very pleasant afternoon next to the fire eating free plates of chips, drinking beer and unlimited tea and playing cards before catching the bus to Hobart and then flying home the next day.

Thanks very much to Felix the leader, SS the deputy leader and Jim the underminer of their authority for a very enjoyable walk that wasn’t boring. Thanks to the whole group for being so generous with scroggin and so fun to walk with. To all MUMC members, do the overland track in spring instead of summer as there are MANY fewer people on it and more water in the waterfalls and some snow on the peaks to have fun sliding around in.



Jim sliding down Mount Ossa
– Felix Dance

The MUMC 60th Anniversary Dinner

On Saturday 2 October 2004, the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club celebrated its 60th Anniversary with an evening at Albert by the Lake.

More than 200 past and present members, including some who had travelled from interstate, gathered to toast the continuing success of the club and to reminisce about the countless adventures of their MUMC days.

A slide show of images from various trips illuminated the stage as the guests mingled. We were treated to speeches from one of the founding members of MUMC, Dr Philip Law, and current president Mac Brunkhorst.

Twenty-four club 'legends' were made honorary life members in recognition of their outstanding contribution to MUMC. Their names were inscribed on a beautiful wooden plaque that can be viewed in the clubrooms.

Many thanks to all the people whose hard work made this such a fabulous night, especially Carys Evans.

– Laura Kneen



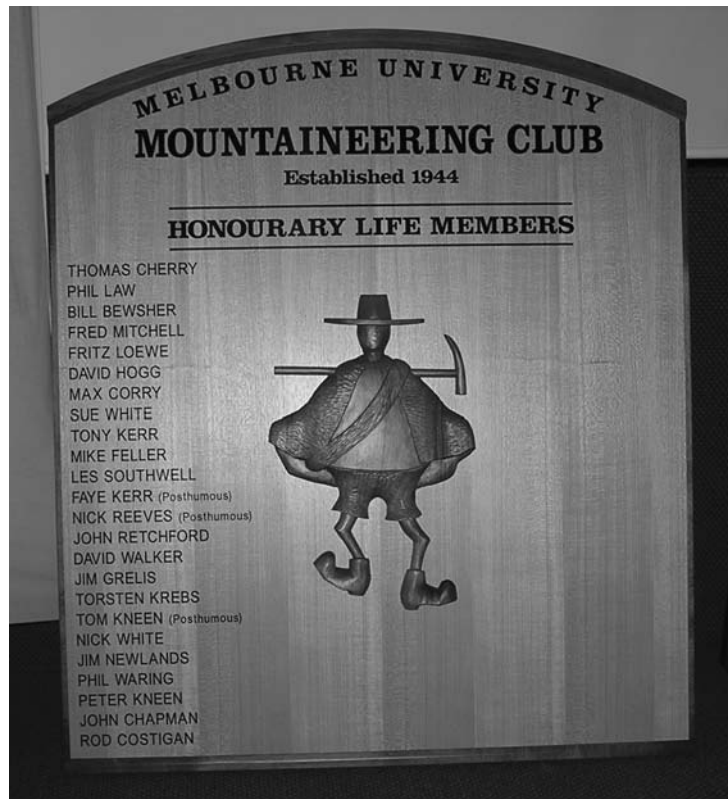
Left: Dr Philip Law (Dawn Kneen) **Right:** Matt, Stu and Wendy
Photographs by Laura Kneen unless otherwise stated



Clockwise from top left: Jasmine and Al; Kath and Brad; Mac, Kate and Greta; Marg James and partner, Tony and Cath Kerr (Dawn Kneen); Enmoore and Lizzie, Dmitri and Andy



Clockwise from top left: Kat and Carys; Ben and Jac; Dale and Stu; Stu, Laurence and Marcelle; Pete and Amanda, Andrea and Nic



Clockwise from top left: Ros Escott and Fay Retchford (Dawn Kneen); Andrew, Kat and Laura; MUMC Honourary Life Members Board; Alex and Liz; Min and Greta

Skiing along the Fainters

Felix Dance

During the heat of the ski season this year Dimi and Matt decided it would be nice to run a ski-camping training weekend in the Alps, so without much further ado than a few cancellations and delays before the trip got popular enough to run we prepared to head off. Unfortunately, on the day of our departure Matt decided he couldn't come on the trip for some legitimate excuse, leaving us one car short of an acceptable number. Luckily though, historical forces conspired in our favour with my parents away in Bali, and thus without the liberty to prohibit the use of their car, and Dimi forgetting my adventure on his trip the week before driving the same car off the road on the way down from Mount Stirling. And so, after a brief supermarket endeavour, we set off to the snow.

After many a long and weary hour heading to the hills we finally made camp under a picnic shelter in the rain of Bogong Village, to be awoken by the delightful sound of geese from the lake coming to nibble our toes. No sooner had they been dealt with than we were industriously putting on roof-racks, organising the skis and executing a modest car shuffle. We arrived at the scene of the Falls Creek ski resort with trepidation, snow chains and Dimi's appalling taste in jokes. After a not unreasonable amount

of faffing around we made our way through the resort, carefully not skiing on any paths so we wouldn't be obliged to pay trail fees, to the tune of excellent skiing conditions and fine weather. Unfortunately it was not to last.

By the time we'd lost the scent of the yuppies engaged in downhill skiing during brunch time, we were well on our way and optimistic of the eventual advance in skill of those less accustomed to ski touring as had been believed. However, this optimism soon turned to frustration as the minutes and hours ticked over without the rediscovery of a favourite lunching hut (later realised to have been completely buried under snow). Frustration gave way to apprehension after lunch as large storm clouds enveloped us, reducing the visibility to the end of our skis and a blob or two in the distance. After the snow poles became shorter and shorter as we ascended an



invisible ridge we were reduced to sole navigation by that doyen of navigational instruments, the magnetic compass. Snow camping was no longer on the agenda as arriving at the next hut became our only ambition. Here, by the warmth of the fire, we whittled away the night telling tales of yore.

As the morning broke the party energetically began the first task of the day: faffing around. This was



Above: Arriving at Tawonga Hut
– Tristan Croll

Top: Tristan feeling the weather – Tristan Croll

augmented by the realization that it was impossible to do anything when one's fingers and toes were frozen solid and one's boots filled with ice and snow rather than feet. However, the faffing was finally defeated by the warm sunny day and our eagerness to bask in it. Good white snow and a calm blue sky smoothed our progress along the track, with the view music to our eyes. So good, in fact, was the quality of the snow, that we decided that the track could take care of itself but we wouldn't get a chance like this again for some telemarking practice. Thus we spent most of the rest of the day slicing down mountains, falling over, then stomping our way back up again for another go. I was unfortunate enough to find myself skiing straight into a tree at one point, being spiked by a branch where Man was not meant to be spiked. After more mucking around, we headed off, or in my case, hobbled.



Skiing around the Nigger Heads we soon ascended the icy slope up to the Fainters, where many dives had to be made to rescue the sliding map. The view was as spectacular as views get – Mount Bogong, Feathertop and Buffalo all in as magnificent a majesty as a mango on the moon. But in a different way. Tristan's panorama complete, we icily skied down the other side, cutting hardly a discernible track. This caused problems on a particularly steep spur, possibly contributing to our loss of path, forcing us to snow bash through thick sloping vegetation.

As the hours advanced, the light dwindled, and the remainder of the trip was executed in a sense of foreboding as night skiing seemed inevitable. Luckily it became only head-torch time when we were off our skis and walking the many more kilometres back to the car for the eventual reversal of the car shuffle, which would end after midnight. Then we realised we still had to get home...



Above: Icy descent from the Fainters
– Tristan Croll

Top: Dmitri contemplating the awesome snow
– Tristan Croll

A Rain Dance... Or How to turn a Mountain Biking Trip into a Paddling Trip

Grant Schuster

The long weekend in June signals the start of winter. Well the start of the ski season at least. Therefore, it must also signal the start of the paddling season? Wrong! Or were we?

In the weeks leading up to the wonderful holiday they give us for the Queen's Birthday there was many a rain dance going around. We had Jimbo planning a trip to the Grampians, just so he could cancel it when the rain fell. We had Dave talking of the Cobungra's running: I guess someone has to be ambitious. And I was ensuring there was a <rain dance> snow, rain, melt, water, mmm </rain dance> on each page of the MUMC forum.

Despite all this, as the weekend drew near it became apparent (a.k.a. we were reminded by Timmy) that there will not be any good paddling until September, as per usual. So it was decided at the Thursday night pool session that we should leave the kayaks at home and take the mountain bikes up to Beechworth for some hucking of a different kind.

Saturday morning came around and Andy and Dave rocked up at my place in a very suitable vehicle provided by Andy's employers (Holden). Well, actually, they ended up getting to my place at about 11:30am, after originally being told they would be there at about 10am. Not too deterred, I loaded my beast of a bike in the back of the black Crewman. It was at this point that I noticed how large Andy and Dave's bags were compared to mine, so I asked, 'Are we going for the weekend?' After the obvious response, I rushed back upstairs and put a few extra things in a bag to last me longer than a day.

Finally we got on the road and decided Sydney Road at midday on a Saturday would be a good way to leave Melbourne... hmmm. OK, it did allow us to get a superb souvlaki from The Melbourne Kebab Station (MKs) and other assorted baked goods for the drive, but I don't recommend the Sydney Road option, no matter how cool you think you look.

Eventually we got the Crewman up to an idle (i.e. reached 110kmph on the Hume) and were well on our way, despite it now being after midday. What I also failed to mention

earlier was that despite the fact that I was now staying longer than a day, Pete was driving home that night, after having a day's biking with us. So it was that we arrived in Beechworth around 3:30pm, which was not to Pete's liking, as we were carrying his off-road tyres.

So, with the sun setting, we made our way out to the newly created Beechworth Mountain Bike Park and got ready. For most people this involved changing their slicks to off-road tyres, putting on their lycra and slipping on some fan-dangled clipless pedals. Not for me... my trusty old Malvern Star with straps on the pedals and an old t-shirt and shorts were all I needed, not forgetting the 'all weather' road tyres (i.e., slicks with a bit of tread on the sides). Oh, I have made one modification to the standard bike – the double crown RST downhill forks (bought off EBay of course). Nothing could stop me with my downhill machine!

We managed to get in two laps of the course before it went



Above: Grant after paddling off the 13 metre waterfall (in background) and whacking his nose on his arm, Leven Canyon, Tassie, October 2004 – Andy Close

dark (well the second half was in the dark). It is an awesome track and the smooth landings off the jumps at the top of the course made me grateful that one part of my bike was good quality. We returned, via Kat's mystery, slippery, muddy track back up to the cars and headed into town for dinner. I wouldn't exactly say well earned since we had only done about an hour and a half riding, but the chips with the boys still went down well. At this point I should mention that Kat was called a boy for the third time on this trip during dinner, this time by a complete stranger!

After burning around the countryside around Beechworth looking for Dave's friends we eventually gave up and camped down some short track. Thus ended day one, and still no rain. However, day two would be a different story.

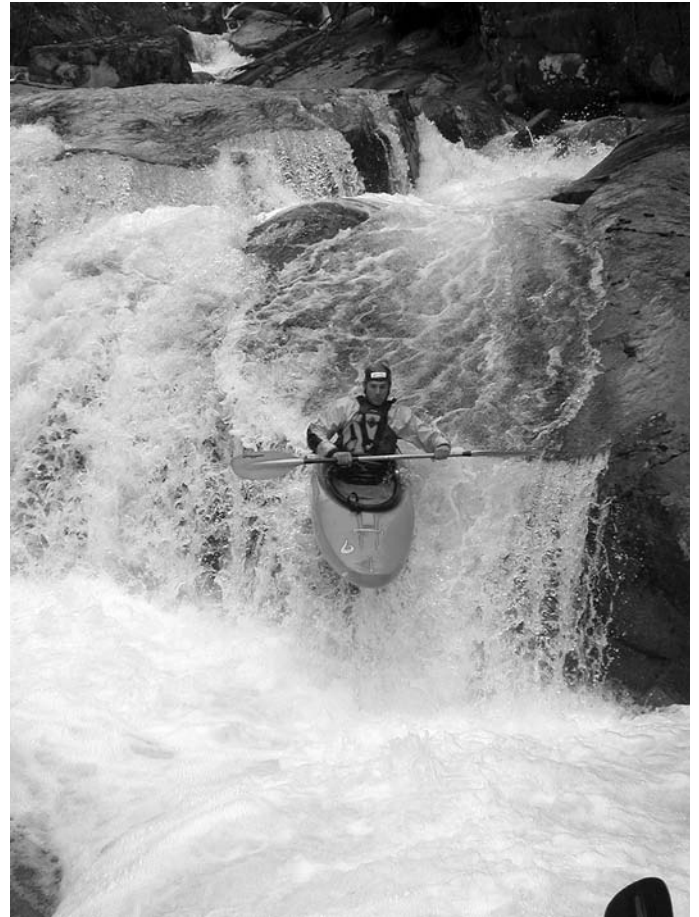
This time Yak was the location for our morning pedal. At the carpark already we were starting to see the rain gods listening. Though the bike gods were harsh on Dave, who found his forks broken in half by the previous day (his new bike's third day ever off-road) and therefore had to go visit his uncle at his brewery for the day instead.

After Dave burned off in the Crewman, we headed off on the excellent single-track through a variety of forests and challenging terrain. The many bridges, ramps and gutters ensured plenty of spills and laughs all around. After two or three hours of adventuring we found our way back to the carpark and had some lunch, at which point the rain decided to arrive properly.

Not to be outdone on our biking weekend, we decided that more was needed. Feeling invincible (or maybe suicidal) behind my forks, I was keen on the downhill track. Luckily that thought was not entertained for very long and instead we decided to head back to the Beechworth park for another spin. This time it was pouring down upon our arrival and only Andy and I decided we would give it a go, with Dave restricted to driving duties (though he wasn't complaining too much) and Kat deciding the warm car was more appealing. So the Malvern Star was taken out for one last spin.

All was going well, despite the slippery conditions. The third jump up the top was extra exciting, when I hit it at a slight angle and headed off towards the tree on the left. After passing to the left of one of them, I found my way back onto the track to hit the fourth jump at a bit more controllable speed. As my brakes deteriorated increasingly, the excitement (or perhaps it should have been fear) going into the corners appeared to increase. The last right-hander over the back proved just too much for the slicks and a spectacular slide followed by high-side flip ensured. After getting out from under my bike I noticed that my brakes were now completely stuffed and the gap between my rims and tyres were filled with gravel and bark. So began the exciting downhill section at full brakes, but still managing to accelerate. Finally that passed and I limped my bike back to the cars.

Not to be outdone, I eyed off the short loop with an eager eye and a bit of craziness: Just what would those jumps be like with no brakes? Sure enough, four minutes later I found myself at the lead in to the four consecutive jumps, once again at full brakes. Unfortunately those full brakes work even less well while in the air and by the time I reached the third jump I had managed to get offline and had built up considerable speed. In mid air I could almost



Ben Patrick on Park 'n' Huck on the East Kiewa Valley Branch – Grant Schuster

taste the thud of the ground. It was with considerable luck that I managed to straighten my bike enough and deny the ground any bed. Thus my Malvern Star's weekend was over... or so I thought!

With the rain now well and truly set in, we decided warm Melbourne beds would be much nicer than the tent and so we loaded the four bikes in the crewman and headed home.

Hang on! Heading home on Sunday night of a long weekend! That leaves a day to make use of. So it was that the phone calls started from Kel on the drive home and a PADDLING trip was planned! The rain dance had been successful.

We had a crew... Kel, Mac, Hugh and myself... we had a river... The Big! Hang on a minute. That's only four people, which is one car. OK, the Malvern Star had to come out again; brakes or not!

So it was that Monday morning, while praising the Queen, with the iPod pumping, we drove against the oncoming traffic returning early from their holidays out to The Big. The bike was placed, The Big was run (and swam by one who shouldn't have) and the shuttle was successfully negotiated to end a weekend of mountain biking... MUMC style!

Italy to France the Long Way...

A Valley to Valley Adventure

Jodie Murdoch



Mt Blanc – Jodie Murdoch

Ice axe in one gear loop, breadstick in the other, we set off for our ambitious journey up Mt Blanc from the Italian side (Italian route) back into the Chamonix valley via the 3 peaks route. What made our journey even more ambitious was that John and I had only met at dinner the night before and we had copied our route description onto a post-it note. One would think that to climb Europe's highest mountain you would need more than an hours planning and preparation. (note: both of us had been doing a lot of climbing at high altitude in the previous months, just not together).

We baked in the hot sun in our mountain gear by the side of the road as we stood with our thumbs out laughing about the night before. 'How about this for a plan; we hitch through the tunnel...' 'Sounds dangerous count me in' 'So we hitch through the tunnel to Italy, walk up to Gonnella hut, stay the night, then climb up the Italian route, it's about eight hours from the hut to the summit, then descend by the 3 peaks route to the midi station which is about four hours. A twelve hour day from the Italian hut, and it's

all rather straightforward. Say a midnight alpine start??' 'AWESOME.'

A big truck pulled to a stop and we ran in our mountain boots to get into it. Impressing us with his command of English, the Italian truck driver rattled off swearwords with maybe one word that might appear in the Oxford dictionary squished in there somewhere. We zoomed through the tunnel, under all those big mountains we planned on climbing the next day. The border crossing certainly was easier than the next one we had planned, though we felt like we had been smuggled through as no-one saw our passports!! The truckie dropped us in Cormeyer; with a few more swear words and a toot of the horn he was gone. We slogged up the road in the hot sun in our heavy plastic boots and awkward packs. We had decided to climb the mountain French style (with a day pack) but all our gear for the cold weather didn't quite fit so we had harnesses and other assorted climbing stuff hanging from every loop or strap on our packs. Finding some shade we decided to lighten our packs a little by having a roadside picnic to use up that kilogram jar of mayo (okay slight exaggeration, it

was only 200 grams) John had insisted on bringing (and getting me to carry). Just as we were about to get to our tasty yoghurt desserts a car came up the road, stopping to give us a ride. The ice-cream eating Italian family dropped us at vale verni (1700m) so that we could begin our ascent. Up a very pretty green flower-filled valley we walked to gain access to the moraine. We balanced along the edge of the moraine watching the mountain goats graze. We enjoyed the serenity of the moraine as we passed many precariously balanced rocks (like the ones that coyote would push onto roadrunner). When we stopped for a well-earned chocolate break, the hut was a tiny little dot high up on the cliff. Enjoying the glaciers and peaks high above us we continued upwards to the hut along the moraine. Following the post-it note route description we went up the moraine then 'walked' to the hut – since when does a walk involve steel cables, traverses of doom over loose scree slopes, snow traverses and ladders?

We arrived at the hut (3071m) with 20 minutes to spare (amazing after 5 hrs of walking and hitching from France) until our dinner date of 6:30pm. Enough time to change into dry clothes and stretch out the muscles. 'Isn't this awesome and we are the only people here!' we exclaimed as we settled into the bunk room.

Full of expectations of an authentic Italian pasta meal, we were proudly presented with a ham steak and instant mashed spud! 'That's the most effort any man has ever put in to have dinner with me, you could have at least made sure the food was good first!' I tease John as we unenthusiastically chew through our ham steaks. Soon after enjoying our 'gourmet' meal we pay far too many euros to the hut manager then crawl up to bed for four precious hours of sleep.

The alarm raised us from our slumber at midnight; we got up to check the weather. With large flashes of lightning illuminating the sky we decided to return to the cocoons. At 1am we arose again to check the weather, thunder sent us back to our cocoons again. When we checked the weather again at 2am, we found a clear sky. We breakfasted on our ration of dry bread, jam and hot water. We even forced down the cold lumps of butter – we would need the energy! All geared up and ready to go we step outside just as the heavens opened up forcing us to return to our cocoons. If there is anything ruder than an alpine start it's three failed attempts on the same night.

When we awoke again at a more 'normal' hour, the sky was clear and the sun was bright. We spent the day reading the few English climbing magazines, trying to remember two player card games, trying to spot climbers on Mt Blanc and trying to figure out how to get something other than ham steak to eat. At the elected time, John politely asked the hut manager for pasta instead of ham steak. Then at dinner we were proudly presented with pasta, ham steak

and grated carrot...hmmmm!! This meal was followed by a dessert of 'pizza with sugar' (turned out to be peaches in syrup). Some Belgian dudes arrived and asked to join our climbing party in the morning. Not long afterwards we were back in the cocoons trying to catch a precious few hours of sleep at an hour far too early and far too bright to sleep!

At a quarter to midnight someone's alarm went off and we got up to check the weather. The sky was starry with some dark clouds looming around. We tucked into our ration of dry bread, butter and jam joking about the repetitiveness of the food! Gearing up, we stepped out onto the glacier, the butter still lining our mouths. The Belgian dudes joined us just as we had finished roping up. We ascended the glacier in the moonlight. At first the ascent was gentle with a few big crevasses to weave around. As we went higher we hit steeper terrain and larger crevasses. At one stage we were climbing on a huge sheet of ice marvelling at the quality of the climbing. The moonlight danced on the snow, the stars winked above. The easy rhythm of the pace, the joy of picking the path, the awesome snow formations made it a journey that will never be forgotten.

A few hours into our ascent, it began to hail, making route finding challenging due to the reduced visibility. Not long after that the Belgian dudes turned around. We decided to continue upwards as the hail was covering our tracks and we were closer to the French huts than the Italian hut we had left earlier that morning. Besides we couldn't face another ham steak dinner or tub of butter for breakfast, so it was off to France for us!

After a short time on the glacier alone we hit the ridge line (3810m) that would take us to join highway 101 to Mt Blanc (the well-used standard route up Mt Blanc) on Gouter dome (4304m). Shuddering at the sound of metal on rock, John led us up an ambitious but short ice climb which rejoined the ridge.

Not far above the rocky section we hit rotten snow. 'One step, two steps, crash, crash, one step, two steps, woohooo solid, crash – doh!' It took us an hour to ascend 100m as we crashed down to our thighs every few steps. I felt like I was tunneling my way back to France. I think it was at that stage that the statement 'Next holiday I'm going to the beach' left my lips, along with a few of those swear words that the Italian truckie had taught me! We took turns leading on the horrid snow. The thick ice hiding the soft powder (rotten snow) dropped sharply into the valley beneath us. Although we couldn't see it due to the white-out, the 70 degree ice slopes reached all the way down to the valley 2000 metres under us!! The thought of the exposure wasn't far from our minds as we crashed around on the rotten snow.

It was still hailing and the sun was lazily lighting the world through the cloud. Giant icicles were forming on any exposed pieces of hair and our clothing. Unfortunately the camera was too cold to snap any precious memories. Stopping on Pitons des Italiens (4002m), we enjoyed some chocolate snacks hidden in the clouds. We took care as we ascended through the almost white-out conditions to keep the ridge line in view at all times. The snow condition was only slightly better than what we experienced when we hit the ridge. The effort of battling for hours in rotten snow, the ice coating on our clothes, started to drain our energy. 'Doh! Should have had more wheaties' we joked. 'No John, what we need is more rich creamery butter'; then it was on – the Simpsons quote fest!

When we hit the dome, we were unable to find superhighway 101 to Mt Blanc – it must have been under construction due to hail damage! By this stage we were cold and tired and decided to find Vallot hut (4362m) so that we could wait for the weather to improve.

We found one pole on the dome but were unsure of the exact bearing to Vallot hut (still in a white-out). We were so tired our brains had left our bodies in search of more worthy recipients of brain power. We stood by the pole discussing our different theories on where north actually was and was the compass telling us lies?? 'Remember in a rogain in the wee hours of the morning when your brain leaves your body and you think north is actually west, well this is one of those times'. Our brains fired momentarily and we decided that in fact this was one of those occasions during which you must place your faith in the science behind a compass being correct! We tried a few different navigational theories before we settled on a very scientific method and slogged on up to the hut.

Anyone who has ever been mountaineering in the Chamonix area is always given the advice 'you do not want to be stuck in Vallot hut'. Stepping on the enormous piles of rubbish and trying to decide which corner smelled the least like a sewage works I understood why! Huddled under manky wet blankets on a pile of damp urine-soaked rubbish we tried to keep each other warm; although the heat transfer rate isn't so effective through so many layers. We were too scared to take too many clothes off in a place like that, besides we hardly knew each other!!

Cold seeped right into my bones, the smell of decaying mank filled my nostrils as I desperately recalled all those days of living in Queensland when it was too hot to even move!! We shared our last item of food, took our last sip of water; the cold settled deeper.

The pile of blankets in the corner started coughing, thick dust filled the air. Over the other side of the room a group of climbers emerged from under a large pile of manky rubbish covered blankets. Language was no barrier to deciding to huddle together to try to share our warmth.

Around noon the weather cleared and we left the Mt Blanc 'Hilton'. At this point we decided not to go to the summit, it was too late in the day, as well as that we were out of food and water!! We decided that we would descend the gouter route (superhighway 101). The clouds were just beneath the gouter dome and the sun was shining, warming us as we descended. We could see our tracks looping around the dome; I think we found the longest, most convoluted way of finding the hut, though all our theories would have worked if we had stuck with them!

The midi station looked impressive rising sharply out of the white blanket of clouds; unfortunately the camera was still too cold to get photos. The snow quality was incredible compared to our slog up the rotten arête on the Italian route. Just as we rounded the dome in the glorious sunshine we met the first of many people we would meet on our descent. 'Did you make it to the top?' 'No, we came from the Italian side and had bad weather and bad snow so we didn't make it'; I think we repeated it 1,000 times before we made it to the valley floor. As we approached the Gouter hut (3817m) we discussed the possibility of staying the night in the hut and attempting the summit again in the morning. With our planned departure to the Matterhorn with another group of two less than 48 hours away, we decided to continue our descent.

Once we were on the rocky section beneath Gouter hut we met hundreds of mule teams coming up the mountain (punters roped to guides). Continuing further down the mountain we met even more people coming up the mountain, a little bit of a shock to the system after the isolation of the past few days.

At the Nid d'Aigle train station (2372m) we found that we had just missed the last train (2 mins) – DOH! Walking down the constant gradient of the railway line sure hammered the knees. At the first opportunity we ducked off the railway line onto a beautiful hiking track. The feet began to swell in the plastic mountaineering boots as we descended through the lush shady pine trees. After the mandatory (for mountaineering) river crossing we continued to descend through the pretty spring flowers. Crossing a huge overgrown meadow of flowers we finally found ourselves on the valley floor and on a paved road. A final four kilometre slog up the highway would take us to the hostel, showers and dinner. Still in our Gore-Tex, still in our harnesses and with our sore swollen feet still in plastic boots we dragged ourselves up the highway. We arrived back at the hostel at 8pm, exhausted after a 19 hour day on the move. A blackboard advertising dinner teased us with roast lamb and crème caramel – DOH!! DOH!! As I slipped a well travelled euro coin into the internet machine to tell everyone we were safe, John convinced the kitchen to serve us anyway. Tucking into a hot meal and staring up at the midi station and Gouter dome was a perfect end to a nice day tramping in the hills.

What are you doing this summer?

This isn't a very fun answer. I'll be working near Corryong in north-eastern Victoria, but I hope to get up to NSW for some canyoning and maybe caving (which I have never done!) ~ **Marty**

Having used up my endless months of arts-student summer holidays by desperately trying to earn money, I'm now stuck earning money instead of having summer holidays! I'm not sure that it's really worth the extra two public holidays per year to have to use up my hard-earned annual leave for an extra few days off at Christmas, but here goes...this summer I'm off to New Zealand for a precious two weeks of paddling in the South Island, including a four-day course at the NZ Kayaking School in Murchison. Then I'll be back at work again, but there'll probably be lots of weekends at Arapiles, lazy hot Saturdays upside-down in the freezing Goulburn river and maybe a desperate weekend or two canyoning in the blueys or caving in Tassie (come on Jetstar, we want some more cheap flights!) ~ **Kylie**

I am going to England. I will most likely be walking in Snowdonia (North Wales) over New Year. Hardly a 'summer' trip though! ~ **Pete**

Kat's ultimate summer camp comprising
1 week of sea kayaking (Fiordlands, NZ)
3 weeks whitewater kayaking (South Island, NZ)
1 week whitewater kayaking (North Island, NZ)
2 weeks caving - Waitomo and various sheep stations in the North Island of NZ
Can't wait!!

Fieldwork... a.k.a. 9 weeks mountain biking on full pay with a brief canyoning holiday in the middle and climbing on weekends ~ **Cam**

Hmmmm....unfortunately working, probably fighting fires and, with any luck, CLIMBING!! ~ **Carys**

This summer I am walking along beaches at Croajingalong National Park and also hopefully along the south coast track in Tasmania. ~ **Marina**

Spending December walking and mountaineering in NZ. Coming home at Christmas stone broke and living on bread and water for the next few months. ~ **Lincoln**



Above: The MUMC/Loki crew in Tassie for the Teva Lea Xtreme Race 2004
– Grant Schuster

Back Cover: Ascent of Mt Fainter – Tristan Croll

VCROLL
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