



THE
MOUNTAINEER
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THE MOUNTAINEER

AUGUST 2009

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ANDY GREEN
President

PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

It's hard to believe almost a year has passed since I took office, but we've hardly been idle in that time. And the club I see now makes me more excited than ever because it offers its members even more: the spectrum of trips has expanded and membership is up over last year.

We are offering more to everyone with activities in the expanded Tuesday night meetings, now starting at 6:30. Slide shows of exotic destinations and recent club trips; workshops on navigation, skiing, mountaineering and caving; seminars on leadership, and even films make a worthwhile night even if you aren't going away.

And for those who are, a revamped trip sheet and activity guidelines make organising and leading a trip easier. Several gear stores sport new gear including modern caving lights, bushwalking tents, and a climbing rack.

But these improvements are really insignificant compared to what the club already offers, and not just in equipment and club meetings. The instruction on offer from the club is surprising in both its depth and breadth. More often forgotten is experience available. Active members in the club can tell you which moves you need to do to complete a particular climb, how to decide whether it's worth going kayaking after a rain storm, what the canyoning guidebook really is saying, or even about climbing the Bard with pitons,

It is easy to forget just how much the club does offer, easier still to take for granted all the time and effort of various leaders to make those offerings. Because of this, it is often hard to explain to a friend why joining the club is so much more than just cheap gear hire.

The club's leaders don't keep planning trips, buying gear and running trips just because they are so generous and like helping others. Instead, they have discovered a secret: they learn far more by leading than by following. Leadership is the short cut to knowledge and understanding.

The knowledge to be gained isn't just what a prussic does or how to perform a T-rescue. It's team building at the start of a long trip, people management skills on a big beginners weekend, risk assessment when the weather turns sour, and careful planning for two weeks of dehydrated meals—it is learning to quickly deal with problems and situations with direct, logical solutions, a rare skill known as “common sense.” These are the first skills an employer looks for in a potential employee.

In this respect, the leaders in the club are selfish, and rightfully, unashamedly so. It is the opportunity to lead which is the most important offering of the club. To few people take advantage of that, for anyone can become a leader: all they need to do is step up! It's all I did, and I hope you have all enjoyed the past year as much as I have.

CONTACTING THE EDITOR

For questions about this publication or the contents thereof:
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MUMC ONLINE

Full colour PDF versions of this and past Mountaineers, as well as information about the club and how to join can be found on the website:
www.mumc.org.au

MEETINGS AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES

For specific questions about the Club, contact the club secretary:
secretary@mumc.org.au

Regular meetings are held at the MUMC club rooms each Tuesday at 7:00 pm.

MAILING ADDRESS

MUMC
c/o MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY SPORT
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
PARKVILLE VIC 3010

FROM OUR CLUB CONVENORS

Canyoning

Kate Abel

canyoning@mumc.org.au



CANYONING HAS BEEN really successful so far this year. At the start of April, I ran a day trip in preparation for upcoming canyoning trips. We focussed on learning and revising abseiling and prussicking skills. More advanced trip attendees also learned how to set up anchors and some basic rope rescue techniques were taught.

At Easter Alaster Meehan lead the first trip of the year and headed up to the Blue Mountains for a week of canyoning with five other MUMC members. They completed five canyons of increasingly difficulty. Over ANZAC weekend another group left for the Bluiers where they spent three days abseiling, scrambling and swimming down stunning canyons.

Winter has now arrived and the canyoners go into hibernation (or head to the snow). Come September, when the weather starts warming up, (and the water does too, slightly) we will reappear for more canyoning fun.

Paddling

Helen Dulfer

paddling@mumc.org.au



UNFORTUNATELY, AFTER THE introduction to kayaking and bushwalking trip to the Otways at the beginning of semester, kayaking came to a halt due to lack of water (a common problem over the past few years due to the extreme drought). However, with the recent colder weather bringing rain, some of the rivers are starting to flow and there have been a couple of recent river trips to the Big and the Yarra.

Hopefully, the rain Gods continue to smile upon us and we receive lots and lots more water over the next few months and snow melt come September. If you are interested in kayaking keep in mind the fact that Kayaking trips tend to be organized at the last minute because they are weather dependant, so, make sure you find me in the club-rooms or introduce yourself via email.

Mountaineering

Dale Thistlewaite

alpinism@mumc.org.au



AFTER A SUCCESSFUL summer of climbing for MUMC including member trips to New Zealand and Canada, mountaineering has been understandably quiet through the autumn and winter months, but it is time to start dreaming of the peaks again!

During June, as part of MUMC's now regular Tuesday slide shows, I presented a pictorial odyssey of ascents of some of New Zealand's more popular peaks including Mt Aspiring, Mt Tasman and Mt Cook.

To further inspire, MUMC and the Australian Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club will be jointly hosting a slide show by famed mountaineer Stephen Venables, the first Briton to summit Mt Everest without supplementary oxygen, on 17 September in the Elisabeth Murdoch theatre at Melbourne Uni – watch the website in the coming months for ticket details.

In this spirit of collaboration we will also be offering our regular alpine techniques weekend at Arapiles to member of both clubs (MUMC and NZAC) during October – again watch the website for further details.

Rock Climbing

Mark Patterson

climbing@mumc.org.au

CLIMBING IN THE club has been very busy and popular recently. The introductory trips and numerous other beginner trips that were run at the start of the first semester has brought many new climbers to the club. For the last 5 months there have been trips running most weekends, often multiple trips on each weekend. Thursday night's at Altona have been busy and successful with many people turning up weekly to improve their climbing. Week-long trips over Easter and the mid year break have been run to NSW for climbers to get their interstate climbing fix.

The gear store has seen the arrival of a new climbing rack which is a welcome addition to our existing equipment. Also a new system of gear hire is planned to be implemented for next semester, special thanks to Dave for all his work here. With climbing every weekend even at this point in winter things are looking promising for a fantastic spring of climbing.

Skiing

Wen-Jie Yang

skiing@mumc.org.au



THE SKIING TECHNICALLY started in May, when a freakish gust from Antarctica brought the glorious white stuff to Mt Buller. Then between then and the official ski trips, were some bushwalkers who were still suffering last season's withdrawal symptoms. However, official ski trips are now in full swing, with even dodgy weather conditions not dampening the enthusiasm. Unfortunately the two novice trips were met with poor icy conditions, but that didn't stop the persistent from practicing their snow ploughs and perfecting their uphill travel skills. An overnight trip to the area surrounding Falls Creek was also a success, with good conditions and only Sam, Kathryn and I to enjoy a whole mountain's worth of untouched snow. Hopefully trips like these as well as the weeklong trips to the Bogong area and then another to the Main Range will inspire people to ski as much as possible to improve their skills and thus tackle more interesting and varied terrain. A Telemark clinic will also be run in conjunction with some resort skiing, to allow people more practice with their Down, after they have grasped the Up.

Last of all, a reminder that fluids exist in all sorts of places and nothing brings this home more than an extremely cold night. Some things that we forgot to load into our sleeping bags include damp gloves, camelbaks, contact lens fluid, sunscreen and toothbrush. All of the above needed defrosting on a stove, as can be proven by photographic evidence.

Bushwalking

Sam Flewett

bushwalking@mumc.org.au



THIS HAS BEEN a strong half year for bushwalking at MUMC with overnight trips running most weekends during the first semester, along with some longer trips interstate. Highlights for the semester have included an Easter trip down to the Walls of Jerusalem in Central Tasmania, a trip to the Flinders Ranges in South Australia and a trip to the Larapinta Trail near Alice Springs which is in progress as I write. These longer and more adventurous trips are in addition to weekend trips to places such as the Razorback and the MUMC Hut, the Crosscut Saw, and daytrips closer to Melbourne.

Once the snow melts and we have to actually start walking again as opposed to skiing, bushwalking will get into full swing leading up to the Summer season for big trips to Tasmania and New Zealand. For new people joining the club, and those who have been around for a while, bushwalking is a great way to see Victoria and places further afield, and a great way to get in shape and meet some new people. We are always looking for new people to lead and organise trips, and there are plenty of destinations (such as Wilson's Prom) where you can have a great time and not get lost, even if you aren't that flash with the map and compass to begin with.

Conservation

Christine

conservation@mumc.org.au

SQUIRREL GLIDERS AREN'T easy to see in the day time. That's why I jumped at the chance to join MUMC's trip to Benalla to check glider nesting boxes. I was rewarded when we found many nesting boxes with sleeping occupants: furry Squirrel Glider families all curled up. This trip to Benalla was my first MUMC experience, and I was hooked immediately. One trip under my belt hardly made me qualified to take Paul's place as Conservation Convenor, but that's what happened since he is leaving us.

The Benalla trip was just the beginning for me. At the end of June, a few of us planted trees at Yarra Bend Park. We met up at Andrews Reserve on a beautiful Sunday morning and helped plant 750 native trees and shrubs. The plants should provide much needed habitat for city birds. Speaking of which, we were lucky enough to witness a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos overhead.

Next semester you'll have the chance to help scientists and experienced animal handlers with ongoing research on shorebirds, woodland birds of Box-Ironbark country, and exciting genetic studies on platypus. And there will be a bunch of opportunities for you to plant trees; an activity I find extremely gratifying. I hope you're as excited as I am about these upcoming events. Feel free to shoot me an email at conservation@mumc.org.au if you have any questions. I hope to meet more of you in the months to come.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Midnight Ascent Friday, 8th August, 2009

Dan Hearnden
gear-store@mumc.org.au

Every year, mumc plans a bushwalking trip lit by the full moon, which kicks off a full weekend of winter backcountry fun: Midnight Ascent. Driving from Melbourne, club members arrive at the base of the North West Spur of Mt. Feathertop just as the moon is high over head. A few hours later, tired walkers layout their sleeping bags in the dry comfort of the Club's own backcountry hut.

Waking to a snowy wonderland, there are many opportunities for fun. Cross country skiing, enjoying the expansive views from Mt. Feathertop, snowball fights, or just a quiet afternoon in the Club hut await those who have braved the night. A grand feast is the order of the evening, with elaborate costumes or formal dress the typical attire.

Spaces will fill fast, so please make sure you're on the list by emailing or speaking with the organiser, Dan Hearnden. This year's theme is "Heros and Villians."

Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 27 August 2008

Andy Green
president@mumc.org.au

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Cricket Pavillion next to the Clubrooms. The meeting will begin promptly at **6:30 pm on Tuesday, August 25th**. A light dinner will be available. This meeting is very important for the club, and **all members are strongly encouraged to attend**.

A special resolution is before the club. Any business other than Ordinary Business to be included on the Agenda must be given in writing to the Secretary via post to the address on page one, or email (secretary@mumc.org.au) no later than seven days prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting appear on page 30.

Special Resolution

Dan Hearnden
secretary@mumc.org.au

Notice of Special Resolution to alter the Constitution:

A vote will be held at the Annual General Meeting on changing the Financial Year End from 30 April to 30 June. The intention is to simplify our financial reporting and budgeting by aligning our reports with university semesters. A 75% majority of members voting at the meeting is required for the motion to be passed.

Committee Nominations Returning Officer

Call for Nominations for all voting positions on the Incorporation's Committee of Management: Nominations are to be submitted in writing, and must be signed by the Proposer, Seconder, and the Nominee. Nominations must be passed in to the Nominations Box in the Clubrooms, or handed to the Returning Officer. Nominations must be submitted by 8:00 pm Tuesday, August 18th.

65th Anniversary Dinner Saturday, 17 October 2009

Dale Thistlewaite
alumni@mumc.org.au

This year, 2009, is the 65th anniversary of the club. MUMC in collaboration with former members is organising the traditional five-yearly reunion dinner to celebrate. The evening will be a largely informal event providing a chance for you to catch up with old friends, and hopefully make some new ones, over a meal.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Dale via email or post a note to the club's address on page one.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MUMC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 30 AUGUST 2007

Meeting opened 6.43pm, Lincoln Smith presiding, Stuart Hollaway returning officer

Apologies

Simon McKenzie (nominates David Rochwerger as proxy vote), Michelle Bassett, Grace Phang (will be late)

Present

Dhugal Bissett, Stephan Chan, Eugenie Chung, Oliver Clarke, Shannon Crack, Peter Crockett, Claire Davy, Jane Davy, Helen Dulfer, David Ellis, Paul Glennie, Bronwyn Hradsky, Stu Hollaway, Alice Leppitt, Alaster Meehan, Andrew Nurse, Andrew Oppenheim, Grace Phang, Greta Raymant, David Rochwerger, Grant Schuster, Jennifer Sheridan, Lincoln Smith, Dale Thistlethwaite, Alison Thomson, Kathryn Whalley

Minutes from Previous AGM

Lincoln: I motion that last year's AGM minutes are a true and accurate representation of what was said.

Jen: Second

Motion passed without objection.

Reports

President

Lincoln: The aim of this year has been to look at how VSU would affect the club. The club has coped quite well. We are still doing well financially and membership level is similar to previous years. A full financial picture won't be available until next year after a full year of VSU has elapsed and it will take a few years to see the long term effects.

A substantial amount of the committee's time this year was also devoted dealing with the actions of one member. The incident occurred during o-week and involved one member burning another with a figure 8. From this the committee has begun putting in place a system to deal with members who transgress.

There are a lot of new names in the nominations for the next committee. It is great to see new members stepping up and getting involved. All major technical convenor roles have been filled with a few notable vacancies in the executive.

When people walk into the clubrooms they ask to speak to convenor's, not the president and it is good to see newer members in these roles. Older members might like to consider volunteering for

empty executive positions.

I would like to thank all members of the outgoing committee. On occasion it has been a trying year.

Treasurer

David R: We have weathered the intro of VSU fairly well but have only seen the effects of half a year. We are still in profit by \$9,217 but that is about \$6,000 down from last year. There was less income from memberships but more from gear hire, in particularly from the ski hire, to offset this.

NAB did not correctly credit our account for a previous cash deposit until this year. There is also an accidental cheque deposit where we deposited a cheque to ourselves. Income from pie'n'slide night was not banked in this financial year. There was no Bush Dance this year (2007).

We deposited \$20,000 into an ING Direct account. This has generated about \$800 in interest. The Australian Ethical fund has generated around \$4,000.

Around \$1,500 in cheques were written this year. There are a number of unrepresented cheques outstanding from the last three years including a cheque to ourselves from the 60th dinner T-shirts.

Alison: Why isn't gear hire recorded by sport?

Dave R: There were two gear hire deposits not recording which sport they were from. They may have been from multiple sports.

Dale: This is very annoying. Specific gear hire figures are used in deciding the budget for each sport.

Shannon: It is up to the convenor to ensure gear hire is banked correctly.

Mac: No, it is up to the treasurer.

Dale: I move that the minutes are a true and accurate reflection of the club's accounts.

Alaster: I second.

Motion passed without objection

Bushwalking

Lincoln: Marina is now in Sydney and resigned as Bushwalking convenor a month ago.

Andrew: Bushwalking's status in club is diminished and its future debatable. Only one extended club trip occurred (to the Tasmania's south coast in Easter). I don't recall any others. There have been regular overnight trips to standard areas and Marina ran many day trips, including to areas the club hasn't normally visited. Many trips were organised informally on Tuesday nights. Next year it would be good to see more formal organised trips run.

Climbing

Lincoln: Simon is away but has forwarded the following statement

"..."

Kayaking

Jen: Kayaking has done well considering the effects of last years drought. With the drought and lack of trips no intermediate paddlers have come through. This put pressure on the few existing intermediate and older paddlers. There were however lots of beginners this year, some of who will hopefully progress to leaders next year.

VSU has resulted in the regular pool sessions at Brunswick pool being cancelled. These sessions had provided a regular place to learn to roll and to gauge peoples' ability. We have been able to have a few pool sessions at Kensington pool. The focus on these sessions has shifted from a social event to more of a focus on training technique in the time available. We have introduced a uniform roll technique so all leaders do and teach in the same manner. We also have videos demonstrating this technique.

There have been beginner's trips to the Yarra at the start of the year and intermediate trips in the recent rains. There will be more beginner trips when the snow melts.

Mac: Sounds like pretty much it.

Skiing

Alison: It has been a great season with ski trips every weekend. Thank you to Joel Bartley for the snow (he had two broken wrists). When he eventually skied in August the snow worsened only to return when he suffered a hernia.

There were more than 282 trips away when counted per person. If what people did at resorts was counted this figure would be well over 300.

Notable trips include a group of 21 on a trip to Baw Baw and 15 people going to Stirling. Greta ran a trip to the razorback which hasn't been done in a while. Thank you to Lincoln, Greta, Alan Daley and Joel Bartley for running a telemark clinic. Less successful was a skate clinic that only I took part in.

This year we ran an info sessions modelled on Dale's mountaineering info night. There is now a list on the web site of what to take.

We have began replacing the old 3 pin leather bindings with new plastic boots and cables. These are more expensive but should last longer. 2 new snow shoes were purchased bringing the total number to 4

in order to have a full car load.

Caving

Shannon: Quite a few new people tried vertical caving this year. There were a number of beginner's trips after o-week. There have still been trips regularly since then, often joint with LUMC or interstate clubs. Things have been quiet in the last few months due to skiing.

Mountaineering

Dale: This has been my third year as mountaineering convenor. The assents completed this year by club members are: "..."

Matty Doyle unfortunately lost an ice axe. An info session ran on the 17 October last year. Despite being well advertised it was more well attended by Latrobe.

Another info session will run this year on 12 September. It will give an overview of gear, etc.. I have also invited members of RMIT, NZAC, Latrobe and Monash clubs.

I might also run an alpine climbing technique course covering things such as crevasse rescue if there is enough interest.

Glenn Pennycook who runs www.iclimb.co.nz has offered very cheap gear to club members this year.

Conservation

Bronwyn: A couple of tree planting trips occurred earlier this year. There have not been many trips this end of year due to everyone skiing. I was away over summer, but tried to encourage others to go on trips.

I am currently drafting a letter about the River Resgum National Park.

Canyoning

Alison: There was a trip to the Blue Mountains last year with about half a dozen participants. Lincoln and Al run some more serious trips to ... and ... canyons and will go again soon. There are not many other experienced canyons in the club.

Mac: We have Kylie and Jasmine.

Stu: They didn't do much any more.

Alison: Juc Cutter, another older member also has experience. I am going to buy some maps and guides of some of canyons to encourage others to take the sport up.

Canoe Polo

Greta: This year there was one team in E grade, including two new polo players. They came third and just missed out on the finals. This season there is no team entered. A lot of that is due to fact that no one wanted to be a point of contact with club. Hopefully next year the committee can encourage members to take up canoe polo again.

Rogaining

Alaster: This is my last year as Rogaining convenor. However, quite a few extra people became involved in Rogaining this

year. In the first 6 hour rogaine we had 16 competitors.

We unfortunately lost the Victorian Rogaining trophy to Victoria University in April this year. They do well in this rogaine because they have a lot more competitors than us. It is compulsory for students from some of their courses to participate.

There is a more casual competition that adds up the scores of each rogaine over the course of the year. Melbourne University is well ahead in this competition with a score more than all the other universities combined.

This is the first year the university students have been able to apply for funding to go to the Australian Championships. We had one team successful in receiving this funding.

Phil Caldwell came in 6th in one rogaine.

Hut Warden

Lincoln: We not have a hut warden present.

Alison: A new toilet has been installed thanks to parks. It is a fly in, fly out model.

There are some major problems with the hut and we need to run a hut maintenance trip when the snow has gone. The rubber sheeting around the outside needs replacing in sections. This will involve unpiling the rocks on top first. The roof also needs repainting and checking to see if waterproof. The old fire extinguisher has already been removed to be checked. It has been replaced with a fire blanket. The extinguished will be returned once checked.

IT

Steve: We implemented a new database this year. It is much faster than the previous one. A new web site will be launched in January 2008. That's about it.

Publications

Stuart: This year's Mountaineers have been the best since the 1980s.

Steve: There were 3 mountaineers this year. I will pass down template to the next publications officer.

Alison: The Mountaineer has looked very professional this year. We have been considering making an ultimate o-week edition to be available every year.

Round of applause for Steve's efforts on The Mountaineer.

Other Business

Membership Prices

Lincoln: The club gave the committee the power to set prices for last year only. We need to be able to do this on a more permanent bases. I motion "that the annual subscription for membership of MUMC be set at \$20 for students, and \$50 for non-students".

Mac: I second.

Motion passed without objection.

Dale: We need active members. You can't go a trips with non active members.

Elections

Lincoln: The committee can function next year but there is a vacancy for the role of president.

Dale: It is passed disappointing no one has a vision for club and would like to step up. At the first incoming committee meeting there is an opportunity for people to turn up and volunteer to fill empty roles. If you didn't want to stand at the AGM you should come to that meeting.

Alison: You can run for things jointly but not for president or vice-president. At this stage you could volunteer to run even if only around for half a year. The president's role is to provide the vision and is not so much an admin. role. A lot is delegated but it is better if people are on campus.

Lincoln: There are no contested positions so no need to vote.

2007/2008 Committee Nominations

Executive (voting)

President:	none
Vice President:	none
Secretary:	Grace Phang
Treasurer:	Dave Ellis
Assistant Treasurer:	none

Convenors (voting)

Bushwalking:	Sam Flewett
Rock Climbing:	none
Canoeing (kayaking):	Kat Martin & Andrew Nurse (joint)
Ski Touring:	Greta Raymant & Pete Crockett (joint)
Caving:	Lincoln Smith
Mountaineering:	Dale Thistlethwaite

Other (voting)

Publications:	Dhugal Bissett
Gear Store Officer:	none
General Member:	Helen Duffer

Non-Voting

Canyoning:	none
Canoe Polo:	none
Rogaining:	none
Hut Warden:	none
IT officer:	none

Stuart: I declare the previous committee dissolved and appoint those nominated as the new committee.

Grace: Thank you to Lincoln and previous committee. Can the new committee stay back to discuss next meeting.

Stuart: Many thanks to Mac, Alison and Lincoln who have given many years of service.

Meeting closed 7.35pm



Summit snow slope of Mt Halcombe

MOUNTAINEERING AT FOX GLACIER AND SURVIVING THE KIWI WEATHER: JANUARY 2009

BY KATE ABEL

Day 1: Christchurch to Fox Glacier account

IDRAG MYSELF out of bed while it's still dark. Stu is already up and busy packing. Get used to it, I think, this is a late start in mountaineering terms! I swallow some breakfast and then it's time to hit the road. 6 hours later and somewhat more awake we arrive in Fox Glacier village. We're in luck. The weather is good and the helicopter company can squeeze us in between a couple of scenic flights.

More frantic unpacking, sorting and repacking. By midafternoon we're standing and blinking in the powerful sunlight and crisp cold air on Fox Glacier Neve. We've donned our alpine gear and are surrounded by boxes of food, crampons, ice axes and climbing packs.

That afternoon we warm up by climbing a small bump close to the hut called Toilet Peak, so-called because it could be seen through the old toilet window. The mountaineering skills I learned the pre-

vious year in my mountaineering course come flooding back to me... it was a lovely easy start.

The sunset from the balcony of Pioneer Hut that night was beautiful. In the distance, you can see the ocean. Fox Glacier flows steeply downhill away from the hut at the top of the neve.

Day 2: Mt Halcombe

DAWN HAS ARRIVED by the time we reach the bergschrund (the terminal crevasse at the base of the mountain). We've been up since 3am with the hike across the glacier only taking a couple of hours. The weather has been warm over the past few days, but, unfortunately today it's freezing and the incoming cloud is very ominous. Well, I'm only here for 10 days and I want to make the most of it, so we start climbing anyway. We choose the steepest line up the mountain that we can find.

The bergschrund is horrible. You have to climb down into it and then up the other side (vertical climbing) to get onto the mountain proper because it's too wide and steep to step over. Imagine climbing a pile of collapsing caster sugar. The soggy

snow collapses with each foot placement. I can't get a decent axe placement to haul up on because the snow just pulls away from me. Somehow I eventually manage to grovel up, probably with quite a bit of assistance from Stu!

The snow on the mountain is better. Lovely hard snow; almost ice. It's disconcerting that the snow is only a thin layer on rock and below that I can hear water running as the snow melts. However, it's still almost freezing. I'm wearing; thermal top, polar fleece jumper, goretex jacket and on top of that, my down jacket. I'm wearing a beanie under my helmet and 2 layers of gloves. It's bitterly cold.

Three pitches of almost vertical Grade 3+ snow/ice climbing later, I'm suffering from what Stu calls the "screaming barfies". My hands are freezing. They are attached via tight wrist straps to my ice axe and hammer because I am climbing vertically in a technique called front-pointing and therefore, are almost constantly in contact with the snow above my head. There is also the wind. The circulation is poor when your hands are above your head, but, when you lower your hands to waist level, the circulation returns. You



Sunrise while climbing Mt Haidinger.



Rock climb on Mt Humdinger – it's snowing!

know the feeling of taking a hot shower when you are cold? How your feet tingle and hurt? Imagine that multiplied by about 100. The pain is excruciating. So bad all you can do is scream and vomit at the same time, hence the term “screaming barfies”. It takes 5 or more minutes to recover. Tip: don’t lower your hands until after you have finished climbing all those pitches (unless you have to!).

The last 2 pitches are easy snow slopes followed by a short scramble up loose rock to the summit. When we get there, Stu stops suddenly. The summit and whole other side of the mountain has fallen off! All that’s left is a large unstable overhang of loose rock (that we’re standing on) and rubble on the glacier hundreds of metres below. We retreat quickly and reconsider our options. Our planned descent route no longer exists. Plan B; down-climb, which is really awful, and then abseil over a 30m rock band back down onto the glacier below.

Back on the glacier we snack with the sun on our backs. The weather that looked ugly earlier that morning has temporarily receded during our descent and rapidly the glacier is becoming extremely hot. Altitude and white snow combined, it’s about 30degC while we wade back to the hut through knee-to-waist-deep slushy snow. The hike across the glacier that took us 2 hours that morning takes us 4 hours to get back. However Stu puts on a deli-

cious late lunch, followed by an equally delicious dinner a couple of hours later.

Days 3 and 4: Pioneer Hut

I WAKE AT 6am to Stu swearing. He is in a cleaning frenzy. Gradually, becoming more aware of my surroundings, I see that there is a blizzard outside and it’s raining inside. Yep, that’s right, the roof is leaking from multiple holes and the hut floor is covered in water. My down jacket, hanging innocently on a hook under a rather large leak, is soggy and useless. It’s freezing, but, I get out of my warm and slightly wet sleeping bag and help Stu. Some time later the pools of water have been mopped up though the floor is still damp. We crawl back in our sleeping bags and enjoy two blissful days reading, eating and catching up on sleep.

The only major challenge on these two days is the trip to the toilet. The hut is perched on a rocky outcrop and the toilet is located down a ridge of loose bouldery rock, approximately 10 metres from the hut balcony. The ridge falls away steeply on both sides; one side terminating in a crevasse and the other side dropping hundreds of metres before reaching the glacier floor. The wind howls and snow/hail/rain/sleet pounds you as you scramble precariously (bouldering-style) down frozen wet rock to the toilet. Both threaten to throw

you off balance. The snow building up on the ridge is slippery when frozen. Later, as the weather warms up, the deceiving under-layer melts. This collapses when a foot is placed on what looks like solid snow. A hand-line helps, but, there is a certain level of courage (and perhaps desperation to do a number two) required as you take the leap of faith from the warmth and relative safety of the hut to the toilet. I feel sorry for the poor sod that emptied the overflowing pee bucket over the hut balcony just as a gust of gale-force wind blew the contents directly back at him.

Day 6: Grey’s Peak and Mt Humdinger

FINALLY! THERE’S a break in the weather. Well, not a good break, but a little, unsettled one. After another “alpine start” of 2:30am, I need to practice my cramponing technique, so Stu takes me up a very convoluted route on Grey. After traversing back and forth up the slope and then back down after summiting, my arthritic knees complain, but, I have gained a little more confidence in flat-footing.

Clouds roll in and visibility is obscured. However, there’s no blizzard yet and it’s still early in the day. We set our sights on the Gr15 rock route on the nearby Mt Humdinger. Obviously, we’ve been climbing in mountaineering boots and crampons, but, it’s useless for rock. Crouching



Descending Mt Haidinger.

awkwardly on a very steep slippery snow slope just below the bergschrund, we change into our rock shoes. Stu makes us pigeon holes in the snow for our grip-less rock shoes and after dumping our packs, we climb up and over the bergschrund onto lovely New Zealand alpine rock.

The rock is loose, wet and cold. I'm climbing in full alpine gear; goretex, thermal top and bottom, polarfleece jumper and beanie, but, reluctantly leave the gloves behind in a trade-off between being able to make use of small handholds versus being warm. Visibility has improved again but it's still overcast. The weather is very unsettled.

100 metres up it is snowing. Stu is straight up above me, but, it's too windy to communicate. The rock becomes wetter. We've still got another few hundred metres to go. We abort, rapping off a small rock spike.

Back on the glacier it continues to snow and the West Coast afternoon cloud rolls in. Same time, every day, shrouding the glacier in a hot damp white-out. The cloud forms as hot air rises from the temperate rainforest at sea level along the West Coast, condensing with the cold glacial air. It's always a pleasant reminder that, regardless of the revolting conditions up in the mountains, down below and only 30kms away there is the more typical summer warmth that you expect in January (well, if you can call NZ warm). The air is so still and hot. I feel like I am walking in an oven. It feels tropical, and altogether eerie, being immersed in a humid white-out. The snow quickly starts its usual afternoon melting/condensing cycle and the once-hard morning snow becomes the deep slush of the afternoon on the wade back to the hut.

Day 7: Mt Haidinger

THIS MORNING WE wake bright-eyed at 2am and full of anticipation of the Grade 3+ climb ahead of us. It's too early to chew on muesli but porridge and 2 cups of steaming hot chocolate go down well. We rummage around in the dark for clothes whilst attempting not to wake fellow climbers who are still trying to sleep. I put on my shell outerwear, socks, inner boots, boots, gaiters, harness, helmet, rope up for glacier travel and hold my axe in gloved hands. Finally, half an hour later, we're off. It's a long slog up the glacier, especially with heavy crampons. By 5am the air is at its coldest and I don my down jacket over my goretex. The slope steepens rapidly and the pre-dawn glow arrives as we reach the bergschrund.

The first part of the climb is a lovely snow arête, a steep snow ridge falling away hundreds of metres on both sides. I soon drop from flat-footing into the more stable, but, slower front-pointing style, while Stu carries on cramponing with style. The altitude is affecting me severely and I pant constantly as I climb. I stop for a rest and appreciate the beautiful sunrise; the whole sky is pink, the shadows are black and the snow is crisp white.

Beside the arête is a drop of several hundred metres and then a 70-80deg snow/ice slope. While we climb the arête, there is a team climbing the slope. There's 3 guides and a single client. He is an amputee (having lost both his legs in a mountaineering accident in the 1980s) and has prosthetic legs. He has massive upper body strength and his front-pointing skills (the style of climbing required for a steep slope) are incredible. The 3 guides have to climb at full pace to keep up with him. He climbs full 60m rope lengths without stopping. The first guide climbs solo, clearing any loose slabs of ice and chopping steps for them to rest on. The next guide leads on with the client on the end of the rope. The third guide climbs last to ensure everything is running smoothly from below.

At the top of the arête and snow slope, there is a snow-covered ridge running up left, that heads towards the summit. The ridge separates the West Coast of New Zealand from the Eastern side of the Alps, Mt Cook National Park and the Tasman Glacier. As we climb the ridge, Mt Cook and Mt Tasman are behind us. To our right there is a several hundred metre vertical drop down to the Tasman Glacier. To

our left Fox Glacier flows away from us; where we just hiked up. Directly up ahead lies the summit of Mt Haidinger, which is today's incentive. It is a very exposed and intimidating position. Step off three metres either side and reach certain death. It is also incredibly beautiful.

Along the top of the ridge is a cornice, which is deceptively flat. It looks lovely to walk on. However, a cornice is an unstable ledge of overhanging snow, formed by the wind blowing powder snow across the ridge and subsequently freezing. You stand on a cornice and it will probably collapse; falling to your death is almost guaranteed. Instead we had to make our way along a vertical slab of snow that was just below the top, traversing delicately in front-pointing position. The top of the ridge and the cornice is at eye level, with the Tasman Glacier in front and far below. The wall we are traversing drops away almost vertically, down to the Fox Glacier.

The guides with their client are ahead of us. They chop steps for him. In fact, they chop every single footstep for several hundred metres. The first guide chops, then step. The second guide chops, then step. The first guide chops, then step. The second guide chops, then step. The third guide follows behind the client. All of them are incredibly fit. The client with prosthetic legs that have little control and limited mobility, mainly uses his upper body to climb. The guides not only have to climb but take responsibility for the client. It's inspirational to watch.

It's close to 9am. We rest and watch them. It's freezing cold, but, the air and sky are beautifully clear. I'm still climbing in my thermals, polarfleece, goretex and down jackets.

The last part of the climb is 2 pitches of vertical ice. It's fantastic climbing, though physically challenging. I'm seconding Stu on the final part of the second pitch when he stops and yells "smile for the camera!" The subsequent photo of my "smile" can be interpreted as a grimace.

There's only room for two or three on the summit rock. The guides and their client abseil down as we arrive. The view and the feeling of immense satisfaction are exhilarating, but, it's cold! We follow the others soon after.

We have to do the delicate traverse in reverse, which is as difficult as it was the first time; however, the excitement makes it pass much quicker. 10 pitches of down climbing and abseiling later, we're back over the bergschrund, on the glacier. That



In the chopper flying back out of the mountains



*Taking a rest at Lake Alta, with The Remarkables behind (we climbed the ridgeline).
Photo: Stuart Hollaway*



*Jumping a crevasse.
Photo: Stuart Hollaway*



Ridge (with large cornice), steep snow slope and 2 pitches of ice leading to the summit of Mt Haidinger

blasted cloud rolls in again and instantly we're sweating.

When we arrive back at the hut late in the afternoon, the client with no legs is looking very pleased and excited. His guides are fast asleep; he's worn them out.

Day 8

THE PLAN FOR the next two days was to climb Mt Tasman, the second tallest mountain in New Zealand. Hike up the glacier one day, bivy for a few hours, then climb the north shoulder of Mt Tasman (via Mt Lendenfeld) and then hike back down the glacier. Unfortunately, foul weather foiled our plans. The evening "sched" (Department of Conservation daily weather forecast relayed via mountain radio) announced blizzard conditions

for five days straight. We consider our options and decide to fly out of the mountains early. There is plenty of climbing to do lower down, and the idea of a shower is too desirable. Everyone else in the hut individually makes the same decision.

It takes all day to fly all nine of us out. The weather is perfect at 6am but the helicopters don't fly until 8am! The first chopper makes it in and out, collecting the first three people, with literally a minute to spare before the weather closes back in. The rest of us are left waiting on the glacier in white-out, windy and sleeting conditions.

They try three more times during the day to collect us. Each time the weather clears, we rush back out carrying loads of gear back to the helipad (a patch of clear snow with a flag marking it). It is a dicey dash through chopped up, crevasse-riddled

snow for a couple of hundred metres, and Stu and I alone have perhaps 80kg of gear and food. It isn't easy. The choppers try hard. They are so close we can hear their engines, but, the cloud is too thick and the wind too strong. Always so close, yet so far! The thought of the alternate plan of a 2- or 3-day difficult hike, wading through deep snow down a crevasse-riddled glacier with heavy packs is unbearable. Finally, when the pilots are about to call it quits for the day, there is a break and they fly in 2 helicopters in quick succession.

The shower in the NZAC hut in Fox Village is fantastic! A celebratory dinner follows. Down in the village the weather is partially overcast but very warm and humid. In the distance, we can see the Fox neve is completely immersed in thick dark cloud.



Climbing pitches of ice on Mt Haidinger (above).

Stu leading an easy pitch on The Remarkables (top right)

*Climbing The Remarkables (right).
Photo: Stuart Hollaway*



Days 9 – 11

WE SPEND OUR final three days at a more leisurely pace. There is a day of ice climbing at Franz Josef and a day of rock climbing at Wanaka. We also do a fantastic alpine day trip of mixed climbing (rock and rapidly melting snow couloirs) that involves a traverse over the ridge of The Remarkables and some spectacular abseiling to descend, with views of perfectly clear, azure blue alpine lakes. Commercial ski resorts are very different in summer!

Author's note: A special thankyou to Stuart Hollaway for a fantastic trip. Thankyou also to John and Helen Hammond for their generous hospitality in Wanaka.

GOING PADDLING?

An old paddling hand tells us a bit about what to take, and what not to take.

BY MAC BRUNCKHOSRT

WHAT TO TAKE on a kayaking trip or buy when you decide you can't live without kayaking: an infomercial by an old fart.

Looking to take up whitewater kayaking? Been on a few trips and were wondering what to buy first? Sick of fighting for the club gear you like? Well here are some thoughts about the benefits of owning certain paddling items of your very own.

Warm clothing

Warm clothes are essential for a good time on the water. Choose whatever type takes your fancy, as long as the fabric keeps you warm when it is wet! Therefore, **DO NOT WEAR COTTON!** I was once

made to take off my cotton undies, so be warned! A layer or two of thermals adds to your warmth but is rarely enough on its own. Thin fleece tops and vests are great as long as they are a snug fit. I like my fuzzy rubber top and my neoprene shorts; they keep me warm. A good gimp hat (neoprene hood) is highly recommended and much better than a beanie. Wetsuit booties are great for both keeping your feet warm and protecting them while scouting rapids, or if you must; swimming. Too many clothes is better than too little because hypothermia sucks. You can always stop to remove layers if you are too hot but it is hard to get warm again when you are freezing.

Dry tops/pants

Apart from warm clothes THE most useful item a beginner could buy is a dry top. Victorian rivers tend to be cold. A lot of the time you paddle in snowmelt. Dry tops are a few hundred dollars but well worth the investment. The club does have some cags (inferior waterproof tops) but you still need to layer up with thermals, fleece and fuzzy rubber to stay warm. A proper dry top will keep most of the water out so you are not wet for the entire trip. Dry pants do the same thing however, they are less useful if you don't swim because your deck should keep the water out.



Dry bags

Dry bags are very useful to put things in, such as spare clothes and your lunch. However, the club has some.

Helmets

Definitely worth it! Your head is quite important. Well, for most of you anyway. A comfy well fitting helmet makes paddling more fun. The club's helmets will do the job but they are not as comfy as having your own. Helmets also come in many styles. Make sure you look in a mirror when choosing a helmet to ensure it has good coverage of your skull and it looks good.

Nose plugs

These are cheap and they stop you getting a head full of water every time you go upside-down. I like the *smileys* ones the best. They are about \$20.

Paddles

Paddles are a personal thing. They come in many shapes and sizes. Work out what you want from your paddle before you buy it. Ask yourself 'Do I want a crank shaft? What size and shape blades? Do I prefer to hold on to a thin or a thick shaft? How long do I want it? What angle do I like my blades offset? Do I want plastic, fibreglass or carbon? Am I going to use it as a shovel?' and most importantly 'How much do I want to spend?' A cheap paddle

like the club ones could cost you around \$150. Don't buy one of these. Spend some more and get something pretty.

Spray decks

The club ones are awesome. Unless you are really skinny don't bother getting your own until you have a boat. There is nothing worse than water pouring in through the tunnel of your skirt.

PFD's

There are plenty of sizes in the boatsheds. Buy one of your own when you feel like getting serious. Pockets are a good place to keep your chocolate and other snacks. Like anything a good fit and trendy colour is most important. Oh yeah, make sure it floats too! A rescue pfd is handy in your later boating career, but the club has four of these too.

Rescue stuff

Rescue stuff is good to have on the river as long as you know how to use it. Without this knowledge it is useless. Do a course or learn from someone experienced and then buy what is required.

Boats

To be honest the club has quite a good selection of boats on offer to hire. This should probably not be the first item on

your hit list. Unless of course you don't fit in any club boats or find a bargain. Later on when you become an expert playboater or start running tons of creeks you can look for your perfect boat. A new boat will set you back between \$1300 to \$2000 so search for second hand ones to save some \$\$\$\$. Just remember to check it out before you buy it.

Camera

Waterproof cameras are great for convenience while paddling. You can pull them out of your pocket and shoot away. We all know that cool photos are the only reason to do things in life so really a camera is essential. If it is not waterproof you can put it in a pelican case or something similar*.

Remember to ask questions if you are unsure about what to take boating. Some things people have forgotten on my trips include a towel, lunch, a spray deck, dry clothes for afterwards, sunscreen, a boat....

Pray to the rain gods, do your sacrifices and I'll see you on the river.

*The author takes no responsibility for the destruction of cameras used while kayaking



FIVE PASSES TRIP

SOUTH ISLAND NEW ZEALAND

BY SAM FLEWETT AND JAMES SOUTHWELL

IN THE SOUTHERN part of the Southern Alps lie the popular trails of the Milford and Routeburn tracks. As soon as one gets off these tourist highways, there are miles and miles of spectacular untouched wilderness just waiting to be visited. Our plan was to do a big loop just to the north of the Routeburn track, spending a week crossing 5 high passes, traversing across pristine alpine meadows, rock hopping alongside crystal clear mountain streams, and camping in a variety of alpine and riverside locations.

In these parts once the marked tracks have been left far behind, the only sign of human activity are the few bootprints of previous groups, the odd fireplace, and rock cairns every little while along

the route. A section of our route was through a legally designated wilderness area which means that no infrastructure of any sort is allowed to be installed, meaning we were to expect a true back-country experience.

Day 0 – Preparations

After being woken early in the morning by crazy drunk people sounding like mating hyenas at the backpackers hostel, it was off to the Airport to meet James and then brave the Frankton supermarket. Being a tourist trap, everything in Queenstown was hideously overpriced, but we still managed to buy some nice goodies to fill our bellies with on the tramp such as Kumara (NZ sweet potato), fresh NZ lamb and Hubbard's cereals for breakfast (good kiwi muesli with lots of fruit). Back in Queenstown it was off to the hostel to pack our bags and then

off to bed early for a good nights sleep before waking early to catch the bus in to the roadend.

Day 1 – Into the Hills

We were off on the bus to the start of the track at 8am, arriving a couple of hours near the Dart River and a swarm of sandflies. For those who don't know, sandflies are about half the size of an Australian fly, have a similar tendency to swarm around your face but have the additional annoyance of finding human blood rather tasty. Fortunately they are too slow and stupid to get you when you move, and once the sun goes down in the evening they go away and there are no mozzies to take their place.

Having found that the Aeroguard had no effect on the little bastards, it was up the easy track towards Lake Sylvan, a small



lake surrounded by Lord of the Rings style beech forest. There was another bloke with us at this stage who had just finished the same route that we were planning. He was raving about how wonderful the trip was, but the first adjective he used to describe it was 'steep'. We were to find out exactly how steep over the next few days...

Sidling the lake, the track became smaller and rougher, and we followed this track round the lake, over a small saddle and down to the Rockburn River. There is a hut situated near the confluence of the Rockburn and the Dart, and just upstream from the hut was a very deep slot canyon with a bridge over it that made for a good lunch stop. Back down by the Dart, there were a couple of dozen jetboat passengers who had each paid about \$200 for the privilege of speeding up the river for the afternoon making a shitload of noise at the same time.

After lunch, it was down onto the braided riverbed of the Dart, which we followed for about 4km upstream to the next major tributary – the Beans Burn. At this time the weather was mostly

overcast with strengthening NW winds, a common prelude to a cold front with rain that we expected to arrive within the next few hours.

Sure enough the weather held for the rest of the afternoon, and we were able to head up past the last lot of jetboat tourists, and up a track alongside the Beans Burn to the first flat about an hour and a half upstream from the Dart. The map and the guidebook show a large rock bivvy that provides shelter from rain at the head of the valley, a spot that would be good to be at in bad weather. With rain forecast for the following day, I was hoping to get as far up the Beans Burn as possible, but looking at the map there weren't many campsites between this first flat and the Rock Bivvy, so we opted to have our first campsite down by the river in the lower Beans Burn.

During the night, the rain came, and in the morning there was enough rainwater in the billy to cook my porridge with – about 30-40mm worth. However the forecast which we got each night on the Mountain Radio, was saying that after this rain there were several days of fine

weather, boding well for the rest of the trip.

Day 2 – Up the Beans Burn

Waking up to the sound of rain is never the most exciting thing on a bushwalking trip, so hearing it reduce to drizzle around the time of sunrise was a rather good thing. By the time we had had breakfast, the sun was out but the wind was still in the NW suggesting that the front hadn't yet come through and more rain was on its way.

Not knowing how much fine weather we had, we thought we would make the most of it by cruising up the track towards the head of the river. In the guidebook and on the map, this track isn't supposed to exist as an official track, but the Department of Conservation had been doing a series of pest control operations in the valley, meaning that we had a rough but clear track to travel up all the way to the bushline.

Heading up the valley, as we got higher the views of the high peaks and glaciers

came into view more and more, and photo opportunities seemed to appear around every other corner. We stopped for lunch by some gnarly looking rapids in the river, where it falls steeply over a series of large boulders left behind after the last ice age. The sandflies were still around, but in not such terrible quantities as before which made for more tolerable rest stops.

After lunch, the track became rougher and disappeared altogether about 2km before the nights campsite at the Rock Bivvy. From the end of the track we rock hopped upstream and emerged up onto the upper flats in the head of the valley where the Rock Bivvy was situated. The Rock Bivvy was this large rock with a series of dry caverns suitable for sleeping in underneath. It even took the sandflies a little while to find us there, but once they had found us, the called in their mates and were unwelcome visitors for the rest of the evening.

During the evening the wind went round to the south, which brought more rain and a wee bit of the white stuff higher up on the hills.

Day 3 – Into the Wilderness

The rain had cleared by morning leaving behind a distinct autumnal look on the mountains with snow having settled to round the 1400m contour. Today was to be a big day with 2 passes to be crossed and a fair bit of ground to be covered in between.

The first bit of the route was up the river a little more, with a mixture of boulder hopping in the river bed and scrub bashing up on the bank. Both were a little slower than we would have liked, but after about 90 minutes or so we had reached the bottom of the steep climb up to the saddle.

The next bit of the climb really was steep; there was no track to speak of so we were both pretty much hauling ourselves and our heavy packs up this 45 degree tussock slope, cursing and grunting most of the way up. After about an hour, the slope eased off and we were able to enjoy the view opening up below us, and before we knew it we were up on top the Main Divide at Föhn Saddle (1509m). Up here, there was fresh snow on the ground, and everything looked quite pretty under its thin mantle of white. As James was drying out his feet to prevent blisters, I thought it was time to tuck into the first of my 800g of duty free Toblerone that had been brought along specially for the trip.

With the weather rapidly clearing to beautiful sunshine out west, we were hopping and skipping our way down the other side of Föhn Saddle into the Olivine Wilderness Area. From the Saddle, we had to drop about 450m onto the Olivine Ledge, a grassy bench at about the 1100m contour which we were to follow all the way along to the bottom of our next pass called Fiery Col. The Olivine ledge was far from easy travel, with the very long grasses at times slowing the

pace to a crawl, and the hot sun making for rather tiring work. The upside of having difficult travel was that it forced lots of stops to admire the view; a view that has the quality of cleansing the soul of all worries and generally making one feel good.

After lunch, I started feeling a little off colour, which I correctly guessed was due to dehydration. This was easily cured with the help of another perfect mountain stream, and we were soon powering up the rock slopes of Fiery Col (1546m). The geology of these hills was interesting, with most of the rocks taking on a striking red colour on one side of the pass, and the more usual gray colour on the other. This area is very close to the Alpine Fault, a major fault line that marks the boundary of the Pacific and Australian plates. This tectonic motion creates the mountains and moves vast amounts of rock over hundreds of kilometres. Fortunately for us there were not any earthquakes during our trip in the mountains.

From the top of Fiery Col, we were both starting to get a little tired, so we made our way down as quickly as possible to Cow(pat) Saddle (1025m) at the bottom of the hill where we were to camp for the night.

Cow(pat) Saddle wasn't the most attractive of the passes we went through (hence the renaming), but it did make for an alright albeit windy campsite that required the use of the guy ropes for the first time. The wind got even stronger during the night and we had to get up in the middle of the night to get some of the pegs back into the ground.

Day 4 – Bushbashing Time

Because we had arrived in camp late on the previous night, we had not had time to do the mountain radio check in that normally happens in the evening. We therefore had a different guy on the other end for the morning check in, who was telling us how terrible the weather was over in Wanaka and Christchurch. For us however on the west side of the Divide it was nothing but sunshine albeit with a cool breeze coming in from the south.

After breakfast, it was off over Cow(pat) Saddle (and yes there were actually some old cowpats there), and down Hidden Falls Creek into the bush. We managed to pick up a nice ground trail in the bush which sped up travel considerably. Upon reaching the 600m altitude mark







there was a lovely little grassy spot and campsite down by the river with only a small number of sandflies in attendance. However this was only to be our lunch stop because our goal for the day was to reach Park Pass high up above this point.

The ground trail conveniently ended (or we lost it) pretty much at the bottom of the climb up to Park Pass. After spending about 20 futile minutes looking for it, close inspection of the map showed that there was only one way from here – up. So we picked up our packs and started hauling ourselves up this slope hanging onto whatever would hold our weight and kicking our feet into the slope to try and get some grip.

The climb was steep, about 60 degrees in places, and we soon reached a point where our progress was blocked by a large thicket of scrub. With James leading the way, we struck out on a sidle and somehow managed to find a slightly better line to head up on. The good thing about heading uphill on spurs, is that all the different subspurs tend to converge as you go up making navigation progressively easier, and after about 400m of climbing we were back on some sort of trail and a much easier slope.

After about 3 hours, we were up on the bushline with our first views of the Daran Mountains, the highest mountain range in Fiordland. What makes the Dar-

rans so dramatic is that the glaciers have carved them out of hard granite which doesn't erode very easily, thus leaving behind the spectacular rock walls that make places such as Milford Sound so dramatic.

We were now only about 20 minutes from our campsite on top of Park Pass, so we slowly made our way up stopping for photos along the way. Park Pass is a lovely spot nestled up on the Main Divide by some tarns underneath the retreating Park Pass Glacier.

Looking south along the Main Divide, we inspected our route for the following morning. The guidebook had warned us that it is a potentially dangerous snowgrass sidle with large bluffs waiting at the bottom should you slip. We sure could see those bluffs, but given that it was dry we figured that we should be OK, especially given that it appeared no steeper than some earlier stuff we had travelled across.

Day 5 – Photography Time

Today was to be a shorter day, so we allowed ourselves to sleep in for an extra hour and have a nice leisurely start. It was also here that we were to depart from the usual Five Passes Trip route that would have headed down off Park Pass and into the Rockburn valley. Instead we

were to continue up along the Main Divide and traverse across to North Col at the head of the North Routeburn valley.

The first part of the route was an easy stroll up along the ridge, with fine views across to the high peaks of Mt Madeleine and Mt Tutoko, the highest 2 peaks in Fiordland. We soon reached the point where we had to leave the ridge and sidle round on the snowgrass slopes to the east. In reality, this was not too bad and James led the way with me following carefully in behind making sure I didn't slip. After a couple of hours of this, we were up on easier ground by a beautiful clear tarn perched high above the Rockburn. With cameras in hand, we proceeded around this little lake and up over some moraine to a small saddle overlooking Lake Nerine, our campsite for the evening.

Not satisfied with the views from there, I decided to head on further up the ridge above this saddle, and was soon standing up on pt 1740 on the Main Divide. Up here there was a real sense of vertigo as the land seemed to drop straight away into the Hollyford valley far below, and across to Tutoko and Madeleine on the other side. It was a real privilege to be blessed with fine weather in which to enjoy these views, and even better still to have them all to ourselves.

Our solitude was not to last much longer however, because as we were eating dinner down by the lake, we heard footsteps coming along the beach as a solo trumper arrived from the other direction. While we were keen to have a little chat with the first person we had seen in about 4 days, this guy was not so keen and would have probably walked straight past our camp had we not said hi to him. To tramp alone in such parts, one has to be at least a little bit crazy, and to not want any human contact whatsoever is rather sad.

Day 6: Back to Civilisation

After sleeping out under the stars, it was up early for what was to be a longish day over the North Col (1589m) and down into the North Routeburn. After some nice porridge for breakfast, it was over onto the Hollyford side of the Main Divide where we had to sidle south for about a kilometre, all the time getting more stunning views across to the Fiordland mountains on the other side. Because we were already pretty high up where we camped, the final climb up to



North Col was nothing too difficult, and before we knew it we were saying good-bye to Fiordland and heading back down into the dryer valley of the Routeburn.

It was on the descent into the Routeburn that the ice axe came off my pack for the first and only time. There were still a few patches of snow left over from the previous winter that hadn't melted because of the lack of sunshine in the couloir leading down from the pass. We reached a point where the best route involved having to get ourselves down a small 2.5m waterfall. To do this, I went down first on my ass getting very wet in the process whilst James lowered the packs down from above. There was a large bank of snow up above us that we would have

walked on top of had it not been so undermined by the creek, but on a hot day like this the little canyoning manoeuvre helped cool us off in the strong summer sun.

After lunch, we met a couple from Taranaki (western North Island) who were struggling up the hillside on their way to Lake Nerine. We shared route information and continued rock hopping down the valley. By this time, James was being affected slightly by dehydration and was slowing quite considerably, but unlike in Australia where dehydration is a very serious problem, in NZ you have a seemingly endless supply of crystal clear mountain water. After rehydrating, we were pretty much running down over

the rocks down to the start of the track on the flats below. Once on the track we were very much back in civilisation and only a couple of hours from the uber civilisation of the Routeburn track.

Being one of the country's main tourist tracks, you pay \$40 per night to stay in the huts on the Routeburn track and if you don't want to pay, you must camp at least 500m away from the track. We did that up at the north end of the Routeburn flats, and well and truly back in sandfly territory. With an early start to catch the bus the following morning, it was a quick dinner and into the tent not long after the sun went down.



Day 7 – On the Highway

We woke up to a slight frost in the morning which made crossing the long grass of the Routeburn flats a rather cold affair. Upon reaching the hut and the Routeburn track, the trip may as well have been over because the Routeburn track is pretty much a big wide highway cut into the bush on which you can walk on the track at the same speed as you would walk in the city. Like being in the city, people pass you on the track without acknowledging your presence, and you walk at such a speed as to miss half the stuff as you walk past.

We were out at the carpark within 2 hours of leaving the campsite and after

a short breakfast were on the bus and headed back to Queenstown and some fine Kiwi beers (Montieths being our drink of choice).

Day 8 – Touristing Around

With one day left before James flew back to Australia, we decided to be tourists and hop on the bus to Milford Sound. This was definitely worth it and made a nice relaxing end to our trip. For me having grown up in NZ but having never been to Milford, I figured that it was about time that I got on down there, and I was definitely not disappointed by the mile high sheer rock walls tumbling down into the water.

If you have always wanted to get over to NZ for some tramping there but have never gotten round to it, I definitely do recommend taking the time to make the trip. Even if you do not feel like doing off track cross country stuff, there is plenty of on track walking to be done right up and down the country, and choosing a route pretty much involves sitting down with a map and a guidebook and deciding which spots look good to visit.

FOUR SUNSETS

BUSHWALKING



BY DAN HEARNDEN

MT FEATHERTOP AND I have been getting to know each other the past few years. I have walked in via North-West Spur, Bungalow Spur and Razorback North and South. I have taken trips from the height of summer to the middle of winter. However, it has always

been the usual weekend rush in and then rush out. So in March 2009 I decided to take a week off work and spend some quality time at the MUMC hut, getting to know the mountain.

The rough plan was to hike in with a group for the weekend, but stay on at the hut while everyone else went back to Melbourne on Sunday. I would hang around until my food ran out and I was forced to

head back to Melbourne myself. During this time I planned to give the hut a bit of a make over by doing maintenance odds and sods to keep myself occupied.

Day 1 – 7th March 2009: We split into two groups, with myself leading the lazy man's route via the Razorback and another group hiking up via Bungalow Spur. We all met at the hut in the late afternoon, along with another couple of visitors who arrived later. We were treated to a fiery sunset. As the sun dropped below the horizon, the full moon rose behind us and lit up the sky brightly. We eventually retired to the hut, sipped some the port and had some laughs into the night.



Day 2 – 8th March 2009: Our band split up again not long into the morning. One group heading back to the cars early via the Bon-Accord Spur. The remaining people stayed for a while to help repair the toilet door, which was damaged in recent winds and started to sanding back the hut entrance to get it ready for a fresh coat of paint.

Lunch time passed and what I assumed to be last company I would have for a few days, headed off back to Hotham.

Out on my deck chair, camera in hand, I waited patiently for my next sunset.





Day 3 – 9th March 2009: Up at the crack of dawn, I got stuck into my first day alone. Sanding, scraping, wiping and painting were the order of the day. A couple of ladies surprised the hell out of me around lunch time, as they dropped into the hut for a rest in their day walk. Not long after some old “F.A.R. T.’s” (as the called themselves) who where taking a side trip on their week long visit to the huts in the area, also dropped in. My serenity returned soon enough. I gave into fatigue and put the paint brush aside, layed on the grass and gazed at my third sun set in a clear sky.



Day 4 – 10th March 2009: In the morning I could see that my good run of weather was at risk. I made the most of the clear sky, and went crazy with the painting, getting most of the dome that was visible from the ground painted. I continued to paint by rigging up a few ropes and did as much of the top section as was safe. From the top of the hut, I saw the old fellas returning to share the hut that evening. They treated me to wine, bush poetry, and were fine company as they shared my fourth sunset with me.



Day 5 – 11th March 2009: While normally not the best spot for a sunrise, the mountain treated me that day. Low hung clouds captured the colour of the morning, letting me enjoy the change from the hut steps.

With my last hot breakfast eaten, the last drop of port drunk, my muscles aching, my memory card full, I felt it time to say good bye to the hut and head back home. Up and out, with a refreshingly light pack, I left Feathertop revived.

10 MINUTES TO WONDER

BY ANDY GREEN

The helicopter trip was less than ten minutes. At the end of it was pure bliss. Not that the ride itself wasn't spectacular: starting from outside of Fox Glacier Township and climbing right up the glacier to a tiny helipad perched above a hundred metre cliff, my first time in a chopper was no disappointment. Arriving in this beautiful alpine setting, eyeing up a bunk in the cozy hut, and the solitude, however, was bliss all on its own.

After six days of tramping in extremely difficult terrain, Fiordlands rain and without huts, followed by the endless bumbling tourists in Fox Glacier, the novelty of the alpine hut was not lost on me.

To With our packs still on our backs, we rushed around the hut, drunk with the alpine air, a frenzied attempt to take in all at once. Our faces reflected an ecstasy no drug could ever induce.

A hole in the clouds above showed us tantalising views of the ice above, about to be bathed in the amber sunset. Envisaged with energy we didn't know we possessed, we chucked our packs in the hut and jogged up the track.

Unfortunately, the clouds had already been gracious enough to let us fly all the

way to the hut, and open views of the setting sun on Mt Tasman was too much to ask. We surveyed possible routes further up as though we would only attempt them in another lifetime.

We ambled back down the track, determined to discover all that we had missed



on our earlier furvor. Clear alpine tarns made up for the hidden sunset, reflecting the lichen-covered grey granite and leathery green tundra. Fog covered the ridge, making the landscape a dream, the narrow track of compressed tussock a mere thread connecting us back to the hut.

With the stove's cheery purr simmering our dehydrated dinner, we wandered about, identifying the various alpine flora with a specially brought book, snapping documentary photographs of blossoms and ourselves. A short drizzle found us

exploring all the hut's nooks and discovering the secrets of past visitors in the hut book.

Even our simple dehydrated dinner was as lobster and steak, the chocolate a fine mousse with a biscuit. We marveled at our own gastronomy: three courses, counting soup and chocolate. If only we could dine so well in such beautiful surrounds every night.

As we finished eating, the clouds lifted enough to reveal the setting sun over the Tasman Sea, giving the lot a view neither of us could miss. New Zealand may be Aotearoa, but the moana's presence really makes this land special.

Several cups of cocoa later, we were quietly enjoying our books by cozy candlelight in warm fleece and woolen hats. A blustering snow storm outside would have only made us happier. Bunks with thick cushions and warm sleeping bags made the day complete.

Walking down from the hut the next day brought tears to my eyes, for my time in New Zealand was once again at an end. Huts in alpine settings like this are the epitome of my perfect outdoor experience. This trip at the end of a long holiday in New Zealand was bittersweet.

The ridge above Chancellor Hut covered ominously in fog just after we landed. We jogged up the track to see if we could get above the muck and see the main divide above.

Below: Kathryn's face reflects my alpine ecstasy just after landing at Chancellor Hut. We were so excited we raced around the hut with our packs on taking in the scenery and plenty of pictures.

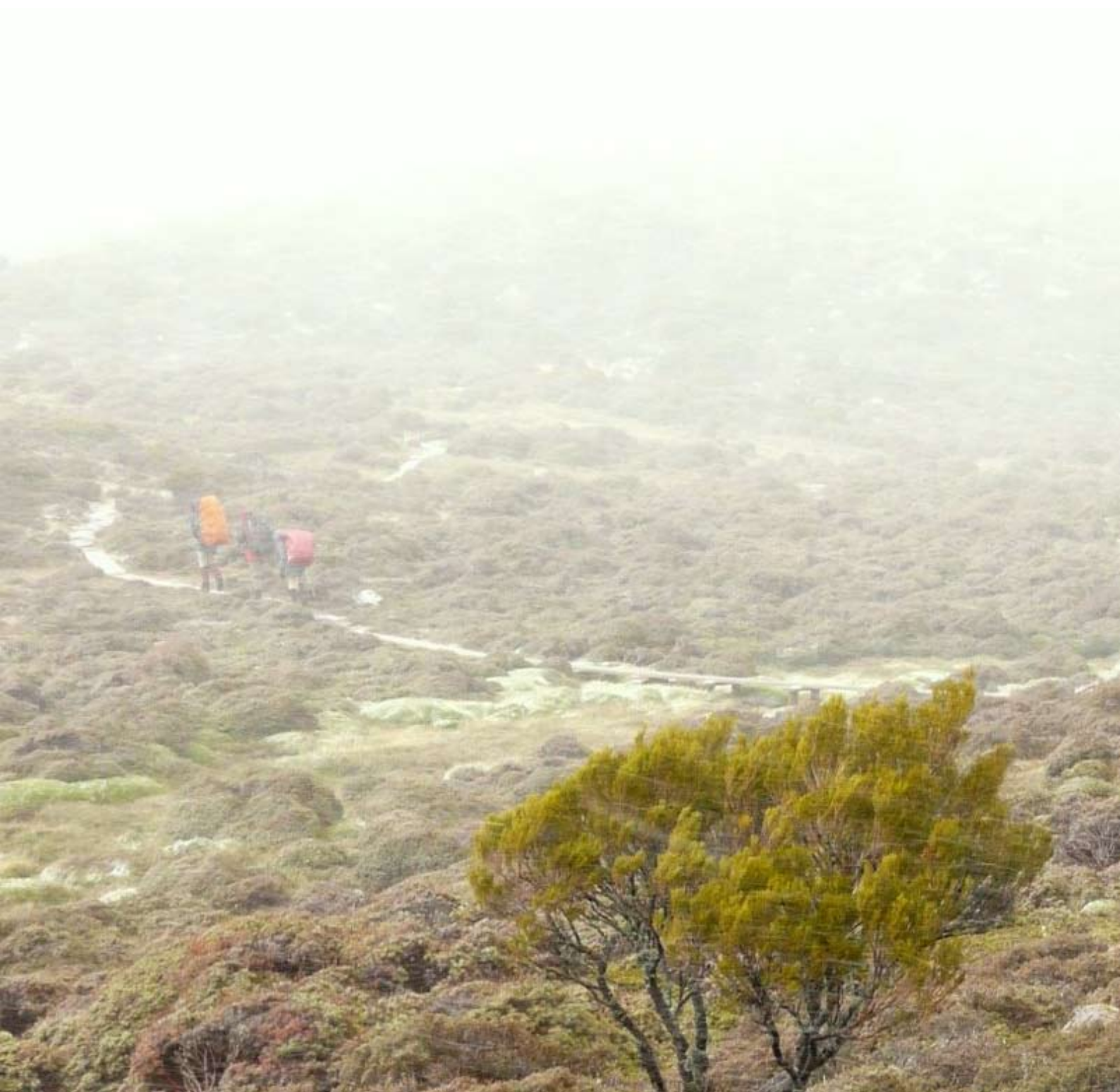


Kathryn reads by candle light in the hut. Chancellor Hut is the oldest alpine hut in New Zealand still on its original location. The hut was built in 1923??? For it's fantastic alpine setting and easy access, this hut has very little use. Far better than staying in Fox Glacier township with the zillions of tourists!



Despite the extensive clouds, Kathryn is happy to see some patchy views of Mt Tasman and the névé above Fox Glacier. The glimpses were tantalising: if it wasn't 7 pm we probably would have kept going.

Above: The spectacular ice of Fox Glacier contrasts the clouds lit by the setting sun. Unfortunately, pressed onward by the rapidly diminishing light, we couldn't enjoy this as we should.



NEVER SAY “NEVER NEVER” AGAIN

BY IAN WANLESS

EVERY EPIC ADVENTURE should have a mix of triumph and disaster. We decided to get our disaster out of the way right at the start, by locking the keys in the car at boarding time. Helplessly, we watched the queue of vehicles boarding the *Spirit of Tasmania*. By the time we retrieved the keys our ship had sailed and we had lost the first day of our trip.

We caught the next sailing the following morning and drove to the trailhead that night. Driving through a Tasmanian forest after dark is an excellent way to spot wildlife. Though it tends to fray the nerves of the driver who has to constantly brake to avoid squashing the wombats, possums, wallabies, quolls and owls which seem to scoot from everywhere with suicidal intent.

After camping at the trailhead, our walk finally began the next morning with

a climb past Trapper's hut to the Walls of Jerusalem. The party ascended in good spirits and were greeted at the top by magnificent views of Herod's Gate. The typically fickle Tasmanian weather alternated quickly between periods of sunshine, sleet and snow. We took a quick look at the lovely, if freezing, pool of Bethesda before pushing on to Dixon's kingdom for a late lunch. As we sat in the hut it snowed horizontally outside, but that cleared in time for a saunter up Mt Jerusalem af





Dixons Hut, above, provided ready shelter for lunch while it snowed horizontally outside. The next morning, a blanket of snow surrounded our tent and the hut.



Mt. Jerusalem covered in snow. The previous day we had climbed this peak in clear weather to get a view of the surrounding lake covered landscape.



ter lunch. From there we had great views of the thousands of lakes on the plateau that make so much of our map blue. The Tasmanians will tell you they are having a drought too, but it's all relative...

That evening Deb and Tim had a protracted argument over who would eat the leftover stroganoff. There was far too much of it, and besides Deb had put too much pepper in for Tim's liking. They couldn't in conscience leave it for the possums who were enthusiastically suggesting that they would cope very nicely thank you, and didn't fancy the alternatives of saving it as breakfast or carrying it as rubbish for the next five days. Just then two tired and hungry travellers burst into the hut. They were looking for a 14-year-old school boy who had become separated from his walking group earlier that day. They'd been looking for hours and were facing the prospect of walking through the night unless he was found sooner. Our bones chilled at the thought of a schoolboy out on his own on a night like

this—it was snowing and it wasn't clear whether the kid had a tent or any food with him. The least we could do was feed these guys—would they care for some stroganoff? They wolfed it down appreciatively and were effusive in praise for the chef, much to the amusement of everyone except Tim. The next morning we had a visit from the rescue helicopter, telling us they still hadn't found the kid. The world outside had transformed to white overnight. It was very beautiful, but frightening when we thought about the poor lost kid. At best he had a cold, uncomfortable and lonely night. We promised the chopper pilot we would keep an eye out for him, and set off down the hill to Lake Ball. We found out a couple of days later that he did have a tent and did survive, though he spent two nights on his own. Amazingly the same school group had lost three kids earlier in the same walk, including the teacher's son! Time for a rethink of their safety procedures!

The snow gradually melted as we skirted Lake Ball, and by the time we reached Lake Adelaide there was basically none left at our altitude. We pushed on to Junction Lake Hut by nightfall, thereby catching up with our original itinerary. The missed boat in the end only cost us a short side trip in the Walls.

That night I made the mistake of leaving my pack at ground level and was dismayed to find the next morning that the local wildlife had chewed a large hole in it. I wasn't too upset that they'd stolen my fruit cake and peanut butter, but having a hole in my faithful old pack was very annoying. I kept worrying on subsequent days that something small might fall out of it, though nothing did.

Day Three was our most adventurous because we were crossing the untracked "Never Never." It wasn't the same life-

threatening experience as in the movie "Australia," but it had the potential to go badly wrong if we didn't keep our wits about us. In the end though, our off-track navigation was spectacularly successful. We paralleled the Mersey River at sufficient distance to keep away from its scrubby and boggy banks, then dropped down to the river at precisely the right point. We had read that there was a log that had fallen across the river that provided a bridge. We had its GPS coordinates, though no GPS. And yet we came through the scrub and bog to the river at exactly the right point!

Elodie, our fearless trip leader, lead the way and proved it was possible to cross the slippery log without wet feet. With a few indelicate but effective gymnastic moves we all managed to get ourselves and our packs around the various branches—even though doing so required going backwards briefly. We needn't have worried about keeping our feet dry, since soon enough we were wading through a couple of knee-deep creeks. But without the log we would have been facing a tricky and rather chilly swim. There was a fair volume of water in the river, as we saw slightly downstream at the first of a series of gorgeous waterfalls. Would we have ended up going over this if we'd slipped off the log? Hmm, let's not think about that!

Having crossed the Mersey, we followed something of a track down its left bank. We still had some scrub bashing to do, and a bit of mud wading, plus the ever present annoyance of leaches. I had dozens that day, including one on my ear, and the bites bled profusely. Tim also managed some spectacular blood stains on his strides.

Late in the day we reached the overland track, something of a highway compared to where we'd been walking. We camped that night at Kia Ora Hut, shirking the hut which was full of middle-aged tryhards believing they were roughing it to the max. Proof that these were a different class of hikers was provided when one of them pulled a can of hair spray from her pack! Not even our Deb, who if let loose would have wet-wiped the entire central plateau free of mud, had sunk that far. Though we did rib her about the fact that she'd brought more than three times as many socks as anyone else in the party!

Day Four we had a stroke of amazing fortune when the sky was cloudless for our ascent of Mt Ossa. It rains something



Meston Lake

more often than not in this area, so the fact that we had glorious 360-degree views was very lucky. The climb involved some boulder scrambling, but it wasn't too bad because we had left our packs on the main track. Ossa is the highest peak in Tassie, and from the top we could see extensive views of Cradle Mountain National Park and the surrounding wilderness areas. There were inspiring crags as far as the eye could see, and it was difficult to detect any sign of human activity anywhere. Awesome!

I felt sorry for Deb and Cath, who were a bit lame by this stage of the trip, and hadn't been able to make the ascent. Actually Cath had bugged her knee on Day One, and it was painful just to watch

Crossing the Mersey River on the fallen log "bridge." Some indelicate but effective gymnastics allowed us to cross the river with dry feet, a considerable improvement on the chilly swim which would otherwise be necessary. Naturally the log was wet and slippery.





The Pools of Bethesda near the Walls of Jerusalem.

Old Pelion's Hut was quieter than the overrun New Pelion's Hut, which was full of Overland Trackers.



her hobbling the whole way. To her great credit, she maintained a broad grin the entire way! What do they put in those Ibuprofen? One mountain was enough for me and Elodie, but Tim and Julien hadn't had enough and scampered up Pelion East before pushing on to the hut.

New Pelion Hut is gloriously positioned in front of Mt Oakleigh, and the sunset from the verandah was sensational. How-

ever, staying in the hut with the troops of overland trackers was a big mistake, as we learned to our cost. The occupants had cranked up the heating to near sauna temperature, even though it was a warm night (as measured by Elodie's surefire thermometer)—her chocolate pudding didn't set despite it sitting outside for an hour under guard from the possums. Most of us had a sleepless night, thanks to Snorer Man whose extensive repertoire included Freight Train Man and Warthog Man. Tim gave up early and headed out into the night to pitch his tent. Elodie claims her earplugs let her sleep, but the rest of us didn't get much.

Next morning, with great relief, we left the overland track and headed eastwards. But not before Tim and Julien had dashed up Mt Oakleigh and back (seeing not much, because of the cloud) and Elodie and I checked out the 19th century "Old Pelion" Hut. The main task for the day was to descend off the plateau. The track was dry and mud-free (at least by Tasmanian standards) and aside from the last steep descent the walk was pretty cruisy. En route we saw our first of two black snakes, a possibility that had sometimes played on my mind in the past days of tramping through long and swampy grass.

When we reached the valley floor we were greeted by the impossibly picturesque view of Lees Hut, nestled on a grassy plain between two towering mountain ranges. Cath observed that it looked like a film set. Lees Paddock, as it is known, is a small pocket of private land surrounded by national park. It is still grazed by cattle, though there were none there when we were. The hut is used by the Lees family occasionally, but we had it to ourselves. We explored the river, flirted with a quick dip in its "refreshing" waters and then cooked dinner and played cards.

The games ended when I carelessly dealt

Pelion Plains





the king of spades down a finger-width crack between floorboards. With a head-torch in the right position it was possible to see the card face up, taunting us from the dirt a foot below the floor. Julien tried valiantly to rescue the card with a wire toasting fork but gave up after a quarter of an hour of frustration. I had another go at it the next morning and managed twice to lift it to just below the floorboards, but with no way to turn it to get it back through the crack. In the end persistence paid off, and with a combination of a few different implements I had the card in my fingers, but still trapped below the floor. With an extra hand (Tim's) the card was then finally retrieved. Relief! We didn't have to violate the walkers pledge to take out everything we brought in!

Another amusing thing that happened at Lees hut was that Deb tried to deduce Tim's star sign. She literally guessed every sign except the correct one. Then when she discovered what it was, she proclaimed "That makes sense, after all, Virgos are quite pedantic!" To the rest of us skeptics, this confirmed that any star sign can be made to match any personality.

The final and sixth day was an easy walk out to the car and we encountered a few day trippers on the way, who had come to see the waterfalls and spectacular hills. Perhaps it was all a bit too easy, because we switched our brains off and walked nearly 2 km past the turn off to the car! Having negotiated the trackless scrub of

the Never Never, we got "lost" on a fire trail!

So our epic trip did indeed involve its share of triumph and disaster. The whole way I had a Weddings Parties Anything song stuck in my head. It tells the story of escaped convict Alexander Pearce who in 1822 walked across Tasmania gradually eating his companions as he went. "There were six of us together, a jolly hungry crew, and as the days went by our hunger quickly grew..." It puts a whole new complexion on Tim's statement early in the trip that "Our emergency meal is Deb..."

Nestled between two mountain ranges, Lee's Paddock is the impossibly picturesque home of Lee's Hut. This small patch of freehold land is surrounded by national park.

The group on the front porch of Lees Hut. Ian being menacing with an axe in reference to Alexander Pearce the cannibalist convict from early 20th century.



TALES OF A NEWBIE: LEARNING THE HARD WAY

BY EGG

In the first weekend of March this year, I went out on my very first trip with MUMC. We went bushwalking via the Razorback trail to the MUMC hut near Mt. Feathertop. Young and fresh out of two years with the army, I was ready and eager to experience the Victorian high country, thinking that I was ready for anything.

Since it was just a weekend trip, I reckoned that I wouldn't need too much equipment. I got together my 30 liter day pack, some clothing, stove, water, four packets of instant pasta "meals" and a +15 degrees summer sleeping bag which I had brought over from Singapore. I thought that March would still be a relatively warm month, and therefore, it wouldn't be cold. Besides, the sun sets at 2000 hours! Big mistake.

After driving up to Harrierville on Friday night, we slept in a playground gazebo, quite illegally. I didn't have a sleeping mat, so I laid my sleeping bag on the concrete floor. Not only was it uncomfortable; it was cold! That night it had dropped to about 6 degrees and I was shivering, tossing and turning all night, despite wearing an extra fleece jacket. It was almost torture. It served as a chilling reminder (pun intended) of how cold it can get out there.

I survived until the next morning, where I woke up feeling very groggy. After breakfast, we drove up to the start of the Razorback trail and I felt nauseous around the winding roads. I bet Richard Sota wouldn't have been very pleased with me if I had hurled in his car. I probably wouldn't be welcomed on anymore trips! Dan Hearnden, who was leading the trip, was kind enough to lend me an extra fleece blanket and fleece jacket.

So our little adventure began on the Razorback trail, which was a fairly easy walk. The sun was up and the sky was

pretty clear. However the sensation of my skin was awkward. There was a blazing hot sun, and blasts of really cold wind. So throughout the hike I was putting on and taking off my jacket. Finally I gave up and decided to just bear the fluctuating conditions.

Once we had reached the MUMC hut, we made a side trip up to the summit of Mount Feathertop. At night we sat outside the hut to watch the sunset. The especially slow sunset created beautiful hues of blue and orange that glazed the horizon. For lunch and dinner, I used my instant pasta "meal" packets (which I had bought from Safeway a day before for 99 cents each). I emptied the contents into my pot and firing up the stove whilst flipping the back of the packet to read the instructions: "Add 75g of sliced bacon (and other stuff) to make a FULL MEAL!". Oh crap. While Tim Carter and Richard were cooking up a storm with real pasta, cheese, bread and hot chocolate, I had a measly packet of instant pasta, which wasn't even enough to feed an ant. Thankfully Tim and Richard shared some of their extra pasta with me.

The MUMC hut is nice and warm, and it even has water pump! It really amazes me how early MUMC members built this odd geodesic shape hut on a mountain with a small bank loan, donated materials and volunteer labor. I helped Dan with some maintenance on hut by repainting some of the outer walls, while Richard, Tim, Ian (the really fit Monash math teacher) and Leo helped repair the outhouse door.

Overall, my first experience with the Victorian high country was awesome and kept me inspired to keep coming back for more. But, what are the hard lessons that I took away from my very first trip? Well here are some really basic

tips for those who are new to bushwalking. I have learnt the hard way, so that you don't have to.

1. **Get a good sleeping bag.** It can get pretty cold out there. We spend a third of our lives sleeping so that we can be well rested for the day's activities. A plus 15 degrees for a 6 degree night is a deathwish!

2. **Get a mat.** A mat stops your body from losing heat to the ground and makes it more comfortable to lie down. (Remember, I slept on cold concrete!)

3. **Be prepared for both hot and cold conditions.** Ideally you will use at least an additional two layers of fleece for the night (when it's cold), and a t-shirt for walking in the day (when it's warm). Also bring plenty of sun block and a pair of sunglasses.

4. **Bring along full meals.** Don't depend on instant noodle packets or instant pasta for your meals. Have lots of additional food, such as cheese, bread, salami or even vegetables if you can afford to carry them. Also, hot drinks, such as hot chocolate or soup sachets, are a real morale booster on cold nights. Lastly, you will preferably want both sweet and salty snacks whilst on the go. Normally chocolates, fruit bars or sweets with nuts should suffice. On really long and tiring trips, sugar will give you a short energy boost and nuts provide salt for your body so that it doesn't cramp.

Hope this helps. Stay warm and remember to pack the right stuff!



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