



# THE MOUNTAINEER

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JOURNAL OF THE  
MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

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### COVER

The sun rises across Divers Col at the foot of Mt Walter and Mt Green, South Island, New Zealand. This photograph was taken by Eng Wu 'Egg' Ong on his and Richard Bassett-Smith's December mountaineering trip. See the original photograph (which also shows Richard) in the article on page 40.

### ABOVE

Aaron Lowndes sits on a boulder and contemplates Taipan Wall in the Grampians, Victoria. Photograph taken by Chelsea Eaw on a joint bushwalking/rockclimbing trip in May, 2010. This photo was one of many entries in last year's Pie 'n' Slide Night; see the winning photos on page 23 onwards.





ANDY GREEN  
President

## PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

EVERY DAY WE TAKE risks: it is a fundamental part of life. Adventures outdoors are no different: the risks are real, and can have very high consequences. Usually, we understand most of the risks we face, or at least we should.

As much as possible, we also minimize or eliminate those risks by applying all that we have learned. Through experience, we learn how to recognize dangers, and how to minimise or eliminate them. Some of this experience is our own, some is from others, from an instructional course, or over a beer at the pub.

The challenge we face is to achieve our goals despite the risks. By identifying and preparing for the risks, we can accomplish far greater goals than would otherwise be possible. With careful planning and preparation, two young men paddled across the Tasman Sea in a kayak. In perhaps one of the greatest demonstrations of human accomplishment, ten men have rocketed to the moon and returned safely to the earth.

Risk can never be entirely eliminated. More than anything else, the simple risk of failure is present in any endeavour. Like any risk, it can be reduced, but it cannot be eliminated. Although we often wonder why people take risks, it is clear that one must take risks. Without risk, life would be meaningless. Achievement would be valueless, fulfilment impossible, and happiness empty.

In spite of their plans, two men never landed on the moon, and a solo kayaker died before completing his journey to New Zealand from Australia. Yet all were committed to their goals, and chose to accept the risks.

In the words of William Arthur Ward:

“Risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.”

**CONTACTING THE EDITOR**  
For questions about this publication or the contents thereof:  
Richard Sota  
Publications Officer  
publications@mumc.org.au

**MUMC ONLINE**  
Full colour PDF versions of current and past editions of *The Mountaineer*, as well as information about the club and how to join can be found on the website:  
[www.mumc.org.au](http://www.mumc.org.au)

**MEETINGS & GENERAL ENQUIRIES**  
Regular meetings are held at the MUMC clubrooms each Tuesday at 7:00 pm. For specific questions about the club, contact the club secretary:  
[secretary@mumc.org.au](mailto:secretary@mumc.org.au)

**MAILING ADDRESS**  
MUMC  
c/o MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY SPORT  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE  
PARKVILLE VIC 3010  
AUSTRALIA

# EDITOR'S BIT

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**Richard Sota**

publications@mumc.org.au



**We begin this edition** of *The Mountaineer* sombrely as we pay our respects to club member Eng Wu Ong, known to us as 'Egg', who passed away climbing Mt Aspiring in December of 2010. His passing came as a shock and has affected us all deeply, as he was an inspirational individual passionate about the outdoors and mountaineering. More recently we also heard of the passing of Andrea Schaefer, a club member who enjoyed a number of climbing trips with us. Sadly she was involved in a car accident while travelling in Western Australia.

Understandably, Egg's passing while mountaineering has prompted reflection on the reasons why we choose to take risks, and the importance of following one's passions. The President's Decree and Mountaineering Convenor's Report go some way in addressing these themes. A eulogy by Chelsea Eaw contains many thoughtful and funny recollections of Egg's time with the club, gathered from a range of past and present club members. And Richard Bassett-Smith has written a few articles that document some of their final trips together, including one that provides us a glimpse into the first ten days of their December New Zealand trip.

After the sad end to 2010, the new year brings with it renewed spirits as university O-week approaches with the prospect of new members. Convenors have been busy spruiking their activities in their Convenor Reports, so take a look at them to see what's in store for each of the club's activities this year.

The club has a long and dignified list of Honorary Life Members, whose names are displayed on the carved honour board within the clubrooms, however many recent club members are unaware of the incredible achievements that some of these members have accomplished. Chelsea Eaw lifts the veil on one of our life members, John Chapman, and explores his long association with the outdoors.

Finally, it's great to see a range of articles covering the major social events within MUMC. The annual Midnight Ascent is seen through a newbie's perspective, and the remarkable beer that was brewed up at MUMC Hut also gets an article! The shenanigans of the Christmas Party and the winning photographs from Pie 'n' Slide night are also covered.

A big thank you goes out to everyone who gave up their time to submit something for this edition of *The Mountaineer*, and especially to those who put up with my fussiness over small, often pedantic details! It is through your efforts that these pages get filled, so hopefully I haven't put you off and you'll continue to put that pen to paper for future editions.

I hope that the articles contained herein inspire you to do things and go places with MUMC that you never thought possible. Happy and safe travelling.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### Necrology

It is with sadness that we announce the passing on of two MUMC club members over the past few months:

**Eng Wu 'Egg' Ong** 1989-2010: fell while ascending Mt Aspiring, New Zealand;

**Andrea Schaefer** 1987-2011: involved in a car accident near Onslow, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

Our condolences go out to their family and friends.

### Committee News

**New Gear-store Officer:  
Emma Harold**

Another consequence of Egg's passing was the position of Gear-store Officer becoming vacant. Club member Emma Harold expressed her interest in the role at February's committee meeting and was subsequently voted in unopposed. We would like to welcome Emma into the committee as the new Gear-store Officer and wish her well in this important role.

# FROM OUR CLUB CONVENORS

## Mountaineering

Dale Thistlethwaite

alpinism@mumc.org.au



**Mountaineering is a brutal** and beautiful endeavour: breaking trail on a long glacier slog; crisp cramponning across the Plateau under a lurid full moon; long, cold pre-dawn approaches; the sheer effort of a major ascent and the anxiety of testing descents; the dazzling tranquillity of a vision realised. It features the intensity and promise of unique and unforgettable experience, and the gravity, the nearness, of death.

Wednesday December 15 2010 was a perfect, golden day. In the dawn light climbers kicked their way up Aspiring's South West ridge above the Bonar. On Gillespie Pass I enjoyed cold stillness and perfect sunshine, while Stuart hacked stances up rope length after rope length of perfect neve on Mt Green.

On this dawn, on an beautiful mountain, its shadow a pyramid over the western valleys, fresh from a terrific trip on the Tasman Glacier climbing peaks, including Green and Walter, Eng Wu Ong—Egg—fell to his death, and Richard climbed grimly to call a rescue.

In some respects mountaineering has changed little since the great and terrible day in 1865 when the first ascent of the Matterhorn heralded the end of the Golden Age (and the innocence) of climbing in Europe. The triumph of skill and will marred in an instant when the tired Douglas Hadow slipped and pulled his three companions, including the great Zermatt guide Michel Croz, to their deaths. Only the snapping of a rope saved Edward Whymper and his two guides from being pulled off as well.

Like the inexorable forces of time and gravity, the reflections of Edward Whymper still apply: "Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end."

Whymper learnt this climbing but he is speaking for all of life.

No man is an island. Egg was an enthusiastic young climber, a generous and positive friend. His experience was limited but he was determined to learn, excited by climbing, and animated by the experience of the mountains. People will remember his smile—the outward expression of inner energy.

Egg's death, the confrontation with mortality, like all climbing accidents, provokes rationalisation—the desire to explain, to justify, to quantify, to blame, and thereby to remove or keep distant and manageable, the risks and horrors we accept or endure. Perhaps there is a lesson that can make the death of another young man, a climber, our friend, okay and to allow us to carry on.

But Egg and Richard were fit and climbing in good style on an excellent route in very good conditions.

We—friends, family, club and climbers—are all marked by Egg's death, haunted by his sudden fall, robbed of his energy, his promise and his hope. In the mountains he found, as many do, an understanding of beauty and purpose that enrich life.

At 6:50 am on the SW ridge of Aspiring, for unknown reasons, Egg lost his balance on the slope; he was unable to arrest his slide and died of trauma in the fall.

Perhaps the only certain lesson is this: we are all balanced on an ice slope and our presumptions of control are, at least in part, a delusion.

It is in the nature of mountaineering that risk is accepted as the price for the intensity of the experience. Egg projected himself into the wild grim beauty of the mountains. He had ambition and desire, and years ahead of him—so do we all in our youth and pride. But the years ahead are not yet to be counted and, whatever our hopes, we live fragile lives.

I see Aspiring with aching clarity: a peak of perfect beauty alone above the broad glacier; an icy tombstone.

Whether we climb or not, we all stand in the shadow of the mountain.

This is the only lesson that counts: find passion and beauty where you can—they can be found in the mountains reflecting and magnifying that which is in you—and tell the people you love.

Vale, Eng Wu Ong.

With thanks to Stuart Hollaway.

# FROM OUR CLUB CONVENORS



## Bushwalking

**Mitchell Stephen**

[bushwalk@mumc.org.au](mailto:bushwalk@mumc.org.au)

**I see Mt Feathertop** as the core pillar of strength for bushwalking at MUMC. Now this may seem like a rather grandiose statement, but from a bushwalking convenor's point of view it is a very handy mountain. The traverse along the Razorback is a terrific route to take beginner groups; the ascent from Harrietteville provides a challenging Midnight Ascent route; and I mustn't forget those who run regular trips up the mountain just so that they can tick off another spur! With our Memorial Hut close to the summit, trips have a sheltered (and comparatively well furnished) place to aim for. The ownership and pride club members display towards the hut is terrific, and congratulations must be given to Daniel Hearnden for continuing to organise the maintenance of it. For those new members

wondering about the photographic opportunities that arise around Mt Feathertop, just ask Jesse Bates, as for him a photographic trip up there is warranted seemingly every fortnight!

But do not be afraid, bushwalking within MUMC is not limited to just Mt Feathertop, or even Victoria for that matter! Over the last year club members have headed off along every cardinal point, completing the South Coast Track in Tasmania, the Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory, Flinders Ranges exploration in South Australia, the Nadgee Wilderness Walk in New South Wales and much more.

Closer to home, bushwalking trips (including day walks) have run almost every weekend during semester to places including the Grampians, Cathedral Ranges, Mt Bogong, Lake Tali Karng, Lake Eildon, Mt Dandenong, The Fainters, The Otways and Wilsons Promontory. The annual Midnight Ascent of Mt Feathertop continues to be a highlight, with special mention going to all those involved with brewing a keg of beer up there—it sure was appreciated!

If these trips have whet your appetite for some bushwalking, come along to the clubrooms and speak to someone who looks like they know what they are talking about. Trips coming up in the first weeks of semester include a trip to Mt Feathertop (who would have guessed?), a day walk to the Cathedral Ranges and a MASSIVE trip for first time members down to Wilsons Prom. See you around the club rooms!



## Canyoning

**Kate Abel**

[canyoning@mumc.org.au](mailto:canyoning@mumc.org.au)

### 'Canyoning, so what's that?'

you say. Canyoning is the art of scrambling, sliding, jumping, swimming and walking down creek beds. Sometimes it involves abseiling down a waterfall, or jumping several metres down into a deep pool of water (not for the faint-hearted). Some canyons involve floating on a lilo down wide, open gorges, while others are deep, dark and narrow. It can be as easy or as challenging as you want to make it.

Canyoning requires the culmination of navigational, bushwalking and rockclimbing skills. It can take you to some incredibly beautiful places, of which paddling, walking or climbing alone cannot take you.

There are very few canyons in Victoria so canyoning is a small sport in MUMC. Most of Australia's canyons are in the Blue Mountains National Park and surrounding areas in NSW, so we tend to run week-long trips rather than weekend trips.

Last Easter four advanced canyoners completed Davies Canyon, a very difficult canyon covering much rugged terrain in Kanangra Boyd National Park, and taking four days in total. This was the first multi-day canyoning trip to be run by MUMC for several years. There were also several beginner trips that took place in the Blue Mountains and, as convenor, I'm excited to see canyoning developing in size and experience in MUMC.

So what's in store for early 2011? Plans are underway for an abseiling trip to teach beginners some of the basic abseiling and rope skills required for canyoning. Beyond this, an extended beginner canyoning trip to the Blue Mountains will be organised, provided that the beginners have attended



## Skiing

**Jeremy Walthert**

[ski@mumc.org.au](mailto:ski@mumc.org.au)

### Welcome to ski touring at MUMC.

We like snow. But because we live in Australia this sometimes requires a level of patience, optimism, and occasionally a bit of a walk. But once on the snow we can glide our way to some of the most surreal snow capped ranges across Victoria, where the snowgums and array of trails create a truly unique experience.

The 2010 touring season ran for a total of 14 weeks between July and remarkably into October. From day trips for beginners who want to give cross-country skiing a go, to longer overnight trips for both adventurous travellers and intermediate skiers alike, the club makes it happen.

There is also a range of gear for hire including skis, stocks, boots, and even snow-shoes. Best of all it's really cheap: only \$60 for a full season of hire! There is even telemark gear for those down-hillers who want to free the heel and experience a very different ski trip away from the resorts.

If you're interested, just come along to a club meeting Tuesdays at 7 pm and track down the ski convenor for a chat. First event will be coming up soon so keep an eye out!

the introductory abseiling trip, and also that they have demonstrated an adequate level of skill.

There are many opportunities for experienced canyoners too. We tend to break into small independent groups for advanced canyoning trips, so if you're new to the club and you'd like to join in an advanced canyoning trip, please contact me.

You can obtain many of the required skills for canyoning by participating in other MUMC sports. Rope skills, including abseiling and prusiking (climbing back up a rope), are usually learned on weekend rock climbing trips, and navigational skills improved by participating in some rogaines.

If you are keen to do some canyoning, email me (Kate Abel) at [canyon@mumc.org.au](mailto:canyon@mumc.org.au) or have a chat to me in the clubrooms on Tuesday evenings.





## Caving Shannon Crack

caving@mumc.org.au

**Every cave offers a** different experience: from an entrance where you're abseiling into the depths, or just walking into and under a hill to find either a twisting maze of passages or a curving serpentine streamway.

You'll walk, scramble, climb and occasionally crawl through a cave to see stalagmites, stalactites and larger formations like shawls and flowstone.

Caves we visit:

- Labertouche Cave: a granite maze of walls and boulders;
- Wilsons Cave: cavernous chambers and passages open to walk through;
- Honeycomb Cave: a mix of everything—

walking, scrambling and climbing around;

- Tuglow Cave: walk up the streamway and abseil the waterfall on the way out.

Our most recent caving trip was a beginners trip to Buchan in early February where we walked through Wilsons Cave, climbed around in oolite, explored different sections of Honeycomb Cave and marvelled at the gravity-defying helictite formations in Razor Cave.

Early semester trips include:

- March 13 beginner daytrip to Labertouche;
- March 19-20 beginner trip to Buchan;
- April 2-3 Buchan trip (for beginner levels up).



## Rockclimbing Aaron Lowndes

rockclimb@mumc.org.au

**Welcome to a new** year of excellent Victorian rockclimbing! Climbing is a significant part of Melbourne Uni Mountaineering Club's activities, and my aim as this year's convenor is to ensure that the sport is more accessible and less daunting than ever before. That means I will be organising (and probably leading) plenty of beginner trips, and sending those more qualified away on their own more advanced trips.

Indoor climbing should be rampant this year, with regular evenings at the local indoor rock climbing gyms. Firstly, this will enable those of you who have never climbed before to get used to the ropes and the

basic techniques for staying safe on rock. Secondly, it enables those who need it as an avenue for regular mid-week stress relief (as good as any yoga class, trust me!), and of course a fun way to exercise that will keep going all the way through the winter!

But climbing in Victoria is not about being indoors now is it! Outdoor climbing trips kick off in March with the Bushwalking/Climbing trip to Wilsons Promontory. Throw in a couple of Arapiles trips, a smearing of Grampians and garnish with some Mt Buffalo and surrounds and you have a recipe for a fantastic year of rock-love with MUMC!



WHAT:

**MUMC MEGA BUYING NIGHT  
ONE NIGHT ONLY!!!**

WHERE:

**THE WILDERNESS SHOP**

969 Whitehorse Rd Box Hill

WHEN:

**TUESDAY 5TH APRIL  
6 PM TO 9 PM**

**DETAILS: 20% OFF ALL OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING ROCKCLIMBING,  
BUSHWALKING, CLOTHING, PACKS, BOOTS, XC SKIS ETC....**

**OTHER GOODIES: FREE NIBBLES, PIZZA, DRINKS**

**DOOR PRIZE: DOOR PRIZE DRAWN ON THE NIGHT. BE THERE TO WIN!!!**

# FROM OUR CLUB CONVENORS



## Conservation

Josh Howie

conservation@mumc.org.au

**The first conservation trip** I ran last year was grass-tree monitoring in the Brisbane Ranges. Some of the trees in the national park are affected by *Phytophthora* (a mould, not a fungus) and we were there to help with an ongoing scientific research project. We'll be back again this year.

In September several club members participated in a tree-planting weekend near Benalla. This is part of the Regent Honeyeater Project, which aims to restore remnant box-ironbark habitat for endangered species. Along with many other volunteers we planted over 5000 trees during the weekend. There was a free feed, some wild folk dancing, much consumption of the "red medicine", Performance Mania

and getting drunk up trees.

I also returned to Benalla in December for some more tree planting and a bit of seed collecting.

There will be two nest box checking weekends up there this year, one in March and one in April. This is when we check the nest boxes for any signs of sugar gliders, squirrel gliders and some birds. Good chance to see some cute native animals and to practice your navigation. Hope to see a few of you there.

Next month should also see the return of combined climbing/conservation trips with trackwork to be completed in the You Yangs and at Arapiles, but will only be half days so that you can get in lots of climbing.



## Kayaking

Ben Webb

paddle@mumc.org.au

**With the unusually high** amounts of rain this year there have been heaps of opportunities to get out on the water. Trips down the Yarra, King and Big Rivers along with surfing at Wilsons Promontory have been heaps of fun, with just the odd hiccup to create an interesting tale.

The goal of the last few months has been to build up a solid skill base of kayaking in the club, and for me personally to learn how to paddle (I really had no idea until recently). It was great to get a large group of beginner paddlers onto the Yarra at the Christmas Party, and anyone who is keen should keep their eyes peeled for a progression of trips early in the year that will hopefully take a bunch of bumblebee beginners and turn them into some pro paddlers.

For people with some skills already, I'm looking forward to tackling some of the more challenging rivers around Victoria; the Mitchell, Mitta Mitta, Snowy and more still await!



## Canoe Polo

Emma Bland

polo@mumc.org.au

**What else could be** more fun than paddling non-stop around a 50 m pool and pushing people upside down as you try to gain possession of a big yellow ball? Canoe

polo is great for people who want to learn to paddle, and those who want to maintain their kayaking skills when the rivers aren't flowing.

This season we welcomed an entire team of novice players to the sport, and the team finished third in the recent spring season. Unfortunately we didn't have quite enough players to enter a MUMC team in C-grade this season, so the more advanced players joined other teams from the competition. Many players have been training regularly on Sundays at the Maribyrnong, and at Studley Park on Wednesday evenings, where they are practising their paddling skills and match tactics.

The next season begins on March 1 at Richmond Recreation Centre. We are also organising a monthly competition with Monash and La Trobe universities. If you'd like to join us please send me an e-mail. All you really need is a sense of humour!

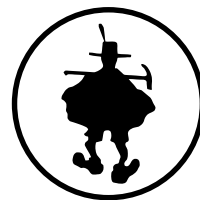
## Annual MUMC Introduction Trip

To: **Wilsons Promontory**

On the beach about 3 hours drive south-east of Melbourne

From: **25-27<sup>th</sup> of March 2011**

Leaving the night of the 25th after uni or work



For a weekend of **Bushwalking, Rockclimbing, Kayaking, Eating and Socialising**

**\$80**

Cost covers accommodation, transport expenses, park fees, food and punch!



# LIFE'S WINDING ROAD (AND HOW CLIMBING FITS IN)

ROCKCLIMBING

What was Ben Gray's motivation for going rockclimbing? What did he gain after joining MUMC? He reveals all.

my memory is saying was called the VCC. I'm quite sure I believed rockclimbing would lead to a glamorous looking body, attractive women, fame, fortune and glory, something of a panacea if you like. I'm pretty confident each of those rewards occurred to me in exactly that order also!

As IT DOES life meandered on and off various roads from that point forward and although rockclimbing interjected from time to time, it never became an all consuming passion. It was only after a skiing holiday in France and a few small off-piste adventures above Chamonix at the beginning of 2008 that I became motivated to seek out some consolidated training in rockclimbing.

Downhill alpine snow skiing is something I have enjoyed since a young age and common sense suggested if I wanted to go beyond the boundaries I was currently facing, asking for help and gaining assistance and knowledge from others who were experienced would be a bloody good idea!

As it happened one of the people I met in the hostel in France was a Kiwi ski mountaineer and lecturer in Criminology from Melbourne University. When I talked to him about rockclimbing he mentioned MUMC and strenuous indoor rockclimbing sessions at the Cliffhanger indoor facility in Altona. I'm fairly certain it was then I made up my mind I would join the club. I assumed everything else would just follow. Funny how some people's minds operate!

Concentrating on the goal of getting skilled and equipped for mountain adventure at the time meant I barely considered the *social* implications of my plan to join the club. I didn't think that I might meet and become friends with such a brilliant and diverse array of so many impressive and genuine people.

After several months, rockclimbing seems to be residing where it mostly has, in an overgrown, somewhat neglected and fairly untended corner of my life. This doesn't mean the fire in me has gone out, it just means the fire is currently burning elsewhere. MUMC is a great association, I respect and feel privileged for the friendships, experience and knowledge I have met with through it. I hope they will endure despite life's many winding roads!

Thanks to everyone.

And just two other small things:

- Wen-Jie, I'm glad your ankle seems to be healing;
- Egg, rest in peace. ☹

BY BEN GRAY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KHANH TRAN

I AM NOT SOMEONE WHO has done a huge amount of rockclimbing or mountain climbing. The first rockclimbing experience I remember was at Hollow Mountain in the Grampians National Park when I was about eleven. I remember watching someone else climb up something and thinking "That looks easy, I can do that". Not long after, I was clinging with fear I hadn't bargained for and was looking down thinking "WTF am I gonna do now?" Fortunately there were plenty of people standing around at the foot of that little precipice to call out useful

advice like "Hang on" and "Put your foot over there, not like that, yes that's it...". A few years later I had another encounter with rockclimbing during the annual high school outdoor education and personal development camp. It was an experience that tapped into the rapidly flooding reservoirs of testosterone in my young body.

Not long after, I discovered *Rock* and *Wild* magazines and the beautifully strong, hard looking bodies of the glamorous super men and women featured between their covers. I'm sure it must have been virtually straight away I began nagging my mum to drive me the hour or so from where we lived to an indoor rockclimbing centre in Seaford, one





# VALE ENG WU 'EGG' ONG 1989–2010

BY CHELSEA EAW  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY WEE LOON ONG, JOSH HOWIE, DARSHINI  
NITHIANANTHAM & ENG WU 'EGG' ONG

**M**T BOGONG WAS HIS first trip in snow,' recalls Tim Carter, an ex-bushwalking convenor of ours. 'He brought meat, so he carried a fridge and ice blocks... into snow.' There are some crazy stories about Egg, but this—the ultimate example of lugging the unnecessary—is probably the most illustrative of Eng Wu 'Egg' Ong.

There's no shortage of tales about one of our club's greatest characters. Before I met Egg, I knew him by reputation. Most likely it had something to do with the story about him hauling a table and an oven the size of a small TV up Mt Feathertop's outrageously steep North West Spur for the 2009 Midnight Ascent—a story that will probably go down in history.

And there are many others to go along with it. That infamous oven reappeared on a Wilson's Prom trip (along with a chair and a kite), and the fridge re-emerged from his bottomless backpack on a climbing trip. But it's not just the stories of Egg's predilection for over-packing that we'll remember fondly. Egg was a real character. Apart from his comical idiosyncrasies—like an obsession with pirates and people's accents—what defined him was his desire to do things.

'Some people do it,' says Tim. 'Jump in and do every activity, every weekend. They sort of become the life of the club because they do

everything and know everyone.' Undeniably, Egg was one of these people—there was barely a soul in the club to whom Egg was a stranger. And his popularity was owed largely to his innate friendliness.

'He offered to patch up the holes in my Gortex overpants with his own leftover material,' remembers club member Helen Dulfer. 'And when the harness on my pack broke coming down from Midnight Ascent, I remember saying I'd had to borrow a club pack for my main range ski tour in a couple of weeks. Egg was so generous; he offered me his brand new mountaineering pack for the weekend.'

EGG'S ALTRUISM WASN'T limited to his friends. For many new club members, he was the first friendly face who greeted them, and the first person to take them out for a bushwalk or rockclimb. The first time I roped up at Werribee Gorge, I remember him standing at the base of the cliff goading me on with the best intentions. Helen remembers Egg being content to walk towards the back of their walking group on Midnight Ascent to keep everyone company, despite being by far the quickest walker in the group. 'I always felt like he was looking out for me,' says Darshini Nithianantham, who went on her first overnight bushwalk with a group led by Egg. For many people, he was a patient leader and a teacher.

BUT HE WAS also a willing learner. Egg's

beginnings at MUMC weren't as you'd expect. He wasn't always the gear guru he became known to be. (You know someone's serious about their gear when they use their Facebook relationship status to declare their affection for their newest, shiniest piece of gear.) 'On his first trip up to Feathertop he was completely unprepared,' club member Deb Piattoni recalls warmly. 'Dan Hearnden had to lend him some clothes, I think. Egg didn't bring a sleeping mat and only had a summer-rated sleeping bag, so he nearly froze on the hard concrete floor in the Harrierville bandstand on the first night. When we were up on the mountain he had no sunscreen either, so we gave him some since he was getting redder and redder.'

## Plays on Egg's name:

*Egg-xactly*

*Egg-xcellent*

*Easter Egg*  
(Egg on an Easter trip)

*Cracked Egg*  
(Egg doing a crack climb)

*Egg White*  
(Egg plastered with sunscreen)





*Egg's nickname was in reference to his head shape when he was born.*

'After that he became a gear freak,' Tim recalls. 'On our next trip, to the Crinoline this time, he brought absolutely everything—including a flame-thrower to melt his cheese. If it wasn't the middle of winter I would have had a conniption!' Egg's endearing tendency to pack non-essentials never abated (he dubbed his tent—equipped with the world's biggest vestibule, an oven and a sink—the 'Singapore Hilton'), although word is he did eventually go lightweight. In fact, he ended up working in a store called Backpacking Light.

And that was so 'Egg'—once his heart was set on something, he'd give it 100 per cent. It'd become his work, play, everything—whether it was going lightweight, mountaineering, climbing, bushwalking... even playing poker. Egg was naturally a fast learner too, which was evident as his skill set grew. 'The guy just consumed info,' says Tim, who did a mountaineering course with Egg in New Zealand in 2009. 'He'd just be constantly asking questions.' And Egg was never

content to do something unless it challenged him: 'the Routeburn [a classic track in New Zealand's South Island] wasn't hard enough,' Tim laughs. 'So he started doing push-ups at every stop.'

Yet despite being borderline fanatical about developing his personal climbing skills, 'he was always happy to give up his own time to lead beginner trips, and he was always enthusiastic about setting up top-ropes for other people,' says Wen-Jie Yang, a former club member. Few people are so committed to encouraging others to throw on a pair of hiking boots or climbing shoes. Egg had this incredible talent for being the link between our more experienced club members and our newbies. To think that the next wave of first years won't be hauling a pack up some track or gripping the 'conglomerate' rock at Werribee Gorge with Egg's voice spurring them on is a little sad.

YOU LEARN a person's final lessons once they've departed and you're wandering around the hole they left behind. Egg taught me the value in having aspirations. Many people (including myself) never get around to doing what they want to do. Instead we shelve our goals, letting them collect dust until we decide it's too late or too far to reach. Not Egg. If he wanted to do something, he just did it. And that's inspiring. Even in his early days as an MUMC member, he had high hopes of becoming a mountaineer. It seems poignant that he lost his life on a mountain called Aspiring.

In a way Egg's legacy is the enthusiasm he infused into the club. This was once written about Chris Baxter, a pioneering rockclimber who passed away last year: 'We could probably work out how many stories have been told throughout the years, but the tentacles of inspiration reaching outwards are harder to quantify.' While Egg wasn't Chris Baxter—and didn't shape Victorian rockclimbing—in our own little universe, in the dilapidated green shed we affectionately call the clubrooms, Egg's infectious enthusiasm has been an unquantifiable gift.

WE WILL ALL miss Egg, and our condolences go out to all of Egg's friends and family. Vale, Pirate of the Carabiner. ☘



Egg at the summit of Mt. Feathertop, September 2009 (main).

Climbing at the Cathedral Ranges, May 2010 (top left).

Egg carries two packs at Wilsons Promontory, on the final stretch of a three-day bushwalk, September 2009 (top right).

Battling pirates at Midnight Ascent, August 2010 (left).

PHOTOS: WEE LOON ONG (MAIN); JOSH HOWIE (TOP LEFT); DARSHINI NITHIANATHAM (TOP RIGHT); ENG WU 'EGG' ONG (ABOVE).



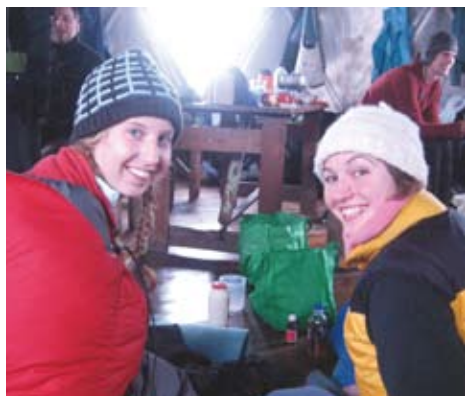
# MIDNIGHT ASCENT

An odd combination of pirates, vikings, and politicians.



BY EMMA HAROLD  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE BATES,  
AROM MALEE & ENG WU 'EGG' ONG.

FIRST OFF, I AM forced to admit that, despite the prerequisite listed on the trip sheet, this was in fact my first MUMC bushwalking trip (though certainly not my first bushwalk). Not even Tim's stern talk about the extreme challenges the trip presented and his hope for a survival rate of at least 40 percent this year pressured me



into owning up. It did however discourage a friend of mine on exchange from Ireland who, having a somewhat stereotypical understanding of our weather, only brought shorts and a hoodie in the way of warm and waterproof clothing with him. His pulling out was probably for the best.

This was not the first warning about the North West Spur I had received. A hike my aunt and uncle went on which proceeded down the same path almost resulted in mutiny within a group who had been walking together for a decade.

NOW FOR THE second admission of the article: Our group cheated. We started walking up around 9:30 pm, well before the 'midnight' suggested in the title, and I do not regret it. It was a difficult walk, not least of all because my head-torch started playing up—turning itself off after 10 seconds, but not nearly so traumatic as expected. After finding the start of the thoughtfully glowstick-marked path, we made fairly good time and had reached the MUMC Hut by around 2 am.

As I had planned to stay in the hut I only brought one blue mat, which proved less than desirable when I ended up snow camping. However I firmly believe it was still preferable to being continually woken up by people arriving at the hut (the last group seemed to arrive around 7 am). This is not to cast any aspersions on the magnificent structure. By 'hut' I was expecting some sort of wooden shack, not a big green faceted bubble very impressive against the snowy backdrop.

Having had between 3 and 5 hours more sleep than most I decided to put my extra energy to good use. I spent the day drinking whiskey, attempting to build a snowman for about 10 minutes, and having a nap (which just 'happened' to be around the time more noble souls undertook to switch the containers underneath the toilet). Others went skiing, or walked in snow shoes. Having neither of these I can blame my lack of activity on conditions unsuitable for walking any further towards the summit of Mt Feathertop.

Before long it was time for costumes. The theme, being Pirates, Vikings and Australian





Politicians, certainly provided for a wide range. Highlights included Alaster's viking outfit, complete with large mallet found under the hut, Mitch in a suit with bow-tie, and watching those dressed in attire ill-suited to snow growing impatient with the duration of the photo shoot out the front of the hut.

Now for the most integral part: the food. For those unfamiliar with the event, a fairly major part of it is the dinner on Saturday night. Everyone eats in groups of six with two people preparing each of the three courses from scratch. People brought up ovens to cook pavlova, they smoked trout, made pasta from scratch and rolled dumplings. As you will hear about elsewhere in the magazine, Tim took on the even greater challenge of brewing beer in the hut. Being ill-prepared for the sheer amount of effort expected, myself and Nicole took the less-ambitious step of melting chocolate and cream and cutting fruit for fondue.

One of the evening's challenges was getting through the hole leading up to the sleeping platform. All the girls who attempted, including myself, got through with relative ease whereas some of the stronger male climbers struggled to fit through, rather disturbingly requesting to be greased up in order to do so. Other activities in a similar vein included climbing through the ladder to get up it and bouldering around the benches. Later in the evening we were treated to an illuminating discussion on New Zealand and its natural environment led by James.

The next morning involved the normal lack of enthusiasm associated with cleaning up after a party with the added thrill of carrying all the rubbish back down the hill, hoping

the bag containing it does not break on the way (I was not so lucky). Walking down was not as difficult as the trip up, but it was certainly felt the next day. I had a lovely pair of blue big toenails in memory of the trip up until the beginning of December.

As my introduction to the club, having only been on a climbing daytrip and to less than half a dozen meetings prior, Midnight Ascent was fairly epic. Not that I now expect all trips to revolve around costumes, partying and gourmet meals. However, after six months involvement in the club, I do feel the spirit of humorous challenge (cooking a three course dinner on top of a mountain) and the dedication bordering on ridiculousness (months of effort brewing beer on the top of a mountain) embodied in Midnight Ascent is something that MUMC brings to all its trips. I'm glad I joined. ☘

Jaz, Mitchell, James and Ben with the highly praised pavlova (above left), while Alex tries the alternative method of climbing the ladder (above).

Sytske, Jamie, Nicole and Sok Shin create a pile of snow ... (below).

PHOTOS: ENG WU 'EGG' ONG (ABOVE LEFT, ABOVE); AROM MALEE (BELOW).



2010's motley crew of Midnight Ascenters (main).

Jamie and Arlie in good spirits (opposite bottom).

Noble souls switching the "honeypots" beneath the toilet (right).

PHOTOS: JESSE BATES (MAIN); AROM MALEE (OPPOSITE BOTTOM); ENG WU 'EGG' ONG (RIGHT).





# THE DESTRUCTO CHALLENGE

A report on Mike Law's new climbing gear test rig.

BY DALE THISTLETHWAITE AND MICHAEL LAW  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL LAW

WHEN MUMC RECEIVED A request from renowned climber and gear nerd Mike Law to sponsor him to break some pro... we were intrigued—and then duly handed over the cash. MUMC is just one of the sponsors of Mike's gear testing rig which is travelling the country and was last seen in Victoria. The rig is designed to test the strength of existing anchors and also of trad gear placement, to help us all be a little better informed about what stands between us and the ground.

The rig is currently being put to good use in the capable hands of the Victorian Climbing Club. If you're keen to get involved please e-mail the mountaineering convenor, Dale Thistlethwaite, at [alpinism@mumc.org.au](mailto:alpinism@mumc.org.au).

## Mike's report

THE RIG CAN test the strength of existing anchors, target which types of anchors are weak or unreliable, or maybe show that some of the old anchors are okay. The system is relatively portable (approximately 20 kg) and will be used around Australia so that various groups can test anchors in their local rock. The unit is pretty beefy and will pull 50 kN (5 tonnes).

You can test several types of force: downwards ('shear', also known as 'radial'), straight outwards ('axial') by using a tripod [see main photo], or at 45 degrees.

Rock may be damaged when good bolts are pulled. For this reason testers are avoiding testing solid bolts on popular routes, leaving strong bolts alone. Most testing should be confined to bits of rock away from the good climbing.

All test data will be collected, collated and published to the web for all to access.

## Results so far

STRENGTH AND FATIGUE testing across 7 types of bolts in various sizes demonstrated what can and can't be used in the soft rock tested so far (mostly NSW). More results are required in good rock (i.e. Victoria).

Trad gear has also been tested; these experiments were designed to test not gear (which is generally very well made), but if typical placements are going to save your bacon, and how accurately climbers can rate the security and strength of placements. The set-up is simple: place gear and estimate its security, then try to flick it out, replace it if necessary, then rate the strength.

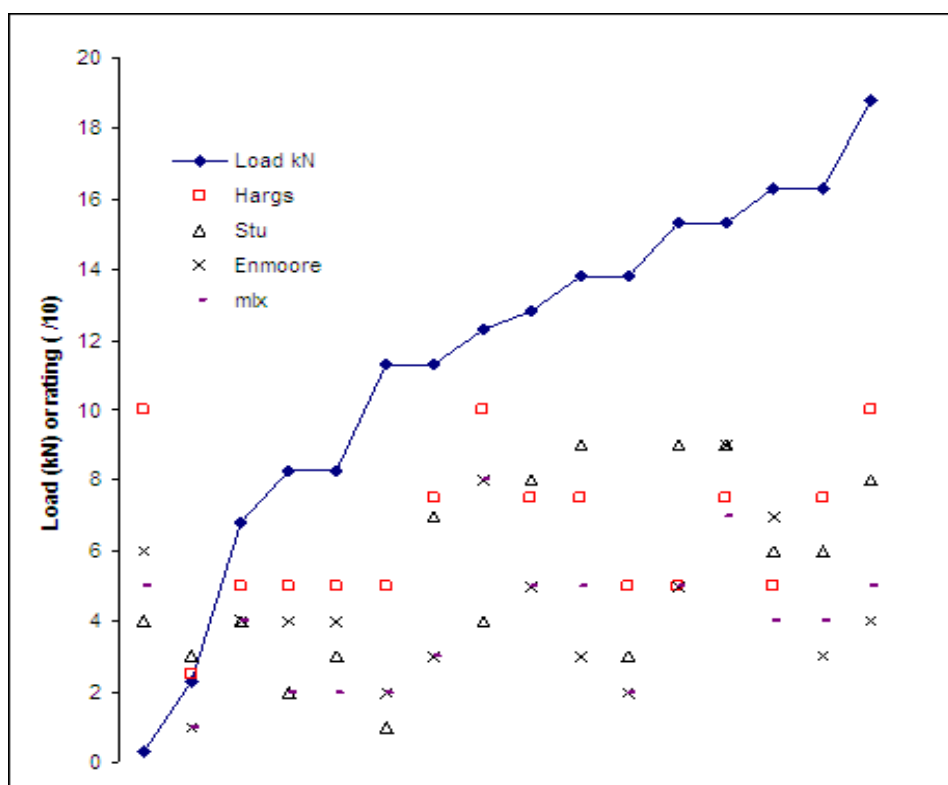
The gear was tested for security by giving a sling attached to it a 'handshake' (a 15 cm flick), then by pulling it outwards with 10 kg force. The rating system is 0 to 10, where 10 is bombproof, and will hold any conceivable climbing fall (i.e. 10 kN).





Tripod pulling a Ubolt on soft sandstone, failure at 38 kN (opposite).

A 10mm dynabolt being tested and about to fail at 14 kN (left).



Failure loads sorted in increasing order, with ratings (left). Observant readers (and those who've been around MUMC far too long) will notice that Mike is being ably assisted in his endeavours by two MUMC alumni, Enmoore Lin and Stu Dobbie.

## Trad gear conclusions

FIRSTLY, THE RATINGS were quite random but most of the gear was stronger than the testers expected, so why does gear come out in falls?

Three possible options are:

1. Rope movement due to falling dislodges the gear (this could be checked by videoing rope movement in real falls). The cure for this is to use more slings and pieces of stabilising gear.

2. There may be something inherently more destructive about dynamic loading, I suspect this might be true for poorly lubricated cams but not for other gear. Once again, we can resolve this with drop testing.

3. The loading direction is significantly different in a fall, this is particularly true when overly anxious belayers take in rope as you fly past gear (it should be noted that half the pieces were all loaded outwards at greater than 10 degrees).

The second feature was that, though our assessments were generally conservative, there was little correlation between the assessed and actual strength (and I had the greatest errors). We made dangerous assessments about 15% of the time. This implies that if gear failure would lead to pain, you should put another piece in. ☹

– Michael Law  
(Great-nephew of MUMC Honorary Life Member Dr Phillip Law)

# PROFILE: JOHN CHAPMAN

Author, bushwalking legend,  
MUMC Honorary Life Member... and climber.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY CHELSEA EAW  
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY  
OF GLENN TEMPEST

**I**TURNED UP WITH A frying pan and a steak,' John Chapman recollects. 'I told them I'd walked in South West Tasmania, but they didn't believe me.' He chuckles at the memory of his first trip with the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (MUMC), of which he is now an Honorary Life Member.

Unless you're an outdoorsman (or woman), you may not have heard of John Chapman. But most bushwalkers will have, at some point, picked up a guidebook with John's name emblazoned on the cover. His name is almost synonymous with walking in Tasmania, and to Taswegians and Victorians alike, John Chapman is bushwalking royalty. Having served as a professional guide in Tasmania, Nepal and India—and authored countless guidebooks—John has earned a stellar reputation as a bushwalker.

But fewer people know John Chapman as a climber. That he put up about 60 new routes in his day seems to be a little-known, under-celebrated fact. It started with MUMC membership in 1974. Being a natural climber, it

only took John Chapman a year to become MUMC's rockclimbing convenor. That same year, he was around for MUMC's third ever Midnight Ascent in 1975, and he remained a member 'til the late 1980s.

BY THE TIME John Chapman joined MUMC, the club was shifting away from its pole position as the state's dominant climbing body. That role was adopted by the Victorian Climbing Club (VCC), of which John was also a member. Dual membership wasn't unusual—32 of the VCC's 39 original members were also MUMC members. In truth, the VCC was an MUMC off-shoot—it was created for people who wanted to climb, but weren't eligible to join MUMC.



John Chapman *was* eligible to join MUMC, and ended up climbing through an exciting spike in climbing history. He saw what was probably Victorian climbing's biggest period of growth, in terms of both grades and gear. In the mid-1970s, pitons were falling out of favour as the 'clean climbing' notion reached Australia. Nuts had just begun to be manufactured by Chouinard Equipment, a company now known as Black Diamond Equipment. Chouinard had also

just invented 'Hexentrics', unwieldy chocks that younger climbers call 'hexes' nowadays. In essence, the climber's rack was changing.

John's rack provides an incredible snapshot of 1970s climbing gear. His collection features 'stoppers' (early nuts made by Chouinard). They're solid metal wedges that, if aimed well, would knock out a small bird. Similarly lethal are John's larger RPs—younger climbers may be surprised to learn that large, stopper-sized RPs exist. (What differentiates them from stoppers, John tells me, is the angle of the taper.)

The weirdest item on John's rack is an early camming device called a cam nut or camlock—something midway between a hex, a tube and half a modern cam. I'd never

seen one before. But of all of John Chapman's climbing gear, my personal favourite was a stiff tent peg that John used as a nut tool.

But arguably the most exciting innovation in John's era were 'EBs'—one of the first commercially available climbing shoes. 'EBs hadn't been in use long,' John recalls. 'They were the thing to have. When I tried some out, I was like, wow, this is better than sandals.'

These advancements in gear translated into a swift rise in grades. When John started climbing, Arapiles had a couple of 18s, 19s and 20s. Higher grades didn't exist yet. 'I saw the grades go to 30,' John reminisces. It was during John's time—what guidebooks dub the time of 'The New Wave' climbers—that a lot of crags were being developed. And John did his share of developing—among his many first ascents, he also did the second or third ascent of Arapiles' *Bam Bam* (20). A couple of years later, he did it in thongs.

'HE ALWAYS HAD this party trick,' remembers Glenn Tempest, a prolific climber and guidebook author, 'where he'd do *Golden Streak* (V2) in thongs.' *Golden Streak* is a classic, greasy problem on its namesake boulder at Arapiles. 'Most people struggle up it,' Glenn observes. 'But John just walked up in thongs.' And he still does today.

Back in the day, John wasn't afraid of soloing the odd route. When a group of his friends were developing Black Ian's Rocks—a Grampians crag that was chanced upon when Ian Ross got lost driving from Mt Talbot to Arapiles—John soloed a new route graded 15. 'I was halfway up, when I thought, ooh, actually, this is a bit dicey!' The climb is called *Bail Refused* (perhaps fittingly), and the description in a guidebook reads 'Beware of the loose rock on the stance below the final off-width.'

But John reckons his best lead was a 22 in NSW's Wolgan Valley. This huge sandstone canyon on the 'back' side of the Blue Mountains has a plethora of crags offering all kinds of climbing. 'The climb was fairly steep—you know, like this [makes the appropriate hand gestures]—and then there was a scoop. Then the holds just disappear!' What's amazing about this lead is that it was protected with just two runners.

It wasn't that John was a particularly gutsy climber. Remember that as the 80s rolled in, many a gutsy-ish climber lived in the shadow of superstars like Jon Muir, who by the

mid-80s had soloed half the 24s at Araps. John Chapman's gifts were talent, a solidness on rock, and intelligence—he was a thinking climber. 'He's one of those methodical, almost mathematical people,' Glenn Tempest says. 'And he applies that mathematical sense to his climbing.'

That's not to say that John was a boring climber. John was a real character. Glenn

continues. 'I'm similar, so of course we got on famously. Didn't let each other get a word in. I remember him being very active in the Victorian Climbing Club. He had a tight group of friends—Peter Watson, Nick Reeves, Keith Egerton—who put up a lot of new routes.'

Sometimes, John's achievements were accidental. For instance, the *Direct Start* of

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## 'He always had this party trick, where he'd do Golden Streak (V2) in thongs.' —Glenn Tempest

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Tempest recalls being belayed by John on *Ozymandias Direct* (28 or M4)—a stunning 270-metre climb up the North Wall of Buffalo Gorge that some say is *the* aid route to do in Australia. 'I was on the crux pitch on loads and loads of RPs,' Glenn recalls. 'I look down and see John, and he's *reading a book*. It didn't even look like he was belaying! I fell, and ended up falling 25 metres. In fact I fell past John, who dropped his book. He caught me, and he was just laughing!'

'He's always been a real chatterbox,' Glenn

Mt Buffalo's famous three-starred crack-fest, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. John and his climbing partner Keith Egerton arrived at Buffalo with no guidebook and climbed what they thought was *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (17). 'We knew it was the Angels Buttress, and the obvious crack,' John explains. 'We stood at the bottom and thought the left crack looked rubbish, so we went up the middle crack. After a while the crack disappears, and it's a face climb to join the other crack! I thought, gee, that looks hard for a 17, or

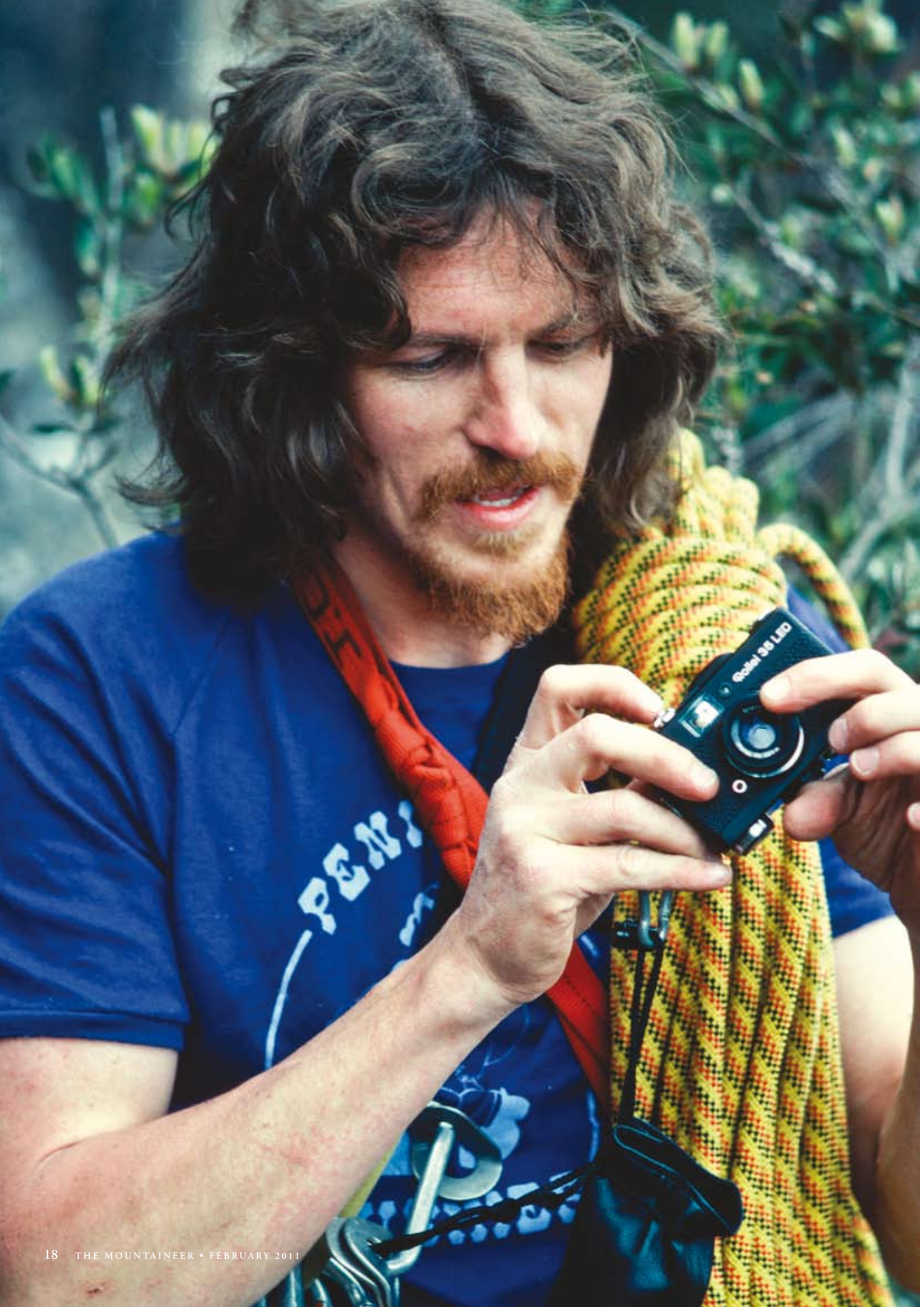


Some examples of original modern climbing gear from John's rack (above).

John Chapman at home (opposite).

PHOTOS: CHELSEA EAW.







John Chapman at North Jawbones, Victoria, 1978.  
Photo courtesy of Glenn Tempest (opposite).

John retrieves his climbing rack from an  
old apple box (right).

PHOTOS: GLENN TEMPEST (OPPOSITE); CHELSEA EAW (RIGHT).

whatever it was graded back then.' It turns out they had done the first ascent of a new variant, which later became the *Direct Start* at grade 19.

JOHN SEEMS TO have been a natural climber (he never trained, he couldn't be bothered). His other talent is keeping records. In fact, John almost ended up writing the 1978 Arapiles climbing guide because he'd already recorded most of the climbs in his own handwritten, personal notebook. So, when the VCC (Victorian Climbing Club) wanted to publish another guide, John Chapman was one of two possible authors—him or Keith 'Noddy' Lockwood. Ultimately Keith Lockwood ended up writing the guide because John insisted Keith was the pithier writer.

Keith Lockwood wasn't the only famous climber John knew. Through the VCC, John met and served on the committee with Chris Baxter (founder of *Rock* and *Wild* magazines), and eventually went on to climb with Joe Friend and Glenn Tempest—a name that is familiar to most climbers today. John also climbed with Kim Carrigan, the man some say was almost singularly responsible for pushing grades in Victoria into the high 20s.

MEETING PEOPLE WITH experience was the benefit of joining clubs like the VCC and MUMC for John. At MUMC, although the ratio of beginners to experienced individuals has always been lop-sided, there were a few people about with a couple of years under their belt—in John's eyes, it was better than zero years.

'Clubs are a quick way of gaining experience,' John says. 'Experienced people don't have to teach, people will learn by watching. Sometimes people turn up for a bushwalk in jeans or whatever, and you think, gee, they'll be cold. But they manage, and they see somebody else wearing warmer or quicker-drying clothes and think, "Maybe I should do that". Next time they come back more prepared. That's how you get experience; you do things wrong. The trick is not to make it a disaster. Make sure things go wrong in places where you can deal with it or afford to make an error or mistake there.'

The advice stands for both bushwalking and climbing. 'The biggest danger for climbers is the first few leads,' John continues. 'If you

can survive that, you're OK. We've all backed off climbs. Use your common sense. You can always come back. Don't try things too difficult too early.'

There was a time when MUMC did very difficult things—like exploring remote areas, particularly in South West Tasmania. Federation Peak—a conspicuous spire in Tasmania flanked by razor-sharp ridges—was almost 'conquered' by a group from MUMC. In fact, they missed out on the first ascent in 1949 by a hair's breadth. On the approach to the peak, the group bumped into John Béchervaise (and his party from the Geelong College Exploration Society), who had just completed the climb.

These days, it's a bit harder to undertake such pioneering expeditions (it took 50 years for someone to bag the Federation Peak summit). I ask John Chapman about MUMC's exploration and our relatively humble exploits today. 'In the late 40s, early 50s, MUMC did a lot of exploration,' John says. 'At that stage, places in Tasmania hadn't been explored. It gets harder to find those places now. You need to have a lot of experience to do that. A lot of people got a good grounding while at the club, but did [notable] things not while they were at MUMC.'

You could say John Chapman is one of these people. While John had already visited South

West Tasmania before joining the club, it wasn't until four years after that he published his first guidebook and earned the reputation he has today. When I first met John it was by chance at a trackwork weekend in the Yarra Ranges. Not being an avid bushwalker, I had no idea who he was—until he told me he was an MUMC Honorary Life Member.

It's now a year on, and when I contacted John again for this interview I suggested revisiting the Yarra Ranges. Instead, he invited me to his home. He's so humble that, apart from the 60-odd prints on the walls (most of which are John's own photographs), the mostly native front garden and his pile of handwritten records, you wouldn't know that John is one of Australia's outdoor legends—an MUMC Honorary Life Member who has carved a part of Australian bushwalking and climbing history.

'Back in the 70s we were only a small group of climbers,' Glenn Tempest reminisces. 'We were all characters. We had to be. Remember in those days, we didn't come from a gym background. We were spurred on by our need for adventure. We were looking for something different. We wanted to go to new places. Climbing really suited John—his desire to do difficult things and find new places.' ♦





# THE BIG DAYS OUT

Rockclimbing in New Zealand's alpine regions.



BY FELICITY ROUSSEAU  
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIBOR JANOS  
& ANDY ECKLESHALL

**Y**OU KNOW YOUR LIFE is rich, (in every sense of the word) when your 'domestics' are about whether you will do alpine rock, or mixed ice & rock routes on your holiday.

The preceding months before the New Zealand South Island trip were full of heated debate and a battle of wills over the plans for our trip. Due to an injury I sustained, we not only postponed our trip but went from plan A—perfect for a mountaineer of many years' experience, to plan B—perfect for a rock climber of many years' experience.

I last went to New Zealand just prior to agreeing to marry the best man in the world, Tibor. It was only after we had climbed *White Dream* on Mt. Cook as my introduction to a mountaineering holiday, that I realised the trip was just a test to see if I was made of the right stuff to marry.

It appears I was.

Our recent trip brought just as many rewards as the last one. The lungs, limbs and camera were in overdrive, and we had

a couple of good spells of weather. The strategic Christmas present of a guide to the Darrans came into use first. We had perfect weather whilst doing the East Ridge of Mt. Talbot, and the views were spectacular! The Darrans is an area near Milford Sound where the peaks rush up steeply from valleys rather than from the Sound's waters. It defies the written word to describe the awesome beauty and the feast for the eyes that abounds; from peaks, to flowers, to mountain goat, to moss and stream, to alpine lakes, to beautiful lines.

It took a couple of hours up the valley and lower slopes to approach the climb. We then belayed above the bergschrund to put away the ice axes, crampons and boots and squeeze into our friction boots. The bergschrund gaped and threatened to eat anything that wasn't held tightly or tied in.

The route was clean, solid and interesting. At times the climbing bolted up a few grades due to the weight of all the snow and ice gear in our packs. At the last pitch it moved into extreme grades, so after trying all options we





Tibor at the bergschrund at the base of the climb. Mt Talbot (above).

Felicity on the approach of Mt Talbot (left).

East Ridge of Single Cone, The Remarkables (opposite top).

Tibor approaching the base of East Ridge of Mt Talbot (opposite centre).

Felicity on East Ridge of Mt Talbot (opposite bottom).

Edward Bear in full climbing gear (below).

PHOTOS: ANDY ECKLESHALL (OPPOSITE TOP); TIBOR JANOS (LEFT, OPPOSITE BOTTOM); FELICITY ROUSSEAU (ABOVE, BELOW, OPPOSITE CENTRE).

decided we were off route and rapped off.

Disappointing, but the mountains are not going anywhere and we could hopefully return.

Beta gleaned at Homer Hut below gave us some useful tips. Either leave your pack at the bottom of the climb, do the route and rap down to your pack, or, use light boots and crampons and take them with you.

Overall it was a great day-adventure with a wide variety of rock, snow and trail travel. I'd highly recommend you put it on your hit list.

THE NEXT WINDOW of weather was spent at The Remarkables near Queenstown. Here we not only enjoyed the *fabulous* climbs, but also the fact the friends we bummed around the world with in years gone by now have houses and holiday houses in strategic locations next to climbing heavens.

What to tell you about The Remarkables? I CAN'T WAIT TO GO BACK!!! They are made of schist rock with some quartz, and like all of the New Zealand mountains are a

product of the two tectonic plates, the Indo-Australian and Pacific plates, colliding. Yes, we had seen Christchurch looking patchy as it continues to periodically shake, as do other parts of New Zealand.

Key features of The Remarkables, Single Cone and Double Cone, became larger and larger as we approached the peaks. The ski area at The Remarkables allows you to start your approach from their car park. It is instant immersion in alpine vegetation. Crisp, cold wind; deep blue Lake Alta; imposing, grey rock peaks tower over scree, snow patches and some elegant slabs.

Our fine weather saw us exploring the ridge and settling to circumvent the lake and bag the three star route on Alta Wall, *The Fat Lady Sings At The Circus*. My heart was singing and the only thing that was fat on our trip was our mascot, Edward Bear, who becomes heavier when we go up hill and loses weight on the descent. Funny that...

When I'm climbing there is a sense of total freedom and immersion in the task at hand. Amidst this "zone" the pleasure of





Andy Eckleshall on *East Ridge of Single Cone*,  
The Remarkables (right).

Felicity and Andy on *East Ridge of Single Cone*,  
with Lake Alta below (below).

Felicity and Tibor on the summit of Single Cone,  
with Double Cone and the Mt Aspiring National  
Park in the background (below right).

*Leucogenes grandiceps*: South Island edelweiss  
(bottom).

PHOTOS: ANDY ECKLESHALL (BELOW RIGHT); TIBOR JANOS (BELOW);  
FELICITY ROUSSEAU (RIGHT).



seeing Edelweiss eke out a living from some tiny morsel of nutrients amidst the rocks is enhanced. With all those endorphins and wonderful rock moves, even the views get better!!

THE NEXT EXPEDITION was the East Ridge of Single Cone. We'd teamed up with a friend, Andy Eckleshall, so simul-climbed once the scree turned to rockclimbing. My demeanour was sobered by a foothold breaking off just as I used it to climb up. I was able to hold myself and not engender a fall that could have pulled us all off onto gear that would *hopefully* hold. I was reminded that climbing is a serious sport. The scratches and bruises reminded me as well—but hush! Don't disturb the flow and no-one saw the slip.

On the top there was the happiness that comes from a good line on (mostly) good

rock on a beautiful day with spectacular views and great company. Summit photos and time to listen to the boys plan which mixed ice & rock routes they'll do this winter. It's good to see people happy!

It was a couple of abseils and a careful unroped down-climb to the car and evening beer on the veranda overlooking a Queenstown sunset.

NEXT WE RELOCATED to Arthur's Pass. The weather thwarted our second attempt at Mt. Rolleston. A 3:30 am start and we splashed our way up to the snowline, deep in cloud and rain. Then we held on till 9 am before even our mascot agreed to admit defeat—not a good feeling.

Never at a loss for original ideas as to how to soothe the emotions, the boys headed for the Wobbly Kea café in Arthur's Pass town-

ship and sunk into a large couch, beers in hand. We filled the front display window with our long, tired legs. It appeared we were galvanising custom for the establishment. "They should be giving us beer" pipes Andy.

Perhaps on the next trip.... ☺



# PIE 'N' SLIDE NIGHT 2010

**Here are the** winning photographs from MUMC's annual photography competition, held at the Dan O'Connell Hotel in August last year. Over some beer and pies, winning photos were chosen by a panel of judges, and prizes donated by various outdoors stores awarded to the winners. Congratulations to those who won, and thanks to the sponsors and judges.



## OVERALL WINNER PRASHANT DABEE Breaching Shark

Great white shark breaching.  
False Bay, South Africa.

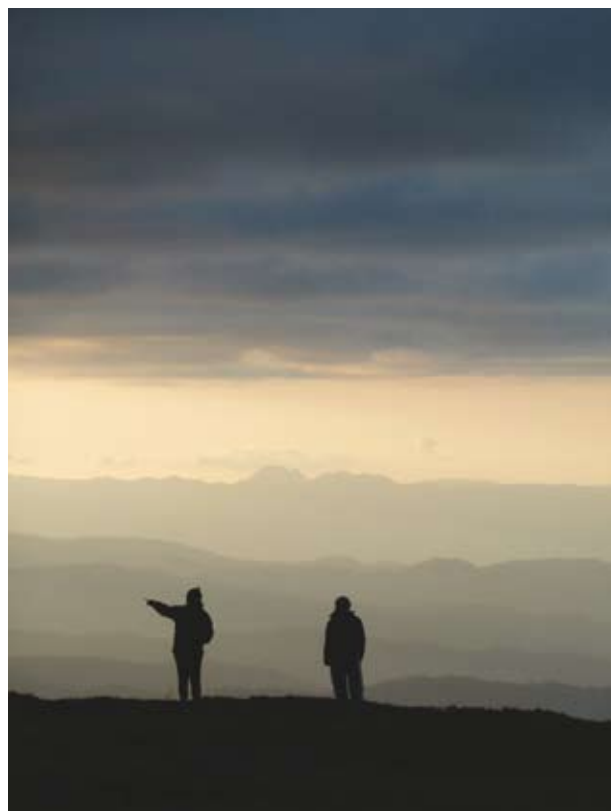


## CLUB ACTIVITY ENG WU 'EGG' ONG Just Hanging Out

Richard Bassett-Smith and Ben Gray pause for a photo while on a climbing trip to the Blue Mountains in New South Wales, Easter 2010.

## RUNNER UP JEREMY WALTHERT Spring Skiing on Top of Mount Hotham

Seasoned telemarker Arimbi (left) points out landmarks in the distance while new-comer Ruth looks on. Taken from Mt Hotham looking towards Mt Buffalo after a day of October cross-country skiing.







## AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

### ENG WU 'EGG' ONG

#### Cape Liptrap

Sunset at Cape Liptrap, Victoria.



## OUTDOORS NATURE

### MONA JOHN VON FREYEND

#### Puffin and Guillemots

Taken in July 2010 on one of the Farne Islands, off the coast of Northumberland, UK. In spring, the small rocky uninhabited islands host thousands of nesting sea birds, including puffins, guillemots, and three species of tern. It was amazing to see the swift little puffins darting to and from their burrows, watch the arctic terns attack those who came too close to their eggs or chicks, and take in the bustle and noise of the incredible number of different birds.



## CLUB PERSONALITY

### ALASTER MEEHAN

#### Flashers

Whilst changing out of wet clothes, Chris Watkins, Claire Baxter, Chelsea Lawson and Gerard Deffenbaugh get the urge to flash themselves to Alaster after a canyoning trip to the Blue Mountains, New South Wales.



## OVERSEAS LANDSCAPE

**MONA JOHN VON FREYEND**

**Laguna Miscanti**

Laguna Miscanti is located in the altiplano of the Antofagasta region of northern Chile. This high-plateau is extremely dry (it is in the vicinity of the Atacama, the driest desert in the world) and only sparsely covered with rough Festuca grass. At an altitude of 4,100 m, the clean, dry air leads to the vivid appearance of colours. The surrounding mountains are between 5,500 m and 5,900 m high.



## PHOTOJOURNALISM

**DANIEL KLESS**

**Self-Sustaining Family in Argentina**

Only 150 km from the well-developed town of Tucuman in Argentina, a family living entirely self-sustainably without electricity, water connection or schooling. Their kitchen was pitch-black from smoke as their fireplace had no chimney. The trekking guide (who was their friend) attempted to provide them advice about receiving government support. From left to right are mother and son, Daniel, trekking guide and another friend. The family's grandfather is not shown.



## HONOURABLE MENTIONS

**SOK SHIN YAP**

**Sunset Silhouette**

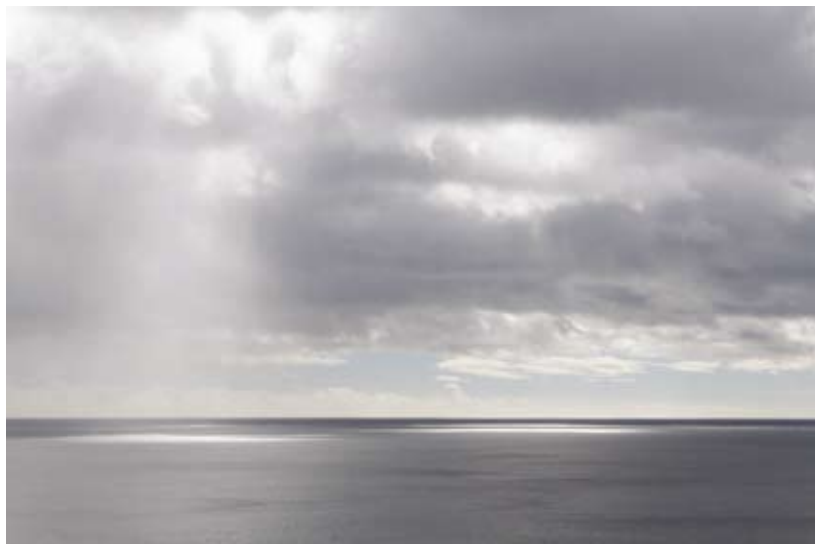
A photo of Wee Loon Ong silhouetted against the evening sky, on a bushwalking trip to Cape Liptrap, Victoria, in April 2010.



# HONOURABLE MENTIONS

## DANIEL KLESS Spotlights

Spotlights appear on the water as a result of gaps in the clouds. Taken at Table Cape, Wynyard, Tasmania.



## DANA FORCEY Lone Gum

A solitary gum tree stands over a valley, encountered while hiking on the Larapinta Trail, Northern Territory.



## PRASHANT DABEE African Desert

An old tree stump echoes the dry surroundings during sunrise in the Namib Desert, Namibia.



## YASAMAN MOHAMMADI Bird's-Eye View

Birds look out over a misty valley and craggy peaks in the Alps. Taken while hiking in Chamonix, France.

# DREAMING OF LIONS

Circumstances came together to allow a new route on Mt Tasman to be reeled in.

Dawn approach: Felix heading across the neve, with the shadow of the great divide cast onto the Tasman Sea (above).

Topo showing *Path of Manolin* on Mt Tasman (below).

BY STUART HOLLAWAY

I HAVE A LIST of unclimbed routes that I want to do around Aoraki Mt Cook and Westland National Parks.

In general they are clear lines on big peaks. Mostly, I think, they haven't been done because they looked too improbably hard during the competitive era of development through the 70s and mid-80s. Since then, developments have been generally limited to cragging type routes with the major exception of Al Uren's *Godzone* (NZ 6+) and the McLeod/Dickson route *Rumpelstiltskin* (NZ 6) on Aoraki's East Face. The other two obvious exceptions are my routes, *The Middle Path* (NZ 6) on the Balfour Face of Tasman and *Resolution* (NZ 6+) on Aoraki Mt Cook, which were opened with MUMC members Phil Blunsom and Lachie Currie respectively.

Most years I am lucky if I get the chance to try one of the routes on my list. Often I see new features or come to believe in new possibilities, so the list keeps getting longer rather than shorter.

Sometimes I spend years thinking about these routes, hoping that time, partner, conditions and weather will come together, chafing until they do. I have pictures—





Rockshoes balanced on ice as Felix considers the opening move (above left).

It was steeper than it looks here, but quite solid and fun—Felix storming up the Tower of Choss to reach the ice of the West Ridge (above right).

Traditional self-portrait on the summit—starting to get a bit thirsty now (below).



pictures with lines on them, pictures from different years and seasons. I have blown up sections of maps—with annotations. I am a real mountain dork. I spend ages persuading people into attempting these routes, sometimes (generally, virtually always really) downplaying the difficulty and the effort and the uncertainty to get them to agree.

Sometimes, however, it is easy.

SATURDAY, TWO WEEKS ago, walking down from Pioneer Hut on the Fox neve to



Chancellor Hut for a flight out, my client Carl paused for a drink and my attention was caught by the unusual view of a buttress rising to the remote West Ridge of Mt Tasman from the wild and rarely visited Abel Janssoon glacier. It looked big, steep and compact. It faced north-west, so it should have good rock. It was unclimbed.

I showed my photos and map to Felix Landman, a guide I had met earlier in the summer who was instructing a climbing course. We finished our guiding jobs on Wednesday and returned to Fox Thursday night determined to have a go at it with a favourable, if slightly disturbed weather forecast.

Friday morning we flew in and hiked off to explore access to the route. It turned out to be remarkably straightforward, except for weaving through one minor icefall and having to make a rather horrifying, Agamemnon-style lunge across an ice chimney to connect two crucial bridges to get past a 20 wide crevasse splitting the entire glacier.

The line we had hoped to climb was not viable due to the massive rockfall pouring out of the nearby Torres–Tasman col, but the clean buttress immediately left provided an appealing and challenging looking alternative. Further left again is an attractive mixed buttress of very good rock that will yield a classic, big, moderately difficult climb.

We spent the night back in the hut and enjoyed a leisurely sleep-in (5 am) so that we would reach the rockclimbing when the sun was high enough to cross the divide and warm the rock and it all went very smoothly from there. The climbing was not as hard as we had hoped, but the rock was sound and the buttress pronounced enough to provide protection from the occasional rockfall down the gully to the left, which will be an excellent big mountain winter route, and great views of the whole cirque as well as the endless smashing drama of the Torres–Tasman col from which rock poured down like a waterfall.

We did about 550 m of roped climbing to reach the ice at the start of Tasman's West Ridge. Most of it was quite moderate, blocky scrambling—grade 13—up short walls on good rock. There were two crux pitches—grade 17/18—that provided steep, athletic climbing with good gear; the overhanging cracks of pitch 5 were a real highlight. And there was a bit of care required to manage the rope around broken terrain at the crest of the ridge, which culminated in a dreadful looking 60 m tower: it appeared to be a pile of unspeakable choss but actually provided quite fun climbing with sound rock and protection thanks to Felix's cunning route finding.

Changing back into boots and crampons





at 4:30 pm we were looking good. After a hundred metres of downclimbing steep, brittle ice we were looking a bit slow and tired, but it was just a matter of taking time and care and grinding it out up the West Ridge to the summit and then down the North Ridge and over Lendenfeld to complete a great traverse. The weather was ideal, the moon would be full, the views were

magnificent and the helicopter would pick us up at the hut at 8:30 am. It wasn't that difficult—there are bigger fish to catch and much still to learn and the 7th grade is still waiting on Aoraki, Tasman and Hicks—but it was a magnificent day on a beautiful mountain and as all else is stripped away the memory lasts. ☼

Felix starting up the ice arete of the West Ridge, with Torres Peak, cloud and ocean in the background (top left).

Easy travel on the final snow slope towards the summit (top right).

Felix downclimbing the summit ridge of Tasman's North Shoulder route: exposed and elegant but tiring until you reach straightforward terrain near the shoulder (above).

Felix traverses from the base of the summit arete towards the North Shoulder in rapidly fading light, with Aoraki Mt Cook rising from a sea of cloud in the background (left).

**First Ascent:** *Path of Manolin*, Abel Janszoon Face of Mt Tasman, NZ 5+, 550 m of rock (crux 18) to the start of the West Ridge, NZ 4. Stuart Hollaway & Felix Landman, 22/1/11. First ascensionists descended via the North Shoulder.



# PHYTOPHTORA CINNAMOMI: SILENT KILLER



BY CHELSEA EAW

IT'S INVISIBLE AND IT kills. No, I'm not talking about the 1987 science fiction film *Predator*. Although, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is more or less the botanical equivalent.

*Phytophthora cinnamomi* is an unwanted visitor. It invades ecosystems, killing plants. And it does so invisibly; you can't see *Phytophthora* with the naked eye because it's a soil-borne water mould. Like Arnold Schwarzenegger's invisible nemesis, you can only see where it's been—it leaves a trail of dying plants. Yellowing leaves and a 'sickly' look describes a plant condition science-heads call 'dieback'. This 'dieback' in certain

trees is a tell-tale sign of the presence of *Phytophthora*.

Bushwalkers should keep a weary eye out for these signs. *Phytophthora* is an enemy every bushwalker should be briefed on. Why? Because we play a huge part in how it spreads. The sneaky pathogen has a few tricks up its sleeve. Firstly, it travels in water—that means it moves with groundwater to infect new hosts in new areas. But that's not its only means of transport—it also relies on our shoes. That's right, shoes that belong to you and me. If you've ever walked through a park with known *Phytophthora* infection, you may have noticed some cleaning stations. Don't ignore these. Your grubbiness might mean

A recent conservation trip highlighted the problems caused by this invasive pathogen.

you've given *Phytophthora*—the bastards—a chance to hitch a ride to a new location and wreak new havoc.

The worst thing about *Phytophthora* is that—like a nightmarish virus—there's no cure for a plant once it's infected. The famous example involves the Wollemi Pine; a prehistoric tree discovered in the Blue Mountains by ranger, climber and bushwalker David Noble in 1994. Finding the Wollemi Pine was the botanical equivalent of stumbling across a *Tyrannosaurus rex* in the bush. But in 2005, the wild Wollemi Pines were found to be infected with *Phytophthora cinnamomi*—it was introduced by bushwalkers. Like I said, there is no cure, and the entire wild population of this living fossil—a tree that thrived back when Australia was part of the giant landmass Gondwana (and you and I were non-existent)—is now threatened with extinction. The exact location of wild Wollemi Pines in the Blueys is now top secret.

New South Wales isn't the only place we should worry about *Phytophthora*. Closer to home, the Brisbane Ranges National Park—just over an hour west of Melbourne—is



Checking the condition of Grass Trees for evidence of *Phytophthora* in the Brisbane Ranges (top).

The prehistoric Wollemi Pine is threatened with extinction due to infection by bushwalkers (left).

known to be infected with *Phytophthora*. Anyone visiting Brisbane Ranges National Park—for walking, birding, paintballing, or whatever—should be sure to clean their footwear after leaving the park, especially in winter and spring when there is (or should be) more water around.

A BUNCH OF MUMCers visited the Brisbane Ranges to participate in a survey on Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea* species); an iconic tree that isn't unlike Jim Henson's Muppet character, Beaker—a solid trunk with long, thin tufts of grass-like leaves erupting abruptly at its crown. Grass Trees infected with *Phytophthora* aren't difficult to single out. The typically vibrant looking plant instead sports tired looking leaves browning at the ends. Our job at the Brisbane Ranges was to survey for *Phytophthora* a number of Grass Tree-filled 'quadrats', some of which were defined thirty years ago when the project was conceived.

You don't have to get involved in thirty-year projects to help out. Helping can be as simple as cleaning your shoes. For the uninitiated, here's a how-to guide to ensure you get the little buggers.

#### Things you'll need:

- A big brush
- A spray bottle
- A methylated spirits and water solution (70 per cent : 30 per cent)

1. Using the big brush, scrub the soil off your shoe's soles. Take care to remove all the dirt from the cracks, and scrub the sole's outer edges too.

2. With your metho/water solution in a spray bottle, spray the solution onto your soles. Ensure you've covered the entire surface. Methylated spirits kills *Phytophthora* spores.

That's it. Two simple steps to help stop the spread of one of the world's most invasive pathogens. ☘



A big brush and a spray bottle of metho/water solution can help to stop the spread of *Phytophthora* (above).

Scrubbing big hiking boots can be hard work, but it was important to remove the mud and spray each boot before and after carrying out surveys to neutralise any mould spores (below).





# MUMC CHRISTMAS PARTY

Complete with a treasure  
hunt, water slide and  
blocked plumbing.

BY MONA JOHN VON FREYEND

**W**HAT DOES IT TAKE to make a bunch of MUMC members very happy for an entire weekend?

Usually the answer to that would probably involve mountains or nice, remote bushland. But for the Christmas party weekend we only needed to go a mere 35 km out of Melbourne to Kangaroo Ground. Here we were kindly allowed to stay at the farm of Richard Bassett-Smith's parents, where 18 ha of paddock bordering on the Yarra, 20 cows, 20 calves, one bull and a wonderful house full of board games provided the setting for a great weekend. So there we were, spending Friday evening happily sitting around,

playing Settlers, Scrabble, cards, Jenga and other things. There was even a 1500-piece puzzle. Oh yes, we are such a rowdy bunch.

Saturday commenced with a yummy pancake breakfast and a treasure hunt, prepared by Róisín and Richard. Whoever managed to find the most candy canes cunningly hidden (read: tossed into) the trees on the farm, was the lucky winner of a prime pink Barbie bodyboard. Very useful for the waterslide, that was prepared on the slopes of the paddock later in the afternoon. The treasure hunt also ended in a somewhat unplanned competition on who showed the worst allergic welts on legs and face, with Andy being the "lucky" winner on that one. While most people stayed at the farm and enjoyed the amazingly long waterslide, I was part of a group that headed out to the Yarra (some way upstream of Kangaroo ground) for some kayaking. This was my first time in a kayak and I was therefore slightly surprised when Ben started his introductory lesson by

turning us all upside down, one after the other. It later turned out to be immensely helpful when my kayak got wedged between two stones in a rapid. Thanks to the practice I was more amused than anything else to suddenly find myself upside down. And really, floating down a rapid by yourself is pretty good fun as well, I can now confirm. The tour itself was incredibly enjoyable. Short rapids were interspersed with long stretches of calm water, on which we floated along between steep shores covered in dense eucalypt forest, home to a multitude of birds. The whole area had a feeling of remoteness that I would have never expected so close to the city.

Returning to the farm we caught the tale-end of the waterslide fun, giving the more experienced kayakers an opportunity to demonstrate that, really, a slide is only another sort of rapid. We also discovered that due to some girls having way too much fun in the shower together (not what you are thinking—get your minds out of the gutter) the drainage system of the house was broken down. It seems three girls, several cups of tea and a good chat lead to a showering time that is beyond the abilities of a humble farm house. But who needs a shower when they can also use a watering can to wash off the Yarra muds. And while most people of the group







enjoyed the evening's BBQ, a couple of guys braved the task of unblocking the drainage. And, indeed, they gloriously managed. All it took was digging a few mysterious holes into the patio and a bunch of people employed to block every possible drainage outlet in the house. Ah, the joys of standing on a hole in the bathroom floor that could any second turn into a fountain of rather unpleasant content (thankfully it didn't). Meanwhile the board games extravaganza had started again. Yes it sounds boring, but it really wasn't. The atmosphere was reminiscent of an evening in a mountain hut, with everyone extremely relaxed and in good spirits. And we did, after a while and a few beers, also start to dance.

But it wouldn't have been an MUMC party if nobody had tried to climb the rafters of the living room. So climb it they did. And hung on to them. In pairs. And of course there were also games (other than board games). Like the one, where two people are only allowed one point of floor contact (between the two of them) beyond a fixed line in order to place a candy cane as far out as possible. It's somewhat hard to describe but it led to quite a few good performances. Undisputed winners of this contest were Aaron and Róisín with their formidable I'll-pick-you-up-and-you-stretch-out routine. Less successful on the other hand

were the attempts at table traverse, despite heated discussions ("but it **MUST** be possible, it's on YouTube"). But one of the highlights was definitely the miracle of managing a ten-person pyramid, at 3 am, while somewhat under the influence, with the photo to prove it (in which everybody even smiles) and no serious injuries.

Sunday morning dawned and we discovered the pancake batter already ready and waiting in the fridge (Heather really is a person capable of immense foresight, even at 2:30 am). It was also discovered that, embarrassingly, some of us are terrible city slickers, seeing how much excitement it caused to help move the herd of cows from one paddock to the next. I certainly learned how very hard it is to try and count a couple of calves, when they just wouldn't stand still and wait till I'd finished! But in the end, no cows were lost, everybody sooner or later recovered from their hangovers and there is only one thing that remains to be said: a very big thank you to Heather and Róisín for organising this weekend, to Richard for helping and his parents for letting us use the farm. We had a great time and I am sure I am not alone when I say I enjoyed every minute of it.

And no, we didn't finish the puzzle in the end. It got danced upon. ☘



Richard arms himself with a mop (top left), whilst Daniel simply uses his arm (top right) in an attempt to unblock the drainage.

Róisín joins Jess up in the rafters (centre left).

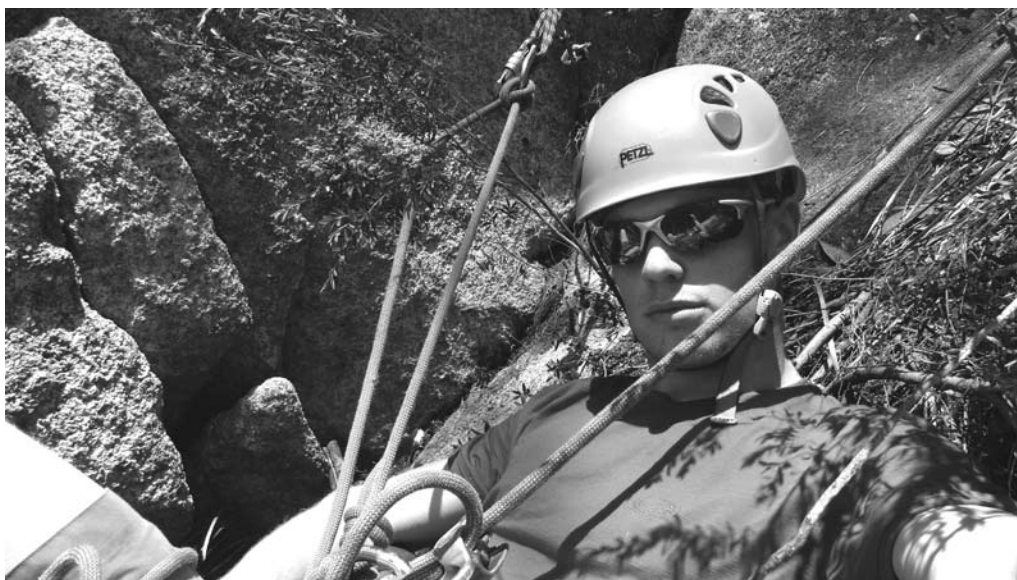
Aaron and Róisín make everyone else look like amateurs (centre right).

Roger joins the two Jesses for a game of mutant Jenga (above).

It's puzzle time, as Ben expresses his true feelings (opposite bottom).

The weekend's highest achievement (opposite top).





## MT BUFFALO: WHAT AN ADVENTURE!

Richard and Egg's pre-NZ training  
turned into more than just a climbing trip.

BY RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH

**W**E HAVEN'T BEEN TO Buffalo yet! In ten days time we would be heading off to New Zealand for five weeks of mountaineering. As part of our preparation and training we planned to have some practice on long multi-pitch trad climbs. This would have some resemblance to alpine climbing.

**CLIMB NAME:** *STILETTO*. 180 metres rap in. Only way out: climb. Taking a look at the first pitch at grade 15 and with limited protection and effectively a slab climb, I was happy when Egg decided to take the first lead. As a second, there wasn't much protection to clean and the anchor was as good as it was going to get—there wasn't much more to do. Second pitch, I managed to place one nut—probably marginal, sling one bush which Egg later laughed at saying “you expect that to hold?”, and I think that was about it. Not to mention all the trickles of water running down the granite slab. I bailed off that pitch into the trees on the edge.

Scrambling up through the trees we came to the end of the line with nowhere to go but back out onto the rock. The nearest bolt was about twenty-five metres away. With Egg using a bunch of trees, each no thicker

than an inch or two as an anchor, I was on belay. Carrying only three quickdraws and half a set of nuts in the off-chance I might find a crack somewhere in this featureless slab, I ventured out on lead. Fifteen metres out I found a carrot, making quick use of a nut since I had no bolt plates. This might be one reason to always carry one or two in your chalk bag. Five metres further up was a fixed anchor, so we climbed out on a sport route. I also learnt that there are two types of granite when walking back to the car: hard granite and soft granite. I'd inadvertently left my sandals halfway up the climb amongst the trees. That was only the beginning of our weekend adventure.

**TWO DAYS LATER**, we thought we would get one more climb in at Eurobin Falls before heading back to Melbourne. Should only take a few hours, we'll be finished by 1 pm, so we thought. Take a black-and-white guide book, pick a slab climb, make it five or six pitches, add some water and the scorching sun and then do it all on trad. Now that's an epic day we didn't know we would be in for, not to mention the unexpected bushwalking and canyoning components that followed.

An excellent corner crack slab with plenty of good pro, nicely covered in shade was a

pleasant way to start out, but it didn't last long. While belaying Egg on the second pitch, numerous sticks and branches came my way. Seconding up to Egg, he was eager for another lead; in exchange I would lead the next two. Now on a semi-hanging belay with only a little shade from the small shrubs and trees, Egg lead on. At close to two o'clock, full afternoon sun had set in with temperatures up around the high 20s to low 30s. The next anchor was in full sun—I didn't stop to hang around. Luckily for the both of us the next anchor was amongst a patch of trees and required no more than sitting down for a body belay.

From here things started to get interesting. We had given up on the guide book at this point, not sure why we had carried it up the climb with us. The descriptions were not much good and the picture was no better with its low resolution quality. I would be taking the next lead as agreed. A forty-five degree slab isn't too bad; this one was featureless and relied purely on smearing. No problems there either but when your only protection is in a corner crack running alongside you that has a film of water about a metre wide separating you from it, things start to get a little nerve-racking. We'd better start getting used to run outs; at points you could just



Egg seems quite happy after abseiling down into the creek (far left).

Richard on belay (left).

reach across and manage to get a cam in but they were few and far between. Just to top it all off, the slab we were climbing had thin trickles of water running down which we could only see when the light was on the right angle. It was about a grade 19 without any of the added extras. There was one benefit to the water—when your feet start to burn in your rubber shoes you can cool them down. Pleased to have been seconding that pitch, Egg allowed me take a third consecutive lead which consisted of even more water.

We didn't realise we were at the top; it looked like there were another sixty or so metres to go. There's a hidden gem at the top of Eurobin Falls, but you'll have to climb up there yourselves to find out about it.

Take note if you are reading this twenty years later looking for ideas for a club trip—here's the beta: plan to arrive with a picnic lunch, for two, at around noon when the heat of the day is setting in. Also, allow plenty of time to get back down.

We had finished the climb at around four o'clock, consulting the guide book one last time: "The descent is on the left-hand side when looking out from the rock face" or something along those lines—no more information than that. Sounds easy

enough. We were in for a long trip back. Climbers don't particularly like walking; well, most of the ones I know, anyway. Why go bushwalking when you can go climbing *and* see magnificent views?

At first it wasn't too bad but then we came across the sword grass, well Egg did; he was leading. I thought better and went another way scrambling up onto a boulder. I sat there with my camera filming him wade through the grass at shoulder height, till he looked up and realised I was watching him. He went to turn around and come my way but I encouraged him to keep going, as he was

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*Climbers don't particularly like walking; well, most of the ones I know, anyway.*

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already halfway through and plus it made for a good movie on the camera. Further on there was a clump of tree ferns so dense that it was easier to walk along the tops than to go between. It was starting to get late and at this point we didn't really know where we were, apart from knowing that we should go in roughly *that* direction (down). Concerns were starting to show on both of us.

We'd crossed a creek which was too dense to walk along, but further on the terrain had steepened up and we were forced to abseil off a tree six metres down into it. Egg finally succumbed to drinking water from the

creek—he'd been fairly sceptical about it but he'd run out of water now. Visibility through the vegetation was one to two metres. No more than ten metres on it opened up onto what looked like the head waters of a river with huge granite boulders strewn everywhere. I was happy now as we couldn't be too far away and we were out of the dense vegetation; in the worst case we'd miss the track but then hit the road. Egg being not so sure, wasn't all too pleased when I pulled my camera out. We'd now been going for more than two hours since we had started our descent.

Several hundred metres on and what else could we be encountering—there was a distant rumble which was getting louder. Then we see the bridge which we walked across on the way in. So now we knew where we were but there was a twelve metre waterfall between us and going back to Melbourne. We've been rockclimbing and bushwalking, and now we were about to go canyoning, all in the one day! Well, almost—we abseiled off next to it leaving behind a cordelette. What an adventure! ☘

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**"Next time, Richard, remind me to bring a machete"**  
— Eng Wu Ong

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Stopping in front of Ladies Bath Falls after abseiling down beside it, marking the end of their epic walk out (below).





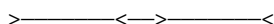


# A TALE OF EXTREME HOME-BREWING ON MT FEATHERTOP

BY TIM CARTER  
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX THOMPSON

## The Brewers:

*Rob Hutton*  
*Alex Thompson*  
*Tim Carter*  
*Tom Anderson*



THE IDEA OF BREWING a beer at the MUMC Hut had been thought of for a couple of months. The problem of lack of beer at Midnight Ascent due to its low alcohol to volume ratio had been overcome a few years previously by Hayden Beck who carried a 19 L keg to the hut. This time we thought in the spirit of Midnight Ascent it should be *made at* the hut. A plan was developed over the summer that we thought had a feasible chance of success and that justified the effort involved. We had solutions for how to stop the beer freezing over winter, we had come up with a way of sanitising the equipment without polluting the alpine environment, and timed the trip to coincide with optimum brewing temperatures. This is the story of the MUMC Midnight Ascent Brew 2010 and our new sport of extreme home-brew.

## The Brew Trip

AS A BACKDROP to the brewing I had a bet going with Dan Hearnden to see who could walk all seven routes up to Mt Feathertop first. I had previously knocked off Bon Accord, the Razorback, Bungalow Spur, the North West Spur and Diamantina Spur. The brew trip was to head up Champion Spur. This track is rather ill-defined on many maps of the area but a recent guide book had given it as a route so we thought there would be some semblance of a track.

The route starts at Harrierville near the Ovens River in the same spot as the track up Bon Accord spur. We soon encountered the first river crossing which inspired feats of acrobatics to keep feet dry. This was followed by a further twelve river crossings which



Rob attempting to cross without getting his feet wet (left). The numerous river crossings to follow meant that everyone's efforts became futile. Note also the jumbo-sized pack containing the fermenter carried by Tim.

The group stops for lunch on the track, surrounded by eucalypt regrowth and cloudy mist (below).

Tim, Rob and Alex show their fondness for the fermenter and the brew held within (opposite).

PHOTOS: ALEX THOMPSON



made all previous attempts at keeping boot dry slightly futile.

The track snaked its way up the valley along a well-defined track then turned eastward up an old 4x4 track and climbed the spur steeply. We walked through gum forests and were quickly enveloped in the misty cloud. The 4x4 track petered out about a third of the way up and the overgrown track continued through dense waist-high scrub. We reached the top to find the ridge highly exposed to drizzle, rain and wind and so made swiftly for the MUMC Hut.

In our packs was all the brew equipment for the trip. I was carrying the brew ingredients of 3 kg of liquid malt and the fermenter. This was a 30 L home-brew fermenter which thankfully fit in my 95 L hiking pack. The fermenter had been sanitised back in

Melbourne then sealed up. This made for a very awkward pack for walking. Alex was carrying the empty keg for the future keggings trip.

The brew was done after dinner in the hut. Our chief brewer was Rob Hutton with assistance from Alex and me. A further sanitisation was done with boiling water.

The brew recipe was 1.5 kg of Cooper's liquid malt, one Black Rock Nut Brown Ale kit, 14 grams Perle hops boiled for 15 minutes. All this was done on my gas MSR stove. The wort was pitched with both ale and lager yeast (to hedge our bets; lager for low temp brewing, ale for high temps). I can't quite remember the exact pitching temperature—if anyone is interested the full recipe is in the hut log book. We pitched the yeast and insulated the fermenter for the

night in my down jacket. The next morning it was placed in the cellar to ferment for the next four weeks.

## The Kegging

WE THEN ANXIOUSLY watched the alpine temperatures for the next month. Soon after the brew trip it dropped quite suddenly to wintry conditions, so we decided to prolong the fermenting time from 3 to 4 weeks. The return trip was to be via the Northern Razorback (thus winning the bet with Dan). We drove up the night before and camped at Mountain Creek. Roger proudly showed off his new head-torch with blinding consequences for all involved. Revenge was ours however when he was attacked by a plague of giant Bogong moths.





Tim sanitising the fermenter with boiling water before the brew ingredients are added (above).

Adding the kit can of brown ale to the fermenter (right).

After 4 weeks the beer was kegged, and the keg placed back into the fermenter and wrapped with foam to prevent it from freezing (far right).

PHOTOS: ALEX THOMPSON (ABOVE & RIGHT); TIM CARTER (FAR RIGHT).



The next day we drove to the dirt track that starts the Northern Razorback. The plan to drive a fair distance up the dirt road was foiled by some creeks and our failure to secure any cars larger than my Honda Civic. This was to have fateful consequences.

We set off in high mood for a long 4x4 bash. The track climbs gradually through alpine gums. Our progress while at a decent speed wasn't quite what was needed on this longer route in, so it started to look like we would be walking into the evening.

The walk proceeded to minor epic status as the sun set while we were still north of the summit. We summited at around 9 pm with a fantastic clear starry sky. Thankfully we were able to make it down to the hut albeit

slightly exhausted and relieved.

The kegging was a relative non-event after all that. We further sanitised the keg which had been sitting in the hut for 4 weeks. The beer was then racked from the fermenter into the keg. Initial taste tests were promising.

We then implemented the *Keep the beer from freezing* plan. The keg was placed back into the fermenter and the gap was filled with water (for thermal mass). This was then wrapped in a closed cell foam mat (for insulation) and wedged between the two water tanks in the basement (to add more thermal mass). Thanks for Tom Anderson for his help in kegging and the previous night's excitement.

## The Drinking of the Beer

WE HAD ENDURED a nervous winter not knowing if the beer had frozen solid. Jesse Bates had gone to the hut the weekend before and had confirmed that the beer was liquid. Midnight Ascent preparations had been in full swing for a week. Food had been planned, costumes organised and absent votes cast in the federal election.

A crowd of about 40 headed up for Midnight Ascent. Early rain and drizzle gave way to slow showers. Dan had nicely marked the track for us to follow. I trudged up the spur haunted by the thoughts of the beer failing or being infected.



Happy brewers with the final product: Tim and Alex with the successful keg of beer (above).

Tim calls Rob in Oxford to tell him the good news (left).

Mmmm ... The MUMC Midnight Ascent Brew 2010 is delicious! (below).

PHOTOS: ALEX THOMPSON



The last of us reached the hut at 7 am and collapsed into a sleep that not even the thought of beer could revive. Around late afternoon Alex and I fished the keg from the cellar. It had remained liquid! Chilling the beer was no issue so we set up the CO<sub>2</sub> dispensing system and sampled the brew. It was delicious! A strong malt-driven flavour, good amber colour, nice foam head and refreshing mild bitterness. The constant low temperature of the brewing and then keg conditioning had made our beer the best I'd ever brewed.

I have since had people suggest that maybe the beer wasn't that good, just its location at the end of a hike. That's wrong—ask Alex, it was good beer.

The night of food, beer and fun then ensued—details of which are given in detail in another part of this fine periodical. We placed a slightly tipsy call to Rob who unfortunately could not taste the beer he'd brewed due to moving to Oxford. I'm sure he appreciated the thought...

In the end the full 19 L keg was devoured to our relief as someone needed to carry it out.

Thank you to Rob Hutton, Alex Thompson and Tom Anderson for helping with the brew. Already I hear that we may have cheated using a pre-made kit to brew, so now plans for a full grain mash are in the pipeline... ☘

## The Routes up Feathertop

MT FEATHERTOP is a favourite stomping ground of MUMCers, with the most common routes up being the Razorback, Bungalow Spur and the North West Spur. The other routes are well worth a shot if you're up for something different.

**Razorback** Easy route across the Razorback Ridge to Mt Feathertop. Great views of the Victorian Alps in good weather.

**Bungalow Spur** The easiest route that climbs from the bottom. The track begins in Harrietville following an old horse track with a good gradient before finishing at Federation Hut

**Bon Accord Spur** This route starts in Harrietville and passes through old mining areas up to the beginning of the Razorback near Mt Hotham. The Razorback is then followed to Mt Feathertop.

**Diamantina Spur** This spur approaches from the eastern side of the Razorback and can be accessed either from the Bogong High Plains or from Mt Hotham and Dibbins Hut. The spur is a steep climb with occasional rocky scrabbling.

**North West Spur** Using the Tom Kneen Track, this is the most direct route to the MUMC Hut starting at the Harrietville fish farm and climbing very steeply to the hut. Named in honour of Tom Kneen, a club member who died while on Feathertop.

**Northern Razorback** Long 4x4 track then walking path that now crosses directly over the summit of Feathertop. This was the way in for the hut construction material. A now defunct path avoided the summit.

**Champion Spur** An old mining route. Several river crossings in the valley followed by a 4x4 track then walking track through dense undergrowth.



# INTO THE HILLS

The first ten days of Richard and Egg's mountaineering trip to NZ.

BY RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH  
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY ENG WU 'EGG' ONG

**T**WENTY FOUR HOURS WAS all it took from landing in the country to be in the hills. Tuesday night in Christchurch (Day 1), we loaded up with supplies, 7 kg of meat, fruit and veggies plus all the snacks—enough to last us for two weeks up in the snow line.

## Day 2

TAKING A BUS down to Mt Cook Village the following morning, we called ahead to arrange a flight into the top end of Tasman Glacier. Prices were looking pretty stiff at \$350 each. On arriving at Unwin Hut we

called again; flight 3 pm today, \$165 each. We had one hour and a shopping list of items to buy. On the list was gas, webbing tape, water bottles and gloves; nothing too important, just some of the essentials for when going into the hills. We also had to check in with DOC (Department of Conservation) our intentions.

That afternoon we had made it to Kelman Hut, where I was given a crash course in mountaineering outside the hut. We practiced self-arrest techniques, then looked at building an anchor using a snow stake. According to Egg, five minutes maximum is all it should take to build a T-slot, three minutes if you're good. That was a challenge; I managed to clock under three minutes.

To finish up we went over pitching, where you run out your 50 m length of rope and build an anchor. Your climbing partner then climbs up to you and repeats the process, leap-frogging along.

## Day 3

THE TERM "ALPINE START" was still foreign to me—I really didn't think Egg was serious. The first night in Kelman Hut I could tell Egg couldn't sleep. With eleven people in one small room there's bound to be a snorer. We copped a bad one. I laughed at Egg quietly; he was getting a little annoyed. Bad move. "Are you awake?" "Yeah", I responded. "You want to go now?" I thought he was joking,





Egg returns to Kelman Hut, perched on the ridge below Peak 9144 to the left. Mt Abel looms to the right.

PHOTO: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH





Collecting all the essentials in Christchurch: *Shapes*, chocolate and toilet paper (top).  
 After just landing at Upper Tasman Glacier. Mt Green, Mt Walter and Hochstetter Dome  
 from left to right in the background (far above).  
 Trying to navigate at twenty past one in the morning (above).

PHOTOS: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH



Egg after having just climbed Mt Aylmer. The clouds  
 on the other side sent us running (far above).  
 Egg slept all morning and afternoon before getting  
 up for our second outing in a day (above)

PHOTOS: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH



My first sunrise in the hills (above).

PHOTO: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH

so I played along with it. “What time is it?” The conversation went along for several more minutes, still thinking he was joking until we were getting up and putting on our boots. He was bloody serious. It was 12:30 in the morning. We were out the door soon after 1 am. First time in crampons, ever; I had never walked in the things before. Suppose there’s only one way learn.

Navigating at night in the snow has its challenges, especially without much moonlight. Each time we looked at the map we would think “we’re about... here”. Then Egg would pull out his GPS, “No, we are all the way back... there”. We stopped for hot chocolates at twenty past three in the morning. Two hours later we were both standing on the top of Mt Aylmer with the sun yet to rise. One look on the other side and Egg says we better go. There was a huge mass of clouds brewing. No time wait. We were back at the hut before 7 am just as the guided groups were stepping off. The clouds remained there all week trapped in a pressure gradient on the other side of the ridge.

Egg said he would get up at 10:30 am but he didn’t. He ended up sleeping for the rest

of the morning and into the afternoon. I was all too excited to sleep having just climbed my first peak, and I was ready to go again. When he finally got up, I started talking about Hochstetter Dome which is another gentle introductory mountain. Another group had recommended it, having walked up and snowboarded back down the previous afternoon. When Egg asked what time I would like to leave the next morning, he found out I was actually thinking real soonish. Hochstetter Dome turned out to be a snow slog with soft afternoon conditions, mostly knee-deep along the ridge line. It was certainly worth it though, a second outing in a day.

#### Day 4

MT ABEL, just behind the Kelman Hut, was my first introduction to NZ rock, which is described like Weet-Bix. The technique is to try and push it all together rather than pull it apart. We had taken an alpine rack consisting of three cams, four nuts, two hexes and four draws. Minimal gear, but some might say too much. We didn’t know we were in for

a 25 metre rock pitch. Apart from that it was a scramble across a ridge line covered in loose rock. We found a nice belay by standing behind a big boulder, followed then by more scrambling and eventually topping out onto a beautiful snow slope leading to the top of Mt Abel. From here we could plan our route across the glacier to Mt Walter. On the way down, Egg somehow managed to get himself stuck in the snow, not to mention it happening right in front of one of the guided groups. He required digging out after I had taken a photo or two.

#### Day 5

WHAT WE HAD been climbing up until this point had been half-days taking around 5-6 hours. Mt Walter would be the next step consisting of 8 hours plus. With high freezing levels and rain overnight, the snow was soft the next morning. Walter became a snow slog from the very beginning despite us leaving in





the early hours of the morning. We dropped off supplies at Tasman Saddle Hut along the way in order to get away from the crowded Kelman Hut for a night. The huts are about 1-2 hours apart depending on conditions. Getting to Walter required negotiating the crevasses across the glacier—another thing new to me—before heading up the ridge line to Divers Col. In the last few hundred meters to Walter we reached freezing level: the lower the level, the easier it is. It was pretty high that day. At Grade 2-, Mt Walter didn't have anything too technical to it, just a longer day. It was a ten hour return trip to stay at Tasman Saddle Hut that night.

## Day 6

THERE WAS AN excellent freeze overnight, although today would be a rest day as the weather was marginal and partly because we'd had a big day yesterday. After sleeping in, we returned to Kelman Hut to make an admin move with the rest of our gear back to Tasman Saddle Hut. It had taken an hour and a half the previous morning to make this trip from point A to B. This time with a full pack we did it in 35 minutes. It's all in the conditions. Arriving back we found four new visitors at Tasman Saddle Hut. Andy, Andrew, Julia and Sab all of whom are previous members of the Sydney University Rockclimbing and Mountaineering Club (SURMC).

Speaking to the guides we found out that there were some seracs nearby that are good for ice climbing. We went out and found



them that afternoon. Egg then proceeded in giving me the run down about ice climbing, but before he'd finished explaining how to place ice-screws, I had one in hand and was already copying what he was doing. Chip away the bad ice till you get to the hard stuff and then screw it in, and don't drop it. Then we built a V-thread each and of course gave them a test, blowing both of them. The idea behind it was correct but the ice wasn't the best stuff and we'd made them pretty shallow. The seracs were only 8 meters tall so Egg let me have a lead. He did recommend the easier one but knowing me I went for the harder one with the slight bulge. Egg knew what I was in for—I was about to get pumped out. At least it was short. There's quite a bit of technique to it which I'm yet to learn.

The route for Mt Green, across the glacier negotiating crevasses then up along the ridge.

The final part to the top, we pitched (top). Richard's first time ice-climbing (above) and Egg provides ice-screw instruction (below).

PHOTOS: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH (TOP, BELOW); ENG WU 'EGG' ONG (ABOVE).





Egg white? Just a little too much sun cream. I asked Tim how to get along with Egg for five weeks. His response was lots of Egg puns. I didn't have to say anything about this one... (left).

Egg shows off his ripped abs, just after coming back from Mt Walter (far left).

PHOTOS: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH



## Day 7

ANOTHER MARGINAL WEATHER day, so it was time for crevasse rescue practice. First time around, the person holding the fall would build an anchor while the other who went in to the crevasse would prusik out. No problems there apart from the back-up anchor complicating a few things. Walking off the edge into a crevasse probably would have been the highlight for the trip for me. Second time around, Egg decided to fill up his pack with snow and allowed me to haul that out instead of him. The hauling system flowed smoothly, although the pack snagged a few times but was easily fixed. Now it was Egg's turn to perform the rescue and I wasn't letting him get away with it that easily. I tied

myself in ready for crevasse travel and walked off the edge once more. You don't want to be hanging unconscious in a crevasse for too long. The blood flow becomes severely restricted in your legs due to the harness and it doesn't take long till you can't wriggle your ankles or bend your knees. You lose a lot of heat very quickly and a fair bit of snow falls on you from above. I ended up climbing out myself, I was getting very cold, and we just threw everything into our packs and ran back to the hut.

## Day 8

LOOKING UP, THE rock fades out; looking down, you can barely see your belayer. We're on Peak 9144 climbing amongst the clouds.

Guided group practicing crevasse rescue. The one throwing snowballs at us is the instructor (above).

Richard hanging out in a crevasse (below).

PHOTOS: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH







Richard with the sunrise at Divers Col (above).

The valley below covered in clouds, up here Egg climbs on a beautiful morning with Mt Cook in the distance (below).

*Monopoly* in the hut—I think Andrew is winning (far below).

PHOTOS: ENG WU 'EGG' ONG (ABOVE);  
RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH (BELOW, FAR BELOW).



On Day 8, the view down to Egg while on Peak 9144; climbing amongst the clouds (opposite).

Richard on some of the better NZ rock. The skies cleared up just below the top (far opposite).

PHOTOS: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH (OPPOSITE);  
ENG WU 'EGG' ONG (FAR OPPOSITE).

This is an alpine rock route so popular that there are anchors every twenty five meters. With a full rock rack we had plenty of gear, and at grade 9 climbing in mountaineering boots we ascended into the clouds. I carried an ice axe slung onto my harness, and if needed I could also place pitons. Pitons are metal pegs that are hammered into the rock and are another form of protection when on lead. I didn't need to place any pitons but I had never used one yet so I thought I might give it a try. Hammering one into the rock required little effort although it didn't come out without its complaints. Egg wasn't so amused when I could have used a camming device right next to it. "You just put that in because you could." As it was a brand new piton at \$40 a pop, we weren't going to leave it behind.

## Day 9

MT GREEN WOULD be our biggest challenge yet, being the first grade 2 climb for the both of us unguided. We set out in the early morning, with the beta: "5 rope lengths up and 30 meters across". The route would be the same as for Walter but stopping short at Divers Col. With firm snow, the conditions were great, allowing for fast travel. Ascending the ridge for the second time, progress was fast with the sun rising as we reached the Col. Looking down Tasman Glacier, Mt Cook is well-defined against the skyline.

Mt Green has a 45 degree slope; time for some pitching. Run out 50 meters of rope, construct an anchor, then belay your partner up. They climb past you another 50 meters, hammering in their snow stake and then you are on belay. This process repeats its self, climbing one at the time till you reach the top. When seconding, you can only go as fast as the belay; once you take lead, you climb as fast as your calf muscles allow you. We were back at Tasman Saddle Hut in time for lunch, having picked up one stranded climber along the way known as Paul. His climbing partners had decided to climb both Walter and Green in one day; one peak was enough for Paul. We managed to play a game of *Monopoly* with five players to "the bitter, bitter end" as defined by the additional rules before the other two returned. Andrew won, I went out first, followed by Egg, Paul and Julia.





Walking out from Tasman Saddle Hut, which is perched up on the rocky crop, to meet our flight.

PHOTO: RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH

It was time to get out—the weather would soon be turning for the worse. If we stayed, our food would last out the storm but by then it would be time go anyway. We had planned to walk out but when the opportunity of sharing a ski plane arises it's hard to turn it down. It was worth every dollar.

## Day 10

WITH NOT A not a day wasted, there was time for climbing after we flew out. The four from Sydney Uni invited us along climbing with them at Sebastopol Bluffs. So the six of us jammed into the car and off we went.

Within the first ten days of being in the country we had climbed six peaks, practiced crevasse rescue, had an introduction to ice climbing and been rockclimbing. We were expecting to be at this point by around day 20 or 25. The fast pace didn't stop as we continued on to our next challenges. ☘





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FEBRUARY 2011

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