



THE MOUNTAINEER

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JOURNAL OF THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

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COVER
The beautiful shades of Mt Feathertop and the Razorback at sunset. *Photo by Liv Grover Johnson*

ABOVE
Luke Gogolkiewicz, Taner Kucukyuruk and Tim Tyers on Mt Bogong's summit. *Photo Luke Gogolkiewicz Collection*



MITCHELL STEPHEN
President

PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

“I SEE NO ONE IN the club with the level of commitment that saw our Memorial Hut built on Mt Feathertop. Is such commitment, like the days before the Internet, to become myth and legend?”

Andy Green wrote these words in his Presidential Decree at the end of his three years as vice-president and president in August 2011.

The commitment and foresight of these past members is legendary. The hut is still there, it is still visited, and it is still used by club members and the public alike. To achieve something with a legacy like that is terrific.

The demolition of our old clubrooms north of the university oval necessitated the move to our new location on Berkeley Street. This summer members started constructing gear stores and other storage facilities. More work still needs to be done and we need many more volunteers to transform what was a day surgery into a clubrooms that we will be comfortable in and that reflects the commitment of past and present members.

Within the club I believe we do have a handful of people showing the level of commitment that Andy described. For example: Richard Bassett-Smith is practically working a second fulltime job to get these clubrooms to where they are now. Chelsea Brunckhorst is toiling tirelessly to produce professional quality publications such as the Cape Woolamai rockclimbing guidebook. And, of course, Stuart Hollaway has been involved in the club and instructed club members since before I was in kindergarten!

I am now seeking commitment from you to help make our new clubrooms a place that reflects us, our values and the sports we choose. Let's build a place that we and our future members will be proud of.

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Full colour PDF versions of past editions of *The Mountaineer*, as well as information about the club and how to join, can be found at our website:
mumc.org.au

MEETINGS & GENERAL ENQUIRIES
Regular meetings are held at the MUMC clubrooms each Tuesday at 7pm.
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SANCTUARY



I had a scary swim once. It was 1998 in the dank Bornean jungle. I was 13 years old. My friends and I fashioned a “raft” out of sticks and tyres on a school trip and flailed down a frothy brown river somewhere in the Malaysian state of Sabah, armed with enormous wooden oars. Our raft was sucked into a hole, and I still remember the sight of my feet flying into the air like a ragdoll’s as I topped backwards. For a long while it was dark and I could feel the riverbed. When I didn’t surface, I pushed off what I thought was the bottom. Eventually I emerged, and because I didn’t know where the surface was, I pierced through the water with both arms still flapping, like you see in the movies. I was a long way downstream of the raft and so was my friend who also fell in. He was jolly until he realised that the current was too strong for swimming upstream. (It didn’t occur to us to swim in any other direction.) Wordlessly we held hands as we were swept towards the next rapid. I remember getting sucked under violently and losing my friend’s hand. In the confusion we were pulled separate ways, and somehow I ended up in an eddy. The bank was a vertical wall of mud and roots, covered in bull ants.

That was 15 years ago now. My friend also made it, although he lost his “lucky” shoes. Thanks to the advantage of hindsight I know, now, why what happened happened. But for a while, even though I was happy to hop into a raft or kayak—spurred on by the mystery of what was beyond each river bend or towering gorge—a small part of me was terrified of the unknowns.

It took me until now to finally realise what kayaking is really about. Like climbing (my other love), it is an alluring mixture of power and grace. The joy is in the mastery of the sport, through feeling, thinking, reading... but mostly feeling. In the seeming chaos of moving water, a well timed and perfectly executed stroke, or a flawless carve, or the sweetest line, makes for a moment when the world slows down and everything is as it should be. Like many outdoor pursuits, it is an enduring search for balance, validation and redemption.

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MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB was founded in 1944 and aims to bring together those interested in outdoor activities such as bushwalking, rockclimbing, paddling, mountaineering, rogaining, conservation, caving and canyoning through trips and social activities. New members are welcome.

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OPENING SHOT



Turpins Falls Central Victoria
MUMC paddler Rose Beagley runs the Campaspe River’s nine-metre waterfall, which ends in a deep pool: “I visualised the drop at least a month before running it—keeping the boat straight while going over the lip, pin-dropping it, tucking forward, aligning the paddle correctly. I didn’t want to flip over in the lead-in. While waiting for my turn, watching Ben Webb and the La Trobe University boys was pretty nerve-racking. The highest drop I’d done prior to this was maybe 1.5 metres. The toughest part turned out to be the ferry glide across the river to get the line on river right. I underestimated the river’s strength in flood and almost got washed downstream to the unrunnable side of the waterfall. I took some time out on the opposite bank before getting back into my boat. As I reached the lip, I could see over it, and thought, ‘Holey moley, it’s a long way down. This is cool!’ I found it hard to tuck forward because I wanted to watch the pool of water below get closer. I can still remember that moment of free fall. It’s got me hooked.”
PHOTOGRAPHER: Dan Smith


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Reflections

THE LONG DAYS

Twenty-plus-hour days and how they stand apart from ordinary recreation

BY STUART HOLLOWAY (UNCREDITED QUOTES ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA)
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LACHIE CURRIE

The problem with alpine climbs is that they are all at least two pitches too long.

—John Entwistle

Let him think that I am more man than I am and I will be so.

I REMEMBER the long days. They stand apart from ordinary activity, preserved in their own fuzzy clarity. In a lifetime of recreation they each remain an undiminished memory—adventure, for good or ill. Experiences beyond 20 hours—long mark our psyches as much as they deplete our bodies.

...for there is much that I can learn and you can teach me everything.

My first long day was only 18 hours, but we were kids and that changed everything. Tom Woodruff scuba dived and coached rowing. Jo Orr was an engineer who co-ordinated a touch rugby league. Michael Besley surfed and managed lots of money. That day we took a daypack and 20 metres of rope and we traversed Tasmania's Eastern Arthur Range from Cracroft Creek, up Federation Peak, and back again.

Boundaries dissolved; possibilities massed over the horizon. I wonder how they remember that day 21 years ago; if they yearn to feel again that sense of being far out on a wild idea; whether they have found other ways to liberate that fearful charge.

Perhaps I should not have been a fisherman, he thought. But that was the thing that I was born for.

That day changed me. How things had been done suddenly didn't matter. If you could imagine it, it could be realised—the only laws are physics. I fell asleep in the vestibule trying to cook dinner.

In New South Wales' Not The Butterbox Canyon, Michael, John Teitzel and I were lost but learnt to find our way. I led a 180-metre new route out the canyon walls with an eight-millimetre rope and some prusiks. We slept in our wetsuits under a roof below the canyon rim.

On the East Ridge of New Zealand's Aiguille Rouge, Nick Morgan and I were completely out of our depth but learnt how to move. Descending from the Pioneer Ridge we decided to belay for safety because we had been climbing for so long. I was really cranky

The author in a crevasse after a bivvy in the Linda Shelf on the first ascent of *Resolution* (NZ 6+), Aoraki/Mt Cook.

PHOTO BY LACHIE CURRIE



with Nick when I arrived at his belay and found him asleep with loose rope pooling all over the place, but he was unperturbed when he woke me at the next belay.

Two weeks later, still in New Zealand, we climbed through the night from Gardiner Hut to reach Low Peak and then traversed and descended Aoraki/Mt Cook to complete a grand traverse by midday, but upon reaching Plateau Hut, we simply raided it for cheese and crackers and kept going because we needed to catch a bus. With no stove and no sleeping bags in Ball Shelter, we shared a blanket on a bench and a coffee laced with whisky given to us by two hikers, and we slept like kings.

In New South Wales' Whungee-Wheengee Canyon, a.k.a. The Green Room, our plan to enchain three canyons turned into an epic rescue after Tommy Miller managed a fractured dislocation of his ankle. We had to breach the canyon walls, hoist him out, fight an enraged Tiger Snake on a semi-hanging belay, hop to the ridge-line, run out to summon a rescue and carry the stretcher through six hours of storm—holidays!

On the North Ridge of Aoraki/Mt Cook with Carys Evans I watched the sun come up, go down and come up again on perhaps the longest day.

Phil Blunsom quit alpine climbing twice—once after a big winter route with daypacks in France and again after a new route on Mt Tasman's Balfour Face where he struggled with foot problems—but he returned: the long days are as attractive as they are appalling.

The long days reveal what you can endure. Provided the weather is with you, if you can simply look after yourself and not panic, or do anything rash, you can probably just keep going—steadily, making sure of it, grinding it out.

But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready.

With Lachie Currie I was out for 36 hours on *Resolution* (NZ 6+), our new route on Aoraki/Mt Cook. With Felix Landman, it was 20 hours on our Mt Tasman new route, *Path of Manolin* (NZ 5+): the 560 metres of new rock went quickly, but the huge traverse on brittle ice was crushing. On Richard Bassett-Smith's Balfour traverse of Mt Tasman we'd been awake 22 hours before we chopped a ledge by a serac and climbed into our double bivvy to sit out an unexpected blizzard. It was 31 hours chopper-to-chopper and the pizza Richard ate afterwards was alarmingly large.

My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either one of us.

The honest truth is that the long days flirt with the limits of control, either in the incidents that create them or in the struggle to maintain discipline against time and fatigue, but, sometimes, you find yourself 84 days out and nothing appeals like a mighty struggle: to imagine a wonderful, uncertain goal and to set out to embrace it.

Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it. ☺

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Topical

MUMC HUT REPORT

MUMC's Mt Feathertop hut survives January 2013 bushfires

BY HUT WARDEN ALEX THOMPSON

AS THE MUMC HUT NEARS its 50th birthday (due in 2016), it survives yet another narrow escape from fire on Mt Feathertop. In January 2013, a fire began near Harrierville, resulting in large area being burnt (from Harrierville to Mt Feathertop and Mt Hotham). Fortunately the MUMC Hut, along with Federation Hut on Mt Feathertop's Bungalow Spur, survived unscathed, no doubt due to the efforts of DSE (Department of Sustainability and Environment), CFA (Country Fire Authority) and Parks Victoria.

The fire came within a few metres of the hut and most of the surrounding area is burnt. As of late March, there is still evidence of fire retardant on the hut, nearby vegetation and rocks. Although the fire devastated the area, it exposed a number of interesting aspects of the hut's history (e.g. a quarry, and an ancient rubbish dump), which are usually hidden under the scrub. Also, spring and summer 2013-14 may be a spectacular season for wild flowers, which are usually the first to regrow after high-country fires.

Otherwise, the status of the hut is much the same. It remains a reliable shelter from the elements, thanks to regular maintenance trips led by previous hut wardens. However, it still suffers from ongoing issues of condensation and minor leaks. Additionally, inspections revealed rotten timber in the flooring, which will soon require replacement. Plans are being developed for an overhaul in time for the hut's 50th anniversary. ☺



All photos: MUMCers on the first hut visit after the January 2013 fires.

PHOTOS BY ALEX THOMPSON



MOONARIE

Richard Bassett-Smith goes climbing in the South Australian gem

BY RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH



M OONARIE is an amazing place, hidden away in the Flinders Ranges, with some brilliant lines through beautiful orange rock. One nice thing about the place is its isolation—it’s 50 kilometres from the nearest town—which makes climbing here different to the norm. This is one place where you will get fit. There is a 40-minute walk-in, which means a 40-minute walk-out returning to camp after a long day. But it is well worth it; the multipitch routes offer fantastic climbing. And the views... wow! By day seven I had been climbing every day, refusing to give in to a very tempting rest day. So far I had been climbing with two girls—Mary Maloney and Alice Leppitt (a former MUMC member)—who both declared their second rest day that morning. So I asked a climber I met at camp, Pete, and his partner Jess if I could join them for the day. The walk-in was the easy part. The climb that followed, *Goblin Mischief* (23), was harder than anything I had ever experienced.

The start was very hard—not so much the climbing, but trying to place protection through the traverse. It was obvious what goes where, but just trying to take a hand off to grab a piece of gear was almost impossible, and became a process where I had only two to three seconds before I had to grab back onto the wall in desperation in order to not fall. To place one piece took several minutes, swapping between hands and trying to rest between attempts. And that was the easy part. We bailed and rapped to collect our gear. Somehow I managed to continue climbing through the afternoon, including onsighting a grade 22 sport route. I dragged my SLR camera with me on every climb, including through a chimney. It survived without a scratch, although I could hear all my gear grinding away as I squeezed through. After making the most of this amazing area, we began the drive home, heading for Arapiles (from the opposite direction to normal) and camping on the banks of the Murray River en route. Worn out, we arrived back in Melbourne after a total of two weeks away with more stories to tell. ☺

ROMAIN THEVENOT,

25, from Saint-Maur-des-Fossés (France), lives in Richmond, Melbourne University Mountaineering Club member, Master of Civil Engineering

INTERVIEW BY CHELSEA BRUNCKHORST
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARETH MONTGOMERY

I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD when my dad first took me climbing. The cliff was a small crag at Servoz, in the Chamonix Valley in France. There is a photo of me from that day wearing a fancy, pink, full-body harness.

MY FIRST MEMORY of climbing is my ascent of *Arête des Cosmiques*, which leads to the summit of the famous Aiguille du Midi (3842 metres) in Chamonix. It was August 1998. I only remember a short section of the climb. There was a small rock bridge that my dad passed easily. First I went under the bridge, but figured out quickly that I had to follow the rope, which went above. I tried and tried, but was too small. I couldn’t see my dad and am not sure he could hear me. Soon an English guy (to whom I could only say ‘Hello, I have a problem!’) came along and made me climb on top of his shoulders to pass the bridge. I remember we offered him hot tea at the top.

SO MANY THINGS make up parts of adventure: the people you are with, the personal challenge, the good or bad weather, the beauty. And also the unexpected events.

ON ONE ASCENT of Aiguille du Plan by the Midi–Plan traverse, we arrived on top of Aiguille du Midi and it was cold, snowing a lot, windy, and the visibility was low. We knew the way to the summit was not hard and decided to go. The first two hours were a crazy adventure. Then the clouds slowly went down as we went up, and we ended up above the clouds. From there, everything was wonderful. A sea of clouds separated our world (of climbers and mountains) from the ‘real’ world. All the summits above 3500 metres showed, and were more attractive than ever: Aiguille Verte, Mt Blanc, the famous north face of the Grande Jorasses...



FOR ME climbing is not about grades. It is about yourself. I am thinking about people who can’t handle heights; climbing a couple of metres is a wonderful achievement. What makes something difficult is not necessarily physical, but a combination of technical skills and your psychological state. **CLIMBING IS A GREAT ESCAPE** from society and the ‘everyday’ world. There is a peace with myself that I find through the ascent of a summit or route. **MY FAVOURITE** Victorian crag is the famous Taipan Wall. This wonderful orange overhanging cliff has many amazing routes. I’ve done some, tried others, and want to do many more. **WERRIBEE GORGE** is my favourite daytrip from Melbourne. I like to go there every couple of months with people new to climbing. I always jump on *Redex* [23] (one of my favourite climbs), *Golgotha* [18] (one of my scariest experiences due to a lack of

large cams) and *Nero on the Rampage* [25] (has one of my favourite balancey moves). **CLIMBING IS ABOUT** understanding what your body can do. I think a good climber is not one who can climb hard grades, but one who can move smoothly and knows how to control his or her balance perfectly. **I THINK THAT** training to climb a specific grade is unnecessary, because you can’t know what your limits are.

I AM THE HEAD ROUTESSETTER at Hardrock climbing gyms, where I have worked for almost two years. In September last year I also organised a lead competition. We had 92 competitors in 15 categories. **HARDROCK IS** co-hosting the 2013 Victorian Leading Ladder Series with two other gyms. By working together I hope the climbing community becomes stronger and better represented. ☺

Historical

RICHARD
KJAR

Melbourne University Mountaineering Club
Canoeing Convenor in 1995 (member 1993–1998)

INTERVIEW BY CHELSEA BRUNCKHORST
PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD KJAR COLLECTION



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

Richard Kjar and Stu Richardson.

Richard Kjar on the Mitta Mitta, Victoria.

Richard Kjar on the second descent of the West Kiewa, Victoria.

Andy Lean on the Nymboida, New South Wales.

Sam Maffet on the Franklin River, Tasmania.

Somewhere near the King River, Victoria.

PHOTOS RICHARD KJAR COLLECTION

Your descent of the West Kiewa River was the second (and unbeknownst to you, not the first, we hear)...
We were looking for harder whitewater in Victoria. The East Kiewa had been paddled a few times. I researched the details pretty carefully. We knew the geology, the gradient, the access. It seemed to add up that it would ‘go’. What we didn’t know is how long it would take to walk 9km with a kayak!

What was the most memorable part?
Paddling ‘The Spanker’—which is the last really big rapid before the end. It certainly ‘spanked’ me. It also ultimately became the scene of my scariest kayak experience on a later trip, when a fellow kayaker, David Wilson, got pinned under a log and broke his leg to free himself. [Google ‘David Wilson kayaker’ for the full story.]

Apart from the West Kiewa, what are some of your other notable adventures?
Paddling-wise, the East Kiewa (Vic.), the Nymboida (NSW), the Franklin (Tas.), rivers in the Snowy Mountains and New Zealand’s South Island. There was also interspersed kayaking. Once I left uni I kayaked in Costa Rica and Canada.

You wrote the *White-water Paddling in Victoria* guide that was released with the 77th issue of *Wild* magazine (Jul–Sep 2000).
There was nothing that described many of the ‘harder’ rivers, and the guides before tended to be vague and inaccurate, especially with put-in and take-out details, levels, etc. I was trying to improve the info available, without taking away some of the adventure. The only guidebook around then was Chris McLaughlin’s *Canoeing the Rivers and Lakes of Victoria*. I modelled the guide on the then recently released New Zealand Whitewater guidebook by Graham Charles (which is still fantastic). The AdventurePro online guide (adventurepro.com.au) has taken my book and really extended things further—which is great. As an aside, the guide also launched my career—but that is a story for another day.

In the guidebook you mention the arrival of plastic kayaks. How has the sport changed?
Since the late ‘90s and early 2000s kayaking has changed massively. Boats are shorter, stronger and better shapes. We have kayaks for different rivers and different aspects of whitewater (rodeo, creeks, river-running, etc). When I started, a 3.5m plastic Perception Dancer was used for everyone and everything. (It’s pretty hard to flat spin a Dancer!) People are running far harder and higher things these days, and things we thought were impossible have been done.



What was your personal gear set-up?
When I started I used MUMC gear entirely. We had Dancers and Reflexes (for the ‘advanced’ paddlers), plastic paddles, ACE plastic helmets (like an ice-cream container), Supersport spraydecks and RapidStyle PFDs. Most of us didn’t have waterproof jackets, and drytops didn’t exist. All this gear was pretty much ‘state of the art’ for the time, and interestingly I don’t think any of this gear is still made! We evolved with the gear revolution that went on, and the club really funded this well. We upgraded kayaks and gear extensively. By the time I left uni I think I had a Dagger Medieval (another archaic design), a Werner paddle, drytop and rescue vest (homemade, mind you).

We heard you made spraydecks for MUMC.
I didn’t make spraydecks, but made drytops, PFDs and throwbags. I did quite a few gear repairs along the way too. I also made first-aid kits (I think they may still be in existence, RAK Designs)—over 300, which I sold to lots of outdoor clubs and schools.

Why was kayaking important to you?
At the time, I had a close friendship group, and we all liked kayaking. We had access to the gear, and exploring rivers is what we enjoyed. I am still friends with these people (and am married to one of them!). We still go away together, but more often skiing, mountainbiking and hiking. It’s hard to balance trips, family and work. That said we still do a few trips—mostly spurred on by Stu Richardson, who is still quite active. We’re planning a trip to the Herbert River this year.

During your era with MUMC, many of the club’s ‘main paddlers’ preceded you. What is the most important lesson you learned from them?
These guys taught me the basic paddling skills, Eskimo rolling and a sense of adventure. I think my ‘era’ tended to just improve these things, fine tune the ‘rodeo’ moves and make things a little safer with a better idea of skills and river rescue.

What’s your advice to today’s paddlers?
Just get out there and enjoy yourself! ☺

Richard Kjar, now 37 years old, is an Orthopaedic Surgeon in Wangaratta, Victoria.



ENDEAVOUR

460 metres, 18, Aoraki/Mt Cook, New Zealand

BY STUART HOLLAWAY

IN JANUARY this year, Richard Bassett-Smith and I established *Endeavour*. It climbs a buttress that rises from the Bowie Couloir to the Zurbriggen Ridge—the same buttress on which I established *Resolution* (NZ 6+) with Lachie Currie as recipients of the MUMC Adventure Grant in 2010.

Endeavour is the better route and climbs the middle arête on the buttress. It is one of the best and most exhilarating passages I have climbed in the mountains—unlikely, exposed, protected, great rock and good holds, and only about grade 18. The 11-pitch route is very sustained at about 17 (crux 18). The top six pitches feature lots of brilliant alpine cragging in an unmatched setting.

Named after a ship commanded by explorer Captain James Cook, I imagined *Endeavour* to be an endurance project, expecting it to be hard, scary and committing—but as we progressed up the route, despite it frequently appearing too hard and unprotected, it turned out that if we simply endeavoured, the solutions became apparent.

Route Description

Starting at an obvious alcove at the bottom, climb up and onto the arête on left. Continue up the arête and wall, and up a black wall (right of arête, left of corner) to regain the arête. Keep following it until an area complicated by overhangs and snow.

Move onto the left wall, up into snow below an obvious overhang and up left past overhangs to gain a big diamond slab on the left wall (about two-thirds the way up, just right of a prominent square black corner with a snow seam down the crack).

Breach the middle of the overlap at the top of the diamond slab and head up and right onto the arête. Essentially continue up the arête to the base of a big roof. Move left under the roof and turn it using a fist crack. You are now right up near the top and on the final pitch. Move through the overlap, up right following a stepped corner, then breach this (good crack through roof) and continue straight up to the top of the buttress. Rappel the route or continue up the Zurbriggen Ridge to the summit. ☯



Above: *The Pink Route* (Monks & Sunderland 1995) climbs the right arête (unmarked); *Resolution* climbs the corner left, leading to the big roof; and *Endeavour* climbs the prominent arête further left.

Left: Richard Bassett-Smith—outrageous positions nearing the finish.

PHOTOS BY STUART HOLLAWAY



Even after over a century of climbing, Mt Tasman still offers opportunities for wonder and exploration.

BY STUART HOLLAWAY

AMBITION—or desire—is a necessary and dangerous thing.

The indifferent, irresistible mountains offer a canvas onto which we can project our imagination; a pedestal from which to see the world, and the abyss, into which we stare, as at a mirror.

The mountains are passive but not still. Shifting and changing, unconscious of our transient struggles, they are innocently capable of unleashing a random barrage of rock or ice that would sweep us from time.

Anyone can have a lovely time in the mountains. They are undeniably beautiful and offer a glimpse of the sublime on a sporting holiday.

But to get involved in serious alpinism—attempting big routes on major peaks—you have to really want it. Beyond playing on the small peaks, which everyone should do, there is too much hard work and too much risk to be described strictly as a holiday.

More of a calling than an interest, the exploration of peaks becomes a compulsion.

THERE IS A BUTTRESS ON MT TASMAN—a great snow and rock-banded pyramid rising to a peaklet on the remote west ridge of the mountain. It is both obvious and hidden, dropping out of sight over 500m into the Abel Janszoon Glacier, which is remote though not far away.



The buttress was on my mind for two years. Dale Thistlethwaite and I tried it last summer, but we were too late in the season; the ice had melted from the rock bands so we climbed on other peaks.

Now we were back again—my 20th summer around Aoraki/Mt Cook and Dale's 10th—still chasing the sense of dynamic stillness, of omnipotent transience. To quote *The Great Gatsby*, “It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And then one fine morning—”

We stood on the summit as the sun began to set. Below our feet the long unbroken wall of ice—Rarakiroa—was dark and cast its shadow out across the lakes and the Mackenzie Basin. Looking back, the precipitous ridge threaded its way from the Tasman Sea to the summit.

The climbing was fun—aesthetic ice runnels through rock bands linking steep snow fields—engaging and wildly exposed. We spent the night in our bivvy tent high on the mountain sheltered by a 'schrund wall with the summit looming through the door. As we organised dinner it was just us and Aoraki in the red evening light as darkness climbed out of the ocean and over the Navigator Range.

In the morning we spent three and a half hours descending the Stevenson–Dick Couloir as the mountain fell apart around us.



As the day warmed the deep breakable crust on the glacier redefined suffering, but heli services lifted us from the hut as soon as we arrived. The next day was Christmas and we drank champagne on our friends John and Helen Hammond's verandah, and remembered.

I remembered the dawns, crisp and blue; the crystal ice cascading through the cliff-bands; lunch on the crest, thirsty and so far from home but with all uncertainties below us; the gulf beneath our feet as we traversed the ridge; the summit, the bivvy, the laughter; the fulfilment of an idea; the tranquillity, the sweat.

I remembered the sickening whine of acceleration: ice hit Dale on the arm and me in the head; low on the climb a falling stone scythed between us.

I remembered it being fairly safe, but this was the most serious route I had done in years. A big empty space in the mountains where we could do as we chose and make our own story—a chance to wonder and to seek realisation.

When we headed up the Abel Janszoon I remembered the dream: the ideal of a place where we are free—to risk and to love and to create and to fear and to hope.

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

—The Great Gatsby

In the empty mountain air I was, briefly, as I hoped to be. ☺

THE DREAM OF THE DUTCH SAILORS (NZ 4+)

First ascent: Stuart Hollaway and Dale Thistlethwaite

23–24 December 2012

“A big empty space in the mountains where we could do as we chose.”



WE CAME, WE SAW, WE WERE CONQUERED

The East Face of Mt Geryon

BY MARK PATTERSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARLOS CORREA GREZ AND MARK PATTERSON

ABSEILING should be a basic task. But it also requires a fair bit of concentration and isn't tolerant of mistakes. Many climbing accidents occur while abseiling because it is so easy to get complacent. I was far from casual abseiling down into the Acropolis–Geryon saddle. It was late in the morning, 11am; I was tired from minimal sleep and frustrated from our previous day, which proved less than successful. The rope was a clusterfuck and it was taking forever to sort out. Not surprising really, considering it had been thrown down moderate and bushy terrain. I should have known better, but trailing 50 metres of rope off my harness hadn't appealed to me up top.

I worked my way down slowly while sorting out the tangles. It was slow going and I had to be mindful of the rope above me—already I had one close call earlier with a dislodged rock tumbling past me. Pausing again, I did yet another leg wrap to sort out the noodle soup two metres below. As I pulled up the rope, I stopped, puzzled. The rope in my hand was cut to the core.

Rewind to the start of the trip. Along with Carlos Correa Grez, Ivan Gonzalez and Marcella Gonzalez, I set out to climb the East Face of Mt Geryon, a big cliff in Tasmania.

Adventure has been at the heart of rockclimbing since its birth. In Victoria Mt Arapiles offers world-class climbing, but lacks a sense of adventure found in broader challenges. Many years ago I spent time climbing in Yosemite, and that gave me a taste for and hunger for bigger and more remote cliffs.

A 400-metre cliff that is a four-hour walk from camp and at 2000-metre altitude encompasses vastly different challenges and dangers from anything faced at Arapiles, the Grampians or the Blue Mountains. At Arapiles, unprepared or slow climbers generally suffer embarrassment at camp in the evening, whereas on cliffs like Mt Geryon, situations can quickly become life threatening, as I discovered researching the climb.

To quote one guidebook: "Climbing [at Geryon] is a serious undertaking. The approach is long and strenuous and

navigation in the bush is difficult at times. The lengths of climbs demand early starts and full days on the cliff. A trip should only be attempted in a window of three to four days of fine weather.”

To quote thesarvo.com, a Tasmanian climbing website: “The cliffs of Mt Geryon and The Acropolis provide absolutely exceptional climbing ‘on the wild side’. Many of the routes have had few ascents, so obviously take appropriate precautions—the seriousness of accidents is high, with help a good day’s walk away. The downside of the climbing in a twosome. Firstly, expect the usual foul weather. Multiple trips before even laying chalk to rock are hardly uncommon (no joke). Secondly, packs full of camping and climbing gear are good ‘fun’.”

With camping, climbing, photography equipment and supplies for a week, I carried a pack that weighed about 32 kilograms. This is part of the reason why I chose Mt Geryon (as opposed to a two-day mud slog to Federation Peak). The other reason is that its East Face was first climbed by MUMC members Bob Jones and Bernie Lyons via a route called *East Face of the Foresight* (11/16, 370 metres) in 1961. Our ascent would be the 50-year anniversary.

Our predecessors had a challenging climb, an exciting fall and a difficult descent, and returned to their bivvy at 11.30pm. Being a little developed cliff with limited route descriptions, I didn’t expect the challenges for us to be much different (only we would have more modern equipment, of course!). There are no tracks, no rappel points and limited descriptions of the descents. This is pristine rock.



Climbing a long grade 17 here is not comparable to climbing a long grade 17 even at Arapiles.

On Wednesday evening I picked Carlos up from Rathdowne Street and headed off to the airport, excited about our long-planned trip. We met up with Ivan and Marcella that night in Hobart and enjoyed our last sleep in a bed for a while. It was a busy morning in Hobart. We shopped for food and stove fuel—making time for a decent bacon and eggs breakfast—before rushing off to Lake St Clair in the Central Highlands. Lake St Clair is at the southern end of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park. It is a tourist destination and also the end of Australia’s most popular hike, The Overland.

The 10-kilometre walk-in was on good tracks, and should have been easy despite our overloaded 32-kilogram packs. The hike in took two and a half hours. I was in my own world of pain with a borrowed pack and hips that started complaining after 10 minutes. I was fit, but my hips weren’t used to the weight. The benefit of this was that I wanted to minimise the time I was carrying it, so it forced me to walk fast. That evening

we arrived at Bert Nichols Hut, the \$1.2 million Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania extravaganza.

The views to Mt Geryon from the hut were perfect; the access less so. Mt Geryon is traditionally accessed from the back, since the West Face was pioneered first. I hoped to track an access route to the base of the East Face, and we had all of Friday to do so since heavy rain was forecast.

“As I pulled up the rope,
I stopped, puzzled.
The rope in my hand
”
was cut to the core.



I AWOKE EARLY and was presented with a stunning morning view of the cliffline before the heavens descended and obscured the peaks. We had a leisurely breakfast before setting out late morning as the rain lightened. Ivan and I trekked through thick and difficult brush for hours in an attempt to navigate an approach to the base of the cliff. After two hours we were quite close, but still not close enough for this to be a practical route to the base. It was an enjoyable and beautiful bush bash, but we were quite glad to get back to the hut that afternoon.

My plan to explore a new approach was ambitious and I should have known better (the traditional approach is normally the ‘traditional approach’ for a reason!). Carlos expressed his doubts earlier, but was happy to let me try my route. I was driven by the quest for adventure as well as the contrasting luxury of Bert Nichols Hut. That afternoon I floated the idea that we pack up and do an evening walk to the Pine Valley Hut so that we had the full advantage of the fine weather the next day. In retrospect it was probably the best thing to do, but we were all tired and none of us relished the possibility of a tough walk that evening.



THE NEXT DAY, with a morning walk of 10km carrying heavy packs, we didn’t climb that day. Instead we decided to scout and haul in some gear. Neglecting a proper alpine start, we woke up at 7am and left at 9am. The weather was perfect and the walk was beautiful. Pine Valley is a lush mossy valley with gentle criss-crossing creeks and ferns, and we meandered our way up the obscure track to the back of the mountain...

During the descent was when I found myself abseiling down into the Acropolis–Geryon saddle. In a way the damaged rope was a slight relief. There was no decision about whether or not to climb to be made; it was made for me. My nagging concerns about my hurting right shoulder and climbing after so little sleep were now irrelevant. There would be time later for annoyance. At the moment I was potentially hanging by a few exposed threads. Inspecting the cut I could see that the core was largely intact, so it was still mostly safe for rappelling, but climbing was definitely out.

I started the day angry—both at myself and my party. We had allowed time and good weather to pass without taking advantage of it. I also over-estimated the ground the group of four could cover, and I allowed a day to be wasted thanks to my attempt at forging an alternative approach. The climb was over, and with bad weather approaching there would be no opportunities left. It was a disappointing end to a trip that I had high hopes for. ☹



NADGEE —Howe

Walking along a wilderness coast

BY JAMES CRISTOFARO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN JUDD

ALL THAT REMAINED visible of the ship was the crow's nest still vigilantly rising from the breaking surf. The next day we found another wreckage from human society; this time covered partially by shifting sand. I stopped for a moment to observe the strong winds blow sand over the tips of the dunes. Watching the elements form these remarkable natural features was captivating. I spent some time alone in quiet introspection, and had a strong moment of existential contemplation when I realised that even mankind is vulnerable to the relentless forces of nature.

It was November and I was on a four-day hike along the spectacular coastline of the Nadgee–Howe Wilderness, in the south-east corner of Australia's mainland. Attending the trip were Daniel Beynon, Chris Flawn, Ben Glasson, Sytske Hillenius, Ryan Judd, Arom Malee, Alaster Meehan, Sally Stead and myself.

For me, the trip really started at one in the morning when I woke to the jarring ringing of my mobile phone and the voice of Alaster in my ear, who was lost looking for the campsite in the small town of Mallacoota. I was not particularly helpful after driving for nine hours and only one hour of sleep.

Half an hour later I was woken again by the headlights of Alaster's car—he had finally found our campsite. What followed was close to an hour of faff as Alaster set up camp and fixed his car, which was now refusing to start.

I would have liked to sleep through all this, but before we started the hike we needed to do a car shuffle. Crossing the Victoria–New South Wales border, the car shuffle took us a gruelling two hours and involved some desperate navigation along dirt roads, with Sytske holding down fallen trees as Alaster and I drove our cars across what we hoped was the correct road.

We had close to three hours of sleep before our brutal 7.00am start (to make an 8.00am ferry across Mallacoota Inlet).

Despite a pressing desire for sleep I could not help but enjoy the first day. That morning we relaxed and a few of us played on an excellent climbing tree before making our way down to the coastline where we spent the rest of the day walking. For this section of the walk we had a very old topographic map. It had an old lakeside campsite location marked on it, which resulted in our group walking past the correct location by a few kilometres and then spending a good hour wandering around sand dunes not even remotely close to our planned campsite. Considering that our group was technically lost, everyone seemed to be having a great time scattered and wandering around the dunes. This was likely a result of the impressive sand dunes, which characterised much of the bushwalk. While certainly not the highest we encountered on the trip, they were still quite remarkable.

Taking a back-bearing off the lighthouse on nearby Gabo Island we soon worked out where we needed to go. Realising we had to backtrack and cover a significant chunk of ground again tomorrow definitely put a dampener on the mood, but it wasn't long before we found the correct campsite nestled in similar sand dunes next to Lake Barracoota. That night involved swimming, a campfire, an amazing sunset and uncontrolled running down dunes.

After quickly covering the same ground from the previous day, we had a small rest at a shipwreck marked on the map. Continuing along the beach until breaking for lunch, we stopped by another great swimming hole and our last reliable water source for at least the next day. Because we were walking in a coastal region, many water sources we encountered—despite being lakes and rivers—were brackish and undrinkable. Thanks to Sytske, who prior to departing had contacted the park rangers to ask about the quality of various water sources, we had a good idea of where we could and couldn't get water. This meant heavier packs due to the large volume of water we had to carry.





Camp that night was in a location sheltered by tea trees. In the evening while we cooked, we were startled by screaming coming from the beach. Immediately we all jumped up and ran towards the beach. Thinking back I'm not sure what I was expecting, but was relieved that Arom was in fact screaming with joy: whales were breaching out of the water and creating gigantic splashes. As if they knew they had an audience, some of the whales started breaching synchronously! They were about a kilometre offshore, and as they made their way across the horizon slowly, our group stood entranced. This was the first of many whale sightings for the trip.



WE CROSSED THE BORDER the next day. The continuous sandy beaches were now broken by rocky coastal features. At one of these headlands there was a large amount of washed up debris and we spent some time combing through. Most people ended up with some sort of trinket and Sally certainly had a few more than one.

Later that day, Alaster and a few others investigated a small inland “shortcut” leading up a large sand dune. At the top, they were greeted by another dune, hidden by the first, which seemed enormous! They returned to the rocky coast rather than press on. Our afternoon stop later on resulted in more whale sightings, which of course excited everyone. That evening we camped on the shore of Nadgee Lake, where most people had a swim (and we joked about taking a couple of photographs for the highly anticipated MUMC Nude Calendar).

On the final day of walking we headed up and around a rocky outcrop. From a lookout atop the headland we said goodbye to our whale friends, who made another surprise appearance, much to everyone's delight. Again the whales breached not far off the coast, and we spent a long while at this lookout watching them take a leisurely path across the sea. From here we took an inland route back to the car.

All-in-all the trip was an amazing journey. I have many great memories from it, and would put it amongst the best walking trips I have done. The area is absolutely stunning, and we experienced some extreme windy weather conditions, making the region feel even more remarkable. The area is also quite remote—we didn't see another group of walkers the entire time, which is not something that can be said about other beautiful walking destinations. The great thing about this trip is that it wasn't difficult; all that we needed was some basic equipment and a desire to go. Nearly all the equipment you need can be hired from Melbourne University Mountaineering Club and, provided you have a leader willing to take you, there are virtually no prerequisite skills for an incredible experience. ☺



THE DIRTBAG KAYAKER’S WAY

How to get around New Zealand

WORDS AND UNCREDITED PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEN WEBB

What Vehicle Should I Get?

Firstly you need to buy a van. Not just any van, it has to be the cheapest, oldest crappiest van in all of Christchurch. Why? A) It’s cheap. B) If it’s already really bad, it can only get better. C) If you buy a good van, you probably won’t be inclined to paint and graffiti all over it—this is a key step in increasing the value of your van.

Increasing the Value of Your Vehicle

Everyone loves an awesome looking van, and everyone wishes they had one; most folks just don’t have the balls to take that big step and splatter some colour all over. Buy some paint. Paint pots from Bunnings work a treat. Three primary colours plus black and white mean you now have every colour of the rainbow at your disposal. We started off simple, with some mad blue speed stripes (also key in increasing the performance of your van). Waterfalls, rivers, ducklings and beached whales seemed a logical progression. We also ended up drawing, scribbling and writing stories all over the interior—this may or may not have added value, we’re not entirely sure...

Fixing the Van When It Breaks

If it is something simple like a rusted out exhaust pipe in the engine bay—something that may cause fumes to enter the cabin and make everyone to feel not so great—pull over at the pub, detox, and think about how a dirtbag kayaker would fix this. Cut a couple of beer cans up, wrap them around the pipe, fasten with fencing wire and it’s good as new—potentially even better. After smashing your gearbox on a rock on the road into the Shotover River, DO NOT go to the dodgiest mechanic in Queenstown. We thought logically, that a dodgy mechanic would be perfect for a fairly dodgy van. We were wrong. This guy was just too dodgy, even by our standards. We will happily hurl ourselves over drops into munchy, swirling whitewater, and even

swim in it from time to time. However, watching this bloke work underneath the van precariously (not) supported by a lone trolley jack was just too much. It wobbled every time he shook, pushed, pulled or prodded. We could only look on with a sick feeling in our stomachs, thinking that it’s no wonder this guy is missing three fingers with work practices like that. When he finally did lower it, without switching off the engine or taking it out of gear, it headed straight for a BMW in the shed, luckily stalling out just in time, with mere centimetres to spare.

When your front universal joint drops out, stop immediately (you won’t have much choice in the matter). You will need to be towed to the nearest town, say, the town of Ross. If it is a long weekend you will be stuck for three full days until business resumes on Tuesday. Camp outside the Ross pub; there’s no place better. Have a few beers with the bartender and all the locals, maybe even have a jam and sing some Johnny Cash. Bribe a local to be your shuttle bunny in this time; you don’t want to miss out on any paddling action! Once business resumes, hitch to the nearest wrecker, buy a new driveshaft, install in less than one hour and you’re on the road before lunch on Tuesday.

Pets in the Van

When you are paddling down a river, sometimes a pet will find you. If a tiny, lone duckling approaches you in the middle of a continuous class IV section, chances are it’s fairly keen to hitch a ride. If it won’t leave you, even when you take it to the safety of the river’s edge, you have probably made a friend for life. You simply need to overcome the problem of getting it down the rest of the rapids without squashing or losing it in your kayak. There is a lack of wildlife centres in New Zealand, so now you have a buddy who will follow you anywhere: swim alongside you on the easy stuff, jump in the boat for the hard stuff, waddle all over the

backseat of the van, find its own food and waddle after you wherever you may go.

Selling the Van

Get yourself a trademe.co.nz account and wait. Sell the van to a German backpacker for a few hundred dollars more than you bought it for. It does have an extremely awesome paintjob, a bunch of camping gear and a ‘new’ driveshaft after all.

Getting around New Zealand in such a way is not the easiest option; it involves a fair bit of mucking around. Only do this if you are after the ‘Van Adventure Experience’. For less than a month of travel, it is probably not worth it; you will lose a few days buying, selling and repairing. However if you are game to roll the dice, it’s probably the most economical option; repair costs are far cheaper than what we would have paid for a rental, and there is no way a rental would be anywhere near as fun. It was pretty freaking awesome cruising around in the ‘Stig of the Dump’ getting smiles and honks wherever we went.

What You Will See and Do

It’s pretty hard to describe the meat of a New Zealand kayaking trip. Every single day requires its own article. You will paddle countless stunning rivers; winding between the tallest snow-capped mountains, through deep moss-covered gorges, on beautiful turquoise glacial melt water. There is a range of things to paddle, from easy to expert, low-volume creeking to big water, and opportunities to build on your skills are everywhere. There are rapids wherever you look, at whatever grade you need, big drops, small drops, munchy holes and enormous waves. When you get tired of walking/cycling shuttles, you can hitch a helicopter ride into incredibly stunning, remote runs on the West Coast. You will share experiences with amazing people. You will see sunrise on the east coast and sunset on the west, and in between, every day will be an adventure. ☺



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ‘The Stig’ by the sea north of Kaikoura; Tikki the duckling (RIP) below Maruia Falls; a steep gorge on the Whataroa River (photo by Rose Beagley); Jonathan Cawood and Mitchell Stephen replace the Stig’s driveshaft outside the Ross pub.



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE TOP:

Rose Beagley takes in Whataroa Gorge's beauty
(photo by Jonathan Cawood).

A sweet rockslide on the Perth River.

Rose and Ben Webb roll through the enormous wave
train lead-in to Dog Leg Rapid, Kawarau River
(photo by Jonathan Cawood).

The group's first heli run up the Whataroa River.

A beautiful gorge on the Kakapotohi River.

Jono takes a clean line through the Shotover Gorge.

Discussing safety setup, Citroen Rapid, Kawarau River.

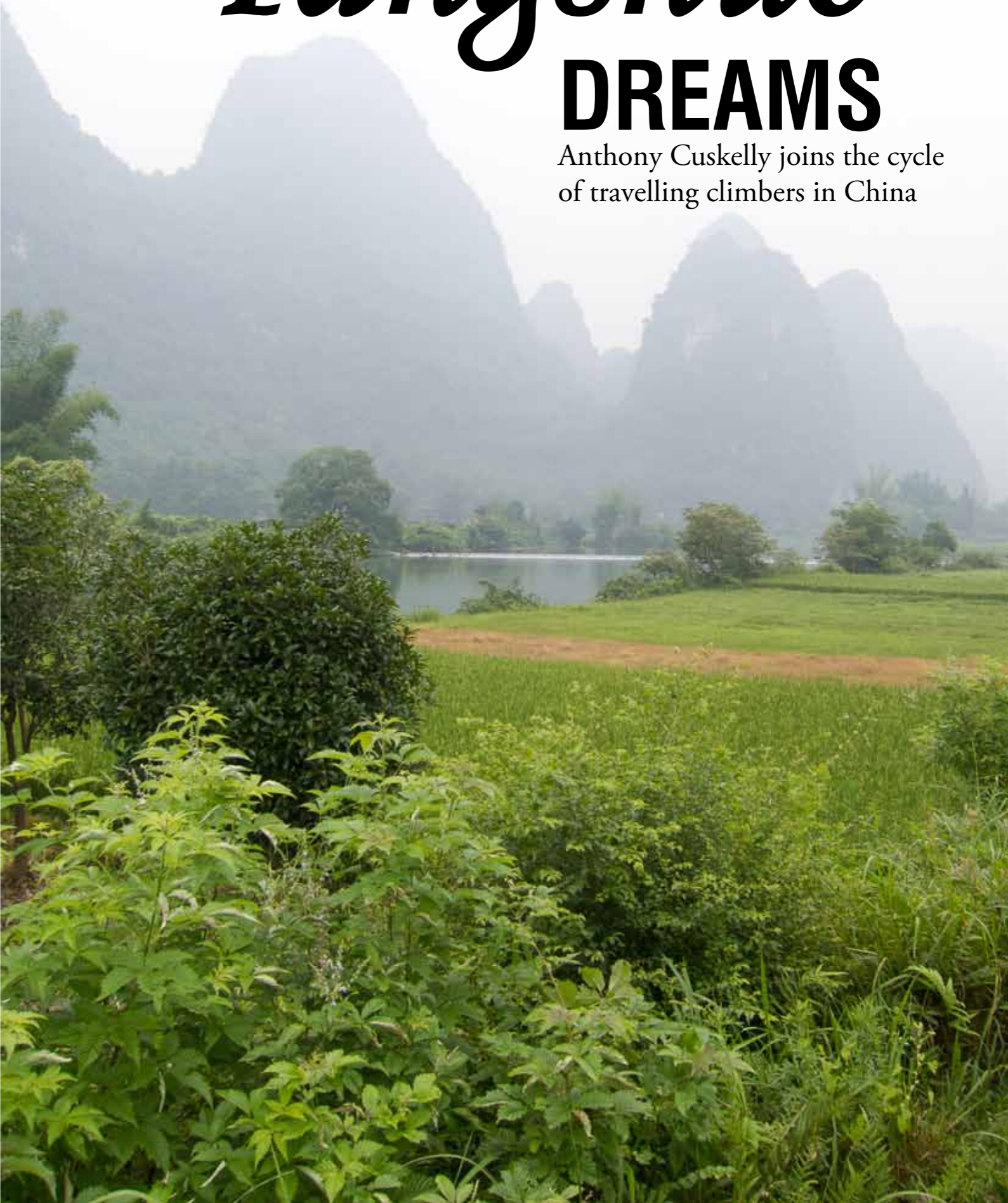


ROCKCLIMBING

Yangshuo

DREAMS

Anthony Cuskelly joins the cycle of travelling climbers in China



YANGSHUO is a mythic place. The oldest routes in the guidebook were put up by Todd Skinner and friends at Moon Hill in 1990, and many climbers have seen photos of these epic routes tracing a line through a white sea of stalactites. Others will have heard of Yangshuo's amazing natural arch (aeroplanes could just about fly through), or its amazing karst landscape, with numerous limestone towers rising out of the river plains, unclimbed and unnamed.

I arrived in Guilin airport on Saturday evening and found my driver. Within 10 minutes we slowed down to pass a water buffalo pulling a cart. After 20 minutes the karsts started to emerge from the haze like silent sentinels, ghosting past in spectacular number and variation.

After pulling into Yangshuo I was guided into a narrow alleyway, to the Climbers Inn. Run by lady called Lily, this is a small hostel convenient to everywhere and nearly guaranteed to contain someone after a belay.

I had arranged to meet a girl called Keight, a friend of a friend. I made a quick phone call, met Keight, and headed to an Indian restaurant with a random assortment of other foreigners. After stuffing our faces, we had a few beers at the Rusty Bolt with more climbers.



SOUTHERN CHINA IN JUNE is hot; every day is more than 30°C and humidity is high. We breakfasted at a place called Kelly's before acquiring an 'Alice' each: a pink singlespeed bicycle with a basket on the back (seemingly designed with young girls as the target market), which cost 10 RMB per day (A\$1.50). On our pushbikes, Keight, a guy called Jonno and I rode to Swiss Cheese, which is a crag about 2.5 kilometres from the middle of town.

Yangshuo climbing is predominantly single-pitch sport climbing varying from vertical to extremely steep. The limestone is highly featured, with many pockets and caves, as well as extensive tufas and stalactites. The routes are generally well bolted, although older routes are sometimes not as well thought out. There's quite a lot of variation in the type of moves required, so pack some imagination (your chalk will just sweat off). Most of the approaches are easy, and the scale of the place is simply mind-boggling.

At Swiss Cheese we ran into some French climbers, an American, and a few other



Australians staying at the Climbers Inn. We warmed up on *Classic Gouda* (15), *Spam the Chinese Ham* (16) and *Chairman Mao* (16), then climbed *Philly Cheese Steak* (17) and *Lomito Complito* (18). I had a little rest on the latter after the bird chicks on the route put me off, while Keight pushed through despite it being her first day back leading on a broken ankle with damaged tendons. Dinner and beers (after a well-earned shower) finished off a brilliant first day.



KEIGHT WAS LEAVING the next day, so we got up early and headed to Baby Frog Buttress. After a random act of kindness by Keight (putting a baby bird back in its nest), we both polished off *Liar* (17) and *Toad in the Hole* (17)—the latter being one of the best I've ever done at the grade. Lunch was dumplings (nine for 4 RMB, which is A\$0.60!), then I rode my 'Alice' to a crag called the Egg to find climbers Paul, Ben and Duncan. Given that it was a warm summer day, my extended tour of Guangxi province on the way was possibly unwise. Ignoring sunburn and tiredness, Ben and I did *Chocolate Milk Crack* (17) and *Absent Friends* (17).

After this I'd originally contemplated a rest day, but enthusiasm was getting the better of me, so the next day I made a trip to the Wine Bottle. We misjudged the sun, so our 'warm up' climbs *Watered Whine* (16) and *Irresistible* (16) were a bit too literal, but after that the cliff came into shade. I also discovered the joys of fresh watermelon obtainable at the crag. I did the first pitch of *Red Wall* (18) with one rest, climbed *The Miracle of Lankou*, the classic 17 of the crag, and flailed my way up *Shu Ba Jie* (18). Consider it falling practice. An hour-long back massage for 60 RMB (A\$9) made the climbing feel like it had been a little less strenuous.

The following day I couldn't resist heading to Space Buttress with the others; the climbing had just been so good. After another pleasant warm-up, *Supernova* (17), I convinced an American called Thomas who was newer to climbing to join me on the stellar *Interstalgic Cruiser*, a two-pitch 22. We both got to the top, though I can't say we cruised between the stalactites, given how many falls were involved. I finished off with the excellent and appropriate *Aliens in Yangshuo* (17).

That night started with the usual dinner and beers, before Paul and Duncan revealed that they'd obtained a significant quantity of fireworks (cheaply and legally). Enough that it was hard work to carry them. So we



Deer Hunters, Tractors and STEWED APPLES

OXO adventures in Wonnangatta Valley



BY TIM CARTER
PHOTOGRAPHY LUKE GOGOLKIEWICZ COLLECTION

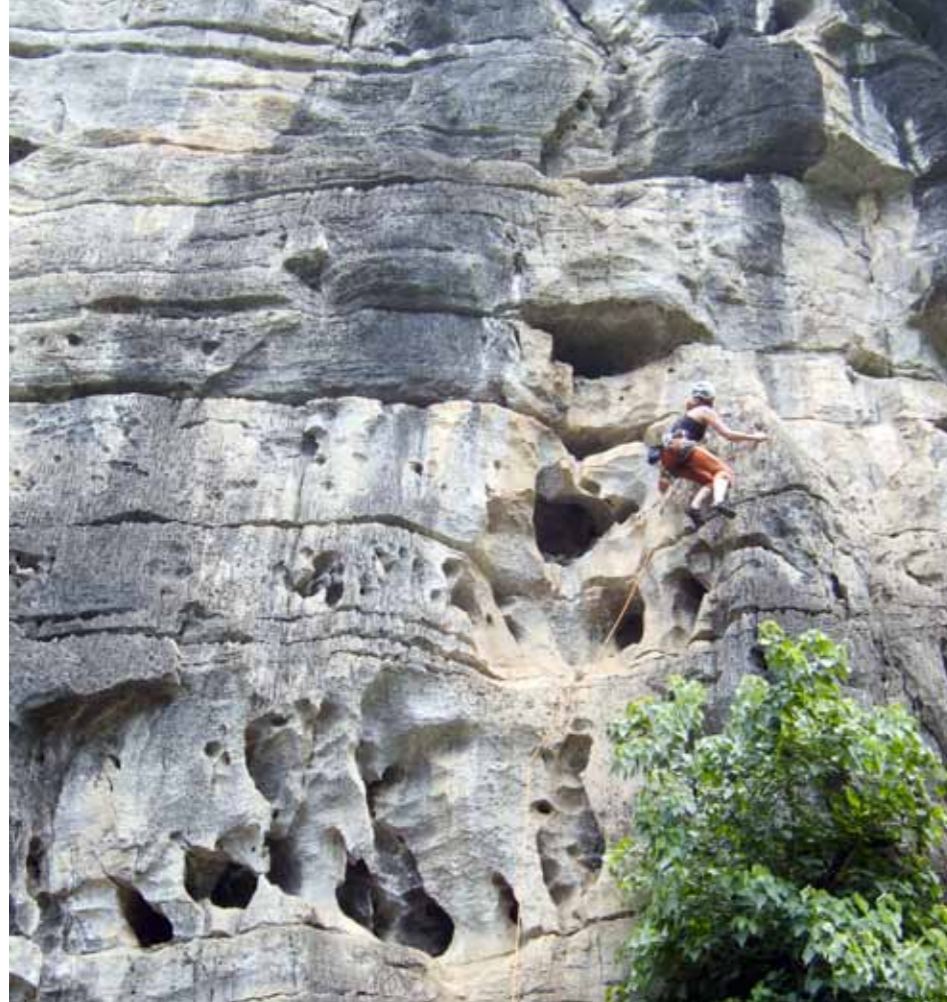
THE WONNANGATTA Valley is a remote, former farmland valley in the heart of Alpine National Park. The area was inspiration for the terrain in John Marsden's *Tomorrow When the War Began* book series. The collection of small cliffs Marsden called Satan's Steps and the ridgeline Marsden called Tailor's Stitch were inspired by real places in Wonnangatta Valley: the Devil's Staircase and the Crosscut Saw. Other landmarks in the area are Mt Despair, The Terrible Hollow, Mt Buggery and the Horrible Gap. Whoever named the area had a flare for the dramatic.

And drama there was. The valley was also the site of an unsolved double murder in 1911. Police found a man shot in the back after he was missing for two weeks. Everyone suspected his station hand, who was also missing and known to have a foul temper. However, he was found months later after the winter snow melted at Howitt Hut—a full day's walk away—also shot, in the head.

I wanted to explore the Wonnangatta Valley—unfortunately I had lost the out-of-print guidebook, so my route needed to be somewhat improvised. Our plan was to head down to the valley floor via Dry

River Creek and camp at the site of the old homestead. On Sunday we planned to make our way up the untracked Conglomerate Creek to make an escape back to Howitt Hut, potentially along the murdered station hand's fateful route.

When I explained this—and the potential hazards of snow, river-wading, steep climbs and the high chance of getting lost—at a trip meeting, our jolly crew was whittled from 15 down to six...



found a quiet spot on the river, proceeded to make it less so, had a swim in the river, and discovered that the local fireflies were putting on a show as well, which was much quieter though no less amazing.

After my relative successes with climbing, I decided I should do something other than climb on Thursday. Dragon Bridge was recommended, so a few of us hired bikes and cycled up the river through the villages and rice paddies. We caught bamboo rafts back down, I had another swim, then I headed back to town so I could leave.

I left a lot undone around Yangshuo. I didn't end up getting to Moon Hill, I didn't see any of the caves, and I didn't visit the night markets. I didn't see the famous Big Banyan Tree, or the terraced rice paddies, or venture off into the more remote areas.

I definitely didn't visit every crag, or do every climb I wanted to at any crag I did visit. But it would have been hard to fit more in with the time I had, and I don't regret any of it.

I learnt a lot on this trip, and not very much of it is about climbing. I never would have gone if it wasn't for the help and friendship of Keight, someone I'd never met, and I definitely wouldn't have enjoyed myself as much if not for the people I met along the way. I travelled alone, learnt the annoyance that is ticket touts, bartered via calculator, ate frog, climbed some great limestone and, with a little encouragement, took an opportunity that presented itself. I joined the cycle of travelling climbers, if only for a short time. ☺

GETTING THERE

The most convenient international hub to fly into is Guangzhou. From there, it's one hour by plane to Guilin (or you can take the train). A taxi (220 RMB, 90 minutes) from Guilin airport is convenient, while the bus is cheaper but slower.

GETTING AROUND

Reaching the crags can be accomplished by bicycle (10–20 RMB per day), taxi (<100 RMB, pay on return), or bus (crag dependent).

ACCOMODATION

The Climbers Inn is run by a climber and is full of climbers, but it's a little noisy due to the nearby bars. There are plenty of other options.

WHEN TO GO

The northern autumn is best, followed by spring. Summer is hot (>30°C) and humid, while winter is very cold, but climbing is possible year-round.

COSTS

At the time of writing, the RMB is about six to the AUD. Hostel accommodation costs around 30 RMB per night, longneck beers and spirits costs around 15 RMB each, and a decent dinner (including beer) costs less than 50 RMB.

EATING

Kelly's Café does good meals (especially breakfasts). Otherwise all kinds of dining are available, from street vendors upwards. Herbivores may struggle, although there is at least one vegetarian restaurant in town. Chopstick skills are handy.

COMMUNICATING

Highly varied levels of English is spoken. Take a phrasebook and expect to mime. Expect ticket touts and hawkers as well, especially in touristy areas.

THE CLIMBING

Expect mostly highly featured near-vertical to steep limestone with well bolted single-pitch sport climbs from grade 16 upwards. Take a 60-metre rope (at least) and about 14 quickdraws. Buy the guidebook for 100 RMB (grades in both American and French systems with a conversion table in the back, and profits go back to crag development). If you're looking for partners, check the Rusty Bolt or the Climbers Inn.

“*I sent a watermelon-sized rock crashing down into the gully. To our surprise it kept going, and going, and going... with all the ensuing crash bang and boom. We decided at that point that we wouldn't fall.*”

WE DROVE OUT on Friday night, and on Saturday morning we woke to find the puddles frozen by a clear autumn night. As we set off on the track to Dry River Creek, we bumped into some people dressed in camouflage clothing. After chatting to them and discovering that they were deer hunters, we continued along, doing our best not to look like deer.

The track meandered through the Howitt Plain before descending steeply into the valley. At our first encounter (of many) with Dry River Creek, we decided that it was a poorly named creek. A better name would be, “River that is flowing quite nicely and has too many blackberries near it.”

Hours of blackberry bashing brought us to the valley floor. We decided at this point that we were safe from deer hunters, but now faced another challenge—a smoky cloud hung over the track, we guessed from grass fires up the valley. We proceeded through the haze and up the valley to the site of the old homestead and graveyard. Here, we encountered some friendly 4x4 drivers, who determined that the fire was small and kilometres away.

The graveyard was a small collection of headstones. Remnants from when the valley was settled. Further exploring uncovered an old apple tree full of apples. We ate to excess then packed more for stewed apples and cream dessert later.

Suddenly 10 vintage tractors emerged from the smoke. They'd driven from Myrtleford (about 100km away) for their annual tractor convention. They asked us which way we were heading, and we explained the proposed route. “Good luck with that,” said one. “Headed up that way 30 years ago. Damn steep.” Encouraging, but at least it confirmed our route, which was prior to this based only on my memory of the lost guidebook.

We made camp at the head of Conglomerate Creek, away from the homestead. True to form as a former

Melbourne High student, Mitchell Stephen got the fire going in pyromaniac style. We feasted on our apple stew then slept to the dulcet tones of Luke Gogolkiewicz's snoring.

We woke at dawn and were off an hour after sunrise. A low mist hung in the valley, and the mountains rose up around us.

A few short investigations involving more apple trees did not provide the bounty of the day before. Soon we left the 4x4 track behind and sidled steep riverbanks 20 metres above the river. After a river crossing or two, most of us accepted the inevitable and waded in the frigid water. Ben Webb valiantly continued to avoid wet boots. (Personally I found it strange for a paddling officer to be so scared of water.)

We proceeded up the secluded sun-drenched valley. Mitch's attempts at acrobatics meant that he had wet clothes in addition to wet shoes. His riverside handstand skills were found sadly lacking.

Eventually we reached the point of departure from the river. The ridge we had chosen to regain the plateau was a gradient of 50 per cent. As promised the ridge was, in fact, steep. We cursed the lost guidebook and kept climbing. Eucalypt regrowth meant we periodically lost members of the group in the dense scrub. We gained the ridge and traversed several knolls. They were annoying. We couldn't ever see the next one and kept thinking it was nearly over, but, inevitably, another knoll presented itself, and along with it, another annoying climb. As we approached the last knoll, it was with even more annoyance that we hit a cliff.

By this stage we were running late. Again cursing the lost guidebook, we started scrambling. Our first spot of bouldering was made interesting by the chossy rock and lack of hand holds. I sent a watermelon-sized rock crashing down into the gully. To our surprise it kept going, and going, and going... with all the ensuing crash bang and boom. We decided at that point that we



wouldn't fall. We stopped for a late lunch at what we thought was the top. Alas there was a second cliff. Luckily this one had better rock, and we finally topped out.

We were now running seriously late. Dusk was coming fast and we were still kilometres from the car. The cliff and ridge scramble had taken longer than expected, but at least we were only racing the sunset, and not any mysterious murderers (or deer hunters). With the rain now closing in we found a track and climbed the final kilometres to the Howitt plateau.

An attempted short cut across the plain resulted in us losing the track and having to

make our way by map, compass and GPS. As darkness fell our spirits did too. The gloom and the light of our torches made shadows dance about the trees. Further faff was induced by a search for my lost glove, dropped somewhere in the last 100 metres (thanks, Taner, for finding it!).

Our weary bunch eventually found the track and car again after an hour of night walking. Finally we were out. No one disappeared, no one was murdered. Alas no murder was solved, but our route finding was successful. ☘



INTO THE UNDERGROWTH

Kayaking the Denison River

BY ROSE BEAGLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEN WEBB

UPON HEARING about MUMC's Adventure Grant at a club meeting one Tuesday in 2011, I went home and began looking for a river that seemed adventurous. I started my search with Tasmania, as this seemed to be Australia's Mecca for river missions. On Tasmania's paddling website, paddletasmania.canoe.org.au, I found the Denison River. A Denison River trip involves a bush bash to a lake, a 20km paddle across the lake, a 3km (about 13.5 hours) scrub bash to the river and then a few days down the Denison, onto the confluence with the Gordon River, a relatively (very) flat water paddle to Sir John Falls and then to Heritage Landing to catch the ferry to Strahan.

Back in 2011 I'd been kayaking for less than six months and wasn't quite ready for the Denison. A whole year later, I was in a different position. I'd spent pretty much all of 2011 and 2012 kayaking; I couldn't get enough of it! I'd also been on several other MUMC trips involving climbing, hiking, canyoning and rogaining, all of which gave me new outdoor skills and improved my existing ones. With Adventure Grant submissions due in early June 2012, fellow club member Ben Webb and I wrote an application for the Denison River.

In mid July 2012 we discovered that we were successful in our application and began planning our trip for December 2012. The months leading up to December saw us busy booking flights/ferries, working out the car shuffle (thanks, Dad), sorting out what gear we'd take (every gram was going to count—we were going super lightweight) and dehydrating food. This was on top of working, studying and getting out kayaking pretty much every weekend before the trip. We also fortunately happened to meet a kayaker called Jean Dind, who'd paddled the Denison back in 2008 and had some handy tips about webbing to tow our boats, lightening our load and potential portage spots along the river. Those few months were busy but definitely worth it.

ALL TOO SOON we were on our way and departing the access track in Strathgordon to reach Lake Gordon, the starting point for our trip, which saw us getting bogged...

Me: Maybe we shouldn't drive in there...

Ben: Nah, don't worry, it will be fi—
CLUNK...

And we were bogged. I had to run back to the tiny town of Strathgordon and ask for help from the Lake Pedder Chalet. The owner, Neville, came to our rescue to tow us out. Minutes later despite my pleas of "Be careful!" Ben got his car—affectionately known as 'Elvis'—bogged again. This time we got Elvis out ourselves (I don't think I could have faced Neville again).

Our first real test was the 150-metre bush bash to Lake Gordon. Could we handle the South West Tasmanian bush? We left camp at 7am and arrived some 50 minutes later at Lake Gordon, slightly dishevelled, and both glad to be in our boats regardless of the flat water ahead.

Settling into our boats, wearing hiking boots, gaiters and with backpacks over our laps, we couldn't get over the view that surrounded us. Mountains enclosed us from all directions and the rising sun sparkled across the still water—it was stunning. As the morning went on our whitewater

kayaker tolerance to flat water declined as the headwind increased. However we couldn't stop paddling, for if we did, the wind blew us backwards. So we carried on, navigating the inlets, occasionally taking a bearing (a recently acquired skill) until at last it was lunchtime and we arrived at the other end of the lake (20km later).

“*The Denison showed us a world ... where you live by silence, the sounds of the river, wind, birds, the scenery, views and isolation.*”

Our bush bash began as soon as we got out of our boats. There were no flat spots and the sides of the lake were straight up. Clipping webbing to our 19-kilogram boats and hoisting more than 10 kilograms of gear onto our backs (each) we began the drag up. We ditched our bags at a 'suitable' camping spot, then kept going—all afternoon

through the scrub, up, down, around, over, under, through. Our aim was to reach the ridgeline and follow it up to the first of two summits (481 metres and 526 metres). We didn't quite get to the first summit that day, but gained a fair amount of height before dropping our boats and hiking back to camp. Camp being our large, one-man tarp strung half a metre off the ground with our mats on bunches of tussock grass. We were too exhausted to complain.

The next day was similar to the previous afternoon except there was no paddling, just hiking. By 7am we were hiking with our packs and paddles back to our boats. Collecting 'Zeus' and 'George' (our boats), we began a tag-team process. Taking the boats onward, leaving red pieces of tissue paper as a trail and then going back for our bags and paddles. It was at this point we discovered the tape—those tiny bits of pink tape, found sparingly along the way, left by others who had been here before, lifted our spirits. Even though we were dripping with sweat, doing something halfway between rockclimbing and dog-sledding (us being the dogs), with our legs covered with leeches, we kept taking bearings and following those pieces of tape. However, even with the tape it wasn't easy. There is no



easy way to drag a 19-kilogram, two-and-a-half-metre plastic boat through that type of bush. At times I felt tears of frustration and exhaustion; however, there was no stopping. Having no access to water between Lake Gordon and the Denison River, aside from what we were carrying, we had no choice but to make it in one push.

Late in the afternoon, the Denison River Valley came into view at last. It was beautiful. We could finally see the Denison River, although a vast expanse of dense, wet, tangled forest and scrub stood in our path. However, there was some pretty good motivation to get to the river (aside from the rapids of course)—we would be able to set up camp and have supper. We'd already decided which of our dehydrated meals we were having that morning, and were pretty excited for lentil Bolognese and pasta! We took a quick breather and then launched ourselves down the hillside. Fortunately we came upon more tape and that became our guide through the undergrowth; crawling, pulling, yanking, dragging, throwing, until at last we hit the Denison River, nine hours

after getting up that morning. If I wasn't utterly exhausted or covered in leeches I might have danced with joy. Instead we both jumped and yelled in horror at the leeches and took a quick (cold) swim to get rid of them. Then we set up camp on a bed of moss and, barely noticing the rain, cooked supper before crawling into bed with muscles aching.



THE NEXT DAY the real paddling began! We'd planned a rest day but by lunchtime we'd had enough of the drizzle and there was no point getting our dry clothes wet. We packed up and left. That afternoon the first couple of hours saw us paddling long stretches of flat water accompanied by a silence broken up only by the faint trickle of tiny waterfalls down rock cliffs, the bubble of a stream as it entered through a dense bush screen or the splash of our paddles as they dipped into the water. That didn't last, though. Soon we entered Marriotts Gorge. Marriotts Gorge is tight with some

nice drops and must-make moves. It was so much fun!

The following day was a big one: we had the Denison Gorge awaiting us at the end, but first we had some flatwater paddling to do. This section was broken up by one of the largest remaining stands of Huon Pine—the Truchanas Nature Reserve. This reserve was named after Olegas Truchanas, a photographer and environmentalist who dedicated his life to saving Tasmanian rivers from being dammed.

By 10am we entered the Denison Gorge. It had a few tricky rapids that we scouted before running. Mostly, though, it was 'read and run', until the gorge began to really tighten and the rocks in the river became more apparent. The flow also got stronger, and I found myself eddying out above a rapid where all the flow was funnelled into a tight chute with a boulder in the middle. Not long after, towards the end of the gorge, the river vanished through a series of strainers into the ground, becoming a kayaker's death trap. It was portage time and



two hours of it. I'm sad to say that both our boats left slivers of plastic all over the rocks, as they were lowered or hoisted up from tree anchors and we rockclimbed beside them.

Thoroughly exhausted after the portage, we got back in our boats and managed to miss the Denison camp and instead came to the Gordon–Denison confluence. It was late afternoon by this time. We had planned to paddle up the Gordon River to see the geological phenomenon of the Gordon Splits, however our progress was too slow. Instead we bailed. Leaving behind the hope of seeing the Splits on this trip, we turned back and set about finding a camping spot.

While Ben scouted the banks I sat in my boat, close to sleep, until I heard him cry out. A twig had poked him in the eye as he was returning through the undergrowth to his boat—and not just poked, it had snapped off, so that he had to pull it free of his eyelid. With Ben half blinded I had to take the lead. Paddling downstream, into a rapidly setting sun, I called instructions back to Ben. His limited vision meant that he could no longer see the logs or rocks just below the surface. When I was starting to get desperate I spotted a tiny beach on the side of the river and decided it would have to do. Not wanting to waste the setting sun, we quickly laid out our wet gear and then collapsed on the sand, enjoying the warmth.

There was one thing we'd forgotten though—the Gordon is dammed and apparently water is released in the evenings. With the sun almost gone, I got up to get my down jacket and suddenly realised our three-metre-wide beach had started to shrink. We packed up camp quickly—there was no time to faff. By the time we left, the beach had halved in size and we spent the next hour in the fading light with increasing anxiety trying to find a camping spot on the overgrown banks. Fortunately we came to a large island and set up camp as close to the middle as possible... just in case. I don't think either of us slept well that night, both wondering, *Is this island high enough?*



THE LAST DAY of paddling was another big one, not in terms of rapids and portaging, but more in the sense that it was a whole day of flat water broken up only by Sunshine Gorge and the confluence of the Gordon and Franklin rivers. As with Lake Gordon we paddled separately for most of the day. Ben prefers to take his time, while I just want to get the flat water over and done with. However we did pause together to have lunch on a sandy beach, this time laughing as we watched the water level



change dramatically as we ate. We paused again at the confluence with the Franklin River (which is a must-do on any serious paddler's list) looking upstream at the water flowing gently down to join the Gordon and imagining the rapids it held deep within its steep gorges. I was thankful for those who fought and saved it from being dammed some 30 years ago. However, it was the sight of the Sir John Falls landing that brought the biggest sense of relief. We'd made it down the longest stretch of flat water for the trip—26km of the majestic Gordon. We could finally put down our paddles, pull up our boats and rest.

The peace didn't last. Half an hour after our arrival, small fishing boats zoomed into view with the arrival of a Tasmanian boat club. We helped them tie up to the jetty, and while we were standing around chatting they offered us a lift. We did not hesitate. Neither of us had been looking forward to the next day of 20km flatwater paddling to Heritage Landing.

Settling in for the night, our boat friends were so welcoming and hospitable, even though we'd only just met. They offered us food, beer, a bed and their company. Something we were very grateful for after

six days in the wilderness. They left us the next day at Heritage Landing, but only after giving us lunch, tea and coffee.

I wish we could have stayed longer and kayaked some other rivers in the region or simply lived out amongst the wilderness. Instead we took the ferry back to Strahan, knowing that we weren't done with South West Tasmanian rivers. There is something very special about them.

The Denison showed us a world so different to the one we live our everyday lives in. A world where you live by silence, the sounds of the river, wind, birds, the scenery, views and isolation. Despite the long hours spent dragging our boats and gear through dense bush, the leeches crawling up our legs, the sketchy camp spots and the continuous drizzle of rain, we were happy. To be able to walk and kayak in a place where few people have been before us was an amazing, unforgettable experience. Each day brought something new: another challenge, another view, but always the serenity, beauty and encompassing isolation from the rest of the world. ☺

PASSPORT *to* INSANITY

Mark Patterson and Richard Bassett-Smith
climb an iconic route

BY MARK PATTERSON AND RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH

PASSPORT *to Insanity* (20, M2) is a climb touted as the “best line in Australia”. Deep in the heart of the Grampians, its searing offwidth crack leads to a looming roof 50 metres off the deck. The roof is so steep that its lip is lower than where it meets the wall. While a few people have free-climbed the roof at grade 27, mere mortals resort to aid-climbing it, which is what we set out to do.

The seed of the idea was planted back in July. It was a muffled and hard-to-hear phone call from Richard in East Timor during which the suggestion to climb *Passport* was raised.

In October Richard returned to Australia, and we made a quick trip to Camels Hump for Mark to figure out which end of an etrier was which.

Come December we still hadn’t gotten our hands on any fifi hooks. After visiting Little Bourke Street’s outdoor shops and making a few phone calls, we were pretty sure that not a single shop in Melbourne had them in stock. With a homemade fifi hook, we packed our racks and extra gear from MUMC and hit the road.

The Fortress is the name of a large square cliff that stands tall on a crest in the Victoria Range in Grampians National Park. While it has many recorded climbs, its remoteness and difficult access ensures it is only visited occasionally.

At 6pm our adventure began when we discovered that there was some basis for Parks Victoria’s designation that this track is 4WD only! The road tested Mark’s Volvo’s traction and ground clearance.

We followed the road to the top of a steep, rocky descent, which looked possible to get down. However, we decided that getting back up would be impossible. So we parked, threw on our packs and made the walk down, which was followed by steep uphill hiking to camp.

We rose at 5.30am, ate a quick breakfast, made quick work of the walk-in, and found ourselves at the base of the climb by 7am.

When Keith ‘Noddy’ Lockwood (the first person to climb *Passport* along with Joe Friend in 1974) arrived at the bottom of the climb, he says he “Rounded the corner and just cranked my head up, and there it was; the huge *Passport* area with the crack and the terrifying roof. Crumbs. I just had to sit down and absorb it all. It was pretty sensational.” Our reaction was similar.

Richard was tasked with the first lead. His aim was to lead it free, but in the end we decided it might be wise to consider aiding some parts. We possessed only one piece of



ROCKCLIMBING

gear that could adequately protect the crack at its widest. Thus we clipped two etriers, two daisies and one hastily made fifi hook to his harness, just in case.

After the first couple of moderate moves, the crack quickly widens and leads to the crux. Richard is a polite young man who doesn’t usually drink, smoke or swear. But after spending a couple of minutes at the crux, he yelled down “How the fuck do I climb this?” This was Richard’s first introduction to hard offwidths.

A grade 20. How hard can that be? I can climb that; no need to aid it. Maybe I didn’t truly understand what climbing a hard offwidth would entail—and this one leans out beyond vertical. My willingness to commit was overturned by intimidation. A short comment from the guidebook suggested that a number five cam is required to protect the crux. But

I wanted to plug the number five in right in front of me. There was no easy start. I took one step off the ground and the crack was ready to spit me off. Doubt set in.

How do you climb an offwidth? Layback the edge? With the crack beyond vertical, you fight not only strenuous moves, but gravity. Double hand jams? Never done those before. And how to make the next move once both hands are fixed?

I guess I had never laid hands on an offwidth before. The etriers didn’t last long tied up at the back of my harness. Pretty soon both feet were in them, and I was hanging off the number five cam.

But what next? I only had one number five, and the next biggest piece was too small. Somehow I found a spot for my number four cam, balanced on only two lobes, which could have been described as completely open.



Soon my whole body weight was suspended from them. Ever so cautiously removing the number five cam and placing it again higher up, relief set back in. I repeated this process before the run-outs began.

Then it was good, easy climbing. Protection got further and further apart. The final run-out was eight to 10 metres. When the first pitch was complete, and I had a newfound love for fifi hooks.

Nursing a broken toe and still unable to put on his climbing shoes, Mark figured that juggling up the rope in true aid style would be the way to go. He was soon beneath the roof grinning in anticipation.

After hauling up the small haul bag, sorting gear and organising ourselves, we were ready for the next pitch. Such was Mark's excitement that he almost managed to leave with an extra etrier clipped to the back of his harness, leaving Richard with only one! And then came the long and slow processes of aiding.

Select cam... Place cam... Clip etrier... Stand up... Hook into daisy... Repeat...

The slow process gave Richard plenty of time to take photos while Mark moved slowly but mostly steadily across the roof. After much grunting and complaining about his lack of core strength, Mark eventually made it to the lip of the roof.

RING! RING!

It isn't exactly what you expect to hear hanging 50 metres off the deck, looking out over Victoria's western plains. But such is modern technology. Mark looked over at Richard in a moment of uncertainty, to which Richard simply said, "Well, aren't you going to answer it?" And that is how Mark came to be hanging off the edge of a cliff, suspended from his beloved fifi hook, with a phone glued to his ear.

After being delayed by the slightly inconvenient phone call from his landlord, Mark pulled the lip and moved up to the belay stance. Richard aided the roof in half the time, but unfortunately does not have the photos to prove it.

It was nearing two o'clock and there was a decision to be made. Should we complete the last pitch of rambly grade 18 climbing on mediocre rock and then face the difficult, long and complicated descent off the summit? Or should we abseil back to the base and get back to the MUMC pub night? It was an easy decision.

We dropped our rope and rappelled off. With five hours between us and the pub, we stashed our gear and made a move. The car was still there, and after making a seven-point turn, we were off. ☺





PHOTO BY STUART HOLLAWAY

A NEW ROUTE ON MT TASMAN

The Mountaineering report BY DALE THISTLETHWAITE

MUMC ENJOYED a fantastic summer season of alpine climbing this year, with eight OXOs alpine climbing in New Zealand and two venturing to North America for climbing and skiing.

The season started in early December when Stuart Hollaway and I headed to New Zealand. After several seasons of firm goals we went with no particular objective (although we were both secretly eyeing off various routes). The weather gods smiled on us, and during a beautiful trip to Pioneer Hut we climbed Halcombe, a rock route on Humdinger, and a big, demanding new route on Mt Tasman, *The Dream of the Dutch*

Sailors (NZ 4+), which goes up the proudest line on the Abel Janzoon face. The route was only marred by a terrifying descent down the Stevenson–Dick Couloir, which we both resolved never to repeat. A second trip into the hills saw us summit the Footstool; finishing unfinished business after a forced retreat in horrendous wind last season.

Stu then met up with MUMC's intrepid vice-president Richard Bassett-Smith for a protracted trip. They headed to the Grand Plateau and started their season together with a south-east ridge traverse of Dixon in challenging winds. They then made the first ascent of *Endeavour* (NZ 6-) on the *Resolution* buttress of Aoraki/Mt Cook.

The route runs 11 pitches (460 metres) up an arête left of *Resolution* with a crux of 18, and sustained climbing at 17.

Richard and Stu finished their season with a 30-hour traverse of Mt Tasman, climbing the Balfour Rib route to join the west ridge and spending sunset on the summit. On the descent, overtaken by cloud and spindrift, they opted to spend the night huddled in a plastic bag while 10 centimetres of snow fell around them. In the morning they continued their descent, reaching Pioneer Hut in the early afternoon and flying out.

Stu then met up with Sergio Cabrera, Denis Chew, David Bark and Ben Cebon for MUMC's annual summer climbing course. Arriving at Fox Glacier the team spent the first day packing and learning about logistics while waiting for flying weather. They flew in to Pioneer Hut the next day, attempting Pioneer Pass and doing some self-arrest practise. An unprecedented good weather spell over the next six days saw them climb Mt Halcombe, Grey Peak, Pioneer Peak, the south ridge of Haidinger, and a possible new rock route on the lower Pioneer Ridge, as well as cover crevasse rescue and avalanche theory. The following day they made the trip down to Chancellor Hut—stopping to climb in crevasses along the way—for their flight out to Fox Glacier. Day 10 wrapped up the course with transceiver practise, navigation and weather theory.

Richard and Mitchell Stephen (or 'The Presidential Alpinism Team' as they will henceforth be known) also flew into Pioneer Hut with the summer course participants. They too made good use of the excellent weather, climbing Grey Peak, Conway, Halcombe, Triad (which involved a long traverse and some less-than-stellar rock), Glacier Peak, and the south ridge of Haidinger. After the obligatory seventh day of rest, The Presidential Alpinism Team headed to Centennial Hut, making an ascent of *The Egg Memorial Route* (NZ 4-) that afternoon and returning to Pioneer in deep snow the next day. Finally they climbed a challenging rock route on Humdinger before heading for the Village via Chancellor. After several days plotting in Wanaka, our fearless leaders set their sights on Malte Brun and headed to Mt Cook Village. Malte Brun proved somewhat resistant and their attempted ascent involved difficult decision-making, an uncomfortable night in a random unoccupied tent, a fortuitous lift back to the village, and making it to the pub just before the kitchen closed.

As usual there are much better stories in all these trips than I can tell and hopefully some of MUMC's growing team of alpinists will rise to the challenge with articles of their own. Congratulations everyone on an awesome season.

– ALPINISM@MUMC.ORG.AU



PHOTO BY RYAN JUD

INTERSTATE ADVENTURES FOR BUSHWALKING

The Walking Sports report BY JAMES CRISTOFARO

THIS REPORT would span many pages if I went into detail about all the remarkable walking trips that have been run by MUMC members since the previous edition of *The Mountaineer*. It is great to have such an active and diverse group of leaders; this has enabled varied and interesting trips to a wide range of locations across Australia. I can't thank the leaders of these trips enough—without their tireless work, many club members wouldn't have such exciting things to do.

Without a doubt, every year a highlight is Midnight Ascent and 2012 certainly didn't disappoint. In an attempt to avoid the hut congestion and cooking problems of previous years, the trip was capped at 50 attendees and I could have taken a waiting list twice that! The trip was a classy affair and the black-tie theme was strictly enforced. This suited the exceptional calibre of food (and coffee martinis!) being passed around and consumed.

An article called 'West Coast Weeding' by Alex Thompson published in the August 2012 edition of *The Mountaineer* about helicopter-deployed bushwalking and

weeding along the remote South West coast of Tasmania created quite a lot of buzz. This resulted in seven MUMC members getting involved in the ongoing Sea Spurge Remote Area Teams (SPRATS) bushwalking-based conservation project over January this year. As a direct result of this interest, the co-ordinators of the project are currently in discussion with MUMC regarding possible long-term involvement.

Other **BUSHWALKING** trips through the later part of last year include frequent visits to the ever-popular high country, a couple of journeys along the coast in our favourite Wilsons Prom and a further flung coastal adventure to the Nadgee–Howe wilderness on the Victorian and New South Wales border.

The navigation sport **ROGAINING** was particularly active in the last few months of 2012. Bush Search and Rescue Victoria (BSAR) and the Victorian Rogaining Association (VRA) joined forces to run a 12-hour day–night rogaine followed by a BSAR training day, which many club members attended late last year. While some were just there for the rogaine, most members stayed over Sunday for the **SEARCH AND**

RESCUE training, which covered techniques including line searches, GPS usage and correct radio procedure. After attending this trip many of our members signed up to be a part of the BSAR volunteer program. Congratulations as well to Rodney Polkinghorne for becoming our Rogaining Deputy. If you have any queries about this exciting navigation sport, you can find Rodney in the clubrooms or email him at rogaine@mumc.org.au.

And a final note: I'm always happy to answer questions about bushwalking, rogaining, BSAR and the club in general, so either email me or come have a chat. I can usually be found skulking around the bushwalking gear store at Tuesday-night meetings.

– BUSHWALK@MUMC.ORG.AU

NOTABLE ASCENTS AND DESCENTS FOR MUMC ROPE SPORTS

The Rope Sports report
BY GAETAN RIOU

OUR CLIMBERS are heading out regularly, with trips going away almost every weekend. Mostly club members head to the classic Victorian crags like Arapiles, the Grampians and Werribee Gorge. Falcon's Lookout has seen its fair share of activity, with a few beginner-friendly daytrips.

The Cape Woolamai guidebook project is well on its way now, with Chelsea Brunckhorst and Stuart Hollaway running a few successful trips down to Phillip Island.

The end of last year saw a renewed interest in aid climbing, with a notable ascent of *Passport to Insanity* (20, M2) by Richard Bassett-Smith and Mark Patterson.

CLIMBING is still popular as demonstrated by the huge attendance on our most recent Arapiles beginner trip.

What's in store for the future? Regular gym sessions are running again—a good way for people to get a taste of climbing and find a climbing partner. Of course, we'll also try to get as many people as possible outdoors. For those eager to step up their game, Aaron Lowndes will run a Learn to Lead course, so keep an eye on our website (mumc.org.au).

For more information on rockclimbing email me at ropes@mumc.org.au or come have a chat—I am usually in the climbing gear store.

CANYONING There aren't many canyons in Victoria—as a result, canyoners tend to head to the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Once again a large group of OXOs invaded the Bluies over the New Year—many of them first-time canyoners—and they all



enjoyed the large array of canyons. I hope that trip becomes a tradition within the club. To be noted is a descent of the committing Kanangra Main Canyon by Alaster Meehan, James Cristofaro and Ben Webb.

For more information on canyoning with MUMC chat to Alaster in the clubrooms or email him at canyon@mumc.org.au.

CAVING Victoria has something to offer for underground dwelling types. MUMC

regularly visit Labertouche and Buchan. To keep things exciting, cavers often head interstate; our most recent interstate trip headed to Yarrangobilly in the Snowy Mountains, New South Wales. If you're interested in caving, keep an eye on the website; there are already a few beginner trips planned. For more information email Shannon Crack at caving@mumc.org.au or find him in the clubrooms.

– ROPES@MUMC.ORG.AU

HELI-KAYAKING OVERSEAS

The Paddling report BY ROSE BEAGLEY



Rose Beagley runs the final rapid on Deep Creek.

PHOTO ROSE BEAGLEY COLLECTION

THE MUMC BOATSHED has seen a busy few months since July 2012. As a result of all the rain last year, there were plenty of opportunities for some advanced paddling. Ben Webb and I both kayaked our first waterfall and ticked some long awaited boxes: the Jamieson River, Deep Creek, the Indi and the beautiful Eucumbene River in the New South Wales Alps. Ben also made use of the Snowy River environmental releases and paddled the harder upper section with LUMC paddler Jonathan Cawood.

The arrival of several keen beginners—Katy Mouritz, Elliott Smith, Betty Kao and Dani Curnow-Andreasen—boosted our paddling numbers dramatically. Since being introduced to the world of whitewater kayaking last year, they progressed to a point where they can now run their own beginner trips to the beach and down the Yarra River. With the support of other experienced MUMC paddlers and with the help of the friendly LUMC paddlers, they

should be able to get on harder stuff over the next year.

There were two highlights over the past few months: the Adventure Grant, where Ben and I headed to Tasmania for an epic bush bash in the South West Tasmanian wilderness to kayak the Denison River (see page 38); and over December, Mitchell Stephen joined Ben, Jonathan and me for a paddling roadtrip in the South Island of New Zealand, which included heli-kayaking (see page 26).

It is brilliant to see the paddling sector of MUMC active; and despite Ben Webb and myself both leaving the club for a little while (Ben to Queensland and myself to New Zealand) it looks like it will remain so with the arrival and return of many keen paddlers to the club.

– PADDLE@MUMC.ORG.AU

DEDICATED SNOWSHOEING TO REMOTER SUMMITS

The Snow Sports report BY RYAN JUDD

THE 2012 SKI SEASON saw the club on many weekend and long-weekend ski trips to various Victorian mountains, as well as a resurgence in dedicated snow-shoeing trips to some of the more remote summits. Snow camping, touring, cross-country racing and the occasional resort downhill day were all covered. Thanks to the Phil Law bequest, we purchased some more modern ski equipment and snow shoes, allowing these trips to cater to more people.

The clubrooms move in late 2012 left the club without a room to store our ski equipment in. This means extra work in the off season but also the opportunity to develop a more space-efficient storage system ready for the ski season ahead.

If you're interested in skiing at any level come and talk to me or one of the other skiers around the club for an idea of the trips that will be happening come winter. Hopefully there will be a range of beginner and intermediate trips to the High Plains, Hotham, Stirling and St Gwinear as well as more advanced or extended trips to Mt Feathertop and the New South Wales Main Range.

– SKI@MUMC.ORG.AU



PHOTO BY ALEX THOMPSON

MUMC HELPS ERADICATE WEEDS IN THE HIGH COUNTRY AND TASMANIA'S SOUTH WEST

The Conservation report BY JOSH HOWIE



PHOTO BY LEAH LANDROUGH

DURING LAST SPRING, several small groups of MUMC members participated in Regent Honeyeater Project tree planting weekends. These were all lots of fun, had a great community atmosphere and thousands of native seedlings were planted.

In January five members visited South West Tasmania to join the Sea Spurge Remote Area Teams (SPRATS). This is a conservation group who are trying to eradicate sea spurge from this remote coastline. Participants worked in teams, walking along an area of the coast for one to two weeks, and were boated or flown by helicopter or aeroplane in and out of their areas. This is a fantastic way to see some remote places and help the environment. And it looks like there are going to be more opportunities for MUMC to be involved again next year.

In February three club members helped the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) eradicate willows on the Bogong High Plains for three days, with all their food and accommodation paid for.

Over the coming months, there will be three nest-box weekends (checking nest boxes for gliders and other wildlife) with the Regent Honeyeater Project near Benalla. There will be trips in March, April and May, and this will be another great opportunity to see Sugar and Squirrel gliders up close.

A big thanks to Roberto Lay, Wen-Jie Yang and Alex Thompson for their enthusiasm in helping organise trips and being consistently involved in MUMC conservation activities over the past year.

– CONSERVATION@MUMC.ORG.AU

COMPETITIVE NATURE?

Join the fun by signing up for kayaking, rogaining or rockclimbing competitions

BY ROISIN BRISCOE

EVERYONE WHO JOINS this club joins for different reasons, whether it is to learn a specific sport or experience something new and exciting. One of the little known aspects of the club is the introduction to competition. At MUMC you can not only enjoy a sport for the experience, as many club members do, but you can also compete doing something you love.

There are three sports of note that cater to the competitive spirit. They are rockclimbing, rogaining and canoe polo. Each one tests your ability and re-enforces techniques learnt.

Firstly we will take a brief look at **CANOE POLO**. Canoe polo is similar to water polo, except it is played in kayaks. This is played in local swimming pools and occurs on Wednesday nights (with training on Thursday nights). MUMC has several teams from A to C levels, allowing people of all skill levels to participate.

Upcoming Canoe Polo Competitions

- Weekly games during the season
- Melbourne Invitational, 27–28 April

For more information about canoe polo visit the Australian Canoeing website, canoe.org.au, or visit the MUMC clubrooms and speak to Mitchell Stephen.

ROGAINING is a sport where you can show off your navigation prowess... or learn how to navigate, as was my first experience rogaining. Rogaining was first established by MUMC and has now blossomed into an international sport. It is similar to orienteering. Participants are given a map approximately one hour before the event start. On this map you will see checkpoints, and each checkpoint has points assigned to it. Some checkpoints have more points than others. Your team will then pick a route that hopefully earns the most points. At the end of every rogaine there is LOTS of food to make up for the six straight hours of walking (or running!). There are many different rogaining categories, and rogaines can run from six to 24 hours.

Upcoming Rogaining Events in Victoria

- Twelve-Hour Rogaine, 27 April
- Six-Hour Rogaine, 25 May
- Australian Rogaining Championships, 22 June
- Eight-Hour Rogaine, 20 July
- Victorian Rogaining Championships, 19 October

For more information about rogaining visit the Victorian Rogaining Association website, vra.rogaine.asn.au, or visit the MUMC clubrooms and speak to Rodney Polkinghorne.

Naturally I have left the best for last (I'm biased). The final way to scratch your competitive itch is to compete in **ROCKCLIMBING** competitions. These are conducted in indoor rockclimbing gyms. You can either compete in the speed category (simply whoever gets to the top fastest wins); compete in the lead category (whoever gets the highest wins); and finally there are also bouldering competitions.

Many of the bouldering competitions in Victoria are conducted in a 'pump fest' format. That means that you are given two hours to do as many problems as you can. The best eight of these (the grade of the climb translates to your points) are added up and make up your final score. You can often earn a flash point for completing a problem on the first attempt. The Victorian Intervarsity Climbing Competition that was formerly run by club member Chelsea Brunckhorst and Mac Brunckhorst (a former club member) is also run in this fashion. For both of these you do not need to select a category; your score will place you in one.

For the state and national competitions, first you compete in two heats. Your score is determined by how well you do in these heats. Once your score is totalled, the top eight climbers in each category progress into the final. Whoever gets the highest up the wall in the final is the winner. If there is a tie, then there is a count-back to the heats. If there is still a tie, then the time taken to climb is the decider.

Upcoming Climbing Competitions

- Victorian Leading Ladder Round 3, 1–14 April
- Victorian State Lead Titles, 4 May
- Australian Lead and Speed Nationals, 29–30 June
- Victorian Intervarsity Climbing Competition, August 2013
- Victorian Bouldering Series, late 2013

For more information about these competitions, visit the Sports Climbing Australia (SCA) website, sportclimbingaustralia.org.au, or visit the MUMC clubrooms and speak to me, Róisín Briscoe.

For those of you who are looking for a little competition, there is no excuse! Good luck to all in this year's competitions. ☺

The End of an Era

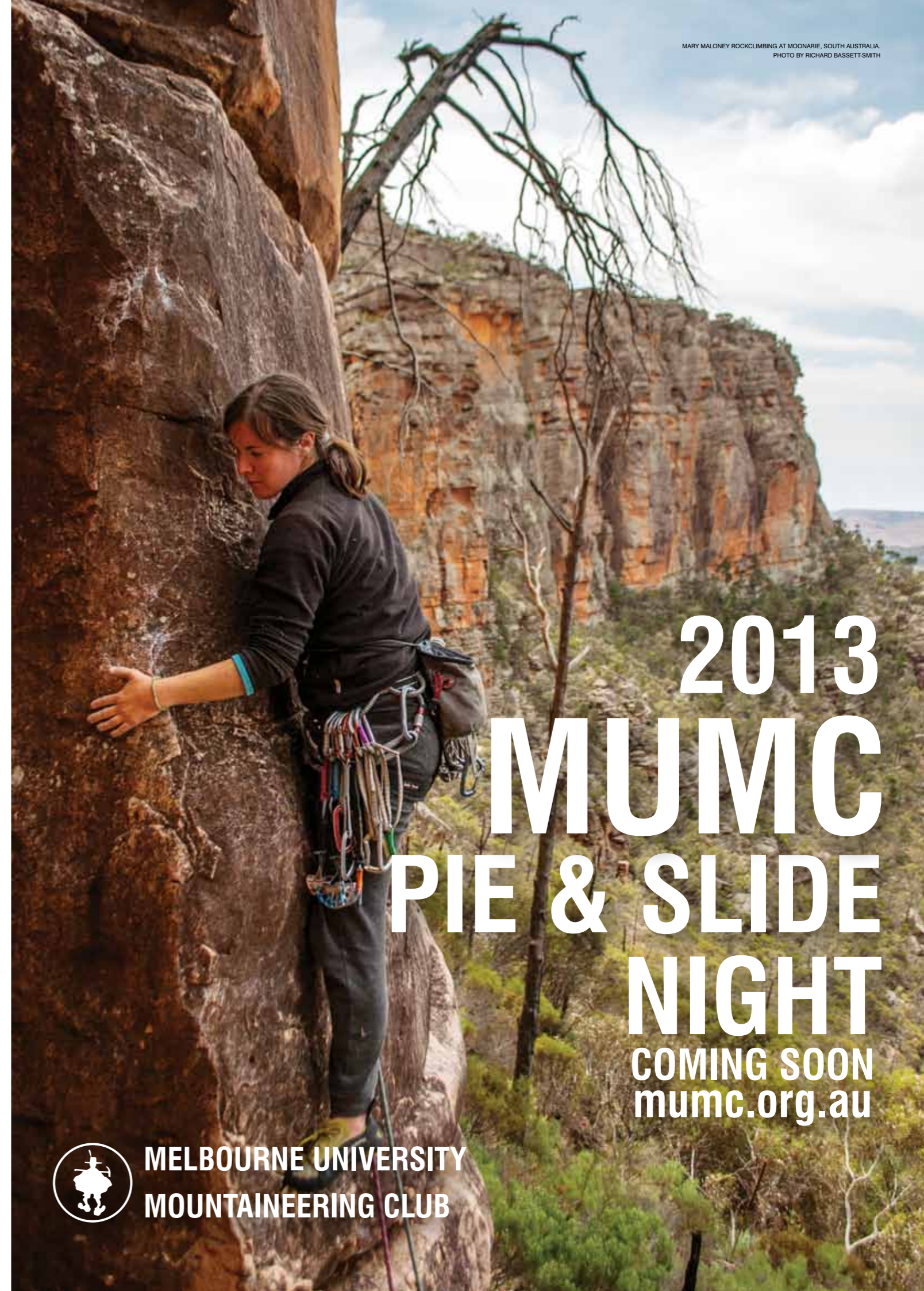


The old MUMC clubrooms north of the university oval.
PHOTO BY CHELSEA BRUNCKHORST

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY Mountaineering Club was created in 1944. Legend has it that early on, club gear was stored in a cupboard in the University of Melbourne's meteorology building. MUMC didn't have "clubrooms", and meetings were held at various locations on campus.

Over the course of the club's history, MUMC's storage facilities—later called "the clubrooms"—moved a number of times, to places including the "Aikmans Road" basement and later the green shed-like building near the cricket pavillion north of the university oval. The latter are the clubrooms current MUMC members are familiar with and have fond memories of.

In 2012, due to the building's planned demolition, MUMC's clubrooms moved to its current location at 169/171 Berkeley Street, just south of Grattan Street and the Faculty of Medicine. ☺

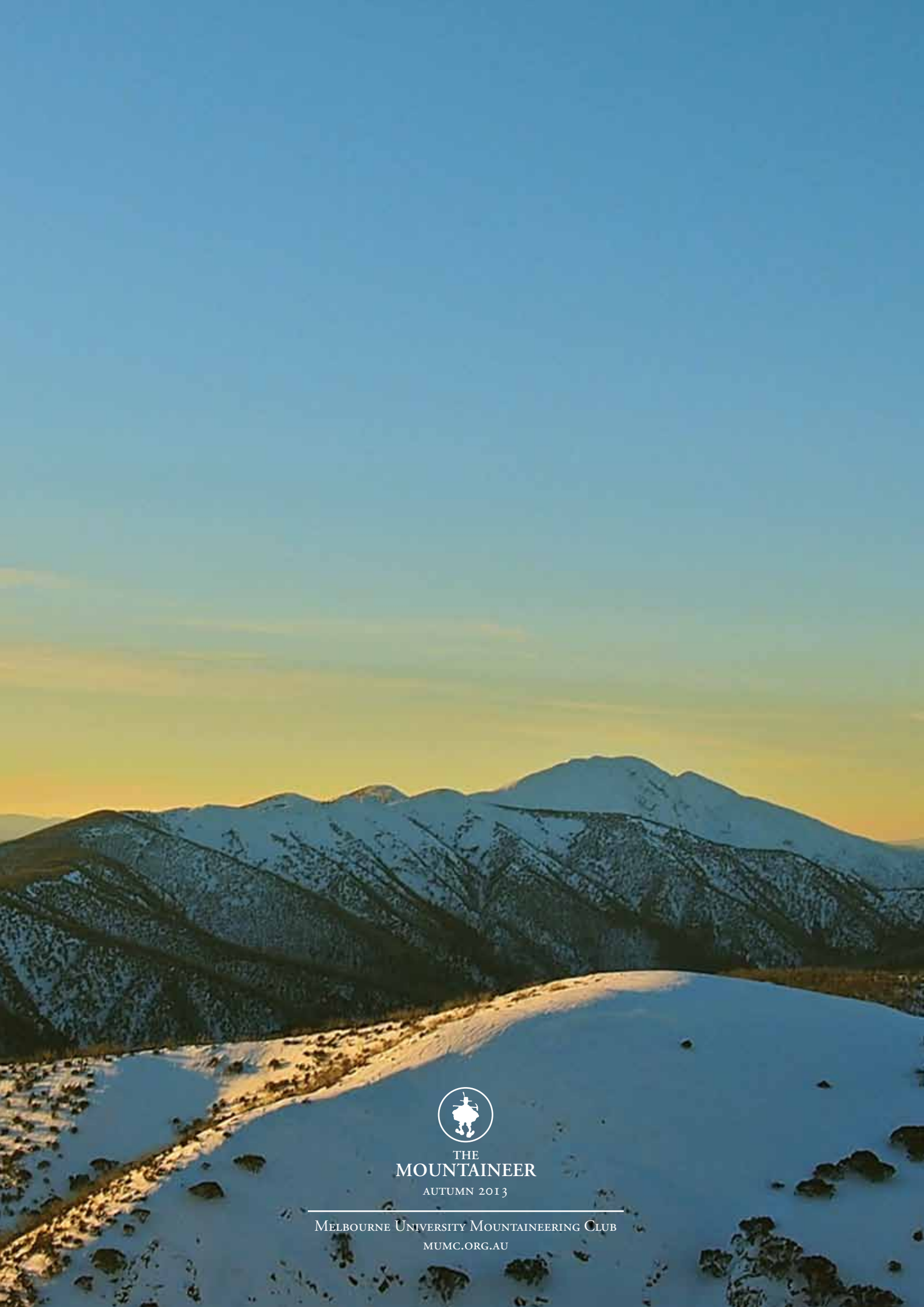


MARY MALONEY ROCKCLIMBING AT MOONARIE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.
PHOTO BY RICHARD BASSETT-SMITH

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