



THE
MOUNTAINEER
JUNE 2016



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

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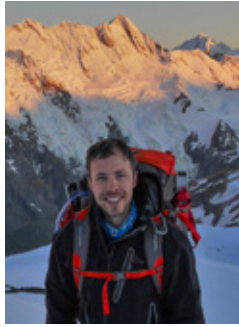
CONTENTS

4	President's Decree Daniel Cocker	22	Improving your climbing Gaetan Riou	42	5 Passes – Photo Essay Danielle Curnow-Andreason	53	A realistic alpine climbing trip to New Zealand Tom Patton
4	Editorial Anja Fuechtbauer	24	Bouldering Nationals Roisin Briscoe, Aaron Lowndes, Mona John von Freyend, Anja Fuechtbauer & Daniel Berton	43	Midnight Ascent 2015 Robert Springer	54	One longer Day Richard Bassett-Smith
5	Noteworthy			43	Rogaining:2015 Report Gina Snelling	57	Blue Lake ice climbing Luke Frisken
6	Shannon Crack: Honorary Life Membership Rodney Polkinghorne	26	A bit of Climbing, a bit of Surfing and lot of Faffing Andreas Fieber	44	Remando Juntos Ben Webb	60	Officer Report – Paddling Jack McCutchan
7	Pie and Slide Winners 2015			48	Officer Report – Conservation Sally Stead	60	Canoe Polo Emma Johnson
8	An Optimist's Adventure Jack McCutchan	29	Kanangra Main Daniel Berton	48	Dentist doesn't recommend Colgate Daniel Cocker	61	Cry me a River Anja Fuechtbauer
11	Expertise and Expedition Rodney Polkinghorne	31	Midnight Epic Robert Springer	49	Repair rather than replace Anon	61	A Storm hits Ben Webb
12	Vale Dale and Stu Mona John von Freyend	34	Officer Report – Walking Evie Clarke	49	Volunteer Toilet Cleaner Lingshu Liu	62	Mitta Mitta River Anja Fuechtbauer
14	Mountain Dorks & Chocolate Thiefs Stuart Hollaway & Dale Thistlethwaite	34	Faroe Islands Danielle Curnow-Andreason	50	A Hitchhikers Guide to the Glacier Richard Bassett-Smith	64	Kayaking in New Zealand Matt Dunwoodie
19	A road to a passionate life Roisin Briscoe	35	Feathertop Kite Flying Emma Johnson	53	Officer Report – Mountaineering Julian Goad	67	MUMC: Enthusiasm bordering on foolhardiness Hannah Kerber
21	Rock Dancer Thara Supasiti	36	Type 2.5 Fun Isabel Cornes			68	Andes to Amazon Ben Webb
22	Officer Report – Ropes Matt Dunwoodie	38	Some Questions and Wilderness Scrub Sytske Hillenius & James Cristofaro			70	Bucket Lunch Paul Webb
						71	H2 Low Paul Webb
						72	A Pirate's tale Evie Clarke & Anja Fuechtbauer
						73	Officer Report – Skiing Luke Frisken
						74	Lake Mountain – Beginners cross-country skiing trip Benedict Ong
						74	A Land Time Forgot Daniel Cocker
						75	Hotham to Falls Creek Luke Frisken

Cover:
Watercolour by Evie Clarke for the 50th anniversary of our beloved MUMC Hut on Mt Feathertop.
Inside Leaf:
Luke Frisken captured a jaw dropping sunset in the Arthurs Ranges in Tasmania, descending Federation Peak.

PRESIDENT'S DECREE

WORDS / Daniel Cocker



THIS HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING TERM to be president of MUMC. Unfortunately, our love of the environment is not always a reciprocal love, which has resulted in a difficult time personally and for the club. Over the summer break we farewelled two of our Honorary Life Members, Dale Thistlethwaite and Stuart Holloway. Dale and Stu have been the life of mountaineering in the club for the past two decades; both of them excited about getting members into the hills and facilitating members to experience this incredible terrain. Their loss will be strongly felt through many generations of MUMC members.

I personally will remember the previous summer when, thanks to the enthusiasm of Dale and Stu, they and twelve other OXOs filled Tasman Saddle Hut for twelve amazing days of mountaineering.

“Always be strong in the mountains”

-Stuart Holloway-

EDITORIAL

WORDS / Anja Fuechtbauer



WHAT A ROLLERCOASTER of a year lies behind us. During my three years at the club, the last was definitely the most emotional one. At least for me. The Mountaineer you are holding in your hands right now covers one-year worth of stories from April 2015 onwards. And a lot has happened during this year. Many stories fill this edition with the amazing adventures we had but also with the challenges we had to face, personally and within the club.

When news reached me that Richard Bassett-Smith had an accident at Mt Buffalo last winter, I didn't know where to turn first. Knowing he had to sit out the night in the gorge with god knows what injuries we were all shocked. To our relieve (and slight disbelief), he walked away from it. Bruised and scratched and with a neck brace for weeks but he did walk away. We had barely recovered from Richards accident when Sally, a new member to the club, also had an accident. For her though, the accident would impact the rest of her life. And barely the new year had settled in when bad news struck again. Twice. In German, if something tragic happens we call it “Unglück” – “un-luck”. Our two honorary life members Stu and Dale climbed their last climb on Mt. Silberhorn in New Zealand. Vale, friends.

And we all wondered what was happening? Was the club just lucky in years before and now tragedy struck again and again? Were we not on top of our game when it came to safety? The members had to sit down and review what was going on. Documents upon documents about safety in our sports, especially ropes, were reviewed, drafted, re-drafted and implemented. A huge number of hours were put into it and the members involved deserve to be acknowledged for their tremendous efforts in this important but often tedious task. Without them the club would have likely been faced a shut down.

Currently we are banned from running any trips related to rope

Stu and Dale have been amazing mentors to many of the current members and their advice will live on through the next generation of OXO mountaineers.

Making sound decisions in an ever changing environment does not conform to a manual. Safety and risk management in the outdoors is a subject that takes years of learning and experience to master. Modern society has an ever-growing expectation that all risk is removed; however, for the environments we choose to adventure into, this is not possible. Passing on the hard earned knowledge and experience, as well as a serious safety culture, is important for the next MUMC generation. Without this continual learning, the club couldn't exist. For those leading trips, it's about providing an opportunity to learn, giving to the next generation what was given to you, this is what Dale and Stu have been giving to the club for so long. For those on trips, it's about looking for and taking those opportunities, acquiring the skills and experience to be able to run the adventures you want to embark on and taking along the generation to follow.

sports. No climbing, canyoning or caving, and also no mountaineering with the club. As it happened though this actually gave a massive push to our other sports. The club took out the newly purchased rafts for trips down the Mitchell, Mitta Mitta and Snowy. Paddling was getting an influx of interested members as I hadn't seen it in my whole three years at MUMC. Our paddling officer Jack McCutchan made sure we kept going out, Emma Johnson and Rowan McCowan put together more than one active Canoe Polo team and the Webb brothers caused double trouble. Natalie Care and Gina Snelling brought Rogaining back into the spotlight just in time for this year's Rogaining World Championships in Alice Springs. After all, if you didn't know, MUMC has invented this sport so hopefully some members will make their way to the competition! Liv Grover-Johnson established a partnership with the Wild Magazine which enabled OXOs to test gear, write reviews and for the club to keep some of it for it's gear stores. The club rooms buzzed with activity and you could usually find someone there during lunch or in the evenings for a chat or a shared meal. It felt like the misfortune of the past year had brought us all closer together.

Unsure of where to turn when facing the task of putting this Mountaineer together, I browsed through many old editions. I read as many articles as I could find by Stu and Dale. It gave me closure to read those thoughtful, funny and adventurous tales. And for reference I still don't agree with Stu's definition of 'granny terrain' in the mountains, even though he really yelled it loudly at me.

It's been a pleasure working with the publications team this year! Great work and thanks to Don Teng, Imogen Stafford and Andrew Corson! I hope you will enjoy this edition of the Mountaineer! It's pretty awesome!

OXOs, you make the club what it is and your stories reflect the adventurous spirit, the friendships and our love for the outdoors at MUMC! I am already looking forward to your next submissions!

NOTEWORTHY

PHOTOGRAPHY /

Robert Springer, Natalie Care, Luke Frisken, Emma Johnson & Anja Fuechtbauer



The date for this year's
Midnight Ascent is the

19th August 2016

Save the date and make sure you register for the club's
favourite social night of the year.

The 2015 / 2016
Committee

President: Daniel Cocker

Vice-President:

Richard Bassett-Smith

Treasurer: David Heng

Secretary: Simin Ngan

Walking: Evie Clarke

Conservation: Sally Stead

Mountaineering: Julian Goad

Ropes: Matt Dunwoodie

Paddling: Jack McCutchan

Snow: Luke Frisken

Publications: Anja Fuechtbauer

General Members:

Mitchell Stephen & TJ Chuang



Competition Results:

Bouldering

Rogaining

VIC State Titles:

Open A Male: 2nd Aaron Lowndes

Open B Male: 3rd Don Teng

4th Thara Supasiti

12th Gaetan Riou

27th Luke Frisken

Open B Female: 3rd Anja Fuechtbauer

State Championship:

Overall and Mens:

2nd Joe Dawson &

Tom Stegink

Women's:

1st Natalie Care &

Gina Snelling (yay!!)

Down & Dirty

Natalie Care and Emma Johnson have taken our OXOs to a 'down and dirty' morning. Take a tennis ball and some down wash and enjoy the shennannigans!



You thought about a First Aid course? Or Swift Water Rescue? Have you heard about our Training Fund yet? Go to TeamApp > Documents > Application!

facebook

For our more informal communication around the clubrooms please make sure you join the OXO Club Rooms facebook page!

MELBOURNE CLIMBING SCHOOL
INTELLIGENT ROCK CLIMBING

Our Honorary Member of 2015, Aaron Lowndes, has founded the Melbourne Climbing School! Way to go!



Over the last year we have used Teamapp to:
- event announcements
- trip organisation & sign-ups
- online payment of memberships.
Thanks to Reilly Beacom for your support!

TEAM APP

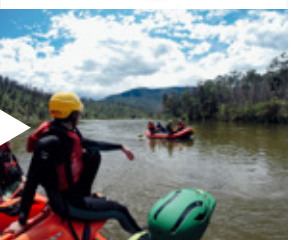


The MUMC Hut celebrates it's 50th anniversary!

We will hopefully have a dinner at the club rooms and maybe a trip up to the hut.



Constitution changes:
Rafting &
Canoe Polo are now official sports at MUMC!



SHANNON CRACK-HONORARY LIFE MEMBER 2016

WORDS / **Rodney Polkinghorne**
PHOTOGRAPHY / **Richard Bassett-Smith**

AT THE AGM IN 2015, the club awarded life membership to Shannon Crack. This recognises his service to caving at Victorian universities, an activity that he has run essentially on his own for the past decade.

Shannon has been a caver since he joined the Sydney University Speleological Society in 1997. He began exploring new caves four months after he started. In 2003, he moved to Melbourne and joined MUMC. He was appointed as caving convenor in 2004, and has held that position ever since, except for an 18 month interruption while he lived interstate.

Soon after he was appointed the other expert cavers in MUMC moved interstate, and until very recently he was the only member capable of leading caving trips at any university club in Melbourne. Shannon continued to run regular trips to Labertouche and Buchan, as well as more adventurous and exploratory trips

in New South Wales. Members of ROC and MBOC joined MUMC in order to go caving, and some of them became the current caving leaders at ROC after Shannon taught them to lead trips.

The experiences that attract people to the outdoors are a mixture of adventure and exploration. In the adventure sports that are currently fashionable in MUMC, climbing and paddling, participants mostly pay attention to themselves, and to the challenges that they face. The exploration sports, which are more about landscapes, caves and canyons than about the people visiting those environments, have been a bit neglected in comparison. But exploration is a strand the club's purpose, running back to its beginning. Shannon plays a vital role in continuing this strand in the present day.



SPONSORS

A special thanks to all our sponsors that have generously provided us with prizes for our Pie and Slide night last year!



PIE AND SLIDE 2015

The prices were plentiful, the projector pre-heated, the shoes polished for the dance off, and the pie's steaming in the oven. Our annual pie and slide night last year was a magnificent success thanks to Loren Leong's awesome organisation. The quality of photography outstanding and the banter plentiful. Great work on all submissions and looking forward seeing what you OXOs are up to this year!

Overall Winner -
Danielle Curnow-Andreason



Club Personality - Humour -
Loren Leong



Australian Landscape - Rob Springer



Nature - David Heng



Faces of the club - Mitchell Stephen



Photojournalism - Ben Webb



Overseas Landscape - Khorloo Batpurev



Club Activity - David Heng



Judges Choice - Anja Fuechtbauer



An Optimist's Adventure

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / Jack McCutchan

How does one best plan a trip to New Zealand? Arguably the most effective way is to book the cheapest ticket you can find - somewhat accidentally due to the airline's poor budget-priced website - and only then decide that yes, you will indeed go to New Zealand. Tomorrow. So began my least planned overseas venture to date.

The Devil's Recreation

IF YOU'VE EVER looked into the eyes of a cycle tourist, it can be well understood why it's not a club sport at MUMC. Seeing the vacuous depths of despair in a heavily-laden cyclist grinding their way up an endless hill is enough to give any sane person nightmares of pannier racks and legionnaire caps. However, the poor student within me, in true OXO fashion, decided that I would rather suffer up and over the mountain passes than pay for any kind of legitimate transport option on my holiday. Hence I arrived at Melbourne Airport with my bike in a big cardboard box, a sweet smile on my face and a subtle supportive foot at the check-in counter to bring my luggage down below the allowed 20kg.

Landing in Christchurch, I realised at once that I had made a huge mistake: it was pouring with rain outside. Something not factored into any plans hastily made in the last 24 hours. Funnily enough, not one of the advertisements I had come across had mentioned anything of this nature and my dreams of coasting past sun-bathed lakes and fields of summer flowers were suddenly disintegrating, much like my wet cardboard bike box as I wandered between hostels in the fading light. I quickly learnt that in peak season in New Zealand, you are indeed meant to book a room ahead of time.



My first day on the bike proved no more successful. Leaving my hostel roommates to continue another day in their fruitless search for cannabis, I headed out of Christchurch in heavy traffic with odds and ends throwing themselves off my pannier rack with frustrating regularity. I ended up camped next to a disused train track for the night, hoping to be hidden from the highway. In hindsight, I am now confident that the train line was not as disused as I had hoped. Being woken up by a freight train thundering past just metres from your bed – where its pressure wave will knock down your shanty shelter at each pass – does not get any less terrifying after the first few times.

“I observed the road in front of me ascending vertically up the hillside and into the clouds, a geographical feature evidently overlooked by Google Maps.”

A cursory glance at a map in the airport had confirmed my suspicion that there were indeed roads in New Zealand and that a small yellow line could be followed through Arthur's Pass, all the way to the legendary West Coast. About 70 km out of the city along the Canterbury Plains, I observed the road in front of me ascending vertically up the hillside and into the clouds, a geographical feature evidently overlooked by Google Maps. As I hunched over my handlebars and gritted my teeth, numerous tour buses and camper vans full of my cheering fans passed by. Blinded by the low cloud, the only indication of the hill ahead were the sounds of petrol-driven gears changing down, down, down; struggling more each time. With only a skinny pair of kayaker's legs to propel my own vehicle, I clawed away 200 metres at a time from the mountain, clutching at the stone wall next to me to catch my breath and swear at the poor decisions that had brought me to that moment. The hill was steep and my load heavy enough that while struggling to keep my front wheel in contact with the road, I, at one point, found myself lying on the tarmac still clipped into the pedals of a toppled bike, though luckily nobody was there to witness that act.

Sunny Fortunes

THANKFULLY, I AM blessed with a woefully poor memory. So by the time I was over that first pass (Porters Pass, 939m), I was blissfully unaware of the pain left behind on the other side, left along with the



dark mass of cloud I had been inside. Screaming the few lyrics of Fast Car that I knew, I experimented with speed wobbles as I flew down towards the sun-covered mountains that I had left home to find. Everyone I met told me that the West Coast enjoyed 300 days of rain each year. My reply each time was, doing the maths, there must be 66 days of sunshine this year, plenty enough for my three week trip with some left-overs for the locals to enjoy. From the moment I hit the sunshine on that first downhill, I only had one morning of drizzle for the remainder of my trip.

I woke in my hammock next to Lake Pearson, surprised by a Belgian describing the fearsome beast he had seen during the night, a possum. When I made it into the Kea-plagued town of Arthur's Pass, sporting some ridiculous sunburn lines from my cycling knicks, I wasted no time in sitting down and having a nap. The sun was shining, I had a downhill ride all the way to the coast ahead of me, life was good. With my new friend Jess, a fellow dirtbag in the cheapest bunkhouse in town, I spent the next day climbing up to nearby Avalanche Peak for a view of some of the glaciers and waterfalls of the Southern Alps. Back near town, a short walk past a warning sign had us swimming under the ice-cold Bridal Veil Falls, large enough to create its own roaring wind, blasting a piercing spray into our screaming faces.

The road going down to the coast well surpassed the limits of my bike's braking ability. Taking a line straight through the sky on a huge viaduct at 16% downhill gradient into tight bends, leaving me to shoot down, chased by cars, completely unable to stop. Jess would be hitch hiking to start walking the Copland Track at 10am in two days time, 280km down the coast. 'No worries', I said, having not yet recovered from the bruises on my rear caused by my previous days on the saddle. But, like clockwork, two gory days later at 10am, we stood at the trailhead, being made a meal of by hundreds of hungry sandflies.

The first day of the Copland Track follows a bright blue river up the Copland Valley towards Aoraki/Mt Cook, crossing numerous boulder-filled side creeks on vast single-person suspension bridges, leaving plenty of opportunity for your walking partner to be devoured by sandflies while they wait for you to cross and take happy snaps. The day ends 18km away at Welcome Flat Hut, conveniently positioned next to natural hot pools, where we sat all afternoon eating chips under a mosquito net. Brief encounters with the glacier-fed river on the other side of the hut provided a painfully refreshing contrast. In unsurprising style, I hadn't booked a bunk in the hut ahead for the night, so instead I found a comfy spot under a large rock nearby which

I shared with a colony of glow worms. Our second day took us about 12km further up the valley on the landslide-ravaged path to Douglas Rock Hut. Our first call of duty once we had arrived there was to hike up to touch a glacier, build a snowman and have a snowball fight with our friendly hut-mates. We all amassed outside in the wee hours of the morning, when the clouds finally parted for us to honour the vast walls of jagged mountains and hanging glaciers surrounding us, lit up against the milky way by the moonlight.

River Rescue

WHILE I HAD been gallivanting in the mountains, a river rescue course had been brewing up in Murchison at the New Zealand Kayak School. My deposit was paid, leaving me \$9 in my bank account and \$1.40 in loose change to survive until my bank transfer came through. I had only a few days to get 400 km back north. After a surprisingly comfortable night slept under the highway bridge across the Fox River, the Intercity bus refused to take my bike on board, so a quick bout of hitch hiking got me over the first mountain pass, then I was back on the bike again all too soon. Luckily, my credit card regained function in time to book a bus ticket the next day, so I cruised into Murchison in good style and good time, sheepishly claiming to be exhausted from all the cycling.

The two-day course (NZ Rescue 1) covered all the basics of rescue scenarios encountered kayaking on whitewater. Having heard great things about the Kayak School, I was not disappointed as we leapt into the Buller River to practice throw bag rescues for the morning, working on different techniques for swimming in moving water and for extracting others from the current. After covering the basic knots used on the river, we moved on to practicing boat-based rescues and moving efficiently on the banks to access victims. I was told, to my surprise, that my hasn't-failed-me-yet eskimo roll is "very Australian" (said with disdain), so I spent some extra time in the evening working on it with the instructors while I had the opportunity. Apparently, as good as you think your roll might be, there is always plenty of room for improvement.

On the second day of the course we focused on extractions, the process of getting a live victim or a boat unstuck when they have been trapped by the force of moving water against a solid object in the river. On the river, we do everything we can to avoid situations where an extraction is necessary. However, if the skills are ever required, they must be known extremely well so as to make an effective rescue as quickly as possible. After learning each technique, we were challenged to repeat the process as quickly as possible, highlighting how well-rehearsed these skills must be before getting on the water. At the conclusion of the course we were all well and truly knackered, but had all gained a lot of great information and practical experience from the course.

In the quiet town of Murchison, there really isn't much going on if you're not paddling. So once the course was over, a fellow Australian, Connie, and myself hung out, hitting up all the local sections of the Buller River. We formed a legendary partnership, with Connie's bomb-proof roll, her Corolla station wagon and a sweet hitch-hiking smile complimented by my confident river-reading and my begrudging willingness to run back along the road for car shuttles when required. My 21st birthday in New Zealand began with chocolate cake, was

full of paddling fun grade III whitewater and ended at the pub with a whole bunch of new friends from the kayak school.

To me the great joy of travelling is in the uncertainty that it offers. The trip that takes an unexpected turn - or the trip that never had a path to follow to begin with - is the trip worth taking. It's not just the places we visit, but also how we get there; it's not just what we do, but also who we do it with, and sometimes it's better not to know any of that until it's already happening.

FEATURE: Finding clear skies at Lake Pearson, between Arthurs and Porters Passes.
PREVIOUS PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Driftwood sculptures in Hokitika, West Coast.
TOP RIGHT: Douglas Rock Hut underneath the Sierra Range, Copland Track.
THIS PAGE:
BELOW TOP: Living the dirtbag dream in Murchison.
BELOW BOTTOM: Following the Copland River up to Douglas Rock Hut.



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EXPERTISE AND EXPEDITIONS

WORDS / **Rodney Polkinghorne**

MUMC IS ABOUT OUTDOOR SPORTS. We are the paddlers, the bushwalkers, the canyoneers, and other such teams. Each team practices skills, learns from literature and community, and knows how to run trips around Melbourne. And it can pass this expertise on to new participants, who eventually learn to lead other adventurers and to organise groups of their own.

Our teams grow and decline in a common pattern. A sport that runs occasional trips offers new challenges, drawing people into a team that runs a program of trips. Once there is a team, other people join and it grows. But eventually the program becomes routine, and routines do not engage adventurous people. Some of the team drift into other sports, others lose touch with the club, and the sport declines. Novel experiences become routine chores when members attain the basic expertise that sustains their team. Our teams can be permanent, but only if their programs provide these independent members with opportunities that are hard to find outside the club.

There are ways to keep a sport permanently interesting. You can do it in new settings - many cavers and bushwalkers gush about the appeal of exploration. Although other people have met the challenges, and you are capable of them, they are still new for you. I think this tends to appeal to older people. Young people, such as University club members, tend to maintain their enthusiasm by trying harder challenges where the outcome remains genuinely uncertain.

The variety of settings is limited by the available sites. We usually run trips a few hours drive from Melbourne, and rarely run expeditions further afield. These present great opportunities to progress in rock climbing, and many climbers stay involved in the club. On the other hand, Victoria has few opportunities for paddling and caving: there are a handful of grade IV and V rapids which rarely flow, and keen new cavers can explore Buchan in a year or two. Opportunities for real challenges are especially limited, because there are few places where it's safe to fail.

Some of us travel further. As I write this, Shannon is on an extended tour of Europe, with his daily cave scheduled for months in advance; Paul Webb just got back from the Franklin River; several members are fresh out of kayak school in New Zealand. They give time and expertise to support our development as a club, but we rarely give more than moral support to them. These people are unusual: most people leave the club when they can organise such expeditions on their own.

The exceptional sport, that goes on expeditions as a team, is mountaineering. There are no real mountains in Victoria; all the trips are expeditions overseas; but mountaineers stay active in the club longer than bushwalkers do. This is Stu and Dale's legacy, of course. But how did they run things differently?

An expedition is a big commitment. People imagine doing these things, but it takes a lot of initiative to pick one of them, and hope that other people will go with you instead of pursuing their own ideas.

The team has a big impact when it decides on a date and a place. Once an expedition is going to happen, the choice reduces to whether

you will be going or other people will, and many of us save our money and go. A way to commit to objectives together is a large part of what the club can offer independent members.

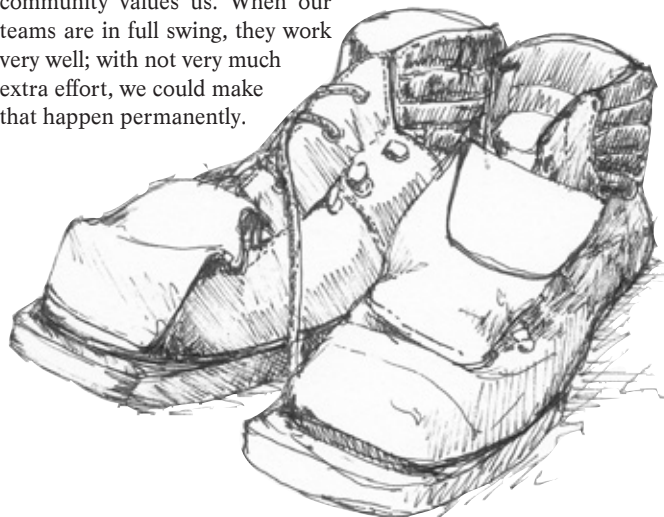
Expeditions are expensive. Airfares, excess luggage and hut fees add up. Time away costs a lot of money to begin with, and it's worth spending more money on hire cars, in order to save that time to pursue your objectives. No doubt we could save money by pooling our resources. We could keep club cars in Tasmania and in the South Island of New Zealand - we pay enough hire fees to buy a car each year - and save luggage fees by shipping a box of kayaks and mountaineering gear to Christchurch.

We can also save time away by paying the local experts to teach us. When you can learn a sport in Victoria, it's best to get out with your peers, make mistakes and recover from them, and figure it out yourself. Then you learn why the experts teach people to do it that way, and you develop independence instead of learning to rely on leaders. But this takes time. For sports that you can't do near home, it's best to accept that you can't master it the deep way the locals can, and pay them to push your capability as far as it can go.

On your own, in an unfamiliar activity and setting, it is hard to pick the instructors from the tour guides. The club can help by maintaining permanent relationships with a few overseas instructors who know what we're capable of and what we need to be taught next. Most professional instructors get sick of looking after tourists and would welcome a chance to teach people who want to learn.

The club is capable of teaching many things itself. Some things can't be taught around Melbourne, and volunteers won't spend their time away teaching beginners, so we have to pay professionals to teach those things. On the other hand, most of the courses on offer teach ropework that can be learnt at Arapiles, and paddling skills that can be practised in any pool. The club can help members prepare to spend their time away on things that they can't do here. If we maintain relationships with instructors, they can avoid teaching it all again.

If you talk to the people who organise rogaines, find lost people, or supervise the climbing industry, and ask how they got started, it becomes clear that they often started out with the club. The rest of them taught themselves. This is a big reason that the outdoor community values us. When our teams are in full swing, they work very well; with not very much extra effort, we could make that happen permanently.



Vale Dale and Stu

WORDS / **Mona John von Freyend**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Roisin Briscoe, Steve Chan, Anthony Cuskelly & Stuart Hollaway**

ON DECEMBER 29TH 2015 Dale Thistlethwaite and Stuart Hollaway fell while mountaineering on Mt Silberhorn in the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, New Zealand. Their deaths left the current and former club members who knew them in complete disbelief. We all know that mountaineering is dangerous and that many risks are not within your control; both Dale and Stu often repeated this sentiment. But somehow none of us would have ever thought that we would lose those two. They were highly experienced – Stu was one of very few Australians to become accredited as a New Zealand Mountain Guide, while Dale had many seasons of mountaineering in New Zealand and the rest of the world under her belt. Dale was only the second MUMC woman to complete the Grand Traverse of Aoraki/Mt Cook in 2012.

Stu and Dale loved the mountains; a love affair that started particularly early for Stu. Every year for the past 20+ years, Stu took the exact same flight to New Zealand as soon as the school year was over in December. He revelled in the possibility of spending his summers in the mountains; to climb, to guide, to seek out first ascents and to teach. Thanks to Stu's immense commitment and his willingness to run courses and teach aspiring climbers we now have a thriving community of mountaineers in the club.

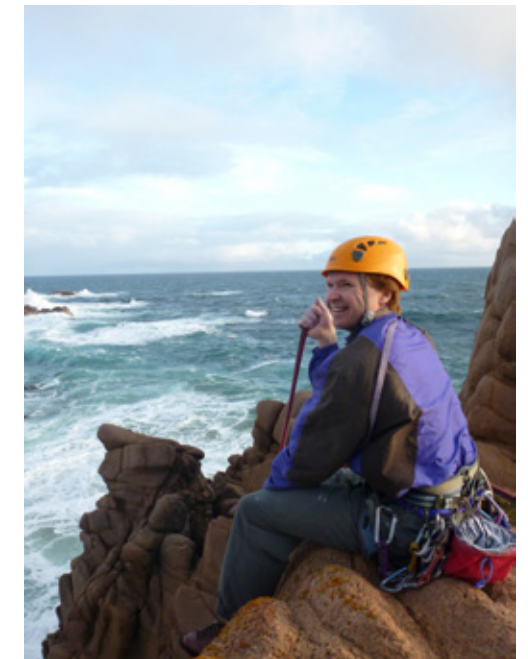
Stu was a passionate teacher and he never held back with his opinions; most of which were spot on. He had a very keen eye for people's abilities and fears. One of my best climbing weekends ever was on his first "falling off" course. He took a group of four of us to Arapiles to teach us that your personal trad limit should not be any different from your personal sport climbing limit once you have learned to fall on gear. I can get pretty scared on rock at the best of times, yet never have I felt so confident as when I was on that course. On that weekend, my personal best trad lead went up 5 grades, I learned to fall on gear and to trust my own abilities, all thanks to Stu's guidance.

Dale served as the club's Mountaineering convenor for 10 years and was awarded an Honorary Life membership in 2013 (Stu had been made a life member in 2009). When I first met Dale, she was still on the committee and we, the brand new committee of 2011, received quite a few bollockings from her for having meetings that were too long, having messy agendas and for generally not knowing how to do things right. To begin with, I actually thought Dale was a little scary. She had a scathing way of stating her opinions that was rather intimidating. Yet, over time, I learned to recognise how valuable the immense knowledge was that she had accumulated as an active club member since 2001. From then on I appreciated the guidance and advice she would provide. More often than not, she would step back and let people make their own mistakes: "sure, buy those expensive bits of gear, but they'll just get nicked again" – and indeed, they disappeared over time.

This ability to let people learn for themselves is a mark of every great teacher and at their heart that is what both Stu and Dale were: teachers and mentors first and foremost. But beyond the role of teachers Dale and Stu were so much more: they were great friends and role-models. To me they were an example of a successful relationship of two strong-minded outdoorsy people, who pursued their own passions, while remaining an incredibly strong team.

Both Dale and Stu had an insatiable lust for life and enjoyed themselves immensely. They loved adventures and travelling, just as much as good food and wine, books and a night on the couch at home. At a dinner party with Dale and Stu you could always be sure that the conversation would flow, jokes would be wacky (have you ever considered the bread enjoyment constant in relation to the bread anticipation quotient?) and good times would be had. They were both avid scuba divers and performed perfect impersonations of sea creatures that had you laughing on the floor.

Stu exploring Cape Woolamai



“Both Dale and Stu had an insatiable lust for life and enjoyed themselves immensely.”

*TOP LEFT: Summit portrait with Aoraki in the background. It is tradition rather than a good idea.
TOP RIGHT: Stu at Cape Woolamai.
BELOW: Dale belaying Stu during the Onisght or Flight weekend at Arapiles on Loudly Inferior (25).*

Despite her vivacious personality Dale actually hated big social gatherings and would mostly stay away from parties and large crowds. Which is why it meant all the more to us when she cut her mountaineering season of 2014/2015 short to attend Aaron's and my wedding. She and Richard slept at Christchurch airport to take an early morning flight to go pretty much straight to the ceremony. Dale then proceeded to dance into the early morning hours.

Dale loved great solo hikes and used to tell stories of how her food drops would contain little notes ("please don't eat this or I will be very hungry"). When she died, she was on a two week hiatus from walking the "Te Araroa" trail that from the Northernmost tip of New Zealand's South Island to the Southernmost tip. She had taken a short break to join Stu for some mountaineering. Dale started Te Araroa on November 3rd and had planned to finish by the end of January.

Stu loved the challenge in climbing and was always seeking a new adventure. He particularly favoured the spectacular cliffs of Cape Woolamai on Phillip Island, which are permanently exposed to the sea and weather and lashed by waves. I remember the way his face beamed with untamable joy after he had conquered the first ascent of "Hoist the Colours" (18) with his long-time climbing partner Lachie. Dale had organised a weekend there with friends to film the ascent as a birthday present for Stu.

It is impossible to capture exactly who Dale and Stu were in a short piece such as this. Which is why we can be glad to possess as valuable a resource such as The Mountaineer. Their writings in our club magazine over the years show their personalities, wit, dedication and just how much the outdoors meant to them.

Stu and Dale are, and will be for a long time, missed beyond belief. They were friends, mentors and role models to so many. But if there is one thing we can all learn from them and their passing, I think it is this: life is often short, enjoy the hell out of it while you can and always follow your passions with your whole heart.



CHOCOLATE THIEFS & MOUNTAIN DORKS

INTRODUCTION / **Anja Fuechtbauer**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Various as credited**

WHEN MITCH, LUKE AND DAN returned from a cross-country skiing trip with Dale and Stu from Falls Creek to Hotham last year, They told me that the whole trip was a little bit like papa bear and mama bear and the three young (and untamable) cubs. For some reason or the other, this description stuck in my head. Having been out there with Stu and Dale, I couldn't imagine a better image of them than a pair of blonde and ginger bears who teach you the ropes of life (and climbing, and wine), whack you over your head if you are being stupid but also would not hesitate to fight back against something or someone threatening their pack. It makes me smile just thinking about it.

As 'The Mountaineer' carries on our memories, I consider myself lucky to have had the chance to get to know Stu and Dale better through old stories and to remember them for their quirkiness, love for each other and the club, and for all the adventures they shared with us. Even though the time I got to spend with them was far too limited. I would like to invite all of you to come to the clubrooms and re-read those stories in old editions of the magazine and share a giggle or a tear before being inspired to go out on a trip! I've put together extracts from various articles that they wrote during their time at MUMC for you to enjoy.. Vale, friends. May the sun always shine on your beloved mountains.

Advice on 'Abseiling Anchors' by Stu

IT IS STANDARD ADVICE never to abseil of a single piece anchor. "Never abseil off a one-piece anchor." There. I said it. I hope I sounded convincing. Unfortunately, like stretching the truth, illicit drug use, sex before marriage and binge drinking it is something we are probably going to do, despite the advice of our elders and betters. I abseil off one piece anchors routinely. (The rest of my life is probably less exciting.)

Since you leave them behind, abseil anchors tend to be the cheapest thing you can kid yourself will do the job. There is, however, no point saving money if you are about to die (people with parents entering retirement might not want to leave this article around the house) so remember that it takes about a day to earn enough to buy a new camming device, or less if you use gear from the former soviet republics, whereas your funeral will cost thousands and severely curtail your earning potential. Whatever it takes, you must get good anchors.



ABOVE: Stu and his long-term climbing partner Lachie after the first ascent of 'Hoist the Colours' on Stu's 58th birthday. (Mona John von Freyend)



On 'New Zealand's Highest Mile. The Grand Traverse' Dale throws good chocolate manners overboard

I DON'T REMEMBER deciding that I wanted to do a Grand Traverse of Mt Cook. Stuart tells me that's how it happened and I don't doubt him — I would be lying if I said that most of the schemes ending with the two of us huddled in a bivvy stuffing ourselves with soup and couscous were not my idea (I'm an 'Ideas Man' that way).

[...] We trudged slowly through thigh-deep snow, sliding backwards heartbreakingly with every step.

I tend not to totally trust my instincts on mountains; several times I have been heard to exclaim in a fit of pique 'We're going to die!' only to have Stu say 'We're not going to die,' in much the same tone Arnie tells the child in Kindergarten Cop that his headache 'Is not a tumour!'

While resting after the abseil, during a shameful moment of weakness, bleary-eyed and moaning, I stole Stu's chocolate bar, stuffing it whole in my mouth — in a matter of minutes I was revived — and Stuart, bless him, was thrilled, while if positions had been reversed I can confidently say there would have been a death on that ridge for sure.

And when I offered to break trail through the knee-deep snow the rest of the way, Stu looked so grateful that my guilt at the chocolate theft began to diminish.

Talking big and acting small in 'Becoming a (mountaineering) hut wanker: the essential how to guide' by Dale

NATURALLY now you've decided to become a hut wanker you've spent quite a deal of time sitting around in the hut doing nothing. The fool proof antidote to this is to start talking up your plans for next season while you are still thoroughly engaged in pissing away this one. Don't worry about being called on this, there are boundless excellent excuses for why you haven't achieved (or indeed attempted) any of this season's ambitious plans, including, but not limited to:

- you couldn't find a suitable partner who could match your prodigious skill level. NB: Don't worry about offending your current partner, after all, you have no loyalties now — you're a hut wanker.
- The conditions/weather never quite coincided; an excuse with year's worth of value since it's often true.
- you have a chronic, ongoing and very manly injury — scars help.



TOP CENTRE: Dale & Stu at the MUMC 70th anniversary reception which Dale had organised. (Aaron Lowndes).

ABOVE: Dale at Dan Hearnden and Flick's wedding, April 2011. (Steve Chan).

'The long days' by Stu

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.

Dale is 'Cooking with Pride'

I BEGAN TO GET ANXIOUS that good weather wouldn't come, that we wouldn't get to climb. I repeatedly tried to tell myself, "you never intended to do this route and you don't need to, stop worrying about it."

But it wasn't working. I was becoming obsessed. I started to hear a tiny voice in the pit of my stomach say that if we didn't make it the season would be a waste, that this was why i had come here. It was irritating.

If I'd never thought I would climb Cook—which I hadn't—then I'd never in a million years thought I would try it, gain half the height of the mountain, fail, and then get up the next day and do it all again. But I had. I realised when I got back to the hut and was eating dinner that night that in the eyes of others this made me tough, but I wondered if perhaps I was just too stubborn to fail. Either way I was more proud of my determination to do it again, than actually getting to the top...strange.

'Priorities' by Stu

I FIND IT INCREDIBLE that people drink drive and even more so that some people do not wear seat-belts in motor-vehicles given their indisputable contribution to improving victim outcomes in collisions, but I do understand the practice of the Treble Cone bus drivers who reportedly don't wear seat belts on the mountain road; their hope is that they might be able to jump clear of the vehicle as no-one has yet survived a crash on that road. As a passenger I would rather have the driver well strapped in and motivated to drive a bit slower.

In some ways I could be seen as regularly encouraging people to cut corners but I am not really asking climbers to be unsafe. Try to focus on the real issues. Be willing to strip away useless extra redundancy or complex systems that don't actually solve problems. Think about what you are doing, where you are doing it and why you are doing it — understand systems rather than memorising rules; respond to the situation.

About nice things in 'The White Line' by Stu

IT WAS JUST the sort of trip you hope to make: fun, safe, great conditions giving both excellent climbing and pleasant skiing, and it is always nice to do new things.

'Endeavour' by Stu

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.

'Hic Sunt Dracones' by Stu

THE GREAT JOURNEYS — the source of memories and discoveries — are not necessarily the long ones, but rather the ones with uncertain outcomes. Adventure, like difficulty, is relative, but to have the thrill, and the risks, of the unknown, you have to head off the edge of the map. it is the essential nature of adventure: being willing to start without really knowing how it will end.

[...]

Ocean and earth; time and tide; stone and sand; alone and together: for the second time in my life, I had gone climbing for the day and was totally satisfied by one pitch.

[...]

It is one of the great things about exploring our sports: I drove 110 kms from Melbourne and went playing with my friends. With people that I love I had fun in the sun (and the water) and, a couple of times, we slipped over the edge—where the map was blank except for the note "Here there Be Monsters". We climbed 19 m, and there we found many wonderful things.

BELOW: Dale by Steve Chan

'The Magnus Ratio' by Dale

"You KNOW THE PROBLEM with that climb?"
"No"
"There wasn't enough fun"
"I thought it was fun"
"Oh yeah it was fun, but there wasn't enough fun to make up for all the horror. the fun to horror ratio wasn't good enough"
"I know what you mean... and I think we need a name for that ratio"
"A name?"
"Yeah a name, you know, like the Frobert's ratio"
"OK. let's call it the Magnus ratio"

So what had we learnt? We continued our discussion on the walk and noted some curious aspects of the Magnus ratio, defined as:

Fun experienced : Horror experienced

(I should make it clear that "fun" includes all feelings of joy and personal satisfaction resulting from climbing, not just fun in the traditional sense of the word).

The first observation is that a person's capacity to experience horror diminishes with their experience of it. In other words, the more horror you have experienced the less horrible any new horror will seem; the mind, when faced with horror, has a tendency to look to past horrors and say either "this is not as bad as the time we (insert past horror here)" or "I got through (insert past horror here), i can get through this." This also applies to fear.

The more you do things you fear (in this case climbing steep mixed routes in bad condition), the less fear you feel when attempting it again. However, this diminishing return rule doesn't appear to apply to fun. You don't have less fun because you've previously experienced fun. You don't become less excited about reaching a summit because you've reached other summits. The experience of fun appears to be a constant. This gives experienced mountaineers a Magnus ratio advantage — with experience the good bits continue to seem just as good, but the bad bits seem not as bad.



‘The Dream of the Dutch Sailor’ by Stu

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—*”

I remembered the dawns, crisp and blue; the crystal ice cascading through the cliffbands; 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 tranquility, 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.

**‘Dreaming of Lions’
by mountain dork Stu**

I AM A REAL MOUNTAIN DORK. I spend ages persuading people into attempting these routes, sometimes (generally, virtually always really) downplaying the difficulty and the effort and the uncertainty to get them to agree.

[...] And there was a bit of care required to manage the rope around broken terrain at the crest of the ridge, which culminated in a dreadful looking 60 m tower: it appeared to be a pile of unspeakable choss but actually provided quite fun climbing with sound rock and protection thanks to Felix’s cunning route finding.

**‘The last kind of Hunger’
by Stu**

FOR A BRIEF moment I grasp the stillness. I soar in elation.

I think: I commit therefore I am.

Desperately sliming the sloper at full extension, the world rushes back into sweaty focus. Pedaling feebly I fail to raise either foot. It is like crimping on a salmon. Fighting the inexorable slide as my fingers grease the dish, I abandon hope and throw wildly at the rail.

I hang on the ropes. I know: I am, but I am weak.

‘Malte Brun’ by Stu

WHEN WE REACH the cheval, there is no confusion: it is a ludicrous proposition. With considerable hesitation, I assume the position.

**‘Alpine Climbing’
by Dale**

ALPINE CLIMBING IS about personal achievement, no question. But at its best it’s also about so much more. It’s about human connection, it’s about choice and it’s about consequence.

While in life you often have to wait for the consequences of your choices to become completely apparent, mountaineering requires no such patience. The best mountaineers I’ve met are those that try constantly to be aware of the choices they make and the factors contributing to them, they resist allowing ignorance, personal ambition or investment to make choices for them, and when they do, they know.

‘Stu’s Guide to Black Ian’ by Stu

GREAT CRAG REALLY. You’re never more than two minutes from the car, or lunch, so I love it.

**Aiming for 700 points in 7 days
climbing in ‘Grosed Out’ by Dale**

WE COULD HAVE LEFT it at that but, being the beagle that I am, I needed a goal. I didn’t want to pick a particular route. Firstly, if you don’t get up the route, it can be a bit of a bummer for your holiday. Secondly it’d been so long since I last climbed at the Blues, and there are so many awesome routes, I didn’t want to spend the whole week desperately dogging one and miss out on all the others.

[...] Everything about this climb said ‘No’: too steep for me, moves too big, a large overhang about a quarter of the way up... but the line is a gorgeous orange streak cutting through the greyness right next to a beautiful arête—my toddler brain screamed ‘I want it! I want it! I want it!’

[...] When I lowered off I realised I was cold, but the thought of raising my arms above my head to put on my fleece brought tears to my eyes so I stayed cold—who knew it was possible to be this tired?

[...]I forfeited my opportunity in order to get away from the insane chatter of semi-naked climbing teenagers engaged in furious (and profane) flirting. As we headed around the corner to find a quieter spot for lunch, I realised with sadness that I’d gotten old.

[...] I looked carefully at Stu for signs of fatigue, convinced at this point that I was indeed married to a cyborg—he looked fine, smiling, awake, fine. How? I am ashamed to admit I was more than a bit annoyed.

[...] We talked canyoning, climbing and mutual friends in Canberra, but Stu was uncharacteristically quiet. It wasn’t until Andy directed a question to him that we realised he was completely asleep sitting upright on the couch and probably had been for some time. I did a little internal dance of satisfaction—he was finally worn out.

BELOW: Dale by Steve Chan



**Dale speaks about ‘Mountaineering’
in her Convenor Report**

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

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

... and on mortality

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

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

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

‘No Road Between’ by Stu

In confession we reveal ourselves as we fear we have been. In the act of faith we declare ourselves: as we are, as we hope to be. Between them we went looking for something new ...

[...] Someone has doubtless been here before. We like to think we are different... but everyone’s fingers sweat more when the holds slope. There is no road between fear and desire. I may struggle to hold the line, but sometimes, when climbing gets interesting, I glimpse myself as I’d like to be.

[...] It is nothing really, but suspended by the anchor I am nakedly exultant, happy to be, for a moment, more than my weakness.

**Stu on windows and clouds in
‘The Unseen Stone’**

NO MATTER HOW FIT OR SKILLED you are though, the most important thing in alpinism is the window.

You need time, weather, access and conditions to coincide before you have the chance to see whether you are good enough. Climbers can work hard to interpret the weather, predict conditions and put themselves in position to make a climb, but without the window there is nothing you can do.

The window is more valuable than money, more significant than skill, beautiful and fleeting as hope. By car, helicopter and on foot I chase these openings. I pressure people and pour out my earnings and sweat in pursuit of their promise, of the chance of experience and expression.

The pilots are only scared of what they can’t see, so they won’t fly in cloud as, in the mountains, the clouds tend to have rocks in them.

**...and on the decision of turning
around:**

IN THE NIGHT it is even warmer and the winds gust, blowing away our plans to try Aoraki (Mt. Cook). The mountains are closing down. Everyone is heading out. On the glacier we are sheltered and I feel taunted by the Gunbarrels. Perhaps. I look with lasting hunger then turn and move on. It is quite a fun day with friends in the mountains. The decision is more powerful than doubt, its rightness is embodied in our joy.

**Wisdoms in ‘Nowra.
The Cabin of Pleasure’
by Stu**

THE JEDI COUNCIL had the same shower curtains as us (see through you we can).

[...] Fear leads to sport climbing. Anger leads to aid climbing.

We have no idea what leads to caving.

[...] The grading in Nowra is somehow linked to the value of the Czech Zloty or another of the world’s defunct currencies.

**‘Chamonix Diary’
by Stu**

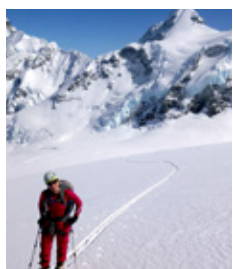
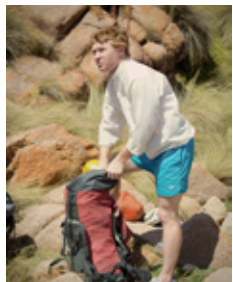
CHAMONIX ALPINISM; to succeed is good; to have style is everything.

Stu talks about abseiling in
‘Hail Gravity’

I SPEND A LOT OF MY TIME telling people to speed up their climbing, but approaching abseils I slow down. What I have written in bold is the check I apply at every rappel. I start at the top - at the anchor - and work down through the system to my back up and end knots. I say it and touch each element in turn. I do this every time and without disruption or distraction. I do it to my partners as well. Going fast is about not wasting time rather than skipping steps.

[...] Mick Hopkins - known to the club members for his paddling school on the Buller River - once wrote a book which featured 3 rules for instructing abseiling: you should be able to place and evaluate your own anchors; you should have had a personal friend killed abseiling; and you should hate abseiling.

[...] The most important equipment is on top of your neck. The most important technique is the discipline to focus it, every time.



LEFT: Dale completing a project after a long time trying - Stu is proud of her (Richard Bassett-Smith).
CENTRE DOWN: Various pictures from the Hollaway collection.

‘Good Climb, Long Day.’
by Stu

IT WAS A CLASSIC EXPRESSION of alpinism. Ugly and excellent, terrifying and exhilarating. Sliding on ice, body climbing, steepness and space. It took a long time to reach the safety of a belay.

[...] We had to get off this thing, so we had to get up. Technical bridging. Hard face moves. Rotten ice. No protection. No alternatives. It led to a desperate, improbable layback, which eventually enabled me to gain less traumatic ground. Beyond fear I found only the climbing. Previously I had found certainty, so it can't be that bad I guess.

[...] A sickly grey in the clouds reminded me it was getting late. Scratching for a belay in the ephemeral wasteland where shattered rock and honeycombed old snow come together in an embrace that is both powerless and destructive, I was terrified that, if Carys fell, the rope would trigger a barrage of rocks from the loose upper reaches of the groove system. I tied together 6 bits of junk, stood so I'd be hard to pull off, and suggested that Carys might want to put her prussiks on before starting. She belted it.

‘On the Origin of Species: OXO’
by Dale

WHEN LIV TOLD ME she couldn't imagine anyone better placed to contribute a nostalgic article on MUMC for the 70th anniversary edition, I immediately thought: "That's a fancy way of saying I'm old!" But soon, my far too healthy self-esteem kicked in and I realised what she was actually trying to say was that as an active member of fifteen years, I am an unrivalled expert on the taxonomy of the OXO; I am to filthy bushwalkers what Mendel was to peas; I am to geodesic dome dwellers what Watson and Crick were to the double helix - but more. As an MUMC honorary life member I am not just the scientist, but also the subject, a living embodiment of all things OXO; the mouthpiece, as it were, for a complex and proud, if perverse, species. I emerged from my musings triumphant, prepared to speak with ultimate authority - here goes nothing.

Stu is
‘Falling Upward’

CLIMBING IS INEVITABLY A STRUGGLE against gravity and thus we can only ever be temporarily successful. Defeat is certain however much we seek to sneak around the crux, so there is, perhaps, more fun to be had if we accept the fall.

[...] There is not a lot of glamour in the fearful, foot-pedaling fury of the frightened climber pawing pumped at the exit jugs before belly flopping onto a ledge, but I found once the whimpering subsided the endorphins remained. Similarly, I once captured the bedwetting essence of a frightened boy scout as I screeched like a shaved cat for 10 metres off the back wall of The Bluffs.

[...] This, above all, is what I seek climbing in the interplay of time, muscle, gravity, landscape and imagination - a state of grace: my mind fallen but body still climbing; movement outside of fear or time; falling upwards.

‘Snake Wrestling, Storms and One Long Day: Rescue in the Blueys’
by Stu

IT WAS MY IDEA. One of the ideas, which horrifies those around me. They call them crazy, ridiculous, appalling.

I think of them as visions. In the effort to test physical, mental and technical resources the conception of the possible is the crucial starting point. Usually, more worried about missing out than the thought of the suffering involved, my friends choose to come.

[...] We stamped heavily to make large, scary snake shooting vibrations but the snake showed no sign of backing off. "I don't think this one has read the books. Just what we need, a stupid snake."

[...] I was spent. Slumped at the base of a rockface in thick, waist deep scrub, the rain thundering dully on my hood. I didn't move. The stretcher was at a standstill, awaiting direction. We had lost the trail. Scouts had fanned out to find it. It certainly wasn't over here, I had established that, but I couldn't bring myself to circle through the thick undergrowth to keep searching. Others could find it.

A ROAD TO A PASSIONATE LIFE

WORDS / Roisin Briscoe



TWO OF MY FRIENDS DIED at the beginning of the year. On the 1st of January, I received a call from one of my friends, who was then in New Zealand mountaineering. I, of course, was in the middle of a nap - being the day after New Year's eve - and didn't answer. The caller ID came up as another friend's name. In my sluggish state it took me a moment to recall that she was also in the mountains, and this may be an important call - why else would she call when she was off having the time of her life?

So I woke myself up, and called her back, only to get my friend on the phone. He asked me how I was but sounded glum. I knew there was bad news before he told me, I just knew. Of all the people that an accident could have happened to, the last words I expected to come out of his mouth were 'Stuart and Dale have had an accident... they didn't make it'.

I'm pretty sure I was in shock. I have no idea what I said in response. I hung up on my friend, after offering no comfort to him, and proceeded to call two other friends who were shopping at the time. I told them as best I could.

I had to work the next day. I was grateful for the distraction, but I spent the whole day in denial. I wasn't going to believe it until the newspaper article said it was true. So I worked, while spending the whole day pressing the refresh button; waiting for the words to change from 'two Australians have died in a mountaineering accident' to 'Stuart Jason Hollaway and Dale Amanda Thistlethwaite have died in a mountaineering accident'. At around 2pm the change came. That was it, they were definitely dead.

‘I’ve seen the sparkle in Dale’s eye when she talked of having an adventure and recounted her engagement. I have had Stu bouncing up and down at the thought of seeing polar bears...’

I only tell you this story, because at that moment I felt that there was a large amount of passion that had just left the world. Stu and Dale were the most passionate people about everything. I've seen the sparkle in Dale's eye when she talked of having an adventure and recounted her engagement. I have had Stu bouncing up and down at the thought of seeing polar bears, and tell anyone who would listen how much of an adventure Cape Woolamai is.

Passion is the key. Passion is how we all need to lead our lives. I attended a talk by Monique Forestier and Simon Carter tonight and I saw another couple that live their lives passionately.

They spoke of their adventure and how they got there. And they spoke of hardships and challenges that would stop them from climbing. Each time an overwhelming factor would bring them back to the rock: their passion for their sport and their way of life.

They, in conjunction with World Expeditions, were offering a Sicily climbing trip, where Monique would coach you through your climbing and Simon would impart his wisdom behind the lens. At this point, my passion for climbing flared. As I listened to their talk, I kept coming back to, for me this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

I live my life by the book. I work two jobs to pay my mortgage, I am also a volunteer for two associations which takes up a lot of my spare time. In 2015, I had very little opportunity to climb myself and my sanity suffered for it. After Stu and Dale died, I knew I wanted to rebuild the passion I once had. I would be happy living with half the passion they had.

So I looked at the dates of this once-in-a-lifetime adventure. I would be returning from the trip less than six days before a large conference that I had to administrate. My heart sank. There is no way that I could go that close to my conference. I also know there will probably be no other experience like this.

See, I am not like Stu and Dale, I don't plan my own adventures and then make them happen. I need a little help and this trip was going to provide that. And then a thought crept in; a thought that I would normally disregard the second I thought it. I may not be able to go the whole time, but my superiors may agree to let me be away for part of the trip. So at the end of the session, I approached Monique, and asked if there would be a possibility to join the first part of the trip.

I can only describe Monique as very generous. I attended one of her seminars in 2014, at the Australian Climbing Festival. She had let me participate even though I had missed the deadline to register for her session. At the end, she had taken my details and agreed to conduct an assessment of my climbing and come up with a training schedule. The one catch was, I didn't live in NSW, so this would have to wait until I returned. I am yet to make it back, but I think this year I will make a point of it.

This time, her only response was 'can I have your email, and I'll see what I can find out'. Monique and Simon have no control over this of course, and it will be entirely up to World Expeditions if I could possibly join for part of the adventure.

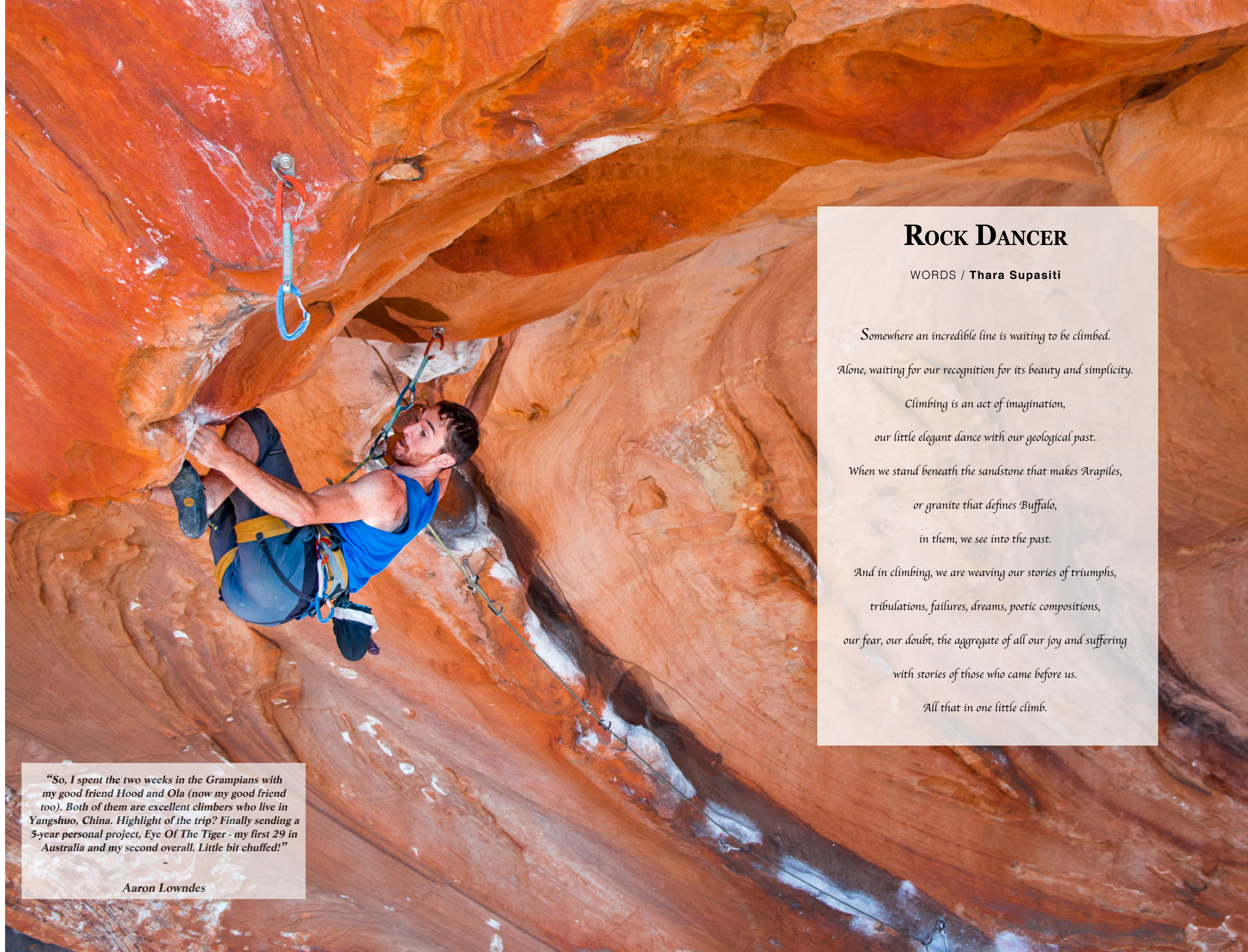
And then I have to get the annual leave at a very tenuous time. But isn't this what passion is about? Putting caution to the wind, forgetting work, forgetting everything else, just for getting on that trip? Will I regret having not asked World Expeditions for the leniency and the time off from my bosses? Absolutely. Will I regret going on the trip? Not a chance.

A bibliography of articles by Stu and Dale (I don't claim that's all of them...) which can be found in previous editions of the Mountaineer:

1997: 'Rock Climbing Report, '96 & '97' by Stu.
1999: 'Nowra, The Cabin of Pleasure', 'Good Climb, Long Day.' & 'Fox Glacier Neve. Mt Cook & Westland NP' by Stu.
2000: '08 Edition - 'Snake Wrestling, Storms and One Long Day: Rescue in the Blueys' by Stu.
2002: 'Chamonix Diary' by Stu.
2006: 'Mountaineering' by Dale, 'Abseiling Anchors' & 'Stu's guide to the Black Ian' by Stu.
2007: '02 Edition - 'The white line' & 'The unseen stone' by Stu;
'05 Edition - 'John Long's Research' by Stu.
2008: 'No road between', 'Heli Climb' and 'Escaping a climb' by Stu.
2009: 'Cooking with Pride' & 'Becoming a (mountaineering) hut wanker: the essential how to guide' by Dale, 'Priorities' & 'At world's end' by Stu.

2010: '02 Edition - 'Resolution' by Stu & 'The Magnus Ratio' by Dale;
'08 Edition - 'Hic Sunt Dracones' by Stu & 'Ski-Touring in NZ' by Dale.
2011: '02 Edition - 'Club Convenors Report' by Dale & 'Dreaming of Lions' by Stu;
'08 Edition - 'Malte Brun' by Stu.
2012: '02 Edition - 'MUMC completes a Grand Traverse of Mt Cook' by Dale & Path of Manolin and other Dinosaurs' by Stu
'08 Edition - 'The last kind of hunger' by Stu, 'New Zealand's highest Mile. Grand Traverse' & 'Grosed out' by Dale.
2013: 'The long days', 'Endeavour' & 'The Dream of the Dutch Sailor' by Stu.
2014: 'On the Origin of Species: OXO' by Dale, 'Falling Upwards' & 'Hail Gravity' by Stu.
2015: 'Escapade (not the pina colada song)' by Stu.

CLIMBING



ROCK DANCER

WORDS / **Thara Supasiti**

*Somewhere an incredible line is waiting to be climbed.
Alone, waiting for our recognition for its beauty and simplicity.
Climbing is an act of imagination,
our little elegant dance with our geological past.
When we stand beneath the sandstone that makes Arapiles,
or granite that defines Buffalo,
in them, we see into the past.
And in climbing, we are weaving our stories of triumphs,
tribulations, failures, dreams, poetic compositions,
our fear, our doubt, the aggregate of all our joy and suffering
with stories of those who came before us.
All that in one little climb.*

“So, I spent the two weeks in the Grampians with my good friend Hood and Ola (now my good friend too). Both of them are excellent climbers who live in Yangshuo, China. Highlight of the trip? Finally sending a 5-year personal project, Eye Of The Tiger - my first 29 in Australia and my second overall. Little bit chuffed!”

Aaron Lowndes

OFFICER REPORT

WORDS / **Matt Dunwoodie**



IT HAS TAKEN US A WHILE to get to this point. The last month, 12 months, 10 years, 70 years you say? The promise of returning rope sports is getting nearer and nearer. But first, it fills me with joy to have seen such a success during O-Week and up until now. Thank you David, Richard and everyone else involved in the speleo-box. It was quite the attraction at our O-Week stall.

Since then, weekly (and sometimes even bi-weekly) trips to Hardrock and Northside have kept climbing a valid interest in the club. On our first Friday, when we all arrived at Hardrock, we just about doubled the number of people at the gym. Woo Hoo!!

Over summer I spent two months in New Zealand doing a little bit of climbing, some more kayaking and a whole lot of caving. I hope, soon enough, I can share this experience with the club. New Zealand is a wonderful place.

Also over summer I went through all our gear, labelling ropes, organising racks, fixing shoes and repairing helmets. I am both astounded and purely exhausted seeing the amount of gear we have. For those interested, we have over 1.2km of rope tied up amongst canyoning,

caving and climbing. That is enough to reach from the clubrooms to the Royal Exhibition Building. If we had all the ropes that have been taken out of service over the last two years as well, we could make it all the way to Flinders Street Station.

Obviously rope sports are still pending the University's approval, but it pleases me greatly to tell you that progress has recently gotten a kick up the backside. Peter Martin, who Melbourne University Sport approached to provide recommendations, has handed over a list of recommendations to MUS. This was the first major hurdle to pass. We will likely need to implement most of these recommendations before we can get the green light.

The good news is that we have been working with Peter in order to develop both reasonable and flexible guidelines, but also to a level that Peter is happy to be confident that we can continue safe operation. There will be more structure and a clear progression of skills and leadership, which formalises our practices. They are all steps in the right direction.

The gear stores are patiently awaiting our return. They have been cleaned, dusted and reorganised so hopefully when the time comes there is no trouble getting the gear you want. But until then, come find me, say hey, introduce yourself and tell me what your favourite piece of gear is.

IMPROVING YOUR CLIMBING

WORDS / **Gaetan Riou**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Emilie Skramsett & Tanya Craig**

JUST STARTED CLIMBING? Have been climbing for a while, but don't seem to improve any more? This is just the article you need.

As you probably know, I am a keen rock climber and I spend a fair bit of my time reading about climbing and reading about training for climbing. So I've compiled a series of guidelines that I think would be useful for people who want to step up their climbing game. It's mostly aimed at people who haven't been climbing for a very long time, but I hope more experienced people will find something interesting as well.



I'll start with a reminder: you don't need to climb hard to enjoy climbing. Alex Lowe once said, "The best climber in the world is the one having the most fun!"

LEFT: The Author playing with movement while warming up.

Just climb

When you start climbing, the best thing you can do is climbing! Forget all about specific training tools or getting physically stronger. The most important thing is to learn how to move on vertical terrain and expose yourself to a variety of different movements. Try as many different climbs as you can. You will develop climbing-specific strength just by climbing itself.

Use your feet

Another important thing is to use your feet. This is valid for climbers of any level. A common misconception amongst beginners is to think that they need to do a pull up for every climbing move. However, if you think about it, your legs are a lot stronger than your arms. It makes sense to use them to push yourself up, instead of trying to use your arm to pull. Arms are mostly used to keep your balance on the wall. So next time you jump on a route, think about what to do with your feet. It's best to try to place your foot using your big toe, so you can move your foot around once placed on a foot hold. A common mistake when starting out is to use the ball of your foot, which will restrict the way you can move your body around.

A good exercise to improve your footwork is "silent feet": try to place your feet as silently as possible. It will force you to pay attention to them. Another good tip is to look at your foot till it is placed on the hold. Often people look down, find a foothold, move their feet and look up before their foot is actually on the hold, resulting in inaccurate foot placement.

Refine your movement on easier climbs

It's true that to progress in climbing, you need to try things that are hard for you. But you shouldn't be trying hard stuff all the time. You should still to spend a good amount of time doing routes that are easy-ish for you, so you can refine your movement. The idea is to try to climb those routes/problems as perfectly as possible and try to climb efficiently, i.e. climbing using as little energy as you can. It's a great way to improve your technique. When I started climbing, for some unknown reason, I thought I needed to be able to climb every 16 in the gym clean (climbing to the top without falling/resting on the rope), before I could try a 17. This funny idea allowed me to gain a good technical base. I had a big jump in climbing grade when I started trying harder stuff. Also, when trying things at your limit, you don't usually have time to think about your movement because you are too busy trying to hang on, thinking about how you pumped you are etc... so you tend to climb poorly. By trying hard things all the time, you are more likely to train bad habits.

Observe

To improve on your movement repertoire, spend some time observing better climbers, you know, the ones who seem to move effortlessly. Pay attention to the way they climb, especially if it is a route/boulder you are struggling with. Try to understand what they do differently to you. Don't hesitate to ask for tips; climbers are usually more than happy to give you "beta", i.e. explaining a move. The other important thing is to experiment: just because someone is climbing something a certain way doesn't mean it's the best way for you. Everyone is different, so try to find a method that works best for you.

'Read' the route

Learning to read a route/boulder is also very important. Before jumping on the wall, try to spend some time imagining how you are going to climb. Try to imagine how you are going to move, based on the holds you can see. Indoor climbing is usually great place to train route reading because holds are obvious. Reading rock is a bit more difficult, but with practice, you should be able to spot handholds and footholds. Chalk marks give away useful insight on well-travelled routes. Reading rock is a skill that takes years to refine - never stop practising.

Tackle your weak spot

One of the best ways to improve your climbing is to work on your weaknesses. Not very good at steep stuff, go try all the steep climbing you can find. Same goes, for slab, cracks etc... Your weakness could also be a type of hold, like a crimp or sloper. A good way to spot your weakness is to think about which climb/boulder you don't like: there is a good chance that's something you are not very good at! Or ask your friends - they might be able to point you in the right direction. When trying to improve something, you will most likely drop a few grades compared to what you usually climb, but that's all right. It will make you a better climber in the long run.

To get a bit more technical, your climbing performance is a combination of your technique, strength, power and endurance. The mental aspect of focus and determination is also a big part of it, but it's that's not really within the scope of this article. I encourage you to do some research if you think your head game is limiting you. There are plenty of resources out there.

Technique, strength, power, and endurance

Technique refers to your ability to perform a move the easiest way possible, see above for how to improve it. The limiting strength in climbing is usually your finger strength, especially when you start. Bouldering would be the best way to improve climbing specific strength. Can't hold a crimp? Go and spend some time trying a crimping boulder problem. (Don't over do it, it's really easy to injure your finger). Power relates to your ability to perform dynamic moves; again, bouldering is a great way to improve your power. Jump on those steep juggy climbs, it will help your power. Endurance is your ability to stay on the wall for a long time.

You are surely familiar with the 'pumped' feeling, when your fore-arm feels painful and you fall off because you can't hang on anymore. You can train endurance by climbing more on ropes, doing laps on routes that are relatively easy for you. For a more intense workout, try the 4x4 with boulder problems. Climb four problems back to back and do this four times, taking five to ten minutes rest between sets. Choose problems which are easy enough that you are just barely able to finish them by the end of the last set.

A couple of general guidelines:

If you fall off because you are too tired/too pumped, you most likely need to work on your endurance. If you fall off because you can't do a move, first try to figure out why you can't do the move. It could be that you don't know the best way to do the sequence, try experimenting first. It could also be that you are just not strong enough, but don't be too quick to blame strength or lack thereof.

Climbing specific exercises and injury prevention

As I said earlier, forget about training-specific tools like hangboards, campus boards and the like. A good rule of thumb is to have been climbing for about 2-3 years and be around grade 25/V5 level before considering climbing-specific tools. Tendons take a lots of time to grow, and you need to be strong enough to use these tools without injuring yourself.

If you want to do some extra exercises, focus on your core: it can never be strong enough. Also pushing exercise, like push ups. Climbers, unsurprisingly, do a lot of pulling, so it's important to balance out those pulling muscles to prevent injury. I'd recommend a couple of sessions per week, just do two to three sets of push ups at the end of your climbing session.

The best climbers are the ones who don't get injured, so listen to your body and stop when something hurts or feels wrong. It is better to miss a week of climbing because a finger or something feels a bit sore, than to get injured and not be able to climb for a few months.

Mix it up

A last tip if you think you are stuck at a plateau and you are not progressing any more: maybe it's time to mix up your climbing. Go bouldering for a while, or if you boulder all the time, get on a rope. Don't forget there are lots of different climbing disciplines and a change of scenery might be all you need to break through to a new level. The first time I spent my winter mostly bouldering, I was amazed at the small holds I could hold on to when I went back to climbing on rope.

If you are after more information look up these references :

- Google "The Making of a 'Rockprodigy'" and check rockclimberstrainingmanual.com from the Anderson's brother. Better get a copy of "The Rock Climber's Training Manual".
- "9 out of 10 Climbers Make the Same Mistakes," by Dave MacLeod.
- "Self Coached Climber," by Dan M. Hague & Douglas Hunter
- "Performance Rock Climbing" by Dale Goddard & Udo Neumann (German bouldering coach) - we have a copy in the library. A bit old, but still full of relevant information.



ABOVE: The author working on its weakness, roof climbing. Bouldering state title 2014.

BOULDERING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015

WORDS / **Various**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Anja Fuechtbauer & Aaron Lowndes**

When it was announced that the Australian Bouldering National Championships were to be held in our own backyard, in Ballarat, Sport Climbing Victoria pulled off a fantastic weekend. Many OXOs have helped out as volunteers to make this event happen. We tried to cover this event by bringing together the different experiences of Organiser, Wall Builder, Judge & Isolation Stewart, Participant and Spectator from the weekend.

Roisin Briscoe - Organiser

IMAGINE MY EXCITEMENT when the Sport Climbing Victoria (SCV) board decided they wanted to host the Nationals. This was going to be an amazing event and I had the opportunity to be a part of it! So we started planning. We were going to need sponsors, officials, volunteers... and most importantly, we were going to need a wall. This national title was not to be held in a gym as usual, it was going to be hosted in Ballarat, on a custom built wall. We started making arrangements for the engineer and to have the wall built. As the day drew nearer the wall was built, the volunteers were trained and the documents required were prepared. The stage was set, the boulders were set and now all we needed were the competitors! As they rocked up, the nervous tension rose. The competitors were nervous, but so were we. The competition began and SCV worked to ensure a seamless event over the next three days. I breathed a massive sigh of relief when the competition was concluded. The incredible team at SCV had done it! We had planned and organized an amazing event on a custom built wall.



Aaron Lowndes - Wall Builder



BUILDING THE WALL, well what can I say? It was a huge project, the largest project I've ever taken on, that's for sure. The actual building process started many weeks earlier than most people realise. First up: Ingemar, our trusty computer guy, had designed the wall in Sketch-up, and we were all impressed with the design so went ahead with it. Before construction could start, we had to get the engineering drawings finalised by an overseas engineer - after all, it's nice to know that the wall Ingemar had designed will actually stay up in real life. Cutting the plywood panels into shape was always going to take the longest, and getting them laser cut was out of our budget.

While the engineer was preparing the cutting plans, we counted the total number of 2.4m x 1.2m plywood sheets we would need, and had them delivered to Ingemar's house, where a double-garage was available for our use. Ingemar had purchased two work tables and a "Festool" (a kind of super-accurate skill-saw), I was recently out of work and willing and able to put in the time to cut the sheets out. The first day we met at Ingemar's place there were 5 of us, and we spent the day getting used to the plans - all 89 pages of them - making rigs to cut out strange 3D angles

from 0 to 67 degrees, getting to know the saw and generally making extremely slow progress. After that initial day the complicated cuts (thankfully all straight) were easier to manage, though with over 900 of them each requiring an accurate measurement, check, clamping-the-guide-in-place, check-again, turn-on-the-vacuum, make-the-cut, it understandably took a long time! Two weeks of 15-hour days later we discovered that we had estimated the amount of wood we would need down to the exact sheet - not one sheet too many, hurrah! In three loads, the sheets - now labelled with identifying numbers like "pl17-3" - were shipped off to Ballarat for painting.

As the painting started I tackled another 2 day job, using a table-saw to cut out over 200m of 2x4 beams into correct angles for joining the sheets together, a complicated business again made easier by the excellent engineering drawings. From there and with just 2 weeks to go a large contingent of volunteers descended on the Benjamin's residence in Ballarat to tackle the painting. One undercoat and two coats of colour (the correct colour for each panel) later, and we only had drilling, t-nutting, transport to the venue and assembly of the steel frame to go before we could put it up!

At the t-minus 5-day mark the marquee finally came in and was assembled by the construction company. Rumour has it this was the largest marquee in existence in Victoria! So with 5 days to go, many of the volunteers started sleeping at the Benjamin's place or in the marquee itself, and the working day increased to 18+ hours. We received the steel beams the same afternoon and started the process of figuring out how they assemble, while other volunteers continued drilling t-nut holes and putting in the t-nuts. The amount of OXOs coming to Ballarat to volunteer and help make this happen was fantastic! Finally, at the t-minus 2 day mark, the steel frame was up, most of the panels were on and the volumes were being finalised. While the setters commenced work, I put the finishing touches on the wall to make sure it looked good, and on the final evening the setters helped put the new mats into place. This was the most fun and most exhausting project I have ever taken on, and I would do it again in a heartbeat! Once again a huge thank-you goes out to all of the volunteers who put in countless hours and became part of something truly incredible.

Mona John von Freyend - Judge & Isolation Steward

I LOVE VOLUNTEERING at climbing events. Why? Well, it's fun. It's great to be able to soak up the atmosphere as part of the event team. It's challenging to be a judge and concentrate on the person climbing in front of you, making sure no little foot slip touches another hold. And it is so hard not to cheer the climbers on. Especially the Youth teams. You have to treat every climber the same and cheering them on could give an unfair advantage. So I usually end up cheering in my head only. For both the State and the National Bouldering Championships last year, I ended up also functioning as Isolation Steward. It's a great job. You have the responsibility of sending out all the climbers at the right time in the Finals. It's pretty exciting, as timing is crucial. A lapse in concentration or a small mistake by me could derail the whole thing. Being isolation steward also means you get to hang with the best climbers while they wait for the routes to be set and the Finals round to start. What could be better than being around people like Andrea Ha, Claire Kassay and James Kassay while they wait, chat and prepare for the Finals?!



Anja Fuechtbauer - Participant in Open B Female



WHEN MONA WALKED UP TO ME with a sheep-ish smile during the Victorian State Titles at Northside, I had no idea she'd tell me I made it to 3rd place, and that would entitle me to compete in the Nationals. Even though nobody else from MUMC competed, I gave it a crack. At least a day spent with friends is a good day, right?! During the warm-up phase for the competition for Open B female, all those strong looking women were doing push ups and other serious warm-up exercises. I thought, "I'll just go over there and ... stretch." I didn't take the day too seriously and enjoyed the open format of the competition. You got to climb seven problems in two hours and the fewer attempts you have on a climb, the better you are ranked. Unfortunately, the first problem I tried, the green one, I kept getting stuck on the last move. Should have just gotten my left foot higher. Hindsight is always a great thing. After two or three attempts, I moved on to the other problems. More doable. I flashed some and played around a bit longer on others. Always helpful being able to watch my competitors and learn from their successes and mistakes. I rotated through, being cocky on a climb that I could flash with some campussing (when the spectators thought I was stuck because I did the sequence different) and flew past a dyno start a couple of times on another, before finding

a less dynamic way to do it. The routes set were well done for our category and I enjoyed the different styles that all climbs offered. In the end I tried myself on that green one again. Nope. Not only time was running out but also skin. After a failed attempt I managed to rip a callus on my finger which didn't stop me from trying one last time. But no more energy. I ended up making it to 13 out of 18, which is pretty sweet. Would I do it again? Hell, yeah!

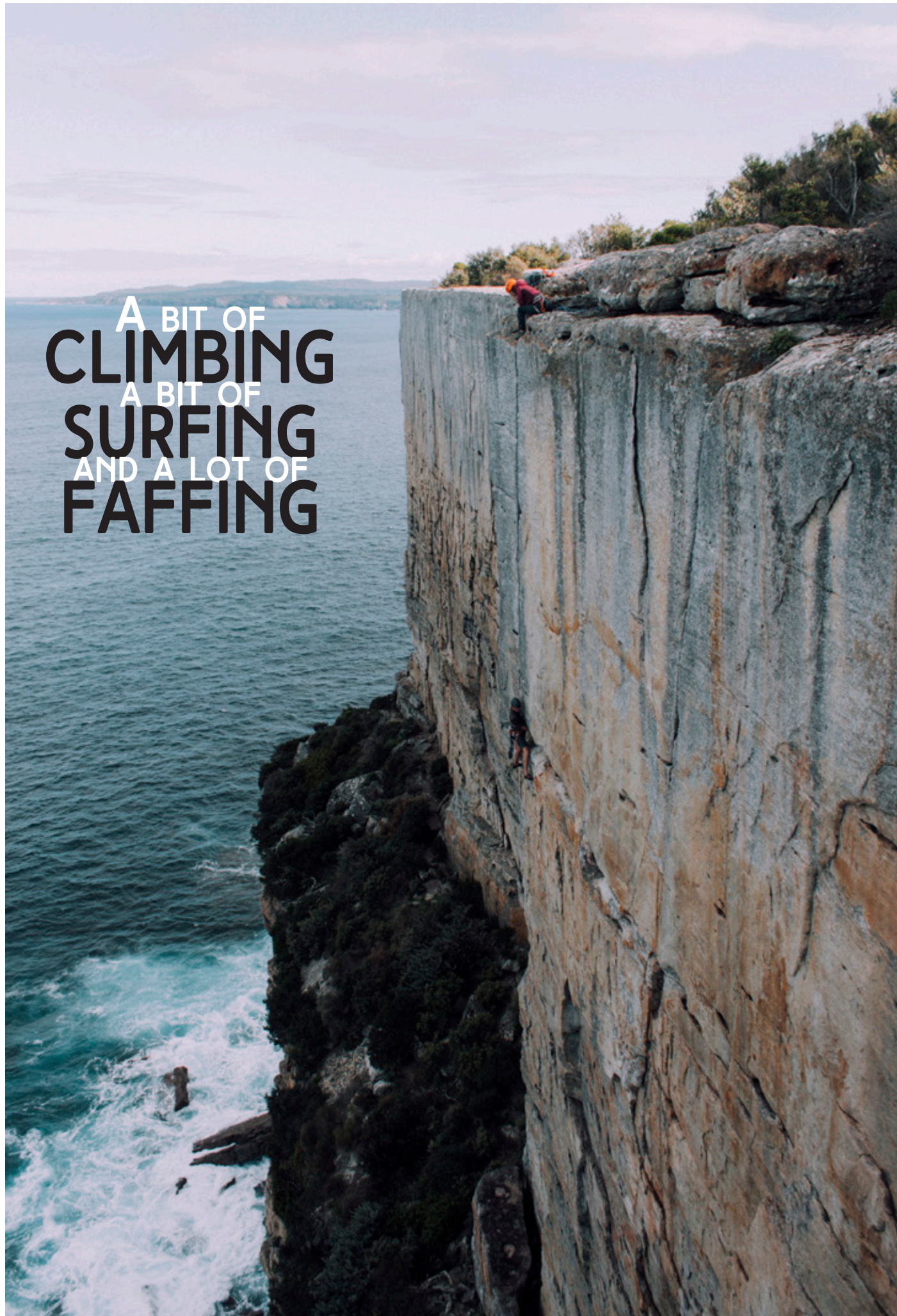
Daniel Berton - Spectator

THE OPEN-A FINALS COMPETITION was held on Saturday. It was amazing to see Australia's top boulderers test their skill on some of the more difficult (seemingly impossible) problems, sometimes making me wonder how they could possibly hold on to such tiny sloping holds in the most awkward and strained positions.

Sunday was a series of BoulderJams for the Youth, Open-B and Masters categories. Unlike Open-A finals where each competitor is isolated, in a BoulderJam, all the competitors can mingle whilst they compete and have two hours to complete a collection of problems in whichever order they like. Certainly no dull moments for the spectators, as each climb had a line of competitors waiting to jump on and try their luck. A big thanks to the volunteers and competitors who made it such a great weekend.



Here are the final stats:	175 home cooked meal deliveries	248 registrations
89 pages of engineering drawings	340 cans of diet coke	17 hours of live stream
4 tonnes of ply	4 mega volumes	4 terabytes of film footage
3 saw blades	400 metres of tape	336 score sheets
900 angle cuts in plywood	860 holds	400 computer documents
72 litres of paint	40 volumes	7 iphone cables
10,000 T-nuts holes	210 sqm of wall	1.5km of cables
(24 drill bits)	230 sqm of mats	13 sponsors
600 sqm of marquee	500 spectator seats	59 facebook updates
4 Tonnes of steel frame	78 problems	19700 timelapse photos
1000 bolts	2 reams of paper	Over 4400 hours of volunteer labour
10,000 t-nuts	1 printer cartridge	Thousands of emails, texts and messenger conversations!!
50,000 hits of the hammer	1125 paper clips	
	20 hours of DJing	



WORDS / **Andreas Fieber**
PHOTOGRAPHY / **Anja Fuechtbauer & Andreas Fieber**

A road trip along the East Coast

HALF A YEAR. Just over half a year. That's how much time has passed since we (that is Egil, Liv, handsome Jack, young Jack, Anja, David and I) set out on a road trip up the East Coast. The plan was.... Well, we really had no plan apart from following the sun, escape the Melbourne winter and have some fun. We had packed climbing gear, strapped surfboards onto the cars and headed up north to explore different climbing crags, catch waves and enjoy the simple life with a few good friends - that was the plan really.

The first stop on our trip was Nowra, a sport-climbing heaven for all climbers from experienced fuffers to professional one-arm-in-the-chalk-bag photo posers. The climbing days started with a short paddle across the river from the campsite, and then it was just a matter of turning the guide book to a random page and finding a 2 or 3 star route (I don't think many routes had less than that, at least not the ones we climbed).

One afternoon, we were climbing on some routes with a perfect view of a slightly more difficult route across a roof (Potato Junkies, grade 24). Two guys were giving it their best shot and took some big falls. Anja however thought that they should "try harder!" - this quote was to become slightly over-used by the end of the trip, especially during occasions when one of us was struggling on a particular move, especially when that someone was Anja. After a long day of climbing, we collected some firewood and enjoyed the rest of the evening with cold beer and a BBQ, planning the next part of the trip - Point Perpendicular.

Why do we love climbing? A simple question with many answers. However, a few days on the sea cliffs at Point Perpendicular will explain the majority of reasons. As climbers, we all have some sort of love-hate relationship with the feeling of exposure. Either way, trad-climbing on the sea cliffs at Point Perpendicular is sufficiently exposed to get the adrenaline rushing through your body. When you step out onto a ledge, see nothing but blue around (be it sky or water) and hear the waves crashing against the rock 30 metres below, you know the margin for error is small. But one move at a time, a few gear placements later and the top of the cliff is in sight again. A high-light must have undoubtedly been the moment when a few humpback whales decided to swim near the cliffs. For a moment the climbing became secondary and we all just watched the whales glide by. By the end, it was difficult to miss the big smiles on everyone's face.

Since we did not have a plan per se, it didn't take long for the group to decide to spend another day of climbing here. A quiet campsite in a gumtree forest, with private beach access, was quickly found. A few kangaroos made sure we set up the tents and hammocks correctly and before we knew it, the campfire was warming us. The night was freezing, but the crystal clear Milky Way made up for it. I asked around if anybody wanted to go for a night swim in the ocean, despite the cold. Apart from blank looks, there wasn't much of a response. When I came back telling everyone about bioluminescent algae that light up

when you swim through the water, the response changed and it didn't take long until Anja and David decided to check for themselves. It's amazing how "grown up" people can find simple things, like bioluminescent algae, hilarious and anyone who would have seen us that evening on the beach must have thought we were crazy (enough said).

The next day, we went to a different part of the cliffs. The great thing about climbing is that it allows you to go to locations that are usually not rated #1 on tripadvisor. Smelly bird caves, too small for the average person, definitely belong into this category. Following the theme of "top-rope tough guys", a few of us decided to set up a top rope on a grade 23, thinking that if the guidebook gives a route 3 stars, there is probably a reason for it. And perfect it was - until the infamous bird caves called for some creative yoga positions and cursing sound effects - imagine the awkward traverse of the Bard at Arapiles, only worse. A few technical moves later, and the top was almost reached. Emphasis on almost. In soccer, there is often talk about those famous last few centimetres that were missing for a goal. Well, that sums up this route as well... The final crack not only resulted

in even more cursing and extended resting-in-harness-periods but also took a blood toll on the hands. But up was the only way and eventually everyone who attempted the route climbed to the top (the help of belayers should not be underestimated in this joint team effort - thanks again to top rope tough guys for inspiration). With the hands in desperate

need for some rest, the climbing gear was swapped for a wet suit and surfing we went. Well... after the short drive. It only took a 978 km and the quick drive to Byron Bay was done - that we could have also casually driven from Berlin to Paris is just a small side note.

What I had heard from Byron Bay, it was pretty much the Arapiles of surfing. Given our surfing progress to date, we felt like we didn't quite deserve to stay in Byron (not like we really wanted to anyways) and decided to stay one bay further south. By this point in time in the trip, we had advanced to real master-fuffers. Breakfast times moved further and further back by the day (also due to fairly rainy weather) and the rest times between surf sessions increased - signs that the holiday was starting to have positive effects. The rest of the time in Byron can be summarised as follows: A turkey stole our bread, young Jack's board lost its tip (again), making fire from sticks and rock is an urban myth and results in more hand blisters than sparks, cheese and baked beans toasties on BBQs taste great even after having done nothing and some of us actually managed to catch a few waves.

At one of the many wild camp spots in the middle of nowhere, this one had a particularly picturesque setting on a small riverbank, we decided to have the first official camp olympics of dangerous and non-recommended sports. Disciplines included stone skipping, a hit-the-flying-stone-with-a-small-stone throwing competition, Swiss army knife can opening races, and a log sawing competition. The Olympic committee still cannot confirm some of the results, but a good laugh was guaranteed for the rest of the night, despite sub-zero temperatures and ice forming inside the tents.

Some things we did during the trip were slightly stupid, others childish and then there was taking surfboards for a day-walk along the beach in Yuraygir National Park, just north of Coffs Harbour. To be honest, thinking back now, I'm not entirely sure how or why we decided to do this, but I am confident that at the time it was definitely the right thing to do. We packed our 60-70 litre backpacks with all essential gear for an extended two day expedition - including camping chairs (the comfy ones), beers, wetsuits and, last but not least, surfboards. As is the case for every big expedition attempting the unthinkable, we had to make some sacrifices, meaning that tents, hiking shoes and other non-essential items had to be left in the cars.

The first mission was to cross a river estuary. Luckily, a friendly Canadian campsite warden let us borrow canoes so we could safely cross the river (at this point we knew we had to cross the river again on the return trip, but we would worry about that later). Barefoot we walked up the beach for the day, passing beautiful bays and at lunch a spontaneous surf session was compulsory for some - good thing we'd packed the boards. Later, we found an idyllic camp spot in a private bay. Another round of sunset surfing was initiated which resulted in handsome Jack being worried about everyone else making it back to shore safely (while he sat in his hammock with a beer watching) and Egil, Anja and David laughing hysterically after finally reaching the beach again. It didn't take long for the fire to be lit to warm up again.

The morning after was definitely one to remember.

While lying in our sleeping bags, waking up to a perfect sunrise, several dolphins were playing in the waves, not more than a couple of metres away from the shore.

Young Jack chased down the beach to surf with them, but forgot his wetsuit in all the excitement. Eventually we back-tracked our steps along the beach and returned to the river estuary. I should have mentioned earlier, that a friendly elderly tourist offered to paddle the canoe back after our last crossing the day before. The canoe was safely back at the campsite on the other side.

Hence, someone had to swim. After none of the gentlemen on the trip offered to get their swimming trunks wet, Anja ended up paddling across on her board and getting the canoe. While us guys were busy observing the hundreds of little crabs on the sand, we made a crucial mistake - we let Liv be the first passenger to be chauffeured across, meaning that both girls were back on the safe side, while we were on the tidal sands in the river estuary. We only realised our mistake when neither Liv nor Anja returned with the canoe to pick the next one up. Instead, they returned with ice creams and grins on their faces to enjoy our hopeless situation. Not wanting to give them the satisfaction of being on the better side, we intuitively knew what to do: set up the camp chairs, open a beer and enjoy our last hours until the tide would come in. Eventually the girls must have become jealous when we started having the leftover food and decided to pick us up again.

This is only a small recollection of memories of what turned out to be an amazing road trip. I think it's fair to say that everyone had a great time and the trip has once again shown that as long as you go outside, you will have fun. You don't need to be a pro surfer or climb grade 27 to have a good time - all you need is a group of good friends. Thank you guys for the unforgettable trip and I hope everything is well Melbourne and in the club.

FEATURE OVERLEAF: The author grunting his way up a 25 in front of the stunning backdrop of the seacliffs, gushing waves below and the occasional humpback whale going past.

TOP TO BOTTOM:
ONE: Try hard and pay the skin price.
TWO: Taking the surfboards for a walk along the beach.
THREE: Stick bread around the bonfire at night was only beaten by the raving ocean next to our sleeping bags.
FOUR: Anja and Liv leaving the boys stranded on the other side.
FIVE: Revenge is sweet. Whilst Liv and Anja (successfully) trying to catch fish, the boys are on their way to the next campsite.



Fear and loathing in KANANGRA MAIN

WORDS / **Daniel Berton**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Steven Birkett & Daniel Berton**

IT SEEMS I AM CURSED when it comes to canyoning in the Blue Mountains. I have been there twice so far over the past two summers, and each time I have had an epic on the last day of the trip. Last year it was Claustral Canyon, a 6 hour trip, and we "smashed it in 11 hours". It can be read about in an article by Tim Tyres published in the Autumn 2015 Mountaineer. This article is about my 2016 Summer Blue Mountains trip and of my attempt at Kanangra Main Canyon with Taner Kucukyuruk and Steven Birkett. Steve also experienced the misfortunes of Claustral Canyon last summer.

"Kanangra Main is a serious undertaking, especially in wet weather. The quartzite rock becomes extremely slippery and scrambling is much more difficult. In high water, some of the abseils become quite dangerous." - Canyoning Near Sydney Guidebook

After easing into the Blueys trip with Closet Canyon on our first day, I was thrown into the deep end. At the start of day two, my car's transmission died after I drove over a rocky pot hole on the way to Hole-in-the-wall. Thanks to Taner, Nicole, Rob, Mark, Steve, Platzer and Geoff, I finally got my car back on the road. It seems luck was not on our side however, as the next few days were forecast to have heavy rain and storms, but we weren't going let that ruin our fun. We spent time relaxing at campsites, pubs and cafés, indulging ourselves in huge cups of tea and banter-full card games.

The card game of choice was of course an MUMC canyoning favourite; Durak, Russian for 'idiot'. There are no winners, only one loser (The Durak). Between card games we spent our time pouring over canyoning guidebooks, impatiently looking out for a window of good weather. Finally, the forecast began to show signs of clearing up. This was our only opportunity to attempt another canyon before we had to leave; my second canyon of the entire week-long trip.

The only people left at this point were Steve, Taner and myself. We agreed upon Kanangra Main as our final canyon and headed down to the closest campsite, Boyd River Campground. We had dinner in the shelter and dried our damp clothes by the fire. We decided on an early night before facing the challenge of Kanangra Main.

Rising at 6 am in anticipation of the long and difficult canyon, luck was on our side as the forecast was only predicting some light showers during the day. Spirits were high as we ate breakfast, packed our tents and fuffed around with excitement before driving up to the Kanangra Walls Lookout. Taner had informed Nicole, who was New Zealand at the time, that we should be back by dark. We overshot the entry point by a few hundred metres, but the walk in was fairly straightforward

and we reached the top of our first waterfall at 9.30 am. A short and fairly exposed scramble down the right side of the waterfall led us to the first abseil - notably the most breathtaking experience of the entire Blue Mountains trip.

To the left of us was a river, slightly engorged thanks to recent rains, cascading off the edge of a sheer cliff face into an unseen pool 150 metres below. The canyon was wide and very deep, with steep walls containing heavy vegetation and unstable patches of fallen rock dotted around on either side. Looking way into the distance we could spy a shade of brilliant bright orange, Kanangra Walls, a cliff face that marks the top of the steep gully used to exit the canyon. With this vista coupled with slippery, saturated rock below and ominous looking clouds above, I knew we were definitely in for an exciting day ahead.

Taner, easily being the most experienced of the group, led the first 50 m abseil to a small ledge with Steve and myself bringing up the rear. I had initially thought it had begun to pour with rain but it became clear I was just being showered by the waterfall to the left of us.

Now that it was my turn to lead, I cautiously descended the rope and wet walls to a ledge behind a small drenched pinnacle jutting out of the cliff. All along these abseils we could see and hear the roaring column of water several meters away, but it was only then, framed by the narrow gap between the pinnacle and cliff on this tiny ledge, as I waited for the others to descend, that I truly appreciated the beauty of Kanangra Main waterfall.

The next abseil brought us into a pool on a large ledge at bottom of the main waterfall. It became clear in the last 10 m of the abseil that I had only two options. Neither of which sounded overly appealing. Carefully balance myself across to the right, against the pull of the rope, and finish in the pool; or go with the flow (quite literally) and abseil straight down into the violent backwash of the waterfall as it meets the ledge. I had seen Taner and Steve take the more sensible option and feebly attempted it myself, but quickly gave up and slowly descended down into the white frothy torrent. I was moderately comforted by the others waiting at the bottom, able to haul me out if something were to happen.

For me, this was certainly the best part of the canyon. The feeling of my whole body being pelted with a wall of water and hearing absolutely nothing over the deafening white noise. I hung around in there long enough to get a concerned tug of the rope from Taner, but continued to untie my prussic before exiting the waterfall.

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After some difficulty retrieving the rope, we abseiled down to a pool at the base of the waterfall where we had the opportunity for an early exit out of the gully. The day was still young so we decided to press on to the next challenge this canyon had for us. A memorial plaque for a 17 year old girl named Alexia was stuck to a wall at the bottom of the fifth abseil. It soberly reminded me of the consequences that life in the outdoors can have, casting my thoughts back to a few days before, receiving news of OXOs who had recently lost their lives in the mountains.

Throughout the first part of the canyon, we were aware of how slippery the rock had been. Navigating around in such an environment had required some care but up until now I had not felt in any serious danger from losing my footing. Abseil six and seven, in stark contrast, involved some of the most tenuous and hair-raising sections of the canyon.

Whilst being mentioned in the guidebook as a possible scramble, in these conditions scrambling was no such option and an awkward abseil down to a large smooth boulder was set up. Each of us had a fairly tenuous time trying to not fall into the raging rapids around us. Taner and Steve were keen to try a jump from the boulder to a pool seven meters below, but the guide book mentioned it was “not particularly deep”, a concerning phrase. I abseiled down and checked it out before they took the plunge.

After reading a few trip reports of Kanangra Main online, it would seem that on a dry day the seventh abseil is not particularly difficult or noteworthy. In stark contrast, the experience of this abseil is seared into my mind. Taner took the lead and at the top it looked quite simple. Abseil down a 15 m cliff, cross a stream and walk onto a flat three meter wide ledge. The stream however, was deeper and more powerful than we thought and needed to be crossed anxiously close to the edge of a 40 metre high waterfall. The ledge was fairly smooth and instead of being horizontal, angled at twenty degrees down to the edge of a cliff. A wrong step on this slippery and sloping terrain would have resulted in careening off the ledge and a four metre swing into the adjacent waterfall. Certainly something to avoid if at all possible. We each arrived at the next abseil unscathed and happy to be off rope and finally anchored to something solid.

The rest of the abseils were relatively benign after that. At 5:30 pm, nine hours since leaving the carpark, we arrived at the bottom of abseil twelve. According to the guidebook, the walkout would take us two hours and ten minutes, which would have put us squarely back at the carpark by 7:40 pm, half an hour before sunset. It would be a long day, but a good day. This, however was not the case and is where an already long day got much, much longer.

After an uneventful hour of wading through a stream and using the great orange features of Kanangra Walls as our guide, we came across a meter high cairn that marked the bottom of our exit gully.

We ascended the aptly named “Murdering Gully”, a brutal 60 degree slope covered in loose dirt and rock. There were patches of scrub and trees which provided useful hand-holds and occasionally a deceptive dead tree that gave way at the slightest touch. After a few hundred metres the gully became too overgrown and we headed up the ridge to our left. Not long after, Steve’s legs began to cramp and our already sluggish pace slowed further. At 7:30 pm Steve was in serious pain at every step and we stopped many times for him to recover. In an effort to hasten our progress, we decided I should carry both Steve’s and my backpack: his on my back and mine on the front. I remember thinking that perhaps this is what being pregnant feels like, as I awkwardly resumed climbing.

We were not even halfway up the ridge when an orange hue began to permeate the sky, but was rudely interrupted by the discovery of a small leech stuck to Steve’s palm. A glimpse of what would be a continuous all-night barrage. As luck would have it we were still wearing our wetsuits and only had a relatively small area of exposed flesh on our hands, but that didn’t stop those little bastards from trying to latch onto anything they could. It quickly got dark and at 8:30 pm, after a panicked search of my dry bag, I realised I had broken the cardinal rule of any outdoor sport.

I hadn’t brought a head torch.

Fortunately for me, Steve and Taner were not quite so dull and with the borrowed light from their head torches, I continued on. The difficult trek got worse and our pace up this torturous ridge slowed as the climb got steeper, rockier and more treacherous. Two hours later, it dawned upon us that we had overshot our next turn and had reached the base of the sheer Kanangra Walls. Climbing up was not an option and reversing our path down the ridge would have been too perilous to consider. Our only option was to set up a hand line over a tree and lower ourselves down into the gully to our right.

For over an hour and a half, we battled across steep gullies and precipitous ridges, which we characterised at the time as “sketchy at best”. The sky was now clear enough for us to cross-check our map and compass navigation with the GPS on Taner’s phone, which buoyed our spirits when we saw how close we were to the end. We eventually got around Kanangra Walls and onto the home stretch. Taner started to get mobile reception and at 1 am contacted Nicole, our home base, who had just finished notifying the local police that we were missing.

At 2 am, covered in cuts, scrapes, dirt, blood and leech bites we arrived at the car. Exhausted, but ecstatic that we were finally back. As we salted the last few leeches from our hands and feet, Steve turned to me with a huge grin and said: “Smashed it in 18 hours”.

PREVIOUS PAGE: View from the bottom of 150 metres high Kanangra Falls.
BELOW LEFT: Three strapping young men at the bottom of abseil five, the plaque abseil.
BELOW RIGHT: My car transmission patch job.



MIDNIGHT EPIC (OR A CAUTIONARY TALE FOR SKIPPING THE BASICS)

WORDS / **Robert Springer**
PHOTOGRPAHY / **Robert Springer & Lingshu Liu**

Last year I went on a private exploratory canyoning trip. I'm quite experienced in rough terrain navigation, with mulitiple years of experiences several solo off-track southwest Tassie trips under my belt. Thus, a short adventure-bushwalk right next to Melbourne, where I even had beta, didn't really worry me. So follows the cautionary tale of what happens when I don't follow my usual preparatory steps:

AFTER A BUSHWALKING TRIP in the Otways that didn’t eventuate, I became intrigued at the possibilities of undiscovered canyoning opportunities awaiting there. While there were no tales of canyons, there were a couple of creeks that turned back a waterfall-exploring bushwalking acquaintance of mine. Perhaps these waterfalls could lead into undiscovered canyoning riches? The start of summer holidays would be the perfect time to explore. I had my car packed to the roof with all my belongings and there was barely room for me and my co-explorer. On the spur of the moment, we decided that we would do some sightseeing on the way and drove along the Great Ocean Road as opposed to the inland route. Probably not a great idea - we were now three hours late. Arriving at the place where the creek was closest to the road at 12.30 pm, we got changed, sorted out the canyoning gear we would require, and debated the relative merits of prussiking systems. We were ready to go at 1 pm. Sadly, I couldn’t find my GPS. No problem, I thought, I’ll just take my phone, download the google map of the area and I also have the modified topo that my friend gave me on the phone too. Shouldn’t have done that – going without a single backup navigational system isn’t a good idea. Thankfully, I did have my compass.

After a bit of a debate where the track started, we walked off. We didn’t find the described track but we did find blackberries though,

and since these had been mentioned, I assumed we had the right track. The next three hours consisted of trying to find the right creek. Though there may once have been a nice benched track, it was now covered by fallen trees, moss, and the general detritus of what felt like a century of disuse. The intermittent tape made it possible to guess the right track. Using a combination of google maps and my compass, I found a creek which could have been the right one. Maybe. There was no sign of the waterfall that marks it. No matter. All water flows downhill, right? I thought to myself. We’ll get to the right creek whichever headwater we start in. While dry, the creek I picked was certainly steep. Every few steps a loose rock would start rolling. The biggest ones looked like we would barely be able to lift it if we tried.

A short time later we reached the first waterfall. Definitely requiring an abseil, we set up the first retrievable anchor, locked the rope off for the first descender and began to descend with the first person letting out the rope from our trusty IKEA rope bag. After the second cascade – and obligatory selfies – we checked the time. 4 pm. Hmm. Two more waterfalls on the map.

The next waterfall was considerably larger, with multiple large drops. The base of the first drop had a decently large log jam which required a second anchor due to risk of the pull cord or rope becoming entangled. We should have checked for a site before pulling the old anchor... the climb up the mud wall to get another anchor would have been much easier with a rope to hang on to.





The third and final drop looked long. The tiny ledge we were on had no options for a re-belay, resulting in us electing to continue using our previous anchor and just lengthening the retrievable anchor pull rope. The bailout choice was just to retrieve the rope and leave the anchor in place.

Our 70m rope was long enough to get us to a better looking ledge.

As there were no easily slung anchors at the top of the third cascade, we decided to keep using the previous one. I don't think it looked that far but by the time I got down I was happy we had a 70m rope – there wasn't much more than 8m left in my rope bag. That's when I realised we had a small problem. The pull cord of webbing wasn't going to be long enough. Lingshu had to stop in the waterfall and tie on my slings, prussic, and personal anchor to the end. Sadly, this still wasn't long enough. Thus, the end of the rope had to serve as a pull cord. Thankfully, it worked, and we had our full canyoning setup back down with us.

“I checked my phone. It wouldn't turn on. The screen was broken. Crap. “

The next waterfall was incredible. A perfect 10m free falling drop. At this point it started getting dark and, wanting to know how much further, I checked my phone. It wouldn't turn on. The screen was broken. Crap. Stuck in an unexplored canyon. At night. No map. No GPS. No phone. Probably should have arranged for a home base too. Well, I guess we had to find our own way out. So on we went.

One small waterfall and then we reached the creek intersection at which we'd walked up. The way I understood it, my friend had gone down and returned up this creek with only a hand line, so I thought it would be no problem for us to return by. The 30m waterfall we soon reached the base of belied that very fact. It was very beautiful, but a rather unwelcome sight in the final few minutes of twilight.

Back at the intersection I pointed up at the gorge wall and said “that's our back-up”. I'm surprised Lingshu didn't actually call me crazy at this point. A few minutes of grunting followed as we worked our way up the stupidly steep wall. The torch came out - not fully charged of course – and we'd only packed one. To the tune of my companion's outbursts: “OW! frackin' stinging nettle” and other curses I walked up in the stunningly beautiful moonlight. Finally, as it started levelling out, we were rewarded with another patch of blackberries. Stumbling onto the road, my memory and compass navigation were rewarded by the sight of my car less than 100m away. It was 11pm.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Looking up at the lowest drop of zig zag falls.

THIS PAGE:

TOP LEFT: Scrambling around in the upper reaches of zig zag canyon.

BOTTOM LEFT Pitch two of the first abseil. In a beautiful waterfall through a small constriction.



“There's something pretty magical about descending into clouds. Being placed on photo ban to ensure we get to camp by nightfall, having our views obscured was probably a good thing in hindsight. No matter how miserable it made me at the time.”

Jade Gilbert

OFFICER REPORT

WORDS / **Evie Clarke**

AS THE RUSH of the first few weeks of the University year begins to dissipate, there seems to be no end to the various and exciting hiking trips planned for this year. Hearing all your ideas got my legs itching to go and I began dreaming of all the drop dunnies and river crossings in store. With lots of enthusiastic walkers in the club, I hope for some good adventures this year! The MUMC hut 50th anniversary celebrations are kicking off this year, we can also look forward to several trips up Mt Feathertop.

Before coming back to Melbourne this summer, I was lucky enough to spend fourteen days hiking the Western and Eastern Arthurs in south west Tasmania. This was one of the most beautiful and rugged walks I've done, despite the character-building weather. If nothing else, fourteen nights holed up in a tent does facilitate a lot of thinking!

It came to me, after a particularly frustrating day in the wet scrub, that the verb 'bush-bashing' is for the most part a misnomer. The Australian bush, with all its spiny shrubs and cutting grasses, seems to do a much better job of bashing up the bushwalker, rather than the other way around!

However, as we walked over the ranges (blood dripping from multiple limbs), I also began thinking about how the Australian environment is not as tough as we often assume. Many of the areas where

we go bushwalking, in Victoria and beyond, are part of fragile ecosystems that are at risk from the introduction of new species, diseases and changing uses. We don't have to look far from home to find major threats to the ecosystems, threats that with correct management and awareness can be minimised. Take for example, the disease-causing pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamoni*, named in the top 100 of the world's most invasive species and the most significant plant pathogen in Victoria. The disease has caused a major ecosystem to collapse in the Brisbane Ranges and has affected parts of the Grampians and Wilsons Promontory. The movement of contaminated soil by hikers bushwalking and driving in these areas has been a major cause of the spread of this devastating disease.

The link between bushwalking and conservation is a clear and natural one: if we want to continue hiking in beautiful and healthy ecosystems, it is our responsibility to look after these areas. This year, I would love to work with Sally to promote conservation, not just on its own, but also as an integral part of bushwalking.



The Faroe Islands are not known for their hiking, but they should be. The landscape is wild and remote. No other people to be seen for days, just you, the wind, the rain and thousands of birds. However, after a week of wearing thermals and waterproof pants/jackets we smelled pretty bad. Heading back to Denmark, we again had confused groups of peo-

ple looking on as four now even scruffier Australians. The puffins, dramatic wild landscape and rugged sea cliffs will stay in my memory until I return to hike again in the Faroe Islands.



PREVIOUS PAGE: Steve crossing another river after leaving the abandoned village of Sleettanes in far north Vágur.

THIS PAGE: TOP LEFT: Marcus and Lise high up in the hills, below here is the abandoned village of Víkar. Steep cliffs of several hundred meters plunge down to meet the sea below. BOTTOM LEFT: Lise, Marcus and Steve hike along the coast of Vágur Island. rock cairns lead the way along the forgotten village paths. This is until the fog closes in, then guesswork and faith take over. CENTRE: Puffins were a highlight of the trip, seeing these comical birds so close was a dream come true. RIGHT: Some of the largest colonies of Gannets breed in the Faroe Islands, nesting in large groups on sea cliff edges

BEST MOMENT, WORST MOMENT: FEATHERTOP KITE FLYING

COLLAGE / **Emma Johnson**

FAROE ISLANDS

WORDS / **Danielle Curnow-Andreason**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Danielle & Marcus Curnow-Andreason**

A wild forgotten and remote part of the world.

OUR HIKE IN THE FAROE ISLANDS began at Vágur Airport. A group of confused people looked at as four scruffy Australians with big backpacks proceeded to put on their waterproofs and head out the airport door, continuing hiking across the road and down through the next village. I think they would have been even more shocked to know that we didn't stop there; in fact we continued to hike and camp in wilderness areas for the week. The Faroe Islands consist of 18 small islands found about halfway between Iceland and Norway, high up



in the North Atlantic Ocean. There are no trees outside the towns, the mountainous landscape is covered in tundra grasses and riddled with small streams. Slættanesgotan trail is not actually a hiking track, but a series of rock cairns leading a way through the mountains. Before many villages were abandoned, these cairns lead people from one village to another. Often it was priests who travelled these trails, moving from one village to the next to marry, christen or bury people. With the constant rain and clouds, visibility was often poor and these cairns could be hard to find.

Birdlife on many of the islands is spectacular. Some seabirds nest on the cliff faces or burrow in the grassy banks, others make nests and lay eggs in the grasses further inland. Hikers need to be careful when walking, watching both above for territorial swooping birds and below so as not to step on eggs or new born chicks. Seeing puffins was a highlight of the trip; my brother and I spent hours photographing them. I see puffins as the clowns of the bird world. Their bodies look too big to fly, their wings too short, their large webbed feet are bright orange and spread out when they try to land, their beaks are almost the same size as their head. One of their best features is the black feathers around their eyes, making them look comically triangular. They weren't frightened of humans either; I guess because they don't see many. We could easily get within a meter of them.



TYPE 2.5 FUN

WORDS / Isabel Cornes

PHOTOGRAPHY / Jade Gilbert

Three girls, one Jack, tackle the end of the Western plus Eastern Arthur Ranges to Federation Peak, Tasmania.

13/01/2016-23/01/2016

“I JUST DON’T HAVE FAITH in things working according to plan; besides, it’s more exciting when things don’t go to plan”, a wise friend said, as he wished me well for the trip. I often hear tales of grand adventures that don’t quite go to plan - this tale is no exception.

The original plan for Tassie was to explore the ancient forest in the North West, the Tarkine. After years of campaigning with ‘The Wilderness Society’, I was enthusiastic to see the unique landscape that we were fighting to protect. Jack and I had debated for months about the integrity of the landscape there, so we were keen to see who was right. Somehow we ended up going from gentle day walks to an epic eleven-day hike in some of the most challenging terrain Tassie has to offer. After much negotiation, we decided that the Tarkine would wait until the end.

Following the guidance of the hiker’s best friend, the infamous Australian bushwalker and past MUMC member John Chapman, Jade Gilbert (who has a natural remedy for everything), Jack McCutchan (who knew what he was getting himself into, and still ended up the packhorse), Alice Newman (who constantly distracted us from pain with her talkativeness), and I (the slightly delicate and stubborn one) descended into South West National Park - clothes clean, packs filled with food, and a naive spring in our steps.

We started at Scotts Peak Dam, with a ‘gentle’ hike across But-tongrass Plains. After a few hours we were already pooped - figuratively, even if the bogs made us look otherwise. We took a few too many breaks at beautiful creeks and ended up stopping well before our planned destination of 7 Mile Creek. Shattered, we managed to convince ourselves that it was for the best and that we could make up the distance the following day. Haha.

It was on day 2 that we decided Chapman was a demi-god. How can anyone cover those distances, over that terrain, and with such weight so quickly?! Divine intervention was clearly the only rational explanation. Kappa Moraine to Promontory Lake was without a doubt the worst day of the trip. It was steep and relentless. Jack and Alice managed to convince me that we had to make it to the summit of that section before traversing across the ridge.

Dripping wet, freezing cold, and exhausted from the endless uphill, I felt my spirit breaking, and cursed my decision to leave my comfy hobbit hole. Alas, when we got to the track junction to turn towards Promontory Lake (well below the summit which I had been glaring and swearing at for a solid hour) Jack and Alice burst out laughing and whooping and said that we’d reached the highest point before the traverse. I promptly burst into tears of happiness and proceeded to expel a variety of profanities at them.

The day kept growing worse as a storm brought sleet (trusty Tassie weather) pelting down on our last hour to Promontory Lake. This was also our first brush (impalement) with spiky Scoparia, which would accompany us on most of the remaining journey.

Mildly hypothermic, we managed to get the tents up in the gale force winds and wrapped up in every layer we had brought with us. Following the recommendation by Chapman not to tackle the next section in bad weather, we decided to take a rest day. Yes, after just two days into an eleven-day hike, we needed a rest day. But if I have learned one thing about getting through a trip like this, it’s to listen to your body and have the supplies to support that kind of decision.

Unfortunately, that meant we then had to catch up on a day, needing to travel to Pass Creek in one long 13-hour day. The early morning mist and rain cleared and we were greeted with phenomenal views of peaks, valleys, and lakes as we walked. The serenity was lovely. We had the mountains to ourselves. It was one of those days where we were constantly in awe... and in pain, all at once. “It’s so beautiful, but I’m in so much pain, but it’s so beautiful.”

Dragging our feet hours later, we stumbled into camp, and promptly collapsed into a heap, providing a delicious meal for the local mosquito population. Jade attempted to address this with ‘natural’ mosquito repellent, only to have a mosquito land directly on the application roller - sorry nature, you were defeated by a stronger force of nature.

Day 5 meant the re-ascent of the range. This ascent was steep. Steeper than Kappa Moraine. It felt like climbing a ladder with tree roots and rocks as your steps up vertical sections of the track. The climber in me loved it!



And sometimes I just had to crawl my way up on hands and knees, because the erosion meant I couldn’t quite get my legs high enough. In an effort to conserve and protect the landscape surrounding the track, we also tackled several a\$\$ deep bogs instead of walking around them, trampling down native vegetation.

We were greeted at Stuart’s Saddle campsite with much-anticipated decks and a water tank. It was my favourite campsite of the trip. Nestled at the foot of one of the towering Needles, we were surrounded by Pandani, and an array of mosses and delicate plants.

Day 6 was an accident. We only made it from Stuarts Saddle to Goon Moor. Wonderful, we thought, after two hours of walking, we’ve finally levelled up to Chapman demi-god status, and promptly set up camp. At about 5 p.m. a burst of hysterical laughter pierced the silence. Jack and Alice had rechecked the map. Turns out we were meant to go to Thwaites today... a five hour walk away. Celebrating our combined failure, we decided to make pancakes!

The last stretch to Federation Peak involved pack-hauling and some basic rock climbing. I don’t think rock scrambling quite covers how challenging some of the sections were (again, Chapman, demi-god). So to the person who says, ‘Hiking? It’s really just walking, right?’, I raise you one trip to the Eastern Arthurs. The scenery was like something out of ‘How to Train Your Dragon’: rugged, steep, misty, mysterious.

Arriving early and with the sun shining, Jack and Alice went to conquer Federation Peak. With warnings about the difficult nature of the ascent and descent, Jade and I both reflected on our abilities and what we had achieved so far, and decided not to join them. Even upon success, they respectfully agreed that we had made the right decision. Something I’ve learnt throughout my outdoors experience is being comfortable with the risk you are taking, no matter how big or small. It takes a lot to admit that you’re not ready for something, but swallowing that pride is an essential skill to master - it may even keep you alive.

The returning 5 days of the track went smoothly, with lighter packs, legs of steel, and stomachs yearning for a greasy burger. More clear weather and insanely beautiful views of Federation Peak kept us failing to blink. So beautiful, we continued to look at the view and not at our feet, which resulted in more trips and tumbles.

Our last day from Junction Creek back to the car was one to tell the grandkids about. We had finally beaten Chapman’s recommended earliest time, completing the 2.5 hour walk in 2.25 hours. Hurrah!

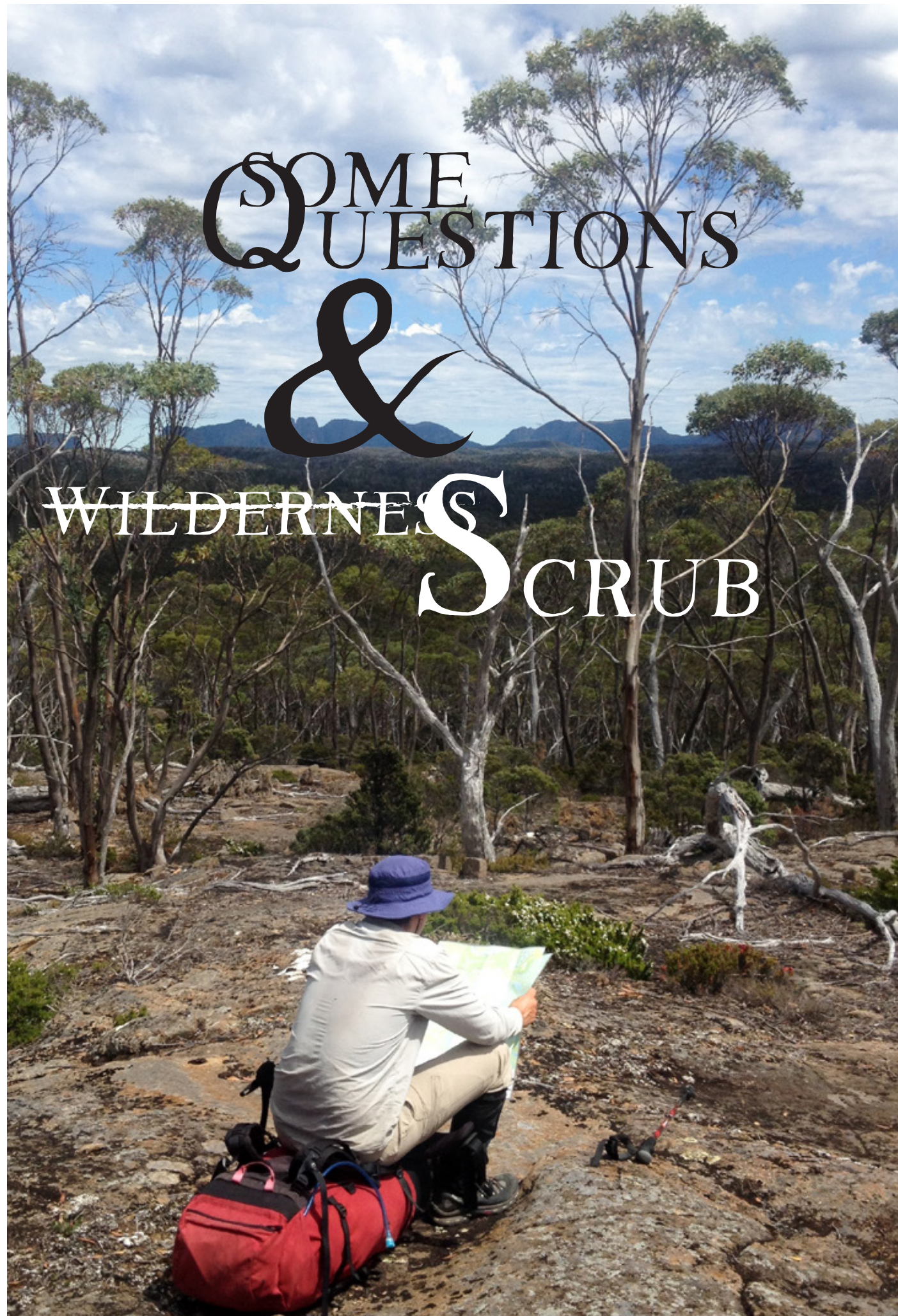
Sadly, whilst we had been away, many of Tasmania’s delicate forests were being ravaged by wildfires, including the beautiful Tarkine we had been so excited to see. Climate change has and will continue to devastate these unique and irreplaceable landscapes exposing them to conditions they are unable to adapt to. This is another heartbreaking case that deeply affected the four of us - seeing and

smelling the thick smoke throughout most of the hike. As passionate people of the outdoors, I personally believe we all have a duty to do what we can to mitigate these impacts, in order to protect the places we love so much.

While hiking may seem like ‘just walking’ to some of the more hardcore amongst us, this trip truly pushed my physical and mental endurance to its limits, with spectacular and unforgettable rewards. I can’t wait to do it again.

LEFT PAGE: Day 2: Three hours across the plains down, six hours up into the mountains to go. Enjoying the mild weather and flat ground while it lasted. Exhaustion setting in, I pull Jack aside to confess I didn’t think I’d make it up the 5-hour ascent into the mountains.

THIS PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Day 5: We saw so many incredible plants persisting through the crazy weather conditions. Here teensy bonsais poked out of 5-cent sized pockets of soil embedded in the rocks of Promontory Lake.
TOP RIGHT: Day 1: At the first big creek we encounter, Alice is stripped and in the water before the rest of us have even taken off our packs. The water here is a rich amber colour due to tannins from eucalyptus leaves.
BOTTOM LEFT: Day 1: The time has come. We begin our two-day hike over the plains (just to get to the mountains) with the sun glaring down and rivers of sweat drenching us.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Day 7: Jack and Alice summited the infamous Fed Peak. The largest cliff in Australia with a 700m drop to the lake below.



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED what it would be like to explore a pre-human Earth? To answer this question, you might decide that a remote bushwalk would give you a sense. It certainly couldn't be a hike nearby, perhaps Tali Karng, Croajingolong or even further afield to Larapinta in central Australia. On the trip you have a great time, an adventure! You've seen some places you had never seen, but at the end of the day, you can't shake a feeling, the feeling that someone made the track you're walking on. How many people have walked that same track and shared the same views? Hundreds? Perhaps tens of thousands, or even over a million! How does the knowledge that you are not the first alter your reactions on the trip or confidence in decision making? This is the nature of questions that filled our minds as Sytske and I prepared for an uncertain adventure into the unforgiving Tasmanian wilderness.

We planned to hike across the Traveller Range, a predominantly untracked alpine plateau with our route stretching from the southern end of Lake St Clair through to Du Cane Gap, a pass on the world-famous Overland Track. Sure, I knew people had hiked there before, Chapman even had a brief paragraph concerning access in one of his many books, but he didn't give too much away.

Back on a ten day Tasmanian hike in 2009, my second trip in MUMC, I remember the breathtaking views we got from Mt Jerusalem. Stretched across to the distant horizon was a patchwork of interwoven lakes and alpine tarns. I wondered how many people had travelled through that seemingly untouched wilderness. It was the same trip I had my first exposure to off-track bushwalking, a one-day jaunt through the more-or-less untracked Never Never. The view that day from The Walls of Jerusalem wasn't quite across the Traveller Range, but it was the view that inspired our trip.

At Lake St Clair Visitors Centre I scoured the trip intentions log books for evidence of others who may be up on the range. James returned, navigating through the throngs of tourists to the crowded bench where I was waiting and related a fresh conversation with a park ranger. We had been hoping to get useful intel before our plunge into the unknown wilderness, but I could tell from James' expression that had not happened. The ranger, after answering our questions with disparaging retorts, had under his breath ended the conversation with, "I wish people wouldn't go up there".

The ranger's words loomed in our minds as we made our own careful crossing of Lake St Clair and travelled up and onto the range. Part-way up the spur, our attempt at following the same bearing over five



LEFT PAGE: Another Navigation Stop
ABOVE: James found some Pandani trees
RIGHT: We have to go this way!

kilometers through ever-increasing scrub became unbearable. Dusk was approaching rapidly and we weren't sure how far we still needed to travel. I got to thinking, if every day was this intense, would I make it through this trip? Jerked back into reality, I nearly burst into tears of frustration as yet another branch bashed me across the shoulder. Our hope was fading as sunset engulfed us and luckily we stumbled into a spacious open clearing. Even without a water source to bolster our dwindling supplies, we felt blessed; our pace would have slowed



to a crawl in darkness in that dense wilderness. It wasn't until early the next morning, when we arrived at Travellers Rest Lagoon (a mere 800 meters away), that we realised we had actually made it up and onto the plateau.

From here the next four days passed like a dream. We hopped from lake to lake, passing through Lake Sappho, Rim Lake, Lake Payanna and a labyrinth of small tarns north-west of Payanna, Lake Pallas, and finally the stunning Orion Lakes. Afternoon swims and gorgeous lakes without a soul in sight was reward enough for the long hours of scrub bashing and prickles we had to put up with to get there.

For those of you thinking of attempting a similar off-track journey, we have a few valuable lessons and stories to share:

1. Understand the accuracy and limitations of your map. We were lucky to have 1:25,000 scale maps covering the entire region which was almost essential for fast travel. Many of the maps in this scale are now out-of-print and the efforts we made to borrow an old copy from a friend paid off. These maps often make best-effort suggestions of likely terrain and vegetation depicted in various shades of green, dots, hashes and often text descriptions like 'sedge', 'heath' and 'with low dense vegetation'. We were continually reminded how invaluable these markings proved and they effectively rendered our 1:50,000 maps useless.

2. If you can only see one meter in front of you due to scrub, there is likely a much faster route nearby. If you find yourself in a scrubby gully, try to get to higher ground. Sure, this may mean you no-longer know exactly where you are, but progress is likely so slow you aren't going to lose this spot very quickly. The elevation gained in this manner on multiple occasions helped us get a view of our destination and a faster route. Even if you still can't see where you're trying to get to, as vegetation density increases in areas where water flows (gullies), the high ground will still help you move faster. Previous rogaining and navigation experience proved invaluable here. Make sure you have a good grasp of these essential navigation skills, as you will be relying on them every day!

3. Navigating near Rim Lake we dropped down into dense scrub at the edge of the lake. A visit probably isn't worth it unless you want to bushwalk or rock-climb Mt Ida. It took us about 30 minutes to move through approximately 250 meters of thick scrub! I heard that while Mt Ida looks quite steep and intimidating from the plateau, there is supposedly a gentle walking track up the northwest face. (We did not attempt this as our excitement levels were well above 100% for that day).



4. Learn to judge your speed through different terrain (I store it in my head as an estimation of kilometers per hour) and trust these approximations enough to loosely follow your compass bearing. Here is where off-track walking differs from rogaining. You don't have to get to a precise spot you just need to know roughly where you are, where you're trying to get to and enjoy the journey on the way.

5. Navigating all day for five days makes James tired and cranky: you have been warned.

This trip offered us privileged insight into what Australia may have been like before western settlement. Despite being only a dedicated day or two's walk from the nearest track, in our minds we had a pervasive sense of isolation. In Australia, this country is blessed with tracts of wilderness, but on this planet environments like this one are cast aside in our relentless quest as a species for development and growth.



ABOVE: Sytske looking across the Lakes of Orion.
LEFT: Tripods take silly pictures.
RIGHT: James crossing the Weir.
BOTTOM LEFT: Sytske cooking dinner on a rock.
BOTTOM RIGHT: James at Lakes of Orion.

Overall, the skills needed for a wilderness trip like the one we took are not overly onerous. With some experience on multi-day bushwalks, previous navigation experience and a willingness to tunnel through scrub where required, most people in MUMC could undertake a similar journey. Have a bit of flexibility in your plans (a few spare planned days here and there) as well as a home base with knowledge of where you are going and planned return date and everything should be alright. Taking the time to stop and enjoy an environment like this one really does feel like a privilege that may not exist in the generations to come. Our advice, pick another part of wilderness and explore it for yourself!

Photosphere links (type in your laptop browser):

<http://bit.ly/1WqbKr6> - campsite

<http://bit.ly/1TNRbap> - end of the range

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5 PASSES

WORDS / **Danielle Curnow-Andreason**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Danielle Curnow-Andreason & Daniel Cocker**

IN JANUARY 2016, Dan Cocker, Tim Tyres, Dan Candy, and myself, headed to New Zealand to trek in Mount Aspiring National Park. We spent an incredible five days hiking what is known as the '5 Passes'. This circuit is mostly off track hiking through New Zealand's wilderness, following rivers and ridges climbing over Sugarloaf Pass, Parks Pass, Cow Saddle, Fiery Col, and Fohn Saddle. It was hard. After each pass we climbed back down to the next river, then proceeded to climb straight back up to another pass at the same altitude.



Tim and Dan accompanied by their reflections as we begin our climb to Fohn Saddle.



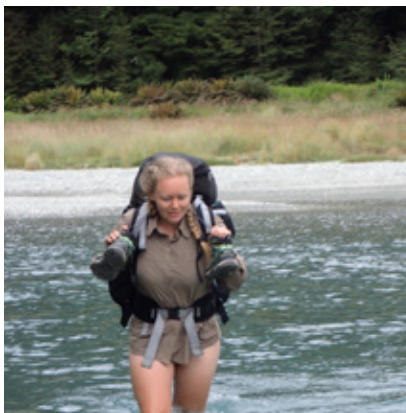
One of many spectacular camps, just below Cow Saddle. We ate our dinner and watched the colours in the landscape glow, our eyes following the path we would follow the next day. (Over the pass which can be seen behind camp).



For me, one of the best things is sitting in a beautiful camp site with a hot cup-a-soup at the end of the day. This is Dan at camp three, down on the Beansburn after our decent from Fohn Saddle.



Fiery Cole, perhaps our steepest and definitely the highest pass we went over, patches of snow and scree made and climb just that much more interesting.



On our final morning we did multiple river crossings, some of them necessary and others it would seem just for fun. The water is glacier melt, a beautiful green/blue colour and a terrible temperature for bare feet and legs.



We felt as though we were walking amongst Ent trees from The Lord of the Rings. The walk down from Sugarloaf Saddle seemed so much longer than the ascent, down, down, down and more down.



High above Cow saddle we take a rest, the views are spectacular, the water cold and clear and a cloudless blue sky is above our heads. There in that moment I don't think I could have asked for anything else.

MIDNIGHT ASCENT 2015:

WHERE CHILDHOOD DREAMS CAME TRUE

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Robert Springer**



FRONT ROW: Robert Springer, Adam Holway, Astrid, Molis Yunzab with Oscar the Meerkat, Danielle Curnow-Andreason, Mitchell Stephen, David Heng, Simin Ngan, Jack Gill, Emma Johnson, Gina Tonkin-Hill, Alice Newman, Eugenia Pacitti, Mark Patterson & Tim White.
SECOND ROW: Linghsu Liu, Jayde Millington, Hartley Malcom-Stevens, Daniel Cocker, Liv Grover-Johnson, Anja Fuechtbauer, Gina Snelling, Ellen Rochelmeyer, Imogen Stafford, Gopy Manney, Richard Bassett-Smith,

Emilie Skramsett & Andrew Hazi.

THIRD ROW: Matt Dunwoodie, Simon McCowan, Rowan McCowan, Egil Heier, Uli Aschenbrenner & Phoebe Hone.

LAST ROW: Luke Friskien, Daniel Berton, Steven Birkett, unknown, Taner Kucukyuruk, James Adams & Rob Jones.

ROGAINING: 2015 REPORT

WORDS / **Gina Snelling**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Natalie Care**



to advertise, coordinate navigation training sessions.

2015 WAS AN ABSOLUTELY STELLAR year for rogaining in the club, with strong Oxo participation and some fantastic results!

Participation at VRA rogaines increased by 280%, from an average of 43 OXOs in previous years to an impressive 121 in 2015. This is partly due to increased MUMC membership numbers, but also many hours of hard work by 2015 Rogaine Deputy Natalie Care transport and provide regular

The high level of participation has translated to great successes for the club, with at least one OXO team placing in the top three for every rogaine in 2015! At the Victorian Championships

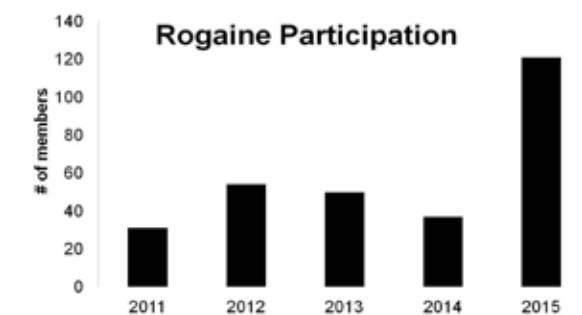


MUMC member Gleb Belov took out the trophy with runners up Tom Stegink and Joe Dawson close on their heels (only 60 points behind the winning score). The women's division was taken out by Natalie Care and Gina Snelling.

OXOs could also regularly be seen flipping burgers and collecting checkpoints after events. We also ran a successful June rogaine, which was well supported by the club and its members. For those who haven't yet tried rogaining, 2016 will offer plenty of opportunities to get involved. There are monthly events in Victoria and MUMC will be running another rogaine in April, where helping out will be a great way to find out what rogaining involves. With MUMC offering a \$10 rebate on entry fees, there's no reason not to get out and give it a go!

I look forward to another great year in 2016, with a number of teams entered in the World Championships in Northern Territory, and hopefully a few OXO-teams across the desert at the Australasian Championships in Western Australia.

Hope to see lots of new and old members out on the course in 2016!



LEFT: Simin Ngan, David Heng, Loren Leong, Rob Jones, Joe Dawson, Tom Stegink, Rob Springer, Rodney Polkinghorne, Gina Snelling, Natalie Care, Tim Plozza, Gleb Belov.
RIGHT: Thanks to Simin for providing me with the data to analyse MUMC participation.

Remando Juntos

WORDS / **Benjamin Webb**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Benjamin Webb, Camoté & Bruno Monteferri**

Recipe for a large headache: A 20-day expedition, documentary shoot and the delivery of informative presentations in remote villages.

A fight to save the source of the Amazon.

THE IDEA STARTED OUT SIMPLE ENOUGH: take a handful of young Peruvians down the Marañón River before dams destroy the incredible canyons forever. With two years between conception and implementation, this small idea had time to grow.

“Let’s run a campaign to raise awareness in Peru!”,
“Let’s shoot a documentary!”,
“Let’s give presentations in remote Peruvian villages!”.

By launch day this small idea included a dozen volunteer river guides, a group of young Peruvian activists keen to see the river and to deliver informative presentations to remote villages, a director, a sound person and a handful of support crew for the film shoot (thanks Paul). All up, 21 people joined us for the Remando Juntos expedition.

Imagine trying to keep a raft of electronic equipment safe and charged for 20 days while travelling down a class IV river and camping on sandy, dusty beaches each night; all the while scheduling presentations in remote Peruvian villages, getting the shots for a documentary, interviewing local people and keeping to a tight 20-day itinerary.

Day 1: Head and knees sore due to the worst of Peruvian mountainside roads and bus seats ergonomically designed for an average height of 5 ft. We finally get loaded and onto the river by late afternoon.

Day 2: We had heard rumors that the president of Peru is flying into a nearby village to bless the opening of a new bridge and promote developments in the area before the next election. After waiting around most of the day (he arrives late), we get some great footage. Our protest signs however were confiscated by police; apparently only pro-president posters are allowed.

Interestingly, despite the billions of dollars of investment that are being touted as ‘development for the people’ in his speeches, President Humala doesn’t mention any of the 20 dams planned for the enormous river flowing unstopably behind him. Maybe that is a topic only open for under-the-table discussions with multinational executives. >>

A day on the river

don't trust us. A neighbouring community leader suspects that we are employed by the dam construction company and this is a ruse to gain their trust and take advantage of them. He gives an equally rousing speech to the villagers urging them not to trust us, not to let us film anything or take anything from them. The majority of people in the community are confused but remain friendly. Many of the leaders come and speak with us in private, saying how they appreciate our efforts and want to work together to stop the dams. (This is helped by the happy coincidence that one leader had seen my picture on an anti-dam publication from 2014, for which I had provided photographic materials of the river). The visiting leader remains disgruntled and we walk back to our riverside camp with mixed feelings about the evening. This type of work is never easy, or clear cut.

“A neighbouring community leader suspects that we are employed by the dam construction company and this is a ruse to gain their trust and take advantage of them.”

Day 6: After a tasty breakfast offered to us by the kind residents of Jecumbui, we float down to the Yanten box canyon. We climb several small waterfalls to arrive in the main chamber. Light filters through a narrow slit in the roof to illuminate the rough textured walls. The effect is stunning and the lighting is perfect. The film crew has a field day. After a couple of hours in the canyon I give the crew a 20-minute warning, we have to keep moving downstream. When the time is up, the director acknowledges this and I set the example by heading back down the canyon.

A reminder of why shooting documentaries and expedition paddling do not go hand-in-hand, and why a director in a stunning location should not be left alone with the crew. Two hours later they finally emerge. We paddle late into the day to make up lost ground;



unfortunately, this is the norm and not the exception. Tired and hungry, camp is made, food is prepared, the day's worth of footage is downloaded and backed up.

Another long day ends once the cameras are recharged and the buzzing of our tiny Suzuki generator is replaced by the steady gurgling of the river.

Days 9-13: I have scheduled plenty of time between the villages of Tupén and Mendán, 5 days all up. This is the heart of the fight to save this river. The tight knit communities vehemently reject Chadin II, a 600 megawatt hydroelectric dam that will flood their valley and destroy the endemic 'dry forests' that cover the valley walls. We interview key members of the community, peasant farmers, cocoa growers, mothers and children. We interview César Chavez, president of the Ronda, Peru's answer to a sheriff in the wild west. They are the community police force in a largely lawless yet peaceful land. The law of the frontier and the law of a centralized government don't always see eye to eye, however. César and several other 'Ronderos' are on trial facing 35 years for 'kidnapping'. They are persecuted by Oderbrecht, the company behind the dam. In 2014 Cesar detained three engineers overnight before releasing them the following day with the command to stop their studies and never trespass on village territories again. In Peru you would be better off committing murder than trying to defend social or environmental rights in the face of large scale development.

Days 14-18: The final days are through mostly uninhabited canyon; the team is happy to take this break from filming interviews and delivering presentations. It has been a long journey and we are all tired. However, the incredible scenery in this part of the canyon is revitalizing and the dozens of fun rapids are refreshing. Our team of young Peruvians relish the chance to laugh, joke and tell stories around the roaring campfire. They are not the same people that I interviewed ten months earlier; eager to participate in this project. For better or worse, the memory of this canyon will remain with them forever, even if it is not long for this world.

This expedition was the culmination of almost two years working to build the skills and momentum needed to get it off the ground. A massive thanks to everyone that helped raise those initial funds which put these wheels in motion.

We get back to camp late. Zero kilometres gained for the day, only day 2 and we are one day behind. After 20 minutes to rest and rein-vigorate, we head into Viljus to give a rousing presentation on what is planned for the river and the implications of this. If the president won't discuss these things openly with the local people, somebody should.

Day 4: After battling against epic winds all afternoon we arrived at the seldom visited village of Tingo la Paya. We hike up to the village square and hurriedly shoot footage of this picture perfect village before the sun disappears behind the Andes mountains which hem us in from all sides.

Despite delivering another rousing presentation about the social and environmental impacts the dams will have (in this case, flood the village and displace hundreds), some members of the community



LEFT: A day in the life of the Marañon.
TOP RIGHT: Franco working hard to get the aerial shot from ruins high above the canyon, note cactus GoPro stand.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Amazonas Cave.

The Peruvian team continue to campaign and raise awareness of this issue in Peru. Facebook: Remando Juntos.

One day our director might finish editing the film; when this happens we can do some film tours and gain even more exposure and momentum for the issue.

I will continue to work on this in 2016; I looked for jobs when I got back to Australia but nothing really seemed interesting when compared with the chance to patrol these epic canyons and help protect the source of the Amazon. The goal for 2016 is to set up a chapter of the Waterkeeper Alliance on the Marañón; then we can garner the funds needed to take these dam companies to school; their environmental impact assessments are like Swiss cheese, all we need is a decent lawyer! If I do good, maybe I will even get paid this year!

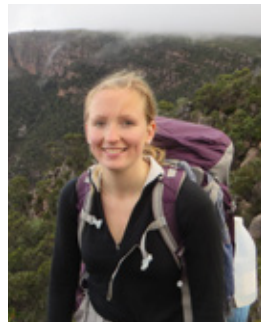
Keep an eye out for the **MUMC Marañón Expedition 2017**, it will be one of a kind!



TOP: The stunning Yanten box canyon.
ABOVE: Rock pools and waterfalls overlooking the Marañón.

OFFICER REPORT

WORDS / Sally Stead



and the challenges in restoring habitat.

Volunteers visited a previous planting site that the club had worked on and were encouraged to see the young plants flourishing. This

IN THE PAST twelve months, members have continued to enjoy participating in initiatives to conserve our wild places, plants and animals. The club's long-held tradition of attending planting days hosted by the Regent Honeyeater Project in the Lurg Hills is as strong as ever, with an enthusiastic turnout in the spring. Participating in this strategic revegetation project gave volunteers a chance to learn from conservation experts about the ecology of the flora and fauna in the region,

year, members were asked to attend the bush dance in conservation costume and the night showcased impressive craft talent, as well as great dance flare. Over the coming months opportunities to participate in nest box checking events with the Regent Honeyeater Project will be available, giving tree planters an insight into how the regenerated habitat is supporting the health of populations of Squirrel Gliders and rare Phascogales, as well as broader biodiversity. There are many creative ideas amongst the club's membership for novel ways that members can explore conservation themes and contribute to efforts which protect the natural places that we all hold dear. This has included beach cleanup mornings, environmental film screenings, activism and track maintenance, just to name a few. Members are encouraged to voice their ideas and seek support in making these worthwhile ideas happen.

DENTIST DOESN'T RECOMMEND COLGATE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / (Dr) Daniel Cocker

CONSERVATION TENDS TO be a quieter sport in MUMC, but conservation is more than a sport. It is more than picking up rubbish at a local beach or a weekend away planting trees. Conservation should be a way of life. Do you know the environmental impact of the product you are about to buy?

The greatest threat to many species is loss of habitat. No conservation effort can be successful if there isn't somewhere for the animals to live. For example, orangutans, tigers and elephants are all under threat from habitat destruction in Sumatra, Indonesia, and you have probably contributed to this without realising.

Palm oil is used for its physical properties and low cost compared to other oils. Unfortunately, a significant amount of palm oil is sourced from unsustainable and unethical plantations. Throughout Indonesia, rainforest is purposefully set on fire to clear the land cheaply and quickly, with palm plantations preventing the natural regrowth afterwards. This loss of habitat results in loss of orangutans, which may become extinct from the wild within ten years.

How do we, living in Melbourne, affect land clearing in Indonesia? Every time you buy a product with palm oil (that's about half the products in the supermarket) that isn't sourced 100% from ethical and sustainable plantations, you promote an industry that is causing the destruction.

CENTRE TOP: Baby Orangutan in the Sumarran jungle.
CENTRE BOTTOM: Hanging around in my arm hammock.



What does this have to do with a dentist not recommending Colgate? Many companies are slowly realising that consumers want to reduce their environmental impact, and are therefore promising to source ingredients in a sustainable and ethical way. Colgate-Palmolive is not able or unwilling to publish the actual sources of their palm oil; instead they rely on buying certificates from GreenPalm, to say 75% of the palm oil they use is from "certified" sources. Buying these certificates is like a coal power station buying carbon certificates from a company that plants trees. It's a start, but not the same as generating the power from a renewable source in the first place.

Companies will respond to consumer demand; voting with your wallet is the language large corporations understand. When you're next out shopping, stop and think what went into the product you're about to buy. Where did it come from? If it's not fresh food, it's surprisingly hard to find out the answer. There are organisations out there who source information from companies on how their products are produced and give ratings to the companies. Unfortunately, these are often incomplete due to a lack of information available, but they are a starting point. Unfortunately, I don't have an actual recommendation, as the other toothpaste-producing companies aren't any better. Maybe it's time we let them know we care.

REPAIR RATHER THAN REPLACE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / Anon

Review by Anon: Twice saved by Finn Industries

I WAS DISMAYED WHEN picking up my trusty Macpac at baggage collection at the airport. Despite layers of plastic wrap, they had somehow managed to tear several holes in it. A review at the partner replacement store revealed that it was deemed too old to be worth replacing; but repair might be an option. I sent photos of the bag to an outdoor gear repair shop somewhere out west. I received a quote, and cash from the airline to pay for it.

When actually implementing the repair, I realised shipping was not included in the repair quote, and the repairer was too far away to be worth dropping off.

A solution presented itself when a friend said she was going to Finn Industries in Coburg to get some gear repaired. I tagged along to get a quote. Pleasantly surprised, it was half what the original company had quoted and significantly more convenient, and I got to keep the balance of the money the airline had already given me! The owner was knowledgeable and passionate about outdoor gear and shared a healthy ethic about our responsibility when it comes to selecting and ultimately using our gear. Where possible always repair rather than

replace. Goretex and other manufactured materials inevitably have heavy footprints wherever they are produced.

Another pack ripped a couple of months later. I called up Finn Industries, dropped in and he repaired it on the spot for \$20. I walked away after 10 minutes with a pack good as new and it was unbelievably easy.

Anytime you have gear in need of love consider repairing instead of replacing. You may be very pleasantly surprised at the price. And the environmental savings to avoid our disposable culture are priceless.

www.finnindustries.com.au P: 03 9029 9951 M: 0415 050 285
23 Manna Gum Ct. Coburg.



VOLUNTEER TOILET CLEANER

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / Lingshu Liu

I VOLUNTEERED AS A HUT WARDEN along the Travers-Sabine Circuit in Nelson Lakes National Park this summer. Mainly cleaning toilets, but also chatting with people, losing my mind and developing great calf muscles.

In New Zealand, we are very fortunate to have access to such places, and we take care of it by having facilities such as huts and toilets. The Department of Conservation (DoC) flies the toilet waste out. However, it concerns me after witnessing the acts of irresponsible trampers, such as unburied toilet waste pretty much on the path and next to a stream, and the sheer numbers of Te Araroa (TA) walkers (there are so so many), that the DoC may not be able to manage the quality of these environments. In addition, the knowledge of some of these TA walkers is concerning - I met one guy who was walking alone, without a compass or map, or even a knowledge of reading a map... It is because of these people that the likelihood of demand for BSAR resources is increased. Another walker was just using the fire in the huts instead of carrying a stove. The hut culture is changing as these walkers use the huts as cheap

accommodation (they have a six month backcountry hut pass), and can freely utilise the firewood stocked by helicopters in summer months as cooking fuel. Some were not even compliant with cleaning up the hut when leaving, despite being such frequent users of them.

I am not too sure how to address these issues, or how NZ will manage this, but something will need to be done soon, especially as the number of TA walkers increase rapidly over the next few years. Although trampers-turned-activists initially fought for the freedom to access these natural areas, their intention was to protect these areas so that future generations could also enjoy them. However, from overuse of this public good, our taonga has become diminished; perhaps it is time to limit access, so that the use of the park is more sustainable? I think being a thru-hiker with the single goal of walking 30-40 km each day is a bit narrow-minded. Alternatively, we should consider the additional goals of enjoyment and supporting the sustainability of the trails. This will help to maintain the environment for generations to come, and allow other people to also experience these special places.



CENTRE TOP: The author at Travers Saddle, with Mt Travers in the background.
CENTRE BOTTOM: Shelf above Cupola Hut

A HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GLACIER

WORDS / **Richard Bassett-Smith**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Richard Bassett-Smith & Anja Fuechtbauer**

Over summer I decided to stay on in the mountains, which meant I would skip my flight home for Christmas with the family. Not that Mum and Dad were expecting me home for Christmas, but that is another matter. For me, to be with friends during fine weather spells amongst the mountains is too good an opportunity to miss. Anja, David and Andrew formed one of the mountaineering parties, all of whom had come back for a second season of mountaineering. Liv and Dave Kneen formed the second. As for me, I had the choice to join either, as each had extended the invitation and I had accepted both. Hence the 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Glacier'...

THE HOURS ARE EARLY in the morning. One party has already left. I passed on their offer to go climbing in exchange for an extra hour of sleep and join the second party as they leave the hut. The freeze underfoot makes for fast travel, with Dave setting a hard and fast pace across the frozen crust. Lights up ahead indicate those already out across the glacier. Hitching a lift is not all that bad. Being tied into the middle of a rope with it skipping about you does make for safe travel across the glacier.

The sky is still dark as the gradient begins to steepen. The silhouettes in the distance now loom up above. My time with this part of the journey is now coming to an end, and with it, the realisation that a whole new mental game is about to begin. As I will not take part in the transition from glacier travel to pitching, I simply unclip and with a second ice axe in hand, I walk away.

The next few minutes would dictate how the route would run today. The bergschrund emerges above, splitting the buttress from the glacier on which I stand. I seek out a possible bridge. Cresting the lip shows no such passage but hints at another

possibility. A small weakness, with some intricate moves to breach the upper schrund wall.

The evening before, while enjoying dinner sitting on the roof of the hut with the warmth of the setting sun gazing across at Mt Haidinger, we had all planned our routes. When making mental notes it seemed so easy to draw lines onto the landscape, but now, in amongst it, I asked myself 'where were those lines, exactly?'. 'Having cleared the schrund, which buttress was it that I planned to climb?' The strategy remains clear, but the uncertainty grows, for they all look alike up so close. 'Gain the left rock buttress before moving through mixed terrain, then out onto the snow slopes above, which lead up and into the rocky outcrops of Mt Haidinger'.

To climb unroped is nothing new for me, for it is very much a part of mountaineering. At times the security of speed overrides the security of a belay. Having a partner at your side provides reassurance as you venture into the mountain's features above. But to climb alone, a new fear develops within; a fear that will keep your mind sharp. Maintaining absolute concentration is critical.

>>

OFFICER REPORT

WORDS / **Julian Goad**



THE 2015/16 MOUNTAINEERING SEASON in New Zealand saw many MUMC members in the mountains this year. Unfortunately, we also saw the tragic loss of two life members, Stuart Hollaway and Dale Thistlethwaite. Stuart established one last route on the hidden Balfour face of Mt Tasman with Richard Bassett-Smith, called “One longer day”. The topo was drawn into the Pioneer Hut book, with a haunting quote next to the name that read:

“Why do old men wake early, he wondered? Is it to have one longer day?”

Poor conditions made climbing difficult this year, as many routes did not have sufficient snow and ice, or were cut off from large bergschrunds. By January, high temperatures prevented slopes from freezing, resulting in many early morning retreats. Despite these conditions, climbing continued with most MUMC members climbing on the West Coast in Pioneer Hut and Centennial Hut. The early season climbers bagged numerous summits including Mt Lendenfeld, Mt Haidinger, Glacier Peak and Mt Tasman, while the late season climbers explored the rock routes in the region.

Mountaineering for MUMC won’t be the same without Stu and Dale to impart their experience to us. They will be dearly missed and the knowledge they gave to us will guide us through the mountains for many seasons to come.

A REALISTIC ALPINE TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND

WORDS / **Tom Patton**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Luke Frisken**

TRIPS AND ADVENTURES will often be planned down to the smallest detail, yet turned on their heads by the simplest and most basic of things – the weather. My recent trip to NZ, ostensibly for the purpose of alpine climbing, was more an exercise in flexibility around weather conditions than anything else. I had planned out a 10 day stint in Pioneer Hut on the Fox Glacier névé, a few days resting up and sport climbing in Wanaka and then an attempt of Mt Aspiring from Colin Todd Hut. The weather and conditions started out looking OK, a little bit warm at times but no particularly large or persistent storm systems. However fairly quickly conditions deteriorated; faces and ridges melted out and storm systems blew in. We were faced with repeated frustrations, yet through it all I feel I have come away a better climber and more prepared for approaching New Zealand weather in the future.

We flew in to Pioneer Hut right as a minor storm system hit, a bit of rain, a bit of wind as well as quite warm temperatures. We entertained ourselves climbing the rock on Pioneer Ridge which included one memorable pitch of sustained grade 15/16 climbing up some of the loosest alpine rock I’ve ever had the misfortune to touch. After a couple of days the weather actually cleared, we had a good freeze overnight and we forgot to set our alarm. We woke up late and headed up the South Ridge of Mt Haidinger. The summit ridge wasn’t in condition and it was getting late so we turned back and trundled back down to hut. The next day, with more good weather, we headed out and climbed Moonshine Buttress, a wonderful piece of alpine rock with varied and sustained climbing for 250m with a crux of 16/17. This was a great day out in a really

amazing place and emphasised what the mountains can provide and the simple enjoyment of experiencing the alpine environment. From this high-point things somewhat went downhill. A new storm front was approaching and the freezing level the next day was far too high. When we set off at 5am the next morning I was post-holing calf deep out of the hut – not great climbing conditions. That afternoon half our group, myself included, flew out back to Fox Glacier.

At this point the plan was still to get back into the hills and climb Mt Aspiring. Yet the weather remained poor and unsuitable for climbing. The forecast was for several days of unsettled weather, of high winds and rain with a freezing level remaining stubbornly above 3000m. When faced with such hostile conditions one’s only option is to reassess and change plans. So we packed up and headed South to Fjordland and went tramping. On reflection this trip has changed the way I will approach climbing in NZ. The vagaries of the weather are such that any plans one makes have to be flexible above all else. Approaching things stubbornly will only lead to frustration. New Zealand is a great place to climb and if you do maintain this flexible approach and don’t get too hung up on achieving objectives it’s hard to have a bad time.

LEFT: Julian and Tom celebrating a great first pitch near Pioneer Hut.
ABOVE: Tom and Molis ascending the West Ridge of Mt Haidinger.

“Thin slivers of clear ice gather around. Unavoidable, and set in the path ahead”

In a quiet calm, the crampon points leave the snow, finding a new surface. Climbing rock in crampons is familiar, positioning the metal points as so they do not skate from underneath becomes a perfected art form. The tiniest nicks in the rock hold your full body weight on a single crampon point. The challenge comes in the transition, as crampons are removed for the security of large, perhaps cumbersome mountaineering boots. Crampons are packed away and ice tools are sheathed into the gear loops of the pack, which is shouldered once more.

Beautiful pink rock towers above, where it leads to is not yet clear but from its weaknesses a gentle path gives way. A party is far below, their head torches still visible in the morning light. There is no gauge for the distance covered, no rope to measure the pitches, only the view which rapidly extends as each hand and foot passes across the rock before me.

A new fear grows within. What would be called black ice on the roads at home is also present here. Thin slivers of clear ice gather around. Unavoidable, and set in the path ahead. Its intensity can be seen to increase but it is negotiable with absolute concentration. There is no room for error, no belay to provide a catch. To be in the right head space allows you to move through. Some would say I am crazy, insane, stupid to name a few; perhaps I am. To fight fear, the unknown, to go out there and climb alone. I say it’s a mental game; the technical difficulty is well within my ability; conditions are acceptable.

The buttress eases off, snow is returning, the transition comes sooner than expected and climbing becomes easier than before. It’s a relief to be away from the hidden trickles of ice. The realisation passes through my mind that the climb may well be over no sooner than it began. A new security is found, reinstated crampons now bite and re-

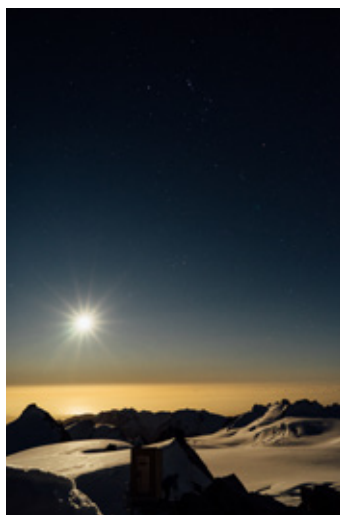
trieved tools swing fluidly and the outcrops above are in sight. What remains of the rock is scattered amongst the gentle snow slope and soon stays behind.

Head space is being threatened; water is flowing underneath the ice. I can hear a prominent stream in the gully to my right. I pause and seek a clean line through before moving on, gaining the high point to the right for a secure route. What looks like eight more stances to the ridge works out to be about double that.

I crest the outcrops and I am bathing in sunlight, and relief, but shortly and to my surprise I see the first party down below already moving along the southern ridge. I think quietly that they are doing pretty well for time. It would be another full hour before I would have the chance to act as paparazzi for the three mountaineers as they one by one summit Mt Haidinger.

This is a soloist’s affair and not that of the unseasoned or common mountaineer. There are many lessons to be learned in the mountains and they can’t all come at once. It takes many seasons, each in their own will build on your skills, confidence and understanding of the beautiful but unforgiving world above.

FEATURE: The author waiting on the summit of Mt Haidinger whilst one party is climbing the last pitch to pick him up.
BELOW CLOCKWISE FROM THE LEFT:
ONE: David climbing the final pitch of Mt Haidinger.
TWO: Summit high-fives.
THREE: Anja cutting a step to rest her calves during the steep section.
FOUR: A 2.30 a.m start means to travel under a full moon which turned red as it touched the horizon, lighting up snow, water and the clouds along the way.



One *longer* Day

WORDS / **Richard Bassett-Smith**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Stuart Hollaway, Anja Fuechtbauer & Molis Yunzab**

Ice cliffs

The crunching sound of breaking ice thunders across the glacier upon which we are standing. We both look up as one very small section of the massive ice cliffs above begins to fall. Then, without a word, I take a few paces forwards to move behind an ice boulder – a relict from a previous ice cliff collapse. Stu does the same. There’s no point running. We would only be increasing our exposure. Where we were would just have to suffice.

THE ICE SEEMS TO BE SUSPENDED in the air as it falls down. When it hits the glacier floor it bursts into a new sound as the collapse impacts and tumbles towards us. White mist engulfs us, but only small debris scatters past and clears up sooner that it had started. “Well, that was exciting, but let’s get out of here”. No more is said. We both turn and resume our steps towards our distant bivvy lower down on the glacier. Stu is out ahead, the rope skipping between us.

The ice cliffs, below which we find ourselves, stretch across Mt Tasman’s shoulders. They are a couple of hundred metres high, hanging precariously hundreds more metres above us. While we may have been out in the middle of the glacier, their threatening presence is unavoidable. It is one of those paths you have to take. Just move efficiently across the glacier and don’t stop for the next kilometre. The ice cliff had been pretty quiet during the days before.

But it seems like the ice fall before was just foreplay. If I was to describe the breaking ice as thunder just moments before, this time, I would describe it as the cracking of lightening now - this was a big one. Stu shouts to me “Run!” Neither of us really needed the prompt. All cautions about travelling in crevassed terrain are thrown away. I’m gathering the rope mid run as to not trip on it and a seemingly endless sprint begins. Ten seconds pass and we are still running as fast as big boots and heavy crampons allow. The sound of breaking ice tumbling behind us ever so present but we are in the open with nowhere to hide. So we keep running. Stu begins to slow down; we are pretty much out of the fall zone now, but I keep moving until I am in between some small ice boulders – the debris of an avalanche from earlier in the season. A couple more seconds pass. Now looking back, the entire glacier, wall to wall, mountain side to mountain side is beaten by a snowstorm and then all visibility disappears in white mist.

It is one thing to watch an ice fall from a safe distance but it is a whole other feeling to be in amongst it. To be there, in that moment, is awe inspiring. Not that you wish to be in between the collapsing ice cliff but wow, it’s pretty surreal. Those mountains have a power which is not to be messed with.

It’s 8 pm when we stride into our bivvy.

Approach

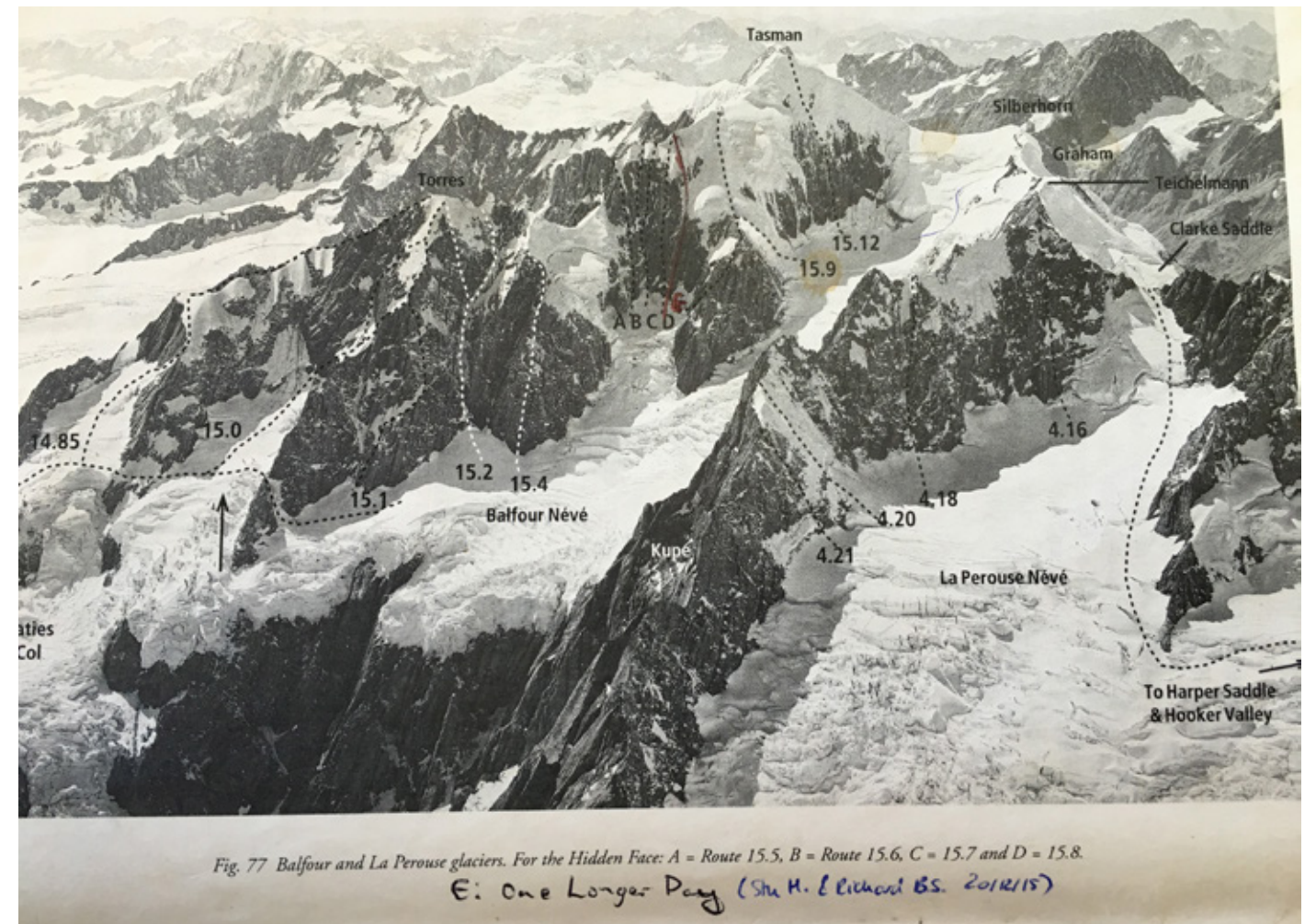
FOUR YEARS AGO, I passed over Katies Col and onto the Balfour Glacier, but back then it was a little different to today. I had engaged Stu as a professional guide to go mountaineering. Not at one point did Stu let me off the rope. I was short roped, tethered, and belayed through a 30-hour traverse of Mt Tasman via the Balfour rib. Not to mention being overtaken by a storm and bivvying in a plastic bag on the north shoulder of Mt Tasman at 2 am - hanging off not more than an ice screw. This time, Stu and I were climbing as ‘amateur mountaineers’ together. (Climbing as amateur mountaineers is no not necessarily a reflection on the individual’s skill, but rather to demonstrate that a pair is climbing on a recreational basis as opposed to that of professional guide and their client or someone who is a full time climber for their profession.)

Getting into the Balfour Glacier is a feat of mountaineering by itself. Having left in the early morning hours from Pioneer Hut, we had skirted through heavily crevassed terrain, keeping close to the 2200 m contour line before rising up onto Katies Col. From there the glacier falls out from beneath us. Here the rope was only a risk to us, so it was stowed away. With a second axe in hand we proceed to climb unroped.

It was around mid morning when we reached the final drop that lead onto the Balfour Glacier. Stu scrambled around the protruding rocky outcrop looking for the bolt rings, but they were buried in snow. Unable to find them we turned in and began down climbing the sixty or so degree slope. Beneath us: a large bergschrund followed by a steep snow slope which ran off an edge. But that was neither here nor there, our tools provide more than adequate security facing into the mountain when the conditions are right*. Lower down we reached the second set of bolt rings (which were easy to find), which were useful in negotiating over the schrund below. A quick discussion followed as to whether we need one or two ropes to make it past the schrund. We opt for just the one. It pays off as both strands clear past the schrund and we are on the glacier once more without losing time dealing with a second rope.

Stu didn’t miss the opportunity to point out the possibilities as we entered the Balfour. He had his eyes on many lines, most of which are yet to be climbed. Soon after, an obvious bivvy site presented itself and we setup camp. In the past, a plastic garbage bag and half a foam mat was all I had, but here I was emptying out my sleeping bag, half a tent (of which Stu was carrying the other half), plus all the other added comforts required for a grand bivvy. Including a stove to melt water. It’s a little bit of a luxury which I’m not used to.

Our original intention was to climb a rock route in the afternoon, but the fresh dusting of snow ruled it out. Stu seemed to be preoc-



cupied with thoughts. I could tell he had something else on his mind besides trying to find a rock route that was suitable for the rest of the day to stick to the plan. He had his eyes on the Hidden Face of Mt Tasman and he was very excited when the suggestion was made to put in tracks in preparation for the next day, instead of going for a climb.

A glacier. A frozen river high up a mountain above freezing levels. It is a frozen river in motion. And as rivers differ in speed of flow and temper one from another, so do their frozen relatives. The glacier around Pioneer Hut is rather tame compared to the Balfour. Here the ice is constantly moving, at all times of the day the rumbles can be heard. Ice breaking away, rocks tumbling down - the place doesn’t sleep. Debris can be seen strewn across the glacier; the far side depicts the path of an earlier massive avalanche.

The Balfour Glacier is steep, crevasses leave gaping big gouges. It’s a wandering maze of negotiation around these features. At times we crested an ice feature only to be met by a 30 or 50 plus metre drop into the depths below. We turned around soon after heading up the centre of the glacier. Instead we tried from the left side, where the rock of Mt Torres [AF2] meets the glacial ice, walking into a crevasse from its edge, only to be met by its sheer, steep, unclimbable walls. We took yet another approach, this time it kept leading us on, perhaps it might go?

The Hidden Face was in the distance. Glacier travel was no longer acceptable, ropes were uncoiled, full rope lengths were run out, climbing from feature to feature, dropping into a snowed-in crevasse, walking along its length before we climbed out again to run up 60 degree slopes, before cresting onto a plateau surrounded by fractured ice. Roped but free of complexity, the features of the terrain became natural protection acting as directed runners for the rope, while the dead weight of the other climber was there to counter a fall. Leads were swapped. I could see Stu in the distance, ever so delicately bridging

across a dubiously thin ice bridge - beneath a wall of ice. Stu breached the wall via a subtle ramp leading up to its left. With much excitement he declares, “It will go”, before he turned around for one longer day.

The Hidden Face

THE HOURS WERE EARLY once more, the bivvy collapsed and stashed in a garbage bag to be left behind. No sooner than the crampons were on our feet, Stu took off. He couldn’t have set a faster pace. I remember thinking what I had got myself into, but no sooner than that we found ourselves in thigh deep snow. It was almost a relief, until we considered the new challenge that it presented. Our tracks from the day before made for easy navigation. We retraced our steps with stars overhead in the cold night air. The features familiar, progress steady, as first light dimmed our torches, the Hidden Face loomed up ahead.

The excitement, the anticipation, the lines and the possibilities. Final preparations were made: a second rope was drawn, flaked and we began to trail up. A mixed start, crampon points met rock, not one but three omega link cams fall into place before we met the ice. A moderate mixed first pitch, two steep pitches followed. The lines run full rope lengths, a belay is showered in ice, the next more considerate, pitches begin to blur. Opportunities create distractions, alternative lines, but remember they are all new, just climb the most obvious one. The ice conditions were brilliant. Steep climbing continues until gaining a gentle snow slope which runs into the corner. I say gentle, but that is still at sixty degrees. The steep corner pitch offered perfect bridging and then disappeared from sight. Rising above a wall of steep ice, but uniquely featured as to keep the weight on our feet. The surrounding mountains were below, the arête was gained, the rope ran free, a new pair of feet takes the lead. Now we bathed in sunlight for the first time, the shoulder was near, screws were placed far apart and in quick succession. >>

The wind hit, its strength be known, jacket zips closed up. Pioneer Hut was far below, no movement, no presence, no one knew we were up here. Mt Tasman was close. Ropes were cut loose to trail behind. Last time I had been here, a storm brewed in the sky with the sun setting, but now it was early afternoon when we reached the summit. What should have been 15 minutes on the descent from Mt Tasman to Mt Silberhorn turned into several hours of challenging front pointing with ropes. Concentration was critical - not a single step or crampon point to be missed. Then, when we thought we were clear, the shelf below Mt Silberhorn contained bullet ice hidden beneath its disguise of pleasant snow. Travel was slow, the day wore on, our plan to be back at Pioneer Hut became a plan for one longer day.

Return to Pioneer

THE RAIN WAKES US UP. We've slept through our alarm. Unsurprising, after the adrenaline rush the ice falls had added to our already long day the day before. Storm shells are donned and it is time to move. Conditions prove challenging; when passing the schrund our tools slide through the ice. Concentration on our front points gets critical once more. A race against time, the storm clouds coming in fast from the south; as we reach Katies Col, we're engulfed. Visibility drops, we lose sight of references, our earlier approach tracks disappear. The day moves on, the hut is appearing for moments, then is lost from sight. We can see our feet but not the ground, no definition. I could be walking anywhere going by feel alone. A hut appears and so does a person not yet aware of our presence.



The excitement of Stu, I wish I could have captured it on film. To share that moment once more. For it was one longer day I wish could go on.

"New route on the Hidden (Balfour) Face of Rarakiroa Mt Tasman.

NZ 6-, passages of Ice 4, thin, mixed.

7x60m pitches to crest above buttress.

Excellent.

Stuart Hollaway & Richard Bassett-Smith, 19/12/15."

PREVIOUS PAGE: Climbing book photograph with the newly established route.

THIS PAGE:

TOP LEFT: Stu and Richard looking at photos of the route just after their return to the hut.

TOP RIGHT: Richard reaching some easier angled ground at the top of pitch 5.

CENTRE LEFT: Not much to say, really.

CENTRE MIDDLE: Conditions on Balfour Face looking good; on ridges up high conditions are hard & shiny.

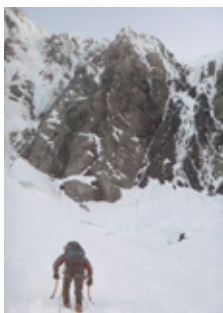
CENTRE RIGHT: Richard emerging out of the Balfour Glacier - grey day; bright smiles. Thanks to Richard for a great adventure.

BOTTOM LEFT: Stu's entry into the Hut Logbook.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Richard post-holing up to the Hidden Face. We climbed the thin/mixed line up the right edge of the buttress finishing up a long steep ice wall behind the arete.



Back from a 'couple of nights in the Balfour. Climbed Tasman via new line on Hidden Face. [Hut log on Silberhorn - Arch]
"One Longer Day" (NZ 6- passages of Ice 4, thin, mixed) Climb mixed terrain into steep ice up the right edge of the Sessions Buttress. Line obvious in most photos (thick). Excellent climbing. 7x60m onto crest above buttress. Continue up the West Ridge et al. Very good looking conditions on main Balfour - Hidden ice flows - Torres. Hard ice up high on ridges.
Great climb; great day on the beautiful mountain.
"Why do old men wake early, he wondered. Is it to have one longer day?"



BLUE LAKE ICE CLIMBING

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / **Luke Frisken**

TWO DAYS IN A ROW, stuck in the tent while it rains and sleet outside. Everyone's going stir crazy. I think both Tom and I are running out of patience after our third game of 'Paddocks' today. At least there are extra avocados, right? But for some reason I can't bring myself to get out and find where they got buried in the snow. Jack's tent is badly ripped, Andrew stood on and bent the poles in Tom's tent, and I'm beginning to think this trip is turning into an unmitigated disaster.

The story began with the rumour that there is some decent ice climbing to be had in the locale of Blue Lake, Kosciuszko National Park, NSW. This rumour spread amongst climbing acquaintances, leading to a surprisingly well organised plan to set out for Guthega and make our way up the Snowy River. We would be carrying climbing and camping gear on skis until we reached our destination where we could stay for several days and enjoy the climbing and skiing amusements to be had in the surrounding area.

When all had arrived at Guthega, I was somewhat surprised by the weight of my pack, easily the heaviest I'd ever carried for skiing or for bushwalking! Why oh why, so many avocados? At the base of a small hill, four of us stood taking bets and considering the likelihood of Owyong joining us in the upright position. The outcome really was hilarious, but despite the enthusiasm; it was inevitable. After all it was his first time on skis and he was carrying a heavy backpack. A sensible decision was made to return to the car and fetch snow shoes.

The start of the track climbs up following the Snowy River and negotiates a number of steep-ish rolling hills. I distinctly remember cursing my stupidity on a number of occasions while trapped, face first in a snowy ditch, weighed down by an abundance of avocados. The light faded and shortly after crossing the Snowy River over an exciting cable footbridge it was head-torch time. As the temperature dropped, the snow began to firm up, and a steep slope below our destination perfectly illustrated the advantages



of skins. Those in the group with skins on our skis shot to the top of the slope, and after dumping packs, proceeded to enjoy a number of runs past our labouring friends who seemed to be sliding backwards more than forwards. Any trip to this area we would totally recommend taking skins to add grip to the base of your skis.

On the first clear morning, everyone excitedly clambered and rushed in a rather haphazard manner over the ridges and down to the side of Blue Lake, which was completely frozen over! Having been there in summer, I could never have imagined such an event. Tentatively, I watched the others ski out onto the surface, and followed soon after. Towering above us were many ice formations and mixed lines, some of which looked to my eye to be possibly 60 m long.

Despite the fantastic ice conditions, we were beaten down, wet, and tired. Retrospectively sitting in here in a warm room, perhaps we should have stayed for some more type two fun? Talking to others about it, such good ice here in Australia appears to be a rare occurrence. We instead beat a hasty retreat the next morning, and drove back home.

ABOVE: Tomas Dorrington leading a pitch of ice.
BELOW: Jack McCutchan styling it on the way to Blue Lake.
BOTTOM LEFT: Beating a hasty retreat back to Guthega as the weather worsens.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Our campsite overlooking the Snowy River.



PADDLING

“River trips are at their best when you not only have a crew that technically knows what they are doing but when they are excelling in shennanigans as well”

From left: Richard Bassett-Smith, Chris Harper, Matt Dunwoodie, Anja Fuechtbauer & Oscar, Ryan Judd, Tom Beagley, Dan Cocker, Ben Webb & Mitchell Stephen getting ready to run a rapid on the Mitta Mitta.

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Olivia Grover-Johnson**



OFFICER REPORT

WORDS / **Jack McCutchan**



IT'S AN EXCITING TIME to be paddling at MUMC! After a period of relative dormancy, it feels like a resurgence is coming. We have all the right people, all the right gear and all the right enthusiasm to build up paddling once again.

Our priorities this year:

- Improve safety on all trips
- Increase participation in all paddle sports
- Foster a self-sustaining framework for paddling at MUMC

Last year's Mitchell River trip with LUMC and MUOC proved the popularity of rafting, and thrust paddling back into the limelight. An intervarsity Boater-X race on Amphitheatre rapid was a popular spectacle; however, campground boat races were somewhat more disappointing for the club. The trip also proved to be a valuable catalyst for thought, with a safety review held post-trip to analyse what improvements to our safety management could be implemented for this trip and others in the future. Despite having no serious incidents (other than Dan misplacing his keys in the wetsuit he was wearing for a few hours), it was important to take a step back and look at any "near-miss" incidents to make sure that our safety procedures guide us towards running trips that are as safe as they can be.

Led by the ever-brave and oft-mistreated Capt. Oscar (the meerkat),

our new rafts also made a number of more adventurous trips on the Snowy River and Mitta Mitta River possible, where many members seem to have discovered that there's more to paddling than the same old trips down the Yarra. A number of members have once again headed to the Kayak School in NZ to take the next step in their paddling, showing promising signs of having some new leaders coming up through the ranks in the next couple of years. It's great to see the potential for increasing both our participation rates and the number of members taking on higher-level skills in the sport.

Enthusiasm for paddling has actually been a bit overwhelming recently; one highlight was having 25 members paddling down the Yarra to the Christmas party (and an impressive 16 delicate souls braving the river the next morning). After an active spring season on the rivers, it seemed we couldn't run enough trips to keep up with demand. The summer months have revived regular day trips down to Torquay and even Port Phillip Bay for an introduction to surf kayaking, with Flinders offering some great beat-downs and bounces for members with a solid roll and good lungs.

This grand rise of paddling (unfortunately not yet matched by river levels) is encouraging to see, but to make sure it continues and survives, we need your help! We want as many people involved in paddling as possible, learning from other members and helping to share that knowledge with new members. There is a whole stack of funding available for training and a whole calendar full of trips on which to practice your paddling and leading skills. Many thanks to the valued contributions of all the members who are responsible for the great things going on!

CANOE POLO

WORDS / **Emma Johnson**



FOLLOWING A SOCIAL intervarsity night in July last year, in the darkness of the Monash carpark, a small group of OXOs decided to start a Canoe Polo team. The subsequent 8 months have seen a Canoe Polo Renaissance within the club, with 34 members getting in a boat (many for the first time) to represent MUMC.

The initial Novice team has since advanced to be competitive in C-grade on Wednesday nights at Richmond pool, and the continued interest in the sport has allowed us to enter a second team in this year's autumn competition. There has been a lot of improvement, with everyone greatly enhancing their boat control skills, tactics, eskimo rolls and handrolls.

Additionally, summer saw the club attend three 'Interclubs series' roundrobin days around Victoria. Our teams enjoyed competing and relaxing on the riverside with many successful results. Of particular note was our women's team who won their section at the Nagambie Lakes Regatta Centre event.

In September, the stars aligned and Melbourne University Sport provided substantial financial support towards new gear. This allowed us to purchase 6 boats, 7 carbon paddles, 12 sets of helmets, decks and personal flotation devices (PFDs), 4 balls, 2 sets of soft roof racks and a ball pump, as well as footpegs and bumpers to repair the 6 existing boats. Thus, we now have enough gear to fit out two polo teams, which will let us hold independent club trainings and practice games in the future. The carbon paddles have been an especially big hit among the players.

More recently, we were also excited to offer new members a taste of Canoe Polo as an Intro Trip activity this year! Over the weekend, 45 new members were introduced to Canoe Polo on the warm waters of Lake Eildon. The sessions included practising wet exits, paddle strokes and ball skills before trying a competitive game. Hopefully some of these new faces will be showing up in our teams soon!

It's been a big year for this extraordinary sport within the club. I'm looking forward to seeing our skills base continue to grow and more members getting on the water to give it a go.

CRY ME A RIVER

WORDS / **Anja Fuechtbauer**

Example – O'Sullies, Buller River, NZ

LOUDLY SAY THAT you are not ready for that section of the river.

Remember the stories where your pro paddling friends got wind-screened on the biggest rapid.

Be shaky, tense and nervous and separate yourself from the group.

Sit quietly staring into nothingness.

Get in the boat and announce you'll only run this section if the first roll feels good.

Try some rolls.

Look miserable because your dry top is not keeping you dry - at all.

Flip in the first big rapid because you run into your capsized leader.

Panic, fail at your roll and immediately pull the deck, because you know your leader is no use to you. He /she is upside down. Gone. Dead. Can't look after you.

When you surface and see your leader paddling next to you, ignore his/her comment about: 'why did you not tap, I was waiting to t-rescue you'.

In your head scream at him/her: "Because you were gone/dead/eaten by the river!" But you say nothing and just look distressed and accusing at him/her.

When your leader tells you this rapid wasn't that bad, you say: "It was the freaking biggest wavetrain I've ever run."

Be more freaked out.

Cry.

Sit in an eddy looking miserable while the others play in a wave.

Paddle past eddies with your friends in them because you are too freaked out to try and get into the eddy and float down the main current instead.

Cry again.

Ask how all the other rapids are on the river in comparison to the one you just ran.

Ask if you could portage them.

Ignore the fact that your friends would not ever take you on a section they believe you could not paddle.

Also ignore that the paddling teacher from kayak school said, "If you wanted to try big water grade III, you should try O'Sullies because the rapids are 'fluffy' and 'flush you out nicely' and 'nobody ever died on that section'."

When scouting the biggest rapid of the day, and you are encouragingly asked how it looked, answer with: "Death and despair".

Watch half of a local paddling club play in the rapid and realise you now have an even bigger audience.

Make it down in one piece, half blind because water splashes your contact lenses behind your eyeballs.

End up in a surging eddy you feel is worse than the grade III rapid you just ran.

Practice rolling in the eddy next to the huge rapid.

Swim because you fail to roll and also fail to get t-rescued.

Get a deep water rescue because the eddy you chose to roll in is in a gorge.

When your leader comes back and asks what happened, say: "Nothing" and pretend the water running down on you is invisible.

When you complain you are now really cold, don't admit that it was because you went for an unplanned swim.

When your leader compliments you on making it down well, just make big eyes and say: "It was alright I guess".

Be nice and be the shuttle bunny for your leaders when they run the section again.

Get them ice cream in town while they paddle the section a second time.

Eat all the ice cream while waiting.

Two months later tell everyone it was a great day out.

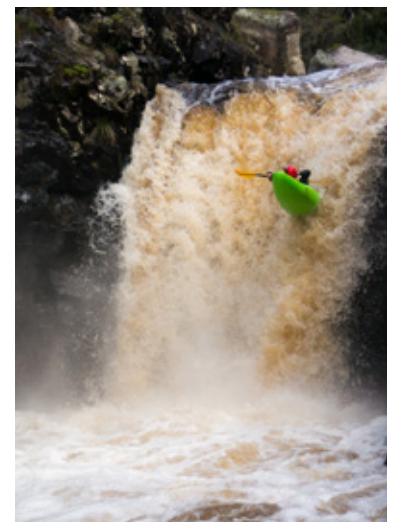
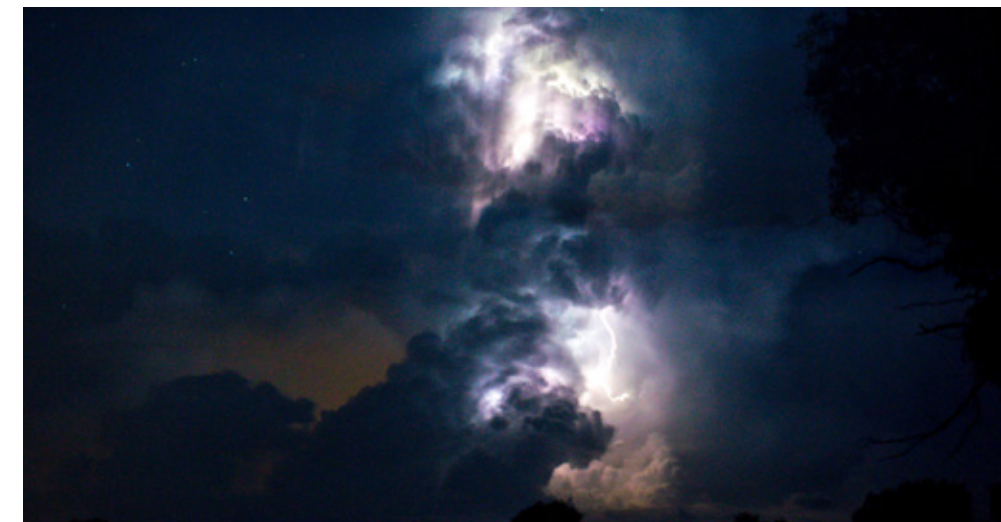
Thanks Matt, Richard and David for a fun time in Murch!

A STORM HITS

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / **Benjamin Webb**

WE WATCHED THE LIGHTNING crawl across the sky near Albury, hoping the rain was falling in the right places to bring up our mission target: the Peak River. Arriving to a halfway campsite near the border at midnight, a recently abandoned campfire (and lonely porkchop) were very much appreciated.

Checking the charts at 6 am, there had been plenty of rain in the region, but the gauge on the Goob hadn't responded yet.



We decided to play it safe and head to the Upper Snowy. Just as the last bar of 3G was fading, somewhere between Tallangatta and Beringama, I refreshed the BOM page and saw the Goob was on the rise! "Stop!", I yelled at Shane. "Turn around, we're going to the Peak!" We re-routed the crew and 5 hours later were scouting lines on the coolest double drop (8 m, 4 m) in South East Australia. Shane and I took beater lines off the 8 m, but I did get this shot of Anna killing it with a super steezy boof.



MITTA MITTA RIVER

WORDS / Anja Fuechtbauer

PHOTOGRAPHY / Anja Fuechtbauer, Ben Webb & Olivia Grover-Johnson

Rafting, Paddling & Rolling

FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, there was a new public holiday this year: Grand Final Day. We took the opportunity to head to the mighty Mitta Mitta River. What was initially planned as a simple kayaking trip turned into an awesome weekend of learning more about guiding a raft and a little bit of kayaking as well. Or, of how not to kayak and how to swim.

Let's begin. A Friday well-spent faffing around trying to get ready and get to the river was a mission: getting up at seven in the morning, picking up gear and people, driving (a lot), food shopping along the way and arriving at camp at sunset. Well, the sunset part was at least true for Richard Bassett-Smith and myself, who sported a Landcruiser to the Mitta together. After an epic fail of not making the right turn in Omeo (we went left into town), we stopped at the scenic Mt. Kosciuszko lookout, admired the landscape and the evolving sunset and snapped some happy shots. Fair to say, we sort of realised we were on the wrong road when the street markings turned from white to alpine yellow, and the sight of Mt Hotham airport gave us clues to turn back.

Arriving back at camp with a good portion of laughter, we were met with concerns for our whereabouts. Everyone was relieved that we didn't end up down the gorge along the windy road. I had sent a text when we drove through Omeo (again), but the sketchy reception made everyone at camp nervous, as they did not know at what time we had actually sent it. Could have been hours ago. Especially because Richard and me were the first car in group before we drove through Omeo, alarm bells were readily activated in everyone's heads when Dan's car arrived and we weren't there. Lesson learnt for the future: send text and include time sent. Makes life easier for all. We spent the rest of the evening around the bonfire under a stellar night sky. Having a drink, sharing a story or two and listening to guitar tunes. Could have stayed in my warm spot next to the fire forever.

The next morning, we got ready to paddle the gorge section of the Mitta. Mitchell Stephen, Matt Dunwoodie, Ben Webb and Paul Webb jumped into kayaks, whilst the rest of us hopped into the rafts. One group of four into the big one and a pair into the small sports raft that had Ryan Judd brought along. I managed to score the sports raft with Dani Curnow-Andreason and we had a ball! The little raft is much more agile than the big ones and we could take almost the same lines through the rapids as the kayaks. Good for me, as I was keen but undecided about kayaking the gorge section the next day. The sports raft gave me a great way to experience the more difficult rapids in an easy and less committing way. We did surprisingly well. Only flipped the small raft once and most of the swims were due to ongoing piracy between the rafts and kayaks. Or when we managed to raft down the river fully loaded with kayaks (as per the paddling cover photo).

The river wound along the scenery and it was one rapid after the next. Dani maneuvered us well through 'The Graveyard' and into the gorge. The absolute highlight was a rapid called 'The Waterfall'. It was majestic and fun and not quite as big as the name suggested. I've seen pictures of it in flood though and that looks a bit more committing. But sunshine conditions for us. Towards the end of the section, Mitch handed me his kayak for the 'boring' flat water to the take out and I managed to practice some rolls. Confidence for the next day in a kayak was high. Sort of. Not really. At all.

Sunday! Kayak day! An early start with everything packed up and car shuffled down the river. I was definitely feeling nervous when I pushed the kayak in the water. The last river trip in a kayak was way too long ago and the Mitta is one or two steps up from the Yarra and the Goulbourn. I managed the first little rapids just fine. Richard had swapped the raft for a kayak too and he encouraged me to roll. Confidently, I did. I did try. And it didn't work. Two attempts and then I pulled the deck... Argh! Shortly after this, the two rafts got stuck below a rapid and I crashed into them, flipped upside down and went for swim number two... I had some more head-under-water time along the way but managed to get t-rescued by either Matt or Ben every time. Confidence was shaky and only Mitch's forgiving creeker saved me a couple of times from flipping upside down. 'The Graveyard' had to be scouted again and I would lie if I was to say my heart didn't beat fast and my mouth was dry. However, there were about six kayaks in the eddies along the length of the rapid, ready to rescue me should I flip. That's a boat every three metres. But I didn't! Big cheering from everyone and a big smile on my face. And nobody saw that wobble of my boat (or heard my whispered 'do not flip, do not flip') when eddying out, right? I was looking forward to lunch. I hadn't quite realised in what frequency and quick succession the rapids followed each other on the river while rafting the day before (something all the paddlers love about the Mitta). I was exhausted and was very much looking forward to dry out my nose properly.

After lunch, we headed towards the gorge again. A little bit nervous still, but feeling better after the break. We had Paul going for a swim (sure, the new paddle is different...), adding to the list of bootie beers for the end of the day. Dan Cocker and Dani were on that list too, with Mitch and Ben to follow as well. Paddling down another rapid, I was happy and proud for having managed it so well. Matt gave me the thumbs up and watched the others come down. Eddying out, I flipped and in the process I noticed Matt being reeeeeeally far away. Too far for a t-rescue. So I tried to roll once more. What the heck, worst case I swim anyway. But it worked! Unfortunately, some of the others saw me rolling. This meant that my novice paddling and swimming times were counted and any future swim would result in bootie beers for me. I can roll now, right? I kayaked down 'the Waterfall' and squealed with joy! Paddle in the air and totally not helping to stabilise me in the water. Mitch's boat to the rescue once more.

Later on we saw an amazing act of teamwork by Liv and Richard, when Richard tried to hand Ryan a paddle to the raft and Ryan got a lovely push out of the boat by Liv Grover-Johnson! The master of the rafts went for a swim! Ha! Mitch flipped the little raft with Ben and overall the day finished with more rolls by myself and Dan on flat water. The rest of the day saw bootie beers with a litre of old, warm, car beer, packing up, faffing around, loading a motorcycle on the troopie and heading back to Melbourne. No red lights were run in the process...

MAIN: Mitta Mitta Nights. One of my favourite nights in the whole wide world. Such a great trip with amazing friends, good water and millions of stars.
BOTTOM LEFT: Ben, Matt and Richard trying to store the motorbike on the car...
BOTTOM CENTRE: The author's joy on 'The Waterfall'.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Mitch running 'The Waterfall' and taking a big plunge.

Kayaking in New Zealand

WORDS / **Matt Dunwoodie**

PHOTOGRAPHY & DRAWINGS /

**Sivanesan Ganabathy,
Anja Fuechtbauer & Matt Dunwoodie**



DEPENDING ON WHO YOU ASK, you may get a different response as to how this adventure came to be. From my perspective, it probably started just as I was about to fall asleep on a cool New Zealand December night. I had spent the day caving in Waitomo when I received a message from Anja. She wanted to know whether I could meet her, David and Richard down in Murchison. It would require nine hours of driving, and add in a four hour ferry ride between the islands. Yes! Awesome! Except I don't have a car...

This occurred right before the others were flying into the mountains for ten days. I hadn't been able to give a definite yes before they flew out of reception. This mattered because Richard would only come if he had someone to kayak with, as David and Anja were going to be preoccupied with kayak school. They were planning to arrive on the 26th, 9 days from now, in order to start the course on the 28th, and this was all I knew.

By the 23rd, I thought it was about time to start heading south. Never having hitchhiked before, I really had no clue how long it would take or if it would even work. I booked a ferry ticket and packed my bags. Already arranged was a seat down to Wellington with a friend and I arrived at the ferry 30 minutes before departure. We pulled into Picton around midnight.

Now, most travellers would settle into a motel or backpackers for the night, but not me! Not in a hurry, but not wanting to fork out the \$20 for accommodation. A short 2km walk to the other side of town would put me at a prime location for hitchhiking, except it was almost 1am. Nevertheless, a determined attitude would hopefully summon the good will, or perhaps sympathy, of a passing car.

While standing on the side of the road, a thought crossed my mind: what the hell am I doing here? The last time I was speaking to Anja was over a week ago, and to the best of my knowledge she didn't even know I was coming down. Maybe Richard had made other plans while climbing in the mountains? Maybe he would stay up there not knowing I was on my way to paddle with him?

My thoughts were quickly interrupted as only after six or seven passing cars, one pulled over and offered me a lift to Nelson. Not quite on the direct path to Murch, but somewhere much closer to sleep. Two hours later I was snuggled up in my sleeping bag next to an abandoned rail line by a beautiful Nelson beach.

Awoken by the sun, I set back on my journey and again, had another car pull over in due time. It seemed I was in luck. John (a factory worker who deep-fries crisps twelve hours a day, every day) was travelling straight through to Murchison. Let's get this show on the road.

Murchison is a small town, with most of its businesses catering to travellers heading between Nelson and Greymouth. Behind the scenes, it offers some beautiful walks in the Kahurangi National Park, and access to the Buller River and all of its wonderful tributaries. I set up my camp on the banks of the Matakaitaki River, with no need for a tent, given how nice the weather was.

I spent two more days bumming around Murchison until I heard from the others. Despite being a day behind on their plans, we finally met up on the 27th and headed off to the NZ Kayak School.

This was one of those trips where things just worked out. There were two beds free at the Kayak School even though the courses (that include onsite accommodation) were fully booked. This meant one room for four OXOs themselves. Couldn't have worked out better! We got some gear the following morning and finally, we could get around to some kayaking.

"Waaaaait... Anja... Did you get a car with roof racks? Damn. Nevertheless, Richard and I had an idea, and we thought it might just work.

Our first run down the Buller was Doctor's Creek. An easy grade II run that was a good warm up. A couple of bumpy rapids here and there and we were out. What draws me back to New Zealand time after time is the three c's: Clearness, Clarity and Quality. You can see the bottom of the river, four metres deep. Now at the take out, the problem was, we only had one car. Quick to come up with an idea, I suggested we try hitchhiking back up to where we left the car. Richard tried for half an hour before getting too hot in the sun. I jumped out for a while and had no luck either. So far it was disappointing. We had picked a spot where people could see us on approach. We stood in front of a place for people to slow down and pull over. It was then I realised we looked like drowned rats, in tattered thermals, in the middle of a rural highway, sporting a slightly psychotic, ear-to-ear smile. It became obvious that we needed to make ourselves look like kayakers. Oh wait... make ourselves look less like escaped convicts. I ran back to the boats and brought over my paddle. Within five minutes I had someone pull over and offer me a ride. Great success! >>

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
ONE: Lighting up the stars on New Years Eve.
TWO: Siva paddling 'Whalers Creek'.
THREE: Richard got urged to do some deep water soloing on Middles on the Matakaitaki River.
FOUR: 'Got you', David, Imogen and Richard after New Years Eve pondering over maps.
FIVE: David styling 'Whale Creek' with huge biceps.
SIX: Paddling in the rain on the Buller River, a favourite.



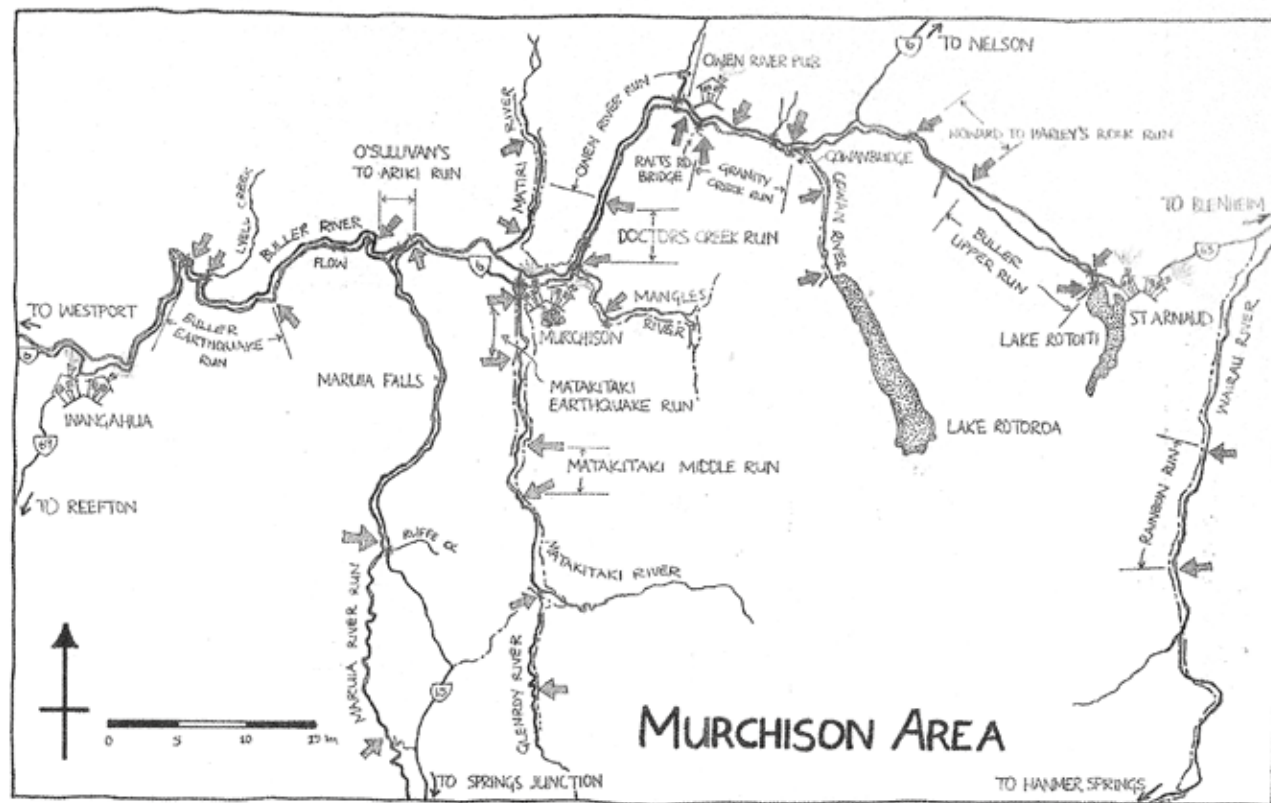


By the time Anja and David had finished kayak school, Richard and I were masters of all the runs. All four of us decided to hang around for a few days to consolidate our skills. We moved out to the local campground, making sure to steer clear of Auckland Uni's campsite. New Year was in a couple of days and we wanted to get at least some sleep. New Year's was actually quite beautiful. We lay out in the campsite with a near 180 degree view of the night sky. The stars were twinkling brighter than I have ever seen.

Our final run was probably the most satisfying. From the top of Doctor's Creek, we paddled into the sunset, arriving just 20m from our tents on our riverside campsite. If you find yourself in Murchison anytime soon, jump on 'Earthquake' for both Buller and Matakītiki, give yourself a day for a couple of runs of 'Granity Creek', wait for the rain to hit and bomb down the Glenroy and finally, don't forget to have a whale of a time on 'Whale Creek'. Also, waterfalls. While I had a great time, it would have been good to at least tick the Maruia Falls. Who else is keen for another trip?

By the time the other three had to fly back to Melbourne, I still had four weeks until my flight out. We said our goodbyes at Christchurch Airport and they left me with a box of food next to a helicopter pad. Like I said, it was one of those trips where you never really plan anything, but you can always work things out, the best kinds of trips.

ABOVE: The obvious solution.
BELOW: Map of Murchison Rivers.



MUMC: ENTHUSIASM BORDERING ON FOOLHARDINESS

WORDS / **Hannah Kerber**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Guillaume Stanguennec**

An Incident Report

SATURDAY MORNING. It is overcast and muggy, the kind of suffocating stillness that makes you want to escape the city walls. Coffees in hand, we pack the kayaks onto the two cars, rubbing sleep from our eyes. My Subaru, a new edition to the family, bristles with excitement at having its roof racks fully loaded for the first time. I am mildly trepidatious. My mother has often told me horror stories of boats ripping the roofs off cars on the highway. Thankfully, the trip wasn't to end in this manner of misfortune.

We arrive in Torquay to discover the main beach brimming with "shark biscuits" (learner surfers). Deciding that it would be best to spare the learners exposure to our kayaks in full surf mode, we drive to Jan Juc beach. The waves look good, the water less crowded and a thick breeze rolls lazily in off the ocean. Standing atop the sand dunes, we turn to each other and exchange nods of approval.

With nine in our party, we hire some longboards to supplement the three kayaks. I take to the water in one of the boats, reacquainting myself with the intricacies of paddling, whilst coming to grips with some frankly intimidating surf. I meet Emma out the back and learn how to T-Rescue in the deep swell. It takes me a full five minutes to voluntarily capsize in the face of such large waves looming over my boat.

For lunch, we dine on all manner of sandwiches, fruit and nuts, chatting about our various adventures. Afterwards, I feel it is time to lend someone else a kayak, so I take Guillaume up on his offer to learn how to surf. I mean, how hard can it be? I think enthusiasm can sometimes border on foolhardiness. As it is, I last about forty-five minutes.

The waves are breaking shallow, to the point where we need only walk out up to our armpits to catch the better ones. I try to find a system for getting over the waves smoothly but gradually get more and more battered than a piece of flake. I catch two waves in and manage to get to my knees on the second, but it doesn't take long for the cruel waters of Bass Strait to get the better of me.

On my way back out I encounter a towering dark monstrosity. It advances ominously and builds to a peak above my head, blocking out the sun. Caught between a fight or flight response, I ready myself as it breaks, the smooth face becoming a mass of angry white water rushing towards me. It slams into my chest with the force of 30 Rhinos. I am knocked over backwards, the longboard whisked from my fingers as I get tumble-dried in a soup of salty foam and seaweed. Pummeled into the sand, I feel the board slam down on my head like a giant hammer from whack-a-mole. Bubbles whirl around me. I struggle to the surface, gasping for breath and fumble along my ankle strap until I find the board adrift next to me. My head feels like a stuffed olive and throbs intermittently, so I stumble towards the beach, trying not to get swept up by another rogue wave.

Back on dry land, I traipse towards my companions nestled against the cliffs. As I draw near, their smiles of recognition transform into gasps in horror. I look down. There is a trail of blood in the sand behind me and the longboard is splattered with red. My face feels sticky. I reach up and touch the top of my head, drawing my hand away to find it coated with blood. Now this is impressive.

Emma immediately jumps into chief rescuer mode and flags down the surf life saving buggy. We hitch a ride up the beach to the red and

yellow tent. As the buggy draws up, the younger lifeguards recoil at the sight of my gory scalp. You'd almost believe they saw bits of brain oozing out through the gash. The more seasoned lifesavers spring into action and I'm whisked onto the treatment bench and wrapped in an astronaut's blanket. Someone insists on strapping an oxygen mask to my face and suddenly I'm surrounded by an entire mob of lifesavers adopting their various emergency responses. One holds my wrist for a pulse, another cleans the fairly sizeable wound on my head, someone else wipes the blood from my face, another asks me questions about the date to observe me for concussion, and a team of two probe me for details about my identity and begin to scribble an incident report. I'm the most excitement they've had all day.

After half an hour of constant pampering, growing increasingly cold in my blood-soaked wetsuit, I am finally sent on my way. The lifesavers hand me some gauze and give me directions to the nearest medical clinic. I'm going to have to get my head stitched up. As I rise to my feet, a pool of blood cascades off the astronaut's blanket and onto the sand. The lifeguards wave goodbye, trying not to look disgusted.

Emma walks me back up the beach and we meet the rest of the group who have come in off the waves. Guillaume looks more sheepish than a New Zealander. It's the very first trip he has organised and I am a walking, talking injury report. He offers to drive me to the clinic so we hasten down the road, me pressing gauze against my head. Andrew comes along for the ride and as we pull up, I leave the boys in the waiting area while I get whisked straight into a consultation room.

The doctor is a tall, bearded guy, who wouldn't look amiss in a pair of boardshorts. He is, in fact, a surfer and I can't help but think how much he reminds me of Angus from SeaChange. He takes a look at the wound.

"Oh yeah, that's a classic fin cut." I can detect a hint of admiration in his voice. He prods around a bit more. "I reckon I'll use a continuous running mattress stitch. It'll be fully waterproof, so if you want, you can go back out in the surf this afternoon." I am grateful for his concern. It is around three o'clock; just when the waves are due to soften right up into beautiful glassy breakers. Shame I caught them at a bad time.

Several pricks of anesthetic later and a wonderfully attentive stitching job that looks like it has been done on a sewing machine, I'm free to go. We drive back to Jan Juc to find the others packing the final bits into the car. With one last look at the beach and its now calm, rolling waves, we hit the road. As we pass through Torquay, we stop for a 'happy coffee' and the hot liquid finally warms me up. Driving back along Geelong Road, the passengers slowly pass out one by one, until it is just Guillaume and I chatting up the front and listening to Talking Heads' 'Take me to the River'.

That night I crawl into bed after a long, hot shower and press my fingers against the line of stitching nestled amongst my hair. I smile as I think of the scar that I will remember this day by - my first ever MUMC trip.

ABOVE: Fin Cut



Andes to Amazon

A 42 DAY DESCENT OF THE SOURCE OF THE AMAZON



WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / **Benjamin Webb**

DAY 1

Morning wasted. I told my mates Adam and Jake not to get frustrated, I knew that we were to get 'Peru'd' many more times before this trip was over. The sun rose higher and higher as we waited for the donkeys to show up and haul our kayaks the final 10 km to Laguna Carhuacocha. We shouldered our boats and began walking; having learned the 'donkey driver' was drunk and could not be located. Welcome to Peru.

At 4100 metres above sea level the air was thin and water crisp. We marvelled at the imposing glaciers of the Huaywash Mountain Range which crashed from towering peaks into this source lake which eventually would become the Amazon River. We launched onto the one metre wide creek with barely enough water to float; scraping our way downstream, pinballing between rocks until getting back to the high Andean village of Queropalca.

DAY 2

Gaining minor celebrity status while we stock up on food in the

town of Baños, it is evident they don't often get foreign visitors, nor the kind that are cloaked in bright drytops, helmets and arm guards. The whole village turns out to see us launch below the bridge. Riverside hot-springs in the afternoon with natural 40-50° water are exactly what the doctor ordered.

DAY 3

From camp it's an EPIC portage up steep canyon walls and over a ridge to avoid a deadly section of river that flows under boulders for several hundred meters. A shrivelled Peruvian farmer shows up at just the right moment, along with his trusty donkeys. He is a bit uncertain but I quickly talk him round, reach an agreement and figure out how to strap kayaks onto the small Peruvian mules. Kayaks don't fit snugly on donkeys, and it seems that donkeys like carrying kayaks even less than we do. Constant re-adjustment and coaxing, whistling and shoving is required to keep them moving. While not the walk in the park we had imagined, it is significantly better than carrying 35 kg of gear ourselves.

DAY 7

Beautiful class III-V emerald whitewater and homely campsites amongst recently emigrated gum trees. After several days in remote canyon we arrive to the town of Chuquibamba where we happen upon a fried chicken and chip stand less than 20 steps from the river. We feast, dripping wet and still fully geared up - this is kayaking heaven. The local people are incredibly friendly, sharing beers and stories with us. Eventually a small hotel provides a perfect rest for the night.

DAYS 8-12

We leave the comforts of Chuquibamba and float toward the steepest and most committing section of this descent. Remote Class V excitement as the Marañón River drops off the side of the Andes. The section begins by navigating sketchy spiderwebs of rigging across the river. Several kilometers of class III-IV have been choked up with ropes and cables used to hold artisanal gold mining pontoons in place. Every metre or so there is a loose cable to 'boof' over or a taut rope to limbo under. Peruvian peasants dive into the current weighted down with lead and use giant pumps to suck up and filter the gold rich sediments. Scary job, but we have our own risks to worry about. In a class III wave train Jake cops a rope to the chest as it flicks up in front of him; luckily it springs off and releases him without too much pain. We continue deeper into the canyon, the miners thin out and disappear as the terrain become impassable, the water remains turbid from their activities, hiding its riches.

The river gets bigger, and the rapids are unrelenting. On our hardest day we make only 5 km of downstream progress. We carefully assess the rapids, find the next safe eddy, set safety, run it and then repeat. It is too steep to make a mistake. The thought of an injury or lost boat in this steep walled canyon is too scary to consider.

We work together to haul gear over several enormous portages. The biggest portage 'Big Mama' takes a full day to complete. The river tumbles under boulder choked waterfalls for over a kilometre, losing around 400m in gradient. We crawl through the caves of highwater sieves, feeling out of place witnessing the insides of places a kayaker never hopes to see. We spend the night cosy inside one sandy bottomed cave as the river roars

below us. Another enormous portage involves scaling cliffs high above the river, then using rope and pulley systems to get back down to river level. At the top of this descent we almost lose all three boats when they suddenly slide off a tiny ledge and tumble down the cliff towards the river; they fall a full rope length before arresting on the anchor I had tied them into only moments before.



Towards the end of the crux I took a well overdue swim, my first in 2.5 years. Adam had scouted ahead and signalled good to go, read and run. He must not have noticed the giant hole backed by a large pillow. After windowshading several times (just enough to see that fighting was futile), I pulled the deck. Happily, I held onto my boat and paddle and almost immediately flushed into a pocket eddy on the side. I had been dreading my next swim for a long time, and this was far more pleasant than anything I could have hoped for. Jake and Adam portaged the ugly hole and then we bounced through a fun class IV canyon until reaching the bridge where we would meet the incoming group for the next 10 day section. >>

PREVIOUS PAGE: Day 12 emerging from the depths of the Andes, the worst already behind us.
ABOVE: Rio Marañón Map.
LEFT: Donkey Portage.



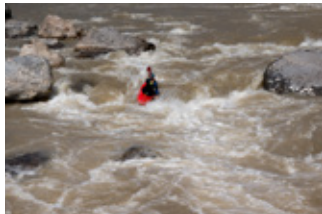
DAYS 13-22

Fun class IV-V rapids with a big water feel, raft support and wide sandy beaches to relax on in the evenings. The river truly took on a new character from the steep, seething mess that we had navigated the week before. We learn that rock pool hot springs built into the side of a cliff overlooking a class IV rapid are certainly the best way to spend your evening while on a river trip.

DAYS 23-42

We took a week off between day 22 and 23 to restock food, sort out logistics, pick up dozens of cameras, rafts, a generator, sound system and other items needed for riverside dance parties (and for shooting documentaries). Days 23-42 are written up in the accompanying article 'Remando Juntos'.

All up, this was easily the longest descent I have completed. The Marañón River is unique because there is so much high quality paddle-able whitewater available over such a long stretch. Next time though it would be nice to do the whole thing straight, without rafting and subsequent raft faff and more time to explore dozens of side canyons and historical sites that exist.



COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
ONE: Launching at Laguna Carhuacocha at the base of the Cordillera Huayhuash, 4100 metres above sea level.
TWO: A warm farewell from the town of Baños.
THREE: Ben kayaking Wasson's Landslide rapid.
FOUR: Ropes spiderwebbing across the river. Not fun paddling conditions.

BUCKET LUNCH

WORDS **Paul Webb**

So you've got a bunch of people in the outdoors who need feeding - sounds like it's time for a bucket lunch.

- Wraps (budget 3 per person, some people will eat more and some will eat less)
- Enough Salad to fill the wraps (carrots, tomatoes, capsicum, baby spinach leaves, cucumber)
- A couple of packets of chips to crunch up and mix in
- A couple tubs of dip to bring it all together.
- A bottle of masterfoods sweet chilli sauce (it's the best one, for going on the wraps first)

And, of course, a giant bucket or something to mix everything together in. Now the key here is not to overfill your bucket, otherwise you'll get yourself into a disastrous situation where you can't mix it all together properly.

Enjoy :)



WORDS / **Paul Webb**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Chris Harper & Jimmy O'Hagan**

Words can't describe this place...

THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID for spending consecutive days on the river. It allows you to break free of your routine and really experience a place. But somewhere like the Franklin makes it incredibly easy.

The Franklin has always been on my bucket list. It was only a question of when. Once I got the call that the trip was happening, I knew I had to be on it. There were four of us: Jonno Cawood, Jimmy O'Hagan, Chris Harper and myself.

We got to the Collingwood, which feeds into the Franklin, and spent the first afternoon packing our boats with the gear we would be living off for the next ten days. (Please note, flavoured couscous does not provide an adequate supply of nutrients). Chris and I christened our heavy boats with a test paddle and rolling session. There was a moment of appreciation, sitting in my boat in a cool place knowing I would be spending the next ten days following the course of this river.

While the Franklin was quite low at 0.56m we decided as a group: "We were already in, we had committed, we were going for it."

The next day we got into our boats and set off. It felt good being in an unfamiliar place, not knowing what gems each twist and turn of the river would reveal. The hardest part of the journey was the first day on the Collingwood with not much water. We boat-scraped our way through the bottom of countless grade 3-4 rapids that would be sweet with just a touch more water.

It seemed as though there was an infinite number of low water portages but after the first few we became pretty efficient as a group at helping each other, so we didn't waste too much time. I think it was Jimmy who said "this isn't a white water trip, it's a journey." He was so right. It was more a chance to see a remote place; a series of remarkable landscapes with a rich history. Kind of like hiking, where you carry heavy stuff in your backpack which gets you into places, except we didn't have backpacks, we had boats. It was a journey that reminded me how much I love multi-day expeditions and the realisation of just how far I have come since those first days on the Yarra.

Before we got on the river, we had checked the rain forecast and it looked like some rain would be coming, so we wanted to make it through the Great Ravine before the river rose too much. We portaged the Churn and stopped at the campsite above Corruscades and evaluated our options. We decided to keep going through the Great Ravine, as we had plenty of time. We had an attentive audience watching us do this portage. We all had a job to do and it went really smoothly, so at the end of that section, on a rock in the middle of the rapid, we gave them a bow and kept moving. We ended up making it to the Eagle's Nest campsite just above the Cauldron rapid, which meant one more portage the next morning and we would be through the Great Ravine.

Looking back all days have blended together. But what I do recall is this: the river widened and the landscape changed to a flatter pace but beautiful nonetheless. On one of these days we found a really pointy rock to jump off into the river, a little bit sketchy and scary, but fun. The most memorable part of the trip was camping at Newlands Cascades. As the sun was setting, Jonno and I carried our empty boats up to the top of the rapids and paddled down. Our boats felt so light it was effortless, every stroke and move was easier. It felt like flying.

We squeezed the last two days into one, which involved paddling the last flattish waters of the Franklin, which then joins the Gordon river (dam-fed, which is faster if they're releasing water), so we decided we didn't need to paddle any more. We would sail instead. We almost made it to Sir John falls without paddling, but I caved, broke up the sail team and we started paddling. Around the next corner we spotted the jetty and knew we had made it.

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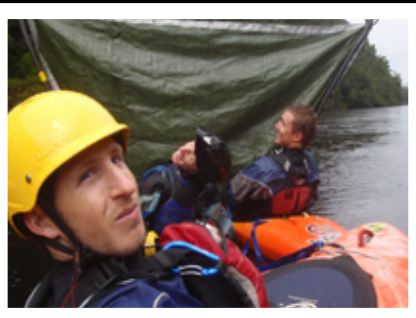
It was awesome lazing around on the jetty for a day and just appreciating the journey we had completed, the next afternoon the storm breaker arrived along with our cider and we celebrated an awesome trip with an army group we had been bumping into on our way down the river.



PREVIOUS PAGE: H2 Low.
THIS PAGE:
LEFT: Newlands Cascades.
CENTRE: Arrrrr! Hoist the Sail!
RIGHT: Irenabyss group selfie.

I hope you'll go see the Franklin for yourself, or whatever other expedition you've been dreaming up. As for me, when this goes to print I will be spending my days on the rivers of Canada with a big smile on my face.

Keep breaking new ground OXOs.



A PIRATES TALE

WORDS / **Evie Clarke & Anja Fuechtbauer**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Evie Clarke**

THE LEAD UP TO THE 2015 MITCHELL TRIP was promising. Three new rafts had arrived at the club rooms, fresh for prowling the pearly twists and turns of the river. We had twenty-five MUMC paddlers - nay, pirates - lined up: six kayakers and 18 rafters all ready to get wet. The twenty-fifth OXO was none other than a pirate meerkat named 'Oscar'.

From the hectic hub-bub at the cars the water looked suspiciously calm, but it only took one look at my raft crew to confirm that a storm was brewing. Anja was ripping herself a blood-red bandana, Cap'n Rob had slipped a frilled blouse under his life jacket, and Chris, Nuosha, Alice and Oscar were talking tactics. Pirate tactics. Our targets were no less than 75 MUMC, MOC and LUMC rafters and kayakers. While the raft leaders Dan, Rob and Ryan established their dictatorship on their respective boats, we established the first rule amongst pirates as outlined by Captain Jack Sparrow: "Take what you can get and give nothing back."

It didn't take us long to find our sea legs and get plundering. Singing shanties as we approached the other ships, we boarded, flinging people out with no mercy and stealing paddles where we could. The other rafts began to form allies in their attacks, and even the kayakers had taken a side - and it

was not ours. At this point, we wondered whether we were going to be able to make friends at camp that night or not. But we had bigger things to worry about now. It seemed our ship had turned mutinous! Cap'n Rob, the scallywag, had begun expelling crew members, so he had to go. We did have to occasionally remind ourselves that piracy took second priority to rapids. Oscar was meerkat-napped at lunch.

In the Amphitheatre Dan managed to pin his raft to a rock. Will and Lingshu, being the novice paddlers of the trip, did great on the rapid and Will performed a legendary live roll that will go down in history. Unlucky James managed to boof of a rock and swam. Jack raced formidably and came second in the inter-uni boat race. A second boat race, of a different type, was held at camp and it is safe to say that MUMC will not be remembered for their skills there.

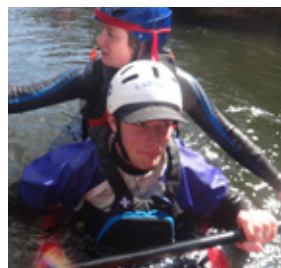
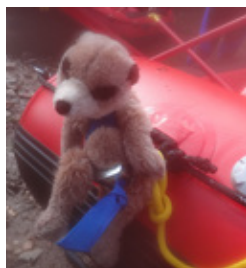
In the morning, MUMC were bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in comparison to MOC and LUMC. It looked like we might lead the charge to the river with minimal affing. Not so lucky; at this point Dan realised he'd lost his car keys. For future reference, it is not recommend that readers store their keys in their wetsuit: even if you have many keen helpers, this spot is not readily searched. The day passed smoothly and rapidly, with

more piracy and fun. We carried Emma in her boat on a long flat section of the river and she became our queen. We had lunch on the dam wall, jumping off it and lapping up the sun (or in Jack's case, hiding under a red umbrella lest the sun should touch him).

"But what about Oscar?" we hear you ask. Did he enjoy the Mitchell? Well, poor Oscar had a very disrupted weekend, being forcibly claimed by all the other rafts and the kayaks. All we shall say is that in matters of furry-friend-stealing, I would not trust Matt.

The Mitchell river trip was invaluable in improving our rafting piracy skills. MUMC are ready for 2016.

TOP RIGHT: Lunch at the damn wall.
LEFT: Floating down the Mitchell.
CENTRE LEFT: Oscar the meerkat.
CENTRE RIGHT: Not even the kayaks were safe.
RIGHT: Jack realising he lost against the pirates.

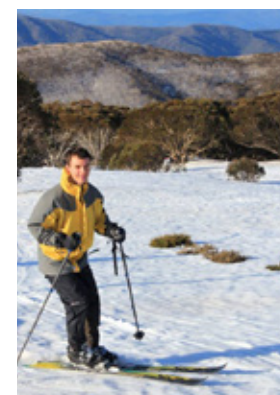


Bogong High Plains

by **Luke Frisken**

OFFICER REPORT

WORDS / **Luke Frisken**



place, we can confidently run even more club trips this year,

CLUB MEMBERS participated in many ski and snow activities in the season of 2015. These were in the Victorian high country, ever the popular destination, but also in a number of interstate and overseas locations. Mt Feathertop, Mt Bogong, the Main Range, Mt Baw Baw and The Bogong High Plains all saw visits.

It is my hope that with the club's new safety policies in

especially of the beginner/learning variety. If you've never been skiing before, or never camped out in the snow and built an igloo, this is your chance. Backcountry skiing can take you away from the crowds to remote places, untouched snow and steep slopes. Building your skills and learning from experienced club members can lead to many exciting opportunities both here in Australia and overseas.

There are some exciting things on the radar for this season. Hopefully a trip up to the main range, and a backcountry skiing trip in cooperation with MUSKI to Mt Stirling. The purchase of a set of climbing skins for the club will help enable more advanced trips. Looking forward to seeing you out there this winter.

SKIING

LAKE MOUNTAIN BEGINNERS CROSS COUNTRY SKIING TRIP

WORDS / **Benedict Ong**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Emma Johnson**

ON THE 9TH OF AUGUST 2015, there was a beginner's Cross Country skiing trip to Lake Mountain. Leading it was, to the best of my knowledge, a Norwegian snow leopard named Egil Heier (fun fact for those who do not know: snow leopards are fast in the snow, very very fast) and a guy with no experience at all in skiing. That guy is me.

Together, we found a bunch of like-minded, foolish people to venture into the cold and disregard the safety of their warm homes. It was a fantastic day to ski after all. So, at the terrifyingly early time (for a university student anyway) of 7.30 am, we showed up at clubrooms, bleary eyed and wanting sleep, but at the same time excited for the adventure ahead of us. At 8 am, with our gear ready, we got in our cars, and drove and drove, until we found the snowy paradise that was Lake Mountain.

The skiing was... fun.

But in all seriousness, everyone had a very fun and enjoyable time. We had an entire range of people with different skiing abilities. On one end of the spectrum, there was, as previously mentioned, the snow leopard Egil, and Emma Johnson, who knew how to turn, go uphill and stop all when they wanted to. You know, the good stuff. Then there were the talented first-timers, of which there were many, who also figured out how to turn and go uphill and stop in no time, though not all the time. Finally, on the other end of the spectrum, the side you



never want to be on, there was me and my friend Gopy. We took to cross country skiing like a fish would take to land. We looked as if we were trying to imitate the dance moves of Michael Jackson, but, make no mistake, a terrible terrible version. You realise quite quickly that you are terrible at skiing, when every time you ski halfway up a hill, you start sliding all the way back down again. Though it was fun and only slightly embarrassing to use Egil as a sled dog.

The day ended well and happy, mostly. With fish and chips, we returned with everyone still in one piece. It was a terrific experience both running the trip (with the help of many others) and participating in it. I would greatly encourage others to either run or join one of these trips and I am looking forward to cross country skiing again, no matter how terrible I am.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY / **Daniel Cocker**

TA LAND TIME FORGOT

SKIING IS ABOVE THE LAW OF PHYSICS. Skiing doesn't care about Newton, about Einstein. Skiing doesn't care about time dilation, about spacetime.

The journey across the Howitt Plateau in winter is a cold one. Time has no meaning, time is not constant, to us the world has stopped as Tim and I slide slowly up hill. Through the breaks in the fog the peak comes no closer, the slower we travel uphill, the slower time passes. It almost stops.

Eventually, the other side stretches out before us, clear of fog, from here on the mountain top, our journey looks long and pleasant. The mountains don't care about physics. We gain speed enjoying the well deserved descent, skiing through the snow gums. As our velocity increases, the spacetime around us compresses. To the external observer time passes normally, to us in our cold snowing world time vanishes before our eyes, slowing to a crawl as we look up the next hill.

The mountains, as usual, win. Reaching our objective a day late as time continued to pass, despite it stopping for us. The fog lifts briefly, to tease us with a glimpse of the Crosscut, frozen, stopped.

We turn for home, looking forward to some short uphill sections and long downhill trails. Time has other ideas. Our slow speed uphill slows time and again to our confused minds the downhills barely exist, gone in a whisper.

Skiing doesn't follow the rules.

HOTHAM TO FALLS CREEK

WORDS / **Luke Frisken**

PHOTOGRAPHY / **Daniel Cocker, Luke Frisken & Stuart Hollaway**



WE PREDICTED MUCH SUFFERING and a grim struggle for survival while on the two day crossing from Mt Hotham to Falls Creek.

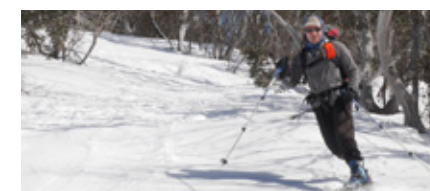
At the end of 40 hours, emergency services and family would be notified of our failure to arrive. At the 60 hour mark, search parties would fan out from either end of the trail, looking high and low among the snow-gums for our persons. Satellite photographs of the area would be scheduled to be taken every hour to aid in the investigation. The

steep valley down to Dibbins Hut, where the parties would inevitably meet, is rumoured to be treacherous in winter. Icicles poised to drop on heads are just one of the many concerns and obstacles expected in this remote region. An extra eight days worth of food for contingency purposes, along with minus 30 degree sleeping bags for every party member.

The imposing Mt Jim Massif is rumoured to affect compass bearings and could well interfere with radio and GPS communications

too. Several kilometres of coloured string would therefore need to be taken, to aid backtracking in whiteout conditions.

And so it was quite the shock that we returned. Well fed, a little tanned, and thoroughly excited after what was, at least for me, the most enjoyable weekend skiing one could ask for! The only way it could have been better, is if we'd decided to take the helicopter back to Hotham instead of the bus.



TOP: Follow the leader.
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
ONE: Much getting some air, no comment on the landing.
TWO: With a bit of cunning, a lot of enthusiasm, a few kick turns & one incident involving a large shrubbery, I made it down to pole 165.
THREE: Walking through the Hotham Tunnel.
FOUR: Tawonga huts sign on the Bogong High Plains.
FIVE: Stuart Hollaway sliding under the barrier. Looks more extreme than it actually was that day!
SIX: Following the poles down to Dibbins Hut.
CENTRE: As you can imagine, it was pretty much snorkels on snow-plough-of-doom child dodging action down Wombats Ramble. A fantastic way to finish a great fun trip



THE
MOUNTAINEER

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