



The Mountaineer

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FRONT AND BACK COVER PHOTOS
By Sam Thompson
Deep in the Heart of the Blue Mountains

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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.



WARNING
The activities described in The Mountaineer may be dangerous. Doing them without the proper training, knowledge and expertise can result in injury or death. Melbourne University Mountaineering Club makes no claims that information in the The Mountaineer is accurate or verified. As such, the club, its authors and editors cannot be held responsible for any injuries or deaths resulting from incorrect or incomplete material. All articles represent the authors' views and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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THE MOUNTAINEER was designed and formatted by
Sam Thompson and Anna Detmold

How to make a Climber

A TUTORIAL FOR CLIMBERS WHO DATE NON-CLIMBERS

So, you want to take your significant other out rock-climbing for the first time?

Unlike climbing with your already-hooked-on-rock-mates, there's more to it than you think. Here's a few tips to help you out, so that everyone has the most enjoyable experience possible, and you come out a hero.

By Aaron Lowndes

Chris Arvier on Snatch and Grab (21), Weribee Gorge.
Photo by Sam Thompson

Here's the scenario: you are already a climber, you love the sport. I mean, you REALLY love the sport. You're passionate, driven and climbing has been among your waking thoughts for the last 2, 10 or 20 years, and there is no sign of it slowing down. Your most frequent daytime thought is "when do I get to climb next", and you have heaps of fun outdoors every weekend (or weekday if you're lucky), meeting similar minded people and revelling in that adrenaline rush as often as possible. What's more, you're lucky enough to have learned all of the required skills and own all of the required gear. Climbing is a part of your life now, an integral aspect of who you are... and it never won't be.

But... there was something missing. Somewhere deep down you know that climbing is not the "be-all" and "end-all" of life. Okay... for some of us that feeling is really, really deep down. But it's there. Other things are important, right? Well yes, something else could definitely weigh at least as heavily on your mind... yeah, you know what I'm talking about.

Although, here we're going to step back a bit, and talk about the bit before, y'know, the building-a-healthy-relationship bit that comes before the, uh, passion bit. So while you've been having an amazing time on the rock, you've also been searching for a wonderful life partner. And hey, guess what! You've finally found him/her! And he/she's great! But there's one major flaw, just one little itty bitty crucial-no-I-mean-not-crucial annoyance:

They're not a climber, (dom dom doooooomm).

But that's okay. Kind of. No really, it's not that important for them to be a climber, right? And besides, there's plenty of time ahead, who knows how their interests will change over time. Maybe they would be a climber, if only they had someone to show them how amazing it is. Now there's an idea. And the best bit? You could be that someone!

So you've decided to take them out for their first foray onto real rock. You have the whole weekend planned, it'll be a once-in-a-lifetime moment, a dream come true, the awakening of a hidden passion, the birth of a... ahem. You've got the camping gear, all the cooking sorted, good food and great wine. Fantastic evenings under the stars. And during the day - just the two of you out on the rock with nothing but a rope and a rack between you (that's a rack of gear fellas, not what you were thinking... oh I forgot, you're a climber, of course you were thinking a rack of gear).

But hang on. This is important. What if they don't like it? As their first experience it should be magical, as magical as you know climbing is. The fear of heights but pushing on anyway... the adrenaline... overcoming the mental and physical challenge... getting close to the top... the conquering! In your mind you can see your partner at the top of the cliff, looking out over the landscape from their position way up high, tears welling in their eyes... they wonder why they'd never known that this feeling existed?

But it could go the other way. You've seen beginner climbers get scared before. Their stomach just doesn't behave with that much space below. They whimper, they shut their eyes. They beg to be lowered back down. And once they are down, they never return. They are scarred for life. Instead of being a hero, you'd be the direct



Anna attempting Conscientious Potentious (17) at Werribee Gorge.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

cause of a traumatic experience. And they were only one pitch off the ground! On a grade 14! ¹ Shit, that's kind of worth worrying about. Well friend, here I am to tell you where you went wrong. Or maybe you're smart enough to read this first and not make these mistakes. Well done, you're a smart climber. Read on!

Let's Get Started!

All right, your first mistake was choosing a hard climb. Grade 14 might be an okay difficulty to challenge a beginner during their first time at an indoor climbing gym, but outdoors is a completely different situation, with none of the climate-control-paid-staff-cushy-mats-creature-comforts that exist inside. And if you were on a multi-pitch at that grade, then you lose extra points. No relationship commitment trust stuff for you!

So what grade is appropriate?

Here in Victoria we happen to have the incredibly unique Mt Arapiles practically in our back yard (in Australia 4 hours drive is still considered "in the back yard"). There, you can find single or multi-pitch routes at practically any grade - and I mean ANY grade. We're talking amazing 3-star routes starting at grade 4. Many of them. Too many to do in a weekend, or even in a year. Oh, you didn't realise the grades went that low? It's not a staircase folks, it's called... well one is called "Spiral Staircase", but whatever. Plus, you don't have to go all the way to Mt Arapiles for this, practically any climbing area will have one or two

¹ (US 5.8, UIAA V, Fr 5a)

really good easy climbs, which should be in a guide book for the area. Seek them out.

The point is, for your significant other's first foray onto real rock, they shouldn't feel any "hard" moves. Take the lowest grade you can imagine enjoying, and knock a further 5 grades off. Actually make that 10. Especially if you are multi-pitching. Think "Easy Adventure Outing" not "Challenging Scary Test Route at My Best Guess Of Their Top Ability". If there's literally nothing at an appropriate grade to be fun but not scary or hard at all, maybe stick to single-pitch, or find a guide you can ask, or travel to a better beginner-friendly area.

Should I change my behaviour?

You have been a climber for a long time. So long in fact that you can't remember what it was like to not be a climber. That's a bit of a problem when it comes to how you view climbing. You have gained mastery of your fear of heights, can think clearly in hairy situations and you have total faith in the safety system. None of this is true for your partner. To them, the rope could spontaneously snap (remember when that thought popped into your head the first time? No? You probably remember wrong), or if it doesn't then the rock could come loose. Or any other imaginary things could happen, all of which are described using the only words they have for it, the incredibly vague "what if I fall!" The root of the problem is that your newbie cannot see the whole safety system like you



Anja Fuechtbauer looking for the next hold. Photo by Anthony Cuskelly.

can. They don't understand that many parts make up an incredibly robust system, how each part is carefully designed and engineered to be strong and/or redundant enough to keep both climbers safe with a near perfect predictability.

Over the years and as part of my guiding training, I learned very many handy tips to help alleviate that vague newbie fear. Here follows a few cool facts about the equipment that I might work into the conversation at some point during the day - not all at once of course, and only if they happen to fit. Of course it's up to you if you want to arrogantly mansplain it all in one go, after all who am I to give you dating advice.

The rope is not the sort of rope you can get from the local hardware store². Climbing ropes are expensive, made in far away places with high quality control, and can hold a car off the ground, which means it probably won't have a problem holding their puny weight. That last bit is a nice touch and it happens to be true, probably³.

Explain the construction of the rope at some point - the core is strong and stretchy like a bungee cord and the sheath, while it does contribute a small amount to the overall strength, is mainly a protective layer to ensure no damage comes to the core. It is quite easy to tell if you have exposed the core because it is bright white, at which point all climbers know to cease use and replace the rope immediately.

² If your rope was purchased in a hardware store, please cease use immediately and seek professional instruction from a climbing guide. You have no idea what you are doing and you risk the reputation of all climbers, not just yourselves, you idiot.

³ Ropes hold about 8 to 9kN of force typically, and a small car like a Mitsubishi Mirage weighs about 920kg, about the same amount of force once you do the math.



Liv Grover Johnson climbing Grey Mist at Point Perpendicular.
Photo by Anja Fuechtbauer.

Extra dating points

The name Kernmantle is derived from the German words Kern and Mantel, which mean core and jacket. Not quite as sexy as busting out some suave French words, but use what you've got.

Point out the strength ratings on carabiners and the tags of your slings and cams. Tell them what a kN means, and why the strength of equipment is measured by weight and not by the mass it can hold. This testing and certification system is why you aren't using seatbelts and shoelace as part of your climbing kit⁴.

Pretty much all of the climbing safety system is designed to be either redundant, meaning there is a backup in case something happens, or simply too strong to fail. Some parts have a sort of redundancy built into their construction (examine your belay loop closely, read the bit about ropes again), others don't need it because they're simply too strong (your belay carabiner. Try telling them it could hold a tank. Not even remotely true but do it anyway. You get extra points for enthusiasm, but lose them all again for outright lying).

⁴ Please see 2

Ready to set off

Okay, so you've arrived at the bottom of your chosen route, with Nervous Newbie Partner (NNP) in tow. NNP has been walking up the track, with the wall growing in their vision, looming ever higher in their sight and mind. Make no mistake, NNP is nervous. But the silence tells you that, for now at least, they trust you. Or that they're just puffed from the walk.

Now you could treat them just the same as an ordinary climbing partner, by assuming that they can take responsibility for their own fear and state of mind once up there, but that's not the point of this whole exercise is it? You are acting as a guide here and you want your partner to enjoy the experience, or in other words you are taking on the extra responsibility for their mental as well as their physical wellbeing. To do that, spend some time directly addressing some of the biggest concerns they likely have even before you start.

Here's my standard explanation that I go through at the bottom of any climb before we get going. The whole explanation/demonstration takes no more than 10 min-

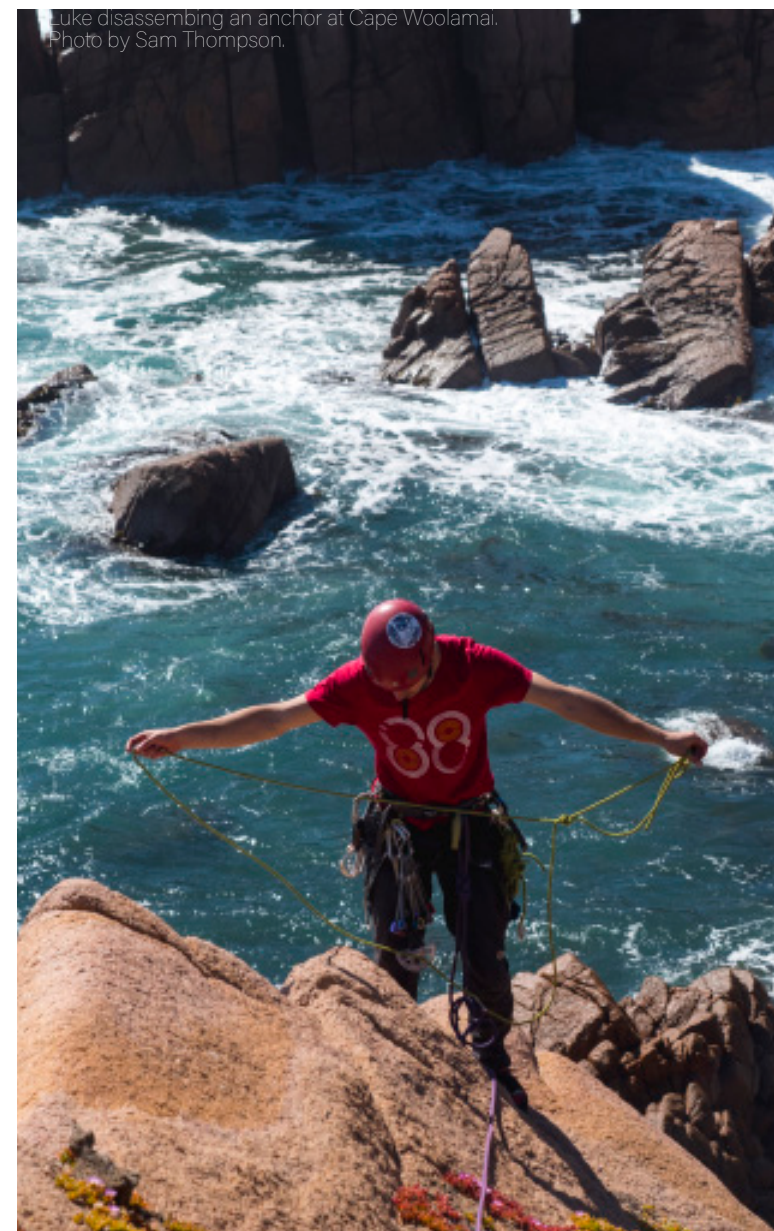
utes whether I'm with one person or four, and it always, always makes them feel better about the coming unknowns. Plus, it fits in smoothly with the setup process itself so that at the end, you're practically ready to go.

Start by walking a few meters AWAY from the bottom of your chosen climb, to the left or right if you can. Then get out the harnesses and put them on. Since you'll be a bit faster at this, you can also get your rack out. I'm going to skip telling you to do things like fit helmets and check buckles here - this isn't a lesson in safety and you should know about that stuff already⁵.

Unpack your rope and flake out a few meters leaving the bottom end free of course, you'll need them to tie into that. Since

⁵ However I will say that your NNP has probably seen some pictures somewhere of beginners climbing, and has noted the presence of helmets. It might make them a bit suspicious if you're a gung-ho-who-needs-a-helmet-anyway kind of climber. If only for the sake of making them feel like you're competent with beginners, fit them with one eh? Safety lesson out.

Luke disassembling an anchor at Cape Woolamai.
Photo by Sam Thompson.



you want your partner to feel valued and part of the team, you can get them to flake the rest of the rope while you do the next bit.

Take a nut and a cam off your rack and put them into the wall at about chest height, a couple of meters apart horizontally, between where you are setting up and the bottom of your chosen climb. It's just a demonstration so they don't need to be bomber (but bomber helps). Put a quickdraw on the nut so it's ready to clip. You can then continue racking up, clipping the nut tool to your partner's harness. If you're on a sport climb, put two quickdraws on tree branches nearby, or if you have to lay them on the ground with a weight to hold them still.

Once the rope is flaked, tie yourself and your partner into the ends. Oh dear... I'm struggling here... no don't say it... ah fuckCHECKTHEFUCKINGKNOT! Ah... sorry, that just came out. Won't happen again, promise.

All right, pay attention now, because here's the best bit, the explanation, the proof that you are in full control of what you're both about to do. Point out that you and your partner are tied to each other with the rope, and that you'll stay tied in like that until both of you have finished the climb, way up there. So since you are tied to each other, and either one or both of you OR the rope is attached to the rock somehow at all times... then you are both attached to the rock and therefore neither of you can fall and hit the ground. That's teamwork, that's a System. That's also a bit oversimplified, but hey. So all of the rest of this equipment, belay devices, gear, and other stuff hanging off you is all just making sure that the System stays put. It's also why you should go to the toilet down here and not halfway up.

Demonstration time. Put yourself on belay using your partners belay loop. Give them the quick lesson on letting out the rope and keeping it locked off. Keep this short, you don't want to overwhelm them with scary thoughts like "if you don't hold this bit here I might fall and die and it'd be your fault". Oh, you don't trust their belaying seeing as they've never done it before? That's very smart, but there are still a couple of tricks you can use - either put them on a brake-assist device like a Grigri (my personal favorite is a ClickUp)⁶, or have someone

⁶ Note the term brake assist instead of auto-locking or similar. Such

else backup belay (if the backup person is a beginner have them slide a prusik along the brake rope so that they literally can't let go), and lastly.. don't plan to fall. Another good reason why you're on a grade 5 and not a 14. Pick up your end of the rope, pretend to "lead climb" to your first piece and clip it. Explain how you'll continue "up" the climb, putting in gear and clipping it as you go. Now you've clipped both pieces and you're standing a few meters away, which happens to be at the bottom of your chosen climb but you don't need to say that. Explain that somewhere "up here" you'll have stopped climbing and you'll be taking a few minutes to attach yourself to the rock with a big ol' anchor made of many solid pieces. You don't need to actually do this, just wave your hands around to indicate "big" and "solid". Your newbie shouldn't do anything until you call down, at which point they'll take you off belay and call up the answer (get them to do

devices do not guarantee catching a fall, because for most of them the brake rope still needs to be held down in order for the braking action to engage.

this and say this or else they'll forget). They won't be able to climb yet because there will still be a pile of rope at their feet. Pretty soon they will see the rope being pulled up (demonstrate by pulling it towards you, flaking it at the foot of the chosen climb), until finally it will look more like "this" (quickly finish pulling and flaking until it is tight on their harness, OR achieve the same thing by quickly unclipping the two pieces, walking over and grabbing the flaked rope, bringing it back to dump it at your feet and clipping their end back in before saying "...this"). Just because the rope is above them now, they absolutely cannot start climbing until you have finished doing some stuff (demonstrate stuff) and they hear you call down that they can climb. Now get them to "climb" towards you while you pretend to belay. Have them remove the two pieces as they go, pointing out the nut tool etc. When they get to you, say that they will be standing right next



Evie abseiling off the Organ Pipes, Arapiles.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

to you and you'll be able to tell them what to do next, so there's no point in going through it now.

Then you'll start again, using the same process again and again (if on a multi-pitch that is), until you're both all the way at the top of the cliff.

That's it. The whole system clearly summarised, in less than 10 minutes (probably 5 for one person). If you take the two pieces back from your partner and re-rack them, you're pretty much ready to go on belay and start climbing immediately⁷. But there's perhaps one more thing you can do before you head off. After asking them if they have any questions, point out a few friendly "what ifs" you have the answers to, like this:

⁷ Depending on how you handled the rope you might have to re-flake or swap ends of course.

While they are climbing you will almost always be in direct line of sight, so you will be able to see if anything is going wrong before they do.

If they get tired at any point, they can sit in their harness and have a rest, you can easily hold them from above. If they really can't do part of the climb that's not a problem at all because you have a special device (point out your prusik or mechanical rope-grab) that means you can pull them up past a hard bit - yes, you really can pull their whole body weight up; no, it's not a problem at all. If they get scared, stop and try to remember to breathe deeply and evenly like in yoga, or childbirth. They can take as long as they like to do the climb, nobody is in a rush here and they are definitely not slowing anyone



Taner climbing School's Out (23), Dam Walls, Blue Mountains.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

down.

And finally, at any point on this whole climb an abort is totally possible and absolutely allowed. They have every right to ask to go back down, and they can always try again another day. This might not be ideal in your but-I-want-them-to-be-a-climber mind, but think about it the other way - if you push them too hard, you are pushing directly towards that "traumatic experience", and there's no coming back from that one.

Well that about sums it up. Is there anything else? Well obviously on the climb itself you need to actually do what

you say you will do - i.e.

Set or extend the anchor so that you can see your partner as they climb,
Have your hauling system ready,
Know your retreat and rescue plans,
Give them the time to figure out the moves for themselves (nobody likes a beta spray, even beginners),
Know the walk-off and descent route,

Generally try to make the whole process easy and comfortable for them, maybe even carrying a bit more of the snacks/shoes/water/jackets/head torches/first aid



Body belaying Luke on top of The Pinnacles, Cape Woolamai.
Photo/Loose Belay by Sam Thompson.

kit yourself if you are feeling extra chivalrous... let them carry something though, you don't want to come across as chauvinistic, this is a team after all.

Most importantly try not to give off the vibe that you are scared or stressed at any point, by climbing smoothly and efficiently (you have done this route before, right?), not recklessly fast nor overly slow - just smoothly and safely.

And finally, stay happy! Try to have actual fun showing your significant other how amazing your sport is. You are a confidence inspiring, heroic climber and you practically have an ethereal glow right now. Well done, you are well on your way to creating a brand new climber! Good luck, fare thee well, try not to kill your life partner in a horrible accident, etc.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Lowndes has more than 20 years experience in rock climbing and has taught hundreds of students over the last decade. He is fully qualified with the Australian Climbing Instructors Association and regularly rock-climbs for his own enjoyment. This year he has thrown caution to the wind and started Melbourne Climbing School - check them out at www.melbourneclimbing-school.com.au to see available courses.



Luke exploring above a sea cave at Cape Woolamai.
Photo by Sam Thompson.



Coastal Views with Emma Johnson.
Photo by Evie Clarke.

EAST TIMOR

BY EVIE CLARKE

"I guess we'll just have to work that out when we get there." This was the typical answer to most questions that Alice, Emma and I encountered during planning for our trip to East Timor.

This blasé attitude wasn't entirely due to lack of concerted effort, we had in fact read every single thing that the Google could tell us on hiking over there – it hadn't taken long. Using Google Earth, we drew an ambitious line over East Timor's highest mountains – this was our proposed route. We had the map in our hands, the spirit of adventure in our hearts and all other logistics, by necessity, would be worked out on the way.

Alice and I were lucky enough to have found 'passage' on a sailing vessel bound for East Timor as part of the Darwin to Dili yacht race. And no, before you ask, I don't mean as stow-

aways – someone actually agreed to take us on their boat! We joined the lovely Paul and Sue on their 40ft yacht, The Osborne Star, for the three-day journey to Dili. Despite possibly overdosing on seasickness medication, the rocky open water passage got the better of Alice who spent the trip lying on the deck in cheery recumbency. It was an amazing experience, being out in the vast ocean with no land or life for miles (despite knowing this, I conducted my night watch in a state of slight terror that we would collide with something, constantly checking the radar). Once we'd rounded the eastern-most Timorese island of Jako, we sailed the north coast of the country and the view of the dramatic mountainous ridges progressively revived Alice. By the time we met Emma in Dili the next morning, after a stressful night of navigating around boats with no lights and reefs in the harbour, we were ready to run

straight off into the hills. Loaded with lots of chocolate biscuits and eggplants (thanks to our over-achievement in the art of bargaining), we found our way onto an Angguna or 'tray-truck.' This wondrous modality of public transport is essentially a truck with limited suspension and with benches on the tray, that can always magically accommodate yet another human, sack of grain or chicken. Five hours of bumpy roads later, we got off and began walking through the heavy rain in the direction of Hato-Builico, the town at the base of East Timor's highest mountain, Mt Ramelau. A passing jeep with two fellow Melbourneans kindly picked our dripping selves up and took us the rest of the way. We stayed the night in a charming sprawling monastery-style guest house, rising in the early morning to begin the climb up Mt Ramelau in the



“ The genuine kindness and friendliness of everyone we met was humbling and really special ”

fog and rain.

Before we left Melbourne we had tossed up hiring guides during the trip: on the one hand we wanted to feed the spirit of adventure and navigate our own route over the mountains, but on the other hand we didn't want to cause offence to any local people or their Gods by walking over private property or sacred sites. We also recognised that hiring a guide was a tangible way to support the local families in the villages we walked through, where unemployment is high and most rely on subsistence farming. In the end, we had guides (or alternatively enthusiastic volunteers) for the majority of the walking we did, and I think we made the right decision.

As the mountain path up Mt Ramelau is a common pilgrimage, the walking was fairly clear. The trees were similar to a thick Australian temperate forest and many Aussie species including eucalypts were recognisable. We were carrying all our gear – much to the frustration of our quick-footed little guide who obviously had a preference for running up the mountain – as we intended to continue directly on to another town on the other side of the mountain. We emerged above the clouds and into the sun for the final 50m of climbing up to a large statue of Mary, squinting upon the sea of clouds below us. On the way down, it became clear that Alice's (recently healed) ankle was struggling on the rocky slopes of Timor Leste and we made the decision to return back to Hato-builico instead of pushing on for a long day. We had carried our heavy packs all the way up and down East Timor's highest mountain for no reason – the villagers must have thought we were crazy!

By necessity, our 'Tetung' skills were coming along in leaps and bounds. We had mastered all the pleases,

thankyous and 'we don't speak Tetung' and could even ask 'Can we Ride?' ("Bele sae?") when passing vehicles stopped for us. With our newly acquired language skills, Emma and I went off to try and buy some food in the small town. I asked a girl where we could buy food and not only did she understand, she actually began leading us somewhere. Great! We walked up a hill, through a field, past a goat and ended up in another field containing nothing but lettuce (a tasteless yet tolerable food)! An old man came out and asked how many lettuces we were after. I said we would buy one, apparently he heard 'five'. We returned back to Alice, tails between our legs, with nothing but five huge lettuces for sustenance. It would take many days, and we would be halfway across the country by the time we got rid of the last lettuce. With her ankle still sore the next day, we left Alice in Hato-builico to recover, with two lettuces for company. It's ok – she had a great time and was even offered a hand in marriage. Emma and myself walked 1100m down to the next town on the slipperiest mudslide of a slope that has ever been called a path. And by walking, I mean bum-sliding. The little town of Nanumague didn't know what had hit them when these two grotty foreigners walked down the road, trailed by a group of joyous children yelling 'malae' (foreigner). I have to stress that approximately 90% of our time in East Timor was spent in a state of befuddlement and confusion; and our time in Nunomogue was no exception. A lovely family adopted us, giving us coffee and food in their nicest china, while thirty children and adults huddled around and watched us! As the night went on, we swapped English and Tetung phrases with our hosts and it was amazing how quickly we could break down the awkwardness that initially stilted our interactions. I think we all learned a lot that evening. We didn't know it, but that day was



Evie Clarke. Photo by Alice Newman.

also the last day of the rainy season. The next morning we woke up to blue skies and sun, and the locals said with utter confidence that it would now not rain for months. Well that was ok with us! After scrummaging through our packs for the sunscreen, we applied it upon the dirt on our skin and headed off up a never ending hill to the remote town of Gouloura, at the base of the next mountain we aimed to climb. Three local boys around our age from the village walked with us, and bless them, they carried our lettuces! (we had tried to give them to our hosts, but they assumed we forgot them and so ran to catch up with us to return them. So close!). Buoyed by a coffee stop in a friendly stranger's house along the way, we did manage to reach the end of the never-ending hill by midmorning. Joshua, a schoolteacher in Gouloura,



took us under his wing and gave us the tour. We met his sister who took to us, enthusiastically, and we became 'best friends' and even facebook friends too! Sometimes, having best friends can be very draining. On the plus side, Joshua's wife accepted our offering of a lettuce and went of to the kitchen hut to prepare the East Timor's signature dish of Mi Goreng and boiled lettuce.

The next day we climbed up Mt Cablaque – following a tiny goat-track up what appeared to be a massively steep scree cliff. After a few hours of heart-in-mouth trekking up the slippery side, we reached the top to find.... An old couple and their fields of potato! It was humbling to think that that steep cliff-face we had huffed and puffed our way up in the name of adventure, was the way this 80+ yr old couple walked to take their potatoes to market!!

But climbing Cablaque was only the first of the two big challenges for that

day – the second was making our way back to Alice. I think we gave a truck of roadworkers the biggest shock of their life when they rounded the dusty corner in the middle of the roadwork sites, seven hours out of the capital city, to find two dusty Australian girls waving them down. Thanks to them, a few other lifts, and a lot of walking – we succeeded in making our way back to Hato-builico by nightfall. Mister Alex, the owner of the guest-house there and quite an influential man in East Timor politics, continued the wonderful streak of luck and kindness that the country had shown us thus far, by offering to give us a lift to Dili the next day. He and his sons even dropped us off at the bus station (or if you ask me, the patch of dirt road where bus drivers have unanimously decided to congregate in). As soon as we drew up, young men from the buses swarmed and grabbed our backpacks and we watched in horror as they were carried off in every different direction.

Despite my first thought that we were victims of the most brazen robbery, Mister Alex reassured us that the men were just trying to ensure we got on their bus, and he and his sons went and retrieved our bags for us. Phew! It turns out the bus we got on wasn't actually the best choice as it broke down about an hour out of Dili. So, evening saw us flying along on the back of this massive construction-yellow truck until we caught up with another bus.

The one and only time in the whole trip that we used the 3.2kg of tent we had brought was a few days later. We had spent the whole day travelling to the wrong town on the wrong bus and then making our way back. I know they say that it's not the destination but the journey that counts, however I would argue this only applies when in vehicles that have suspension. We were tired, it was getting dark and we were in the middle of nowhere when a group of construction workers invited us



Emma and her Lettuce
Photo by Evie Clarke

to sleep on their construction site (a future Nescafe supermarket!) and we gratefully accepted, pitching the tent under the bright light the men turned on to help us see. Turns out that that light was the floodlight that remains on all night to illuminate the building site! We didn't get much sleep. We had one last hiking adventure in store, a last minute trip to squeeze into our last few days in East Timor. When I say 'we', I actually mean Alice and Emma as it was at this point that my sturdy legs decided it was their turn for a rest day (full of reading and sleeping, can't complain!). Alice and Emma valiantly hiked 10 hours up the fierce Matabean mountain and returned in the evening with a new friend, who was head over heels in love with Alice. He was attempting to teach her the local dialect form of Te-

tung (ignoring the fact that she could barely speak the general version). He kept pointing at the wall and saying a word – we eventually worked out he was trying to teach his Australian sweetheart how to say the word for 'cement pillar'. Romantic. Hiking in East Timor taught me so much. The genuine kindness and friendliness of everyone we met was humbling and really special. The trip made me think about the nature of adventure – facing the unknown, new experiences, pushing the limits and gaining new skills. It also reminded me of how huge a privilege it is to be able to embark on such adventures and indeed do all the outdoor sports we love.

WORDS BY EVIE CLARKE

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Buchan

BY KIRRA SOLTERBECK



Sam, Luke, Julius, Matt and Kirra after exiting Baby Berger.

Usually, exams are a time of stress and nervousness, a time of hard core studying. We—Matt, Julius, Luke, Sam, (Taner, Natalie) and I, Kirra – are unlike the average university student. For us, as sunlight exposure decreases, the filthiness of our clothing increases. This was most certainly true on our Buchan trip.

Instead of studying, we spent our time in Buchan, accompanying RMIT Outdoors Club (ROC), finding our way through inhospitable terrain, swimming in mud and perhaps embarrassing ourselves a bit in public.

On Friday night, Matt and I arrived quite early. On arrival, we explored Wilson's cave to ensure my fear of the underground could be overcome. Camp

was set up and relaxing games of cards were played while awaiting the paddlers heading to the snowy river. Matt had promised to assist them with a car shuttle. Due to a few mishaps on their way, the paddlers arrived in Buchan at about 12.30am, consequently, Matt completed the shuttle by 4.45am. At 7 am nervous excitement woke me, keen to head into another cave. The 2 and 1/4 hours of sleep Matt got that night reminded me of previous exam periods but the fresh Gippsland morning made leaving bed even harder.

Luke and Julius joined a group from ROC while Matt and I headed into Honeycomb cave alone. After a short abseil into the cave, we had a quick look around for Honey, a red bellied black snake that had apparently made the entrance chamber its home. When she was nowhere to be seen, we continued. Matt would occasionally get me to find our way (which involved me getting super lost and Matt giving a hint or a thousand). As I crawled back to the rope ready to climb out I stopped, in a very unladylike position. Honey had emerged. Slowly, I continued onwards and blocked Honey from Matt as he gracefully climbed in to join me. Soon, a bag had been retrieved and a stick was used to try and remove Honey from the cave, unfortunately, it seemed her movement resembled Matt's rather than mine and she slithered away from us with ease.

That afternoon the lack of sleep hit Matt hard, so we spend our time practicing SRT skills in a beautiful gumtree



Kirra abseiling down the 45m Pitch inside Baby Berger

rather than entering another cave. We then headed back to camp to get dressed up and ready for the pub.

As many people may have realized by now, Julius is incapable of backing down from a challenge. Thus, he headed to a country Pub in a black, backless dress of mine. Thigh high split and plunging neckline included. Although the dress may have been tight, the rest of us had more trouble breathing than Julius did, as we watched the locals gawk at the chest hair emerging. After eating, energy levels were high. A cross between table tennis, beer pong and volleyball was created using the balls from Guinness and lots of empty cans as a net.

The next day, Matt and many ROC

people went off to practice cave rescue techniques. The rest of the MUMC crew headed into another set of amazing caves and, with astounding will power I stayed at camp alone to study. Man, that was hard! That afternoon we watched a movie in Wilson's cave and played some great hide and seek variations.

On the Monday, Queens Birthday, 5 of us headed into a vertical cave called Baby Berger. This cave included a 45m abseil. Following a long narrow path, we crawled into another part of the cave that eventually took us all the way down to Elk river. Elk river drains all the caves in that area of Buchan. This river was cold and very clear. We followed it for a bit until we reached a sump. In one of the little paths to the side, Sam and I found an

amazing formation that I named Pig's Ear, as it was a large stalactite that was so thin light on one side could be seen through it from the other. It was shaped like the dried pig's ears that are sold as dog treats. Upon exiting the cave, I discovered we were about 120m below ground. A test on my fears, but a great experience!

The mud in that cave covered all of us but I don't think any of us had any challenges that weekend that quite measure up to the difficulty that Sam faced trying to remove the dried mud from his leg hair. That's what you get for wearing shorts in a cave!

WORDS BY KIRRA SOLTERBECK
PHOTOS BY SAM THOMPSON



50th Anniversary of the MUMC Hut

By Rodney Polkinghorne

MUMC Memorial Hut was built in 1966, to commemorate the deaths of Douglas Hatt and Russell Judge in a storm on Mt Cook in 1965. The hut was one of the first geodesic domes built in Australia. On the 17th of November 2016, MUMC and the Melbourne School of Design (who were once called the University of Melbourne Architecture Department) hosted a celebration to mark the anniversary. The attendance was equally divided between current and former members who built the hut; the club had anticipated that architects and engineers from the wider university community would have also attended, but as it seems, geodesic domes were considered a bit old fashioned in those circles.

Dr Alberto Pugnale, a lecturer at the MSD who specializes in lightweight geodesic structures, teamed up with the club to organize an event in the School of Design. Patrick Ong and Peter Johns helped a lot in arranging this collaboration.

The hut was designed by Peter Kneen, inspired by the work of Buckminster Fuller in the 1950s. The construction was an effort by the entire club, coordinated by Nicholas White who ran the construction subcommittee. More details can be found on the MUMC website. Current club members learnt several new things from Peter's talk. Peter went on to a career in Civil Engineering, and played important roles in the structural analysis of the Millennium Dome in London and the spire of the Arts Centre Melbourne.

Dr Kneen revealed that it took some effort to get permission from Parks Victoria to do all of this. The boundary of the park was moved by a few meters to ensure that the hut would be under their jurisdiction. Some things have since changed. The public service of the 1960s was very impressed to hear that the structural analysis of the hut had been carried out by computer, so impressed that they immediately dropped their objections to it being built. Peter went on to a career in Civil Engineering, and played important roles in the structural analysis of the Millennium Dome in London and the spire of the Arts Centre Melbourne.

Dr Pugnale gave a talk about the development of these structures since the 1960s, and concluded with a video of two quadcopter drones building a rope bridge. The audience was amused by this spectacle, and the members who have lugged sacks of mortar up the South West Spur of Mt Feathertop found it quite inspiring. The talks were followed by refreshments and drinks on the roof terrace of the MSD building. The evening was a success. Current club members were able to become well acquainted with the people who built the hut 50 years ago. Events such as these remind us of the achievements the club has made throughout the years, and in hopes would maintain unity between old members and the new.

WORDS BY RODNEY POLKINGHORNE



Safety Kayaker Daire watches as chaos ensues.
Photo: Caitlyn Conway

Thomson River

TRIP REPORT



Rafting down the Thomson with an extra plastic passenger. Photo by Caitlyn Conway

Paddling sports are certainly taking off again in MUMC, as evidenced by the huge interest in the recent beginner and intermediate trips which have been run in the first six months of this year. Beginners Yarra and Goulburn trips helped many of the members build their basic kayaking skills, so when the annual Thomson River environmental release was announced for the middle of April, there was a significant number of beginner paddlers ready to step up their game and undertake an overnight kayaking/rafting trip. For the kayakers, we had Rowan McCowan, Anton Jermakoff, John Penders, Alex Low, Walter Box, Liv Grover-Johnson, Dylan Carolyn-Stewart, Sam Thompson, Alastair Firth, and Luke Frisken. In the rafts, Evie Clarke and Steve Birkett guided Anna Detmold, Gina Snelling, Caitlyn Conway, Gopi Manne, Mohamed Nasher, Suhaib Abdurahman, Bigi Phillip, and Rajesh Ranjan.

The majority of the OXO paddlers that weekend drove up to the put in

at Brunton's Bridge on Friday night, with the remainder rocking up early Saturday morning, or at least that was the plan. Come Saturday morning, the day was pressing on, and there was still no sign of the rest of our group. Turns out that one of the organisers (who shall remain unnamed!) had overslept, and the drivers who were taking the trailer with the rafts, dry bags, and much of the safety equipment were waiting outside the clubrooms for about 40 minutes! Adding in faff from hitching up the trailer and a few last minute additions to pack, and everyone had finally rocked up to the put in at around 11am. All there was left to do was to jump on the water...wait, no, faff! Faffing some more was the next item on the list! Trailer unloaded, rafts inflated, a bite for lunch, and we finally got on the water at 1pm.

The wait was certainly worth it. The Thomson winds through some stunning territory in West Gippsland, with deep valleys lined with dense bush,

steep walled gorges, and a sense of remoteness far from any road noise or city lights when we stopped for the night. The Thomson has some decent Grade II rapids for building everyone's confidence on the Saturday, which was needed for the Grade III features on the Sunday. Of course, there was the usual swims on the way down as everyone was finding their feet on the new river, and we had to wait around for the rafts to catch up at the rapids so that myself, Rowan, and Anton could set up a rescue in case of a raft-flip. Probably the most fun feature of Saturday was a nice, bouncy hole at the mini-gorge, where the group had a mostly successful run, with only one or two swims, and that could be put down to the fact that Sam's boat had no footpegs! After a small bit of maneuvering, Anna and Sam swapped places, with Sam joining the rafters for the remainder of the trip, and Anna, a more experienced paddler, jumped into Sam's boat. Shortly after, we started looking for a place to stop for the night, because we were



Daire Kelly styling class III Triple Stager rapid.

coming up to the main gorge, which would have been a nightmare to get through in the dark.

We came upon a beach that was raised a bit above the river, not far from the entrance to the gorge, that had plenty of firewood, so that's where we set up camp for the evening. Everyone set to work prepping dinner, setting up the tarp, or unpacking the rafts for dry gear to sleep in. Between an early wake up, and some hard paddling to make up for lost time in the afternoon, most people turned in early, since we were still less than halfway to the take-out, which meant another long day to follow.

Even with an early night, 7.30am still came too quick. The valley we were camped in was shrouded in a thick fog that gave an eerie vibe to dense bush on the banks, which only served to amplify the sense of isolation.

Climbing back into cold, damp paddling gear on such a morning isn't the most appealing prospect, but it has to be done to finish out the trip. Fortunately, there was a lot of hard paddling ahead, so we all warmed up pretty sharpish. The gorge came up pretty quick, and while it looked a bit imposing, there wasn't much technical skill required. It would've just meant an extended swim because of the steep, rocky banks..which is exactly what happened with some of the less experienced paddlers. They kept in good spirits the whole time though, and were soon back in their boats. The gorge opened up to more familiar deep valleys, the fog burned off as the sun rose high above us, and we were thoroughly warmed up and ready to make for home.

At about this time, we noticed Alex had been emptying water from his kayak at an alarming frequency. We discovered that his boat had a hole in the bottom that was letting water just pour in. As it would've been unfair to have him paddle the rest of the trip in a sinking boat, one of the poor pack-rafts had to haul his boat down the rest of the river, including the biggest feature of the river, Triple Stager, while Alastair jumped into the other raft so that Alex could take his kayak. It felt like forever to reach Triple Stager, a solid Grade III rapid with increas-

ingly large drops. After a quick scout, it was decided that Rowan ran the stretch first to set up a rescue, followed by Anton, who set up rescue halfway down, and then me, all the while, the rafters stood by on the banks for a throwbag rescue. Props to Liv for a fantastic self rescue when she took a swim after the second stage. Hard luck to John, who was the only other swimmer on that stretch. Everyone else, including the rafts, took solid lines down a fairly intimidating rapid, and that put us back on track for getting off the water before it got dark. Even so, once the S-bend was complete and signs of civilisation started to reappear in the form of power lines, the group was split into two groups so that we might get the shuttle started. That involved about 45 minutes of flatwater paddling, which was just purely exhausting after rather exciting rapids like Triple Stager and S-bend.

And so we managed to get everyone down the Thomson in one piece, which was an achievement for the leaders, only two of whom had ever paddled that stretch before as beginners. Here's to hoping that we managed to inspire some of our OXOs to stick with the paddling and keep coming back for more in the near future!

WORDS BY DAIRE KELLY
PHOTOS BY CAITLYN CONWAY

In picture below: Anna Detmold.



Daniel Berton braving the void at the Grampians.
Photo by Guillaume Stanguennec.

A Casual Weekend in the Grampains

BY GUILLAUME STANGUENNEC

When I joined MUMC, I quickly wondered why its members were obsessed with the outdoors. The fact that many of them are addicted to at least one outdoor sport, made me realize that the more you stay in the club, the more addicted you become. If you are reading these lines, be careful, you might already be dealing with a healthy addiction.

So, when Daniel Berton, an "old member" (sorry Dan), advertised a weekend in the Grampians for advanced bushwalkers, that sparked my interest and I signed up for the adventure. The original plan was fairly simple, drive there on Friday evening, do the adventurous walk on Saturday and find something else to do on Sunday. I told myself "let's get to it", but it turned out to be not as straightforward as I thought.

On Saturday morning after a delicious breakfast, we set-off to walk under what was predicted to be glorious weather. Unfortunately, a gloomy scene was awaiting us outside the campground. A female kangaroo had had an encounter with a car, leaving her with a broken leg and her little joey wailing close by. Without a single moment of doubt, Dan did what he had to do and called the emergency wildlife services. Not long after, the emergency wildlife rangers came and took care of the situation.

With a heavy heart, we continued our journey and tried our best to enjoy the beautiful day ahead. Among the seven of us, three were experienced rock climbers. Within the first hour of the walk, we passed by the bottom of the Taipan wall, these three folks constantly looking up and occasionally stumbling. The lesson here is

that it helps to look where to step on uneven grounds. Immediately after the wall, we spotted a swan-shaped rock, frustrated by the impossibility of climbing Taipan, two of the climbers literally ran to the swan-shaped rock and sent it. Note to self: I should really try rock climbing to understand what really goes on in their heads. The walk that we were on was from an old book in the MUMC library, literally the type you'd find in your grandparents' attic, decaying with stained pages. Printed before GPS and detailed maps were easily accessible, these bushwalking guides included descriptive features of the surrounding landscapes of the trail. The interesting thing about these guides is that it allows you to thoroughly analyse your surroundings to find your way, rather than mindlessly following your GPS.

Our plan was to go up Mount Stapy-lton from the base of Taipan Wall, and make our way down through Hollow Mountain. The terrain was rocky as expected in the Grampians. It involved a lot of rock scrambling and a couple of unusual passes. Among them was a crossing along the ridge line where you'd have to make a huge step across a void. At first glance, based on the photo, you might think it's an easy cross. However, when you integrate crossing a 100m drop and one's fear of heights, let's just say it wasn't an easy feat. This wasn't a problem at all for Dan.

The second pass challenged the group for 15 minutes. To come down the mountain, we had to find a hole leading to a cave. The book failed to clearly describe where to find these

key landmarks. While the others were busy searching for the cave entrance, I sat down to sunbathe and enjoy the view. Once I realized that everyone had gone through, I headed towards the cave. As I got into the cave, the first thing I saw was half of our group members hanging from the cave's ceiling. I was beginning to think that these guys would prefer being on any other surface bar one that's horizontal. We finished the walk and headed back to camp. Melissa, Hartley and James packed up and drove back to Melbourne while Hannah, Dan, Kris-sie and I stayed for an extra night.

We knew the weather would deteriorate during the night. We didn't know that we were going to get heavy rain, strong winds, crackling thunder and lightning. Our group survived the

storm, except for Dan, whose tent flattened and he had to get up in the middle of the night to fix it up. There was another victim, a biker, who didn't belong to our group. His tent flooded quickly so he resorted to spending most of the night in the toilet block.

A year ago, I didn't expect to be writing an article for a magazine, play Canoe Polo, paddle in white waters, nor do any cross country skiing. MUMC has this incredible ability to push you to discover new horizons, while learning from its more seasoned members. It can also turn any activity into a fun and/or adventurous one.

WORDS BY GUILLAUME STANGUENNEC
PHOTO BY ETIENNE MORTIER



The King and the Pawn.
Photo by Etienne Mortier.



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Andrew on the last pitch of Toilet Peak
Photo by Anja Fuectbauer.

This is a very well-known poem, one Stu knew by heart. Stu was so much more than a mountain guide; he was also a teacher and mentor, and a guide in life. These things were not separated in him, as we often separate work and play. His work, his life, his way of thinking always came together at once in him – and thus, I came to learn a fair amount about the famous novels, poetry and essays of the 20th century from him while high up in the mountains.
Submitted in fond memory of Stu & Dale.

WORDS BY LIV GROVER JOHNSON

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there; I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow,
I am the sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there; I did not die.

MARY ELIZABETH FRYE (1932)



Stu pointing out the mountains when we (those on his mountaineering course) summited The Minarets, Dec 2014.

On January 2nd 2016, it was confirmed that two of our club's life members Dale Thistlethwaite and Stuart Hollaway had died on Mt Silberhorn in New Zealand's Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park.

It has taken me many months to find the courage to put down on paper, just a few of the memories and emotions that continue to well up inside of me. Although there are many who knew them far better than I did, they made such an extraordinary impression in my life and in the lives of so many others that I wish to try and share some of these memories with you, to ensure that their legacy lives on within the Mountaineering Club. For a very long time after their fall, Dale and Stu came to mind daily. They were omnipresent; in the back of my mind, whatever I was doing, wherever I was... they were there. More recently, it is only in the brief periods of down time that I have - waiting for the train, sitting at a red light in the traffic, staring out into the dark before bed - that memories of their lives resurface. Sometimes this brings sadness, sometimes a private smile brightens my eyes.

The things that I remember seem to be little glimpses - images that are fixed in my memory. Stu wore two rings on a chain around his neck while he was out climbing. One plain band of Pounamu (New Zealand greenstone), the other was his wedding ring - a silver band with a Celtic-style pattern. He had several little 'comfort' addi-

In Memorandum: Stuart Hollaway & Dale Thistlethwaite

BY LIV GROVER JOHNSON



Dale at Stu and Flick's wedding, April 2011. Photo by Steve Chan



Stu and Richard looking at photos from their first ascent.

to know Dale personally. From this very limited experience I can tell you that I found her very impressive. Here was a beautiful young woman, a little less than ten years my senior, opinionated, strong-willed and strong-minded, who had created a life of adventure for herself. So many times I've had ideas and opportunities for adventure, but then shied away and sought the comfort of the sensible, conservative route. Not Dale, she successfully combined seriously hard-core outdoors-woman with professional life.

And damn, they were mischievous! Some of you will know of their far-from-subtle way of meddling in people's personal affairs with their own matchmaking schemes in mind!

Two summers ago, I spent almost two weeks in Tasman Saddle Hut with Dale, Stu and ten other Oxo mountaineers. We had plenty of fine-weather days for climbing, however there were also a number of storm days. Just try to picture the twelve of us (all active, energetic mountaineering-types), cooped up for three consecutive days in a hut smaller than a shipping-container. The first day was ok; everyone was pretty exhausted from climbing, so we slept and ate, and ate and slept. After midday on the second day, people start turning to the cask-wine as a way to pass the hours while the wind howls around us, threatening to blow the little red hut off the edge of the rocky outcrop, upon which we were perched. Hail, sleet and snow found their way in through cracks, so I put duct-tape over the gaps.

If you knew Dale and Stu, you knew how they relished a good debate - almost as much as they enjoyed their wine. None of us being anywhere near their equal in either the conversation, or the wine-appreciation, we spent many an hour simply listening and observing as they dug up ideas, discussed, argued, count-

tions to his mountaineering kit too. There was a small, handmade pillowcase made out of Thomas-the-Tank print fleece. Dale had made it for him. She had also specially altered a buff for him by sewing mesh into a small hole that she'd cut-out - so that the buff could be pulled right up over his mouth and nose to protect his face in bad weather - so that he could still breathe through it easily. Stu's rock-climbing attire included old business shirts from the Opp-shops, with their sleeves cut off to ¾ length. They made for great sun protection. Fashion wasn't exactly a priority. When we weren't out climbing, Stu was reciting poetry and quoting famous writers and poets. He had read every book in all of the huts and would recommend the various texts to us (or discourage us from reading some, as many of them were "utter shite" as he put it).

Dale wore her straight, blonde hair in a variety of plaits when she was climbing. She secretly organised to bring all the ingredients to make Piña colada's for New Year's Eve one year, complete with mini cocktail umbrellas. I regret that I was only just beginning to get



Dale. Photo by Steve Chan



Dale belaying Stu during the Onisght or Flight weekend at Arapiles on Loudly Inferior (23). Photo by Anthony Cuskelly.

er-argued, played devil's advocate, and darted from topics as diverse as politics, mountaineering, literature, MUMC, France, Chamonix, skiing, philosophy, fashion, rock-climbing, cheese, avalanches, science, economics, and naturally, the quality of the wine they were drinking. All we had to do, when conversation occasionally faltered, was stoke the fire with a new topic of conversation and away they'd go. As entertaining as their endless, humorous, and intelligent conversation could be, on one of those afternoons they set out into the poor weather to visit the other climbing parties at Kelman Hut, an hour walk away. There, they undoubtedly continued the conversation and helped themselves to other people's wine. We all breathed a sigh of relief and sat in silence for a while, just listening to the wind.

Back in Cook Village at the end of that trip, showered and fresh-scented we all went to dinner at a rather fancy restaurant to celebrate. To our horror, and amusement, Dale made numerous loud comments about our fellow diners. Although undeniably accurate, they were far from socially acceptable or appropriate for the setting. The poor bride at her wedding dinner will be forever mortified to know that we could all see her underwear through her bridal gown, and the rather large lady with the especially large backside probably shredded her skin-tight leopard-skin body-con dress as soon as she got home that night. I imagine, with sadness, what they would be doing now if they still lived and breathed with us. They'd go off to Mt Arapiles every other weekend to go climbing. They'd been trying to climb ALL of the 3-star grades 18-22. The last I heard about this project, I think they had done all the 18s, and many of the 19s. Dale was joking about how they were being lazy and choosing the easy ones first (in most people's books, spending every other weekend climbing at Arapiles on grades 18-22 is not what we'd consider lazy!).

It's about this time of year too, that Stu would run his "fight or flight" weekend at Mt Arapiles. Stu certainly had a knack for bringing the best out of people. At the trip meeting he asked each of us the best grade that we had ever flash-climbed in the gym to be able to pick a route for each of us to project. Those trad routes were of the same grade that we'd said we could climb in the gym! Totally terrifying?? – Oh yes! But he didn't just throw us on those routes. On the Saturday, we practiced placing gear on consecutively harder and harder climbs. Stu watched each of us; our technique, strengths and weaknesses, and would then point out the next climb he thought we should try. Stu was a teacher. It wasn't just his

profession, and it wasn't just the Mountaineering and guiding courses either. He was a natural, born teacher. Somehow he could perceive in each of us not just the physical strengths and weaknesses, but also the mental ones, and recognise the types of encouragement and support that would bring the best out in us all. Somehow, he coaxed all of us into attempting that climb he'd picked out, and most of us sent it by the end of the weekend. For me this was an improvement from Grade 9, on the weekend I learned to trad climb a year before, to a grade 20 on trad and 22 on sport!

The winter is not so far away. With the winter comes the snow, and also the winter school holidays. It's quite likely that the two of them would have dashed off to Chamonix for those two weeks to go Mountaineering. Le Petit Dru, L'aiguille de Midi, Refuge des Cosmiques; those names are so familiar to me – but I've never been! Back in Australia, they would use their weekends to go skiing in the high plains (if there was snow) or keep on climbing at Araps (if there wasn't much snow).

The last time Stu and I arrived at Pioneer Hut together he exclaimed with glee that the old 1930s encyclopaedia Britannica was still there (who knows what it was doing in a high alpine hut in 2016 – I suppose it was there to answer our questions when we could no longer turn to trusty google for the answer). Swiftly, he pulled it down and opened it to the section on Adolf Hitler. Of course, being written in the early 1930s, this entry in the encyclopaedia was brief and of very little significance, which Stu found hilarious.

On the 21st of December we woke at Pioneer hut to unexpectedly calm weather. It was the last time that I saw Stu. I waited with him for his helicopter ride back down to Fox Village so he could meet Dale for Christmas and some climbing on the Cook side: "There's a great big f**k-off high [weather pattern] coming, we're going climbing."

We marvelled together at the mountains around us. The winds that they had been forecasting were clearly going to come down and batter us soon – it could be heard rushing over Tasman, Lendenfeld, Haast, Haidinger and Douglas: roaring, howling – the sound

was distant, high above us, and seemed to be coming from everywhere. Where we stood, it was still; almost perfectly calm.

When the helicopter had landed; packed and ready to fly – Stu turned to give me a hug. Not just any old hug – a hug between mountaineers. One that said goodbye: goodbye and I hope I see you again, but I know that I may not. "Take care." I can't help but think that this was meant for me. I was the one who should have fallen. Too young, too inexperienced, too ambitious. He had said goodbye to me. But I am still here, where he should be.

I think of Silberhorn and of both of you, together, in awe of those giants. The mountains glow, pearly blue – even under the starlight. At the first hint of sun, those mountains blush pink and orange in expectation of the warm caress of a golden dawn. You were watching, I'm sure. And I'm sure you would have stopped, if only for a moment, to turn and blush with those mountains. Probably you would have held your breath, just for a moment, in awe. Later, when I learned of your fall, I couldn't help but looking back at the sky – up at that same sky. Maybe that's why people believe in a heaven up there. It's the last connection many of us can make – knowing that we were looking upon the same sky on that fateful day. Stu and Dale dreamed of mountains, and they shared their deep passion for those mountains with many of us. If you do go back into those mountains – the southern alps of New Zealand, think of Dale and of Stu: "I have spread my dreams under your feet. Tread softly because you tread on my dreams." (W.B. Yeats).

WORDS BY LIV GROVER JOHNSON

THE THREE RULES OF MOUNTAINEERING

It's always further than it looks.
It's always taller than it looks.
And it's always harder than it looks.
- Author Unknown

"To die will be an awfully big adventure"

–J.M. Barrie (Peter Pan)

Officer Reports



Hartley Malcom-Stevens, Caio Seguin and Aiden Elliott on day three of a trip from Falls Creek to Mt Hotham. Photo by Caitlyn Conway

Near the summit of Mt Bogong, Victoria.
Photo by Sam Thompson.



BUSHWALKING

AIDEN ELLIOTT



Bushwalking continues to remain one of the strongest performing sports within the club. Evie did a fantastic job as the Bushwalking Officer last year, supplementing the gear store with new kits and merging bushwalking with conservation on a new level. Looking forward, the end goal for this year will be to increase the amount of beginner trips within the first month of each semester. This should allow us to retain a larger number of new members which can deepen MUMC in the long-term.

It was with great trepidation that I put up my hand to volunteer for the position of Bushwalking Officer. The club has so many capable and independent members, what could I offer that so many others could not? So here's to hoping that next year's officer does not start their spiel with "Looking forward from the debacle that was Aiden's leadership!"

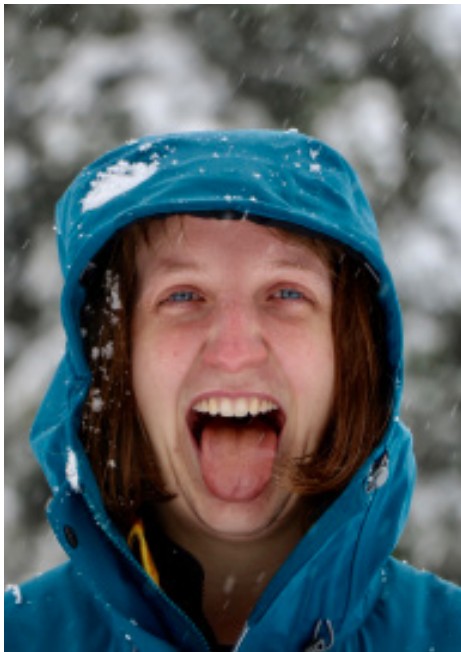
WORDS BY AIDEN ELLIOTT



Hiking the Prom.
Photo by Maddie Brygel.

SAFETY

GINA SNELLING



SKILLS AND TRAINING BINGO

WHERE ARE YOUR SKILLS GAPS??

Navigation	River reading	Avalanche risk forecasting	Effective trip planning	Emergency Response
Vertical rescue	Snowcraft	Remote First Aid	River Rescue	Abseiling and Anchors
Leadership	Multi- pitching	'Leave no trace' camping	Route selection	Climbing Techniques
Lead climbing	Basic First Aid	Risk Assessment	Boat control	Communication
Bomb proof roll	Belay systems	Knot tying	Bushcraft	????

MUMC offers financial support for training and development for skills that aren't easily learnt on trips. Check out the website or speak to Committee for more information.

When I ran for the newly created position of Safety Officer I had a checklist of things I wanted to get done. My priority, underpinning all the items on the (extensive and ever-growing) list, is to support a greater culture of safety awareness within the club.

Safety is subjective. Everyone has a different appetite for risk and a different view on what constitutes acceptable decision making. There is rarely one single cause for an incident, nor one single person at fault. It follows that the most important thing for us as a club is to continue to have open discussions about what a safe club culture looks like, what practices we adopt and follow, and what we can learn from each other's experiences, to ensure the safety of all OXOs.

Since taking on the role I've been

encouraged by the volume and variety of discussions I've had regarding the club's safety culture and practices. There have been many great ideas suggested for ways to ingrain safety awareness into every aspect of the club, from Tuesday night meetings to trip planning, and, of course, on trips themselves.

A critical aspect to improving our safety culture is understanding where our biggest risks are. Better incident reporting is needed. We need to log everything from near misses to serious injuries. Reporting is not about finding someone to blame or punish; we all make mistakes and poor decisions. Instead, reporting is about identifying where the club is failing its members with regards to skills, knowledge and safety practices. It to facilitates discussions and helps us

learn from each other so that we can all make better decisions next time. In the past few months it has been great to see incidents being reported, regardless of how minor they seem, from both leaders and participants. I hope that this continues so we can see where the committee needs to focus its efforts with regard to safety.

We are all responsible for safety. When you do not speak up, you are accepting the decisions that are being made. If you see something that concerns you, speak to your trip leader, the safety officer, a committee or submit an anonymous report via the website so that your concerns can be heard and addressed.

WORDS BY GINA SNLLNG



Isabel at the summit of Mount Feathertop. Photo by Emmanuel Malikides

CONSERVATION

ISABEL CORNES

I think it's fair to say that conservation has received little attention over the last few years at MUMC. Through the excellent work of past Officers. We had a number of tree planting trips and arrangements with external conservation groups over the years, but overall attendance and attention has been relatively low within the club. The thrill of our beloved sports has successfully taken up all of our limited and precious free time – as they should – but I have been intent on making sure that conservation becomes a part of our regular sports, and gets more attention in its own right.



MUMC has a strong history of exciting engagement in environmental activism, the most notable being the Franklin River protests of the 1970's and 1980's. They are the reason we have so many National Parks, beautiful cliffs, rivers, forests, mountains, and oceans. That passion and determination means that now, we and future generations can hike, climb and paddle the landscapes they fought for we all love to enjoy. I hoped that over the course of the year I would be able to bring the enthusiasm for conservation back into the club.

This began with the creation of the rubbish collection competition which saw lots of Oxos posting photos of collections they had done during club and personal trips all over Australia – With submissions from trips in Victoria, NSW, Tassie and the NT! The success of this meant I managed to convince the committee to sacrifice \$40 a month to maintain this initiative. These pictures are slowly being added to the new and growing conservation wall – so be sure to check this out and get inspired.

The most exciting conservation



Evie, Chris and Luke with the Rubbish Man

project happening is the 'MUMC for the Marañón fundraising campaign. In June-July 2017, a group of twelve Oxos rafted and kayaked down the Marañón River and hope to raise \$20,000 to put towards the creation of a conservation area in Peru. This is an effort to increase eco-tourism in the area, and continue the movement to halt destructive dams being built on the river. For more information, or to make a contribution, visit: www.mumcfor.maranonwaterkeeper.org

I am thrilled by the positive response these initiatives have received, and I am hope that conservation will have the opportunity to return to its former glory in MUMC.

WORDS & PHOTOS BY ISABEL CORNES



Luke Frisken rappelling off the Pinnacles, Cape Woolamai.
Photo by Sam Thompson.



Liv Grover Johnson Ski Touring with her puppy, Molly.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

ROPE SPORTS

MATT DUNWOODIE

It is disappointing to say we have not been able to run any club rope trips this year. Navigating university politics has been a course in patience, if nothing else. MU Sport has finally realised that we can't go another year without ropes and as of the last few weeks of November, they have started to push towards being up and running at O-Week. Fingers crossed, this is likely to include climbing at intro trip again!

I really need to say thanks to Dan Cocker and Natalie Care for coordinating with the university. That has probably been the hardest job of all. Also, Aaron Lowndes has run a couple of intro to outdoor climbing trips and has put together a thorough and comprehensive framework for climbing in the club. The outline is available at: <https://goo.gl/fX8c7b> and further links at the bottom of that document.

That is probably a lot to digest, so we

will be running info sessions on how it all works.

This last year has opened my eyes to various things around the club, good and bad. We offer such amazing experiences to people, yet we have a high turnover of members each year. Without climbing, we have lost a lot of valuable members, but that also



means others have started kayaking or skiing. We have amazing facilities provided by the university, but keep in mind they move at a much slower pace than we do. For the epic that, if you go outdoors long enough, you're destined to have, there are a thousand other great experiences you have. what is the relationship between facilities and an epic?

So, I want to set 3 goals for 2017:

1. Implement Aaron's climbing framework.
2. Build up a base of members with solid rope skills for caving and canyoning
3. As always, encourage people to get involved more.

Who is keen to help?

WORDS BY MATT DUNWOODIE



SKIING

ADELE WESTGARD

As I'm writing this, it is snowing light snowflakes outside my window and the temperature is about -4 degrees Celsius. Hopefully it will stay like this for a little longer. I'm planning to go skiing as soon as there is enough snow in the mountains. While some people follow the summer and heat when they travel, I chase winters and snow. In my opinion, there is nothing better than skiing in the backcountry when there is nice weather, including the feeling of achievement and adrenaline when you ski down a steep hill, or wake up in a tent looking out at the snow.

I have been the Snow Sports Officer for about 4 months now and I must admit I still feel like a newbie in this role. I know my snow and skiing, but I'm still learning the administration and committee procedures. I hope to follow in Luke's footsteps, with more beginner and intermediate trips; more trips where participants can develop their skills and most importantly, have fun! As Luke hoped and aimed for, we had an active snow season with more trips than in previous years, about 17 in total! I aim to keep the snow sports momentum going and hope run trips for all skill levels. Beginner trips invite new members to become interested in the sport and to learn the skills needed for snow camping and skiing. Intermediate and advanced trips allow participants to keep developing their skills and explore the opportunities snow sports give to access the backcountry and wilderness.

We have had a good year with few incidents. There was one incident of hypothermia during a snowshoeing trip in the Bogong High Plains where mountain rescue had to help transport a trip participant out of the

mountains. Said participant recovered quickly, but we hope to avoid similar incidents in the future. We have an increased focus on safety within all sports in the club and this is also an important focus to snow sports. There are many risks in all sports, however, I will address avalanche risks and hypothermia. The most useful way to mitigate these risks is to acquire sufficient knowledge and respect. Avalanches do not occur often in Australia and risk areas can be avoided. Hypothermia, on the other hand, is much more unpredictable. It doesn't have to be snow or minus degrees for that, 15 degrees and rain can be just as dangerous. Knowing how to avoid hypothermia, what the main and first symptoms are and how/when to respond is crucial for incident response.

For the upcoming season, I aim to increase knowledge of risks in snow sports. I hope we can keep up the interest for the sport and meet new skiers and snowshoers through more trips. I look forward to new trips with new and "old" participants. If you're interested, come have a chat!

WORDS BY ADELE WESTGARD



Luke Frisken on Triple Stager. Photo by Caitlyn Conway



Summit rocks of Mt Cook. Photo by Sam Thompson

PADDLING

BY ROBERT SPRINGER



"I'm never kayaking again!"
- Me, circa 2012 (after subluxing my shoulder while kayaking)

"I guess I could run a couple rapids in the inflatable kayak..."
- Me, last summer (while rafting the Franklin with my family)

Six months later I found myself on the MUMC committee as the paddling officer.

Looking at the trip numbers for kayaking it seems that I'm not the only one who kayaked a lot more in 2016. The cumulative days on the river by participants on kayaking trips has been over 500 in 2016 (up from 200

in the previous year and 60 the year before that). Beginner kayaking has really taken off, with a roster of beginner trips happening at least once a month.

There has also been a strong skills development focus this year, ten members successfully completed a Swift Water Rescue Course and a few members went to New Zealand kayak school.

Over the coming year we should see some big changes in the boat shed and hopefully more coordination with ropes to develop swiftwater canyoning skills. It is only by standing on the shoulders of giants that paddling has come so far in the past few years - thank you Jack!

WORDS BY ROBERT SPRINGER



The raft is the chariot, and the kayakers are the horsepower.
Photo by Caitlyn Conway

MOUNTAINEERING

BY THOMAS PATTON

Mountaineering in MUMC is currently experiencing significant changes. Since the loss of honorary life members Stu Holloway and Dale Thistlethwaite in New Zealand at the start of 2016, the training of new mountaineers has become much more complicated. In the past, Stu would run a technical mountaineering course (TMC) for MUMC members in New Zealand over the summer. These courses were perfectly tailored to the existing skill sets of MUMC members

that had years of experience rock climbing, bush walking and ski touring. Additionally, these courses were provided at a significantly lower price than a commercial TMCs. Replacing this training program is the key focus for mountaineering this year. I hope that at the end of this year we will have established solid contacts with guiding companies in NZ and can offer aspiring MUMC mountaineers a suitable introductory course to alpine climbing.

tested our skills on some of the classic routes over ridges, faces, mixed terrain and the most perfect alpine granite in the world. This trip culminated in a summit of Mont Blanc via the Three Peaks routes. This summer has been relatively quiet for alpine climbing in NZ with perhaps only a couple of MUMC members heading over to climb in what is traditionally the playground of MUMC mountaineers.

As always, the MUMC mountaineering gear store is maintained to provide members with all the hardware they require to climb easy-moderate alpine routes. The objectives for the gear store for the upcoming year are to maintain the function of the current gear to the point where 6-8 climbers can hire gear and climb simultaneously. It is also intended that the club will invest in a complete set of dry-treated double ropes and a set of modern technical ice tools.



Mountaineering Officer, Thomas in Chamonix
Photo by Julian Goad

The past six months have seen MUMC climbing mountains across the world. Two separate trips to Kyrgyzstan resulted in MUMC members tackling some of Central Asia's most imposing mountains. These trips were most successful in exposing members to international expedition style climbing as well as providing a taste of what climbing at higher altitude is like. Additionally myself and the previous mountaineering officer, Julian Goad, travelled to the home of alpine climbing; Chamonix. There, we

WORDS BY THOMAS PATTON

President's Decree

NATALIE CARE

MUMC Hut on Mt Feathartop. Photo by Lukke Frisken.

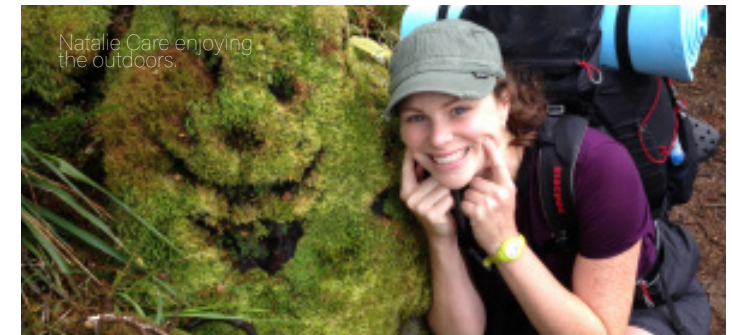
In July 2016, my rogaine partner & one of my best friends, Gina Snelling and I went out for dinner. She told me that people in the club were talking about me being the next president. Half laughing, half choking I remarked "What!!! No f**ken way I am going to do that". But alas, over the next month the grooming commenced, my ego was stroked and I eventually agreed.

Although I was initially hesitant to take on this role, we have had a number of successes since the last Mountaineer that have made it all worthwhile. These include:

- The 50th anniversary celebration of the hut. Rodney Polkinghorne organised an event at the Melbourne School of Design with speeches from Peter Kneen (design and construction of the hut) and Alberto Pugnale (geodesic domes and creating other interesting building shapes). Some relatively major maintenance work will be required on the hut in the next 10-15 years and Dan Cocker has begun planning for this.

We launched our brilliant new website. Massive thanks to Taner Kucukyuruk, Matt Dunwoodie, Richard Bassett-Smith and Gopi Manne who put in a massive number of hours into the project. Thank you to everyone else who contributed in multiple different ways to make this project possible.

At the hut celebration, a particular thank you was given to the people who contributed to the building of the hut by doing the cooking. This "thank you" really resonated with me as it mirrors my feelings about the website project. I truly believe we succeeded in launching the website because of all the support people on the sidelines. Those that were not doing any of the coding, but assisting in other ways. Even popping by to say hi is more powerful than you know. Thank you all!



Robert Springer has spent numerous hours fixing up the now swanky looking boat shed and refreshing our kayak fleet. Fingers crossed the grant application he has submitted is successful.

Daniel Cocker put a lot of work into organising a leadership training day which Gina Snelling ran at the Christmas party. Caitlyn Conway organised the food and other entertainment (note the tickle fights and hog tying were not organised activities).

Thanks to Lingshu Lu, Anna Detmold and Nabilah "Billy" Zulkifli for the Annual Pie and Slide that went off without any unfixable hitches. Take note, never dine at Burger Buzz, Brunswick.

We have a new Tuesday night pub. 'Bobbie Peels' has a \$15 steak deal, good beer and great service (vege option currently being negotiated). Thanks to Emilie Duncan for doing the groundwork and finding an excellent replacement for the Corkman (in my opinion it was never that good anyway).

The clubrooms are cleaner and tidier thanks to our new Tuesday night game "The 2 Minute Tidy" (which actually lasts for 3 minutes as it was determined 2 minutes was too short). You have me to thank/dislike for this one. All of the above projects succeeded because someone developed a passion for them. A club member saw something that needed doing, they took it on, got people involved and made it a success. Everyone has something to contribute, even if you don't necessarily have the hard skills required for the job (I project managed a website for crying out loud!...I don't know f**k about websites). Ask yourself "How can I make this more social?" and "How can I fix this problem?" and "What can I do next?" You are all capable of running with your passion and doing something great.

Find that project that gets you excited and run with it. This is your club. Make it yours!

WORDS BY NATALIE CARE

EPIC ADVENTURES

Swampy Plains River

By Anja Fuechtbauer

Blackberries. Blackberries everywhere. I gauge the next twenty metres ahead and try to figure out which way to keep bashing through it. Which non-existent path would have the least spiky thorns waiting for us?

No matter, they're all the same.

I am scrambling along. It's wet everywhere and branches take turns whipping into my face. I look at the hand carrying my paddle. Scratched up, swollen and with blood running down the back of it. I turn around to see how Anna is going. She doesn't look any better. We keep the conversation light and cheerful trying to see the humorous side of things. Another river crossing ahead. Matt throws us a rope over and we pendulum across. Now we are hopping along some boulders and the going is easy – even if only for about fifty metres before we face an unclimbable rockwall and we

have to enter the scrub again. I sigh and give into the inevitable.

Somewhere, we find Anna's paddle, now if we could only walk around the next bend of the river and see our escaped boats waiting for us.

We are not that lucky, and so we continue to thread our way through the scrub between the Swampy Plains river and the steep walls of its gorge.

It is late afternoon and Neil makes the call: we will spend the night on the river – well, eight of us would – whereas our two strongest paddlers will smash out the rest of the paddle and hopefully return the next morning with a plan. Soon Matt and Neil are paddling off with a handful of Mars bars in their pockets and a head torch. Just in case.

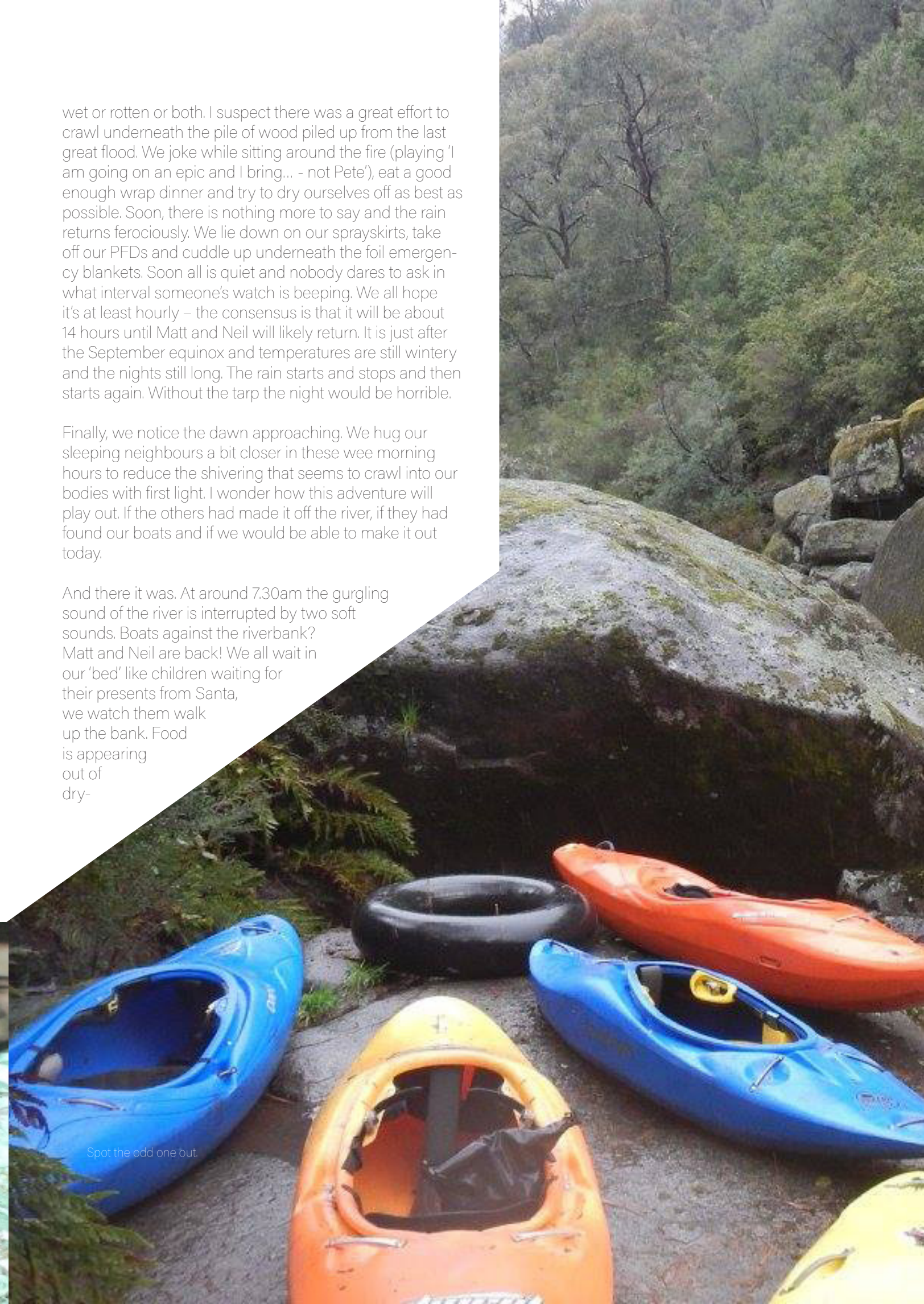
Time to find ourselves a home for the night. A stretch of sand (not too close to the river) will do. A bit of 'gardening' is necessary but soon we have a tarp up and look at our camp with pride. I am not sure how the boys managed to get a fire going. All wood is either

wet or rotten or both. I suspect there was a great effort to crawl underneath the pile of wood piled up from the last great flood. We joke while sitting around the fire (playing 'I am going on an epic and I bring... - not Pete'), eat a good enough wrap dinner and try to dry ourselves off as best as possible. Soon, there is nothing more to say and the rain returns ferociously. We lie down on our sprayskirts, take off our PFDs and cuddle up underneath the foil emergency blankets. Soon all is quiet and nobody dares to ask in what interval someone's watch is beeping. We all hope it's at least hourly – the consensus is that it will be about 14 hours until Matt and Neil will likely return. It is just after the September equinox and temperatures are still wintry and the nights still long. The rain starts and stops and then starts again. Without the tarp the night would be horrible.

Finally, we notice the dawn approaching. We hug our sleeping neighbours a bit closer in these wee morning hours to reduce the shivering that seems to crawl into our bodies with first light. I wonder how this adventure will play out. If the others had made it off the river, if they had found our boats and if we would be able to make it out today.

And there it was. At around 7.30am the gurgling sound of the river is interrupted by two soft sounds. Boats against the riverbank? Matt and Neil are back! We all wait in our 'bed' like children waiting for their presents from Santa, we watch them walk up the bank. Food is appearing out of dry-

Chris, Sarah, Anna, Toni, Brennan, Kirilee and Pete after enduring a chilly night in space blankets





We are all tired as we get back into our boats / tube and start the journey downstream. The portage section isn't far away and carrying nine boats and one inflated inner tube through scrub, a stone tunnel and across a ledge

Dry, warm, clothes and a pub meal are in order.



We'd driven into the states with two cars and five boats, straight to the put-in of my favourite run, the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River. Of course, a good deal of faff ensued upon arrival... pretty standard for our crew. Finally geared up, Josh and Kev went to drive the shuttle, except Josh's keys had vanished. We dropped everything and searched for ten minutes. It was then that Josh admitted that he'd been twirling his key chain on his finger and it could have come off then, or perhaps it had fallen out of the hole in the pocket of his trousers... We searched for another hour or so, to no avail. Finally giving in, Kev drove down to drop



Rose Beagley paddling the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River.



Kevin and the two door Honda Civic

the Civic off and was lucky enough to hitch-hike back up with some other paddlers who had just shown up. We decided to combine the two groups, and our original five became ten, with only three people having paddled the river before.

The run starts off at the base of a dam at the entrance to a very narrow and steep canyon (you can kind of scout it from high above on a bridge that you have to cross to get to the put in). Once you're in, there's no going back.

The canyon section is the hardest (and probably my favourite) part of the run, and finishes in a tight nozzle with two powerful river-wide holes; it's also a must run. As you proceed down the rest of the run, the rapids decrease in difficulty until you think you're

out of it and then you're in for smooth sailing until to the take out. But actually, you're not. The final rapid 'Cheese

Grater' is still to come. It still seems to creep up on me, but having only paddled the run the week before, I knew my line. Some of the others, slightly off line, were caught by the hole below the sloping drop and provided us with some excellent displays of freestyle moves. It all ended well though, and we had a cruisy float down to the take out. After some post paddle beers with them, we loaded up, hid Josh's boat in the bushes and headed for the border. And there we were.

It wasn't the type of situation I'd ever thought I'd be in. Actually, I never thought I was going to go to Canada or even whitewater kayak. But since I joined MUMC in 2011, I do kayak, and I've lived in Canada, and I have had those types of adventures, a lot. And I'm really grateful for it. Kayaking in Canada was a real eye opener for me and saw a huge progression in my paddling skills. There are so many rivers in British Columbia alone, that I'm sure I've only touched the surface of what is available. What I did get to see was a huge range of river types: steep creeking, runs consisting solely of big drops, big volume, river running, wilderness runs, and multi days, it's got it all. What's more, they all seem to flow through stunning surrounds – big gorges, canyons and, forests, have relatively short and straightforward shuttles and are mostly whitewater (BC boaters don't seem to like flat-water paddling). It was

amazing to be able to push myself on these runs and at the same time see such incredibly beautiful places.

But not only is the paddling incredible, the community is too. When I first arrived, I knew no-one, except for one guy I'd cooked dinner with for a few nights beside Lake Mahinapua in Hokitika (NZ) where I was living out my car one summer, and he had just been passing through. I hadn't seen him in months, yet he invited me to stay with him and his sister in Revelstoke. When I arrived, he'd already picked up the boat for me that I'd bought on sale months ago, me stay with him for a couple of weeks and we paddled together every day. He introduced me to other boaters and gave me phone numbers of paddlers around BC so that I could paddle with them. So, despite feeling a little nervous and worried about not being able to find people to paddle with as a) a female boater and b) knowing only Koby, I had no trouble. I spent most of that first summer after leaving Koby, meeting up with other paddlers at appointed times and spots to go paddling, conveying around with those I met, and just having an amazing time.

Yes, Canada does have some low points. I mean, there are bears, and they're scary, especially when you don't invite them to dinner as my boyfriend and I found out one night while camping on a remote forestry track. Canadians drive on the wrong side of the road (you get used to it). And they will happily drive for hours to reach a river, even though there's another perfectly good one nearby. This also includes crossing over to the States, for day trips, which is okay if you hold a Canadian or US passport, but is a little more stressful for other nationalities. But, you can deal with these things. Whether you paddle or not, it's an incredible place to visit and explore.

Whether you're a paddler, climber, hiker, mountaineer, or just a general outdoors enthusiast, Canada should probably be on your bucket list of places to go.

*Oh, and yes we did make it over the border and back into Canada. Josh and Kev went back the next day to pick up his truck with the spare key, the other key... was never found.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ROSE BEAGLEY



LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

By Anna Detmold

I've been skiing long enough that I have figured out that if you look at the snow in front of your skis, your face will inevitably end up there. Little did I know, kayaking and skiing have more in common than I thought. With kayaking, it's not about avoiding a face-plant in the snow. It's about looking where you want to go so that you don't get snagged by scary holes and strainers or hit every single rock. Eyes go down, you hit said rock, boat flips and lots of fish will be counted. Look where you want to go.

I was quite bumbly on the river last year, so maybe, going to kayak school would make me a bit more stable. With high hopes, I set off with Anja to go to New Zealand.

I counted several fish (gaining me a reputation with the instructors in New Zealand), by several I mean a couple too many. Surprisingly, I still managed a tally of zero swims. Still, I must constantly remind myself to look where I want to go... and commit.

Yes, looking where you are going and want to go is always relevant on the river. Even when swimming. Especially when swimming. Evidently, I did not look where I wanted to go. Had I looked, I would have not jumped in feet first into a shallow section of the river. I wanted to go where there was a deep pool of water, and yet, I aimed straight for a rock. Look before you leap. I learnt that the hard way. Five minutes before our kayak rescue course ended, at 4pm - the witching hour of outdoor injuries.





Anna jumping into shallow water. Photo by Anja Fuechtbauer

Thankfully, Anja, Matt and Richard were ready to perform a rescue, after all, we were still on our River Safety Course.

A fractured patella (which I found out about three weeks post injury) and six stitches, a combination of strong winds, a cripple, too much rain and a shortage of boats resulted in a more relaxed second half of the trip. By more relaxed I mean heaps of cloud spotting, star gazing, movies, mock kayak videos, lots of tea, hot springs, real life clue-do, casual hikes, misplacing keys (ask Anja for more information) and delicious brekkies.

Thank you Anja, Matt and Richard for a good time in Murchison, next time around, I will always look where I want to go.

WORDS BY ANNA DETMOLD



The best reversal challenge

HOW TO ORGANISE INTRO TRIP

By Caitlyn Conway

When I volunteered to organise Intro Trip in return for the title of 'Cake Baking Deputy', I wasn't aware of how much of my time and effort it would take. What could be easier? All I have to do is delegate, right?

Unfortunately I'm not known for my ability to delegate. I once told a friend she'd made her sandwich wrong, and I wouldn't let her make her own sandwich the next day. This time, it would be different!

Oh how I tried. It honestly felt that everything I delegated went wrong. It didn't. Confirmation bias is a bitch. Everything that was meant to happen happened, but there were some bumps along the way. Organised chaos is a wonderful term, and it describes Intro Trip perfectly. Leaders didn't know where they were going, five people didn't bring sleeping bags, I felt sick from the stress of it all (either that or



Adele likes to hug trees



Gopi perched on a tree



the head injury I'd sustained on the Thursday morning), and some people were going hungry because I didn't buy enough food (I maintain that they received adequate calories, and that they were greedy).

Some people went out of their way to help, and they are worth their weight in gold. You'll see them around the club, just helping. That's who they are. Sometimes you don't notice them because they're busy just doing things. And sometimes you don't notice their efforts until you sit down and reflect back on the trip. I'm ashamed to say I was too focused on all the things that didn't go to plan to realise how much effort was put in to make everything run smoothly.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Everyone did marvellously, the newbies all had fun, and I still see a fair few around! I was the only person who needed first aid, but I now have a little scar on my left index finger to remind me to not volunteer again next year.

Thank you to all the leaders and newbies who helped make Intro Trip successful, it couldn't have been done without you.

WORDS BY CAITLYN CONWAY
PHOTOS BY SAM THOMPSON
AND CAITLYN CONWAY



THE FUN IS IN THE JOURNEY.

By Sarah McConville

Easily forgotten is the daunting nature of a MUMC newcomers' first trip, seasoned not – as veterans are – to the flurry of last-minute correspondence and to the piling of strangers into decrepit student cars, all set to face a weekend out in the elements. Undoubtedly, this is due to the immediacy of acceptance into MUMC folds, with 'strangers' quickly eschewed for 'friends' and the dawning realisation that there is no such thing as a weekend squandered. What begets this change?

The well-known Friday slog for one. Weekday commitments keep cars city-bound until late afternoon, delaying the several-hours drive towards the mountain ranges home to the spectacular Mount Stirling, Bogong, Hotham and Falls Creek. We left Matt in the dusk, charitably hanging Rob's home-made red velvet curtains that regretfully advertise 'home of adventurers' less effectively than 'newly-opened brothel.' However, frugality raises no eyebrows at MUMC. With the car groaning under the weight of four loaded packs, three sets of skis, snowshoes and a snowboard, the eccentricity was lost on all but the passers-by who witnessed the climbing of the driver through the passenger door to his seat (due to broken door) and the carefully nurtured patch of moss growing above the number

plate (due to a hippy soft spot for city flora and certain madness).

There was polite introductory conversation up Sydney Road, however, reservations soon vanished, and so did the traffic. Rob waved and gesticulated at the cars passed, eerily miming the dubious 'Brown Claw' (supposedly this is a rather clever link between toilet humour and white water paddling) before bursting into subtly pornographic refrains from a so-called MUMC CD of the 90s. Luckily, the value he brought to the trip was not only his warped sense of humour but also his leadership qualifications. The next two hours were productively spent planning the following night's feast, the game consisted of proposing outlandish dishes which Rob would then turn into a reality. In an act that warmed the heart of the car's chemistry PhD, 'mango lassie,' 'naan bread' and 'tzatziki' were quickly boiled down to their components to accompany pre-packaged Indian curries.

Raining and freezing temperatures greeted us in the dark of the Camp Creek carpark. Packs were topped with Myrtleford's supermarket loot, then saddled by an equally bulky mass of gear onto their outsides – loose ski boots, bottles, skis and

Rob Springer and his icicle



carry bags. As we began the long ascent up through the trees, snow gradually replaced the gritty mud and snow shoes were donned. With comically oversized feet and hunchbacks, we navigated, climbed, fell, tore and (in Rob's case) charged our way through meshes of fallen trees that loomed out of the dark to block the trail. Tall skis frequently entangled themselves in the branches above and necessitated impressive feats of contortionism to extricate them. Three hours of trudging eventually brought us to Michell Hut at 1:30am, and dazedly we set about erecting snow tents or nestling into cavities under the benches on top of which the hut's other occupants lay slumbering. Surprisingly, we would not be the last to arrive that night; it seemed that many like-minds were escaping the city to go into the wild mountains in search of snow.

The next morning yielded bursts of sunshine through a fine mist, lighting up the winter wonderland that surrounded us. The hut became a hive of activity as departing groups began their breakfast and packing, while Rob and Simon laid in their inert cocoons on the floor. MUMC readers, a tip; as exemplified by savvy opportunists who hang around the end of popular trails for blister-afflicted hikers to impart food and their cursed boots upon, there is a time and a place for charity. And was the time golden. Clearly, the 500g of white chocolate being shared by Rob and Paul for breakfast was indicative of poor nutritional choices being made. Lo, a feast was bestowed upon the hungry uni students by sympathetic departers: cheese, salami, milk chocolate bars, scroggin with white choc-chips, goon wine, and carrots (Rob, starkly: 'So why did you carrot it all up then?' falling on deaf ears and probably mistaken for ingratitude). Leaving the evening's dough to gestate in it's cup, we set off snowshoeing up the steep Eskdale Spur to the summit. In a marvellous display of nature's capriciousness, we seemingly battled up the ridge through a howling dark gale only to reach sun and spectacular views at the top. Although surrounded by abundant snow, its iciness meant that a short 200m joy ride was possible from summit to saddle before the risk necessitated that we switch back to snowshoes.



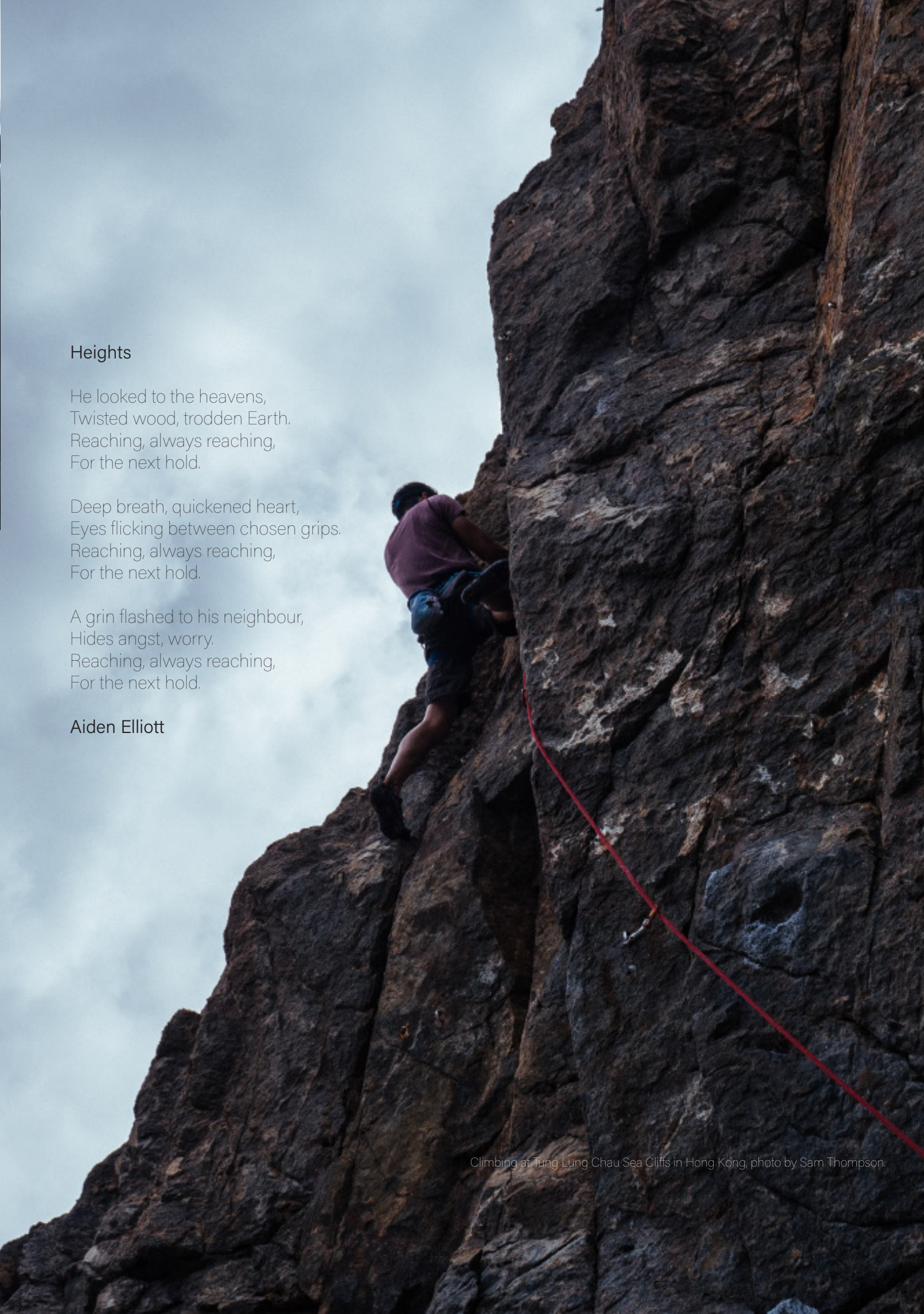
Summit selfie of Rob, Sarah, Paul and Simon

With the day’s adventure over, so began – as is often the case on long cold trips – the eating. Wood was manically chopped and a roaring fire was kindled in the hut. After finishing lunch at 2:30pm, we started out dinner preparations. Grimy, passing around inherited goon and coughing in the increasingly smoky hut, we emulated the slum conditions of an Industrial-era factory from a century past. Our assembly line churned out bread, rubbed with olive oil and garlic, and grilled it on the (hastily wiped) fire top; yoghurt found homes in people’s donated KeepCups and the cucumber and pounded mango were duly stirred in. Steaming curries filled the hut with the aroma of cooked potato, spices, and fragranced rice, and soon, a feast lay before us. Two hours later, the dessert course – hefty chunks of naan dough cooked around molten chocolate and banana – sent us to bed in a stupor.

The next day, the weather closed in further. We decided that our skiing opportunities had been exhausted and began our descent towards the carpark. Our good humour was but slightly marred at the pace with which we descended; On our downward stroll through snowy drifts and gums, we covered the same interminable long trek of the Friday night in a quarter of the time. In hindsight, we were all thankful for the strength-training the skis had provided on the uphill section, and chuffed

sentiments of general self-improvement were felt all-round... With no feasts to plan in the car, our minds were put to the test by four hours of word games. The Animal Game from the way up (one must think of an animal beginning with the last letter of the person prior’s), was resumed, providing us with three hours of knee-slapping fun. Variations were introduced, whereby the alphabet was run through for categories comprising ‘Bands’ and the much more scintillating ‘Fruits and Vegetables.’ To quote the wise oft-repeated mantra, ‘the fun is in the journey.’ And whilst snow variability means that the ‘ski’ in ‘ski trip’ is sometimes redundant, Melbourne’s location dictates that a journey must always be had. Altogether, the trip yielded a healthy dose of Australian wilderness, an impressive renewed general knowledge of foreign cuisine, bread-making and the planet’s flora and fauna (evidently limited in recent months to the contents of our fridges), as well as a set of new friends. Bring on MUMC Pub Trivia!

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY SARAH MCCONVILLE



Heights

He looked to the heavens,
Twisted wood, trodden Earth.
Reaching, always reaching,
For the next hold.

Deep breath, quickened heart,
Eyes flicking between chosen grips.
Reaching, always reaching,
For the next hold.

A grin flashed to his neighbour,
Hides angst, worry.
Reaching, always reaching,
For the next hold.

Aiden Elliott

Climbing at Tung Lung Chau Sea Cliffs in Hong Kong, photo by Sam Thompson.

A NOT VERY MID-NIGHT ASCENT

By Isabel Cornes

Okay, I must confess. I cheated. I didn't actually go up at midnight. Or anywhere close to midnight. Mitch Stephen picked me up, bleary eyed, at the ripe old hour of 6am with the intention of beating the weather forecast of 30-70 km/h winds, heavy rain, and snow. Around 9.30am however, Mitch pulled over abruptly onto the side of the road just outside Milawa. He had spotted a blue car with an Oxo Man sticker on the back. Upon closer inspection, we spotted Robert, scruffy hair and an appalling moustache, reminiscent of the 1970's. He was squatting on the ground next to his busted left front tyre. After flicking through the instruction manual, jacking up the car, and removing the wheel, we discovered the problem went much deeper. The rim was bent well out of shape. Our 6am start and plans to ascend Northwest Spur in good weather were quickly shattered.

We drove 20km back to Wangaratta, dropped Robert and his tyre at the local wreckers with a gruff looking gentleman, a cigarette hanging loosely out of his mouth, who was none too enthusiastic about Robert's offer to help him out for the day. Leaving Robert with only a single tyre, no mobile phone, and instructions with Bushwalking Officer Evie to call the wreckers to organise a pickup from a later car, Mitch and I continued on our way. We began the walk just as the rain began to set in.

After losing time setting up the rope at the river crossing, we were ascending into the worst of the weather. It was hard. Really hard. The icy wind roared through the trees, rain quickly saturated our Gore-Tex and ran down our sleeves and necks. Naturally, the higher we got up the horrendously steep, and aptly named 'the wall', the colder it became. Feeling utterly exhausted, Mitch regularly had to assure me that "we were almost there... just a little further... I'm sure we've only got another kilometre to go..." He made these comments virtually every kilometre, but they kept me moving forward slowly.

We made it to the MUMC Hut just as the snow began to fall. Upon seeing the hut, lightly dusted with snow, I was relieved for that walk to have been over, but I had been rather disappointed. Past Midnight Ascent photos showed a huge amount of beautiful snow cover, and yet, there we stood with the ground still largely visible. Dragging ourselves into the hut, with steam curling off our damp bodies, we settled in to wait for the braver troops to arrive.

My disappointment didn't last long. Over the course of the evening, the mountain received a tremendous amount of snow. More fresh snow than I have ever seen in Australia, and probably in my life. I was thrilled, repeatedly saying the word 'amazing' to the point where I'm sure Mitch would have beaten me over the head with a thesaurus had there been one in the hut. Around 3am we were woken by the first tired, yet chirpy, voices setting up their tents around us. The true midnight ascent-ers had begun to arrive! By morning, it was tent and tarp city, with so much snow we were half buried and had to kick our way out of the tent. Lingshu and Luke's tarps were barely visible under the blanket of snow.



Dan and Jim Violating the Liquor Licence.
Photo by Anja Fuetbauer.

Even the most high-tech of snow tents were showing a degree of strain.

The day passed pleasantly, filled with card games, reading, naps, and laughs. It was much cosier with over forty people inside the hut. Robert had finally made it during the night, having acquired his replacement tyre. Evie had called all the wreckers in Wangaratta until she found one who spoke of a student having left earlier, a tyre under his arm, and with the intention of hitch-hiking.

Over the course of the afternoon, the Hut filled with delicious smells - the cooking of feasts had begun. Every food group had a phenomenal spread of food and drinks, from potato roti, freshly made pasta, sushi, pressure cooked vegetable biryani (courtesy of Gopi who hauled

a pressure cooker up the mountain), espresso martinis, and mulled wine to name a few. To be honest, the Hut was a bit of a hazard at this time, with stoves crackling, water boiling, food frying, and utensils spread about. The only thing to break the intense focus on cooking the three course meals was the annual photo. This years' theme was the 1920s, some excellent costumes began to emerge down the ladder. Suits, waistcoats, beads, mountaineering garb, dresses, high heels, feather boas, hats, and a touch of makeup embraced the cold. In true MUMC spirit, everyone laughed through chattering teeth.

As the sun set, the eating began, and we were serenaded by 1920's music which was barely audible above the excited chatter which steadily grew louder (and more slurred) as more alcoholic beverages made their way

Dissappointing Snow Cover At Arrival.
Photo by Isabel Cornes.



Photo by Gopi Manney.



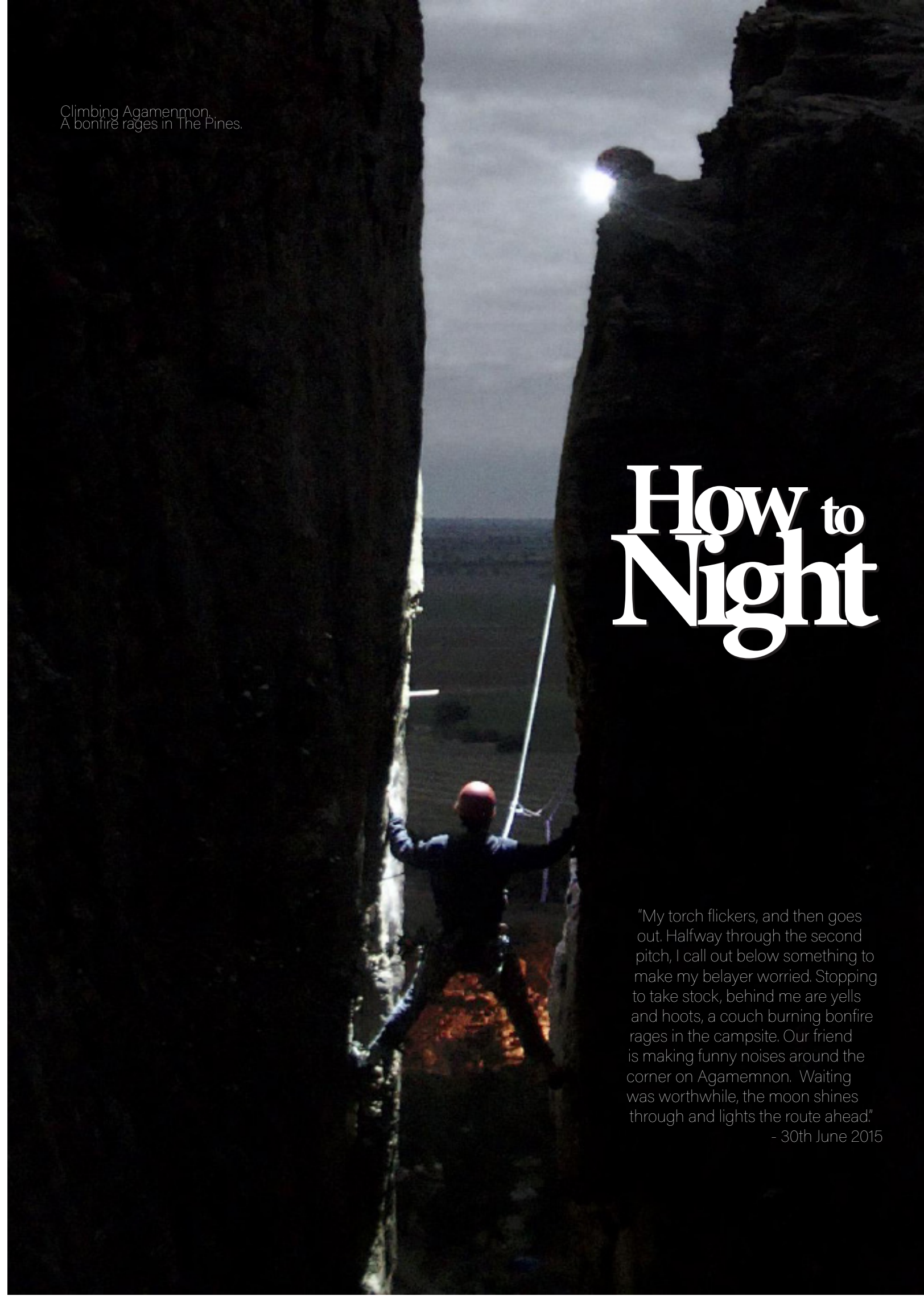
around the room. Food and drinks were in abundance, with tasters from every group circling the Hut. Dinner was followed by sock wars, bench traverses, and a very impressive human traverse demonstrated by the pairs, Lingshu and Robert, and Richard and Matt. How very MUMC.

The morning saw a flurry of activity, with individuals attempting to locate misplaced possessions and pack up snow covered tents. The return trip was largely uneventful, except for a lengthy detour which saw our party somehow ending up behind the hut, instead of down Northwest Spur. The guilty party shall go un-named but I believe the image above reflects my feelings at the time well.

All in all, it was a superb, if not very midnight, ascent.

WORDS BY ISABEL CORNES

Climbing Agamenmon.
A bonfire rages in The Pines.



How to Night

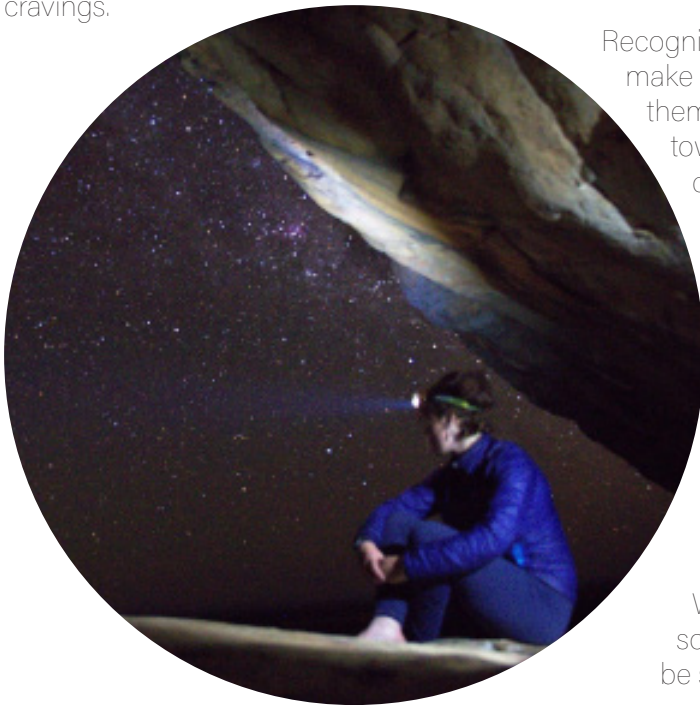
"My torch flickers, and then goes out. Halfway through the second pitch, I call out below something to make my belayer worried. Stopping to take stock, behind me are yells and hoots, a couch burning bonfire rages in the campsite. Our friend is making funny noises around the corner on Agamemnon. Waiting was worthwhile, the moon shines through and lights the route ahead."

- 30th June 2015

To me, the night is exciting and irresistibly appealing. As a club, we pay sort of a tribute to the night every year with the midnight ascent. With sight diminished, I find myself paying more attention to my partners and the other senses. The experience becomes a little surreal. I do struggle with balancing the desire to prance under the starlight with the voice of reason, comfort and safety. I know that climbing, skiing and even walking at night, holds an extra element of risk; but romantic notions often get the better of me. Coming to the realization this past year, that this factor has had the potential to affect my ability to make rational and safe decisions, prompted a deeper look into why this occurs, and what can be done about it.

Human errors are the primary elements in a large percentage of outdoor accidents. You could be an expert in hazard and risk evaluation in your chosen activity. However, with overconfidence, complacency, arrogance or other personal reasons and emotions which could cloud your better judgement, and yet still decide to continue regardless, could potentially be detrimental to yourself and others.

In the "Evidence of heuristic traps in recreational avalanche accidents" by Ian McCammon and in Bruce Temper's "Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain", they identified several "simple rules" or "mental shortcuts" that humans appear to unconsciously follow when presented with complex situations: Familiarity; we tend to be more comfortable in situations with which we are most familiar. For example, if you are familiar with heights, you become more comfortable with it. And thus, are more likely to take risks while on heights. Acceptance; we like to seek acceptance from others. Commitment; when we are committed to a goal or to an identity we wish to attain/sustain. "Expert Halo"; completely trusting and relying on the decisions of those we perceive to be experts. Competition/Scarcity; when something is in short supply, or we are competing with others. "Social Proof"; when we feel more comfortable following the opinion of the crowd, "herd mentality" and perception of safety in numbers. "Risk Homeostasis"; our risk appetite/tolerance is stable in the short term. However, advances in risk management technology or technique, which are developed to reduce risk in our activities, results in us deciding to undertake correspondingly riskier activities to maintain this appetite that satisfies our cravings.



Night climbing at Mt Arapiles



Recognizing the factors within ourselves, which affect our ability to make quality decisions in the outdoors, and being honest about them to both ourselves and to our partners, could go a long way towards being able to reduce their unwanted impact on the choices we make.

It's also possible that a group may consciously and deliberately submit to some of these factors. Perhaps a little competition, commitment to a goal, leadership respect and an appetite for risk won't be undesirable if they are carefully considered, limited, accepted and monitored by every group member. Looking back, I notice that on a number of occasions (especially ones in which I was personally involved), when this care is not taken, situations can rapidly spiral out of control and become unacceptable for the entire group, or for individuals within the group.

With the right mindset, the right people, the right skills, and some functional head-torches, adventuring under the stars can be super enjoyable, with little by way of regret.

WORDS AND PHOTOS
BY LUKE FRISKEN

IN THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING: Friends, and Mountains on the Viking Circuit, Easter 2017.

By Suzy McKinney

It was 8 o'clock on a Tuesday evening. The regular crowd shuffled in. There was an old man sitting next to me. Having rushed from work to attend the weekly club meeting, I sat back in my chair, breathed in familiar smells of wood and yeast, purchased a drink and talked to my friends. Across from me, two people were engaging in the modern warfare otherwise known as sharing and comparing who has the best photographs of weekend adventures. Being a frequent competitor in the sport (and frequent winner, given turning up to my corporate job on Monday with stories of sunsets from caves and climbing sheer rock faces is possibly hard for others to compete with), I paid attention.

A very friendly, enthusiastic woman from RMIT pulled out her phone and offered up a stunning sunrise snap from the top of Mt Feathertop. The crowd "ooh-ed" audibly. Well

played, Sarah, well played. Steve gave a slight smile, and drew his weapon. "That's really nice", he allowed, "but look at this panoramic sunrise from the top of Mt Speculation, surrounded by mountain islands in a sea of fog." And so, the match was won. Having moved recently to Melbourne from New Zealand, my next steps after procuring somewhere to live were securing the two next most important things: friends, and mountains. On the advice of a Sydney-based expat, I chased after the first goal by turning up to the university outdoor club's weekly meeting. After learning the best way to answer the question, "So what are you studying?" (answer: nothing bar the school of the wilderness. I finished university in New Zealand about two years ago; I was a doctor but now I am a management consultant; yes, that is a weird transition; yes, I can explain why. Can

Guillaume, a bit too cheerful after a wrong turn.





Group photo at our breakfast spot.

we get a beer now?), I came to feel comforted in the knowledge that I had found some great people who might want to share an adventure or two; an urban tribe, a place to be where you don't have to have toenails to be normal.

The second goal was to prove a little more difficult to surmount. Mountains, in Australia? Don't they only have that one averagely tall mountain that you can drive a golf buggy up? Didn't they change the seventh peak of the seven summits from Kosciuszko to Puncak Jaya in Indonesia because the former was both geologically inaccurate and uninspiring? I was soon to discover that I was wrong.

The Viking circuit: a 40km, four-day event with 2700m of elevation gain, a liberal approach to the idea of a track and endless alpine views.

After getting stuck in a car-parking building for too long, I picked up a crew from the clubrooms at 7pm on the Thursday prior to Easter. We drove for six hours far and away from the city, travelling winding and aggressive dirt roads that left me grateful the car was a rental and I had paid the extra dollars for a zero excess. In the small hours of the morning we arrived at a campsite, joined the others in our party to make twelve total, pitched tents sloppily and fell asleep.

Good Friday was a beautiful, bluebird day. Our group briefly considered the ominous opening sign to the trail: "Razor Viking Circuit Walk: This route is remote and contains steep sections, which can be physically demanding to traverse. Search and Rescue in this country may be very slow." So it goes. We went on.

The country became wider, and more open. Up and down we travelled along a well-cut path, walking along ridgelines towards a distant naked top that looked to be Mt Speculation. Any preconceptions I had about Australia not having mountains were corrected by our walk across Cross Cut Saw against a backdrop of a deep-blue curtain of peaks. Yes, these weren't the dramatic, sculpted mountains of the New Zealand alps: instead, a gentler, vaster expanse of land with undulating curtains of ridges and peaks layered on each other like a school child's diorama. Yes, these weren't a snow-capped mountaineering playground; but the amount of land to be explored that beheld the eye was perhaps as remarkable as the Remarkables range in the Otago area.

Travelling towards Mt Speculation on an undulating ridgeline, I was struck by how big the sky was. I tried to articulate this to others around me, but struggled to explain. The sky seemed bigger, bolder, clearer. There was more lofty expanse, and the sun seemed brighter. Maybe it was the relatively flat land, the lack of ozone layer or the effect of not being able to see a coastline, something I am used to - regardless, we certainly were in the big sky country, and it reminded me of home.



Guillaume Resting



Anne at our breakfast spot.

Fourteen kilometres after a traverse along the slopes of Mt Buggery and through the awkwardly named, "Horrible Gap", we made it to the top of Mt Speculation as the light started fading. After some speculation, camp was set up on a knoll slightly below the summit.

Sitting around the remains of someone else's fire, puffer-jacketed creatures started dinner preparations by torchlight. I brought out my dried pasta and dehydrated peas, puffing out my chest a little at my super cool #ultralightweight thru-hiker food. Ready to chat about the total weight of my food to the gram, as well as the weight savings I achieved by my method of packaging the food, I soon realised that I had entirely misjudged the food mood and quickly developed severe food envy. Steve and Caitlyn cooked up fresh steak they had hauled up the mountain, and mighty Mohammed made curry from scratch, inclusive of fresh herbs. Members of our party had carried tins up the mountain. Tins! How absurd, and wonderful! My thru-hiker brain shrivelled in disgust but my taste

buds disagreed. I resolved to bring better food next time.

It was a rough initiation into MUMC food culture but the ever-generous Mohammed eased my discontent by very kindly sharing the quantity of wine he had brought up the mountain around our circle of cold hikers in sub-5-degree night-time alpine air. I dreamed of foodstuffs with an energy density <2000kJ per 100g while wrapped up inside a shared tent. The second day of the trip started with myself narrowly missing the crux of the sunrise due to an overnight frost and a reluctance to leave my warm tent for a cold exterior before it had been adequately warmed by the sun. I reimagined my priorities with enough time to join the majority of the group collected around a large rock just under Mt Speculation, starting east. The sun, having hit its debut notes with disregard to my schedule, now rose incrementally above a sea of fog featuring islands of mountain-tops. There was tea brewing. It was perfect.

After procuring 5-6L of water each from a stream roughly 30mins from the tents, we broke camp to start the first part of the more off-road, water-scarce portion of the trip and began to bush-bash directly down the western side of the Speculation ridge to find a trail. It was good, messy, ankle-risking, skin-irritating fun: the best thing to do before 9am in the morning. The slopes were steep in parts, and I became the first casualty of the trip as I was hit by a giant, falling object shaped like a person. This earned me some impressive bruises to show to my workmates on Tuesday, a piece of Toblerone from Mohammed, and guilt points from an apologetic Josh. Worth it.

Up and down, we travelled over ridges and through terrain that became increasingly challenging. Finding "the trail" became an exercise in interpre-



Very Hungry Caterpillars.

tation requiring a post-graduate arts degree. The phrase “what comes up, must go down” became increasingly truthful as our legs ascended and descended countless times. Route-finding became increasingly difficult as the bush cover increased, and as the trail became more of a concept than a tangible entity, so did the group’s energy levels. A GPS was helpful a number of times, as were frequent snacks.

After traversing Catherine Saddle and Mt Despair, we made it to the X Saddle which proved to be an excellent, flat, camping spot. We resolved to rest there overnight and tackle the Viking itself with an alpine start the next morning. Campsite banter continued, and we traded off learning more about each other with warmth for several hours, until the latter won. Zips were closed and night sky became quiet.

Easter Sunday came around, and dutifully, we rose early before the first light. There were no bunnies, no chocolate, just a giant rock buttress to climb and the promise of breakfast up the top. What more could you ask for? The Viking climb started off with around 300m of elevation gain up a steep and poorly maintained trail requiring some interesting scrambling over fallen trees. We broke through the bushline and saw the Viking for the first time up close, a seemingly impenetrable buttress of rock. How to get up? On further investigation, there was an old rope slung around something sticking out from underneath a boulder cave. To use the rope? No, clearly a bad idea. We settled on an exposed rock scramble, requiring the removal of packs and some delicate footwork. It took the whole party over an hour to travel about 200m. Quietly behind us, the sun rose.

Breakfast was cooked with tired smiles at 1700m of elevation, staring

at

the pastel colours in the sky and with that sweet dopamine release that comes from hard physical activity in a wild place.

Again, the phrase “what comes up, must go down” rang true. After our morning’s climb, we were scheduled to descend 700m vertically, bush-bashing to the Wonnangatta River over several knee-hating hours. My walking poles had expired earlier on in the trip and so I made do with an organic walking pole to save my joints on the descent. The group was relieved to make it down to the riverbed where we bathed feet and procured our first fresh water for almost two days, although not in that order.

The true part of the trip ended near the river where we joined a 4WD track, and hiked up and up through red, scorched earth back to a similar elevation to the start of the circuit. A campsite was gained only 5km or so from the carpark, and the next morning we bush-bashed our way through the jungle through a combination of compass and GPS navigation. Fuelled by a desire for a pub lunch and clean socks, we made it back to the carpark before midday.

My organic walking stick long ago lost to join its friends amongst the flora of the Alpine National Park, I traded walking for a car and filed away thoughts of mountain vistas and big skies for the coming weeks in the city. Driving home, I asked an impatient navigator to play me a memory: “I’m not really sure how it goes; but it’s sad and it’s sweet and I knew it complete, when I wore dirtier clothes.”

Thank you, Viking Circuit - you gave me both friends and mountains.

WORDS BY SUZY MCKINNEY
PHOTOS BY CAITLYN CONWAY

The whole group on The Viking Saddle.



How should we go forward with Mountaineering at MUMC?

An opinion in light of the deaths of Stuart Hollaway and Dale Thistlethwaite.

By **Liv Grover-Johnson**

We might ask ourselves whether we should continue to climb, especially in terms of mountaineering. Although we were all aware of the inherent dangers of mountaineering - and were constantly reminded by Stu himself of the perils, I think that most of us still felt safe and protected by our relative youth. The accidents that befell other, unknown climbers were because of their careless decisions, and foolhardy nature... right? Accidents don't happen to sensible, careful people like us.

But then we learned that even Stu and Dale can fall. Even experience, care, and all the sensibilities that come with age and wisdom couldn't protect even the most experienced climbers we knew. I think that in 2016, many of us suddenly came to terms with how fragile and vulnerable we really are, and were suddenly able to wholeheartedly understand the lessons that Stu had been trying to teach us. It was unfortunate that we could only learn these lessons through personal experience.

What are we to do now? Do we keep on going out into those mountains? Surely, they are too big, too hard and too dangerous for us. Surely, if even the best, most experienced mountaineers can experience defeat, then who am I to take on those same peaks?

So, do we keep on climbing?
Should we?
Or do we stop and never return to the mountains because of the inherent risks of this pursuit?

I think Stu would have both disappointed and frustrated if we threw up our arms and relinquished mountaineering altogether, as if we proceeded without further thought, in a fit of rash behavior to prove our fearlessness. I believe that

Gaping Crevasses on the Grand Plateau Glacier.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

he would ask us to examine our desire to go into the mountains. I believe he would want us to assess the risks and dangers, the potential harm and grief, as well as the beauty, the passion, the exhilaration, the feeling of being alive. I believe that that we truly went into the mountains for the same reasons that he did, then he would say that his death should not change our desire to return. After all, the risks themselves have not changed – and yet, they have suddenly been put into sharp focus for many of us.

He would have expected us to identify and scrutinize our weaknesses with twice the concentration that we give to our strengths. He would have wanted us to ask questions, and to listen closely to other climbers, friends and guides, and to heed their advice. Their experience and understanding of the mountains and weather are invaluable. He did caution us to climb many, many small ‘simple’ peaks, and to take pleasure in being out there in the wild. We should not forget his advice now. Leave the bigger, more committing climbs to another day when we are very well prepared, when the weather conditions suit best, when we are not fatigued, when our gear and techniques have been mastered to the point where we can work them blindfolded.

I believe he would rather have us work together to identify patterns of thought that could lead us astray, provide each other with constructive criticism and advice. I believe that he would have encouraged us to support each other to continue to develop our skills and our passion for those mountains in the safest way. I believe he would have urged us to speak up when concerned, and to turn our backs on a peak when we were uncertain. He would have wanted us to congratulate each other on sensible decisions, and upon returning to the hut at midday for lunch. I believe that



Stuart Hollaway on the Fox Glacier.

he may have even encouraged us to look up the coroner’s report on his death to learn what we could from his fall, so that we may always avoid whichever mistake he made. Whether we choose to continue climbing or not, Stu would have definitely wanted us to keep on learning. To keep on trying.

I choose to climb on.

WORDS BY LIV GROVER-JOHNSON



North West Island

By Will Manahan

There’s a splash as I dunk my head under the water. Like a powerful vacuum, a cold silence fills my ears. But seconds later, I hear the reef slowly coming to life; waves crashing, bubbles popping and a harmony of fish clicking. Opening my eyes, I feel invited into a new world of colour and life.

I begin to explore. Gliding through the water, fish sheepishly dart for cover when they notice my presence and like some sort of undersea Justin Bieber, hundreds of tiny eyes hold focus on me from the safety of the corals. Several minutes later, I get the feeling that I’m being followed. Not wanting to show any panic, I slowly turn to my right. Nothing. Then to my left, I am confronted by a sea turtle silently floating beside me, seemingly within reach. Feeling hypnotised, I can’t remember exactly how long we were floating there, studying one another.

But eventually when I gestured towards her, within a flash she disappeared. I continued, amazed at every turn. Two reef sharks and countless stingrays later, I start feeling cold and head for shore.

Taking little over 45 minutes to circumnavigate, Northwest Island is situated about 75 km Northeast of the Queensland port city of Gladstone, at the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef. Completely off the grid, it is part of the Capricornia Cays National Park, and camping on the island is virtually free with the significant expense being transported to/from the island. A shelf extends at least half a kilometre off the beach in all directions, and a whole afternoon can be spent exploring the rock pools when they’re exposed during low tide. However, days typically consisted of endless hours basking in the sun or playing beach volleyball.

Looking back, it’s hard to pinpoint memories to a moment in time, or indeed how the days passed by so quickly, but I suppose that’s one of the effects of leaving the real world behind.

There was a particularly beautiful area on the northern tip of the island, where one can barely see the silhouette of Tryon Island on the horizon. And being the only area which somewhat resembled a cove, sea turtles would congregate en masse during high tide to take shelter from the sharks. Swimming in this little cove makes you feel like a 1967 Dr Dolittle, minus the pet chimp Che Che. Almost every night, a different fishing group would moor on the beach and cook up their catch under the stars, before setting off again at first light.

WORDS AND PHOTOS
BY WILL MANAHAN

Climbing Why Not, Wye Creek, The Remarkables.
Photo by Julian Goad.

“

You cannot stay on the summit forever;
you have to come down again.
So why bother in the first place?

Just this: What is above knows what is below,
but what is below does not know what is above.
One climbs, one sees.
One descents, one sees no longer, but one has seen.
There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions
by the memory of what one saw higher up.

When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.

”

RENE DAUMAL

I hang in total silence, eye-level with
the rebelay, accompanied only by the
unknown. Stepping in my footloop I
unclip my croll and reweight my rack.
From this point on, my feet will leave
the wet slippery rock wall, and be-
come weights, pulling me down
the infinitesimal line that leads
down into the depths of an
immense limestone system.

I unclip my cowstail and
let the rope slide slowly
through my rack. Like a
spider dangling from a
crystalline web I feel
tiny, dwarfed by an
ancient landscape.

Immense
By Sam Thompson

Vertical rock walls surround me on every side, dripping with water from hundreds of tiny little waterfalls that cascade down the into the gaping hole. Water drops appear frozen in time as they fall past me on their journey into the system. It's the same journey that I'll be sharing, in a mere blink of an eye compared to the journey of water that has shaped this landscape.

Underneath me the sinkhole opens up like a giant bell shaped cavern, and I pass through some lingering fog which marks the last reach of sunlight from above. The furthest reach of sunlight forms a distinct line of algae on the walls of the cavern, signalling a distinct transition to the underground world. I reach up and switch on my headtorch.

At the bottom of the pitch, a gently sloping rockfall leads downward into the pitch black darkness. Sidestepping the remains of several unfortunate rodents, I continue down into the darkness. Here, I pause for my companion to descend into the cavern, down the slippery line that protrudes from the enveloping fog above.



Immediately we are joined by a small stream, which leads us on our journey through the system. The system exists partly because of the corrosive nature that the water has on the limestone hills above, carving out large caverns which collapse under their own weight. When the collapse eventually reaches the mountain surface, it is deemed a sinkhole – and provides a convenient entrance point into the

underground labyrinths of streams and passages. This particular stream winds its way through some stunning speleological features – flowstone, waterfalls, columns, pillars and rimstone pools, all of which contain their own little features and intricacies.

It feels humbling to move through this system with the water, and observe the course of speleological formation that has taken place here over millennia. Some pillars we pass are older than any civilisation on earth, a fact which takes a moment to appreciate. As we continue down a particular passage, I stop to step over a large patch of stalagmites. As I put my foot down, I fall limply waist deep into water. I had not realised at the time, but had unknowingly stepped into a giant rimstone pool of crystal clear transparent water. I chuckled, took a photo, and looked around to see several other translucent pools. I wondered how long the water had been sitting there, undisturbed.

After what seemed like no time at all, we emerged from Starlight Cave, and began the hike back up to the car.

WORDS AND PHOTOS
BY SAM THOMPSON

Aiden Elliott and Rowan McCowan, winners of the uni division.



Hope Springs Eternal: Experiences from some 24 hour Rogaines

By Rowan McCowan

I remember my first 24 hour rogain. This isn't difficult, as I haven't done very many of them, i.e. three in total. The scene was set in WA in 2010. My friend Pip and I had completed our first ever rogain earlier in the year and we were hooked. Now was time for the 24hr challenge. Given our status as 24hr rogain newbies, we thought we'd give ourselves a gentle introduction to the art of the 24 hour event and go for the 'social' variety.

Now, for those readers for whom rogaining remains a yet untried and tested activity, let me enlighten you. The 'social' 24hr rogain involves the following: a lie in, quick look at the map, plot out any old route as long as it comes back to the 'hash-house' at least once, pleasant afternoon bushwalk, back to base for an afternoon cheese toastie and cup of tea, sitting by the fire in comfortable camp

chairs, a leisurely dinner, and some more sitting by the fire with port and chocolate. This is followed by a good night's sleep in your tent, a generous breakfast and (if you can be bothered) a morning stroll to collect a few final checkpoints before lunch. I've always thought this seems like a most attractive prospect, but have never managed to make it happen.

That first time, Pip and I collected our map, had a quick look, and then looked at each other. The 'hash house' was in the very far north-eastern corner, and neither of us could envisage a route that fitted in with our leisurely plans. At the same time, our competitive instincts kicked in. 'If we want to get points, we're going to have to stay out all night', one of us ventured. It didn't matter who said it, we both agreed. Then we looked at our food supplies.



Kieran McKay skirting round a flowstone in the green pools, Harwoods Hole.

Banking on a decent dinner and breakfast at the hash house, we hadn't exactly brought plentiful amounts. Hmm.

To cut a long story short, that first hour of the 24 hour rogaine wasn't our finest hour. We didn't have enough food or warm clothes. The weather was abysmal. The bush was thick. By midnight, we were cold, wet and miserable, and had made it to the far south-western corner of the map, as far from the 'hash-house' as we could possibly be. We gave up, jacking in most of the remaining controls and hot (or cold) footing it back to the hash house as quickly as possible. By 4am we were in bed, shivering, and attempting to thaw out and go to sleep.

Despite this disheartening experience we were back the next year for more. This time we came prepared to stay out all night. All was going well, but around 2am we inexplicably confused north and south on our compasses and walked 180 degrees in the wrong direction for longer than I am prepared to admit here. Once we'd reorientated ourselves, it was time for a nap, then, a couple of hours later, an attempt at a proper sleep in our bivvy bags. It was too cold to stop for long though, so we just kept walking.

With a total of 22 hours out in the bush, 70km covered and 2210 points achieved, we ended up coming 7th overall. It felt like a real achievement, and it was. To be fair, I should probably also mention the resulting pain. I had never had such bad blisters, and let me tell you, blisters on the soles of your feet are no joke. Also, my leg muscles were so stiff and sore I had to peel myself off the floor at home to get into the bath. Hmm.

Fast-forward to 2016 and there I was, contemplating another 24 hour rogaine ('WHY?!!' I hear you ask. 'WHY?!'). Who knows? All I can say is that the satisfaction of completing such a mental and physical challenge lasts a lot longer than the pain.

Simon, my husband and previous regular rogaining partner, had relocated to WA and I was in search of a teammate. So was Aido. We teamed up. Then, I confess, I had second thoughts. After all, we'd never rogained together before, and Aido had never attempted a 24hr event. And spending 24 hours straight out in the bush with just one other person is quite a commitment. But after a bit more chit chat, I was confident we were on the same page. This was our agreement: to push ourselves as much as we could (but no running) and to stay out all night (but with naps).

Of course, the best plans are always flexible and we

ended up planning a route that would bring us back to the 'hash house' in the evening for a cheese toastie and a more comfortable nap in the tent. All too soon, it was time for the off switch.

It's funny at the start of a rogaine. With a limited number of controls and everyone setting off at the same time, it often feels like a sprint for the first control. Many teams speed off into the distance and as a self-proclaimed 'plodder' I always have to remind myself that the first 10 minutes doesn't really matter in the grand scheme of the next 24 hours. The first few hours proceeded with the usual complement of knolls, gullies, spurs, and watercourses. Plus multiple kangaroos, an echidna and some quality conversation when we knew we wouldn't have to pay too much attention to navigation in the next ten minutes. Conversation of course being the enemy of navigation; it's all too easy to lose track (pun intended).

After a convenient banana at our first water drop (Mount Hope, of the eponymous 'Hope Springs Eternal' event title), we rapidly lost sight of all other teams and found ourselves the first to visit the next few controls. Now this can be interpreted in a few different ways. Firstly, you could be doing really well and making fantastic progress compared to other teams (unlikely given my 'slow and steady' predisposition). Secondly, you've planned a route unlike that of any other team – are you a genius or just completely bonkers? Who knows! Of course, most likely it's just a coincidence.

But at this point, we felt like we were making good enough progress to include our optional extra 90 points. Costing an extra 3kms though, would I do the same again? I'm not sure. The afternoon's controls, although high scoring, felt perhaps a little too well spaced, with over half an hour on average between each control. Slow going. But some excellent navigation too. How satisfying it is, practically in the middle of nowhere in the bush, to come across an A4 sized marker directly in your line of travel and exactly where you thought it should be?

This is the pinnacle of rogaining navigation, but (for me and Aido at least) certainly doesn't happen every time. More often, we'd get to approximately the right location and then think, 'Well, we probably went a bit too far left on this compass bearing, so maybe the control will be somewhere over there.' At the opposite end of the spectrum is fruitless searching, you've lost your bearings (again, pun intended), it's probably dark, and you end up giving up and moving on the next control before too much time is wasted. A valuable lesson in the use of attack points is all I



Some of our rogaine helpers for the MUMC rogaine in April. Photo by Yao-Li Wang

can say (novice rogainers, look out for navigation training sessions on the website this year, covering these as well as many other useful things).

As the daylight hours dwindled, things were looking pretty good. We had a grand total of 920 points after about a quarter of the event, even if we were roughly half an hour behind our very approximate schedule. And we were headed into the pine plantation in the western half of the map, with a well-marked network of tracks for easy navigation in darkness hours and the prospect of a cheese toasty and nap back at the hash house before too long. At least that was the plan.

A few hours later, we were knee deep in a creek festooned with blackberry brambles, fruitlessly searching for control 67. Eventually, we gave up. My feet were starting to get pretty sore as we trailed into the 'hash house.' After a quick cheese toasty (complete with veggie burger and ketchup) and then another one (oh my, they hit the spot), it was time to relish the exquisite delights of being horizontal. We set an alarm for half an hour and closed our eyes.

Half an hour later the alarm went off. There weren't many signs of life on Aido's side of the tent. Except for some rather enthusiastic snoring. I didn't feel particularly human myself, but reached across to give his shoulder a shake.

"Aido, it's time to get up", I encouraged.

"Mmpphhm" was the response. Decidedly unimpressed.

"Or, I could set the alarm for another half an hour?"

"Mmmmmm" was the second response. Definitely the preferred option.

At this point, despite our debacle with the blackberry-brambled brook, we had over 1200 points with more than half the event remaining. I'd started out with the vague idea that 2000 points seemed like a suitably ambitious but relatively achievable target. The conclusion? Plenty of time for a bit more sleep....

In the end, I think we set the alarm for a third half an hour, before stumbling out of the tent and back onto the course. After some foot doctoring and a pair of dry socks.

My shoes were getting pretty old and worn out, and although I'd never had problems before, the length of time and distance you end up walking during a 24hr event can lead to some interesting results. I already had a sizeable blister on the side of one heel, and the pre-emptive taping I'd put on my toes had peeled off and caused some problems of its own.

Within a couple of kms, the leg muscles had warmed up, but the feet were already wet again. Ah well. We then hit another snag. It turned out that the pine plantation was, as we'd been warned, pretty thick (an understatement if ever I heard one). Despite this, control 44 'The Watercourse', should, we thought, be easy enough to find. Walk along the track, paying attention to contours and distance, then, when the track hits the watercourse, turn left and follow it down to the control. We tried. This particular watercourse was the least obvious thing imaginable, and visibility within the plantation was around five metres at best. We got to the other side of the plantation and knew we'd missed the control.

OK, new plan, we thought. Follow the edge of the plantation (in both directions) until we find the watercourse, then follow it back up the control. It still wasn't obvious, and our compasses felt like they were all over the place. The map didn't make sense and we were getting more and more confused; a direct result of our lack of brain function at that time of the morning.

Demoralised, depressed, and not wanting to waste any more time, we moved on. In the course of re-orientating ourselves, we came across David and Simin and felt a bit better. A few controls later, we bumped into Alaster and his partner James. Suddenly the night seemed alive with fellow Oxos! As we plodded on, the sky began to lighten and we both agreed it was time for another nap.

Taking stock at this point, we had less than six hours to go and just over 1500 points in the bag. Our 2000-point target was still achievable, but it was starting to feel a bit borderline. Shortly afterwards we were faced with a tricky combination: spaced out controls, super broad contours, a suspect track network and two rogainers who by this point, were frankly not feeling their best. I'm afraid this resulted in some more fruitless searching. Just as we were giving up (and we really didn't want to lose that 70 points), things began to sink in and all of a sudden, the map made sense. I was 98% sure I knew where we were, and persuaded Aido to turn back and have one more look. A few minutes later, 'Ah-ha', 'Hooray' and 'Woohoo', we'd found it! After this relative triumph, things were fairly straightforward. Progress however was slow, and footsore doesn't even begin to describe how we felt. It was the easiest decision in the world not to extend our route any further, even if in the throes of optimistic planning we'd thought it might be a possibility. Plod on, you tell your tired brain. Your heart sinks at the sight of more steep slopes and blackberry brambles up ahead. Just a few more controls. I'm not sure anyone would describe this last part of the rogaine as fun. Somehow, Aido's legs seemed to be able to carry him at least 20% faster than mine along the final road back to the 'hash-house'. We keep checking the clock: not long to go now, but thank goodness, we're not going to be late and we don't have to run. We walked into the 'hash house' together, high-fived and finished. Then immediately lay down in a heap on the grass, exhausted. We definitely weren't the only OXO's in that condition, but they will all have their own stories to tell....

WORDS BY ROWAN MCCOWAN

CONGRATULATIONS!

We had strong participation in regaining again this year, with notable achievements being:

- Joe Dowson and Nick Montgomery won the Youth/Uni division at both Victorian University Championships and the Australasian championships
- Aiden Elliot and Rowan McCowan won the uni division of the Victorian 24 Hour Championships
- We organised and ran a successful 2 day rogaine in April supported by work from both rogaing and non-rogaing members

Natalie’s Top 12 Hiking Hacks

By Natalie Care

- 1.** Before you go to sleep, stuff clothes into each leg of your thermals (placed under your knees). This creates bolster pillows that relieve the pressure when sleeping on your back and don't get in the way when you roll onto to your side or stomach.
- 2.** Remove the cardboard tube from the middle of a toilet paper roll and store in a zip lock bag. Pull the paper from the middle of the roll like tissues. This way you never have to take the roll out of the waterproof bag.
- 3.** Cut a small piece of foam mat to sit on during hikes or around camp. I thought I'd invented Buttsulation until Dani told me it was called a Sit Mat. Quite frankly, the name "Buttsulation" is both more descriptive and funnier.
- 4.** Peanut butter containers are fully leak-proof and waterproof. Plus, it's more environmentally friendly and cheaper to reuse a jar than buying a purpose made one.
- 5.** This isn't really a hack, but a product I found that has changed my hiking life. Scholl makes a product called Toe and Finger Gel Protector, which is basically a cut-to-fit fit gel tube that acts like a band aid for your toes. The benefit of this is that you can take it off easily and reuse it as many times as you like. This results in less faffing, no more damp strapping tape after river crossings, the ability to air your toes out at night, no sticky substance on your skin creating more irritation, and it reduced waste.
- 6.** When pooping in the bush, pull a clump of grass or a dead stump out of the ground to create a hole. Once you have done your business, simply plop the grass or stump back in place.
- 7.** Put your sleeping bag inside a plastic bag before stuffing in a stuff sack to make it waterproof. Having the plastic bag on the inside prevents it from getting torn.
- 8.** Use "Ian's Secure Shoelace Knot" and your laces will never come untied. It's just like a regular bunny ear style shoe-lace knot, but the rabbit goes into the hole twice rather than once.
- 9.** Make waterproof hut shoes out of gaiters. You look kind of like an elf but it's very practical if you want to reduce weight in your pack.
- 10.** Pitch your tent inside a hut when possible. It's warmer, drier, more private, plus your once tiny vestibule grows phenomenally.
- 11.** Use a Mon-Fri pill box to store spices in. I personally still use ziploc bags, but at dinner time Gina looks like the ultimate outdoors professional and her campsite cred grows exponentially.
- 12.** Refill a travel size toothpaste with your normal size toothpaste simply by holding the ends together and squeezing one into the other (it works better than you would expect). Of course, dry toothpaste dots if you want to be ultralight.
- 13.** *Bonus hack for home* If you forget to take a hair tie to the shower, use your dirty undies instead. I try and put the dirty side outwards to make it a little less gross.



Photo by Anja Fuetcbauer.

Taner Kucukyuruk emerging from the 'Tunnel Swim'.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

Claustral Canyon

By Evie Clarke

Claustral Canyon is arguably one of the most famous slot canyons in the blue mountains, and the reason why becomes apparent to any canyoner that ventures into its mossy depths. The canyoning is technical and exciting, with jumps, a long tunnel swim and a series of three technical abseils through the creepily named 'Black Hole of Calcutta'. I'd been keen to do it since seeing the shared bottom section via Ranon Brook canyon the previous year. Luckily, everyone in our group camped at Mt Wilson was up for the challenge and we had the skills and equipment to go. There were seven of us in total with a mix of canyoning and caving backgrounds – Taner, Sam, Emilie, David, Alex, Andreas and myself.

An early start (which in my canyoning experience is never quite as early as intended) saw us and all our gear jangling along the curves of the highway, looking for the obscure track entrance marked by the painted letters "CC". The well-worn track felt like a highway after the last few days canyoning in the overgrown Newnes section of the park, and it was no time before we were slipping on our wetsuits at the start of the stream. And by 'slipping on', I should perhaps clarify, I actually mean 'squirming into' – for our wetsuits were still damp and the rocks we perched on were slippery.

Proceeding along through the waist deep wades and scrambles, it wasn't too long before we reached the abseils. Looking down, it was as dark as you might expect a deep canyon extending into the bowels of the earth to be. The faint beams of light reached only part way down the walls, illuminating the polished rock that must have been carved over thousands of years of fluctuating water flow.

With Taner going ahead to set up the abseils, we moved quickly through this famous section, swimming through the dark water between the abseils and listening to the water crash down.

Emerging out of the darkness was truly awesome – and, unlike its use in the popular vernacular, by this I mean we were all blown away with a sense of true awe. All the rocks were cloaked in brilliant green moss, equal parts beautiful and treacherous to the scrambling canyoner. The light filtering down through the ferns growing on the steep walls danced in beams above us. When we looked up, the walls bent in over us and framed the narrow slit of blue sky far above. The following section of canyon is sustained and beautiful but also very very chilly due to the combination of the long swimming sections and no direct sunlight. Hence, we kept on scrambling our way through, only stopping to swim along the tributary to the cave where a whole constellation of glow-worms call home. Andreas impressed us all by doing a spontaneous backflip off a boulder into a deep pool and once again proved that Norwegians are legitimately crazy.

We managed to avoid the apparently common mistake (see previous issues of the Mountaineer) of mistaking the exit point – and our three-hour walk out was uneventful. We arrived soggy and happy on the highway and Emilie and I, with our feminine charm (I'm laughing as I write this – we looked like drowned rats), almost immediately secured a lift to our cars. A long day, a good day, a food day, a good mood day – thanks Claustral.

WORDS BY EVIE CLARKE
PHOTOS BY SAM THOMPSON

Alex Williams abseiling into the 'Black Hole of Calcutta'.
Photo by Sam Thompson.

PIE AND SLIDE



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ERIC LAMBERS IN KYRGISTAN

Club Activity Winner.
Richard Basset-Smith

EPIC KAYAK (NO BUSHBASH) TRIP

Photojournalism
Overall Runner-Up
Anja Fuechtbauer



IBEX AT SUNSET

Overseas Landscape Overall Winner.
Chris Arvier

MUMC Life Member

Jim Grellis

14/9/1951 - 7/6/2017

It was way back in the 1970's that Jim Grellis was active in MUMC, but he never lost his connection. Jim was one of MUMC's great stalwarts.

In fact, the words "Jim Grellis, MUMC" appeared in search and rescue reports over the following 40 years, until his death in June this year. "Jim Grellis, MUMC" was a respected Field Organiser with Bush Search and Rescue (BSAR), holding leadership roles on many high profile operations, including the BSAR responses for MUMC members Steve Galland and Tom Kneen, who fell to their eventual deaths from Mt Feathertop in 1983 and 1985 respectively. Many times over the years, Jim addressed MUMC members to encourage them to join Bush Search and Rescue through their club and he was always there to take an interest in MUMC members attending their first training or search. Many of them will remember their pleasant surprise at finding this senior searcher so interested not only in how they were going, but in them.

Jim's strongest focus in life was his wife Katherin (also ex MUMC) and his three children, but outside family he always retained a strong interest in sporting and adventure pursuits including rockclimbing, mountaineering, running, bushwalking, ski-touring, rogaining and cycling. He joined many associations around these interests and such was his outgoing, though quiet, nature that he developed strong friendships in all of them. But it was always apparent that MUMC - a club that for practical reasons we must all eventually leave behind - was always there, part of his background and part of his essence. Among his interests I should also mention his delight in the old fashioned pastime of campfire singing, and I am willing to bet that he had the MUMC Songbook, c. 1975, on his shelves till the day he died.

I shared some of Jim's outdoor interests over several decades and I also worked with him in a niche of banking for 6 or 7 years. Both in the bush and at work, for me



Jim has been the outstanding exemplar of the qualities that matter. That is, fastidiously honest, totally dependable, loyal to all and respectful by default. He just never let you down. He was open to friendship everywhere, and if there were people Jim didn't like, I can't remember him ever making mention of them.

Jim Grellis, MUMC, was also modest to a fault. Although he would have known I'd be interested, he didn't mention it to me when MUMC honoured him with life membership, and I didn't find it out till years later. I do know that he would have been immensely pleased, just disinclined to brag.

Most of you who read these words will be current members of MUMC. Only a few of you will have met Jim Grellis, MUMC, and not all of you will have heard of him. But I can tell you that every one of you has lost a friend.

ROD COSTIGAN
HONORARY LIFE MEMBER
AND ONE OF JIM'S MANY FRIENDS.



374 Little Bourke Street
Melbourne 3000
9600 0599

A SNIPPET OF MUMC HISTORY.
Neil Blundy was on the committee of MUMC from 1975 to 1979. During this time the club rooms moved from "Aikman's Rd" at the rear of a building in Royal Pde to the old Meteorology building on campus. This period is listed as the "Historical Dark Ages" of the club according to the MUMC website and perhaps due to the nefarious activities of members of the time should remain so!

After many hard years of study - fortunately being totally overwhelmed by MUMC activities - Neil entered the retail outdoor industry which led to the establishment of Bogong Equipment in 1990. Bogong to this day remains steeped in the tradition of supplying "real" outdoor gear for the outdoor activities of MUMC tradition.

Gear for serious outdoor adventurers
bogong.com.au



Neil showing the latest in outdoor apparel on MUMC trip circa 1975

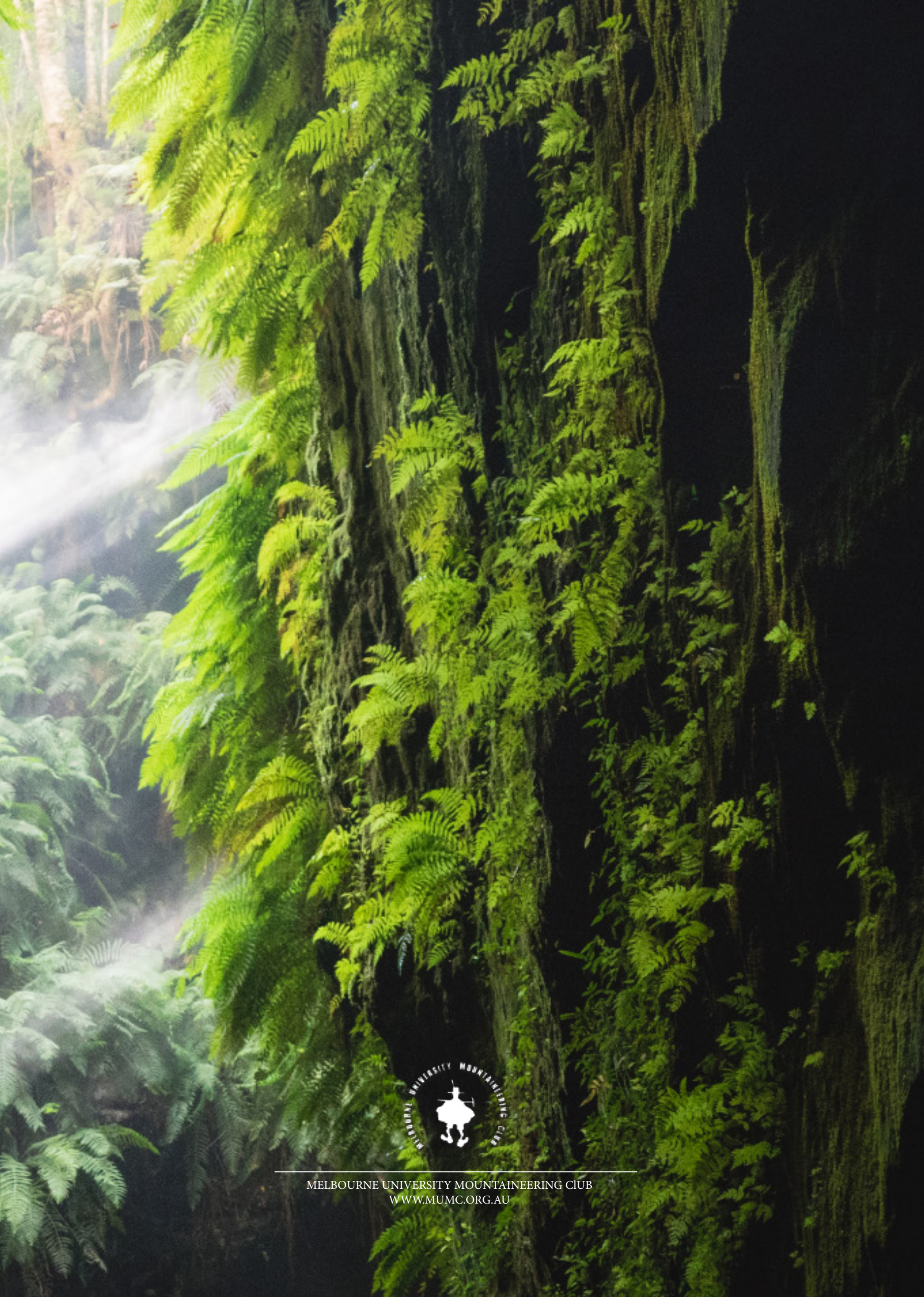
This is your club, Make it yours!



In July 2016 the new MUMC website went live. Developers, coders, testers, writers, organisers, designers, cooks, Pokemon players, people who provided opinions, feedback, entertainment and moral support. This project succeeded because of you. Do not undervalue the contribution you make to the club.

This is your club, make it yours.

Written by Natalie Care, the project manager for the website. Taner Kucukyuruk was the lead developer for the website, without him the new website would have never started. Matt Dunwoodie also did a huge amount of coding and in his role as ropes officer helped manage the relationship with the committee. Richard Bassett-Smith spent hours on the project providing feedback and ideas from a committee perspective and motivating the team. Gopi Manne project managed in Natalie's absence, and the website was completed under his instruction. Thank you to every club member who contributed in any capacity.



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