



THE **MOUNTAINEER**

2021 & 2022 EDITION



acknowledgement of country

we acknowledge the traditional owners of the land.

melbourne university mountaineering club recognises that sovereignty of these Australian lands was never ceded. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have continued to resist colonial rule since invasion.

our clubrooms rest on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people of the Kulin Nation and we pay our respect to the Elders of the past, present, and emerging. we recognise that as an outdoors club, our activities are intrinsically linked to the lands, waters, and skies that have been looked after by Aboriginal people for more than 60,000 years.

the importance of 'green', natural spaces has been increasingly acknowledged for mental health and physical wellbeing, particularly following COVID-19 lockdowns. it is our responsibility to care for the spaces we inhabit, whether on country or in the city, as Aboriginal people have done. practising principles of sustainability including 'leave no trace' practices and respecting the environment as well as continued education and awareness raising.

the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is acknowledged, particularly the many acts of resistance and displays of strength in the face of displacement, grief, and loss.

always was, always will be aboriginal lands, waters, and skies.

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2021 — 2022

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THE MOUNTAINEER

Established in 1961

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publications@mumc.org.au

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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.

Cover: Bogong High Plains by Tessa Elliott

Inside leaf: Stars at Little Waterloo Bay by

Tessa Elliott

THANK YOU VERY MUCH TO OUR PIE AND SLIDE SPONSORS!



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club news



Brand new sea kayaks have been added to the paddling arsenal! This has been through the tireless efforts of Anita who has worked hard to introduce this new activity to our club!



Anita, Addi, Brigit and Mark spent Christmas '21 volunteering with The Les Twentyman Foundation for disadvantaged youth to run a canoe polo event. Great job team!



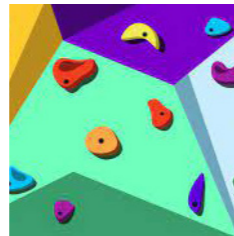
Canyoning has returned to MUMC with a new Framework for leadership progression - thanks to Sam Thompson & Robert Springer for bringing the sport back to the club!



The first Interclub Bouldering Competition between MUMC, ROC, VUOC, MUOC & LUMC has been organised by President Jacob Forker and took place in September '22.



Taner Kucukyuruk was voted a Life Member of MUMC at the 2021 AGM. We thank Taner for his amazing contributions to the club including set up and maintenance of our webpage and continued support despite living in Spain!



The bouldering wall in the MUMC clubrooms has been re-set by Caitlin Minney!



The 2019 Adventure Grant, awarded to Robert Springer, Sam Thompson and Mitchell Stephen, was used to complete the first descent of Tin Mine Creek in the Pilot Wilderness in NSW!



Sam Thompson and Robert Springer have completed their book: *A Comprehensive Guide to Canyoning Around Victoria*. The first book of its kind in Victoria. The book is available at the MUMC library. To buy a copy, visit canyoninginvictoria.org

Training grants and subsidies are available for first aid and related courses. MUMC continues to invest in members and encourages anyone looking to upskill to enquire about grants.

A huge thank you to new trip leaders in 2021 & 2022! After completing training they have taken MUMC members on paddling, snowsports, bushwalking, climbing and canyoning trips. More leaders equal more outdoor opportunities! To become a leader or learn about the process and commitment, contact the associated Sports Officer.

PIE & SLIDE 2021

OVERALL WINNER - ELECTRA BY TANER KUCUKYURUK

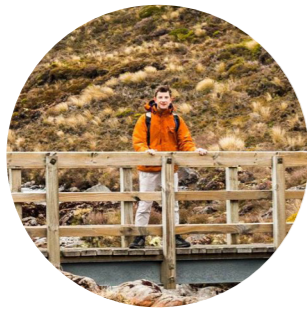


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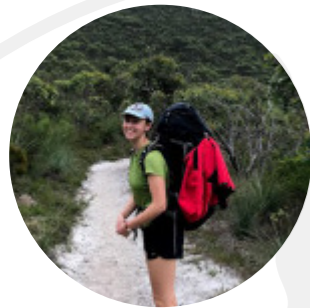
BUSHWALKING
Emily Webb Ware



BUSHWALKING
Callum Edwards



ROPES
Hugh Mason



SNOW SPORTS
Maggie Dick



PADDLING
Dáire Kelly



MOUNTAINEERING
Taner Kucukyuruk



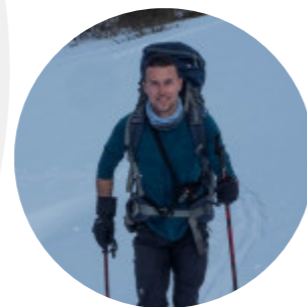
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TESSA ELLIOTT

If a thank you can be deep, this is the ocean. Here goes, thank you to everyone who contributed to this magazine. Thanks especially to those who wrote about their experience and had the courage to submit, those who took beautiful photographs, those with the patience to wait for this edition, and those who listened to me whine about it. Thanks to Chris, Kasia, and Jason for proofreading and thanks to the Committee for supporting a print magazine in a digital age. Special mention to Finn Connolly who got me started with his beautiful photos and articles.

To utilise a cliché, the creation of this edition of the mountaineer was a journey. It was long, it was arduous – and I'm not yet

convinced it was worth it. Definitely Type II fun. When I became publications officer in October 2021, I greatly underestimated the difficulty of 1. Cajoling unsuspecting OXOs into writing (and submitting) articles; 2. Learning to utilise InDesign software efficiently/effectively; and 3. DESIGN a magazine. Design is in capitals because there are so many small decisions involved that contribute to the 'design' element of the magazine – with no standardised format, layout, or thematic styles, the final product was completely and utterly at my discretion (that's a lot to take in!). Thankfully, soon after my appointment, I teamed up with Chris Karelak and together we have whittled down this enormous task into the magazine you see before you. Although we have very different approaches, the Mountaineer has benefitted from our different skill sets, and with the edition of Kasia (albeit late in the game) we got a magazine that I think we are all proud of. I want to thank Kasia here because she joined the team in the middle of 2022 but her insights and experience with InDesign were

greatly appreciated.

Along the way we faced many unforeseen battles, many of which, for me, were against InDesign. The quality of photos, fonts, paragraph spacing, links to picture files, layers, colour schemes, too many words, not enough words... the list goes on. However, these were mostly solitary battles – meanwhile Chris was busy haranguing people he met on trips and down at the Crooms. Neither was an easy job, and given my recent move to Central Australia, much liaising fell on Chris' shoulders towards the pointy end of magazine construction.

As this edition reaches its epic culmination, its denouement, the conclusion of our efforts... Chris and I have signed up to do it all again next year. Part devotion to the club, part belief in the continuation of the Mountaineer magazine (and all of the OXOs it has represented since 1961), and part madness – Chris and I have some big ideas that we're excited to share for this new era of the magazine!



CHRIS KARELAS

cles, drawings and sketches evolving to greyscale and then colour photos. With the club creating history, there were more opportunities to write about and celebrate past achievements.

Not only is The Mountaineer an opportunity for members, associates and alumni to express their creativity, it is a means of story-telling – a forum where a vivid description of ideas, personal experiences and life-lessons are used to share knowledge, evoke powerful emotions and insights; as well as storing these elements in an archived time capsule. Writing is certainly an intricate and powerful way to record those tiny little details, interesting conversations, cool finds, unexpected accomplished (or unaccomplished) goals, surprises and the unexpected – memories that will be time-capsuled and shared for many years to come.

It is with great delight that we present to you the long-awaited latest edition of The Mountaineer. What has been an up and down period since the release of the last edition, there have been ample opportunities within the club for adventure and creating fond memories. With not much happening over 2020/2021, once we hit Spring 2021, we have been in full swing with adventures to peaks, mountains, canyons, on-water, and even underground! We have had a multitude of different trips taking place, all with their unique intricacies. Whether it be going deep beneath a doline in Buchan Caves to solve a murder mystery; traversing the Fainters in Bogong after an all-night lightning show; lounging about on French Island looking for seahorses; kayaking in Lake Eildon where the water is warmer than the outside Summer temperature, after rafting down the nearby Goulbourn River the day before where the water was stone-cold; backcountry skiing at Falls Creek where you bump into your old Physics tutor at the hut; or just the

odd-occasion day walk to escape from your daily routine – there is always an event for you at MUMC!

It has been a pleasure to work behind the scenes in the writing and editing department, so we hope you enjoy this long-awaited latest edition! Whilst it is no easy feat to chase down our authors for their final drafts or spending many a late night behind the keyboard, it is certainly worth every second to be able to see the magazine come together and enable the MUMC legacy to continue.

I would also like to take this opportunity to personally thank Tessa for her hard work and commitment to this magazine, basically doing the entire In Design element. Despite it becoming our worst nightmare, at times we had an obsession with getting things to polished perfection, and this involved many after-hours zoom calls (that sometimes went much later than they should have), thousands of messages back and forth, more than 20 InDesign versions created (at last count), and a 2-day summit in the clubrooms living on instant tea and coffee. It sometimes took hours just to figure out simple things like how to italicise a font and make it stay that way, or paste a photo to preserve its resolution, and constant file corruption – once we thought we were done, we were back at square one pretty quickly! Couldn't have done it without you and can't wait to do it all again! In saying that, hopefully our joint investment in this edition pays dividends in inspiring you to take on an adventure and come back with a ripper story for the next one!

We want to get you published, and if you write something up half-decent about a trip that you've been on, or an article, informative piece, lecture, story or poem about a topic that fits into one of the sections of the magazine, we want to read it!

Contact us at publications@mumc.org.au and we'll aim to get you published!

Previous editions can be viewed on the MUMC website: <https://www.mumc.org.au/mountaineer>

Welcome to the 2021/2022 edition of The Mountaineer, an exclusive publication that first began in 1961! What was once a black-and-white type-writer periodical used to notify members of upcoming events, it has since transformed into an annual publication, evolving to become an amalgamation of articles, trip reports and photos, where MUMC members get to express their creativity and write about what they have been up to both inside and outside of the club.

Looking back through the archived editions you can really see the evolution of the club and how some traditions have remained much the same. Weekly meetings used to be held in cafés back in 1948 and into the 50s, as women were not allowed to go to pubs. There was a dedicated MUMC table, and members would stand in the doorway and yell "Oxo!" until the table replied¹. Similarly, Oxos still did have to clock-watch as last outbound trains to the suburbs departed from the city at 12am. Before the digital era, The Mountaineer was the only means of communication and served to keep members up-to-date with the day-to-day operations of the club, announcing when and where meetings were held, where to go to sign up for trips (which was usually a manilla folder in the clubroom where you would show up to the meeting and sign your name), and drafting trip itineraries – similar to what we now utilise the MUMC website for. The Mountaineer gradually evolved to become more trip-report focused with authored arti-

¹ Histories of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club 1897 by Ruth Paterson

from the
editors

Bushwalking

OFFICER REPORT

Emma Ferris & Callum Edwards

We started off the semester really well for bushwalking! Our aim was to run as many trips as possible and get as many members involved to latch onto interest. This was successful in that we were able to run a trip almost every single week. A goal of ours was to have rogaining return to the club since the recent cancellations of our rogaining event, which actually had the biggest participation numbers that we have ever seen. A big thanks to Emily and Emma for helping to organise and get things done! We have a good budgeting to buy more tents and poles, our next upcoming challenge

is to get more leaders though and trained up. This would enable more trips to run, expand the club with more variety of bushwalking trips ranging from beginner to advanced level, whilst making way for newcomers to experience bushwalking and overnight hiking and become involved with this incredible hobby. Whilst lockdowns have been extremely challenging, we have a positive outlook and are still on the hunt for more leaders! So, if you are interested in becoming a leader or interested in finding out more, please get in contact with us! We would love to have you on board.



Photo: Feathertop Hike by Finn Connolly



Welcome to MUMC: Feathertop Summit '21

Finn Connolly

There's nothing quite like bursting through thick snow gum to reveal MUMC hut and the beautiful peak of Feathertop behind. This was our view as we made it to the top of NW Spur one (Good) Friday afternoon.

The beginning of our three-day bushwalk, taking place over Easter weekend, saw us in high spirits. A group with a distinct lack of familiar faces meant new friends, and the excited chatter rose to reflect the feeling of finally being part of MUMC, after a long period

without many trips. While spirits remained high, our pace didn't, with NW Spur's steep switchbacks only broken by the occasional fresh raspberry

“ the feeling of finally being part of MUMC, after a long period without many trips

and stream crossing to cool us down. The heat was a sign of the fine weather we expected for the weekend, but it didn't make the ascent any easier,

especially with Saturday night's three-course meal weighing us down.

The rewarding views soon came, with the gains in altitude presenting more and more spectacular vistas across to the sun-soaked Fainters and finally Feathertop itself. We took no time making the hut feel like home and tucking into some dinner. Dessert featured a rich serving of Mohamed's stories and wisdom as the milky way stretched above. I tried passing some of my basic

astrophotography skills to a few others who were interested, but once their photos started turning out better than mine, I put a quick stop to that!

With daybreak came the decision by Alanah, Oliver, and Thomas to head to Hotham for a slab of beer, to be enjoyed by the group later that night. Modern day heroes, that's for sure! While they headed off across the Razorback the rest of us enjoyed a relaxed start to the day before heading to the summit. We were greeted by 360-degree views and took our time getting acquainted with the nearby peaks, setting goals for future trips, and just generally taking in the magic of the high country.

Our relaxed itinerary continued with a game-filled afternoon of being introduced to Secret Hitler (it's a game...), with

“ the long-awaited return of the slab from Hotham.. the perfect pairing for delicious three-course meals by the fire

much laughter and more of Mohamed's stories. This got us through to the long-awaited return of the slab from Hotham,

which was the perfect pairing for some delicious three-course meals by the fire. The group spent the second night sleeping out under the stars, taking full advantage of the clear weather.

Come Sunday morning, another perfect sunrise got us up and ready to head back down the spur, this time thankful for much lighter packs. Friday's small talk had been swapped for flowing conversations between new friends and before we knew it, we were back to the cars. A successful trip was, of course, rounded out with a stop at Bright Brewery for some beer tasting and hearty meals followed by a swim for some. This trip wasn't going to be topped any time soon!

Special thanks to Mohamed for organising, and Nathan and Jack for leading the group. We'll be back soon for a midnight ascent!

Feathertop Summit by Finn Connolly





OXO Spa Under Car: Midnight Ascent '19

(How else should they find where the parts were cleverly hidden from the rain?)

Rob Springer & Jak Burges

Midnight ascent has got to be the most mad OXO trip of them all. Not only does it require an elevation gain of more than one km up the steepest and toughest route up the mountain, but we do it at night, carrying a crazy costume, enough food to feed an army, and enough alcohol to embalm a mule (and that's ignoring the weather). The goal? A tiny hut, (that used to be) without electricity, exposed upon the hardest route leading up to the most dangerous¹ alpine summit this side of the Tasman.

Does that sound hard enough? No? That's why all kinds of other frivolities are dreamed up. There was the year we carried up a whitewater kayak, so that we could go kayak surfing in the snow. And there was the year a

keg of beer² was brewed up in the cellar!

One thing that has been talked about for years has been a hot spa/pool.

An action group of three interested parties started feverish planning over several months. The original plan was based upon a tarp over a timber frame, but a trial in my backyard resulted in the frame tipping over and the water flooding my industrial sized mint plantation³. A semi-inflatable children's pool was used instead. The heat source was to be a fire in the antiquated MUMC BBQ with 15m of 20mm copper pipe bent into a coil with a frying pan lid to encourage the heat not to leave via the input hole at the top. The plan was to pump water in a

Gear	
Item	Weight
Copper coil	9kg
Fittings	3kg
Car battery	20kg
Extension pipes	2kg
Pool	4kg
Insulation	2kg
Groundsheet	1kg
12V pump + PWM controller	1kg
TOTAL: 42kg	

circuit using a 12 volt pump and a car battery but you'll hear more about that later.

Sadly, four days before Midnight one group member had 'serious business' to attend to and was unable to come. Thankfully Jak, the apolitical and stoic stalwart of the demented and deranged offered to carry the car battery up himself - he even rustled up some extra volunteers to carry up the assorted goodies required for a functioning heating setup.

No Mountaineer article is complete without a mention of Mitch. As you may know, Mitch often has a lot of compliments to my ideas. These may range from the more common "That's dangerous/stupid/unsafe", but at times he gets creative asking about complex metaphysical concepts such as 'OHS' and 'SOPs'. As usual he was right and our lovely plan started falling apart before we even started walking up. This time it was "emergency surgery" and "medically unfit" - life would be

so much simpler if we all did the same thing as the founder of the Beechworth Bakery.⁴ Several frantic phone calls later and we'd found someone who could be ordained the privilege to carry the battery up.

I carried the coil, the complex electronics, and the fittings to make it all work. Thankfully the weather rewarded us with the lowest snow line I'd ever had the pleasure of meeting. Yay. At least the persistent wind was warm enough to keep the falling snow liquid and keep me nicely cooled during the entire walk up. My canyoning backpack⁵ was filled to the brim with pool equipment and a small watershed bag was clipped below with all my clothes, hammock, and (under)quilt. This was definitely the heaviest ultralight trip I'd ever been on.

Come Saturday morning I started shoveling a clearing for the

baptismal font. I only got yelled at once (a personal record for Midnight Ascent) for ruining the aesthetics of the usual group photo by putting the spa smack-bang in the middle of it. Humbug! If I can't get a beach up on the mountain I at least need a pool - it's a vital part of my Beach Boys costume!

After gently and harmoniously waking everyone up at 11:30am⁶ by pumping 100L⁷ of water to prime the heating coil (it was well after 11am, and the lack of alcohol was a very un-OXO thing), the fire was started and we started melting snow.

By 3pm the pool was warming, and someone even found a thermometer that suggested it was a balmy 38°C.

I'd call that a success.

4 He had all his teeth removed in his twenties.
5 It's the biggest backpack I own.
6 Definitely the latest starting OXO-drunks I've yet seen at a Midnight Ascent.
7 The tanks were 100% full before I started.

For future OXO bathers:

- We've left the coil, connections and 12V pump and PWM controller in the cellar (20mm metric screw connections)
- Bring a battery in summer, and set it up to trickle charge from the solar panel.
- Build a pool that is closer to the optimum heat loss size (cuboid) - we'd suggest a bolt together solid frame with some form of suspended pool.
- Who's in for a better one next year

1 When they're all a solid 0/10, you can't argue with it.
2 Antechinus Ale, named after the dead marsupial found whilst cleaning the water tank.
3 Not a euphemism, it's just that I'm only qualified in life support if chromosomes(n=46).

PIE & SLIDE 2021

OVERALL RUNNER UP - VIEW INTO THE BEANS BURN VALLEY
BY LAURA DE JONG



Goldgaine Rogaine by Molly Fleming

Rogaining 101

Emma Ferris

The sport of rogaining is perhaps one of MUMC's lesser-known activities. At start of term meetings for the club, it's not uncommon for members, new and old alike, to sidle up to leaders and ask, "So, um, what exactly is rogaining?"

There is a certain poignant irony to this oft-asked question, as the MUMC was actually responsible for inventing and popularising the sport way back in the 1970s. It's an integral part of the club and our history, and yet many of us aren't really sure what it is. In the wake of the disruption caused by Covid-19 over the last few years, it appears more important than ever to preserve and maintain the club's history and traditions.

“MUMC was actually responsible for inventing and popularising the sport way back in the 1970s... it appears more important than ever to preserve and maintain the club's history and traditions.

The story starts in 1976 when an enterprising bunch of MUMC members, Rod Phillips, Gail Davis and Neil Phillips, held the world's very first rogaining event which was adapted from a 24-hour walking event held by the club since the 1940s. In April 1976 the sport was named, rules were set, and the Victorian Rogaining Association was born. The humble beginnings of this sport are inscribed in the name of the sport itself, with the word 'rogaining' derived from the names of the three MUMC founders (RoGaiNe).

Since 1976 the sport has grown exponentially. The first World Rogaining Championships were held in 1992, and have since been held in countries all over the world, including Estonia, the Czech Republic, Russia, Finland, Latvia, the USA and Spain. Rogaines happen all over Victoria and attract hundreds of teams who come across the state to compete.

So that's how it started, but what exactly is it, again? It depends, a bit, on who you ask. Rogaining has

variously been described as competitive bushwalking, a relaxed day trip with the family, and one of the most hardcore outdoor endurance events ever invented.

“Rogaining has been described as competitive bushwalking, a relaxed day trip with the family, and one of the most hardcore outdoor endurance events ever invented.

Essentially, teams of two to five participants are given a map with a series of checkpoints. Checkpoints are scored differently based on how difficult they are to reach. It is usually impossible for all checkpoints to be accessed in the allotted time. Teams must therefore strategically plan their routes, aiming to accrue as many points as possible, either by aiming for high-scoring markers, visiting many checkpoints, or a mix of both. Rogaines can be gruelling and mentally challenging endurance events, with some running for up to 24 hours and covering 250 square kilometres of terrain. Most events, however, are more relaxed affairs, lasting around 6-12 hours and feature a hearty lunch at the central base camp or 'hash house' after the event. Rogaining is open to all, and courses are often filled with young families, veteran teams of retirees, partners, friends, and of course, competitive uni teams.

“Rogaining has a joyful innocence and fun that I think is sometimes lost in the heat and adrenaline of other sports

It's this wholesome and inclusive aspect of rogaining that I like best. While I think paddling and rock-climbing are undoubtedly 'cool', rogaining has a joyful innocence and fun that I think is sometimes lost in the heat and adrenaline of other sports. I feel very proud to be part of the club that got the sport going, and I dearly hope that we can get a few teams up at the annual championship this year and maintain the club's historic involvement in the sport.

Escape From Reality: Winter Wonderland

Callum Edwards

It was a crisp Tuesday morning in Melbourne, day 12 of another Covid lockdown.

We had watched the snow forecast for the past two weeks with simultaneous excitement and disappointment at the excellent snowfalls that we weren't able to experience. My girlfriend, Emma, and I were sitting on the couch with the news on, eagerly awaiting an announcement on whether the lockdown would end. As soon as the words "no limits on travel" were uttered, we had a brief moment of celebration, and went straight into planning mode.

What do we want to do? Where shall we go? When shall we

go? We racked our brains, trying to come up with the perfect escape. Eventually we settled on snow camping and snowshoeing at Mount Buffalo. We had wanted to experience Mount Buffalo in the snow for ages, ever since visiting the mountain together as volunteer track rangers.

“ There was so much excitement for a plan not ruined by lockdowns.

Lockdown ended 11:59pm Tuesday so naturally we decided to put everything else on hold and leave the next day. There was so much excitement for a plan not ruined by lockdowns. Assuming that

we would be able to car camp at Lake Catani (as we had done in Summer 2020), we stocked up the car with the creature comforts required to camp in the snow: blankets, firewood, yummy (but heavy) food, drinks, as well as all of the normal camping stuff. Around midday on Wednesday, we started the drive up.

You could almost feel the stress levels drop as soon as you left the Melbourne traffic and hit the open road of the country. We had a classic bakery lunch in Benalla, and picked up groceries and snow chains in Myrtleford.

Side note: I would highly recommend supporting the local economy by buying groceries in the country rather than at home – these places have done it tough with the fires and lockdowns of the last couple years.

We drove up the mountain, excited to get set up and get a fire going. But when we got there, we found that the road into Lake Catani was closed and completely covered in snow. The walk in was 700m and the prospect of taking multiple trips to walk with our heavy gear and firewood was very daunting, especially in fading light and snow. But the idea of a nice warm fire fuelled us, and eventually we made it,



set up our tent (nice and close to the hut) and got a nice fire going. It was quite special and a little unnerving at times having the whole campground to ourselves.

The next morning, we woke up excited to properly explore the mountain. We started off with a nice snowshoe up to The Horn where we passed all sorts of snowshoers, skiers and even snowboarders. We finished the day exploring the plateau and the Giants Playground, imagining giants playing around the impressive granite boulders.

“ It was quite special and a little unnerving.. having the whole campground to ourselves.

We appreciated having the fire to warm us and dry our sodden shoes and socks (though unfortunately a sock was lost to the fire). The highlight of the trip was on Friday snowshoeing up to the Cathedral, a very impressive granite rock formation that juts out from one of the hills on the mountain. The morning light



and fast moving clouds made it all the more impressive.

We were momentarily brought back to Covid-reality, however, when Emma needed to attend a Zoom class for uni. Afterward, there was time for one last look at the Horn and the La Souef plateau before we headed back home on Saturday.

This was my first time

snowshoeing and snow camping, and I could not recommend it highly enough with the right gear: plenty of warm and waterproof layers, thermals, warm sleeping gear, a good 3-4 season tent, etc.

The past couple of years have shown us the importance of spontaneous trips!



Photos by Callum Edwards and Emma Ferris



PIE & SLIDE 2021

Overseas Landscape

Category Runner Up: Glacier Evaporated by Steven Birkett



PIE & SLIDE 2021

Faces of the Club

Category Runner Up: Memorial Hut by JJ Law



Club Activity

Category Runner Up: Climbing
Perpendicularly by Sarah Mcconville



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Outdoors Nature

Category
Winner: Caving
is Serious Business
by Andriana
Stoddert



Category Runner Up: Untitled by Andriana Stoddart



Paddling

OFFICER REPORT Anita Tolpinrud

Despite rolling lockdowns and another difficult year due to COVID-19, I think I wouldn't be wrong to say that paddling has been one of the most active sports in the club, with huge interest amongst members and some significant milestones and achievements.

2021 started with 8 of our members undertaking a swiftwater rescue course in February, partially funded by MUMC training grants. This helped some to get started on the path of becoming a whitewater leader, while refreshing the skills and knowledge of established leaders. Swiftwater rescue is a key skill required for our leaders to run whitewater trips in order to keep everyone safe on the water and we are always happy to see more people wanting to be involved as leaders and become certified.

In March, April and May, paddling was exceedingly busy with trips. We ran multiple beginner pool and flatwater social paddles, as well as a couple of beginner and intermediate whitewater trips, although lockdown over prime whitewater season sadly precluded us from reaching the bigger rivers. No doubt that's something we will try to rectify in the coming year, however. Also worthy of a mention was a very successful clean-up paddle on the Yarra in April. Keen MUMC members removed over 8 huge bags worth of rubbish, well over 100 tennis balls, and a deck chair! Hopefully, we can keep up our efforts and help play a role in keeping our precious waterways clean and safe well into the future. I want to take the opportunity to extend my thanks to the paddling leaders who have helped

organise and run a lot of successful trips despite all the challenges over the last couple of years.

Canoe polo has also been very active throughout, with weekly training sessions, regular interclub competitions through the summer months, multiple intro sessions and the Brunswick baths winter competitions when restrictions allowed. Canoe polo is an exceptionally active and inclusive sport and a great way to learn and improve paddling techniques in a social setting - I would encourage anyone with an interest in paddling to come along to a session and have a go.

Lastly, but absolutely not least, we have been working hard through the lockdowns in order to introduce a brand new activity to the club: sea and touring kayaking! In consultation with Melbourne University Sports (MUS), East Coast Kayaking and RMIT outdoors club, we developed an activity and leader training framework and, thanks to the MUMC committee and MUS, we secured generous funding for leader training and equipment purchases. This culminated in the exciting and much-anticipated arrival of our brand new fleet of sea kayaks at the start of 2022, so far consisting of three single and two tandem boats. I'm confident that this is just the beginning of what is sure to be lots of new adventures and a source of numerous memorable trips and great enjoyment for our members!

We will continue to work hard to grow our paddling sports and community and hope to see some exciting trips and engagement as we move through 2022. Look forward to seeing you on the water!



Photo: Lake Eildon by Anita Tolpinrud and Michael Clark



MicroAdventures in the City

Dáire Kelly

“Adventure is only a state of mind - ALASTAIR HUMPHREYS

This quote is something I've taken to heart over the last couple of years. Going in and out of lockdowns for the last two years, cut off from “The Big Wild”, you take what you can get for an adventure fix. This magazine is usually full of grand adventures in far flung corners of the globe, but for many OXOs the world shrunk to a 5-kilometer radius around their house that was only open for two hours a day.

Within these constraints, I concocted my own microadventure: kayak the whitewater of Moonee Ponds Creek, the only stretch of whitewater available within 5km of my house. Close to the city, the Moonee Ponds Creek is a glorified storm drain; nothing but poured concrete, steel grates and the frequent abandoned shopping trolley. Venture a bit further north, however, and you can be surprised how easily you forget you're less than 10km from the Melbourne CBD. Overhanging

gum trees, steep muddy/grassy slopes, and most surprisingly, several grade II rapids. Following a massive deluge in September 2021, the water level in this tiny

“Overhanging gum trees, steep muddy/grassy slopes, and most surprisingly, several grade II rapids

creek rose quite significantly, making it navigable by kayak. As a bonus, there's a bike track that runs along most of the length of the creek. This allowed me to 1. Scout the rapids from the bank before I actually had to paddle it, and 2. Do it completely solo.

So off I went on my bike, to scout the length of the creek. It took about an hour to cycle upstream to the edge of my 5km radius, Kelvin Thomson Park, and back to Holbrook Reserve to leave my bike, the most convenient spot to pull my boat out. The rapids all seemed mellow enough that I was unlikely to get flipped,

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but still challenging enough for someone who hadn't been in a whitewater boat for six months. I certainly didn't want to catch a face full of urban stormwater (and God knows what else might be dumped in there...). One thing that did start to concern me was a 500-meter section that backed directly onto people's back gardens, meaning I couldn't see if it was actually passable or not. Poring over satellite images on Google didn't exactly inspire hope, but I've gotten out of some sticky situations before, and if worst came to worst, I could hold onto the bank and bush bash my way out.

“The sun was shining, there was a flow in the creek, and I was in a boat. It felt good to be alive that day.

With a small amount of nervous excitement, I walked back to the house and drove my car filled with paddling gear to Kelvin Thomson Park where the creek goes under

Bell St. I got more than a few odd looks from people out and about for their allotted fresh air time as I put in. Dog walkers, joggers, cyclists, and parents with small kids in tow stopped to gawk at the novelty. A few of the adults shouted down words of encouragement from the path above, most of the kids watched and waved. The sun was shining, there was a flow in the creek, and I was in a boat. It felt good to be alive that day.

I pushed away from the muddy bank and joined the mainstream. Looking at the banks either side of me, it was clear the water level was dropping quickly from its peak flow, a good 10cm of wet concrete was showing above the waterline. I picked up the pace so I wouldn't have to drag my kayak for the last section. It didn't take long before I hit the first rapid, a straightforward drop right under the bridge from Bell Street to the Tullamarine Freeway. The rest of the paddle was a mix of flatwater and small rapids to break up the monotony, with some pleasant parklands giving way to the grey unyielding concrete the further I went.

I was really shocked by the amount of litter in the river. Huge amounts of plastic waste washed into the strainers at high levels with nowhere to go when it dropped, and that's just what was visible to the naked eye. After a heavy rain like the one that enabled me to paddle the creek, all kinds of crappy chemicals get washed into the waterways; fertilizers that cause blue-green algae outbreaks, and pesticides that can annihilate local fish populations. The Moonee Ponds Creek happens to run right past Melbourne Airport and through industrial warehouse districts, so it's not exactly a pristine watershed.

In some good news though, Melbourne Water is currently undertaking works on the creek to try return it to a more natural environment between 2022-2023.



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Photos by Dáire Kelly



Exploring the Great Barrier Reef: North West Island

Shaun Mascarenhas

In March of 2021, amid what seemed like an endless series of lockdowns, I saw a post on the MUMC Facebook page which caught my eye. My friend Amy (who was a stranger at the time) posted about an upcoming trip to North West Island with a link to its Wikipedia page. Intrigued, I clicked on the link and here was the description: North West island is a coral cay in the southern Great Barrier Reef, located 75 kilometres north-east of Gladstone, with an area of 1.05km² and a maximum elevation of 10 metres. While this might sound off-brand for a mountaineering club given that there's nothing there to climb and a walk around the island would take a mere 45 minutes, I was intrigued.

I quickly sent Amy a message and recruited another friend Ella, who after reading the Wikipedia page, was instantly onboard. We met up

at the club and Bobur, who had only just heard about the trip, was also onboard. And so, our group was established.

Logistics

While one wouldn't typically write about logistics, North West Island is no typical island. The island has no fixed infrastructure (barring drop toilets), no fresh water and no reliable way off. A ferry arrives once a week to drop off and pick up people and stuff - it's imperative to adequately plan and acquire all the necessary items one needs. As we were flying from Melbourne, this was a bit tricky.

On the day of our departure, we flew from Melbourne to Gladstone. We arrived at night and slept in a motel. The next morning, Amy, Ella and Bobur ventured off to Woolies and Bunnings to get everything we needed. I had the far more important job of looking

after our stuff (i.e. sitting in a café, basking in the morning sun, drinking smoothies, with a large mountain of gear taking up half the pavement...)

That afternoon, after packing up all our gear into plastic, protective boxes (which promptly broke), we boarded the ferry. Here, we met Amy's sister and her friends who were also going to the island. The ferry took around 7 hours. The conditions were choppy and many got sea sick, myself included. We arrived at midnight, unloaded the ferry, set up our tents and went to sleep.

The next morning, we scoped the island. There were around 70 people in total, scattered across various camps. These camps ranged in sophistication between groups. On one end of the spectrum, you had groups like ours with few creature comforts, to groups with generators and

portable bread making ovens. We found a suitable camping spot and set up our gear. Upon deciding on a big breakfast, we discovered the key flaw in our approach - we didn't have a gas connection between the stove and gas cylinder. As such, we had to barter for our gas the entire trip with precious bottles of wine, massages and entertainment (none of which were taken up).

Life on the island

Life on North West Island was simple. We would wake up, barter for gas (because of the aforementioned lack of gas situation), have an extended breakfast and go for a morning snorkel while the tide was still low. At lunch, after bartering for more gas, we would eat our lunch on the beach. The afternoons were relaxed. In the late afternoon, we would typically go for another snorkel or

read or walk. In the evenings, our group along with our campsite mates Snowy and Andy and Amy's sister Sarah and

her boyfriend Tom would have long dinners and chat for hours. Some of the key moments and highlights of our trip included:

Flora and fauna: The Great Barrier Reef is amazingly vibrant and full of life. We saw colourful fish of all natures and types, sharks, rays and turtles, and I don't mean a few. We saw literally thousands of these fish.

An epic kayak journey: One afternoon, we borrowed a kayak to paddle around the island. It was a two-person kayak and there were five of us. Instead of taking turns, we all boarded the kayak. Our kayak sat under the water and paddling was extremely slow and delicate. It took us about two-and-a-half hours and multiple capsizes to circumnavigate the island.

The most wholesome family: One morning while Bobur was bartering for gas, I went for a walk and stopped by a camping set up that could only be described as heaven. This family had everything! While I was staring longingly at the set up, the dad came out and asked me to sit and drink a coffee. I explained to him our gas situation and from then on, this family brought us food

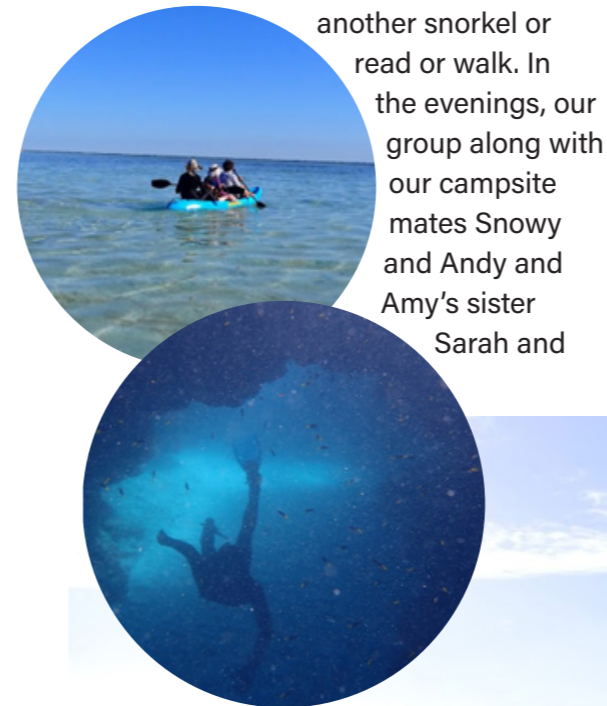
ranging from freshly made pizzas, to freshly caught fish to garlic-infused lobsters to two loaves of bread. They even showed us how to prepare freshly caught fish and then gave us the fish!

Sleep talking: My tentmate Ella started making bird noises at 5:00AM in the morning one day. I turned around to ask her what she was doing - she asked me if I could hear the birds (meaning her), turned around and went back to sleep.

Acknowledgements:

- Amy Buckerfield: The mastermind of good times and proper preparation.
- Ella McNenny: My tentmate and purveyor of deep and meaningful conversations.
- Bobur Turnsunov: The philosopher and under-exaggerator to my over-exaggerations.
- Sarah Buckerfield and Tom Veit: For organizing everything and being the reason we even went on this trip.
- Snowy and Andy: Our campsite, snorkeling and kayaking buddies.

Goes without saying, I couldn't have done this trip on my own. The people I shared it with made it great!



PIE & SLIDE 2021

Australian Landscape

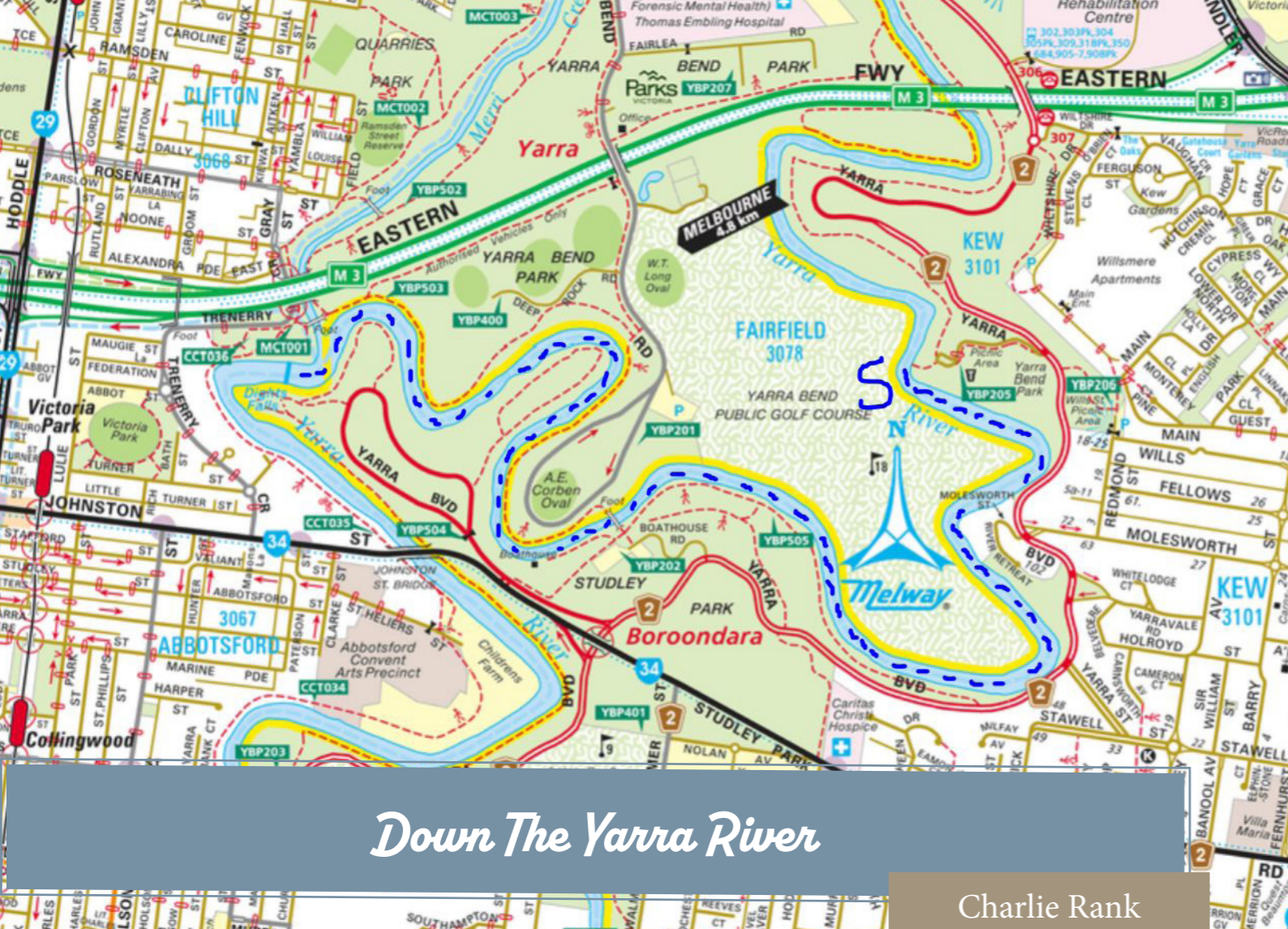
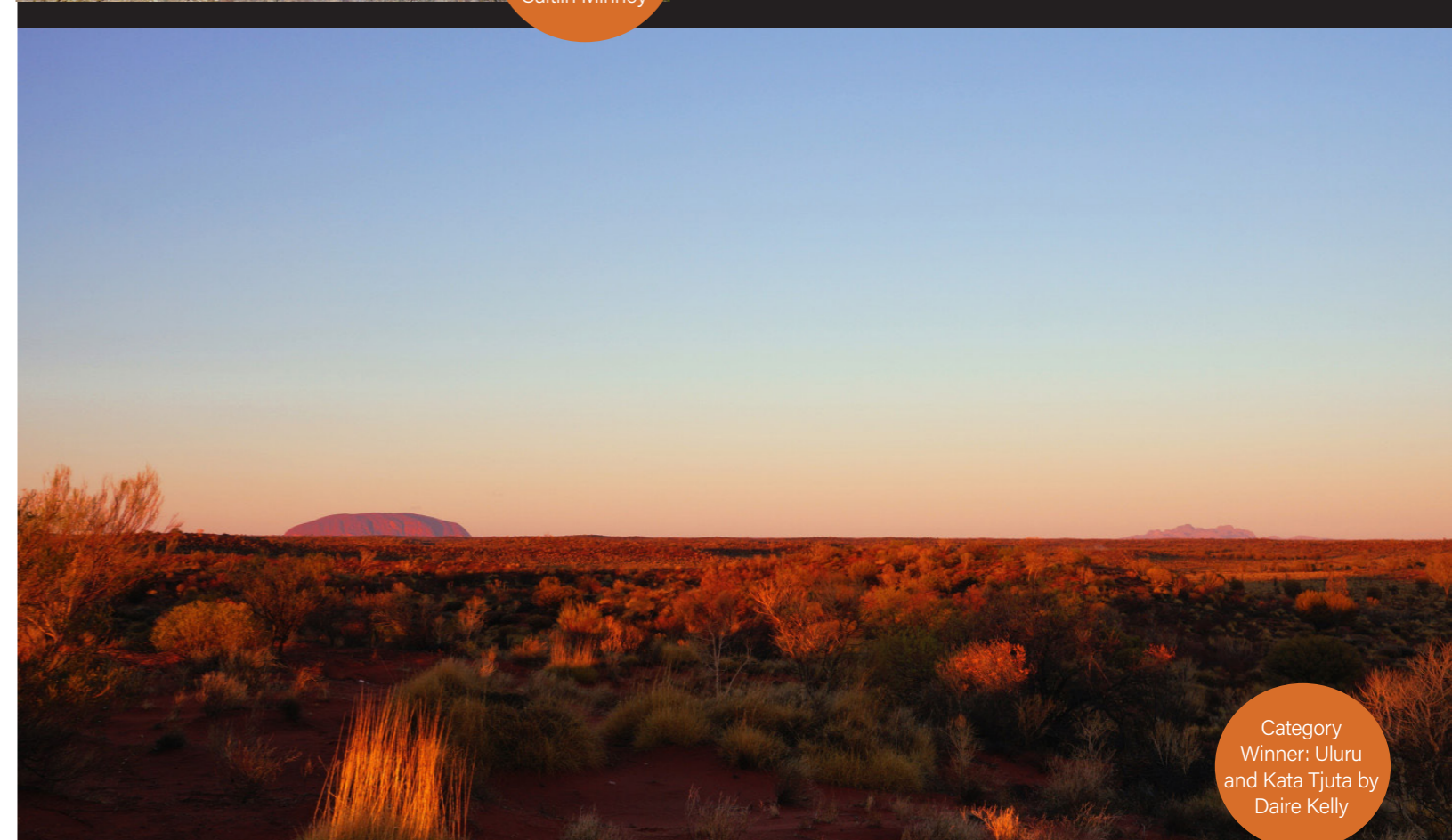
Category Runner Up: Roaring Beach by Bobur Tursunov



Category Winner: Werribee Gorgeously by Caitlin Minney



Category Winner: Uluru and Kata Tjuta by Daire Kelly



Down The Yarra River

Charlie Rank

Today was my first assist-lead trip with the club, alongside one of the club's most experienced kayakers, Dairé Kelly. We managed to strap two touring kayaks per car, so our trip was limited to having four members, but I think that it's probably best to have a small amount of people for my first leading trip.

We were set to launch at Bellbird Picnic Area; my personal favourite as it is secluded and has its very own canoe ramp.

The last time I came here it was Summer, the spot was teeming with grey-headed flying foxes, whose distinct sound becomes apparent as soon as you get to the car park. Now they have probably migrated up north to seek warmer weather and it is quiet again on the river.

After going through gear and safety briefing, we launched on the water and practiced paddling strokes. I was reminded again how fast things can happen on the river and catch you off guard. One of the paddlers was practicing their draw strokes and fell in the water. They were taking some time to get to the surface and I had started to panic a bit. When you get in these moments, you realise how many things could go wrong, a paddler could hit their head on a submerged object and knock them out, they could get entangled with a submerged object, or the spray deck pull tab could be stuck under the spray deck itself.

All was good and nothing came from it, but it taught me an important lesson to always be

unassuming of the river, and to put more countermeasures in place to prevent any accidents from happening, like a more thorough briefing.

The rest of the paddle was very cruisy, paddling past Studley Park Boathouse and observing the spectacular geology, fauna and flora. Just before Dight's Falls, we got out, stretched our legs, and had a snack while studying the sheer amount of water flowing off the man made concrete weir.

All in all, it was a great first trip and very beneficial to start seeing through the eyes of a leader. As a leader you're not relaxing and enjoying the trip in the same way - you're actively looking for dangers and potential risks which could pose a real threat to paddlers.

Climbing, Caving, & Canyoning

OFFICER REPORT Caitlin Minney

2021- 2022 has seen both challenges and success for MUMC rope sports, with growing participation across the club. 2021 started successfully with multiple top- rope trips running, conservation initiatives, and rescue training occurring between lockdowns. Despite leader attrition, 2022 saw an enjoyable top-roping experience for many new club members at Intro Trip and external seconding training provided by Melbourne Climbing School to encourage enthusiastic climbers to begin climbing with MUMC.

Highlights of 2022 include the recommencement of official MUMC canyoning trips, with the approval of a new canyoning framework. I hope that the recommencement of MUMC canyoning will provide opportunities for canyoners at all levels to participate in the sport at an exciting time in the history of canyoning in Victoria.

Congratulations to club members Robert Springer and Sam Thompson on the publication of 'A Comprehensive Guide to Canyoning Around Victoria', their guidebook following a successful Adventure Grant to descend a remote waterfall in Ngarigo Country, NSW.

Initiative was taken by President Jacob Forker-Freeman for a renewed inter club competition, with the inaugural inter-club bouldering competition held at Boulder Project. This event celebrated the talent within the major university outdoors clubs across Melbourne, and allowed club and climbing leaders to get to know each other. I am looking forward to further inter-club competitions allowing for greater collaboration between university clubs.

Rope skills sessions have also been running at the clubrooms allowing leaders to share their knowledge and beginner and intermediate climbers to practice essential skills before climbing outdoors. In addition to Monday night climbing, these skills sessions have allowed for keen climbers to meet each other in the club and build their skills before climbing outdoors.

A streamlined approach to approving climber log-books; recognising prior experience of climbers joining MUMC, in addition to new climbing leaders will provide a refreshed and excited leader base to revive climbing trips within the club. Moving towards 2023, I am excited for revived climbing within the club with fun and challenging trips for all climbing levels.





Headspace Strategies for Rock Climbing

Anonymous
(words reflect personal experience)

Rock climbing is a sport that at first glance seems to have a straightforward goal: get to the top. However, the vertical dance we do gets more complicated the deeper you immerse yourself. Eventually you'll be training like a fiend, just trying to get stronger in any way possible. It can become an obsession too, particularly with grade chasing, the practice of using grade progression as your metric for measuring success. Everyone has grades they want to attain by the end of a trip, season or year. I'm definitely guilty of it, and it's especially noticeable after climbing for a couple of years. Your confidence levels outpace your skills and strength - eventually you hit a wall. The breakthrough I found was purely psychological, and navigating it

can be a nightmare. Even now I still grapple with it from time to time.

“Your confidence levels outpace your skills and strength - eventually you hit a wall.

The first time I experienced it was on a trip to New Zealand in 2019 - I was pretty psyched to be climbing somewhere new, and I felt confident and physically strong at the time with the grades I could send. However, as the trip progressed I found that I was lacking a solid foundation in route reading and finding optimal beta; all of which led to me getting shutdown on a number of routes that I felt at the time to

be within my ability. This led to many negative thoughts that felt like I had ruined this part of the trip for myself. I did have a very supportive climbing partner, but I still had some very emotional internal conversations about how to improve, which weren't obvious at the time.

In hindsight, I wasn't a smart climber with the sport routes I was doing. I would either strength my way to the top (definitely not gracefully or controlled), or rely on my reach. This just fed a vicious cycle, which took time to fix. Although I found some strategies with indoor bouldering and trying out routes that were my anti-style which proved helpful, there is always more to learn.

Four takeaways for a beginner climber

1. Don't be afraid of hitting a plateau - it happens to everyone. It's a good time to reassess your goals and adjust your training habits.
2. Talk to other climbers about strategies and consider incorporating what works for your current skill level into your training.
3. Try to climb a variety of routes and problems, it's a good way to figure out your weaknesses as well as what to train, and also improves your ability to onsight and flash too.
4. It's not the end of the world if you don't onsight a route or flash a problem. Projecting is a good way to develop micro beta suitable for your body type and style.



Icy Tents, Steep Descents & an Ambition to Explore the Underground World

Chris Karelas

“It is reasonable to suppose that there are other chambers yet undiscovered, awaiting in their awful darkness for someone to enter them and behold their beauty
(Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Ormeo Chronicle, 10/8/1897)

Nestled beneath the ground in Krauatungalung Country 350km northeast of Melbourne, lies Victoria’s largest cave system, the Buchan Caves Reserve. Created approximately 400 million years ago by the carving actions of an underground river, a labyrinth of limestone lies beneath the undulating hills. The full extent and number of individual caves is still unknown, with an estimated

350 caves in the Potholes area alone. Buchan offers a wide range of caves open to the public, from the easily accesible Fairy Cave to unexplored, literal holes in the ground.

This was no ordinary, cliché tourist experience - it was more the BYO ropes and ladder, choose-your-own-adventure style of trip. This meant finding your cave, anchoring your ropes, securing a

wire ladder, and working together to ensure each caver made a safe descent into the depths of the unknown. To find a cave, you first need to scan the land for a doline. Typically funnel-shaped, dolines are hollow basins or sinkholes found in karst¹ regions. Where there is a doline, there is usually a cave. The entrance may or may not be blocked by prickly blackberry bushes!

1 Karst: a type of landscape where the dissolving of the bedrock has created sinkholes, sinking streams, caves, springs and other characteristic features. Karst is associated with soluble rock types such as limestone, marble, and gypsum.

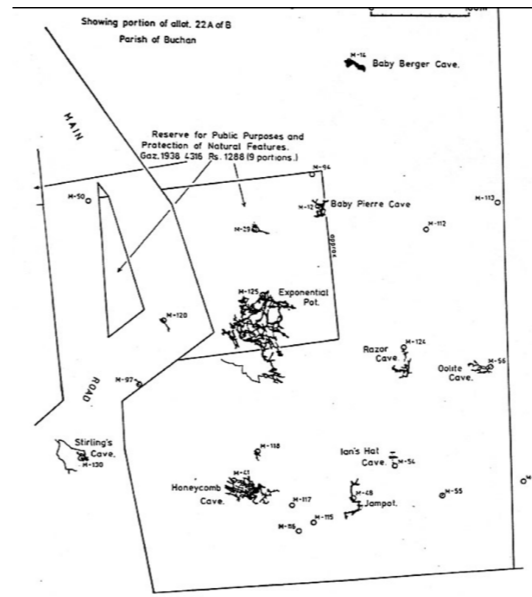


FIGURE 5.

Once descended and grounded, the person standing at the entrance of the cave would hear echoes of “off rope” before hauling the rope back up to attach to the next descender – quite a lengthy process in groups of eight. The hardest part would have to be

holding onto the cold metal rungs of the ladder, and having your palms pricked by the gravel left by your previous bootstep (flexible gloves are highly recommended), while trying to remain balanced as the ladder sways back and forth. The air feels cooler and more crisp with each step down, the light slowly fading away, eclipsing into a tiny circle and becoming more and more out of reach. The outdoor sounds of wind and trees gradually disappear and the musty smell of clay and damp rock become your new environment.

Honeycomb Cave

The Honeycomb Cave was the first cave our group entered. A first-time for many, being underground was a surreal and

spooky experience. The ladder and rope were the only life-line – without it, there would be no way to escape!

The thing to note about being underground in a labyrinth of chambers is that it is very easy to get lost, as many of the rooms and surroundings look very alike. It is a similar feeling to being in a snow-covered field where everything begins to blend in. The trick is to constantly look backwards, at every intersection, and memorise a visual



The undulating hills of the Buchan Potholes Reserve region by Antigony Haikalis



Looking into the eye of a doline in the Buchan Caves Reserve

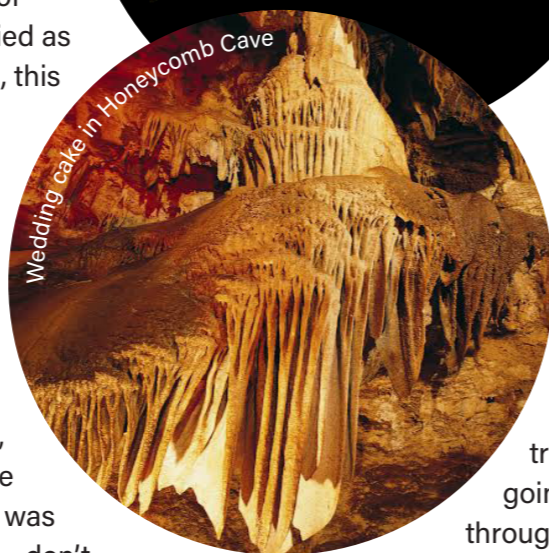
image of what the route looks like in reverse. One point of interest in the Honeycomb cave is the Camel's Hump, a polished piece of limestone (question: why is it polished?'), to the left of which lies a 10 metre drop known as the 'Valley of Death'. After looping the cave, the Camel's Hump will be met again but from the reverse perspective, allowing you to backtrack the pathway taken upon entry. This will lead to chamber number two from the entrance, followed by a steep chimney climb where you will meet the exit rope (if you are lucky and no one has decided to sabotage your lifeline). Other formations of significance in this cave include the wedding cake (there were actually several wedding cakes, the official one is unknown), the bar with a wine bottle, and helictites, which were salt crystals formed up along the walls and roof. Unlike other caves which didn't have much lustre and were dull in their tones, the Honeycomb Cave had an orangey honey-coloured salt lamp like luminescence to it, emitting a dark orange glow under torchlight with a slight shine.

Wilson's Cave

Wilson's Cave would have to be the perfect venue for a cinematic experience. After an eventful and exciting day of exploring the underworld, we all gathered in the depths for a scheduled surround-sound screening of *Black Water: Abyss*. Classified as an action horror-thriller film, this movie was nothing short of a comedy. Pointing out the production mistakes and the predictable nature of what was going to happen next got everyone laughing. The basic premise of the film was: dumb people go out caving, they do dumb things, people die – the end. At least there was a moral to the story though – don't go into a cave when there are floods forecasted, and don't throw your caving partner's Ventolin straight into the water when they are gasping for air! Unfortunately, technology did fail us on this occasion (sigh), a flat battery leaving the ending unfinished. Bats clicking above and occasionally swooping through the audience did add a further element of theatrics, transforming the cinema into a 4-D experience.

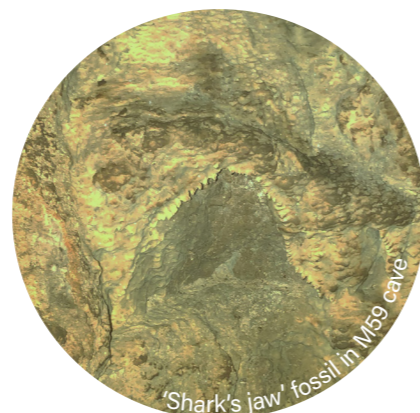
Oolites Cave

If you are after a cave that involves only a short stroll and a little bit of a murder mystery, the Oolites cave is for you. As you venture downwards, chuck a left at main chamber as you enter the section with the cheese wheel. The cheese wheel is a real test of your ability – if you make it through in one piece, then well done! If not,



try going through with both

arms stretched over the top of your head to reduce shoulder width, then rotate like a corkscrew. There are lots of nooks and crannies to explore in this one - we found a set of wombat bones in one of the chambers! For those who are forensically minded, I've got a question for you – how did the wombat die? And how did it get into the cave in the first place, so far down, without dying on entry? You will have to visit to make some observations for yourself and journal your findings!



M59 Cave

If you are after a real challenge and like the idea of slippery walls and deep drop offs, the M59 might be of interest. A rope or harness may not be required to enter, but don't let that trick you into thinking this cave will be an easy one! You wind your way down in a corkscrew fashion, where at the bottom there is a passage to the left that leads to a deep crevasse (and a very hard squeeze through as you become pancaked between both sheets of rock wall). It was very hard to balance without a protective caving suit since the walls had bumps on them that dug into your skin. An alternative route is to climb into the hole on the right using someone else's knee as a step ladder (thanks Rose!), however, not really recommended as there were not a lot of footholds to stabilise yourself once you are

immersed in the manhole that connects to the crevasse part to the left. Interestingly though, to the right there was a chimney-like hole that looked like there could be a possible climb down, yet to be explored - maybe next time! See if you can spot the fossil-like structure on the wall that looks like a shark's jaw.

Slocombes Cave

Located adjacent to the Potholes Reserve and only a short-drive away onto private farmer property, the Slocombes Cave will cost you a slab of beer to enter! This cave was more of a gymnastic venture compared with the other caves. Very high ceilings, lots of clay and mud, slippery obstacle courses with mud hills and rope handles will test your stamina. Highlights include an optional elbow-tight squeeze rabbit run that goes on for 50-plus metres, an active bat-

chamber, two-tiered levels with a nice viewing platform, many twists and turns and a resident amphibian!

Action-packed days were concluded with hearty meals and warm fires by night prior to sleeping in our igloos (tents).

All in all, this was a great long-weekend away and a real eye-opener to the underground world of caving. With every cave offering a different experience, whether it be strolling, walking or crawling; getting stuck twisting through tight chambers and tunnels; from hanging out with bats in the dark to Netflix and chill (literally, chill!)

– there is a cave for everyone at Buchan.

Shout out to leaders Jak, Keith, Matthew, Lewis and Steve. Without you this adventure would not have been possible.



1 High foot-traffic at this junction has created a polished, smooth feel of this rock, known as Camel's Hump.



Canyoning in Victoria

Sam Thompson

Victoria isn't known for having deep slot canyons like those in the well-known Blue Mountains sandstone. Nevertheless, a surprising amount of canyons exist in Victoria. Its widely varied geological history has produced a range of canyoning areas of considerable diversity.

In the alpine areas, large uplands collect snow which—once melted in the spring and summer—is funnelled towards the resistant rocks at the plateau's edge. Here, high volume streams fall 300–600m into adjacent, deeply incised valleys over many knickpoints (or waterfalls). Anyone who has been skiing at Mt Buller

will be familiar with the striking escarpments of the Crosscut Saw and The Bluff visible on the horizon; both are perfect examples of the typical exposed strata through which some of the classic Victorian canyons cut their path. Elsewhere in the state, older geological formations have created impressive gorges and canyons. Mt Buffalo and the Wulgulmerang Plateau, both remnants of Victoria's volcanic past, contain terrain for exceptional single and multi-day trips.

In the last 5-10 years, canyoning has rapidly evolved beyond the

realm of the weekend warrior. Professional organisations now exist, with the aim of facilitating global representation of the growing canyoning community, and providing accredited training for both amateurs and professionals. Commercial guiding companies have sprung up all over the place, and the



safety margin needed to provide such an experience has increased. With all this growth has come an evolution in technique based on the collective experience of the canyoning community, allowing canyoners to seek more and more vertical and aquatic playgrounds. Some canyoning could now be described as 'creeking', or 'kayaking without a boat', as the technical line between aquatic ropework and the purist experience of 'descending narrow walled canyons' becomes blurred. In Victoria, we are lucky to have both types of canyoning. Deep, vertical slot canyons and steep swiftwater creeks with high volume rivers are present. The modern, equipped canyoner is now dressed something like a swiftwater rescue professional, highlighted by our party shirt-wearing models Ash and Xavier (right).

As you can imagine then, Canyoning in Victoria is not your typical NSW experience, where wetsuits are optional on a warm day, double-rope techniques are the norm, and a lightweight knowledge of navigation will suffice. Instead, you will face snow on the walk in, tricky 4WD approaches, closed roads, difficult-to-escape scrambles, vertical ropework in relentless curtains of icy water, and long days exposed to the cold. Aquatic grades are given here for a reason, and they should be taken seriously. As the book, *A Comprehensive Guide to Canyoning around Victoria*, makes abundantly



clear, gradings are given for normal flow in the recommended season only. Excursions that depart from these flow regimes are not recommended. Elementary knowledge of surface hydrology will serve canyoners well, particularly in actively or recently logged catchments,

where discharge will fluctuate wildly with rain, snow, or early-morning dew. Start easy, and work your way up.

A Comprehensive Guide to Canyoning Around Victoria was written by Sam Thompson and Rob Springer. To buy a copy go to canyoninginvictoria.org

Canyoning Locations: At a Glance

Buffalo

Mount Buffalo, on the traditional land of the Minjambuta First Nations people, is the granite remnant of a volcanic intrusion which has eroded to form a huge, round-topped plateau. From May to late-October, most of the plateau is covered in snow. Joint planes in the bedrock funnel surface water down well-defined paths, resulting in deep and exciting canyons. There are long and technical multi-day descents, high-volume gorges and deep jumping pools, and some canyons have over a vertical kilometre of abseiling. Epic!

The Otways

The Otway Ranges are a predominantly cool-temperate rainforest region near Victoria's southwestern coast. Home to the Gadubanud Nation, the ranges provided them with a near-impenetrable haven; and refugees from other First Nations fleeing the onslaught of early occupation sought safety here. Streams radiate north/south outward from the spine of the low-altitude central ranges. The streams are long, and are typically low angle and stepped, each step representing a waterfall over a thicker bed of sandstone. Ocean views feature frequently in the canyons here, which are beautiful. They're technically easy, too, more akin to bushwalking with a rope, and every canyon can be completed year-round in a single day.

Cobbler

The Cobbler Plateau, home to the Waveroo Nation, is a part of northeast Victoria's Wabonga Plateau, with its high-point being the 1,628m Mt Cobbler. The plateau's geology of gently dipping sedimentary rocks and conglomerate strata are exposed on the spectacular northern face, which lights up at sunset in the warmer months. Wildflowers bloom in late winter and spring. Three branches of the Dandongadale River tumble over the escarpment of the spectacular northern face, one of which forms Victoria's largest waterfall: Dandongadale Falls. The area is a steep and committing area for canyoning, but has relatively easy access. It's an excellent place to spend a long weekend practising your vertical canyoning skills.

Snowy Plains

The Snowy Plains are an area of Alpine National Park that includes the Bennison and Tamboritha Plains, approximately 20km north of Licola. The plains have huge catchments which funnel water and snowmelt east into deeply incised valleys; the water here is the highest volume in the state. Stratigraphy of the Paleozoic era is evident in the large cliff bands that flank the gorges and the rivers tumbling off the eastern cliffs. The canyoning here is wild, pushy and cold—scrape the ice off the rope. Depending on water levels you may be better off in a boat.

Wulgulmerang / Gelantipy

This large area—encompassing much of the state's far east, and flowing just over the border into NSW—has a fascinating geological mix. Several canyons in this region are formed on the boundary of the Wulgulmerang Plateau, composed of ignimbrite. Victoria's deepest gorge, Little River Gorge, is also here. Canyoning in the area can be remote, and many trips here are multi-day expeditions. Probably one of the state's least-known areas. Don't let that put you off—exciting trips await!

Bogong High Plains

Located between 1,600m and 1,800m, the Bogong High Plains comprise Victoria's most elevated plateau. For First Nations people, the area is accorded considerable spiritual significance and is a place to meet and share cultural rituals. In winter, the plains are covered by heavy snow, and they're popular for ski touring. In summer, however, the snow melts and is then filtered through the underlying grasslands, creating clear, pristine streams that run down the deep gullies which surround all sides of the plains. Bogong has many low-angle canyons featuring jumps and slides. It is a very fun region to explore in summer.

Omeo

The Omeo Region, land of the Jaitmatang people, spans a large expanse of Victoria's northeast. It's mostly rolling hills and alluvial valleys with mountainous boundaries, and the canyons are technically easy, although good navigation is needed.

Eildon / Yarra

The Eildon and Yarra Ranges describe a subsection of the mountainous temperate rainforest east of Melbourne, encompassing the north-flowing catchments of the Yarra, Big, and Eildon Rivers. The Yarra River in particular has considerable cultural significance to the Wurundjeri people. The high-volume canyons here are recommended for only the most experienced canyoners, and are deceptively difficult with tricky aquatic features. As much fun as you can have canyoning before you'll need a boat.



Many of the creeks and waterfalls presented in the guide are known to First Nations people who have walked this land for tens of thousands of years. We feel that making claims about first descents would be arrogant, at best.

PIE & SLIDE 2021

Photojournalism

Lockdown Adventures

Category
Winner: Outdoor
Adventures, Animal
Crossing Style by
Caitlin Minney



Club Personality & Humour



Category
Winner: Coffee
First by Lingshu
Liu

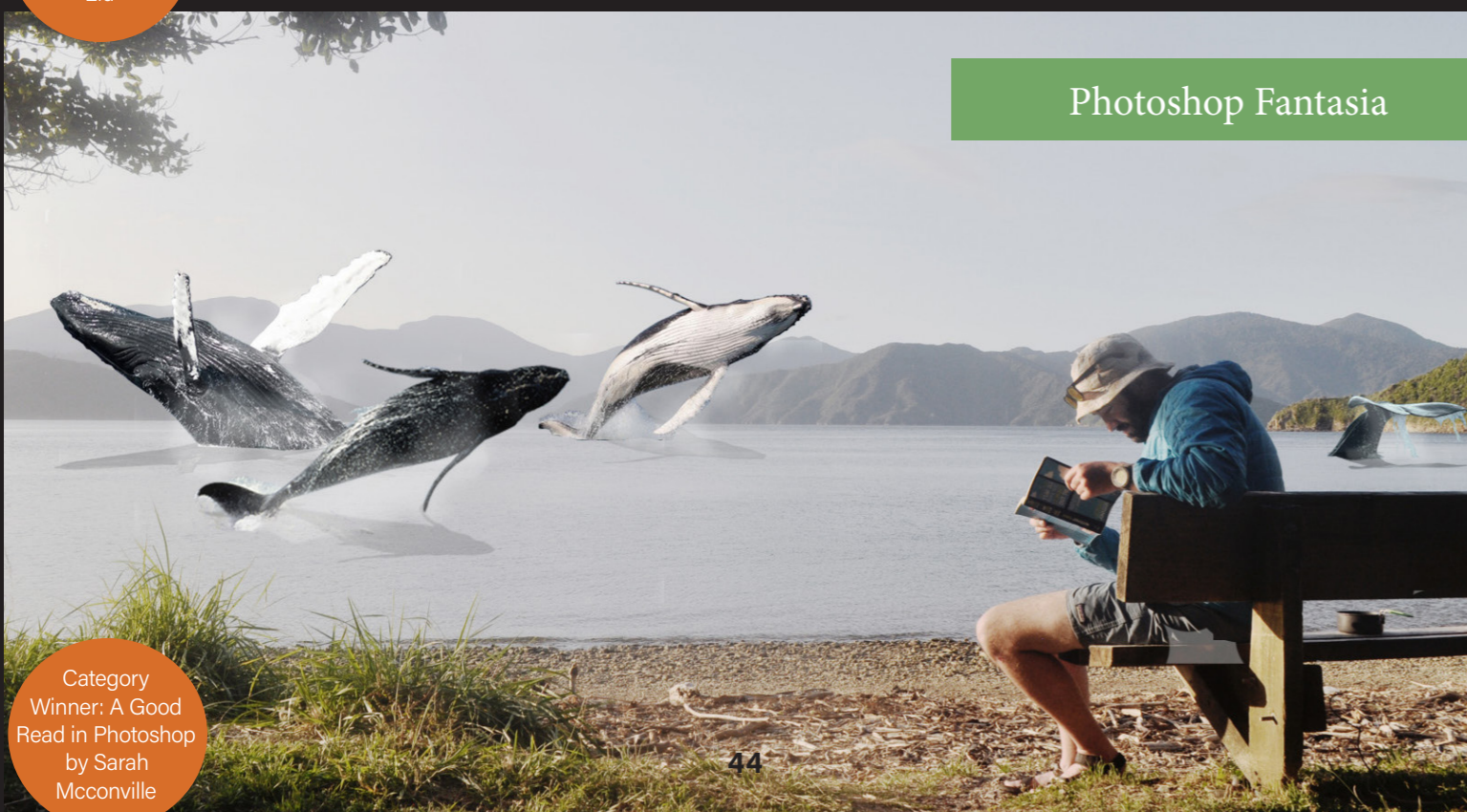


Category Runner Up: Sometimes You Find Yourself in the
Middle of Nowhere by Alex Ballantyne

Category
Winner: Bushfire
Damage in Tjorita-
West McDonnell
Ranges National Park
by Daire Kelly



Photoshop Fantasia



Category
Winner: A Good
Read in Photoshop
by Sarah
Mcconville

44



45

Category Runner Up: Hopper's Longing Gaze by Nicholas Tierney

Mountaineering

& Snow Sports

OFFICER REPORT Edyrn Mudie

After the long uncertainty around the Covid-19 lockdowns, 2022 has finally seen a return to organised club activity. With the coming of the winter months it's been great to see club members begin to organise trips up to the high country, some of them seeing snow for the first time. Although snow-sports has traditionally not been as well-trafficked as some other areas of the club, there's a certain surreal beauty to alpine Australia that makes it worth supporting.

As the incoming snow-sports officer, I only found myself taking over the role in late May after a long period of vacancy. This left the gear store somewhat neglected in the lead up to snow season, so a large part of my role has been maintenance and upkeep. I'm hoping to round out our collection of skis and

boots to make up for some that age has damaged beyond repair, and bring some clarity to the process with updated gear prices and the continued setting down of standard operating procedures in-line with club policies.

This is perhaps not the most exciting platform for a club officer, but given my limited tenure I'd like to leave the MUMC snow-sports department in a position to once again run multiple trips per year, promote the development of more ski-trip leaders, and encourage members to make use of club grants and free gear hire to upskill into avalanche and other snow-related training.

Photo: Approaching Edmonson Hut, Falls Creek Cross-Country
Skiing Trip by Hamza Bashir

Snow Where You're Going: Alpine Touring on the Bogong High Plains

Finn Connolly

Day 1: The Beginning and the Big Surprise

As Victoria hit zero covid cases in early August, we found ourselves on a bus heading up the winding road to Falls Creek, coffee and croissants in hand. Things were back to normal and with a sunny forecast ahead the 4-day backcountry ski trip was looking up. But by the end of the day, things would feel very different.

A trip to Bumps earlier in the week had seen us glean as much wisdom as we could about our rented AT (alpine touring) ski gear – it was both of our first times skiing in the backcountry, so a guided tour through the world of pin bindings and skins was much appreciated.

The first few transitions between walking and skiing were painfully slow – especially donning packs loaded with winter gear and more fresh cheese than you could poke a stick at. But the big surprise of the day was that by the evening, the state was back in lockdown and we were officially on our own.

Despite this news, we enjoyed some easy skiing out to Cope Hut which would form a basecamp for exploring the mellow peaks of the eastern High Plains. This section of the High Plains was perfect for an intro to the backcountry, with its accessibility and low-angle slopes (which minimise avalanche risk).

We finished the day riding into the sunset on the slopes surrounding the hut, before stoking the fire for some marshmallows.

Day 2: Sunshine on the Rocky Knobs

With the sun out, the nearby slopes off the Rocky Knobs made the perfect playground for some long runs. With a good snow base and a sun-warmed surface, the skiing was super playful and made the 1km walk back up the run worth it.

By lunch it was time to climb over the top and into Pretty Valley. The climb over offered stunning views back to falls and over the dam, as well as a peak of Feathertop's mighty cornices rising above the cloud.

Our first full day of touring taught us that in winter, everything seems further apart. The High Plains offer easy summer walking where peaks are all close by. But having to break trail made progress much slower and even small distances seemed like a big trek.

This was typified when climbing out of Pretty Valley to return to Cope



Hut, a 4km journey that felt like a lifetime. Getting slightly lost didn't help either.

Day 3: Dodging trees on Mt Cope

More sunshine set the scene for a day of skiing down Mt Cope who knows how many times.

This was a great area to try ducking and weaving between the snow gums, as well as navigating some fun boulder fields on the southern slope.

The runs on Mt Cope offer around 200m of vertical skiing over somewhere between 600m to 1km of horizontal distance. For a first trip these were a super enjoyable way to get used to the lighter skis and bindings.

Having a basecamp on this trip was amazing from a food perspective: being able to pack that bit heavier meant more gas for more coffee, and lunches could be supplemented with fresh cheeses and veggies. Just watch out for all the animals that emerge at night trying to steal your snacks!

There was an eerie feeling on the ski back; looking across to Hotham and Falls, which were silent once

again. The lifts stood still and there was not a soul to be seen.

Day 4: The mystery truck

Late on the previous day, the sound of a diesel engine could be heard passing Cope Hut. What was this mystery truck doing out on the high plains, during lockdown nonetheless? To our fortune, Falls Creek values its cross-country skiers so much they had groomed the road all the way back to the resort. This was very much appreciated since we had to be back early for the bus out (services were reduced because of lockdown).

Somehow the sunny weather held for a fourth straight day which made for stunning views on the way back, including watching some skiers gliding over the icy surface of Rocky Valley Dam.

Skiing down a groomed trail with heavy packs meant we made quick work of the return trip to Falls, only having to attach our skins for the final climb into the resort.

Before we knew it our bellies were full of burgers, churros, and milkshakes and we were on the road to Melbourne to join the rest of the state in lockdown 6.



Bonus lessons / took from the trip

Disclaimer: I am by no means a good skier or snow camper (having grown up in Queensland), so these should be taken with a grain of salt.

- Start with good weather: There's so much to consider when in the backcountry that bad weather just makes it so much harder. It would be nice to have skills dialled in before having to navigate in a whiteout.
- Listen to experience: Almost everywhere we skied and what we skied on was based on advice from the staff at Bumps and other skiers we met while camping. And it all worked great!
- Be bold, start cold: Not my rule but I experienced firsthand how cold sweat gets once it starts evaporating. And there's only so much drying a hut fire can achieve.
- Eat! A lot!



Beginner Cross-Country Skiing & Snow Camping

James Vinnicombe & Chris Karel

Italics denote Chris / Non-Italics denote James

Day 1: The Asymptote

I rocked up to the clubrooms on a random Tuesday with the intention of finding out more about the club with no knowledge of any upcoming trips. In the clubrooms, Mohamed announced that the cross country skiing trip would be cancelled because they only had one car available. I suggested that someone should hire a car, only to realise that nobody else was willing to. So, I found myself in the awkward position of being the deciding factor for whether or not the trip went ahead on my first visit to the clubrooms. Having not driven in years and having never driven in Victoria I decided to go. Fuck it, I'm on holidays. Trip saved, yay!

After consuming one cup of tea, we left the clubrooms at around 7pm (6pm was the planned departure) on Thursday and arrived at Mountain Creek campsite late at 1am (time was not on our side with the late departure and long McDonald's stop – obviously the best time and place to have some deep and long discussions with no sense of urgency). After what felt like rocket science, we finished setting up the tents and got to sleep at a cosy 2am. The second car started arriving as we headed to bed as they missed the turnoff and continued driving for an extra half an hour! I said goodnight to Arianna, Mohammed and Ilia as they commenced to set up their tents, there was no way we were going to stay up any later. After a bit of a sleep in (2am to 8am is barely a sleep in), we headed up the windy mountain roads up to

the resort, picking up snow chains and breakfast in Mount Beauty (a quoted 20 minutes turned into 60 minutes, keep in mind this equation, $\text{actual time} = 3x$, where x is the quoted time in minutes. Question: can you guess who keeps making these 20 minute quotes?1). At the top, we put on our ski gear and met up with Luke who would be our babysitter for the rest of the trip (soon to be the most tortured baby sitter, as you will soon find out as you read along). Most of us had zero skiing experience, let alone skiing with a heavy pack for a pretty long distance, so it was actually a bit of a surprise that there were only about 10 falls in the first hour, most of which were me (in my defence, my pack was stupidly heavy, stupid because I packed a glass water bottle and many other no-no's). That's a massive no-no, it was actually one of those restaurant glass water jugs with the clip-on lid – where did you get that from, James? Oh and Hamza's skis broke almost as soon as we left. I love Telemark skis, don't you? Especially when the clips dig into my heels and try to give me blisters, wearing them slightly loose and clipped on an angle somewhat prevented this. It was actually an interesting sight to see snow-shoe walkers outpace the skiers as well.

We made slow and steady progress for the rest of the day until it started getting dark. It seemed that the closer we got to the hut, the slower we became. "I want water", says Connie. "My legs are sore", murmurs someone else from behind. "My hands are

frozen", says Grace. This behaviour could be described as asymptotic. As distance to the hut approached zero, the time elapsed seemed to approach infinity. Every 100 metres the people at the front had to stop, cool down, become hypothermic and wait at least 5 minutes in the freezing dark conditions for the remainder to catch up – their scattered headlamps and dim glow in the distant fog approached ever so slowly, the final k-and-a-half taking about 1 hour (see Figure 1). We were quoted 20 minutes to complete the final 1km, once again, $\text{actual time} = 3x$, so 60 minutes and this equation proved to be spot on, starting at 6:25pm, and arriving at 7:23pm – I think we have a mathematical proof on our hands! We reached a tiny slope leading into the hut and caused a traffic jam as many of us fell over on what was probably the most beginner slope possible, but I guess that's what skiing with a heavy pack all day will do to you. I was lucky enough to be the first in the hut, and was able to watch and listen to the traffic jam from the comfort of the inside, wondering why it was taking half an hour for people to enter the hut. By this stage I questioned whether the graph



Building snowmen adjacent to Edmonson Hut. by Hamza Bashir

had turned parabolic from 19:23, and perhaps the group had missed the hut altogether? But we all had reached "the hut at the end of the storm"².

Day 2: Rest and Relaxation

The next day was a rest and relaxation day, with Luke teaching us how to ski on the nearby slopes. Eventually most of us picked up the basics, but it was really hard work having to walk up the slope for minutes to be able to ski for seconds. I was just happy we didn't have to pay for lift tickets. After getting sick of skiing, we slept, played cards and built snowmen (not in that order, obviously). We also spilled soups, hot chocolates and washed dishes using the snow as a scrubbing sponge. Racing down the mountain on skis was also very fun and rewarding. For someone who has not skied before, getting used to the techniques of slowing down and making S-bends in the snow was quite easy and fun to pick up. The trick is to go fast enough that you are too scared to fall (thereby forcing your body to do all it can balance-wise to prevent a fall), and keeping an eye on what lies ahead and mapping out a route so that when you do fall, you fall in a good place that isn't a tree, rock, or post. Watch out, snails (slow people)! We also had external company at the hut: a small group

who hiked in and had lunch, a couple who set up camp behind us, and a group of three guys who camped beside the hut, coincidentally one of whom was Ilia's former physics tutor – how's that for a small world!

Day 3: Rolling back home...

We woke up the next day to find the tents covered in frost. Today we headed back the way we came. We started off really slowly, the snow was very icy on the way out and I think some more skis broke (Telemark skis are the best, really), but eventually we were on our way. Going downhill was such a relief, all that heavy weight was able to slide down the hill with very little acceleration, although staying balanced and trying not to fall can be tough on the knees – after a while you hope for a bit of flat terrain just for some tentative relief. The rest of the trip was pretty smooth sailing, the sun came out and the beauty of the mountains, lakes and trees finally sunk in.

“Feels like I'm in the space between heaven and Earth!”³

Eventually we arrived back at the resort and packed up and left for Melbourne. After speeding most of

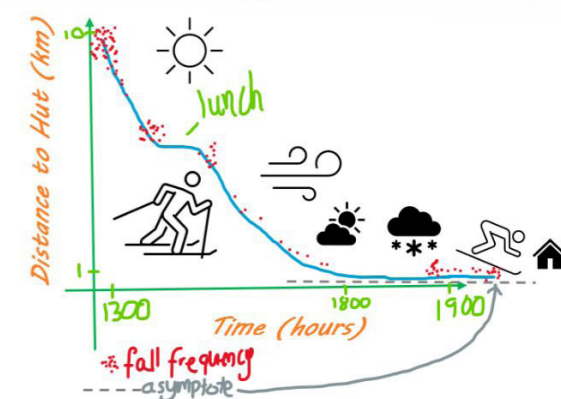


Figure 1: An accurate mathematical and graphical depiction of events.

the way home, we arrived back at the clubrooms about half an hour before the other car. We returned the hire gear and said our good-byes.

Overall, I had an awesome experience in my first MUMC trip. XC skiing proved to be a great way to meet people because there's not much to do other than ski and talk. I made a bunch of new friends and learnt to ski for only \$127, most of which came from splitting the cost of the hire car. I learnt this the hard way – if you're going to hire a car for a long distance trip, go with a company that doesn't charge per km. Also don't pack glass water bottles. But do go on cross country skiing trips! It's tough but rewarding and you'll make a bunch of new friends and memories.

¹ Mohammed was the one who quoted 20 minutes.

² Quote by Hamza

³ Quote by Connie

THE LAST MOUNTAIN

Ambition & Connection in the Outdoors

Tessa Elliott

“Mountaineers epitomise a human desire to be better, to go one better” - CHRIS TERRILL

The documentary, *The Last Mountain*, directed by Chris Terrill and produced by Olivia Lancaster and Julia Nottingham, details the life of Tom Ballard – a mountaineer who died in the Himalayas in 2019 following the path of mountaineer mother, Alison Hargreaves. Alison was the first person to complete the six great north faces in a single season and the first woman to summit Everest unaided and without oxygen. She died on descent of K2 in 1995 after attempting the same feat a few months later. The documentary explores mountaineering, its impacts on the Ballard family, and through them, humanity.

Although risk is commonly discussed in connection with mountaineering – many past editions of this magazine contain MUMC musings on the subject – this narrows the focus to what can be lost in the pursuit and neglects

what can be gained – what is contained in the other 95% of the magazine – the passion, ambition and connection that sustains us and keeps us drawn to the outdoors, and potentially risky sports.

The Last Mountain explores Tom's connection to the mountains, and through them his connection to his mountaineer mother, his family, community, as well as to himself. When I interviewed director Chris and producer Olivia, Chris reflected on Tom's connection to mountaineering through his mother, how it became a way for him to be closer to her, remarking on Tom and sister Kate, “*They needed the mountains... to come to terms with the lasting grief of their mother.*” Kate's grief at losing two family members to the mountains is central to the documentary, with Chris reflecting “*The main strength of the story is that*

sibling bond”. Chris also shares a personal stake in Kate's grief after becoming connected to the family while filming a posthumous documentary about Alison in 1996.

Kate's journey leads her to the Himalayas where her mother's, and now Tom's, bodies lie. There is a deeper spiritual connection to the mountains there, as Chris comments, “*They lie pretty close together... each one with a mountain as their gravestone. There's a poetic, dark beauty to it.*” Kate reconnects with Big Ibrhim the Sherpa who carried her on his back when she visited Alison's last mountain at 4 years old. Olivia further remarks, “*[Kate] feels that they are there in that kind of energetic, spiritual way, she feels that she's with them then.*”

This journey of grief and loss connection runs parallel to exploration of Tom's ambition. Equally important, the stories

reflect both the impact and the driving forces behind Tom's actions. Tom's ambition is shown through a micro and macro lens; as linked to a larger narrative of human capability as well as his own personal limits. As Chris says, “*We want to push our boundaries, human beings. We're creatures that need to prove ourselves.*” This is the view he takes on Tom and other mountaineers, driving themselves to reach new levels of achievement. “*It's not always a case of just getting to the top, mountaineers will always find another challenge.*” Reflecting on Tom personally, “*His urge to get as close to that line as possible... The same mindset, the same human desire to overcome.*” However, he also states “*There's no death wish... Tom was not a reckless climber; he was a very careful climber.*” It is likely that Tom was driven by a complex web of multifaceted, and interrelated factors.

These drove Tom's ambition to both personal heights and human ones.

Risk, when framed by a larger picture of human existence, human toil, and breaking barriers imposed by our frail, fleshy bodies, becomes part of a larger narrative. Human advancement is happening all around us, as Chris reflects “*I'm an anthropologist so I'm interested in what motivates us not only individually but collectively to do what we do and see what we can achieve.*”

Through the documentary process, Kate appears to accept her loss and find ways to reconnect with her brother, and mother in everyday life. Olivia remarks that “*we all have people that we lose, it's difficult*” as she reflects on the applicability of the film for non-mountaineers. Olivia further states “*Kate's got a lot of messages from people on*

social media, saying thank you for this film because it's helped them come to terms with their own grief.” This confirms Olivia's opinion that the film has helped Kate accept her grief and says, “*That will be really sort of healing for Jim and Kate somehow, to feel that their story is going around the world.*” Chris also touched on this point, stating “*Apart from appealing to mountain people, it will also have a positive effect on people who are coming to terms with grief as well*”

So, the question often asked of those with risky pursuits is not ‘What is worth risking your life for?’ but ‘Is a life with meaning, connection and ambition worth taking the risk?’

THANK YOU CARLY AT NIXCO AND UNIVERSAL PICTURES FOR REACHING OUT TO MUMC FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY



“They are the wind beneath my wings” - KATE BALLARD

Conservation

OFFICER REPORT

Maya Hall

Conservation is a hot (and controversial!) topic that underpins any outdoor activity. Without a healthy ecosystem, we can't go hiking, kayaking, climbing, or mountaineering. But conservation is about more than trying to maintain an ecosystem in its (fallible) 'untouched' state. It's also about cultivating our relationship to the landscape that we live and play in.

I approached my role of conservation officer in 2022 with the aim of bringing greater awareness to these relationships between people and place. In addition to the usual clean-up events, tree-planting shenanigans, and citizen science trips, I tried to organise informative talks and workshops.

This included an urban foraging workshop run by Anna "The Urban Nanna", where we explored our relationships to the flora in urban landscapes. Particularly, Anna demonstrated the use of many common weeds, and took us on a walk around campus where she identified over 40 different species of edible plant. The mental process of recategorizing plants from 'weed' to 'food' is not often encouraged but is really valuable in fostering a less colonial perspective of the land we live and work on.

Although they didn't actualise as events, I established relationships with Indigenous Landcare groups in the hope of bringing a First Nations perspective to the often-whitewashed world of conservation at MUMC. Practices like backburning, foraging and sustainable hunting have been fundamental in sustaining Australia's ecosystem for thousands of years, and there is a very valuable place for these conversations in groups like MUMC.

I also worked to re-establish dumpster diving/freeganism in the club. This, however, relies on bold and local knowledge that is hard to access. It was a shame that such events didn't materialise, however the possibility sparked a number of interesting conversations around the club.

We had several collaborative events through the year – including with the Wilderness Society, the Surfriders, the Bike Collective and the UMSU Enviro Department (with whom we had a contingent at a few Fridays for Future Climate rallies!). It was exciting to bring conversations around conservation into the wider population of UniMelb.

Of particular note was the bikepacking trip run with help from the UniMelb Bike Collective. As the first official bikepacking trip through MUMC, we aimed to explore and practice different eco-friendly options of travel. Ironically, many of our outdoors adventure require long car trips, which are (en mass) detrimental to the landscapes we're on our way to celebrate. Victoria's system of public transport is surprisingly good, and the V-Line train services cheap and accessible with bikes. With train and bike together, you can get almost anywhere in the state – including remote and beautiful locations like Halls Gap!

The role of conservation officer is constantly evolving, and I'm excited to watch where it goes in the future. I hope that we continue to evaluate and foster the values that underpin most of our outdoors adventure: conservation, sustainability, thoughtful relationships with our landscapes.



Photo by Tessa Elliott



Cold-blooded friends, Serpentine Gorge, NT
by Tessa Elliott

Conservation - At A Glance

Chris Karelas

Conservation is the protection, preservation and restoration of the natural environment and wildlife. By preserving the forests, rivers, lakes, mountains, land we walk on, air we breathe, food we eat, and fuel that we burn - we ensure that we are doing our part to protect the sacred environment we live in for all generations to come, a concept that underpins all of MUMC's activities as we interact with the spaces around us on our adventures. This is a time-old concept that Aboriginal Australians have been practising for thousands of generations.

This is not just about monitoring our environmental footprint and awareness, it's about connecting

with the Lands and the Earth on a deeper level. It encompasses the exploration of our beautiful and rich history, learning the stories from our Traditional Owners, keeping traditions alive, and fully appreciating the diversity of flora and fauna present in Australia that we are lucky enough to co-exist with. With sustained conservation efforts we will continue to share this big blue world for many generations to come.

Conservation officer, Maya, had many ideas she was able to bring to the club. Trips she has run include:

- Regent Honeyeater Planting Days

- Aussie Backyard Bird Count
- Surfing + Beach Clean-Up
- Urban Foraging Workshop with the Urban Nanna
- Great Glossy Count Victoria
- Clean Up Australia Day Paddle
- Woody Weed Whacking, Bababi Marning #1 in 2022 - Friends of Merri Creek
- Tree Planting At Merri Creek (Galada Tamboore Project)
- Friends of Edgars Creek Planting
- School Strike for Climate
- Beach Clean (& Beers) @ St. Kilda

An impressive effort!

Clean Up Australia Day Paddle

Jason Lu (ROC)

Love for natural environment and outdoor activities culminated in a river paddle to clean up one of our many precious waterways, the Yarra River, last Clean Up Australia Day (March 6, 2022). It was a joint effort between ROC and MUMC - university club allegiance came second our humanity.

Inflatable rafts, one each for ROC and MUMC (with a crew of 4-6 plus a raft guide) were the optimal vessel of choice. Even though it was flatwater terrain, rafts made storage of rubbish bags easier, as well as providing a more stable platform to lean over and collect litter from the water. A few people in kayaks - sea and whitewater - also helped to collect litter across a broader area simultaneously. Gloves, rubbish bags and reacher grabbers were essential pieces of equipment, along with the standard paddling safety gear: a PFD and helmet.

We put in at the Yarra near Rudder Grange in Alphington and rafted 2-3 hours down the lower stretches of the river, past Fairfield boat house, the pipe bridge, and under the Eastern Freeway. We collected various bits of rubbish. Plastics: wrappers, bottles, caps, labels, bags; aluminium cans and parts of bottles; polystyrene foam (problematic as easily broken into smaller particles but not easily biodegradable); bits of driftwood from pallets; tennis balls, footballs, soccer balls; a sign... Either floating, caught on vegetation

or washed onto the banks of the river.

Once past the freeway, we stopped paddling and drifted, marvelling at thousands of flying foxes hanging from their perches in trees along the riverbanks - like fuzzy gumdrops! We took out at

Bellbird Park just past the flying fox bat colony. Nothing left but to pack up and take the rubbish we collected to the gear room for disposal. T'was a good day!

Thanks to MUMC and ROC paddling leaders for making this combined trip!



Photo: Collected waste by Anita Tolpinrud

Bikepacking in the Victorian Alps

Bernhard Andersson



What actually is bikepacking? This question prompted me to do a lot of research during the 2020 lockdown (while procrastinating online Uni classes, of course). I was getting seriously sick of my local suburban park and was craving adventure. Already being a passionate cyclist and regular hiker, the idea of fusing the two activities was intriguing.

“Just like hiking, you carry everything you need with you

My research revealed that bikepacking was basically hiking, except you do it on a bike. Just like hiking, you carry everything you need with you (including a tent, sleeping gear, food, and clothes). However, instead of carrying it on your back, everything fits into bags that are specially made to attach securely to a bike.



I am of the (perhaps controversial) opinion that bikepacking trumps hiking, the reason being that you can travel significant distances while bikepacking, like across a mountain range, through a forest, or from town to town - which increases the 'epic-ness' factor (when you hike, are you really getting anywhere?).

“bikepacking trumps hiking.. you can travel significant distances while bikepacking.. which increases the 'epic-ness' factor.

My bikepacking setup:

So, I ended up splurging a lot of money on bikepacking bags and racks, to prepare myself for a trip when lockdown ended. Working out what bags would be compatible with my bike and whether I'd be able to fit everything I needed into them was a challenge - it's not as simple chucking all your gear into a pack. Once lockdown ended, I got a couple of beginner trips under my belt, including an overnighter exploring Grand Ridge Road in the Strzelecki Ranges and three-day trip traversing Big River Road near Eildon.

In 2021, I got myself a new bikepacking-oriented gravel bike: the Focus Atlas. Now it was time to try a more hardcore trip. With a bit of research, I found a route that would take me, over the



course of three days, from Wangaratta in the northeast of Victoria to Bairnsdale in the east, travelling right through the heart of the Victorian Alps - an adventure of epic proportions. Things got in the way though, so it wasn't until February 2022 that I finally found myself on a train to Wangaratta on Saturday afternoon. Spoiler: not everything would go to plan.

I hopped off the train in Wangaratta to a sweltering 30°C. I didn't let this deter me; I lathered on the sunscreen, munched down a banana, and then set off at about 3pm.

Day 1: Wangaratta to Buckland Valley

The first 80km of the route took me along the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail. This was relatively tame, as there were no steep gradients, and the surface was paved all the way. While the rail trail has plenty of nostalgic value for me being the setting for multiple bike camps back in junior high school, I saw it as more of a slog to get out of the way before getting to the good stuff, so I smashed it out quickly. After approximately 80km I pulled into Porepunkah at about 7pm and had a solid meal and drink at the pub (this is one of the nicer things about bikepacking - while you spend less time in wild places, you can eat out and save space in your bags for other things).

Sated, I set off down Buckland Valley Road, entering the mountains proper. This is where it got wild - the next human settlement on the route was Dargo, 130 kilometres away. The road turned from asphalt to smooth gravel to rough gravel as I rode further. About 20km down the road, having travelled up the Buckland valley plain and into the forest, I stopped to camp for the night.



The sun was setting which meant I had just enough time for a blissful dip in the Buckland River before setting up my tent, reading a few chapters of my book, and finally getting to sleep.

“I had 130km to ride and a mountain range to cross.. before the end of the day.

I slept in the next day - I thought I deserved it. In hindsight I should have gotten up earlier, as it was a hell of a day. I had 130km to ride and a mountain range to cross to get to Dargo before the end of the day. I finally set off at 10:30am, heading further up Buckland Valley Road.

Day 2: Buckland Valley to Mt Hotham

The road was undulating to begin with, and the scenery only got better. Forested hills rose on either side of me. I passed several campsites along this section, one of which was home to several wild cows.

Things got gnarly after I reached the turnoff to Mount Murray Road (which I would have missed without the support of my Garmin Etrex). Mount



elevation increased by 650 metres – an excruciatingly painful average gradient on a 4WD track of 11%. Initially I was full of energy and grinding my way up the rocks, but my breaks became more and more frequent (so did the swearing) as I went along. I had an average speed of 4.2km/h on this section and was pushing my bike more often than not.

“ soon I had stunning views of mountains around every corner.. forests of snow gums and alpine heathlands.

However, I was motivated by the change in scenery as I gained altitude, and soon I had stunning views of mountains around every corner. After the main climb, there were steady descents and ascents taking me through forests of snow gums and alpine heathlands. Soon I would approach the Great Alpine Road, after which I would turn onto Dargo High Plains Road.



Murray Road was no more than a 4WD track, with a very rough, rocky surface, making it prime bikepacking road – interesting terrain and out in the middle of nowhere. There were a bunch of river crossings which were a lot of fun to plough through. I was still following the valley floor at this point, so the gradient was still gentle.

“ Prime bikepacking road – interesting terrain and out in the middle of nowhere.

Inevitably, as I reached the end of the valley, the track began to climb. And oh boy it climbed. In the next 6 kilometres, my



Photos by Bernhard Andersson

Trouble in paradise:

This is where things started to go wrong. About a kilometre away from the Great Alpine Road, I got a puncture in my back tyre as I was descending an especially rocky section. This was not a massive concern, as I had two spare tubes with me, but it was annoying, nonetheless.

I decided to walk my bike the final kilometre to the main road. There, I chucked together a quick lunch of pasta, packeted sauce, and parmesan cheese. The time was about 3:30pm and I had ridden 50km, which was a bit concerning as I still had 70km to go on Dargo High Plains Road. I knew this 70km would be mostly downhill though, and I didn't mind riding a bit in the dark.

With a bit of fiddling and help from a few friendly 4WD drivers, I chucked on one of my spare tubes and started down Dargo High Plains Road at about 5pm. I worked out that 70km was about 3 hours of riding, so I'd get to Dargo at 8pm in time for dinner and a drink at the pub.

5km in, my spare tube punctured. Now this was worrying. Not only was I losing time, but it seemed like the spare tubes I had bought were not the highest quality. I sat down to put on my last spare tube. I had put it in the tyre and was pumping it up when I realised that it too had been punctured somehow as I was putting it on the bike!

That unfortunately spelt the end of my trip. I was very lucky to have a little bit of reception, with which I got a lift to Mt Hotham sorted. If I hadn't had reception, I would have had to rely on a car passing for a lift. From Mt Hotham, it was public transport all the way



home the next day as I had run out of time to do the whole trip to Bairnsdale even if I had the tube replaced.

A disappointing end to what would have been an epic adventure. I'll reattempt this as soon as I can find a free weekend, and this time I will be making sure I get some high-quality spare tubes!

I had a ton of fun the first two days though. It's hard to beat a weekend adventure out in the bush.

I highly recommend bikepacking to any MUMC members who enjoy riding their bikes!



Photo by Finn Connolly

Recently, MUMC has been to...

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