

2024 | 80th Anniversary Edition

THE MOUNTAINEER

Since 1961

Published by Melbourne University Mountaineering Club Inc.



EDITORS' MESSAGE

by **Miranda Ramsay**

I'll start by saying thank you to everyone who helped me along the way on this magazine writing journey. Jumping into the Publications Officer role over halfway through the term, while also maintaining my role as Social Media Deputy, being on the 80th subcommittee and running other random events was no easy task. Thank you to Riley for the handover and all your liaising with sponsors. Thank you to Ai Wei for bearing with me while we got started slightly late (oops) and working with me until well past September! And of course a huge thank you to Jess for constantly reassuring me that things were looking good and all design help!

I hope you all enjoy reading about the epic and sometimes odd adventures from our awesome community. See you next year for another edition!

2024 80th Anniversary Edition

A huge thank you to all of our sponsors: Adventure Entertainment, Bogong Equipment, Climbing Anchors, Hardrock, Northside Boulders, Off Course Bike Shop, One Planet, Paddy Pallin, Urban Climb, Melbourne University Sport, Scotty Dog Resoles.

EDITORS AND DESIGN

Ai Wei Chia, Jess Vinnicombe and Miranda Ramsay

COVER IMAGE:

Mountaineering in Kyrgyzstan by Luke Spencer

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MUMC COMMITTEE 23/24



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Connor Gundberg
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MUMC COMMITTEE 23/24



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Walking Sports Officer



Molly Fleming
Walking Sports Officer



Daire Kelly
Alpinism Officer



Isaac Miles-Fine
Ropes Officer



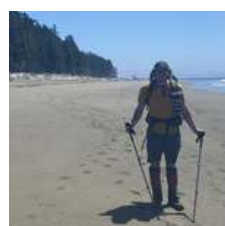
Miranda Ramsay
Publications Officer



Ai Wei Chia
Publications Officer



Rhea Harris
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Luke Parolin
General Member

Presidential Decree

by **Jess Vinnicombe**

DEAR MUMC,
The 2023-2024 Committee year has been an awesome one.

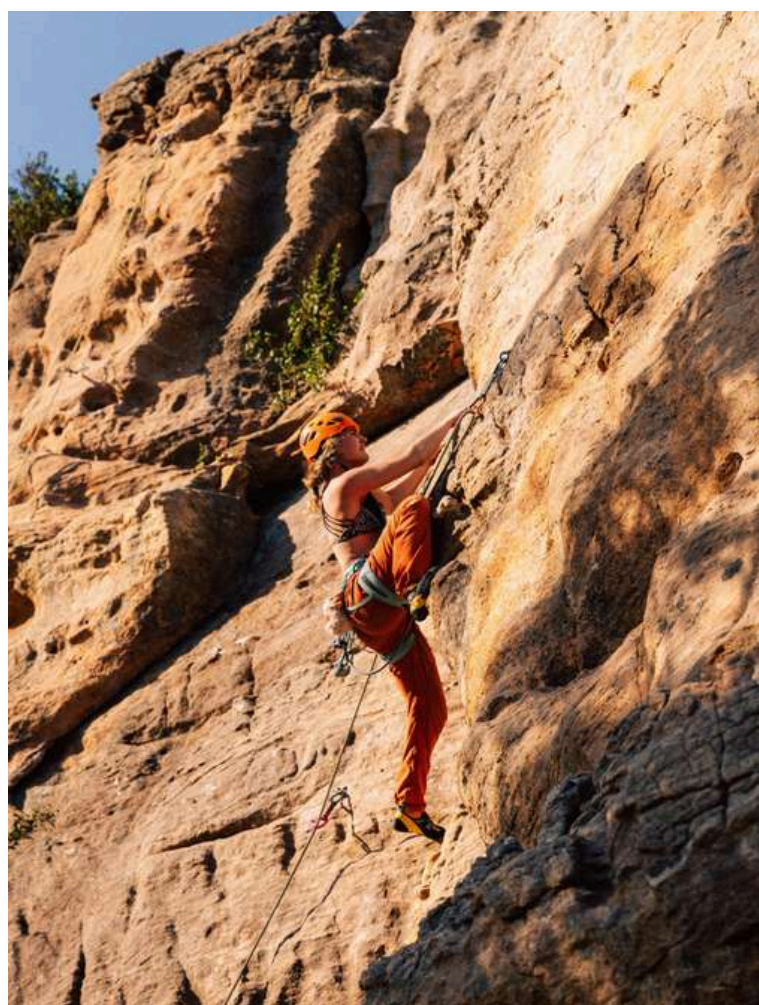
Despite having a reasonably fresh committee, and not having elected a secretary following 2023's AGM (thankfully, Alicia and Leandro quickly stepped in to fill the role!), we've had so much success and excitement this year, and our club is thriving. There are two themes that I think sum up the atmosphere at MUMC over the past year: growth and belonging.

We saw many positions being shared between two people this year, including two positions on the Executive Committee. We had two Secretaries, two Safety Officers, two Walking Sports Officers, and two Publications Officers. The deputies followed a similar trend: we had two Archives Deputies, three Bushwalking Deputies, two Inclusion Deputies - the list goes on. We also had some people vacating positions, but just as quickly, several strong candidates stepped up to fill their places. I want to acknowledge the contributions of those who stepped down from committee positions this year, as well as those, including our Vice-President Riley, Publications Officer, Miranda, Paddling Sports Officer, Nathan, and Conservation Officer and Librarian, Connor, who stepped in to take their places on short notice.

The large number of shared positions and OXOs who are keen to lead demonstrates that our club is in a strong position. Many of those on committee or in deputy positions this year have been new to committee, myself included, and all of us lead busy lives, several of us studying master's degrees, writing PhDs, or working full-time.

Despite this, each of us still believed in giving back to a club which continues to instil in us a sense of belonging, fulfils our desire to serve, and gives us a common purpose. Thank you, MUMC committee and deputies of 2023-2024.

The healthy culture in our club this committee year is a testament to each of you. This culture has helped spark new friendships, welcomed new members, encouraged those no longer studying at the University of Melbourne to remain part of our community, and it has fostered an enthusiasm to lead others and to grow our sports.



Jess Vinnicombe, 2023/2024 President. Photo: Bastien Claeys

REPORT Presidential Decree

This year, thanks to the efforts of our Walking Sports Officers, Molly and Bernhard, our Treasurer, Chris, and one of our Safety Officers, Luke, we received a grant that enabled us to add a new sport to the already extensive list of activities that our members enjoy: Bikepacking. We've already run eight bikepacking trips and trained up six new bikepacking leaders so far this year, with more in training. We have also seen the return of backcountry skiing, thanks to the hard work of Tom, our Snow Sports Officer, who made very productive use of his time being injured, purchasing approximately \$21,000 worth of new backcountry skiing gear and getting us some insanely good deals, and thanks to the grace of the committee in trusting Tom with our precious funds. Additionally, as of August, we have already run more trips overall in 2024 than in either of the previous two years!

Financially, whilst we have spent an awful lot of money this year, thanks to the hard work of Chris, our Treasurer, we have also made a lot of money, and are in a healthy position. We've trained up many new leaders this year, including for bikepacking, bushwalking, paddling, skiing, and climbing, with Isaac becoming our newest climbing instructor and reinvigorating the Club's climbing scene. We have seen some new positions appear, including the new committee positions of Welfare Officer and Bikepacking Officer after our AGM in 2024, and the positions of Archives Deputy, Whitewater Paddling Deputy, and Social Media Deputy. Any nominations for 'Deputy' Deputy?

We've seen growth in the number of adventurous trips our members are going on, from our Safety Officers, Luke and James's epic Kyrgyzstan mountaineering adventure last summer to a bunch of interstate canyoning and climbing trips and several backcountry skiing trips in interesting conditions. Midnight Ascent, our annual jaunt up Mt Feathertop's North-West Spur to the MUMC Memorial Hut, was a huge success this year, thanks to the seamless organisation of our incredible Walking Sports Officers, Molly and Bernhard.

There were some dangerously delicious entries to the Masterchef cooking competition, some impressively heavy packs walking up Mt Feathertop, some tear-jerking views, and some insanely sore legs. Back in March, Rhea and Luke also ran an awesome Intro Trip to the Cathedrals, with several participants who attended going on to become part of the active core of our club.

I want to take the opportunity to thank our sponsors, Paddy Pallin, Climbing Anchors, Bogong, and Urban Climb, amongst others, who have provided our members with amazing discounts, as well as prizes (and venues) for a range of club events this year, including our inaugural inter-club bouldering competition, organised by Miranda, our annual photography competition, Pie and Slide, organised by our General Members, Rhea and Luke, Clubs Day (which had too many volunteers to name!), and our club bingo, which was held during week 1 of semester 2.

I'd like to give a shoutout to Dáire, our Mountaineering Officer, who was our longest-serving current committee member in 2023/24. Dáire has advocated for mountaineering to continue to be recognised as one of the club's official activities, and served this year on the 80th Anniversary Subcommittee. Additionally, I'd like to congratulate and acknowledge the contributions of former long-standing committee member, Steve Birkett, who finally felt the club was in safe enough hands not to run again this year. Steve was recently nominated as MUMC's newest Life Member.

Miranda and Ai Wei, our Publications Officers, have done a fantastic job in putting together this 80th edition of The Mountaineer. They've captured the essence of belonging and adventure that continues to keep our club thriving today, for young and old alike.

I sincerely hope you get to witness many more years of growth, belonging, and adventure, our beloved MUMC. Thank you for being a place we all call home. Happy 80th anniversary. And for each of us who belong to you - happy adventures!

*Love,
from Jess*



Walking Sports Officer Report

by **Bernhard and Molly**

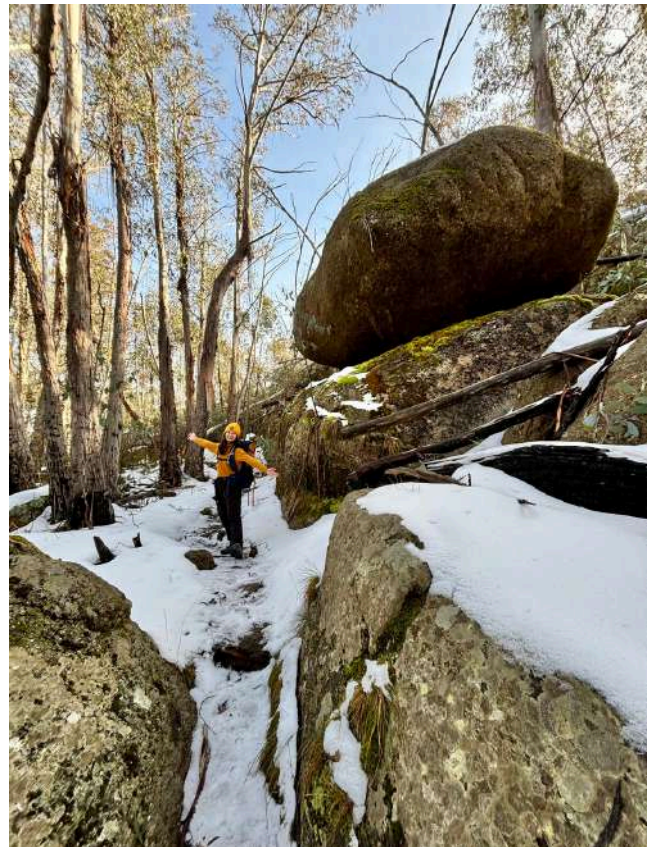
Inspired by the numerous trips and momentum from the 2022/23 committee year, 2023/24 got off to a great start with trips to the Routeburn track in New Zealand, the Little Desert in Western Victoria, and the Australian Alps. In Semester 1, MUMC travelled to iconic Victorian destinations to hike, such as Gariwerd/Grampians and Wilson's Promontory, but also explored our urban backyard on trips to Yarra Bend.

We welcomed in colder temperatures with snow trips to Mt Baw Baw and Mt Buffalo.

This year also saw a new trend of Rail Trail walks, with Lindsay, Josh, and Khoi leading beginner hikes along the Great Southern Rail Trail, the Eastern Dandenong Ranges Trail, and the Great Victorian Rail Trail to sample some of Victoria's best pubs (and enjoy the scenery, of course). After some very popular leader training nights and hard work by the bushwalking leader team, we welcomed Khoi, Jess, Luke, and Nicole to the fold. A big thanks to Alexis, Alicia, Callum, Chris, Emma, Hamish, Jess, John, Khoi, Lindsay, Luke Parolin, Luke Spencer, Nicole, Nikita, and Riley, for running bushwalking trips over the past committee year!

The bushwalking store received some fresh gear. A large order was put in with Remote Equipment Repairs to fix many of our damaged items, including tents, sleeping bags, and hiking packs, and to reproof all our older rain jackets. We also acquired new gaiters, rain pants, and winter sleeping bags. ipate in these Rogaines with some winning prizes.

With all the trips being run, the bushwalking store was pushed to the limit and every week we had plenty of members hiring and returning gear. Rogaining saw a new burst of momentum with the appointment of Nikita Bulach as rogaining deputy. The year kicked off with the CBD-gaine in the city, followed by Rogaines across Victoria in Enfield, Kara Kara National Park, Muckleford, and Glenluce. We had many members participate in these Rogaines with some winning prizes.



Mt Buffalo Bushwalking trip August 2024. **Lindsay Kosack**

REPORT

Very excitingly, we welcomed a new sport to the Walking Sports portfolio: bikepacking. With the help of Luke Spencer and Chris Karelas, we spent the 2023/24 summer toiling over a new bikepacking framework, applying for funding, and purchasing bikepacking gear such as pannier racks, pannier bags, dry bags, and straps. Since then, bikepacking leaders have run trips all over Victoria in the Bunyip State Forest, the High Country, and the Strathbogie Ranges. Thanks to Connor, Eleanor, and Steve for running trips, and congratulations to Connor for becoming a bikepacking leader.

This report would be incomplete without mentioning Midnight Ascent, the annual trip to the MUMC hut. In 2023 we enjoyed a very warm fairytale-themed couple of days and were able to summit Mount Feathertop without mountaineering gear for a stunning sunrise. This year, we'll be heading up under starkly different conditions, with rain and snow forecasted throughout the weekend. We hope the MasterChef competition and Dr Seuss dress up theme will keep stomachs warm and spirits high.

We have thoroughly enjoyed our two years as bushwalking officers and will be moving on next year. We'd like to thank the committee for their continued support of bushwalking as well as our leaders who take members out to the bush, help develop new skills, and foster an appreciation for the outdoors.

Last, but certainly not least, we'd like to say a special thank you to Josh, Tuna, Margarita, Nikita, and Dan for their hard work, commitment, and enthusiasm as deputies. They have been critical to keeping the wheels turning and we would not have had such a successful couple of years without them.



Paddling Officer Report

by **Nathan Daniel**

MUMC has had a dynamic and successful year in 2024 despite its challenges. Through a series of well-organized events and courses, we engaged with members across various skill levels, strengthened our cross-club ties, and ensured the sustainability of our equipment and resources.

This year saw significant changes in our leadership team. We welcomed Avryl Hart as the new Canoe Polo Deputy, Polly Stokes as the Whitewater Deputy, and myself as the Paddling Sports Officer after our previous hard-working and dedicated Paddling Officer, Anita Tolpinrud, transitioned out of the role.

Over the year, we facilitated many opportunities for members to get kayaking, particularly through canoe polo, with help from our friends from the Victorian Youth Paddling Association with regular training sessions and a 3-month competitive season over winter. Further, we began rebuilding our leader base by joining other paddlers from RMIT Outdoors Club for an introduction to kayaking leadership course and hope to continue extending opportunities for club members to upskill and run more traditional paddling trips.

We are also looking to continue fostering canoe polo player development over the Spring with several interclub competitions in Ballarat and Fairfield. These will allow our players to test their skills and gain experience in a competitive setting.

Aside from our water-based activities, this year,, we saw a major clean-up in the paddling store, allowing MUMC paddlers, canyons, and bikepackers to access gear more safely. Our equipment continues to be updated and used as we invest in our members.

As we look back on this year so far, we in the paddling leadership team are excited for what lies ahead and are committed to continuing our mission of promoting paddling activities among MUMC members. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all members who participated in and contributed to our activities this year and look forward to ending the year strong.

Nathan Daniel



The Beginner Canoe Polo Team 2024

Ropes Officer Report

by **Isaac Miles-Fine**

In the last twelve months MUMC has finally seen a return to climbing as an activity undertaken by all members of the club. Monday night climbing at Urban Climb Blackburn is continuing its popularity of the previous year and now there is a regular group of members starting to climb frequently on other days of the week. We have also had the return of outdoor lead climbing trips, with the club running to the Grampians, Arapiles, Black Hill, You Yangs and the Cathedral Ranges. We also had our first ever outdoor bouldering trip at Mt Alexander, which was enjoyed by climbers of all levels.

We had the regular running of beginner top-roping trips which brought many beginners to the club. With regards to the training and up-skilling of members, we had 7 people learn to trad climb at Arapiles over the Easter Break through Melbourne Climbing School. We also have a new MCI at the club which has helped assess already experienced climbers at the club get checked off in the framework. We ran a successful learn to lead course, which taught 4 members of the club how to lead climb indoors.

What has been exciting to see at the club is a culture of performance growing in which people are interested in pushing themselves to become better climbers both in terms of grades and skills. This has meant that many people have sent their hardest grades in the last twelve months as well as MUMC members upskilling to trad climbing or learning to lead. This has resulted in several of our members going on inter-state climbing and canyoning trips to Frog Buttress, Blue Mountains Nowra and canyoning in Townsville.

Steps have been taken to streamline and improve on the current climbing framework to make it more accessible to enter and to understand. This is close to being finalised and will hopefully make climbing even more popular at the club. Hopefully this can be finalised by the end of the year to help facilitate the growth of climbing at MUMC.

Going forward into the next committee year, I would like to see more members trained up and the club moving towards a self-sustaining mass of climbing leaders as well as building on the current culture of self-improvement and leadership. I would also love to see MUMC become more involved in the preservation and maintenance of the crags around Victoria.



Climber: Connor Gundberg

Mountaineering Officer Report

by **Dáire Kelly**

Another year of growth for MUMC mountaineering! We had six members undertake instructional courses over the Austral summer, mostly in New Zealand, but we had a couple of members head off to central Asia to tackle some peaks in Kyrgyzstan. Make sure to check out Luke Spencer's article on making sure you get correctly fitted boots before going to a minor Himalayan range in winter! I held a well attended Mountaineering Info Night near the start of Semester 1, which has hopefully inspired some people to head across The Ditch later this year. Over winter we have some aspirational trips planned for some winter climbing in the Victorian High Country, and possibly some ice climbing at Blue Lake up in NSW (check out the club's Instagram to see if they went ahead, article submissions closed before the trips planned dates), and a trio of our members are headed off to the Remarkables Ice & Mixed Climbing Festival in Queenstown in August.

By the time this report is published, I'll be in the midst of organising a pre-alpine skills course at Djuritte/Arapiles for those attending courses during the coming summer to hopefully save some folk from sitting around in a mountain hut learning the basics on a bluebird day in the hills.

Our gear store now features a set of half and twin rated dry-treated ropes with aramid sheathes for cut protection, new crampons, and two bivvy bags for those alpine starts close to the base of your route. In the next budget I'm finally hoping to buy those sets of technical ice climbing tools Tom Patton said would be bought by the club way back in his 2016 officer report.



Callum, Alexis, and Dáire on Mt Feathertop



Conservation Officer Report

by **Connor Gundberg**

Conservation is often overlooked, yet it is vital to every activity that an outdoor club partakes in. The flora and fauna of Australia attracts millions of international visitors annually and is a primary reason for people to get outdoors with MUMC. Since arriving to Australia in 2023, I have seen echidnas, wombats, emus, and my fair share of snakes and crawlies on club trips. While preserving the often endangered species of this continent is a key responsibility in conservation, we must also care for the concerns of First Nations Peoples in the future of conservation in Naarm and greater Victoria. Keeping the environment in a pristine and untouched state has never been realistic to the ecosystem of this continent and ignores the wisdom passed from Elders past to present. Members of the club and the students of the University of Melbourne should seek input from Custodians on matters of conservation in the contexts of wildlife, National Parks, and within our local communities.

I have only been the Conservation Officer at the club for a month before writing this; in my brief time I hoped to reintroduce enthusiasm for conservation within the club. We have partnered with Conservation Volunteers Australia and Crag Stewards Victoria this year in initiatives to clean up wetlands and repair walking tracks. These projects improve outdoor accessibility and reflect a club commitment to equity and inclusion. After listening to the words of Michael Robinson, a Wandandian Traditional Owner, I have also felt that taking extra measures in climbing conservation should be an objective of MUMC.

We hope to care for areas in Gariwerd (Grampians) that have been whitened with chalk in the coming month. In addition, the incoming position of a climbing conservation deputy promises to improve our club's relationship with the Traditional Custodians of this land.



Conservation trip to Lake Connewarre.

REPORT Conservation Officer

With the reintroduction of bikepacking, I have led and participated in many human-powered trips. This sport is one of the most environmentally friendly the club offers and I would encourage members to give it a go! As an international student, bikepacking enables me to see more of Victoria with only Vline trains and my bicycle. This year, we will be having a large-scale human powered trip, Bikepackapiles, that we hope becomes an annual event! Our journey to Dyurrite will utilise our bicycles and Vline trains, with trad racks in our panniers, eliminating the petroleum consumption that is often inherent with climbing trips.

“The future of conservation in the club is evolving quickly”

I encourage future officers to seek input from the many and diverse stakeholders involved with conservation efforts. Conservation is the backbone that ensures we may continue the activities that we love. I encourage our members to participate in conservation efforts, especially if they have enjoyed a bushwalk, climb, paddle, or even a rogaine with us.



Bouldering and Crag cleanup trip to Mt Alexander.

Steve Birkett

Q &A with our newest life member

What years were you on the committee and what positions did you hold?

This one is easy:

- Safety Officer (2022 - 2023)
- Treasurer (2020 - 2021)
- Vice President (2019 - 2020)
- President (2018 - 2019)
- Walking Sports Officer (2017 - 2018)
- Training grant subcommittee (2016 - 2022)
- Treasurer (2016 - 2017)

If you could pick, what has been your favourite year in the club so far, and why?

2018-19 of course, my time as el Presidente! I had the pleasure of hanging out with MUS and having endless conversations about frameworks and agreements... Joking aside, it was a fantastic year, full of accomplishments and antics. Yes, heaps of stress but that was mostly abated by some wonderful interactions with members and the support of some hard working committee members. I'd compare it to the likes of any worthy adventure; tough while in the thick of it, with only fond memories looking back.

A close runner up year would be 2016, before committee involvement, when I was beginning to feel comfortable in my abilities and challenge the difficulty of the adventures I would go on. Also some great social times.

Have you ever had an epic? If so, what happened?

Yes, plenty of epics, mostly from canyoning trips. They have a habit of taking slightly longer than originally planned.

The two most notable come from a period when I was relatively new to the sport and many others in the club had the naïve, and often classified as a "cowboy", approach of double roping every abseil with limited implementation of back-up systems. I invite you to check out the detailed accounts in previous editions of The Mountaineer: "Confounded by Claustal" by Tim Tyers, Autumn 2015 and "Fear and loathing in Kanangra Main" By Daniel Burton, June 2016. Through training and the shared knowledge of fellow keen canyoneers and experience, we all improved our techniques and practices to canyon much safer today. Nevertheless it remains a sport where an epic is lurking just over the next drop.

Favourite club sport if you had to pick?

Canyoning, for reasons above.

Also the sheer level of adrenaline abseiling 150m free hangs, or 15m slides and jumps. Exploring off the beaten track and through relatively undisturbed ecosystems (trending as gently as possible). Honourable mention goes to Bike-packing, the newest sport to MUMC. I've enjoyed a good multi day bike trip for many years.



INTERVIEW Steven Birkett

Are the rumours true that you were once on committee at MUMC and another unnamed outdoor club at the same time?

Yep, I was part of said unnamed outdoors club's committee as a general member, with the aims of improving club collaboration, both in terms of organising joint adventures, and to share

What are your future plans for adventures? Any cool trips coming up?

I'm heading off on a 1500km bike-packing adventure over the mountains (32,000m of altitude gain) and through the forests of Colombia at the end of December 2024 until late January 2025. This is as part of a fundraising effort to provide children in the regional areas of Colombia with bikes, enabling greater access to schooling and healthcare. I'll be part of a team of MUMC Alumni (some Life Members) and like minded outdoorsy, socially and environmentally conscious friends.

All going well, I assume I'll be back from this trip, spreading the tales of this amazing experience by the time this is published (and dreaming up the next expedition).



POEM

TIPTOE IN THE TWILIGHT

by **CONNOR GUNDBERG**

The ballet, or the disco
The salsa, or the tango
The sexiest dance I know
Is a boogie up the tiptoe

You can do it with a partner
Or dance with death solo
Either way, it's a guaranteed shimmy
With jugs above and air below

On a bright moonlight night
Our dancers took flight
With cams, nuts and hexes
But not a garment in sight!

Up the rocky face they flew
Flashing pitch one, then pitch two
Residents of the pines pondered "*who*"
As four five-limbed climbers went up to

Pitch three! No! Pitch four!
The nut placements galore!
A wondrous ridge to adore
Our nude heroes come back ashore

Walking off the treacherous cliff
Having danced without a riff
The moonlight route a hieroglyph
A tale of tiptoe's naked sheriffs

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Alpinism in Kyrgyzstan

By LUKE SPENCER

Kyrgyzstan wasn't a country we'd ever really thought about. Many people don't even know where it is. But intrigued by the suggestion when myself and a friend asked where we should do a mountaineering course, and inspired by some of Hamid's incredible mountaineering feats (namely the Trango Towers), we thought, why not, and booked plane tickets half way across the world.

When we arrived at Bishkek it was unlike any place we'd been before. The weather was very cold and unwelcoming, giving off a gloomy, eerie vibe. We got driven to the hotel along a big dark empty highway and when the driver pulled over to signify we'd arrived at some ghetto mud brick housed, we were sure it was the wrong place. The driver assuringly pointed to the wrong side of the road. All at once, the driver began to drive off with our bags still in the back of his car (accident or no accident we still don't know) and a garage opened and a German Shepard started barking furiously and charged at us. Quite the welcome to Bishkek... This was definitely a momentary realisation that we were way too far out of our depths. Fortunately for us, the owner ended up calling the dog back and the driver heard us yelling and reversed back.

The next day, we woke up exchanged a quick 'merry Christmas', called family and friends, and we met with our guide Misha. We planned to make a quick detour to the supermarket to get our lunch for our time climbing. We'd planned to have breakfast and dinner in the hut.

When buying groceries, it occurred to me that the morals and ethics in consumption become slightly more ambiguous when your guide tells you that it's normal to eat horse meat, cured fish and pure blocks of fat in the mountain.

We drove a couple of hours and arrived in Ala Archa National park. Named after the juniper tree, Ala Archa got its name for its vibrant colours. Being 1 of 88 mountain ranges in Tian Shan range, Ala Archa is the largest mountain range and full of mixed climbing terrain, a perfect training ground to hone the craft of alpinism. We started the hike from the car park early in the afternoon and made our way up towards Ratsek hut (3300m) .

Being 1 of 88 mountain ranges in Tian Shan range, Ala Archa is the largest mountain range and full of mixed climbing terrain, a perfect training ground to hone the craft of Alpinism.



When we first met Misha, it quickly became clear how highly experienced he was. In fact, when we got to Ratsek hut, we were surrounded by Snow Leopards. Not the animal kind, but the highest russian mountaineering ranking kind. Misha had earned his stripes climbing 5 of the 7000m Kyrgyzstan peaks in winter. Even better, he also spoke great English. We transformed Ratsek hut into our home for the next days. Being so cold, the hut was practically empty apart from us, a few very experienced alpinists, Vitaly (an experienced older climber who looked after the hut, climbed and played gutiar very softly) and Lena (an aspiring climber who also helped to manage the hut in exchange for free mountaineering gear hire).

The first days of ice climbing were really trial by fire. Suffering a combination of blunt crampons and poor technique, the culmination of my suffering on day 2 was 4 pitches of ice route and my crampons barely stay on the wall whilst we were both attached to Misha on a single rope, with James bearing the brunt of my dead weight as I barely managed to stay on the wall, unable to comprehend how the skills weren't coming to me. On day 3, I suffered the same miserable fate while dry tooling as I would often find my ice axe flinging off the wall. Yet, with a stubborn personality, switching crampons, sharpening crampons, and a lot of repeats, I eventually found my groove. On day 4, our climb of Ratsek peak (3972) was delightful. 3 pitches of mixed climbing routes, warm weather and a beautiful summit view.

As soon as we were moving, whether it be traversing, scrambling or trekking, I was quickly in my stride and felt like a natural.

James suffered opposing problems. Climbing elegantly on ice pitches and dry tooling until the altitude hit him like a freight train. Severe headache, nausea, coughing, all classic altitude sickness symptoms. The climb down from Ratsek peak was a little worrisome. As we started waiting for longer and longer, James looked like a zombie, walking ever so slowly down the mountain.

We still had hours to get back to the hut and with wind picking up and the sun setting, I quickly realised the weather would not be kind to us on a very slow descent. After lowering in altitude and drinking some water, he was walking a little bit faster and the concerns eased as I realised we'd make it back successfully. By the time we got to day 6, we prepared to climb Baichechekei peak. 9 ice pitches, 2 rock (scrambles) to summit (4515) making a total of 1200m ascent from Ratsek hut. We were up at 4 and started in -20c and 60kmh winds that regally made it feel like -35c.

Our balaclavas were frozen, mucus froze as it left the nostril and eyelashes were icy.



Baichechekey Peak (4515m)

The north face didn't get any sun and the windchill was painful. We knew that once we reached the summit, there was light (warmth) at the end of the tunnel. But even then, warmth was 1 pitch away for 7 pitches. My legs were shaking as I stood dormant at the belay stand but with sun at the summit in sight, I knew I'd warm up eventually. Once we reached the sun, we were in good spirits, quickly submitted the rock pitches and skipped our way back home (via a mega rock scramble), excited we had another Kyrgyz ascent under our belt.

When we reached the hut, it became obvious that my toes were still numb and actually quite painful. The feeling of elation quickly becomes an "oh fuck" moment when,

I realised I had frostbite in my toes.

Our guide Misha said it's probably stage 2 frostbite. He said the first time it happened to him, he was very worried and went to hospital but now it doesn't bother him so I should be fine (yeah cool). He also mentioned that he had it as bad as me on day 1 and then continued to climb a 7000er in winter. Talking about inspirational words of advice from a hardcore mountaineer. 1-2 days and it will feel a bit better; 1-2 months and my feet will be back to normal. He also mentioned that he knew someone with black toes who had to undergo 6 months of rehab and said fuck it 2 weeks in and cut off the toes.



Luke's frostbitten toe

As someone who is rarely psyched out, this experience rocked me. The fear of unknown and very increased susceptibility to losing toes weighed heavily on me. I always knew there was risk mountaineering but suddenly the risk of losing a couple of toes became more of a worry than dying.

Alas, the next day I was in a bit of a mental hole. I began questioning whether this was all worth it. Update: I have come to realise, brief moments of "maybe this isn't for me" occur quite often in these types of sports. On one side of my brain, I desperately sought sympathy. Maybe the rest of a trip should be a write off. I'd have years in the future to alpine in the future. The other side of my brain called myself a coward, if I was truly to commit to the craft, surely I'd be willing to battle on with the possibility of losing some toes.

New Year's Eve was interesting. The room in Our hut went from 4 people to 20 on New Year's Eve. A large group of Kyrgyz/Russian/Siberian's had hiked up for the night and were ready to party. They brought up some party led fairy lights, hiked up a banquet and were all singing along to popular Russian songs played on guitar. Though we didn't understand the Russian music or conversation, it was very wholesome nonetheless. The food hit the spot, the mulled wine was delightful, Jägermeister and tea warmed the soul and the Russian music was soothing. As you can imagine, I wasn't in the partying mood. Still rather little psyched out about my toes and exhausted from earlier days escapades, we were in bed by 9pm.

The next day my mental game was back (new year new me?). My feet had begun blistering which hurt every step I took but I'd beaten my internal demons and we set out and spent the day practicing short roping on the rock. Days later we attempted to climb box peak, a super long classic ridge line traverse. The approach was long and slow. Walking through waist deep snow, we found that it had taken us 5 hours to get to the start of the climb. We made it about 1/4 of the way up until the point of no return and opted to turn back. The combination of our slow movement made for a semi easy decision not wanting to lose toes over a chill peak.





That night, we decided to move from Ala Archa to Issey Kul. It was a half day hike back down the mountain and a 2 hour drive back to Bishkek. Then we'd drive for 5 hours very early morning so we don't lose a day of climbing. The rationale was pretty simple, we'd reached a plateau. James wasn't dealing well with the altitude and with my own personal battle with swollen and blistering toes, long summit days would be a slog. The change of scenery was warmly welcomed. Having spent the entire trip in the mountains plus a day either side in Bishkek city, Issey Kul was a new side to Kyrgyzstan we had not experienced. We relocated to Barskoon waterfalls to ice climb. As we climbed the start of the creek, we still hear the running water on the ice at 2325m elevation. But, as we ascended up Gagarins trail and saw a Kazakhstan team ice climbing lower down the waterfall at Mana's Bowl and Tears of the Snow leopard, it became clear we were about to see something special.

We ice climbed at Elders beard, mainly top roping but I also managed my first lead pitch. Emotions were evoked but it was as good a place as ever to lead an ice route. The feeling of your first lead send never changes. The classic body shaking. The internal "oh fuck, I'm 4 meters from my last gear placement". It also occurred to me that I was also on a big traverse so if I whipper I'd also be flying with my ice axes and crampons. Alas, all the prior ice training made for a good send. A big plus was that when asked for feedback, Misha said I did most things well.

Emotions were evoked but it was as good a place as ever to lead an ice route. The feeling of your first lead send never changes. The classic body shaking. The internal "oh fuck, I'm 4 meters from my last gear placement". It also occurred to me that I was also on a big traverse so if I whipper I'd also be flying with my ice axes and crampons.

Accom at guesthouse was intricate. Blue carpet on the wall, blue carpet on the floor with a whole lot of sequin patterns. The beds were so soft and springy, my fat ass fell through to the bed frame. The guest house owners had cooked up an absolute feast and it was a taste of Kyrgyzstan we had not yet had, a culinary experience enhanced with vodka. We'd been given double shot glasses and drinks were flowing. We were toasting to everything. A toast to the new year, a toast to the new year (again), a toast to love, a toast to friendship. Despite the inherent language barrier, salutations are easy to understand and the night was delightful. When strangers welcome you into their home and treat you like family, it kind of restores your faith in humanity. That was until we had to pay and realised it was more expensive than all of the hotels.



After descending from the waterfall, my toe was blistered and it had peeled back all the skin and looked pretty gnarly. I figured that it was probably not even worth mentioning to Misha as he would mention something about battling on. Rather than feeling sorry for myself, this kind of chat is exactly what I'm after. I try and pride myself of being resilient but Misha really took this to another level. It was inspiring. James and I had a chat and realised that Misha was probably the toughest person we'd ever met. We guesstimated he'd be top 1000 toughest people on the planet. Misha had casually recalled a story to us days prior about how he had attempted to climb K2 in winter (only 1 group has ever succeeded), and made it up above 7800m. I don't think I could respect him any more.

The next morning which also happened to be my 26th lap around the sun, I figured with my toe situation getting worse, it probably wouldn't be good to climb. I'd made the decision internally that I'd walk up and practice speed ice screwing and Abolakov hooks while James and Misha climbed. I told Misha in the morning and to my surprise, he was pretty concerned about my toe and we treated it with antiseptic. To my surprise, he said I shouldn't do anything more than walking which was very inconvenient as we'd left most of our gear up on the mountain to save us from having the climb with it on the steep, hour long approach.

Misha and James headed up the mountain to retrieve our gear and we'd then travel to Karakol to be tourists for the rest of the day. When we reflected on the trip, we spoke to Misha and he recommended us to get some coaching for all the relevant disciplines to make us better mountaineers. He is coaching the Kyrgyz national mountaineering team and plans to conquer a 7000er on an atypical route and some 6as at Ala Archa. Despite all the corruption we'd read about and also seen (mainly a huge mega highway that remains gravel because of corruption), Misha expressed how he deeply loves Kyrgyzstan for its simplicity, being peace around a lot of chaos (referring to Kyrgyzstan as central Asia's Switzerland). In Kyrgyzstan, their national symbol is the snow leopard and its perfect epitome of wilderness.

A dying breed in a domesticated society, the snow leopard still remains as majestic and wild as ever.

A big thank you to MUMC for some training grant money to learn mountaineering, friends and family for putting up with my affinity for danger, Hamid for the Kyrgyz inspiration, and Misha for putting up with us for two weeks and inspiring the mountaineering dream.





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Totally fine: My first canyon, a masterclass in type 2 fun

By JESS VINNICOMBE

LÉGÈRE DÉSCENTE AT MT BUFFALO (v4a3I*). MY FIRST CANYON.

Luke told us to expect a “fun and relatively short day trip”. After all, that’s what the guidebook said. What followed was anything but.

My housemate was hosting a party at ours the night before, but the next day was going to be easy, so I wasn’t worried about the lack of sleep. It was fine. We left at 7am. Still fine. I knew it would be chill, so I didn’t stress too much about packing appropriate food. Even back then, I definitely knew better. But we’d probably be able to stop at shops on the way, right? (We didn’t.) Still fine.

We drove 4 hours to Buffalo, getting there at about 11am. Then we walked for about 3 hours through really thick, steep scrub, no trails. And thankfully, no rolled ankles (yet). Some of us strolled through it like it was nothing. Some of us didn’t.

We canyoned for a really long time - for the first few pitches, there was only one of us setting up the anchors. My heart was in my throat on most of the pitches as I tried to quash intrusive thoughts of slipping into the heaviest flow of the waterfall, inhaling water, my feet slipping, losing my balance, and letting go of the brake rope. We used firemen’s belays whenever we could. But it turns out that’s pretty hard when the person at the bottom is in a deep pool of water having their face pounded by a heavy waterfall.

One of the golden rules of wet canyoning is to never look up during the rappel. If you look up, you’ll get blasted with water, which could drown you. It’s scary.



Nikita, Jess and Miranda before the canyon, Mt Buffalo

It’s frightening seeing your friends slip around at the bottom of each pitch in their trail runners with worn-out soles.

Then you stumble your way down some rapids, narrowly avoiding twisting your ankle, get to the top of the next pitch, and see those same friends standing in ankle-deep water at the very edge of the top of a really high waterfall looking down, without protection, and without a care in the world

I’d love to tell myself that I’d thought it through when I decided that six boiled eggs were going to be enough to power myself through the day. I should’ve known better. I did know better.

Was I in a drunken daze at the party the night before when I made that decision? Was it the fact that I hadn't read past the first few lines of the trip description? I got through the day thanks to a smattering of pity sugar from my kind friends. On one of the later pitches of the day, we found a little fixed bit of cord we were supposed to rappel off that looked pretty old. So we replaced it with a super-skinny bit of cord. Yippee. Trusting our lives on shoelaces.

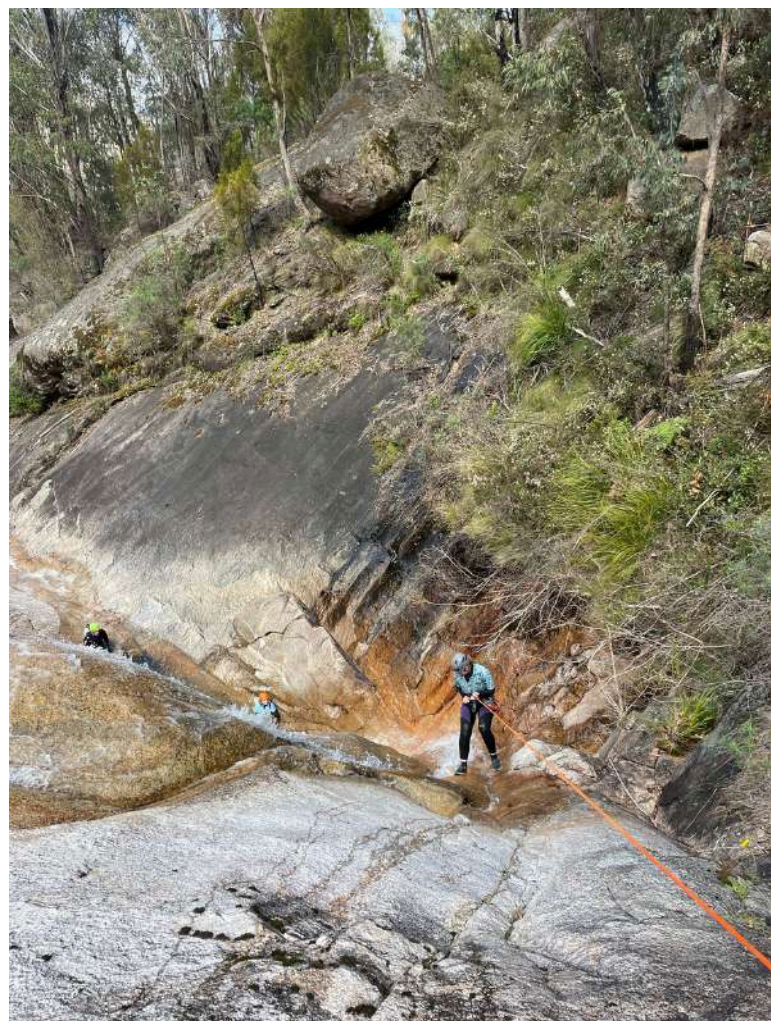
"I was so hungry... It was a bad sign that I'd gone quiet again."

Fast-forward a few hours. It was around 8pm. It was almost completely dark. We were all shivering. I was at the top of the second-last pitch (which was humongous). I was trying to think of my happy place. Luke joked about how this was his happy place. It wasn't mine. I tried to keep my mind focused on cuddles and warmth, cuddles and warmth. At this point, I was wondering if there was any possible way I could bail. Maybe I could climb up the canyon's walls? Nah, they were way too steep. I began contemplating an airlift. Surely I would roll my ankle. Surely. It seemed impossible that we'd make our own way out unscathed in such rugged terrain. I was begging to go first. I just wanted it to end. I shimmied my way down the pitch. My stomach was groaning. At least the last metre or two were fun.

The walk out was horrendous. I wasn't sure we were going the right way. We waded through a narrow river about waist-deep. Although it was freezing, that didn't seem to scare the bugs away. It was so overgrown. Every time we turned our head torches on, we'd inhale a generous mouthful of bugs. We'd turn them off, faceplant in the water, trip over our feet, rinse and repeat. I spent most of the walk out rushing to try and get in front, terrified of being left behind. But we were in this together. I was reassured to hear that our two navigators were confident we were going the right way. At least someone felt confident. I guess it's hard to get too lost when you're in the middle of a canyon, with steep walls containing (I mean cocooning! Definitely cocooning!) you on either side.

Thankfully, after a couple of hours of utter misery, we discovered a near-flat, less-overgrown track that mostly followed the river. I'm a firm believer in the philosophy that the mountains are defined by the valleys. This day was carving a beautiful valley in the part of my mind previously occupied by high hopes and mediocre hills. This path was our mountain. In a good way, though. Although parts of it were overgrown, I was so grateful to the universe for granting us this one concession. But I was so hungry. Luke joked about how it was a bad sign that I'd gone quiet again.

After what felt like four hours, but I've been told was probably more like three (not that big a difference, I know!), we began our final push on the walk out. The final challenge was a mega-steep hill that we had to trudge up to escape from our protective cocoon. It was pretty much as steep as you could get without climbing. In fact, I spent most of it climbing. We were all so fatigued.



Leon, Jess, and Miranda, after an early pitch.

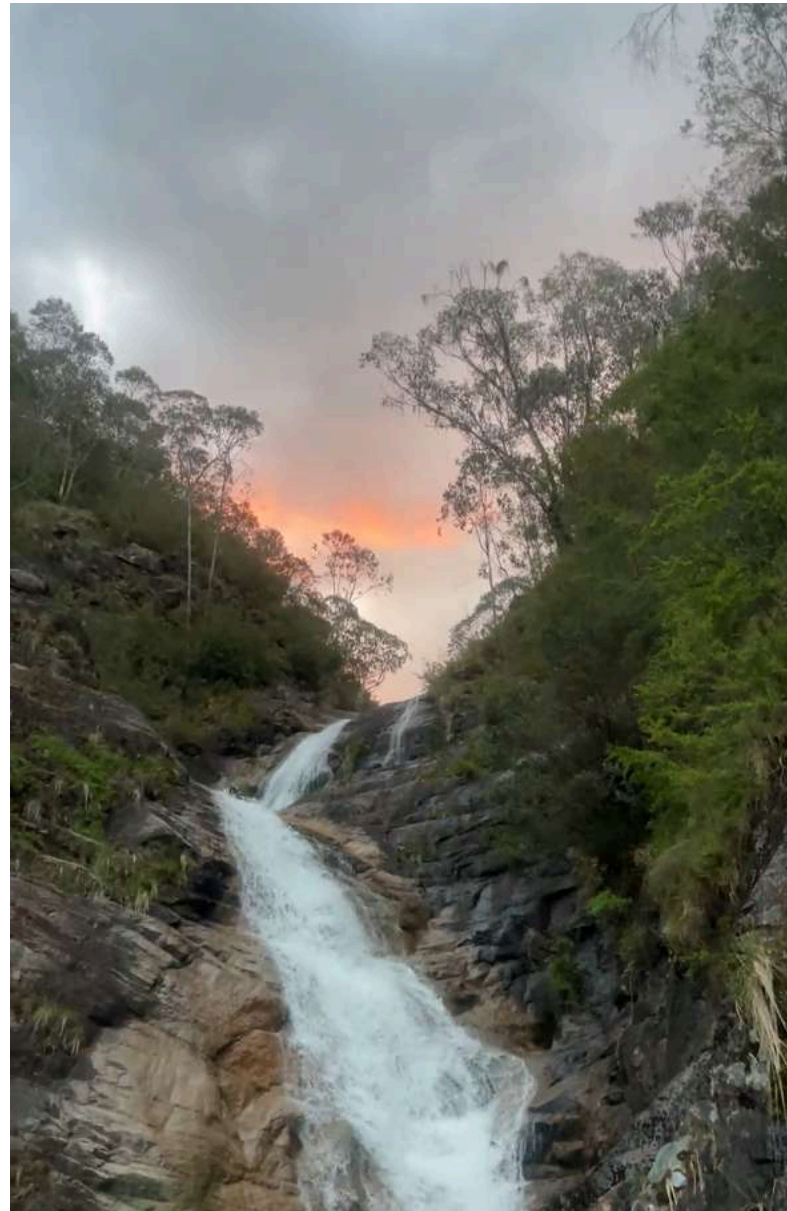
*“I’d love to tell myself that I’d thought it through when I decided that **six boiled eggs** were going to be enough to power myself through the day.”*

My legs gave way multiple times. Nikita’s 1000-lumen mega-torch shone like a beacon of hope towards the road, our first sign of civilisation.

Somehow, we managed to survive with no rolled ankles. I sat in the back seat with Leon in Miranda and Jacob’s car, contemplating whether to feel smug about Leon calling me ‘tough’ after finishing the walk out. We spent about an hour driving, feeling drunk and delirious with tiredness. I thought I was following the conversation in real time, but later found out that every 15 minutes or so, I’d nod and mutter in agreement about a conversation topic that they’d long since moved past. We slept in the car after whoever was driving realised that trying to drive back to Melbourne that night was probably pretty dumb, even though we all had work in the morning.

Canyoning is fun. My memory sucks. But here I am now, still alive, writing about it a year later, a year wiser, and I remember that canyon like it was yesterday. Bring food. Read the trip description. Imagine it’ll be a lot harder than you expect. And please, follow the 7 Ps. For those of you who need me to spell it out: prior preparation and planning prevent piss poor performance. Hopefully your first experience canyoning will be equally full of hardship and triumph as mine was. Well, hopefully with a little more triumph.

Oh, and by the way...



The sunset before our final rappel.

...if Luke asked me to do another canyon with him, would I say yes?

Absolutely.





LOFOTEN^{-ISH} BIKEPACKING

By **SAKURA EVERETT-JONES**

“I have always been of the belief that some things are best learned by throwing yourself into it with only a skeleton of a plan, an open mind, and the expectation that you will have to do some on-the-spot problem solving.”

I recently put this into practice by venturing out to Lofoten; an archipelago in northern Norway famous for its breathtaking scenery of staggering mountains, pristine fjords and rolling fields of wildflowers; as well as an expansive network of roads and cycleways connecting the quaint fishing villages that dot the islands. Having just spent the past semester in Finland for university exchange, I took the opportunity to make the trip west to give this solo bikepacking thing a crack.

Bikepacking had been on the cards for me for some time: I've been hiking for a while and had recently gotten some more challenging multi-day treks under my belt, I'd just upgraded some of my camping gear, and I've been a certified bike lover for years (and my love grows by the day). The plan to bikepack Lofoten had been somewhat set in stone before I had even received an acceptance letter from my host university in Finland. But naturally, the finer details were only worked out a few days prior, if at all.

The journey to

In the spirit of sustainable and human powered transport, I decided to only use public transport to get from my host city, Helsinki, to the Lofoten Islands. This resulted in a very disjointed journey (think cycling 30km across country borders to get from one train station to another), but fortunately, I could just hop on my bike to fill in any gaps. And whilst I didn't cycle a particularly long distance on this trip, I can proudly say I crossed four borders (Finland/Sweden, and Sweden/Norway, twice each).



Wild camping is not only legal but encouraged in Nordic countries, so I also got a small taste of urban camping wherever I had an overnight stop between transport connections; hidden just out of sight of the local recreation centre or supermarket.

The longest and perhaps most harrowing cycling legs of the journey were actually to and from Narvik, the nearest major town in northern Norway to Lofoten, with bus connections to the archipelago. I had originally intended to catch the iconic iron ore train from the Swedish coast all the way to Narvik, but I only found out at the departing train station that this particular train didn't take bicycles. Frantic rerouting ensued. The next best option was to catch a bus to the Swedish-Norwegian border and then cycle the remaining 50km to Narvik.

This seemed easy enough, but the only road into Narvik was the E10; a major transportation corridor frequented by heavy vehicles with only a bit of space on the shoulder. Needless to say, I had a crash course in learning to share the road with cargo trucks travelling 80km/h, driving on the right-hand side of the road. The return trip also featured 900 metres of elevation gain with a solid 9 percent incline for 6 kilometres. Woof.

The setup

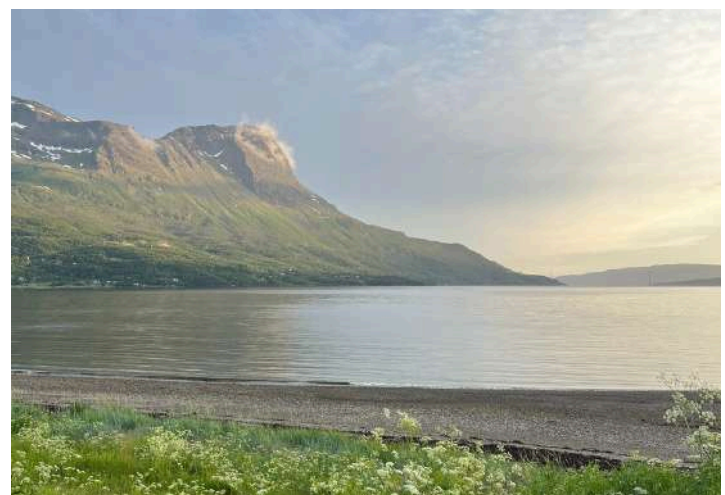
Something I really admire about outdoor sports is that they generally have a low barrier of entry, and this is certainly true for bikepacking. All you really need is a bicycle and a few waterproof bags, and you're good to go. My setup featured gear from all over the place: a gravel bike I bought second hand in Helsinki, a pannier bag I bought in Melbourne on Facebook Marketplace, a tube bag I stress purchased in Estonia a few hours before a 24-hour bike rogaining race (that's another story), and some borrowed dry bags secured with a series of ratchet tie down straps. The set up was complete with a phone mount dodgily kept in place with zip ties, and my trusty sandals strapped to the rear rack.

People moments

I'm loading up my bike to depart my campsite in Moskenes in southern Lofoten, I caught the eye of an older man who presumably had just come back from an ocean swim. I ascertained he was also a bikepacker, and we exchanged some information about the routes we'd taken to get here. He clearly had a lot more experience than me (and had just cycled a couple thousand kilometres from Denmark), but it felt like a mutual exchange laced with a lot of respect for one another. I wonder if I sparked some kind of nostalgia or softness in him - perhaps seeing my comparatively humble set up reminded him of his early touring days.

I had similar interactions in the coming days with other bikepackers: eager conversations about the routes we'd just taken and intended to take, playful remarks about the weather (it rained a lot), or a genuine smile and wave as we passed each other on the road. My tent was destroyed when I attempted to set it up on a beach during a storm, and the first person who rushed over to help was another young female bike packer. She told me she saw my bike laying next to the tent and immediately understood what I was going through. Unfortunately the tent was broken beyond repair, but her warmth and kindness helped me through a pretty distressing situation.

This immediate trust and camaraderie is another aspect of outdoor sports that I really cherish, and being welcomed into the bikepacking community so openly helped diminish the feelings of apprehension and imposter syndrome that plagued the start of my trip.



The ride and the sights

Over the course of four days, I cycled from the southern tip of Lofoten, a town called Å, to Stamsund (with a cheeky bus leg to get me through a tunnel not recommended for cyclists), with detours and stops for small hikes along the way. Every turn ushered in an entirely new view, the dramatic weather changes and midnight sun only adding to the effect. You really get the sense that you're moving forward when the scenery around you changes so quickly. The rocky cliffs in the south jutted upwards into mountains that domineered over secluded coves, thunderous rockslides piercing through the hushed lapping of the waves. Mountains flattened into pastures complete with sheep and red wooden buildings, with pink and purple lupines lining the edges of the road. There were moments where

I would suddenly remember where I was after a period of mindless pedalling, and I would be so moved I'd be on the verge of tears. Either that or I was going fast enough on the downhills that there were tears streaming from my eyes regardless.

Ultimately, this trip took me through three countries via bicycle, train, bus, and even an impromptu overnight ferry. I finished this trip with 230 additional kilometres under my belt, more confidence in my road cycling and bike maintenance skills, a renewed zest for community, soggy shoes and a camera roll full of gorgeous landscapes and hardcore selfies.

Not bad for my first ever bikepacking trip.



Ikey: On bailing

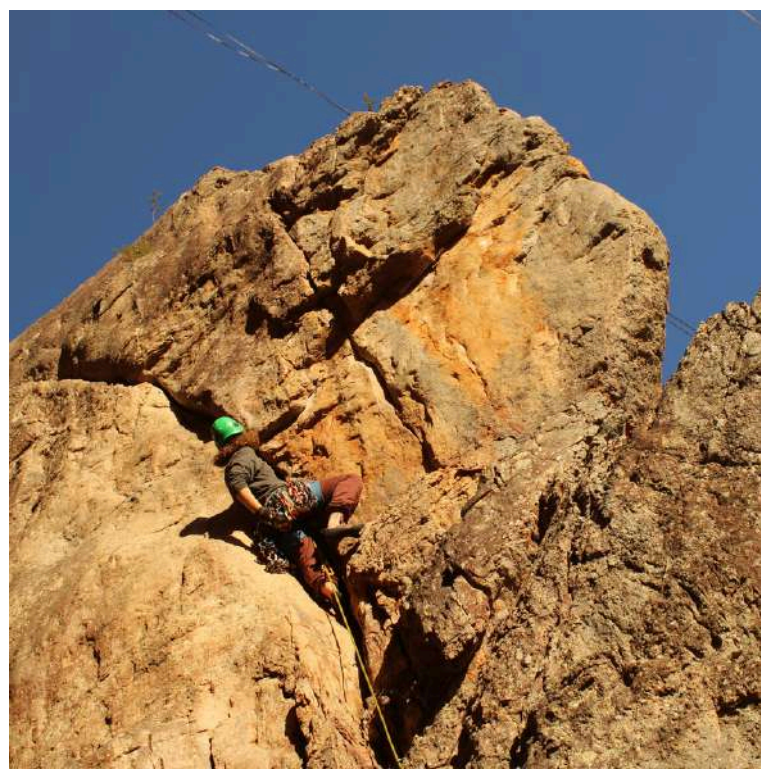
by **Ikey Doosey-Shaw**

I'm currently learning to trad climb. About a year ago I placed my first piece, and since then I've had the bug. I've been a sport climber for a few years now, but learning trad was like starting from scratch. So on my most recent trip to Arapiles, I had some rough goals, ways to measure my progress, beyond grade chasing. I had a rough idea of how good I was, and had a couple of routes in mind, but I was focusing on enjoying myself, spending time on rock and trusting that progress would come.

About halfway through the trip, I was looking up at one of the climbs on my ticklist. I had tried it two or three times before, and had gotten eaten alive. My flash attempt was the first time I had fallen on gear. I hadn't planned to get on it this trip, thinking it to be a bit out of reach, but one of my friends had been keen, and I found myself at the base. To my surprise, it went easily; there was never really a point where I thought I might have fallen. I was stoked to have done it, but felt more confused about my ability. I wanted to do better.

'As soon as we were back at the campsite, the guidebook was out. I found a route that seemed up my alley, my style, two stars, and a grade I felt was within my reach. I was keen to get on it. A day and a half later (due to a rain delay), I was sitting at the base of the climb, trading names and stoke with the other climbers around. I had stopped by the campground for a sit-start v2 and some poetry on the walk-in, so my climbing partner and I had agreed to meet at the cliff. I was there a little bit before him, so I let two guys before me jump on the route. They flew up it, not seeming to be fazed by the difficulty of the climbing or the availability of gear. I was stoked, it was going to go.

My climbing partner arrived, I racked up and got cracking. The first few moves were shared with another climb. Thinking of rope drag, and not wanting to interfere with any other climbers, I chose to do this easy section without any protection. I wasn't scared, I was feeling comfortable and in the zone. I reached my first piece, about 3m above the ground, happy but not ecstatic with my placement. I placed my second close after. I climbed a couple more metres, and stopped to place gear. My stance was awkward but tolerable; I couldn't go hands free but I wasn't going to fall off. I tried a cam - the crack was flared. I tried a nut - too small. I tried a bigger nut - pretty average but it'll do. I could see a crack in a move or two so I figured I'd be safe when I got there. I got up there, and the crack was smooth and flared. Shit. I put in a cam that might have held, and looked for a nut. As I tilted my head up, searching for anything, raindrops hit my forehead and landed in my eye. I looked down, and then at the cam in front of me. I gave it a gentle tug, and it shifted. It took me a moment for my brain to figure it out, but I wasn't going to try the next moves. I was bailing.



FEATURE | Key: On Bailing

I downclimbed, cleaning my gear as I went. I stopped at my last two pieces, two nuts. The rest of the downclimb was easy, I had climbed up without any protection or worry, but it was slightly greasy and now a bit wet. I gave the downclimb a go with the nuts in, so I knew I could do it, but when I took them out I couldn't will myself to do the moves. I sat agonising for longer than I care to admit. Eventually I decided to sacrifice some gear, and lowered off a nut. My feet touched the ground and I felt relieved. I felt like a gumby, and my tail was between my legs, but I was safe. I apologised to my belayer, and thanked him for dealing with my faff, feeling indebted and grateful for his attitude and patience. I pulled the rope, packed my bag and asked what he wanted to jump on. We then left for an adjacent wall, where one of our friends was looking for a second. I drew the long straw; undeterred by the belay-slavery I put him through before, my partner had offered to belay. While I debated going up as the third, a burst of rain came through, giving me an excuse to head back to camp.

On the walk back, I thought about my surrender. I was somewhat disappointed that I hadn't done a climb that I knew to be within my ability, but overwhelmingly I felt relief that I made it out unscathed. I remembered a conversation with a friend from a couple of months ago, who bailed close to the summit of a peak in the Arthur Range. He told me that he realised he would've been mad at himself for taking the risk, had he tried to summit. I hadn't thought about it while I was on the wall, but on the walk home, I felt the same. Had I run it out a little bit, or done the downclimb with no protection, I would've been mad at myself for taking the risk. I doubt anything would've gone wrong, but what if that cam didn't hold? What if I slipped on the wet downclimb? I love climbing, but it's not the only thing in my life. I thought of the people who I care about, and how I would explain my choices if something went wrong.

As I neared camp, I met an ambulance parked at the trailhead. Luckily, the climber was mostly alright, a hard catch had claimed another ankle.

A I'm not suggesting that their injury was due to them being risky or that it was anyone's fault, but it was a reminder that accidents happen. I felt okay with my choice to bail, I'd live to climb another day. You may not feel the same, an awesome climb might be worth the risk to you. The risk might make it even more satisfying. I think that is great. I am stoked that you're having fun climbing and I can't wait to hear about the sick stuff that you do.

To calm my nerves when climbing, I ask myself the following question (stolen from American Mountain Guides Association President Silas Rossi)

“Do I trust my future self to make the right decision?”

Moments like what I just had been through, while humbling, give me confidence in my answer. Maybe this holds me back a little bit in my climbing, but for me, trying to be as safe as possible makes my progress all the more satisfying. Bailing off that climb was not my most proud moment, but I only have one regret: I wish I had placed a second piece before I lowered.



CONNOR'S FOOT

by YASMINE HASSAR

It was a dark, gloomy day at Melbourne university when four protagonists found themselves blankly staring at their computer. Tabs of my.unimelb, crag.com and the MUMC trip sign up pages were alternating in a rhythmic succession, one after the other, hour after hour.

They were envious of the creative adventures designed by the greatest members, and a few messages sent quickly built up into a disastrous but thrilling idea: to climb Mt Macedon. One of our protagonists- Connor- always chooses the best day to climb: the rainiest.

This is how we all woke up- early on a Sunday morning fully covered by grey clouds in the happy spirit of a better option to whatever assignment was due. Liberated and free-spirited, our only concern was Connor's toes showing from his wide-open sandals- a questionable choice of approach shoes.

Joyful in the car, we were confident that the greying clouds would soon be gone and leave room for the climb "Boogy Till You Puke" to shine.

And how surprised we were when we arrived, and rain started to drop.

The drops got heavier and with a silent contemplation, we left our dusty ropes in the car and opted for a hike instead, motivated by the consolation of a good climbing session in Blackburn on the way back to compensate.

We hopped on this delightful hike, soaking wet but admiring of the spooky clouds forming beneath the strangely shaped trees, and the shiny bark on the floor. This shine also came from the leeches- delighted, celebrating the rain by climbing up our legs and finding comfort in their spot of choice.

Yet, we were not at our peak of excitement and I am not just a foot fetishist who chose the title of this article: the path got narrower, steeper and sloppier. Connor missed a step, leading him to fall right in a branch forcing an entrance in between two of his toes, violating his foot, leaving him in pain, still wet and full of leeches.

We got back in a more or less efficient way with the help of our more or less efficient sense of orientation, hopped in a car, walked towards a hospital while Connor kept hopping, waited there in a children's room under a smiling butterfly and a smiling horse. We then hopped towards another hospital, and used their bathroom to remove the ever-growing leeches.

We ended our journey, as tradition wants, in a pub. Connor was first suggested to get stitches, slightly concerned as he planned a flight to Japan on that very night, but happily got out with just some glue.

From this lesson, what Connor learnt was that he will keep wearing his open sandals because he really likes them, and to keep booking flight tickets on an outdoor climbing day.

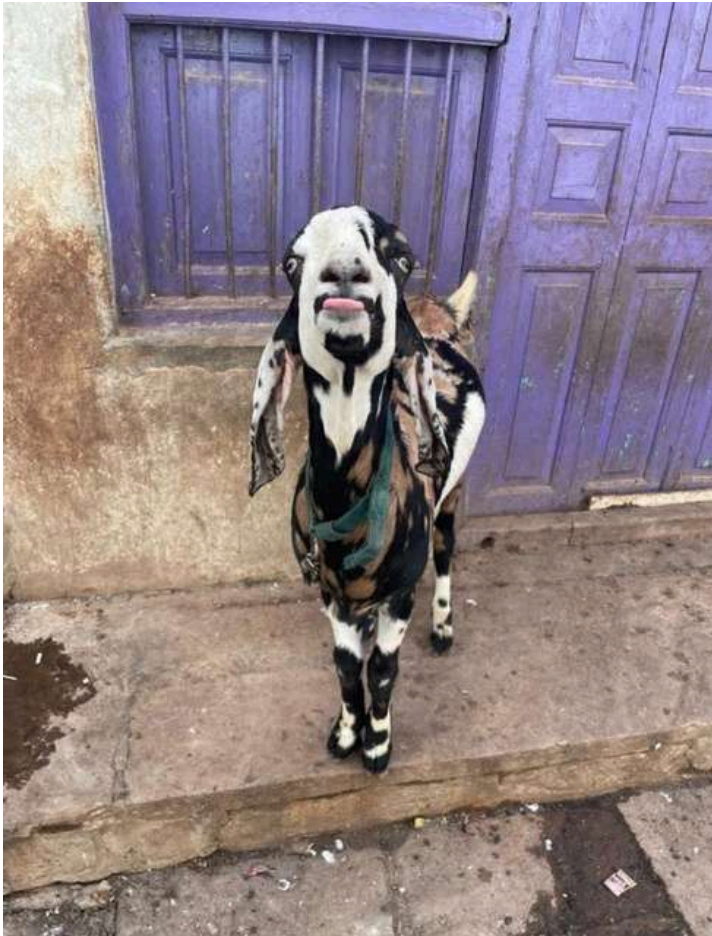


Overall Winner: Cool alpine climbing photo in Club Activity by Callum Boreham

PIE AND SLIDE 2024



Category Winner: Blep in Outdoors
Nature by Alicia Cognian



Category Winner: Stars in the sky in
Australian Landscape by Ninn Ng



Category Winner: A Well Trafficked Perch in
Photojournalism by Sakura Everett-Jones



Category Winner: The beauty of the Isle of Skye in Overseas Landscape by Nicola Zuzek-mayer



Category Winner: MUMC in Club Personality and Humour by Molly Flemin



The Dolomites, Riley Clarke, Pie and Slide winner 2023



AN EXCHANGE STUDENT'S GUIDE TO MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME IN MUMC

by **RHEA HARRIS**

Being an exchange student often means stepping out of your comfort zone and diving into new experiences. My journey with MUMC over the past year has been nothing short of extraordinary. I've not only collected some of my favourite memories but also learned valuable lessons that I hope future exchange students can benefit from. Here are my top tips for making the most out of your time with MUMC.

Tip 1: Get in on trips early! I knew I wanted to join the club before O-week and managed to get on a trip within my first 2 weeks in Australia. I saw both wombats and wallabies, wild camped by a lake that's at least 3x bigger than anything at home in England and got my first real taste of Australian wildlife. MUMC trips have allowed me to escape to places of Australia that I would never have thought to go otherwise and see things hardly anybody else sees.

Tip 2: One of the best decisions I made was to get actively involved in MUMC by joining the committee. Even though many discussions were focused on long-term plans that wouldn't directly affect me, this involvement was incredibly rewarding. Being part of the committee allowed me to understand sports better. Not only this, it also has allowed me to make numerous friends, making my eventual departure even more bittersweet. Planning events and contributing to the club gave me a sense of belonging and made Australia feel like a home-away-from-home.

Tip 3: When I joined MUMC, I identified as a kayaker. However, throughout the year, I ventured into climbing, rogaining, and bushwalking. Embracing these new activities allowed me to discover passions I never knew I had.

Say YES to new experiences...

... they can open a world of adventure and personal growth. Each trip and activity introduced me to different facets of Australia's stunning landscapes and outdoor culture.

My personal highlights:

First Wildlife Encounters: Seeing wombats and wallabies on my first trip set the tone for a year of amazing wildlife experiences. I leave Australia having seen wild koalas, snakes, kangaroos and various bird species.

Involvement: I have been deeply engaged with the club, made lifelong friends and managed to contribute to memorable events.

New Passions: As of May 2024, I am the proud owner of a pair of climbing shoes.

My year in Australia has been a time of pushing personal boundaries leading to epic memories.

For future exchange students, my advice is to seize opportunities early, get involved in the MUMC community, and be open to trying new things. These steps will not only enhance your experience but also help you create a lasting love for this country.

"Embrace everything and make the most of every moment."

I look back with gratitude on the experiences and friendships that made this year so special, my involvement with MUMC has been a significant part of this journey. I hope many future exchange and international students will be inspired to also embrace this adventure.



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SAILING THE PACIFIC

by **MATTHEW BANNON**

“Dolphins starboard side!”

Came the call from below. I held onto the ropes tightly and, in the wind's sway, caught a glimpse of a pod of bottlenose dolphins trailing along the shadow of our hull...

My mother was a sea-lover, and my grandfather was a merchant sailor in England. Though I seemingly had the ocean in my veins, I had never stood on a boat and, even until this year, never learned to swim. And there I was, 32 metres above the deck, swinging side to side with the ship's rolls, unfurling the sail with one eye and happily keeping track of the dolphins with the other.

I first learnt of the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme when I was 12. A gift from the UK government, Australia's national sail training ship, the Young Endeavour, a vessel of the Royal Australian Navy, had made her maiden voyage across the Atlantic and down the cape of Africa to Australia in 1987. Beginning in 1988, the STS Young Endeavour would take 500 Australian youths aged 16-23 and continue circumnavigating the country yearly until this very moment. In February 2024, I sailed with the STS Young Endeavour from Newcastle to Sydney under the wise watch of Maritime Warfare Officers (MWOs). Battling against storms, racing against poorly steered French and sanctioned Russian cargo ships and swimming amongst rays and dolphins, I logged around 80 hours of ship watch routines, 'learnt the ropes' and sailed hundreds of nautical miles along the Pacific.

By the time I stepped onto her deck, Young Endeavour had already circumnavigated the globe twice, rounded Australia dozens of times, and visited several nations across the Asia-Pacific, including New Zealand and Indonesia. As I walked her timbers and learned to climb her ratlines, I began a journey thousands of Australians had completed before me since 1987. Her motto, as engraved in 1987, is *Carpe Diem*, Latin for seize the day.

We dropped and weighed anchor in beautiful spots such as Broken Bay, Patonga Beach, and the Seal Rocks. For the last 24 hours of our voyage, I had the privilege of navigating us to Sydney Harbour, where we cut motors and arrived fully under the power of wind and sail.

Split into colour-themed groups and led by MWOs, the following is a short poem about my voyage.



I dream of a time that I myself cannot recall,
When whales were but beasts to hunt,
And dangerous cargo ships would haul,
When tailored sail 'gainst lightning did confront,
And Shackleton and crew bore the ocean's brunt,

When gold and bronze medals were pinned above men's ribs,
And compliments like cannon-shot flew at the cut of jibs,
When distant oceans were but galaxies far away,
And the sailors' only clock was the sunset of each new day,
When world's anew hid behind the swelling wave,
And a tight rope around your waist was your only earthly save,

So yes, I dream of a time that I myself cannot remember,
Of the dangers and daring of a dear and bolden age,
Of great men and women confined to history's page,

But I recall a time that I was a part of,
And a ship that I set sail with,
And though the galley may have changed, and the
spyglass evolved,
The sea and her ways remain like legends of old,

We felt line slip between fingers and pass to 'the stopper',
And felt the chill of the biting rain against us landlubber,
We awoke at dawn, as the 'pipes' came with a crack,
As I called on the sail-master, "standby to tack",
And we heard sail groan and bend as she filled with air,
And called "hard to port" to avoid a buoy's snare.

And we did we as we were told,
When the watch leader called for slack,
And we struggled 'gainst seasickness,
Till we each owned a leather back,

And though the sea at times was rough and the winds were mighty dry,
All we want is a tall ship and a course to steer her by,
To stand proud in the 'guts watch' with my own two feet planted,
And to take the helm and steer her by as Seb cheers, "permission granted",
For when I sit in my rack, I still feel the sway of her hull,
And when I shut my eyes, I can hear the call of a gull,
And if I lay aground, I see her stars shine bright above,
And as the wind passes,
I can feel 'two' and 'six' shove,

And though I forget the rules of the road,
I've memorised each letter of morse-code,
And through her mast, I forget precisely how tall,
...I do know a true course, east-west and all

So, all I ask to head down to the calling sea and tide,
For our land is girt by sea, and She cannot be denied,
And all I wish is to set sail and power on steady,
And once again, proudly call in, "Blue watch ready"

So, mountaineers, if you feel the urge to lead and hear the call of the sea,
Join the Young Endeavour; don't just take it from me,
Grab line or compass and let sail flow free,
Join the Young Endeavour,
See how great it can be.



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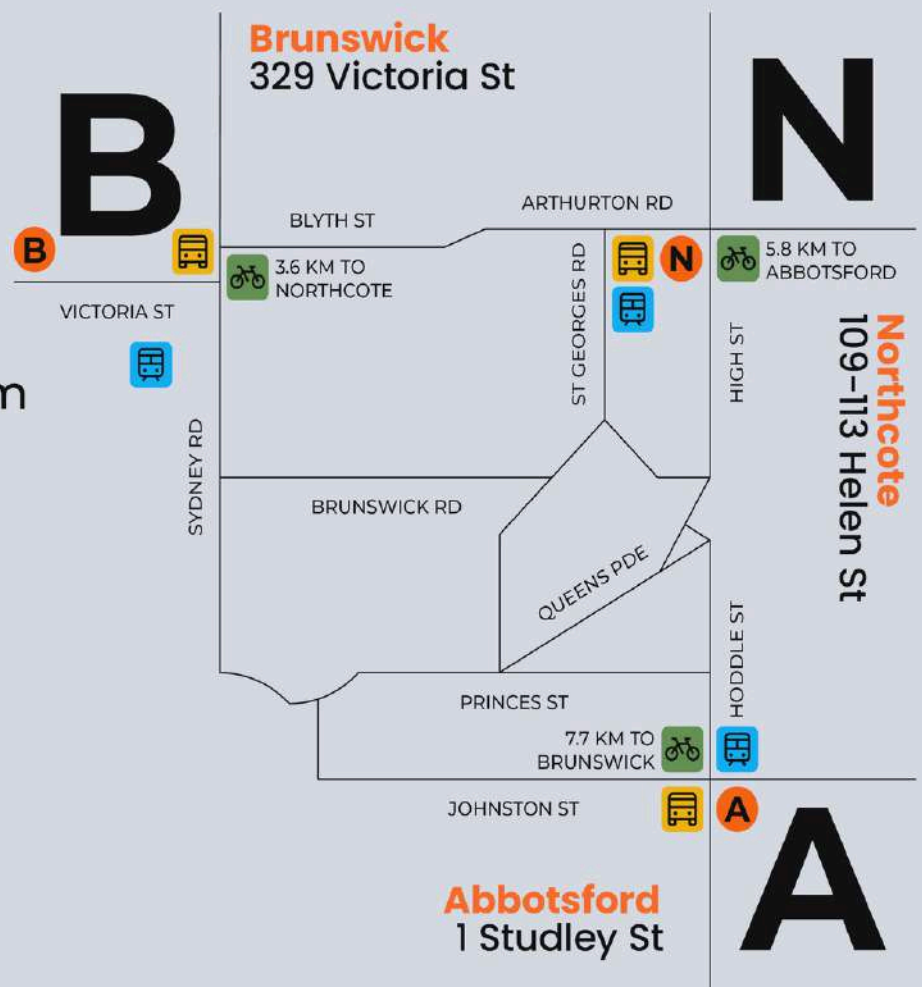
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MURRAY RIVER: ADVENTURE GRANT

By CHARLIE RANK



TRIP REPORT Charlie Rank

Rivers often tell us a story. A journey from one place to another, and the mighty Murray River is no exception to this, from its beginnings as a spring in Kosciusko National Park, it forges its way through alpine country to begin as a swift river at the foothills of the Victorian Alps. Roughly 150km downstream from this point is where I began my journey, at Bringenbrong Bridge. It wasn't until I had all my gear laid out in front of me, packing the kayak thoroughly, that I felt the enormous weight of this trip rest on my shoulders. 2400km of paddling solo a river with all its challenges; scorching heat, gigantic bends, fierce winds, torrential downpour, thunderstorms, weirs, dams, huge lakes and I had yet to even put my paddle in the water and take my first stroke.

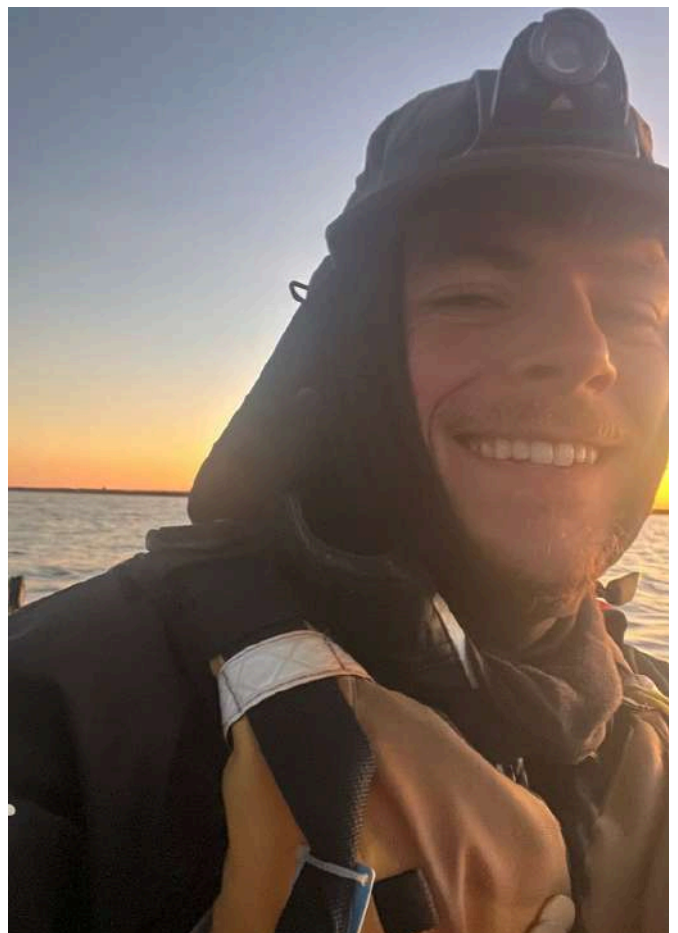


I made jokes with passer-by's as I cruised down the river. "Which way to the ocean?" I would call out. "That way" they would point "but you've got a long way to go". The first days were about finding my feet but were filled with anxiety and required constant attention as to not fall trap in the invasive willow trees which hugged the bank of the river.

The speed of the river was impressive. I would often turn too sharply and the kayak would lose its tracking and swing into the eddy. One could not deny the beauty of this country. The rolling hills and mountains contrasted with the lush green plains where cows happily grazed all day is reminiscent of New Zealand, and the water is dark, deep, cold and clean with pebbles, stones and gravel laying at the bottom of the river.

Initially the plan was to be self sufficient and never source food other than what I had planned for. With enough determination I could've achieved this, however I soon discovered that it would be beneficial for the journey if I participated in some of the local history and often that meant travelling into town to have a beer with a local. So the trip then turned into more of a Murray River Pub Crawl.

I was averaging about 60km a day because of the fast water but that all ended when I reached Lake Hume. Lakes are often underestimated as they appear flat in calm weather, but as soon as the wind picks up can become dangerous.



This lake alone had taken lives of adventurers before so I was on high alert. I stopped at the beginning of the lake entrance and found a beach to set up camp before the weather turned and I was trapped in my tent during a huge thunderstorm. The tent shook and rain poured down as I sat and prayed that the tent wouldn't collapse or fly away.

With a lucky weather window I managed to complete the lake and stealth camp at a caravan park near the dam wall which refused me entry. The next morning I knew was going to be a big one as I had to portage around the dam with my portable wheels. However, they did not hold up as when I got to the top of the hill the right wheel tubing completely blew out and it was like dragging a bag of stones downhill. This aggravated my shoulders and I lost a lot of time but pushed on and made way to Albury.



The river is relentless and of one is not mentally prepared for such a massive adventure one could go very much insane. As you finish one bend, another appears in sight. It's easy to fall for:

"The best campsite is just around the next bend," which is just a fallacy and you end up more exhausted, with less light and a crappier campsite.

A highlight of the trip was actually the people I met along the way. Most people are friendly and aren't opposed to a chinwag during the Australian heat or at the very least a wave or 'fisherman's wave'. The river brings out the best in people I think, but people from the country are in general nicer than city folk. I witnessed incredible acts of kindness, fishermen and campers would call me over and offer a beer, food or anything cold to take the sting out of the day. Once I was given a whole platter of fruit, watermelon, bananas and grapes along with a beer. I felt very grateful and taken away from the kindness I received along my journey. It was certainly unexpected.

As I approached South Australia everything was going very well. I was making good progress, even though I had slowed significantly since the beginning of the trip due to the lack of flow in the river. I pushed it too hard one day and felt my shoulder ping. I knew what had happened and it gradually got worse the next day. I had just crossed the border into South Australia and the river was now very wide and straighter. There were cliffs which extended into the sky by 20-30 metres that channelled winds toward me making it impossible to avoid paddling into a headwind by midday. The shoulder pain got worse. It started spreading too, past my shoulder and to my back and eventually my neck.

It got so bad I actually was losing hope that the trip could be completed. My strategy changed. I was going to go at the most relaxed pace so that it didn't aggravate the shoulder, and when it flared up I would stop, massage it for a bit and apply Voltaren on to reduce inflammation. I did this for about a week and it was agonising. The winds in South Australia follow a pattern that is almost consistently south. Very rarely would one find a tail wind if heading downstream. The days grew very long when I could see maybe 4-5 kilometres in front of me and felt like I wasn't making any progress at all. So then I began to get up earlier. The final week of the trip I was getting up at 2 or 3am just to beat the wild winds.

The last leg of the Murray, Lake Alexandrina, was a highly anticipated part of the trip as it's the largest lake on the Murray and is essentially ends at the ocean. I had made it to Wellington, the last town along the Murray, and even that felt like a dream. I was surprised I made it that far with the wind I was copping the previous days. So I rested up well, went to the pub to celebrate and liaise with some fishermen about the best method of approaching the lake. They both were a big help, we had a look at the weather forecast and I would leave at midnight to make the best of the weather.

They gave me a look and said "if things start to get choppy or you start seeing whitecaps, you get right out of there".

I took his advice seriously as I read it was only years ago that a group of canoeists were paddling the lake and drowned when they were met with fierce winds.

I was stocking up on red bulls for the last section when another man spoke to the fisherman and said to them "he's gonna be a dead man and it will be on you two". As one can expect, that didn't exactly bolster my confidence.

I left early. The ferry in front of the town still operating with lights shining in the distance. I got dressed, packed up the tent and set sail, only the gentlest of breezes touching my skin. I was nervous. Hell, I was goddamn terrified. Paddling a river in pitch black is one thing, but at least you can roughly make out the contour of the bank of the river. A lake? It felt like looking into the edge of space.

There were stars at least to help guide me and I hugged the bank of the lake as much as I could before I had to depart and head straight through the guts. I felt more vulnerable than any other time in my life, like the lake could swallow me up at any moment and not even a cry would be heard from anyone. I made it past the first half of the lake, but felt the choppiness of the waves as a crosswind hit the kayak side-on. The winds indeed picked up, but thankfully I had a tailwind as I headed south. But even this tailwind was worrying. It accumulated so that the further I got into the lake, the larger the waves would become and eventually I was surfing these waves which would be impossible to kayak against if I were going the other direction. I reached a town called Raukkan. I got up and out of my kayak, walked around to find a dead-quiet town.

I had an eerie feeling like I was being watched. A man on a motorcycle approached me and asked me what I was doing here. "This is an Aboriginal town," he said "no white fellas are allowed to stay here". I explained my situation and how I had kayaked 48 days to get here and he changed his demeanour. "My name's Kevin, I'll ask the elder" he said. He called up the elder but the elder said that strictly no white people can stay on the reservation. Kevin looked at me and told me to stay there while he got his car. "I'll show you a spot where you can stay" he told me, and returned 10 minutes later with a commodore ute and told me to get in. Kevin drove me to a cliff and said that I can sleep there and it was unlikely to get caught. Incredibly thankful, I parted ways with Kevin and made my way to the hidden spot. I only stayed for 6 hours before I left at 11pm to paddle through the night and made it through the final lock before arriving at the ocean just as the sun rose.

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The Overland Track

By Khoi Nguyen

It all started out when I read the 2023 reviews of the renowned Overland Track of Tassie, which ended up with, "I gotta go for it" thoughts. The next thing I knew, the challenge had already started, just from booking tickets. It was just the start of the booming popularity, likely due to the renovated huts, and I ended up having to spend the morning in the middle of Uluru waiting for the booking queue to load. It was a satisfying feeling being able to grab the tickets for

"The Taylor Swift concert for hikers".

The Tuesday before the trip, I went to rent some gear from the MUMC clubrooms. Ivan came and asked where we were going. I mentioned about having a slot available from the bail-out fella. The next thing I knew, Ivan booked his flight immediately that night. And the journey started.

DAY 1

What can be more hectic than realising last-minute that your bladder was missing the pin? Luckily the hotel had a bunch of tape...

We arrived just before the 11:30am induction, where there was only us (apparently everyone went for 9:30am). We ended up departing at 2pm.

As expected, the start was hellish: 400m climb with 20kg on your back. We were in doubt if summiting Cradle later was possible. But it wasn't too bad after all.

I have scrambled many times before, yet I never expected to scramble for like 300m with a sore leg from going uphill! I met a bloke named Martin midway, who warned me that the dark clouds were approaching and the top would not be the end.



But I was already too determined to go. It was a rare opportunity,

"This place rains 288 days a year..."

So you only have a 20% chance of summitable weather! It was rough, after the deceptive peak, there was a dip, then another big climb! I thought of giving up for a while, but the determination kept me going. Eventually I summited with Dan. First achievement done and dusted!

But back to reality. We were 6km away from the hut, and it was already 7:30pm (8:50pm was sunset time). With a sore leg, I rushed along, hoping it would be a nice plateau ahead.



But hell no, it was difficult terrain, and I had to climb up and down continuously. With a tired leg, every climb adds to the pain. We came across the emergency shelter as sunset came, where the signpost denoted 1 hour left to Waterfall Valley hut. Tremendous effort was made not to stay relaxing in the hut.

Eventually, we reached the large downhill before the hut as the sky fell into darkness. We sprinted the descent without lights on. The moonlight, or what was left of the day, guided us through. We reached the hut at 9:27pm.

DAY 2

After the previous day, I doubted if I could do the side track to Lake Will. But I still did. It was more pleasant now. The walk was relatively chill and short.

As we arrived at Windermere Hut, Dan and Ivan went for a swim at the lake. In the middle of lake Windermere lies an island, and on the island lies a bottle of whiskey as a reward! If you are planning to do Overland, you'll know what to look for now.

DAY 3

A long day, but there was plenty of downhill, so I knew I'd be fine with a slower pace.

Once again we were the last group to depart at 9:50am. Dan and Ivan went far ahead of me at some point, and I became the last walker in the pack. No problem for me, I could relax and take more pictures!

The hike up to Pine Moor was hellish with most of the hills being short and steep. Walking on the muddy trail in the forest with fog and clouds looked eery, I felt like I could get lost anytime.

I caught up with the gang at Pelion Creek, arriving just in time for a selfie. I thought the descent would be nice, but no. Everything was muddy and wet. But at least I developed mud avoiding techniques, which worked out quite well actually! After a little ascent, we arrived at the Pelion hut.

It was a rare afternoon with a clear sky, so we went to Old Pelion Hut. I put my name in the log book, and the others took a swim at the nearby river.

I learned that I was the youngest in the gang at 24, everyone else was 28 and above! **It reminded me that a lot of MUMC members are actually quite senior!**

Glass vermicelli, with miso soup and dried beef was a nice combo for dinner, I somehow didn't feel sick of it despite having eaten it for 3 days straight!

DAY 4

It was a beautiful day for a hike. Sunlight all around - something you don't see often on the Overland Track. This day was expected to have the most ascent, especially when climbing Mt Ossa.

The hike started out painful, but as long as I walked steadily, I had no more sore muscles. I realised putting my mental state into: *'The next part will probably be harder than what I'm currently doing'* rather than: *'Hopefully that's the last of it'* boosted my determination.

Coming to Mt Ossa junction, we saw a family that had rodents munch on their bags. What a notorious junction! They also warned that the wind was too strong so they came back.

Heavy rain would deter me, but strong wind wouldn't change my mind about summiting. Besides, if I made it, I could get enough signal to call my partner, and get back to civilisation for a moment.

As expected, the track was all uphill. Even the low elevation looking part in AllTrails turned out to be 400m ascent. I finally met the strong wind the family had mentioned. I thought, whatever, I'm still going. Especially when I had seen the peak and the whole trail going up already!

As I got to the mountain, the wind became more gentle. The climb was longer, but much easier than the Cradle Mt summit (though I preferred the scramble rather than stair climbing).

After 2 hours on the summit, having called, chilled, had lunch and taken a bunch of pictures of the boys, we were ready to head off. Now the two best and hardest sidetracks of the Overland Track had been conquered! I was more than satisfied.

Arriving back to the junction, we found the bags had been messed up by the wildlife. Apparently the warning about currawong's ability to unzip was not enough for us. Ivan's bag had been pecked, Dang's bag was opened and messed up



For me, the rain cover was lifted, the front zip and top zip was opened despite having no food. After finding no food, the birds defecated on my bag!

DAY 5

Tasmania has all 4 seasons - that's what they said. We saw a glimpse of sunlight at 9am, and I thought about whether I should hike straight to Pine Valley hut to get the full Overland experience. Everyone was enthusiastic at first.

But as the visit to the side track waterfalls began, it started raining heavier. Everything became filthy, all the tracks became muddied or flooded. With the rain came the cold breeze. Slowly it hit me. My balancing ability to rock hop and keep my balance was no longer sufficient. I tripped many times, shoes hitting the deep puddles and mud several times.

At D'Alton falls junction, there were no direction indicators. There were shoe prints in both directions. I continued to hike with insecure thoughts of my own navigation capabilities.

TRIP REPORT KHOI NGUYEN

My insecurities were finally resolved when I arrived at Harnett Falls junction.

I decided Pine Valley was no more as soon as I arrived at Bert Nichols hut. I sat in the kitchen to get some warmth from the fireplace. The hut was old this time, and the toilet stunk! You could smell the methane from afar.

DAY 6

Ivan and Dan were going to take the ferry. So I decided to hike the 10km extra to go to Pine Valley, for the sake of completeness!

Weather was the same as the day before: muddy, cold and rainy. The terrain became more flooded. I wore 5 layers, and all of them were wet! Either the rain jacket reached its capacity, or it was not working at all.

As I got to Pine Valley, I went over 2 more trestle bridges.. After the 2nd bridge came the rainforest again. Just walking 30 minutes in there felt like an eternity, and I was the only one on the track.

I finally arrived at Pine Valley hut. The lone feeling ended when I met a group of Hobart school mates in the hut who shared some salami and cheese. After a nice chat, I taught them to play the card games durak and catte, which they really enjoyed!

During the trip back to Narcissus, the temperature was as low as 12 degrees. Being all wet, it was a freezing feeling and I doubted if I could continue. Nevertheless, I walked at a faster pace to warm myself up, and it worked. Knowing the terrain ahead, I strolled the muddy route as I whispered a few songs.

Got to the hut right when the rain stops. Now both my pants were soaked. I only had a pair of socks and a base layer left in my dry bag...



DAY 7

On our final day, we agreed to depart at 6am, which meant having breakfast at Echo Point.

After walking for a while, I soon realised I forgot to take any water from Echo Point. I only had 2 to 3 sips left. I started moving at a faster but steady pace to keep my body moderated.

It worked out quite well for a while, nearly 2 hours. I was stable on the uphill and sprinted on the downhill. Eventually I caught up with Dan and Martin.

As I reached an uphill, I sweated more, and my body felt like it had reached the limit from all the previous days' misery. I had to take smaller steps use poles even on flat terrain to get myself up. Each kilometre hit hard alongside the humid and windy weather. After what was seemingly an endless walk, finally more and more signs of civilisation showed up: first the ferry, then the day tourists visiting Lake St Clair. The tree roots became less prevalent, leaving space for more gravel on the track. Eventually, I reached Lake St Clair Visitor Centre after 2.5 hours of miserable walking. It was a proud and great relief at the same time. The first thing I did was to come in the pub and ordered and 2 ice cream scoops. Best feeling ever!

And so that was how my journey ended. Started out as 3 dudes from MUMC, we underwent many unforgettable memories. 7 days, more than 100 kilometers of track, more than 3000 meters of elevation, 90% wet clothes, a poorly taped water bladder, and plenty of friendships made on the way!

‘A Gumby’s time in MUMC’

By JACOB HOLDER

Night descends upon the campsite. Grime covered faces can be seen faintly in the dark, lit by a slowly smouldering fire. Tall tales are told by tall tellers, food is passed around, and everyone’s settling down after a hard day cruxing out on grade 9s. The degeneracy begins. It starts when somebody pipes up from the corner:

“Hey, who wants to go and try the squeeze test?”

Jump cut to 20 minutes later and a group of grown adults are patiently lined up, taking turns to cram themselves headfirst through a crack in a boulder in the middle of a desert.

As far as introductions go, I feel there is no better way to be welcomed into MUMC than my first trip to Arapiles with the club. I’d left Scotland, where I normally study, a few weeks prior, anxious and excited about my six-month exchange. In just a couple of weeks, I’d already succumbed to the madness, and happily leapt into the crack that’s seen a mountain rescue from people getting stuck in the past. I’d done plenty of hiking and some climbing before coming to Australia, so I knew that I was going to join the mountaineering club on my exchange but I didn’t expect my time in MUMC to be so much fun! Although I like to think of myself as a little wild, there’s definitely something in the walls of the club room that make folk go a little loopier while in MUMC. So what is the secret sauce that makes this club so special?

For starters, it’s the number of activities they manage to squeeze into one group! That’s right folks, it ain’t just mountaineering with this club! If there’s an activity heading somewhere up a cliff or down a river, there will be someone in the club crazy enough to do it. That means there’s plenty of nutters to join if you want to try something you’ve never done before.

One of my personal favourites was a cross-country skiing trip to Mt Stirling for beginners. After getting all our kit on at Telephone Box Junction at the base, we got a lift to where the snow line began and set off. Although I was definitely the least experienced there, if you compared the number of bruises on each of us afterwards, you would not be able to tell!

Turns out cross-country skiing is quite different from the downhill kind, so although there were some expert black diamond aficionados among us, I don’t think anyone went through the day without at least ten falls. Even though there weren’t any serious injuries, the falls at least looked quite dramatic, making it an absolute blast. My only regret was packing so many soft food items (bananas and croissants make quite a mess when squished to a pulp...).



Definitely the most memorable trip that I went on with the club was the infamous Midnight Ascent. This involves hiking up Mt Feathertop, Victoria's second highest mountain, in winter, at midnight (duh!) whilst carrying a costume and ingredients for a three-course meal, in one of the most noble pursuits of type 2 fun known to man. It's easily the heaviest bag I've had to haul up a hill! There were around fifteen of us in total, split into groups of three or four, and our group set off at 11pm up the long, steep switchback trail that leads to the MUMC hut near the summit. It took around 4 hours in total, plenty of time for delirium to set in. After collapsing into our tents, everyone woke the next day with a sudden urgency to get changed into our fairy tale themed outfit. Absolute madness.

Following this was the preparation and judging of the three course meals. To be honest, I don't quite remember what our little group of vegetarians made but I don't think it was very good. All I remember is bringing up an excessive number of condensed milk cans that went unused in my cupboard for weeks afterwards. Finally, with a quick sunrise summit the following morning, we all headed down the mountain, which feels a lot smaller on the descent, cheerful after another successful year of silliness.

And I suppose I should talk a bit about the climbing, the *pièce de résistance* of the club in my opinion. Melbourne's a pretty great place for climbers, with a decent number of gyms in the city and great sport crags within day trip range to get your weekly rock fix – Mount Macedon or Werribee Gorge are always a safe bet. But to get the best of Australian sport you need to go all the way to the Blue Mountains.

In the mid-sem break, the club took a week-long trip here and it's well worth the drive. With blazing sun, a sauna in the nearby leisure centre and fine sandstone to be climbed, you'll never want to leave! Some notable moments include swearing my way up Dirty Beasts, cowering in the cars from a thunderstorm and, of course, the endless shirtless climbing pics, filled with adrenaline and testosterone, shot for optimum flexage.

As fun as sport climbing is, I think deep down (some of us VERY deep down!), we all crave a bit of trad climbing every so often. And in terms of trad climbing, there's no better place than Arapiles. With the impeccable rock, the ideally placed campsite, the almost perfect weather and the poetry in the toilet cubicles, it really feels like a climber's paradise.

There's an endless amount to do, with almost every style of climbing available and at least one three-star climb at every grade. In the few trips I managed to squeeze in during my time in Melbourne, I felt I barely scratched the surface of what's possible here. I'm particularly fond of Agamemnon, a phenomenal climb for those who fancy an exposed, run-out chimney, and Necrophiliac if you want to test your crack climbing.

Regardless of your level, Arapiles is the perfect spot to learn or improve your trad climbing. It's taken me from someone who struggled to second a grade 11 without shitting myself to being competent enough to drag some other poor soul up the same grade.

I think if I tried to write down every good experience I had with MUMC, it could fill an entire magazine by itself. I haven't even mentioned the pub nights in The Clyde Hotel, the kayak polo scene, or Monday night climbing, which makes sure your week stays fun. It's truly a testament to the effort of those in the club to push their own and other people's capabilities, even after so many years. So if you're keen for awesome adventures with awesome people, get stuck in and go have a blast!

BIKEPACKING: ROAD BIKE & DIY GEAR

GRAVE-L MISTAKE?

By Dan Tran

I love cycling and hiking, so I thought,
why not combine them?

The only challenge is that I have a road bike, limiting
me to paved roads. However, I recently took it on a
gravel trail from Lilydale to Warburton. Despite using
a road bike, it held up surprisingly well...

Here's what I did to prepare it.

My initial thoughts were...

If I can switch to wider tires and attach some bags to the bike frame, I'll be ready to tackle even the most challenging trails.

Coincidentally, I found a dusty but functional portable sewing machine in the back of the house. It was missing some components, but I 3D printed replacements to get it working again.

Let's go.



The Plan, Dan.

The preparation began with the idea of making a frame bag and a handlebar bag using old clothes from thrift shops. However, while riding through the South Lawn underground parking one day, something caught my eye—a discarded UMSU poster. It looked perfect for making a frame bag. Without wasting a second, I grabbed it and headed straight to the workshop to turn the idea into reality.



I started the DIY Frame Bag by measuring the bike frame and making patterns from discarded cardboard. After cleaning the poster, I cut it into the necessary shapes, ready to be sewn together.

Of course, things rarely go as planned. The sewing machine was a nightmare, despite spending an entire night adjusting it. It produced messy stitches and used up my only roll of thread. Frustrated, I abandoned the project for a month.

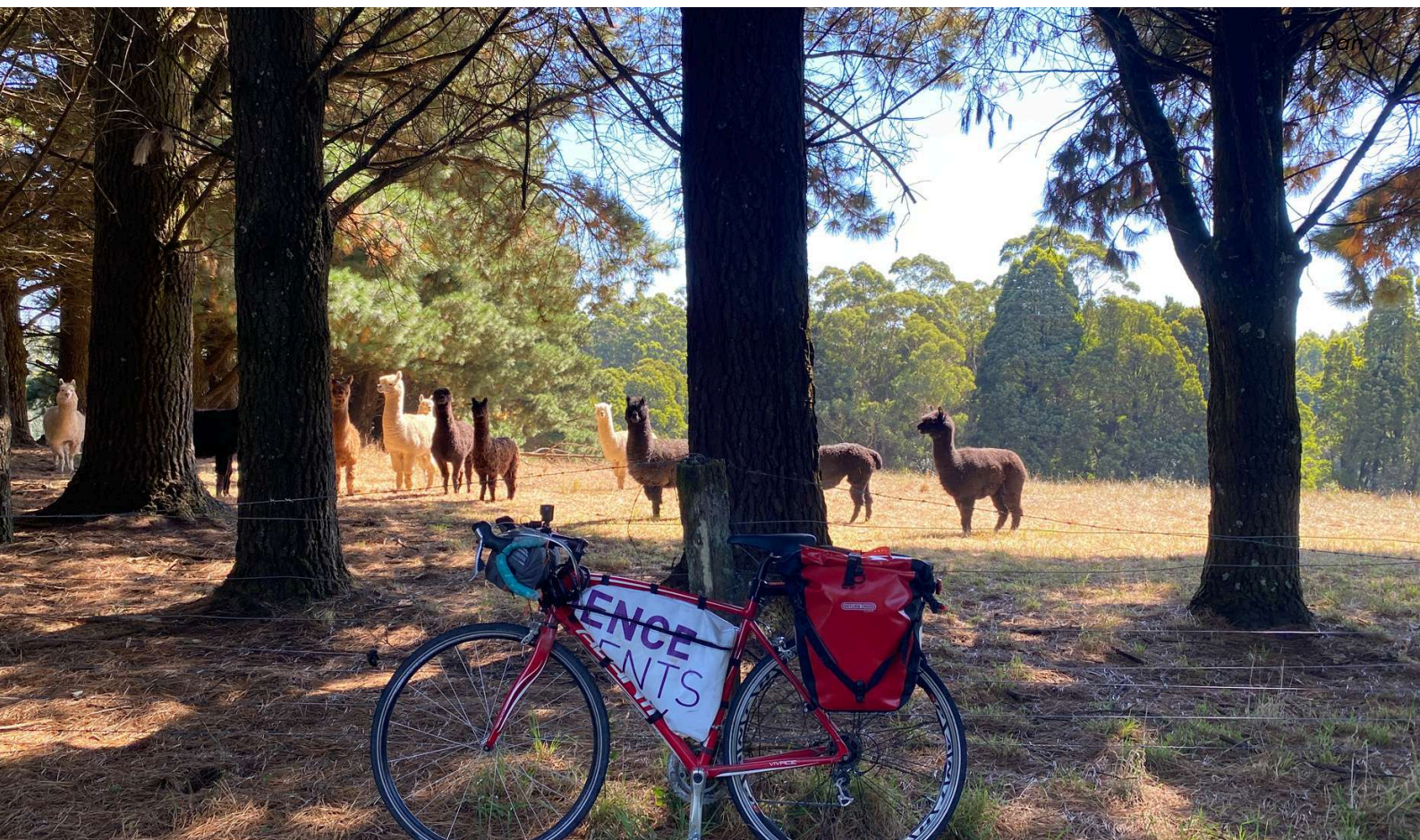
One random day, I decided to finish it by hand-sewing. It went smoothly for the first half-hour, but then the difficulties began. I poked my fingers countless times, my neck and back ached from the effort, and the thick material was tough to work with.

After a full day and night, the bag was finally in the right shape. The moment of truth arrived: it fit the bike perfectly, with all the messy stitching hidden inside.

The test run went well, providing ample space for my gear, including a first-aid kit, repair kit, sunblock, water bladder, and even a fleece. It was perfect.

The Bag, Dan.





I got the idea for the ride from a post on the MUMC website about the Great Otway National Park trail. I planned several alternative routes for safety, given that I was doing it solo.

The day before the trip, I discovered that the wider tires didn't fit my frame, so I had to stick with 28mm road tires for a gravel trail. I was unsure how the bike would handle loose gravel. For gear, I packed a frame bag for easy access items, rented two pannier bags from MUMC for my sleeping system, clothes, and food, and strapped the tent to the handlebars.

Starting from Colac, I visited the information center and spoke with a friendly staff member. My bike was heavy with fresh food for three days—already regretting the decision to skip dehydrated food. The first day was mostly on the Old Beechy Rail Trail, a 45 km stretch from Colac to Beech Forest. While road bike-friendly for the most part, some sections were quite challenging. The ride was pleasant until the first uphill section. It was only about 200 meters, but it drained all my energy, making me question why I was doing this. The only solace was the soothing, light, and relaxing scent of the woods.

I was cruising along the trail and enjoying the view when suddenly my rear wheel locked up. My feet were clipped into the pedals, and my lack of practice with clip-in shoes left me unable to react quickly. I fell. Upon investigation, I found the chain stuck between the cogs and spokes. This was surprising, as I had set the lower limit of the derailleur to prevent this very issue.

What I thought would be a minor problem turned into a 15-minute struggle. Despite all my efforts, the chain wouldn't budge, and there was no one around to help. I knew a group behind me would eventually catch up, but just when I hit my lowest point, the chain finally came loose. I was thrilled and quickly pulled it out, but this misalignment required another 15 minutes to fix before I could resume my journey.

At the 30th kilometer, I was going downhill when a thought flashed through my mind: a mistake here and I could be in trouble. Before I could finish the thought, my front wheel slid sideways, and I found myself lying on the road. Fortunately, thanks to my gloves and helmet, I only had a scratch on my knee.

FEATURE Dan Tran

Things were manageable until the 46th kilometer. Ahead of me was a steep hill behind a gate. Pushing the bike up with the weight and my clip-in shoes, which had no grip, was a nightmare. I pushed the bike up only to slide down repeatedly for about half an hour. Exhausted, I still had a few kilometers to go to the campsite.

Continuing on, I finally saw the sign for Beauchamp Falls campground. It was in the middle of a hill, with the falls at the bottom. I thought it would be easy going downhill, but I was wrong. The wavy road surface, shaped by road-making machinery, proved tricky. I made the mistake of not braking, lost control briefly, but then managed to brake and continued at a crawling speed to the campsite.

Thankfully, the falls were beautiful and cool. Being the only one in the water recharged my energy after a grueling day. The first day was done.



Hopetoun Falls, Dan.

The second day began with a refreshing downhill ride to Hopetoun Falls and the Californian Redwood Forest. The forest was tranquil, beautiful, and aesthetically pleasing. I met a group of bikepackers there, likely in their 50s or 60s, each with different setups.

The uphill climb to Beech Forest was challenging—5 kilometers of continuous ascent. The sunny weather, though not too hot, made me sweat profusely. I took frequent breaks to drink water and rest my legs. It took an hour to reach the top of the hill. The journey continued through a beautiful but hilly mountain pass to Forrest.



Redwood Forest, Dan.

My original plan was to reach Lake Elizabeth and watch the sunset while waiting for platypus, but my legs were exhausted by the time I reached Stevensons Falls, an unplanned detour. I thought it would take about half an hour to cycle down to the falls and then head back to Lake Elizabeth, but I was mistaken. The gravel was loose, and the slope was steep—definitely not suitable for a road bike. The weight of the bike added to its instability, and the rim brakes made the descent even more treacherous. I ended up walking the bike for an hour and a half to the campsite, struggling with my shoes the whole way.

The campsite was crowded due to the public holiday, but a kind couple from New Zealand let me set up next to their tent. The falls were just a 20-meter walk from the campsite, surrounded by redwood forests.

My homemade frame bag held up well and seemed to be water-resistant. I left it out for two nights, and everything inside stayed dry.

The End?

I started the last day early, knowing it would be a long trek pushing the bike uphill. It was still dark, and no one else was awake. After a quick breakfast, I packed everything and headed up to the main road.

Suddenly, I heard a "krtt krtd" sound from the rear wheel, and the bike refused to move. The rim had deformed, likely due to the substantial weight it had carried over the last two days and the uneven road conditions. To make matters worse, the cogs had come loose from the hub, probably from the vibrations loosening the hub thread. This explained why the chain had gotten stuck the other day.

Fortunately, I had a spoke wrench to reform the rim, but I didn't have the right tool to properly tighten the cogs. I hand-tightened them and crossed my fingers, hoping they wouldn't come loose too much on the way back home.

Of course, when you pray for something not to happen, it often does just to tease you. I had to stop twice to fix the cogs before finally making it back to my starting point.

Thought the trip ended on a high note? Not quite. Just as I was enjoying the smooth ride on paved roads, I found myself stranded on a stretch of loose gravel, about 6 km from the end. As I slowly walked my bike, a car stopped, and the driver asked if I needed help. I assured him I was fine and had everything I needed to reach my destination.

A few minutes later, he returned with a generous offer to drive me to my car, knowing it was a long way under the scorching heat. Despite my determination to finish the trip on my own, I eventually accepted his offer. It wasn't the ending I had planned, but the drive was pleasant, and I discovered the gravel stretch was nearly 10 km, not just 6 km.

Dan.





MUMC Memorial Hut and the Matter of Heritage

Written by **Maggie Dick**



INTRODUCTION

The Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (MUMC) memorial hut is a place of shelter, celebration, and engineering accomplishment. Although not heritage listed, it has significant qualifications to become so, but is limited by the ability of a volunteer run club to advocate for it amidst already stretched resources. For the sake of this essay, I will assume that like Vallego Gantner Hut registered in 2005 at Macalister Springs near Mt Howitt, The MUMC Memorial Hut satisfies the Heritage Council of Victoria's Inclusions of:

CRITERION D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

CRITERION F

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

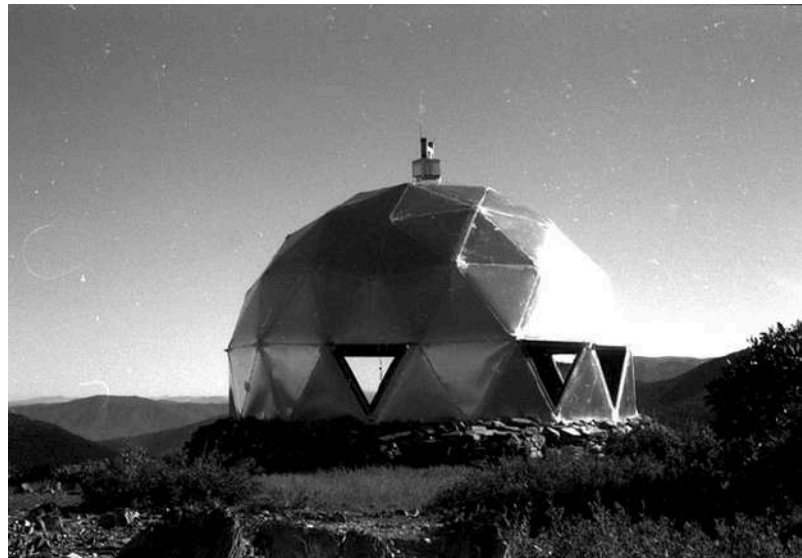
CRITERION H

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

DEFINING HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

Colloquially associated with the old and ornate, heritage in the built environment refers to a consciously collected series of places that professional specialists or community groups have chosen to keep.

Heritage practice is a modern process of value-adding to particular moments in time. In distinguishing a place as inherently worthy of protection a value judgement is made based on the ideals of current society.



In making this distinction, the field of heritage has embedded itself into management practices, as a means to substantiate intangible connections that large groups of society develop towards these stable parts of their built environment.² While heritage was once linked to architectural merit, or keeping streets in a particular vernacular, today the definition of heritage is much broader encompassing values, lived experiences and a larger proportion of our community.

From the 1960s modernism to the late 1970s rise in postmodernism, heritage practices shifted from monumental focused to values based assessment. John Schofield explains this shift as an essential vs instrumental view.³ Previous heritage practice involved highly objective overlaying by experts while a growing post-modernism allowed public value to gain authority.⁴ In this way, the less mainstream and places with no architectural merit had increased validity as worthy in a value-based heritage practice. For the MUMC Memorial hut, modern-day negativity towards heritage listing as a bureaucratic impediment to freedom has contributed to the hut not being put forward for listing. A summary of heritage as a means for acquiring state assistance will reframe heritage from a limitation and instead see it as a liberator, ensuring places of social value are not lost by dereliction, but instead supported into the modern day.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HERITAGE

As a settler colonial society, Australia adopted a British model of conservation and value judgment. The preservation of past can be dated back to the 1500s with Italian protection of Roman history, which developed into the 18th century tourism boom known as the 'grand tour'. It wasn't until the 1830s that governments would become involved in heritage, with the French being the first to bring in protections allowing for active restoration. The British followed with conservation protections in 1888, advocating regular maintenance⁵ for aesthetic continuity. As a result of the rapid changes caused by the Industrial Revolution, these protections were concerned with maintaining ideas of what it meant to be from a certain place in a world clinging to nationalism for collective security.

The birth of charters and societies grew to create democratic governance and management systems intended to reflect higher societies' wants and needs. Notable groups include the Society of Protection Ancient Buildings (1877), The Athens Charter (1931) and The Venice Charter (1964).

Although heavily influenced by the British, Australia has held its own distinct view on architecture where indifference and ornamentation are often seen as a waste to functionality. However, as European and British migration increased,

Australia imported ideas of the picturesque, the monumental, and the symbolic as a means of establishing permanence.

In Melbourne, enlightenment thinking informed much of the city's renaissance of post development. Classical architecture in Australia was used not out of reverence but as a way of giving perceived authority.

Historically, there arose three main techniques of approaching heritage. The first being the French notion of restoration championed by Viollet-le-Duc as "idealistically reinstating... a condition of completeness."

The British tailored towards ensuring order and stability through government support for a built environment at risk of neglect with the breakdown of British high society. Britain's technique of minimal impact by consistent maintenance is what Australia would adopt.

Asian perspectives of heritage drastically challenge European static models by responding to monuments through constant rebirth (see Ise Grand Shrine).

The now old remain true to their design intent of the past.

This technique could be seen as pivotal in developing the conservation of modernisms short lifespan buildings.

Although varied approaches, these historical protections have almost unanimously been limited to countries' monuments, landmarks, and public places of societies' majorities.

A reactionary response to rapidly changing times drove Heritage into the mainstream in an attempt to retain some urban continuity.

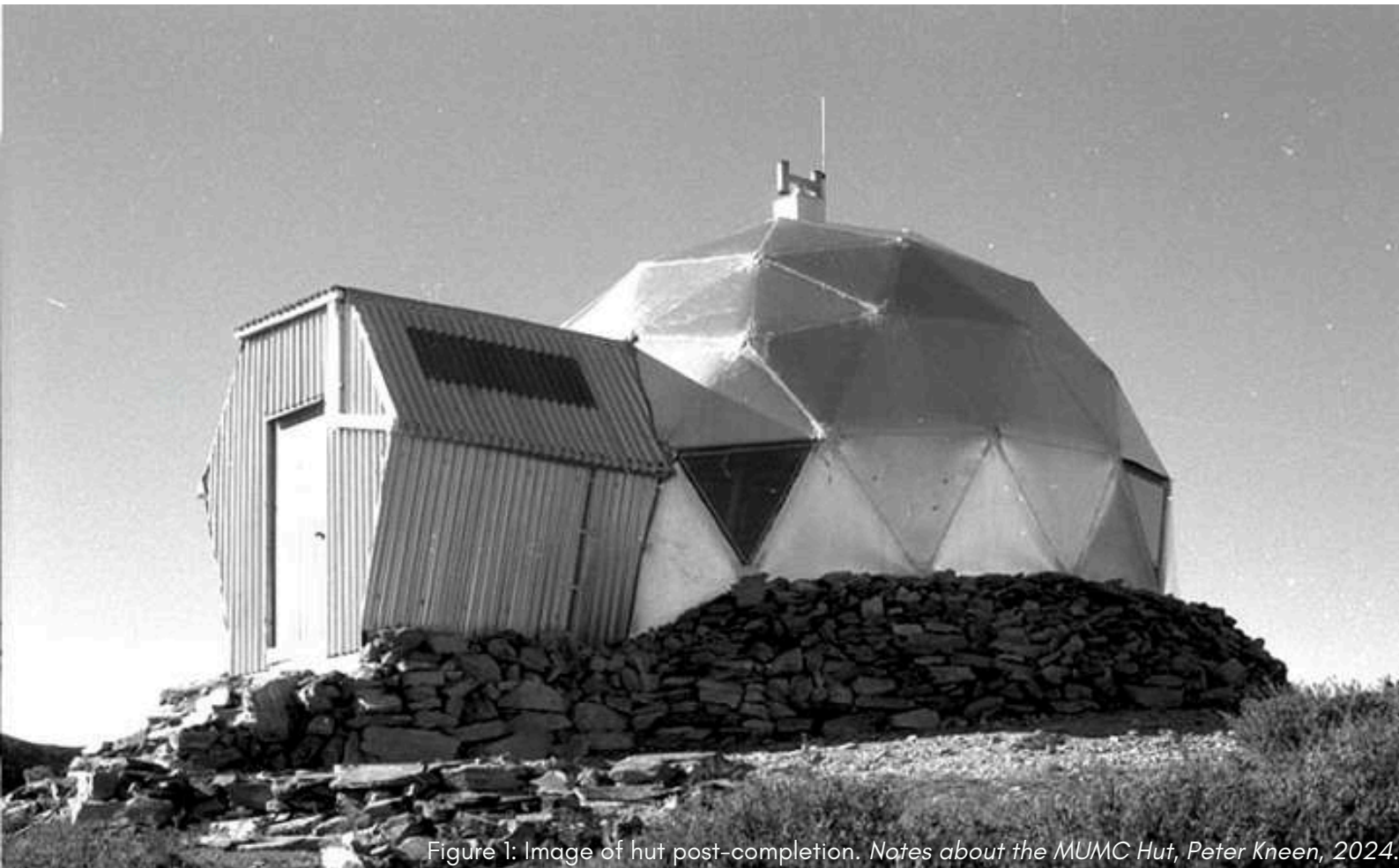


Figure 1: Image of hut post-completion. *Notes about the MUMC Hut, Peter Kneen, 2024.*

Painting of the Hut

An exhaustive discussion resulted in the passing of the motion in the policy section. The sole reason for painting the hut was to reduce the visual pollution due to its reflectivity. The following summarizes some of the against painting:

- (a) Increased maintenance requirements. BALM paints would not guarantee their products under the weather conditions experienced by the hut.
- (b) The committee had received no first hand complaints about its reflectivity.
- (c) Its reflectivity was decreasing with time.
- (d) Any coating apart from white-wash would lead to an increased surface temperature in summer. Two results could be the melting of the ISOLITE insulation and enhanced diurnal expansion leading to, perhaps, more leaks in the dome.

Early Club Policy document outlining communal management and decision making around the hut. In particular the decision to paint the Dome green to reduce community concern regarding reflection of metal clad huts in the area. David Hogg, 1972

Alps

Cladding

FEDERATION Hut on Mount Feathertop's Bungalow Spur has been re-clad in Cedar by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. Built in 1968 by the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, the aluminium hut has been an eyesore standing out as an alien object amongst the snow gums ever since.

Re-cladding it in timber is a positive move in making it less obtrusive.

Article from Parkwatch - 'Parkwatch: Official journal of the Victorian National Parks Association', No. 154, September 1988.

ESSAY

INTRODUCTION OF MUMC AND THE MEMORIAL HUT

Founded in 1944, the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club has been a prominent player in the Australian outdoors community. It has been pivotal in the cartographic mapping of large areas of bush, canyon, and cave systems, and inspired thousands to push themselves in the great outdoors.

The MUMC Memorial hut is a spaceframe construction (geodesic dome) located a 4-hour grade 4 hike from Harrietville or 5-hour grade 3 hike from Diamantina Hut (Mt Hotham). The hut was commissioned by MUMC as a memorial for Doug Hatt and Russell Judge (11 January 1965) who were killed in an avalanche on Mt Cook. The hut now is a memorial for many more members of MUMC who have died in the mountains and is the destination of an annual midnight winter walk and celebration.

Designed by Peter Kneen during his time as an engineering student at the University of Melbourne, Kneen then went on to get his Doctorate of Computer Aided Design of Spaceframe Structures from the University of Waterloo Ontario.

His work on the MUMC Memorial Hut contributed to his design of the spire on the State Arts Centre in Melbourne.

In 1972 Kneen became Associate Professor in Civil Engineering from the University of New South Wales. Kneen is now P/T Exec Office of Lightweight Structures Association Australasia Inc. Although the hut is now owned by Parks Victoria it relies on volunteers from MUMC for maintenance and advocacy.

A club built on young, educated minds, MUMC was swept in the inertia of the 1960s and chose Kneen's most intriguing design out of all of his options. The igloo-shaped geodesic dome was pioneered by Buckminster Fuller, a genius for his development of a:

light-weight structural support system based on a three-dimensional grid of triangles...

developed in the 1940s. Heritage movements of the time relied upon the genius and monumental as items to protect but the innovative modernism of the MUMC hut proved too outrageous for locals in the quiet Ovens valley.

The reflective aluminium sheeting was painted green in 1971 compromising its loud futuristic aesthetic for one that was more reserved to those in the know or a pleasant discovery for bushwalkers. However, the 1870's concern with losing the past in increased urban life is still valid for remote places that are forgotten by heritage movements or deemed too hard.

Painting of the Hut

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Left: State Arts Centre Spire – Heritage Listed in 2019. Above: Early Club Policy document outlining communal management and decision making around the hut. In particular the decision to paint the Dome green to reduce community concern regarding reflection of metal clad huts in the area. (David Hogg, 1972)

SOCIETY 1980-2010

From the 1980s, a social acceptance of modern architecture, technology, and expression began to be normalised with the Art Centre being built in Melbourne of which Kneen is quoted:

“There is no doubt in my mind that the MUMC hut was a major factor or background influence to the design of the Aluminium lower skirt of the Melbourne Arts Centre”

ESSAY

A transforming society with increased privatisation, globalisation the rise of neoliberalism under labour governments and rapid growth in modern buildings saw many building technologies quickly become outdated and materials, like asbestos, used in the MUMC hut, being banned in 2003. Ongoing debates regarding Indigenous issues and rights rose notably with Paul Keating's Redfern speech of 1993 and Kevin Rudd's apology in 2008. Challenges of inequality, environmental degradation and the changing of land ownership with the formation of the Alpine National Park in 1989 would continue to shape Australia's social landscape as well as that of a university club heavily embedded in social issues.

Environmental Challenges and Wear for The MUMC Memorial Hut

As early as 1991 major repairs and work were being needed including the replacement or repair of the floor that had rotted due to water damage, insulation which was outdated and highly flammable, windows breaking, roofing leaking and painting chipping. Priming was required to paint onto the aluminium sheeting and the hut was estimated to need 120 person days of work 27 years after its completion. The largest issue of having a sustained hut warden and team dedicated to the hut maintenance in the context of rapid turnover as students graduated meant that the hut continued to decline. In 2001 the current hut warden Mat Thomas summarised the morale noting the 'hut hasn't blown down yet'. Further to this, 2003 fires burnt down the toilet and removed all access to the hut highlighting increased vulnerability as natural disasters affect the area.



Negotiations around this time confirmed a change in ownership that had occurred by the creation of the Alpine National Park with the hut now legally being owned by Parks Victoria. During this time Thomas notes in the 2003 minutes:

'Personally I would like club to maintain involvement with the hut. Cope Hut and other huts that are "maintained" by Parks are just deteriorating because no one cares about them.

Every hut warden has faced same problem of leakage - it is designed for really cold weather that we don't often get in Australia. My belief is that it is our hut and we should keep maintaining it -regardless of ownership. However I'd welcome input as to where we go in the future with the hut.'

-MUMC Hut Warden, 1991-2003

This strain reflects an ongoing issue of modernist building conservation. The hut had many issues and although a group of committed people tried to support it, it's niche technical design meant that for most of it's life it was neglected. A lack of financial support, access to professional ongoing support, physical access, new legal challenges due lack of landownership meant that to MUMC the hut became subject to sporadic and limited interventions. A new toilet eventually arrived by helicopter from Parks Victoria and a further inventory done in 2007 summarised that:

'Water ingress into the hut has damaged structural members. Further work needs to be conducted to halt any further damage and then significant restoration work will be required to repair damage already done.'



Although an extensive list of repairs was noted the highest priority was put to repairing the leaking dome ceiling:

'Look for an alternative to the tar backed tape as this is a fire hazard. Adhesive alternatives are available although cost more. May need to completely remove the node covers and clean up around the joints to get effective sealing. The ladder under the hut can be used, but with caution due to its age. Will require harness and rope for safe access to top of hut. Recommend recruiting people involved in previous trips to access the roof.'

Concerns regarding the environment and the use of surrounding vegetation for fuel resulted in a decision to remove the fireplace from the hut. At this point the idea of maintenance had already been lost. Drastic action was required to save the hut. But countless obstacles lay in the way. Of particular concern was the discovery of asbestos used throughout the building, issues with painting straight onto Aluminium and further complications in Fire Management and future mitigation with the use of now known to be toxic foams used to save the hut in 2003 fires.

Lack of drawings or consistent involvement meant that action on the part of the club came down to repeated inventories of the huts demise with limited repairs. Now a respected part of a network of huts that saved many lives and saw thousands of visitors there was little question of the value of the hut and its merit but more an unanswerable question of how to save it.

Future Problems and Strategies

Today heritage discourse is increasingly less interested in built form but puts added weight on places as a part of 'social identity and as a location for community action' . Australia's broadening values in understanding our colonial history is making way for First Nations understandings of space, Country and intangible connections. The challenge with Heritage of the hut moving forward are of community involvement but also these changing values. The cartographic mapping that was once seen as heroic is now seen with an acknowledgement of being instrumental in white washing England's ways on a foreign land. Furthermore, the differing values of community for first nations vs property in a modern consumer society poses a need for heritage to return to it's roots being a means to provide financial support to substantiated places of worth while continually being reflective of biases within professional thought. Although Jermy Wells argues 'regulatory environment is a fundamental barrier' ...'in integrating tangible and intangible' For the MUMC Memorial hut regulatory framework is required due to the changing membership of the club, to ensure the huts longstanding care.

Without a framework for additional support, lack of multigenerational knowledge results in the clubs autonomy through action and connection being lost. In an increasingly professionalised field, heritage policy and management rely on community engagement to ensure that a diverse reflection of the Australian story is kept to share with following generations. Likewise, Australian people rely on a supported and funded Heritage profession and engagement with that profession to ensure places of challenging maintenance yet undoubtable significance continue into the future.



ESSAY

Conclusion:

Embedded deeply in the social activism of a university club, reflexivity and proactive postmodernist thought shape not only the club's self-perception but also its approach to managing the hut. This bottom-up, empowered, and ideologically driven conception of the hut makes it seem foreign to many, yet it embodies the spirit of an active and daring group of individuals. However, this self-identification has created limitations. Despite the progress in heritage as a profession, this development has not effectively reached those who need it most.

From a public perspective, the hut has evolved significantly. It is no longer viewed as an eyesore, thanks to a fresh coat of paint, and has been embraced as a symbol of human greatness and youthful passion, closely linked to a broader network of life-saving huts. Its bold architecture, once contentious, is now accepted as part of a space for self-expression due to its natural surroundings.

Critical heritage allows us to continually reflect on the values of a place and adapt theory to societal needs. However, it often lacks formal advice on practical assistance and increased professionalisation, making community group representation challenging. Members of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (MUMC) feel incapable of acting within the bureaucratic framework now required to prove the hut's worth based on specific criteria. Yet, it is often the threat of losing something that reminds people of its value.

In the case of the MUMC hut, seeking a Victorian heritage listing may now be the best course of action. Without professional skills, the numerous design challenges from its timeless modernist era hinder progress as new issues continually arise.

The MUMC hut not only reflects a brilliant and energetic culture, but also relies on heritage practices to seek community representation.

This ensures that all protected buildings have fair access to formal recognition.



Michael Feller

1946 – 2024

Mike Feller joined the Club in 1964, was actively involved in the building of Feathertop Hut, and served as Trips Secretary in 1967 and 1968. He established a reputation as one of the Club's toughest bushwalkers, as well as being involved in winter activities, including alpine climbing. His bushwalking energies were put to good use during the production of the Guide to the Victorian Alps, when he led and documented a significant proportion of the walks described in the book. As an alpine climber, he was initially active in New Zealand and was a member of the 1969 Australian Andean Expedition. During that expedition, he was seriously affected by hepatitis, particularly during the ascent of Lasunayoc, the highest mountain objective of the expedition, but by sheer willpower and with the help of painkilling drugs, managed to attain his objective.

Originally trained in chemistry, Mike went to Canada in 1971 to complete a Ph.D. in forest ecology, this new interest stimulated by his MUMC experiences. He returned to Melbourne University in 1975 as a lecturer in the Forestry Department and rejoined to the MUMC Committee as Conservation Officer during the late 1970s.

A committed conservationist, Mike was active in leading Club conservation efforts, particularly in the Victorian alpine area, during the period when the Club was first becoming actively involved in such issues. That role extended to the FVWC, heading its Conservation Subcommittee between 1978 and 1979, and promoting the Federation's public rally for an alpine national park in 1979.

Mike's conservation views brought him into conflict with the forestry establishment in Victoria, making him effectively unemployable in the Victorian forestry industry. He consequently returned to Canada where he continued his mountaineering career with the British Columbia Mountaineering Club.

He was on that club's executive as editor from 1980 to 2016, when he produced 10 newsletters per year and a biennial journal, one issue of which was a large centennial journal celebrating the club's 100th anniversary. He also spent a year as conservation chair and several years as summer camp chair, was made an honorary member of the BC Mountaineering Club and the Alpine Club of Canada, and was awarded a BC Government Community Achievement Award the service to the community. On the mountaineering front, he continued his climbing with several first ascents in British Columbia and Peru, and maintained his conservation activism in British Columbia, helping in the creation of several new provincial parks.

Mike was made an honorary life member of MUMC at the 1977 Annual General Meeting.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF MASS COOKING

By ISAAC MILES-FINE



COOKING

It's your first MUMC overnight climbing trip. Looking through the messages in the group chat, you see a message that sends a shiver down your spine more chilling than any tales of 15 meter run outs over bad gear: "Hey, we are doing mass cooking on this trip, so please put your name down on the spreadsheet".

Your palms start to sweat, and you instinctively reach for your chalk bag as you picture cooking dinner for 8 or more people you barely know.

Your mind floods with questions: "How much food, what food, what will I cook with, what if everyone hates my food, what if I kill someone or, heaven forbid, what if people are still hungry?"

But fear not. Here are ten commandments that will keep you safe (and popular).

1. THOU SHALT DO THY RESEARCH

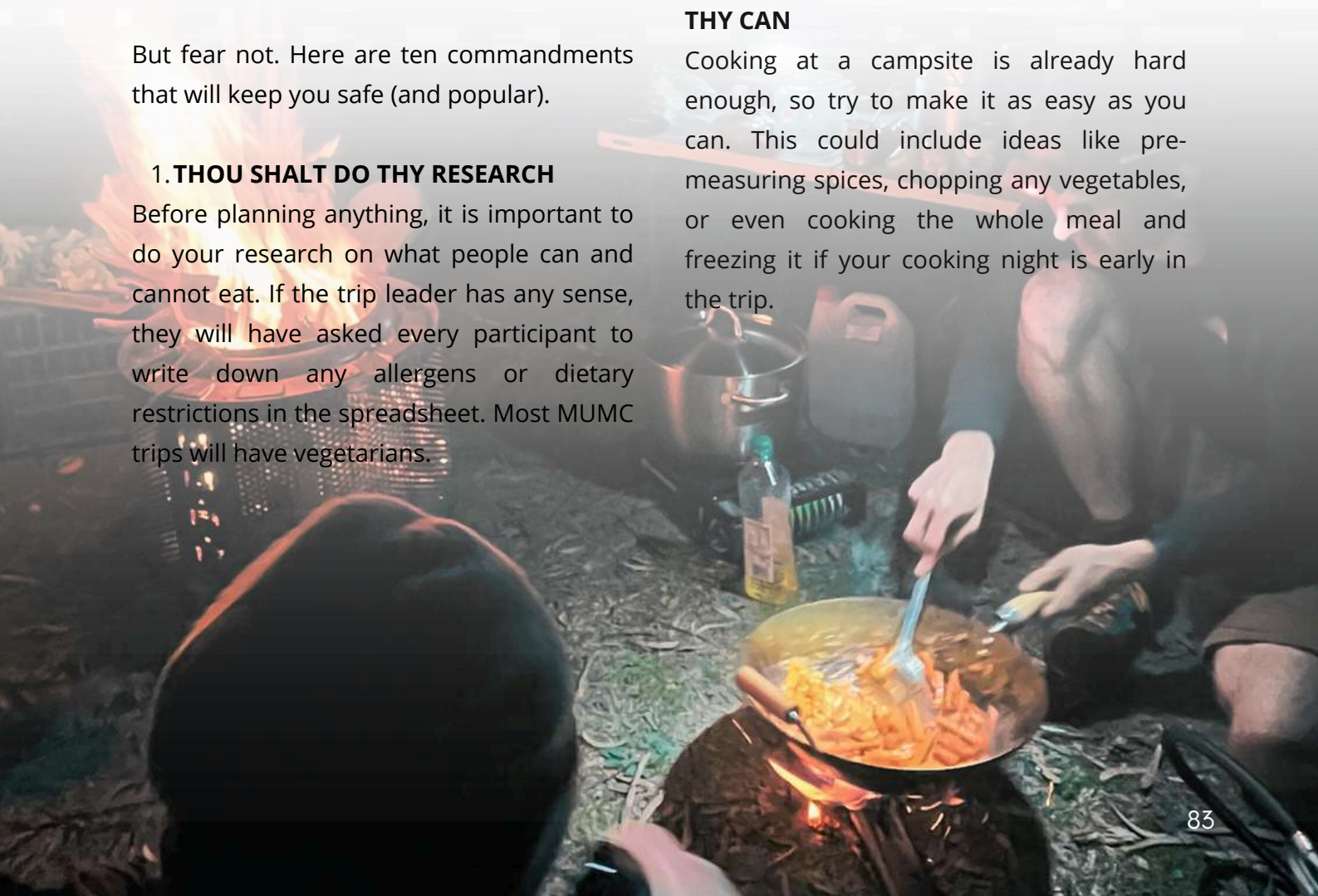
Before planning anything, it is important to do your research on what people can and cannot eat. If the trip leader has any sense, they will have asked every participant to write down any allergens or dietary restrictions in the spreadsheet. Most MUMC trips will have vegetarians.

Regardless of your own views on meat consumption, I recommend cooking mostly vegetarian meals (better for the planet and yourself anyway). The issue is allergies and intolerances. Depending on what they are, it can change what you cook.

For example, if someone can only eat gluten-free food and you want to make pasta, you can keep the pasta separate from the sauce so that they eat your sauce with their own gluten-free pasta. When dealing with allergies always check the labels of base sauces and curry mixes as they often have unexpected ingredients in them. For example, many Thai curry pastes contain shrimp, which is rude to vegetarians and potentially deadly to someone with a seafood allergy.

2. THOU SHALT DO AS MUCH AT HOME AS THY CAN

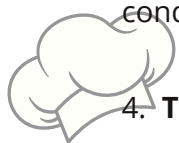
Cooking at a campsite is already hard enough, so try to make it as easy as you can. This could include ideas like pre-measuring spices, chopping any vegetables, or even cooking the whole meal and freezing it if your cooking night is early in the trip.



Basically, ask yourself when reading the recipe: **“can I do this at home in advance?”** Believe me, your future self will be thanking you when you are able to just throw a jar of spices into the pot rather than trying to measure 4 different spices in the dark, while it's wet and windy and people just want to eat and go to bed.

3. THOU SHALT HAVE COOKED THE MEAL BEFORE

Please don't attempt to make something completely new when cooking for a group (this advice is true for dinner parties at your house as well). You want to have experienced how the meal looks as it cooks and roughly how long things take to cook. Plus, it will make the whole experience much smoother and less stressful for you. You don't have to make 8 portions at home, just cooking a normal serve at home will allow you to see what steps could be modified to make it easier when camping and how long things take. You will find out if the recipe is awful and should be condemned to never be cooked again.



4. THOU SHALT DELEGATE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Now, just because you are the one rostered on for a meal doesn't mean that you have to do everything yourself. Think of yourself as the head chef. As we learned from the study of reality TV shows, being the head chef means two things: you get to call people idiot sandwiches, and you get to tell people what to do. Some examples of tasks to give out are “stir this”, “get me this”, “chop this”, “cook this rice”, “taste this”, “season this”, “get me a beer” and so on. I will add that for clarity, I removed all manners.

These are recommended, otherwise not much will be done for you, and you will probably get left in the squeeze test. While this might sound like laziness, it will make your night less stressful and people will eat faster and better food, so wins all around.

5. THOU SHALT NOT BLINDLY DOUBLE THE LIQUID

Most of the time you will be doubling or tripling or even quadrupling recipes. You should be careful not to put too much liquid into the meal. This obviously depends on what the liquid is used for (do double the water when cooking rice, don't double the liquid when instructions say to “reduce till thick”, remember you can always add, but you can't take away.



6. RICE IS THY FRIEND

Rice is one of the best ingredients for mass cooking. It is cheap, you can buy a large bag and use it for most of the meals of the trip, most people can eat rice, it doesn't require a pot of boiling water (gas and time heavy) and it stays warm while your cook the other food. This is very important if you only have one burner. For example, if making dahl and rice, you start by cooking the dahl most of the way, then you take it off the burner and cook the rice. Then, once the rice is done, you put the dahl back on and finish it off, and you have warm rice and warm dahl.

7. THOU SHALL KEEP IT SIMPLE

This should be obvious, but just remember we are cooking at a campsite with basic equipment and basic abilities to wash things, so don't use 3 pots, two frypans and half of the utensils from your parents' kitchen drawer.

COOKING

I like to limit myself to two pots (usually one saucy dish and one starch pot; for example, Thai green curry in one pot and rice in the other). Simplicity is good because it's quick, nobody wants to wait around after a day of climbing for you to flambé some mushrooms because you saw someone on Masterchef do it and win the mystery box challenge. Just keep it simple, you and everyone else will thank you.

8. THOU SHALT TAKE SERVING SIZES WITH A GRAIN OF SALT

Don't just look at a recipe and go "that serves 4, I'm cooking for 7, so I'll just double it". MUMC members are hungry people. Most of the time and after a big day of climbing, they will be ravenous, so always take the cautious route. I normally do 1.5 servings per person (so, if I am cooking for 6, I would make 9 'servings'). It's always better to overestimate than underestimate. You don't want to send people to bed hungry. This also means that at the supermarket, put that extra tin of beans in and buy that extra bag of pasta. The cost divided out among everyone is inconsequential and if you don't use it, someone else will.

9. THOU SHALT USE TINS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Taking tins camping is a really good idea. They are animal proof, durable and don't need to be kept cool (leaving more space for beer in the esky). A really great meal is a bean chilli. Just buy a couple of tins of beans, tomatoes, corn and some Mexican seasoning. Fry an onion with some garlic, add the seasoning packet and the tins and – done!

Serve with some avocado and cheese if you are feeling fancy and enjoy with or without rice. This is a cheap, easy and tasty meal. And it lasts forever, which is good if your night is towards the end of the trip.

10. THOU SHALT CREATE BIG FLAVOUR

Science says that flavours taste more dulled when the weather is cooler. This means that you need to put more flavour into your food when camping. The weather during a climbing trip is often colder so adding more flavour is very important. I often find adding heat with chilli goes a long way in enhancing the comfort factor of a meal outdoors (though please be inclusive of people with heat intolerance's when adding spice to a meal). The main way to increase the flavour of your meal is salt. You will have to add what seems like a large amount of salt to your food, but remember you are cooking for a lot of people, and you are probably seasoning the bland rice and pasta as well. So, if you are making a sauce, it should be slightly stronger than you want, as its flavour will be blunted by rice, pasta, etc. While it may seem like a lot of salt, also remember that people will have been exercising during the day and probably need to get some salt into them anyway.

Here endeth the ten commandments. But, as a final tip, ask people for advice. All of us have different experiences and knowledge and can help guide you towards creating a great meal. And do remember to have fun. Cooking is one of the main ways humans show care and forge memories with each other.



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