

AT MY DESK - Editors note

MOBSAC WOULD BE BIGGER & EVEN BETTER IF MORE
PENPUSHING OCCURRED - MY SINCERE THANKS TO
THOSE WHO WROTE:

*"Never in the field of human conflict was so much
contributed by so few, for so many."*

R. Tiley

By Andy Blakers

In 1975 a group of members of the A.N.U. Mountaineering Club decided to organize a climb in the Himalayas. In order to allow plenty of time for preparation, the date was set for pre-monsoon 1978. A number of areas were looked at, principally the Kanjiroba Himal in Nepal, and Kamet and Garwahl in India. Eventually an application was made to climb Nanda Devi, which was refused due to a prior booking. Instead, permission to climb Dunagiri, (7,066m), a nearby mountain, was granted. We were a little apprehensive about our new objective, as there didn't appear to be any straightforward routes to the summit and some of our party had Himalayas experience. Most of us had 2 or 3 seasons experience climbing in New Zealand, an excellent Himalayas training area, and some had further experience in places as diverse as Antarctica and the European Alps. Eventually we got it all together, having done 90% of the preparation in the 4 months prior to departure, and on April 11, 1978 a party of 14 from the A.N.U. plus a climbing reporter from the S.Mitt (Ben Sandilands) left for India.

India is different. Our personal gear sailed through customs, but over 2 tonnes of other gear got horribly stuck. After 4 frustrating days trying to clear it we finally resorted to a customs agent. The problem was solved. He knew who to bribe and when to do it. 400 Rupees later (IRs = 12c) we had our gear through customs. Then came the insult to the injury. We had to pay an Rs1100 fine for taking excessive time to clear customs! We loaded our gear and ourselves aboard our transport - 3 tonnes of gear and people in a short wheel base bus! - for the trip to the mountains. This turned out to be the most frightening part of the whole trip. We had to travel up the Alak Nanda gorge, which is 200km long, on a single lane road without safety fences. Our speed averaged 15km/hr and many times we gazed in awe at the road ahead, our thoughts a mixture of admiration for the builders (the British Army) and fear. Peace of mind was not helped by the sight of the wreckage of buses at several points that had gone off the edge and been caught on rocks half-way to the river. We were all very happy to reach Josimath, a frontier town not far from the Chinese border. Here we spent a week organizing porters, buying food and equipment, conducting some tree core collecting and going on get fit trips. At least came the big day, the start of the trek up the Rishi Gorge. The Rishi is one of the most spectacular gorges in the world. It is the only access route to the Nanda Devi sanctuary that doesn't involve crossing 18,000' passes. The Nanda Devi Sanctuary is guarded by two rings of mountains, both of which the Rishi flows through. Dunagin is on the outer ring, and it and Trisul form the two edges of a mighty gorge as the Rishi pierces the outer ring. At this point the gorge is 12,000 feet deep. An advance party moved up the gorge ahead of the porters to fix ropes in awkward spots and build bridges over the Rishi. They reached base camp, at 15,500 feet, in 7 days while the porters took 10 days. The lower part of the gorge was difficult to move in, but higher up is opened out a little to give magnificent views, especially of Nanda Devi (25,600'), India's highest and most sacred mountain. Above about 11,000 feet, altitude really starts to affect performance, with shortness of breath, rapid pulse rate, headaches, nausea and sleeplessness becoming more of a problem with increasing altitude and speed of ascent. Fortunately our speed of ascent was rather limited by the terrain. As part of our scientific programme all of the party were taking a diuretic to maximise throughput of liquid and minimize the risk of pulmonary odema. There were two consequences. One was that no one could get through a whole night without feeling forced to vacate a warm sleeping bag for the cold snow, and the other was to cause some of the most vivid dream any of us have ever had (Wow!)

Our porters were real mountain men - incredibly fit and agile, absolutely honest and a delight to get to know. But they had one damnable habit. After a shit they always wash their bums in a stream. Very comendable and hygenic I'm sure, but when the same stream was used for drinking water it wasn't appreciated. It often ended in a competition to see who could use the water from highest up the mountain. We would walk up the stream until above the highest turd before drawing water. But the next time water was required a turd always seemed to have been deposited a few meters higher than before. Still, since none of us got "Delly Belly" on the approach march it didn't matter in the end. The porters carried 25kgs each plus about 3kgs of personal gear. At each camp they were issued with rations consisting of potatoes, onions, salt, rice, flour (for making chappaties), cigarettes and an amazing quantity of curry and chilli powder. Our doctor was of the opinion that the curry and chilli was the cause of the prevalence of stomach ulcers.

Eventually we all arrived at Base camp, from where Dunagin could be seen peeping over a nearby ridge. Changabang could also be seen just a few kms towards Dunagin. Changabang and Kalanka together form one of the truly beautiful sights on Earth. Changabang is like an inverted ice cream cone, made from ghost white granite and generally too steep to hold snow. Kalanka is the perfect backdrop - a huge half circle of complete white. Dunagin is also a very impressive mountain, with an 1800m S.E. face and a 2,800m N.W. face, one of the largest in the central Himalaya. (See attached sheet)

We had originally planned to attempt the virgin East Ridge. But we quickly changed our minds when we treked up the Ramani Glacier to look at it. Tasker and Renshaw had done an amazing 11 day alpine - style epic on Renshaw the S.E. ridge, but this was beyond our capabilities and experience.

The S.W. ridge had been climbed by Andre Roche, the great Swiss climber in 1938. In 1976 4 Americans were killed attempting this route. Nevertheless this was the only way that we had a real chance of getting to the top, so we switched our efforts to the Dunagin glacier. We established a dump in the centre of the glacier and another in a rock cave at the head of the neve and forced a steep pitch of snow to a cot (at 6000m) below a steep rock section actually on the S.W. ridge. It was obvious that we would have to fix ropes up this section and work proceeded on this during the second half of May. (See Attached sheet)

Above the rock step was a knife edge, 1000m long, 6,800m high snow ridge leading to the summit at 7,066m. The weather was invariably fine at sunrise, but generally clouded over around midday, with snow falling every second afternoon. This effectively limited climbing to the morning on most days. Also, the fresh snow meant a dreamy plod on the glacier if still out and about after noon when it had unfrozen. How we wished for skis! They would have been the perfect means of transport on the glacier, as it had few slots. We were fortunate that wind only occurred actually on the ridges. On the Dunagin glacier the air was usually quite still. The echos at Dump were amazing as were the accoustics - one could understand people talking at Cave, 3km away! Because of the 100% snow cover, the glacier resembled a furnace by noon. I was one of the fortunates who developed a good tan, but most people had to stay rugged up because of the potential for sunburn in the snow at 31 degrees North, 6,000m up in mid summer is high to say the least. Various methods were resorted to to save the poor old nose, leading to the sprouting of several artificial beaks. One problem that we hadn't counted on was sun burnt tongues. We could't risk opening our mouths to pant! Climbing at 6000m, before acclimatization occurs, with a 22kg pack (the standard load) is not easy. One cannot afford to get out of breath. The legs don't seem to get tired because the poor old lungs give way long before the calf muscles begin screaming. One just feels lethargic and not with it. Up the fixed ropes only 10 or 12 steps were possible before a halt was forced, head slumped on ice axes as the lungs laboured for air.

We were fortunate in our choice of route in that there was little danger for ice cliffs. There was only 100m where we felt inclined to run, close to cave. Also we never struck any wind slab snow. Present statistics show that 1 in 8 or 10 Himalayan climbers are killed, almost always by avalanche and especially by ice cliff collapse. It seems to me to be crazy to choose a mountain where either of these objective dangers are not small. In other words ridges are in and icefalls and faces are out.

Back at base things were running smoothly, and by mid May Base was snow free. Some people found washing themselves to be a dispensible chore while the more conscientious among us dunked ourselves briefly in the glacial stream on sunny mornings prior to a full scale search and rescue mission for our testicles. We retained the services of a porter as cook and 2 porters as mail runners for Ben's articles. In the S.M.H and Canberra Times. In addition, one porter stood out head and shoulders above the rest and everyone took a great liking to him, so Sher Singh became our only local high altitude porter/climber. Food consisted of rice, rice, rice plus dehydrated potato, spaghetti, vegetables, freeze dried meat, cans of fish and meat and fruit, custart, cheese cakes, nuts, choc and the usual. At base food was generally edible, but above dump it became very difficult to handle certain sorts of food such as freeze dried products and muesli. Egg powder (for omelets) red salmon, Refresh and custard powder turned out to be most satisfactory at the higher camps, along with cheese and nuts. Chocolate palled after a few weeks. Tins of meat and fish and fruit (Yum Yum) were worth their weight in gold (well, before the recent price rise) and a close watch was kept on our supply.

While work was progressing on the rockstep two other mountains were attempted. The first was the South peak of Purbi Dunagin about 6,600m high, by Lincoln Hall and Tim McCartney - Snape. The route involved some very steep ice, front pointing all the time, then a traverse up a steep rock/ice ridge. Unfortunately a storm struck when they were 200m below the summit. The retreat turned into a nightmare, with the intense cold freezing the ropes to the Karabinas at times. We were very glad to receive their message that they were O.K. by radio, as the storm had dropped a lot of snow as far down as base. The other peak attempted was Bagini peak (6,190m) by the Doctor (Mark Podkolinski) and myself. We took a very pleasant 8 hours to reach the summit up a classic mixed ice/rock ridge. On the way down we got caught in an electrical storm. Snow all over some rock slabs forced a traverse onto steep snow on the side of the ridge with no protection and treacherous rocks covered by the new fallen snow.

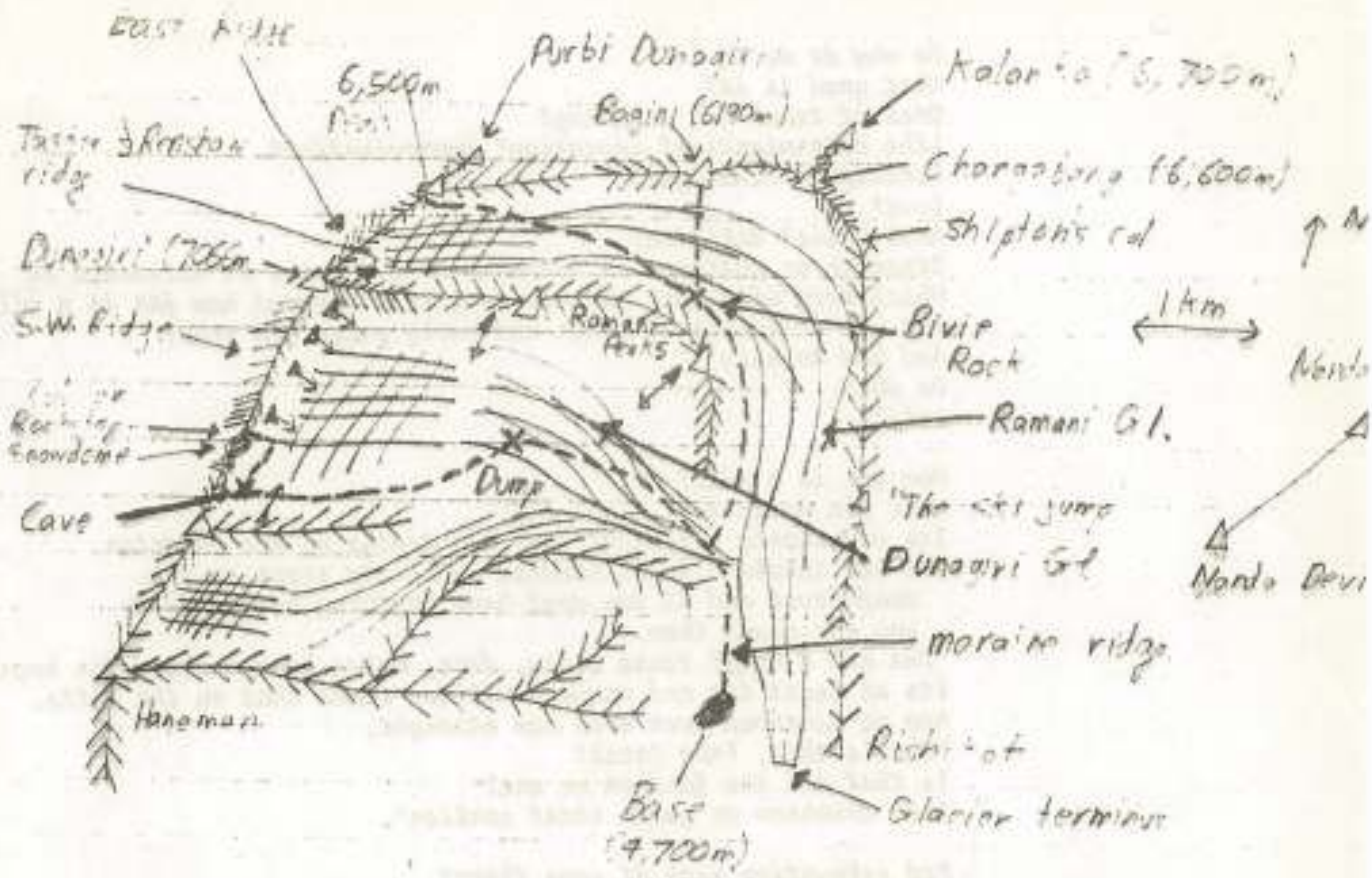
When we regained the ridge below the slabs, we realized that we were the highest points on an exposed ridge in a full scale electrical storm. The rocks were all humming, our rope crackled when moved and our ice axes sparked when waved about. We took to our heels slipping and sliding, weariness forgotten in our race to get off the ridge onto some large ice fields lower down, it was with immense relief that we eventually reached the Ramani Glacier.

By the end of May time was running out. The Col had been well supplied for a summit attempt but the rockstep turned out to be quite difficult and only 2/3 of it had been fixed. The rock was like West Bix in places and the angle wasn't far off verticle in several steps. The ice fields were really ice and were hard to put protection into. In addition, several of our best climbers hadn't acclimatized well, which put additional strain on the other lead climbers who had to do more fixing themselves. The storm that Mark and I had been caught in on Bagini had dropped 1 to 2 feet of fresh powder at the col and there was an obvious avalanche risk. In addition we had received reports that the monsoon was close to Delhi already and we didn't want to get caught in that. A decision had to be made, by Tim and

Lincoln, who were the only pair with the required experience and acclimatization for a summit attempt. They decided to abandon the attempt on Dunagin. Accordingly, the next day people moved from Base to the higher camps to remove gear while Tim and Line climbed up the rockstep to remove the fixed ropes. There was great excitement when they reached the top of the fixed ropes and decided to try for the summit because it was such a beautiful day. We followed them with binoculars to a place one third of the way along the S.W. ridge called "The ghost". There they made a campsite by kicking off the top of the knife edge ridge. The theory of moving on knife edge ridges is that if one climber falls off one side the other jumps off the other side, leaving the rope taut across the top of the ridge. They spent a very cold night (no sleeping bags) at 6,800m in about as airy a perch as it would be possible to find with wonderful views of Tibet only 20km away, on one side was an 1,800m drop and on the other the drop was 2,800m. May 30th they continued slowly on along the ridge while we checked their progress at base, which we were busily packing up. Eventually they reached the summit ice cap. Line had a rest while Tim completed the last 200m to the summit, 29 years and a day since Hillary Tensing climbed Everest. They were very tired on the way back along the ridge. To make things worse a storm struck at 3pm. Eventually they reached the top of the rockstep, at 7pm and prepared to abseil down. Back at base we were terribly worried, and made plans for everyone to go up to help the next day. We woke to the news that Tim had reached Col at 2am, but that Line was still out on the fixed ropes. To say we were in a hurry is an understatement. 15 minutes later 4 of us were off to the col with the others to follow. At 7am we checked with Peter Cocker, (the leader) who was at col, and he told us the very welcome news that Line had come in, but that he was suffering from exposure and frostbite and dehydration and exhaustion. It was decided that the Doctor and I should continue on all the way to the col and that the others were to take stretchers and gear to the dump in preparation for a rescue the next day. Line and Tim were in good spirits but very tired. By the afternoon Tim had recovered sufficiently to return to base, leaving Mark and I to look after Line. Line's toes and fingers had all been frostbitten, so Mark did the best he could for them - bandaged them and left them severely alone. The next day 10 people came up to the col to lower Line's stretcher down. Thanks to an excellent harness jury rig by Martin Stone, the operation went smoothly. Then it was a long walk back down the glacier and even worse down a wet boulder strewn moraine ridge, in falling snow. Its amazing how heavy someone gets after 6 hours even with lots of carriers. A few days later Line was evacuated by helicopter, courtesy of the Indian Army, but not before a celebration party at which everyone had a can of beer and some wine and assorted goodies which we had especially carried in for the occasion.

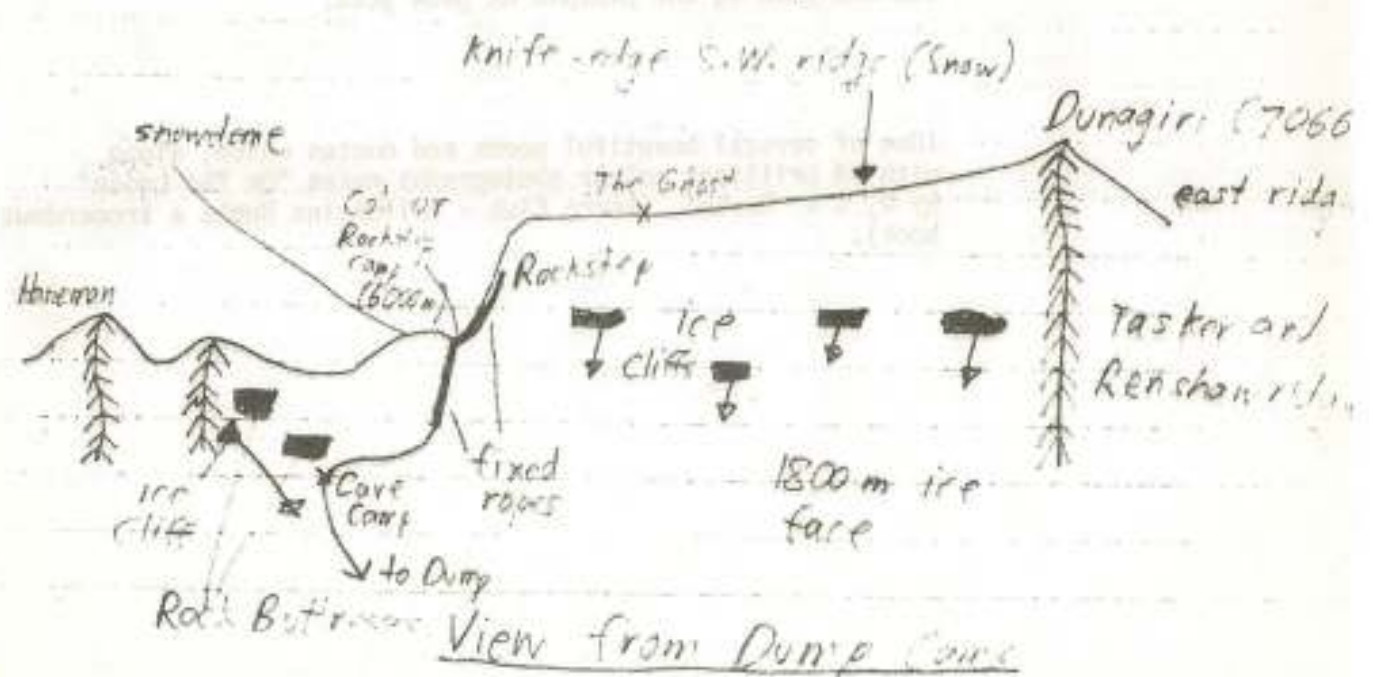
The last few days of the expedition were delightful and absolutely abysmal. It was magic to drop down into the Rishi gorge, into the land of green and living things, after 6 weeks in ice and rock. We followed a high level route out and demonstrated our fitness by reaching the road head in 2 days, one of which involved 3,400' of climbing, 6,400 of descending and many kms in between with full pack. By now it was mid summer (early June). On the day of the trip to Delhi 4 of us caught a full dose of the dreaded lurgi. The temperature was well over 40 deg. C., there was no cool water and we fearless foursome were vomiting repeatedly out the side of the bus as it moved along while desperately trying to restrain our bowels. I don't think I've ever had a more miserable day. At least it made me forget to fear the Alak Nanda gorge.

There can be few things as rewarding as a Himalayan Expedition. We were very lucky in our choice of mountain, time and companions. There were virtually no personality clashes and the unexpected success capped a truly memorable 2 months. Not all expeditions are so lucky. Himalayan climbing often ends in failure and tragedy. This point was brought home to me by the narrowness with which our mountain was climbed & tragedy averted. Still, if care is exercised in selecting team members and even more importantly in selecting a suitable route, a climbing expedition really can supply the



= neve
 ← = ice cliff
 ~ = glacier
 - - - = climbing route

Dunaigri Area



So why do we do it?
What good is it?
Does it teach you anything?
Like determination? invention? improvisation?
Foresight? Hindsight?
Love?
Art? Music? Religion?
Strength or patience or accuracy or quickness or tolerance or
Which wood will burn and how long is a day and how far is a mile
And how delicious is water and smoky green pea soup?
And how to rely
On your
self?

How far is a mile?
Well you learn that right off.
Its peculiarly different from ten tenths on the odometer
Its one thousand seven hundred and sixty steps on the
dead level and if you dont have anything better to do
you can count them.
"One and a half? Youre crazy, dere, we've been walking for hours!"
Its at least ten and maybe a million times that on the hills.
And no riverbed ever does run straight.
"What's this, Frog Creek?
Is that all the further we are?
Look tomorrow we gotta start earlier".

Red exhaustion rips at your throat
And salt sweat spills off your forehead and mats youre
eyelids and brows
And drips on the burning ground.
And your legs start to turn to rubber and collapse like a balloon
Pretty soon I've got to rest.
How much further? What's the good of this God
damn work anyway?

The long distance runner is paid by the snap of a
white thread across his chest
You are paid by the picture at your feet.

(One of several beautiful poems and quotes which, along
with 63 brilliant colour photographs makes "On The Loose"
by J. & R. Russel. Sierra Club - Ballantine Books a tremendous
book).

MAPS: There are no Lands Dept. or CIA Topographical Obtain Forestry maps (Scale: 2miles = 1"??) and information from NPXWS 167 Kent St. Detailed maps not necessary because most walking is on trails.

TIP: 4 days can be cut down to 3 easy walking on firetrails all the way - although this can be hard on the feet. Many steep ascents and descents.

We left Sydney very early Friday morning, travelling via Wollambi, Cessnock, Maitland, Durgoo and Salisbury to the Barrington Guest House (some 320km). Here we enquired about hiring horses for an hour, and were told this would be possible on Monday, after the guests had used them for the weekend.

We left the cars at Lagoon Pinch (picnic tables and a watertank), the steep ascent of 1400m is made in 4km to just above the Carker, along a 4WD track. Spectacular Scenery - but alas, we have made a mistake in coming at Easter. Smelling pollutioning 4 Wheel Drives snort and fume up the slope. Weekend golfers, grandmothers and eskoes.

North of the Carker there is still 3km of climbing, but it is more graded and we are able to concentrate on the imposing antarctic beech forests and ferns. We decided to camp on a disused loop of road. The ultimate humidity for "ardent" bushwalkers would be getting run over in the middle of the night. The 9 of us make a major foray (of Pooch Bear standards, in search of the North Pole) into the forest looking for water. An opportunity to come to close quarters with the dark forest and its accompanying undergrowth.

Saturday morning we cover the remaining kilometre to the Gloucester Tops turnoff. We drop our packs and walk the 300m to Wambat Ck (plenty of water) where the vegetation has changed to snow gums and alpine grass.

It does not take long to partly retrace our steps and cover the remaining 2km to Carey's Peak, where we are rewarded by an unexpected marvellous view of of the Allyn River Valley. After lunch Colin, Lloyd and I set off to cover the 12km return trip to Mt. Barrington. The rest of the party are to make their way east along the 20km trail to Gloucester Tops.

We are glad to be setting a reasonable pace, and discuss impending overseas trips and how one would set about skiing Kiandra to Kosciusko one day. We are passed by 4WD's, probably on their way through to Moonar Brook and the Hunter River, but maintain a air of superiority over these sightseers (or "touris", a gagle of the dreaded schgular). The mixed eucalypts occasionally thin out to reveal alpine meadows.

Mt. Barrington has been cleared of trees and reveals a view with a more westerly aspect than Mt. Carey. We return to our packs and follow the disused foretrail towards Gloucester Tops Road. Since there are no vehicle tracks the path becomes much more pleasant as it wanders through the antarctic beeches. At times we can hear a creek, but we leave this sound and just on dusk catch up with the others. The tents are pitched within a morass of fallen trees - real "Lord of the Rings" country. Water is obtained from small pools on a dry watercourse drapping off the Southern side of the ridge the ridge into the Gloucester River watershed.

The next day the scenery alternates between beech and temperate rainforest, and snow gums - quite different vegetation to that in the Sydney Basin and Blue Mountains. Each town of the track reveals a new view, another variety of flower or a different coloured fungus. The advantage of walking on a disused firetrail is that one is able to admire the bush, without having to fight it or mind one's step.

The Gloucester Tops road is reached and 6km of footslogging brings us to the Gloucester River for a late lunch. There are many picnickers enjoying the sun. Up the hill in a Southerly direction, over the locked gate into the Hunter River Catchment Area (unauthorised Entry Prohibited) and then the long descent down from the heights of Gloucester Tops. We are now amongst fine stands of towering gums with ferns in a subtropical-rainforest. The firetrail stays on the backbone of the ridge as it plunges down to Mt. Nelson. Interrupted by only intermittent rises. The heavily wooded slopes drop steeply on either side, and we frequented by many birds.

We can see where a vehicle has unsuccessfully tried to come up the trail, but was defeated by the gradient and loose surface. This is also having an adverse affect on our party - toes are forced to the fronts of sandshoes and boots and at the end of a long day blisters are rife. From Mt. Nelson we see our objective, the Chichester River, flowing through grazing land. Before we can reach it we pass small logging concerns, and around locked gates.

We camp on the banks of the river after obtaining permission at a nearby farm. A couple of car seats provide comfort around the fire, and everybody feels better for the wash.

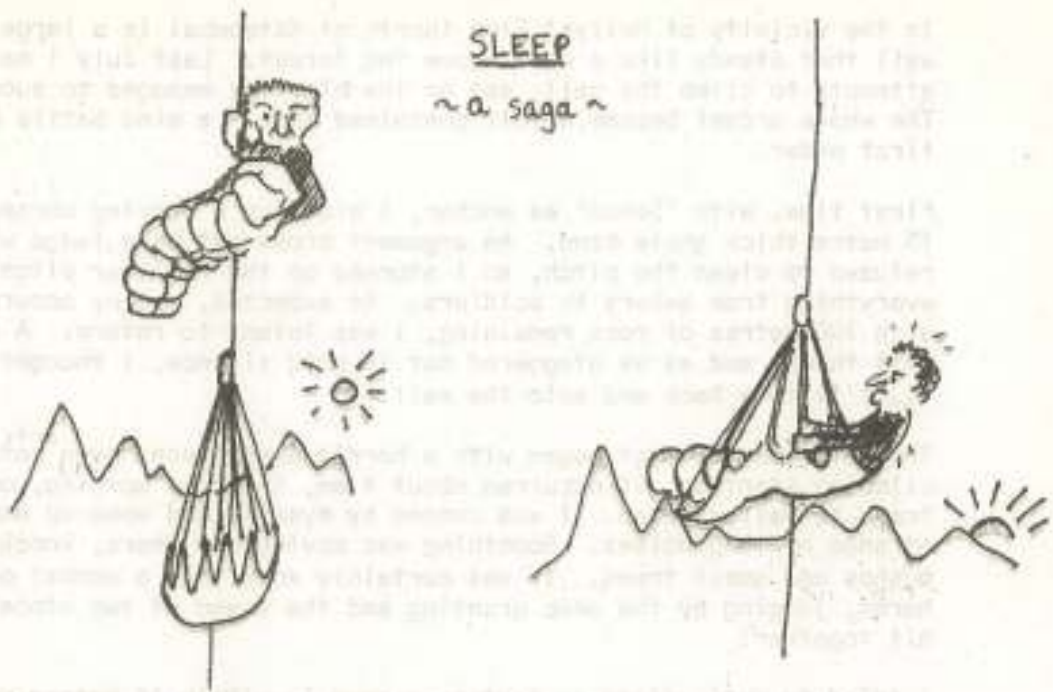
Monday is a lazy day for the others, while Colin, Lloyd and I continue along the road to Upper Chichester until it peters out amongst farm buildings. We then follow a ridge west, and are pleased to find a bridle trail that takes us over into the Williams River Valley. We are sorry for the others missing out on the views, but later envy them as we slog back up past the guesthouse to the cars.

In the cars we detour via the Allyn River with its many idyllic camping spots - everyone of which is occupied by the latest fashion in tentage. Back to Upper Chichester for the others and then home - although there is still time for Dr. Jurd's Jungle Juice at Woalombi.

ADRIAN SPRAGG

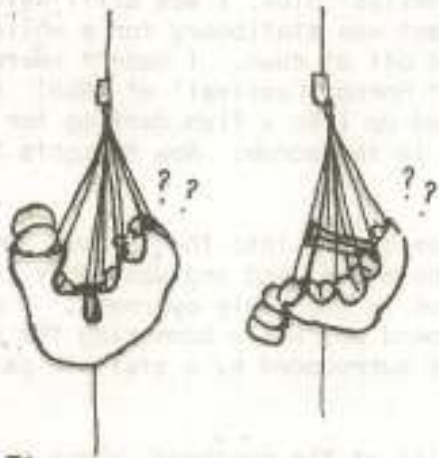
SLEEP

~ a saga ~

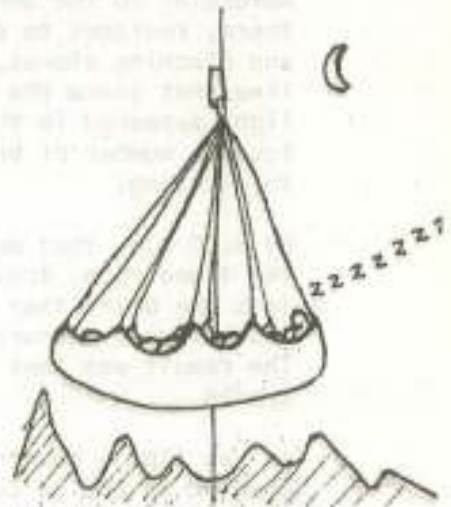


① The intending Hammock Dweller is inside his sleeping bag and jammers down to an awaiting Hammock.

② The sun is going down, so hurry u Ease in, feet first - don't go out the other end. Thats it... thrash and struggle, but dont lose your temper



③ If you end up in the above positions try to turn over at regular intervals - Later, have a chat with your designer



The ideal prone position. Have a pluck of the slings before you nod off. Good night then, and dont go sleep walking. D:

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - David Wagland

In the vicinity of Nellys' Glen (north of Katoomba) is a large yellow wall that stands like a wave above the forest. Last July I made two attempts to climb the wall, and on the third try managed to succeed. The whole ordeal became a self contained epic - a mind battle of the first order.

First time, with 'Sebco' as anchor, I aided up a curving corner to a 15 metre thick shale band. An argument broke out on a ledge when 'Sebco' refused to clean the pitch, so I stormed up the familiar pitch cursing everything from bakers to soldiers. As expected, mutiny occurred, and with 100 metres of rock remaining, I was intent to return. A rope was left there, and as we staggered out in cold silence, I thought - "Damn it, I'll come back and solo the wall."

The following attempt began with a horrid experience, even before the climbing started. It occurred about 4 am, Saturday morning, on the track to Nellys' Glen. I was camped by myself, and woke up hearing strange howling noises. Something was moving out there, knocking down bushes and small trees. It was certainly more than a wombat or stray horse, judging by the deep grunting and the sound of two stones being hit together!

I tried to rationalize as footsteps came to within 15 metres of the track, but instead adrenalin gave way to tears and panic. Of course the highway was a 5 minute sprint away..... I pictured a maniac dashing out of the bush onto the road, screaming about a wild beast. Car headlights would illuminate the crazy person for an instant, then he would be squashed onto the bitumen like a lost possum of the night - A victim of civilization.

Returning to the unreal world of Nellys' Glen, I was still lying (stuck) there, resigned to death. The beast was stationary for a while - grunting and clacking stones, then it moved off at dawn. I hadn't heard noises like that since the 'Deadly Ernest Horror Festival' of 1968! As soon as light appeared in the sky, I jumped up like a fish darting for air, and found a number of broken branches in the scrub. Now thoughts had to turn to climbing.

By 9.30 a.m. that morning, I had descended into the valley, jammed up the fixed rope, traversed along the shale band and was ready to clip into the bolts that had been placed in the shale overhand. A week ago, the entire structure collapsed around me, while hammering the drill in. The result was that every bolt was surrounded by a stellate pattern of cracks.

It was tiptoe country out to the lip of the overhand, where a thin crack enabled an upside down knife blade to be driven in. I swung around in the etriers and placed a tied off blade on the wall above. The rest of the morning was spend nutting up a rotten overhung crack. On the way up, a wire ripped out of the sand, and I was left spinning in space, hanging like a puppet off a prussick knot. At least the self-belaying system worked! The crack ended abruptly in a shale-filled shelf that one could just squeeze into. I gained composure in the coffin, then bashed in 3 bolts to reach a diagonal flake.

The sun went down just as the flake was reached, so I hurriedly down-climbed two pitches to the large shale band. It was going to be a hammock bivvy that night, without a sleeping bag. The gusty wind wasn't going to help things either. As darkness descended, I stood there like a miserable wretch, nibbling Scotch Herrings and Sauce.

I jumared into the 'Dirty Brothers' Hammock, fighting with a large plastic bag, and finally established myself. An icy wind gave me a hostile reminder that it was winter, and all I could do was hang there, either rubbing numb feet or shivering to the static beat of 2KA. (A pocket transistor was pressed against my ear). At first light, I looked out of bed to the swaying trees well below. I cursed myself for being alone in such a terrifying place

Unfortunately the cliff was in shadow all day, so there was little point in trying to sleep in. It took a long time to get organized and to re-climb the fixed aids up to yesterday's bolt terminal. Since the aiding had zig-zagged around an overhang, it was not a simple matter of rapping down, then jumaring a pitch. How frustrating it was, climbing mank 3 times!

The diagonal flake above the bolts seemed reasonable despite the hollow sounds, and this led to another shelf, slightly roomier and less exposed than the coffin at the top of Pitch 4. Hopes were that the next 15 metres could have been freed, but unfortunately it was blank. Above, was far more climbing, and because I had a 9 o'clock lecture the next day, another night on the wall would have been absurd. It was decided to get the dirty work over and done with, descent in the light, and return the following weekend.

10 bolts and 2 pegs later, I sagged to a stop. 2 hours passed as I down-climbed and abseiled to the rainforest below. On arrival it was dark, so I was faced with a blind-footed trudge through 45 degree mud and undergrowth to the bottom of Nellys' Glen. With gear hanging everywhere, I tripped and stumbled on every obstacle.

Later in the night I was at the top of Nellys' Glen in the area where I left my daysack full of valuables and spare clothes. Cunningly this sack was stashed behind one of the many trees about 50 metres from the track. I tried 3 times to retrace Saturday mornings' footsteps, but in the darkness it seemed better strategy to run around frantically until it was tripped over. Eventually the daysack was recovered, and with that problem over I tried hitch-hiking for an hour or so. Final punishment was a 4 kilometre crawl to Katoomba Station!

I was in a state of intense anxiety that following week. Many things could have failed - the weather, my health, the cliff collapsing etc., so by the end of the week, impatience was at a peak. I felt my way to the bottom of the cliff in the darkness of Saturday morning, wary of any foreign noises. Plans were to complete the project that day, so no bivvy gear or food was dragged along.

It was a perfectly still day, and as I aided up the fixed placements at sunrise, I looked down to the beautiful mist covered valley. Even above the roar of the waterfalls, one could hear many different bird calls coming from beneath the silver mantle of cloud. The isolation was incredible - all around me was overhanging rock. Rescue would have been practically impossible if an accident occurred. Only 2 or 3 people knew of my plight anyway, so it was up to myself to survive.

From the highpoint, more bolts and tied-off pegs led to some committing free climbing across a smooth wall. The back rope, self-belay system employed was adequate when aiding, but for free climbing one had to calculate when there would be a chance to stop and slide the prussick knot up the rope. Rather necky when the rope snaps tight in the midst of a desperate move!

Anyhow, the short winter day flashed by as I hooked, freed and bolted up a mottled wall. By dusk I collapsed onto a ledge below a bulging headwall. A quick inspection revealed no possible escape, but I had to haul the pack and clean the previous pitch first. After all that work had been done, it was dark, but a full moon was rising.

It looked grim because the wall above had a discontinuous crack and elsewhere it appeared blank. However, on a bulging arete, there looked as though there might be some holds. I quickly swung over some projections and was suddenly hanging above 200 metres of space below another bulge. A wire placed behind a flake provided some relief, so I flung my foot out to a heel-hook on the lip..... Nothing. I tried again. Locking with all remaining strength, I raised my left arm and grabbed a hold. I hauled myself and a moonshadow onto the vertical, then pranced up the wall and chute above to a solid tree anchor.

Spirits were really high, despite having a close call with a dislodged rock. After hauling, I sat down to coil the ropes and observed the moon glancing through the tree tops. I thought of all the work and heartbreak that had gone into 200 metres of rock. I laughed, because it was so hard to comprehend what release meant.

A RIDE IN THE SNOWY

After a harrowing ride up Pitt St. I joined Ken Wilson and his brother to catch a train to Cooma. After a long and boring trip (it lacked usual entertainments such as drunk guards and servicemen on leave) we were on the road by 7.15 am.

The ensuing ride to Thredbo was long and uphill in drizzle. I remember using my brakes twice. We arrived rather buggered at Rutledge's Hut at about 3.45 pm and slept there.

The following day was sunny and after visiting the habitually empty Cargens Station we left Dead Horse Gap for the Cascades at 12.00. I then collected two punctures in quick succession on the slippery, rocky surface. From the top of Cascade ridge our efforts were well rewarded. A clear view was to be had of Mt Pilot, the Murray Valley and Victoria. We began the steep (and due to the rocky surface) slow ascent of Bob's ridge and were at Cascade Hut for a 3.00 lunch. The ensuing ride to Tin Mine was along undulating and fairly smooth road. We careened passed two surprised parties of bushwalkers over huge piles of horse shit and reached Tin Mine Hut by 7 pm. A late dinner followed and we all slept well, disturbed periodically by sporting stamping brumbles.

The Sun was still shining the following morning in a cloudless sky; Mt Pilot was the obvious objective, followed by Cowombat flat for a day trip.

A 2 to 3 hours ride, mostly uphill, brought us to the foot of the Pilot. After a fast ascent we were rewarded by a cloudless beautiful 360° view, with slight wind. We descended back to the bikes and headed off to Cowombat Flat for lunch.

About a mile from our destination Ken left off his bike suddenly, a problem appearing - a quick dissection of the front forks revealed the trouble - a fractured fork crown. With such damage there was only one solution - push the bike out. Further riding would only cause the forks to snap. While Don and I shot off to Cowombat (we'd heard there might be some vehicles there capable of transporting Ken's bike), Ken began the 10 mile push back to Tin Mine.

When we reached Cowombat there was no vehicles visible, just their tracks criss-crossing across the flat. We examined the remains of the DC-3 wreck, a shattered star-board wing, recrossed the Murray and started off after Ken.

He had made good progress and reached Tin Mine a half hour ahead of us. Over dinner we discussed our predicament. With the bike in such a condition, our planned exit route. The now unused Tin Mine Track, seemed ridiculous - it left us 33 miles from the nearest town and hope of repair, whereas to return the way we'd come was only 20 miles and help might be available at Thredbo. We decided on the latter course of action and despite the noisy nocturnal brumbies rose at 5 am the next morning to execute it.

We rose with the sun, ate and left for Dead Horse Gap. Don was very weary and our progress was halted for some hours due to this. Ken stoically refused to let anyone push his bike - eventually it made no difference as we were all pushing up the hills we had so joyously ridden down some days before. We reached Cascade Hut for lunch at midday and then began the big grunt over Bob's Ridge and back to Dead Horse Gap. The Sun still persisted in shining and we enjoyed a good downhill trip off the cascades to Thredbo.

(cont)

A Ride in the Snowy (cont)

There we managed to purchase a second hand pair of front forks from the Fleets bicycle hire shop - the bloke there was most helpful. Then followed a quick descent to the Thredbo ranger's station, deserted as usual. We left a message on some toilet paper to inform the authorities of our return. A cool night followed at Rutledge's Hut.

The next day the clouds burst and we arrived at Cooma, soaked, to find we had a 25 hour wait for a train home to Sydney.

ROB TILEY

"SO GOOD - YOU CANT PUT IT DOWN"

Having spent 5 hard days traversing the southern tip of Tasmania we finally arrived at Cox's Bight.

Like a reward awaiting us the brilliant white beach lay surrounded by hills and lagoons. Three days walk from the nearest road and about a week from the nearest town and about a week from the nearest town we were experiencing a great place.

As we walked along the beach we saw a plane - some alien bird in such a lonely area - which circled and came in to land. 'Oh well, the more people who can appreciate such a place the better'. Expecting to see the passengers alight and wander along the shore line, we were proved very wrong. After a quick glance at the scenery, a few deck chairs were pulled up and within minutes they were engrossed in paper backs and newspapers. Not even an attempt to test the temperature of the Southern Ocean with a small toe! In an hour or so the plane had gone.

No wonder so many want wilderness opened up if they appreciate it so much.

DAVID POLAND
IAN JOHNSTONE
BOB TILEY
CAMERON McMORROW
IAN DONOVAN

February, 1979.

*"I'd rather wake up in the middle of nowhere than
in any city on earth" -*

STEVE McQUEEN

HAPPILY IT WAS RAINING

After two days of overcast weather, rain now looked imminent. Though our goal for the day, the Capertee River, was within our reach, Adrian and I chose the comfort of a small overhang to await the rain. By dinner it had set in.

The next morning saw Adrian quickly breakfast and pack. As it had poured all night, and was continuing to rain, I was somewhat reluctant. Only the feeling of guilt as I saw Adrian sit coolly by his packed pack, prompted me to get up. Soon the dry little cave was left. The knee deep crossing of the Capertee did not seem much to us, already being soaked through. Then we two water soaked rats crawled our way up a ridge to the Mt. Morgan plateau. (the plateau separating the Wolgan and Capertee Rivers). With increasing winds, fog and rain, a cave just below the plateau made a spot to strip ourselves of our wet clothing and stuff ourselves with food.

Easing back into the wet clothing, after lunch, was torture, but then the pouring rain, mist, scrup and icy winds! We camped early that afternoon in an overhang. With a soft dry dusty floor, and an abundance of water outside, we were happy.

But with a change in wind direction in the middle of the night, the dry overhang was transformed into a wet, windy hell. The rain was coming in onto us. The soft dry dust was blown around the cave, onto wet sleeping bags, and into our packs and food. Our wet cloths, having been hung up to dry, were blown onto the now muddy cave floor, and our ground sheets (giving us some protection from the rain) were blown off us.

Two mud-encrusted figures decided the next morning that they had had enough, and the quickest route to Adrians car on the Culoul Range was chosen (This was down a ridge to where the Wolgan and Capertee Rivers meet to form the Colo River, then follow down the Colo). There was a passing expression of concern over the possibility that the Colo River might flood soon.

Soon? Some sunshine, five foot pressure waves and river levels eight feet above normal greeted us at the Wolgan-Capertee Junction. What to do?

Retreat to N ewnes via the Wolgan River, abandoning Adrian's car?. A sure solution, but very inconvenient.

With weather apparently clearing, should we wait out the flood here? Crossing the Capertee or Colo was essential to get to the Culoul Range from here. But at the time, both of these were completely out of the question. They were too rough.

It was possible to swim the Wolgan at the junction (Because the Capertee was in a much higher flood than the Wolgan, the waters of the Wolgan was banked up and still for the hundred feet before the junction. Up the Wolgan from the junction it appeared impossible to cross). Should we swim the Wolgan then do a ridge traverse to the flying fox at the base of the Culoul Range, and then use slings and rope to cross the Colo by the flying fox cable? The swim across the Wolgan was not inviting, nor was the thought of using the flying fox cable.

To help with the decision, we ate some of our dust-covered food. A new downpour made up our minds: "Stuff the car, lets go to the N ewnes pub".

A simple stroll up the Wolgan you may think. Hardly! Not far up the Wolgan I was confronted by a bull. Fearlessly I made gestures to shoo it away. Smashing through, jumping over and pushing itself under fallen trees, the bull started to charge me. Quickly, scared out of my mind, I hid behind a tree. The bull stood on the other side of the tree, waiting.

A thicket around the tree effectively trapped me. The bull had me cornered. The bull and I waited for the other to make a move. A few minutes dragged past. I was shitting myself with fear.

The bull lost interest, and walked off.

Continuing the slog of the Wolgan (in pouring rain) I had yet another delightful surprise. Frolicing through some cutting grass, I cut one of my fingers quite badly. It was bad enough to probably require some stitches. Busily calculating week-end off-duty remote country service rates, Adrian patched me up. Still suffering shock from the bull-charge, and suffering from rain, cold, lack of sleep and exhaustion, my morale and vigour sunk to an all-time low with this cut. I spent most of the rest of the day reluctantly plodding behind Adrian, allowing him to do all the leading. But some chocolate and water (ironically I was suffering mildly from dehydration) fixed me up a fair bit.

When we arrived near Annie Rowan Creek, a dry way across the Wolgan presented itself (or at least appeared to). Two 100 foot trees had fallen end-to-end across the river. Knowing that the other (southern) bank of the Wolgan was easier going, we crossed, only to find that we had crossed onto an island. Luck was with us, though, and we found a way to within 30 feet of the southern bank, and even this 30 feet did not look too bad. (ie it appeared possible to negotiate). To get across the last 30 feet you simply jumped into the water, and swam like buggery towards the other side, which you reached 60ft downstream. We kept our packs from getting wetter, in the swim, by rigging up a sort of flying fox to get them across the river.

Cold, saturated and tired, we made our way along the southern bank, now keeping an ever-hopeful eye open for a camp save. But in vain. Only having one one-man hutchie between the two of us, that night promised to be very cramped and damp.

With the fall of darkness came the fall of heavier rain. We became damper and damper. The increasing roar of the rising Wolgan made me curse that I had not seen for myself exactly how far above water level we had camped. By now water was on the inside of my sleeping bag. To make me less comfortable, I needed to have a piss, yet the foul weather outside, and the nature of the hutchie prevented me from getting up to relieve myself.

I spent most of that night awake, uncomfortable, with tightly crossed legs. Morning was a relief. Our moral was better, knowing that we would reach Newnes pub by lunch. We started walking well before dawn, in drizzle.

Our morale was shattered when we came to Rocky Creek. Normally only 10ft wide and ankle deep, it was 200ft wide, with 10ft pressure waves on that day. It was totally out of the question to cross. Resigned to another half day to the Cameron Track and a 25 mile road-bash along it, we started to walk up beside Rocky Creek.

Half a mile up Rocky Creek we were in ecstasy. A 150ft log spanned the entire creek in a narrower, smoother flowing section. Breakfast of crab paste and muddy biscuits was had on the opposite bank of Rocky Creek. Soon we were back down to the Wolgan (now upstream of the Rocky Creek confluence) and on a fire trail to Newnes. The only thing that now hindered our fast pace was where the road was underwater, or simply washed away.

A few hours later we were opposite Newnes pub, the very high Wolgan being the only thing separating us from a warm dry room. A conversation, yelled across the river, with the pub owner was not very enlightening as to how to cross. We trudged four more miles up the Wolgan (me being very careful to avoid cattle grazing on the banks) and found a log spanning the river. Joyiously we crossed the log and climbed the bank onto the main Newnes road. We luncheoned on muesli and raw TVP, finishing off all our food. It was over! The weather cleared a bit, & it was not too long before we got a lift to Lithgow, now seeing the amazing floods from under cover.

Three days later, when the Colo Bridge was reopened, Adrian managed to get to the Culoul Range, and retrieve his car.

BOB SOULT

S.W. TASMANIA FILM NIGHT

Once again another superb film night is to be held on October 12th and 13th at the Law School Theatre, Elizabeth Street, Sydney.

As in past years the Launceston Walking Club is expected to put on a display of professional standard.



D.W.

I/V ORIENTEERING/ROGAINING 1979

This year's Intervarsity Orienteering (cunning running)/Rogaining (the masochists version thereof) 24 Hour event was hosted by Newcastle University at Bulahdelah near Mycell Lakes National Park, 80km north of Newcastle.

The 11 representatives from UNSW (2 mens and 2 womens teams) travelled to Newcastle by train on the evening of Friday, 31 August, where we were met and taken by car to the University's Aquatic Centre, on the banks of the Hunter River at Raymond Terrace. After standing up the whole trip (the rigours of public transport in the school holidays) the awaiting barbeque was most welcome.

The AUSA (Australian Universities Sports Association) meeting held on the evening prior to the event was attended by all contestants from La Trobe, Macquarie, Melbourne, Monash, New England, Newcastle and UNSW (usually it has been a reps meeting in the past).

It should be explained that Orienteering involves navigating by map and compass to predetermined checkpoints, where some form of stamp is collected. Rogaining is the term used for endurance events of more than a couple of hours and in Victoria is an extremely popular sport. The objective is either to cover a standard course in the minimum time, or to reach as many checkpoints as possible in a certain time period.

There was a move afoot to replace the I/V title with Rogaining. Initially rejected, it was slipped in the back door by proposing the use of "Orienteering/Rogaining". Dissatisfaction was expressed at the exclusion of unofficial teams, and the failure to organise the 3 and 6 hour events which have been run in the past (although the rules don't yet provide for them). New England Uni agreed to host the event in 1980, and undertook to overcome both these deficiencies.

On Saturday morning we had a few hours wait before the bus arrived at 10 am. Slack time such as this is a good chance to socialise - something bushwalking types (for all the reps are from the respective Uni Bushwalking & Mountaineering Clubs) can be a little reticent about.

The bus arrived at the venue between Girvan and Bulahdelah at 11 am, and the first teams in the draw are away by 11.45 am. Peter, Andy and I have learnt from experience, and as well as compass, torches, food and extra clothing we are equipped with contact adhesive for the topographical maps we are given and marker pens to accentuate the checkpoints that we have 20 minutes to transcribe from the master map.

Our strategy changes as soon as we see the course the route is obvious with little choice involved, for we must do the rough stretchers by day and arrange to be on the firetrail sections by nightfall. Last year at Wollombi the course was over more rugged terrain, and the winning strategy was to describe a large arc around the farthest checks (and therefore highest scoring), returning at the end of 24 hours. However, this course is a figure 8 passing back through the meal tent in the middle of the night and predominantly road bashing.

The first checkpoints fall in quick succession. Because of their poor strategic location, there are 4 teams travelling concertina, until our faster pace allows us to draw ahead. We are negotiating a myriad of (unmarked) logging roads and we shocked by the logging process - bulldozers destroy much of what is not carried away. Yet on steep rocky hillsides we come across solitary stumps from trees probably logged 40 years ago, and we wonder how they ever got the trees out.

(cont)

I/V Orienteering/Rogaining 1979 (cont)

We drop our small packs when we can and race nightfall to the outlying checkpoints. We have quickly realised that there is a good chance of collecting every point and we cannot afford to skip any. We are almost caught by night in a scrub choked creek without torches, but make a timely exit. We pass the other 3 UNSW teams and marvel that we have independently chosen the same route.

The checkpoints are visible from 50m with a dolphin torch - unlike last year when it was necessary to use 8 figure co-ordinates (accurate to 10m). It is a beautiful night with a 3/4 moon and Andy entertains us with a few appropriate ballads.

Back at the meal tent (in jargon: hash house) by 11 pm, we are fortified with hot stew, dessert and fruitcake. The State Emergency Service has provided tents, 2 woodburning stoves and generator. We only have a half hour to air sore feet and plan the second half of the course. It is now a race against time, for Melbourne Uni have passed through an hour before and Monash are there at the same time, having visited every checkpoint in the southern section.

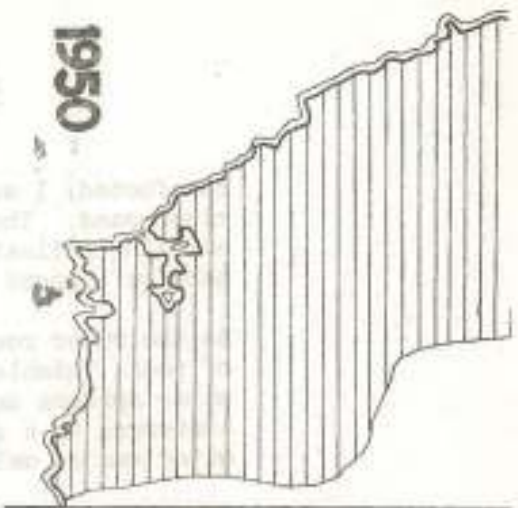
Although the southern section is easier, we run into trouble on a rocky ridge when Peter's torch gives out. Our flagging morale lifts when we hit the roads again at dawn. We apply basic psychology to our planning now. We recognise that the course setters were not very adventurous and when a checkpoint appears to be out in the sticks we know there must be a track of some description. Where is the most likely place to find that track? It works every time.

We arrive back at 10.45 am after 22 hours and some 70km (less than past years) to learn that Melbourne Uni came in 2 hours before. A convincing win - and we are second with Monash a half hour behind us. We are the only 3 teams to collect every checkpoint. Robyn and Megs (UNSW) have acquitted themselves well collecting with Newcastle Uni the equal highest aggregate pointscore in the Womens. The latter are awarded the win on time, but UNSW later lodges a protest, for there is no provision in the rules to take account of time in this 24 hour event. The objective is a maximum point score and we believe both teams should be equal first.

There is increased camaraderie as weary contestants loll on the grass eating, drinking and conducting the inevitable post mortems. We learn that for one of the Melbourne members this is his 14th 24 hour event - an indication of the popularity of the sport in Victoria. It is difficult to describe the feelings experienced on the course of this day - many relate to being at peace with the bush.

The bus takes us back to Raymond Terrace to collect packs, and then on to Newcastle Uni (a superb campus) for a barbeque and presentation of trophies - prousted hiking boots that have obviously seen better days.

ADRIAN SPRAGG



S.W. TASMANIA - OUR LAST GREAT WILDERNESS

The only wilderness of its kind in Australia is under threat. Already much of it lies under water or fragmented by a network of access roads. More dams proposed will virtually destroy the uniqueness of the area.

Several expeditions have been made to Tassie by the club in recent years yet it is to our shame that we do not help save this wilderness. Our own lack of enthusiasm breeds apathy.

How many of us have written letters?

How many of us have tried collecting signatures?

Here are three things that each of us can do:

- (1) Write to the Premier, the Hon. D.A. Lowe, Parliament House, Hobart, 7000.
- (2) Get in touch with the South West Tasmania Committee, 599 Pitt St. (233 5388) for a petition.
- (3) Buy calendars and the 'South West' Book as gifts (233 5388).

DAVID POLAND

DOWNSTREAM WANDER - David Wagland

Barefooted, I watched my footprints dissolve into the coarse river sand. The reeds below, strained the fine silt, emitting delicate swirling patterns. Amongst the reeds, tiny pebbles bounced along, as if a child was behind the movement.

As the river rounded a spur, it brushed a moss coated bastion of rock. Thimble shadows lay on the fern covered bank and tiny water spiders darted across the stones. A series of channels converged to a chute which tumbled into a dark pool. The water was so well defined, ceaselessly consistent in form.

Further on, large boulders choked the stream, making progress more difficult. I stood at the bottom of a small waterfall, feet sampling hundreds of small bubbles passing through. There was more river down there, but an impatient mind was not willing to respond. Without thinking I turned back towards camp.



MARIA ISLAND - A MUST FOR WORK OR PLAY

Maria Island is situated some 3 miles off the East Tasmanian Coast, South of Freycinet Peninsular. It is a paradise, even relative to parts of Tasmania itself, which I was able to enjoy albeit for only 1 night.

I had just returned from 9 days walking on the South Coast and felt like stopping and resting a while.

Curiosity led me to catch the early ferry out to Maria Island (from Memory they leave at 9.00 and 1.00 every day). The day was summery and the hour - long boat ride pleasant.

Maria Island now a national park, was originally a convict prison, and the scars of this settlement still exist today. Some of the stone houses have been renovated, but much has been reclaimed by the bush.

Upon landing I was immediately impressed by the flocks of Cape Barren Geese present. These birds, with their grey plumage and green beaks, were an unexpected pleasure. They are almost extinct but government protection and sanctuary of national parks such as Maria have allowed their numbers to increase.

I decided to spend the rest of the day climbing Mt. Bishop and Clerk, the northernmost peak on the island, and poking around the ruins.

The track to Bishop and Clerk begins as a jeep track, but as one gains height it peters out into a foot track - eventually the route is marked only by cairns, as by then one is climbing up through rock falls.

The track passes through densely wooded forests. Here and there patches of faded red and orange peep through the trees marking yet another decaying convict-brick building, echoes of other times when the bush appearing as a release to myself, provided an effective prison to others.

I examined the remains of the old reservoir, now a mixture of crumbling red brick and green creeper, yet still containing a full supply of water.

The track then led up onto the cliff top rising above the treetops and now Bishop and Clerk were more easily visible, as two stark peaks, each of vertically faulted dolomite and looking north one could glimpse Freycinet Peninsula. The track once again plunged into bush, the grade now becoming steeper, and the track narrower.

By now I had reached the foot of the large slope of broken rock, where the route up was marked only by Cairns. A half hour of puffing and I stood upon the top of Bishop & Clerk, where both a delightful view north-west to north-east, and lunch was to be had - not a cloud in the Sky; Great skin-cancer weather. Between mouthfuls I glanced south, to Black Sky and fog.

I had been told about the 5 minute Tasmanian weather changes - now I was seeing one.

I packed-up lunch and rather hurriedly began my descent, hoping to reach the track and leave the cairned route before the fog arrived. I did so only just in time, and managed to find a nice large log under which I could finish my lunch, as the clouds burst.

I looked over my shoulder and to my surprise saw a flock of 12 or 13 emus peacefully walking within feet of my refuge. Surprises such as this were what made Maria even more memorable. Leaving the track by which I had come, I continued to follow the coast around to where I had pitched my tent. I crossed the airfield (inevitably, I suppose), and came across more ruins, accompanied by a strange circular, stone-paved dish, above. Although Eric Von Daniken would have gone wild, I finally worked out that this must be the old convict mill, and a large circular stone wheel lying some yards further on confirmed this.

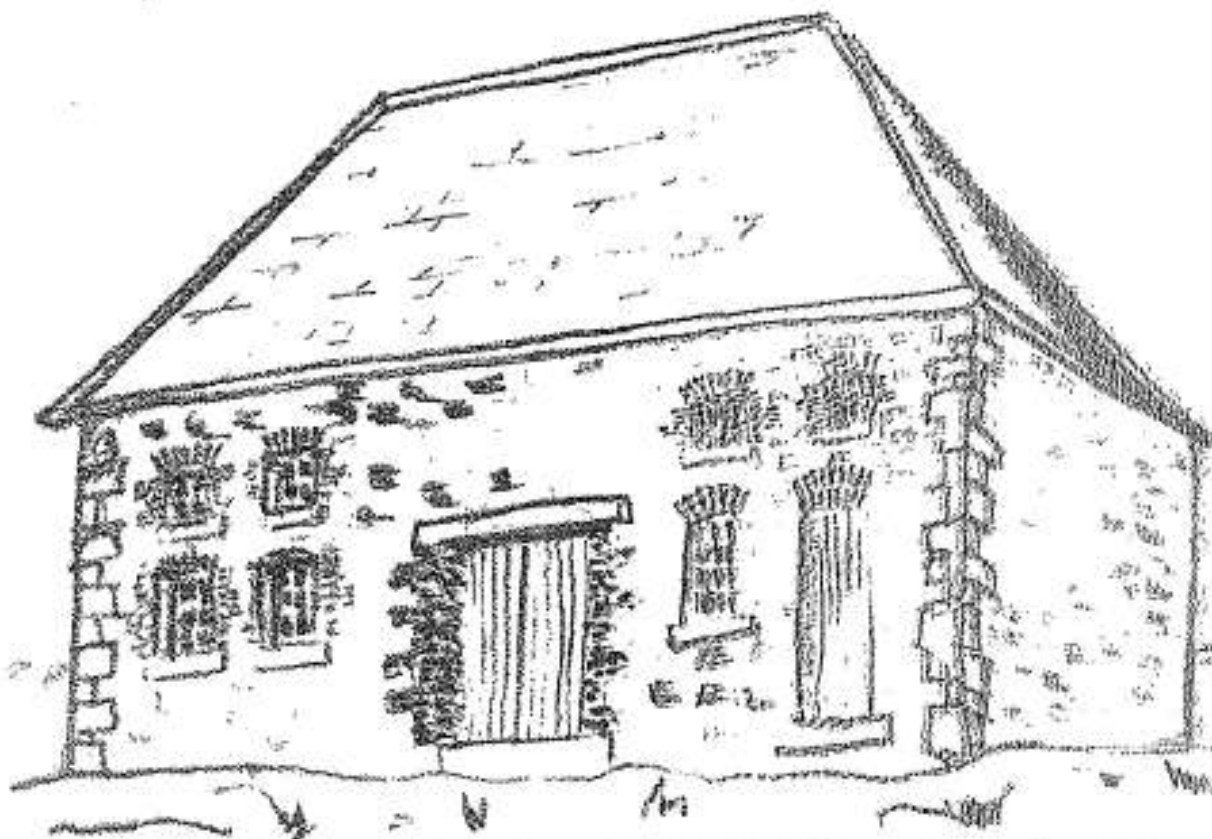
Time had indeed passed quickly, and it was getting dark when I returned to my tent. Accompanying the ritual of preparing dinner came, inevitably, the bush tailed possum. At one stage I had to pull one out of my tent by the tail, so keen were they to get at my dory stores. In the morning I rose to rise a number of wallabies within camera shot of my camp, and I was sorry to leave the Island on the morning boat.

What I have related here is only a small part of Maria Island. If time permits, a trip along the road to the beaches of the southern end of the Is. is well worth it, especially if one has a bike at one's disposal. However, the wildlife and the splendid journey to even only the north of the Is. I saw, makes any visit to Maria Island National Park well worth it.

THE HOUSE

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
MARIA ISLAND

1934



EAST RIDGE OF DIXON - N.Z.

After porridge and toast at 6.30am, we stepped out of Plateau Hut to escape the fumes and peak hour rush. A leisurely stroll across the plateau led to a snow ramp on a buttress of Haast Ridge. Adrian and I were being followed by three hot-blooded Yanks, who were eager on doing the same route.

Once on the ridge itself, progress was slow and nerve-racking. The irregular nature of the ridge meant that several minor peaks had to be climbed or traversed. We climbed unroped, often treadmilling up vertical gravel. One particular section of the Haast Ridge, just before it joined the ice ridge of Mt. Dixon, entailed a diagonal traverse across an exposed loose buttress. As each person made those mantle-shelves, you would watch precious hand and foot ledges crumble away and bounce hundreds of metres towards the Tasman Glacier. Then when it came to your turn, you would go up and dig out fresh holds, hoping that 'Old Provvy' was spotting you. Look back on it, I think it would have been a good idea to rope this part.

We all collapsed onto a col and introduced ourselves. There was the six foot six Corie, a chatty guy called Chris and Aldous, who looked like a West Coast beachbum. The Yanks moved off first, with 15 metres of slack between each member. They casually balanced up a knifeblade edge of ice to safer ground. Adrian and I followed, taking things rather cautiously.

The rest of the ridge eased off in angle resembling the back of a Loch-ness monster. Although it had been snowing heavily the previous day, a good freeze gave crusty ice conditions. A few schrunds and crevasses were encountered, but otherwise it was a pleasant ridge walk to a large summit snowfield.

With that cue, Adrian and I ran up the slope on front-points and paws, overtaking the puffing American trio, to patriotically land on the summit first. We all sat down out of the wind, posing for piccies and plastering lipstick on ourselves. It was good to be up there, just staring at the world. About 2 kilometres away were Australians' Joe Loriaz and Greg Mortimer, inching up the amazing stepped East Face of Lendenfield. We waived a few more minutes then began the descent, as the wind was rather cold.

The descent down the East Ridge was more serious than the trip up, because the $\frac{1}{2}$ metre surface of powder snow had melted. Conditions were so bad, that one had to stop every few footsteps to clear the crampons of accumulated mush. We both fell at various stages, but these were quickly checked.

Once we reversed the Haast Ridge, we ran back to the hut, so by 3pm both of us were gnawing away at the remaining food supply.

SUMMARY: An ascent of the East Ridge of Mt. Dixon (Mt. Cook National Park) by Adrian Teague, David Wagland and three Americans during February 1979.

"Man was born to wonder" -

J & R. RUSSELL

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN WORKCAMP - January, 1979

In January each year for the past 5 years a group of people, mainly from Sydney, have travelled to Central Australia where they work on Aboriginal Mission voluntarily for 3 weeks. The Pitjantjatjara people are one of the more populous tribes, and their grounds are certainly the most extensive of any in Australia. In the last few years they have been given extensive land rights by the progressive South Australian government in that area west of the Stuart Hwy. (linking Adelaide to Darwin) and around the NT border.

The two most sizeable missions would be Amata (govt. run) and Ernabella (regarded as a Uniting Church mission). Although with the movement towards outstations they have actually decreased in population. These workcamps have concentrated on the latter, set in the heart of the beautiful Musgrave Ranges and in the last two years have extended to Fregon (70km South) and Minnili (another cattle station, 90km southwest again).

I had been to the camp 2 years previously when my motives were to find out a little more about the "Aboriginal problem" and to get some experience in basic building skills. I came no closer to a "Solution" and in fact became more aware of the problems of a society and culture that is completely at odds with our own, and cannot hope to survive unchanged. The missions (or settlements) perform a valuable role in both helping them to assimilate, and protecting them from the more unpleasant aspects of our society.

I learnt much from the work we did there - restructuring and painting the store, which had been set up for self service (a new concept there), building shelves in the craft shop, renovating a house for one of the white staff restringing power lines, building change rooms and toilets at the oval. These were the priorities determined by the community council, which employs and is advised by the (white) community adviser and staff.

We became close to the staff there, who are dedicated and hard working. Unfortunately we had little close contact with the Aboriginal people themselves. As January is the mission slack time when many are on walkabout (perhaps drivesabout is more apt), and also it is impressed upon us that we are merely visitors and should respect their privacy accordingly.

The convoy of vehicles generally leaves Mal's place in Penrith on Christmas Day, and drives almost non stop for 2 days. This time I refused to leave then because it seemed pointless - I would miss out on Xmas festivities, and would be extremely tired on the trip itself. I still have memories of being in a VW beetle that 2 years ago rolled at 80kph on the desolate May plains. Fortunately none of us were burnt, but the car was written off.

Since I could persuade nobody else to leave, my sister Jill and I resolved to catch the train from Sydney on Boxing night to Broken Hill, and hitch hike to Alice Springs, where I hoped we could get a lift within a few days to the mission. We were, I felt, extremely lucky to get as far as Pimba, the jumping off point for the Woomera Rocket range, and where the bitumen ends on the Stuart Hwy. I still marvel at that povochiality which motivated the rejection of the Americans offer to seal this road during WWII.

We arrived at Punba at 7pm on 28th December, and began to realise the task ahead of us. There was just no traffic, or if there were any vehicles going north, they were full. We returned to the pub and joined a group of people sitting around a table chock a block with stubbies of Victorian beer. We met Keith and Alan, who were holidaying at Punbar well you might ask who would spend their holidays in such a God forsaken hole. They had consumed some quantity of the brown ale, and after the pub closed we all moved outside

At midnight Jill and I returned to one of the deserted outbuildings, but sought out by these two who offered to drive us to Ernabella right then. They said the car had been sitting idle for 2 days, and they needed to "clear the cobwebs out".

This is just the situation I had always tried to avoid in my hitch hiking travels. I feared for our safety and even should nothing else happen, I wondered what the reaction would be when they sobered up and realised they'd offered to drive 2 strangers 950km across some of the worst dirt roads in Australia.

We had little choice, took the plunge, and 17 hours later their air-conditioned Ford Fairlane deposited us at the mission. How many times have you wished for an airconditioned Mercedes to take you the whole way, and been happy to get a clapped out VW get you half way there? All we could do was give them a glass of water before they pushed on, for Keith had decided to show his mate Ayers Rock. Certainly the most incredible lift I've had...and in retrospect I wouldn't attempt that stunt again.

It was great to be back at Ernabella. The ranges were as stark and beautiful as ever, with the red soil blanketed at times in yellow or purple flowers. The familiar staff were still here - 2 families with new kids, and the other kids that much older.

I helped put fibro on the walls of an old vandalized house that was being renovated. At the end of the camp I realised how difficult it can be to renovate when the walls are not true, wood is warped, floors are uneven. It would have been quicker, although there was neither the material nor finance to build a new house.

On Saturday evening the Fregon workcampers came to visit for dinner ... and a swim in the Clark pool. Sunday was New Years Eve, and after a swim in one of the few waterholes with water, secluded some distance up a rocky watercourse, everybody travelled back to Fregon for a barbecue. It was interesting listening to the two community Advisers discussing claims to land for grazing purposes. It seemed like a bit of free for all at the moment. Albert Lennan, a self styled Aboriginal cattle king, has established himself at Officer creek in a modern bungalow. He is now, it would seem, fencing areas that have been open range, and subject to cattle rustling. Each community is jockeying for at least, and if possible more than, their share of the land. It occurred to me that problems in obtaining land rights were nothing compared to those brewing now.

A few days later Paul and I drove back to Fregon in the Mini moke (its third, and probably last, trip to the centre), for he was to do the plumbing for an old house being done up for visitors. At Ernabella the staff are prepared with all the materials when the workcamp arrives. Unfortunately this was not the case at Fregon, where we wasted hours looking for parts in a shed that contained \$½ to \$1 million worth of gear and unused machinery - legacies of past visions of grandeur.

The heat is considerably greater at Fregon, on the open plains, than Ernabella which nestles between hills. This year was the hottest they have had since the workcamps started 5 years ago, and our work slows down considerably. One day registered 110 deg. F in the shade, and then there were the hot winds which left one quite desiccated. We started work at 8.30am and I drank out the waterbag until morning tea when it was not unusual to have (in order) 2 cups of water, 1 of cordial, 2 of saline, a cup of chocolate or iced coffee and finally 2 cups of tea. The bore water had many minerals in it (unlike Ernabella) which fouled up the Solar water heaters. The elements in electric jugs fused.

At Fregon I really appreciated the presence of Aboriginals, for we constantly walked past wiltchas to get to the other house we were renovating. I spent a few hours one day more intent on watching a nearby doting mother showing affection on her baby and children, than on the holes I was meant to be drilling.

On the middle weekend we assembled and drove the 4 or 5 hours to Ayers Rock in convoy. The swim in one of the motel pool was great during the heat of the day, until it was cool enough to climb the rock. It is everybit as good as it is made out to be, and I wandered up and down the deeply furrowed parallel ribs on top, where I was rewarded with views of a pair of wedge tailed eagles soaring at my level off the edge.

That evening we cooked jaffles on the gas stoves provided, and as with every night there, slept under the stars. The next morning each vehicle made its own way out of the Olgas, the photos of which had always attracted me more than Ayers Rock. Two of us climbed Mt. Olga for a beautiful view of the other Olgas, the Rock, the Petermann and Marn Ranges, Lake Amadeus and other features on the horizon. This is the country that Earnest Giles, who I greatly admire as being one of Australia's most dedicated and professional explorers, travelled through last century.

On our return a group of us proceeded to Mimili where we took 3 days to paint the curiously Y shaped homestead. (It has some 22 rooms and was obviously built to use the maximum possible exterior wall space. The Sun was fierce, and we organised the scraping, sanding, primer and top coat applications so as to be on the opposite side of the house as the sun moved around the sky.

We were all taken by Jim Lester, the Aboriginal boss, and his wife Lacy. He is totally blind, but runs the cattle station successfully, and in a few months time was to take up the position of Director of the Aboriginal institute in Alice Springs.

I was repatriated back to Ernabella after a bad "cold" which many others had. The only possible cause we can attribute it to was the unfiltered (?) water in the pool at Ayers Rock. The few who were badly affected could not shake it off until we left the heat. Everybody else was getting up at 6am before it was too hot for the big concrete pours associated with the raising of the floor of the renovated house. Jill left early with some of the other girls, and 2 days later we received a telegram saying they had rolled the car on the Stuart Hwy, but were able to drive it on to Port Augusta, and later to Sydney.

It was with regret that I left Ernabella again. I would have liked to stay on as has been done before, but commitments and health precluded this. I am sad to think it will be my last time there for many years.

POSTSCRIPT

1. For an interesting account of the Pitjantjatjura people of Ernabella, read "The People in Between" by Win Hilliard (first published 1968, now in Seal Books 1976) who has been the craft adviser there for the past 25 years.
2. Anybody interested in participating in these Christian Work camps (basically non denominational) in NSW, Victoria or Central Australia should write or phone Steve Campbell, Workcamp convenor, 30 Stathan Avenue, North Rocks 2151 Ph 8085 and ask to be put on the mailing list of "Workcamps".

TAKE A BUS TO THE BUNGLES

My memories of this trip are mud, minibus, and meeting people.

There are several pros and cons of hiring a minibus for such a trip. But I think one big PLUS is that people are thrown together. And the rain on Sunday was not a complete disaster. With it came the mud, the slippery roads, and the united effort needed to get that minibus through to Siding Springs.

There were 20 people on the trip, many of whom I had never or barely met before, but I came home with memories of most.

The trip to the Bungles was long and tiring and it was 10.30 am on Saturday before we parked the minibus and two cars. While most of the group hot-footed it up the track, John waited for me to puff along. We had a pleasant break talking to Linda who had sensibly decided to take several relaxing hours to reach Balar Hut.

After lunch, the party split up - two groups each of two climbing teams set off to Beladgery Spire, four opted to walk out to Bluff Mountain, and John and I caught up on lost sleep. Cameron and Carolyn had their first taste of climbing that afternoon. Long Peter had his wits about him and thereafter hoarded Carolyn's company for the rest of the weekend.

Around the campfire, meals were various. Some cooked individually, others pooled resources. George, John, and Roslyn had to await the return of Mike in the late climbing party to find where he had hidden the steak. Meanwhile, Roslyn threw some spuds in the fire. Did you ever retrieve them? If so, how did they taste?! Several palates approved of John M's wine - not such a bad idea to lug it up the hill after all.

The best fireside stories came from Doug whom I suspect has scores of colourful yarns and true stories up his sleeve.

Ross, the organiser of the expedition, never stopped the whole weekend except when he was asleep - he was first to bed on Saturday night, by 7.30 p.m.

Talking of beds, Karen maintained that she successfully moulded the concrete floor of Balar Hut to fit her body. The table was just long enough to accommodate Cameron, and Bill Blunt was served breakfast in bed on Sunday morning (Linda cooked him jaffles). While he was last to rise and leave the hut, he and Peter Tomsett sped helter skelter down the track to reach the cars before anyone else.

The ROAD CLOSED sign was more a challenge than a deterrent to Ross, and the ranger certainly hadn't bargained for 20 people power. He would hardly have believed his eyes had he seen the minibus successfully climbing the slippery road, Ross at the wheel and just about everyone else with hand to minibus or trailer! It was then that I got to know Clare, a visitor from England who had come on the trip to see a bit more of Australia. A pity she hadn't discovered the Club a few months earlier, as she planned to leave for Perth soon.

This stage of the trip wasn't all hard slog. There were hair-raising moments. Like when the bus was hot on the tail of Bruce's car which suddenly stalled in the middle of the road half-way up a hill. Then to our horror, Bill opened the front passenger door and got out, seconds before we passed on the left hand side. Somehow we missed him, swerved into the bank, hit a small boulder, and came to rest with no more than a few jolts and a small scratch on the bus.

The long trip back to Sydney was lightened by the fun and games in the back seat of the minibus. Annie and Paul managed to confine Karen and Cameron to one corner, while Leo tried with his camera to record their suspicious movements beneath the rug. How much are those photos worth Leo?

Rosalie Meadows.

THRESHOLD

Making thoughts end on the roadway,
the last of the world is left behind,
as loose-winded plains clutch the day
and a streak of mystery turns blind;
The making of vision is only one lane,
for those to follow the distant hills
and latent time you lose to age,
for the threshold rises above the will.

The threshold rises from pools of crystal,
threading through the links of years,
spanning the bays of bridges drowned
and arching realms of finely drawn dreams.
They are wound into the threshold trail,
where sinister puddles are snatching the edge
and fresh breaths of wind and ripples play
You see it moving, but always far ahead.

David Wagland