



Tying-in in Thailand

Anthony Knittel

Over the last few months there's been quite a few unswOC groups exploring places far across the seas. Some headed to the mountains of New Zealand and South America, but the place to be for our fairly large contingent was the tropical delights of Thailand.

Phra-nang peninsula in southern Thailand has become somewhat of a mecca for sport climbers in recent years, not surprising considering its a place where you can laze around on a beach, eat awesome and cheap food and have hundreds of bolted climbs all around you.

The location is really quite astounding, massive towers of limestone jut out of the sea all around the area. As you round the corner in view of the bay in a long-tail boat (the only way to access the peninsula) you're greeted with the towering faces of Thaiwand wall and Tiger wall and many other massive sculptures of rock, which were the

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backdrop of our new home. It's become somewhat filled with tourists (both the backpack and suitcase wielding variety) and much of the area has been tailored to fit, but we weren't going to let that get in the way of a good holiday.

We poured through the guide books and drew up lists of must-do climbs, and went to explore the endless climbing areas that were hidden all around our new playground. Most of the routes were single-pitch sport routes with nice holds and pockets on otherwise frictionless polished limestone. Stalactites and other strange formations made for a whole new bag of moves to try out, and for some wild and unusual locations. Of course



chalk was an absolute must and climbing was strictly limited to the shade. Some of the walls were perched high above the bays with awesome views of postcard beaches, others were hidden in the jungle or squeezed between slabs of rock jutting out of the sea that you have to wade to with your packs above your head.

We came there to climb, but after a few days sweating it out in the heat its easy to succumb to the easier temptations, like fresh coconuts, mango lassis and a deck-chair on the beach.

Hang-dogging short routes near the restaurants seemed to be the popular style, but we explored as much of the longer, more adventurous routes as we could. It was quite amazing to find out how little of the endless wall space had actually been climbed, especially above the sport-friendly lower 30m.

(more about the trip in a presentation at the meeting) AK

Quick News

• Meetings officer needed

We need a keen volunteer to organise monthly meetings for the club. Experience within the club is preferred but not essential. Contact Mark if you're interested (mark.worsfold@bigpond.com)



- **T-Shirt / Logo competition**

Interested in coming up with a design for a new unswOC t-shirt? We'll be running a comp some time soon so time to get started thinking up ideas for designs.

- **Climbing Photography competition**

Queensland-based webzine 'qurank' is running a photo comp to showcase Australian climbing images, with lots of great prizes to win. More details are at <http://www.qurank.com/photocomp/>

- **Upcoming trips:** (see the website for more details)

22/Feb	Can't get enough: Mountain biking, Manly dam - <i>Marc Chee</i>
28-29/Feb	Sport climbing - <i>Anthony Knittel</i>
12/Mar	NSW Police Games Mountain Biking Event - <i>Karl Umlauff</i>
13/Mar	Canberra Single Tracking, Mountain biking - <i>Marc Chee</i>
21/Mar	ASCF NSW Bouldering Series – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
28/Mar	Beginners Outdoor Climbing – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
03/Apr	Beginners ride, Mountain biking - <i>Marc Chee</i>
07/Apr	ASCF NSW Bouldering Comp, Round 2 – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
08/May	Mt Arapiles Pilgrimage, Rock climbing – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
22/May	Arrow 24 Hour Adventure Race – <i>Adam Barnes</i>



A brief adventure in Chilean Patagonia

Marton Hidas

I met up with James (a former BMC member) in a pleasant riverside town called Valdivia (about 1000km south of Santiago). After a day there and one on the island of Chiloe, we were ready head on South.

On the 1st of December we boarded a cargo ship (partially converted to carry passengers) in Puerto Montt for a 3-day cruise through the Chilean fjords. This was a very relaxed and social affair. We had our bunk beds, we got fed three times a day (and despite what we'd heard before, the food was good), there were presentations on the local flora and fauna and our destination. For about 80% of the passengers, including James & I, the destination was Torres del Paine national park, a bit of a mecca of bushwalking in South America. Apart from that we had nothing to do but hang around on deck watching the beautiful scenery drift past and socialize. There was some excitement on the second day, when we briefly headed out to the open ocean and spotted several killer whales. There was also a bar, and they even had bingo and a bit of a dance party on the last night.



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We got off the boat in Puerto Natales in the early afternoon, and by some amazing luck James and I managed to catch the last bus into the park (5 minutes before it left, we were still running around looking for metho for my stove). By that night we were camped well within the park and had a magnificent view of the Torres del Paine themselves, the three huge rock towers the park was named after. Luckily it only gets dark around 11pm down there!

During the following week, we walked through some very pleasant country, a bit of not-so-pleasant mud and even some fun snow. We walked along a circuit which goes most of the way around the central peaks in the park. The mountains themselves were quite a sight from most angles, but even more impressive were the glaciers, including one which is about 7km wide in some parts! We walked along this one for a couple of days and I could hardly take my eyes off it.



Walking in this park was not quite the full 'wilderness experience', since almost every night we camped at a place where there was at least a well stocked ranger's hut, if not a full 'refugio', where - for a fee of

course - you can get a bed, a hot shower and meals cooked for you, and where we had to pay to camp too. We did the slightly more remote and less popular section of track, so it wasn't too bad. Also, before the area became a national park, it was subject to some pretty extensive grazing, and even now there are lots of (presumably wild) horses in the area.

After the walk we spend another couple of days in Punta Arenas admiring the architecture, learning a bit about the history, enjoying some wonderful seafood and Chilean wine, and kayaking to the airport on a beautifully calm Strait of Magellan.

MH





White powder addiction.

Tom V (a.k.a plasticman)

Despite the best attempts of concerned friends to intervene, those generous folk who pity me and try to make me a better person, I have climbed outdoors about three times in my life, and boulderhogg¹ only a few more.

My particular form of white powder addiction is plastic. Don't get me wrong, there was something really nice about abseiling down after a climb at Barrenjoey, on a beautiful Sydney summer day, looking at the ocean, and watching the hang gliders ridge soar above. (Something less nice about having the flu, being out in the rain for hours at Keira, doing one 16 in agony only because three beginners had shot up it, and being spat off another 16, all the while thinking "if I die, my corpse is going to end up in Wollongong") But the real thing for me about climbing is something else, and that's what I want to talk about in this little essay about the attractions of plastic.

My first year in the club was spent in the ledge on Friday nights. Finally here was a sport that weedy guys had an advantage. This was a good year for my climbing because I spent the whole of Friday night pushing myself non stop for three hours until the ledge staff screamed at me to get the hell out. Aside from having no technique because I was climbing in sneakers or later clown shoes (Stu: "If you got some technique you'd actually be good"; Duncan "your shoes are fucked because you drag your toes up the walls") I was getting really strong. Those months before the first big plateau are a really fun part of one's climbing career.

Anyhoo, the upshot of all this gym work was that I was getting a good intense workout while having

fun. It didn't feel like forced exercise, it was just a great thing to do on a Friday night. Also, being a beginner and having some really good climbers around was really motivating. (Seeing Olivia on the old, crimped black 25 at the ledge stands out as an example).

I was hungry to climb more and get stronger, and the gym was the perfect place to do this. Get there, push yourself to the limits for a couple of hours, repeat twice a week and you will definitely climb harder. No setting up top ropes, no sitting in Sydney traffic, and no trekking through skanky bushland to do a couple of 16s.

To qualify that last statement, if being outdoors and travelling is what attracts you to climbing that's really cool and I don't look down on anyone (well except dirty trad hoes...just kidding). But to finally get to my point, this isn't the major thing for me. The thing for me is pushing myself mentally to the limit and then making that one move that gets me to the top of the climb.

My favourite example of this (although there have been many more) was a yellow 23 at the ledge over on the arête of the grey wall. I worked and worked on this climb, and it was really pumpy and just plain hard at the time. One night, after working it to death over the preceding weeks, I finally pushed through and made it to the top. I felt a rush of endorphins as I achieved this goal that had frustrated me (in a good way) for weeks. Everything about climbing for me was captured in that one top out. It didn't matter that I was climbing in a gym on some yellow plastic holds, it was just that I'd pushed myself and got there. (Of course there would be amazing rushes from doing the same thing outdoors – but that's the point; that the feeling can be had anywhere).

Needless to say, I'm addicted to this feeling, and have had other climbs do the same thing. The

¹ bolderhog = bouldering, with a little creative alteration from the predictive text thing used when writing SMS's.



longer the problem frustrates you, the better that rush is at the end when you finally achieve it. This mental aspect of climbing is what really interests me about the sport. After doing the yellow one, I could repeat it every time, like something was unlocked mentally and every move just became natural and flowed. It became a favourite to do this really hard problem again because although they were tough moves it just felt so easy and fun.

In essence, it all comes down to hanging there, on this one move, everything else falls away. All I think about (when I'm in the flow) is that one next hold. It doesn't matter whether your on a 16 or a 22, if you get to a point where you think "oh just let go" and then you regain your focus, and push, and get that hold then that's what its all about. It also doesn't matter how strong you are physically, your body is whatever it is, the only thing you can change is how far you push yourself mentally when your body is crying out to let go. Maybe you don't even make the move, but you know you didn't give up before you gave it everything. This mental state is sometimes rare, and maybe most people don't even get it. I often am on a tough climb and think "shit I'm not going to make this next move". When you gather everything together, and silence that part of your mind, and go for it, then you know what I'm talking about.

Anyhoo, all this is just an explanation of what my addiction is. The most effective route to this mental state for me is in the gym. (Although I have a feeling that the ultimate form of what I'm talking about is free soloing outdoors...but serious balls are required, and it's not for the risk-averse.)

I started off climbing, and now mostly boulder, and it feels like a more pure journey to the same destination. No rope, no belaying, just that move and hopefully the mental thing. When you think about boulderhog, it's completely ridiculous: you're two feet off the ground, and going nowhere



– all it can be about then is that move and pushing yourself. Sure I'm going to boulder outdoors and maybe even climb some, but you will always find me in church on Tuesday and Friday evenings chasing that feeling; come hang out with us and we'll try and get you addicted too. *TV*

Camping Tips

off the net by Adam Barnes

- The best backpacks are named after national parks or mountain ranges. Steer clear of those named after landfills.
- Modern rain suits made of fabrics that "breathe" enable campers to stay dry in a downpour. Rain suits that sneeze, cough, and belch, however, have been proven to add absolutely nothing to the wilderness experience.
- When camping, always wear a long sleeved shirt. It gives you something to wipe your nose on.



- A potato baked in the coals for one hour makes an excellent side dish. A potato baked in the coals for three hours makes an excellent cricket ball.
- The guitar of the noisy teenagers at the next campsite makes excellent kindling.
- The sight of a bald eagle has thrilled campers for generations. The sight of a bald man, however, does absolutely nothing for the eagle.
- It's entirely possible to spend your whole vacation on a winding mountain road behind a large motor home.
- Bear bells provide an element of safety for hikers in grizzly country. The tricky part is getting them on the bears.

AB

UNSWOC Climbing Level Draft

Duncan Macinnis, photos Anthony Knittel (from a recent ropes course)

As the club gets bigger it is inevitable that the climbing officer will not know the specific skills and abilities of each member. By introducing a system of levels it is hoped that safe and fair distribution of gear can be achieved. In introducing this level system it is also hoped that a culture of safe climbing can be fostered, so that new climbers can be taught safe methods from the outset. Climbing is a sport in which a number of different methods can be considered "safe", in this system we will aim to teach and use methods that are simple and efficient. If members decide to use more complex methods or devices then this is their prerogative.

It would be wrong to claim that the skills taught for each level are the complete set of skills required. Rather, the skills taught are the minimum set of skills required. In order for the system to work it will be necessary to provide the opportunities for members to increase their knowledge, both practical and theoretical, and to this end it will be the responsibility of the climbing officer that these opportunities exist. Other members will, of course, be able to provide help other members improve their skills.



It will be the responsibility of each member to ensure that their skill level is recognised, and their responsibility to improve their skill level. It is also the responsibility of each member to recognise that



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climbing and canyoning are inherently dangerous activities. The climbing officer and other trip leaders are not professional instructors, in running trips they are giving their time to help others in the club. It is hoped that all members will consolidate their skills through regular practice. A library of climbing literature will also be constructed over the next few years. This will be available to all members, but it must be noted that theory is no substitute for actually performing the skills.

Once the system has been introduced, a qualified person must actually witness the necessary skills. A person may skip levels only at the discretion of the climbing officer, as it is this person who may have to take responsibility for any accidents. Certain ways of doing things will be the preferred way that will need to be demonstrated if the skill level is to be attained. If the climber wishes to use another method after this time, that is their choice. All Level C members will be expected to teach these methods, regardless of whether they actually use them. The aim of this is to promote safe methods within the club.

It is hoped that the introduction of this system will help foster the climbing community within UNSWOC, and aid the fair and safe distribution of gear. The club pays a large amount of money each year on new gear and as such looking after gear will form a large part of each level.

The levels: *(draft by Duncan and Anthony)*

Level 0:

- No climbing skills, or level of ability unknown. It will be assumed that all members are at this level until they have proven otherwise.

Level A. belay / abseil:

- General
 - Correctly put on a harness
 - Understand the difference between static and dynamic ropes
 - Understand basic principles of looking after gear
 - Coiling a rope
 - understanding of risks when top-rope climbing and abseiling
- Abseiling
 - Abseil using a sheriff/tube type device (ATC), and various other devices favoured by cavers and canyoneers eg rap-racks or pit-stops
 - Tie and use prussics
 - Tie and use prussic knots and "frenchys" for use as a self-belaying knot while abseiling
 - firemans belay
- Climbing
 - Top rope belay using a sheriff/tube type device (ATC)
 - Correctly tie a figure eight and rethreaded figure eight.





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- Understand their personal limitations as climbers
- Lead belay: feed and retract rope for leader.
 - ensure safe handing of tail rope at all times
 - importance of back-line
 - tie and use for abseiling and belaying a Munter Hitch. Know the drawbacks of using this knot
- General safety
 - keep away from edge (2 body lengths?) or use safety
 - use of helmet below cliffs
 - yell below if rock/other object dropped. if hear yell move towards cliff, don't look up.
 - buddy system: check others, have others check you before proceeding.
 - use of calls: on belay, climbing, abseiling, off rope
 - ABCDEF check for abseiling: Anchor, Buckle, Carabiner, Descender, hELmet, Friend
 - assess risk of running off end of rope: tie ends or view reaching the ground
- Level allows:
 - Level A climbers will be able to borrow harnesses, helmets, carabiners and belay devices (but shouldn't climb without more experienced climbers to set up etc)

Level B: sport climbing: principles of leading and anchoring

- Leading
 - principles: back clipping, rope run around legs, direction of clip, climbing on carrots: don't use wire gates, invert gates in bolt plate. clipping technique
 - basic assessment of route: quality of pro, quality of rock, risk of decking out, enough protection (and gear) and anchoring. ensure enough rope to lower off, tie end.
 - good awareness of climbing ability, limitations
 - cleaning sport routes: cleaning anchor, cleaning draws on lower-off: vertical, traversing, overhanging, strongly overhanging.
 - falling
- Basic anchoring
 - Understand the SRENE (Solid, Redundant, Equalised, No Extension) Anchor concept
 - Tie the clove hitch, bowline and alpine butterfly
 - demonstrate basic equalising from fixed points (trees, bollards, bolts etc) (simple examples)





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- demonstrate some understanding of the limitations of fixed protection (bolts, trees etc)
- multi-pitching
 - basic multi-pitch procedure and safety (for seconder)
- general
 - thorough knowledge of care of ropes (as in previous email about rope care) and climbing gear
 - importance of monitoring safety of less experienced climbers
 - belay using twin/half ropes, top belaying
 - knowledge of appropriate preparation for climbing trip: assessing ability of participants, ensuring safe environment, ability to contact help
 - understanding of risks involved in lead climbing
- Level allows:
 - Level B climber's will be able to borrow Level A gear, ropes and quickdraws (specific knowledge of grigris will allow Level B climbers to borrow these as well)



Level C: further independent climbing

- further skills
 - abseil/prussic past knot
 - hands free on abseil (eg stop & do something while on abseil, like untangle mess)
 - leading with twin & half ropes (don't lead a pitch partly twin and partly half)
- further anchoring
 - equalising several points using a combination of knots, eg clove hitch, alpine butterfly, figure 8,
 - assessing quality of pro, eg boulders, trees, bolts. sling/tie appropriately
- ensure proper rope run for top-rope/abseil. (care of rope!)
- consider effects of swinging, ensure anchor can't move to unsafe position
- multi-pitching (although probably not very usable till can use natural pro (Lev D)), assume in context of bolted climb.
 - joining ropes for abseil: overhand, double fishermans. risks (badly tied knots, figure 8s)
 - protecting the second (eg traverses)
 - escape
 - general procedure of multi-pitch climbing (safety), preventing factor 2 falls (fall on anchor)
 - cordelettes (equalising): equalise for top belay (off anchor) and for bottom belay (with appropriate backline).
 - handling ropes on ledges
 - basic hanging belay



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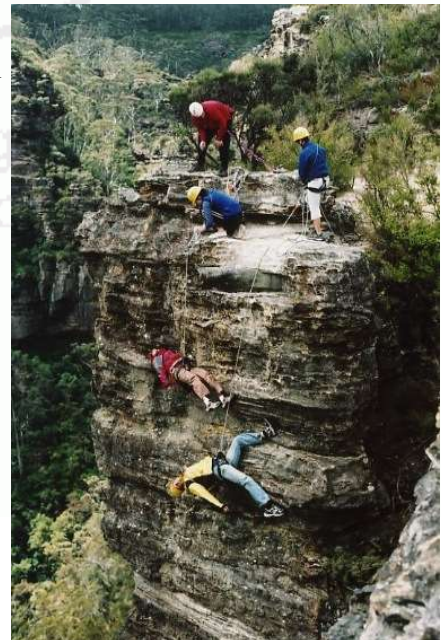
- participation
 - demonstrate a sufficient level of competency with Level B skills to be able to teach Level A and B skills. This level will need to be attained to progress to Level D
 - helping out on at least one (more?) Level A or B trip
 - level C climbers will be able to help other members reach Level A and B status. This will be done by telling the climbing officer, who will record the relevant details

Level D: natural pro

- natural pro
 - fundamentals of placements: how to place cams, nuts, hexes, tricams, slings
 - recognising quality of placements and limitations- failure mode of placements, conditions where placement is strong and when weak.
 - understanding of climbing ability and limitations!
 - zippering: effects of tension on rope during fall: angle of force on lower placements
 - general safety: multi-directional first piece, importance of backline for belayer, dangers of running it out
 - selecting placements: minimise zippering effects, aware of fall position, ability to place the piece, protect difficult sections better, protect the second
 - extending placements: drag, stability of piece, safety of fall
 - selecting gear for the climb
- multi-pitching
 - review of everything in levels B and C in context of natural pro.
- anchoring
 - review of previous anchoring in context of natural pro
- general
 - knowledge of examples of accidents involving climbing on natural pro, understanding of risks
 - caring for trad gear
- Level allows:
 - may borrow club trad racks
 - may help other members reach Level C. Once again, this will be done by telling the climbing officer, who will record the details

Level E: basic rescue

- general
 - understanding of considerations when teaching climbing skills to others
 - supervising groups of novice climbers- risks (to them and to you), good practises
- rescue
 - simple hoists: assisted 3 to 1, unassisted 3 to 1 and 5 to 1





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- assisted abseils
- demonstrate appropriate handling of rescue scenario
- recommended skills: rescue of leader on multi-pitch
- level allows
 - may help other members achieve any level
 - may borrow any gear

Comments and suggestions are welcome, please send them to duncanmacinnis@yahoo.com

Editors Notes

Another new uni year has come around and with it a whole new group of people interested in trying out something different or just looking for new people to hang out with. There's a lot of great stuff that you can get involved in, its really worth making time and taking the step to take part in some of the trips that are being run.

If there's nothing much listed or you've got ideas of trips you want to go on, don't be afraid to speak up and ask around and see if other people are also

interested in taking part or leading a trip. The club runs by active participation, you don't have to wait until the people who run most of the trips offer to run one that you like, anyone is welcome to lead one of their own.

And don't forget to share with everyone else all the stuff you get up to- put together a slide show and show it at one of the meetings or write up an article and have it put up in the newsletter.

Best of luck, and have fun. AK

