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Cover photo: View north from Federation Peak. Photo: Matt Hollignworth
Editors’ Blurb

A new edition – and a new look for *The Epic*. Yes, for this Autumn edition the venerable journal of the ANUMC has undergone a radical facelift.

We hope that readers will find innovations such as a single column and larger photos have made the new *Epic* more user friendly, especially for online viewing. Despite now being published almost entirely on the internet, the layout of the Epic has not changed from its print days. We hope you enjoy the new look and we welcome your feedback.

Exciting things are in the pipeline for the ANUMC over the coming months – mountaineering is making a comeback in the club, and other big events loom on the horizon. Get out there and get involved!

Andrew, Mostyn and Bron

About The Epic

*The Epic* is the quarterly newsletter of the ANU Mountaineering Club.

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All contributions, including photos and artwork, are eagerly accepted. Photos at 300dpi resolution via email are preferred, prints accepted. All care/no responsibility is taken. Try to limit articles to 600 words. Articles submitted may be edited for length and style.

Club Membership: $15/year students; $20/year non-students (+ SRA Membership Fees)

**CORRIGENDA:**
In the Summer 2006 EPIC the article on canyoning was written by Purdie Wond and the photographs taken by Catherine Price, not by Nic Bendeli - our apologies!!
Hi there mountain-types!

I’ve been El Presidente for 3 months now after Melbourne poached the fabulous Prita with promises of career advancement.

For those of you who don’t know me, I’ve been a member of the Club since 1999 (!) and have been active on the exec/committee for the past 4 years. I think the Club should be many things to many people, from the hard core types to the person who’s just discovering the joys of the bush, from the person who only climbs on plastic, to those who live to scale the highest peaks. So... If you have any suggestions about how the Club can be improved (new activities, new ways of doing things etc), please get in touch.

It’s been a busy few months on the Committee. Market Day was a great success and the new electronic sign-up process made everyone’s lives a bit easier (special thanks to Ben and John). The Huge Days Out and the Bluies Extravaganza introduced new members to what the Club can offer, and gave old hands a chance to catch up, have some fun and meet new people. The move to the new gearstore (in the new sports hall) continues and should be completed in the next few weeks. Sam Margerison has put lots of effort into our grant application for this year and we should hear the results from the SRA soon. Charles Jenkins has been working hard to negotiate new discounts at outdoor stores for Club members – more details on page 14. Steph Goodrick has organised a Canoe Polo team (yet another activity in the Club portfolio!), and there are exciting new social events planned for the second half of the year – stay tuned for news of trivia.

Thank you and welcome to our new executive and committee members: Paul Lloyd is the new Secretary (replacing me), Garth Coghlan is the new bushwalking officer (also replacing me), Penny Baker is out new Women’s Climbing Night Wall Officer (replacing Elaine Abery) and you’ve probably all met Fiona Jinman who has joined our fabulous gear store team. Thank you also to the rest of the executive and committee who volunteer their time and energy to make the Club all that it is.

My thesis is due next week, so I’m looking forward to plenty of trips in the near future – see you out there!
Tasmania’s South-West can be a wretched place. Take this morning, for example. When I get to Scott’s Peak Dam, it’s miserably dreary - low cloud and intermittent drizzle. I have the mood to match. My plans, made in the absence of anything better? I’m gonna bag Federation. Uh huh.

In the past year I’ve already done three trips to Tassie, including the quagmire that is the South Coast Track, so I’m up for the walk-in. It’s buttongrass plains (yum) for thirty kilometres, followed by another fourteen up and along the Eastern Arthurs to Federation Peak itself. People also make a big deal about the final ascent to the peak - it’s steep and exposed climbing, apparently. That’s bushwalking-steep though, so I’m not bothered. But shitty weather and my own company? Now there’s a frightful prospect.

In fact, I’m chasing fine weather by starting today, a day early. It’s the tail end of a rainy spell, with improving weather forecast and a hot day on the cards for the summit, three days away. But fuck it’s horrible today, and whatever the weather charts show, the four-day outlook for good spirits is cloudy. I nearly drive back to Hobart, and only get started by entertaining the come-back-out-tomorrow option. I wallow through mud for seven hours, pitch my tent and fall asleep to the sound of rain.

Wednesday is better, slightly. I get less rain, but still no views of the Western Arthurs,
whose flanks I’m edging. Low clouds lap the moraines and obscure the peaks behind, leaving only endless buttongrass plains to dull my senses. I ease into that pleasantly vacant way of walking. With my empty hours, do I think about life? My plans for the future? Those people I know, and who don’t know me? Not really. It’s “how deep is that mud hole?” and “how many contours do I cross?” for the most part. I can go forever like this.

Creek crossings bookend my day, and it’s obviously been raining. In the morning, I ford a fast-flowing Seven Mile Creek with some anxiety. Late in the day, Pass Creek, a narrow channel of turbulent water, proves easier than it looks. Still, such crossings worry me as much as anything on a trip like this. When I die, it’ll be alone on some such pissy little hazard, I know it.

At Pass Creek campsite I meet two parties on their way out; all blokes of course. No-one has made the top, though it sounds like they gave up pretty easily. I’m quietly optimistic. The afternoon has cleared a bit, and I can even dry out my sodden gear. I get an early night.

From Pass Creek, it’s straight up for 750 metres, at a gradient of about one in two. The path is tough - tree roots and rocky steps mostly - and the few flat parts are boggy trenches. I do okay. The weather’s fine by now, with popcorn clouds scudding across the sky. The new views back to the Arthur Plains and the Crags of Andromeda help pass the time. Briefly, there’s some nice walking once I reach the tops, before the Boiler Plates and the Needles offer a taste of more typical Arthurs scrambling. This basically involves bypassing rocky spires by climbing and descending series of steep gullies and ridges. It’s hard work, tedious and slow. It keeps your mind occupied, at least.

In the early afternoon I find tent platforms at Goon Moor, before I’d intended to stop. From here though, Federation Peak is in striking distance of a day trip, so I make a strategic decision to set camp. The summit day will be longer, but I won’t have to lug my pack any further. In the afternoon, I rest. The quiet peace of the mountains seeps to my core.

I awake in darkness, and am on my way before six. As I labour through dense scrub, dawn’s pink glow suffuses the horizon and reveals my destination in silhouette. It’s a stunning sight. I’m beginning to warm to this trip, at last. Clouds line the valley floors around me, but the sky is wide and blue. After sunrise comes the slowest part of the walk, a traverse behind the Four Peaks. It’s only a kilometre but takes an hour! I’m glad my pack’s staying behind. I emerge onto Thwaites Plateau and “Feders” is now close.

It’s a jagged mountain. Two of its faces plunge 600 metres to glacial lakes, the north one in truly vertiginous fashion. The south face is reached high up by sidling the Southern Traverse. The face is scrambling territory; the yanks would call it fourth class, probably. That’s if you find the right way though; I spend an hour bouldering around half the face, it seems, getting repeatedly bluffed out. I retreat, a mess of nerves and anxiety at having come this far to the prospect of failing for poor routefinding, of all things. I drink, eat and calm my nerves. I will nail this bugger. Paying close attention to the cairns this time, I head back up, and lo and behold, it goes. A sneaky ledge which I’d previously missed leads to an easy, grassy ramp and on to the top.
The Crags of Andromeda. Photo: Matt Hollingworth.
Yeah, it’s not bad. From the summit I can see Prion Beach, on the south coast, where I walked less than two months ago. I can see Mount Anne, from where I first saw Federation this time last year. I can see Bathurst Harbour, and Lake Pedder, and the myriad peaks of the Western Arthurs. I can see the Ironbounds, and Precipitous Bluff, and Pindars Peak, and Hartz Mountain, and Mount Bobs, and hundreds of others for which I have no names. There are ghosts here too - my friend Phil, who came here two years ago and died on another mountain not long after. I look inward, and see the other mountains I’ve overcome, and those I’ve failed to, and wonder at how these endeavours sustain me yet also mean nothing. I cry. I shout. It feels good.

A Cessna flies low and circles me twice. I don’t mind; I’m lonely and it’s nice to be seen. But my summit spell is broken and I’ve still got some walking to do. Now that I know the way, the climb back down is easy. I retrace my steps to the campsite, returning thirteen hours after I left. On the way back, my thoughts are preoccupied mostly with the tendonitis I feel coming on in my ankle. (I can always find *something* to worry about.)

After my perfect summit day, the next morning comes up dark and brooding. From the moor I watch enchanted as a beautiful cloudscape drapes itself around the peaks and snares the morning sun. The Tasmanian ranges are muted, but have a beauty all their own, and are at their best in weather like this. I reluctantly pull camp.

Walking back is no less arduous. When I get to Pass Creek, it’s early and raining and I just keep going. I end up at Cracroft Crossing for the night, by which time it’s obvious I’m going to walk out in two days, not three. So on Sunday, I slog through filthy mud for twenty six kilometres and reach my car in the early evening. I peel off my gaiters and boots and wash the crud from my legs. It’s a subdued pleasure to be finished. I have no idea what’s next, but this will do, for now.
Ahhh New Years Eve... the very thought conjures a variety of mental images. Staggering around the City or Manuka amidst crowds of teeny boppers and drunken yobs. Stinking heat and everyone sweating like pigs. Crap music and people dancing like they’re afflicted with tetanus (or epilepsy). Passing out in a gutter in a puddle of... Yes, its not that special, so to bring in 2006, the hunt for something exciting and unique was on! When Annabel’s trip for New Years on Kosi appeared, like many others, I signed up with a click of the mouse. One phenomenon that seems to be happening a lot nowadays is participants signing up, only to pull out. In this case, sports injuries, visiting relatives and mysterious disappearances culled the group to four: Annabel, Jaakko, Yi and myself. John, Nic and Garth were going to meet us on top as they were doing a longer, harder route to Kosi.

The drive to the Snowies in a non air-conditioned car was somewhat ominous. The high temps and vast fields of bone dry grass gave the impression we’d be struggling up steep hills under a harsh, beating sun, sweating profusely under the weight of an enormous pack. Fortunately, it was cooler in Jindabyne, and actually quite pleasant at Dead Horse Gap. Departure for Kosi was delayed for a few hours, giving us the chance to snooze and cool our feet in the Cascades.

Eventually, with packs laden with goodies, we headed up the hill. The breeze kept things quite comfortable as we gained several hundred metres. The path wound its way between boulders and snowgums, some dead from the 2003 bushfires. Patches of wildflowers were in full bloom, and we spotted the odd snowdrift clinging to the rocky Ramshead peaks. At the top of Thredbo we stopped for a snack. Here there was an altercation with what may have been an alpine funnelweb, however we got our gear
and continued our merry way. From there it was a matter of following the metal walkway to Mueller’s Pass. Kosi swung into view and a couple of specks indicated people were already on top. Large drifts of snow adorned Kosi’s side, so our bush esky was sorted. Sunset was approaching, so we hurried upwards, the path seeming to go on for way longer than the signposted distance.

Upon summitting, we stumbled across John and a few other groups. John had come the long way from Tharwa, mostly on foot. Nick and Garth had pulled out of that walk earlier with various injuries. Leaving the summit, we found a campsite in a small hollow. Here Annabel pulled out the esky I’d lumped up. John’s eyes bugged out of his head when he saw the array of delicacies on offer; cheeses, salmon and booze. After a quick change of clothes (ranging in quality from cocktail dress to down jacket, shorts and trashed sandals), we headed back up with drinks, wine flutes, and snacks.

At the top John poured everyone refreshing glasses of chilled drinks, made with ice from the snowdrifts. These were sipped with other revelers, and a spectacular view. Photos were snapped and the sunset witnessed by all. Dinner called, and back at the tents we had a chance meeting with Stu Fitch, a club member of yesteryear. Nowadays he lives in Darwin (!), but had nipped over with his partner Ali. In true mountain style, a little earlier Stu had taken the opportunity to propose to Ali on the summit!

As darkness fell, entrees and dinner were had. During this, we were engulfed in a blizzard of bogong moths. Millions of little wings flapped overhead for an hour, the noise being like light rain. Dessert was plum pudding with chocolate and port sauce. Afterwards we lay back and gazed at the milky way, the spectacular view only possible in undeveloped areas. At one point the sky flashed brightly as a meteor hit the atmosphere and broke up, trails of light streaming about. The countdown to midnight was spent watching shooting stars, and observing the progress of distant lights approaching Mueller’s Pass.

With a few minutes to go (according to John’s GPS watch, set to an atomic clock), we returned to the summit with champagne and classy plastic flutes. Several revellers were
already there, including three blokes with a stereo system. Huddled around the summit, John started the countdown, finishing at -1 to include the leap second. With a cheer and cork pop, 2006 arrived! After quaffing some bubbly the others headed back. I remained on the summit talking with two blokes who'd arrived minutes after midnight. John came back later, after having drunk the rest of the bottle at camp! Finally at 1am we retired to the tents.

In the tents, the dry conditions caused plenty of static electricity to be generated. Shuffling around resulted in random small sparks in the darkness. This aside, the campsite had gotten extremely windy. Tents flapped noisily and sleeping bags were buffeted by gusts, so not much sleep was had. At some stage sunrise arrived, though some of us merely burrowed back into our bags in an attempt to snooze longer.

At 6am we packed up to find a sheltered spot for breakfast. We looked like a bunch of drunks walking down as the wind was made us sway about crazily.

After breakfast at Mueller’s Pass it was back to the metal walkway. Here the wind was stronger and even blew us off the track. This had advantages, as wind assisted walking is much quicker!

Upon reaching the treeline, the wind was replaced with flies. Finally we reached the cars and the end of a great trip. Certainly next year will have to be a bigger event, just don't expect any dancing...

Random dude on the summit. Photo: Ben Davies.
A Rotten Scabby Easter

By Liam Whyte

Combine four days and three nights in Namadgi National Park. Gradually add a generous helping of scrub, granite boulders and cold nights. Season to taste with sweeping views, howling wild dogs and two major peaks. Serve with a chocolate egg hunt and some sub zero temperatures and hey presto, one ‘Rotten Scabby Bushwalk’.

Six of us helped ourselves to this tasty dish over Easter. Entrée was served as we left Orroral Valley in brilliant sunshine and headed up towards and then along part of the Australian Alps walking track. After a lunch notable for the appearance of five (yes, five) SLR cameras in a group of six people, we soon headed off track head first into some infamous Namadgi scrub (three years since the bushfires and it is back with a vengeance) up to the impressive Split Rock.

After an obligatory paparazzi session led by Ben atop the granite boulders, we dived back into the scrub to fight our way to our campsite for the night. Upon arriving to discover the creek from which we planned to take water bone dry, of course the heavens opened up and we fled back through the scrub to another creek to set up tents, cook dinner and fall asleep amongst the downpour.

Taking our first bites of the main course on Saturday, the group rose to once more do battle with the scrub and we fought our way through snow, granite boulder fields, fierce winds and did I mention scrub to make our way down to Little Creamy Flats quite a bit behind schedule. With the head chef Mika becoming concerned at our slow progress, our assault upon the long steep ridgeline towards Mt Namadgi quickly began and after battling Paparazzi break mid-climb up Mt Namadgi. Photo: Liam Whyte.
away for several hours the mountain’s defences were breached and the group paused to sample the panoramic views of Namadgi National Park. However, the weather was closing in, so we hurriedly kept chewing away, working our way down the towards Rotten Swamp for the night. The temperature soon plummeted away like the steep slopes of Mt Namadgi that we had recently descended, and ice on the tents after dinner foretold of a chilly night.

‘My sleeping bag is not so very warm’ Tiago remarked as he crawled out of his tent shivering while the first light played across a scene of frozen tents and frost encrusted grass on Easter Sunday morning. Fortunately for all, it was time for desert, so with glee we forgot our numb toes and tucked into an Easter Egg Hunt amongst the scrubbery around the tents. Liam claimed the Chocolate Huntmaster title after ferreting out 13 eggs, unmatched except by Annie who, although she found a baker’s dozen of tasty treats as well, failed to fight temptation and so only presented 11 eggs to be counted by the judges. Next we turned our culinary attention toward Mt Kelly, atop which Robert discovered the joys of frisbeeing sheets of ice from frozen puddles in between mouthfuls of yet more sweet sweeping vistas.

Still, we weren’t quite ready to leave the metaphorical table, so as an apertif we marched down Sam’s Creek, following the intermittent remains of a fire trail to our final campsite in the shadow of Mt Gugenby. As night fell, well, so the wild dogs did begin to howl, no doubt contemplating their own feast of bushwalker steak. Annie was so disconcerted that she refused to leave the safety of the campfire to do her bit for drought relief. But the dogs turned out to not be hungry enough to disturb our rest and so with an early start on Monday morning, we folded our napkins and headed back to the cars via Gugenby valley, to reflect on a long weekend well spent.
Club Discounts

The following stores are generous enough to provide discounts to ANUMC members. If you’re in the market for gear, please consider buying from them.

You’ll need to show your ANUMC membership card in order to get the discount.

**Jurkiewicz Adventure Store - Fyshwick**
15% discount on regular stock (excluding kayaks, GPS, EPIRBs and Southern Cross tents)
25% discount on any Lowe Alpine, Faders, Wild Country, DMM or Salewa products

**Mountain Designs - Braddon**
15% off all non-sale items

**Camping World - Belconnen and Tuggeranong**
12% off

**Paddy Pallin - Braddon**
10% off most of their regular stock. They will match prices from other stores for the same or similar items.

Fog breaking in the Orroral Valley. Photo: Tiago.
If you ever wanted to look down a cliff and see the ground two hundred meters below you, if you ever wanted to swim in your Goretex, if you ever wanted to feel water hitting your helmet from sixty metres above you - Kanangra is the place to experience it. I went there with Nic and Roger, on the first weekend of February.

We arrived at the camping site near the end of Kanangra Road on Friday night. Having started from Canberra in the Australian summer, we now were surrounded by mist, fog, cloud, drizzle. This sort of weather accompanied us the whole Saturday. With temperatures probably not more than twenty degrees, we were going down Christie’s Creek. A nice change from the heat of the last week, although a few degrees more would have been nice - just until the end of the descent and the beginning of the ascent. The canyon was exciting, surrounded by cold rain-forest changing into eucalypts, and it was a good warm-up for the next day. The same is true for the ascent afterwards: 300 m uphill, which was half of the height we had to do the following day.

The following day - Kanangra Main. After one hour’s walk on the top of the cliffs, we reached the first belay. Together with a spectacular view into the gorge, 200 metres down, more or less vertically. On the other side of the valley Kanangra walls, finally uncovered from fog, with their shiny orange colour. On the left hand side Kanangra Creek, falling down the cliffs. „Quite committing, isn’t it?” Roger asked me when I started to abseil down. This was my first impression, too. But with each abseil, I appreciated Nic’s roping skills more and more. As I found out later, he is one of the canyoning pioneers in that region. Some bolts we have used have been set up by his mates and him around twenty years ago. With a chainsaw converted into a drilling machine...

Each abseil had its own character, and had to be enjoyed on its own. Altogether fifteen.
All my senses were involved in capturing the scenery, in belaying, in lowering myself. All my senses, and, as I found out the following morning, all my body. From my toetips over my arms and shoulders until my head - I had to use all I had. The highlights were: abseiling down into a pool, straight into the point where the waterfall comes down, and then unclipping from the rope while your breath is taken away from the water that is falling down from around sixty metres further up. Abseiling down a cliff and freeing a rope from a tree, where it got tangled. Arriving on a platform, that was at least as slippery as if somebody had put soap on it. Coming down near a waterfall that was making noise like a thunderstorm. Being hit by the spray of the water dropping just two armlengths to your right. Finally, a highlight on its own: the way back up again, through Murdering Gully. „It deserved its name today“, Nic said, when we arrived at the top, shortly before dark. Since the tiny difference between downhill skiing and canyoning is that there is no lift to bring you up again.

The morning after I felt all muscles that I usually do not use so often – and that I should train better for the next adventure. In Nic's words: „Liberate your body, expand your mind and walk into the unknown. Canyon safe, canyon well. “
With the end of summer the search was on for a last breath of warmth before the alpine adventures begin, and did we ever get on a winner. Meeting up at Bundeena early Saturday morning after a few stumbles we all headed off in glorious sun through the bizarre suburb to the track head.

Collecting for the mandatory photo our group looked somewhat bulky and over-prepared against the other parties starting off on the track as we waited for all the photographers to complete their compositions. With the formalities out of the way we all set our own paces and were soon spread beyond contact range, given the track had no junctions and was so distinct I had no worries of anyone getting lost.

After an hours walking we finally hit the beach proper as the track dropped down off a headland to Marley Beach, squeaky sand only adding to the novelty. I stopped at the southern end of Little Marley Beach and watched the world go by. Waist high scrub was the terrain of the morning and the lack of shade had us all feeling rather hot.

At this, the first regroup of the day, I was forced to provide my own shade in the form of a vest strung between a pair of walking poles. When Ulrike and Ron caught up they
set about enjoying the cooling water with a barefoot walk back across the beach while we waited on the others.

With the arrival of the back end of the group we collected together and pushed on for a late lunch at Watamolla. To our disappointment the drought had taken hold and the waterfalls/swimming holes were dry, a short dip would have fitted the weather perfectly. As we arrived at the picnic tables we saw one of the parties from earlier in the day finishing their lunch and heading off, our speed wasn’t ideal but we’d still make it comfortably. Lunch had to be short but some members of the party still had time to visit the kiosk for some cold treats.

Darren had been singing and playing air guitar to a specific song at random moments all morning and yet even as we stood looking at Eagle Rock some people still weren’t sure what we were making all the fuss about, after filling them in I was hoping to enjoy the waterfalls that normally plunge off the cliffs here. Again the drought was showing its force and of the 3 falls that were running impressively last time I was on the track only 1 was running and even then its state of flow was debateable. Even without the falls the cliff top views were still good and we quickly gained altitude to the highest point of day, above a 110m cliff that fell to the ocean below.

The descent to Gaire Beach slipped away effortlessly and our party joined together at the first of the coastal ledges to be crossed - a well maintained track that made the crossing nice and simple. At the next ledge a sign proclaimed track closed, and despite the encouragement of a local still using the track I couldn’t convince anyone to attempt the exciting crossing. This put us on a detour up over the headland and through the local huts, Rich

Six walkers, a cliff, and two wide blue yonders. Photo: John Pillans.
stopped to ask a few questions of a resident and retuned with a glossy brochure of the area’s history. Descending to the campsite, we were the second last group to arrive and had to settle on a site in the middle of camping ground. Ron and I made the water run to the well hidden supply, luckily no-one else had been there for a while so the water could be considered very safe.

Our evening lounging around was interrupted by a very cheeky wallaby, clearly it had been fed by many people in the past and just wandered in to the middle of us and started trying its luck at peoples food. It seemed particularly interested in Darren and even gave him a kiss (much to his disgust). The night was punctuated with people shooing away this pesky animal as it tried further to steal our food, the morning revealed a chewed apple despite it being in a bag in a tent vestibule.

The short exit for day two lived up to expectations, leaving Era we caught sight of some wild Deer quietly going about their day. Burning palms provided a hint of things to come with its lush canopy and soon after a few of us managed a peek at the figure eight pool. Finally we all entered the (littoral) rainforest, its musty smell and cool floor a delight after a day of ocean swept scrub.

The last stretch of track across the top of the cliff line was amazing, the light was flowing parallel to the slope that dropped steeply to the ocean, bright greens of the canopy were contrasting against the deep blue of the water, just perfect. A fitting conclusion to a thoroughly splendid walk.
Calamity follows calamity. Geoff gets bitten by a snake (judging by the puncture wounds, at least a ten foot taipan.) Tiago goes down with the flu, miles from the car. The weather can’t decide what it’s doing - two people suffer hypothermia on Saturday, followed by a case of heat stroke on the Sunday. Jaakko falls off a cliff – twice; and then the group self-destructs: Lucy races off into the scrub while Liam and I roll down the hillside trying to beat the living daylights out of each other. The weekend is turning into every trip leaders’ worst nightmare, but we’re having a great time.

It’s the Trip Leaders’ weekend, and each of the participants is getting the chance to manage navigating a group through the wild while also handling the culmination of some of the risks of going bush; be it snakes; bushfires; or sprained ankles. We’re also getting the chance to role-play being victims of some of these disasters, which is even more fun. Lucy’s blood-curdling scream after seeing a snake was an Oscar winning performance, and probably was heard by everybody camped within five kilometres. Liam and I were struggling not to burst out laughing as we argued about sleeping with an imaginary girlfriend. And suffering hypothermia is a much more pleasant thing to do when warm with the sun on your face.

Some of the disasters that befell us were the familiar bush hazards, but some of them came out of left field, and all of them provided a challenge, and a chance to try out our responses and abilities; while a few were definitely thought provoking. What were they? Sorry, but I can’t give away all of Mika’s and Annabel’s secrets.

Thanks to Mika, Annabel and Jaakko for setting up the weekend for us – it was a valuable learning process, with fun and humour matching the challenges, and an evil gleam in Mika’s eye as he orchestrated the next surprise. It was a very engaging and useful weekend. And I’m sure I won the fight with Liam...
By the final day of the Bluies Extravaganza, only three troopers remained enthused enough to hit the most challenging of the weekend’s canyons - Ranon. Nic led the graceful Sebastien and I (newbie Nicola) through the misty rain down into the canyon. Right from the start, this felt like a true adventure into unchartered territory. The trail was barely there, the rocky creek line covered in velvety moss, with each step revealing the most intricate network of spiderwebs. We learnt some incredibly useful new skills – downclimbing on body belays and descending hand over hand - down some very steep, wet, mossy ground.

Once we hit the main abseil, Seb and I were both speechless, and Nic was squealing with joy. A small slip drew blood to my knuckles, but did little to dampen the spirits. It was so exhilarating getting pummeled by the waterfalls, enjoying the delightful swim across the pond mid abseil - all before scrambling over the rocky lip for the final descent. This brought us into a place that was nothing short of magical (Claustral Ranon Junction). The density of the ferns and the intensity of the colours were so phenomenal that we felt like we’d stepped into another world, another time, another dimension – a place where we almost expected to find dinosaurs! This wonder world continued until we joined up with Thunder Canyon. Although less magical, this section of the canyon proved to have some exciting rock scrambling and delicate manoeuvres. We enjoyed every minute of the trip, and I was certainly sad to get to the end and ascend the steep and muddy exit. By that time, it was so wet we left our wetsuits on for the hike out.
Chocolate Cheesecake  
(Backcountry!)  

By Annabel Battersby

This is a dessert recipe I’ve tried out on a couple of club trips where we have camped in the snow and it has been a big hit. The point of this recipe is that you can put the tin of cheesecake in the snow to chill and set – no fridge required!

**Ingredients:**

- 1 packet Cottee’s Chocolate Instant Pudding
- 500ml milk (or equivalent in milk powder plus water)
- 100-200g plain sweet biscuits (crumbed, and mixed with butter or margarine)
- 30 g butter or margarine
- 250g light cream cheese (buy the Philadelphia cream cheese in the foil packet)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Grated chocolate or 2 -3 strawberries to decorate.

**Equipment:**

- 1 medium-large frying pan or pot, 2nd pot, big spoon, knife, fork or whisk.

**Method:**

As you will be preparing this recipe out in the backcountry, a bit of preparation before you leave home is needed: First, fill a snap lock bag with the crumbed plain sweet biscuits (you can crumb them by putting biscuits in a bag and bashing them to bits!). Add butter or margarine to the bag, and put mixture in the fridge. Next, add the sugar into the foil packet of cream cheese, and put the whole lot into a snap lock bag (leaving it in the fridge until you leave home -try to keep this cool until you use it). Pack some grated chocolate (grate it at home) or a few strawberries to decorate the cheesecake. Pack the Cottee’s Instant pudding and you are ready to go!
Out in the Backcountry:

After you have had your dinner, and everyone is busy around their Trangia and MSR stoves melting snow for hot drinks, begin to prepare your cheesecake. First, get a good sized Trangia lid or pot ready. Take out the snap lock bag of crumbed biscuits and warm up the butter by massaging the bag of biscuits in your hands (perhaps take off your gloves). Then cover the base of the pot with the biscuit and butter mixture, carefully and patiently patting it down to create a smooth layer using the back of a spoon. This will quickly cool and become hard.

Next, get the cream cheese and soften to ‘room temperature’. Since you will be sitting in sub-zero conditions on a winter’s evening in the Snowy Mountains, this will probably mean you have to put the cream cheese (still inside snap lock bag) inside your jacket to warm up– perhaps you will need to put the cream cheese in between layers of clothing, or warm it up with your hands. Do this for quite a while (10 -15mins), until it’s really soft.

While you are doing this, mix the 500ml of milk and the pudding mixture in your 2nd Trangia pot (or get someone else to do it if your hands are too full warming the cream cheese). This will only require cold milk (or cold water and milk powder), and the full packet of chocolate pudding mixture whisked together for 1 minute.

Then mix the softened cream cheese with the pudding mixture and before the mixture cools, pour or spoon the mixture over the biscuit base. This may be quite tricky as it will be setting quickly, but be patient and just smooth the mixture on top of the biscuit base as best you can (it will taste good no matter what!). Then put a plastic bag over your cheesecake and half bury it in the snow for 20 – 30 minutes to chill and set. Meanwhile cut up some strawberries for decoration if you have them.

When the cheesecake is ready, decorate with strawberries and chocolate. Serve with a spoon into the the waiting bowls of your grateful trip mates. Accompany with hot drinks and enjoy!
Yileen Canyon

By Yi Chen

The morning had started with grey overcast clouds and it had been raining the day before. After my breaky of bacon and eggs, I just wanted to go to a pub and read in front of a nice warm fire. Nic, however, gathered everyone in militaristic fashion to discuss our strategy for canyoning Yileen. None of us, including the leader, had done Yileen before and it was thought that this was a mostly dry canyon so a few bravehearts (Seb, Michael and Tiago) without wetsuits decided to join the group.

Nic went through all the gear and ensured that we were prepared for the 50m abseil at the end. There was a good fire trail leading down to the canyon. By this time, the clouds had cleared and there were blue skies. At the start of the canyon, there was little water and there was a moment when I thought I brought my wetsuit for nothing ... that was until we hit a pool about 2m deep and a few swimming sections down the canyon. Suffice to say that the few bravehearts were very wet and very frozen by the end.

Whilst some were dying of hypothermia, I was busily making love to the camera. Nic and I did the classic “tiger/jungle look” and “calendar girls pose”. Elaine professed how she loved to bite babies’ heads off and Darren was philosophizing whether girls dig vasectomy scars on guys ... we all had deep insights into each others’ psyches.

The highlight was the 50m abseil off a cliff face at the end - one very long pitch followed by one very short pitch. The men folk - Darren and Geoff - went down first to belay the women folk, the frozen ones and our leader. We walked out of the canyon intact - it was a great day overall with a great bunch of people. Special thanks to Nic for being such a fabulous poser (and leader).
Yes, we all know how hard it can be these days to take a whole weekend off to go into the great Australian bush and enjoy some fresh air. There is always something, whether it is study, work, sport commitments, or just laundry that you have been putting off for... far too long. So what do you do? Stay in Canberra for the whole weekend? I think not! The perfect solution is a day walk: a hassle-free, convenient and overall enjoyable “easy way out”. What is not to like: great company, fantastic scenery, peace and quiet, fresh air, nice lunch in a cool spot, usually the top of a mountain, a bit of adventure, a sense of achievement, and usually a nice meal somewhere on the drive home. And, the best thing of all, you get to go home and sleep in your own warm bed!

The perfect example of how enjoyable a great day walk can be was a hike to the Tinderry Peak with Annabel Battersby. Just a short drive south of Canberra, this walk was a mixture of creek scrub, alpine woodland and dry open forest, with a bit of granite boulder scrambling thrown in for fun. It was a perfect way to show Annabel’s impressive navigational skills, which allowed her to be “within 10 meters of the GPS” just by using a compass and a map the whole way! The spectacular lunch spot, overlooking the Namadgi NP and the Monaro plains, was provided by a group of huge boulders on the top of the hill. Everybody had a great time, and the conversation flowed freely throughout the day. The whole journey is well illustrated by Ron Henry’s spectacular photos from the trip, which have been posted on the website.

So whether you are just starting out your “bushwalking career”, or are an experienced bushwalker, there is always something to enjoy on a day walk. And if you are trip leader, or just considering leading a trip for the first time, there is never a shortage of great spots around Canberra to visit for a day - so let’s have more day walks please!
January 2006. In the heat of the Canberran summer, some ANU Mountaineering Clubbers are desperately waiting for the next canyoning trip to cool down. Nic Bendeli and his school of canyoning are fortunately heading to Bungonia. The week before the trip is spent fearing that it will be cancelled because of bushfires or, ironically, heavy rain. On Thursday the verdict is given: the park is closed. But of course Nic has a Plan B (and probably Plans C, D and E just in case): Waterfall Creek in Namadgi.

Canyoning in Namadgi?!! Okay in six months in Australia I have learned to expect just about anything from the Bush but still ... Anyway, on a beautiful Sunday morning I am catching up on sleep in the back of a 4WD flying up and down Namadgi’s dirt roads. An hour later everybody is joyfully gearing up and leaving the cars for a gentle bush walk to the creek.

Following the tiny stream of water I am wondering where the canyon is supposed to be, but a trip to the Bluetes a few weeks before had taught me that Australian canyons seem to randomly appear in the middle of nowhere. And Waterfall Canyon is no exception: after a short walk the mini-creek turns into a mighty group of waterfalls. There is not much water in there and no “canyon” per say but quite a few abseils to be done and amazing views to enjoy. Fair enough! So here we are, appreciating a relaxing Sunday in the bush, spending most of our time sitting on top of a waterfall and waiting to abseil down to the next one.

There is also a bit of adventure as the place has apparently not been visited since the 2003 bush fires and the anchor points sometimes need to be reconstructed. But everything goes smoothly and 4 abseils later we are standing at the bottom of the impressive waterfall. Getting back up at this point would be a pretty tricky climb so we continue down the creek, rock hopping once in a while and fighting our way through the vegetation. Pretty soon the blackberries are winning the fight and we have no choice but to leave their creek. Adventure is on the menu again since Nic reckons that this way out “might be a bit steep”. It turns out to be okay, although quite exhausting on such a hot day. A few litres of sweat later, we make it back to the dirt road and the cars, only to regret that, contrary to Nic, we did not bother bringing a can of peaches in mango juice, thinking that it was “just an easy day trip”. Ah, the foolishness of youth!
Mt Gingera

By Tamara Hartwich

Nine people and one magical pony, all led by Sam Margerison, headed off for an easy day walk up Mt Gingera. This was my first outing with the ANUMC, and I was slightly nervous, not knowing what to expect and what the other people would be like. As it turned out I had nothing to worry about. The group was full of friendly people, several who were in my situation of having just joined the club.

The walk went without a hitch. The first section to Pryor’s Hut passed quickly, with people able to walk three or four abreast down the dirt road. Once at the hut, we stopped to have a very relaxing break and to explore the hut. The mystery of the place centred on how the previous visitors’ log book burned in the fire and yet the hut survived!

After relaxing and viewing Sam’s map, we headed down the final leg of the dirt road before following the little path up the Mountain. It was an easy climb with not too much scrub around. The sun was out and the day was beautiful. When we got to the top, we managed to scare off the only other person up there, so had the place to ourselves for lunch.

The view from the top was well worth the walk. We were able to see the Mountains in all directions. The main activity (other than eating which kept people quiet for quite a while) was examining Sam’s map and naming the mountains which we could see perfectly from the summit.

Ben was the main photographer on the day. He managed to take some great photos. Despite the scenery, the magical pony (who apparently manages to go everywhere with Ann) was probably the most photographed object (person?) along on the day. He also enjoyed a fair slice of the conversation of the day.

The walk back to the cars seemed to take a lot longer than the walk to the top – though isn’t that always the way? As it got later in the day, the temperature fell a bit, but overall it was a gorgeous day, spent in the outdoors with friendly people.
Tuross Canyoning

By Elisha Grange

A few weeks ago, I glimpsed heaven. Or maybe it’s just that natural tendency to contemplate one’s mortality while peering over the edge of a 50-metre waterfall that our fearless guide is telling us we’re about to abseil down.

I’d like to think it was an actual glimpse of heaven. The bad news is that heaven has brambles and sharp rocks. But the good news is that it’s about a two-hour drive from Canberra in Tuross Canyon.

A group of us from the Mountaineering Club went canyoning on Feb. 26, 2006. We met up at 7 a.m. and then everyone but the drivers fell asleep on the way there. We woke up when the car started bouncing on the dirt roads that wound through Eucalyptus forest. By the time we arrived, we were all hopped up on adrenaline and wide-eyed with excitement. We grabbed our packs and started walking single-file along the trail.

All was going well. Nic suddenly veered into the brush holding his compass and pointed into the trees. “That way,” he said. So we followed, swatting our way through the spider webs and underbrush. We headed downhill for about half an hour, then made our way into the canyon. A slow-moving stream ran through a narrow granite canyon packed with...
giant boulders. We jumped, hopped and tentatively tiptoed our way down the canyon. A few of us slipped on the rocks and fell into the water. That was just the warm up. There were several narrow gorges with no boulders and only long stretches of murky water. We had no choice but to swim.

Nic and one other guy were the only ones with wetsuits. The rest of us were a motley crew wearing bathing suits mixed with flannel shirts, old running shoes, workout clothes and crappy old sweaters and pants.

We packed our gear into garbage sacks, then stuffed them in our backpacks. Nic threw the backpacks in the water where they bobbed gently. We followed the packs, jumping from large boulders, screaming and laughing. The water was pretty warm and the sun was hot making the swims a welcome relief.

At one point, I was slightly ahead of the group and heard Nic point something out to everyone else. “There!” he yelled. “See that! On the water!” I turned around and saw only ripples. The others were oh-ing and ah-ing. Some of the girls looked nervous.

I yelled back to Nic, “WHAT’S IN THE WATER?!?” He yelled back, “Just a water lizard!”

A water wha-?! Being an American unfamiliar with the local animals, I was nervous. I turned around again, facing forward, and slowly breaststroked forward, hoping and praying a water lizard was closer to a little desert lizard in size and less like the salt-water crocodiles I’d been hearing about. I had visions of swimming around a boulder and being greeted by a floating pair of large, slitted eyes.

At one point, my sneaker popped up from underneath my pack and scared me so badly I nearly walked on water.

The water lizard surfaced later. Turns out they’re black, about a foot and a half long and look just like regular lizards. No worries.

We got though the last pool and started hiking down the boulders again when we heard a deep thundering in the distance. The canyon ahead of us opened into a giant gorge with orange granite cliffs covered in green trees and shrubs.
The slow little river we’d been following disappeared over a cliff edge. I gingerly stepped forward and peered down into the massive hole. The size of the hole was so immense that the mountains on the other side were pale from the distance. It was a drop of hundreds of feet – a giant cascading waterfall from where we were into a deep gorge filled with even more granite boulders.

My stomach froze into a little knot as I realized, “Oh, wow, it’s been a really long time since I went abseiling. And I’ve never done it over a waterfall.”

Nic began checking the ropes as Michael – one of the group members – began strapping on his harness. The three of us were going to abseil down and hike back up while the rest of the group lunched and basked in the sun.

“I’ll go first, then Elisha, then Michael,” Nic said. “When I get to the bottom, I’ll give three whistles, which means it’s time for the next person to go.” We both nodded and he disappeared over the edge. I glanced at Michael. We were both clipped in to the rope. He clipped me into the abseiling device, unclipped me from the holding clip and told me to go over. I decided that was a good time to “refresh” my memory. The water thundered next to us.

“Ok, so to slow down, I hold it to my side?” I asked. “No, behind you,” Michael said, pointing. “Always keep your right hand behind you. Where’s your helmet?” I grabbed my bare head, grimaced and asked one of our group members to grab it for me. I’d totally forgotten it. Way to make an impression.

I held the device with my left hand as Michael explained how it worked.”No! Don’t do that!
Never touch the device with your hand – your fingers will get cut off,” he said, pointing to
the way I was incorrectly holding the metal clip. Hold the rope or the rock, but never the
device. Keep your right hand behind you. If you start going too fast, just hold the rope
with your hand. Ok, go.” I started walking sideways to the edge.

“Remember, I live in Burgmann College,” I said to the group as they watched from a safe
distance away. “They have my emergency contact info, ok? My last words are ‘I love my
family.’” The group nodded.

Unfortunately, my device was too secure and I had to tug with all my strength to get the
ropes to pass through it. Later, Nic said we should have gone with less friction. But then
again, it probably kept me alive. I walked over the edge and then walked down the cliff,
with the spray from the waterfall misting my skin and arms.

Once I was over the edge, dangling 50 meters above the rocks and not dead, the fear left
me. My only focus was getting the dang rope to go through the device. The sound of the
waterfall blotted out all sound except that of my feet scraping against the cliff between
bounces. The air smelled like gum trees and wet dirt. The hot sun beat across my back
and created rainbows in the waterfall. The air of the gorge was cool and welcoming.

I landed next to Nic, who unclipped me and sent for Michael. We were balancing on a
slippery rock ledge a couple feet above a giant pool. Michael landed next to us and we
jumped in the water and swam to the other side. After climbing out onto the boulders, we
left our gear and bouldered and swam our way through a couple more pools before coming to a
second waterfall. This one was much smaller than the first – only about 30 feet high. Michael and I
jumped off the cliff into the pool, then swam around trying to dunk each other. Nic just shook his
head.

To get back to the rest of the group, we hiked up the near vertical face of the opposite side
of the gorge, then walked across the ridge up behind the surrounding cliff walls, picked our
way through the brush at the top of the ridge, then bouldered and bounced our way back to the
group below. By the time we got there, I collapsed, exhausted.

On our way home, we stopped for burgers and I walked like an old cowboy to restaurant, my legs
already stiff. But it was sooo worth it.
With the Australia Day holiday on a Thursday, it was the perfect time to take Friday off and have a four-day bushwalk in the Budawangs. Ettrema Gorge is an excellent walk: the scenery is beautiful, there are plenty of rockpools for swimming, and the wildlife includes bearded dragons and red-belly black snakes. Our trip started off at The Jumps and headed down into Bullfrog Creek, and before long we were down into the Gorge. Walking trails weren’t always available so the best path was often to walk through the water, which was mostly shin depth and quite pleasant in the hot weather. The first day’s walking was gradually downhill, to a great little camping spot near a collection of rock pools and swimming holes, under the towering cliffs that the Budawangs are known for. We arrived mid-afternoon and had plenty of time for afternoon swimming.

The second day was in similar terrain with even more swimming. There were several places to take good jumps off the rocks into deep pools.

On day three, we left the campsite with day packs to head up Jones’ Creek for a lunch and a siesta near a big waterfall. A definite trip highlight took place on the way back from the waterfall. Michael John, a German chemistry postdoc, contemplated a twelve-metre jump into a very deep rock pool. After a long time at the top, he asked for a countdown from us spectators below and took the plunge. The splash was impressive and left a few marks on John the next day. Video footage is available on the photos section of the website.

On the final day it was time to regain the lost altitude, walking out along Myall Creek. At the top it got fairly scrubby before we finally emerged on the edge of a farm and walked along the road back to the cars. The third and fourth days involved a few rock scrambles including one or two tricky bits, so it was worth bringing handline to haul the packs up.

All up, it was a great trip to be on. This area of the Budawangs really provides for a sense of isolation and wilderness even though our distance over four days was only ~35km. The scenery, swimming, and rock-jumping makes it a great summertime walk. There’s lots of photos on the website if you need more convincing. Strongly recommended!
## ANUMC Contacts

### Committee for Autumn 2006

General enquiries should go to the club mobile: 0418 293 502. But, anyone listed below is more than happy to talk to anyone about the club and its activities.

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<td>Granite Guide</td>
<td>Sonia Graham</td>
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<td>Andrew Peters</td>
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