



The Epic

Newsletter of the ANU
Mountaineering Club
Winter 2006

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Cover photo: View from Mt Townsend September 2006 *Photo: ANUMC Website*

Editors' Blurb

Well, another winter is over and we're getting geared up for another season of canyoning, bushwalking, kayaking, rockclimbing, and anything else you can do in the warmer weather - springtime! Alas, this year's ski season was somewhat disappointing in terms of snow coverage, so there were not as many cross country ski trips run - from all accounts it was the worst ski season in about 20 years, so we all have our fingers crossed for next year's season!! Perhaps we should get club members to do a snow dance?

Winter couldn't have passed however without the Club's annual Mid-Winter Feast trip which went off rather well this year. Check out the article on page 6. Also included is the recipe for Felix's fantastic apple crumble that went down very well with all the Feasters. There are also some canyoning, kayaking and bushwalking trip reports.

Important Notice: All club members should read the notice on Page 5!!

Happy reading! Bron, Andrew and Mostyn

Note from Bron: As EPIC editor for the last few years, I am sadly going to have to hang up my keyboard and hand over the software. It's been great fun and thanks to everyone that has contributed their stories and photos - keep 'em comin'!!

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)

President's Report

By Sam Keech-Marx

I hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather and has lots of plans for Spring bushwalking/climbing/paddling and more!

The big issue facing the club at the moment is voluntary student unionism (VSU) which came into effect in July. This means that the university can no longer collect the GSF fee from students at the start of every year and distribute it to student organizations. The Sports and Recreation Association, which we are affiliated to, will lose over \$500,000 of GSF funding per year and so prices in the gym will rise, hire rates for tennis courts etc will increase, and there will be over \$70,000 less money available for Clubs like us.

This means that we will receive less money for buying equipment, subsidizing competition fees and more restricted use of facilities. The SRA has also decided that the minimum membership fee for a Club to be eligible to receive funding is \$30 for students and \$50 for non-students. This is a significant increase from the \$15/\$20 we currently charge. However, there are some changes to offset these increased costs. For non-students, the cost of joining the SRA will be reduced, probably to \$100 instead of the current \$120. For students, there will be no GSF, which means you have around \$250 in your pocket that would have otherwise gone to the university. As well as an increased membership fee, prices in the gear store may have to rise in order to compensate for decreased grants from the SRA. If you have suggestions on how the Club should deal with this significant loss of funding, please feel free to contact me and I'll make sure your ideas are taken into account as the committee and executive prepare the Club for the challenges ahead.

In other news, we have had a very successful few months since the last EPIC. A highlight has been the number of big social trips throughout the colder months. It all kicked off with the Mid-Winter Feast where 14 intrepid souls enjoyed a trip involving minimal walking and maximum eating! Another 14 people enjoyed a snow shoe trip to Cascade Hut which involved more walking but just as much feasting! And of course the Winter Huge Days Out added a new (annual?) social event to the Club calendar. Don't forget that the fabulous Cocktails on the Castle event is coming up in October so sign up and get glamorous on top of a big mountain with a great view and a tequila sunrise! See you out there! Sam



First word... The official government dance of Kazakhstan... Sam plays charades on the Mid-Winter Feast Photo: Aleksandar Davidovic

Important notice for all Club members!

Every year the ANUMC runs hundreds of trips in almost every adventure type activity. It is important that we receive feedback about ANUMC trips - every edition of the EPIC is packed with trip reports and the website photo gallery is a small sample of the hundreds of successful ANUMC trips each year.

Letting us know about a great trip helps promote the ANUMC and encourages more trips to be organised. However, it is also important that we receive feedback when a trip has had problems. Often vague and exaggerated rumours are the only source of information when people don't provide feedback when something goes wrong.

Usually people decide that they wouldn't do another trip with that person or the ANUMC again and as a result the activity officers may not even know that there have been problems or if an individual is repeating poor form. Examples include unsafe driving, poor leadership, exaggerated or incompetent skills for a particular activity.

It is important that the issue is not confused with a general dislike for an individual or differing styles in how things are done. Trip leaders volunteer to organise ANUMC trips - without them, our trip calendar would be empty. While they have a responsibility of ensuring their trips are well orchestrated, they are neither staff sergeants or tour guides.

As a participant on an ANUMC trip it is your responsibility to be honest about your capabilities, skills and experience before signing up to a club trip. When you're on a club trip, you're on a trip with mates - you're all equal and deserve equal respect as individuals.

If you go on a trip that isn't being run in the spirit of a university club or you are concerned about safety issues or poor risk management, please contact the relevant activity officer or ANUMC executive so that we can assess the problem and prevent future incidents.

The process for running an ANUMC trip is relatively straightforward. All ANUMC trips are screened by experienced club members with a strong background in the trip activity. Their assessment for approving a trip depends mostly on the information provided by the trip leader, which includes detailed trip planning, risk management and experience in the activity.

Most ANUMC trips run smoothly without any problems, but occasionally weather, injuries and other unpredictable factors alter even the best planned trips. Every year ANUMC organises a leadership weekend, which is an excellent opportunity to develop and recognise skills needed when organising trips.

Anyone interested in running a trip, discussing past trips or doing the leadership weekend early next year should contact the relevant activity officer.

Mid-Winter Feast

By Aleksandar Davidovic

An old Club tradition seen through the eyes of a new member

As the title says, the midwinter feast is one of the old traditions of the ANU Mountaineering Club. Lured by the promise of an easy walk, good company and feasting around the fire, as Mika described it on the 'Fridge Door', this new member couldn't help signing up, and here is the story...

The trip began at the very reasonable hour of 10AM at Mika's house (OK, some of us were a wee bit late, but still within tolerable limits) and from the very beginning it promised an adventure... the leading car in our little convoy managed to take three out of four, if I am not mistaken, wrong turns on our way to Garran shops where we planned to refuel, and get some additional supplies. Of course, in a very hobbit-like manner, we used the opportunity to have a second breakfast, and engage in fruitful discussion about the purpose and meaning of elevenses, luncheon, afternoon tea and other gastronomic pleasures. Unwilling to take any chances, Mika decided to lead the convoy from there, and soon we were on our way to Namadgi National Park.

Describing the drive through Namadgi, its beauties and all the interesting things yours truly learned, would require a whole new article, but it will suffice to say that we spent it in lively conversation, spotted some wallabies, a wedge-tailed eagle, commemorated Bron's slide from last year, and had a short stop at a lookout to take some photos. That was an opportunity for Felix to demonstrate the quality of his camera's super-duper ultra high capacity space shuttle batteries, which he bought a while ago, and never had to recharge them. Consequently, (see Murphy's laws) they provided just about enough power for circa three or four photos...



Gooandra Hut *Photo: Bronwen Davies*

True to the trip's name, we had our next stop in Adaminaby, for a quick lunch, where the author of these lines was introduced to the Australian custom of setting up 'big things' in the middle of nowhere. Namely, there was a big trout in front of the shopping area. There was a place that offered some vegetarian options, that is, wedges or chips, so we ate there. After refilling our bellies, we proceeded toward Kiandra – once home to some ten thousand gold miners and store keepers, now just a ghost town. We left our cars there, loaded ourselves up and enjoyed an easy walk to Gooandra homestead, enriched by discussions of such profound questions as 'whether bunyips are pink and fluffy or brown and scary', or 'what are the dietary habits of hoop snakes and drop bears'. Mind you, one of the advantages of parking in a ghost town is that there are no parking fees or inspectors.

It was already late afternoon when we arrived at the homestead, so the most pressing tasks were to set up the camp, get some firewood (which would have been a lot easier had there been an axe or something of the sort in the hut), and get fresh water supplies. Speaking of tents, some of us had club tents which we never saw before, and setting them up proved to be a somewhat daunting task. Your reporter caught himself a couple of times thinking, 'Well if this doesn't come out as a tent this time, we'll sure have the nicest kite around'. Once the three primary tasks were finished, and the fireplace was in full blaze, we were able to focus on the real purpose of the trip – food and drinks!

And may I just say that it was a feast fit for kings. A bit heavy on the dessert side (we had at least five different desserts), but there were plenty of entrées and main courses too, so nobody was complaining. Copious quantities of good wine and other beverages should definitely be mentioned, as they certainly contributed to what was a great atmosphere around a cosy, warm fireplace. Of course, food and drinks are only one part of such a social gathering, and the next phase was the games!



Leo, Katie, Cheryl, Geoff and Felix cooking up a storm! *Photo: Bronwen Davies*



Well we did finally get snow!!! The feasters the morning after. Photo: Aleksandar Davidovic

El Presidente naturally used the skills acquired on her tour of South American dictatorships (Ooooooh, you still think she went there as an exchange student? Right...) to convince people to play her favourite game – charades... She was, indeed, successful, and we were witnesses to some rather interesting performances. There were such classics as 'Debbie Does Dallas' presented by Robert, and 'French Kissing in the USA', presented by yours truly (thank you very much Angelina for that task, I will not forget it), to mention just a few.

As the night went on, the number of players decreased and charades inevitably changed into deep philosophical discussions beyond the scope of this article, and when our brains finally stopped functioning, we had a tooth brushing session and retired to the privacy of our tents.

The next day, we had tiramisu for breakfast (what else did you expect?), quickly tidied the place up, dismantled the camp, and set course for our parking lot, and from there back to Canberra.

On our way back we stopped to enjoy the cosy and friendly atmosphere in Adaminaby Pub where the owner, who could be best described as a female version of the 'Soup Nazi' from Seinfeld, provided us with the tasty refreshments necessary for the last leg of our trip. With a bit of luck, we managed to get away without washing the dishes, or leaving any of our organs as compensation for broken tableware.

In conclusion, it can be safely assumed that on this trip many more calories were consumed than were expended, and so with several new friends, some additional body weight and beautiful memories, we parted till the next trip brings us together again.

Apple Crumble

Back-Country Style

By Felix Schill

For two pies, you'll need approximately (I never measured the quantities... I'm not a recipe person - add some common sense and a tablespoon of healthy gut feeling.)

4-5 apples 1 lemon
500g flour 70-100g sugar
200g margarine cinnamon (or cinnamon sticks)
4 round aluminium BBQ dishes
2 large pots
1 camping stove of your choice
1 roaring fire

Peel the apples and cut them into 2-3cm chunks. Mix a bit of lemon juice through the apples - it'll stop them from turning brown, and gives a nice taste. Stew the apples in a large pot with a bit of cinnamon and a bit of sugar on your stove/open fire. Do not overcook them - they should still be slightly firm. Mix the margarine with the sugar, add flour and keep mixing until the mix turns crumbly between your fingers. Try to estimate how much crumble you will need to cover two pies. If it is too dry, add margarine, if it is too sticky, add flour. Keep adding and mixing until you are happy with the consistency and quantity.

Now how do we get the crumble crumbly and crusty? Some advice: do not attempt to roast the crumble in a frying pan - this will only cause the margarine to melt together with the sugar, and will turn perfectly fine crumble into a sticky blob. The best method I've found so far: spread the pre-stewed apples into two of the four aluminium dishes. Mix some of the crumble into the apples. Generously sprinkle the majority of the crumble to completely cover the apples. Place the other aluminium dishes on top as a lid. Try to crimp the edges of the dishes together with your Leatherman (or similar). Now you are ready for the last stage.

Proceed to the fireplace. Find a flat spot inside or close to the fire, and clear it of charcoal and other fuel. Alternatively find a flat rock and place it on the edge of the fire. Put the crumble dishes on the rock. Now pick some nice chunks of glowing-red charcoal, and place them on top of the lids (using a scrap piece of corrugated iron or maybe someone in your party brought a steel folding shovel along...?). The coal will provide enough heat from above to make a nice brown crust. Make sure the lids are not sagging onto the crumble - otherwise the crumble will turn black. Replace the charcoal pieces when they stop glowing. The crumble should be ready in about 10-20 minutes.

Enjoy, and make sure to share it with everyone. Or rather, take care that there will be something left for yourself.. If you don't have a fire handy, you can also just mix the uncooked crumble into the apples. Give us some feedback if you were successful with other methods!



Felix with a smile after satisfying the feasters with his Apple Crumble. Photo: Aleksandar Davidovic

Moonlight Paddle

By Roslyn Carrol

A kayak trip on an almost-full moonlight night to an island in the middle of Lake Burley Griffin and camp overnight? How could one resist such a novel invitation from Hiawatha himself? Friends curious of my holiday plans thought I was mad to contemplate such an activity in the middle of winter, but I had the last mini-ha-ha as it was a great fun adventure.

Setting off in the dark from the ANU boatshed in a double kayak and accompanied by one other "brave" in a single, it was a pleasant paddle to Springbank Island which was circumnavigated so to take in all the city lights and moonlit views. What luxuries on that island ... Barbeques, shelter in which to sleep and LOOs! Once established, a barbeque meal, lots of chat and an encounter with the island's resident possum ensued before climbing into sleeping bags. We must have looked like three mummies in a row lying in state! While the concrete floor was rather hard for this recently bruised body due to a fall on black ice at work the previous week, sleep finally took over as the traffic on the roadways eventually ceased.

Next morning was cool, misty and eventful. Emerging from the fog on the lake was a dragon boat full of a team training, then a hot air balloon appeared. A multitude of black swans desired our company however it was a thieving magpie (talk to Rossini about that) who stole a slice of toast from the breakfast barbeque and shared it with his friends. We had planned on cooking pancakes but someone forgot to bring the griddle pan.

Time moved along so we packed up, launched the kayaks and paddled back to the boatshed. Sonia was able to practise some techniques en route while my technique ensured that I got wet legs. A cure for a dribbling paddle? Wear my waterproof ski pants next time! (I'm learning!) Arriving at the boatshed, some rowers in training asked about our trip and described it as "oar-some". They were relieved to learn that their pesky possum, whom they had transported to the island some time ago, was alive and well but we commented that he needed a mate. The guys agreed and may do something about it.

So thank you Sonia for your pleasant company and thank you Nic for organising the trip, inviting me along, and for doing most of the paddling while I absorbed the atmosphere and the surroundings. The whole experience was "paddle-some" and definitely worth the drive from Cooma!



Kayakers enjoying dawn paddling *Photo: ANUMC website*

Mt McKeahnie

By Ben Davies

Often some of the nicest outdoor locations can be found in our often overlooked backyard. Yes, I am talking about Namadgi, a great place for all manner of winter activities. Winter often entails cold, early morning starts to make the most of the light. Naturally, this was exactly what happened for the walk Sam and I did to Mt McKeahnie. Wandering out the door at 6:30am, I felt that sudden sensation when you realise something bad has happened. In this case, my keys were locked inside. Bugger!

This aside, we all met up at the ANU. Being keyless rendered my bike lock useless, but Michael helped out. With a 100% success rate in having participants appearing, we headed off. Half an hour later in the Corin valley, we passed a gate and sign just near the bobsled venue. With random chatter bubbling along, no-one paid any attention. This was to play a part later in the day...

Soon we found a sloping open area to park the cars in a wonky fashion. Resisting the urge to play 'car tipping', we headed off. The first section looked steep and demanding, but was actually quite open. There was no serious fire damage and reports of super thick scrub simply didn't hold weight. Tim twiddled with his GPS and Michael did a fine job with his trusty compass. A steady climb past a couple of large boulder outcrops led us to our first rest. Here I discovered the aforementioned useless (and weighty) bike lock buried in my daypack. Bugger!



Laura, Robert and Michael picking their way through the scrub *Photo: Ben Davies*



Continuing on, we scooted round giant rock piles and found ourselves on a rocky knob underneath the sister peak to our destination: McKeahnie trig. After a map check, we scooted around the western side of the trig, finding woodier scrub, boulders, ice and chilly winds. Some scrambling brought us round to a congregation boulder for a snack. Whilst most snacked on chocolate, nuts, or scroggin, Tim had a supply of lollipops. He quickly discovered that this was not the smartest idea, given that the lollipops looked like dishwasher soap pellets. Worse yet was the taste, something we joked must have been akin to sucking on a urinal cake. Strangely, after seeing the colour of his tongue, everyone declined offers of his urinal cake lollipops.

We contoured around a few rocky knobs, aiming for the summit ridge leading up McKeahnie. We only encountered one patch of regrowth, the rest was fine. The northern end of the Orroral Valley was visible through the trees,

and would offer a different way of getting up to the summit. The scrub got woodier as we ascended the mount, but we soon got near the very top. Here we discovered some snow, and various rocks (all of which could have been the true summit) off in the distance. Bugger!

After pushing through more regrowth, happy walkers and one bike lock made the summit of McKeahnie! Nearby Gingera was capped with snow, and we could see storm clouds rolling in over Mt Bimberi. Beating a partial retreat, we found a sheltered spot for lunch and amusing discussions of bad food combinations (eg. cherries and guacamole). On the descent, we bumped into some walkers who cheerfully informed us that the aforementioned gate was going to be locked around 6pm. Bugger!

Instead of a cruisy walk back, the pace was upped to avoid snuggling numerous sweaty bodies into a car for the night. We found a mostly easier route back, aside from the odd bit of rock scrambling (and a cheese grater slide on granite that resulted in bleeding knuckles). As darkness slowly crept over, we fled pell mell down the hillside and reached the cars just before dark. Perfect! Next task was to get out, and with our drivers gunning engines, we took off up the road. Minutes later and the closure looming, Sam's headlights picked out the gate and a lone figure slowly pushing it closed. Sam floored the accelerator, aiming for the gap, whilst the rest of us gritted our teeth and hung on. The figure hesitated, then leapt out of the way in the nick of time. We careened through the gap with a centimetre to spare! Success!

A bit further down the road Sam slowed the frenetic pace, and our adrenalin subsided. In the darkness everyone had the happy feeling that we'd live to see another ANUMC trip.

I just hope Sam doesn't notice all the fingernail marks to the upholstery...

Wild Wonderful Wolgan Weekend

By Kerry Austin

The track was steep and it was a slow, tough start to the day. Naively, I hadn't even considered the fact that we would have to go up at some point in order to descend a canyon. The Pipeline Track took us up and round the cliff to the next valley, suddenly levelling off to give spectacular views of the surrounding area. After a well-deserved rest we walked on, following the creek, any apprehension us newbies had about our first abseil melting away as we enjoyed the scenery.



View from the top of the Pipeline track Photo: Kerrie Austin

It was almost 3 hours after we started before we stumbled upon the drop-in abseil and boy was it a beauty!!! My first ever outdoor abseil was a slippery descent into a dark hole which we couldn't even see the bottom of, it was amazing!!! Nic went first, showing us how it was done.

One by one we followed, slowly and nervously at first, then, responding to Nic's calls from below, "faster, faster, faster", loosening up and enjoying the ride. The canyon was narrow and deep, soon we found ourselves in a twisty passage not much wider than shoulder width, engulfed in darkness.

Starlight was supposed to be a dry canyon so when we encountered the first pool we decided not to put our wetsuits on and try to stay dry, after all, it is just this one bit right? Bad idea!!! Bracing ourselves between the walls of the passage we did our best to shimmy along above the water. It was further than we had anticipated and pretty tough on the arms and legs.



The thought that I might not be able to make it all the way had only just entered my head when I fell into the freezing water, taking Nic with me and Robert following soon after. (This isn't the first time I have pulled Nic into a freezing pool of water, but that is another story from another trip). Later on the tunnel widened and everyone ended up having to swim which eased a little of my guilt.

The canyon dried out toward the end and we were able to admire the amazing ceiling of glow worms after which it was named (Starlight) just before the final opening. We came out into a wide, picturesque area perfect for a lunch break and a dry off. Bolder-hopping, sliding, abseiling and walking took us out to the banks of the Wolgan River by late afternoon for the lazy walk back to camp.

On Day Two we decided to try Devils Pinch, a shorter but more challenging canyon. The same torturous morning climb up the Pipeline Track took us to the top of the watershed where we took a different turn off from the previous day. The track this time was a lot less defined and after consulting the guidebook and map a few times and a bit of backtracking we found the drop-in point.

Perched on the narrow ledge we got into our wetsuits, determined not to make the same mistakes as yesterday. The first abseil was brilliant, easily the best of the weekend, narrow and several stages finishing with a climb down a groove into the darkness. Cave Cicadas and a Brown Snake unearthed a few phobias in the group and we moved on quickly. During the day gorge walking was interspersed with scrambling through pools, another great abseil and a deep, wet canyon section.

Unfortunately, all this fun had to come to an end and before we knew it we had arrived at the final abseil. An exhilarating 50m drop in two stages over a slippery, dirty waterfall was great way to end a wild wonderful weekend.



Bowens Creek Canyoning

Northern Arm of Bowens Creek

By Hannah Hueneke

This was my first canyon ever. As we drove out of Mt Wilson's peaceful, green, English-style landscape towards the valley edge, I wondered - it's a lovely warm late summer's day, and we are heading to a place where we need ropes, assorted devices, helmets, and wetsuits... why?

I kept wondering as we disentangled harnesses and went through the Bendeli Alphabet of canyoning safety, and slid and slithered down the steep forested slope to the upper reaches of our creek.

Looking back I do vaguely remember struggling with the belay device, shivering, and fearing for my life (well, in a dramatic sort of way). More clearly I remember how it was chilly, but magical being inside the canyon. Normally, only the water sees this two metre wide, twenty metre high sandstone gorge.

It was all blue-purple light, green ferns and moss, and smooth waterworn walls. We abseiled down water falls into deep pools, avoided an unmoved coiled snake, and walked wonderingly under boulders lodged between the canyon walls high up above us. We emerged into the sunny scrubby creek at the bottom way too soon. I hope my first canyon ever won't be my last.



Matthew Montgomery models ice axes during the gear store migration *Photo: Ben Davies*



Freideman about to make a 'deadman' with an ice stake *Photo: Ben Davies*



Paul Lloyd at Porcupine Rocks. *Photo: someone with Paul's camera*

ANUMC Canyoning

2006-07 Season

The coming season canyoning will see the culmination of a three year plan to expose, consolidate and extend canyoning enjoyment, enthusiasm and experience in the ANUMC. In 04~05, there was an introduction to skills, practises and ideas in order to participate comfortably in a canyoning environment. This was fostered with a number of canyons in a variety of areas and the introduction of "Mellow Yellow". Many people profited from the abseiling instructionals and the initial roping courses.

In 05~06, there was a consolidation of skills, practises and ideas in order to canyon comfortably and competently. A website for canyoning was added to the club website. There were many canyons descended in areas such as the Blue Mountains, Kanangra, Bungonia, Brindabellas and the Tuross. Levels of difficulties went from beginner to experienced. The enthusiasm at the Blueys Huge Weekend Out was stimulating. The canyons this season complemented the previous season so that most of them were not repeats.

In 06~07, we should be looking forward to a season where we have levels of experience to comfortably, competently and confidently lead simple canyons in a variety of areas. The Roping Skill sessions will restart again in September and are designed for people who have demonstrated continuity, commitment and contribution to the club. They are potential club leaders in canyoning, climbing, mountaineering, canoeing and wherever roping skills are required to effect safe passage through difficult terrain.

In September there will be a revision session of Roping skills and late September Roping 301: assisted abseils. In October Roping 302: simple hauling systems. In November probably the first canyon will be descended. Hopefully there will be some club members who will be interested in starting to lead their own trips and keen to build the necessary experience whilst in the final phase of the three year plan.

If interested, please do consider to lead some canyons, contact me for some ideas if you wish and gradually spread the canyoning experience. Happy canyoning! Nic Bendeli.

Club Discounts

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

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.