Welcome to the Spring edition of EPIC, the ANU Mountaineering Club magazine. This edition sees three new editors: Mike Hobbins, Lloyd White and Lauren Bartsch join Tiago Pereira. Despite a slow start to the year the new editorial team hopes to keep to tradition and publish a new EPIC each season. This edition sees trip reports from close to home (see Namadgi Cycle Tour, pg 6), to further afield (Winter Overland, pg 4) and everywhere in between. For this edition, Mike was fortunate to interview Karina Scott, a local bushwalker, about her three-night experience in the Namadgi National Park (pg 14) and we have a gear review on ski bindings (pg 11).

We are always looking for new inclusions to the EPIC, so if you have an idea for a column, have put up a new climbing route, would like to share your favourite back country recipes (see Trangia Pizza, pg 7) or have a trip report, be sure to contact us. So, when you’re off on your next trip, keep in mind sending in a contribution for the Summer edition of EPIC!

LAUREN BARTSCH

Lauren left the warmer climes of northern NSW and moved to Canberra in late-2007. After wondering for some months what it is that people do when there is no beach nearby, she joined the ANUMC. Having spent part of her younger years hiking throughout the dry, but beautiful, Flinders Ranges in SA, she has since relished the experience of walking through the (comparatively) green and lush national parks surrounding Canberra. You’ll see Lauren about on bushwalks, mountain bike trips and hopefully future skiing trips; just keep an eye out for the hot pink socks.

MIKE AND JACKIE HOBbins

Mike Hobbins is a Research Hydrologist at ANU. Although born in Cooma, NSW, he left Australia as a babe in arms, only returning three years ago. He cut his climbing teeth (not as painful as it sounds) on the Cascade volcanoes of the US Pacific Northwest before moving to Colorado for his Ph.D.. There he fell in love with the Rocky Mountains--climbing them and writing about climbing them--and with Jackie. Jackie is the PR and Fundraising Manager for the Snowy Hydro SouthCare Rescue Helicopter, a wicked rock-climber, and is EPIC’s graphic design whiz in her spare time.

TIAGO PEREIRA

Tiago came to Australia in 2006 for his Ph.D. in Astrophysics and soon joined ANUMC. In his first year in the club he was very active, trying a little bit of the many exciting activities the club has to offer. Commonly seen at the climbing wall, lately he has been more focused on improving his skiing skills, always counting the days to the next ski trip! With the recent arrival of his baby daughter, Tiago is taking a break from too many weekends on club trips.

LLOYD WHITE

Lloyd White is a structural geologist and mapping specialist. He is completing a Ph.D. at the ANU where his research is focused on the history of mountain building in the Himalayas. When he’s not licking rocks, he can be found playing soccer, bushwalking or camping.
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In July, six ANUMC trekkers traversed central Tasmania’s mountains, walking the famous Overland Track in mid-winter. They were Mika Kontiainen (team leader), Julian Talbot, James Aston, Melinda Brouwer, Neill Burton, and Rachel Bourke.

A couple of pre-trip trips to Namadgi’s Mount Orroral and the Schlink Hilton and Mount Gungartan in the Snowy Mountains in the months before the Winter Overland provided the team with an opportunity to meet each other and question Mika about his first aid skills and contingency plans. There was little cause for concern as we set off with more safety equipment and contingency plans than a team heading to Antarctica. We carried snowshoes, four-season tents, quality sleeping gear, a satellite phone, an EPIRB and a first aid kit that would be the envy of any ANUMC expedition.

The trip started badly as one of our bags—containing the snowshoes and Mika’s boots—failed to arrive with our flight to Launceston. Fortunately, after an anxious wait, a courier brought us the missing bag at Waldheim Cabins after midnight, just hours before we set off.

On Sunday morning we ascended the Overland Track from Ronny Creek onto the snowbound Cradle Mountain plateau. Poor visibility, snow flurries, wind and cold encouraged a good pace, although constant care was needed on the snow- and ice-covered boardwalks. The rocky and icy ascent towards Marions Lookout was particularly treacherous. Our view from the lookout was marred by fog and lots of it (much like the view out of a plane window when flying through a cloud). However, the mysterious landscape of eerie tarns glimmering in the dim light made for an exciting start to the trip. Traversing the plateau, most of us took at least one tumble from unlucky snowshoe placement in snow of varying depths and compactness, but everyone was clearly in good spirits, chuckling at themselves (and others!). A highlight was the rocky crag of Barn Bluff, which came into view when the clouds parted. Alas, Cradle Mountain remained obscured.

Our first night was at the new Waterfall Valley Hut, which we shared with three exhausted undergraduates from Hobart. They had struggled across the plateau without snowshoes, optimistically intending to walk 17 km to Windermere in a single day. They were the first of perhaps thirty people, mostly university students avoiding seasonal track fees, whom we saw that week: more than we expected but nothing like summer’s crowds.

On day two we continued south over snow, water and ice, taking a blustery side trip to Lake Will before reaching Windermere Hut for the night. Here a solo walker heading north shared with us the cautionary tale of three bushwalkers she had passed heading south. Just days earlier these three unfortunates, lacking skis or snowshoes, had been forced to shelter in the unheated, damp and draughty confines of Kitchen Hut for two nights as a blizzard raged across Cradle Plateau.

The following morning, brilliant sunshine and a crisp bluebird day greeted us for our 14.2-km walk to Pelion Hut. A stunning panorama emerged as we reached a high pass an hour or two from Windermere. Before us we saw Mount Pelion West, Mount Ossa, Mount Oakley and Mount Pelion East. Behind us was Barn Bluff and Cradle Mountain. Pelion Hut was nothing short of a five-star resort, complete with veranda for sunning oneself after a long day of hiking.

On our fourth day, we climbed Tasmania’s highest mountain, Mount Ossa (1614 m). Julian gave it a miss to nurse his injured knee (he’d slipped on an icy boardwalk) in the hope it would improve for the rest of the trip. The rest of us headed up from Pelion Gap over firm, deep snow-cover at our own pace, drinking in the awesome views. The steep and rocky ascent was hard work while the descent was great fun, involving sliding up to 50 m at a time down steep snowy slopes. It goes without saying that bodies in motion will require something to stop the momentum, a physical law that provided much...
hilarity… until Neil almost hurtled off the mountain, saved only by a leg jammed into a snow hole.

That evening we rejoined Julian at Kiaora Hut, which eventually packed twenty people in but remained nice and warm thanks to the glowing coal stove. There were countless wet socks, thermals and every other piece of clothing possible dangling precariously above the hot fire and from all the rafters. Luckily, by this stage of the trip, the smell didn’t bother us as we smelled quite bad ourselves. (So why then did Mika and Neil decide to sleep outside in the tent?)

In the morning, we walked the 8.6 km from Kiaora Hut to Windy Ridge Hut. Builders at the fabulous new hut invited us out of the snow and sleet into the shelter of the nearly complete lodge for lunch. After Windy Ridge we detoured off the main track to Pine Valley and spent two nights in this pretty forest setting in the company of various interesting bushwalkers. The first night saw a huge dump of snow. Mika, James and Melinda, together with a few others, headed off in the morning to explore The Labyrinth and were rewarded with a stunningly beautiful winter landscape of snow-entombed pencil pines, snow gums and countless tarns. Meanwhile, Julian’s army training served him (and us) well. He did an expert job of lighting the fickle coal fire, not an easy task with little else than wet, mossy branches to work with.

On our seventh and final day we trotted nine km out of Pine Valley to Narcissus Hut and rode the boat across Lake St Clair to our waiting mini-bus. Carrying various accumulated niggling injuries, we were very much soothed by the prospect of a hot shower in Hobart. We finished the trip off with a night in Hobart, treating ourselves to a greatly appreciated fresh, hydrated seafood dinner.

While the views, walking tracks, flora and fauna were incredible in this snow-covered wonderland, what really made this trip so fantastic was the great group of people that made up our group. Thanks guys, it was a blast!
During the ANZAC Day weekend seven cyclists toured Namadgi National Park. The plan was to ride to Honeysuckle Campground on the first day, then travel along Cotter Hut Road and up Smokers Trail to Woods Reserve before completing the loop back to Canberra on the third day.

The first day began somewhat innocently. Fresh and excited about the trip to come, we set out from the SRA at eight am and cruised south through Canberra, stopping at Curtin to pick up Sam and Kylie and then at Conder shops for a coffee break. Then we cycled to Tharwa via Point Hut Crossing and rested at the Namadgi Visitors Centre for lunch. After half a day of riding with bikes burdened by camping equipment, we were beginning to tire.

Then came the highlight of the day, the climb up Apollo Road: equivalent to riding up Black Mountain. Twice. Everyone complained... excessively! Kylie tore a muscle. Around every corner there was another hill waiting. I wished I had packed less.

We arrived at Honeysuckle Campground at five pm, having ridden a total of 60 km. Mitch demonstrated how to camp in style, cooking pizza with a Trangia stove (see recipe, pg 7). Although the next day’s ride was only 35 km, Steve suggested we should try to leave early since there was a lot of climbing. The next morning, after I had packed everything onto my bike for a quick getaway, I noticed the front tyre had gone flat overnight. We made a late start.

The day’s ride began with more climbing—up Orroral Ridge. Cruising back down Apollo Road seemed a much more attractive option, but eventually we were rewarded with a winding descent along a firetrail into Orroral Valley. Kylie’s leg had not recovered from the previous day, forcing her to turn around with Sam. They spent the night at Orroral Campground and returned to Canberra the next day.

Thanks to Steve for organising the trip and for always reminding us we were nearly at the top of the hill. The experience was enjoyed by all.
MITCHELL STRACHAN - TRANGIA PIZZA

Ingredients:

Pita bread
1 x tube of tomato paste
1 x small can of pineapple
1 x small can of ham (spam)
1 x block of long-life or cheddar cheese

You’ll also need a Trangia stove and some aluminium foil.

Prepare the pizza in the lid of a Trangia stove, and cover it with foil or—for the adventurous or under-prepared—a large piece of bark.

Cook the pizza over a half-open Trangia burner for about ten minutes, until the cheese is melted and the pizza is warmed through, but make sure to keep the heat low or the bread will burn on the bottom.

Mitchell Strachan unveils his latest creation. Photo by Kylie Mulligan.
We arrived back in Canberra late on a Sunday night with smiles all round after two days in the Snowies. Six of us drove up on Friday night and camped at Island Bend so that we could get an early start. At the crack of nine am on Saturday, we de-camped and drove to Guthega from where we walked up and over a hill or two, on a mixture of snowshoes, boots and skis to find a suitable snowdrift. “Suitable” in this context meaning enough of the right snow to build our shelters. It took us from one pm to 5:30 pm to build the igloos, which was quicker than we’d expected.

Tents having being forbidden by our fearless trip-leader (just to ensure we had the right level of commitment), we had been given a range of options for shelter for the night: a snow-trench, a quinzie, a snow-cave, or an igloo. James chose to build a snow-trench, while Nic (said fearless trip-leader), Stewart and Dominic elected to use Nic’s “You Beaut” patented folding plastic formwork kit, imported all the way from Canada, to build an igloo the “sensible”, high-tech way. Julian, meanwhile, decided that was cheating and accordingly picked the hardest of the four options—a traditional igloo. Fortunately, he had one equally crazy team member (Laura) on side and, after James finished his snow-trench—about 20 minutes after starting—he got bored and decided to help.

With his usual meticulous preparation, Julian had found a 17-minute video on Youtube the day before and thought to bring along a pruning saw (yep, pretty high-tech stuff). The only one of us who had ever actually built an igloo was Nic. It was just as well that at least one of us had experience. Julian’s first start on his igloo would have slept ten people in comfort (albeit on the Sunday night, given that that’s how long it would have taken to finish) but Nic was on hand to suggest the “6+n rule” (six feet plus one extra foot per person to lay out the diameter). Tip number one.

After four hours of cutting and laying blocks and just as the sun set, Julian, Laura and James finished a three-person igloo with room enough to stand inside. This was only 15 minutes behind the “shovel and pack it in” formwork crew, who had completed their slightly larger four-person igloo. By this time our backs were pleased that we could place the final capstone so that we could move in.

Building an igloo is an interesting experience for the person working from the inside: if everything works out well and it doesn’t all collapse on top of you (something that felt very much like a possibility while we were building them) you find yourself locked into an icy hemisphere—too late then to find out you’re claustrophobic. The trick is to cut or dig your way out by making a tunnel under the wall—the lower the better as it lets the cold air sump out and keeps the warm air in. Tip number two.
You basically build the igloo around yourself by cutting blocks (or shovelling snow if using the high-tech option) out of the floor and stacking them in a circle. The hole where the blocks come from becomes the floor and sleeping bays. Though semi-grownup, we were grinning from ear to ear like a bunch of big kids. It is still a wondrous thing to see the blocks stacking up and up and up until they are almost horizontal and still holding: amazing! And really cool (no pun intended). We all had our doubts until about two-thirds of the way into it but with the backup plan being a snow-trench with tarp over the top, we were all pretty committed. They are actually quite warm inside and we had room in each for three of us to stand, eat, sleep and generally hang out.

All good fun and lots of laughs all round. After a (very) good night’s sleep, we headed off on snowshoes up Mount Tate in what is, for that part of the world, the usual mixture of blue skies, high-level clouds and swirling mists (rinse and repeat over and over during the time it took us to walk up to the peak). When we got to the peak we couldn’t see more than 20 metres, then five minutes later we could see for 20 kilometres. The weather was kind to us all weekend—it didn’t rain or snow at all, which was great! Getting back to the cars that afternoon proved an easy exercise for the four people on skis but an interesting lesson for Julian and Laura on snow-shoes. Which leads us to tip number three: traversing steep slopes in snowshoes is not fun! Instead of going up and over the hill (the way we came) Julian and Laura thought it would be smart to follow the creek back down and traverse around the hill. With the benefit of experience, it would have been much quicker and easier had they gone up and over the top, and they would have avoided a few places where they slid down the slopes and almost into the creek!

Thanks to Nic for organising the trip and to the rest of the crew for not having the common sense to realise that snow-trenches or snow caves are a whole lot easier (but not as much fun), the club now has a core team of igloo-builders for the future.
The Style and Folly of the Dunlop Volley
Tom Gleeson

It doesn't have a GORE-TEX liner. It doesn't have a Vibram sole. It doesn't have a leather outer. Neither does it have ankle support, nor arch support for that matter. What the humble Dunlop Volley does have, though, is the admiration and trust of generations of bushwalkers it has faithfully borne on journeys close to home, in Namadgi and Kosciuszko, further afield, in Kanangra, and, of course, to that most-holy shrine of bushwalking, Federation Peak in Tasmania.

It is a little-known fact that Charles Darwin’s On the Origin of Species was inspired by his visit to Australia and to the Blue Mountains in particular. Looking out across the valleys and gorges, Darwin reflected upon the similarity between the topography of the land and the zigzag pattern of ridges and grooves on the sole of his Dunlop Volleys. At that moment, Darwin realised his theory of natural selection for him, the Volley represented a selective advantage over the heavy leather boot. Bushwalkers embraced this philosophy, abandoned the boot, and discovered the freedom and the style of the Volley.

So it is not just bushwalkers who have placed so much faith in the Volley. Indeed, another little-known piece of history tells us that when he was not strolling around in a pair of Roman sandals, Julius Caesar wore Volleys, remaining light-footed and comfortable throughout the Gallic Wars. In 1969, Neil Armstrong quite famously wore Volleys on the moon, and if you look closely enough in the NASA images, you’ll actually see their distinctive zigzag imprint in the moon dust. Impressively, Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay both wore Volleys to the summit of Everest. The Pope wears a red pair of Volleys. If Ghandi had worn shoes on his long march to freedom, Volleys would have been his obvious choice. Kathy Freeman wore Volleys in her 400-m gold sprint at the Sydney Olympics. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Nelson Mandela, is often seen getting about in a pair of Volleys. Perhaps less well known, our own Miika Konttainen secretly wears Volleys around the house.

They’re so light, so cheap, and so grippy on wet rock that even lizards get jealous. What’s more, they’re just so damn stylish, they’ll get you into Mooseheads any night of the week.
SKI BINDING CONFUSION
Tiago Pereira

Ski bindings come in many flavours—in fact, more flavours than we would want. They are a fundamental piece in any ski system, yet their importance is not always fully appreciated. Which bindings are best? Which should I use? Hopefully this article will clear some of the confusion and answer some of these questions.

Ideally, having one universal binding to link any boot to any ski seems appealing. In reality, if such binding were to exist it would be an absurd compromise between vastly different types of skiing. Why? Because of the inescapable physical reality that a ski system that excels at going uphill is very different from a system designed to go downhill.

Ski bindings fall in two main groups: fixed heel and free heel. Some bindings are designed only for going up/straight (cross-country bindings), others only to go down (downhill or alpine bindings), and some are compromise bindings (backcountry, telemark or Alpine Terrain bindings).

Fixed heel bindings are designed to ski down, while free-heel bindings are more flexible all round (but with more emphasis in going straight or up). Why? Because having a free heel usually means freedom of movement and low weight, essential for covering long distances and going up (look at the up-down movement of your heels when you walk, and imagine walking without lifting your heels). Fixed-heel bindings, on the other hand, are heavier, more stable and provide the best transmission of torque from body to ski, important when you want to control your turns and stop when you must. Most systems are mutually incompatible and require their own boots. Here we’ll focus on free-heel systems, which is what the ANUMC uses.

There are several types of free-heel bindings. From light to heavy, they are: New Nordic Norm (or NNN), three-pin (75 mm) and telemark (cable) bindings. The first is suited for groomed Nordic trails and racing, the latter for touring and resort skiing. Before the NNN, standardization in free-heel started when a Norwegian manufacturer developed the precursor, so-called “Nordic norm” (75 mm), with the three-pin binding. The 75-mm boot’s sole has a characteristic duckbill 75 mm wide, with three holes that fit into three pins in the binding, holding the boot in place. This relic duckbill still survives today, and is easily identifiable in most telemark boots. The Nordic norm was widespread and the three-pin binding is still in use today (check them out at the ANUMC gear store).

The NNN bindings, which developed later, have a clip-in mechanism that connects to a metal rod in the toe of the boot. They are not compatible with the 75-mm system. There are a few variations of the NNN binding today. One is the Salomon system, which is essentially NNN, but (in)conveniently only fits Salomon boots. Then there is the NNN-BC (BC for backcountry), a more robust version to endure the hardships of the backcountry. (The ANUMC has NNN-BC bindings.) NNN-like systems are light, easy to use and clip-in, but don’t transmit a lot of torque to the ski, which makes turning difficult. Downhill is outside their territory. To fill in that gap, the cable binding was invented.

The cable binding is essentially a hack to the old three-pin system, adding increased control for downhill by means of metal cables tightened around the boots. Modern cable-binding systems (like most of the ANUMC ones) don’t even have the three pins anymore, and are locked only with the cables. The system is far from ideal, since a tight cable will reduce the heel mobility that is important for uphill travel. There are ‘light’ cable bindings designed for light touring and ‘aggressive’, or very stiff, cable bindings designed for heavy boots and resort skiing. And, obviously, a myriad of options in between. The relative advantage of cable-binding systems is its compatibility with all telemark boots (well, most). A relative advantage is that it is still just a hack of the obsolete 75-mm system. The same Norwegian company that developed the NNN has just recently developed NTN (New Telemark Norm). This system is the first true innovation for backcountry or telemark skiers, but at the time of writing it is only available for heavy, resort telemark systems.

Continuing to heavier bindings, another flavour is the Alpine Touring (AT). These are based on downhill bindings (fixed heel), but have a free-pivot mode that allows a free heel for uphills, effectively offering the best of both worlds. Nevertheless, they sit on the heavier side of the binding spectrum and are thus not the best tool to cover long distances.

So which bindings should you get? It really depends on what you want to do. For light touring and covering long distances, stick to NNN-BC. If you enjoy a few turns and going steeper, then go with cable bindings. If going down is your main priority and up is just a tool to go down, then maybe you should try AT bindings. With all the variety in bindings, there will be certainly one that suits your style.

A plethora of binding systems, clockwise from top-right: three-pin, telemark cable binding, NTN, downhill, NNN-BC.
The Mid-Winter Feast is an annual ANUMC social event combining an easy overnight high-country bushwalk (or, if conditions permit, a snowshoe walk) with a warm crackling fire, a snug high-country hut and plenty of fine food and wine shared amongst old and new friends. The venue for this popular event is historic Gooandra Homestead, a restored timber house built in 1913 near the Kiandra goldfields of northern Kosciuszko National Park.

Overwhelming interest in this year’s Mid-Winter Feast saw the trip fill weeks before the event, leaving many members being turned away in disappointment. Unfortunately, some people who registered were unable to attend (remember, if you register for a trip, it’s your responsibility to attend pre-trip meetings and to keep the trip-leader informed if you have to cancel). In the end, 17 fortunate ANUMCers trekked to Gooandra Homestead for an awesome weekend.

After lunch in Adaminaby, the ANUMC convoy of four cars arrived on the treeless, windswept Kiandra Plain and stopped beside the Snowy Mountains Highway. Then the hard work of shovelling snow and getting the gear in order began. Teamwork and enthusiasm led to enough snow being flung out of the way to clear a safe park for the cars. Skis for four and snowshoes for the rest were strapped on (the first time for some new friends) and packs were shouldered as everybody headed down to the Eucumbene River in search of a way across.

Concern mounted amongst the intrepid as they scoured the snowbound riverbank for a crossing. A bracing, thigh-deep wade across the swollen, fast-flowing river seemed inevitable as there seemed to be no sign of a narrows that might be jumped safely. Just before the “pants off” command could be issued there appeared a brand-new bridge spanning what last year had been but a disused ford. Relieved, the snowshoers and skiers crossed over and ascended onto the low rise that was the Great Dividing Range, bypassing the nineteenth-century gold fields of Six Mile Diggings. Felix, leading the skiers, made an effortless ascent, pulled along by a bright blue kite. While the others slowly made their way to the crest, he para-skied up and down the slope with evident relish.

Making their way along an indistinct snowbound fire trail, the lead snowshoers startled a kangaroo. It bounded away before suddenly tumbling snout first into deep snow. It floundered about before making good its escape into the beautiful sub-alpine bush that was untouched by the ravages of the 2003 bushfires.

Two hours and five km from the highway, the snowshoers arrived at Gooandra. The skiers, plagued by binding problems, arrived some time later. Discarding packs and snowshoes, people hurried about pitching tents and collecting firewood.
Dusk fell—and with it the temperature and a dusting of snow—as people moved inside and the feast began.

The focal point of the feast was the candle-lit main room where a blazing fire kept the outside cold at bay. In another smaller room, back-country chefs bustled about by candle- and torch-light, preparing their signature dishes on a crowded trestle table. Ready dishes were carried into the main room and onto a table groaning under the weight of a banquet of unsurpassed variety and flavour. Mulled wine, Scotch whisky, and Tasmanian pepperberry liqueur were amongst the splendid beverages that loosened tongues and inhibitions. Friendships and romances were strengthened, rekindled, and initiated. As the moon and stars blazed in a crisp, cold sky, the melodious sound of voices in song and conversation drifted out into the night.

Little by little, singly and in pairs, the feasters left the warmth of the hut for the comfort of their down sleeping bags. Snug in their tents few, other than those rising to answer nature’s call, realised until dawn that the temperature had plummeted to a marrow-chilling –11°C.

Sunday morning was, as Sunday mornings should be, slow and unhurried. Many feasters didn’t emerge from their down cocoons until the sun was high in a brilliant blue morning sky and the thick overnight frost was gone from the tents. A leisurely breakfast, then gear-packing and hut-cleaning—even some sun-baking—consumed most of the morning before departure.

An otherwise pleasant Sunday amble back to the cars was marred for one unsuspecting skier when her skis slipped below the top wire of an old, hidden fence. Caught suddenly at the ankles, she slammed face-first into the snow, hard, and was lucky to escape with a mild concussion. A minor traffic accident at a roundabout in Canberra that evening added a second possible case of mild concussion to the casualty list.

Accidents aside, the 2008 Mid-Winter Feast was an easy, fantastic and fun adventure that will be on again in winter 2009. Sign up early or miss out.

Marit Kragt leads the hungry pack.

Striped drop bear, cunningly disguised as Sophia Christoe.
In early September, when I heard that a solo bushwalker had gotten lost in Namadgi National Park, I asked myself, “what did she do wrong?” I wanted to know how a simple day-hike on a supposedly well-marked loop trail became an odyssey that sparked a multi-day, multi-agency rescue effort involving scores of police, SES volunteers, park rangers and numerous helicopters. So I met with Karina and asked her. This is her story.

Day one—Wednesday, September 3:
Karina hikes in from the parking on Ornoral Road along a fire-trail running southwest across Nursery Creek Swamp, up over a saddle, and down into the valley of Rendezvous Creek. From here, her plan is to follow the trail over two mountains, looping back down to Nursery Creek and north back to her car.

It is late-morning when Karina reaches Rendezvous Creek. She’s been hiking, though, the trail has petered out to nothing but young scrub. She isn’t concerned, looks up at the two mountains she had planned to traverse, and makes a key decision to climb to the top of the first mountain to gain a vantage point to pick up the trail again. However, as Karina is new to Canberra, she does not know that the guidebook she used to trace the trail onto her topo map was published three years before fires that swept through the forest; fires that have erased the trail ahead.

As Karina bush-bashes up the mountain through pouring rain, she is drenched. What is worse is that from the top she cannot see a trail ahead to the next hill. Being wet, cold, and off the trail are bad enough, but things are actually worse again—she doesn’t know it yet but her compass has fallen from her bum-bag on the way up. Feeling vulnerable, Karina reformulates her plan and decides to turn around and retrace her steps back to the car. But once she reaches the bottom of the valley, instead of a trail, she only finds a creek. Now she knows she is lost.

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But it is only 1 pm. Karina amends her plan a second time. She will follow the creek until it feeds into a larger creek, where she then hopes to locate the track she has traced onto her map.

Karina spends all afternoon following creeks, but the rain has complicated matters. The creeks are running together. She knows she should follow the creeks downhill but, whether from stress or there simply being too much water on the ground, she cannot tell which way they are flowing. In any case, there are too many creeks shown on her map. By 4 pm the map is shredded from being pulled from her pack so often and sodden from the rain. It is unreadable. She does not know which watershed she is in, and without a useful map, cannot know which creek would lead her to safety. Karina realises she must spend the night in the bush. Without shelter and alone.

In an attempt to dry off, Karina swaps her wet hiking clothes for her wet-weather shell and pants. She lies down by a creek, and pulls the tussocky grass over herself. All night, she lays awake, shivering, and worrying about her partner, Danny, back in Canberra. She is heartened by knowing that he knows where she is, and she tries to come up with a new plan for the morning. To comfort herself, Karina eats the last of her food, a mandarin, and discards the peels.

Day two—Thursday:
As soon as it is light, Karina follows the creeks for a couple of hours, and feels like she is making progress. But her spirits drop when she stumbles back to the previous night’s mandarin peels. She is completely disoriented; she cannot understand how she could have travelled so far and gotten nowhere. Karina realises that she needs to formulate a new plan, which then becomes to make for the hilltops to try to reorient herself. She climbs the highest hill closest to her and although there is a good view from the top, it is overcast so she cannot tell where the sun is in the sky, and she cannot get her bearings. Karina now thinks that
she could have been on the southwest (and wrong) side of Rendezvous Creek. She spots a clearing “a long, way away” over more hills. Karina makes it her goal. She heads for it and spends the rest of the day climbing up, down and around hills she hopes are on her way. She never finds the clearing.

Karina’s second night is spent in a crevice, up against a rock. The rock shelters her from the weather, but it is freezing. She does not sleep.

**Day three—Friday:**
The sky clears, and her occasional glimpses of helicopters tell her that people are searching for her. Each time she sees a helicopter, she rushes to climb rocks or make for clearings where she waves a flag—her white shirt on a stick—but they do not see her. Either they are too high or the bush is too dense. The effort to be visible is exhausting.

Atop yet another hill in the afternoon, Karina has a breakthrough. She can see another, larger clearing, again “a long, long way away”. The sun is out now, and she can see a large creek running through the clearing. She thinks it must be the clearing for the tracking station, near to where she parked her car. She heads for the creek, and plans to follow it to the clearing. After she reaches it, she follows the creek for the rest of the day.

It is the end of her third day lost and alone and she hasn’t eaten for two days. Despite it all, Karina feels encouraged: her plan of navigating from the hilltops is finally working, and her mental and physical resources are standing up to each challenge. She finds a place to sleep, and she remembers it as her “nicest campsite”.

**Day four—Saturday:**
At first light, Karina continues along the creek. When she stumbles upon a series of pink tags attached to trees, she feels her- self reconnecting to humanity: “someone’s been here!” she thinks. She follows the tags through a clearing, and finds a well-formed track following the creek. Another helicopter flies overhead her in another clearing, but this one is closer than the others. She waves her flag, but the helicopter flies away… and returns… and leaves again. Unsure if she has been seen, she continues walking.

Within minutes, four people materialize on the trail, walking towards her. The first words from another human that Karina hears in four days are, “Are you Karina Scott?” They are police officers. She has been found.

She is a mere 800 m from where she parked her car. She is dirty, cut, bruised, and her elevated creatinine levels indicate muscle wastage. She has lost three kilos. But she is alive.

Looking back, Karina easily admits to making mistakes. Most significantly, in her navigation: she didn’t protect her map from the elements; in any case, her map was inadequate, showing trails that didn’t exist; and she didn’t secure her compass. She didn’t say whether she had equipment for lighting a fire, but given the wet weather, that most likely would have been a fool’s errand. While we outdoor enthusiasts may be quick to judge Karina’s misadventure, until we have walked a mile in her shoes, or in her case, four days in her shoes, we may never appreciate what physical, mental, and emotional resources it took for her to survive. I hope I never have to find out.

Of her days lost, Karina says, “It made me realise that life itself is the most important thing; that all this guff about the election, the economy, our money worries, they’re nothing against the happiness we should feel at simply being alive. Little is more important than that we focus on our relationships.” It is not a complex lesson: but it is profound and very hard-learned.

There is a simple lesson for us, too. Emergencies arise when situations emerge too quickly for our decision-making process. We become slaves to their consequence. We simply react. But we force a turning point in our favour when we are able to step back from the situation and regard it objectively—when we realize that we are walking in circles, or that we need to stop and wait for searchers, or that we must keep moving to keep warm, or that we must climb a mountain to find out where we are in the world. When one plan doesn’t work, we need another, and, if necessary, still another. We always need to keep working for our own survival, despite knowledge that others are out searching for us. When she was found, Karina was already walking herself out of the wilderness. In the end, she had rescued herself.

"I just felt the strength of my family"
This being a comparatively good season, Nic decided there should be enough snow to attempt Mount Jagungal from the northwest, from Lake Eucumbene. We hoped we would not have to walk too far from the gate just past Eucumbene Dam to find snow. Arriving at Eucumbene Dam lookout on Friday night, we quickly bedded down so we could get an early start in the morning. Saturday morning saw us past the gate at 8.30 am and walking with the anticipation of finding snow just around the next corner, and then the next corner, and the next corner... After about an hour of walking, skiable snow greeted us at Adams Huts. We happily dumped our shoes, strapped ourselves into our skis and headed off.

The snow was still patchy at this point and some grass skiing between patches of snow was required from time to time. But this quickly ran out as well when we dropped down into Gungarlin Valley, which we found completely void of snow. But just across the other side we could see deep, complete, and uninterrupted coverage. Walking across Gungarlin Valley did provide some excitement though, as with no snow cover we could not simply ignore the rivers by skiing over them. Instead, we more-or-less chucked our skis and poles over to the other bank and then performed a balancing act across a wire fence—a fence that included a barbed wire strand to make things more interesting (see back cover).

Soon we were greeted by the snow (again) and we skied up the ridge to Cesjacks Hut and into Kosciuszko National Park. We arrived at Cesjacks Hut in good time and were a bit surprised to find three people already there. After eating lunch and removing most of the gear from our packs, we headed off to make our ascent of Mount Jagungal. We headed southwest along the ridge from the hut for a kilometre or so before dropping down to Doubtful Creek and making a bee-line for Mount Jagungal. The skiing and weather had been good so far but there were clouds on the horizon quickly moving towards us, and soon we could no longer see the peak. As we ascended the base of the mountain, the cloud cover kept dropping and the whole mountain before us became lost to us. Snow conditions on the mountain had also deteriorated, becoming very icy. We decided that continuing to the top was not worth it just to see a bit more cloud, so we reluctantly turned our backs on Mount Jagungal and headed back down to Cesjacks Hut. On the way back, we spied a number of other skiers who seemed to be heading in the same direction as we were. The hut would be crowded tonight.
We returned to Cesjacks Hut to find three tents set up outside and a full house inside. There were four people in tents outside, and six inside. It made for a very merry evening in front of the fire.

The next morning we arose late-ish and took our time with breakfast and packing up. The weather was perfect, not a cloud in sight and a very conspicuous Mount Jagungal. We left following the way we had come in for a short while before, heading more northward for Crooks Racecourse and enjoying a long downhill run for the next couple of kilometres. At the end of the downhill run we dumped our packs next to a creek, had a snack, and then headed north up the valley for a quick visit to Mackeys Hut (also known as Tibeaudos). The skiing was a joy, nice and quick, with beautiful weather and scenery to boot. We returned in high spirits to pick up our packs and start off towards Crooks Racecourse and the fairly long climb up the Munyang Range. After reaching the top of the range we swung eastwards towards the summit of Bald Hill. The tiring climb up provided many an opportunity to stop and rest and appreciate the views out towards Mount Jagungal and where we had just been. There were also spectacular views west showing a very prominent Round Mountain. We appreciated the views of Mount Jagungal one last time before skiing down the road towards Adams Hut and our shoes. After relocating our shoes, we started the walk back towards the car, discussing all the way what a great trip it had been, how much distance we had covered, and how good the snow and skiing had been, never mentioning that we did not actually make the summit of Mount Jagungal. Oh well, another time, another time.
“Tents are unnecessary, boots will only slow you down, keep your pack under 12 kg”. The trip description sounded pretty hard-core; what kind of trip was this going to be? Would I be experienced enough or tough enough to make it?

But, hey, I’d never been to Kanangra and I thought, “what better way to celebrate my 30th birthday than out in the Australian bush?”

The four of us (Barbara, Marit, Nick and Tom) left on Friday night, had dinner at the Goulburn bakery and drove to Kanangra Walls, where we found a group of Sydney Bushwalkers sleeping in the shelter. Our plan was to walk for an hour or so to a camping cave for the night. But the rain was pissing down, so we decided to spend the night in Dance Floor Cave, a mere ten-minute walk from the car park.

We climbed into our cozy sleeping bags as we listened to the rain trickle down the cave walls, and lay there hoping for better weather tomorrow. Unfortunately, we woke to yet more rain and the promise of another gloomy day. I feared I would not be able to do the long walk we had planned—to follow the Gingra Range, bush-bash down to Gingra Creek, ascend to the Ti Willa Plateau and try to find the camping cave on the other side. I thought bush-bashing through the wet scrub in the hope of finding the camping cave before dusk would be quite difficult. I could just see ourselves unable to find the cave and having to sleep in the open, with wet gear and more rain. Not a very comforting thought.

Rather than leaving me behind in the car, Tom suggested a less-challenging route from Kanangra Walls to Mount Cloudmaker. It was still a 12-km hike, and with persistent rain, and so many puddles on the plateau, we were soaked by the end of the day. But as the trip progressed (and the rain continued to fall), I got used to it. I always thought that walking in wet shoes would be terrible, but it simply wasn’t that bad. To top it all off, we were also rewarded with views of waterfalls roaring off Kanangra Walls.

The Sydney Bushwalkers had left at six am, on their yearly one-day walk from Kanangra to the Blue Mountains (insane, those Sydney-siders). However, at around three pm, as we reached the top of Mount Cloudmaker, we ran into them on their way back! It turned out that the heavy rains had transformed Coxs River into a raging current, and they were unable to cross it. Instead, they were forced to walk for another few hours back to the car park.

We headed south-southeast to Ti Willa to look for Hundred Men Cave, which we found at dusk. We made a ‘one-match’ fire, had a good meal and were able to dry most of our stuff. Tom had a rant about how Volleys are the superior hiking shoes and managed to convince both Barbara and myself to give them a go next time (see Tom’s rant, pg 10).

The Sunday was just gorgeous. On a long walk, we climbed several peaks—Mount Cloudmaker, the knolls of Rip, Rack, Roar and Rumble, Mount Stormbreaker, Mount High and Mighty, and Mount Berry—and eventually made our way up to the plateau near Kanangra Walls. We finally got the amazing views that Tom had promised in the trip description. The Sunday took us over eight hours, with plenty of time for everyone to catch their breath, take photos and generally enjoy the amazing scenery.
Goodies

ACROSS
3 A bloody steep road in Namadgi National Park (6-4).
6 A simple campstove made in Sweden.
10 Hollow and flat rope used to make runners and slings.
12 A free-heel skiing technique.
14 A steep snow-filled gully.
15 A knot used as a fail-safe backup while descending on a rope.
17 A severe form of altitude sickness — in the head.
19 Slang for helmet.

DOWN
1 The president of the ANU Mountaineering Club (4-9)
2 The location of this issue’s cover photo.
4 A rudimentary snow shelter.
5 The process used to descend on a fixed rope.
7 A self-locking belay device made by Petzl. (3-3)
8 A usually voluntary act of sliding down a steep slope of snow.
9 ANUMC’s gustatory homestead destination.
11 Julius Caesar’s favourite footwear (6-6).
13 Tasmania’s highest mountain (2-4).
16 An overhanging edge of snow on a ridge.
18 An emergency locator device that emits a distress signal.

The local wildlife at Karanga, Barbara Toebbens (L) and Nick Bakker (R). Photo by Marit Kragt.
“Bridges? We don’t need no stinkin’ bridges.” - The Mount Jagungal crew. Photo courtesy of Thomas Polden.