The Editors

The snow is getting softer and the weather is getting warmer, so what better time than now to relive all the fun and adventure the last few months in the Winter edition of EPIC.

This edition begins on a serious note with two articles discussing issues about the ANUMC constitution. To have your say on these issues, make sure you come along to the ANUMC AGM which will be on Wednesday October the 28th at 7pm in GO30. There will also be a free BBQ starting at 5:30pm in the Copland Courtyard.

This edition features trip reports from the many ski and snow shoe trips, as well as the winter bushwalking trips. Highlights include Richard Salmons’ photographic essay of his recent skiing on the Main Range (pg 16) and the Mid-Winter Feast (pg 24) which features poetry from Les Murray.

As always we'll be 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 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 next edition of EPIC!

LAUREN BARTSCH

Lauren has recently signed up for 4 more years in Canberra and has fully embraced the Canberran lifestyle—by spending all her earnings on outdoor related gear! In between organising social events for ANUMC, editing the EPIC and going on bushwalking and skiing trips, Lauren finds time to study for her PhD/masters degree. You'll see Lauren about on bushwalks and falling over on skiing trips; just keep an eye out for the hot pink socks...and shirt....and soft shell...and her most recent addition—hot pink buff!

FIONA KNOX

Fiona has just moved to Canberra this year, and is keen to escape from her medicine degree as much as possible by heading bushwalking, cycling, skiing or any of the club activities. Outside of that she can be found in the lindt chocolate aisles of the local supermarket, or watching House and pretending she's learning something.
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Many, perhaps most, of the over three hundred members of the ANUMC possibly don't know, or perhaps don't particularly care, that their Club has a Constitution. While the ANUMC Constitution is readily available on the internet at http://anumc.anu.edu.au/files/constitution.pdf it seems likely that only a minority of members are familiar with its provisions. Fewer still seem to appreciate how significantly the Constitution governs the way the ANUMC operates, including who gets to make binding decisions that impact on all current and even future members.

The Constitution defines the objectives of the ANUMC, defines membership and perhaps most important of all governs how, and by whom, the ANUMC is run. Constitutionally, all power in the ANUMC is vested in an Executive of seven members (the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Social Officer, and two General Members). Four members of the Executive is a quorum. Thus the Executive, or just four members of the Executive, can decided and enforce what is done or not done in the ANUMC, how the ANUMC spends its money, how the ANUMC’s extensive gear store is used, and can dismiss any member of the Committee.

Given that considerable power is concentrated in the hands of a few, it is fortunate that the Constitution has numerous safeguards against mismanagement and hidden personal agendas. These safeguards are no accident. As befitting such a charter, the ANUMC Constitution was carefully crafted over the years with the considered input of many wise past and present members. In drafting (and occasionally amending) the Constitution these dedicated members sought to protect the integrity of the ANUMC.

The first safeguard is that the Executive has to be re-elected by the membership each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). A second safeguard includes the provision for the membership to call a General Meeting and dismiss any member of the Executive by a three-quarters majority vote. Although a two-thirds majority of a General Meeting is hard to achieve, it can happen as it did when a General Member was dismissed in 2008. A two-thirds majority vote is also required to change the Constitution, thus making it difficult to weaken the provisions of the Constitution.

Until earlier this year there was another safeguard, namely a provision that the office of President, if vacated, could only be filled by a vote of a General Meeting. In April 2009, however, a poorly attended General Meeting voted by the narrowest of margins to drop this provision. The case for doing so was based on a view that replacing a President who resigned would be simpler if the Executive could do without the bothersome need to consult members and call a General Meeting.

The problem with this change is that it now enables as few as four members of the Executive, meeting as a quorum, to disregard the views of the membership and decide who will be President. Too bad if a candidate, who received 49% of the membership’s vote at the AGM, still wanted to be President. So sad if the majority of the membership would rather see this, or any other candidate, as President, rather some ring-in mate of the Executive.

A simple, but effective way of not only restoring but reinforcing the old safeguard would be to provide the membership with the power of veto and the right to demand a General Meeting to vote on the matter before any appointment to the Executive takes effect.

In Constitutional terms this could be simply achieved by inserting the following new underlined clause into the Constitution:

Clause 6 (viii) A vacant position in the Executive may be filled either by:
(a) a unanimous vote of the Executive
(b) where the Executive is unable to reach a decision, a majority vote of a General Meeting of the Club
(c) a unanimous vote of the Executive under Clause (viii) (a) takes effect seven days after the decision has been notified to the membership, unless a General Meeting has been petitioned for under Clause 9 (ii).

And for the record, Clause 9 (ii) states that “A General Meeting may also be called by presentation of a petition of 5 members to the Executive.”

Proposed changes to the Constitution will be considered and voted on at the AGM on the 28th of October. All available ANUMC members should attend and vote. After all, ensuring these safeguards is vitally important for the healthy future of the Club. While the integrity of the current Executive is unquestioned, who can say of those who will come after them?

Mika Kontiainen ANUMC Bushwalking Officer and Life Member
At a general meeting in April 2009 a proposed change to the election of a new President was passed in the event of a vacancy. This allowed the position of President to be elected by unanimous vote of the Executive where previously the vacancy had to be voted on at a General meeting. This was amended for the following reasons: the position of President is an Executive position and it was deemed that the rules of the Executive should apply equally for the President as for other Executive positions. The Executive has been voted in by club members at the AGM. They have already been entrusted by club members to make sound decisions on behalf of the club.

This amendment was only with regards to a vacancy. Each year a new Executive will be elected at the AGM, but occasionally an elected Executive member may have to withdraw due to various commitments such as work or travel. If there is a vacancy, nominations from the previous AGM are reviewed and a call for nominations is also invited from the club. Any club member can put forward their nomination to be considered for an Executive position.

There is still a provision in the constitution that allows for 5 club members to propose a GM to vote on an issue. A constitution amendment requires a 3 quarters majority vote, with a minimum of 20% of club members or 20 club members, which ever is the lesser, voting on the issue.

At the last General meeting in April there was a proposed amendment to change the breakdown of students and non students serving on the Executive. Currently our constitution states that at least four (4) Executive Committee members shall be full time or part time students at the Australian National University at the time of their election, with at least one (1) being an undergraduate and one (1) a post graduate (clause 6.iii). There were two alternatives proposed: there should be a minimum of 2 students (undergrad or post grad) serving on the Executive; or there should be a minimum of 3 students (undergrad or post grad) serving on the Executive.

A three quarters majority voted that the clause specifying the breakdown of students and non students serving on the Executive should be changed - however there was not a three quarters majority vote for specific changes to the clause. There was general agreement that this should be put forward again at the next AGM where a larger representational base can vote on this proposal.

The constitution can be viewed at http://anumc.anu.edu.au/files/constitution.pdf and we would welcome any feedback on proposed changes to the constitution before any changes are put forward at the next AGM on Wed 28 October 2009.

Steph Goodrick
ANUMC President
Mt Jagungal

Friday (Munyang Power Station– Schlink Hilton)
After a few emails back and forward from Ray Vran and myself, I thought I knew what I was getting myself into. After hiring some hard plastic boots (the only ones that fit me at the ANUMC) with skinny skis, I was told I would get blisters by everyone around. I mitigated this risk by placing copious amounts of strapping tape on my ankles. We left at about 1800 on Friday night from Ray’s house (the first navigation exercise) and headed for Munyang power station, and got down there in record time. We started on a beautiful clear evening heading up the hill towards Schlink Pass. The snow was soft and fresh and we were able to turn our headlamps off and ski under moonlight. We got to Schlink Hilton just after midnight, had a hot drink and snack and went to bed.

Saturday (Schlink Hilton – Mawson’s Hut)
A bit of a sleep in was had due to the late night. Breakfast consisted of porridge and chocolate cooked up by Mic & we were on our way by 8am. The visibility was terrible, about 20m, and I was glad that Ray had been there regularly and that he had a GPS. Around 2pm we got to Mawson’s hut. I broke the basket on my stock with about 1km to go to Mawson’s hut, that was fixed with a lot of strapping tape and a metal grate which we found at the hut. The weather was still rubbish and I thought that we had no chance of getting up Jagungal let alone being able to see anything. Ray and Mic were more optimistic as the weather report stated there would be a change overnight and that the visibility would clear up. I cranked up the pot belly in the hut and settled in reading the hut visitors book and eating as much as I could.

Sunday (Mawson’s Hut– Jagungal– Munyang Power Station)
Someone woke me up early and we headed outside to a beautiful still clear day. We had definitely struck it lucky. So another quick breakfast of porridge and skiing the 8km to Jagungal. I fell into the creek attempting to cross it but luckily I had my hard heavy plastic boots which assisted in my foot not getting too wet. Eventually after taking a running jump I got across (the others got across on skis with no problems). I arrived at the top for the picturesque 360˚ views of the snowy mountains. It was fantastic.

The wind was increasing (and not because I am lactose intolerant) so we quickly took some photos and headed back down. Crossing the creek was less eventful and much more pleasant this time for me. After a quick bite to eat we headed towards Schlink Hilton. Had a quick break there and then headed home. The snow turned a bit icy on top which made turning difficult (for me at least) but we made it back to the car at about 1830, absolutely wrecked but blister free.

Many thanks to Ray Vran and Mic Cavazzini for a fantastic weekend. Jagungal was described to me as the premier mountain to climb in the Snowy Mountains and I am inclined to agree. If you are thinking about giving it a go – do it.
An ANUMC trip to the Victorian Alps middle of August 2009

I first heard of Mt Buggery at a club social meeting. Friends of mine were going skiing. "Hey guys, where are you going?" "We are off to Buggery !" Since then, Buggery in winter always had a special fascination for me. The photo on top of the sign with snow around is irresistible.

I have tried many times to get there in winter - and summer too. The first try was winter 1976. Buggery 1 - Nic 0. In the meantime schools changed from three terms to four terms per year and completely destroyed skiing in the middle of winter. The second try was winter 2000. I walked in and out all the way. No snow. There was one patch of snow along the way and I managed three turns. It was not a fair winter trip because there was no snow. Buggery 2 - Nic 0.

This year I planned a trip there in the middle of August to benefit from the deepest cover of snow. Two mates joined in. Graham and Rod were ex ANUMC members and had solid depth of experience after decades in the outdoors. The team was strong, the timing right. We had to succeed.

We walked in this time via The Bluff. Walking in was appropriate as there was no snow. At the top of The Bluff, we attached skis and gingerly skied on a thin cover for a couple of kilometres and then removed the ski for the final descent to the hut. The scene looked bare. Minimal snow. The following day we continued to walk, and walk, and walk. Eventually on top of Mt Lovick we skied for a while. In the meantime the weather was deteriorating and the snow again became thin. We looked at the trip unfolding in front of us. We looked at the steep slopes. We looked at the deep saddles between the peaks. We looked at the lack of snow. We looked at the thick timber. We looked at the fact that we had skis instead of snowshoes. We looked in dismay at our prospects. We looked at how unenjoyable it was and decided to retreat to the Bogong High Plains instead. Buggery 3 - Nic 0.

The following day we were touring on the BHPlains. Hut to hut touring following the incredible Victorian navigation pole lines. The weather had closed in and visibility about 50 m. We enjoyed the snow at the higher
altitudes and the comfort of close by huts.

Friday was the last day on the BHP and we were hoping that the weather would improve enough to ski up the Niggerheads. The Niggerheads rise 200m above Tawonga huts. They provide a wonderful belvedere onto Mt Feathertop and adjoining peaks. During the night, the clouds parted, a hard frost occurred and dawn rose in brilliant light and clear skies. We preferentially walked up to the summits since it was more energy efficient to do so rather than try to ski. By the time we were ready to descend, the surface had started to thaw with wonderful spring corn snow. You could say “hero” snow. Corn snow is so nice that it makes you feel like a hero descending incredible slopes with maximal control. Just like a hero. We returned to Falls Creek via Mt McKay nordic trails thence along to Cloud Nine for a descent on the alpine slopes to the car. A great day and the whole episode much more skiing worthwhile than antagonising around Buggery.

We still had two days to go and decided a tentative plan to ascend Mt Bogong on Saturday and Mt Feathertop on Sunday, pending weather conditions of course. The weather was bright and calm as we started the trail onto the Staircase Spur around 08:00hrs. We eventually arrived at the snowline, changed to ski boots and continued in increasing wind and decreasing visibility. By the time we arrived at the crosstracks of those wonderful Victorian snow pole lines, the visibility was around 40m and the wind whistling around our ears. We left the packs there and continued to the summit. Once back at the crossroads it was a real debate on whether to continue to Cleve Cole hut or to descend via the Staircase. I was concerned in case the snow pack froze. The slopes draining Bogong are convex and can be deadly once frozen. We decided to continue to Cleve Cole. The decision was justified as visibility improved and the wind decreased. We arrived at the hut after doing some really nice turns on spring corn. A quick coffee. A quick lunch. A quick chat with the locals. A quick look at the log book. A quick photo and we were gone. Back up towards Bogong and down the Eskdale spur. The descent proved to be the best ski of the trip. “Hero snow” in the mid afternoon in a spectacular setting. The spur was initially a broad face which gradually narrowed to a thin
ridge. Care had to be taken to stay on top of the ridge and not ski over the cornices on the right or fall into the gullies on the left. All too soon we were at Wallaces hut, changed to joggers and continued down the road and arriving at the car at 18:00hrs.

Feathertop? We decided against it. The weather forecast was inclement with predictions of storms, wind, poor visibility. Instead we returned to Canberra one day ahead of schedule and contented with the experience of a great trip.

Buggery? I will have to try again another winter. In summer the walking track is evident and the score is Buggery 0 - Nic 3.

Winter? Buggery 3 - Nic 0

Schi heil
On the first weekend of August, a crew of 8 ANUMC adventurers joined Kylie and Sam to celebrate Sam’s 33 and a third years of existence on this ‘fun park of a planet’ (Kylie’s words).

Fortunately, none of us showed up in bikinis on Friday night, when we drove up for a windy night at Island Bend. On Saturday, we drove up to the Guthega Power Station where no snow was to be seen, so we had to walk up the hill with our skis and backpacks to find the white powdery goodness. About 500 metres later (i.e. higher), we donned our long splines and started skiing.

A morning tea stop was called for at Horse Camp hut, adding delicious banana bread and an extra kilometre to the trip. Further up the hill we went, passing White’s River Hut and battling increasing winds and icy fire-trails. Lucky for us, the weather didn’t break, and we got to the hut by the end of the afternoon. Schlink is a gorgeous hut, with four rooms, table, stove, and even some moth ridden beds. Having come up to sleep in the snow, we set up our tents rather than sleep in the hut. The snow was perfectly sticky to build a massive igloo-wall around each tent to protect it from the cold winds. Kudos to Dave and Finn for digging two snow-walls.

We feasted in the hut, on mulled wine, couscous, curries and a variety of desserts involving lots of chocolate and rice-pudding.

After a long and cosy warm night in our tents, we had another lazy start on Sunday. Both the weather and the terrain had much improved, with blue skies and lots of downhill skiing. I was quite pleased by how well I managed to do my turns carrying a heavy backpack. I’m already looking forward to the next Kosi feast!

**Couscous cook-off?**

Couscous is an excellent choice for light-weight tasty dinners. Mix it with your favourite (dried) veggies, dried fruits and nuts. Pour boiling water over the mixture, let it set for a couple of minutes and you’re done. Too easy! Two couscous salads were prepared for Sam’s birthday feasting. Try them out next time you’re out there.

**Couscous a la Marit** Separately mix some dried peas and corn (separate to boil up a bit). Mix couscous with almonds, raisins, ginger-powder, coriander, cinnamon, salt, pepper and sundried tomatoes (the ANU food co op has an ideal lightweight variety).

**Couscous a la Finn** Mix couscous with currants, walnuts, dried apricots and powdered parmesan. Spice mix with cinnamon, coriander and cumin.
It was the shortest day of the year, but the route was long. Sixteen kilometers on snowshoes, a 700 metre ascent. Starting at the gargantuan Gungartan power station at Munyang and forging up the wild Munyang River valley to the windswept saddle of Schlink pass, before climbing to Mt. Gungartan’s icy pinnacle and finally navigating through the labyrinthine cornices to Tin Hut. But forgive me for this terrible hyperbole, for this was the first trip of my snowshoeing career, and things always seem epic the first time round. There were plenty of lessons to learn along the way, on this first snowshoeing trip of the season, a few of which I think are worth recording here.

**Lesson 1: Route setting and how not to do it.**

We were winding up the ascending aqueduct trail that runs north of the power station. Nick, Jennifer and I were ahead, Mika, Bill and Lauren further back. Waiting where the trail forked, we concocted a time-saving plan. The trail we had planned to follow curled southwards before proceeding north. We reasoned to save time by cutting straight northwest, through the seemingly pleasant snowgums. Mika, when he heard the plan, did not discourage us, but no doubt he sported a mischievous smile as we parted ways: we covered half the distance in twice the time.

After stopping at Horse Camp Hut for a mini-snow-man-building break, we donned our snowshoes. Some kilometres, a lunch break, and a gentle climb later we stood at Schlink Pass, a bare and wind scoured place, but with wonderful views into the valleys north and south.

**Lesson 2: Ascents and the ancient art of cutting steps.**

It was time to depart the trail and ascend towards Mt. Gungartan, which still lay hidden behind a ridge to the east. It was the steepest part of our route, but the snow was pleasant and the views increasingly gorgeous. It was now that the snowshoes really came into their own. Rather than sinking waist-deep in the soft snow, we could wander as we wanted! Soon we were metres away from the summit, but faced with the choice of a steep and icy rock ascent, or a steep and powdery snow ascent. For those that took the snow route, a lesson in step cutting ensued, as we slipped and slid like people who definitely did not want to have photos of what they are doing up on Facebook. (Un)fortunately no photos of this incident survived.

**Lesson 3: Navigation and the peerless night.**

A quick group photo on the summit of Mt. Gungartan was all the celebration we had time for upon reaching the top. Twilight was falling fast, and Tin Hut was still an hour away. We travelled fast. Fast enough, in fact, to probably have toppled over several cornices that were now almost invisible in the fading light, had Mika not spotted them in the nick of time. We were above the tree line here, and the high backcountry was stunningly surreal. The sight didn’t last long. Head torches came out, and were quickly followed by total darkness.

This was the winter solstice. The moon was new, so we had no moonlight. The clouds were thick, so we had no starlight. It was truly pitch black. This, Mika decided, would be a great time to play a game to see how well we could orient ourselves. The results ranged from close to cautionary and the fact that the hut was less than
200 meters away was known only to Mika. Fortunately for the rest of us, he eventually divulged its whereabouts.

**Lesson 4: Huts and the Rat of Legend.**

The warm fire and the cheerful company made the hut a favourable alternative to the prospect of cooking in the wind and rain, which we had so nearly realised. Snow melted in pots above the fire and the smells of rice and salmon filled the air. We were tired. We had come a long way. But there was still time before retiring to read from the hut guestbook the tales of the pseudo-legendary Rat of Tin Hut.

The Rat (as opposed to rat) had apparently developed quite the reputation with the human residents of the hut. The descriptions, and one very fine diagram, suggested this was truly a rodent of unusual size. And the story that told of it trying to eat a sleeping traveller’s beanie, while he was still wearing it, suggested a fearless disposition. I for one was glad we had brought tents, as we hung up our pack on the hooks in the middle of the room. I didn’t particularly want to meet this Rat or his lesser ratty kin. No doubt he lurks there still, preying at night on hapless wanderers and their beanie pompoms.

**Lesson 5: Home.**

It fills you with energy to know you’re returning home. And it seemed like everyone in our party had a spring in their step, even as the trip’s first snow fell, wet and slushy. Before long we had stopped for lunch in the Munyang River Valley, near Whites River Hut. Mika and Lauren had gone to explore the hut, while Jenn, Bill and Nick relaxed by the stream bank, and everyone else forded over the rocks and splashed in the frigid water taking photos.

The rest of the day passed slowly, the east aqueduct trail running ever onwards towards the power station. The views matched the mood; the valley seemed so serene and timeless, the lengthening shadows bringing out every imaginable shade of dark blue.

We reached the cars (though not before rescuing a stockless skier, wearing some exceeding colourful pants) and collapsed. We stopped for the obligatory pizza in Cooma. And we were home. It was a tiring trip, but also beautiful and satisfying. My thanks go out to Bill, Lauren, Nick, Jenn and especially our leader Mika for making this trip so thoroughly enjoyable!

Photos
Far left: Lauren concentrating on a creek crossing
Left: Nic and Bill enjoying lunch
Bottom left: Mika, Nick and Jenn
Bottom Middle: Mika making it look easy
Bottom Right: Jenn and Mika consult the map
Having been bitten by the ski bug on previous beginner trips, Anne, Jenn, Deciana and myself were keen to practice our skills off-trail. A day trip to Guthega, led by Richard, was just the ticket.

Jenn navigated us through the busy resort and along one of the trails until we reached Blue Cow Creek. After carefully making our way across, managing [barely] not to lose our footing or drop a ski into the creek, the navigational reins were handed over to Deciana. We were taken around the side of Back Perisher Mountain, using a technique apparently referred to as ‘sidling’ in mountaineering circles, through the snow-clad gums until a campsite on the bank of New Farm Creek made the perfect spot for morning tea.

After following the creek, now buried by snow, upstream to the base of The Paralyser, we peered through the mist at the slope ahead of us. Now in Anne’s hands, we started our ascent up a relatively gentle slope through trees adorned with melting icicles, with the sound of masses of ice occasionally falling from the trees the only break in the still silence of our surroundings. Then a steeper climb could not be avoided. Herringbone was no longer adequate and it took quite a time to reach Paralyser Trig, with most of us messing up many of our kick turns and sliding part way back down the slope. After a herculean effort we reached the trig, abandoned our skis and explored, before enjoying lunch and the warm contents of thermoses in a hollow beside a rock, trying to keep out of the strengthening wind.

The trip back down the slope looked daunting, but before we knew it we were zig-zagging down in a relatively controlled fashion, making use of snow ploughs, the occasional kick turn and [if Richard wasn’t looking] a few side...
Richard, Gabriela, Dom & Mark’s trip to Cootapatamba, near Mt Kosciuszko on the Main Range, 8-9 August 2009. Our campsite was just under the Ramshead out from Thredbo, and we spent the weekend skiing down into the Cootapatamba valley and Leatherbarrel Creek in the shadow of the imposing Kosciuszko Cornice. We summited Kosci on skis - despite dreadful ice on the peak - and skied down as quickly as we could, finding beautiful fresh snow on the lower slopes. The lower slopes on Leatherbarrel Creek are especially recommended. The campsite is also a convenient location with nice views - but at about 2100m, be prepared for cold nights. I enjoyed a nice drink from my water bottle after I’d first chipped out a centimetre of ice that formed during the evening. All in all, a nice taste of the Main Range, and planning more for September.
Sun rises on the Main Range

Sun and moon rise on the Main Range

Sun rises on the Main Range
Dom and Mark check the navigation

Mark turning steeply on club tele gear
Gabriela turning on steep ice on the Main Range

Steep runs from the Ramshead
Skiing down to Cootapatamba Hut

Gabriela with Leatherbarrel Creek behind
Main Range campsite evening

Afternoon views on Main Range
Returning to camp at end of the day
Mid-Winter Feast 2009

Gooandra and the Serenity

"Why is there a why?" James’ colossal question continues to puzzle me as I transition from the natural and philosophical wilderness of the ANUMC mid-winter feast to my own bedroom. Led by the highly experienced and somewhat bossy 7-year-old mountaineer Sakari, a group of twelve adventurers (predominantly physicists) set out for the historic alpine homestead ‘Gooandra.’ Built in 1913 by grazier Fred Lampe, Gooandra is about 15km north of Kiandra and is the oldest standing structure in Kosciusko National Park. The purpose of the trip? Food, wine and good ol’ fashioned festive merriment ensconced in the splendours of nature. Somewhat less expected were the conversations that peppered our excursion – but more of that later.

After a 3hr drive through Namadgi and Kiandra, we arrived on the Kiandra Plain at the Gooandra fire trail ready for the brisk walk to the hut. Half of us followed Zac along the 5km fire trail, the other half followed Zac’s second-in-command (Mika) taking a slightly longer, more scenic route along the ridge line. The absence of snow at this altitude and time of year was unseasonable and made for a slightly less wintry atmosphere; however, it did make the walk easier than expected. Veering off the fire trail and following an overgrown path down into a valley, we were welcomed by a restored 1930s weatherboard homestead nestled amongst the Black Sallees. The stench of Australian history, pastoralists, brumbies and romance nearly knocked me over! It was all I could do not to swoon on the spot and hope that the Man from Snowy River would ride past, collect me in his strong arms and carry me away to live a life of brumby-catching, damper-baking, billy tea-drinking, baby-making heaven... apologies for the digression.

 Joined by Mika and the Lone Rangers at last, ‘we few, we happy few, we band of brothers’ got down to the earthy business of collecting wood and water. And of course, every Happy Camper’s dream: putting up the tents!! My dark side started to show through as I struggled hopelessly with what seemed like a large orange crossed with a space-ship. Always the Happy Camper, Ben lent a helping hand by taking photos of me in my distress (bottom and all). As we settled down for a sumptuous evening meal in the warm glow of fire and candlelight, the conversation touched on the weird, the wonderful and the downright dirty. Mika, Emma, Zac, Julia, James, Kate, Charlotte, Katanya, Geoff, Martin, Ben and I managed to transcend space and time... and the other dimensions... in less than 24 hours: Quantum physics; the pros and cons of The Australian Male species; The Four Forces of the Universe; ‘String Theory’; ‘Spin Theory’; history (Truth...
particular landscape has been the visual and poetic backbone of the collective Australian Bush Legend. Not only is it a landscape that fired the imaginations of formative Australian poets such as Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson, it is also historically a place that has witnessed brutal colonial injustices and environmental devastation. Therefore, if I am to express my feelings about this landscape, allow me to use the words of Australia’s best poet (which is Les Murray, in case you didn’t know... and yes, I AM the poetry Nazi!)

or Big Fat Fiction?); the 15 different Aussie slang phrases for ‘having sex’; all things supernatural, paranormal or metaphysical (again, Truth or Big Fat Fiction?); nudity, nude beaches and nude photography; the problem with pencils; the habits of French women and hair-removal; and finally, the sacred art of poetry.

Unfortunately, the tyranny of poetry lurked in the shadows and pounced unexpectedly. Accompanied by the warm inner glow of red wine and James’ excellent port, Mika nobly began his recitation of Banjo Patterson’s ‘The Man From Snowy River’ only to be cruelly deflated by the obsessive ranting of an unbearably obnoxious “Arts” graduate. Mika’s eyes bulged at the unreasonable and outlandish demands of the poetry Harpy – nay, poetry Nazi! Poor Mika composed himself after the violent verbal onslaught and attempted to continue his recitation only to find that he had been robbed of all speech and all poetry. Try as he might, he could no longer recollect the words of the poem and so recoiled, speechless and horrified at the impending tyranny of the Poetry Nazi.

Despite this, the combined force of the twelve personalities in that cosy candlelit hut made for a truly memorable mid-winter feast. It did try to snow for us and we were all very grateful for the valiant attempt, but it got exhausted fairly quickly and decided to rain heavily instead. One by one, we drifted away to our tents and fell asleep to the sound of wind and rain (except for Katanya who was unable to sleep and was then inexplicably smacked in the face by an unknown, unseen Force).

Ever since my first adolescent visit to the Snowy Mountains with my parents, this particular part of the country has captured my imagination with its rugged beauty, its history, its poetry and its brumbies. In many ways, this particular landscape has been the visual and poetic backbone of the collective Australian Bush Legend. Not only is it a landscape that fired the imaginations of formative Australian poets such as Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson, it is also historically a place that has witnessed brutal colonial injustices and environmental devastation. Therefore, if I am to express my feelings about this landscape, allow me to use the words of Australia’s best poet (which is Les Murray, in case you didn’t know... and yes, I AM the poetry Nazi!)

Gooandra
Noonday Axeman
by Les Murray

Axe-fall, echo and silence. Noonday silence.
Two miles from here, it is the twentieth century: cars on the bitumen, powerlines vaulting the farms. Here, with my axe, I am chopping into the stillness.

Axe-fall, echo and silence. I pause, roll tobacco, Twist a cigarette, lick it. All is still. I lean on my axe. A cloud of fragrant leaves Hangs over me moveless, pierced everywhere by sky.

Here, I remember all of a hundred years: candleflame, still night, frost and cattle bells, the draywheels’ silence final in our ears, and the first red cattle spreading through the hills and my great-great-grandfather here with his first sons, who would grow old, still speaking with his Scots accent, having never seen those highlands that they sang of. A hundred years. I stand and smoke in silence.

A hundred years of clearing, splitting, sawing, a hundred years of timbermen, ringbarkers, fencers and women in kitchens, stoking loud iron stoves year in, year out, and singing old songs to their children have made this silence human and familiar no farther than where the farms rise into foothills, and, in that time, how many have sought their graves or fled to the cities, maddened by this stillness?

... (forgive me, Les Murray, for editing your poem)

Axe-fall, echo and silence. It will be centuries before many men are truly at home in this country, and yet, there have always been some, in each generation, there have always been some who could live in the presence of silence.

And some, I have known then, men with gentle broad hands, who would die if removed from these unpeopled places, some again I have seen, bemused and shy in the cities you have built against silence, dumbly trudging through noise past the railway stations, looking up through the traffic at the smoky halls, dreaming of journeys, of stepping down from the train at some upland stop to recover the crush of dry grass underfoot, the silence of trees.

Axe-fall, echo and silence. Dreaming the silence. Though I myself run to the cities, I will forever be coming back here to walk, knee-deep in ferns, up and away from this metropolitan century, to remember my ancestors, axemen, dairymen, horse-breakers, now coffined in silence, down with their beards and dreams, who, unwilling or rapt, despairing or very patient, made what amounts to a human breach in the silence.
made of their lives the rough foundation of legends – men must have legends, else they will die of strangeness – then died in their turn, each, after his own fashion, resigned or agonized, from silence into great silence.

Axe-fall, echo and axe-fall. Noonday silence.
Though I go to the cities, turning my back on these hills, for the talk and dazzle of cities, for the sake of belonging for months and years at a time to the twentieth century, the city will never quite hold me. I will be always coming back here on the up-train, peering, leaning out of the window to see, on far-off ridges, the sky between the trees, and over the racket of the rails to hear the echo and the silence.

I shoulder my axe and set off home through the stillness.
1965

And while we didn’t exactly shoulder axes, we shouldered lighter packs and somewhat heavy hearts on our walk back to the twentieth century. On climbing to the peak of the Mt Gooandra ridge (1522m) on our way home and looking back to the Eucumbene River and Kiandra plain below, Ben asked me, ‘What is the most apt quote for this (pointing to the view) right now?’ As I tried to find some poxy, snotty nosed poet to quote, Ben answered his own question: ‘Haow’s the serenidy?’ Hmm, I couldn’t have put it better myself Ben, even though I’ve wasted 1,400 words trying.
This year the BDO Snow Trip was run on the weekend of 25/26 July. The focus was on getting beginners down to the snow and introducing them to two of the club's popular winter activities – cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Four leaders and twelve beginners undertook the Friday night drive to Island Bend; most arriving at the Island Bend picnic area, others arriving at Island Bend proper – all reunited in the morning though! The groups were split in two; half headed off to go snowshoeing with Tom and Steph up the Guthega Ridge towards Consett Stephens Pass, whilst the other group received cross-country skiing lessons at Perisher and then spent an afternoon on the Nordic trails with Richard and Matt. We all regrouped at Island Bend for dinner on the Saturday night, save for a few daring telemark skiers who stayed at Perisher for some night skiing, showing those pesky alpine skiers and arrogant snow-boarders a thing or two about telemark style.

The groups swapped over for the Sunday; the snowshoers again started out from Guthega but this time headed south along the Snowy River towards Illawong Lodge and the suspension bridge. After perfect weather conditions the previous day, capricious Huey hid the sun behind dark clouds and sent cold biting winds on the Sunday. Even so, the snowshoers enjoyed the day and were glad to reach the bakery in Jindabyne for a hot drink later in the afternoon.

As for the skiers, beginners were given a taste of cross-country skiing, starting with morning lessons with Wilderness Sports. They made ‘windmills’, careered out of control down slopes that were pretty much flat, discovered it is quite possible to fall over while standing still, got the hang of snowploughs and were quick to master the art of getting back on their feet after a fall!

After practicing near the Nordic shelter, they headed a bit further a field on the trails near Perisher to refine their skills, also learning some new ones – the herringbone, staking and of course, kick turning. Some of the more adventurous had a go at telemarking, one managing to pull the cable binding out of her ski as she performed a perfect turn at high speed (or did it just happen while she was standing in the snow watching someone else being brave? Ah, details….)

After lunch and a well-deserved warm drink in the Nordic shelter, Richard and Matt took their ducklings back out for another session on the Perisher trails. They practiced all the skills learnt in the morning on the gentle slopes before peering cautiously down the steeper one, contemplating how they could get down in one piece. It seemed that there were several options – to weave down with a series of wide, graceful snow plough turns, to aim straight down the slope and whiz to the bottom at lightning speed, or for most, to use a snail’s pace combination of zigzags, clumsy kick turns and side steps around the obstacles. All in all a great time was had, with a lot being learnt and no doubt the club has found itself some new free-heel converts.

Special thanks go to Richard Salmons and Matt Yager for their patient leadership and enthusiasm in guiding beginners for the weekend. Thanks also to the drivers and the other leaders who were there to help with the smooth running of the trip – Lauren Bartsch and Kylie Mulligan get special mention for their assistance.

Photo: Annette taking off at the beginner ski lessons.
Photo taken by Richard Salmons
Dead Horse Snowshoe  
Lyn Massey

_Dashing through the snow_
_On our two feet open “shoes”_
_Over hills we go_
_Taking in the views …_

Such is the versatility that snowshoeing allows … not only were we able to effortlessly (well, seemingly effortlessly for most) scale a snow-clad “mountain” but we were also able to take our time and absorb the wintry beauty surrounding us, the snowshoes providing plenty of stability for great photo opportunities as we ascended. Early Sunday morning we all met at Mika’s place for a quick gear check - and sound advice from Mika’s young son Sakari - before heading off, detouring as custom would have it via a Jindabyne bakery, to Dead Horse Gap (1582m) where we began our expedition to the top of South Rams Head (~2050m). Most of us had little or no experience in the joys of snowshoeing, and we were all surprised and delighted to find that our trip leader had arranged excellent conditions for us – sunny with some high cloud, a balmy -2 to 0 degree temperature variance, only a slight breeze at higher altitude, and best of all, a blanket of pristine dry powder snow atop a firm compacted base. After a quick introduction to the workings of our equipment we set off through an enchanting naked snow gum forest encountering a gentle incline at first before a slight plateau, then pushing onwards and upwards towards our goal, the summit. We took in a short side-trip to appreciate a trickling creek nestled in the snow, and were hoping to glimpse the owner of the four legged impressions forging its own trail off into the distance, but were not fortunate enough to do so. Our only other company encountered along the way was a lone cross country skier who had gotten a much earlier start than us as she had already had half a dozen or so runs down from the top. Reaching the summit around 90 minutes later, we were rewarded for our efforts with a stunning 360 degree vista encompassing the Main Range, Mt Kosciusko, Thredbo Valley and the Snowy River all the way around to the snow-clad Victorian Alps. The sunlight played upon the snow and melting ice which exposed and contrasted artistically with the rugged contours of the rocky peaks. The natural beauty of the environment was so inviting that one of our party, a Dane, was almost persuaded to strike a potentially compromising pose in the name of creative photography but modesty, and a light bulb moment of understanding Australian directness, prevailed. We spent an hour or so having lunch and generally exploring the mountain top, comparing various vantage points, and some eager beavers even tried their hand at (semi-successfully) building a snow cave. After almost two hours near the summit, it was time to head back down to our vehicles. Trustingly, we plunged shin deep into the powder, the snowshoes offering enough traction to prevent us from sliding uncontrollably down the slope. A little skill and balance were required to stay upright however, but we all managed a fun and playful descent without incident.

Like all good things, the outing came to an end all too soon and before we knew it we were dressing down, stowing our gear and heading home for Canberra. The general consensus seemed to be that if you get the opportunity to try it, snowshoeing offers a great alternative to other winter outdoor pursuits and should be tried at least once before you die. If you enjoy bushwalking and/or want to experience the fun and beauty of getting out in amongst the snow without hurting at great speed towards unknown destinies on various forms of “sliders”, snowshoeing is definitely worth a go.

Thanks once again to Mika for organising the trip – and for the great weather and company.

A Jog Up Gingera  
Christopher Lee

Earlier in the week, I had sent a semi-declination email to Nic B, regarding his excruciatingly long “ski training jog” that I had enthusiastically signed up for. In the end however Nic graciously accepted me into his group of ultra-athlete mountaineers, and on Sunday, we
Winter Trip Reports

Winter 2009 Bushwalking
Mika Kontiainen
ANUMC Bushwalking Officer

Despite the cold and lure of the snow, and perhaps in the case of snowshoeing because of it, this year’s winter season has been a popular one for bushwalking. In the three months (13 weekends) of June, July and August an impressive range of 11 bushwalking and four snowshoeing ANUMC trips have been run, with an average of eight participants on each trip. Two out of three trips have been hugely popular day trips, mostly into nearby Namadgi (Brandy Flat, Camel Hump, Mt Orroral, Square Rock, Boboyan Valley and Mt Gingera) but also further afield to the Tinderry Mountains, Yanununbeyan National Park, the South Coast (Pigeon House) and Kosciusko National Park (South Rams Head). Three over night trips ventured into the cold of Kosciusko (Tin Hut, Jagungal, Gooandra), one into Namadgi (Scabby Range) and a fifth sought the relative warmth of the Budawangs. Seven trip leaders, Alana, Linda, Kathryn, Rob, Nic, Ray and I, have run these trips. My thanks goes to my fellow trip leaders for taking the time and the effort to safely take others, both beginners and the experienced, out bush and sharing with them the beauty and the challenges of the Australian bush in winter. If you too would like to lead an ANUMC bushwalking trip this spring, please contact me and I’d be happy to help you make it happen.

South coast winter solstice
Gwen Le Mene

Six people went on the two-day trip to the coast, Nic Bendeli, John, Nic, Chris, Caroline and Gwen. On Saturday morning we first drove to Mount Bushwalker. After parking the car, we started our hike around 11am. We spent 1 hour to get to the summit where we had lunch with a beautiful view on the cliffs and forests of the Budawangs (in Morton NP). We got very nice views on The Castle and Mt Pigeonhouse. We returned back to our cars on the same track. The next planned stop was Mt Pigeonhouse. Although almost getting lost on the way we arrived there around 5pm. After dinner we started our hike all equipped with head torches. In consideration of the forecast we decided to sleep just below the top in some small caves, since nobody was keen on waking up wet the next morning. Of course it didn’t rain that night. After a recovering night we were able to observe a magnificent sunrise from the top of Pigeon House. After that a big platform on the top of the mountain was transformed into an international kitchen to have a great breakfast with cheese wraps, ham and cheese croissants, eggs and bacon, Vietnamese Pancake, French toast and Crepes. After making our way back to the car park, we drove to a beach at Bawley Point to enjoy a swim in the quite chilly waters of the Pacific. To finish this beautiful weekend, we stopped in Batemans bay to have Fish and Chips and drove back to Canberra.
A cold wind dances across the exposed portion of my face; my cheeks burn with the chill of the winter morn. My sleeping bag is my only shelter - all that was needed under a starry vault. My fingers search for the sleeping bag’s draw-cords, find the toggles, and with a pull release me from the embrace of the snug fitting mummy-shaped bag. I role onto my right hand side, as my left arm emerges from the warm comfort of the bag and extends into the cold air around me. My left hand searches along the ground, finding my trusty Volleys and my glasses stashed inside the left shoe. I put on my glasses and appreciate my surroundings; the eucalypts paint a ghostly silhouette upon the canvas of the pre-dawn sky. I reach into my other shoe and take out my camera. Then I get up out of my sleeping bag, put on a fleece and my shoes, and walk over to the mountain’s cliff edge to sit and watch the sunrise. It is a spectacular show, for which I am soon joined by some other bushwalkers. We sit in silence and witness the rising of the sun, watch how it’s rays of light land on the cliffs and illuminate the valleys, and listen to the morning song of the birds as they soar high above the ground below.

What is it about wilderness areas, which draws bushwalkers to their remote peaks, trackless bush, and clear running streams? The unspoilt beauty of the Australian bush – here embodied in the delicate fragility of the orchid, there by the harsh intertwining of Banksia branches – is something special beyond words. A trip into the wilderness has a certain spiritual quality about it. What can compare with the thunderous power of the waterfall, the ancient architecture of a mountain range, or the cool taste of a mountain stream? What Botanic Garden can rival the array of a remote canyon, with tall Red Cedars, hidden and inaccessible to the chainsaw? What can surpass the simple pleasure of observing a platypus swim happily in a flowing creek?

For myself, I go not to the wilderness to escape the urbanity of everyday life, but to experience life in the first place. Landscaped parks, air-conditioned shopping centres, wide bitumen roads and neatly constructed houses – ostensibly displays of man’s achievements – are temporary and insubstantial. It is in the wilderness that the bushwalker is at home. To witness the morning sunrise, to walk the valleys and ranges, to eat, sleep and wake again in this environment, is to experience something beyond that which words can express. The bushwalker leaves his cares behind when he sets off with his map and compass, and everything he needs within his pack. The complexities, tribulations, and consternations of everyday life seem trivial and are forgotten as the senses are assaulted by the beauty and innocence of nature.