



UNE Mountaineering Club

Term 2 Newsletter 2004

Well Term 1 is over and I hope you all had fun and are not too stressed about work or study.

I won't prattle on too much as we have some trip reports that will be much better reading but I will say one thing: **Get involved!**

If you can help out in any way we would love to hear from you. You don't need to be an international paddling champion, just helping out with cleaning and packing gear, writing about trips, being a driver or

helping out with the club administration, would be greatly appreciated. Especially as the year progresses and we plan more interesting, bigger trips. Specifically we will be in need of a Treasurer and Caving coordinator after Peter hands in his thesis and moves on to better pastures.

So please help out if you can and remember to have fun!

Brendan (Skip) Heywood
Club President

Trip Reports

Colong Caves – 15 Nov 2003

After a long and arduous drive down we finally arrived at Batts Camp at around 1am, following Bron, Tim, and Michaels' arrival earlier that evening. A quick breakfast we were on our way down the gorge to the cave entrance. Once arriving at the creek there was some debate as to where the mouth of the cave was, resulting in a quick search up and around some ridges that looked promising. Finally we found the entrance in the form of the amphitheatre. The arch entrance is a spectacular way to begin these caves, and is incredibly large considering the small actual

entrance hidden away to one corner of the opening.

We finally entered the caves at around 11am, Brendan and Bron leading the way as usual, exploring every squeeze and crevice they could find. The first large cavern we came across was Kings Cross, the meeting point of all three levels of the cave. From here we explored our way back towards King Solomons Temple, a site decorated with impressive columns and other formations. We moved onwards towards the end of the system, exploring the crystal pools on the way. While this required a slight

detour it proved well worth it. The pools themselves are reached after a small squeeze sloping down to a 3m drop closer to the pools themselves.

Back in the main cavern we worked our way past numerous obstacles including large holes on the cave floor that needed to be climbed around, a canyon which involved some horizontal body jamming and some rock falls. After a squeeze past some shawls and a quick skirting of a pool of water we had arrived at Woofs cavern. The cavern stretched out in front of us and our feeble torches and candles barely penetrating the dark abyss. We suddenly realised the vastness of what we had come across and understood why this cavern elicited such renown among cavers around the country. Deep, ample clefts dropped steeply around us. After we had spent some time exploring, experiencing and getting to know Woofs, we went on our way.

As the system falls into three distinct levels, we chose to go back a different way to that which we

entered. This also formed a toilet stop for the boys, who, managing to thus far fill the 1.5 litre bottle about a quarter of the way, were amazed at Michael's ability to fill the bottle completely. Following the inevitable disagreement about who was going to carry the bottle out in their bag (which could obviously involve dire consequences) we went on towards the terraces, which proved to be along a tunnel wide and high enough to drive a car through. With a few stumbles and a deep breath we had left the system, the light from the sun surprisingly still beating down on us.

All in all it was a brilliant trip with good company, good food and most of all a good cave. The system can be recommended to most as it is not technically difficult, however it is quite long. Plans to head back in 2004 for another exploration, this time camping at the mouth of the cave, are already being put together. See you there.

Sam Hull

Bushwalking along the Guy Fawkes – 27 Feb

13 walkers headed out to Guy Fawkes NP, planning to walk from Chaelundi falls into the gorge and along the river, camp overnight then walk out on Sunday.

Guy Fawkes NP is about 40 minutes north of Ebor, and is relatively isolated with a lot of gravel road leading to it. Even without the trip down the gorge, it is well worth visiting for the views and the great campground.





After getting packs (some only weighing 9kg!!) and shared gear sorted out, we headed past Chaelundi falls and took a detour out along the Lucifers Thumb ridge to get spectacular views down the gorge, and to watch a few rock wallabies sunning themselves. Next, a long, steep descent into the gorge, losing 600m of elevation in a few km. The international contingent in the group claimed that this was much worse than anything Europe has to offer, being steeper and seemingly endless (!).

We finally made it to the river and a welcome swim stop, where the discussion was on the merits of taking boots off to keep them dry, or ignoring them and wading through the river. After 10 river crossings for the afternoon, the wet boot philosophy won out.

The walk along the river would be very pleasant at any time of year (views, running water, etc), except for autumn when the sticky beaks are setting seed. Walking near the river involved pushing through thickets of sticky beaks with any exposed clothing picking up a good

load of seed. I'm still finding them in clothes 6 weeks after the trip!

The campsite on the junction of the Aberfoyle River was one of the best we saw during the day, with less sticky beaks than elsewhere, and a comfortable gravel bank to camp on. The next morning started with two more river crossings, and the beginning of Jordan's track out of the gorge. The bottom of the track is easy to see, starting near a set of yards (312689) about 50m off the river (wouldn't you agree, Pete?).

At this point, a small error of judgement saw half the group attempt to leave the gorge by going cross country and climbing a different ridge line, using only a map in a digital camera for guidance in the last stages!!

Overall, an enjoyable if strenuous weekend, with good views and about 25km of walking, a river worth checking out for canoeing or liloing, and as many sticky beaks as you could carry.

Craig Birchall
Photos: Takeshi Ueno

Guy Fawkes Part II: Lilo and Stitch – 17 Apr

Having just walked through the Guy Fawkes, and been so impressed with the flow, Pete Stonestreet and I had decided it just had to be LiLoed. For the uninitiated LiLo-ing involves the physically demanding and highly skilled art of floating down a river on an inflatable mattress. It sounded like an easy walk (or float) in the park.

So the three of us (we were joined by Iain Mackay) grabbed some Tuna and headed off. We entered the gorge from the west, via private property, and down Bee's Nest ridge. Pete had the idea that we would aim to come up the Lucifer's Thumb track but if we were too slow we could exit the gorge via Jordan's fire trail.

Well after a long four-hour car shuffle and a moderately hellish decent through forests of burrs clinging to the very steep rocky ridge we finally met the river.

From here it was plain sailing; idle floating, gentle paddling and some occasional walking over gravel runs. That is until Iain discovered that in the game of Rock-Water-Lilo, a Rock beats a Lilo. The rip

wasn't too bad but Iain had to walk for the rest of that day.

That night around the campfire Iain worked to fix his Lilo throwing every patch we had at it. The next morning, after cautious testing, we all floated off. It wasn't exactly airtight but was good enough.

The morning was probably the highlight of the trip, where we saw in several of the quieter pools turtles and fish and above us lots of birds including a few bright blue and orange kingfishers.

We had been going pretty slowly so we pulled out at Jordan's Fire trail. Then while stuffing around after lunch in a seemingly safe section of water, Pete's Lilo spectacularly ripped open a good foot or two.

In resignation we trudged up the ridge, this time on the right track, which Pete reckons was just as hard as the 'alternate route' anyway.

All up it was still a good trip, but probably not one that I will repeat too soon.

Brendan Heywood

Paddling at Goolang – 8 May

Early Saturday morning UNEMC members gathered at the shed to set off on our latest paddling adventure, only to find that the keys to the shed had been locked in the shed. After some waiting for Sports UNE to open we gained access to the gear and set off.

Arriving at the Nymboida Canoe Centre a little later than expected we hit the water, which turned out to be considerably lower than the last time we were here. Not letting this dampen our spirits we spent the morning going over some basic

skills and letting the beginners get the hang of their boats.

A quick lunch was followed by an afternoon trip from the power station to the bottom of B grade, playing in nearly every stopper on the way down. A notable section on this trip was the Tennis Court rapid, which Skip ran for the first time, three times, dragging his boat back up and running it again. The afternoon proved to be a great introduction for members of the group into wave and hole surfing, and by the end of the trip some had even mastered (for the first time!) flatspins, stern squirts and other surfing tricks.

Saturday night saw a few slight cooking mishaps with some pappadums exploding causing subsequent oil burns, and a lesson in how not to use a Trangia (put the burner in the hole for it, not under the stove) and which fuel not to use (metho, not white spirits). After polishing off some fantastic beverages provided courtesy of Brendan's and Rob's leftovers, we retired to bed.

The next morning saw an almost bright and early start. A quick trip to the showers to put on some cold, wet and slimy paddling gear followed and then we headed off to the power station for another morning of playing our way down the river. During the morning we tackled all of the stoppers again, with Scott G polishing off Tennis Court for the first time, even executing a 360 spin halfway down. The Folley Steps proved a to be a great surfing wave in low

water with nearly everyone having a go.

Lunch proved to be a little longer as the sun was out and warming everyone. Robbie and Jen headed off early, leaving the rest of us to have a play from the Folley Steps down to the campsite.

Following this we broke camp and started heading back to the 'dale. A short storm signalled our leaving the centre, bucketing us with water, making everyone wish they could stay a couple more days to experience the raised levels. We decided to get some steaks from the Ebor pub, but this was not to be, as they wouldn't cook for us unless we waited half an hour. Stan showered us with the drinks he owed us following his swim on Saturday and we headed off.

About 20km out of Armidale disaster struck as Stan suddenly realized why you shouldn't trust a father in law who offers to do your welding. A join at the chassis meant the bar holding the tow ball came loose (after ten years of towing) and the trailer hit the road. Fortunately, we remembered that Karen had a tow ball, and a 'V8' (according to Brendan) and headed off to acquire her vehicle.

Finally, some hours later, we ended up back in Armidale, safe, dry and well, wishing we were still on the river. A great trip despite the low water, with everyone getting their surfing skills dialed.

See you on the water!

Sam Hull

Meet the crew

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If you are keen to help out we would love to hear from you. Contact any of us if you or a friend could help out.

Free or cheap gear hire

The club maintains a fair amount of gear for the activities we do. We have Canoes and Kayaks with all the associated gear, a Climbing rack and ropes, Canyoning ropes, Camping gear (tents, stoves, sleeping mats), Caving helmets and headlamps, a GPS, an EPIRB and various other bits and pieces. All of this gear is available for free if you are on a club trip or for a minimal fee for private trips.

We are a non-profit club and the fees only cover the maintenance of our gear.

Our website

On our website you can find information about all of our activities and as we do trips we will put up trip reports and photos. If you have any contributions you would like to make please contact any of the committee members.

<http://www.une.edu.au/unemc/>

Our email list

All members will receive a newsletter (choose either paper or email) once a term with the schedule of activities and trip reports from the last term. If you would like to be on our mailing list make sure you correctly fill out your email on the membership form. You can also join the email list at any time by visiting:

<http://pobox.une.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/unemc>

You can send a message to everyone subscribed on the list via the following email address. Feel free to ask questions on the list or use it to find people for trips etc. We are a friendly bunch and don't bite.

unemc@pobox.une.edu.au

Mountain Biking email list

There is also another email list just for Mountain Biking. For more information contact Mark Trotter our MTB coordinator or visit this URL:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ArmidaleMTB/>



Term 2 Events

Regular events

Indoor Climbing – 6pm Tue and Thur nights

Indoor climbing is not as hard as it looks. Just wander in and give it a go. Climbing for the year costs just \$20 and you climb for free every club night.

Canoe polo – 7pm Thur nights

Canoe polo is a great way to practice your paddling skills and have heaps of fun. A social competition runs though the term and there is plenty of spare time to just jump in and give paddling a try

Mountain Biking – early Wed and Fri mornings

Contact Mark or join the MTB email list (details above) for times and places or rides.

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Scheduled Trips

8/9 May – Paddling at Goolang Creek / Nymboida

Visit Goolang creek on the Sat and then head out on Sun for a day trip down the Nymboida river.

22/23 May – Two days of bush walking

Car camp with day walks in the awesome scenery in Washpool / Gibraltar NP.

Fri 28 May – Social night

Good food, drink, fun and all round warm fuzzy feelings. Details TBA

Sun 30 May – Climbing

Try out the real thing instead of plastic. Probably at Ebor falls but may change depending on interest.

Sat 5 Jun – Mountain Biking

Location and details to be announced.

12/13 Jun – Caving in Kempsey

Explore the Maparabar caves near Kempsey. If we don't get a permit we will go to Glen Dhu caves.

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