

NEWSLETTER MONTHLY



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Dargans

Heart Attack and Deep Pass

Annual Dinner

Kites Over Kosci

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**Graham, Denise and a chairlift in
Switzerland**

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Cover Shot:
Michael Sliwka on “that” abseil. Heart Attack Canyon.
Photo by Rod Smith

Last Meeting

Last meeting was the first for the year, and the first for Jim as Treasurer. We had a visitor by the name of John Rijvers. We had trips reports from Wollangambe, Dargans, Heart Attack and Deep Pass, Grand, and the Annual Dinner. There was also some talk about recent New Zealand trips and other activities we've been up to.

Next Meeting

Next meeting won't be until January, there is no meeting in December. We look forward to seeing you all there in the new year.

Date: 18th February, 2008

Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: Baden Powell Scout Camp
Pomona Street, Pennant Hills

Quote of the Month

"Grand is just ... Grand" - Heard in unison from a couple of the Grand trip's participants.

Announcements

Jim Crockett is looking into organising a trip to Wombeyan Caves. However, to do this, we need to join a trip with another club that knows the area. This will require a bit more organisation than for a normal trip, so Jim is wanting to know how many people would be interested in that kind of trip before going any further. So, if you are interested in visiting Wombeyan Caves sometime next year, please let Jim know.

Fees are due for next year. The subs have remained at \$70. Payment options include:

Cash – to Jim Crockett

Cheque – made out to Metropolitan Speleological Society Inc.

Bank Transfer (preferred option) – BSB is 062021, Account Number is 000901421 and be sure to include your name in the message.

Trip Reports

Wollangambe Canyon – or abandonment in the Wilderness for \$3 - 26th December, 2007

Attending: David Stuckey (TL), Rod Smith (Young Lion), Johan Verhagen (Old Dog).

Lilo packed? Affirmative. Lunch and water bottle packed? Affirmative. Hat and sunscreen? Another yes - I was ready for another Boxing Day Wollangambe Canyon trip.

After a stroll down the ridge, we arrived at the waters of the Wollangambe River. The river was up a little and was crystal clear - the sandy bottom of the first big pool could easily be observed. What a great day - It was just fantastic to float down the river between high rock walls, watching little waterfalls tumble into the river and enjoy the uniqueness of the Australian Bush. Overhead, a perfect blue sky and warm sunshine to make everything just right.

Lunch was taken at a new location – an elevated ledge overlooking a big pool, surrounded by beautiful sandstone walls.

After a little more paddling and one or two scrambles over rocks, we arrived at the exit point of the standard Wollangambe trip – at that little sandy beach next to a big pool. What a beautiful spot to finish the trip. My contentment was at a high.

However, my feeling of contentment and personal security was soon shattered - our Trip Leader (along with the young Lion) decided to CONTINUE DOWN the Wollangambe River into 'who knows what's down there', leaving me sitting alone on the little sandy beach and abandoned in the Wollangambe Wilderness. Plus, the Young Lion took my good-lilo and left his leaky-lilo in return! What was I to do?

That little sandy beach beside the Wollangambe River all of a sudden took on a threatening guise – hostile bush all around me. Attempting to follow the faint exit track back to safety, took all of my years of bush skills – a volley footprint here and a broken stick there, plus a smearing of sand against a rock – it vaguely looked like the track out.

On the way out, I encountered a terrible and desperate rock climb up slippery rocks and dodgy tree roots – “a cramp here would be fatal”. I was imagining slipping from my frightful stance and falling hundreds of metres to be dashed to pieces upon the rocks below. But rational reasoning prevailed and I decided “That’s Nothing” compared to what the Trip Leader and Young Lion were no doubt encountering further down the Wollangambe? How could they do that? How brave and bold. What was a Serendipity anyway?

After hours of walking, and steadfast concentration on following that most obscure track, I arrived back at the car park. What an epic trek of gigantic proportions. So good to be back at my car – the joy of sitting in my car and completing the task of dusting & aligning all the air vents in the same direction, had such a calming effect, I quickly forgot what I had just endured.

All that for \$3.

Johan

Dargans Creek Canyon - 28th December, 2007

Participants: Rod Smith, Bob Horn, John Marshall, Michael Reifenstein, Johan Verhagen and Jim Crockett (TL)

It had been decided to use the Clarence Zig Zag car park as the meeting place as it is only just up the road from the Dargan’s turn off and is very familiar with most members. To my surprise I found Rob Clyne there and thought it was strange as he had only told me the day before that he was not coming on the trip. As it turned out Rob was going on his own family trip with Tim Grimes and other family up from Melbourne to Sheep dip and Rocky Creek. As I chatted to him about Christmas celebrations etc the rest of the party started to turn up and then Tim arrived with relatives in tow. We all farewelled Rob, Tim and family and waited for Michael to turn up.

Michael arrived and we proceeded to examine his newly operated big toe in which the nail had been removed and this is the reason why he had not done many trips lately.

We were all now ready and so we headed east to the Dargan’s Creek track and along the railway to the large car park area. We made sure that we used up all the car park space with our 5 vehicles as we had 1 car in each corner and 1 in the middle to make the most of the large space available. We then headed off down towards the dam. It was noted that the Dam water level was up by at least 1 metre as a rock in the water that on previous trips could comfortably seat about 6 people was almost completely submerged. This was really no surprise considering the rainfall we have had this December. After viewing the weir we headed down the steps to the moister, cooler environment below the dam wall. I had a quick look at the dam wall foundations as I had never been here before. We then continued down the right hand side of the creek, the group separated momentarily as I decided to continue at creek level while the rest stayed higher.

We soon rejoined and all started to walk in the creek. As we crossed the creek for the first time John did not duck low enough to avoid a low hanging tree branch and his cap came off and into the water, which was quickly retrieved from under the water and then after a few more steps he said “I’ve lost my glasses as well, they cost me \$200”. We all then immediately commenced searching for them in the stream mainly by touch as by now the water had become murky. We all continued searching for about 5 minutes with no luck and were about to give up when my last thought was to check a small tunnel where a lot of water went under a rock that was just large enough to fit an arm. Bob had already checked this earlier but had another go and put his arm in as far as he could get and magically retrieved John’s glasses. John was instantly very happy. Lesson to be learnt here, is to secure your glasses with a lanyard or take them off.



Bob spotting John on one of the down-climbs
Photo: Rod Smith

With that incident behind us we continued down the creek to the first downclimb and expecting the water to be cold, we gingerly entered but the water temperature was found to be relatively warm, probably due to the increased flow rate from the recent rains. We negotiated the remaining downclimbs and swims and stopped for lunch at the side branch exit point after stepping around a baby docile brown snake standing guard.

We all had lunch except for Reif who had not brought anything except for his camera.

With lunch finished we started to climb the fixed rope up the side branch waterfall and Johan who was preparing to belay John watched in dismay as John climbed the waterfall and before he even had a chance to ask him if he required a belay, John was stepping off the top of the Spikey tree, "oh well" Johan exclaimed. We took the usual route towards the cars but before we got to them decided to have a look at the cliffline by following the service road for the telephone cable that spans the canyon. At the cliff we located a chain, a couple of ringbolts which would be useful for abseiling and rockclimbing training. At one point we found that the cliff height was only about 5 metres and with the aid of a handline thru an existing ringbolt it was easy to climb down. We worked out that if we used this point to access the creek you could avoid going to the dam wall and climbing down the steps and bypass about half of the creek walk in. This could make it possible to do the canyon car to car in about 40 minutes.

The day was starting to heat up and we decided to all meet up at the Imperial Hotel at Mt Victoria for a drink. We sat on the veranda and entertained ourselves watching a middle aged couple all decked out in matching black and orange Harley Davidson riding gear, which also matched the new looking black and orange Harley. They proceeded to have a very long passionate embrace next to the bike. They eventually disentangled themselves and became seated closely on the bike. It was obvious to Johan that this guy was a relatively inexperienced rider as he had to support bike with 1 foot on the road while completing a 180 deg turn before taking off.

This ended an excellent day of canyoning which was to be my last canyon for 2007.

Heart Attack and Deep Pass - 5th - 6th January, 2008

Participants:

Both days: Rod Smith (TL), Michael Sliwka

Just Deep Pass: John Stathakis, Kathryn, Dain, Alexa

Forgetting something is always annoying, to say the least. Forgetting the map is probably a bit more than just annoying, especially when the canyon you are doing, you (and the rest of the group) haven't done before. Still, we pressed on fearlessly/foolishly!

The firetrails are still distinct and the directions given in the guidebook are good, so the first hour went as planned. Near the end of the firetrail we had a decision, take the shorter, but harder to navigate, route, or the longer, easier to navigate, route. Considering the lack of map, we opted for the longer choice. Although we didn't make a mistake in the navigation, the scrub in the creek before the canyon slowed us down substantially. If we go back we'll take the shorter option.

Eventually the canyon begins with a "heart-stopping" abseil from a chockstone (I'm sure most people have seen the picture in the guidebook). This is an excellent abseil. I had a lot of fun jumping off the wall and swinging around, and smashing my camera into the wall (still works though).



Some great canyon scenery in Heart Attack
Photo: Rod Smith

I'd heard the canyon was only worth it for that first abseil. Although I'd agree that it's the best feature, the rest of the canyon is quite nice also. The second abseil is much shorter, but more technically difficult. I managed to get first my knee, then my rack, wedged at the top. Possibly the most awkward abseil I've done.

We continued and found the exit gully without any difficulty. At places there was a semblance of a track, but it's definitely fading over the years. Thus, when we reached the top of the gully, we made our only navigational error. We should have gone right, we went left. If we'd had the map we would have known that, although both options led to higher ground, going left meant we had an extra down and up to do.

That cost us some more time, but thankfully there wasn't any massive cliff-lines in the way, just a few pagodas. Eventually we managed to find what's left of the exit track, and followed that back to the firetrail. Another long walk back to the car, getting there around 8pm.

I can't say I enjoy setting up camp and cooking dinner in the rain, but at least we had a sleep in the next morning. We met John, Kathryn, Dain and Alexa at Zig Zag at 10am for a leisurely trip through Deep Pass.

Since I was the only person that had been to Deep Pass before, the others were keen to have a look around. So I lay on the grass, enjoying the sun pushing its way through the clouds while the others climbed all over the place, enjoying the scenery, and finding a couple of places worth going back to for a proper look.

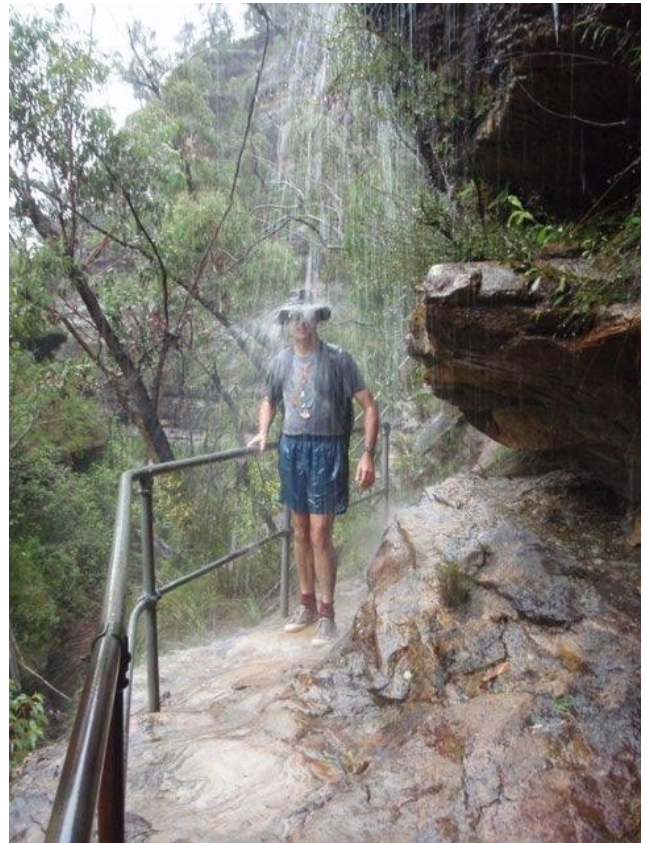
With the sun forcing its way through, and the day warming up, we made our way up Deep Pass. John's children were fascinated by the whole experience, being completely new to it. It's always a great experience introducing new people to the wonders of canyoning, especially when they're so responsive and rapt in the whole experience.

It didn't take long to get to the end, where Michael, John and Dain went for a swim. The look of shock on Dain's face when he jumped in and found out how cold it really was was absolutely priceless. Unfortunately no-one had a camera ready!

We decided to start out the exit and have lunch somewhere with a view. I find there's never a shortage of nice lunch spots. A short walk after lunch and we were back at the cars. A much shorter, and easier, day than Heart Attack.

Rod (TL).

Driving along the road to Fortress Creek, it was noticed that the water was lying very deep in the gutters. Thoughts of flooded sections in Fortress were beginning to materialise. The narrow swim section alone would be very challenging, if not impossible. Certainly dangerous! I decided to abort this trip and after consultation with the other members, we decided to go to Grand Canyon instead. This was a much safer prospect. Off we went to the Pilcher track parking area.



Even the waterfalls on the track were pumping
Photo: Rod Smith

Grand Canyon - 19th January, 2008

Participants:

Johan Verhagen, Rod Smith, Jim Crockett, John Gray, David Stuckey(TL).

Our members assembled at Nathan's house, amidst the continuing rain, which had been falling in the area for more than 4 days now. This is reminiscent of the 'low cloud' which Johan and I had recently experienced whilst walking the Milford Track in New Zealand. Nathan shared with us, some images from his own NZ trip amongst some other, more controversial, pictures. It was time to get moving, although the scenes being presented on Nathan's screen were a lot more appealing than the dreary skyline outside. The rain slanted down with no signs of abating.

To say that the walking track and canyon were vastly changed by the volume of rainwater would be an understatement. The canyon was draining water from just about everywhere. Numerous waterfalls cascaded straight over the walking track, stairs became rapids. The loud roar from the canyon depths left us with no illusion as to the amount of water in there.

We rapped in and immediately noticed that the normally narrow creek had swollen to a sheet of water which extended across the entire breadth of the canyon. We were in for some fun!

Every down-climb section presented us with a technical exercise. How to descend without getting swept many metres down the canyon? Some sections of the canyon required an entirely different route to the normal trip. Other sections were negotiated by simply plunging into the water and blobbing along the surface. It would have been possible to lilo many sections of the canyon. Great care was exercised to ensure we didn't get pulled under any horizontal logs by the force of the water. This would have been disastrous!

The normally clear water was carrying a heavy load of silt. This made it very difficult to walk along, even in ankle depth water as the bottom of the pools were simply invisible. So every step had to be gently tested with the foot, before transferring any weight onto it. We found most of the potholes by simply falling into them.



Jim in 'that' hat
Photo: Rod Smith

Our experience saw us through and we emerged from the end of the canyon quite tired and babbling incessantly about the incredible adventure which we had just witnessed. We regained the Pilcher track and strode back to the cars. It was so cold, that we didn't bother to change out of our wetsuits until we were back at the carpark.

Back in the cars, we drove, with heaters on, to the shelter shed at the end of the road for a late lunch. Later, we descended on a cafe in Katoomba for a coffee, before we headed our various ways...we had an Annual Dinner to go to!!!

David Stuckey

Annual Dinner - 19th January, 2008

Participants: Rod Smith (TL), Dave Stuckey, Johan Verhagen, Rob Clyne, Jim Crockett, Marie Crockett, Bob Horn, Pam Horn, Julie Burton, Allison Olds, Jonathan Spittle

I find it's a nice start to an evening when you walk into a restaurant and are recognised, it makes it feel like you're getting special treatment. We then walked upstairs to find most people already waiting for us. Although not as many people as last year, it still looked like being a good night.

It wasn't long before the anitpasto arrived, a nice selection of fetta, capsicum, mushrooms, olives, etc. The bread arrived shortly after, and didn't stay long. A couple of different types of pizzas were next, with not a single slice left. The tappas finished with some lamb and pork rissoles.

The meal finished with some of us having dessert and/or coffee. Everyone agreed that the food was fantastic.

After dinner there was some OzCanyons calendars that Nathan and printed up for people to view, and purchase if desired. Also, prizes were given out for last years Dexter's Quiz.

Great food, great conversation, great company, all-in-all a great night. Hopefully we'll see you there next year.

Rod.

Kites Over Kosciuszko - 26th - 28th January, 2008

Attending: Rod, David and Johan (TL).

Sat 26th AUSTRALIA DAY: With Aussie Flags fluttering from our Rucksacks, we rode the Chairlift to Thredbo Top Station, walked the elevated track to Rawson's Pass and climbed the craggy, summit heights of Mt Kosciuszko 2228m. Great to see other walkers with Aussie Flags on their rucksacks too. Big surprise, upon reaching the summit - there were other walkers with Kites!! They apparently had observed people with Kites, last Australia Day and thought it was a cool idea!! Us! Ha, 'Kites over Kosci' is catching. Fantastic. NPWS Rangers Gilly and Annette were there to welcome us as usual.

This year, the wind was perfect under a blue sky – we were able to hoist two large Aussie flags on long kite strings, under two 'sky-anchors', in addition to the usual plethora of kites.

Saturday night campsite was in Wilkinson's Valley. However, we had a dilemma: how do we chill the Cheesecake?? Problem solved – a short hailstorm occurred which provided us with enough ice to chill the cheesecake perfectly. Must have looked so funny, seeing three guys sheltering under a cramped granite overhang, being pelted with hailstones, keeping vaguely dry, whilst perfectly-good tents and rain ware were just ignored. However, cheesecake at altitude is just so yummy.

Sunday 27th: Perfect weather for a summit attempt on Mt Townsend 2209m. What a fantastic view and great wind for kites. Back to Wilkinson's Valley base camp to enjoy Rod's delicious Honeycomb Mousse desert.

Monday 28th: More perfect weather as we walked back to Thredbo and kite flying (of course) along the way. Very spoilt, getting the Thredbo chairlift back to the village.

The Fourth 'Kites over Kosciuszko' is scheduled for Australia Day 2009 – come and fly a kite or simply come along and wave an Aussie flag on Australia's highest mountain. The views from the Main Range are simply superb.

Johan

Members Overseas

Graham, Denise and Chairlifts in Switzerland

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

We are in in Grindelwald, Switzerland on the closing legs of our round the world trip. We have had a wild start to the new year. Do a google on "Grindelwald ski lift accident" or have a look at the attached file. Some great reading for the MSS newsletter. It could be aptly entitled "MSS members falling off chairlifts around the world".

The chair lift Denise and I were riding fell from the tower. Two chairs impacted the ground, the chair Denise and I were on and the chair in front of us that two Germans were on. One of the Germans was killed and the other is still in intensive care. Denise has 10 stiches in her head, a broken arm, torn calf muscle, swollen ankle and some sort of compression injury on her knee. She's out of the wheel chair already and making a fast recovery. I walked away from accident with minor concussion. I have seen photos in the paper and I took the entire impact of our chair on my head as we fell backwards and to my side. We were choppered off the mountain in our own choppers due to the high wind.

We made the 6 o'clock news and first story of the night right across Switzerland. We had a police interview, interview with the railways chief executive and several requests for interviews from the papers. It looks like we'll be staying here until Denise can walk on her own again.

Still can't believe I walked away and Denise could crawl away. Luck was on our side but it was a tragic end for the 29 year old German who was skiing with his family.

It hits home that you have to enjoy every day as if it's your last.

Speak again soon.

Graham

This is a copy of one of the articles about Graham and Denise's accident:

Aussies in ski lift mishap released January 04, 2008

TWO Australians injured in a Swiss chairlift accident that killed a German man have been released from hospital, foreign affairs officials say.

One person was killed and several others were injured, including the Australians, when chairlifts carrying skiers fell to the ground near the Swiss resort of Grindelwald.

A German man died and a German woman suffered medium to serious injuries in the accident, according to Jungfrau-bahnen Interlaken, the company which operates the ski lift.

Several other people received minor injuries.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said the Australian pair had received treatment for minor injuries in hospital and had been released.

"The Geneva consul-general was aware of the accident and contacted the Interlaken hospital for advice on the victims," a spokeswoman said.

"The hospital advised that an Australian man and woman received treatment for minor injuries and were then released.

"The man was apparently able to leave the scene of the accident by himself. The woman was transported from the hospital."

Officials believe the accident may have occurred because a cable appeared to have jumped off a guide wheel at one of the chairlift's support towers, that rise up to 14 metres from the slopes.

"The cable slipped at one of the masts and the chairs fell down," Joseph Zeder of the independent investigation bureau for railway, funicular and boat accidents, told The Associated Press.

The remaining 75 passengers still on the chairlift had to be evacuated from the ground as high winds made the use of helicopters too dangerous, according to mountain rescue officials.

When a chairlift malfunctions, helicopters are often used to lift trapped passengers to safety.

The national weather centre said winds reached speeds of 90 kilometres per hour when the accident occurred at about 1pm (2300 AEDT) on the Kleine-Scheidegg pass above Grindelwald, one of Switzerland's best-known tourist destinations.

About 60km south-east of the capital Bern, the town and its surrounding mountains - which include the imposing Eiger, Moench and Jungfrau peaks - draw in tens of thousands of visitors each year.

The accident is the worst of its kind in Switzerland since December 1999, when strong winds caused a tree to topple onto a gondola car, killing two and injuring three people.

What Else We've Been Doing

New Zealand – December 2007 - January 2008

"Would you like to come and do some mountaineering in New Zealand?" my friend Debbie asked. No wasn't an option so Debbie, Irish and I flew out of Sydney on Christmas Day after a meat pie and cup of coffee for Christmas dinner at Central railway station. We arrived in Christchurch a little after midnight where a friendly little doggie at the airport came and sat down next to Irish's backpack. Those banana odours do linger for some time!

After an 8 hour bus ride back towards the west coast, we arrived in Wanaka where we met up with our guide Jo who was to spend the next 9 days instructing us in the skills required for alpine mountaineering. Debbie and Irish already knew her from a previous trip to Nepal. We drove down to Fox glacier township in driving rain through steep mountainous country under sheeting waterfalls that coursed down mountainsides onto the road. The canyon potential here had me awestruck!



Some professional looking mountaineers
Photo: Julie Burton

We spent our first night in Porter's Lodge before being choppered up to Centennial Hut at the top of the Franz Josef glacier. Our instruction began immediately with learning how to walk in crampons, roping ourselves together (mmm - bondage), and hurling ourselves down slippery slopes practicing self arrests.

The next day was spent learning the various techniques to traverse pitches, cut snow steps, and learned how to build different types of snow anchors. The following day saw us being lowered into a crevasse to practice self rescue. The depths of this crevasse was just like an icy blue canyon so a longing in me to go crevasse exploring was instantly born. Another time. After we were deemed proficient in rescuing ourselves (which didn't take long as we're already very experienced with rope work), we were shown how to set up a haul system to rescue our buddy who is tied to the other end of all the rope we carry wound around our upper body.

We were finally ready to tackle our first peak so Jo woke us early for an alpine start and we tackled a nearby peak known as the Triad. Working in 2 pairs, we climbed 5 pitches, the first rather tricky as we had to step across a yawning crevasse while negotiating a verticle slab of ice. Coming back down was easy, we abseiled! On the way down we stopped so Jo and I could retrieve a snow stake I dropped on the way up and came to rest on top of a thin blanket of soft snow hanging over a crevasse. I climbed out very gingerly on my stomach as close as I dared and lassoed it with a sling. It was comforting to have that rope around me attached to Jo! The walk back to the hut became a lesson in traversing around crevasses which were now opening up everywhere in the heat of the day. Back at the hut we shared a sip of port each to celebrate New Years Eve.



Magic!
Photo: Julie Burton

After the previous long day, we stayed closer to the hut for more practice at crevasse rescues using haul systems. Using a 5:1, I was able to haul Irish out alone who weighs in at 113kg. We spent the afternoon rock climbing in our alpine clodhoppers which surprised us with their superior grip. I wasn't expecting to be so agile in boots like these.

The next day was another alpine start and it gave me an opportunity to photograph an awesome sunrise. We climbed to the top of Graham's Saddle and were rewarded with spectacular views to the east of Rudolph and Tasman glaciers. Descending, we abseiled off a snow bollard which is nothing more than the rope sitting in a circular groove scooped out of the snow! We completed the day by rock climbing back up the the hut instead of traversing the long way around.

So far the weather had been exceptional. Clear blue skies. But suddenly the weather closed in confining us to the hut for a day of well earned rest. Jo took this opportunity to teach us all about the weather, and reading the warning signs of impending bad weather.

Day 9 and the plan was to be choppered out, then do some ice climbing on the glacier. We were met by one of Jo's guiding buddies at the helipad who broke the news to her that one of their mates had been killed a few days earlier while climbing Mt Cook. Deb, Irish and I offered to cut the trip short so Jo could return to Wanaka. She gratefully accepted and we left our exciting 8 days at Centennial Hut behind.

Irish parted company with Deb and I for a few days while he went for a walk near Mt Aspiring. Deb and I headed down to Queenstown where she had a massage while I went white water rafting on the Shotover River. The following day Deb hang glided while I went for a blast through a canyon on the Shotover River in a jetboat. Then it was down to Te Anau where we met up with Dave and Johan who were about to embark on their Milford Track venture. We girls went on a cruise on Doubtful Sound, followed by Milford Sound the following day. Then a 12 hour bus ride back to Christchurch where we were reunited with Irish.

It was Deb's turn to have a brush with security on the way back into Australia. Some official thought she looked like a threat to our national security and scanned her for explosives!

Photos of the trip at
<http://imageevent.com/jburton/newzealand/mountaineering>
<http://imageevent.com/jburton/newzealand/queenstown>
<http://imageevent.com/jburton/newzealand/milfordsound>

Julie

Milford Track, New Zealand - January 2008

Whilst not an MSS Club Trip, members may be interested in reading about the Milford Track, which David and myself completed in January 2008.



Dave and Johan ready to tackle the Milford Track
Photo: Dave Stuckey

Imagine how light your rucksack would be if you didn't have to pack a tent, stove, fuel, water and sleeping mat. Then, replace the weight of those items with 2 litres of red wine, 2 bottles of Guinness, cream lamingtons, 1kg of fruitcake and well, other 'normal' food to eat for 4 days.

Then imagine a warm, dry mountain hut at the end of each day, complete with your own bunk including comfortable mattress, cooking facilities and real dining tables to eat from. The Milford Track huts of Clinton, Mintaro and Dumpling are just like a home away from home, that is, if you like sharing your home with 38 other walkers from varied countries such as Japan, Sweden, Germany, Ireland, England and NZ.

Add fantastic Fiord-land mountain views, more waterfalls than you could poke a stick at, crystal-clear streams and rivers all accessed by a track initially 1-2m wide with not a blade of grass out of place – except where the track crosses 54 avalanche sites.

Combine all the above and you have a reasonable idea of the world-famous Milford Track in New Zealand. Oh, and add a little low cloud or more precisely, rain. Lots of it. And more too.

Despite the rain (first day was sunny), the scenery along the Milford Track was absolutely superb. The Track basically follows a river upstream, ascends an alpine pass, then descends into another river valley covering a total of 54km. Many times on the walk, I was stopped in my tracks by some of the most amazing sights I have ever seen - whether the view of multiple escarpments with gigantic amounts of water streaming down, huge canyons and beech forests filled with mosses and ferns. I couldn't believe that despite the wet conditions, we didn't have to bother about leeches! How good is that!

Just don't ask me about the sandflies.

Johan

Other Tidbits

Cavernous hotel takes root in Shanghai

An underground hotel slated to become the world's "lowest" is to be built in this city's suburbs.

The project, to be developed by the Shimao Group, has passed its environmental evaluation and is expected to be completed by the end of 2010.

The five-star hotel, which will require an investment of about 600million yuan (US\$79 million), will be built in a cave by Tianma Hill, in the Sheshan national resort area. It will be part of the "Shimao New Experience", a massive real estate project.

The project will occupy some 428,300 sq m and will include a theme park, a nature resort and a shopping center.

The cave was formerly a stone pit with a lake at the bottom.

The hotel will have 480 rooms, 400 of them underground, Li Xuyang, a senior manager of the Shimao Group's architecture design department, said.

"Two stories will be built underwater, 17 will be within the cave and two more will be above ground," Li said. The roof of the hotel will only be 15 m above the cave.

"The idea was to take advantage of this unique land form and to create a garden growing in the air," Li said.

The design will make full use of the rock walls, following the natural curves of the cave.

"We won't consider expanding the cave, but we will make the best out of the present situation," Li said.

According to the artists' impressions of the hotel on the Shimao Group website, the design will accommodate facilities for extreme sports and certain aquatic activities like climbing and swimming in the underground lake.

Hot springs will be available 16 stories below the ground, and a dining hall and cafe will be built underwater on the 17th floor, near a 100-m-high waterfall.

Although the developer's PR department declined to provide any further specific information about the project, an unidentified source with the company said an inauguration ceremony would be held next week.

Meanwhile, the project seems to have won support from the community.

"Our company intends to tap the tourism potential of Tianma hill," Qian Wei, the PR representative of the Shimao Group, told China Daily. "And the Songjiang District supports the idea."

The hotel will also include underground presidential suites that will have the best views of the cave. Some of the underwater rooms will feature aquarium views, where guests can enjoy the exotic feeling of living under the ocean.

"It's hard to imagine how it feels to live 50 m or even 70 m below the ground, but it must be a wonderful experience," Li said.

(China Daily October 24, 2007)

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/229450.htm>

China wartime cave to open as resort

"China is to create a tourist resort in a giant cave used by the former Nationalist government as a secret aircraft factory during World War Two, the official Xinhua news agency said on Tuesday. The Haikong cave, in verdant mountains near the southwestern city and wartime capital of Chongqing, will cost about 500 million yuan (\$78 million) to develop, the report said. The cave is "an ideal place for conferences and leisure travel", it said, citing the local investment bureau's Web site. "The enshrouded cave is 50 metres high and as spacious as a giant conference hall," Xinhua added. "The tourist bureau said that the manufacturing plant could be developed into a loft art workshop." The plant was deserted in 1949, the report said, after the Nationalists fled to Taiwan after losing a brutal civil war with the Communists."

Emergency Survival Kit

On a recent Canyoning trip we discussed amongst ourselves about the benefits of each person having an EMERGENCY SURVIVAL KIT.

This would be a small kit containing items that would be useful should an Emergency situation occur to your group while Canyoning or Bushwalking. Such a situation would be if you became be-nighted, your group got lost or there was an accident.

This kit would be in addition to all the usual items that you should carry on a trip such as water, food, navigation equipment, extra warm clothes, first aid kit (especially if you are the trip leader), EPIRB as well as any specialised equipment required for the particular activity you are doing such as, ropes, abseiling equipment and wetsuits.

It has been suggested this kit could contain the following items;

- Torch with fresh batteries (preferably a head torch)
- matches (waterproof)
- whistle
- compass
- firestarters
- space blanket
- knife (multi purpose type)
- waterproof paper and pencil
- small mirror
- duct tape
- 2m length of 4mm cord.

This could all be packed in a small waterproof container and left in your pack.

I am starting to put together one of these kits for myself. If you can think of anything else that the kit should contain then let me know.

Dexter's Photo Competition

We are launching a new competition this year. Yes, it's a photo competition. Unfortunately, Sinister has gotten his hands on it, so it's not your average photo competition. The idea of this competition is to select an item (for example, a hairdryer). Then, during the year, you must photograph this object at various locations (for example, halfway down an abseil). Submit your photos to the Newsletter editors for judging.

* The judges descision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Bribes may work.

Dexter's Quiz Results

These are the results from last year's Dexter's Quiz:

First – 100 points: Jim Crockett
Second – 74 points: Min
Third – 41 points: Julie Burton
Fourth – 36 points: Dave Stuckey
Fifth – 32 points: Warwick Blake
Sixth – 31 points: Jonathan Spittle

Future Trips

Welcome to the new look future trips section. Anyone with artistic abilities are welcome to submit their own icons for any of the categories here, and/or any other categories. If we use your icon then you'll have to be prepared to accept the praise and admiration from your fellow club members. Send your icons, or any other feedback, to roderick_smith@hotmail.com.

Legend:

Activity



Caving



Canyoning



Diving



Hiking



Abseiling



Cycling



Horse Riding



Kayaking



Climbing



Skiing

Grade



Easy



Easy/Medium



Medium



Medium/Hard



Hard



Extreme

Accommodation



Camping



Cottage

Extras













Kites






Camp Ovens

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Banks (possibly Nosedive) & Mystery Canyon	2 nd - 3 rd Feb			John Gray 0427 876 679 john.gray@sydneywater.com.au			31 st Jan	7
Other Info: John's annual birthday canyoning trip. Always excellent!								
Fortress	16 th Feb			Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 dstuckey@acay.com.au			13 th Feb	
Other Info:								
Empress	17 th Feb			Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 dstuckey@acay.com.au			13 th Feb	
Other Info:								
Danae Brook	8 th - 9 th Mar			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			13 th Feb	5
Other Info:								
Colo River	15 th - 16 th Mar			Bob Horn 9639 3672 randphorn@optusnet.com.au			12 th Mar	
Other Info:								
Halifax Park	5 th - 6 th Apr			Graham Boyles 0423 179 525 graham_boyles@yahoo.com.au			2 nd Apr	
Other Info: Diving in Nelson Bay. One of Grahams favourite diving areas.								

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Lindfield Rocks	19 th Apr	Field Day		Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			16 th Apr	
Other Info: Preparation for the coming abseil trips								
Castle Head	3 rd May			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			30 th Apr	
Other Info:								
Malaita Wall	4 th May			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			30 th Apr	
Other Info:								
Boars Head	17 th May			Rob Clyne 0409 033 224 boonara@tpg.com.au			14 th May	
Other Info:								
Africa	18 th May			Rob Clyne 0409 033 224 boonara@tpg.com.au			14 th May	
Mt Solitary	31 st May - 1 st Jun			Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 dstuckey@acay.com.au			28 th May	

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Other Info:								
Jenolan	7 th - 9 th Jun		TBA	TBA			4 th Jun	12
Other Info:								
Jenolan	2 nd - 3 rd Aug		TBA	TBA			31 st Jul	12
Other Info:								
Jenolan	1 st - 2 nd Nov		TBA	TBA			29 th Oct	12
Other Info:								
Wyanbene	TBA		TBA	Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com	TBA	TBA	TBA	7
Other Info:								
Snowys	TBA 2008			Rosetta Lidano 0439 696 006 rosetta_l2002@yahoo.com.au		\$390 accommodation + potentially transport, hire, etc. See other info	TBA	
Other Info: Accommodation will be booked at The Lodge for Friday 27 th July – Sunday 29 th July (2 nights). Check in between 2pm and 4pm. Cost of \$390 per person (twin share)								

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
includes breakfast and dinner. This MUST be paid upfront. Additional costs include: ski hire (including skis, poles and boots) - \$73.00, snowboard hire (including board, boots and risk guards) - \$90.00, Parker and Pants - \$43.00, Mountain Pass - \$190.00, Coach from Central to Bullock Flat ski tube - \$178.00 return, transport from Bullock Flat ski tube to The Lodge - \$53.00. If you plan on catching the coach, it leaves Central at 8:00am on Friday, arriving at 3:10pm and leaves Bullock Flat ski tube at 4:50pm on Sunday, arriving at 11:55pm								
Tasmania	TBA	 	TBA	Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com	TBA	TBA	TBA	
Other Info:								
Nullarbor	TBA		TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	
Other Info:								