

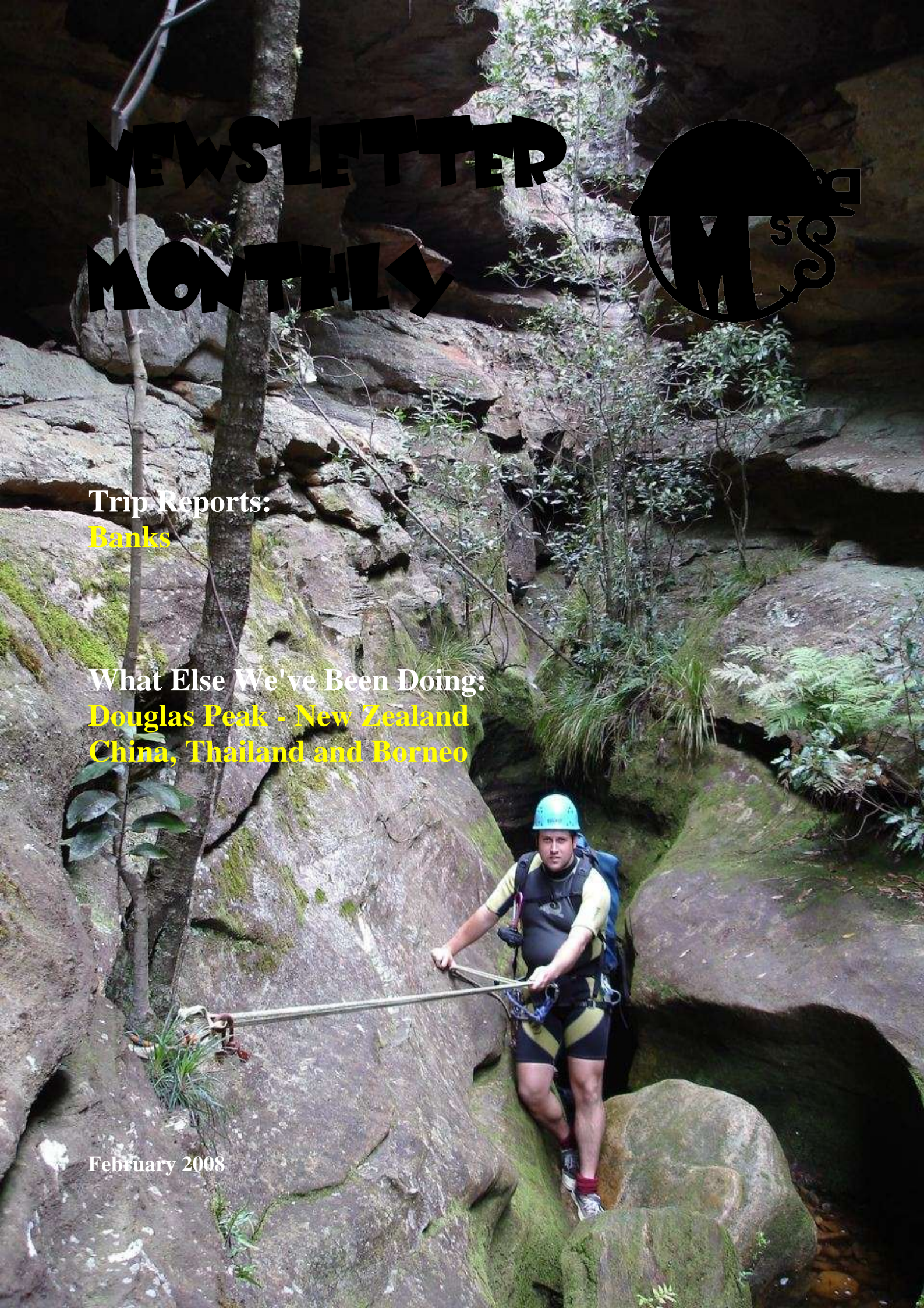
# NEWSLETTER MONTHLY



**Trip Reports:**  
**Banks**

**What Else We've Been Doing:**  
**Douglas Peak - New Zealand**  
**China, Thailand and Borneo**

February 2008





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Cover Shot:  
Rod Smith about to abseil in Banks Canyon.  
Photo by John Gray

**NEWSLETTER OF THE METROPOLITAN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC.**  
**P.O. Box 178, THORNLEIGH, NSW, 2120**

## Last Meeting

Last meeting we discussed making slides a regular feature at meetings and what would be required to do so. So if you wish to see photos from club trips, or have your own photos you wish to share, watch this space!. We had trips reports from Kites over Kosci, John Gray's birthday trip to Banks and the Fortress and Empress trip. There was also reports of other activities we've been up to, including trips to Firefly and Looking Glass canyons. Tim Grimes continued his excellent role as catering officer.

## Next Meeting

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2008  
Time: 7.30 pm  
Venue: Baden Powell Scout Camp  
Pomona Street, Pennant Hills

## Quote of the Month

"I never get injured!" - John Gray.

## Announcements

Fees are due for next year. We will be finalising the cheque for ASF at the March meeting, so please pay your subs before then. 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.

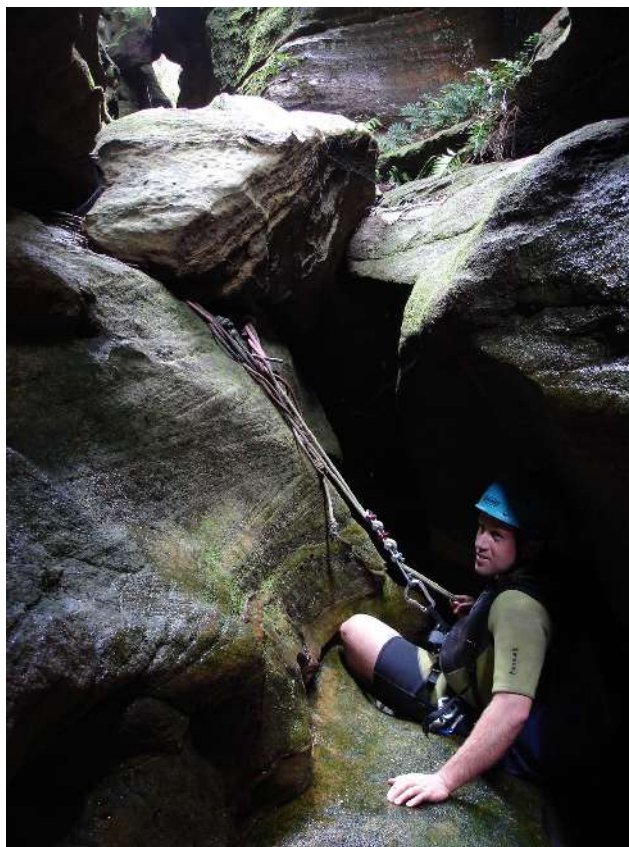
Jim Crockett is looking into organising a trip to Wombeyan Caves. However, to do this, we need to join a trip with another club that knows the area. This will require a bit more organisation than for a normal trip, so Jim is wanting to know how many people would be interested in that kind of trip before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

## Trip Reports

### ***Banks Canyon - 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2008***

Participants: Rod Smith, Warwick Blake, John Gray (TL)

Suddenly the ground was hurtling up at me. One second I was walking down the final steep track into Bungleboori Creek...what happened next was all a blur. I looked down at my leg and saw a dribble of blood. A large lump had formed on my shin which I felt an irrepressible urge to prod with my finger. An alarming amount of bright red arterial blood proceeded to cover my lower leg including my shiny new white volleys. Not normally being the accident prone kind, I wasn't used to the sight of that much blood and thought it advisable to lie down for a few minutes. Warwick quickly whipped out the first aid kit and applied a pressure bandage to the wound. Warwick later admitted in characteristic understatement that he hadn't liked the look of that. After gingerly testing the leg we moved down onto flatter ground for morning tea.



Rod about to disappear into blackness  
Photo: John Gray

The day had started with a four wheel drive trip around the boundary road as Waratah Ridge Road was closed for logging. (\$2200 fine- what did they think we were going to do? Nick some logs or something?) The day was persistently overcast and we proceeded along the lengthy walking track to Bungleboori Creek. I was starting to feel the effects of an oncoming virus and chose to blame my subsequent fumble footedness on said virus. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

After a pleasant morning tea Rod decided to stress test my newly bandaged leg by doing a rockclimb that avoided a swim crossing the Bungleboori. So far so good. We continued up North East Canyon and dropped over the saddle into Banks Creek. We donned wetsuits immediately. From there the several abseils and many swims that make up Banks Canyon were enjoyed by all. At home I had checked my records and discovered that I had done Banks twice before. Once in 1991 and once in 1992. The beauty of doing a canyon after 16 years is that it's like doing it for the first time again.



Warwick framed by the magnificent Banks Canyon  
Photo: John Gray

The final abseil into Bungleboori Creek was completed and we headed off upstream to the exit point. The water level was up a bit after the recent rains but not enough to impede our progress. The long walk back to the cars became a weary trudge as the virus starting taking over my body. Once we stopped walking I soon had the shivers and a decision was made to head home rather than spend the night on Newnes Plateau as originally planned. In all it will remain a memorable birthday canyon but not even a virus and a nasty leg wound can take away the enjoyment to be had in a good quality canyon.

## What Else We've Been Doing

### ***Douglas Peak - New Zealand - 2007***

Each year about October there's a clattering from the garage as my ice tools and crampons jiggle about getting themselves all excited! Yes, it's time for adventure – NZ alpine style.



Douglas Peak  
Photo: Dave Blythe

This year's objective was the South Island's Douglas Peak. Located close to Mts. Cook and Tasman it's not the highest (16th, 3100M) – but what makes it special is the top-quality 500-metre steep ice routes on the south face.

Don't get me wrong here. I'm no ice expert. I'd done Mt Tasman and some others but those are mainly snow-ice and not so technical.



Not being a local and doing this stuff only once a year I always hire a mountain guide from Aspiring Guides based in Wanaka. I did my initial mountaineering course with them back in 2000 and an ice course in 2001. Highly recommended.

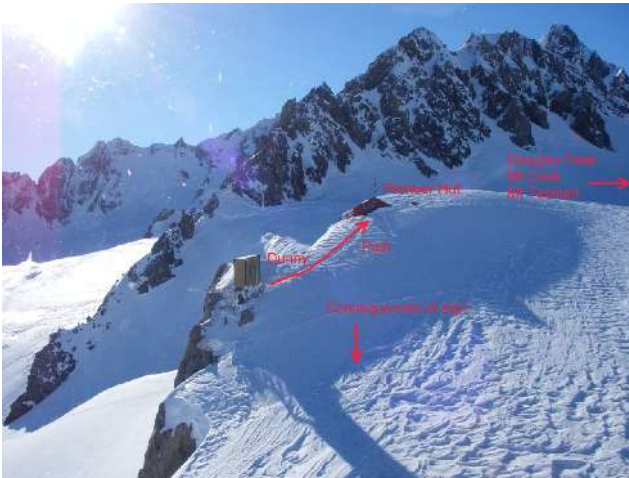
So in late October 2007 I flew to Christchurch then drove south to Wanaka to meet my guides and to get geared up.

Because this is a hard (grade 5+) climb they operate a 1:2 client:guide ratio instead of just one client: one guide. My guides are Murray and Milo. They're 30+ year highly qualified mountain veterans with masses of skills and generally cool guys.

On the ground we discuss possible routes. They sound me out..."umm there's a couple of variations from the easy route including this one (Murray points to an impossible line) that no-one's ummm...guided as far as we know"... bastards!! it's bait!

What can I say – my brain tells my mouth to say “no-way get lost let's do the pink easy route” But of course aliens steal my brain and I think I said “cool – I'm up for anything!”. The die is cast.

Preparations complete we take the 4 hr drive to the West coast in readiness for our ascent to the glacier the next day.



The accommodation  
Photo: Dave Blythe

Like most, we avoided the tedious 2 day slog from sea level to the Pioneer Glacier by taking a chopper. Dropped on the glacier 2400 m above the valley after just 10 minutes we arrive just in time to bag the last 3 sleeping places in Pioneer Hut. A dozen or so other hopefuls share the hut for the 48hr good weather break promised. Fortunately we all have different climbing objectives – so we will have Douglas peak to ourselves!

The next day after a leisurely brekky we rope together for glacier travel and head out to Douglas Peak foot for a look-see and check the route. Remembering to put sun-block under my nose and chin to prevent being zapped by rays reflected from the snow floor. Odd to think of sun coming UP not down. Others have reported getting sun burned in the roof of their mouths! An easy 2-hour hike over crisp ice takes us there. The conditions look “ON!” big-time. Nice ice lines all the way to the top. Did I really say “up for anything”?

Tomorrow would be the big climb.

Next we headed for a nearby peak and did a 2 pitch warm-up ice climb to dust off my skills. I managed to dust off my falling skills perfectly!

Took a 4M ‘off’ at the start of the 2nd pitch and was lucky to get away with a few bruises. Being on the end of a 60M 8mm half rope sure demonstrates what ‘dynamic’ really means. Talk about bungee.....

Back to the hut. Usual mountain meal and in the sack by 7pm for a 3am start. The rowdy sods up at 1am for a Tasman ascent wake us all. ...peeking out reveals a perfect frozen cloudless night and full moon – awesome!

Butterflies and anticipation.....no more sleep comes.

Leaving the hut at 4am crampons scrunch on the frozen snow. Bright moonlight shines off the cotton wool clouds way down in the valley below. Up here is cloudless and – 30C windchill.

Arriving at the bergschrund (crevasse at mountain base) by 5am and in the lee of the wind, we change from hiking to climbing mode. Checking crampon straps and ditching walking poles for ice hammers tethered to wrists – ropes, ice screws....nerves!!

This lower ice is a bit sugary and less steep at 65 degrees. It's the bottom of the RH couloir and the fist sized rocks poking from the ice have fallen from the upper reaches once the sun has warmed them. To avoid the bombardment we HAVE to be at the Peak by midday and off the base by 2pm latest.

Seriously cold from not moving for 20 minutes while we arrange ropes and gear we stamp around in our ledge cut in the ice. At last – readiness. Milo leads the 1st pitch in semi-darkness sending lumps of ice down on us. We curse. He apologises. We move sideways.

Pretty soon he's out of sight over a steeper lip and Murray bellows “10 metres!” as the twin ropes approach their 60 metre run out. Milos cue to find a good belay point soon. A short while later Milo rigs the belay and we follow - climbing simultaneously on the wide ice – Murray cleaning the pitch of ice screws as he climbs. Feels good to be moving rhythmically – ice tools finding their mark with a satisfying “chunk”.

At the top of P1 pale daylight appears gradually and the headlights are turned off.

After P2 I begin to see the pattern. The guides look for a bit of good ground to begin the pitch – where we can get a stance in the less steep ice and where we're out of the fall line of ice crap coming down. There needs to be an approximate 50M climb and corresponding easy ground to rig a belay and repeat the process...all this is magic to me...I'm a passenger albeit a climbing one!

P3, P4 and P5 quickly follow. Each different in texture and steepness – but all with vertigo inducing exposure to savor. P5 ice is unbelievably dense and hard. Well it is to me...the guides dance up it using just enough energy to whack in the tools sufficiently....I use far too much grunt and my tools sink deep in the ice - sapping energy pulling them out....but I get there!



Start of the fifth pitch  
Photo: Dave Blythe

The guides offer advice as we go. How to use less energy. How the leader must be prevented from taking a fall at all costs but a 2nd can fall and should be prepared to in the interests of speed. I guess they're telling me to get my finger out!

P7 (final pitch) is the crux – a near vertical / slightly over vertical ice slot. By now we've been climbing for 6 hours straight. At it's narrowest you can get one foot back on an adjacent wall and help (cheat) to reduce the arm pumping overhanging-ness. This bit is desperate and I know I'm going to fall any second. The voices (you know the voices?) begin..."why is this rope so slack?"..."can't do this!"..."vertical – impossible!". Some part of me counters.....keep swinging those tools and repeat the mantra. "Move up! move up! move up!" Soon – and incredibly, I'm directly under the overhanging lip leading to the easy ramp at the top. One final thrash and I haul myself over and onto my belly – gasping and quite in awe of what I've done! Bloody hell – 7 pitches of grade 5+ ice and I'm still alive!!

My self-adulation is short lived as I look over at my guides – they seem a bit more serious than I'd have imagined. Wonder why? As they quickly rig for descent I see the reason. Rocks begin to peel free from the shattered peak and ricochet down the couloir from which we just came - also our only exit route. Oh shit!

The next hour is quite honestly much scarier than the ascent. Random projectiles smash into our backpacks and helmets as we rap quickly down. The buzzing and whistling is unnerving. We swing pendulum style to get out of the fall line for as long as possible then crash land at the top of the next pitch to squat close in and with helmet and pack facing the fire. Eventually the base of P1 is reached and we're off the rope and tucked to one side. We all copped a few minor cuts to hands and face but nothing more serious.

If the guides hadn't had the foresight to rig ice threads (rap belays) on the way up our descent would be impossibly slow – causing us to wait until after dark when the ice holding the summit rock together had re-frozen.

So there it is. That's what a multi-pitch ice climb feels like. Box ticked – at least at the level I need to experience it. Now, how about a nice flower-arranging holiday. Sounds good!

Dave Blythe

## ***China, Thailand and Borneo – December 2007 - January 2008***

December and January 07/08 school holidays – China (school trip), Thailand (leisure sit on beach trip) and Borneo (Adventure holiday)  
Sally Collins

Left for China with the school group- fourteen 15, 16 and 17 year olds on the 6th of December, 07. Flew, sat and waited in airports til the 8/12 then we had a day free to acclimatise and explore Lijiang, with its maze of alleyways, bridges and canals. We saw the minority tribes, the Naxi women in their traditional dress. We visited the Black Dragon Pool Park and climbed up to the park overlooking the old town for fantastic views over Lijiang. We visited the local restaurants and tried the Chinese delicacies! Pigeon, turtle and snake were some.

On the 9/12 we transferred to Shuhe just outside Lijiang and trekked uphill to Wenhai Yi Village. For 6 days we stayed at Wenhai Village. We were doing a School Heating Project – We went to the school, met the children and started work. Moving water tanks, painting walls and designing murals, bricklaying, tiling, cementing and sweeping tiled areas clean. We fund raised \$15,000 and it paid for all the supplies and paid for the two toilet and shower blocks with tiles and bricks.

On the 15/12 – we started our trek along Tiger Leaping Gorge, so beautiful. Around 15 km in length, the gorge is located where the river passes between 5,596 m Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and 5,396 m Haba Xueshan in a series of rapids under steep 2000 m cliffs. Legend says that in order to escape from a hunter, a tiger jumped across the river at the narrowest point hence the name.

We then headed off to Zhongdian, part of the old Tibet – very rural and Tibetan. Lots of monasteries and farms. Then flew to Xian, terracotta warriors and explored the old city walls, Drum tower and Bell tower and the interesting Feng Shui museum.

Overnight train to Beijing and then transfer to the Great Wall of China in the morning before commencing a 4 hour intro walk on reconstructed sections of the Great Wall. A full five days of walking amongst the ruins of the Great Wall from Yellow Cliff pass to Simatei. Christmas day finishes the trek and transferred back to Beijing, an hour and half foot massage for all then Peking duck and a somersault show. Then explored Tiananmen Square, Summer Palace. Temple of Heaven and fake markets for the last two days. Antipodeans trip section ended – said bye to school group then headed into Bangkok to meet friends. Stayed in Thailand (Bangkok and Koh Samui) with mates from 30/12 to 11/1.

Flew from Thailand down to Peninsula Malaysia then Borneo Malaysia. The tour started with Intrepid travel on the 12/1 in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia today. Went snorkeling on one of the islands and then explored the city of Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Sabah. It is an intriguing city that was born between the Borneo jungle and the South China Sea. Having recovered from World War II bombings, KK now possesses a gateway charm that can only be found in a frontier town.

Then we left Kota Kinabalu and headed for the base of Mt Kinabalu (approximately 3 hours) we stopped off at the park headquarters to organise our permits and store our excess luggage before heading to our accommodation at the base of the Mesilau Trail.

We began the climb up Mt Kinabalu early the next morning. It was not an easy walk, but it was incredibly rewarding! The Mesilau Trail is a well-marked trail and is predominantly made up of steep steps that vary considerably in size. Longer than the normal route – 4 km. Carrying just an overnight pack, we passed an extraordinary variety of plant life including around 1,000 varieties of orchids, the carnivorous pitcher plant. The climb was 18km and completed in 10 hours. We spend the night at Laban Rata rest house located at 3,272m. We started walking at 1200m, so walked up 2000m today. Bedtime was early in order to prepare for the final ascent tomorrow morning!

We rose at 2am in order to catch the sunrise at the summit of Mt Kinabalu (4095m). The view from the summit is stupendous - the jungles of Borneo in one direction, the South China Sea in the other, making every inch of the climb worthwhile. The trail is marked out by a rope that is also useful to help you up some of the steep sections. We descended the mountain via “Via Ferreta” (Biggest and longest in the world); it took 5 hours straight down, scaling the cliffs, hooking into cable in the granite.

The next day we rode the 20km to Ranau which was downhill all the way. From Ranau we cycle to Tambunan, approx 80km along both sealed & non sealed roads. This is where we began to encounter some steep hills. We stopped for lunch at Mahua waterfall.

After lunch we jumped back on the bikes & cycled the last 25 kms into Tambunan. The scenery was superb as we ride through villages & rice fields, past cows, water buffalo & farmers finishing their days work.

The next day we headed off on our bikes for another 120 km ride, skirting around Mt Trus Mardi, Sabah’s second highest peak, & the Crocker Range before arriving in Tenom after lunch time. Tenom is the home of the Murut people; a small minority tribe of Sabah, their main income comes from agricultural crops of maize, cocoa and soy beans.

On the morning after cycling we travel from Tenom by train to the Padas River. Here we go white water rafting. The river normally creates rapids grade 4 depending on the water levels. After rafting we enjoy a hearty lunch & travel back to Kinarut using both train and bus (approx 3 hours). By the way it was grade 5 and nearly drowned.

Today we left Sabah and headed to the land of hornbills, headhunters and white rajahs: Sarawak. We flew from Kota Kinabalu very early to Bario, via Miri on a 12 seater plane. Bario is located in a small valley in the Kelabit Highlands, home to the Kelabit people and it is accessible only by air or foot. The village of Bario has a chequered past, with the British parachuting in here during World War II to begin their resistance against the Japanese occupation. After landing in the boggy ground, they were rescued by a small tribe of highland head-hunters few people knew anything about - the Kelabits. This contact catapulted the local Kelabit tribe from their tribal ways into the 20th century. The Kelabits went on to prove their valour in that war and again during the confrontation with Indonesia in the early 1960s.

We then started a 5 day trek around the infamous Bario Loop. The first day was approximately 9 hours long from Bario to Long Danau, also known as Pa'Mada. The walk was tough at times, up hill and lots of mud every where. We met a few friendly leeches along the way, well about 5 every step actually. We all donated blood during our Bario stay. We stayed overnight in a local longhouse, stayed with a local family, living as they do. We had the opportunity to experience the life of the Kelabit people before logging and the influx of Western culture changed their lifestyle forever.

The next morning, we have a relaxing morning exploring the small village & surrounding historical sites within the jungle that remind us of the areas notorious & often violent head hunting days. After lunch, we trekked to the small settlement of Pa'Dailh (approx 6 hours). Pa'Dalih houses the local primary school, clinic and only public phone within miles.

The next day we caught a ride in longboats downriver to view the jungle from a different perspective. The skill with which the boatmen maneuvered the longboats over the small rapids was astounding. We then took approx 3 hours to walk to Ramudu where we had lunch.

The next day after breakfast we began the trek back to Bario (approx 9 hours) retracing our steps. We leave the jungle behind us as we enter the settlement of Bario as the sun sets over the surrounding hills.

This morning we left tranquil Bario behind and we headed to the town of Miri, Sarawak's second-largest city. Miri is an oil boom town with a multicultural community of Malays, expatriates, Chinese traders and tribal people. Big last night diner out tonight, lots of local beer had by all. Then I flew from Miri to Kota Kinabalu in the morning then afternoon headed to Bangkok then back to Sydney. Three days travelling to get back to OZ, one day before school started again.

Sally Collins

## 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 decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Bribes may work.



# 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](mailto: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
Colo River	15 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup> Mar			Bob Horn 9639 3672 randphorn@optusnet.com.au			12 <sup>th</sup> Mar	
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Halifax Park	5 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> Apr			Graham Boyles 0423 179 525 <a href="mailto:graham_boyles@yahoo.com.au">graham_boyles@yahoo.com.au</a>			2 <sup>nd</sup> Apr	
<b>Other Info:</b> Diving in Nelson Bay. One of Grahams favourite diving areas.								
Lindfield Rocks	19 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Field Day		Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			16 <sup>th</sup> Apr	
<b>Other Info:</b> Preparation for the coming abseil trips								
Castle Head	3 <sup>rd</sup> May			Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 dstuckey@acay.com.au			30 <sup>th</sup> Apr	
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Malaita Wall	4 <sup>th</sup> May			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			30 <sup>th</sup> Apr	
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Boars Head	17 <sup>th</sup> May			Rob Clyne 0409 033 224 boonara@tpg.com.au			14 <sup>th</sup> May	



Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Africa	18 <sup>th</sup> May			Rob Clyne 0409 033 224 boonara@tpg.com.au			14 <sup>th</sup> May	
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Mt Solitary	31 <sup>st</sup> May - 1 <sup>st</sup> Jun			Dave Stuckey 0414 590 305 dstuckey@acay.com.au			28 <sup>th</sup> May	
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Jenolan	7 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup> Jun		TBA	TBA			4 <sup>th</sup> Jun	12
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Jenolan	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug		TBA	TBA			31 <sup>st</sup> Jul	12
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Pierces Pass and ...	TBA			Rod Smith 0438 444 262 <a href="mailto:roderick_smith@hotmail.com">roderick_smith@hotmail.com</a> (that's 2 underscores)			TBA	
<b>Other Info:</b> 200m abseils. Massive exposure!!								

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Jenolan	1 <sup>st</sup> - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov		TBA	TBA			29 <sup>th</sup> Oct	12
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Danae Brook	1 <sup>st</sup> Dec			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			N/A	Trip Full
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Wyanbene	TBA		TBA	Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com	TBA	TBA	TBA	7
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Snowys	TBA 2008			Rosetta Lidano 0439 696 006 rosetta_l2002@yahoo.com.au		\$390 accommodation + potentially transport, hire, etc. See other info	TBA	
<b>Other Info:</b> Accommodation will be booked at The Lodge for Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> July – Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> July (2 nights). Check in between 2pm and 4pm. Cost of \$390 per person (twin share) 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								
New Zealand	Dec 2008 – Jan 2009			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au		TBA	TBA	



Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Tasmania	TBA		TBA	Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com	TBA	TBA	TBA	
<b>Other Info:</b>								
Nullarbor	TBA		TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	
<b>Other Info:</b>								