



A successful Easter at Thredbo

The Easter trip to Thredbo was our most popular in years, delivering a full bushwalking experience. The worst part was out of the way early – around 3am Friday - that being the long bus-journey up. Thredbo is over seven hours by bus, plus breaks, however the spectacular scenery of the Main Range makes a long trip like this worthwhile every few years. Thanks to Rowland Kelly, Ken Sussex and Peter Eames for volunteering their time to drive the two buses we ended up chartering.

The second worst part was Friday afternoon. After a pleasant morning, with some sunny spells, an ominous approaching black mass of cloud sent the day trippers on a return path back to the lodge, while the pack-carriers up on the Main Range set up camp with only minutes to spare before the deluge hit.

The rain lasted several hours, turning to snow on the high peaks as the wind turned colder. The worst of the weather passed by Saturday, clearing during the afternoon and setting the stage for a glorious Sunday. The legacy of the cold front was the scenic splendour created by the carpet of snow on the high peaks under brilliant sunshine.



The long and winding road to Thredbo

Among the many day walks was a 27km epic from Mt Twynam to Thredbo led by Simon, including a detour to Mt Townsend. By reaching the top of the chairlift just as it reopened for dinner at the restaurant, they arrived back before another group who'd skipped the Townsend side-trip but had to walk down to the village.

South of Thredbo, Ken Sussex led a small group to Cascade & Tin Mine huts then an epic scrub bash to the base of Tin Mine Falls. Some snow even made it to these lower altitudes, which may have lacked the grandeur of the Main Range, but allowed two very cosy campfires.

A selection of photos from the Easter walk is currently on the club's website photo gallery



Having survived some very inclement weather, the overnight campers make it to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko at Easter. (photo: Bruce Meincke)

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Pelion West from Tasmania's Overland Track. The club is running its first trip there for a decade – in winter! (Details p10)

YHA BUSHWALKING COMMITTEE 2006/07

President	David Sisson
Secretary	Stuart Hanham
Treasurer	Cynthia Bell
Walks Sec. (Weekends)	Paul Gottliebse
Walks Sec (Sundays)	Sing Wong
Clubnight Coordinator	Catherine Koh
Social Secretary	Andrew Stevenson
Search & Rescue Rep	Simon Walliss
Website	Hooi-Soon Khoo
General committee	Ron Bell Ken Sussex

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Yeti Editor (non-committee) Stephen Smith

CONTRIBUTIONS TO YETI

These articles don't write themselves y' know, nor are they all plagiarised from the internet (well some of them aren't anyway). If you've enjoyed yourself on one or two YHA trips or have some thoughts about bushwalking which you'd like to share, then here's your opportunity to do so. Find a spare moment, jot them down then email them to yhabush@bigpond.com. Deadline for the next issue is Aug 30th 2006.

YETI ONLINE

"Yeti" has its own website www.vicnet.net.au/~yhayeti containing an online version of the latest issue as well as archived articles from past editions. The web versions are well worth visiting, as they often include additional photographs not able to be included in the print version for reasons of space, as well as superior reproduction.

TRIP LEADERS

If you wish to have a brief description of your upcoming trip printed here in YETI please contact the editor with the details.

YHA ACTIVITIES CLUBNIGHT

Is held on Monday nights at the YWCA building, 1st floor 489 Elizabeth Street in the city, from 8pm to approx. 9:30pm. Special events start at 8.15pm sharp, everybody welcome.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

If you recognise an article in this newsletter it is probably because it has been plagiarised from another source. This is the only way we can bring you this newsletter. YETI makes no apology for any offence caused.

YETI THANKS

The following contributors to this issue:

Paul Gottliebse
Belinda Jones
Bruce Meincke
Richard Miller
David Sisson
Andrew Stevenson
Sing Wong

Honorary Life Members

The Bushwalking Committee recently decided to annually award life membership to someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the YHA Bushwalking Club. For the first year at which this featured, three such honorary memberships were given to Ron Bell, Mark Beyer and Bruce Meincke.

Ron has been involved with the club since the 1960s, leading numerous walks since that time, some of which he has become synonymous with such as Mt Disappointment and Easters at Camp "Rondilagong". His favourite area is Mt Buffalo, however he rarely leads YHA trips there (perhaps it explains the attraction?). For many years Ron has been the driving force behind the annual Bushdance. Ron's ex-wife didn't share his passion for the outdoors, however his bushwalking genes have been passed on to one of his daughters, Cynthia, currently the club treasurer.

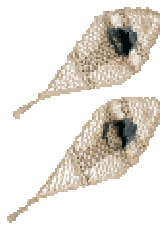
Mark has been involved with the club since the 1980s, serving on the Bushwalking committee for most of the 1990s. In 1998 Mark became a director on the board of YHA Victoria, and since 2001 has held the role of Honorary Treasurer. Mark's best-known walks are a series of Christmas trips along sections of the Alpine walking track, beginning at Canberra in 1995, eventually completing the journey in 2002. It was on one of these walks that Mark picked up one of the first "Silly Billy" awards for diving into a puddle and severely gashing his forehead (his crowning glory?) Proving that the first award was no fluke, he snared a second on a subsequent seven-day AAWT walk for forgetting his tent pegs and poles. His resourcefulness in overcoming this slight problem must have impressed his then new girlfriend Sharon as they are now proud parents of three children.

Bruce has walked with the club since his teenage years in the early 1960s, rarely going for more than a few months without turning up on one of the more challenging walks. Bruce has led countless overnight walks, passing on his experience to several new generations of walkers, but is particularly noted for his annual snow-walk to Mt Feathertop, easily his favourite mountain, with over 100 journeys to its summit. Now recently retired, Bruce, together with wife Gillian who he met through YHA many years ago (the only woman who could keep up with him) looks forward to finding even more time to spend in the outdoors.

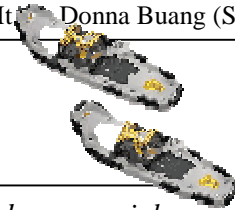


Bruce Meincke (right) being presented with his Life Membership by Simon at Dead Horse Gap, straight after his most recently led walk at Easter. Coming up on Bruce's list is the Overland Track (see p10)

Guide to this Winter's Snow-walks



How do I get started? With a day-walk to Keppel's Hut on **Lake Mountain**. A medium rated trip through snow gums away from the ski runs (July 15th) or Mt Donna Buang (Sept 2nd)



Since the public liability insurance crisis a few years ago, YHA is one of the few bushwalking clubs whose insurance conditions don't prohibit activities above the snowline.

To take advantage of this, we've scheduled more snow-walks than ever this winter.

Do I need any special equipment? Not for areas such as Lake Mountain, Mt Stirling and the Bogong High Plains. You must have a good quality raincoat (Gore-tex, Hydronaute etc), overpants, beanie and gloves or you won't be permitted on the walk. Sunglasses and sunburn cream are also recommended. For exposed icy areas such as Mounts Feathertop, Bogong and Buller, ice-axes and crampons are also required; these can be easily hired.



The thrill of reaching these snow-capped summits on a clear day will more than compensate for the effort of the climb.



What about footwear? Unless the snow is very deep and soft, you can manage with just walking boots (leather, not the lightweight suede style and definitely no runners) and gaiters. Make sure they are well waterproofed first, although this won't stop your boots getting wet, just delay the inevitable for several hours.



Is that it? No, there's also snow walks up Mt Buller (Aug 5th) and Mt Bogong (Sep 16-17). These are rated "hard" for good reason, so you must have done at least a Mt Feathertop snow-camp or equivalent grade trip as a pre-requisite.

However, if you've ever wondered about snowshoeing and what it is like, well it's a lot of fun, so come along to the Clubnight on July 17th for a talk from Yowie Snowshoes and the chance to win your very own pair of Yowies!
Then, put theory into practice on July 29th at Andrew Stevenson's Mt Stirling Telefest beginner snowshoe class.

To find out many more tips about snow camping, come along to Bruce Meincke and David Sisson's Clubnight talk on July 3rd, then give it a try at either Lake Mountain (July 15-16), Mt Feathertop (July 22-23) or Mt Stirling (Aug 12-13)

Another major step is to try snow-camping. It's best if you've done some weekend pack-carries off-snow first, so that you are familiar with the basics. There are a few important equipment requirements, such as a four-season tent, snow-pegs for anchoring in deep snow, an extra sleeping mat and of course a warm sleeping bag!



Lessons from My First Overnight Walk

Having done plenty of hard day walks, I decided it was time to go a step further and try an overnight pack-carry. Thanks to a Kathmandu half-price sale, I quickly acquired a tent, sleeping bag and stove. I chose an exploratory walk in “Butcher Country” for my debut; it sounded interesting and although the leader (Simon) had a reputation for tough walks, I’d coped with the day trips he led at Easter and felt up to the challenge.

The instructions on how to get to the Friday night meeting point after Heyfield were fairly simple - “don’t go into Licola, just carry on for about 20km until just past the Breakfast Creek bridge”. My passenger Matt and I had both recently moved to Melbourne from interstate and weren’t familiar with the area, but managed to find our way to Licola without too much difficulty. So far so good – apart from a small shop, situated slightly off the road in a small lay-by, there was no sign we’d gone through the town, so we continued on. We carried on driving for about 45 minutes, the sealed road giving way to gravel (strange that Simon didn’t mention anything about that). Something else was puzzling – if the meeting point was “Breakfast Creek”, why were we heading steadily uphill to reach it? Eventually we saw a sign, “Mt Skene”, consulted the map and realised we’d travelled 45km in the wrong direction. We eventually arrived at Breakfast Creek at 1.00am – everyone else was in their tents, but as I didn’t want anyone lying awake worrying about what had happened to us, I made a bit of noise to let them know we’d made it.

Lesson #1 – *Licola - a. one-horse town in Gippsland, population about a dozen people and a few dogs.*

Lesson #2 – *Exploratory walk - One to an area where no-one within the group has previously visited and little is written about it in the way of recent tracknotes.* My first pack-carry also turned out to be my first “exploratory” walk. The section to Mt Reynard was fairly straightforward, after that however it dawned why there were no tracknotes – there was no track to write notes about. The map showed a track down to the MacAlister river but there was no sign of anything, so we had to forge our own path down through the scrub.

Lesson #3 – *Bushwalking is not just a 9-5 pastime.* I thought walking was done during the daytime and camping at night, but there are exceptions. Sunset arrived as we were still making our way towards the river. As the light gradually faded I was assured there was nothing to worry about as Simon was very experienced at walking in the dark. We eventually camped at 6.30pm, without having made it to the water.

Lesson #4 – *There are many different grades of campsite.* I thought campsites were places where you had a fire and sat around toasting marshmallows, but apparently this isn’t always the case. Campsites have a five star rating system – one star for flat, soft ground, another for a clean fresh water supply, another for a fire, another for scenic location and the last star for marshmallows. As it was my first walk, it may have been overdoing it to go for a four or five-star camp, so we took it easy with a half-star (some of the ground under the tent was flattish).

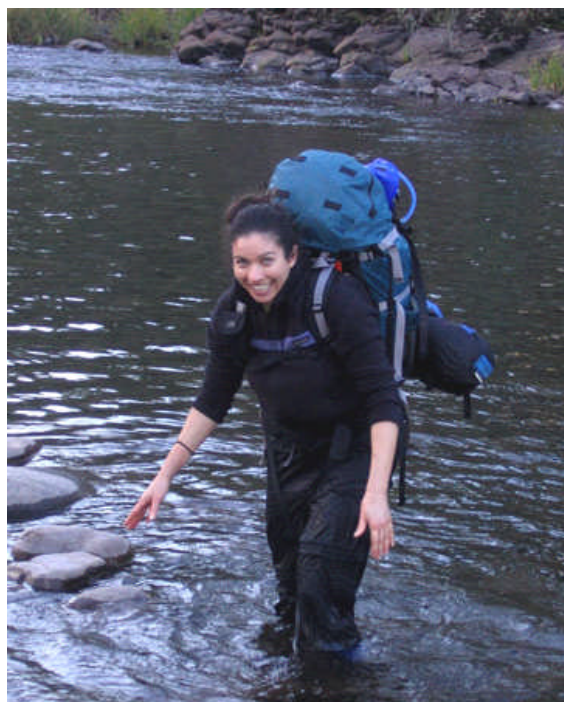
After a couple of hours walking on Sunday morning, we finally made it to the MacAlister river, filled up our empty water containers and began the return journey via an easier route (I’d graduated to handling tracks). It was nevertheless a late arrival back at the cars.

Lesson #5 – *Never leave civilisation with less than half a tank of petrol.* The detours on Friday night, and the fact that I left Melbourne with a $\frac{3}{4}$ -full tank of petrol, meant I was running close to empty by the time I made it back to “civilisation” at Licola on Sunday afternoon – 19km left according to my fuel gauge. Luckily I arrived at 5.50pm, ten minutes before the store closed, as the next fuel was at Heyfield, over 50km away. The others were also running low, unfortunately they were a long way behind. We managed to talk the proprietor into staying open until they arrived. She agreed, although didn’t seem too pleased about it – maybe if I’d bought a few bumper stickers while we were waiting, such as “Don’t bugger the bush, bugger a Greenie” or “If it moves, shoot it; if it doesn’t, cut it down; if it’s green, piss on it” it would have brought more of a smile to her face.

Everyone made it into, and more importantly out of, Licola and safely back to Melbourne. I’d passed the first test and look forward to some more advanced walks!

Belinda Jones

Not overly daunted by her experience, Belinda has since progressed to walks with tracks and four-star campsites



President's Report

The Easter trip to Thredbo had over 90 walkers participating in up to four day walks each day, as well as two pack carries. We hired two large ski lodges, two buses and bought chairlift tickets for 76 people. There were a few minor problems due to the distance from Melbourne and the large numbers, but overall the trip was a huge success.

We also had 70 walkers split between two day walks on the first weekend in June and these high numbers are indicative of the only real problem the club is facing, namely we are growing rather fast. With 841 people on our email list, we are only just keeping up with demand. It appears that we are finally running enough overnight pack carries, but numbers on day walks are getting a little high again. So if you can help us out by leading a day walk, and will take the care to make sure things run properly, please contact one of the Walks Secretaries.

I've been pondering what has caused this growth. I think it is partly due to the aging of other walking clubs. There are 20 clubs in Melbourne targeting more mature walkers, but we are the only one tackling the late 20's to early 40's age group.

But our success is also due to our informality. Perhaps our greatest attraction is that there is no need to book for our Sunday walks. Other clubs literally have multi-page rule books, and some even require people to 'qualify' before they are allowed to join. By contrast, we really only have one rule; 'walkers should always follow the directions of the trip leader'.

Finally, the new Walks Secretaries have organised a record number of snow walks this winter. They range from fairly easy to disturbingly hard. We are the only club to offer a range of snow walks, so I'd encourage you to try one.

David Sisson

...And a few words from the new Social Secretary

With the success of the YHA Easter trip to Thredbo, there is an increased interest for more social events to be run. With a turn out of 45 for the recent Gurkha's restaurant night and having to turn away many more, YHA Bushwalking will be running varied social events for the Winter programme.

So come along for great entertainment events such as Strike Bowling Bar with Simon Wallis, Kanzaman Turkish Restaurant in Richmond with Robin Carter, Omahs Restaurant & Go Carting with Catherine Koh and Topolinos Pizza Restaurant in St Kilda with yours truly.

When the weather gets a little warmer there will be events like Jazz at the Zoo, Moonlight Cinema and Puffing Billy, so come one come all and support YHA Bushwalking by attending these social events!

If you feel that you would like to run a social activity, or have an idea for one, please contact me as we are always on the look out for social butterflies to run these events.

Andrew Stevenson

"Silly Billy" nominations

The winner of the annual "Silly Billy" award won't be decided until December, however with 2006 not even half-way through, it looks to be a bumper year, with several strong contenders already emerging.

#1 - Greg Shepherd for his very retro rain protection at Thredbo, eschewing a high-tech Gore-tex jacket for an umbrella. Unfortunately it was no match for the harsh weather of the Main Range.



#2 - Ken Sussex for advising before his excursion to Tin Mine Falls "don't bother taking food, we'll be back at camp for lunch". And so he was, except "lunch" was at 6.40pm. It would have been a few minutes earlier, if Ken, exhausted through lack of food, hadn't needed to lie down on the track for a five minute rest with about a kilometre to go. (For those that took plenty of chocolate and snacks anyway, it was a very good walk)

#3 - Neil Warden, for melting his socks in an attempt to dry them out on the campfire (below).



#4 - Sing Wong, who while busy showering at the Lake Eildon campground, realised from the conversation in the adjoining cubicles that he was in the women's block. After getting dressed and waiting until the coast was clear, he eventually crept out unnoticed. And what lesson did Sing learn from this experience? "all that stuff on the internet is true! - men are different from women".

New Committee Members

This year's AGM in April saw several new faces join the bushwalking committee. Of note is that there has been a complete turnover of all roles – no-one is doing the same job as last year.

One major change is the splitting of the Walks Secretary job into two; Weekends & Sundays. Taking on these roles are Paul Gottliebsen and Sing Wong respectively; both Paul and Sing are new to committee, along with Social Secretary Andrew Stevenson.

Sing Wong (Sunday Walks)



How long have you been bushwalking? About 30 years, I started with Melbourne University mountaineering club and got involved with YHA in the early 80's. Since then have I've tried everything (cross-country skiing, cycling, kayaking).

What's the best walk that you've done so far? So many wonderful trips, probably Snowy River walk through Loch Ard gorge over Easter about 15 years ago, led by Stephen Lake.

Experience you would least like to repeat? Some weekends spent tentbound in a rain storm during my early years of bushwalking and getting quite wet.

What aspect of Bushwalking attracts you the most? The bush, the fresh air, friends and a camp fire.

In your new role as Sunday Walks Secretary, are there any new ideas you'd like to try? Maybe some arts walks, historical walks and the new Australian native gardens in Cranbourne. My first list is now full so put it in for the next one (spring).

Paul Gottliebsen (Weekend/Saturday walks)



Paul out treading the boards

How long have you been bushwalking with YHA? About three and a half years, since February 2003.

What's the best walk that you've done so far? The Overland and Milford Tracks

Experience you would least like to repeat? Five days of near non-stop rain and strong winds on the way to Precipitous Bluff (SW Tasmania).

What aspect of Bushwalking attracts you the most? The outdoors

In your new role as Walks Secretary, are there any new directions you'd like to take the walks program? As well as the traditional winter walks, I would like to expand the number of snow shoe walks on future winter programmes.

Spring is probably the best time of year to go walking in Victoria, so I would like to include walks to a variety of locations across all grades. I would also like to schedule at least one extended walk on each programme.

How can we all help the Walks Secretary? Volunteer as a leader. The more leaders we have, the more walks we can place on the programme.

A tip for new walkers or new leaders? Protect your food from fauna, especially when leaving it unattended at a campsite.

Andrew Stevenson (Social Secretary)

How long have you been bushwalking? About twenty years, but have increased walking in the last six.

What's the best walk that you've done so far? Annapurna Circuit, Nepal.

Experience you would least like to repeat? Slipping on a wet boardwalk on Mt Taranaki NZ, and doing my knee two days into a walk, while walking on my own!

What locations you haven't been to yet are you keenest to visit? Everest Base Camp, Corsica & South America



Andrew snow-shoeing on Mt Feathertop

What aspect of Bushwalking attracts you the most?

Finding great locations and making new friends who share a love for the outdoors!

In your new role as Social Secretary, are there any new ideas for social events you'd like to try?

A Saturday morning cafe breakfast and a gourmet picnic in spring, with plenty of good food and a wine or two?

Favourite bush-camp food? Nothing like a good curry!

What don't you go walking without? My stove top coffee maker, one whiff of a good brew on a hike and every one wants to be my friend, so I take plenty of coffee!



Are You a Survivor?

As the days get shorter and temperatures plummet,
warm your mind with Dr T's Desert Survival Quiz.

1) On the tenth day of a solo crossing of the Simpson Desert you discover that you are short of toilet paper, do you?

- a) Turn back.
- b) Only use your left hand
- c) Don't go any more out of sheer embarrassment
- d) Stop eating

2) Which of the following should you do to conserve water?

- a) Dig a hole and cover yourself with sand.
- b) Try to keep your eyes and mouth closed so they stay moist.
- c) Don't eat.
- d) Keep moving to build up sweat to cool you down.

3) A bore is ?

- a) A walker who constantly tells everyone about his latest overseas trip
- b) A male pig.
- c) A degenerate Dutchman
- d) A potential source of brackish water.

4) If lost in a desert with no water and 36°C when resting in the shade, how many days would you expect to survive?

- a) Approximately 6
- b) Approximately 15
- c) Approximately 5
- d) Approximately 1

5) On the way to a 4 day walk at the Big Desert you realise that you didn't bring any large water containers, even though the leader told you to. Do you?

- a) Try to rely on dew caught on your tent fly in the morning
- b) Ask the rest of the group if you can recycle their fluids
- c) Stop at the last shop and purchase 9 litres of bottled Coke.
- d) Drink as much as possible before the walk and hope that your body will store it.

6) When in a desert environment in hot cloudless weather, is it best to?

- a) Walk naked to avoid excessive perspiration
- b) Go for it and get the walk over as quick as possible.
- c) Walk at night and rest during the day.
- d) Drink plenty of water.

7) After 16 days of eating dry leaves and grass you are offered a large banana would you?

- a) Eat a small portion at a time.
- b) Use it to treat your heat rash.
- c) Gobble it down as quickly as possible.
- d) Save it so that you could sell it later.

8) The Southern Cross is?

- a) A star formation that can be used to locate true North.
- b) A star formation that can be used to locate true South.
- c) A type of bore
- d) A new railway station in central Melbourne.

9) Would camel dung make a good emergency fuel?

- a) Only if mixed with petrol at 75:1.
- b) No, it clogs up my Trangia
- c) Yes, it burns with a smoky yellow flame.
- d) No, it's only good for smoking.

10) You have lost your compass how would you navigate?

- a) Use the hands of your watch to locate North (analogue version only)
- b) Locate Southern Cross and catch the train home.
- c) Locate the Southern Cross and get your bearings.
- d) Switch on your GPS

Answers:

1) a=1 b=4 c=3 d=2, **2)** a=2 b=3 c=4 d=1, **3)** a=3 b=2 c=1 d=4, **4)** a=4 b=1 c=3 d=2, **5)** a=2 b=3 c=4 d=1, **6)** a=2 b=1 c=4 d=3, **7)** a=3 b=2 c=1 d=4, **8)** a=1 b=4 c=2 d=3, **9)** a=1 b=3 c=4 d=2, **10)** a=4 b=1 c=3 d=2

Score: **31 – 40:** A real survivalist, email me, I'm looking for someone like you for help with a crossing of the Great Sandy Desert.

21 – 30: You're getting there, you should be able to last long enough for the Channel 7 helicopter to spot you.

11 – 20: Barely trying

1 – 10: A pathetic score, do you even watch reality television ?

Dr T's Walks from the Vault

4 – "NIGHTMARE ON BOGONG"

Our walking party of six left Melbourne, two in a spacious(!) red Alfa Romeo GTV and four in a Suzuki Micro Van with mid-mount engine. We were heading to Mt Bogong for a long-anticipated winter ascent. There had been heavy snowfalls during the week and we were looking forward to the climb to the summit in thick snow.

The climb up Staircase Spur to Bivouac Hut was slow and steady and before long snow covered the track. After setting up our tents at the hut and a quick lunch, we set off for the summit. As the snow became deeper and snow laden branches covered the track, we took turns to break trail through the waist-deep snow. After a long and arduous climb we finally reached Gorge Gap below the Gadsen Memorial. The final ascent was in view and summit fever gripped us, the faster members of the group suddenly heading for the summit. One slow walker was left behind, but before we left him he was given instructions to follow our snow-trail along the pole line and to look out for our vertical ascent trail to the summit.

The main group summited in deteriorating weather conditions and descended shortly afterwards. On the way down we met the slowest member of the party just leaving the pole line to commence his ascent. The leader led him up to the summit while the rest of us waited for them to return. The cloud started to thicken and visibility deteriorated. One walker foolishly bounded ahead of the main group down the steep slope, ice axe at the ready, straight over a cornice and flat on his face. The ice axe grazed his forehead and narrowly missed his eye.



It wasn't long before we were walking in blizzard conditions; heavy snowfall and howling wind. The sky blended into the ground and it was difficult to tell which way was up. We reached Gorge Gap, it wasn't far to the tree line now, but the slowest walker was lacking energy. His motorcycle jacket wasn't keeping him warm and his lack of a hat made things worse. We found a spare hat, had a quick rest and moved on. The leader was following the compass and trying to get his bearings. Dropping off a wind blown cornice, we realised that we'd just walked around in a circle. We regrouped and checked the map. Our hapless friend, suffering from mild hypothermia probably induced by alcohol and cigarettes partaken the night before, sank to his knees and, when asked if he was ok, fell head-first into the snow like a stiff frozen corpse. The person next to him reached down and picked him up

by the jacket collar; he came around and stood up. We fed him some sugar and water until he somewhat recovered. Our position now located, we continued down to the tree line. The trail we'd made earlier was now covered with fresh snow and it was a long slog down to Bivouac Hut.

The heavy snow fall had dumped a massive amount of snow on our camp. At first we could only see the outline of our tents in the thick snow, but then as we got closer we noticed that the tent owned by our hapless motorcycling hero, a tent that he had assured us was the best available for snow conditions (a DMH Trendsetter, purchased at Kmart) was flattened. The only thing standing above the snow were two fibreglass tent poles reaching for the sky. The owner salvaged what he could from the ruined tent then quickly retreated to the hut for a warm meal, later finding a spot in the leader's tent for the night. It wasn't long after dinner that we took to the tents for a well earned rest.

By Sunday morning the weather had cleared and we headed back for our second summit attempt before returning to camp for lunch then packing and heading down. Normally the drama of a walk like this would end once off the mountain, but this trip had one more act.

Our motorcycling hero had fully recovered from the previous day's ordeal and rushed on ahead for a quick descent so that he could drive his micro van into Mt Beauty to stock up on food and petrol. Eventually we arrived at the car park where we waited for the van to return. It wasn't long before we heard a strange tapping noise, getting steadily louder as the vehicle approached us along the bush track. The micro van suddenly rounded the corner and stopped next to where we rested. The driver proclaimed that there was a slight problem, then reached into the passenger compartment of the van, removed the access panel to the engine and proceeded to remove the filthy grease-encrusted rocker cover, letting dirt fall into the internal parts of the engine. The driver was sure that there wasn't much wrong with the engine so he put it all back together again, instructed the passengers to load up and off they went, the tapping noise receding into the distance. We packed up the Alfa at a leisurely pace and headed off. It wasn't long before we saw a trail of oil on the road ahead and when we rounded the next bend there was the small white van at the side of the road, the passengers peering into the engine bay. A pool of oil lay under the car and a piston protruded from the side of the engine block. The mechanic from Mt Beauty suggested that the engine's Big End Bearing had gone and the driver admitted that he hadn't checked the oil since a trip to Central Australia some months earlier. He still couldn't accept that there was a problem; he wasn't going anywhere but the rest of us had to get back to Melbourne and the Alfa only held one passenger, so we packed it to the gunwales with numerous ice axes and as much gear as could be crammed in. One by one the stranded van passengers were ferried to the main road where they hitched lifts back to Melbourne. The last we saw of the van driver was a lone figure heading into Mt Beauty to try and arrange a tow.

Highway Food Guide

Looking for somewhere to get a decent meal en-route to or from a weekend walk? Here's a few recommendations, the ratings based on value for money, menu variety, quality of food, and time to serve a medium-sized group.



Princes Highway (east)

Royal Exchange Hotel, Traralgon ★★★½ Good food, an interesting and varied menu (eg kangaroo, several Asian style dishes), the only minus is that with a pokies area and creche, it lacks a country pub atmosphere. Plenty of room however, able to cater for moderate sized groups (10-20) without overloading the kitchen.

Criterion Hotel, Trafalgar ★★★★★ A cosy country pub featuring a wood-fired pizza oven, varied menu, well cooked food. One of the most imaginative salad bars seen in some time, included polenta and vegetable slices among the more unusual choices. No home-made bread or rolls though to fill up on while waiting for the meal.

Darnum Hotel ★★ Very standard steak and parmigiana type pub menu. Prices are reasonable, but the food isn't particularly well done ("English" style overcooked vegetables and a very basic salad bar). The hotel overlooks the Princes freeway; accessed by taking the "Darnum" exit then turning left straight away.

Hume Highway

Euroa Café ★★★★★ Situated in the town-centre, well away from even the Old Hume highway, this is the pick of eateries in Euroa. Good for anything from a quick coffee stop or light snacks such as a hearty bowl of soup through to seafood, steak or some good vegetarian main courses. Can get a bit busy on Friday evenings, but generally fairly good service.

Jumping Jumbuck ★★½ (Old Hume Highway, Euroa) Probably the 'healthiest' meals on the Hume highway, with a selection of home-made pies, quiches with salad or vegetables but in recent years has shifted upmarket, aiming more for locals dining out for an evening than passing travellers. The food is still OK, but prices have increased. Still worthwhile for a "coffee and cake" stop however.

Olive Branch ½ (Old Hume Highway, Euroa) One to avoid. Used to be a reasonable pizza/pasta place, but changed management and names, unfortunately the rest is history. If you didn't wash for a month then walked into a New York café and announced before you sat down that you wouldn't be leaving a tip, you'd still get better service than this place. Even if you hadn't planned on doing particularly much with the rest of your life and don't mind the wait, the ordinariness of the food that is eventually shoved in front of you is at odds with the overpriced and pretentious menu.

For those in a hurry, the best option is a couple of reasonable takeaways (hamburger, fish'n'chips etc) in the town centre of Euroa. The roadhouses along the Old Hume Highway have either closed down since the town was bypassed or scaled back their menus to a very basic pie and chips offering.

Winter Equipment News - something for the snow?

Austrian inventor Carl Tinkler came up with a portable ski-jet able to propel the wearer along the snow at speeds of 40-50km/hour, handling slopes with gradients up to 30 degrees and with a range of 20km before refuelling. Once at the summit, the ski-jet easily dismantles for storage in a backpack during the downhill run. After some initial trials (right), it was taken away for a bit of fine-tuning such as adding brakes and measures to prevent the jet flames accidentally igniting the wearer, with the intention of launching a consumer model the following ski season.

That was over 50 years ago, nothing has been heard of this since. Surely, with modern-technology and now that the patent has expired, the time has come for a latter-day entrepreneur to fashion this into an accessory for Generation X? The cost is estimated at \$8,000 per unit, however with the saving on lift-tickets, it should pay for itself within a few weekends at Mt Buller.

Or must another fifty years elapse, by which time the market will have thawed away?



Brünhildè and Klaus Füchenvunder trial a prototype ski-jet at Innsbruck in 1952

The Best Ever Wyperfeld Weekend



The Wyperfeld overnight campers gather under “Old Be-al”, an ancient river redgum older than the combined age of everybody in the picture (let’s see another Melbourne walking club say the same about a similar photo of their members!)

Nearly thirty people attended the Queens Birthday Wyperfeld weekend, the club’s first trip to this part of the Mallee in over a decade. Surprisingly the pack-carriers (17) outnumbered the base-campers (12), however a good time was had by all. The best way to appreciate the park is to go off-track. Apart from being generally easier walking than the generally sandy tracks, following a straight line passes through the full variety of the landscape, from sand dunes, to mallee, to pine forest. The main thing the area lacks is water. Peak time is a couple of months later after winter rains, however it’s been thirty years since the last flood filled lakes in the park, dramatically transforming the region. Floods have typically occurred only once every 20-30 years, however with evidence of a climate change for the drier in SE Australia, it’s anyone’s guess when the next one will be. Hopefully it will happen during our lifetime – should significant rainfall occur in the Mallee, the club won’t be waiting another decade or even until the next Queens Birthday long weekend to revisit the area.



Facilities at the main campground made for a very pleasant base-camp (no wonder several quite experienced pack-carriers decided to take it easy this weekend!)

Rowland welcomes Ken back from the overnight walk (left) with a slice of damper. The first batch was a bit crusty, but the next attempt (with added sultanas) got the texture a lot closer to the mark (right).



Winter Overland Track Walk

For those with a taste for adventure, the highlight of this season’s programme is Tasmania’s Overland Track. Although this world-famous trek is attempted by many tourists who otherwise do very little walking (and sometimes suffer the consequences), at this time of year you definitely need to be experienced and equipped for possible snow conditions. This means snow-shoes, ice-axes and a four-season tent in case of emergency, as well as the usual good quality warm clothing. Accommodation should normally be in fairly empty huts.

The region is notorious for its bad weather year-round, and it would be unduly optimistic to expect a totally fine run, however if the law of averages is upheld out, there should be a few clear days to take in the snow-capped beauty of Cradle Mountain and the other peaks which line the route of Overland Track. Nine days have been allowed for the trip, departing early morning from Launceston on Saturday August 19th – the basic track can be comfortably done in seven, with a couple of spare days for side-trips or to wait-out bad weather. Numbers are limited, but there are still a few places available; contact Bruce Meincke (9306 2428).

The only disappointment was the failure to spot any sign of a mallee fowl during the extensive off-track walking. Also, near the only mallee mound (on a marked nature trail, but seemingly deserted), Darren lost a very expensive pair of sunglasses. Mallee fowl are known to be shy and value their privacy; evidence is emerging of a connection between the elusive mallee fowl and the missing sunglasses...

