

# ARGUS

A person wearing a red helmet, a blue and white checkered shirt, and red pants is climbing a steep, grey rock face. They are wearing a climbing harness with various pieces of gear attached. The background shows a vast, hazy landscape under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

Victorian  
Climbing  
Club  
Newsletter

March 2021

VCC

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Summer hail at  
Araps.  
Photo: Lita Vickers

*The VCC is based in Naarm / Melbourne. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Australia on which we climb. We recognise sovereignty was never ceded, and pay our respects to your Elders, past, present and emerging.*

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GST included  
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# ARGUS

## Editor/Designer

Leigh Hopkinson

## Submissions

Send your submissions to [argueditor@vicclimb.org.au](mailto:argueditor@vicclimb.org.au)  
Deadline is the 15th of each month. A big thank you to all of this month's contributors!

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## Back Issues

For a selection of previous Argus issues, please follow this link: <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/tep/129542>

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## Front Cover

Sarah on Peroxide Blonde (20) at Mt Buffalo  
Photo: Steve Toal

## Back Cover

Mark on Profanities (17) at Mt Buffalo  
Photo: Peter Upton

## EDITORIAL



Dear Members,

The bureaucratic demands have eased in the wake of submissions to the draft Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan. It feels a good time to shift the focus inwards, to the running of the club.

As with any volunteer organisation there's only a limited amount of energy to go around, so it's great to have Glen Donohue come onboard as our new membership secretary (see p9). Any delays you might've experienced in having your membership processed should now be resolved.

We're also putting a call out for trip leaders, now that we have trips back up and running (whoop!!) We really need a few more people to help out with club trips. Thanks to those of you who have already offered. If you're considering leading a trip but have some questions or concerns, please get in touch with Trip Coordinator Michael O'Reilly, [clubtrips@vicclimb.org.au](mailto:clubtrips@vicclimb.org.au)

I'm also putting a call out for content, as I'm in New Zealand for the best part of 2021, so sadly won't be on the ground. If you've any stories, articles, ideas or photos you'd be up for sharing, I'd be very grateful. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed this round! I'll be crossing my fingers for that Trans-Tasman bubble.

Enjoy the read and stay safe out there.

Leigh

# GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Quite a bit has been happening over the last couple of months, despite COVID-19 lockdowns.

## **Submissions in response to the draft Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan**

The VCC submission in response to the draft GGLMP was sent to Parks Victoria (many of you will have seen a couple of versions of it posted and updated on the VCC website as it was being developed. For those that haven't seen the final version, it can be found at <https://vicclimb.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/VCC-submission-on-the-Greater-Gariwerd-Landscape-Management-Plan-9.pdf> ).



In the weeks before 24 January—the due date for submissions on the draft GGLMP—committee member Hywel Rowlands wrote, and had peer reviewed, a very useful economic analysis of climbing tourism and its contribution to the Western Victorian regional economy. This was cited in the VCC's submission and in a few other submissions from the climbing community. Thanks Hywel! See <https://vicclimb.org.au/2021/01/the-economics-of-rock-climbing-what-are-we-worth/>.

For those interested, some of the common concerns and key recommendations raised by the climbing community have been collated in the document <https://vicclimb.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Common-themes-in-climber-feedback-in-response-to-the-draft-GGLMP.pdf>.

This particular document has been sent to the person in Parks Victoria tasked with making sense of the hundreds of submissions and teasing out their common themes. It accompanied the suggestion that it would be beneficial to have two or three representatives from the climbing community meet with land manager representatives before the final version of the Plan is set in stone (no pun intended). Such a meeting could be useful to further explore outstanding issues and clarify and improve potential solutions. It was made clear to PV that we were not endeavouring to dictate to them how to manage; we appreciated that that is their role, not ours. Nonetheless, we all

know that decisions informed by the knowledge and understandings of all stakeholders are likely to lead to better solutions. Additionally, if the logic behind management decisions has manifestly taken such knowledge and understandings into account, and has been clearly conveyed to all, then land managers are more likely to get respect and compliance from the various parties concerned. Moreover, land managers are also likely to benefit in other ways from having recreational user groups on-side—user groups that can engage their networks, educate their members, and reinforce the critical messages about protecting cultural and environmental values. So... we wait with interest to see what response we will receive.

## **Things legal**

Last year Parks Victoria rejected individual applications for climbing to be allowed in a limited number of specified areas within SPAs. A legal challenge was subsequently filed. In recent months, there has been a directions hearing, followed by filing of relevant affidavits by the plaintiffs and by PV.

We note, without divulging anything we are not at liberty to divulge, that map 4B in the publicly available draft Plan now shows the Northern Walls and Central Buttress areas in the Stapylton Amphitheatre—areas where an application to climb was rejected by PV—to be designated climbing areas.

Similarly, we note that the Sandinista area (another climbing area where an application to climb was rejected) has now been broken into two areas in the draft Plan, the area immediately right of the track where climbing is not allowed, and the area immediately left of the track which is now shown as a designated climbing area.

Andersens (an extensive and once very popular bouldering area and also an area where an application to climb was rejected) has similarly now been subdivided into two sub-areas in the draft Plan. Andersens East is shown in the draft Plan as an area where climbing is not permitted. Andersens West is now shown as a possible climbing area (under review).

So, some movement by PV in response to some of the issues brought into focus by the legal challenge, which is to be applauded (though there are hundreds of other crags not part of the legal challenge where similar, more fine-grained readjustments are still warranted).

Our latest legal advice was that, in balance, it was probably not worth pushing this particular legal challenge further. Consequently, both parties (plaintiffs and Parks Victoria) have agreed that the legal challenge will be withdrawn with no costs sought.

None of this prevents any parties, the VCC, other climbing organisations or individual climbers who might now have standing, from filing whatever future legal challenge they might deem to be appropriate. There are still lots of issues that are problematic for climbers (many are listed in our submission and in other submissions in response to the draft GGLMP), including what appears to be one set of rules for climbers, and a different set of rules for other general tourists and recreational users of the Gariwerd landscape. We wait with great interest to see how reasonable Parks Victoria is willing to be in its responses to recommended changes to the Plan.

### **Broader issues of concern and bed-time reading**

1) For those of you who may have been reflecting on the recent and still current debates on access, Indigenous rights and expressions of views within the climbing community, the following article by Waleed Ali may be of interest: <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2020/november/1604149200/waleed-aly/woke-politics-and-power#mtr>  
Despite its length and somewhat academic tone, it is worth persevering with.

2) And for those of you who have been scratching your heads in bewilderment when reading of the decisions to prohibit dispersed camping in Gariwerd, and the decisions to close a wide range of walking tracks whilst advertising to entice paying customers to book sites on the new Grampians Peaks Trail, all foreshadowed in the draft Plan, the following might be of interest:  
<http://wild.com.au/conservation/luxury-lodges-means-wilderness-lost/>

### **Club trips post COVID-19 lockdowns**

Finally, having prepared for 'return to play'—running club trips in a COVID-19 safe manner—VCC Trip Coordinator, Michael O'Reilly, is still looking for people prepared to lead such trips later in the year. A reminder too that the club will subsidise the cost of potential trip leaders obtaining up-to-date first aid qualifications, as long as trip leaders commit to running at least two trips this year.

Take care out there!

*Kevin*



*Friends of Arapiles and co putting in tree guards to protect native saplings  
at Dyurrite / Mt Arapiles over summer  
Photos: Rob Leach*



# UPDATES

## Product recall

Climbing Anchors has issued a recall on PFH 45-degree bolt plates manufactured after 5 December 2020. The defect is that they won't fit over 10mm bolts. For details on how to identify the plates or for more information, please go to their [website](#).



Reel Rock 15 is coming soon!  
16 March at the Astor in St Kilda.  
For tix, go to [Eventbrite](#).



## Womxn of colour survey

Women Uprising has created a community survey for womxn of colour, in order to create safer, more inclusive climbing spaces. If you identify as a womxn of colour and would like to complete the survey, please go here:

<https://forms.gle/6N8aq2L4Ht4WYd7R6>

## New store

Climbing Anchors has moved! Their new store is at Shop 7/397 Smith St, Fitzroy—just 6 minutes walk from their old store in Collingwood. There's change rooms that don't double as storage, and a dedicated hang-out space.



## Gear night

Rock Hardware is running a gear sales night at Gravity Worx on 26 March from 4.30pm – 8.30pm. And Gravity Worx's bouldering area is now up and running.

## Red point series

Bogong Equipment is the official climbing shoe sponsor of the Red Point Series, a month-long social climbing competition at North Walls. Their finals party takes place on 26 March.





Goatfest is happening on 3 April, back to its original date slot of Easter.

Goatfest 2021 is dedicated to Douglas Hockly and will be including some of his much-applauded Goatfest entries, alongside other remembrances. Douglas was a much-loved friend, climber, artist, Natimukian, ACT Natimuk member and supporter, and Goatfest organiser. He passed in early January.

This year's event will again be online, with organisers working on an outside live component for those in Natimuk.

Climbing Anchors is sponsoring the event, with prizes for Audience Choice (\$200 voucher), Jury Choice (\$200 Voucher) and Kids Award (\$50 voucher).

All films must be climbing themed and no more than 15 minutes. The format is flexible. Organisers will be sending out information to previous filmmakers so drop Goatfest a line if you'd like to receive this. Email [goatfestnatimuk@gmail.com](mailto:goatfestnatimuk@gmail.com).



## **New Membership Secretary**

Glen Donohue has come onboard as the VCC's new Membership Secretary. Thank you Glen for volunteering your time!

When not stalking members to pay their membership, Glen can be found in the Grampians/Gariwerd. Usually covered in sweat, dirt and prickles at some remote cliff no one has visited in the last decade, which was probably the last time he was there anyway.

He is the editor of the VCC mega-classic *A Grampians Rock Climbing Guide: the Asses Ears Area*, and co-conspirator with many other lost souls of Grampians/Gariwerd guidebook editors in keeping Victorian climbing history documented.

# UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

## **Learn2Lead Course, 6–11 April 2021, Dyurrite / Mt Arapiles**

The next VCC Learn2Lead course will run at Dyurrite / Mt Arapiles from Tuesday 6 April to Sunday 11 April. These dates overlap with the first week of the Victorian school holidays.

Take the next step! Learn to lead climb using natural protection, have fun and get home safely.

- Exclusive to VCC members
- 6 days instruction with a qualified private provider
- All equipment, including trad gear, provided
- Only 4 participants on the course.

What you will learn includes:

- Lead climbing using natural protection
- Setting up belay stations and descending from the cliff
- Multi-pitch considerations
- Protecting the second.

Course pre-requisites:

- You should be able to safely belay and second a lead climber outdoors
- You must be a current VCC member.

Total cost: \$880 per person, including GST.

Note: Camping fees at Mt Arapiles (currently \$2.70 per person per night), and food and transport are not included in this price.

Email Michael O'Reilly, the VCC Trip Co-ordinator ([clubtrips@vicclimb.org.au](mailto:clubtrips@vicclimb.org.au)) to secure your place or if you have any questions. Your place will only be confirmed upon payment of a non-refundable and non-transferrable \$280 deposit. The balance of the payment needs to be made at least four weeks prior to the start of the course.

For more details about what you can expect to learn please visit our website.

## COVID-19 SAFETY ADVICE

**A few important changes have been made to enable us to safely resume club trips and courses. Please read the [VCC COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) on our website before signing up for any trips or courses.**



## GENERAL TRIP INFO

If you'd like to go on any club trips, it's essential to contact the trip leader beforehand to make arrangements, confirm your booking and find out what's required. Trips are free unless stated otherwise. Visit [www.vicclimb.org.au/events](http://www.vicclimb.org.au/events) for more info.

### **You are a beginner climber if:**

- You can tie in using a figure-of-eight knot
- You have a harness, helmet, suitable footwear, one sling and a screw gate carabiner.

### **You are an intermediate climber if:**

- You can tie in using a figure-of-eight knot
- You can safely belay and second a lead climber
- You can abseil
- You have a harness, helmet, suitable footwear, several long slings, two screw gate carabiners, a nut pick and a belay device.

### **You are an advanced climber if:**

- You meet the intermediate criteria, plus
- You can lead climb using traditional gear
- You can set up belays on multi-pitch climbs
- You have all the above-mentioned gear, plus a rack and a rope.

All intending participants are advised to read VCC Trip Participants Guidelines in the downloads section of the VCC website, as well as our COVID-19 Safety Plan (see link opposite). Before contacting the trip leader, please visit the website events page for a full description. More trips will be posted on this page as they become available.

# Mt Buffalo Trip Report

January / February 2021



**By Steve Toal**

I've had some great trips to Buffalo. Sunny skies, swimming in the lake, and no incidents or injuries. But this wasn't one of them.

Paula and I had volunteered to run this trip on the back of two campsite bookings that had been made. By getting in first, we reasoned, we'd secure a spot. Turns out, lots of others were also keen to get out climbing after the disasters and lockdowns of 2020, so before long we'd booked another two sites, then about a week before, a fifth site. It was going to be quite a crew.

As it happened, we'd picked the worst week for weather, with the forecast looking ominous. Paula and I headed north a few days earlier to stay in Mt Beauty for some mountain biking and to explore the local Gorgeous Crag. (*Ed*: More about the Gorgeous Crag in the next issue.) On Tuesday morning the weather broke, and we packed up in the rain and headed to Mt Buffalo. Fortunately the rain eased around 1.30pm and we were able to set up camp and watch some of the crew arrive in the late afternoon sunshine.

Wednesday was the best day. I was keen to head up to The Horn to

check out some routes I'd never done. However, Jeremy was off to do Wicked Solitaire with Geoff, among others, so we thought we'd tag along and get some photos. However, the top was seeping and they'd turned around before we caught up to them. Off to the Horn, then!

Meanwhile Ben and Mark decided to get the full introduction to Buffalo by doing Where Angels Fear To Tread on their first day.

Thursday also started with beautiful weather, but there was a possible shower in the afternoon. I took the less-experienced group of Tully, Emmaline and Leah to top rope some routes at Catani Crags, while Paula and Sarah headed off to do Maharajah. We got back into camp shortly before the rain started.

With a pretty nasty forecast slated for Friday, some of the group started to bail, easing my stress about how we were going to fit everyone in on the weekend. Jeremy and Isaac were first to go on Thursday, followed by James. As expected, it bucketed all day on Friday (135mm!), so most of us decamped to the Bright Brewery for lunch then got fires going at night in the picnic hut, making for a social evening involving gin cocktails and various other beverages.

Saturday, I had news of others that had decided to pull the pin before even leaving Melbourne. While waiting for the place to dry out, Geoff, Paula and I walked out to

the rock formations of Og, Gog and Magog, then back out to the Horn again for a few routes in the afternoon.

Sunday, I was keen to try some other routes at The Hump, and there was a party or two keen on The Initiation, so we headed out there. Geoff turned up at lunchtime, having worn out his climbing partner Joel (who was about half his age). We headed out to Mt Dunn to check it out (nice walk) and tick a very run-out slab and a lovely jam crack.

Monday was another bad weather day, but there was time in the morning to head out to Chalwell Galleries to have a shot at Glacé and do Untouched by Human Hands with a number of so-called climbers acting as spectators. We headed back to camp to beat the incoming rain, only to find out about Yushu's accident and deal with the communications and logistic issues. (See her write-up of the accident in this issue of *Argus*).

All in all, some pretty nice climbing was done despite the adversity.

# Wicked Solitaire

By Yushu Soon

On the second-last day of our climbing trip to Mt Buffalo, I fell about 14m to the ground during a rappel. Right after the fall, I felt ashamed and embarrassed as I thought I was always careful and climbing accidents would never happen to me. Thus it takes some courage to give an honest account, to reflect and to admit my own mistakes.

My climbing partner and I planned to rap in and climb the top pitch of Wicked Solitaire, a 15m crack near the Oval Carpark area. The edge of the cliff was a few metres away from our trad anchor. Due to the distance between the edge and the anchor, we didn't have to safety in to anything. Both of us agreed that we could prussik in and set up our abseil devices from near the anchor, slowly walk down to the sloppy edge, and rappel.

After my climbing partner abseiled down to a ledge, which was the base of the top pitch, I tied a French prussik and then set up my ATC. My personal safety sling was girth-hitched to my tie-in loop and had two overhand knots—one is to extend my abseil device; one is to function as a short safety. I clipped the extra length of sling—the short safety—back to my gear loop.

After I had rappelled past the edge of the cliff for about 1m, I felt pain underneath my ribcage and realised it was because of the tension between the ATC biner and the gear loop on my right-hand side. I wanted to adjust the connection, so I paused the rappel to try and remove the biner from my gear loop with my right hand. As I was weighting both the ATC and the gear loop strands of the sling, I struggled to remove the biner. I instinctively used my left hand to pull myself up to create slack.

The moment I successfully removed the sling from my gear loop was also the moment I fell. I caught sight of the loose prussik that wasn't holding me. Within a few seconds, I hit a big ledge, falling onto my back between the rock face and my climbing partner. He immediately attended to me, tried to calm me down, for I couldn't move and couldn't stop crying for a while. You wouldn't believe how grateful and how relieved I was to be able to see, to hear and to feel a living person next to me. My climbing partner checked for visible injuries and, at some point, tried to figure out the reason behind the fall. He looked up and saw my ATC hanging near the top of the cliff.

A witness reported that the ATC and the biner were clipped correctly on to the rope. The question is, why was I detached from them? While I was looking down, focusing on removing the tight sling from the gear loop, I didn't realise that my left hand was grabbing the ATC biner to



pull myself up. The grabbing force opened the gate of the biner. Now that there was slack in the system, I successfully removed the sling from my gear loop but at the same time also accidentally removed the sling from the now-open biner. From memory, I did follow abseiling protocol and check whether each biner was locked while I was still on top of the cliff. But memory can be misleading. I suspect it wasn't locked properly from the very beginning due to my hastiness, and quite likely, it wasn't locked at all.

Remember the loose prussik that wasn't holding me? It could have backed me up if I had done it correctly. A few more wraps would have prevented the fall.

The origin of the accident was the discomfort on my ribs, which had caused the need to stop the rappel and sort out the mess. Normally there should have been slack between the ATC biner and the gear loop. In my scenario, there was tension because the length of my

ATC extension was longer than the extra length that I clipped back to the gear loop through the second overhand knot (Picture 1). I should have either clipped the biner through the end of the sling (Picture 2), or shortened my ATC extension. Even better, I should have just clipped the biner back to one of the rope strands above the ATC, like I do most of the time, but not this time.

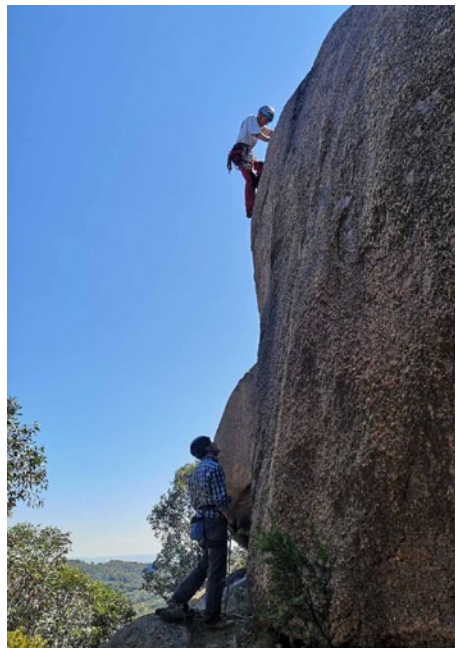
By telling you this story about how I felt I am also reminding myself that not everyone is lucky enough to survive, to recover from an accident and to eventually learn from mistakes, move on and grow. I feel incredibly lucky and grateful that, at the scene of the accident, I was taken care of by a group of climbers who knew how to rescue and could work out a plan so efficiently, like a dream team. My deepest gratitude to my climbing partner, the witnesses and rescuers whom I call heroes, and the trip leaders and climbing friends who gave me mental support, care and good advice throughout the recovering journey.



Above: Geoff happily skipping bolts on Profanities (17). Photo: Peter Upton

Below left: James leading Crowlands (18). Photo: Steve Toal

Below right: Hywel belaying Geoff on Strawberry Jam. Photo: Yushu Soon







Above: Sarah, Steve, Paula and Geoff looking towards the Gorge, North Side. Photo: Dirk Kassner. Below: Paula on Remand (19). Photo: Steve Toal



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# LIQUID CHALK

## *WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE CAREFULLY*

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**By Michael O'Reilly**  
**VCC Trip Coordinator**

As a result of COVID-19 safety concerns last year, climbing gyms banned loose chalk and only allowed liquid chalk—a new experience for many climbers. Liquid chalk is a very basic product, a mixture of alcohol and the usual climbing chalk, finely powdered magnesium carbonate. The alcohol is usually isopropanol, ethanol, or n-propanol. The ratio varies across the brands, but the alcohol is usually in the 60–70% range. This is also within the sanitising range for alcohol-based sanitisers for COVID-19.

But the reason climbing gyms were switching to liquid chalk was not the sanitising effect of the alcohol in the liquid chalk. Rather, it was to reduce the risk of loose chalk spreading COVID-19. As anyone who has bouldered in a busy gym knows, the loose chalk gets everywhere. It is all over the holds, all over the mats, all over your clothes, and in the air. Climbers were already inhaling significant quantities of chalk! Especially early in the pandemic, it was thought that loose chalk could be a vector for spreading COVID-19. So, the switch to liquid chalk happened in climbing gyms worldwide.

Liquid chalk is also marketed to have a range of advantages, depending on the ingredients. This is where things become problematic. Some brands contain thickeners, antiperspirants, drying agents and even perfumes, as the alcohol is reasonably pungent. Some brands just have alcohol and chalk. But the ingredient of most concern is rosin.

What is rosin? Rosin—also known as pof, colophonium or colophony—came to prominence at the world-class bouldering area of Fontainebleau in France. It is a plant-based sticky resin used to enhance your grip. Unlike chalk, which only keeps your hands dry, rosin makes them stickier. The problem that occurred at Font was that rosin didn't wash off. Instead it built up over time, making the famous slopers and footers even slipperier.

If you use a liquid chalk that includes rosin, when you wash your hands you're left with a sticky substance on them. That's the rosin: it doesn't wash off easily. And this is the problem with using rosin—both indoors and out. Over time, it makes all holds smoother.



*Photo: Jill Gara*

After Lockdown 2.0 in Melbourne, climbers returned to our gyms with liquid chalk. Some of these brands contained rosin at the time; some still do. Slowly but surely, rosin began clogging up the fine texture of many climbing holds. The usual hold-cleaning process using water wasn't able to remove it. Basically the holds became more difficult to grip. This was especially noticeable on large, sloping holds with a fine texture.

The upshot of this is that climbing gyms have started making their own liquid chalk and have changed the brands of commercial liquid chalk that they sell. In response to feedback, some brands of liquid chalk have removed the rosin from their formula too.

As a route setter at the three Northside Boulders gyms, I'm acutely aware of how slippery some holds are. I use that to force moves! When I set boulder problems, I don't want them to become more difficult over the ensuing days. I encourage all climbers to regularly brush the holds. I also encourage climbers to check the ingredients of their liquid chalk. Search the internet for details if the label only has limited information.

If your liquid chalk contains rosin, throw it away. Don't use it indoors or outdoors. I don't want rosin to slowly change the texture of the slopers on routes the likes of Mantle, Brolga or Auto Da Fe on the Watchtower Faces at

Mt Arapiles / Dyrurrite. And it would be sacrilege to slowly ruin the texture of beautifully crafted climbing holds at your climbing gym. Climbing holds are expensive, especially the larger ones.

Instead, use rosin-free liquid chalk. At the time of writing, the locally made Gods Grip Liquid Chalk has changed its formula and is now rosin-free. The locally made RESET Liquid Chalk from Climbing Anchors is also rosin-free. Beal Pure Grip Liquid Chalk still contains rosin and should not be used.



Please check the ingredients before buying/using and tell your climbing mates.

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## GOAT OF THE MONTH!



Photo: [Donnie Ray Jones](#)



# Talking Dirty

**By Leigh Hopkinson**

I still remember the first time I had to pack out my poo. I was a 13 year-old schoolgirl on a two-day hike. The masochistic old guide hired to introduce us girls to the outdoors also introduced us to 'the can': a metal ammunition box leftover from the Second World War, fitted with a single black rubbish bag. Whenever one of us needed to take a dump we'd have to collect the can, unfurl the rubbish bag and add our stink to the pile. I was tasked with carrying the dreaded thing for most of the second day, by which time the stench was palpable. I tried, but couldn't bring myself to use the can. I got as far as lifting the lid before opting to hold it all in.

These days, I'm more acclimatised to carrying out other people's poo: I have a two-year-old, so shitty nappies at the crag have been normalised. But I'm still not au fait with carrying out my own waste. (I did, once, use a nappy to cart out my poo when caught unprepared, but that wasn't a success story.) This year I've made a resolution to be more proactive with

my poo, instead of just dashing into the undergrowth.

We've all done it, be it the thought of the route we're about to get on, or that second coffee we brewed. And on the whole, climbers are pretty excellent at disposing of their number twos. (It's usually people unaccustomed to being in the outdoors who need the crash-course: those who leave that little flutter of tissues trackside or *beside* the public toilet, the ones who crown their turd with an inadequate rock.) However, crag poos are likely to become increasingly topical with the number of climbers heading into the outdoors on the up, and the number of crags available to us on the down. And when you gotta go, you gotta go. So, what are our options as responsible evacuator?

## **1. Use the facilities**

It's a no-brainer. If you can, walk back out. For example, there's a toilet several hundred metres down the road from Camel's Hump at Mt Macedon. Losing half an hour isn't ideal, but you'll be doing your bit for the crag and your fellow users.

## 2. Dig a hole and bury it

This is, by and large, accepted practise in Australia. CliffCare recommends going at least 60 metres away from tracks or streams and digging your hole 15cm deep. Polluting a water source with faeces can cause giardia and Hep A, while animals could chow down if you bury it too shallow.

If you're new to doing your business in the outdoors, here's a few things to keep in mind:

- Look out for snakes, stinging nettle and blackberries.
- Crouching puts your bowels in the optimum evacuation position, so allow yourself ample time to dig your hole. Choose a sunny spot to speed up the time your poo will take to break down. Try and choose an elevated area where water will not go during run-off or heavy rain.
- Aussie soil can be rock hard, especially in summer, so you might like to invest in a trowel. Make sure your trowel doesn't come in contact with your poo when you're shovelling the soil back in!
- If you're in desert conditions or above the snow line, carry out your waste. It won't break down in extreme dry and will reveal itself when the snow melts.
- Most sanitary items and baby wipes aren't biodegradable. Carry them out too.

## 3. Carry it out

Some crags overseas, including in the United States, require you to 'pack out your poop'. We're not at that stage yet, but why not move on it before critical mass dictates? Studies have shown that human faeces takes about a year to break down, with toilet paper taking longer still. (Burning it is dangerous: a man in Texas once did this and caused a wildfire that destroyed over 50,000 acres.) In some places, packing out your used paper is encouraged, if not essential. But if you're going to do this and you've got space, why not pack out the lot? There's a bunch of ways to do this.



### a) Wag It

Use a Wag Bag or similar product, available from outlets such as Climbing Anchors. The benefit of Wag Bags is that they're all-in-one: a transport bag, a waste collection bag preloaded with gelling agent, and toilet paper and hand sanitiser. You can simply place WAGs in a normal rubbish bin. The downside is the cost: \$4.95 each. (Complaints have also been made about the limited supply of toilet paper, so bring extra.)



## b) Buy a Poo Pot

You can buy these specific receptacles online from organisations such as the [NZAC](#). Poo Pots come in different sizes, depending on how long you're likely to be away from facilities for. Simply place your compostable shit-bag in the pot and screw up the lid. (Note: cornstarch bags will break down; biodegradable bags will just disintegrate over time.) Buy bags that are large enough to handle any directional issues you may encounter.

## c) Make your own receptacle

Google how to make a poo tube. Essentially you'll need a length of 4-inch piping. Poo tubes are essential for big wall climbing and are usually attached to the outside of a haul bag. Be careful not to lose the lid! Some sites suggest attaching the lid to the tube with cable ties, but others say this makes it less airtight. Others



still suggest carrying a back-up lid with you, just in case you drop the first.

## d) Use what you've already got

Bogong suggests pooing into a bag and then putting it into a Nalgene bottle. And obviously *never drinking from this bottle again*. Let's call a spade a spade and label that vessel.

At last year's Womxn's Uprising Virtual Climbing Festival panel 'Let's talk about poo', Ashlee Hendy suggested using a protein powder container, or similar airtight container with a screw cap. And after watching Simon Bischoff's documentary *Winter on the Blade*, where they didn't take enough plastic bags and then struggled to push the poo into the poo tube (muffin top, anyone?) I'm taking Hendy's idea on-board. If we're talking about a day trip or an overnighter, then why not make the opening of your receptacle generous and do away with the post-poo pushing? Problem solved. Almost.

Here's the issue. Many sites suggest packing out your poo and 'disposing of it appropriately afterwards'. But what does this mean, exactly? To the best of my knowledge, we

don't have human waste disposal stations in Australia like they do in the United States, and you can't just put human faeces in the rubbish bin. And scraping the contents of a poo receptacle into the toilet at home is just a little, well, *involved*. However, after searching online, scraping appears to be the best option. If you're using compostable bags, you can drop them into the nearest compostable toilet or long-drop on your way out, but this doesn't work for flush toilets: you'll have to take the poo out of the bag and then tie the bag up and put it in the rubbish bin. (Suddenly five bucks for a WAG bag doesn't look so bad...)

#### 4) Get inventive

Climber Steph Davis has written about the fine art of [toileting on the big wall](#), saying: 'I climbed El Cap once with a very committed environmentalist, and she insisted we use paper bags. She made a daily chore of tying the bags to hang off ledges with string in order to let them mummify in the sun whilst we were on the wall. Then she packed them into a SealLine bag for hauling. They were significantly lighter to haul, and on the summit she made a fire and burned them. I agreed that this system was superior in every way possible: It kept us from pooping into plastic (mega-plus!), there was essentially no weight for hauling and carrying loads down, and definitely a lot more environmental than throwing plastic waggbags into a landfill. But personally I didn't have the stomach for that much poop

handling, so I was just thankful she was spearheading that project.' (Note: mummification could be an option in Oz, but burning your poo is definitely not recommended.)



Meanwhile, in the UK, inventor and retired engineer Brian Harper has created a dog-poo powered [biogas street lamp](#) on a trail in the Malvern Hills. Walkers put their dog poo into a bin that then feeds it into a biodigester. The microbes in the anaerobic digester produce methane, which is then stored and used to power a streetlamp that comes on at dusk. Crag power, anyone?

To the business end of the story, I've assembled a poo kit: a Vital Greens tub, cornstarch bags, toilet paper, trowel and hand sanitiser. The next time I need to dash into the undergrowth, I'll be taking this with me. And I've made it big enough to share, so if you're caught out and I'm about, hit me up.





Above: Billie escaping a summer rainstorm on the Initiation (18), Mt Buffalo. Photo: Steve Toal  
Below: Allison, Sarah and Yushu watching the sunset after a day's climbing at the Horn, Mt Buffalo. Photo: Dirk Kassner



# NEW ROUTES AND BETA

## Mt Arapiles

### **Comic Strip Wall**

#### **Jolliffe 18m 11**

Starts immediately right of Ettamogah Pub. Bridge up to bulge and jugs, pull onto the wall and continue up slab and juggy steepening to the top.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 10/12/20

### **Hunger Gully**

#### **Redhead 25m 15**

A shady climb for a hot day. Takes the tower beside The Match. Start: 3m left of The Match. Climb the juggy groove to the short chimney. Step right and climb the grey wall (facing A Sore Thumb pillar), finishing via the crack at the left edge of the overlap.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 30/11/20

### **Cobwebs Gully**

#### **Framed 40m 15**

Takes in a lot of nice rock architecture and scenery. Starts at the foot of the gully, directly opposite the start of Gilt Edged.

1. 20m—Balance up the smooth round rib, then bridge up the line to a good ledge opposite the Cobwebs 'window'.

2. 20m—Straight up the steep juggy line above, culminating in an airy finish.

To descend: Scramble for miles up and back to the Upper King Rat Gully, or take an old sling and abseil off, or make your way across to the Mesa abseil anchors.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 3/1/21

### **Upper Cobwebs Gully**

#### **The Land of Nod 35m 16**

A pretty shady companion route to East of Eden. Scramble through the chimney gap left of Mesa into the Upper Cobwebs Gully. This climb starts about 5m down the gully, at the base of the rock turret that splits the gully and about 6m left of East of Eden. Follow the seam up the grey wall, through the cracked bulge, then finish up the steep juggy line on the left side of the headwall.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 7/1/21

### **Ozenkadnook Tiger Wall**

This is the wall directly above The Bat Cave. Named after consultation with

the original first ascensionists. Easy access from the disabled lookout.

### **Ozenkadnook Tiger 16m 7**

Not too scary, this mythological beast from the West Wimmera. Climb the weakness in the wall about 3m left of Last of the Summer Wine, finishing steeply.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 12/11/20

### **Last of the Summer Wine 16m 8**

Gentle fun. Starts 3m left of The Willows. Climb wall past chockstone to finish via the left-facing blocky corner.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Norm Booth, 24/10/20

### **The End of Tiger Wall 11m 15**

Starts at the extreme right end of Ozenkadnook Tiger Wall, right of Mrs D and near a big tree halfway up the gully. Step onto a rectangular flake and climb the weakness, finishing to the left through the treetops.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Norm Booth, 24/10/20

### **Looking Glass Wall**

#### **End Game 35m 10**

Nice climbing, but the final few metres are a bit runout—you have to be game at the end. Starts left of Doo Voo, where an easy ramp leads up left. Climb the wall above the ramp, starting up a little left-facing corner. Up the wall, trending leftish, to finish up a clean wall on square-cut holds.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 28/11/20

### **Deckchairs Overboard 35m 12**

Climb the smooth white slab right of Doo Voo and continue up white streaks on the right side of big scoops. Finish up left-facing black corner under the giant tree.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 28/11/20

### **Pharos Gully**

#### **Emission Control 15m 8**

Companion to Shitty Nappies—possibly done earlier. Starts left of Shitty Nappies. Climb the line of little right-facing corners about 1m left of the arete. The line joins Shitty Nappies for the final few moves.

First recorded ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 7/12/20

### **Northern Group—Unnamed/Nameless Gully Area**

#### **Wild Goose Chase 18m 16**

Starts immediately left of The Dwarves of Towyn. Steeply up grey wall and

left-slanting seam. Continue straight up, then step left and finish up short steep wall to top.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 26/11/20

### **The Dwarves of Towyn variant finish 18m 12**

An easier and more consistent version of the climb. Instead of doing the 'interesting' headwall as per original route description, step right and climb the vertical wall on orange jugs. This could be somewhere near the top pitch of either The Lobster Princess or Declan the Crab.

First recorded ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 26/11/20

### **Upper PB Gully**

The next three climbs are in the Upper PB Gully, on the wall opposite and a bit downhill from Lost World Wall (aka Upper PB Gully). Best access is to abseil in, because the gully is steep, loose and tiresome.

### **On our Selection 20m 10**

Pleasant left-facing corner, finishing up the right arete.

First ascent: Kurt Pitts, Keith Lockwood, 30/12/20

### **We of the Never Never 20m 14**

About 2-3m right of On our Selection is a right-facing corner a few metres off the ground. Climb up to this tricky little corner, and continue straight up.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Kurt Pitts, 30/12/20

### **Kings in Grass Castles 20m 13**

The seam and wall 2-3m right of We of the Never Never.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Kurt Pitts, 30/12/20

### **The Deep South**

#### **Shackleton 12m 16**

Tackles the roadside face of the Doodad outcrop, via the clean line right of centre. Robust moves over the overhang lead to the seam in the smooth wall, which in turn leads to a fun finish up the overhanging jam crack.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 21/11/20

#### **Touching Bottom 10m 11**

Nice climbing—pity it's not longer. Climb the middle of the clean wall around right from Doodad, starting from the block on the left and finishing direct over the summit bulge.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 10/11/20



## MEMBERSHIP

### **Celebrating our life members**

Bill & Cheryl Andrews  
Tony Brotherton  
Peter Canning  
Rupert Freeman  
Geoff Gledhill  
Peter Jackson  
Keith Lockwood  
Jacqui Middleton  
David Mitchell  
Stan Mizon  
Clive Parker  
Barry Revill  
Iain Sedgman  
Simon Todman  
Michelle Tusch  
Peter Watling  
Peter Watson  
Ben Wright

### **Life members in memoriam**

Chris Baxter  
Eddy Rawlins  
Michael Stone

### **Welcome to new and returning members**

Anthony Spillman  
Luke Stephenson  
Michael Fuller  
Matt Trentini  
Peter Treby  
Andrew Cobb  
Rafal Wadowski  
John Ormandy  
Katherine Buzza  
Ellena Hocking  
Kristen Scicluna  
Julian Clark  
Daniel Chambers  
Matthew Shnookal  
Simon Barnaby  
Maria Fan  
Chris Leech  
Trent Budge  
Luisa Orta  
Alexander Witting  
Maarten Van Erps  
Daniel Macko  
Shjaan Versey  
Jane Kou  
Stuart Dobbie



# YOUNG CLIFFHANGERS

## 5 powerful habits to help young climbers avoid traumatic injury

Young climbers want to have fun. For them to keep having fun—and thrive in the sport long-term—it's worth understanding how to avoid injury. The key is building great habits.

Habits seem mundane and tedious, yet they can have a huge impact on performance. In his book *The Mundanity of Excellence* sociologist Dan Chambliss shared his insights from investigating high-performing athletes.

'Superlative performance is really a confluence of dozens of small skills or activities, each one learned or stumbled upon, which have been carefully drilled into habit and then are fitted together in a synthesized whole.

'There is nothing extraordinary or superhuman in any one of those actions; only the fact that they are done consistently and correctly, and all together, produce excellence.'

Today we'll look at forming habits. We'll touch on:

- 5 powerful habits for young climbers
- A proven way to build habits, based on a fascinating wartime story
- A helpful technique to help our

- kids without being annoying
- How long it takes for a habit to form.

## 5 powerful habits for young climbers

Training for young climbers is different from training for adults. The following habits are recommendations from Nina Leonfellner-Tappini and Neil Gresham in the *Rock and Ice* article [How to train juniors with care and caution](#) (Issue 241, April 2017).

Nina Leonfellner-Tappin is a sports physiotherapist and a climber of over 15 years; Neil Gresham has coached since 1994.

They found that young climbers have certain fragile areas in their bodies as they grow: bones, joint cartilage, and the bony attachment points of tendons and ligaments. Young climbers hyperextend more than adults—finger and elbow hyperextension, for example, can strain joints and tendons. Also, doing other sports alongside climbing can cause burnout and injuries.

The following 5 supportive practices can help young climbers avoid traumatic injury, keep them motivated, and enjoy climbing long-term.



Photo: Jason Jones

### **Habit 1: Warm up**

Raise heart rate (jog, skip, burpees); warm core (sit-ups, leg paddles, planks); and do mobility work (arm circles, finger clenches, hip circles).

### **Habit 2: Cool down**

Do light climbing, antagonistic exercises and static stretches.

### **Habit 3: Supportive conditioning**

Prevent injuries caused by muscle imbalances. For instance, work on chest muscles to avoid a permanently rounded upper back. Work on forearm extensors and triceps to avoid finger and elbow injuries.

### **Habit 4: Drink water**

Young climbers produce more heat than adults, their sweat glands are less active and they don't get thirsty as often. Also they're less likely to notice when they're tired. We need to remind them to drink and rest.

### **Habit 5: Technique and posture**

Encourage them to focus on technique and control, especially when they're tired. Understand what the correct shoulder position feels like to avoid chicken winging. Remind them to avoid hyperextended elbows when hanging on straight arms or doing side pulls. On overhangs, help them focus on feet and core, rather than cutting loose.

### **A proven way to build habits**

During my research, I came across [a fascinating true wartime story](#) that we can use to help our young climbers build new habits—and keep them up.

During the Second World War, the United States sent much of its meat overseas to supply soldiers and its foreign market. There was a worry about protein deficiency at home. Protein was available as offal, but

there was a stigma attached to it: it was seen as a lower-status food and people didn't know how it tasted or how to cook it.

To gently introduce it to the public, the government didn't tell them to eat beef brains every day. Instead, it suggested people 'just try it for variety'. Instead of steak pie, people were encouraged to make steak and kidney pie—a new ingredient in a familiar dish. Butchers were encouraged to use the term 'variety meats'.

Cooking classes and cookbooks showed people how to use offal in familiar, beloved dishes. They made sure the dish looked the same, still tasted delicious, and had a meaty texture. It worked! In his book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg says that this was America's most successful food campaign so far. And what we can each take away from this campaign is valuable in helping us make new habits stick: link new habits to existing habits.

### **How to apply this to help climbers create strong climbing habits**

Warm-ups and cool-downs seem to be the easiest examples of how to build habits. Warm-ups are done at the start of a session, cool-downs at the end. To make these habits more powerful, we could allocate durations. Say 15 minutes to warm up and 15 minutes to cool down.

We could also structure them using Neil and Nina's suggestions—warm-ups can always include the following exercises: heart raisers, core work, and mobility work. Cool-downs can always include lower-grade climbs

and static stretches.

And what about getting climbers to drink water more often? A battle. Young climbers don't feel thirsty as often as adults so they may not reach for water as often as we would. We can help them by linking it with specific, familiar habits during a session, such as during warm-ups, after every route and during cool-downs. Drinking water outside the session is important too. So we could offer water during familiar habits such as at regular meals and snack times.

A couple of ideas for creating new technique and posture habits: take your young climber through targeted exercises regularly, for instance, once a week get them to climb three routes with the focus on avoiding chicken winging. Or remind them before or after a climb.

It's particularly tough as parents to give feedback our young climbers may respond well to—rather than ignore, as they do when they're asked to do chores at home. How can we help our climbers without being annoying?

### **Avoid nagging, use the sandwich feedback technique instead**

Whatever habits you help your climbers to create, keep it subtle and positive instead of pushy and negative. In an [interview](#) with *Gear Junkie* in 2016, young climber, Ashima Shiraishi shared: 'If you don't remember to have fun, you will get stressed and doubt yourself'.

I find it helpful to use the classic sandwich feedback technique. Offer them a positive comment:



'Wow, I love how you used your feet on that overhang!' Then ask a question focusing on the habit: 'Did you notice your arms were hyperextended on the ceiling?' Finally, finish with another positive comment: 'You did that with so much focus, well done!'

It's not enough to help our climbers start a habit. As we all know, it's easy to get the oomph to begin something new. Our young climbers might see an amazing athlete on YouTube. They might want to out-do their mate. Or they might be keen to compete in the next youth comp. But how long will they need to keep up their new habits for these to become automatic?

### **How long does it take to form a habit?**

It can take from 18–254 days (or an average of 66 days) for people to get to the point where an action is automatic, according to [habit research published in 2009](#).

### **In a nutshell**

Good habits can give our young climbers confidence, help them progress and keep them climbing for longer, without traumatic injuries.

Five great habits to support climbing include: warm-ups; cool downs; conditioning exercises; drinking water; technique and posture considerations.

Bundling new habits with familiar habits is a great way to gradually make them automatic too. And help your climber keep up the habits for an average of 66 days (or approximately three months) for

these to become engrained in their routine.

You've got this! Keep it light-hearted, fun and positive—use the sandwich feedback technique. Your young climber is sure to appreciate your efforts.

**by Cynthia Marinakos**

## VCC SUPPORTERS

*The following climbing gyms offer VCC members concession entry  
Discounts are also usually available on memberships and 10-visit passes  
Some of the gyms offer discounts in their gear shops*

**Bayside Rock** Carrum Downs  
[www.baysiderock.com.au](http://www.baysiderock.com.au)



**Cliffhanger** Altona North  
[www.cliffhanger.com.au](http://www.cliffhanger.com.au)



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**Northside Boulders** Brunswick  
[www.northsideboulders.com](http://www.northsideboulders.com)



**Northside Boulders** Northcote  
[www.northsideboulders.com](http://www.northsideboulders.com)



**North Walls** Brunswick  
[www.northwalls.com.au](http://www.northwalls.com.au)



**The Rock Adventure Centre**  
Geelong  
[www.rockadventures.com.au](http://www.rockadventures.com.au)



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**La Roca**  
Oakleigh  
[www.laroca.com.au](http://www.laroca.com.au)



*Please support these gyms as they support the VCC and Cliffcare*

## VCC SUPPORTERS

*The following retailers offer discounts to VCC members  
These discounts are usually 10% off RRP or 'non-sale' prices  
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### **Bogong Equipment**

Melbourne CBD  
[www.bogong.com.au](http://www.bogong.com.au)



### **The Wilderness Shop**

Box Hill  
[www.wildernessshop.com.au](http://www.wildernessshop.com.au)



### **Arapiles Mountain Shop**

Natimuk VIC  
Phone: (03) 53871529



### **Climbing Anchors**

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[www.climbinganchors.com.au](http://www.climbinganchors.com.au)  
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Show your VCC membership card and ask!

*Please support these retailers as they support the VCC and Cliffcare*

