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The BOLFA newsletter



A publication of the Climbing Club of South Australia

Ice climbing for beginners – by Steve Pollard

A few months back I met with honorary ex-Adelaide local, Stefan Schiller, for some hardcore winter climbing. Despite warnings of 4-5 grade avalanche danger, strong winds and heavy rain and snow, we decided to just go for it anyway. I left Geneva at 6am and drove very fast for 1.5 hours through heavy rain to a road stop on the autobahn just outside of Bern.

Stefan met me there, driving from his home town of Fribourg where it had snowed more than 30cm overnight. We caught up on each others stories, news and travel, and it felt really motivating to go climbing with a good friend and familiar partner. With the rain and wind hammering the car outside, we shared our memories of Australia's red sandstone and clear blue sky, and found ourselves creating long tick lists and making plans.

We stopped at the house of Stefan's friend in for coffee and to get a condition report from the locals. It was raining heavily at the first area of choice, which put us off the idea of an exposed and wet ice climbing epic. Even with only a 10 minute walk in this would have been the choice of men, but we decided to go mixed climbing instead. At least this next area required a 1.5 hour approach on skis to make up for our lack of bravado. And being super-overhanging we could expect to be at least a little bit more sheltered from the bad weather.

The cliff was one of the first mixed areas to be developed in Switzerland. Stefan and his regular ice climbing partner have been visiting the crag for (4 years?). There are over 2 dozen mixed and pure dry tooling routes between the grades of M7 and M11, as well as a number of pure water features that form on the surrounding cliffs. Dry tooling is possible all year round for those addicts who are dedicated to this constantly evolving style of climbing. So despite the rain, snow and a few large avalanches cascading down the high cliffs opposite, we were not the only climbers mad enough to be out that day. A group of Spaniards had been climbing at the cliff for 2 days, as part of a 2 week stay in Switzerland for mixed climbing. While they hooked their way up a number of the crags test-pieces, I spent the day scaring myself stupid, and Stefan spent the day showing off his style and laughing at me.

The mixed routes at the cliff were unusually dry for the season, with only 1 or 2 blobs of ice formed on a couple of them, where normally there should be a cascade. Still we set about the warm up route and I had my first taste of this fun and different style of climbing. Having only 1 pair of mixed climbing boots meant swapping shoes for every climb, as well as exchanging the obligatory down belay jacket and ski gloves. Stefan cruised up the warm-up route first, to rediscover the hook placements and to demonstrate the technique, while also showing off a stunning fleece outfit, including bike gloves and a balaclava tucked under his helmet. But even with all of the beta, and the latest and greatest gear, it still takes some



practice to transform a rock climber into a dry-tooling monster. A few scratches in the carabiners and a fair bit of dangling on the rope and I was at the top. On the next go I found that the skills of red-pointing are easily transferable, at least until the pump sets in and fear takes over. After learning to find and put trust in the hook placements a much greater flow and grace developed in the climbing (well – at least I thought so anyway!). A real limiting factor is the unbelievable pump brought on by over-gripping the tools and misusing the feet.

Leashless tools allow for easier clips and shake-outs, as well as a whole new world of stylish hand matches and funky moves. And heel spurs enable such gnarly bat hooking that it is possible to rest and recover in the most impossible terrain. Even though the handholds are always the same size, for me at least there was a lot of fear involved in trusting to insecure feeling hooks and using my feet. Especially when half the people at the crag were missing teeth! The sensations of the rock's texture and the sensitivity of sticky climbing rubber are replaced by the feel of ice axe handles and the scrape of metal under your toes. It made the climbing feel totally exposed, without any comfort in the feel of a solid jug or a comfortable stance, even if the bolt was only an inch below my waist. But the style of Stefan and the Spaniards shows that this discomfort can be overcome through good technique, a strong head and lots of practice. Plus it feels unbelievably tough to cut loose while dry tooling, even if only because of poor footwork. (But hey, if you can't do it in your sneakers, it's just way too technical!)

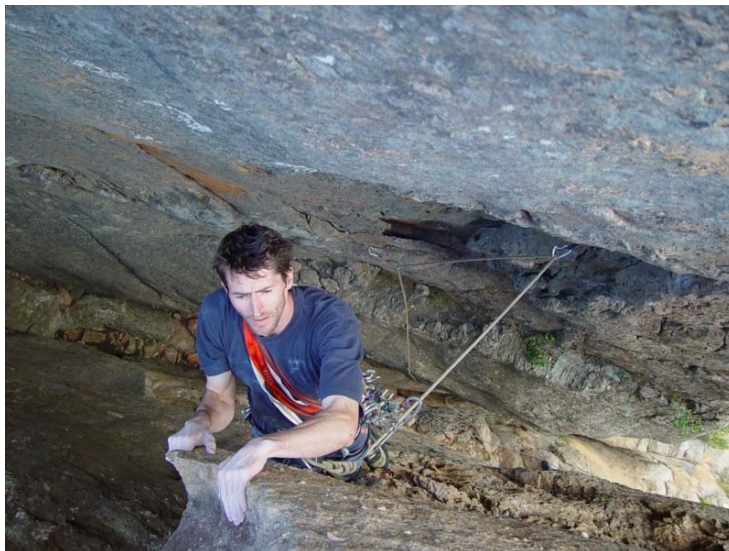
We moved on to one of the mixed routes, which was sadly lacking in ice formations but did have a nice looking blob 1/3rd of the way up. Once again Stefan climbed it in good style, working the moves on the first go and then totally cruising it on his second attempt. We were right not to believe him when he lied about not being able to climb steep stuff. My attempt on the route was a little less graceful; I opted for the classic thrutch and moan technique. I did make it to the ice and managed a few seconds of composure for the photo, but with no bag of chalk to seek comfort in my climbing quickly reverted to fear and whining.

In the meantime the Spaniards had been threading their ropes across the most unbelievable terrain, and I was reminded how it feels to be a hapless beginner in a world of giants. Stefan finished the day working the moves of another route, and was way keen for more, but fortunately for me I convinced him that my skiing was not up to the challenge of a descent in the darkness. We packed up our gear and started the tour out, the German in fine form on the skis despite the heavy, wet snow and leather hiking boots. I suffered a little on short skis in oversize hiking boots but eventually the effort of digging myself out of deep snow discouraged me from falling over too much more. If Stefan hadn't been laughing so hard there could have been some amazing video showing my complete lack of grace and style. I did manage to get a turn or two in near the end, but only after we had been overtaken by the last of the Spaniards, who had left the crag at least 40 minutes later. At least they showed me that the steeper sections of the descent were far easier to manage if I took off the skis and just ran down, snow shoe style.

So while it may not have been a day for ticking climbs it was an awesome chance to experience something new and to go climbing with a psyched friend. We said goodbye again at the truck stop near Bern and I was back in Geneva by 10pm. It was actually just in time to get a phone call from Stefan to say the roads back to Fribourg were so bad he would have to stay at his sister's place in Biel that night. And because of the snow and bad roads he didn't make it back home until midday on Sunday, at about the same time that I stopped feeling completely pumped. Our next plans for climbing together were on more familiar ground for me, a long weekend at that most famous of all bouldering areas, Fontainebleau. It (was) the second choice, because neither of us could afford to get to Moonarie for the Easter break...



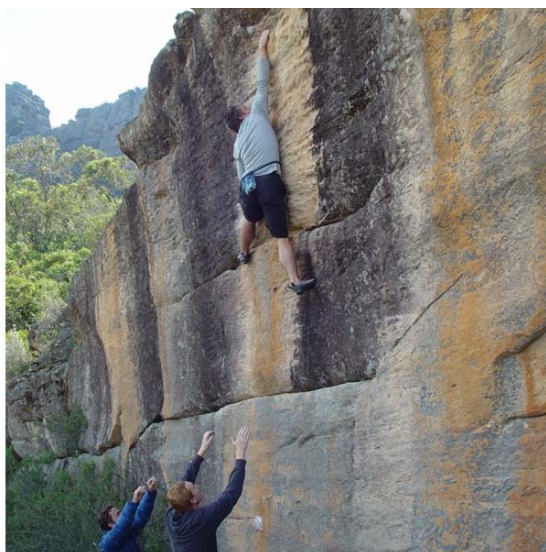
Picture Perfect; Submit your photo's to: bolfa@climbingclubsouthaustralia.asn.au



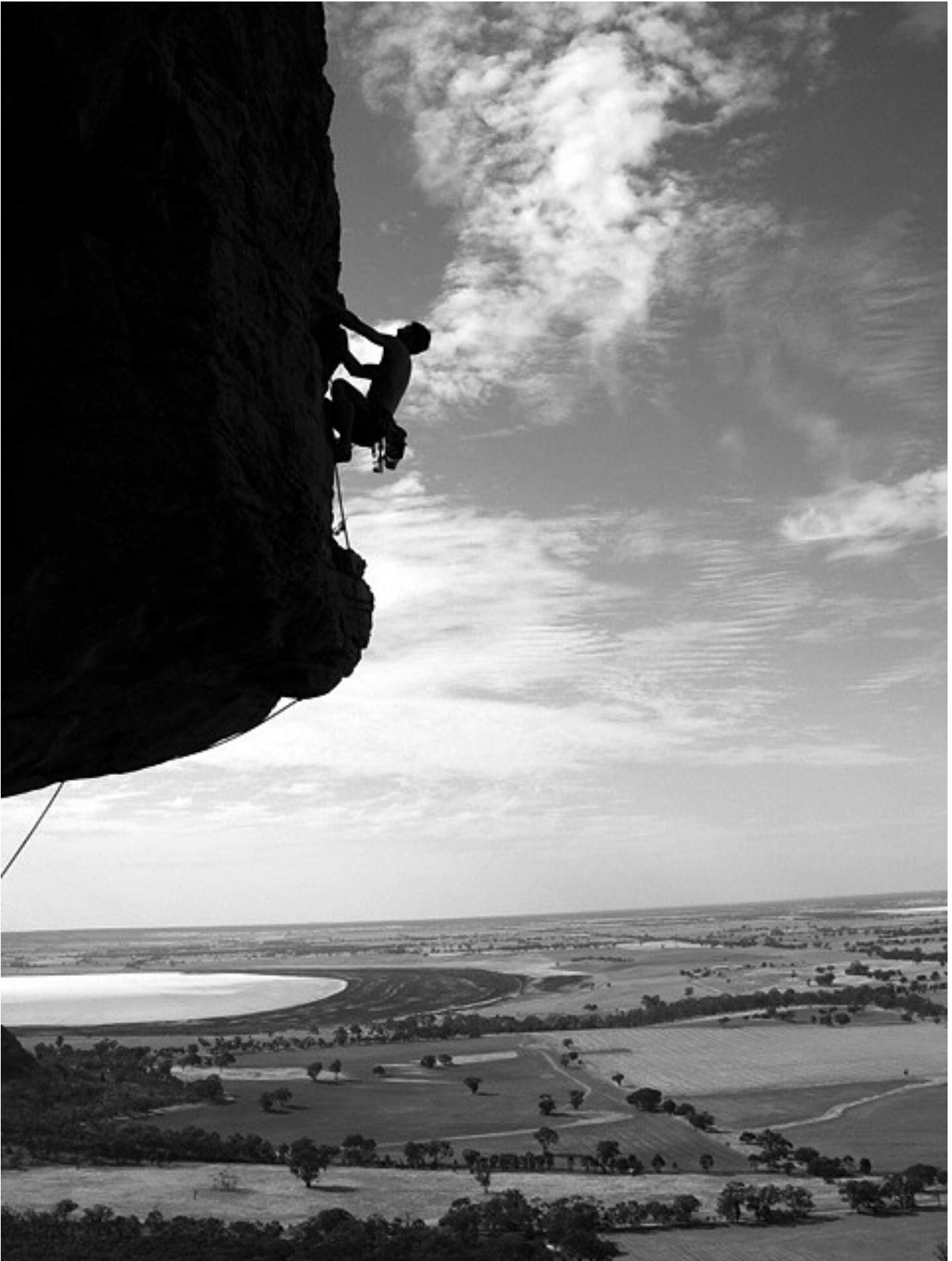
Jon Cook (UK) climbing Agamemnon (10), Arapiles



James Falconer, motoring up Volume 1000 (V3 – 6 metres) The Snakepit, Grampians



Vaughn Thomas committing to Volume 1000 – The Snakepit, Grampians



Jon Cook (UK) trying not to get scared on his 4th trad lead in over 10 years on Kachoong (21) Arapiles

The BOLFA newsletter

Editor: Steve Kelly

Due date for next BOLFA submissions:
Monday 1 August 2006

All photo's, letters, stories or trip reports to
bolfa@climbingclubsouthaustralia.asn.au

A Day in the Life of the Foodland Wood Team

By 'The Board Lord'...

The last weekend in April, and it was raining! Nevertheless, the 'Adelaide Wood Team' set off for Arapiles after months of training on homemade pieces of ply, hoping to find some dry spot of real rock somewhere between the Nati pub and Curtain Wall. Saturday dawns and it doesn't look like the goal will be fulfilled. After raining all night, the fog has set in, and everything looks soaked. Immediately conversation turns to that of WOOD - and why the hell we'd left the confines of the 'Foodland', 'Glenalta' and 'Digler' boards for this marshland. The Foodland Boardlord however was optimistic that he'd be able to find a piece of Arapiles quartzite that would allow upward progress - so with a bit of cajoling - the team headed off in the car to the summit (no - not 'Norton' - much to the disgust of Craig) - whereupon they hike into Kitten Wall to find their fate for the day.

Everything's wet - apart from most of Cat Cracker (25/F7a+); Armed Forces (25) and Security Jerks (27/F7c). Steve - having been on board the Cat before (with girls man Stefan) - ever more optimistically announces that he can dry out the final crux hold and headwall with one of his black socks - plus a tub of chalk. No-one seems to believe him... Words like 'blow torch', 'The Hole' and 'Wish I Was Back On Wood' come

to the surface - with three of the lads declining the offer and instead heading for the likes of High Dive Gully... Only the thought of walking all the way there (a full 10 minutes) results in The duRon staying put.

The Boardlord meanwhile gears up Cat Cracker - spending 15 minutes holding his sock in place whilst it supposedly draws out the puddle that is resident upon the dyno jug (the primary crux hold) - all the while wishing it was made out of MDF wood. Having geared it up - Johnnie Reach Man (aka The duRon) goes in to play, finding the entire line 'well easy' and probably overgraded. 4 shots later he declines further comment, merely stating instead that he's giving up on the thing 'cause I can't be arsed' - having fallen off the crux move on every occasion. Thankfully he doesn't blame it on the dampness of the hold. The Boardlord sends the rig in fine style on his second shot (this time 'round) - commenting that the dyno wasn't a dyno at all - but a very controlled slap... all the while with The duRon looking on like he was going to give him exactly that...

Thus after just about throwing the towel in (or was it the sock?) - the duRon comes back down to the ground for another rest - and the promise of yet another attempt. 5 minutes later he succeeds - much to the delight of all present (The Board Lord, a couple of squirrels, and a wombat).

Over in HDG - the 'strong lads' are doing battle with PCL (27/F7c) - despite a water streak which resides on one of the large jugs in the starting crack. Dave 'I'm not strong enough' Lee waves at every hold with his free hand whilst climbing the line on toprope - as if to say 'Hi - it's just me - nice to meet your acquaintance'.

Onlookers meanwhile marvel at this display of sheer lock off strength, as well as his display of utter stupidity in not just grabbing the next hold. Sadly however, this is a man that suffers from the virus known as 'chicken little' (aka 'toprope syndrome') and in this context being more than 28cm above any bolt can lead to heart failure... bloody boulderer's!

Dan 'Johnny Campus Man' - who reportedly has never climbed harder

than 25 - yet holds the record for double-handed dyno's on a campus board in his hometown (or at least in the suburb where it matters) - shows all present the benefits of 'specific strength training in relation to routes' when he does the Lats In the Belfry (28/7c+) crux move with ease - then continues linking all the way to the top of the PCL connection with just one rest. Not surprisingly however, he gets shut down on the easier PCL crux - because it involves moving a left foot - a movement he needs a driver's manual for. (Rumour has it that walking as a baby was a 3 year project for him - but one-armers out of the cot were a breeze....)

Clearly out of a similar pod is Johnny Front Step Man (aka Craig) - who has more power to waste than your average bull elephant - but one that has been on a Jenny Craig diet for some 29 years.

Having already devoured PCL on a previous occasion, he consequently now has a look at the crux of Lats. All those present expect him to walk up the thing in the space of some 30 seconds, however the audience once again is treated to yet another awesome display of deft footwork (ie. front-stepping) - and he fails to realise the dream.

'If only the route was in The Hole' is a line commonly uttered by the only other body part that works apart from his arms (his mouth) - which (if you were to translate into proper English) means: 'If only all the holds were drilled seeping pockets'. You just can't please some people....

Whilst all of this is going on, Johnny Reach Man (the duRon) promptly falls asleep - muttering something about 'having done his time' as well as something about lack of body tension. The Boardlord meanwhile - having long ago dismissed the route in question as impossible - nevertheless suffers from a disease known as 'Gravity-fed Boredom Syndrome' (GFBS). This peculiar affliction affects its victim by ushering a chemical into the brain - which consequently has one of three results: 1) it makes them want to get off the ground at every conceivable moment 2) failing that, it makes them want to destroy a lot of inanimate objects with a baseball bat, or 3) it

makes them want to drive straight to a pub and consume their body weight in alcohol.

Thankfully, option 1 is on the cards (he was missing a baseball bat anyway) - and he pulls directly into the Lats crux to try the move. Being weak and slappy, and unable to lock off anything with his elbows apart from a 480ml pint glass of Guinness - he desperately searches for another option. Not surprisingly, it involves 'footwork' - a word all three previous parties had long ago dismissed from their mental thesaurus's. After a couple of false starts - he latches the target hold - proving beyond a doubt that he can do the move, but will never do the route because it's still 'way too endurancy'...

Not long after this The duRon is awakened from his dream involving himself, three versions of Halle Berry, a tub of yoghurt and a paddle pop stick - and announces that he's at last pretty keen to try and climb something. Unfortunately for him, he's woken up next door to the body tension capital of Arapiles walls - and like Craig's weakness is his feet - the duRon's chosen form of weakness is his stomach - so he declines the offer to partake in the proceedings. Instead - he capitalises on his weakness by feeding it 3 Lavash Wraps and a cup of coffee, followed by some chocolate...

By now the Boardlord has gotten bored again (because he's been standing on the ground) - and declared that he'd rather (like The duRon) go and sample something requiring a bit more footwork, so both of them set off for the realms of Fang Buttress - taking the car with them to ensure that 'the body tension team' learn to use their feet - only this time by walking all the way down Central Gully in the dark...

Over at Fang things look a bit more pretty. Only 10 degrees overhanging if that - and a nice little array of holds ranging from sidepulls, to pinches, to sidepulls, then more sidepulls. The duRon has a go at the moves of Strolling Direct (26) - amalgamating the Boardlords sequence with his - resulting in a finely tuned series of static rockovers, hold caressing, and the odd foot smear. Not a dynamic move in sight! 2 tries later and he climbs through the crux - getting to the

jug over the roof which signifies the end of the difficulties. From here, it's a quick mantle to a no-hands rest, then a lovely grade 17 romp up to the chain. Unfortunately though - he doesn't have anymore gear - so instead announces that he's going to jump off - and come back the next day. His belayer however, states otherwise...

Urging him on over the lip of the roof, he then passes an entire rack up to the now stranded duRon, who looks about as comfortable sitting on the ledge unprotected as did Craig when we told him to use a drop knee... Shortly thereafter though, the duRon recomposes, having found a nice little nut placement behind a loose flake, and a questionable cam higher up. Some 10 minutes later and he's at the chains - success!

The Boardlord, struggling with the amount of body tension and pure power the line requires (no joke), fails to execute the supreme 'foot slap' move off a marginal smear - commenting that it will never go and falling off in a pumped mess. After a 30 minute rest he tries it again, this time getting through the foot slap, but getting completely pumped in the meantime. Matching the fridge sidepull of the original crux to try and de-pump, he then loses his technique (if he had any in the first place) and dyno's for the Strolling original crux hold below the roof - catching it and pulling through - but only after desperately slapping his way out left along the roof - then back right - much to the worry of his belayer. After about a 10 minute rest - the remainder of the route goes, and the mission is accomplished.

The remainder of the night was spent drinking beer, then port, then attempting to go to bed during an onslaught of several guitarists (well - 3 of them) all of whom seemingly were competing against each other for the prime spot of campground 'Bard' - or something similar. After half a bottle of Port, we began formulating a plan to drag some of them up the route itself - then throw them (and their guitars) off the 3rd pitch - but thankfully the singing of 'Koom By Ya' never eventuated - and their deaths were postponed to a later date...



The Half Brick Award



This issues thumbs down goes to...

This issues 'Half Brick' goes to injuries - guaranteed to be coming to a cinema near you - no matter where you live!



Words of wisdom...

"If you're not living life on the edge - then you're taking up too much space."

Anon



Club Calendar

Upcoming meetings/events

Next Club Meet: 5 June 2006

One after that: 7 August 2006

Venue: All bi-monthly meetings take place at 7.30pm in The Brecknock Hotel, King William Street, Adelaide on the 1st Monday of every 2nd month.

Voluntary slide presentations welcome at any of these meets.

Hot Fun Closing

Latest (and some not so latest) news & views from around the country...

Australian news

Ben Cossey did a new route at Diamond Falls calling it "Der Kitzlige Hund" 33 (8c). Big brother Lee made the second ascent the following day – then later climbed the route of his life with 'Sneaky Old Fox' (34) – likely the hardest route in the country. This new line climbs most of 'Fantastic Mr Fox' (itself 33 – again put up by Ben Cossey), before heading into Grey Area and its crux. With Grey Area being a 28 into a V11 – this new route definitely signifies a big step in standards, as it contains a 33 into the same boulder-problem finish. Ben Cossey meanwhile added yet another new 33 – this time at Centennial Glen called 'Bowl of Milk' (33) and another at Diamond Falls called 'Over Monkey' (32).

Jake Bresnahan has climbed a new route in Tasmania calling it 'The Wizard of Oz' (32) – currently the hardest line at the Star Factory.

Chris Webb-Parsons has done the first ascent of Motor Pussy at Mini Haha, grading it 33/34. This comes after Garth Miller's recent addition at the same grade

dubbed 'One On One'. Both climbers are now on a Euro tour – with Webb currently visiting Switzerland, and Miller visiting the UK. Webb also made a repeat of Mechanical Animals (now considered 33).

Monique Forestier made the third ascent of the amazing 40 metre sport route Larger Than Life (31), at Centennial Glen (Blue Mts).

Also on the female side of things, Melanie Shields and Helen Ellis (NSW) have climbed their first 28's. Mel redpointed Green Eggs and Ham at Boronia Point and Helen climbed Vanity Case at Porters Pass.

Ex-Adelaide boy Lawrie Dermody has meanwhile taken a liking to Taipan Wall – sending Serpentine (29) in three shots (calling it 28) and Rage (29) also in 3 shots. He made a quick visit to Diamond Falls recently and made a flash ascent of Fresh Goats Milk (28), whilst also sending Some Kind of Bliss (30/31) in 4 shots. Upon returning home (Natimuk) he also sent Not Too Bad (27/28) – by flashing it.

Another ex-Adelaide local Steve Pollard (apart from sampling a bit of ice – see main feature article) has made a quick (3 tries) ascent of the mega-classic Reve de Papillon (29) at Buoux, France. He also sent the classic route of Gorge du Tarn with La Bomba (30), and made his hardest onsight ever by sending Arnaque.com (29) – which he thought felt like a 27...!

Closer to home Fred Bonnet has made the first ascents of 'Stugang & the Seven Draws' (31) and Dr Strike & the Wormhole Search (30). Both routes are variation starts for his previously established Nivanoxyne. Fred also previously paid the amazing Spanish crag of Rodellar a visit, sending Mal d' Amores (30) amongst other things.

Overheard...

"I don't think I've got any strengths – I've only got weaknesses."

As usual, please send any Local News/Trip Reports or other BOLFA material to the following address:

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The Last Word

**'I'm not designed to climb on
jugs!'**

*CCSA Club member – announcing
why he fell off 'PB' (22) as his warm up
at Arapiles, Victoria.*

