



THRUTCH

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T H R U T C H

THE ROCKCLIMBING MAGAZINE

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THE CHIMNEY

Neil Lamb

A cluster of tents graced, if that is the word, the creek flats at the foot of Mt. Lindsay, that fine Sunday morning in September 1956. The day before, as leader of the trip, I had dutifully spent my time encouraging some twenty odd members of the Brisbane Walking Club up the normal route of Mt. Lindsay - a tiring, somewhat frustrating but ultimately rewarding procedure. Today was to be spent on Mt. Ernest, a lesser eminence between Mt. Barney and Mt. Lindsay, - a prospect which did not greatly endear itself to me. Three thousand feet above, the last wisps of morning cloud drifted idly along Lindesay's summit cliffline.

Gazing at the great cliffs I foolishly remarked to Ron Brooks that a large crevice running directly up the main lower face looked promising and would be worth investigating one day.

Twenty minutes later, girdled with rope and hardware, in company with Ron, I was slogging up the never-ending grass slopes which form the lower two-thirds of the mountain. I had successfully delegated my leader's duties elsewhere, and feeling very like a truant schoolboy, was impatient to get to grips with our proposed route.

At this time only two routes existed up the mountain: the normal route by the north-eastern corner, of no technical difficulty, and Vidler's Chimney on the northern face, successfully climbed in 1953.

At the base of the cliffline we traversed right to the foot of the crevice, which appeared to gain chimney-like dimensions higher, roped up and commended climbing. The first hundred feet led over moderate ground until a large boulder sitting in the chimney was reached. This rock, some eight feet in diameter, we bypassed with some nervousness, on its right-hand side. On being gently tested for security from above it swiftly disappeared from view, reappeared much lower down removing a small tree in its flight and eventually came to rest some six hundred feet lower; needless to say, all to the accompaniment of an appalling racket. We fervently hoped that the din would not carry to the party on nearby Ernest and that there were no panic merchants present in that group. Ron took this occasion to point out we were on, rather than in, a National Park and we shouldn't throw stones. I'm still unsure as to whether or not he was serious.

At this point the chimney narrowed considerably and in alternate leads a vertical pitch of some 130 feet was negotiated in traditional chimneying style.

A belay stance was set up on a chockstone with piton protection. Directly above us the chimney overhung ferociously, a dismal prospect, and we paused for refuelling. Time had passed all too quickly and 2,500 feet below the bus had arrived at the campsite and a number of minute dots began to file aboard and wait, and wait and wait.

We reluctantly decided to leave the comparative security of the chimney and break out to the left by means of a shallow ascending groove. I arranged myself comfortably, feet on the thin edge of the chockstone, back against the far wall of the chimney and fed out the rope as Ron disappeared from view. Considerable time passed; the bus far below remained motionless; I remained motionless; only the rope moved out fitfully - and then a worried and disembodied voice instructed me to come up but to be careful as the belay was of a somewhat dubious nature.

Traversing out of the chimney, I found myself on a near vertical wall of loose rock, dirt and grass - mainly dirt. The wall underneath was undercut and the next thing visible was the top of the grass slope 400 feet below. I burrowed for foot and handholds and dug my way up to Ron. Sixty feet of scrambling then led to the timber-covered verandah. A longing glance at the 150 foot second cliffline, a frantic glance at the departing sun and waiting bus and we were racing in a tangle of rope around the verandah. A record descent of the normal route and foothills and we were back to camp.

A relieved and somewhat bored busload of walkers greeted us and we were gratified to find that our gear had been packed and loaded. A quick look back at the mountain glowing in the evening light and we were off, back to the city and its working life - but what a whacko day!

A NOTE ON FEDERATION

John Davis

Federation Peak is Australia's mountain. The air can be clear and cold, the exposure spectacular. The land drops steeply into a lake far below but rises easily out to the other side.

Federation is pure rock, the ridge leading to it a series of spires. From a distance it appears to be in council with the Rain God, accompanied by his Court of clouds. Rumbles and flashes emanate from within as the weather is decided.

The climber is in a world built for his breed alone; he and the flowers just hang on as the rock tilts up. The skyline has been cut out by lightning and appears to bleed the clouds of their load. Peaks are guarded by scoparia - and people's desire for comfort.

It is, in fact, a Lilliput, a small corner of a vast continent left alone to build its defences; to guard its heart.

Those living in the surrounding farms ask us "What's it like up there?"

But it is hard to explain.
