

# Ozymandias Direct, Mt. Buffalo Australia

Australia's iconic big wall, The North Wall (south facing, so little sunshine in these antipodes) is the longest section of cliff of Mt. Buffalo, about 1000 feet of vertical granite. First attempted by John Ewbank and Chris Baxter in 1969, Chris later teamed up with Chris Dewhirst (apparently much to Ewbank's consternation) to climb the first ascent of Ozymandias. In 1972, Geoff and Alan Gledhill took the more imposing direct line through the big roof midway up the face, finishing at the Wilkinson Lookout, creating the route now known as Ozymandias Direct.

Last year, as I was beginning work on the new D4 portaledge, Simon Mentz suggested teaming up for an ascent of Ozymandias Direct. I heartily agreed, not really thinking about the fact that I hadn't climbed a wall for nearly 20 years. I rarely get out on hard climbs these days, preferring to enjoy easy and moderate climbs with my boy. But when the time came, and after a week of "getting in shape" at Arapiles, I was ready for the adventure. Luckily Simon is an ultramarathoner, and hardly complained when I loaded up his haulbag full of all but the rack and one rope for the descent to the base, as the most daunting thing about getting back on the big stones for me is my diminished capacity (at age 57) to carry the back-breaking loads of all the crap one needs for a big wall.

We hiked down around noon to the base, which took a few hours of bush bashing and finding the best trail down the stepped canyon. We were grateful for the many cairns and the short sections of fixed ropes, which helped dropping down ledge systems with our heavy packs. There was a running creek where we filled our water bottles. Then we fixed the first two pitches (60m), and had a night at the base, which is not a great bivy with only a place for one to sleep--as I had been sleeping in my portaledge solo the whole previous week in Arapiles, Simon took the portaledge for the night, and I perched myself on a tiny platform on the

edge of a long and steep dropoff for the night.

The long corner which creates the second and third pitches is a pinched off crack and must have been mostly knifeblades on the first ascent--it was hard to believe it had had so much traffic in its early years to create the shallow, sloping pin scars that opened up enough to allow it to go clean in so few years, but in 1975, Rick White and John Hattink climbed it without hammers all clean. As a clean route, we found it fairly technical, C2+ or C3, requiring moving up on reasonably long sections of tipped out tiny RP's and stoppers, along with the occasional micro cam and camhook.

Once we got to Big Grassy at the top of pitch 3, the cracks become more reasonable. We took the arguably more classic line of Ozymandias for a pitch (C1) before traversing back on a more recent bolt ladder (as part of the free route) back into Ozymanidas Direct, and made it to the top of pitch 5, under the huge imposing roof midway up the climb. We set up my new D4 portaledge, and settled in for the night.

The next morning the internet (amazing big wall tool!) told us of an oncoming storm, and the skies did look threatening, so we decided it would be best to sit tight for a day to let the storm blow over. All morning it seemed okay to climb, even got sunny at times, but around midday it dumped hard for an hour or two, and we were glad to have the justification of lying around all day in that spectacular spot. Plus the day off gave me time to post some live updates to the [D4 Portaledge Kickstarter](#), as it was so novel to me to have the internet while climbing a big wall. The roof above protected us from the elements, and we didn't even need to deploy the fly. Besides, it was a great way to "get-to-know" my new design. I was really pleased with the strength and stability, and also how easy it was to deploy and pack up. Made portaledge living much more enjoyable. [See [post #191 on this thread](#) for more on the first report/thoughts of the performance of the D4 Portaledge].

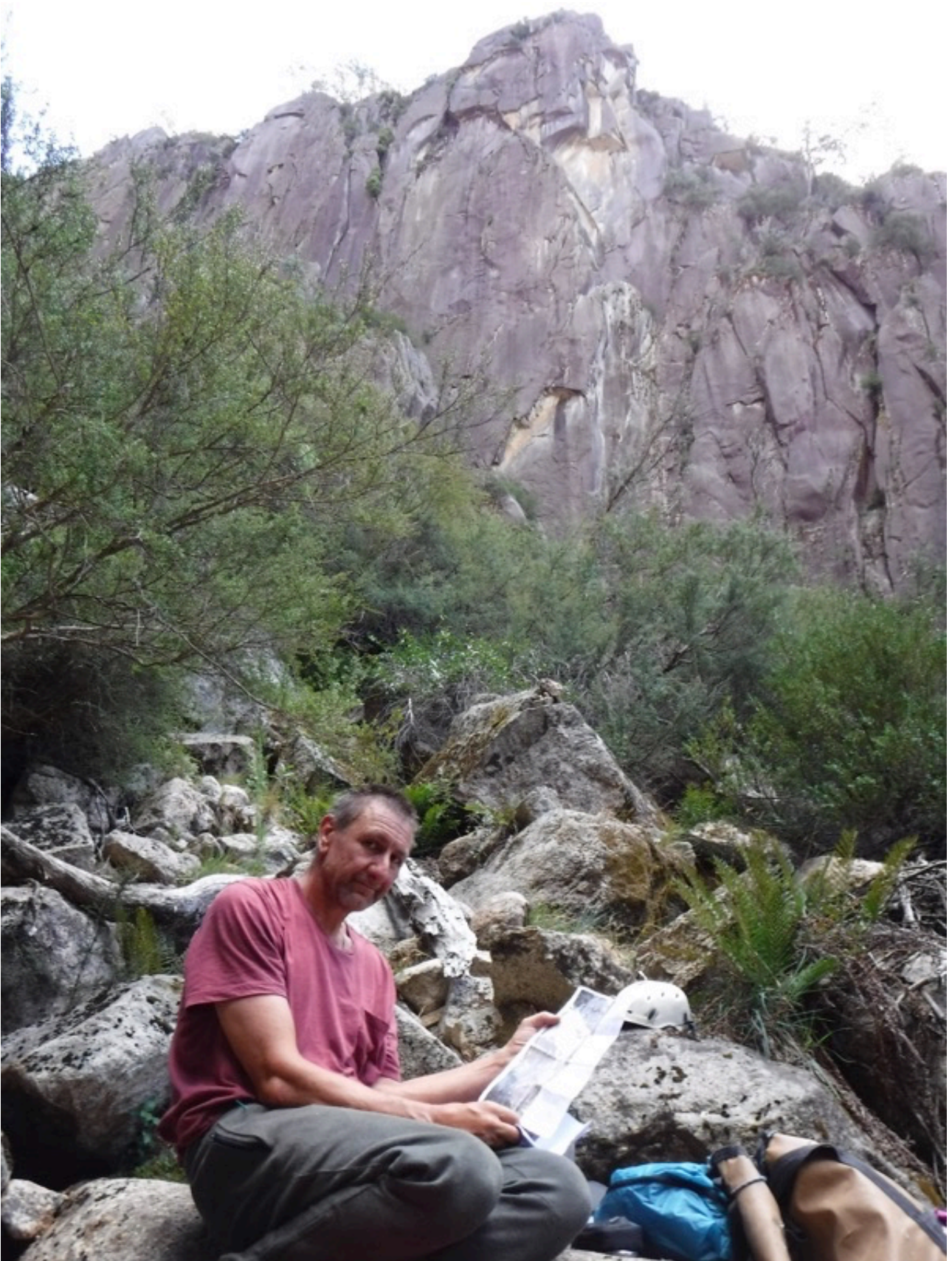
After the full rest day lounging around on the portaledge, Simon led the roof, which has a large seemingly loose block at the lip (it's solid), and sharp edges (though the rope runs naturally around a rounded edge), which had seemed so imposing the day before, but went without any issues. The block reminded me of the Paul Bunyan's Coffin Block on the Atlantic Ocean Wall, and coincidentally, Levy had posted a Facebook pic of the AO roof just as I was starting to clean the pitch. The next pitch is one of the more awkward pitches, going around and through two small roofs, wide and very thrutchy. The second to last pitch goes up a ways, then through a chimney which is hell to follow! The final pitch ends at the Wilkinson Lookout, with a nice easy belay of tied-off Guardrails, and a lovely spot to hang out and appreciate the horizontal in the warm afternoon sun.

A great adventure with a great partner, we had tons of fun climbing it together, and I would be very happy if Ozymanidias is ultimately the final wall of my big wall climbing career!

P.S. Many thanks to the wall climbers of Arapiles, Kate Dooley, Gareth Llewllin, Adam Demmert, who lent us key pieces of gear, like a belay seat, aiders, a #5 Camalot, a camhook, and double gear sling, also all the good beta, especially from HB who could recall all the key placements at various spots on the climb!

EDIT: Here's Simon's film of the climb, "Portaledge Orgy":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsqOhre63lY&feature=youtu.be>



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At the bottom of the canyon, with Ozymanidias in view.



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The rack for Ozymandias Direct--lots of small stuff! (Add a #5 Camalot to this rack!)



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Part of the bush bashing from the top to the base...



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Simon's first bivy spot at the base, after fixing the first two pitches.



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Simon following the second pitch.





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Feeling a bit tired after the second pitch (C2+)



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My belay.



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Simon on the crux third pitch.



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Simon Mentz, the man, the legend.



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Me leading the pitch to the roof, C1.



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Our bivy at top of pitch 5.



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This was taken at the exact same time as the last photo.



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Simon's first time on a portaledge! Looking a little apprehensive.





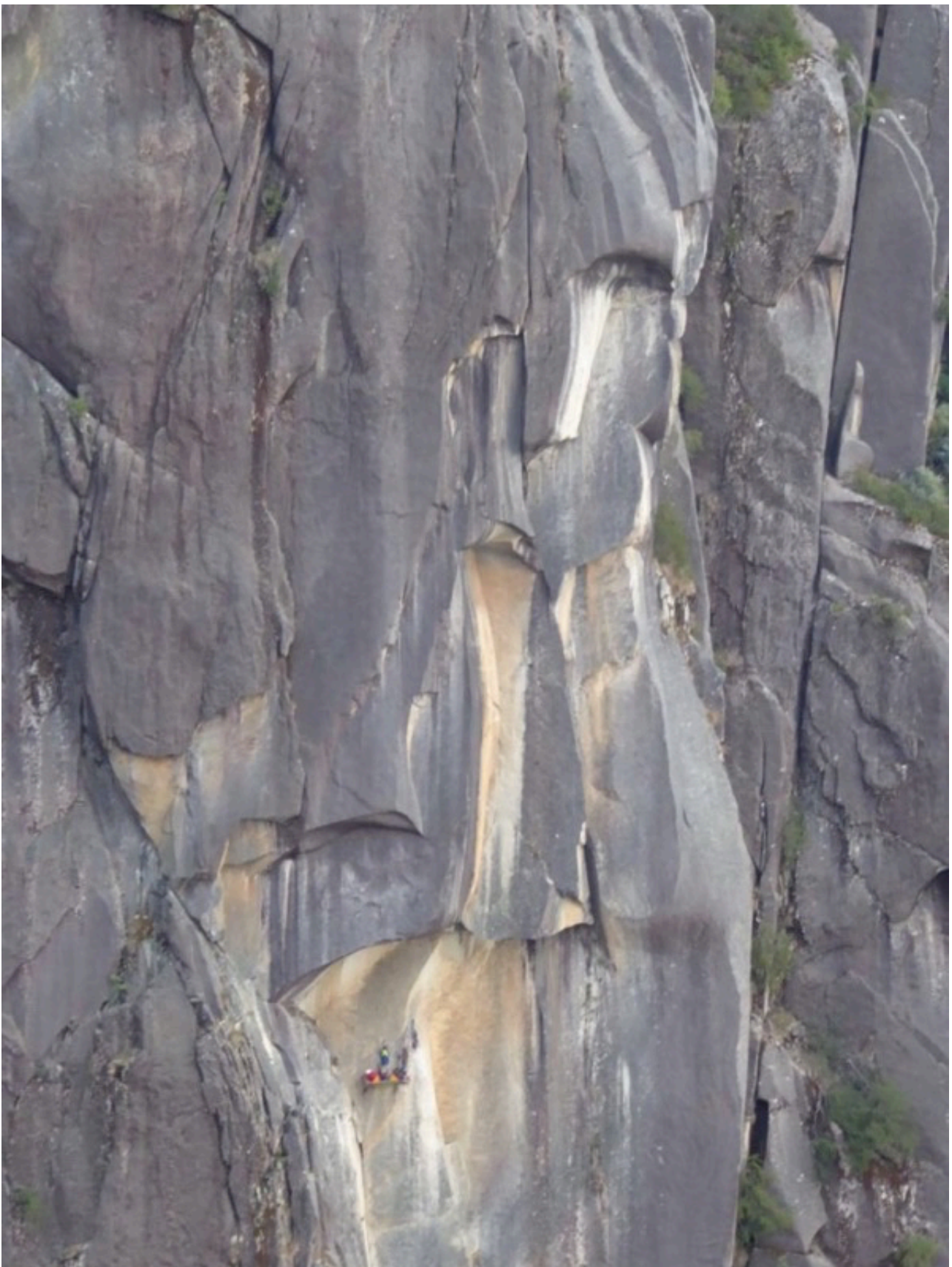
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After a few hours and some whiskey, Simon was right at home in the ledge.



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I kept thinking of new design tweaks.



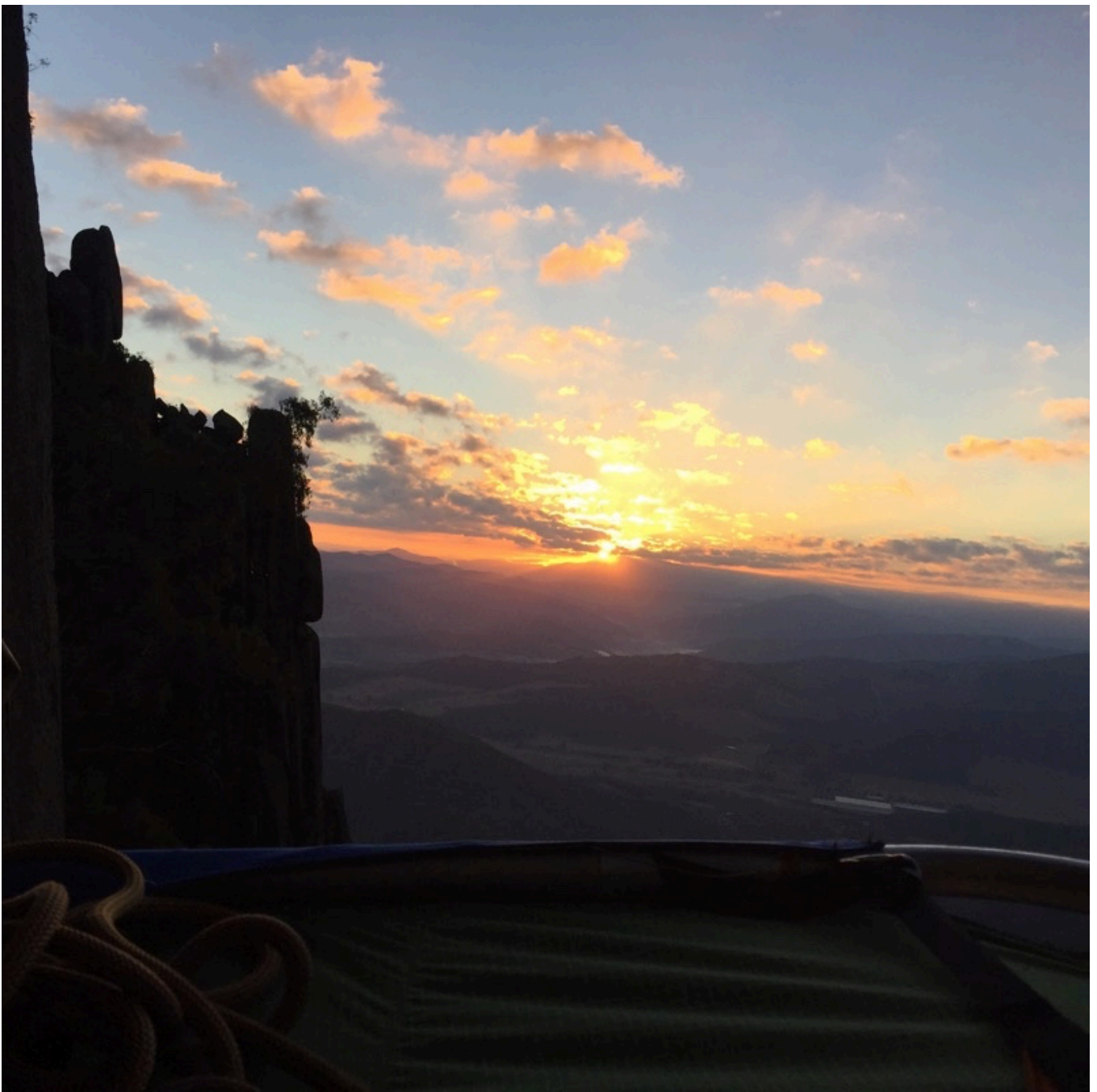
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Another shot of our two-night bivy from the canyon rim.



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A fun day hanging out in space, complete with storm show.



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Gorgeous sunrise.



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D4 Portaledge makes for a great belay ledge!



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Simon took this shot just before turning the roof.



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Simon about to turn the roof.





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The start of the awkward pitch.



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"oh no, I have to go through that!?"



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Simon coming up.



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We can start to smell the summit...



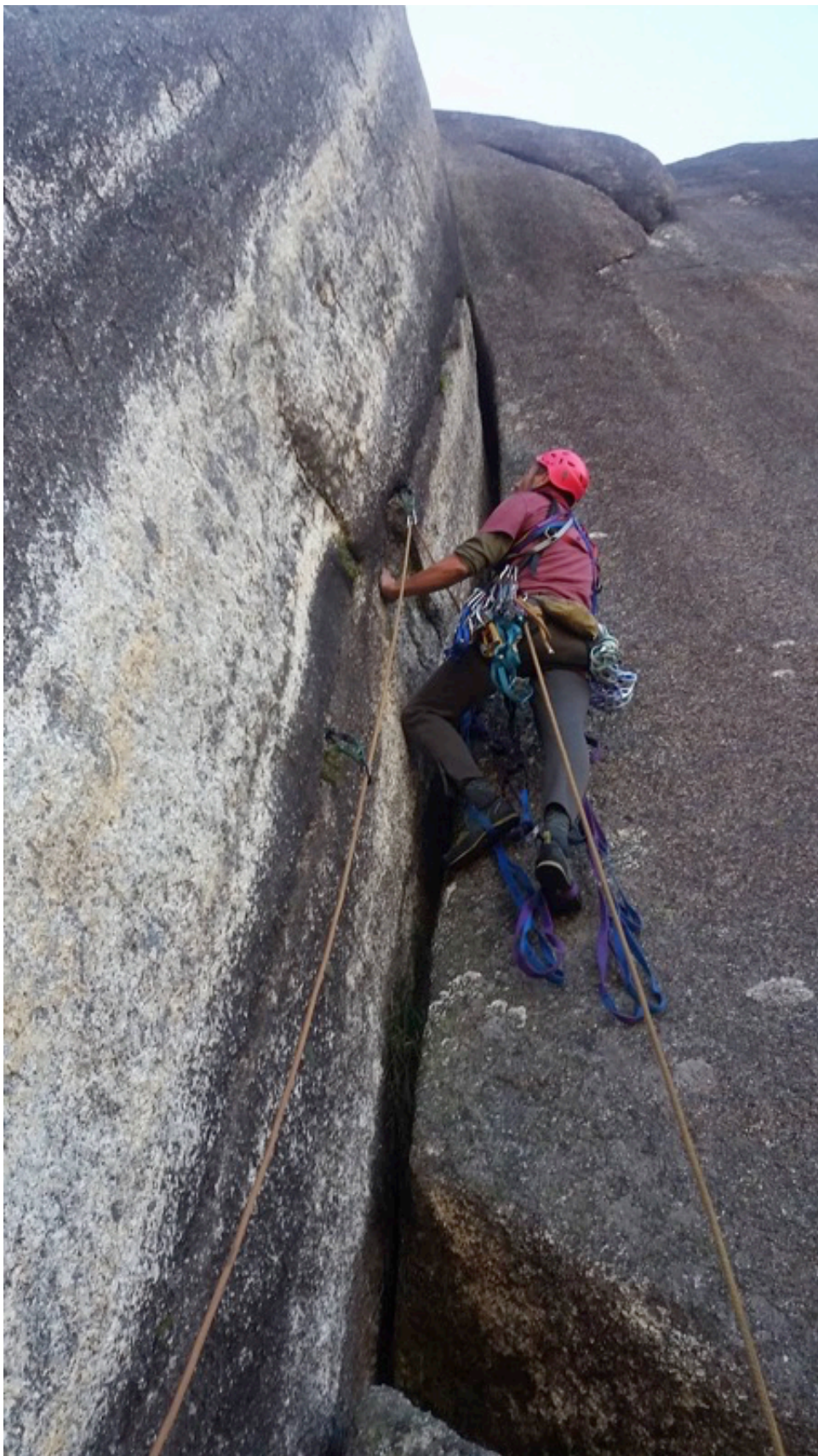
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Just a couple more pitches...



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Hellish chimney to follow on jumars.



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Last pitch!



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Summit anchor.





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Easy haul point.



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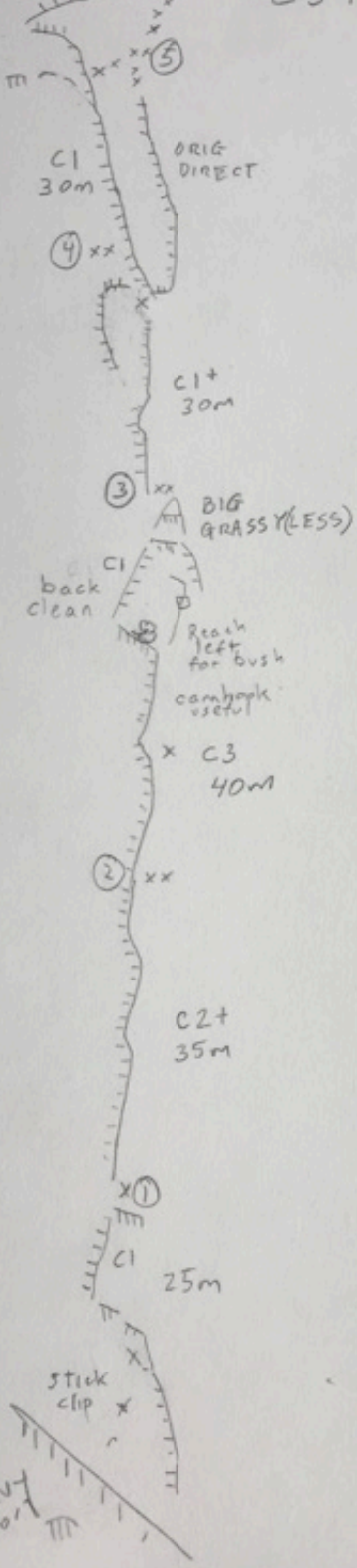
I felt pretty wasted when I first arrived on top.



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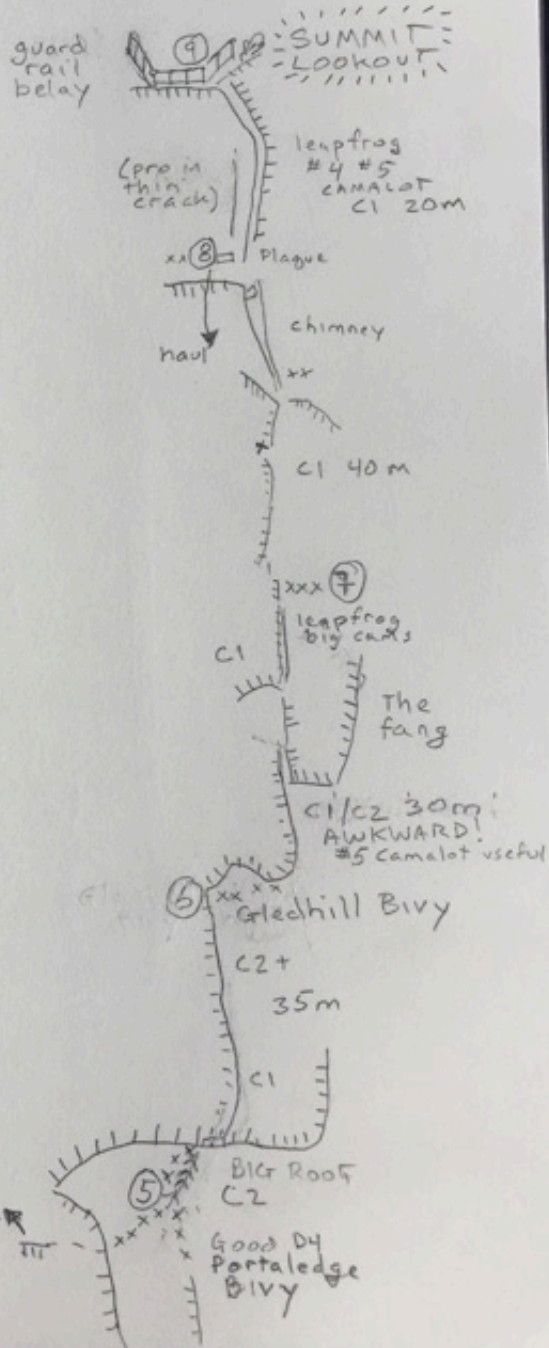
But soon we were celebrating our adventure!

OZYMANDIAS DIRECT  
C3 15



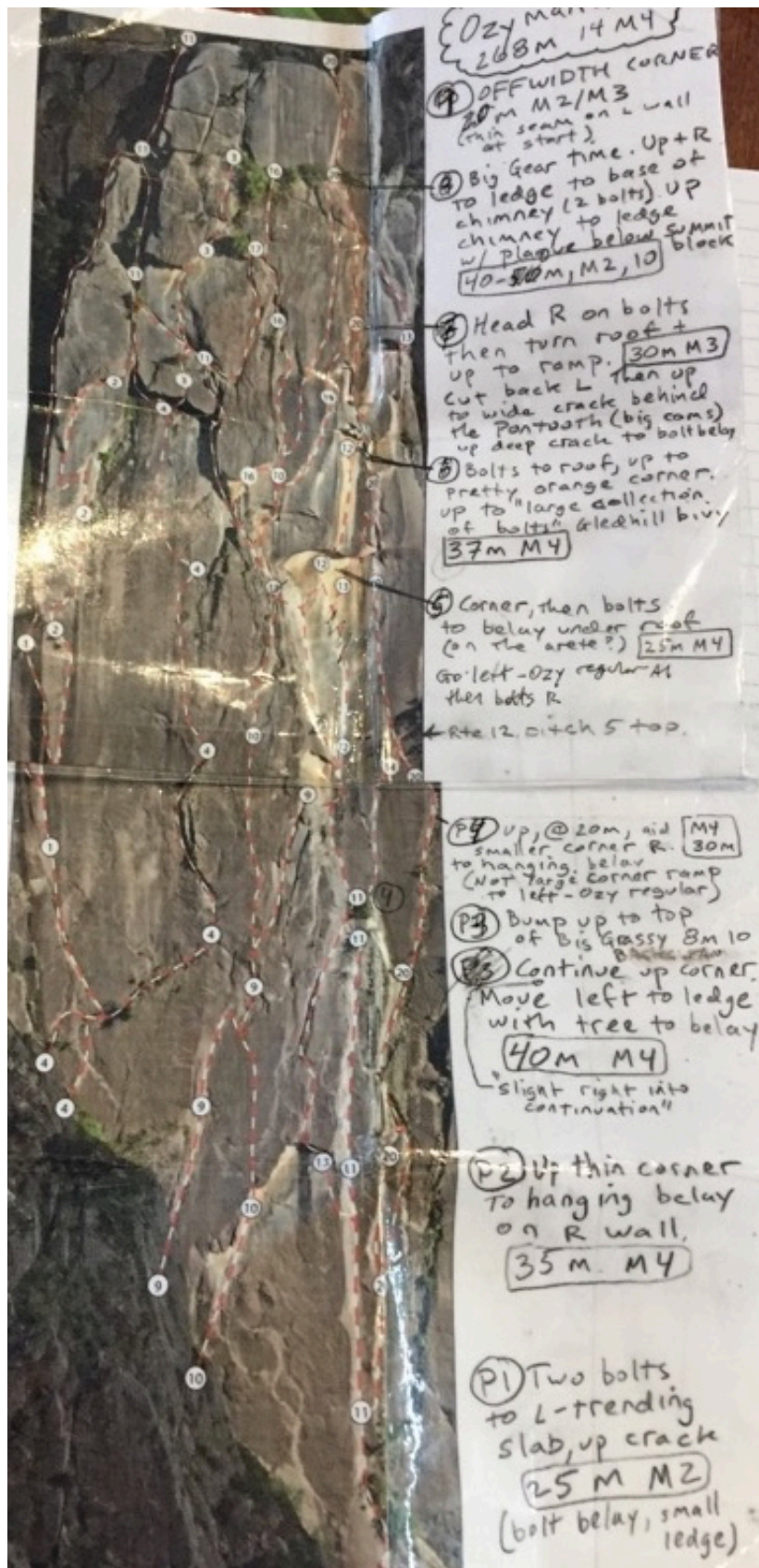
RACK

- 3-4 sets nuts, many micro to large
- 2-3 sets cams, micro to #3
- 1 each #3.5, #4, #5 Camalot
- Camhook
- Bolt Plates (5)
- Tie-offs for dodgy bolts
- 30-40 tree biners
- some long slings



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The topo I drew after the climb.



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The topo we took...