



Southland Section New Zealand Alpine Club Newsletter

November 2009

REMINDER

6:30 pm Friday 13th November, Cabbage Tree Restaurant

Annual Dinner Join us for our annual dinner, this year at the Cabbage Tree Restaurant, 379 Dunns Rd, Otatara. Speeches will be kept to a minimum unless they are found to be humorous and riveting. Convivial company is assured. Ring Ron McLeod or Vonnie Crawford to book and ensure a seat at the table.

Section meetings are on the 3rd Tuesday of every second month at 7:30pm. To cover room hire and supper, there is a \$3.00 door charge. Non-members are warmly invited to come along and join us.

For more information regarding the New Zealand Alpine Club contact the Section Chairman, Ron McLeod phone 217 6727
r.m.mcleod@xtra.co.nz

ACR BBQ

End of year BBQ, bring your other half, meat, nibbles / salad, and something to wash it down with!! Sunday November 22nd 5.00pm 167 Margaret Street. Lets know if you are coming.

Cheers Ron

The cost of the course is \$600. Additionally, participants will provide their own transport and food and pay their accommodation at Unwin.

If you are interested in the participating on this course, contact

Pat, pat@alpineclub.org.nz, 03 377 7595

Homer Hut Working Bee

14/15 November, or 28/29th if wet. This is always a fun outing, a chance to make new friends, reacquaint yourself with old friends and a good opportunity to acquire some "free" hut tickets. The weather forecast is important as we will be painting the roof.

Ron McLeod phone 217 6727

The Winter of 09

The winter of 09 was almost my winter of contentment. There was plenty of ice and snow about to throw myself on, in and at.

For me the winter started with the 'Alpine Club & MSC Mid-year Winter Dinner at Homer'. This little event was to promote the off season use of the hut, to have a friendly get together and a bit of a cooking competition, not that the food mattered. For those with special dietary requirements there is opportunity to show the rest of us what we have been missing out on. I have been treated to some of the best hut cooking a mountaineer could ever expect. Most participants cook all their meals in the hut, however I like to cheat and bring a nice roast of pork along already cooked. Alistair Walker has been known to slave over a hot stove for hours to ensure that the masses are well catered for.

Is this event worth participating in, yes, I think so? It is a good time to take the family to Homer, point out to them where you have been. Take a leisurely stroll up the Gertrude saddle if that is possible. This year there were about 24 people at the dinner. They ranged from semi-retired climbers to a couple of pre-teen who managed

NZAC High Alpine Skills Course, Mt Cook 1-5 February 2010

The New Zealand Alpine Club is running a High Alpine Skills Course for those NZAC members' who have participated on a Basic Instruction Course, or instructed in a trainee capacity.

The course will run for five days and will be based on foot, rather than utilising helicopter or fixed wing access.

It will also be bivvy based rather than 'hut' based. This will keep the cost low and hopefully instil a 'walk-in' ethic in the participants. However, it does mean it is important participants have a good level of fitness.

to keep themselves entertained with some ice tools. The atmosphere was quite relaxed, and the a few bottles of wine went down a treat.

My next outing was 'Ice Climbing Lake Alta'. The ice was well formed mid June so we - Booboo and I decided we would have a go at it prior to the Ice Climbing Camp at Homer. We met on the Saturday and got a few preliminaries sorted. On Saturday evening we were joined by Kotare who had come up for 'a bit of a look'. Together, on the Sunday morning we drove up to Remarkables Ski area, doing all the right things before heading off. Hell, those two have left me in their tracks, maybe I am not as fit as I thought I was. The ice was looking quite nice, and Booboo was up for the first climb. As time went by I started to get very cold and I was beginning to worry about my ability to belay safely. I was pleased to have Kotare with me, in order for him to drop a hand warmer into each of my gloves. Riming was forming on us as we waited, then finally I decided 'Enough'. You had better come down Booboo it is bloody freezing down here.

'Yea, it's not great up there Yogi. Further up the ice is fractured and rotten, thin in a lot of places.'

As we trudged back across the frozen Lake Alta I was already planning my next route. Maybe the Avalanche conditions are better in the Darrans. That night I drove to Homer by myself, hoping that I would find someone to link up there.

Boy there was hardly any room for me to park the car. Hey there is a party going on at homer, great.

Ah, welcome to the United Nations of ice climbing, the token Kiwi has arrived. " you're late!" Uncle Al teased me. I was out numbered by every other race that was there, 20 or so climbers, hang on there's a couple of kiwi's.(Jaffa's they're not from the mainland.) That night I was able to link up with a couple of friendly Scots who were keen to show me the lay of the land. I thought I knew everything about the ice at homer but I was to be pleasantly surprised. In the morning we headed off to the 'Ice Park' which is a series of small low angle waterfall ice formations. Great this would give me a chance to get some practice in before Booboo gets here in the weekend. Over the next day or two, I had climbs with several other climbers, all from the Northern Hemisphere. In the evenings back at the Hut we had fun jibing each other. The Aussies were up to a bit of sport, but their snoring was up there with the likes of Ron McLeod. I was driven outside to my tent, damned pleased I took it.

After several texts via satellite phone I managed to get Kotare on site. He will make a good belay bitch, not this trip though. When he arrived at homer, he quietly moved through the crowded room to be greeted by 'Kotare, You Homo, Where the Hell Have You Been'. This set the Aussie boys alight, one of them said 'he must be a really good mate for you to be able to get away with that'. After a day in the 'Ice Park' we were looking like we were on form. In the mean time all the easy access day routes had one or two climbing parties on them. Gomer was climbed daily, Coumshingaun several times with some climbers returning around midnight. Stirling Moss not fully formed, HQ Holden buried in avalanche debris, Classic Hits and Memories done a couple of times, Gabites-Rogan well formed and taking a thrashing. Rabbit Run not full formed.



Al Uren, Ron and Max put in a new route 'The Celtic Connection' which I sat and watched for a while. I found the experience quite nerve wracking, as if I was waiting for someone to fall. The stuff they were climbing seems impossible and yet, there they were. I could not watch the full climb, it was a bit much for me, so I went off with another UK climber, to throw myself against another bit of ice. I was informed that this climb is yet to be fully ascended and that I was not the first to try it. Yay, ground or ice breaking stuff.

Booboo arrived with the weekend, and we headed out to Coumshingaun. I was out of bed by 3am; Booboo was planning for a big day. As we headed up the ramp to where the climbing

begins Booboo had several belts of throwing up, 7 track markers in all. Not that I was counting. Back to bed was the call. Numerous other climbers had suffered the same bug, I had protected myself with the aid of a bit of Jim Beam.

Later that day we toured the ice park again, climbing pillars and small faces. In all it was a fun time. Mark that date on your calendar for next year.

Climbing Darrans 3rd to 12th July.

Our local section has left it up to the MSC members to run the alpine courses; however this would not prevent anyone taking a new climber off on some of their adventures. Sebastian Blank is one of those new members to our section who completed the msc courses, plus avalanche awareness training. Sebastian made it along to the ice climbing meet and made his first ice climbs there.

MSC Courses were fun. It is good to give a little bit back and by putting a few hours or so into running alpine courses for MSC does do my conscience a little relief. The courses that I was involved with are enough to get any beginning climber well on their way. The courses start with setting up your crampons and how to walk in them. Using an ice axe, self arresting, selecting safe terrain etc. The second course is all about placing protection, snow, rock and ice. Learning how to pitch and belay... The third course is snow caving, and other options, with some more rope work to finish the weekend off. Most of the instructors are both members of the alpine club and msc, however msc has a very good set of resources. Good instructor training and avalanche training. Some of the rules are a little tight but this is to protect the instructors from getting out of their depth. The courses are run in the Remarkables Ski Area, giving easy access and good avalanche conditions reports.

Ice climbing at Wye Creek was the 'piece de resistance' as per previous submission...

It was an alpine start for Yogi rising at 5am after a Stags winning performance at Rugby Park and the festivities that followed. The drive to the Remarks was a non-event, meeting up with Booboo at about 730am at the bottom car-park. The trip up the mountain was a good chance to catch up and have a few laughs. Once there, transceiver checks and intentions books were carried out, mainly by Booboo.



Snow shoes on for the long slog over the saddle towards Wye creek. (Not the Wye saddle, the other one). Somewhere near the top of the saddle Yogi decided to remove his jacket, and while doing so manage to lose his car key. Great.

Once over the saddle the gentle walk to the ramp was O.K. the previous travellers of this route have left a firm track to walk on. The ramp was another story, from the top the ice falls looked great. We could see only one other climbing team in residence.

Off with the snow shoes and down some old arvo debris, across to a rock and ice bivi known as the 'the Iron Curtain'. It had taken about 3.5 hrs to get there so it was a good time for a snack. After a quick lunch it was time to get out and amongst it. The area we were to concentrate our climbing is known as Left Hand Side in the guide book.

Some discussion about how we manage the twin rope system and then Booboo suggests 'Try heading up there under that Prow. There should be some bolts there'.

Off Yogi headed wandering all over the place like a mad thing, but up the main approach all the same. Quite an act to watch, I imagine.

'Out to your right there are some bolts and rings to come back down off'.

Which Yogi did and started to remove the gear as he came down.

When at the bottom Booboo mused about why he was not seconding and cleaning the route? Yogi didn't think the route was big enough. So Booboo then led the same route, with a more direct line. Yogi seconded up the climb cleaning the gear as he went.

A simple abseil to the base and on to the next climb, 'Slippery Customer'. An easy route, good for a warm-up. Yogi got it right this time, he led and Booboo followed.

Next was first pitch of 'Dirty rotten Scoundrels'. A very nice led by Booboo with Yogi seconding. A handy 'V' thread that was in place was a good end this climb, and which was used to abseil off and finish the day's climbing. Back to the bivi for a well earned 'Back Country' evening meal ...

Ring home and explain the car key situation, beg for mercy, make promises that one cannot keep and convince beloved to bring spare key up to remarks tomorrow afternoon.

Sunday morning was cool with clag, there had been a light sprinkling of snow overnight. It was nine am by the time we were ready to climb. 'Your turn again Yogi, head up there the full sixty this time'. Off I went, the voice of Uncle Al Walker in my head 'Heals down Laddie', it did help stave off the calf burn that was going on at the time. The other voice was that of Al Uren 'put you're pro in when it is easy'. There was nothing easy about this climb, but I managed to put some in anyway. I was pleased I had completed my ablutions before the climb because if I slipped there would be more than one accident. I had 16 screws and used most of them. 'Keep a couple of screws for the anchor I reminded myself more than once'.

'I don't think I can go much further, how much rope is left. Oh that much, O.K. I'll keep going then.'

Up over the last bench of ice and low and behold a 'V' thread just where I needed one. 'Secure' build an anchor, quick, Booboo has been down there for ages. 'You're on belay' and up he came, twenty minutes later he was at the top. 'That was a gutsy led Yogi'

'Thanks, let's get out of here. I have to get the car key thing sorted'. The abseil down interesting, the twin 8mm ropes giving quite a bit of stretch, esp. when you are as big as Yogi.



Back at the ice bivi another quick meal, pack and time to head out.

It is a tough haul back up the first slope, a couple of ski tour campers were heading in as we approached the top. Woops one of them has just taken a fall, a good self arrest with his ski pole saved more than just his bacon.

Booboo's fitness and lighter pack are a bonus for him as Yogi falls through the snow pack, snow shoes and all.

By the time we reach the ski field base building the cafe is closed, damn. Booboo ditched his pack beside the vehicle and hitched a ride down hill to wait for the arrival of the keys. An hour or so later the wee car roars into life and Yogi is back in business. He has some heavy dues to pay, the first was an evening meal in Queenstown. This did some smoothing of the ways, however there will have to be lots more meals and maybe paint the kitchen or something.

It has been a busy winter, attending all the rugby, skiing and climbing as possible. I sorely missed 2 Stags home games while instructing on the MSC Alpine courses. As I write this, today is our 24th wedding anniversary, I must be leading a charmed life.

As a closing note I have been thinking about all the improvements to Homer hut, if we can still call Homer a hut, and the climbers who have spending their spare time to make it a more

hospitable place for us. I am looking forward to



seeing you there next winter.



Peter (Yogi) O'Neill

The Serpentine Range

The trip was organised by Robin McNeill. Paula and I were keen to join as we were not familiar with the range and there were a few easy peaks to climb there. We left at lunchtime on Friday and had agreed to meet the others on Saturday morning at the Routeburn Flats Hut. The drive up was uneventful and it was a pleasant walk up to the Flats hut in the evening that we got to just after dark. There were some other folk there who had gone to bed and no doubt cursed us as we set about making dinner.

Next morning dawned fine and there was a great view of the surrounding snow capped peaks touched with an alpine glow as we left. It was too good to sit around till 9.00 AM when Robin was due to arrive so we set off at 6.50AM. We were at the Falls Hut complex in an hour and then headed up to Lake Harris. There was an overseas couple in front of us but they turned back in knee deep snow at the lake. We crossed the lake outlet and headed up a tussock/snow ridge towards Xenicus. I was feeling very tired and unfit so left my pack higher up in a basin as

we climbed towards the East Ridge of Xenicus. Higher up the snow improved and several awkward steps on the ridge needed care.



The final slope was quite steep and challenging with just one ice axe each and no rope. The views when we got there were great especially towards the Darrans where I could recognise many peaks I'd climbed in the past there. The descent went well and on the way down we spied 4 people crossing frozen Lake Harris, no doubt Robin and party. We arrived back at our gear drop and had a lie in the tussock and a bite to eat.



The weather still looked fine and I was thinking of heading down to the Falls Hut but Paula suggested following Robins footprints up to the Valley of the Trolls so I thought that was a good idea. Off we set crossing Lake Harris and into the valley to find them camped a short distance up. Nigel and Graham I knew from a previous trip and Julia was a new face. We had a pleasant camp that night though it was cold in the morning.

Another fine day and hard snow conditions and we decided to go for Erebus another 1900-meter peak further up the valley. Robin and co decided to try Xenicus from the camp. I was curious to see they left their tents up when on their climb

which is something I've never done because of the risk of being damaged by keas. Snow conditions were excellent and we made good time up the valley. We were going to climb straight up but I was wary of a steep hard snow step on the face that was quite exposed. Instead we deviated off to the right up a gully and onto easier slopes running up from the south to the peak. There had been quite a few avalanches and the snow was soft. We arrived on the summit without mishap. Again views were spectacular from Tutoko to Earnslaw and from Martins Bay to Christina. The descent went well and we were back in camp late morning. Robin was co were there and had wisely turned back when it became too technical for the skills of the party.



Then it was down valley for a spell at the Falls Hut and a pleasant walk back to the cars.

Acknowledgment: Thanks Robin for organising a great trip and thanks Paula for carrying the pack when I was feeling off colour.

Stanley Mulvany



Lake Alta in winter, Robin McNeill



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