

OTAGO
CLIMBER

November 2019
NEWSLETTER OF THE OTAGO SECTION NZAC



Mark Bodner showing full commitment on Foops (V2), Flock Hill

UPCOMING EVENTS

Club Nights

Club Nights are held at the University Staff Club, Union St. at 7:30pm, usually on the first Wednesday of every month.

Have you been somewhere interesting? Do you have someone you'd like to hear from? Suggestions for speakers are always welcome! [Contact us](#)

November Club Night, Wednesday 6 November 2019

This month's guest speaker is Russell Shanks from the South Canterbury Section who will be talking about competing in the Great Divide bike race. This is a "bike packing" adventure, and Russell will be bringing his bike and some tips for aspiring bike packers.

The 4,339 kilometre Great Divide Mountain Bike Route is the most recognised and important off-pavement cycling route in the United States, if not the world. The route criss-crosses the Continental Divide from north to south starting in Banff, Alberta, Canada and finishing at the US/Mexico border in Antelope Wells, New Mexico.



Upcoming Club Nights

On 4 December 2019, Mathjis van de Ven will be speaking about the Geology of Dunedin Rock Climbing. Take a journey back 16 million years to discover what made the rocks we've come to love (and hate).

Rock Climbing Trip to Castledowns, 2-3 November

Organised by the Southland Section to one of Southland's best limestone crags. All skill levels are welcome, and a lunchtime BBQ will be provided. You will also need a harness, climbing shoes and helmet. Contact Sarah O'Neill for more info and to sign up: sarahrosie@windowslive.com

Elephant Rocks Bouldering Trip, 9 November

A classic bouldering crag with over 300 problems, most of them V3 or below. An excellent trip to socialise and improve your skills! Sign up via the [OSONZAC website](#), or contact Mike (027 222 6422)

Mount Somers Trad Climbing Trip, 15-18 November

Mount Somers is one of the best climbing areas in Canterbury with over 60 routes grades 9 to 25. Participants must be comfortable leading trad outdoors and be able to provide their own gear. Check out the [OSONZAC website](#) for more information and to sign up, or contact Eve (027 642 3211)

Reel Rock Film Tour, 20 November, 6:00-8:00pm

One of the greatest celebrations of climbing on film! [Check out](#) this year's line-up of films. Purchase online through [Rialto Cinema](#): \$15 for members (you MUST show your NZAC ID at the door or you will pay full price).

Trad Climbing Trip to Spur Road, Timaru, 6-8 December

Spur Road crag has some 93 routes to explore with a good range of grades, so this is a perfect trip for building confidence with trad! Participants must have climbed trad before and have/be sharing a trad rack. Contact Eve for details.

Introductory Lead Climbing Course

Dunedin instructor Tim Bartholomew is running an introductory, two-day lead climbing course in Dunedin. Numbers limited, dates dependent: if you're interested, get in touch with Tim at tim@dunedinclimbing.co.nz (022 153 8879)



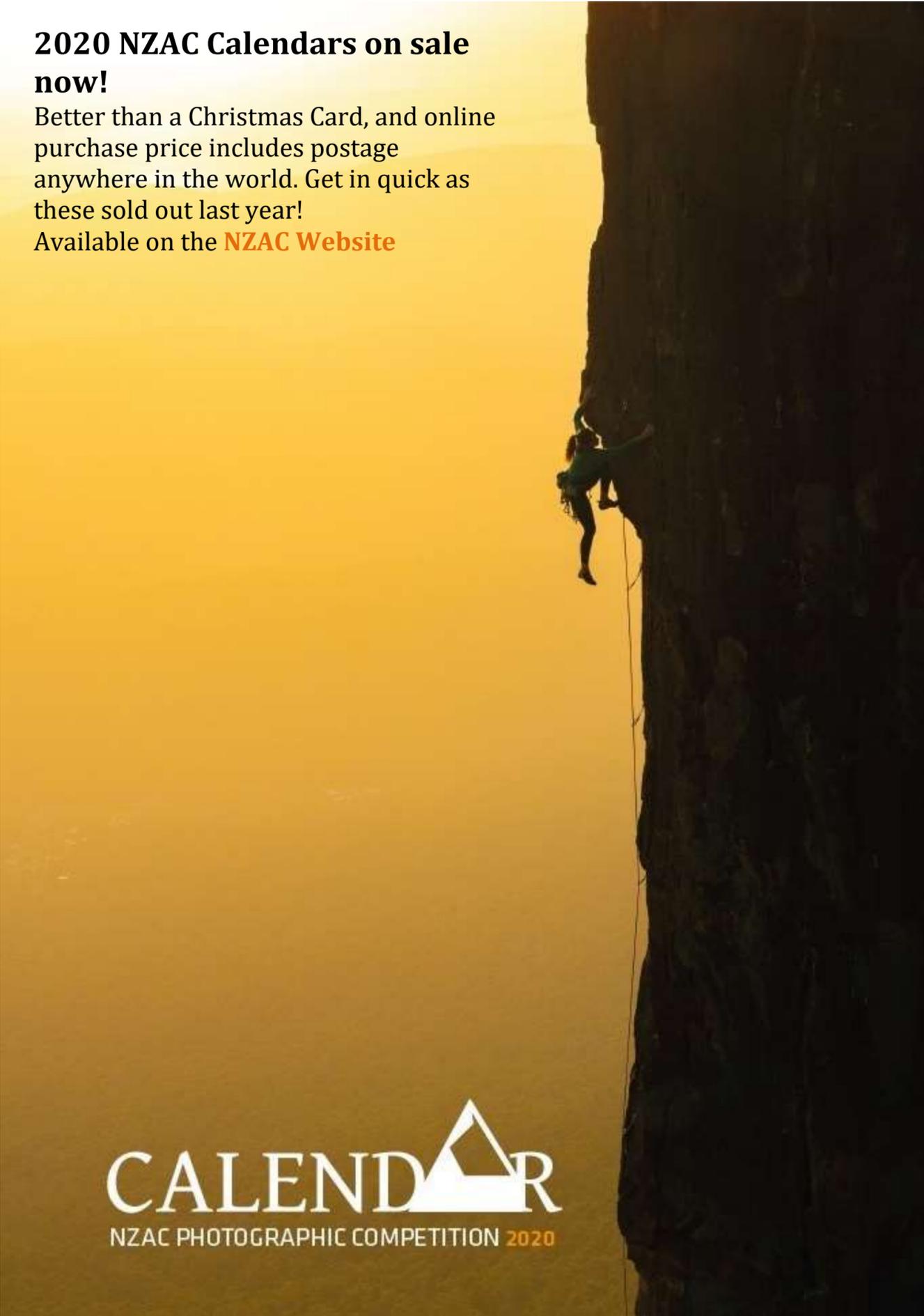
TRIPS AND EVENTS

When	What
Every Tuesday, 5:15pm	Tuesday night rock climbing Meet beside Logan Park. Weather dependent (check our Facebook page for updates)
Fri, 1 Nov 2019 7.00pm	New Zealand Alpine Club AGM At Three Boys Brewery 592 Ferry Rd Woolston, Christchurch. Free pizza, all members invited to attend!
Sat-Sun, 2-3 Nov 2019	Climbing Trip to Castledowns All skill levels welcome. Contact sarahrosie@windowslive.com for more information.
Wed, 6 Nov 2019 7:30pm	Club Night Russell Shanks on competing in the 4,339 km Great Divide Bike Race in Canada and the United States.
Wed, 6 Nov 2019 7:30pm	Section Night book sale continues A great selection of books available by donation.
Sat, 9 Nov 2019	Elephant Rocks Boulder Trip OSONZAC website
15-18 Nov 2019	Trad Climbing Trip to Mount Somers Check out the OSONZAC website for information
20 Nov 2019 6:00-8:00 pm	Reel Rock Film Tour Rialto Cinema, discount for members
Wed, 4 Dec 2019 7:30pm	Club Night Mathjis Van De Ven on the Geology of Dunedin Rock Climbing
6-8 December, 2019	Trad Climbing Trip to Spur Road, Timaru Good range of grades, contact Eve (027 642 3211) for details
1-8 Feb 2020	National Climbing Camp To be held at Ferguson Hut in the Hunter Valley. A great chance to explore a remote corner of the New Zealand Mountains! Check the Alpine Club Event Page for more information.

2020 NZAC Calendars on sale now!

Better than a Christmas Card, and online purchase price includes postage anywhere in the world. Get in quick as these sold out last year!

Available on the [NZAC Website](#)



CALENDAR
NZAC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2020

Bouldering Indoors and Out

By Alastair Campbell



Approaching the wonderland that is Flock Hill

The beginning of September saw ten keen Dunedin climbers head north to Christchurch to compete in the last round of the [NZAC National Indoor Bouldering Series](#). The event was held at the brand new [Uprising](#) bouldering gym. The format was a fun two-hour session with best seven problems counting towards qualifying for the open male and female final. The difficulty of problems ranged from green (V0ish) through to black (V7+). The Christchurch meet had over 250 climbers across three separate rounds.

While no one from Dunedin made the finals, everyone placed in the top half of their respective divisions, with George Armstrong second in the Masters. Several of the group won spot prizes, receiving everything from climbing chalk through to a bouldering mat. Uprising's pizza and beer are to be recommended and helped the post-climb recovery.

On Sunday, plans to drive to Castle Hill for a day of outside bouldering were diverted as a torched car on Highway 73 set the tussock alight. Plan B brought us back to Uprising to wear away more skin, including trying those problems from the final. By lunchtime, everyone was suitably broken and ready to start the drive home.

All had an excellent time and agreed it was well worth the trip.

The last weekend in September brought us to the final outing of the season at Flock Hill in the Castle Hill Basin. A group of seven (2 Kiwis and 5 Americans) travelled up with only two having been there before. Flock Hill is a hillside boulder field with possibly the biggest range of climbed and yet-to-be-climbed problems in the country. For all the information on Flock Hill and wider Castle Hill bouldering the [CHB website](#) is the best source.

Friday was spent on the five-hour drive before climbing at the Quantum Field. It was a time to get reacquainted with the lack of holds and mantle finishes – a unique experience for the uninitiated. In glorious sunshine a wide range of problems were attempted and sent. A highlight was “Bliss”, a V3 slab with a healthy level exposure, which had Jesse and Mark using a choice selection of language.

The evening was spent camping at the DOC Mistletoe Campsite, formerly known as the Craigieburn Shelter: a basic campsite with long drop and water tank just 5-10 min from the bouldering areas.

Saturday was Flock Hill day. Warm-up was the 40 minute approach, which is an easy but steep walk. Several of the regulars stash their pads under the boulders to save carrying in every time. The day involved picking a problem and giving it a go. No formal guide exists for Flock so the best idea is to use the [CHB website](#) and the links to Google/Apple maps. Or for a first timer just try something that looks like fun. The highlight for three brave/foolish Americans was Foops (V2) – a high dyno that requires full commitment.

No matter your level of climbing, many happy days can be spent at Flock exploring and climbing. Note: Flock Hill is closed for lambing until 26th Dec.



Conor Vaessen takes on a route at Uprising



Cameron Daniel at Flock Hill

EDITOR'S NOTE

Notes About the Castle Hill Basin By Alex Weller

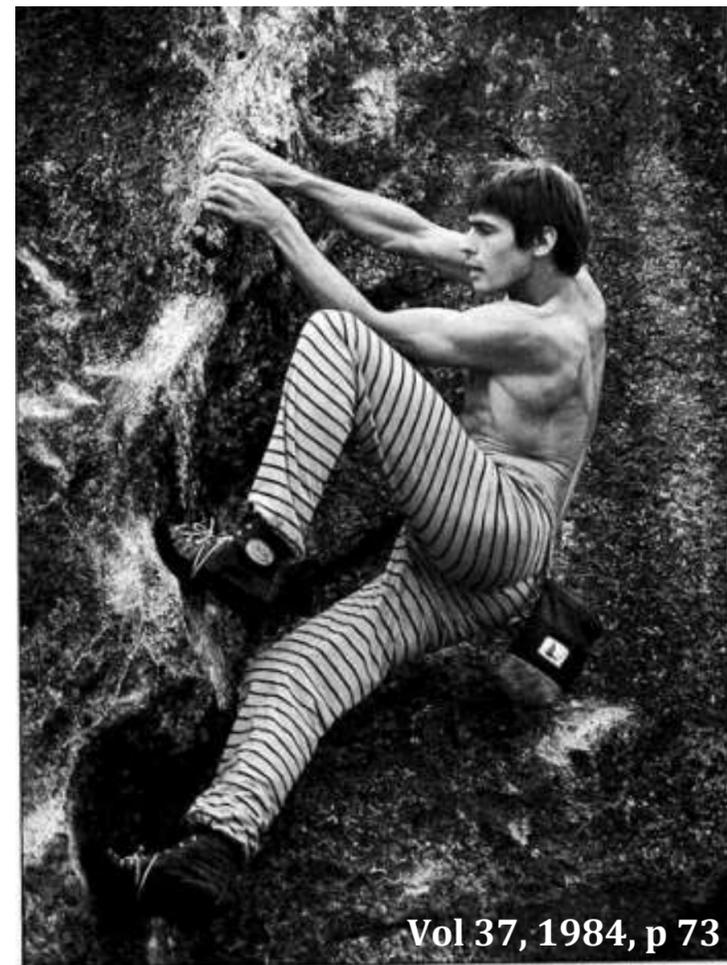
This month while reading Alastair's report about bouldering up at Flock Hill, I got curious about how climbing developed in that area. So I did a quick search of the [NZAC Journal Archive](#) for "Flock Hill" and was greeted with a fantastic photo from 1984. Ah, 1980s fashion!

So what else did I learn about Flock Hill? Flock Hill is part of the Castle Hill Basin: a notorious bouldering and climbing area in Canterbury's High Country. The boulders are numerous, the problems are endless, and the grade range is vast. These climbs require both power and finesse, and the use of muscles you didn't know existed, thanks largely to a range of absolutely hideous slopers and mantles. The area has a reputation for being extremely hard, which isn't necessarily true, but it does take some time to get used to (we'll get to that).

The Castle Hill Basin was "discovered" by climbers in the early 1970s, when Bill Atkinson put in the Rambandit jam crack (V5) in the area now known as Dark Castle. Development was boosted at the end of the decade when a group of enthusiastic Christchurch based climbers decided that those blank looking faces might not be so unclimbable after all. They started with the natural crack lines, and when these proved unpleasant, "... people began looking at the blank bits in between [and] things really started happening." (Vol 40, 1987, p 69)

This trend towards the "blank bits" was a theme in the development of climbing in area. Climbers would repeatedly go back, look at those apparently featureless faces, and think "why not?" before struggling their way up. Each wave of climbers seemed to climb routes that the wave of climbers before them thought impossible.

These developments didn't occur without some controversy. Arguments broke out about excessive bolting, over-enthusiastic cleaning, and conspicuous use of



Vol 37, 1984, p 73
Marty Beare on Babyfood (25), Flock Hill. Simon Carr.

chains and hangers. Initial activity focused around the Castle Hill area (Spittle Hill and Quantum Field), however in the 1980s attention started to drift further afield towards Cave Basin and Flock Hill.

Intriguingly, these early climbers didn't have to fight for space with flocks of tourists. It was only as more climbers parked along the roadside that sightseers began to stop to see what the big attraction was about. (Vol 43, 1990, p 56)

Climbing in the Castle Hill Basin has gone in and out of fashion in the decades since, even as access to the various crags has changed according to the whims and preferences of landowners. What has remained constant, however, is that Castle Hill has remained an area to test a climber's abilities. In a 2007 article, one climber notes how climbing well at Castle Hill requires as much mental gymnastics as physical skill:

Often what you use as a hold at Castle Hill is simply a change in angle of the rock. It's not something that perhaps a non-climber would look at and recognise as being a hold in the conventional sense. So often it requires quite imaginative body positions and lots of opposing tension using your feet in different ways. I guess Castle Hill changes your

perception of what you'd normally define as being a foothold. (Vol 59, 2007, p 110)

This same article has a fascinating description of how some routes were developed at Castle Hill. "...we had a time where we decided that if there needed to be a handhold in a certain position, but there wasn't one, we'd just put our body into that position, or our hand to the position where we thought there should be a hold and we found that this was successful at reaching another level of climbing at Castle Hill." (p110)

That's right. Castle Hill climbers are able to jedi-mind-trick hand and footholds into existence through sheer power of will (and, well, a whole lot of body tension).

So it seems that climbers going to Castle Hill will always find what they are looking for, so long as their goals include sore muscles and a fair share of frustration. But hey, if you get sandbagged at least you know two things: (1) You aren't the only one; and (2) It's a pretty stunning location, so there are worse places for failure.



Photo: Alex Weller

SECTION NEWS & NOTICES

Guide Books Available

The Section has an up-to-date set of guidebooks available to members. Priority goes to trip leaders, however these are available to all members. Contact us to arrange use.

Aoraki Tai Poutini, Rob Frost, 4th ed., 2018

Backcountry Ski-Touring in New Zealand, Shane Orchard, 1st ed., 2018

Barron Saddle – Mount Brewster, Ross Cullen, 2nd ed., 2002

Mount Aspiring Region, Allan Uren and Mark Watson, 4th ed., 2016

The Otago Southern Alps, Danilo Hegg & Geoff Spearpoint, 8th ed., 2013

Queenstown Rock Ice & Boulders, Guillaume Charton, 3rd ed., 2018

Rock Deluxe, Ivan Vostiner and Kate Sinclair, 2nd ed., 2015

Wanaka Rock, 7th ed., 2014

Section Trip Information

Trip Sign Up

Interested in going on Section Trips? [Sign up](#) to our [section website](#) and subscribe to receive email notifications when new trips are posted. Members and non-members welcome.

Trip Leaders Wanted!

We're looking for keen people to volunteer to become section trip leaders. Anyone can become a section trip leader as long as they are known to be competent and capable in the mountains. If you're interested in becoming a trip leader, contact us at otago.climber@gmail.com and we'll help guide you through the process.

Gear for Hire

PLBs (Personal Locator Beacons)

The Otago Section has two PLBs (Personal Locator Beacons) for use by Section members. Rental is free for NZAC members and \$5 per day for non-members.

Fill out the [online booking form](#), then contact Keith Moffat or Ryan Thomas to arrange to collect a unit (contact info in Section Contacts).

Avalanche Equipment and Snowshoes

Available for rent from Hunting and Fishing, Dunedin (141 Crawford Street).

Rental for members is \$5 per day for an avalanche set (transceiver, probe and shovel), and \$5 per day for snowshoes. You **MUST** show your current membership card to receive that rate. Fees for non members are \$10 per day with a \$20 deposit. Members are welcome to collect gear on Friday and return Monday and two day's rental will apply.

Contact the Section if you have any issues with gear or rentals.



ON SALE NOW

THE NORTH FACE PRESENTS

REEL ROCK 14

Black Diamond YETI TRUBLUE AUTO BELAY

From 5 November 2019

FOR TICKETS & INFO: www.reelrockfilmtour.co.nz

ADVENTURE ENTERTAINMENT

Breaking the Ice, Online Exhibition

The Canterbury Museum just ran an exhibition on Carsten Borchgrevink's trip to spend a year in Antarctica over 1899-1900. Before Scott and Shackleton, his team proved it was possible for humans to survive the Antarctica winter. They have a fancy online version of their exhibit available if you want to check it out, including an entire section entitled "The First Dogs" in which, yes, there are plenty of photos of fluffy Antarctic doggos.

SECTION CONTACTS

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Trip info & booking: www.osonzac.org.nz

Wanted: Photos for new "Ōhau-Landsborough" guidebook



This new book is set to replace the Barron Saddle-Mt Brewster guidebook in spring 2020 with more than 100 new climbs.

The authors are requesting colour photographs and information such as new routes, errors and omissions in the current edition, and changes to existing routes, access, huts.

Contact the authors directly:

j.m.thornton@live.com (Landsborough, Hunter/Makarora, West of the Hooker Range, McKerrow Range)

rosscullen.kiwi@gmail.com (Bush Stream, Twin Stream rock and ice climbing)

nina.dickerhof@gmail.com (Dobson, Hopkins, Huxley, Ahuriri, Barrier Rane, Ben Ohau Range)

GO NATIVE



Members get 10% off Go Native foods, a Wellington based company that makes ready-to-eat casseroles and curries (not freeze dried), and natural slow-release energy fruit bars. The Go Native Company will also give 10% commission from all Alpine Club sales to the NZAC Hut Fund. Get your discount code at <http://www.alpineclub.org.nz/company/go-native/>