



February 2020
NEWSLETTER OF THE OTAGO SECTION NZAC



Ryan Thomas on the slopes of Mt Heim
Photo: Alex Weller

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](#)

February Club Night, Wednesday 5 February 2020

It's Show and Tell Night this month! Bring along photos and stories from your holiday adventures – or come along and live vicariously through the stories of others!

Upcoming Club Nights

4 March, topic TBA

Bouldering Day at Hulk Hogan, 15 February 2020

Local expert, Andy Milne, has agreed to be on hand to offer local beta and tips on this lesser known bouldering area located out by Elephant Rocks. This is a great opportunity to explore this lesser known crag, known for its brawny moves on steep overhangs. This will be a fun one! Contact Eve (027 642 3211), or sign up on the [website](#).

Taranaki Section Climbing Meet, 28 Feb – 2 March 2020, Tahurangi Lodge on North side of Taranaki

Hey, North Island has mountains too! Based at the 1,500m, the Tahurangi Lodge provides a fantastic base to explore Mount Taranaki. Contact Taranaki Section Chair Phill Davies ascent.phill@gmail.com

National Mountain Workshop Weekend, 21-22 March 2020, Unwin Lodge

There are still spaces available in three of the six workshops being hosted by NZAC: Mountain Navigation, Multipitch Climbing Skills, and Alpine Scrambling (Rock) Ropework. This is a great opportunity to develop skills with a great group of like-minded people. Space is running out, so book now if you're interested! www.alpineclub.org.nz/courses

Banff Mountain Film Festival, Thursday 4 June 2020

Back this year for one night only. Pencil this one in, and stay tuned for details: schedule of films to be announced.

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)
5 Feb 2020	Club Night It's show and tell month! Bring photos and stories from your summer adventures.
15 Feb 2020	Bouldering Day at Hulk Hogan A rare opportunity to explore a lesser-known crag with a local expert. Contact Eve (027 642 3211) or look online
29 Feb – 1 March 2020	Taranaki Climbing Section Meet Contact Taranaki Section Chair Phill Davies ascent.phill@gmail.com
21-22 March 2020	National Mountain Workshop Weekend Develop your mountain skills at a series of workshops held at Unwin Lodge www.alpineclub.org.nz/courses
4 June 2020	Banff Mountain Film Festival

Hey there, Kiwi!

Want to get more involved in the club?

Your current chairperson (Ryan Thomas) and myself (the newsletter editor) are moving to Australia in May for a new job.

If you're interested in joining the section committee, standing in as chairperson, or in editing this newsletter, please contact the club.

Join an amazing a group of people who are super excited about Otago climbing!



TRIP REPORTS



Teagan Abseiling
Photo: Mathijs

A Weather Window on an otherwise Wet Weekend: Trad Climbing at Spur Road

By Ryan Thomas

For anyone who can remember back to the beginning of December, you might recall the weekend when both Lake Wakitapu and Lake Wanaka flooded their banks, the Rangitata overflowed, grocery store shelves emptied as the lower half of the South Island was cut off from the world, and slips on the West Coast isolated numerous communities. Meanwhile, on a quiet road near Timaru, a group of five climbers spent the weekend basking in sunshine and warm weather.

Four of us (Eve, Ryan, Mathijs, and Kyle) set out from Dunedin in Eve's very full car (curse you trad gear!) to meet up with one more at Spur Road for a weekend of climbing. With picturesque lifestyle blocks on rolling green hills, the area felt more like the English countryside than a climbing destination, but a quick walk along a farmer's field brought us to the edge of a small basalt cliff. One can either walk down or set up an anchor on some very large tree roots and abseil over.

The climbing at Spur Road is exclusively trad on reasonably solid basalt rock, but beware: there are some loose blocks near the top that wouldn't take much to knock off. Anchors are a combination of double-bolts and trees/tree roots, so bring some long runners. The climbs are fairly short, so in terms of gear you probably only need a set of nuts and one cam in each size from 0.5 to 3, although

Eve brought a 4 and a 5 Black Diamond cam and found places for them on one of the easier climbs.

We had a generally good time climbing over two days, although some of the grades are outright sand-bags – I struggled on the grade 17 climbs, and we had to outright abandon a grade 19 that we tried. On the other hand, the easier climbs made for good practice for placing trad gear.

The weekend wasn't entirely incident free. Mathijs had a bad run of luck – on his first climb he bloodied one leg after a fall, and on his third climb of the weekend he fell, hit a ledge, and twisted his ankle. So instead of climbing, he spent time investigating the geology of the crag (thanks for the December club night talk Mathijs! – it was super interesting and you're welcome back anytime you want to talk about geology elsewhere in New Zealand).

If you're looking for a good place to practice some trad climbing in an easy-to-access location, Spur Road and nearby Mount Horrible are excellent places to investigate.



Mathijs on Zorro (17)
Photo: Ryan Thomas



Kyle picking gear on Hot Tin Roof (17)
Photo: Ryan Thomas

EDITOR'S NOTE

Glacial Thoughts up Canyon Creek

When a couple of nice days appeared out of the gloom at the beginning of January, our household cracked out the mountaineering gear and drove past Omarama and up the Ahuriri River Valley to Canyon Creek. After hiking up a very flat/steep trail to the basin at the head of the valley, we spent the night surrounded by waterfalls on all sides. It's been a minute since I've enjoyed water fresh off the glacier, and it was amazing!

But as we settled in for the night, and then again the next morning as we started going up the mountain, I got to thinking how a valley of waterfalls might change over time. We can assume that the glaciers used to be bigger, yes, but how much bigger? What did previous trips find in this valley? And most importantly: are there photos?

To answer these questions, we'll first need some context. There are two main mountains at the headwaters of Canyon Creek: Mount Barth is the more prominent, and Mount Heim is one of those wee points on a ridgeline that only appears as a mountain when viewed from certain angles. The Thurneysen Glacier connects the two.

Both peaks were first ascended and named in January 1936 after contemporary theologians Karl Barth and Karl Heim. The glacier's namesake, Eduard Thurneysen, was also a theologian (the first ascent party were quite enthralled

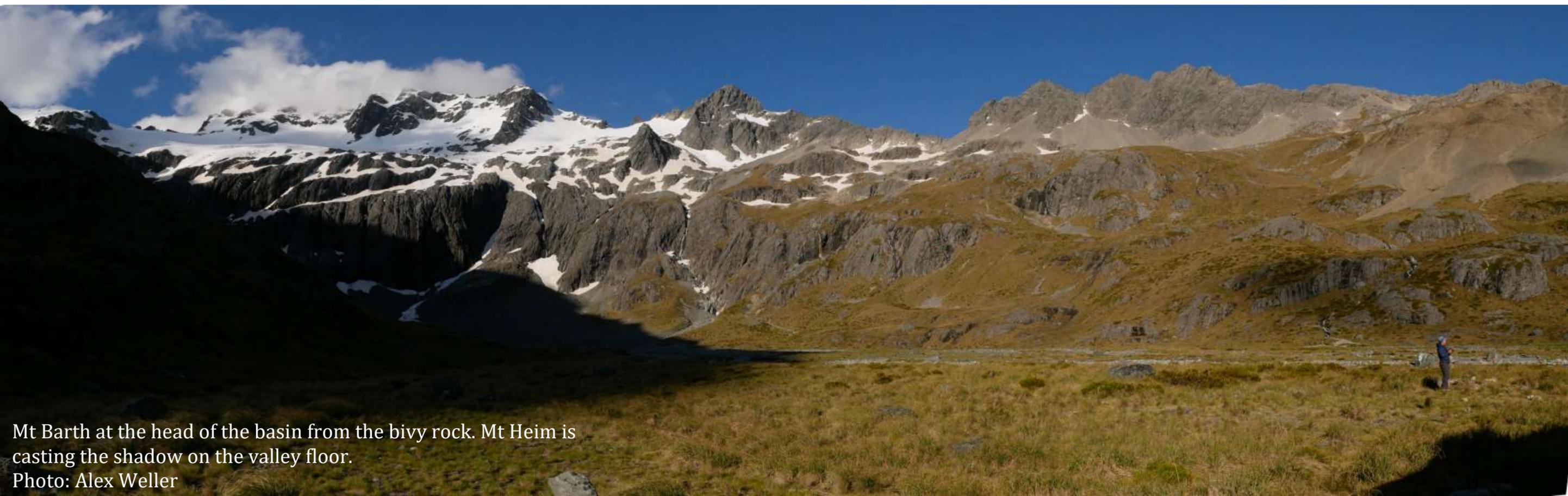
with Swiss/German theology at the time, particularly as these particular thinkers were strong opponents to the Nazi party).

The names Barth and Heim were critiqued in an editorial note recounting the first ascent in the Alpine Journal published in 1936. The editor argued that Barth was indistinguishable in sound from Mt Barff in the Matukituki (fair), and that a "Heim" already existed as the name of a glacier in the Rakaia.

Apparently the Geological Board was also hesitant in accepting the names due to their German-soundingness, but after the Second World War ended they eventually got over it and the names became official. Karl Barth was reportedly quite chuffed – and perhaps slightly confused – when he somehow learned that he had a mountain named after him in the wilds of New Zealand.

Our mission was to go up the shorter and easier of the two peaks: Mount Heim. The original route up Heim, described in the 1936 report, sounds somewhat similar to our experience of climbing it: "After a thousand feet [300 metres] of easy, snow grass slopes and rock, the glacier was reached. On steeper parts, steps were cut, as one man climbed without crampons and another without an axe. Crevasses such as existed were easily negotiated, and the party arrived at the top in four hours."

Although similar, there were some key differences in our January 2020 ascent. We climbed up about 450 metres (about 1500 feet) of snow grass/rock before we hit snow. Once we had crampons on, the slopes were steady but not so steep that we needed to cut steps until the very last bit at the top, where we made a few cuts to make things easier. Our ascent was also entirely crevasse free – there



Mt Barth at the head of the basin from the bivy rock. Mt Heim is casting the shadow on the valley floor.

Photo: Alex Weller

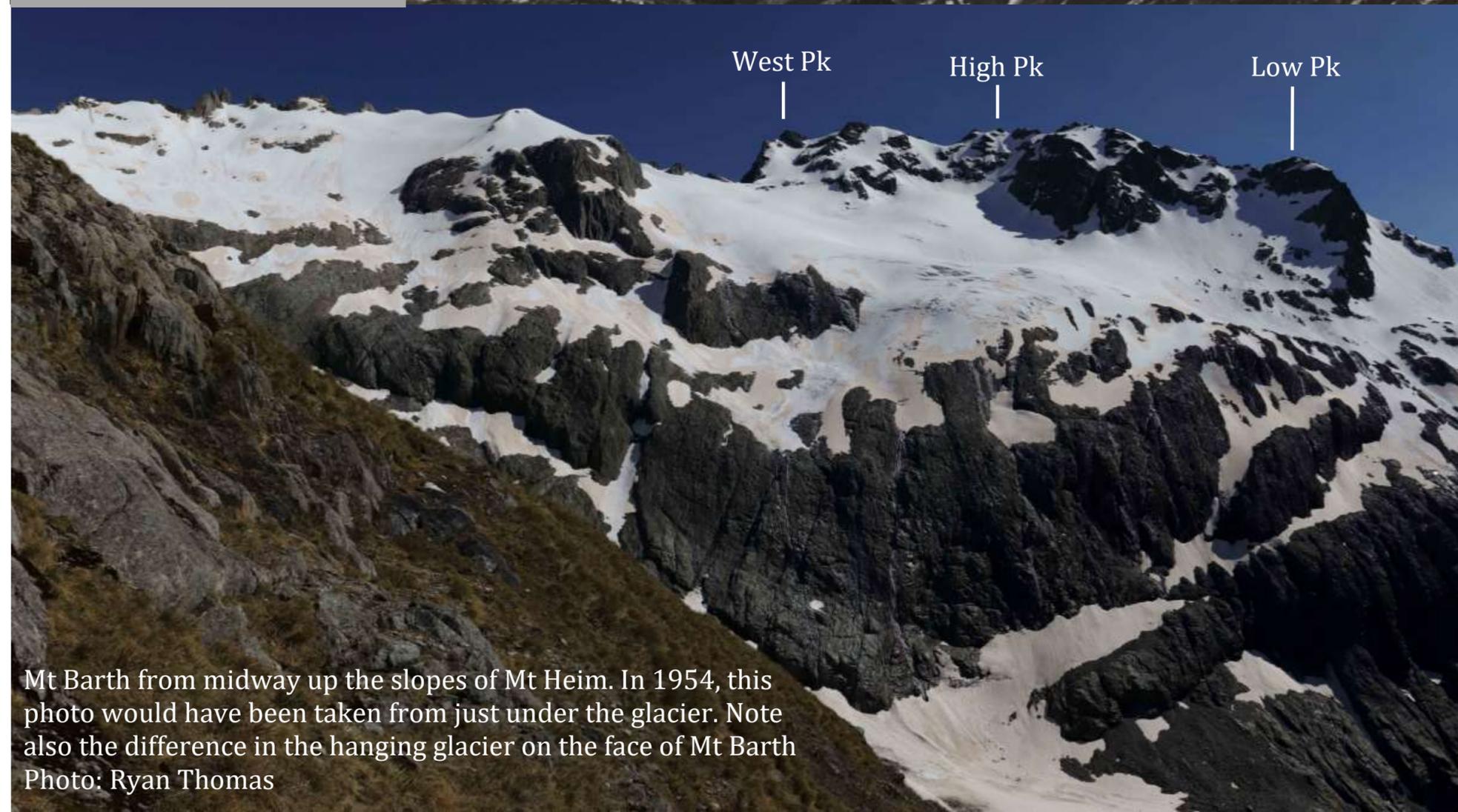
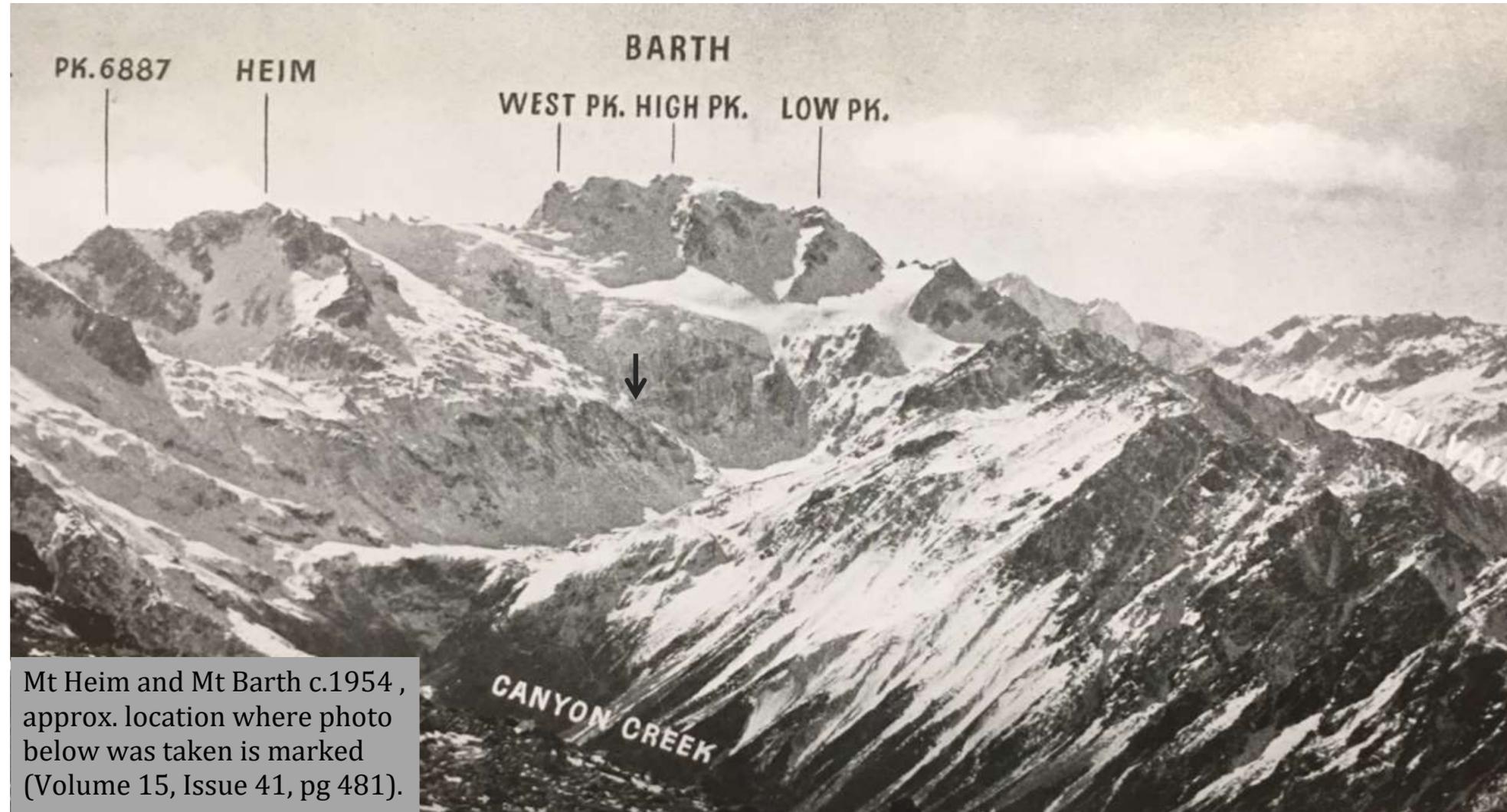
seemed to be a line where a bergschrund was thinking about making an appearance, but it was little more than a line in the snow at this point. Our total ascent time from the valley basin was two and a half hours.

The 1936 account therefore seems to support the assumption that the glacier on Mount Heim used to stretch further down into the valley and was a lot more, well, glacier-y. A 1954 photo and a topo map from the 1960s ([online](#)) supports this.

Studying these, the account of the first ascent seems quite accurate: the ice on Mount Heim appears to extend to about 1,000 feet (300 metres) above the basin floor. The Thurneysen Glacier over on Mount Barth also sported a much more imposing hanging glacier. It is likely that early mountaineers were more likely to fall asleep to the sound of icefalls than waterfalls.

It's difficult to imagine this valley without any glaciers at all, as the area is defined by myself (and previous climbers) by that glacial skirt around the mountain tops. That being said, it's also hard to imagine that what is left of these glaciers can stick around. They've already receded dramatically, and that's a trend that's not likely to stop.

After successfully summiting Mount Heim and descending back into the basin bottom, I gladly filled my water bottle to overflowing with that delicious glacial runoff. As for the rest of the descent, well, I was much encouraged a week later when I read the 1954 report of the second ascent of Mount Barth. The author (a far more dedicated mountaineer than I) reports how after their climb, "Of the weary journey down valley and the late arrival at Roxburgh that night of two tired bodies, less said the better." Just substitute Dunedin for Roxburgh and that so thoroughly described our trip out that it made me smile: at least some things stay the same.



Mt Barth from midway up the slopes of Mt Heim. In 1954, this photo would have been taken from just under the glacier. Note also the difference in the hanging glacier on the face of Mt Barth
Photo: Ryan Thomas

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.

Please note that default settings will not give any notifications: if you want to receive notices about trips you need to set your email preferences.

Trip Leaders Wanted!

We're looking for keen people to volunteer to become section trip leaders. Club trips can be as low-key or go-getter as you want them to be: if you're thinking about going somewhere, chances are somebody else in the Club is interested as well. Why not share the experience?

Leading a trip is not as daunting as it sounds. Anyone can become a section trip leader as long as they are known to be competent and capable in the mountains.

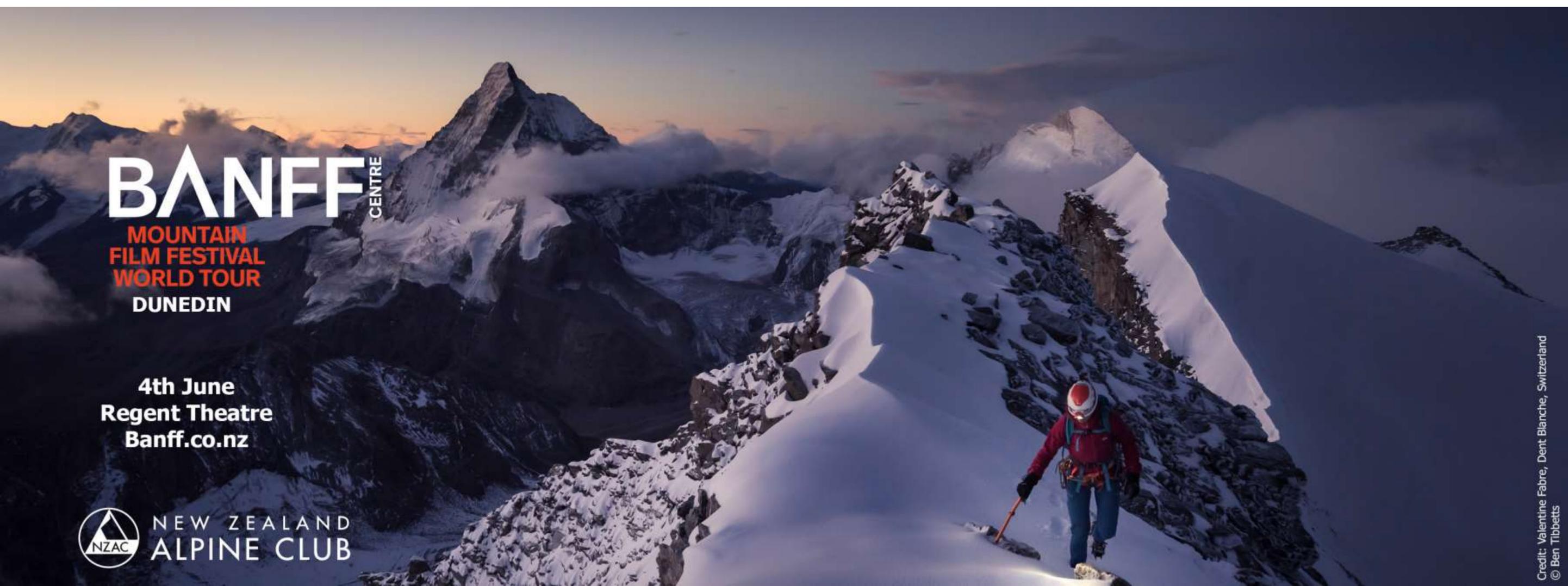
If you're interested in becoming a trip leader, contact us at otago.climber@gmail.com and we'll help guide you through the process.

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).



BANFF CENTRE
MOUNTAIN
FILM FESTIVAL
WORLD TOUR
DUNEDIN

4th June
Regent Theatre
Banff.co.nz

 NEW ZEALAND
ALPINE CLUB

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.

If you have any issues with the gear or rentals, please contact the Section. Hunting and Fishing are doing us a huge favour running the rentals: please don't hassle the staff!

Obituaries

B Dawn Ibbotson (Otago Section): Dawn died peacefully on January 10, 2020, in Dunedin, aged 105. Dearly loved life partner of the late Arthur. Much loved mother and mother-in-law of Russell and Anne, Neal and Judy, Ruth-Mary and Chris. Inspiring grandmother to Sarina, Tony, Julie, Sara, Meredith, Lucy, Suzanna, Annabel, Kate and Caroline, and great-grandmother to 21. A celebration of Dawn's life was held at First Church of Otago on Wednesday, January 15. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Otago Hospice would be welcomed.

SECTION CONTACTS

2019-20 Otago Section Committee		
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Mount Barth and the Hunter Valley from the top of Mount Heim. The Hunter Valley is the location of this week's National Climbing Camp
Photo: Alex Weller

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