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June 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE OTAGO SECTION NZAC



NEW ZEALAND
ALPINE CLUB

Paraglider launching from Brewster Hut
Photo: Phil Sommerville

EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello all!

Who else had sore legs that first Monday after Level 2 came in?

Talk about an amazing re-entry into the mountains that first weekend (May 16-17). Otago must have missed us, because she sure rolled out the welcome party! Crisp mornings, stunningly calm, bluebird skies, and we weren't trapped at home anymore. We hope everyone was able to get out and enjoy.

Our trip report this month comes from Keith Moffat and his ascent up Topheavy. As some of you may know, Keith has been trying and trying again for years to get up Topheavy and has been repeatedly turned back by poor weather. We were pretty excited that he finally made it!

As positive signs towards the containment of Covid-19 in New Zealand accumulate, the club is tentatively taking steps to begin planning for events and club nights. Barring sudden changes to the public health situation, Otago and Southland are planning a joint midwinter Christmas at Homer Hut in June, and the Otago Section will have a Club Night in July. Take note of the dates: we're planning our Christmas the weekend after actual midwinter in the hopes that the country will be under Level 1 by that time.

Alex Weller, Editor

UPCOMING EVENTS

Club Nights

In a very exciting development, Club Nights are again being held! Club nights are at the Otago 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](#)

July Club Night, Wednesday 1 July 2020

Graeme Hall is coming to speak on his recent "Last Degree To The South Pole" expedition in January 2020. This involved two weeks living in an extreme environment (up to -37 degrees Celsius), with strenuous physical exertion (skiing pulling a sled) for 8 - 10 hours a day, at an altitude of 3200 metres, from 89°S to the South Pole (118 kilometres).

Mid-Winter Christmas at Homer Hut 27-28 June 2020



A combined mid-winter Christmas gathering with the Southland Section is being held at Homer Hut the weekend 27-28 June. It will be the usual format with good food (potluck), good company and a secret Santa. If you are interested, please contact Keith Moffat at moffat.k172@gmail.com.

TRIPS AND EVENTS

When	What
27-28 June 2020	Mid-Winter Christmas at Homer Hut Joint gathering with Southland Section.
1 July 2020	Club Night Graeme Hall recounts his January 2020 expedition "Last Degree to the South Pole."



July's Club Night: Last Degree to the South Pole
Photo: Vladimir Karakash-Solodovnikoff ©
karakash.solodovnikoff@gmail.com

Topheavy May 15-17

By Keith Moffat



Alex on summit of Topheavy
Photo: Phil Sommerville

An invitation from Phil Sommerville for a trip into Brewster Hut to climb Top heavy during the first weekend of the Covid-19 Level 2 rules, that allowed travel again, was not possible to turn down even though I was not sure how the body would cope, having been limited to walking the dog for the last couple of months. Also on the trip was Alex Tups with his paraglider.

We drove through to the Fantail Falls car park on the Friday morning and light rain was just clearing as we started the three-hour slog up to Brewster Hut. This trip has been on my bucket list for some time and I was looking forward to seeing the new! (2007) Brewster Hut. As we approached the hut the last of the day's sunshine was penetrating the clouds and the valley remained mist filled. I love that smug feeling of being in the sun while everyone else below is having a dull day.

We shared the hut with four other people. We did our best with social distancing but Covid-19 seems another world away when you are in the mountains. The cloudless sky was perfect for stargazing and observing Elon Musk's Starlink

Satellite train. It is now not possible to escape the influence of human development anywhere on the planet unless you take up caving.

Saturday morning it was not exactly an alpine start with us being on our way by 9 am. The snow line was at about 1800m. There were numerous patches of ice so we had to take care when placing our feet. It was not long before we were in the sunshine and fingers and toes warmed up nicely.

The route is straight up the ridge of Mt Armstrong behind the hut to about 1700m, and then a sidle until you are looking down onto the Brewster Glacier terminal. We explored the terminal and found good access onto the glacier from the rock on the true left of the glacier.

It was perfect cramponing conditions up the glacier and when we reached the ridge at the head of the glacier we were rewarded with fantastic views to the West. It was a perfect spot for lunch with not a breath of wind. From there it was a short climb to the summit of Topheavy. Brewster Hut was still in the mist when we were on the summit so on our return journey we lingered in the sun above the hut for a while and timed our arrival just as it cleared.

There were a few more people at the hut on Saturday night and there was a frenzy of photograph taking as we were rewarded with another spectacular sunset. As the hut was nearly full, we decided to sleep in our tents.



Brewster Hut sunset
Photo: Alex Tups

On Sunday morning Phil and I decided on a trip up Mt Armstrong. We had both climbed it at least a couple of times before so did not give a lot of thought to the route finding. We were not content to follow the tracks of others so headed for a gully Phil had used last time.

On route to the gully we had a change of plan and decided to head up a snow slope onto the regular ridge route which created a little more excitement than we anticipated when we found ourselves on our front points using our axe picks through a steep section. It was best not to look down and push on to the ridge.

While we were on the summit an Irish Traveller arrived wearing jeans and soft boots. He managed to get up by following steps in the snow. We gave him a couple of walking poles to help him on the descent but instead of following our steps down he stepped onto hard snow and only just managed to stop sliding off down the mountain. After that we gave him an ice axe for the rest of his descent. He obviously had no idea of what he was getting into.

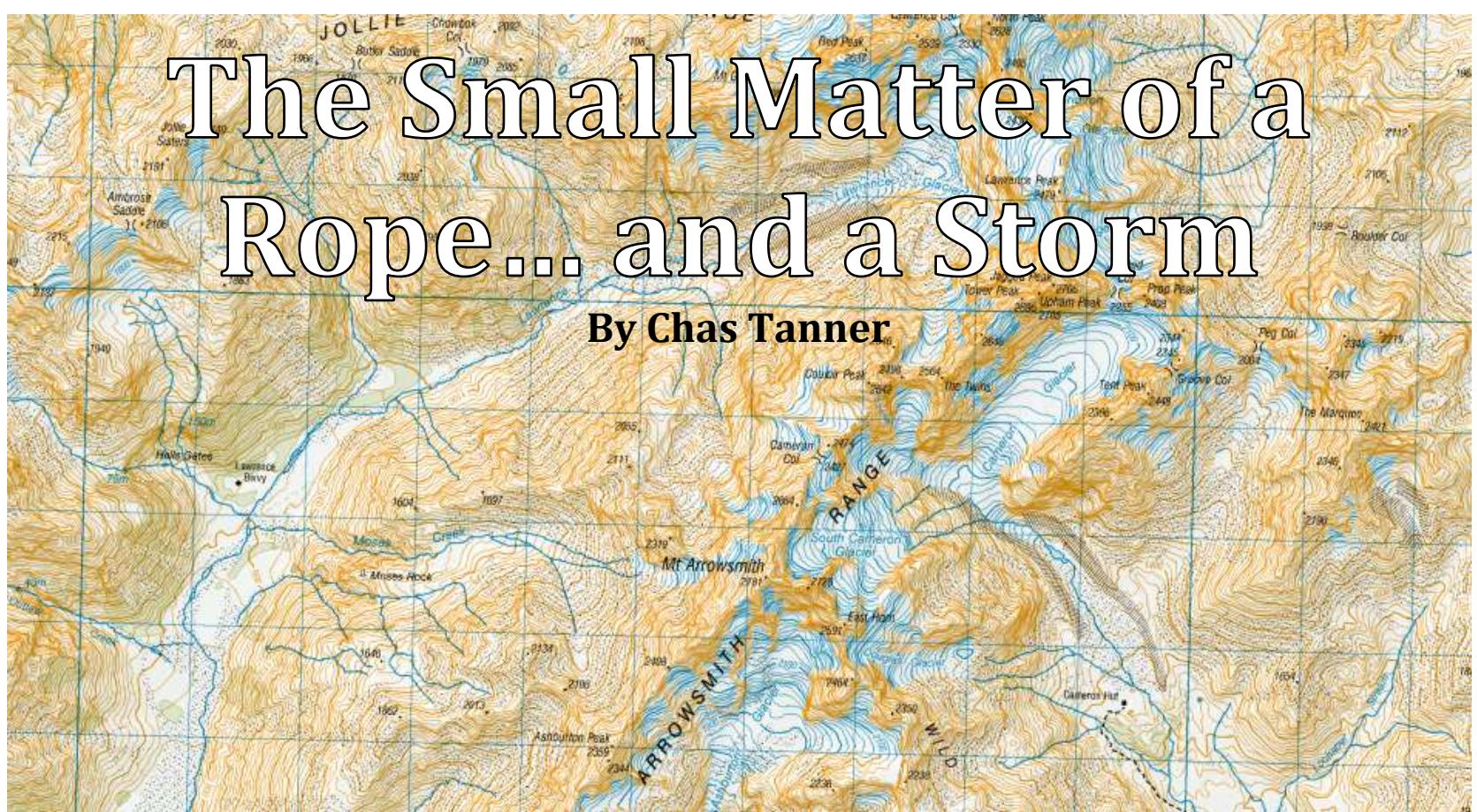
After lunch at Brewster hut we watched Alex and two other paragliders launch for their quick trip to the road. Phil and I had two hours of giving our quads a good workout down the hill and picked up Alex at the Makarora Pub where he was enjoying an ale with his new paragliding mates. It was back to Phil's bach in Wanaka for hot showers and a beer in front of the open fire before re-joining the Covid-19 world on Monday.

Mt Jackson up the Hopkins River Valley
Photo: Alex Weller



**Do you have a story to tell?
We're always looking for newsletter contributions from our members!
Send your story (and/or photos) to otago.climber@gmail.com**

NOTES FROM OUR MEMBERS



Dave had travelled down to Timaru from Wellington and I had travelled up to Timaru from Dunedin. We met at the bus depot and found a corner to sort out and check gear for a planned trip to the Arrowsmiths and specifically to climb Jagged Peak. It was January 1977 and we were champing at the bit to get into the mountains.

Food, tent, personal gear and climbing kit were checked...Dave: "you got the rope Chas?" Me: "No Dave, we agreed you would bring it" "No, no, Chas you said you would bring it." Gee we have a problem here. With little time before we had to catch a bus to inland Canterbury, what were we to do?

There was a hardware store reasonably close to the bus depot, we were told, but it was nearly closing time. Off I ran to see what they had in the 'rope' department. Nothing. Only the proverbial 'clothesline'. So be it, "I'll have one please".

Dave's face dropped and we barely spoke on the bumpy bus ride. Time heals, and we kicked off up the Clyde River in good spirits, happy to be once again heading into the Southern Alps.

This was my first time in the area and the history of Erewhon enthralled me. As we tramped up the valley and into the Lawrence, Dave's encyclopaedic knowledge of the area made my guidebook superfluous. I liked it and was looking forward to a great few days with an old climbing friend.

The walk up into the head of the valley and to under the snout of the Lawrence Glacier was gorgeous and we found a small grassy patch on which to pitch our tent, which was some 4 or 5 metres above a small creek below. The sides of the

valley were steep, high and boulder strewn. Not a cloud could be seen above us. Contentedly, we slipped into our sleeping bags looking forward to a great day's climbing in the morning.

'CRACK' "what the hell was that?" Dave enquired after sitting bolt upright at about 3am in the morning. RUMBLE, RUMBLE, CRACK. It's thunder and lightning, *and* now it's starting to rain, a light pitter patter on the tent. Within the space of a few minutes all hell seemed to be let loose. The heavens opened, the wind raged, the thunder and lightning were constant and deafening. We sat up, each holding a tent pole whilst listening to boulders crashing down the side of the valley, hoping that none would find our tent as a target.

Water started to creep into the tent. Where on earth had this come from? Indeed the creek, that had been so benign earlier, had risen rapidly. Within the short space of an hour we were in trouble and the only option was to immediately get out of there... which we did with great difficulty. Two very wet people with accompanying very wet heavy gear walked, and crawled, in the horrendous conditions, the lightening penetrating the lashing rain to give us a sense of direction until daylight.

We were exhausted, battling wind and rain, although the thunder and lightning had ceased. Continuing down valley we needed to cross what was the day before a small step over creek. Not now though. Dave thought he would have a go at crossing the raging torrent. With little warning, he was up to his neck in water and I quickly grabbed a pack strap preventing him from being swept away.

All that day and night were as miserable as it gets. Tent slung over a Matagouri bush and two drowned rats eating soaking chocolate and nuts. We must have had some sleep but not much. As dawn broke, a good day looked promising to cross the now reduced torrent of the stream and to attempt a drying session of our gear. Thoughts of climbing had disappeared as had any time to do so anyway.

The stroll out to the road end was pleasant. You learn to accept what the mountains chuck at you and appreciate you are in their environment on their terms. Looking back up valley to the Arrowsmiths and Jagged I thought of Don Whillans, the English climber, who said 'the mountains will be there tomorrow; the trick is to make sure you are'

Upon reaching 'civilisation' we caught up with the news that during the storm of our epic, the Three Johns Hut on Barron Saddle at the head of the Mueller Glacier in Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park had been blown away. Four members of a Wanganui Tramping Club party, who were in the hut at the time, perished.

The 'rope' was never taken out of its wrapping until arriving back home in Dunedin. It was used for its intended purpose for many years.

NOTES FROM OUR MEMBERS

Marla's Day Out

By Karena Garratt (Marla's Mom)



Look, mum, I found shells!

For many of us life in lockdown got monotonous. Each day blended into the next with little to differentiate except the weather and the food on the table.

For one of our youngest members, however, those weeks of lockdown were a time for big changes.

Marla Garratt is just over a year old. She started walking properly just a few days before we went into lockdown, and was really getting into the playground scene.

Life in lockdown with a newly toddling toddler was a bit of a challenge. Suddenly there was only a small living area for trotting around – no yard or outdoor space. Our house is on a massive hill, which made neighbourhood walks on wobbly legs rather difficult. Just before lockdown, I went and panic bought a small sandbox, which was put on the flat part of the driveway. It was a good way to play outdoors, but still, it was a pretty small sandbox.

Although long walks with mum and dad sitting in the backpack were exciting (and dad was home all day!), we desperately missed the beach. Marla has probably visited the beach at least once a week since she's been born.

Two days after we moved into Level 3 we drove down to Long Beach. It was the first time that Marla, now a pro at the whole walking thing, was actually able to walk on the beach. The freedom!

The water on her toes was her favourite, and we couldn't seem to collect enough shells. Then there were the gulls. So many gulls! Running in the open space was amazing. I cried a little seeing Marla's joy! It's been a monotonous and eerie time for us, and yet a momentous, exciting moment for Marla.

We went home wet, sandy, exhausted and very happy!

Editor's Note: From the perspective of someone who hadn't seen Marla for over a month, she went from wobbly standing before lockdown to being a little speed demon! Watch out mum and dad!



NEWS & NOTICES

Alpine Club Lectures

The UK Alpine Club has started an online series of lectures for members, and are posting these on their YouTube channel. They have new lectures planned every week into July. If you're interested, check out their [YouTube channel](#) – looks like an interesting line up.

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.

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.

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!

SECTION CONTACTS

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Ever get the feeling that the trees have eyes?

Photo: Alex Weller

DISCOUNT PAGE

Kiwi businesses such as these are going to need all the help they can get in the next year or so! For some of these discounts you'll need your NZAC Card, for others you'll need your FMC Card. Check the [NZAC Website](#) for a full discount list and details.

Gear/Clothing

Note that most of these discounts are off the regularly priced gear only, and that a lot of gear will have a better discount when it goes on regular sale. Just saying retailers.



Aspiring Safety 10% off

In-store and online, wide variety of climbing gear and snow/ice tools



Bivouac 10% off

This one seems variable – ask at the till and you may get more



Cactus Outdoor 10% off

In-store and online, a range of clothing/gear, made in New Zealand



Climbing Equipment NZ 25% off

Rock climbing and mountaineering gear, free freight orders over \$20



Earth Sea Sky 15% off

Free freight in NZ



Further Faster 15% off

Online or in-store (ChCh)

	Gearshop 10% off Phone orders, online outdoor gear retailer
	GoNative 10% off Wellington based with ready to eat food (not freeze dried) and energy fruit bars
	Good Rotating – Up to 10% Bicycle Shop Bicycles, packrafting, accessories in Wanaka. Sale and rent.
	Kai Carrier 25% off Entire pouch range. Reusable pouches and packaging to make your backcountry trips waste free
	Koaro Packrafts \$50 off Discount off any new packraft, Christchurch Company
	Macpac 30%/15% off 30% off Macpac branded gear, 15% off everything else
	Monster Merinos 10% off Kids merino clothing built to last
	North Face 15% off In-store (Qtown and ChCh)
	Outfitters 10% off Extensive range of global outdoor adventure brands
	Small Planet 10% off Gear, clothing and equipment in Queenstown

	Other Services
	Peak Safety 15% off Courses and medical supplies
	Twin Needle Repairs 10% off Gear repairs including packs, tents, sleeping bags, tents, rainwear clothing
	Travel/Experiences
	Snow Farm 20% off Cross country skiing, snowshoeing, bookable huts and more. Two for one prices on hut bookings!
	DOC Annual Backcountry Hut Pass 30% off Show your hut pass and NZAC Card and get 10% off Great Walk fees
	Real Journeys 10% off Cruises in Milford or Doubtful Sounds, TSS Earnslaw
	Stewart Island Experience 10% off Ferry services (we tested this: includes ferry to/from Oban)
	Whale Watch Kaikoura 50% off Whale watching tours between 1 st May and 31 st October. Makes it reasonably affordable!