

THE CLIMBER

NEW ZEALAND'S CLIMBING MAGAZINE

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QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE
NEW ZEALAND ALPINE CLUB



A woman with long brown hair is climbing a large, golden-brown rock face. She is wearing a dark grey jacket, orange cargo pants, and climbing shoes. She has a green bag slung over her shoulder. The background shows a valley with green hills and a town under a clear blue sky.

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Remember summer? This may be the winter issue, but perhaps a little reminder of summer mightn't be amiss. Gareth Jones deep water soloing *Skylark* (17) at Raglan. JUSTIN BASTIEN

 **Uprising**



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ON THE COVER

James Warren looking up at the buttress which is home to *Astralabe* (IV, 5+) on Mt. Drake, as it bakes in the summer sun. See p.20 for more.
SOOJI CLARKSON

THIS PAGE

Lionel Clay approaching the Grandes Jorasses, Chamonix. Lionel made a successful winter ascent of the *Colton-MacIntyre* (VI) on the north face of the Grandes Jorasses in mid-March with fellow New Zealand Alpine Team member Alastair McDowell. For more about their climbing in the Chamonix winter season see alpineteam.co.nz. ALASTAIR MCDOWELL



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LEFT Merry Schimanski making the first ascent of *Milk and Honey* (26) at a crag on Flinders Island, Tasmania, which he describes as 'Arapiles on the beach'. SIMON BISCHOFF

BELOW The irrepressible Jane Presto climbing the epic Al Cap route *Tormentum Vigilae* (30), Wanaka. DOM CHANNON

ABOVE New Zealand Alpine Team member Daniel Joll descending the *Croz Spur* (V+), Grandes Jorasses, Chamonix. Daniel and Kim Ladiges climbed this route shortly after climbing the *Walker Spur* (IV) on the north face of the same peak in a successful winter season in the Chamonix region. For more info visit: alpineteam.co.nz. KIM LADIGES



EXIT THE BIG METAL BUDGIE

THE USE of mechanised access to get into and about Aoraki / Mt Cook and Westland / Tai Poutini National Parks is indeed a fraught issue; one person's notion of compromise can look to another as anything but. From my point of view, taking a large, extremely noisy industrial machine into the heart of a national park ought to be totally unacceptable. So with that thought in mind, I can't help but see Mr. Dunlop's proposals for heli access as simply the continued erosion of natural quiet and wilderness values within the park. In fact, as this is a periodical which is no stranger to plain speaking, I'll put it bluntly. People's use of aircraft for their own convenience and enjoyment within the park is nothing more than a form of environmental vandalism. Harsh perhaps, some may even say unreasonable, I know, but I think it's worth stating when we begin to talk about what compromise should look like.

To give a sense of the woeful state of natural quiet within Aoraki / Mt Cook National Park, on a club trip I lead during April onto the southern end of the Malte Brun Range, on a single Saturday, I counted roughly 75 overflights between 9am and 5pm by low-flying helicopters. The result was literally a constant drone of helicopters, with one flying over on average about every five to seven minutes. We may have enjoyed a maximum of 15 minutes continuous natural quiet throughout that time. From the current position where the park's natural quiet is so severely degraded, surely compromise isn't in the direction of more heli access. Rather, I would suggest compromise lies in the direction of yes, okay, let's have helicopter access under much tighter restrictions than currently exist. And by this I mean to include sightseeing and general overflights. The notion that light aircraft can buzz around anywhere they choose above a ceiling of a paltry 500 ft (152.4 m) is absolutely ridiculous. Alon Tal, an environmental lawyer, put it nicely in a law review on natural quiet when he wrote: 'Visitors seeking natural

quiet ... have no recourse and are simply forced to suffer or find alternative venues. If this dynamic were cast in political terms, it would be called "tyranny".' (Tal, A. *Naturally Quiet: Towards a New Legislative Strategy for Regulating Air Space Above Conservation Areas in New Zealand* [2004] OtaLawRw 4; (2004) 10 Otago Law Review 537). It's an interesting piece and I encourage anyone with an interest in these matters to read it.

One of the things I value most highly about the mountains is that it is a place where nature's voice dominates. Being able to lay down in the tussocks at Ball Hut, accompanied by nothing more than the rush of wind, and to look upon the peaks with nothing but the blue sky above—I find this far more important than being able to blast my way up to the icy tops in search of instant gratification and glorification. Who's to say who's values and ideals for the park come up trumps here? But it is worth noting that my quiet enjoyment of the park, sipping on a cup of tea amongst the tussocks, has an incredibly minimal footprint within the park, whereas heli-recreationalists have a profoundly negative impact on the natural values that are the very reason many people come to the park to experience. And surely it's unnecessary by now to mention the bitter irony of heli-assisted activities within a landscape where the effects of climate change are so glaringly evident.

In light of my personal 'let's ban helicopters' position, the club's stance is hardly 'blanket opposition', as Mr Dunlop suggests. In terms of mechanised access, the club is essentially advocating for the status quo, which to my mind is still disgracefully permissible of this destructive activity. In terms of compromise, what I would like to see is the Tasman heli-free every alternate day. This would go a long way towards restoring nature's voice within the valley, allowing one to experience the Tasman without that *Apocalypse Now* feeling which currently dominates.

Finally, a point I must address is the notion that climbers should somehow have



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preferential rights of mechanised access when it comes to using aircraft. I'm yet to hear a convincing argument for why those with the intention of clambering up a steep bit of hillside should enjoy an exclusive right to access places with a helicopter, especially if one considers that climbers are actually the most capable group in society of accessing these places unaided by helicopters. National parks are for the enjoyment of all, regardless of why one is there, whether it is simply to be in such a magical place, botanise, take photographs, go for a wander, or partake of that most rarefied of pursuits—mountaineering. The activity one undertakes once one has stepped out of an aircraft is neither here nor there; it is still a massive intrusion into the quiet enjoyment of the park for those of us below the flight path. The notion of only allowing 'accredited' clamberers heli access is an untenable position. Some might even go so far as to say arrogant. And to argue that because there are few 'accredited clamberers' around means that the impact of such air access will be limited doesn't hold water. By that line of argument, we could limit air access to all accredited red heads. If you've got red hair, you're in, no red hair, 'sorry, mate'. The issue of hair dye would arise, but perhaps a simple DNA test could eventually be implemented. This makes about as much sense as the right to air access being dictated by the angle of the terrain one intends to eventually end up on after exiting the big metal budgie.

-James Thornton

THIS ISSUE'S PRIZE GOES TO:
JAMES THORNTON

WELCOME FRANCIS

FRANCIS CHARLESWORTH has joined the NZAC National Office team, covering Ashlee Peeters for the next 12 months while she is away on parental leave. Francis recently moved to New Zealand with his Australian partner, having previously lived and worked in the UK. He has a passion for sharing the mountains with others and worked as a mountaineering and climbing instructor in Europe and expedition guide further afield. His background in delivering technical advice and risk management strategies, instructor development and the management of large outdoor programmes holds him in good stead, and he will likely be called upon to use all these skills and more in the role of Programme Coordinator at the National Office.

When not working, Francis' passion is for 'adventurous' climbing and mountaineering, whether that is developing new routes in the Wadi Rum desert, first ascents of 6000m peaks in the Indian Himalaya or just rediscovering forgotten crags. For Francis, the mountains are a playground to be enjoyed with good friends and he loves getting out in these unique and incredible environments. With winter just around the corner, he is looking forward to some ski touring near his new home and joining in on some NZAC trips to meet other members.

While in the position of the Programme Coordinator, Francis is hoping to develop strong relationships with the volunteers across all sections and so he is always happy to have a chat and offer support or guidance to members.



Francis practising his European death knots in the Picos de Europa, Spain. FRANCIS CHARLESWORTH COLLECTION



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For more info see climber.co.nz/contribute. Contact us for payment rates.

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NZAC

Our vision: NZAC champions the pursuit of climbing, enabling skilled and active adventurers. We provide inspiration, information and seek to enable a vibrant climbing community.

Our core purpose is to foster and support climbing.

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CLIMBNZ API IN PROGRESS

NZAC is developing an API to enable better access to the information held on climbnz.org.nz. API means application programming interface. This will create opportunities for people to contribute new services and functions on climbnz and also elsewhere. Use of the information will be under the same Creative Commons 'non-commercial, share alike' licence as currently. Initially at least, use of the API will be on request. But the club is very keen to facilitate development and use. If you're interested, please get in touch with *The Climber* editor Tom Hoyle at editor@alpineclub.org.nz.

SIR RANULPH FIENNES

THIS YEAR, on July 20, Sir Edmund Hillary would have turned 100. To mark this anniversary, the Himalayan Trust is holding a special Centenary Gala Dinner in Auckland on July 17. The keynote speaker at this gala dinner will be Arctic and Antarctic explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes. To find out more about this event, visit: himalayantrust.org/get-involved/centenary-gala-dinner-17-july/



NZAC PHOTO COMPETITION

THIS YEAR'S annual NZAC Photo Competition is back and with more prizes than ever. The competition opens on July 15 and is open for entries through until August 26. The categories for entries are Alpine Activity, Alpine Landscape, Alpine Nature, Rock Climbing, Youth and Mountain and Climbing Culture. The competition is open to NZAC members only, except for the youth category, which is open to anybody 20 years old and under on the start date of the competition.

Entries in this competition are always strong and serve as a great representation of the activities and places our club members get out and enjoy. For all the rules and entry information, visit: alpineclub.org.nz/photo-competition/rules-information/

Thanks to our sponsors for supporting this year's competition:



ANDY KIRKPATRICK

THE ENTERTAINING speaker, two-time Boardman-Tasker Award winning author and climber Andy Kirkpatrick will be speaking in a special 'one night only' NZAC event in Christchurch, on July 8. Andy is famous for his comic story-telling and crazy climbing adventures, so this event will be very popular. Get in fast as tickets are just \$10 for NZAC members.

Visit: eventopia.co/event/An-Evening-with-Andy-Kirkpatrick/386595 to book your tickets.

NZAC INSTRUCTION COURSES

DATES HAVE been set for this summer's round of NZAC High Alpine Skills courses. The dates of the available courses are:

October 25-30

November 5-10

November 12-17

November 19-24

December 10-15

January 7-12

January 14-19

Visit alpineclub.org.nz/alpine-climbing/courses/ to register and to see information about the other courses available.

WINTER PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

JOIN PHOTOGRAPHER Rob Brown for a winter photography workshop, based out of NZAC's Unwin Lodge in the picturesque Aoraki / Mt Cook National Park. The workshop runs from August 9 to August 12 and spaces are strictly limited. Visit: alpineclub.org.nz/winter-photography-workshop/ for more information.

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WHANGANUI BAY REOPENS WITH NEW ACCESS CONDITIONS

NZAC HAS successfully negotiated climbing access to the North Island's premier crag, Whanganui Bay. The Bay, as it is affectionately known, will be open for a trial climbing season from August 1 to November 30. If the trial is successful, an ongoing autumn-winter season will be implemented, which is the best time of year to climb at the Bay.

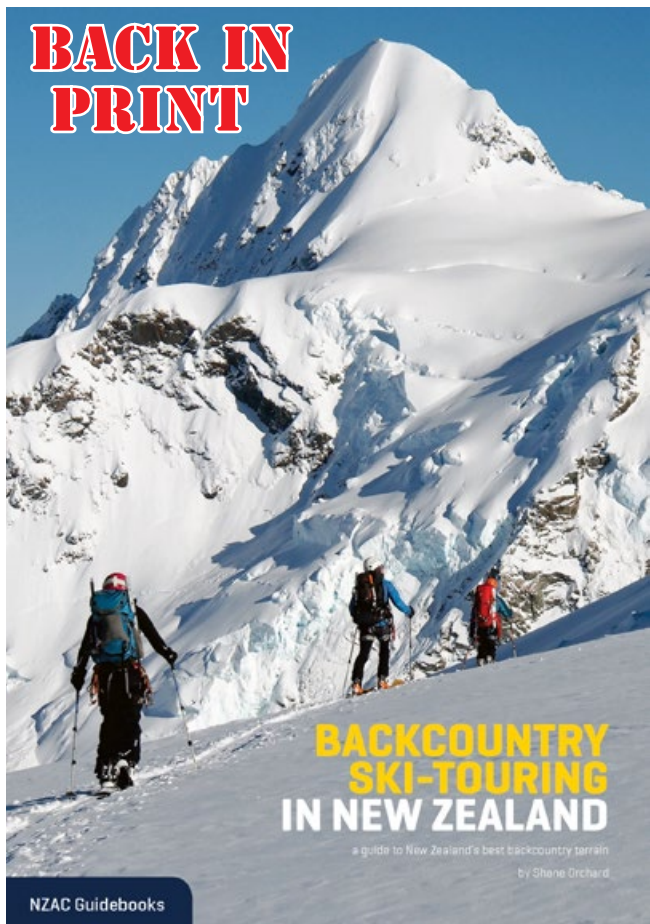
The new access restrictions require each climber to register and pay for each day they visit Whanganui Bay. Registration and payment will be made through the website: whanganuibay.alpineclub.org.nz/. This site also has key information around access terms and dates. Please take care to respect the new access conditions and ensure all the hard work put in to re-opening this important crag is not wasted.

There will be an opening weekend event. Check the website for details.

TRANSMITTER CRAG REOPEN

MEMBERS OF the Canterbury/Westland section have successfully negotiated the reopening of Transmitter Crag, in Christchurch's Port Hills. NZAC members may purchase a scenic ticket for the Adventure Park lift for \$5 to access the crag (NZAC ID required) after signing in. No access is permitted on foot from Dyers Pass Rd/Summit Rd. Please check out the access information on climbnz.org.nz and comply with all restrictions so that this crag remains open.

It's business time. Isaac Buckley on the classic *Bizarete* (22), Whanganui Bay. JOHN PALMER



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BOARD AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

IN 2018, the NZAC membership voted to change the governance structure and implement an elected board. The time is here for this very important first election to take place. We have had a wonderful response from members wanting to get involved and we present here ten candidates for the election of four positions on the NZAC Board. These profiles are only a snapshot and we encourage you to check out their full profiles on our website using the link: <http://bit.ly/nzacelection-candidates2019>

The board election will take place from July 4 to July 26 and as with the governance election, it will be conducted by electronic vote. You will receive instructions on how to vote by email on the July 4, as long as we have your email address. If we do not have your email address, or you are unable to vote electronically, please contact the office to cast a special vote. Every member has the right to vote.

When voting, each member will choose their top four candidates for the board. You may choose fewer if you wish. The four candidates with the most total votes will be announced as part of the newly elected board in August and will take office on October 1, 2019. Every vote is important and shapes the future of NZAC, so please have your say.

NZAC BOARD CANDIDATES

NINA SAWICKI

REGION: WELLINGTON

BACKGROUND: DOCTOR (GP)

MAIN INTERESTS: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING, PRESERVATION OF WILDERNESS

I am a doctor (GP), educator, writer, and passionate outdoors enthusiast (especially of the alpine environment) and wild spaces. I strongly believe our health and welfare is linked to access to the outdoors, and am pleased to see good data now supporting this. I have tramped all my life but embraced mountaineering after my children grew up.

I am keen to work on finding the balance between preserving wild spaces and maintaining access for alpinists of all skill levels. Practical Air Access to alpine spaces is an area where we need to collaborate well and listen respectfully to each other's perspectives. I am particularly enthusiastic about engagement with youth in order to help our young to appreciate the mountains and build the club's base. Finally, I'd like to see more dialogue with our overseas friends.



YVONNE PFLUGER

REGION: CENTRAL OTAGO

BACKGROUND: LANDSCAPE PLANNER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT

MAIN INTERESTS: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, STRATEGIC DIRECTION, A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE CLUB

My long-term involvement has allowed me to contribute through various roles on the Canterbury/Westland Section Committee and, over the past couple of years in a governance role on the Executive Committee.

I am keen to use my experience in policy development to help shape the strategic plan for NZAC, while understanding the realities of a club that is largely run by passionate volunteers. In this respect, I want to ensure that the strategic goals are based on the values held by the wider climbing community. As an active member, I strongly believe that the club should cater for a range of abilities, ages, activities and genders. In my view, the stewardship responsibility for the environment that we all have when accessing the outdoors extends to the board-level of NZAC.



RICHARD WESLEY

REGION: CANTERVURY/WESTLAND

BACKGROUND: ENGINEER

MAIN INTERESTS: HUTS

I am passionate about our wonderful network of club huts around the country, and believe that they are an amazing asset for getting people out in the mountains. This is my real focus and area of expertise. Over the last 25 years, I've also instructed on alpine courses and run section trips, worked at the National Office in Christchurch, and am now also a Banff addict. I'm really enthusiastic about putting myself forward for the board to help shape and guide the club to a sustainable and exciting future.



NICK SHEARER

REGION: NORTH OTAGO

BACKGROUND: DENTIST

MAIN INTERESTS: FUTURE PROOFING THE CLUB, MATCHING CLUB ACTIVITIES TO MEMBER NEEDS

I am passionate about climbing and NZAC. I've been a member for 40 years and have climbed extensively in New Zealand, Europe and the Himalaya. I have a good understanding of the running of the club through many years as section representative on the Club Committee, and as Chairperson of the North Otago Section. I have the time, knowledge, communication skills and connections to substantially contribute to the new board, and I'm particularly interested in understanding what members want from the club, analysing where expectations may be changing, and using this information to help plan future club policies.

ROSS CULLEN

REGION: NELSON/MARLBOROUGH

BACKGROUND: PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS

MAIN INTERESTS: PUBLICATIONS AND CLIMBNZ, ADAPTING TO CHANGING NEEDS, ACCESS AND ADVOCACY

I am keen to apply my energy, experience, and knowledge to governing NZAC. The NZAC Board has to be alert to opportunities and changes in climbing, and be able to mobilise or redirect effort and resources as needed. I believe diversity in experience, skills, interests will ensure the Board recognises and responds to opportunities and challenges in administration, accommodation, access, advocacy, instruction and publications.

I've been an NZAC member and contributor for 40 years: President 1991-93, guidebook editor, interim board member, and current Publications Committee convener. I have a BCom (hons) and PhD in economics, and governance experience on New Zealand and Australasian boards.



MARTIN HUNTER

REGION: AUCKLAND

BACKGROUND: INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL

MAIN INTERESTS: GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT, STRATEGIC DIRECTION, STRENGTHENING THE CLUB VOICE

I have had the benefit of the club's support, networks and friendships for a number of years and I would now welcome an opportunity to give back to the club. I have governance, strategic and risk management capabilities, and a collaborative and consensus-building approach to working with others. I would like to help the club set a compelling future strategy so it can adapt to change, remain relevant and grow its membership, and become a stronger voice on issues affecting its members, and New Zealand more broadly.



GERALD LANNING

REGION: AUCKLAND

BACKGROUND: LAWYER

MAIN INTERESTS: PROTECTION OF WILDERNESS, ACCESS AND ADVOCACY

Despite the various distractions in life, I have constantly returned to climbing. I am a proud member of the club (for around 35 years) and value its contribution to New Zealand climbing and the protection of our wilderness areas. I want to ensure the club can support climbing as a life-long activity.

As an Auckland-based climber, I am directly affected by the loss of access to climbing areas and want to assist with the essential club role of re-instating or preserving access where we have it.

My legal skills and experience, combined with my understanding of Maori-related issues (given that many access issues relate to Maori land), will be of value.



NEIL HAMILTON

REGION: CANTERBURY/WESTLAND

BACKGROUND: TECHNOLOGIST

MAIN INTERESTS: MODERNISING THE CLUB, EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT, DIGITAL MODERNISATION

I would bring to the board my lifelong love of climbing and tramping, plus significant experience of governance with both commercial and not-for-profit organisations. I'm also a long-term member of NZAC and have been an active participant as Chair of Canterbury/Westland section, organiser of club trips and tutor on snow-craft courses. In my opinion, areas of focus for the Board should be to continue to evolve and clarify our governance model, sustain and amplify our advocacy work, improve our relevance and attractiveness for youth, support and boost section activities and improve revenue streams and our overall financial position.

RICH MCGILL

REGION: CANTERBURY/WESTLAND

BACKGROUND: ACCOUNTANCY AND LAW

MAIN INTERESTS: STRENGTHENING CLIMBING COMMUNITY, FINANCIAL STRATEGY

I've benefited immensely from being a part of NZAC as an active climber. That's why I'm keen to join the board and give back in a way that best uses my financial and governance experience as a Chartered Accountant and Partner at PwC. My experience means I can help the board oversee NZAC's financial management and ensure that decisions are made based on the appropriate financial analysis and reporting. I'm also keen to use my skills to help NZAC develop and execute a long-term capital plan focused on improving facilities to meet the increasing demand.



CLARE KEARNEY

REGION: NORTH OTAGO

BACKGROUND: DIRECTOR

MAIN INTERESTS: FUTURE PROOFING THE ORGANISATION, EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

NZAC has made the bold decision to develop a board model of governance. I believe, with my background and experience, I can add value to this process.

A successful membership organisation, such as NZAC, reflects the requirements of its current membership and keeps a focus on future needs. It develops strong relationships with stakeholders and leads by example. NZAC represents people who climb or who have an affinity for climbing and its environment. Its members have a connection to New Zealand's climbing heritage and this is reflected in the pride NZAC has in member's achievements. I would be privileged to represent NZAC membership on a board that has such strong values.



PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE



LINDSAY SMITH

REGION: OTAGO

BACKGROUND: DIRECTOR

MAIN INTERESTS: STRATEGIC PLANNING, CHANGE MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE

An enthusiastic supporter of the Governance Review, I welcome the opportunity to deliver the new way of planning and guiding this organisation that the members have asked for.

Although my climbing skills could generously be described as average, the recognition of importance of the Alpine Club in encouraging and supporting climbers, gained from 15 years of section committee involvement, is what motivated me to seek a role as President.

I bring many years of leadership in creating and implementing strategic changes, across a diverse range of significant businesses and community organisations, but my primary value comes not from these business skills but from my ability to guide change in an inclusive, encouraging and positive manner.

It would be an honour to be part of implementing the governance changes requested by our membership, so that the New Zealand Alpine Club continues to thrive in the years ahead.

WIZ FINERON: RETIRED Extremely Dangerous

INTERVIEW BY SCOTT JURY

Tucked away at Diamond Falls in the Blue Mountains, *The Red Project* was originally bolted by Garth Miller back in 1999 and left as an open project. The project was tried by Australia's finest for many years, but the first ascent wasn't claimed until German climber Alex Megos arrived in 2013. He renamed it *Retired Extremely Dangerous* and proposed grade 35, the first route in Australia with that grade.

The route has since repelled all efforts until our very own Wiz Fineron had the chance to claim the second ascent early this May. Straight off the streets of Mount Maunganui, 'The Wiz kid' has taken his finely-tuned Froggatt Edge skills to the global scale, making notable ascents all around the world including the first ascent of the fabled *Somalia* (33) at Arapiles, and a recent third ascent of New Zealand's own test piece *Angel of Pain* (32). Wiz is also the only New Zealander to send the Swiss Alps' test piece *Silbergeier* (32), one part of the famously hard and scary 'Alpine Trilogy'. These were just mere stepping stones to his latest achievement.

Scott So you first tried this route back in 2016. Can you tell us a bit about your experience with it then? How long did you spend trying the route?

Wiz I was living in the Blue Mountains back then and as the season got started, I'd been climbing well, and it was time to step it up a notch. *The Red* represented a standard of climbing I'd dreamt about since my earliest climber days, so the stakes were high, but my chips were all in.

The process began well, all the moves were in the bag, good sections were being linked and it felt close. The subtle and precise nature of the route makes you feel close all the time.

However, it only takes one star to be out of line and that's enough to spit you off the wall.

For the following few months I gave it everything: post-climbing training sessions, crazy dieting regimes and whatever else I could think of to give me the edge to succeed.

Over the course of the season I had numerous opportunities to succeed, [even] to the point of falling off past what was considered as the hardest move. Surely it was in the bag. [But] from this point on, I began regressing. I was feeling stronger than ever, lighter than ever and motivated as all hell, yet I was still going backwards. The stars just wouldn't align, and for me, that one star that never aligned was my headspace. I was unhappy. I needed this ascent, convinced that it would change things. Climbing was my identity, and my ascents defined me. Despite countless efforts, my progress was stumped and towards the end of the season I was done. I was unhappy in life as well as my climbing. Something needed to change.

Did this have much impact on you returning home and moving on from your 'pro-climber' status?

I wouldn't say directly, but through my experiences on the route I became a lot more self-aware as to what really mattered to me. I was unhappy, and climbing the route or not wasn't going to change that. New Zealand was always home and it had been quite some time since I'd spent any good length of time there. Returning seemed like a perfect option for a fresh start.

As for the 'pro-life', climbing was no longer my motivation. I had burnt out and was no longer finding enjoyment in it. As climbing represented my entire existence, not being motivated for it anymore posed a bit of an issue to the 'pro-life'.

From the age of 14, I have been hugely lucky to have the support of a number of climbing companies wanting to support me along my journey as a climber. This was great as for most of the time I was on an upward spiral and growing forever bigger as a climber in my experiences, styles, and abilities. However, the higher up that ladder I climbed, the more and more [demanding] self-promotion—and with that, social media—became. Totally understandable from a business point of view, but when it becomes more encouraged than actually getting out there and becoming a better climber, this is where I become uncomfortable with it. I believe social media is the devil in adventure sports (and in general), as for me there has always been a much deeper connection than just grades, candid photos, and superficial likes.

After a lot of thought, and as part of my quest to rediscover my love for climbing, I figured signing off from the 'pro-life' would be a great way to start a new chapter in my climbing.

Without the pressure or feeling of responsibility to anyone, I could go back to my roots and think a lot about the little things that originally drew me to the sport. This slowly but surely got the ball rolling for the long journey ahead of rediscovering my motivation in climbing.

How have you found living down in Christchurch? Have you been finding it difficult to stay motivated here? Are there many projects in New Zealand that keep you psyched?

Christchurch is wicked. I mean, it definitely took me a little while to find my flow here, but if you live in the right areas (Sumner obviously) then Christchurch is pretty perfect. The amount of adventure sport on offer right in your own backyard is endless. As many would probably agree, this poses the biggest threat to my climbing as it's too easy to get distracted doing other things. Balance is key I always say, and as for my motivation for climbing, getting hooked on other sports has actually helped a lot. You've got to mix it up—nobody likes a one trick pony!

Up until this point, I haven't viewed anything in New Zealand as potential projects as such, more stepping stones as part of the recovery process. There have been a number of climbs that have posed a challenge, but understanding my motivations around each one has been the focus. By not being attached to anything, I've learnt to redefine success as part of the process and not the outcome.

However, this latest trip was an eye opener for me in more ways than one. I know now that my body and mind can still climb how I want it to when I put my mind to something—so I can definitely see myself setting goals within New Zealand. Just have to ride the wave and see how things go.

Since moving here, I understand you're now no stranger to injury (dealing with muscle strain and compartment syndrome in your forearm, a compression fracture of the L1, L2 and L3 vertebrae in a speed flying incident and recently tweaking your finger in the local gym while training for this trip). How did this play with your mindset leading up to the trip?

Yeah, what's up with that? I travel the world solely rock climbing and never get injured. I return home, stop rock climbing and suddenly I'm falling apart. As for the arm issue and broken back, neither of them were quick fixes, so patience was key. My approach to all the rehab proved to me that, deep down, I did have a strong level of determination and commitment. I just had to apply it to something motivating. The finger—this really emphasised the focus on the process and not the outcome. By the time the trip came around, it was almost a year to the day since my flying incident. Fully healed, I was confident it wasn't going to inhibit my trip. The arm was just as much of a question mark as the finger. Neither had been tested anywhere close to the expected loading strain required for climbing at my limit, so it was definitely a bit of a play-it-day-by-day approach. Enjoy the process.

So, if you'll allow me to get 'nerdy' for a moment, can you tell me about the nature of this route? What kind of moves does it feature? What does it come down to in order to send it?

For a route that is only about 18 metres tall, she definitely packs a punch. Confined within a bright red streak, the main business end of the route



Wiz attempting the delicate moves of *R.E.D.* on his previous round of attempts in 2016. BEN SANFORD

is in the first two thirds. From the second bolt, you enter the first boulder problem with some shouldery gastons and powerful double takes on edges. Not super hard, but easy to mess up. After this, you reach an average rest, enough to gain composure and a token shake before biting into the meaty section of the pie. The main crux consists of around seven moves, all on very friction-dependant holds that require a unique level of precision I've not experienced before. From here, you feel as if you've squeezed juice out of the holds, but before taking a breather there are another five exit moves, culminating in a rest jug. Deep locks between positive but small holds takes you out of the red streak and into the grey rock to the rest jug. 'Cut the rope, if I fall in the grey streak.' A section never considered hard, but the link from the ground proved this to be the redpoint crux. The bit I was actually worried about was the section following the rest jug to the top. This is the final boulder problem, where more crimps are to be crimped and more deep pulls are to be pulled. Crimp and crimp hard, watch those elbows, layback a friction sloper, bring the foot up high, press out to the shark's tooth, lock and reach to the smiley crimp, stay low, bring right hand to intermediate crimp, stare down the jug, and pounce.

Jugs.

The level of precision required for this route is what really inspired me. If your body position is merely millimetres out, pulling on feels desperate. It took everything I had learned as a climber, technical poetry, fingers fingers fingers, wind, head space, wind, patience, and maybe a bit of luck.

'It's not just a bicep curl, not just a show of strength, but a display of everything you can lay down as a climber.' – Lee Cossey

Oh wait, did you want grades?

Just before you went away, I remember you telling me of your low expectations of success for this trip and how you were more 'just going to see what you had to train when you came home'. Having said that, how did the trip start for you? At what point did this opinion shift? Did it take long to realise that you actually had the potential to do this?

For me, I had no expectations. Considering my ups and downs in climbing over the past couple of years, I was just buzzing about actually being psyched on going climbing again. There was however always a goal associated with the trip, and that was to at least get back on the route. Luckily for me, the first good stint of winter sending conditions blew through the mountains just as I arrived. I think it was my third climbing day of the trip where the forecast was looking great for a Diamond Falls day, so I couldn't resist. The injuries seemed to be holding up and the moves were once again in the bag. I figured I would have enough time to build that specific route fitness just from regularly trying, so I thought, 'Why not? What's there to lose?'

All my chips were in. I was committed.

The second half of the trip was where my mentality began to shift. I had a string of really good conditions where my approach of 'one day on, one day off' gave me the consistency I needed to make some good links. My confidence began to build massively, but there were still a lot of unknowns. By the fifth day of attempts (this trip), I climbed solidly through the crux and came off half a move from the resting jug. This was a handful of moves higher than my previous high point from years before, and somewhere I never expected to fall. I figured, next shot for sure. Two days later, I fell there a further two more times (half a move higher with my hand actually in contact with the jug). Consistent high points, yes, but did I have enough in the tank to actually put it all together?

I needed one more day. The confidence was consistently building, but the unknowns kept the expectations low and the guessing game alive right till the end. The last 'good conditions day' in the forecast was to be the morning of the day before I flew home. During what seemed like nature's last breath of wind, I climbed through my unknowns and soon found myself sitting on top.

I think it's important to keep expectations low. Not doubting yourself, but just keeping things real. I believe there is a balance in having enough self-confidence to give things an honest go—but without trying to predict an outcome. Things always happen when you're least expecting them.



Wiz gearing up for a spin on R.E.D. this year. ELLEN MEADS

Last time you were on the route, you were at the end of your 'sponsored career'. What was it like to go back to this after so much time? What changed from then and now? What do you think factored in you sending it now?

The biggest difference this time was that there was no sense of external pressure. It felt great. I was there purely for myself. My mental approach was so much healthier when climbing was no longer my identity and my ascents no longer defined me.

As to what changed, this time I would say it was 90 per cent head-space. I have finally managed to find balance in my climbing—where the passion is still there but without the obsession. This provided a fresh perspective and a new approach to my climbing. Physically, I can't imagine I'm any stronger than what I was back when I was climbing full time. I think I've always had what it took. It was just a matter of going through the process mentally and physically to find that existing strength and learning how to use it. Time.

And maybe the 'power mo'. I couldn't grow a moustache back then, so it must have been the final star needing to align.

I'm interested in hearing what your motivations are as a climber, and what inspired you to want to return to this route after so much time and attempt to take it down?

I feel like my motivations have probably changed a lot over the years, but for now the personal development that goes on through the challenge of climbing is pretty cool. The process you go through mentally and physically as a climber and person is fascinating.

It's different for every person and for every climb. Finding enjoyment in the small things like movement, the company I keep and the locations I choose definitely also feeds my motivation. I think that is why this trip worked out so well. The Blue Mountains have always been held as a special place to me, I caught up with great friends, and climbed at some of my favourite crags. Pretty hard for this trip not to have been a success.

As for the route itself, it represented a challenge, a chance to develop myself further, and an unfinished chapter in my life. Unfinished business just couldn't go ignored and I knew I wouldn't be able to move on if I didn't give it an honest go. It was a matter of being patient and waiting till the time was right. This year it just [was], and I was in a healthy head-space, (mostly) on top of my injuries, and quite frankly sick of the nagging from my friends across the ditch. 📍



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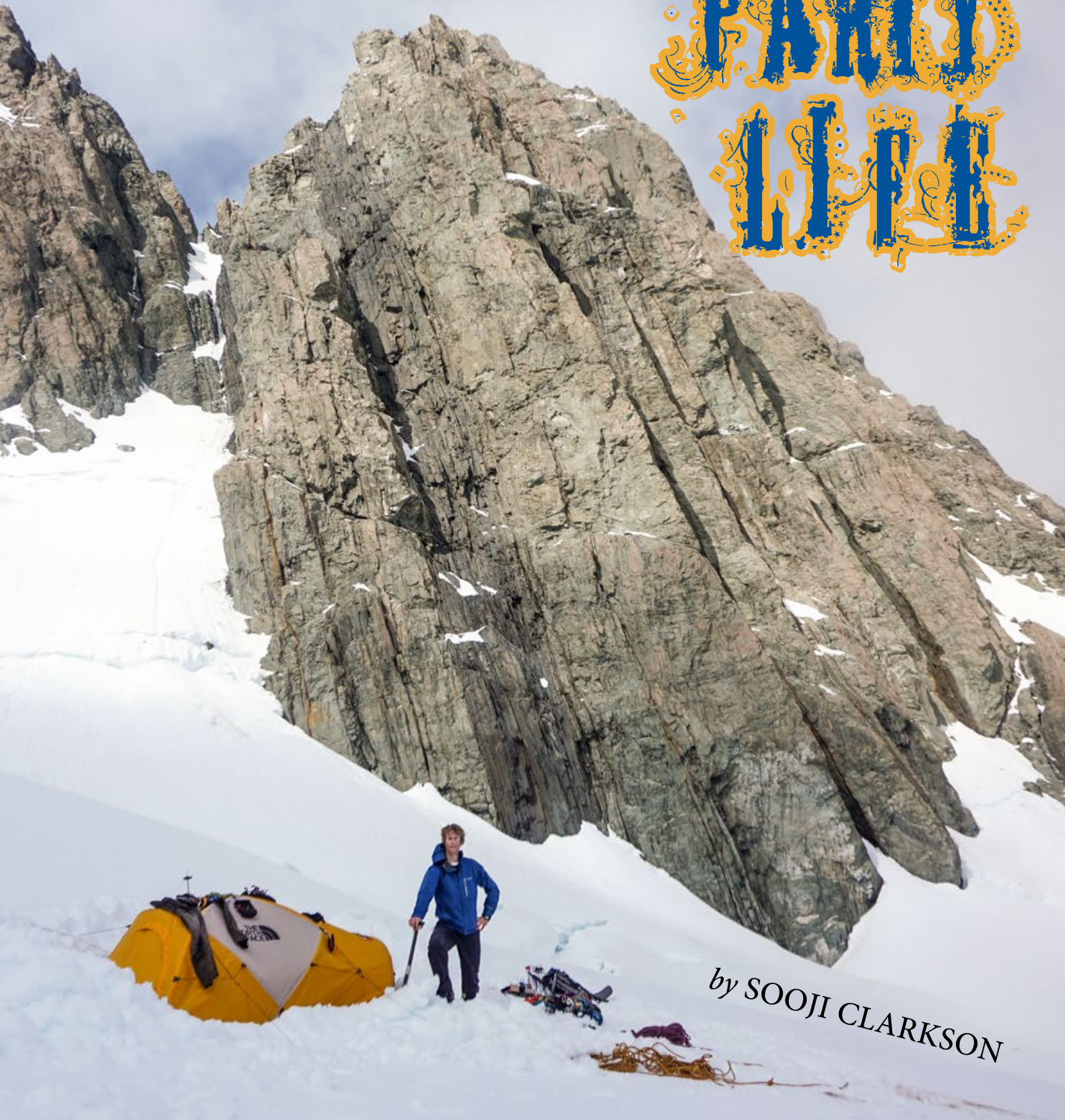
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BALFOUR PARTY LINE



by SOOJI CLARKSON

Late in December I was sitting at my desk, holding on to my cup of tea and with it my last pretences of being a clean, functional member of society. I was closing off and handing over projects ahead of my final fortnight of employment before embarking on a period of extended leave. Abruptly, with a look at the upcoming weather window and a psyched message from James Warren, all pretences were down the drain. I somehow wrangled leave for most of my remaining workdays, threw a haphazard pile of gear into a borrowed car (thanks Sam), and was on the road to Fox.

The Balfour Glacier lies to the southeast of Mt Tasman, bordered by peaks such as Torres, Graham, Teichelmann and, of most interest to us, Drake and Magellan. Since '89, the efforts of Alex Palman and Peter Dickson (among others) have achieved an impressive concentration of rock routes on these two peaks. The rock quality is rumoured to be among the best in the park and the setting is nothing short of spectacular. There is great potential for new mixed lines, and the névé also houses the Balfour and Hidden Balfour faces of Tasman—some of the finest ice climbing in New Zealand (though despite having carried in an ice rack, it was too warm during our trip to get out swinging picks). Yet the Balfour remains a little bit like a moderately exclusive nightclub. The name is fairly known, people generally know where it is and perhaps have heard rumours of what it's like, but it remains moderately difficult to get to. New Zealand weather and glacier access: nature's bouncers.

The Balfour had been nagging at my mind for a while. Since first hearing about Magellan through Simon Bell's epic ascent of *Anyone Can*

FACING PAGE James Warren digging out a camp on the Balfour Glacier, Mt Drake lies behind him. SOOJI CLARKSON

RIGHT Abseiling from Mt Drake with the Balfour Buttress of Magellan just peeking out from behind. SOOJI CLARKSON

BELOW The author at Katies Col, with views across to Drake and Magellan. JAMES WARREN





Play Guitar (III, 6+), interest was properly sparked when a friend suggested we go give this iconic line a jam ... I applied for an FMC Youth Scholarship off the back of that conversation and, when my application was successful, the subsequent funding made it all suddenly a very real possibility. With a tentative crew of four and a few months up our sleeves, there was surely no way we wouldn't line up that magic combination: leave + partners + conditions + weather = get on it! Right?

With the settled, predictable weather that New Zealand is renowned for, the weeks kept ticking away and nothing materialised out of the gloom. I got more and more nervous. The access from Katies Col and to the base of the routes in the Balfour presents a dilemma increasingly prevalent in our hills: to be far enough into summer to have dry rock, but simultaneously early enough that it is still accessible. Glacial retreat has made the future look concerning for alpine rock routes in areas such as the Balfour. I'd heard early March was a rough deadline to get in there ... in a good snow year. This year was anything but, so when the benevolent weather gods came calling, I couldn't have been more ready to drop everything. Other commitments mixed with injuries took out the rest of the team, so I was very grateful to still have James for this adventure. It would've been a little too painful to miss this chance.

Flat light and gusty wind saw us dropped further from Katies Col than usually would be tenable for access to the Balfour. It was a hard slog from the start, swimming through soft snow while carrying overloaded packs. But the knowledge that others had camped at the col in recent days gave us the motivation of a pre-dug tent site awaiting us there.

Our first plan: day trip from Katies Col to climb *Astrolabe* (IV, 5+) on Mt Drake. This had the secondary benefit of scoping out our access without the burden of full packs. We learnt valuable lessons about which route not to take down from the col—sections of vertical ice and a schrund crossed by jumping down on to avalanche debris were both obstacles that looked like they would be avoidable next time. The best route is a lot easier to assess in retrospect once on the Balfour. From there, access to Satellite Buttress was still involved but not too

ABOVE Recovery and laundry day after a late night out on *Astrolabe*. SOOJI CLARKSON
OPPOSITE PAGE TOP LEFT The decaying low arete on *Shogun*, with the alternative new pitch marked in red. SOOJI CLARKSON

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP RIGHT James puts the scale of the buttresses on Drake into impressive perspective. SOOJI CLARKSON

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM The magnificent landscape of the West Coast névés. SOOJI CLARKSON

tricky, although with the consistently high freezing level, we became accustomed to punching our legs (and sometimes more) through snow bridges to dangle in empty space. There was definitely going to be no escaping roped travel all week. At long last we were on the rock and climbing. Let the party begin!

The presence of some bolted belays and harder grades than expected made it apparent we'd started up the neighbouring *Red Scorpion* (IV, 7+) instead of *Astrolabe*. Looking back through Taichiro Naka's article on their Balfour trip (*The Climber* #93, Spring 2015), it seems we weren't the first to make this detour. With an excellent lead from James up a crux pitch of underclings in a small roof—great exposure—we eventually ran out of mountain with ample daylight to spare. Unfortunately, this was also in deteriorating weather. Sleet and snow had moved in and the winds had picked up, but we had a bolted rap line to descend, so we'd be down soon enough. Perhaps.

After searching a little for the *Corsair* abseil line, we decided instead to descend the *Red Scorpion* line as it was closer and we knew the belays were in excellent condition, having used or seen them earlier in the day. On the first rap, one rope got stuck. Oh well, these things happen. Indeed, the features of this buttress seem built to catch rope. We re-pitched the section on our remaining rope to sort it out. Onwards and downwards ... only to get stuck again on the next rap. We had at least four stuck ropes that night. Needless to say, the extra climbing ate up our night, and by the time we reached our gear stash at the base, we found we could turn our head torches off—it was getting past 5am.





Party till we see the morning light and all that, except we were still a long way from our camp at Katies Col. We roped up as the precipitation and visibility continued to worsen. We didn't have tracks to follow in the new snow, but at least the daylight perked us up a bit. After extremely low visibility led to an unintentional but 'brief' foray up the left rib of Torres Peak's west ridge, we were back at our camp in time for a well-deserved meal (breakfast, dinner or lunch? It was uncertain), some welcoming sun to dry out in, and a good sleep.

Perhaps a little too much sleep. We woke up well into the high temperatures and bluebird skies of mid-morning, with wet slide danger ruling out the possibility of moving our camp into the Balfour proper that day. Taking a rest day seemed a wise idea though—it turns out an all-night climbing bender can sap the energy a little. We'd move camp very early the next morning in the hopes of more stable snow, and to leave ourselves enough time in the day to get on another route.

Our initial scoping mission gave us the beta we needed for much smoother access this time around. Upon arrival, we dug in a homely new base camp and brewed a few much-needed cuppas (tea is life, coffee is life) before racking up and heading to the base of Magellan for *Anyone Can Play Guitar* (III, 6+). Continuing warm conditions and low snow levels made access spicy, but doable. James let me have the first, and crux, pitch ... and what a pitch! Fifty metres of corner to a widening crack, steepening and getting more jagged until the last fist-sized crack section rises in an imposing, overhanging headwall. Sustained, memorable and thoroughly enjoyable. Thereafter the route relents significantly, though still sports sections of interesting climbing. As a bonus, the belays are all still in good condition and the route finishes almost on the summit of Magellan. Not needing to commit to the unpleasant task of kicking steps in snow with rock shoes just to make a summit is surely worth at least half a star.

Thankfully, we had a less eventful descent compared to the previous route, though not without mishap. With the ropes failing to pull on the last rap, James put in the hard yards to prusik up the full 50-metre pitch to free the rope. Oddly enough, we were less than keen on re-leading the crux—at what was now 2am—in the dark and the rain. At least our tent, and thus our bed, wasn't so far away this time.

The classic Mt Drake buttress route *Shogun* (IV, 5+) lost the majority of its first pitch when the base of the buttress fell away in 1998. A new start traversing in from the left and joining the buttress at the third pitch had been climbed in 2014. But I had been eyeing up a new direct start using the arête left by the rockfall scar. This would join the very base of the remaining original route and miss out none of the excellent buttress. With minimal time remaining on our good forecast, we set off early in the morning and I started up the line well before the sun hit the rock. It felt tricky with numb hands and feet, but probably goes at around 17 or 18—just enough small features for hands, with feet on smears and small edges. The gear is minimal but good. Following a rising traverse, *Gun Show* pulls around on to the original arête with a neat bit of exposure above the overhanging top of the rockfall scar. From there, it's back on to the original *Shogun* route—gorgeous orange rock and delightful climbing indeed.

We had other places to be that morning however, so we descended from the second pitch. It was our last chance to have a look at *Pelican* (IV, 8), lurking just around the corner. The first pitch went down in a combination of suspect rock and suspect gear, finishing in a traverse on thin holds. At least I had the sun to warm me a little by this point. After a cruiser second pitch, the third turned up the heat again—but promised a couple of bolts. I had to laugh a bit while running it out past at least one empty bolt hole. After a solid effort on the iconic roof crack pitch, James unfortunately put some seriously gnarly flappers into his

hand from a sharp jam, and after considering the time and approaching weather, we had to make the decision to bail off so we could grab a 'good' (over an hour at least) night's sleep before packing up camp to get out of the Balfour in the cooler hours of the night.

Unfortunately, the unrelentingly high freezing level meant reversing the access was still tricky, despite our early start. Steep sugary snow and collapsing schrunds entertained us through the morning until we made it to the Fox Nêvé, back where we'd started, in time for sunrise. And there was still a long way to go, in fact much longer than we had yet realised. We could not make a direct route down to Chancellor Hut (not for lack of trying), and had to resign ourselves to a seemingly endless, depressing trudge back under Katies Col and around to Pioneer Hut instead—talk about taking the scenic route home. Consolation prize: an overflowing hut food box to refuel our spirits and the excellent company of Mike and Josh, who'd based themselves there for the last week.

A return flight was scheduled for 3pm the next day, but considering the forecast, the four of us decided it was unlikely to come through. As an insurance policy, we made a dash for Chancellor Hut early the next morning. It paid off. Ominous weather was swirling spectacularly over the divide by the time we reached the Fox, and James put on an impressive acceleration in order to get on the hut radio for a heli. Good timing. The cloud had come in too low and, by mid-flight, our pilot radioed back to base, calling a halt to any further flights. Out just in the nick of time. We touched down and went straight to the pub.

Thanks to FMC for providing the funding to make this trip possible, to Alex Palman and James Wright who provided us copies of Balfour Rock (one now available in Pioneer Hut), and to those others who helped out with beta. What an amazing corner of our mountain playgrounds.



ABOVE James having been bit by the *Pelican*. 500JI CLARKSON

BELOW Impressive evening views over the Tasman Sea. 500JI CLARKSON

PREVIOUS PAGE Preparing to abseil from Drake, with Katies Col and the route across the Balfour on the right. 500JI CLARKSON



LIFETIME PROJECT

CHRONICLES OF

OBSESSION

by Peter Allison

KISMET

/ˈkɪzmet/

noun

destiny; fate.

'what chance did I stand against kismet?'

synonyms: fate, destiny, fortune, providence, the stars, God's will, what is written in the stars, one's doom, one's portion, one's lot, one's lot in life, karma, predestination, preordination, predetermination, what is to come, the writing on the wall.

December, 2003

School's out. It has not gone well—nearly all Ds. I'm not fussed. Judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree and all that. I'm moving to Christchurch to be a climbing bum.

2005

I'm back in Wellington, living at my parents' place and working night shifts in a hotel as a bellboy to save money for a climbing trip to Australia. This is my second year as a climbing bum. My sleep patterns are all messed up so I wake at 5am on Saturday, despite it being my day off. I go climbing all day at Turakirae Head on the south coast, where I manage the second ascent of *Speed Freak* (V7). I should try and sleep before work, but I'm too psyched. I work Saturday night (12am-8am) and then go and pick up Kester Brown on Sunday morning.

Kester had called me the previous week to ask if I wanted to come climbing at a new crag on Mt Ruapehu. I was 18 years old and an aspiring young climber. Kester was famous in New Zealand climbing circles; he had climbed *A Show of Strength* (V8) and he was a mountaineer. Of course I wanted to go climbing with him. I didn't really know him very well at the time. I just assumed he needed a ride and I had a car.

We drive to Mt Ruapehu and climb all day at Whakapapa Gorge.

Most North Islanders are familiar with the Happy Valley beginner's ski area at the top of the Bruce Road. On a mid-winter's day, thousands of people cram themselves and their children (willing or otherwise) into this sub-horizontal valley in order to fight over a patch of heavily-compressed snow. However, only a few hundred metres away on the eastern flank of the ridge lies an immaculate andesite cliff in a setting of utmost serenity. The choice between these two seems obvious to me, but then I never did understand most popular things. The crag hosts some of the best routes in the North Island, with both trad and sport routes up to 45m long, and grades ranging from 10 to 26.

When we arrive, Paul 'Dodgers' Rogers is there. He developed the majority of Whakapapa Crag while working at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre just down the road. Having moved to New Zealand in 1986, Paul established a number of the finest routes in the country, often by himself or in a bold style seldom appreciated by those who followed.

Kester says I can try his project after he has had one go, presumably knowing full well he will do it on his first try. Kester picks a name for the route from a book he's been reading: *Arturism* (25), a state of mind only achieved through the removal of one's legs and arms. Okay then ...

I manage to flash the second ascent of *Arturism*. I'm elated and pump my fist like an American teenager, glossing over the fact that I'd only managed it because Kester was spraying continuous beta at me, telling me exactly where all the holds were and with which hand to grab them. I was so close to failure. There was no way I'd have done it first go had I needed to pause and work out the crux for myself. Certainly not a very bold style.

Kester then suggests I try another route he had established on a previous trip. I flash that too—*Electric Earth* (23). I was wrong about being used for my car. Kester was genuinely psyched about going climbing, and about encouraging others who shared a similar level of motivation. He seemed



TOP The 'Golden Wall' section of Whakapapa Gorge crag. *Kismet* climbs through the centre of the inset wall and through the roof above. TOM HOYLE

BOTTOM The author attempting *Kismet* in 2005, Paul Rogers belaying. KESTER BROWN

LIFETIME PROJECT

CHRONICLES OF

OBSESSION

to get as much joy from seeing others succeed on a climb as he did from his own success.

As the day draws to a close, we attempt the hardest route at the crag—*Kismet* (26).

Kester bolted this route in 2004, and then gifted it to John Palmer as a birthday present. JP said it was the best birthday present he ever had, prompting his wife to interject: 'But John, we got together on your birthday.'

The route is incredible. The initial vertical wall is made up of a series of interlocking blocks, crazy geometric shapes that look like a giant honeycomb. Hailing from Wellington, it seems no small miracle that these blocks are actually all solid. The holds on this wall are generous but spaced, and the moves that lead to the business—a 45° overhang—are slightly more taxing than you'd like. From here, a series of sidepulls lead to a large sloping pod. You need to get both hands and apparently a foot in the pod to continue, but we're all trashed and call it a day. I'll have to come back.

We drive back to Wellington. Dodgers asks if he can hitch a ride. He looks like he is having second thoughts when he sees my car.

My first car was a 1981 Toyota Starlet. It was painted with bright-yellow house paint (applied by brush), with various iconic New Zealand climbing logos of the time splashed across each panel. It was a 'target vehicle', as one officer of the law would tell me. It was small and light, and it was not uncommon to return from a day of climbing to find it missing, having been carried off to some new location by bored climbing bums. That car symbolised a lot to me. It was my ticket to freedom. It transported me from school, which I despised, to all of those wonderful South Island crags I'd dreamed about. It frequently broke down, and learning to fix it was a catalyst for a personal interest in mechanics, which led to reading a book, rebuilding an engine, studying engineering, buying motorbikes, racing motorbikes, maintaining racebikes, rebuilding more engines, maintaining hydropower schemes ... but I digress.

I make Kester drive home, thinking I'll get some sleep on the ride home, but can't stop thinking about *Kismet* and don't sleep a wink. We arrive back in Wellington in time for another night shift. When I crawl into bed on Monday morning, I've been awake for 53 hours.

2008

I've been overseas. I'm back in New Zealand and am catching up with my parents. We head to Tongariro National Park to do some walking. I deviate the trip to try *Kismet*. I've not been climbing in months and am weak as piss. I barely scabble my way up the first vertical section, only to flounder around the slopy pod and get stuck. I'll have to come back.

2009

I've snapped my right leg in two. It really hurts. I mention to John Palmer that I am considering studying an engineering degree at university. John is immensely supportive of the idea.

I first met John at Castle Hill in 2004. He had recently returned from working for a law firm in the UK to work for a law firm in New Zealand.

John is a suit, more climbing professional than climbing bum. Given he is 12 years my senior and considering his summation of our first encounter (*The Climber #68*, Winter 2009), our friendship seemed unlikely. Once again, I was mistaken. John began climbing at the Evolution Gym climbing wall in Wellington in 1996. He coupled repeats of the hardest boulder problems at Baring Head in the late 1990s with repeats and first ascents of the hardest boulders at Castle Hill in the early 2000s, including the second ascent of *House of Pain* (V10) and the first ascent of *Everything's Gone Green* (V10). We began frequently climbing together in 2005 when I moved back to Wellington. Religiously: Tuesday and Thursday bouldering sessions on the Hangdog '45', and then weekend missions to the Rak. John generously provided a stimulus package to my meagre wages by giving me free rides out to Turakirae in the weekends, and later, free entry to his bouldering wall The Engine Room. When I busted my leg, no one paid me more visits than JP.

2011

My girlfriend Sarah and I are in Wellington. There's been a huge earthquake in Christchurch and the university is closed. A friend suggests we head to Ruapehu for a day's climbing. I've recently had another operation to get the metal removed from my shin. It's not very good. I try *Kismet* anyway, and make it to the slopy pod, but no further. I'll have to come back.

2018

I've finished the engineering degree, tacked on a PhD and am married to Sarah. JP was our celebrant. Kester was there too. I apply for a job in Taupo and we move there in October. I've been racing motorbikes for five years and I hate rock climbing. Climbing has resulted in countless finger injuries, a torn supraspinatus, a dislocated knee, the aforementioned broken leg, elbow tendonitis, a torn hamstring, a torn groin, and screwed-up wrists that pop out of place from time to time. Some guys at work go climbing at the AC Baths wall. It's hard to make friends in a small town—I'd best accept their invite.

2019

We head to Whakapapa. Paul Rogers is there. He's recently moved back to the Central North Island to work at the Hillary Outdoors Centre. I put the draws on *Kismet* and send it next go.

It has been 14 years since I first tried the route. Kester and JP, people I barely knew at the time they established the climb, have since become lifelong climbing partners and friends. The guy who developed this crag all those years ago hasn't lived in the North Island for all of that time, but is here. Is it fate?

JP's coming up on Monday and I've got the day off—we're going to try a new route he's bolted. 📍

If you have a story of an epic long term ascent that you'd like to share in *The Climber*, get in touch with us at: editor@alpineclub.org.nz.



TOP The author's 1981 Toyota Starlet; target vehicle and star of the film *Tough Love*. JOHN PALMER

BOTTOM Peter on his successful ascent of *Kismet* this year, 14 years after his first attempt. JOHN PALMER



THE FYFE RIVER GORGE

BY ALASTAIR MARK

📷 Rachel Musgrave climbing amidst the streaks on the Intergalactic Wall, Fyfe River Gorge. TROY MATTINGLEY

I have no doubt that I can credit the cover of the 85th issue of *The Climber* for reinvigorating my climbing career. 2013 was just my tenth year living in Nelson. Paines Ford no longer offered much that was new and still within my aging capabilities. The Pohara crags, at the time, were largely uninspiring. On the cover in the Spring 2013 edition, James Morris was climbing a wall of soaring multi-coloured limestone tufas that could have been somewhere in France or Spain. And the route: *Space Cowboy*, grade 30, was just down the road.

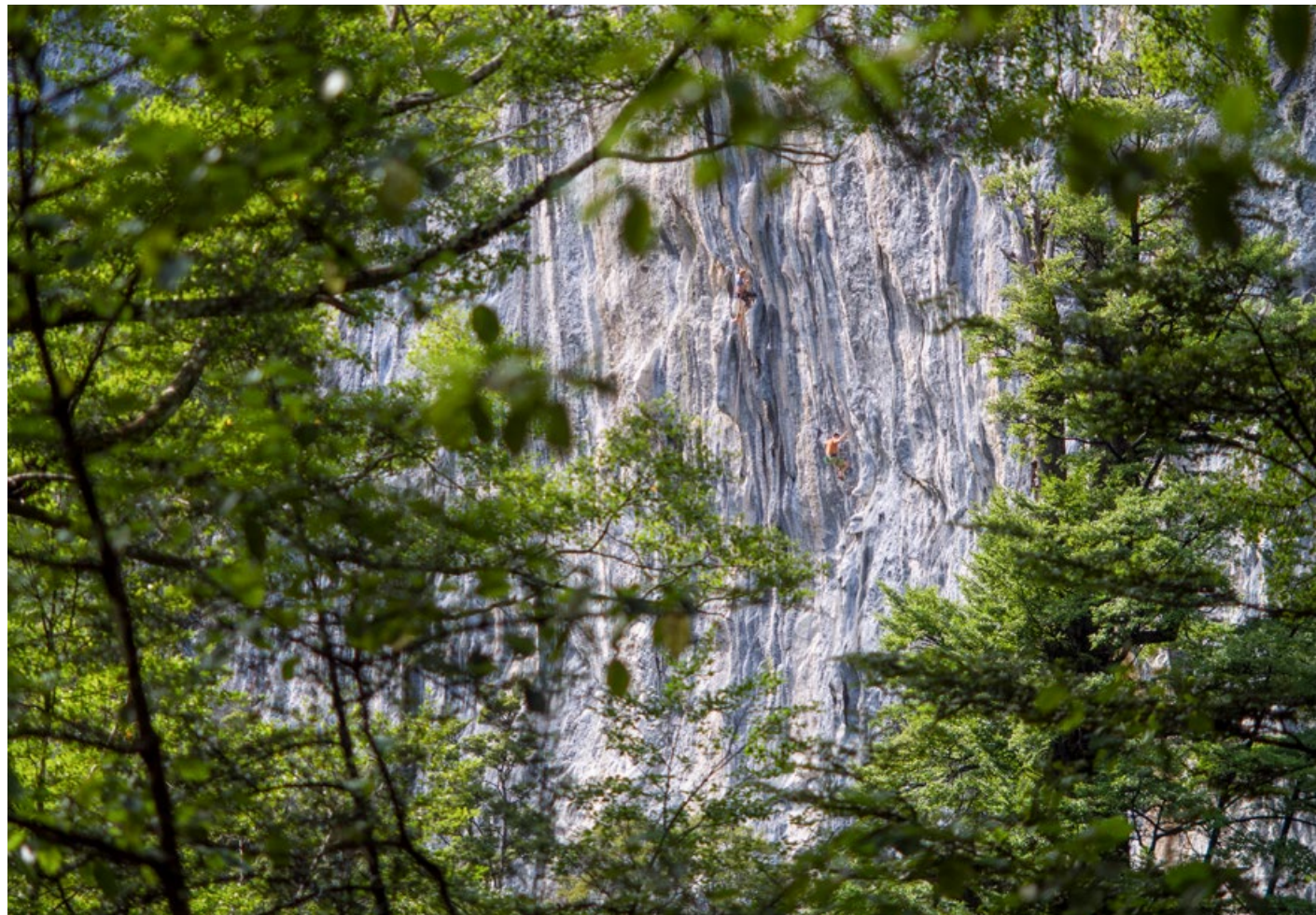
It would never be possible to keep this location secret. The topographical map of the lower Fyfe River Gorge has cliffs on both sides of the valley extending for kilometres above the start of the Frying Pan track. My first solo foray into the gorge, like others, followed the river itself. The relative ease of this access was directly related to river flows. Now, after numerous visits, a well-defined track exists through to the Intergalactic Wall and Space Camp. The track is marked by Vespex wasp bait stations, orange triangles/Doritos, stoat traps and, in a couple of places, a hand-line to assist in traversing some difficult terrain. Some climbing can be reached with dry feet using the 'High and Dry' track. To continue on past The Factory still requires four river crossings. Usually by mid-summer, the river flow reduces so that these too can be made without getting wet.

Much of the early focus was directed towards the Intergalactic Wall. The west side, from above the sleeping platforms, is steep, clean and well featured. It is home to the first recorded route in the gorge, the popular, if not a little intimidating *Conquistadors of the Useless* (22). The east side gently overhangs and rises to over 50m in height. Most routes end at 30m, highlighting how difficult bolting on lead can be. Despite this focus at the Intergalactic Wall, Jochen Lenfert and I undertook establishing a multi-pitch route on the Knot Factory, where the High and Dry track comes down towards the river. The Knot Factory can be easily reached in less than two hours from Nelson. Numerous day trips were required to complete the four-pitch *Too Filthy for Freud* (23). Filthy, sick and phat! Those who can unlock the first pitch and continue upwards are rewarded with some of the best climbing in the gorge.



ABOVE Daniel Krippner and Sam Stephenson at Space Camp. JACOB DOORNEBOSCH

BELOW John Harris on *Megalomania* (25), the original, central line on the main part of the Intergalactic Wall. TROY MATTINGLEY



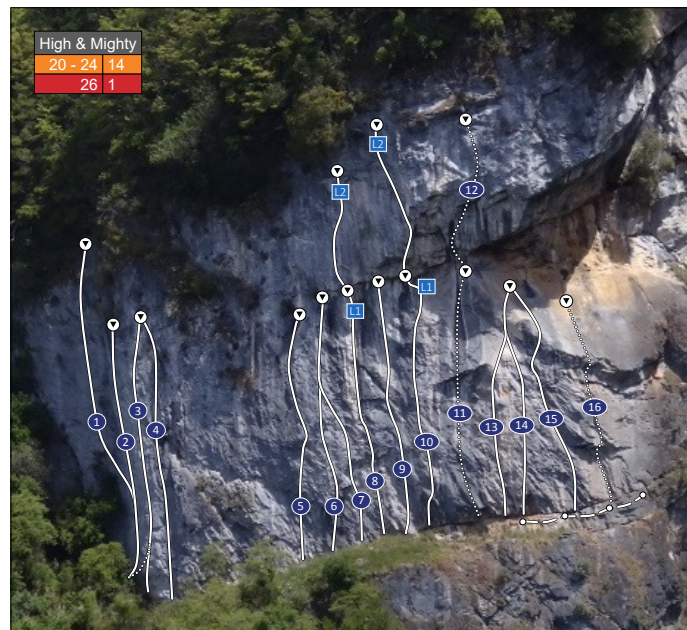
Alec McCallum trying his hand at *Lunacy* (24), on the Intergalactic Wall. TROY MATTINGLEY

High and Mighty



High and Mighty Approach

- 1 Robin's Delight 21 30m**
Start as for *Cloud Nine* and then head left into the groove after the 2nd bolt. Puzzle your way up this groove to the top of the wall.
Jochen Lenfert, February 2017
- 2 Cloud Nine 21 8B 22m**
Left most line of bolts. Start above the belay tree climbing the scoop to the base of the blunt, slightly overhung arête. Airy moves lead to the anchor below the scrub. Ignore the bolt two thirds up on the right. This was the first route on the wall.
Al Mark, October 2015 (Eq. Jochen Lenfert and Al Mark)
- 3 Kea 20 9B 25m**
Starts in steep broken ground then heads up the prominent arête. Keeping slightly right of the arête finishing at the same anchor as the next route. Originally shared the *Cloud Nine* start, traversed right below the first bolt to meet the arête at what is now the 3rd bolt.
Jochen Lenfert, October 2015
- 4 Happier than Larry 21 9B 25m**
At the lowest point of the wall right of the arête, climb up through small roof heading left, then straight up on beautiful moves to the same belay as Kea.
Al Mark, 2015 (Eq. Jochen Lenfert and Al Mark)
- 5 The Plug 24**
Tudor Burchill, March 2017 (Eq. Jochen Lenfert and Al Mark)
- 6 Majestic Rose 23 9B 25m**
Direct start to *Mighty Like A Rose* which starts at the bottom of the flow and joins *Mighty Like A Rose* at the 6th bolt (*Mighty Like A Rose's* 5th).
Jochen Lenfert, January 2017
- 7 Mighty Like A Rose 23 8B 25m**
Starts just right of gritty line of flow underneath a triangular block roof. After pulling over bulge follow the flow up tending left, finishing at anchors under the break.
Jochen Lenfert, January 2017
- 8 Flight of the Kereru 24 16B 38m**
11 22 24m 10B: Following the thin, light yellow streak to the break (first anchor).
Jochen Lenfert, March 2016
- 12 24 38m 16B:** Turning the bulge and finishing left of the top flow turns it into a Fyfe pump fest.
Michael Cartwright, March 2016 (Eq. Jochen Lenfert)
- 9 Veni, Vidi, Vici 22 10B 24m**
Or V³. Fingery through the Light grey streak to anchor at break
Jochen Lenfert, March 2016



High and Mighty

- 10 The Veteran Pilot 26 16B 40m**
11 23 25m 10B: Sharp dark grey rock leads to first anchor below the striking flow.
Jochen Lenfert, January 2016
- 12 26 40m 16B:** Crazy climbing up a unique feature. Yard up the obvious steep tufas. A number of funky tricks will keep you sticking to the wall!
Josh Cornah, October 2017 (Eq. Jochen Lenfert, 2015)
- 13 Closed Project**
Eq. Al Mark
- 14 The Beak Of The World (Closed Project)**
Eq. Ed Nepia
- 15 Mighty '18' 21 9B 25m**
Fingery up the yellow flow to no hands rest. Technical onto another no hands rest and follow seam to slab below bigg roofs. Bring bolting kit!
- 16 Closed Project**
8B 25m
Start at overhanging seam, last 2 bolts same as previous route.
Eq. Jochen Lenfert
- 15 Not Given Lightly 21 7B 23m**
Up the left leaning corner. Same anchor as *Mighty '18*.
Ed Nepia & Al Mark, 2017
- 16 Into Africa 24 8B 24m**
Blocky looking features on far right of wall.
Jono Clark, 2018 (Eq. Al Mark)



The largely untapped potential of the Darkside walls. This area is currently home to just a handful of routes.

TOM HOYLE

Route development in the Fyfe River Gorge has continued in surges that were dependent on enthusiasts and their preparedness to put in the hard work required. There are still numerous walls worthy of the considerable effort needed to produce routes. Many can be difficult to reach, or to get above, or are so steep as to make abseil access counterproductive. One wall however, has proven to be different.

On the west side of the valley, guarded by the first two distinct gorges is the impressive High and Mighty wall. The height, aspect and steepness tend to allow climbing all year round. The upper headwall keeps the routes dry, even in the most persistent rain. A break at two-thirds height is where most of the routes finish, with steep, tempting features above. The nature of the limestone rewards novel climbing styles, meaning the routes feel like a full pitch of climbing at just 30m. For those with more stamina and drive, the much steeper upper headwall—with its numerous flowstones and tufas will offer greater challenges. Currently only two routes and a project continue through these outrageous features to the top.

On the south end, the Kea Buttress and Robin's Retreat faces stay shaded from morning sun. By midday, the sun leaves the entire wall—often improving conditions on some of the best-graded 20 to 24 routes in the region. The elevation allows one to relax, admire and speculate at the future of options for climbing in the gorge. Yet still bigger challenges wait for those willing to venture westward. At over 100m tall, Te Maunganui stands defiantly above the grass sidle before the Intergalactic Wall and Space Camp. This massive piece of rock real estate promises to hold the future of multi-pitch limestone in New Zealand—for those with pioneering skills and considerable enthusiasm. Currently the longest route here is the three-pitch route, *Where the Wild Things Are* (17, 21, 13). It leads up from the centre of the wall to a cave that is partially obscured by a thin veil of limestone. Advanced caving skills may be required to continue up through this unique feature. Overhanging rock above leads to the biggest limestone roof I have ever seen: surely unclimbable without aid?

Crossing the river below Te Maunganui and continuing up to the Darkside has led to the discovery of some of the most challenging projects in the gorge. Much unexplored and shady rock exists here, but often at outrageous angles. For those with more modest ambitions, a multitude of new route potential exists on more manageable crags. This summer, development has begun on the accessible Nether Regions and the south-facing Underworld. These areas promise more quality climbs for those prepared to bolt and clean their way into rock climbing immortality. Thanks to a generous contribution from the NZAC bolting fund, this has become possible for several climbers who have recently written themselves into the draft Fyfe River Gorge guidebook.

In January, Bohdi Bettjeman added a new route that begins and exits to the right of the now popular *Ka Mau Te Wehi*. *Bodacious* (21) shares the same crux, and also provides an alternate first pitch to *Where The Wild Things Are*. From the same belay, *Where Did My Mojo Go* (23) ascends the corner, before spanning back left and charging on up the steep flaring corner. This route easily makes it into my top ten 'moderate' Fyfe classic climbs. Another worthy climb is *New Pants* (19), the route at The Nether Regions. First climbed by Russell Adams, it is a deep, wide crack that narrows to a bulging hand crack finale. It is generously supplemented with more than enough face holds for those without jamming skills. The most impressive addition is a right-to-left traverse above Space Camp, which succumbed to the concerted efforts of Thomas Bauer and Olivier Boutin. *Cosmic Sidling* (25) starts as for *The Secret Life of Walty Mitty* (23) and continues out above the campsite to the second set of anchors. Having witnessed the early attempts, and with the crux being the final exit past a pair of tufas, the grade of 25 seems fair, even by Fyfe standards.

As the drought continues in the Buller region, more projects are being unearthed and equipped. If visiting the area, please respect someone else's project. Considerable time, effort and finances will have gone into their preparation. More important is to respect the region. This is a beautiful and unique part of Kahurangi National Park, still with abundant birdlife and unrivalled scenery. At the moment, the one recommended camping site is Space Camp, with enough dry platforms to sleep up to



ABOVE The looming wall and roof of Te Maunganui. JACOB DOORNEBOSCH
BELOW Thomas Bauer on *Cosmic Sidling* (25), a route that traverses from right to left above Space Camp. ALASTAIR MARK
PREVIOUS TOP The High and Mighty Wall topos from the *Fyfe River Gorge Guidebook* draft, courtesy of www.kiwitracks.com/fyfe-river-gorge.



ten people comfortably. No formal toilet has been established. Camping down by the river is discouraged, as the gorge is prime habitat for the shy and endangered whio. The last, and best place to get reliable water before Space Camp is to drop down to the river at the start of the grassy slope at the base of Te Maunganui. A short climb from the river, at the start of the narrow canyon, is the shady Underworld. This promises to be a warm weather alternative to the Darkside, and with more work should contain several classic limestone climbs.

Needless to say, since looking at the cover of *The Climber* issue #85 five years ago I've remained enthused about the climbing in the Fyfe. That enthusiasm has spread to other parts of Kahurangi National Park. With unique potential for some incredible route development, now more than ever, we need to be considerate of the ecological values these special places have. All future climbing should be mindful of that responsibility. Tread lightly and enjoy. [G]

FREE SOLO

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY DEREK CHENG



📷 Kiff Alcocer on the west ridge of Pigeon Spire (5.4/12), with the three Howser Towers in front of him. Bugaboos, Canada.



CHASING THE HIGH

The suitcase-sized block dislodged as soon as I touched it. It rumbled towards me in cumbersome fashion, forcing an awkward twist to keep my sacred bits out of its path. It brushed my foot and crashed down the mountainside before detonating on the glacier below, leaving only dust, silence, and the distinct gunpowder smell that comes from huge masses of rock slicing against each other.

I collected myself. Checked my foot. Inhaled deeply. The dawn was just beginning to kiss the tips of the nine peaks of the *Evolution Traverse* (VI, 5.9/17), a prized ridge climb in California's Sierra Nevada. A moment ago, I had narrowly escaped being swept away into oblivion, but now everything was benign. The still morning. The valleys and glaciers and jagged peaks. The exquisite solitude.

This isn't the only close shave I've had, or witnessed, while climbing ropeless. On Mt Robson, the tallest and proudest peak in the Canadian Rockies, I was down-climbing an overhanging section of loose shale when one of my handholds broke. Gravity seized my waist and heaved me towards the abyss below, but the fingertips of my other hand clamped down and refused to yield.

In the Cirque of the Towers in Wyoming's Wind River Range, I watched my friend panic and shuffle her feet several times while trying to negotiate the exposed, gut-emptying crux move (5.8/16) of the Cirque traverse. She gasped in terror, tried to down-climb but couldn't, and eventually committed to the move. Mercifully, she pulled through.

There has been a lot of debate about the rights and wrongs of free soloing, especially in light of the publicity of Alex Honnold's scarcely believable free solo of El Cap in Yosemite. Discussions among climbers traverse whether it should be done at all, given the obvious risks, and if so, how.

This isn't a treatise imploring you to go out and try it, but rather an exploration of the rationale. Much of the public perception is misguided, casting free soloists as adrenaline junkies who test themselves in the most extreme way possible.

This, in my experience, has no basis in truth. You don't simply take a fancy to a line and decide to jump on it without much thought. Most free solos are likely to be on grades where a fall—and any adrenaline—is highly improbable, or on routes you've climbed so many times that you're on auto-pilot. Even Honnold climbed *Freerider* (5.13a/28) over

and over for two years before he conquered El Cap without a rope.

And while there is definitely a rush, it's nothing like the pulsing feeling of throwing for a 50/50 move when you're onsighting and pumped out of your skull. (If you're doing that and ropeless, then you're truly mad). Instead it's the most potent climbing flow (*The Climber* #104), total immersion in a zone that so enriches every pore and heightens every sense. The unique circumstances command your attention. You have little option but to master your fear and deal with anything that may happen, from insecure rock to strenuous moves above a potentially lethal fall. Mastery in such a high stakes game can deliver a feeling akin to the transcendental.

But, for me, that was the light at the end of a very long tunnel. For years I viewed free soloing, like most climbers, as simply too risky to even consider. Then one afternoon in the Pines—the dirtbag haven of Arapiles—I was party to a conversation with far more experienced climbers about the virtues of simul-climbing.

'You are basically soloing but in a safer way and with a bunch more gear,' one older, grislier climber was saying. 'And it can be an essential skill if you're in an alpine environment and trying to minimise the time exposed to objective hazards. In the mountains, with potential avalanche terrain or incoming storms, speed is often safety.'

Arapiles, with its abundance of easy multi-pitch climbs, was the perfect place to try simul-climbing. A buddy and I spent that afternoon knocking off five multi-pitch trad routes in a few hours. It was exhilarating to move so quickly across so much rock.



RIGHT The first rays of dawn hit Kiff Alcocer as he solos the upper part of the North East Ridge of Bugaboo Spire (5.8/16) in Canada.

BELOW Keenan Waeschle atop one of the gendarmes of Cathedral Peak, Sierra Nevada, USA.



TOP Frazer Burley on *Joy* (5.6, 14), on Mt Indefatigable, Canada. This was my first time soloing a technical route, prompted by a wish to take photos.

MIDDLE Climbers scrambling near the top of the North West Ridge of Sir Donald (5.4/12), Canada.

BOTTOM Keenan Waeschle on the aesthetic ridgeline of *Matthes Crest* (5.7/15), Sierra Nevada, USA.



Comfort levels commonly expand as a challenging activity becomes more familiar. Several more simul-climbing days on grades no harder than 12 peppered my Arapiles season, and the more familiar I became, the more my gear placements tended to become 10 metres apart, rather than every third metre. Still, the thought of climbing ropeless was terrifying and, when a bunch of friends gang-soloed up *Tiptoe Ridge* (5), I stayed behind.

Simul-climbing, however, became an essential tool in the alpine toolbox. One of the first occasions was in the Cirque of the Towers. An early start saw me and my friend at the base of the 350m-high northeast face (5.8, 15) of Pingora, one of the 50 Classic Climbs of North America, with a double rack and a 50m-half rope. One simul-pitch later, we were on the summit.

The neighbouring peak, Wolf's Head, also has one of the 50 classics, and we rappelled over to it and started up the fourth class terrain at the base of the East Ridge (5.5/13). When it steepened, we tied in and simul-climbed to the top. It was just after noon when we topped out. We might have continued to the next peak, but instead succumbed to the temptation of lazing in the meadow in the afternoon sun amid such magnificent granite walls.

The truth is that you've probably done some free soloing if you've ever done any alpine routes. It is rare to rope up for any and all mountain terrain. Some will be comfortably ropeless while crossing glaciers on well-trodden boot tracks, or scrambling up non-technical approaches, or climbing technical fifth-class rock.

I was still very cautious the first time I ended up soloing more technical terrain. It was a 300m-long corner system called *Joy* (5.6, 14) on Mt Indefatigable in the Canadian Rockies. We intended to climb it as a party of three, but I decided to start soloing up to take photos of my friends. I had a harness on and a half-rack of cams so I could build an anchor, sit on gear and wait for a rope if I was in any way uncomfortable.

When I topped out, I was acutely aware of the awesome tremendousness of the experience. I slowly branched out. The trade route on Sir Donald, Canada, a gorgeous 5.4/12 line up the north-west ridge, takes a whole day if pitched out, but is a casual few hours as a solo. And a fine one it is, with mostly easy scrambling and huge jugs wherever the terrain steepens.

📷 Kiff Alcocer traverses near the top of the East Ridge of Wolf's Head (5.5/13), in the Cirque of the Towers, Wind River Range, Wyoming, USA.



Soloing eventually became an integral part of trying alpine traverses or grand link-ups, one of the most memorable being a four-peak day in the Canadian Bugaboos. It started with simul-climbing most of *McTech Arete* (5.10a/18) to the top of *Crescent Spire*, simul-climbing the first three pitches and then soloing the rest of the northeast ridge of *Bugaboo Spire* (5.8/16), soloing the west ridge of *Pigeon Spire* (5.4/12), and then pitching out the harder sections of the ultra-classic *Beckey-Chouinard* (5.10d/20) on the *South Howser Tower*.

Such traverses and link-ups are a fabulous way to get a taste for a mountain range. The *Cirque of the Towers* traverse ticks 12 summits, and has the luxury of being mostly non-technical scrambling. A bluebird day accompanied me from *Irene's Arete* (5.8/16) up *Disappointment Peak*, in Grand Teton National Park, to *Exum Ridge* (5.7/15) on the majestic Grand Teton. The Sierra Nevada has so many peaks that there is literally no limit to potential link-ups. One of the most popular is combining the southeast buttress of *Cathedral Peak* (5.6/14) with *Matthes Crest* (5.7/15), a nearby mile-long fin of the most exquisite granite.

But the *Evolution Traverse* was a step up, with its 13 km across nine peaks, more than 3000m of elevation gain and loss, and sections of technical, steep rock up to 5.9/17. The exposure at play is twofold: the vertigo that makes your belly shrink, and the remoteness that means you'd likely have to crawl to safety for days if you got hurt.

It was first done by legendary Canadian climber Peter Croft in 1999, and he declared it one of his favourite routes of all time. 'I spent all day

LEFT Cat Geras on the traverse of the *Cirque of the Towers*, Wind River Range, Wyoming, USA.

BELOW The impressive skyline of the *Cirque of the Towers* in the Wind River Range, Wyoming. The traverse touches 12 summits, starting with *Pingora* on the right.



on this great spine of granite,' said Croft. 'To climb for miles and never leave the skyline.'

Several times on the traverse did I narrowly dodge the firing line. Thrice did that gunpowder smell seize my senses, as my movement loosened titanic boulders that quickly dropped to the depths below. Once my weighty heft broke off a foot nubbin, throwing me gracelessly onto a ledge. Luckily it was only a metre below me, and a mildly sore bottom was the only consequence.

Towards the end of the day, I leapt from one rock to another, but landed on lichen that instantly dismissed my footing, forcing me to throw down my upper body in a frantic bid for purchase. Other times I strayed from the ridge and found myself clinging to dirty rock that had seen little human interaction.

Each time, I emerged with nothing more than a scratch. I took a moment to reset, and then ploughed onwards. The final two peaks, fittingly, offered the best climbing: excellent rock, steep climbing on solid holds, and a jubilant anticipation that grew with each step. From the top of *Huxley*, the final summit, I could trace the gorgeous, undulating granite line across the sky.

I spent the following days eating burgers, soaking in hot pools, and contemplating the pros and cons of free soloing. Every discipline of climbing has an element of risk, and every climber makes an assessment based on experience, temperament of the day, objective hazard of the route, etc. One climber's epic free solo is another's casual outing in approach shoes.

Free soloing does seem to have a stigma, though. It's been pointed out that a trad climber with little experience on a R- or X-rated climb takes a similar risk, but nobody



calls for all R- or X-rated routes to be closed.

That doesn't mean that a catastrophe can't, and doesn't, happen to free soloists. Many readers will know that I have also been in a serious free solo accident, a story for another time. Does that make it reckless? More reckless than sitting at home watching TV, undoubtedly. But if we never did any activity that might end in injury, we would never do anything.

Too reckless? That depends on all the elements in the equation, and one of the biggest elements is 'you'. Another is random, indiscriminate luck. You could be the most prepared person in the history of the world and be swallowed in a freak rockfall, or the world's most careless gumbly and come home completely unscathed. **Q**

ABOVE The author on the *Evolution Traverse* (5.9/17) in the Sierra Nevada, USA. The route crosses nine peaks, the highest being *Mt Darwin* (4216m).

BELOW Kiff Alcocer in the Canadian Bugaboos, with *Pigeon Spire* to his left and the three *Howser Towers* to his right.



TAONGA

TREASURED KIT

THE VERVE SHORTS

BY CHRISTINA RIVETT

I was always easily impressed. In the beginning, I was in awe of climbers who could count their experience in years rather than months, and boast of multiple visits to other countries for climbing. These climbers could solve or brute-force their way up routes that had shut me down. I would pester them for beta and command them, with a youthful lack of filter, to demonstrate it to me as I gazed at the intimidatingly horizontal roof section of the wall.

Denmark is a country of flat and brown wormy earth rather than solid rock, so the scene was concentrated around an indoor climbing wall in a large decommissioned hospital in Copenhagen. I showed enormous enthusiasm from day one, and was sent home by an experienced climber when I turned up on my fourth day in a row. He agreed that I had a lot to catch up on if I was to become like them, but stressed that I was risking a bright future on this expressway to injury. An early verbal lesson in the necessity of rest days in a world of obsession.

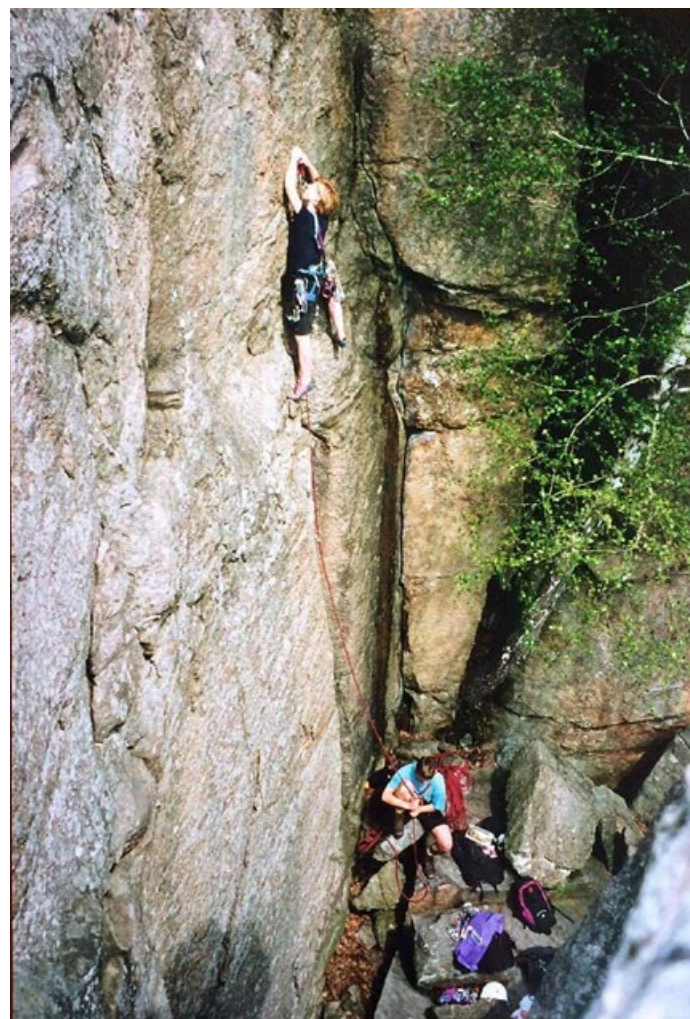
And obsession came fast. It took hours rather than months to realise that this activity was to dictate every long-term plan and choice of location for a lifetime. The world of climbing seemed vast and had so many aspects to explore, discover and learn about—both from simply doing it and from watching and listening to the masters. I considered most people around me to be masters. But one stood out.

He was a true living legend. Illusive in the way only those pre-social media times allowed. He had his own woody at home and preferred to train there when not spending all possible moments in France on technical limestone. Stories of his dedication circulated. He was choosy about what to climb, who to climb with and who to talk to—which did come across as fairly arrogant. But he was incredibly fit and handsome, and so very clever about every aspect of climbing, all of which helped to break down the barriers. Actually, the air of superiority only made the few people he did like feel even more special—a category which I lucked into. The combination of obsession in common and the general girl/boy ratio in 90s climbing was a winning recipe for an intensely stormy relationship, where he would set out to make me an excellent climber.

His legend status came from more than self-staged importance. He was the first person to climb 8a/29 in the country, which was a big deal in the early '90s. Never big on data retention, I didn't hold on to the exact number of months it took him from entering the sport, but even by today's standards, it was pretty impressive. And he quickly redirected a fair bit of that motivation into making me the first female in the country to reach this level. I got introduced to circuit training on perfect, sustained 60-move masterpieces on the 40 degree home wall. He grunted disapprovingly when I planned vertical/slab trad climbing trips to Swedish granite—a distraction from the real goal. My stories of epics

in the alpine environment of Chamonix from my first visit were equally frowned upon. He helped me buy real sport climbing shoes—5.10 Anasazi lace-ups—to replace the disgraceful excuse for shoes I was then sporting. I was educated on the position in climbing history of Patrick Edlinger, while the same Patrick Edlinger soloed my project at Cimai to warm up. I learned just how serious the skin on one's fingers could be handled when his hands wouldn't touch the dishwashing water the night before a hard

📷 The author 'off-task' on Swedish granite in the early '90s. CHRISTINA RIVETT COLLECTION



redpoint attempt ... And I was taught the importance of cold conditions, as we hunted perfect friction in snow in Ceüse in winter.

A vital step in the journey to greatness turned out to be addressing my dress code. Part of the deal, I came to understand, was wearing real climbing attire. Like the pros. But not big brand, easy-to-get garments that any bumbly off the streets could buy in any outdoor shop. In a small apartment near Gap, during a boulder World Cup, American Timmy Fairfield would represent the small American climbing clothing brand Verve by showing selections from cardboard boxes to the climbers in the know, thus letting us in to the inner circle.

I don't remember at which point his old Verve shorts became mine. He gave them to me to replace the appalling selection of leg wear I had until then allowed myself to be seen wearing at the crag in France. They fitted fine; he was of the 'calorie restriction to achieve weight optimisation' school of thought, common at the time. Count your raisins. Eating disorders were unfortunately common amongst serious climbers for a while. Symbolically, and he was big on symbolism, these were the shorts he climbed his first 8a in. They were intended to bring me luck too. We were fortunately past the era of candy-coloured, revealingly-tight lycra. These were a cool black, slightly looser cotton fit. Timeless.

'I can joystick you up an 8a.' This could, I understand, be considered a compliment. It was definitely an acknowledgement of my physical

strength. It just didn't sound grand to my already well-developed sense of independence and self-reliance. I couldn't help but hear what wasn't said in this sentence; the missing ability to work it out myself, to find the moves, the beta. It was true, though. He was a very analytical climber, while I was always counting more on gut instinct. Intuition, some would say. Unable to remember any sequence, others would say. If the number was the goal, his skills and involvement could no doubt fast-track the process.

When ambition and help started feeling like pressure and restriction, the joy in joystick disappeared and I ran away to discover freedom in bouldering. He redirected his attention to better suited candidates for excellence. I kept the shorts and the ambition for 8a. Twenty one years later, I still have both. The shorts are in the bottom of my drawer. They are well worn and faded in colour. I occasionally catch a glimpse of them and remember the many valuable climbing lessons he gave me. The long-term plan is still alive, even if other life gets in the way for a while. It has moved me to this country with rock on the doorstep. I absolutely can't make it first in any country anymore, but with the speed I have approached this goal, I can likely claim to be the oldest to climb her first 8a, when it finally goes. And when it gets near, the precious shorts will once again come out of the drawer for a climb, a nod to an old partner and master. 📷



PROTECT OUR WINTERS POW NEW ZEALAND

BY CASEY LUCAS

IF YOU'RE the sort of person who pays any attention at all to the news, climate change has become an unavoidable subject in the last few years. Everyday people are bombarded with stories about the latest predictions, unusual weather patterns, glaciers receding at rates previously unheard of in recorded history, and the latest greenhouse gas threshold that we, as a species, have collectively, callously marched past.

In 1953, a young American scientist named Charles David Keeling decided to measure the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere around Pasadena, California. He soon expanded his measurements to other regions in the American West, and eventually his network of monitoring stations reached as far as the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, as well as Antarctica.

Over the course of his research, Keeling discovered that CO2 levels in our planet's atmosphere had both a daily and a seasonal rhythm. Soon he realised that this rhythm was due to the planet's plant growth withdrawing CO2 from the air during the North American summer and returning it each succeeding winter. He also discovered that, every year, the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere was gradually increasing due to the use of combustible fossil fuels.

The rate of that increase of CO2 over time was dubbed the Keeling Curve, and in May 2019 scientists recorded the first-ever CO2 reading above 415 parts per million at Hawaii's Mauna Loa Observatory. This is the highest recording ever, not only in the years since Keeling's 1958 experiments, but in 800,000 years of available data.

Human activity is causing undeniable change to Earth's atmosphere, and each time we, as a species, creep closer to a new deadline by which our habits must change, we sail past it seemingly without a thought, and certainly without large-scale institutional change. It can be exhausting, reading these stories in the news on a daily basis and wondering what, if anything, individual New Zealanders could even attempt to do about it. We are individual people in a country that's a small player on the global scale—so what are our options?

Enter Protect Our Winters. Founded in 2007 by pro snowboarder Jeremy Jones, POW was created to mobilise the snowsports community toward taking both individual and collective climate action. The Aotearoa chapter has now opened and founding member Marian Krogh is eager to bring POW's blend of educational, inspirational, and practical work to New Zealand.

'Skiing is my favourite thing in the world to do,' says Krogh, who is based in Wanaka. 'It's what gets me up in the morning, what's dictated



LOUIS CHARNAUD



LOUIS CHARNAUD

my career choices and where I've travelled. The skiing community is my home. I'm passionate about that and I wanted to turn my passion into purpose by founding POW NZ and bringing the organisation's work to New Zealand.'

One example is their Hot Planet Cool Athletes programme, which provides presentations to kiwi schools featuring professional outdoor athletes who are dedicated to preserving our country's winter playgrounds. They also host tree-planting events, movie nights, and panel discussions which feature a passionate athlete, a scientist, and a policymaker to discuss climate issues unique to New Zealand, such as the susceptibility of our resorts to changing weather due to their low elevation, or our already-short winter season compared to the northern hemisphere.

Climate change is already limiting New Zealanders' access to our wild places, with the changes in hiking routes around Tasman and Fox Glaciers standing out as a prime example. The faces of the glaciers themselves—the Hooker, Tasman, and Franz Josef especially—have already been altered by the changing climate. Ski resorts in the south are already consulting with experts on how climate change will affect the course of their businesses, which of course will affect our ability to enjoy these landscapes.

And down near Queenstown, the snap cold spells and plunging winter temperatures that create the tremendous ice climbing territory at Wye Creek are becoming less reliable, and the season is growing shorter. Ice climbing is a tricky business at the best of times, but as thaws come earlier and freezes grow less reliable, it becomes trickier still as newly-formed ice is brittle and susceptible to shearing. The sheer, chilly walls are terrain unlike any other, calling to a particular kind of winter adventurer who, with crampons and ice axes working as extensions of their limbs, is able to transport themselves into a wholly-frozen world that feels

hundreds of miles from the bustle of New Zealand's busiest tourist hotspot. That world is in danger of vanishing.

'When you think about it,' says Krogh, 'climate change isn't only limiting our ability to enjoy these places by endangering them, it's also furthering the issue of equality and the wealth divide in this country. Our glaciers and ice fields are in danger of becoming accessible only to the rich, and of course all this helicopter travel to the glaciers themselves is only exacerbating the issue.'

One of the founding tenets of POW is that collective action makes a stronger impact than individual action. While reducing car trips, switching to an electric vehicle, and eating less meat are all things that individuals can do to reduce their contributions to the world's CO2 problem, the vast majority of pollution and greenhouse gas creation takes place on the industrial level. POW's goal is to combine the voices of outdoor enthusiasts in New Zealand to become loud enough to put effective pressure on our country's business leaders and politicians, holding them accountable for decisions that threaten the winters we all enjoy.

'We all need winter,' Krogh says. 'Regardless of whether you ski or snowboard or climb or hike or just live in our country, less snow means less spring runoff, which means less access to water, less food for our native animals. There's a huge flow-on effect.'

Tackling one of the biggest issues the planet has ever faced may feel insurmountable, but as a collective, every individual action has a greater impact. Instead of feeling frustrated and disheartened by the enormity of the issue, Krogh hopes that POW Aotearoa can offer like-minded New Zealanders the opportunity to tackle climate change as a community, reminding all outdoor people that they can be climate advocates.

For a list of upcoming events and current projects near you, POW's calendar is available on their website at www.protectourwinters.nz.

THE ART OF THINKING SAFELY

Questioning why we do things the way we do. BY GIDEON GEERLING

There's plenty to think about at a hanging belay on a big wall first ascent. Having the ability to think through what you are doing and why in these situations is a crucial climbing skill. Merry Schimanski and Paul Rogers working through the logistics while establishing *Rainmaker* (23), Sinbad Gully, Fiordland. TOM HOYLE



Have you thought about what you do and why when operating in high consequence environments? Or do you accept that you were shown how to do something by someone else with more knowledge—thus it must be right in each and every situation?

PERSONAL SAFETY LANYARD

As an example, when attaching your personal safety lanyard to your harness, where do you put it and how do you attach it? Or is it just done the way you were shown a long time ago, and you accept this as okay?

Most personal safety lanyards these days are made of Dyneema™, also known as spectra, with or without a nylon component to give it colour.

Spectra is a phenomenally strong and somewhat static material, far more so than nylon. Because of this, how we choose to attach the spectra personal safety sling to our nylon harness needs some consideration.

For example, if you choose to girth-hitch your sling in parallel to your belay loop through both the loops in your waist belt and leg loops, which seems the common way for novices who are using these personal safeties, what will happen to the nylon in these parts of your harness over time? Will the weighting and unweighting of your harness through your personal safety have a wearing effect on your harness?

Your spectra personal safety is a static sling under tension, with a higher strength than the surrounding nylon harness. What is this doing to the nylon areas of your belay loop and distribution loop as it becomes tight and cinches the two parts of your harness together? The short answer is that this action is abrading these areas a little at a time. Over enough time, this weakens the focal point of the whole harness.

A better option is to girth-hitch the sling directly onto the belay loop, so that under tension and without tension the sling is moving less and not cinching two parts of your harness together. The tension through your belay loop still performs this action, but at least all parts in this action are nylon and have the same dynamic properties. This method causes the spectra sling to rub less over the nylon. Also, the belay loop is multiple layers of nylon, designed to resist abrasion over the life of the harness as well as being easier to inspect, and therefore a better place for this wear to occur.

Alternatively, re-loop the personal safety parallel to the belay loop, but isolate it with an overhand knot. This creates a closed static loop that will not expand and contract each time it is loaded, thereby reducing the abrading relationship caused by the different material properties of the spectra and the nylon under load.

Knowledge of the mechanisms at play, the materials involved and the consequences of how they interact is crucial in climbing safety. Take this example into consideration and factor it into what you're doing out there when you're climbing.

You should be continually asking yourself:

Do you know what you're doing?

Is it safe?

Do you know why you're doing it that way?

Does/Will it work?

...

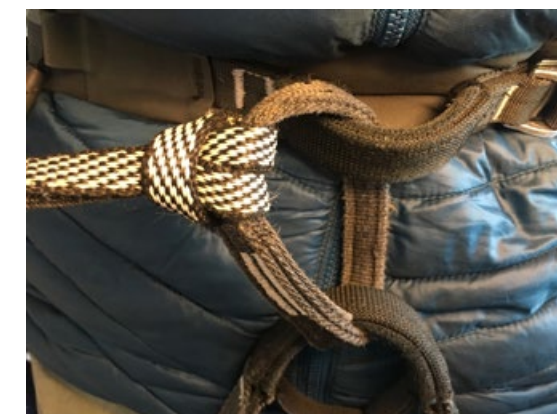
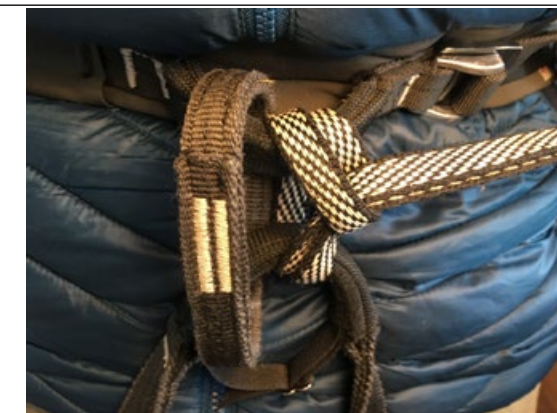
Another example to think about is what method you use when cleaning a sport route. Many climbers in New Zealand will have been taught to always abseil when cleaning a sport route. This comes with a range of explanations from 'it creates less wear on fixed hardware', to 'it is safer', to 'I would rather be self-reliant than trust my belayer to lower me'.

On face value these may appear to be good reasons, but the number of accidents that happen when people abseil from sport routes is alarming and suggests that it isn't, in fact, safer. The proportion of wear on fixed hardware and its relative cost versus the expense and consequences of an accident don't match up, and if you don't trust your belayer to lower you, then should they be belaying you at all? Lowering is certainly a more basic skill than catching a fall.

Which isn't to say that lowering is *always* the best option. There are situations where abseiling is a better method for navigating sharp edges with the rope and avoiding swinging across these edges, or having the rope running over them. What is important to think about is that there isn't likely one option that is always the best, even if someone more experienced than you has told you that is the case. Think about what will work best for the situation you are in and try to maintain a critical attitude towards your own habits.

These two examples are part of the larger issue we face of consequential awareness. A lack of this awareness contributes to a lot of the incidents we experience when operating in the vertical world, or even outdoors in general.

The key pragmatic approach to consequential awareness should be constant self-questioning, 'What could hurt me at this moment, and how am I going to manage that?' When rock climbing, the common hazards are poor belaying, protection or rock. When abseiling, poor anchors, bad training, and limited experience in a technique can all be problems. Consequential awareness is managing these issues according to their level of severity at any given time. Thinking over an accepted doctrine or tradition is also part of this questioning process. So again, knowing why you're doing something, how it works and whether it's safe assists you in your management of the consequential mindset.



TOP A static spectra lanyard girth-hitched in parallel to the belay loop. A common, but not optimal method.

MIDDLE The lanyard instead girth-hitched to the belay loop.

BOTTOM An alternative method for girth-hitching in parallel to the belay loop is to isolate the lanyard with an overhand knot to lessen the cinching effect on the different parts of the nylon harness.

PIES

By The Sheffield Pie Shop

Reviewed by Count Ray Tzekan

I'M SURE a large number of you are familiar with the must-stop attraction at 51 Great Alpine Highway, Sheffield. I can't drive past it. Every time I commute to the CHB (as Castle Hill Basin seems to be known these days), they call out to me, the little heavenly pastries filled with a vast array of delectable ingredients: 'Eat meeeee!!'

Yes, the Sheffield Pie Shop is quite something. Of course, we all have our favourites and our least favourites. And yes, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and yes, not everyone has to like the same pies. So on that note, here are Sheffield's unquestionable hits and misses. Shall we start with the bads? That way we end on a high.

The Butter Chicken: not your classic pie, and a bit of a curve ball when it comes to hand-pastries. Bland flavours and not a lot of spice. It's really just chicken with an oriental gravy. Let's move on.

The Veg: They give it a bloody good nudge, but it's nothing special. It's your standard, really, not raising the bar, just skimming it as you jump over. I'd love to see a couple of other options, maybe a kumara and leek, or a broccoli, mushroom, asparagus ... you can put anything in a pie. Lentil dahl, perhaps? Mmmmm.

Hell, that's enough down-buzzing. This is an exceptional pie shop, after all. I just had to look as though I wasn't completely biased and head over heels in love with them all.

So, the standouts. We've got a lot of strong contenders for best pie here.

The Mexican: Pfoh! Nailed it. A great pie, full of flavour, satisfaction, and even sour cream. Also, pro tip: this one goes great when cold at the top of the hill. Legend goes that this was the pie that sent BeastKong into retirement via that Quantum prow thing. Some say that if he hadn't have had this in his belly, he wouldn't have done it. Believe what you will.

The Venison Whiskey Relish: A specialty pie of the shop and a bit more expensive, but quite worth it. If there were bones in this pie, the venison would be falling off them—just like Pa's Sunday roast. On top of that, there's relish. It really makes this pie a touch on the sweeter end of the savoury, but it treads the line so well. This one is generally devoured before I even make it down the road to Springfield. Always a winner.



The Chicken Camembert Apricot: Now this pie is something. I'm not going to say it's not flawed (the seal between the pie base and the top is often structurally unsound), but it doesn't matter. I keep going back time and time again to this one. Flavour-wise, it's a ten. The chicken and it's sauce are complemented so well by the apricot layer above, and just when you think it couldn't be better, you hit the gooey, generous helping of camembert in the middle. C'est magnifique.

Now the pie shop isn't just pies. Some of their best offerings are in the cabinet just to the right. My personal favourites: the carrot cake, delish. The strudel, oh my lord. That raspberry brownie they do, yes. And the date scone is really something; once I got one with walnuts, and it blew my mind.

For all you poor uni students and mid-lifers paying mortgages, don't worry. You don't have to spend all your money on full price items. 'Yesterday's rolls' are a great option for those who need to tighten up on spending. These are heavily discounted and, let's face it, if I were going to make a sandwich for a day at the boulders, I'd probably make it the night before, so I definitely don't mind that these rolls are a day old. Some days you get lucky with a peri peri chicken or a corned beef that yesterday's fools have passed up. Some days there's only a salad sandwich. You win some, you lose some, but you can't complain—they're \$2.50. Also, a recent discovery of mine is the \$1 shelf (insert sound of crowd quietly 'ooing'). Hidden at your feet, just as you walk in the door, is a freezer shelf commonly stocked with muffins, scrolls, scones and slices. Why, might you ask, would I buy something frozen for a day out scrambling? Firstly, because it's a dollar. Secondly, because it defrosts by lunch time anyway. And thirdly, because some people just prefer a frozen muffin. You know who you are, you weirdo.

The lovely folk out at Sheffield recently finished some renovations, doubling the size of the shop (unfortunately not doubling the selection of pies) and greatly improving the vibe. The feng shui is well executed, with a great deck for devouring your goodies if you just can't wait to get in to them. There's also indoor seating, a bigger coffee machine and, for those of you with tiny wee bladders, they've got a loo too. All in all, it enhances the experience ten-fold.

These pies are a crucial piece to the puzzle of a successful day of rock climbing. I am told that certain pies contain various performance-enhancing capabilities. Some increase strength, some improve technique and, if the bakers are so inclined, they can even make a pie that decreases gravity. Witches? Voodoo shamans? No, legends.

So there it is. An in-depth, comprehensive, completely accurate and unbiased review of the Sheffield Pie Shop. I urge you to go get a pie, try new ones (know what you're buying though; I got a lambs fry one once ... never again), find your favourite and fill your bellies. As they say at the shop: 'Life's good when there's a pie in your hand'.

MACPAC EXPEDITION SOCKS

SOCKS ARE not the coolest piece of gear one can buy. Here at *The Climber*, we often gravitate to those 'cool' items for our gear reviews and leave the boring bits of kit unaddressed. But while the sock bins may not be the first section of the gear store that you migrate to when shopping, a crummy pair of socks can ruin a trip. The tree-hugger in me likes using natural fibres, but I have found that my expensive wool socks from well-known sock brands just don't last very long. A season or two and they're toast. So I've moved away from pure wool socks, especially for multi-day trips where I'm going to be wearing the same pair of socks for a while. While perusing my local Macpac store (after looking at all the more interesting bits of kit) a few winters ago, I picked up a pair of Macpac Expedition socks.

A little bit about my sock-wearing habits. I have always favoured a medium-thick pair of socks for my climbing and tramping boots as well as very thin liner socks. If you are a thin sock aficionado or want the thickest sock you can buy, you might not like these.

The Expedition socks weren't very expensive (especially with Macpac's perpetual sales), were mostly synthetic (only 34 per cent wool) and were a nice just-above-the-boot-top length. They have a medium amount of cushion, as well as the requisite flat seams and differential stitching/elastic over the instep that any decent pair of outdoor socks should have. They may have ticked all the boxes, but to be perfectly honest, I didn't expect very much from them. Socks at this price (and sometimes more expensive ones) tend to start out fluffy and quickly get hammered down into a flat, sweaty mess throughout a day's worth of climbing, or the elastic starts to sag, or both.

But not these. It's been two years since I bought them and they quickly became both my favourite and most-used sock, pretty much every time I'm going to be wearing boots. Over the course of I don't know how many total days of use, they have remained respectably cushion-y, even during multi-day trips, and they fluff back up after a trip through the wash. They wick sweat on par with the best socks I've used, and when they do get wet, the synthetics in them ensure that they dry quickly. The elastic still seems as snug as the day I bought them.

They're not magic socks. They do pack down over the course of the day and are noticeably less cushioned on day three than they were on day one. But they're certainly no worse than the fanciest socks I have, and are definitely a lot better than a lot of other socks I've used.

I've got more expensive socks, I've got thicker socks, and I've got techier socks, but these are always the ones I reach for in the morning.

Socks are still not cool, but these get the job done in comfort and at an excellent price. My original pair is still going strong and I've just purchased a few more pairs.

Macpac Expedition Socks. NZ RRP \$39.95

★★★★★

—Graham Johnson



RAB GUIDE GLOVES

IF YOU'RE expecting a helpful review on what pair of gloves to buy next, you're flat out of luck. Buy mittens—they're where it's at. Mittens are warm, dry, reasonably light, and utterly useless if you want to do anything vaguely dexterous with your fingers.

In all seriousness though, how is it that we can put a man on the moon and four rovers on Mars, but still can't create a waterproof and warm glove that can be used for climbing in New Zealand conditions? With my general cynicism of gloves covered, let's move on to the subject at hand—the Rab Guide Gloves. The Guide gloves come in shorter and longer cuff versions—aptly named the Guide Glove Short and the Guide Glove Long.

We'll start with the positives. To their credit, when I'm taking anything more than liner gloves into the hills for skiing, mountaineering, or ice and mixed climbing, these are the first gloves in my pack. These midweight gloves have decent leather (Pittards Armortan) over the entire palm and additional leather reinforcing over the centre of the palm and the index finger, and leather on the backs of the fingers. The leather has proved to be remarkably durable (must be the 'microscopic ceramic armour plates' that Pittards say they've put into the leather!). When new, the leather is surprisingly water-resistant—you could almost have 30 minutes of dry hands (the first 15 minutes being while you struggle to fit your fat fingers into these very sleek, European-styled gloves). Positives ... right. The non-removable fleece lining feels delightful, they are perfectly insulated for New Zealand winter conditions, the fleece nose-wipe thumb patch is luxurious when dry, the medium length cuff is remarkably adequate, despite not having the ability to cinch it closed, and when broken in, they are just dexterous and articulated enough to use as lead gloves when ice and mixed climbing.

Now, onto the less positive things. Honestly, these gloves have more stitches in them than a jailhouse informant. And if one more

person in outdoor retail tries to tell me about this wonderful technology called eVent® that is waterproof and breathable, I'm done. I know I have sweaty hands, and lord knows my palms get extra moist when I'm gripped, but these gloves somehow collect enough moisture in their (aforementioned fabulous) insulation to quench a drought-stricken Australian farm. Said insulation also takes at least the rest of the trip to dry. While I stand by my comments that the insulation is perfect, I've still found myself wet in them at -20°C—maybe it's from inside, maybe it's from outside, but the net result is the same. My other primary gripe is durability. Rab's marketing material says 'designed specifically for regular hard use when working full-time in the mountains.' The leather is splendid, but everything else is less than splendid. After only moderate use, the stitching split in a number of places in my first pair—most commonly on the seams between the nylon and leather and especially on the fingers. The stitching also came apart inside, exposing insulation. This may be related to the fact that the sizing seems to run startlingly small (although the leather does stretch over time).

Credit where credit is due though—Rab did come to the party and replaced the gloves when they started blowing apart, and it was an easy decision to get exactly the same pair again. I don't expect the new pair to last any longer than the first, but they're the best of a bad selection in this weight class.

Rab Guide Gloves. RRP \$259.95

★★★

—Pete Harris



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GRIVEL CARRYABINER ICE SCREW RACKING CARABINER

I LOOKED down at my harness as I started up a pitch of ice. Twelve screws were hanging on two plastic carabiners. I had been using my Petzl Caritool racking carabiners for almost ten years, and it would be a major inconvenience if they broke. While I've never had a major issue with them (the only issue is that the gate sometimes pops out), I've always been a little nervous having six or seven screws on them and scraping through some horrible chimney, just waiting for them to break and spill my screws into the abyss. It was time for a change to something a little more burly.

DMM started making metal ice screw clippers a few years ago, but it seems they didn't work very well (heresay, not personal experience) with the current line of Black Diamond ice screws (which many people, including myself, use). Grivel decided to make a very large wire gate carabiner—fully rated—with a lip on it for stacking screws. I don't know why it took someone so long to come up with this. I've never liked the idea of a single purpose item (like the plastic ice clipper), especially for alpine climbing. Before I could afford to splurge on spurious purchases like ice clippers, I used a large carabiner (Omega Pacific 5-0 usually) wedged into the ice clipper slots on my harness, held in place by a bunch of rubber bands. It wasn't ideal, but it worked and I certainly didn't need to worry about them breaking.

In typical Grivel fashion, there is virtually no information about how to use the Carryabiner. My first few days climbing with them, I used the thick, clear rubber band that comes with them to secure them around the waistbelt of my harness after threading the biner through the slots on my harness. This worked, but was pretty uncomfortable, especially when my layers shifted around and the rubber band was close to the skin. It turns out the rubber band is for securing the Carryabiner to the ice clipper slot, not the waistbelt, much like the rubber gasket on a quickdraw. I switched them around and almost all of my initial complaints about the Carryabiner disappeared. I wonder how many people out there are using these incorrectly, thanks to the lack of information from Grivel.

I can easily fit seven ice screws on each, with room to spare. The large size of the biner—much larger than the Petzl Caritool—means that the screws are not all bunched up. Screws are extremely easy to rack and de-rack, regardless of brand; I currently I have Petzl, BD and Grivel screws. The notch for sorting screws is effective, and I can stack two screws there to access one from the middle of the pile.

Because the Carryabiner does not have a stabilising 'clip' on the back like the Petzl or DMM clippers, it does move around a little bit on the harness. Most notably, the Carryabiner will twist to lay flatter against the harness when using a backpack hipbelt. I don't know whether this is a design feature or a result of the lack of a clip, but it does make it more comfortable than my Petzl when carrying a pack. I've never had any issues on a route with them moving, but I do sometimes move them back into place at the end of the day when they've shifted a little bit.

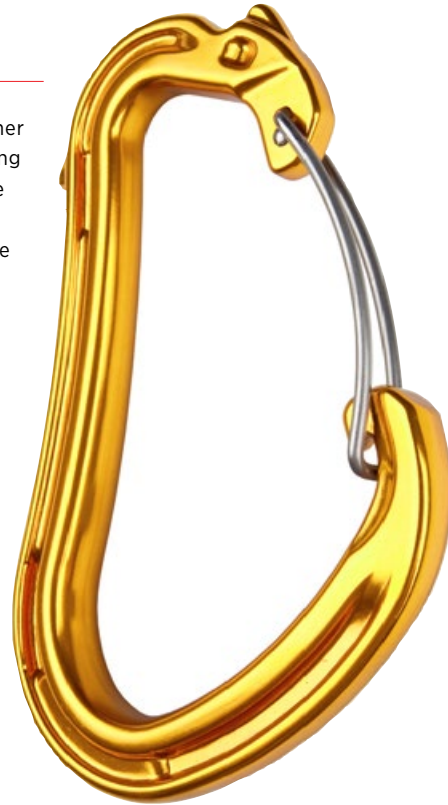
Of course, there is a weight penalty to having a real carabiner over a plastic clip: 64g vs 25g. The difference—39g—is a lot, but for me, I like the knowledge that I don't need to worry about losing screws to a broken piece of plastic, and that these could be used for something else—like building an anchor or bailing—if needed.

Grivel has made a serious contender to the original, trusted, Petzl Caritool. BD's offering is so laughably bad that it was never in contention. While I'd like to see a little more stability on the harness, I feel like these perform at least as well as the Petzl Caritool, are far more robust, and could actually be used for something else in an emergency—all at a minimal weight cost.

Grivel Carryabiner. RRP \$25.95

★★★★★

—Graham Johnson



BLACK DIAMOND ULTRALIGHT ICE SCREW

AFTER PETZL introduced its Laser Speed Light ice screw a number of years ago (reviewed in issue 91), Black Diamond has been playing catch-up and has now finally released the BD Ultralight Ice screws. Like the Speed Light, these are steel-tipped ice screws with an aluminium body. I've never been a huge fan of the Petzl screws. I've found that in certain ice conditions, they just don't 'bite' very well. Many times I will try to place a Speed Light and end up not being able to get it in, whereas a steel BD Turbo Express screw goes right in. I'm not alone in this observation, either. I've also somehow broken off one of the handles on a Petzl screw.

Right away I liked the new BD screws. The flip out lever arm is by far the longest of any screw I own (BD, Petzl, Grivel), and it flips in and out with a satisfying 'snap'. The steel portion of the screw is far longer than that of the Petzl and the threads have the classic BD design. Interestingly, the BD 13cm screw is almost a full centimetre shorter than the Petzl 13cm screw, but exactly the same length as the Turbo Express 13cm screw. At 74g, the 13cm BD Ultralight is likely the lightest steel-toothed ice screw on the market, and a whopping 17g lighter than the Petzl. That's 18 per cent lighter. It's a little harder to compare the other screw lengths as the 13cm is the only size they share, but the weight savings are all across the board. The BDs win on weight, hands down.

The biggest cosmetic change I noticed from the standard steel Turbo Express is the tooth profile. I ordered some Ultralights as well as a few standard steel Turbo Express screws this winter. When comparing brand-new to brand-new, the tooth profile on the Ultralights is seriously aggressive. I could probably shave with these. They're that sharp and they make the Turbo Express look like a spoon. I would expect to see this tooth profile trickle down into the standard steel screws in the very near future. The hanger is a bit bulkier than the Turbo Express and doesn't rack nearly as well.

So how do they perform? It's worth noting that BD doesn't really push

these for ice climbers, but instead targets its marketing towards alpinists and ski mountaineers. Despite this, I've been primarily using them for waterfall ice climbing. They bite into the ice better than any screw I've ever used, even better than the other brand new BD steel screws I got at the same time. Once in, however, there is a distinct area with a lot more friction between the ice and the screw than I'm used to. A beginner might think that they were pushing against a rock—the friction can be that high. Push past this point and the screw goes in just fine. I don't think this is a huge problem, so long as you're aware of it, but a friend of mine hates these screws because of it. I have not noticed this same friction point when removing the screws, nor have I been able to identify particular ice conditions where this occurs.

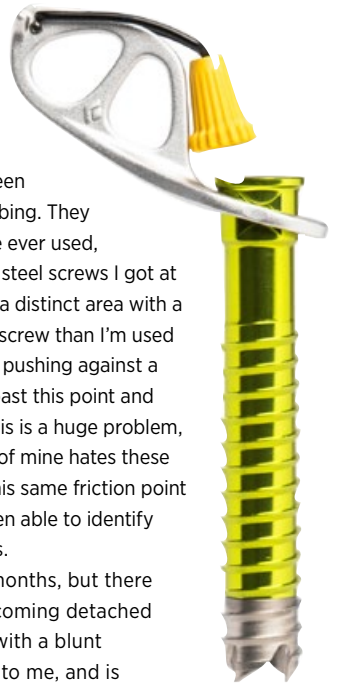
I've only been using these for a few months, but there have been reports of the steel teeth becoming detached from the rest of the screw, leaving you with a blunt aluminium tube. This has not happened to me, and is likely some teething problem associated with joining the aluminium tube and the steel tip.

I am very pleased with these screws, especially after being less than impressed with the Petzl screws. I imagine that they will not last as long as my steel Turbo Express screws, so I definitely baby them a little bit, but they are the best placing screws on my rack. I'm excited to see if the tooth design is introduced in an all-steel screw. Weight savings be damned—I bet that would blow everything else out of the water.

Black Diamond Ultralight Ice Screw. RRP \$169.95

★★★★★

—Graham Johnson



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Admission: with own gear - \$17 Adult, \$12 child. Students 10% discount with ID. 1,3,6 and 12 month memberships available.
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Ph: +64 09 818 3038.

extremeedge.co.nz/glen-eden

Extreme Edge Indoor Climbing Panmure

10% discount to NZAC members.
Admission \$16 Adult, \$10 child with own gear. 1,3,6 and 12 month memberships available. Courses available. Climbing gear for hire, or purchase. Address: 40 Morrin Road, Panmure, Auckland. Ph: +64 (0)9 574 5677.
extremeedge.co.nz/panmure

Birkenhead Pool and Leisure Centre

\$11 entry to NZAC members.
Admission: \$14 adult, \$11 children. Bouldering \$7.50. Instruction and gear hire available - harness \$5, shoes \$4.50, chalk-bag \$5.
Address: 46 Mahara Ave, Birkenhead, Auckland.
Ph: +64 (0)9 484 7290.

aucklandleisure.co.nz

Northern Rocks

10% discount to NZAC members with I.D.
Admission: \$18 adult, \$15.75 youth under 16, \$9 child under 8.
Address: Unit 17, 101-111 Diana Drive, Wairau Valley, Auckland.
Ph: +64 (0) 9 278 2363

Climbing shoes for hire, membership options, coaching and classes. Fitness gym, pro shop, yoga.
northernrocks.co.nz

Rockup Mobile Rockclimbing Wall

10% discount to NZAC members.
Climbing wall hire. See website and contact them for details and options available. Contact: 0800 ROCKUP (0800 762 587).
rockup.co.nz

Wellington

Fergs Kayaks Wellington

NZAC club night and discount to members.
NZAC Club Night Mondays (\$12 entry/\$2 harness), or \$15 any other time. Admission: Adult \$21, student \$18, child \$17 (less \$3 if you have your own harness).
Address: Shed 6 Queens Wharf, Wellington.
Ph: +64 (0)4 4998 898.

fergskayaks.co.nz

Hangdog Indoor Rock Climbing

Lower Hutt
NZAC members \$15 and 20% discount off gear at the shop.
Admission: adult \$22, student \$18, child \$18 (with harness/2hr pass and supervised safety briefing if needed). It is \$4 cheaper if you supply your own harness. Gear Hire/instruction available.
Address: Unit #11 - 453 Hutt Rd, Alicetown, Lower Hutt.
Ph: +64 (0)4 589 9181

hangdog.co.nz

Canterbury

YMCA Adventure Centre

NZAC members: \$16 adult, \$12 under 16's,
Club night Tuesday: \$12 adult entry with valid membership card
Address: cnr Waltham Road & Byron Street, Christchurch.
Ph: +64 (0)3 377 3000

ymcachch.org.nz/fitness-and-climbing/adventurecentre/climbingwall/

Uprising Boulder Gym Christchurch

NZAC Members with I.D. \$16 entry.
Unlimited entry \$19 per week.
Admission: \$18 adult, \$16 student, \$14 under 13.
Address: 199 Ferry Road, Waltam, Christchurch.
Ph: +64 (0)3 389 5061

bouldering.co.nz

Otago

Waitaki Recreation Centre

NZAC discount on memberships and casual entry .
Annual pass: Adult \$120 (NZAC \$90), junior \$85 (NZAC \$65), family \$165 (NZAC \$125). Casual per day: Adult \$12 (NZAC \$10), junior \$8.50 (NZAC \$6.50), family \$16.50 (NZAC \$12).
10% discount to school kids as a group if paid in full. Other groups to pay gym hire and instructor, plus gear \$30 per group.
Address: 43 Orwell Street, Oamaru. Ph: +64 (0)3 434 6932.
sportsground.co.nz/waitakirc/112878

Basecamp Wanaka Climbing Centre

Admission: NZAC members \$13.50 Address: 50 Cardrona Valley Road, Wanaka. Ph: +64 (0)3 443 1110.
basecampwanaka.co.nz

Southland

YMCA Climbing Wall Invercargill

NZAC members with I.D. \$5 entry.
Admission: \$6, free to YMCA members.
Address: 77 Tay Street, Invercargill. Ph: +64 (0)3 218 2989
recreation.ymcasouth.co.nz/com-rec/climbing-wall

Australia

Cliffhanger Climbing Gym Altona North VIC

Concession rate entry for NZAC adult members.
Admission: adults \$17, students \$15, 12 and under \$12, bouldering \$10. Passes and gear hire available. Cnr Grieves Parade & Dohertys Road, Altona Nth, Vic. Ph: 3025 +61 (0)3 9369 6400
cliffhanger.com.au

Pulse Climbing Adamstown NSW

\$5 discount off adult entry to NZAC members.
Admission: adults \$16, under 12 \$13, Harness hire \$5. 10/122 Garden Grove Pde, Adamstown, NSW. Ph: +61 (0)2 4023 4743
pulseclimbing.com.au

The Last Pitch: continued from page 56

Doug pointed us up. The first pitch was straightforward, up a shallow groove with limited protection, but easy climbing. The next few pitches flowed without incident until we started on the crux. The crux pitch followed an arcing roof crack above a slab, then out and around a corner. Doug had graded it 17 when he'd done the first ascent. It was my lead, so I cautiously led out. The crack below the roof was seeping with water and filled with dirt. I used my nut tool to excavate the first few marginal placements while I tip-toed between dry patches of slab. Crumbly cracks, wet footholds, my dodgy knee and marginal gear—it was all a bit beyond me. I finally found a placement I could trust and confessed that I wanted to hand over the lead. Doug lowered me back down to the belay and I unloaded the rack as fast as I could. 'You made that look hard,' he said.

He made it to my high point without too much effort, but the grunting soon began. Moans of mild terror floated down from above, sprinkled with wet gravel and bits of dirt. The rope slowed to a crawl and the tenor of the vocalisations went up an octave or two. The slab Doug was on was wet and covered in debris—the kind of conditions that make even the most bomber of holds feel sketchy.

'This is way harder than 17!' he screamed, finally thrutching his way towards the belay. Red-faced and sweating, he grumbled: 'I've fucking sandbagged myself.' The next pitch was mine, but I was over it. My bad leg was shaking from the unexpected and unfamiliar exertion. Memories of my accident had me terrified of everything. Doug was extremely grumpy. I don't think we even

talked about it. We just started setting up the abseil. Silence continued as we crawled, hobbled and finally walked back to the car.

A few years before, Doug had given me a speech (Doug was fond of the little known lecture-by-ambush technique) about the importance of getting out. 'It doesn't matter whether you reach the top or not. What's important is that you got out, whatever the conditions, and had a go.' I didn't agree with him then, but maybe now I can translate his words into my own philosophy: 'You can't get shit done on the couch,' tempered by your current limitations limits, of course...

As we settled into the drive home, Doug came to life. 'You know, Roadside has some nice easy climbs. Maybe we should go do some of those when we've recovered from this.'

I agreed: 'The usual cafe at 9am tomorrow?' ☐



Backcountry touring access guidelines

How to behave when accessing the backcountry using ski field infrastructure

Talk to Ski patrol

It's in everyone's best interest to have open communication.

- Find out about snow and avalanche conditions and current ski field operations.
- If requested, leave your intentions and ensure you sign back in.

Respect the field

Everyone wants to have a good day out on the hill, a little respect goes a long way.

- Each mountain is different; always check out the field's website for advice and the latest updates before you leave home.
- Skin or hike where you are not a hazard to others on the field.
- Respect closed areas; they are closed for good reasons.
- Follow the field's advice about when and where to travel through the field, so that you are not exposed to dangerous ski field operations like avalanche bombing, de-icing, helicopters, snowmobile routes, winch groomers and cables, which can all kill.
- Find out the ski area's policy on leaving your vehicle there outside of operational hours.
- Do not interfere with field operations or be a nuisance.
- Respect the ski areas' generosity if they allow one-ride tickets.

Respect the backcountry

One step beyond the field boundary is the backcountry!

- Plan and prepare for your trip.
- Research private property boundaries (www.WAMS.org.nz); get permission before you go.
- Take an avalanche awareness course or consider hiring a guide.
- Check the avalanche advisory. (www.avalanche.net.nz)
- Always take shovel, beacon and probe, and ensure you know how to use them.
- Consider taking an emergency communication device, such as a personal locator beacon.
- Make room between people and other groups when travelling.
- Always tell a responsible person your trip plan, when you intend to return and when they should notify emergency services.
- Check in with that responsible person when you are safely off the mountain.
- Never travel alone in the backcountry.





FAFFINEERING

BY GRAHAM JOHNSON

Faffineering – an activity that involves expending a great deal of energy in the mountains while actually accomplishing very little.

‘WELL, YOUTH, want to go proper climbing this weekend?’ Doug was of the age that just about anybody else was a ‘youth’. Doug and I had bonded over our mutual injuries. He was recovering from having his ankle fused, and I was trying to gain strength and flexibility after a rock took out part of my knee a few months before. I used to see him doing aquarobics in the local lake while I lay on the shore and tried to pick up girls with my leg in a splint. We’d met several times before our surgeries, but didn’t really start hanging out until our inability to move away from each other fast enough eventually led to friendship. I liked hearing stories of hard climbing back in the day, and Doug liked telling them. As our individual injuries improved, we moved from the couch to limping to the café to pathetic performances at the sport crag. Crag climbing didn’t count as ‘proper’ climbing. Only alpine climbing counted, and we eventually progressed to the point where we might entertain the thought of climbing an easy alpine rock route. ‘I’ve got a great route for us,’ he said. It was a short alpine route he’d put up several years ago. The belay stations were fully bolted so we wouldn’t have to walk off, and the crux grade was well within our currently miserable standards. It sounded perfect. I brought the ropes and he brought the rack.

We were like those t-shirts charting the evolution of mankind. We walked upright from the car to the trailhead, began limping our way up the trail from the car, and stooped closer and closer to the ground until we eventually started crawling on all fours across a scree slope to the base of the route. I was terrified that if any rock moved and I flexed my knee beyond its extremely limited range of motion, I’d be screaming in pain. Doug appeared to be moving just as gingerly. The thought that we might be pushing the boat out a bit far briefly flickered through my brain. Eventually we made it to the base of the route without further injuring ourselves.

‘Did Royal Robbins ever make carabiners?’ Doug asked as I flaked out my brand new half ropes. I seem to buy gear when I’m injured. Doug clearly didn’t. ‘I’m not sure. If he did, it would have been a long time ago,’ I replied. ‘Oh, ‘cause a lot of my carabiners say Royal Robbins on them.’ Sure enough, Doug’s geriatric rack was composed of a handful of Chouinard-era camalots on their original slings, as well as several 1970s-era ovals with ‘R Robbins, Salewa W Germany’ stamped on them.

Please turn to page 55



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