

Summer 2025

# NEWSLETTER



**TARANAKI**

## Section Update

Kia Ora NZAC Taranaki Membership! With summer now just finished, let's stop and take a look at what has been happening in our local climbing scene lately.

## 2024 AGM

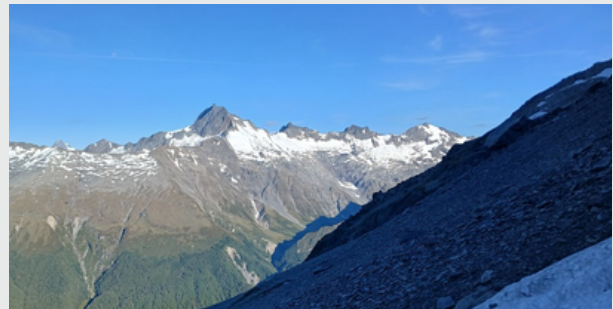
### Committee Changes

At the recent AGM held in October saw some changes to the committee. Ange Hampton has stepped back and we thank Ange for her positive contribution. Olly Thomas has joined the committee and is excited to contribute to Taranaki climbing!

## Summer Climbing Meet

### Let's get the rope out!

This recent weekend on the 14th - 16th March, we hosted our 2025 Taranaki Climbing Meet. This was a great social weekend, with awesome food, climbing and company!



## South Island Trip Fund

### Successful Applicants

Two NZAC Taranaki South Island Trip grants were awarded this season. The first went to Don Paterson who intended to complete the 'Symphony on Skis' trip from the Godley Valley to Fox Glacier (unfortunately bad weather). The second grant went to Fletcher Miles, who with Dave Bolger and Rupert Gardiner ventured up the Hopkins Valley and climbed the 350m tall West Buttress of Armistice Peak in the Hopkins Valley. See trip report below!!

## Climbing Contributions

### Pakeho Crag Upgrades

The Pakeho crag is one of Taranaki's closest sport climbing crags, and has recently had significant upgrades resulting in it being reopened to the public. ACAT raised or directly provided the \$15,000 spent on re-bolting and crag infrastructure (including hardware, glue, new signs etc.)

We donated \$1000 to the upgrade project, specifically to help replenish ACAT's Kimi Worrell Fund, which was significantly depleted by Pakeho. With accessible sport climbing from grade 9 to 25, this spot is well worth the 2h 15min trip from New Plymouth

More access info [here](#) on climbznz!

## Summer Climbing

### Taranaki maunga and abroad

There are lots of great summer trips to do on the Maunga, with most of them not involving walking up scree slopes. The usual narrative of "a small but dedicated crew of local climbers" have been keeping busy on the Maunga and abroad

The early summer months again provided reliably fantastic conditions for climbing on the maunga. The Little Eiger received some attention, mainly on *Long Drop* (16) and the excellent *Imported Talent* (17) on the Red Slabs also received a couple of ascents.

A *Sister's Traverse* was completed one crisp early morning for sunrise by Harrison Larkin + Lucas Flay. This is a must do Taranaki trip if you are in the summit area

Five new routes have been climbed so far this summer:

*Awake the Snake* (15, 25m Fletcher Miles, Conrad Bolger) was climbed ground-up onsight. This starts halfway along the *Traverse of the Gods* ledge tops out the cliff, and is a fun but easy alpine adventure.

On the prominent Lion Rock outcrop, *Clean Your Crack* (17, 8m, Lucas Flay) was added onsight and was described as short and sweet.

The Drop Zone located in the Ambury Bluffs area was the scene of 2 new routes: *Don't Decide to Slide* (16, 25m, F. Miles, L. Flay) climbs a mostly clean splitter fist crack before linking into the classic but rarely climbed Terminal Arete at 3/4 height and is a good line.

In contrast, *Bruce-Flay Slabmaster* (17, 30m) further up the wall, tackles an easy corner, before tackling a blank mantle move straight on (crux). The first ascent was climbed in the

rain in approach shoes and the mantle field like a quantum field V5.

On Minarapa Bluff, a new adventure style route was climbed. *Block Land* (13, 60m, F. Miles, L. Flay) tackles a pleasant looking line on the first buttress up from the col and was climbed onsight in 2 pitches. Seldom a place to push grades, the Minarapa is a rad and atmospheric spot, and a visit should be on the bucket list of any Taranaki climber.

There has been some notable ascents on the maunga this season. Dave Bolger successfully climbed the bold test piece *Terminal Dive* (24). This line is known for it's quality arete climbing, with historic fall potential being potentially 'terminal'. Lucas Flay also sent the classic *Space Invader* (21/22) and free soloed *Nose of Humphries*.

The addition of Beta Climbing Gym to New Plymouth has seen a notable increase in the strength of the local climbers. New Plymouth now has a moonboard for training. This has translated into new personal best sends for Conrad Bolger who sent *The Hit* (V8), and *Gollum* (V7) at the Jardines in Queenstown. Younger brother Huxley sent *Flake News* (22) and recently placed fifth at the NZ lead nationals for his age group while recovering from a broken foot!

Enjoy the rest of summer!





## Trip Reports

### Taranaki Meet - by Chris Prudden

A fair weather forecast for Taranaki can mean a varied range in the alpine where the stone is. However, there was an acceptable tolerance albeit inside a cloud.

As much as a rock meet it's always mountain appreciation time, meeting with old and new participants friends and family.

The very lush herb fields lead to the clean eroded lava flows, Warwick's Castle, Little Eiger and the Organ Pipes all offering many historical routes of many grades.

The ever present cloud was enough to create some light precip which produced some slippery surfaces. Higher in the organ pipes and a bit more UV sneaking through conditions were drier and routes were climbed with more confidence.

Lucas Flay was his usual effervescent self and even managed to experience an inverted fall which didn't deter him at all.

Oscar Thomas (12) showed a cool head for his age and climbed well with enthusiasm and confidence.

We all appreciated time out in the environment a bit of friendly banter and comfortable beds at Manganui lodge courtesy of the Stratford Mountain Club.

Nga mihi nui - Chris





## Trip Reports

### West Buttress of Armistice Peak – Fletcher Miles

While the naki is an amazing training ground, the south island mountains are where it's at. To avoid living in Taranaki climbing isolation (a common trap), it is important for Taranaki mountaineers to do south trips.

At the end of January, Dave Bolger and I ventured south for some alpine climbing. With a great forecast with clear skies and light winds, a plan was hatched to venture up the Hopkins valley. Our goal was to go and climb *Animal Crackers* (12-13, 350, Mt Cook grade 4) on the West Buttress of Armistice Peak via on the Naumann Range.

#### Day 1 – Hopkins Valley Road end to Elcho Hut

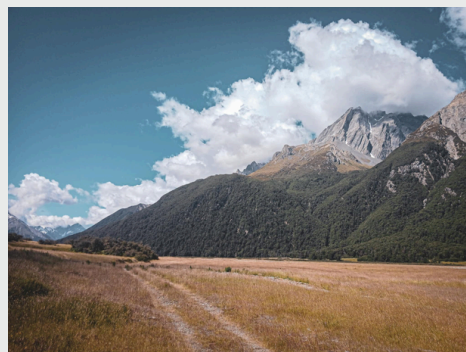
Two Fairlie pies deep, we teamed up with Rupert Gardiner and headed up to the Hopkins Valley road end at the head of Lake Ohau. This valley is a major alpine valley and is about 50 km long. What makes this valley great is that typically all trips involve a classic valley approach via on foot or by bike, and the terrain + views are big.

We left the car at midday, and with heavy packs wandered on foot up the 4wd track, passing monument hut after about an hour. Shortly after the hut, we opted to travel up the riverbed and 3km later crossed the Huxley river. From here, the views opened significantly, with great vantages of the Dasler Pinnacles to the east, and glimpses of the mythical Black Tower Peak ahead on the main divide.

Our destination of the night was the NZAC Elcho Hut, at the Elcho / Hopkins confluence. This hut was comfortable, and once the jetboil freeze-dri was eaten, and our energy levels recharged, provided a great night's sleep. There was plenty of mosquitos, but luckily no hunters!

#### Day 2 – Elcho Hut to Biv on the Nauman Range at 1450m

Leaving the hut early, we continued 2 hours up the valley to Dodger Hut, a 4 bunk doc hut at the Dodger stream confluence. Here, we opted to stash some food and given the favourable forecast, prepare for a high biv near the base of the route at 1800m. From the hut to the scrub-line involved 2 hours of sweaty and steep bush bashing through beechforest. However once on the scrub-line, we were rewarded with excellent views.







Here, the first glimpses of our objective were obtained. The imposing 350m high west buttress of armistice peak was an unmissable shield of rock, towering above a cool alpine cirque.

This alpine cirque ended up being our bivvy site for the night. With flowing streams, no cell phone coverage, and excellent views across the Hopkins Valley to Mt Ward, and two days walk from the car, there was no better place to be!! We counted about 10 tahr snacking on vegetation up higher in the cirque.

### **Day 3 – Climbed the West Buttress of Armistice Peak via *Animal Crackers* and a potentially new start**



A 10/10 sleep under the sil-tarp fuelled an early start. We left the camp at 7am, and zig zagged our way up scree slopes to the base of the west buttress. Here, the route topo was a bit vague and it wasn't obvious where the original route went, so we chose the most prominent and striking line up the nose of the lower buttress. The first three pitches were about grade 17, with average rock quality, run out pro and likely unclimbed previously. These were great adventure onsight leads from Dave and certainly woke us up for the day ahead! 4 pitches from the ground had us on the halfway scree ledge and the excellent looking upper headwall still loomed above.

Here, we strayed away from the topo marked line onto better rock. This was either a new route, but more likely where the original line went. Four to five pitches later of adventurous grade 12/13 we parked ourselves on the summit. Greeted by a rock wren, the views North to as far as Aoraki were great, and the drop down the east side of the Naumann range into the Dobson Valley was exposed.



Now, how do we get off this thing? Luckily the descent was straightforward, and we dropped down to a col on the Naumann range crest before descending and looping back around to our camp, arriving by about 4:00pm.

To give ourselves a head start for the next we, we collected our overnight gear, and headed down through the beech forest back to the valley floor, to the welcoming but mosquito filled Dodger Hut at 7:00pm. Crashed hard into the sleeping bag that night, however we felt stoked due to great climbing, achieving our goal, and having an adventure.

### Day 4 – Doger Hut to Hopkins Valley Carpark

The sun rose, greeting us with an excellent bluebird weather day. 5.5 hours, 25km, and multiple thigh deep river crossings later, we egressed from Dodger hut, down the Hopkins valley out to the car. The holyman's (Alec Hielbron) three rules of mountaineering were adhered to:

- Come back alive – tick
- Come back as friends – tick
- Climb some peaks – tick!!

Now let's go get a pub feed and cold drink!!

### Day 5 – Jardines Bouldering

Chill session at the Jardines bouldering area. This spot is nestled between the foot of the remarkables with views out to Lake Wakatipu. Contact strength was lacking after 4 days of exertion but ticked a few easy classics. Dave had some strong attempts on the G-Spot (V6) however didn't quite send.

### Day 6 – Remarkables Grand Traverse

Wow, another mega perfect weather day for climbing! Leaving QT on sunrise, with a very light rack and some snacks, we headed up to Dave's old stomping ground – the remarks. On the agenda for the day was a Grand Traverse.

This classic NZ alpine day trip was a fun and easily accessible scramble with good rock and great exposure. Although the ridgeline looked mega from the helipad, the scrambling was very secure, and we soloed everything but two short steps and was on top of single cone for lunch by mid-day.

Moving efficiently through this terrain with Dave was awesome fun. However always present was a low likelihood + high consequence trip hazard which we managed accordingly.

A short down climb + one rap had us back on the ground, and before too long we dropped over wye saddle, past the instagrammers at Lake Alta and back to the car with plenty of afternoon remaining.

After the trip into the Hopkins, the remarks felt like car cragging. This made me appreciate the extra effort we put in to getting up to Armistice Peak earlier in the week.







### Day 7 – Rest Day

Woke up crook with a sniffle. Spent the day in the tent. Bummer!!

### Day 8 – Wanaka Sport Climbing

Hot conditions welcomed us at hospital flat. I onsighted the classic *Head Bangers Arete* (17) and Dave climbed a steep 21 at The Office.

Then walked up to Al Cap to see where the strong folk hang out (mega crag). Quick swim in the lake followed by a burger and a cruisy drive to Twizel rounded out the day.

### Day 9 – Uprising Session

Great indoor bouldering session at Uprising Gym in Chch!!

### Conclusion

What a great week. 10 days of perfect weather and the climbing was maximised! Cheers for Dave for being a great climbing partner and thanks to Rupert + family for the Arrowtown hospitality.

My biggest learning of the trip was learning how to succeed on longer multi day climbing trips. On Taranaki, it's far too easy to trash yourself on a day trip, fail to eat or drink enough, and just rely on a big sleep on the couch + takeaways + a sleep in to recover once you get home.

However, this approach doesn't work on multi-day climbing trips when you have back-to-back big days of either walking with a heavy pack or climbing. Recovery + energy management is important, i.e. getting enough rest, being slick with descisions, and eating the right food. This allowed us to stack the odds in our favour for the climbing day on Armistice Peak – after already being tired from a couple of days on the go. It would have been a real shame to walk all the way there and not succeed!!

I'm looking forward to taking the gains from this south-island climbing experience and applying them to future trips. On the possible future radar are alpine rock routes in the Temple Valley, Cloudy Peak range, and eventually the Darrans. But in the meantime, hopefully will be able to score a few onsight FA's on the maunga this summer.

Thanks to NZAC Taranaki Section for supporting this trip via the NZAC Taranaki South Island Trip Fund.





## Competition Climbing

### Are you feeling strong?

With the surge of modern style indoor bouldering competitions upon us, Beta gym in New Plymouth has its first indoor boulder competition scheduled for 6th April 2025.

- Qualifiers will run from 5:30pm-7:00pm and finals from 7:30pm - 9:00pm.
- Qualifiers will consist on 10 climbs ranging in difficulty from V0 - V9
- Finals will consist of 3 climbs each scored using the IFSC format.
- Five different age group categories

The section is sponsoring a prize so be sure to enter!

## Banff Mountain Film Festival 2025

**Friday 13 June 2025 at 19:00 at City West Church**

NZAC Taranaki Section is proud to be hosting a New Plymouth screening in 2025.

From approximately 375 films entered into the annual festival, the world's best mountain films are chosen for the World Tour. This year's tour features a collection of the most inspiring action, environmental, cultural and adventure films from the festival. In New Zealand, our programmes feature over 2 hours of thought-provoking films from the world's most prestigious mountain film festival!

Be moved. Be inspired. Don't miss out. [Reserve your tickets today.](#)





## New Pull Up Banner

### Check us out!

With all these exciting events coming up, we thought having an improved presence is pretty important – so we made ourselves a new pull up banner. Be sure to check it out next time you are at an NZAC Taranaki event.

Bonus points if you can name the route + extra bonus points if you can name the climber and photographer!

## Utilising NZAC National Connections

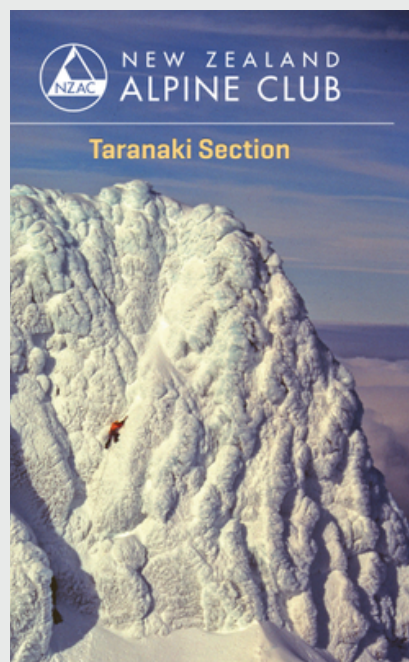
One of the major benefits of belonging to NZAC is being able to make use of the national connections.

The NZAC CNI section recently organized some excellent training up at the Pakeho crag. The training was run over a weekend in February with 'Introduction to Trad Climbing' on the first day and 'Self Rescue' on the second day. UIAA guide Adam Fox was the instructor.

Olly Thomas joined for the Self Rescue day and found it very worthwhile – it was a great introduction to the topic, covering fundamental skills across the key areas and without over-complicating things:

- Friction hitches and tie-offs
- Load transfers
- Ascending a counter-balanced rope
- Using a gri gri or ATC in guide mode for lowering
- Raising systems 3:1 and 5:1 (with a gri gri)
- Tandem abseil.

Definitely worth keeping an eye-out for these opportunities in the future.



## NZAC Taranaki Section Committee

<b>Chair</b>	Fletcher Miles	fletcher miles2012@gmail.com
<b>Vice Chair</b>	Dave Bolger	davebolger@hotmail.co.nz
<b>Secretary / Treasurer</b>	Mark Hall	markhall102@gmail.com
<b>Committee</b>	Matt Sullivan-Brown	matthewpsb@gmail.com
<b>Committee</b>	Phill Davies	ascent.phill@gmail.com
<b>Committee</b>	Olly Thomas	oliverwthomas@yahoo.co.uk



# TARANAKI SECTION



Lucas Flay on *Block Land* (13), Minarapa Bluff.  
[Photo: Fletcher Miles]