

Baa Summer 2007 – 2008, V.27 i.1



Section: Introduction

The post summer issue of Baa is finally here, don't be deceived by its almost post winter arrival! Its late arrival could even lead to it being defined as the post-post summer edition. But the main thing is that it has arrived before the end of year Heels, if only just.

Reading through Baa is making me feeling inspired to get out and go tramping. It contains tales of adventure, suspense and intrigue. Highlights for me include Sam's cliffhanger account of cold, injury and geographical confusion in the Tararuas and Hannah's description of some highly efficient rain and tent decision making procedures as well as some pointers on the benefits of foot shuffling. Manning's nonchalant understatement of a fairly challenging sounding solo ascent of Caroline Face also deserves a mention, with the trip's challenging nature confirmed to me by Terra's account of the same glacier. Actually considering Terra's trip reports make up about half of this issue, I'd like to say, cheers big ears, to her (not that your ears are big Terra).

Anyway after reading lots of trip reports covering climbing jargon that I didn't understand, I got a little geeky and added a wee glossary, for all those people who, like me, don't understand climbing terms. (Ahh the librarian in me surfaces again). The glossary only contains words that I didn't know, so may not actually be of use to anyone else. But enjoy☺

Section: Adventures

Sam wiped his arse with leatherwood in the Tararua's

Trip details: Sam Mcoll (Scribe), October 2007

In October I set out on an 8-9 day tramp in the Tararuas. The goal was to do the Northern and Southern Crossings in a big loop taking me back my starting point. The objective, aside from taking some timeout from city living and the girlfriend, was to test my comfort traveling those hills alone. At the end of four days I arrived back at my starting point without actually completing either the Northern or the Southern crossing. My goal was not reached but my objective was achieved.

A compounding of small problems and errors over a few days with unlucky circumstances challenged my abilities and put me in a potentially life threatening situation. My experience level was not enough to avoid the situation but luckily it was good enough to get me through it.

The first problems to strike were caused by a general lack of 'tramping' fitness. I had just returned from nine weeks of holidaying around the Americas. Unfortunately, despite my natural fitness, two months of city life, fine foods, booze, and uncomfortable airplanes had an impact on me. Despite breaking in my new boots on a few small tramps earlier in the year, my city softened feet succumbed to the chaff of leather. A heavy (24kg) load on my back, and an unnecessary long-cut on the first day up to Te Matawai hut meant that by the start of the next day my body was sore and my feet were blistered.

An unpredicted change in the weather was the next problem. An early rise in the morning revealing clear skies, and a weather forecast text messaged to me indicated a great day for heading up on to the tops. Being slower than usual (due to my unfit and sore state, and an

enjoyable ambling pace) meant I didn't reach Pukematawai before the weather turned. By the time I reached it visibility was 20m and a very fresh northwesterly had developed. I pushed on to Arête (which I had never been to before) to start looking for Arête Bivouac to escape the worsening winds. By the time I was on Arête visibility was several metres and the gale force winds reduced me to crawling in places.

I had been warned that Arête Biv was hard to find so I was not surprised that I was still searching for it after half an hour. What did surprise me was that after being blown over and sliding a few metres down a grass slope I was disoriented and could not regain the route. I tried heading back to Arête on my compass bearing but could not find it again. I went up higher and found a ridge leading north and decided it must be wrong. I went southwest but the ridge dropped too steeply. I cut across to the south in the hope to intercept the correct ridge but came up blank. I had become lost and confused. The wind was crippling and deafening, the rain stung my face, and I could see but a few metres in front of me. After an hour of searching and starting to feel cold and tired I decided to get off the tops and seek more comfortable conditions lower down and wait for the weather to improve. I made the decision to drop to the northwest in the hope that I would drop in to the Mangahau catchment.

A small steep gully began to grow into a small steep valley and I scrambled down for about an hour before reaching a 10m drop-off/waterfall. There were two options here: either climb down or head back up onto the tops and try again. I opted for the latter thinking I could see a safe way down. Halfway down I realised it wasn't safe. What if I fell? What if this rotten greywacke rock gave way? I started thinking how dangerous this was and how much Steve Corin would love it. This made me feel better and I kept down climbing but giving each hold careful consideration. Within two metres from the bottom I breathed a sigh of relief because I had done the worst of it. But almost the second I breathed this sigh, my hold broke free and I fell back-first into the stream below. My head smashed against something hard, my body went under the water, and my hands were crushed by tumbling rocks, and for a second as my vision went blank I thought to myself 'oh man, this is going to hurt'. But within another second, my natural reflexes bounded my body out of the stream and I stood on the side and felt surprisingly OK.

An examination of my pack contents revealed a bent aluminum plate and billy and a shattered plastic survival box. These items and my pack probably dampened the blow significantly. In the fall I lost my water bottle, which would later prove to be another problem. A little bit sore, especially with my crushed fingers, I hobbled further down the valley until I came to another steep drop. I considered going down the next waterfall but there was enough leatherwood around to make a semi-sheltered camp so I decided to stop for the afternoon and wait for better conditions.

As luck would have it, the wind and rain worsened. I found out later that the winds in Wellington that day were the worst experienced all year. I decided I would set up camp for the night and hope that the weather would be better by morning. My little clearing was about 1 foot short of my body length, on an angle of 5-10 degrees, and not exactly a foam mattress sort of comfort. It was a long cold night. Not only was the wind too loud to allow sleep but it drove rain right into the depths of my down sleeping bag despite being inside my pack liner and in the relative shelter of my fly and ground sheet. A wet down-bag is about as useful as a wet sack. The gale force gusts made cooking impossible. I had to use every last bit of my clothing to keep the shivering at bay, so by morning all my clothes were wet too. At one point I decided to use my survival blanket which helped keep me warm but made things wetter with condensation.

During a long night alone like that many a thought go through the mind. Thoughts of ‘what if the weather only gets worse? How long could I stay here before I start succumbing to the elements? What if I fall down the next waterfall and break a leg? I wish I had an emergency locator beacon with me. What if I can’t get cell phone coverage tomorrow? ‘I wonder if my car is safe at the road end? Actually, why the heck do I care? I might not even be alive tomorrow’. ‘Maybe I am experiencing advanced hypothermia right now and that is why I have stopped shivering? What if I woke up dead? That’s impossible you dumb-arse, you don’t wake up if you are dead’. ‘I wonder what the time is? Oh crap my fingers are numb again, but at least my toes are still nice and warm.’

Next light and still no improvement in the weather. I used my phone to get a forecast. Gale force northwesterlys were expected to ease around 1300hrs for a few hours before strong southerlies took over. I contacted my Dad (an experienced trumper) and he informed me that the escape route into the Mangahau was difficult. He convinced me to instead head back up and hope to find the route again if the weather eased.

By 1130 the weather showed no sign of improvement but I knew I would take at least 2hrs to get back up to the tops so I broke camp and starting heading back up. I discovered that I was now sporting new injuries. My knees were badly inflamed. This was a problem I had years ago and thought it had gone for good, but the steep descent and cold weather the day before must have triggered it again. My fingers were also only semi-functional. This was partly due to the cold, and partly due to bashing/crushing them somehow when I fell down the waterfall. It made scrambling up boulders and hauling myself back up the waterfall painful and slow. At the last opportunity before the tops, I took a big drink of water from the stream and hoped it would get me by until I got down to Te Matawai Hut, the closest shelter with water.

At about 2 p.m. I had stumbled back onto the tops, and just as the weather forecasters had predicted, the tops started to clear and the winds began to ease. Within 20 minutes I had nearly 100-200m visibility and it allowed me to easily regain the route which I followed on to Arête and then back to Pukematawai. From Pukematawai it was a long, slow, painful, thirsty, but actually very pleasant hobble to Te Matawai because the wind had completely stopped and the skies almost cleared. But facing me at the Hut was another potentially long cold night. My down sleeping bag was still soaked through and every piece of clothing I had was wet.

I normally avoid using Hut firewood supplies when I am tramping but on this occasion I made an exception. I had to at least get some of my clothing dry. The supply of firewood however was pretty low and a little bit damp. It took me about an hour to get a decent fire going and I knew I didn’t have enough firewood to keep the fire going for even most of the night. I spent the next four hours meticulously rotating my layers of wet clothing around the fireplace, wasting as little heat as I could, until they were all dry. I dried my sleeping bag liner too which was a bit of a token gesture but it was comforting to be able to get into something, even though it wasn’t a sleeping bag. At some point in the evening a southerly storm reached the Tararuas. It dumped a few centimeters of snow so I was thankful I wasn’t still exposed in the leatherwood. I was never exactly warm that night but with dry clothing, and a weather-tight shelter, I managed to get a bit of sleep.

I had decided by this stage that I would abandon my goal of the northern and southern crossings. It would take at least several days to get my down-sleeping bag dry if I had a plentiful supply of firewood in the hut (which I didn’t have). Plus I was not in a great state physically. I had blisters, aching shoulders, sore leg muscles, rooted knees, and I could hardly tie a shoelace with my battered fingers. Plus, without a drink bottle, traveling on the tops would be dangerous.

The weather the next day was a bit windy and cold but not bad for walking out. My dad had been in contact with me and worried about my physical state he had offered to walk in and meet me halfway to take some weight from my pack. I was thankful that he did, because even with his help it took me over 10 hours to walk out, on a track which would normally take me about half that time. By the time I met my dad, almost halfway, I was getting a bit sick of drinking from muddy puddles!

It can be disappointing to set out on a trip with a plan or goal in mind and then not being able to carry that out to its end. This could be especially annoying if, like in my case here, the goal end comes nowhere in sight. But I think that any tramping trip, whether it be a successful trip with no hiccups, or a complete disaster, always offers some reward and lesson. That reward may simply be the chance to be outdoors. Lessons may be as simple as not crawling behind your mate when he wearing small yellow shorts and no underwear, or that leatherwood leaves are not a good substitute for toilet paper if you don't like bum rash, or just giving that little bit of extra experience in tricky situations. Even though I didn't reach my goal I had fun and got to test my body and state of mind in an uncomfortable and worrying situation. I would still like to do the southern and northern crossings all in one trip but next time I try I'm going to make it a bit harder for myself by using a blindfold and carrying a couple of watermelons.

Raglan Range at Christmas

Hazel Bidmead (scribe), Greg Thurlow, Alyn Higgins

I can probably count on one hand the number of times I've been in Wellington for Christmas, and with the rest of my family scattered around the country and my parents in Antarctica it seemed like the ideal time to get away for a few days tramping. Following in the footsteps of a couple of other VUWTC trips we decided to head for the Raglan Range, in particular the Hellfire-Branch-Lees circuit with a side trip to the Lost.

Our first campsite was absolutely amazing beside the tarn at the top of Hellfire stream with a view down the valley in one direction and the steep cirque behind us. An amazingly still (and somewhat chilly) evening was the icing on the cake for a great spot. It reminded me of Lake Angelus - but without the tourists.

We had all been expecting to see only each other for the 5 days, so it was something of a surprise to see a couple of trampers wander over the rise during as we were contemplating the valley and the last climb for the day. Needless to say they hadn't expected to see anyone and didn't seem to want company so we had the tarn to ourselves.

The rest of the trip involved a couple of passes, a few interesting valleys and some great hut locations. One of the hut books went back 30 years and the others weren't all that much newer so there were some classic entries. We had 2 nights in 2 person bivs which was rather reminiscent of a trip a few years ago when 4 of us got stuck in a 2 man biv for a couple of nights as it rained cats and dogs and the rivers kept rising.

Christmas day was a cracker. We had a reasonably early start (as early as can be expected when you're in a 2 person biv and it's raining outside) and headed up the valley to the Branch-Lee pass. The drizzle eased and by the time we made it to the pass after a bit of rock scrambling and boulder hopping the sun made an appearance just in time for a mega scree ski and it wasn't long before we were down into the Beech again.

It was positively baking by the time we arrived at Lees Hut (voted most scenic by all members of the party) and it was definitely time for a spot of swimming. Christmas dinner was a good feed of Paella, complete with bubbles, rich Christmas pudding and some well earned dark chocolate coated macadamia nuts.

All in all it was a great trip, especially as it was somewhere completely new (and we got better weather than Wellington) – we even managed a lie-in on the last morning.



O' Caroline

Trip details: Dave Manning (Scribe), November 2007

The Caroline Face had been at the top of my to-do list since climbing Aspiring in July. This would be the third time I'd headed to MCNP with the intention of climbing it. Attempt one was thwarted by boot issues and attempt two was aborted half way up the Ball Glacier as it looked like the ice cliffs were due for a major collapse. Returning two weeks later to see nothing had changed, I assumed this must be how it always looks. Which meant I'd run out of excuses. It looked like there would actually be some climbing this time.

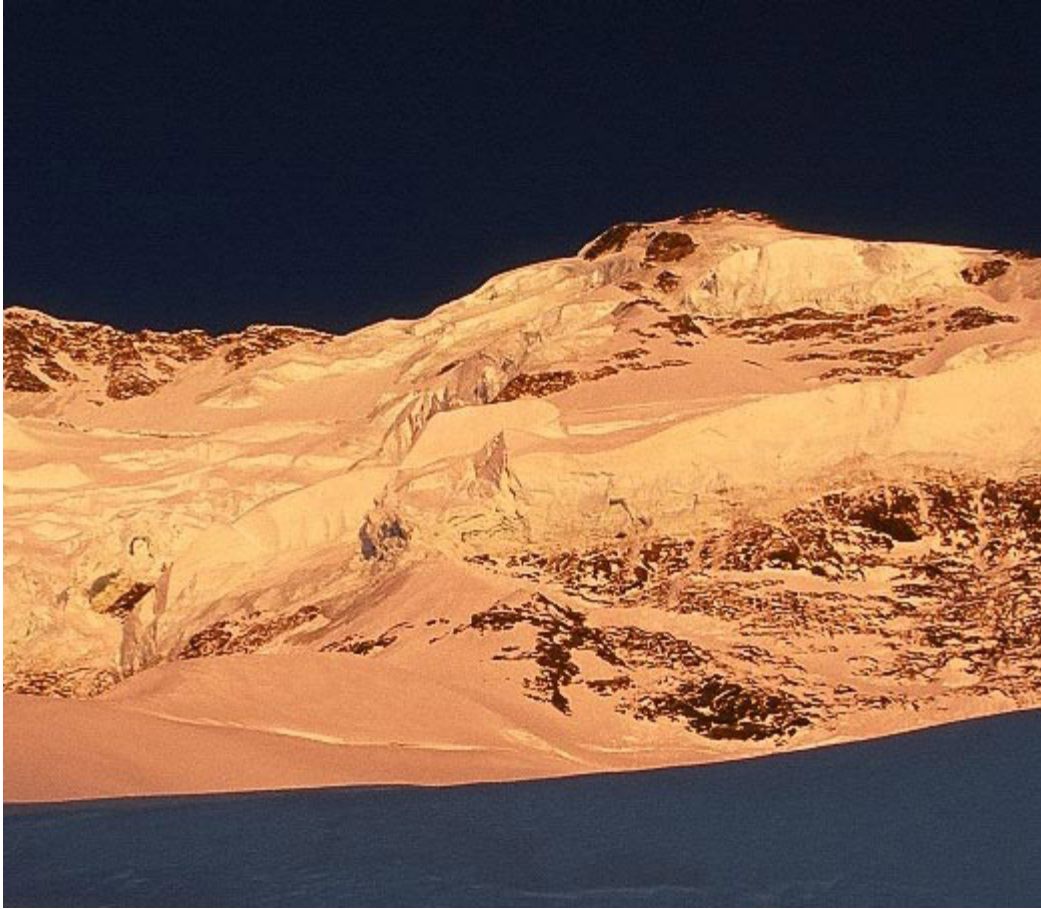
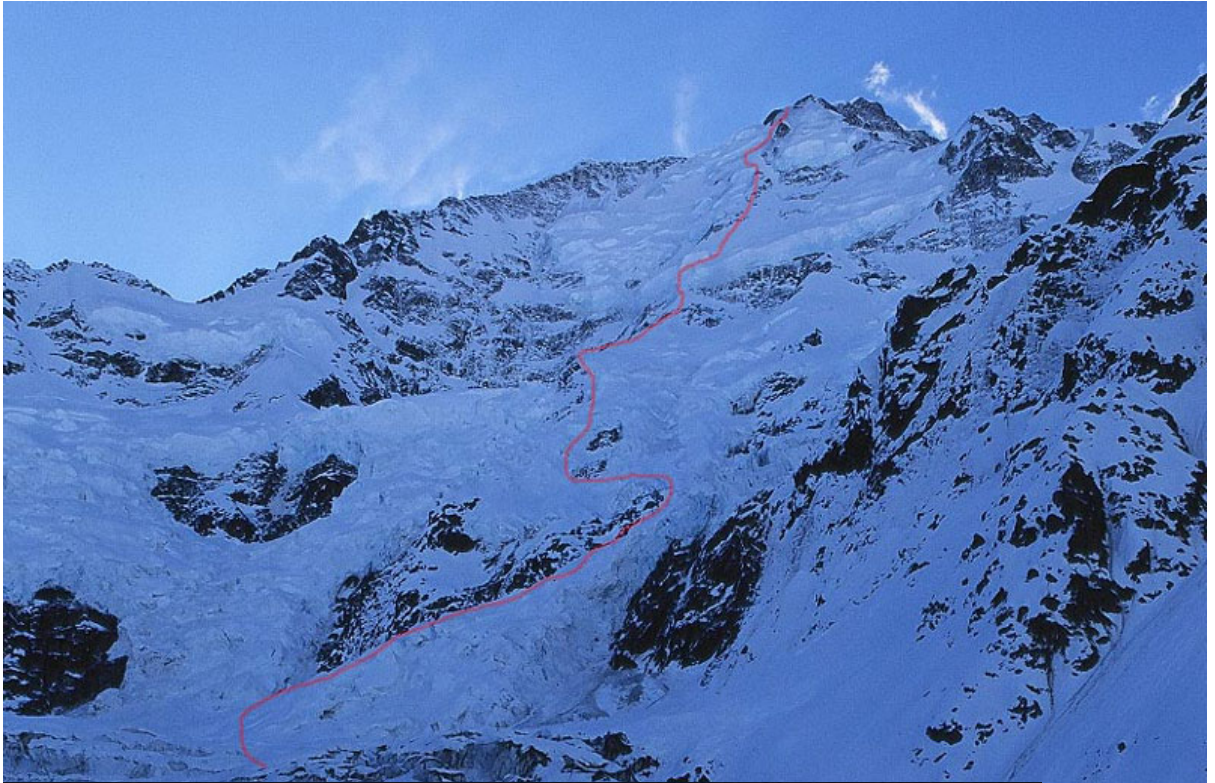
Being a new moon, the rock section didn't seem like a good idea at 1:30am, and it was also right next to all the ice avalanche action. So access was courtesy of the Caroline Glacier joining back up with the Clit Route just before it flattens off near the ice cliffs at half height. The glacier was a mixture of cautious bridge crossings and fast travel up glacial highways that are avalanche paths, followed by lovely frozen snow threading through cliffs to get back on route. With this came the sun and the most enjoyable part of the day: wandering up a rib of snow, looking down at the shelf, a sea of cloud and, best of all, Ball Pass at 8am.

A snow cone leading into the central ice cliff marked the point Caroline started fighting back. Sticky powder snow was the order of the day and would be the theme for the rest of the face. Ice below this made crampons a necessity and **antibots** only work if the gap between boot and crampon is not filled with snow. Progress slowed as I slid my way up on two blocks of snow.

The route sneaks up the side of the major ice cliff at half height and as I approached, things didn't look that steep. The top half of the face plays a similar trick, managing to hide its true gradient until one is climbing it. As it turned out, I was faced with two 3m vertical steps with epic exposure; the second step was a block of ice that actually overhung the 300m drop to the shelf below. A few overdriven placements later, with the adrenaline pumping and a serious case of the shakes, I was past obstacle number one.

Lots more terrible snow, some loose rock and quite a bit later, I reached the top ice fields. One of the problems with soloing is there's no one to call you a lazy bastard when you stop to admire the scenery every five minutes. On reaching the ice fields, I left the worst snow I've ever encountered and met the worst ice. A good few centimeters of excavation was required for a placement and it couldn't be relied upon to support a crampon. The climbing was nerve-wracking and exhausting but thankfully (and kinda annoyingly) not that steep. Moving between bits of rock to give the calves a rest I gained the ridge under middle peak at 7pm.

No great sense of achievement on topping out on the face, I was exhausted and pretty shaken up. The brain had stopped functioning properly many hours before. The original plan had been to head over High Peak and descend to Plateau but it was too late for that so I bivied up top. Which was fantastic - there's nothing quite like being at altitude when the sun's coming and going. Another long day took me out via the Hooker. Thank you to whoever put the tracks down that weekend, it made the glacier travel a lot less stressful.



Olivine Ice Plateau Attempt #1

Trip Details: Kieran Paton (scribe), Jeremy Haines, Guy Short, Terra Dumont, Alyn Higgins, Sophie Allen, January 2008

Six of us headed up the Matukituki Valley about 2pm one fine day at the start of January (me, Jeremy, Guy, Terra, Alyn, Sophie), made our way up to Aspiring Hut with ridiculously heavy 10 day packs and decided to keep going up to Cascade Saddle. Oddly enough the steep slopes were kinder on the feet and back than the flats (me and Jeremy had rigid **Makalus**) and we made short work of the 1300m climb to be up near the saddle round 8.30pm. Finding a long-drop beside the alpine stream draining over the Cascade we decided to camp here and proceed down the Dart the next day. Our rather ambitious plans were to head up by Margaret Burn, over the Barrier Range to the Forgotten, onto the Olivine Plateau and out via Ritchie's route down Destiny, Joe, Arawhata Saddle, etc - glad we didn't get that far from what I heard later!

We had a sweltering 25km walk down the Dart to Daley's Flat on a highway (beginning to regret my **Makalus** as my feet were slowly destroyed). Jeremy had already destroyed his feet however, probably breaking his toe on a slackline at Payne's Ford so his boots and the Codeine were the only thing holding his feet together - next day he decided he wasn't up for it (could only walk up hills, not down them) so he walked out down to Glenorchy way and hitched to Mt Cook, our next climbing destination.

The five of us continued over the Dart and up the spur near Margaret Burn, an easy, almost pleasant bush bash up to the bush line with no scrub whatsoever. We hadn't exactly had an early start (mistaking the sound of 10,000 sandflies bouncing off our tents for rain) and camped by a stream at about 1500m, planning for a big day across Desperation Pass, Derivation Neve and Possibility Col to the Forgotten, before the crap weather hit. The next day started perfectly and we got going about 5am, making quick time up to the snow line, with a bit of scrambling up rocks. Unfortunately the wind picked up at this point and the cloud started pouring over the main divide, making it all look quite dark and unpleasant.

We fairly quickly decided that the steep slopes around Desperation Pass really did require more than a few metres of visibility and that a whole day on the tops above 2000m in the clag wouldn't be all that smart or pleasant! So we turned around (knowing the next two days were going to be rained out too) and reluctantly headed back down to the Dart. It felt like a totally different spur coming down (though went in and came out at exactly the same points) - there were just all these huge house size boulders forming deep narrow ravines on the uphill sides, which made downhill navigation rather tricky. However we got back down to the Dart and Daley's Flat hut about 4pm, just in time for the tourists to start arriving at the end of their day. They were quite surprised then to see us packing up again after a late lunch and heading off for the road end, the next 'day' of their tramp. After a couple of swims in the Dart (was still sunny down there) we made it to the shelter and watched all the tourists arriving the next day in the pouring rain!

Eventually we got a ride back to Queenstown in the afternoon and hitched back to Wanaka, only day 5 of our trip. After visiting the DOC centre and checking out the forecast for the next few days we decided we might as well have a crack at Mt Aspiring. So we camped in the bushes in Wanaka and hitched back into the road-end, learning on the way that about a dozen cars had been broken into the night before. Luckily my wagon was safe, probably cause it looked too old and crappy. So with a sense of deja vu we headed back up towards Aspiring Hut, about 4pm this time and camped at the bottom of the Liverpool hut spur. Ran into a couple of friendly trampers from

HVTC at the road end who were also heading up Aspiring (and had yummy sour worms...) and kept on bumping into them for the whole trip.

Next morning we headed up to Bevan Col, which was easier than we thought, though still glad to have a route description as the head of the Matukituki looks pretty imposing. Was a nice sidle round the waterfall though and the slabs were quite easy even with heavy packs - would be pretty tricky in the rain though or icy conditions I'd imagine. We then wound our way up through snow and rocky ledges to the Col and set up camp there about lunchtime (weren't keen on paying for the hut). A pleasant afternoon of scrambling round Bevan, and lying in the sun followed though we didn't get much of a view of the route as the Bonar was filled with cloud - nice view of the summit though!

We didn't really have much of a clue where we were going to go, having heard reports that the ramp was 'totally out of condition' and all these Aussies talking about going up the Kangaroo. There was a vaguely Kangaroo shaped patch of snow below the buttress that we glimpsed through a crack in the clouds. Given this we thought an alpine start would give us plenty of time to figure it all out, and so Terra was jumping up and down outside our tents about midnight after only two and a half hours sleep. After the rest of us ignored her for a while we eventually got going about 2am - Alyn unfortunately had a bout of food poisoning, so was throwing up and feeling pretty wretched, leaving the four of us (me, Terra, Guy, Sophie) to make the ascent. We stumbled our way across the glacier, winding our way through the crevasse fields and up the steepish sides to the bottom of the ramp. The reflections of shooting stars whizzing across the glacier were pretty cool.

The ramp was indeed quite out of condition (just a sheer rock wall in the night) so we wandered around a bit more and found a whole load of footprints leading up to the **schrund** at a place where it almost kissed the rock with only a small snowbridge and scramble up rock required - the Kangaroo we assumed. Then we got onto a steep icy slope that we could have used a rope on if it wasn't so short (think we went up the *** of the kangaroo instead of its head which might have been easier). A quick scramble round some rock took us onto the North West Ridge proper however, just below the buttress. From here it was just starting to get light, so we followed the broad ledges of rock (almost a track) round on the Therma side and followed up round easy snow slopes to the ridge again above the buttress. From here it was just a walk up easily graded rock and slabs to the snowcap on the summit. Was a windy morning though with some wicked gusts on the ridge, but forecast to die down so we kept having hour long breaks and went to sleep a couple of times on the way up.

By midday it was dropping, but our little posse about 100m below the summit was still getting gusts every 5 minutes that you could hardly stand in. Hesitating about what to do, whether to use ropes, etc we saw a guide and his leashed client just wander up the ridge past us a bit higher up - deciding that it wasn't as windy as it seemed, we charged on up to discover that the summit cap was largely sheltered and while icy, no steeper and with no more exposure than Taranaki in winter. So we didn't bother with the rope and just wandered up past the guide who was now belaying his client off his pick. The summit itself was dead calm with perfect 360-degree views up to Cook in the north, the west coast and Fiordland (maybe Tutuko) to the south. We took a few summit photos and sat around for a while looking down the somewhat steep south face and south-west ridge, before heading down back past the guide and client still diligently belaying up the slope. We were the first on top at about midday, with 12 in all summiting that day so seemed rather crowded to us. The way down was straightforward and 90% on rock so soft afternoon snow was not such an issue, with us back at the Bevan Col camp by 5.30pm including a stop to melt snow and have lunch on the way down.

It was a fantastic climb on a neat mountain - so much higher than anything around us - but was also so much easier than we thought it would be, and quite a bit easier than the things we climbed round Mt Cook (Sealy, Nuns Veil, Hochstetter) that were graded at least 1 below it on the alpine scale! Definitely made up for not getting to the Olivine Ice Plateau though, but Jeremy was a bit gutted to learn that his ice hammer had made a second ascent of Aspiring without him!

Three or four days to the Garibaldi Plateau

Richard Davies, Quentin Duthie, Rob Holmes, Benj Ainsworth, Hannah McGregor (scribe), January 2008

Friday

We drove from Nelson and arrived very late in Little Wanganui. The big delay was the hour in Richmond Pak n' Slave where we accidentally bought between us 5 identical dinners, equalling a weeks' worth of pasta and dried peas. Mama mia!

Saturday

We camped overnight in some gravelly grass at the Wangapeka road end and got greeted by the landowner in the morning. His pony-tail matched those of his skinny horses. When we told him we were going in for seven or eight days he scoffed and told us that it took most people three or four days.

The Wangapeka track is an old mining/logging/speculating track. It is now thick with grass and damp, but you can clearly see the wide bench that was laid down. We stepped off the track directly behind the first Wangapeka hut (Bell-Town Mananui). Fortunately, Quentin has some civic-minded friends, who, on their own tramp the same way, had snipped and marked a track over the low saddle to Bellbird stream.

Bellbird stream was where the helpful pink tape stopped and after lunch we started into thicker thickets. Still, it wasn't too hard going until, dropping down an old slip on the other side of the second saddle, we began blundering into wasps nests. It is very hard, after coming out of a clutch of ferns with wasps crawling up your gaiters, to make yourself walk into more clutches. Also, the forest got older and more mossy. We were mostly feeling a bit thrashed by the time we arrived at Kakapo Hut, 12 hours after kick-off.

Sunday

Early the next morning we trudged a small way down river to a spur that looked promising on the map. It started okay, for about the first 300 metres, but the forest on the spur then turned into pick 'n mix. Among the beech grew slippery, tangly things, like neinei, and a type of tree that grows in spindly clumps.

Higher up we started coming up against old boulder fields that were smothered in the tree that grows in spindly clumps. This was slow work. It paid to walk behind Benj, whose oversized pack was breaking large holes in the spindly clumps. It was good to finally emerge at a place called 24 Tarn Pass, which is a large granite bowl speckled with alpine lakes (around 24 of them in fact).

Unfortunately, as we were lunching the mists came in from the North so we did not get many views on our afternoon across the tops. We ran out of enthusiasm for walking along the Herbert Range about 4pm and set up camp in a little copse of trees. There were only old brown deer-watering-holes for camping and drinking water, but we didn't worry about that too much because of the forecast...

Monday

Next morning, from the comforts of my sleeping bag I managed to eat my breakfast, pack my pack, brush my teeth, and put on my boots. At the very very very last minute I stuck my head out into the downpour. It was like a children's drawing of rain with lots of big slashing lines.

We squelched along for three hours or so to a spot that we could see (from the map) was directly opposite Garibaldi plateau. To our excitement the cloud drifted a smidgen to show waterfalls flooding down the Southern faces of the plateau.

According to the trip plan, our next move was to go down into Coppermine Creek and up onto the plateau, but "this looks like a nice campsite right here," said Quentin. At which point, lots of polite hinting at preferences and foot shuffling ensued. In the end we decided we should camp where we were. This took about an hour of foot shuffling.

In fact, because there was no decisiveness anywhere to be found, an interesting type of theatre unfolded over the following 36 hours. Taking turns, an emissary from the Green Tent (Richard and I), the Orange Tent (Benj and Rob), or the Microlight (Quentin), would go out into the rain, mostly in one layer of polypro - as smell deflects rain, and ask the other tents if they wanted to restart the trip. When the reply was "a couple more minutes" a new time for putting the question would be set. We did this about every three hours except at night.

Tuesday

The torrential rain came in bursts but the gaps between the bursts gradually got longer until the clearing on Tuesday night. We all went a bit stale in the tents. There may or may not have been 20 verses of a revised "Morning has broken". That night on the mountain radio, along with a promising forecast, we also got the sombre news that someone had tried to swim the Karamea river (just across the map from us) and drowned. Miraculously, the other person who tried to swim it survived. The Hutt Valley Tramping Club comes into the story about here, as they had been having the same tent-time as us, across valley, pinioned to the plateau. We asked them for some hints on the best route up. We got some hints. Serves us right, really.

Wednesday

Next morning was misty, although the kind of misty that suggests bright sun not far above. Across valley all we could see was impassable ramparts, but to get there we had to do the smashiest crashiest bush-bashing we did all trip. It took four hours to descend 600 metres to the creek.

Coppermine Creek was true copper-coloured with gritty granity rocks - and in normal flow - as if no rain had ever happened. In beating sun, the rain delay seemed a strange smelling dream. Half an hour downstream we had to decide which spur to take, and so we took a bit of gamble based on what looked right on the map.

For some reason, the bush was much less bashy on this side. It took us a couple of hours to ascend 600 metres, at which point we broke out onto a gentle spur-top that had beautiful granite boulders scattered about. Is there any greater irony in tramping than twice as long to go down as up? We clambered along smooth boulders, which was all wonderful fun in the sunshine, and then

came to the inevitable cliff. And then there was a nice easy way up through some trees that split the middle of the cliff, and it all seemed too easy, which it was.

Soon enough, we came over the top of the last crest and there was the plateau. There were clear lines of tomos running across it, so that it looked just like a hairy golden glacier. In trying to avoid camping too close to the Hutt Valleys we found a spot that turned out to be within flying distance of a deer-gut. Fortunately the flies went to bed promptly at nightfall, being 10pm.

Thursday

The next day began with a Mexican stand-off with the Hutt Valleys. We took our time taking down our tents and making breakfast. So did the Hutt Valleys. We went for prolonged water-collecting and toileting missions. So did the Hutt Valleys. We stood around and shuffled our feet. So did the Hutt Valleys.

Our foot-shuffling prowess eventually paid off, however, as the Hutt Valley's set off first. We gave them a polite couple of minutes and then followed in their footsteps and breathed down their necks.

After a straightforward sidle along the side of the mud-stone mountain, which is like a flaky full-stop at the end of the plateau, there was a short vertical slope to climb. As the Hutt Valleys were ahead, they had already started to climb it when we arrived. We picked our way cautiously underneath them, but it was hard not to stop and stare at their curious route choice, for which we were rewarded with a couple of big bouncy rocks that were only dodged at the very last minute.

Then came the heroic sight of a man much-advanced in years, climbing like a polypropolene spider up a very steep piece of snowgrass. He said later that he had "used the daisies for hand holds". The Hutt Valleys offered moral encouragement by stacking up below him like bowling pins. We went for the options involving dracophyllum and leatherwood. More painful, but it cures vertigo to stick some scrub into your ribs.

The rest of the spur was an absolute gem. Fantastic little deer trails wended along through the worst scrub, occasionally coming out onto spiny dragons' backs of rock, with good vantages of Karamea Bend down below. Then we got into the first proper beech we had been in for ages. We had three hours where we did not have to thrash through one thicket. Even though there were wasps, they seemed kinder and gentler and only stung Richard.

At the foot of the spur we popped out directly at the Bend. The Karamea was doing a good impression of a big green river, but it was only knee deep at the ford, if a little pushy. Directly we crossed we jumped in for a swim, and then sprinted to the hut pursued by a strange and persistent black biting insect with which we were not familiar.

The Hutt Valleys arrived not long after, and even though they had surely earned the whole lot, shared some of the enormous block of cheese that they had stashed at the hut on the way in. Mmmmmm, yellow.

Friday and Saturday

The original trip plan involved going back off-track at this point, but we had scrapped that plan during the lost day camped in the rain, so the final day and a half were spent on track. We climbed the long wending way to the Tablelands, and camped with a long view over the Tasman Wilderness Area back towards the coast. Then on Saturday we bimbled to Flora carpark, along a gentle benched track that goes past the interesting rock bivvies. And the bus driver was early and

waiting impatiently for us (as he also knew very well that it only takes most people three or four days). The end.



Piking in Mt. Cook & why alpine watches should have VERY loud alarms

Ollie, Andrea, Jeremy and Terra (scribe),

After spending 2 days learning every possible version of 500 from Jeremy and playing a epic day long game of Monopoly, with everyone trying to buy Mt. Cook and Golden Bay and my dyslexic brain collapsing after 10 min, the weather at last cleared enough for Ollie Jeremy and I to escape to the hills. (Really big ones!)

The original plan was to walk into De le Beche hut, climb something, then walk back to Ball Shelter and meet Andrea a few days later. Needless to say, as we staggered into ball shelter (Ollie in his plastics and me in my falling apart boots) we decided to stuff 7 hours of walking over a moraine covered glacier, and instead go and camp up Ball Glacier, then climb something there. This was a decision I was very happy with given I had never packed for anything longer than a weekend trip and my pack was about twice as heavy as the boys... So we stashed all our extra food and gear at the shelter with "Please do not eat. We are coming back for it and will be really hungry!!" signs, then trudged up the glacier until we found the first flat spot to camp (i.e a space of slightly rocky ice wide enough for one or 2 people to lie). Then we began the never boring sport of avalanche watching as the Caroline Face continually collapsed above us.

We set out alarms for a nice early alpine start, but woke to cloudy darkness, and fell promptly back to sleep. Ollie woke Jeremy and I with breakfast in bed, but his trick for getting us up didn't work as it was still cloudy, so to Ollie's disgust we went back to sleep until the lovely respectable hour of 10am.

By noon the weather began to clear and we decided to start a mission up to Anzac Peaks by walking up the Caroline Glacier. This was all quite interesting for me as I had never been on a glacier before and found this extreme version of follow the leader to be a new experience. The first few crevasses took some "Terra you are a long jumper. You will have no problem jumping over that meter wide crevasse. Forget you can't see the bottom. You won't miss. Just jump" type of encouragement. By the time we got to the big crevasses and narrow ice bridges (that we didn't realise were ice bridges until the way back...) I was quite enjoying watching the inky blue gaps fly beneath my crampons, and this was even more fun, though still a bit hair raising for a novice!

Sadly the weather came in before we made it to the top of Cinerama Coll and it started hailing, so not wanting to loose our visibility to get back over the crevasse, we went home to our rocky nests.

The next morning it was raining, so again Jeremy and I woke to the smell or Ollie's wondrous porridge being offered through the Micro-light door. Again this did little to encourage us to leave our dry bed for the rain outside. By 10am Ollie gave up waiting for us and started walking back to Ball Shelter. We joined him soon after, actually making it to the top of the moraine wall at the same time, given we had found a better route.

That afternoon I did a quick little side mission up the ridge above Ball Shelter, getting splendid views of Mt. Cook while the boys slept. Then I read them Jeremy's romance novel aloud, (all of us were trying to keep straight faces during the sex scenes) to pass the time as we waited for Andrea to show up after she finished work.

The next morning we trudged over the seemingly never ending glacier to De le Beche Hut. The last 50m to the hut got a bit exciting because, for some reason, we decided to go up the arête of the moraine. Andrea, Ollie and I were going along, thinking “this is ok, but getting a bit dodgy...” and our worries escalated as we listened to rocks thundering down the side Jeremy had disappeared over. Then we heard the wondrous words “Would you guys like a rope?” from Jeremy who had made it to the top. We thankfully agreed! And thank goodness we had, as everything got exponentially dodgier a few more meters up! When we got to the hut we saw the posts showing the nice route up the moraine which we were meant to take...

The next morning at 1am the weather was perfect for an alpine start, so by 2.15 we were on our way up De le Beche ridge towards the Minarets. We managed to miss the easy route up by about 50m and engaged in some fun rock climbing that we decided a rope was fairly necessary for. From then on it was a lovely route, with a stunning view of Mt. Cook at sunrise. We ended up having to turn back just before De le Beche as we would have had to cross either under a very dodgy piece of wind-slab (which Jeremy is pretty sure fell down the next day) or where we were constantly hearing avalanches fall. Instead we had lunch and settled for some ice climbing out of crevasses, which was quite interesting for my soft-soled-day-walking-boots which were just about in 4 pieces by that stage.

The trip down was uneventful, and we all fell into our sleeping bags, with our alarms set for 7am so Jeremy and I would be able to make it back to Christchurch by a reasonable hour the next day. At around 8.30 we all woke up... Sometime before noon we began the long trudge home, and eventually made it to Christchurch by Christmas eve, and to my house in Pakawau later that day.

Nuns Veil

Annabel Beattie, Kieran Paton, Guy Short, Jeremy Haines and Terra (scribe), January 2008

After running out of the Huxley Valley, I speedily repacked my bag in record time (under 20min!). Then I jumped into the car with Annabel, Kieran, Guy and Jeremy to catch the jet boat across the lake, which Annabel had used her charm to get us for free. We found upon arrival my speed packing was not required, as they couldn't take us across for another hour. So we found some small shaded patches and wished there was more than the sediment saturated lake water to drink. We got our free ride through the ice-burgs (people actually pay for that?!?) and began our walk. It took us about an hour along the monotonous river bed to reach Gorilla Stream. Then things got much more enjoyable! The next few hours were excellent fun, jumping and scrambling over boulders as we made our way up the stream. We camped as soon as we could see the base of Nuns Veil and the sun was leaving the valley.

The next morning we awoke at 4:30am, getting to the base of the glacier by full light, just as planned. We were not sure what the best route was, so when the snow was starting to look a bit steep we headed up onto the rocks, which were a bit steeper than they first appeared... When Jeremy and I made it to the top of the worst bit we told the others to wait and sent a rope down (I was silly enough to be carrying the rope, thus had no choice but to make it to the top!). After a bit of easier scrambling, Kieran and Annabel decided to head up the snow, while Jeremy, Guy and I stuck to the rocks. This brought us all to a small plateau before more steep snow led to the summit. Here we climbed into the **schrund** between the snow and rock leading to the summit. We avoided the face because the snow was getting quite steep and the runout included a 500m drop into a rocky gorge... The shrund gave some quite easy and safe travel until the end, when it became quite steep and composed of ice that shattered under our picks. I clambered up it, with Jeremy following closely behind. The others (more intelligently) stayed in the lovely little ice cave below.

The rock that I reached turned out to be slightly more vertical than it appeared from the bottom. However I was not looking forward to going down the shitty ice, so I clung to a bit of loose rock, trying (in vain) not to knock rock onto those below me, and took off my crampons. Jeremy scrambled on ahead then threw a rope down for me. On the way up I commented on the fact that "I can see through the ridge!" (as it was compiled of a bunch of loose boulders balancing on top of each other.) This didn't cheer up my lovely belayer much! When Kieran yelled up to us asking if they should follow, Jeremy replied with something along the lines of "It goes..." So they decided they might try pitching the snow instead and we heartedly agreed that was probably the best idea!

We stayed roped up and loosely pitched the ridge. The first 50m turned out to be the most exposed part, as it widened out further along. From there it was only a small bit of snow to cross before the easy scramble to the summit. The snow turned out to be slightly exciting, with a cornice to one side and crevasses to the other (one of which half my body found when trying to stay away from the cornice.) We then wandered up the (not so) lovely loose rocks to the summit. We had a fabulous picnic in the sun with a 360 degree view of massive mountains and waited for our three companions.

We waited, and waited, and waited... After a while we decided that they might have experienced difficulty and were not able to get up that route, so we began to head back down. When we got back to the rocks we saw Kieran's blue helmet pop above the crest of the snow. They had not encountered any problems, but 6 pitches of snow with three people was much more time consuming than 3 loosely belayed rock pitches with two people. So Jeremy and I had another rest in the sun while waiting as the others summited.

We had been watching the progress of another group of three behind us. Two had stopped half way up, and the third, a German speaking guy, was soloing up to the summit. He paused to talk to us, and when we offered for him to join us on our rope for the descent he heartedly took up the offer. While he headed up to the summit, Jeremy and I put up a fixed rope along the ridge to where we could abseil back into the shrund.

The foreigner came back first. Chatting to him, we found out that the other two climbers he was with were Glen and Francesca! On the way down we all had a good chat, walking down together, as their route looked much more reasonable than our roundabout one. They had come directly up the snow instead of onto the rocks. After walking down a part of the glacier we reached a bluff which we abseiled over, then climbed back onto the snow. Soon we reached the soft snow near the bottom and ye-ha! we could run home to our dinner and beds (18hrs later).

After a divine sleep in we had a lovely rock hop in the sun to the Tasman valley. There we trudged across the hot flat plain to the lake. We waved, yelled and whistled until a jetboat came and picked us up.

Make You Think Climbing

Terra Durmont (scribe), Jeremy Haines, Mt. Lloyd & Mt. Cran, January 2008

After waiting for nearly a day for the rain to clear, Jeremy and I finally set off up Freds Creek with ropes, slings, a full rack, ice axes, crampons, 6 days worth of food, a Microlight tent fly, half a toothbrush and a spoon. An hour later darkness fell, so we pitched the fly in the stream bed.

The next morning we continued upstream, reaching the stream junction heading to Mt. Lloyd a few hours later. The sheer face jutting into the sky made my stomach do a few summersaults. I began to wonder if I should check myself into a mental institute for even thinking of climbing it. Clouds were pouring over it's summit, smattering us with rain, so we decided to snooze in the sun on the other side of the valley until the weather cleared there. A few hours later we scrambled up the valley. After an hour we arrived at the base of Mt. Lloyd. We decided to camp on the scree ridge to the true right side of the mountain, where we would be descending from the climb.

After setting up camp we decided to do a few pitches of Craig (the route up the arête of Mt. Lloyd) before dinner to see what it was like, and to give me a taste of multi pitch and **trad climbing**. (I had done a grand total of two trad climbs and nothing more than two pitches.) Jeremy took the first pitch, a steady 15 finishing about 50m up at a nice ledge with big rocks to belay off of, something we would happily find to await us at top of most of the pitches. The next two pitches were easier, just steep scrambling. I ended up with the 4th pitch. It had a nice little crux of about 16 which without protection through the crux. It then thankfully eased off to about a 13. After finishing that pitch, was decided we were getting hungry, so abseiled down, excited about the prospects of completing the route the following day.

Mt. Lloyd – Craig, 4+ (Pyramid Face)

After the sun began to beat on the face of Lloyd (sun is one of life's necessities for Jeremy) we re-began it's ascent. We carried one pack, with our boots, food and water in it. We kept switching it so it was carried by the person seconding. This time I took the first pitch so I didn't have to do the dreadful 4th pitch again. After it, there were two more easy pitches before we got to the **gendarmes** (6th pitch). Given the face looked like good climbing but lacked protection, I gave it to Jeremy. Following him I was certainly glad I did! It went up the face, then dropped down, before heading up another **gendarme**, which Jeremy looped a sling around and belayed off of. He then belayed me down that **gendarme** and onto a ledge. He then looped the rope around the peak and abseiled off. The next pitch was a vertical grade 16 wall of rotten, damp, moss covered rock. I was again thankfully able to talk Jeremy into climbing it (what would I do without him??). The guide book told us to follow the line of weakness, but he decided to head straight up and slightly left, as it got us back onto the ridge much quicker. This proved to be a good move as it was much easier. Soon we reached a corner, which said it was supposed to be a 15. Soon I realized either the person who decided this was a 15 was on something I wasn't, or I was in the wrong spot. 15's in my experience are not two smooth walls joined at 45° with an occasional little hold every few meters! Luckily I could shove **cams** into the crack joining the slabs, so it was quite easy to protect well. The corner ended in a roof formed of boulders jammed in a crack. Yay for awesome sling placements!! Then it eased off to about a vertical 14, at which point I ran out of rope... so time for my first hanging belay - on nice loose rock! I shoved in every piece of gear I had left and called safe. We continued on, regaining the main ridge and following it, trying to avoid the grade 18 that the guide book says to be our last pitch. I was scrambling up a pile of large boulders, when, pulling myself on top of one of them, I realized, to my relief, it was the top! Despite thoroughly enjoying myself, I was very tired.

We worked our way down, then up to the next mini peak on the ridge, and over to the other side where we put on our tramping boots and got down to the scree slope.

As there was still plenty of daylight left we decided to summit Mt. Lloyd itself (the Pyramid face is actually quite a way away from the true summit and connected to it by a broken ridge). We dumped most of the gear except for our harnesses and one half rope and walked up. We only needed the rope once when crossing over to the other side of the ridge. The rest of the route was quite straightforward. The view from the summit was fabulous, looking over to Mt. Cook, Nuns Veil and beyond. After taking a few pictures and gazing at the view, Jeremy was finding out what happens to me when he withholds lunch until 5pm and decided it was time to get me home to dinner and bed before I fell asleep right there. By 10pm we were home sweet home.

The next day we spent flat out – in the Microlight. I did manage to entice Jeremy to explore some of the short climbs in the evening. We were not able to find any of the routes in the book, but found two nice climbs anyway.

Mt. Cran – Deep Purple, 4

Given Mt. Cran is substantially higher than the Pyramid face and the SAR guys said they had had trouble getting off it (though we do not know what route they tried) we decided for an earlier morning start. So by 8am we were on our way.

This time we carried two packs, as we also had crampons and an ice tool each. One pack was light (for the leader) and one heavier (for the seconder).

Bill describes the route as “Two pitches of about grade 14 and 450m of make-you-think climbing. A further 250m of easy angle terrain leads to the summit”. The first two pitches were as expected, but then it really didn’t ease off into anything we would feel comfortable soloing, so we kept pitching and the rock kept disintegrating. For future reference, Bill’s “make you think climbing” translates to “grade 14 rotten vertical rock” for us mere mortals! I’m not sure if I will ever be able to look at rock the same way again, or use a hold before thoroughly testing it!

Climbing consisted of wiggling every hold as hard as I dared, then putting my weight on it gingerly and trying to put my weight as straight down as possible. Protection consisted of a few **cam** placements interspaced by creative sling placements. A sling placed on a small flat ledge then piling rocks on top of it was considered a good gear placement. Three placements per 50m was a well protected pitch. The best placement of the day has to go to Jeremy. When I was cleaning the pitch and got to his last (and 3rd) placement, which was a wire, and started to wiggle it out, the whole rock fell away!

After half a dozen or so of these pitches the exposure decreased, and the grade was slightly less, so we began **simul-climbing** for a while until we came again to some more difficult climbing, with more dodgy pitches...

By this point we decided there was really no way we could get off the mountain easily, so the best idea was to keep going up. We also decided if worse came to worse all we had to do was phone the Glentana airport and within 20min we could have a helicopter ride home. So we continued.

At last, from the best belay posy of the day (a nice big hole!) I realized we were at the end of the steepest part. So we took off our climbing shoes, put on our boots and began walking, dragging the rope between us. A little while latter we put the rope away and scrambled to the lower

summit. It was easier gradient, as Bill had foretold, but only in comparison of what we had done before!

It was getting onwards towards evening, so we decided we could not be bothered to climb to the true summit, especially as we didn't know what the descent had in store for us. We took the ridge on the Mt. Lloyd side down. To our relief we encountered no difficulties, and the rope was never needed. It kept looking like it could peter out any moment, but just kept going. We even saw some little deer like animals and wished we could run up and down cliffs like them!

Soon enough we had reached the snow slope. There we followed the **shrund** as far as possible, then Jeremy belayed me down the steepest bit. He made an anchor for himself by poking two holes through the **shrund** then threading the rope through it.

From there we just walked down the snow then scree to the ever patient Microlight fly, which we didn't leave the safety of for a good 36 hours!

Still waters run deep

Richard Davies (scribe), Quentin Duthie, Location; Fiordland National Park

I'm lying upside down with my legs in the air. My pack is jammed against the slippery log I had been standing on five seconds earlier. I stand up wincing and kicking myself for rushing. Up ahead I can hear Quentin burrowing into another thicket. The boat is only 10 minutes behind us but may as well be on the other side of Lake Te Anau. A few sandflies touch down on my bare legs. Bastards. Welcome to Fiordland.

20 minutes earlier we'd been cruising into the South West Arm of Lake Te Anau, and jumped out at the Doon river, Quentin in his guise of the Bludger from the Scrub having scored us a free boat ride. Now there's just two of us in a land of moss, I gingerly start to walk after the noise of Quentin's violent thrashing, thinking that if I stay here any longer I'll have moss on me.

On the boat we decided to ignore Moir's advice and take to the True Left side of the Doon where there was an old track. Moirs has just been republished but we think the beta on the Doon is wrong. After the initial thickets where I ended up upside down we find old markers and a strong deer trail. We have an account of a Tounge and Meats trip from 6 years ago. They took to the True Right of the Doon in appalling weather and had a real grovel. By contrast we are now flying. Despite the fact we are only a few k's into a week long trip **hubris** reigns. "Lets cut the corner" shouts Quentin and plunges off the good deer trail and into the shallow clear water of the Doon. As he gets halfway across I notice he is going downstream more than sideways and trotting more than you would expect on an easy crossing. I wander in and am surprised by the force of the current. I back out in time to watch Quentin tangle with a log jam. I wait for him to extricate himself and realise he is stuck. So I head back in and get to within a long arm of him before the water takes me. Like Michael Jackson I moon walk down the bed of the Doon with the water rising over my waist and a swim coming alarmingly close before I grab the end of the same log jam and crawl to dry land. Quentin finds his own way out and we stand wet and sheepish on possibly the wrong side of the Doon.

As it is, travel is a wee bit worse but far from horrendous and we reach the Doon bivy rock – our intended lunch stop and the Tounge and Meats first night – for morning tea. Lunch is had at the confluence of Campbell Creek and the Doon. We had intended to climb over Mt Donald to the head of Lake Wapiti but limited route information and the view of snow on the southern aspects

(we had no ice axes) makes us reconsider. Over lunch we estimate that we can be at the head of Lake Wapiti tonight if we go up Campbell Creek, whereas it would be tomorrow night via Mt Donald. We do know from the Tounge and Meats that Campbell Creek is horrible. So it proves. It takes 2hrs to move 500metres (horizontal not vertical!). The area is full of huge boulders and bottomless holes spanned by rotten logs and vines. It's dire. Our route reflects our idiosyncrasies. When Quentin is in front we climb high, only to invariably hit an impassable bit and while we backtrack. When I move to the front we move closer to the river, when that is invariably blocked I backtrack. Then Quentin takes the lead and we climb again and on and on for two hours. After 2 hours we get to the top of the waterfall and pass the Tounge and Meats second night campsite. The river flattens off and we find a few more deer trails. It is well and truly evening by the time we break out into tussock and more boulders and get a view of Lake Wapiti. It's an impressive place but I am impressively stuffed and don't get my camera out. Quentin is like a manic energiser bunny and wants to push on. To get around Lake Wapiti you need to climb 150m then sidle ledges above the lake. The Tounge and Meats did it in snowfall (a break from the rain) and described considerable discomfort. While I digest all this Quentin has climbed 50 of the 150m. I haul arse up the steep tussock. The ledge proves to be OK - better than that really. It's a neat route. There are bluffs above and bluffs below but the deer come this way, the grass is long and on a dry afternoon it feels safe, easy and dreamy - Fiordland at its best. We camp at the far end of the ledge, where it is more of a bench and get swarmed by sandflies. At 1050m. Bastards. Welcome to Fiordland.

Moirs describes an easy walk off to the head of Lake Wapiti. In the clag the next day we can't find it. Before the trip we had debated carrying a light rope. We decided that good sense will guide us and if we need a rope we will turn around. As a concession to the wildness of Fiordland we buy a ball of string from Mitre 10. So it comes to be in the clag above the Lake Wapiti delta I am perched on a bluff unrolling the aforementioned string and doubling it and lowering our packs down the "easy walk off." Below the bluff it is quite easy. The Tounge and Meats got stuck here by snow, so in really a smidgen over one day we are seeing the country they took 4 days to see. That is the essence of Fiordland, it is the weather that provides the texture. Their trip was nothing short of epic. Ours is merely curious.

The pass to Twin Falls stream is easy from the top. In the top basin on the Lake Wapiti side Kim Hollows buzzes us in his chopper; a culled deer swinging Saddam Hussein style below the chopper. They do a few loops around us and then disappear over a different pass to the Stillwater - a helicopter-only pass. Looking back at our pass from Twin falls creek it looks helicopter-only too. But it's actually really simple and quite pleasant. Over lunch we observe a pair of **Whio**. By reporting the colours of their leg bands we later find out that they were released in the Takahe area a couple of years ago. Quite a journey for the little ducks.

Quentin had his eye on a 'new route' from the Twin Falls creek to the lower Stillwater, but we're making such good time that we decide to follow Moirs. The Stillwater is a huge flat Fiordland valley filled with log jams. The gorge by Ethne stream is small. We're nearly through it on good deer trails when the deer take off up the hill. We ignore our good senses and a basic tenet of Fiordland travel and don't follow them. We are lucky to get through on a hairy low sidle. The deer of course knew best and they climb high and early to avoid a huge bluff. Fortunately part of it is vegetated and that's how we sneak across, but it is slow and ugly and we are angry at ourselves for ignoring the good deer trail.

Our second night is spent in incredible pepperwood forest. Incredible because the **Horopito** is the dominant species and has grown tree like. There's plenty of room for a tent underneath. Kaka threaten to keep us awake with their raucous cries at dusk. Silvery silt high in the trees indicates

the depth to which these flat Fiordland rivers can back up in flood. A phenomenon which has made many tourists (and Kiwis) into swimmers on the Dusky track. By now the Tounge and Meats trip report had departed on a different route (happily for them with good weather) so fatuous comparisons of travel are out of the question, we're still pretty happy with progress mind you.

The next day we charge down the Stillwater on strong deer trails. There is one annoying gorge with attendant swamp forest which slows us down but other than that it is pretty straightforward all the way to Lake Marchant. This lake is impassable by foot, although Quentin's swim seems to take him about half way across it before it gets over waist deep. Such is silting. We spend the night at the historic Caswell Sound hut. It's very dark, although this means the sandflies don't come in as historically there was no bug protection in Fiordland. Caswell sound is surprisingly anti-climactic, although it's always pretty cool to tramp to any wild coast.

The next day we retrace our steps all the way back up the Stillwater, our hut-bagging duties discharged. We make better work of the gorge and even disturb a large mob of track builders resting in the ferns. After a few days in the bush with a vegetarian I suddenly wish I had a rifle. From the base of the gorge that gave us problems a couple of days earlier we head up Ethne stream. This stream is tiny and features the ugly thick bush and small scale steepness normally associated with search and rescue missions in the Akatarawas or side streams south of Otaki Forks. The map is marked incorrectly here. A cursory proof read would reveal that streams don't normally cross spurs into new catchments. The Moir's description also leaves a bit to be desired. However we do find a good place to camp – not where Moirs says but at C41 690632. It's roughly about the 600m contour, quite a bit higher than Moirs says. Male and Female kiwi call near our tent. A tent we have tried to make bomb proof as plenty of rain is forecast. Unfortunately the tent is not bomb proof, and with only a $\frac{3}{4}$ length thermarest it is Quentin who finds the water pooling first.

We spend all morning in pit waiting for the rain to stop and when it does we carry on over the Overlander ridge. Moirs describes it as a well marked day trip from George Sound hut. We find one marker, very thick bush and lots of bluffs.

On reaching George Sound we are pleased that we consulted a tide chart. Rather than being desirable (Moirs) low tide is essential. It is slow travel on slippery rocks and the sandflies move in for the kill. Bastards. We collect pockets full of mussels instead as our strike back against nature.

We take a pit day at George Sound hut and feast on mussels and food left by boaties. After a pit day we head for Lake Thompson with a side trip to Mt Henry a main divide bump with superb views of this part of this gloriously beautiful, rugged wilderness. We reach Hankinson hut quite early and with a long wait for our boat Quentin goes to work on the DoC staff to try and get a chopper ride out. They decline, but our luck holds and when two foreign fisherman turn up by floatplane to spread Didymo. We get ourselves a cheap flight back. 15 m later we are standing on the waterfront at Te Anau ringing the boat operator. "picking who up" he says. "I'm not picking anyone up from Hankinson, they never confirmed." Whoops. In Fiordland you've got to make your own luck.



Section: Recipes

A great start to the day – in every way

Steve Corin

If you're anything like me, waking up in the morning in the hills can be a traumatising experience. Not only do you need to get out of your cocoon of warmth, navigate bundles of wet clothes, trek to the long drop for a pee (though I must admit being a bloke the deck often comes into use at this point) but what should be the best part of the day, namely breakfast, often consists of some mash suitable for a old folks home, or at very best a third world hospital.

I've spent far too long putting up with this misery despite seeing people try all sorts of alternatives, noodles, bacon and eggs, hash browns, muffins, but to be honest they just look like

far too much effort and I'm a weet-bix lad at heart. But I think I have finally struck onto a winning recipe, which CANNOT GO WRONG, requires NO cooking and tastes NICEish. So in a nutshell:

- Take a free Allison Holst plastic bag from a supermarket
- Add 180 g of Hubbards Apricot Museli
- Two-three tablespoons of milk power
- One-two tablespoons of milo
- Seal the bag!

Now all you need to do is wake up in the morning, shake the bag to mix the ingredients, and then add some water and wola - muesli milo!

Please note the author to this story has no affiliation to any companies above, but if they would like to consider sponsorship could they please get in touch with me at: steve.corin@actrix.co.nz

Note: I reckon adding chili to this would make it more interesting... (Sarah)

Section: Glossary of terms that Sarah did not know

Antibot – Apparently climbers don't need anti robot devices, to help them climb although I'm sure they could be added to climbing attire for an added fashion statement... An antibot is an anti-snowballing plate to place under your crampons, which keeps snow from sticking to your Crampons. Who would have thought?

Cams - A spring-loaded device, placed into the rock, which stops you plummeting to your death.

Gendarme - A pinnacle or isolated rock tower frequently encountered along a ridge. However, it is also the word for a French policeman.

Horopito – Pepper tree

Hubris - is a term used in modern English to indicate overweening pride, self-confidence, superciliousness, or arrogance, often resulting in fatal retribution.

Makalus – are one-piece leather mountaineering boots. They have a crampon-compatible sole, a full-length steel shank, and a waterproof lining. Apparently the upsides are support and sole stiffness, with the downsides being, constant blisters and difficulty drying.

Schrund or Bergschrund describes a crevasse that forms on the upper portion of a glacier where the moving section pulls away from the headwall. (a headwall being the wall at the head of the glacier)

Simul-climbing is when both climbers move together with gear between them

Trad-climbing involves placing removable protection in cracks and pockets or around natural features to secure the climber in the event of a fall

Whio – Blue ducks