



## AAC Publications

---

### Darran Mountains, New Routes

New Zealand

**Most new-route activity in New Zealand in 2015 was focused in and around the Darran Mountains, both in summer and winter.**

Things started off with a flurry of activity during a sustained period of warm and fine weather in February. On the upper tier of the south face of Barrier Peak (2,039m), Daniel Joll and Pete Harris established a new nine-pitch route directly to the summit: Peaking Pete (440m, 20/5.10c A2). On the same day, Jaz Morris and Michael Eatson climbed Jaz Hands (240m, 17/5.9, which follows a rib on the left side of the face to a point on the south ridge, approximately 100m below the summit.

During the same period, Zac Orme and Troy Mattingly climbed five new pitches on the Mighty Dur, a small subpeak below Mt. Taiaroa (2,154m) in the central Darrans. The climb, Yeah, Nah, Dur (24/5.11d), follows a striking line up a steep, golden shield of rock on the east face, above the Te Puoho basin.

Farther off the beaten track, and into the true depths of the central Darrans, three stalwart pioneers of development in the area, Rich Turner, Richard Thomson, and Dave Vass, teamed up with James Spears to climb a trio of new routes. Turner and Spears established Katabatic Gravity Well (300m, 23/5.11c) on the Statue Wall, below the north ridge of Karetai Peak (2,206m), and also Kilroy Wuz Ere (250m, 21/5.11a) on the west face of Nga Mokopuna (2,073m), an outlier peak on the ridge between Karetai Peak and Mt. Te Wera (2,309m). On the same wall, Turner, Thomson, and Vass climbed Brothers In Arms (325m, 22/5.11b).

In March, Kyle Dempster and Jewell Lund (both U.S.A.) climbed a new 300m line on the east face of Karetai Peak: Tabula Rasa (5.11b, 7 pitches), right of the Thomson/Vass route (2012).

Slightly north of the main hive of activity in the Darrans, I made the first ascent of the south ridge on Amphion Peak (1,965m). This striking rock pyramid dominates the head of the Rock Burn catchment and gave enjoyable climbing up to grade 17 (5.9) on sound rock.

Moving into the winter season, the majority of the action was again focused in the Darrans. At the annual Darrans Winter Climbing Meet, hosted out of Homer Hut in early July, some of the best ice conditions seen in recent years allowed for a number of great climbs to be completed. The seldom-formed ice lines Squealing (IV, 6+, Rogers-Vass, 1993) and Stirling Moss (III, 5+, Alder-Evrard-Fearnley, 1992) both received rare ascents. Steve Fortune and I made the third ascent of Squealing, quickly followed by Graham Johnson, Matthias Kerkmann, and Johan Maillol the next day. Richard Measures and Alastair McDowell completed the third ascent of Stirling Moss.

Several new lines also were climbed. Steve Fortune and I found two new routes in the McPherson Cirque. The first, Crystal Ship (IV, 7), climbs a striking freestanding ice pillar (WI5+) through the center of the upper tier. The second, Ether (III, 5+), follows a thinly iced groove angling up through the lower tier between Rabbit Run (Perry, 1981) and Stirling Moss for five pitches. Several other moderate new routes were climbed within the McPherson Cirque area and up Cirque Creek.

Shortly following the winter meet, I ventured back up into Cirque Creek to climb a new four-pitch ice

line, parallel to Squealing, called Tempest (200m, IV, 6+ (WI5- R). Meanwhile, Lionel Clay and Allan Uren made the first ascent of Bill's Way (120m, WI6), at the head of Eyre Creek in the Eyre Mountains.

Bucking the trend of climbing in the deep south, Andrew Finnigan and Sam Spector ventured into the Humboldt Mountains to climb a new ice and mixed line on the south face of Peak 2,016m, above the Glacier Burn. Their 300m route, which provided difficulties up to M4 and WI3-, was climbed in a day trip from Queenstown and highlighted the great potential for further winter development at the head of Lake Wakatipu.

Taking advantage of the great late-season conditions in the Darrans, two more multi-pitch routes were added on the upper south face of Mt. Crosscut (2,263m) to close out the ice season. In late September, Milo Gilmour and Allan Uren climbed a series of iced-up ramps and corners to the East Peak, directly right of Hotel Caribbean (Cradock-Perry, 1982), to claim the first ascent of Up Cirque Creek Without a Shovel (400m, VI, 6 (WI4). Two weeks later, Steve Fortune and I climbed a line to the left of this, between White Knight (McLeod-Widdowson, 1987) and Heart of Gold (Perry-Ritchie, 1981). Tramadol Dreams (460m, V, 5 (WI4), starts up steep, thinly iced slabs before traversing left into a deep gully leading to the summit of the Middle Peak (2,250m).

Ben Dare, New Zealand

## Images



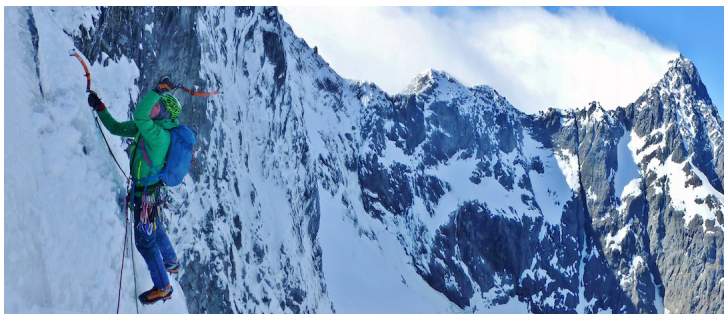
Amphion Peak, with the south ridge on the right.



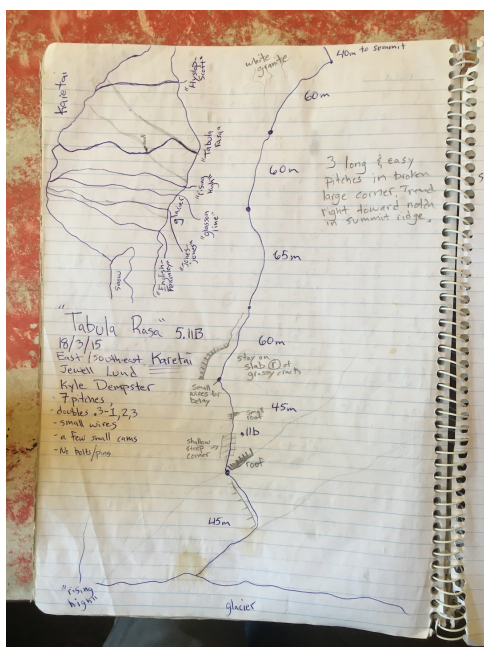
Ben Dare on the crux of Crystal Ship in the McPherson Cirque.



Ben Dare on the first pitch of Squealing, Cirque Creek.

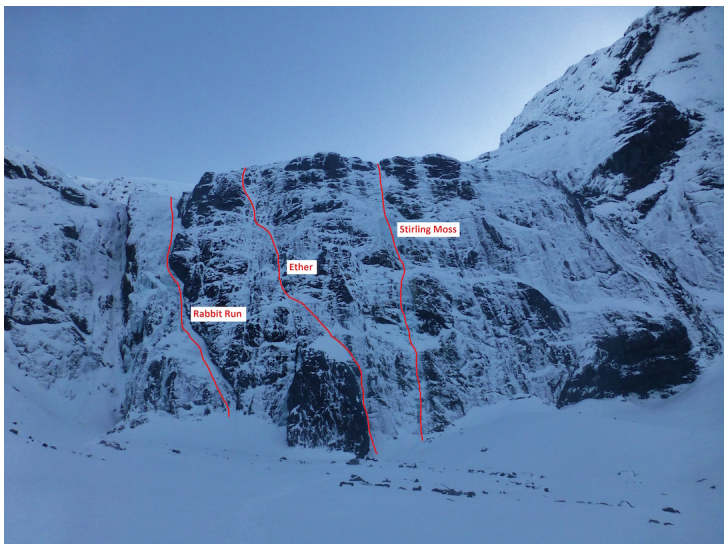


Ben Dare on Tramadol Dreams, Mt. Crosscut.



Topo for the new route Tabula Rasa on the east face of Karetai Peak.





Lower McPherson Cirque routes.



Routes on the lower tier of Cirque Creek.



Squealing Buttress.



Steve Fortune below Tramadol Dreams.



Steve Fortune on Ether, McPherson Cirque.



Steve Fortune on Squealing.



Steve Fortune on the first pitch of Tramadol Dreams.





Steve Fortune on Tramadol Dreams.



Tramadol Dreams, Upper Cirque Creek.





Upper Cirque Creek, routes on the right-hand side.

Article Details

Author	Ben Dare
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	0
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions