



## AAC Publications

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### Notable Climbs of 2017

#### New Zealand

**A general trend of unsettled and wet weather plagued the summer months in New Zealand and limited the amount of activity in the alpine. The most notable ascents were repeats: the second ascent of Maid Marian (1,000m, 22/5.11c A2, Dare-Joll, 2013), on the south face of Marian Peak (2,102m) in the Darran Mountains, by Daniel Joll and Gavin Lang; and the second ascent of Megawatt (600m, 17/5.9, McLeod, 1996), on the east face of Townsend Peak (2,043m) in the Hooker Range, by Steven Fortune and Conor Smith.**

In early winter, a lack of precipitation led to thin conditions. Despite this, a number of new ice and mixed routes were established in the southern ranges. During the annual Darrans Winter Climbing Meet, in July, Steven Fortune and I climbed a six-pitch mixed route on the left-hand wall of the upper McPherson Cirque. Dark Waters (220m, III, 6) climbs the center of the southeast face of Mt. McPherson (1,931m), between the existing routes No Country For Old Men (Charles-Howells-Uren, 2000) and the Crossing (Harrison-Steward, 2012). I followed this up with two successful trips into the Earnslaw Burn, below the south face of Mt. Earnslaw (2,830m), where I established three new water-ice routes, two solo and one with Caleb Jennings.

The last act of winter occurred in heart of the Southern Alps, where Ben Ellis, Jack Grinsted, and Josh Mitchell made the first winter ascent of the pinnacled Maximilian Ridge on Mt. Elie De Beaumont (3,109m), more than 66 years after the first ascent in the summer of 1951 by Ed Cotter, Ed Hillary, George Lowe, and Earle Riddiford. Over six days, the trio made the long approach via the remote Whataroa Valley, on the west coast of the South Island, then completed the climb and descended the Tasman Glacier, on the opposite side of the range, to Mt. Cook Village. Ellis said the overall winter grade would be “in the ballpark of the summer grade” (4+ on the Mt. Cook scale), with a crux of about seven pitches leading to the summit ice cap, with powder snow on the south side of the ridge and mixed climbing on the north, difficult to protect on either side.

Late spring brought a sustained period of calm, settled weather to the Southern Alps, and I was able to make two more first ascents. In late October I climbed the first route up the south face of Peak 2,472m, in the Huxley Range, at the head of the Ahuriri Valley. Phoenix (500m, IV, 5+ [M4, AI4]) follows a series of thin ice leads up a large corner system through the middle of the face.

In mid-November I ventured up the Hooker Valley to climb a probable new route on the south face of Aoraki/Mt. Cook (3,724m). From the upper Noeline Glacier, I linked ice flows and snowfields into a final mixed headwall below the upper south ridge to establish Remembrance (550m, V, 6 [M5, WI4]). [This route is to the right of Sodom and Gomorrah (Alder-Vass, 1988) and completely independent of it. A route called Pounamu (Schmidt-Braun-Elwert) was climbed in the same general area in 2011. Elke Braun-Elwert remembers climbing mostly to the left of Dare’s 2017 route, but the exact line of Pounamu has not been determined.] **Remembrance is named in tribute to Conor Smith, who, along with climbing partner Sarwan Chand, tragically lost his life in April. I had originally attempted the climb with Conor the previous year, and it was our last alpine climb together.**

– Ben Dare, New Zealand

## Images



Steven Fortune on the crux mixed pitch of Dark Waters on the southeast face of Mt. McPherson.



Steven Fortune descending off the summit of Mt. McPherson after making the first ascent of Dark Waters on the southeast face.



Lennox Falls (100m, WI3) in the Earnslaw Burn.



Tick, Tick, Boom (40m, WI5) in the Earnslaw Burn.



Caleb Jennings on the final section of the approach to Dream Theatre in the Earnslaw Burn.



Caleb Jennings on the second pitch Dream Theatre in the Earnslaw Burn.





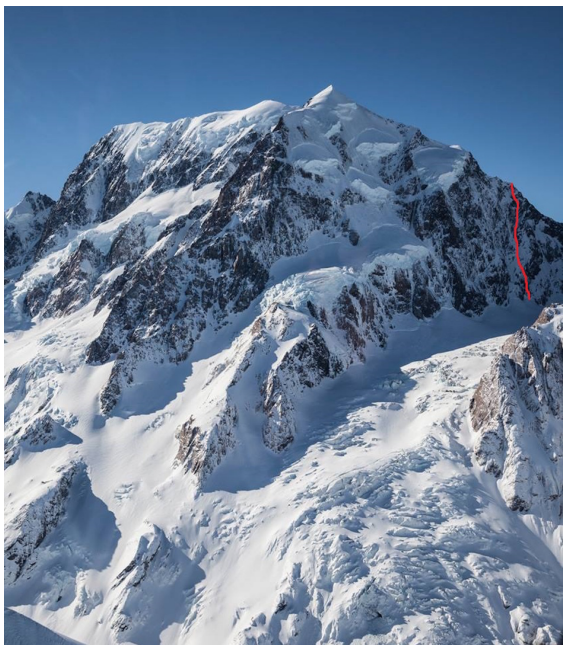
Ben Dare on the third pitch Dream Theatre in the Earnslaw Burn.



The south face of Peak 2,472m (left), with the line of Phoenix (500m, IV, 5+). The west face of Mt. Huxley is on the right.



Climbing thin ice on the south face of Peak 2,472m during the first ascent of Phoenix (500m, IV, 5+).



The south face of Aoraki/Mt. Cook, with the line of Remembrance (550m, V, 6).



Approaching the south face of Aoraki/Mt. Cook up the Noeline Glacier.



Climbing an ice runnel on the south face of Aoraki/Mt. Cook, during the first ascent of Remembrance (550m, V, 6).

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