



AAC Publications

Notable Recent Climbs (late 2017 and 2018)

New Zealand

SUMMER in New Zealand's high alpine was highlighted by several periods of warm, calm weather, resulting in dry and stable conditions. Despite a hive of activity in the hills, only two new routes of note were established, both solo climbs by Ben Dare. On Mt. Glenisla (2,392m) in the Nauman Range, Dare made the first ascent of the west face in December 2017 via the prominent open book corner system that parallels the northwest ridge to its left. The 300m climb, graded III, 4+ (16/5.9) was on mostly compact rock and topped out on the large plateau below and to the north of the main summit. This was followed by a new line on the south face of Mt. Sabre (2,162m) in the Darran Mountains: Everlasting Light, 600m, V, 6, (18/5.10a), in March. Dare climbed between the Original Line (Jones-Jones, 1971) and the Campbell-Howard (1973), and in the process claimed the first solo ascent of the face.

A rapid drop in temperature and early snowfall in May brought about the sudden arrival of the winter season. Taking advantage of the promising early season conditions, Dare set out to explore a new waterfall-ice crag at the head of 25 Mile Creek, near the head of the Reece Valley. This area had been spotted during a scenic "ice hunting" flight in the winter of 2016, and upon closer inspection it lived up to expectations. Three new lines were climbed, all solo, the pick of which was the main flow of Twenty-Five Mile Falls (100m, WI4 R).

In mid-July, the annual Darrans Winter Climbing Meet once again drew a strong crowd to Homer Hut. Unfortunately, unsettled weather and fluctuating temperatures, coupled with intermittent road closures, kept most of the participants pinned down in the hut and sharing stories and whiskey in front of the fire. During one short weather window, Dare managed to sneak out and bag the second ascent—and first solo—of the south face of Mt. Suter (2,094m) by a new route. Elysium, 750m, VI, 6+ (AI5), climbs steep runnels and thinly iced slabs on the right side of the face.

To close out the winter season, Lucas Kirchner and Llewellyn Murdoch made the second ascent of Reunion Invernal (650m, V, 4, Kerkmann-Muños, 2010) on the East Peak of Mt. Crosscut (2,263m) at the head of Cirque Creek. Meanwhile, Caleb Jennings, Alastair McDowell, and Rose Pearson made the first ascent of the south face of Mt. Hutton (2,822m) via Moonshadow, 500m, V, 5+ (WI3 M4+).

The arrival of spring saw a notable surge in activity in Aoraki/Mt. Cook and Westland national parks. Two new routes were climbed on the Sheila Face of Aoraki/Mt. Cook (3,724m, see related report.) Evan Davies and Jacob Downie climbed the Grey Hare, 300m, III, 4+ (WI3 M3), on Conway Peak (2,899m), followed soon after by James Warren and Tanja De Wilde with Save Some Ice for Later, III, 4+ (WI3 M4) on the south face of Mt. Barnicoat (2,800m). For Warren, this capped a busy month, with solo ascents of the Direct Couloir Route (Button-Dingle, 1979) on the east face of the Footstool (2,764m) and the Torres Peak–Mt. Tasman traverse, along with an ascent of the infrequently climbed Right Hand Gully route (Denz-Ross, 1972) on the south face of Douglas Peak (3,077m). During the same weather window, and also on Douglas Peak, Evan Davies and Meg Buddle made a rare ascent of the Ayres Ridge (Ayres-Gillies, 1953).

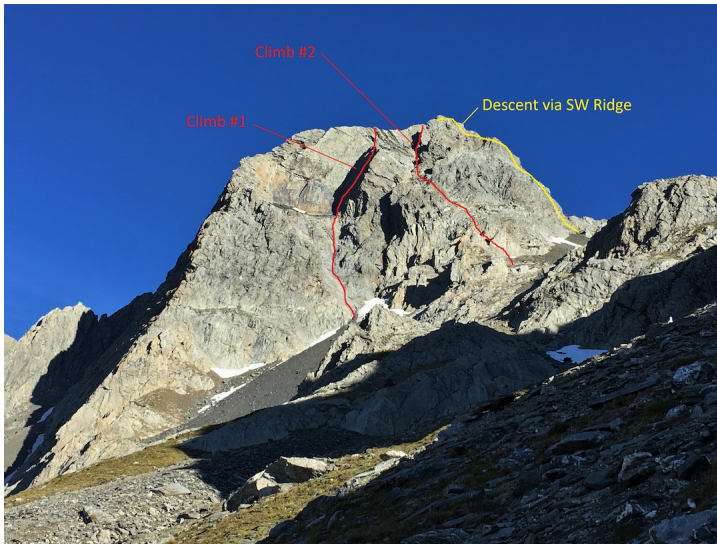
Further north, Ben Ellis, Jack Grinstead, and Josh Mitchell climbed a new route on the south face of D'Archaic (2,875m). Their line, Desire, 650m, V, 5 (WI4), follows steep ice through the lower rock band and then snowfields leading directly to the summit.

In early October, Dare made the long trip up to the head of the Hopkins Valley, crossing the main divide of the Southern Alps into the Baker Creek drainage to reach the southwest face of Mt. Percy Smith (2,465m). His new route, The Promise, 700m, VI, 6+ (WI4 M5+ A0), was the second ascent of the face and the long-sought first ascent in winter conditions.

The year closed out with Wiz Fineron, Zachary Orme, and Sefton Priestley adding four new pitches to the route Te Hamo on the Sinbad Gully Wall in the Darran Mountains. Orme and Priestley climbed the first seven pitches in February. (The first two of these had been climbed by a previous party.) The new pitches brought the climb to the top of the wall, and the full route has sustained difficult climbing, partially protected by bolts. Of the route's 11 pitches, nine are graded 24 (5.12a) or harder, with a crux ninth pitch of 31 (5.13d). All of the pitches have been free climbed, but the full climb—one of the most difficult of this style in the entire country—had not been freed in a single push as of early 2019. The rock is said to be high-quality granite, and there is much potential for similar climbs on this wall.

– Ben Dare, New Zealand

Images



The west face of Mt. Glenisla showing two new routes climbed on the same day in December 2017 by Ben Dare. The one on the left is described in the text; the right-hand route was "more of a scramble."



The southwest face of Mt. Percy Smith (2,465m) and the line of the Promise, soloed by Ben Dare in October 2018. The remote face is rarely seen in winter condition; this photo was taken in 1984. The only previous route is to the left: On the Dark Shore (790m, 23 pitches, with a crux of 17/5.9, Dickinson-McLeod, 1993).



The line of Everlasting Light (600m, V, 6, (18/10a), the first solo ascent of the south face of Mt. Sabre.



Elysium (750m, VI, 6+ (AI5) on the south face of Mt. Suter.



Looking up at the south face of Mt. Suter.



Wiz Fineron leading the crux ninth pitch of Te Hamo (11 pitches, 31/5.13d), a new route on the Sinbad Gully Wall in the Darran Mountains.



Wiz Fineron leading the crux ninth pitch of Te Hamo (11 pitches, 31/5.13d), a new route on the Sinbad Gully Wall in the Darran Mountains.

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