



AAC Publications

Alpine Report 2025

New Zealand, Southern Alps

The Donne Face of Mt. Revelation, showing the Big Easy (white line, Thomson-Vass, 2012) and A New Dawn (de Wilde-Le, 2025). Photo courtesy of ClimbNZ.

Tanja de Wilde and Peter Le kicked off the southern summer in the Darran Mountains in January when they trekked up the Donne Valley to climb the imposing Donne (west) Face of Mt. Revelation (2,176m). Starting just to the right of The Big Easy (Thomson-Vass, 2012), their new line, A New Dawn, climbs 700 meters of featured granite up to grade 23 (5.11d) in 16 pitches.

In March, Le returned to the Donne Face to establish a second new route. He and Yuichi Yamaha followed the first seven pitches of A New Dawn before continuing up and left, then finally trending back right to the summit ridge. In doing so, they climbed 450 meters of new ground in nine pitches, with a crux of 21 (5.11b). They named their climb Dawnwalker.

Following her climb on Revelation, Tanja de Wilde teamed up with Rose Pearson to claim the first ascent of the west face of Mt. Grave (2,225m). Accessing the peak directly from Milford Sound, via the untracked Bowen Valley, they scrambled up the initial slabs to a bivy below the main face. The next day, they climbed the 700-meter face to top out on Point 2,135m (south of the main summit). Following a high bivy, they traversed over the summit before descending the northeast ridge and Graves Couloir into the Tutoko Valley. Graded at 19 (5.10c), the route was named The Pregnant Porter after some banter about the hilarious size mismatch between the leader's and second's packs, and the physical condition of one of the party during the ascent.

Near the Homer Tunnel, on the main road to Milford Sound, Rachel Knott and Llewellyn Murdoch established a new line on the north face of Mt. Moir (1,965m). Camino del Baile climbs 150 meters of compact granite, using a combination of fixed and traditional gear, with a crux of grade 27 (5.12d).

The prodigious Ruari Macfarlane was active as always, helping to put up four new alpine rock routes during the summer. On the south face of Mt. Tutoko (2,723m), he made the first ascent of the South Rib with Sooji Clarkson, ascending a prominent rock buttress in the middle of the face for 900 meters at 21 (5.11b).

This was followed by a trip into the Central Darrans with Peter Le to climb two new routes on the southern aspects of Taiaroa Peak (2,154m). Only the Righteous (21) climbs 300 meters in seven pitches on the main south face. You're My Sugar Lump is a more moderate eight-pitch route (16/5.8) on the western outlier of Taiaroa called Point 2,033m (which also goes by the colloquial name of the Sugar Lump). Both were climbed from the Korako Glacier.

Finally, Macfarlane and Greg Beisly partnered up to make the first ascent of the South Pillar on Mitre Peak (1,683m). Accessed from the upper southeast ridge, this obvious feature stands proud in the center of the upper south face and gave the pair 500 meters of engaging and adventurous climbing up to grade 21.

Farther north, in the Humboldt Mountains, Mason Gardener and Jacob Kuchler made a single-day ascent of the east face of Mt. Chaos (1,995m) to establish Gods of Chaos (650m, 20/5.11a). Approaching up the Beans Burn Valley, they scrambled up 150 meters of polished slabs before

climbing the main face in 12 pitches on high-quality schist.

The winter months saw a general lull in activity in the higher alpine, but come spring people once again began venturing out in greater numbers. From a base at Plateau Hut below Aoraki/Mt. Cook (3,724m), Ross Hewitt, Will Rowntree, and Sam Smoothy made a ski descent of the Jones Route (1973) on the east face of Aoraki. Their line largely emulates that skied by Christina Lustenberger and Gee Pierrel in 2024, with a deviation in the lower sections to more closely align with the original climbing route.

The trio followed this up with a rare descent of the south face of Lendenfeld Peak (3,194m), from the summit down to the névé between the Syme Ridge on Mt. Tasman (3,497m) and the south ridge of Dixon Peak (3,004m). Smoothy and Rowntree then completed a grand traverse of Aoraki (climbing over all three peaks from north to south and starting with High Peak), before skiing down the northwest couloir from the Low Peak (3,593m).

—Ben Dare, New Zealand

Images



The line of the Pregnant Porter, the first ascent of the west face of Mt. Grave.



The general line of Gods of Chaos on the east face of Mt. Chaos.



Will Rowntree battling up the south face of Lendenfeld Peak in gale-force winds en route to the first ski descent of the south face.



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