

New Zealand 1984–85

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A wet December/early January thwarted the plans of many climbers except for a few stayers.

At Mt Cook, hard, fast solos came into vogue. The most notable was Paul Bayne's first solo ascent of the Balfour face of Mt Tasman in 2½ hours. This was one of New Zealand's most sought-after climbs on one of the country's premier ice test-pieces. Al Wood made a fast first ascent of the Central Gullies route on the S face of Mt Hicks in 7½ hours, which was repeated shortly afterwards by John Goulstone in 9 hours. This climb is undertaken on steep ice and rock and is both difficult and demanding. Greg Aimer continued the solo trend with a direct line on the S face of Malte Brun.

In early December the Caroline face of Mt Cook was climbed by two German guides working in New Zealand. One was later killed attempting to cross a swollen river.

One of the best new routes for the season was a ten pitch rock route on the Linda face of the Bowie ridge of Mt Cook by Kevin Boekholt and Nick Craddock. This climb was completed in rock boots and is reputed to have been some of the most difficult rock climbing to be found at Mt Cook.

There were also a number of important ascents of some of the more classic routes. The third ascent of the Frind route on Mt Sefton was made by John Nankervis and Jim Jolley. This completed 'Nank's' ascents of the 30 3000m peaks in New Zealand, a notable and still fairly rare achievement in New Zealand mountaineering. The second ascent of Nazomi (MacInnes ridge) to Mt Cook (S ridge) *integral* was made by Rob Hall and Gavin Tweedie.

It was also an important season for the re-emergence of New Zealand women climbers. Although women climbers have been making good ascents of New Zealand's hardest alpine routes for many years, it has generally been in the company of men who have been the dominant climbing partner. However, this season saw ascents of some of New Zealand's hardest routes by women-only teams. The most important ascents included 'White Dreams' on the S face of Mt Cook by Carol Nash and Lyn Bowering, and the Sheila face of Mt Cook by Ann Palmer and Carol Nash.

There were also many new ascents during the season in the Darrens and Mt Aspiring alpine regions.

Winter climbing in New Zealand's main alpine areas is still in its infancy. In fact many mountains still await their first winter ascent. Other than access problems because of deep snow and avalanches, long periods of bad weather make any winter ascent of the higher mountains a serious proposition. Although in recent years there has been a trend towards winter mountaineering, this did not live up to expectations this year and very few new ascents were recorded. However, Bill McLeod, who seems to have dedicated his life to first solo winter ascents, did Earle's route on Mt Cook and also managed to complete

the second winter ascent of La Perouse. A somewhat controversial first winter ascent of the much sought after 'Black Tower' was made by Rob Hall and Bill Atkinson. The pair flew in to a hanging glacier on the N face of Black Tower by helicopter and completed a 15 pitch ice route to the summit before abseiling off and flying out again the following day.

The rock scene in New Zealand is alive and healthy. With an increasing number of participants in the sport, new crags are being opened up and climbing standards are improving to a high degree. New Zealand's best rock climbing crag at Whanganui Bay, Lake Taupo, had access problems during the summer months and was closed, except to those who had water access in a power boat. This probably had some beneficial effects in that it encouraged the development of new crags and pushed up the grades of new routes on existing crags. Roland Foster, after his European sojourn, managed to complete many high quality routes of grade 28 at the 'Bay' before it was closed. He also managed the second ascent of Charlie Cresse's test piece (Pet Cemetery) grade 29 at Auckland's Quarry.

With an increase in numbers now climbing in New Zealand, the standard of both alpine and rock routes is increasing, with a tendency now being directed towards hard, solo climbs and new winter climbs.

My thanks to — NZAC Bulletin, NZAC Journal, CMC News for information on ascents.

