

Notes 1972 Australasia

Colin Monteath

NEW ZEALAND 1971-2 SEASON

The weather in the Mount Cook region reverted to more normal patterns last season, with very patchy one- to three-day fine spells spread through December and January. Climbers prepared to get into position and wait for the routes were usually rewarded, and some remarkable climbs were achieved, predominantly by younger teams.

Last year's monster problem, the Caroline face of Mount Cook, was the scene of much activity during the Christmas period, being climbed by no less than four parties. Kevin Caroll and Bill Denz completed the third ascent coming out directly at Middle Peak. John Visser and Rob Rainsbury completed their ascent in a single seventeen-hour push, only to be followed by a solo ascent by Max Doerflinger in a remarkable fifteen hours of continuous climbing. Waking from a sleep in a schrund on Middle Peak, Doerflinger proceeded to High Peak in full moonlight and then descended the Linda route. John Stanton and Bryan Pooley completed the sixth ascent of this gigantic face during a January fine spell.

After several attempts, the 'last problem' Balfour face of Mount Tasman was climbed by Bryan Pooley and Bill Denz, and from all indications, is certainly the toughest thing ever done in New Zealand (*Mountain 21, 8*).

John Glasgow, Peter Gough, Murray Cullen and Dave White made several unsuccessful attempts at the right-hand pillar on the s face of Hicks. Interest will be high in this beautiful virgin pillar next season.

K. Caroll and Dick Strong achieved the first ascent of the s face of Elie de Beaumont and M. Doerflinger and Herman Manser climbed the virgin sw ridge to Elie's w peak from a bivouac beyond Diver's Col. Doerflinger then teamed up with P. Gough and did the first ascent of the Strauchan face of Dilemma, which turned out to be a very fine rock route.

Joe Friend and Colin Monteath did the first traverse from the Minarets to Coronet. However, the full traverse to Elie de Beaumont was abandoned after two frightful nights in a storm. The same pair then completed the fourth ascent of the Sheila face on Mount Cook.

Archie Simpson teamed with Austin Brooks and put up the first route on the beautiful w face of Dixon. Simpson was subsequently killed while descending the Haast ridge to the Tasman glacier. Austin Brooks and three others also did the first ascent of the Linda face of Mount Dampier under Cook's N shoulder.

Classic ice routes like the E face of Sefton direct, E face of Cook and the E ridge of Cook received a lot of attention. Two of the best rock routes in the park, the W face of Haidinger and the Darwin Buttress, were also climbed frequently.

Another notable first was that of the solo traverse of Mount Tasman (Syme's-Silberhorn) by Bill Denz. Denz is the first and only person to have soloed both Cook and Tasman, both efforts being traverses of the mountains.

The summer season was marred by four deaths in consecutive weeks during December, although the rest of the season was virtually accident free. The most notable first ascent in areas outside the Cook region was of the S face of Aspiring, by D. Bennets and P. Moore.

WINTER 1972

Following the start of winter climbing in the Cook region in 1971 a small, close-knit group of about a dozen climbers began to notch up an impressive list of first winter ascents.

Bob Cunningham and Limbo Thompson achieved a long-awaited first in a Grand Traverse of the three peaks of Mount Cook early in July, following excellent snow-falls. The climb took two days to complete and was made via the W ridge-Linda route under excellent conditions.

The hypnotic S ridge of Cook received its first winter ascent at the hands of Graeme Dingle and Bryan Sissons, also in two days. Bill Denz and Al Jones climbed Mount Hicks for the first time in winter and then, after a bivouac, Denz continued on to solo the first winter ascent of Mount Dampier.

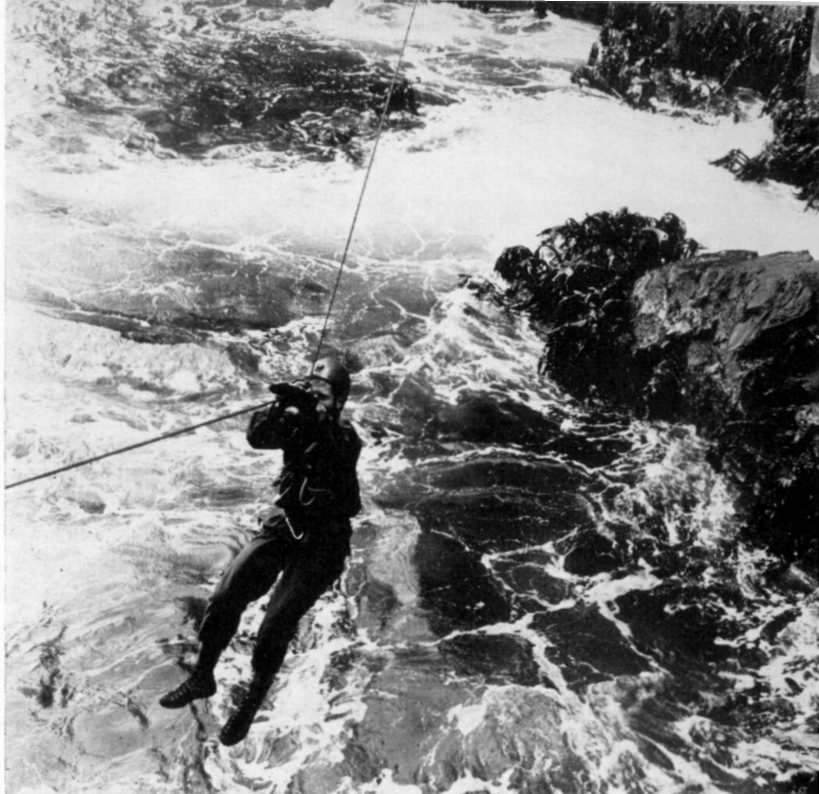
The second winter ascent of the impressive S face of Douglas (*AJ* 77 227) went to Stu Allen and three others.

The Sheila face on Cook was attempted and three very strong teams made several attempts to climb the icy E face of Cook. However, all were repulsed by storms.

Tragedy struck the winter scene at Mount Cook when Keith McIvor and Bill Hancks were killed in a fall from their bivouac site above the ice-cliffs on the Caroline face. McIvor was on the first winter ascent of Mount Tasman last year, and both were very experienced climbers.

AUSTRALIA 1972

Undoubtedly the ascent of the year was that made by Chris Dewhirst, Dave Neilson and Ian Ross when they climbed the 1200-ft virgin E face of Frenchman's Cap in Tasmania. The route, called Conquistador and graded 17 MS, went mostly free, with only two aid pitches on the whole route.



98 *Tasmanian sea-cliffs* Photo: C. Hocking

Several parties, consisting mainly of Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmanian climbers, were in the Federation and Frenchman's areas of Tasmania during the summer months and many new routes were put up. The most notable were: Carlyle (15) 900 ft on the NW face of Federation by K. Prinz and L. Close; Waterloo Road direct finish (16) by R. Pauligh and P. Canning and Napoleon (15) by P. Canning and A. Richardson, both in the Frenchman's Cap region.

Like Tasmania, great activity in all mainland states continues, with an unprecedented number of high-quality first ascents being put up during 1972 by a large number of up and coming leaders. A reflection of this activity was the appearance of eight guide-books during the year including guides to desert regions around Broken Hill, NSW and the Stirling Ranges of Western Australia, as well as the more popular areas of SE Australia.

Buffalo Gorge again drew the country's top climbers, and routes like Lord Gumtree (1050 ft, M7) by C. Dewhirst and P. McKeand and the Queen Victoria Route (1420 ft, 14M4) by the Gledhill brothers are amongst the many first ascents put up this year. The Gledhill brothers also added a direct finish to the famed Ozymandias which provides 210 ft (M4) of new route; sustained and spectacular.

Rick White continues to dominate the Queensland scene and is putting up extreme new routes on new cliffs around Mount Marson and at Frog Buttress



09 Climbing at Frog Buttress Photo: I. Paterson

every weekend. The true worth of John Ewbank's grading system is now being realised with the recent addition of a new upper grade—the magical '22', when Valhalla was climbed by R. White, R. Collett and T. Cais at Mount Marson. The third National Climbing Meet was held at Frog Buttress during May.

In the areas near Sydney, large numbers of extremely fine first ascents are being put up by climbers like Keith Bell, Bryden Allen, Jeff Morgan and Joe Friend. About six complete cliff lines were opened up during the year, with over one hundred first ascents being done in a remarkably short period.

Colossus (M6) on the Dogface main wall was repeated for the first time by J. Morgan and G. Mortimer, and K. Bell and R. Reynolds completed the second ascent of Gone with the Wind (18M5) in the Echo Point area near Katoomba, both very exacting aid climbs. Bryden Allen eliminated all the aid from John Ewbank's 'Kraken' at Wirindi and graded it 22. He then climbed the magnificent Janiceps (21) to check on the validity of Kraken's new grade and certainly found it a full grade harder.

There are too many fine first ascents being put up throughout Australia these days for me to do justice to a fraction of them in the space available in this Journal. However, *Thrutch* magazine continues to come out regularly and is trying to cope with the recording of this ever-expanding activity in both Australian and New Zealand climbing.