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Section 'Meeting'

This month's social get together is **7:30pm on Wednesday 10th August** at **Little George**

Have an event that you want to promote or review, a trip report or any section or club news? Get in touch with Michael Donovan, or post something directly to the Section's Slack channel #newsletter.

In this month's newsletter, Josh Knox reports on the Beginner Snowcraft Course held at Whakapapa Skifield, the trial of some new software for communicating is introduced and Michael Donovan reports on the Instructor Development Weekend at Temple Basin and a few of the recent happenings at local crags.

Beginner Snowcraft at Whakapapa

by Josh Knox

I couldn't escape from work early enough on Friday, in the back of the van lay my backpack, fully stocked with all I'd need to spend the weekend trekking around in the mountains and snow. I've spent a bit of time outdoors in different environments before, but wanted to take that next step and start challenging myself more regularly in the alpine environment. My next step towards that goal was to join the NZ alpine club on their snowcraft course and I just managed to grab a last minute spot and jumped at the chance to get out and learn, explore and meet others that were keen on getting out in the mountains during winter.

The weather forecast wasn't looking great, actually it looked pretty terrible, but you wouldn't have guessed that from talking to any of the people that I met at the shelter when I finally arrived around eight that night, the level of excitement was pretty contagious. I was one of the last to arrive and met with Mike and Ray, whom I'd spoken to briefly before when booking, and got issued with the gear I'd need for the weekend's adventures, cramp-ons, helmet, ice axe, transceiver and a few other bits and pieces necessary to explore the alpine environment safely. There was time for a few quick introductions and chats with the others as we shuffled cars without 4wd or chains down the hill, precaution for the coming weather and possibly expecting the roads to be closed by Sunday. There were five instructors and fifteen students, a big group, and all stoked to get up the hill and get into it.

The night was crisp, and the reduced visibility gave it that dreamlike feel as we headed out and up the hill to the hut. Head torches pierced the mist, as snow crunched underfoot and the yellow lights of the huts nearby added to the dreamtime quality of it all. I let it all sink in and marvelled at the fact that only that morning I had been near beaches and ocean and now here I was watching my breath hang heavy in the winter air as we crunched and climbed out way along. To be able to explore and experience so much in such a small area is one of the amazing things about New Zealand. It was a short walk to the hut and what we found there was certainly far more comfortable than I had ever imagined, Big clean dorm rooms, hot showers, a drying room for wet gear, and a large kitchen, dining and lounge upstairs, complete with warm fire blazing away of course. We settled in and had a meeting to formally meet the instructors and each other, and to discuss plans for the weekends training.



ABOVE: *Elliot O'Brien leading a class on walking in average conditions*

After getting a bit of an idea of the plans for the weekend it was time for chatting and keeping warm with cups of tea or port, before crashing out ready for the days ahead.

Next morning we were all up early and after some brekky and chat about the plan of action for the day, we decided to get out while the weather allowed and geared up and headed out the door. We ran through different methods and tips for getting around in the ice and snow and was good to be able to break up into smaller groups with the instructors to run through and practice different things. There was more rain, in a general horizontal direction, than snow, but we all got into it and it was really cool to see how eager everyone was to get involved, even through the less than perfect conditions. The beauty of the place shone through the rain and reduced visibility, and in some ways the weather even added to the setting, making it easy to imagine we were miles away trekking on some remote ridge, rather than fifty meters from the hut. After practicing a few things it was back inside for lunch, warming up and a few laughs. I think the amount of enthusiasm flowing through everyone really showed up after lunch, as the weather deteriorated even a little more and it was time to head back out. The jokes and high spirits carried all the way through pulling on wet and cold gear and leaving the warm hut behind.

We again got into the routine of learning and practicing as we simulated falls, self-arrests, different methods of climbing and running through different scenarios we may find ourselves in and how to deal with them. Splitting up into smaller groups again, we heading off for a bit of a walk and spent the rest of the afternoon exploring the areas around the hut and trying to find some suitable places to simulate some tricky situations. The weather stayed true to the forecast though and the rain settled into a steady stream and the wind whipped at clothing as we decided to call it a day and head back. A few of us did take time to stop outside the hut and take it all in though, the conditions were far from perfect, but we were still in this amazing place and there is a raw and natural beauty that I find humbling in conditions like this. Although admittedly it's easier to appreciate when there is a warm dry hut only a few steps away.

That night the instructors went to work in the kitchen and whipped up an amazing meal as we all sat down together to share dinner and stories of the day. I think that, especially in places like this, a communal meal, a few glasses of wine, and good company are just as much part of it, as getting out into the mountains themselves. To get a group of people all so stoked to be out and doing something they enjoy and challenging themselves and learning from each other is a pretty cool thing indeed and seems to be a big part of the alpine club in general. Later, looking over maps and chatting to the instructors about different trips and missions certainly opened my eyes to what was possible and set the imaginative and inspirational fires burning. I can't wait to get out and explore more and the opportunity to meet others and plan trips is a huge bonus of the course as well.

That night I could hear and feel the wind tugging at the hut and we awoke on the morning to a day much better suited to being surrounded by walls, a roof and a fire than outside, so we settled in to do some theory and had a chance to talk over what we had learned and go through some of the intricacies of gear, weather and details involved in planning trips. The level of instruction and enthusiasm on the part of the guys running the course was really amazing and I certainly learnt lot and it opened my eyes to a great overall experience of planning and carrying out trips.

Actually I think they can be held personally accountable for the upcoming time away from family and friends, money spent (or saved) on gear, and wandering train of thoughts at work that many of us may experience as we explore this amazing environment and get out and enjoy the endless things on offer here in New Zealand. Having travelled a bit personally I can honestly say it's one of the most naturally beautiful places I have been.

Huge thanks to the volunteers at the NZ Alpine Club for a great weekend away and all the time and knowledge shared, and everyone on the course as well. Met some really great people and looking forward to getting out climbing soon. Oh, and wouldn't you know it, as soon as it was time to head down from the hut, the rain stopped. Just long enough for us to get down the hill and to the Tussock for a beer and some food. All part of the plan I'm sure.



ABOVE: *All the keen participants standing still for the 2 mins it took to take a photo in the rather average conditions*

Introducing Slack

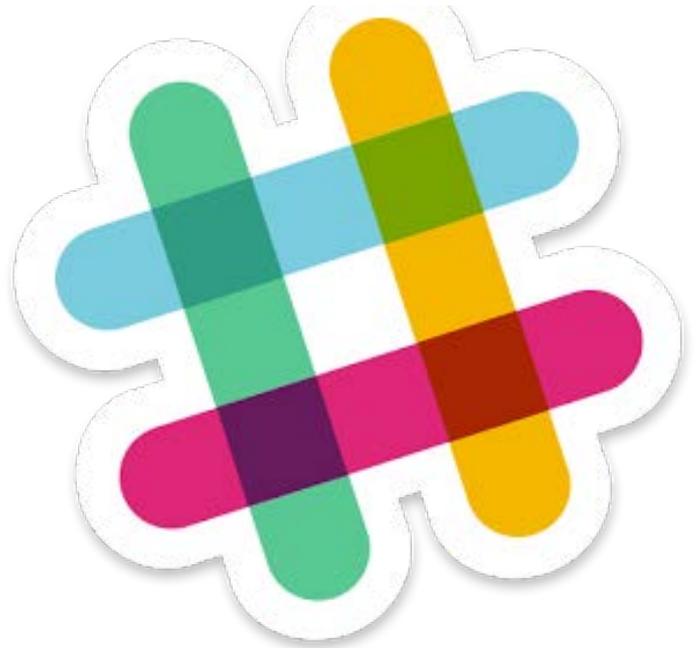
by Michael Donovan

As you hopefully know my now, we have a website, a Facebook Page and a Google Group. Well I'm young, and I like to pay attention to what's changing out there. Google Groups are rapidly becoming outdated, and Facebook isn't working out for many. So let me introduce Slack. Auckland's using it so why shouldn't we?

<http://www.slack.com/>

It's still early days, and I've so far only set up a few channels for the handful of people that have being invite. If you are after an invite, send me an email at mrdonovan@outlook.com, txt me on 02102391332, or message me on Facebook.

Now Pete Cammell, I'm still waiting on my invite to the Auckland Section's Slack...



Public Service Announcements

Wharapapa Crags Warning:

Visitors to crags in the Wharepapa region: If you're climbing at a crag on farmland, please don't take your dog with you, or park your car in front of a gate. Don't leave rubbish at the crag, leave gates open, or drive your 4WD across paddocks.

Trip Dates

Mt. Arapiles 22nd August to 4th September 2016:

We currently have 10 climbers for the early season Mt Arapiles trip departing in under a fortnight. It's not too late to join, Victorians are volunteering cars to assist with the Kiwi's transport. Get in touch with Michael Donovan for details. All welcome, we currently have sub 10 climbers through to high 20 climbers on the trip, with a number looking to learn to learn trad.

Kawakawa Bay 8th to 9th October 2016:

A number of Kawakawa regulars are heading off on epic dirtbag adventures so come along to a way to early in the season trip to Kawakawa Bay. Will run in Michael's standard format; trad racks get free passage on Jock's boat, then those that pay up in alcohol can get their gear on as well. And maybe there'll be a few seats left. Again, talk to Michael Donovan.

South Island 26th December 2016 to 10th February 2017:

I'm heading to the South Island for just over a month leaving Boxing Day. I have an epic schedule planned and if you are looking at Paynes Ford, Charleston, Arthurs Pass, Castle Hill, Wanaka or the Darrans, get in touch. You must know who with by now.

Instructor Development Weekend, Temple Basin

by Michael Donovan

Every year each Sections Snowcraft instructors are invited down to Temple Basin, Arthurs Pass for a weekend of refreshing and developing their instructions skills. This year Michael Greer, Marcus Bai, Elliot O'Brien, Simon Aiken and Gareth Riches made the trip down thanks to the section and national's support. Instructors from Auckland and Wellington also attended under the guidance of a number of excellent Alpine 2 guides. We split into small groups of 4 or 5 for a weekend of practical workshops on snowcraft (with a notable lack of snow). Despite epic plans being made for the Monday to tick off some classic routes around Arthur's Pass, the weather closed in and we instead took a look at the world class bouldering at Castle Hill, by attempting some of the spicy sport routes on naked bolt.



ABOVE: *Heading back down towards Temple Basin. With a pitiful amount of snow around.*

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