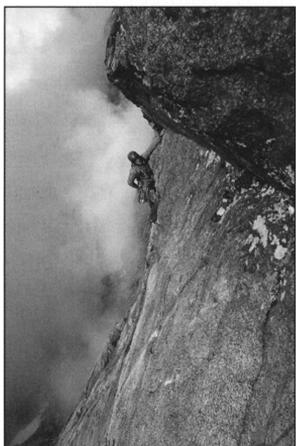


New Zealand

AUTUMN 2006-AUTUMN 2007



Mayan Smith-Gobat during the first free ascent of Shadowlands (27), Sinbad Gully Headwall, Fiordland. Craig Jefferies



Derek Thatcher on the fourth pitch (24) of an as-yet-unnamed 11-pitch route on the upper Kaipo Wall, Darran Mountains, Fiordland. Craig Jefferies

The Darran Mountains, summary. The alpine and rock climbing region of the Darran Mountains (Fiordland) continues to be the area of New Zealand that is generating the most climbing news and new routes of note. In late 2006 the New Zealand Alpine Club published Craig Jefferies' new guidebook to the Darrans. The guidebook's 312 pages capture more than a decade's worth of new route activity since the last edition, as well as revealing the enormous scope for new climbs that this region still provides.

A Hillary Expedition grant from the Government organisation SPARC enabled a group of (mostly young) and highly motivated individuals to make some major first ascents this summer. The "Rock Solid Progression" team of Kester Brown, Craig Jefferies, Paul Rogers, Mayan Smith-Gobat, and Derek Thatcher pooled their talents to make the first free ascent of Shadowlands (27) on the remote Sinbad Gully headwall, near Mitre Peak. This sustained 300m route has multiple pitches of hard climbing, including three of 27 and two of 26.

Following this, they helicoptered onto the Ngapunatoru ice plateau and rappelled into the isolated 1,300m Kaipo Wall, adding the first new route since the 1974 first ascent. The team rappelled to a shelf at the base of the upper wall, placing bolt belays, and then Smith-Gobat and Thatcher climbed back out via 11 pitches of varied and often difficult, committing climbing up to grade 25. The first ascent of the Kaipo Wall was made by Graham Dingle, Mike Gill, and Murray Jones, who reached the base from the Hollyford River by raft, kayak, and foot. The three then climbed the entire 1,300m face from the valley floor via a prominent corner/ramp in the upper section. The crux pitch was 17.

Early in the summer Smith-Gobat and Thatcher teamed with the 2006 CMC/Macpac Mountaineer of the Year, Jonathon Clearwater, for a quick and inspired first ascent on the northwest face of an iconic Darrans mountain, Sabre Peak (2,162m). Tora Tora Tora (24) takes a direct line up the face right of the Original Line and was established on sight, ground up and with no fixed protection. It is the first new route on the

face in over 20 years.

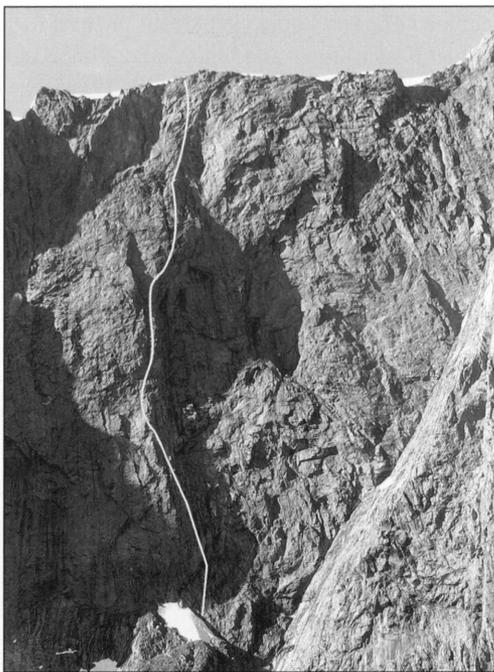
Closer to the climbing base at the Homer Hut, a four-pitch project on the Mate's Little Brother was completed to give the hardest alpine free climb in the Darrans: Armageddon (21,

28, 28, 25). This powerful route climbs directly through the Second Coming roofs and was redpointed by Stefan Hadfield and Derek Thatcher.

The Barrier Face (Gertrude Valley) saw a new five-pitch line established 200m right of Joker by Sam Bossard and Al Ritchie. Scramble (18, 18, 20, 18, 22) was bolted and climbed over several days. Late March saw two new routes added to the northeast face of Barrier Knob by Kristen Foley and Mark Watson. Utu (25, 22, 24) is the hardest line on Barrier Knob and features intricate slab and face climbing, while Forgotten Silver (16, 18, 20) climbs a sweep of nicely featured rock. Both routes were bolted and climbed over four days.

New route activity continues at Babylon with the pace driven by Bruce Dowrick and Jon Sedon. Attention has recently turned to the reportedly Arapiles-like Little Babylon, a very promising cave above Babylon. A number of new routes were completed.

MARK WATSON, *New Zealand Alpine Club*



The upper half of the isolated 1,300m Kaipo Wall in the Darran Mountains. The as-yet-unnamed 11-pitch route climbed in 2006 is marked. The only other route on the wall climbs its full height, finishing up the prominent rightward sloping ramp. *Derek Thatcher/NZAC*

Queenstown region, summary. Winter saw the development of Cigar Creek in the Eyre Mountains as an ice climbing venue. A few new routes were established. Johnny Davison and Rupert Gardiner made first ascents of Kapa O Panga (WI 5) and the Cold Light of Day (WI 4+), the latter reportedly fell down soon after being climbed! Davison and Andy Mills climbed Balloons and Knives (WI 4), with Mills taking a huge whipper off the top of the route, narrowly missing the ground. Dave Bolger climbed a potentially classic 60m moderate, Divine Symmetry (WI 3), and a second route he named Hybrid (WI 3+). In South Wye Valley Adrian Camm and Mal Haskins put up Bush Lawyer (WI 4), while in great early season conditions Bolger and Rupert Gardiner climbed a new route on the southwest face of Double Cone in the Remarkables. The route follows mixed terrain and is called Warthog.

MARK WATSON, *New Zealand Alpine Club*

Barron Saddle – Mt. Brewster Region, summary. With plums still to be picked, this extensive and remote mountain tract between the Aoraki Mt. Cook and Mt. Aspiring areas has seen continued activity from a motivated few. Guidebook author Ross Cullen teamed up with Nick Shearer to make the first ascent of the East Ridge of Mt. Hiwiroa (2,281m), a seven-hour scramble. Paul Hersey with various partners has made number of notable first ascents. During winter he