New Zealand 1987

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Highlights of 1987 include the continued activity by solo climbers, new winter ascents, a successful international climbing meeting, the continued widespread interest in rock climbing, and New Zealand mountaineering successes overseas.

Throughout the summer season the weather thwarted many plans. However, John Fantini continued his innovative and fast solo ascents of Mt Cook, completing 10 ascents in one season, including one new route and the first solo of 'White Dreams' on the S face. Fantini now has the most recorded ascents of Mt Cook, numbering 22.

Other important ascents included Carol McDermott's solo ascent of the Caroline face of Mt Cook in 7½ hours; Steve Elder's first ascent of the N face of Mt Sefton; Nick Cradock's second solo ascent of the Balfour face of Mt Tasman, and an ascent of the Caroline face of Mt Cook by Maryann Waters and Mike Roberts. This was the first ascent of this notorious face by a woman since it was first climbed nearly 20 years ago.

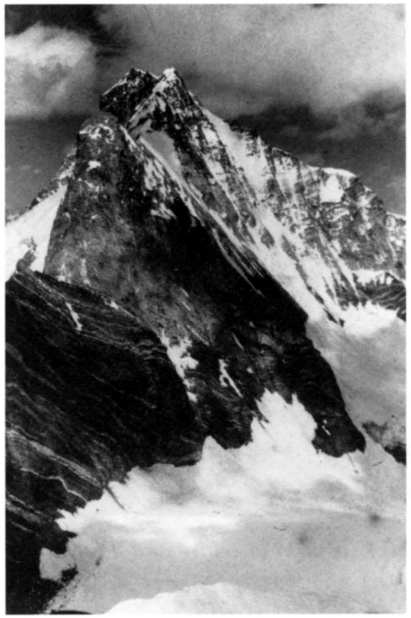
In late summer (March) New Zealand held its first international climbing meeting which was attended by over 70 people from 12 different countries. Europe was well represented with teams from France, Britain, Germany, Russia and Spain. Although the weather was bad for most of the 14-day period, over 30 climbers managed ascents of Mt Cook by a variety of different routes.

There was the normal amount of climbing carried out elsewhere in the Southern Alps, but no exceptional routes were claimed. In the Darrens region Murray Judge and friends have managed to climb some very impressive free routes on the Fiordland granite.

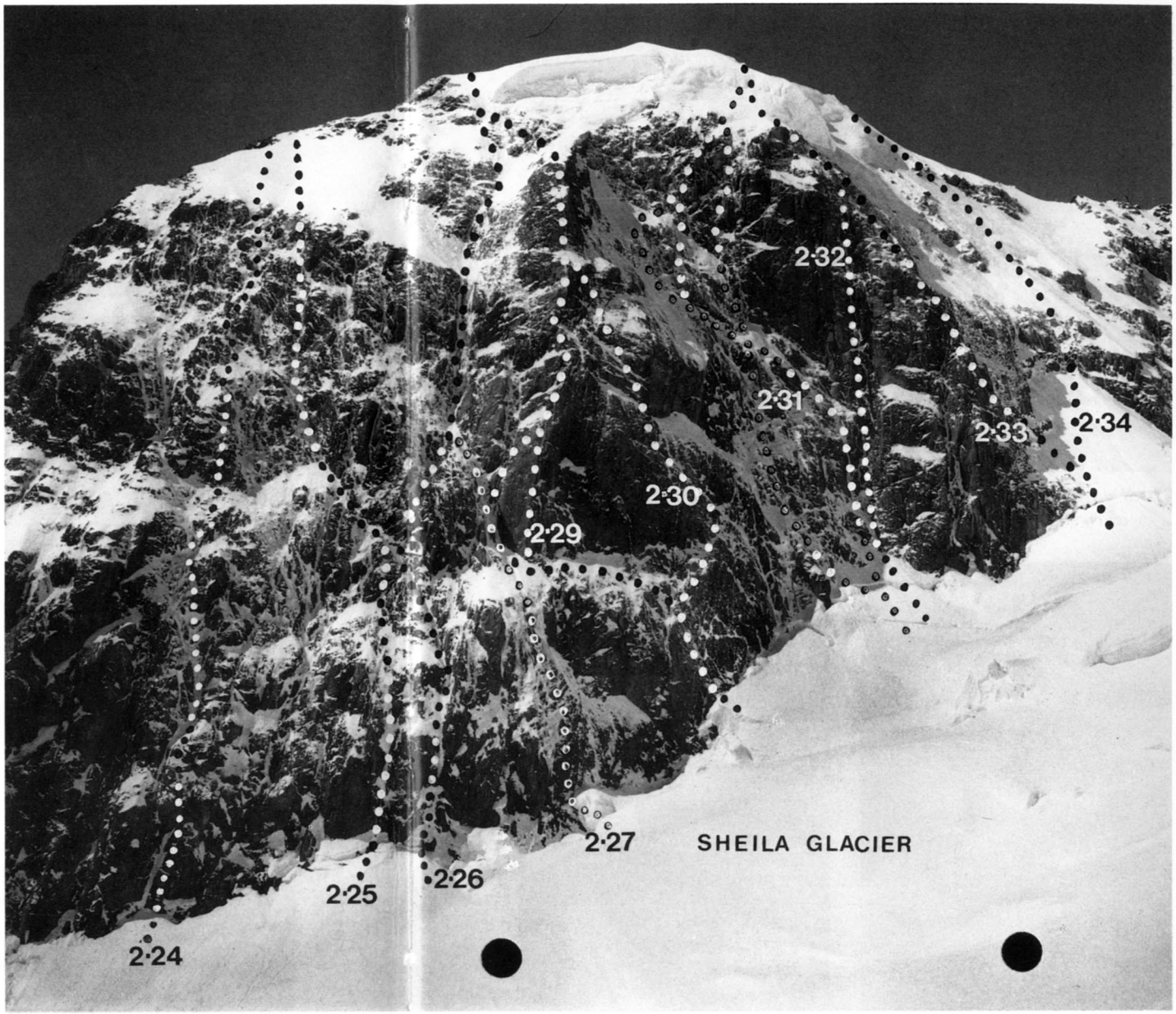
Although winter climbing is still very much for the minority, some good ascents were recorded. Bill McLeod continued to show his experience and very careful planning with the first winter solo of the Balfour face of Mt Tasman, and the Yankee/Kiwi couloir of Mt Hicks. This last route is an 800m grade 6 ribbon of vertical ice and rock, graded harder than the Balfour face. Joined by Steve Elder he also completed the first winter ascent of Logan's Run on the S face of Mt Hicks. Steve comments, 'the climb was superb, steep and sustained. 11 pitches in total. The top ice-fields were climbed unroped by torchlight. I received mild frostbite in both big toes on the descent, with a windchill temperature down to −30°C.'

New Zealand rock-climbing standards continue to improve. Many of the top climbers have now been around for some time, and most have considerable overseas experience gained from such places as Arapiles in Australia, Yosemite, and the Verdon Gorge in France. The influx of visiting top overseas climbers including Kim Carrigan helps to push local standards continually higher.

The increased standard of climbing in New Zealand has also helped to contribute to the success of New Zealand mountaineers overseas. In the



89. *Phabrang (6172m), SW face.*



90. *The S face of Mt Hicks. (2.27, Yankee–Kiwi couloir: 'an 800m ribbon of ice and rock'; 2.32, Logan's Run: '. . . superb, steep and sustained. 11 pitches in total'.)*

Himalaya, New Zealand mountaineers made two ascents of 8000m mountains. These were important ascents because, although NZ mountaineers had previously climbed 8000m mountains, they were always part of an overseas-organized expedition. The ascents of Xixabangma and Gasherbrum 2 were made solely by NZ-organized expeditions.

Further afield, in Patagonia, Nick Cradock and Russell Braddock made very impressive ascents, within a few days of each other, of both Cerro Torre and Fitzroy. Elsewhere, NZ mountaineers enjoyed successes in Peru, Bolivia, USSR (Pamir), India (Gangotri) and in Africa (Ruwenzori).