
RICHARD THOMPSON

New Zealand 1993

The major focus of activity shifted from the high peaks of the **Mt Cook** region during 1993, with few of the classic faces, such as the Balfour and Hidden faces of **Tasman** even being repeated.

Rather, it was the valleys lying just to the south of Mt Cook village, the Mueller, Dobson and Hopkins, that attracted most attention. More attentive than anyone was the incomparable Bill McLeod, who put up 15 new routes, both in this region and further afield, many of which rank with the finest in the Southern Alps.

Hopkins Region

Vampire Peak (2623m) Although above the Mueller glacier, Vampire has been included in the Hopkins area for this review. On the E face, with Brian Alder, McLeod climbed *Nosferatu*, and with Andy MacFarlane *Bram Stoker*. The former is a particularly fine 14-pitch ice gully, comparable to Hick's S face routes.

Mt Sealey (2639m) *Prime Time* is an 800m rock route on the S face, climbed by McLeod and Peter Dickson. A better climb than Hick's N face central buttress, claims McLeod. On the same wall, but climbing to the peaks of **Jean** and **Marie** further west, McLeod climbed two more routes, the latter with Ross Cullen.

Mt Hopkins (2676m) One of the finest and most neglected peaks of the Southern Alps, to which McLeod has added two outstanding lines. The S ridge is so obvious, the dominant feature of the upper Hopkins valley, it seems incredible it was not climbed years ago. McLeod completed it with Dickson. In winter McLeod returned alone, struggling for several days through deep soft snow to reach the bottom of the SW face. *Gormenghast* is a formidable achievement. McLeod, who has soloed many of the test pieces of the Southern Alps, rated it as among the more gripping experiences of his career.

Mt McKerrow (2650m) Also in winter McLeod climbed the obvious line direct from valley floor to summit: *Orinoco Flow*.

Mt Percy Smith (2465m) On this landmark of colonial nomenclature (Stephenson Percy Smith was a 19th century surveyor-general and inventor of the 'great fleet' myth of Maori migration) McLeod and Dickson climbed on the S face. *On the Dark Shore* is a 23-pitch rock route with a crux of grade 17. Many New Zealand climbers were completely unaware even of the existence of the face until the completion of this route.

Westland

Mt Unicorn (2560m) On the very fine Strauchon face Bill McLeod and Peter Dickson did the rock route *Classical Gas* (rock, cruxes of 16).

Mt La Perouse (3081m) *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* climbs the very steep ice on the S face. McLeod and Brian Alder bivouacked twice to complete the route.

'Kupe Peak' A small rock peak below the icefall of the Balfour glacier (visible on the spine of the Mt Cook guidebook). *Sinusoidal Ridge* (16), *Captain Incredible and the Naked Dancing Girls* and *Kupe Direct* (19) were climbed by Tony Ward Holmes, Bryan Moore and Erik 'the flatmate from hell'.

Darran Mountains

Cirque Creek confirmed its status as the pre-eminent ice-climbing venue in the country. *Southern Man* (Alan Uren and Clinton Beaven) and *Squealing* (Dave Vass and Paul Rogers) take lines on the lower wall of **Mt Crosscut**. The latter especially approaches the virtuosity of Scottish ice.