

Kawakawa Bay Climbing Trip

Mark Smith

The nz-cni-climbers group gets together weekly for climbing. This year, we're gonna do a monthly weekend trip throughout the summer. Most of the trips planned for the summer will be overnight trips on the first weekend of the month.

The weekend of Saturday 2012-12-01, Norbert Abel, Michael Greer, Paul Field, Gerard Tarr, Andres and Maria Sarcevic, and Mark Ashurst all found their way out to [Kawakawa Bay](#) in [Lake Taupo](#). This fine climbing area had been in my sights for a while. It included a bunch of travel to get to it and was rumored to have a wide selection of fantastic and scenic climbs. No one went away disappointed!

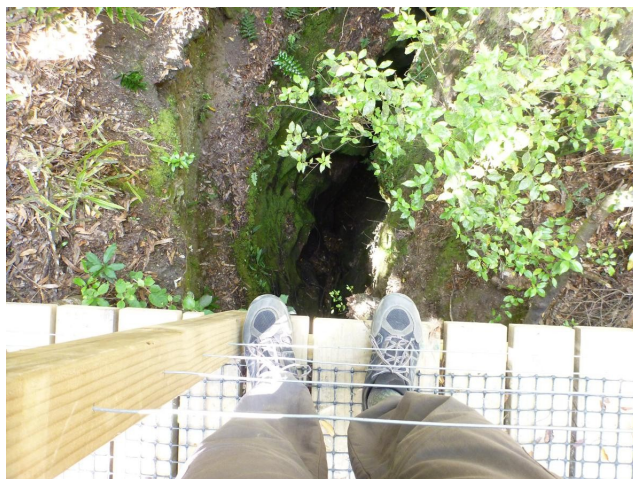
In addition, this crag recently had a bike path extension built out to to it ([Great Lake Trail](#)). It is completely adequate for hiking or for a mountain bike ride near to the crag. Norbert and I decided to go via mountain bike. I can't speak for Norbert, but frankly, I had never did a combination biking/camping/climbing trip and was intrigued by it.



The forecast was decent for the weekend with the weather was being more iffy on Sunday. I should learn to pay less attention to forecasts though. The Greercast¹™ was more accurate. A local that we ran into confirmed this. This is a good thing as we stayed through mid day on Sunday and had some mighty fine climbing that day too.

After a two hour drive to get to a parking lot, we jumped on our bikes and rode another 1.5 hours. I freely admit we were going slowly and enjoying the ride. More than once I found myself grinning from ear to ear. We rode through pine forests, across dusty trails, recent slips, up and down bumps, and across bridges (one was spanning a chasm where I couldn't see the bottom clearly).

¹ Michael Greer, get it?



After this effort we reached the campsite. We weren't quite at the crag, but we could see one of them from there. Gerard, who stays there quite regularly put it succinctly when he answered my question about which way to the crag. He answered, everywhere. And indeed there were a great many crags in the area with differing flavours of rock. Yum.



Gerard was great (thanks!) Once we arrived and finished ogling the beauty in the area. We grabbed our gear and started hiking in the last 15 minutes to go and touch some rock. Our first point of contact would be The Point. On the way we took note of the recent failure of the development cave. This was a place where folks could go and stay out of the environment. There was someone in there at the time of the slide, but luckily, there was enough notice and he was not injured!

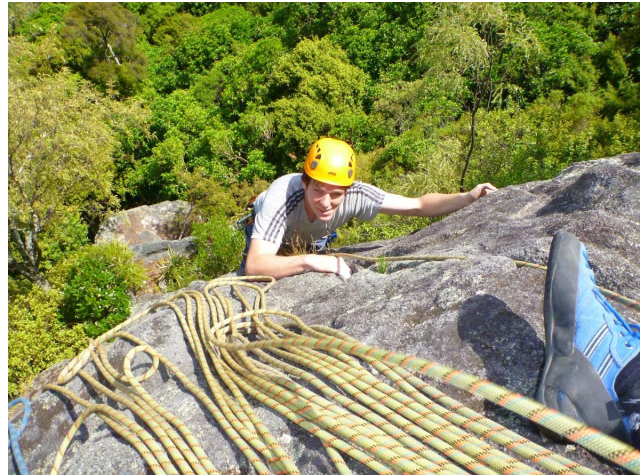
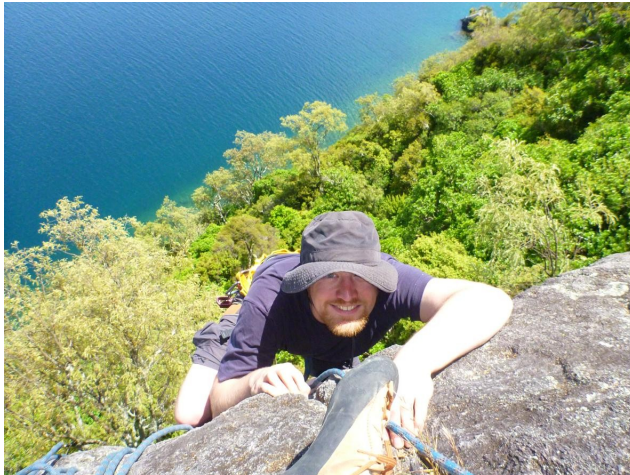




After trekking through some interesting structures, we were greeted by some familiar faces. Paul and Michael had gotten there earlier. Mike had hiked in Friday night so as to make the best of the available time. Paul actually lives down the road— lucky bastard.

The first port of call for myself, Andres and Norbert was to run a rope up Mellow Yellow around the corner from where these two fine chaps were. The structure of the climb is give three pitches, but for three people this was a lot of effort and we made it into two. The pitches were short enough. Oh, and

such fantastic seating for top belaying. Such comfort! Here is Norbert and Andres trying to sneak up on me.



The second pitch was tall enough that it would have impossible to abseil off without a longer rope. A wonderful expanse of the Kawakawa Bay was visible.

After we all got safely off the climb I toyed around with Sunday School which got my pucker factor up a bit. All good fun.



The day was still young and my energy level still high so it was off to the next climb. Norbert had high hopes for High Hope. It is a recommended climb and I can see why. The panoramic vista of the bay, Mount Ruapehu, and, well, everything was fantastic. The rock required a little daring, but she gave as much as she took. The rock was really gritty which really helped. The first belay station was a darling little 20cm ledge. It's a good thing that I like Norbert!

Climbing up from there was more of the same. The last protection, to my eye, seemed quite a far distance from the top, but there was plenty of room below to fall and lots of good reason not too on the way up to the top double anchor. Once again, the view was fantastic.



One thing we should all be more careful of though is the sun. Gosh, it was strong. I should have put more sunblock on, but I didn't have too many problems due to it. The evening came and climbing had to come to a stop. Before sleep though, we went to check out Cracks Wall. It was very pleasing to the eye and a great place to watch the sun go down.



Somewhere along the line, I had gotten in touch with my wife at home and while I was on the line with her I asked her to check the updated weather from METS. Mets was still calling for drizzly stuff by 7am. After some consultation, Norbert and I decided to blast out in the morning in case the bike trail got all muddied up. It was going to be mostly uphill on the way out and we were concerned.

By this time, I was sweaty and filthy from the days activities. I could no longer resist the draw of fresh cold water on my skin. The dip was longer than I

probably should have been, and I'm not usually a cold water fan, but gosh darn, that was great.

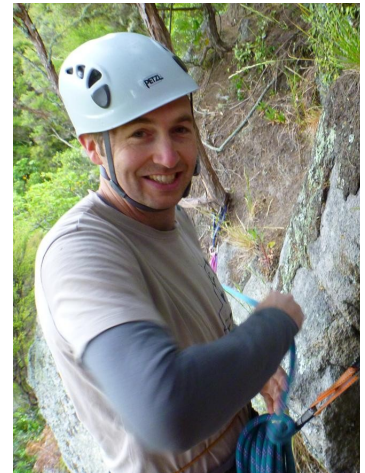
We had some good ole fashion campfire cooking and some very pleasant conversation. It wasn't too hot, nor too cold. There weren't many bugs and everything went swimmingly.

The morning came and the rain still hadn't materialized. By the time we had eaten and broken down camp, the expected cold front hadn't arrived yet. A local runner stopped by and talked about the weather and he agreed with the Greercast™ that it didn't seem right that it was going to rain just now. Since we were already at the rock, it only made sense to do just a little more, right?



Right! Cracks Wall it is. We marched up the hill ready to have some more fun. First stop was Outboard Crack and some natural pro. I'm not a trad guy so Michael showed us the way.

I followed leaving every other pro in, and Mark Ashurst followed me cleaning up the rest. Poor Michael. Here is a picture of how much suffering he is doing up on the wall. And Mark too with his patented tongue camera greeting.



Finally, it was time to go. I think we can all agree that this was a quite a successful weekend. I met some new friends and others met old ones who happened to be at the crag along with our group.

The trail was still really dusty on the way home. Unfortunately, it was mostly uphill on the way back. The entire ride is about 10.5km so it was about 10.5km uphill. The return trip highlighted the weather coming in over the lake so apparently we timed it pretty well. You could see the rain on the other side as it



gradually obscured the shores. The wind made beautiful blue on blue patterns in the water constantly rippling.



Norbert and I arrived nackered at the trailhead. Well, I can speak for myself anyway. Norbert still had some more oomph in him, but I was about out of it. Michael had left on foot about 20 minutes before us and arrived at the trailhead at about the same time, but he had admitted that he had walked as fast as he could. We all sat around and had a much liked lunch from the boot and then it was time to leave. Only another two hours later and a lot of rain from the comfort of the inside of my car and we were home!



I know some folks are going down to NZAC Otago Makarora climbing camp in January of next year. For those of not fortunate enough to be going to the South Island at that time there will be another climbing day trip to Waipapa Dam on Saturday 2013-01-05. Apparently, there are some sport routes about 15 minutes into the walkway. I can vouch for the fact that there is some beautiful rock not too far into the track; I've touched rock there. As a side issue, I also hear that there is a pretty good fruits leftover from the dam construction workers' orchid up some secret stairs. I'm keen to take a walk.

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<https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/nz-cni-climbers>