



# THE FOX VIEW

ALPINE GUIDES FOX GLACIER

ISSUE 3 / SUMMER 2004/05

## alpine guides celebrates 30 years



Alpine Guides Base 1975



Alpine Guides Base Now

This year is the 30th for Alpine Guides Fox Glacier. The company started in October 1974 with a capital of \$4000 paid up to 25c in the dollar. Mike Browne and his new wife Carrol returned from Canada to start the business when Mary Kerr decided to relinquish the guiding which had been carried out by the Fox Hotel. The company's initial shareholders were the Brownes, Mary Kerr, Gavin Wills and Dooley Coxhead but it is now owned solely by Mike and Carrol Browne.



Mike & Carrol Browne 1974



Mike & Carrol Browne 2004

When the company started a Half Day Glacier walk cost \$1.25 and a pair of boots cost \$12.00. Tourism in those early years was dominated by the big tour companies of Newmans, Tiki Tours and Trans tours and the long suffering bus drivers would grind their teeth as the hobnail boot clad people ground glacier grit into the bus carpets. Alpine Guides could only afford a small clapped out Ford Transit van so there was no alternative.

Over the years the company has dealt with advances and retreats of the glacier, floods, economic booms and recessions, high and low interest rates, the constant battle to keep the Bedford buses running and hundreds of guides and sales staff have left their mark on it.

It has mostly been great fun and, rather to the surprise of the owners, Alpine Guides is now quite a substantial company with over sixty staff, housing for about fifty people and a turnover of millions of dollars. For Mike and Carrol the best part of it all has been the interaction and fun that they have had with the young, and not so young, people who have worked for the company and contributed their ingenuity and spirit. Thirty years has passed in a flash.

## yes the glacier is advancing

Glacier guides have reported an advancing surge has noticeably affected the whole 7km length of the glacier's trunk, with Guided Parties enjoying an increased number of glacier noises like pops, grinds and groans and also visible movements.



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## staff training 2004

Despite the challenges imposed by our favourite friend Mother Nature, four successful and very different training courses were organised by Lead Guide Marius Bron, ably assisted by his deputy Abel Roche.

The three day stage one of new guides training, encompassed amongst other things ice skills, hazard identification and group management and is followed up with training days on specific trips and mentoring by senior guides.

Year 2 or more guides, preparing to sit their final NZMGA Glacier Guides qualification trained with UIAGM guide, Shaun Norman and Aspirant Climbing Guide Andy Fullerton at Pioneer Hut. They got to hone their white out navigational skills in real life conditions! The others met the challenges of ice climbing, crevasse rescue and cliff rescue evacuations on the Fox and Franz glaciers and got rather wet at times.

Senior guides and owner Mike Browne went comparative shopping in Queenstown to see how other adventure tourism operators do things. They managed to flip their raft on the Shotover River, try the Via Ferrata operated by one time Alpine Guides guide Dave McLeod and endure the rantings and yarns of the old boys.



## letting out the seams

Hilary Cave retired from Alpine Guides four years ago after fourteen years with the company and in those years she helped to steer it through the most trying growing pains. She used to have a recurring dream that the Alpine Guides building blew up due to the pressure of people in it and the energy they generated. So over the years the bottom half of our base was extended, first forward and then backward, and meanwhile the office space upstairs shrunk accordingly, relatively speaking. "Excuse me! Excuse me!" was what the office staff spent their days saying as they inhaled deeply to squeeze by each other. Now finally the office space has tripled in size, by some ingenious extensions of walls into ceilings. Our Fraemohs building has been excellent, warm, easy to adapt to our growth, and it has helped to establish the character of our business. All upstairs workers now have a very comfortable work station to call their own.

Similarly, the tiny office at The Glacier Shop has become an OSH hazard as there was barely room in it to breathe. So a nice new office has been added and the SCUBA gear has been laid to rest.



Staff & Peter MacCormack opening the new Alpine Guides building December 1985



# alpine guides retail comes of age

The significant contribution that Alpine Guides retail makes to the success of the business, has been recognised by a major rebranding of the three shops and the introduction of the exciting IceFox range of t-shirts, designed especially for Alpine Guides customers. "We have always aimed to make our shops the best of their type in New Zealand and we work very hard in the pursuit of that goal," says Carrol Browne, whose job it is to lead the retail side of Alpine Guides.

Design work has been done by Grant and Mandy Nelson and Emma Le Heron, of G&A Nelson and Glen Stringer and Jo Crompton, artists at Global Culture, the firm that will do the printing. Both firms are in Christchurch and they were chosen because of the high quality work that they do. We think we have some fine designs and have created fashion garments that celebrate the the area.



## the hobnail shop



The Hobnail Shop, which is in the Alpine Guides building at Fox Glacier, is under the stewardship of Krissy Mitchell who has been with the company since 1997. No task is too large or small for this one time Lyttelton lass who very competently leads a team of delightful young women who have become known over the years as "The Dorises". Our Dorises take the terms "multi-tasking" and "lateral thinking" to new levels and to just watch them perform at peak times exhausts you.



*Kaye, Krissy, Susie*

## the glacier shop



The Glacier Shop, in the Alpine Adventure Centre at Franz Josef, was added to the fleet in 1997. Kimmy Nolan is the manager there and she is ably supported by Jude, Maureen, Raima Joy and Rana. Her idea of a great shop is one where the staff, customers and anyone who has anything to do with the shop, have a lot of fun. On one memorable occasion Kimmy was showing a customer a rather expensive gold bracelet and when the customer said he would like to buy it Kimmy said "You would? All of it?"



*Kimmy Nolan*

## flights gallery



Flights Gallery (formerly Flights of Fancy – the Gallery Shop) in the Glacier Southern Lakes Helicopters building at Franz Josef is the baby of the Alpine Guides shops. Joan Spinks directs it with the skill and sensitivity of a world class maestro. Joan's enthusiasm for the ingenuity and talent of New Zealand artists and producers is equally matched by her team of Mo, Rose and Em who are as proud of this shop as she is. Our customers often comment that "Flights" is the nicest shop they have been in, not only New Zealand but anywhere! Modest we aren't.



*Joan Spinks*

## alpine guides conservation efforts recognised



In September, The Department of Conservation (DOC) held a small ceremony in order to present three awards to recognise West Coasters who have made a difference because of their contribution to conservation on the West Coast. Alpine Guides owners, Mike and Carrol Browne and their staff, were the recipients of one of these awards. Over the years Alpine Guides staff have volunteered their time to maintain the historic Chancellor Hut which is located on a shelf above the Fox Glacier. The company also assists DOC with rock fall monitoring in the glacier valley and in helping to evacuate the public in an extreme weather event. Mike Browne says that it is nice to have their efforts acknowledged and they enjoy the partnership with DOC.



*1931 – Frank Alack – Guide*

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And presenting the  
**Alpine Guides Staff**  
 for 2004-2005 or most of them...



*Alpine Guides staff for 2004-2005 with new elected Westland Mayor Maureen Pugh and builder extraordinaire John Pugh*

We warmly welcome to the Guiding Staff at Alpine Guides ...

James Griffiths	Nigel Reid	Jaya Marr	Steve Mackie	Jason Ridley
Ruth Van Aalst	Jason Kelman	Martin Hess	Peate Savage	Natalie van der Hulst (Natalie used to be a Doris!)

... and to the Sales Staff:

Karen Pelletier	Rebecca Peate	Julia Monachan
Rosemary Brownie	Em Strickland	Patricia Santos



*Mike Browne on  
Mt Everest 1977*

## message from mike to our suppliers

We really appreciate the loyalty to us that a lot of fine companies have shown over the years. They are too numerous to mention but, as an example, Contiki Tours started with us when they were formed over twenty-five years ago. Every tour since then has done a glacier walk unless the weather prevented it. We would not have a business without companies like this, so many thanks to you all for thirty years of great support.

We would also like to acknowledge the companies that have supplied our retail with products over the years, through good times and bad. Special mention needs to be made of MF Hunter Holdings, who carried us through our most trying times back in the mid 80's after Mike's accident.

We would also like to acknowledge the patience of our fine sons, Patrick and Peter. Seven day tourism businesses can be all consuming at times. During the hard times the support of our parents was also much appreciated.

## hollywood here we come

On Saturday, 30 October 2004, the staff of Alpine Guides gathered together and rolled out the red carpet to celebrate the "world premiere in Fox Glacier" of the 'Adventure Guide' programme on TV One. This starred four of our guides Abel Roche, Craig Cardie, Tracey Bean and Richard Harthern. The brain child of Craig, the plot had the cast follow the life of a snowflake from its lofty beginnings high up in the snowy catchment area of New Zealand's highest peaks, followed it's journey down the West Coast's longest glacier and then, via the milky and turbulent waters of the Fox and Cook Rivers, to it's explosive entry into the Tasman Sea.

The programme grabbed us viewers and showcased to the world the magnificent mountain scenery of the West Coast.

## chancellor dome heli-trek

Since the programme has aired, Alpine Guides has seen an increase in the number of enquiries and bookings for their guided Chancellor Dome Heli-Trek. Many previous clients have said that the trip was the highlight of their visit to New Zealand and in some cases, their life!

The Chancellor Dome Heli-Trek allows people to gain a taste of what mountaineering is all about. After an exciting helicopter flight to the historic Chancellor Hut, perched above the Fox Glacier, you ascend through alpine tussock and between rocky bluffs to the snowline. From the snowline you continue across a small glacier and up a moderate snow face to a ridge which winds its way up to the rocky summit where the view of the Southern Alps is breathtaking. You then return to the hut, whereupon you can relax with a glass of wine and enjoy the sunset while your guide prepares dinner. For the client all play, no work – sort of!

The next day there is the option of descending to the main Fox Glacier to try your hand at ice climbing, or just enjoying the peace of the alpine meadows.

## and the little one said move over

Not a song to be sung at Alpine Guides Fox Glacier! Four new flats were added to the staff accommodation collection over the past winter making 6 more bedrooms available. Bedrooms for staff now total 53 over a range of houses and flats.



*To all and one we wish you a happy festive season and good health, success and happiness in 2005.  
 Mike and Carrol Browne and the staff of Alpine Guides Fox Glacier*

ALPINE GUIDES  
 FOX GLACIER

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