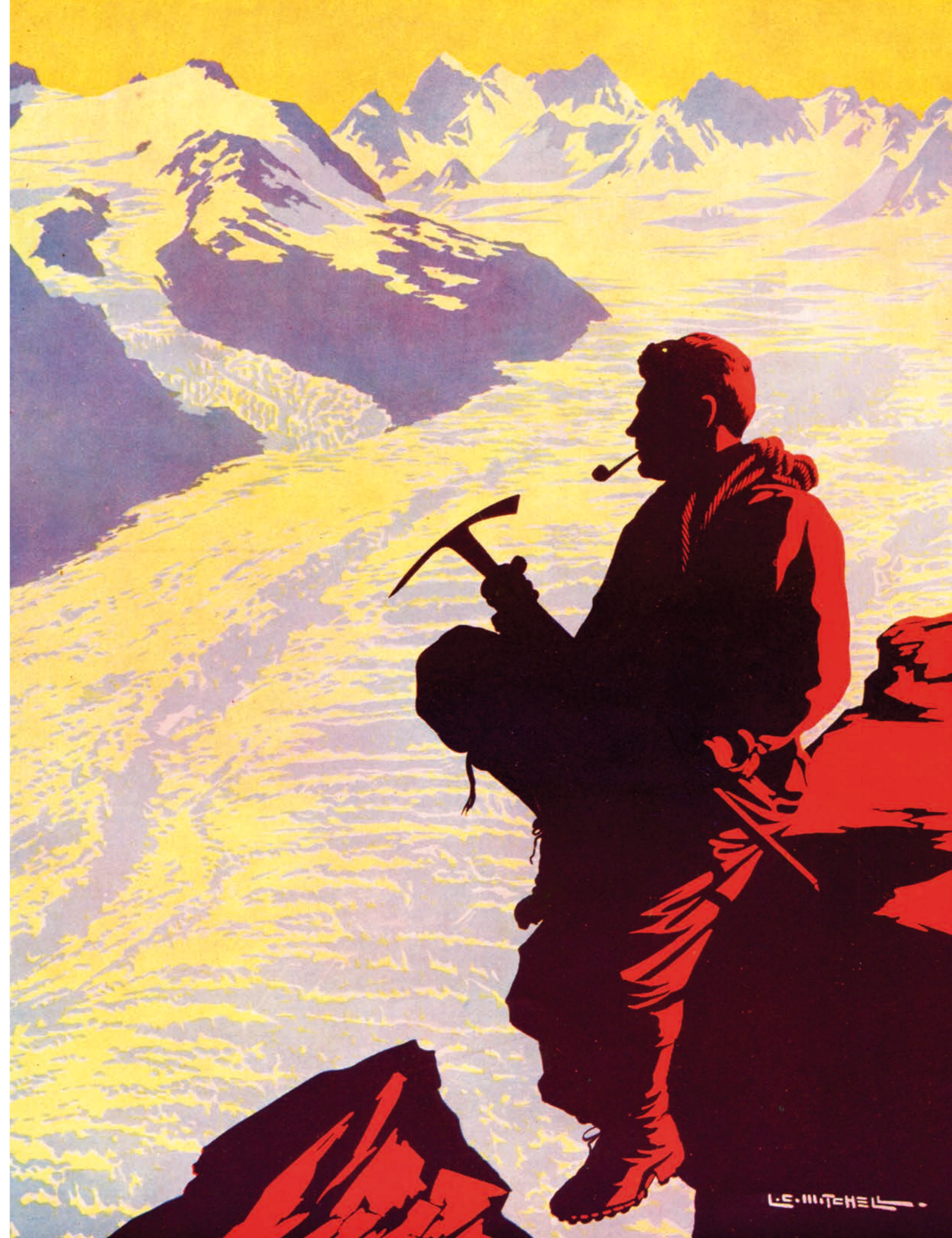


PUBLICISING PEAKS

Early promotion of mountain tourism

WRITTEN BY LEE DAVIDSON IMAGES PROVIDED BY PETER ALSOP



A

T THE BUSTLING golden jubilee meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, in York, the Reverend William Spotswood Green stood in the geographical section, transfixed by an exhibit. Jostling for attention amid travel accounts from West Africa to the Arctic was ‘The Hot-lake district and the Glacier scenery and Fjords of New Zealand’; among the photographs, a rare image of the alluring 12,349-foot mass of Mount Cook, half a world away.

It was 1881, and New Zealand’s highest mountain was still unclimbed.

Green was the quintessential Victorian gentleman mountaineer. A lover of “wild sport”, he possessed several years’ experience in the European Alps and a coveted membership of the Alpine Club, London. He was also a science buff with a “craving to get to mountain ranges hitherto unexplored”. It is hardly surprising, then, that this was not the first time an expedition to the “farthermost part of our Outer Empire” had crossed the reverend gentleman’s mind.

In the past, he’d failed to find

enough information on New Zealand to launch such an ambitious adventure. But the photos he now studied were sufficient to convince him Mount Cook was a “splendid peak” and “well worth the trouble of a long journey”.

Determined to learn all he could about his intended destination, Green went from York to the Royal Geographical Society library in London. Here he became engrossed in Julius von Haast’s *Geology of the Provinces of Canterbury and Westland*, published just two years earlier, in which the intrepid scientist rapturously described his first glimpse of the Southern Alps, “everywhere glistening with snow and ice, frowning rocky precipices furrowing their sides, and above them all, the bold majestic form of Mount Cook”. “Nothing,” von Haast declared, “can be compared with the sublimity of the scenery which certainly has not its equal in the European Alps.”

Green set out for New Zealand the following year. His subsequent adventures with Swiss guides Emil Boss and Ulrich Kaufmann are recounted in a stirring narrative with the slightly misleading title, *The High Alps of New Zealand or A Trip to the Glaciers of the Antipodes with an Ascent of Mount Cook*—misleading >

A wood engraving of Green’s party among the seracs of Mount Cook’s Grand Plateau appeared in London newspaper *The Graphic* in July 1882. Lectures and published accounts of the climb raised awareness of New Zealand’s potential for mountain sports, both at home and abroad. Fifty years on, images produced by commercial artists for government tourist brochures and posters were playing this role. Opposite and previous page: lithographs by prolific graphic designer and painter Leonard C. Mitchell.





because, despite a truly valiant effort, they turned back a short distance from the summit in the face of a rising storm and descending darkness.

Although victory eluded Green—on Cook and further south on Mount Earnslaw—he was most taken by the mountaineering potential in New Zealand’s virgin alps. At a public dinner held in his honour by the Christchurch Athletic Club, Green urged the gathering to found an alpine club and raise funds to build mountain huts. “Here was work,” he later wrote, “not for a short holiday ramble merely, not to be accomplished even in a lifetime, but work for a whole company of climbers, which would occupy them for half a century of summers.”

Accounts of Green’s travels appeared in *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, the *Alpine Journal* and daily papers, and he gave a lecture at an evening meeting of the Royal Geographical Society. His book was published in London in 1883. A reviewer for the society’s *Proceedings* felt it was “acceptable not only to



Green’s party pose for a photograph [above] by Edmund Wheeler and Son of Christchurch. With his Swiss guides, scientific proclivities and penchant for the sublime, Green fitted the mould of the Victorian gentleman mountaineer. Early mountaineering in New Zealand was inspired by this tradition, but soon developed its own flavour, imbued with a pioneering spirit and the hardships of early exploration. Arthur P. Harper personified this evolution (top, on right). He fell in love with climbing in Europe, but returned home and became more drawn to exploration. Between 1893 and 1895 he assisted veteran explorer Charlie Douglas in surveying remote areas of the West Coast, such as the Cook River, where they are pictured in 1894.

mountaineers, but to a large circle of general readers, who, apart from the interest of a narrative of dangerous personal adventure, cannot fail to appreciate the descriptions of unhackneyed scenes in the Antipodes”.

Such good publicity was all the government could have hoped for when, a decade earlier, it had offered assistance to any member of the English Alpine Club who would mount an expedition to conquer the highest peak. Knowledge of New Zealand abroad was exceedingly poor, and the government was keen to change perceptions to boost both immigration and tourism.

Green also caused a stir among a small

group of impressionable colonials, and helped to spark a brief flourishing of pioneering climbing in New Zealand.

Young Malcolm Ross, a journalist and keen sportsman from Dunedin, digested Green’s rousing tale and, suitably inspired, set off in 1885 for Mount Earnslaw. What he lacked in equipment and experience, Ross made up for with colonial ingenuity, “pluck and daring”. He improvised what passed as an “alpen-stock” from manuka saplings and the blades of sheep shears. Horseshoe nails provided extra grip for his boots. His party made it high enough to get a good look at the seracs and crevasses of the eastern glacier on Earnslaw, but retreated when the weather turned.

One New Zealander Green did not convert was Arthur P. Harper (known as A.P.), who had been a teenager when the hero of Mount Cook stayed with his family in Christchurch. Harper remained convinced that only fools climbed mountains for pleasure, until a trip to the Swiss Alps changed his mind. In *Memoirs of Mountains and Men*, he recalls his reaction on returning to New Zealand in 1889 with a new-found passion for climbing. “Not a hut, not a track, not a guide or porter, heavier moraines, larger glaciers, rougher ice, and the more ‘lively’ conditions owing to a much lower snow line,” he lamented. On the other hand, the existence of a “great number of first-class alpine peaks lying untouched” dispelled his earlier regrets at leaving Switzerland.

In 1891, Ross, Harper and their friend George Mannering finally acted on Green’s advice and formed the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC). That same year, a hut was built on a site near the Ball Glacier at Mount Cook. In 1898, a second hut below Mount Malte Brun, several hours walk up the Tasman Glacier, offered both a climbing base and a viewpoint for tourists in search of moderate exercise and mountain sublimity.

Ross and wife Forrestina, also a climber, raised public awareness of the sport by writing newspaper articles about their mountain excursions. These formed the basis of *A Climber in New Zealand*, published in London in 1914. Ross also wrote illustrated tourist booklets, some commissioned by the government.

Despite the best efforts of its members, the NZAC was unable to rouse sufficient enthusiasm to sustain itself, and by 1896 the club was defunct. While a few individuals kept climbing, Harper blamed difficult access

and limited holidays for the colonials’ disappointing lack of interest in mountain recreation around the turn of the century.

For the first two decades of the 20th century, most mountaineering in New Zealand was guided climbing sustained by the tourist traffic to mountain resorts such as Mount Cook, Franz Josef and Lake Wakatipu.

The first Hermitage at Mount Cook, built in 1884, struggled in its early years. An 1890 tourist guide declared that while the area offered “beauties and difficulties sufficient

Early mountain visitors were awestruck by the massive peaks that rose steeply from small islands. Artists and photographers immortalised the figures of Mount Cook, Egmont and Mitre Peak, and the remote, high mountain became a central motif for New Zealand.



for the most enthusiastic, the most daring, the most agile”, it was in dire need of development and would need a large comfortable hotel to “become one of the great mountaineering centres of the world”.

Taking the dream of a “Switzerland of the South” to the extreme, *Brett’s Handy Guide to New Zealand* suggested Mount Cook would make an “idyllic spot for a Swiss village”, complete with Swiss families and guides. Green had been of a similar opinion, arguing that the immigration of “Swiss peasantry” would solve the dual problems of finding shepherds for the high country and teaching the youth of New Zealand to climb safely.

If the government was aware of these

suggestions when it stepped in and purchased the hotel in 1895, it did not act on them. But it did what it could to upgrade tourist facilities and services.

Early mountain visitors were awestruck by the massive peaks that rose steeply from small islands. Artists and photographers immortalised the figures of Mount Cook, Egmont and Mitre Peak, and the remote, high mountain became a central motif for New Zealand. Such images were prominent in early tourism publicity, and dominated the first set of 13 “pictorial” postage stamps in 1898, and later sets of poster-stamps. The first postcard, issued by the Post Office in December 1897, featured four vignettes of scenic landmarks, three of which were alpine scenes.

From Tongariro to Egmont, to Queenstown and the glaciers of the West Coast, mountain resorts were growing in popularity. The North Island mountains were easiest to

get to, with crowds at Mount Egmont swelling to 2500 in the record season of 1902–03.

After its establishment in 1901, the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was most closely involved in mountain tourism at Mount Cook, but also played a role in the Southern Lakes, Milford Track (opened in the late 1880s) and the central North Island.

When Malcolm Ross returned to Mount Cook in the summer of 1905–06, after several years’ absence, he was greatly impressed by government improvements and the boom in visitor numbers. “The long detour via Pukaki, involving a two-day coach journey,” on the other hand, “still kills the Mt Cook trip,” he complained in *The First Traverse of Mount Cook*.

Later that year, Rodolph Wigley pulled up to the Hermitage in “The Beetle” mail car, unloaded the post, and the problem was solved. The first regular motor service to Mount Cook reduced the two-day, bone-rattling journey by horse coach to a ten-and-a-half-hour trip from the rail head at Fairlie. Hundreds of well-to-do tourists took advantage of this more “comfortable, enjoyable and decidedly quicker” (as a later tourist brochure described it) mode of transport to visit Mount Cook in the early 20th century. >



Around a third came from overseas.

Ross made the trip to Mount Cook that summer to climb with English alpinist Samuel Turner, who had met the general manager of the tourist department, Mr T. E. Donne, in London that year. Turner had a reputation as “the most adventurous living climber”, and Donne challenged him to come and climb in the New Zealand Alps, which, he assured him, were “much more difficult” than anything he’d find in Switzerland. They agreed that he should be a guest of the government, which would supply him with a guide and equipment, so long as he wrote and lectured about it all when he returned home.

My Climbing Adventures on Four Continents appeared in London in 1911. Turner had a knack for self-publicity, which suited the department’s purposes but often made him unpopular with other climbers. In *The Conquest of the New Zealand Alps* (1922), he described himself as having a “rare gift of balance and natural physical development”. Harper thought him “a great enthusiast of boundless energy, but curiously apt to quarrel with his companions, and boastful in his writings”.

Nonetheless, his climbing record was “outstanding” and he was clearly impressed by New Zealand, returning to climb and eventually settling here. And he was not above giving credit where credit was due. After inviting himself along on a trip to climb Mount Aspiring with an amateur party in 1913, he discovered that none of his three new companions had ever climbed before. He’d “never dreamed that three men without previous experience would tackle such a formidable peak, but this is the resourceful stuff New Zealanders are made of—they will have a shot at anything, no matter how difficult of success or certain of failure”. Turner led them to success, and “considering these men had never been on an ice-slope before, they did very well”.

But amateur expeditions were not the norm and the government’s guiding service, based at the Hermitage, was pivotal for both climbing and mountain tourism at this time.



“From the moment my eyes rested on the snow-clad alps I worshipped their beauty. My chief desire as I gazed at them was to reach the snow and bury my hands in its wonderful whiteness, and dig and dig till my snow-starved Australian soul was satisfied that all this wonder of white was real and would not vanish at the touch.”

Short glacier trips were the “bread and butter” of the service, but after 1901, high-guiding became established. The period of 1906–1914 was the heyday of guided climbing in the Southern Alps.

Freda Du Faur initially had no thought of climbing as she perused the Christchurch Exhibition in 1906. Then she spotted a photo of Mount Cook and met others who’d visited

the Southern Alps. Soon, “the charms of the exhibition waned”, and the 24-year-old set off for the mountains. “From the moment my eyes rested on the snow-clad alps I worshipped their beauty,” she wrote in her autobiography. “My chief desire as I gazed at them was to reach the snow and bury my hands in its wonderful whiteness, and dig and dig till my snow-starved Australian soul was satisfied that all this wonder of white was real and would not vanish at the touch.”

Four years later, after a careful apprenticeship with her favourite guide, Peter Graham, Du Faur achieved her dream of being the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Cook. The party had barely returned to the Hermitage, exhausted, sunburnt and in want of a bath, when the story was leaked to the press and published around the country, from the *Ashburton Guardian* to the *Feilding Star*.

“After that,” Du Faur wrote, “the deluge.” Telegrams and cables came pouring in; “from members of the Government and the Admiral of the Fleet to unknown and unheard-of admirers in out-of-the-way towns came congratulations in every shape and form.” If New Zealanders were before only dimly aware of alpine activities, they now knew that an “Australian lady” had been to the top, and faster than anyone before her.

The next day, the same papers reported that the Minister of Tourist and Health Resorts, Thomas Mackenzie, was expected at Mount Cook by the end of the week. The government was pressing ahead as soon as possible, in the interests of tourist comfort, with a number of improvements. There would be a new hotel, a bridge for the Hooker River, over which one currently passed in a “clumsy and exceedingly dangerous chair”, and a sum of £2000 for a track over the Copeland Pass and down to the West Coast.

Du Faur often complained that the Hermitage was crowded during the climbing season, but she wrote with affection of the “old happy, carefree, home-like days spent in the ugly rambling cottage building”. Mackenzie’s new Hermitage was to be “a fashionable place with tennis courts, golf links, etc., where you will have to dress for dinner and play in pretty clothes—in fact, a fashionable tourist resort”.

She felt a pang of regret that the mountains were “fast becoming civilised”. Before >

Freda Du Faur is pictured [above] with her favourite guides, Alexander and Peter Graham, with whom she summited Mount Cook. As one of a minority of mountain visitors interested in high alpine climbing, Du Faur sometimes resented the ‘tourists’ who booked up the guides for glacier excursions, delaying her own expeditions. She viewed proposed improvements at the Hermitage with dismay, fearing it would become a “fashionable tourist resort”, with her beloved mountain solitudes over-run by “civilization”—exactly the image promoted by the Tourist Department in the 1960s [left].

long, she feared, her realm of soul-quenching silence and solitude would be defiled by railways, tourists and beer bottles.

The few who climbed were mostly foreigners. In Du Faur's opinion, the scarcity of local climbers demonstrated a "want of energy and interest [that] does seem rather appalling. It argues for one thing such a lamentable lack of imagination." Had she returned to the Southern Alps in the 1920s or 30s, her faith in the enthusiasm and imagination of New Zealanders might have been restored.

In 1930, A. P. Harper wrote in the new monthly magazine *Wanderlust* that "forty years ago our small group of Alpine enthusiasts were looked upon as semi-lunatics", but that "our glorious mountains" were, at long last, attracting a "growing army of mountain visitors". As he penned his memoir, 16 years on, Harper looked back with satisfaction on how much had changed in the 1920s and 30s. World War I, he felt, had "quickened the desire for adventure". His generation, with only a few exceptions, had been shameless "stay-at-homes". But, in a society becoming increasingly modern and urbanised, losing much of its informal pioneering flavour, a "third generation" were looking to the mountains for "temporary freedom from the conventionalities of civilisation".

From the early 1920s, clubs sprouted up around the country as New Zealanders caught on to the new craze for walking, skiing and climbing in the mountains. Tramping attracted younger and less well-heeled New Zealanders from urban centres and provided a foundation for the development of a more local style of climbing, based on club activity instead of mountain resorts.

On an April evening in 1931, 900 people packed out the Dunedin Town Hall Concert Chamber for a viewing of the first cinema film from the summit of Mount Aspiring, shot a few months earlier by local climber Roland Ellis. The Otago section of the now-revived NZAC raised £66 that night for a climbing hut in the Aspiring district. Club chairman Eric Miller wrote to A. P. Harper in Wellington to keep him abreast of developments. The audience, he boasted, included a "goodly proportion of tourists and visitors staying at the Hotels

where our propaganda was quite successful".

The following summer, the club held a camp in the Rees Valley. This novel idea departed from the individualism of the English climbing tradition. Despite initial reservations, Harper, by now "a grey-bearded old buffer", came down to help nurture the next generation.

Camp graduates went on to spend a succession of Easter and ten-day summer holidays scaling the unclimbed peaks of the region. They were renowned for their hardi-



"Every lover of the sublime in Nature will find in these Southern Alps scenes to stir his imagination to empyreans of wonder and delight... The body and the mind is rejuvenated in this land of enchantment which modern transport now places within the reach of all."

ness and for lugging heavy loads. "A back view of us," Russell Edwards wrote in his diary after a trip in March 1932, "must have looked very much like 3 packs with a pair of legs at the bottom. A front view after the first 10 minutes must have looked like a river of sweat and three noses close to the ground."

They began with one ice axe between them, and cutting sticks out of the bush made up the deficit. Gradually they acquired an ice axe a-piece, each so long one had to be a "he-man" to swing it. They pooled their finances to buy an old Hudson truck for about £35. It turned out to be hard on tyres, and four spares generally had to be carried. They may

have looked like a few likely lads from Dunedin, but regional newspapers followed their adventures with interest.

Driven to raise funds for more tracks and huts, the Otago section in August 1935 organised its greatest mountain promotion yet. "Otago's Alpine Charms" ran for two nights, with illustrated lectures and dance presentations. In his opening address, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr J. C. Begg, congratulated the NZAC for providing the facilities and informative publicity to attract overseas tourists "with profitable reactions throughout the entire range of commerce". The *Otago Daily Times* commended the organisers for publicising the "rich heritage" of Otago's mountains, as "few realise the scenic grandeur, the opportunities for healthful, vigorous alpine sport, or the potential commercial advantages they offer... For a moderate cost any person has the opportunity of enjoying a healthful and enjoyable outdoor diversion which in older countries is more the privilege of the wealthy."

Mountaineers and trampers were leading the way in the new urge to "know your own country". The government supported the clubs, and introduced its own initiatives to promote mountain recreation as one way to soften the social dislocation and economic hardship of the Depression. In the late 1930s, the Labour government established the physical welfare branch of the Internal Affairs Department as part of its agenda of giving people more leisure time and promoting constructive activities with which to occupy it. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Bill Parry, wrote to the secretary of the Federated Mountain Clubs in April 1940 and reassured him that the department attached "considerable importance to the place of tramping trips in the back country in its programme of physical welfare and recreation. Such trips are cheap and companionable and achieve splendid results in ensuring wholesome and healthy activity."

Even for those who had no desire to climb up or tramp through them, mountains held the allure of adventure and uplifting scenery, >

The *New Zealand Railways Magazine* (above) was an important vehicle for the promotion of mountain tourism in the 1920s and 30s. Catching on to the new wave of enthusiasm for tramping and climbing, articles enthused about the activities of mountaineers who were exploring new areas and opening them up to tourism. Publicity produced by the Railways and Tourist Departments utilised the image of the mountaineer to promote the revitalising, health-giving benefits of mountain holidays (right).

an escape from mundane reality. A growing number of tourists were now visiting alpine resorts, spurred on by the symbolism of mountains and mountaineering in a new wave of tourist publicity.

The Tourist and Railways Departments worked with local authorities, chambers of commerce and other accommodation and transport providers to promote domestic tourism to the mountains. For Railways' publicity, the in-house *New Zealand Railways Magazine* was key. Appearing monthly from 1926 to 1940, it evolved into more than just a "shop organ", publishing articles of general interest and reaching a peak circulation of 26,000 in the mid 1930s.

The second and third issues featured a two-part article on the "High Places in the Southern Alps", with glowing descriptions of the majestic alpine scenery, reassuring descriptions of the "comfortable and commodious" accommodation, of a train and motor journey "full of interest", and practical details on the tariff and guide fees for glacier excursions and high climbing.

"Every lover of the sublime in Nature," the article promised, "will find in these Southern Alps scenes to stir his imagination to empyreans of wonder and delight. There is nothing just like it on earth. Serious students of Nature will find material for a lifetime of research; the alpinist will find here opportunities for the greatest adventure; the artist will find here a paradise indeed; those who find the burden of life weighing heavily upon them will find here a haven of rest. The body and the mind is rejuvenated in this land of enchantment which modern transport now places within the reach of all."

Publicity slogans echoed the theme that mountains offered refreshment and rejuvenation and compensated for the ills of modern society. Mountains were contrasted with the "germy dust and fluff, smoke and fumes" of the cities. They were "Nature's Tonic", offering "a necessary break from business fatigue" in "the pure health-giving mountain air that gives you tireless energy". And, as Europe edged closer to conflict, Mount Cook and Mount Tongariro were "Nature's answer to [the] quest for peace in a turbulent world".



By the late 1920s, journey times to reach Mount Cook had dropped to six hours from Timaru and 12 from Dunedin and Christchurch. The Hermitage, leased

from the government by Wigley's Mount Cook Company in 1922, was vigorously promoted in posters, brochures and publications with the slogan "Thousands of feet above worry level". This publicity was at pains to dispel the "false impression" that the Hermitage was too expensive, cold and dull and catered only for hardcore alpinists. In terms of affordability, the brochures produced by the Railways and Tourist Departments and the Mount Cook Company promoted combined rail and motor fares, reduced tariffs and "easy time-payment systems" to bring "this ideal alpine holiday within the means of many thousands of New Zealanders".

They also stressed luxury, sociability and "fun and frolic", in addition to the health-giving benefits on offer, for everyone from the "ambitious alpinist" to those who prefer "delightful, easy little picnics to many beautiful places". For evenings and bad-weather days there were "indoor amusements" such as billiards, radio, table tennis and dancing.

On offer was a domesticated taste of what mountains and mountaineers symbolised. So while most mountain tourists were unlikely to venture far afield, tourism posters featured male and female figures posing in

alpine settings with ice axes and coils of rope and gazing longingly at the summits.

The perception that climbing was a "manly" sport persisted, but the prevalence of women in publicity images perhaps reflected the unprecedented numbers who were joining outdoor clubs. Harper, for one, was impressed by the number of women tramping and climbing in the 1930s. "What astonishes me," he conceded in his memoir, "are the heavy packs they carry, and apparently think nothing of it! But I don't like it and am sure that it is unwise."

Harper's own daughter Rosamund was guilty of this recklessness. In 1934, she teamed up with Lella Davidson and Betsy Blunden to climb Mount Sefton. "This climb was not much noticed here," the proud father wrote in *Memoirs of Mountains and Men*, "but roused a good deal of interest in Alpine circles in London." The president "wrote hearty congratulations. They said it was the first time that a manless party had climbed a first-class snow peak." But what most impressed the old pioneer was the "heavy work of packing camp and tucker over the country traversed; that appears to me to be even more notable than the ascents".

The new self-reliant mountaineering culture these women were participating in diverged from emerging forms of mountain tourism. Mount Cook became less important as a centre for climbing during this period, despite still being the most developed, with professional guides and main-



tained huts and tracks.

Harper visited to investigate in 1926 and concluded that the Hermitage was still rather costly and the management more encouraging of social activities than mountain climbing. The new generation of mountaineers, he wrote in his subsequent report to the Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, had "very limited

holidays and purses" and desired in their recreation to "shake off many of the conventionalities of modern society". In spite of the promotions and package deals, the NZAC felt that tourist companies were cultivating mountain resorts for the rich and privileged. They wanted to see more huts in alpine regions to accommodate climbers of "smaller means".

The image of skiers and hotel guests at the Chateau Tongariro [opposite] by artist Edgar Macleod Lovell-Smith appeared on a postage stamp issued by the Tourist Department and a poster by the Railways Publicity Branch in 1931—imagery which adorned government tourist publicity bureaus, such as the one shown opposite, in Rotorua. Despite the luxurious accommodation now on offer at Tongariro and at the Hermitage, it wasn't until after WWII that the first rope tow was installed at Coronet Peak and promoted in brochures [left].

But tourism was seen by others as providing a valuable social good. "With the introduction of the five-day, 40-hour week into our national life", G. F. Hunt wrote in the *Railways Magazine* in 1937, "comes the necessity for something in the nature of moral, social and physical uplift to fill the idle hours—especially for the dwellers in our cities."

Arthur's Pass and Tongariro, more accessible to large urban populations than their southern counterparts, offered a dose of mountain tonic within the space of a weekend. The Railways Department offered Sunday excursions, leaving Christchurch at 8am and returning by 9pm. On reaching Arthur's Pass, passengers were encouraged to disembark and walk the last ten miles to Otira so as to enjoy the "wonderful beech forest, with snow-clad mountains reaching right down to the verge of the bush". Four or five hundred passengers clambered aboard almost once a fortnight, year-round, to make the excursion.

Up north, Wellingtonians and Aucklanders converged upon Tongariro National Park. In 1930, the "Express" would leave Auckland on a Friday afternoon and arrive at National Park before midnight. The area, previously considered the preserve of the "robust tramper and mountaineer", was transformed by the building in 1929 of the Chateau, a 90-room Georgian mansion just 20 minutes by 'motor' from the Main Trunk line. The Chateau offered "the most complete comfort in the wilds", according to the *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, with similar activities to its southern cousin at Mount Cook—winter skiing, summer ascents of Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, and shorter walks or the golf course for those who preferred less vigorous exercise.

The promotion of winter sports meant that alpine resorts were now seen as year-round tourist playgrounds. Skiing was first introduced on Ball Glacier in 1915, and by the 1930s had become a popular tourist activity.

Brochures advertised skiing, tobogganing, skating and glissading at Mount Cook, Fox and Franz Josef glaciers and Tongariro, and a "Grand Winter Excursion" for Sydneyites with 14 days at Mount Cook. The ski run at Ball Hut was touted as the "finest in the world" and likened to the "ski-ing grounds" of Switzerland.

It may have been one such brochure that brought the Kirk party of 20 to Mount Cook >

in 1929. On a sunny August day, they carried their skis to the saddle of Mount Sebastopol, full of anticipation. Some had tried the new sport the previous season. The rest were novices. After a bit of trial and error, “most of the party attained a moderate level of proficiency ... [and] there were few, if any, who were not getting the maximum amount of fun and satisfaction out of this exhilarating pastime”, wrote A. A. Kirk in his “Souvenir Diary”. A few days later, on the Ball Glacier, they all managed the mile and a half distance from the top of the glacier “with only three spills each”.

In subsequent years, the government brought ski instructors with “the latest information and skill in tuition” from Europe so that novices might have more professional training than Kirk’s merry party. The Tourist and Railways Departments co-operated with private tourist companies to lower costs and improve the quality of transport, accommodation and equipment. Now, the publicity claimed, skiing could be learned by anyone and was no longer the preserve of the “moneyed class”.

The New Zealand Snow Sports Championships, held at Tongariro in August 1932, attracted entries from Australia, England, Sweden and all parts of the Dominion—some on home-made skis of native wood. Three hundred and fifty people packed out the five storeys of the Chateau “from basement to attic”, and 200 bookings had to be refused, according to the *New Zealand Railways Magazine*. In the late 1930s, the Railways Department put on special “Snow Trains” which brought hundreds of New Zealanders to Mount Cook and Tongariro National Park “to find new life in the thrills of winter sport”.

Much had changed in the space of six decades. What would Green have made of all this “fun and frolic” for the masses amid his sublime alpine landscapes? Or even of the likely lads from Dunedin charging about with huge packs on their backs and not a Swiss guide in sight? Could Green have imagined a world shattered by the Great War and crippled by depression, and the new urge to escape the city and find rejuvenation and refreshment in the mountains?

The alpine club was thriving and there were now huts a-plenty, but this was not a Switzerland of the South and the gentleman mountaineer was a thing of the past. The government was in cahoots with the tourism



industry, promoting mountain holidays for all and bringing tourists by the train load. It was not quite the desecration that Du Faur had feared, but the mountains were no longer such silent and solitary places. And mountaineers had played a major part in this new-found popularity.

For more than 100 years, mountains, and those who play in them, have been central to our tourism publicity. In a recent incarnation of the 100% Pure brand, an icy mountain peak rises dramatically from the ocean—a digital representation of the Maori creation myth.

Trampers descend tussocky ridgelines and a lone snowboarder carves tracks through untouched powder in the “youngest country on Earth”.

The need to find a delicate balance between tourism development and the tradition of mountain recreation in New Zealand is something else that is still with us today. This tradition may have reached maturity in the 1930s, and found new ways to express itself, but it encapsulates values and feelings that would make sense to the pioneers, to Freda Du Faur, to Russell Edwards, and the >



Women took to the new outdoor culture with unprecedented enthusiasm [right]. In the 1930s, more than half the membership of Auckland’s Alpine Sports Club, for example, were women. The growing number of women in the mountains was reflected in tourist publicity. More affordable, convenient and comfortable transport [opposite] was also key to getting more people into the hills during the 1950s.

mountaineers who have come after them.

News of war interrupted the preparations for the NZAC climbing camp of Christmas 1939. Undeterred, 107 club members and other visitors, from as far afield as Australia, converged upon the West Matukituki area in the Southern Alps for “Camp Three”. War and politics were barred from conversation. Harper was there, and Mannering came up for a couple of days. At the grand old age of 75, Harper was venerated as a living legend and had the “most enjoyable fortnight” ever. He spent a few days “loafing in that beautiful valley, answering questions about the old days, about bushcraft, and yarning to the young people who were just starting out on the journey I was finishing”.

As they came over the last snow slope onto Hector’s Col, Harper burst into song. “I don’t remember enjoying anything so much...the ‘joy of the mountains’ was mine for every minute of the trip.”

“Then,” he writes in his memoir, came “a sudden and irresistible urge to get on to the pass at the head of the river and have one more look over to the West Coast.

“Here was a taste of the old game, a bit of bush-work, a ford or two over the river, the finding of a suitable bivouac at the scrub-line and a good fire, the old anxiety about the weather, and watching the clouds when one woke up in the night, the start at dawn to reach the pass before the snow softened and the fog came over”—a 14-hour day from bivvy to pass and back to the main camp.

As they came over the last snow slope onto Hector’s Col, Harper burst into song. “I don’t remember enjoying anything so much...the ‘joy of the mountains’ was mine for every minute of the trip.”

With his “active work” now at an end and just “a store of wonderful memories” from more than half a century of New Zealand mountaineering to sustain him, he wondered if his three young companions could



Along with Leonard C. Mitchell and George Bridgman, Marcus King was one of New Zealand’s foremost producers of graphic art. Both Mitchell and King were influenced by fine art traditions including regionalism, which sought to capture the uniqueness of rural landscapes, and the symbolism of the Cubist and modernist movements.

appreciate his pleasure on that climb.

“If they don’t realise it now, the day will surely come when they look back over the years and say, ‘Now we know why A.P.H. sang on the snow slope!’” ■

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