

## **TRAMPARAMA ALTERNATIVE OR EARNSLAW REVISITED**

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Barry and myself set out for the Rees on the Thursday night of Waitangi weekend. Stopped in at Queenstown to try to persuade Andrew Powell to join us but when he found all we planned to do was the East Peak of Earnslaw, expressions like "it's a piece of p--" and "it's just a dawdle" left us in little doubt to his decision, so just the two of us carried on down the Glenorchy Road. We arrived at the Rees Road end with no mishaps. This was directly in contrast to my last visit here when by this time I'd run the car into a bank and at three in the morning had come across the varsity tramping club's bus hanging precariously over a bank blocking the Rees Road.

Friday morning dawned overcast and not too bad, so we had our fingers crossed that the expected clearance may be on its way - could we be so lucky?

Lunch at Kea Basin bivvy - "Looks like a nice sport to spend the night Barry" (?) "Provan you piker, there's no way we'll spend the night here!" Earnslaw was looking pretty clagged-in from Kea Basin but as we were only heading for Esquilant Biv we carried on. Onwards and upwards into the crud - soon it was raining, hailing, sleeting, snowing and whatever, with spindrift blowing into our faces. Reduced visibility made navigation very difficult - "Do you know where we are Bill?", "Not a by clue, but I think we're going in the right direction"

Better check the map ... Oops, ... it was about this time we discovered I'd left the maps behind! We carried on the same direction but conditions worsened and if we didn't find the Biv soon we were going to spend a most unpleasant cold night out in this storm. (Clearance indeed - we should be so lucky!!)

Memories of my last visit to this area came to mind, being caught out for the night just below the summit of Earnslaw with no gear or food.

It was about that time we made a hasty retreat back down to Kea Basin. Unfortunately, the bivvy had filled up somewhat since lunch time when we had had it to ourselves. Everyone had the sense not to carry on when they saw the crud above.

Earnslaw didn't look any more inviting on Saturday morning, but we set off in the hope that the promised clearance may eventuate. Quite deep snow had been dumped in the area over the last couple of days, so it made for quite a plod. (Realised we had turned back only about 15 mins from Esquilant the previous day.) After arriving at the biv a bit of a clearance showed Earnslaw plastered with snow and ice and not looking at all inviting. Even the Alpine Club members were piking on the 'easy' route as the rock was so iced up.

Barry should have known better than to ask a wimp like me what I thought we should do. He overruled me of course, so we followed some of the others up the snow slope on the eastern side. The snow on the ice was exciting though, but when we got up to the iced up rock where everyone was having fun (a euphemism for s----g oneself), it was time to pike as we hadn't brought a rope with us. It was about this time that Andrew came under fire with his remarks being recalled - "It's just a dawdle."

Great views of the crevasses on the lower slopes on the descent, as believe it or not, the weather had finally started to clear and it had come out quite pleasant.

Back down to Kea Basin where we were entertained by a 7-year-old giving us a frame by frame account of 'Crocodile Dundee', the accuracy of which was confirmed the following week when I went to the film.

Barry hid his disappointment of not getting to the top (I's used to it) by eating cheesecake and drinking very weak tea (tea bags were rationed).

Of course Sunday was brilliantly fine for the walk out. After a personal tour by Andrew through the new high class tourist condominiums past Arthurs Point, it was homeward bound with the promise to return in the not too distant future.

Bill Provan and Barry Wybrow