

Stoney Creek Hut, Shotover Area, Queenstown

Refurb Project March 10-15 2019

History

Stoney Creek Hut is in the catchment of the same name that flows into the Shotover on the true right just downstream of Skippers.

The hut is situated in a small terrace beside the creek on the TR not far above the confluence of McGills Creek where Stoney Creek makes a 90 degree turn East towards the Shotover.

The hut is built 10m from the Boundary of Ben Lomond Station on what was formerly Wyuna Station but is now known as Whakaari East which adjoins Mt Aurum Recreational Reserve.

From graffiti in the hut dated 1965, noticed during this refurb, it is assumed it was built about that time possibly by the NZFS. A diary found in the hut dated from the early 1970's shows mostly use by NZFS Goat Cullers. The hut was also used on occasions by musterers from Ben Lomond Station.



This Hut is unique insofar it has dexion framing. From weights painted on various items and location abbreviations marked on different studs and components, it can be safely assumed the hut was pre fabricated off site and flown in in pieces by helicopter. The valley is too steep and narrow for it to have been dropped from a fixed wing plane.

Stoney Creek Hut, December 2018

Maintenance

This hut had very little maintenance over the years and according to the hut book only receives up to 2 visits per year and they are mostly only for the duration of 1 night each. As usual, water leaks and rodents have been the main reason for slow decay.

When I visited this hut in April 2017, some trees had been fallen on the hut and were still resting against the roof. There had been a heavy snowfall in November 2016 which I believe to be the cause of the trees falling over. The damage was mostly to the large overhangs (eaves) of the roof .

It is noted in a Doc inspection report the trees needed to be cut back. Some clearing appears to be have done by a possum trapper in August 2018 but there still is an urgent need to remove more trees to create a safe zone.



Interior, December 2018

My Involvement

I first visited Stoney Creek Hut in 2014 with 2 hunting companions. We walked in across the Mt Gilbert faces on Ben Lomond Station and stayed for 2 nights. We walked out up the face opposite the hut up onto the Silverhorn Spur, sidled around the southern face and then dropped back down to Ben Lomond's Hut at the end of the 4WD track.

The Mt Gilbert route mentioned above is the shortest way in and out of Stoney Creek hut but requires permission from Ben Lomond Station. Stoney Creek itself, below the hut is a steep sided gorge with cataracts and should not be considered as a way to access this area.

Other ways into this area are from Skippers via Archies Hut and Monument Saddle from the Glenorchy side. Both involve high level passes and there are no marked tracks.

It was during a 5 night stay in April 2017, the idea to give this hut a serious makeover was first mooted, mainly due to a hole in the rotten floor boards beside the fire hearth. I posted a story on Facebook and Alan Stout, who for many years, has a Crib at Skippers, contacted me with an offer to help.

Planning started in earnest and required several more walk in trips to create a plan, recheck measurements and requirements to enable to a funding application to the Back Country Trust. Almost two years later, this project is now complete.

Scope

As this hut is unique due to its design and construction, not only was there a requirement to repair the decay and restore the hut to its original state but we also wanted to improve on what was already there without detracting from its original character.

Water was coming in under the door and also down the chimney causing the floor to rot. It was dark inside the hut even on the brightest days due to the brown pinex lining, one window and massively long un-supported eaves which had folded down from both snow loading and some tree falls.

The hut is also unique insofar the bunks were 1270mm wide compared with the usual 750mm. There was a standard Doc mattress on each bunk along with a uncovered foam strip. It was decided to retain the bunk sizes as they were but supply 2 custom sized mattress for each bunk to allow if necessary, comfortable but cosy sleeping for four.

It was also decided to replace the pinex, which had been gnawed on by rodents, with 12mm ply painted Doc Spanish White. Along with a new roof with shorter eaves, it was expected these modifications would increase the light inside.

This was the scope,

1. Reroof with Pioneer Red colour steel.
2. Fit new Barge Boards

3. Replace Pinex interior with ply and to ceiling also
4. Replace rotten floor boards
5. Replace hearth by pouring concrete into Galvanised tray
6. Fit a chimney cap and a flashing to door step
7. Strengthen bunks and supply 4x mattresses
8. Wood shed
9. Toilet
10. Rebuild Bench
11. Replace door frame

The Team



Mike Lagan, Ed Anscombe, Alan McLeod, Alan Stout, Neale Dale

Prefab work & Logistics

The toilet and wood shed were built at home and then flat packed for transportation. The 15x sheets of 12mm ply received two coats of paint along with the door frame and the barge boards.

Once all the materials had been assembled, loaded onto the trailer and weighed at 820kgs, we then had to get them along with 3 of the team and their equipment to the staging area at Maori Point in the Shotover.

Once at Maori Point we loaded the cargo net with the materials for the flight in the following morning. Ed and the two Alans then stayed the night at Skippers while Neale and I drove around to Glenorchy to meet with Heli Glenorchy the following morning at 7.30 am

Neale and I flew into Stoney Creek with tools, Generator and all our camping requirements on Sunday morning, March 10th. The Squirrel B3 then made 2 flights from Maori Point, the first being a longline trip and the second for the passengers and remaining equipment.



Longline load from Maori Point just arrived beside hut

Onsite works

Day 1 Strip out interior of hut, remove roofing iron. Replace & repair pearlins and fit pearlins along eaves. Fit ply and building paper to roof. Remove window and door. Start stripping wall cladding.



Ed stripping walls



Mike fixing ply to roof

Day 2. Assemble toilet, dig hole and clad toilet with new colour steel. fit new colour steel to roof. Remove hut wall cladding and pinex. Fit ply to rear wall, building paper and refit cladding. Paint hut door.



Ceiling on to provide bracing



Toilet construction

Day 3. Deconstruct fireplace and wall, break away old hearth to reveal extent of floor rot. Replace 2 floor joists and 18 pieces of T&G floor. Repair broken fireplace and work on new hearth and fireplace improvements. Complete toilet and assemble woodshed. Clad woodshed roof with new colour steel and fit old roofing iron to walls and paint Karaka green.



Floorboards under old hearth



New joists and floorboards. Note broken Fireplace



Toilet completed, hut roof on



Alan & Neale assembling the wood shed



Alan McLeods masterpiece.

Day 4 Finish framing fireplace wall, fit new door frame and finish lining interior and fit exterior cladding. Refit window with new facings and paint. Fit bug screen to window. Fit barge boards and flashings and ridge caps. Rebuild bunks.



Roof and cladding finished

Day 5 Hang door in frame. Finish bunks with roll out protection and a ladder. Rebuild and install bench. Fit cladding to fireplace and install chimney. Strengthen chimney and brace back to hut. Fit weather cap to chimney. fill woodshed with wood. Clean up site, load net and prepare for flight out.





Statistics

Hours

576 hours spent including travel, planning, obtaining quotes, preparing funding application, prefabrication and onsite works by 5 volunteers.

Donations, sponsorship & assistance

3600km traveled by project team vehicles.

Paint generously supplied by Dulux through the Doc partnerships program

Shotover Canyon Jet (Wink) for the use of the property at Maori Point

Heli Glenorchy for discounted helicopter flying time

Ben Lomond Station for allowing vehicle access in the planning stages.

Rubbish

We flew out 460kgs of rubbish and project waste.

Epilogue

As with any remote project, there will always be things that catch you out that were not planned for.

The Fireplace falling apart could have been a real issue and it was looking like the only option was to blank it off and return another day to rebuild it. Luckily, we had a bag of cement for the new hearth. Alan McLeod took repaired and rebuilt the firebox to even better than before. To me, that is the real standout story for this project.

This hut was seriously out of square. The length of the barge above the door needed to be 160mm shorter than the other three barges and it impacted on the time to fit the ply, roofing and refitting the cladding.

Thanks to my awesome team for your help, laughs and outstanding result.

The End.