

Report on Explorer Hut

On our first trip three people flew into Explorer at 4 PM on Monday 10th August 2016 and spent the next couple of hours cutting back the scrub around the chopper pad and then started our survey of the hut.



Cleared Chopper Pad

Mikonui River to the West of the hut, about 1.5 Km, We placed two large orange triangles in the Mikonui River, one in the riverbed at the start of the track and a second where the track leaves the riverbed and enters the bush proper.



Hut Survey

When we got back to the hut we cleared back the scrub from round the hut by about 2-3 mt. and then cleared a patch of scrub at the back of the hut for the future woodshed.

Later we trimmed and marked where needed the track down towards Doctor Creek to the East, the beginning of the track leading to the Hokitika River. We cruise taped and made a couple of rock cairns where the track enters the bush and from Vanina Stream and down to the confluence of Vanina Stream and Doctor Creek, a distance of about 1.7 Km.



Scrub Cleared From Round Hut



Cairn at Vanina Stream

Upon our return to the hut we cut fire wood for a couple of hours and that night wrote up our requirements for the hut repair job for this summer.



Geoff, Alastair, & Paul at Explorer hut

The following day, Wednesday, we did more hut survey and then headed up the Miserable ridge track. We cut the track to a point about 2/3rds of the way to point 1177, about 1.4 Km and cruise taped up to point 1177 a further 1.3 Km.



clearing For Woodshed

On the last morning we cut more fire wood and stacked it in and under the hut.

We went home and correlated all our information and applied for a grant through the outdoor consortium via the FMC group and after gathering all the needed resources waited for a weather window.



Two nets of gear and equipment ready for lift

Our first task was to replace seven rotting and rotted piles

The South West corner pile was well rotted down the side from hut wall run off as it jutted out from under the wall cladding

A weather window finally opened up for us to fly to Explorer Hut on the 15th February 2017, six people flew in with two sling loads of equipment and gear. Our crew included a carpenter so that things would be done to spec.



South West corner pile



Centre right pile

The centre row of piles were all rotten to one extent or another, the right hand pile was almost non existent. The middle pile was rotted off at ground level

We dug out all the rotten piles and replaced them with outside treated round post sections, they were dug into the ground 400mm and set in concrete, the bearers were jacked up and then released after the concrete was set.



middle pile



Centre pile in place



S W corner pile showing damp course and wire

The piles were topped with damp course and wired into place as well as skewed four inch nails, the piles that were too difficult to wire were fixed with “Z” nails.

The hut has, in the past, been altered and an extra meter added to the South end but it was added with no bearers so we had to add bearers to the last pile span

On the East wall the fireplace had been renewed at some date too, We found the remains of the old chimney rotting in the bush nearby, but only every second floor joist was replaced. We added a full joist under the new section on the South wall and added what joists needed on the East wall next to the fire place



New S W pile and bearer



New bearers and joists on the South end

Once the damp course was placed between the piles and the bearers we “Z” nailed the piles and put 2 four inch nails skewed in. The piles that we could easily access we stapled wire over them



Old pile Z nailed and 4 inch skew nails



New pile fixed with 2 Z nails, 2 skewed 4 inch nails

The new bearers were Z nailed and skew nailed into place also and on the North end of the new bearer we nailed them into the existing bearers.



New bearer attached to pile



Pile flashing and side wall flashing

All the outside piles had new flashing added and where the side wall tin finished a little high we added a flashing to bring it below the top of the piles.

The chimney needed attention as the flashing between the hut and chimney was rusty and leaking, there was a hole in the side of the chimney and the top shroud was not wide enough and was letting rain in.



Rust coming out of the chimney to hut flashing



New flashing in place.



New flashing from the inside showing the slope for better water run off.



Patch on the side of the chimney



Hut roof shrouds before and after

Photo shows the old shroud size and the new extension we put on

We took the old roof off and found that the tar paper was reasonably sound. We still covered this with new builders paper before replacing the roof with new tin and ridge cap. The edge of the old roofing iron was rolled over the edge of the hut but we put the new tin flush with the edge and placed new flashing on the edges

Under the new sky lights we secured a sheet of clear PVC to direct any condensation to the outside of the roof. This was rolled round a baton and secured down the wall.



Old building paper



Clear PVC placed under the clear light

The PVC required to be well attached to the top of the ridge line and secured down each side because over time it will shrink from the sides if they are not secure

We replaced the roofing iron, sky light and added a new ridge cap and side flashings. Then painted the roof and walls with rescue orange. An undercoat was put on the walls after we washed all the mould and lichen off before the top coat of orange also.



Roof and sky light on



We then attacked the cupboard corner on the South East side of the hut, it was so bad we ripped the cupboard right out to get at the rotten floor, the rotten studs and rotten dwangs in that corner

Roof and walls painted



Cupboard floor removed

We replaced the floor boards over the new joists we had put in earlier and then put in new bottom plates and studs, finally new dwangs were put in on the East wall.

Cupboard and being removed



New floor in place



New studs, top plates and dwangs in place



The cupboard corner tidy with building paper

The area was then tidied up with building paper as we had no extra wall lining to replace the bare cupboard walls.

The rotted window was the next thing, just one small piece of rot was found in one corner of the window but on further investigation we found that the whole window needed to come out



Rot on outside of window



Rotted stud beside window

We spent some time extracting the window whole and doing a small repair on the window itself but we discovered that the whole stud beside the window was rotten as well as the dwang under the window.

The studs and dwangs for the hut corner and window were replaced and the window space lined on the bottom with tar sealer. The window was then replaced and a new piece of sash attached.



Window space sealed

A small piece of rotted floor was replaced on each side of the fire place where water had run out of the fire place and onto the floor.



Window put back in wall

On the outside of the hut surround we dug ditches to try and divert some of the water from going under the hut. We dug a channel on both sides of the chimney to carry rain water off the roof away from the hut and another ditch around three sides of the hut to divert ground water from the surrounding slope above the hut from running under the hut.



Ditches to draw water away from the hut

We then built a wood shed with timber off cuts and tin not used on the hut and tied it down with 4 strands of 12 gauge wire



Wood shed full of wood and detail of tie down

With the materials and resources we had the above is the extent of the work we accomplished.

There was, however a couple of jobs that we did not get done because we ran out of materials because some of the tasks ended up bigger than we had foreseen and also we ran out of time.

These jobs are, a second top coat of paint on the sides of the chimney and hut walls, all the paint and brushes etc. are stored in the hut under the bunk for this task so that someone can tramp in and do this job.

The second job not done is the rotten floor boards in the North West corner of the hut under the bunk, we suspect that upon opening up the wall it will be found that studs and dwangs as well as top plates will need to be replaced, some of the materials for this task are stored under the bunk. We suspect that another stud, 75x50 x 2mt, and several 50x50x500 dwangs and a couple of 75x50x500 top plates will also be needed.

I am very grateful to all the crew, what a marvellous effort, Thanks, Alan Jemison, Liz Stephenson, Mike O'Connell, Geoff Spearpoint, and Antony Johnson with Alastair Macdonald



Appendix 1:

Extra photo page showing some details mentioned in report



Clear PVC rolled over baton under the clear light



End of ridge cap fixed and sealed



New floor in place on either side of fire hearth



Rot in the North West corner under the bunk, my finger went at least 100mm into the corner, we painted it fully with Metalex wood preserver in the mean time. This problem was not fixed

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