

**New Zealand
Outdoor Recreation
CONSORTIUM**



“A partnership to maintain and enhance backcountry facilities”

Frisko Hut



Above: Frisko Hut crowded in by vegetation before our intervention

Location

Hokitika catchment. Map BV19. Altitude 915m. Grid Ref: E1446095/ N5233930. Frisko Hut is located on a bench in the montane zone well above the Hokitika River. There are great views to Conway Ridge, the Meta Range, & the peaks of the Whitcombe. The sense of isolation & solitude at Frisko is palpable & the hut book, an NZFS original, chronicles 30 years of visits in a half dozen pages. At the turn on the millennium, visits averaged around one every 2-3 years. This picked up when the hut was profiled on the 'Remote Huts' site. 2010 saw two visits, then two parties between 2011 & 2014. 2016 was a record buster with nine visits. There are plenty of deer on the tops directly above the hut, their trails are well defined & animals have been encountered during daylight hours.

Type

Frisco Hut is a NZFS 4-bunk S81 design built around 1964. Frisco was a very basic design lined with tar paper only. It started with an open fireplace that was probably removed in the late 1960s. A toilet was added around 1983, constructed from materials salvaged from the dismantled Lower Toaroha & Lower Kokatahi Huts respectively. A small creek 20m down the track towards Serpentine Hut provides water.

Condition

Frisco is in pretty good condition considering a two-decade maintenance gap from 1983 onward. In 2004 DOC replaced some of the framing & one of the piles, the wire mesh on the bunks with wooden slats, & removed one of the door cupboards to make more space.

Maintenance Status

Frisco Hut is designated as minimal maintenance. The original access tracks put in by the NZFS were not maintained from the mid-1970s & had become overgrown & vanished in places. Frisco Hut was isolated by no track access for 20+ years & it received few visits. The hut itself was maintained periodically & remained sound. In 2011 Permolat members recut the track up the Hokitika River from Darby Creek to reconnect Frisco Hut with the fully maintained Frew - Toaroha Saddle circuit. In 2015, Permolat members, mainly Andrew Buglass, finished cutting the down-valley tracks to Serpentine Hut & further through the three spectacular gorges down to the Whitcombe Junction. The entire lower Hokitika River route is open again for the first time in over 35 years.

Worked Completed

Anzac weekend 2017 saw Frisco Hut the site of frenzied activity as 5 Permolat volunteers gave the hut & its surroundings the much over-due attention it so surely deserves, given the grandeur of the huts location. The Permolat volunteers used all their improvisation skills & energy to see Frisco Hut transformed into a 'once-again' solid hut, ready to warmly welcome the next generation of back country recreationists for another 50+ years. The boisterous noise of cheeky keas was substituted by the industrious sounds of noisy mechanical tools & the clattering of hammers. A small mountain of 'cargo' (2 sling loads) was flown in for the 5-days, including piles, a new corrugated iron roof, various lengths of timber, a scrub cutter, ladder, a fire hearth, & a new wood burner, with the latter been kindly donated by Mauricio Lloreda of Nelson.



Above: 2 sling loads of gear & material to be flown in

The crew was immediately hard at work upon arriving at the site & a set of the hut bunks was removed to use as scaffolding & the heli-pad & toilet track receiving a hair cut. Internally some of the studs & dwangs on the south wall (next to the window) which were rotten were removed & replaced. Andre Winkelman installed a new sill plate below the window & then made up a window sill flashing that slotted nicely in-between the window sill & new sill plate.



Above: Martin Clapham clearing the heli-pad. Below: Kerry Clapham dealing to the south wall





Above: The south wall with a new stud, building paper, sill plate & sill flashing

Day two was a very busy one & first up the next morning was the turn of the south west corner to receive some attention with the corner stud & dwangs being removed & replaced, along with new building paper stapled into place.

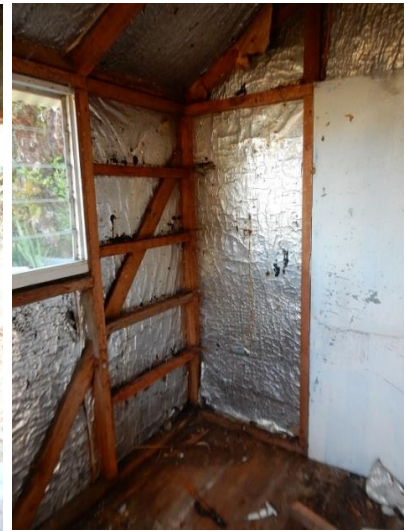


Above: (L) The rotten stud in the southwest corner. (R) The same corner looking much better

The crew gradually worked their way along the west wall with Andre & Martin removing the cooking bench & mantel (which was acting as a splash back) from the west wall where the old open fire used to be. In the meantime, Kerry commenced deconstructing the old NZFS cupboard in order to make more room for the fire hearth, wood burner & new cooking area. Meanwhile outside, Alan Jemison continued pruning back the vegetation, which ended up revealing a surprise. He also got a fire going, which he manned, thereby ensuring we had continuous hot water for bottomless coffees & billy tea.



Above: (L) Martin removing the cooking bench, meanwhile (R) Alan (in his yellow & blue overalls) continues pruning



Above: Kerry at the various stages during removal of the cupboard & once he had finished



Above: (L) The surprise, an old dog kennel & (R) Andre preparing to install a new bottom plate where the old fire used to be

After morning tea, Alan, Martin & I began replacing some of the huts piles, starting with two along the east wall as we had to replace the bearer too.



Above: Out with the old, in with the new



Above: (L) Scissor jacks, blocks & chocks support the southeast corner & (R) the new pile & bearer in position, complete with Z nails & DPC

Meanwhile, inside the hut Andre had finished framing the western wall, including double studs beside the window for the corrugated iron heat shield & he had also laid & secured the fire hearth & edging into place, & positioned the donated wood burner. Thanks Mauricio.

After a late lunch the piles were concreted in & the crew were gripped by spontaneity as a decision was made to commence action on the eastern roof. It was all hands to the pump, & in two whirlwind hours Andre & Kerry had the old iron roof & building paper removed, & in next-to-no-time, a new row of top purlins & misc. other ones had been cut by Martin, & Alan had trimmed the new roof to length. New chicken wire & building paper were stapled into place & the new pioneer red corrugated iron roof was screwed into place with 65mm hex-head screws. What a big day it was.



Above: Completed framing on the west wall & the wood burner, flue & heat shield sitting on the hearth. A great job Andre. Photo: Andre



Above: Kerry working on removing the east side roof



Above: (L) Alan & (R) Martin respectively cutting the new roofing iron & purlins to length



Above: (L) New chicken wire & building paper in-situ as twilight approached & (R) Kerry & Andre screwing in the first few new sheets



Above: (L) An exercise of comparing & contrasting between the old & the new roof. (R) The new roof the next morning

Day three dawned clear & we had to wait until 10.30am before the sun hit the hut site. Work commenced on the roof again with the troughs at the centre board end of the new east roof being turned slightly upwards, the old west roof was removed, framing installed to house the flue & nine new purlins installed. Work also begun on replacing the three piles along the north wall.



Above: Andre enjoying his 'office' space while removing the old roof & tar paper & installing new purlins. Below: Paul & Alan working on the northwest pile, & Kerry & Andre enjoying the view. Note: the framing for the flue. Photo: Martin





Above: The middle pile along the north wall. We placed a large flat stone in the hole to keep the base of the pile of the ground



Above: Two of the new piles along the north wall with DPC in between the pile & joist. Both concrete & pile flashings were added later



Above: Note the absence of any bearers at this end of the hut

Meanwhile, Andre & Kerry continued on the roof with new chicken wire & building paper stapled into place, followed by new sheets of pioneer red corrugated iron & a new sheet of Suntuf polycarbonate clear roofing. They then secured the new barge flashings & ridge capping. It was during this latter stage battery power was exhausted, so the trusty old fashioned brace & bit was pulled out.



Above & below: The new west roof in-situ & Andre & Kerry working on the barge flashings



Day four also dawned beautifully clear & sunny with fine views across the valley. Work continued on the roof with Andre cutting a hole in the new roof & installing the flue. We hoped by the end of the day we would be able to christen Maurico's new wood burner. In readiness for the event, Alan saw fit to build a wood shed out of the remaining timber we had, while the father & son team of Martin & Kerry commenced building the new cooker bench, utilising the old cupboard door & flat iron from the wall of the cupboard. A corrugated roofing sheet was attached to the wall behind the wood burner to act as a heat shield.



Above: (L) Andre cutting a hole in the roof for the flue & (R) working with Kerry to drill & pop-rivet the sections of outer flue together



Above: Alan enjoying working in the sun on his wood shed. We used sections of the old roof for the walls, base & roof



Above: (L) New roof, new ridge capping, new purlins, new clear light sheet, & a new flue, 'to boot'

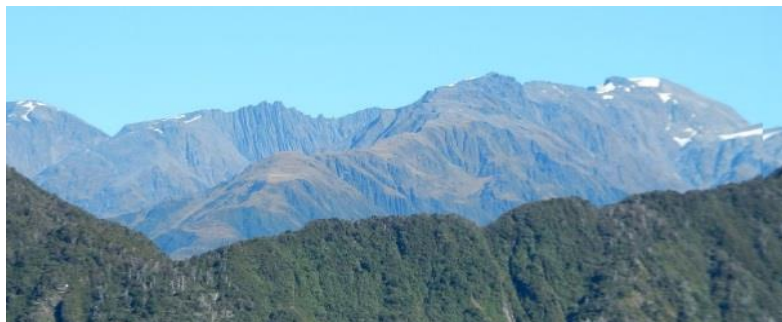


Above: Where there's smoke, there's fire. It was a cosy night. Photo on left: Andre



Above: (L) Martin constructing the supports for the new cooking area & (R) the finished project

Finally, our last day, Anzac Day. We discussed & thought about those pre war hut & track builders who never returned to the NZ mountains. Overnight we had made a list of jobs to finish, so shortly after breakfast it was straight into it. Andre successfully rigged up some chicken wire around the rubber boot to keep the keas at bay, while Martin & I began cutting up all the old roofing iron in preparation for flying all the old rubbish out. Kerry eventually succeeded in driving-in two waratahs & securing the wood shed that sits atop three short lengths of fencing post. Meanwhile, Alan went for a walk up the tops track.





Above: (L) Andre working on installing chicken wire to protect the flue flashing & (R) The complete flue set-up



Above: (L) Kerry trying to secure Alan's wood shed to the waratahs. (R) The wood shed filled. Note how clear of vegetation the site is



Above: Martin cutting up the old corrugated iron roofing for flying out

Andre then tackled a section of rotten timber at the base of the southeast corner stud, only to discover the joist running along the south wall was rotten along the top where the floor boards met the flat iron. At this point Andre had to improvise with various grades & sizes of timber.



Above: (L) The floor boards cut open to reveal the true extent of the rotten joist. (R) Andre built a secondary joist beside the rotten one



Above: (L) Sections of shelving from the old cupboard were used to replace the floor boards. (R) Andre had to improvise with a double bottom plate, both sides of the corner stud & up to the first dwang

By this stage it was well after lunch & we began to clean up the site & finish of the jobs. The old mattress covers were replaced with fire retardant mattress covers, signs were attached to the wall, including a Permolat flyer & a flagstone was placed in cement at the door step. One of the last jobs we did was to cover a large hole in the ground at the rear of the toilet.





Above: Your volunteers - Alan Jemison, Paul Reid, Martin & Kerry Clapham & Andre Winkelman

Further work

Exterior painting of the hut; build two benches for sitting around the fire; drive-in two more waratahs for the wood shed; track work on the upper side part of the tops track; install plastic PVC sheet under the skylight; south wall window needs replacing or at least a new sill; reinstate the other cooking bench; bunk steps & examine boot flashing for any damage.

Many thanks to

The High-Country Consortium for funding to facilitate this project. Fletcher Anderson from Anderson Helicopters for transportation of both tools & volunteers. Once again thanks to Mauricio Lloreda for donating the new wood burner. Finally, I sincerely appreciate the outstanding efforts & skills of Permolat volunteers Alan Jemison, Martin & Kerry Clapham & Andre Winkelman. I wish to thank Andrew Buglass for opening up the Hokitika valley after 30 years of zero maintenance. Folks, Frisco Hut now has heating & is good for another 50 + years.

By the numbers: 1 hut significantly upgraded by 5 volunteers contributing 250 volunteer hours.

Paul Reid (Project leader)