A BLAST FROM THE PAST
Helene Thivierge visits her old stamping ground

It’s more than ten years since Helene Thivierge worked as a Dance Coach for Alpine Ice’s Coffee Club, so many members will not have met her. But those who remember Helene’s unique coaching style, charming French accent and joie de vivre on ice were excited to see her back in NZ for a brief visit earlier this year. Helene is a resident of Gatineaux in Ottawa and doesn’t get the chance to grace our rink very often. She took the opportunity to get back onto the ice and have a dance or two with Chris Street while she was here. Chris has often partnered Helene in the past - long serving club members might remember their teasing Argentine Tango. You’ll find out on page three what happened when Helene teamed up with Kim Lewis for a tramp. Meantime, if you’d like to see how Helene has been acquitting herself on the ice more recently check this web link of her competing in 2016 ISU Adult Figure Skating Competition with her dance partner Leonard Scharbach. Here too.

Our own club members have been competing in this ISU event too - 2 years later - look out for Alastair’s article on Vancouver Adult Ice Figure Skating Competition in 2018

SYNCHRONISED SKATING SKILLS SESSIONS

The best thing about synchro for a newsletter editor is that it lends itself to wonderful tongue twisting alliterative headlines without one even trying! But for those involved in this discipline it’s the body not the tongue that’s twisting and you do have to try.

The good news is that stylish and accomplished synchro skaters Sasha Seatter and Liam McIver, members of Centaurus Ice Skating Club’s Kia Kaha, are volunteering their time and skills to run some sessions for anyone interested in some practice, irrespective of their skill level. Three sessions are running in the first half of August with more to come if they prove popular and useful. The coaches will be using some of the drills they have picked up from other coaches and from the OneTeam MVMT Camp in Sydney earlier in the year.

Now if you’re not attending these sessions your punishment is to say 10 times quickly

Sasha Seatton’s Synchronised Skating Skills Sessions
That’ll teach you!

Remembering Kath

It was a stunning sunny day in January when the Club took a turn in the Botanic Gardens to remember our late patron Kath Craven, to appreciate all she contributed to the club and especially to reflect on the many walks she had arranged and participated in. A friendly gardener came to the rescue of one late comer, swooping her up on his mini moke and chasing down the group - not exactly a knight in shining armour on a white stallion but June felt truly indebted to this Galahad who had saved her from a hot scurry to catch up. Kath would have had a quick quip for the tardy culprit. We missed you on that walk Kath as we miss you on the ice.
Elvis is in the building;
Vancouver ISU Adult Figure Skating Competition October 2018

I mainly visited Yellowknife to see Aurora Borealis and got to see the lights every night of my stay. Though by far the best show was on my final night. The aurora display was amazing! No charge to see that either.

The week of the competition saw me returning to Vancouver where my first event was a social ice dance evening ahead of the competition (with food). I really enjoyed the evening where dances I’ve learnt and practised at coffee club were put to good use. It was with some fear though….. I didn’t want to fall and injure my dance partner (or myself) with a competition the next day!

On the day of the competition I was the third person to perform right after the opening ceremony. The announcement inviting me to the ice went something like “Representing New Zealand, please welcome to the ice Alastair Christie”. That’s my cue, do your best, make it look good, keep up with the music and most importantly have fun. The ice rink is mine.

Afterwards many people told me how much they enjoyed my performance and watching “Elvis” skate. I think it went down well with the audience. A group of ladies told me how much they liked my performance and watching the male skaters and they thought the sport needs more men….. Wow. I can now say with some pride I’ve competed in an international competition. I really enjoyed the experience, the people, the atmosphere, it was fun and I won gold

A special thanks to Sue and Jeanette for their support ahead of my performance on the day. Thank you to Michelle Carroll, my coach. I wouldn’t be doing competitions without your help. Finally, thanks to our club patron, Kath Craven for your support. I was honoured that you awarded me the Most Improved Skater trophy at Club Champs last year. We will all miss you very much down at the ice rink, RIP.

NZIFSA Skating Tests
Since our last newsletter the following club members have passed these NZIFSA tests

Isabella Smith
Kaitlyn Ingram
Suzy Hosking
Liam McIver

Bronze Stroking
Elementary Pattern Dance & Elementary Stroking
Inter Bronze Adult Pattern Dance
Gold Stroking

Congratulations to these members on their success.

South Island Ice Figure Skating
Champs 2019
The best of luck to the following club members who are competing in SIs in Dunedin this weekend, Aug 17-18

Kirsty Cox
Kaillin Ingram
Jeanette King
Josie Dawber
Aimee Kenworthy

If you have never entered a skating competition, you should, it’s fun and a bit scary at the same time, even though there is really nothing to worry about. After all, what other time do you get to “own the ice”. For about two minutes the rink is yours and they’re playing your music. Once people see you perform they treat you differently.

At the start of the year while at a competition in Dunedin a fellow competitor told me about an adult skating competition in Vancouver during October. That got me thinking about the logistics of a holiday coinciding with the competition in Vancouver. Plans were made, a new passport organised and flights booked. By July it was done, I was going to Canada to represent New Zealand in an international adult ice figure skating competition.

About two weeks ahead of the competition I left for my Canadian holiday. Starting with a Rocky mountaineer train trip that ended in Calgary, followed by a few days in Yellowknife and returning to Vancouver the week of the competition.

While I was in Calgary the weather wasn’t so great and there was heaps of snow about. Good conditions for indoor activities such as ice skating. I had a choice of many ice facilities and decided to skate at their Olympic ice oval, a 400m speed skating circuit built for the 1988 winter Olympics. The building contained a big oval ice track along with two other rinks inside the ice oval. I really enjoyed the experience, skating at an Olympic venue and just chatting to other skaters.

Most towns in Canada have an indoor rink and Yellowknife, a city of just twenty thousand people, had three indoor rinks and they mostly let me use their rinks for free. On one visit the cashier said “I like your accent” and let me through at no cost! Interestingly even at the hottest part of the day the ice rink was much warmer than outside.
WHO’S OUT & ABOUT?

The editor (2nd from left) thought she cut rather a dashing figure galloping along the beach on an Icelandic pony. But photos don’t lie - her feet are almost touching the ground.

Sally Craighill and Simon Horsfall announce the arrival of Miss Kitty

Erstwhile Club members Sally and Rita cross a raging torrent in the Hawdon Valley, Arthurs Pass

Aleks and Sabina take up folk dancing with friends? Or are they just warming up off ice at for 2019 Summer Workshop?

Sally Craighill and Simon Horsfall

WHEN COACHES GO TRAMPING

What could possibly go wrong?

It was Helene’s idea. Yes, our former coach, famed for complaining bitterly on any hiking trip, decided she’d like to mark this visit to NZ by going on a genuine back country tramp. The promise was there would be no complaining. Recruitment began. Who better than former Skate School Director Kim Lewis, keen to try out her tramping legs after a long break from hefty physical exercise. Then just two former Coffee Club skaters and a newsletter editor made up an eager group ready for adventure on the tussock clad hills of Banks Peninsula.

Our goal for day one was Rod Donald Hut, a fairly new hut on Te Ara Pataka, a trail from Hill Top (overlooking Akaroa) to Gebbies Pass. The hut is dedicated to the memory of Rod Donald, co leader of the Green Party until his sudden death in 2005. Starting at Purau Saddle we set off a bit too fast for the steepness of the terrain and the weight of our packs and so we ground along ever more slowly until the towering Monument Peak became a distant bump below.

Our rasping breath meant it was time to ditch any inessentials from those burdensome packs. Kim’s stainless steel water container was jettisoned for collection on the return trip. It felt as heavy when empty as a plastic bottle does when full. While the coaches and aged editor fell to the rear, those who had been deemed remedial skaters in their Coffee Club days forged ahead and were almost lost to sight. We thought the end of the morning would see us rested and refreshed at the hut but it was a sorry six suffering hours before we were able to claim our beds for the night.

A reviving cup of tea would fix us. But wait. The little gas burner is malfunctioning and flames are shooting up and out of it. “Can those things explode?” someone cries. Attempts to smother the flames with a tiny facecloth fail so the most foolhardy of us grabs it and heads to the door. But no! While chucking a fiery burner on a beach and tossing sand on it can quickly extinguish it, the hut was surrounded by tinder dry remnants of precious native forest. “Light no fires” insist the signs. Back into the hut with the offending burner, still shooting flames half a metre high. Running out of options, the most obvious one suddenly strikes us. Preparing for a misadventure just like this DOC has equipped the hut with fire extinguishers and a nifty little fire blanket. Rita spotted it and within seconds it was wrapped around the flames and disaster was averted. Thanks DOC and Duh to us for taking so long to notice it - it was well positioned, easy to get to and perfectly visible. Better still the blanket can be refolded to be used again. Every home should have one. All this before a single drink was poured. The evening was quiet by contrast - old friends catching up, sausages sizzling, beds beckoning.

The next day dawned as hot as the one before and swollen toes and sore backs vied with each other at breakfast. We not-so-hardy trampers, chastened by a long day and near disastrous accident, thought of the delights of the Little River cafe, visible in the far distance. Toiling back up over the tops could surely wait for a cooler day. Brynn could be in Little River with a large rescue vehicle by the time we shambled down for iced coffees. All for one and one for all, we turned tail and fled.

Kim’s water bottle is still on the flanks of Mount Herbert. I’ve been back three times looking for it but that hiding place is elusive. I have a fire blanket in my kitchen and nag others about them relentlessly. $19.99 from Bunnings. Helene didn’t complain - just as she promised. Te Ara Pataka is on our doorstep, Cantabrians. Let’s do it again.
Our ability to subsidise skating sessions and to stage our own club champs this year is dependent on the generosity of our sponsors, listed below.

NZRB donated a substantial sum to the club to cover ice time for members to practise for tests and competitions in terms 1 & 2.

CERT’s donation again this year will cover the costs of hiring the officials’ staging for Club Champs as well as setting it up and dismantling it.

The cost of ice hire is always a significant expense at Club Champs as we need practice as well as competing ice time. One Foundation has generously covered this as well as the cost of microphone hire.

Mainland Foundation is kindly covering the cost of ice hire for members to practise in terms 3 & 4.

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**Centaurus Ice Skating Club Championships 7 July 2019**

**How did our club members perform?**

**Bronze I Ladies Freeskate**
- Josie Dawber 1st/3
- Kaitlyn Ingram 2nd/3
- Aimee Kenworthy 3rd/3

**Bronze II Ladies Freeskate**
- Jeanette King 1st/2
- Linda White 2nd/2

**Bronze II Ladies Interpretive**
- Jeanette King 1st/2
- Linda White 2nd/2

**Gold I Men Freeskate**
- Liam McIver 1st/1

**Junior Men**
- Connor McIver 1st/1

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**CMFSC AGM 2019**

This year’s AGM saw the club appoint its first Life Member - who else but that pesky newsletter editor. We have always had Honorary Members - currently they are Evelyn Brown and Valda and Arnold Schmidt. We are also pleased to keep Daphne Morris (Tekapo), Lesley Anderson (Wanaka), Cheryl Hawksford (Sydney) and Mark House (Florida) as Distant Members. The Committee line up sees many of our old favorites retained - welcome to Trish Weir. Check out the list below.

Editor’s note - Thanks so much, clubbies, for awarding me Life Membership - I am honoured. Also inspired to get a few more newsletters out - Keep those contributions rolling in.