

PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

**P.O. BOX 1217
PALMERSTON NORTH**

NEWSLETTER

April 1997 Edition

Club Patron	: Lawson Pither	357-3033
President	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Vice President	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
Secretary	: Sarah Todd	357-0612
Treasurer	: Peter Wiles	358-6894
Membership Enquires	: Sarah Todd 357-0612 and Warren Wheeler 356-1998	
Trips co-ordinators	: Terry Crippen (356-3588) and Liz Flint (356-7654)	
Gear Custodian	: Mick Leyland	358-3183
Newsletter Editor	: John Philips	358-1874

ENQUIRES CONCERNING OVERDUE TRIPS

Mick Leyland : Ph. 358-3183
Terry Crippen : Ph. 356-3588
Sue & Lawson Pither : Ph. 357-3033

Trips

The Club runs trips each weekend, either overnight and/or day. See scheduled events list below. There are also mid-week tramps. If you are interested in going on a trip, please advise the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips usually leave from the Foodtown car park in Fergusson Street. For general information on the scheduled or alternative tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators: Terry Crippen (356-3588) and Liz Flint (356-7654).

Grade of trip: This is based on what tramping time a reasonably proficient tramper would be expected to cover in. Easy (E) 3 – 4 hours, Medium (M) 5 – 6 hrs, Fit (F) about 8 hrs, Fitness Essential (FE) >8 hrs. (Tech) refers to trips graded technical requiring either special skills and / or gear. Beginners should start with Easy graded tramps.

Members are reminded that a charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance traveled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAMME

Club meetings are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month. The venue is the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North, at 7:30 pm during winter and 7:45 pm during summer unless otherwise notified in the newsletter. Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 30c which includes supper.

The PNTMC committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

<p>Deadline for notices and trip reports for inclusion in newsletter: LAST THURSDAY of each month.</p>

NOTE TO TRIP LEADERS: PLEASE DISCUSS WITH THE TRIPS CONVENOR (TERRY 356-3588), AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT THAT YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO RUN YOUR TRIP AS SCHEDULED. THIS IS SO THAT ALTERNATIVES CAN BE ARRANGED, PUT IN THE NEWSLETTER, OR PASSED ON AT CLUB NIGHT.

APRIL 17 Midweek Tramping Phil Pearce 354-6687

April 19-20 *Pourangaki Valley M/F-F Rosie Bishop 358-9004 (work)
Depart 6:30am Sat. Into the Western Ruahines via Purity, Iron Peg and the start of the Hawkes Bay Ridge. Down into the Pourangaki and the hut for the night. Out via the top end of the Whanahuia Range and Kelly Knight Hut on Sunday. This is spectacular country - a great circuit.

*Note change of date (and locality) to what's on the events card

APRIL 20 Fields Hut E/M Neil Campbell 359-5048
Depart 7am. A visit to the historic Fields Hut just on the bush line above Otaki Forks in the Tararuas. This was where the first Club trip went to, February 1966. Conditions permitting, onto the open tussock tops, just up from the hut. A good first tramp.

APRIL 24 Midweek Tramping Neil Gutry 354-0284

APRIL 24 Club Night "Himalayan climbing" Clive Jones
Clive Jones will be talking and showing colour slides to the Tramping Club on the 24 April club evening. During April 1996, Clive was in an international expedition that attempted to climb Lhotse, near Everest. They were defeated by illness and storms at camp three, at 7300 metres. At the same time, the mountains claimed several fatalities. Guaranteed to be an excellent talk.

ANZAC WEEKEND

APRIL 25-27 Pureora Forest Park

Two trips, both trips departing 7am Friday 25 (ANZAC Day). A chance to visit this extensive outstanding podocarp-hardwood forest which forms the ranges and volcanic peaks west of Lake Taupo. It is well known as the home of the rare Kokako as well as having abundant native bird life in general.

Medium to fit trip Terry Crippen 356-3588

Up the Waihaha river Valley and north along the range, staying at Waihaha and Bog Inn huts or camping out. Over Mt Pureora to meet the others on Sunday.

Easy/family Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Based at Pureora camping areas, tramps onto Mts Pureora and/or Titiraupeunga, a look at the totara forest, the Buried Forest and hopefully hearing/seeing Kokako.

May 1 Midweek Tramping Merv Matthews 357-2858

MAY 1 Committee meeting

MAY 3-4 *Risk Management Course all Terry Crippen
356-3588

Depart 6:30 pm Friday night. This is essential for all leaders and prospective leaders of PNTMC trips. Run by the NZ Mountain Safety Council, it is at the MTSC lodge on the Whakapapa side of

Ruapehu. It will be a combination of theory and practice and should be informative and enjoyable. Cost \$50 which includes accommodation, meals, instruction, and certificate. 16 places only available. Deposit required BY CLUB NIGHT THURS 24 APRIL to secure you place (cheques made out to PNTMC). Application forms and info sheet from Terry. **Also see article under "Notices" this issue.**

*Note change of date from what's on Events Card

MAY 8-9 Midweek Tramping (Whakapapa) John Rockell 358-3513

MAY 8 Club Night Club summer trips

Two longer club trips took place over the holidays. Heather and Lawrence will give a presentation on the four day trip to the Matemateaonga Walkway in the Whanganui National Park while Terry will give a presentation on the Arthur's Pass trip.

MAY 11 *Manawatu Gorge Walkway E Margaret
 Riordan 356-7460

Depart 9am A relaxed morning stroll along a section of the Walkway to stretch the legs and enjoy morning tea outside, returning to town in time for a late-ish lunch.

*Note that this morning trip replaces the overnight trip advertised on the Events Card.

MAY 11 Roaring Stag M names to Christine Scott (leader required) 354-0510

Depart 8am (from PN Police Station). An enjoyable tramp through bush and valley in the north-eastern Tararuas (and a couple of bridges across the river to keep feet dry).

MAY 15 Midweek Tramping Russ Johnson 358-7777

MAY 17-18 Pourangaki M Patrick Janssen 356-3116

Depart 7am Sat Between the Hikurangi and the Whanahuia Ranges, the Pourangaki is a major but less visited western Ruahine valley with two huts, Pourangaki and Kelly Knight. A number of routes possible depending on conditions. Bush, river valley and open tops.

MAY 18 Kelly Knight E Dave Larsen 329-8054

Depart 8am A pleasant stroll through bush of the Pourangaki Valley in the Western Ruahines to Kelly Knight hut for lunch in the sun, possibly meeting up with the weekend trippers.

MAY 22 Midweek Tramping Keith Domett 04 562-7322

MAY 24-25 Jumbo-McGregor F Peter
 Burgess 354-3533

Depart 6am Sat Up to Jumbo hut from the Holdsworth road end of the eastern Tararuas, for Saturday. Come Sunday a horse-shoe loop over McGregor and Baldy. River valley, forest and open tops.

MAY 25 Holdsworth M Richard Lockett 323-0948

Depart 7am A traditional day trip onto the tops of the eastern Tararuas, via a well formed track through forest, and lunch at Powell hut just on the bush line.

MAY 29 Midweek Tramping Vina Cottam 354-5045

MAY 29 Club Night " Sea Kayaking, Chile" Peter Gates

Talk and Slide Show by Peter Gates, of Wellington. Peter is a dedicated Sea Kayaker, and has many stories to tell and pickies to show of sea kayaking in New Zealand waters, especially Fiordland, and the fiords of southern Chile. Guaranteed to be an excellent talk.

NOTICES

EDITORIAL - from the Presidents Keyboard

As incoming President I would like to thank Terry Crippen for keeping the Club on its toes over the last 2 years - its very easy to become complacent but Terry has driven us to upskill in essential areas of expertise such as Outdoor First Aid, river safety, navigation, search and rescue, and risk management. He also streamlined committee meetings by use of such innovations as an agenda (!) and vigorously cut the waffle. Needless to say we won't be missing Terry - he has become my right hand man as vice-president.

Welcome back to all the committee members from last year and to our fresher on the committee, Lawrence Gatehouse. I'm looking forward to continuing Terry's fine example and working with the committee and the new secretary Sarah Todd to help make the Club a better place to be on this little blue planet full of life and watery bits and rocky bits and airy bits.

And stuff called challenges and opportunities. The stuff which I joined the Club to enjoy. With kindred spirits. In harmony. And peace...like when you climb a moonlit Egmont and see the sun rise over a world so calm its breathless. Sure, it may not happen all the time, but it definitely can happen - I hope you had a happening last year but hey, if not, then there's that much more to look forward to in this tramping year, right? Sure.

I look forward to seeing you at Club Nights, on Trips or Instructional events and extend an invitation to all prospective members to come along - you are most welcome and I trust you will enjoy being with us.

I also extend a challenge to all members this year to introduce at least one of your friends to tramping with the Club by bringing them along to a Club Night or on a Club Trip.

See you out there, and good tramping.

Warren Wheeler
President 1997

...AND AN EXTRACT FROM THE FORMER PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 1996/97:

Funding and Gear:

This year we received subsidies and grants from the Hillary Commission and Trust Bank. This enabled us to boost the clubs climbing equipment (ropes, helmets, hammers). (One follow on from this was the auctioning off of old gear). This funding also helped towards FMC instruction course fees.

The Club Newsletter, etc:

Two six-monthly events cards were produced. The Guide for trip leaders came out on card also. The newsletter continues to be a significant monthly document, and is now in the hands of John as the new editor. Lots of good trips are recorded but I would like to see all club trips written up, even if only briefly. Also, in the near future the newsletter printing will become modernised, watch out for it.

Officers, Committee, Helpers, and Members:

I would like to thank all the officers and committee members for their effort in keeping the club running: Tony, Peter, Warren, Mick, John, Nigel Barret, Derek, Sarah, and of course Lawson. Also Alistair Milward and Nigel Scott who moved from PN during the year. A wide range of jobs and tasks were undertaken: secretarial, planning instruction, instructing, supper duties, map and hut pass orders, finances, editing the Newsletter, and printing it, writing submissions, SAR organisation, keeping track of membership, organising speakers, attending committee meetings; to name just some. Thanks again.

Outside of the committee, thanks to Monica as chief round town advertiser, Linda Rowan as one of the SAR contacts (Linda has now stepped down from this), and Brain Lawrence for his great BBQ venue. All those who instructed on courses. Finally all you keen members who supported the tramps and evenings, throughout the year.

In summary:

Plenty of tramping, an increase of instruction, and enjoyable evenings and company continue to make PNTMC a great club to belong to. Thank you. I have enjoyed my two years as President.

Terry Crippen, President 1996/97

Club positions for 1997 are now:

President:	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
Vice-President:	Terry Crippen	356 3588
Secretary:	Sarah Todd	357 0612
Treasurer:	Peter Wiles	358 6894
Trips Co-ordinators:	Terry Crippen	356 3588
	Liz Flint	356 7654
Gear Custodian:	Mick Leyland	358 3183
Newsletter Editor:	John Phillips	358 1874 phillips@mwrc.govt.nz
Membership Enquiries:	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
	Sarah Todd	357 0612

TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

To all of you who would like to contribute articles to this newsletter, small articles are okay hand-written (deliver to John Phillips, 87 Victoria Avenue), but it makes my job a bit easier if larger articles are on disc. Even better, if you have the facilities at home or at work, why not "e-mail" it to me at my work e-mail address which is PHILLIPS@MWRC.GOV.T.NZ.

PLEASE NOTE that I am now editing exclusively on Microsoft Word, and am no longer using Microsoft Works software. If you use any other software, give me a ring on 357-9009 (work) or

358-1874 (home) and I may be able to indicate whether it is compatible or not. If in doubt, a pretty safe bet is to send any files as an “.RTF” (Rich Text Format) file, which can be easily converted from one software format to another.

Please note the deadline for each month's issue on the front page of the newsletter.

CLUB GEAR FOR HIRE

As you have no doubt noticed, there is a questionnaire enclosed with this newsletter. In order to decide what you think the club should consider buying, it seems sensible to know what we own following the club auction. Here is a rough list to guide you, including the new purchases.

5 climbing ropes
1 static rope (for abseiling & top roping but not climbing)
5 ice hammers
10 ice axes
9 pairs crampons (incl 1 pr step-in)
5 climbing harnesses
1 backpack (full-size)
4 tent fly's
misc. Long slings
misc. Rockclimbing protection (nuts, hexes, and friends)
3 figure-8's
3 screwgate karabiners
9 snapgate “

Note: some gear is not available for general use, eg. 4 of the ropes are for use on instruction courses only.

RISK MANAGEMENT COURSE, 3-4 MAY

What is Risk Management?

It is a way of thinking and planning to minimise risks and also formalise safety thinking, for all our tramping and climbing activities. As a club, leaders are responsible for the well-being of people on their trips, so wise planning beforehand, as well as wise management while on the trip, is essential to minimise risk (as a result of terrain, weather, rivers in flood, injuries, etc.), and to promote enjoyment for those participating.

What will you learn on the course? As participants you will learn to:

- accurately assess your personal leadership abilities and how to apply risk management principles in tramping and climbing activities;
- identify the additional knowledge, skills and experience required for your continued development in these activities;
- test your ability to cope with emergencies;
- learn methods of planning and implementation of these activities.

You will also get a certificate for the successful completion of the course.

All leaders and prospective leaders should attend this course, hence there are no other club trips that weekend. It should be enjoyable and worthwhile: ask Liz Flint or Dave Larsen, they went on one last year.

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome two new members to the club:

Margaret Easton	Duncan Grant
Box 5299, PN	452 Ruahine St, PN
Ph 357-8645	Ph 354-8252

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Mike Lane, formerly of 90 Maxwells Line, PN, is now residing at:

23 CUBA ST, MARTON - Ph. (06)327-8208.

CLUB PHOTO ALBUM

We are always looking for photo material to update the club album. This can only come from YOU, the club members! So think about donating copies of some of those photos from those club tramps you have been on recently - they will be fixed in posterity for all to see in the future!

CLUB BADGES

The club now has cloth badges for sale (\$4 each) for sewing onto packs, shirts, etc. See Liz Flint at Club night, or phone her on 356-7654.

FOR SALE

1 Medium boys oilskin parka - navy dry japara. Excellent condition \$30-00. Suit child 9-11+ yrs. Phone Liz 356-7654

FOR SALE

Wilderness Rainjacket, made from 'Reflex' breathable, waterproof material. Large size. Only 18 months old, not heavily used. \$180 ono. Phone John Phillips 357-9009(w) or 358-1874(h)

ODDS & SODS...

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

B. van-Brunt

The World Wide Web provides unlimited opportunity for one to waste time chasing down bits of information not directly relevant to one's job or immediate existence. I must confess that I am addicted to "surfing" the web for information on climbing. In one of my cyber adventures I happened upon a distributor of climbing gear in Russia. Trivia question: name one climbing gear manufacturer based in Russia. If you can't think of any don't feel too bad (the author couldn't either). There are in fact several manufacturers, and it is perhaps more a reflection on our ignorance of the Eastern European/Russian "climbing scene" than on Russian industry.

It is well-known that Titanium is an extremely good material to use in climbing hardware. It is quite strong and has a very high strength to weight ratio (it also has a very high cost to weight ratio in the "West"). It is also relatively easy to care for. Russia is a leading producer of Titanium and it should thus occasion little surprise that gear manufacturers concentrate on Titanium products. What is a pleasant surprise is that the cost of Titanium equipment is not horrific over there.

The distributor I located is called "Ushba Mountain Works" named presumably after Mt Ushba (elev. 4710 m) in the Caucasus. (You can see a photo of it on their web page, contact details below). A quick glance at their catalogue reveals Titanium ice screws priced at \$US39-00 for the fat 6 tooth model and \$US19-95 for the slimmer 4 tooth model. The weight of the former is a mere 125gm and that of the latter is 95gm. Not bad for a 20cm screw; my old Salewa screws weigh at least twice this. Their products are guaranteed and meet all the relevant tests so this is a pretty good deal if they are available in finite time and postage is not too high (always a danger). Other items in their on-line catalogue include lightweight Titanium pulleys, ascenders, and lots of aid climbing stuff like pitons and wedges. For those of you who wish to make a fashion/political statement out on the mountain, Ushba offers the Trotsky Commemorative Ice Axe (no kidding!) As this collectors item is in great demand, Ushba does not list the price-- the reader is directed to get the latest up to the minute price from Ushba via e-mail.

How can I get in contact with Ushba? Their web address is: <http://www.ushba.com>; their e-mail address is gear@ushba.com. I am looking forward to seeing lots of Trotsky axes on Snowcraft II this year (but I had better wear my helmet).

FOOD REVIEW! - ALLIANCE BACK COUNTRY FOODS

by Liz Flint

Have you tasted any from this new range? Believe me they leave the old ones for dead. Not only do they taste better but there's more of them. Here's a few worth trying...

The Beef & Pasta 2-person pack @ \$7-50 left us feeling quite full. To this we added that tiny little bag of dehyd. peas because it was there to be eaten and the result was plenty for 2 good eaters. We had to add a bit more water than the packet stipulated so keep that in mind with the other varieties. If you're a pudding person the cold Lemon Cream Pie @ \$7-50 was just truly magnificent. Instant puddings have lost here. If its a hot pud. your after then the Hot Apple Cobler @ \$5-75 is just the one. I know they're on the expensive side but between 2 they were great.

Alliance have also put out an all natural no cook series too. How do they work? Well you simply bring to the boil 2-1/4 cups of water, stir thoroughly and let sit for 10 minutes. We added a creamy pasta mix as a side dish because we weren't sure how much the packet would swell to. We ate it of course but it wasn't necessary at all. Needless to say no pudding that night. So impressed was I with this tasty, that I've branched out and bought it again for another trip along with Cajun Rice with Chicken. On the downside is the price of \$13-50 and \$13-75 respectively for the 2 person packets but the taste made the price worth it. Interestingly we found more water was required in these dinners also. The food actually tastes quite spicy and the old curry powder I carry in an old 35mm film case will be left behind in future.

There's a list of the new range available at most of our local tramping shops.

...AND A POEM

"Tramping with the Speed Freak"

In the car
ha, ha, ha

On the tramp
run, run, run
(puff, puff, puff)

In the car
ha, ha, ha

“Let’s do it again guys” ?!

- Ever felt like that?

- Anon.

TRIP REPORTS

TARANAKI ROCK-CLIMBING 25-26th January by Clive Marsh

Andy, Zoe, Bruce and I spent a fine weekend sampling the delights of the volcanic rock in the Organ Pipes valley on Mount Taranaki. After walking in from Stratford Plateau to our base at the salubrious Taurangi Lodge we proceeded up to the Organ Pipes which are situated just above (and slightly north of) the infamous Warwick Castle.

From consultation of the guide book the 'left-of-nose' crag at the top of the valley appeared to offer the most suitable routes for us - we were not disappointed. The rock offered good adhesion without being excessively abrasive and the slab-like slope with many cracks provided several well protected (using natural protection) routes in the grade 14-16 range. Steeper and more difficult routes abound in other areas in the valley for the more adventurous. Overall, a pleasant weekend and our voracious appetites were quenched, as usual, by the wonderful folk at the infamous Double Happy, the pearl of Hawera.

RANGIWAHIA HUT 9 February Margaret Riordan

Dave and Dave, Margaret and Margaret, Ken and Sarah headed off for a day in the hills: we had packed our sunblock for this summer trip above the bushline....but you all know what February's weather was like! We arrived at the hut to find a hunter already there with a billy boiled, and several were glad to warm themselves up with the hot drink he shared. For Ken it was a return to tramping after many years away, and we enjoyed hearing about the tramping he'd done in the Otago area in his younger days.

We hope you come back and join us again sometime, Ken, and will try to provide a panoramic view that consists of more than cloud, cloud and more cloud! We were: Sarah Todd, Dave Simcock, Dave Thomas, Margaret Easton, Ken Begg and Margaret Riordan.

TITAHI BAY ROCKCLIMBING February 16 Peter Darragh

“On belay!” Gee its a great day, must get someone to bring up some sun screen, I’m burning! A quick glance at the anchor to which I’m tied (more for my own reassurance... I’ve got further to go) before another person starts the climb up to me. Some are finding the start of this route a bit of a challenge, but everyone tops out.

Once they arrive at my stance I belay them over to where Warren is doing much the same as me, a climb to the side of the “Slab”. Here they abseil, under Terry’s supervision, down to have a go at

another portion of rock face. A full and enjoyable day was had by all, even the injured among us had a go.

Those giving it a go were Warren, Peter, Terry, Vicki, Lyn, Brent, Leo, Zoe, and Jenny.

SEARCH METHODS TRAINING WEEKEND March 1-2 by Terry Crippen

Sound sweeps, purposeful wandering, critical separation, POA's, PLS's, POD's, and LNP's! Sounds like some strange airy-fairy weekend that Warren and I went on. But it was in fact highly informative and enjoyable: looking at the latest techniques for efficient searching, run for NZLSAR (NZ Land Search and Rescue), what the SAR organisation is now called. It was based at Marton and involved activities using these techniques in Santoft forest and along the Rangitikei River. Some of the techniques were used in the SAREX the following weekend. What do the terms mean? POA: Probability of (finding a person in a specific) Area; eg for a thar hunter lost in a certain catchment, the probability that he is somewhere on the tops may be 70%, along the lake edge 5%, on the riverflats 5%, in the bush on the valley side 15%, and ROW 5%. Coupled with a number of POD's the POS is calculated to make the most efficient use of searchers and resources. Sounds complicated?, but that's what search controllers do when running a search. The searchers are then out there "purposefully wandering" etc as required. Anybody work out the other terms?

SAREX - MANAWATU GORGE March 8-9 by David Larsen

Two teams from PNTMC took part in this exercise. Team 8 was led by Warren Wheeler with Kristin, Peter and David, and Terry Crippen along as umpire. Saturday morning through to mid-afternoon was taken up with round robin exercises in various aspects of search and rescue, including helicopter, radio, first aid, tracking, and dog use. After this the scenario got underway.

A party of school children had walked along the gorge track from Ashhurst end and disturbed a wasps nest, causing attacks on some of the children. Fourteen children who had fled remained lost in the bush, with very little provisions or waterproof clothing. Our team's task was to search for the children 50 metres either side of the track, starting from the Ballance end.

The method employed was a whistle sweep involving the four of us proceeding along the track about 20 metres apart, stopping at 60-metre intervals to blow our whistles together, then listen. Once we got a rhythm going this worked fairly well. The weather did its best to make the whole exercise as realistic as possible with steady rain and cool conditions. We camped in the bush for the night, with some sleeping under flysheets and others in tents. The whole exercise was an excellent learning curve on team work, needing the right gear and provisions not only for ourselves but also for the victims. Terry's help with waterproof paper for the messages proved valuable.

Sunday morning team 8 located three of the victims suffering from mild hypothermia. After making them comfortable we were able to walk them out to safety. Certainly it was a very enjoyable weekend with the added bonus of being fed by some of the finest of NZ Army cuisine.

OHAU SHELTER 23 March Margaret Riordan

The 5M's and Eileen left on a dreary kind of a morning, at the civilised hour of 9am, for what we thought might be a cold, muddy trek through to Ohau Shelter. We were pleasantly surprised to find it calm and reasonably warm when we arrived at the carpark. Despite the heavy rain of the previous days, it wasn't too wet underfoot as we headed across the farmland. We strolled at a comfortable pace along the track, enjoying lots of talk and each other's company. Lunch was a pleasant sojourn on the rocks, listening to the roar of the river nearby, and more chat. And still the rain held off...! We had just a wee bit of drizzle on our return, and our sedate pace let us notice the wonders of nature as we passed by: that was quite some spider web! When we were finally ready to leave in our cars....the rain began!

We were: Margaret Easton, Marlene Henderson, Marion, Eileen, Maree Fletcher and Margaret Riordan.

EASTER EGGMONT

March 29-30

by Stuart Hubbard

This trip was cunningly planned to take advantage of the full-ish moon around Easter for a moonlit summit trip. Departed P.N. 5 pm on Saturday, arriving at the Plateau carpark near Stratford around 9.30. Nigel, Wayne & Keith found a spot for a tent near the cars while Peter, Warren and myself elected to stay at the shelter 20 minutes up the track. After much deliberating, we decided that ice-axes would not be necessary, and were left in the car. The moon came out about this time, so we turned torches off. I felt somewhat apprehensive heading up a mountain in the dark, and was glad to be in the company of people who seemed to know what they were doing. Some signs of recent avalanche damage - flattened poles and debris were an indication of the forces of nature.

We had the public shelter all to ourselves, and prepared for a brief 4 hour kip. But there was a small problem. "Warren, did you bring an alarm clock?" "No, I don't even have a watch." However the measured consumption of some of my home brewed dark ale was calculated to trigger a bladder reaction at the correct time. Warren duly woke us about 2.30am, and after breakfasting by torchlight we began our ascent up East Ridge, leaving sleeping bags and mats behind to retrieve later. Moonlight was quite adequate to see our way, so torches were extinguished. The flat light did cause us some problems as we circumvented the Policemen, making distances hard to judge. The view was spectacular, with the towns of Stratford, Eltham and Hawera spread out below us, but with some low cloud rolling in. We had reached the Shark's Tooth about 6.30 as the sun rose behind Mt Ruapehu, bathing us in a reddish light, and silhouetting the peaks of the central plateau.

Dropping down the ridge and through a little tunnel, we crossed a snow covered saddle before reaching the peak proper around 7am. Out with billy and Easter eggs, and the obligatory summit shots, capturing Nigel's sartorial splendour, attired in long sleeved shirt, tie, grey flannel shorts and dubious sunhat. Two others had made it there before us, but many more were on their way up as we descended North Ridge via the Lizard and scree slopes below. I was annoyed with myself for leaving my gaiters down below, as enough small stones to supply an ornamental rockery found their way into my boots.

Below us was the spectacular outcrop of Humphrey's Castle, which provided a spot of rock climbing practice. We followed the Round the Mountain track past Tahurangi lodge back to the Plateau, passing many people along the way. Back to Stratford for ice creams and then the weary drive back to Palmerston, with the odd driver swap as we tried hard to keep our eyes open, arriving around 4pm. An eventful 23 hours.

My quadriceps are still aching as I type this a couple of days on, but well worth it. Thanks Warren for organising this one. An excellent wee jaunt. We were: Warren (leader), Peter D, Keith, Wayne, Nigel B, & Stuart.

TOP MAROPEA (Combined Club Trip) 6 April by Liz Flint

13 eventually set out after we had 2 cancellations. The weather up to Sunrise was quite nice, but as we neared the tops we could hear the wind. The track has to be one of the fastest around having been done up almost to wheelchair standard - certainly you could wheel a baby trolley without any hassle. We had a brew at Sunrise before starting off over to Top Maropea.

The wind was pretty strong (I've got a lovely cut knee to show for being blown over). I note that I wasn't the only one. Eventually 6 of us turned back with 7 continuing to the hut for a quick lunch. The wind came up a bit more with horizontal rain and clag. Ironically however it dropped as the others made their way over the top and across the saddle. The billy was put on for them and another brew was enjoyed. We found that a big tree had blown over the track in the interim, having been split down the middle with the wind.

It was nice to know that Palmerston North was having heavy rain (Malcolm's cellphone). An enjoyable day was had by all. We were: Liz & Arthur Flint, Dave Larsen, Cath Lyttle, Rod McKenzie, Malcolm Parker, Robert & James Bruce, Robert's mate Bill, Carol & John Fitchley, Peter Stockdale, and Alan Rae.