

---

# **PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.**

---

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

**Newsletter - April 1998**

## **\*\*\*THIS ISSUE\*\*\***

**NEWS: even more Net Surfing, AGM Election Results,  
and a competition for a new club logo + newsletter name!**

**TRIP REPORTS:  
Mount Aspiring Part II, Egmont Summit Traverse,  
Pohangina River trips, Holdsworth-Jumbo,  
Sunrise-Waipawa**

## **CLUB NIGHTS**

<b>APRIL 9</b>	<b>“The Pyrenees”</b>	<b>Terry Crippen</b>
<b>APRIL 30</b>	<b>“Himalaya Botany”</b>	<b>Dave Bull</b>
<b>MAY 7</b>	<b>Committee meeting</b>	<b>at Terry Crippen’s</b>
<b>MAY 14</b>	<b>“South Island Caving”</b>	<b>Janet Wilson &amp; Graham Peters</b>
<b>MAY 28</b>	<b>“DOC activities in the Ruahines”</b>	<b>Pat Bonnis</b>

Club nights are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month at the **Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North**. Club nights commence at 7:30 pm during winter and 7:45 pm during summer unless otherwise notified in the newsletter. The PNTMC Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

At the club night: Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 50c which includes supper.

---





If you have ever wondered what lies beneath that range you have walked over, or where the river in a dry valley goes, come along.

May 16-17      Arete-Bannister Crossing      F/FE  
                     Dave Henwood                      326-8892  
 Depart 7am Sat morning. This is the second of the two Tararua crossings this month, this time the northern Tararuas. In from the Ohau side up track though forest to Te Matawai and the tops to Arete Biv for the night. Sunday continuing east via Bannister Ridge, Cow Saddle and Blue Range, coming out at Kiriwhakapapa roadend just south of Mt Bruce. Contact Dave in plenty of time so that transport can be arranged for both sides. Offers of pick up and/or drop off welcome (perhaps someone visiting the Mt Bruce Wildlife reserve?).

May 17              Coppermine Creek              E  
                     Sarah Stratton\*                      353-0387  
 Very handy to PN in the SE Ruahines behind Wharite Peak. A good local muddy spot, with good views in fine weather. Also a chance for a close-up look at the famed southern Ruahine leatherwood belt, from the comfort of a cut track!  
 \*changed from Tony Gates on the Trip Card.

May 21              Thursday Trampers  
                     Kath Little                      329-8608

May 23-24        Longview - Daphne              M  
                     Lawrence Gatehouse              356-5805

Depart Sat morn. A trip to the eastern Ruahines, walking in from the DoC carpark at the site of the old Moorcock base in from Takapau. We climb to the ridge top from the track to Daphne, then open tops south to Longview. . Good views of Hawkes Bay and the central Ruahines. A side trip to the high point is possible. Sunday descend from Longview, either using ridge travel, or a or stroll down the valley if people don't feel keen. Should there be a lot of snow on the ridge then we can go to Daphne instead for a more easy w/end.

May 24              Burn Hut                              E  
                     Llew Pritchard                      358-2217

Depart 8am      Visit a interesting part of the Tararuas, and a rarely visited hut, in from the Mangahao Dams. Last time Llew went there it was in the rain, so this time he wants to see what the forest, small area of tussock tops and hut are like on a fine autumn day.

May 28              Thursday Trampers  
                     Pam Dransfield                      357-0008

May 28              **Club Night: "DOC activities in the Ruahines"** with Pat Bonnis  
 Pat is based at DoC's Ongaonga field centre, on the eastern side of the Ruahines & will talk about the Department's activities in the Ruahine & Hawkes Bay areas. Come & find out about DoC's work in your local tramping grounds.

#### Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trips co-ordinator (Terry Crippen 356-3588, or Liz Flint 356-7654), 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.

#### Trip participants:

If you are interested in going on a trip, please advise the leader **at least three days** in advance. Trips often leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street unless the leader arranges otherwise. A charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance travelled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance. For general information on the scheduled or alternative tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654).

#### \*\*\* OVERDUE TRIPS \*\*\*

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Liz Flint (356-7654), or Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805)

#### NOTICES

FROM THE EDITOR

All kinds of articles, whether trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, or even a product review, are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. If it is a small article, hand-written is okay (deliver to John Phillips, 87 Victoria Avenue) but if handwriting is all you can do, don't let it put you off even large articles.

If you *do* have access to a computer, it does make my job a bit easier if larger articles are on disc. However, more and more people are e-mailing articles to me. If you have the facilities at home or at work, this is a very quick & convenient way to do it - my work e-mail address is PHILLIPS@MWRC.GOV.TZ.

I use Microsoft Word Version 7.0. 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, try sending any files as an ".RTF" (Rich Text Format) file, which can sometimes be easily converted from one software format to another, or the safest bet is to just cut-and-paste your text directly into your e-mail message.

I can also scan photos for inclusion in the newsletter. If you get photos printed off soon after your trip, please consider submitting them as it can add that added dimension of interest that only photos can!

**Please note the deadline for anything to go in each month's issue is the FIRST THURSDAY of the month.**

#### SUBS DUE!!!

Its that time of year again, so please send your cheque to PNTMC at PO Box 1217, or pay Peter Wiles, our Treasurer, at club night. Subs are unchanged at \$30 ordinary and \$35 family.

#### CLUB PHOTO ALBUM

Another plea for items to go into the club album. The album is a bit lean in recent times, so please have a think about what *you* can contribute to the album, especially if you have some from any of the club's summer tramps?

#### CLUB LOGO & NEWSLETTER NAME

It has been suggested that the club could run a competition for a new logo (to replace our present

one based on the stylised-chappy demonstrating the french cramponing technique), as well as for a name for our newsletter.

Time to unleash your creativity & imagination on the club with some suggestions! Alternatively you may ask that the present logo be retained. You can lodge your suggestions or views in writing in the suggestion box at the back of the room on club night **by the last club night in May** (28<sup>th</sup>) for the club's committee to consider at their June meeting. The committee will collate a list of the suggestions & put them to the vote on the evening of the annual photo competition later in June.

#### AGM ELECTIONS

All the previous year's office bearers were returned. They are listed on the back of the newsletter. Welcome to Sarah Stratton as a new Committee member (replacing Derek Sharp). Laurence Gatehouse is also now an additional overdue trip contact.

#### NEW MEMBER

The club has a new member this month:

Nikki Smith  
325 Old West Road  
RD4, Palmerston North  
Phone 354-6886

Welcome to the club Nikki.

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Harley Betts has moved from his old address at 34 Newbury Line RD8, Palmerston North, to:  
658 Pahiatua Track RD1,  
Palmerston North.

Phone number has also changed to 355-4737.

#### NEW KEY FOR TUKINO SKI-FIELD

For those of you who access the eastern side of Ruapehu via Tukino ski-field access road, the gate lock has been changed. PNTMC has a key which is held by Mick Leyland.

#### THE JULY-DECEMBER 1998 EVENTS CARD

Terry C

The next six monthly events card is being planned now. Its time to decide what trips we want: easy walks (eg Coppermine Creek), medium tramps (eg a Rangi Oroua weekend), fit and/or FE tramps (eg a winter day Sawtooth), rock or snow climbing trips, or even odd-ball events; for a day, weekend or longer. All you regular, and up and coming, leaders here is your chance. Phone the

Trip Coordinators (Terry Crippen 356-3588, email: [crippent@landcare.cri.nz](mailto:crippent@landcare.cri.nz)) or Liz Flint (356-7654), BEFORE WE PHONE YOU! Perhaps its that nice relaxed easy grade weekend trip to Sunrise Hut that you what to try your leadership skills on. Or your suggestion could build on the snowcraft instruction that is coming up. And we would like one or more longer scheduled trips over the summer period (like the Matemateaonga and Arthurs Pass trips of the last few summers).

And don't forget Thursday night speakers and activities. Any offers or ideas contact Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805: what about that overseas trip you have just done, or do you know somebody who can give an interesting talk on underwater handgliding for example.

Leaders (Getting Scheduled Trip blurbs into the newsletter):

The committee has decided on a new procedure. Blurbs go straight to John Phillips (the newsletter editor) still a month in advance. So check the Events Card for the trip you are going to lead and phone or email John to save John phoning you (don't forget departure time). So for June trips (these go into the May Newsletter) ring between now and the end of April. Don't forget though, the trips coordinators Terry or Liz still need to be informed of any changes eg. if you can't lead a trip or want to change the date etc. Do this as soon as you know any time before the newsletter gets done, or before club night for last minute changes.

MORE ON THE INTERNET... by Harley Betts

Following Andy's prompt in a previous newsletter I thought I had better come to the party and share a few more pearls of wisdom about gleaning useful information from the Internet! The sites I use most often are pretty biased towards my personal interests - meteorology and photography - but I also have a couple of links with other general outdoors sites. Here are a few of each:

An excellent site (mentioned by Terry in the March 98 newsletter) is the MUAC (Massey University Alpine Club) home page, at <http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/m.u.a.c./pages/frames.htm>. Most useful here is a whole host of links to other outdoors organisations, such as: Tararua Tramping Club, City Rock, Cactus Climbing, Windsurfing and Surfing in NZ,

Recreation Guide and Classifieds, The New Zealand Alpine Club, Christchurch Tramping Club, Land Information New Zealand, NZ Mountain Safety, Canterbury Mountaineering Club, Otago University Tramping Club, Metservice (see earlier article), Canterbury University Climbing Club, NZ Mountain Bike Web Site, and South Island Tramping Tracks. Other worldwide sites are also available here.

If you're looking for employment in the outdoors, you might like to have a peep at <http://www.outdoorsnz.co.nz> which is a really comprehensive magazine-style site on almost anything outdoors, including a jobs column. They even invite you to contact them and put yourself on their "available for employment" list with a short description, although I tried this out several months ago and never heard back (maybe I shouldn't have sent them my photo?).

Most of us have some interest in photography, so here's a bit on "Netting" yourself some good deals. One of the best sites I have found is <http://www.photo.co.nz/photo/index.htm> which is the homepage for Photo and Video International, who are based in Christchurch. They are currently the largest online photo equipment supplier in NZ, and their site is indeed comprehensive. And, as I have discovered, it is very easy to check out some good secondhand gear on their site, contact them with VISA card in hand, and before you know it the requested item is on its way. A great service, but not for those with impulsive tendencies! Also worth checking out are the homepages of the manufacturers themselves, such as Nikon (<http://www.nikonusa.com>), Pentax (<http://www.pentax.com>), Billingham (makers of damn good camera bags, at <http://www.billingham.co.uk>), B+W Filters Ltd (<http://www.schneideroptics.com/filters>), and a whole lot more. Most of these have mail order departments and are only too happy to take your credit card details, but it still pays to check out your local supplier first because some of the overseas firms are pretty heavy on their "shipping charges" which often make overseas purchases uneconomic. Photo and Video International (see above) are the cheapest photographic retailer I have found online in NZ (profit margins around 20 percent), although there may be others who are just as good. However, it definitely pays to shop around as some retailers have horrendous margins of 40-100 percent or

even more! Avoid these like you would avoid a rabid dog.

There are plenty more out there, just try typing in "photographic equipment" as search keywords

and you will be immediately swamped with thousands of address to look at. The armchair photo-shopper's dream!

## TRIP REPORTS

### MOUNT ASPIRING (PART II)

by Andy Backhouse

After shedding crampons & rope on the way down, the whop-whop-whop of a Squirrel helicopter in front of me made me scrutinise the ridge lower down. Choppers are only allowed in that vicinity for rescues, so I knew immediately that someone was in trouble. Jon was standing on an outcrop just beyond the top of the ramp holding an aluminised "survival blanket" overhead to show the pilot wind direction & to guide him in. One rescuer was dropped from the helicopter with radios in hand to set up communications. Only later did we discover that these did not allow us to talk to the pilot.

I rushed down the ridge & found Pete, one of Jon's party, lying on a ledge below the crest of the rocky ridge with his right leg splinted with a pack's internal frame. He had rumbled a daypack-sized rock onto himself about 3 hours before, knocking him sideways. Fortunately it hadn't thrown him any further as there were cliffs below. He had a presumed tib & fib fracture, & with the helicopter's imminent return I had no time or reason to check. He couldn't walk at all, let alone off this ridge so rescue was his only way out.

A cellphone had provided the means of raising the alarm, though reception was marginal. (In 1995, my cellphone did not work from a spot 300 metres away, so I hadn't brought it this time to save weight.) Pete seemed to have been comfortable for most of the preceding hours but confided that he had been feeling sweaty & sick for the last 10 minutes. Five minutes later he passed out for 30 seconds, for a little added drama. We moved him to a bed of packs making him more horizontal to prevent a recurrence, then I put an intravenous cannula in his arm & gave him some more pain relief.

Moments later the familiar sound of a helicopter, but it wasn't the same one. This time we had a Hughes 500, smaller but with a more experienced

local pilot who, we were advised by Geoff Wayatt who had been dropped out of it, would be able to pick up from closer to the spot where Pete lay, rather than up on the snow at the top of the Ramp, which the other pilot preferred. Back at Colin Todd hut, Barry, Clive & others were watching with concern as *two* helicopters buzzed the ridge, wondering what carnage had occurred.

Under the direction of Geoff, we mustered a group of about ten to lift Pete to the pick up point, about 30 metres away, but along a loose & steep sided track. We were very grateful we didn't have to take him further. With impressive skill the pilot, after several abortive attempts, put one skid down a metre or so from us & we hauled Pete aboard.

Down on the glacier he was transferred to the Squirrel, & up on the ridge there was much discussion about the radios, what to do with his pack & gear & so forth. We all grabbed a bit of now very late lunch, picked up gear which had been spread around, & cleared away the syringes, needles, & other similar paraphernalia. We slowly started to head down, realising that with about 20 people around the vicinity, all of us would be going down the same way. Bruce & I found ourselves near the front of the peloton, jostling for position with Anton & Paul. When we reached the abseil slings we joined forces for the 50 metre abseil as both pairs had only one rope. We were following my understanding of the earlier trio's route down the ridge, but Anton wanted to go down first, heading straight down towards the snow of the glacier below. From the top we couldn't hear his call, so we sent Paul down next as he had requested. Much muffled shouting in the wind indicated something was wrong.

Other parties were beginning to arrive behind us at the top. We knew there was a loose "goat track" that avoided this pitch but the prospect of a dozen people meandering around kicking rocks onto each other did not appeal. Luckily Jon, being a

---

guide who usually worked in this area unlike Anton, knew the way down the goat track, though for speed he dropped his pack at the top & headed down. After 5 minutes he was in a position to speak to both Anton at the bottom & myself at the top, & Anton's garbled expletives were decoded. Whilst I complied with these, Bruce was working with another guide, Whitney, to set up another abseil on the other side of the ridge which would avoid the worst loose area of the goat track without heading down the dead end Anton was in.

As soon as we could we gathered up our rope & gear & headed down, catching up with Anton & Paul after the former had had to climb up to another spot to abseil from to get back on route. He had left some protection behind as an abseil anchor & was cursing about that. I apologised for my part in his mistake, but he was smiling & blaming his own poor knowledge of this route. As we continued down we saw the original trio abseil off the same point & on later questioning, we found they had not fallen into Anton's obvious trap, because on their first time down, in high winds & poor visibility, they hadn't seen the glacier below so had forced their way along the ridge as they descended, instead of straight down.

A little way further & another abseil sling marked an easy half rope abseil onto the Bonar glacier. Geoff Wayatt had a guided party on an instruction course camped here, & this explained his appearance at the earlier rescue. He happened to be flying in with clients when his Hughes 500 pilot told him of the events in progress. When the Squirrel pilot couldn't land close, Geoff through his rescue experience knew that his pilot could & they took over. After a brief chat, we headed back to Colin Todd, arriving 7.30pm, somewhat later than planned. Barry & Clive had abandoned the route after Barry began struggling with his leather tramping boots on the steep slope.

The next day was fine again but our late finish made us keen for a lie in. So Barry & Clive went to look at Mt Rolling Pin & beyond, whilst Bruce & I did some rockclimbing on the small overhangs of the Shipowner ridge, just a few metres from the hut.

By now there were more climbers to replace many who had gone out after the previous day's good weather & the 12 in the hut were matched by a similar number camping outside. We had decided against the North Buttress for the next day if the weather held, but we weren't sure what else to do.

It wasn't till that evening that we hit upon the idea of the West face of Aspiring. The approach was basically the same as the SW ridge with the option of finishing up the same gully again or a lower alternative further left. The descent would be down the NW ridge again, but we knew that route so it all seemed attractive. Best of all the weather was still good with only a higher freezing level to spoil things. Clive & Barry had decided to go for the NW ridge route to the summit as this would be more suited to Barry's footwear.

A later start was preferred after our waiting for daylight on the last ascent. Up at 3 & away at 4.10am, this time with Jonathan & one of his group's luckier members from the rescue incident, Debbie, ahead of us with their sights on the SW ridge. We caught up with them at the foot of the W face where they headed out right to the ridge, & carrying on a little further we were at last able to see at close quarters the bergschrund at the foot of the face. On the previous climb it had been dark when we were close to it. We knew that the W face tends to break up & the bergschrund become impassable during January or February. Our route would have to take us up a pile of avalanche debris in order to cross off the glacier. This debris had gouged channels all the way down from the top of the face & by its unconsolidated feel & the recent good weather, we knew much of this had fallen in the last few days. This wasn't a place to hang around. The easiest route across the 'schrund was up the channels, which gave a strong sense of exposure. The sound of water running down a rockface nearby reminded us of the above zero temperature, which would soon bring a constant hail of ice down the route as the day warmed.

We quickly climbed the first step where Bruce, climbing first, spotted something coloured in the snow. A quick excavation revealed an iceaxe, with a karabiner, pulley & 2 prussik loops attached. The axe was not the sort either of us would climb a steep face with, so we were puzzled how it got there. It was where anything that fell down the face would end up. (We recalled that two climbers had fallen off the gully at the top a few weeks before. Both had survived but when we talked to climbers involved in the rescue later they assured us that all their gear was accounted for.)

Musing on this we hurried on up the icy runnels, choosing to traverse right as we climbed to the

---



safety of some rocks. Nothing was coming down the face, but the thought that if anything did, having a rope strung between us was the worst way to be waiting for it. There was no time to take it off however. And once at the safety of the rocks, there was no reason to remove it. Now we could climb around the other side of them away from the main scoop of the face, and the danger.

The face was of quite constant steepness with a soft crust patchily covering hard ice. Tools often needed to be swung rather than daggered, but "pied American" was usually sufficient. We climbed the right side of the face aiming for the snow gully. The alternative exits on the left of the face would have required another traverse of the icy exposed scoop in the centre. As we climbed, we saw Jon & Debbie above us away on our right but the ice from their tools fell on us. When they reached the rocks where they had to deviate left into the gully, they called down that they would wait till we were closer & out of the way. Arriving at the stance, Debbie told us how she was anxious about the gully as she had forgotten her ice hammer, having left it at the hut that morning. So again we came to their aid with the ice axe Bruce had found!

The gully had lost much of the snow it had had two days before, confirming our suspicions about the debris at the bottom. We had the luxury of alternating the lead the reverse way from before, so we could both feel we had led the whole couloir. Another brief visit to the summit & more good photographs, being clearer than the previous time. This time we had lunch on the col at the top of the Ramp without any extra excitement, then headed off down the ridge using the goat track side to avoid an abseil. Then back to the hut around 4pm.

A fine trip even if both main climbing routes were only a short distance apart. Barry & Clive had a successful & enjoyable ascent & had been back for an hour or so.

And the next day we walked out, but that is a story in itself, & so worthy of a write up all of its own.

## EGMONT SUMMIT TRAVERSE

Feb 28 / March 1<sup>st</sup> by Sarah Todd

Dave and I had arranged to meet John at Tahurangi hut on Egmont, Saturday morning. Unfortunately Zeb was unable to join us for this

particular adventure because, as everyone knows, dogs are not welcome in National Parks. Needless to say he showed his disgust by uprooting the lawn.

The weather forecast wasn't promising but a clear view of the mountain as we drove to North Egmont restored some hope. Calf muscles and lungs had a rude awakening as we dragged ourselves up 'the Puffer' from the carpark in cloud, which cleared periodically to give us views of the daunting climb ahead. Shortly after arriving at Tahurangi, a hairy John arrived round the corner to meet us (he had been tramping round the mountain for 5 days). It was with relief that Dave and I unloaded our packs and handed over the extra supplies we had brought up for him.

The next three and a half hours were spent climbing steps, slipping in scoria and clambering over rocks whilst bypassing an endless stream of about 200 people coming from the opposite direction. The local alpine clubs were holding an open climb that day, and there were also a number of private trips and individual tourists. Ages of people in the open climb probably ranged from 10 to 60, experience began at nil and judging from their attire, some of them could have been on a walk along the beach. The weather was supposed to turn bad and the number of guides relative to climbers was minimal. The flashing lights I saw before me were not stars but lemons!

Progress up the mountain was slow but steady. As we were planning to stay the night at Syme hut we had weekend packs and this proved to be a source of entertainment to the hordes. It was with some amazement that these people repeatedly pointed out that we had large packs, a fact that we were not particularly keen to remember.

This was soon forgotten when periodically the cloud cleared to reveal blue skies and the world below. Surrounding us the currents and updraughts of wind produced dynamic cloud displays which could be quite unsettling when standing in a calm spot. We made it to the crater in a sea of cloud with limited visibility but as we sat eating our lunch at the bottom of Shark's tooth, the cloud disappeared and all was momentarily revealed. It clouded over again but John and Dave went to check out the summit while I rested my weary legs and took photos for tourists.

Looking over the south side of the crater we had a clear view of Fanthams and Syme hut but they were surrounded by swirling cloud. Needless to say we found the wind on the way down. We had been very lucky with the weather that day. The rain even held off until we had entered the hut. As the only inhabitants of the hut we made ourselves at home while the weather settled in outside.

Dave and I were aware that John had been living off pasta for five days and as we owed him one from a previous tramp, we had brought steak, red wine and a chocolate fudge self-saucing pudding which was too rich to eat. Dave cooked the tea, assisted by John who kept delving into his pack and pulling out the right piece of equipment at the right time. Meanwhile I assumed the proper position and reclined in my sleeping bag watching the hive of activity before me. We all appreciated our heavy packs while we ate dinner - well worth the effort.

Leaving the debris from our banquet for the morning, John was under instruction to wake us up if he could see a sunrise. We weren't too hopeful judging by the weather outside but he set his alarm anyway. After a fantastic sleep we woke to see a red line across the horizon and although the wind was still quite strong, the sky was clear. Having brought a tripod and an SLR all the way up the mountain for this purpose I was in a mild state of excitement. I proceeded to take three photos before realising that I'd forgotten to focus the camera. Luckily I hadn't missed the best of it.

We were wrapped up in windproof gear for the trip down but this was soon shed as the wind disappeared and it became uncannily still and almost humid. From Dawson Falls we made our way back to North Egmont via the lower tracks. This involved crossing a number of not quite vertical valleys of which only one had a bridge. I was feeling the effects of the previous day's exertions during these brief but steep climbs and progress was very slow.

In between times (the nice flat bits!) I was able to enjoy the awesome forest with moss-laden mountain cedar, mountain totara and kamahi, and was introduced to the appealing Rifleman which seemed to be everywhere. It was a very scenic walk home and apart from the fact that I was totally knackered it was most enjoyable. It had

been a long day and we were quite relieved to finally reach the car.

The drive home was most entertaining as John, who was sitting in the back seat, took it upon himself to abuse a number of tail-gating drivers and proceeded to educate me on the finer points of becoming more aggressive/defensive(?). It was a fabulous trip thanks to our incredible luck with the weather.

We were: Sarah Todd, Dave Simcock and John Phillips.

#### FULL POHANGINA RIVER TRIP

March 7-8

by Warren Wheeler

Dawn is such a lovely time of day it seems a shame that I so seldom see it. On this occasion it heralded fine weather for our trip down the Pohangina Valley. Alison our driver dropped the three of us off on the eastern side of the Ruahine Ranges at 8.30 at the end of the narrow winding Mill Road - the road was good the whole way unlike on other occasions when the loose gravel has meant a walk in up and over the hill.

Without further ado we headed off up the ridge to Longview Hut in unusually calm conditions with a bit of light cloud on the tops which briefly turned to a light drizzle as we reached the hut. While entering our intentions in the log book we read about the windy night before from another party who had already left on their northwards trip. There was also mention of the toilet shed being blown over a couple of weeks previously and it lay rather forlorn some 20m away from the hole in the ground in the tussock.

With no-one else ahead of us, it looked like we would have the whole valley to ourselves. Just along from the hut we veered off the ridge track at the sign pointing down an old slip and found our way into the stream bed - being almost at the very head of the valley it was almost dry. Straight away we had to ease our way carefully around a small waterfall following previous foot-holds in the moss covered rocky bank. This was the trickiest section and from then on it was wet feet but plain sailing down the stream bed to Top Gorge Biv for an early lunch. This hut was in mint condition and seems to have been given a good tidy up recently.

---

---

The river was slowly getting bigger, with wider river flats and deeper gorge sections. Our progress was slower than the last time Graham led this trip and despite 3 or 4 false alarms (each bend looked like the one I remembered from my last stay) the Leon Kinvig Hut didn't appear until almost 4.00pm. We decided we weren't too tired and would press on to Ngamoko Hut as planned, even if it meant getting close to dark - it would mean the next day would be much shorter.

A swim-able gorge section was by-passed by following the markers on the left bank up and over and down again - it made a pleasant break to be in the bush for a change instead of the interminable gravel and rock-strewn stream-bed. Later on a similar little unmarked, but fairly obvious, detour took us up and over a small ridge to short-cut a loop in the river.

Just before dark we took a wee break and assessed our situation. Graham had lost track of where we were but figured we couldn't be far away, and the pine trees planted on the large slip on the left bank in front of us looked like sign of civilisation, but.

Sure enough, just a few minutes later Graham spotted the brick cast in concrete on the right river bank "NZFS Memorial - died 1987"... and "Hut" with an arrow, scratched at the bottom. I showed this artefact to Karen and it took a while for the word H-U-T to sink in but with a huge sigh of relief, broad grins and a high five we congratulated ourselves and scrambled up to the hut in a clearing on a small terrace above the river - instead of the intended 8 hours it had taken 11 hours of leisurely river rambling Kiwi-style, welcome to New Zealand Karen!

It was a calm starry night so we set ourselves up on the verandah and enjoyed a pot luck dinner as the half moon cruised serenely westwards above the trees on the nearby ridge line. After a good nights sleep and feeling none the worse for wear we downed breakfast and headed off at our leisurely pace about 9.00. Graham led the way with his Leki walking stick and Karen and I followed, adopting a routine of linking up for the numerous stream crossings where steep banks, large boulders and deep pools barred the way.

We seemed to be following deer tracks which appeared to be quite fresh in the sand but didn't see any on the hoof. Somehow we missed the Mid-Pohangina Hut - up on a terrace too - until

we passed under the swing-bridge just downstream.

After a brief conference we decided that we would carry on down-river rather than take the maybe easier but notorious up and down sidle-track. This section is quite spectacular and full of huge boulders to route-find around and over. We saw

two blue duck, or maybe the same one twice, and at one point the strong smell of perfume led us to a small cluster of tiny orchids on a boulder face.

The sky was blue, there was no breeze, and if it wasn't for the morning sun being too low to get into the gorge it would have been almost too hot so we were quite happy to get a bit wet. The pools we couldn't get around were not too deep and the water not too cold and there was just one short swim required about a kilometre downstream of the swing-bridge. A chest wade just before lunch gave us an excuse to rest in the sun and dry out.

We reached Centre Creek and the first footsteps of our day-trippers about 3.00. Graham decided we should take the track out as it would be quicker

---

than the river and he didn't want us to miss our rides home(!). The side track high above the river also gave us a chance to see the river from a different view-point - it looked a lot easier in this lower section with a wider bed and fewer large boulders. The one little rapid and gorge looked interesting though.....next time.

The track and the open farmland and papa cliffs were a bit of a shock after the confines of the valley, the boulder gorge scenery, and the untamed wilderness we had just experienced. Graham raced on ahead to alert the waiting day trippers to our whereabouts and at about 4.00 Karen and I strolled across to the remaining four carloads of PNTMC day-trippers sun bathing in the paddock car park - so many people after seeing no-one for two days, so much to say, yet strangely so much to hold to as our own uniquely personal story, impossible to relate. So after a quick swapping of trip raves it was "home James (well, Terry actually) and don't forget the icecreams". Yes Karen, this is "rambling" Kiwi-style.

Although this trip is not recommended for the inexperienced or unfit, it is a wonderful wilderness experience and in fine conditions, with low river flows, and early starts, is quite achievable and I believe is well worthwhile for those who are reasonably fit and adventurous. We were: Graham Roberts, Karen Bevan-Mogg, and Warren Wheeler (scribe).

#### CENTRE CREEK BIV

March 8<sup>th</sup> by Sarah Stratton

Having been previously exposed to Mick's character-building expeditions, I was definitely a starter for an 'easy' jaunt up Centre Creek to the bivvy nestled in the bush. Thinking that it might have been a bit too cool to take a swim, I decided to forego the togs and leave it to chance that I might take a paddle somewhere if it got a bit warmer.

After a comfortable 8.30am start, taking the drive up as far as Pakohu, we took a steep track down to the Pohangina River. This part of the track was the easy bit. Not so sure about the flat terrain promised though! Mick's sister from Australia had planned her footwear according to his original suggestion.

A morning break beside the river gave us an opportunity to rest our legs and practice some rock climbing amongst the large boulders strewn about the river. After the break, there was a somewhat more challenging route that led us towards Centre Creek - more rocks to scramble over and rivers to cross. I was very impressed with the progress made by Theo, Pauline's grandson who, at 6 years, was keeping the pace well, scrambling with the rest and the best!

We reached the bivvy in good time, (where's my prize Mick?), having a long break to stop for early lunch, and check out the sleeping quarters - recognised one or two familiar names in the 'guest' book. Just for fun, and in true Mick style, we opted for the scenic route back from the hut, this time going down the river on the opposite side that we'd come down. This part was where character-building came into play.

It was necessary to make several crossings in pretty deep water, and also to clamber up and over a very steep bluff in one part. I think one of those little river rafts might have come in handy here! Theo, aided by Christine, Pauline and Sarah T, managed to get there, probably drier than anyone else! Good job that the river was quite low!

By the time we were at the end of the Centre Creek 'classic', I decided, along with a few others, that a swim would be just the ticket to finish the trip so, clothes and all, took a bracing dip in the water - Divine! Not far from the end, we took the steep track back up to the road, taking up plenty of sun. Had a good rest at the end, while we waited for the 'weekenders' to emerge from their trip.

The trip was properly topped off by the obligatory ice cream stop at Ashhurst, another chance to stretch those legs and dry out wet clothes, inspect wear and tear etc! Almost all believed that it had been a successful trip-not sure about the easy part, but I'm definitely a starter for some more character building! Thanks Mick!

---

We were: Mick, Tui, Marion, Donna, Brian, Terry, Christine, Pauline, June, Theo, Sarah T, Zeb, and Sarah Stratton (scribe).

### HOLDSWORTH - JUMBO LOOP

March 14-15 by Nikki Smith

Martin, Warren, Karyn, Peter and myself set out for the Eastern Tararuas to meet the lovely Lynn Murphy, our hostess for the weekend! Being the vet one of the group, I was quick to ascertain the medical status of our group - several appeared to be suffering from a rather acute dose of 'hemorrhoids' which were to plague us on our adventure. After some scenic deviation to remotest Masterton (minor technicality) we arrived to 50+ cars at Holdsworth carpark and began to think sleeping mats may have been in order. Due to an ominous and rather annoyingly accurate (for a change) weather forecast, a quick groupie decision to ascend and traverse the tops on the first (rather than second) day turned out to be very rewarding.

The ascent to Powell Hut was via a very well kept (recently upgraded) stony track with a somewhat consistent gradient, just enough to blow out a few cobwebs. Several hours later . . . arriving at Powell Hut we decided to ignore grumbly tums and climb the extra ½ hour to Holdsworth trig for a spectacular view all round - a rare feat in the Tararuas in my experience!

Onwards over three ridges, following the third down, in an exciting race against those we could see coming down and those we could see coming up to fight for the last few bunk spaces! A rather busy wee hut that evening caused some to sleep on the verandah, some to continue home and watch the rugby(!), and two of our own (Karyn and Peter) to make a troopage beyond nose-length of the dunny, into a beautiful clearing amongst dwarf-sized trees (Alice in Wonderland revisited!).

Picking this as a great place to cook dinner (and escape the hoards competing for hut gas rings), Lynn proceeded to try to ignite our dwarf abode with her 1920's cooker, while Warren creatively carved a protective carrot-totem (with a great nose I might add) to guard against the forest goblins. Peter gave us an interesting lesson in how to perfect the one-pot cooking technique, having brought a cooker yet somehow misplacing the fuel (!?). Back to the hut for the dessert, Martin's

tongue twister choc-pud, and a delectable Italian thingy I can't pronounce, which had a different alcoholic beverage for each layer, I'm surprised we didn't wake up with hang-overs!

The beautiful rising moon quickly changed into a very windy, rainy night, for which Peter and Karyn got tea in bed for surviving! We had a very wet descent down a typical picturesque Tararua track (ie. moss-covered forest over a myriad of root systems) and via Donnelly Flats to create the loop back. Our trip was completed with the child-like exuberance it began with, showing our skills (or lack of) playing frisbee, eating ice-creams at the dairy, and playing eye-spy all the way home(?!).

Yes, overall I have to say, a very delightful journey amongst very intriguing company, I'd really recommend either one of the above! We were: Lynn Murphy (leader), Peter Darragh, Karen Burgess, Warren Wheeler, Martin Lawrence, and Nikki Smith (scribe).

P.S. I still can't believe you tramped up there with a watermelon Warren!!!

---