

PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - September 1999

*****THIS ISSUE*****

NEWS:

**Rangi track re-opens, MSC Outdoor First Aid Course,
Tararua 1080 baiting, Botany notes on southern Ruahines**

TRIP REPORTS:

**Burn Hut (Version I and II), Sunrise poetry,
Snowcraft II epic (..the report, that is), Ohau outing**

CLUB NIGHTS

SEPT 9	“Iceland”	Andy Backhouse
SEPT 30	“Climbing & Trekking in the Andes”	Tony Gates
OCT 7	Committee Meeting	
OCT 14	“Ecological Leatherwood Bashing”	Peter van Essen
OCT 28	“Life in the Isle of Skye”	Viv Nichols

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**. All club nights commence at 7:45 pm **sharp**, winter or summer. 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.

UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Trip Grades

Grades of trips can depend on many factors, most especially the weather and state of the track. As a guide, a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the graded trips in about the following times:

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs

Fit (F): about 8 hrs

Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

(T) refers to technical trips requiring special skills and/or gear.

Beginners should start with Easy Grade trips.

Sept 9 Thursday trampers
John Rockell 04 298-1440 Wgtn

**Sept 9 Club Night: "Iceland"
with Andy Backhouse**

Once upon a time a long time ago, there were 4 students, who thought it would be nice to go for a long walk. So they planned a walk across Iceland. Would they survive the duststorms, blisters, petrol leaking out of containers & rockflour in the food, & would the washing up bowl make it. Find out from one who struggled with the repressed memory.

Sept 11-12 Maree's mystery trip F
Maree Limpus 025 395883

Depart 6am. Well its no longer a mystery – Maree's thinking about a Tararua snow trip, heading for the Wairarapa to do the Jumbo-Holdsworth loop, see how the new hut's coming along and all that, and look for missing clues in the murder saga! It will be a fit trip and we may need crampons and ice axes if there are any more winter snow conditions between now and then.

Sept 12 Kahuterawa Loop Bike E,MTB
Stuart Hubbard 356-8782

Depart 9-30am. This is an interesting but not-so-long mountain biking excursion beyond the end of Kahuterawa Rd. Although short (2 hrs incl. breaks), it requires moderate experience (ie. not for the complete novice). The route is mostly along forest tracks with a downhill run back to the starting point. There are some stream crossings,

and conditions could be muddy. Come along for some fun!

Sept 16 Thursday trampers
June Sowerby 355-2690

Sept 18-19-20 Climbing Whakapapa F, T
Terry Crippen 356-3588

Depart 6pm Friday (17th) night and walk up to the NZ Alpine Club hut above the Whakapapa ski field on Mt Ruapehu. This is the opportunity for you to put into practice all those skills you have learnt on the Club's Snowcraft instruction programme. Lots of good climbing to be done on the Pinnacles as well as the various faces, gullies and ridges further up. Bring (borrow) lots of climbing gear, team up with a climbing buddy, and have a go. We have places booked for three days, returning Sunday or Monday nights. Hut Fees per night \$8 NZAC members, \$18 non NZAC members.

(I need to confirm actual numbers of us going in advance, so please give hut fees to me the previous club night ie Thurs 9)

Sept 19 Raparapawai Valley E/M
Merve Matthews 357-2858

Depart 8am. A daytrip a short drive from PN in the Southeast Ruahines exploring some tracks not marked on the maps (but they're there!). Up a ridge track that heads to Keretaki Hut, but turning south before the hut to follow an old hunters track down another spur back to the cars. There is some quite nice bush on this route, with rimu & miro, plus a number of interesting shrubs for the botanists among you. Merv has some botanist's notes written by Graham Pritchard that he may distribute to participants at the beginning of the walk.

Sept 19 Waipawa River E/M
Arthur Todd 323-6246

Depart 7-30am. If you're interested in a daytrip a little further afield than Merve's trip, try this one for something different - in the Sunrise area of the eastern Ruahines. Maybe a chance to explore one of the delightful streams in the Waipawa Valley, depending on the weather & what people would like to do on the day.

Sept 23 Thursday trampers

Sandra Wilson 359-1245

Sept 25-26 Kaweka Range M
Patrick Janssen 350-4600 ext 7175 (wk)
or 021 705 422 (after hours)

Depart 7am. A weekend tramp in the Kaweka Ranges, back of Hawkes Bay to the north of the Ruahine Ranges. Contact Patrick for details.

Sept 26 Harris Creek E
Dave Larsen 329-8054

Depart 8am. A drive up the winding road in from Shannon to the top Mangahao Dam. This will be an easy walk through rather nice bush up the Mangahao Valley as far as Harris Creek, a tributary. Maybe return via the river, water temperatures permitting!

Sept 30 Thursday trampers
Russell Johnson 358-7777

Sept 30 Club Night: "Climbing & trekking in the Andes" with Tony Gates

Tony Gates traveled to Argentina early this year, and got to the summit of two good Andes peaks. He tramped about the place, botanised (deciduous Nothofagus, with red leaves!), and planned several future trips. This is your chance to hear some tales of travelling in South America, and see the pickies.

Oct 2 Sat Atene Walkway M
Richard Lockett 323-0948

Depart 7.30am. This is a fairly easy-going loop track along a ridge over in forest country near the Whanganui River. The ridge follows around an old loop of the river, with views over surrounding countryside.

Oct 2-3 Keretaki Hut-Maharahara E/M
Dave Grant 357-8269

Depart 7.30am Saturday. Keretaki Hut is situated in the Southern Ruahines about 1 hour off the main Maharahara track. We start with an easy walk up the Kumeti stream then climb steeply up onto the ridge, following the main track before branching south. A neat opportunity to walk along leatherwood covered tops without any hassle. Good views over Southern Hawkes Bay. Back the same way on Sunday.

Oct 3 Ngauruhoe M/F,T
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart 6.30am. This is the by now traditional 1995 Ruapehu Eruption Anniversary Ascent up the mighty west face of Ngauruhoe. We crampon up for about 2 hours to explore the steaming crater and enjoy lunch with grandstand views before an exhilarating bum-slide back down.

Oct 7 Thursday trampers
Peter Carver 354-4479

Oct 7 Committee meeting

Oct 9-10 Harley's Ice cream special:
Tongaporutu Beach camp-out E
Harley Betts 355-4737

Depart 7pm Friday night. This will be a very relaxed trip to the magnificent black-sand beaches of the Tongaporutu coast, in North Taranaki. It's about 300km from PN by road, so arrangements have been made to stay at a beach house near New Plymouth on the Friday night to allow for a relaxed start to the Saturday. Bring your camera and lots of film - the coastline at Tongaporutu is one of the more spectacular places in the country and has something of interest for everyone. The plan is to arrive there around mid-morning-to-early-afternoon (depending on the tide) on the Saturday, spending the afternoon exploring the numerous caves, arches and stacks along the beach to the south of the river mouth (again, depending on the tide). Bring your togs too if you're feeling brave enough for an October dip in the Tasman.

Marshmallows, sausages and lots of interesting stories, etc will be required for the evening bonfire on the beach just below the tents (there's heaps of driftwood), and don't forget the potential for sunset photos! Sunday will see a relaxed return to PN in time for dinner, stopping of course in Hawera to pick up the famous 50c ice creams at the "Sunshine Dairy."

Oct 10 Table Top E/M
Liz Flint 356-7654

Depart 7-30am. A leisurely day-trip from Otaki Forks up the western part of the 'southern crossing' in the Tararuas. In to view the historic Field Hut and up onto Table Top for lunch and some views. Back down the same route to Otaki Forks.

Oct 14 Thursday trampers
Carolyn Brodie 358-6576

Oct 14 Club Night: "Ecological leatherwood Bashing"

with Peter van Essen
 Leatherwood - most trampers have bashed through it, some have been stuck in it for hours, most have cursed it profusely. Now is your chance to find out how it functions ecologically. Is all leatherwood the same? What makes it so successful in some places? How does it cope with often extreme climatic conditions? Is it spreading to take over our mountains? This talk will give you the answers so the next time you find yourself leatherwood bashing (both physically and verbally) you can do it in an informed manner.

Oct 16-17 Hikurangi Range M/F
 Mick Leyland 358-3183

Depart 6.30am. A walk up and along this broad ridge in the western Ruahines, taking in Mangaweka, the highest point of the Ruahines. Give Mick a ring for more details.

Oct 16-17 MSC outdoors first aid I/All
 Dianne Sigenthaler 357-7237
 See article in "Notices" section of this issue.

Oct 16-17 Mangaweka Trig M
 Sarah Todd 326-9265

Postponed to Oct 31.

Oct 21 Thursday trampers

Merv Matthews 357-2858

Labour Weekend

Oct 23-25 Whangehu, Ruapehu F/T
 Terry Crippen 356-3588

Leaving 6-30pm Friday. Up the Tukino Road on Ruapehu walking into either the NZAC hut on that side of Ruapehu or DoC's Rangipo hut. The plan is then to use a high level route to give either one or two nights in the head of the Wahianoa Valley on the south eastern side of the mountain. This gives good direct access to climbs on Girdlestone, Tahurangi and Mitre. This is a climbing trip so you will need to be fully equipped.

Oct 24 Kapakapanui E
 Llew Prichard 358-2217

Depart 7.30am. A loop track just inland from Waikanae in the southern Tararuas. We'll be walking up to Kapakapanui Hut on the bushline, continuing on for some views out across Kapiti Island if the weather is fine.

Oct 28 Thursday trampers
 Harry & Chris Allardice 323-4390

Oct 28 Club Night: "Life in the Isle of Skye" with Viv Nichols

Details in October newsletter.

Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trip co-ordinators (Terry Crippen 356-3588, Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805, or Peter Burgess 354-3533), 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 trips please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588), Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805), or Peter Burgess (354-3533).

***** OVERDUE TRIPS *****

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

NOTICES

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

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 at home address: 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, by far the most convenient way is to e-mail it to me, at my work address:

john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz

If you are e-mailing scanned photos, send your scan files to:

postmaster@horizons.govt.nz

where all incoming scan files are automatically quarantined by a software package. It helps to give me notice before sending a scan via e-mail, then I can arrange to have it forwarded to me from quarantine. **Any photo scan files e-mailed directly to me will be automatically rejected** by the system, so make sure you send them to the 'postmaster' address at my work.

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.

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

WHERE HAS THE EDITOR GONE?

I am temporarily working in Wellington, at the Ministry for Environment, from 6th September to 15th October, but the newsletter will still be produced as normal, and the above arrangements for newsletter articles still apply. My e-mails will be automatically forwarded from horizons.mw (the Regional Council), and I will have my home letterbox cleared regularly. So keep sending your trip reports in as usual, but if you need to ring me, I can be contacted on:

(04) 917-7400 (work)

(04) 233-2993 (home)

HELP! Please check your Trip Card.

Can all weekend & Sunday **trip leaders** with trips between **30th October** and **22nd November** please e-mail or post me a short description of their trip (including departure time) to put in the October newsletter. I will have to make a special trip back up to PN on the weekend of 2-3 October to compile the October edition, and this will make my job a lot easier for just this one month. Thanks.

John Phillips

NEW MEMBERS

A big welcome to three new members this month:

Pete McGregor
Pohangina Valley East Road
RD14 Ashhurst
Phone: 021 256-9001

Janice Lloyd and Richard Squires
71 Manawatu St, PN
Phone: 354-9553

Welcome aboard, folks!

POSSUM BAITING IN TARARUAS

DoC is planning aerial 1080 baiting operations this year over 6,500 hectares in the Waiohine, Waingawa and Ruamahanga catchments of the Tararua Forest Park. About 1700 hectares in the more accessible, high use area of the Atiwhakatu Valley will be controlled using ground-based methods such as leghold traps, bait stations and cyanide paste. For further details contact DoC Masterton on (06) 377-0700.

MANAWATU MSC OUTDOOR FIRST AID COURSES

Do you need to update your first aid certificate ? A two day Outdoor First Aid Course 15 - 17 October, bargain price will be your last chance at this price of \$86. From November 1st 1999 it will be \$130. We will be offering Outdoor First Aid Courses which include NZQA modules 6400, 6401, and 6402. Optional NZQA modules can be obtained on October course for an extra \$45 on request. Contact Dianne Siegenthaler phone 06 357-7237 for more information or course bookings.

REVALIDATION OUTDOOR FIRST AID COURSE

A one-day revalidation course (8 hours) will be held (date, venue and cost to be confirmed) next year. This will be available to all previous participants on Outdoor First Aid Courses if you attend a revalidation course before the two-year expiry date. Watch this spot for more information on new revalidation courses being offered by NZMSC. Contact Dianne Siegenthaler phone 06 357-7237 for more information or course bookings.

STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

The track up to Rangī Hut is now open again.

FMC CARDS

The FMC card has arrived for club members. Try to make full use of all the available discounts that are offered. By supporting these it will help FMC to improve future deals for Club members. Apologies for the card arriving a bit late.

Terry

BOTANY OF THE SOUTH-EAST RUAHINES by Graham Pritchard

Common native trees and shrubs on S.E. Ruahine track accessed from Fairbrother Road (take note, those going on Merv Matthews' Raparapawai trip on 19th September).

General notes on the vegetation.

The vegetation in this area is fairly characteristic of the southern region of the Ruahine Range. The overall altitude of the range is lower than further north (not reaching the tussock grassland level), the range is relatively narrow with just a single main divide exposed to high winds and frequent low cloud cover on both sides of the range. [The more complex structure of the Ruahines further north, with high lateral ranges branching from the main divide provides a more varied set of microclimates as well as a greater altitudinal range.] The original forest cover has been removed to varying altitudes on both edges of the range and most of the large podocarps, e.g. rimu, have been extensively milled from the floor and slopes of the valleys, though many large trees (mostly miro with some rimu) remain on the ridge crests.

A distinctive feature of the southern Ruahine region is the absence of beech (*Nothofagus*) forest, (such as is found on the Sunrise track for

example), both the red beech at lower altitudes and mountain beech higher up. In many parts of the southern Ruahines the beech is replaced by kamahi but on this particular ridge track there is very little kamahi to be seen (reason not clear).

The earlier part of the track passes through what is known as mixed podocarp/broadleaf forest. [Podocarps include the large miro, rimu, totara trees; broadleaf include a wide range of others-tawa, rewarewa, hinau and several others. Don't confuse the general descriptive term "broadleaf" with the particular tree called broadleaf (*Griselinia*) which is common in this forest.] Podocarp/broadleaf forest contains a wide range of different tree/shrub species as well as ferns, climbers, epiphytes etc. As you continue further up the ridge track to higher levels, the height of the canopy is much lower and the number of species present is very much less. In some places, the 'forest' consists of almost pure stands of the coloured-leaved horopito or pepper tree (*Pseudowintera colorata*) with just a few associated species.

At the point where the track to Keretaki Hut branches off one emerges into the leatherwood scrub belt, dominated by one main species of leatherwood (*Oleada colensoi*). In other areas of the Ruahines especially in the western area such as on Knight's track or Rangiwahia track, a very distinctive belt of high altitude forest is found just before reaching the leatherwood belt. This forest is characterised by mountain cedar (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) and pink pine (*Halocarpus biformis*). However, in the southern Ruahine region, as exemplified by this track, the mountain cedar is represented only by the stark trunks of dead trees standing out above the leatherwood. The pink pine is still alive and well but there are relatively few specimens evident on this track. The reasons for the deterioration of the mountain cedar are not clear - maybe partly old age coupled with browsing animal damage with climatic change not encouraging regeneration (although in parts of the northern Ruahines, vigorous young stands of cedar can be found).

Common trees and shrubs seen on this track

At lower altitudes (roughly in order of size - first five are the biggest trees):

- Miro (*Prumnopitys ferrugineus*) (I don't think there are any of the related matai)

- Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*)
- Tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*) (mostly just near the start of the track)
- Rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*)
- Hinau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*) (very few - one large specimen at the start)
- Lacebark (*Hoheda populnea* and *H. sextylosa*) (very common initially)
- Lancewood (*Pseudopanax crassifolium*)
- Fivefinger (*Pseudopanax arboreum* & maybe other species)
- Pigeonwood (*Hedycarya arborea*)
- Broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*)
- Horopito - green leaved form (*Pseudowintera axmads*) (very common)
- Mahoe or whiteywood (*Melicytus ramiflorus*)
- Putaputaweta or marble-leaf (*Carpodetus serratus*)
- Heketara (*Oleada rani*)
- Red matipo or mapou (*Myrsine australis*)
- Rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda*)
- Hangehange (*Geniostoma rupefren*)
- Kanono (*Coprosma grandifolia*)
- Numerous small leaved shrubs (mainly *Coprosma* species)
- Tree ferns - I will need to check identification of these

At higher levels

- Horopito or pepper tree - coloured leaf form (*Pseudowintera colorata*)
- Broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*)
- Stinkwood (*Coprosma foetidissima*)
- Toro (*Myrsine salicina*)
- Halls totara (*Podocarpus haul.*)
- Snowberry (*Gaultheria antipoda* & maybe *G. rupestris*)
- Dracophyllum species (sometimes called turpentine bush)
- Small leaved shrubs (*Myrsine divaricata* and *Coprosma* species)

Leatherwood belt

- Leatherwood (*Oleada colensoi*)
- Shiny leaved leatherwood (*Brachyglottis elaeagnifolius*) - need to check this.
- Dracophyllum species (sometimes called turpentine bush)
- Stinkwood (*Coprosma foetidissima*)
- Small leaved shrubs (*Myrsine divaricata* and *Coprosma* species)
- Pink pine (*Halocarpus biformis*)
- Mountain cedar (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) - virtually all dead
- Snowberry (*Gaultheria antipoda* & maybe *G. rupestris*)

TRIP REPORTS

BURN HUT BASK

8 August

by Dave Grant

Just as well we left Foodtown good and early for the Mangahao because by the time we worked out we should have started the tramp from the No.2 dam and not the No.3 dam (which accounts for why we had not been sidling around just above the river, and why that ridge just to the north of us was covered in pine trees), it was 9.30am.

Back to the van and on to No.2 dam. There's even a sign on the other side saying Burn Hut. 10.15am now. Not to worry, the weather is fantastic, and the others in the party have forgiven me already. What a great day tramp it is into Burn Hut. Just enough difficult terrain to provide a bit of a challenge. First there's the picturesque side above the Mangahao through beech, broadleaf and podocarp with a thick understorey

of ferns, and some precipitous glimpses down to deep river pools, then the climb up onto the ridge with wind-shorn miro. Finally we emerged out into the alpine scrub. Leatherwood and dracophyllum with a scattering of red tussock on the tops. And today fabulous views out to the Tasman with the muddy Manawatu river staining the sea, Ruapehu and Taranaki to the north & west, and to the south the Tararuas climbing away to Dundas ridge and Dundas itself showing with a dusting of snow.

We basked in the sun and ate our lunch, then carried on the extra half-hour to Burn hut nestled in the bush on a narrow outcrop. We spent a few minutes cleaning up the mess caused by possums. This is one of the huts that DoC are talking about removing because it doesn't get enough use. This policy should be strongly resisted by PNTMC. The hut was built in 1970, is still sound and is an

investment in the backcountry which couldn't be repeated today. It could even save someone's life on a stormy night.

It was a seemingly quick 2½ hours back through the late afternoon sun to the road and we agreed that it had been a very pleasant day. We were Elaine and Mike Whitton, John Phillips and Dave Grant.

BURN HUT (eventually) – VERSION II
8 August 1999 by Mike Whitton

07:30 Sunday morning, a sharp frost gripped the slumbering town of Palmerston North. Dave stood next to his battered van dressed in shorts waiting for his followers to arrive. Slowly a bleary-eyed crowd, all somewhat overdressed compared to Dave, gathered. Dave issued a command and all four of us (Dave, John, Elaine & Mike) jumped into the van and headed for Shannon with Dave at the wheel. During the 40-minute drive we learned that Dave runs the best Mountaineering Shop in Palmy and that John is the editor of this fine newsletter. With such experienced mountain people in control we felt sure that nothing could possibly go wrong.

We raced through the sleepy town of Shannon and headed into the hills along the Mangahao valley. We reached a dam, seductively named "Dam number 3" and stopped in the empty car park. The sky was cloudless, the air clear, the scenery beautiful and only the scream of a paradise duck pierced the tranquillity of the moment.

"We need a volunteer to write a trip report", said Dave and John in well rehearsed unison, "and your it". "Right, this way" commanded Dave and he expertly navigated us across the dam. However, on reaching the bush on the other side of the dam, doubts began to emerge. Dave appeared hesitant and made several comments like "The path doesn't seem to be going in the right direction" and "we must avoid climbing the ridge". However, such doubts were only momentary and Dave led the way up the forbidden ridge. We emerged 40 minutes later into a clearing above the bush line looking out over a beautiful pine-tree filled valley and a snow-capped Mount Taranaki on the horizon. Dave and John discussed the slight discrepancies between the map and the area we were looking at (something to do with the complete lack of trees on the map and hills not being in the correct

location). "How old is the map?" offered one of the new trampers, "trees do grow quickly round here and with all those tectonic plate movements...". "No" interjected Dave "we started from the wrong dam" and he darted back into the bush from whence we came. Twenty minutes later we were back at the van. Dave told us how easy it is to get dams mixed up, particularly small ones, when visibility is so limited. A valuable lesson to us all.

Another twenty minutes later we were at "Dam number 2" and as the name suggests this was even more spectacular than "Dam number 3". One can but wonder at the nirvana that must await at "Dam number 1" further up the valley, but that treat would have to wait for another day. The presence of a sign stating "Burn Hut this way →" gave us renewed trust in Dave's navigational skills.

[For the sake of avoiding compounding navigational errors, please note that the real sign (out there, at no.2 dam!) has an arrow pointing to the left, not as typed above within the constraints of Bill Gates' software. – Ed.]

The next 40 minutes were spent scrambling along a narrow path with occasional precipitous drops down to the river on our left. Then we turned away from the river and headed up into the dense bush. The track was very narrow and overgrown. Long sections of the walk involved putting our feet through the ferns / vegetation and hoping that there was solid, flattish ground underneath (not always the case). On several occasions we emerged from the bush into clearings where we were treated to excellent, clear views south over the Tararuas and out to the East Coast. Along the way Dave stopped frequently to tell us about the local plant and bird life. Above the bush line the hill was covered with Leatherwood but the faint path led us safely through. Near the summit ridge we found a clear patch for a lunch break with spectacular views out to Taranaki.

After lunch we headed over the ridge and down a steep path for the 400-m walk to Burn Hut. Sadly the inside of the hut was a bit of a mess with rats having ripped open several mattresses and leaving the stuffing strewn around the place. The last human (?) inhabitants hadn't been any tidier than the rats. A flurry of cleaning improved matters and we left the inside of the hut bright and shiny with one bag of compressed rubbish in tow. If it hadn't been for the earlier navigational faux pas, Dave would probably have made us give the hut a

fresh lick of paint. However, the sun was well on its way to Taranaki so it was time to head home.

Dave insisted that the newcomers lead the return journey, (obviously some form of initiation thing, those that fall over a bluff don't deserve to be PNTMC members anyway). This was not too easy with such a faint path but we eventually emerged at the dam (No 2 fortunately) weary, scratched, aching but happy to have experienced such an excellent tramp on such an excellent day.

We were: Dave Grant, John Phillips, Mike & Elaine Whitton

SNOWCRAFT II (WHAKAPAPA)

August 13-15 by Janice Lloyd
(& additional notes in *italics* by Pete McGregor)

Editor Warning:

This trip report has been rated by the *Tramping Club Newsletter Trip Reports Classification Act 1999* and has been graded as follows:

“TRIP REPORT OF MAMMOTH PROPORTIONS” - Occasional coarse language and possible insomnia.

GLOSSARY

“Terryed”: A startled, sinking feeling caused by the realisation that you've just been finagled into doing something you don't want to do.

I was Terryed into writing this article. Knowing that a worthy sequel to Peter M^cGregor's magnum opus on Snowcraft I would be unfeasible I have, therefore, resorted to the advice of a “reliable source” (an RS). I would also like to remind Terry that I have witnesses to his promise of being kind to me in the future, as a writing incentive.

Snowcraft II was prefaced by a Tuesday evening session at the climbing wall at the Massey University Recreation Centre to sort out gear hire, learn basic rope work, how to belay without lynching yourself or someone else, and watch Andy being swallowed by a 50 metre cobra of rope in mere seconds. The event itself was launched from the Foodtown carpark on Friday at 6:30 pm when several vehicles, overburdened with Snowcrafters, climbing gear, snow chains and mountains of food and wine, headed once more for Whakapapa.

As we drove through the night, Terry quizzed Maree about her audition as an extra for The Lord of the Rings. Eventually it transpired that I was the only person in the car who had actually read the book, although Terry had managed The Hobbit. Maree and Bruce seemed vague about the characters.

"I guess I should read it and find out what I'm supposed to be," Maree said.

"And what's that?" I asked, trying to remember where women figured in the tale.

"I think it's something called an orc," she replied.

"An orc!"

"Yeeess...," Maree said, beginning to sound slightly concerned. "What are they like?"

"Ummm, well, they're kind of like goblins," I said, wondering how to be diplomatic. "They're fairly violent and their personal hygiene isn't very good."

"You mean I should pick my nose during the audition?"

"It's probably better to pick someone else's nose.

Or slash them senseless, then pick their nose."

At the Taihape chippy we fortified ourselves with saturated fat before continuing to the foot of the Bruce Road. About a kilometre from the destination carpark the vehicles encountered icy conditions, so snowchains were applied to the non-4WD vehicles and a convoy of cars wound its wary way up the hill. All, that is, except for one. I have it from an RS that Jörg's car attempted to disprove the laws of physics by sporting chains on its rear wheels despite being front wheel drive. I also have on RS that someone sounding remarkably like Tony repeatedly bellowed “I'll shoot them”, as his car was overtaken by everything else on the road.

At the public shelter at the foot of the Bruce we stopped, changed into boots and warm tramping clothes and waited for Charlie's car. We stamped and shuffled and muttered and wondered where he'd got. Eventually we decided that he must have carried on to the carpark, so we started up the Bruce Road. We'd gone only about 50 metres when Charlie's car appeared, driving down the road. They'd been waiting at the top for quite some time. That sorted out, we cruised up behind Tony, who happily inserted his car into a large snowdrift at the end of a line of cars. "I think I'm stuck," he said, grinning happily. Terry parked further down, and we tramped back to Tony's carload. There was still no sign of the other cars. We waited and froze and stamped around and had

circular conversations that fizzled into indecision, then we froze some more. Finally Terry decided to take most of the party to the hut, leaving Tony and one other person to search for the lost cars. I was it.

Fortunately we didn't have far to go. Tony and I followed the smell of burning rubber to its source beneath a steam-enshrouded car not far below the summit of the road. Jörg stuck his head out the driver's window. "The chains don't work," he said. Being Jörg, he was still smiling while his car melted around him. With an extra two people to push, we soon had his car at the top. Tony and I resumed the search for Charlie. Again, the smell of burning rubber, the sound of an engine revving like a mosquito on steroids and a cloud of steam like a goose fart on a frosty morning led us to Charlie's car. He stuck his head out the driver's window. "The chains broke," he said. Being Charlie, he added something I wasn't aware that non-biological objects could do.

On arrival at the hut, Terry Terryed out the chores, which meant my group, the Whiteouts, was once again on dinner duty. A few Gaelic obscenities were heard emanating from the cold store in the basement at 1:15 a.m. as I struggled with another barrowload of vegetation.

A rather chilly night passed and we were awakened at the standard time of 6:30 am with a nice wee cup of tea and a biscuit. We breakfasted well, courtesy of the Middles, on a blend of carbohydrates, protein and fat suitable for a day on a snowy mountain (©Andy's lecture on Snowcraft 1) and, once geared up, set off around 8:30 am into a grey, cool atmosphere.

The Whiteouts, led by Bruce, bristling with his boundless collection of ice axes, headed for a suitably gentle slope on which to learn the rudiments of roping together, setting anchors and belaying in the real world of snow and frozen appendages. Bruce, christened by some wag as the 'Snow Probe', lived up to the sobriquet by disappearing alarmingly at every third step in a rapid, vertically downward direction. Ever the mathematician, he explained it in terms of foot-size-to-weight ratio. We were accompanied by the Middles, led by Alasdair and his amazing rucksack, cleverly utilising Bruce's trail to practice crevasse rescue.

Both Sarah and Maree had flash drinking systems attached to their packs. At least I assume Sarah's was flash - it was mostly hidden in her pack - but Maree's... well, I think she'd acquired it second-hand. She'd written "Platypus" on it in a futile attempt to erase the words "Property of P.N. Hospital", but had completely missed the words "For colonic irrigation only" on the other side. I began to wonder whether the yellowish fluid inside the bladder had come with it, and watched with horror as she drained the contents. "Yes," I thought, "Peter Jackson's hit the jackpot there."

After practicing on more challenging terrain, we ate a late lunch on the slope. I was grateful to my partner Richard for introducing me to cheese and spaghetti sandwiches, and am looking forward to returning the compliment in his lunch box soon. As I ate, I glanced nervously around for signs of the Abominable Snow Chicken that was rumored to inhabit this territory. Meanwhile, elsewhere on the mountain Terry was reportedly demonstrating the Austrian Belay technique to the riff-raff by means of standing on his buried axe and launching into an up and down perpetual belay motion, with elbows and knees shooting off at unfeasible tangents, not dissimilar to a chook on heat. Need I go on?



After lunch we worked with the avalanche detectors. At least those who actually turned the device on did. Not that I'm implying Jens may be less than the perfect choice to rely on for survival in an avalanche. It was a super day. We tortured Damon with snowballs after he had been forced to abandon his own arsenal in order to bury the transmitter, and the weather held out right to the end with only a short period at the top with frozen nasal hairs.

Nyree, having consumed two thirds of the muesli bar proffered by Chris, began to suspect that the

small granules coating the bar weren't put there by the original manufacturers. She brought it over to the entomologist (me) for identification.

"It's caterpillar frass," I said.

"What's frass?" she asked, uneasily. I told her.

"I ate that!?" she shrieked, as Chris the S.N.A.G. doubled over laughing. Seconds later he was still doubled over, but he wasn't laughing anymore.

Back at the hut around 5:30 pm people warmed up and relaxed, and the Whiteouts prepared a concoction of lentils, peas, barley, eye of newt, toe of frog - in fact anything organic that might aid and abet the functioning of intestinal flora while not causing a seven-year-old fellow diner with food allergies to go into anaphylactic shock. As we cooks toiled and cauldrons bubbled, Charlie and Jens obligingly supplied us with coffee and Alasdair lectured on first aid and hypothermia. The snippets I overheard above the sound of a roiling, trouble of evil, green slime were "... I want to live... you die... here have this prehistoric piece of permeable PVC". An RS informed me that he also procured from the bottom of his amazing rucksack ancient pieces of equipment for dubious purposes including a blackened banana skin that he insisted came in handy as an umbrella. Literature was passed around encouraging people to whip the drawers off anyone on the mountain that has an oral temperature of less than 35°C in order to assess the core temperature via the rectum. Consequently, I'm hoping that if I'm ever in a party at risk from hypothermia, I'm assessed before the really cold person.

At 7:30 pm the other Snowcrafters were served a meal of lesser quality than that on the previous trip. In our defense, the contents of the freezer were limiting and yes Richard did get carried away with visions of chilli a l'orange. As clouds of acrid cayenne pepper filled the lounge, another guest was witnessed taking flight, via a shut door, clutching his streaming face and crying "Oh my God, my eyes, my eyes". However, Heather's veggie dish was delicious and although it pains me, Maree's fruit crumble was better than my previous effort. This was washed down with a modicum of mulled wine and the cleverly disguised contents of James's grapejuice bottle.

While we waited for the delicious smells from the kitchen to transmute into the real thing, Charlie attacked a crossword. Eventually he called for help.

"What's a 3-letter word beginning with 'c', ending with 'p', and meaning 'undermine'?" he asked.

We struggled to find a satisfactory fit until we realised that the first letter was 's', not 'c', and the answer was 'sap'. Was it the general standard of conversation that had led Charles to spell obsession as obcession, or had his spelling deteriorated after reading the current membership form for the PNTMC which, without embarrassment, declares that you too can procure a 'singe' for just \$30? I'm still not sure what a singe is, but it sounds like hot stuff.

After dinner, Tony and Terry kindly reiterated the lectures our group had missed while we cooked. These lectures were Routes on Ruapehu and The Mountain Radio. The latter device had earlier flummoxed Charlie, as it turned out to be a sophisticated model with a volume control. Tony, despite his protestations of not being a salesman (yeah, right) managed to flog us several NZ Alpine calendars. Sue declined to commit herself, and managed to hold her ground even when Tony gravely told her that "you're the one who'll miss out". Bedtime reading for our group was Pete's Snowcraft I article. He smiled enigmatically, as only entomologists can, at our obvious enjoyment pointedly ignoring the strange caterpillar-like creatures, and regrettably half caterpillars, that were escaping from abandoned muesli bars.

That evening, as we sat replete around the long wooden tables the conversation turned to favourite breakfasts. Bacon and eggs seemed to figure prominently, and someone casually asked Nyree how she liked her eggs. "Unfertilised," she replied. Later she confided that she'd waited years for an opportunity to use that one.

Richard, Sarah and I had previously been Terryed from our original room, as it had a door and a heater and was therefore reasonably required for the children present, so we retired to our snowcave equivalent. Unfortunately, sleep was elusive as someone stayed up late and played very loud music. I confess to not having an RS on whom that person was but I suspect it was someone sporting an Adidas hat while still managing to look military. Meanwhile, Sarah insisted on dancing the dance of the seven sleeping bags in her furry slippers; however, she will deny it if you ask her. Richard expressed concern that there was no barrier to prevent him from rolling out of his top bunk during the night, but was reassured when reminded that his nose

was still swollen enough from attempting to French kiss his ice axe on Snowcraft I to act as ballast. Meanwhile, all through the lodge Snowcrafters' bellies began to swell insidiously with a conglomerate of fermenting, undercooked peas and kidney beans and someone had a raucous nightmare: probably about being Terryed into washing an infinite supply of tea towels and bathmats with Napisan™ in a smelly toilet.

The next morning, with the luxury of an extra half-hour in bed, the nice wee cup of tea and biscuits arrived on a trolley, pushed by Nyree and pulled by Chris acting as the dumb waiter. He remained silent until a look of relief passed over his face and he unexpectedly commented "your room smells OK". This was followed by Nyree's "the boys' room, 4, is heinous", and then they left, Nyree thoughtfully beeping as she reversed out of the snowcave. As we supped our tea, Richard handed me a gift voucher for a day of pampering, as it was my birthday (of some ridiculously young age). A lovely surprise considering he had been contemplating buying me a chainsaw. I even removed some of my night attire i.e. balaclava to thank him. Perhaps I'll spend the voucher on a professional colour consultation so I can look as coordinated as Sue on Snowcraft III. I'll pay for Tony too if he promises not to wear those orange trousers again.

"Run for high ground!" Sarah screamed. I leaped to my feet and stared around, eyes popping and adrenals like raisins. "Oops, sorry," she said. "My mistake. It was just Tony's trousers. I thought it was a lava flow."

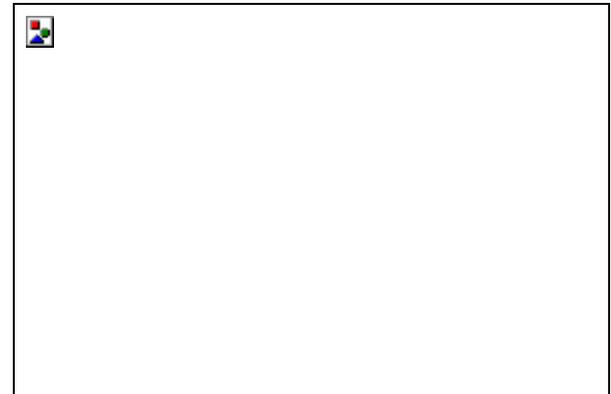
"Yeah, well, every time I fart it feels like one. Musta been that chilli last night," Tony said.

In retrospect the choice of adjective regarding room 4 was accurate. Apparently, James effectively demonstrated that indeed one could snore and emit vapours from several orifices simultaneously; Heather had been compelled to flee for air while the audacious crew chastised her for merely murmuring in her sleep. She came into the lounge gasping and quoting Macbeth - something about doing a runner "...through the fog and filthy air", and muttering that while fair might be foul, foul was also foul and there was nothing fair about this air etc. etc.

The Riff-Raff's Sunday breakfast feast was interesting. I've never seen anyone eat pea soup on toast before, but it was eaten with relish (no

pun intended). Before heading out into poor visibility, where neither the fluorescence of Sarah's pink fleece nor Tony's aforementioned trews could be clearly seen beyond 2 kilometres, the toilets frequently displayed the engaged sign. Then at last we were off on another alpine learning experience.

That day, our group honed their skills. Not once was Sue heard to yell "on belay... no, off belay... no on...just testing...", and I was not observed passing the rope 25 metres one way through the friction device followed by 25 metres the other way and belaying Richard with an excess of slack. (I say not observed, he's well insured.) Bruce continued his tradition of only wearing his waterproof clothing when it was not raining, and somehow he managed to secrete a few extra axes from his person. Alasdair sported one of his "it used to be waterproof 17 years ago" jackets with panache as he confessed to Jörg and James that yesterday they were using the snow stakes the wrong way round. Snow conditions were not appropriate for the use of crampons but other techniques such as use of Dead Men and multiple anchors were introduced and practiced. We headed back to the hut for lunch of leftovers around noon.



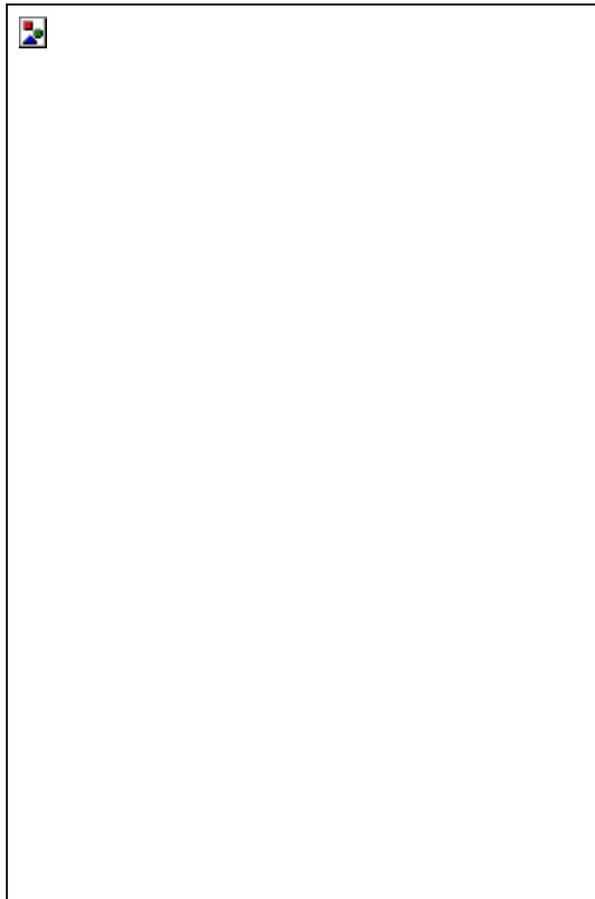
Jörg, who had defected to the Free World only to be partnered with Damon, beat a hasty exit for the carpark with an increasingly broadening grin on his face and a glint in his eye. I later learnt that his partner, currently living in Germany, was arriving in New Zealand that day and they were both off to Rarotonga, which would account for his maniacal expression and overactive endocrine glands.

During lunch, Chris had a near-death experience of the gastronomic kind. He proffered a fistful of brittle shards to Heather, complaining that he had

ground glass in his orange-flavoured mince, but he relaxed when Richard gently explained that when preparing the cuisine he had merely been over-vigorous on pulling the lid off a plastic spice container. So 'normality' was restored.

After lunch and a tidy up session involving Napisan™, a debriefing session proclaimed the weekend a great success and brought to light the fact that Chris actually had died on the mountain due to a nasty wee slip of a Saxon Cross set by an unknown hand. (Exhibit A - an axe with the initials T. C. - has been sent for DNA analysis; results pending.) Interestingly, before being sent back (why, we wonder) to this dimension, he saw enough to assure us that the after-life also consisted of smelly wet climbers like us.

While we packed for the final walk out to the carpark, I happened to notice what type of pack James was carrying. The worn leather tag displayed the Fairydown logo above the words "Breaking Ice". I pointed it out to Chris, who stared blankly for a moment until it registered, and we howled with laughter at the vision of James hunched beneath his pack as he struggled through the blizzard with the rear of his salopettes shredded by long icicles (or should that be farcicles?)



We headed for home at 2pm stopping at the renamed "Brown Fat" café in Taihape (ref: M^cGregor P., July 1999. *Snowcraft I*. PNTMC Newsletter), where only those who had not spent all their money on calendars ate, and where I was Terryed into writing this article that I am thoroughly enjoying procrastinating over. Maree was spied with a bag of carrots rejected by Tony (the carrots, that is), presumably for competing with his clothing, attempting to buy the love of the two yellow dogs who dwell there, and Peter was last seen surreptitiously sporting a conference bag with little spikes protruding from the sides (see above ref.).

Tony's detour at Ohakune had been to purchase carrots. Carried away by their abundance and quality, he'd apparently purchased several hundredweight, and was now distributing them in a futile attempt to get his car off its shock-absorbers. He'd left a carton on the driver's seat of Terry's car. Terry picked them up and walked to the rear of the car.

"Got to fit these in the backside," he said. We burst out laughing, but you could almost hear the sound of four bums clenching.

The rest of the journey flew past with travel-mates Sue, Jens and Richard and me brainstorming material for this article. Jens unwittingly provided some of it by making a lasting impression on Sue's parents when dropping her off at her home. Or at least he did when they saw the one he made on the manicured front lawn. I don't know – give a man from a hot country a set of snow chains and he's out of control...

Sarah rang home at Taihape to allow her partner time to clear the house of war-games. As we drove south she described the idiosyncrasies of war-gaming and war-gamers - such things as the little wisps of cotton wool that get attached to tiny model tanks to represent smoke, so you know they're burning. Terry seemed fascinated. "It makes stamp collecting sound like a normal activity," he said.

"It makes necrophilia sound like a normal activity," I thought, but said nothing.

In summary, Snowcraft II was enormous fun and everyone learned a tremendous amount. Many thanks to the instructors for doing such an excellent job and especially to Terry for organising the whole thing and for giving me so much material to write about. We're all looking forward to the next one – and a final plea from Jens: can he please make a snow cave?

We were:

The Whiteouts: Heather Bewick, Sue Bull, Richard Squires & Janice Lloyd

The Middles: James Gordon, Damon Kostidis, Jens Andreas & Jörg Henning

The Riff-Raff: Sarah Todd, Maree Limpus, Charlie Russell, Pete McGregor, Chris Brausch & Nyree Fea

The Instructors: Bruce van Brunt, Alasdair Noble, Terry Crippen & Tony Gates

P.S. To make up for the Whiteouts not having a three-course dinner made for them on Snowcraft III, I have it from an RS that Terry has offered to carry our rucksacks if we get tired on future trips and will re-waterproof our boots on demand.

SUNRISE HUT

Sunday, 22nd August by Elaine Whitton

I was reliably informed that what the newsletter needed was some poetry - please forgive me if you are a poetry enthusiast, (I haven't moved from the school that says a poem has to rhyme).

Sunday morn,
the weather cloudy and damp,
at foodtown,
gathered nine folk for a tramp.
The plan was to reach,
Sunrise hut for lunch.
The start was early,
so we were glad it wasn't brunch.
As we drove around the ranges,
the hills began to show,
beautifully framed,
by a bright rainbow.
After a two hour drive,
our cars were parked,
we viewed the path,
which is really well marked.
All booted up,
and ready to go,
our mix of attire,
made a strange fashion show.
As we steadily plodded,
up the winding trail,
the wind picked up,
it began to hail.
Undeterred, we admired,
the fauna and flora,
experiencing the forest's
magical aura.
As we neared the top,
a delight for us all,
there lay on the path,
a fresh, white, snowfall.
The top was on
exposed ground,
Luckily the hut,
was soon to be found.
A handy spot for a bite to eat,
and a chance to mend,
Cheryl's blistered feet.
On the way down,
we could see Hawkes Bay.
The clouds had gone,
It was a beautiful day.
We quickly forgot,
the wind and the rain,
and said with confidence,
we must do this again!

We were - Heather & Laurence Gatehouse,
Elaine & Mike Whitton, Cheryl Palmer, Stephen
Liddell, June Norris, Ross Fletcher, Lial Jones.

OHAU RIVER

Sunday, 29 August by Neil Campbell

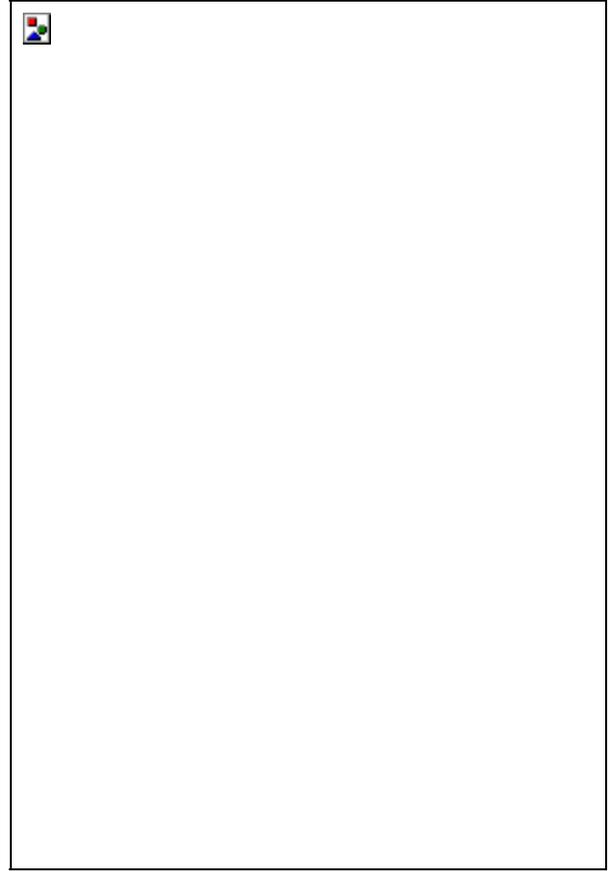
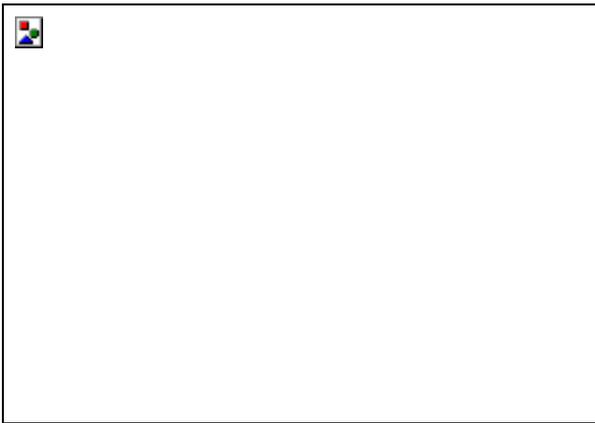
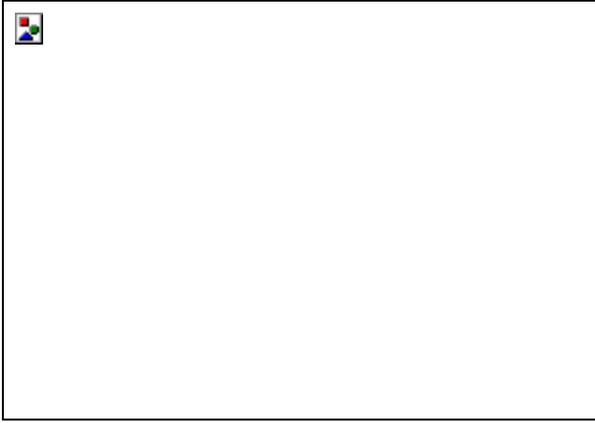
We left Palmerston North at 8am and started walking at 9:10am. To reach the roadend we turned inland at Levin and then took a right turn off Gladstone Road, crossing a narrow bridge. Once we had started walking, it took us about 10 minutes to cross the farmland and reach the bush. We chose to take the track that follows the river. The track is in very good condition and passes through pleasant bushland.

By mid-morning we reached the site of the, now non-existent, Ohau Shelter. There is enough room

here for several tents. We then followed the river until lunchtime and then turned back. We guessed we had got about 40% of the way from Ohau Shelter to South Ohau Hut. This section of the river made for very relaxed walking with the water mostly well below the knee level and a very mild current. There are many deep swimming holes, but it was a little too cold for swimming.

Thanks go to Laurence for leading this trip. We were Heather and Laurence Gatehouse and Neil Campbell.

Some "Lake Crippen" photos from last month's Takapari 4WD Trip:



Club Patron	: Lawson Pither	357-3033
President	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Vice President	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
Secretary	: Sarah Todd	326-9265
Treasurer	: Peter Wiles	358-6894
Membership Enquiries	: Liz Flint	356-7654
	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Gear Custodian	: Mick Leyland	358-3183
Newsletter Editor	: John Phillips	357-9009 (work)
deliver articles/disks to:	87 Victoria Avenue, P.N.	358-1874 (home)
e-mail articles to:	john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz	
Trip Co-ordinators	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
	: Laurence Gatehouse	356-5805
	: Peter Burgess	354-3533
