

PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - September 2000

***** BUMPER SNOWCRAFT ISSUE *****

TRIP REPORTS ON:

**Snowcraft I with a foreign flavour,
Snowcraft II and the igloo people,
Ngauruhoe Climb, + lotsa photos!!
And still a little bush fare . . .
Coppermine Creek and Hemi Matengi**

NEWS:

**Baby Column, interclub photo comp results,
Editor O/E, and President back from O/E**

CLUB NIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 14	Interclub Quiz	
SEPTEMBER 28	“Search and Rescue”	Stewart Davies
OCTOBER 5	Committee Meeting	Sarah Todd's place
OCTOBER 12	“Mr Explorer Douglas”	Graham Langton
OCTOBER 26	“Antartica”	Yvette Cottam

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. A 50c door fee 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.

14 Sept Thursday trampers
Don MacLaine 357-0745

14 Sept Club night: Interclub Quiz
At PNTMC's usual venue & starting time, but sponsored by Mountain Equipment. We are still finalising a team and some openings are still there, so please contact us! Or come along to support our club team in their efforts to repeat last year's magnificent victory.

16-18 Sept Climbing Whakapapa F, T
Terry Crippen 356-3588

Departing 6pm Friday night and heading up to the NZ Alpine Club Hut above the Whakapapa ski field on Ruapehu. We have places booked in the hut for 3 nights giving us the chance of Sat, Sun and Monday to practice all those skills learnt on Snowcraft. With the Pinnacles close by, there is plenty of scope for technical climbing. Also time to head up onto the summit plateau and the high peaks of Ruapehu. Or anything else you want to do. Come for two or three days. (Hut fees per night: NZAC members \$8, non-NZAC members \$18).

16-17 Sept Pureora Forest Park E/M
Cancelled, unfortunately as Barry Scott has to go overseas. As an alternative, the club will run an easy trip of some kind, destination to be announced at the Sept 14th club night, or ring Terry on 356-3588.

21 Sept Thursday trampers
Gordon Clark 359-2500

23-24 Sept Howletts Hut F

Dave Grant 357-8269

Depart 7am. Fresh back from the Pyrenees, Dave will be keen to get back into some great NZ tramping. This trip is a loop in the eastern Ruahines, taking in an overnight stay at the superbly located Howletts Hut.

24 Sept Thompson M
Stephen Liddall 350-3473

Depart 8am. A hilltop in the western Tararuas behind Manakau. If weather is fine, there are good views of Kapiti / Horowhenua area. Wet feet as we must cross the Waikawa stream. Depending upon the weather, can start the tramp either at the end of Nth Manakau road or the Waikawa picnic ground.

28 Sept Thursday trampers
Neville Gray 357-2768

28 Sept Club night: "Search and Rescue"
Stewart Davies

Stewart has been involved with Search and Rescue in the Palmerston North - Levin area for over 20 years, so has a great deal of experience. This promises to be an excellent presentation.

30 Sept - 1 Oct Climbing Whangaehu F, T
Derek Sharp 326-8178

Depart 7am. Derek is offering this climbing trip high on the eastern slopes of Ruapehu. We will be based at Whangaehu Hut, an NZAC hut at over 2000m altitude. Plenty of ice climbing routes and good gullies on this part of Ruapehu, and an opportunity to put your Snowcraft III skills to use.

1 Oct Kapakapanui M
Tony Gates 357-7439

Depart 7-30am. A loop track inland from Waikanae, in the southwest corner of Tararua Forest Park. Some nice forest, with expansive views from the open tops inland across Mount Hector & back out to Kapiti Island.

5 Oct Thursday trampers
Peter Carver 354-4479

5 Oct Committee meeting (Sarah Todd's place)

7 Oct MSC Avalanche awareness M, I

Terry Crippen 356-3588

Essential if you get into the mountains with snow. This course is run by Mark Sedon (a expert on avalanches and snow conditions, based in Ohakune) for the NZ Mountain Safety Council. It involves a Friday night (6th) lecture and the field day on the Saturday (7th). Course cost \$80. We will go up Friday evening for the lecture and stay in Ohakune for the field day. Numbers limited. **BOOK NOW DIRECTLY BY SENDING YOUR \$80 to: Mark Seddon PO Box 234 Ohakune. Specify the dates. Other dates and info are on www.offpiste.co.nz or Mark.Sedon@xtra.co.nz.**

8 Oct Climbing Turoa M,T
Terry Crippen 3563-588

This Sunday of climbing follows on from the Avo awareness Saturday, to give us a full weekend up The Mountain. (or just come up for the day). Lots of options on the south side of Ruapehu.

8 Oct Aircraft wreck, Otaki E
Dennis Moore 357-5651

Depart 8am. A wee jaunt up Waitohu Stream inland from Otaki, then up a spur to an old aircraft crash site in the forest.

12 Oct Thursday trampers
Donna Hayes 328-2878

**12 Oct Club night: "Mr Explorer Douglas"
Graham Langton**

Charlie Douglas (Mr Explorer Douglas) is perhaps the most interesting of New Zealand's explorers, spending the period from 1867 to 1916 exploring the rugged West Coast of the South Island. Some of us have had the pleasure of using Charlie Douglas' road in the Cascade Valley of South Westland. John Pascoe published the 1st edition of Mr Explorer Douglas in 1957. It soon became a classic and collectors item. This year Graham Langton has published a completely revised 2nd edition. Graham is a trumper, mountaineer and historian and specialises in mountaineering history. He gave a very interesting presentation to PNTMC earlier on the history of women climbers in NZ. His Mr Explorer presentation will be equally interesting. So come along for an informative evening.

14-15 Oct MSC Outdoor First Aid Course all
Dianne Seigenthaler 357-7237

14-15 Oct McKinnon Hut M
Mick Leyland 358-3183

Depart 7am. McKinnon Hut is a great location above the bushline at the north end of Hikurangi Range (mid-western Ruahines). Head in from Kawhatau Base, crossing the Kawhatau River via the cableway for the steep grunt up onto the Hikurangi Range. Stroll along the top past some nice tarns and down to the hut. Back the same way Sunday or via the river.

15 Oct Blue Range loop M
Richard Lockett 323-0948

Depart 7-30am. A moderate walk in the eastern Tararuas, heading up Reef Creek to Blue Range Hut & some goblin forest, returning via the track.

19 Oct Thursday trampers
Merve Matthews 357-2858

LABOUR WEEKEND

20-24 Oct Whangapeka - Mt Patriarch M
Tony Gates 357-7439 / 025 246 1901

Five full days in Kauharangi National Park, exploring the Thousand Acres Plateau, and the Matiri Valley. Advance price for Interislander, under \$75.00 pp. Tony plans a midnight departure, midnight Thursday that is, then five days of exploration in Kauharangi National Park, commencing at Murchison, then tramping around the gorgeous hinterland there. There are peaks with names like "Needle" and "Haystack", and probably the best native bird life found in NZ. A lovely spot. Early notification of interest please. We could take extras if necessary.

21-23 Oct Tararua Southern Crossing M
Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805

A chance to do the classic crossing of the Tararua ranges at long weekend pace i.e. suited to the less fit of us. Please express interest at least a week beforehand, mainly to organise transport, then when numbers are settled we can fine tune our plans, organise food and stoves etc etc. and decide on a start time. I've been looking forward to doing this one for a couple of years now and it should be a good time to see the alpine flowers.

22 Oct Kiritaki ridge E
Merv Mathews 357-2858

An area quite close to town in the southeast Ruahines. There are a range of unofficial tracks that offer access into some good areas of forest, with some views. Give Merv a call.

26 Oct Thursday trampers
Carolyn Brodie 358-6576

**26 Oct Club night: "Antartica"
Yvette Cottam**

The Last Continent is a place few of us get a chance to explore. Yvette was part of a Massey Team doing penguin research at Cape Bird over the Millennium Summer Season. Bring your snow goggles and wrap up warm for this one.

Trip participants:

If you are interested in going on a trip, please contact the leader at least three days in advance. Trips usually leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street with transport provided by car-pooling. 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 or any suggestions for future tramps please contact one of the trip coordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or David Grant (357-8269).

Trip leaders: Please discuss with the trip coordinators, 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.

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

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Terry Crippen (356-3588), or David Grant (357-8269)

NOTICES

STAND-IN EDITOR OCTOBER/NOVEMBER... Winter has turned out a pretty good one, if our Snowcraft courses this year were any indication (plenty of SC news in this edition). Just what we needed after the disappointing snows of the past couple of years, but lets hope the recent summers keep happening though, with plenty of good weather to get out and about.

In the meantime, I will be spending this Spring in the autumn of the northern hemisphere, from 30th September to 7th November. Three PNTMC members (Alan Bee, James Gordon and myself) will be trekking the Dhaulagiri circuit in Nepal - not one of the easier circuits, we're told. It is not quite your normal "tea-house" trek commonly experienced on the more popular circuits such as Annapurna. Dhaulagiri involves camping out for a 10-day section of the circuit that follows more remote back-country alpine valleys - not in itself a significant feat, but it includes a couple of days along the Chhonbardan glacier, and -15^oC nights in Hidden Valley, a remote hanging valley at nearly 5,000m altitude. The internet has been a great source of information for us & we are getting prepared for what might be an unforgettable experience.

In the meantime Tony Gates, ably assisted by Warren Wheeler, will be looking after the October and November editions of the newsletter while I am away. So please note the

following temporary arrangements until I return:

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Until John returns on 7th November, please send articles to Tony Gates at horizons.mw (regional council) at 15 Victoria Ave. This is the same street address as John's work, but e-mailed stuff should be sent to Tony's e-mail address, *not* John's:

tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz

We'd prefer you to include your article as an attachment (please use Microsoft Word Version 7.0 or Rich Text Format), unless it is quite a small article, in which case it is fine to type it directly into the e-mail.

Note that e-mails with certain attachments (particularly scanned photos) will be filtered by a "quarantine" system at horizons - you will get an automatic e-mail reply from the horizons 'postmaster', confirming this. Don't worry about this, all material gets through to us once it is checked for viruses etc. by horizons' staff.

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

John Phillips (editor)

FROM THE PRESIDENTS PC

Hej hej everyone, I trust you've been up and about enjoying the adventurous opportunities that the

Club's winter programme has to offer. I have just returned from my summer holiday in Sweden so am a bit out of touch but from all accounts the Snowcraft Courses were very successful once again thanks to the Instructors and also to the great bunch of people who took part. Thanks especially to Terry Crippen as the Course Organiser-Instructor and to Bruce Van Brunt as Chief Instructor. The small profit we made will be useful for the purchase of additional climbing/instruction gear.

Sadly we farewell Andy Backhouse, who along with Bruce Van Brunt helped to develop the successful format of the present Courses. Andy has just left to take up a practice down in Greymouth with his family. We wish you all the best for the future Andy - may the clouds recede the higher you climb.

I was sorry to hear that the K2-Mt Cook Millennium Expedition was cancelled - I guess not everyone is barking mad after all. Still, perhaps you can't improve on last years epic performance. I unfortunately also canned my Sept 9-10 trip into Waterfall Creek Hut - weather horrible and only 2 of us keen. If you are interested in this trip later in say November let me know and we can pick a weekend to suit.

So what about my Swedish trip? I spent 3 weeks of canoeing and hiking in Northern Sweden which was just great. The mozzies were generally not too hungry although repellent and our mozzie net were quite handy in the evenings particularly. Saw reindeer in Lappland but no elk at all. Met lots of Swedish hikers and even a few Germans. The weather at Kebnekaise, the highest peak at about 2100m, was off so instead of the Topp Tour we helicoptered out and did the "Bottom Tour" at the Kiruna Iron Mine - 400km of asphalt roads underground, impressive.

We started our Boutique Wilderness Adventure canoe trip with a couple of Swiss canoeists and they were virtually the only people we bumped into now and again over the 9 days of our lake-river trip on the Harkan River, which started up in Norway. Easy paddling and we didn't get into too much trouble with the waves on the lakes or the shallow rapids. Highly recommended.

David Grant is also back from tripping around in the Spanish Pyrenees and the Lake District. Tony

Gates is still away in South America (again). And soon we'll be looking forward to postcards from John Phillips & crew in Nepal.

Clearly there is a wealth of experience to tap within the Club - both of places in New Zealand and Overseas. Whatever your skill level I hope that the Club helps you to widen your horizons, inspires you to seek new challenges, and assists you to safely achieve them. Check out the club nights coming up and come along for a chat - you may surprise yourself where it leads.

Happy tramping,
Warren Wheeler.

ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER CORRECTIONS

Duncan Hedderly's phone number was wrong on the membership list that came out last month. The correct number is 356-1078. Also, a couple of new addresses didn't make it on to last month's membership list:

Nigel Green
177 Harbour Rd
Ohope, Whakatane
07 312-5710

Sarah Todd & Dave Simcock
452 Turitea Road
RD4, PN
Ph: 354-9933
021-134-2687 (Sarah's cellphone)

NEW MEMBERS

We have two new additions to the club this month:

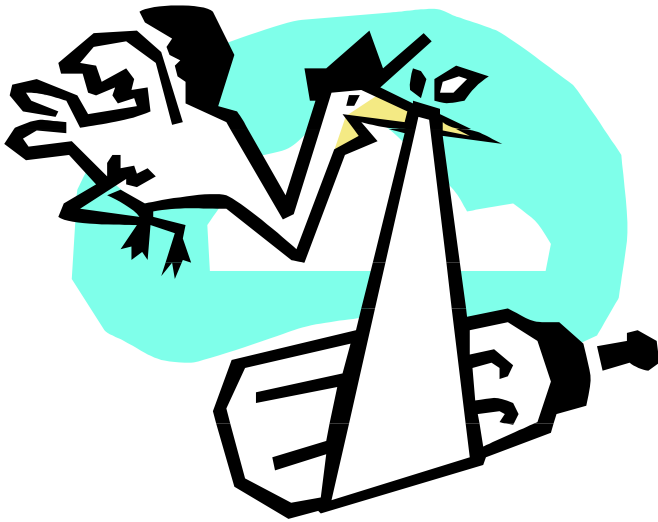
Christine Taylor
307 Kahuterawa Road
R.D.4, PN
Ph: 357-0132

Anneli Baehr
272 Park Road, PN
Ph: 355-0543

Welcome to PNTMC!

And, speaking of additions . . .

PNTMC Baby Column



There are a couple of other new arrivals in our midst, one of them now off to Greymouth with her parents. So we just had to run a special photo feature on these little darlings.

On May 9th, club members Heather and Laurence Gatehouse became proud new parents to Bryony Sian (weight 7lb 11oz). Bryony is progressing well and, I am told, starts at Massey on 18th Sept!



"Still trying to figure out Dad"

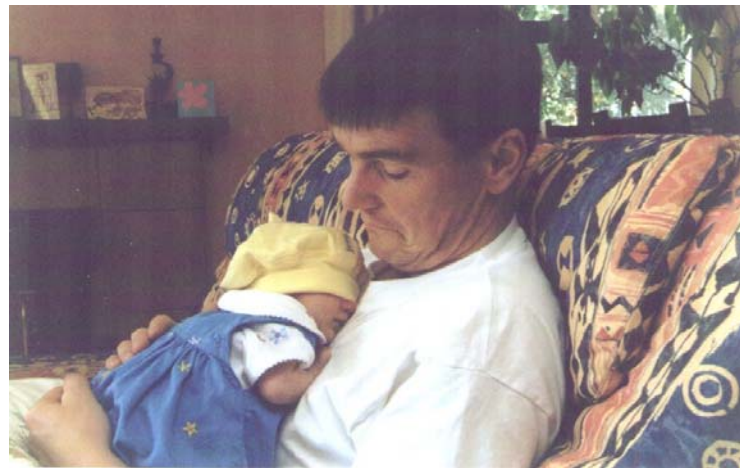


... now is she cute or what?

Zoe Hart and Andy Backhouse are moving to Greymouth with a new family member, Isobel . . .



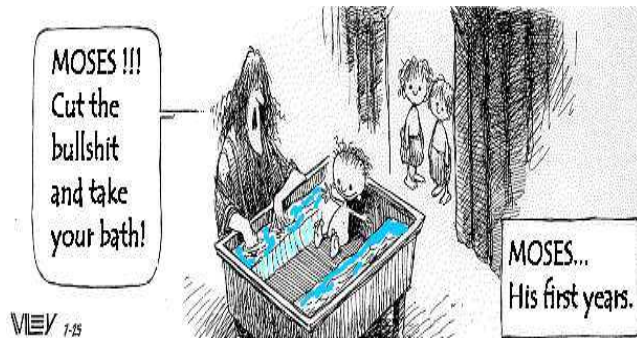
... that looks like a proud Mum too.



... (so does she ever wake up Andy?)

"PNTMC Baby Column", cont'd . . .

It seems both new arrivals aren't being given much respite from getting into training for tramping and mountaineering either. Bryony has frequently been seen wheeled about the streets of central Palmerston North at high speed in an all-terrain buggy, and I believe Isobel is now to be seen in a backpack carrier as her standard mode of transport. Summit photos soon folks?



INTER-CLUB PHOTO COMPETITION RESULTS

A good evening was had by all on the 29th August at the Massey Ag-Hort Lecture Theatre. Many thanks to Ray Corner from the Manawatu Tramping and Skiing Club, who stood in at very short notice to judge competition entries when we were unsuccessful in procuring other judges. Ray's obvious expertise balanced the very one-sided "democratic" influence of the MUAC-dominated audience!!!

Slides:

People and Places

1. "Adelaide tarn hut", Wei (MTSC)
2. "Trampers at Rangi", Tony Gates (PNTMC)
3. "Centennial Hut", Terry Crippen (PNTMC)

Flora and Fauna

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. "Curio Bay" | Harley Betts (PNTMC) |
| 2. "Ice on Tussock" | Tony Gates (PNTMC) |
| 3. "Palliser Bay" | Harley Betts (PNTMC) |

Rock and Alpine

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. "Sharks Tooth" | Tomas Evans (MUAC) |
| 2. "Syme Hut" | Harley Betts (PNTMC) |
| 3. "Blue Lake" | Harley Betts (PNTMC) |

Action

1. "Nikki on Fulljames" Lee Davies (MUAC)
2. "Liz on Rangitiki Dam" Lee Davies (MUAC)
3. "Wave at Castlepoint" Harley Betts (PNTMC)

Humour

1. "Windy Trig on Urupukapuka Is." Laani Uunila (MUAC)
2. "Capoiera" Laani Uunila (MUAC)
3. (no entry)

Landscape

1. "Old hut in Kahurangi NP" Howard Nicholson (MTSC)
2. "Cloud over Auckland Is." Ruth Fleeson (MUAC)
3. "Ruapehu from near Lake Surprise" Wei (MTSC)

Prints:

People and Places

1. "Temporarily Confused" Ruth Fleeson (MUAC)
2. "Snowy Group" Peter Rawlins (MTSC)
3. "Christina, Cairn repairer" Warren Wheeler (PNTMC)

Flora and Fauna

1. "Peacock" Sherman Smith (MUAC)
2. "Takahe" Tony Gates (PNTMC)
3. "Fiordland crested penguin" Aussie Austin (MTSC)

Rock and Alpine

1. "Taranake Nightscape" Harley Betts (PNTMC)
2. "Rock at Ships Creek" Ruth Fleeson (MUAC)
3. "Nelson Lakes" Merv Mathews (PNTMC)

Action

1. "Ruapehu Eruption" Harley Betts (PNTMC)
2. (no entry)
3. (no entry)

Humor

1. "The Deer Hunter" Ruth Fleeson (MUAC)
2. "Sticky Bun" Peter Rawlins (MTSC)
3. (no entry)

Landscape

1. "Lake Angelus" David Jones (MTSC)
2. "Lake Alexandrina" Merv Mathews (PNTMC)
3. "Mangatera gorge" Aussie Austin (MTSC)

TRIP REPORTS

COPPERMINE CREEK

15 July by Monica Cantwell

The day was a little overcast, but very pleasant tramping conditions. Terry picked up Noel and myself on Napier Road at 8.15am. We took the very well maintained track up to the old Coppermine workings and tunnel. Terry, with his new Tripod, determined to get a "first" in the next photo competition, took us up against the tunnel. Murray, armed with torch and camera, headed into the black hole, spying the wetas with his torch, then hoping he'd got it right with the camera. Along the track, very well encased information on vegetation, and old pictures of the workers at the mine site.

We returned the same way, then crossed the stream, and headed up the ridge to the farmland, stopping to have a bite of lunch before we reached the open farmland. Back at the carpark by 1:00pm.

Thanks to Terry Crippen, our leader, Murray Jessen, Noel and Monica Cantwell.

Footnote: It is sad to announce the passing of "Rosemary" Cantwell, the Labrador who has tramped with the club for 9 of her 10 years. She died of Cancer.

HEMI MATENGI

by Duncan Hedderley

So, you're asking yourself, where is Hemi Matengi? Well, you know that wall of hills just behind Waikanae - it's up there. Turn left at the Waikanae lights and thread through some residential streets, and sandwiched between two houses is the entrance to the Hemi Matengi reserve. There's a pleasant half-hour loop track through bush rich in bird life; but if you turn off that, a path zigzags up the hillside. Towards the top of the ridge there's a lookout. I had forgotten how beautiful Kapiti can look on a good day; and the view stretched to the top of the South Island.

We stopped for lunch about 20 minutes later at another lookout, and watched a front moving across Cook Strait. At this point Trish headed back the way we had come, while Liz, Monica and I followed the path on through bush, over several knobs, before a steep drop down to

farmland and a road back to Waikanae. Trish was waiting there with her car, saving us an anticlimatic trudge back to the carpark. We felt the first spits of rain as we were getting into the car.

To round off a pleasant afternoon, Liz offered us tea, biscuits and tales of the West Coast at her house in Waikanae Beach. Thanks Liz. We were Liz Morrison (leader), Monica Cantwell, Trish, Duncan Hedderley, Bonny (Liz's Dalmatian) and Petra (Trish's German Shepherd)

NGAURUHOE CLIMB

July 30 by Christine Cheyne

Writers far more talented than I have been known to write trip reports so I was somewhat daunted by the prospect of taking on the task for the first time, let alone doing justice to the wonderful Ngauruhoe trip that was experienced by six lucky trampers on a Sunday in late July.

It was a magical morning especially once the rays of sunshine - and little bit of warmth - made it on to the frost-hardened ground of the central volcanic plateau. Two groups of PNTMC trampers converged on the fairly congested car park at the Mangatepopo Road end and find themselves in the company of numerous others from Palmerston North who'd accurately anticipated a spectacular day out in Tongariro National Park. These others, and ourselves, made our way up to the saddle between Tongariro and Ngauruhoe in glorious conditions: clear blue skies and brilliant sunshine. The snow on both mountains was somewhat patchy on the northwestern slopes as the winter hadn't really arrived even at the end of July. (A month later the snow cover would be more substantial as we now know.)

At the saddle the groups went in their different directions and soon our party was virtually alone on Ngauruhoe. The rocky ribs provided the best route to the top as the snow was indeed very patchy and also a little icy. Not far from the summit, we resorted to crampons as the terrain was steeper and the pace in just boots a bit too slow for the more chilly conditions (fine still but a brisk breeze). And then we were on the edge of the crater, enjoying spectacular views around 360 degrees.



Near Ngauruhoe summit, with South Crater / Red Crater / Blue Lake beyond. [Photo: Terry Crippen]

It was also time for lunch. Not content with guiding us to such a stunning location, our trip leader brought out black forest gateau, fresh grapes and mandarins and other epicurean delights.

Below us cloud had filled the saddle and it seemed that the weather might be deteriorating. We had an exhilarating bumslide down much of the upper slopes and were very quickly back at the saddle. Compared with the morning tea stop at this point, the visibility was much reduced. However, we could see blue sky through holes in the cloud and, as we descended down the Mangatepopo Valley, Ngauruhoe appeared again through the mist. Light from the rapidly setting sun gave a kind of mystical feeling to the valley. We reached the now-empty car park a little after dark after a leisurely stroll down the valley.

As for me, I learned that there are some awesome trip leaders (thank you Buzz) and that being "terry-ed" into trips with F & T attached to them can actually be enjoyable! We were; Alan Bee (leader), James Gordon, Todd Jenkins, John Phillips, Christine Cheyne, Terry Crippen.

IMPRESSIONS FROM SNOWCRAFT I

by Marcus Deurer

Twelve people with determined faces carrying helmets and axes – a troop of pioneers on their way into the territory of the enemy? No, looking at the bags with fluffy toast bread between them it must be something more enjoyable. It is Friday night and the teams of Snowcraft I gather at the Foodtown carpark.

The first test on this trip was for our noses and stomachs, when we were hit by the takeaways in Taihape. Further we drove through a clear night full of stars and soon we could see Ruapehu in dim moonlight in the distance. We reached the hut after a short walk through powdery snow. Full of expectations everybody fell asleep and dreamt about their own expedition into snow and ice...

Saturday morning I was woken up by some friendly horribly-awake woman giving me tea and a biscuit – this definitely cannot be real, I always thought New Zealand is the worst country for machos. After a rich breakfast with porridge a la klein varken, bacon, eggs and beans we painted our faces with suncream, and started into a sunny bright day with magnificent views. The wind blew strongly at times modeling meandering shapes into the snow. Armoured with crampons we gained self confidence with walking on steep slopes of snow and ice. And of course the grande nations, France and America, invented special ways of safely kicking untouched territory - we learnt the French and American techniques of cramponing.



Marcus on the slopes

[Photo by Tony Gates]

Some beautiful things, such as the glistening steep ice cannot be embraced, and idle staring cannot impress this repellent force. Self-arrest is the only efficient recipe. We exercised it starting from all imaginable positions. In between we refilled the adrenalin storage by glissading down the slopes. For doing so some protected themselves additionally with special talismans. Carlo wrapped himself into the Royal Dutch postman uniform and Anneli wore a bear tooth around her neck. At a wonderful spot with a gorgeous view

Toni, la esquiador “Telemark”, put up his tent as an ultimate shelter showing how plastic bags can be efficiently used as tent anchors when filled with snow.

Hot, tired, full of new experiences, saturated with all this beauty of ice and rock we finally made our way back to the hut. In front of the hut we learnt how to find someone buried in an avalanche if she/he wore one of these pieping devices.

Bruce managed to transmit his enthusiasm about the variety of snow (conditions) lecturing to a bunch of hungry people and Thierry introduced us to the complexity of factors triggering avalanches. Toni added the state of the art of building a shelter. After tea we had moderate amounts of wine and the hut was soon filled with snoring alpinists.



Photo by Tony Gates

Overnight the wind died down and we woke up in silence, no clouds, the first daylight unravelling Taranaki's cone in the distance. Another day full of cramponing, glissading and self-arrest. All of us started to get familiar with moving in snow and ice. Only Christine had bad luck, she cut herself with her crampons and the wound had to be stitched. All others only earned some bruises.



Photo by Terry Crippen

On our way we came across the NZ alpine hut. We sat in the anteroom and I could see only women come out, fully equipped and strikingly happy. As I am not really familiar with the customs in this country I asked Toni, if there are no men in the Alpine club. There are four of them, still inside, exhausted and still sleeping was the laconic answer. Maybe it is not too bad to be an alpine man in NZ?

Around the hut there were nice steep slopes for kicking the crampons in the ice and lots of small rock-ice climbs. At some stage we had to go back to the hut, a verdict that hung over us since we left the hut in the morning. Sad and suppressing the thoughts about the inevitable Monday morning we trotted downwards. Rather numb we did all the packing and cleaning jobs and finally left the scene of this brilliant experience. Beside some coffee we meditated about all the impressions we gathered on this weekend in the Brown Sugar Café in Taihape – I doubt the coffee was strong enough to rip us out of the world of snow and ice yet, that happened on Monday...

Instructors: Bruce van Brunt, Tony Gates, Terry Crippen. Pupils: Stephen Liddall, Christine Taylor, Marcus Deurer, Celine Duwig, Anne

Lawrence, Anneli Baehr, Harley Betts, Karin Weidgrou, Carlo van den Dejssel.



Photo by Tony Gates

SNOWCRAFT I (Version 2) by Stephen Liddell

Not really knowing what to expect, the weekend spent on Ruapehu was a real eye opener for a snow novice like myself. With a bit less snow than desirable, the weather fortunately stayed fine and sunny, though a bit windy on exposed areas, we can't complain. The varied experience of the instructors seemed almost limitless as they passed on essential basics for safe and enjoyable travel in snow (and ice). Being teamed with 2 similar novices - Anne and Karin - meant we could all share the same learning curve.

The use of crampons brought a big smile when it was discovered how the ice could be conquered. The number of topics covered was quite broad: self arresting, snow conditions, use of crampons, and many varied uses of the ice axe - step cutting, self arresting, and as an aid for climbing ascents and descents - meant that by the time we left on

Sunday afternoon, I felt more confident when confronting the white wet stuff.

There was a great mix of people on the course, of which only half were home grown Kiwis, and in a stroke of good fortune we had the lodge almost all to ourselves, so with some excellent cooks in the group the food was really first class, especially the Saturday night dinner although I've never had roast corned beef before.

All in all a really great weekend.

SNOWCRAFT I (Foreign Combo)
"LA CLASSE DE NUIVECRAFT NUMERO UNO, MONTANE VOLCAN RUAPEHU"

Les Montagnes sont in environnement magnifique. J'ai passe` in superbe week end. Merci. Celine.
 The mountains are beautiful. I spent a superb week end. Thanks.

Ee hadden ein geweldige Izd in de sneuw op de vulkan. Carlos.

We had a great time in the snow on the volcano.

"One Snowball" Ich bein oldz daraul werngsten einige blaue Fledeen aun riditigen Platz zu gaben. Und es ist enie Salande diesen wundervollen ost jetzl schon zu verlassen. Annile.

I am proud that at least some bruisers are on the right spot. And it is a pity leaving this wonderful place so soon. It was a great weekend!

Herrlicher, sommerlein, fels, & gis. Wir als lacherdes team dazwisden. Wie sommen wir mur den nachblen Montag iboleben! Vielen Danz. Marcus.

Magnificent sunshine, rock, and ice. We as a laughing team in the middle of all that, how can we survive the next Monday! Thank you.

SNOWCRAFT II

August 19-20

by Harley Betts

The forecast for the weekend of Snowcraft 2 was grim, but nobody complained as we headed northwards to Ruapehu on Friday night. If anything, it gave us hope that we would at last get some snow to play in!

We arrived at the Whakapapa Village at around 9pm, some of us dismayed at the warmth and the sound of gurgling water from melting snow, but ever hopeful that soon the forecast southerly

would arrive to stop the melt and deliver a fresh batch of new snow.

Saturday morning, 6am: Terry and a team of enthusiastic(?) helpers went about wrenching the rest of us out of our peaceful slumber, making the transition from warmth and sleep a bit easier with a morning cuppa and biscuits. "It's still dark, dammit" my tired body pleaded, but to no avail. With auto pilot on, I dragged myself to the bathroom, splashed my face with some water and joined the rest for breakfast as a cold, steely blue-grey dawn began to colour the sky outside.

It wasn't long before snow began to fall, and by the time we got ready to head outside it was falling steadily - great stuff. We split into three groups of about 3 or 4 with an instructor per group, and headed off in search of some decent smooth snow slopes higher up that we could demolish in the name of learning. "Good, good" I could imagine Terry muttering as the snow got heavier and the wind picked up. I was hoping to myself that it would soon get colder though because it was just mild enough for the new snow to melt which meant it didn't take long to get soaked.

While the other two groups continued higher up the mountain, our group stayed relatively low to begin with and refreshed ourselves on belaying techniques by pitching up a snow slope a few times. About halfway through the session, while I was belaying, a huge snowball came out of nowhere and almost took my head off. Bloody hell! Furious (and in a bit of pain), I looked around for the idiot who had thrown it, but to no avail. It turned out that I was standing directly under a chairlift which had decided to shed half its load of snow right on top of me. It seemed that the only thing worse than being hit with a snowball was not being able to blame anyone but myself for standing in exactly the wrong place. Oh well.

Once we'd had a few goes with belaying and putting in snow stakes and/or deadmen, we carried on up towards the NZAC hut where we sat outside in the snow and shivered our way through lunch, not realising that in fact the hut was unlocked. It only became obvious as we were getting ready to go when another climbing party turned up, looked puzzled as to why we were sitting outside looking miserable, and calmly let themselves in. Sheesh....

A few curses later we were on our way back into the snow, which was falling thicker and faster than ever. By this stage it was accumulating noticeably - heavy, wet stuff that negated the need for crampons which, as it turned out, never left our packs during the whole weekend. Moving higher, we found a fantastic little gully that was more or less perfect for more practising of belaying and other ropework, although self-arresting practice was not really an option despite the availability of steep, snow-covered slopes. The stuff was soft to the point where you could launch yourself off the top at full speed, only to land a few feet below with a dull 'splat' in snow the consistency of half-melted ice-cream - without the flavour, unfortunately. We instead concentrated on practising traversing and putting in runners, etc and also did a bit on descending, something easily overlooked when you tend to concentrate on going up.



Photo by Christine Taylor

The snow kept on falling, and by late afternoon it was obvious that the higher slopes were beginning to get quite well loaded with fresh snow so we decided it was time to move back to the lodge for the night. About 35cm of new snow fell between Saturday morning and Sunday morning, which was a real bonus because the snow cover was quite thin beforehand.

Sunday morning, 6am (ever seen Groundhog Day?): The customary shattering of sleep and the tea-and-bikkies routine was followed by an indoor session on belaying and more rope work, before we finally headed out to brave the wind. The snow had stopped falling, but in its place we were blessed with a near hurricane-force southerly which filled the air with spindrift and made the

going pretty damn unpleasant (I won't repeat some of the more colourful descriptions I heard at the time). Trudging uphill in knee-deep soft snow and into blinding spindrift brought out a few choice oaths from most of us, but we were all determined to keep on going. Maybe if we kept climbing we would eventually reach the top of the atmosphere and therefore there wouldn't be any more wind?

After a while we found what seemed to be a suitable spot to practice some more skills - a narrow gully which opened out towards the summit, and which appeared to act as a funnel for all the wind in the whole universe. The force of the wind was unbelievable but exhilarating (well I thought so), and encouraged us to start thinking about building some form of shelter in order to learn about how effective a snow shelter could be - although I expect the real reason was that we just wanted to get out of that damn wind before we all got blown away. About an hour later, a perfect igloo had appeared.



Photo by Harley Betts

We found it was surprisingly easy to cut snow blocks with the pick of an ice axe, and once our "lego house" was fully constructed we all crawled inside for a bite to eat. God it was good to be out of the wind! The quietness and relative calm of the igloo was in stark contrast to the screaming wind outside, and there was enough room inside for five of us - almost hotel-like. It was excellent to get the chance to learn how to put an igloo together, and also a good opportunity to let the creative sandcastle-building kid in each of us come out to play for a while.



Photo by Harley Betts

Naturally, once we'd got back to the lodge and begun to pack for the trip home, the wind began to die out and the sun broke through in all its glory. But looking back, the conditions over the weekend were still ideal; we all got to learn about how changeable the weather and snow conditions can be in the alpine zone, and how important it is to be able to travel safely and comfortably in alpine areas in less than perfect conditions. We definitely got a lot more out of it that we would have had the weekend been calm and sunny, so it was a blessing in disguise really (someone's probably going to hit me for saying this, but hey...)

Thanks to everyone who came along and made it such a great trip, and thanks to Terry Crippen, Bruce Van Brunt, Barry Scott and Janet Wilson for doing a superb job of instructing. Roll on next winter!

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