



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - December 2002. Christmas Edition

*The sky, the ranges, and the river
Arawhata; on the twenty first day
The long walk is over
The climbing a memory.
The gorges in shadow,
The snow peaks in sunlight.
And I, John, windswept, whiskered, and sunburnt
Have lost a stone in weight
And with my friends
Have reached the Tasman Sea.*

From "Of Unknown New Zealand", by John Pascoe (1971), on an expedition from the Matukituki to Jackson Bay.

**News from Cambridge University
Kelly Knights Hut
Maropea Forks
Snowcaving on Mt Ruapehu
Navigation and River Safety- Ashhurst and Putara.
Whariti
Honeycomb Rock**

CLUB NIGHTS

January 30	BBQ at Horseshoe Bend	PNTMC
February 6	Committee Meeting	PNTMC
February 13	Club Night, Rock Climbing, City Rock	Terry Crippen
February 27	Navigation	Warren Wheeler

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

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially the weather. A reasonably proficient trumper can be expected to do the trips in 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.

January 3- 7 2003 Tararua Forks and Flies M
Warren Wheeler 356-1998
Depart 8.00am New Years Day. This relatively leisurely fly-camping trip will take in most of the river forks marked on the Park Map in a traverse from Otaki Forks generally North-east to the Putara Road end. Plenty of time for trying out the best swimming holes and fishing spots, and if the weather is bad we can easily adjust our plans to suit, with huts and bridged tracks as alternatives along the way.

Previously this trip was advertised 1-5 January but I am now planning to lead it 3-7 January as requested by some participants. The majority rules so if the earlier date suits more people we will go then. Either way, anyone missing out could join us for at least part of a 3-day (or more) trip. Please contact me before (or soon after) 18 December but no later than 22 December.

Note, Club trips start again January 11 2003. See the next Trip Card, enclosed with this edition.

Jan 11- 12 Otaki River M
Tony Gates 357 7439

This is a classic summer time tramp that is reliant on good weather. The upper Otaki river was once described as a perfect place for tramping, so come along and find out. Camping out.

Jan 12 Mikimiki E
Fiona Donald. 356 1095

Depart 8.30 am Foodtown carpark to this lovely Wairarapa track starting from the Kiriwhakapapa Road and tramping towards Mikimiki then return. Beautiful bush, interesting history and lunch under the redwoods. A good way to ease yourself back into tramping for the 03 summer season.

Anniversary Weekend 2003.

Jan 18- 20 Unknown Stream.
Janet Wilson 329 4722

Unknown stream and campsight, NW Ruahines. This area has good forest and rivers, and heads

into some of the most remote Ruahine areas. The route will possibly include Lake Colenso.

Jan 20 Stanfield Hut E
Duncan Hedderley 355 1820

Close to Dannevirke, this tramp is a traditional easy day walk, in via the river, out via the road.

Jan 25- 26 Kaweka Range M/ F
Stephen Liddall 357 6978

There are good opportunities here to climb high onto tussock and scree tops. Plenty of routes to follow and huts to visit. This will be a great opportunity to see where the famous Kaweka Challenge goes. Contact Stephen.

Jan 26 PN walkways circuit E/ M
Doug Strachan 353 6526

Good local walks. Contact Doug.

January 30. Club night.

BBQ, Horseshoe Bend, Tokomaru. Organised by Warren Wheeler.

The area here has opportunities for swimming as well as the usual wining, dining, and yarning. A nice spot. BYO food, drink, and BBQ.

February 1- 2 Mitre Peak (Tararuas) M/ F
Mick Leyland 358 3183

The highest point in the Tararuas, in from Masterton, is always a good place to visit. The mighty Waingawa, flowing past Mitre Flats Hut, has plenty of good swimming opportunities too.

Feb 2 Sunrise Loop E/ M
Warren Wheeler 356 1998

A traditional day tramp past the popular Sunrise Hut, through Armstrong Saddle, and down the impressive Waipawa River.

Waitangi Day

Feb 6 Field Hut PNTMC '66 E/ M
Neil Campbell 359 5048

Otaki Forks is the starting point for this tramp, which climbs up the good track to this historic hut (built 1924). Beyond the hut lies the Tussock.

Feb 6 Thursday trampers
Phil Pearce 354 6687

February 6. Committee meeting.

Feb 8- 9 Waterfall Hut M/ F
Lance Gray 356 6454

This hut and valley (The Kawhatau), are favourites for many trips, providing excellent variety of scenery.

Feb 8 Burn Hut Loop M
Dave Grant 357 8269
A good local tramp in from the Mangahao Dams.

Feb 13 Thursday Trampers
Ken Rush 357 2529

February 13. Club night. City Rock, with Terry Crippen, 3563-588

A chance to practice or learn some climbing skills in preparation for the two rock climbing trips coming up. Instruction and gear supplied, just come in suitable clothing and foot wear (you can hire climbing shoes). An enjoyable evening, costing you \$7.00. City Rock: 217 Featherston St, phone 357-4552, behind Phil Turnbull Motors just along from the Rangitiki St intersection.

Feb 15(Sat) Coastal walk E
Jim Jones 356-2670

A pleasant walk along one of our west coast beaches, with the opportunity to swim.

Feb 15-16 Mid Waiohine tubing F, T
Tony Gates 357 7439

A classic Tararua river trip, camping at Totara Flats (lovely), then tramping up to Hector forks to float down again (more than one time if possible). Bring wet suit, tube, helmet, and be prepared for action. A gorgeous place (pun intended).

Feb 16 Rock climbing M, T
Pete McGregor w 356 7154

There are plenty of Central North Island rocks to climb, with your expert guide and leader. Come prepared.

Feb 20 Thursday trampers
Lorraine Green 354-6158

Feb 22-23. Kaweka Challenge. Details later.

**February 27. Club night.
Navigation, with Warren Wheeler.**

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 co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or Andrew Lynch (325-8779).

Trip leaders: Please discuss with the trip co-ordinators, 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 Janet Wilson (329 4722)

NOTICES

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES can be Emailed to tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz, or stuff can be delivered to him at home or work.

c/- horizons.mw

11-15 Victoria Ave, PN

If you're e-mailing, please include your article as an attachment (Microsoft Word Version 7.0 or Rich Text Format), unless it is a small article, which can be typed directly into the e-mail.

You may get an e-mail reply from the horizons 'postmaster'. Don't worry, all

material gets through once it is checked for viruses etc. by horizons' staff.

The deadline for anything for the Newsletter is the FIRST THURSDAY of the month.

EMAIL ADDRESS LIST

Committee members who are connected to Email are listed below. Please note that changes to this list may occur from time to time, so we will try to keep it as up to date as possible.

warren.wheeler@horizons.govt.nz

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P.WILES@wiles.gen.nz

tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz

atlynch@ihug.co.nz

B.vanBrunt@massey.ac.nz

gaewyn.grant@xtra.co.nz

NEW MEMBER.

Welcome, and happy tramping to Anne Zanker, of 91 Savage Crescent, Palmerston North Ph. 353-7527

CORRECTION.

Doug Strachans' home phone number is now 353 6526."

WEDNESDAY TRAMPING GROUP

We go out every second Wednesday on easy tramps. Come and join us. For more information, please phone Judy 357 0192, Jennifer, 323 3914, or June 355 2690.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEAS.

On any good trumper or mountaineer's Christmas pressie list will surely be some good books. In the shops now are two new ones published by Craig Potton, "Classic Peaks of New Zealand" (by Hugh Logan), and "North Island weekend tramps" (by Shaun Barnett). There are many other adventurous ones by the likes of Simon Yates (Joe Simpson's knife wielding partner in Peru)-sorry, that might sound a bit gross, but it really was Simon who cut the rope. I'm sure you have heard the story). On the topic of near disasters in the mountains, New Zealand's very own Mark Ingles presents an interesting life story.

There are many other good books out there waiting to be bought.

THE NEW SIX MONTH EVENTS CALENDAR.

By Terry Crippen.

The events calendar for Jan to June 2003 is enclosed with this Newsletter. Lots of excellent trips, local and distant, and of all grades. Easter, ANZAC, and Queens Birthday weekends are in the South Island. Also a good range of activities and speakers for Club nights, starting off with a BBQ at Horse Shoe Bend. Thank you all you leaders who have committed yourselves to lead trips. I'm sure all club members will actively support this good effort by going on lots of these trips and events. Don't forget to encourage others to come on these trips as well.

A FEW PLEASURES:

Please read the comments, regarding the grading of trips, printed on the events card and at the start and finish of the listings in the Newsletter. Please let the leader know in plenty of time that you want to go on their trip.

TRIP LEADERS. New Leaders, and those new to leading PNTMC trips, will see that we have put a "PNTMC Guide for trip leaders" in with your newsletter. Please read it and use it. (Also a copy of the pink help form as a guide on what details to leave when running a trip.)

All leaders: please stick to your original date and place. If you do need to change a trips date or destination ALWAYS discuss it with one of the Trips Coordinators as soon as possible. This is for safety reasons and a matter of courtesy as it is a club trip you are leading, not a private one.

TRIP FEED BACK FORMS. These forms (as well as the other two forms mentioned above) are always available at club night. Use these as needed to give feedback on trips.

The Trips Coordinators are Terry Crippen 356-3588, Janet Wilson 329-4722, Andrew Lynch 325-8779.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION NEWS FOR THE TARARUAS.

Dear trampers

Sorry about the lack of warning, but the following information is important for anyone intending to Kaitoke Roadend, at the start of the Puffer track, into the Tauherenikau Valley or the Southern Crossing. Please circulate this further if you can.

The Puffer Track at the Kaitoke road end (access to Tararua Forest Park) is closed until Saturday 23rd November and both areas will be closed for dogs for approximately three months. Both tracks are being cleared of bait today.

The Wellington Regional Council advised us this afternoon that they have completed their 1080 operation today. One of the conditions on their MOH consent is the closure of all tracks through the Kaitoke Regional Park for 7 days.

This includes access from the Kaitoke road end into the Tararua Forest Park and the Rimutaka Incline as both of these sites are jointly managed. Through discussions with Wellington Regional

Council, the Rimutaka Incline has an exemption to closure because of the Trentham Harrier Race this weekend, however the Puffer at the Kaitoke road end will remain closed for 7 days from today.

Steve Sutton
Recreation Planner
Wellington Conservancy

FROM THE PRESIDENTS PC

Ah, Summer evenings around the BBQ – here at last. If the mellow style of the last committee meeting around the BBQ at Janet's place was any indication, so has the holiday season. Andrew Lynch regaled us with his tales of climbing Mt Tasman and Mt Aspiring; both Bruce and Terry were away climbing in the South Island; and Tony was away tramping Ruahine Corner. Needless to say the business part of the meeting did not start until the sun had set and the wine bottles empty.

But enough confessions from the Boardroom, what I really want to tell you is about the looming funding crisis.

Nothing serious, but our club Constitution will need to be changed to ensure that our charitable organisation status is more formally recognized by IRD and therefore by the Eastern and Central Trust and other funding sources we use for gear and instructional purposes. The change required is a minor rewording of the Winding Up clause to ensure that surplus funds are only distributed to a charitable organisation and not at the discretion of the Committee.

It may also be convenient to change the financial year to the 31st March, resulting in future AGMs being held in April or later.

At least two-thirds of members must agree to the changes by way of resolutions at the 2003 AGM. Proxy mail votes will be sought from those unable to attend. You will hear more about this in the February Newsletter....exciting isn't it?!!

In the meantime, I wish you a safe and happy summer season of tramping and mountaineering.

Warren Wheeler

President PNTMC

Extracts of news from Cambridge. By Jonathon Astin.

Wow, in no time my first months here in England have gone and I have finally some time to immortalise my experiences. Coming from Canada my arrival in England was like coming home in many senses. The trees, grasses, weeds, are all very similar and there is a lot more farmland than I had expected. I was met by Mr Heaven, distinctive as always in his mouldy tweed coat. From Heathrow it was a convoluted nightmare of queuing, buses, more queuing, tubes, even more queuing, getting on the wrong bus, humiliation, waiting for trains, getting on the wrong carriage, more humiliation and finally arriving at Eastbourne.

While in Eastbourne I was introduced to walking – English style. While not the rugged outdoor experience I'm used to In NZ I found it is a walking style I could easily get used to. Basically all of England is covered in these little public walking trails. They start in the oddest places, peoples' vege gardens, rubbish-strewn alleys, the main street, anywhere. In Eastbourne they all lead on the downs which is basically the farmland behind the city. Ben and I would pack a lunch and amble around until our feet found a trail and then we would follow it through forest and farm until we eventually came across a lovely English village

nestled in a valley. These villages are a real delight. They are all I imagined them to be and more. Stone walls, narrow roads, houses with thatched rooves, chickens in the yard, old churches with derelict headstones, friendly horses, autumnal trees and the jewel of any English village – the local pub. Now I could and probably will devote entire pages on the joys of a country with real pubs and fine ales, suffice it to say there is little better than a pint of ale and a ploughmans lunch at a small old-world English pub after a long walk in the countryside.

The trails are amazing, nearly all are signposted and every single village in England will be linked to the trail network somehow. The public right of way on these footpaths is as sacred to the English as queuing, so much so that entire legions of Britons sacrifice their weekends on the upkeep of the national trail network. Often in along the trail you will encounter a handily positioned seat overlooking an especially nice scene. In lots of cases these seats have forced the local farmer to detour his haymaking exploits which makes me laugh as I imagine a kiwi cockey trying to put up with dozens of walkers freely able to walk all over his land.

It was a relief to finally arrive at my flat after a month of carrying my luggage everywhere and as an added bonus my flatmates are all reasonably

normal. It is a very international flat with representatives from India, France, Greece, Scotland, Uganda and a lone Englishman. The Ugandan guy really cracks me up especially when he is drunk. He comes out with these totally random comments, usually some confused Ugandan tribal wisdom. Once when we were discussing the merits of certain fruits he interjected with: "In my country we have a saying." His country apparently has a lot of sayings. "Wherever you find the banana, you will also find the monkey".... Useful stuff.

The older Colleges are magnificent with old buildings and chapels. They back onto the river Cam which winds its way through the centre of Cambridge. Most of the colleges are open to the public and many tourists take advantage of this. Walking through Trinity/Kings or Queens College is like going back in time and is the very picture of academia complete with absent-minded Professors striding along, robes billowing behind. In fact I can see where a lot of the inspiration for Hogwarts came from. I happened to get a bit mesmerised by all this grandeur and for a moment, just fleetingly, my foot brushed against the sacred turf at Kings College. Instantly a burly, suited, security guard appeared complete with earpiece, looking terrifyingly like Agent Smith from the Matrix. You see, no one is allowed to walk on the grass at these colleges, even in the middle of summer when you would have to use a jack hammer to damage anything. No one that is, except the fellows of the College who are deemed to have through years of dedicated study to have earned the privilege to walk on the grass, and they do so, seeming to flaunt their grass walking status in front of us mere mortals. What a load of crap.

My laboratory is at the Sanger Institute which is located 14 km south of Cambridge. It is funded by the Wellcome Trust which means that it is loaded with money. My lab mates are a great bunch of people, on my first day they appeared more concerned with my lack of juggling ability than anything else. There are 11 people in the lab and they can all juggle. The lab works with a small worm that lives in the soil called *C. elegans*. This worm is a terrific genetic model, not only does it have stunning good looks, it has a generation time of 4 days, it's entire cell lineage is mapped out, it is translucent allowing us to look inside its body and it's genome has been completely sequenced. In fact the sequencing was completed at the Sanger, so I just have to walk down the hall to get any clone I want. The lab has a worm-sorter which is one of 6 in the world. Although simple in theory it is actually technically difficult to sort adult worms from larval, especially when the worms are only

1mm long. This machine can sort 40 000 worms an hour, saving us weeks of work.

Specifically my PhD project is based around DNA-repair mechanisms in *C. elegans*. There are a number of mutants that are sensitive to UV light, which is indicative of a DNA-repair defect. I am attempting to isolate the genes affected by these mutations. I have spent the last week trying to genetically modify these worms by microinjecting DNA into their gonads. However, when the worm is less than 1mm long, trying to stick a needle into their bollock isn't an easy task. I go home at night close my eyes and all I can see is thousands of bloody worms crawling over the inside of my eyelids. Hazards of the job.

As I mentioned I have joined the local climbing club and they have made me very welcome, that is after they had exhausted their vast array of sheep-shagging jokes. Unfortunately Cambridge is a climbing desert and to my vast disappointment the Cambridge climbing wall is completely crap. It is a small bouldering wall with old frail holds that haven't been washed in years. The resulting build-up of human skin and chalk makes the holds very slippery especially when it rains as the water drips down the wall. Some say this adds realism I tell them what's the point of an indoor wall if you can't climb when it is raining. In addition the wall is fairly high for a bouldering wall about 6 – 7m and your only protection are these mats scattered haphazardly about the bottom. Believe me taking an unexpected fall from the top is a frightening experience.

My first outdoor climbing trip was in the peak district which is about 2.5hours north of Cambridge. The climbing was at an old grit stone quarry and was awesome. I had a go lead climbing and seconded a few E1 5bs (grade 18-20). The British grading system is much better than the Australian as it has a severity and a technical component. Saw one guy take a huge fall near the top of one climb, his first gear placements ripped out, but luckily for him the third one held, otherwise he would have "bottomed out". He broke some ribs and after we escorted him away I noticed that our climbing slipped down a few grades!

I spent a weekend up in the lake district which is one of the more popular outdoor destinations in England, didn't get in any climbing as the rock was wet so we went walking instead. Apparently everyone in Northern England had the same idea as we must have seen at least 100 – 200 people throughout the day. The Lake District has probably the best walking in England and contains England's highest peak – Scafell Pike 978m. We

traversed over England's second-highest mountain – Helvellyn a whopping 950m. Break out the oxygen! While the scenery is nowhere as magnificent as the mountains back home it was scenic for other reasons. One of the things I love about England is the way the villages and farms actually add to the scenery. In NZ the houses and fences do not look like they belong, but over here the old stone houses, bridges and stone fences have been around for centuries and seamlessly fit into the surrounding landscape. The stone fences are everywhere and apparently there are clubs in Britain which dedicate themselves to repairing the miles of stone walls.

Coming down off Helvellyn we were pursued by a snowstorm and the dark menacing clouds really added to the atmosphere, that is until it overtook us. It was surreal walking on through the snowstorm, which was furious enough to rival a Tararua storm, as we kept passing English walkers seeming oblivious to the weather around them, still intent on reaching the summit. By yourself in a snowstorm you can think that you are undergoing a bit of an adventure, until you pass two old English women walking their dog and chatting away about the latest Coronation Street episode, it kind puts you down a peg or two.

That's a funny thing about these English walkers, as the weather is so crap most of the time that they regard any weather short of a hurricane as perfect walking weather. As you gaze doubtfully at the horizontal rain sweeping across the trail, you can hear the English uttering helpful comments like: "well at least we won't overheat" or "it looks like it may clear up later". There were people in my climbing club who had been walking in the Lake district for years and had never seen the place. Our walk was the first time they had been able to get a view. As we battled manfully against the wind and rain occasionally catching rare glimpses of the hills around us they would exclaim how lucky I was to be getting such good weather on my first trip. I had wondered how Britain could produce such amazing mountaineers with so little mountains, now I think I know.

One thing that is much better about hiking in England, the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. These are simply the best topographical maps I have ever seen. With a 1:25 000 scale and contours

every 5m there is absolutely no excuse for getting lost. Every building, rock, shithouse and tree in England is accurately plotted. I can even pick my flat out on the Cambridge OS map.

That sums up my experiences here so far. I will leave you with a transcript of a conversation I had in a chip shop up in Yorkshire. I think that it neatly sums up the culture differences between NZ and England.

Regards, Jonathan.

JA: "Hello, could I have a scoop of chips and two fish please"?

Big Fat Red Chip Chop Lady(BFRCCL):"A what of chips"?

JA: "I'll have one scoop please"

BFRCCL: "Look honey we don't serve ice cream here, you want fish & chips or not"?

JA: "Sorry, look I'll have one portion of chips"

BFRCCL: "Small or large"

JA: "Small"

BFRCCL: "Peas on that"?

JA: ????????

BFRCCL: "mushy peas on ya chips love"

JA: "Ah...no thanks I'm trying to give up"

BFRCCL: "Gravy"?

JA: "No thanks"

BFRCCL: "Beans"?

JA: "Look do you have tomato sauce"?

BFRCCL: "No but the beans come with tomato sauce"

JA: "Right. Look I'll be a real devil and just stick with salt thanks, oh, could I have two fish as well please"?

BFRCCL: "Plaice"?

JA: "No just fish"

BFRCCL: "Are you from Australia or something"?

JA: "Are there any McDonalds near here"?

P.S. You can send Christmas presents to the following address:

98 Barton Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire
CB3 9LH, UNITED KINGDOM

Phone: (Home) + 44 0 1223 355 518
(Work) + 44 0 1223 494 843

TRIP REPORTS

Kelly Knight Hut, November 10. By Duncan Hedderley

Though people have mentioned Kelly Knight hut, I didn't know where it was. Turns out it is in the upper Kawhatau valley area, just the other side of

the hill from Purity; if you are keen, there is a Kelly Knight-Wooden Peg-Purity loop. Liz Flint reckoned it took 8 hours the last time she did it. Her plans for this trip were less ambitious - just a nice easy trip into the hut and back out the same

way. There is 2km of farm track from the road to the start of the track proper, so it is worth contacting the farmer beforehand and asking for permission to drive in (Apparently Bev Akers of the Thursday trampers is compiling a list of who to contact for access across farmland). The track itself crosses a couple of paddocks, then runs through some marvelous bush above the Pourangaki river. It is similar to the track to Iron Gates; narrow, undulating, above a steep drop. You cross a small but impressive swing bridge just before the hut. We got there just as Pete McGregor and a group of Landcare people were packing up after staying overnight.

Liz told us about a holiday in Alaska while we had lunch. The trip back was uneventful, though Yuko and I both had feet slip over the edge of the path at times.

Getting to Kawhatau valley is a bit of a mission; Liz and Arthur took a back route, via Auputa Road, on the way in. We came out via Mangaweka, which was about 20 minutes and 20 km longer, but Arthur reckoned was easier on the driver (And on anyone with a queasy stomach, I might add)

We were Liz and Arthur Flint (leading), Elaine Herve, Alan Cameron, Yuko, and Duncan Hedderley.

Sunrise Hut- Maroepa Forks, 2-3 November 2002. By Lance Gray.

Picture yourself curled up in front of the fire with a good book and a handily placed bottle of wine on one of our regular cold weekends – the way to go eh? Picture an alternative - eight PNTMC souls busily reminding each other how much fun they are having as drops ooze through pack straps along the shoulder and down the forearm to meet up with mates coming the other way. I was one of the lucky ones, my hangover did not abate till halfway down the stream to Maroepa Forks so my initial priority was the bass rhythm at the back of my left eye socket.

Unfortunately like stepping out of a dream I was now one of the cold footed ones crossing side to side hoping like hell that that the 30 second break in the rain was permanent and cheered lustily with everyone else when the sun dared peak through the cloud. Without Warren to lead us into merry song we plodded downstream – Janet optimistically recapping how much easier it was to walk downstream than upstream and being very pleasant when I dared mock the weather she had promised, “hadnt ya put anything in ta meter” I dared shout. “A big kiss for you too” she retorted.

We knew we were in for a shocker yet how we deceive. A wee clue was at the first gate going into Triple X roadend, I swear not a lie, that Graham, Janet and I, hanging on, wrested the gate open and shut lest the farmer lose it to the wind it was so strong. Sunrise Hut was a cup of tea and a pep talk from the leadership then it was OVER THE TOP and MARCH ON towards Armstrong Saddle and Top Maroepa Hut for another snack before PLUNGING down into the icy stream.

We made Maroepa Forks around 3.30 pm whereupon I promptly fell asleep before later watching in admiration as Graham made us endless cups of tea and then dinner on something I thought left the NASA launch pad back in the late 1960s. My feet did not touch the hut floor till 2.00am next morning when Mick gently suggested to the hut that we all pile out onto the verandah. Not being slow on the uptake I promptly set up camp out there beyond the front door in Jeans bivvie bag. It was a cloudless night and hearing the blue duck whirr back and forth made the frost all worth it. Having Janet and Graham out there also under the fly made it that much more cosy. At around 900 metres altitude it should have been no surprise to find frozen boots and socks. It was certainly a surprise to my feet though, made even more pleasant by greeting river water once more.

Jean and I being the team players we are left the primary expeditionary party and headed up the actual Maroepa River and onto the main Ruahine Range via a very obvious slip that takes you up between Sparrowhawk biv and the lump that is Orupu. Our thoughts quickly turned to safety as numerous rocks, too large for our liking, careered down adjoining slips - a result of the frost/thaw cycle. Sparrowhawk was a fun visit as we pored over famous names Tony Gates, Jonathon Astin... before plodding along the range over Maroepa, “Fatty” and 1499 metres, emerging to see fellow champions of freedom make their way back to Sunrise Hut and the debrief.

As a previous leader of miserable trips we all rejoice in sticking it to all the weekend couch potatoes – yeah right! Special recognition goes to Megan who put up with all us adults telling her how character building it all was. All of us feel we deserve a fine weather trip shortly and so there will be a weeks expedition along Rarotonga beaches in the next trip calendar.

We were Janet Wilson & Graham Wilson?, Nigel, Suzanna & Megan, Jean Garman, Mick Leyland & Lance Gray

**Snow caving at Mt Ruapehu, 23- 24 November.
By Florence Fraisse**



The amazing shapes of Te Heu Heu peak (2732m), as viewed from our snow cave. These peaks dominate the upper Mangatoetoenui (Waikato) Glacier. [Tony Gates]

When I called Tony on Tuesday I was really surprised that only two persons wanted to come on this trip. Maybe part of the weather and part of Christmas time, but you do not know what you have missed. Friday the weather was absolutely horrible but we (Jean, Tony and I) trusted the weather forecast for the week end (cloudy on Saturday and clear on Sunday) and took off with Tony's four wheels drive on Saturday morning at 6.00, direction Ruapehu, via Tukino skifield (East of the mountain). We stopped at Waiouru to have the usual coffee break and also tried to get the key to access Tukino road (this key was unavailable in Palmy). After two petrol station that did not know any think about his key we head off at the army head quarter. People there were really useful but the person that held the key was not there. Nevermind, we can still drive on Tukino road, stop at the first car park and walk along the road for the last 5 kms. So here we go on the four wheel drive track driving through rocks, stream, holes and a bit of snow; good fun! We finally reached this locked gate, but there was a possibility to go off the track through a muddy

slope. Let's do it..... here we are carrying on the track like if there has been no gate. We just hoped that people from DOC would not move the big stone on the way to stop four wheel drive car to go through, well at least not this week end, as we still have to come back the same way.

We stated to climb at 10.30 with a lovely weather, really sunny. At the top of the ski field, we made our first stop to take some memorable photos. Then we rapidly reached the snow, which was quite soft, and started the climb on Mangatoetoenui (Waikato) Glacier. The sun became stronger and stronger and we felt like in an oven. I have not tried but it should be about the same sensation. The shade of a rock was more than welcome to help us to cool down and to fill in up our drinking bottles. The snow was melting quickly and we collected the water leaking from these rocks, with our billy laying in balance on two horizontal ski poles over a deep snow hole. After three hours we finally reach the plateau and found Te Heu Heu on our right, the famous whale shape. We arrived just in time before the clouds, to spot the best place to build the snow cave. We started to dig making two entrances. We had two shovels for three persons, but it was quite alright as one person was in charge to remove the snow from each entrance. The same person was also in charge of the cooker, as it started to be really cold, making some hot drinks for the others and also melting some snow to fill in up the drinking bottles. We swapped positions, as the person outside was getting cold quickly. The snow was in perfect conditions to build a snow cave, however we could not go too deep as we reached ice, making it hard to dig. After three hours, the snow cave was finished, not really spacious due to the ice but big enough for three persons to sleep inside. Jean decided to sleep in the big entrance, which was two thirds covered, as she had a bivy bag. After the hard work, it was time for dinner. Jean and I started to cook (we had only one cooker) and Tony went for a ski trip on the plateau with his cross country skis, he disappeared in the clouds and came back only 15-20 minutes after. Then, it was time for a walk on the plateau. Jean and I started direction the Crater Lake, while Tony wanted to take more photos. It is true that the weather was wonderful, giving so much opportunities for exceptional shots. A strange noise was coming from the Crater Lake and it was not the water crashing onto the bank, just boiling water. A little detour to the Dome shelter and it was back to the snow cave. Not that fast, the clouds came and we could not see 10 meters further. Jean and I decided to follow our foot prints to come back. But after 15 minutes, we realised it was not our foot prints we have been following. Where are we now? It can be so

disorientated. As the clouds disappeared briefly, we managed to figure out that we were on the way to Whakapapa, completely the opposite direction we wanted to go. Then we finally arrived to the snow cave where Tony was already back from his trip to Cathedral Rocks. The moral of the story, always take a compass or GPS, even for a short walk.

After a good night of rest, we woke up early and had a surprise in the morning: there was some snow at the entrance of the snow cave and it was still snowing outside. Tony cleared the entrance and dug out the crampons and gear that stayed outside during the night. The temperature had dropped so much compared to yesterday; the night was a bit cold as well. Due to poor visibility our plans to climb Te Heu Heu and back to the car through Whangaehu glacier were cancelled. We returned to the car park by the same way of the previous day, but this time we used our crampons on the steepest part. We also made a detour to Whangaehu hut where we had a decent breakfast and tried to dry our clothes. After the hut, the snow was really sloshy and reached the top of our gaiters at each step we were making, even few times above our knees. We arrived at the car at 10.30 am. Our trip lasted only 24 hours but we have done so much during this time. A big thanks to Tony who led this wonderful trip, it was like having a professional guide.

We were: Jean Garman, Tony Gates (leader) and Florence Fraise.

Navigation 1 and River Safety, Ashhurst, 24 November. By Fiona Donald.

Elaine, Heike and I arrived early at the Ashhurst Domain full of anticipation towards the morning's instruction. Terry spent a few minutes checking that we understood what the little white lines represented between the numbers on the compass then we were all set for the next challenge. Terry asked us to estimate the distance of 100 metres and how many paces you would require for 50 metres. We all had varying answers but after pacing out 50 metres return, Terry then showed us how to estimate the number of paces for every 10 metres. Terry preferred counting double paces however counting single paces are also fine. You need a consistent system for counting both types of paces.

The course had more navigation techniques particularly when we, individually, practiced by using Terry's practical examples around the camping ground and the bush tracks. There were varying degrees of success in following the instructions; however, everyone agreed they had learnt a lot on this navigation course.

Fiona Donald, Elaine Herve, Malcolm Parker, Suzanne and Megan Gregory, Barbara Mare, Heike Hahn.

The river safety instruction course was on the afternoon's agenda. Outside, there was blue sky, warm air, children playing on the slides, Father Christmas resplendent in red and white - he was getting ready to make a grand appearance while we were inside receiving instruction on the finer arts of river awareness. Noel took us through a thorough river awareness programme. Diane then explained the rules on what you need to know about crossing a river including how to cope when the crossing can go wrong. A few demonstrations later and we felt ready to go for the real thing. The river crossings went very well and we all felt confident in moving forward plus shuffling backwards out and on to the riverbank. The next exciting moment was learning to "fairy glide" down the river; this may happen to you if you fall over in the river and it's necessary to know how to safely reach the riverbank while using your pack as a buoyancy aid. Congratulations to Elaine in helping someone overcome their dislike of water and try this new skill. Finally, the full immersion under controlled conditions. Try imagining your pack is caught in a snag while you are in the water and all you have to do is unclick your hip belt, put your arms above your head so that the water pressure pushes you away from your pack and you are released free. Most people made this look easy. It's a well-recommended course to do with many thanks for the large amount of mountain safety instructors available. A good afternoon had by all.

We were: Elaine, Heike, Suzanne, Megan and Fiona + 5 mountain safety people.

Wharite Peak Trip 30 November. By Warren Wheeler.

Fine mild weather with a light breeze was perfect for this "Easy" trip from the Coppermine Creek road end. We easily wandered along the sidle track along the Creek, and easily crossed a small slip that had recently come down. Our steep ascent from the signposted track junction was made at an easy pace, with only one windfall to easily negotiate. A few scenic stops helped ease glowing pains and the slope eventually flattened out before the last easy steep section up to the old signs at the track junction on the ridgeline.

The TV tower looked an easy 10 minutes away but it was almost 40 minutes along the easy ridge track through the wide-cut leatherwood. A small windfall was easily stepped over, and the only really muddy sections were just before the trig. After almost 3 easy hours on the go we lunched in

a sheltered sunny spot out of the easterly wind wailing quietly in the TV tower.

We easily demolished the punnet of strawberries Warren passed around and decided that the return trip would be more interesting going down the Coppermine Creek. A fit-looking young chap also arrived and we invited him to join us, to which he easily agreed.

We returned along the ridge track to the old sign and duly noted its large size "To Coppermine Hut via Coppermine Creek" ...and the easy comment about size bearing no relation to the standard of the track.

After about 150m we easily found the turnoff from the narrow-cut leatherwood track down to the head of the old slip. Squeals of delight came easily at the onset of our little adventure. Most of the next 3 hours is easily summarized as "slow going" - sidling to avoid the slippery rocks and overgrowth along the watercourse, scrambling through cutty grass, easily leaping across a small chasm section (or scrambling down and up) and following deer tracks – the image of the large signpost easily coming to mind. Despite frequent regrouping the line easily disappeared within a few paces along the "track" and squeals of frustration finally came easily with the relentless struggle with the scenery. A wide grin easily came to everyone's face when we reached the Coppermine Track and easily made it back to the cars in 20 minutes, arriving easily with less than a minute to spare to keep the promise of being out by 6 o'clock. After licking our wounds and changing out of wet gear we easily accepted Warren's offer of an ice cream shout at Woodville after our "Easy" 8 ½ hours.

We were Duncan Hedderley, Elaine Herve, Yuko Watanabe, Pauline Knuckey, Jacqueline Aust, Fiona Donald, Craig Allerby and Warren Wheeler (leader and scribe).

Navigation – Putara Road-End- Bottles Track. 1 December 2002. By Lance Gray.

I am not sure if Terry was playing a practical joke but when I saw the navigation course penned for the 1st of December, I wondered if he was having another laugh at my expense. I knew he definitely was when he addressed all thirteen of us with "...we all know what happened to Lance last year." Exactly a year as it turns out. I can't emphasise enough to all tramping club members the significance of being confident with map and compass – especially those of us becoming involved in search and rescue activities –

voluntarily or involuntarily. This particular day's instruction given by Terry and Peter gave us lot of confidence and should become an almost compulsory club activity for all trip leaders. The fact that we all got geographically embarrassed at one point – yes - even the great man himself pulled out the GPS shows that this was no patsy walk in the park!

Terry had us at the Putara Roadend with a map of the terrain, measuring distances and heights, as well as pre-writing grid and magnetic bearings to get some of us thinking a bit more about the significance of preparation. After watching the Southern Traverse action you can see the team leaders going through this same process while they are in the warm confines of a checkpoint instead of trying to do it hanging over a waterfall. We still look at Terry with awe when it comes to preparation and this occasion was no exception.

With bearings noted we played out Terry's scenario that had us reaching Herapai Stream in flood forcing us to take a bearing over a hill with two small peaks before dropping over the other side to pick up a saddle close to the stream where there was a safer crossing. Picking up the saddle was the downfall for all us; as like lemmings we jumped off onto spurs too early forcing us to back track and try lower down.

Peter Darragh playing the role of teacher found himself mustering a paddock with his team before suggesting that they may have to go back and rethink things. Helen Ronald and myself were no better but took the easy option of bombing straight down to the stream – pity that we forgot it was in flood - fail - D! Thankfully we weren't alone and Terry and the rest turned up at the appointed meeting point without too many other dramas except to mention that bit about the GPS. After lunch in light rain we picked up the three bottles track that comes out just below Herepai Hut before making our way back to the car-park. I can't thank Terry enough for the exercise as it really forced us to navigate by map and compass instead of following those poles and orange markers.

We were Jo & Lawrence O'Halloran, Nigel, Suzanne & Megan Gregory, Barbara Mare, Helen Ronald, Doug Strachan, Neil Campbell, Jacqueline Hoeglard, Lance Gray, Peter Darragh and Captain Crippen.

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