

# Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

[www.pntmc.org.nz](http://www.pntmc.org.nz)

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

## Newsletter February 2011

### Club Nights

Club nights are held at 7:45pm on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. All welcome! Please sign the visitor's book at the door.

#### 10 February Tramping on Wheels

Jonathan Kennett is a well known author and keen trumper who currently works for the NZ Cycle Trail team. His presentation tonight will focus on the challenges of adventure cycling.

#### 17 Feb Committee meeting

#### 24 February World's Longest Rogaine

Rogaining "the sport of long-distance cross-country navigation". Janet Wilson has recently competed as part of a team in the World Championships held in NZ. She will tell you about this challenging sport and how it can morph into a 24 hour hut bagging competition.

#### Trip Grading

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trumper should expect 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):	over 8 hrs

Other grades:

Technical skills (T)
Instructional (I)

#### Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Milverton Park. A charge for transport will be collected on the day.

#### Gear for trips

Minimum gear for day trips is appropriate footwear, pack, lunch and snacks, waterproof jacket, overtrousers, gloves, warm hat, torch, toilet paper, matches or a lighter, sunblock, first aid kit, and a survival bag or space blanket. Each person needs to be equipped to survive overnight.

#### Trip leaders

Complete the trip intentions form and leave with one of Overdue Trip Contacts or drop into 44 Dahlia St. If you are unable to run your trip as scheduled, advise a trip coordinator as soon as possible so that alternatives can be arranged.

#### Overdue Trips

If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry unduly as there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone one of the Overdue Trip Contacts:

Mick Leyland	358-3183
Terry Crippen	356-3588
Janet Wilson	329-4722

### Upcoming Trips

#### 5 February (Sat) Longview Hut John Feeney

E/M

354-2940

Located high in the tussock overlooking Southern Hawkes Bay, Longview Hut is understandably a popular spot. It's a short but stiff climb past some rocky bluffs to the wide open tussock basins of the Pohangina Saddle. Bring good sun protection and a water bottle.

**5-6 Feb**

**Leon Kinvig Hut** **M**  
**Michael Allerby** **323-8563**

Beautiful Pohangina country here, through mixed tramping terrain with good views from the Ngamoko Range then swimming in the river.

**12-13 Feb**

**Waiohine Gorge** **F/T**  
**Tony Gates** **357-7439**

Some consider that Tararua heartland is best traversed on a river during a sunny Summers day. The Waiohine Gorge, from Mt Holdsworth and then Mid Waiohine Hut down to Totara Flats is the aim of this tramp, but it can be re scheduled like it was Feb 2010 to float merely the Walls Whare end, as a single day, to avoid the need for extensive waterproofing, and make it a bit easier (but still a classic).

**13 Feb**

**Iron Gates Gorge** **M**  
**Warren Wheeler** **356-1998**

This classic river trip is ideal for a sunny day. We take the sidle track past Heritage Lodge, then brunch beside the Oroua River at the Tunupo campsite. We then rock hop downriver a couple of hours to reach the gorge. We can either pack float and swim through, or clamber up the track to the farm land, then the car. A fun day out for family and friends. Depart 8.45am.

**19 Feb (Sat)**

**Manawatu Gorge Track** **E**  
**Gina Fermor** **359-0096**

A local favourite, with good bush all the way, lookouts, then a quality café at the end.

**19-20 Feb**

**Ohau Explorer** **M/F**  
**Graham Peters** **329-4722**

The plan is flexible at this stage involving possibly Nth Ohau biv, Mangahao Flats hut or possibly Deception Spur.

**26-27 Feb**

**Howletts Explorer** **M/F**  
**Martin Lawrence** **357-1695**

Wander in to Howletts Hut, then out again via a different route. There is ample opportunity on this tramp to see much of the high central Ruahines while based at a cosy bushline hut.

**27 Feb**

**Atiwhakatu Hut** **E/M**  
**Fiona Donald** **356-1095**

We depart at 8am Victoria Ave/Milverton Park for Masterton, Mt Holdsworth area. This walking track crosses over a number of bridges and has great river/bush views. We will have lunch by the

river and return the same way. Please contact me **before** 9pm by 24 Feb.

**5 March (Sat)**

**Tongariro South Ridge** **M**  
**Bruce van Brunt** **328-4761**

A good late summer rock scramble to an easy summit, well away from the madding crowds tramping the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Depart early. Bring a good water bottle.

**5-6 March**

**Sawtooth Ridge** **F**  
**Chris Tuffley** **359-2530**

Weather permitting, this will be my third attempt at the legendary Sawtooth Ridge, in the high central Ruahines. We plan to take the route from Longview through to Howletts, then on to Sawtooth Ridge. Tony says that it is worth the wait, so I hope this time I get to find out. Departure Friday afternoon or early Saturday.

### **Matemateonga, 10-13 March 2011**

PNTMC plans a 4 day Matemateonga Tramp for 10-13 March 2011. This is an area seldom visited by PNTMC but not too far away. It will be very interesting, and not too difficult once spread over four days. There are several options to explore the area, including visiting "The Bridge to Nowhere". Transport arrangements are \$190.00 (jet boat and connections).

Contact Malcolm Parker 06 357 5203

### **Kahurangi National Park**

Preliminary Trip notice. Pre Easter Trip, Fit Grade, Fri 15th/ Sat 16th to Thurs 21 April. As usual we will be running a pre Easter trip to Kahurangi National Park. There are a range of possibilities, including tramping the Wangapeka and Upper Karamea valleys, and another attempt at Mt Kendall. There will be vehicle(s) going down, or down there, but going elsewhere for Easter, so you will need to at least organize your own flights back from Nelson for late on Thursday (and possibly flying down also).

Please let Terry (356-1998) or Janet (329-4722) know if you are interested.

### Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month to Tony Gates, the newsletter editor, at [kiwi@leatherwood.co.nz](mailto:kiwi@leatherwood.co.nz), or via <http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>

## Membership

Phone number correction. Doug Strachan's correct phone number is 353-6526.

## Notices

### WARNING BURTTONS TRACK CLOSURE NOTICE

Access to the Te Araroa Trail from Scotts Road and Tokomaru Valley Road, Mangahao Valley will be closed during week days due to forest harvesting operations and logging traffic.

The period of closure will be effective from 3 January 2011 to 6 May 2011.

Full access is available to the trail during weekends.

### Annual Awards 2010

The following awards were announced by Vice-President Warren Wheeler at the End of Year BBQ at Ashhurst Domain.

**Exide Flat Out Award** – Geoff Beauchamp for overcoming a flat battery at the MacIntosh Hut roadend.

**Brassed Off Award** – Janet Wilson for losing her sports bra after a run to the Castlepoint Midwinter Celebrations.

**Boots and All Award** – Fiona Donald for rubbing spilt sunscreen into her boots. (refer trip report "Makairo Track" below)

**Bent Compass Award** – Peter Wiles for a loope wander looking for a Tokyo subway station.

**One Square Meal Award** – Malcolm Parker for the biggest lunch box on a day trip.

**Wall of Fame Award** – Terry Crippen for his collection of 15 summits over summer.

**Short Change Award** – Graham Peters for leaving some old shorts behind in Anne's brother's luxury flat in Wellington.

**Ambulance at the Top of Cliff Award** – Jennifer Kitchen for tooting a dozy tourist onto the right (left) side of the road 5 seconds before a certain collision.

**Tardis Award** – Woody Lee for micro-packing so much into so little.

**Florence Nightingale Award** – Richard Lockett for leading his party out by torchlight after the Waipawa-Sunrise Rescue.

**Dave Hodges Award for Excellence in Pursuit of Forgetfulness** – Warren Wheeler for (1) forgetting his keys were on the car roof, with credit cards and drivers licence (and returning to find them on the side of the road two hours later), (2) forgetting his car keys were in the jacket he "never uses" (and finding them 2 months later), for (3) forgetting the Committee BBQ at Dave's place until getting home at 7.30pm, and... Oh, I forget the rest!

**The Tararua Trophy 2010**, which is for excellence in literature, was awarded this year to Richard Lockett for his Apiti Track trip report (October 2010). A classic local tramp with an interesting report. Richard is a regular contributor to the PNTMC Newsletter, and a worthy recipient.

Congratulations to our winners this year – feel free to forward any well-deserved belated additions to the Editor and be sure to notify Warren of any nominations during 2011.

## Editorial: Club Nights

Besides our own members and friends, PNTMC has some very interesting guest speakers. On 25 November, Audrey Watson presented a charming and informative talk to us about her activities with Rambling UK, a London based organisation with over 60 staff dedicated to organising "easy tramping". She had obtained a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship Award, which allowed her to share her experiences in the United Kingdom as well as learn from some of ours. She gave us vital statistics concerning numbers and types of tracks throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. Most of their rambles are day walks, and as expected, are much closer to towns and villages than our own

tramps in New Zealand. They are organising many rambles to now be based on public transport points. Audrey spoke of various aspects of leadership, legal access, and Health and Safety issues. One story that had us laughing was the one about the leader who got drunk during the group lunch stop at a pub. He/she then lost interest in continuing the ramble,

and let the group find their own way along the myriad of tracks across the moors.

The Ramblers are involved with; campaigns and policy work, walking routes, tips and advice, the latest walking and non-walking books, volunteer work, and of course many Ramblers led walks.

Refer <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/>

## Lawson Pither 1922- 2010

### Club Patron and Life Member



#### Lawson By Kevin Pearce

This photo was taken on 8 January 1977. I was freshly back from the USA and we were both at a loose end so did a trip to Ruapehu. The weather was good. There was still plenty of snow and we camped high on snow. I have photos from the summit so must have made it there.

#### Interview with Lawson and Sue Pither, 28 April 2007

By Doug Strachan

##### Initial interest in tramping

Born in Masterton on March 5th, 1922, Lawson became a boy scout when he was about 15 years old. They went on easy tramps. When he was 17, Lawson was tramping around the Tararuas. At 18, the army further introduced him to the outdoors.

##### Role in the army

He went overseas with the infantry when he was 21 years old. He was a stretcher bearer in the 2NZEF (Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force). He was in the 24th infantry for 3 years, gaining the rank of sergeant once he took over the regimental aid post and became the doctor's assistant. At the Battle of Cassino, Lawson was in the front line trenches when he got into trouble for repeatedly singing Happy Birthday to himself. His own people jokingly threatened that if the Germans didn't get him, they would.

##### After the war

Lawson lived in Wellington and studied at night school. He was admitted to the Society of New Zealand Accountants in 1957, and qualified as an Associate Public Accountant in 1965.

After working for the Bank of New South Wales (became Westpac Bank) in Masterton, he moved to their branch in Blenheim for about 18 months. In the late 50s, he moved to Palmerston North, where he worked as a registered accountant for the Bank of NSW; Birnie Coombs & Wilson; Larson & Associates. Lawson gave up accountancy at age 81, although still had one client until 82 (in 2004). Then he retired.

## **Role in the PNTMC**

Lawson joined the PNTMC in 1966, the club's first year of existence. He was on the club's first official trip, which was to Field Hut in 1966. His last major tramp was also to Field Hut, with the Wednesday Wanderers. He went to Blyth Hut in 2007 to celebrate his 85th.

Lawson was on the PNTMC committee in 1967, and was club President from 1968-70. He served as the club Auditor for about 20yrs from 1974. His long dedication to the club was recognised when he was made a Life Member in 1987. A club member for over four decades, Lawson was involved with SAR and mountain safety, and did a lot of tramping with Kevin Pearce. Lawson has been the club Patron since 1976.

## **Funny Incidents**

See the story of how the stove got to Rangī Hut. Lawson built a yeti on the club's first ever Xmas trip. He got his foot stuck in a billy (the story is in Heather Crabb's Obituary). Lawson thought he had Trevor Bissell beat in the competition for the tattiest clothes, but Trevor won. Lawson's shorts became the 'Patron's Flag' at the club's 21st anniversary celebrations. Lawson still has those shorts, first worn over 40 years ago on the club's first tramp.

## **From Kevin Pearce**

My first tramping trip with Lawson and PNTMC was QB 1968, a Winchombe-Neill crossing of the Tararuas. Lawson was "old" then and has remained "old" ever after. I had been out with MTSC a few times before this but I immediately switched to PNTMC. Lawson impressed me by his fitness, enthusiasm and good humour. I liked the adventurous spirit of Lawson and the Club.

## **LIFE'S RICH TAPESTRY: THE STOVE AT RANGI HUT**

**By Lawson Pither**

**From the late 1960's**

**Reprinted from the June 1993 Newsletter**

As the Club's patron, and invited to put pen to paper for this editorial, I hope you'll enjoy this narration of events which took place in the sixties shortly after the PNTMC was formed.

At that time, members had finished relocating and remodelling Rangiwahia Ski Club Hut which was then officially recognised by the NZ Forest Service as the PNTMC Club Hut. As mountain huts went it was comfortable, weatherproof and a most satisfactory retreat in bad weather, but

lacked an efficient wood burning stove suitable for cooking purposes.

The following is the story of the stove. A group of four, comprising the President and three committee members, decided that the stove appealed as a worthwhile project but the Club had no spare funds and so economy was to be the name of the game. One Saturday, the four set off with trailer to investigate the Ballance to Pahiatua area, searching for lone chimneys (the results of house fires). The theory was that most of those chimneys would have a stove at the foot. There were many of these chimneys in this area but after years of weathering the majority were in appallingly bad condition or had been removed for use in the "New House".

After enquiries concerning many chimneys, a generous farmer gave this group of eccentrics a reasonably good sample of the stove maker's art which finished up in the writer's garden shed (cum garage). None of the group had experience in the field of stove engineering but it was decided to strip down and rebuild it. The stripping was completed and the shed which comfortably accommodated a car became full of sooty parts.

The group met regularly with much socializing, tea drinking etc, and after about six weeks, the job was done at no cost to the Club. It was time for the trial run and the little beauty was moved into the garden and stoked up. She drew perfectly and an experiment with water in the wet-back pipe was tried and had unexpected results. A jet of super-heated water shot out and demolished a row of Brussels sprouts. We decided then that a hot water service in the Hut was beyond the group's capability.

The second phase was to deliver the stove to Rangī Hut. At that time our club had an excellent relationship with the NZ Forest Service who very kindly offered to deliver the stove by helicopter. All they required was it to be delivered to their base at Pohangina. The group were delighted to comply with the above and in due course farmers in the Rangiwahia area were surprised to see a helicopter with a stove suspended underneath heading in towards Rangī Hut in very cloudy conditions.

A message was received from NZFS that the pilot could not see the Hut but had put the stove down on a knob which showed through the clouds. A search party from the club found the lost stove about a mile from the Hut on the snow covered slopes of Mangahua. It was easy to fix the stove onto a sheet of galvanised iron, and with ropes on each corner - behold a sledge! To

sledge it down to the hut, it was decided that the President (myself) would control proceedings from the sledge. The rope parties provided forward momentum and when required the rear parties acted as brakes on the steep slopes.

What developed was that the arranged load hurtled down hills at high speed, the President abandoned ship and the front rope party shot off to each side, out of the path of the juggernaut. Sufficient control or plain luck meant that the sledge did not descend the steep gully to the right of the track and the journey was completed very quickly without injury to the haulers. The front of the hut was taken out and the stove put in and the chimney attached and the first brew under way – total cost nil.

Those taking part were: Wayne Bauchard, Roger Clarke, Keith Potter and Lawson Pither.

**"THE HAM SANDWICH BATTLE AT YPRES"  
or "HOW THE MATTRESSES GOT TO RANGI"  
Reprinted from the August 1970 newsletter:  
(A true, unbiased, factual, uncensored account in  
which the culprits are named.)**

The Forest Service provided six rubber mattresses for Rangiwahia hut which the Club undertook to carry up. On Saturday morning Heather Crabb, Peter Baxter, Sue Streeter and Kevin Pearce waltzed up the track with two of the said mattresses. A light mist obscured the view for the whole of the weekend although it remained fine and calm. The hut was found to be in reasonable order.

Shortly after arrival and without warning or provocation, and contrary to the Geneva Protocol on Chemical Warfare, Sue lit the stove. Fuelled with leatherwood it produced voluminous clouds of diabolic, malignant, pernicious, noxious, virulent, foul, rank, venomous, abominable, astringent, lachrymatory smoke, only a small portion of which went up the chimney.

This was only the beginning. That night Sue and Heather formed an alliance. They took over the mattresses, sandwiched Kevin between them and forced Peter to sleep on the hard straw. Throughout the night they periodically rolled over onto Kevin who was trapped in his Everest sleeping bag, cooking and crushing him. Occasionally Sue would roll off the edge of the mattress and land on poor inoffensive Peter. Eventually the long night ended.

Lawson and Gunther Pither and Hamish Tough came up on the Sunday morning with a further

two mattresses. The hut was cleared out as was the water tank and all returned home.

Further to this libellous trip report, this is a true, unbiased, factual etc. account in which the subject is Not named but we all know who he is, DON'T WE?

While conducting a psychological surveyor of the trip members it was interesting to note that one subject insisted on a probable carryover from childhood, namely, taking to bed a specific article such as a certain "cuddly rug" or towel. Paradoxically it was apparent that subject showed considerable psychopathic tendencies when faced with a certain member being unable to contribute adequately to the communal food supply. A rope with a sliding noose over a rafter being suggestive of an unpleasant fate! Aforesaid subject experimented with methods of asphyxiation which were very nearly 100% successful, members having to evacuate the establishment with great alacrity.

It was also revealed that another unnamed member was afflicted with sleep talking, which provided an entertaining few minutes for the unwilling listeners. When cross examined, the member denied all knowledge.

#### **Footnote from Kevin Pearce**

The stove could not burn large pieces of wood and was inclined to smoke rather badly when starting up or burning wet wood. People were inclined to beat the chimney thinking in might be blocked. This resulted in ongoing problems with the flashing and leaks and rusting of the stove. This is why the stove was replaced with a much simpler device, some years later.

#### **"ON INCIDENTS DELIGHTFUL AND SOME MOST TERRIBLE FRIGHTFUL"**

**By Anon, from PNTMC Newsletter, Feb 1971**

Peter with his fishing rod  
Tramped over the greensward so.  
To catch a fish was his earnest wish  
But alas and alack we saw no such dish.

In a canoe as big as a shoe  
It was up the lake that Peter flew  
Passing by with a victorious cry  
Which made the rest of us want to sigh.

It was Lawson with his mosquito netting  
Who haunted the camp after the sun setting.  
A terrible fright to see such a sight  
Which kept them awake and dancing all night.

## Trip Reports

**28 November 2010**

**A-Frame/Tamaki River circuit  
Report by Nicola Wallace**

Dave, Gen and I met at Milverton Park at 7.30am, ready to head off and pick up Tina and Cherry on the way. But there was no Richard. So we headed off at 7.45am, under blue skies which promised a hot day ahead.

Having arrived at Tamaki West Roadend, the 5 of us left Dave's car just before 9am, and after a few pack adjustments, and a stop to admire a fine example of Ongaonga, we headed off up the hill towards A-Frame Hut. Very soon someone caught us up – our missing Richard. He'd gone to Milverton Park at 8.00am, the time stated in the newsletter trip notice. It just goes to show that Richard must read his newsletters thoroughly.

It was shady trudging up the hill, but very hot. It's a very good benched track, with flattish bits every so often that give you a break without having to stop. We heard but could not see a topdressing plane. Not long before the top we emerged into the leatherwood zone. Mercifully, the clear sky was now replaced with light cloud. Reaching the top and looking back down the track was a great sight – a sea of leatherwood. A turn to the right down Takapari Road, and A-Frame Hut was about 100 metres down, on the left.



*It's a good track through the leatherwood here.*

After a few minutes stop at the hut, and a look in the hut book (which showed that someone had stayed overnight a few nights before – interesting as there's no water tank anymore) we carried on in a NNE direction along Takapari Road. There were very good views to the SE, with Dannevirke clearly visible. Last time I came up here, about 3 months ago, it was very wet

With a half billy of water he sought 'er  
But no luck, never caught 'er.  
The door he did climb, one foot at a time  
While the rest looked on with looks sublime.

It was Randall who nearly started a scandal  
By being a dab hand with an old axe handle.  
He chopped the wood as fast as he could  
Until the whole ground shook on which he stood.

Our Grant with terrible yell of "I can't!"  
Was thrown in the creek midst an ominous  
chant.  
With an injunction of "I don't mean maybe,"  
This was the fate of our grubby baby.

Now Brad the lad was terribly sad  
He tore the only shorts he ever had.  
By all he swore it would happen no more  
As he threw those old shorts clean out the door.

Now Adrian, after mu-celli had  
The most terrible pains in the belly  
His hands grew sweaty and it was no yeti  
Just a breakfast he will never forgetti.

The mosquitoes to Adrienne took a liking.  
The effect of this was most striking.  
They bombed and they bit without giving a whit  
To the size of the eye on which they did sit.

Now it was Heather going all for leather  
Who kept our happy party much together.  
Thus it was our ladies' leader  
Was never to be found when we did need her.

Peter B. it was good to see  
Was always in the foremost three.  
By the food he ate at a shocking rate  
He could run and jump like a bull at a gate.

It could be well to remember  
Our smallest member  
Whose greatest wish  
Was not to be liked to a "Greasy Dish."

and clagged in, so the views were really appreciated.

It was pretty easy walking along wide Takapari Road, so the conversation flowed freely. After about 2.5 km down the road we reached the turnoff down to Stanfield Hut, and stopped for a late morning tea. It was still cloudy, and becoming increasingly humid. Dave proposed that we go down the Rimu Track, which is no longer maintained, and the whole group was keen.

Judging by the sign at the Rimu track start, the track hasn't been maintained since before October 2004. To start with, the track was very well defined as we were still in leatherwood, but as we descended in to the bush, the track became a little tricky to find in some places, while other parts were still very good indeed. It was interesting to see the many seedlings sprouting on the track. There was much flax, snow grass, and other cutty sorts of grasses that made our hands and arms red and stingy, mixing with the sweat from our downhill exertions.

There were a few different track markers still present, with more DOC orange triangles the further we descended. Near the bottom, the track flattened and weaved through quite a large stand of Rimu. A sign at the bottom stated that the track was closed – yes sir! Finally we got to the river, which we'd been hearing for ages, and stopped for a late lunch at about 1.15pm.

After lunch, everyone wanted to go up the river to Stanfield Hut, so we did. The river was very low, the lowest I'd ever seen it. Little orange Stanfield Hut was quiet and peaceful, as usual.

After leaving the hut, Richard and Gen got ahead of the rest of us, and by the time we reached the big orange triangle at the start of the Holmes Ridge track, they were out of sight.

It was lovely to savour the comparative cool in the bush, on what was now a very humid day. Yells and whistles brought no response from Gen and Richard, as we headed uphill on to Holmes Ridge. By the time we emerged from the bush and on to the farm track, black clouds were massed overhead, and I was hoping for a little rain to cool things down. A look down into the river revealed no sign of the missing twosome.

Conversation once again flowed freely as we thumped down the farm track, ending with the steep descent to the river – one not to hurry. Across the river, and back to the car by 4pm. And who should turn up about 5 minutes later

but Richard and Gen. They'd missed the start of the Holmes Ridge track, and had done a bit of to-ing and fro-ing in the river before spotting the big triangle.

We didn't linger in the car park, as the sandflies were biting, so it was off towards home pronto, with a stop in Woodville where the others ate icecreams, and I resalted with a bag of chicken chips. Everyone had really enjoyed their day.

Many thanks to Dave for his leadership, and for driving us there and back.

We were: Dave Grant (leader), Tina Bishop, Cherry Jin, Richard Lockett, Gen Tongu, and Nicola Wallace.

### **3- 5 December Waikawa Stream- West Waitewaewae River Report by Tina Bishop**

Our starting point was Waikawa Stream via North Manakau Road. Leaving Palmy on Friday at 5.30 pm we ambitiously dropped a car off at the Poads Road end intending to finish our tramp there on Sunday – I had a feeling this was the beginning of an adventure. We had an easy stroll to a lovely camp site less than an hour from the car park.



*Two well dressed Tararua trampers at Waitewaewae Forks. Note wet feet and stylish sunhats. Photo by Janet Wilson.*

Janet thought it would be funny if we saw a fish in the stream and at that moment we saw an eel casually cruising along oblivious to its audience. A cuppa and a snack saw us hit the sack fairly early although there was a lot of chatter before we actually slept. Janet was not impressed by the cuckoo who thought 3.30am was a good time to start its call. I thought cuckoos only crowed on the quarter hours and from within a clock. We were not sure if it was a short or long tailed cuckoo but it seemed to follow and annoy Janet for quite a way the next morning.

It was a long and restless night for me but we were up and away by seven, immediately trudging up a steep spur following a little used track for an hour and a half then quickly dropping down into the upper West Waitewaewae Stream. As we slowly rock hopped and crossed the stream numerous times we saw the stream grow as side streams fed into it. I began to realise that my rock hopping was much slower than Tony and Janet's, we were making very slow progress and I managed to slip over in my haste to go faster. Surprisingly Janet also fell (maybe to make me feel better?) and slightly twisted her knee, not a biggy though. We stopped by what was thought to be Mick Stream where Tony found a camp site tucked away, there was talk of there being a track up that way as an alternative way out if we did not make the round trip.

I was beginning to realise just how far we were off the beaten tracks and how having followed the stream for over three hours we still had such a long way to go. The scenery was stunning as we climbed over fallen trees, waded deep pools, splashed through the shallows and kept our balance on the side of mossy banks. Oh no! I was not good at the latter as my foot somehow slid off the bank I managed to land face down in a deep pool smashing my knee on a rock on the way down. I immediately panicked, struggling to lift my head to breathe. As my pack pushed me down I furiously dog paddled to the edge and grabbed a rock where Janet was offering to drag me out. Somehow I still had my glasses on and walking pole in my hand. Shaken and with a very sore knee I decided to avoid a rest and carry on but knowing our trip plan had a huge spanner in the works and my confidence was shot. We lunched at the beautiful Island forks, Janet and Tony debating whether it was indeed that as their maps were different – can islands move?.

Wandering (limping) on after lunch we came to the East Waitewaewae Stream junction where Tony and Janet wandered up and found the secret hut – placed there for a goat hunting project. After a quick fish in a deep pool there was much discussion about my capability of carrying on and it was decided that we would camp at the secret hut which was quickly named the dolls house. The two bunk dolls house had about a four star rating in bush sense (no long drop), complete with picnic table, washing lines, a grassy lawn, a nice camping area, recent Hunting and Fishing magazines plus a dodgy book which made Janet and I wonder what these goat hunters did for fun??

After a siesta Tony went off in search of trout and deer while Janet and I read on the sunny lawn, a rarity for Janet. I felt relieved to be able

to stop but was riddled with guilt knowing the original plan of camping in the beautiful grassy flats of the upper Otaki were scrapped and we would not be exiting via Richards Knob.

We girls slept in the dolls house and woke latish to drizzle. Off at eight, Tony's need for a wee at the forks saw him find an old hidden punga hut/camp site – very exciting. We ambled back the way we came yesterday, rock hopping our way back upstream, my knee sore but thankfully walk able – Janet's just a bit niggly. We scrambled up a bank and onto a ridge a little before the area we had come down yesterday and amazingly ended up at a tree with three orange ribbons and three very faint tracks.

Tony led the way along the ridge with Janet checking her compass bearings at the rear. We were hopefully heading towards an old four wheel drive track on the ridge that led to Thompson. To me we were in the middle of nowhere on a very marginal track (was it actually a track at all?) knowing we may have to turn back (I hoped not!). I had all faith in my fellow trampers' navigational skills, they are superb although Tony walked off his map! Yes we found the old track which was like a beautiful leaf lined highway in the middle of nowhere – candy to my eyes and sore knee. With lots of debating about which track branches to take and a quick sidle up to Thompson we headed back to the car park. A very interesting and enjoyable eight hours walk altogether. I think the discovery of new tracks and an old hut sort of made up for the trip shortened by me. Of course we had to drop Janet back at her not needed car and somehow lost her from then on. It was fresh cherries, cherry tomatoes and apricots from York Garden on the way home. Yes it was an adventure for me. Thank you Tony and Janet for your patience and support – you hid your frustration well!

## **5 December Makairo Track Report and photos by Fiona Donald**

It was an education, in more ways than one, on the Makairo Track tramp. We started well, in Palmerston North, no one got lost on the way to Milverton Park and we were all on time despite the misty rain. It was a good drive over the Pahiatua Track and there were no problems getting to the Makairo turn-off. A couple of dicey bits on the gravel road meant that I couldn't see where the bonnet of the car was and had to trust that when we went over the brow it will be okay. On the way up the closed road, Warren educated Woody and myself about the flowering rewarewa and tutu.



Fiona and Woody on The Makairo Track

The rewarewa flower looked fantastic in Warren's hand and as he very kindly let Woody photograph his hand and flower, Warren remarked on "Don't pick your nose or your bogey would look like this.." meaning the spiky flower in his hand and in a certain light, the rewarewa looks just like a bogey!

The supple-jack had already flowered and there were super-sized seeds on it; the mountain cabbage tree was about to flower and on the whole, there were a range of flowers that I had never seen before in that area.

We stopped for a drink, partway up, and looked over the bushy valley. Warren could see wood pigeons swooping up and down amongst the trees; Woody was busy slicing up and eating a whey protein bar he had made over 6 months ago while I was making myself comfortable by sitting on my pack. After morning tea, we got ourselves organised and there was a problem with my pack: my sunscreen tube had squished over most of my pack. Here are the perils of sitting on one's own pack and not checking whether anything was squishable and removing it.



Well protected tramping boots.

So, there was my problem – loads of sunscreen and not a lot of skin to put it on. The weather was cool, threatening rain and I already had a

long-sleeved top on so I invited the lads to plaster themselves with sunscreen. There was still a lot left over so I looked down at my leather boots and decided they needed some extra moisture.

After this slightly quirky moment, I heard some loud motorbikes that seemed to be near. It took quite some time but suddenly Woody said "get off the track" while I was in the middle of telling him about Derek's camera in the car-park and the epic journey he made to get it back. And there we all were-sandwiched along a small section of the track while the rumble of motorbikes got closer and closer. I stuck out my arm and waved and around the corner came a guy with helmet and on a two-wheeled motorbike and closely followed by 3 more two-wheeled motorbike riders' plus 2 quad-bike riders. They roared off into the distance and we plodded on, sniffing up the petrol fumes, and with me finishing off the story about Derek's camera.

At the summit we met up with the motor-bike lads and they were about to return and we didn't stay long – no views, cold wind, misty rain and the same on the other side so we turned back and found another spot for lunch. Warren said "it was better sitting here than having a poncy cup of coffee in George Street"; then the weather started to fine up; still, we were not inspired enough to turn around and go up to the summit. Warren and Woody were very interested in the Ongaonga nettle-hairy bits and I wasn't – I warned them that if they got stung I only had a small amount of anti-histamine ointment available.

## 6 December 2010 Success at last on Aoraki/ Mt Cook Report and photos by Malcolm Leary

I joined PNTMC back in 2001 to get the skills to climb Mt Cook. My first four attempts within two years all failed due to the weather. In the meantime, mostly with Bruce I have climbed other mountains and passes. However last year while on Lendenfield Peak with Terry, Bruce and Nigel Scott, I decided I had better get back to Mt Cook this summer. So on December 6<sup>th</sup>, with guide Abbey Watkins from Canada, I flew in to Plateau hut by helicopter. Also at the hut was former PNTMC member Heather Purdie aiming to climb Mt Cook. The weather wasn't good on Tuesday but Wednesday and Thursday looked better with the freezing level dropping to 2400 metres.

At 1am Wednesday morning thirteen climbers left the hut for the summit.

As my guide had not been on Mt Cook before she wanted an experienced guide from Alpine Guides (with a client ) there also - this being Dave McKinley. Dave became ill, so after about two hours, both parties returned to the hut. Heather was successful on Wednesday in a very good time of fourteen and a half hours. The following night we again set out at 1.00 am.

The Linda Glacier was very cut up with crevasses. As we approached the Linda Shelf at 4.30 am the Gunbarrels let loose twice .We had to go right across the Linda Shelf to get around the large crevasse and then up a snow gully on to the Summit Rocks.



Malcolm at the summit rocks. Linda Glacier and Mt Tasman behind.

The rocks were not difficult and then we were at a false summit back on snow. The summit ice-cap had a crevasse from one side right across to the other, so we had to go way out right to get around it and then back up along the ridge to the summit. It was a fine day with no wind on top--10.25 am.



Dave McKinley, Malcolm Leary, and Abbey Watkins on the summit of Aoraki - Mt Cook

We did not spend too long on the summit as we were only half-way for the day. We abseiled down the Summit Rocks and then down the snow gully and straight over the crevasse on the Linda Shelf to save time. The Gunbarrels behaved on the way down, then we weaved

through the crevasses on the Linda and finally the uphill test of stamina approaching the hut after sixteen and a half hours. Because the weather was due to deteriorate we flew out after a quick pack-up back to Mt Cook airport before 7pm. Because of the condition of the Linda we were the last guided parties for the season!

### 11-12 December Pureora Explorer Report by Tina Bishop

An early start saw us load the Ute with too much gear, typical when we knew we did not have to carry it. Four hours later we arrived at the Piropiro camp site to the threat of rain and so much space but so few perfect campsites. The four public shelters complete with fire boxes came with occupants who seemed to have unspoken ownership of them. We decided to skip setting up camp and go for a mountain bike ride instead.

A short cycle from the Ute led us to the "Pan Handle" – a daunting rutted uphill challenge which made me wonder what I was in for. The track evened out a bit allowing us to actually ride our bikes although some of the hills had to be walked. Finally we were in the bush then headed steeply downhill to cross a creek only to have to push up the other side which was so steep and long I was ready to turn back before my heart exploded through my chest. Richard craftily told me about an unusual private hut up ahead so I trudged on.

The hut was worth the effort, a mixture of punga, plastic and iron. We were privileged to meet the occupants – one with dreadlocks down to his knees - get a tour inside and offered a cup of tea which we declined. Up a bit further we came across a highway of a track which is apparently part of John Keys NZ cycleway, not very well planned we thought. Richard explored a bit further while I waited and rested. The trip back, mainly downhill was awesome, the temptation to go too fast saw me have one tumble without too much damage while Richard thrived on the challenge.

Back to camp, by now the rain had settled in so I smugly set up my cosy tent (which I later nick named the sieve!) not at all envious of Richards fly under the trees – until I later found puddles in my tent. After standing around in the rain looking stupid we decided to go and join the two friendly Dutch "survivalists" under their shelter to cook our dinner. One of these guys was busy making an eel trap out of a broken Warehouse cane blind while the other read his SAS 900 page

survival book – who needs TV! Across the camp the hunters were cooking their freshly caught/shot? shellfish over the campfire.



*Difficult but interesting mountain biking at Purerora.*

The rain stopped in the night and so after a reasonably good dryish night's sleep we were up and off tramping by 7am. A few kms up a steep never ending forestry road saw us finally in the bush on our way up to Ketemaringi trig, which we never saw. The walking was easy through very pleasant bush on a very little used track which eventually turned into a four wheeler motorbike track. We came out into the open to a track lined with toi toi's, the odd huge tree that survived the seventies logging and lots of bird song. We saw quite a few Kereru.

Our lunch spot was a surprise in the middle of nowhere, it had a sign "Beerhaven". In the grassed area there was a chainsaw carved log lounge suite, fire place, clothes line and a plywood kitchen bench. In the bush there was a huge wooden bar, an assortment of tarps and ropes, a tiny creek that had been dammed but then it got a bit dodgy as there was a wooden contraption over the creek which to me looked like it could be for tying up and torturing lost trampers. I don't think Richard agreed with that idea.

Finally we unsuccessfully tried to find "Angels Rest" which according to Google does exist. Finally the smell of pines told me we were nearing the forestry road at the other end. We were back at camp before 2pm, pulled our tents down and were off home just after 2pm. What a great trip with the added bonus of unusual and entertaining sights.

We were Richard Lockett & Tina Bishop

## **11 December Maharaha Crossing done by Lunchtime Report by Peter Wiles**

Initial forecasts suggested that Saturday would be better than the marked Sunday. So we switched days and assembled at Dahlia Street at 7am. The C-team (Citroen) of three departed for Opawe Road while the P team (Peugeot) of three departed for Kumeti Road.

We started across the paddocks at Opawe Road at 8am in good but breezy conditions. Rapid progress was made such that we arrived at Maharaha before 10am in a strong wind and a hint of drizzle. After dropping down a bit on the track through the leatherwood we stopped for morning tea. About 10min after resuming and heading back up the other side we met the P team and swapped a car key. They too had made good progress but had not yet stopped for tea. We agreed that with continued good progress we would meet up at the Ashhurst Domain Café for lunch.

It was definitely an advantage with the wind and rain at our backs plunging down the wide track through the leatherwood (which had been recently cleared).

The rain eased once further east and back into the bush region. We dropped off the spur down to the stream bed and were at the car before 12 noon.

At the café, the C team had a coffee and a leisurely lunch and waited for the P team. The wait extended for the ordering of a second coffee before they arrived about an hour after us. The descent from Maharaha in the rain and cloud amongst the grass-covered steeper ground slowed the P team down somewhat. They stopped for lunch once down in the bush.

Otherwise both parties completed the crossing of the range in good time despite non ideal conditions.

Team C: Martin, Amy & Peter

Team P: Warren, Chantal & Anne.

As it turned out, Sunday was nice and fine and calm, but it might have been hot work instead.

## **30 December- 2 January Looney loops around New Year in the Ruahines-Tukituki-Porongaki-Kawhatau Report and photos by Peter Wiles**

With an after lunch departure from Palmy we arrived at Hinerua Hut about 6pm on the 29th

Dec. It was handy timing as cloud rolled in as we arrived, then drizzle started which turned to rain for a period later in the evening.

We made an early departure from the hut in the morning and headed for Ohuinga. The cloud was initially below us. We then progressed along Sawtooth Ridge in mostly clear conditions with some cloud slowly drifting up on the eastern side of the ridge to give us some respite from the sun. We took a well deserved lunch on the peak just south of Tiraha. After lunch we tackled Te Hekenga. The cheval section being as tricky as ever, but probably easier when travelling east to west i.e. upwards and our direction.

Based on Derek's past experience, we then took a scree down the upper portion of Te Hekenga, then a section of grass and scrubby spur and then another scree that took us almost to the Pourangaki riverbed. (We disturbed 3 deer from their afternoon rest.) The travel down the river was tedious but generally steady going. The plunge pool section was chest deep. We arrived at Pourangaki Hut around 6pm completing a 12 hr day.



*Derek progressing south along Sawtooth Ridge. Porangaki river headwaters TR, Tiraha peak TL, Tukituki River headwaters in mist, left (east).*

We decided on a slower start for New Year's Eve and left at 8am for the climb up to the Hawkes Bay Range. Another stunning day. We had lunch on Iron Peg and were surprised that there was no one around on such a lovely day. After Mangaweka, we dropped down the grassy slope on the eastern side for several hundred metres before making use of a scree that took us into the bottom of Iron Peg Stream. Soon we passed Trig Creek junction and were in the Kawhatau. There was no one at Waterfall Creek Hut.

Welcome to 2011! New Year's day saw us leave the hut before 6am for the climb up to Rangiateatua, which we reached before 8am. We had climbed up through the cloud from near Rangji Saddle and emerged near the summit into

bright sunshine. Again, there was no wind. After a nibble and photos, we traversed along the tops southwards back to Ohuinga. We were mostly in cloud now. We made one minor navigational blunder in the mist that cost us about a 50m recomb. We had lunch on Ohuinga, completing the first loop.

After lunch we decided to drop onto Black Ridge and take the old Government Spur track down to the Tuki Tuki River. Navigation along the Ridge required some care in the cloud to ensure the correct turn-off point was taken. Once onto the Spur – what a disaster! Any sign of a track when you really need it i.e. into and down through the leatherwood had long gone. Once eventually below the leatherwood-beech zone we struck dense thickets of pepperwood and waist high (or higher) ferns. Then it started to rain. Occasionally we found and made use of sections of the old track, but generally when the ridge was broad and we really needed a track to give us direction, there was no sign. However, the navigation was good and our fear of wandering off the spur into some hopeless gully was unfounded, but hours went by, and our thirst and tiredness grew. Quite long sections of the old track were followable along the lower sections of the spur which considerably boosted progress as otherwise the prospect of a wet nightfall in the bush was a distinct prospect.

Near the end of the spur, and as indicated on the map (vintage 1965), the track turns sharply to the right and in sight of the farmland drops down to the river. Accordingly we made the same move, but this may have been a little premature, as we ended up on a very steep face with very dense tangled vegetation that we had considerable trouble getting down safely in the wet slippery conditions. It would have been extremely difficult to recomb out of amongst the wet tangled mess if we were unable to descend further. Fortunately, we reached the river not too much worse for wear. Finally we reached the car shortly after 7pm and completed the second and most loony loop.

We were Derek Sharp and Peter Wiles.

**3- 7 January 2011  
Northern Ruahine New Year Tramp  
Mokai-Lake Colenso-Potae-Ruahine Corner  
Report by Jo O'Halloran  
Photo by Richard Lockett**

A group of 6 took on the task of getting to Ruahine corner, starting from the steep farmland from Mokai Station at the end of Mokai Road. It was a clear sunny day as we trudged up nearly

600m with our heavy packs on..."zig zag!" ordered Warren, definitely we were doing the biggest climb in our first hour. Those calf muscles and lungs, and our temperature control centres were getting a good workout.

We descended through the beech forest to Ironbark Hut where we met a hunter and his wife. They told us that they had seen a family of whio in the river where we had been swimming. We slept out under our tent flies listening to the morepork during the night and the birdsong in the morning.

There were stoat traps all the way along the marked track, and signs that a recent 1080 poison drop had been made. The presence of birds appeared to be in reasonable numbers, with more bird sounds than I had heard for a long time. Was it the traps or the drop that contributed to the numbers in the area? We saw a falcon, kereru and tui. Along the path mature fungi were spotted, and the cool side streams were a welcomed place to stop.

The 2nd day saw us cross the river with bare feet and boots tied around our necks, hard on the feet but worth it for dry boots for the rest of the day. Then up a 360m climb up a ridge towards Lake Colenso. We saw beautiful mature beech trees spreading their roots across the dry forest floor. Observant Warren spotted some white flowering rata. We were stung by stinging nettle along the way even though Warren and Woody did try to clear the path of these offensive plants.

The temperature climbed high causing our energy to sap away and making us sweat profusely (we later heard that it had been 31degrees C in Ashhurst!). For our hard work we were rewarded by the vision of the beautiful Lake Colenso where we stopped for lunch before going onto the hut. It was an early finish to the day so Richard set off to explore the river up to the junction for the ascent Potae summit. He was rewarded by seeing a family of whio!

Meanwhile Warren and Tina bathed in the beautiful deep pools beyond the hut. There were some interesting looking limestone rock in the banks. That night we were joined by a group of trappers from the Hawkes Bay. They had got up at 0430 that day to begin their holiday in the hills! We crammed into the hut with the snorers camping out so no need to use the ear plugs that Jo had brought for our group to use.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> day had four of us setting off up stream towards Potae. Woody and Richard heading

towards the Unknown Stream camp site and a stay at Otukota Hut, as they only had 4 days to tramp.

Our Hawkes Bay trappers reported to us later that they had seen the family of whio at the Potae junction in the river....again we missed out on this pleasure ourselves! It was lovely getting onto the Potae summit and seeing Ruapehu in the distance. We moved thru limestone formations on the narrow edge, with Warren sighting a few deer in a grassy clearing below. Tina helped herself to some small red berries that were found in vegetation although hardly enough to sustain her. In the distance we had views of the Ruahine Corner tussock lands. There were hunters in the hut and little water in the tank so we decided to camp out, finding a well sheltered, mossy site to settle into to. Lawrence found a giant snail shell at the bush edge. We went for a walk to the edge of the park to the Maori owned land, and looked at the Makirikiri Tarns. Back at our camp site Warren cooked up for Tina a 2006 Back Country fish dinner with very dubious culinary value...we joked that they may have to be air lifted out the next day with the hunters, if they had food poisoning! The outdated dehydrated strawberries and ice cream for dessert was not much better (but Warren never complained!) The next morning they were still in the land of the living which defied all odds. There was meant to be some showers that night but none eventuated. Lucky us.



*Richard approaching the Mokai Patea Range sign above Otukota Hut. Bruce Ridge (the alternative track from Otukota Hut to the Mokai Patea Range) behind, and the Maropea Catchment headwaters.*

The 4<sup>th</sup> day we headed back and stayed at Ironbark Hut and then out on the Saturday morning. The weather was cooler so the up-hill was not as punishing as it had been. We unfortunately didn't see any whio in the rivers on the way back so we were left disappointed in that respect. The tramp took Jo, Lawrence, and Tina into areas we hadn't previously been to, so thank

you Warren. It was a great trip, with great weather – unusual for this time of year.

We were Jo and Lawrence O'Halloran, Tina Bishop, Warren Wheeler (5 days) and Richard Lockett, Woody Lee (4 days).

**22-24 January  
Tararua Southern Non-Crossing  
Report and Photos by Chantal MacDonald**

Our four party members headed down to the Upper Hutt area to begin the tramp at the Kaitoke carpark. Already the sky was looking ominous when we headed out, and sure enough we all had our raincoats on before long. The track led us up Marchant Ridge, where regrowth has reclaimed the formerly scorched land. Periodic open areas revealed lovely views of...fog.



*Misty Marchant Ridge.*

Eventually the vegetation thickened into the quite beautiful and somewhat mystic goblin forest: beech trees covered in moss. I found that the track also became appreciatively tricky, always clear to see but with tree roots ready to trip you up at a moment's notice. Of course, by this time the rain was coming down pretty good, and so not only were we wet, but we also had quite a few bogs to deal with.

The ridge then quickly descended into Hells Gate followed by a steep ascent back up onto Alpha Ridge. At this point we were getting worn out, looking forward to reaching Alpha Hut, and already soaked to the bone. Warren's pesky "just" gremlin came out to play when he mentioned it would "just" be 10 or 15 more minutes. About 40 minutes and several undulations later we reached the hut. To our great delight it was warm from the wood stove.

We cooked dinner, chatted with our hut mates (one of whom, Dionne, has tramped with the club in the past) and enjoyed a dry night in the hut despite the torrent outside.

The next morning saw the torrent continue and a change to our plans. As the latest weather forecast was calling for "persistent rain" and gale force wind on the tops, the decision was made to abandon the high ridge crossing to Kime Hut in favour of keeping dry in Alpha Hut. The day was thus spent alternating between keeping warm in our sleeping bags (as the firewood had run out and the hut had returned to its virtual icebox state) and reading or otherwise using up time. Warren won the handy helper award for braving the rain to clean the outhouse of its blowfly carpet and other generalized nastiness.

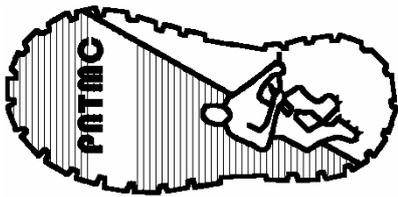
The rain let up somewhat Sunday night, just to re-emerge in all its glory for our departure Monday morning. We retraced our steps back to the Kaitoke carpark, past Dobson shelter, which was a complete joke as it wouldn't shelter a mosquito. Parts of the track were hardly recognizable as the rain had created innumerable bogs and marshes. The latter part of the Marchant Ridge afforded lovely views of the rural Upper Hutt farmlands, and the rain finally ceased allowing us quite a pleasant end of journey!

(PS from WW - Chantal is from Ontario, Canada so our misty drizzle = rain, and light rain = torrent....welcome to Godzone, Chantal !!)

We were Chantal MacDonald, Jo and Lawrence O'Halloran, Warren Wheeler (Leader).



*Alpha Hut*



**Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.**

[www.pntmc.org.nz](http://www.pntmc.org.nz)

P.O. Box 1217,  
Palmerston North

**PNTMC Newsletter**

**February 2011**

***What's inside this month?***

- *Upcoming trips and club events*
- *In memory of Lawson Pither*
- *Annual Awards*
- *Trip Reports – New Year and more*
- *Mt Cook at Last*

**Articles for the newsletter**

Send by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month to Tony Gates, the newsletter editor, via the club website <http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>.

**Get out and about with us!**

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