



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217
PALMERSTON NORTH
NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 1995 Edition

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	: Nigel Barrett	326-8847
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ENQUIRES CONCERNING OVERDUE TRIPS

Mick Leyland : Ph. 358-3183
Daryl & Linda Rowan : Ph. 356-4655
Sue & Lawson Pither : Ph. 357-3033

TRIPS OFTEN LEAVE FROM THE FOODTOWN CAR PARK IN FERGUSSON STREET UNLESS THE LEADER ARRANGES OTHERWISE.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GOING ON A TRIP, PLEASE ADVISE THE LEADER AT LEAST THREE DAYS IN ADVANCE. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN AN ALTERNATIVE DAY OR WEEKEND TRIP, CONTACT THE LEADER OF THE SCHEDULED TRIP.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN A DAY TRIP MID-WEEK SEE DETAILS BELOW, OR RING Lawson and Sue Pither (357-3033), or Monica (326-9691), John (358-3513).

Trip Grades

Grade of trips can depend on many factors, most especially the weather and state of the track. As a guide, a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the graded trips in about the following times: Easy (E) 3 – 4 hours, Medium (M) 5 – 6 hrs, Fit (F) about 8 hrs, Fitness Essential (FE) >8 hrs. (Tech) refers to trips graded technical requiring either special skills and / or gear.

Members are reminded that a charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance traveled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAMME

Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 30c which includes supper.

Club meetings are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month. The venue is the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North, at 7:45 pm unless otherwise notified in the newsletter.

The PNTMC committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

SCHEDULED EVENT LIST

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 19	Thursday day trippers		John Rockell	358-3513
Labour Weekend OCTOBER 21-23	Kaweka, Mohaka Hot Springs	E+M	Mick Leyland	358-3183

Depart Sat morning 6 am. These hot springs are located on the Mohaka River, at the north eastern end of the Kaweka Range; sunny Hawkes Bay. A 3 to 4 hour tramp/stroll into the hut with hot springs and good river swimming adjacent. A range of possible tramps or walks can be done on the Sunday followed by more cold and/or hot swims. Great country and Mick knows the area well.

OCTOBER 21 or 22 or 23 Tama Lakes TNP all Peter Wiles 358-6894
I plan to try and pick the best day's weather. We will leave at 6 am from Foodtown and head up to the Chateau. Then we will take the track to Tama Lakes and organise things according to conditions, interests etc. If clear, there should be good views of Ruapehu should it perform.

OCTOBER 26 Club night Steve Boulton from DOC Pohangina will talk about DOC activities in the Ruahine Ranges. You can order a hut pass directly from Steve.

OCTOBER 28-29 Snow Caving F Tony Gates 357-7439
Ruapehu may be OK for this snow caving trip. If so we will try to put a cave up near the Turoa skifield. If not, well, the destination will be Tongariro and South Crater. You will not necessarily need warm stuff, just lots of sun protection and plenty of energy. Should be a great weekend either way.

OCTOBER 29 Ohingaiti boulders E Margaret Riorden 356-7460
Depart 9 am These boulders are large concretions similar to the ones found at Moeraki in the SI. We follow a scenic farm track down to the Rangitikei River to where the boulders lie in a remnant of native bush. If it's a sunny day we can enjoy a picnic, and a paddle in the river before heading back uphill. Come along.

OCTOBER 29 SAR - Orienteering M+F Warren Wheeler 356-1998
This is a day of orienteering, in sunny Hawkes Bay, done in conjunction with the orienteering club and the Search and Rescue organisation. A range of courses are being offered. You walk/tramp/run in pairs. It is an excellent way to brush up, or develop your navigation skills, which are so important when tramping. Plus it's a great way to meet others from other clubs. The club members who went on it last time certainly enjoyed the activity.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 2 Thursday day trippers Judy Stockdale 355-5277

NOVEMBER 2 B-B-Q and Committee meeting at Nigel Scott's place, 146 Salisbury St. Ashhurst. The Bar-B-Que is at 6pm (bring your own goodies) with the committee meeting following at 7:45pm. Come, along and contribute to the running of your club. All club members welcome.

NOVEMBER 4-5 Snowcraft Extension F/T Nigel Barrett 326-884
Due to exams this trip has been postponed for later on in the month. Contact Nigel for the date and details.

NOVEMBER 4-5 Toka - Leon Kinvig M Peter/Judy Stockdale 355-5277
Departs Saturday 6 am One party will come in from Sixtus Lodge on the west side of the Ruahine Ranges, the other from the Ngamoko Rd end on Dannevirke side. Saturday night will be at Leon Kinvig hut where we will swap keys and compare notes. This trip is for those who are looking for an enjoyable and relatively easy (medium) crossing of the Ruahine ranges.

NOVEMBER 4 Otaki Forks E Richard Lockett 323-0948
Depart 8 am A ramble about the flats at Otaki Forks, and/or up the Waitatapia and Waiotauru, in the Western Tararua Ranges checking out the old tram line, mill sites and steam hauler from the days when logging and milling for timber was carried out in these parts. And if it's hot some time for a swim.

NOVEMBER 9 Thursday day trippers Dug Wakeling 323-4127

NOVEMBER 9 Pete Barnes talking on mountaineering in Peru. Last year, Peter climbed some of the 6,000 m peaks in the Cordillera Blanca region of the Andes. This is one of the world's most impressive mountaineering areas.

NOVEMBER 11-12 Open w/e Rangitaua All Llew/Jenny Prichard 358-2217
Depart whenever. These weekend events will be held at Sue and Lawson's place adjacent to Ohakune and the slopes of Mt Ruapehu, are always enjoyable. Scope for all sorts of activity; investigating old hut sites and tracks, a hidden hut and/or lake, the odd active volcano; tramping, climbing, skiing, walking, mountain biking, relaxing and good evening eating.

NOVEMBER 11 Rangitikei rafting M Derek Sharp 326-8178
One of the best stretches of river in the North Island. Being done with Rangitikei Whitewater Guides. (This trip was to have gone in September but was postponed due to river conditions.) This is its new date with warmer water and weather. Ring Derek if you want to go as there may be some places available.

NOVEMBER 12	Holdsworth	M	Patrick Janssen 356-3116
Depart 7 am A favourite peak to visit in from Masterton in the Tararua Ranges. Heading up through the forest of the Atiwahakatu Valley and then either via the mountain house track or the East Holdsworth loop onto the tops and Mt Holdsworth with its excellent views on the perfect fine and sunny day that has been ordered for the 12 th .			
NOVEMBER 16	Thursday day trippers		Judy Callesen 357-0192
NOVEMBER 18-19	Rangi - Iron Gates – Oroua	M	Judy Callesen 357-0192
Depart 7 am A visit to a favourite part of the Western Ruahine Ranges: Up to Rangi hut and then onto the tops from Mangahuaia, dropping down to the Oroua valley and Triangle or Iron Gates hut for the night. On Sunday down river and/or track with a chance for a swim to cool off. Meeting up with the day trippers on the way.			
NOVEMBER 19	Oroua River Loop	E/M	Terry Crippen 356-3588
Depart 8 am A relaxing stroll up the sidle track along the Oroua Valley in the Western Ruahine Ranges, to Tunupo camp site. Then down the river for some water activities (the odd deep pool), sunbathing and lunch. Meeting up with the weekend trip along the way.			
NOVEMBER 23	Thursday day trippers		Tony Cameron 356-5461
NOVEMBER 25-26	Rockslide Biv	M	Mick Leyland 358-3183
NOVEMBER 25-26	Otaki River by tube	M	Andrew Carvell 359-0935
NOVEMBER 26	Te Atuaoparapara	M/F	Christine Scott 354-0510
NOVEMBER 30	Thursday day trippers		Russ Johnson 358-7777
NOVEMBER 30	Club night TBA		

EDITORIAL

There is compelling evidence that spring is here in Palmerston North. I adduce the warmer weather and occasional sunny day as proof. At such a time of year thoughts naturally tend towards tramping or we lie in dreaded fear of mowing the lawn. Myself, I actually like winter for it brings with it snow and affords, numerous local mountaineering opportunities. I must admit, I am addicted to the stuff: within about three weeks of arriving in New Zealand I managed to find myself in at least three blizzards on the North Island. I actually miss the snowy months I used to have in the northern hemisphere. I will never get used to celebrating Christmas at the beach.

This season our club had what could be described as a bumper year for snowcraft courses. Despite ominous weather conditions, our snowcraft trips were heavily booked with a crescendo of thirty-one participants at snowcraft II. I find it satisfying that our club has taken such an active role in alpine instruction. We have sent members to courses designed for alpine instructors over the last two years and their commitment to this activity is bearing fruit in all the snowcraft trips.

Snowcraft trips are rewarding not only for the "students" but also for the instructors. Like other club activities, it provides an opportunity to meet people with similar interests. Unlike most activities, it provides a somewhat structured environment to learn new alpine skills and gather confidence on snow and ice. Occasionally, there is the added bonus of reaching a summit. The long lasting benefit for many is the experience on snow and ice. Equipped with such experience some opt to pursue more with a vengeance while others find that it is the key to many tramps involving modest amounts of snow.

The passing of winter does not signal the end of snow and ice activities. Since snowcraft III, the club has planned four climbing trips this year building on the snowcraft courses. The unpredictable weather and even more unpredictable Ruapehu has changed things a bit, but it has not altered the basic resolve to offer alpine trips. There is still plenty of snow around and one does not need to wait for a scheduled trip to frolic in the stuff. As I write this editorial, I am nursing a sore muscle or two from my adventures on Ngauruhoe, from where I saw Ruapehu obligingly erupt. Three other club members in a separate party led by Warren Wheeler also ascended the snowy slopes of Ngauruhoe to see the spectacular show. I would like to think that in some small measure the snowcraft courses they attended helped to make the ascent possible. Incidentally, they got to the top just in time to see the 'big blast' that afternoon. We left too early and saw only the enormous plume from the south crater.

NOTICES

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome two new members to the club:

Sarah Todd	Ramon Wilson
Makerua Road, RD 4	F7 /32 M ^c Giffert Street
Tokomaru Ph 329-8040	Palmerston North Ph 355-1278

THURSDAY TRIP SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 19	Thursday day trippers	John Rockell	358-3513
NOVEMBER 2	Thursday day trippers	Judy Stockdale	355-5277
NOVEMBER 9	Thursday day trippers	Dug Wakeling	323-4127
NOVEMBER 16	Thursday day trippers	Judy Callesen	357-0192
NOVEMBER 23	Thursday day trippers	Tony Cameron	356-5461
NOVEMBER 30	Thursday day trippers	Russ Johnson	358-7777

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)

A club team took part in a recent search (see article by Mick Leyland for details). So it seemed to be a good time for some related comments and figures. Reading one of the other club's newsletters recently about a day trip being caught out in the Ruahine ranges this July some points were noted: The return track as marked on the map was unable to be found, due to a combination of no markers, snow cover and running out of time. So the party wisely headed back to the nearest bivy for the night, before retracing their steps the following day. The trampers noted that fortunately there was spare food in the bivy. Yes, they had torches, spare food and clothing, and a primus with them. Large plastic (pack liners/survival) bags were godsend. They also noted that Thermal sheets/blankets were unsuitable for their needs, and that they could have had more dry socks. They noted that their search and rescue procedures (i.e. leaving full details with a responsible contact and what action the club takes) went well. How often do you as a trampler and/or a trip leader go through that mental or written check list, to ensure that if you and or your party run into difficulties, the outcome will be best for all concerned? Remember PNTMC trips also on occasion run into problems: parties getting split up, losing the route, getting benighted, an injury, etc. Do you know your responsibilities as a party member and/or trip leader? Are you prepared for these incidents. Have you left full details behind so that one of the Club's Overdue Trips Contact can access it all? Does your family know what to do if you don't return on time? Check your copy of the Trip leaders responsibilities and/or ask a committee member if in doubt.

SOME SEARCH AND RESCUE STATISTICS FOR 1994

There were 448 land SAR operations throughout New Zealand. Forty percent of the people rescued did not leave word of where they were going. Nearly half of the people rescued were inadequately equipped. Note also that only 37 of these incidents took place in extreme (i.e. bad weather), 230 took place in (good fine and sunny weather).

THE JANUARY-JUNE 1996 EVENTS CARD

Your committee is now planning the next six months of club events (trips and club evenings). It's time for all of us to start thinking about the first six months of 1996 and the types of trips we want and places we want to go to. We are now looking for leaders for these trips and events: be they easy, medium or fit tramps, rock or snow climbing trips, or other events e.g. visits to places such as Kapiti or Mana Island; for a day; weekend or longer, or a Thursday night speaker. What are your ideas? Terry (356-3588) and Derek (326-8178) your friendly trip convenors and Bruce (328-4761) your friendly social convenor would now like to hear from you so we can start to fill in all the spaces on the blank January – July 1996 events/trips card so you all can participate in a full and wide range of activities in the new year! Check up in past news letters and previous events cards for ideas. So phone us with your ideas before we phone you! First in gets the choice date slots.

CLUB T-SHIRTS FOR SALE

The club still has a number of t-shirts with the club's modified logo on them. Colour and sizes are: SM blue, M red and fawn. This is your last chance to buy one of these as the club is about to change over to marketing Club sun hats. T-shirts are at the bargain price of \$5 see Terry at club night or phone him on 356-3588. And while on club things - hot weather - hot item to wear - sunhats! We plan to get a bulk order complete with club logo. More details later.

SPEAKING OF CLUB LOGOS

Who has noted that the two different approaches to crampon use are mirrored in the two styles of the club logo. On the newsletter (traditional logo) we have French crampon techniques (flat footing) being successfully utilized. While on the t-shirts we have front point crampon techniques being used less than successfully. Must be something in that - or is just somebody's conservative (equals old fashioned?) ideas. Our own (TV) film stars (or what was Derek really drinking?) Club members including Derek Sharp and Linda Rowan, were recently caught on TV1, tramping somewhere in the (very) local hills. Derek appeared to be drinking some of the local waters. But was it just water? He seemed to be enjoying it too much. Anyhow the purpose of the appearance of PNTMC

bods on TV was part of the background for a "Really Living" piece on Giardia. The short piece reinforced the idea that it is the lack of personal hygiene, and aspects of town life that are more likely to expose you to Giardia than drinking (stream water) in the hills.

FOR SALE

Pair of Garmont Explorer boots, size 10, in good condition. Asking price \$100. (I've discovered I take size 10½.)
Phone Terry 356-3588

Overdue Contacts: Sue and Lawson Pither (357-3033) and Trish Eder (357-0122)

SMEDLY MEDLEY

This event is being held again this year on October 29. There is a choice .of three course options to enter.
Contact Warren Wheeler for more details - 356-1998.

CALENDERS

The calendar order has been sent off. We may get calendars with the cover photo (also reprinted on one of the months), of Ngauruhoe back to front.

MORE POSSUM POISONING OPERATIONS

This spring, DOC advises us, they will be carrying 1080 bait drops in the upper Waiohine, Hector and upper Tauherenikau rivers. Please take care with children and dogs.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING November

If you are unable to make it or expect to be late, please ensure that your apology is forwarded to the secretary in advance. Next meeting at Nigel Scott's place with BBQ. All members welcome. See details above.

MOUNTAINCRAFT MANUALS

The second bulk order has arrived, cost \$10.50. Please collect and pay money/cheque to Terry 3563-588. Apart from the ones that specific people have ordered there is one spare copy for sale.

MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL EVENTS

Following on from the last club night. talk by Noel Bigwood on the role and activities of the NZ MSC, there are some courses coming up that club members may want to go on (besides the River Safety). Over October there is the Outdoor Training Scheme (Basic Bushcraft). This consists of several evenings and two weekends and covers in depth, all the basic bushcraft skills, including travel and navigation in the bush without the use of compass! All good stuff. Cost about \$80 for the whole course. There is a risk management course also in October. For info on these and other MSC courses, contact Noel Bigwood (355-1453) or Eve Pura (357-9714).

TRIP REPORTS

Don't forget (leaders) please get your trip reports in or use your short lived powerrs to delegate to an unsuspecting team member. How about a letter to the editor, perhaps, or some good gossip, or a poem or what ever? Electronic copy is the most convenient. This newsletter is prepared using Wordperfect. So I can retrieve any material in Wordperfect format (version 5,5.1, 5.2 or 6, in either DOS or Windows). If you use Microsoft Word or a MAC, then I need an ASCII (or DOS text file) version. With a MAC, you will need a DOS formatted disc. I can only handle 3½ inch discs.

If you have DOS or Windows, and are not sure that you have saved it in ASCII format, then retrieve it into Notepad (Windows) or Edit (DOS) to check the copy. If it's ORI it's OR, if it's not, it's not!

TRIP DECISIONS?

If you decide you want. to go on a trip, please ensure that you have contacted the leader by the Wednesday before, so that logistical decisions can be made. Recently, there have been some instances of people expressing an interest in a trip on the evening before - the leaders in some cases, having made other plans at that late stage.

SAR CALL OUT

On Monday night I received a telephone call asking me if I could have a 'Search & Rescue Team' at the PN Police Station at 6 am, Tuesday morning.

On Friday night two men had been out hunting up Scots Road, and they had not returned to their vehicle where most of their gear had been left. They should have returned on Saturday but had not done so.

Three teams from Palmerston North were at the Police Station. An army truck transported us up to the hunters' vehicle to begin the search. All of the teams were equipped with maps of the area and a Codan radio. Our team was sent east. As we were searching we spied a hut from the ridge top. We informed base and were

asked to investigate. Once we had checked the hut, Trevor radioed back to base to say there was no sign of anyone having been in residence recently.

We were then informed that a dog had been sighted by another search party in the Tokomaru River. It was decided that we would be lifted out of the ranges and to the head of the Tokomaru River by helicopter. We were cable hoisted by a helicopter out of the bush. This was a first time experience for all of us except Trevor. (Most exciting. A real Buzz!)

Our next task was to check the side creeks. Having completed this we radioed base control only to be informed that the lost party had walked out by themselves.

A helicopter was then sent in to collect us and we were flown back to base at 5: 30 pm, Tuesday night.

Trevor managed our team most professionally with Llew, Graham and myself having a good day out.

Debriefing for the search was held at the Police Station two weeks later with refreshments afterwards.

Mick

TRIP REPORTS

SNOWCRAFT II

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times, and perhaps everything in between. We were by degrees frozen and sunburnt, and tired and restless. Thirty one people participated in this course; nine of us elected to begin on Friday night. Snowcraft I had also been held at Kapuni lodge some two weeks prior to this and by all accounts there was much snow about. Since that time more snow had fallen, and we were worried about snow on the road up to Dawson Falls. There was no snow, however, and we arrived at the carpark without incident sometime around 9: 30 pm. The weather was poor and conditions were getting worse. We quickly organized ourselves and headed for Kapuni Lodge in a rather unpleasant rain storm.

In the bush it was wet but tolerable, and we made our way by torchlight up the track. The snow had evidently receded some since Snowcraft I, but we were soon sloshing around in wet snow about ankle deep. Once we left the cover of the trees, the conditions were notably harder. The rain of course had turned to freezing rain and snow, the wind was up, and worst of all there were heavy deposits of unconsolidated snow. There was so much snow that the deep heavily eroded track to Kapuni Lodge was entirely filled with snow and indistinguishable at night from the neighbouring snow covered scrub. We pushed on, though progress was slow. Having been in the lead for a while I gave it over to Mike Collett, who did an admirable job of breaking trail. Occasionally we fell through up to the waist in cavities between the eroded trail and the snow. Peter Darragh fell in one such abyss and it took perhaps five minutes for him to get out. It was miserable: we were moving at a glacial pace (judging from the track conditions we should have been roped up for glacier travel) and chilled from the wind and snow (above and below). We managed to grope our way to Kapuni Lodge - it was about 1:00 am. With shivering bodies and chattering teeth we started a fire and gathered around the stove. We were too cold to sleep. Eventually around 2:00 am we went to sleep. I do not think I was alone in the lodge that night in hoping that this would not be the prelude to even worse weather.

In stark contrast with Friday night, Saturday morning was quite tolerable and showed signs of clearing. We did not wake up terribly early and race up the slopes. Much of the lodge was under snow and we occupied ourselves with digging out the toilet: shed, and water supply. Soon we saw the next wave of snowcraft participants ascending from the Hooker Shelter, and I must admit that I watched with mild envy how simple things were going for them in the daylight with a broken trail before them and pleasant weather.

By mid morning most of the teams were formed and we were out on the slopes. The weather was good and the memory of the previous night remote. With eight instructors and twenty-three students we had a good ratio of instructors-students and the teams were small. Some groups elected to stay low and reinforce skills learned on the first snowcraft trip; others made their ways up Fathom's Peak. My group consisted of Mike Collett, Clifford Hughs, and myself. We "pioneered" the way up to Syme Hut practising rope work for much of the way. The snow was disgustingly soft on the lower slopes and it was not really until the top of Fathom's Peak that it was hard enough to practice cramponing techniques. We had lunch at Syrne Hut, which was totally encased in snow, and then proceeded down. We stopped and practised a few pitches of rope just below the crater in a steep section. By this time a few other groups had climbed up and practising rope work.

We had a pleasant evening in Kapuni Lodge. It was a bit crowded with thirty-one people, but comfortable. Although the weather had packed up in the afternoon, we were optimistic about the weather for the next day. We were not disappointed.

The next morning we divided ourselves into teams and hit the slopes. Again some groups stayed low and others went high. Derek's group left the earliest. They were going to try some novel route from the lodge to the

East Ridge. The weather was certainly good although the snow even in the morning was still soft. As we reached the flats we saw that everything was right for a summit attempt. The mystery was that we were the first up to the saddle: Where was Derek's group; did they actually cross Kapuni Gorge low down? Our curiosity was soon satiated: we saw Derek's bedraggled group emerge from the gorge. They had had various adventures but had not crossed the gorge. Soon they were in good form and took the lead to the summit. We carried on up to the top without incident. The sun was beating down on us and the snow was again soft making hard work of it. We had lunch at the summit and a short play on the sastrugi ice covering the Shark's Tooth. The ice was too rotten to do any climbing.

We had a pleasant descent from the crater. The marvellous weather was rapidly retreating and by the time we reached the flats all visibility was gone. We met Terry Crippen and his group at the "false top" and had a murky descent to the lodge. Just under half of the participants made it to the summit that day and there was plenty of time for instruction. We packed up our stuff that afternoon and headed home. The Snowcraft II participants were: Andy Backhouse, Nigel Barrett, Shane Baxter, Alan Bee, Phillip Brown, Mike Collett, Terry Crippen, Peter Darragh, Ron DeRose, Bridget Douglas, Adam Fort, Zoe Hart, Clifford Hughs, Vanessa Johnson, Mike Lane, Maree Limpus, Dale Lockhart, Kevin Mansell, Clive Marsh, Lynn Murphy, John Phillips, Jo Robins, Chris and Alistair Saunders, Barry Scott, Nigel Scott, Derek Sharp, Sarah Todd, Vicky Trotter, Bruce van-Brunst, and Warren Wheeler.

NGAURUHOE etc September 30 - October 1:

Present were Terry, Bridget, Warren and Ron. This was meant to be the weekend trip to Whakapapa alpine club hut on Ruapehu, but owing to the obvious, it was shifted to a climb of Ngauruhoe - hopefully to observe some of the volcanic activity from Ruapehu. With due optimism we departed Palmerston at one of those unmentionable hours. A brief stop was made at the Tangawai bridge, which crosses the Whangaehu river, to observe some of the recent debris flow deposits from Ruapehu. Then it was off to the Mangatepopo road end. For those who haven't been there, DOC have provided a wonderful architecturally designed shelter, that really isn't much of a shelter at all. In any normal westerly breeze, rain gets driven underneath, so you will have to shelter in the very back corner, if you want to get changed and keep dry at the same time. After doing just this, we departed for Mangatepopo Hut. Terry had initially planned an ascent of Ngauruhoe via a direct route beside Pukekaikiore. But owing to marginal weather conditions (i.e. clouds - no views), we changed our plans, and departed for Oturere Hut via Mangatepopo Saddle. With improving weather conditions we wandered around the base of Ngauruhoe in soft snow conditions, to the south end of the ridge, that connects south crater with Ngauruhoe. After a brief lunch stop at the head of the Waihohonu stream, it was time to descend down into the Oturere Crater. An ancient lava flow leads from the crater down to Oturere Hut. There are some remarkable rock formations through this lava field, and with some stunted vegetation and rapidly melting snow fields, made for some incredible scenery, resembling something out of Lost in Space. The evening was spent clambering over some rock formations outside the hut, and practising free climbing techniques.

Next day we travelled back along the way we had come. Since Terry wanted to tryout his new rope, we found some large rocks back towards the head of the crater, for some climbing practice. Now, with a little practice under our belts, we headed off to South Crater via the most difficult route we could find. Much of the lava here is loose and easily dislodged as Terry was to find out when a fist sized rock just about knocked him out. It's at times like these helmets come in real handy! By the time we got to the top of a small peak on the eastern side of South Crater the weather had began to deteriorate, so we again abandoned the idea of climbing Ngauruhoe. We weren't singing much at this stage, but the ice axes on our packs were beginning to hum. What - ice axes humming - can't be. Sure enough when we touched the axes the buzzing sound stopped. It looks as though we were discharging static electricity, to the extent that Bridget's hair was beginning to stand on end. It was at this stage we thought of naming the peak we just ascended. After a raft of ideas I think the best turned out to be - Frizzy Bridget. I had heard of climbers being struck by lightning before, not a pleasant thought, so we ended up getting off this little peak as quickly as possible. After a brisk stroll back to the road end in heavy rain, we changed into some dry clothes under the shelter, that really isn't much of a shelter at all, and headed off to Tokaanu for a relaxing soak in some hot pools. Oturere is possibly one of the most remote huts in Tongariro National park, but is well worth the visit, and makes for an interesting and varied trip.

SNOWCRAFT SEVEN, Sawtooth Ridge in Winter, August 25, 26, 27 1995

Derek Sharp, Tony Gates, and Nigel Scott met me at Ashhurst, and were on the road by 2 pm Friday, destination Moorcocks (Kashmir Road). Nigel was the one that coined the trip title, "Snowcraft Seven"!!! With nano packs on our backs and ice axes in our hands, we sprinted across the rough farmland, and were soon on the bush track to Daphne Hut. Overcast weather. There was no mucking about for these fellows, and it didn't take long to reach the Tukituki River, then Daphne Hut. We were really chasing daylight up the steep track. Not long and we were in snow, then dark. We very nearly made it to the bush edge without torches, but we had slowed down somewhat by then. My god it was cold. The track winds up through open tops, but under the conditions, it was getting a bit dicey in places. It was however a very short distance to the hut, although conditions were somewhat worse than we had anticipated. The wind was cooler and the ice harder than any of us could have imagined. Howlett Hut was particularly attractive in such conditions.

Saturday was a beaut, weak winter sunshine, wind, spindrift, but most 'importantly, clear skies. The primus rattled into life, and the time consuming task of melting snow and ice began. By the time our three water bottles were full it was well and truly daylight, and it was nearly time to depart. We struggled with the usual paraphernalia like cramming our packs, forcing down food putting on boots, gaiters, and crampons (in the hut!), and struggling with the toilet door. No trouble cramponing along the track only the snow/ice was maybe a metre deep under the trees, so we had to bend our head's in places to get along! Once out in the open, we stopped briefly to adjust crampons, and to organise sunscreen, sunglasses, and adjust layers of clothes. Great cramponing, but somewhat sobering when Nigel took a fall, sliding approximately 50 metres, to a snowbank. Self arrest was impossible, 'so' was assistance, as he slid down the slope like a rag doll. We knew that the runout was "OK", and Nigel was all too aware of that too, but there were hundreds of much more significant and dangerous slopes further on. Don't slip! We pushed on, hounded by a diabolical Southerly wind on Tiraha. The ice and sastrugi was pretty rugged, and it was misty by then, but we knew the place well. And with Derek there as guide, route finding was no problem. We descended rapidly to the first ledge, then gladly saw some semi-clear weather to the north. The legendary Sawtooth Ridge was in fine form/ typically misty and extremely icy. But at least it was sheltered from the southerly, and we could enjoy it a bit more. We three skittered along/ presently coming to the first of several rugged knobs. Easy. Well, Nigel was impressed, commenting on how suitable Sawtooth Ridge was for Snowcraft Seven! Luckily, there were a few more clear spells in the weather. The difficult bits came and went with relative ease (much to Nigel's relief). Clear weather gave us all increased optimism, we were going to get to Waterfall Hut without problems that afternoon. There is one 'steep downhill section where you balance on slippery rocks, then jump, to land in what was soft snow. Thrilling. The usual grunt up onto Ohuinga went surprisingly rapidly, due I guess to our nano packs. We met Nigel Barrett, Terry, and two others as planned, so we swapped car keys to allow us to complete our respective crossings. Excellent planning, guys. Hawkes Bay Ridge seemed to drag on, but the weather was only semi-shitty, and it was basically clear enough to show us the route. Broken Ridge, Paemutu, and the headwaters of the Kawhatau looked great below us, as did the headwaters of the Pourangaki side streams. We could periodically see Waterfall Flat, way in the distance. By the time we were at the headwaters of Pinnacle Stream, we were ready for an easy descent. And easy it was too, following the snowed in footprints of the others on our bums. The bum sliding was not all that good, but the descent was rapid and cruisy. The short leatherwood section was iced over and simple, then the broad shingle flats, plastered with snow, provided extremely pleasant travel. The temperature was rising in the shelter of the valley, and the sun was poking its head out, so we were soon sweltering. The river was easy to cross, and feet remained dry in climbing boots. At the hut by 3.30, 8 hours on the go!

Glorious sun out there then, and 300 mm deep of snow and ice around the hut. The forest appeared wide open underneath with all the snow pressing down shrubs and fern fronds. We got the fire going, but it was a continual struggle fanning and feeding it. We gathered some good firewood, the best piece of which was a piece the diameter of a large leg, three times as long, and weighing about 70 kg. We fed it into the fire pretty slowly! Dusk came and went with numerous brews and a rather disorganised dinner, then a long sleep.

My bladder forced me out of the confines of my pit just on first light. It was going to be a glorious day, but my god was it cold! Everything that was damp, and I mean everything, was frozen. Even a billy of water was mostly frozen solid! The fire soon warmed us up (and smoke us out. A few good brews during a very lazy getaway, we packed up, and we were out of the place by 9.00 am. Dry feet once again crossing the Kawhatau River, (Nigel crossed in gummies, then piggybacked Derek across), then we all ambled up the hill a short way to the sunshine, where Nigel could dry off his feet, swap boots, and we could re-pack. We then climbed rapidly up Pinnacle Stream, warming up rapidly in the sunshine. Some snow plugging, then hard ice on the ridge top. Thoroughly well deserved views of all around were much appreciated.. It was one of those magic days in the hills where you could see everything. We happily crunched along Hawkes Bay Ridge, laughing at the hare trails in the snow and ice. The poor creature obviously had problems climbing and descending some of the steeper snow slopes. Hikurangi Range presented a huge area of ice, with awesome cauliflower lumps on the top. We ambled along to where the trig once stood (no sign of it now) then back down to warmer climes. Mist came in, and the temperature increased remarkably as we descended. Very soon we were really sweltering. Purity Hut, the bush edge, the tidy farmland below, the mud, then the car. By then, the pure white peaks from where we had descended were easily visible. We were happy in the knowledge that we had been up there.

A PLACE CALLED RANGI, Sept 3 1995

It was a beautiful day. Nine of us left town at the respectable hour of 9.00 AM Sunday morning, and drove north to a place called Rangi. At the car park, someone who wanted to demonstrate the art of skiing declared that all the ski poles had been left behind! No skiing, iceaxes and walking it had to be then. So we all ambled up the track to the bridge, then on into the snow and ice up near the hut called Rangi. About an hour and a half it took us, so we were well deserved of a lunch break and brew. And what a glorious day it was too, a good dusting of fresh snow around the hut, some ice, and always the views. Rangi Hut was new-ish (but a wee bit dirty), and has gas cookers and heaters. It is very popular for day trampers, especially on such a good day. Trampers naturally seem to gravitate uphill behind the hut, out to the wide open tussock basins. A good dusting of snow, as we experienced, makes the area all the more attractive.

Warren led most of the party up the hill to practice some snowcraft techniques, and they ended up on the top of the ridge, with fantastic views. Two of us tried this game of cross country skiing, and discovered interesting techniques of falling over! The area is however excellent for skiing. Logan sped around on his snowboard. A cup of tea at the hut, a quick jaunt down the track, and it was all over. Home early.

NGAURUHOE IMPROMPTU 7 October 1995 "Climbers have Grandstand View of Ruapehu Eruption"

A few of us Snowcrafters decided to climb Ngauruhoe by the west route. This offered excellent cramponing conditions from half way up with each zig offering views of smoke signals off Ruapehu and each zag giving views of Tongariro and Taupo. It was almost 3 o'clock before we were finally lunching just below the summit on a prime snow-free patch of thermally heated crater rim. At ten past three an exceptionally billowy cloud rose above the summit ridge from the direction of Ruapehu. This signalled the end of lunch and a general movement back to the summit and grandstand viewing as Ruapehu took centre-stage for an encore of the first eruption last week. The huge plume was carried safely eastwards creating strange thunderhead formations over the Desert Road. Great roars of approval broke out from the crowd as black blow-outs burst from the right of the base of the rising billows. Within ten minutes the show was all over and we were left feeling happiness filled, awestruck, and altogether pretty pleased that we didn't go to Egmont as originally planned (although we could see that Egmont too was free of the low-level cloud layer covering the country). The rapid slide down the north face used up some of the adrenalin pumping through our veins and enthused half the party to stagger up to have a look at Red Crater with the cloud lifting nicely to reveal the beauty of this strange area. Snow covered most of the Emerald Lakes and the Blue Lake looked just like any other snow filled crater. A short slide and glissade into South Crater continued our off-track adventure and rounded out a great day as we headed back to the main Mangatepopo track, meeting up with the other weary souls simultaneously at the car park. We were leaving just on dark when Bruce van Brunt turned up having just completed the full Ngauruhoe to Ketetahi trip with his group. Bad luck Bruce, you missed the show by an hour.

There may be a lesson in here somewhere about the virtues of early starts and careful planning but there is also a wonderful lesson about the pleasure that is to be found by just getting out there, being there makes it happen. OH, JOY!

We were Lynn and Brent, Vicki and Leo, Alan Bee, John Phillips and me, Warren Wheeler.

Thanks to Lynn who through her job with the Wellington Evening Post had a photo of Alan and the eruption on the FRONT PAGE of the edition on Monday 9th October.

ADVENTURES ON MT. ASPIRING by Bruce Van Brunt

(This is the third instalment -following the drama in reaching Colin Todd hut, Bruce continues his account - the ascent.

Colin Todd hut is a modest affair as huts go. The hut can sleep comfortably perhaps eight people and is equipped with a wireless. There is no water tank at this hut. One is obliged to collect water from some of the nearby tarns. Unfortunately, the closest ones are very suspect owing to continued pollution by visitors. The hut is located low on the Shipowner Ridge of Mt. Aspiring near the terminus of the Bonar and provides spectacular views in almost every direction. Facing due west, one can look down on the terminus of the Bonar and look across a valley to several nearby peaks around 2200m in elevation (e.g. Mt. Athene and Mt. Eros) swathed in glaciers. To the north there is the small Iso glacier below and the nearby peaks of Rolling Pin and Mainroyal. The eastern aspect is dominated completely by Mt. Aspiring. To the south one can look across the Bonar towards Mt. Bevan. In good weather, the alpine scenery from this hut is outstanding in every direction and alone well worth the visit.

Colin Todd hut was deserted upon our arrival. The poor weather had doubtless thinned out the climbers. The weather now, however, was really quite good. As the morning progressed the weather got better, the few remaining clouds disappeared and we found ourselves basking in our shirt-sleeves on the rocks drinking up the delicious autumn sun. The past three days had virtually soaked every stitch of clothing we brought and we used this as an opportunity to dry clothes and gear. We soon transformed the environs of the hut into what must have looked like a second hand gear swap meet perhaps crossed with a laundry. What a frightful state we were in: everything from our sleeping bags to our last pair of 'hut socks' was drenched.

The glorious weather was a merciful reprieve; it allowed us to dry all our belongings and relax comfortably around the hut, but it was also very frustrating as the weather was perfect for climbing and we were too shattered to use it. Throughout the day I wondered if such an opportunity would again occur during our visit. (I think too many days battling Mt. Egmont has turned me into a pessimist.) The day was not a complete loss. In addition to getting some rest and dry clothes we also managed to do some reconnaissance for what we hoped would be a summit attempt the next day. Clive and I climbed up the Shipowner Ridge to get a good look at "the buttress", a formidable rock structure on the Northwest Ridge, and a view of a possible route up the Bonar towards "The Ramp", a common approach to the summit from the northwest. The weather was settled and there was no wind (though some wisps of cloud around the summit suggested some wind up high). Richard would have

accompanied us but his feet were severely blistered the previous day and he was in some distress. He did good service guarding our possessions from the ever present keas.

Shipowner Ridge is a pleasant scramble of perhaps an hour in duration from the hut. From this ridge one can see much of the Bonar, Iso, and Therma glaciers, not to mention the northwest ridge of Mt. Aspiring with the magnificent buttress. In short, it is a worthwhile scramble in its own right requiring only a modest effort and no technical skill.

We returned to Colin Todd hut just before supper and decided to scout a quicker way down to the glacier that could be used in the early morning. The snow route up is steep but not too bothersome; nonetheless we wanted to stay on the rock for the descent to the glacier as long as possible – it seemed as if it would be quicker. With little trouble we found a nice route which avoided most of the steep snow. As we knew that we would start the climb in the dark, we placed a few cairns at strategic spots to help us efficiently find the path again. We enjoyed a scenic, peaceful supper outside the hut that evening. We were obliged to fend off a flock of determined keas, but the climate was comfortable and the sunset was impressive. Richard cooked a heavy but tasty meal while I took photographs of the sunset. It seemed worlds away from yesterday evening in the tent.

We listened to the weather report that night on the wireless: it seemed as if we were to have some good (albeit cold) weather in the morning. Given yesterday's performance by the weather service I was not a firm believer in their forecasts; however, it was evident that the weather situation had stabilized and not unthinkable that the nice weather would persist. We decided to make a bid for the summit. Richard felt it best to stay in the hut and not take part in the climb. Clive and I would be on one rope: Hep and Maree would be on another. We would climb "together but separately." When the broadcast ended we gave each other the "thumbs up" sign and agreed to awake at 3:00 am.

Sometime around the perverse hour of 3:00 am I awoke. I never sleep well in huts even when deprived of sleep the night before. We began to organize ourselves, sluggishly at first, until all was ready around 3:45 am. The previous night we had organized all the gear, food, and clothing so it would not be too involved an affair in the morning. Getting breakfast and finishing packing just seemed to take a long time. As we left the hut Richard asked when we expected to return. I really had not a clue, for the snow conditions had changed noticeably with the cold snap and the climb was unfamiliar. We guessed based on summer ascents that it might be as late as 6:00 pm; Richard exclaimed that it would be more like 3:00 pm. I did not hear all the conversation after this, but I understand that Richard was to "start worrying" if we did not return by late evening.

We scrambled down the dry rocks near the hut until we neared a small snow tongue on which we could get easy access to the glacier. Richard had pioneered this way and we knew there would be no trouble using this access. I felt lazy, however, and went further down the rocks looking for yet another access point. The rock slope steepened considerably and I was beginning to worry about my brashness (especially when everyone was following me), but we all managed to negotiate the rocks with out undue difficulty. Getting onto the snow was a bit inconvenient because it involved a small jump off the rocks onto the glacier in the dark but it was not too awkward. Soon we were on the Bonar fixing crampons.

At this stage Clive and I were the leading rope with Hep and Maree close behind. It was dark, but there was enough starlight (very little moonlight) to make one's way along the glacier. We were not in the centre of the glacier but at the edge of it hugging Mt. Aspiring. At first there were few crevasses, but soon Clive and I found ourselves confronted by numerous crevasses on moderate slopes and we roped up. This was the one section of the glacier we could not see in our reconnaissance and it cost us some time. Hep and Maree had wisely climbed higher and managed to find a somewhat dubious snow bridge to cross the major crevasse which barred the way. Soon it was clear that we had no choice; we had to back out of the ganglia of crevasses we were in and pick up Hep and Maree's route. Save for the snow bridge, it was a good straightforward path through this section. It was still dark but getting lighter.

After negotiating the crevasses we essentially left the glacier and steadily ascended the snow slopes leading to the ramp. The snow was firm but pleasant to crampon on. It was daylight well before we reached a chute which was the gateway to the Ramp. At this chute we caught up with Hep and Maree. They had set up their first belay of the climb. The pitch was a short one owing to the nature of the chute and the nearby ice. After they finished we started up the chute. Clive led the way using their old belay point. We needed our ice axes and hammers from this point onwards. Clive and I climbed "leapfrog" exchanging the lead at each crossing. The snow was of varying consistency: overall it was hard, but in some places it was more icy. The snow conditions were much different from the conditions encountered even a week ago. The recent storms followed by the cold weather had transformed the ramp into a hard snow ice route. What was perhaps more irksome was that in several places there were alternating layers of snow and ice so that setting up a belay was time consuming. Generally, one would first attempt to place a snow stake only to find that about half way in there was a barrier of ice. If this layer of ice proved thick enough the snow stake would be abandoned for ice screws etc. Although the weather was beautiful, the sun did not help us. This time of the year the sun does not reach the Ramp until well into the afternoon and there is little softening during the day until late afternoon. (I did not even need sunscreen

until the top of the Ramp). Progress was slow up the Ramp, and it was not until twelve pitches of rope that we reached the top of it. Hep and Maree led the way up the Ramp and we followed them. Unfortunately, our rope was about 45 m, whereas theirs was a full 50 m. The net effect of this was that we could not use their lovely elaborate belay positions.

Aside from the first pitch which required some minor ice scrambling there was only one other noticeably awkward pitch. The pitch entailed a traverse of about 25 m of which about 7 m is below a crevasse followed by a short climb up an iced over snow bridge. I led the way on the first part of this pitch and set up a belay, just above the crevasse. I managed to find enough "soft" snow to use snow stakes, but the top of one was bent slightly by my efforts (this was reminiscent of winter conditions on the east ridge of Egmont). Clive passed me by and started climbing an ice slope directly above me following Hep's route. There really were no better options as this portion of the Ramp consisted of sheer blue ice. The climbing was not too bad, but the belay position was horrid. I was showered by copious amounts of ice, the product of at least two climbers above me. I tucked in my helmeted head and rode out the storm of ice.

Sometime around noon we reached the top of the Ramp. Here there is a welcome saddle on which to rest and inhale the dramatic views of the park from about 2500 m. I will not dwell here on this place as we were later to become much more intimate with it. We had a quick snack at the saddle and started for the summit. Clive exclaimed that he wanted to get back to the Ramp no later than 2:00 pm. This-we could see was extremely optimistic planning: we still had some 500+m to ascend.

From the top of the ramp the slopes to the summit are relatively gentle but exposed. We unroped at the saddle and soon passed Hep and Maree who remained roped up. The next 300m was really fairly easy. The snow was hard and there was much ice about (and the exposure increased with each step) but we felt comfortable on the pacific slopes of the summit ridge. I led the way up the first few hundred metres from the saddle until Clive "smelled the summit" and took the lead. This was perhaps the most enjoyable part of the ascent. The warm sun finally found us, we were on gentle slopes, the skies were absolutely destitute of clouds, and there was no wind. It was not too hot and what seemed like the entirety of the Southern Alps lay before us - who could have asked for better conditions. Our pleasant slopes, however; soon left us and the gradient became steeper. This itself was not too bad, but these slopes were encased completely in sastrugi ice. We clung to the southern edge of the ridge and fought perhaps 200 m of this unpleasant ice. On this sort of ice one never really knows what sort of hold one has. Each step required several swings of the ice tools before a secure grip was felt. Plates of ice and hard snow showered down at each stroke. The last hundred metres proceeded at what seemed a logarithmic pace (i.e. phenomenally slow), but we had "summit fever" by this stage; our blood was up and we already imagined ourselves at the top. The weather was still gorgeous and at any moment we could stop and imbibe the glorious alpine scenery laid before us, which included stunning views of neighbouring peaks and glaciers as well as picturesque views of Mt. Cook and nearby mountains. This was the first time I saw Mt. Cook and its environs and even at this distance it was impressive.

We struggled up the last hundred metres to the top battling loose ice and sastrugi. Clive clawed his way to the summit followed by me. At about 3:00pm I walked on the (fairly small) summit of Mt Aspiring. Clive exclaimed "Dr van-Brunt I presume" and we shook hands. We sat comfortably at the summit in awe absorbing the view. There was still no wind; I was warm in a short sleeve shirt. We took numerous photographs and gradually our minds drifted back to the harsh reality of our predicament. We had at most three and a half hours to get off the mountain before darkness. The weather was good but a descent on the sastrugi ice was bound to take a long time and the Ramp even longer. Still exuberant from the climb we began our slow painful descent.