



# PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

**Newsletter - February 1999**

## \*\*\*THIS ISSUE\*\*\*

### NEWS:

Book reviews, and the 'Sound of Music'

### TRIP REPORTS:

Cracker summer extended trips -  
Tararua mid-fold traverse, Murchison/Tasman Glaciers,  
and Rees Valley (Part I)

## CLUB NIGHTS

<b>FEBRUARY 25</b>	<b>Massey Rock Wall</b>	<b>Massey Rec Centre</b>
<b>MARCH 4</b>	<b>Committee meeting</b>	<b>Maree's place</b>
<b>MARCH 11</b>	<b>"Painting the Mountains"</b>	<b>John Gates</b>
<b>MARCH 25</b>	<b>AGM / Wine &amp; cheese</b>	

Club nights are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month at the **Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North**. All club nights commence at 7:45 pm, winter or summer. The PNTMC Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

At the club night: Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 50c which includes supper.

## UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

### Trip Grades

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

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs

Fit (F): about 8 hrs

Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

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

Beginners should start with Easy Grade trips.

Feb 18            Thursday trampers  
Graham Pritchard            357-1391

Feb 20-21        SAREX                            M/F, I  
Mick Leyland                358-3183  
PNTMC have a team organised for this exercise.

Feb 21            Harris Creek                    E/M  
Liz Flint                        356-7654  
Depart 7-30am. A nice leisurely tramp up the Mangahao valley to Harris Creek Hut and beyond for a picnic lunch. Tramping via the river, weather permitting. There's also some lovely swimming holes so bring your togs & a towel.

Feb 25            Thursday trampers  
Pam Wilson                    357-6247

Feb 25            **Club Night: Massey Rock Wall**  
Bruce van Brunt                328-4761  
Laurence Gatehouse        356-5805  
7:45pm at the Massey University Climbing Wall (in the Massey University Recreational Centre), instead of our normal venue. The night is dedicated primarily to playing on the climbing wall so dress for some moderate physical exertion, and bring along any gear you might wish to try out (leave the ice screws and pitons at home!). This is a free night for PNTMC to try out / revisit the wall so let's take advantage of it.

Feb 27-28        Hidden Lake                    M  
Tony Gates                    357-7439  
"Hidden Lake", near the confluence of the Ruamahanga River and Ruapae Stream, will no longer be hidden to members of this reasonably

easy tramp. It is one of the scenic gems of the Tararuas, set in majestic Podocarp forest, with a good native bird population, and with its own little island in the middle. This will be a cruisy trip exploring some easy Tararua country, and swimming in some of the best pools you have ever seen. Depart after brekky Saturday, return midday Sunday. Phone, visit, or e-mail Tony.

Feb 27-28        Egmont Rock (Andy Backhouse)  
**Now moved to March 13-14.**

Mar 4             Thursday trampers  
Sue & Lawson Pither        357-3033

Mar 4             Committee Meeting  
Maree Limpus' place

Mar 6-7 Kahuterawa Valley                    M  
Terry Crippen                    356-3588

Depart 8am. After last year's day-investigation of this area close to Palmerston North, it was decided another exploratory trip was in order - this time camping overnight. We will either do a loop from the Kahuterawa side, or an east-west crossing starting from Marima, camping in the basin of the Otangane stream. A mostly untracked trip with stream travel.

Mar 7             Rangi Hut & beyond            E/M  
Stuart Hubbard                356-8782

Depart at the civilised hour of 8-30am. A cruise up to Rangi Hut for an early lunch and great views across to Mt Ruapehu. Then up the spur to the ridge behind the hut for more views to the inland ranges.

Mar 11            Thursday trampers  
Nevelle Gray                    357-2768

### **Mar 11 Club Night: "Painting the Mountains" with John Gates**

John Gates has been tramping and climbing around New Zealand for over 50 years. A talented and productive artist, he has drawn and painted many mountain scenes. He will present the Tramping Club with a display of some of his work, and if you are lucky, John will show you how it is done. And if you are *extremely lucky*

(and bring your cheque book), you might just be able to purchase a pickie of your liking.

Mar 13 (Sat)    Roaring Stag                    M  
                         Sarah Todd                            326-9265

This is a nice walk in the NE Tararuas, alongside the beautiful upper Mangatainoka River, then over a hill and down through moody forest to Roaring Stag Lodge on the Ruamahanga River.

**Note: This has been moved from March 27**

Mar 13-14        Egmont Rock                            all, I  
                         Andy Backhouse                        353-0774

Andy is visiting his old friend the Snotgobbler on the slopes of Taranaki. He's really very friendly & not at all slimy. And you can do some fun single pitch or top-roped rock climbing whilst you're visiting his lair. Grades from 11 upwards depending on how hungry he is. Interested? - ring Andy & see what's on the menu.

**Note: This has been moved from Feb 27-28.**

Mar 14            Burn Hut revisit                        E/M  
                         Llew Pritchard                         358-2217

Depart 7-30am. A walk from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mangahao Dam in through forest then scrub to Burn Hut, a Deerstalkers Association hut in the northern Tararuas.

Mar 18            Thursday trampers  
                         John Rockell                            357-4126

Mar 21            Powell Jumbo                            F  
                         Maree Limpus                         025 395-883

Depart 6-30am. For the more fit, this is a great loop walk in the eastern Tararuas, first climbing to Powell Hut below Mt Holdsworth, then north

along the ridge with great views across Wairarapa & back to the southern & inland Tararua ranges.

Mar 21            Maharahara Crossing                M  
                         Kevin Pearce                            357-0217

Depart 7am. An 800m climb & crossing of the southern Ruahines. Good views of both sides, and *the* place to venture through the infamous leatherwood unhindered! If enough takers, we can organise a double crossing & exchange car keys at the summit to save on transport.

Mar 25            Thursday trampers  
                         June Sowerby                            355-2690

### **Mar 25            Club Night                          "Wine & Cheeze and AGM"**

Starts 7-45pm. This evening will kick off in a leisurely fashion with the serious stuff (wine & cheese that is!) first. Have a chat with other members over a wine & nibbles about nominees for club positions. Remember that nominations for Patron, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and general Committee members really need to be given in writing to our Secretary (Sarah Todd) *before* the AGM, which will commence after the wine and cheese when spirits will be high and members' interest in the administration of our club will be at a peak!

Nomination forms will be available at the Wine & Cheese; include the position, name of person you are nominating, your name as proposer, and name of a seconder. So come along for a drink & chat, grab some nomination forms, discuss & decide on your nominations, and have your say on who & how your club is run. See you all there.

#### Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trips co-ordinator (Terry Crippen 356-3588, or Liz Flint 356-7654), as soon as possible, if there is any doubt that you will be unable to run your trip as scheduled. This is so that alternatives can be arranged, put in the newsletter, or passed on at club night.

#### Trip participants:

If you are interested in going on a trip, please advise the leader **at least three days** in advance.

Trips often leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street unless the leader arranges otherwise.

A charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance travelled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

For general information on the scheduled or alternative tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654).

### **\*\*\* OVERDUE TRIPS \*\*\***

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

## NOTICES

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**ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER**

All kinds of articles, whether trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, or even a product review, are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. If it is a small article, hand-written is okay (deliver to John Phillips at home address: 87 Victoria Avenue) but if handwriting is all you can do, don't let it put you off even large articles.

If you *do* have access to a computer, it does make my job a bit easier if larger articles are on disc. However, more and more people are e-mailing articles to me. If you have the facilities at home or at work, this is a very quick & convenient way to do it. Use my work e-mail address:

john.phillips@mwrc.govt.nz

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

postmaster@mwrc.govt.nz

where all incoming scan files are processed by a software package and forwarded on to me. **Any photo scan files e-mailed directly to me will be automatically rejected** by the system, so make sure you send them to the 'postmaster' address at my work.

I use Microsoft Word Version 7.0. If you use any other software, give me a ring on 357-9009 (work) or 358-1874 (home) and I may be able to indicate whether it is compatible or not. If in doubt, try sending any files as an ".RTF" (Rich Text Format) file, which can sometimes be easily converted from one software format to another, or the safest bet is to just cut-and-paste your text directly into your e-mail message.

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

**STOP PRESS !!!**

For those with activities near Wharite in mind, NZ Broadcasting are restricting public access under the Wharite tower during February-March 1999, due to tower and building renovations.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Pauline Coy has moved from 57 Friars Rd but you can use her work address which is:

C/- Palmerston North City Council  
Private bag 11034, PN  
Ph 3568 199 ext 7102  
or mobile 021 647 115

“THE HILLS ARE ALIVE”  
(with apologies to The Sound of Music)

“Doe a deer a female deer  
Bang I shot it with my gun  
Me a bloke I call myself  
Car a long long way to go  
So I boned it took its head  
Lugged it out in waste deep snow  
Tea, I think of steak instead  
That's the end of that poor doe  
A deer a ....”

Warren Wheeler

**BOOK REVIEWS** By Tony Gates

“Early Huts of the North Eastern Ruahine and Central Wakarara Ranges”  
by Matthew Wright (1986), New Zealand Forest Service, Napier (unpublished).

This book offers a fascinating history of some of our favourite spots. Some chapters present information from over 100 years ago, as there were huts built for farming, logging, rabbiting, and a bit later on, tramping. The book has some darling photos of old timers, many with their horses and dogs.

Chapter one introduces the scene, with hut construction (many somewhat temporary), supplies, fires (forest and hut), and sources discussed. Chapter two then covers the Northern Ruahines, with a page or so written on each of 11 huts. Some pretty scratchy photographs complement the text, with rudimentary maps. The Whakarara Range is covered in chapter three (14 huts), and then chapter four covers the central Ruahines (10 huts in the Sunrise- Howlett area).

“Hall & Ball, Kiwi Mountaineers, From Mount Cook to Everest”

By Colin Monteath (1997) Hedgehog House.

This is a very different book from the above, and right there on the top of my Christmas pressie list.

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Many other books have been written about various Himalayan climbs and tragedies, but I believe that this is the best yet. It follows the life stories of Gary Ball and Rob Hall, to the their unfortunate deaths in the Himalayas. They were perhaps New Zealand's most capable mountaineers, and certainly the most publicised and well known of the 1990's.

The book is a large, glossy, coffee table book with superb photos and excellent text. The well laid out chapters are not presented in strict chronological order, as the author chose to present chapters primarily in geographical areas. They follow firstly Ball's exploits in New Zealand's Alps, The Andes, and Antarctica, then Hall's exploits there and in the Himalayas. Their paths

inevitably crossed, and they formed a successful climbing partnership that chased publicity (and sponsorship) almost as much as the mountain summits themselves. They were the first to climb the prestigious goal of the highest peaks of the seven continents in seven months. They then formed "Adventure Consultants", guiding numerous paying clients onto the summit of Everest (amongst other summits). The career path stirred up plenty of controversy, but they were certainly critical of the activities of many other expeditions, and they were leaders in many safety and environmentally friendly ideas. The book certainly stresses that mountaineering is a wonderful thing to do, and the reader is left with the resounding impression of Hall and Ball as respected leaders in their field.

### TRIP REPORTS

KIRITAKI HUT                      Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January  
by Katherine Lauchland-Farquhar

The plan was to walk up to Kiritaki Hut in the southeast Ruahines, via a ridge from Fairbrothers Road. (Permission is required to cross the farmland from the road end.)

However, torrential rain greeted us just a few metres short of the 'carpark' as we stepped out to change a flat tyre . . . Umbrellas definitely a useful accessory . . .

Despite the rain, all were keen to explore some distance along the ridge and we enjoyed a leisurely, if somewhat sodden, half-day amble. There's some really nice bush to be seen in the area.

We were: Duncan Hedderley, Monica Cantwell, Neil Campbell, Katherine Lauchland-Farquhar.

SUNRISE HUT                      30-31 January  
by 13 year old Peter Barnett

After I had filled my pack with modern-day 13 year old teenage essentials - Walkman, electronic organiser, tapes, chocolate, scroggin and drink, - I set off on what our optimistic tramping club newsletter described as an 'easy' tramp! By the time our party of eight were all at the hut, we were stuffed. Elizabeth, the sister of trip leader, Richard Lockett wants it recorded that she made it

all the way to the hut too! The views of the Ruahine Forest Reserve and the Hawkes Bay plains were spectacular. Elizabeth's seven year old son, Daniel and my eight year old sister Stephanie managed the steep track with ease. My Mum and Dad, sister Libby and her friend, Holly had more bodyweight to carry up so were slower. It had taken us two and a half hours to climb up and yet we had only covered four kilometres.

Up at Sunrise Hut we met Ray, an ex French Foreign Legion soldier who was walking from the Cape to Bluff with a sixty-pound pack, (twenty days of food) and a rifle. We had a really good dinner of rice, tuna and pasta source. At my age, what we ate is of key importance for a trip report so Dad hasn't edited it out. I spent a night squeezed in among four other people, realising at two o'clock that my 'pillow' of clothes was in fact my sister's pack and not at all soft with all its clips and buckles.

In the morning some people saw a fantastic sunrise though the more sane of us stayed in bed. The walk down took an hour and five minutes less than the walk up which pleased us all. By the time we were all down we were all very proud of what we had done.

MID-FOLD TRAVERSE OF THE TARARUA RANGES (ROVERS HILL TO MICK)  
1-5 January                      by Warren Wheeler

Celebrating the End of the Millennium, this trip was dedicated to all those Great Moments in Tramping History, those disconcerting moments when, in the worst possible circumstances, the vital route detail is found to be worn away by the fold in your map.

Is this a future Classic Trip? Hey! Do birds sing at dawn? Are trees green? Is there ever 5 days of continuous fine calm blue-sky days in the Tararua's? Yes! But then it is an El Ninya year. Lucky me.

This ended up as a solo trip as the timing was off for the few hardy demented souls who had earlier supported the crazy idea of a trip across the mid-fold of the Tararua Park map (line 43 on the 1:50,000 - plus or minus half a kilometre wear-allowance). With fine weather forecast I abandoned Plan B, a week on Waiheke Island with my sister and her young family (no offence Lynda, but), and finalised plans on the drive down from Auckland on New Years Eve. The transport problem was solved nicely by Richard Lockett who, along with Terry Crippen joined me for the first part of the trip into Blue Range hut.

The beauty of this trip is that there are so many options along the way - and variations on the theme. I had originally looked at this as a west-east crossing but ended up doing it east-west starting at the Kiriwhakapapa Road end, mainly because it would make for a shorter drive for my lift home. As it turned out this direction was much easier for navigation, especially for finding spurs down off the ridges. It also meant North Mitre Stream was done going upstream which was a bit easier, maybe.

I also bent the "rules" a little by not starting from Rovers Hill but instead stayed in the Park from the road-end and took the obvious route up Reef Creek before veering up onto the Blue Range. This would make a nice easy-medium day trip joining up with the Blue Range Hut track to make a loop walk. Likewise at the tail end of the trip I took the short cut out from Mick along the track past the Ventura crash site rather than bush-bashing down and up onto the Gumpies Hut track and then out. I suspect this section would be hard going through re-growth and lowland forest vegetation but I was too worn out by that stage to even entertain the idea. Anyway, like the Appalachian Trail, one doesn't have to do the

whole route in one hit, and this would make a good day trip from the Waitohu quarry.

While stopped for lunch at Blue Range Hut we were inundated with up to 80 Scouts from the jamboree at Greytown - they seemed to have run out of energy and told us about the 38-degree days they had been having at the camp. Thinking I too would have warm balmy nights I had opted to save weight by not carrying a sleeping bag. This resulted in me sleeping under my fly in my silk liner wearing woolly long-johns and vest, T-shirt, long-sleeved shirt, polypro jacket, socks and using my raincoat as a blanket - hot? NOT!!! Still, at least I wasn't carrying any excess weight....I farewelled my Day One companions at the Cow Creek track turnoff with instructions from Terry to tie a strip of yellow plastic at my exit and entry points on the main streams I crossed - to aid search and rescue.....thanks Terry, good idea.....but, OK.

The reason for his concern was high-lighted a few hours later when I twisted my knee while dropping off down to the Waingawa River. Novice navigator that I am I headed off the Cow Creek track too early and ended up in the watercourse south of the spur I was aiming for - a bit steep in places. Still, all good fun and not too bad, especially as it ended at a beauty 15m waterfall just before the Waingawa, rather nice for a dip. Fortunately the knee wasn't a real bother but it got me thinking about what I was doing and the need to be careful. At least there are numerous escape routes down well-travelled tracks....if one is still mobile...

Day One ended after crossing the Waingawa and going downstream a little to climb up onto the obvious spur above North Mitre Stream. This had lots of deer wallows on its flat top and signs of a hunting track heading up the spur. It looked like a nice place to camp but after realising I needed water and a bit more shelter from the breeze that had sprung up I dropped into North Mitre Stream and emerged at a perfect little spot. Rather lucky as they seem to be few and far between. I soon had my fly set up and a wee campfire going under a billy full of rice risotto, licking my wounds and counting my blessings as the daylight leaked out of the sky. Cold night No.1.

Day Two: North Mitre Stream to Carkeek Hut. North Mitre Stream is generally quite straight forward except for a couple of waterfall sections.

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The first two I climbed up quite high on the true right bank before sidling to get around the overgrown slips trying to miss the odd patch of stinging nettle. The second falls are about 600m further upstream and I took these by climbing around on the true left. At the head of the valley it opens out and a side stream leads up towards the Brockett-Mitre saddle. This has one or two little waterfalls requiring a tussle with some leatherwood and I had lunch here before the 200m climb up through the tussock to the saddle itself. I met three trampers on the track here and heard about their wind-blown clogged out last couple of days at Arete Biv. I wondered if Derek Sharp and Nigel Barrett had struck the same weather a day or two earlier and was thankful all I had was a few wispy clouds lurking around Mitre.

The easterly wind was leaving the view to the west fine and clear but a side trip to Mitre was pointless, especially as I needed all my energy just for the afternoon ahead - yes, being fit helps, I'm sure but the views from Brockett and Girdlestone made it all worthwhile. I took the route along picturesque Dorset Ridge, with its tarn and lots of alpine flowers, and then branched off at a cairn (surprise, surprise) down a leading spur into the right branch of the Waiohine River before joining the main stream. A further kilometre downstream I headed up a side stream, which was rather steep and blown apart by recent slips, before taking to the forest and climbing slowly up 300m on to the Carkeek Ridge track.

The Carkeek Ridge Hut was a very welcome sight and there was no-one else there when I staggered in around 7.45pm - a long day. This 6-bed hut is well-looked after by Victoria University Tramping Club who use it as an epic destination if the log book is anything to go by. It is also popular with deer-hunters and HVTC did a fit trip to here last year via Mitre-Tarn Ridge-Lancaster returning via the route I had come along and out over Mitre again. Hmmmm. It is possible apparently to continue up the right branch of the Waitohu to finally emerge opposite the new Tarn Ridge Hut, a good option for future MFT's perhaps.

Instead of using an open fire I fired up the steel box stove which was good for warming the place up but consumed vast quantities of wood just to get the billy boiling. Fortunately there was plenty of windfall in the beech forest to replace it next morning after another boil up.

Day Three: Carkeek - Otaki River. Woke early due to the cold and after porridge for breakfast headed off soon after sun-up. I went back down the ridge track and veered west off 1088 down a spur but half way down veered right and ended up in the watercourse which required a bit of a sidle around a waterfall further down. Emerging at the Park River I followed downstream for a few hundred metres to a stream coming in on the left. Opposite this I took the easy to follow deer trails up the ridge for 300m onto the marked but not maintained Nicols-Kelleher track. After following this track south for 300m to 1031 I branched off down and worked my way down into a side branch of Kelleher Creek for lunch.

From here it was fairly straight-forward to follow an easterly bearing on the mid-fold line which avoided the climb all the way up to 870 and brought me out on top of some huge old slips, and after sidling around to avoid them, an even bigger fresh slip. I gingerly followed a deer trail through the remaining bush next to the slip edge until breaking out onto the slip itself. It was very loose on top and hard underneath with deer tracks and a hunters footprint set like concrete as testimony to how wet it had been. The debris trail in the stream bed was tremendous, with the 4m high windrow of gravel particularly impressive where it had turned into the main stream.

I followed the diminishing trail of destruction down to the Otaki and was surprised that there were no big log jams. Perhaps the slip area was so unstable that the trees don't get a chance to populate it much. However the debris had formed a large sandy beach at the Otaki and just opposite and downstream was another old slip with a very inviting grassy flat. This was clearly used for camping at the upstream end but I chose the downstream end where the flood debris provided more firewood. I set up camp there in the mid-late afternoon and later had mushroom and wine pasta for dinner. The strange dreams that cold night may have been influenced by this, but.

Day 4: Otaki-Waitewaewae-Chaney Creek track. The trek is taking its toll, I have sore big toes and blisters on top of the middle toes - must be from the wet socks. Can't be the Ashlea gumboots, they never give me trouble.... I was packed up and on my way as soon as the sun hit my fly (about 9am I would say). The wander down the Otaki for 600m or so made a nice change before taking my cue

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from a sidestream and heading into the beech forest again for a 480m climb onto Oriwa Ridge, emerging just east of 937. There was lots of old windfall, apparently dating back to the Big Blow in 1934 but the deer trails made the going pretty easy. I veered right at the end of the ridge, then left to drop steeply down to the Waitewaewae Stream following the zig-zagging deer tracks through the crown ferns and beech.

Lunched at the stream and had a look at the sidestream heading west but decided to take the ridge instead as it would probably be quite open although a bit hot. It was a 600m climb up to the Chaney Creek track, trying not to get too excited about the possibility of getting right out today. Beware "home-itis"!! There was a lot of small windfall about and the deer tracks wandered all over the place but the up-ness steadily retreated the further on I went. Although there was lots of deer sign around I never saw one so it was with some surprise that I spotted a cuckoo sitting motionless right beside the track, its mottled feathering making near perfect camouflage.

### **The Lost Pack Saga**

Approaching the ridge and Chaney's Creek track the beech started to give way to patches of leatherwood and a branch flicked my glasses off. I dropped my pack and finally found them then realised that my map was missing. It was usually tucked nice and handy down the front of the waist-band of my pack. So I decided it must have dropped out while coming up through the last patch, just down the way, and went back to look. Leaving my pack behind. But first marking the spot with a broken branch on a 2m high peppertree. No worries. Yes, worries because when I came back it wasn't there. Or there. Oh-oh. I seemed to have come back a slightly different way and in re-tracing my steps rapidly became very dis-oriented, nay delirious. Water! Fortunately I was able to get a drink from a deer wallow-puddle and this fuelled me nicely for the grid search that followed. Thoughts of dying a horrible death from Tb or something temporarily cast aside.

The search. Unsuccessful. For maybe two hours. Over an area about 200m long and 50m wide. Ridiculous - it had to be here somewhere! As the day wore on the shadows lengthened making the place even more unrecognisable but the sun's rays settled on the hanging mosses and, taking the hint,

I collected balls of the stuff as I searched back and forth, purposefully.

The moss was of course for bedding and a lining for the nice patch of tussocky growth I had come across when randomly exploring in exasperation along the overgrown Chaney Creek track, well beyond the obvious search area, but. As dusk set in I wasn't at all hungry as I snuggled into my nest, covered myself with more of the moss and spent a calm moonlit night dozing fitfully between waking and re-packing the bits of moss blanket which had slipped leaving bits of leg and arm to get cold. I was most impressed with the moss off the tree trunks which fitted nicely over my curled up legs and kept them nice and warm.

Day 5: Chaney Creek Track- Waitohu Valley Road. Awoke with eyes gummed up and moss through everything. At least I had my hanky tied over my hair. Search time again. Right. Success at last. Oh Joy. If only I had searched a few metres further along up onto the ridge the day before. If only I had ignored the self imposed boundaries I had put on the search area and re-traced the most obvious route up the spur that I would have taken - instead of being led off to the left by the blazed trail I had come across on my map wander. And the funniest thing? When I opened the pack there was the map on top, just staring at me - or I should say, I stared at it! I must have put it there when I put the pack down to look for my glasses. One does funny things when tired, dehydrated and alone. Like yelling Hallelujah!!

And then having trouble deciding whether to cook some porridge (best for energy) or simply scoff the crackers with honey, cheese, sardines in mustard sauce, and salami (quick and easy). Hard decision. Must have been the picnic atmosphere created by the one litre of Raro which made me favour the latter but just to be on the safe side I polished off the last of my Cinnamill biscuits (for added energy). With an easy four hours out, no worries. However I had not counted on the leatherwood sections of the track which were a bit overgrown and resulted in my eventual appearance at the road end being very bedraggled, arms torn out of my old shirt and legs scratched to tender-to-the-touch. Gaiters? Great idea, thoroughly recommended. Why didn't I wear the ones I got for Christmas? I thought they were for snow and being cotton would be trashed on their first trip in the bush....

Another funny thing: I actually found that trying to follow the overgrown track felt quite restrictive and irksome compared with the freedom of the last few days just following my map and compass and relying on my bush-sense to follow deer trails in a relaxed kind of way - no track, no worries about being lost! Deer hunters will know what I mean. Muddle-forth Rules OK. Beware the Beaten Track. Don't get me wrong, any track through the leatherwood is better than none (unless a sidle is easier) but most of this trip was through open beech forest with very little undergrowth to get tangled in and a pleasure to travel through.

Yes, a great learning experience indeed. To all those lost and found trampers who have been temporarily geographically confused by the absence of an essential map detail - I salute you. To all those who now want to tackle the Mid-fold - Good Luck. If you are fit enough, with a light pack it may even be possible to do this in a day (or two anyway).

Thanks to Richard Lockett for coming down to pick me up on such a scorcher of a day, ginger beer in hand, and to the Linton family on Waitohu Valley Road who, despite my rude appearance, let me use their phone and plied me with pikelets and jam, and cool raspberry drink.  
Warren Wheeler

**The MFT east-west route (refer to 1:50,000 topo map NZMS 260 Sheet S25 Levin)**

Start at Kiriwhakapapa Road-end 247411-239427-232431-Blue Range Hut-216429-200425-202427-194424(camp)-177433-170428-Brockett-Girdlestone-144425-140433-129429-123433-Carkeek Ridge Hut-123432-113433-113431-105433-096431-079429-072432(camp)-068427-060433-050428-042428-022427-023425(Biv)-011433-010437-987442-957469 Finish at Waitohu Valley Road

**THE MURCHISON TASMAN CELL PHONE EXTRAVAGANZA**

2-17 January by Terry Crippen, Nigel Scott, Richard Lovell, Nigel Hough

After four summers of trips to the Arthur's Pass area it was time to head into some bigger country; the glaciers at the head of the Murchison and Tasman Valleys in the Mt Cook National Park. So for Terry, Nigel S and Richard, in Richard's Citroen, it was the usual late night ferry crossing

and a few hours sleep at Nigel's dad's place at Blenheim, then a even longer hot drive down to Mt Cook.

We stayed a couple of nights at the NZAC's Unwin hut, just down from the village, so we could check things out with DoC and others. Various reports from people made it sound as if the Murchison headwall at Tasman Saddle would be impassable - the crevasses were wide open with the lack of snow over the winter - snow conditions that you would expect in late February not early January.

So we organised with Mt Cook Line who were going to fly us in to do a good circuit over the headwall so we could make an on-the-spot decision on where to land us - the Murchison or the Tasman. Fortunately the slots (crevasses) didn't look totally impassable so it was down for the start of the eleven days. Once the plane departed we had the place to ourselves - a big white world of glacier, snow and peaks.

We roped up for the slog with heavy gear up to the "closed" Murchison Hut. The rock spur that the hut is on is breaking up with the downwards recession of the glacier, (a common problem for mountain huts) so NZAC is currently investigating what to do. We pitched the tent further up the spur from the hut and made use of the hut for cooking in etc. The afternoon of our arrival saw us wandering up the rotten rock and soft pluggy snow onto Cooper (2362m) directly behind the hut.

**Day 2 Classen Saddle Soiree**

Nigel's penchant for early mornings (milking cows) translated very well down here, with him supplying a healthy bowl of porridge to speed along an early start. Down onto the Murchison, roping up for glacier travel (we were roped up just about all the time on this trip) we weaved our way across and up to Classen Saddle though some mean slots. An incoming Nor Wester put paid to any attempt on Brodrick on the Main Divide. We sheltered in a gap between the snow and rocks overlooking the Classen Glacier dropping off below us.

So with the strong wind behind us we headed away from the main divide, over to Mt Phyllis. Admiring some incredible views of the Godley headwaters, the Aida and the Murchison, we stopped for a bite of food, and a quick cell phone

call (one of many) to Nigel H back in PN to plan his arrival. Then a quick trip down in the soft sugary snow, weaving our way past the slots back to the hut. The sound of avalanches gave an authentic feel to the day. The afternoon was spent relaxing, snoozing and contemplating the weather. It was decided to take the tent down and move into the shelter of the hut as the wind was building up strength.

#### Day 3 Pit Day Number 1

We didn't even bother to wake up for the early morning alarm - we had a full on storm outside - very strong winds, marginal visibility and near horizontal rain.

#### Day 4 Up and Over Tasman Saddle

An early start, with the weather abating, we left Murchison hut a little unsure of what awaited us further up the glacier. The flight in and the view from Phyllis had given us some idea of the route but we found the distances quite deceptive and often the slots are hidden from view with the curvature of the glacier. We estimated about 5-6 hours to Kelman Hut but the headwall up the Tasman Saddle put paid to that. Reaching the base of the headwall at 11 am it was decided to have lunch when we got to the top of the saddle. After all we only had about 200m to climb.

Ha, Ha! Belaying all the way and with 3 on the rope we weaved our way between slots and over soft snow bridges. For Nigel S in the middle it was a free ride as all he had to do was prussic up the rope from Terry to Richard and vice versa. However his platypus drink machine showed its value as the belayers were getting a bit thirsty, but were too busy to extract their water bottles. We must have appeared like a slow motion movie to the audience high up the ridge at Kelman hut.

"Lunch" was tempting when we finally got to the saddle but with Kelman hut only about 30 minutes away we decided to continue. Lunch therefore was at the hut at 6pm! A 12 hour day, but what a view from the hut perched at 2460m on the narrow ridge between the Murchison and Tasman upper glaciers.

#### Day 5 Abel

We awoke and fell to sleep a few times before finally rising at the late hour of 8:30am to find the 20 odd other climbers had already departed for their day activities. Deciding not to be too lazy we departed about 10:30 for Abel (2688m, the

guide book Abel not the map one), a small nearby peak. On the summit the cameras had a good workout - views of the Murchison, Elie de Beaumont, Hochstetter Dome, Annan, etc. Mountains in all directions and a fine clear day.

After the descent and some crevasse extraction practice we returned to the hut for lunch at a more sensible time of 2:30pm. Being hardy PNTMC types having to carry food for the trip from place to place our dinners were the usual dried pasta. The others who flew directly in had "boring" normal home meals of stir fry fresh vegs and fruit for pudding and bacon and eggs and oranges for lunches. Evenings on the veranda of the hut was cell phone time, good reception straight down to the West Coast (Complementing the radio sched).

We got in touch with Nigel H - he would be arriving tomorrow. Two possibilities, either by plane to a landing strip well down the Tasman Glacier (coming in to take climbers out from Tasman Saddle hut) - hope not as this option would mean a 5 hour return slog for two of us to go and get him so he could travel back on the rope, or by helicopter coming up to the hut - the fresh fruit and veg option (or so we thought!).

#### Day 6 Nigel H by Chopper

A short morning climb to save ourselves for the possible slog to pick up Nigel H. Up before dawn and over to the base of Aylmer just as the sun came up turning the snow pink. Good ice necessitated a few pitches using ice screws, a change from the soft stuff. On the summit, amazing views straight down onto the Whympers Glacier in the Whataroa Valley. Down the ridge towards Hochstetter Dome and back to the hut for lunch and another phone contact with Nigel - yes by chopper in 30 minutes, but no - no fresh food except one loaf of bread (he didn't know till the last minute he was coming by chopper).

Nigel S and Terry had to interrupt sunbathing to gear up again for the short plod down to where he had been deposited on the glacier. The loaf of bread got demolished when the four of us at last, sat down for lunch. After that onto the glacier for some more action packed crevasse extraction practice.

#### Day 7 How To Hire Crampons

A 4 am start to get Nigel H into the mood, was set back a bit by the clubs crampons that he had hired breaking (the connecting bar), and some

repair work by torch light. So a 5am departure from the hut for Hochstetter Dome (2827m). There was a front predicted to come across later in the day, so an early start was necessary. A pleasant travel over the two summits saw us heading back down onto the Tasman Glacier just as the cloud started to billow over the Main Divide.

Time for another cell phone call. This time for Nigel H to contact firstly Alpine Guides Ltd to hire a pair of replacement crampons (much dearer than the club rate perhaps a cell phone extra rate!), then to Mt Cook Ltd to see about getting them dropped (literally) in to Kelman hut. "No problem will be there in about a couple of hours"! So after investigating some of the huge slots in the area and calling into Tasman Saddle Hut for a feed we plodded back in the enveloping cloud to Kelman and the crampon drop. Quick accurate delivery, they got thrown out of the chopper to land just below the veranda.

The afternoon was spent eating and sleeping and comparing notes with the others in the hut - quite a few of the bods were from Aussie on instruction courses run by AGL etc.

#### Day 8 Pit Day 2

Rain, wind and mist. Eating, sleeping and talking.

#### Day 9 Abel Again and Down Glacier

An early start for a traverse over Abel. Up the rock of the NE ridge, belaying all the way, quite enjoyable being on rock for a change even though it was falling apart in places, then over the summit and down the snow slopes on the NW side. Back to the hut, lunch, then packing up. The distance down glacier to De La Beche Hut was 12 or more km but at least it was more or less downhill, losing about 1100m. Initially on the snow of the upper glacier, then the white ice of the middle section. With the high temperatures some of the white ice was wet soft slushy muck but otherwise travel was good. Initially the rocky moraine was OK as well, but taking a diagonal across to the moraine wall at De La Beche corner became trickier - steep icy ridges and slippery rock rubble. Then the over-steep loose 100+m moraine wall, leading into the basin and the little hut. At least we had the hut to ourselves that night, previously (according to the radio sched) it had been overflowing with people.

#### Day 10 Pit Day 3

Rain, wind and no visibility. We couldn't do any climbing. We had the hut to ourselves, so enjoyed eating, sleeping and reading. Nigel H's rolled oat fritters were an excellent addition to the menu.

Day 11 The Gruelling Moronic Tasman Moraine  
Time to head out to civilisation. The weather was not the best, cloud right down on the glacier but at least no rain or wind. Back down the moraine wall onto the ridges of moraine on the white ice. We had quizzed others at Unwin and Kelman for the best route down this 12km of rubble. Terry had been down it about 10 years ago but what with the big Mt Cook rockfall the route was quite different. Map, sketch map and compass were needed with the lack of visibility. The rock fall had left a huge tongue of rubble on top of the glacier moraine. It actually provided a reasonable route for a km or two.

The section across to the moraine wall below Ball shelter was gruelling - up and down on steep moraine covered ice. However as the cloud lifted we saw we were bang on route - we could see the notch high up on the moraine wall where we needed to scramble up to. A crossing of the murky stream from the Ball Glacier, then the grovel up to the notch, were we picked up the rough track to Ball shelter. From there it was the plod down the old Ball Road track. Some of us were quite \*\*\*\*\* by this stage.

We had made arrangements back at Unwin (and of course, confirmed by cell phone from Kelman) to be picked up at the road end at 3pm, another 10km away. It was already 2pm. Oh dear! However our driver assumed we would be a bit late and also managed to get up the track in his 4WD further than we were expecting - so at about 10 past 3 we reached our taxi. What a relief - being driven back to Unwin saving many more kms walking. Then an evening of visiting the Hermitage, showering, a few beers and pizzas and socialising in the Tavern. Catching up with the others we met in Kelman Hut - who had flown out by chopper, a 10 minute flight instead of 2 days slog.

#### The Next Day

The four of us in the Citroen off to Tekapo for a Big Breakfast Feed to await the arrive of Peter W, Janet W and Graham P. Nigel S was joining them on the Rees -Hunter trip. For us other three it was off to Christchurch to check out the outdoor equipment shops and the drinks, food and scene at

the Arts Centre. Then almost running out of petrol in north Canterbury, fish and chips at Kaikoura, off to Picton just missing the late ferry. So a snooze on Waikawa beach and across on the 5:30am ferry. Home.

REES VALLEY (MT ASPIRING NATIONAL PARK)  
January 15-26  
PART I - CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF SIR WILLIAM  
by Janet Wilson

We headed off on Friday at lunchtime in Peter's trusty Renault. Cook Strait that afternoon was rough enough to deter the Lynx but not the old Aratika. After take-aways in Blenheim, we carried on until nearly dark and camped beside the Waiau River near Parnassus - not a particularly quiet spot near the main highway and railway line. We were off early next morning, reaching Tekapo at about 11 am where we met up with Nigel - and Terry C, Richard L, + Nigel H. Fond farewells said, Nigel squeezed himself into the already overloaded Renault which was now becoming decidedly cosy (and low to the ground). We arrived at Glenorchy around 4 pm, filled up on the last minute junk food, logged in at DOC and drove to the Reese Valley road end.

With very heavy packs - nine days food, crampons 2 tents and cookers etc., and with temperatures approaching 30°C, we got going at 5.30 pm and walked for 2 hours up the valley to our camp site beside the Lennox Falls. We had great views of Mt Earnslaw and of Mts Head, Clarke and Moira Peak as we walked. We had planned to climb 500m up to Kea Basin that night but time was against this.

We were woken by Peter with a cup of tea (a mutually advantageous arrangement, much appreciated by Graham and I, that was a feature of this trip each morning). We had 1200m to ascend and were soon heading up the well graded, benched track through the beech forest to Kea Basin. (This is the route commonly used to climb Mt Earnslaw.) Above the basin you are in the open and it was soon very hot in cloudless skies.

We climbed steadily on following the cairned route and had a well deserved late lunch when we had climbed the 1200m. From here we sidled across screes northwards, away from Mt Earnslaw and came to a ridge at 1700 m with views down into the south branch of the Hunter Stream and the

very steep-looking Sir William. We sidled west and down from here onto the valley floor and camped at about 1600m. It was strange to see a pair of seagulls flying around here - makes a change from keas. There were frequent ice falls from the glacier above us on Sir William down to the valley floor not far from our camp.

Next morning we headed south, up the valley, planning to climb Leary Peak (2570m) and head over into the Bedford Valley, possibly via Shepard's Pass (2075m). This was already looking very steep and snow covered for the last 200m. We chose to crampon up a steepish snow tongue in a gully to the east of the pass onto the slopes of Leary Peak. At about 200 m we were forced off the snow onto very steep scree (desperately so with the packs we were carrying). Fortunately, we were able reach a large overhanging rock, where we stashed the bulk of our gear out of the way of keas, before resuming the ascent of Leary, now on more favourable scree and snow slopes. The climb became mostly a long grind up scree.

We had lunch at the top in warm calm sunshine, with great views of Earnslaw, Sir William and Pluto Peak. We saw and could hear the voices of a party of about 6 reach the summit of Earnslaw about 300 m above us and about 1 km to the south (also a scree gravel). We descended via Luncheon Col. On the way down Graham discovered an alternative route that bypassed Shepard's Pass - a rocky scramble about 100m above the pass and about 70m above the point where our gear was stashed.

Once united with our heavy load of gear, we crossed over into the Bedford Valley. Looking back down the Hunter side of the pass it certainly did not look encouraging as a packing route and we were relieved that we had avoided it. Hoping not to get bluffed, we descended down screes and moraine walls to a campsite beside a clear snow-melt stream and a huge conical heap of moraine directly between Sir William and the huge face of Pluto at about 1650m. It had been a hot tiring 9-hour day. However, we could relax and watch the sun set on the tops at 9.30pm in a glorious evening vista.

Next morning, again cloudless, we headed down valley for about 3 km before dropping our packs and walking to the edge of the hanging valley as it drops off into the Dart Valley. Here the Bedford

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Stream drops over a 245 m waterfall which we were able to peer directly over the crest of - straight down over 800 ft! Photos taken, we headed back to our packs and then in a north-westerly sidle on more endless scree to an unnamed col at about 2150m very close to the summit of Cerberus (2257 m) (directly to the west of Sir William). This was a steady and relatively easy climb compared with the screes of the previous day.

We had lunch at the col (where there was a small stream very handily placed to have a brew) then we scrambled up Cerberus - a series of 3 loose rocky knobs. The route down the west branch of Hunter Stream was unknown to us - although Peter assured us that it looked okay from views far down the valley and the map did not seem to show any major problems. We avoided the initial snow slope and headed down a very nasty loose steep slope to a snowy basin.

Continuing on down, we eventually found the way was blocked by bluffs and the stream unexpectedly dropped into a narrow ravine. We decided (only option really) to sidle screes on Sir William above big bluffs and that we would be able to pick a route down the 3 or 4 layers of bluffs beneath us. This took time and considerable amounts of scrambling and backtracking (with and without packs) but we gradually lost height - not totally confident that we would come up to some impassable obstruction that would see us heading back all the way to the Bedford Valley!

The last big obstacle was either a very steep snowgrass covered slope or another route across more scree ledges with unknown prospects of a way off. Thus at one stage the party ended split

2-2 with what appeared to be an impassable ravine between us! Nigel found a route that reunited us. Things turned out for the best for both options fortunately, and we completed the descent to the West Hunter flats without further problems. We reached the bivvy rock/camp site that Peter had used the year before at about 1200m just after 7 pm. A welcome sight after 11 hours - our longest day.

The troupes opted for a rest next day so we slept in, had a wash and sat in the sun etc. In the afternoon, we went for a little walk to the lake below the Grant Glacier. The stream flowing from the glacier was uncrossable with dry feet, so we didn't go very far. That night we had a few showers - the only rain on the entire trip.

Next morning, (Thursday) we had a bit of a scrub bash up the Sth branch of the Hunter Stream and then a steady climb up the tussock back to the "saddle" point at 1700m, thereby completing the circumnavigation of Sir William. Fog rising from the Rees Valley obscured the sun for much of the reverse of the sidle back to the Earnslaw track. This made the walking considerably cooler for us. We stopped part way down to Kea Basin to have lunch and were joined by a pair of inquisitive keas who were fairly brave and keen to "inspect" some of our gear. However, this was the only time on the whole trip that they came near us. Back down in the Rees, we had a brief break at the old Twenty Five Mile Creek Hut, before heading up the other (eastern) side, gaining 100m to a pleasant campsite near the confluence of Twenty Mile Creek and Little Devil Creek.

*[Next month . . . Part II - The Centaur Peaks]*

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