

PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - July 1999

*****THIS ISSUE*****

NEWS:

**Annual photo comp results (with a few samples!),
club bring-&-buy auction, and MSC news (incl. New video release)**

TRIP REPORTS:

**Rees ramblings from summer, Toka,
Midwinter jaunts (incl. midnight rambles!)**

CLUB NIGHTS

JULY 29	Bring-&-Buy Auction Night	
AUG 5	Committee meeting	@ Rose & Crown pub
AUG 12	Action eating. Tramping and nutrition	Gaye Philpott
AUG 26	"Mount Cook"	Bruce van Brunt

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.

July 15 Thursday trampers
Judy Callesen 357-0192

July 17-18 No Mans 4WD All,4WD
Tony Gates 357-7439

Depart 8am. No Mans hut is in the Northern Ruahines, overlooking the Hawkes Bay Plains. There is a reasonable four-wheel-drive road cruising past Ruahine Hut, right up to No Mans Hut, which is nestled in a delightful tussock hollow. The hut is private, so we might return to Ruahine Hut, or camp out in the nearby beech forest. It's a lovely area, with the possibility of a good sunrise over the plains, and some easy walks over the tussock tops.

July 18 Kapakapanui M
Kevin Pearce 357-0217

Depart 7am. A loop track inland from Waikanae up onto the tops in the southwest Tararuas. Lunch near Kapakapanui Hut with an easy option of returning the same way for those not up to the loop trip. Views (and maybe some snow) on the tops.

July 22 Thursday trampers
Bev Akers 325-8879

July 23 Applications close for Snowcraft 1

July 24-25 Iglooming Ruahines F/T
Derek Sharp 326-8178

Depart 7-30am. Unless there is mega-snow very soon, the igloo/snowcave option looks like being canned, but Derek will have something equally

worthwhile as a tramping option somewhere in the Central Ruahines.

July 25 Field hut / Tabletop E/M
John Phillips 358-1874

Depart 8am. A leisurely day-trip from Otaki Forks up the western part of the 'southern crossing' in the Tararuas. In to view the historic Field Hut and up onto Table Top for lunch and some views. Back down the same route to Otaki Forks.

July 27(Tuesday)
Snow Craft 1 evening for all participants. Introductory briefing at the PN Fire Station, Cook St.

July 29 Thursday trampers
Phil Pearce 354-6687

July 29 Club Night "Bring and Buy Auction night"

Is your tramping cupboard cluttered with stuff you don't use anymore? Bring along you old, unwanted and superseded gear, anything that still has a bit of life in it, and maybe make a few dollars. What to do with those dollars burning a hole in your pocket and that nice clear space in your tramping cupboard? Well there will be heaps of bargains to hunt down, just the thing if you are giving up rock climbing and getting into telemark skiing (or whatever).

The club gets a small percentage of the sale price and you can put a reserve price on your gear.

July 31 - Aug 1 Snow Craft 1 I,M/F
MTSC Ruapehu Lodge, Whakapapa
Warren Wheeler 356-1998
or Terry Crippen 356-3588

July 31 - Aug 1 MSC Outdoor First Aid I,All
Dianne Sigenthaler 357-7237

Aug 1 Stanfield-A Frame M
Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805

A-Frame Hut is on Takapari Road and suffers a little from the 4WD access whereas Stanfield is an excellent little hut on the West Tamaki river in a pleasant clearing. Could be a little of everything

on this trip, depending on the weather – perhaps snow on Takapari Road, at least one (smallish) river crossing, bush in various states of regeneration, and two rather different huts. It should be a good trip, come along.

Aug 5 Thursday trampers
Liz Flint 356-7654

Aug 5 Committee meeting

Aug 6 Applications close for Snowcraft 2

Aug 7-8 Arete Biv F
Derek Sharp 326-8178

This trip departs Friday night for a torchlit walk in from Putara roadend to Herepai Hut. A solid Saturday's walk up & across the East-West Peak saddle, and along the glorious Dundas Ridge to Arete Biv for the night. Head back out via Bannister and Cattle Ridge for an equally glorious Sunday to complete the loop back to the cars.

Aug 8 Burn Hut M
Dave Grant 357-8269

A drive up to No.2 Mangahao Dam back of Shannon for the walk down Mangahao River & up a bushy spur to Burn Hut in the northern Tararuas. Return same way after lunch at the hut.

Aug 10 (Tuesday) Snow Craft 2 evening for all participants. Introduction to rope work, Climbing Wall, Rec Centre, Massey University.

Aug 12 Thursday trampers
Graham Pritchard 357-1393

Aug 12 Club night "Action eating, Tramping and nutrition" with Gaye Philpott

Gail is a nutritionist by profession who is going to talk about foods for maximising energy and such for taking into the hills. Questions such as the often debated and all important B and E (bacon and eggs) or museli dilemma should be answered. Bring along your questions and maybe your favourite "hills" recipes to see what she thinks. In fact, why not bring a bit for us all to sample!

Aug 14-15 Snow Craft 2 (Must have S.C.1) I,M/F
MTSC Ruapehu Lodge, Whakapapa
Terry Crippen 356-3588
or Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Aug 15 TBA E
Alan Bee 323-4582

More details next newsletter.

Aug 19 Thursday trampers
Pam Wilson 357-6247

Aug 20 Applications close for Snowcraft 3.

Aug 21-22 Waterfall crossing M/F
John Phillips 358-1874

Depart 7am. A Ruahine crossing setting out from the west side on Saturday, via Purity and Iron Peg over to Waterfall Hut in the heart of the Ruahines. Continue over Rangī and Waipawa Saddles on Sunday & down the steep eroding Waipawa Valley to join up with the Sunrise daytrippers near Triplex carpark.

[Note: changed from Top Maropea w/end on the Trip Card.]

Aug 22 Sunrise E
Heather Gatehouse 356-5805

Depart 8am. We'll head up into the eastern Ruahines. The path is well maintained and an easy gradient, so it will be a gentle walk up to Sunrise Hut, just above the bush line. This is an excellent trip for a first tramp in the bush, or for a gentle escape from town, with a good track, pleasant bush and great views.

Aug 26 Thursday trampers
Sue & Lawson Pither 357-3033

Aug 26 Club night: "Mount Cook" with Bruce van Brunt

Club mountaineer Bruce will give us a rundown on his Mount Cook attempts from last summer, plus maybe talk about some of his other Mainland peaks such as Aspiring.

Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trip co-ordinators (Terry Crippen 356-3588, Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805, or Peter Burgess 354-3533), 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), Laurence

Gatehouse (356-5805), or Peter Burgess (354-3533).

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

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

NOTICES

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, by far the most convenient way is to e-mail it to me, at my work address:

john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz

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

postmaster@horizons.govt.nz

where all incoming scan files are automatically quarantined by a software package. It helps to give me notice before sending a scan via e-mail, then I can arrange to have it forwarded to me from quarantine. **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.

NEW GEAR - AVALANCHE TRANSCEIVERS

Thanks to funding from the Hillary Commission and from Trustbank Community Trust we have purchased four transceivers which will be available for instruction on snowcraft courses. They will also be available for other organisations and groups to use once we decide on the hire conditions and rates.

GEAR CUSTODIAN

Mick Leyland will be away from mid-July until early September. Contact Terry Crippen 356-3588 for any club gear hire.

PRESIDENT ON LEAVE

Warren Wheeler plans to be on leave in Sweden for all of August, which means Vice-President Terry Crippen will be in charge, 356-3588.

WELCOME BACK MR VICE-PRESIDENT

Terry Crippen and Christine Cheyne have returned from their trip to UK and France. Thanks for the Postcard from the French Alps Terry.

WELCOME BACK MR PRESIDENT

The Committee Meeting on 2 September is to be held at the Rose and Crown, Terrace End. Warren's shout - everyone welcome. Come along for a meal before 7.30pm.

BRING AND BUY AUCTION 29 JULY

This club night is your opportunity to get rid of excess gear and make a profit on those purchases you made at the last Club Auction. 10% suggested donation to the club from sales. All proceeds to the gear fund for additional climbing equipment.

MANAWATU MSC OUTDOOR FIRST AID COURSES

A reminder that Manawatu MSC Outdoor First Aid Courses are:

July 30 - Aug 1

Oct 15 - 17

Contact Dianne Siegenthaler 06 357 7237.

Cost: \$86

NEW MEMBER

The club has one new member this month:

Barbara Cottrill

RD9 Feilding

328-8025

Welcome to the club Barbara.

1999 PHOTO COMPETITION RESULTS

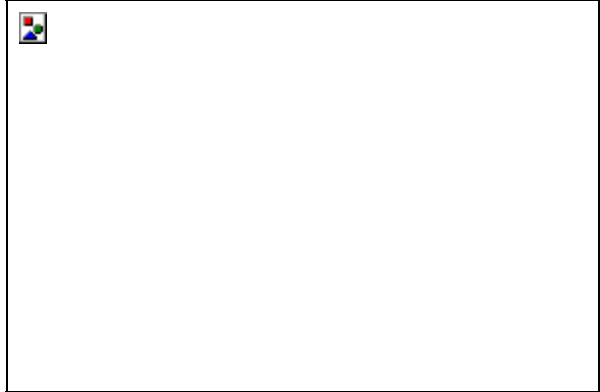
Murray Woodcock was this year's photo competition judge, keeping the audience informed and entertained, and encouraged. He obviously loves good photographs of New Zealand, especially the outdoors. For the slides Murray asked the audience for a description and photographer, then used the usual democratic judging style after he short-listed his choice of the selection. For the prints, Murray made his choice of winners, and told us why.

As expected, there was a wide range of entries, and a huge variety of photographs. I think that the Alpine (NZ), and Natural History (NZ) presented the best photographs, and if there were an overall winner, I think that the audience and judge would agree with me that Harley Betts very dramatic and moody photo of the Tasman Valley at sunrise would win. Some, like that one, were obvious favourites, resulting in ooh's and ahhh's from the audience. I think that there were a few disappointed photographers, and more than a few close ties. Not all sections received first, second, and third awards. However the results listed thus show a pretty good choice:

[Some may have noticed an article on the competition made it to the Tribune. – Ed.]

SLIDES SECTION:

Alpine (NZ)

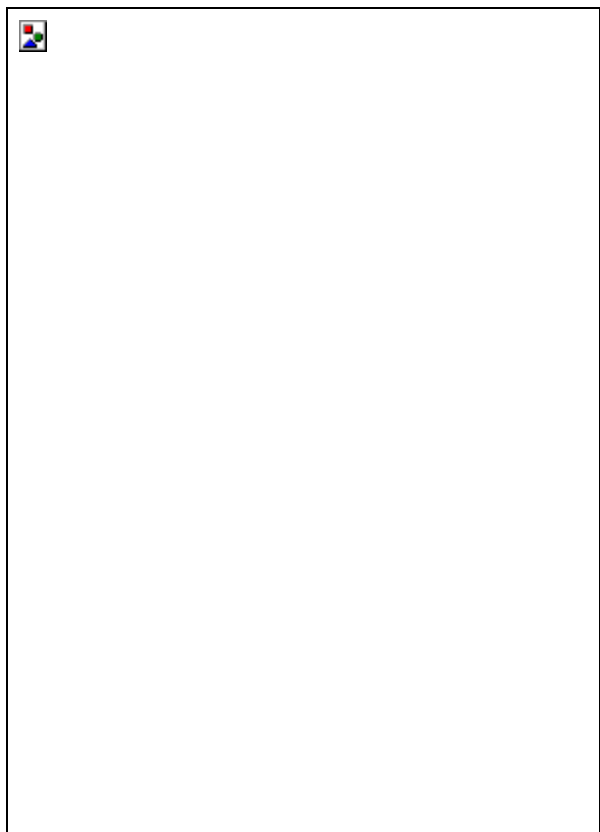


1st. "Tasman Valley at Sunrise" *Harley Betts*

2nd (equal) "Rangipo Desert scene" *Harley Betts*

2nd (equal) "Clouds over Mt Aspiring" *Warren Soufflot*

Scenic (NZ)



1st "Lake Tekapo" *Harley Betts*

2nd "Mt Ruapehu from Lake Surprise" *Sarah Todd*

3rd "Sunset over the sea, Tongapurutu" *Harley Betts*

Natural History (NZ)



- 1st (equal) "Sandstone boulder patterns" *Harley Betts*
 1st (equal) "Ice patterns" *Sarah Todd*
 1st (equal) "Eroded beach with tree" *Harley Betts*

Topical (NZ)



- 1st "Climber on Taranaki" *Harley Betts*
 2nd "Tramper pouring over Tararua map" *Tony Gates*
 3rd "Tramper in mountain beech, Ruahines" *John Phillips*

Overseas alpine/ Scenic

- 1st "Alpine lake and hut, Argentina" *Tony Gates*

- 2nd "Sunset over the Andes" *Tony Gates*
 3rd "Waterfall, Blue Mountains NSW" *John Phillips*

Overseas topical

- 1st "Listening to Led Zeppelin CD's in a mountain hut"
Tony Gates
 2nd "Tramper admiring the Andes" *Tony Gates*

PRINTS

Alpine (NZ)

- 1st "Ruapehu Climber doing a Hollywood stunt" *Maree Limpus*

Scenic (NZ)

- 1st "Tramper in mist, Jumbo-Holdsworth" *John Phillips*
 2nd "Jumbo tussock tops" *John Phillips*

Natural History (NZ)

- 1st "Flowering leatherwood" *Tony Gates*
 2nd "Kakapo chick" *Wayne Beggs*

Topical (NZ)

- 1st "The mad mountain biker" *Wayne Beggs*
 2nd "Trampers on Mt Holdsworth" *Neil Campbell*

BOOK REVIEW by Tony Gates
 "The Death Zone - Climbing Everest through the killer storm"
 By Matt Dickinson (1997), Arrow, UK.

As promised, this is yet another book review on climbing to the highest piece of rock on earth and ice. This book is the story of the British expedition climbing to the summit from the Northern, Rongbuk Glacier side, during May 1996. I admit to starting the book a paragraph or two before the author stepped on the actual summit - well I knew the outcome by looking at the photos anyway.

This newsletter has reviewed Krakauer's book on Everest, Simpson's on Pumori, Boukreev's on Everest, Monteith's on Hall and Ball, and will no doubt continue to pour over the literature about this "magnetic" mountain. This review was certainly tempted by the book's comparison with Simpson's "Touching the void", and the writers desire to answer some of the numerous unanswered questions about the multi tragedy on Everest during May 1996 that killed Rob Hall. It looks like such a good book that I might just have to offer the honour of reading, then reviewing it, to Andy or Bruce. Or are there any volunteers?

NEW EOTC TEACHING RESOURCE

“The New Bushcraft Video - It Was Just A Tramp In The Bush”

“It Was Just A Tramp In The Bush” was filmed in January 1999 by Dixon Productions, Lower Hutt. Filming took place in the Kaimanawa Forest Park, by courtesy of the Department of Conservation and Ngati Tuwharetoa.

It highlights important safety considerations through a drama involving two tramping parties; one inexperienced and ill-equipped, the other well prepared and under the leadership of a bushcraft instructor.



The video is a valuable training resource and an excellent replacement for the original MSC Bushcraft video filmed over 25 years ago.

- Purchase the video for \$25
- Borrow it for no charge
- Purchase the Bushcraft Resource Kit for \$35

Kit includes: The Video
Video Teaching Notes
Bushcraft Manual
Hypothermia Manual
Bush Safety Pamphlets.

For more information contact New Zealand Mountain Safety Council phone (04) 385 7162, fax (04) 385 7366, email: info@mountainsafety.org.nz, or Internet: www.mountainsafety.org.nz

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Managing Risks in Outdoor Activities

While many people now enjoy a range of outdoor activities in the bush and mountains, the back country environment does challenge our abilities to look after ourselves.



Understanding how to avoid and reduce risks improves the quality of our outdoor experiences, and may on occasions even save lives. Risk management training provides insight on how to run outdoor activities with an acceptable level of risk. It takes you through a process that analyses your intended outdoor activity.

The following steps are part of this process:

- Identifying the risks associated with the activity.

It is useful to identify these under the three main causes:

People, equipment and resources, and environment.

- Assessing the level of risk
- Developing strategies to help manage risks
- Coping with a crisis.

Risk Management Courses are offered through the NZ Mountain Safety Council and are of interest to:

- Outdoor leaders
- Instructors
- Recreation workers
- Teachers
- People interested in outdoor recreation for their own enjoyment.

Research indicates that over 90% of fatal back country accidents could have been avoided. Experienced outdoor users are victims just as often as the inexperienced. (Managing Risks in Outdoor Activities, NZMSC 1993)

The NZ Mountain Safety Council encourages people to be responsible for their own safety. Council courses and manuals are available to help develop the skills necessary for outdoor activities. Mountain Safety Wellington has a Risk Management course on the weekend of October 16-17. For further details contact Dianne Gallagher ☎04 358 7162.

TRIP REPORTS

MORE REES RAMBLINGS

by Dave Henwood

A couple of weeks after Peter Wiles & co went to the Rees valley this summer I was in the same area on a climbing spree.

1991 was the New Zealand Alpine Club's Centenary year and as part of the festivities a list of 100 notable NZ peaks was drawn up with a competition to see who could climb the most during the year. (For the record, the winner was a professional guide with 12 summits ticked). Don French, a climbing friend set himself the goal of climbing all 100 so since then, every southward trip of his has been geared towards ticking 1 or more from the list. At the end of February we headed for the Forbes range between the Rees and Dart valleys where there were 3 peaks on the list.

The trip had the usual dramatics at first – 4 bodies planned, then a couple of days before we were due to leave, there was only 3. The Aratere ferry fiasco also held us up a bit but hey, sitting in the Wellington Ferry Terminal for an unscheduled extra 2 hours is character building isn't it? However after a solid day of driving from Kaikoura late afternoon the next day found us unloading our gear at the bottom of the track up to Kea basin – having a 4wd vehicle saved several hours walking up the Rees valley. By 7:30 pm we were settling down for the night under the Kea Basin bivvy rock.

Next morning saw an early start to beat the heat for the long grind up to Wright Col. The route goes up a ridge through tussock and scree and is fairly easy to follow to the Birley glacier. Here we stopped to don sun cream and crampons and I discovered that my Bolle glacier glasses were still down at the bivvy rock, several hours below. Fortunately Don had a spare pair. The grind up the glacier and final scree was a drag in the hot sun and the small Esquient bivvies (old and new) were a welcome sight, as was our first look at the spectacular northern face of Earnslaw and the ridge between the East and West peaks (check out the January picture in this years NZ Alpine calendar).

After a long lunch, several brews and a snooze Don and I headed onto the scree ledges that sidle under Earnslaw round to Pluto Col while the third member of the team stayed at the hut to dress a couple of the biggest blisters I've seen for a while. After checking out access to the couloir on the north face we continued towards Pluto peak. The peak is a formidable looking tower but the secret is to traverse behind it on a narrow hidden ledge on the western side. The ledge was located without difficulty though the intermittent shower of ice, water and rocks bombarding the middle 20 metres of the ledge was not welcome. A couple of deep breaths and we made the dash across, ever cautious of the very large vertical drop just to our left. This brought us to a scree-filled gully and a scramble to the top only two hours after leaving the hut. After the usual photos we retraced our tracks and were back at the hut by 7pm.

We left the hut at 6am the following morning heading for the couloir on the West Peak of Earnslaw with the intention of traversing both peaks. The ice in the couloir was hard enough to require some caution but allowed us to gain height quickly. Where the gully narrowed we branched out left onto the north face. This proved to be quite straight forward zig-zagging up a blocky scree covered series of ledges. There were a couple of steepish chimneyish bits where we thought about putting on the rope but never bothered. After only three and a half hours we emerged onto the summit of Earnslaw's West Peak. The route guide in the hut indicated 5 hours as a more appropriate time so we felt pretty pleased with ourselves. "Only 3 hours to East Peak, then an hour down and we can spend the rest of the afternoon sun-bathing" we said to ourselves. Our third party member (the blister king) and the other two hut occupants were just reaching the summit of East Peak so we set off to join them. About then our swollen heads were rapidly cut down to size!

The ridge to East peak drops down a couple of rock steps to a deep notch, then traverses past a couple of rock towers before a straight forward amble up to the Peak. Getting past the first couple of steps is usually accomplished by sidling on steepish but relatively easy snow slopes on the southern side of the ridge. Unfortunately for us, because of the poor winter and hot, dry summer

the easy snow slopes had melted down to hard ice. Descending and traversing on bloody hard ice with non-rigid boots and 3 ice tools between us (Don was travelling light so only had his non-technical tramping axe and no ice hammer) is....., well, bloody hard actually. And agonisingly slow with each ice tool placement taking 3 or 4 bashes to get any penetration and the necessity to constantly belay each pitch. We alternated with first man down getting one ice tool but the protection of a top rope and the second man getting 2 tools but no top rope.

After a few hours and what seemed like only a few hundred metres of progress we spotted a yellow sling on a rock ledge below us. "Aah", we said, "someone has obviously abseiled from there onto ledges lower down." It looked like those ledges would give good progress so we headed on down. After a bit of grovelling we found ourselves on a wet ledge covered in scree. The sling was sitting loose on the ledge. There were no anchors in sight and all the rock strata sloped the wrong way. We checked out the sling. It was labelled "Barker Jan 99". Research in the hut book later revealed that a certain Dave Barker and an MTSC party had turned back from the traverse in January due to hard ice conditions! I rang him when we got back to thank him for his contribution to our climb. Apparently the sling had been placed around a very large ice bollard as an abseil anchor. According to Dave the ice had been about 1½ metres thick. But for us there was just bare rock, an indication as to how much melt there had been in a month and a half.

Adding the sling to our collection, we continued slowly downclimbing until we were able to reach the ledges and make some real progress. A short while later we found ourselves directly above the notch marking the lowest point of the ridge. The acquired sling was looped round a convenient block as an abseil anchor and we were soon in the notch. The first third of the ridge had taken 5 hours and we still had what was meant to be the worst part of the ridge to go. The narrow ridge crest overhung the northern slopes with several hundred metres of air to the terraces we had crossed that morning. The southern side dropped very steeply to the heavily crevassed glacier hanging above the Earnslaw Burn. Further on, we knew there were a couple of rock towers to bypass. However we were pleasantly surprised to find that the actual crest was a perfect pathway that we raced along, with only the occasional

small block or step to climb past. Fortunately there was no wind, which would have made things tricky. Progress became quite rapid.

In due course we found ourselves on top of a tower festooned with old abseil slings. One appeared to be quite recent (in fact it also formerly belonged to the MTSC team). We threaded the rope through it and several of the other slings for good measure and abseiled off. By now we were blanketed in thick cloud but it was obvious that the difficulties had been dealt to. Off came the rope and we headed up the last part of the rocky ridge arriving on the summit of East Peak a mere 7 hours after leaving the West Peak.

The view was non-existent and so after a quick snack and drink, we headed off into the murk, carefully following a worn ground trail that led down scree slopes, then through a steep section of bluffs where the route was cairned every few metres. Less than an hour after leaving the top, we were sipping a hot brew in the hut, very pleased to be back.

After the previous days efforts the next day was declared a rest day. The third member of the team limped off to spend the rest of the week in Queenstown while Don and I had a sleep-in. After lunch we ambled up Leary Peak to check out the route round to Sir William.

Another 6 am start found us heading back up over Leary and then down scree slopes to Shepherd Pass. More scree bashing, a quick dash under ice cliffs, up a steep, hard ice slope, then a gentle glacier and we found ourselves on Sir Williams' north east ridge. The crux of the route is a huge rock tower which looked very intimidating. After stashing our ice gear we scrambled up the lower ridge and were soon below the tower. As is often the case, things looked better up close. Though very steep, there was a good line with plenty of solid holds. After 4 pitches we were above the tower and the rope came off. More scrambling on loose scree covered ledges interspersed with short rocky steps brought us to the summit.

In the summit cairn, we found a small rusting aluminium film container containing a record of the first two ascents of the peak (in 1931 and 1941) written in fading pencil on a paper Cadbury's chocolate wrapper. Because the paper was showing a fair bit of water damage we took

both items with us and later deposited them with DOC in Glenorchy for preservation.

Leaving the summit, we carefully picked our way back down the upper rubble. Four abseils dealt with the rock tower and we were soon back at our gear, contemplating the slog back to the hut. After counting contours on the map, Don announced the options – return the way we had come over Shepherd Pass and Leary meaning 420 metres of descent, 800 metres of ascent and 300 more of descent or drop down to the Bedford valley and then climb directly to Wright Col from the valley head. The second option meant 520 metres of descent and 540 of ascent. The choice seems obvious doesn't it? However there were a couple of little obstacles, namely getting through the line of bluffs to get down to the valley floor and then by-passing a waterfall and nasty looking gut to get into the upper Bedford cirque.

Being optimists we choose the shorter route and headed off down the glacier searching for a snow lead Don had spotted earlier in the morning that he was sure led right through the bluffs. Hmm, unfortunately, not quite. A bit of a search produced a zig-zag line of ledges which did the trick though not without a 3 metre step to overcome (hang on to edge, dangle, close eyes and drop....). The waterfall was the next problem. Don attacked near vertical snow grass and bluffs on the true left while I explored dripping, steep snow grass on the right. Right it turned out to be though we were both glad we only had light packs and were going up. If you ever intend going down that way, take a rope and some waratahs to abseil off – its steep and not recommended as a packing route.

Once above the falls there was only the now familiar scree and easy rocky buttresses to deal with. However it was two rather tired lads who crawled into the bivvy after yet another 11-hour day.

The following day we bade farewell to Esquient and headed down to the Rees valley floor. A minor SAR operation at the Kea Basin bivvy rock failed to find the missing glacier glasses so after a few choice words we continued down to the river. It was very pleasant to be down among vegetation again and to have a clear clean river to drink from and wash in. Not so welcome was the local sandfly population who made the most of our return to their neighbourhood. We headed up

valley and set up a fly camp in a pleasant grove of beech trees at the bottom of the Clarke slip with an ascent of Mt Clarke as the next day's plan.

Another pre-dawn start saw us racing up the old slip to the range above. From there we followed a broad undulating tussock ridge, then an easy rocky ridge to the final glacier. Dark clouds were starting to blow in from the north west so pushed hard and had our first stop at the glacier, three hours after leaving the fly, to put on crampons. The glacier was easy up to the final rocky section. I almost embarrassed myself by attempting to ascend the wrong rock knob but fortunately Don was a bit more alert and we were soon on the correct summit. Pocking our noses over the ridge we disturbed a group of 9 chamois sunning themselves less than 50 metres away. They did not appreciate our intrusion and, with their usual agility, raced off across steep bluffs and scree with seeming ease.

It was most rewarding to sit on our final summit of the trip and gaze across to the objects of our week's efforts. However all good things must come to an end and with an eye on the weather we retraced our steps, arriving back at the fly in time for a late lunch and a well-earned brew. After lunch, we packed up and headed down valley, eventually camping in a sheltered spot by 25 Mile Creek.

Next morning produced no rain but a freezing southerly wind that blew away the clouds. A couple of hours walking brought us to the road end and our ride home, complete with a large supply of tasty treats from the Arrowtown Bakery. So ended a great trip in a great area. There is something there for most tastes – easy river tramping, rugged alpine ridges and tops, seldom-visited valleys. It's a long way to drive but well worth the effort and highly recommended.

TOKA 13 June by Duncan Hedderley

Maybe it was an unpromising weather forecast; maybe it was the sudden swap with John Phillips' Field Hut trip; maybe it was the date; whatever, there were only 3 of us in the Foodtown carpark at 7.30, staring at the clouds.

Peter had described Toka as a medium height peak in the southern Ruahines, with very nice views, and two tracks to the top, so it could be done as a loop. He'd also said something about there being snow up there, so I'd got mixed

feelings when we left the car in the carpark (paddock) at the end of Umutoi North road.

We started up Knight's Track, the steeper of the two tracks, Peer's thinking being that Short's Track (the other route) involves a long north-south ridge, and he would rather come down that way, so that the northerly wind was behind us.

The track *was* steep, but well maintained; and after a couple of early showers the weather started to clear up. Peter set a cracking pace which got us to the summit by 11:00. We stopped for a while, looking at the trig (which has seen better days) and searching for snow (there were a few lumps in the tussock), then headed down Short's Track to get out of the wind. We reached the end of the ridge by lunchtime, and the improving weather meant we had clear views of both the Pohangina Valley and the Norsewood area. Short's Track was also clear and in good condition, so we got back to the car just after 2 pm, a bit out of breath, but very satisfied.

We were: Peter Burgess (leader, but not the guy who stood for mayor), Fiona Green and Duncan Hedderley.

A MIDWINTER RUAPEHU FEAST
19-20 June by Maree Limpus

Snow, sun, sparkling slopes (and eyes), great food and company - what more could you want of a weekend (except maybe a little less of the great food!). The gods were smiling on us for this year's end of a millenium midwinter feast.

Eight of us went up on the Friday night - the earlier crowd catching the rugby at the Powder Keg pub, while the latter three in Warrens trusty beast, changed tyres and other fun rainy-night things before joining the others for a quick drink and warm up in front of the fire. It was then back to Sue and Lawson's place in Rangitaua to fight over beds and discuss plans for the coming day.

Saturday dawned crisp (ie. freezing) and clear, and we slowly got ourselves organised (including dealing with another one of the ever-calm Warren's flat tyres) and headed for the Mount. Chains or 4x drive were required for the last 4km, so we did a car shuttle in Llew's vehicle to the beautiful powder covered car park. Here we split up, with 5 heading for Lake Surprise, while Llew, Wayne and Maree set out for the summit.

The conditions were perfect, including the two snowboarders conveniently put in front of us to kick the steps - yes! Our intrepid leader (Llew) kept us entertained with his continual comments of -"I'm too old for this" (yea right!), and "when can we stop for another smoke?" etc. as we puffed our way ever up. We pretty much had the whole mountain to ourselves - nothing but blue skies, sparkling snow and air so cold that our drinks froze in their tubes.

It wasn't until we reached the last little steep part onto the top that we had to put crampons on, as we were hitting hard ice under the soft snow. Then we were there, overlooking the snow and ice filled wonderland of the crater. After a quick bite, photo shoot (and, for Llew, another smoke since he had left all his food with his wife - well done!), we took to our bums and headed down in style. Llew had the speed advantage thanks to his trusty piece of blue plastic, but those behind made good use of the trench that he carved.

With almost perfect timing we meet the others back from the lake walk and headed back to base where some opted to stay and set up for the feast (thank you!) while the rest, including the new arrivals Heather and Lawrence, headed for the Powder Keg's hot pool. At \$6 per person this is a must stop at the end of any Mt trip - it's a beautiful big grotto type indoor pool.

THEN it was back to change into our costumes - 1899 or 2099, and the feast. Everyone had put in a great effort, with Rose being the perfect 1899 real lady, and Llew, the not so perfect 1899 man in his longjohns, bowler hat and cowboy boots. Mick was having fun dressed in pink tights but causing a bit of concern with his obvious enjoyment of applying and wearing makeup! Continuous food was interspersed with entertaining mid-winter gifts, before people waddled and rolled off to bed around 10.30pm.

Sunday was a quieter day after a breakfast of fried up leftovers and for some, a Warren treat of chocolate porridge, blue jelly and ice cream (I like that mans style!). While some stayed to finish the cleaning up, Warren, Wayne, Heather, Lawrence and Maree headed for the top of Hauhangatahi - the flat topped peak behind Erua. It was a muddy rooty climb up, but reminiscent of plains of Africa on the scrub, herb and tussock covered top. The dusting of snow and views from the summit were

beautiful and almost made up for the cold as we made a hasty retreat to beat the inrolling cloud. We were back at the cars after about a 5 hour trip and hit the road for an uneventful trip home to a week of dieting!

We were, Mick and ? (his wife) Llew Prichard and his wife ?, Rose, Wayne Beggs, Warren Wheeler, Heather and Lawrence, and Maree.

MAREE & WARREN'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE by Warren Soufflot

We set off from Palmy at 6-30pm heading for Syme Hut on Mt Egmont. The sky above was full of stars so it looked like we might have a moonlight climb onto Fantham's Peak. As all good things change, so did the weather. We arrived at Dawson Falls to low cloud and a cold breeze. Leaving the car at 9-30pm we slowly plodded our way up the mega staircase to arrive at Kapuni Lodge at 10-30pm. The temperature had now dropped below zero and the cloud was all around us, so we kept ambling on up more steps only to see more steps during the cloud breaks.

While we were slogging up the hill I mentioned to Maree that I had only been to Syme Hut once in daylight, but it was clagged out, so I wasn't too sure on where the hut was. Her reply was "I think there's a few false summits and it's just past them..." Soon we had found the few false summits and things levelled off as we made our way across Fanthams Peak. However, the short climb to the hut seemed to go on & on – was this just the tiredness & cold, or something else?

After about 150 metres the clouds parted revealing the mighty Sharks Tooth in the not-too-far distance. Whoops, I yelled to Maree. We must have taken a wrong turn somewhere, it must be over here. We crossed the icy slopes to a mound where we could get a view. It didn't look right to Maree so back we went across the slopes to have a look the other way. Nothing that way either. We figured now we were about 300 metres above Fanthams Peak so we began climbing down retracing our rapidly disappearing crampon marks. The temperature was now -7°C and with

windchill was down to about -15°C to -20°C . Our hair & eye lashes had frozen solid and my beard felt like it was going to snap off.

Suddenly the skies parted and we could see flat land below. After studying the landscape I suddenly let out a cheer as I spotted what sure looks like the hut over a small dip. Maree agrees that it sure feels familiar, so off we go. Frozen fingers were forgotten as we headed for the hut with huge smiles on our faces. We were confident now and proud of our ability to resolve what could have been a serious situation.

As we approached the top of the rise, Maree says "Yep, this sure feels right". However, we arrived at the hut to find it was a large rock that really looked like a hut. If in doubt read the map, we thought, so we found a sheltered spot and figured out where we were. If we drop into here and go across there, that must be the hut here, we said. We moved into the dip and followed it around to find a trail of marker poles. This looked familiar to Maree so we decided the hut must be on top of the ridge over there. This all sounded like a tape gone wrong, but we really were confident this time (poles can't be wrong!). First the toilet came into view and then the hut - a real hut and not a rock.

After bashing the ice from the doors we entered a very good imitation of a fridge. It was -5°C inside and 2-00am so after a quick cuppa and a feed of instant mashed potato we hit the sack for one of the coldest nights we have ever spent out. When we awoke it was still -5°C inside. Due to this, breakfast was had sitting in our sleeping bags. My plastic boots had rubbed my shins raw and Maree was coming down with a cold so we opted for the carpark instead of the summit (we had after all been half-way there the night before anyway!) A casual pack-up and a chat with some more climbers and we were off back to Hawera for 50c ice-creams.

A fun time was had by all. We were Maree Limpus and Warren Soufflot.

Club Patron	: Lawson Pither	357-3033
President	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Vice President	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
Secretary	: Sarah Todd	326-9265
Treasurer	: Peter Wiles	358-6894
Membership Enquiries	: Liz Flint	356-7654
	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Gear Custodian	: Mick Leyland	358-3183
Newsletter Editor	: John Phillips	357-9009 (work)
deliver articles/disks to:	87 Victoria Avenue, P.N.	358-1874 (home)
e-mail articles to:	john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz	
Trip Co-ordinators	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
	: Laurence Gatehouse	356-5805
	: Peter Burgess	354-3533
