

PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - December 2004

TRIPS

CLUB NIGHTS

*Club nights are on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friend's Hall, 227 College Street, at 7:45pm **sharp**. All welcome!*

At the club night: Please sign the visitor's book. A 50c door fee includes supper.

9 December EOY BBQ Ashhurst Domain, 6.30pm.

Our End of Year BBQ and Annual Prize-giving will again be held near the shelter in the Ashhurst Domain, entrance off the Main Highway. BYO food and drink to share, a small \$2 gift for the Xmas tree, and a portable BBQ if you have one. If you have queries or would like transport, phone Warren 356-1998.

20 January, Committee Meeting.

27 January BBQ at Horseshoe Bend.

Our first club night for 2005 is a BYO BBQ at Horseshoe Bend Reserve, Tokomaru. 6.30pm till dusk. Enjoy warm weather, a refreshing swim, and tall tales from the backcountry over fine wine, cool beer, sizzling steak, specialty breads, fresh crispy salad and anything else you might like to bring. For transport and any queries, contact Warren 356-1998.

Nov 27- 28 Cattle Ridge Hut M Martin Lawrence 357 1695

A good overnight Tararua tramp, with the full moon allowing for some evening tramping without torches.

Nov 28 Manawatu Gorge Track E Leader required.

Close to home, this trail should be much improved, now it has had time to dry out after winter. A classic training run or bush stroll, with a quality café at the Balance end.

Nov 28 (pm) River Safety (MSC) I Tom Siegenthaler 357 7237

Dec 4- 5 Full length Waingawa River F Jean Garman 354 3536

Now this might be the stuff of fantasies for some people, you know, endless leatherwood and Spaniard, waterfalls in the river, slippery rocks, and long, hard days. But on a trip like this, it's not all difficult, and you get to see some long forgotten corners and very beautiful parts of the Tararuas. Alpine flowers will be seen.

Dec 5 Pinnacle Ridge M/ F Jenny McCarthy 06 376 8838

This tramp is a good bush navigation trip near Holdsworth Lodge, and traveling close (maybe meeting) the above group.

Dec 11. Maharahara crossing M
Craig Allerby 323 7913

Leatherwood city of the southern Ruahines seen the best way- from a good track.

Dec 12. Makuri MTB M
Richard Lockett 323 0948.

This area is East of Pahiatua, and follows the now disused Makairo track through some steep forest and farmland.

Dec 14. Club night, End of year BBQ.

Dec 18- 19 Contorta pulling. Janet
Wilson (co ordinator) 329 4722. NB, please indicate your interest in this trip by Dec 5th

Your chance to escape the xmas rush and do something for conservation. We are looking for volunteers to help pull Pinus contorta seedlings on the lower slopes (up to 1500m) of Mt Ruapehu. This is an ongoing DOC project which the club helped with earlier this year and I think most people who participated got a great deal of satisfaction from hunting down the little seedlings. We will be camping in beech forest up there and plan to have some nice xmas goodies (BYO to share) for dinner on the Sat evening. We need a good turnout from the club for this to go ahead. DOC give an 12cent/km travel subsidy to participants. Departing PN Sat 6.30am

19 December Waipawa Loop (Warren Wheeler), Postponed- Sunday 16 January.

New Year - Janet Wilson

Anyone interested in a New Year gathering at Kawhatau base please let me know - before xmas. Nothing planned at present although the idea was for anyone tramping in the area to arrive there for New Years Eve. Pretty low key but would be fun if plenty of people turn up - you may just want to drive up for the night. Could look at using the base building if there is enough interest - otherwise we will camp.

1-5 January "Tararua Forks and Flies – the Return" M/ F
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart 9.00am. This fly-camping traverse of the Tararua Ranges will take us past the

various river forks marked on the Park Map in a line between sunny Eketahuna and Otaki, the reverse to the trip in January 2004. The route will depend on the weather but will involve a good mixture of stream and tops travel. There is some flexibility around the dates so discuss your preferences with Warren.

Jan 2- 14. Mt Whitcombe F, T
Terry Crippen 356 3588

This trip is already organized at time of editing. If however you are in the South Island during this period, and may be able to join Terry, then please call him ASAP.

Jan 15-16 Waterfall Hut. F
Nigel Gregory.

A central Ruahine hut and river flat that is the favourite of any visitor.

Jan 16 Sunrise Loop M
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart 7.30am. This trip offers a wide variety of terrain in the north-east Ruahine Ranges. We climb up the excellent bush track to Sunrise Hut and on past alpine meadows in full bloom, before dropping down a scree slope into the north branch of the Waipawa Stream for some off-track travel, rock-hopping and easy stream travel back out to the cars.

Anniversary Weekend Jan 23-24
Ngamoko/ Piripiri M/F Janet Wilson

So that you can go to the Wairarapa Air Show (on the Saturday) and come tramping, this trip is for only 2 days of Anniversary weekend. On Sunday we will head up the Pohangina River, past Mid Pohangina Hut to Ngamoko Hut, another hour or so up the river. This hut has recently been renovated and is in a nice spot near the river. On Monday we will head up onto the Ngamoko Range and head Sth to pick up the track down the Piripiri Stream, checking out Piripiri Biv on the way down. A nice little adventure

Anniversary Weekend, Jan 23 (Sunday), E/M, Fiona Donald ph 356 1095.

Atiwhakatu Hut/ Lookout. An easy tramp to the Hut for lunch with refreshing water nearby

for a dip or two so if it's a warm day then please bring your togs. On the way back we'll leap up to the Lookout to view the ranges. It is a good challenging climb then back to the cars. Leader will be staying overnight in Masterton.

27 January BBQ at Horseshoe Bend.

Our first club night is a BYO BBQ at Horseshoe Bend Reserve, Tokomaru. 6.30pm till dusk.

Jan 29-30 Cattle Creek M Llew Pritchard

This Mid Pohangina crossing, from Dannevirke to Pohangina. will follow some local streams and rivers, so giving you a chance to enjoy some great swimming holes in the wilderness, and some lovely DOC huts.

Jan 30 Sledge Track E Elaine Herve

This pleasant and popular bush walk is in the upper Kahuterawa catchment, and takes you to some historic (and failed) platinum mines.

Trip participants:

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Countdown carpark. A charge for transport will be collected on the day. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance. For general info, or any suggestions for future tramps, please contact Terry Crippen (356-3588), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or Tony Gates (357-7439).

Trips

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs *Technical skills reqd (T)*
Medium (M): 5-6 hrs *Instructional (I)*
Fit (F): about 8 hrs
Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

Trip leaders:

Please advise a trip coordinator, as soon as possible, if you will be unable to run your trip as scheduled. This is so that alternatives can be arranged, put in the newsletter, or passed on at club night.

*** OVERDUE TRIPS ***

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358 3183), Terry Crippen (356 3588), or Janet Wilson (329 4722)

For lots more photos & trips, check out

www.pntmc.org.nz

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NOTICES

From the Presidents PC, New Member, Trip Card and Survey, Past Club nights.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

can be e-mailed to the temporary editor, who is Tony Gates, at kiwi@leatherwood.co.nz,

or dropped in in paper format (if you insist), to 24 Springdale Grove, Palmerston North.

From the Presidents PC

Woo hoo – summer is here. Summer. The joys of Christmas. Quality time with friends and family. And time for some good long trips into the hills. There's still plenty of snow to enjoy in the mountains of both islands - so be careful, mind the sun, and take lots of photos...and don't forget your raincoat:-)

Thanks to Lance Gray and Anne Lawrence for offering to take on the all-powerful role of editor of this fine publication. By mutual agreement Lance will be it for the time being, starting with the February edition. We look forward to Lance bringing his own unique style to continue a strong tradition of innovation and excellence that has been established over the years (no pressure Lance, but).

I look forward to seeing many of you at the End of Year BBQ at Ashhurst Domain. And the Annual Prize-giving (it's Xmas after all). We have some candidates already but we welcome your suggestions for any club member who deserves recognition for anything they have done (or not) during the year – just let me or a Committee member know.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas, a happy New Year, and Good Tramping.
Warren Wheeler, President PNTMC

New Member

Welcome to, and happy tramping, to Samantha Harrild, from 12 Alemain Grove, Linton, 06 325 8982

Trip Card and Survey

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to lead a trip/s over the next 6 months. Thankyou also to those who have taken the time to reply to the Trip Card Survey . There wasn't a huge response which leads me to assume that most people are generally happy with the trips offered . A number of people however wanted more easy/medium trips, both day and overnight. Hope you can find plenty to suit you - for the first time in awhile we have a family camping trip - perhaps some of the non-campers could have a go at this one, and there are 3 E or E/M trips to huts and a Sth Island trip, plus plenty of E day trips to inspire you to get out in the hills. Something for everyone we hope. We still welcome feedback on the trip card so if you haven't filled in your survey yet there's still time to hand it to or email Janet or Terry.

Past Club night

Richard Haverkamp recently gave us a fine and inspirational presentation about travels through the wilderness of Fiordland.

He is obviously a real character, a hard man in the hills, and has vast tramping experience experience. I was lucky enough to be on a few trips with Richard some twenty years ago, and though of introducing him a little more.

We were camped on the plateau of Ruapehu. Winter, it was, cold, but we had enjoyed a nice, fine evening. Before dawn, a fierce blizzard arose, so we were happy to remain in our pits for a sleep in. Richard, needing to pee, jumped out of his warm, dry pit almost naked, grabbed one of his jandals (carried for hut shoes and insulation), but couldn't find the other. He hopped off into the murk wearing only one jandal plus underwear, assuming that he would be very quick, then return very soon to the safety of our tent. Remember, it was a howling blizzard. Ruapehu, being a popular mountain, has more than a few visitors. Richard immediately encountered another person, naturally all decked out in full storm gear. He casually asked them if they had seen his lost jandal!. He must have muttered something else about the bitter cold wind and snow on his semi naked body (and his one bare foot), then hopped and dived back into his pit. We all though it hilarious.

We did find the lost jandal in the tent later.

New Editor

I have enjoyed my time as Editor for PNTMC, both as a permanent editor, then as a stand in for Doug. I really appreciate all the support, and encourage all you writers, poets, photographers, and contributors to continue with your excellent work. One day, when the book about PNTMC is written, your stories will be studied, and maybe published again.

Lance Gray, a regular trumper and writer, will be taking over from me early 2005. I'm sure that he will do a fine job, and will keep us all entertained.

I hope that you enjoy this edition.

Happy summer tramping and merry christmas
Tony Gates

TRIP REPORTS

Historic Kaimanawa tramp, Nicholls Hut, Stanfields Hut, Tunupo Peak, Kawekas, Navigation (Ashhurst and Putara), Manaia Track.

Easter in the Kaimanawas. From the archives, taken from the No. 3 PNTMC Newsletter. (April 1966).

TRIP LEADER: Russ Lacey
 DATE: Easter 8-11 April 1966.
 IN ATTENDANCE: Trevor Arnold
 Ian Barnes
 Chris Freyberg
 Ron Haxton
 Vern Jensen
 Russ Lacey
 M. McGregor
 Tony Morrison
 Bill Olsen
 Keith Potter
 Sue Roberts

After calling on Mr Robert's at Owhaka Station and collecting the Golden Hills Hut Book and some rain gauge charts etc., the party headed off around the Eastern side of the Ngamatea swamp. Most of the party headed towards the river along the horse track to the old log cabin, while one good keen man headed on the shorter horse track to the Golden Hills.

The party headed up the Taruarua River, pausing for a swim on the way up. After some confusion at the gorge most of us scrambled over a heavily manuka covered ridge, and after crossing several creeks darkness overtook us. Pressing on by torch-light we reached the head of the river. Vern and Chris moved ahead of the of the party, soon reaching the hut, and we arrived to a welcome brew. Several members slept out under the stars being lulled asleep by the calls of the morepork and the shrill call of the kiwi. On Saturday the party crossed a bush saddle to look into the head of the Ngaruroro River, towards Boyd Hut we could see the towering rocky point or Boyds Rock or Tapuioaruahine. After moving eastwards along a tussock ridge we again circled, frightening up several deer on our way down off the tops, and soon reached the saddle and Golden Hills for an easy day.

Sunday the party headed towards the Kaimanawa Hut for a very enjoyable days tramping, the round trip between five and six

hours. On Monday we returned down the river to our transport and home via Taihape.

A really interesting weekend with some unusual happenings. One member, becoming separated from the party decided to camp along side the track, and awoke as the party came along in the dark. He made a very hurried exit, from his sleeping bag to avoid being trodden on! Venison stew to be remembered by all, a roaring campfire and a sing-song on a very frosty night.

The multitude of native birds and their calls - those heard or seen were; Grey Warblers, Tuis, Bellbirds, Riflemen, North Island Pied Tits', Pipits, Bush Hawks, and the shrill cries of the Kiwi at night.

Of interest to the botanically minded were very many sub-alpine and tussock plants, namely the Spaniard, Red Tussock, several whipcord Hebes, Celmesias, Ourisias and the Mountain Beech on which we found several mistletoe plants. A terrific weekend enjoyed by eleven members.

Nichols Hut 9/10 October. By Graham Peters.
 On a recent trip with Nigel Gregory camping between Angle Knob and McGregor; Janet, Nigel and myself decided that Nichols looked like a good place to go. The fact that it is due to be relocated gave added impetus to this expedition. Unfortunately Nigel chose not to come but we were joined by Alyn Higgins. The weather forecast wasn't that flash but we decided that if it was too bad we could have a somewhat shorter trip staying at Waitawaewae. As it turned out as we disembarked at Otaki Forks on Saturday morning the weather looked promising. The walk into YTTY went on a bit but we got there for a 1230 lunch.

The climb up to Shoulder Knob starts off reasonably steeply and brought home to me that I hadn't been tramping for 3 months. It is 1000m from the river to Shoulder Knob however. Once you're above the bush however the gradient eases and theoretically you have views to distract you. However this not the case for us as we had parkas on and the mist was swirling around us. At 5.00pm at Junction Knob we had a team discussion as to whether we wanted to carry on over Mt Crawford in the worsening weather or

take the easier option and spend the night at Andersons Memorial Hut. As none of us had been there either, that was where we ended up. A very nice little hut it is too.

Early next morning the cloud had lifted but by the time we had breakfasted it had descended again. Needless to say the trip back down to the Otaki was easier on the muscles but harder on the knees. Carried on past YTYT as it started to rain and had lunch as we reached the Plateau. Funnily enough the walk out from YTYT went on a bit as well. However we got back to Otaki Forks in good time. The three of us were:- Janet Wilson, Alyn Higgins, and myself, Graham Peters.

Stanfield Hut, 25 October. By Duncan Hedderley.

Stanfield is a nice little hut in the hills behind Dannevirke. You can get into it along the Holmes Ridge track (I guess going via A-Frame Hut and Takapari Road is an alternative for the Mad Fit), then come back out down the creek. I had not been there since the floods, and was a bit uncertain about how the creek might have changed; if anything, it was easier to travel along, since the vegetation had been washed away and the gravel had had time to settle into a fairly smooth surface. OK, that meant the 4WD-ers had been through, but fortunately all we saw of them was ruts. We did run into Mick and Marian Leyland out for a quick ramble. We also saw a family of shelducks; and Alex spotted a kingfisher and a parrot with his binoculars at lunchtime. We got back to the carpark surprisingly quickly after that, leaving time for a (large, cheap) icecream in bustling Woodville.

We were Yuko, Neil, Alex and Duncan

Tunupo Peak 31st October by Anja Scholz (Sam Harrild, Alexis Chevellier, Neil Campbell, Heather Purdie, Warren Wheeler, Janet Wilson, Graham Peters, Lance Gray and Anja Scholz)

Well, I knocked the bastard off – without knocking myself out first, or any other calamity befalling me this time (refer to Tunupo Trip Report 18th of April in May Newsletter)!!

After a cold and wet Saturday the Sunday started as brilliantly weatherwise as forecasted. Driving up to the road end we could see in front of us snow capped Ruapehu hovering like a mirage over the land, and make out just about the length of the Ruahines to our right. We started the tramp with short sleeves and sunscreened faces, but thankfully it was still a pleasant temperature for the climb up to the bushline. A steady ascent

with a couple of breaks for breath and refreshments brought us into the sunshine after about 2 hours, with the keen front people breaking out into a bit of a sweat to bag the peak early and get the best seats for lunch.

Unfortunately there was a localized bitterly cold little breeze around the peak, they also got the coldest hands.

The views were pretty amazing, only a bit of a haze obscuring the coast on either side, and we could make out other trampers in the distance at Toka Trig (MTSCs!). While lunching, the A (respectively AGHJL) – Team put the proposition to the trip leader to do the Tunupo-Toka circuit, and took later off in that direction, soon to be ants on the horizon. We others didn't linger too much either, because of said breeze, but 5 minutes into the descent the fleeces, hats and gloves could come off again. Steadily we made our way back to the carpark and went to pick up the others at the Toka roadend – we had dawdled a bit and they had already been waiting for a while !!

The Toka Detour

The Toka detour by the "A" team, as Anja accurately describes us, was worth every extra footstep. We don't know how many but Warren tells us that in his group, the B team, his pedometer says it was 6000 steps up, but, wait for it, 8000 steps down! Go figure? Janet was alarmed that Alexis seemed to be walking too fast to Toka so we all agreed that he now had to carry rocks in his pack to bring him down to our level. New members should not be allowed to be so fit! Janet was also curious about Toka Bivouac, none of us had seen it before, but there it lay immediately before us; oh the the joy of fine weather in the Ruahines! On Toka Trig we replenished our thirst from the tarns, you can tell Summer is coming, and had the good fortune to catch up with the MTSC's, as well as admire the two gliders who swooped in over us. The trip down provided no dramas with a very relaxing gossip at the carpark with the rest of the MTSCs and their flash bus. Alexis taking photos of sheep was pretty cool too!

The Kimbolton Café en route made for a good end to an awesome little trip. ☺

Kaweka's 6/7 November. By Graham Peters.

There's an odd bunch of people in PNTMC. No, I'm not talking about Warren. I'm talking about those who do the Kaweka Challenge. It's a complete and utter mystery to me why anyone would pay good money to go somewhere you can for free, with hordes of other people when at any other time of the year you would hardly see

anyone. Still, as they say " There's nought as queer as folks."

There were two reasons behind Janet organising this trip that follows the route of the said Kaweka Challenge to Makahu Base from Kuripapango via Kiwi Saddle, Kaiarahi, and Kaweka J. After overnighing at Makahu the route is back via Matauria Ridge, crossing the Donald river, then via Mackintosh Hut to in our case The Lakes carpark. The Kaweka Challenge itself goes back through private forest to Kuripapango. The first reason was that Janet reckons the times she's been on this route she's never had time to look around. The second was that she hoped it might inspire others to join this misguided bunch of masochists. In this latter hope I see a deep seated psychological need to have this bizarre behaviour somehow validated by more people participating in this mass masochism. Still, for us it was a good tramp.

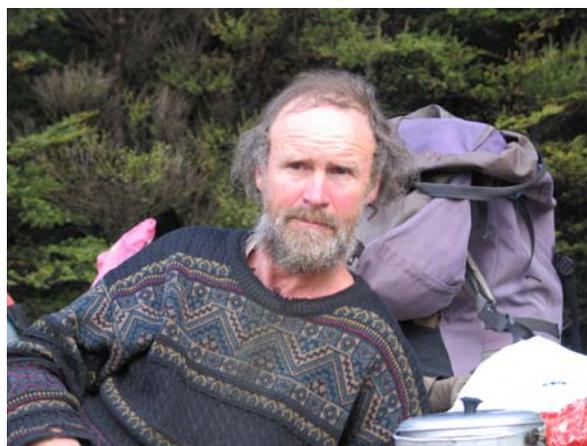
Being gentleblokes/ sheilas of leisure the five of us - Janet Wilson, Yuko Watanabe, Yvette Cottam, Tony Gates, and myself Graham Peters, headed up to Kuripapango on the Friday afternoon. We had a cunning plan in that we took a bicycle and after dropping people and gear at the foot of Kuripapango hill, I would take the car to the Lakes carpark and then cycle back to the others. We'd stash the bike and pick it up on Sunday. This worked better than expected. I'd hardly started cycling when a security guard employed by the forest company stopped and gave me a ride back to the others.



Yvette and Janet- speed Kaweka trampers.

Next morning after a good nights sleep we set out bright and earlyish on the 700m climb to the top of Kuripapango itself. At this stage in the day we did get some views but soon cloud came in. From there the route wanders up and down before dropping 250 odd metres to Kiwi Saddle Hut. It was a bit early for lunch so after a brief stop we headed on to Castle Camp. The travel to

there is undulating but good going. We had lunch at Castle Camp - an odd place with a water tank and a clear polythene wrapped frame shelter. It's about 200m climb from there to Kaiarahi in three gentle steps. Somewhere along here however Tony's back decided to start having painful spasms so at Kaiarahi we took a bit of gear off him. The going to the top of MacIntosh Spur and then Studholme Saddle is good fast travel, not for Tony on this day however. His back was proving to be a real problem. Fortunately, about 1000 of Tony's mates from the Heretaunga TC were having a day trip on the Sunday to lay a wreath at the cairn on Kaweka J. We decided that if we abandoned him there, they might do something with him - or not. As it was, Janet, who's been on lots of courses decided that wasn't an ethical option. However, if we could get him down to Makahu Base, the might take him back to Fernhill where we could pick him up. So, we shared around as much of Tony's stuff as we could and headed off up Mad Dog Hill. Tony was very stoic as we cracked the whip keeping him moving. The 750m descent to Makahu Base s must have been extremely trying for him, it was bad enough for the rest of us. Still we got there and had many good cups of tea and a good hearty dinner. It was good to see and hear Kaka flying around the area. During the night we heard a strange whistling noise that Tony tells us are Sika deer.



Graham Peters- trumper and coffee maker.

Sunday dawned brilliantly fine but with a cold wind. When the HTC turned up and said they'd take Tony to Fernhill for us, things were definitely looking good. The route from Makahu along the Matauria Ridge was easy going through scrubby pine forest and open areas of clay. **We had a few moments of excitement as a deer hopped across the track in front of us.** I was really impressed with the 350m drop into the Donald

river - unbelievably steep. Fortunately the ascent out the other side is not as steep and only 250m. MacIntosh Hut is on a plateau so from the top of the Donald, to our lunch at a dead possum infested clearing for lunch, was straightforward. From there to The Lakes carpark the route ascends and descends as you cross the grain of the country through alternately pine forest and bush till you cross the Tutaekuri and ascend to the carpark. Threw everything in the car and back to pick up the stuff stashed and a swim for some of us in the Ngaroro river before the car wouldn't start. Not even a pathetic attempt at starting. Fortunately it push started easily so we made our way to Fernhill, picked up Tony, then on to Dannevirke where we had dinner at a very flash cafe that Tony knew of. Thank you Tony. Not only did Yvette's car have a knackered battery but also, after she'd dropped off the last person she had a blowout in one of her tyres.

The trip was thoroughly enjoyable but as far as persuading people to go on the Kaweka Challenge, Janet, Yvette, and Tony are already addicted to it, and Yuko and myself have far too much good sense to even contemplate it.

Footnote, by Tony Gates

My physiotherapist tells me that lower back injuries are fairly common- usually muscle swellings and spasms caused over time by poor sitting/ walking and posture. Although that is not very reassuring for a somewhat damaged person such as myself, it at least tells me to take precautionary measures. Drugs are brilliant, and one should always have some on hand, be they pain killers, anti inflammation drugs, or the like. Exercise, which all good trampers are used to, is possibly the best way to prevent injuries like mine, but one must always treat knees, hips, feet, backs, and other susceptible body parts with care. In my case, the drugs helped a great deal, as did the rest that I had at the lovely Makahu Base. A walking stick is very useful too. Oh and I cannot forget the need for assistance from friends, who willingly carried most of my pack contents as I limped on. Thank you Janet, Graham, Yuko, and Yvette, for carrying my pack and looking after me.

Nov 6 & 7th – Navigation, by Heather Purdie Sat 6th

There was only two 'navigatees' (Anja & myself) that arrived at the Ashurst domain with 'navigator' Terry on Sat morning. It was a beautiful morning with a number of Tui's in full chorus & a good opportunity to refresh ourselves with the working of map & compass. We started with some distance estimation & calculating just how many paces we walk per 100m. Despite rather different

statures, our calculations were surprisingly similar. This was followed by Terry sending us on our way with our compass & instruction sheet, for a worthwhile jaunt through the bush interpreting directions & getting a feel for time & distance travelled.

We rounded off the morning with an interesting discussion about geomagnetic reversals (when Earth's magnetic pole switches, and north becomes south and vice versa). This phenomenon last occurred around 780,000 years ago when our present magnetic field was set. Whilst Anja & I contemplated the havoc it would cause a tramper or airline pilot, Terry suggested that it could provide a good market for the sale of Anja's northern hemisphere compass down under!

Sun 7th

Today arriving at the Putara Road end Terry had three pupils: Anja, Malcolm, & myself. We were given a nice 'search' scenario to read & began using maps compass to calculate our ETA with the 'overdue party'. Calculations done, we set off along the Herepai Hut track and made good time to the second swing bridge. At this point we were then to find (over the page on our instruction sheet) that the bridge had been 'washed out' & our simple planned route required a rather large revision. Our destination was some river flats in a tributary off the Mangatainoka River & now with the 'bridge out' we picked a number of bearings to get us up an over a bush clad ridge & into the next valley. Taking turns at steering the group we soon came to appreciate how slow untracked travel can be. Finally making the ridge proper & locating an old trail we were about to set off again when our instructor announced that he had temporarily misplaced (lost) his pack somewhere! At first I thought this was Terry being cunning to see if we had been paying attention, but soon realised that he was not joking! Luckily Malcolm spied it through the undergrowth and instructor & pack were reunited. Our group then made good progress along the ridge & descended into the correct valley for a slightly later lunch than anticipated. With such a beautiful day in hand, we decided to have a nice rock-hop down the river as opposed to regaining the track near Herepai Hut. It was a great day out & it is always good to practice & improve the compass skills. Who knows when they may become crucial? Many thanks to Terry for providing this great learning opportunity.

Mania Track - 14 November 2004; by Fiona Donald (driver/Leader/writer), with Ian Harding, Yuko Watanabe, Neil Campbell, Duncan Hedderley and Warren Wheeler

We headed towards Feilding, along Railway Road, passing bunches of cyclists racing together; it was a pleasant day to drive the scenic route to Mania Track.

Just beyond Rangiwahia we turned right on to a gravel road and steadily moved into the hills. We drove at a very slow speed due to the rough state of the road; there was very uneven surfaces combined with lots of fresh gravel.

We walked and followed the white markers over the farm while passing native clematis hanging in great drifts from the trees until we reached the Ruahine Park sign.

From there we encountered very muddy conditions, climbed through two slips and a number of felled branches then the track levelled out and we left the mud behind! There was evidence that a dog and at least one person was ahead of us and this became more clear when we made our first stop at a recently lived-in hunter's camp. Ian entertained us with stories about one of the hardier men of the Harding Clan while we ate morning tea. Just after morning tea,

I mentioned that "a bit of a hill" was coming up and in no time at all, most of us were puffing our way up it. Ian said "this ought to be a medium trip" but as we all know the current grades are based on time! The Leader was obviously tiring at the end of that little uphill epic and eventually decided to stage a one-woman sit-down mutiny; it was with some surprise that most of the party joined her for lunch. Warren and Ian went on, for about 5 minutes, to the end of the track. The Leader felt so much better sitting down and checking out the awesome view down the valley. There were a few rain spits where a few of us donned our raincoats but nothing came of it.

On the way down, some dead trees looked like a perfect place for Great Eagles to swoop down to hunt moa in the valley below ...that's what Warren had us visualising and much later on, we all flopped down and rested for a while. We were all stepped out from Warren's pedometer (12000) and timed out from Fiona's stopwatch. (4 hours). So, with plenty of lassitude we stopped for refreshments at Cheltenham and made our way home.

Picture a wild and rugged valley, rising steeply between encroaching ranges, to a majestic, ice capped peak standing in splendid isolation at its head. From the blue-white glacial torrent tumbling in foam and spray down a giant's staircase of piled boulders, tangled scrub and alpine meadow land spread upward to where the dwindling tussock give way to rock and snow. A lonely place, the Wilkinson, wild and beautiful, as the intruder sees it from below.



"It is a peculiar emotion, this love of the high hills. We experience hardships and privations, cold and hunger, fatigue and discomfort, but we return again and again. Why is it? I do not so much mean the joy of combat in climbing, or the sense of achievement in a peak conquered, as the quiet satisfaction of just being among the giants. Is it that we are of hillmen ancestry, and sense that we have come home, or is it just the result of necessary independence and self reliance?"

We cannot explain, but we understand.

From 'The Wilkinson Valley' by JA Wells (1934). From "In search of New Zealand", Hutt Valley Tramping Club (1934).

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