



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - April 2005

CLUB NIGHTS

Club nights are on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends 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.

14 Apr Club Night – BYO Slides

A good opportunity to show us what you did this Summer. If you are normally too shy to do a "major" presentation this is your opportunity to have some fun with friends. We promise to laugh at all jokes.

21 Apr Committee Meeting

28 Apr Club Night – European Alps Terry Crippen

Compared to our Southern Alps, the European Alps have very easy access for tramping and trans-alpine type trips of all grades and duration. Terry soon discovered that the big loads NZ trampers usually carry become redundant, and if you choose "in-between seasons" there are very few people about. Come along to his presentation about trips into the German, Austrian, French and Italian Alps.

Come along even if it is to hear some of Terry's famous tramping vernacular. If you want to learn about how to organise a tramping trip on the cheap through the Alps this talk is for you.

Articles to Lance gray.family@actrix.co.nz or post to 37 Parata Street, Palmerston North (by 20th of the month)

TRIPS

Apr 2-3 Oroua River Camp E/Family Alasdair Noble 356-1094

Leave early Saturday afternoon. Short walk to the campsite in the Oroua river below Heritage Lodge (turn left at the fork just before Heritage lodge). Set up camp and enjoy a pleasant evening. There will be prizes for "most useful piece of equipment", "Most useless piece of equipment", "Best evening meal", "Best wine" etc. There is the option of going up Tunupo on the Sunday (though I won't be leading this). Come and have a relaxing night under the stars.

Apr 3 Iron Gate Hut M Terry Crippen 356-3588

Departing 7am. Heading in to the hut via the track up the Oroua River in the western Ruahines. Returning the same way or perhaps with a section in the river. Should be an excellent sunny autumn day. May catch up with the weekend campers as well.

Apr 9-10 Waikamaka Hut M Jo O'Halloran 353-0300

Waikamaka Hut is an excellent introduction to overnight tramping in the Ruahines. Based from the same road-end as the Sunrise Hut trip this walk makes its way up the Waipawa River then over Waipawa Saddle before a short descent to the superb Waikamaka Hut and return. Please contact Jo for further details.

Apr 10 Takapari Circuit M/F Heather Purdie 354-0448

The 'Lost Track' has been found! Come & check out this little used circuit that incorporates the Takapari Trig (1265m), & on a clear day gives great views both west and east, with just a little good old kiwi bush bashing on the way around. This will be a 7:30am start from Countdown.

Apr 16-17 Mangatepopo Rock Climb T
Pete McGregor 021-256-9001
pohanginapete@yahoo.co.nz

Rock climbing in the Mangatepopo Valley (the southern end of the Tongariro Crossing). We'll drive to the carpark on Saturday morning, walk about ¾ h to the Tuwharetoa Lower Tier (the bluffs on the true right) and spend the afternoon climbing there. Camp at the Mangahuaia campsite or kip at the National Park Backpackers; return to Mangatepopo for a morning's climbing, then back to PN. As well as the usual day-trip gear, you'll need a helmet (*essential*) and a harness (both can be hired from the club); other items such as rock shoes and a belay device will make the experience more efficient and enjoyable. *This is not an instruction course.* You must have some experience at belaying safely with an ATC, figure-8 or sticht plate (the self-locking grigri devices now used in many gyms do not count). (Note: trip is weather-dependent and places close Thursday evening 14 April).

Apr 17 Jumbo/Holdsworth Loop F
Barry Scott 354-0510

Leaving 7am from Countdown this trip follows the classic 24km Jumbo/ Holdsworth mountain race just south of Masterton. With day-packs this will be an excellent occasion for those who want to maximise their tramping experience.

Apr 23-25 Mangapurua M
 Looking for a leader phone Warren (06) 356-1998

Apr 23-25 Kaimanawa Plains M
Tony Gates 357-7439

Apologies to all South Island trampers, but the Anzac weekend Mt Patriach trip has been shifted north to the Kaimanawas due to transport difficulties. We plan to enter the Kaimanawa grasslands from Six Cross (the high point of the Desert Road), and stroll along the access corridor to the Rangitikei River, and back. We will camp en route, and look around the wide open grassy plains. There is lots of wilderness in this area, so we will be prepared to not get lost.

Apr 25 Diggers Hut M
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart 0800hrs. Lest we forget Anzac Day, from Pohangina Valley East Road we go up onto the southern Ruahine Range, down to Diggers Hut (2 hours), then 4-5km rock-hopping down the Makawakawa Stream to the carpark.

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)

From the Editor's Desk

I am reliably informed that mountain running does not meet the official objectives of PNTMC's constitution but given the number of enthusiastic participants within the club it seems re-miss not to at least acknowledge their activities. The original perpetrator and to whom all complaints should be addressed is to a certain Mick Leyland (he has stepped aside this year) who tells me that he only took up mountain running to keep fit. What's with the cigarettes? Oh they're your sponsors!

The official training ground is the Manawatu Gorge Walk which provides the metric for fitness. A simple "How long did it take you to do the Gorge Walk?" instantly tells this in-crowd who the guns are. It pays to deny that you have been anywhere near the place such is the competition. The traditional (local) mountain running events on the calendar are: The Jumbo – Holdsworth (Jan), the Kaweka Challenge (Feb) and the Tararua Mountain Race (Mar). For PNTMC the Kaweka Challenge has become the favourite with Mick Leyland, Janet Wilson, Nigel Gregory, Llew Prichard and Tony Gates appearing to regularly win their classes as well as set records.

This year the Tararua Mountain Race also received some attention with two present PNTMC members participating, plus our very own official photographer, a certain Mr Gates (Leatherwood Lenz). Being photographed atop Mt Hector is something special and our thanks goes to Tony for his efforts. Next year, he tells me, he is

running the event, so we need a volunteer to sit up there and take photos. Any takers?

From a personal point of view the teams aspect of the mountain runs have been the most pleasing though Janet did take this to extremes by picking up her partner while training out and about the Pohangina! The Kaweka Challenge has courses that suit any ability (it is true) while the Tararua Mountain Race (the Southern Crossing from Kaitoke to Otaki) presents a few difficulties as it is suggested you should be able to complete it within 10 hours, you can tramp it in 14 hours, so you do have to run a bit.



Nigel, Tony & friends (Kaweka Challenge)



Team Nigel & Llew (Kaweka Challenge)



Team Kim & Janet on Mt Hector (Tararua Mountain Race)



Team Sarah & Lance on Mt Hector (Tararua Mountain Race)

Kaweka Challenge 26-27 Feb **- 2 Day Pairs – 30km 2160m climb**

Nigel Gregory & Llew Prichard 6:41:15
Tony Gates & Peter Kerr 7:09:53

-1 Day Solo – 28 km 2150m climb

Janet Wilson 5:54:59

Tararua Mountain Run 35km 12 March

Janet Wilson & Kim McKay 7hrs 37min
Lance Gray & Sarah Pettus 6hrs 30min

NOTICES

**Taranaki-Whanganui Conservancy Board, Te Araroa Manawatu Trust,
Heritage Lodge Fire, NZ Geo & Wilderness Mag, Coal at Howletts, Waiotauru Hut Closure**

Taranaki-Whanganui Conservancy Board

Christine Cheyne is our very own Taranaki-Whanganui Conservancy Board member. If anyone has an interest in Board activities or wants to bring anything to the attention of the Board please contact Christine on 356-3588. The Board's most recent meeting (Feb 18-19) included a visit into the western Ruahines to inspect the Rangiwahia slip and snow damage at Kahikatea Reserve. The Board's next meeting is 13 April in Wanganui.

Te Araroa Manawatu Trust

Also from Christine, (gee you're busy, how do you look after that demanding Terry?) the Te Araroa Manawatu Trust was established in November 2004 and has 11 trustees giving representation from a range of local interest groups. The local Trust is responsible for seeing the development of the trail between Levin and Feilding. South of Levin is the Wellington Trust and north, hopefully, will become part of a yet to be established Wanganui Trust.

Within the region the Te Araroa trail seen as the core route or spine from which a number of other walking trails will connect over time. The trail will not be solely for walkers, parts of the trail will be for multiple use including cyclist and horse riding. If you are interested in the proposed route between Feilding & Levin, contact Christine and she can provide you with a newsletter.

Heritage Lodge Razed

Going by the emails I received it appears Heritage Lodge was burned beyond repair sometime around Sunday /Monday 14 March 2005. This was apparently seen by a hunter and confirmed by army personnel camped at the road-end. No doubt you've seen the article in the sub-standard.

New Zealand Geographic & Wilderness

The latest issue of National Geographic has an article of the Tararua's with a certain Mr Gates featuring in one of the photographs. I also recommend a look at the black & white image taken in the Ngatiawa Stream near Kapakapanui. Tony also features in the latest Wilderness magazine rafting the Motu River.

Coal at Howlett's Hut

For those of you keen on a coal fire, Howlett's Hut, owned by the Heretaunga Tramping Club, has been re-stocked for the winter. Tony who organised this said it was helicoptered in during February so get up there and check it out. Great spot.

Waiotauru Hut Closure

The Waiotauru Hut (GR S26 939 274) in the Tararua Forest Park will be closed for building and maintenance work from 4pm on Thursday 24th March until the morning of Tuesday 29th March 2005. Tent sites are available in the valley below the hut.

With the annual SAREX (Search and Rescue Exercise) just completed, I thought it would be good to introduce you to the sage advice from Charles, a contributor whose identity Doug Strachan tells me is strictly on a must know basis.

Dear Charles,

I've been in a helicopter on a SAR exercise. If the engine cuts out, what's the highest I could be above the ground and still survive?

From Bladerunner

Dear Bladerunner,

If the height is less than 40ft you might survive with injuries. Above 400ft you might survive unscathed. I was once in a helicopter and asked the pilot what he'd do in the event of engine failure. He said, "I'll show you," and he switched the engine off! It was a single-engined machine! Well, we just came down under what they call "autorotation." If you're high enough, the air passing over the rotor blades as you fall will keep them spinning (It's similar to a maple seed falling). Under powered flight, the air is down-flowing. During autorotation, it's upflowing, so the pilot has a window of 2 or 3 seconds to change the pitch of the blades. I've never had such a shock as when he cut that engine, but we landed gently and smoothly.

Regards,

Charles.

TRIP REPORTS

Iron Gates Gorge, Cape Turnagain Beach Walk, Centre Creek Bush Bash, Maketawa Hut, SAREX, Top Maropea Hut, The Drowned Rat Diaries – Part Two, Kapakapanui Circuit.

Iron Gates Gorge, Feb 6 By Doug Strachan

Warren's and my departure was delayed 15 mins waiting for the 3rd party member, who never arrived. Warren has since learned what the "answer only" option on his answer-phone means.

With the run of hot, dry weather, we were a little surprised to encounter drizzle on the drive up. The car's wiper blade started coming off, so Warren fixed it with a little Kiwi ingenuity. He broke a match in half and used the sticks to hold the rubber in place. We continued on in rather dense fog, the matchsticks, positioned in a V-shape, giving me the fingers with each sweep of the wiper blade.

Crossing the stile at the carpark, we noted a Mitsubishi car key strung onto the top fence wire. There was no Mitsubishi in the car park, which led us to speculate about what happened. Moving on, we found that the Dec/Jan rains had caused a big slip, taking out a chunk of the track. It was easy enough to by-pass.

We met some Wellingtonians, and a couple of hunters who reckoned the deer had been driven higher by the hot, dry weather, and that was why they never got any. However, we later saw fresh deer prints near the river.

We lunched beside the river and, as expected, Warren conjured a watermelon from his pack. The day was starting to get hot, so we cooled off in a big, refreshing, pool. Walking down-river, we encountered further pools, which we chose to pack-float across. We saw a couple of fish.

We reached Iron Gates Gorge and swam through it, noting that it had scoured out and changed a bit since last visit. Seemed to be deeper. We encountered more rapids, and shot some of them. *"Maybe I shouldn't have gone down that rapid head first," said Warren, evaluating a minor injury.*

Carrying on down-river, it was soon time for another swim before climbing up to the farmland.

The track up had untold Ongaonga growing along it, and Warren got stung on the back. He tried Rangiora leaves as a remedy. Did it work?

It took exactly half an hour to cross the farmland to get back to the Mitsubishi key. On the way home, Warren made a detour to show me London's Ford, where folks were swimming. A great swimming spot shaded by a vertical cliff. We watched a little fox terrier-cross climb up through a mohawk of plants clinging improbably to the cliff, where it found a possum in a flax bush and grabbed it. There was a lot of noise as the flax bush shook violently. Next thing the dog, severed possum tail tip in mouth, free-fell 6m into the river. No animals died. Beer and chips at Kimbolton rounded off the day. Good one Warren.



Doug pack-floating Iron Gates Gorge

Cape Turnagain Beach Walk - 13 Feb

By Ian Harding, [Leader] in the company of Chris and Glenice Saunders, Neil Campbell, Monica Cantwell, Fiona Donald and John Feeney.

It's quite surprising how many motor vehicles frequent the Countdown carpark at 8.30am on a Sunday morning, far more than I expected, which made it easy for the temporary misplacement of two of our team members. Departure time had arrived with no sign of Chris and wife Glenice. A

quick phone call to their courteous answer machine yielded no response, so a look around the carpark was called for, locating them some 50 meters away patiently waiting, sheltering in their car from the passing shower[as we were] and wondering where the rest of the group was.

On the road, making a brief-stop to collect Monica near Ashurst, then off to the East Coast taking a short-cut via the Makirikiri Marae road, south of Dannevirke. Medicinal treatment administered to Fiona in the form of "crystallized ginger" for a slight bout of motion sickness brought a short break to the journey en-route before a comfort stop at the Wimbledon Hotel. Unfortunately as we were a little early for "opening-time" the female members of the group had to suffer the indignity of using the "gents" outside toilet, all in good humour though, may I add. My apologies ladies, its just I don't normally have occasion to require the use of a women's convenience. [obviously room for improvement in my organisational skills with this regard] Before departing, a successful rescue mission instigated by Fiona saved the Publican's cat that has apparently developed an unhealthy affection for the undersides of parked motor vehicles. [long may it live]

The Herbert monument on the foreshore at Herbertville was the starting point of our beach-walk. Interestingly, it was erected fairly recently to commemorate the arrival/landing of the Herbert family and subsequent naming of the settlement in the mid-1800's. All dressed in suitable beach-hiking attire and with a rather steady south-westerly wind blowing we set off, walking in fairly close proximity to the waters edge. The wet sand in certain sections of the beach certainly proved to be physically demanding, especially noticeable on ones calf muscles with the conversation at one point touching on the late Arthur Lydiard and his use of vigorous beach walking in his fitness-training programmes. All the time the wind-blown sand proved to be a nuisance factor especially on the backs of our legs.

Upon reaching the "Cape" we headed for the sand-hills in order to avoid the rocks and achieve an unobtrusive view of the seals that usually inhabit the area, unfortunately none were to be seen on this occasion. With a lunch-break beckoning, we found suitable shelter with a view, free from wind and sand, behind some native vegetation. [flax] As usual healthy conversation prevailed and it was with some apprehension we finally left our sunny spot for the return trip.

Because of the increased wind strength and the uninviting prospect of the accompanying sand particles it was decided to return to the parked cars via the adjacent shingle roadway, even though that meant an extra 2-3kms walking. Heading into Herbertville's main thoroughfare saw our group of "tuckered-out trampers" promptly stopping outside the village's hotel thinking that they had reached the pre-organised café venue. It took some rather strong persuasion on behalf of the leader to convince them to walk yet another kilometre or so to the "Cock and Pullet Café". So while the main party stayed and settled into the local hospitality, the drivers Neil and "self" walked-on to collect the cars. [just round the corner] On returning we found the others "well into it", lapping-up the good atmosphere, great coastal view and of course, the excellent home cooked food. Actually the "C&P" is one of those places along with the region in general that seem to possess that certain "magnetic attraction" making it worthy of a future revisit.

An uneventful but pleasant return trip to P Nth. concluded yet another enjoyable day shared with the friendly folk from the PNTMC.

Centre Creek Bush Bash - 20 Feb Janet Wilson

It was a fine but cool morning when we set off up the Pohangina River sidle track towards Centre Creek. The route down to the river from the paddock on Kevin Billets farm is pretty rough and overgrown these days, after it was nearly destroyed in the floods last year. However, it was better defined than it had been a few weeks prior due, I suppose, to summer tramping traffic and some hungry sheep.

We soon crossed the river and found the old biv - not looking much better than last time but still a useful shelter and it's obviously loved by someone who uses it. Graham then set a cracking pace up the creek, enjoying the sporty, boulder hopping opportunities. The big floods have caused quite a bit of change to the creek, but it is still passable, with only one climb that I was sure wasn't there last time. The big slip that marks the point where we leave the stream and head up to Takapari Rd seemed to arrive quickly. We dropped our packs here and went upstream for another 5 minutes to view the big waterfall and then had a bite to eat before starting the climb.

This is a little awkward at the start but soon becomes easier but not less steep. We found our way onto a spur that was steep, overgrown and

slow going. When we were all starting to hope this would end, around the time the leatherwood begins, we popped out onto the old hunters track that we had found last time. While a little overgrown, it sure beats bashing through leatherwood, and we soon were out on the road.

After some more food, we walked down to the track that leads back to Centre Creek Biv - this is straightforward and only interesting in that when it was last cut, around a year ago, they forgot to cut the lower half! Maybe someone forgot to go back? We were soon back in the Pohangina River which, after some discussion, we decided to go down rather than use the sidle track. I must admit to being a little less enthusiastic than the others, as I remembered an awkward sidle around a deep pool - however, this turned out to be no problem and the rest of the trip was fun - lovely sunny afternoon and it was nice to swim in some of the deep pools further down. The trip took about 8 hours and was enjoyed by Warren Wheeler, Nigel Gregory, Janet Wilson and Graham Peters (leader).

Maketawa Hut - 19th & 20th Feb by Elaine Hervé

What a pity there were not more people for this fantastic sunny weekend on Egmont. We had a leisurely 9:00am departure from Palmerston, arriving at Dawson Falls at about Midday. We had a 1st lunch before heading off up the mountain. The climb up to the Stratford Plateau is reasonably gradual, with us enjoying warm temperatures, indulging in club gossip [not Duncan !] and admiring emerging views. At the plateau it was decided to have 2nd lunch at the ski field, so on we went, through the rock fall tunnel and avalanche prone valley, though no snow to be seen today. We had time for a quick snack, to pose for a photo, Duncan to meet an old work colleague and for Anja to comment on the number of Germans around the place.

The next part of the track is a gentle up hill to Tahurangi Lodge. As expected at the lodge we met an organised run/walk up the mountain. One lady said there were 140 people in her group! They certainly had a great day for it. As we looked up to the summit the thought of climbing to the top was considered, the conditions could never be better. A quick calculation of another 1000m's to climb and we decided against it.

Going down the puffer had the usual effect of turning my legs to jelly. We quickly lost all the height we had gained and arrived at the Hut at 4:00pm. Maketawa is a great hut and I can't understand why it is not used more. It has great

views both up and out, 2 sleeping area's, a great deck and now a new toilet and outside sink with running water. We had it all to ourselves [except for the resident rat]. We enjoyed an extended meal during the evening with each of us providing a course. It was good to have some relaxation time enjoying the sun and great views. We headed to bed when it became too dark to continue reading easily.

I awoke with a start at 6:30, realising it was getting light outside and was just in time to see some great views of the central plateau above the cloud level. At last a photo for the next competition. By the time the others appeared the cloud had lifted and views lost. We left the hut soon after 8:00.

The Curtis Falls track climbs in and out of 6 gorges, with easy sections between to help you get your breath back. By the time we arrived at the large Manganui gorge it was realised we were making good time and the others kindly let me lead them a short way up the river to view the falls. The dry weather meant they were not particularly large, but at least accessible. We had an early lunch sitting on a park bench, enjoying the sun at East Egmont.

Throughout most of the two days we were passed stoat traps every 100 metres carefully laid and baited with eggs. Only one stoat was seen. The track to Dawson Falls included, three stream crossings, a swing bridge and a surprise appearance by a Morepork. It flew close by my head landing in a branch and then stared at us staring at it. We arrived back at the car park about 2:00.



Elaine, Anja, Duncan and the "Naki".

On the return journey we stopped off in Hawera for refreshments and a quick stretch of pleasantly tired legs. We were Anja Scholz, Duncan Hedderley and Elaine Hervé

Search & Rescue Exercise 5-6 March By Janet Wilson

The annual Land Search and Rescue exercise was based at Levin police station. Team arrival times were staggered this year, and we were one of the first group of 4 teams, with an 8am start. While we weren't expecting to use helicopters on this exercise, both the rescue Squirrel and the airforce Iroquois became available (you can hear Janet celebrating! Ed.)

There were 10 teams involved in total, although 3 of the teams had a separate scenario involving night searching. The scenario for us was a couple of overdue hunters who had been dropped at Nichols Hut some days prior. *We got, what was for me, the best possible first tasking - to fly in the Squirrel to all the huts in the area to check them out for clues.* We got into YTTY OK but cloud prevented landings at Andersons and Nichols. We found a couple of trampers at Te Matawai but no clues and then couldn't get into Dracophyllum Biv or Waiopehu or Oriwa Biv so it was back to YTTY. A nice long fly around but unfortunately not so appreciated by everyone - I'm sure I heard Doug mutter later that he never wanted to get into a chopper again!

Once at YTTY we lost radio contact for awhile but were eventually tasked to head up the Otaki River and to check out a side stream on the true left about 3km up river. We did this, finding no clues and were re-tasked around 6pm to sidle about 1km around the hillside to a spur. We questioned this tasking but management seemed to indicate that there would be a camp site where we were heading. However, it was 8.30pm, very dark and raining when we eventually found a spot flat enough to sleep the 4 of us. Doug cooked up dinner very efficiently while Peter and Warren organised the shelter. Given the conditions, we all had a good nights sleep.

Early next morning we headed back down to the Otaki for a pickup and re-tasking - the lost party hadn't been found yet. We got to a very large clearing on the river where we finally found some footprints. These turned out to be from another team and it was about this time that the lost party was spotted from the chopper upstream from us.

We were all eventually flown out - the low cloud and rain meant that we had a lovely long flight back to

Otaki Forks and then back to Levin in the Iroquois, rather than the more direct flight over the hills.

We had an interesting time - I felt that the team worked well together and I'm sure we all learnt a lot. Its always a little disappointing to be nowhere near all the clues, but you can't have everything! We were Warren Wheeler, Peter Darragh, Doug Strachan and Janet Wilson (Team Leader)



Nice legs Peter Darragh!

Top Maropea Hut - 13 March By Neil Campbell.

We left Palmerston North at about 7am and after a few gate openings and closings we found ourselves at the start of the walk at about 9am. We made our way up to Sunrise Hut getting there around 11:30am. The track to Sunrise Hut is of an extremely high quality with signs along the way pointing out interesting features.

At present this hut is being expanded and it is surrounded by building materials. After a 'first lunch' we continued on. We were now out on the tops at an altitude of around 1300m. We had perfect fine weather and excellent views with a slight heat haze. Continuing on to Armstrong Saddle there is a sign noting that the name comes from a Mr Armstrong who crashed his plane there in the 1930s. Doug has a strong interest in this incident and anyone with information might like to get in touch with him. At this saddle you can see both Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe.

From there we made our way across and down to Top Maropea Hut. This small mountain hut has recently been refurbished. We had our 'second lunch' and then headed back to the cars. On the drive home we took a break in Dannevirke. I am under orders from Doug to report that certain unnamed party members decided that chips (fries?) left by some recently departed diner should not be wasted and so partook of the said

chips before the waitress had a chance to remove the plate. Whether this is a violation of cafe etiquette I am not really sure. (This is definitely the type of gossip this club needs. Ed))



The team on Armstrong Saddle

Neil Campbell, Elaine Herve, Doug Strachan, John Feeney, Trevor King & Monica Cantwell.

The Drowned Rat Diaries – Part Two (Arthur's Pass Climbing Trip)

by *Rattus alpinus fluvialis* (a.k.a. Pete McGregor)

Friday 14 January

Terry's curious about our pack harnesses.

"What sort's yours, Lance?" he asks.

Lance can't remember, but it's one of the sophisticated, modern devices.

"What about yours, Pete?"

"It's a *dynamic pivot* harness".

Terry nods, more to himself than us, as if he's trying to settle the information into his brain.

"Is it a 2 or a 3?" he asks.

"A three."

"Hmmm... you must have long legs, or a long something."

"Thankyou, Terry."

Terry's harness, it turns out, is prehistoric. It's too short and gives him problems with his back, which is presumably why he's been thrusting his pelvis all over the place. Most disconcerting.

Last night Terry decreed that Lance should look after breakfast. The weather prospect wasn't good; nevertheless the command went out:

"You got an alarm on your watch, Lance?
Good-good—set it for five".

Shortly before five, Terry's alarm started beeping. Just in case Lance's alarm didn't work, you understand. Seconds later, Terry was up, dressed—he later disclosed that he sleeps in his clothes to save time in the mornings—peering out dark windows and murmuring: those little communications of reassurance to himself. He went outside, came back in, peered out each window in turn and continued murmuring. I could stand the suspense no longer.

"What's it like, Terry?"

"Still clagged in around the tops. Bit of precipitation coming up the valley."

In other words, filthy.

He went back to bed, got up an hour later and repeated the procedure, with the same verdict. This time, however, he put a brew on.

Late in the morning the cloud coalesced into whiter, rapidly-moving clumps in a cerulean sky. I sat on the verandah, sheltered from the still-angry wind, and looked across to the bulk of Mt Harper; to the Cahill Glacier where hard ice cliffs, duck-egg blue, wrinkled and striated like the face of a heavy smoker, peered out from an icing of snow. Three black-backed gulls circled in the valley, tiny white forms soaring against shadowed cliffs, a kind of elegiac definition of immensity. I felt a sudden urge to live here.

At 1:30 we set off for a walk up to the western White Col. Half an hour later we arrived; looked over Burnett Stream to the ridge between Harper and Greenlaw; up towards the summit of Murchison. It looked close, straightforward and free of cloud, so the decision was unanimous—let's go for it. And it was straightforward; a few crevasses; a short climb on odiously rotten rock; nothing worth seriously considering roping-up for. The utmost summit was a mere translucent cornice; a blue-green, fragile curl defining the blue plane of the sky. We stayed below it, this time not entirely out of respect. The cloud had backed off to the West Coast and the wind was little more than a breeze. We could hardly credit our luck.

Lance had spotted a steep snow gully and was keen to descend that rather than the slag-pile we'd climbed. An excellent idea. We rescued the abseil rope left by a recent party, checking it meticulously and deciding that the few frayed sections were still amply strong. By the time we'd descended to the néve the cloud had returned and nearly whited-out. But we descended quickly and soon dropped below the mist. High on luck and accomplishment and the beautiful, wild,

evening light, we glissaded much of the way down, arriving at the hut at 6:45.



I'm going this way Terry!

Saturday 15 January

What a day. Terry's up at 5, stomps around outside, comes in, turns on the solar light and starts rattling pots. "Fine and clear", he says—that gentle Crippenism for "shift your lazy arses!". By 6:30 we're on our way; up to the col then traversing to White Col. A short climb over good, easy rock, then we're faced with a long grind up a snowfield or a climb over what looks like similarly good and easy rock but is graded as 3 by the route guide. Terry chooses the snow; Lance likes the rock but follows Terry; I'd enjoyed the rock scramble so much that I remove my crampons and start directly up.

It proved wonderful—solid, grippy, just steep enough to require hands but not scarily exposed. I'd have liked it to have gone on forever. When I stepped back onto the snow and began cramponing upwards, Terry and Lance were still out of sight, far below. I'd chosen the easy way. I plodded on and up towards the col below Harper, in an increasingly violent wind. When I finally reached the rock at the crest, I was battling hard to stay upright; several times, the wind almost lifted me off my feet. As I climbed the small gully, the nor'wester lifted my helmet up off my head, tugging hard on the chinstrap; I had to stop and cinch the waist cord tight on my jacket to stop it being peeled up over my head. I waited for Lance and Terry on the lee side, not at all happy about the conditions.

While Lance and I covered in what little shelter we could find, Terry reconnoitred. He struggled to the lip of the basin, but while returning, was immobilised several times by tremendous gusts; once, he was blown onto his back. I still remember the sight—Terry like a flipped-over beetle, clinging to the axe he'd plunged into the snow, unable to regain his feet until the wind momentarily relented. I swear that later I found the indentations of his fingers pressed into the

metal of his axe head. But when he finally rejoined us he confirmed that we'd be able to get down to shelter without undue difficulty. He was right, of course; once we'd descended a short way the wind abated and we were soon well into the Greenlaw Basins. Then, inevitably, the problem became finding the way out of them.

After yet more consulting of maps and discussing where the route was supposed to go, we sidled around to where we could look over the head of Greenlaw Creek to the "rock rib" we were supposed to take. It looked feasible, but the knowledge that after ascending the rib we then had to climb over Avoca Col, traverse to Gizeh Col and descend into the Anti-Crow wasn't appealing. Finally Terry suggested camping where we were. Lance and I were more than happy.

We spent a few hours relaxing in the afternoon. Well, Lance and I relaxed; Terry couldn't even sit still to eat his lunch. He was up and levelling a camp site, adjusting rocks, fiddling with stuff while his cup-a-soup turned tepid ... "RELAX, Terry!" we yelled. But he kept fiddling and adjusting and pacing ... "You know me, like to keep busy..." he replied, as if it were some sort of excuse. Which, knowing Terry, it was.

Sunday 16 January

I didn't hear Terry's alarm go off. We'd told him that an early start wasn't necessary, but just before I dropped into a deep, much-needed sleep, I heard surreptitious beeping which sounded very much like the setting of an alarm. Sure enough, at 5 a.m. he was organising to get away. Lance asked him what was up.

"It's raining", he said.

Last night he'd agreed to the sensible, i.e. late, start—but only "if it's fine and clear". That was as much as he was prepared to accept.

So now it was raining. I listened, and eventually heard the desultory pitter of a few lost drops. Then it stopped. Outside, I heard the "whoomph" of an MSR being lit as Terry got a brew going. We left our campsite at 6:30 a.m. in clearing weather.

Having reconnoitred the previous evening, we found the ridge straightforward; the early morning light beautiful. Cloud and mist swirling and clearing; the steep, solid buttresses of Speight wreathed behind us; below us, appalling spurs and ridges of shattered rock edged with light against dark, deep gullies. An hour and a half after breaking camp we arrived at the top of the scree, thinking we were in for a quick run down to the creekbed. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be. The

scree for the most part was blocky, unstable and unpredictable, with few fine, loose sections you could surf—in Terry parlance, it was *diabolical*. In fact, the rate of descent was inversely proportional to your sanity, which was presumably why I reached the bottom well ahead of Lance and Terry. I paused only to gaze down at two curious hinds that stood watching us and trying to decide whether we were a threat. Then on, the effort of the descent and the developing heat saturating us with sweat, the stream always just a little further; relief just out of reach.

But eventually we're there. Greenlaw Creek... gloriously cold, clear water, like liquid light; morning sun delineating back-lit beech trunks; clean, grey, water-washed boulders. In the shade of the mountain beech forest and sedated by the sound of rushing water we discuss our options for the rest of the day. We could camp at the old Greenlaw Hut site with the sandflies, or we could head for Anti-Crow. Also with sandflies, and possibly with other people, who might or might not be as annoying as the sandflies. But regardless of whether they're nice people or not, Lance says what we're all thinking: "I don't want to meet other people!" It's not misanthropic—it's just that we've grown to enjoy each other's company, our individual eccentricities (not that I have any, you understand), and, well, to put it bluntly, we're having too good a time to share it. The Greenlaw Creek camp it is. The following morning we discovered that Anti-Crow Hut had been home to a party of three, which would have left us three bunks. Except that a party of 14 Auckland trampers also stayed there.

Monday 17 January

After a night of violent wind (meteorological, not biological) I heard the light patter of dawn rain on the fly. Terry resisted the urge to rise at 5 a.m., but when he finally crawled outside we heard him say, "It looks pretty crappy". On peering outside I saw grey sheets of rain blowing down the Waimakariri; fortunately it wasn't heavy, and we packed and breakfasted while staying mostly dry. The saturation was to come later.

As we slogged downriver, the rain became steady, driven by a strong wind at our backs. We stopped for a brief snack at Anti-Crow, then it was on; on through the bush, along the riverbed, across Turkey Flat, through waist-high, sodden lupins... I began to cool down and even Terry remarked that he also was feeling cold. Nothing for it but to push on until at last we reached the relative shelter of the bush. I'd seldom been so wet. Water filtered through my unwashed hair into my eyes, dripped off my nose and trickled into my mouth; my shorts clung, cold and

sopping, to my arse, thighs and ... well ... it was less than salubrious. Not far from the road, I turned to Lance and said, "I feel like a drowned rat. Probably look like one, too".

"You do", he replied.

Rattus alpinus fluvialis, we decided. The alpine drowned rat. But we still had the memory of those magical days among wild mountains; the satisfaction of accomplishment and the rewards of excellent companionship. And, of course, the promise of the Bealey pub.

We were Terry Crippen, Lance Gray and Pete McGregor.

Kapakapanui Circuit – 6 Mar By Lance Gray

"The Otaki bakery Lance, the Otaki bakery, you've got to come, just to go to the Otaki bakery." Now I am not averse to bribery to boost the numbers for club trips but Anja really went for my weakness when she described the exotic pleasures of the Otaki bakery. This was the person who described Germany in terms of its wonderful bakeries. I can see and smell them now...

Anja, as always, was convinced there would be less than a car-load for her trip and that it was compulsory that I come along so the trip report doesn't read like a trip leader with no friends. Well, by the time we had crammed 9 hikers into our sedan and Neil's family people mover, Anja was now concerned about leading too many! The Bakery was great but not on a German scale, I'm sorry, not very patriotic, but we have a long way to go. I mean, where is the coffee, the paper, and stools to gaze out over the world?

The Ngatiawa Stream that you walk up to begin the Kapakapanui circuit was the scene of what I believe is one of the best black & white photos you will ever see, depicting the "grimness" of a search and rescue with a poor result. Taken by Barry Durant, this photo is re-produced in the latest NZ Geographic.

The walk itself is similar to the Waiopahu and Gable End Ridge loop. Unfortunately the weather did not co-operate and we had to imagine the views over to Kapiti and then around to the Main Range. Never mind, we caught up on significant gossip and got to look at another Tararua hut variation. This one has a large porch. The dunny was good. The icecream on the way home was even better.

We were: Anja Scholz, Neil Campbell, Lance Gray, Yuko Watanabe, John Feeney, Dave Grant, Duncan Hedderley, Kris Grabow, Mark Spash.

Club Patron	Lawson Pither	357 3033	
President	Warren Wheeler	356 1998	warren.wheeler@horizons.govt.nz
Vice President	Terry Crippen	356 3588	bluesky_tramping@clear.net.nz
Secretary	Dave Grant	357 8269	gaewyn.grant@xtra.co.nz
Treasurer	Alasdair Noble	356 1094	a.d.noble@massey.ac.nz
Webmaster	Peter Wiles	558 6894	p.wiles@wiles.gen.nz
Membership Enquires	Warren Wheeler	356 1998	warren.wheeler@horizons.govt.nz
	Anja Scholz	356 6454	a.scholz@massey.ac.nz
	Mick Leyland	358 3183	marionandmick@inspire.net.nz
Gear Custodian	Mick Leyland	358 3183	marionandmick@inspire.net.nz
Newsletter Editor	Lance Gray	356 6454	gray.family@actrix.co.nz
Trip Co-ordinators	Terry Crippen	356 3588	bluesky_tramping@clear.net.nz
	Janet Wilson	329 4722	jwilson@inspire.net.nz
	Tony Gates	357 7439	kiwi@leatherwood.co.nz
Aides de Camp	Andrew Lynch	325 8779	atlynch@ihug.co.nz
	Bruce van Brunt	328 4761	B.vanBrunt@massey.ac.nz
	Doug Strachan	353 6526	doug.strachan@xtra.co.nz