



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - May 2006

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.

11 May Club Night
Mt Albert Edward, PNG
Richard Havercamp

Richard has become a favourite presenter at PNTMC club nights with presentations about Fiordland and Canada. Come along for a trip to a new and exotic location: Papua New Guinea. Mt Albert Edward is 3990 metres or 13090 feet and is located in the Goilala area of the Owen Stanley Range in Central Province. It is the only site on the Owen Stanley Range where you can see both Port Moresby and Lae.

18 May Committee Meeting

25 May Club Night
Fitzroy Patagonia

Tony continues his love affair with South America with this presentation of Mt Fitzroy which is located in Los Glaciares National Park. This gives Tony an opportunity to practice his other great passion: the Spanish language. So expect plenty of entertainment Amigos!

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

TRIPS

May 6-7 Mitre Peak F
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Mitre Peak at 1570 metres is the highest peak in the Tararua Forest Park. Access is from the Barra track directly west of Masterton. With Mitre Hut at the foot of the peak there is opportunity for those who just want to stroll in and enjoy the views while Warren musters together an assault party on what is not a difficult walk to the summit. We have often had a dozen people on the summit for lunch! Please contact Warren for further details.

May 7 Mangahao Valley M
Peter Wiles 358-6894

Mangahao Valley lies behind Shannon in the western Tararuas. The drive itself is a fun adventure with most of the climbing already completed for you. With the climbing out of the way you have the opportunity to explore an interesting landscape given the impact of the various dams. Please contact Peter for further details.

May 13-14 Triangle Hut F
Graham Peters 329-4722

Triangle Hut provides an excellent destination for those who wish to make the route, to and from such a hut, as interesting as possible. The possibilities are endless and so usually are the trip descriptions. Please contact Graham for further details.

May 14 Rimutaka Incline MTB M
Richard Lockett 323-0948

Mountain biking the Rimutaka Incline is an excellent Sunday activity. The descent to Cross Creek has many attractions. In particular you get to cycle through a couple of tunnels so bring a light. As well you get to see the spot where Wellington's famous wind blew a locomotive clean off the rails! Contact Richard for further details.

May 20-21 Dorset Hut F
Lance Gray 356-6454

Dorset Hut is located not surprisingly on Dorset Ridge in behind Mitre Peak. The simplest route is to go in via the Barra Track and go over Mitre. Opportunity exists to take a spur off South King into Dorset Creek before heading to the hut returning the standard route. Please contact Lance for further details.

May 21 Burn Hut M
Dave Grant 357-8269

Burn Hut is "newish" with an even more "newish" bridge across the stream. We have seen Mick unsuccessfully try and swim the stream so this really helps! The track starts near the Mangahao Dams which are in behind Shannon. Leaving Countdown at 8am.

May 27-28 Forks Hut E
Llew Prichard 358-2217

Join Llew for a pleasant overnight trip into the eastern Ruahines. Good opportunity to try out overnight tramping if you are not so sure. Good spot to see the occasional deer as well. Contact Llew for more details.

May 28 Kime /Mt Hector F
Andrew Lynch 325-8779

This is a rather energetic trip but it is amazing what you can achieve if you just put your head down and follow the feet in front of you. You might not remember much but you will get there. Once you are on top of Mt Hector you will wonder what all the fuss was about as the views will make up for any slight loss of breathe. Contact Andrew for further details and some motivation.

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)

NOTICES

SUBS are now DUE

AGM has been and gone so **subs are now due**. Please mail your cheque with the reminder slip included with this newsletter to PNTMC, PO Box 1217, Palmerston North or hand it to Alasdair or Warren at club night.

SNOWCRAFT 2006 Preliminary notice

The snow has started to arrive, so it's timely to start thinking about learning or updating your snowcraft skills. Here are the dates for the Clubs snowcraft programme for your diaries. Pass the word round to your friends and family members who may be interested.

SC1 (evening Tue 25th July), weekend
29-30 July

SC2 (evening Tues 8th Aug), weekend
12-13 Aug

SC3 (evening Tues 22nd Aug), weekend
26-27 Aug

Full details in next months Newsletter. Contact Terry (3563-588), Bruce (3284-761) or Alasdair (3561-094), for info, costs and registration form.

PURE NEW RUAHINE HUT

Purity Hut, one of the most popular in the Ruahine Ranges is about to close while its replacement is built. The hut in the north-west Ruahine is old and no longer provides

an enjoyable experience. Work begins on the hut on May 1st and while the new hut is being built the old one will be closed to the public, to allow contractors to base themselves there. The new hut should be open for use by early July. It will sleep six instead of three, have a deck around the outside, and a pioneer stove for heating. The hut will be situated 30 m above the old site, where spectacular views will reward the weary trampler.

Recreation manager Arend Renting says it's an exciting time for the department, as this is the first new hut to be built in the western Ruahines since the early 60s, when huts first went in. Purity Hut is a popular overnight stay on the way to the Hikurangi Range. It is the gateway to Waterfall Hut and provides a jumping off point for west-east crossings. It is situated close to the Mangaweka Trig (1733m) which is the highest point of the Ruahine Forest Park.

MANGAHUKA HUT IS OPEN

The new Mangahuka Hut is open for business so get up there and have a look.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - PNTMC MARCH 2006

It is with pleasure that I present the 40th President's Report.

Membership

We have welcomed 5 new members over the last year with a loss of 12, so current membership now totals 60. This includes 10 families or couples, and 50 individuals, with a 63:37 ratio of men and women.

Activities

As in the past, the committee has ensured that the club offers a wide variety of trips, club nights, social activities and instruction courses for members and non-members.

The 40th Anniversary Rangi Picnic was a memorable highlight, especially for the

magnificent cake, although numbers were less than anticipated. On the other hand the Kapiti Island trip needed two full boatloads and completely booked the island for the day. As usual there were numerous local trips into the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges. There were also longer trips to more exotic locations including Hopkins Valley, Mt Hikurangi, Raukumara Ranges, Kaikoura Ranges, and a very social trip to Takaka and Abel Tasman National Park.

Club nights were generally well-attended and included slide presentations by club members on Euro-trekking, climbing in the Copland area, Great Barrier Island, Peru, Rees-Dart, SAR, Fox Glaciology, life in the hill-country of Fiji, Blast from the Past - PNTMC trips from yester-year, Over the Hill - looking back on highlights from Past newsletters. This year we had only one guest speaker who gave a presentation on the Te Araroa Walkway from one end of the country to the other.

We also had two BYO slides evenings, a wine and cheese evening at Mountain Equipment, a Club photo competition, and Gear Auction.

In September MUAC hosted the Interclub Photo Competition and PNTMC members scooped a good share of the prizes generously donated by various sponsors. The Interclub Quiz was hosted by PNTMC and with the home advantage romped away with the Trevor Bissell Memorial Trophy, thanks largely to Tony Gates encyclopaedic knowledge of the local ranges.

Snowcraft 1, 2, and 3 were less well-attended than recent years, but continue to provide valuable instruction to both members and non-members. Thanks again to the coordinators Terry Crippen and Bruce van Brunt, and also to the other instructors Alasdair Noble and Peter Darragh for sharing their skills and experience with those attending.

It is great to see the contacts and support provided by the club extending beyond club activities, with private climbing and tramping trips being organised to the Mt Cook region, and several members again successfully

competing in the recent Kaweka Challenge and Southern Crossing races.

Search and Rescue

About 15 club members are involved as SAR volunteers and had a particularly busy year with several call-outs and standby calls for what can be a frustrating and onerous, albeit very worthwhile service. Two of the call-outs fortunately ended at the briefing stage when the lost parties walked out, but two others involved extensive air observation by helicopter in the Wanganui area and a foot search along the Manawatu River bank near town. The Police require volunteers to meet at least basic requirements and members attended a variety of courses throughout the year, culminating in the recent SAREX. Several people deserve special mention. Terry Crippen was Secretary and Treasurer for the local Land SAR committee, until relinquishing it in July. Both Terry and Peter Darragh have continued as our club representatives on the committee. Also, Graham Peters has stepped up to the role of Search Controller, and Jean Garman is the Regional Training Coordinator. The monthly refresher training initiated by Jean has been widened to help maintain all local volunteers at peak efficiency. Peter Darragh and Janet Wilson are regularly involved in providing training at these sessions.

Gear

A data projector and laptop have recently been purchased with funding assistance from Eastern and Central Trust. Thanks to Bruce van Brunt and Alasdair Noble for their prolonged efforts in achieving this milestone. This will no doubt prove to be a valuable asset at club nights as more members and guest presenters switch from slides to digital images.

You may recall that club funds for the projector were boosted over the last couple of years by donations from St Peters School for helping with their Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. Andrew Lynch deserves special thanks for leading this initiative. Thanks also to those other club members who shared their skills and experience with these enthusiastic young people.

Terry Crippen also deserves a special mention for organising the Club Apparel order, which was well supported by members who achieved instant recognition in their distinctive PNTMC cap, beanie or stylish microfleece top.

Interaction with DoC

Doc holds occasional User Group meetings to keep in touch with their work and to provide a forum for discussion of any issues developing. Peter van Essen offered to represent us at the recently programmed one but it was postponed at the last minute.

Further afield a group of 8 club members and one potential member enjoyed a successful pre-Xmas weekend assisting DoC with its pinus contorta eradication programme on the south flanks of Ruapehu.

No snow this year but this worthwhile conservation activity looks set to become an annual fixture on the club calendar.

Special mention also goes to Christine Cheyne who has been actively involved on the Taranaki/Wanganui Conservation Board this past year.

Newsletter and Web-site

The monthly newsletter continues to be an informative and enjoyable read, thanks to Lance Gray as editor and to all those members who beat the deadline and contribute trip reports, articles, book reviews, trip blurbs, poetry and pictures. Thanks to Anja Scholz for distributing the newsletter so efficiently.

17 club members subscribe as e-members and read their monthly newsletter off the web.

The web-site is continuing to be a hit thanks to web-master Peter Wiles. There have been numerous feedback queries via the site, some more unusual than others but consistently about joining the club. Peter has also completed the impressive task of archiving all the past newsletters in digital format, which involved considerable re-typing

of early newsletters, and unknown bottles of whiskey.

Doug Strachan on the other hand has taken scissors to past newsletters and manually compiled a subject by subject history of the club, which I understand is soon to be released in book form and and DVD...right Doug?

Thanks

Finally I would like to thank all those members who have helped in running the club over the past year. Special thanks to David Grant as Secretary, Alasdair Noble as Treasurer, Janet Wilson as chief trip coordinator, Mick Leyland as Gear Custodian, and Anja Scholz as supper coordinator. Special mention also to Monica Cantwell and Richard Lockett for continuing to promote the club by putting up flyers on community notice boards around Palmerston North and Feilding.

And lastly, thanks to all of you for supporting the club, and for helping to fulfil the worthwhile objectives that were developed by those far-sighted individuals 40 years ago. We may now be "over the hill", but I am sure you will agree it is not all downhill from here.

May the skies be blue
And the route be true.

Warren Wheeler
President PNTMC
30 March 2006

From the Presidents PC

The leaves are dropping, some call it Fall.
Summer is passed, let the snow fall.
Easter and Anzac Day, fine days all.
Stuffed up with a cold, no tramping at all.

I hope you have been enjoying the wonderful tramping weather and are looking forward to winter bringing new season's challenges. Not that the weather hasn't held some surprises, with snow and rain in the Tararua Ranges resulting in a couple of private trips involving club members being delayed an extra night by high river levels. Nice to have a cell-phone to call out and let those

at home know you are OK, but not so good when there is no coverage in the valleys.

So-o-o-o.....remember the last thing to leave behind when you leave home is Complacency.

Always make sure that you have left your intentions with those at home, or someone else who cares. A short note with the route you plan to go, possible alternatives, who you are going with, and in what vehicle is very useful in assessing why you may be overdue.

Even if the folks back home don't know the area our Overdue Trip Contacts or other experienced club members can interpret the note, help allay fears about the situation and ultimately help the Police decide whether to initiate a Search and Rescue. Here endeth the Lesson.

Thanks to everyone attending the AGM for your vote of confidence in re-electing the existing Club Officers and Committee, and to John Feeney and Martin Lawrence for accepting nomination and for their election onto the Committee. The phone tree included with this newsletter shows the Committee members and all Club members in 2005-06.

Thanks also to Peter Wiles for raising several issues at the AGM and for his after-AGM slide presentation on memorable past trips. Anja Scholz deserves special mention for the delicious chocolate cake for supper – you'll have to be quicker if you want a piece next time, Anja!

Andrew Lynch is to be commended for his quick thinking in suggesting that the Club would like to look after the City Library's obsolete collection of Alpine Journals. Andrew has also offered to take on the position of Club Librarian to upgrade the Club Library, and catalogue the Club books and other publications with a view to making it available on our website. Watch this space!

Petrol costs are rising, eyebrows too. So should the Club Mileage Rate be increased above the current 25 cents per km? At present the committee is adopting a wait-and-see approach, mindful of the need to reimburse costs without unduly affecting the affordability of trips. Your opinion on this issue is important so please feel free to let me, or any other Committee member, know what you think.

May the skies be blue
And the trail be true.

Warren Wheeler
President PNTMC



"The Urbane Trampers" by Martin Lawrence From Left: Christine Cheyne, Terry Crippen, Anne Lawrence, Warren Wheeler, Graham Peters and Janet Wilson.

TRIP REPORTS

Spotlight Ohau 2006, Putangirua Pinnacles, Ascent of Mt Kaukau and Skyline Traverse, Bridge to Nowhere

Spotlight Ohau Jan 2006

The last bunch arrived at Ohau Lodge shortly after 8 pm on Sunday evening after an 820 km run from Palmy.

Terry suggested the first task at the lodge was to get our party gear organised before the light faded. In the midst of this, a vehicle drew up to the lodge with a message for Terry to ring home urgently. Surprisingly, cell phones worked (on all 3 networks) a 100 m or so out from the hut. Terry heard that his colleague and friend of many years had mysteriously and tragically died in a cycling accident. Terry decided quickly that he would return to Palmy the following day. His holiday was over before it had even begun, despite having put a substantial amount of time in arranging the whole trip. We recommenced reassigning the party gear.

Next morning (Monday) after final packing we piled into Pat and Alastair's 4-wheel drives to take us to Memorial Hut, some 10 km up the Hopkins Valley where the track starts. Pat, Conway, Barry, Richard, Peter VE and Peter W started up the track to the Huxley junction. Conditions were fine with a steady wind down the valley. We arrived at the Huxley Forks Hut for lunch after about 3h easy tramping. Here we discarded food and gear for the second leg of the trip.

We crossed the north branch of the Huxley River and progressed our way up the track to Brodrick Hut, which we reached after about 3h. A few rain showers emerged from the clag on the Main Divide. The hut, located at the bush edge, was empty and cool conditions prompted getting the fire going. We spent a cosy and convivial evening partaking of some of the "goodies" Richard

had brought up for the party and discussing the merits of Suduko and national politics.

Tuesday morning, the weather was no better, but rather than sit in the hut, we opted to head up to Brodrick Pass (1650m). At the pass conditions were okay as the wind was not as strong as we expected and was just clear of the cloud level. Views were not very extensive and the idea of climbing Mt McKenzie was abandoned although 2 had a nominal plod up to the snow. After dropping down to the valley floor we had lunch and further explored up the valley towards its head for a few km. The evening was a replay of the previous but with some rain in the night.

Wednesday morning we departed back to Huxley Forks Hut. After lunch at the hut, Richard and Conway continued down valley back to Pat's vehicle and civilisation.

Meanwhile with the cashed gear loaded on board, Barry, Pat and Peter x2 headed up the track into the south branch of the Huxley. This track is not used as much as the north branch, but is easy to follow and climbs steadily to gain a hanging valley from which the river emerges. The track finally dropped us into a splendid valley of grassy flats to finally reach the small bivy at about 950 m.

Thursday morning was off into a good frost with clear sky. This was the big effort day for gaining height to 1900 m. We stayed on the valley floor for a couple of hours until we were past the bush and scrub zones where we could take a clear spur up to the alpine meadows. We did not take the perfect route but made good progress without excessive problems to reach the entrance to the final couloir to take us into the Ahuriri Valley at 1850m. The last 50m was rather steep and rocky (loose) so we opted to keep close together. In retrospect this was a mistake which luckily we got away with as the final 15-20m was a worryingly steep rock gut with very few good holds for either hands or feet. Barry who was in front afterwards expressed his fear that if he had slipped the rest of us would all have gone with him. At the col we scrambled over some snow, sidled across a steep scree for a few 100m until reaching more snow and rocks under the col between

the Temple and Ahuriri Valleys. We found a suitable tent site and had lunch.

The afternoon was spent excavating and preparing the tent site (to keep Terry happy using his tent), melting snow and sitting in the sun. Late in the afternoon Peter W did some reconnaissance of the route to Mt Huxley.

Friday morning was clear calm and frosty. Pat, Peter X2 left about 7 am for Mt Huxley, which even with the route info (Terry had copied and left us) was far from clear. (Barry opted to guard the tent, as his feet were sore.) The first obstacle was getting over the ridge that we had crossed the previous day but further west to give us access to Mt Huxley (2500m). We wasted some time on this first obstacle but finally found the scree gully that descended off the bluffs on the Huxley side. We then sidled over scree and around snow generally losing height towards an area of rock slabs which had in the past been ground smooth by a glacier. We found a route over this by belaying a full rope length, but three people, one rope and a lack of anything like decent anchors revealed our limitations. This combined with uncertainty about the route and a steep patch of snow that was too hard to drive a snow stake into, followed immediately by a rock couloir of 1-2 rope lengths where it was obvious that places for sling anchors were virtually nil, and the late time (already 11 am), caused us to decide that we were not prepared or resourced for this. (Despite it being a gorgeous day and that it was clear that once the rock section was cleared the rest of the route onto the glacier and the summit was straightforward.) Examination of photographs and the maps of the early 1970s (1:63360) suggested that over the years a great deal of snowfield recession has occurred in this area.

We leisurely made our way back to our camp by 5 pm. The evening was chilly as cloud persisted to block the sun and a breeze came up.

Saturday morning we packed up and wandered up onto the Ahuriri-Temple col at 1950m. We dumped our packs and wandered up the ridge to the south to partake of the views at about 2200m. We then descended down 100s of metres of scree

before reaching the stream at the valley floor. Time for lunch.

At the scrub zone we picked up a track, but stopped several times to admire the views of fine rock peaks towards the north Temple and the diversity and extent of the scrub zone especially its ability to colonise the scree slopes. We reached the hut in the south Temple by about 4 pm. Recent and extensive flood damage to the lower valley was very evident. The hut filled later when another party of six arrived. Barry was able to tell them some of his legendary climbs and in return we seemed to be plied with some of their extensive wine supply.

Sunday. There was some rain in the night. We left the hut shortly after 7 am for the road which we reached around 10 am. Then there was another hour walking up the road for about 5 km back to the Lodge. Barry and Pat now packed up and headed for Christchurch. Peter x2 washed and cleaned their clothes and planned a further trip.

With a favourable weather forecast (via Peter VE's cell phone) we organised a 3-day trip.

Monday morning, we returned (by car) to the Temple road end and by 9 am were back at the south branch hut. We headed up a side valley near the hut that runs west up towards Mt Maitland 2248m. Travel was initially through open beech forest before emerging into an easy grassy streambed with a steady gradient with minimal scrub (beyond a few Spaniards). By 1 pm we were at a couple of gorgeous tarns hidden in a small valley at about 1800m adjacent Mt Maitland. After erecting the tent (Barry's) we decided to climb the peak before dinner. This proved to be an exercise in scree/moraine and loose rock plodding, but was worthwhile, gaining generous views of the Hopkins region and Mt Cook to the north, Brewster and Mt Barth and the Ahuriri Valley to the west and the Ohau Range to the south, plus a glimpse of Lake Ohau. We also studied our proposed route for the morrow carefully.

Shortly after retiring into the tent wind gusts from the east commenced and punctuated the night.

Tuesday morning saw much cloud to the east and a breeze. We packed up and headed back towards Mt Maitland and a col at 1950m that we crossed the previous evening. Then down into a tributary of the Ahuriri over loose rock to about 1300m where we sidled for a distance to gain a grassy tongue which we climbed, followed upwards by more scree, until finally emerging at the ridge top at about 1850m overlooking Maitland Stream. We crossed another col at 1950m into a tributary of the stream and had lunch beside another delightful tarn. The clouds had vanished. We reached the flats at the bushline and located the track, whereupon we collapsed into the shade to watch some rifleman dart about over the beech tree trunks.

The Maitland Stream hut was reached after about 2 km along an excellent track. Another restful evening/night.

Wednesday morning we headed down the track, not knowing quite what to expect as it soon ran off the edge of our map. After descending to the stream and following it along the narrow flats for a couple of km, it started a steady climb that before long saw us at the height of the bush edge 1150m. At a major scree, the track seemed disappear but a marker was suddenly located about 70m directly above us. Another km of sidling along a poled track brought us to a road. We had only gone a couple of 100m when we found a wilding pine (contorta type) of about 5m high. The challenge was to cut it down. Using PvE's 10cm pruning saw, the 20cm diameter trunk finally succumbed. We found another few pines but of lesser size which we also dispatched.

The road took us down to the main valley road eventually. For lunch we wanted shade and water so we walked a further km up the road to the Maitland Stream bridge and collapsed under the willow trees. Peter W then walked for an hour back to the Temple to pick up the car, and along the way found some excellent field mushrooms. Another relaxing evening was spent at the Ohau Lodge, and the meal supplemented with butter fried mushrooms.

We returned to civilisation on Thursday via Christchurch and Banks Peninsula before

catching the ferry on Saturday pm. (Friday – a little retail therapy in Chch.)

Leg 0: Ohau Lodge Terry

Leg 1: North Huxley, Brodrick Pass
Pat Holland (Nelson), Conway Powell (Wanaka), Richard Lockett, Barry Scott, Peter van Essen, Peter Wiles

Leg 2: South Huxley, Ahuriri, South Temple
Pat Holland, Barry Scott, Peter van Essen, Peter Wiles

Leg 3: South Temple, Mt Maitland, Watson Stream, Maitland Stream Peter van Essen, Peter Wiles

(Amongst the team, >1000 photos were taken; Peter van E about 700 alone!)



The South Huxley Valley by Peter Wiles

Putangirua Pinnacles **Sunday 26 March** **By Fiona Donald**

Warren drove my car; I volunteered to write the trip report; Emma and Zac made up the party. The drive took two and an half hours, from the Countdown car park (included a quick detour to Lake Ferry) to the Pinnacles car park, Southern Wairarapa.

The Pinnacles are columns of easily eroded gravels; most columns have (at its top) either a cap-like boulder or hardened gravel that protects the rest of the column from completely eroding away. Other columns aren't so lucky and have lost their protective caps; rain is the most common form of erosion. These gravels are somewhere between 12-14 million years old; thus, it's a fascinating area to visit for anyone.

First, we walked up the steep rocky streambed. At times we leapt and got our feet wet crossing the bubbly stream that wound its

way down towards the sea. On arrival, it was amazing to be amongst the awe-inspiring pinnacles towering above our heads. The 'boys' busily did what boys do – throw rocks at the nearest formation to see how easy it is to knock the gravelly rocks off.... it was very easy and made me realise how potentially unstable the area is: there are signs saying watch out for rock falls. Still, one of us picks a route and we follow and climb up and over the roughly piled up rocks that keep shifting under each footfall, through the deep gullies where the rain falls vertically ("the badlands")*DOC until we are amongst the Pinnacles where the path gets very narrow, it's harder to walk up...voices don't echo and Warren says "it's all too spooky for him". Later on, my comment was that it would be "a great place for a murder and hiding a body".

Next, we climbed to the Look out – the views were breath-taking over the flat as a pancake sea and looking back over the tops of the Pinnacles. By then the breeze had a bite to it and we were glad to sit and eat lunch. Afterwards, we walked down through lush lowland forest, past a small swamp and emerged onto the streambed again. We whizzed to Ngawi along a sealed road to view the fishing trailer tractors: Tulip and Babe, pink and mauve paint on others. Then we hastened to Martinborough for an essential stop. Homeward bound to Palmerston North and back by 4.50pm.

Ascent of Mt Kaukau and Skyline Traverse **2nd April** **By Martin Lawrence**

The terrain we covered on the Urban Walk was mix of sheep country, an exposed ridge, bush, park land and suburban streets, with a train ride at each end. It was 9:30'ish as the Johnsonville train pulled out from Wellington. We hopped off just before Johnsonville at Raroa, and navigated through a school and a couple of streets to the beginning of the Northern Walkway. A couple of points of interest on the way up to Mt Kaukau were a tunnel (actually not that interesting when you turned your torch on and walked to end of it) and an old water reservoir. Warren and Terry got close and personal to check out the engineering and trying to work out why the heck it was ever built there.

Mt Kaukau is home to a very large transmitter mast, and famous for very strong winds. The forecast was for a soggy cloud mass to move over, but we had a modest breeze only and great views in all four directions. The Northern Walkway heads down hill here to the Khandallah Swimming Pool. But we needed more walking, so headed off South, following the wiggly pole route (more engineering discussions as to the merits of these over good old Waratahs) to the Skyline Walkway. We did get many changing views of Wellington, the harbour and the South Island.

The Skyline Walkway continues to the Makara Road, but we headed down towards Karori at Johnsons Hill, then part way down turned left again towards Otari-Wilton's Bush. We did have a slight navigational hitch here. The signs had triangles pointing up or down, which seemed to mean right or left. After some reasonably vigorous discussion we took a punt and managed to avoid the Karori Cemetery. This part of the walk is a true bush walk which suddenly ends up in Otari itself with its great collection of labelled native plants. Janet was particularly taken with the *Dracophyllum* collection.

The goal now was to get to the Botanical Gardens and the cable car, so we navigated a reasonably direct route through streets and down one of those crazy steep one-way Wellington streets to the edge of the Gardens (more discussion here about the merits of dangling your garage above your house).

It seemed a stiff climb through the gardens and I for one was very pleased to see that the Cable Car café was open and serving drinks. We had a pleasant break here and checked a couple of other possible outdoor pursuits in Wellington including some quite different paddling.

The Cable car trip was great and in no time we were in the hurly-burly of the big city. We felt rather lucky as the day closed in and the rain started as we drove out of town.

The Urban Trampers were Terry and Christine, Janet and Graham, Warren, and myself and Anne.

“Bridge to Nowhere”

14-17 April 2006

By Ian Harding

The “Bridge to Nowhere” is a prominent landmark situated in the Whanganui National Park and was constructed in the late thirties to improve access for the settlers farming in the WW1 soldier rehabilitation block in the Mangapurua valley. However due to the unstable geological nature of the land, isolation, poor farming returns and unreliable road access the entire settlement scheme was abandoned in 1942 by Government decree. By that stage though, only two of the original forty-plus block-holders remained. An area quite appropriately labelled in later years as “the valley of abandoned dreams”.

After a “senior moment” in Palmerston Nth where the driver lost sense of direction but was promptly redirected [thanks Jo], we soon reached Raetihi where Malcolm was patiently waiting. Upon reaching the road-end at Ruatiti we all piled onto Malcolm's 4WD [leaving the car] and drove via the former roadway [now a bush surrounded farm track] to the Mangapurua Trig[663 mtrs] which saved us 3hrs of up hill walking.

A bit of a “bummer” having to start the “walking thing” but considering it was all virtually down hill “here-on-in” we very soon got into the swing of it. Reaching the camp-site, Bettjeman's[one of the last remaining families to leave in 1942] at around 4pm and erecting our accommodation.[a tent fly and a tent] An evening meal followed and bedtime was at the modest hour of around 6.00pm.[no wonder early settlers had big families!!!] However, evening entertainment was provided by the resident possum community, rather vocal to say the least.

The next day we headed off further down the valley with “day-rations” to the “Bridge” and Mangapurua Landing on the Whanganui River. Many of the former signs of habitation have all but disappeared with the ravages of time and natural flora regeneration. However at the former house-site of each road-adjointing farm property a board signpost has been erected depicting the name of the former occupier, which adds interest to the

journey. On occasion, glimpses of old post and wire fences are still visible along the former roadway but virtually all building structures have gone except for one or two lonely chimney stacks.

In most cases only introduced timber trees and isolated garden-escapees indicate former human presence. The valley itself hasn't completely reverted back to total bush cover as some of the lower river-flat terraces are still covered in pasture and are grazed by the feral goat and pig population that live in the area. Although the track is narrow at times and hard to depict, the grade and surface is fairly good to walk on. Plenty of well constructed walking bridges also make life easy. However, the use of 4wd motorbikes, by local hunters, within the park, has caused significant damage to the track especially where deep rutting has occurred. Fortunately they are unable to travel the entire length of the former roadway due to the narrow and eroded nature of several bluffs etc.

We reached the Mangapurua Landing on the Whanganui River in good time for lunch but were very soon joined by a number of canoeists and jet-boat tourists all keen to get their angle on the Bridge.[45mins walk up from the landing]

Heading back to the campsite was fairly uneventful apart from the writer gathering some fallen chestnut tree seeds[for planting] and the meeting of two young hiker guys, one with a "dreadnought" hair-do and the other wearing heaps of "wire" [piercings].....foreigners of course!!! Two hunters on 4wd bikes also stopped for a yarn, with one of them exhibiting many of the "Barry Crump" characteristics symbolic with outdoor folk.

Yet another early night after the evening meal but instead of the usual possum chorus we were later on visited by "boss-possum" who decided to get "up close and personal", fixing his sights on an empty yogurt pot. With a shortage of suitable missile material, headlight dazzling was resorted to as a form of deterrent. This, so I'm told was successful. I managed to sleep through the entire episode securely zipped up in my "trade-me" tent unaware of the performance.

A bit of a "grunt" getting back up to the trig and ute the next morning but we made it in good time for mid-day lunch. Since we had "wheels" we ventured down the Kaiwhakauka Track[in the next valley] to the former Cootes house site, also carrying a young German hiking couple[no "dreads" or "wire"] we'd shared lunch with. They were heading out to Whakahoro/Wades Landing on the Whanganui River. Unfortunately the colourful character[known to Malcolm] who resides near the "Cootes" site in a rather modern batch with all the conveniences, wasn't home. A bit sad really as everybody had looked forward to sampling his renowned "home-brew" and experiencing his generous hospitality especially after hearing one of Malcolm's entertaining stories relating to past visits. Maybe another time.

Finally getting back to the road-end where we found my parked car aptly decorated with a pair of goat's testicles jammed in the side mirror.[goat detached] I guess it was to be expected as there were a number of "larger-than-life" hunters in the vicinity due to a weekend hunting competition in the region. No doubt humour was running rife. Perhaps I should have left a torn bush shirt and some empty ammunition boxes on the back seat, I thought afterwards. How does it go? "When in Rome, do as....."

Heading home, stopping at "The Gumboot Manor" in Taihape for an evening meal before driving back to P. Nth. concluded a fun and most interesting weekend.

We were Ian Harding, Jo and Lawrence O'Halloran and Malcolm Leary[leader]



The Bridge to Nowhere by Ian Harding

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