

# Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

[www.pntmc.org.nz](http://www.pntmc.org.nz)

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

## Newsletter October 2009

### Club Nights

Club nights are held at 7:45pm on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. All welcome! Please sign the visitor's book at the door.

#### 6 October Interclub Quiz

The Interclub Quiz will be held on Tuesday 6 October at 7:30pm. The event is being hosted by MTSC at the RSA rooms, 200 Broadway Ave, Palmerston North. All welcome.

#### 8 October Club night

##### Amadablam, Nepal

Mark Tootill will give a presentation on his expedition to Amadablam, a 6812m mountain in the Himalaya range of eastern Nepal. Mark is a keen local climber with overseas experience of high peaks such as Aconcagua and Danali. His presentation will include a video of his impressions of climbing what is regarded as the most beautiful peak in the world.

#### 15 October Committee meeting at Terry's

#### 29 October Club night

##### Natural Diversity in NZ

Harley Betts will give a slide talk about NZ's scenic diversity, drawing on mainly coastal photos from around NZ, along with a bit of easy alpine tramping, as a way of illustrating the wide range of landscapes that one can experience in NZ within very easy reach of a road or track.

### Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month to Anne Lawrence, the newsletter editor, via the club website: <http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>.

### Upcoming Trips

#### Trip Grading

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trumper should expect to do the trips in the following times:

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

#### Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Milverton Park. A charge for transport will be collected on the day.

#### 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

If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry unduly as there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone one of the Overdue Trip Contacts:

Mick Leyland	358-3183
Terry Crippen	356-3588
Janet Wilson	329-4722

#### 3-4 October

##### Full Moon Ngauruhoe

M

##### Warren Wheeler

356 1998

Depart 5.00pm Saturday. The plan is to be settled in at Mangatepopo Hut by 9.00pm, about 20minutes walk from the roadend, ready for an Alpine Start at 3.00am. Alternatively we could stay at a backpackers in National Park. We will take the normal route up the north side of Ngauruhoe to reach the summit at sunrise for a Grandstand View in commemoration of the 1996 Ruapehu Eruption. Return route may vary depending on conditions. Crampons and ice axe required.

#### 4 October

**Coppermine Creek, Wharite** E  
**John Feeney** 354 2940

Come and enjoy this interesting tramp close to Palmerston North. Starting at the back of Woodville, we take the track from Coppermine Creek and head up to the Wharite TV Transmitter. A good walk up a decent hill with some well earned views around the Manawatu on a clear day.

#### 10-11 October

**Howletts Hut** M/F  
**Tony Gates** 357 7439

Howletts Hut, nestled at the bushline high in the Ruahines, is a cosy and historic hut in a great tramping area. Several options are available to us, most involving some tramping along tussock tops. Our chosen route will depend on our fitness as much as the weather. Depart PN 8.00 AM Saturday

#### 11 October

**Daphne Hut** M  
**Dave Grant** 357 8269

Daphne hut is a neat place to visit. It is located on the Tukituki river in the eastern Ruahines and we will go in via the Kashmir road track. Expect great views into the main spine of the Ruahines and the chance to get our feet wet in the Tukituki. Leave Ferguson Street side of Milverton Park 7.30am

#### 16/17-18 October

**Girdlestone-Tahurangi Climbing** M/F  
**Terry Crippen** 356 3588

Plan A is for technical climbing on the north side of Girdlestone, possibly camping in the head of the Wahianoa Valley for a couple of nights. This gives us time for something different on Ringatoto also. Other alternatives/venues possible. Possibility of departing Friday morning.

#### 18 October

**Herepai Hut** M  
**Malcolm Parker** 357 5203

Leaving PN at 7.00 am and head over to Putara Road end behind Eketahuna. After crossing the swingbridge by the carpark we follow the sidle track along the river before attacking the short step climb up to the ridgeline. From here it is a short wander along to Herepai hut. We may consider wandering along above the hut too, depending on the weather. Return the same way.

#### Labour weekend trip

**23-26 October**  
**Mt Patriarch, Kahurangi NP** M/F  
**Martin Lawrence** 357 1695

The plan is to leave PN first thing in the morning on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, and return late on Monday 26<sup>th</sup>. We will complete a loop that begins at the start of the Wangapeka track and takes in Kiwi Hut, John Reid Hut and Mt Patriarch. We need definite commitment

from people because of flight bookings, so get in touch with Martin asap.

#### 31 October- 1 November

**South Ohau Hut** M  
**Richard Lockett** 323 0948

From the Poads Road end we climb up Gable end to Richards Knob, then across Butcher saddle and down Yeates track to arrive at the new South Ohau hut for the night. On Sunday we will head back out via the Ohau River. 7.30.start at Milverton Park.

#### 1 November

**Burttons Track** M  
**Peter Wiles** 358 6894

This is becoming something of a regular route for the Club. Well worth going on as it offers a good leg stretch over a variety of terrain and doesn't entail a lot of travelling. Contact Peter for more details.

#### 7-8 November

**Waihohonu Springs** E/M  
**Warren Wheeler** 356 1998

Depart 8.00am. From the Desert Road it is an easy 3 hour walk to our camping spot at Waihohonu Springs near the base of Ngauruhoe in Tongariro National Park. Our walk in will visit the larger Ohinepango Springs near the base of Ruapehu as well as the historic Waihohonu Hut that provided the base camp for tourists up Ruapehu almost 100 years ago. Our return will include a steep scramble up onto Tama ridge and summit for stunning views over Upper Tama Lake.

### Advance notice of pre-Christmas trip

#### 5-13 December

**Clarence River / Tapuaenuku** All  
**Alasdair Noble** 356 1094

The trip will be a week long float down the river Clarence through the Molesworth property and other high country stations. The river is up to grade 3 and flows through some interesting country. Weather and conditions permitting, it is possible to climb Tapuaenuku on the way past. If the trip is to go ahead we will need to organise river craft and transport so please let Alasdair know soon if you are interested.

## Notices

### Lost or Misplaced

One Club Climbing Helmet Vanished sometime between Snowcraft 2008 and Snowcraft 2009, a lime coloured Edelrid helmet (number 7). It could be amongst your gear. Have a look and if you find it return it to Mick Leyland 358-3183.

## Gear auction

The gear auction was again a successful night bringing in a range of people and making a profit of \$180.85 for the club. Most people seemed to leave with a different assortment of gear than what they had brought to the evening – hopefully most will find a use, and if not, it may turn up at gear auction night next year!

## Interclub photo competition

There was a good turnout to the interclub photo competition held on 24 September. All clubs were well represented amongst those attending as well as amongst the prize winners (listed below).

### Alpine

1	Mike Archer	PNTMC
2	Kim Fraser	MTSC
3	Anja Scholz	PNTMC

### Natural History

1	Jean Garman	MTSC
2	Kim Fraser	MTSC
3	Clare Robertson	MUAC

### Overseas

1	Heather Noble-Young	PNTMC
2	Duncan Fraser	MTSC
3	Andy Fogal	MUAC

### Scenic NZ

1	Kathy Corner	PNTMC
2	Richard Lander	MTSC
3	Andy Fogal	MUAC

### Topical

1	Andy Fogal	MUAC
2	Heather Noble-Young	PNTMC
3	Jean Garman	MTSC

### Overall

1	Mike Archer	PNTMC
2	Jean Garman	MTSC
3	Kathy Corner	PNTMC

## Topo50 Maps purchase.

The new topo map series is called Topo50. It uses a new datum, grid and the cut-up is portrait. This series replaces NZMS260. If you want more info on this series visit: [www.fmc.org.nz/services/maps](http://www.fmc.org.nz/services/maps)

FMC stopped map sales (of the NZMS260 series) recently and it is offering a ONCE ONLY resale of the new maps, based on a single order from any one club. Cost per map (folded only) will range from \$7 to \$5 depending on number of maps ordered. The club is taking orders from club members. You need to

determine which sheets you want. So for the details and index of maps links go to:

<http://www.linz.govt.nz/topography/projects-programmes/topo50-project/sheets/index.aspx>

The index for North Island maps is:

<http://www.linz.govt.nz/topography/projects-programmes/topo50-project/sheets/images/north-island.jpg>

The index for South Island maps is:

<http://www.linz.govt.nz/topography/projects-programmes/topo50-project/sheets/images/south-island.jpg>

Each sheet code is 4 characters (2 alphabetical, two numerals), eg BJ34 Mount Ruapehu. Be careful in determining which code for which sheets you want as incorrectly ordered maps can't be returned/swapped.

Please give your list to Terry Crippen. Orders close with FMC 15 November.

## News from DOC

### Field Hut

The track upgrade has been suspended due to prevailing weather conditions and will be completed later in the year when conditions improve. Take care on unmetalled sections of track as these are slippery.

### Waiotauru Track

An 80 m section of track has slipped into the river, approx. 10 min from the Fenceline carpark at Otaki Forks. Attempts are being made to keep a route across the slip, but due to the current unstable nature of the slip care needs to be taken when using this area. Present access is across the base of the slip and should not be attempted in wet weather or high river flows.

### Kime Hut

Kime hut toilets are closed until further notice.

### Avian Aversion Training for Dogs

Course to be held in PN in Nov for \$25 per dog - only a 15 minute session - Book Now!

### Te Araroa walkway

The Department of Conservation is calling for submissions on the proposed Te Araroa route along Oriwa Ridge.

South of Levin, Te Araroa Trust and the regional Te Araroa Wellington Trust originally proposed taking the track through an interior Tararua route and over Mt Crawford. DOC, which manages the Forest

Park, thought the tracks here were too hazardous, and asked for an alternative.

The Oriwa Ridge has become that alternative. It's still in the Tararuas, but runs parallel to the interior route, is lower, and ten kilometres shorter. Oriwa Ridge falls within the 'Otaki Remote Experience Area.' By definition this has few facilities – Oriwa Ridge itself has only a water collection facility for drinking – and is for 'more experienced' recreational users. Te Araroa's proposal would upgrade what's presently a route used by a few to 'tramping track' standard, making passage along the ridge easier. This means marking it up, cutting vegetation sufficiently that a trumper can see the next marker, and – since tramping tracks require a shelter of some kind once the route extends beyond four hours' walking – constructing a small shelter half-way along the ridge. At the southern end of the proposed new track, a new bridge would take Te Araroa trampers across the Waitewaewae River.

The original Te Araroa route was over existing tracks, via Waiopahu, Te Matawai, Dracophyllum, and Nichols huts to Mt Crawford, before dropping down to Waitewaewae hut. The tramp used exposed ridge lines and was consistently over 1000 metres. The Mt Crawford summit is 1465 metres. DOC doesn't support the route as a Te Araroa section.

In comparison, the highest knob on the Oriwa Ridge is 1085 metres. Average elevation is under 1000 metres. Forest cover on the ridge gives a trumper significant protection from winds and bad weather.

Opponents to Oriwa Ridge have proposed that Te Araroa use a route within the foothills west of Oriwa Ridge. Te Araroa has investigated the land issues here, and no through route is possible without crossing private properties, including Maori blocks. These owners have balked at giving the unrestricted access Te Araroa requires. In effect this is not an alternative.

The only other alternative is a 45-kilometre roadwalk from Levin to Waikanae down State Highway One.

All the details are at [www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/consultations/current/proposal-to-extend-te-araroa-trail/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/consultations/current/proposal-to-extend-te-araroa-trail/)

## Trip Reports

### Day walk to Ellis Hut

2 August

Report and Photo: René van Oosten.

Peter planned a trip to Ellis Hut in the Eastern Ruahines on the Sunday. I signed up for the trip because Peter promised us good weather! I started to doubt the "good" weather prospect when it was still raining cats and dogs at 7am on Sunday. However, it turned out to be a very nice day which I really enjoyed. The five of us left Palmerston North in one car at 9am.

The last part of the road to the track, straight through a paddock with cows, became a little bit too muddy, so we had to find an odd parking spot for the car so that the cows wouldn't be able to rub it! After finding a suitable parking spot, we walked up to the start of the track. We first had to cross a river in which the water level was higher than expected. Peter luckily brought gumboots but we still all ended up having wet feet as the boots rapidly filled up with water since the water level was so high. We held on to each other so that we could safely cross the river that had a strong current.



This adventurous start of our walk woke us up since the water was not particularly warm at this time of the year. From then on we started following the old loggers road through pine forest and later on Eucalyptus and beech forest. On the way we met some hunters who had started hunting with three dogs but had only one dog left when we met them. This dog found us rather interesting and kept on following us but in the end the hunters convinced the dog to stay with them.

It took us two hours before we reached Ellis hut where we had lunch in the bright sunshine - the group gave Peter an A+ for the weather forecast! This hut is the oldest wooden structure in the Ruahine ranges. It took us less than 2 hours on the same way back before we had to experience the cold water of the river again, and we safely made it to the other side. We had a

drink on the way back in Onga Onga and arrived around 6pm in Palmy. We had a great day out enjoying nature and the late winter/early spring weather!

*We were Peter Wiles (trip leader), Lu Zhang, Kathy McKnight, Julita van Oosten-Manski, and René van Oosten.*

## Stanfield Explorer

30 August

Report and photos: Dave Grant

Five of us headed off for the Tamaki road end in the south eastern Ruahines on a surprisingly fine morning to do a loop up to Stanfield hut and back. Weather forecast had been a bit gloomy – expect rain and gale force winds, and here it was, calm and sunny. From the road end we had intended taking the track up to A-Frame hut on the Takapari road and then on to Stanfield, but Warren suggested “why not go up the stream just to the south”.



I had looked down this gully from the top on a previous trip and thought it was steep to overhanging near the top, but Warren assured us he had come down it, so away we went. And apart from the bit near the top it proved a good route, following the wide shingle bed of the creek pretty much straight up to the Takapari road. Sure, it got progressively steeper as we climbed, and we had to have a wee spell occasionally, and towards the end we had to cut out

into the fuchsia scrub to get a safer route, but it was an interesting alternative to the usual track.

We wandered northward along Takapari road, briefly inspecting the A Frame hut, and admiring the views. Some cloud build-up to the west and only a glimpse of the base of Ruapehu, but to the north it was clear right across the upper Pohangina catchment and up to the snow streaked slopes of Tunipo and Toka. To the east, glorious views across the Dannevirke valley and the hill country beyond.

Continuing on, we turned down towards the Tamaki stream via the Rimu track. I had understood this track had not been maintained but it was in good condition and easily followed apart from a few windfalls well down towards the valley bottom. The reward of this route is passing through the magnificent grove of rimu on the lower reaches just above the Tamaki stream.



We enjoyed lunch on a shingle beach in the river bed and then carried on upstream to Stanfield hut with its new coat of paint gleaming bright orange in the sun. Then it was back down stream a short distance to pick up the entrance to the Holmes ridge track (true left side of the river) and on out to the road end. We paused now and then to glance up speculatively at where we had been, as you do when you can, feeling well satisfied with an enjoyable day's tramping.

*We were Woody Lee, Michael Allerby, Warren Wheeler, Richard Lockett, and David Grant*

## Frozen Water Burial - McKinnon Hut

8-9 August

Report: Logan Westwood

Photos: Martin Lawrence

I'm not sure what first caught my eye. Maybe it was the odd hollow, dimpled in the snow. Maybe it was the strange colour of what first appeared to be a large stone dropped from high above into the sun melted

snow crust underfoot. Straining my left eye through my viewfinder, I adjusted the front focus ring on my tokina lens. I framed the small object, now peacefully cocooned, glittering sunkist ice crystals dancing around its form, and lightly depressed the shutter on my Minolta camera.

It was a small bird. It appeared out of place in the winter snows of the Hikurangi range. I pondered how he had got here, where he had come from and where he was headed, when within his last physical limits he had succumbed to the cold, the wind, his own exhaustion and relented to this now warm windless white winterland. I like to imagine he died midflight, falling gracefully into the snows far below his small beating wings, without thought to the sheltered green canopy he was trying to reach in the yonder, full of fat earthworms below its high branches within the steep forested slopes, his warm nest built with effort and perseverance within his favourite tree, maybe to those he shared his life with, the ones he loved. Maybe within the cycle of samsara, he would be me, as I once was, looking upon what would be me, as he was before.

The others had walked ahead, as I would find so often on this short journey, leaving me alone to frame the landscape, the shapes, the light, as I tried to capture a moment, this moment, in some futile attempt to halt the march of time, to relegate this electro-chemical memory within my mind to a digital code scratched deep within the abyss of a finite hard disk. I took three photos of that dead bird, each time reframing the shot and minutely adjusting the focus. I don't know what species of bird he belonged to, it didn't seem to matter to me, and I'm sure such matters for him were now far beyond his concern.

Earlier in the day, as our group had slowly been gaining altitude from the Kawhatau River, Martin had pointed out a kowhai tree to me...Its leaves within grasp of my sweat glistened fingers I could not see it. Until I actually grasped the leaves and felt their texture upon my skin, I could not see it. Like so much of this largely untouched land I moved through I didn't know names, dates or structures of the wilderness around me, maybe this is ignorance on my behalf, but I have always looked upon these hills and mountains, spared the settlers saws, as a world unto itself, a place to test and replenish oneself, mind, body and soul, a place free of barcodes, price tags and categorizations.

Lungs expanding and retracting within my frame, underneath heavy pack upon sweat soaked spine, the climb was arduous and unrelenting, but on the first glimpse of the silver serpentine Kawhatau within the increasing depths of the darkening valley below us, my mood lifted and a small smile pricked my lips upwards at their ends. Nearing the edge of the alpine tussocklands our group of six was forced through a

maze of fallen forest giants. Over one such dethroned king a step had been cut within its trunk to assist those rambling through this grand arena, it was upon descending this aid that Anja mistook the ground beneath her and stepped awkwardly onto the forest floor below, spraining her ankle. Quickly she removed her boot and sock to assess the severity of her mis-step, our halted party watching patiently for her ankle to swell, we all knew shelter was hours away uphill and across the snowy tops.

Individually we all played out scenarios in our head as we attentively held our breaths waiting to see whether she would be able to bare weight on it, and if so how far it would allow her to continue. Downing some ibuprofen and neurofen, Anya stoically placed her woollen sock over the foot, carefully nestled it back within her boot and stood up. I don't know how painful it was for her, but as Martin assisted placing her heavy rucksack onto her shoulders I couldn't help feel she didn't want to prematurely end this trip, for either the group or herself.



After lunching at the forest's edge, our group continued on its journey, now upon the less severe wide open tussock slopes, embraced in the warmth of a winter sun. Ruapehu glimmered in early afternoon light to the northwest, the perfect conical form of Ngurahoe at its side, while along the distant northern horizon I gazed a long while into the snows of the Kaimanawas rising like a beast's backbone out of the high central plateau. My feet had never touched these soils, so I was unfamiliar with the uplifted land that filled my peripherals, a landscape ever climbing towards the heavens. Sun-gold grasses eventually relinquished their hold to the snows as we walked on, my ice axe tapping over its form next to me.

Lucky are those who witness this land laid bare, its towering ridges and peaks, its steeply inclined deep valleys whose cool clear-jade rivers endlessly carry away the very hills I walk upon, out to the glistening oceans beyond. Often this land is shrouded in mists and clouds, wracked by winds and rains. Sometimes one may see further than the ridgeline they are following. Then there are these days, and if an individual is blessed enough to experience such a day,

may very well believe somehow they have ascended to a wanderer's heaven. Not a breath of wind touches the skin. Not an uninvited sound corrupts the ear. Still, clear, warm. I walked on, my mind slowly expelling my past and my future, leaving me alone to hear my beating heart and rhythmic breath.

After contemplating the scene before me, I turned to see three distant figures edging along the ridgeline horizon, destined to rest their weary bodies in the same shelter as us. Murray and Anne conversed with the first traveller in the group of three. I stood watching the tiny figures against the grand backdrop, waiting for their words to be carried to me upon the wind. But there was no wind, so there were no words, just a silent exchange, like watching a silent film from God's armchair. The three strangers did not talk for long, quickly setting off once more for the steep descent to the sheltered abode of McKinnon Hut.

Once reunited, our group stood at the route junction, Chris pointing out peaks and saddles with fluent verbal authority, a torrent of knowledge and experience busting forth to any ears that would listen. Chris and I had travelled together from our homes earlier that day and he seemed full of enthusiasm and vitality. What impressed me the most, was his keeping pace with our much younger group on the ascent from the Kawhatau. If I was still tramping these lands at the age of sixty-five, I would not doubt be as happy as Chris.



The sun slowly drowned in the big sky as it was decided to continue onto our overnight destination. It was mid afternoon and I contemplated staying here with my camera to photograph the changing late day colours as the reds and oranges of the light spectrum took their dramatic hold over the landscape. Continuing down with the group I decided if it wasn't too exhausting and time consuming to re-ascend back up here in time for the lightshow after a warming cup of tea at the hut, I would. Three hundred metres from the hut however we encountered a steeper than expected descent that grew icier with each passing hour hidden from the sun. Crampons fitted, our party slowly snaked its way down the iced snow slope, emerging near an empty hut on a much gentler slope. It seems the group of three would rather persevere

with their journey to the next shelter than spend a night cramped shoulder to shoulder with strangers.

Very carefully the potbelly fire was sparked to life with wet twigs and lichen encrusted small branches, as tea was brewed and consumed while we watched the sun make its final farewells in the far west, turning the surrounding snow capped peaks pink and gold against a crimson-blue sky. The night was lit with a near full moon and a blanket of stars piercing through a celestial pitch black universe. Laying my head down after dinner, I was quickly enveloped in an all consuming slumber, devoid of dream.



Night passed, slowly for some, faster for others and by early morning we found ourselves climbing with the rising sun, each step leading us closer to our morning destination, Hikurangi. While in no way a spectacular or important peak, more of a highpoint along the range, Hikurangi none the less seems to beckon the walker with its attractive north face and lazy northwest shoulder that promises higher views, deeper into the southern Ruahine maze. Condensation on the breath, crampons upon the crunching snow, step by step we ascended higher and higher, drawing closer and closer to the 1714 metre peak. The land around us seemed to drop away as we neared the top, one final series of carefully placed steps on a steep icy bank and we were there. I find it hard to describe the sight that day, so I won't try. Let me just say, that as the groups voices faded away downhill, leaving me to my own thoughts, I noticed something quite rare, I had no thoughts. The sheer scale and beauty of what surrounded me, overwhelming my senses, left me in a semi- paralysed state of bliss, beholden to the limitless horizon and all that was contained within it. Like the bird, I was merely a visitor to this world, a world that could be in one instant inspirational and exquisite, while in another heartless and brutal.

*Fellow travellers – Martin and Anne Lawrence, Murray Gifford, Anja Scholz, Chris Saunders.*

## Shadows in the Brocken Spectre - An account of the Third Snowcraft

Report: Logan Westwood

A heavy thunderous rain lashed the glass of the windscreen, inside four figures peered out into the hellish ink black night, lit only by a pair of dim headlights, as they hurtled along a lonely highway encapsulated within a thin metal shell. Unsure of what weather would be dealt to them in the coming days, they drove on into the black abyss, towards the towering volcanic mass of Egmont, determined to learn how to unlock her secrets and ultimately conquer her form, from those who had done so before.

Upon entering the realms of the forest, a quietness enveloped us, as if she was enticing us in, drawing us closer. Our vehicle slowly wound its way up a thin wet thread, until we abruptly halted at the road end, thankful finally to have reached our first nights stop after a long journey.

Inside we found walls plastered with images, maps and factual script of the volcano as we sipped tea, glancing around at all this information, taking bits and pieces of what we thought was useful for our climbing education. Books displayed various summit and technical routes, any jutting rock formations seeming to have been climbed on every possible line, as if a child had been let loose with a crayon upon father's prized alpine photography. Looking around at my fellow climbing students I noticed the contrast between the old and the new.

Outdoor equipment labels jumped out at me whenever I glanced at a piece of equipment or clothing, whereas the people captured in the photos on the walls seemed woefully underequipped by our modern standards. But you realize people climb, no matter what material possessions they have at hand, in the splendid pursuit of happiness and satisfaction. Expensive clothing and shiny new tools aid the climber, they don't define their quest for adventure and discovery. Peter and I marvelled at the journeys that had been made long ago, the smiles of those on the pages of the books said everything we had imagined of this place and why people choose to be here.

Next day we set out into the damp early morning air, our group dodging puddles that gathered within the step depressions, thinking of how much of the weekend would be spent inside learning what could be learnt outside, the low weather depression storming out of the Tasman towards us constantly on our minds. Halting at the Hooker shelter, we waited for the rest of our party, as we spied Kapuni Lodge nestled upon the flat higher above. It didn't look far, but we knew it would be a steep climb, at this elevation everything is steep. On we marched, now as one, up through the stunted forest into the tussocks,

occasionally catching sight of the higher mountain realms we would be ascending to later.

A warming brew rehydrated and replenished our bodies at Kapuni, as preparations were made for the days climbing. Dumping superfluous equipment we soon exited the hut and thrashed a path through the grasses to the snow slopes that descended from the mountain clouds like cascading tears frozen upon a veiled face. The weather held as we hacked steeps, to aid our traverse, into a thin layer of scree, above mud, above ice, each swing spitting high mountain earth into our faces and onto our tongues. Clouds swirled around us as we started our main objective of the day, to lay pitch after pitch after rope pitch, higher and higher into the wind blown tendrils of stratus above. Our three groups stretched across the slope, eyeing each others progression covertly, as minutes seemed to dissolve into hours, theory translated to reality, mind and body of the apprentice slowly forging into a cohesive instrument from its previous awkward beginnings. I would lead a pitch, judging a halfway point in which to strike a snow stake into the mountain with my ice hammer, attach a snap link karabiner, run the rope through and climb again.

"Five metres", Peter would yell from below, a quick glance at Terry told me without even asking, yes, dig another T slot. Slowly the snow extraction for the anchors became faster, my body learning to conserve its energy through efficient movements, slow and steady. Locate the stake, work the wire trace level and then some, attach karabiner, rope length formed to a clove hitch, bust it through the screwgate, adjust for my belay position, ice axe shaft through the karabiner and axe tape snap linked back to the wire trace. "Safe" my hoarse voice sought Peter's ears, as I observed motion below start again. Peter would up his anchor, attaching it to his harness and yell back "take in", to which I would take up any slack rope between us.

Curving the rope back on itself I would thread it through my ATC and my screwgate, winding it up and then letting it off a half turn as a sub zero weather precaution, "on belay". A faint voice echoed back up "climbing". And so it would continue, Peter tracing my ascent footsteps while I took in the slack and dumped the excess at my feet. From my position I could now observe our zig zag pitches, laid down earlier that morning, a safety net to prevent the lead climber from taking out his belayer in the case of a fall. Time seemed infinite as I would survey the world below, having only an idea from the movement of the sun in the sky, glimpsed occasionally through a window of clear day. Higher still and the upper snow layer thinned, while the ice layer beneath metastasized, the crampons lashed to my pack would provide a nice secure bite, but instead, where unsure I would chisel steps for my cold leather boots and keep climbing.

The flu I had that week still dwelled within my sinuses and chest, my heartbeat pulsing faster than usual for such a pursuit, as a parched throat whistled with my every breath. Secretly I coveted the belayer's role, when I could rest my slowly exhausting body, and regain some equanimity with my surroundings. Looking around however, I couldn't think of any place I would rather be. A sensation of hunger and thirst slowly dawned on us all, and before long a location was chosen to sit and consume. Later on Terry imparted upon us the different cramponing techniques, their strengths and weaknesses. The French flat (or duck) foot, the American 90 degree style and German front pointing, as we practiced up and down the slope a combination of all three.

Brilliantly simple belaying and abseiling techniques accomplished with the humble ice axe and screw gate were observed and applied, as Terry quickly winked to the man on the rope end to take a rapid and surprising fall to test the belayer, the anchor physics prevailing every time, bringing the plunging climber to a swift stop. The weather had started to stabilize. With the wind dropping slightly and the sun shining through for longer periods, it was decided to go for a wander up to Fantham's Peak and Syme Hut. From below, the line of climbers ascending above looked like some Neolithic tribe banished to the white wastes, marching in step, making its way to an unknown oasis far off in the netherworld. Eric eventually became the trail breaker, setting a moderate pace without pause.

Walking behind Murray, I relished the short breaks he afforded me when he would halt at a zig or a zag and exchange his axe sling from one hand to the other. Crystallized snow ice pebbles cascaded down the slope from above as Eric dislodged their precarious hold upon the mountain, sending them into the air on the wind, where they were transformed by the sun to a sparkling gold vision, as their audible presence resonated like a gentle rain down past us into the depths of the Kapuni gorge. Heavy breath finally afforded me the plateau, where shallow graves were dug to avert watching windblown backpacks descending the ice slopes with devil speed, never to be carried again.

On an outcrop we were initiated on a basic level to the art of climbing ice. It took some time to trust ourselves and our crampons at the base of the climb, Terry insistent that here, a flat foot with all twelve fangs tasting the ice was perfectly adequate to prevent a fall. And he was right, as our confidence grew, we took up positions at the base of the short wall and each chose a line to the top. Like infants taking first steps, we swung ice axe and hammer into the cold white-blue, a very personal exploration of a new world, trusting a thin thread of pick metal justly thrust but barely biting into the frozen. Tentatively applying weight to judge its placing and hold. Peering down at

our feet we sought to locate the business end of our crampons, the truth of solid ice dawning on us as we found securely locating our sharps in the wall could not always be relied upon to bare our mass. Our muscles strained to keep our precarious attachment points connected to the ice, over exerting ourselves without noticing so, searching for our next placements that would lead us higher, minds commissioned to dedicate all concentration to this basic task. Certain lines would force us to shatter frozen water stalactites as we sought security through attachment with ice tools. Upon reaching the top we would descend the same way back to the base of the wall and search for another line to climb.

On the subsequent climb to the apex I was drawn to the edge of the outcrop, by what appeared to be a rainbow shining on the slopes beneath our towering vantage point. Stepping to the edge I found myself encompassed within the apparition below, my shadow surrounded by a rainbow halo dancing on the water droplets in the lower clouds, seemingly close enough to touch. Marvelling at the sight, I waved my arms above my head to separate myself from the rock outcrop I stood on, looking closely I saw the shadow wave back at me. Asking Terry about the bizarre light play beneath us he told me it had a name, Brocken Spectre, and that it occurred when the sun shone from directly behind you, projecting your image onto mist or cloud beneath, in a bizarre angulated form, an optical illusion making your image appear closer than it was as you viewed the distant terrain farther below. Transfixed by the vision I called Peter to join me in the hallucinatory portal. Together we stood on the crest, becoming more than men climbing a mountain, we became part of the impermanence that is life itself, shadows in the Brocken Spectre. Soon this spectacle would vanish, along with this moment I found myself mesmerized in. A chill wind whipped at my back, as I took one last look at the supernatural exhibition below, before turning into the teeth of the high altitude air flow and joining the others on the lower plateau.

Gathering our stashed packs we carried on to Syme hut over the brow. Ice backed up to the hut on its exposed western limit, making it possible to climb to the roof for a superior view of the outlying lands. Surveying summit routes, our eyes were drawn to the high East Ridge, coated in a sheath of thick ice, a place that would suffer no fools, allowing access to the Sharks Tooth only to those who deserved the description of Mountaineer. The sun now shone through the late afternoon sky unabated, as we receded down the slopes, its warmth at our backs, a dead calm enveloping our tired group, quickly bounding home over the hard won altitude of the morning.

First light observations on Sunday put halt to any more climbing outdoors, so all morning was spent inside practicing rope techniques such as; escaping

the system and crevasse self extraction, along with map and compass navigational skills. The Italian or munter hitch became pivotal when trying to escape the system, a process whereby your partner has been swallowed by a crevasse and to aid you must first secure him and then release yourself from the tensioned rope to be able to observe and assist. Having successfully anchored yourself, you take dead rope and connect it to the live rope via prussic sling, utilizing the munter hitches pulling characteristics to tighten this length and tie off, this subsequently relaxes the tension on the rope attached between yourself and your partner. This in turn is then reattached to your anchor, less you and your harness, again with a munter hitch, which is pulled taut and again tied off, at which point you have effectively 'escaped the system'. Releasing the prusik, it is then utilized to securely move along the unwound rope previously coiled around your torso, to the edge of the crevasse to assess the severity of the situation.

On the other end we practised extricating ourselves from a crevasse while hanging from the well placed roof anchor point. Hanging by our harness with a loaded pack on we had to attach short and long prusik slings to the rope, climb a little to get some dead rope, which we attached our pack to via snaplink and dropped off our backs, before prusiking up the rope to freedom above. The initial movements with an attached back pack were very burdensome and I could imagine this coupled with cold, dehydration, exhaustion and maybe dying light would present an extremely daunting prospect to any climber, reeling from the shock of such a sudden drop, and having to gather his wits within a cavernous ice abyss, fumbling with numb gloved hands to tie prussic cords, while willing his body to give its last reserves to climb the rope towards the light.

Map and compass navigation skills had us planning routes out of a high altitude Southern Alps hut to a pre-determined helicopter extraction point further down a glacier. Hidden crevasses and likely areas of high cliff rock fall had to be identified and avoided as we set about plotting a path using compass bearings, distances measured on map would be measured on snow and ice by ten metre rope lengths, called and marked out between climbers.

After practicing all these techniques I realized that the climbing we had done this weekend was merely a taste of what the alpine world had to offer, as far as landscapes and the technical knowledge required to traverse these areas safely, were concerned. After lunch we set off back to the vehicles through the steady rain, looking only at the boots of the man in front as we splashed along the drowned trail. Passing the Hillary seat I noticed it was no longer dedicated solely to the memory of Sir Ed's Everest ascent, but also to his life, now long past.

I remember years ago reading about a climb he had made of Egmont while he was living in Waitara. In one day he cycled from his home to North Egmont, climbed the mountain and then hopped back on his bike and rode home again, such was his physical stamina and unbounding spirited nature. I felt a deep appreciation for those who had pioneered and advanced this outdoor pursuit. As a novice climber in the twenty-first century, I could merely step into this world and have available to me what had taken years of hard lessons and tragic accidents to develop and fine tune. This is a sport that demands both mental and physical strength from an individual, you are responsible for yourself but also to those you climb with. The rewards are immense, but one must calculate the risks they take very carefully, as the hazards from both the environment and your own decisions, are also. The footprints we left that day may still be etched within the snows upon Egmont's steep slopes, or perhaps they are long gone, filled with fresh snow or melted by the high sun. I wonder how many times since, a Brocken Spectre has shone on the high clouds around the volcano, without a human shadow to grace its beautiful orb, devoid of mans observing eyes.

*Participants- Terry Crippen (tutor), Peter Darragh (tutor), Peter Chamberlin, Steve Keen, Erich Schuster, Marko Wenzel, Murray Gifford, Grant Christian and Logan Westwood.*

## **Atiwhakatu Hut**

**6 September 2009**

**Report: Malcolm Parker**

We appeared to have been lucky with the weather in the days leading up to Sunday. And the day itself didn't let us down. A leisurely departure from Palmerston North and we at the Holdsworth carpark and ready to go by 9.45. What a magic day - Too good to be true!

The idea was to wander up and have a look at the new hut. And it seemed like heaps of others had the same idea, plus the odd runner (place the emphasis where you wish!!). The track is almost wheelchair capable we joked on the way up. Little did we know that we would see an example of this on the way back. We took our time getting to the hut and arrived just on lunchtime. A very tidy new hut next to the site of the previous one. But we decided to find a sunny spot down by the river for lunch. No wind, sun streaming down, very warm - but not warm enough to convince Warren to go for a swim.

The hut site seemed more like a railway station with heaps of people coming, going, stopping. We headed off down and back to cars about 1.00 after a very lazy, but enjoyable, lunchstop and good look around.

Back at the cars and off in to Masterton for the obligatory ice cream. And they were huge!! An excellent trip.

*We were Malcolm, Warren, Duncan, Margaret, Mike and Kathy.*

## **North East Ruahines - Te Atuaoparapara to Waipawa River**

**13 September**

**Report and Pics: Murray Gifford**

We were only a party of three, the weather forecast was for a fine day to develop and light winds, but the day started with the front still hanging around, low clouds over the ranges. A 7.30pm start for the two-hour drive. The Central Hawke's Bay was enjoying fine calm weather with plenty of blue sky. We headed off from the North Block Road end (just west of Ongaonga) at about 9.50am, the cloud still hanging low over all the ranges, rainbows in the air as we set off.

We stopped to check the new DOC track signage, all in glass, lasting well. Up thru the paddocks and into the bush adjacent Triplex Hut. We had a good walk up thru the beech forest, a stop at the first minor saddle to have a snack and enjoy the mountain cabbage trees and totaras. As we headed higher the ominous signs of strong winds became more apparent, 1hr 40mins to Sunrise Hut, the tops clear, but strong winds in the saddle. Chris Tuffley was at the hut after a night in Top Maropea Hut, all wrapped up in his storm gear. We stopped for a quick bite and a chat to 4 hunting types up for the day, out with the coats, mitts and balaclavas, then onwards to Armstrong Saddle. The winds where chilling and buffeted us about along the track, nice to get some shelter in the leatherwood up to the saddle. Then we headed up the ridge above the saddle and turned south leaving the track to Top Maropea.



The weather was slowly improving and we gained some shelter from the northerly as we headed for the

north ridge. Over the small peak to the south west of the saddle, down thru the scrub and the narrow track at the top of the scree. Te Atuaoparapara was now just ahead, the tops all clear and looked deceptively close. We had a bit of a group discussion and opted to stay off the tops today due to the winds and take the alternative loop route back via the scree to the Waipawa River. The four hunter chaps were ahead and were already on the scree, going for it. It was time to get a few photos, shed a bit of gear and head to the top of the scree.

The scree was in good condition, large striding steps sinking deeply into the loose gravels, a fast trip down to the bush edge, the stream disappearing ahead into water falls. We followed the steeply falling stream, bum sliding down some of the larger rocks, but nothing to really halt progress. 20mins down to a confluence with the steep gut directly behind the hut. Time for lunch in the sun, out of the wind, most enjoyable. On down the stream, 40mins to the Waipawa river. Down the main river for 15mins to reach the Sunrise loop track on our left. What was it to be, 1 hr of rock hopping or, back up to the main track. We choose up and were back at the minor saddle in 25mins, so a pretty fast way out.



A leisurely stroll back to the cars by 3.00pm. Six hours round trip; that had been a pretty leisurely day. Coffee/ beers in the Ongaonga General Store and home we headed - a good day out with plenty of exercise.

*We were Warren Wheeler, Mike Allerby, Chris Tuffley and Murray Gifford.*

## Cone Peak Totara Flats

19- 20 September

Report and Photos: Tony Gates

We started our overnight Tararua tramp crossing the Waiohine River on the giant new swingbridge. Dry feet were a bonus, and mine stayed dry all day. The steady plod up to Cone Saddle soon had a sweating, despite the very cold wind that had brought fresh snow to some of the higher peaks. Intermittent views showed us some famous Tararua places, with mist covering Tinui and Tuiti- otherwise known as the Tararua Peaks. We were happy to have mostly clear weather on Cone Peak, where we paused briefly to photo the attractive alpine tarns. Then it was mostly all downhill, along the fairly drawn out Cone Ridge. The goblin forest gave the area a magical appearance, with moss draped and wind contorted beech trees. Tramping times were actually about 3 ½ hours up to Cone, and about the same down to Totara Flats Hut. The downhill just felt a bit longer as it dragged on. The hut is an obvious meeting place for many tracks, with the Waiohine Gorge - Holdsworth Lodge the most popular. Cone Peak is a good alternative route, just a bit tougher than the Calley tramp.

Sunday dawned very chilly, with valley mist, then crystal clear skies. Other hut occupants headed off over Cone Peak, while we ambled down through Totara Flats and the Waiohine Gorge. I had a brief exploration walk around the flats, finding the old Waiohine river cage mentioned below. A relic of the 60's, its components long since demolished and rusting away. Some heavy galvanised steel fittings and wire rope looked like they would last for many more years. I must add that there have been various bridges over the Waiohine River here, with the newest one being one of the longest in the country. It would not be an easy place to make a bridge, and certainly not an easy river to cross on foot.

We visited Sayers hut, finally getting wet feet in the chilly Waiohine River. The expansive Totara Flats looked lovely. And the Waiohine Gorge too is very scenic, with the river and big podocarp forest. Towards the car park, DoC have constructed extensive board walks, steps, and drains. It is a popular picnic and day walk area.

*Tararua Trampers were: Murray Gifford and Tony Gates.*



Murray Gifford in Goblin forest on Cone.

### Totara Flats Flying Fox.

By TM, PNTMC Newsletter, 1968.

I'm coming down Cone Ridge and out to Totara Flats,  
Just done the Southern Crossing- in record time, in  
fact,  
The birds are all a chirping, there's a clear blue sky  
above,  
And the river's roaring down below.  
Easy going on the grass flats and through the tea tree  
scrub,  
And then a trail of empty cans to lead me to the hut.  
I'm through the door, and ease me pack down on the  
bunk,  
Then scratch around the fireplace, to clear the usual  
junk,  
Get the billy boiling, down six cups of tea,  
Then thought of old Don Fletcher- he'd like to be  
with me.  
Left the hut a heading for the river,  
Run into the flying fox, the sight fair made me shiver,  
The cage was in the middle, dangling, while 20 ft  
below,  
The murky flooded depths were waiting, for me to  
have a go.  
I wound her in again, jumped into the seat and let her  
go,  
My hair caught up in the wheel above,  
I roared...the air was blue.  
And the deer took off for miles around  
And this story's dinkum too.  
Now the New Zealand Forest Service are a decent  
bunch of blokes,  
And as any bushman would agree, they're most  
considerate,  
But make no bones about it,  
For it's plain as day to me,  
That the ones who built that flying fox  
Are ill eg it i mate.

## Of interest...

### Tramping tips from Doug Strahan

I put a notice in the newsletter asking for tramping tips, but only received one response. Grant Christian recommends checking out [tramplight.co.nz](http://tramplight.co.nz) for people interested in ultralight tramping. He bought a backpack that only weighs 850g. Its foam frame doubles as a sleeping mat. The following tips are one's I've heard from various people over the years.

- Take a camera – good excuse to stop.
- Soak your sunhat for noticeable cooling.
- Have a check list of things to take tramping.
- Plastic fizzy bottles make very strong water bottles.
- Put smelly tramping socks in a bucket with nappisan.
- Use coloured plastic bags to quickly identify gear.
- 2 pairs of socks reduces blistering.
- Should be able to fit one finger inside back of boot.
- Carry a square foot of closed cell foam as a seat.
- Cut toenails before a tramp.
- Pitch tent on raised ground, not lush green (wet) patch.
- Dig a hollow for your hip when camping.
- Use [www.metservice.co.nz](http://www.metservice.co.nz)

### Quantities of Tramping Food

Here are some quantities you can use when meal planning for tramping. The quantities listed here are average quantities for tramping groups consisting of both girls and guys, but they may need to be adjusted depending the make up of the group.

- **Rice**

Allow 1/2 cup uncooked rice per person per meal. Big eaters may prefer 3/4 cup but this averages out to 1/2 cup each in a mixed group. 1kg bag of rice (Jasmine) contains 6 cups uncooked rice (this feeds 6 people for two nights).

- **Pasta**

500g packet of pasta feeds 5 people

- **Couscous**

Allow 1/2 cup uncooked rice per person per meal. Quick to cook – just add to equal number of cups of boiling water and let stand till liquid is absorbed.

- **Dried mixed veges**

1 packet Surprise dried mixed veges serves 3-4 people. When adding to rice and pasta based meals, add additional 1 cup water when cooking to rehydrate the veges.

- **Mince**

Allow approx. 200g mince per average person (this can be adjusted quite a bit depending on the meal between 150g and 250g per person).

- **Tuna**

Tuna is a convenient source of protein and Omega-3, and works well with most tramping meals based on rice, pasta or couscous. The Greenseas drained form in foil lined packets which is perfect for tramping but is, not available at all supermarkets so you may need to shop around. 1 packet between 2 people works well as part of a main dish

- **Porridge**

Allow 1/2 cup of oats per person. Add dried fruit for variety. For quicker cooking time prepare it the night before and leave to soak, in the morning it will just need a quick heat.

- **Muesli**

Allow 1/2 cup per person.

- **Suggested food for a weekend trip**

For a normal tramping weekend, two breakfasts, two lunches, one evening meal, and snacks are required as follows. The approximate total weight per day is 1 kg per person. This includes:

**Each Breakfast**

150gm muesli or cereals or 75gm porridge and milk powder or 75g macaroni and 50gm cheese.

**Each Lunch**

150gm bread or biscuits or Tararua biscuits and spreads, cheese, salami, fruit, Refresh.

**One Evening Meal**

150gm pasta or rice, meat or beans, dried or fresh vegetables, dried soup, dessert.

**Beverages (per weekend)**

10gm tea or tea bags or 25gm coffee or 50gm Milo, milk powder.

**Condiments (per weekend)**

Salt, pepper, herbs etc (according to party tastes) 15gm.

**Snacks and Scroggin (per weekend):** scroggin (nuts, dried fruit, seeds), chocolate or carob, barley sugars, muesli bars. Total 300gm.

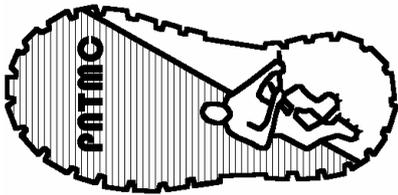
**Utensils**

Bowl, mug, knife, spoon.

**Total pack weight**

12 to 15 kg.

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## PNTMC Newsletter

### October 2009

#### *What's inside this month?*

- *Upcoming trips and club events*
- *Reports on recent trips and events*
- *Results of the interclub Photo competition*
- *Information about the new topo maps*

Get out and about with us!  
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