

Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

www.pntmc.org.nz
P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter April 2020



[PNTMC group ready to board the boat back to Plimmerton after spending the day on Mana Island.](#)

Covid-19 alert level 4 means that all club meetings and trips are suspended until after April 20th at the earliest. This newsletter contains information on April club meeting and trip scheduled for after this as they may go ahead but it depends on how the Covid-19 situation develops.

This will be the last 'normal' newsletter for a while. In order to keep in more regular contact with club members during this time, we will post shorter updates on a more frequent basis. We aim to keep these useful and entertaining. Things we hope to include:

- trip reports –trips you have done and those you would like to do
- gear reports – what you like and what you don't
- Trips that went wrong – in keeping with the theme of Bruce's confessions in this newsletter
- What you are doing during the Lockdown – films watched, routes walked and/or biked, ...
- Quizzes
- What else you come up with...

Please send contributions to Anne Lawrence (anne.lawrence.nz@gmail.com)

Club Nights

Club nights are held on the second and last Thursday of the month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. Doors open 7.15 pm for a cuppa before start at 7.30pm. All welcome.

30 April

Something Old, Something New

Warren Wheeler

A night of show and tell, and an opportunity to buy and sell pre-loved gear. BYO favourite old and/or new gear and tell us why you like it so much, be it clothing, boots, camping gear, climbing gear, snow gear, what-have-you. Also bring any surplus gear and give us a sales pitch to ensure it gets a good offer and goes to a good home.

Upcoming Trips

Sat 25th – Mon 27th April

Maroepa Forks

M/F

Graham Peters

329 4722

Depending on the Covid-19 situation, we may be able to take advantage of the 3-day weekend to visit Maroepa Forks hut. Rather than the debacle of my last trip where we ended up being bluffed by waterfalls, we'll go in a clockwise direction via Top Maroepa, Maroepa Forks, Sparrowhawk Biv. If we're very lucky, there may be some traps to check in the vicinity.

Trip Grading

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trapper 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:

Family (Fam)
Technical skills (T)
Instructional (I)

BWD = Best weather day of a weekend

Trip participants

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

Gear for trips

Minimum gear for day trips is appropriate footwear, pack, lunch and snacks, waterproof jacket, over-trousers, gloves, warm hat, torch, toilet paper, matches or a lighter, sunblock, first aid kit, and a survival bag or space blanket. Each person needs to be equipped to survive overnight.

If you concerned about a trip being overdue, please phone one of the Overdue Trip Contacts:

Anne & Martin Lawrence	357 1695
Graeme Richards	353 6227

Notices

What does the level 4 lockdown mean for us?

Covid-19 alert level 4 means nobody should be out tramping. Go for a walk or a bike ride but stay close to home.

Recreation in the great outdoors needs to be put on hold as the country goes into lockdown for the next four weeks. The idea is to keep as local as you can for exercise, so no drives.

<https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-level/>

DOC has closed all huts and campsites and asks no one uses these until further notice.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/issues/covid-19/>

Mountain Safety's message is simple: stay at home, stay out of the backcountry, put the trip plans on ice and save them for another day. *"We will all have plenty of opportunities to enjoy our wonderful country once this is over, we all want New Zealanders to stay safe and healthy."*

<https://mailchi.mp/mountainsafety/msc-connect-march-4112958?e=9761979959>

Club Challenge

The Club Challenge finished just before the level 4 lockdown started – what amazing timing! Awards go to top point scorers in different categories.

Overall top score was attained by Chris Tuffley on 156.5 points. He was closely followed by Warren Wheeler on 154.5. And third equal were Janet Wilson and Grant Christian on 141.5.

Janet and Warren got the most bonus points with 30 each. Warren also scored the most points for huts on a club trip (38) and high points on a club trip (16). Grant got the highest

number of points for first hut visits with 20. Ellie scored the highest number of points for first high points (14).

Congratulations to the top scorers, and well done to everyone who got out there and participated. The next Club Challenge is currently in development – more info to come!

Trip Reports

Oroua farm walk

1 February 2020

Report and pics: Kathy Corner

Following Dave's excellent instructions Pam and I arrived safely at Dave and Gaewyn's farm, remembering to change down for the steep driveway. Liz and Arthur Todd were already there, and Janet and Graham arrived soon after.

We set off across the ridge line which afforded stunning views of the surrounding farmland, Ruahines and Ruapehu peeping through. The electric fences didn't seem to worry Dave in the least he just pressed down on them with his bare hands which allowed us to climb over safely. Arthur was very knowledgeable on the glacial strata of the area.



We soon descended to the Oroua River and had lunch in the shade.



We headed up stream then circuited a field of maize picking blackberries en route. Tramping up a gully we passed a very interesting colourful cliff- a work of art.



We encountered some steers in the gully and although we approached quietly they got scared and scampered up the bank in a panic, one getting caught up in the fence and being left behind.

Then it was a very steep 5 minute grunt up to the farmland again and back along a ridge. Only a four hour walk so we were back at the homestead at 2 pm to enjoy home cooked scones, jam and cream and of course the wonderful views.

Pam and I drove back via Finnis Road to Pohangina where Graham and Janet kindly picked some plums and other fruit for us from their orchard. The day was finished off aptly with a refreshing dip in the Pohangina. Thanks again to Dave and Gaewyn for their warm hospitality

Kahui Capers

29 February – 1 March 2020

Report by Lladira Miranda

Photos by Lladira and Warren Wheeler

Friday afternoon and a nervous phone call starts the journey. Warren is an experienced sure-footed trumper and as I come to find out later, an alpine Ibex in the guise of a human form!

Destination Mt Taranaki - Kahui Track to be exact. Our journey starts off with a bit of a delay waiting for the home baked bread to pop out of the oven - good thing that it was forecasted for 'early morning showers then clearing', because by the time we got to the western side of the mountain we were met with a sunny clear day to commence our 2hr easy walk to the hut.

Once we lightened our load and secured a bed each for the night, we set off to Turehu Hill to take in the grand west view that Mt Taranaki has to offer. Surprisingly you can't see Kapuni gas production station from that hill - perhaps because it lies in the shadow of Mt Taranaki, however that didn't come to mind at the time so off we set again to get a better view from Big Pyramid.

Random fact - Kapuni is the oldest producing natural gas-condensate field in New Zealand, and was first discovered in 1959!



As for the views, well they were worth the short traverse across, and it appeared as if the wind was also on our side - having cleverly pushed aside the blanket of clouds that we had spotted. Having reached Big Pyramid it just wouldn't have been right to not have ventured down toward Little Pyramid, so that's exactly what we did. It was around this time too that I had resolved in my mind that Warren was in fact an alpine Ibex. No matter that I was able to keep up with him on the steady climbs, the speed in which he was able to make it down on a rocky path with such sure-footing was certainly impressive.



Had we not needed to head back to the hut I think that I would have been content with setting up camp atop Little Pyramid. The overgrown thick tussock made for a nice wind barrier whilst you admired the panoramic views. However, time wasn't on our side and we had to venture back down before the setting of the sun.



At this point began the real adventure, trying to find the track! I had every faith that Warren would in fact cut the track, but whether we had daylight on our side was another matter entirely. As we speedily walked back down the slopes, I couldn't help but notice all the hare that were running back towards their own cosy little dens - having probably finished grazing for the day, and thinking how it would feel to have such strong hind legs as they. Surprisingly even though rabbits have a visual field of nearly 360 degrees, they reportedly have poor night vision with little depth perception. Hence relying on my own visual acuity and Warren's internal compass, we managed to cut-the-track and vaguely spot the blue ribbons that were meant to mark the track back to the hut.

After crossing three washed out gullies and pushing through a thick bush climb, we arrived with three minutes to spare before the setting sun concluded the day. It had turned out to be a great day and the night sky was aglow with stars that makes any cuppa feel so much richer.

The other young trampers at the hut (who were fly camping there) were busy planning for the next day's climb and the next morning was certainly a great one too. A short morning climb to Kahui Hill and a disappointing and unforgiving bush bash a short distance towards Puniho Hill concluded our ventures the next morning. So back to Opunake we went to conclude the trip. Unfortunately, yet again Maru eluded Warren, but I'd be happy to venture back to Kahui Hut to join-in on another adventure, and I'm sure Warren won't allow Maru to go unclimbed.

Having travelled 221km and after 21 hours, I was glad to be heading back home to see my young son return from his own adventures at

youth camp and proud to have made contact with PNTMC.



Pohangina Gorge

15 March 2020

Report and pics by Sike Li (Mary)

On Sunday, I started my first trip of PNTMC, with Warren and Michelle. It was a lovely day with beautiful sunshine.

Michelle picked us from Milverton Park for the drive to Mid-Pohangina Track. We started walking the poled route across the farm to the Mid-Pohangina sidle track and after about an hour we arrived at the intersection down to the river. It was pleasant walking in the cool of the bush and I learned more skills on tramping.



Warren had long legs. 😊

Down at the river we explored up to Centre Creek and after a break, we headed off downriver and soon reached the gorge, which

looked rather challenging for me. We needed to either cross the slippery cliff or swim in the river. Warren and I crossed the short section of slippery rock but Michelle was not keen and decided to walk back on the track.



We try to cross the slippery cliff at the river gorge.

It was easier going downriver from there with only one or two deep wades and rocky scrambles. After about an hour we met up again with Michelle at Piripiri Stream confluence, on the edge of the Ruahine Forest Park. After lunch and a dip we carried on downriver for about half an hour, through a knee-deep gorge and back to the farmland. On the way home, we stopped at Cheltenham for a nice ice cream and cold drink to celebrate our successful mini adventure. Overall, it was a very good trip with lovely weather and I really enjoyed my first rock hopping down the beautiful Pohangina River.



Michelle enjoys the sunshine at lunch break, swimming in the river.

Thank you to Warren and Michelle, they took care of me very well, I had an awesome first trip with PNTMC.



"Happy Warren"

Touching the Cold War July 2010

Report and pics: Peter Wiles

It was the 8th July 2010 and I was in the Kuril Islands – the long chain of volcanic islands that stretch north from Japan up to the Kamchatka Peninsula. I was on one of Rodney Russ' Heritage Expedition trips in the Russian Far East.

Overnight, at some stage we had anchored just off this island. But getting on deck first thing after rising yielded a grey prospect – dense fog. Still there was no doubt we were in the right place – GPS / GLONASS (the Russian GPS equivalent) had seen to that and the island was clearly visible on the ship's radar.

After breakfast and a brief briefing on the plan for the morning, we got into the zodiacs and set off. The sea was very calm. After a couple of kilometres, we emerged from the fog and could see we were heading towards a narrow

entrance into the flooded crater of this now extinct? volcano. The entrance was only a couple 100 m wide and beyond was a nearly circular lagoon of perhaps 2 km diameter. Dimly at first, and at the far end of the lagoon some buildings became visible and we were heading directly towards them. Here lay an abandoned Soviet secret submarine base constructed in this superbly hidden and sheltered spot after the CCCP captured the Kuril Islands from the Japanese in the dying days of WWII. (Still a very sore political point.)



We landed on the beach and Rodney gave us another briefing. We had 2 hours; we could inspect the buildings but were advised not to enter them as they may be unsafe. We must not venture beyond the general area of the settlement. And off we went.



Pacific Ocean lies beyond the narrow entrance. Finding the best route about the place was not straight forward as the place had been abandoned since around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and over the intervening years thick vegetation had grown up all over the place.

At its height, there must have been a community of several hundred people living

here as the facilities included a school, a hospital and even a dental clinic!

I inspected the remains of what was the generator building that included a couple of large diesel engines (probably in the order of 1000 kW each) which lay in ruins and used to drive the power generation system. The waste heat was used to supply the central heating system that snaked about the facility.

I then visited the main building and ignoring Rodney's instruction, wandered around inside including managing to head up the staircase (partially collapsed) to the upper floors. Everything was of course ruined and just about anything of use long removed (looted?). Some of the roof had collapsed and the floors were sopping wet.



There was a whole small town hidden away here. Typical Russia / USSR scene of abandoned oil drums.



Note the submarine moorings at the head of the bay. The pipeline was part of the central heating system.



Yes, folks, there were families here.



One can only guess how often the gun was fired – perhaps Lenin’s and Stalin’s birthdays?



“Crater-something”. Note the submarine on the plaque.

But I did not leave empty handed! I found a set of small cups – egg cups perhaps, or for drinking vodka? Who knows? But I still have something to touch from the Cold War.



After emerging from the main building, I wondered around some of the lesser buildings and finally the submarine moorings before we got back into the zodiacs and returned to the ship for lunch.

What we did over summer

Elly’s report on her January adventure didn’t make it into the March newsletter so we get to read about this now.

**Chris Sanson’s [Small] Backyard Loop
January 2020
Trip report and pic: Elly Arnst**

Beep beep beep... 4:30am... stretch, yawn, find caffeine, walk...

Headlamps push back the darkness as we set off along the track - luxury.

The sun rises as we reach the leatherwood, so does the wind. ‘This will be interesting’, I think. The forecast geek in me knows the worst of the wind and rain will coincide with crossing Sawtooth.

We’ve listed our bail out options – we’ll assess our plans as the day (and weather) progresses.

By pt1635 it’s starting to drizzle and the wind is biting. We drop off the side to layer up and have the first snack of the day.

On to Maungamahue and the clouds are rolling in. Could bail down to Kelly Knight and play

cards at the hut? Nah need a longer walk - keep going.

Check the GPS to ensure we take the right ridge towards Te Hekenga. This is the fourth time I've traversed this piece of country in a fortnight. Bit trickier in poor visibility.

We blitz along, check GPS, change direction, walk. Check bearing, change direction, walk. 10:30am we sit in the saddle, snack, then walk.

The wind buffets me as we climb the 300m to Te Hekenga. I try not to walk too close to the edge. There'll be no clambering onto the ledge today.

Up to the top, swing hard right. Look for the cairns to sidle. The wind blows harder. Could bail down the ridge to Triangle? Maybe? Nah, it's a horribly steep at the bottom - keep going.

Sidling is a piece of cake. Soon we're back on the ridge, where the wind blows harder. Check GPS, check bearing, push on.

On Tiraha we pause, drop out of the wind to regroup. Could bail down to Howletts and wait out the weather? Nah, might have to wait ages and would have to climb back up the hill again - keep going.

Sawtooth Ridge is narrow, the wind blows, we move fast to keep warm, pausing only when the gusts are too strong to safely cross the narrowest bits. We sidle where possible, relish the sheltered bliss on the eastern side.

We take five for lunch before the final climb to Ohuinga – climbing will rewarm us. 12:30pm, 25km already done.

The forecast is right, the weather gets worse. Ohuinga, check GPS, turn left. The wind rages, the rain drives sideways, stings my face. I struggle to stay upright, lean on my poles. Head down, push on.

The ridge is covered in ground trails, many lead in the false directions. We try to sidle out of the wind, check GPS, backtrack, climb up, check bearing, sidle.

Clamber, sidle, climb up, climb down, squeeze around some tricky bits, a DoC sign reads "Pourangaki Hut".

Could bail down to Pourangaki and out via the river? Nah, we're on the home straight - keep going.

We tick off the landmarks: Pinnacle Creek, old trig, Iron Peg, Wooden Peg – moving steady, we're on fire.

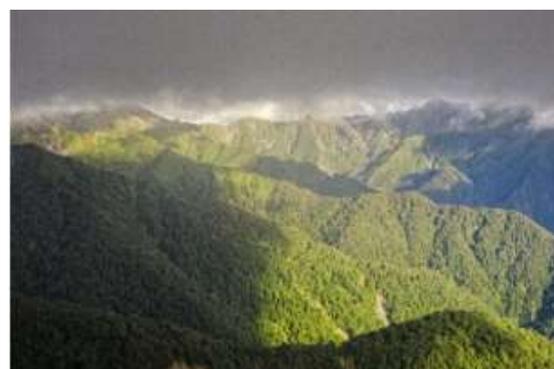
Back on a poled route – not luxury. Deep tussock, deep holes, hard to follow. Then, finally a cut track – luxury. But, still a couple of hours to go...

Layers of warm and waterproof clothing are peeled off. We move quickly along the track. Onto the farm, the sun sets.

Scramble down the bank, into the river, cross the river, cross again, and again, and again... scramble up the bank. Onto the farm.

Headlamps push back the darkness as we set off along the track – luxury.

Wahoo, high-five, smile... 9:30pm... stretch, yawn, find food, sleep...



Note: Chris' backyard loop starts and ends at Mania Road, taking in Maungamahue, Te Hekenga, Sawtooth Ridge, the Hawkes Bay Range, Kelly Knight track, and some private farm access. Approx 50km in length with over 3,000m of ascent, it took us 16 hours in fairly miserable conditions, taking only short breaks to refuel and layer up. The only view for most of the entirety was the inside of wet clouds, hence the lack of photographs accompanying this report.

Confessions of a Trampler

By Bruce van Brunt

I recall many years ago meeting one of our esteemed members on Ruapehu. I had just summited and was relaxing at the Turoa carpark. This (unnamed) member had just done the round the mountain walk in pretty respectable time and came up to talk. What struck me, however, was that **he was wearing two left boots** that were so dissimilar in construction as to beg the question: how did this happen?

I propose here to initiate a column whereby trampers can make their confessions. Many of us regard ourselves as wizened, wise, and experienced trampers that perhaps spend too much time lecturing the newcomers into the ways of tramping without reflecting that we often do stupid things ourselves (even when lecturing the “newbies”). You have to laugh at yourself and embrace the humour...nobody is perfect, and though we should be role models on tramps, we sometimes are not and add to the amusement of a trip.

The boundaries I propose for these confessions are:

1. **You take total responsibility for the event.** Yes, others are probably involved, but no names aside from your own go into the confession.
2. **There must be an element of humour.** We have enough tramping mistakes that involve serious injuries etc.. What I am looking for is silly things that might have been bad, but nonetheless remained simply embarrassing to the individual.
3. If the event occurs between the end of the year BBQ's, then **you are fully liable for a prize.** The committee keeps a sharp eye out for such stuff.

As President of the Club I feel some obligation to start this process with the hope that others will freely contribute in future volumes of our newsletter.

1. What is in the Pack?

We like to think that we all pare our packs down to the essential and what separates experience from inexperience is simply the weight of the packs. Nice formula but totally

wrong. There is some truth in this, but I have heard many a turgid lecture to newcomers about pack weight only to find that the lecturer brought various items of no use on the trip and that the “newbie” actually brought some items that were very useful. Here are some silly things I brought mostly because I did not bother to optimize or check the load.

- a. Two pairs of overtrousers and no raincoat...this happened on Egmont some years ago and I have still not figured out how it happened.
- b. No bowl or spoon...we have all done this one.
- c. Maps for places at least 100km from where I was tramping.
- d. Two tents.

This last entry I confess earned me a certain prize last year. I bought a super lightweight tent and forgot it at the bottom of my pack only to add a normal tent for a trip. With some reflexion I am sure that I could think of a lot of other stuff that cluttered my pack on any given trip.

2. Navigation:

Navigation is a skill that separates trampers from “followers”. Indeed, if we can go from pt A to pt B along no recognized path in the hills and somehow end up where we claimed, then this is a sure victory. The problem is that navigation, like any other skill, is dependent on a lot of other factors such as fatigue, weather, familiarity with the area.... We do our best, but all of us must surely have had moments when our navigation experience deserted us. Here are some “highlights” from my navigation:

- a. **I cannot match anything I see to the map:** solution, the map was held upside down.
- b. **Let us get a bearing on the Bonar glacier** at the top of the Quarter deck. We pull out a map in a nice waterproof case, then drop it down the slopes to reside somewhere on the Bonar. We got sort of a bearing (visibility went to zero) and after careful compass

work managed to complete a circle, though we were hoping to actually descend the glacier to Colin Todd hut. It has got to be the anomalous magnetic field of Aspiring!

- c. **Was red needle north or was it black?** just a short conversation near Mt French by Arthurs Pass in rather trying circumstances.
- d. **Despite obvious route changes, we seem to be on the same bearing:** solution, you have a N Hemisphere compass that sticks to the glass. It is like a “left-handed hammer” you think magnetic north is magnetic north and the compass should not care what hemisphere it is in.
- e. **Always back up the GPS with a compass.** Here, the problem was that the compass failed (it broke and fell apart in my hands) and I had to use the GPS as a backup. We seem to lecture trampers about the horrors of having a GPS whose batteries die, yet we do not appreciate how delicate a compass can be.

3. Wildlife

NZ is quite tame for wildlife (no bears, snakes etc.) yet the limited wildlife certainly adds a flavour to our tramps.

- a. **Keas:** these birds are far more intelligent than most people I meet. I have an unrestricted admiration for this parrot even though it has conspired on occasion to make grief for me. I have too many Kea stories to include here as I expect most of you also have. This is separate topic that perhaps later we can discuss. These are intelligent animals that should be allowed to vote in any election unlike the less capable who do.
- b. **Possums:** My latest possum story is what I would call “**Night of the Killer Possums**”...it is also related to what is in the pack. Recently, I decided to go to Triangle hut via Rangi hut. At Rangi, I met a friend (at the end of a stag party, I was not part of this) who generously

left me some beer. I thought this might be nice on my solo trip to Triangle hut. The problem was that one of the cans, for reasons unknown, decided to empty itself in my pack. The net effect was that my tent was decidedly “beery” in smell along with other items. Setting up camp on the river, I thought that, though I would wish otherwise, I could put up with this mild yeast/beer smell and clean things at the end of the trip. Well, this smell was obviously a great attractant to possums. Far from having a nice quiet camp on the river I found myself defending the tent against a concerted possum attack. I had to put all food etc. in the tent and threaten any living creature that banged against the tent. This was a very broken sleep.

Yet another recent possum story concerns a camp near the Urchin carpark in the Kaimaniwa Range. A pot of porridge was left to soak for the night with a lid weighted down by a large rock. Sometime during the night, a possum presumed to get at this porridge, but it did not factor in the skill of my fellow trumper, who not only precluded the possum from getting the food, but managed to catch it and kill it. Other campers thought that an axe murderer had come into their midst or at least that some idiots arriving after midnight decided to chop wood. Apparently, there was a repeated hammering on a log that woke others from a sound sleep. The trophy possum was proudly displayed the next morning. The worrying part was that I am generally a light sleeper, but I missed all the drama. I can, however, verify the possum corpse and marvel that the same trumper can sleep though all the “noise” I make, the winds along with other distractions yet instantly focus on a possum intent on getting his breakfast. Where

was he when I fended off all the possums last week?

- c. **Sandflies:** Native fauna are protected. The default mode is that whatever it is, it is probably endangered and thus we should treat it with a certain reverence. Clearly various birds such as the Kiwi, Whio, and Kea fall into this obvious category and all of us are willing to help insects such as various Weta and monopods like the snail. What about sandflies? On the face of it, they deserve the same treatment as say a Kiwi (though few of us sense they are endangered). As far as my ecology colleagues at Massey attest, these are bona fide NZ native things and thus entitled to the blanket protection offered other fauna.

This somewhat awkward point was brought home to me on the Dusky track some years ago. If you are truly in the “conservation camp” then you should not knowingly dispatch of a sandfly, for they are native to NZ etc.. Now I am sure that the reader is guiltless of this murder, but I must confess that on occasion I have been known to hasten a fly to its maker for no better reason than irritating me. I must say that I have lost little sleep over this matter, but I am prepared to feel guilt once this fly becomes a rare treasured insect that is perhaps experienced only in a few zoos.

Tramping recipes

I found this on an outdoor website described as a tramping recipe. Perhaps it would also make a good breakfast if you are stuck at home as well.

It is from www.outdoorappetite.com

Apple and cinnamon porridge

Serves 1

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

1/2 cup oats

10g (around 2 tbsp) dried apple cut in small pieces

1/2 tbsp chia seeds

1 tsp cinnamon (optional)

1/3 cup milk powder

Preparation

Put all ingredients, except the boiling water, in a Ziplock bag. Shake to combine. Made up, the bag will weigh around 105 grams.

Cooking

1. Bring 1 cup of water to boil
2. Stir boiling water into plastic bag. Best to hold the bag in a beanie or spare t-shirt so it's not too hot on your hands.
3. Leave to soak for 10 minutes. Ideal if you can put in something to keep it warm.
4. Stir and eat.



PNTMC Newsletter

April 2020

What's inside this month?

- Club Challenge results
- Trip Reports
- Upcoming trips
- What we did over summer
- And more....

Articles for the newsletter

Send to Anne Lawrence,
the newsletter editor, via the club website
<http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>.



Find us on facebook
<https://tinyurl.com/pntmcfacbook>

Get out and about with us!

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