



Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club

www.pntmc.org.nz

c/- Society of Friends, 227 College St, PN

Newsletter December 2025/January 2026



Photo by Kirstie Priddle: Windy Lookout, Gorge Walk

Club Nights

Club nights are held on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Quakers Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. Doors open 7.15pm for meeting start at 7.30pm. All welcome.

Thu 29th January

Beginning of Year BBQ

Warren Wheeler

BYO food and drink to the electric BBQ area in the Esplanade next to the paddling pool. From 6.15pm.

Thu 12th February

**Beginner Workshop 2: Map
Reading and Orientation**

Warren Wheeler

Come along to our annual introduction map reading and orientation workshop at the Quakers Hall. Whether you are a beginner looking to learn or experienced and looking to brush up on your skills, come along for a practical hands-on-evening of map reading and compass orientation. This is the second workshop for our Beginners programme.

Thu 26th February

**Beginner Workshop 3: More on
Maps and Orientation**

Warren Wheeler

This is workshop 3 of our Beginners Programme. Come along to our second map reading and orientation workshop at the Quakers Hall. This workshop builds on the skills explored in the earlier map reading and orientation workshops with practical hands-on activities.

Upcoming Trips

Sat 20th December - Sun 21st December Short Knights *Easy-Medium*

Warren Wheeler
06 356 1998

Overnight trip to the Ruahine tops on the Longest Day to celebrate the Summer Solstice at sunset and sunrise. Camping near Toka high point. Optional day trip Medium-Fit. Depart Milverton Park Saturday 3pm.

Tue 30th December - Fri 2nd January New Year Turoa *All*

Janet Wilson
06 329 4722

Celebrate New Year at the MUAC Turoa Lodge for a few days to enjoy exploring the Turoa slopes of Mt Ruapehu or further afield if keen. MUAC has given us the 31st free for winning the Interclub Quiz, extra nights are \$50pp. Pot Luck dinner on 31st. Maximum 24 people. Expressions of interest by 11 December please. You can also contact Janet on 027 341 8945.

Sat 17th January - Mon 19th January Wellington Anniversary *All*

Warren Wheeler
06 356 1998

TBA - details to come - watch this space.

Sun 18th January Rangi Botanising *Easy-Medium*

Warren Wheeler
06 356 1998

Best weather day Saturday or Sunday. A classic trip to Rangiwahia Hut to enjoy the alpine flowers on the Ruahine tops. Depart Milverton Park 8.00am.

Sat 31st January Beginner Workshop 1: The Fern Walk *Easy*

Verity Elder
0212601885

Saturday morning walk and Beginners Workshop 1: This loop walk moves through original podocarp forest, including giant lowland totara, mata and kahikatea as old as 1000 years, and up to 68 species of fern (hence its name). An easy, close to home walk, this trip is a short, in-situ introduction to map reading and orientation. Contact Verity Elder no later than 5pm Friday 28th January: 0212061885. Track grade: Walking track. (Totara Reserve, Pohangina Valley). Walking time: 3 hours (loop) Fitness level: low to moderate Workshop: map reading and orientation prior to walk, 15-20 min approx. Meeting point: Milverton Park, 8am Travel time: 40 minutes approx one way.

Trips beyond December and January can be viewed on the club website [‘trip card.’](#)

Trip Grading - Trip grades depend on many factors, including weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient tramper 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 |
| BWD = Best weather day of a weekend | |

Other Grades:

- Family (Fam)
- Technical skills (T)
- Inst (Instruction)

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.

Overdue Trips - If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry, there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone Bruce van Brunt 06 328 4761 or Verity Elder 0212601885

Notices

Bereavement notice

It is with sadness we acknowledge the passing of Dennis Price in early November this year.

Club members will be saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Dennis Price. Along with wife Lynette and daughter Rachel, Dennis joined the club in June 2019. As an avid tramper, Dennis, along with Lynette, generously shared many tramping adventures with talks at club nights, including The Old Ghost Road Cycle

and Hiking track, Lake Crucible/Gillespie Pass in Mt Aspiring NP, Abel Tasman Great Walk as well as The Ball Room Overhang and Inland Pack track, which joins the Paparoa Great Walk. They participated in the club snowcraft course, making use of their skills with many adventures down south and closer to home, including Mount Taranaki. We fondly remember Dennis as a friend, tramper and adventurer – RIP Dennis.

What's in My Pack winner

After a year of pack essentials ranging from the clever, the intriguing, to the unexpected, we finally made the draw for the winner of a \$50 voucher from a retailer of (the winner's) choosing at our end of year BBQ on December 11th. Congratulations to Warren Wheeler, whose entry about his second-hand shorts and shirt, possibly his pride and joy second to his patchwork Swannndri, was the winning draw.

PNTMC is associated with **Federated Mountain Clubs**

Annual Awards – (2025).

Prepared by Warren Wheeler

Photo by Kirstie Priddle

Each year we acknowledge the “memorable” endeavours of members with our annual Awards, presented at our End of Year BBQ on 11 December 2025, Ashhurst Domain.



Weather or Not Award – Nicola Wallace, Chris Tuffley, Robyn & Warren Wheeler, for being the only ones to turn up at the Beginning of Year BBQ in the Esplanade despite the drizzle (we had a very nice BBQ/cooker-powered in the annex to the toilet block...honest)

Wakey Wakey Award – Sally Hewson, for her startled reaction to a giant earthworm crawling across her while resting on the Sunrise Track.

Hot Footing It Award – Janet Wilson, for spilling a cup of hot water at Waikuku Lodge.

Just a Minute Award – Anne Lawrence, third time lucky to send out the correct 2024 Minutes for the AGM.

Footloose and Fancy Free Award – Martin Lawrence, for completing the Wharite trip with the sole of his boot flapping.

Right Left Out Award – Martin Lawrence, for packing two left foot sandals.

Here Endeth the Lesson Award – Neil Benton, for walking out with a novice member of his Wharite trip who had slipped and twisted their ankle and who had become wet and cold after slipping and falling into Coppermine Creek.

High Hopes Award – Ernie Cook, for his well-named trip to Mid-King Biv and beyond, that successfully bagged six of the seven Tararua peaks he was aiming for.

Slow Fashion Award – Graeme Curwen, for his original kangaroo skin hat that his son now uses.

Under the Table Award – Graham Peters, for sleeping under a picnic table at Okarito after the tent poles were left at home.

Don't Worry Be Happy Award – Chris Tuffley, who was stranded an extra night in Ruahine Hut with other Backcountry Trust volunteers waiting for a weather window for their helicopter, eventually being taken out by Ute down No-Mans Road.

Tail End Charlie Just Gremlin Award – Warren Wheeler, for causing unnecessary worry by stopping too long to just have a chat to a hunter heading out on the Rangi Track.

Red Face Award – Graeme Curwen, for forgetting to turn up on his first night of Red Bag supper duty (club night supper duty).

Stay Calm and Carry On Award – Stephen Legg, for not getting upset when his two videos wouldn't play on the new club laptop at the November BYO Pics Club Night.

Mr Fix-it Too Easy Award – Martin Lawrence, for installing the missing video software downloaded for a cost of only \$1.50.

Too Good Not To Go Award – Richard Lockett, for being the only one keen to go on his MTB trip at Ohakune.

In Hot Water Award – Sally Hewson, for staying so long in the hot spa tub that she was too late to help with supper duty on the Kawhia Coastal Classic.

Dave Hodges Award for Excellence in Pursuit of Forgetfulness (our most prestigious award) – Warren Wheeler, for taking four almost empty gas cans up to Rangi Supper but forgetting to take the cooker.

Tararua Trophy Award for Best Newsletter Trip Report – Verity Elder for her *Waterfall Hut* trip report in the September newsletter. Nomination by Monica Coles.

Trip Reports

Moonlight Gorge Walk – (1st November).

Report and photo by Verity Elder

This trip has become an annual event for our club with an avid following of regulars. With a straightforward and easy to follow cut track the Gorge Walk is the perfect opportunity to gain experience walking in twilight, moonlight and torch light, with the later of particular necessity. In the last two years, even if there is moonlight to be had, the canopy is so thick with Tawa we find ourselves shrouded in darkness and relying on torchlight for visibility. I am considering changing its name to the 'Torchlight Gorge Walk' as a more accurate description of what to expect.

This year, due to a need to reschedule the trip to a later date, we left Milverton Park at 5:30pm rather than 4:30pm and stopped for super at the Windmill Lookout instead of Sentinel Lookout. Various delicious, prepared dinner/suppers were enjoyed as well as some potluck sharing of sweets, thank you to those who shared – yum!



The walk up to the Windmill Lookout included beautiful glowing low light creeping through the bush as the sun set. During super the light quickly failed, and when we re-entered the bush for the return trip the encased track was basically pitch black. As I lead us back down, I kept turning around to count the

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headlamps. At one point there was an attempt at a count off – ‘1, 2, 3, 4 etc. which despite a small mishap halfway through with Ernie skipping a number, somehow, accounted for us all. We returned via Balance bridge and were back in Palmerston North by approximately 9pm.

We were Verity (trip leader), Emma, Woody, Ernie, Camille, Kim, Kirstie, and Ari.

Akoutere Loop – (9th November).

Report by Robyn Boocock

We met at Milverton Park at 0800 and drove to Bledisloe Park by Massey University. We walked through the Arboretum enjoying the spring growth on the variety of trees. We ran into many Sunday joggers and walkers, one with an interesting young St Bernard dog which was startling in its size.

Making our way up through the parkways to pop out through La Lena Grove we cross the road and dive down into the Poutua reserve. Looping around to emerge conveniently near the toilets at Akoutere, stop for coffee, then back into the bush to wind our way down and around Tenant Dr and down back to our car. While we didn't really leave town, we heard lots of birds and enjoyed native and introduced trees. It was a pleasant ramble.

We were Robyn (leader), Warren, Michelle and Adele.

Barlow Hut – (8th – 9th November).

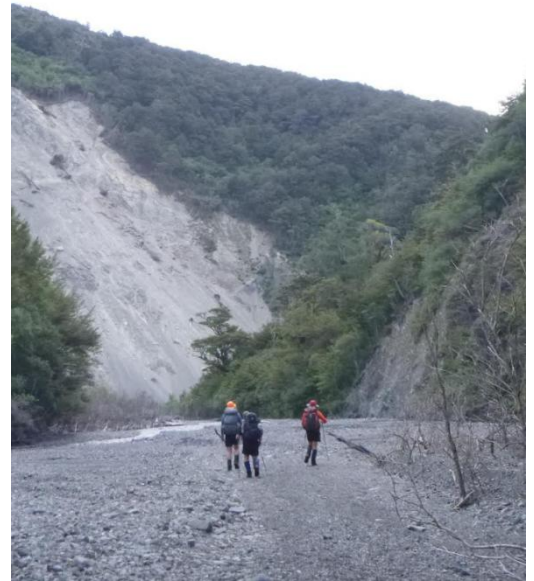
Report and Photos by Nicola Wallace

Despite two lengthy stops for road works and orange cone movements, we arrived at Wakarara Road end in good time, on a hot and sunny Hawkes Bay day. Only 4-wheel drives are allowed down the bottom of the hill, so we started our walk with a descent. Yellow lupins festooned the Makaroro riverbed for a short distance, and we enjoyed our easy walk upstream, accompanied now and then by Paradise Ducks flying overhead. The river, which came up to about knee height and occasionally higher, had to be crossed many times, but I found the wet feet and damp shorts quite refreshing. After about 6km and 2 hours we stopped for lunch in the shade at the foot of Colenso Spur. I was looking forward to seeing the Colenso Memorial.

By the time we set off again it was very hot. We hauled ourselves up a large rock, with the help of an attached chain. Poles were thrown up. I should have put them on my pack! The memorial was a couple of minutes up the hill, a concrete mound covered in ferns, moss and lichen, bearing a plate inscribed *“COLENZO SPUR - Along this route in Feb. 1845 William Colenso made his first journey to cross the Ruahine Range.”*



After this the way forward was a mess of fallen trees, but we soon found our way on to the very steep track. I really struggled up here in the heat and lack of wind, and I soon started to feel sick and hoped I didn't have something nasty like food poisoning. I had to stop every few minutes to cool down. No matter how much I drank, it didn't feel like enough. Thank goodness after about an hour the track flattened out, and we had a long rest at the top and the turnoff down towards Barlow Hut. I started to improve as the nausea turned into a mere stomach-ache as I downed the last of my water. "Barlow Hut 30 minutes" according to the sign. Ha Ha. It was a very steep descent on a mostly good track, except for another patch of many tangled fallen trees to get through. Towards the bottom I heard the croaking of frogs from the tarn below and to our right, a dodgy walk across the top of a slip, followed by a precipitous downhill with loose stones. It was wonderful to arrive at Barlow Hut a few minutes later, at about 3.30pm. We had the hut to ourselves!



Barlow Hut was built in 1983 and is named after a local family who settled in the area. Beautifully wood panelled inside, it is officially an 8 bunker, but only 3 mattresses fit across each of the two sleeping platforms. This didn't affect me; as soon as it cooled down close to 5.30pm I really came back to life and set up my bush cocoon on a terrace just above the Makaroro River. I love hearing the sound of the river. Murray did the same but outside the hut. Adam intended to sleep in the wood annex which is part of the hut, but unfortunately, he would be driven inside by mosquitos.



Directly across the river from the hut was a massive slip, with one tree hanging on to life. These big slips are everywhere in this part of the Ruahines.

That night it was breezy, and it always feels funny when your shelter presses against you with every gust. But it was wonderful hearing Moreporks, who called for much of the night. In the early hours the darkness lightened as the moon came up. By 6am I was up and had packed my shelter. After breakfast and a group photo, we left the hut at 7.30am. I was looking forward to the easy walk out, down the river in the morning cool.

Sunday was a much cooler day. Passing under many large slips we came across a quad with its rider camping up on a bank, and a few minutes later a Ute. It seems a decent 4WD can get most of the way to the hut in lowish river flow.

In two and a half hours we were back at the car, but our treats weren't over with yet. Blair had seen a hut on "Huttbagger" called Norris Hut. It is also marked on my Topo 50 map. As long as an irate farmer didn't chase us, we were going to look for it. Only about 5km down Wakarara Road from where we were parked, we turned down Norris Road, parked at the end, and set off downhill, heading North on a grassy farm track. We had a fantastic view of Waipawa Saddle. Soon we came to a white picket gate, which led to a cottage and small outbuildings. The cottage was shuttered up, but we opened it up and entered for a look, a wonderful old-world setup with bunks, a kitchen, fireplace and small library. A visitors' book lay on the

table. Posted on the wall was interesting information: in 1975 the landowner, Dr Dan Norris transferred the title of his property to the NZ Scouting Association. This is private land, protected in perpetuity by an Open Space Covenant, by the QEII National Trust. There was another rather tatty little bunkroom outside, a locked shed, and an outhouse. All in a very relaxing bush setting.



We headed to Norsewood for lunch and were back in Palmerston North at about 2.30pm. Thanks to Blair for leading this wonderful and very interesting trip. And thanks to our drivers Adam and Blair.

We were Blair Petersen (trip leader), Heather, Adam, Murray, Grant, Woody, Nicola

Super at Rangi – (30th November).

Report and photo by Verity Elder

“Super at Rangi” was to be the summer, twilight version to the *“Moonlight Gorge Walk,”* aiming for a delightful evening looking over the Rangiwahia Terraces and lower Rangitikei area after an early dinner/super at Rangi Hut. At least that was the plan. The weather forecast was not looking great, with a high wind warning that eventually lifted the night before. In the end the walk up was humid and hot; we slowly cruised our way to the hut, melting in the afternoon heat. On the return walk the uncomfortable humidity broke with a light drizzle and shelter from the wind on the tops (the advantage of the track sidling the ridges). Either way, Rangi Hut is a great spot for good food and good company.

Super ranged from prepared pasta meals to tuna sachets. Quick, easy and light. But not for Warren and Robyn, who had carried ingredients for delicious burgers. Warren had diligently brought multiple near empty gas canisters, with the plan to use them to heat precooked sausages for their burgers. Every item came out of his pack as he spread out his gear, only to finally conclude, he had left his cooker at home. Four gas cylinders sat on the bench in the hut but no cooker!



Luckily, a short time later, a father and son (adult) duo arrived who generously shared their cooker so Warren could at least make a cup of tea. All was not wasted. This couple had travelled all the way from Tauranga to walk the Deadmans Loop and stay the night at Rangiwahia Hut. We marvelled at their determination to drive almost 8 hours return for this simple overnight trip and concluded it must be the draw of Rangi Hut, so perfectly accessible and a must visit for the area.

Future trip ideas were brainstormed such as *‘High Tea at Rangi’* – make a cup of tea and share a biscuit, (just don’t forget your cooker!). Food for thought (pun intended).

We were Verity (leader), Emma, Jenny (visitor from South Africa), Warren and Robyn.



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- Upcoming Trips and Club Nights
- Notices
- Trip Reports: Moonlight Gorge Walk, Akoutere, Barlow Hut, Super at Rangī.

Send articles to

the newsletter editor at elderverity@gmail.com

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