



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217
PALMERSTON NORTH

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1996 Edition

Club Patron	: Lawson Pither	357-3033
President	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
Vice President	: Tony Gates	357-7439
Secretary	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Treasurer	: Peter Wiles 358-6894	
Membership Enquiries	: Liz Flint 356-7654 and Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Gear custodian	: Mick Leyland 358-3183	
Newsletter Editor	: John Phillips 358-1874	

ENQUIRIES CONCERNING OVERDUE TRIPS

Mick Leyland : Ph. 358-3183
Terry Crippen : Ph. 356-3588
Sue & Lawson Pither : Ph. 357-3033

TRIPS OFTEN LEAVE FROM THE FOODTOWN CAR PARK IN FERGUSON STREET UNLESS THE LEADER ARRANGES OTHERWISE.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GOING ON A TRIP, PLEASE ADVISE THE LEADER AT LEAST THREE DAYS IN ADVANCE. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN AN ALTERNATIVE DAY OR WEEKEND TRIP, CONTACT THE LEADER OF THE SCHEDULED TRIP.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN A DAY TRIP MID-WEEK (Wednesday or Thursday) SEE DETAILS BELOW, OR RING Liz Flint (356-7654), or Lawson and Sue Pither (357-3033), or Monica (326-9691).

Trip Grades

Grade of trip: this is based on what tramping time a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the trip in. Easy (E) 3 – 4 hours, Medium (M) 5 – 6 hours, Fit (F) about 8 hrs, Fitness Essential (FE) >8 hrs. (Tech) refers to trips graded technical requiring either special skills and / or gear. Beginners should start with Easy grade tramps.

Members are reminded that a charge for transport will be collected on the day of the tramp, the amount depending on the distance traveled and vehicle used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAMME

Club meetings are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month. The venue is the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North, at 7:30 pm during winter and 7:45 pm during summer unless otherwise notified in the newsletter. Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 30c which includes supper.

The PNTMC committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

**Deadline for notices and trip reports for inclusion in newsletter:
LAST THURSDAY of each month.**

SCHEDULED EVENT LIST

NOTE TO TRIP LEADERS: PLEASE DISCUSS WITH THE TRIPS CONVENORS (TERRY 356-3588) OF LIZ 356-7654), AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT THAT 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.

SEPT 12 Midweek tramping Cath Lyttle 329-8608

SEPT 12 Club Night: SAR and First Aid by Travers Moffitt.
Travers is a local paramedic, and with his interest in the hills, he has been involved with numerous Search and Rescue operations. Essential listening.

SEPT 14-15 Whangaehu, climbing F,T Nigel Barrett 326-8847

Whangaehu Hut is located overlooking the Desert Road, and provides good accommodation for those wanting to experience Ruapehu at its best. September can be a great time to look for some steep ice to climb, plod up some snow slopes, and further your snowcraft experiences. Beware of exploding volcanoes! The leader here is quite a character, who promises to provide an interesting cuisine, and may entertain the troops with his (attempts at) poetry. Depart Saturday AM, early.

SEPT 15 Rangī snowplay E+M Tony Gates 357-7439

Rangī Hut is located on the tussock tops of the western Ruahines. It is a popular day trip just to see the countryside and relax in the hut, but with Tony, you will get a chance to go for a cross country ski. Crampons and ice axe may be required. Depart Sat. 8.00 AM.

SEPT 19 Midweek Tramping John Rockell 358-3513

SEPT 21-22 Gold Creek E/M Graeme Roberts 357-8567

Located in the north eastern Ruahines in from Ongaonga, Gold Creek and Hut are easily reached in 5 hours. Great beech forest. Depart Saturday AM.

SEPT 22 Sunrise-Waipawa loop M Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Sunrise Hut is a popular spot, and provides easy access to the tops of the north Eastern Ruahines. There are a couple of options for this trip: either via Te Atuaoparapara and Waipawa Saddle and River, or a scramble down a huge scree slope north of Te Atua to a creek that meets the Waipawa River. The option via TeAtuoparapara, at 1687 metres, provides great views of much of the Ruahines. It involves a fairly strenuous climb to the top, then descent south to Waipawa Saddle, then leads down the wide open Waipawa River. Alternatively, the scree slope route is lots of fun for the "moon-walking" junkies. Come prepared for snow and ice with the first option. Depart early Saturday.

SEPT 26 Midweek Tramping Phil Pearce 354-6687

SEPT 26 Club night: Climbing in Bolivia Andy Backhouse

The club's very own resident mountaineer, Andy Backhouse, will be talking tonight on his travels into the Andean mountains in Bolivia.

SEPT 28- 29 Pouakai, ENP M Malcolm Parker 357-5203

This trip was postponed from Sept 7-8. This area has alpine swamps that are botanically very interesting, and there are always great views of the big hill to the south. Check departure time with Malcolm.

SEPT 28-29 Climbing, Whakapapa M/F, T Terry Crippen 356-3588

Full moon in the mountains again. Depart 6 pm Friday night. This climbing trip is to the western slopes of Ruapehu, staying at the NZ Alpine Club hut (all the mod cons) above the skifield. It's an opportunity for those who went on Snowcraft III to further practice their skills. So talk one of the people who instructed you on the snowcraft weekends into teaming up with you (with their gear!) for a weekend of climbing. 10 places booked. Cost: \$36 (non NZAC members), \$16 (NZAC members); plus transport /food.

SEPT 29 Rimutaka Incline E+M Richard Lockett 323-0948

This is one of DOC Wellington's most popular spots, just south of Featherston, in the Wairarapa. Good picnic spots. The main track follows the old "Rimutaka Incline", which is the old railway line over the scrub covered range. Plenty of interest for everyone.

OCT 3 Midweek Tramping Peter Carver 354-4479

OCT 3 Committee Meeting at Tony Gates' place 24 Springdale Crescent 7.30 pm.

OCT 5-6 McKinnon Hut M Barry Scott 354-0510

McKinnon Hut is located in a bushline basin on the northern slopes of the Hikurangi Range in the Ruahines, requiring travel on the tops to reach it. Ice axe and crampons may be required. Good views. Departure time to be advised.

OCT 6 Ohau Shelter E Margaret Riordan 356-7460
In from Levin, the Ohau valley is usually seen as a valley to pass through. This time, Margaret will take you over the farmland, and along the well worn track to the somewhat decrepit Ohau Shelter. Hopefully, there will be a new bridge to cross.

OCT 10 Midweek Tramping Neil Gutry 354-0284

OCT 10 Club night: Rocky Mountains Peter and Judy Stockdale
Club members Peter and Judy will be presenting a talk of some activities in the Rocky Mountains. Peter and Judy have spoken to us before, and they have some great pickies to show.

OCT 12-13 Howletts – Longview M Llew Prichard 358-2217
This area is an eternal favourite for many of us, and there are numerous options for trips in the area. The route to Howletts follows the Tukituki to Daphne hut, then climbs steeply to the delightful Howletts hut, which is just on the tops. Tramp along Daphne ridge to Otumore on Sunday, then down to Longview hut, and the road. Good low tussock tops, some leatherwood, and always good views. There will still be a bit of snow about up there, so be prepared.

OCT 12-13 Rock-climbing instruction I Andy Backhouse 353-0774
Another chance to brush up on skills that will be useful for Snowcraft. Location to be decided, possibly "CITY ROCK" on Grey Street.

OCT 17 Midweek Tramping Ken & Rose Hall 356-8538

OCT 19-20 Mangahao Flats combo M Warren Wheeler 356-1998
Drive into the Tararuas from Shannon, then up to the top dam carpark. A couple of hours of fairly muddy tramping to Harris Creek Hut, then pleasant open grassy river flats and beech forest.

OCT 20 Mick's Mystery Trip M Mick Leyland 358-3183
We can't tell you where you are going as it is a mystery! Mick knows the hills well, and his trips are always good value, so give him a call and come along.

OCT 24 Thursday day trippers Lawson Pither 357-3033

Labour Weekend

OCT 25-28 Mt Hikurangi M+F Terry Crippen 356-3588
Another full moon, smack bang in the middle of the weekend this time, so adding to what should be a great trip to one of those seldom visited mountains. Hikurangi is near the top of the East coast, and is well known as "the first to see the light". It is a steep crag at the top, getting well up into the tussock tops. There is a good hut up there somewhere. Terry plans to make it a four day trip due to the traveling distances involved.

OCT 26-28 Heritage Lodge Family Jo & Lawrence O'Halloran 356-2296
A very easy stroll up an old road in the Oroua River, in front of Apiti. The hut is nothing to speak of, but the river flats below it make for pleasant picnicking.

OCT 31 Midweek Tramping Judy Stockdale 355-5277

OCT 31 Club Night: Intro To south Island Trips
The ultimate for many of us is the long weekend/ week/ two week expedition into the Southern Alps. That is where you can tramp, climb, and simply exist in New Zealand's best mountains and valleys. Many club members know the South Island very well, and will be talking about, and showing slides of, the South Islands.

EDITORIAL

Terry Crippen

Spring has arrived already. For me winter did not seem like a real winter, with Snowcraft I and II on Egmont/Taranaki having very little snow and that was sugary spring-like snow anyhow. (Snowcraft III, I hear, had proper winter-like conditions on Ruapehu.) Likewise the Ruahine ranges had less snow than other years, (but snow conditions were excellent on my rare visits to the tops). However I think the main reason it hasn't seemed like a "real" winter to me is that I didn't get out enough. Possibly a common complaint for many of us. It's quite hard getting out on all those trips that are available. However collectively, as club members and new comers, over the winter we averaged 6 or more people on each scheduled trip (and that didn't include Midwinter and the three Snowcraft weekends which have 10-20+ participants on each).

The Snowcraft programme was highly successful this winter with the large numbers of pupils on each of the three

weekends developing their skills under the eyes of the instructors. A thank you to the instructors. I would especially like to thank Andy and Bruce for the large amount of time and effort that they put into planning and running the programme. Their approach this year with formal evening sessions before and over the weekends to compliment the outside training, will be of great benefit to all those who participated. I hope we can continue this style of instruction each year.

Spring means plenty of snow and better weather conditions to practice all those snowcraft and climbing skills. There are plenty of club trips to cater for this. Also there will be rock climbing instruction and trips. This rock climbing complements the snow and ice skills recently learnt. Most climbing down south, especially over the summer, is always a mixture of snow, ice and rock. So combining both skills is essential.

Talking about down south and summer, it looks like we may have three or more club extended trips over the Christmas - February period: Arthur's Pass, Kahurangi National Park and, closer to hand, Matemateaonga walkway. Some tramping, some climbing. (See in the notices for preliminary info.) So use spring to get out and get fitter for those 4 or 8 or ?14 day trips.

Changing the subject a bit... While some people may think that there has been a lot of emphasis on snow, ice and mountaineering lately, we haven't forgotten about the tramping and below bushline activities and skills. It's just that winter is the best time to concentrate on alpine activities (from Palmerston North). So come November, we will be getting into some navigation and river safety training, and hopefully in the new year, bushcraft training (after a long absence of formal training in this set of skills), and risk management (which is a formal approach to wise planning and activity that can be used in all spheres of the outdoors). And there are always plenty of tramping trips.

Finally, we have the coming election of a new (style) parliament and government. So give some thought to issues that affect our access to, and use of, all the National and Forest Parks, and effects on DOC, etc. Check out the various party policies and track records. (the last FMC bulletin – August had lots of relevant stuff). And don't forget to cast a vote before you head off on either the Howletts – Longview or Rock-climbing trips on the weekend of October 12 – 13.

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome the following new members to the Club:

Magda Dunoska	19A Cedar Grove, Ph 357-2663;
Clive Marsh	112B Linton Street, Ph 359-5220;
Nick Pringle	27 Miko Street, PN.

CORRECTIONS/CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP LIST (in August newsletter)

Nigel Scott	Quine Rd, RD3 (not 5), Morrinsville,	07 887-5610
Kristen Stokes	18 Buxton Place, Palmerston North,	358-9334
Sarah Todd	20 Kent Crescent, Palmerston North,	357-0612

FIRST AID COURSES

Sheryl Wright has confirmed the next MSC courses on Outdoor First Aid. The Palmerston North courses will be on NOVEMBER 9-10 and DECEMBER 7-8. A course originally planned for October has been cancelled. Cost will be \$80 which is good value, because it includes all food. The location is Camp Kilsby at Linton. For those who cannot make these dates, Wellington MSC are running one at Riverslea Lodge, Otaki Forks on October 5-6. The cost for this course will be \$110 because of the higher cost for the Lodge. Contact Sheryl on 358-3300 or 025-416 585 for details, or to register your interest.

THE NEXT SIX MONTHLY EVENTS CARD

This will be for January to July 1997, and comes out with the December Newsletter, so that gives just a couple of months for all your suggestions as to where you want club trips to go to, and your offers to lead them. Also your suggestions/offers for club night speakers/events. Be in early by contacting the Trips convenor Terry Crippen 356-3588, or Liz Flint 356-7654 and, for the club evenings, the Social convenor Tony Gates 357-7439 before we contact you in October - November.

EXTENDED TRIPS THIS SUMMER - Preliminary info

1. Matemateaonga Walkway, Whanganui National Park

Have you ever dreamed of one of those relaxing holiday-type trips where the huts aren't too far apart, there are no longer uphill (or downhill) stretches, the scenery is fantastic, the huts are excellent, etc etc. This trip will certainly meet all these very stringent criteria!

The track follows a route planned for a road that was surveyed along the crest of the Matemateaonga Range in the

early part of this century, aiming to link the prosperous area surrounding Stratford with Pipiriki and the thriving tourist industry based around the Whanganui River. In many parts you can still see where the roadway had been cut into the hillsides.

Previously one of the major drawbacks from this trip has been the horrendous transport access problem, as both ends of the track are quite remote. This has now been resolved for a reasonable cost (compared with other options), as we have someone who has made an offer for complete transport arrangements from Wanganui City base for around \$130 each (minimum 5 persons). This includes a jetboat leg from the eastern end of the track to Pipiriki. That just leaves you to concentrate on enjoying yourself and having a well-earned holiday! So if you are interested in this Medium trip of about 4 days on December 27-30, then contact Malcolm Parker on 357-5203.

2. Kahurangi Natinal Park

This will be a medium to fit trip some time in the first 2 weeks of the New Year. Planning for this trip is very preliminary at this stage, with various options being considered. The Park offers long and short trips to points of interest and through different types of country - wide river valleys, rugged ridges, plateaux, karst and sink-hole landscapes. To gain the most enjoyment from this trip a combination of long and short trips could work out well, for example 6 days Cobb Valley to Boulder Lake via the Drunken Sailors, 2-3 days in the Mt Arthur Tablelands and 1-2 days to Mt Owen. For those with limited time, it may be possible to join only one section of the trip. If you are interested in joining this trip or have a trip preference in mind, then contact Warren (356-1998).

3. Arthur's Pass

A two week combination alpine tramping/climbing trip to the Arthur's Pass area along similar lines to the trips the last two summers; an 8 to 10 day trans-alpine tramp climbing the odd peak. Followed by a few days of "rest" and climbing based in Arthur's Pass township. Grade: Fit and Technical, ie. capable of doing an extended trip (8 to 10 days), generally about 6-8 hours tramping per day but with the odd 13 hour day, and at least Snowcraft III ability. Cost: very approx \$200 includes food/transport. Tentative dates about 11 to 25 January. Contact Terry 356-3588.

TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER NEWSLETTER ARTICLES! A note from the Editor

To all of you who would like to contribute articles to this newsletter, small articles are okay hand-written (deliver to John Phillips, 87 Victoria Avenue), but it makes the editor's job a bit easier if larger articles are on disc. Even better, if you have the facilities at home or at work, why not "e-mail" it to me at my work e-mail address which is PHILLIPS@MWRC.GOV.T.NZ. I am editing on "Microsoft Works" software, which can convert Microsoft Word as well. If you use any other software, give me a ring on 357-9009(work) or 358-1874(home) and I may be able to indicate whether it is compatible or not. Please note the deadline for each month's issue on the front page of the newsletter. People are also welcome to write a guest editorial (so as you don't have to listen to me every month!) This month's is written by Terry. Any other offers?

WANTED TO BUY

2-3 person tent. Contact Dale Lockart, 359-2922

"EXTREME REALITY" LECTURE BY PETER HILLARY

First Doug Scott, and now Peter Hillary have spoken to Palmerston North. Hillary recently gave a packed audience at Aquaba an enthralling account of his attempt at K2, in Pakistan. He is a skilled orator. Amazing slides, a brief video clip, a failure of a fashion parade, and complimentary wine and chicken pieces and wedges all made it a great night out.

BOOK REVIEWS by Tony Gates

"Graeme Dingle Dangerous Journeys", by Pat Booth (1995), Hodder Moa Beckett, Auckland.

This book is a glossy, hard covered biography of one of New Zealand's most achieved and well known mountaineers and adventurers. It is essentially a summary of several books by Dingle that most of us are familiar with, but written by a non-mountaineer (except for some dairy excerpts). The book covers his very active and well photographed life in the mountains from the mid 60's to today.

There are 12 chapters that are easy to slot into anywhere in the book. Each deal with episodes in Dingles life, admittedly most of which are about the mountains. But there are other episodes of note, including: setting up the Outdoor Pursuits Centre; taking Bruce Burgess, a Cerebral Palsy victim, to the top of Ruapehu; "The Journey" (which PNTMC met at Rangi Hut, June 1988); Jet boating the Ganges; and "Expedition K". Setting and achieving goals, turning back before that goal (summit), physical fitness, and death in the mountains are central themes. (The deaths of Noel Sissons, Jill Tremain, and Murray Jones, and others, are discussed, including his own brushes with death, perhaps the closest being on the slopes of the Tararuas). Death, and premonition of it, are discussed as Dingle joined

an ill-equipped Army group on Ruapehu who ignored his advice on the mountain, and nearly ended in a multiple tragedy (the army still ignored his advice after the event, and the tragedy did happen some years later). Dingle climbed with many, including Mike Gill, Stu Allen, Ray Button, Doug Wilson, Ian Jowatt, George Harris, Ed and Peter Hillary, and numerous well known Europeans and Sherpas. Dingle's fitness was, and still is, legendary. At age 20, he ran from Putara to Kaitoke in just 18 hours (4 hours to Arete, lunch on Holdsworth, dusk on Cone Saddle). He set many records and first ascents in mountain ranges around the world.

If ever you get the chance, read his books or, even better, attend one of his slide shows. Graeme Dingle is a great Raconteur.

"PIERCING THE CLOUDS". Tom Fyfe: first to climb Mt Cook" By John Haynes (1994), Hazard Press

An excellent book on history, mountaineering, and society of the time. This is an autobiography, following Fyfe's life, and the competition to get to the top first. Compelling reading. Fyfe was obviously very skilled and experienced in the mountains.

"NEW ZEALAND'S TOP TEN TRACKS" By Mark Pickering (1990) Heinemann Reed. Pickering has written several books like this. This one is a very touristy field booklet designed to be carried around by a New Zealander or a foreign visitor as they tramp these tracks. If you are going to these places, then this book would be a valuable document. There is good general introduction stuff, up to date contacts, then easy to read summaries of the; Waikaremoana, Tongariro, Matemateaonga, Abel Tasman, Heaphy, St James, Routeburn, Greenstone-Caples, Milford, and Kepler tracks. Criteria in choosing these top ten was obviously popularity, accessibility, and geographic spread.

Nothing on the Ruahines or Tararuas here, maybe we have something at our back door that the author doesn't know about?

TRIP REPORTS

SAR CALL-OUT

On Monday night I received a telephone call asking me if I could have a 'Search & Rescue Team' at the PN Police Station at 6 o'clock, Tuesday morning. On Friday night two men had been out hunting up Scots Road, and they had not returned to their vehicle where most of their gear had been left. They should have returned on Saturday but had not done so.

Three teams from Palmerston North were at the Police Station. An army truck transported us up to the hunters' vehicle to begin the search. All of the teams were equipped with maps of the area and a Codan radio. Our team was sent east. As we were searching we spied a hut from the ridge top. We informed base and were asked to investigate. Once we had checked the hut Trevor radioed back to base to say there was no sign of anyone having been in residence recently.

We were then informed that a dog had been sighted by another search party in the Tokomaru river. It was decided that we would be lifted out of the ranges and to the head of the Tokomaru river by helicopter. We were cable hoisted by a helicopter out of the bush. This was a first time experience for all of us except Trevor. (Most exciting. A real buzz!)

Our next task was to check the side creeks. Having completed this we radioed base control only to be informed that the lost party had walked out by themselves. A Helicopter was then sent in to collect us and we were flown back to base at 5:30 pm, Tuesday night.

Trevor managed our team most professionally with Llew, Graham and myself having a good day out. Debriefing for the search was held at the police station two weeks later with refreshments after.

HOUND HIKE Sunday, July 21 by "Amy" Eder

Hearing a car one *very* wet Sunday morning I rushed to the door in my usual manner, hackles raised and barking loudly ready to defend Tricia and my territory. I was delighted to see Liz and ecstatic to see she had brought the car up the drive instead of leaving it on the road. This could only mean one thing - A WACK! I leapt into the back of the car as soon as possible. "Bonnie" slunk over into the middle seat. I make her nervous, but she should know I always behave in the car - otherwise I might get left behind! "Rosemary" arrived with Monica AND, you're not going to believe this, Tricia got into the car too - with her boots and my packs - for the first time since I'd lived with her. *Where* were we going because Tricia still can't manage hills too well. Well, it turned out to be the beach at Moanaroa by the Santoft forest and I must say the weather was much better by the time we leapt out of the car.

I snarled gently at Bonnie and Rosemary just to make sure they knew I was still top dog and leader. We had a delightful scamper up the beach, calm sea, warm sun, interesting smells and great company. I kept trotting back to Tricia to make sure she was alright but with me carrying all the gear she was fine and even managed quite a steep slope up into the sand dunes for lunch.

After eating our Tux biscuits and any other scraps we could scrounge we set off along the forest track. Rosemary loved hunting in the gloom of the pine forest. We had a splash and a drink in one of those square holes they fill with water especially for thirsty hounds but only Rosemary wanted to swim.

Back at the car we had a bowl of water and a biscuit before driving home. A great day. We were: Amy Eder, Rosemary Cantwell and Bonnie Morrison, accompanied by Tricia, Monica and Liz.

P.S. Hi Nicky, how's your new home? A greeting woof from us all.

SNOWCRAFT II August 3-4 by Zoe Hart

The alarm went off at 4 am – yea it really was time to get up! After the customary congregating at the Foodtown carpark we made our way to Dawson Falls. The weather looked challenging, (actually, we couldn't see the mountain from the road) but that didn't deter us and we made our way up to Kapuni Lodge. The weather was pretty shocking, but as Snowcraft One had been 'Hut craft' for at least one day, we made our way round to a gully which was relatively (!) protected from the wind and rain. Those of us in plastic boots remembered quickly why we'd saved up for them, and those of us in leathers got wet feet!

We spent two to three hours practicing cramponing and belay techniques until the weather got the better of us and we made our way back to the hut for a late lunch. The rest of the day was spent practicing/learning how to put in snowstakes (yes, its true, in the hut) and extricating fallen colleagues from crevasses. After dinner Bruce talked about the various climbs up Taranaki, and which ones to pick depending on the season.

Sunday the weather was better, and again we headed back to the same gully for more practice. Tony kept Clive's group going by lobbing scorched almonds down the slope at them. Amazingly, they didn't seem to mind. Andy showed his group how to make a snow bollard - or was it a slush bollard? Not surprisingly, it was not terribly bomb proof.

I certainly improved my confidence and skills, thanks to the organisation and effort of Andy and all the instructors. Thanks guys! Snowcraft II were: Neil, Maree, Dave L, Cath, Jo, Sarah, Dave S, Kristin, Judy, Warren, Heather, Lawrence, Ramon, Peter, Wayne, Zoe, Lynn, Keith and Wayne.

HINERUA HUT, EASTERN RUAHINES August 10-11 by Mick Leyland

Three trampers toured towards Tinofcoco (I've run out of "T" words) in inclement weather. We hadn't been in this part of the Ruahines, so we poked around a little before parking the car down the road heading towards an airstrip marked on the map. While waiting for a shower to pass the farmer came by. He seemed pleased to have trampers on his land which stretches right through to the Tukituki river, 1700 acres of deer farm.

Walking up the road small herds of deer could be seen scattered in and about Second Growth Beech Forest. As farm roads go this would have to be one of the most interesting I have yet to see.

Very pleasant walk into Hinerua Hut once off the farm. It has been refurbished (1993), four bunks, sink and wood burning stove. Having the afternoon free it was decided to have a look at Smith's Stream Hut which is placed on a small river bench - the hut is grotty. Graham decided to lead us off the track on the way back from Smiths Stream, no doubt feeling we were a little under done and needed some real bush bashing to work up an appetite for tea.

We departed the hut at 8.30 arriving in Palmy at 12 noon. Finding where the track began and progressed was left up to Llew. Poles, markers or signs don't exist, but once on the track it was no problem.

SNOWCRAFT III 16-18th August, 1996 by Keith Charlton

Instructors: Andy, Derek, Peter, Clive

Participants: Lynn, Kristin, John, Magda, Zoe, Wayne, Marie, Anne, Warren, Keith.

When we arrived at the MTSC hut at Ruapehu on Friday night, the power supply to the entire Top of the Bruce area was down. Andy telephoned the lodge maintenance people and found out that the power would be fixed in the morning, so we had crackers and cheese under candlelight before going to bed.

Relying on two cookers, we managed to brew a cup of tea in the morning with breakfast. I decided to give the mains switch another try, and to my delight, the power was back on, so we were guaranteed a water supply for the toilets.

The day was sunny and with clear skies we set off to the Amphitheatre to practice the belaying skills we had learnt on Egmont a fortnight earlier. We paired off, roped up and pitched up the slopes under the guidance of Andy, Clive Peter, and Derek.

Going up was almost as fun as coming down. We created a self-equalising belay with 2 snow-stakes and abseiled down a double rope to a convenient pillar of rock, then “rapped” off that back into the Amphitheatre. After lunch we traversed the slopes of Ruapehu, down-climbed near Delta Corner onto the skifield, and crossed to the base of the Grand Pinnacle, and practised some 50 metre pitches on some of the gentler slopes.

We returned to the hut at dusk, thoroughly tired out by a great day’s climbing.

The evening was spent learning Z-pulley crevasse extraction techniques with some “crash-test dummies” volunteering to be unconscious bodies attached to the rope, and Andy taught us how to find an avalanche transceiver in the dark (*not* by looking for the flashing green light!).

Sunday was an average day, with a cool breeze blowing. While the adrenaline junkies preferred some “whack & dangle” on the Grand Pinnacle, our group decided to go back to the Amphitheatre to build a snow cave, and practice with avalanche transceivers.

In two hours we had dug out a reasonably sized cavern, so we sheltered from the wind inside and ate our lunch. We decided to leave via a short, vertical ice chute on the northern wall of the Amphitheatre. Peter lead it using only one axe and crampons, then belayed up Magda, Zoe and Warren. They threw me the rope and as I was tying-in we heard a cry for help from beneath the cliffs.

Three young skiers had fallen in from the side over some rocks. Zoe, Peter and I walked up the slope to discover one of them had facial lacerations, possible broken ribs with sharp pain on breathing. We signaled for Warren and Magda to go for the Ski Patrol, and we made the three 13 year-old boys comfortable. Fortunately we had a doctor with us, and we used Peter’s bivvy bag to keep the patient warm.

The Ski Patrol guys brought in their Skidoo, strapped him onto a backboard and moved all three “victims” down to the mouth of the Amphitheatre where they could fly in the chopper. We missed out on a helicopter ride but had an exciting experience helping with the rescue. I’m not quite sure if it was the fall or Peter’s singing that put the boys into their state of shock.

Overall it was an enjoyable and inspiring weekend and many thanks to Andy Backhouse and the instructors for the well organised trip.

SNOWCRAFT III - 'WACK-N-DANGLE' VERSION by John Phillips

We raised our sights for a luxurious weekend ahead in the MTSC Hut near Whakapapa (who cares what the weather hold? Let’s “get down” in the lodge!). We started Friday night with a slippery 10-minute walk through the snow by torchlight from the top of the Bruce carpark. Arriving at our luxury base, we had to leave the torches on when the power wouldn’t crank up. (I think I remember groaning even more the next morning when it came on – with the radio, that is).

Anyhow, as Keith has already described in his report above, Saturday was cracker weather. The sun was blinding on the fresh white slopes all day. A long morning was spent practicing belay skills on some moderate slopes in the Amphitheatre – a striking area of dark brown rocks and bluffs contrasting brilliantly with their blanket of snow and the all-blue sky above. Taranaki was even resplendent on the western horizon. After lunch we brushed through the hoards of skiers and t-bars (who were gawking at us like we’d just landed off some flying saucer – mind you ... with helmets, ice picks, big ‘spikey’ boots, bits jangling around our waist, and miles of technicolour rope around our necks we probably did look pretty alien!) and crossed over below Pinnacle Ridge. Then further belaying practice on the slightly more challenging lower slopes of the ridge, together with an impromptu demonstration of various ice-screws by Andy in the best-quality ice available at the time (probably more fittingly described by the commonly used ‘ski-radio’ lingo for ice: “packed powder”).

We wandered back to the hut, sun-drenched and weary after a long day. Andy made admirable attempts to keep us awake that evening by hanging various ropes and bodies from the main interior beam inside the hut.

Discussions over breakfast on Sunday morning centred around the range of possible activities for the day. We did our

best not to be unduly influenced by the wind-driven snow outside which was assuming an increasingly horizontal trajectory as we spoke. A number of people showed an interest in trying out making a snow cave, but a few hardy souls were contemplating more daring feats. And so the "wack-n-dangle" group was forged in a moment's rush of enthusiasm (or was it naivety?). I myself felt I needed to tackle a slope where one really felt the *need* to rope up, which I presumed yesterday's slopes were *not*, given that our instructors were casually scrambling up and down the slopes all around us without one!

Hence followed the mad quest for a slope that was steep enough, that was icy enough... We ventured out into the weather, thinking it might not be too long before we'd retreat to the hut - it was not exactly "visibility unlimited" (more 'ski-radio' speak). After a pitch led by myself on one steep firm-snow slope past the ski-lift, we spied a likely challenge up a narrow gut on the Pinnacle Ridge slopes. There was no holding back Kristin, my climbing partner for the day, as she took the lead this time, surging up a pitch not far short of 50 metres (muttering expletives at one very icy stage!), with a couple of runners on the way, one of them an ice screw that went in *very* firmly. Our competent instructor, Derek, definitely *wasn't* clambering around without a rope! Instead he used our rope with a prussik for security.

I led the much easier second pitch around the foot of a bluff and up a steepish but soft snow slope, banging in two snow stakes for the final belay. I found out it's when you get to the top and look back *down* you realise just how steep and high you really are in these situations. Man, this was just the sort of mild-adrenalin challenge we had been looking for! The rope-work probably needs a lot more practice to be quick and efficient, but we felt pretty good at what we'd managed to do. We then sidled along the top and back down along an easy spur to the valley floor, returning to the hut for a de-brief, and packed for the journey home.

It was a superb weekend – the weather even held out not too badly for the rest of Sunday. I was really impressed with the course organization, and Andy's positive leadership style, ably assisted by the other instructors.

A CLASSIC RUAHINE CLASSIC 24-25 August 1996 by Peter Burgess

After a certain amount of delay, due to the lateness of some of our party, we set off from Ashhurst at around 7:30 am on Saturday with the addition of Chris Saunders who joined us for the day. As we went North it became apparent that there was considerable snow up there. If the weather would only hold it would be a great trip. We encountered snow quite low down on our way up to Sunrise Hut, which looked pretty fresh and soft. Hmm, some snow plodding to come, I thought to myself. After a short break at the hut, we donned extra clothing and headed out onto the ridge up to Armstrong Saddle. No sooner had we hit the exposed ridge than we had to pile on even more clothes. The wind was icy.

The slog up through the leatherwood on the lower slopes of Te Atuaoparapara didn't seem quite as bad as last time. Perhaps I found a better route through, or perhaps the snow helped? However the next bit was quite a slog, with soft snow to contend with. Only the last few metres to the first peak had ice. Crampons were needed from this point on, especially down the southern side towards Waipawa Saddle. The trip down from the saddle was mostly straight forward apart from a rather narrow spur with a waterfall on one side and a steep eroded gully on the other. Nigel was tempted to "go for a hoon", but sanity prevailed.

Waikamaka Hut is quite cosy with bunks for 10 or 12. We soon had the fire going, despite the previous occupants having put it out with water! We were in the middle of preparing dinner when the other party arrived from Howletts, heralded by Tony Gates staggering through the door and collapsing on the floor! It had taken them 10 hours apparently, with head winds to contend with. A three course dinner went down well (2 minute noodles, rice rizotto and lumpy semolina - mmm) and we quickly retired to get out of the other's way and try to get as much shut-eye as possible before the big day tomorrow.

5 am came at last and we leapt out of bed and got ready, before waiting for some members to make porridge, lose a glove, and attend to various bodily functions. So much for our 6 am start, we finally trooped off at around 6:30 am.

On the advice of Tony, we left the main track to Rangī Saddle and headed up a scree (well mostly snow actually) slope, cutting quite a bit off our time to the top of Rangiateatua, we reckoned. I managed to find some particularly hard ice on the way up (ok with crampons), though the others seemed to manage without until the Summit. Once on top, we beheld a magnificent clear sunny day, quite the reverse of what had been forecast. Even better, there was relatively little wind. These conditions held pretty well for the rest of the day, although some cloud did scud across the tops occasionally.

Broken Ridge was traversed mostly uneventfully apart from one point when I slipped going around a rocky outcrop and had to stick the ice axe in rather hurriedly. Our original plan had been to do Sawtooth Ridge, but we decided that it would take too long, so headed down Black Ridge. This turned out to be quite a bit trickier than anticipated with a very

steep ice slope to start with, followed by some hairy sidling on a steep soft snow slope (both ably led by Nigel, despite the snow balling up under his flash new crampons). The scary stuff eventually gave way to moderate scrambling and tension was relieved by a snow fight or two. We were very glad to reach the large tarn, though some effort was required to reach the water through the ice.

At the signpost which said we still had 2 ½ hours to Daphne Hut it was 5 pm, so we decided to head down to the Tukituki river and out via the road rather than face a long walk in the bush in the dark. Nigel (still full of energy) volunteered to run ahead and get the car. In retrospect, I am not convinced that this was the best move.

We got to the river just before dark and there followed numerous scary river crossings in the dark! Fortunately, Warren was able to show us the new river crossing technique which felt very secure. After a slight detour up the wrong side stream, in spite of Kristin's warning that it wasn't the one she remembered, we eventually reached the road and walked for about half an hour before hearing the welcome sound of a car engine as Nigel arrived. The goodies left by the other party were very much appreciated. Total time for Sunday: 13 hours.

The party were Peter Burgess, Warren Wheeler, Nigel Barrett and Kristin Stokes.

RUAHINE WINTER CLASSIC (The Rendezvous) by John Phillips

I quickly staked my claim for the south-to-north contingent for this trip, rather than Nigel's southbound group, not relishing the thought of Sawtooth Ridge in the highly suspect weather that was forecast for the Sunday. It didn't make much difference as it turned out – the suspect weather occurred Saturday anyway! It was good to get the climb to Howletts behind us the Friday night nevertheless.

A group of four of us (Derek Sharp, Tony Gates, Wayne Beggs and myself) managed to score an early Friday afternoon off to drive out to the old Moorcock Base area. Setting off on foot by 5pm, we crossed a small creek and weaved our way up a hillside of regenerating scrub. Entering the bush for the descent to the Tukituki River in the fading darkness, Wayne and Tony soon disappeared ahead. Derek and I rejoined them at the riverbank, wolfed down some scroggin, and loaded up head-torches (including mine, newly purchased that afternoon in anticipation of this previously untried method of tramping). We headed off up-river, criss-crossing as we went, linking in pairs (using the new river-crossing technique!) for one or two knee-deep sections. The head torches were amazingly effective (why didn't I get one of these ages ago?) and, in fact, despite the regular boot-drenching and the marginal water temperatures, I have to say I really enjoyed this section of the trip. At night, with the forest "walls" either side and the odd rock bluff, the sound (and feel!) of rushing water, the waver of headlamps piercing the darkness of the air and the surprisingly clear depths of the river - I almost imagined this was how caving might feel, minus the claustrophobia perhaps!

Our knowledgeable guides located the track at about 7pm for the grind up to Howletts. It was a real grunt for a while, but the grade then eased a little and the snow began appearing underfoot. We made good time to the bushline and emerged onto the snowy tussock tops, switching off headlamps to walk under a brilliant half-moon shining directly overhead, setting the alpine vista aglow around us. It was hard work through the deep snow up to the hut and RATHER cold on the feet, still wet from the river crossing, but it was a magic evening nonetheless. By 9pm we arrived at a very quaint Howletts Hut in an equally quaint alpine basin setting, and burst forth inside to commence the thawing out process. A late dinner was had by all, except for Mr Gates who was too busy trying to keep the previous meal down - apparently some over-exertion combined with a hint of a tummybug - and he hadn't even eaten any of the dreaded spicy hot sausages yet! I settled in to a 'luxuriously' appointed mezzanine bunk, complete with dormer window that overlooked the moonlit mountains and plains below.

We awoke Saturday soon after sunrise and set off north along Daphne Ridge about 8 am. Tiraha was ominously engulfed in misty cloud, but the early morning sun angled through from the southern Hawkes Bay coast for a while. We donned crampons to scale the more icy slopes towards Tiraha summit, and forged north onto Sawtooth Ridge. My earlier belief that the cloud might lift and herald the brilliant day had been forecast gradually waned, as we found ourselves negotiating bluff after bluff in murky whiteness. The cloud lifted briefly enough to sight Ohuinga ahead, but the cloud set in again further north as we huddled behind the ridge down the next saddle for a quick lunch in the spindrift.

Tony and I soon fell behind on the Broken Ridge leg, thanks largely to recurring crampon problems for both of us. The crampons were certainly essential for many sections we tackled that day. One slope in particular that we had to negotiate to sidle round a large bluff near Rangioateatua was icy, requiring very deliberate, firm steps to ensure crampons engaged the hillside! By 3 pm the cloud and wind was really starting to set in towards Rangioateatua and, after some nervous navigation moments, we soon caught up to Derek and Wayne who had been waiting in a frigid

state for some time. We dropped down to Rangi Saddle, removing crampons for a scrappy descent down a creek bed to Waikamaka Hut. Drenching plastic boots en route.

At the hut by 6 pm, we met Nigel, Peter, Kristin and Warren who had already settled in, with a hot brew ready for us. Tony followed up with a monster stew, laced with his now infamous spicy hot sausages. The evening called for tightly-zipped sleeping bags to minimise any fire hazard! The next morning was a bit of a sleep-in for us, disturbed only by the early-risers for the trip south. The disturbance was strangely comforting - knowing that it wasn't us having to grovel back up that creek to Rangi Saddle, and then scale the whole route back to Moorcock Base in a day. I did not envy their task - particularly given the weather forecast. So what did they need? Hey! Another wrong weather forecast!

And they sure got it - we all got it! This became apparent as we tramped up the small valley towards Waipawa Saddle around 10am, straight into the blinding, warm sun reflecting off water and snow. I started with intentions of giving the planned Te Atuaoparapara route a big miss and opting for the Waipawa River escape route because of my wet plastic boots, but the warmth at the Saddle soon changed that - the day was crystal clear, I just couldn't miss such an opportunity. So up and onwards to the southernmost peak we plodded. We were rewarded with a slight chill wind but a brilliant clear vista across the snow clad Ruahines to the south and west, in particular the snow-drenched Hikurangi Range. 'Te Atua' beckoned to the north across a crisp white plateau. We were soon lunching on the north side of the Te Atua summit, basking in the sun and taking in the scenery.

A few photos and then we were off down towards Armstrong Saddle, with a few bum-slides before reaching the scrubline. The other three soon shot off ahead to Sunrise Hut, while I lingered a little to take in the views. Ruapehu was now quite clear away to the northwest, and the afternoon light played magnificently on the spur north of Te Atua. On a day like that day it was all just too good to rush. As Sunrise Hut came into view the track turned to slush and the odd family group began to appear. A relaxing late lunch with the other three and an easy descent to the carpark finished off a memorable winter weekend in the mountains.