

# PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217  
PALMERSTON NORTH

## NEWSLETTER

March 1997 Edition

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Club Patron	: Lawson Pither	357-3033
President	: Terry Crippen	356-3588
Vice President	: Tony Gates	357-7439
Secretary	: Warren Wheeler	
Treasurer	: Peter Wiles	358-6894
Membership Enquires	: Liz Flint 356-7654 and Warren Wheeler 356-1998	
Trips co-ordinators	: Terry Crippen (356-3588) and Liz Flint (356-7654)	
Gear Custodian	: Mick Leyland	358-3183
Newsletter Editor	: John Philips	358-1874

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### ENQUIRES CONCERNING OVERDUE TRIPS

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

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TRIPS OFTEN LEAVE FROM THE FOODTOWN CAR PARK IN FERGUSSON 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 trips can depend on many factors, most especially the weather and state of the track. As a guide, a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the graded trips in about the following times: Easy (E) 3 – 4 hours, Medium (M) 5 – 6 hrs, 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 graded tramps.

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

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### THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAMME

Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 30c which includes supper.

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. 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 CONVENOR (TERRY 356-3588), 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.

**MARCH 13**                      Midweek tramping                      Judy Stockdale                      355-5277

**MARCH 13**                      **Club Night**                      **“GLACIERS”**                      **Bruce Van Brunt**

Bruce will give an illustrated talk on glaciers, what they are, and what their important features are from a tramping / climbing / navigation point of view: slots, schrunds, etc. Mount Rainier and other Northern Hemisphere glaciated mountains will be used as examples. A good lead up to the club's glaciercraft course.

**MARCH 15-16**                      Wharepapa South rock                      T                      Andy Backhouse                      353-0774

Depart Sat 6am. This is a relatively new rock climbing area near Te Kuiti, well developed with good camping at the adjacent school with facilities. A wider range of easier climbs than Whanganui Bay as well as hard climbing on ignimbrite rock. So come along!

**MARCH 15-16**                      Ruahine Corner                      4WD/family                      Dennis Moore                      357-5651

Depart Friday night. Ruahine Corner is on the edge of a high tussock plateau in the Northern Ruahines. There is an airstrip for those that way inclined, and a farm track to walk, drive, or ride along, to the pleasantly appointed hut. A good spot, with fascinating botany. Contact Dennis early to book your seat. Bring a few luxuries in the four wheel drive vehicles!

**MARCH 18** (Tues)                      Glaciercraft evening (for glaciercraft participants)

This is an instructional evening to prepare for the glaciercraft weekend. Roping up for glacier travel will be practiced, and prusick loops made to suit participants (yopu will be required to buy cord to make them). Full details and venue from Bruce on 328-4761. (NOTE: Prerequisite for this and the glaciercraft weekend is Snowcraft II or equivalent).

**MARCH 20**                      Midweek tramping                      Liz Flint                      356-7654

**MARCH 22-23**                      Glaciercraft/climbing                      M, I                      Bruce Van Brunt                      328-4761

NOTE: Prerequisite Snowcraft II or equivalent, and the Tuesday evening session. Follow up to Snowcraft and brush up for mountaineers. This trip will be held on the Mangaehuehu Glacier on the southern slopes of Mt Ruapehu. Glacier travel, navigation on glaciers, and basic extraction from slots. (One or two days - details from Bruce).

**MARCH 23**                      Richards Knob                      M                      Richard Lockett                      323-0948

Depart 7am. In the Ohau catchment of the Tararuas. Good access, good tracks, and good tramping. Richard will lead you up towards Richards Knob via Gable Edge Ridge for an enjoyable day tramp.

**MARCH 27**                      Midweek tramping                      David Ross                      06 376-7139

**MARCH 27**                      **Club Night**                      **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and WINE & CHEESE**

Note: AGM (and all following club nights until spring) starts 7:30pm sharp (as Daylight Saving has finished)

This is it, your big chance to have a vote, have a discussion, and join in on club administration. This evening will NOT be boring, the AGM business will be sorted out promptly, then there will be the serious stuff like wine and cheese, coffee and chocolate cake, and nattering to your friends and showing off photographs. NOTE: Please have all nominations for positions of Patron, President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and general committee members given in writing to the Secretary before the start of the AGM.

## **EASTER**

**MARCH 28-APRIL 1** (Tues) Nelson Lakes F,T or M/F Terry Crippen 356-3588  
Departure: straight after the AGM on Thurs night! Nelson Lakes is a great place to go tramping / climbing: big valleys, great beech forest and interesting tops and peaks. And its not really too far from PN. Two possibilities: Either a climbing trip to attempt Mts Travers and Cupola from summit creek up the Travers Valley. Or a classic Travers-Sabine tramp via Travers Saddle and Lake Angelus. The trip that will run depending on which car Terry can use (ie will the rusty Datsun get its next WOF?). Names to Terry as soon as possible since numbers are limited. Deposit also required for ferry.

**Easter Eggmont** M/F Warren Wheeler 356-1998  
A full moon opportunity to climb Mt Egmont and camp out on top or, for the slightly less adventurous, a one day trip on Easter Sunday (we'll pick the day to suit the weather). This trip can be simply a rock scramble or an ice-climb depending on the conditions. The proposed route is via East Ridge but north or south options are also possibilities.

Anybody willing to lead an easy day trip over Easter? Contact Terry 356-3588.

**APRIL 3** Midweek Tramping Cath Lyttle 329-8608

**APRIL 3** **Committee meeting**

**APRIL 5-6** \*Orongorongo Valley M+F Tony Gates 357-7439  
Tony's old stomping ground near Wellington is the destination of this trip, departing late Friday evening, and returning Sunday. Tony wants to drive down to the southern end of the Wairarapa, and look up the Mukamuka, maybe with a view to climbing Mt Mathews, and descending one of the massive shingle screes. Gaunt, windswept country.

\*Note change of date from whats on events card (Risk Management now on 3-4 May)

**APRIL 6** Top Maropea M Liz Flint 356-7654  
Depart 7am (PN Police Station) Into the eastern Ruahines via Sunrise Hut overlooking the Waipawa Valley, onto the tops with good views. To Top Maropea Hut, located just below the bushline on the western side, for lunch. (A combined trip with MTSC)

**APRIL 9-11** Midweek Tramping (Bridge to Nowwhere) Peter Carver 354-4479

**APRIL 10** **Club Night** **BYO Slides**

A chance for you to show off slides of those good trips, be they short local tramps, or longer trips further afield. (Limit yourself to your best 15 or less slides per trip or person so we can have a

number of presentations. And don't forget to mark the bottom left of the slide when held up for viewing).

**APRIL 12-13** \*Mangahao, Dundas F Peter Burgess 354-3533

Depart 7am. Onto the tops of the Tararuas from the dam in the Mangahao Valley. Good tops travel to Dundas hut for the night. Sunday, dropping into the forested Mangahao Valley for a good tramp out.

\*Note change of date to whats on the events card.

**APRIL 13** Purity, Wooden Peg E/M Judy Callesen 357-0192

Depart 7:30am (from PN Police station). Up to Purity Hut, just above the bushline, in the western Ruahines. Onto the tussock tops and Wooden Peg for some great views. (A combined trip with MTSC).

**APRIL 17** Midweek Tramping Phil Pearce 354-6687

**APRIL 19-20** \*Pourangaki Valley M/F-F Rosie Bishop 358-9004 (work)

Depart 6:30am Sat. Into the Western Ruahines via Purity, Iron Peg and the start of the Hawkes Bay Ridge. Down into the Pourangaki and the hut for the night. Out via the top end of the Whanahua Range and Kelly Knight Hut on Sunday. This is spectacular country - a great circuit.

\*Note change of date (and locality) to whats on the events card

**APRIL 20** Fields Hut E/M Neil Campbell 359-5048

Depart 7am. A visit to the historic Fields Hut just on the bush line above Otaki Forks in the Tararuas. This was were the first Club trip went to, February 1966. Conditions permitting onto the open tussock tops, just up from the hut. A good first tramp.

**APRIL 24** Midweek Tramping Neil Gutry 354-0284

**APRIL 24 Club Night Himalayan climbing Clive Jones**

Clive Jones will be talking and showing colour slides to the Tramping Club on the 24 April club evening. during April 1996, Clive was in an international expedition that attempted to climb Lhotse, near Everest. They were defeated by illness and storms at camp three, at 7300 metres. At the same time, the mountains claimed several fatalities. Guaranteed to be an excellent talk.

## **ANZAC WEEKEND**

**APRIL 25-27** Pureora Forest Park

Two trips, both trips departing 7am Friday 25 (ANZAC Day). A chance to visit this extensive outstanding podocarp-hardwood forest which forms the ranges and volcanic peaks west of Lake Taupo. It is well known as the home of the rare Kokako as well as having abundant native bird life in general.

Medium to fit trip Terry Crippen 356-3588

Up the Waihaha river Valley and north along the range, staying at Waihaha and Bog Inn huts or camping out. Over Mt Pureora to meet the others on Sunday.

Easy/family Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Based at Pureora camping areas, tramps onto Mts Pureora and/or Titraupenga, a look at the totara forest, the Buried Forest and hopefully hearing/seeing Kokako.

## NOTICES

A note from the editor...

### TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

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 my 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.NZ.

PLEASE NOTE that I am now editing exclusively on Microsoft Word, and am no longer using Microsoft Works software. 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. If in doubt, a pretty safe bet is to send any files in an ".RTF" (Rich Text File) format, which can be easily converted from one software format to another.

Please note the deadline for each month's issue on the front page of the newsletter.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT COURSE, 3-4 MAY**

Preliminary Information:

NZ Mountain Safety Council will be running a Risk Management Course on 3-4 May for all PNTMC trip leaders and prospective/aspiring leaders! It will be at the MTSC Lodge at Ruapehu (very comfortable digs), which will give opportunities for practical exercises outside.

What is Risk Management?

It is a way of thinking and planning to minimise risks and also formalise safety thinking, for all our tramping and climbing activities. As a club, leaders are responsible for the well-being of people on their trips, so wise planning beforehand, as well as wise management while on the trip, is essential to minimise risk (as a result of terrain, weather, rivers in flood, injuries, etc.), and to promote enjoyment for those participating.

What will you learn on the course? As participants you will learn to:

- accurately assess your personal leadership abilities and how to apply risk management principles in tramping and climbing activities;
- identify the additional knowledge, skills and experience required for your continued development in these activities;
- test your ability to cope with emergencies;
- learn methods of planning and implementation of these activities.

You will also get a certificate for the successful completion of the course.

All leaders and prospective leaders should attend this course, hence there are no other club trips that weekend. It should be enjoyable and worthwhile: ask Liz Flint or Dave Larsen, they went on one last year. There will be a cost (\$90 to \$110, includes accomodation, food, instruction, certificate) but we expect to get funding to cover some or most of this.

Information sheets and registration forms are available from Terry (356-3588). There are 16 places available (minimum of 10 for course to run), so names to Terry a.s.a.p. please.

## **MAP ORDERS**

Another opportunity to order maps through the club, at substantial discounts over retail prices. Get your requests in to Terry (356-3588) - orders close on the last clubnight of the month, ie. the AGM March 27.

## **CLUB BADGES**

The club now has cloth badges for sale (\$4 each) for sewing onto packs, shirts, etc. See Liz Flint at Club night, or phone her on 356-7654.

## **MANAIA TRACK STILE**

Llew Pritchard, under the "guidance" of Mick Leyland, built and installed the stile over the fence at the start of the Manaia track into the Western Ruahines. This track begins across John & Jennifer Stent's land. John and Jennifer were club members earlier on. Thanks Llew.

## **TRIP REPORTS**

### **THE COPLAND PASS**      January 5-8      by Lyn Murphy

Crossing the Southern Alps to the West Coast via the Copland Pass has long been a tramping goal for us, and one of the reasons we set out to get some snow skills two years ago. Thanks to those, and fantastic weather, the crossing was not the dauntingly difficult climb I always imagined it would be.

Heavy rains last summer washed out parts of the original track to the Hooker Hut. The route now follows along the side of the glacial lake and then the base of the moraine wall to a spot below the hut marked with an orange cairn. The DOC Ranger told us getting up the 100-metre moraine wall was dangerous and difficult, with tales of broken limbs and a party of Germans who managed to get to the hut only after abandoning their packs halfway up. They radioed for a helicopter because they didn't want to go back, or on (just what I needed to hear).

Luckily we didn't find it that bad. Loose rock makes helmets a must but a rope wasn't necessary (just as well because we didn't have one). Vicki cunningly managed to get Mt Cook DOC to waive our Hooker Hut fees (\$18 x 4) in return for taking a new hut book to Douglas Rock on the other side. Amazingly the old one had run out three months earlier and still not been replaced by the West Coast conservancy - people have been leaving intentions on Ryvita packets!

From Hooker Hut it is all uphill via a rocky ridge to the Copland Shelter, which is only a short climb up a permanent snow slope from the top. We reached the pass - a series of rock notches - just after midday and warm conditions meant we didn't use crampons until we reached the shadier slopes on the West Coast side. There were great views all the way up of Mount Cook and its neighbours, and all the way down the Hooker Valley to Lake Pukaki.

We took our time on the way down, enjoying the great mountain scenery and fine weather, not quite realising how far we still had to go to Douglas Rock hut, which we reached some time after six. The rock pools at Welcome Flat the following night were great - every track should have some.

We took four days to do the walk but the crossing is the only long day. We were Lyn, Vicki, Brent and Leo.

### **THE COPLAND TRACK**      February 10-14      by Tony Gates

Just a quick note here, from a solo trans alpine mountaineer who has just returned from crossing the Copland pass. Till a couple of years ago, this track saw about twenty people each day complete the crossing! Now, maybe one or two per day.

Route Guide information from DOC and Alpine Guides is very variable, and the route does change from time to time. The so called suicide crossings of the lower side creeks were not all that bad when I crossed them, and I suspect that they are in fact easier (a relative term) than the main moraine wall from the Hooker Glacier. Which ever route you take, it is spectacular country, and you do need a climbing helmet and a lot of guts. I found the route up to Copland Shelter quite hairy, you know, very steep, semi solid rock with an awesome drop on each side. I wouldnt like to attempt the ridge in either direction in misty weather. It's reassuring to have radio scheds at all the huts.

Typical of climbing to 2000 metres, crampons are essential (but some people that attempt the crossing still do not believe you). There is a small glacier and a few slots to cross, a couple of tricky bits, then there is the West Coast laid out beneath you. Its OK to climb solo there, but many people may need the security of a rope. Once again, a helmet is essential.

The upper Copland is a beautiful valley, providing welcome relief from the alpine zone. Vast, lush tussock and scrub basins, towering cliffs, and then hot pools! When I was there, flowering tree blooms provided fragrant relief from smelly geothermals, and the brilliant red Rata flowers dominated the forest. From Douglas Rock Hut, the track became decidedly crowded with foreigners, most of whom sweat up to Welcome Flats Hut, then retreat to the west. Much more fulfilling to complete the crossing.

## **K2 TO OTIRA PUB (CLUB TRIP TO ARTHUR'S PASS NP) 17-31 January by Terry Crippen**

Taking a wrong turning at Amberley making a 100km detour, and arriving at Arthur's Pass to find we had left a third of our food behind at Blenheim, made an interesting start to two weeks tramping and climbing in the Arthur's Pass area! However we were able to convert some of our extra food that we were leaving in Arthur's Pass for later to cover this problem and so got ready for nine days of tramping with some climbing en route.

However, when we called in at DoC Park headquarters to do our intentions we were greeted with "Are you Nigel, Kristen and Terry?" "Yes" "Do you know that you have left some of your food behind in Blenheim?" Nigel's father, whom we had stayed with in Blenheim, had contacted the Arthur's Pass Police regarding the food, and the Police had put the word round. Running out of food with three days to go in the back country could have been quite a problem!

Back to the trip, an extended variation of the classic "Three Pass Trip", beginning with a long afternoon walk from Klondyke Korner up the Waimakariri River to Carrington hut. This was a good way to get use to the heavy packs, before the series of passes and climbs to follow.

The next day saw us crossing the White River, using the latest river crossing techniques, as the cage is still not meant to be used (it got damaged by an earthquake triggered rockfall three years ago). Then the steady climb up the Taipoiti to Harman Pass (1321m, the first of the Three Passes). A number of other trampers who were doing the Three Pass Trip headed up with us. As they headed

up to the next pass (Whitehorn) we set up camp at a favourite spot near Ariel Tarns. The afternoon was spent climbing a Spot Height next to Mt Isobel to check out the route for a climb of Mt Davie.

The next day started at 4 am, a quick brew and muesli, breaking camp and heading up to Whitehorn Pass (1753m). Here we unloaded most of the food and gear into a Kea-proof cairned cache, and cramponed up to the ridge that leads onto Mt Davie (2280m). This was an enjoyable unroped mixed rock and snow climb. It was good to be up high with other peaks such as Mts Murchison, Rosamond and Rolleston (all of which we had climbed on club trips the previous two years). Back to our cache at Whitehorn Pass for lunch before crossing over into the Cronin Valley and down to the old small Park Morpeth hut in the Wilberforce Valley. A twelve hour day.

The next day was up and over Browning Pass (1411m) which on the southern side is the steepest of the Three Passes. This Pass was to be the road route to the West Coast (before Arthur's Pass was discovered) and there is still evidence of the partially completed six foot wide road put in during the 1860s and 70s. Sheep were actually taken over to the coast this way, and there were gold mining activities nearby also last century. In the Arahura Valley on the West Coast side today's track also follows this old road. (The Three Pass route from the Arahura crosses into the Styx Valley and out to the Lake Kaniere road end.) Our route continued down the Arahura "road" to Mudflats Hut. The name sounds off-putting but the hut is excellent on a high terrace above open flats, and no mudflats and attendant sandflies or mosquitos to be felt/heard.

Day five, starting with cloudy skies, was back onto the "road" and down to the big bend in the Arahura. A rocky scramble down Third Gorge Creek brought us to the footbridge with its "interesting approach and exit", ie the ladder, large rock and wire rope were trickier than the bridge itself. A short bushbash and steep grunt took us into the delightful Newton Creek and its four-person hut. The cloudy skies by this stage had turned to rain and the creek began to rise. As the route over Newton Saddle was just that, (not tracked), in thick cloud, and up a steep cascading stream, we decided to have our rest (half) day. It was a good time to check out Kristen's blisters and Nigel's ankles. Cryptic crosswords, barometer and Blue Duck studies were then the order of the afternoon.

The next day as predicted by us four weather experts and the barometer was fine, cool and clear, well worth the half-day delay. By this stage Harry had teamed up with us, so by the time we got up to Newton Saddle plans were afoot to traverse Mt Edelweiss (the nob between Newton and Dunn Saddles), give Harry some quick snowcraft instruction (non-iceaxe), and have the four of us climb Tara Tama, the prominent peak in the area. Step cutting kept Terry busy using Kristen's excellent heavy long ice axe. Lunch on the top gave views ranging from Lake Brunner and the Paparoas to the north, Mts Davie and Rosamond and beyond to the south, and somewhere 1100m below us Dun Creek hut, our destination for the night. Back to Dunn Saddle and a long, tiring boulder hop down to the seldom visited hut.

Day seven was a short climb then steep decent down a dry creek bed into the Taipo Valley. Here Harry headed down-valley on his planned route - Seven Mile Creek and the Kelly Range. We headed up-valley for a hot 1000m afternoon grunt up to Dry Creek Saddle. Getting to the saddle about 5pm, with the excellent visibility and still air we decided to traverse south along the Hunt Range to Bijleveld Col, and then sidle round to our campsite at 1500m above Gorgy Creek Lake. Our walled campsite from the year before was a welcome sight just on dusk at the end of a 13 hour day.

The high camp made the ascent of Mt Armstrong (2110m), the next day, an easy-ish (soft) snow and rock scramble. A discussion about the interesting ominous clouds and the falling barometer, took second place to a lazy lunch and afternoon snooze back at our camp. By about 5pm however the basin was enveloped in thick mist, the barometer was still dropping, so we decided to pack up and head over the high pass into the Hunt Valley. On the way up Terry did some impromptu experiments on the effects of bouncing ribs, other body parts, and spectacles on scree! The upper part of the Hunt Valley is where you hunt in the twilight for a flat area to pitch a tent among the tussock and boulders. This saw us setting up camp about 10 pm that night.

Day nine, our last day, was deemed a non-alarmclock start day. A late breakfast saw us starting tramping at 11am! Down to Hunts Creek hut then a hot sidle to Hunt Saddle and the Kelly Valley. The major problem of the trip then arose: would we arrive out to the Otira Pub in time to satisfy our bodies' food and liquid requirements? We did reach the trip endpoint half late: too late for meals except pies and chippies, but the liquid department was still available. We phoned our shuttle-taxi, to come and pick us up, "no rush", and take us back to Arthur's Pass and the NZAC Hut.

After this we enjoyed the delights of the village, hot showers, washing clothes, eating steaks and further liquid replenishment, for a day or so. Nigel and Terry checked out the upper Otira Valley for a climb of Rolleston while Kristin checked out the Hut library. After two days of this lifestyle it was time for a 4am start and a climb of Rolleston, in weather almost too hot. We took the righthand couloir of the Otira Face which took us onto the last section of the Phillistine - Rolleston ridge. Plenty of rope work, the heat, and a shortage of water, saw us on the summit late afternoon. The schrund at the top of the Crow Glacier was only just crossable, and we were setting off soft snow avalanches well into the evening as the temperature was still high. Down the Otira Slide saw us back at the road at the end of an 18 hour day.

The following day, as the blisters, ankles and ribs were now on the mend, but in need of a rest, it was time for a relaxing drive back north via the Grey and Buller Valleys, spending an enjoyable last night in Blenheim at Nigel's Dad's place again. (Picking up our food dump!) We were Kristin Stokes, Nigel Scott, and Terry Crippen (also Harry Smith from Christchurch, for part of it).

### **THE RED HILLS - ATTEMPT NO. 3**

January 1997 by Peter Wiles

Initially we had another go at Mt Brewster. We left the car park at Haast Pass at 4.30 pm, crossed the river, entered the bush and started the steady climb of 1000 m to the hut. We got hailed on just above the bushline which then turned to snow. We reached the hut at 7.00pm. The hut was fortunately empty - there was a sizable U of C geography party camping beside the glacier (studying its movement etc.). The evening snow melted over night and after the clouds cleared in the late morning, we did a recce trip to get the route sorted out and then we did a scramble up the north ridge of Armstrong.

Next day was perfect and we took off at 5.00 am accompanied by a guy from Dunedin. We crossed the Brewster Glacier and went up the western ridge of Brewster and traversed the western and middle summits. (Cold high up.) Between the central and high summits there is a sharp notch that requires an abseil. The ridge is extraordinary narrow at this point with both sides dropping away at about 60 degrees. We bailed out at this stage. (The easiest route is the one I had investigated the previous year but the snow continues around the summit rock arete that confronted us previously and continues

across the north face (steep and exposed) and then one can choose to climb directly to the summit or to gain the western ridge and then to summit.) Perhaps a 3rd attempt is required?

We returned to the hut, packed up and dropped down to the road staying that evening at the Haast motor camp.

The original plan had been to go to the West Matukituki and potter around. I suggested that since the weather seemed to be reliable and with the West Coast rivers low that we have an attempt (3rd for me) to get to the Red Hills. Derek and Nigel were agreeable. (I was in the area now with a full week at my disposal, but I had never envisaged that I would be able to summon the energy to mount a third attempt. I felt that with Derek and Nigel being in the peak of their form that this might be the best opportunity to date but it was not going to be easy and there were no guarantees.)

We left the motor camp shortly after 6 am and drove south to the road end about 50 km away. We started tramping up the Cascade River flats at about 7.45 am. An hour later at what is known as "The Bend", the river was very low so that we crossed easily and then to my surprise re-crossed about 1 km upstream (I had learnt from previous experience that the eastern side was better going for the initial 10 km or so). Derek and Nigel spotted large trout lurking in some of the deep pools (at least 6 m deep my guess). The weather was completely overcast which then turned to drizzle and then light rain, which made the tall grass and general vegetation on the river flats wet to push through. However, we made good progress and recrossed the river to enter the bush, had lunch and located the "road" (Charlie Douglas' road). At one stage we lost the Road, and Nigel investigated a swamp almost up to his waist. The orange markers that I had put on the "Road" and down to the river, last year, proved their worth - saving us time and energy. When we emerged from the bush (& road) above the 2nd gorge in the late afternoon, the rain had eased and we continued along easy flats before finally climbing over a bluff, as the last hurdle for the day, that had caused problems on my 1st trip. We dropped back to the river and stopped shortly after 6 pm to pitch camp at the edge of the bush on river sand in mainly dry conditions. Three keas called in during dinner. It had been a long and tiring but very successful first day. In one day we had got further up the valley than I had managed on either of the previous occasions in two days. Light rain resumed after we went to bed.

We got going next morning at 7 am in steady rain and headed into new country. After 2 h of easy river flats we reached the start of the 3rd gorge and now changed direction and dropped into bottom gear. We set off on a compass bearing into the bush for the 800 m climb up to the Gorge Plateau. This was the most gut busting bush-bash that we had ever encountered and lasted over 5 h. It was steep, saturated with water, with dense under-canopy and over the first 200 m we encountered lines of huge rocks that were a real effort to get up but at the top there was sometimes up to 3-4 m vertical drop on the uphill side! One seemed to be constantly using nearly every muscle in one's body to grab, push, pull and wriggle one's way upwards, trying as much as possible to ensure one's foothold did not collapse. Too often it did. Derek and Nigel did a superb job forcing the way with me struggling at the back with the compass giving directions. After this section, the next 300 m was a lot more open and better going, but still steep. When we reached the mountain beech section (last 200 m) we again encountered briefly huge jumbled up boulders (probably glacial), with rather dense scrub amongst the beech. The gradient was quite low now but we had about 1 km of this bush/scrub to overcome. This seemed to go on for ever as we were able to progress only at about 500 m an hour, until finally, we reached the open grassy tops in bleak drizzly misty conditions. Somehow, we had pushed on continuously for more than 4 h without a stop. We had many bruises and scratches and were for the most part soaking wet. Then our problem was to find a camp site before we were reduced to frozen shivering wrecks. Everything seemed to be either tarn or swamp. Eventually, we found a dense mat of scab plants about 1 m from a tarn, got the tent up, piled in, changed into dry clothes and got into our

sleeping bags. In a strange twist, at almost this moment the rain stopped, and in another 15 min the cloud lifted, and in another hour sun appeared. We then piled out of the tent and started a big gear drying operation and began to absorb some of the scenery that was rapidly appearing.

We then developed our final strategy for the trip which was reinforced by the weather forecast on the mountain radio. We had no desire to return back through that lot of bush, so we figured if we could get to Big Bay - due west of Red Mountain - then a walk back up the coast to Barn Bay would, we hoped, be much preferred. My initial plan had been to camp on the edge of the Gorge Plateau (i.e. where we were) and then do a long fast day trip to Red Mountain and then return via the way in. However that would require a huge day negotiating at least 10 km of ridges in each direction plus the climb of Red Mountain. It was agreed that this would not be feasible. Instead we would leave early with our gear and head 6-7 km south over the ridges and find a campsite where we could dump most of our gear and then head for the mountain. The following day, we figured, we would then be in a handy spot to head west and descend to Big Bay.

We were away at 7 am next morning in perfect weather and a light frost, and headed south along the ridges. After 2-3 km we reached a point at about 1300 m where we got our first view of the target - Red Mountain - directly ahead - 1705 m. After 2 years, success was perhaps only a few hours away? We continued along the ridges in country very reminiscent of some of the Tararua tops to reach a point where we dropped down to the west (about 200 m) to a basin at 1050 m near a tarn, 3 km north of Red Mountain. We stashed our gear and then headed off at about 11 am to Red Mountain in baking heat. Initially it looked quite a formidable peak, but fortunately these things can be deceptive. It proved to be an easy but dehydrating scramble (with a stop for a late lunch) and we reached the top via the central gully and western rib at 2.30 pm. Amazing views! The entire length of the Olivine mountains lay to the east with Aspiring towering above the Olivines beyond. The Little Red Hills lay below us to the south with Tutoko rearing up and dominating over everything beyond. The Cascade Valley stretched out far to the north followed by the Jackson Valley and the Arawhata river mouth and Haast in the distance 80 km away. Big Bay, the sea and large tracts of bush dominated the west. We descended via some snow slopes for about 250 m on the eastern side before rejoining our route on the rocks to the bottom. We were back safely at our camp at 5.30 pm rather exhausted but satisfied that it would have been next to impossible for us to return to the Gorge Plateau in the remainder of the day.

Next morning was still fine and clear and we headed westwards at 7 am, up to, then along a ridge system (including almost a 2 km section of easy bush) before dropping into the bush (on a compass) bearing towards the Upper Pyke flats, 1000 m below. Our worries about what the bush might be like proved unfounded - much more open, dry and free of boulders! After lunch at the start of the flats, we spent time looking for the track to Big Bay. (I had not brought a map of this section because it never occurred to me we might attempt the round trip.) Anyway, after some wasted time and effort, and the application of some common sense, we found it (just been recut) and eventually reached Big Bay and the sandfly capital of the world at 6 pm rather exhausted. (During 20 y, I had forgotten just how bad the sandflies are here.) We found the DOC hut (empty) and settled in. Rain started during the night, but it was forecast to clear about midday. While we were resting up in our pits in the morning, at about 9 am, the hut door suddenly opened and one of the (few) locals walked in dripping with two substantial fish for us. We put our meagre muesli rations on the back burner and instead set about producing a substantial brunch of steamed fish with cheese and rice. Very nice. We left about 2 pm for the return up the coast to Barn Bay. The coast out of, and north of, Big Bay is mostly boulders and rocks. Tedious and slippery. We reached a good camp site at 7 pm. (The tide was rather unfavourable for our trip up the coast, being high in the middle of the day.)

Next day we were off again at 7 am and it was more baking heat but now mostly on sand but also a good (bad) many km of stones (including the last 6 km between Sandrock Bluff and Barn Bay). We stopped for a short break at the Gorge River hut, before crossing the river. After lunch we crossed Sandrock Bluff on the bulldozer track - a remnant from 1970's mining exploration in the Little Red Hills. I got RSI in a tendon in my foot during this last section and could only progress slowly with considerable discomfort. We eventually reached the hut at Barn Bay (a private hut but able to be used by the public). The next day, again we left early at about 7 am, for the final 16 km section along the 4-WD track up the Cascade back to the car. Two thirds of this was in bush before emerging out onto the grassy flats and the farmland. We crossed the river for the final time and reached the car at 11 am before the fierce heat became too much and my foot became too painful to walk on. We then headed off back up to the Haast Pass to the Wanaka motor camp for the night.

Upon reflection, to get successfully to the Red Hills required three elements:  
Favourable weather was absolutely essential and this time we were lucky - it was fine when we really needed it.

Prior knowledge of the Cascade Valley and how to manage the river paid big dividends.

A fit party that can handle protracted and potentially difficult bush and river situations and which can navigate adequately. (Derek and Nigel's years of Tararua campaigning was a huge asset here, and I will be forever very grateful for their enthusiastic commitment.)

In addition, the majority of the days were quite long - at least 10 h. Our only easy (rest?) day was the walk out of Big Bay in the afternoon for 5 h tramping.

We were: Peter Wiles, Nigel Barrett and Derek Sharp.

## **RUAHINE CROSSING - SUNRISE TO COLENZO**

February 15-16

6:30 am Saturday and it was warm already as we left Palmerston North for Hawkes Bay. Led by Llew were Graham, Wouta and Martin. The first leg to Sunrise was made at an enthusiastic pace as we climbed above the low early morning cloud to perfect blue skies.

Sunrise to Top Maropea was a lovely walk, dead calm, with great views of the ranges through to Ruapehu. With a few photo-stops on the way we arrived at Top Maropea hut for a break and a chance to top-up body fluids and wring out the tee-shirts.

Back in the bush we were aiming for Maropea Forks Hut. The stream bed was tailor-made for easy tramping so we made good progress and arrived at the hut during mid-afternoon. The hut was far too nice not to stay the night so we plonked on the grass to spend the remainder of the afternoon watching the river and Blue Duck spotting. In fact this plan didn't appeal so much to the youngest member of the party so he popped over to Wakelings Hut and back before tea.

Day two looked to be hot and sunny again as we hit the steep climb out of the valley on the hill-route to Otukota Hut. We aimed to take the direct route South from here to the Mokai-Patea range which looked steep on the map and was just as steep in real life. Also we were shortly exposed to the midday sun and DOC had added interest by slicing the flax and grasses which slipped nicely under our boots. With relief we finally rested under a convenient tree near the top.

The next goal was Colenso peak but with the water bottles emptying fast we probably were a little over-excited by a small stream and so slightly overshot the main ridge to Colenso. Some of us were less nimble than when we started so the walk along the tops to Colenso then down to Kawhatau Base was a little slower than the morning's effort and the road-end was a welcome sight.

This was a great way to spend a weekend. Thanks Llew, and thanks for the unexpected post-tramp “refreshments”.