
PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - May 1998

THIS ISSUE

NEWS:

“Bush 3” weekend, Snowcraft dates, and some official trip feedback . . . also your last chance in the club logo competition

TRIP REPORTS:

Matemateaonga Walkway, Ohutu Ridge, Tararua tramps (including Southern Crossing), Easter Eggmont Summit, and some Purity poetry . . .

CLUB NIGHTS

| | | |
|---------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| MAY 14 | “South Island Caving” | Janet Wilson & Graham Peters |
| MAY 28 | “DOC activities in the Ruahines” | Pat Bonnis |
| JUNE 4 | Committee Meeting | Mick Leyland’s place |
| JUNE 11 | “West Coast Travels” | Russell Lake |
| JUNE 25 | ANNUAL PHOTO COMPETITION | |

Club nights are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month at the **Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North**. Please note that at this year’s AGM it was decided that **all club nights now commence at 7:45 pm**, winter or summer. The PNTMC Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

At the club night: Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 50c which includes supper.

UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Trip Grades

Grades 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 hrs

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs

Fit (F): about 8 hrs

Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

(T) refers to technical trips requiring special skills and/or gear.

Beginners should start with Easy Grade trips.

May 14 Club Night: "South Island Caving"

Janet Wilson & Graham Peters

Janet and Graham, both long-standing PNTMC club members, are to talk on crawling over rocks through mud and water and generally not getting great panoramic views! They are both active members of a local caving club, and will talk & present slides on some of their caving expeditions. If you have ever wondered what lies beneath that range you have walked over, or where the river in a dry valley goes, come along.

May 16-17 Arete-Bannister Crossing F/FE
Dave Henwood 326-8892

Depart 7am Sat morning. This is the second of the two Tararua crossings this month, this time the northern Tararuas. In from the Ohau side up track through forest to Te Matawai and the tops to Arete Biv for the night. Sunday continuing east via Bannister Ridge, Cow Saddle and Blue Range, coming out at Kiriwhakapapa roadend just south of Mt Bruce. Contact Dave in plenty of time to arrange transport for both sides. Offers of pick up and/or drop off welcome (perhaps someone visiting the Mt Bruce Wildlife reserve?).

May 17 Coppermine Creek E
Sarah Stratton* 353-0387

***changed from Tony Gates on the Trip Card.**

Very handy to PN in the SE Ruahines behind Wharite Peak. Well graded track featuring forest, a nice stream, some coloured rocks and a tunnel. Copper was mined (not very productively) early this century.

May 21 Thursday Trampers
Kath Little 329-8608

May 23-24 Longview - Daphne M
Lawrence Gatehouse 356-5805

Depart Sat morn. A trip to the eastern Ruahines, walking in from the DoC carpark at the site of the old Moorcock base in from Takapau. We climb to the ridge top from the track to Daphne, then open tops south to Longview. . Good views of Hawkes Bay and the central Ruahines. A side trip to the high point is possible. Sunday descend from Longview, either using ridge travel, or a or stroll down the valley if people don't feel keen. Should there be a lot of snow on the ridge then we can go to Daphne instead for a more easy w/end.

May 24 Burn Hut E
Llew Pritchard 358-2217

Depart 8am Visit a interesting part of the Tararuas, and a rarely visited hut, in from the Mangahao Dams. Last time Llew went there it was in the rain, so this time he wants to see what the forest, small area of tussock tops and hut are like on a fine autumn day.

May 28 Thursday Trampers
Pam Dransfield 357-0008

May 28 Club Night: "DOC activities in the Ruahines" with Pat Bonnis

Pat is based at DoC's Ongaonga field centre, on the eastern side of the Ruahines & will talk about the Department's activities in the Ruahine & Hawkes Bay areas. Come & find out about DoC's work in your local tramping grounds.

Queens Birthday

May 29-June 1 Turoa - Ketetahi TNP F*
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart Sat 6.30 am, breakfast at Waiouru. The tramp starts from Turoa and follows the round-the-mountain track, pass Mangaehuehu Hut round to Rangipo Hut for the first night. Sunday traverse the awesome Rangipo Desert, cross the Whangaehu Stream - the outlet for the Ruapehu lahars during the eruptions of 1995 and 96 - pass Ohinepango Springs to Waihohonu, then to Oturere Hut in the moonscape on the eastern side of Tongariro. Monday an easier day, past the Emerald and Blue Lakes, then down to the Ketetahi Thermal Area on the northern side of Tongariro, then down to our waiting transport

back to Waiouru. (Alternative transport may be arranged - stay tuned or be forthcoming with your offer). Long days but not much climbing, so come along and try a fit trip. Contact Warren in plenty of time because of transport arranging.

*Note change of grade to that in the events card.

May 31 Powell/Holdsworth M
Dave Larsen 329-8054

Depart 7am on the Sunday (or perhaps on the good weather day). A popular tramp up onto the Tararua tops, in from Masterton. A well graded and formed track goes up through Beech forest past the old Mountain House hut to Powell hut at the bush line. A good lunch stop. For those that want to, Dave will take onto the open tops of Mt Holdsworth for those crystal clear late autumn views of the ranges.

June 4 Thursday Trampers
Carolyn Brodie 358-6576

June 4 Committee meeting
at Mick Leyland's place

June 6-7 Ngamoko Range M/F
Terry Crippen 3563-588

Depart 7 am. A chance to get onto the open tops above the Oroua River in the Western Ruahines, traversing along the range with good views around (or scope for navigation practice), hopefully with some snow underfoot, before dropping down to Iron Gates Hut for the night. Sunday, a relaxing valley track out.

June 7 Iron Gates Hut E/M
Dave Grant 357-8269

Depart 8am. A nice stroll along a bush track up the Oroua valley to Iron Gates Hut & back. Should cross paths with the weekend group returning from their trip along the tops.

June 11 Thursday Trampers
Rosemary & Ken Hall 356-8538

June 11 Club Night

"West Coast Travels" Russell Lake

Last year in April/May Russell went down the West Coast as "a general dogsbody and companion" to a local professional photographer. They went from Westport right down through Haast as far as Wanaka & back up the coast & over Arthurs Pass to Picton via Chch, managing

several short walks & a 3-day tramp in between the wet weather. Come along & see Russell's slide show & see if any tips on techniques rubbed off!

June 13-14 Mitre Flats M
Alan Bee 354-9180

Depart 8am. This will be quite a leisurely and open-ended weekend based at the superb Mitre Flats Hut. Wander in along the Barra Track Saturday morning. There is a choice of a number of routes for half-day tramps from the Mitre Flats base, depending on the weather and what people feel like doing at the time.

June 18 Thursday Trampers
Jill Spencer 329-8738

MIDWINTER CELEBRATIONS

June 20-21 Rangataua All
Jenny & Llew Pritchard 358-2217
Mick Leyland 358-3183

Depart Friday night and/or anytime Saturday. This years festivities will be held at Rangataua, just on the edge of Tongariro National Park near Ohakune, with all the comforts of home at Sue's and Lawson's Place. Lots to do each day: easy walks, easy to hard tramps in the forest and the snow on the southern slope of Ruapehu, cafe-cruising in 'Kune, perhaps a day summit, and if lucky, skiing from out the front lawn. In the evening(s), convivial company in warm surrounds. Bring lots of goodies for communal dinner. There will be a small \$ charge to cover some extra essentials.

Contact Jenny & Llew for coordinating getting there and the eating department, and Mick for the guff on the more vigorous activities (tramping/walks etc) department.

June 25 Thursday Trampers
David Warnock 357-6247

June 25 Club Night: ANNUAL PHOTO COMPETITION

A club highlight of the year, with plenty of different categories & awards. Local photographer John Cleland will be there to do the judging, with plenty of advice welcome from the audience! *See article below under "Notices" for details.*

Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trips co-ordinator (Terry Crippen 356-3588, or Liz Flint 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.

Trip participants:

If you are interested in going on a trip, please advise the leader **at least three days** in advance.

Trips often leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street unless the leader arranges otherwise.

A charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance travelled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

For general information on the scheduled or alternative tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654).

***** OVERDUE TRIPS *****

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Liz Flint (356-7654), or Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805)

NOTICES

FROM THE EDITOR

All kinds of articles, whether trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, or even a product review, are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. If it is a small article, hand-written is okay (deliver to John Phillips, 87 Victoria Avenue) but if handwriting is all you can do, don't let it put you off even large articles.

If you *do* have access to a computer, it does make my job a bit easier if larger articles are on disc. However, more and more people are e-mailing articles to me. If you have the facilities at home or at work, this is a very quick & convenient way to do it - my work e-mail address is PHILLIPS@MWRC.GOVN.Z.

I use Microsoft Word Version 7.0. 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, try sending any files as an ".RTF" (Rich Text Format) file, which can sometimes be easily converted from one software format to another, or the safest bet is to just cut-and-paste your text directly into your e-mail message.

I can also scan photos for inclusion in the newsletter. If you get photos printed off soon after your trip, **please consider submitting them as it can add that added dimension of interest that only photos can!**

Please note the deadline for anything to go in each month's issue is the FIRST THURSDAY of the month.

OMISSIONS

Apologies for the following omissions from previous issues:

March: Arthurs Pass photos were taken by Ron de Rose.

April: Monica Cantwell was also on the Centre Creek Biv trip; also the Pohangina River photos were taken by Warren Wheeler.

1998 SNOWCRAFT COURSES

At this stage it looks very likely SnowCraft courses will be on the following weekends: SC1 at MTSC hut, Ruapehu 17-19 July, SC2 Kapuni Lodge, Mt Taranaki 1-2 Aug, & SC3 at MTSC hut, Ruapehu 21-23 Aug.

SUBS DUE!!!

For those who haven't paid yet, please send your cheque to PNTMC at PO Box 1217, or pay Peter Wiles, our Treasurer, at club night. Subs are unchanged at the bargain price of \$30 ordinary and \$35 family.

CLUB LOGO & NEWSLETTER NAME

A last reminder that the club is running a competition for a new logo, as well as for a name for our newsletter. If you don't wish the logo to

change, you may vote for the present logo to be retained.

We haven't received too many ideas to date. Any suggestions or views must be lodged in writing **by the last club night in May (28th)** for the club's committee to consider at their June meeting. Place your written contributions in the suggestion box at the back of the room on club night. The committee will collate a list of the suggestions & put them to the vote on the evening of the annual photo competition later in June.

ANNUAL PHOTO COMPETITION

The club's annual photo competition will be held at the club night on Thursday, June 25. The rules for the competition are:

- Slides/prints must not have been entered previously
- All entries must be related to tramping, skiing or climbing
- All slides must have a cross on the bottom left-hand corner of the mount for normal viewing (ie. top right-hand corner when loaded into the carousel)
- All slides and photos must be labelled (on back for photos!) with author's name, and entry category chosen from list below. NOTE: Slides and prints not marked prior to judging in the manner outlined here **WILL BE REJECTED** (sorry but this is essential to facilitate smooth running of the event).
- Limit of 3 slides per person per category, but no limit on prints

Categories:

1. *Alpine (NZ)*. Predominantly alpine scenery in NZ (ie. above bushline)
2. *Scenic (NZ)*. Scenes of natural pictorial interest in NZ hills, coasts, etc. (ie. predominantly below the bushline)
3. *Natural History (NZ)*. NZ flora & fauna, or detail of interest eg. geology, ice formations, etc.
4. *Topical (NZ)*. People in tramping, climbing, or skiing related activities in NZ.
5. *Overseas Alpine or Scenic*. Related to tramping, etc. overseas or Scenic
6. *Overseas People*. Climbers or people met while tramping, climbing overseas.

Formats: Slides, black-and-white prints, colour prints. Prints do not need to be mounted. Prints may be judged as one group or separated at the judge's discretion, depending on numbers.

NEW MEMBERS

The club has two new members this month:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Nigel Hough | Wayne Bennett |
| 32 St Johns Ave | 33 Humber St |
| Palmerston North | Palmerston North |
| Ph: 355-5049 | Ph: 354-8029 (wk) |

Welcome to the club guys!

THE JULY-DECEMBER 1998 EVENTS CARD

Terry, Liz & Laurence

This is almost complete. We have been busy scheduling all those trips you have "volunteered" to lead and have taken up all those suggestions for club night speakers and activities "you have phoned us about". Many thanks. However we can still do with some last minute offers so be in quick as we need to get the listings ready to be printed to come out with the next (June) newsletter. Phone the Trip Coordinators (Terry Crippen 356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654), and for club night ideas, Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805).

TRIP FEEDBACK FORMS . . . and other trip matters . . .

It's about a year since we initiated having the Trip Feedback Form system, the idea of which was to get systematic (no name required if desired) feedback from people who go on trips about positive and negative aspects of the trips. In this way it is hoped the club can act on this information and hence enhance the enjoyment for all of us on future trips. In the past, a small number of negative comments floated back nebulously about this trip or that. As a result it was hard to act on these rumours.

We have got 12 forms back over this period, from both leaders and other party participants (many more would have been better), so this is a summary of the comments and suggestions on these:

Trip as expected? Most went as expected apart from some taking a bit longer - a bit more care in grading trips, overestimating one's ability and fitness.

Incidents? Rockfall problems on scrambling and climbing type trips - party should keep closer together and/or only have one person climbing up rockfall prone area at a time, take care with placing feet, use helmets. Some need to inform the leader (and for the leader to find out about) of

any medical problems that may effect the wellbeing of party member(s).

Highlights of the trips? (This had the most feed back.) The bush, views, companionship, pack floating, the physical challenges (sometimes unexpected), the snow. And wait for it - the cold, the heavy rain, the very strong winds and driving snow - all highly enjoyable! (Some proof of my theory that there is no such thing as bad weather).

New route info: (not much here) some unexpectedly overgrown sections of track and boggy roadends to get cars stuck in - don't forget, you can always quiz other club members or DoC about track conditions.

So keep those trip feedback forms coming in, more are wanted, ask the trip leader for one, or pick them up from the back of the hall on Club night, and deposit them in the coloured flowery box also at the back.

Cheers, Terry

“BUSH 3 1998”

This is a very interesting looking course offered by Manawatu Mountain Safety Council, to be held on 20-21 June 1998. Experienced and qualified instructors will be there to get you to 'step outside your comfort zone' and practice a wide range of skills, including: off-track navigation, emergency shelter building, first-aid scenario management, leadership skills, and risk management. The setting will be the western Ruahine Ranges, and the cost is \$70. Contact Warren 359-2890 (hm), 357-2684 (wk).

BOOK REVIEW

by Tony Gates

The Trampers' Marathon. by Peter Jagger (1998)

This is a home publication of the history of the annual Trampers Marathon. It represents a unique piece of New Zealand's tramping history, and certainly a unique race. The researcher, author, and publisher (who also is an ex-runner, ex-marshal, and ex-organiser/ handicapper) is a Wellington tramping identity, whose familiar hand writing appears in hut log books the country over. He has presented here a complete list of all participants, with summaries of each decade, and a vast statistical analysis of running times, track conditions etc. There are several delightful hand drawn maps (with hand written notes) of the various marathon routes (the route changed over time). Poor quality photos of some of the runners are poorly reproduced!

The Tararua Tramping Club instigated the Marathon in 1930 after some resistance, when the need arose for young men to display their physical fitness. Parts of the Tararua Tramping Club harshly disagreed and strongly criticised “speedy tramping” during the prosperous and social 1920's, making an official club policy to disassociate itself with such activities. Once organised, there was a race every year from 1930 till 1995, running through the Five Mile Track to the Orongorongo River, and back via a very demanding route. It was a handicapped team event, with a lower age limit of 20 years, and a strictly enforced rule about running in boots. Most teams came from the ranks of the Wellington Associated Mountain Clubs, ie Tararua, Catholic, Wellington, and Hutt Valley Tramping Clubs featured, but also Police (SAR), Levin Waiopahu, Wairapara, PNTMC (yes, the names Bissell, Pearce, Gates, and Darragh do appear), NZ Alpine Club, Outdoor Pursuits Centre, Orongorongo Club, NZFS/ DOC, and some independants. The route was approximately 20 kilometres, with the overall average time probably 1 hour 40 minutes (fastest ever time 1 hour 12, slowest was over 3 hours). Scratch (last) runner was usually on a handicap of about 40 minutes! Imagine departing on the run of your life when the first to depart had 40 minutes on you. Races attracted between 20 and 60 entrants, with often fierce but fair inter-club competition. Shield trophies were shared between individuals and clubs. Many runners ran for ten years or more, and were so named “decadents”. Some endured the route to become “double decadents”, one an amazing “triple decadent”!

For most of its active time span, the Trampers Marathon was THE event of the Wellington tramping Calendar. I'm sure some young men (and women) saw the Marathon as a sort of rite of passage, to be accepted as a fit tramper. I'm sure that even now, it evokes strong passions about fitness, and competition between individuals and clubs.

This book is a story of a vital piece of the Wellington Tramping Club scene. It is sad to see the demise of such an important event on the tramping calendar. However, the Trampers Marathon has largely been replaced by other similar events, some of which are considerably more difficult.

TRIP REPORTS

MATEMATEONGA WALKWAY
27-30 December, 1997 by Malcolm Parker

After a very pleasant morning tea of fresh scones with cream and jam we headed up to the start in behind Stratford. Encountered a minor delay on the way when we stopped to assist a friend of our drivers who had broken down south of Hawera. We enjoyed an excellent lunch at the road end, complete with birthday cake, although when our driver took a wrong turn and had to ask directions of a local I was asking myself if he really did know the way. Even the local wasn't sure !

But we started our tramp mid afternoon. It was only a short distance into the first hut where we encountered a voluntary hut warden clearing the track. Having nothing else to do we decided to help him out taking the timber he had cut up to the wood shed. Someone was heard to ask how this sort of timber would finish if it was turned on a lathe. Upon being informed that it was matai a number of schemes were considered for rescuing this beautiful timber from the fireplace. Alas none were practical.

Our host obviously enjoyed having company for the night and directed us to a very impressive lookout not far from the hut but well off the track.

Day two started well and within a short time the track was replaced with the old road that had been cut out of the hillside by hand when the intention was to build a road right through this range earlier in the century. A short side trip was made up Mount Humphries. Although it wasn't a totally clear day the view was still impressive and well worth it

It looked as though we might have the hut to ourselves that night until we were joined by another group about 5 pm. They had come all the way in from the road end that morning.

Day three was the longest day. The view of the mist hanging in the valleys when we left was so impressive we had to stop for a photo shot - even though it was only a couple of hundred yards from the hut. It rained off and on but nothing too unpleasant. Although it did look as if we were going to have to have lunch in the rain until the

guy on point duty "discovered" a hut just off the track. It certainly wasn't on the map and we were a little concerned about the ownership of the hut and the helicopter landing pad beside it. Upon finding a tent fly with "DOC Pipiriki" stenciled on it we relaxed somewhat, assuming that it was legitimate and not used for any market gardening type operations.

Clearly our deodorant by the end of day three was not up to the task because the crowd that was in the hut when we arrived decided to move out and camp on the flat slightly below. With the chance of a mattress to rest on rather than the floor we didn't let this upset us too much. Especially as our friends from the previous night would soon be joining us and cramming into the hut.

Day four started with a short trot down to the river to meet the jet boat to take us up to the Bridge to Nowhere. Some of us had read about this area before and it was interesting to actually see it. A few photos and a good look around, a chat to a couple of canoeists and we were in the jet boat and off down to Pipiriki for a fabulous lunch. We finished the trip with a leisurely drive down the river road back to Wanganui with regular stops at places of interest along the way. The most enjoyable being a stop at a certain drinking establishment just out of Wanganui for a well earned cold one before returning to Palmerston for tea and the inevitable unpacking and clean up.

An excellent trip with the emphasis on taking it easy and making it a holiday. We were Rose Aston, Rod McKenzie, Monica Cantwell, Robert Briggs, Malcolm Parker, and Barry and Christine Scott.

HARRIS CREEK
February 22nd by Liz Flint

Sorry everyone for such a late trip report. We went, we did it, we returned, but yours truly forgot to send it to our editor. Delegate I didn't, and look how late it is.

In warm weather we set off although it had obviously been raining in the hills as the creek was discoloured. We decided not to get our feet wet on the way to Harris Creek and so, after

having a look at the river, continued by track. There had recently been a tremendous amount of rain because when we got to the track by the waterfall it had gone. In its place was a huge valley - quite nasty - so we went up the old path just before the detour near the waterfall. I always liked that clamber better anyway and now you have no choice. The valley behind showed a huge removal of earth had taken place.

We stopped on the hour for snacks and had a relaxed trip in, opting to bypass the hut for a river view across the Harris Creek bridge. The river at this stage didn't attract any swimmers as it had a dirty look to it which made you feel a little cold. Mind you if my mate Monica had been there I probably would have done the rash thing.

The homeward journey was warmer than the inward and the river was decidedly more tempting so most of us returned by river from the swing bridge. The others opted to return by track.

It was an enjoyable day. Although it was a combined trip with Manawatu it was all PNTMC with the only common denominator being Arthur & I. A great club turnout. We were Liz & Arthur Flint, Richard Lockett & nephew Joseph Ward, Christine & Anne Kelly, Margaret Easton, Marlene Henderson, Irelene O'Conner, Marion Carey, Laurence & Heather Gatehouse, Andrew McKenzie, Warren Wheeler, Francine Farrell, and Sarah Stratton.

SUNRISE-WAIPAWA LOOP

March 22nd by June Norris

Our morning started at 7.30 in the Foodtown car park. There was supposed to be 4 of us but ended up by being only 3, which were Warren Wheeler, Richard Lockett and myself (June Norris).

We 3 piled into Warren's car for a quiet pleasant drive to Triplex car park. There we got ourselves ready for the long hard climb up, or in Warren and Richard's case nice leisurely stroll (they probably won't agree with this but as I'm writing the report I can put what I like).

Although Richard has been to Sunrise and further it was almost like a whole new experience for him as he had never had the views before. All the way up and on the top he was amazed by the scenery. All he could remember from his previous trips was clouds wind and more clouds. Warren's

comeback was that Richard should go on more of his tramps as he always has good weather.

We stopped for lunch at the Top Maropea/Sunrise signpost before heading down to the scree. This part I found both exciting and scary as I had never gone down scree before. But I had nothing to worry about because Warren talked me through the whole thing and I ended up by having a ball.

Then we hit the river. If Warren and Richard thought I was slow before, now they had to re-evaluate (Big time). Short ungainly people like me shouldn't go on tramps that consist of tall guys with legs up to their necks. They have a habit of leaving you behind after only taking a few steps. They tried so hard to put me in front but every time after half a dozen steps there they were out front again.

At this point they gave up and wandered on ahead stopping every few minutes to let me catch up. The trip down the river continued like this right to the end. Its great that there are people in the club who have the patience to put up with slower trampers who love what they are doing but don't have the speed of others. Anyway the 6 hour trip Warren had allocated turned into 7.

I had fun, Warren and Richard had a relaxing tramp (whether they wanted to or not) and we enjoyed ourselves (well I did). I would like to thank Warren and Richard for making the trip so enjoyable for me.

OHUTU RIDGE

March 28-29 by Karyn Burgess

One bright sunny day in March one Wellington trumper, one ex-Wellington trumper, one Palmerston North trumper, his gun and a cyclone warning set off into the Ruahine Ranges to conquer the mighty Ohutu Ridge. The plan was to head into Iron Bark Hut, bash down river then conquer the ridge and either camp there or drop down to Waiokotere Stream and Mangatera River. But Palmerston North (our revered trip leader) thought it a little ill-advised to include a day's river travel on a trip with a cyclone warning along. So the troupe ummed and arhhhed and after much discussion dumped their gear at Iron Bark and set out on an afternoon trip up the ridge and back down to the hut.

The trip up the ridge consisted of much grunting and groaning and (quite predictably) much ummming and arhhhhing over exactly how far up the ridge one ought to go when one when one was only going to turn around and come back down again. Palmerston North had had enough, Wellington was ambivalent, and ex-Wellington was frustrated about the ummming and arhhhhing. However, the gun wanted to go up for an excellent photo opportunity at the top of the ridge. So, for the gun's sake, ex-Wellington put her foot down and insisted that the troupe persist at least enough for a view.

As it turned out, no one much minded the extra effort since the flat top of Ohutu ridge turned out to be a pretty groovy place . . . soft mossy paths to tread, magical views and - a must for any spot of significance in the Ruahines - plenty of leatherwood. If only our troupe had brought their gear up with them instead of the cyclone warning (of course it was still a beautiful day). Alas, no camping to be had and it was time to turn back. Ex-Wellington quickly agreed to be in a photo with Palmerston North's gun, Wellington took the photo and Palmerston North took off round the corner to phone home before they began the descent back to Iron Bark Hut for a good night's kip.

The troupe awoke to another stunning day (of course - where was the bloody cyclone i ask you?) and headed upriver to Otukota Hut. If you have the chance you should do this bit - great swimming holes and a few special spots to sit and enjoy a magazine while you wait for Wellington and ex-Wellington to catch up to Palmerston North. (Don't worry, they gave him a run for his money on the uphill.)

From Otukota, our wee troupe headed up over the tops of the Mokai Patea Range, this time trading in the cyclone warning for the real thing. What a buzz that was. The 3 trampers (and the gun) were very suddenly very glad of the warm woolies they had packed in next to their swimming togs. Yet, in no time at all they were safely down the other side in the sunshine, leaving the bad weather on the tops. A few paddocks of cattle later, there they were back at the car. Of course everyone was sad to leave the Ruahines, but Palmerston North was so inspired that he had already planned his next 20 trips by the time Wellington and ex-Wellington made it back to the car.

A trip highly recommended by Karyn Burgess, Ferrida Curwood and Tony Gates (all of whom of course lived happily ever after).

PURITY HUT 29 March

*Sky thick with the promise of rain,
a warm breeze at our backs,
we made our way through grassy fields,
gentle at first, then up,
The dogs run on, chase ball and stick,
we puff and pant behind.
We stop and rest, admire the view,
see distant clouds of rain.*

*Into the bush we follow the path
over tree-root and rock
twisting, turning, this way and that,
but ever climbing up.
A rest, we stop to catch the view,
to find that the white clouds
have stole away the half of it,
we tramp towards the hut.*

*Purity! simple grace, clean, pleasant, tranquil.
Purity! a tin shack, a dark grotty hole,
filled with scrawlings from over the decades.*

*We ate our lunch outside the hut,
in living, light, fresh air,
and watched the rain creep up the world,
to hide the plains below.
Would we score a gap in the clouds?
What brand of boots we wore.
Why do dogs chase whatÆere you throw
return banana skins?*

*Refreshed, we headed upwards still
aiming for Wooden Peg.
But just above the bushline there,
we paused and saw the view
now stopped, a mere stones-throw away,
a hundred yards or so.
The rain was bearing down on us,
we legged it to the hut.*

*Purity! Ah, Purity! What joy! What serenity!
How welcome is your shelter from the storm!*

*Our clothes dripping, we shared some tea,
discussing ration packs.
Within our refuge, safe and dry
listening to the rain.
With the rainfall not abating,
the tops they would not clear,*

*so we headed downwards, resigned
to trace the same old path.*

*Hebe and beech sheltered the route,
shielding us from the rain,
pampering us with fragrances
a memory of spring.
Out of the bush, the grass was wet,
the descent slippery,
Back on the flats, towards the cars,
the rain arrived again.*

*Purity! Oh Purity! Seen not in the best of weather,
thus did we learn to appreciate your joys!*

[Trip participants were: Sarah, Dave, Mhairi, Neil, Richard, June, Nikki, Rochelle, Laurence & Heather (poetic scribes), and of course, Zeb and Hari.]

HEREPAI HUT April 5 by Neil Campbell

We left Palmerston North at 8am and arrived at the Putara road end at about 9.30am. I think some new gravel has been put on the Putara road. Given this and the number of other cars using it, fairly careful driving is required. The weather was very good with nice clear skies. The track is in good condition although fairly muddy in places. We reached the hut by about 11.40am for an early lunch. We were amused that the Levin 1:50,000 topomap shows a footbridge at the hut that in reality does not exist. After lunch we walked a little bit further up the track to get a good view. We finished the day with an icecream stop at Eketahuna.

We were: Neil Campbell, Duncan Hedderley and Lars Van Uffelen.

EASTER TRAMPING on the TARARUA
TUSSOCK TOPS by Tony Gates

Easter 1998 will long be remembered for its wonderful weather. If you were any where near the hills then, you would have enjoyed excellent tramping conditions, a full moon, and a distinct lack of crowds. For me, it was a solo Northern Crossing of the Tararua Ranges, a tramp that covers much of the high central Tararuas, and offers magnificent views all around.

It all began in a sweaty haze, as I beat the daylight up to Mitre Flats Hut, in from Masterton. Time for a brew, then off by torch light to bivvy out an

hour or so up the track. Fine and warm. A few birds twittering about.

Day two was a continuation of the stiff climb up onto Mitre peak, the highest in the Tararuas. A few stags were roaring well, but none answered my challenges. The high overcast weather did not diminish the views of much of the hinterland where I was to tramp. Refreshed and fortified with Easter eggs, it was an easy stroll over to Girdlestone, then for an early lunch at the luxuriously appointed Tarn Ridge Hut. The log book goes back many years, and is filled with names like Barrett, Sharp, and Burgess. One can cover the ground pretty rapidly on Tarn Ridge, past the old hut site (rubbish still not removed after 5 or so years!), then, if you are like me, one slows down somewhat when climbing the looming bulk of the Waiohine Pinnacles. There is some pretty steep country down to the east, towards Arete Forks, and some pretty healthy looking leatherwood. Back the other way, the headwaters of the mighty Waiohine River beckon- a fantastic spot. I wandered through towards Arete then descended through a very short leatherwood ridge to the Park Valley floor. A perfect campsite in perfect weather next to a stream sounds like paradise to me. Twelve hours in the pit!

Day three, and a few clouds soon burnt off to a brilliant day. By the time the sun hit me, I was in the Saddle between Arete and Pukematawai, and pushing over towards the Ohau. A brief pause on Pukematawai confirmed my belief that the Tararuas have some of the most fantastically scenic country around. The views all around were truly awesome. It was real sun hat weather on the long descent to the bush of the Ohau, where once again, the resident stags started to roar. A primeval, guttural sound that is designed to scare off opponents, but often attracts hunters. I followed the Ohau River all the way down to the farm land- my god it felt like a long way. There were a few good swimming holes, and lots of pleasant autumn sunshine. Thanks to some clever transport arrangements, I was home just before dark.

MT EGMONT SUMMIT
Easter Sunday by Laurence Gatehouse

After a pleasant 3-hour drive to the Stratford Plateau carpark, we booted up and admired the view of Egmont with our route up the east ridge to

the Sharks Tooth easily visible and worryingly foreshortened. We were expecting to meet the round the mountain people (Nigel Scott plus Paul and Gavin) somewhere but they weren't at the carpark.

We walked up towards the skifield, crossing the avalanche gully with its new concrete tunnel and history of the Maunganui monster avalanche of some years ago (you can see the effects still on the vegetation). Wandering up the skifield, we broke right to pick up the east ridge above the big outcrop at the skifield, and then climbed and climbed and climbed meeting the round the mountain group and drinking huge amounts of water. The incline averaged about 40 degrees, alternating between steep walking and scrambling. There was quite a lot of loose debris about, easily dislodged, some of it quite large as Dave almost found out firsthand (sorry). The best course was to stay out of the small gullies.

We reached the Sharks tooth for a late-ish lunch in brilliant weather, almost still and warm in the sun. Someone claimed the air temperature was 21^o! From here we saw a strong Brocken Spectre of the Sharks tooth projected onto the cloud in the big gully south of the east ridge. It is a sort of circular rainbow with your shadow in the centre. We had seen a less strong one on the way up, though the cloud layer was then much nearer so the central shadow showed us as people better.

The views were magnificent - I particularly remember looking down onto Fanthams peak, which looked like an alpine meadow, and the new concrete toilet there replacing the one which blew away. The summit proper (7 meters higher than the Sharks tooth) looked well populated and most

of us after lunch descended across the crater and

climbed it.

The descent was via the Lizard track on the north side of the mountain. I found this pretty hard going - I have never quite got the knack of descending scree without losing skin. The track ended up at the Taranaki Alpine Club hut, which looked pretty plush from the outside. Here we regrouped and said goodbye to the round the mountain bunch. The rest of us headed back to the cars via the round the mountain track which comes out behind the lodges at the skifield. We arrived back at the cars after 9 hours walking, a long day for a medium/fit but when will I ever get views like that again from Egmont.

We were Laurence (scribe), Terry, Warren, Nigel Scott, Paul and Gavin, Lars, Kath and Dave, and Alan B.

[Photos by Laurence & Heather Gatehouse]

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