



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - June 1999

*****THIS ISSUE*****

NEWS:

**Enclosed: Last trip card for the millenium,
plus details for Annual Photo Comp, 1999 Snowcraft Courses,
Midwinter celebrations, Bring-&-Buy Auction
and another Everest book review**

TRIP REPORTS:

**Diggers/Forks Hut bash, Waterfall/Pourangaki,
Waitomo Caving, and Kaikomata Range (Kawekas)**

CLUB NIGHTS

JUNE 24	Annual Photo Competition	Murray Woodcock
JULY 1	Committee meeting	
JULY 8	Snowcraft Intro + BYO Slides (Winter Trips)	
JULY 29	Bring-&-Buy Auction Night	

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**. All club nights 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.

June 12 Maharahara variation F
 Derek Sharp 326-8178

Depart 8am. A jolly jaunt into Derek's favourite: the Southern Ruahine leatherwood belt (only its along the tracks this time!). Take the usual route from Opawe roadend on the west side, and over Maharahara summit, but veer south to Keretaki Hut, and down Raparapawai Stream to the eastern edge of Ruahine Forest Park. Very picturesque if there is some snow about on the leatherwood tops.

June 13 Toka M
 Peter Burgess 354-3533

Depart 7am. Toka is a medium height summit in the southern Ruahines, which is easily accessible for a day tramp, yet provides very nice views. There are two tracks to the top so we can do a loop. The full trip should take around 6 hours.

Note: swapped with John Phillips' Field Hut Trip, which is now on July 25.

June 17 Thursday trampers
 Brad Owen 358-3467

MIDWINTER 1 - RANGATAUA

June 19-20 Rangataua & TNP all
 Maree Limpus 358-9004(w)

Costume Theme: "Looking Forward – Looking Back", your choice of 2099 garb or 1899, + bring a \$2 gift. The first of our two Midwinter options, a weekend at Sue and Lawson's cottage up at Rangataua, a great location for choice of activities. Roll up at Sue & Lawson's Friday night or Saturday (early if you're in on a daytramp). BYO food, drink, and "Buzz

Lightyear", plus best party games - somebody suggested welders goggles(?). Day-tramping possibilities still include Hauhangatahi (Saturday), and maybe Ruapehu summit on the Sunday. Give Maree a ring at the DoC Office for details – she can also coordinate transport from PN to Rangataua.

June 19-20 Hauhangatahi, TNP M/F
 Maree Limpus 025 395 883

Now a daytramp option as part of the Rangataua Midwinter Weekend (see above).

June 24 Thursday trampers
 Ellie Kidd 329-0832

June 24 **Club Night: ANNUAL PHOTO & SLIDE COMPETITION**

A club highlight of the year, with plenty of different categories & awards. Our judge for many years, John Cleland, will not be available this year, but local photographer Murray Woodcock will be filling his shoes.

See article below under "Notices" for details.

Mid-Winter 2 - Konini Lodge – Egmont All
26-27 June Warren Wheeler 356 1998

Depart Friday night or Saturday morning. No, we did not cancel our booking and you reap the rewards in a Special Samx Bonus offer - this end-of-millennium year only! Climb to Fanthams Peak, the summit of Egmont, or just warm the hearth at the Lodge. The theme is "Looking Forward-Looking Back" as for MW-1 so dress up in retro (1899) or space age (2099) gear for the climbing and dinner party on Saturday night. BYO food and drink and party games, jokes, and tall tales. \$2 "gift" to get into the merry Samx-ness spirit. RSVP Wednesday 23 June.

July 1 Thursday trampers
 John Stantiall 354-5521

July 1 Committee meeting

July 3-4Dundas - Cattle Ridge M/F
 Graham Peters 329-4722

Depart 7-30am. A classic trip in to Dundas Ridge in the heart of the northern Tararuas. We do a loop from Putara roadend (in from Eketahuna), up

via Herepai Hut, across from East Peak to West Peak and along to Dundas Hut for the night. Drop down across the upper Ruamahanga River Sunday morning, then up over Cattle Ridge and out via Roaring Stag Lodge to the roadend.

July 4 Roaring Stag E/M
 Malcolm Parker 357-5203

Depart 7am. A walk into the eastern Tararuas back of Eketahuna, through nice forest to Roaring Stag Lodge on the banks of the Ruamahanga River. Lunch before heading back the same way, possibly meeting up with Graham's weekend party heading back from Dundas Ridge.

July 8 Thursday trampers
 Rosemary & Ken Hall 356-8538

July 8 Club Night "Snow Craft Intro and Winter Trips BYO slides"

If you are interested in the snowcraft courses this year all will be explained here. This is important as there will be a number of changes to the arrangements made in previous years. Also please bring along any nice winter trip slides you have to help everyone get in the snowcraft mood.

July 10-11 Tutuwai M
 Warren Soufflot 358-7056(w)

Depart 8am. A very nice jaunt in from Walls Whare (back of Carterton on the Waiohine River) over to Cone Hut and down the Tauherenikau valley to Tutuwai Hut for the night. On Sunday return via Mt Reeves to complete a leisurely but scenic loop. Tutuwai is a fairly palatious hut, replete with gas cookers, set above the Tauherenikau River.

July 11 South face of K2 All/T
 Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart 6.30am. This is the Big One - what a way to end the millennium! And a great warm-up for Snowcraft too. The legendary K2 - 32,000mm above sea level and (almost) world famous in Foxton. Our pre-dawn preparations begin with setting up Base Camp and a hearty breakfast while your guides survey the best route up the slick icy south face rising before us in the gathering light. Your guides will instruct you in the use of the specialised high altitude gear we will use and will set up the fixed rope to secure expedition members against a fall during the arduous ascent. The elite few will climb solo, without oxygen. Crampons, ice axes, and rope gear will be provided but BYO if you have it.

July 15 Thursday trampers
 Judy Callesen 357-0192

July 17-18 No Mans 4WD All,4WD
 Tony Gates 357-7439

Depart 8am. No Mans hut is in the Northern Ruahines, overlooking the Hawkes Bay Plains. There is a reasonable four-wheel-drive road cruising past Ruahine Hut, right up to No Mans Hut, which is nestled in a delightful tussock hollow. The hut is private, so we might return to Ruahine Hut, or camp out in the nearby beech forest. It's a lovely area, with the possibility of a good sunrise over the plains, and some easy walks over the tussock tops.

July 18 Kapakapanui M
 Kevin Pearce 357-0217

Depart 7am. A loop track inland from Waikanae up onto the tops in the southwest Tararuas. Lunch near Kapakapanui Hut with an easy option of returning the same way for those not up to the loop trip. Views (and maybe some snow) on the tops.

July 22 Thursday trampers
 Bev Akers 325-8879

July 23 Applications close for Snowcraft 1

July 24-25 Iglooming Ruahines F/T
 Derek Sharp 326-8178

Stay tuned for more details next newsletter. Derek is considering igloo/snowcave options on the Whanahuia Range back of Rangī, or maybe Te Hekenga to the northeast, as part of a loop option from Rangī.

July 25 Field hut / Tabletop E/M
 John Phillips 358-1874

Depart 8am. A leisurely day-trip from Otaki Forks up the western part of the 'southern crossing' in the Tararuas. In to view the historic Field Hut and up onto Table Top for lunch and some views. Back down the same route to Otaki Forks.

July 27(Tuesday)
Snow Craft 1 evening for all participants

July 29 Thursday trampers
 Phil Pearce 354-6687

July 29 Club Night

“Bring and Buy Auction night”

Is your tramping cupboard cluttered with stuff you don't use anymore? Bring along you old, unwanted and superseded gear, anything that still has a bit of life in it, and maybe make a few dollars. What to do with those dollars burning a hole in your pocket and that nice clear space in your tramping cupboard? Well there will be heaps of bargains to hunt down, just the thing if you are giving up rock climbing and getting into telemark skiing (or whatever).

The club gets a small percentage of the sale price and you can put a reserve price on your gear.

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

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

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 at home address: 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, by far the most convenient way is to e-mail it to me, at my work address:

john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz

If you are e-mailing scanned photos, send your scan files to:

postmaster@horizons.govt.nz

where all incoming scan files are automatically quarantined by a software package. It helps to give me notice before sending a scan via e-mail, then I can arrange to have it forwarded to me from quarantine. **Any photo scan files e-mailed directly to me will be automatically rejected** by

the system, so make sure you send them to the 'postmaster' address at my work.

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.

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

FINAL CALL FOR SUBS

Less than half of club members have paid up. Come on folks, lets see those subs rolling in! Good value at \$30 single, \$35 family.

EVENTS CARD FOR JULY-DECEMBER 1999

Terry C.

The Events Card for the next six months is out. There are lots of trips and activities being offered with tons of scope for tramping on those excellent winter days: cold and frosty in the mornings, but fine, clear and warm as the sun rises in the sky, with those snowy vistas that always excite you and make you want to get out and about even

more. With the winter snow, some snowcraft skills are essential, hence the Snowcraft Course. But there is still plenty of variety for those who are not into the snow and ice, with local tramping of various grades. Winter and spring is the time to do as much tramping as possible so when summer comes you are fit and ready for those longer summer trips. Down the South Island?

Included on the events card are some courses run locally by the NZ Mountain Safety Council - check these out - they compliment the clubs instruction programme.

For further info on trips contact the various leaders or the trip convenors: Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805 and Peter Burgess 354-3533.

Many members have committed themselves to lead one or more trips/events for this coming six months. Thank you all you leaders. I'm sure all club members will actively support this good effort by going on lots of these trips and events. Don't forget to encourage flatmates, partners, parents, family and friends to come on these trips as well.

The club evenings have also been organised by Maree (025 395-883), using members and outside speakers. Evenings include talks on overseas areas, and the EOYBBQ. Come along to them, and encourage new bods also.

"GUIDE FOR TRIP LEADERS", PINK "HELP" FORM, AND TRIP FEEDBACK FORM Terry
The "Guide For Trip Leaders", essential reading for leaders of Club trips, is good value for all trip participants as it give you an idea of what's involved. Please keep as reference. Also included with this newsletter is a copy of the pink "Help" form for possible Search and Rescue purposes, for when you are leading club or other trips. Fill it in or use it as a guide to compile details, prior to the trips departure (more available at Club nights). The Trip Feedback form is designed for getting feedback, either positive or negative, from those trips you go on, so the club can enhance your future outdoor experiences. Fill them in and drop into the flowery box at the back at club nights. (More copies are available, at club night or from your trip leader).

MANAWATU MSC OUTDOOR FIRST AID COURSES

Do you need to update your first aid skills? The next Manawatu MSC Outdoor First Aid Courses are:

July 30 - Aug 1

Oct 15 - 17

Contact Dianne Siegenthaler 06 357 7237.

Cost: \$86

WANTED OLD ITEMS

Manawatu MSC Outdoor First Aid team of instructors need your help. Do you have old sleeping bags, snow foam mats, raincoats and leggings, hats and gloves? Our equipment we use on outdoor first aid courses needs replacing, the emphasis is on OLD items.

If you have any of the above items please contact Manawatu MSC Outdoor First Aid convenor Dianne Siegenthaler 06 357 7237

CHANGING PHONE NUMBERS

Warren Soufflot's address is effectively "no fixed abode" over the next few months before his departure to the States (ie. he's living in all sorts of places), so if you need to contact him, use his work phone no: 358-7056.

Patrick Janssen has also lost a home phone number! Use his mobile number 021 705 422, or ring him at work, 3504 600 ext 7175.

ANNUAL PHOTO COMPETITION

The club's annual photo competition will be held at the club night on Thursday, June 24. The usual rules for the competition apply:

- 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.

The system for judging winners is a democratic one – a show of hands, after the guiding advice of our guest photographic expert, Murray Woodcock.

Murray will be taking the place of John Cleland, our longstanding judge for many previous years' competitions. Murray is an avid young local photographer, who also combines it with tramping, so I am sure he will be a keen and worthy judge on the night. You may have seen Murray at his workplace (Bell's on Broadway), or seen his photographic exhibition recently at the Manawatu Art Gallery.

1999 SNOWCRAFT COURSES

As usual, PNTMC will be running three Snowcraft training weekends this year. SC1 is for Beginners and those wanting confidence for tramping and basic survival in snow conditions; SC2 is Intermediate and includes basic rope work for alpine tramping; SC3 is Advanced and includes more skills for mountaineering.

The three weekends combine into a comprehensive Snowcraft Course with each weekend a prerequisite for the next. SC1 and SC2 will be preceded by Introductory Briefing sessions on the Tuesday night before each weekend.

The weekends will be run similar to club trips to provide an authentic atmosphere. Instructors will team up with 2-3 students for instruction and generally the same groups will prepare their own meals and share other hut chores.

Cost will be \$70-\$140 for each weekend to cover costs for transport, accommodation, food, gear hire, and club instructors.

The Programme:

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------|--|
| SC1 | 31 July-1 August | MTSC Ruapehu Lodge, Whakapapa |
| SC2 | 14-15 August | MTSC Ruapehu Lodge, Whakapapa |
| SC3 | 28-29 August | Kapuni Lodge, Egmont |
| 27 July | SC1 | Introductory Briefing at the PN Fire Station, Cook St |
| 10 August | SC2 | Introduction to Rope work, Climbing Wall, Rec Centre, Massey University. |

If these dates do not suit you may like to consider the courses run by NZAC Wellington, or MTSC or MUAC here in PN. Further information contact Warren Wheeler 356-1998 or Terry Crippen 356-3588

BOOK REVIEW

by Tony Gates

"The Climb - Tragic Ambitions on Everest"

By Anatoli Boukreev and G Weston DeWalt (1997) St Martins, New York.

'Toli Boukreev was perhaps the greatest high altitude mountaineer of our time. He was raised in a staunch, Soviet manner, and performed many great feats of strength and skill in the Himalayas for over twenty years. He was intimately involved with the Everest tragedy of May 1996, which forms the basis of the book. (Kiwis Rob Hall and Andy Harris, among others, died on Everest then). Sadly, Toli was killed in an avalanche on Annapurna shortly before his book was finished.

I think part of the American psyche is to argue and gossip over a coffee table and on the media. We have seen many cases of vast media coverage of (relatively) seemingly insignificant events, and in the States, this was one such issue. Well, I mean that it was not an insignificant event to see six mountaineers die on one mountain at one time, but the volume of media coverage that this received far exceeds what would happen if they all died in mountains at different times. Jon Krakauer was on Rob Hall's ill-fated expedition, and he was first to present to the press his version of events (a fine book it was too, reviewed here last year). But debate has raged since about specific events, and who was where, when, about

the role of the guides versus the paying clients, and how the deadly outcome could have been different. One crucial debate is who had oxygen, and how much. Krakauer was somewhat critical of the expedition leader Scott Fischer, the expedition (the crowds) and Boukreev himself, so Boukreev and De Welt present their side of the story. There was much criticism from this book (and other sources) about the crowds, and the sharing of guiding duties. Hall's and Fischer's expeditions were well prepared and catered for, but disaster was due to a combination of factors. This book is quite clear in its statements that Boukreev did indeed save several lives on the South Col, and acted in a professional manner. He was always known as an immensely strong mountaineer, capable of pulling anybody out of a

trouble spot. But he was unable to rescue everybody when darkness and the storm hit.

This is a wonderful book, with fine writing on the profession of mountain guiding, the climb itself, and death in the mountains. Great title too! I challenge anybody to read this book and not shed a tear!

The next book to be reviewed in this newsletter is "The Death Zone" "Climbing Everest through the killer storm", by Matt Dickinson (1997), yet another story of the highest spot on this planet, and when it was climbed just after the Rob Hall (etc) disaster. According to the reviews, this one is really worth reading.

TRIP REPORTS

THE MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Diggers Hut to Forks Hut

2nd May

by Dave Henwood

On the trip card, it was called Dave's Magical Mystery Trip, mainly because until a week before, it was a mystery to me where to go. However after a study of the map and a quick chat to Terry and Mick, it became a trip into Diggers Hut, then cross-country to Forks Hut and back out to the road via Te Ekaou Hut.

By the Friday night there were still no takers. "Great," I thought looking forward to a sleep-in on Sunday morning. However on Saturday morning, Graham phoned – he and Janet were keen to come. To quote the man in the red Toyota Hilux, "Bugger."

We left the car at the Arbon farmhouse at 8:30 am and taking Mick's advice headed up the river. There had obviously been a bit of rain the previous night as the water level was up quite a bit, reflected by the amount of green grass that was submerged. Eventually we got sick of the stream and, climbing up onto the farmland, discovered we were pretty much where we wanted to be. A wander along the fence-line and the Diggers track was located.

Our stroll in to Diggers was broken by an encounter with two very bedraggled hunters.

They had bivvied out the night before and it had "fair persisted down" (or words to that effect!) so they were heading out to dry out and grab a hot shower.

At Diggers we had an early lunch, then headed down river a hundred metres or so to the base of our chosen spur. Getting away from the river was a bit of a challenge as the bush was rather thick. However once reunited on the spur, we picked up a good trail with the occasional permatat marker to entice us onwards. On the ridge top the compass was put to a bit of use as we wandered along trying to find the right place to drop off to the next stream.

The worst thing about native trees is that most of them don't have decent branches low down. This makes climbing them for route-finding purposes difficult. Eventually we made our decision and dropped off down steep ground, first through reasonably open bush, then through tangled supplejack, tree-ferns and other assorted veg. Yuk.

Once down at the stream, we tried to relate the terrain to the map. Were we in the correct branch or was this a little side stream? We grovelled down stream a bit, then were forced to climb above a gorgey bit. The extra height gave some views and proved that we had been in the right place so we were forced to backtrack. A bit more grovelling up the other side of the stream brought

us onto the spur we wanted. However, the stream on the other side was roaring, obviously swollen by the previous nights rain so we elected to continue sidling until we could drop down to the forks and hut.

At this point, the drizzle set in and got steadier as the afternoon wore on. The sidle was straight forward as sidles go – picking the route was easy, actually following it wasn't. After a fair bit of thrashing around we dropped down to the forks and, lo and behold, there was the hut right in front of us.

The hut provided welcome shelter from the rain as we had a bit of afternoon tea before following the track out to the farm land. With the light fading we followed farm tracks and then crossed the main stream opposite the Arbon's. Here the last obstacle presented itself – a 3 metre verticle bank of river shingle. A bit of searching and a handy macrocarpa was located with dangling roots providing a convenient ladder.

We reached the car just as darkness fell – perfect timing and a great way to end a trip that was just a little bit different.

The team: Graham Peters, Janet Wilson and Dave Henwood.

WATERFALL HUT TRIP

Sat/Sun 8-9 May by Dave Grant

The pre dawn blackness hung heavily over the countryside as we left Ashhurst and drove north to Mangaweka, then up the picturesque Kawhatau valley to Mangakukeke road end. By 8am with boots on feet and packs on backs we were making our way up a steep pinch across farmland towards the bush edge and the track to Purity Hut and beyond. The weather was overcast but held promise of better things to come (according to the weather forecast anyway!!).

Climbing steadily first through beech forest and then a magnificent grove of kaikawaka we reached the scrub line and Purity Hut just before 10am. Sleeping bags on the bunks and tucker hanging in plastic bags from the rafters indicated the hut was occupied and the unlined corrugated iron walls indicated why the place was called Purity.

Two or three day-old snow lay thicker on the ground as we climbed and by the time we reached the tussock slopes approaching Wooden Peg the white stuff was about 20cm deep. We met the two hunters who were camped in Purity heading down the hill empty handed and disappointed.

Shortly after we climbed through the cloud into a scene of winter magic. A cloudless blue sky above, brilliant sunshine, and the snow dusted tops emerging all around from a sea of cloud below. In the far distance to the west and north: Taranaki, Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe. Closer at hand Mangaweka at the end of the Hikurangi Range and then east from Te Atuaoparapara, to Rangiateatua, Ohuinga and Te Hekenga and further west to Pourangaki. Away to the south Tunupo was showing. Down below we caught murky glimpses of the bush clad Pourangaki valley.

After a lunch break in the sun on Iron Peg we followed the ridge SE for a short distance before dropping off into Iron Peg creek and scrambling down to the Kawhatau river and Waterfall Hut which we reached about 3.20pm. At this point the river runs in quite a wide valley edged with sparsely clad shingle flats. Almost managed to get right to the hut without getting our feet wet!!

The rest of the afternoon we spent drinking tea, then preparing and eating the evening cordon bleu creation (rice and pasta accompanied by savory sausages, onion and apple, with an entree of raw carrot and frankfurter slices). After a night cap of port, and partially asphyxiated by a smoky fire we hit the sack by 7.30pm.

Woke the next morning to a clouding sky and were on the track by 7.30am. Little did we know at this stage that the day was going to be quite a mission!! We took the Pinnacle Creek route out of the Kawhatau back up on to the ridge we had left yesterday. This route is much more straight forward than that down Iron Peg Creek. By the time we had reached the ridge at about 9am the weather had clouded in completely and the wind was rising. After travelling south along the ridge for a short distance we dropped off to the SW at the Pourangaki signpost and followed the track down to the Pourangaki river swing-bridge and up to the hut, reaching there by 10.45am.

By this time rain had set in. Previous considerations about following the river down to

Kelly Knight hut were quickly dispelled by the sight of a reasonable flow of very cold looking water. The last section of track down to the Pourangaki River drops steeply causing thigh muscles to protest.

We spent an hour at the hut recovering and refueling. Well set in a clearing we decided that Pourangaki hut would be a nice place to spend a few days in summer. From there it was a steady climb up to the bush line and then into the full reality of the deteriorated weather. Reaching the top of Pourangaki about 1.30pm it took us an hour to find our way through the murk onto the start of the track down to Kelly Knight. Under the conditions the poles were too far apart to follow without using a compass especially through the more broken tops to the west.

Heading down to Kelly Knight the conditions improved once we reached the shelter of the bushline and particularly once there was no more snow to make conditions slippery underfoot!! By the time we reached Kelly Knight hut the rain had stopped, it was 4pm, and we decided it was time for a feed. At this stage Llew and the other PNTMC folk who had come in to the hut from the road end for Saturday night were long gone but it was a big relief to see a note in the hut book that our van was waiting just 10 minutes from the bush edge!!

We left the hut at 5pm expecting to get out of the bush long after dark (Kelly Knight hut info suggested 3-4 hours). However, despite the nasty little up-hill grunt just after the swing-bridge we made excellent time and were out of the bush by 6pm. Ten minutes more to the van, off with the packs, boots and some of the sweaty clothes, then it was a nice cosy drive back to civilization. We were Janet Wilson, Dave Henwood and Dave Grant.

CAVING – TRAMPING AND CLIMBING ON THE INSIDE

May 15-16 by Warren Wheeler

This was a combined trip with Manawatu Caving Club to the Mahoenui area south of Waitomo. It's a 4-hour drive and I was picked up from home on Friday night by the caving contingent from Pahiatua. Another carload left earlier that afternoon and the other was somewhere ahead of us. After takeaways at North Wanganui we traveled up through Stratford and finally met the forecast rain which eased off as we carried on up

the coast to our base for the weekend, the Mahoenui "Hut," half way between the Awakino and PioPio pubs.

The hut is an old farm cottage managed by the Taranaki Caving Group and located in a handy spot just off the main highway. It is suitably homely with electric lights, gas cooking, a wood-burning Kent-style heater with wetback for hot water, a shower, an indoor toilet (via the woodshed lean-to), mobile garbage disposal units (2 pigs roving outside), matted beds and bunks for 30 and its own version of "The Wild Kingdom" thanks to the resident rat population. After brief introductions we all bunked down around 11pm.

It was still raining in the morning and there was concern about high water levels in some of the underground streams. This limited the choice of caves to explore and in deference to the 2 PNTMC novices we prepared to head off to the Skyline Cave. Caving can be cold wet muddy abrasive and cramped so long-johns, overalls, gumboots, gloves, helmet and a willingness to be battered and bruised are pre-requisites. Oh, and its pitch dark so a back-up torch is a good idea and a reliable lamp helps. Graham introduced us to our state of the ark gas lamps and showed us how to fill our acetylene generators with carbide wrapped in an old polypro sock (a trick to make it easier to clean out afterwards, apparently).

We needn't have been concerned because as we drove off the rain eased (a good omen) and the "not unusual" limestone boulder fallen off the bank onto the gravel road was easily heaved aside by only four of us (another good omen). The caves are not located on any master map to avoid people finding them (!) so we hoped we had parked at the right place on the side of the road. After jumping the fence we headed down the steep paddock into the gully where a little creek ducked around out of sight into, yes, our Skyline cave. Before following the stream underground we added water to our generators and fired up the helmet lamps with the fitted piezometric lighters.

The caves themselves have been nicely mapped by the various caving clubs. The maps are quite detailed and show cross sections, gradients, stalactites and other formations with names like Crocodile, Pumpkin Patch, and Ogre's Mouth. After consulting our map we walked into the cave entrance and were immediately in commando

mode on our elbows and bellies slithering over gravel beside the little creek under a flat roof of limestone before being able to stand up again. For the next 4 hours we enjoyed clambering over rockfalls, straddling above the stream, crossing waterfalls, climbing up over, around and through this dark world with its beautiful limestone formations -“curtains” and “straws” hanging from above, crystal “pools”, billowy flows like Renaissance clouds frozen in time. There were even a few glow-worms and strange black hairy fungus growing off rat droppings, as well as a more unusual long-haired white version of the same thing. Cave wetas we saw none but we came across a baleful looking green frog washed in from a pond outside.

In one place a boardwalk system had been installed to prevent damage to the delicate formations in the chambers lined with straws and stalactites and stalagmites and cascading flow formations. Another spot involved a little climb up from the stream into a side tunnel, then a wriggle through a small opening and up a hidden shaft into a secondary tunnel – it was like being in an Indiana Jones story. We straddled and bridged along the limestone walls above a clear deep pool filling the fissure to find our treasure, little pools of clear crystals in an alcove above. Unfortunately I was unable to avoid dragging my muddy feet in the pool on the way out and left it in less than pristine state, sorry Bruce. Caving rules are based on Take Only Photos (a bit tricky when there is steam rising in clouds off everyone), try not to touch the sides and leave no grubby handmarks and duck to avoid damaging the scenery.

At some stage we had lunch by candle light (well, gas-light yes, all right), and finally we emerged into daylight up a slippery rockfall into a tomo hollow with some bush and stinging nettle to negotiate – ah, the joys of caving. It was a 10-minute stroll back uphill to the cars and we were well satisfied with our little adventure – what it may have lacked in technical challenge it made up for in variety and beauty.

In the evening the after-dinner entertainment provided a showcase for caving’s arcane skills. These included a chair traverse (beginners only) and a most impressive traverse of the cupboard under the sink, a feat only Janet and Ivan were limber enough to achieve. Other challenges included picking a matchbox off the floor with

your mouth with only your feet touching the floor (Janet and Steve) and Aaron showed us how to jump one-legged through the hoop formed by grabbing the big toe on your left foot with your right hand.....then jumping back – better than the Chinese Circus! Bed-time stories continued in front of the fire with tales of the rescue deep inside Mt Owen and other yarns about cave exploits near and far.

Sunday was still wet, and after intense discussion an easy rest-day cave was picked – Blacks Cave. This was also very close to the same road and had a “dry” entrance. The cave opened up to a sizable cavern with raging stream, complete with waterfalls and rapids which were putting on a good show with all the runoff.

We followed it upstream a bit to its source before back-tracking and heading into a heavily strawed cavern with dimply stalagmites littered everywhere. The cave linked through to Not-Blacks via a muddy wriggle which was a bit of a squeeze and we needed to take our helmets and generators off to make it through, pushing the PVC cave bags in front. A tad awkward and a taste of how difficult caving can be at times.

We were back at the Hut a bit after 2 pm, showered off the mud, and soon had the place cleaned up and our gear packed. Steve, Colin and Ivan had enjoyed their cave with water pouring in from the rain outside. Thanks to Janet for looking after us novices and giving us the opportunity to share their wonderful and exciting world under the mountains. Maybe we’ll see some fairies next time.

We were Janet Wilson, Graham Peters, Bruce Van Brunt, Warren Wheeler (scribe), and caving club members Aaron and Tracy, Steve Glasgow, Colin and Ivan.

KAIKOMATA RANGE (KAWEKAS)

May 16

by Tony Gates

The Mohaka and Ngaruroro Rivers and their tributaries slice up the vast, rugged, and sometimes beautiful high country of inland Hawkes Bay. These mighty rivers drain the eastern side of the popular Kaweka and Ruahine Ranges, and several smaller ranges in between. A quick glance at the topo maps of the area will give you literally hundreds of trips to fantasise about in an area that is easily accessible from Palmerston

North. Our destination for this day tramp was the Kaikomata Range, in between the Ngaruroro and Taruarau Rivers.

The Kaikomata Range is botanically interesting, as there are a few remnant beech forest areas, lots of regenerating scrub, and frustratingly large amounts of *Pinus Contorta*. We frequently cursed the Forestry bureaucrats who instigated such a scheme some 30 years ago. *Pinus Contorta* is a powerfully invasive weed, rapidly spreading through large areas of the Kaweka Ranges, much of which is steep and rugged. We imagined that to control and/ or eradicate it would now be near impossible, and would cost huge sums of money. Much of the Kawekas are also seriously eroded, with impoverished soils.

So, after three hours in the car, including 15 minutes of back-tracking for an intended trip abandonment (car problems), we were finally stretching our legs in sunny Hawkes Bay. The Ruahine Ranges, far to the south, and the Kawekas to the north, were covered in clag for most of the day, and they say it rained in Palmy for most of the day, but we somehow remained in clear, mostly warm weather.

We wandered past the somewhat derelict Komata hut to the wide, flat, scrub covered ridge (where there were a number of unnaturally foul odours detected). The track followed the ridge to the edge of the Taruarau River valley, where we paused for lunch and a view on a pleasant rocky knob.

The track to the Taruarau River and Shutes Hut descended 700 metres down. Better, we thought, to enjoy the views of the northern Ruahines, than to sweat unnecessarily down and up a hill that didn't care. Peter then set his compass on an eastern bearing to "point 963", which was along a

flat, scrubby ridge with the promise of better views of Hawkes Bay. Yes, better views, but also better scrub. It seemed somehow easier to tramp through the rubbish with Jimmy out in front. Then he found *a track*, a roughly cut affair that certainly made it easier for us.

We turned around at a nondescript place, with views only of more scrub. Someone said that if he was here, Derek Sharp would have continued all the way down to the river, then grovelled up the ridge opposite. Then someone said that if Mick Leyland were there, we might just lose our way returning to the car. Ha ha.

We zipped back along our new-found track, so smug and assured that we did indeed promptly lose our way. In fact, we all walked right over the track without realising, then floundered around in neck high tussock, manuka, and *Contorta* and swamp for an hour or so before we found the track. We must have tramped (grovelled) parallel to the track for ages. I guess you were there with us in spirit Mick!!! Four slightly scratched trampers emerged at the car before dark, determined to revisit the area one day.

Day trampers were Peter Wiles, Tony Gates, Martin Lawrence, and James Gordon (Jimmy the scrub man).

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