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# PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

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P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

**Newsletter - December 1999 / January 2000**

## **\*\*\*THIS ISSUE\*\*\***

### **NEWS & VIEWS:**

**TripCard 2000, Club trophy update,  
tramping trivia & sonnets,  
and more book reviews with TG**

### **TRIP REPORTS:**

**Field Hut / Table Top, Mangaweka Trig,  
Search Team Leader Course,  
No Mans Road (the long and short of it),  
and Navigation 1 & 2**

## **CLUB NIGHTS**

<b>JAN 27</b>	<b>New Year BBQ</b>	<b>Horeshoe Bend, Tokomaru</b>
<b>FEB 3</b>	<b>Committee meeting</b>	
<b>FEB 10</b>	<b>Our Local DoC Reserves</b>	<b>Maree Limpus</b>
<b>FEB 24</b>	<b>Summer trips / BYO Slides</b>	

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 **sharp**, 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. A 50c door fee includes supper.

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Depart 8am. Roaring Stag Hut is a character-filled old place, situated in the Eastern Tararuas beside the Ruamahunga River. The track in consists of a short, steepish climb from the Putara Road end, followed by a long gentle descent through particularly pleasant open bush. Depending on the keenness of the party and conditions, we may return via the river.

Jan 27 Thursday trampers  
Rose & Ken Hall 356-8538

**Jan 27 Club Night: BBQ Horseshoe Bend**

Come along with your friends, your smiles, your summer tans, your Christmas tales, and your food, and get the new year off to a great start with the summer BBQ. This great event will take place at 6.30pm at Horse Shoe Bend just up the road from Tokomaru. Bring your BBQ (if you have one), togs and mosquito repellent.

Jan 29-30 Kime Hut M  
Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805

Kime hut is on the Tararua tops about as far again as Field hut and on the same path (which is one end of the southern crossing for those with ambitions). It is a pleasant hut with some good views given the visibility which is a pretty good bet in January. The plan is to start early-ish (in case of good (hot) weather) but to avoid setting any speed records. If people are keen we can drop our packs at the hut and do Mount Hector which is fairly close or even make a midnight trip up there. Sunday I would like to walk out via Penn Creek which has been closed by DOC due to slips for a few years now but is reported to be fairly easily passable. However, retracing our steps back to Otaki forks remains an option. OK I'll hate myself for this but meet Foodtown carpark at 6.30 and don't forget the water bottle, sunblock and swimming togs. Hope to see you along.

Jan 30 Harris Creek (joint with MTSC)  
E/M Liz Flint 356-7654

Depart 7-30am. A leisurely joint-club trip up the Mangahao valley beyond the dams, with a picnic lunch at the footbridge across to Harris Creek. Bring your togs for a swim.

Feb 3 Thursday trampers  
Pam Wilson 357-6247

Feb 3 Committee meeting

Feb 5-6 Keretaki Hut, Maharahara E/M

Dave Grant 357-8269

Depart 7.30am Saturday. Keretaki Hut is situated in the Southern Ruahines about 1 hour off the main Maharahara track. We start with an easy walk up the Kumeti stream then climb steeply up onto the ridge, following the main track before branching south. A neat opportunity to walk along leatherwood covered tops without any hassle. Good views over Southern Hawkes Bay. Back the same way on Sunday.

Feb 6 Lower Otaki Gorge M  
Kevin Pearce 357-0217

Depart 9am. This is a tubing trip from the end of the road at Otaki Forks, back down the river. So bring along a tube & a change of clothes if you want to check out the lower Otaki from a different angle.

Feb 10 Thursday trampers  
Graham Pritchard 357-1393

**Feb 10 Club night: "Our local DoC Reserves" (with our local DoC person!) Maree Limpus**

Maree from Doc will share slides on some of those beautiful little reserves that dot our area. She will be highlighting the most accessible of these treasures that we so often just fly past on our way to bigger, but not always better things.

Feb 12-13 Howletts Hut M/F  
Llew Prichard 358-2217

Depart 8am. This interesting & varied weekend tramp leads from the old Moorcock Base in the eastern Ruahines, across a farm valley, down through nice bush to the Tukituki River Gorge (wet feet!) and Daphne Hut. From there, a steep climb up to the superbly sited Howletts Hut for the night. May return via Longview Hut to the south.

Feb 13 Mangatepopo Rock All,I  
Andy Backhouse 353-0774

More details in February newsletter, or ring Andy after he gets back from the UK on 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

Feb 17 Thursday trampers  
Sue & Lawson Pither 357-3033

Feb 20 Sunrise Hut E/M  
John Barnett 355-0933

Depart 7am. The popular Sunrise Hut is at the edge of the bush in the eastern Ruahines, with great views east over the Hawkes Bay Plains and

west over the inland ranges of the Ruahines. This is an excellent tramp for first-timers - with a well-graded & benched track – and rewarding for the regulars too, with nice bush & superb hut location and views.

Feb 20 Otaki Gorge - Penn Creek M/F,T  
Tony Gates 357-7439

Depart PN 7am, return probably 7-8pm. The Otaki is a classic Tararua River, with deep gorges, bottomless swimming holes, and some exciting rapids to float down. This is a classic "gorge trip", when we walk up the sidle track to Penn Creek, then tube back down the river. Anyone who has floated a Tararua gorge will never forget

the fantastic scenery, and the thrill and excitement of tubing. You will need to be well prepared, with wet suit, waterproof gear, and guts, and you will just love this one. A small day-pack certainly helps.

Feb 24 Thursday trampers  
Jill Spencer 329-8738

**Feb 24 Club Night: Summer trips /  
BYO Slides**

Summer trip tales - what were we up to in the season of sun and snow?

#### Trip participants:

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

Trips usually leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street with transport provided by car-pooling. 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 or any suggestions for future tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588), Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805), or Peter Burgess (354-3533).

#### Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trip co-ordinators, 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.

#### \*\*\* OVERDUE TRIPS \*\*\*

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Terry Crippen (356-3588), or Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805)

### NOTICES

#### ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

All kinds of articles (trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, product reviews, etc etc) are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles may be hand-written or sent by e-mail to the newsletter editor John Phillips (see address on end page).

It is preferable to include your article as an attachment (please use Microsoft Word Version 7.0 or Rich Text Format), unless it is quite a small article, in which case it is fine to cut-&-paste into the e-mail.

Note that scanned **photos** must be sent with a covering e-mail (or phone call to John) to:

[postmaster@horizons.govt.nz](mailto:postmaster@horizons.govt.nz).

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

Wishing you all a great Xmas & New Millenium, and happy summer tramping!

#### WELCOME TO THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE NEXT THOUSAND YEARS!

Terry, Peter B., Laurence . . .

Yes, its The Events Card for the first half of 2000.

There is a wide range of trips and activities being run: tramping and climbing, near and far, Easy to Fit Grade, day to 5-day ones (Easter and ANZAC are joined together this year – so you don't have to make the Tuesday a sickly).

Thank you all you leaders who have committed yourselves to lead trips. 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.

#### A FEW PLEASURES:

Please read the comments, regarding the grading of trips and participating on these, printed on the events card and at the start and finish of the listings in the Newsletter.

Please let the leader know EARLIER than later that you want to go on their trip - otherwise the leader may cancel the trip and go to the beach.

PLEASE IF YOU ARE A TRIP LEADER - stick to the original date and place. The last few months too many leaders were rearranging their trip dates. I know sometimes it can't be helped but please try to avoid it where possible. The preferred option is to try and get a suitable replacement leader. BUT ALWAYS discuss it with one of the Trips Coordinators (there are three of us) as soon as possible. They have the final say in the end regarding Club trips.

The Trips Coordinators are Terry Crippen 356-3588 (terry-crippen@clear.net.nz), Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805 (lgatehouse@hort.cri.nz), & Peter Burgess 354-3533 (peterb@cardax.com).

A range of club evenings have been organised, with members and outside speakers, starting off with the traditional BBQ at Horseshoe Bend on the edge of the Tararuas near Tokomaru. Maree Limpus (w358-9004) organizes the club night schedule.

#### "GUIDE FOR TRIP LEADERS", PINK "HELP" FORM, AND "TRIP FEEDBACK" FORM

Make use of the Guide for Trip Leaders, especially if you are new to running a PNTMC trip. This guide is also good value for all trip participants as it gives you an idea in what's involved. Please keep as reference.

The pink "Help" - fill it out, or use it as a guide to compile details, prior to the trips departure, for safety purposes. A useful idea is to have two copies filled out; one to take on the trip as well as the one left with your overdue trip contact - so

everybody has the same details of what is happening and when the trip is due out. (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)

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Alan Bee is now at:

9 Ranfurly Road

Feilding

Phone: 323-4582

#### CLUB TROPHIES

The Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy, which PNTMC skilfully won at the annual quiz against MUAC, MTSC, and Mountain Equipment last winter, has had an upgrade. Each competitor has had their emblem engraved in the lid. It looks GREAT. The Billy is currently residing behind the counter at Mountain Equipment for all participants to see.

We have a new trophy . . .

THE TARARUA TROPHY is awarded for excellence in writing for the Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club. It was donated by Tony Gates, and crafted by Masterfix Ltd from a Totara fence post from Otaki Forks, and melted metal from the ashes of Powell Hut, burnt down during 1999.

This trophy is a classy piece of art work crafted to decorate your book shelf or mantle piece at home. It will reward the good work of newsletter authors. Previous newsletters have offered some wonderful, memorable stories. Now, the best writings of the year can be suitably awarded when The Tararua Trophy is presented.

This year it was awarded at the Christmas BBQ to Pete McGregor. Other awards from previous years include the prestigious Dave Hodges forgetfulness Award, the Derek Sharp cuisine award, the map & compass geographical embarrassment award (ie, who got the most lost), and of course the award for the

``best'' dressed trumper of the year (Maree won that on last year for climbing Mt Aspiring with her boots on the wrong feet- could you do better than THAT!). Talking of past awards, literature awards have been awarded to Bruce Van Brunt, for his multi chaptered volumes on climbing Mt Aspiring, and Tony Gates for his exhaustive ravings on tramping in the Tararuas. More details of this year's awards in next issue (February 2000).

### TRAMPING TRIVIA

Instructions on a packet of tea recently produced on a Tramping Club trip:

*Usage:- put a quantity of tea into the pot.*

*- pour some boiling water to 100°C*

*- Wait for 30 seconds to let tea leaves getting larger.*

*- Then pour again more boiling water into the tea pot according as a strong tea or a weak one. Depending on the man drinking tea.*

*- Produced from tender tea leaves planted on 1050 m highland.*

*- Produced tea by the most modern equipments and machines made in Taiwan.*

*- Delicate pure aroma.*

### CACH DUNG

### TRA SEN CHAU MOC

### CHAU MOC LOTUSTEA

An excerpt from the 1950 publication ``Tips for Trampers''

by George M. Moir

(of Moir's Guidebook fame):

*"During the last ten or fifteen years girls have discovered that they can carry swags, and can join with their boy friends for week-end and longer trips to the hills, and that tramping is good healthy exercise with a tang of adventure to it. ... In a mixed party there should be at least two girls and if there are more men than girls, so much the better. Young men who plan such a tour should realise that a girl, however willing, may not be able to maintain the same effort day*

*after day, and also that she may do herself a good deal of harm by carrying on gamely with a heavy pack when she is not feeling up to it."*

### BOOK REVIEW

by Tony Gates

*New Zealand Outside* (1999 edition)

The complete guide to the NZ outdoor experience. Published by New Zealand Outside Ltd, edited by Mary Hobbs.

This is an unashamedly commercial reference text on companies selling services to the New Zealand tourist. It is glossy, exciting, and professionally produced. New Zealand Outside oozes colour photos, short, sharp business descriptions, and feature articles, and is for foreigners and locals alike. It understandably won a New Zealand tourism award in 1998.

Large companies, with a budget to match, present a few full page glossy adverts. Many of these companies seek high profiles by sponsoring outdoor activities. There are a few feature articles on Sir Ed Hillary, Dick Hubbard, Russell Coutts, and John Travolta (his familiar photo features on the cover), and numerous little snippets of useful information. The guts of the book is the advertisements for the outdoor companies, each presented by geographic area after an introduction and map. There are also chapters on luxury accommodation, New Zealand wide companies, outdoor photographers, and an index of operators. New Zealand Outside excels in its range of operators, with a huge variety of activities offered, from whale-watching to windsurfing (not, I believe, at the same time).

Naturally, there is a heavy emphasis on major tourist destinations such as the upper Waiohine Valley and Lake Colenso - no, just joking, destinations like Queenstown, Mt Cook, and Rotorua, and our region is conspicuous by its absence, but that may in fact not be a bad thing for tramping club members. It is a book with a large market in mind, and it is well worth consulting if you need a guide, equipment, and can afford to pay.

### WEATHER RULES

*[Ah, folk - so you thought we'd seen the end of Pete McGregor's bawdy wit - hark, he blesseth*

*uth with the following sonnet (meant for previous newsletter, with apologies) . . . Ed. ]*

*October should be Summer warming up  
but Spring has sprung a season out of turn  
there's snow about, the weather's run amok  
the firewood's gone, you've nothing left to burn  
So grab that ragged Swannndri off its hook  
and disinfect those stinky winter socks  
it's time you hit the hills for one last look  
at filigrees of ice and verglased rocks  
at snowgrass frosted by the bitter chill  
a full moon rising golden over snow  
so get out there, just do it for the thrill  
don't hesitate because by now you know  
the forecasters might work in high-tech halls  
but nature's got the buggers by the b\_\_s*

*Peter McGregor*

### **TRIP REPORTS**

#### **FIELD HUT & TABLE TOP**

10<sup>th</sup> October

by Liz Flint

Twelve people set out on what looked to be a cloudy day. The weather improved, the sky cleared and after stopping for a break at Field Hut we continued to Table Top where we had a leisurely lunch with great views. We found we had company at Field on the way down, so stopped for a chat. On returning to the river once more some of us went for a swim. The water was most refreshing. I might add this was not the first swim of the season for some.

We were Liz Flint, Harry and Chris Allardice, Helen Davidson, Monica Cantwell, Robin Garnett, Tanya Naylor, Steven Liddle, Frank, Robyn, Steven and Phillip Usmar.

#### **MANGAWEKA TRIG**

October 31<sup>st</sup>

by Duncan Hedderley

It was a fine, bright day in October, and the clocks were showing 9:30 as we arrived at Mangakukeke road-end. It had been an interesting drive in - turn east off SH1 just past the tearooms in Mangaweka, then follow a long dirt-and-gravel road. I was glad Steven was driving.

Out of the cars, into boots and make introductions. Sarah has brought a group of friends along. They're from Massey Alpine Club. Gulp; I've \*heard\* about these guys - mad-fit ice-axe-yielding maniacs. Still, Dave, Mhairi, Scott, Wei and Lee look comparatively normal - no axes, though they do seem to have a lot of cameras. The only one who looks like he might be barking is Zebedee - but that's OK because he's a labrador.

The track starts out easily, across farmland, then goes uphill - fast. Oh, and don't try using the farm fence to steady yourself - it's electric. There is speculation about whether the farmer has a video camera hidden somewhere and sells the tapes to "New Zealand's Funniest Home Videos".

By the time we get up that rise, everyone is doing beetroot impressions and envying Zeb's four legs. The track carries on, rising at a more gentle pace through bush. The shade is a welcome relief.

Spurred on by an endless stream of Irish jokes, we reach Purity Hut in about 2 hours, and break for lunch. Purity does not get the MUAC Seal of Approval. From here it's on to Wooden Peg, Iron Peg and Mangaweka Trig, the highest point in the Ruahine Forest Park. How far's that? Oh, about the same distance we've already come. And then back the same way. Gulp.

We head out onto the tussock above Purity, and about half -way to Wooden Peg cloud begins to come in and the wind gets up. Looks like we're going to have to take Sarah's word for it that the views up here can be amazing.

At Wooden Peg we drop down into the lee of the hill and decide that it's probably not worth pushing on. Photos are taken, sticks are thrown for Zebedee, then we head back down.

On the way down, we debate whether the correct pronunciation is "clem-ay-tis" or "clem-ar-tis". Scott and Lee find a giant weta, which starts a round of "biggest spider I ever met" stories. Then down that steep paddock, trying to avoid grabbing the fence or sliding into cowpats. It's about 4 o'clock by the time we get back to the cars. Zebedee is still bounding about but I'm feeling a bit ragged. No views, but a good day in good company.

We were Sarah Todd, David Simcock, Mhairi Sutherland, Scott MacIntyre, Wei-Hung Chua, Lee Davies (MUAC), Steven Little, Duncan Hedderley (PNTMC) and Zebedee (unaffiliated).

#### SEARCH TEAM LEADERS COURSE

November 13-14 by Peter Burgess

Once again this course was held at the outdoor pursuits centre near Levin, given by Ross Gordon and funded by NZ Land SAR. The course was intended for search volunteers who have previously completed Track and Clue Awareness and/or Search Methods courses.

The content of this course was a mixture of search methods and team leadership techniques and as with the TCA courses, combined a good deal of practical work with theory and case studies. One of the most interesting concepts was that of the search teams life-cycle which consists of four stages:

1. Forming: in which the team meet each other (perhaps for the first time).
2. Storming & Norming: in which the group dynamics are worked out. The team leader and the team members work out each others strengths and weaknesses.
3. Performing: in which the search is in progress.
4. Adjourning: a debriefing stage which can be in an informal setting such as the pub.

Ross emphasised the importance of the adjourning stage in rounding off positively, so that searchers want to participate in future searches. Another point made throughout was the importance of encouraging a sense of "ownership" by the team members in the task. Ross is keen on using search techniques which maximise this sense of participation, such as "decision pointing" and "purposeful wandering". The former involves having the team study a map and work out the points at which the lost party is likely to have had to make a decision (e.g. track junctions, stream junctions, hill tops). The latter technique is often used in place of the old-fashioned and labour intensive contact search for searching for an unresponsive party. It has been found to produce equally good results and utilises the intelligence and experience of the searchers. Ross is clearly of the view that more planning work and responsibility should be delegated to teams and also that teams of two or three may be more effective than the traditional four. One technique

where this was apparent was the sound line search, which we practised using portable radios. This technique can be quite difficult to coordinate and a smaller group would almost certainly be able to move faster.

Other topics covered included lost person behaviour, especially of Alzheimer's sufferers and potential suicides, situation appraisals, planning 300 metre searches and the idea of tuning in, which Ross introduce in his other courses. This involves going off and finding a quiet spot to sit still for about 10 minutes. The idea is that you start using all your senses and also can empathise better with the lost party.

As with the other SAR courses I have attended, one of the greatest benefits was to be able to listen to the wealth of experience of the other participants.

#### NOMANS ROAD, NORTHERN RUAHINE

13-14 November 1999 by David Lee

Early on Saturday morning we started off by vehicles for the first leg of the journey, my first tramping in the Kiwi lands. Passing through the Manawatu Gorge, I was alerted with some familiar landscapes I have got sight of before, like those somewhere in Taiwan, although not with routes of transport on both sides of the valley. The river that has both the highway and the railway overlooking each other across really provides a fantastic view for the people travelling by, particularly in the glare of the rising sun.

After nearly an hour of steering on the road, the Ruahine Range came up on the far side of the skyline which looked quite pleasant and its view refreshed my eyes which had been watching the monotonous landscapes of the rolling hills and sheep farms. One could easily imagine the long and dipping profile of the range was once rock strata formed on the seabed of prehistoric New Zealand and at a later time being raised sky high with earth movements. Tramping is such an activity that it could bring us so close to the magic and might of nature.

Tramping on top of the Ruahine Range following the cart track opened for the forestry vehicles, we always spotted some shattered rocks en route, often with a strangely bright colour of rust, which indicates no chance of being metallic but of species of lichen specially adapted to the

mountain climate. Without picking up a piece, and have it scrutinised, one might cry out in curiosity why rocks could rust like iron.

Winds were the wild beasts on the slopes. 15 to 20 knots maybe. Tony walked on the lead of us to the windward side of the range. Then we felt the bursts of the southern chills, already travelled long distances over the ocean, yet still holding out the harshness of the Antarctic cold. I put my fingers inside the low-lying moss, which stretched out and flourished like a thick blanket on the ground, and was surprised with the warmth as if I had put my fingers in the fur of the reindeer. How could these of no complexity simulate and create an environment as warm as that of the animal?

In sunset, we retreated to our camp site to stay overnight, a place set up in a low bush of local beeches, next to it an uphill track, and along which water could be bucketed from a creek down the slope. We were smart to choose this site for fresh clean air, in avoidance of the fouling smell of the interior of the No Mans Hut. Later we alighted some firewood gathered from the vicinity. Similar to the Japanese drinking sake, as they warm it before drinking, Tony Gates introduced and shared us his bottle with a new recipe, with a mix of perfumed tea bag, lemon and cinnamon, and curiously enough that we might have never thought of how sweet the flavour of the simple red wine could have been so much enriched. We warmed ourselves with it a bit more beside the sparkles of the evening bonfire.

Before pulling into the sleeping bag for a rest, I walked out to the track for watching if I could see anything in the dark. Amazingly, the flickering beams of the headlights of motor cars running down there on the plain seemed like the dancers performing the Swan Lake on a stage with the hazy dim lights of the townships of Napier and Hastings in the background. I couldn't be satisfied with this view without staying for a few minutes before I turned back.

NOMANS ROAD (The Pete McGregor version)  
by none other than . . . yup - Pete McGregor

I'd expected a cruisy trip, a chauffeured 4-wheel drive trip to NoMans Hut to camp on the tussock tops; to watch the sun set; to amble gently around taking photos; to relax and listen to club stalwarts talk absolute crap about epic trips. I'd expected to enjoy the pleasures of the northern

Ruahine tops without enduring the usual hardships.

I got all of that except the gentle ambling. I also got knackered knees, sleep deprivation and Tony Gates.

Saturday morning. Dave and I listened as Terry drove through the Manawatu Gorge, explaining its geology to David. "There's a lot of greywacke through here," he said, "but the main rock type is crap." As we entered the Hawkes Bay, he switched to a discourse on the weather, and why the Bay wasn't a nice place to live or work. "It's horrible. It's just day after day of sunshine and heat," he complained, apparently upset by any climate where you could get up in the morning and be relatively certain what the weather would do. "Variable weather - that's what you want," he said. He kept muttering "variable weather" for the next half hour or so, as if to remind himself of how nice it was to freeze, roast, sweat and shiver all within the space of a few minutes.

At the Ongaonga turnoff we found Warren attempting to thumb a ride. He'd been expelled from his car for reasons he wouldn't disclose, claiming instead that he'd been left there to intercept us while Tony picked up the gate key from the DoC office. After witnessing his attempts to attract our attention by hitching up his trouser leg, we realised how appropriate it was to leave him at a turnoff, and refused to allow him into the car. He seemed puzzled by our apparent lack of excitement over the exposure of his hairy leg, and offended when someone muttered something about its resemblance to a ferret with mange. But somehow he managed to reclaim his place in Dennis' car.

NoMans Road was in reasonable condition - 4-wheel-drive only, but otherwise straightforward. We stopped briefly where the gradient eased, and looked out over beech-filled gullies and snowgrassed ridges, past the Taruarau and on to the hazy Kaweka. A blustery wind chilled us, and we returned to the cars to drive on to Ruahine Hut, where two hunters, complete with a quad bike, dog and camouflage clothing had camped in the hut. While Liz befriended the dog we quickly assured them we were only there for lunch. I lit my stove and began the long process of boiling eleven brews' worth of water in Tony's billy - apparently purchased cheap from the Russian army at the end of the cold war. I think it used to be a missile silo. But let me not be critical; Tony

has many virtues, as we discovered that lunchtime when he generously distributed a box of delicious chocolates. And as for the gluhwein he prepared that evening... Warren, however, complained bitterly about the chocolates. He held up a bitten-off chocolate, exposing the soft, runny centre. "Hey Tony," he whined, "this one's gone off. It's got pus inside it!"

Our next stop was about a kilometre before the mythical Lessongs Monument, to drop off Dave and Warren at the top of the track down to Dead Dog Hut. Tony had persuaded the two fools that it would be a delightful afternoon's stroll to descend to Dead Dog then climb the track that joined the road a few kilometres from NoMans Hut. Every time we'd discussed it, his estimates of how long it would take had decreased by large amounts. Eventually he'd worked himself into a frenzy of self-delusion that infected Dave and Warren. "You'd nip down there in ten minutes!" he exclaimed. It transpired that the track, when they did manage to find it, was wildly overgrown and hardly worth the effort of attempting to locate.

The rest of us continued to NoMans Hut, where we left the vehicles and ambled across to investigate an old aeroplane wreck not far from the Masters Memorial Cairn. Dennis quickly located the wreckage, a scattered tangle of twisted aluminium shredded by the beeches through which it had ploughed. At least it must have been quick. I wandered out onto the open tops, into the fresh wind, acutely aware of being alive. Cloud shadows drifted across the northern Ruahine, straw-yellow snowgrass flowed in the wind, grey and white clouds piled up on the horizon. I stopped by the Masters Cairn, another reminder of the incomprehensibility of what it means to exist and why it's important to seize opportunities.

It was still early in the afternoon. Terry appeared, then Tony. "I think I might do that loop along the ridge," I said, referring to a suggestion Tony had made about following the ridge around from NoMans hut and down to Diane's hut, then back to camp. Tony immediately became enthusiastic. "Do you mind if I come too?" he asked eagerly, then launched into a series of progressively shortening estimates of how long it would take. When he'd settled on about three hours (it took five and a half), we gathered our gear and set off, leaving Terry to oversee the setting-up of camp in

a delightful patch of beech near Lessongs Monument.

I'd never walked with Tony before, and felt apprehensive about whether my comfortable, solitary stroll would turn into a desperate, wheezing struggle to keep up. I'd read too many of the man's entries in Ruahine hut books - the sort that read "two hours seven minutes & 12 seconds from Top Gorge to Ngamoko; numerous neck-deep crossings; got two deer on the way and almost ran down a goat..." etc. But I needn't have worried. The pace was comfortable, and I enjoyed his seemingly irrepressible enthusiasm. We gabbed on about hunting, the Ruahine, why there are no recent good books on tramping (other than guides), James' virtuosity with wind instruments (and thereby hangs a tale), the West Coast, a little bit of politics, favourite places in the hills, photographs, and many other things unsuitable for mentioning in this newsletter.

We cruised along the ridge, passing through peninsulas of beech that extended from the valley across the top of the ridge; we nibbled Uncle Toby's 97% Fat-Free Fruit Breaks and sipped water while we watched the afternoon light come and go over Ruahine Corner; we were gradually dehydrated by the incessant wind; we found a stunningly beautiful, sheltered campsite; and we visited Taruarau Biv, nestled on the western bushline. I browsed through the book while Tony fossicked. When he returned I pointed to the first entry, which was dated October 1969. "I think the water in the tank's been there since then," he said.

The track to Diane's hut had disappeared, overgrown by time, so we bashed down through the bush, surprised at the apparent absence of fresh deer sign. Finally we emerged onto a bluff overlooking the river, close to where we thought the hut must be. I scrambled a short distance further to peer over the back of the bluff. There it was - the pale, dull glint of corrugated iron. Our bush navigation had been close to exactly right. "Hey, I'm good!" Tony exclaimed, unfairly claiming all the credit.

The hut was clean, but it stank worse than a tentful of unwashed armpits. A sleeping bag lay on one of the bunks, a gas stove and a few other items sat on the table, but there was no indication in the hut book of who the residents might be. Tony and I sat outside in the fresh air, eating, rehydrating, and speculating about the final climb

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up to the road. "It can't be more than half an hour," Tony estimated. It took us twice that.

On our return to camp we discovered that the gear in Diane's hut belonged to Mick and Lew, who had decided to spend the night there. We wondered how they'd survive the stench. Russell had dropped down below the camp towards Big Hill Stream to look for deer; he returned after having seen a hind and yearling, but had forgone the shot because he hadn't been confident of a clean kill. He wasn't disappointed, rather, he'd been pleased to see them and watch them feeding undisturbed. Meanwhile Tony had prepared a billy of gluhwein - a heated mixture of red wine and 27 secret herbs and spices. We drank it and experienced a general feeling of goodwill to all living creatures. But we still resolved to try for a deer the next day.

After dinner, Terry attempted to make custard. Eventually he managed to produce something resembling thin cream. Prompted by this, Dave told us about the time he'd been in a party at high altitude, attempting to cook pasta. They couldn't bring the water to a proper boil, and the pasta had dissolved into a glutinous mess that had set hard. They were so hungry they'd eaten it anyway. "You're lucky it didn't set after you'd eaten it," I observed. "You might never have crapped again." "Yeah," Warren added, "and a good thing you hadn't had rhubarb with it - it would've turned into adobe. You'd have literally been shitting bricks."

Early the next morning, Tony, Russell and I climbed down to where Russell had seen the deer. The entire valley was filled with a thick mist that occasionally developed into drizzle then eased back to mist. We sat on a slip getting colder as we peered into the gloom. Beads of water hung along snowgrass blades; dull cold seeped into our bones. To our right, on a tongue of vegetation across the scree, the faint silhouette of a hare nibbled an eerie breakfast. After half an hour of sitting on cold, wet rock my rectal temperature began to approach the lower level necessary to sustain life, or (more importantly) smooth muscle function, and I had just decided to suggest that we pursue a more active form of hunting when Tony voiced a similar thought. Russell agreed. It seemed pointless to wait for the mist to clear, as we had no idea how long that might be. We tried to pick our way quietly down the scree, gave up and made our way noisily down instead. Once we began to scramble along the creek bed I felt more

optimistic, as the sound of the stream masked much of the noise, and small slips and flats suggested the possibility of a deer.

It was a typical small Ruahine stream - narrow, a mixture of jumbled rocks, log jams, short sections of straight-forward going, and occasional small gorges that forced a sidling bush-bash. But it was worth it. Just after picking our way through the chaos of debris at the foot of a slip, Russell shot a yearling, thus allowing Tony to formulate Gates' Law: Deer-shooting requires three people - one person to spot the deer (Tony), one person to shoot it (Russell), and one gullible idiot to carry 50kg of meat up a near-vertical ridge through horrible, dripping, tangled bush and scrub (me).

Back at the abandoned camp we found a note in Dennis' wagon. Terry, Dave and Warren had left for Diane's Hut and the ridge loop past Taruarau Biv and back to NoMans Hut; Dennis had gone as far as Diane's with them, but would return the same way rather than attempting to accompany the three whippets to NoMans; Mick and Lew would presumably return some time later from the overnight stay at Diane's; and Liz, no doubt besotted by her new canine friend, had gone to Ruahine Hut with David in tow.

With nothing to do but wait for the others, and eventually drive to NoMans to collect Terry, Dave and Warren, we settled down to recover from the morning's effort. Russell wandered off to check whether his rifle was still sighted-in properly, while Tony lay on his back snoring quietly like a mid-winter blowfly, hat propped over his eyes, nostrils peering from beneath the brim like abandoned rabbit burrows. He seemed totally relaxed, but perhaps it was exhaustion, like one of those narcoleptic dogs that rush madly about then collapse into deep sleep in mid-bark. He woke when Russell returned, and they began boning-out the venison, a process that involved much cursing and slashing alternately at meat and flies. The cursing and slashing was still in progress when Mick and Lew returned. We asked them how they'd managed to survive the stench inside Diane's hut. "We lit a fire," Lew said. "It smoked out everything, including the pong."

They drove off to collect Liz and David from Ruahine Hut and continue back to Palmerston North. Tony and Russell finished the boning-out, but the cursing resumed when Russell bent to pick up a bag of venison and was greeted by the sound

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of frenzied buzzing from within the bag. It seemed to be one of those days: cold enough to prevent enjoyable relaxing, but not cold enough to suppress the vermin. The forecast had predicted fine weather.



Tony & Russell taking an undeserved rest above Big Hill Stream after Pete carried out the venison. [Photo (and caption, obviously): Pete McGregor]

We packed and drove Dennis' vehicle to NoMans, where Tony prepared venison in readiness for the arrival of Dennis and the three who had done the loop. We wondered how they were faring, as cloud, harried by a cold wind, had enveloped the ridge. They arrived with the rain, soon after Dennis had driven up from the Diane's Hut junction in Terry's wagon. I asked Dave what the bush-bash up from Diane's hut had been like. "Pretty straight-forward," he said. I looked at his shattered shorts and the congealed blood on Terry's legs, and wondered what he'd consider to be a moderately difficult walk.

But walking was over. We drove back to the camp, packed, and made our way down to the lowlands, stopping at Ongaonga to return the key and eat ice-creams. No, the trip hadn't been what I'd expected. It had been better.

We were: Tony Gates, Terry Crippen, David Lee, Warren Wheeler, Dave Henwood, Dennis, Russell, Liz, Mick, Lew, and Pete McGregor.

#### NAVIGATION 1 & RIVER SAFETY

Election Day Nov 27

Terry Crippen

Fine weather was the order of the day for these important events. Seven of us assembled at the Ashhurst domain on the Saturday morning for the basic navigation activity: an introduction to compass use, estimating times and distances. Pre-

injured Pete hobbled round on crutches while a house bus and plenty of nappies formed interesting diversions. Most people soon discovered the necessity to make sure they accurately sight a bearing - one degree becomes quite significant even over a short distance.

A relaxing lunch under the trees, then the afternoon River Safety activity - with Warren Granger of the local branch of the NZ Mountain Safety Council. The emphasis is on River Safety not just River Crossing; if in doubt don't cross - avoid "home-itis" - too bad (probably good) if you get out a day or two late if that last river crossing looks iffy. The Pohangina River was nice and warm.

Would have been nice if we had had a better PNTMC turn out - we were out-numbered. The Nav 1 and/or River Safety and/or picnic peoples were a combination of PNTMC, NZMSC, Landcare Research, Feilding Civil Defence, and Adventures Plus Inc: Terry Crippen, Warren Granger, Phil Luders, Stephen Waddell, Pete McGregor and John Barnett, Chris Bee, Kathryn Knightbridge, Aaron Miller, Sue, Bob Padgett, and others.

#### NAVIGATION 2

4th December

by Duncan Hedderley

'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a trampler in possession of a map and compass is looking for an opportunity to bush-bash.'

I hadn't been at the first Navigation training, but Terry assured me that he planned to take things slowly and give everyone plenty of help if they needed it, so I thought I'd give this a go. We went into the Putara road-end (in from Ekatahuna, giving access to Roaring Stag and Herepai huts) and the exercises began before we'd even left the carpark; Terry gave us a map and a written description of the route (a variation from the track to Herepai down into the Mangatainoka Stream to visit the Ruapae Falls), and asked us to trace it on the map; then to estimate the distance and the time it would take using two methods (One based simply on distance, the other taking into account steep ascents).

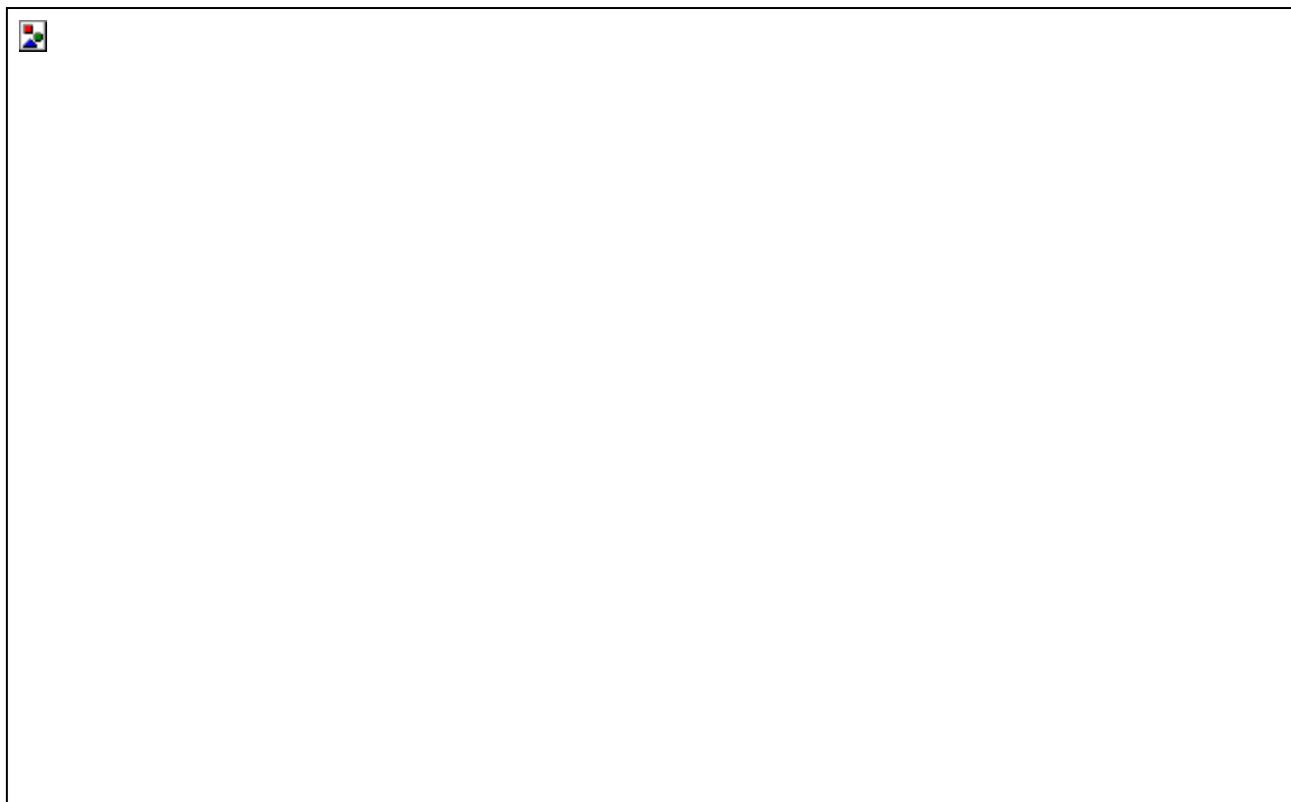
That done, we headed off on the track until we reached the second swing bridge. There Terry stopped us and said for the purpose of the exercise the bridge was uncrossable and we had to find

another route. After some discussion we agreed on a new route, which was shorter and involved less ascent but was through bush so would probably take a similar time. Peter and Terry made sure we were comfortable taking bearings from maps, and navigating with a compass, then we were off into the bush. We managed to bash our way to the stream by lunchtime, picking up some useful tips (How do you know you've got to the top of a hill? Carry on on the same bearing till you're clearly on the downward side, then backtrack...) and some scratches along the way.

The early cloud had cleared and it was a beautiful day, with great surroundings. After something to

eat we headed up the stream to the falls, then we headed back and tried to find the track we would have come down on the way in; not a trivial task, involving a bit of map reading, a bit of thought, a bit of compass work, and a bit of scouring the bush for track markers (God bless day-glo pink paint). The rest of the trip back to the car should have been simple, all on clear paths; but coming down to the swing-bridge where we had turned off the path, there was a large tree down which meant more than the usual amount of scrambling.

We were Peter Burgess, Steven Liddall, Duncan Hedderley and Terry Crippen



Tarn on the northern Ruahine tops between Aranga Hut and Piopio (see article in November newsletter).  
[Photo: Pete McGregor]

Club Patron	: Lawson Pither	357-3033
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Membership Enquiries	: Liz Flint	356-7654
	: Warren Wheeler	356-1998
Gear Custodian	: Mick Leyland	358-3183
Newsletter Editor	: John Phillips	357-9009 (work)
deliver articles/disks to:	87 Victoria Avenue, P.N.	358-1874 (home)
e-mail articles to:	john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz	
Trip Co-ordinators	: Terry Crippen	356-3588

: Laurence Gatehouse	356-5805
: Peter Burgess	354-3533

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