

PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - February 2001

*****BUMPER SUMMER ISSUE*****

**SOUTH ISLAND TRIP REPORTS:
Mount Aspiring, Olivine Ice Plateau, Whitcombe Valley**

plus 8 NORTH ISLAND TRIP REPORTS !

and book reviews on 2 great women climbers . . .

CLUB NIGHTS

| | | |
|--------------------|--|------------------------|
| FEBRUARY 22 | Massey Climbing Wall | Terry Crippen |
| MARCH 1 | Committee meeting | |
| MARCH 8 | Kinabalu, Borneo | Chris Underwood |
| MARCH 29 | AGM & guest speaker: Peter Horsley, Conservation Board work | |

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.

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.

Feb 22 Thursday trampers
 Neville Gray 357-2768

**Feb 22 Club night "Massey Climbing Wall"
 Terry Crippen 356-3588**

Come along to the Massey Recreation Centre and try your hand at rock-climbing. Practise your belaying and abseiling for both rock and the coming winter snow conditions. We will have club gear available and club instructors to get you started or refine techniques. Contact Terry Crippen 356-3588.

Feb 24-25 Waiohine Gorge FE, tube
 Tony Gates 357-7439

Depart EARLY Saturday morning. The Tatarua Ranges have many fine rivers and gorges. One of the best ways to travel down the rivers is IN them, floating on a truck tube, and wearing a wet suit and crash helmet, while your precious supplies stay dry in your pack. There are several options for this trip, depending on participants and conditions. We hope to visit Mid Waiohine hut, Totara Flats, and other fantastic Tatarua country. We'll have a lot of fun floating down that river.

Feb 25 Manawatu Gorge Walkway E
 Duncan Hedderley 355 1820

Depart 8am for a pleasant walk along the top of the road side of the Gorge. The track is well-formed, and bush provides shade. Ideally we will leave a car at both ends; if we start from the Ashhurst end, we should get to the Woodville end (with the option of a side-trip to the Bridge Cafe) about lunchtime

March 1 Thursday trampers

Gordon Clark 359-2500

March 1 Committee meeting

March 3-4 Syme Hut ENP M
 Harley Betts 354-2094

Depart 9am for Dawson Falls car park on Mt Egmont's southern side. The track climbs gradually but steadily through beautiful montane forest of kamahi & mountain totara at first, breaking out into subalpine scrub (Dracophyllum, Hebe and Leatherwood) and tussock, offering great views back down to the coast. From here it's a scramble up bare scoria slopes to the hut. Syme Hut is at just under 2000 metres elevation on Fantham's Peak and we'll have all afternoon at our disposal to get there - heaps of time for rest/photo/food stops. The sunset views and sunrise views are magnificent, or if the weather isn't so great, the storms here are awesome too! Next morning, if people are keen & the conditions ok, we could head up to Egmont's summit (about 3-4 hours return) or alternatively head back down via Wilkie's Pools for a refreshing swim before returning to PN.

March 4 Parks Peak Hut M
 Liz Flint 356-7654

Depart 7am. This daywalk lies in the eastern Ruahines, north of Gwavas Forest. We'll walk in via Sentry Box up to Parks Peak Hut, then back down via Kamatua Track. See you there.

March 8 Thursday trampers
 Rosemary Hall 356-8538

**March 8 Club night: "Kinabalu, Borneo"
 Chris Underwood**

This definitely sounds like an evening worth coming along for - more details next newsletter.

March 10 Rock climbing all, I
 Pete McGregor 356-7154 (w)

This is weather-dependent, as trying to stand on wet footholds is about as easy as making tofu tasty... If the weather permits, we'll head to Mangatepopo. This is a trad climbing area, i.e. natural protection, so you won't be clipping bolts and many of the climbs follow cracks in the rock, which means you jam bits of your body into the

crack to help you move upwards. It's heaps of fun. Note that this is not a comprehensive instruction course, but we'll choose climbs according to your abilities and desires. We'll decide on Friday evening whether the weather's OK. If it is, we'll leave at 6:30 a.m on Saturday morning; back late that evening. To express interest, contact Pete (email mcgregorp@landcare.cri.nz or ph. 021 256 9001) by Wednesday 7 March.

March 11 Maharahara Xing M
 Tony Gates 357-7439

Depart 8am. A good, local day tramp to the southern Ruahine Ranges on a track crossing from the Pohangina to the Dannevirke side. Good views if the weather allows, but it can be muddy.

March 13-15 Thursday trampers
 Bev Akers 325-8879

March 17-18 YTTY M
 Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805

Depart 8am. An overnight trip inland from Otaki Forks in the western Tararuas. We'll walk in (swingbridge, tramline, stream, mud etc), stay the night at the fairly modern hut (mice, possums etc) and walk out the same route next day (etc mud, stream, tramline, swingbridge). Try & contact Laurence earlier rather than later for this one.

March 18 Mitre Flats loop M
 Mick Leyland 358-3183

Depart 7am. A walk in the eastern Tararuas in through nice forest to the palatious Mitre Flats Hut. An equally nice walk back out via the river.

March 22 Thursday trampers
 Phil Pearce 354-6687

March 24 Ruapehu day M
 Peter Wiles 358-6894

Depart 6.30 am and head for the Chateau. We'll take the ridge track starting behind the DoC shelter and after a few km head cross-country behind the Pinnacles, working our way towards the northern lava field, with lunch there or over looking Lower Tama lake. Return to base via the Tama crossing track.

Mar 24-25 SAREX
 Contact Terry for details 356-3588

March 25 Arawaru - Otangane M/F
 Terry Crippen 356-3588

Now postponed till 11 June.

March 29 Thursday trampers
 Judy Callesen 357-0192

**March 29 Club night: AGM & guest speaker:
 Peter Horsley Conservation Board work**

Starts 7-45pm. This is the club's Annual General Meeting, which will be combined with a talk by Peter Horsley, member of the Conservation Board.

Remember that nominations for Patron, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and general Committee members really need to be given in writing to our Secretary (Sarah Todd) at the beginning of the AGM; nomination forms will be available on the night. Include the position, name of person you are nominating, your name as proposer, and name of a seconder on the form.

So come along for an interesting talk from Peter, grab some nomination forms, and have your say on who & how your club is run. See you all

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), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or David Grant (357-8269).

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 David Grant (357-8269)

NOTICES

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

You can e-mail articles to

john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz

and deliver/post hardcopy articles to John's work address:

c/- horizons.mw

11-15 Victoria Ave, PN

If you're e-mailing, we'd prefer you 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 type it directly into the e-mail.

Note that e-mails with certain attachments (particularly scanned photos) will be filtered by a "quarantine" system at horizons - you will get an automatic e-mail reply from the horizons 'postmaster', confirming this. Don't worry about this, all material gets through to us once it is checked for viruses etc. by horizons' staff.

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

TRIP LEADER WANTED

to take the Top Gorge Hut Pohangina Valley trip, medium grade, 21-22 April. Mary can't lead it. Contact Terry 356 3588 or John 323-4582.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Duncan Hedderley is now at:

4 Hughes Avenue, PN

Ph 355 1820

BOOK REVIEWS

by Tony Gates

Two Remarkable Women

"Regions of the Heart - The triumph and tragedy of Alison Hargreaves"

by David Rose and Ed Douglas (1999). Penguin Books.

... and ...

"Between Heaven and Earth. The life of Mountaineer Freda Du Faur, 1882- 1935"

by Sally Irwin (2000). White Crane Press, Aust.

This is a combined review of two excellent recently released books about the lives and climbs

of two remarkable women mountaineers. They both broke society's "rules", tried hard, and were first to reach their respective mountain summits. They both have gone down in mountaineering history.

Freda Du Faur and Alison Hargreaves may have climbed 85 years apart, but they shared many ideals, most of all great love of and enthusiasm for the mountains. Their dedication, skill, and experience at their chosen sport shines through in both books despite the obvious differences. They both wrote magazine articles and books of their climbs. I couldn't help imagining that, had they lived in the same era, and climbed together, they would have made a formidable and successful partnership.

On 4 December 1910, Freda, accompanied by the famous New Zealand Mountain Guides Peter and Alex Graham, reached the summit of Mt Cook. She was the first woman to do so. She continued (with her guides of course) to climb several other summits, including Malte Brun, Tasman, and the first Grand Traverse of Mt Cook. (the later was voted by the New Zealand Alpine Club to be on of the top ten climbs of the Century). Remarkable achievements indeed. Her book was aptly titled *"The Conquest of Mt Cook. An account of four seasons' mountaineering in the Southern Alps of New Zealand"* (Unwin, London, 1915)

On 13 May 1995, Alison Hargreaves reached the summit of Mt Everest solo, without oxygen or support. She duplicated that remarkable achievement on K2 three months later, where she died.

Alison led a life based on climbing. She was obviously a skilled rock climber, vastly experienced in the European Alps (especially going solo), then of course in the Himalayas also. The book also features her private life, of a crumbling marriage, financial problems, two children, and an ongoing battle with the media. Like Freda, Alison did things in the public eye, and "armchair experts" would then castigate as much as praise her. It's a lovely, if sad, story.

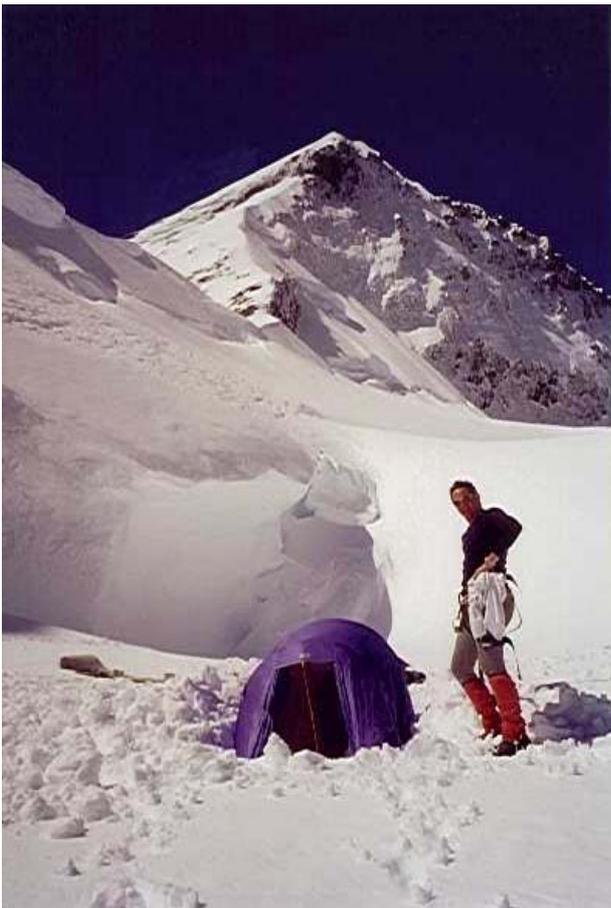
TRIP REPORTS

MT ASPIRING

24-27 November by Chris Underwood

Luck with the weather was a major factor in our success in ascending the Southwest ridge of Mt Aspiring at the end of November. After an early start on the first day (12 noon), friend Teri Edwards and I walked in and up to the new French Ridge Hut in low cloud and passing rain showers. We were slightly concerned about our prospects of reaching the top of the hill after we talked to two climbers who were on their way out. They informed us that they had just spent five nights stuck in Colin Todd Hut due to weather, and had that morning crossed the Bonar Glacier in waist deep snow!

The next morning we awoke early to clear skies and no wind at all and the trip up onto the glacier was rewarded with good views back into the Matukituki Valley. On reaching the top of French Ridge we realised that our chances of



making a summit attempt the next morning were actually quite good as the snow conditions on the mountain looked to be excellent. The walk across the glacier was again made straight forward by the

good conditions, and five hours after leaving French Ridge Hut we were at our tent site under the Southwest ridge.

Once we'd set up camp, Teri had the bright idea of walking up onto the ridge proper so that in the dark the next morning we'd have footprints to follow.

A slightly earlier start on day 3 (4:30am) was again greeted by clear skies and just a light south-easterly wind. Following our footsteps was easy and about 45 minutes after leaving the tent we were at the steep bit at the bottom of the ridge. While we continued to climb we witnessed a spectacular mountain sunrise. By the time we reached the couloir the wind was starting to pick up and two other climbers we'd met the day before were up on the ridge with us. The couloir was in good condition being hard ice. Three pitches of good climbing saw us at the top of the Southwest ridge at the point where it reaches the Northwest ridge. The remaining 100 feet or so to the summit was straightforward and it was a great feeling to realise we'd done it. Mt Aspiring is a peak we'd talked about climbing for ages and after one or two earlier attempts it was neat to finally top it. After a drink and a couple of photos at the top, due to the wind now being quite strong, it was time to leave.



The trek down the Northwest ridge was reasonably simple albeit somewhat like walking on a main highway. A large climbing course who'd been staying in Colin Todd were on their way up and there were climbers everywhere. 'The Ramp' at the bottom of the Northwest ridge was somewhat of a rude shock when we got to the top of it, as we thought at that stage we were

already home and hosed. Two hours of down climbing on all fours later we finally got onto the glacier. By that time we'd gained a certain respect for that notorious bit of the down climb called 'The Ramp'! A stroll back across the glacier was hampered by only a few large crevasses and it was a good feeling to get back to the tent!



After cooking dinner that evening, we took a bearing across the glacier to the top of French Ridge. This proved to be valuable little exercise the next morning when we woke up in nearly whiteout conditions. It felt good walking across the Bonar Glacier at 7am on day 4 knowing that we'd been to the top of an awesome mountain. Being a Monday morning we were also in the knowledge that most of our mates were probably right now getting up and going to work! I know where I'd have rather have been!

Our final small exercise was to find the top of French Ridge now that we were in a complete whiteout. After a brief discussion about whether left or right was the best way to go, and climbing another small peak by mistake, we found the ridge and down we went.

It was raining again on and off by the time we reached Raspberry Flat eight hours later. The next morning in Wanaka after a chilly night in a backpackers, we looked out the window to see snow on the surrounding hills down to 1100 meters! The south island weather has let me down a couple of times recently, this time we were lucky!

WAIPAWA

Sun Nov 26th

by Arthur Todd

We set off from Foodtown car park with Patricia, Barbara, Duncan, Yuka, Lis and Arthur in rather threatening weather conditions. Between Dannevirke and Norsewood there was a light dusting of snow on the roadside trees, and light sleet falling. At the Triplex Hut carpark light snow was falling, and it was quite cold. After a quick morning tea at Triplex, we walked up to the saddle between Triplex Creek and the Waipawa River. On the way we inspected the mistletoe enclosures, possum bait stations.

The volume of water in the river and the cold weather precluded the planned exploration of the upper Waipawa River, so we set off for Sunrise Hut in light snow. Closer to the hut the snow was up to 150mm deep on the track. The sky was visibly clearing after lunch at the hut, but it was still quite cold. From the ridge above the hut we admired the view of the snow-coated upper Waipawa and Armstrong Saddle, but few were tempted to clamber further. On the descent to Triplex we heard a small flock of kakariki and marveled over the clematis flowers. Thanks everyone for a very enjoyable day out in the hills.

SAR TRACK & CLUE AWARENESS

Exercise at Levin

by Arthur Todd

A mini van of PNTMC and MTSC members met with members of other clubs and police SAR team members for a day of training in observation skills and tracking techniques at Levin.

The day started with a briefing session on tracking and observation skills. After morning tea we practiced these at Lake Papaitonga, using both a static observation post and observing while walking slowly along a short track. Many of the items planted along the track were quite difficult to find, and it takes practice to train yourself to detect items which a missing person may have discarded. Following lunch we practiced tracking

skills at Muhunua East Scenic Reserve, following lines of clues laid through the reserve earlier in the morning.

The observation and tracking techniques taught were for use in intensive searches of small areas. By learning about what trackers look for in the landscape, how they work as a team, and basic observation skills, we are now hopefully better prepared for assisting with SAR activities. Just as important, we are now much more aware of how to clearly mark our own route should we unfortunately get lost in the bush.

Thanks to the Police SAR team for arranging a very educative day, and increasing our knowledge of both tracking and observation techniques.

BEEHIVE CREEK WALKWAY

by Duncan Hedderley

For those of you who don't know it, the Beehive Creek walkway just north of Pohangina village is a pleasant little walk, fairly close to town, great for an hour or two's peace and quiet. A small group of refugees from the Christmas preparations went up there. Saturday beforehand had been hot, ending in thunder, and the Sunday promised to be more of the same, so Monica suggested we do the walk backwards, parking the cars at the south end of the reserve, then walking up the road to the north end while it was still comparatively cool, then coming back down the creek.

By the time we had gone up the road and over the shoulder of farmland, the day was warming up, and it was nice to drop into the bush around the creek. Alex and Josie Noble were clearly not used to the great kiwi tradition of walking "in" creeks, but quickly took to it like, uh, ducks to water. The trouble with Beehive Creek is that after about 20 creek crossings, it all begins to look the same. You can't get lost, but you can't in honesty say "we're almost there" until you are back at the cars. Fortunately everyone had a decent amount of water with them, and we got back to the cars about midday.

We had lunch in a picnic area just the other side of the bridge (through a gate with a red sign on it, which I had never looked at properly and assumed said Keep Out, but was actually just a fire warning). Just as we were finishing lunch, there

was a splatter of rain, and we headed back to town.

We were Monica Cantwell, Penny Abercrombie, Alasdair, Heather, Alex and Josie Noble, and Duncan Hedderley.

RUAPEHU GLACIER TRAVEL

9-10 December

by Casey Wellington

We departed Palmerston North on Friday evening for Ohakune in order to get a good start on Saturday and take advantage of the fine forecasted weather. Accommodation was at the Gates family cottage (very comfy) and organised into rooms of men, woman and snorers.

After discussion on the format the weekend should take, it was decided to do basic rope work in the backyard the next morning, then hike up Ruapehu to the glacier below Girdlestone in the afternoon for more practical application of our skills. The walk up was a gut-buster! It was HOT, our packs were heavy with tech and overnight gear and the chocolate eclairs were weighing heavy in our stomachs. After recovering at the top café, we continued to the glacier and began our lessons under the watchful eye of Captain Terry.

While I fuffed about re-tying crampons with Andy's help, Tony, Pete, Mary and Colin were roped up and wandering zigzag fashion across the glacier. After being satisfied with our skill level, Terry then proceeded to instruct on the art of crevasse rescue. I managed to muddle my way through that and successfully hauled my partner out of a small slot, frozen but still alive. Then it was my turn to be hauler. The weather had been a little dodgy all day but by now had descended into driving rain and very low cloud. Camping was out of the question! So it was with a degree of relief that we descended back to the cottage for the evening.

Sunday dawned a little brighter. The plan for the day was to knock off Girdlestone in the morning and continue with crevasse rescue in the afternoon. It was a real slog up the glacier for some (myself included) while others scampered up without too much trouble at all. We lunched and rested before making the final assault up the precariously narrow ridge to the top. If it had been wide enough I would have been jumping up and down - it was my first Ruapehu peak! I felt

on top of the world - if only I could have seen it through the clouds! A few guys from Victoria University Alpine Club were perched their already, having hardly broken a sweat. Our descent was much quicker on the way down despite the sloppy, wet snow!

Back to the slots which we industriously dug out, then more practise in assisted rescue techniques which really reinforced what we had learnt the previous day. Terry was ever patient and helpful and did a fantastic job making sure we weren't going to pop our anchors or get our ropes in a tangle. Pack-up time arrived far too soon for my liking and it was a quick gallop back down the mountain to the car park. Once back at the cottage, Tony kindly fed us up on those famous Ohakune eclairs and afghans, washed down with plenty of tea before we sorted gear and headed home.

A most enjoyable weekend, made all the better by great instruction (hooray for Terry!) and great company. Good luck surrounded us as well - Tony found a flash mobile phone in the snow, Terry found a 14c gold ring in the rocks and Pete found \$2! Hell, I might even join the club now.....

Trip Leader, Terry Crippen. Attended by members : Tony Gates, Pete McGregor, Colin Rose, Mary Craw, Andrew Lynch and hanger-on Casey Wellington.

THE OLIVINE ICE PLATEAU EXPEDITION January 2001 by Barry Scott

The Olivine Ice Plateau is one of the most isolated alpine regions in NZ and because of this has a certain mystique that makes it attractive to visit for a truly wilderness alpine experience. The concept of a trip into this region emerged in late 1999 but it was not until the summer of 2001 that the trip became a reality. The 6 of us gathered at the Glenorchy motorcamp on 8th January to set out for this 10-day adventure. Some of us were meeting for the first time as we were from all parts of the country; Pat from Hamilton, Nigel from Whakatane, Barry and Terry from Palmerston North, Richard from Wellington and Conway from Dunedin. Organisation of the trip had been coordinated by email but the hour in the motorcamp enabled some last minute checking of gear, equipment and food supplies. Terry had done an amazing job of organising all the breakfasts and dinners for the 10 days as well as

checking the weights of all party gear so that it could be evenly distributed among team members.

Our trip started with a thrilling jet boat ride from Glenorchy up the Dart river to the mouth of the BeansBurn. Here we disembarked and plunged into the beech forests of the lower valley. Terry not up to his usual navigational standards soon managed to lose the marked track but Nigel with his SAS training soon put us back on route. While the weight of the packs very quickly absorbed our attention the activities of several parakeets in the forest provided a pleasant distraction. The route up the BeansBurn follows the true left for the first hour and then crosses a bridge to the true right. A rough track follows the true right to the head of the valley. By mid-afternoon it was raining so the large split bivvy rock was a welcome sight to end the first days walking.

The 2nd day continued wet with low level cloud on Fohn saddle obscuring the route over to the Olivine ledge. We therefore spent the day around the bivvy rock making brews on an open fire and nibbling at our carefully rationed food supplies. Here to Richard's surprise money does grow on trees when he discovered a small packet of notes in the bushes below one of the party's pack. In the afternoon we carried out a recce of the route onto Fohn saddle, but the low mist and a strange line of cairns sent us up a gully and spur which turned out to be the wrong route. Examination of alternative routes further up the valley seemed to match the recommended route described in Moirs Guide Book.

The 3rd day was still very misty but encouraged by the forecast on the mountain radio the night before we set out for the Olivine ledge. At least the rain had stopped so it was not too unpleasant climbing up through the mist to Fohn saddle (1506 m). Some tracks in the snow near the top of the saddle guided us onto the saddle proper. After a cold lunch on the col we very quickly descended to the Olivine ledge where we found ourselves out of the mist with wonderful views of the mountains across the valley and the Olivine Flats in the distance, our destination for that day. We had a brief stop at the bivvy on the ledge, which sleeps 4 maximum, then commenced a long and horrible sidle descent through steep bush and boulders to the confluence of the Sunset and Olivine rivers.

The Olivine marks the boundary between the Otago schists on one side, and the dark red ultramafic rock on the other, with corresponding dramatic differences in vegetation. As the Olivine was relatively low we were able to follow the river for most of the remaining distance to the lower Olivine flats which are at the confluence with the Forgotten river. The beech forest adjacent to the flats provided a great site to erect our two Spectrum tents for the night. Pat once again lit a fire, that not only was useful for conserving some of our fuel, but kept the sandflies at bay.

The 4th day was again fine so Terry had us up with the bellbirds with the intention of trying to make Forgotten col that day. Although there is a reasonably well-worn route from the Olivine Flats above the Forgotten river gorge to the Forgotten Flats, at times multiple deer trails led to some confusion. To help future parties we added a few fresh blazes to the trees on this route with our ice-axes. Travel up the Flats was very easy and as we turned the corner of the upper valley, Forgotten river col and the associated ice fall surrounded by the ridges of Intervention and Blockade, seemed to dominate everything.

This was a good place to stop for lunch and examine the 900-metre route up to Forgotten col at 1827 m. With Richard and Conway out front we followed the guide book route under the bluffs up to the snow. Some of the team (no names mentioned) were working very hard in the afternoon sun on the ascent to the col. The route is relatively straight forward to follow but requires some careful crossing of an exposed waterfall slab and a steep gully. By late afternoon we reached the snow where Richard changed into top gear and plugged a great line of steps up onto the col proper. Once past the icefall the col flattens out to form a large open space between the ridges of Intervention and Blockage to provide wonderful access to the Plateau.

With very little 'fuel left in our tanks' we sidled around the northern edge of the Blockade ridge to find the recommended sheltered camping site at the top of the Plateau. We pitched the tents on snow platforms but alongside good rocks for cooking and storing packs. Two snow shovels located by Pat on the edge of the rocks reassured us that we had chosen the correct camping site. We later moved these shovels to a more prominent position for future parties as they are

good insurance for digging a snow cave if the weather really turns foul.

The next day dawned fine but the forecast was for a front to move through later that day so we decided to climb Destiny while we had the opportunity. At the leisurely hour of 9am we set off for Destiny knowing that we only had 600 m to climb this day and with relatively light packs. Access to the upper neve was via a moderately steep snow slope on the NE edge of the Memorial icefall. With Nigel and Richard out front plugging steps we quickly reached the neve where relatively easy slopes gave access to the summit ridge of Destiny (2411 m). One look across the valley into the Joe and the bluffs above leading up to O'Leary pass quickly ruled out this route as a packing route to exit the Plateau, despite its use by other parties.

By the time we reached the summit, hogsbacks had built up over the mountains to the west signalling a rapid deterioration in the weather. We therefore wasted little time in descending from the mountain to retrace our steps across the Plateau to the tents. It was a good feeling returning to camp knowing that we had already climbed at least one mountain. By the time we got back to camp the Plateau was covered with low black cloud and within a few hours it was raining. Despite the cool wet weather we put up the aerial for the evening schedule so we could get the forecast for the next day. The forecast was for clearing to the SW so we went to bed knowing that the storm would be brief. Despite this reassurance Conway, forever the cautious pessimist, was up in the middle of the night checking the guys to make sure the tent was secure.

By next morning the front had passed and the skies were relatively clear with the exception of a few clouds scudding over the tops. Barry, Terry, Nigel and Richard opted for a climb of Little Arc (2133 m) at the Northern end of the Plateau while Conway and Pat set out for Blockade (2188 m). Two hours later the team of four were on the summit of Little Arc gazing down on the Andy Ice Fall and Andy Flats but Lake Williamson remained hidden behind some bluffs.

Through the combined use of map and binoculars we spent an hour over lunch resolving the complex geography of this region. Tracks around Futurity rock and on the slopes of Gable Peak

indicated that there had been another party on the Plateau quite recently. Two hours later we were back sunbathing on the rocks alongside our camp amid a silence interrupted only by the occasional ice fall and the passage of a couple of planes returning from Milford to Queenstown. Conway and Pat had an equally enjoyable climb of Blockade. The route was mostly a snow trudge but a final steep snow arete to the summit kept the team alert for the last 100 m. The return trip took about 4 hours. While on top of the summit Pat pieced together the likely climbing route of a previous party – it takes only a few mountaineers to make a big impact on a pristine snowfield with trudge troughs all over the place.

The next day was once again beautifully fine with a cool SW breeze and a relatively good freeze. However the forecast from the night before was for a further deterioration of the weather with gale force winds to hit in two days time. Not wanting to be trapped at the lower Olivine Flats by swollen rivers we decided to retreat that day to the camping site at the confluence of the Forgotten and Olivine rivers. The freeze overnight provided excellent cramponing off the col but we all moved rather cautiously down the section adjacent to the icefall as a slip there would have been fatal. Within a couple of hours we were back down to the valley floor and again wandering through the tussocks alongside the Forgotten.

Just as we were about to leave the flats for the bush section above the gorge we came across the remains (feathers) of a Paradise duck which was a rather depressing sight as three days before there had been a pair of them breezing along the flats of the lower Forgotten. The scene made us reflect on the plight of an already highly depleted bird population in this remote region of Mt Aspiring National Park. The future of our native fauna is indeed in crisis. At the base of the Forgotten river gorge the river emerges into a beautiful clear blue pool. After reaching camp we all returned for a quick dip in this pool and a scrub in the river outlet. At this stage of the trip we decided to exit by way of the RockBurn and Sugar Loaf pass to the Routeburn rather than retrace our steps back down the BeansBurn.

So next day we criss-crossed back up the Olivine to the confluence of Sunset creek. One crossing proved a little exciting for Barry as he almost got washed away while crossing a narrow gap between a couple of big boulders. None of us

could face bush bashing back up the true right to the Olivine ledge so instead we opted for the sidle along the ultramafic ledges on the true left to Fohn creek. This route proved equally ugly as the bush on the other side, but in a different way. Ultramafic rocks are high in magnesium so the vegetation tends to grow much more slowly and consequently is very stunted with branch tips that are very sharp. Consequently the team got very scratched and were quite relieved after 3 h of bush bashing to reach the junction with Fohn creek. A glance back down the river suggested the Olivine gorge may have been the better route but who knows?

After a bite to eat by the river we then made a steep ascent up the ridge alongside the Fohn creek ravine to reach the Olivine ledge. From here we headed south along the ledge to Fiery col. The climb to Fiery col saw Barry in super low gear and when he finally reached the col at 1546 m, was almost out of fuel. However with the weather rapidly deteriorating we wasted no time in descending the snow and beautiful red ultramafic rock to Cow saddle. The evidence of rivulets everywhere on the saddle was a warning that this was no place to camp in a storm. We finally reached a suitable camp-site at the edge of the bush line after 12 hours of travel. Soon after it started to rain and by evening the gale-force winds were thundering down Hidden Falls Creek and the rain bucketed down.

Here Conway taught us some new ‘survival skills’ that one will not find in a BushCraft manual. Suffice to say that a boot, usually an item of footwear, has additional uses! About 6am our campsite was suddenly inundated with water from a stream that had overflowed. The novelty of sleeping on a water-bed quickly wore off as the pressure of the water underneath threatened to wet everything in the tent. Within half an hour we had untied the guys and moved the two tents to the one dry bit of land that remained. Hidden Falls creek was a raging torrent and other streams seemed to flow everywhere across the head of the valley. Warm and dry in our pits we remained in our tents until the rain eased early afternoon. Keen to reach the road end by day 10 we packed up camp and set out for Park Pass and the Rockburn at the late hour of 3pm. However, by now the fitness of the team was beginning to show. We reached the top of Park Pass within 3.5 hours of breaking camp after powering from the valley floor at about 500 m to the top of the pass,

at 1176 m, in 1.5 hours. A well defined track certainly made for easy travel. We descended into the Rockburn and finally set up camp on the first set of flats about 8 pm, just in time for the sched from Invercargill.

Next morning we woke to see fresh snow on the tops and a cool SW breeze blowing up the valley. The last day was a pleasant walk down the Rockburn. This is a more interesting valley than the BeansBurn and more heavily used given its close proximity to the Routeburn. The ascent of SugarLoaf (1154 m) was a bit of a grind as all of us were now feeling a little tired from 10 days in the hills and about 10,000m of up and down of 6 passes and two peaks. We finally reached the Routeburn shelter about mid-afternoon where we rested a while Terry hitched to Glenorchy to retrieve his vehicle. A feed of steak, chips and beer in the Glenorchy pub finished a great trip.

We were: Terry Crippen, Barry Scott, Nigel Green, Pat Holland, Richard Lovell and Conway Powell.

PS. Our ages ranged from 30 to 57 so get out there and do it!

WANDERING THE WHITCOMBE

January 2001 by Tony Gates

Tony Gates and Pete McGregor hereby report that the mighty Whitcombe Valley is a good spot for a tramp. With Nick Groves, they flew into the Wanganui Valley during January 2001 They had the vital job of providing alpine trappers Shaun Barnett, Rob Brown, and Elise Bryant (tramping from Mt Cook to Arthurs Pass) with supplies. After a couple of days in the area, admiring the fantastic terrain and soaking in the hot pools, they all trooped on up valley to Erewhon Col, and the legendary Bracken Snowfield. Mts Evans, Red Lion, Whitcombe, Louper (plus many others) all looked great. They camped at the historic and exceptionally beautiful Whitcombe Pass. The others then departed for distant destinations, leaving Pete and Tony to spend a week wandering the Whitcombe. With the good DOC huts, tracks, and bridges, and assistance from the local helicopter pilot, there is vast potential for future trans alpine trips to the area.

CENTRE CREEK BUSH BASH

14 January by Warren Wheeler

My planned PNTMC 2001 trip was postponed due to the dodgy weather and lack of interest so I opted to join the day trippers for the first club trip of the new year/century/millennium. The weather report promised showers and fine later on and turned out to be spot on.

Seven of us assembled at the track entrance just north of DoC Pohangina Base, enrobed ourselves in parkas, and headed off in the drizzle down the slippery farm track cut into the papa cliffs. The river was a little discoloured but wasn't up very much and we had no trouble crossing and following the markers up the steep bank to the Centre Creek Biv.

We used the hut speaker phone, a technological innovation that really impressed the Mainlander in our midst, to confirm that there were no hunters in the Centre Creek and, after packing parkas away, dropped into the stream bed for an enjoyable boulder hop for an hour or so up to the Secret Camping Spot. This is about 2m above stream level but had been flooded last year and the huge new slump at the bottom of the old slip opposite suggested a modicum of caution in staying too long here.

We postponed a visit to a 20m waterfall around the bend and headed up to Takapari Road on the bush bash segment of the trip. We gingerly climbed the fresh rubble of the slump and picked our way steadily up the grassy slip face using not-too-old deer tracks to lead us into the scrub and onto the ridge.

Here the bush-bashing really started. It was wet, and a bit cold, and slow going up through the dense growth as we tried to follow the animal tracks. Fortunately there wasn't any bush lawyer but after a scramble on all fours and a wee pre-lunch fuel up Janet was heard to mutter aloud that she hoped there wasn't any leatherwood because we wouldn't want to go back down through this lot.

Five minutes later we hit the leatherwood. Fortunately there was a rough cut track through it, and progress was brisk enough to keep us from getting too cold in our wet clothes. From various vantage points we could see right down the Creek but low cloud obscured Ruapehu. We burst out suddenly through a thicket of leatherwood onto Takapari Road at 1300m. Looking back it seemed impossible to find the track from the road, there

were no markers at all. It was 1 p.m., a good 4 hours 20 minutes from the cars. It was also a bit cold and drizzly with a light breeze but patches of blue sky looked promising. We slipped on parkas and warm gear for lunch on the side of the road, with sharing of cherries from Yvette and watermelon from Warren.

The sun came out soon afterwards as we headed down the road to the signpost to “Centre Creek Biv 1 hour”, passing mountain cedar and mountain cabbage tree along the way. Our Mainlander was suitably bedazzled and amazed (and us too). The descent to the Biv is steep and rocky and tricky to follow in places despite the orange markers. A huge rata tree about half way down was in flower to remind us that it was indeed summer. Looking out further down we could see more red flowering rata on the other side of the Pohangina so the possums haven’t got them all yet. To my surprise there were also young kowhai growing, as our Mainlander observed, in clear areas on old slip faces or old tree fall. But aren’t kowhai seed water borne? Pondered he, ‘tis a mystery.

It had taken only 50 minutes to quickly drop down to the Pohangina and we crossed at the same place as in the morning. It was quarter to three and touch and go for Alice to make her 5.00pm flight to Christchurch so we all pushed on to the cars fuelled with barley sugars from Janet. The sun was shining but a last river crossing raised a shriek from one of the girls as she got more than her knees wet. The older and wiser tail-enders crossed in the shallows a little upstream of the recent cliff slump which revealed more shells and coral in the mudstone.

The four fastest surged on to get to the car in time but the rush wasn’t so necessary after all as we met them at 3.40pm. Plenty of time, its only 45 minutes to the Airport so no worries. We waved them off leaving our Mainlander with some “interesting” memories of her first trip into the Ruahines. On a somewhat less cheery note it was disappointing to learn from our friendly farmer passing by that a couple of parties had left the gate open recently, but he was happy for Janet to leave cars in the paddock and under the trees for their long weekend trip ahead.

Those not going to the Airport carried on the afternoon in convivial fashion at the Pohangina homestead of Janet and Graham, and later at the

Waterford where we enjoyed a fine sunset view of the Ruahine Ranges with the leatherwood belt clearly visible on the tops.

Thanks for a great day Janet. We were Warren Wheeler, Janet Wilson (leader), Graham Peters, and fellow cavers Jenny McCarthy, Aaron de Malmanche, Alice Shanks (Aspiring Equipment, CHCH), and Yvette Cottam.

MITRE

20-22 January

by Chris Underwood

Malcolm, Diane and Chris had a pleasant three day stroll in the eastern Tararuas over Wellington Anniversary weekend. A late start out of Palmerston North, due to spending a little too long in Mountain Equipment, meant that it was a leisurely mid day start from the road end at The Pines. After making good time to Mitre Flats Hut and some careful consideration as to the late hour, the weather and the time it was going to take us to get up Mt Mitre, we set off for Tarn Ridge Hut.

The weather was looking good with no wind and just some cloud sitting on the tops. On the way up to the top we met Hazel, a woman on her own from Wellington who was intending to camp just below the bush line. She thought that Tarn Ridge Hut was still half a day away but we managed to convince her that it actually wasn’t that far – so she decided to come with us.

We got to the top of Mitre around six o’clock and were greeted by an awesome view of the inside of a cloud. It was first time lucky for Malcolm and Diane, and third time lucky for Chris getting up to the high point of the Tararuas. Then it was off to Tarn Ridge Hut via Brockett and Girdlestone. By the time we got to Girdlestone it was getting rather dim, so we walked most of the final half an hour to the hut under the light of our headlamps. Due to the lack of light and the cloud we had a bit of hard time finding the hut. Fortunately the roof of the bog was painted white and reasonably easy to see from the track! I wonder if Hazel was thinking she’d have been better off camping back on Mitre?

Sunday dawned windy and cloudy. That high that was predicted over the country by the Met Service must have stayed over the southern Tasman Sea for an extra day. As Malcolm was keen to have a go fishing and the weather precluded a day on the tops, we decided to go back to Brockett and follow the route down to Cow Creek Hut. Strong winds on the way down

Table Ridge made walking on a 60° lean essential. The track down to the bush line is well cairned and the route down through the bush easy enough to follow for the most part.

After giving the fish spotting glasses some use, Malcolm decided that the trout in Cow Creek must have gone away for the long weekend too. Freeze-dried for dinner again! On awaking on Monday morning, Malcolm discovered the river had been discoloured by rain from the previous night. No fishing today! A casual walk down the river in fine weather made the end of an enjoyable three days in the hills.



RANGI SCENIC CIRCUIT

28 January by Duncan Hedderley

I think Warren had meant his Rangiwahia trip to be a family-friendly tramp; but when Sunday dawned over the Foodtown carpark, I was the only person who had expressed an interest. "How about trying something a bit more exciting?" he said in the car on the way up "Like coming down the stream? Or there are some canyons towards Mangaweka we could explore"

So we parked the car and headed off up the path. The diversion around the slip is well-made and well marked. On the other hand, what we could see of the stream suggested the sides were steep and it would be hard to get out short of the farmland. Beyond the bridge, we came across the Lawrence family (who are members of the club but weren't aware of the club trip - sigh), also heading up for the day, so we teamed up for the final ascent. In fact, once we had met them, the track got (comparatively) busy; there was a family who had stayed the night at the hut, and on the way down we passed several groups going up.

Having passed on the stream route, we headed from Rangiwahia to the Mangaweka Dress Circle Reserve, which has some impressive cliffs of soft papa rock, a small waterfall, and some deeply incised tributary streams; but unfortunately none of them were easily accessible.

Back in the car, Warren asked if I had been to the Mangaweka powerhouse, which I hadn't; so we headed east for some industrial archeology; Mangaweka has the remains of an early local hydro scheme, and also a couple of disused railway tunnels, left when the North Island Main Trunk line was re-aligned in the 1960s. Near the tunnels is a short nature walk; DoC must have put a bit of effort into it a few years back.

An interesting day out, with some tramping.

MID-POHANGINA HUT 3-4 February 2001
by Charlotte Šunde (My First P.N.T.M.C. Trip)

As always on tramping trips, it was an early Saturday morning start. I crept around the flat, trying not to wake up inhabitants still in the land of nod. Tip-toed back into my room with a bowl of cereal and yoghurt, opened the door half-way, walked into it and dropped my breakfast bowl all over the carpet. Great! I started to wonder about my ability to boulder-hop down the Pohangina River when I couldn't even manage the day-to-day demands of door-opening.

Met Mick Leyland at his house and we whisked over to Llew and Jenny Prichard's. They were already giving me stick about the comparative size of my pack, but I had been forewarned that Llew was the man with the smallest tramping pack in all of New Zealand. Mick kindly dropped us at the eastern side of the Ruahine Range, in from Dannevirke, before scooting back through the Manawatu Gorge to the western side of the Range. I recognised the car park as the place where I'd returned from a day walk up the riverbed to find my car drivers' window smashed and a pair of old tracksuit pants and sunglasses missing. Vandalism; mindless violation.

We set off up the West Branch Tamaki River, weaving back and forth through the knee-deep water. Back-tracked to Standfield Hut where the sign reported: "5 mins to S. Hut", but perhaps more accurately should be: "5 metres to S. Hut." Continued up the river until we hit the steep track that leads through the bush to the ridgeline. Good

thing that Llew was leading, for the track is not signposted at all. The gutser didn't last too long. It was blowing hard on the tops and was a challenge for some of us lighter-framed people to stay upright. Once again, it was sad to see the extent of dead wood exposed throughout the ranges. Possum damage, people say, and there were a number of dead (poisoned?) carcasses along the track. Yet, one cannot help wondering whether it's all part of some great successional change; or is it just ecological collapse? Time will tell, for environmental managers it is a battle against time all right...

The drop down to Cattle Creek hut was a blessing. The little red roof welcomed us, and up close the pink-painted walls of the hut reminded me of home-made strawberry jam. We had our lunch before continuing the saunter along and through the stream. Much to the dismay of Llew and Jenny, I boasted about my still-dry feet in leather-waterproofed boots. That was until we saw a beautiful, deep waterhole that I couldn't resist. They politely waited for me around the next bend, while I stripped off (except for my boots and gaiters, which were too much of a hassle to take off and on) and plunged in. Ahh... the first icy, refreshing swim of many-to-come on this trip.

We reached Mid-Pohangina Hut some time in the afternoon. The hut is now quite visible from the river itself; Mick told us that before the trees in front were cleared it was quite common to walk past it (an observation from his personal experience). Mick joined us soon after and not long after that reunion, Pete McGregor also called in. Seems like it's Pete's home-away-from-home, according to the log book. I took off to loll about in the rapids and deep holes of the Pohangina Awa and to read my Canadian friend's poetry. Also, to look for the ever-elusive *whio* (native blue duck).

I awoke Sunday morning to Llew rustling about, some time before 6am. He left with rifle in hand and a determined glint in his eye. Well, I imagined that latter comment, for my own

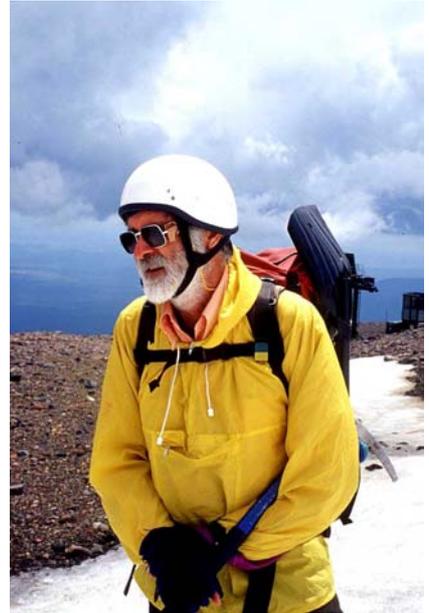
morning eyes were still unfocused. When Mick got up a while later and returned from the river with a full billy, he reported that a *whio* was playing in the still waters next to the rock-waterfall just opposite from the hut. However, by the time I got there (5 minutes later), the 'phantom *whio*' had already meandered to new parts. A search up and down the river did not reveal its new whereabouts. Llew returned much later, when the sun's rays first touched the river valley, with warm and bloody bags of venison! We all packed up and returned to the site of the stag carcass, to carve more meat which filled my billy pot.

It was more boulder-hopping and river wading; calling out for *whio* to no avail and remarking at the numerous deer sign. Arrived at the narrow gorge, where the water level was up to chest-level on Jenny. I tried to rock climb around the bank, but gave up and joined the others in wading. Again they waited for me in the sunshine a little way on, while I plunged into the gorge and was surprised that the water on the other side of the river was at chin-level beside the bank! It must rage through here in a flood.

Not much else to report for the rest of the day. More river weaving, and then some bush-bashing straight up from the river until we connected with the track. Had the occasional delicacy along the way; nibbling at the soft tips of supplejack which tastes like asparagus. A *kereru* wood pigeon appeared at intervals to invite us along the path, flapping noisily in front of us as we approached. Time for one more dip in the river (and this time even Llew took the plunge) before we reached the steep farm track back to the car park.

Stopped in Ashhurst for large icecreams. I called into the supermarket for essential ingredients and then returned home to cook venison with mushrooms, onions and a creamy sauce. Mmm... went down well with three glasses of red wine! All in all, a great trip; beautiful river country, fine company, and excellent weather. I'll be back soon to see that *whio* 'though.

Photos from December 2000 trips . . .



Pete McGregor, Andrew Lynch, Terry Crippen on Girdlestone [*Photos by Tony Gates*]



Heather Bewick & Eric Duggan crossing the flooded Ruapae Stream [*Photo by Tony Gates*]

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