



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - September 2001

Sawtooth Ridge was damned spooky by torchlight, lots of mist and sheer rock faces. I took the wrong ridge coming down from Tiraha, which soaked up a couple of hours, and a lot of energy. But I got here. Excellent hut to see, after 15 or 16 hours walking from Waterfall hut.

Quote from the Howletts Hut logbook, dated March 1998. Not a PNTMC trip!!!!

THIS ISSUE: NEWS

**Review of the new guide book on Mt Aspiring Mountaineering
A real night time search in Dannevirke**

TRIP REPORTS:

Seaward Kaikoura's

Two visits to Howletts Hut

Two versions of Snowcraft One at Whakapapa, and Snowcraft Two

CLUB NIGHTS

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|-----------------------|---|-------------------------|
| SEPTEMBER 13 | Interclub Quizz | By the Committee |
| SEPT 18 (Tues) | INTERCLUB PHOTOGRAPH COMPETITION, The Pavillion, The Square | |
| SEPTEMBER 27 | Mt Cook/ Aoraki- Arthurs Pass | Shaun Barnett |
| OCTOBER 4 | Committee Meeting, Peter's place, at 12 Jensen St, PN. | |
| OCTOBER 11 | Club evening. Gear, wine, & cheese, at Mountain Equipment. | |

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.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES can be Emailed to tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz, or stuff can be delivered to him at home or work.

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, which can be typed it directly into the e-mail.

Note that e-mails with certain attachments (particularly scanned photos) will be filtered by a "quarantine" system. you will get an 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.

The deadline for anything for the Newsletter is the **FIRST THURSDAY** of the month.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome for three new members this month. Happy tramping and climbing to;

Kate Littin

5 Springdale Grove, Palmerston North

06 353 3657

Malcolm Leary

R D 1, Hunterville

06 322 8533

Charlotte Sunde

307 Kahuterawa Road, R D 4, Palmerston North

06 357 0132

CORRECTION FOR MEMBERS DETAILS.

Kathryn Farquar's correct phone number is 06 356 8296, and her address is PO box 253, Palmerston North.

Tricia Eder also has new contact details. She can be contacted at PO box 145, Taihape, or 06 388 0922

Please also note the enclosed addendum. Some members were left off the list of members, and some require their details altered.

INTER CLUB PHOTO COMPETITION

MTSC is hosting the 2001 Inter tramping club photo competition, to be held at their club rooms (the Pavillion) on Tuesday September 18. Come along and enjoy it.

The categories, for both prints and slides, are;

1. Landscape,
2. People,
3. Flora and Fauna,
4. Action.

ALPINE/ ANTARCTIC CALENDARS

Hedgehog house are producing the popular Alpine and Antarctic Calendars again for 2002. I've seen one, and it's pretty good. The usual types of scenery are included, by a selection of talented local.

As with previous years, PNTMC is taking a club order, to utilise the benefits of a bulk buying discount. The shelf price is \$16.00 each, with a 10% discount on orders over 5, and a 15% discount on orders over 30 (ie \$13.00 each). Please contact Peter Wiles and place your order.

AVALANCHE AWARENESS

The Mountain Safety Council have organised an Avalanche Awareness Course for the weekend of 14- 15 September. It is to be held at Ohakune and on Mt Ruapehu, instructed by Mark Woods. These courses are great value, and should be attended by all those who ski and/ or climb in the back country. Contact a committee member.

NZ MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL.

Bushcraft Instruction QE College Night School in conjunction with the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council is running the "complete beginners guide to the outdoors", based on the NZMSC's Outdoor Training scheme. PNTMC does not run any formal instruction programmes on bushcraft, as it concentrates on its snowcraft programme. Ongoing bushcraft knowledge is gained by going on as many club and other trips as possible under the wings of competent leaders. However it is recommended that people new to, or about to enter, the world of tramping join up on this night class programme. Topics covered include: clothing and equipment, stoves, food and cooking, map work, shelter, routefinding, loss of route/survival, etc. Cost is \$40 for 7 Tuesday nights starting 9 Oct, 7-9pm and includes 2 weekend field trips. Contact QE College night school, 359-1592 or Noel Bigwood 357-0116

NEW HUTS

I read in the newspaper the other day that DOC were planning to replace some Tararua huts soon.

Waiopahu hut, owned by Levin Waiopahu Tramping Club, is actually located on private land. As this is a popular spot, with good, albeit muddy, river free access to the tussock tops, DOC have seen the need to remove this hut, and rebuild a new one. The replacement hut will be larger (with 18 bunks) a little further up the ridge, and with a better view.

Aeroplane Creek endangers Totara Flats hut, so this too will be replaced soon. They are planning things now, and the preferred site is on a terrace 5/- 6 metres above the river, near the old TTC Totara Flats hut site. This has a warden, and is a very popular spot during summer. On a PNTMC trip to Totara Flats a few years ago, six of us trooped down Totara Flats to the surprise of the hut residents. We must have looked a bit out of place on a pleasant, grassy river flat in our wetsuits, helmets, and carrying truck tubes!

In the same area, WT&MC's Mountain House is due for demolition, then replaced with a shelter, toilet, and camping area.

Further north, Harris Creek Hut will be removed and not replaced, whereas Burn hut will be replaced. Both of these huts have structural problems. DOC plan a new loop track at Burn hut, and new bridge across the Barra Stream. And on the subject of track upgrades, the saga of replacing the Tararua Peaks ladder continues. A new ladder will be installed next summer.

HOWLETTS HUT

Derek Sharp has organised the donation of 400 kilograms of coal (in 40 kg bags) for this hut. It will be delivered free of charge from the coal merchant at Hastings to DOC Ongaonga, then DOC will helicopter it in when they next fly into the area. Some members, and friends, have made small donations to this worthy cause. If you would like to make a small financial donation, then please contact Derek, or Tony Gates.

POSSUM POISON OPERATIONS

DOC (Wellington) are currently dropping 1080 poison by helicopter for possum control in the Tararuas. The Ohau- Mangahao were done earlier this year, and the Waingawa- upper Waiohine- Ruamahanga will be done soon.

These areas of operation are well signposted. However, if you visit the area, you are advised to

beware of the green, cereal based pellets, and treat any dead possum as poisonous.

TAKAPARI ROAD

DOC have announced that Takapari Road will now be locked to vehicles. I guess that rough ground conditions, vegetation, and the price of maintenance have forced this upon DOC.

Takapari Road was once suitable to sturdy two wheel drive vehicles way up into the leatherwood. Recently, it has become the realm of four wheel drivers and mountain bikers. They say that it was one of the most popular points of entry into the Ruahines. I have many fond memories of Takapari Road providing me with comfortable access right into the heart of the ranges. And the views out over Centre Creek and the Pohangina on a good day were something else. Trampers at least can still enjoy Takapari Road.

SEARCH AND RESCUE ACTIVITIES

Seven of us (Tony, Terry, Dave G, Dave H, Janet, Merv, Warren) went to an evening on the use of GPSs, which are becoming an essential tool for search teams. SAR peoples from the Manawatu and Levin areas were there. Anybody driving around the Cuba st area on the night would have wondered what these people were doing walking around the streets in the rain, intently looking at their hands! Dave Adamson supplied the GPSs and the know how, while the Police supplied the pizzas and fizzy drink.

DANNEVIRKE SEARCH, AUGUST 21.

A SAR operation was undertaken in Dannevirke recently, to search for a missing elderly person. This operation involved possibly over a hundred personnel; police, fire officers, civilians, etc. Teams from PNTMC and MTSC were called up at short notice and went over to help in the night search. Thanks to the four club members who made themselves available.

EDITORIAL

I see the idea of a new mega track in the Ruahines has surfaced in the local newspaper. Some developers, I think based in Palmerston North, want some sort of "Milford track of the north", and have this vision of a huge boost to tourism in the region. They want large, luxury lodges in the ranges, guides, and a track suitable for tourists. I don't know where they want to fund it from, and am unsure of the suggested route (Rangi?)

The newspaper article was a full page spread. It was less than 100 % accurate in its assessment of the environment and quite over the top when writing about birds, flowers, and the like. My initial thoughts were that it was simply a bureaucratic exercise to keep a tourism official busy for a few months. If they do make a new track, then I would assume that it goes onto the tussock tops- which could receive storms and snow at any time of the year. Customers would need to pay, and their numbers guaranteed, to justify the substantial investment (the newspaper suggest five million dollars).

Now I don't want to sound pessimistic, or elitist, but we have some pretty special places out there, and they are available to all. As some of us know, It is neither difficult nor expensive to helicopter into some of those really special places if you cannot tramp there. DOC already keep pretty good tabs on their huts, tracks, and bridges, and huts like Leon Kinvig and Ruahine Corner must surely be some of the best anywhere. Why change what we already have? Why develop the Ruahines, and for whom?

This edition continues with the long standing tradition of great stories from our Snowcraft course. Instruction is a vital part of PNTMC, and it is obvious from these reports that Snowcraft 1 for 2001 was a wonderful weekend. More on Snowcraft 3 in the next newsletter.

Club evenings recently have featured an amazing video, which I believe was produced for TV, about climbing Mt Cook. It was excellent to see modern day climbers, then actors of the first ever climbers, in 1894 period costume, scrambling out of the Hooker Glacier to the summit.

Hella Jansen, gave a presentation, on the crises facing our biodiversity. There were many technical ecological terms here, and plenty of educational information. A bit depressing, I thought, to hear about devastation wrought by possums etc on our native flora and fauna. There have been many stories of successes, not the least of which are the "mainland islands", where DOC (and others) control pests.

Soon to come, and not to be missed, is the interclub photo competition. Then Shaun Barnett talks, and shows pictures, of a trans alpine trip to the central Southern Alps earlier this year.

BOOK REVIEW By Bruce Van Brunt THE MOUNT ASPIRING REGION, A GUIDE FOR MOUNTAINEERS

**by Allan Uren & Mark Watson
Published by New Zealand Alpine Club, 2001,
128 pp., \$29-95 (\$20-00 NZAC members)**

The long awaited update of the guidebook for the Mount Aspiring Region is finally available. The authors are familiar figures in the New Zealand mountaineering community. Allan Uren has written articles for *The Climber* and *Wilderness* magazines as well as *The New Zealand Alpine Journal*; Mark Watson has been the editor of *The Climber*. They have created a guidebook that is more than a revised and enlarged edition of the original guide by Graham Bishop. The book covers climbing and access routes in the Mount Aspiring Park from Mount Alba to just north of (but not including) the Mt Earnslaw massif.

The demand for an updated guide to this region is evident from the numerous reprints of Bishop's book (1974, 1976, 1981, 1989, 1999). Since Bishop's book was written new routes have been climbed, glacial recession has affected other routes, and huts such as Colin Todd and French Ridge have been completely rebuilt. There is even now a new walkwire across the West Matukituki to Scott's Bivvy making this route more feasible in wet weather. The new guide covers these changes and more.

The Mount Aspiring Region is written more in the spirit of Logan's *A Mount Cook Guidebook* than in the spirit of Bishop's original work. After a short 10 page general introduction spanning road access, geology, grading and history, the next 15 pages are devoted to the all important topic of access to routes and huts. There are detailed descriptions of access routes from the West and East Matukituki valleys accompanied by some realistic times. A notable feature is a very detailed description of the Bevan Col route up to Colin Todd hut that includes a detailed map (pg 26) along with some sound advice concerning seasonal avalanche hazards. The remainder of the book is devoted to descriptions of climbing routes. Unlike Logan, the routes are organized according to massif as opposed to valleys, and this seems particularly appropriate for this region. For example, one can find the routes up Mt. Aspiring all gathered in the section entitled "Mt Aspiring".

Other popular climbs such as Rolling Pin, Mainroyal and Skyscraper can be found under "Haast Range". A thumb index on each page makes it easy to find the massif.

The authors have adapted the numerical "Mount Cook" grading system used by Logan (1-7) for the alpine routes. Where the route includes a notable rock section they use the Australian system (1-34) to give the crux grade. The grading system is explained in the introduction. Although there is a reference to an international grade comparison chart in the "rear of the book", this seems to be missing. The book concludes with a short section on some waterfall ice routes. A separate grading system is used for these routes.

The photographs are one of the most attractive features of this book. It is generously illustrated with numerous black and white photographs along with colour photographs on the covers. The photographs illustrating the routes are well thought out and clear. Often, the same route appears on several photographs thus enabling the reader to see the route from different angles. For example, the route up the North Buttress of Mt. Aspiring is marked on at least three different photographs. Usually, the photographs have

captions that indicate the season in which the photograph was taken. There are other photographs that reflect climbing conditions or simply give the reader a taste of the region.

The book is subtitled "a guide for mountaineers", which is certainly appropriate as it focuses on climbing (as opposed to tramping, covered by Moir's guide, by Geoff Spearpoint- NZAC 2000) The book is packed with useful information for the mountaineer from the road end to the summit making it an excellent reference for planning trips and a good companion on the climb. The book itself is printed on durable A5 paper and should weather the trials of pack life at least as well as Logan's book.

In addition to its merits as a guidebook, the *Mount Aspiring Region* is written in a lively style, and along with the great photographs this makes it interesting reading in its own right whether at home or trapped in a hut. Many of the routes have interesting histories, which the authors give, including first ascents (many by Uren himself). Look out for the first ascent by our own Barry Scott (Maiti-iti).

TRIP REPORTS

SEAWARD KAIKOURA, June 21- 22. By Andrew Lynch

Since the great traveller Tama-Ki-te-rangi found the Kaikoura Peninsular with its abundance of crayfish, it has become a settlement of brightly coloured cafes and restaurants. Now, travellers come from throughout the world to marvel at the majestic whales, dolphins, and seals, and to enjoy the ancient Koura, all under the dramatic backdrop of the snow covered peaks of the Seaward Kaikoura.

The Seaward Kaikoura's consist of 1400 hectares (*or in dairy farming language, room for 30 000 cows- ed*), and offers challenging mountains (Manakau 2608m and Te Ao Whekere 2590m), boundless ridgelines, valleys, and catchments to explore. There are tracks and huts to use on the more popular routes, but there still remains vast areas of wilderness. It sports the only mainland habitat of the Hutton's shearwater, who nest in their thousands each year in the Kowhai Stream. Other birdlife are in abundance. Pink broom.

Marlborough rock daisy, and the New Zealand lilac occur here and nowhere else.

On a mild winters day during June this year, with the celestial song of the Koromoko, we climbed the slopes of Mt Fyffe for a night at Fyffe hut. Three hours later, as the sun was tranquilly disappearing behind the western mountains, and with the cool air creeping through the rosy evening to caress the snow encrusted ranges in pink, we arrived. We slept laminated between the frosty stars and the shimmering lights of Kaikoura, thousands of feet below.

As the morning began to dawn on the shadowed mountains, we climbed Mt Fyffe, and in an hour we were sitting on top as if on a throne. The sun began to shine on the dew-pearled snow draped spires, and as nature dressed her beauty in robes of crimson, her crown of sable skies augmented into a florid duvet before the azure of the day. Along the broad snow covered ridge we rambled, fixing crampons when needed, and enjoying the

solitude of this under recognised range. A very steep descent saw us on Kowhai Saddle two and a half hours after leaving Mt Fyffe.

A dangerously iced Kowhai stream lead us through winter shrouded alpine shrubs and grasses. Ridges rose steeply skywards, blocking the warming sun with shaded areas, having been frosted for weeks. But the Marlborough Rock Daisy tenacity brought a dash of colour and hope.

This delightful stream continued its rush onwards with cascading rapids and small waterfalls bubbling into cool pools, guiding us to Kowhai hut an hour away.

A warm sun and a wide shingled stream made an easy three hour exit, to where we began our trip.

We were: Andrew Lynch, Shaun Barnett, and friend Darryl.



Howletts Hut, "the best in the Ruahine Ranges", July 2001. Derek Sharp, Terry Crippen, and Lance Gray contemplating the snow plod then steep descent to Daphne Hut. [Tony Gates]

PORRIDGE, COAL AND CHEESECAKES AT HOWLETTS HUT, 27- 28- 29 July. (Continuing with Derek's tale from Howletts Hut in last month's edition). By Jonathan Astin and Tony Gates

As this was my first trip with the club I was looking forward to see how things were done by the professionals. My first surprise was on arrival at Tony Gates' house, "here grab some coal, I love a good fire don't you"? So shouldering our coal it was a bemused Terry Crippen, Lance Gray and myself that followed Tony from Mill road end to Hinerua hut. It was a perfect night for tramping, no wind, bright moon and brisk temperatures. DOC had recently cut the track from the bush

edge, so travel was quicker than anticipated and we soon arrived at the cosy four-bunk Hinerua hut. After a brew we hit the sack.

Dawn arrived and Tony took charge of breakfast. Unfortunately, our porridge ration was more fit for a Japanese POW camp than a hungry trumper, but we made do. Redemption came later, with a significant dinner, and good coffee.

Leaving Hinerua hut, we followed the track to the bush edge and onto the exposed Hinerua ridge. However, this was a far as we got as the gale-force winds made travel difficult if not dangerous. Deciding that travel along the Sawtooth ridge was probably not the most intelligent option in this

weather, we bid a hasty retreat after a few obligatory photos of us looking suitably rugged in the snow. As Derek was waiting for us at Howletts, we headed for Daphne hut, Tony and Lace via the Tukituki river and Terry and I by the Kasmir road end track.

The route up the Tukituki River to Daphne Hut was not difficult, and took us about two hours. There was considerable fresh erosion, mostly from small slips near the river itself. Then we had two hours to relax, brew up, and wait for Terry and Johnathon. The pot belly fire box at Daphne made the place very attractive.

After plodding up the steep track (carrying Tony's coal), we suddenly ran out of energy as Tony's porridge finally spluttered and died in our stomachs. Finally, we made it to Daphne hut where we met up with Tony and Lance, and their mega feast (sounds a bit like something from McDonalds doesn't it). We had an appointment with Howletts hut, and had to help Derek eat all his food, so headed on up. Derek had not been idle as cheesecakes (with whipped cream and jelly), potato chips and a cool beer awaited us. This was more like it! Never had Howletts housed such a contented bunch of trampers, (the chimney was red hot thanks to the much travelled coal).

Sunday, yuk. A howling wind, soft snow, and mist didn't inspire us to continue on to Sawtooth ridge. Depressing really, to have come all that way, then turn around. However, a failed Sawtooth Ridge trip is not an uncommon occurrence judging by the hut log book –and we failed twice in one weekend!

We nicked down to Daphne in time for the mandatory morning coffee, then sweated profusely back out to the car at Kashmir Road. Good views of the Tukituki Catchment rewarded us. Home early. I vowed to return to the Sawtooth ridge soon, perhaps with more porridge.

We were; Terry Crippen, Lance Gray, Johnathon Astin, and Tony Gates

NOT THE RUAHINE CLASSIC (but pretty damn close) TE HEKENGGA CROSSING, August 10/ 11/ 12. By Dave Henwood

Friday night and we're bumping along the farm road to the Rangī car park squeezed into Derek's dad's car and playing "spot the possum".

"There's one, and another...and another. Jeez, more bludy possums in this paddock than sheep!"

Later, and a slight change of location – the track to Rangī Hut. It's a beautiful night disturbed only by "jeez, more bludy possums." Certainly no shortage of the furry sods in this particular area. There's another wee problem – a new addition to the old slip before the footbridge. It's a nasty gash down through the bush, but with a bit of care it is soon crossed. From then on, it's the usual pleasant stroll to the hut, the last part through snow. The hut has been recently repaired after a bout of vandalism from some mindless cretin or cretins. The gas heater was lovely.

5 am next morning and the alarm goes. I pop outside for a wee moment (as one often does after a night in the pit) to find the clear starry night has been replaced with cloud and heavy drizzle. Hey Derek, this wasn't on the agenda! I retreat into the warm confines of the hut to find him dragging the others out of bed chanting "Raining at seven, clear by eleven". Hmmm!!

6:20 am finally sees us venturing into the elements, well armoured in full storm gear. The snow is sparse and soft, the track is a stream, and our head torches barely penetrate the drizzle. "Not too bad once you get out into it" says Derek. As we progress higher, daylight slowly filters through the murk. The snow on the crest of the Whanahua Range is deeper and softer. The drizzle occasionally stops to be replaced by snow flurries or real rain. Fortunately there's not much wind. And at times, visibility rises to at least a couple of hundred metres.

As we approach Maungamahue, and the turnoff onto the Te Hekenga ridge, there is an attempted mutiny by one member of the party who shall remain nameless – "Pourangaki Hut is very close, and it's such a beyootiful place". Derek is having none of this wimpy talk. "We're at the ridge junction so we'll just turn right here and keep going." You mean there's actually a ridge in front of us? Ya could have fooled me. But he's right, so on we plod. More soft snow, more drizzle. Just before the Te Hekenga saddle, the sun tries to break through, so we take the opportunity to have a bit of lunch. Then it is back to the snow plodding grind, with the dreaded cheval pitch of Te Hekenga lying in wait. There's almost a snow cornice on the summit of the big "T

K”. We stop to put on crampons and then carefully sidle down and round to the cheval pitch. There is enough snow to provide footholds and to bind the crumbling ridge together, and we are soon across. From this point on, snow conditions improve dramatically. We find that we can walk on top of the snow instead of sinking to our knees, but it’s not so hard that we need ‘poons. These go back on packs.



Alpine travel on the “Cheval Pitch”, Te Hekenga. Dave Henwood carefully studies Derek Sharp, clawing his way across. On the left, wheetbix rocks overhang the Porongaki catchment! [Tony Gates]

Coming off Taumataomekura, at the bottom of a short slope, Derek breaks through the crust up to his crotch. Tony, bum-sliding behind unfortunately forgets the 2 second rule, and is unable to stop in time. However by a bit of deft twisting he manages to restrict the collision to a only a glancing blow – his bum against the crampons on the back of Derek’s pack. Quite cleverly done really! He obviously learns a lesson because the next slide (down the big gully off Tiraha) is accomplished without incident.

10 hours after leaving Rangī Hut, we reach Howletts. Tony unearths a secret stash of coal left from a previous trip and the stove is soon pushing out the calories in an attempt to dry out us and our gear. The new firebox is excellent. To the disgust of everyone, Tony demonstrates that Derek’s crampon has penetrated more than just overtrou, long johns and undies. Did we really need to see that? I don’t think so!!!

Tony spends some of the evening on his cell phone arranging our taxi ride for Sunday and calling a few friends such as Nigel Barrett, Pete Barnes and Geoff Spearpoint down south (“Hi

guys, guess where I’m calling from and what we did today....) Later, we retire to the pit with the sound of heavy rain on the corrugated iron roof.

Sunday dawns almost fine. The southerly is blowing through and there’s blue sky starting to show. There’s also a heavy dusting of new snow to add to the atmosphere. In clearing weather, we head south along the range (Daphne Spur) towards Otumore, and Longview Hut. A relatively easy route, with great views back to yesterday’s route, well plastered with new snow, and the severely eroding Tukituki valley. Many photographs were taken.

Eventually we meet our taxi driver, Dave Grant, just before Otumore, and by the time we are back at his vehicle at Kashmir road, the sun is out and we are feeling properly warm for the first time in two days. Well, it wasn’t the traditional Ruahine Classic along Sawtooth Ridge, but it was a pretty good substitute. Thanks to Colin Sharp and David Grant for the taxi rides, Heratanga Tramping Club for Howletts Hut, and to the rest of the guys for making it so much fun(?).

The Team: Derek Sharp (nominal leader and team optimist), Tony Gates (camera man and part time exhibitionist), Alistair Millward (chef) and Dave Henwood (the completely Red man).

SNOWCRAFT 1 PART 1, WHAKAPAPA, August 3-5, by “The Ropeheads” (Charlotte Sunde, Malcolm Leary, Sara Pettus & Lance Gray), with Bruce van Brunt as Team Leader.

Terry in a diplomatic gesture took one look at Charlotte’s coiffure and named us the “Ropeheads” – team building he called it. Tuesday night in a cold hall surrounded by people you do not know can be a bit unnerving so it was a relief when Bruce launched us into Snowcraft 1 with a background sketch of the contents of a climbing pack. Seriously, I had always wondered what that loop at the bottom of the pack was for and that corresponding sort of a loop at the other end. Ice axe holder! Even more impressive was how to actually use the damn thing. A favourite historical anecdote was Trotsky’s fate with the pick as well as a waltz through the fashions of climbing, such as ice axe slings, and whether to wear overtrousers on the inside or the outside of gaiters. Those Mountain Equipment people are thoroughly impressed with my climbing knowledge now! After some inspiration from

Terry it was down to affixing boots to crampons. My trusty number 18's were already sorted so I had the pleasure of watching others wrestling with screwdrivers and unwilling soles. With logistics completed, it was home and preparation for the weekend.

Against all expectations we assembled on time and sorted equipment and personnel. In the Toyota I had Yoko, whom I immediately accused of breaking up the Beatles (tactful), Sara, who immediately began apologising for George Dubbya, and Charlotte whom began by telling us she was shortly going on holiday to Fiji. Needless to say Simon and Garfunkel got little airtime on the way up the mountain. The drive was thankfully uneventful with brief stops at Hunterville for Malcolm (he took the limousine option) and dinner at Taihape. On the mountain getting to the hut was a bit tricky, with Claire getting into self arrest practice before we were barely beyond the carpark! After a briefing and a cup of tea we hit the pit around midnight with an expectation of good weather.

Huey was on the button and we awoke, to a bugle – and a cup of tea, around 6.45am. Breakfast was an all you could eat affair and then some. Downstairs we geared up, with Charlotte and I doing our best to destroy our overtrousers – I think I got away lucky – at least mine still zip up! With suitable inspiration, our two groups assembled and marched off to various favourite spots on the mountain. We spent the first part of the morning cutting steps with the adze, and basic cramponing skills. Things like having all crampon points on the deck and having the iceaxe on the arm closest to the slope were all helpful points. By the time we got to our new Olympic sport we were ready to fling ourselves down any slope such was our confidence. With crampons removed we practiced arresting with and without iceaxe as well as Sara's favourite – the fling myself backwards with pack on arrest. The silliest arrest was Sara's. The "I will throw my ice axe away, retrieve it, stop at the bottom of the gully and thrust the pick into the (stationary) ice arrest". We have to direct attention at Sara's efforts as ours paled by comparison. After a lunch basking in the sun and watching an active rescue helicopter (Whakapapa was chocka) we found more cramponing and self arrest slopes.

The highlight of the day and possibly weekend award (for the Ropeheads) went to Malcolm 20/20 vision man. Straight from a Country Calendar script Malcolm spotted a yellow kayaking helmet in the Amphitheatre! A very lucky Hutt Valley tramper informed us that their helmet had deposited itself over a bluff and by the off chance we spot it to return it. Yeah right! So standing there on the rim of the Ampitheatre Malcolm begins this "Speights" dialogue about this distant yellow object – Charlotte and I peered into the distance as Malcolm directed us to the bottom of that second bluff, below that gut and beside that dark rock – see it? Yeah right! So as we drop down into the Ampitheatre Malcolm trots off and sure enough returns with this helmet! Malcolm also had our attention when he informed us of Dick Hubbard climbing Mt Cook from his cereal pack – "so I give him a ring" he says, and that is how he ended up on Snowcraft!

After a cracker of a Saturday, a big feed, and some local entertainment (climbing your way around the inside of the hut) we crawled into our pits with the added responsibility of a team breakfast commencing at 6am! Morning brought amusement, with Charlotte and Sara awakening (by bugle) some skiers who didn't want waking, and only five cups of tea dispensed in a hut with 33 guests. Breakfast itself was more successful, with Bruce's culinary skills on display with bacon frying, and Malcom operating a machine I had never seen before – a huge poached egg maker – where have I been! I got the coveted role of porridge maker (can't stuff that up) which was on a scale I rarely see – 8 cups of oats and 16 cups of water. Given Huey wasn't cooperating we went over avalanches etc downstairs before shuffling off into the gloom. Self arresting was so much more appetizing with the sun shining! Surprisingly the weather improved and we managed much cramponing and self arrest practice before finishing with avalanche transceivers early in the afternoon. After the cleanup we headed off to the vehicles. The highlight on the way home was the 1970's retro takeaway in Taihape, complete with a smiling Princess Diana (Mickey Joe Savage will be missed surely) and original formica table surfaces. The team "feed" illustrated what a wonderful time we all had and was a pleasant way to say goodbye till Snowcraft 2. A special thanks to Bruce van Brunt, from the Ropeheads.

SNOWCRAFT 1 PART 2, by Kate Littin.

I want to start this report for 'The Try-Hards' on Snowcraft 1, at the end. At the end there were untold bruises, bashes, aching muscles, tired brains but big, big grins. Somehow, we managed to sustain these injuries as a result of Terry's seemingly innocent commands 'Ok, now you're going to slide down (that huge steep hill) on your back', or 'Ok, now you're going to go down head first on your back with your pack on', or (it gets better...) 'Ok, now on your back headfirst, no iceaxe' – you get the message. Needless to say we were champion at self-arresting by the end of the weekend. But seriously, we were blessed with fabulous weather on Saturday, "moderate" weather on Sunday morning (thanks Terry – I'd hate to see 'foul') and a great team. We were Clare Awcock (who was a stalwart member of the team despite managing to fall down a bank before she had time to blink, as soon as we set foot on the snow on Friday night), Yoko Shimada (who succeeded in showing up even the most valiant efforts at self-arrest by the other two members – there were plenty of mumbles about body size correlations with velocity), and myself, Kate Littin (did you seriously think I would write something bad about myself here?). I can't forget Terry Crippen here, he was our Team Leader and mountain guide. We learnt heaps of useful crampon techniques (with all those funny names), got to play with avalanche transceivers (God help the poor person who I have to find), the art of step-cutting (throw heaps of snow around and you'll be doing something right) and did I mention self-arresting? The only advice I can give to anyone who is thinking of doing this course in the future is do it. Thanks Terry for teaching us. (P.S. Snowcraft 2 was fantastic as well- more on that later.)

SNOWCRAFT 2, Mt Ruapehu August 17-19. "THE ROPEHEADS RETURN" – Malcolm, Sara, Charlotte and Lance

The week of Snowcraft 2 did not begin too charitably with heavy rain and snowfall all over the country with the long range forecast also not looking to flash. At the Wednesday session in the Fire Station we watched a video that reinforced the point that climbers cannot act as well as going over how to tangle oneself in a harness and become acquainted with various bits of hardware – I've never seen Sara so excited when it came to talk crabs and snaplinks. For Malcolm and I, tying figure eights and clover hitches was the

main entertainment for the night. As for the ATC, well who knows what that was for! With equipment distributed, our details faithfully recorded in Terry's black book and a reminder of a club member's ability to lose equipment we headed home.

Friday arrived and we all gathered promptly at the Foodtown carpark where along with my garden variety sedan and Terry's limo, there was the extra lure of Barry's all terrain vehicle. Consequently I only had Charlotte and Yoko to entertain before picking up Malcolm in Hunterville. The entertainment had already begun with Charlotte having barely arrived back from Fiji on 2 hours sleep. The trip up to the Manawatu Tramping Lodge was thankfully uneventful apart from the masses of snow everywhere illustrated best by the collapsed timber mill roof near Tangiwai. At the lodge we arrived to find visitors in one of our booked rooms necessitating Malcolm, Barry and I to endure a beeping cell-phone (the battery was dying) of a fellow companion. Saturday dawned brilliantly with the Ropeheads, assisted by Bruce and Janet, quickly into their work. We spent Saturday and Sunday practising roping up, setting up single anchors such as snow stakes, snow pigs, deadmans', and bollards and belaying to here there and everywhere.

Malcolm and I had particular difficulty in working out the various calls such as "on belay" "safe" "climbing" etc. At the beginning we were painfully slow in setting up our anchors and climbing to our next point. By the end of Sunday our gloves were not quite the impediment to knot tying and carabiner fixing they had been previously. At one point I was severely admonished by Janet for removing Malcolm off my belay and the anchor. Thankfully I was not alone in embarrassments with Sara and Charlotte trying their best to hide the fact that they had completely knotted their rope. On the entertainment front testing the strength of various anchors was fun. The bollard took the most punishment, giving way only after the combined weight of a baby elephant (the six of us) pulling on it. The snow on the Saturday was especially good for anchors – unfortunately overnight snow made many single snowstakes rather unreliable with amusing results.

The most courageous act, from the Ropeheads perspective, was Sara's spontaneous corn fritter manufacture for Sunday breakfast especially when we had said we would make scrambled egg. The resistance to anything other than bacon, porridge and scrambled egg was very strong and a testament to Sara's heroism that the corn fritter made the menu at all. Long live the corn fritter.

With Sunday's weather forecast promising anything but sunshine we got a surprising amount done with the weather finally relenting as we made our way back to the lodge for the cleanup and drive home. A big thanks to Terry Crippen, Bruce van Brunt & Janet Wilson.



The team for Snowcraft Two, Whakapapa. [Troy Badison]

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