



# PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

**Newsletter - October 2001**

## THIS ISSUE:

**PNTMC wins Interclub Quizz for the Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy  
and wins the Interclub Photo competition.**

## TRIP REPORTS:

**Taranaki, Snowcraft Three, and another climbing trip there.**

**Tararuas, Mitre Peak, and Mt Hector.**

**Kawekas, Makino Hut.**

**Ruahines, Standfield and Waipawa.**

**Ruapehu, avalanche awareness Course.**

**SAR, Dannevirke, Santoft, and night navigation. exercise.**

## CLUB NIGHTS

OCTOBER 25

BYO slides and photos

NOVEMBER 1

COMMITTEE MEETING, at Tony Gates's place.

NOVEMBER 8

Alex Scott, "focus on birds"

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

Trip grades can depend on many factors, especially the weather. As a guide, a reasonably proficient tramp can be expected to cover the graded trips in 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.

Oct 18 Thursday trampers  
Chris & Harry Allardice 323-4390

Oct 20-22 (Labour W/E Tongariro Circuit E/M  
Warren Wheeler 356-1998, 952 2840 wk  
Depart 7am Saturday. This trip will take in the wonders of the Tongariro Northern Circuit Great Walk, so our first stop is the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre at Whakapapa for Hut Passes (\$15 per night). From there, we follow the track east across Tama Saddle between Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe to Waihohonu Hut (5-6 hours), including a side trip to Tama Lake . Next day is to Oturere Hut (2-3 hours) where we can relax, explore and try some bouldering in the moonscape of the Oturere Crater. Our last day takes us up past the Emerald Lakes and Red Crater, over Tongariro and out to the Mangatepopo Road end for the bus back to Whakapapa (3-4 hours). This is The Plan, but variations are possible so give Warren a call.

Oct 22 Labour weekend day trip. Who wants to go on or lead a day trip? Contact Janet (329 4722) or Warren 356 1998)

Oct 27- 28   Appreciation of Search Management Techniques, to be held at the Levin Police Station. This is for club SAR team members and people interested in becoming involved with SAR, to bring them up to date with methods used at Search HQ for conducting a search. For details, contact Terry 3563-588

Oct 25 Thursday trampers  
Vina Cotton 354-5045

**Oct 25, 7.45 PM. Club night: BYO slides, photos, and stories, by club members. If our own photo competition, and the interclub one,**

are any indication, then you can expect some pretty good photographs here.

**NB, this replaces Alex Scott's talk on birds, which has been rescheduled for November 8.**

Oct 27-28      Leon Kinvig                          M  
                    Peter McGregor (021)256-9001  
email: mcgregorp@landcare.cri.nz

Depart 7:30 am. An overnight trip to a lovely hut with a magical remote feeling. Hear who whistling at dawn from the rushing Pohangina, the rattle of toetoe and mountain cabbage trees in the breeze as the first sun illuminates the Ngamoko tops; smell morning woodsmoke and singed socks.. well, we can't promise it'll be all delightful, but this is a Ruahine gem.

We'll start at the Limestone Road end beyond Sixtus Lodge, negotiate the steep climb over the Ngamoko Range and cross the Pohangina immediately by the hut. If the river's up we'll go in from Norsewood; a comfortable walk on a good track through lowland scrub, into beech forest then a climb onto and along the main Ruahine Range before the final descent to the hut. Both routes 4-6 hours, returning the same way.

Oct 28 Toka Circuit M  
Martin Lawrence 357-1695

This is a good, local tramp onto the tussock tops. We should get good views of the Pohangina Valley and the Ngamoko Range. Hopefully, we can meet up with the above mob.

**Oct 31 (Wednesday) DOC Kapiti user group meeting, for Tararua VAMP etc, at 7.30 PM, 10 Parata St Waikanae.** This will be your chance to find out about and discuss the proposed hut work in the Tararuas.

Nov 1              Thursday trampers  
                        Ann Green              374-5208

**Nov 1 Committee, at Tony Gates's place, 24 Springdale Grove, Palmerston North.**

Nov 3-4 Tararua Northern xing F  
leader TBA  
A classic Tararua tramp, from the Ohau river, to Arete Peak, Girdlestone, Mitre, then the

Waingawa River. From this route will feature numerous views of the high central; Tararuas.

Nov 4           Kahuterawa- Hardings       M/F  
                 Terry Crippen           356-3588

Depart 8am. This is your chance to explore the Kahuterawa and Otangane parts of the City's Water Reserve, very close to town (at the northern end of the Tararua Ranges). A 7 hour (approx) circuit of bush, streams, rough tracks and excellent views.

There has been a lot happening in this area on the recreation front; route investigating, track cutting and hopefully changing its reserve status. Some of us keen Club members, and Thursday trampers, have done a lot of the work. See the map in last years October Newsletter.

Nov 8           Thursday trampers  
                 June Sowerby           355-2690

**Nov 8, 7.45 PM. Club night. Focus on Birds with Alex Scott. Did you know that the Manawatu region has the widest diversity of birdlife in New Zealand? Alex Scott is a local photographer and artist who has published four books on birds. His fascinating slide presentation will extend from the Foxton Estuary, which is a breeding ground for migrants such as the spoonbill, to the forested ranges.**

#### 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 Stephen Liddall (357-6978).

**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 Janet Wilson (329 4722)

*Travel in the Tararua Ranges can range from pleasant, sunny, grass flats; through storm-drenched ridges and streams; to truly alpine conditions on the tops. There are places of tranquil peace and great beauty, and other places where even masochists will be unhappy. Winter conditions can occur on the tops at all seasons of the year – a snow-covered Southern Crossing on Christmas Day is far from extraordinary. Storm gear is always necessary for trips on the tops.*

*Quote, from "Tararua Footprints", by Merv Rodgers, (1995)*

#### Nb this replaces a BYO slide/ photo evening.

Nov 10-11       Triangle Hut (with MTSC)   M  
                 Liz Flint                   356-7654

A leisurely medium tramp, departing PN at 8.00 AM, and following a choice of tracks to the Whanahuia Range (Rangi or Deadmans, depending on the slip at Rangi). Lunch should be on the tops at the saddle, then a reasonable descent down to the Oroua River, and this lovely hut. Sunday's tramp will follow the river for an hour or so, over the saddle, and back down to the river, arriving at Iron Gates hut for lunch. The finale is out the track via Heritage Lodge and the Table Flat road end (in from Apiti).

Nov 11           Waipawa Saddle           M  
                 Peter Wiles                   358-6894

Depart PN at 7 am. We plan to head up to Waipawa Saddle if the weather is fair. Once at the saddle, there are several options. The best is to do a round trip via Three Johns (a short scramble above the saddle that gives an excellent view of the Hawkes Bay) and Middle Stream. Again depends on weather.

Nov 15           Thursday trampers  
                 John Stantiall                   354-5521

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES can be Emailed to [tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz](mailto: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

Welcome to Sarah Pettus and Troy Baisden, who have just joined the club. They reside at 19 Pohangina Road, RD 10, Palmerston North, Phone 06 326 9945, or [baisdent@landcare.cri.nz](mailto:baisdent@landcare.cri.nz) spettus92@yahoo.com

#### INTERCLUB QUIZZ, Sept 1, Fiona Donald.

Pizza ingredients: Scorekeeper, 4 teams with 3 persons each: PNTMC, (Pentium), MTSC, (EmptyEski's), MTNEQ, (Minties) and MUAC. Audience. Knives and forks.

Toppings: Good pair of lungs, Co-ordination, Ability to make a fool of oneself, be noisy...

#### Super Supreme Topping:

Quiz Master-setting the scene: stirring the teams into action with interesting questions, using a large ladle to dole out or deduct points from rebellious teams noted for making the teams hungry to win.

#### Method:

1. Dollop the toppings together (the Quiz Master quickly instructs what the teams need to do to gain maximum points) and combine with the four teams. Mix well.

This means one person can act and two people can sing to a tune of a well-known Sound of Music song...

Doe, a deer, a female deer,  
Bang I shot her with my gun,  
Me, a bloke I call myself,  
Car, a long long way to go...

2. Blend into this mix, the audience, for a rousing clattering rabble in the final round robin verse. Make sure the audience can cheer and clap loudly for maximum points per team.
3. Now add some general knowledge questions; i.e. "What bird is on the \$20 note"

Note: It's imperative the teams have handy their knives and forks to bang together in order to attract the attention of either the Quiz Master or Scorekeeper so their team can answer these questions.

4. Next, add a lot of quick-fire questions aimed to stir up teams collective intellectual juices.
5. Allow some time for thoughts to incubate and process with many whispered conferences among the team members to take place before these quick-fire questions are answered.
6. Throw in some extra lively entertainment coupled with a stopwatch timer. Charades: Cow Saddle, Sawtooth Ridge, Tunipo and Iron Gates Gorge.
7. Next, complete a task: Show the audience how to make a clove hitch, clip on a carabiner attached to a snowstake while wearing thick overmitts. MUAC excelled in 15 seconds while Pentiums limped in at 55 seconds.
8. To top it off, a team member pretends to be a famous mountaineer; the same team member blows up a balloon till it pops **before** the team answers the question. None of the other teams were able to beat the Pentiums here!

A very entertaining and informative evening had by all, especially for this audience's participant!

#### INTERCLUB PHOTO COMPETITION, 2001.

Well I should say all the big gun's were out, but instead I'll say all cameras' blaring!!! It was refreshing to see ice & mountains as, I don't get

out in those quite enuff, and it made for a pleasant change. I noticed some old favourites seeking their way in, and a strong depth in all categories. How many categories were there? Nice too to see some black and white prints. Paying attention for detail I noticed some prints mounted and some even numerically numbered and info inscribed. Make an effort to look after your work, both presenting and transportation wise. Oh, and combine some categories and add in "Fun" as a new one next time. Keep going out and experiencing those new & exciting places. Congratulations to all entries and winners, and keep your camera handee...

Murray woodcock EXTRAEYE Photo



"Weka" [Harley Betts]

#### **Landscape Slides**

- 1st Harley Betts PNTMC "stars at Barker Hut"
- 2nd John Cockren TSC "spray off ice flow"
- =3rd Peter Rawlings MTSC "flags Mt"
- =3<sup>rd</sup> Peter Rawlings MTSC "Mountain"

#### **Landscape Prints**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Harley Betts PNTMC "Magatepopo sunset"
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Robert Bruce MTSC "view of Tamserku"
- 3<sup>RD</sup> Andrew Lynch PNTMC "Hut, Mt Egmont"

#### **People Slides**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Peter McGregor PNTMC "Terry Crippen"
- 2nd Harley Betts PNTMC "Shokalski people"
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Lynda Hunt MTSC "the shave"

#### **People Prints**

- 1st Harley Betts PNTMC " leaning into wind"
- 2nd Robert Bruce MTSC "Sir Ed"
- 3rd Laani Uunila MUAC "soaking in pool"

#### **Action Slides**

- 1st Tony Gates PNTMC "cramponing"
- 2nd Harley Betts PNTMC "climbing Egmont"
- 3rd Laani Uunila MUAC "kayaking"

#### **Action Prints**

- 1st Tony Gates PNTMC "white water rafting"
- 2nd Laani Uunila MUAC "kayaking Fulljames"

#### **Flora & fauna Slides**

- 1st Harley Betts PNTMC "Eglington forest"
- 2nd Peter Rawlings MTSC "Mt/Flags"
- 3rd Tony Gates PNTMC "Tararua Rannunculus"

#### **Flora & Fauna Prints**

- 1st Harley Betts PNTMC "Weka"
- 2nd Tony Gates PNTMC "Takahe"
- 3rd Laani Uunila MUAC "Karmai Toadstool"

Overall Print winner, by Robert Bruce, MTSC "view of Tamserku". Overall Slide winner, and overall competition winner, by Harley Betts, PNTMC "star trails and tent at Barker Hut"



"Kea" [Pete McGregor]

#### **WEBSITE**

Your committee is still investigating the idea of having our own club web site. Potentially, this

could be good for advertising the club, informing members (and others), with Newsletters, Trip cards, membership forms, etc. There are however set up and ongoing costs. Hopefully, we can learn more about organising the web site, obtain funding, then offer you a web site one day.

### **NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL**

For simplicity and economy, as well as allowing you to obtain a better print of the PNTMC Newsletter, it is now available by Email. If you are happy to receive it on your computer, then please notify Tony Gates or Peter Wiles.

### **THE SEARCH AT DANNEVIRKE.**

The Dannevirke Police reported that the elderly man club members searched for in Dannevirke last month. He had slipped down a bank into thick blackberry. Police dogs had trouble finding him. Sadly, he had died of hypothermia.

### **NEXT TRIP CARD**

WHAT!! Time to start thinking about 2002: the January - June 2002 Events Card. The Trip Coordinators are; Terry (356 3588), Janet (329 4722), and Stephen 357-6978. They will be contacting prospective trip leaders, but if you want to choose a particular trip, then be in early and contact one of them. How about a trip to the Kawekas, Kiwi Saddle etc late summer, and a Kauharangi National Park Easter Trip.

Suggestions for Club Nights also wanted. Contact Warren (356 1998)

### **FROM THE PRESIDENTS PC**

Congratulations to the PNTMC Quiz Team of Tony Gates, Andrew Lynch and Viv Nichols. They were very clear winners, annihilating the opposition at the Interclub Quiz in resounding fashion. As Grand Quizz Master I was very pleased with the performance on the night. From all accounts it was a very enjoyable event for participants and audience alike. It was great to see a good crowd compared with some previous years, although the MTSC was noticeable for their lack of supporters. And a very poor 4<sup>th</sup> place performance. Is this an attempt by MTSC to lull PNTMC into a false sense of superiority by fielding a second string team that was not worthy of being supported? Time will tell m'dears, time

will tell (oh yes, two can play these subtle psychological tactics – hagh!).

Congratulations also to the PNTMC photographers who took top honours at the Interclub Photo Competition. I was somewhat disappointed with the overall quality and number of the other club entries, as well as the number of supporters attending from all three Clubs. At least we had Harley Betts, Pete McGregor and Tony Gates there to collect their prizes. Thanks to Bells Photography for their support- it is very much appreciated and helps immensely to increase the prestige of this relatively new event.

As Spring unwinds and Summer starts to simmer it is good to look back over the Winter months as films finally get processed, and reminisce on trips into the white stuff. Which reminds me I have some prints to pass on to various people from the Tunipo Trip and Snowcraft III.

It is also time to start thinking about Summer Trips Down South and the next Trip Card for January-June 2002.

The BYO Slides night coming up (note the change in date) is an opportunity to show off some of the most attractive tramping country down South, with a view to encouraging people to come on Extended Club Trips, as well as a prime incentive for private trips.

Remember that the Club has many experienced members who are only too pleased to share their wealth of knowledge – feel free to ask for more details on any trip you are thinking about.

The Trip Card not only includes Trips and Leaders but also Club Nights. The Trip Coordinators will soon be asking around the Usual Suspects for trips unless you come forward first. And for Club Nights please pass on any suggestions to me – not only for guest speakers, but activities and venues as well (in the past we have had a Navigation Night, and the Massey Climbing Wall.)

Happy Tramping.

Warren Wheeler  
President PNTMC

## TRIP REPORTS

### **SNOWCRAFT 3 - THE BIG "E", Sept 1-2, By Lance Gray**

The "E" Team were Terry Crippen, Barry Scott, Warren Wheeler, Charlotte Sunde, Malcolm Hunterville, Lance Gray, Johnathon Astin and Heather Hawera,



"The E Team" [Lance Gray]

The Wednesday session at the Massey climbing wall was spent practicing multiple anchors and the topic that garnered the most interest – tying up the rope. In fact my greatest achievement over the three weekends was probably laying that damn rope. It is a skill that many of us spend watching experts do but rarely complete ourselves as the experts fret themselves silly watching us novices innocently destroying their precious resource. The other important skill is in avoiding carrying it, especially when wet.

Friday was "ground hog day" as Charlotte turned up at my place for the third time to park her car in my garage and then pack her gear in my car and then accompany me to the Foodtown car-park where we met Terry and that notebook.

Thankfully we drove straight through Bulls this time for Wanganui where I picked up Malcolm and met Terry and the limo for a major ingestion of fat at the St John's Hill chippie. Dinner for Barry was a fateful encounter with an oyster burger culminating in you know what. We arrived at Konini Lodge, Dawson Falls sometime around 10pm for a cup of tea and a brief chat. Saturday dawned brilliant with great views of the mountain. Terry pronounced the weather to crap out – and it did. Spidery clouds that appeared on the summit as we made our way to Kapuni Hut grew progressively larger and by lunchtime it was drizzling and not that pleasant – a "poor result" to use popular Terry vernacular.

Saturday was spent on the slope up to Phantom's Peak where we set multiple anchor after multiple anchor until we could reach out over our packs and clip off a snow stake in our sleep. The only time Malcolm used coarse language was when he was carrying two snow stakes and they clanged Heidi like. He couldn't even enjoy his bum slide because the damn things kept digging into the slope. On bum slides Warren took out the title for the most energetic attempt with his from literally the top of Phantom's Peak.

Heather packed her "things happen in threes" in record time on the Saturday with an inspirational catalogue of disasters. Firstly, on the way back to the hut she fell through the snow and wedged herself literally into the track. Terry says there was snow flying in all directions as she extricated herself. Not happy with this misfortune Heather diligently prepared a sumptuous dessert only to offer it to the floor first! All was not lost though because Heather had also brought a large bottle of alcohol for mulled wine – with Terry talking about alpine hut etiquette and not burning the hut down, a beautiful blue flame erupted from the mulled wine cooking on the gas hob. Poor Heather leapt clean over the table to douse the flames – oops! Sunday was an absolute stunner with glorious sunshine all day. Malcolm and I made a pact that we would move as fast as we could up the slope and escape Terry as it looked so tantalising upstairs. With Barry back at the hut ill and the both of us feigning deafness we roared up the slope only for Terry to intercept us at the last minute and return us to the team. Thankfully we were then informed that we were going up to Phantom's Peak and we set about waling up the slope with each team member taking turns at

plugging steps. On top near Syme's Hut it was magic - you could see right over to Mt Ruapehu and Tongariro. Above us you could see the summit of Taranaki and watch the ant like figures descending its slopes. Syme Hut resembled a beer chiller with climbers having to descend down to the front door. After a quick lunch and a natter with a couple of local snow boarders we played on a particularly icy slope where we used ice screws and attempted a slope with hammer and axe. Leading up this small slope I was eventually hauled through the "gut" by Charlotte as Terry grinned from ear to ear and kept suggesting a photo opportunity. Malcolm completed the insult by positively racing up the slope I had laboured over so badly. Snowcraft 3 activities essentially ended with an abseil off a bollard before we madly bum slid our way down to Kapuni Hut. Snowcraft 3 was complete. A big thanks on behalf of the snowcraft participants to Terry Crippen, Bruce van Brunt, Barry Scott and Janet Wilson who gave their time to introducing us novices to the wonderful world of alpine adventure. Definitely not a poor result and no derricking also.

#### **Quiz for the day;**

If one pupil went just on SC1,  
one went just on SC2,  
two just on SC3,  
three just on SC1 and SC2,  
one just on SC2 and SC3, and  
three went on all SCs.

How many pupils went on each Snowcraft weekend?

#### **MOUNTAIN FRIENDS, TARANAKI Sept 1, by Pete McGregor.**

Taranaki at dawn, seen from the road near Hawera, was one of the most beautiful sights I've ever seen – white snow turning pale orange-pink with a cloud cap casting a ring shadow below the summit. It was then that I realised I'd forgotten to put a film in the camera.

At Dawson Falls there were no cars and the visitor centre was not yet open. I scribbled my intentions and began walking just after half past seven, climbing to Syme hut in bright sun and biting cold on perfect snow, leaving a stairway of kicked steps behind me. In the early light, the contrast of huge, angled planes of perfect snow against dark valleys... arcs of snow-dunes sweeping from deep

shadow into pure light... bluffs encrusted with a frozen-in-place tumble of ice, black rock emerging here and there... the sky a deep, dark blue... I thought of my empty camera back in the car.

*cloud shadows  
on the snowfield  
a line of footprints*

Syme – a conglomeration of blue and white ice cauliflowers; just a tiny clear area of wall above the door; the toilet completely buried save for a crown of ice excrescences. I sheltered in the lee of the hut, trying to chew my way through an energy bar that I'd carried in the top of my pack – the wind had been so cold that the bar was on the point of freezing, so I had to snap bits off and thaw them in my mouth before I could chew them. When I eventually finished, I packed up, put crampons on, applied sunscreen – and the cloud closed in. However, it cleared again soon after, so I carried on up the mountain, whereupon it clouded in again, and this time it didn't clear.

Firm snow, good for crampons . Not-so-good snow, but still ok for crampons. Patches of ice that took crampon points only. Visibility coming and going – a few metres, then a few tens of metres, then back to a few metres. From time to time I checked the compass to make sure I wasn't imperceptibly veering off to one side. That bitterly cold wind, driving the mist against my right side; when I looked down I saw ice had formed on my clothing. But the *intensity* of it – being alive and alone up there in the wild air...

Near the top, the slope was steep enough to North-wall, giving my legs a change of exercise that was nearly as good as a rest, but on the last section the snow deteriorated into an unstable layer over a more solid base, so that my steps kept collapsing under me. No serious risk, but I was glad there wasn't much of it – a long slog in snow like that would have been exceedingly frustrating. The crater lip sprouted stunning ice formations like those encasing Syme hut, but far more extensive: like a science fiction scene from an ice planet. As soon as I stepped onto the lip, the wind protested furiously, so I climbed back down, chopped a small platform in the snow and settled down for a drink and a snack. This time I'd carried a sport bar in my chest pocket and I got more energy from eating it than I expended in

chewing it – unlike the Syme hut episode. It was still well off midday.

From the bottom of the crater, the dim, vague shape of the summit faded and reappeared. Behind me I could just discern my tracks leading back towards the small col. I pressed on, and the cloud grew thicker, completely filling the crater. I could see nothing ahead, nor to my left. On my right, the huge jumble of cauliflowered ice cliffs grew fainter. I turned and looked back at my tracks in the snow, and realised they'd disappeared. I waited, and after a short time shapes began to form and the crater lip reappeared. I could now make out my tracks, leading back to my entry point. Time for a judgement call. I had a strong feeling that Taranaki was telling me "Not today, Pete, not today". To have carried on would have felt, in some strange way, disrespectful – like refusing the wishes of a good friend. In any case, the crater was good enough for me – Taranaki had helped me that far, had shown me scenes that had left me exhilarated, uplifted, privileged, and immensely grateful. I turned and followed the faint trace of my footsteps towards the col. In the intangible light they seemed to float in a pure void.

I managed to follow my ice axe holes about halfway down the mountainside towards Syme before losing them in the whiteout. I descended in what I thought was the same line, but soon decided to play it safe and took a back-bearing to check my progress. Even in that short distance I'd begun to veer to the right. I set off again in the correct direction, trying to suppress the feeling that I should in fact be going straight down. But the compass - and my judgement, rather than my instinct – was vindicated when, lower down, I found my tracks. From there, I progressed slowly along the line, occasionally waiting when the whiteout intensified enough to obliterate all features.

Just above the saddle between Fanthams and the main peaks, a series of tracks joined mine – two sets going up, two going down – making it easy to get most of the way back to Syme hut. The two people who had followed me had bypassed the hut, so from there I had nothing to follow. I took a bearing and set off. Within a few metres I was completely blind; I could see nothing in any direction, and nothing below my feet. I moved slowly, carefully following the bearing and trying

to feel the direction of the slope under my boots. At least it felt as it should, and I reassured myself with the knowledge that it would be some time before I fell off something. But I'd not been travelling long when I began to notice features underfoot; even several metres away. Shortly afterwards, I saw a distinct line of tracks in the snow, leading along my bearing.

From there it was all downhill – but only literally. I met four people climbing up to Syme, and chatted to them about the whiteout and the hut's entombment. Further down I met our own Snowcraft III course. Meeting friends on mountains... are there any words to describe it? Someone unidentifiably cocooned in storm gear and snowglasses introduced himself. It was Barry. After sharing experiences and snacks, I moved across to where Terry was busily instructing his group. He'd set up an anchor and Warren was testing it by gleefully flinging himself down the slope like a pup on a leash. We talked briefly, then, not wishing to interrupt the lesson further, I said goodbye and started glissading down the last snow slope. I'd not gone far when I heard someone call my name. I stopped and looked back up the mountain. A small figure stood there, waving, dark against white snow. I looked up, and waved back, then turned away into the deepening afternoon.

#### **ARETE FORKS, Sept 8- 9. By Tony Gates.**

The Tararuas are considerably more crowded than the Ruahines these days. It's difficult to escape the crowds, even when heading to the more remote corners. So when I sweated up to Blue Range Hut with Derek and Morgan, I fully expected more late night arrivals to Blue Range Hut. Derek and Morgan departed for home, then my mate Al arrived, as arranged. Then a somewhat noisy party of WT&MC's arrived. At least we could give them a warm hut and a brew, having got the fire going.

Saturday brought grotty weather. I ambled on over to Cow Creek hut, then set off up the legendary upper Waingawa Gorge. Typically steep sided country (vertical actually) and a deep pool deterred me, so I retreated for the sidle track to Arete Forks. That was a bad move, as it took me a difficult and exhausting 4 hours to reach Arete Forks Hut, even with a light pack. The track goes ridiculously high, sidling at almost the level of the leatherwood in places, and the

weather was still grotty. I later found out that there was only the one pool in the gorge, then easy going.

Arete Forks is a lovely spot. The DOC hut is cosy, and, with plenty of firewood, I soon had the fire box warming the place up and drying out my damp stuff. Two jokers from VUWTC arrived after having tramped all the way from Cow Creek to Brocket, Tarn Ridge, then the Waiohine Pinnacles- a hell ov a long way.

As forecast, Sunday was lovely. My turn for the best and most rewarding part of tramping, ie on the tops on a good day. The VUWTC jokers descended the gorge, while I tramped the tussock tops. I nicked up to the top of Table Ridge relishing the easy travel, good views, and even lighter pack. That winter sunshine was so lovely, for myself as well as the photographs. Bannister Ridge, Arete, and all around looked great. I particularly wanted to see the October 2000 slip off Tarn Ridge that nearly wiped out Arete Forks Hut and gave it all of that firewood. Surprisingly, it didn't look particularly large or impressive from this direction- at least compared to the erosion scars of the Ruahines. There was more snow than I would have thought (actually most of it was still ice at that stage), making for nice scenes. Feeling good, I strolled past the attractive tarn to the slopes of Brockett, then onto Mitre Peak. As planned, I met Warren and Logan virtually on the top, at almost exactly 11.00 AM. They had left Mitre Flats hut at the same time that I departed Arete Forks Hut. We had each taken 3.5 hours to reach the top.

#### **MITRE PEAK, Sept 8-9, By Warren Wheeler.**

Graham Peters was unable to lead this trip so I filled in for him on the day. Two of us set off in the early afternoon with drizzly showers easing. The track is in good condition and we took about 3 hours to get to the Mitre Flats Hut, taking the slightly longer bridge option rather than getting our feet wet. We were greeted by 3 dogs barking – but they were friendly and so were the two Wellington hunters, their wives and children - the youngest was only 6 years old, and was feeling a little weary! We shared their mulled wine after dinner, looking forward to the clearing weather for our trip up onto Mitre.

Sure enough the morning was clear blue sky and the walk up through the forest was beautifully lit

up by shafts of sunlight, bejewelled droplets dazzling like something from a fairy story. Above the bushline we had great views but as we reached Peggy's Peak some cloud puffs started drifting in from out west, but didn't really spoil our view.

Tony just beat us to the top, we spied him clambering up the western side as we surveyed the upper valley of South Mitre Stream from Peggy. Very little snow about, with the odd patch along the track nicely trodden by a couple of guys who had traversed along the main range from Atiwhakatu Hut and arrived in the dark at Mitre Flats Hut after a windy claggy trip on Saturday. A different day today – warm, calm and splendid views. No snow on Mitre itself - except for Snow Toffee Pops, so we weren't too disappointed.

On the return trip I tried glissading down off the saddle to Peggy's Peak, on the only slope still wearing snow, and provided some entertainment with a pirouette self arrest onto all fours. I don't recommend this without gloves (I knew there was something that I had forgotten in my excitement) – the burning sensation took an hour or two to dissipate, not icy enough though to damage skin. I sidled around and met the other two coming down the track – my slide must have looked a little more than just entertaining, but their lack of adventure is duly noted.



*Warren descending the north eastern (sunny) slopes of Mitre Peak, towards the Waingawa River [Tony Gates]*

Without further drama we reached the hut with plenty of time to pack up, have a brew, late lunch and enjoy the summery weather, before heading off back out to The Pines carpark by 5.00pm.

We were Logan Westwood, Warren Wheeler and hitch-hiker Tony Gates.

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**AVALANCHE AWARENESS COURSE, Sept 14-16, By Lance Gray. With Terry Crippen, Johnathon Aspin, Heather Buick, Nigel Scott, & Malcolm Leary.**

Famous test pilot Chuck Yeager used to say, he “Augered It”, to describe a pilot who had crashed his plane with fatal results. On this course our vernacular was changed forever with our instructor, Henry, in particular, describing how climbers and skiers would “Get Hosed” by an avalanche. “Getting Hosed” seemed to occur regularly on Ruapehu where he seemed to recount with almost relish the wonderful array of mountain user (idiot) behaviour. This course will also be remembered for the reinforcement of stereotypes concerning rugged mountain people and yuppie skier types. You could not have gotten two more different groups in one room if you tried.

**Example 1:** Rugged mountain people sup nature’s finest – water. Also because it is cheap and we are poor. By contrast yuppies stroke their Heinies – I mean Heineken’s, and smile glibly through perfectly presented hairstyles, teeth and sunglasses. We were certainly not jealous of their month long ski touring holiday in the South Island – financed by Mummy and Daddy. Rugged mountain types also take notes, ask questions and religiously recite the 5 A’s – Aspect, Altitude, Angle, um..... Rugged mountain types do not immediately retire to the bar – because who would let us in!

**Example 2:** For our lunch break, at the top of the main Whakapapa chair lift, we were told to return by 2:00pm Central North Island (CNI) time. Our Auckland friends had obviously not adjusted their Auckland Yuppie time (AYT) which appears to be 10 minutes later than CNI. Henry’s off sider (I can’t remember his name) said earnestly – “Who are we waiting for ?”, and then it sinks in that he is addressing the rugged types.

The Friday evening as you may have gathered involved sitting in the conference room of the Powder Horn and listening to Mark Woods, Henry and another off sider discuss the world of avalanches. Along with PNTMC were our MUAC brethren, a couple of other rugged types and of course the skiers. One particularly useful piece of advice is to visit Avalanche.net.nz which apparently gives a comprehensive coverage of most avalanche areas in the country. Ruapehu at

the time had a very low risk level so getting hosed was unlikely. An analysis of the last decade showed more climbers than skiers getting hosed much to our dismay. A fascinating aspect of the discussion was the different types of avalanche and the way the weather changes snow conditions. The photographs of various avalanches was of much entertainment with one particular set of images showing the photographer being chased down the mountain when a deliberate avalanche was much bigger than anticipated.

With the completion of this session we drove to Rangataua for our accommodation where Heather was already firmly ensconced in the double bed. Johnathon by comparison reacquainted himself with army life on a camp stretcher. I won’t mention it but Terry positively raced in to score Heather’s double bed after she returned to work on Saturday night. Saturday was crap. Visibility was minimal and it snowed and sleeted all day. Regardless, we had enjoyable sessions using transceivers and doing snow tests. These tests involved digging trenches to reveal snow faces upon which pressure was applied (we jumped on it) to see how easily it slid and at what points. With the course completed us rugged types let our hair down for two pints and a kebab before heading back to Rangataua.

My prime motivation for this weekend was to climb Girdlestone on the Sunday and so it was with much disappointment to find that on the upper mountain it was blowing its nuts off. Plan B was a cross country expedition that took us up to the top of some chair lift on Turoa (we walked) before navigating our way down to Blyth Hut where we received an excellent lesson in navigation from Terry. During the final section from Blyth Hut Nigel revealed the unthinkable – he had left his car key in Terry’s limo! Given that someone needed somehow to get up to the main carpark and drive the limo back Terry graciously volunteered to hitch-hike and took all of 5 seconds to score a ride! Legendary. The drive down the mountain involved Malcolm umming and arrrring about whether to stick around for a day’s skiing. Much to Malcolm’s disappointment his decision not to stay will haunt him; Monday was apparently a rip snorter Terry tells me with restrained glee. We all wish Malcolm good luck with his climb of Mt Cook late November and look forward to a report of that event.

**STANFIELD HUT, Sept 15. By Fiona Donald.**

We walked at a leisurely pace up the farm track and down into the bush; the occasional wild looking cow was disturbed by our presence and bounded off the track. As promised by Liz there was a magnificent lookout to view the spectacularly eroded hills and the rocky stream bed. At the Hut we ate, rested and made pyramids. Fiona had a nifty portable game where either a variety of pyramids can be built or patterns are made. Homeward bound, we walked down the rocky stream; some of us experienced the delights of slipping on algae covered rocks and enjoying an unexpected watery dip. An excellent day had by all-Liz, Duncan and Fiona.

**MAKINO HUT, MOHAKA. Sept 22- 23, By Dennis Moore and Tony Gates.**

*"you are either with us or you are not"* G W Bush, September 22 2001.

With such prophetic words, we set off to Makino hut with the morning newspaper and coffee brewing materials strategically located for immediate use. This tramp, we were assured, was for relaxation, eating, reading, and sleeping. We had actually started with a warm up stroll around the delightful Balls Clearing, which is a worthwhile walk in itself.

The high Kaweka Range looked lovely, with a few dribbles of snow, and long green ridges descending to Makino Hut- our destination- and the Mohaka Valley beyond. It was a lovely day, and we really enjoyed the pleasant three hour stroll through easy manuka and beech forest to Makino Hut. I recalled from a trip there during 1993 that it was a nice hut, and am pleased to report that it still is, one of those places that is not often visited, and seems to get better with age. A clear, calm evening.

Sunday brought snow! From inside my pit, on the porch, the feeling of snowflakes on my face at 3.00 AM was quite a surprise. However, once on the hoof at 5.00 AM, I soon warmed up. I had a long way to go, to zoom around the Makino, then Mohaka Rivers, while Dennis and Mick retreated the way we had come in. The snow flurries soon faded away to reveal a good day, so the Makino Valley made for an exceptionally pleasant tramp. As expected, the Mohaka river track was quite crowded, with school holiday people, family

groups, and even a few trampers. The tramp ended in the road end hot pools, in hot but rather dirty water.

**NIGHT SAREX AT WAITARERE, Sept 25. By Janet Wilson.**

Four club members participated in a SAR navigation exercise in the Waitarere forest recently. A starting time of 6.30 PM meant we had little time for a meal beforehand, so it was a little annoying when the PN Police turned up 25 minutes late.

Teams of 4 set off a few minutes apart, with approximately 10 checkpoints to find. Each team had a GPS- working very well in more open country once the operators were up to speed, but rather limited under thick forest cover. Our enthusiastic team sped around the course, enjoyed some police refreshments, and looked through a heat seeking device. We tried to head home early, only to be foiled by a locked gate.

We were; Terry Crippen, Llew Pritchard, Pat Jaansen, and Janet Wilson.

**MT HECTOR DEBRIEFING, Sept 30. By Logan Westwood**

0630 Hrs. Operation 'Obscured By Clouds' is under way. Scouting expert Westwood is having doubts of effectiveness of operational visibility.

0800hrs. Four highly trained members of Hector Taskforce are inserted via diesel powered troop carrier into mountainous terrain east of 'Otaki'. Dismal operational visibility is confirmed. Taskforce commander Grant packs uv sun protection cream in vain optimism, and directs team to push on through, although objectives of mission are now in serious doubt by all.

0945hrs. Hector taskforce finally battles through dense undergrowth and thick mist to reach first stage of mission objective, Field Hut. Here, team takes time to rehydrate and consume some of their energy supplies. All members are disheartened and slightly unnerved to discover two large portrait photographs have been stripped and taken. What crazed monster is capable of this?

1100hrs. Atrocious weather and fleeing Mt. Hector refugees fail to stop our heroes from gaining Kime hut at 1440 metres. Once status of hut is confirmed safe, Kime is secured, and to the

surprise of team, 2 German hostages are found, albeit well feed and in a positive psychological state. Task force rest up and consume ration supplies while gathering any information they can from zee Germans. While re-establishing normal core body temperatures, team decision is made that to carry on is uncertain death, retreat being the only viable option in these conditions.

1250hrs. unsuccessful infiltration of Mt Hector fails to diminish or demoralize high spirits of taskforce, who vacate Kime hut, leaving zee Germans with strong suggestions against their planned route to Penn Creek hut. Conditions outside have become easily calm, while visibility remains at a dismal 50 metres. A fast pace is set along the open tops, and before long, team arrives back at Field Hut. While refueling bodies, teams conversation turns to methods of removing personal waste from mountainous regions and other wholesome related subjects, before resuming their retreat down the remaining 930 metres. Westwood takes up point man position for team, scouting approaching terrain, and discovers a native earth worm suffering steroid abuse. But he fails to notice a booby trapped rock that commander Grant, following behind, falls victim to, lacerating his knee and causing him minor blood loss. Visibility is regained at 800 metres, as taskforce make fast progress towards their extraction point, moving more like mountain goats than human beings.

0400hrs. Botanist Cottam photographs and documents some rare plant species, while commander Grant receives urgent medical attention from combat nurse Wilson, who insists a plaster on his gashed knee is in his and the teams best interests. All equipment is packed away into the troop carrier, while all signs of teams presence in area is covered or destroyed before they hightail it back to Palmerston North HQ.

note- individual components of taskforce vow to return some day to take Mt Hector and complete the mission they so narrowly missed

accomplishing. We shall, in the words of the virgin Mary, come again!

Declassified operatives; taskforce commander Dave Grant, scouting and reconnaissance specialist Logan Westwood, combat medical nurse Janet Wilson, botanist Yvette Cottam.

#### **SEARCH AND RESCUE AT SANTOFT, October 2-3. By Janet Wilson.**

Terry's call for SAR team members reached us at 5.00 PM Tuesday. For Graham and I, it resulted in a very quick trip home from Pahiatua to Pohangina, and then out to Bulls. We met up with Terry and Jean for quick fish & chips, then moved out to the coast to find a very well equipped SAR base set up by the air force. Plenty of food, drinks, etc.

A female walker was reported overdue on Sunday afternoon. Most teams were out searching when we arrived. We were tasked to carefully search an area of pine forest and thick scrub near the SAR base until 10.00 PM, when we were joined by about 20 others. We then did a contact search through more forest and sand dunes. The search was called off for the night, and most people, including a large air force contingent, went home. We chose to stay the night in an airforce tent, with stretchers and blankets provided.

The rescue helicopter arrived at 6.30 AM Wednesday morning (with heat seeking equipment), but had no luck. The Iroquois arrived later, and some of us had the pleasure of acting as spotters as we searched over the forest. After breakfast, as many more searchers arrived, the helicopter commenced another search up the coast, and the missing person was soon located walking back down the beach.

Team members; Terry Crippen, Graham Peters, Jean Garman, and Janet Wilson.

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