



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - March 2005

CLUB NIGHTS

Club nights are on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friend's Hall, 227 College Street, at 7:45pm sharp. All welcome! At the club night: Please sign the visitor's book. A 50c door fee includes supper.

5-6 Mar Land SAREX

**10 Mar Club Night – Baffin Island
Richard Havercamp**

He's back by popular demand. After his fascinating accounts of rugged Fiordland tramping he has returned to enthral us with the delights of Baffin Island located on the north east Coast of Canada.

17 Mar Committee Meeting

EASTER

**31 Mar AGM
Warren Wheeler**

The Annual General Meeting will start at 7.45pm and features an election Year address by the President and a fiscal and finance report by the Treasurer. Nominations for the Executive will be accepted no later than immediately prior to election on the night.

Articles to Lance gray.family@actrix.co.nz
or post to 37 Parata Street, Palmerston
North (by 20th of the month)

TRIPS

**Mar 6 Kapakapanui M
Anja Scholz 356-6456**

For a good work-out, the track which starts inland from Waikanae climbs steeply for about 900 metres before relinquishing (hopefully) the hold on stunning views over the Tararuas and Kapiti Island. Over the tops for lunch, and a look at Kapakapanui Hut on the way back down. As the only river crossings are right at the start, those who relish dry feet might want to bring sandals/waterproof plastic bags to cross. Okay, and my arm can be twisted for the time honoured Donut stop on the way in. Start from Countdown Carpark at 7:30 am.

**Mar 12-13 Duck Pond M
Mick Leyland 358-3183**

To be re-scheduled.

**Mar 13 Top Maropea Hut M
Neil Campbell 359-5048**

This is a walk in the Ruahines with the road access being from the Hawkes Bay side. We visit Sunrise Hut and then, weather permitting, continue on to Top Maropea Hut for lunch. The views are excellent in good weather. We depart from Countdown carpark at 7am.

**Mar 19-20 Arete Biv F
Lance Gray 356-6454**

First plan is to complete a Dundas/Bannister loop and tolerate the comfort of the Biv or tent. Could look to a Northern Crossing variation if we have transport; as long as we stop at the Biv I don't mind.

**Mar 20 Tongariro South Ridge M
Bruce van Brunt 328-4761**

Most people climb Tongariro along the tourist track and continue on with the Tongariro crossing. On this trip we take a somewhat different route to the top along the South Ridge. The trip starts from the Mangatepopo road end, where we follow the Tongariro crossing track to the saddle. We then leave the crowds and ascend the South ridge. The ridge itself is a straightforward rock scramble that affords excellent views. From the summit we then descend down a nice scree slope and follow the gentle west ridge down to the Mangatepopo Hut. A fun trip with lots of views.

**Mar 25-28 Easter Eggont M
Warren Wheeler 356-1998**

Depart 7.00am for a 2.5 hr drive to Dawson Falls carpark on the southern side of Mt Egmont/Taranaki. From there we will circuit around the mountain via Lake Dive Hut, Waiaua Gorge Hut, and Holly Hut. We will probably be camping as the huts tend to fill quickly at this time of year.

**Mar 25-29 Raukumara Ranges M
Terry Crippen 3563-588 or
025 643-3637**

Mt Hikurangi at 1752m is the highest non-volcanic peak in the North Island and is in from Ruatoria on the East Coast. Depart PN early Friday: drive to Gisborne (400km) to meet Terry midday (he is up there working), then continue up to the Tapuareoa Valley road-end for the long climb up to the bush line, camping or using the hut. Hopefully climbing to the summit the next day. We may then use "Mac's Track" and descend into the Mangarata Stm and possibly to Oronui hut. The down valley, out to the road end. Tues, drive back to PN. If you are a definite starter please contact me **BEFORE 10th March**.

Mar 31 Club Night AGM

Trip participants:

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Countdown carpark. A charge for transport will be collected on the day. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance. For general info, or any suggestions for future tramps, please contact Terry Crippen (356-3588), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or Tony Gates (357-7439).

Trips

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs Technical skills reqd (T)
Medium (M): 5-6 hrs Instructional (I)
Fit (F): about 8 hrs
Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

Trip leaders:

Please advise a trip coordinator, as soon as possible, if 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)

From the Editor's Desk

- Did anyone spot a certain **Doug Strachan** letter to the editor in the Sub-Standard the other night Thursday 10 Feb titled "Life's Ironies?" To give you a taste of this gem here is the opening paragraph.
Isn't it ironic that Superman ended up in a wheelchair, and that the Marlboro Man died of lung cancer. How about that massacre carried out by American troops in Vietnam at a place called NO Gun Ri.
- To cap it off – come Monday 14 Feb the editor of the Sub-Standard tells us that Doug received letter of the week for his excellent tale of ironies and the ability to poke fun at himself. Well done Doug. Did you get anything out of it like a free subscription?
- Congratulations to **Andrew Lynch** for his fine multi-media presentation on Nepal; a five-week trip he commenced in late Sep. Andrew broke his presentation into three main areas: the "Big Boys and Girls" (Everest etc) as he called them, his 400km trek over five passes (he's never one to take the short option) and pictures of the people of Nepal.
- Andrew suggests that he had to get the Big Boys and Girls out of his system and that while he enjoyed going out to see them he was not particularly interested in climbing them. In particular he suggested that you could get better value for your \$80k (US) by looking at other climbs. As you can guess he was talking about Everest. The wonderful thing about Andrew is his opinions: not one to sit on the fence and appease everyone.
- The 400km trek was fascinating just from a cultural perspective. I think many of us could get quite used to having five cooks and twenty-one porters! The trek took in five passes, one Maoist standoff, one serious climb over 6000 metres, 40kg

loads, socks and jandals, and a bucketful of eye-popping images not to mention altitude headaches. Not bad for a Linton cockie.

- Andrew completed his presentation with ten minutes of digital images of his travels around Nepal accompanied to local music. Very cool. He told us that he took 700 frames (slides/photos) and 250 digital images. Something tells me that Andrew has not always been a dairy farmer.
- We should have dished out Doug's beer and had a rave while listening to the music. Somehow I don't think our landlords "The Society of Friends" would have appreciated alcohol consumption on their premises. I think Doug is priming us for the up-coming Presidential election given the amount of alcohol he's been dishing out lately.



Andy amongst "His Big Boys & Girls"

NOTICES

Change of Address, From the Presidents PC

Change of Address:

Duncan Hedderley
347b Botanical Rd,
Palm Nth ph 354 6905

From the Presidents PC

The February blue skies are nicely letting the sun shine through to warm up the shallow waters now running in the rivers of the region – “you are cordially invited to go outdoors”. “**Hagh hagh**” then to those who didn’t come on the Irongates Gorge trip a couple of weeks ago - the Oroua River was almost warm, definitely not as refreshingly cool as past trips. The water was clear and deeper than it looked in the gorge - the floods having scoured out the gravel - which made for some interesting false foot-downs. I was surprised that only two of us went on the trip...yes, just two – what a waste of a perfect day!

Doug reckoned the blurb in the newsletter was a bit off-putting so perhaps I should have mentioned that even 10-year old boys can do it in 5 hours. No doubt many of you were enjoying other activities anyway, so I won’t take the lack of numbers personally.

In the dog-box again, I was gently reminded recently - in no uncertain terms - that I had omitted from the Annual Awards listed in the last newsletter the last minute (how ironic) on-the-night award for the **Last Minute Award** – you may recall that Janet Wilson kindly nominated me for this award due to phoning trip leader Fiona as she was about to head out the door just 10 minutes before the trip was due to leave from Countdown carpark – my apologies for this unintentional omission.

Good news – St Peters College has given the club **\$500** for services rendered to their

students undertaking **Duke of Edinburgh Award** outdoor activities last year – special thanks to Andrew Lynch (chief instructor/organizer), Martin and Anne Lawrence, and myself for volunteering to instruct and act as minders. This money – and that from last year - is tagged to help fund a data projector for digital slide shows at future club nights. The committee is aiming to make the purchase this year, with additional funding from Square Trust or other community-funding sources.

Peter Darragh has suggested to me that it would be a good idea to remind club members, when on either a club trip or private trip, to fill in the DoC hut-books by including “**PNTMC**” in the column for “Home town”. This would not only help promote PNTMC as an active “user” of the Conservation estate and therefore worthy of consultation on any relevant issues regarding huts and track, but would also help members (and others) to quickly find likely comments that are worth reading.....I know most of us make of point of including “PNTMC” in the Party-members column, but I think you would agree that this suggestion offers a rather nice improvement.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you at the AGM after Easter – your chance to help shape the future direction of the club etcetera, etcetera...the Committee has made strenuous (?) efforts to ensure that this is one AGM you CAN stomach, as it will be followed by food-tasting of fine **trampers cuisine and ice cream** (not my first choice, but the Committee rulz, OK? ;-)

Happy tramping
Warren Wheeler
President PNTMC



Camp below Mt Speight Arthur's Pass

TRIP REPORTS

The Drowned Rat Diaries, Waterfall Hut, Pohangina - Piripiri Loop Sledge Track, Ruamahanga Gorge Float.

The Drowned Rat Diaries

by *Rattus alpinus fluvialis* (a.k.a. Pete McGregor)

Tuesday 11 January 2005

At the Cableway over the White River this evening, Terry struggles to winch the carriage across to our side. He's putting in an immense effort but making no progress, complaining about the *dipsticks* who hooked it up on the other side. Eventually I suggest it might help if he turned the handle the other way.

I'd met Terry and Lance at the Bealey pub that morning, and shortly after 11 we'd begun walking up the Waimakariri. Good conditions for tramping—partly cloudy, a mild breeze—but Terry set a cracking pace and after several hours of river bed bashing with a heavy pack I began to feel the effects. I consoled myself by appreciating the beautiful surroundings. The last time I'd been here was decades ago, but you don't forget country like this.

At Carrington Hut, Terry tells us the correct way to butter Tararua biscuits. "Spread them on the flat side, not the convex side, because you get more on them that way". And you can reuse them, apparently. "Lick the spread off and put more on."

Wednesday 12 January

With the whole day to walk up the White Valley from Carrington to Barker Hut we relaxed, enjoying the good tramping conditions and spectacular surroundings. Even Terry seemed happy enough to cruise—except, of course, when he was out in front leading the way. He explained the pace later; in his words, "I like being at the back. Don't like people coming up my backside". Fair enough, Terry.

We arrived to find John, the hut's sole occupant, stretched out on the verandah, enjoying the sun after his morning's climbing. After chatting with him over lunch we enjoyed a few hours' relaxation—I actually

dozed off—then strolled above the hut to admire the White Glacier and the Kahutea col below Murchison. A brilliant blue sky; warm sun; snow in wide, even fields and perfect, sweeping arcs; jagged skylines ... Icefalls faced us across deep ravines, threatening like clenched fists; a menace reiterated by high bluffs and rock-ravaged gullies. In this country there are places you don't go.

We glissaded much of the way back, as the bright, flat sunlight softened a little and drew shadows from the bluffs. In the mostly snow-filled tarn by the hut a small, frigid-blue area of water rippled and wrinkled in the wind. Still no sign of rock wrens. Never mind: barring major misfortune, this trip cannot be a disappointment.



Barker Hut 1560m Arthur's Pass

Thursday 13 January

Five o'clock in the morning, still dark and the wind's howling around the hut. You can feel the vibrations when the big gusts hit—the hut shudders as if it can see its own disintegration. Terry's alarm goes off, just as he'd threatened last night. "Up at five, away by six!"

But after he scrabbles around in the dark and turns the alarm off, he's quiet—no signs of the rustling, murmuring and soft clattering of pots and primuses that signal the start of another Terry mission—but no sooner have I begun to believe that the man actually

possesses some common sense and won't force us out into this lunatic wind than he's out of his bag and practising his pelvic thrusts

We leave at six, as the peaks begin to colour, taking on the mauves, pinks and violets that precede the first direct sun. Before stepping onto the Marmaduke Dixon glacier we strap on crampons, then crunch across crisp snow and plod up the glacier into the cirque as golden light creeps lower down the mountainsides, slowly losing its colour. The snow whitens, begins to dazzle. There'll be heat in that; enough to turn the

surface to slush and the cirque to an oven. But now we're still well in the shade and here, almost completely encircled by high mountains, we're buffeted less by the wind.

It doesn't last. As we trudge higher up the long, steep slope to the Wakeman ridge occasional tremendous gusts stagger us. Cloud scudding overhead from the West threatens deteriorating weather; high, wispy mares' tails support the prognosis. But here, just east of the Main Divide, conditions are still good; the wind, although awkward and trying, keeps us from overheating.

And the views are spectacular. At its crest, the ridge sweeps up and away in a perfect performance of line, light and form; the two sides meeting in such a sharp line it seems it could slice the sky in two. John's two-day old footprints follow just below that crest; they cross it a few metres short of the steep rock and continue in a long trace across the névé. We follow, aware of the long slope

falling away to the White Glacier far below us. Stand upright and you can reach out and touch the snow without bending. For Lance, this is a new experience; he insists he's apprehensive but as I watch him cross the névé like a pro I find that hard to believe.

None of us have any desperate urge to stand on the summit, so we scramble around on the rocks below it without elevating ourselves above the mountain that's treated us to such a beautiful morning, to such a satisfying and enjoyable climb. The West Coast and the alps down South are almost—but not quite—enveloped in cloud. Briefly, Evans appears, then is swallowed. We're surrounded by deep valleys, hard high mountains, snow, rock and the immense space under the early morning sky. Far away and down below, the Waimakariri glitters, silver and braided. Behind Greenlaw, a wisp of luminous cloud curls up and hooks over itself, hangs there momentarily, then dissolves.



Cramponing up the Marmaduke Dixon Glacier to Wakeman

"I'm going to have to find a crack somewhere soon", Terry informs us. Earlier, lower down, he'd muttered something about it, but had chickened out because he didn't want "...the wind getting up my... (mumble mumble...)".

The crucial information had disappeared into his whiskers, fortunately. But it's still not that desperate and instead of defiling the summit we enjoy a session of relaxing, snack-

nibbling, conversing and admiring views in the lee of the summit before descending.

John's gone; no one else has arrived. It's 3:40 in the afternoon and Lance is asleep, just his head visible outside his sleeping bag, like a case moth on steroids. Terry's been reading us salacious (and hilarious) excerpts from a trashy paperback but he's been silent for some time. Until now—I hear snoring, and it's not from Lance. Terry's lying on his back, eyes closed, the novel still clasped upright in his hands. I guess the early start took its toll.

All day the weather comes and goes, brief splashes of sunlight punctuating long periods of dull, overcast sky and bitter, viciously strong winds. Towards evening the cloud thickens, spreads, lowers and eventually brings rain, but we're snug inside the hut, full of a Crippenfeed. As the valley fills with swirling cloud, steep bluffs and spurs, dark and wild in silhouette, come and go; the wind howls. It's a great night to be in Barker Hut. (to be continued)



Terry & Technology

Waterfall Hut
15-16 Jan
by Nigel Gregory

There were four of us keen for this trip to Waterfall Hut area. Janet Wilson, Graham Peters, Alyn Higgins and Nigel Gregory.

The plan was to go into the Kawhatau River from Mangakukeke road end, partly because I had never been that way before and partly

because it would be less of a drive in for Janet and Graham.

Alyn picked me up at a quarter to seven on Saturday morning and we headed out to Pohangina to meet up with Janet and Graham at their place. The drive out to the road end was uneventful and pleasant ***in the infamous yellow Avenger wagon.***

The day was truly magic, hardly a cloud in the sky, as it had been cloudy in Palmerston North. We tramped up to Purity Hut at a good clip; Graham set a reasonably hard pace getting the farmland out of the way quickly and eager to enjoy a rare cloudless day on the tops.

After a snack and water top up it was on to Wooden Peg and some great views. Iron Peg was next, really an effortless and pleasant tramp with beautiful views all around us. We stopped beside a reasonably large tarn just to the East off Iron Peg for a sun soaked lunch break. Some windsurfing anyone?

During lunch we discussed which way to take down into the Kawhatau River. We decided to take a spur off Mangaweka beside Trig Creek. The way down was easy and if one stays to the south or along side Trig Creek it is a reasonably easy way down. Once into the Kawhatau it was a quick trip up to my favourite camping spot on the river. We had the obligatory cuppa and set up flies for the night.

After a good meal we settled back to count satellites and star gaze. We saw quite a few satellites and after a bit an absolutely astounding shooting star (meteor?). It appeared in the South and hurtled Northerly down the Kawhatau at what looked like jetliner height. It was bright orange with visible flame off the back. I almost ducked!! After that we all sort of felt that was the highlight of the evening and it was off to sleep.

The morning dawned cloudless and cool. As we were considering which way to head home Janet blurted out "blast and bugger" or

something to that effect. She had left her beloved switch blade knife at the previous day's lunch stop on Iron Peg, or so she thought. Well that decided the debate on which way home, we had a mission. Knife hunting we would go and then head down past Purity hut.

On the way up Pinnacle creek instead of heading straight up the creek Graham thought that a trip up the right hand creek would be something a bit different. We discussed it a bit and Alyn was keen as well. Well different it was.

Graham got off to the left of the three of us and we got quite separated on the way up. We thought we had "the way" and that Graham had made a bit of hard work out of his route. ***Well I guess he laughed hardest because our nice scrubby if steep spur ended in a bit of rocky drop, blast.***

Well we messed around a bit and thought and discussed and tried this and that before finally finding a bit of an adventurous sidle across some loose rock to a better scrubby if steep spur.

Meanwhile Graham had his way sorted as well, and we all made headway up the head of the creek. At the top we had a bit of a break, it was a pretty hot day. We had an uneventful tramp up to Iron Peg and Janet soon found the infamous switch blade knife.

We had a nice lazy warm lunch, the weather not the lunch, on Iron Peg, admiring Ruapehu in the distance and discussing various things. The rest of the trip down was pretty uneventful and we were glad to find some shade in the bush below Purity.

All in all I think it we had a terrific time, great weather, good company and conversation and a bit of adventure thrown in for good measure. Many thanks to Graham, Janet and Alyn that made this trip into the Waterfall hut area a success.

Pohangina - Piripiri Loop 23-24 Jan

Once upon a time, Janet myself and a group of friends went on a very excellent tramp. Part of this involved getting from the headwaters of the Piripiri Stream onto the Ngamoko Range. We'd been told there was a good route but it wasn't marked and people's directions were rather vague. In the end we had a very non-excellent gravel through leatherwood till we fell onto the wide swathe cut through the leatherwood on the top of the range. The idea that if we came along the tops and found our way down into the Piripiri we would solve the puzzle of the missing route was the genesis of this trip.

Being eco-friendly, greenhouse gas conscious folk (yeah right Graham!), we love the sound of V12 and 9 cylinder radial aero engines and the smell of combusted avgas, so delayed the start of the trip till Sunday so we could go to the Wings over Wairarapa airshow.

Sunday morning saw Martin & Anne Lawrence, Warren, Yuko, Jenny McCarthy, Vanessa Johnson, Janet and myself (Graham) all bright eyed and bushy tailed at the track start. On reaching the Pohangina we had a pleasant surprise finding the river away from the cliffs on the true left, avoiding the usual early wet feet. (How such simple things give us pleasure!)

The undulations of the sidle track to Mid-Pohangina hut brought on the usual discussion on the merits of the river route versus the track. Lunch was had on a grassy lookout knoll high above the river. Not far from our lunch spot we started on the final descent to the Pohangina and very soon Mid -Poh hut. Ngamoko hut is just a short amble up the river from there so we kicked into 'enjoy the river on a warm sunny afternoon' mode.

One of the highlights was watching a blue duck playing in the rapids, almost posing for Yuko to take a photo. When we arrived at Ngamoko hut there was plenty of time to have a swim, do some reading and leisurely pig out on the horses do firs Janet had organised us to bring. Yuko again provided

us with with some amusement by emptying my pack and laying my kit out so she could photograph what a typical trumper in NZ took and wore. Luckily there was nothing there to embarrass her.

Next morning a wriggly snake set off up onto the Ngamoko Range, regrouping at the bush edge and putting on more clothes before being exposed to the full force of the wind. Meandering along the tops the clouds and the views came and went.

Finding the best way through some of the scrub took a little trial and error. We stopped for lunch in a relatively sheltered basin with a tarn, just at the start of the cut track through the leatherwood. After lunch it was a doddle going along the track, discussing where we'd come out of the leatherwood on our previous trip; where the route into the Piripiri would lie.

All of a sudden the cut track stopped. Where to now? There's no obvious way on. People scuttled in several directions eventually finding signs of cut leatherwood heading straight down the gully. So the mystery was solved, but as to how to describe the route from the Piripiri up - well, it's not quite that simple.

High(low)lights of the trip out from there:- my confirming that it is farther and harder to go downstream to the triangle marked track to the biv than take the sidle route directly there; the amazing slip that still blocks the stream causing it to underground; Janet doing a completely unnecessary rock-hopping manoeuvre and falling, gashing her chin and probably cracking a rib; Vanessa stepping into quicksand, extricating herself and straight away doing it again. A good trip.

Sledge Track **30 January** **by Duncan Hedderley**

I was surprised that on a hot summer Sunday there were not more people at the Sledge Track. Perhaps the signs saying "Track Closed Because of Rock Falls" put them off; but Warren assured us he had experience carrying a stretcher out from here

(during a Search and Rescue exercise), so we carried on.

(We looked for the damage that had caused such a long closure. There was a couple of metres where half the track had slipped away - a bit of a hazard if you weren't steady on your feet, or had running children with you - but that was beyond the "Experienced Trampers Only" sign. ***Hate to sound crusty, but there is plenty of riverside walk that people can enjoy quite safely).***



What on earth are Yuko & Craig doing here?

On the tops the bush was shady, and the wind cooling. There was just so much to do - admire the hills, survey the plains, throw sticks for the dog, practice yoga, hunt wetas and glow-worms in the mines. After we had done all that, Elaine suggested returning via the Toe Toe Flats loop.

I suppressed memories of slogging through half-cleared tracks and knee-deep mud in the area several years ago with Terry Crippen, and am glad I did - the Toe Toe loop isn't on that route. The Flats must have been an area which was burnt, and is now a clearing of Toe Toe grass amid the bush. It's really quite special.

Returning by the riverside track there were half a dozen people enjoying the swimming holes, and a couple of mountain bikers heading into the forestry on the other side of BlackBridge.

The satisfied users of Harding's Park were Carol Burgar, Lee Chin, Warren Wheeler, Yuko Watanabe, Craig Allerby, Christine Astin, Natalie Mercer, Fiona Donald, Elaine Herve and Duncan Hedderley.

The Ruamahanga Gorge float. 12- 13 February 2005. By Tony Gates.

Two of us set off Friday evening for Herepai Hut with high hopes and good equipment to descend Chamberlain Creek- reputedly the most rugged in the entire Tararua Ranges. We arrived on dark, and the other three at midnight- in the pouring rain. The hut was cosy and dry.

Saturday's weather was disgusting. The tops were clagged in, the wind howled, and we could hear the Ruapae Stream roaring. No question, really- forget the tops, and head for a good camp sight down in the valley forest then float the lower Ruamahanga Gorge. The upper Ruamahanga valley, with its numerous good river flats, looked very attractive to us. The sun even popped out for a few nano seconds.

The Ruapae Stream by then was back to normal flows, so we nicked off the Roaring Stag track, and tramped through open forest to the secret Lake next to Ruapae Stream. Now that is a really special place, a little lake set in heavy Podocarp forest, with its own island in the middle. Time for a brew, snap a few photographs, and relax.

We tramped down valley, visiting the rather run down Roaring Stag Lodge en route. DOC has begun to prepare a new hut site right next to the existing hut. It's a nice place, with good access to and from the road, river, and tops. It was easy tramping on bushy river terraces and the bouldery river bed.

At one stage, the sun was shining, but the wind whipped up the most amazing spray from the river. We would laugh as the wind roared and a cloud of spray from the river approached us. Horizontal rain would then batter us for a few seconds, then pass. We chose an extremely pleasant camp sight near Cleft Creek mid afternoon, and enjoyed a fine camp fire and feed. It felt like the poor weather had passed.

We were up and out there reasonably early, with Andy running back to the car and driving around to meet us at the farm land. He chased a few deer up the valley. We skittered easily down river, travelling about the same distance as Andy did, but taking an hour longer. It wasn't just the photo stops that slowed us, rather the chilly

water, slippery boulders, and then the expected deep pools.

The large side creek draining around Blue Range Hut marks the half way point of the lower gorge. We had encountered no compulsory swims by this stage, and I thought that the tramp might end up being just that- a river tramp. Shaun however was longing for some bottomless Tararua gorge pools with sheer rock walls on either side, so was keenly looking around each corner of the river. He wasn't disappointed.

The first pool that we couldn't avoid without a significant bush grovel was coloured deep, deep green, and was very cold. We walked as far as we could, till the water was maybe chest deep, then started to float and swim. We all had car inner tubes, quite small, but still offering good floatation. We would bob and shiver along, paddling for the closest bank. The clean, cold Tararua water didn't often have much current flowing, but we seemed to get through each pool reasonably quickly. It might have had something to do with our desire to be back on solid ground. And there was a pleasant warm breeze blowing once we emerged from the water.

The photographers amongst us caught some of the action. Andy had an underwater camera, so kept it in his hand, even when swimming. He snapped some photographs with the lens semi submerged. ***Sometimes, a shore based photographer was able to do his thing while the models were shivering in the water.*** At the end the sun was shining nicely and it was an easy stroll down a classic Tararua river. I'm sure that we all planned many future Tararua Gorge trips. We were Tony Gates, Andrew Lynch, Shaun Barnett, Andy Reisinger & Lou.



A Deep Pool in the Ruamahanga

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------|--|
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