



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - December 2005

CLUB NIGHTS

Club nights are on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, at 7:45pm sharp. All welcome at the club night. Please sign the visitors book.

8 Dec End of Year BBQ – Ashhurst Domain

Our End of Year BBQ and Annual Prize-giving will be held near the shelter in the Ashhurst Domain, entrance is off the Main Highway. BYO food and drink to share, a small \$2 gift for the Xmas tree, and a portable BBQ if you have one. If you have queries or would like transport, phone Warren 356-1998.

15 Dec Committee Meeting

26 Jan BBQ at Horseshoe Bend

Our first club night for 2006 is a BYO BBQ at Horseshoe Bend Reserve, Tokomaru. From 6.30pm till dusk. Enjoy warm weather, a refreshing swim, and tall tales from the backcountry over fine wine, cool beer, sizzling steak, specialty breads, fresh crispy salad and anything else you might like to bring. For transport and any queries, contact Warren 356-1998.

Dec 4 Paretetaitonga Warren Wheeler F 356-1998

Join Warren for a tramp/climb to the western most peak of Mt Ruapehu at 2751 metres. Great opportunity to have a look at the crater lake and general nosey around. Contact Warren for further details.

Dec 10-11 Leon Kinvig Craig Allerby M 323-7913

Up either Knight's or Short's track through to Leon Kinvig Hut for the night. Return in similar fashion. Leon Kinvig Hut lies along the Pohangina River which is home to blue duck. A trip with Craig will always be a cruisy occasion so don't miss the opportunity to chill out in the Ruahines.

Dec 11 Kohitere Forest Chris Saunders E/M 358-4899

A walk up the ridge behind Levin on forestry roads, great views of the Tararuas and Horowhenua in clear weather. Suitable walking shoes will be fine. We meet at Countdown carpark for an 8.30 a.m. start.

Dec 17-18 Contorta Slaughter Janet Wilson M 329-4772

NB: Please note your interest by Dec 4th.

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

TRIPS

Dec 3-4 Waterfall Hut Nigel Gregory F 354-8124

Join Nigel for a visit to Waterfall Hut on the Kawhatau River in the heart of the Ruahines. Looking to go in via Purity over Wooden and Iron Pegs then down Pinnacle stream. Contact Nigel for further details.

Your chance to escape the Xmas rush and do something for conservation. We are looking for volunteers to help pull Pinus Contorta seedlings on the lower slopes of Mt Ruapehu (up to 1500m) of Mt Ruapehu. We will be camping in beech forest up there and plan to have some Xmas goodies (BYO to share) for dinner on the Sat evening. For those of you who did it last year it was hard work, the snow didn't help, but very satisfying. Departing PN Sat 6.30am.

Jan 14-15 PNTMC 2006 M/F
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Join Warren for this classic Tongariro National Park trip which involves tramp/climbs of both Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. Contact Warren for further details.

Jan 15 Howletts Circuit F
Llew Pritchard 358-2217

This suspiciously looks like Kaweka Challenge preparation in drag. Join Llew for what looks like a day of masochism given that a circuit anywhere Howletts Hut in the Eastern Ruahines has long day written all over it. Contact Llew for more fun details.

Jan 19 Committee Meeting

Jan 21-23 Extended TeHekenga F
Graham Peters 329-4722

Join Graham for a Wellington Anniversary weekend special. Guaranteed to get your morning cup of tea on this one. Cross one of the high points of the Ruahine Range. Contact Graham for more details.

Jan 23 (Mon) Stanfield Hut E
Duncan Hedderley 354 6905

Meet 8am at Countdown for a wander up the Tamaki river in the hills behind Dannevirke. Be prepared for wet feet.

Jan 28-29 Nichols Hut F
Nigel Gregory 354-8124

Join Nigel for a trip to Nichols Hut perched on the great hulk that is Mt Crawford. Accessed from the Waitewaewae Hut track this trip will get you right into the back country. Contact Nigel for further details.

Jan 29 Pohangina River Ramble E/M
Richard Lockett 323-0948

The possibilities are endless for this trip and the proximity to the Waterford is even greater. Contact Richard for what will be a fun easy day's exploration of the Pohangina.

Feb 6th (Mon) Wharite E/M
Duncan Hedderley 354-6905

Wharite is the hill with the TV mast on it; the view over the Manawatu is something special. Meet 8.15 at Countdown to be in for the experience

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)

NOTICES

PNTMC 40 Year Celebrations

On Thursday, Feb 23, we will go on an odyssey back into time, recounting the history of the club from 1966 to the present. Forty years worth of newsletters have been thoroughly dissected and some real gems, often humorous, brought to light. Do come along and find out how the club began, and the answers to those "I wonder..." questions that pop up on tramps.

I wonder...

how many marriages there have been between club members?

what gear people took tramping in the old days?

how many patrons the club has had?

who has been made a Life Member?

if trips have always left from the same place?

how many members have had search parties out looking for them?

which present day members have been in the club the longest?

what funny or exciting trip reports have been written?

Come along and find out the answers. Some of you old-timers might even be able to shed light on a few mysteries. Other topics to be covered include: transport problems, poems, letters to the editor; fatalities, recipes,

environmental issues, etc etc. Further reminiscing will take place the following weekend (Feb 25-26) at Rangī Hut, which used to be our club's hut.

Committee Member Resignation

Heather Purdie has resigned from the PNTMC committee now that she resides in Mt Cook (not that we are jealous or anything!). We miss Heather and wish her well.

Hopkins Valley Spotlight 15th-18th Jan 2006 onwards. -Terry Crippen

The club plans to run a tramping and climbing spotlight based in the Hopkins Valley area up the head of Lake Ohau, in the South Island, hopefully to encourage more of us to "head south over summer". This valley is a very pleasant easy Southern Alps valley – wide open flats, beech forest, and is adjacent to the Main Divide.

Huxley Lodge, which we have booked for three nights, is accessible by road. It has simple accommodation: bunk rooms, wood stove, gas for lighting, showers and flush toilets. It is planned that people arrive on Sunday 15th Jan. The next couple of days can be spent doing day tramps, fishing, or just relaxing.

The cost for this will be \$40 per person (3 nights accommodation and tea/ coffee/ nibbles). You will need to supply your own meals. Find your own way south. (Some of us will be taking vehicles south from P North - may be spare seats.) There are numerous bus operators operating out of Christchurch that call in at Twizel and we can organize transport between there and Huxley Lodge.

Following this, beginning on the 18th, there is an organized 6-day medium/fit or fit grade transalpine tramp (Temple Valley, Huxley Valley, Broderick Pass, ?Mt McKenzie). Or you may want to do your own easier and/or shorter tramp in the area - Huxley or Elcho Valleys, up to Dasler Biv, or perhaps just camp further up the Hopkins. Or head off to other parts of the South Island. Some of us plan to do some more demanding climbing later.

In order for all this to go ahead a minimum of 10 people is needed. Since I will be away most of December, I have enclosed a registration form to send in (with moneys please, cheque made out to T. Crippen). Closing date is December 1st, so that plans and bookings can be finalized. There will be info at club nights. Further info, contact me: 3563-588, or 025 643 36 37. email; bluesky_tramping@clear.net.nz

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

After nearly 3 years and hundreds of hours, the entire known set of the club's newsletters has been converted to searchable text formatted files. The series of PDF files are formatted to as closely as possible preserve the original newsletter format.

Grateful thanks goes to Peter Darragh, whose enthusiasm for the club has resulted in him keeping a set of newsletters that goes back to the early 70s!. This is believed to be the longest known set other than the club's archival set. A number of missing issues in the archival set have been recovered as a result of this unexpected source. Overall, there are perhaps a handful of missing copies, but even then some of these apparently missing issues may never have existed.

Meanwhile, Doug has got plans for the PNTMC definitive history book /encyclopaedia! But that is a 10-year project. Keep at it Doug, you are going to be busy!
Peter Wiles



(Kereru – Trevor King)

Over the Hill



PNTMC turns 40

Our club's 40th birthday is a time to spend warm summer evenings reminiscing about the years gone by. Past, present and future members are invited to the following events:

Jan 26 Clubnight: BBQ at Horseshoe Bend

Horseshoe Bend is a delightful spot, so come along for a chin-wag and throw some meat on the Barbie, even if you're a blacksmith at it. This event marks the start of our year and 40th birthday celebrations. Things to bring: drink, food to share, towel and togs if you like. Phone Warren (356-1998) if you can bring a portable BBQ or require transport. 6:30pm to dusk.

Feb 23 Clubnight: Over the Hill

Doug Strachan will host a discussion reliving the history of the club from its founding to the present. Forty years worth of newsletters have been thoroughly dissected and some real gems, often humorous, brought to light. See notices for more info.

Feb 25-26 Rangī Retro Revellers E Doug Strachan 35 36 526

Go to Rangī Hut via the Deadman's track on Saturday, and join the day-trippers on Sunday for a pot luck lunch followed by a recounting of Rangī's fascinating history. Don any retro trampers' garb you may have and step into the past. Departing at 8am.

Feb 26 Rangī Retro Ramble E Dave Grant 357-8269

Bring some tucker for a pot luck lunch at the Tardis (Rangī Hut), where our club's important historical connection with Rangī will be revealed in detail. There were some hilarious moments, such as getting a fireplace to Rangī after the helicopter deposited it a mile shy of the hut. The theme is "Retro," so leave your chopper behind, and wear gear from yesteryear. Groups leaving from Countdown from 8am to 9am.



They call me “Yellow Shorts” – also known as Tony Gates

TRIP REPORTS

Rangiwahia Track, Addendum to Snowcraft 3, Checking out Howletts, Carkeek Hut, Mt Whanokao, Broken Axe Pinnacles, Erceg Search, Field Hut, Beehive Creek

Rangi – the track we didn’t used to know
24 July (My apologies to Peter for not putting this in earlier)

The clouds were low over the ranges as we departed for Rangi. In fact the carp ark was in the cloud, but at least it was not raining.



Comforting signage?

There were two questions on our minds as we started up the track. What is the new slip deviation route like, and where would the snow be encountered? After about 15 min we reached the slip deviation route – straight up the side of the valley for at least 150 m. It is no longer an easy cruise up to the hut on a Friday night; it’s more of a mission now with a steep clamber up amongst the Pepperwood trees/scrub and a muddy traverse above the slip before a descent back to the old route.

It probably adds an extra 15 min to the time for the trip in either direction. The deviation route avoids the slip entirely: in fact one is not even aware of what lurks beneath the track. While there is much to hang onto to haul oneself up (if required), damp bush is rather wetting even without actual precipitation.

We reached the hut in the cloud and found no sign of snow – little sign of anything really – nobody around and next to nothing to see. We settled for an early lunch and then headed back down. The cloud had shifted a bit for the return, enabling some glimpses of the farmland below. Back down the track, one gets a view across the valley to the slip. One can wonder how the track used to cross it and it is most evident that there is more to collapse in the future.

Duncan Hedderely and Peter Wiles

Addendum to Snowcraft III 28 Aug

Craig and Peter left Kapuni Lodge at 6.15 a.m. when there was just sufficient light to see their way along the track without torches. The morning was clear and calm – a distinct improvement over the showers and cloud of Saturday. The snow at about 1600 m was well frozen, which required crampons. Height was gained rapidly and a brief stop made at Rangitoto Flat to adjust clothing, gear and fluid/food levels before starting the major grind to the crater rim. There was another party a couple of 100 m above us who had left from Syme Hut.



Craig atop Mt Taranaki

Although the surface was smooth glassy ice without a trace of powdery snow, we made good progress and we able follow that tracks of the party above us. We reached the summit at 9.30 and before long, a party or two arrived from the north and quickly quite a group gathered in clear near calm conditions with a few blobs of cloud wafting around the slopes.

After a further snack/drink + photo (Craig's first ascent of Taranaki) we descended

passing Heather Purdie and friend at about 2300 m. After a brief chat with the snowcrafters on the lower slopes, we returned to the Lodge at about 12 noon for a well earned lunch. (Our legs were so sore for the next few days that Craig took a sickie on Monday!!)

Peter Wiles and Craig Allerby.

Checking out Howletts – 22/23 September

Chris and Peter did a mid-week trip to Howletts to re-establish themselves with this classic spot after a gap of many years.

Showers started in Palmy even prior to departure. Taking the Kashmir Road route, snow remnants were encountered even before the bush was reached. We reached Daphne for lunch after considerable effort in wind and rain. We considered staying at Daphne as hail and heavy rain pounded on the roof, but then a glimpse of blue sky changed our minds. It was a slog up the Howletts track with showery rain most of the way to the bushline.

Above the bushline, cloud obscured the ridge-top, but there seemed to be much less wind than lower down. The snow was the major impediment now. Quite a bit of the poled route is quite deeply cut into the ground. Snow had filled in much of the trench and it was very soft. We ploughed slowly onwards. Above about 1300 m the rain turned to quite flaky but persistent snow. At last the ridge-top! A few minutes later we were in the hut, surrounded with about 30 cm of white stuff. After getting the stove going with the coal – mmmmm, we thawed out.

Sometime after a fulsome dinner the snow seemed to stop and we retired to the enduring warmth of the stove. Shortly after first light we looked out to see that magic Howletts view of clear sky overlooking clouds far below covering parts of Hawkes Bay. We watched the sunrise – a special sunrise as it was the equinox – due east. Tiraha glowed vivid pink in its mantle of snow, which looked hopelessly deep to try to wade through.



Howletts in the snow looking from the dunny

After a leisurely breakfast, we packed up and headed back down in fine weather, pleased that our efforts had been rewarded.

Chris Saunders and Peter Wiles

Carkeek Hut: the PNTMC Diet Oct 15-17 By Lance Gray with Craig Allerby

Pitter patter, pitter patter ... "Lance, its raining," says Craig. "Yeah not a problem, they forecast a few overnight showers." Craig I and were in the pit at around 10pm when Craig decided to share this important piece of information. We both nodded off with full stomachs after trekking in from Holdsworth Carpark roughly from 7.30am till 6.20pm; a good honest day's work.

The weather had improved throughout the day so we confidently ate as much as we could given that a few overnight showers weren't going to make the 700 meter stretch from Park Forks to Dorset Creek much of a mission. Well as trip leader I was totally wrong. Around 5am I stirred again and realised that the overnight showers seemed more like continuous rain. Craig helpfully told me that it hadn't stopped all night. Hmmm...

I whipped around the hut and couldn't find any Crystal Balls or Hindsight. Logic told us that Park Forks would be in flood with the Waiohine and the Park Rivers trying to outbid each other. Blind Hope suggested that by the time we made the trek from Carkeek Hut it would have dropped. The Hut Books reckoned that the only true escape route was to continue up Carkeek Ridge over the Waiohine Pinnacles and around over Girdlestone, Brockett and Mitre ...This was

premised on the fact that it might stop raining and that you would end up back near Holdsworth carpark sometime around midnight. We were keen but not superhuman. Blind Hope was keen for a look at the frothing mess of Park Forks. Craig and I gave in and were well treated. Dorset Creek on a raft crewed by Indiana Jones would have taken a minute; getting off as you whizzed by would have been the problem.

Death by drowning was not our favoured option so we trudged back up the track to Carkeek Hut. On cue the rain stopped, the cloud lifted, and the sun came out, some 12 hours after it had started. After soaking up rays, drinking endless cups of tea, I wandered up the ridge to phone Anja; Anja had just returned from the epicly popular PNTMC Kapiti Island trip.

Contrast my popularity with that of Janet: 2 versus 50! The reception not 500 metres from the hut was fantastic and so were the views. To cap it off I spotted a hind sitting on the ridge and shot it with my finger. Happy in the knowledge we weren't about to spark a search and rescue effort Craig and I continued with the PNTMC diet. Dinner was a particularly nourishing cup of soup with peas!

Carkeek Hut is a favourite of many people, the many VUTMC hut books are one of its many pleasures. These books detail some of the more masochistic tramping experiences going. The one that really caught my sense of silliness was termed the Carkeek picnic which involved using Carkeek Hut as the site for a picnic with suitably fit parties starting from the opposing road-ends of Ohau and Holdsworth. After the car-key exchange, the parties then continue to the opposing road-ends, after enjoying their picnic of course. Opinion suggests that you can get to Carkeek from Holdsworth road-end comfortably in 6^{1/2} hours; apparently it takes longer from the Ohau Road-end. Definitely one for the informal PNTMC trip-card.

The walk out on the Monday was interesting because when we returned to Park Forks you could have sworn that there had never been a "flood" though a couple of the pools were slightly deeper. The saviour of the day was

food left at McGregor Biv so a big thankyou to whoever it was that left the packets of pasta for one: they certainly made the final grunt up to Angle Knob less exhausting. Having tolerated windy claggy conditions on the Saturday we were treated to a lift and sunshine. Ahh ... tramping on a Monday ain't so bad after all.

**Whanokao Peak, Raukumara Range, Labour Weekend 2005.
By Tony Gates.**

North and east of our regular stomping grounds of the Ruahine and Kaweka ranges lies a wild region of forests, mountains, and rivers. Te Urewera National Park and Raukumara Forest Park contain much of this wilderness, much of which is seldom visited.



Craig fighting the leatherwood

Our plan was to climb the giant and very steep peak of Whanokao, which has an altitude of 1618 metres altitude, and a summit ridge about five kilometres long. This peak lies near to Hikurangi, and close to the heart of the largest and wildest area of wilderness in the North Island. It is the most northerly and easterly area of alpine flora in the country.

After a two days enforced waiting at Tolaga Bay Holiday Park due to floods (378 mm rain in 48 hours) we set off into the upper Tapuaeroa Valley. This is past Pakihiroa Station, from where one climbs Hikurangi. We followed a forestry road for a bit, then prominent deer trails up a steep ridge. Relatively easy going was due largely to the deer trails and open forest. We knotted numerous pampas grasses to remind us of

this route on the descent. At one point, a side creek swung in close to the ridge, and water was easily obtainable. There were also numerous good campsights in the forest at this point. With careful GPS and compass route choice, as well as the occasional view, we rapidly progressed.



Terry on an interesting sidle!

After a lunch stop at about 900 metres, the terrain and vegetation became noticeably more difficult. We floundered around in pampas grass, windfall, and South Island sized boulders thinking that that was more like the Raukumara Range that we had expected. However, good open patches of forest did appear from time to time, and there were even a few more views and reliable GPS checks.

The ridge was narrow in places, and the drop offs on either side very steep. The ridge ahead was pretty intimidating too. At one stage, I tried a direct assault almost straight up on a house sized rock covered with small trees, and Peter a sidle. I retreated when the vertical became overhanging. Peter pushed around the rock through thick scrub, and soon became extremely entangled. He promptly produced a small pruning saw, making himself a pleasant clearing. We had snippers too, and they did assist on a few occasions.

There were actually a few very old track markers, so we knew we were on the right ridge. We got into the leatherwood, which wasn't too bad, then crossed a "cheval pitch" (straddle it like a horse), then we were there, at the end of the steep stuff. What the map showed as an open basin was in fact fairly

thick leatherwood with several tussock clearings and swamps- and a stream. We refilled water bottles, and were soon making camp in a pleasant clearing. Mist came and went, then clear skies that night. It had been a good six hour ascent, and we were happy for our prospects for the summit the next day.

An excellent sunrise gave us what we wanted- clear weather. We were soon away from camp, pushing thru leatherwood, and stomping to the next open patch. The travel was OK for most of the route to the summit, just numerous rocky knobs and considerable uncertainty. It reminded me somewhat of the Tararua Peaks, or Sawtooth Ridge. Tremendous views all round, with the Motu River tributary catchments (Mangatutara, Te Kahika) standing out. Yes, the Raukumara Ranges are pretty impressive. Mt Hikurangi too, soon became visible, although with some cloud from time to time. We passed a little stream at an obvious saddle before the summit, then easy tussock covered slopes to the summit trig.

Peter recorded a few botanic species, all of which were typical of similar locations in ranges to the south. There were few alpine flowers out, just the occasional *Ranuncullii*. Hot sun chased us through the scrub back to camp. With our newly gained local knowledge, the route was much easier. We brewed up, packed up, and relaxed.

The summit was misty by this time, and Terry spurred us on to complete the descent while the weather was clear. Initially, "the Cheval pitch" was passed (I mean grovelled over) by hanging on by our fingertips to the loose rocks. The slopes around appeared much steeper when looking down. We were pleased to find marks from our ascent, but did require several searches for our knots tied in the pampas grass, boot marks, and snipper marks. We ended up getting down in about half the time of the ascent. Our lunch spot was duly passed, then the open zone of deer trails. It was raining when we returned to the car.

We were; Terry Crippen, Peter Van Essen, Craig Allerby, and Tony Gates.

Broken Axe Pinnacles: The Return of Yellow Shorts Nov 6 By Lance Gray

The omens for the day were good this Sunday as Tony, Nigel and I drove through into the Wairarapa. The All Blacks were just finishing their demolition of Wales and there was a distinct lack of wind. Lets hope we get a lift we kept repeating. At the carpark we met a legend as Tony described him, and further along another guy we stopped for a chat with was incredulous when we said we were off to have a look at the Pinnacles. "Where you staying for the night," he asked. "Palmerston North," I said. The look on his face said it all. Sure it was a longish day but not that bad.

Tony complained at the end of the day that we still had two hours of daylight left. Given the volume of light snoring coming from the back-seat I think Tony and the rest of us were quite happy for the daylight! The weather for Saturday had been a shocker with a classic Spring gale. I was considering re-scheduling with a gorge-return training run. I decided to have a closer look at the mountain forecast which encouragingly suggested lessening winds turning Southerly, and showers easing to an afternoon with increasing fine periods. Fortunately the forecast was pretty bang-on, though we never had the "lift" we all hoped for.



Lance & Nigel traversing Broken Axe Pinnacles in cloud

For a period on Baldy we could see the Broken Axe pinnacles before the cloud lowered again. On South King we had lunch in warm cloud with no wind. The pinnacles themselves did not prove too much of an obstacle with only "the Broken Axe" itself

requiring a quick sidle before immediately regaining the ridge. There appeared a well padded track to the east that simply avoided the pinnacles. With day-packs and no wind it was very enjoyable. The low cloud meant a little bit of navigation but not much as there are cairns and well worn paths.

If you listened to our conversation you would have been forgiven for thinking that we were teenage boys on a school lunch break. Nigel and I blamed Tony for his corrupting influence especially with those yellow shorts! Pamela Anderson's Stacked television programme and Madonna's latest offering were vigorously debated if I remember correctly. I could be wrong of course.

To make the day a bit more interesting we decided to return via the East Holdsworth track which added very little time to our trip. Certainly more interesting than returning via the Jumbo Hut track for the umpteenth time. As long as you stay on the worn tracks and hit the cairns you will find the entrance to the track from the top of East Holdsworth. Since it is less well used the surface is superb.

We were back at the car by 6.20pm for a feed at Subway though Tony was threatening KFC! You can't talk mountain running all day and go to KFC, not in my car anyway. To Tony's gentle murmurings we drove contented back to Palmerston North, though a little shocked to learn of Rod Donald's passing given his healthy living message. The title by the way reflects the healthy glow of Tony's \$5 pair of shorts. We were Tony Gates, Nigel Gregory and Lance Gray.

Erceg Search 7/8 Nov by Graham Peters

Not long after arriving home on the Sunday afternoon after a weekend racing the motorbikes at Manfield, I had a phone call from Peter Darragh saying the Police had been trying to get hold of SAR personnel to act as air observers in the search for the missing helicopter. Having been on an air observers course, Janet and I thought we should make ourselves available so rang and left a message on the SAR cellphone. Of course we didn't get rang back till after we were in bed almost asleep - 'be at the Police Station at 6.45 next morning.'

Sure enough, at 6.45 next morning we were let

into the carpark where a van was ready to take MTSki's Jean Garman, Yvette Cottam, Peter Rawlins, Police Sean Heaphy, Kevin Dalziel, and Janet and myself from PNTMC to Wanganui Airport. Having done a bit of this stuff, we were fully prepared to do a lot of sitting around waiting however fairly soon we were organised and assigned to an helicopter.

Against her wishes, Janet was placed with Yvette and myself to a Jet Ranger that the very chatty pilot David told us was 'the newest old helicopter' amongst the fleet of 8 or 9 there. We were tasked to search an area to the north of Train's Hut on the Waitotara River, an area of fairly rugged bush. Searching was complicated by the fact that the cloud was low and there was lots of wind damage in the bush, mimicking what you might expect to see if an helicopter crashed. Fortunately the pilot knew where we were because looking down we certainly had no idea.

After a couple of hours searching we flew to Makakaho Junction where there was a tanker for refuelling. Our arrival resulted in the whole school (all of about 8 children) coming down to watch. Very civilised the aerial searching, after about another hour or so we headed back to Wanganui for a 2 hour lunch after which we headed back out to finish of our area before heading to the helicopters base near Eltham for afternoon tea. While there we were informed that we were wanted back in Wanganui to be re-tasked. I think our pilot Dave had a serious V addiction as we landed in the school grounds in Eltham so he could nip into the dairy for supplies.

Back at Wanganui we were told to search west of the Wanganui between Matahiwi and Jerusalem to the Mangaetoroa Stream. This was quite different with steep farmland, scrub and patches of bush. Again the cloud was quite low and the searching was a little different in that we spent a good portion of time looking for helicopter catching wires, of which there were a good few. We arrived back at Wanganui at 8pm to a feed of KFC. By the time everything was wrapped up we arrived back in PN at about 10.30.

Janet had to work on the Tuesday but the rest of us headed over to Wanganui again for a very frustrating day of the old 'hurry up and wait.' There was a fair amount of grumbling that it was a beautiful day and here were 8 or so helicopters sitting on the ground. Mid afternoon it seemed unlikely anything would happen and it proved to be so with the operation in Wanganui shut down. Rather than wait for the police van I hitched a ride for Yvette and myself back to PN in the Helipro Bolkof so were back well before 5.

This was certainly an amazing operation to be part of - the resources that were deployed on the search and if you have an interest in helicopters it was a good opportunity to get up close and personal. It would however have been good if the search had been successful.

Field Hut, Nov 20. By Neil Campbell.

Field Hut is located in the Tararua Range. It has historic status having been built in 1924. The drive to the start of our walk to this hut involves leaving State Highway 1, just after passing through Otaki, and then proceeding along the Otaki Gorge Road. Much of the Otaki Gorge Road is unsealed but it is mostly in good condition.

We left Palmerston North at about 8.10am and were ready to start walking from Otaki Forks by about 10.00am. The weather was pleasant but somewhat overcast. The well-made track first crosses open country, then enters an area of regrowth, and finally enters very attractive Tararua forest. We reached the hut at lunchtime. We did not go any further because there would have been no view due to the overcast conditions.

The hut has recently been done-up (well fairly recently) and looks very nice. We returned to the cars and finished the day with some real fruit ice creams at the fruit shop on State Highway 1 just South of the Otaki Gorge Road turn-off.

The party consisted of: Neil Campbell (leader), Duncan Hedderly, Pauline Knuckey, Noelene White, John White, Silvester De Nooijer, Patrick Janssen, Karen van Os, Kathy Bennett, Shona Ellims and Michele Harvey.

BEEHIVE CREEK WALKWAY, 27 Nov By Doug Strachan

The plastic bag with boots and socks in it was right in front of the door, so I couldn't leave and forget them. Just as I was about to put the bag in the car, I caught a glimpse of the boots and felt something was not quite right. Too clean or something. On closer inspection I found they were my wife's boots. Close call!

At the Beehive Creek car park, Duncan had the wise idea of going up the road and down the creek, rather than vice versa. We could keep our feet dry for the first half of the trip. We ambled along the unsealed road, which wasn't dusty thanks to overnight rain. A point of interest on this leg of the walk was a letterbox that was in fact an

old microwave oven on a post. A few kilometres along the road we reached the turn off to the farmland section of the walk. A track winds its way up the hill, although Richard did a "Warren," bee-lining straight up the slope. You get some reasonable views before descending to the creek.

The creek is easy walking and has a sandy bed. Even after overnight rain, the water only came half-way up our boots. We noted pieces of shell in the sand, and talked about how Maui fished up this land.

A group of foolish sheep were spooked by our presence, and kept running ahead of us, towards the Pohangina River. Richard successfully turned them around, and we left them behind. "I've always wanted to be a sheep farmer; got that out of my system now," he said, looking pleased with himself.

The walkway is certainly different from a tramp in the ranges. Mixed in with the natives are lots of exotic species: sheep, poplars, pines, blackberry, horsetail... the later (*Equisetum arvense*) a weed that has just one redeeming feature: being silica-rich it can be used to scrub billies.

We emerged back at the car park, and went to have a look under the bridge, where Janet had said there had always been a wild beehive. We saw comb stuck to the underside of the bridge in 3 places, but the bees appeared to have been wiped out by disease, mites, kids, or some other pest. Monica showed us a good picnic/BBQ site nearby.

We decided to stop off at the Waterford Cafe on the way home, and if they threw Sandra out because she didn't have dry shoes, we'd all leave! As it turned out, we had a warm reception (the fire was going), and we enjoyed lunch or afternoon tea. The carrot cake can certainly be recommended. It's the bee's knees. While we were sitting inside, the rain started, and we noted how fortunate it was that we had done the walk at the time we did.

The Beehive Creek Walkway is a pleasant amble if you feel like some non-strenuous exercise and only have half a day to spare. This walkway was opened in 1983, is 30km from PN, and involves around 2hrs of walking. As farmland is crossed, the track is closed during lambing (Aug 1- Oct 31), and dogs are not allowed.

We were: John Feeney, Neil Campbell, Monica Cantwell, Richard Lockett, Duncan Hedderley, Sandra Kim, Doug Strachan.

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