

# Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

[www.pntmc.org.nz](http://www.pntmc.org.nz)

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

## Newsletter December 2007 - January 2008

### Club Nights

Club nights are held at 7:45pm on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street. All welcome! Please sign the visitor's book at the door.

#### 13 December

##### End of year BBQ - Ashhurst Domain from 6.30pm.

BYO food and drink, plus \$2 gift for random distribution by Santa to all the good girls and boys present. For car-pooling and other information, contact Warren Wheeler 356-1998.

#### 24 January

No Committee meeting

#### 31 January

##### Start of year BBQ - Horseshoe Bend from 6.30pm.

BYO food and drink. For car-pooling and other information, contact Warren Wheeler 356-1998.

### Upcoming Trips

#### Trip Grading

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trampler should be expected to do the trips in the following times:

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs  
Medium (M): 5-6 hrs  
Fit (F): about 8 hrs  
Fitness Essential (FE): over 8 hrs  
Other grades: Technical skills required (T) & Instructional (I)

#### Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Countdown car park. A charge for transport will be collected on the day. Leaders will give an estimate in advance.

#### 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

##### Note to partners, parents or friends of members:

If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry unduly as there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone one of the Overdue Trip Contacts or Trip Coordinators:

Mick Leyland	358-3183	Terry Crippen	356-3588
Janet Wilson	329-4722	Warren Wheeler	356-1998

#### 1 December (Sat)

**Indoor climbing** **I**  
**Terry Crippen** **356 3588**

Come climbing at City Rock YMCA on Park Road. This is your chance to get to grips with the basics of rock climbing in a comfortable indoor setting. This will be either a morning session or an afternoon session. Alternatively, if Saturday's weather looks better than Sunday's for Titahi Bay, we may head along to City Rock on Friday night.

#### 2 December

**Titahi Bay rock** **I**  
**Terry Crippen** **356 3588**

This is your chance to learn/practice climbing skills following on from the City Rock session. Located on the coastal greywacke cliffs behind Porirua, there are climbs of various difficulties; top roping and/or leading. Start time will depend on making full use of low tide, and we may go on Saturday if Saturday's wx is better (see comment above).

#### 2 December

**Roaring Stag Lodge** **M**  
**Peter Wiles** **358 6894**

Depart 7am. This should enable us to reach the hut for a well deserved lunch. Some minor route variations are possible according to conditions and interest.

#### 8-9 December

**Cow Creek Hut** **E**  
**Warren Wheeler** **356 1998**

Depart 8.00am. A good steep climb brings us onto Blue Range in the eastern Tararua Ranges and a stroll through the goblin forest before dropping down to the new swingbridge and this classic little hut beside a superb swimming hole on the Waingawa River.

#### 8-9 December

**Mangatepopo Rock** **M, T**  
**Terry Crippen** **356 3588**

A weekend of rock climbing on the warm sunny bluffs of Pukekaikiore, in the Mangatepopo Valley, Tongariro National Park. A wide range of climbs of various difficulties to suit all. Note: this is not an instructional weekend so you will need some basic knowledge/experience in rock climbing. We will either camp nearby or stay in cabins.

## 9 December

**Blue Range Hut** E  
**Richard Lockett** 323 0948

Depart 7.30am. This trip into the eastern Tararua Ranges starts at the Kaiparoro Roadend. We will follow an old logging tramway along Coal Creek then up onto a ridge leading to the quirky Blue Range Hut. Return back down the steep track.

## 15-16 December

**Tongariro National Park** E/M  
**Warren Wheeler** 356 1998

Depart Friday 6.00pm (preferably). Plan A is to stay at Eivins Lodge on the west side of Tongariro. Saturday and Sunday we will explore this volcanic wonderland, with its moonscape, lakes and springs. Give Warren a call to discuss the options.

## 1-6 January

**Colenso Circuit (6 days)** M/F  
**Warren Wheeler** 356 1998

This will be a hut and/or fly camping trip with river travel, tops travel, and bush tracks. Starting at Wakarara Road End we make a clockwise loop taking in Colenso Spur, Maropea Forks Hut, Ironbark Hut, Lake Colenso, Ruahine Corner, Upper Makaroro Hut and Barlow Hut. The route involves lots of scenic variety and scope for adventure.

## 13 January

**Sunrise Loop** M  
**Warren Wheeler** 356-1998

We will head up to the hut via the old staircase track and then over the Armstrong saddle, down the scree slope and down the north branch of the Waipawa Stream back to the cars.

## 12-13 January

**Mid Pohangina Xing** M  
**Llew Prichard** 358-2217

Phone Llew for details of this trip.

## 19-21 January

**Upper Otaki Camp** M  
**Graham Peters** 329-4722

Come along and enjoy two days camping out. Route may include the old Oriwa Biv site and Dracophyllum Biv. Leaving 7.30am Saturday.

## 21 January (Monday)

**Stanfield Hut** E  
**Duncan Hedderley** 354-6905

Meet at 8am for a pleasant walk in the hills behind Dannevirke. Weather permitting, we'll come out along the stream, so be prepared for wet feet.

## 26-27 January

**Papatahi, Rimutaka** M  
**Tony Gates** 357-7439

From near the shores of Lake Wairarapa, we plan to explore past Lake Pounui, then up on the DoC track to Papatahi peak, Rimutaka Range. A good bush

tramp and camp, with views of Wellington harbour from the top of the high point. The grade should be no more than medium. Depart 6.00am Saturday.

## 27 January

**Mikimiki Track** E  
**Fiona Donald** 356-1095

We will depart from the Countdown Carpark at 8.30am for this lovely introductory tramp via the Kirawhakapapa Road - between Masterton and Mt Bruce. This track offers a walk that is beyond the Manawatu Gorge and still within an Easy grade. We will be traversing along remnants of an old tramway/mine exploration and stopping, for lunch, at the Redwood tree nursery set up in the 1930s then returning the same way. The steep rise could have you puffing for 20-30 minutes but there is beautiful bush to view.

## 2-3 February

**Mid-King Biv** M/F  
**Janet Wilson** 329-4722

Mid King Biv is a small hut just below the bush line in the Eastern Tararuas. From the Pines Rd End we will tramp in to Mitre Flats and then up to the Biv. Our route on Sunday will depend on the weather and party - possibilities include loops over the tops north to Mitre or south via Baldy. There is room to camp near the Biv.. Leaving early Saturday morning or Friday afternoon/evening.

## 2-3 February

**Napier-Taihape Road Trip** E  
**Ian Harding** 06-376-5707

Leave PN Saturday afternoon, and stay the night at River Valley Lodge on the Rangitikei River near Taihape. Drive thru to the "Lakes", Kaweka Hut etc. for a walk. Great scenery and good history with lots of options. We will head home via the Hawkes Bay.

## 10 February

**Beehive Creek** E  
**Doug Strachan** 353-6526

This walkway, just past Pohangina town, is a pleasant amble if you feel like some not-too strenuous exercise or only have half a day available. The walkway opened in 1983, is 30km from P.N., and takes 2.5hrs to complete. No dogs allowed. I'll drop off my wife and 2yr old, and anyone else who wants a head start, at the bottom of the only hill, so they can climb it slowly. The rest of us will walk 3km (~40mins) along the road prior to climbing that hill (~15mins) and meeting up with the others. After that we have an easy walk along a shady stream back to the cars for a picnic lunch by the stream. Good social tramp for first-timers. 9am start.

## 2 -16 February

**Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park (2 weeks)** F, T  
**Terry Crippen** 356 3588

Two weeks of climbing based initially in the Tasman Saddle area where there are a wide range of

objectives - other areas also if conditions not suitable on the Tasman. This is for those who are currently climbing or who have suitable climbing experience. Prerequisites are at least Snowcraft 3. Glacier travel and crevasse extraction skills are essential. Numbers are limited and will be finalised early December when a deposit is required.

## Notices

Many thanks to Tony Gates for filling in as editor of the past two newsletters.

### Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month to Anne at [dahlia44@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dahlia44@xtra.co.nz) or to 44 Dahlia St, Palmerston North.

## Events Card: January-June 2008

Janet Wilson and Terry Crippen have been busy looking for leaders and trip ideas to put together the programme of trips and club nights for the first half of 2008. Included with this newsletter is the exciting programme they have come up with.

## PNTMC History

### From Doug Strachan

The project of organising the club's history has slowed down a lot now that we have 2 young children. However, I will plod away at it over the summer. In the meantime, I am providing an overview for the newsletter. This is the non-edited version of what appeared in the Manawatu Standard.

### Over the Hill

By Doug Strachan

The Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club (PNTMC) turned 40 last year. The following information has been gleaned by dissecting over 400 club newsletters, and speaking with club old-timers.

### BEGINNING

The PNTMC began when a group broke away from the MTSC (Manawatu Tramping and Skiing Club) on Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, 1965. The mutineers disapproved of the MTSC spending time and resources on skiing, a sport which back then was frowned upon by mountaineering purists. 'Climbing' a mountain by chairlift, and then simply sliding down, was seen as a copout, a lazy rich-man's pastime. Skiing became accepted over time, and the two clubs now offer occasional combined tramps, and even have some members in common.

### DEPARTURE POINT FOR TRAMPS

Trips have left from roughly the same spot since July 1966, when an indoor stadium (the Izadium) was the

meeting point. In those days people were hardier, and all trips left at 6am. These days, 8am is a more typical start time.

From May 1975, the meeting point became a nearby supermarket carpark. A supermarket still exists, but it has changed names four times.

Meeting in a supermarket carpark requires members to park any cars superfluous to transport requirements on adjacent streets, otherwise the car gets towed away.

That is not the only thing of which one must be wary. One efficient trip leader, with clipboard in hand, asked a new arrival his name and then introduced him to the rest of the party. When the leader directed everyone into cars, the new person said he wasn't going anywhere. He was a local merely waiting for Foodtown to open so he could buy some eggs for his breakfast.

Sometimes club members nip off to buy food in the supermarket, or to park a car in a side street, and return to find they have been accidentally left behind. However, as one leader noted, "it's better to lose someone before the tramp rather than on it."

### TRANSPORT

Although most club members own cars, this was not always the case. Lack of transport was a serious issue right into the 70s, when it caused the cancellation of some trips, and threatened the club's very existence. A lot of effort went into restoring a donated 1941 Chevrolet van. Club members were implored to donate 50 cents towards the cost of restoration, with each member's signature being immortalised on a 6 inch by 6 inch square of the vehicle's inside panelling. Costs spiralled and the project was eventually abandoned.

Another van (Trevor Bissell's) became something of a club icon. It had a mattress in the back, extra fuel tanks, and had the engine replaced twice. It even survived being rolled by another club member. Trevor later got rid of his van in favour of a bicycle.

In recent times, escalating petrol prices saw the transport charge rise to 25 cents per kilometre per vehicle, with the cost divided by the average number of passengers in each car. In 1968, the charge was one cent per passenger per mile, with a minimum of 3 passengers per car.

From the 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1974, a petrol shortage saw petrol stations closed from Saturday afternoon to Monday morning. It was important to have enough fuel in the car before heading off on a weekend tramp. Of course, there is good ol' Kiwi ingenuity... in 1972 one member powered his car to Waikaremoana on a gallon of white spirits cooker fuel.

## TRIPS

The club offers tramping trips every weekend, generally with the option of a day trip or an overnight trip. Trips are graded easy (~4hrs), medium (~6hrs), fit (~8hrs), fitness essential (over 8hrs), or technical (for mountaineering types).

Most club trips are to the local ranges, Mt Egmont, or Tongariro National Park, with extended trips to the South Island offered in summer. The PNTMC's first tramp was to Field Hut on Feb 6<sup>th</sup>, 1966. The club still runs an annual pilgrimage to this 1924 hut, the oldest in the Tararuas.

## GEAR

Tramping gear has evolved to become far more lightweight and comfortable than in the past. Packs in the club's early days had rigid frames and no waist belt to relieve the shoulders of some of the burden. The Mountain Mule was a popular model, and had a hollow frame tube within which one could carry primus fuel.

It is important to travel light, but pity one poor trumper who signed up for a tramp and the trip leader weighed his pack. The leader scolded the member for bringing excess items, and 'kindly' assisted him to eat his box-full of Easter eggs.

## FOOD

In the 60s, the club dictated what food members were to take on tramps. The food list included dehydrated potato powder, Surprise Beans & Carrots, rice, porridge, bacon.

In the 70s, dehydrated Surprise peas and TVP (textured vegetable protein) were commonly eaten by trampers. By the 80s, precooked stew, which just required re-heating, was popular. These days lightweight dehydrated meals are in.

Scroggin and Tararua biscuits have stood the test of time, and Tararua biscuit making competitions are still on the menu.

## TRAMPING INCIDENTS

Of course, numerous funny incidents have occurred over the years. Just getting up in time for a tramp can be challenging for some: " 'S--t!' I thought as the knock on my door sent me bolt upright. It was pitch black in the room so I tapped the indi-glow on my watch. 'S--t!' I said, allowing my mouth to catch up with my thoughts. It was 5:00 am, an hour later than it was supposed to be. Neither one of the two alarms I had set the night before had gone off at 4:00 am; which was perfectly logical since, I later found out, they were both set to 4:00 PM."

Once you make it on a tramp, you find yourself in the company of others for hours on end. This allows for conversation on a wide range of topics, both deep and shallow. On one trip, members were reduced to exchanging limericks:

There once was a woman from Hyde  
Who ate a sour apple and died  
The apple fermented  
Inside she lamented  
And made cider inside her inside.

On one tramp, Terry Crippen (a club Life Member) was heard to say, "Shortly we will probably see some DoC inspectors." Other members on the trip were perplexed as to how he knew that. It turned out that Terry had not said "DoC inspectors" but Brockenspectres, a phenomenon you can get when light passes through mist, whereby your shadow sports a rainbow halo.

Terry was camping at 1600m with Peter Wiles, another Life Member, in the Arthur's Pass region. Rising one morning, Peter noticed his vision had gone all peculiar. He found himself in the unenviable position of contemplating how to descend a mountain after suffering a stroke. At this point Terry leaned towards him and said quietly, "Peter, I think we had better swap glasses."

The most hair-raising trip was one to Tongariro National Park, when an electrical storm made ice axes hum and everyone's hair stand on end.

Others recall another time, also in Tongariro National Park, when someone put an instant pudding outside the hut to set. A possum was later seen leaving the scene, and it left its facial impression in the dessert.

## CLUBNIGHTS

Club members give presentations at club nights about any epic summer trips or overseas escapades they have been on. Club nights are held twice a month and often feature guest speakers.

In 2004, one speaker was introduced with this anecdote: "Before dawn, a fierce blizzard arose, so we were happy to remain in our pits for a sleep in. Richard, needing to pee, jumped out of his warm, dry pit almost naked, grabbed one of his jandals..., but couldn't find the other. He hopped off into the murk wearing only one jandal plus underwear, assuming that he would be very quick, then return very soon to the safety of our tent. Remember, it was a howling blizzard. Ruapehu, being a popular mountain, has more than a few visitors. Richard immediately encountered another person, naturally all decked out in full storm gear. He casually asked them if they had seen his lost jandal!"

Aside from guest speakers, there is a long tradition of interclub quizzes. The city has three tramping clubs:

PNTMC, MTSC, and MUAC – Massey University Alpine Club.

Participants compete for the coveted Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy. Trevor, who owned the aforementioned van, was hit by falling rock and killed on Mt Cook in 1989.

Quiz questions cover topics such as bird and plant identification, topography, huts. The first team to whack a billy with a spoon gets first crack at answering the question. There is also a practical section, which can involve knot tying or first aid. One year, contestants had to perform a “table traverse”: crossing over and under a table without touching the floor.

Prior to 1990, interclub debates were sometimes held, and the topics included:

“The Mountains are no place for Women” (1975); “Tramping is a form of escapism” (1977); “Trampers are the World’s Best Cooks” (1978); “Trampers are a Privileged Elitist Group” (1979); “Women make better trampers than men” (1981).

## PHOTO COMPETITIONS

As well as interclub quizzes and debates, there are annual photo competitions. The club recently purchased a data projector as digital cameras have become so common.

In the past, prints and slides were the norm. Competitors were advised to ‘spot’ their slides. That is, place a dot in the bottom left corner of the slide when it is held for viewing. This avoided upside-down images being displayed, or a major headache if someone spilled a magazine full of slides onto the floor.

John Cleland, who judged, was awarded honorary club membership in 1979 in recognition of his long service to the club. He went on to judge for another two decades.

In most years the judging style involved the judge selecting the best 3 shots in each category, and then a show of hands by the audience determined the ranking of those shots. John would say “hold that one” if he thought it worthy of making the short list. One year a club member glued a cartoon character of a man on skis onto a picture of a woman’s naked breast cut out of a magazine. Salt was used to simulate snow. The audience got quite a surprise when the image appeared on the screen. There was much laughter and comments like “hold that one” and “he’s been right to the top.”

## RANGI HUT

The PNTMC had a long association with Rangi hut, which it acquired after the Rangiwahia Ski Club

became defunct. Sixty PNTMC members and former members made a nostalgic pilgrimage to Rangi Hut, via three different routes, when the club celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup>. Part of the 40th celebrations also included a retro tramp to Rangi.

Doug Edmiston remembers when Rangi Hut belonged to the Rangiwahia Ski Club. “You could hire skis at the Rangiwahia Hotel (which later burned down), and on the return trip get a bowl of soup there for a shilling.”

In order to improve conditions for skiing, a bulldozer was winched up to smooth out the ski runs. The tussock was also set ablaze to keep the vegetation short.

In the 50s, the Rangiwahia ski fields faced competition from better facilities on Mt Ruapehu. Rangi hut fell into disuse, and the Forest Service donated it to the PNTMC in 1967. The PNTMC maintained the hut until 1983, when the Forest Service resumed ownership and had the funds to replace the hut.

Older PNTMC members recall the days when the club was responsible for maintaining the hut and the track to it. Ron Haxton, a founding member of the club, reminisces, “I offered to supply drop in some building supplies by aircraft [May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1969]... We managed to get the supplies quite close to the hut but not too close. My nightmare was misjudging and scoring a direct hit on the hut, undoing all the hard work done by the members. Would such a thing have been cause for a dishonourable discharge from the tramping club?”

The old Rangi Hut was notorious for its smoky fireplace. An article in the August 1970 club newsletter gives a vivid description: “Shortly after arrival and without warning or provocation, and contrary to the Geneva Protocol on Chemical Warfare, Sue lit the stove. Fuelled with leatherwood it produced voluminous clouds of diabolic, malignant, pernicious, noxious, virulent, foul, rank, venomous, abominable, astringent, lachrymatory smoke, only a small portion of which went up the chimney.” That was rather unfortunate given that the group had just struggled uphill to the hut, carrying six mattresses donated by the Forest Service, and probably just wanted to relax in comfort on them.

Doug Edmiston recalls extending the chimney above the roof ridge-line to try and solve the smoky chimney problem - and discovering that it was stuffed full of beer cans.

How the stove got to Rangi in the first place is a story in itself. Lawson Pither, club president at the time, wrote that funds were scarce, so four club members “investigated the Ballance to Pahiatua area, searching for lone chimneys (the results of house fires). The

theory was that most of those chimneys would have a stove at the foot. There were many of these chimneys in this area but after years of weathering the majority were in appallingly bad condition or had been removed..."

Finally, a generous farmer gave them one. It needed an overhaul, which was carried out over a period of 6 weeks. "It was time for the trial run and the little beauty was moved into the garden and stoked up. She drew perfectly and an experiment with water in the wet-back pipe was tried and had unexpected results. A jet of super-heated water shot out and demolished a row of Brussels sprouts. We decided then that a hot water service in the Hut was beyond the group's capability."

The NZ Forest Service kindly offered to deliver the stove to Rangi Hut by helicopter. The hut could not be seen for cloud, so the stove was put down on a visible knob. A search party found the lost stove in the snow about a mile from the hut.

Lawson describes how the stove was shifted: "It was easy to fix the stove onto a sheet of galvanised iron, and with ropes on each corner - behold a sledge! To sledge it down to the hut, it was decided that the President would control proceedings from the sledge. The rope parties provided forward momentum and when required the rear parties acted as brakes on the steep slopes.

What developed was that the arranged load hurtled down hills at high speed, the President abandoned ship and the front rope party shot off to each side, out of the path of the juggernaut. Sufficient control or plain luck meant that the sledge did not descend the steep gully to the right of the track and the journey was completed very quickly without injury to the haulers.

The front of the hut was taken out and the stove put in and the chimney attached and the first brew under way - total cost nil."

Club members went on numerous work parties to maintain the hut and track. The November 1975 club newsletter has the following entry: "... When the Sunday work party arrived, it was discovered that the ladder to be used for work on the hut roof had been dismantled by Bill and used in building our toilet."

These days the Department of Conservation maintains a high-quality Rangi Hut and toilet, although a 2003 newsletter notes "the difficulty of putting toilet paper down the toilet because of a strong updraft."

The track up to Rangi was built during the depression as a work-creation scheme. The track has been plagued by a major slip for at least as long as the PNTMC has existed. During Conservation Week, club members assisted the Forest Service in planting

two thousand pine trees in an attempt to stabilise the slip. Ironically, these non-native trees would, years later, be poisoned.

## FATALITIES

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007, club member Meguru Inoue, along with another party member, was killed on Mt Cook when the anchor rock she was abseiling from dislodged. This brought the tally of club members killed on Mt Cook up to four (two in 1979, one in 1989), and broke a long run of no fatalities. The club lost a member in the Cave Creek tragedy in 1995, another in the Himalayas in 1991, one in the Canadian Rockies in 1989, two on Ruapehu in 1977, and one on Otira face of Mount Rolleston in 1972. In the club's history, one member, Carol Cullen, has died on a club-listed trip. That was on Mt Egmont in 1982.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

There are callouts every year to look for missing hunters, trappers, or people who wander away from rest homes.

In 1985, there was a search for a glider pilot. Club members quickly found the paraplegic pilot who was in good spirits despite having a broken collar bone and ribs.

In 1996 the club received a grateful letter from Hamilton Boy's High School thanking members for "the tremendous effort you made in saving the lives of three of our boys" on Mt Ruapehu. The student who had informed the others that certain parts of the mountain were not in fact out of bounds found himself in hot water.

A most exciting incident was when members found a man's skull in the forest with a bullet hole in it. There was much excited conjecture. Who was he? Where was he from? How old was he? What was he doing in the Tararua's? ... And why on earth did the skull have antlers??

## Trip Reports

### Mountain Safety Council First Aid Report by Richard Lockett

Anja and I attended this course on September 22/23 held at the Boy's Brigade camp at Foxton Beach.

A peaceful place for a weekend of study and having arrived after dark Friday night I couldn't quite figure out exactly where I was but we could see the Tararua's and hear the sea at night.

It's been a while since I've done a bit of formal study so it took half a day to get in tune, not only do you have to listen to instruction but you have to write stuff down in a workbook to prove that you were there on the day so that some Polytech can claim its bum's on seat's money from the Ministry of Ed. It was hard.

Late Saturday afternoon we got to do a bit of practical on each other and after dinner out came the blood and guts mixed with broken bones and burn's all done with tubes of stuff of course. Anja didn't find the broken bone, oops sorry supposed to keep that quite. Others on the course MUAC people and individuals not affiliated to any clubs nearly burnt down the pine trees doing the burnt kid and the campfire scenario, oh what fun. Heaps of CPR work on the dummies "we have to teach you this but out were you guys go waste of time as help to far away" Choking situation excepted.

Anyway, Anja and myself are now deemed to be competent first aid people as a certificate has turned up in the letterbox in spite of not finding the broken bone. Oops!

## Manawatu Gorge

14 October

Report by Murray Gifford

We had a leisurely start at 8.30am and were at the gorge car park by 9.00am ready to walk. The first rain clouds rolled in and it looked like we were in for a wild and wet trip. Donned our parkers and headed for the shelter of the first bridge. A chance to take the first photo and read up a bit on the history of the track, courtesy of DOC. The showers quickly rolled past and we all headed up the well-graded and formed track, huffing and puffing and shedding parkas. DOC has done a lot of work on the track for the first hour, a well graded gravel finish, good enough for a buggy. Up the ridge with views out to the south and the extensive bush clad gully in behind. We decided much of the bush was Tawa.

We walked briskly for 1.5hrs to the first lookout, a short stop for a nibble, the wind blowing hard, but the rain held off. Fine views of the gorge and wind farm. On for a further half hour to the DOC platform. The wind was most unpleasant here, cold and blustery, a very short stop for photos and views. Back into the bush and stop in a small warmer clearing with some sun for an early lunch stop.

The track heads down hill from here, easy going, meet a party walking up and passed by a runner. Next was the tee off to the gorge bridge, we carried on with views of the river, Balance bridge and the wide sweeping bend in the Manawatu river. Finally after 4 hrs we emerged at the road and walked up to the Bridge café. A great cup of coffee, a snack and warm up in front of the fire.

Trevor squeezed us all into his car and we headed back to the start to collect the other car. I think we had all had a good walk and fresh breath in our lungs.



Photo by Trevor King

*We were Trevor King, leader (historian and botanist), Neil Campbell (nearly an Aussie), Jessica Leberman (tales of German countryside), Murray Gifford (in training for labour weekend) and Anna Ottel (visitor from Germany).*

## Nelson Lakes- Mt Cupola

18-23 October

Report by Tony Gates

Under Terry Crippen's expert guidance and leadership, Murray Gifford, Mike Archer, Peter van Essen, and myself enjoyed an excellent long weekend in Nelson Lakes National Park. We had frosts and snow, wind and rain, and when we needed it, good clear weather. We even had one scorching afternoon of sunshine. Huts, tracks, and bridges were all in good condition, and snow/ice conditions, although variable, allowed us safe and relatively easy to the summit of Mt Cupola (2260 m). The nearby and rather daunting summit of Mt Hopeless (2278 m) eluded us this time.



*Mike Archer, Tony Gate and Terry Crippen on the summit of Mt Cupola.*

We utilised public transport to St Arnaud, then the water taxi up the lake. 4 hrs of pleasant valley tramping soon saw us at John Tait Hut, more passionately known simply as JT. Conditions were dry and chilly. Terry had warned us of a somewhat sturdy climb up to Cupola Hut, and those first timers amongst us weren't disappointed. It was a very big hill. Soon, however, we were happily in the hut, located just in the forest, well surrounded with deep snow. There were great views of the slopes of Mt Hopeless, and easy access to the vast basins and bluffs surrounding Mt Cupola. We had a quick training period with our avalanche transceivers, with evidence of a recent sizeable avalanche giving us good reason for this. We could see a little up into the misty bluffs above.

Saturday was supposed to be our first climbing day, so climb we did. Not to the top of Mt Cupola, but fairly high, and it was a good training day. Snow conditions were ideal for cramponing up the steep couloir to about 2100 m altitude. Back at the hut in time for lunch, we cranked up the fire box and rested. NZAC (Wellington Section) arrived, with similar ambitions to ours. A couple of us camped out to give them all more room. It was pretty cold under the tent fly, with spin drift and snow blowing about, but warm and dry in our well protected sleeping bags. The wind roared off the high peaks, but in the forest it was sheltered.



*The impressive east face and south ridge of Mt Travers. Photo by Mike Archer.*

Sunday dawned unattractive for climbing. All hut residents did however amble off by 10.00am, with thoughts of going for the summit if the wind relented. It was good to climb alongside our Wellington friends as the snow was much softer, and the plugging less tiresome when shared. We rapidly climbed into an increasing number of clearances in the weather. Hot sun and blue sky for a minute or two, then freezing wind and mist. Peter and Murray didn't head for the summit, preferring to snow plug over to the obvious saddle to the north, and to some views of the Sabine Valley. With Terry's knowledge of Cupola peak, route finding was never a problem for us. We followed the couloir, the snow shelf, then the rock

band, leading onto the summit slopes, then the spacious summit itself. The wind faded for a bit then, and a few precious views were offered. We were happy. Soft snow on the descent.

Monday was our last day at Cupola basin. Wet and warm weather gave us no chance of another climb due to avalanche danger and deep, soft snow. We departed mid morning for lower altitudes and some good sunshine. After a quick lunch at JT Hut, we deposited stuff, then raced off up valley to the mega flash new Upper Travers Hut, noting Upper Travers Falls and several avalanche paths, en route. The weather cleared magnificently, with clear skies giving us perfect views of Mts Hopeless, Kehu, Travers, and of course our recently gained summit of Cupola. Murray and Mike continued on to Travers Saddle, with its even better views of the Nelson Lakes hinterland, while Peter, Terry, and Tony relaxed. A quick trip back to JT Hut for our last night. A downpour during the night showed us a different side to the Travers River as we splashed our way down valley, and back to the water taxi. Real nice weather back at St Arnaud, and on the Interislander. Back home by midnight.

*We were Terry Crippen, Murray Gifford, Mike Archer, Peter van Essen, and Tony Gates.*

## **Ohau Shelter**

**21 October**

**Report by Duncan Hedderley**

From the forecast, it looked like the weather would be better Sunday rather than Monday; so we went on Sunday (sorry Nicolas) and had a neat day out. We went up the track to Waiopehu for about an hour and a half before reaching a marked junction and turning left, across the ridge and (steeply) down into the Ohau valley. The track is fairly densely marked, but still we had to stop and backtrack a couple of times because we had confused a clear bit in the undergrowth for the path. This brings you out on the route to Gable End and South Ohau hut. To the right a short way is a swing bridge and the former site of Ohau shelter; just beyond that is a boulder bank beside the river - a good lunch spot.

Then we turned around and headed back along the path which undulates alongside the Ohau. A group heading in for an overnight passed us, and we caught up with two women who had just been in for a quick explore. Judging by the fact that there were four or five vehicles in the carpark when we got back, but they weren't the same four or five which were there when we arrived, the area gets a reasonable number of visitors.

*These three visitors were Neil Campbell, Jessica Leberman, and Duncan Hedderley.*

## Field Hut

28 October

Report and photo 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 and narrow, but it is mostly in good condition. We left Palmerston North at about 8.10am and were ready to start walking from Otaki Forks before 10.00am. The weather was warm and sunny, and, there were a number of other parties marking use of the area.

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. The hut has recently been done-up (well fairly recently) and looks very nice. After a quick lunch, we walked up to Table Top to enjoy the views.

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. On the drive back, the group of us in my car, visited Otaki Beach to walk on the sand and look at the Tasman Sea.



*The party consisted of Neil Campbell (leader), Duncan Hedderley, Rowan Bell, Linda Bell, Trish Eder (and her well-behaved dog Petra), Craig Allerby, Warren Wheeler, Tony Gates and Nicolas the Frenchman.*

## Te Matawai Hut

3-4 November

Report by Janet Wilson

Saturday dawned fine, but with a deteriorating weather forecast. We headed off up the very low and easy Ohau river, enjoying what was a new route for me. Past the fork of the north and south Ohau, the river becomes more gorgy but we managed to get all the way to the old South Ohau Hut site with dry

shorts. We had lunch here by the river and then did the short sharp grunt up the spur on the Yeates track. The gradient soon eased off and it was easy uphill travel to the hut. We arrived around 2.30pm, just as the hills above us became enshrouded by cloud. Plans to head up higher for views were abandoned and we settled in to the hut. Soon after, a group of three who were attempting a tops trip, arrived describing horrible conditions up on Arete, so we didn't feel so guilty about taking the lazy option for the afternoon.

It soon started drizzling and sometime later in the night it started raining more heavily. By morning with tracks had become small streams. After a leisurely start we headed home, glad that we had chosen to do the river route the day before. The track takes you down to the deep Butcher saddle before you climb back up to Richards Knob. It rained heavily all the way there. It wasn't the sort of day for stopping long for food, so we snacked and carried on down the easy Gable End Ridge track. When we got to the bottom, then took a short detour back to the river to find it in full flood - a raging torrent. Most impressive! We were glad of the bridges on the last part of the walk out.

*We were Graham Peters, Stan Mackowiak and Janet Wilson (leader and scribe)*

## SAR training: Search and Track awareness

10-11 November

By Anne Lawrence

There were 15 participants with two instructors based in Levin for a weekend packed full of learning – we started by learning to look closely at the ground. It is amazing how much you can see when you take your time. We learnt that you can see surprising detail of footprints in all sorts of terrain, and then we moved on to using top level clues. We even spent some time learning how to check huts (and toilets) for clues less obvious than the hut book! By the end of the second day, we were all able to follow tracks well enough to score the peppermints that had been left at strategic intervals. This was an excellent course – enjoyable with heaps of new learning that was reinforced by being put into practice throughout the weekend.

*We were Martin and Anne Lawrence, Craig Allerby, Peter van Essen and Mike Archer.*

## Mangaweka mountain biking

11 November

Report by Richard Lockett

I had a ride planned out on the map on our side of the Rangitikei River but on checking it was not good, so Plan B which was to see who was coming on the trip,

check the weather and to make decision as to routes on the day.

With Janet Wilson and Graham Peters putting their hands up and a nice day in the offing I decided on the fit option which was to head across the Rangitikei and up to Mangaweka not on our bikes but in the trusty yellow Avenger with bikes hanging off the back.

Back in May Malcolm Leary lead a trip along Ridge Road South on an old clay road as the locals call them, which some of you may have been on. At a club night I asked Edith Leary about this road as a MTB ride. Edith said no problem, but what you could do is to keep going along Ridge Road South till you hit Kaweka Road and head down there as it also turns into a clay road and you can do a loop back to where you started from, it's a long way though. I checked it out on the map and it looked good. Chris Saunders and I checked it out in September and it was OK apart from a 1.5km section of Ridge Road, which was axle deep in papa mud and cow shit from having cattle parked on it. What farmers call pugged. We had to push the bikes through it, we called it something else, took the shine off an otherwise excellent day.

Back to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November and as we headed up Ridge Road South I was hoping that the above mentioned section of road had dried out and even perhaps some Quad bikes had been through there and rolled it flat. Yeah right.

After four gates and no time at all it seemed we arrived at the pugged section and to my relief it was dry but not rolled flat by the Quad bikes that had been through it so off we go slowly up and down as the wheels rolled from one hole to the next. Sometimes both wheels in a hole, sometimes both wheels out of the holes, sometimes one in and one out back or front, what one might call a technical section? It had Graham and I sweating, Janet deciding that her legs were better at walking over this than pedalling. Excellent views of the northern Ruahines - we could see Purity hut - and the volcanoes in Tongariro National Park.

Through the last gate and we have reached the Otaihape Scenic Reserve with the road forming its southern boundary a good clay road at that, a fast descent brought us out onto the gravel of Ridge Road South the still used bit. Next water stop was the four-way intersection of Ridge Road North and South with Pukenua and Kaweka Roads and our last look at the Ruahines. Turn south into Kaweka, which is mostly downhill so into that tall front sprocket and go for it hanging on tight in those sharp hairpin bends, 8 kms to the road end, a real buzz.

If you are in a car the road ends but for Quad bikes and push bikes the road keeps going all the way to the junction with Wairepu East Road along a clay road which follows a ridge in very steep country with a

few gates some of which we had to lift our bikes over, but good travel mostly on a grass surface.

A descent down Wairepu East Road on hard papa flat out another good buzz brought us back to Manui Road and the long climb on gravel back to our starting point at Ridge Road South with Graham and I continuing on to enjoy the steep descent all the way to Manui on SH1 top of the Mangaweka Deviation.

Icecreams at the aeroplane in Mangaweka. *Thanks, Janet and Graham and Edith - an excellent day out, bike not too muddy!*

## Maharahara

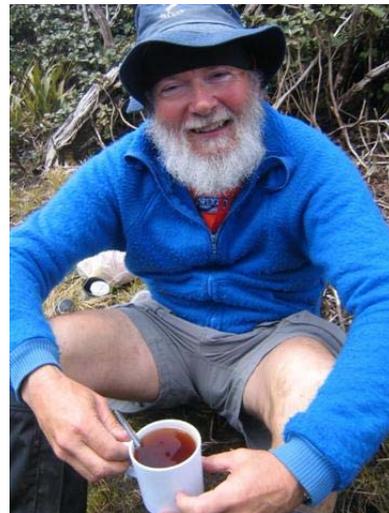
17 November

Report and photos by Doug Strachan

Following the Mangapuaka Stream, Yan soon had to give up trying to keep her sneakers dry. Considering it was her first tramp, it was brave of her to tackle a medium grade trip.

Leaving the stream, we started the steep grunt up a spur to the ridge. I ended up chatting with Nicolas, who flats with Yan and had encouraged her to come tramping. He confided, "I told her it was an easy, flat tramp. She asked if there would be any river crossings and I said 'no'."

Upon reaching the intersection to Keretaki Hut, we had magnificent views of the orange hut, snowy Te Hekenga, Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe; Wharite, and our next port of call, perky little Matanginui. Once we reached the latter, it was time for lunch. Chris's ritualised tea drinking is on a par with Japanese chadou ('the way of tea' or tea ceremony).



Chris, Wendy and Yan opted for a siesta there in the shelter of the leatherwood, while the rest of us popped over to Maharahara, which involved a descent and climb, taking about an hour there and back. The old "Mahara(hara)" sign (the last hurrah has disappeared), has the initials "G.E." carved into it. We know who is responsible for proudly engraving them, and some would say signposts should remain GE free.

We returned to the others and headed out - all downhill. Chris reminded me again that he had chosen me as trip reporter. Apparently the leader's job is to lead and not to write. "It will be a fairly short report," I said, "as it was fairly uneventful" (nobody fell off the track, for example). "What, didn't you see

the kakariki?" asked Richard. "No, I didn't. Perhaps you should write the trip report," I suggested. "No, no," came the reply.

Kakariki weren't the only bird life encountered. When some paradise ducks flew over, Dave informed us that they are actually geese, not ducks. They, like the hawk we were to later see when driving home, have benefited from the conversion of forests to farmland.



After tramping a while, Yan asked how long it would take to get out. We informed her that she could choose whatever time frame she liked, and we would adjust our speed to match it, but if she chose 5 minutes, we'd really have to sprint. An hour later we were out. Wendy enjoyed her first tramp with the club in what was the best possible weather one could hope for, and we look forward to her and Yan joining more trips.

Thus ends a report of a trip that was uneventful, save for Chris making Dave go all the way back to pick up some litter that had been accidentally left behind.

*We were Chris Saunders (Leader), Wendy Mason, Nicolas, Yan, Richard Lockett, Dave Newstead, Doug Strachan, and Tricia Eder*

## **Cattle Ridge**

**17- 18 November**

**Report by Anja Scholz**

The weekend weather forecast being the best so far for this spring, the A- team (Anja and the FFM's (four fit males) – this seems to become the standard composition of my overnight tramps...) was at the Putara Road End at 9:30 on the Saturday to take in bush, rivers, hills and huts. At times we wondered whether we had managed to tramp through a time warp into a parallel universe, as we did not encounter a single person on the whole tramp.

Nothing new on the way to Roaring Stag Hut, but the first little climb to the junction made me rather aware I had not been tramping for six months or so. Therefore, while the FFM's trundled up to the ridge, my huffing and puffing would have been more than a match for the big bad wolf, and the straw bale house which Warren admitted is his secret wish for an abode would not have withstood my breathing for long.

We saw the odd wood pigeon flap past, heard a couple of grey warblers, and – lo and behold – also made an ornithological discovery by spotting the grey wheeler, which has been known to frequent the Roaring Stag Hut area as of late (apparently four sightings there this year so far). While its song does not quite rival those of the nightingale or the vulture, it is interestingly a semi aquatic bird which is often seen splashing about in mountain streams and lakes. On our trip we had also opportunity to observe this unique behaviour of a species whose general appearance does belie such a habit.

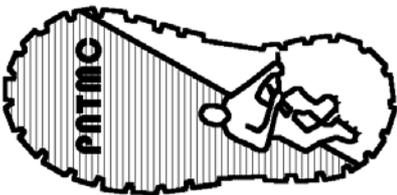
Alas, the A-team made it to the hut and beyond, as we ditched our packs and clambered the last few metres up to the Cattle Ridge. Not a breath of wind (yes, one of the three days per year that this weather phenomenon strikes the Tararuas), and views for miles (instead of inches as on my last trip to the hut) over the Dundas Ridge, Bannister, Pukemoremore, Chamberlain Creek, West Peak etc. etc. the whole caboodle. Yay !

A fresh night followed (the Shiraz warmed), and while the radio weatherman had announced the freezing level to lift to 3000 metres, he must have misread his notes as it hovered at 3000 feet ! Lance had opted to bivvy out under the tent fly and got stung with a nice frost. Warren and Mike were off at first light to catch the sunrise, and the warming rays, from up on the ridge, and we had a leisurely start, getting warmed by a beautiful morning. Especially Lance who had not taken enough antifreeze. To hold PNTMC's reputation up, Mike took a large bag of hut rubbish back with him, and Warren gave the toilet a good wash – from green to pristine. The last rub down being done with some 'abandoned' socks found in the hut. I am sure, Mike, they will be as new when given a hot wash.

The downer we came from the hut, the warmer the air, and by the time we hit Roaring Stag it was swim time for some. To liven things up we took the off trail route back, visiting the Hidden Lake, making our way up the Ruapae Stream and cutting back uphill to meet the track close to the junction with Herepai track. Thoughts of coffee had given way to ice cream visions, and Eketahuna Café supplied those (not the visions...). Great trip with all the bells and whistles, but without my sandwiches. Made with foresight on the Friday night, they were not meant to leave the safety of the fridge until Monday. Thanks Craig for sharing your Pizza bread !!

*We were Mike "leave the tent behind but take the wine" Archer, Warren "the semi aquatic grey" Wheeler, Craig "there is a mouse nest in the roof right by my bunk" Allerby, Lance "can't wait for the end of Movember" Gray, and Anja "memory like a very holey sieve" Scholz.*

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## PNTMC Newsletter

December 2007 -  
January 2008

### *What's Inside:*

- Upcoming trips and other club events through to the start of February 2008.
- A brief history - stories from the past 40 years of PNTMC
- Reports of PNTMC trips enjoyed over the last few months

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