

Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

www.pntmc.org.nz

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter November 2011



Terry Crippen in low conifer scrub in the European Alps. The dense and tangled near horizontal branches give this forest a distinctly leatherwood feel.

Club Nights

All are welcome to our club nights. These are held at 7:45pm on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North.

10 November BYO slides

Members can talk about and show PNTMC a brief selection of some of their recent activities. An enjoyable evening of tramping photos and stories.

24 November Dusky Track

Fiordland's Dusky Track is a challenging track with a reputation for mud, sandflies, and rain. It's all true! But, as Chris Tuffley will show us, it also has fantastic views of some amazing country if you're lucky with the weather.

8 December End of Year BBQ and Awards

Ashurst Domain. Bring a picnic dinner and a \$5.00 gift. See Notices.

Upcoming Trips

5- 6 November

TBA **All**
Graham Peters **329 4722**

Graham has altered the planned Somes Island/ Matui trip to another equally relaxing place.

6 Nov

Moorcock Longview Hut **M**
Dave Grant **357 8269**

This loop starts from the Kashmir Road end west of OngaOnga. Following the track south to Awatere hut on the north branch of the Makaretu we will climb up through the bush to Rocky Knob. We then head north past Longview and then take the route back down to the road end. A great variety of scenery and flora. Leave Milverton at 7.30am.

12- 13 Nov

Arawaru Bush Camp **M/ F**
Peter Van Essen **355 9076**

This is a northern Tararua scrub bash trip to Arawaru Peak. the plan is to use the Sledge Track to access point 550 then bush bash along the main range to Arawaru (767m) and beyond to point 604 then down to Gorgon Kear and return out via the Back Track. An overnight fly camp, off track navigation, and some scrub scratching involved. Depart 7am from a meeting point to be arranged.

13 Nov

Ruapae Falls **E/ M**
Warren Wheeler **356 1998**

Ruapae falls are on the Mangatainoka River below Ruapae Peak behind Eketahuna. From Putara Roadend we follow the track along the river to the second swing bridge, then head off-track up a short spur and down to the stream again. Easy going upstream brings us to a pool to get around, then just around the corner are the impressive falls. Return by rock-hopping downstream to the swing-bridge or a variation of the bush-bash on the way in. Depart 8.00am

19- 20 Nov

Kime Hut **M**
Warren Wheeler **356 1998**

A great place to visit on top of the Tararua Ranges up from Otaki Forks- and you keep your feet dry. Optional sunset cruise further along to Mt Hector. Depart 8.00am. Note-Warren replaces Woody Lee as leader for this trip.

20 Nov

Burn Hut Loop **M**
Dave Grant **357 8269**

This tramp in the northwest Tararuas will take us from the Mangahao middle dam onto the tops at Burn Hut. The route then loops back to the dam via College Creek. A great variety of scenery- river valley, bush, tussock and leatherwood. Leave from Milverton Park 7.30am.

26- 27 Nov

Pureora Forest Park **MTB plus**
Richard Lockett **323 0948**

Our aim is to cycle the new cycle trail from Ongarue to Pureora village. We will base our stay at Piropiro Flats, which is half way along the trail, head south to Ongarue and back on Saturday, and head north to Pureora village and back on Sunday. I Would like to head up Friday afternoon to give us plenty of hours on Saturday. Great camping spot, excellent low land bush, good bird life, If you are not into biking, come up and have a look around on foot.

27 Nov

Purity Hut **M**
Peter Wiles **358 6894**

Leave at 7.00 am. From the roadend in the Kawhatau Valley, head over the farmland and up the farm track and the hillside to the trig. Then into the bush and along the cut track up to the hut just at the bushline.

3- 4 December

Waterfall Hut **M/ F**
Chris Tuffley **359 2530**

Waterfall Hut is smack-dab in the middle of the Ruahines, so there are plenty of options for how to get there, from both the east and west. We'll depart Palmy at 7:30 am; route to be decided closer to the time, depending on interest.

4 Dec

Herepai Hut **M**
Malcolm Parker **357 5203**

Depart P Nth at 7.00 am for Putara Road end behind Eketahuna. A leisurely wander along the Mangitinka before the track climbs up to the turnoff to Herepai Hut. If conditions are favourable we'll go for a wander up past the hut to the tussock tops. Return the same way. "May" stop for a coffee or an ice cream on the way home. This is a really pleasant part of the Tararuas for a wander around.

10- 11 Dec

Hinerua Hut and beyond

M/ F

Martin Lawrence

357 1695

A great eastern Ruahine area, seldom visited, but with excellent huts and tracks. Plenty to do here. Depart PN 8.00am.

11 Dec

Holdsworth Loop

M

Richard Lockett

323 0948

A good climb to Powell Hut then the popular Mt Holdsworth, return down the scenic East Holdsworth Ridge. Depart 7.00am.

Trip Grading

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trampler should expect 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 (T)
Instructional (I)

Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Milverton Park. A charge for transport will be collected on the day.

Gear for trips

Minimum gear for day trips is appropriate footwear, pack, lunch and snacks, waterproof jacket, overtrousers, gloves, warm hat, torch, toilet paper, matches or a lighter, sunblock, first aid kit, and a survival bag or space blanket. Each person needs to be equipped to survive overnight.

Trip leaders

Complete the trip intentions form and leave with one of Overdue Trip Contacts or drop into 44 Dahlia St. If you are unable to run your trip as scheduled, advise a trip coordinator as soon as possible so that alternatives can be arranged.

Overdue Trips

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:

Mick Leyland	358-3183
Martin and Anne Lawrence	357-1695

Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20th of each month to Tony Gates, the newsletter editor, at kiwi@leatherwood.co.nz, or via <http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>

Notices

8 December

Annual BBQ and Awards

Thursday 8 December is the final club nite of the year for PNTMC, with a friendly foody feast at the BBQ and tables in Ashhurst Domain. Remember, it is BYO, and starts about 6.00 pm. Come along to hear about recipients of the annual PNTMC awards, including the prestigious Tararua Trophy for Best Newsletter Article.

January-June 2012 Trip Card

The January-June 2012 Trip Card is currently being drafted for distribution with the December 2011 Newsletter. This six month period plans to focus on the Ruahines, arguably our most traditional stomping grounds. Leaders, please contact Janet to discuss trip ideas.

Interclub Photograph Competition Results

The Interclub Photo Competition was hosted by MUAC on 3 October. After a somewhat rushed presentation of the images, with neither discussion nor ceremony, the winning entries selected by their impartial judge were announced, with MUAC the winners in all categories, with one or two third place getters from MTSC and PNTMC. We hope to have the full results in the next newsletter.

Trip Reports

27- 28 August 2011

Mitre Peak

Report and photo by Woody Lee

Three keen trampers packed into Richard's ute and we departed PN. It was drizzling at the Pahiatua Track but it turned to light showers on SH2. We saw a bright rainbow over the Tararuas and another one at the Pines roadend. We walked through the farm land for 50 minutes, including a visit to a small power generator, to see the familiar old Tararua Forest Park sign.

At the beginning of the bush track we passed a couple of small slips then had a few stops to clear piles of fallen trees and vines that completely blocked the track. We soon got warmed up from the ongoing clearing job with no wind to cool us down, so we were happy that less clearing work was needed the further we went up the valley. Eventually we came across a metal sign to Mitre Flats Hut (300m / 8 min) and dropped steeply down to the new swingbridge over the Waingawa River to reach the hut in the grassy flat shortly after 2 pm. We enjoyed the

afternoon sun on the deck while drinking hot beverages and had a really relaxed evening in the spacious hut.

Next morning at 7.40 am we headed off towards Mitre Peak leaving our sleeping bags and some other things in the hut. It was a calm and pleasant morning with patches of snow on the ground. On the track below Peggy Peak we put on our water-proof pants and had a snack break then walked through the light fog. Richard and Warren made steps on the icy track using ice axes and I followed their footprints as I did not have an ice axe. It was a good opportunity to practice snow skills confidently as I recently completed Snowcraft 1 this year. We finally reached the snow free cairn at the summit (1571m) after waiting for 5 min at Peggy Peak to get clear visibility.



The snowy and icy slopes of Mitre Peak – the highest point in the Taranaki.

We enjoyed the 360 degree view while having lunch at the peak then started to retrace our steps. Warren stopped on the saddle looking down the snow slope and suggested to slide down. I thought he was kidding but he was already set to slide down the slope while holding his ice axe. Richard then followed. When it was my turn, I hesitated for a second but it ended up being an exciting ride.

Back at the hut we had an early afternoon tea with hot drinks and then got ready to head out to the carpark. It was a long day but an awesome trip with a mixture of walking in the bush and snow. It was a bonus to have a hot meal at a takeaway in Eketahuna. Thanks to Warren (trip leader) and Richard for a great trip.

**17-18 September
Cow Creek Hut
Report and photo by Richard Lockett**

It's been a year since my last visit to the eastern side of the Taranaki range, then in the space of

six weeks I've been on four overnight trips down that way, funny how things pan out! A crew of four set off from the Kiriwhakapapa campsite as its now called, Craig and Michael Allerby, Dan Clearwater and Richard Lockett, along the old loggers tram track through the redwoods and other exotics which Michael pointed out to me to which I've all ready forgotten the name off. It's about 800 metres along the tram but seems a lot longer on the way back but a good warm up before the hill.

I've never enjoyed coming down this hill and looking at the map now it's a good 650-700 metres up, good honest work. With a good steady plod we were soon on the top of the Blue Range and the junction, left to Cow, right to Blue Range Hut. It was decided that lunch at the big rock along the track towards Blue Range Hut was a good plan especially as the good weather was coming to us. There we were all perched on the rock filling our bellies watching the cloud slowly lifting off Mitre and Brockett and retracing my steps up onto Mitre from three weeks previous. As Michael not having been to the Blue Range before a quick trot down to check out the hut was in order leaving Dan at the rock drying out his sweaty shirt.



Rest stop in typical Taranaki beech forest.

Back on with our packs and the retracing of steps back to the junction through Taranaki goblin forest with the track swinging through a 180 degree arc sidling around the north face of Te Mara high point 1104 metres before a slow descent along the ridge towards Cow Saddle. At the sign posted point were the track drops over the side down to the Waingawa River a drink and snack and with time on our side we decided to follow the old route continuing along the ridge to Cow Saddle so as to check that spot out. With Craig leading the way it was easy to follow with a few old tin discs still attached to trees and a few pink ribbon strips to highlight turns and potential tricky spots and it seemed that in no time at all we hit the track on the Saddle. No views of

anything from this saddle so it was off down the Cow Creek track, steep with it being on the true right rather than the left as the map shows till we hit the Waingawa.

Not wishing to get wet boots we continued on the track around to the bridge, which involved climbing back up over a large slip face when we could have boulder hopped along the rivers edge and stayed dry no problem. Very impressive bridge for this far into the Tararuas, brand new from the look of it and with the hut just across the other side we soon had the billy boiled for hot drinks and the fire lit for the evenings warmth. An older hut but very tidy, plenty of fire wood courtesy of the DOC track cutters who had done the Blue Range track previous to our visit.

The usual hut evening stuff, eating, rehydration and reading the mags and books supplied with the early climb into sleeping bags and sleep hopefully. The weather for Sunday was for some rain to show up which it did as we took a break after the climb from the Waingawa up onto the ridge top track, but it never amounted to much, drizzle if that.

Lunch back at Blue Range Hut on the picnic table with the views of the morning journey and tales of South America from Dan's recent visit to those parts interrupted by the arrival of a group of Solway College pupils and minders on a DOE practise tramp, some of whom failed to make it up the hill - now that makes you feel a whole lot better, speaking as an older person. Packs back on and off down the hill no problems now as I've got me knees sussed at long last. Another good weekend in the hills, thanks guys.

1 October 2011

Living Legends Planting - Manawatu Gorge Report-Janet Wilson, Photo-Richard Lockett

Several club members participated in this well organised public planting day, one of a number held around the country around the time of the rugby world cup. Our local "Living Legend" was ex All Black Sam Strahan. The plan was to plant 5000 plants!

A large crowd gathered at the Ashhurst Domain (not sure of actual numbers but approx 300) and boarded buses for the trip up Centre Rd and then north along the top of the Tararuas through the wind farm. It was a lovely day and a scenic drive. A short walk had us at the gorge reserve, where the (newish) turbine lookout point is.

After speeches etc, we broke into teams. The site to be planted was a very large old slip below the most eastern most lookout - only a five-ten

minute walk away. We quickly formed a "fit" team and went to the bottom of the slip with our spades and a DOC team leader. The holes had been pre-dug by prisoners and most had plants ready to be put in, so not a terribly difficult job. Some of the ground was hard and rocky which made things a bit tougher. Everyone worked hard, time went quickly, most of holes were filled with plants and soon it was time to leave. I think most plants went in that day - the prisoners were coming back to finish off any we missed. So good luck little plants - it was very dry when we left them, but lots of rain has fallen since so they have every chance to get off to a good start.

Most of us went back to the rugby club in Ashhurst for a "post match" BBQ and beer. Participating from PNTMC were Richard Lockett, Mike Allerby, Malcolm and Edith Leary, Duncan Hedderly and Janet Wilson.



Hard at work planting in the Manawatu Gorge.

8-9 October

Sayers Hut

Report by Kelly Buckle

A hut with character, and charm, no leaks, AND an old-timey fireplace that doesn't smoke out the hut? Where better to roast potatoes in the fire and sit out a rainy Saturday night? Via the use of the 'Peters-car-shuttle-service', four of us made a loop of the tramp, starting from the Holdsworth road end and exiting out to the Mangatarere car park. Chris, Woody, Richard and I started in from the Holdsworth road end, walked up the Gentle Annie track most of the way to the Mountain House shelter, then turned down towards Totara Flats and the Waiohine River, past Totara Flats Hut (where some taciturn pig hunters and their 6 dogs made camp, the gutted pig swinging from the porch supports), and over the river at the pair of gumboots we had heard marked the way to Sayer's Hut.

Janet and Graham, meanwhile, came the slightly shorter way over the ridge from the Mangatarere

car park. The six-bunk Sayer's Hut sits in a lovely clearing and feels very much like an out-of-the-way destination. However, it's only a half hour's walk from the large and modern Totara Flats Hut. With the last stage of the Rugby World Cup group play on, we figured we'd be alone in the Tararuas. Apparently others thought this, too, and a party of four hopefuls turned up at Sayer's Hut some time before dark. Although we offered to give them floor space they decided to try their luck at Totara Flats.

Wet wood almost proved an issue for our foil-wrapped-buried-in-coals potato plans. However, crafty scouting for dry(ish) wood allowed hot coals to eventuate. There seemed to be a less-than-ideal coal to potato ratio, however, since we had each brought 2 potatoes, and it takes lots of hot coals to bury 12 potatoes. What we lacked in hot coals we made up for with incendiary micromanaging, and eventually we all feasted on beautifully roasted potatoes, tasting all the better for the rustic environment and good company. The eating of potatoes was followed closely by the grilling of various types of meat and veggie protein over our rustic fire, using a grill assembly found at the hut.

It rained throughout the night and the rain cleared for our ascent back up the ridge towards the Mangatarere car park. The ascent was followed by a steep but relatively short descent. After a sun-drenched lunch in the grassy car park, we were off towards home. Thanks to some good planning and encouragement by Janet in the way of food planning, rustic Tararua tramping was truly the winner on the day.

Janet Wilson, Graham Peters, Chris Tuffley, Woody Lee, Richard Lockett Kelly Buckle.

**Sayers Hut
by Anon, September 2006
From the old hut log book.**

In this old hut full of character
The breeze blows cold and wide
With us so warm inside.

The onions sizzling on the gas cooker
The billy heating water over the fire
With the moose setting for our desert
And the mulled wine
To make us feel oh so fine.

This hut is so great
It is just so rustic mate
Better than Totara Flats Hut
This hut kicks tramping butt.

**15 October 2011
Tunupo - Oroua River Stoat Trap Training
Report - Janet Wilson, Photo - Chris Tuffley**

In my new role as co-ordinator of volunteers for the Oroua Valley trap line, I organised this trip partly to climb Tunupo peak and partly to train some club members in operating the stoat traps in the area.



Craig closing up a trap

Well, thanks everyone for a really good response to this. Eight members including myself took part. We started with an introduction to the traps when we came to the first one on the track to Heritage Lodge. On the way to Heritage Lodge everyone practised clearing and resetting traps and we did some maintenance as needed. Morning tea was at the hut, then up the track towards Tunupo. I had forgotten what a nice old track this is. The trap numbering is a bit strange up here but we got it sorted and got to the highest trap around lunchtime. Right then it started to hail which made the decision to head down easier - I was keen to do some of the traps back down towards the river as well.

We continued checking traps down to the Heritage campsite by the river. After this point it became harder to find traps and the GPS didn't seem to help much. I have some work to do here on the information sheets! Obviously some

traps were across the river but as it was up a bit and time was getting on, we headed home, returning to the cars about 5pm. A good day out and thanks so much to Penny Abercrombie, Warren Wheeler, Mike and Craig Allerby, Chris Tuffley, Richard Lockett and Graham Peters for coming along.

16 October 2011
Pukaha Mt Bruce
Report and photos by Saadia Akhtar

The group started out from Palmy a few minutes after 8am on a grey and rainy morning, 7 of us piling into Rob's well-worn but trustworthy SUV. The driving route was Pahiatua Track and a somewhat windy shortcut to highway 2. From there, it was straight on. A giant kiwi clad in an All Blacks jersey greeted us as we passed through Eketahuna and at 9:02am we arrived at Pukaha Mt Bruce; the total drive took just under an hour. After paying our entrance fees (\$20/adult, \$6/child 5-15 years, free/<5 years), we set out to explore.

We walked through the main gallery exhibits, which give a clear and succinct history of the area and provide information about the conservation center's efforts and some of the animals they have saved. There are interactive displays for kids of all ages; the giant rata tree replica was a particular favourite of Rob's son's.

Next, we hiked to the lookout along the Te Arapiki o Tawhaki trail; this is about 2km each way with a very small elevation gain but lovely views of the Tararua Range. For us, it was a leisurely and enjoyable 1.5 hour walk with knowledgeable amateur rangers Anne, Martin and Warren sharing information about local flora and fauna. (We noticed a sign for a side trail of 6.4km about 0.5km from end of the lookout trail; there was no mention of this on the Pukaha information or map but would be worth exploring sometime.)



PNTMC enjoying Pukaha / Mt Bruce

Our return to the visitor center was timed to coincide with the feeding of 2 young tuatara. This was followed by feedings of the longfin eels, kiwi chicks and kaka. Along the way we learned some amazing things: longfin eels breed only once in their lives, migrating 6000km to lay eggs and die, kiwi chicks are born with full feathers and in the wild expected to fend for themselves by age 5 days and kaka are cheeky comedians! Watching the wildlife eat made us hungry so we stopped to feed ourselves and, later, had a mid-afternoon tea/coffee break as well; Pukaha has a nice café where you are welcome to sit and eat your own food.

A highlight of the visit was the opportunity to see Manukura, a white kiwi (the first born into captivity). She is beautiful and healthy, albeit a bit overwhelmed at times with the large crowds eager to view her. (Viewing is restricted to Sundays at 2pm.)



Manukura the albino kiwi chick

Our intent had been to spend only a couple of hours at Pukaha and go onto a short walk elsewhere but there turned out to be quite enough to keep us occupied and entertained there for the day. For me, a newcomer to New Zealand, this trip provided a valuable introduction to local wildlife and environmental issues. This may not have been a typical club tramp/outing but I believe a good time was had by all!

We were: Rob, Ann, Martin, Mata, Saadia, Warren and Jeremy

Advertisement

Celebrity endorsement

Gowing's linctus or balsam of liquorice, that old fashioned remedy for coughs and colds, is now in very great demand. It is sold in bottles, 1s 6d at Mr Owen's Pharmacy, Hastings Street. The Rev. W Colenso F.R.S. writes; I consider it to be a valuable and safe medicine, of great service in coughs, colds, bronchial affections, and irritations and dryness of the throat. I always carry a bottle of it when I visit the Bush district. [ADVT]. (date unknown)

Book Review

Pushing His Luck – Report of the Expedition and Death of Henry Whitcombe, by Jakob Lauper.

A new translation and commentary by Hilary Low (2010). Canterbury University Press.

Reviewed by Peter Wiles

The tragic tale of the Whitcombe and Lauper expedition over the Whitcombe Pass in April 1863 is well known. Hilary Low has provided a detailed scholarly review of the original documents and her own research to re-examine the details of this fateful expedition across the Southern Alps. In doing her research, a number of errors in earlier accounts were identified and corrected. Yet despite this scholarly input, this new book is a lively read. I thoroughly enjoyed it and recommend it.

P.S. Your editor would like to add a few notes, as well as the irresistible photo of Jakob Lauper taken a few years before the fateful expedition. If you have tramped the Whitcombe valley (or similar), then you should be able to appreciate at least some of the difficulties encountered on the fateful expedition. The book certainly stresses tough alpine, river, bush, and swamp travel, as well as difficult side creek and river crossings. Although written by Lauper, the incompetence and egotism of Whitcombe featured, as well as social class differences. Hilary adds, by fellow surveyor and explorer Julius Von Haast

Whitcombe had no experience in New Zealand bush traveling, which requires not only strong men, able to carry a heavy load, and to stand hunger, fatigue, and cold, but also a general knowledge of the rivers and the best way of crossing them.

Others, including John Pascoe nearly a century later, added comments about explorers of the time often venturing forth into the wilderness with little experience, food, or appreciation of the difficulties. Whitcombe had depended almost entirely on Lauper. We are however lucky to have had many explorers who really pushed their luck, and in this case, such an accurate record of the journey, terrain, and people.



The impressive Jakob Lauper in 1858

Whitcombe Pass. By Max Polgaze written on a wet day in a back country hut (from the book foreword)

In '62 when gold was found
On Cauty's West Coast side
The push was on to build a road
Across the main divide
Many passes were examined
Many river systems traced
Spare a thought for those explorers
And the hardships they faced.

In the head of the Rakaia
Lay a pass towards the west
Two explorers were engaged
To see if it would pass the test
Henry Whitcombe was the leader
Jakob Lauper was his guide
Lauper made it back again
to tell how Whitcombe died

Travels with Terry and Angela

The Dolomites

Short Walks in the Dolomites- a failed climbing attempt

Finally arriving in the Italian speaking part of Italy, we were greeted with the grandiose sight of the vertical faces of the Dolomite Peaks. They are made of dolomite (calcium magnesium carbonate) as against calcium carbonate (which forms limestone and marble) and all looked very daunting to climb! So, what to attempt? We decided on Antelao Peak, 3264m above the town of San Vito di Cadore, since the buses had stopped running up side valleys to other easier possibilities now that summer had finished.

As usual we found somewhere to stay for the night so we could leave all our excess gear (tent, sleeping bag, cooker, street clothes, etc) until our return, and the following morning had a 1000m grunt up to Refugio Galassi from where the so called normal route to the summit was not far off. This refugio was built prior to WW1 as Italian military barracks, at a time when the Italians and Austrians were not very happy with each other. At that time the border between the two countries was through the Dolomites, hence the initial development of via ferrata and part of WW1 taking place in these mountains. The refugio is now owned by the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) and fortunately for us this weekend it was "closed but open": All the hut volunteers were having an end of season get-together, so there were lots of nice extra goodies and grappa for us foreigners! An enjoyable time was had, even with everyone's limited cross-language skills.

Back to our attempt on Antelao: Come morning, we set off along a well worn steep trail, up rock and extensive white scree to the head of the large amphitheatre where, at about 2500m, things got very interesting. Steep slabs of smooth dolomite ending in bluffs greeted us. After a bit of an attempt, it was enough for us to decide no, we would prefer nice steep snow slopes thank you. So it was back to the hut and trying to explain to the locals that it wasn't a high speed successful summiting trip.



Grandiose vertical faces in the Dolomites



Refugio Galassi

Later we headed over to the via ferrata route to the forcella (saddle) across to the next side valley we wanted to get into. Here even steeper slabs were too much for us, as we didn't have any of the harness and via ferrata gear to attach ourselves to the wire cables for climbing on. So the next day was going to be a long day, a 1000m descent into another major valley, the Val d' Oten, then an equally long climb back up into the head of the side valley where the via ferrata route comes out, before traversing along ridges and basins to Refugio Antelao.

The head of the Val d' Oten is quite a remote valley; just a rough vehicle track up the wide gravel valley floor – suitable for the favourite 4WD vehicle round this part of the world; Landrover, not Pajero. Not a village to be seen. Apart from the conifer forest and the dolomite bluffs and gravels, it could be somewhere in the Canterbury Alps. After a long dry day, a welcome evening meal at Refugio Antelao was had, well worth the cost, since it saves on weight carrying. And the wine is cheaper than beer in this part of the world (down in the towns; a litre of table wine can be bought for under one Euro!).

The fourth day was along a high level track round the base of Antelao with a scramble up a minor knob on Crode de San Piero as a consolation prize. Marked tracks are all numbered and coded in red; full, dashed, dotted, via ferratas (crosses or little ladders) to give you an indication of increasing difficulty. But they can all be quite steep and exposed. Later we dropped down to the quaint village of Vinigo and later a bus back to San Vito. And then a big feed of pizza, salad and wine.

Scrambles in the Julian Alps – a successful ascent of Triglav

Slovenia, a little ex-Yugoslavian country, has in its NW corner the Julian Alps; the tail end of The (European) Alps. More dolomite and limestone, impressive steep peaks, and deep valleys. Triglav at 2865m is Slovenia's highest peak and an important feature in the Slovenian thinking and lifestyle. It makes up for Slovenia's dismal amount of coast line (47kms). A sore point with the locals since the next door country, Croatia, has far too much coastline and territorial waters. A treaty agreement regarding fishing rights for Slovenians is needed before Croatia is allowed to join the EU.

Off up to Ribcev Laz on the shores of Bohinjsko Jezero (Lake Bohinja); a six day circuit was planned in Triglav National Park. First, up through conifer forest then over karst landscapes to the high mountain huts adjacent to Triglav. The route we took up through the forest and the karst, while well tracked, was not well sign-posted. This, coupled with no visibility (thick mist), lots of dolines, and a thin cover of snow, meant full-on navigation was required. This time of the year (October) most huts are closed, but some have a winter room available, with blankets and mattresses supplied. They are still very cold at night. After two days, we eventually reached Triglavski dom na Kredarici at 2515m. This hut is also a weather station so food is always available. We ate some of it but mostly cooked our own outside (afternoon temperatures of -6 degrees or lower). At the base of the steep north-east ridge of Triglav the steep route looked intimidating, but being a weekend others were ascending so on day three we headed up. Hard icy snow in places and smooth dolomite, but being a secured route (steel pegs and wire ropes in places) it was just a matter of holding on tight when required. Some people were doing it via ferrate, others roped up, while some of the locals looked like they were out for a Sunday afternoon run. On the summit - amazing views of partially snow capped peaks of the Julian Alps, Dolomites and Austrian Alps. The summit has a historic (built in 1895) steel shelter – would be interesting in a lightning storm! After the descent it was good to catch up with all the nationalities (Polish, German, Czech, Israelis and locals). The locals all seemed to be amazed that a couple of New Zealanders were hanging around and wanted to know why; blame it on Peter Darragh.



The Julian Alps highest summit, Triglav, 2865 m

Left- The Julian Alps in Slovenia. A typical secured route - pegs and wire rope

The following day we headed west to the head of the Valley of the Seven Lakes, traversing more karst landscape; this again taxed our navigation ability, even though it was brilliantly fine weather. Here we stayed in another winter room at 2071m with excellent views of more mountains and mobs of chamois. The following day we traversed two more peaks on the Spicje ridge, just about tripping over another mob on chamois. There were some intimidating slabs at one stage but nowhere near as bad as the ones in the Dolomites. After that some cross country travel down valley, over more karst reminding us of Mount Owen.

Our last day was over well marked tracks to yet another hut on a high bench above Lake Bohinja. Here we quickly dumped most of our gear and made a quick ascent of a couple of nobs on the adjacent range. Here there was evidence of an historic border between two countries; crumbling concrete border posts (perhaps the Austrian Hungarian Empire and Italy?). Also in one of the dolines the remains of military barracks built in 1914, close to the then battle front. After that it was a knee jerking descent (for one of us anyhow) down to the lake and a hitchhike back to Ribcev Laz. The next day the wx packed in just as the lads at the weather station predicted.

PS: A lot of terms for limestone country originate in Slovenia, eg: karst (from the region called Karst), doline (from dolina, Slovenian for valley).

Obituary: Walter Bonatti

by Peter Wiles

Walter Bonatti

22 June 1930 - 13 September 2011

In September 2011, one of the greatest alpinists who ever lived passed away. I thought we should reflect a moment on his life as I came across a valedictory filling a whole page of the INDEPENDENT by chance while in the UK.

He was Walter Bonatti, a man who set new standards in all facets of mountaineering in the post war years, most especially in the 1950s and early 1960s. He pioneered new routes in the Alps, in the Himalayas and Peru.

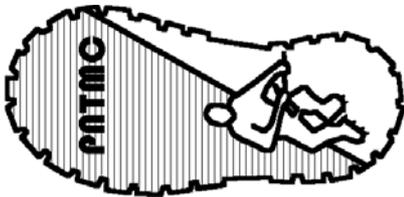
Remarkably, often he did his most challenging climbs solo and these were often conducted over several days. Indeed perhaps his most famous climb – of the southwest pillar of the Dru (now known as the Bonatti Pillar) was climbed over five days, and his final swansong climb - the first direct ascent of the north face of the Matterhorn during winter in 1965 (coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the first ascent) took six days!.

After assisting in the first ascent of K2, Bonatti and his climbing partner, Carlo Mauri, achieved the first ascent of Gasherbrum IV (7925m) via the northeast ridge in 1958. Remarkably this was not re-climbed until 1986.

As the INDEPENDENT noted: “as he wrote in his autobiography, *The Great Days*, *‘I was devoted heart and soul to rock faces, to overhangs, to the intimate joy of trying to overcome my own weakness in a struggle that committed me to the very limits of the possible.’*”

With a lesser climber, that might sound like posturing hyperbole, but with Bonatti the words rang true. He was bold and imaginative, with a resilient streak of asceticism.”

Bonatti wrote a couple of books that record his achievements. They are a great read and a wonderful record of his thoughts and deeds.



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PNTMC Newsletter November 2011

What's inside this month?

- *Coming tramps and social nights*
- *Trip reports to Cow Creek, Sayers, Mitre Flats Huts plus Mt Bruce, Tunupo stoat traps, Manawatu Gorge planting*
- *Gripping tales from the European Alps*
- *Obituary for the great Walter Bonatti*

Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20th of each month to Tony Gates,
the newsletter editor, via the club website
<http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>.

Get out and about with us!

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