



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

October 2011



On top of Mount Angelus

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The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club. Any queries or comments should be directed to the writer of the article. The editor of the newsletter reserves the right to edit and publish articles.

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Hopefully you have been taking full advantage of the great Spring weather to get outdoors tramping, cycling, kayaking, running or just to catching the pool matches in the Rugby World Cup. Shivering in the Cake Tin watching Scotland try to beat Argentina did remind me rather a lot of tramping. With daylight saving here now is a great time to get out on all those trips you thought about but perhaps put off over the winter period. Now is also the time to start planning your longer Xmas tramps.

Good luck to Jo Boyle and Gareth Morton who will be competing in the Wairarapa Marathon next weekend, to Weimen who is doing the Beijing Marathon and to all those members busy training for the Tararua Mountain Run in November and the Goat mountain race in December. If you are keen to get into trail running Google the 'Wellington Ridge Runners' for more information. Running is great fun and excellent training for tramping. Congratulations to Sarah and Alistair who have welcomed another baby girl into their family. Good luck guys! At least you won't be losing any sleep over whether our 24 year drought is about to end, well at least I hope not.

Since the last newsletter I think I have been on no fewer than four Club trips, all very different but all great fun. A couple of them I led and on a couple of them I was just one of the team. The different experiences reinforced for me how important it is for the Club to have a stock of people prepared to step up and lead trips.

The job can be very rewarding but it can also be very time consuming preparing for the trip and challenging running the trip. I know that some of you love coming on trips but don't like leading them which is fine, not everyone is cut out for leading trips. However, we are all cut out for supporting our trip leaders and that is something I would really like to see a bit more of. If trip leaders feel that the group is working with them to make the trip, whether it be an easy day walk or a multi-day epic, a success, they are more likely to do a good job and volunteer to do it all again another time.

How can you support your trip leader? There are lots of ways of doing this and I'm not going to attempt to detail them all here. A good start can be made by anticipating trip leader requests for information before the trip or at least responding promptly to requests. You could also volunteer to help with certain aspects of the trip planning.

On the trip following instructions and helping the leader to make decisions and ensure everyone is clear about what is going to happen can be really useful. Sometimes what is best for the group will not equate with your personal preferences. This is when you need to remind yourself that you are part of a group and a self-centred attitude may not be helpful. Adopting a respectful, constructive, inclusive and considerate attitude can improve the chances of a trip running smoothly and of everyone enjoying themselves. The trip leader is not a tour guide, a mind reader, a dictator or your mum. If they appear to be trying to fulfil

any of these roles think about whether your behaviour is encouraging this. Perhaps the best thing you can do is ask if there is anything you can do to help.

After the trip show your appreciation by thanking the trip leader. Yes, leaders get a lot out of leading trips and they certainly don't do it in order to win the adulation of their punters, but this is not to say that a bit of sincere appreciation does not go down a treat. If you can think of specific things the leader did particularly well then point them out so the leader will know what worked for next time.

Go the All Blacks! At the risk of being a bit vague, if you could do more of what you did against France in the coming games that would be much appreciated.

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



An interesting development in the Tararuas: Powell hut is now bookable between 1 November and the end of February. The price remains the same but there is an additional management fee of \$5-\$10 “depending on party size” that everyone, including holders of annual hut passes, will have to pay. Apparently “unallocated bunks will be available to trampers that haven't booked”. A warden will be onsite to police the system. More info at www.doc.govt.nz.

It's strange to think of Jumbo-Holdsworth as akin to a Great Walk. While many trampers tend to avoid Powell because of its popularity, this is an issue only on Saturday nights. Mid week you're more likely to be concerned about the supposed resident ghost than overcrowding. I wonder if you'll be able to sleep on the floor if it's full? Will that annoy the booked customers who expect undisturbed possession? The only times I've slept in Powell on club trips have been Friday nights, where you often roll in at 10pm or later. Will the warden be awake? If your bed was booked, will it by then have already become “unallocated”? These and other issues will prove interesting.

Unfortunately we've had to cancel both the outdoor first aid and leadership courses because of their unpopularity. Outdoor first aid will be run again in March or April, when everyone who did it last year will be up for recertification. We're thinking about how to best pitch leadership training, given our need to keep bringing new leaders on stream. Feedback is welcome.

Now is the time to start thinking about trips at Christmas and beyond. Do you know you can fly to Invercargill for \$114 if you book far enough in advance?! The transition into

daylight saving reminds us that longer summer days and warmer weather are ahead. Soon that snow will be a distance memory...

Upcoming trips

14-16 October Haurangis

Tramp	E	Mangatoetoe hut	Ray Walker
Tramp	EM	Kawakawa hut	Anna Lambrechtsen
Tramp	M	Washpool hut	Alistair Young
Tramp	F	Frog Tarn	David Jewell

It's not too late to get on these trips into the Haurangis (otherwise known as the Aorangis) – the mountain range that stretches from behind Martinborough to Cape Palliser. Alistair has promised a gourmet menu!

21-24 October Ruahine FP and Kahurangi NP

Tramp	MF	Ruahine Corner nav	Illona Keenan
Tramp	F	Ruahine Corner/Maropea	Richard Lardner
Cycle	M	Forgotten Highway	Dirk Naish
Tramp	EM	Larrikins hut	<i>This trip is now leader required. Contact me to lead it.</i>
Tramp	M	Photography	Spencer Clubb
Tramp	F	5 day adventure	Jenny Cossey

Illona and Richard lead trips to the remotest corner of the Ruahines, while Dirk takes a cycle ride in Taranaki. The EM Kahurangi trip's leader has been lured away to the World Cup final – please contact me if you're interested. Or you could join photography or epic adventures in Kahurangi.

28-30 October Leadership and First Aid courses

Leadership and First aid are cancelled. But there are three Wellington day walks to choose from.

Family	All	Belmont Park	Constanze Schwind
Day	EM	City to sea	Pete Gent
Day	EM	Northern walkway	Amelia White

4-6 November Richmond Range FP - Top Valley

Tramp	M	Old Man hut	Megan Banks
Tramp	MF	Mt Rintoul hut	Mike Phethean
Day	EM	Cattle Ridge	Barbara Keenan
Family	All	Guy Fawkes at Paua hut	Mike Gilbert

Two tramps head to the beautiful (and close!) Richmond Ranges near Blenheim to enjoy the longer daylight hours. Or join Barbara's day walk in the Orongorongos, or Mike at nearby Paua hut.

11-13 November Taranaki NP

Tramp	EM	Lake Dive hut	Jo Boyle
Alp1	MF	Summit climb/ski	Sharron Came and Tony Gazley
Family	All	Kaitoke waterworks	Jo Bonny
MTB	EM	Rimutaka incline	Amelia & Mark White
Work	All	Paua hut working party	Mike Pratt

On Taranaki, you can be either laid back with Jo or attempt a climb/ski adventure with Sharron and Tony. Other trips are close to home on familiar terrain.

18-20 November Tararua FP – Kiriwhakapapa

Tramp	M	Ruamahunga – Blue Range hut	Spencer Clubb
Tramp	F	Tarn Ridge	Amanda Wells
MTB	EM	Pencarrow lakes	Pete Gent
Day	M	Puke Ariki Belmont	Helen Law
Family	All	Totara flats hut	Kevin Thiele

Take up the challenge in the Tararuas, which you will have been missing over the past few weeks; either from the Kiriwhakapapa road end or Kevin's family trip to Totara flats. Or head round the coast past Eastbourne on your bike with Pete, while Helen takes in the Hutt hills.

Hard to believe, but it's nearly time to start thinking about the Summer Schedule... start noting down those ideas.

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



This month, we welcome 3 new senior members to our club: Natascha Sauben, Paula Vincent and Katy Glenie.

Also, I want to thank you those who sent through your views on the current club membership policies. Your opinions, suggestions of possible changes and improvements will be discussed during our next committee meeting in 2 weeks time. I will keep everyone posted in our next newsletter!

If you have any membership queries, please email them to membership@wtmc.org.nz.

Trip reports

The Tale of Tahurangi

26-28 August, Alp 1 MF, Ruapehu, (map #1)

Authors: Katy Glennie, Kate Cushing,
Mike Phethean, Ian Harrison, Marie Henderson, Megan Banks

Punters: Katy Glennie, Kate Cushing, Mike Phethean,
Mike Travers, Megan Banks, Sharron Came, David Jewell,
Harry Smith, Marie Henderson. Ian Harrison in Wellington,
Allen and Sue Higgins met up.

The Walk (Kate's take on it anyway...)

Despite what you read in the rest of this carefully conceived article, in which we are attempting to combine a multitude of writing styles and varying levels of the truth, this was actually a tramping trip. Well, ok, it was an alpine trip which means we carried wee packs but with our ice axes and crampons we looked really cool.

So, the plan was to stay in Ohakune at a backpackers (is this where I mention how great the cheap backpackers was?) and head up Tahurangi on Saturday. Sunday was left open for a delay due to weather or a need for a lie-in after the huge day on Saturday (or perhaps the rugby game Saturday night?). Tahurangi is the highest peak on Ruapehu so we were feeling pretty intrepid as we headed off Saturday morning. We left the van in the parking lot at Turoa and bravely headed off into the sunshine walking up under the Turoa lifts. Well, admittedly there was a fair bit of phaffing prior to heading off while we tried to locate Allen and Sue who were going to meet us up on the mountain someplace - but where?

And why weren't we on those lifts going up like all of the smart skiers? Probably only because no one wanted to be the lazy one who suggested it!

The weather was great and the snow was firm so, up we tromped to the upper cafe. This just happened to be a handy place to pause and wait for Allen and Sue. It also gave some of our group the chance to look even more cool by donning their climbing harnesses! The skiers were looking really jealous - hmmm... actually perhaps not... more like aghast that someone would bother to climb when you can get a ride up and fly down so easily. After this second session of phaffing we again headed up to the spot where the climbers and trampers would split. The cool climbers (Mike P, Sharron, Marie, Alan and Sue) headed for Girdlestone while David lead us trampers (Harry, Megan, Katy, Kate, Mike T) with snow gear (wanna-be's!) off to Tahurangi. The sun was shining and we were optimistically ignoring the dark clouds gathering around the Tahurangi summit. Is that part of being a wanna-be?

We aimed to stay west of the Skyline Ridge and east of an unnamed ridge. It would be easy navigation; just head up, go until you get to the highest spot, then turn around. What could go wrong? We were making good progress but those clouds we were ignoring were determined to put a damper on our optimism. We were soon in heavy clag and having a very hard time seeing anything through our very fogged up glasses. David continued to keep us moving forward and managed to keep us heading up through the clag. We were having a hard time staying together and staying warm but we were still having fun and weren't keen to see the adventure come to an end. At this point we were still having a good laugh at the icicles hanging off our clothes and hair and eyelashes. Did you know you can get icicles on your eyelashes?? We were definitely feeling like intrepid climbers now! How cool were we?!

We met up with another group of three who had made the summit and were heading back down. They hadn't stuck around up there for long! I was glad to have some foot steps to follow for a while but in the wind and clag these soon disappeared on me and we were on our own to find our way up once again. We were then caught up by a pair of strapping young lads who were keen to break trail for us. We followed them up one steep section and paused to re-group. David checked the GPS to find we were 150m below the summit, the weather was not



The Girdlestone crew, including icicles and harnesses

allowing us much optimism and a few of us were getting pretty cold so, we made the decision to head back down to the warmth of the cafe. Surely we could still claim we had made it? Well we were then passed by the two strapping young lads who had also decided to give up short of the summit. We were found out, no making big claims now!

The way down was strange. There was just nothing but white. White air, white snow. All we needed to do was head down slope, what could go wrong there? I thought we would be able to just follow our tracks from the way up but again, they very soon disappeared in all that white and I was left to just go down. Luckily the snow was soft so, we could step with confidence and made good progress. Well, until we discovered that we were on the glacier! How had I gotten us over there?! I still don't know! We soon found that the soft snow was gone and our footing was not quite so confident. This did however provide an opportunity for Katy to show off her shiny new snowcraft skills with a beautiful self-arrest. This will be the stuff of legends (or fish stories?) once she gets the chance to tell the story a few more times. The rest of the descent to the top cafe was pretty uneventful with more white than I knew was possible for one day.

We settled in at the upper cafe to wait for the Girdlestone crew. We wanted to head down with them thinking that the coolness of their harnesses would surely rub off on us a wee bit. Unfortunately, the cafe was closing and we were banished from our spot under the heater after about an hour of comfort. We headed off down the hill to finish our intrepid journey with yet another cafe stop at the bottom. We were very excited to see the rest of our crew appear out of the clag!

While we didn't actually make the summit of Tahurangi it was a great day out and for us alpine wanna-be's and felt like a great adventure!!

The pub

After such an arduous day on the mountain the president in her wisdom dragged us all to the pub ('all' means everyone except Harry) - the All Blacks were after all playing. The long wait until kick off meant some did not stay the distance retreating to their luxurious and peaceful accommodation. Others used the interim to prove that Google has ruined arguments over a beer. Unfortunately the All Blacks failed, but beer was the winner on the day.

The next day, Sunday dawned sparkling and clear and the mountain looked remarkable. It was decided that we had been there done that however and there were other adventures to be had!

The night before Harry had reminisced about a nearby lake surrounded by unusual fruit trees. When questioned on "how did he know they were fruit trees??" it was established they were as they had fruit on them, and that they looked like strawberries. It was decided this had to be checked! As it was late winter and non-fruit season the fruitless search was instigated, but first there was a secret hut to be found...

The secret hut

After several "it's around the next corner" calls from David, Marie pulled off a perfect park on the side of the Ohakune-Turoa Mountain Rd. Off we set in our spring fashion wear for a short amble to visit Alan and Sue, who were staying at a hut at a top secret location. This secret hut is reached by a secret track, which is disclosed to only the most elite of mountaineers (it's a secret). The short amble turned into an arduous ramble through peaty snow-covered tussock and icy streams. Spring fashions took a turn for the worse, although some seemed to innately know that no WTMC expedition is ever undertaken without gaiters, and were soon transitioning to their winter collection.

We eventually reached the secret hut, and Alan and Sue put the kettle on and gave us the tour. The hut is a blast from the past. Perfectly preserved wooden skis hang from the roof, and the pot belly stove rumbles merrily away in the corner, keeping things toasty. Some bright spark has rigged up a solar panel to power the light, and there is room for eight to sleep in the loft. After a nice cuppa and a biccie, we headed off back along the secret path, over the tussock, through the swamp, across the river, and turned right at the last tree on the left to reach the van.

The strawberry tree lake

After a trip to the secret hut (shhhh!) and a fair brunch at a cafe, we headed off to find the



Strawberry tree lake, with no strawberries

strawberry tree lake where Harry had seen some fair sized strawberry trees bearing fruit a long long time ago... After two turn arounds, not asking a local just across from the entry for directions and the van in a ditch (no names revealed) we finally located the road to the strawberry tree lake (not the real name). And lo... as soon as we exited the van, a strawberry tree was found. The lake required a walk, but only a very gentle one and then it was back to town. Almost peak bagging, rugby turn arounds, secret huts and strawberry trees without any fruit - it all felt like a holiday.

Meanwhile, back in Wellington Ian was having an adventure of another kind...

I had been looking forward to going up Tahurangi for about a month. So was a bit upset when I started feeling off-colour whilst packing my bag the night before departure. I tried to ignore the aching muscles and lack of energy but after a couple of hours at work on Friday I was feeling decidedly less than ideal. I needed help fast.

The obvious choice was a lady at work, who having numerous school-aged kids is forever contracting a spectacular variety of diseases, including her latest contagion of “slapped cheek disease”; something which I had not heard of before and would have thought was only caught by men after drinking too much in the company of women.

Nevermind, this lady was a walking medical dictionary and would know what restorative elixir would get me back to Tahurangi climbing condition. Unfortunately when I went looking for her I was told she had gone home sick. However, not all was lost. Her colleague said she swore by some herbal viral defence tablets, and indeed the colleague herself had taken some after recovering from something that sounded like the plague, but because of the tablets had only needed to take a week’s sick leave.

I got myself to the nearest pharmacy and asked the assistant if they stocked any of the viral defence tablets. They did, and what’s more the shop assistant swore by them. The shop assistant had a bit of a cold but she said “my cold would be much worse if it weren’t for the viral defence tablets”.

The recommended dosage was one a day. I wasn’t in the mood for half measures so took three. It tasted like eating raw fish served in a new leather shoe. I spent the rest of the morning imagining the magical herbs laying waste to any nasty virus...

Alas by lunchtime I felt worse. I gave up all hope and emailed Sharron to meet up so I could give her my share of the group food before I took the afternoon off sick. I spent the weekend on the couch, bored out of my skull trying not to think of the others having fun.

The viral defence tablets did eventually work. By Monday morning I was feeling good enough to go back to work. Great.

Wrights Hill

25 September, Easy Medium day walk, Wellington, (map #2)

Brian Johnston

Punters: Helen Law (trip leader), Brian Johnston, John Harrison, Esther Boyle and Christy, Matthew Gibbon, Marieke van den Bergh, Marie Smith, Jon Baker, Anneke Grindley, Anna King, Oleg Vlasov

I was originally intending to be at another function for Sunday but this day trip was also on the schedule. The forecast wasn't sounding so great on the Saturday with some rain likely along with a southerly. Our starting point was at the 4 Square mini market on the corner of Aro & Willis streets.



Under darkening southerly skies & a good chance of some rain, 12 punters set out at 9.30am bound for the Polhill reserve in upper Aro St. At that point light rain began to fall but eased off further up the hill, although only briefly. It soon returned in varying amounts and times but remained with us for the rest of the trip. A brief stop in an open area gave us cloudy views of the city before continuing on up into the bush.

We encountered a few mountain bikers along the way and it was a tight squeeze for both parties getting past each other in places. Further on we came to an intersection and took the alternative left route uphill coming out next to the roadside in Ashton Fitchett Drive before re entering the bush and eventually coming out again at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary perimeter fence line.

As we made our way uphill the rain returned and increased in intensity while we followed the fence line all the way up past the wind turbine and on towards Wrights Hill. We encountered a few more mountain bikers and other people out for a Sunday run or walk. The only blessing at this point was that we didn't have a howling southerly blasting us, in fact there wasn't much wind at all.



We continued to make our way along to the Wrights Hill Reserve parade ground for a brief lunch break. We tried sheltering from the rain inside the bush but it was just as wet in there as it was outside. We had all of about 10 minutes to consume something for lunch before continuing on down the track to Campbell Street where we had the option of finishing the trip and getting the bus back into town from the Karori shops or returning along part of the wildlife sanctuary perimeter fence line and finishing elsewhere. For 6 of us it was out down Campbell St and the trip ending around

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12.45pm after 3 ¼ hours. While the remaining 6 tough punters walked for an hour more back to Aro Street for a coffee.



Southern Crossing

2-3 September, Medium tramp, Tararuas, (map #3)

Marie Henderson

Punters: Jo Boyle (leader), Kate Cushing, Sharron Came, Ian Harrison, Marie Henderson

The southern crossing is a trip that most trampers in Wellington have either done or want to do. One reason is that most of the southern crossing can be seen from various vantage points in Wellington. This means past trips there or the desire to do it are called to mind by its presence as a view alone.



Looking back to the Beehives and Hector. Photo by Ian Harrison

This crossing was particularly memorable due to the fine weather on the tops, lack of 'tararua breeze' and the pleasant amount of snow. The photos tell the story of this trip and need no explanation. When you see it will be conditions like, I recommend you drop everything else and go...



Just passing Dennan before climb to Bridge Peak



Kime Hut



Cross on Hector



Looking back to party on coming off Hector



Coming up to the Beehives



Travel through The Beehives



A short stop, looking back to Hector and Atkinson



Near the top of Alpha



Punters at Alpha Hut



Heading out the Marchant –
Marchant Burn

The Mouth “n” B

Robert Ridge - Angelus

19-21 August, Alp 1 MF, Nelson Lakes, (map #4)

Author: Stephen Healey

Punters: Steven Austin, Stephen Healey, Dmitry Alkhimov,
Tatiana Krayushkina, WeiMin Ren, Simon Lovatt

The tail of the big snowstorm of 2011 had passed and the weather appeared to be coming good just at the right time. The sheer volume of snow and the last of the bad weather along the East Coast had seen a late change of plan; our Tappy trip had become a Nelson Lakes one just a day or two earlier.

Meanwhile I had a spanner thrown in the works at my end. When I arrived to catch my plane to Wellington the girl at the counter said that the flight had been cancelled for maintenance.

Standing at the counter just 40 minutes before take off, with no prior notification, I was somewhat disgruntled; "It's alright though, you are lucky, we can get you on a flight arriving in Wellington at around 2:10 this afternoon".

I attempted to explain that this would make catching the 2:30 ferry somewhat difficult & that perhaps there were other more timely options, but no that was it, the earliest they could get me to Wellington would see me collecting my bag at the airport as the ferry sailed; I didn't feel all that lucky right then.

After a few more dramas I eventually managed to get a connecting flight to Blenheim and after conferring with Steve re pick up in Blenheim, it was all back on.

Some hours later I was looking out the window at Tappy and the surrounding peaks absolutely plastered in snow, there were clouds off out to sea but from the Kaikora's west everything was bathed in sunshine.

The Taxi driver taking me in from the airport suggested I try the Blenheim Working Mens club, which did a really good roast dinner for around \$15, so nursing a beer or 2 and enjoying a roast pork meal, I awaited the arrival of the rest of the team.

A few text messages later they announced they had found a Japanese / Korean Restaurant and had ordered dinner. Thinking Blenheim wasn't that big I headed out the door and turned left into town being sure I would find them. A few minutes later Steve rang and said: "I am standing outside Farmers". "So am I", I said. Turns out we were just around the corner from each other, on different sides of the store.

The others had some interesting looking meals and then we were off to St Arnaud where we had booked into the Backpackers to escape the frost. The thermometer on the van showed -9 degrees at one point so we were glad to be tucked up inside rather than in the open shelter as per normal.

Arriving the next morning at the Buller River Bridge we found it chained off and the road was closed, so the packs came out a little earlier than planned and we had an extra 45 minutes or so of uphill to the top car park, but it was such a magnificent day it somehow just didn't matter. There was no wind and not a cloud in the sky. Topping out at the bush edge we put crampons on straight away as the snow was firm and slightly icy in places from the freeze overnight.



Here we began 3 glorious days in the snow. From the time we left the bush edge early Saturday, until we reached it after lunch on Monday we were in the sun and snow almost continuously and most of the time was spent in shorts and my short sleeved polypro; not bad for tops travel mid August!

I had always wanted to get along here in good snow conditions and was not disappointed. There are enough little interesting sidles and outcrops to test out your crampons and ice

axe skills. Sidling below Julius Summit was interesting as facing west, and being prior to the afternoon sun hitting the slopes, everything was still firm-icy requiring care in places.

Finally we popped out on the ridge over looking Angelus from where we dropped straight down the slopes below and walked across the frozen tarn and up to the hut, where smoke was already rising from the chimney promising a cosy evening ahead.

We had a slow trip in, negotiating obstacles and taking care on the steeper bits had seen us take over 7 hours from the top car park, but it was still only about 4:30 when we first arrived so we had plenty of time still left in the day.

This was my first visit to the new hut and while opinions were divided, I suppose the living / cooking areas are a little spartan, I thought the use of window space to maximise the views was fantastic. Lounging beside the windows watching the fading light on the peaks above the lake is an absolute joy.

There were only 2 other people in residence so we spread out in the opposite bunkroom, but the weather window was obviously way too good. Just as dusk was approaching we saw a guy skiing down the steep slope we had come down earlier, with a headlamp going. As he skied in it was a pretty cool entrance and over the next half hour or so another dozen or more people arrived as well.

Meanwhile Steve took the snow shovel and dug a hole in Hinapouri Tarn; well at least enough of one to allow seepage to gather and provide the hut with water for the weekend.

Chorizo sausage, pasta & veggies for dinner: yum. Then WeiMin whipped up a fabulous custard to go with the Ginger cake he bought for dessert.

Most of the others in the hut were only in for the weekend, so a number of them were up at 4:30am to climb Angelus. This woke me up so I took a tour around the hut admiring the stars, with a half moon and still no clouds or breeze it was fantastic out, just a little chilly.

Returning to the pit I drifted off again and at the somewhat more civilised time of 7:00am it was up again for a brew and breakfast.

We got away about 9:00am in the end and headed off to climb Angelus. On the advice of the returning party we climbed up on to the northern spur and followed that up to avoid deeper softer snow off Sunset Saddle, this proved to give good travel, though the snow was a bit thin in places here with a few rocky bits along the way. Soon enough we were on top and enjoying the views, especially over to Tappy - and through to the Kahurangi's looked fantastic as well.

Here Steve rang Jenny to let her know we were standing on top in perfect conditions. She said that Wellington had a grey overcast day, very different to our experience as we couldn't see a cloud in the sky anywhere.

On top there was just a very slight southerly airflow, so we dropped down towards Sunset saddle where we basked in the sun for a while and had lunch.



We then sidled north again under bluffs coming off Pt 1926 & 1880 and then climbed up to intercept the track over to Cedric. We followed this across to the high point above Cedric where we enjoyed views of Lake Rotoroa and up the Sabine and D'Urville valleys. Returning, we followed the line of the trail back until close to Lake Angelus where we pushed on to the ridge above the lake and then dropped straight down to the lake, walking back across it to gain the hut.

While waiting on the ridge I heard a familiar sliding sound and shortly afterwards a skier raced across below me having climbed to Bristol Pass. He was having a great run back down to the hut in really nice snow conditions.

Back at the hut by 4:00pm we sat around out on the deck enjoying the last of the days sun and then inside to tackle a few hands of Five Hundred before dinner and the discussion over which route to take back out. There were voices in favour of Speargrass, Cascade and Robert Ridge, but I think eventually the chance to spend another day in the snow and sun was too hard to resist so we decided to return back the same way, just dropping to Bushline Hut for a change over the last part of the journey.

Tuna curry for dinner and I retired early while the others continued with cards. The next day we made much better time along the ridge, we got under way about 8:00am and were at Bushline Hut by 11:30am where we stopped for lunch and more photos, eventually packing up reluctantly and heading down the hillside and back to the van. This was one of those trips that will last long in the memory: great snow conditions and brilliant weather, in a wonderful part of the country.

Thanks to Steve for leading and feeding us. We enjoyed a fantastic replacement for Tappy, though I think a few of us may well be back for another crack at it again next year.

If there was anyone who didn't see this, check out the link re snow in Cuba St, magic!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpGalDm0azU>

Angelus

16-19 September, MF Alp 1, Mt Angelus, Nelson Lakes, (map #5) Sharron Came

Team: Coach: Graham Henry (Sharron Came), Assistant Coach: Wayne Smith (David Jewell),
Lock: Sam Whitelock (Ian Harrington), Centre: Conrad Smith (Megan Banks), Left Wing: Richard Kahui
(Kate Cushing), sometime wing or centre: Sonny Bill Williams (Spencer Clubb), Halfback: Piri Weepu
(Paula Vincent) and Israel Dagg, Right wing, (Katy Glenie).

Mt Angelus

After 4 long years the RWC is upon us at last. Our pre match build up has been arduous both physically and mentally. On top of the training we have had to endure relentless hounding from the local and international media, the IRB and the sandflies. However, I think all these trials have stood us in good stead for what lies ahead or as Nietzsche said "that which does not kill us makes us strong".

Selecting the team

You would not believe the selection headaches, although they are of the kind any other team would envy. Ian Whitelock showed good form on Snowcraft, so we selected him for the Angelus expedition even though we knew he is lacking in game time having missed the Tahurangi expedition due to illness and he is carrying a leg injury after the Southern Crossing trip.

Sonny Spencer returns to the team after fulfilling some off shore sponsorship commitments, or was it a sabbatical? While boxing bouts can conceivably count as cross training, I was not entirely convinced that trying to save albatrosses and other sea birds, by attending meetings in Equador, was quite the quality of training he would have gotten if he had been with us in the blizzard on Tahurangi. Still, as I said to Smith, we have to deal with the cards we are dealt and saving sea birds is great PR. (Whitelock left the cards in the van but I digress...).

On the plus side Kate Kahui and Smith (Megan) are in exceptional form with Katie Dagg and Paula Weepu also looking fresh compared with some of the more experienced players we decided to leave behind.

Team training

With the team finally assembled our first video training session was conducted over a few of the sponsor's beverages at the Alpine Lodge in St Arnaud. The team watched the second half of the All Black's game against the Brave Blossoms. Unfortunately Sonny Bill kept his shirt on and Kahui got his two tries in the first half while we were enjoying a curry in Picton. I understand we won though, a point I emphasised in my training lecture. Kirwan hasn't done a bad job with those Blossoms, must call him and encourage him to apply for my position.

Saturday and we managed an early start as planned. This was facilitated by most of the team sleeping in the Kerr Bay shelter, recently renovated by DoC to make it less attractive for illegal campers. Thin benches and tables are insufficient deterrent although definitely a shift in the right direction. The camping crew picked up Sonny, Dagg and Weepu from their luxury accommodation and we headed for the Mt Robert car park.

The conditions were outstanding for a day of ridge walking. Clear, sunny with just a light southerly breeze. The team was able to make rapid progress along Robert ridge enjoying the awesome views across to the St Arnaud range in the east and the Arthur range in the west. We paused for a team photo on Mt Robert where Dagg showed us her lineout skills. I was surprised at how good her skills were given we had selected her to play on the wing. I made a note to mention this to Hansen. We named an otherwise unnamed peak, Kahui Peak. Hopefully Adidas and Heineken will understand.

In the afternoon we continued to follow the ridge until we eventually dropped into the basin that houses Angelus hut. It was about 4pm so we had plenty of time for some stretches and a lengthy team talk. Although Dagg, Kahui and Smith spent a lot of time in the showers, (I made a note to have a word to Rexona about sponsorship commitments interfering with training), overall the team seemed focused and well prepared for the coming climb. Smith (David) and I were quietly pleased with the way things were shaping up, not that we let it show.

Ascent of Angelus

The weather was rubbish over-night but had cleared by morning. The snow was a little soft but not too much trouble as we had a rotation policy in place with a long line of step plugging talent to call on. Sonny, Smith (Megan) and Kahui did the bulk of the work with Whitelock often breaking ranks to indulge in his passion for photography.

Occasionally it was necessary for Smith (David) to send messages to the backs to make sure the game plan anticipated opposition tactics. With the big match against the French coming up, and our abysmal start against the Wallabies in the last Tri Nations match still fresh in our minds we were keen to practice adapting tactics on the fly. Smith (David) led the way through a network of tarns at the base of the summit and gave directions on the preferred line at various points higher on the north ridge. Generally, however the experienced back line proved adept at getting the measure of the opposition and exploiting their weak points.

Scrambling up the snow coated scree slopes was slippery work and I think Dagg and Weepu grew from the experience, although Weepu is never going to be as tall as Whitelock which is why she is a halfback rather than a lock. I say that only because I know some of you think that Smith and I tend to take the rotation policy too far.

The team reached the summit just before 11am and it was a very proud moment for Smith and I although we maintained our stern demeanour and dour facial expressions throughout. Whitelock took pictures of course and the summit being rather petite, the players had to take it in turns to pose up there. They managed to do this in an orderly manner. I gave a short lecture congratulating the chaps and mentioning that they were a credit to their coaches, their club, their country, the sponsors and the game.

Descent

We retreated to a flat piece of snow for a leisurely lunch. While it was claggy it was incredibly hot and some of the team were in danger of suffering from heat exhaustion. Even so, Sonny showed great professionalism and self discipline and kept his shirt on. Large amounts of sunscreen needed to be applied but the players refrained from getting out the Heineken and the Rexona which I think shows a level of maturity on their part. Even in the professional era there are situations where it is neither the time nor the place for indulgence in tacky commercial posturing and the players recognised this.

Smith (Megan) was suffering somewhat from the glare. Her goggles were not filtering sufficient light. Smith (David) was able to partially alleviate this problem by lending her his glacier glasses. We did have a few other injuries which we treated without having to substitute players. Weepu and Sonny in particular seemed to have a talent for spotting gaps and sinking into them, even Kahui displayed this tendency from time to time. Smith (David) thought maybe he should txt Marty Johnson and offer to show his backline how it is done.

Having reached the summit we took our time wandering back to Angelus hut, once down a bit the sun came out and we were treated to another gorgeous day with absolutely no wind. Kahui, in response to a dare, ran across frozen Lake Angelus. She really is an exuberant back that one. Later on Dagg and Kahui led the team in an extensive stretching and warm down programme. Smith remarked to me that perhaps we could pass this on as a suggestion for post match letting off steam to Marty. Might be more prudent than swimming across Lake Whakatipu, bungy jumping , hanging out with dwarfs and running amok with blondes, he opined. I thought about it then dismissed the idea, reminding Smith about people who live in glass houses.

Even all the stretching was not enough to consume Dagg's excess energy so excited was she to be part of the team. She spent a good part of the evening manically scrubbing the billies and the hut itself. As if that was not enough she produced an enormous batch of homemade gluten free kiwi biscuits for the team's dessert! Dagg definitely has the makings of a future captain.

The retreat from Angelus

Sunday evening the weather changed. The wind picked up and it started snowing. Smith and I decided we would retreat via Speargrass and developed a strategy to make this happen. Whitelock was told to put his camera away and was sent off to do the first bout of step plugging to get the team back onto Robert ridge. Sonny then took over, (he really is a wonderful impact player), followed by Kahui then Smith (Megan).

Once we started dropping into the Speargrass valley the snow got progressively wetter and softer and the capacity for Kahui and Weepu to find gaps to disappear into seemed to increase significantly. At one stage the entire team were up to their waists in gaps. Thankfully we were soon able to leave the snow behind and walk in the rain amongst the tussock and, a bit further down, the bush. I even took the lead for a short period until I managed to get offside at which stage Smith (Megan) quickly reassumed the lead. Walking in the tussock was not without its challenges. At one point Weepu and myself stumbled across Sonny lying prone against a large rock. When we asked what he was doing he replied he was waiting for the pain to subside then he intended to return to a vertical position. We waited with him in case assistance was required. Thankfully none was. Kahui had the PLB and first aid kit and she was at the other end of the field. Sonny had been down Speargrass before but that was in his league days and his memory of it was as hazy as the clag around us so he was as surprised as the rest of us when we spotted the hut at about 10.30am. We crowded in for an early lunch. Due to the dampness of conditions and the coolness of the air it was considered prudent not to linger. I sent Smith (David) off with the backs and Whitleock as a sort of advance party while I remained behind with Weepu and Sonny. However, I soon saw that I would get too cold at the back and left those two to come along at their own pace and set off after the rest of the team. I eventually caught up to Dagg who was contemplating the beauty of the NZ rainforest. It was touching to see such sensitivity in an otherwise hardened professional athlete, definitely a future captain in there somewhere. I paused to wait for Weepu and Sonny until again the chill in the air sent me off towards the van.

After match

Back at the car park we gathered together our kit and plotted our after match function. We partook of coffee and other refreshments in Blenheim where we learned of the Irish victory over the Aussies. I thought about texting Dingo but decided against it, we may yet meet them in the semis, best let the team do the talking on the field. As Smith pointed out, England once lost a pool match and still made it to the final. Inspired by the Irish we visited the Irish pub in Picton. I thought about rebuking the team for drinking Guinness, but refrained. For all I know Guinness could be the rival sponsor holding up Sonny's contract negotiations. Best stay out of that one I told Smith (David) as we boarded the Bluebridge for the journey back to headquarters.



Team lineout practice on Mt Robert with Katy Dagg showing her fine jumping skills



The team waist deep in gaps going down Speargrass



Smith (David) on the Summit of Mt Angelus

Other news, notes and reminders

Keep up to date with the WTMC club secretary in Nepal

Keep up to date with what Mika and Hans are up to in Nepal by following their blog:

journals.worldnomads.com/pocoloco .

Deadline for submissions to the November WTMC newsletter: Friday 28 October