



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

November 2011



Climbing Mt Tongariro. Mike Gilbert

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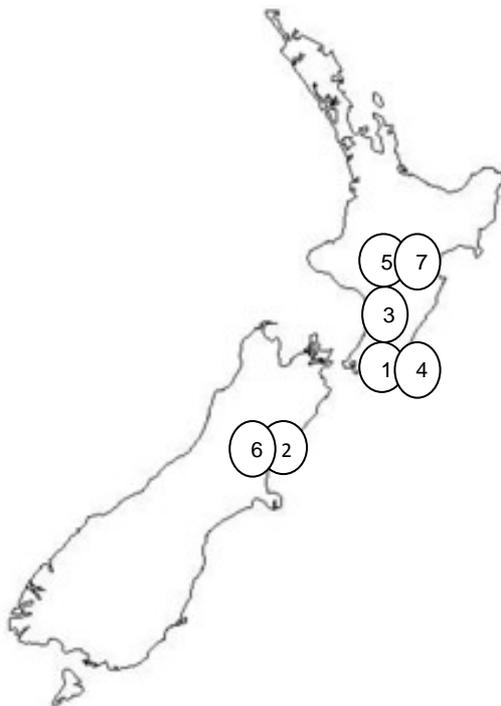
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The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Hopefully you all had a great Labour weekend whether you were out in the hills or biting your nails at your local pub while pondering the big issues of the day such as will Beaver be able to kick that crucial penalty. Judging by the number of texts I received from the Tararuas, some members were doing both. With the RWC over and the last long weekend before Xmas out of the way you may be wondering what to do with yourself. We have a few suggestions.

Our number one priority is the Summer trip schedule. Summer is the peak tramping season and it's also the time of year when we tend to get our biggest influx of prospective members. We hold our annual New Members Night in February. If you have ideas for road ends and trips please send them in to Richard at lardner.richard@gmail.com by 4 November and/or come along to the trip planning night at the Clubrooms at 5.30pm on Wed 9 November. If you thought the trip offerings were lame last time round this is your chance to change that. If you would like to lead some trips we'd love to hear from you. For summer we are particularly keen to run some more mountain biking and kayaking trips but this will only be possible if suitably qualified members step up to lead them.

Incidentally, if you would like to get some rock climbing skills check out the NZ Alpine Club Wellington section website for info on their Summer Rock course run by Blair Hiscoke and his team: <http://www.nzalpine.wellington.net.nz/2011/09/rock-climbing-course-summer-rock-2012/> . Richard and I have both done the course. We really enjoyed it and recommend it. Richard has even gone on to become a decent rock climber. I'm a work in progress...

The Committee is looking forward to 2012 and the changes the New Year will bring. We are keen for some members to join the committee next year. In particular, we are looking for some new Social Convenors and a Promotions Officer.

After successfully running our Wednesday Club nights for several years Donna is hankering after fresh challenges. Therefore we are looking for a couple of enthusiastic, friendly, socially confident, articulate people to take on the role of Social Convenor for the Club. It is not necessary to be a top notch tea maker. This is a big job which is why we are looking for a couple of people. If you are interested please contact Donna or Jenny at social@wtmc.org.nz or talk to them on a Wednesday night.

Likewise Megan has looked into her crystal ball and reckons she saw herself in the future assisting with Club promotions behind the scenes in a support role rather than as the head honcho. If you are interested in the role of Promotions Officer have a word to Megan or send her an email: promotions@wtmc.org.nz .We are looking for someone with lots of vision, energy and drive who is good at planning, communicating and managing the rest of the promotions team.

I imagine there will be other opportunities to join the Committee and we can always find a way for you to contribute if you are interested in helping make the Club work. Just have a word with a Committee member. Funnily enough, helping out can be very rewarding and you can always add your contribution to your CV when you're applying for your next job.

I'm delighted to announce that Tony Gazley has agreed to edit the Club Journal which we hope to get out to members in late March/early April 2012. Tony and Jackie Foster did a superb job with the last two journals and we are hoping the next one will be our best ever. Now is a great time to write up your stories, sort through your photos and get your contributions in to journal@wtmc.org.nz. We need your contributions to ensure the journal is a fitting ode to Club activity over the past year or so.

I haven't updated you on the website project for a bit. This has nothing to do with me spending the best part of seven weeks lounging round in pubs watching the rugby. We are currently in the process of rewriting much of our website content to make it more attention grabbing. Sarah Young, Katy Glenie and Sue Walsh have been doing a fair bit of the writing and editing, thanks guys. We should have the bulk of the content finished shortly. We need some really good photos to illustrate the various activities that the Club offers. If you have any photos that you think would be suitable send them to Sarah at newsletter@wtmc.org.nz. Ideally the photos will speak for themselves and have a few people looking like they are having the time of their lives. That would be smiling not grimacing, frowning or puking. We would love to have some interesting/quirky photos too that convey the message that we are cool and interesting.

Enjoy November. I bet Beaver will.

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



Hard to believe but it's time for a new trip schedule. The summer schedule runs from February to April and we're looking for ideas of road ends now. Please email them to Richard (lardner.richard@gmail.com) by the end of this week. Trip planning, when we figure out the actual tramps for each road end, is at the club rooms from 5.30pm (free pizza!) on Wednesday 9 November.

Even if you're not a leader, your ideas are still very welcome. One issue over winter has been the number of trips we've had to cancel due to lack of punters: trip planning is everyone's chance to make sure the trips appeal!

I've had a couple of interesting weekends in the Ruahines lately. Sometimes just when you think you've finally got your tramping legs properly trained, they are swept out from under you. After a weekend Southern Main Range in the Tararuas in late September, Richard

and I were feeling pretty strong. Well, after a couple of recovery days had passed! But then a stressful time at work noticeably sabotaged my energy as we headed to Maropea Forks hut in early October, with thoughts of an F trip quickly scaled back. By the time the Friday before Labour weekend rolled around, my throat wasn't feeling great but I hoped it would go away (to be fair, sometimes it does!). But as I write, I have been gobbling down antibiotics and moping around at home all week.

It's an interesting experience when your legs just won't go at a normal rate. Intellectually you are aware that it's not usually like this, but "now" is such a powerful concept that any other time seems difficult to believe in. You may even feel slight resentment at others' easy scampering uphill (not that I'm naming names!). Hopefully someone else who was part of the Ruahine Corner trip has been coerced by Sarah to write a fuller account for this newsletter or the next one. I am grateful that significant amounts of my gear were carried by my companions, and for their patience with my out-of-sorts-ness. Knowing without question that you can rely on others to help you out is an amazing feeling (even if perhaps better appreciated in retrospect).

We had an interesting experience on Saturday night, when our plan was to camp high by some tarns. We were in the Northern Ruahines, on the Hawkes Bay side. The forecast good weather had translated into drizzly cloud all day and by 3pm when we reached the tarns, pushing on another 3-4 hours to Ruahine Corner hut was not an attractive option. We hastily set up our flies, pointing into the light southerly.

At this point I will depart from the story to have a rant. When Kevin and Illona got out their small club fly, the pole was broken. This would have been obvious to the person who had broken it. Yet it was returned to the gear room and nothing was said. If you break gear on a trip or observe someone else breaking it, please make sure your trip leader knows, and report it when you return it. If you are a trip leader and gear is broken on your trip, please email Pete G with the details, irrespective of whether your punter promises to tell the gear room person. We don't care if mistakes happen and we know things do break; but we do care if people are placed in potential survival situations due to others' thoughtlessness. In this case, we had a small metal pole sleeve in a personal repair kit so could eventually manage a workaround. By this time, Illona and Kevin were pretty cold. And it didn't end there: Mike's fly had had the end snapped off its pole, so that it couldn't lock into the relevant hole. He also managed a work around.

Eventually we were all in warm clothes and managed to enjoy one of Illona's stylish dinners. All was good, till 2.45am, when the wind did a 180 degree turn and started to bring wet cloud indoors. Luckily, as forecast, it wasn't a strong wind. But it wasn't a great start to the day, especially for Richard who heroically did a 3.15am re-peg. Most of us had wet sleeping bags, thermarests, and anything else we had been foolish enough to leave outside our packs. It made us all think less casually about fly camping on the tops and its wisdom, and perhaps whether some walls should have been dug/built, and other similar easy-in-retrospect actions. It made me vow to always pack up everything inside a fly in future!

You do learn more from challenging experiences than when everything rolls along smoothly. Our urban-dwelling lifestyles are comfortably challenge-averse, and tramping translates us into a totally different plane of existence. This week I've been reading stories of Himalayan climbers and marvelled at their abilities to freeze digits solid and yet descend from 8000 metres. It's out of my league, but tramping is also becoming out of the league of many Kiwis' everyday experiences. When I explain why I like tramping, I tend to mention the need for a touch of masochism. But it's interesting to consider whether this trait is becoming less common in future generations.

11-13 November Taranaki NP

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

Head up to the top of Taranaki in the capable hands of Sharron and Tony. Or take it easy with the kids at Kaitoke waterworks, which has great camping and swimming only a short drive away. Amelia and Mark cycle the nicely graded Rimutaka rail trail, while you can get your hands dirty working on our Paua hut in the Orongorongos.

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	Kelvin Thiele

Head to the Tararuas again, on the Wairarapa side for some bush and river travel with Spencer, or some ambitious tops with me if the weather cooperates. Pete takes a nice easy ride out to the Pencarrow lakes, past Eastbourne, while Helen heads up into the Hutt hills. Take the family to Totara Flats hut in the Eastern Tararuas.

25-27 November

MTB	M	Wakamarina	Anna Lambrechtsen
Day	EM	Boom Rock (fishing)	Spencer Clubb
Day	M	Hawkins Hill – Red Rocks	Marie Henderson
Family	All	Makara walkway	Beth Piggott

Anna leads a mountain bike adventure down Nelson way. Other trips are closer to home: walking with the family at Makara beach, fishing a little further north along that coast or a classic south coast walk with Marie.

2-4 December Ruapehu Lodge

Tramp	MF	Snowy River hut	Jenny Cossey
Day	E	Photography	Amelia White
Day	EM	Meads Wall nav	Mark White
MTN	F	The Goat	Amanda Wells
Family	All	Castlepoint	Ally Clark

Do some navigation near Otaki Forks with Jenny. Or head up to the lodge with Amelia and Mark for some gentle walks or photography. It's also the weekend of the Goat mountain race, though if you're doing it you will already know! Take it easier at Castlepoint with Ally and family.

9-11 December Tararua FP – Kapakapanui

Day	M	Kaitoke	Marie Henderson
Day	E	Matiu/Somes gourmet picnic	Sharron Came

Head into the southern Tararuas for a day walk with Marie. Do less walking with Sharron to a gourmet picnic/wildlife spotting experience on Matiu/Somes Island.

16-18 December Orongorongos

Tramp	E	Paua hut	Jenny Beaumont
Tramp	M	Papatahi Crossing	Jo Boyle

It's the last trip weekend of the year! You have a choice between an easy tramp to Paua hut in the Orongorongos with Jenny B or a crossing of the Orongorongos that may well also end up at Paua hut with Jo.

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



This month we welcome Chris Davies as a Senior member, his spouse Zaheda Davies as an Associate member and his children Isaac and Nisha Davies as Family members. Also we welcome Jonathon Murphy as an Associate member.

Yes, it's getting to that time of the year, time to renew your annual subscription. We will be sending out invoices in mid-December, but before that please check on the club website that we have your current postal address. Or you can email the details to me on membership@wtmc.org.nz

Murmurings from the kitchen

Donna Maher and Jenny Beaumont, Social convenors



Well it's hard to believe that Labour weekend has gone for another year! But no problem, the Christmas break isn't that far away. Speaking of Christmas, it's definitely time to start thinking about what you would like to do during the summer. The club would really like to hear about your ideas of what trips you would like to do. In the meantime fill those Wednesday evenings with a visit to club. It's a great chance to catch up with what is happening with the club, chat to that person/s you haven't seen for a while, sign up for some great trips from our spring schedule and hear some inspiring stories or relevant information from our presenters.

Some presentations to look forward to are: Spencer Clubb taking us on a tour of Mt Ngauruhoe; Ilona Keenan and Kevin Cole later in the month will show us the beauty of the Pyrenees (which will be shown over a couple of evenings); Amelia White will give us an idea of some day walks we can do on Ruapehu and in December Paul Maxim will be talking about his biography on Bill Denz. That will be well worth the effort of coming out on a Wednesday night.

So it would be great to see you all at club enjoying the expertise and experience of some of our club members.

Please remember to help out as this club only functions with the voluntary help of its members. If you think you could help out by giving a presentation on a Wednesday evening we would really appreciate an email on social@wtmc.org.nz or talk to us on a Wednesday night.

Photo competition

It's time to start thinking about taking those prizes winning photos. We will be holding our photo competition at the beginning of March 2012. The closing date for entries will be around the beginning of February but we will confirm this closer to the time. Categories will be as follows:

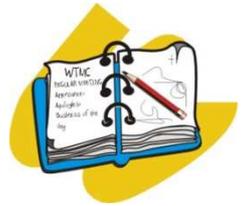
- Above Bush line
- Below Bush line
- Hut and Camp life
- Native Flora and Fauna**
- Outdoor Landscape **

**No people in these photos please.

Look out for more details on the website and in our next newsletter.

WTMC Annual Journal 2011 – stories needed

Tony Gazley (soon-to-be Journal editor)



Yes folks there will be one, but for a number of reasons not until March next year.

The good news is that the delay will give you plenty of time to write a story about a great trip you have been on during the last year, or trips you still have to do during the next couple of months including all those exciting long Christmas journeys in the mountains. Remember they can be either club trips or those you have done with your mates, and either in New Zealand or overseas. They can be about tramping, climbing, skiing, kayaking, MTB, botany etc etc; anything we do or are interested in as a club.

Clearly the journal can only be as good as the contributions of stories and photographs from you the club members. So to make the next club journal a worthwhile one here are a few things you can think about:

- Pick a great trip you have already been on, or one you will do in the next few months, and put pen to paper and record your experiences. You have until mid-February next year but please don't overload the poor editor with a pile of last minute submissions
- You don't have to be a Man Booker prize winning writer, just do your best and the editor will sort out any composition, grammar etc that needs attention. That's what editors do!
- Stories should be between 1,500 and 2,500 words, although more or less can be ok if necessary
- There must be some reasonably good photographs to illustrate the story. After all a big reason of going into the hills is for the wonderful scenery, and pictures of places and people are needed to compliment any journal story

- Photographs need to be interesting and relevant and at least partway technically correct. Ideally they will be unprocessed high resolution images; most modern point-and-shoot cameras on automatic setting will likely be acceptable
- And finally, send in any individual pictures that you think may be good enough for the gallery or the journal covers. These pics need to be something a bit special but give it a try.

Once you have done these simple things then send the lot to the newsletter editor Sarah Young (newsletter@wtmc.org.nz). Be careful your email does not compress any image files. If it will, get copies to Sarah on a disc.

Together we should be able come up with the best journal ever. So, now life has become boring again after Steven won the RWC how about putting just a little bit of your spare time into telling us all a story.

Notes from the editor

Sarah Young



What a fun filled newsletter we have this month with a huge variety of trip reports ranging from family trips and black tie lunches to experience testing fit trips and medium trips.

Thank you to all of you for putting up with, and bowing down to my pestering and requests for newsletter articles. Myself, and the rest of the club, really appreciate the effort put into writing these articles. The reports serve as lasting memories of your experiences, are an invaluable vehicle for passing on lessons learned and will no doubt prove useful to those planning trips in the future.

Next month's newsletter will be emailed / posted to you in mid December, slightly later than usual to coincide with the publication of the next trip schedule, giving you more time to write and send me your reports.

I look forward to receiving and reading many more articles in the future!

Trip reports

Mangatoetoe Hut

14-16 October, Easy tramp, Aorangi Forest Park, Wairarapa (map #1) Paul Schofield
Punters: Deborah Stoebe, Joanna Shirtliff, Catherine Schofield, Paul Schofield, Ray Walker



For Joanne, Debbie, Catherine and Paul, this was the first trip to the Mangatoetoe Hut in the Aorangi (Haurangi) Forest Park. The tramp was led by our illustrious leader Ray who had visited the hut once before. The tramp from the road end to the hut was relatively flat, and consisted of many river crossings, and hunting for paths and tracks in the bush by the side of the river. It didn't rain on our way to the hut which was great. We arrived at the hut in time for lunch, dropped off the heavy contents of our packs, ate our lunch on what looked like a lawn at the front of

the hut, and then started our afternoon walk to the saddle. The hut was quite spacious inside with a table and bench, an open fire, an indoor sink and tap, and 6 bunks.



The afternoon was full of river crossings and rock hopping. Navigating was sometimes challenging because some of the trees with orange markers had fallen over, and with the tracks criss-crossing the river it wasn't always obvious which route to take. After working our way up the river, we started to climb quite steeply, and eventually came to a clearing with views back down the valley and of the ocean. Coming back down from the saddle was a little tricky with often steep and slippery clay tracks. Paul managed to fall over onto his arse after losing his footing, but he was fortunately the only

one. We arrived back to a warm hut, but as the sun was setting the hut started to cool down and we decided it was time to light the fire.

We collected kindling on the way back to the hut and Joanne, Debbie and Ray built the fire. After a while the fire was roaring, although a lot of the smoke was coming into the hut

rather than going up through the chimney. We sat down to have some yummy dinner, and then later on in the evening we were joined by a hunter who had recently moved up from Christchurch, and was now working at the police college in Porirua. We all decided it was time for bed, and because the fire was open we thought it best to extinguish it before hitting the sack. Paul was given this task, but obviously didn't make a very good job of it, because about 15 minutes later Ray could smell smoke and the fire was roaring again. This time he made sure it was out.



On the second day we had a leisurely morning, and after eating breakfast we left the hut around 10am ish. The walk back to the road end appeared to be much easier, and we spent more time on the track than we did walking across the river. When we arrived at the road end, we hopped into the van and drove to the lighthouse via the seal colony.

We had lunch at the lighthouse, walked up and down it a couple of times and then waited for another group to arrive. We waited and waited... but they didn't arrive. Paul walked back up to the lighthouse and found a good vantage point from where he could see the track winding along the coastline. 4pm came and we decided to initiate the emergency protocol which was to get to cell phone coverage and call in the missing group.

We were halfway up the Wairarapa side of the Rimutaka hill road when Ray's mobile rang and it was Steve calling from Ngawi, requesting that we turn around and head back to pick them up. By this time the windy Rimutaka hill road was starting to affect Paul, and Ray decided he would drop us off at the Upper Hutt railway station, potentially sacrificing his evening of rugby. Ray drove back to collect the others on his own. We boarded the train. Paul spent all of the journey lying down while the others spent the entire journey, from Upper Hutt into the City, talking to the train guard. We all went our separate ways at the Wellington station and got home around 8pm.

A big thank you must go out to Ray for dropping us off at the station and returning to pick up the others. They were very pleased to see Ray and the van, and Steve took over the driving back to Wellington so that Ray could get a welcome break.

This is Not Jam Hut

30 September – 2 October, Jolly fit, Kaikoura Ranges, (map #2)

Mike Phethean

Punters: Harry "The glorious helmsman" Smith (Leader), David Jewel, Marie Henderson
Dmitry Alkhimov, Mike Phethean



Normally writing a trip report you can get away with a few continued jokes and well, general lies. This one is different as someone might actually want to know where we went or didn't! A shiver runs down my spine, responsibility aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh!

So the serious stuff:

- We got permission from the farmer to cross his land at the road end
- There is a place to camp where George Stream meets the Waiautoa road
- To get up to Black Hill take the second track on the left after George Stream. Where the track forks take the right hand fork which will take you up to point 917 (4 WD track)
- From Point 917 to Black Hill follow a path which re-crosses the old fence line to the dip just short of Black Hill
- We could find no easy way from point 1410 to Mackintosh Knob. You will have to be very sure of your footing and the route has a high exposure

- We back tracked and headed for Cuckoo Saddle
- There is good camping near Bob Stream once down from Cuckoo Saddle. The best bet is to try and follow the fence down where you can
- Generally there is a lot of Matagaouri and gardening gloves are very useful
- At Cuckoo Saddle there are 2 markers; the second in the second dip gives one way down. However, if you are going to cut from the first one side north before going down otherwise you will be bluffed
- There is a waterfall to bypass in Snowgrass Stream. There is a rope on the true right. It was in good condition, but it would pay to take your own
- To get to Hornby Heights Biv from the junction initially follow the stream up-stream and not long before it bluffs scramble up a small gully on the true right and sidle out near the top. There is a marker on the skyline up along from the water fall
- From here there are a few markers which require quite a height gain which take you to a good route/path to the Biv
- We tried two routes to Jam Stream and failed on both. The 754 / 799 spur bluffs out at the end; this is probably the route to Snowgrass hut. The stream to the west of point 968, has markers at the end but we suspect the route has washed out as it was very exposed and exceptionally steep (stupid)
- From the log book we guess the route is actually over 884 and down the ridge to the Jam Stream junction with the Clarence.

Less serious stuff

- Harry was optimistic on the Friday morning. (Insert disbelieving editorial comment here!)
- David was optimistic on the Saturday morning
- Dmitry makes a mean fire!
- Marie makes a mean cup of tea on camp site arrival
- Thanks to Sharron and Tony for coming back and changing the ferries as we were late.



Tank fly boss walk jam nitty gritty, your listening to the boys from the big bad city, this is not jam hut!

Mount Mitre

7-9 October, Medium tramp, Tararua FP – Ohau/Pines, (Map ref #3) Stefan Lehmann
Punters: Marie Henderson (leader), Helen Law, Graham Morley, Oleg Vlasov,
Jiayin Tay, Stefan Lehmann, Rowena Johnston, Davis Heffernan

My second tramp with the WTMC lead us into the beautiful Tararua Range. I wasn't really sure about my experience nor my fitness level, but it sounded like a nice achievement to climb a mountain, so I gave it a try. Looking back I am a bit embarrassed about my naivety, and will tell you later why. The leader of this tramp was Marie Henderson, who did a really great job and made the best vegetarian dinner you can hope for, after an attempt to climb Mount Mitre.

A happy group of a dog and eight people, after meeting at the Wellington railway station on Friday evening, were driven into the Tararuas. We arrived at Holdsworth roadend when the sunlight was almost gone. We had good luck with the weather as it was calm and dry. So we started into the night with a good pace. Soon we had to slow down because it became obvious that one group member couldn't hold that speed. Marie decided that we should split up so that the people who wanted to go a bit faster didn't get too bored. The second group was lead by Helen, who is also an experienced trumper. The two groups remained almost the whole weekend; good on Marie for handling this so well.

The track to Mitre Hut was astonishingly demanding. The missing sun light didn't made it any better. A couple of times we nearly lost the track. It was so much easier on our way back on a sunny day. The first group arrived at the hut shortly before midnight and went straight into their sleeping bags. The other group arrived about an hour later. The hut was quite empty so there was plenty of room for everybody to sleep in the hut.

Saturday was supposed to be a rather busy day. Early in the morning the group was woken up by Helen. We had to start early to be successful. After a quick breakfast we started off .. a bit later, because myself and another guy were a little unorganized. So the others had to wait for us another 20 minutes before we headed towards Mitre peak! Sorry for that!

The weather was still dry but the sky was cloudy, so we didn't expect to have a good view at the top. Shortly before we left the bush zone we took a break in the middle of some magic trees, which rarely seemed to see the sun. After leaving the bush zone a beautiful rainbow, which occasionally transformed into a double rainbow (all across the sky), appeared to our left. Once



the obligatory rainbow photos were taken we finally prepared to climb the peak.

It turned out that the other people on the trip were much better equipped than me; I thought it wouldn't be too bad and left my rain trousers at home. I regretted this foolish decision a lot when we entered the clouds. I was lucky because the wind wasn't too strong and the rain was ok, but my legs were completely wet after a short time. As we passed the first little patches of snow the rain turned into snow as well. The higher we climbed the more the already bad weather turned into a snow storm.



Eventually we reached the top! But not really,

because the others told me that this was only Peggy Peak. Mitre Peak would be another 30 minutes or so away. Nobody was really keen to do that and so we decided to turn around. The way down was much faster. It turned out that it had rained in the lower regions as well. Shortly before us the easy group had reached the hut and so the place was a bit more crowded. Luckily, there was still enough space for us; I must confess I was really happy about that. I was so looking forward to crawl into my warm and cozy sleeping bag. Before that Helen cooked us a great and filling indian dish. Yum! With a stuffed stomach I soon fell asleep, lulled to sleep by the mumbling sounds of some people who were obviously not half as tired as me.

The sun was shining bright and beautiful on our last day of the tramp. From time to time we saw the peaks of the mountains in the clear sky. Well, next time - we had our chance! The way back to the road end was much easier than our night walk to the hut. Back in the van and in the civilization we took a short break at a nice cafe in Carterton to have some coffee and food. There we met the hut



warden again, who told us that he just did an amazing flight with a small plane through the Tararuas from Masterton.

To be back in Wellington felt a bit strange. We arrived shortly before the rugby match between Australia and South Africa and the streets were crammed with people. I passed the hotel of the Australian team and it was obvious that the team would come out soon. I waited a minute or two and then I thought: 'Nah, I have already seen better things this weekend!' and went home.

Response to this article from the trip leader, Marie Henderson

Over trousers are essential safety gear to have whenever you go above the bush line (and below the bush line in the Tararuas). You never know when someone may hurt themselves and you'll be sitting around for hours. They won't keep you dry, but they keep the wind out thereby keeping you warmer and therefore more comfortable. It is the combination of wind, wet and cold that brings on hypothermia (a too low body temperature that can kill). I have had pre-hypothermia a couple of times now - I recommend you avoid it! I was really lucky one time to be with someone who knew what was happening and what to do with me!

One of our team, Graham, had Norseware woollen mitts, a Swandri bush shirt, an Orangi jacket, quality over trousers and balaclava/beanie; really good quality gear of a seasoned Tararua trumper. He was going to be cosy in whatever weather the Tararuas could throw at him.

From Pinnacles to Sea with the “*has beers*”

14-16 October, Medium tramp, Haurangi Forest Park (map #4)

Alistair Young

Punters: Alistair Young (Leader), Craig McGregor

I was down to lead the medium traverse of the Haurangis, one of my favorite tramping haunts, but with no punters signed up things looked grim until Craig McGregor, an ex-Chief Guide, signed up. It's been a few years since our glory days at the Tongue & Meats and, with no one else signed up, we were obviously forgotten; mere “*has beers*”. Craig, having spent so much time ultra-cycling with his feet cleated to his pedals, had all but forgotten how to walk, while child rearing is proving the ultimate endurance event of all for me.



The Pinnacles



Craig's DIY beer can stove

Camping at the Pinnacles on Friday night, we were barely tucked away under the fly when the light but persistent rain started coming tumbling down for the night.

At daybreak, a brisk 800m ascent quickly reminded us that the Haurangis, although small in stature, are a nuggety and physical place to tramp. We caught the odd glimpse of the sea as the weather alternated between sunny and drizzly as we shared a robust conversation on the subjects of tramping, politics and rugby. Lunch followed the descent to Washpool Hut with a brew cooked on Craig's DIY beer-can stove, which on this tramp proved to be a roaring success.

With tummies fully laden, another sharp ascent and descent led us to Pararaki Hut where we had originally intended to stay the night. There was enthusiasm for an early Sunday departure among other trips with which we shared transport. There was some rugby game on apparently, thus limiting us "*has beens*" to only a day and a half to relive the glory days. Over yet another brew, we hatched a cunning plan to push on toward Kawakawa Hut, thus allowing us to complete the originally intended route, with no shortcuts and finish by lunchtime Sunday. This would mean tramping to sunset but as veterans of many a fit trip that was par for the course.

The saddle and watershed area between the Pararaki and Kawakawa valleys is a lovely place. Great stream travel, marvelous stands of mature native trees and a spectacular descent into the Kawakawa stream over a well marked but not overly manicured route makes the Haurangi traverse one of the best Wellington based medium tramps on offer. We found the perfect campsite just above the Kawakawa Stream where we dined on chilli con carne and pasta before pitting down as the drizzle returned. It had been a long 12 hour day from start to finish but well worth the effort. We were both buzzing.

The next day brought clearing drizzle. We were at Kawakawa Hut within 30 minutes and breakfasted with the easy-medium group before heading south up the other branch of the valley towards the Kawakawa Saddle.

Travel was fast: the stream was low and its banks clear; yet in spite of this, the unimaginable happened: we became separated. The drama unfolded thus: I got ahead of Craig and stopped to brush my teeth. Five minutes passed. A little concerned I left my pack where it could easily be seen and headed back down stream to find Craig - to no avail. I had lost my punter in broad daylight in a narrow stream on a well marked route!

Punters don't just vanish. Having thoroughly searched downstream I continued slowly up it looking for tracks, and soon found a single fresh footprint; the manhunt was over. Craig had walked passed me while I waited. A man sized boulder in the stream between us combined with river noise had rendered me invisible as he walked up the other side a mere 5 meters from me. It was as likely as tossing a coin which lands on its edge, but we had done it achieving the impossible.

The next hour was spent catching up to Craig who was cursing his miserable leader for charging ahead and not bothering to wait or grant him a break. He could not believe it when he saw me approaching from behind. I was, he alleged, playing tricks and telling fibs; no way was it possible to lose each other in such a benign place. After a brief but intense discussion we found the funny side of it and resumed the steady pleasant plod over the saddle to Mangatoetoe Hut for a quick bite before the final trudge to the sea with the sun finally coming out in earnest.



Walking out to the sea, Haurangi Forest Park

Tongariro in the mist – peak bagging for 8 year olds

12-13 March, Family /MF daytrip , Ruapehu Lodge (map #5)

Mike Gilbert

Punters: Mike Gilbert, Toby (8)

Beth Piggott, Taylor (4), Carly (1)

Ally Clark, Simon Ward, Dominic (2.5), Hamish (6mth)

Rene Van Lierop, Tom (10), Vincent (8), Daniel (6)

(Mike, Toby, Simon, Rene, Tom, and Vincent headed up to Tongariro)

Everyone knows the Ruapehu Lodge is where you go for winter weekends; for snowboarding, alpine adventures and the like. Summer? What's there in Summer? Well, that was our mission: to find out.

I well know that the lodge is very comfortable for regular punters and families alike. It needs to be because snowboarding at Mt Ruapehu usually involves trudging up to the lodge in a blizzard, staying inside drinking coffee and relaxing while it sleets, snows and blows all weekend, and then grimly struggling back to the car and going home again. At least in summer, we'd only get gales and rain!

Our journey began at 5pm sharp as we set off. It's never a good idea to start a trip to Ruapehu at 5pm on a Friday, but needs must. We met up with Simon, who was grabbing a ride from us, and collected Toby, our son, who was at after-school care, and off we went north along SH1, along with half of Wellington.

Sure enough, we met the queue for the Waikane lights at the outskirts of Paraparaumu. It was walking speed from then on; must have taken a good hour or so. Sigh. Not unexpected. Once we'd cleared Waikanae it all got a lot faster, although we didn't make the famous Bulls kebab shop for dinner: Levin McDonalds was as good as it got for us.

The fuel light came on just out of Taihape, which was fine. My game plan is always to fill up in Waiouru.

But I learned something that night:

You can't fill up at Waiouru anymore.

We pulled into Waiouru and tried all the petrol stations, one by one. Caltex - gone. BP - gone. Shell - going: there was a digger parked on the remains of the forecourt building. All replaced by truck stops with diesel and fuel cards. Disaster! We definitely didn't have enough petrol to make the lodge. So there was nothing for it but to drive all the way back to Taihape to the BP that's there, and open 24/7. My new game plan is to fill up at Taihape!

(Since March, Z have built a shiny new petrol station so you can get petrol in Waiouru again. But I still don't trust it. Once bitten...)

On the way, my wife Angela started texting about the terrible earthquake and tsunami in Japan. So we sombrely listened to the news on the radio. It certainly brings you down to earth when these things happen.

So between the traffic, the dinner and the backtracking, it was 11pm by the time we got to the lodge. Six hours!! An epic trip (but not 'epic' in a good way). Next time I will definitely take an hour off work, or even work an hour later.

When we got there there were still a lot of folk up and about, and we talked about the next two days' activities. The original plan was some fairly easy 4 hour walks, plenty of stops for jellybeans; normal family tramping fare. But the two 'normal family tramper' families had not been able to make it, leaving Ally and Beth who were intending to have a great weekend being lounge lizards, and Rene, Tom and Vincent who were going to go hard to train for bagging Mt Taranaki the following weekend. So what to do? Nothing for it but for Toby, Simon and I to go hard with Rene.

Ally suggested a great route into Tongariro: head up to Mangetepopo Hut and then head up the ridge opposite the Tongariro Crossing route which takes you straight to the top of Tongariro. This sounded really good and pretty easy to find, and so we decided that was for us.

So to bed we went, with me checking the news and texting Angela before I went to sleep. Angela's parents were holidaying in Hawai'i and there was a tsunami forecast for 3am! All was good in the end though. Hawai'i is well set up for tsunamis so we knew it would be, even if it was a major one.



It was an early start the next morning and off we drove to the Mangetepopo road end. It was a quick, easy jaunt to Mangetepopo Hut. I even heard that it wasn't uncommon for folks to overnight there if they were driving from Wellington to Auckland: easy to get to and free with an annual hut pass! Great idea.

Now we had the first test for the boys: the face up to the opposite ridge. They tackled it with minimum complaints and lots of running back and forth. There were some little slips with smooth mud faces that proved irresistible to

bum-slide down. By the time we got to the top of the ridge, we had three fairly dirty boys with us!

Once we hit the ridge it was a gentle up and down wander, with just a little bit more up than down. The boys wandered along chatting about whatever young boys chat about, and the adults pestered them to go faster. They mostly acceded.



Mt Tongariro was visible in the distance and it steadily got closer.

After a couple of hours the ridge turned into a spur and got steadily steeper. Now things got a bit more serious. The gravel track turned into a scree face, and the walking turned into a slog with one step up and two steps back. Hard work! Toby scrambled up with Vincent in hot pursuit. The two of them were light enough to mostly skate over the scree.

The top of the spur slowly, painfully, got closer and closer and eventually... we popped up to the top and discovered we were within 100m of the summit! We found ourselves looking into big Tongariro crater, with the summit, which is really just the highest lump on the crater wall, off to our right.

Unfortunately, a bank of cloud chose to move over Ngaruhoe and Tongariro just at this time, after the brilliant blue skies we'd had on the way up. So the view from the top wasn't quite as good as it should have been. We got there in time to see the Tongariro craters and the view out to the east before it clagged in.



After the obligatory photos and celebrations and jellybeans, it was time to head down again. Our plan was to follow the crater rim back town, and then take the Tongariro Crossing track in reverse, back to the Mangetepopo car park.

So we sauntered back down the crater rim, and took a quick detour to glance across to Red crater. It looked pretty ethereal; our only real look at a strange volcanic stained landscape (if you don't count Ngaruhoe looming over us constantly, that is).

Now we were back on the Tongariro Walk, steadily passing the straggler loopies in their jeans and cotton tops, wondering how they would get home now they'd missed their transport out by over an hour. The clouds were also closing in and a very light rain was falling. Some of these folks were in for a pretty miserable time as they got wet and cold as they hiked along to no ride at the other end. Oh well.

The children were getting pretty tired by now, even a steady supply of jellybeans was starting to wear off as an incentive. Chocolate was still working though.



Tom was very inventive with his chocolate, carving it slowly with his teeth until it looked exactly like a chocolate fish. A work of art! It certainly made his chocolate last a lot longer than anyone else's.

Meanwhile, Toby was complaining about sore feet. I told him to stop moaning and just get on with it. Eventually - eventually! I thought I should maybe see what he was on about, and fished out some big lumps of gravel from the front of his boots. There were angry red dints on the front of both his feet. Hmm, maybe I should take notice of Toby's 'moaning' a bit more often!



By the time we made it back to the cars we'd been walking for 8 hours, ascended (and descended) about 700m vertical, and had three very tired boys with us. They'd kept up a fantastic pace, it's certainly the longest and hardest daytrip that Toby's done.

We headed home to well earned dinner; thanks to Ally for cooking it for us! The boys soon perked up again with a few calories inside them, and played a fairly complex game of tag

with the younger kids that seemed to involve cross dressing and stress balls and leaping from chair to chair. It all made perfect sense to them at least!

Meanwhile, us adults sat outside on the deck (must be one of the very few times that's possible at the lodge!) and watched a wonderful sunset. Bright orange sky with Mt Taranaki silhouetted between two banks of clouds. Magic.

Two climbers, Pete and Ian, came in and stayed for the evening, so we chatted to them. Hopefully they weren't looking for a peaceful, quiet lodge to stay at! They left pretty early the next morning for another day on the faces around Tongariro.

Next morning we were up (somewhat) early, and soon cleaned up and packed up and said goodbye to the lodge. To justify the two days away, we felt we had to hit another track today, so we headed off to Tuapapakuria Falls track. I'd been here on a 'regular' day walk a year or so ago and loved it. It's a real hidden gem. We found the access road much improved; it used to be goat track barely driveable with a 2WD car, but they seem to be putting a cycleway in so now it's a really good gravel road. To get to the start of the Tuapapakuria Falls track, you head to the north-west corner of National Park, cross the railway track on Carroll Street (sealed), drive 2km or so up Fisher Road (gravelled), until you reach a road end just before a big wooden gate (the size of a deer fence). This looks to be the start of the new cycleway. The track heads off to the left, just past the road-end and before the big wooden gate.

The plan was to race to the falls, but after yesterday's exertions and with Wellington beckoning, no-one was quite so keen! So instead we did a quick jaunt up to the 'Taranaki lookout', which promised a stunning view of Mt Taranaki. We got to see the clouds that hid Mt Taranaki; a more normal Mt Taranaki view. Oh well. That made it time to go back to our cars and take our weary bodies back to Wellington.

This trip just confirmed to me how great the lodge is as a place to hang out even when there's no snow about. Whether you want to sit about and enjoy the view, do a gentle bit of wandering or biking from a great central base or go hard and climb something impressive, the lodge is the place to do it from. It's great for parties as small as 4 and as big as 30+, and in 'summer' mode you don't have a head-scratching list of water valves to open and close when you get there either. See what it's got to offer this summer!

Covert Ops Black Tie Lunch at the Waihohonu Hilton

01 October, Ruapehu Lodge, Waihohonu Hut Daywalk, (map ref 6)

Amelia White

Team: Amelia and Mark White, Colin Bouttell and Nathaniel Bouttell (aged 8)

Friday night, 5.30pm, Wellington Railway Station. Perfect. We have infiltrated a party of climbers heading for "The Lodge". This lodge will be a perfect base for our weekend operation. We hope this lodge will prove as comfortable as it sounds, even if it traffic reports indicate we might be in for a long drive.

Friday night, 6.30pm, Upper Hutt. A detour to pick up another member of the climbing party. The interlopers still haven't been roused out of the van, it appears there may be space enough that they continue not to notice us.

Friday Night, 8pm, Levin. The climbers have all disappeared into a den of iniquity calling itself "Noodle Canteen". To continue avoiding notice we split in half and head for alternative eating establishments, ensuring we are back ahead of the climbers so we don't get left behind.



Saturday, 7am. After a short night's sleep due to a late arrival, some generous soul is cooking breakfast already. We quickly demolish some food, do a spot of cleaning up and inch our way down the crusty ice to the van, where the climbers are waiting for us to drop them off. It appears we have been noticed.



Saturday, 10am. After a successful mutiny against the climbers in Whakapapa Village, we gained control of the van in a bloodless coup and have arrived at a car park in the middle of nowhere, somewhere alongside the "Desert Road". We have been reliably informed that our mission will see us walking in to a "Waihohonu Hut", and that it should not be a long time before our destination is in sight.

Saturday, 11.30am. We appear to be lost. Colin has visited several "huts" in the past, and is adamant that this is not a "hut" and that the spacious lodge with running hot water we

have instead found is the mysterious Waihohonu Hilton. With this in mind, we change clothes to something more suited to the location and settle in to demolish our lunch as if we are just here minding our own business.

Saturday, 1.30pm. We are starting to doubt our directions. We have consumed two courses of food and seen only a pair of Australian trampers. Perhaps our quarry is at the historic hut? We know we are running out of time, as we should be leaving the hut already if we are to make rendezvous with C at M, but we decide that since we are here, we should continue and make a thorough investigation, to ensure we have not stopped a hut too early.

Saturday, 1.45pm. There is no one at the historic hut either. We are perplexed. So we capture our smallest member and string him up instead, just to prove that we have achieved something with our day. To ease his feelings and our confusion, we return to the new hut for a spot of dessert, deciding we can now run late for our rendezvous as we were given spurious information in the first place.



Saturday, 2.30pm. After taking our time to ensure that the change to daylight savings the other weekend was not the cause of our mission failure, we change back out of our dress clothes and leave the Hilton as swiftly as we arrived. The trip back makes us aware of the fact that there is actually a height above MSL difference between the car park and the Hilton – are we sure we are going the right way? We don't remember feeling like we were climbing to get there, but we are definitely dropping now.



Saturday, 4pm. The van is in sight again. Luckily the climbers didn't manage to trace us here and claim it back. We roar (gently) off onto the Desert Road again, back around the mountain to the Mangatepopo Carpark, where our next rendezvous point is.

Saturday, 5pm. There are more people at the rendezvous than there should have been. This makes us a little worried, but we collect them all anyway as they all appear to fit,

before dumping one out at the next junction as we return to the lodge too late for a beer at the pub, and after Happy Hour has finished.

Thankfully dinner appears to be not far away, not that us interlopers need any after a relaxing three hours having lunch on a mission that was only successful in that it caused no further injury to Colin and included tasty food.

Sunday, 10am. The climbers have invited us to join them at the Tokaanu Hot Pools. We gratefully accept, as it's a perfect excuse to escape the boarders vs skiers debate that appears to be ongoing at the "lodge".

Sunday, 12.30pm, Waiouru. The debate has found us again. Save us all. We escape as quickly as is politely possible and continue the drive back to Wellington.

R&R in the Seaward Kaikouras

30 Sept – 1 Oct, F ALP 1 , Mt Manakau (map #ref)

Sharron Came

Punters: Tony Gazley, Laurayne Robb, Sharron Came

It's Thursday night and I'm tired. My bed is the back seat of the Club van parked at the George Stream road end. Not a bad option if you are short in stature, short on time and good at sleeping.

Friday night and my bed is half a minaret pitched on a grassy flat about 20 minutes below Barratt's Biv. Not a bad option if you have an alpine start planned. Faced with an unhelpful forecast and some challenging logistical arrangements, we are stubbornly sticking to our plan to climb Mt Manakau.



Laurayne enjoying the sunshine

The forecast is for high winds and heavy rain. We figure if we get an early night we can do an alpine start and summit Manakau alpine style with light packs.

We spend a pleasant afternoon soaking up Friday's sunshine, drinking cups of tea, exploring Barretts Biv and catching up with Laurayne who has driven up from Christchurch. This doesn't feel like a fit trip, I think as we retire for the night.

Saturday night, and my bed is half a minaret pitched on a neat, flat gravel alcove beside George Stream. Not a bad option if

your other choice is waiting for daylight while clinging to a scree slope in a gale.

The morning's alpine start was not one of our finest. Our watch alarms did not wake us at 4am but my cell phone sure did. Laurayne had not slept well. We forced ourselves up and

stumbled round in the dark trying to locate the correct gully from which to access Stace Saddle. After 45 minutes of feeling our way through thick scrub on steep slopes fringed by bluffs we retreated to the tents to wait for daylight. The obvious lesson here, is either a) forget to set your alarm; or b) use a route you have prepared earlier.

Over breakfast we decided to abandon our attempt on Manakau. Our motivation had drained away with our tea. The forecast was playing on our minds and we could see the clouds moving up on the tops which suggested the wind had already arrived. Then there was our responsibility to be out in time to pick up the other group.

Decision made, we wandered back out to the road end. We passed another climbing pair with a more up to date forecast. Apparently the rain was expected to hold off until tomorrow evening, *c'est la vie*. Laurayne headed back to Christchurch. Feeling a bit deflated Tony and I headed into Kaikoura in search of a pie and inspiration. We got the maps for the walk up George Stream to meet the other group. Not a bad option when the alternative is hanging round in Kaikoura for the best part of two days.

We arrived at the George Stream road end mid-afternoon and started walking. I was concerned that we might not get very far. The other group had various machetes, knives, clippers, flame throwers, dynamite and garden gloves. They said they were expecting to do lots of bush bashing, including possible encounters with giant wild rose bushes. Tony and I did not share the other group's masochistic tendencies. We decided that if we encountered briars we would retreat. Not a bad option given we had not come away to go gardening.

George Stream was a revelation. I had to remind myself that Halloween was still at least a month away. We passed several groups of hunters with deer heads for handbags and a possum trapper drenched in dried blood. Silently puzzling over why the possum trapper had not washed the blood off in the nearby river I neglected to pay full attention to the route advice kindly given.

All parties agreed on one thing, the route over to Jam Hut was a bit gnarly in places. Otherwise the recommendations could be best described as lacking in detail and consistency, with hindsight the same description could perhaps be applied to our decision making. No matter, the going was good, not a briar to be seen, so we kept going.

Initially we thought we would just head up the stream until we got sick of it, then set up camp, laze about in the sunshine and take photos. But we were enjoying our stroll so much and travel was so easy that at about 5pm we had some food and decided we would try to go all the way over George Saddle and surprise the other group at Jam Hut. According to our calculations we should get to the hut at about 9 or 10pm. Not a bad option if you're full of *joie de vivre*.

We set off again soaking up the peaceful atmosphere and the beautiful bush. To my disappointment, no more blood stained travel advisors emerged from the twilight to proffer further instructions. Perhaps our maps would come in handy. Gradually the terrain became less open and more characterised by large boulders and narrow chutes then long, steep, slippery scree slopes – “slippery slips” that required scrambling using hands and feet for

purchase. As the light started to fade we realised that the scree gully I was leading us up was too far to the right of George Saddle and definitely a bad option. Time to back track down the “slippery slips” and sidle left. This was tricky and I silently cursed myself for not stopping sooner when it became obvious nobody else had come this way. Not long before we had seen regular footprints and other signs of people travelling the same way as us. The obvious lesson here was to either a) set up camp before it gets dark; or b) consult your map. Bonus point for any party that does both. Bet it makes writing the trip report harder though.

After a bit of sidling we headed up again. We immediately made fresh acquaintance with more “slippery slips”. In the end we had to go right to gain the ridge. The ridge was made of abrasive rock and knife edge thin. The other side of the ridge was home to a tribe of “slippery slips” huddled above a sheer drop. It was now dark but even by the light of our head torches we could see the exposure was considerable. We had previously been on the leeward side but once we crested the ridge we had the opportunity to experience the full force of the forecast wind. We crawled carefully into the wind along the jagged ridge to George Saddle. This is what it must be like to crawl across giant needles I thought, that possum hunter would be jealous if he could see my bloody fingers.

Pausing in the stiff breeze on the forlorn spot that marks the Saddle we peered over towards Jam Hut. The “slippery slips” that marked the descent looked like a bad option for a night time descent. The blood stained advisors and the hunters with the deer head handbags had not been exaggerating. The route did look a bit gnarly. Somewhere in the darkness there was a safe route off the Saddle. Retreating via our approach route lacked immediate appeal. Jelly bean time.

We decided to have a go at pitching the tent. In hindsight I’m not sure if this was because we had a secret hankering to try kite surfing on land or we were just thinking, it’s dark, cold and time to get into the fetal position. We gave kite surfing a good go and success would have been ours I’m sure if it had been a lot less windy, there had been something to anchor the pegs with and a flat patch. The billy lid however, proved something of a wind surfing prodigy and I had to leave Tony holding the wildly flapping tent while I sidled gingerly across to retrieve it. After nearly losing various other possessions, including the tent, sanity prevailed and we determined on a path of retreat back the way we had come, possibly skipping the crawl along the knife edge ridge that resembled giant needles.

With some difficulty, think trying to get toothpaste back into the tube, we managed to stuff the tent back into Tony’s pack. This was followed by all the other possessions that had come out. Teeth chattering in my case, we turned to inspect the collection of “slippery slips” heading down to George Stream. We decided they were doable if we wiggled on our bums ready to break if we started going into an uncontrolled slide. Tony gallantly offered to go first. As it turned out the “slippery slips” bark was worse than their bite. We probably could have come up them rather than crawl along the knife edge ridge that resembled giant needles.

Soon we were able to abandon crawling in favour of swinging Tarzan like off clumps of vegetation as we completed a direct descent to George Stream. Back on familiar ground

and full of adrenalin we made good progress until we eventually spotted a suitable flat camp site out of the wind. We enjoyed a pleasant, relaxing dinner of cheese and crackers with the mellow sound of a gently running stream providing soothing background music that rivalled one of Chopin's Nocturnes.

Sunday and my bed for the night is variously the floor of the ferry, reclining chairs on the ferry and finally a few hours in my actual bed. Not bad options if you are short in stature, short on time and good at sleeping. It would be cheating to count the sleep I got at my desk on Monday morning.



Sharron working on the WTMC sign

Compared to Saturday, the day started off in a promising manner. After a leisurely breakfast we entertained ourselves making a WTMC sign for the other group then we headed back down George Stream and off to Kaikoura for a late lunch and to check out the rugby results.

Back at the road end we lazed round in the hot sun marvelling at the great weather but noticing the fast moving clouds up high which to our minds vindicated our decision not to head up Manakau. As the afternoon wore on, it gradually dawned on us that the other group might not make the pick up time. We had a ferry to catch and no cellphone coverage. We decided to leave a note for the group and head back to Picton for the ferry.

Back out on the main road we picked up messages to the effect that the other group would not be out till at least 6pm. With this information we were able rebook onto the last Interislander of the day. This was not a bad option in that Tony could still get to work on Monday and the other group could get back to Wellington with us. Logistics sorted we visited Kaikoura for a third time to stock up on crisps and get diesel for the van. Obtaining the crisps was easier than solving the riddle of the diesel cap but we eventually solved both problems to arrive back at the George Stream road end just as the other party emerged from a hard three days of gardening tired, dusty and covered in scratches.

What we thought we'd do: Mt Manakau, ALP1 F.

What we did: George Saddle in the dark: Grade 18 scree gravel with optional ridge traverse and kite surfing; 3 visits to Kaikoura.

Never, never get out of control. A great day on Ngauruhoe

30 Sept – 1 Oct, MF ALP 1 , Mt Ngauruhoe (map #7)

Kate Cushing

Punters: Kate Cushing (Leader), Stijn Schepers (Sleepy), Megan Banks, Ian Harrison, Spencer Clubb (Fearless co-leader), Tony Van Horik, Mike Travers

Firstly, for those who know me, let me state that this trip actually started and was completed on Plan A! Yes, I managed to actually lead a trip that not only went someplace but was successfully completed on the intended plan and I didn't lose any punters along the way. You can check with my punters, it's true!

Plan A: Go to the luxurious club lodge at Whakapapa on Friday night. Have the Easy trip drop us off at Whakapapa Village on Saturday morning. Walk to Ngauruhoe via the Tama Lakes track. Climb up the snow on the south face. Walk around the crater at the summit and descend on the north face. Then complete the trip by walking out on the Tongariro Crossing track to Mangatipopo. Get picked up and chauffeured back to the lodge for Saturday. Hope for bad weather on Sunday so, we could sleep in. Go to bed, assume bad weather and sleep in regardless. Climb in van and go back to Wellington.

When I suggested this route to Spencer, my fearless co-leader, he said it sounded great but I better make sure that someone had actually been up (or down) the south face. Sure Ngauruhoe looks totally smooth and concentric on the Topo50 but, it doesn't hurt to ask. I checked with Sharron, DJ and Tony G who have done all the cool stuff and the response was yes, it is possible to go up the south face. I bit more "interesting" with it being a bit rougher with more rocks and small bluffs but still simple climbing. I was given a detailed route description to the base of Ngauruhoe by Tony G and we were off and running- well walking actually, but you know what I mean.

The Trip

After a lovely night in the lodge and some crazy breakfast clean up/lunch preparation we headed out at a civilized hour to our drop off spot at the start of the Tama Lakes track. Megan and I commented to each, for the first time but certainly not the last, that Ngauruhoe was looking really tall and steep from such a distance. Surely it would look much more mellow once we got closer!

We ambled along with our wee packs loaded down with ice axes, crampons and helmets through nice bush and open moonscapes to Lower Tama Lakes. We had a quick morning tea (Stijn thought we should take a nap- it was a pretty nice spot in the sunshine but we weren't to be distracted from the mission) and then continued on up the ridge to the view point over Upper Tama Lakes. We reached this point by mid-morning and Stijn decided that the wee rock shelter up there was also a good place for a nap! We convinced him that we should carry on just in case conditions for the climb were difficult and took more time than we thought.



Ngauruhoe was shining in the sun up ahead and Megan and I may again have mentioned that it still looked really tall and really steep. Surely, once we got closer, it was going to look easy - a wee little climb! We headed up the ridge to the west of Upper Tama Lake to 1650. Well, Tony went to 1650, the rest of us were lazy and sidled along on the scree slope just below. We were starting to get into small patches of snow but it was soft enough that we were ok without crampons. Following this ridge and 1650 we dropped back down to a saddle and the base of Ngauruhoe.

There was yet another exchange of wow, it looks steep and tall. Then a sensible discussion on what ridge looked best? Or perhaps the basin in between? We decided to go up to a ridge on our left and follow that until we could determine the snow conditions. We climbed perhaps 30m until we were onto continuous snow and we stopped to don our crampons, loose the ice axes from our packs and put on our helmets. There was discussion about the helmets and Spencer rightly pointed out "Well, it's your head." This turned out to be a good decision!

The snow conditions were really good for cramponing, firm but rarely icy, and we made good progress as we started the days climb in earnest. The ridge proved good and the basin looked like it got steep at the top so, our navigators had made a good call. The gradient was just steep enough that going straight up was too hard on the calves but zig zagging back and forth was hard on the ankles. But these are the things you put up with when summit bagging! So, we climbed up... and up... and up. We stopped to "regroup" a few times (Stijn was probably asking for more naps but I was too busy catching my breath to listen) and managed a couple of photo/jelly bean stops. The skies were a bit overcast

but we were still treated to some beautiful views back toward Ruapehu. I kept seeing those windswept looking lenticular clouds and was secretly worried about wind once we got to the top but the wind was light where we sheltered on the South face.

We were perhaps half way up when suddenly there was ice raining down on us from above. Was it the wind? Was it the Ngauruhoe ghost trying to prevent us from completing Plan A? We very quickly beat it into the basin on our left but not before Megan and Kate both got hit in the helmet with chunks of ice. Drama! We all got across the basin safely though and headed to the ridge on the left while still trying to gain elevation in the basin. Unfortunately we were very near the top of the basin where it was steep, as predicted, and there was a small rock bluff. I think this section of the climb was our most difficult of the day as it was a bit crusty, steep and I was a bit stressed after the ice to the head incident. However, we got across to the ridge below the small bluff and carried on up the ridge. I dared to look up at this point to take stock and was amazed to see that yes, we still had a long way to go!

Never the less, we carried on. The snow conditions continued to be good and the winds were still quite light. The total climb took approximately 3 hours and we were treated to a nice flat saddle to have a rest. There was some debate at this point about how best to get up and around the crater. We decided to head straight up from the saddle and then follow the lip of the crater around on the west side to where we could find a good stop to drop off down the north face.

The views of the summit crater were fantastic and otherworldly! Unfortunately there was enough wind to make it pretty cold and us a bit unsteady on our feet (ok we were a bit tired, but it was windy!) so, we snapped a couple pics and made our way around the rim.

Once around to the north side we looked down and debated the best place to start our descent. I have to admit that I was looking at all of it thinking there's no way I'm going down any of that! So much for it not being so steep up close... Tony finally just started going for it sidling across at a likely spot. The snow was soft and wet so I and the rest of the crew just started loping down behind him. Like lemmings?! That was fun enough but it wasn't long until the possibility of a bum slide was mentioned. It didn't take much to convince us! Tony and Stijn continued down like civilized trampers while Megan, Ian Spencer and I stopped to don the proper bum slide kit.

Tony and Stijn couldn't figure out why the heck we had stopped for a picnic 500m up. What in the world were we doing up there? Surely it was some silly pfafting again? They were soon to see that they were missing out on the fun!

So, yes I am Canadian but, this was my first major bum slide experience! Canadians carry toboggans and careen down mountains with dignity. Little did I know what I have been missing out on!

I learned a few things about bum sliding: Definitely wear over-trousers (you get wet and don't go fast enough without them), definitely tuck your jacket in to the over-trousers (you end up with snow packed in places you really don't want it otherwise), use your ice axe as

a brake/steering rudder, and Spencer felt the need to mention that one should “Never, Never, Get Out of Control!!” Clearly there were too many rules ‘cause I managed to forget that last one... I may have been air borne a couple of times...

Following recounting the bum slide experience and a wee snack (did Stijn finally get his nap?) we headed toward Mangatepopo down the Devil’s Staircase and the Tongariro Crossing track to be picked up at the car park.

This turned out to be an awesome trip. The snow was in great condition compared to the soft north side and it creates a great loop for us trampers who don’t like to retrace our steps.

Other news, notes and reminders

Latest FMC newsletter is now available

You can download it as a pdf file from:

www.fmc.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter/Club1110.pdf

**Deadline for submissions to the December / January WTMC newsletter:
Friday 9 December**

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