



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

February 2013



Wellington Harbour from Mt Kaukau.
Photo: Marie Jessup

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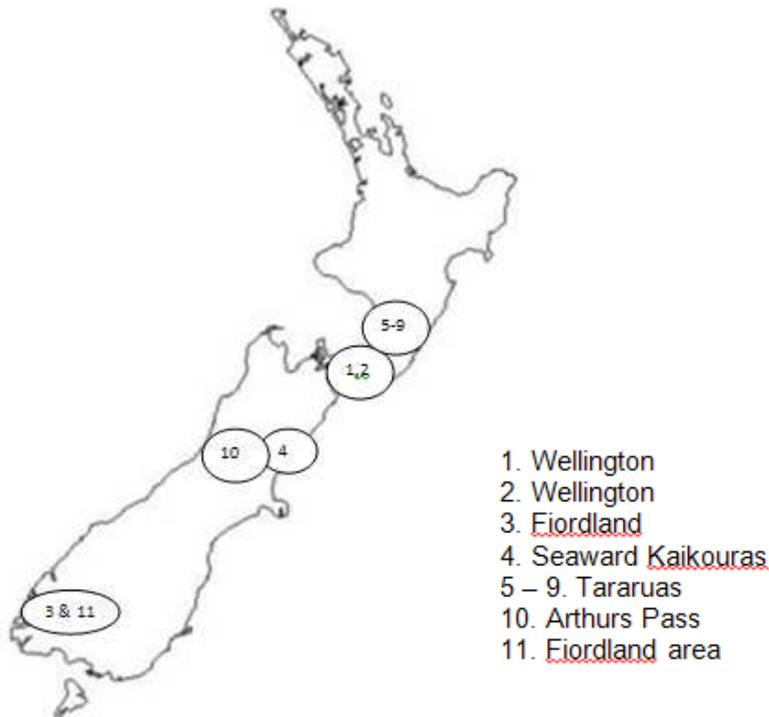
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The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



2013 has gotten off to a great start with the passing of the Constitutional amendments at the EGM on January 16. Thanks to everyone who attended the meeting thereby ensuring we had a quorum. It is gratifying to know that there is support out there in membership land for what the committee is trying to achieve for the Club. Thanks also to all the prospective members who turned up to find out about us and stuck around when they discovered there was no slideshow or other entertainment.

We are holding our annual new members night on February 20. If you are able to help out contact our new Promotions Officer David Heffernan promotions@wtmc.org.nz. It's great to have David in this role and I hope you will all get in behind him and help make his job fun and plain sailing. Particularly at this time of year we get lots of potential new members turning up on Wednesday nights. Every Wednesday night is an opportunity for us to make visitors feel welcome and to demonstrate what we are all about. Please make an effort to chat to any new people and ensure they know how to find the way to the trip sheet board, the website and the pub. Not necessarily in that order.

With Jenny unable to make Wednesday nights for the foreseeable future we are trialling a roster system with different people taking the lead to cover the Club nights. Sue Walsh has kindly agreed to co-ordinate this side of the Social Convenor role and she is doing a great job. Please talk to Sue if you can do a few Wednesday nights, or just help out with the tea making, setting out of chairs etc if you are at the Clubrooms and need a break from charming potential members. We are looking at getting a slideshow roster up on the website so people can see well in advance what entertainment is coming up and arrange their social lives accordingly. The other benefit is that you can book to give a slideshow or offer to organise some other form of entertainment yourself without us having to ask you.

Over the Christmas break we had our first PLB call out and rescue response. While the system worked we are taking the opportunity to review our PLB policy and procedures. Expect to hear more about this in a subsequent newsletter.

At this is the time of year, the Committee is doing two things, preparing the annual report for the 2012 year and thinking about what the strategic priorities should be for the coming year. Yes really. It's early days but our focus could be on:

1. Stream-lining trip running procedures. Organising trips is our core business and it's important to keep our processes efficient and convenient for members without compromising safety. If you have ideas on how we can organise trips better, we'd love to hear from you especially if you are prepared to help implement them.
chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz
2. Stream-lining volunteering and communication across the various media (social, print, word-of-mouth). For example, finding a way round those endless group emails asking people to sign up as a club contact person, a Wednesday night door person

- or a gear person. Everyone needs to know what is going on and how they can contribute so they can get their excuses worked out early. promotions@wtmc.org.nz
3. Skills based training. Amanda is standing down as Chief Guide at the AGM (April 10) to focus on training initiatives. The opportunity to learn new skills may help you get more out of your tramping. There will also be opportunities to give something back to the club by passing your skills on to others through instruction. As well as formal courses we will be looking to run more flora and fauna appreciation trips, navigation/off track trips, fancy dress or themed based trips for those who need to learn how to dress better and have more fun. Also anecdotal evidence suggests there may well be a few members out there who would benefit from learning how to cook. Also it would be great to organise some track marking or hut maintenance trips in partnership with DoC or other recreational groups so WTMC makes more of a contribution to the local tramping community. chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz

If you have a view about what our priorities should be, or a particular interest in being part of any of these work streams we'd love to hear from you president@wtmc.org.nz

I would like to thank the Lodge sub-committee for all the hard work they continue to put in to ensuring the Lodge runs smoothly and is well maintained. In particular it is clear that we have been able to make some savings in terms of electricity costs thanks to all the work that has gone into improving the energy efficiency of the Lodge. This is great from both an environmental and a financial perspective.

If you have any Club related news that you want publicised remember you can always email Sarah at newsletter@wtmc.org.nz. All the best for 2013.



Having just received a text asking where this column is, it will of necessity be brief! I hope you've managed to enjoy some tramps during this holiday season, though to describe it as "summer" has not always seemed accurate. Christmas Day excepted, the weather has been more notable for wind and rain than sunburn.

As we approached Powell hut last weekend, we were also experiencing the unfortunate realisation that our trip had just gone out the window. Being blown over below Powell is a sign that, even the most optimistic would agree, means heading to Mid Waiohine will not be possible. As we neared the hut, massive clouds of coaly smoke billowed out. Going inside was hardly better and seemed strangely warm on what wasn't a cold day (despite what we later learned were 160km/h gusts at the Cone weather station). The people in residence talked of how cold they'd been in the morning, in what I mentally tagged as inferior sleeping bags. I guess providing coal is a step forward from those stupid push-button gas heaters, but when people overload the stove (to the extent that flames at one point licked out of the shut vents and door) the safety improvement seems negligible. I restrained myself from a lecture on coal range usage (well, maybe there was one helpful suggestion that, given the extreme downdraft from the chimney, it might be wise to open the vents before those flames set their clothes on fire!).

The booking system at Powell also removed any chance we had of completing our planned route, which would in theory have been possible if we'd been able to stay. Enthusiasm for this option may perhaps have been nil in any case, after our encounter with the coal smokers. But the experience threw into stark relief what has become a duality of experiences in our conservation estate: ill-equipped and perhaps inexperienced people staying in bookable, serviced, semi-palatial huts that they reach via "trails"; and trampers striving on tracks to stay in six-bunkers that all too often come under threat of removal. Did I mention that the "track" to Powell is about to be upgraded? And that the people at Powell had a large billy on the boil constantly in the 30 minutes we took to eat lunch, for no apparent reason other than that the gas was there?

I don't really mean to rant; we were feeling a bit annoyed about our enforced change of plans, so not exactly in a well-disposed mood anyway! We did have some polite, friendly conversation with the two hut inhabitants about the area and our respective plans. They seemed nice enough, and it is great to see people stepping outside their comfort zone into the outdoors. But it is frustrating to see increasingly endangered DOC dollars treated with so little respect.

Looking on the bright side, it turned out our planned gorge trip down the Waiohine would have been torpedoed by the river flows the next day anyway. So that wind – and that booking system – did us a favour! We took our 17kg packs (wetsuit and multiple plastic bags still included) around Kapakapanui the next day to achieve our training goals; and put the Waiohine back onto the wishlist.

On 9-10 March, we're running a Bushcraft course at the club's Paua hut in the Orongorongos. If you know someone who's keen to tramp but doesn't know where to start, they might be an ideal candidate. It will cover the basics of gear, navigation and terrain awareness, as well as answering all those questions you might feel too stupid to ask. Plus hut etiquette.

Upcoming trips

8-10 February Tararuas – Putara

Tramp	EM	Roaring Stag: Flora/ fauna appreciation	Illona Keenan
Tramp	M	Cattle Ridge	Megan Banks
Tramp	FE	S-K	Yibai He
Family	All	Attaturk daywalk	Marg McLachlan

15-17 February Ruahines - Mokai

Tramp	E	Otukota Hut	Clinton Hunter
Tramp	M	Maropea Forks	Debbie Buck
Tramp	MF	Lake Colenso	Craig McGregor
Tramp	F	Wakelings Hut	David Heffernan
Family	All	Bike Wrights Hill	Daniel Moore

22-24 February Whanganui

Tramp	EM	Trains hut	Meena Kadri Mike Gilbert
Cycle	M	Mangapurua track/ Ohakune	Michael Schier
Family	All	Camping Pinnacles	Angela Gilbert

1-3 March Tararuas - Waiohine

Tramp	E	Totara Flats	Tony Gazley
Tramp	EM	“First Crossings” Tauherenikau	Illona Keenan
Tramp/ Tube	M	Totara Flats	Debbie Buck
Tramp	MF	Neill Forks via Totara Flats	Simon McAuliffe
Tramp	F	Neill Winchcombe	Yibai He
Family	All	Butterfly Creek daywalk	Susan Sturman Sarah Young

8-10 March Richmond Range – North Bank

Tramp	E	Lake Chalice stich'n'tramp	Illona Keenan
Tramp	MF	Mt Rintoul	Michael Schier
Instr	All	Bushcraft course (Paua hut)	Amanda Wells
Family	All	Skyline daywalk	Andrew Squires
Family	All	Ruapehu Lodge	Mike Gilbert

15-17 March Tararuas - Kiriwhakapapa

Tramp	E	Blue Range hut	Richard Lyth
Tramp	MF	Arete Forks via Table Ridge	Paul Christoffel
Alp1	M	Taranaki summit from Syme	Mike Phethean
Day	M	Kapakapanui	Pete Gent
Family	All	Zealandia picnic	Amelia White

Newsletter editor update

Sarah Young, Newsletter editor



What a great way to start a new year than with a bumper issue of the WTMC newsletter. Thank you very much to all of you who contributed to this edition and to editions past. Writing articles is no easy task, and one that consumes a fair amount of time. That time commitment really is appreciated by myself and readers of this publication. So, thank you.

We start a new year with a new column: 'And a little bit of history'. Every month I will take an article from the club's archives and re-publish it for your amusement, to satisfy your craving all things interesting, and to teach you a wee bit about the club's past. In this month in 1949, the Tramping Club newsletter published an article about members of the Waitakere Tramping Club experiencing tramping in the Tararuas for the first time; read their descriptor at the end of this newsletter.

Enjoy!

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



New members

This month we welcome the following new members: Kate Hodgkinson as Senior, Sarah and Hamish James as Couple and their son Ryan James as Junior members. Congratulations.

REMINDER: Subscription renewal

Thank you to those who have renewed your subscription for 2013. For members who are yet to pay, please make payment as soon as possible before 31st March. The fee structure is as follows:

Membership Type	2013 subscription rate
Senior	\$ 62
Couple	\$ 85
Veteran	\$ 52
Veteran couple	\$ 76
Family	\$ 38
Child/ Children	\$ 38
Friend of the Club	\$ 38

Please remember that if you want to receive newsletters by post within NZ, please **add \$11** to your payment to cover part of the printing and postage cost.

Please make payment to:

Account name: **Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc**
Bank/branch: **National Bank of NZ, Manners St, Wellington**
Account number: **06-0582-0013409-02**

If you have misplaced your invoice or have any questions regarding membership, please contact me on membership@wtmc.org.nz



Transport Update

Gareth Morton, Transport officer

The club would like to remind all drivers of the club vans to be extra careful when operating the vans in any tight spots such as road-end car parks, and especially when reversing when other vehicles or objects are close by. The club suggests that the van driver requests another member of the group to stand outside and assist with any tight manoeuvres as the vans are quite long. This will better ensure the van is not reversed into another vehicle or other object such as a tree, fence or shelter. A minor incident of this nature occurred recently and an insurance claim has been made against the club, but fortunately the only damage was to another vehicle and did not involve any harm to any persons.

The club is also seeking a volunteer to clean the two club vans on a monthly basis. There is no need to wash the vans manually as I suggest you drive them to the BP car wash at Johnsonville which also has a large and powerful vacuum for cleaning the insides. The cost can be charged to the Fleet Card which is inside the van. The vans are stored at the Interislander terminal where access is available almost 24 hours a day and you will be given your own set of van keys, allowing you to do this job at your own convenience. If you are keen to give something back to the club or require any more details please speak with me or email transport@wtmc.org.nz

The club is always after confident drivers to share the driving duties at weekends, especially for places further afield like Tongariro, Taranaki, Ruahines and Kaweka's. If you are happy to drive a club van please complete the Driver Vetting Form at <http://www.wtmc.org.nz/sites/default/files/wtmc-driver-vetting-form.pdf> along with a photocopy of your Drivers Licence and hand it to me on a Wednesday night or scan and email to transport@wtmc.org.nz.

Finally, if you want to have control of the club's two sexiest assets (after Sharron and Donna of course), then you will need to become the next Transport Officer! After being in the role for almost 4 years I am looking for someone to take over the reins of this role and join Committee. I have put together a document outlining the duties involved. If you are slightly interested in this role please let me know and I will email it to you. It does not require as much time and commitment as you may think, and the benefits of being able to actively contribute to the running of our wonderful club outweigh the time and work involved. No automotive or mechanical knowledge required.

I will be overseas for 4 weeks in February. Bernie Smithyman is going to step into the role of transport officer whilst I am away. Thank you very much to Bernie for offering to do this for the club. I'm sure you will all offer Bernie the utmost support whilst he is in this role.

Trip reports

Skyline day walk

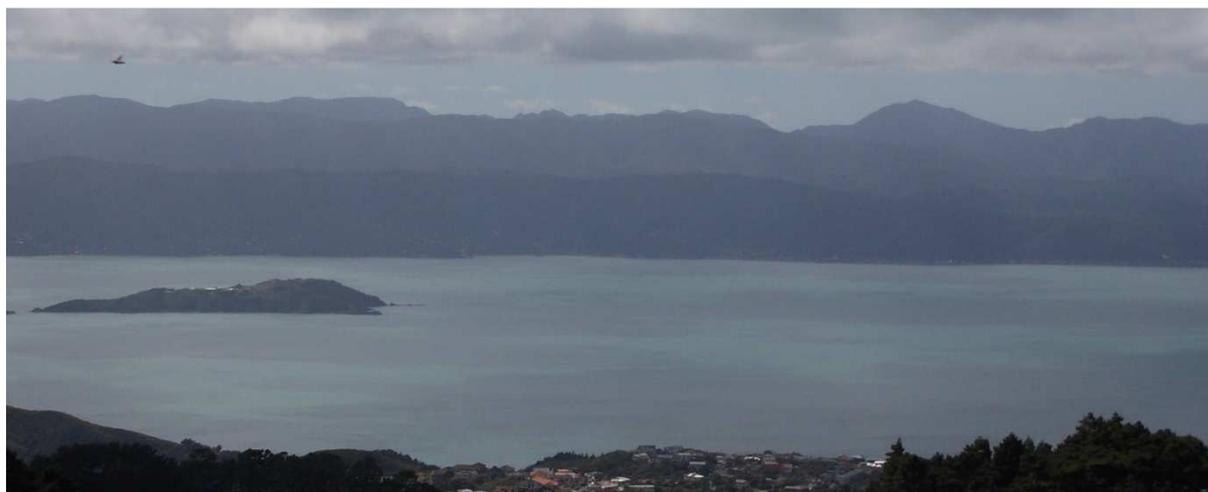
15 December 2012, Easy medium, Wellington (map #1)

Author: Marie Jessup

Trampers: Sarah Young (leader), Tamara McDonough, Deborah Stoebe, Marie Jessup, Ashley Pendree, Ilske Verburg, Tim Gore, Shannon Scott

Conditions couldn't have been more perfect as we set off from the Khandallah swimming pool at around 9.30am. There was just enough sun to make it a beautiful day and just enough cloud to make it not so hot. Not a lot of wind was forecast for the day, although that didn't mean anything to us once we got into the saddles up on the ridgeline.

We headed up the steep 45 minute climb to mount Kaukau, where we were rewarded with panoramic views that spanned from Porirua out to the Marlborough Sounds. The views of the Tararua and Rimutaka Ranges were magnificent and we were also lucky enough to have a clear view of the Kaikoura Ranges which displayed the snow-capped Mount Tapuaenuku with an an impressive height of 2885 metres above sea level; this was the first peak Sir Edmond Hillary climbed.



After soaking up the 360 degree views we made our way down the ridgeline towards the wind turbines bordering the Cook Strait.



An exciting moment was had when a scary bull was guarding our path, it only took a second to wait for him to lazily move on, Sarah cautiously removed her red jacket nevertheless.



Lunch time was spent marvelling at the hardcore mountain runners while we nestled into a little sheltered cove.

The track is most definitely very exposed and the weather is extreme up on the ridgeline especially in the saddle that meets up with Bell Track (to Awarua Street). Warm clothes are a necessity, regardless of the temperature, due to the strong winds. There are many exit points all along the track so if the weather gets too much it is easy to seek

immediate relief. We were lucky and the weather conditions were perfect making it pleasant but still having the thrill of experiencing the rough conditions the track can throw at you.

Exiting was a tranquil forest like descent into Karori Park where we finished up with big bowls of coffee and then took the number 3 bus back into town.



Te Kopahou Reserve

8 December 2012, Easy Medium, Wellington (map #2)

Author: Clinton Hunter

Trampers: Helen Law (leader), Sam Segal, Chris Bolton, Deborah Stoebe, Alex Graves, James Hemming, Shannon Scott, Clinton Hunter

Back before the break, Helen Law led an excellent pre-Christmas trip to Te Kopahou Reserve near the south coast. We gathered at the WTMC club rooms on Saturday morning to begin our walk to the reserve. Our ultimate goal was some World War II



bunkers and an observation post high above the Red Rocks and Sinclair Head on the south coast. We took our cars up to the car park at the Brooklyn wind turbine and began our walk down the sealed road towards the radar dome at Hawkins Hill.

One of the first things that happened to us was that we were greeted by a very friendly ostrich at the side of the road that seemed keen to join us on our walk. Alas it wasn't to be as the ostrich was stopped by a fence while we continued along the sealed road.



We followed the road across the hills past a large mysterious castle-like building surrounded by fences and on up Hawkins Hill past the massive radar dome (which actually looks more like a cracked eggshell from close up). All along the way we admired the stunning views across the harbour and hills. We eventually came to the end of the sealed road and scrambled down a hill to find a 4WD Drive track out to the coast, gorgeous views all the way there.



We descended to the bottom of a hill where we stopped and took a break. We now had a choice to make. Did we continue on to the observation posts, go down the hill and make a loop back up and around or turn around? After a brief discussion we decided to try for the observation post. So it was back up another hill where we were greeted by a stunning view of Cook Strait and far below were some concrete shelters that were what remained of the observation post. We wandered down the hill and were treated to more

breath-taking views of the South Coast, Cook Strait, and the Kaikouras. This we decided was a great spot to sit and have lunch and enjoy the ocean view.

On our way back we decided to take the same route we'd come in on and found the hill that we sauntered down on the way in seemed to be much bigger and much steeper going up! We wondered back along the ridgeline and noted the dark clouds gathering to the north over the Hutt Valley on the other side of the harbour as we headed back to the cars. We made it back without getting rained on and decided to top the great walk with a coffee at the Paramount Cinema café.

All in all a great way to spend a Saturday before Christmas.

Kepler Challenge

1 December 2012, Running race, Fiordland (map #3)

Author: Gareth Morton

Runners: Gareth Morton, Sharron Came, Ed Hussey
plus support crew Tao Morton and Christine Hussey

The Kepler Challenge is promoted as NZ's premier mountain running event and is an event that I thought was achievable in a respectable time with the correct training and utmost commitment. It takes place along the entire route of The Kepler Track outside Te Anau and is 60km long with approximately 1500 metre of ascent and the equivalent in descent. It is normally tramped in 3 nights/4 days at leisure but experienced trampers will do it in 2 nights/3 days. Below is a detailed course profile.



DOC have permitted the race organisers to allow 450 entrants on the course and these places get snapped up within the first 30 minutes of online entries opening six months before race day. Myself and my friend Eddie were fortunate to gain a confirmed place, however, Sharron Came only made number 174 on the waitlist – internet connections in Switzerland obviously not as efficient as their trains!

Flights, car hire and accommodation was booked and a training programme loosely thrown together. The next few months involved lots of hill training with a Camelbak full of water and gear as this would be required on race day which involved running with 5 items of spare compulsory clothing plus hat, beanie, survival blanket as well as food, water and first aid supplies. Three CrossFit classes a week also helped with getting a bit leaner and stronger.

The furthest I had ran before the Kepler Challenge had been 42.2km marathon distance (3 times), but these had all been relatively flat road marathons; the Kepler Challenge is a marathon and a half, off-road, with a big climb, a big descent and having to carry lots of gear on my back. Fingers crossed for good weather, especially along the open tops section!

The pre-race briefing took place in Te Anau the day before race day and the weather forecast was not looking awful, but neither was it looking great; rain was forecast for late morning/afternoon. The race started at 6am the next morning in good conditions, however we were told to run fast if we wanted to avoid the approaching rain clouds! It was important therefore to get along the tops as soon as possible, and down to the shelter of the Iris Burn.

The first 5km of the race is a good introduction on flat, well maintained track close to the shores of Lake Te Anau. At Brod Bay the track begins its long, but gradual, ascent for 8km to Luxmore Hut. The elite runners would have reached Luxmore Hut in about 1 hour, but for 'normal' runners like myself I arrived in 1 hour 52 minutes which I was pleased with. There was a compulsory gear check here for everybody before being allowed across the tops which was organised very efficiently with helpers all dressed as clowns! Luxmore Hut was also the first of 9 aid stations on the course which supplied water, energy gels, jelly beans, bananas and muesli bars. Running across the tops was a bit windy and much colder than down at lake level. The gloves came out but I resisted wearing my running jacket because as long as I kept moving I was able to stay warm enough. Unfortunately I never stopped for more than about 5 seconds to admire the view as I was focussed on running and not wanting to trip and fall causing injury.

After passing Forest Burn Shelter and Hanging Valley Shelter the big 7km descent began. I was glad to have the climbing over with but was also focussed on taking the descent steady and controlled to avoid cramping up at the bottom; this is a common mistake people make when running downhill. Iris Burn Hut now marked the half-way point of the race. The course from here is mostly flat with just a few short and sharp bumps along the way, though by now any slight 'bump' feels a lot harder than under normal circumstances! The track is also through beech forest so offers shelter from wind or sun.

The second half of the course involved me maintaining a steady pace I could sustain until the end and I only stopped briefly at the aid stations for jelly beans and bananas – the perfect runner's combo!

I finished the course in 8 hours, 21 minutes and 47 seconds which I was pleased with and saw me sneak into the top half of all runners. Ed and Sharron finished 30 minutes either side of my time and we all enjoyed a 20 minute post-race massage which certainly helped

to avoid any major discomforts or funny walks the day after! The race winner finished in 4 hours 55 minutes and was his third consecutive victory and the first time he had broken the 5 hour mark – awesome effort indeed! The last competitors came in after 12 hours, which is an even bigger effort in my opinion!

The Kepler Challenge is a well organised event and has a good community feel to it. Hundreds of Te Anau locals get behind this event by volunteering their time and services to ensuring all aspects run smoothly and a great deal of organisation is required to do this. The Kepler Challenge is a wonderful event for anyone with trail running experience who has the will and desire to train and push themselves to complete NZ's premier mountain running race.

www.keplerchallenge.co.nz



Te Ao Whekere

23-25 November 2012, Alp1, Seaward Kaikouras (map #4)

Author: Debbie Buck

Trampers: Tony Gazely (leader), Debbie Buck, Michael Schier, Elizabeth Claridge

After a serene Thursday night ferry crossing we made our way to Tony's 'secret, secluded DoC campsite' just north of Kaikoura. Arriving there before midnight, we were surprised to find that a pleasant campground had been turned into a campervan carpark and was full of campervans. We managed to find some free space underneath some trees to bivvy alfresco and pitch a tent. I mused about the relationship between 'conservation values and gravel car parks' as I drifted off to sleep.

Morning came all too soon. After breakfast, during which many of the campervaners departed without so much as a glance towards the snowy Kaikouras, we headed down the road to the start of our tramp at Jordan Stream. The mountains were clearly visible ahead of us and it seemed like a long way up to the snow.

For two hours we meandered up the gravelly stream, with Michael setting a solid pace. During our first snack break at the point where we were leaving the stream, we gazed at the long, steep scree slope we were about to grovel up. Tony helpfully pointed out the crux



– a slightly steeper band of bigger rocks that were too loose to grab hold off to climb up, but too 'compacted' to behave with the slidiness of scree. Mmm. ...another drink and muesli bar aided my contemplation of this.

With ice axes for support we steadily climbed up the scree, accepting the 'two feet up, half a foot down' progress as a reasonable ratio for scree climbing. The crux came and went without drama – I tried to move gingerly so Elizabeth wouldn't be bombarded with loose rocks. Once we were all safely over the crux, we progressed upwards through tussock and shrubs, interspersed with some rock scrambling to get onto the ridge. Tony had mentioned that the Seaward Kaikouras were NZs youngest mountains and hence the rock was dynamic (ie reluctant to stay in one place). I pondered this as we progressed up the ridge.

On several occasions I opted for the gardening route (ie hauling oneself up though vegetation that seemed to have some level of solid root base) in preference to the uncertainty of juvenile rock. And so the sunny day progressed as we earned every metre of altitude, though at times I wondered if I'd bitten off more than I could chew.

Basking in the sun at lunch, we had stunning clear views back down to Jordan stream and further up the Puhi Puhi River valley. Then we left the vegetation behind and tackled some more serious rock scrambling. About 5pm we arrived at a snow bank in a saddle at ~1600m – not quite as far as we intended to get but possibly more protected from the forecast south westerly.

We flattened a platform for the tents and hunkered down for dinner and the night as the rain showers and mist arrived. Sometime in the night the weather eased. In the morning, Elizabeth and Tony reported their separate night views of starry sky and the moon shining on the ocean. Post breakfast, we had a not-quite alpine start at 7:30am.

Michael, in his true mountain goat form, cramponed up the first steep snow slope whilst the rest of us scrambled up an adjacent rock rib. Once on the relatively flat ridge in snow, we put on crampons and enjoyed the alpine tramping that we'd come for! We even had sun and mountain views. With Michael forging ahead cutting steps and taking photos, we made steady progress, whilst the mist rolled in. There were a few patches where we cramponed over rock and we encountered some spiders that seemed to hover above the snow on their tiptoes. The snow was mostly firm but there were a few holes where I suddenly dropped in up to my thigh.

About 11 am we hit the icy start of the gnarly stuff and the visibility was very poor. Looking at the steep slope without a safe run-out, we decided that only Michael would go further to the summit. A bit disappointing but I was beginning to accept that summits could be elusive on alpine tramps, whereas inclement weather was generally not elusive. So Elizabeth, Tony and I carefully followed our tracks back through the whiteout – at times we weren't able to see more than a couple of metres ahead. We stopped for a quick lunch break, wondering how Michael was going. We didn't need to wonder for too much longer because he caught up with us. Michael made it to the top but had no view and mentioned that he was glad he'd had his technical ice axe and stiff boots for the gnarliest part of the ascent. So Tony, Elizabeth and I continued our careful descent in crampons. Michael removed his crampons and 'skied sans skis' down the steep snow slope.



Back at the campsite at 3:30pm, we decided to pack up and head down to camp by Jordan Stream. So off we started, still with poor visibility. The going was fine and fast until we got a bit lower where it was clearer and realised we were somewhere we weren't meant to be! After Tony and Michael consulted maps and GPS, we decided on an alternative descent route that would take us via farmland to Range Stream or the Puhi Puhi road. By this time I was feeling pretty tired.

Down through slippery totara and matagouri-laced paddocks, we were heartened that we were passing cow pats – if cows could get up here there must be a way down for us. Some moments of indecision and frazzlement as we debated whether to head for the road or the stream – which would have the clearer route so we could get to water and set up camp before dark? By vote it was decided to head along the ridge towards the road. Jubilation and jelly beans when we hit an old farm trail that provided clear travelling all the way to the farm gate at the road.

Whilst Tony and Michael walked the 3km back to pick up the car, Elizabeth and I were greeted by the chatty farmer who was out walking her 3 house dogs, which were very interested in our salami! We apologised for getting lost on her farm and learnt that we'd missed the hunters who had been up shooting pests on the farm that morning. We also learnt that the DoC campground became a campervan carpark for the Rugby World Cup. And for the next time I head to 'Whekere', I also learnt that the farmer had a wee hut up near the top of Range stream which could be used by trampers wanting access to Te Ao Whekere through her farm.

Once Tony and Michael arrived back in the car, we drove to a secluded campsite by the river that the farmer recommended. Tony was happy because this was an idyllic replacement campsite that was not likely to become a campervan carpark!

After 13 hours of tramping, four weary happy trampers washed in the river and enjoyed a sumptuous dehy' and biscuit feast around a warming fire before finally rolling into bed at 11pm.

Our third day was spent sleeping in, indulging in café delights and a sunny flattish stroll amongst the seals at Kaikoura, before we drove back to Picton and the end of a thoroughly challenging and satisfying alpine adventure.

Unfinished business: Niell Ridge

22 December 2012, Private trip, Tararuas (map #5)

Author: Andrew Bichan
Trampers: Andrew Bichan

In the middle of the southern Tararuas there is an enticing route that leads up to (or down from) Mt Hector. It fulfils all the necessities of a great shortcut: it looks like it should be quicker than other routes; it isn't as well travelled as the traditional Southern Crossing and it promises unusual views as it traverses some interesting landscape.

This had been my thinking in June 2012 when a trip from Waiohine up Bull Mound, across the Southern Crossing to Kime for the night was supposed to have been followed by an exit down Neill Ridge to Waiohine. Things went well until high winds, clag and a detour down the wrong spur resulted in a "discretion before valour" decision to beat a retreat back over the Southern Crossing with an unplanned night in Cone Hut.

Incidentally, this was the same day that the WTMC trip up Neill, after heading a fair way along the tops, very sensibly decided that you would have to be insane to be pottering about up there so backtracked and bivvied for the night (refer July 2012 WTMC Newsletter). A hunter I met in Cone Hut that night got as far as poking his nose out of the bushline before reaching the same conclusion.

This time, the plan was to go up Neill (on the theory that it would be harder to get lost going up), then assess options and possibly head along the main range to Maungahuka returning to Waiohine via Neill Forks the next day. The weather forecast wasn't great, promising showers but warm temperatures and light winds.

Leaving the road end at 0615 the sun is probably up but is hidden by the rain coming down. There are no views to be had so it's straight up Cone reaching the top around 0830. Here the sign pointing up Neill Ridge causes a bit of a pause: 6 to 9 hours to Mt Hector. This is somewhat longer than I had estimated but at worst it means a night at Kime which is already noted as an option on my intentions sheet.

Under the bush, the track along the ridge is reasonably easy to follow and quite well marked. The rain keeps up but it is warm enough not to bother with a coat (yet). It is quite up-and-down providing a reminder that a 39m climb may only show as a one contour line change on the map. The bush is stunted, mossy goblin forest, showing the effects of regular assault and battery from the north.

The bush eventually fades behind for the climb up Winchcombe Peak (sparing a thought for my club colleagues' uncomfortable night). On the tops, the wind has come up, visibility is less than 50m and dropping and it's easy to miss the easiest route. At the top of Winchcombe there are no visual clues which way the track drops off but the compass points the way through the gloom.

The next section has some steep sharks' teeth to navigate before the climb up to 1398m. Here I work out why I missed the route last time and push on to Mt Hector. It's a relief when the memorial looms out of the clag and I turn right to take the well-worn track to Kime arriving a little after 1pm.

The lingering effects of a cold has me feeling wrung out and scuppers any thoughts of heading up the main range. I decide to stay put and reassess in the morning. Later in the afternoon the sun breaks through periodically and Kime is more pleasant than I've seen it before. As the only human resident, it's a quiet night.

In the morning, still feeling less than 100% I elect the most direct exit to the road end leaving a little before six. The sun rises over Hector and although the valleys are a sea of cloud, the tops are crisp and clear. A pause at the top to text the changed intentions then a left turn to look down Neill Ridge. The contours previously staggered over in impenetrable clag are bare to the sky.

The walk along the ridge is a completely different experience. The features of the main range march in sequence across the view to the north; the Southern Crossing curves to the south west and in the east, cloud to the horizon hides the Wairarapa. Looking down, there are many alpine plants flowering (mainly white; suggesting moth pollination?) and the sides of the ridge drop steeply into the Hector and Tauherenikau catchments.

The path is generally easy to follow but a few minutes are spared to place a cairn where it might have been helpful first time around.

Below the bush line the roller coaster track soon revives the fatigue of yesterday and the valley cloud rises to 1000m, spilling through Neill Saddle. Despite the thin cloud it's pleasantly warm and pleasantly not raining. My 2L camelback runs dry at the top of the last drop into the Waiohine and arriving at the park just before 1pm the spare bottle in the car is very welcome.

Post script

Neill Ridge is a little gem. It is exposed with some clambering required so can be exciting in the wind. There are one or two points particularly coming down where you can get misled in poor visibility so best to be with someone that has done it before. Just east of Neill there is a route down to Neill Forks which someone has marked with plastic ribbon – don't start following these unless you want a somewhat longer trip.

Oriwa Ridge Bivy

11-13 January 2012, Medium fit, Tararuas (map #6)

Author: Alistair Young

Trampers: Alistair Young, Craig McGregor, Bernie Smithyman, Debbie Buck

Friday night had us hiking the 50 odd minutes required to get to the confluence of the Blackwater and Ohau streams. The campsites were brilliant. Some of us erected flys, the others relied on tree cover, mocking the weather gods.

The next day our boots hit the Blackwater at a lazy 8:30am, but we made acceptable time in the lower gorge section. The water level was low and the day was warm perfect for river travel.

By midday the river steepened and travel became a bit more involved with lots of boulder hopping and a bit of scrambling. The heat also intensified making the deep pools a relief to be sought out and not sidled. The pace of the party slowed markedly given the different levels of experience of river travel, but we soldiered on taking the various forks in the river aiming to exit between Waiopehu and Twin Peak and avoid the leather wood fence which rings the top of these two peaks.





We exited the stream at 5 pm, much later than I had planned (this trip is a favourite of mine and I've done it plenty of times over night and as a day trip). We therefore agreed to shorten the day and stay at Waiopehu hut, leaving Oriwa ridge for another time. The views from the top were excellent; we could see the southern crossing, the Dundas Ridge through to Crawford and the Carkeek Ridge. We loitered on the tops for a while before descending to the hut for brews and a hearty Italian meal.

We shared the hut with a friendly but very loud and drunk private party. We all retired early and the night passed peacefully until I sleepwalked off the top bunk; a two meter high bunk dive leaves you feeling like you've been horse kicked in the gut and flogged with a rubber truncheon. I moved to the lower bunk and spent the rest of the night cursing top bunks, aches and pains.

With overnight rain and my midnight bruising's we decided to head out the fastest way. Leaving in the drizzle we made the road end in regulation time for a coffee in Levin before heading home.

Waiopehu

12-13 January 2013, Easy medium, Tararuas (map #7)

Author: Tracey Black

Trampers: Alex Graves, Anna Lambrechtsen (co-leader),
Anneke Magdorf, Barbara Keenan (co-leader),
Clinton Hunter, Kate Hodgkinson, Pete Gent, Tracey Black

We started off on a gorgeous Saturday morning from Wellington Railway Station, heading for Poads Road (about 4km east of Levin) in the club van. Our intention was to head up to Waiopehu Hut, cook up a lovely curry, enjoy the view, sleep like logs after our exertions and come back down on the Sunday. The forecast looked pretty good, although Sunday was supposed to be a bit drizzly and windy. But we never had to worry about Sunday's weather as circumstances conspired slightly against us...

First things first. In the group were two prospective new club members who hadn't been on an overnight trip with the club before – Alex and myself. Of all the packs hauled out of the van at Poads Road, whose do you think were the heaviest? The others were kinder than they might have been when between us we pulled out a towel, coffee stovepot and 900-page novel, among other things (note to self: buy lightest possible e-book reader for future trips). I decided to leave my fourth litre of water, hairbrush and a few other bits and pieces behind (not the coffee pot though!).

With Alex's and my packs a little lighter, we started off shortly after 10:30am, traversing the paddocks for 1km to the track start. From there, Waiopehu Hut has a posted time of 5 hours for about a 9 km tramp, climbing 1000m and descending 200m on the way. We started up. I don't think I really took in the beautiful lowland bush we were walking through in the first hour; I was blowing too hard and thinking about where my feet were going, how I really needed to be a bit fitter, and my choice about the coffee pot. Too late now! But the gradient seemed to lessen slightly after we passed the junction with the track that heads east to Ohau Gorge, and not long after, we stopped for lunch.

Refuelled, we continued up through the lovely forest, which was giving us good cover on a hot day. We had another quick break at about the 3-hour mark. 'Great,' I thought, 'about another 2 to go. I'm going to murder that coffee when I get there.' But no. A person coming down from Waiopehu Hut passed us. Apparently there was very little water in the tank, and the tap was broken so what water there was, was leaking out.

Having little water in a busy hut (another group of 8 was also planning to stay) was not a good prospect. We considered various options and in the end decided to change the tramp to a day walk, with people free to continue as far as Waiopehu if they wanted before heading back down. The least fit person in the group, I was confident about tramping 2 or 3 more hours at my slower pace, but I quailed at the thought of maybe 6 or more hours and decided to turn around there. All the others were made of tougher stuff, and decided to continue.

Van key in hand, I headed back down and reached the road-end 2h45m later, knackered, but having enjoyed the forest – surprising how different it looks when you're on the way

down! The back seat of the van was a very comfy spot to park up and knock off a few hundred pages of my book while I waited for the others to turn up. It was a stunning evening, sunny with a bit of a breeze. The only thing I was lacking was: fuel and a cooker for a coffee!

The others arrived at 9pm as the last light was going, fatigued after their 10-hour effort. They'd all made it to Waiopehu Hut and enjoyed the views out to Taranaki and Ruapehu. They had also filled their water bottles/bladders from the second tank on the other side of the hut that was in perfect working order, albeit fairly low in water. D'oh!

We elected to head directly back to Wellington, no stopping for KFC, and got back around 11 pm. I don't know where Anna found the energy to drive, I slept most of the way and I'd only walked about half the distance! Thanks Anna ☺ So...not the overnight tramp we planned, but still an opportunity for everyone to enjoy the Tararuas on a fabulous day.

Vossler navigation

7-9 December 2012, Medium, Tararuas (map #8)

Author: David Heffernan

Trampers: Craig McGregor (leader), Oleg Vlasov,
Debbie Buck, Wei Min Ren, David Heffernan

"Punters are but a myth of the imagination, or perhaps the memory of the trampers from a bygone era. An era which has since passed. The era of signing up for a trip meant going on a trip has since passed.

But the show, of course, will always go on."

– Disillusioned trip leader Craig

It was a trip of contrasts: fresh snow, and a lovely refreshing swim in the Otaki River on the way out; brilliant views of Kapiti and the Tararua Main Range, and hours clagged in in Tararua mizzle; delicious tiramisu for dessert and canned survival muffins for lunch; quick progress up the tracks to Field, over Bridge Peak and on to Vossler, followed by an excruciatingly slow descent down an effectively unmarked spur; very happy punters and very disgruntled punters.

There were originally supposed to be two navigation trips leaving from Otaki Forks on the weekend of the 7th: one over Vossler and the other up to Waitewaewae. The two trips started off with 13 members between them. Nine withdrawals, three late sign-ups, and another two late withdrawals amongst the late signups left us with a total of 5 after merging the two trips together.

We started off with the usual Friday night pickup at the railway station in Wellington. After dinner at Waikanae we arrived at the Otaki Forks car park at about 7:20pm. Due to the chaos involved in sorting out the fickle punters trip leader Craig hadn't quite figured out the

gear designations, so just grabbed everything and we sorted it at pre-departure in Otaki. The rain immediately picked up as we all stood outside the van for 40 minutes faffing about and getting our gear and torches sorted and ready to go. The trip leader made wise suggestions regarding the merits of parallel faffing about vs. serial faffing about. Comments taken on board.

"This is faffing of the worst kind. Serial faffing cannot be tolerated. If you must faff, you must ensure that it is parallelised and concurrent faffing."

– Disillusioned trip leader Craig

The trip up to Field was uneventful, although we did overtake a couple of other groups, including four girls training for the Duke of Edinburgh award who eventually arrived at the hut at 11:40pm (total time of 4:40!), well after we the rest of the hut were asleep.

The following morning there was a fairly respectable earthquake, with a short sharp jolt followed by 30 seconds or so of slow rocking motion. We were worried that it might have been Christchurch, in which case the earthquake was probably properly big and not much of the town would be left standing, or Wellington, which could also be problematic. Oh well, not much we could do about it except for spend the next two days guessing where and how big.

After more epic faffing we were out the door a shade after 8:30am, and after a stop in the snow for a muesli bar, and a minor navigational challenge in near-zero visibility at Bridge Peak, we arrived at Vossler at 12:00 for a big lunch and an argument about whether we were actually at Vossler. None of the morning's events bode well for the navigation section that was to follow.



Summer in the Tararuas (Photo c/- WeiMin)

There were no worries finding the top of the spur we were seeking, with a large, strategically-placed cairn guiding the way, and we joked that the track was so well worn that we wouldn't need to do any navigation at all, and would be at the hut, now only about

2.8km away, by 3:00-ish. This confidence soon vanished after it took us two hours bashing through leatherwood to drop 300m altitude for a mere 1km of progress towards our destination.

"Adopting the brace position while out with a group signals to the others that you are working and should be left to get on with it."

-- Lyle Brotherton, Collins Ultimate Navigation Manual.



Things got worse below the bushline, where we would see a glimmer of hope in an old track marker, only to find 50m of tree fall in all directions. Whilst we had the atmosphere of a track we were in fact bushwacking the entirety of the trip down the spur. We did quite well navigating by compass and never getting more than about 50m or so off target, but progress was excruciatingly slow, and it took us another four hours to drop 500m altitude over 1.5km.



Photo to left: Debbie gets acquainted
Photo above: Orange guardian angel of hope. (Also, where are Debbie and WeiMin?). (Both photos c/ Craig)

We arrived at a river 400m from the hut with no obvious way to make progress. Another hour of bush wacking up, over, around, and down the spur and through two streams and we were at last on a lovely track glistening with beautiful orange markers for the final 100m to Penn Creek Hut. Total progress for the day was 12.7km in just over 11.5 hours and we were completely shattered.

After cleaning ourselves off trip leader Craig took care of the Tiramisu dessert while the rest of us prepared a late pasta dinner and washed up.

The following morning nobody was feeling particularly refreshed. The hut had old-school wire mattresses, which may have had something to do with it. (Make a mental note to relocate mattresses to the floor in future.) We were again out the door at about 8:30am for the return to Otaki Forks.

Many of the punters got a bit dirty on the trip out, with a very muddy track back up to the junction we had passed through approximately 24 hours earlier. We spent most of the ascent arguing over climb rates, but we ended up clocking just over 1000m altitude in about 2.5 hours of actually walking in the correct direction (more navigation issues), which works at about 400m/hour vertical at a fairly casual stroll. Obviously everything is a few times faster when you have guardian orange triangles to watch over you.

A quick snack at the junction and a debate on the state of the economy and the TPP and we were on our way back down, past Field Hut again, and back to the Otaki river for a practice river crossing, a gaiter clean and a swim.



Survival muffin (Photo c/- Craig)

The group had a craving for ice creams, and after a couple more failed navigation attempts and a bit of raw determination we found what must surely be Kapiti's best ice cream shop on the corner of the main road at Paraparaumu Beach. A leisurely stroll on the beach, and we were back at the Railway Station drop off just after 6:00pm.



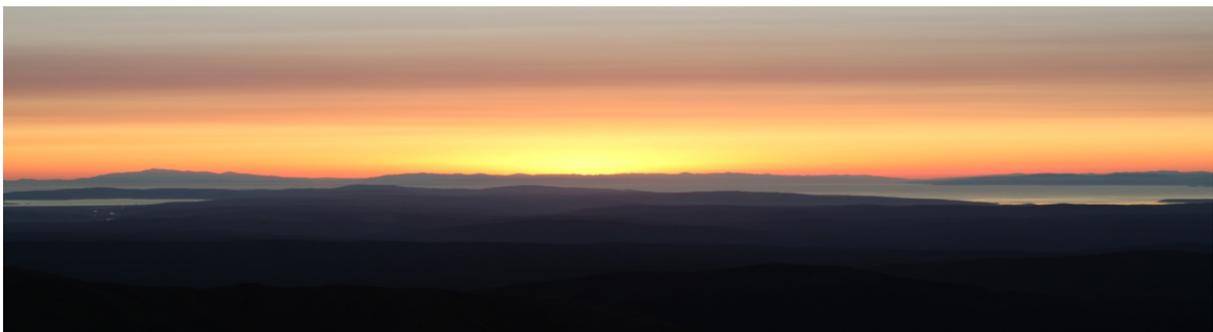
Ice creams on Paraparaumu beach. (Photo c/- Craig)

The trip got good reviews from all punters, but in hindsight it perhaps wasn't really an "M" trip, and after hearing a few horror stories from trip leader Craig's previous attempts at an "M" trip we decided to classify it with a new club grade: "Craig-M".

Mount Hector sunset

5 January 2013, Private trip, Tararuas (map #9)

Author: Kate Hodgkinson
Trampers: Kate Hodgkinson, Tony Gazley



On the morning of Saturday 5th January, myself and Tony Gazley set out for Otaki Forks. Our plan was to walk to the top of Mount Hector, pitch the tent and take photos of the sunset. Wellington had been blessed by awesome weather for the weekend so I was looking forward to getting out onto the tops for the first time.

We took a steady walk up to Mount Hector, stopping off at Field and Kime Huts en route for much needed cuppas. The views on the way up to the top made it more than worth the uphill climb in the heat. No amount of views on the ascent however could have prepared us for what lay ahead at the top.

The views from up there were absolutely incredible. We could see Taranaki, Ruapehu and Tapuae-o-Uenuku as clear as anything and watching the sunset over these, Wellington city and the top of the South Island was an incredible experience.

We were up bright and early on Sunday morning to watch the sunrise and, after breakfast, headed back down to Kime Hut for another cuppa before retracing our steps back down towards Otaki Forks. Arriving at the car park hot and sweaty after a fair few hours of walking in the heat, we took a much needed swim in the river before piling back into the car and heading for home.

Tony assured me that we had been unusually lucky with the weather that weekend and that the views from the tops didn't often extend beyond a few feet in front of your eyes, let alone a 360 degree panoramic masterpiece. Call it beginners luck if you like, but whatever it is, for the opportunity to take photos of scenery like that, just a hop, skip and jump outside of Wellington, whatever it is, I'll take it.

Arthurs Pass mystery trip

18-21 January 2013, Alp 1, Arthurs Pass (map #10)

Author: Mike Phethean

Attendees: Sharron Came (President and leader), David Jewel (Arnie)
Michael Schier (Austrian), Dmitri Alkinmov (Russian), Mike Phethean (Pom and scribe)
Apologies: Geoff Key

I always know when I am tramping on the coming weekend as I spend the week before checking the forecast. The week before this trip was more checking than normal as we all tried to decide whether it was going to rain and blow too much.

This indecision affected Air New Zealand making my flight late. All was well as I got the car and some fuel for the stove in time to pick up the others before driving up to the NZAC lodge in Arthurs Pass.

The morning translated this indecision to alpine lassitude, which meant that eggs and bacon delayed our departure until 10:30am. We decided that as it was not yet raining we would tramp to Avoca Hut and see what came our way. The tramp begins with a knee deep crossing of the Waimakariri followed by a thistle dodge up turkey flat. We then followed the stream as it narrowed into a boulder hopping gorge. Towards the head waters we gained a ledge which led to a very windy saddle.



Team on Jordan Saddle

We did not tarry, but sidled steeply down into the Jordan stream where the wind and falling rock showered us with an odd gritty dust mist. Soon in the trees the river opened up and eventually joined the Avoca river. The promised rain now came but only as showers which disappeared as soon as we donned jackets. We seemed to cruise the six kilometers of river bed to Avoca Hut, seven hours after departure.

The cosy hut had plenty of windfall outside which allowed Russian fire starting while the dinner was cooked.



People indulging their hobbies, in Dmitry's case pyromania, in Mike's case light reading

The wind was forecast to drop so we thankfully did not make an alpine start the next morning. Instead we headed up in the sunshine and after a brief wrestle with some windfall broke out into the open alpine valley.

Our route was up a steep stream which was still partially snow filled. This slowed us down as where normally you could probably get through easily, climbing soft quite vertical snow mounds is tricky.

Some steep snow led to the open snow fields above, where we realized that our attempt was not going to be successful.



Team on Greenlaw Saddle

The wind was actually increasing and the summit seemed to be shedding loose rock onto our climbing path at a very alarming rate. We decided that we would have to climb in spring. Never the less we bagged Greenlaw Col and had lunch.



Team on Sphinx Saddle

A good descent was aided by a couple of cautious abseils and we were soon all trying (and failing) to glissade as fast as Austrians do. Michael decided that winning the skiing meant that he would be in charge of the fire. Thankfully Dmitri was there to give helpful suggestions.

The next day was blue skies and no wind. We took a longer different route out following Easy stream up to Sphinx Saddle and then dropping down which ever scree slope we preferred into the

Ante Crow River. After lunch and another 3 hours we arrived back at the car with

our gravel bashing completed for the year.

Showers and monster size ice creams were then the order of the day.

Thanks very much to Sharron for leading the trip.

WTMC South Island Christmas and New Year trip

26 December 2012 - 4 January 2013, NZ (map #11)

Author: Kate Hodgkinson

Trampers: Barbara Keenan, Peter Gent, Annika, Anna Lambrechtsen, Kate Hodgkinson, Donna Maher, Mike Lightbourne, Sue Walsh



We met bright and early on Boxing Day morning and boarded the ferry. Thankfully it was a very calm crossing over to the South Island so the Christmas over indulgences were forgiven. The weather forecast for the next 10 days was beginning to look a little foreboding but, keeping our fingers crossed that it wouldn't turn into anything, we started out on the long drive south to Glenorchy, via Queenstown.

Two days, many miles and hundreds of photos of stunning scenery later, we arrived at our campsite in Glenorchy. Surrounded by awesome mountain and lake scenery, and arriving in beautiful sunny weather, it was hard to imagine the weather that was still being forecast to come our way over the next few days. After consulting numerous maps and closely analysing the weather forecasts, we decided that we would have to scrap our original tramp route of the Rees Dart as if the weather did come through, we'd be stuck by swollen rivers by day two. Instead, we decided that we'd play it safe for another two days and allow the weather to show itself before we made our next move so we headed off in the direction of the non-river crossing Sugar Loaf overnighter.



The Sugar Loaf proved to be quite a steep learning curve for me. Suffice to say that by the end of the two days, I had learnt a huge amount about tramping nutrition and how to pack a pack correctly! After a long day of tramping, and being rewarded for our efforts with some incredible valley views, we spent the evening battling it out with hundreds of demon sand flies! I can definitely vouch for the fact that they prefer the taste of fresh foreigners and in this instance; I definitely took one for the team!

After arriving back in Glenorchy from the tramp, we realised that the weather forecast had indeed been accurate so we started to re-think our tramping plans for the rest of the trip. We decided that the following day we would do the first day of the Routeburn Track before heading off in the direction of Wanaka.

Having tramped the first day of the track, I'd love to go back and do the whole of the Routeburn. Again we saw some incredible views, even if we did get more than a little bit soggy on the way back out in the afternoon as the weather front had finally hit the area. After a fairly lengthy but beautiful drive, we arrived at our campsite in Wanaka and over the coming days headed off for a few tramps around the lake and up Mount Roy.



After celebrating New Years in the minibus parked in the Wanaka campsite, sipping Baileys and eating chocolate, on the 1st January, we started the drive back up north towards Kaikoura in the hope that the weather would hold out long enough for us to be able to do a day walk up to Saw Cut Gorge before getting our ferry back to Wellington on the 4th January.

Having driven over the top of a number of heavily swollen rivers on the way back up, it seemed unlikely that we'd be able to do the final walk but as luck would have it, we turned the corner into the Gorge's catchment to find very low flowing rivers. Enjoying the first bit of sunshine we'd seen in a few days, we walked up to the Gorge and ate lunch just on the other side of the Saw Cut before then heading back to the minibus and eventually on to the ferry for our return crossing.



After not having the weather we had all hoped for, the trip turned out to be quite a bit different to that which we had originally planned but it still proved to be a good break away spending time with some great people and getting to see some incredible places. Thanks to all who came along, did the many many miles of driving, dehydrated the food and poured over maps and weather forecasts!

And a little bit of history

LABOUR! WEEKEND IN THE TARARUAS.

The following account of a Southern Crossing is reprinted with the permission of the Waitakere Tramping Club to give our members some idea of what an Aucklanders thinks of our tramping country. The article is published exactly as printed in "Trailblazer", the above Club's magazine so please do not blame us for putting a Maori Bunk in Tauwharenikau Hut - it must have crept in through a mirage or something. Many thanks to the Waitakere Club for the readily given permission to re-print. Ed.

On arriving at Otaki by train I met Jack Woodward and then picked up the truck with Mike Monteith and 7 T.T.C. members and proceeded in it to the Otaki Forks. A little excitement was caused in spots where slips had fallen in the two gorges through which we had to pass to reach the Hut at the Forks.

After a hasty snack we left the Hut, crossed the river by suspension bridge and started climbing. After about 600 feet of cleared ridge we came to the bush which is beech forest much the same as in the National Park area. A trip of close on two hours brought us to 3,000 feet where we spent the night at Field Hut. This trip was done in rain which was rather heavy, and which turned into hail as we climbed higher. Field Hut is a barn-like affair with a loft upstairs which is reached by a ladder, thus giving twice the accommodation.

That night was fairly cold and it snowed in the early hours. At about 5a.m. we arose, Breakfasted, and were away around 7a.m. After climbing through snow several inches deep to about 4,000 feet we had a brief halt at Kimo Hut which closely resembles the inside of a refrigerator. As we were fairly cold we moved on across the tops where we encountered a strong, cold wind, strong by our standards, but not by Tararua standards. If you can stand up in the wind they do not consider it strong. All the way across the tops we were above the bush line so the only shelter we had was when we were on the lee of a ridge. Visibility was around 50 feet most of the time but we were lucky to have a break in the cloud at the most advantageous position for a good view. We could see the Hutt Valley and the Wairarapa plains and also up over the Northern Tararuas. They are very rugged and death from exposure has occurred several times in them. They are very much like the Hunua Ranges but on a scale of twice as large. The tracks are mostly like sheep tracks, at least those I saw were, winding across the hills, worn deep by the passage of clinkers and triple hobs.

We arrived at Alpha Hut very tired and after about an hour left for the Tauwharenikau Valley via Hell's Gates, so called because of the long drop down ---- to reach the Hut we then had to climb up about the same amount again. Tramping in the Tararuas seems to consist solely of ups and downs.

We reached Tauwharenikau Hut fairly tired at about 5.40p.m., having that day covered close on twenty miles over hard going. This

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Hut was also barn-like with a loft, but it was strained to near capacity with 70 bods. It has held 100. It is about 30 by 16 feet, so the crush can be imagined. So many people were upstairs in the loft that a rafter snapped and had to be propped up with a log. A novel feature was a Maori Bunk, which is a raised platform about two feet above the floor, covered in bracken, extending the width of the Hut, where everyone can bunk down together and save a lot of space.

Monday morning was spent basking in the sun listening to the river and watching the clouds race across the sky. In the afternoon we tramped out over the hills to Kaitoke Station, a 2½ hour trip, arriving about half an hour before the train was due. However it was over an hour late, but after a speedy (downhill) trip we reached Wellington in time for the 7.40p.m. express for Auckland.

R. Anderson.

Excerpt from:

Tramping and Mountaineering, Journal of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club, Inc. February 1949, Vol 1, No. 5.

Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 1 March 2013

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.