



# the Mouth'n'Ear



*Newsletter of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club*



**John Marney (above) writes about a more difficult trip at Mt Rolleston on p17.  
(Photo: Mike McGavin's archives)**

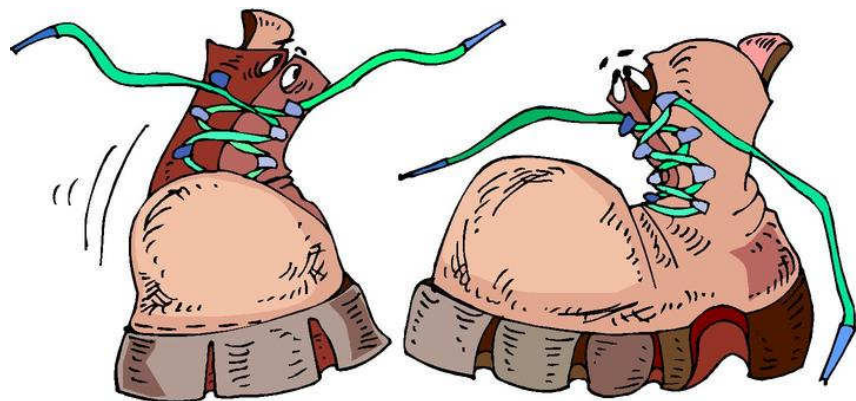
In this February issue: Care of Tents/Flies; Kai on the Fly; Purity Hut (Ruahine FP); Christmas at the Gardens; Northern Main Range (Tararua FP); Mt Rolleston (Arthur's Pass NP).

Deadline March Newsletter: 12 March

Send contributions to [newsletter@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@wtmc.org.nz), or PO Box 5068 Wellington.

# Topographical Turpitude

with the Chief Guide



- Day Walk leaders required for all the keen walkers from the new members night to the end of March
- **Kilometres** please text Gareth or me [transport@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:transport@wtmc.org.nz) the speedo reading for each trip, thanks drivers.
- Please return the gear clean and dry.

## Important Dates

- Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 6.30-8.30pm Trip Planning Meeting at Clubrooms
- Bushcraft 12-14 March
- Outdoor First Aid 23-25 April (numbers limited)
- Leadership Course 14-16 May

Paul Jeffries  
Chief Guide

## UPCOMING TRIPS:

### February 26-28

Day	[E/M]	Mt Clime	Andy Hay
Tramp	[F]	Bannister Crossing	Sharron Came

### Richmond ranges

Tramp	[E/M]	Lake Chalice	Amelia Moody
Tramp	[M]	Tims Creek to Top Valley	Leader Required
Tramp	[F]	Mt Richmond to Old Man	Leader Required
Cycle	[M]	Port Underwood (Ex Picton)	Hans Wiskerke

### March 5-7

Tramp	[M]	Southern X'ing, X Dressing	Bernard Smithyman/Jackie Foster
Cycle	[M]	Around the Haurangis	Harry Smith
Day	[E]	Belmont Regional Park	Tim Frank
Day	[E/M]	Kaitoke/Dodson	Robert Bettis

### March 13

Race	[Run]	Tararua Challenge (marshalls wanted)	Contact Steve Austin
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### March 12-14 (Bushcraft)

Tramp	[E]	Bushcraft (Paua Hut)	Melissa Hewson
Putara Road End			
Tramp	[E]	Herepai	John Hickey
Tramp	[E/M]	Roaring Stag – Ruamahanga Gorge	Tim Frank/Mika Verheul
Tramp	[F]	Arete Biv	Leader Required
Tramp	[Family]	Boar Inn Hut	Mike Gilbert
Tramp	[FE]	Riversdale	Simon Mcauliffe
Day	[E/M]	Wainuiomata Water Catchment (Sunday only)	John Harrison

### March 18-21

Tramp	[E/M]	Jumbo Hut	Katharina Monien
Tramp	[E]	Mitre Flats	Paul Andrews
Tramp	[M]	Mitre via Mitre Flats	Andy Hay
Tramp	[M/F]	Tarn Ridge via 3 Kings	Amanda Wells

### March 26-28

Day	[M]	Takapu Rd-Dry Creek	Mike Gilbert
Day	[E/M]	Spier Park to Mt Kau Kau	Leader Required
Tramp	[FE]	Ohau South-Holdsworth	Murray Sutherland

### South Island Trips

Tramp	[E]	Sawcut Gorge	Donna Maher
Tramp	[E/M]	Hapuku – Kowhai	Leader Required
Tramp	[F]	Mt Snowflake	Leader Required
Cycle	[M/F]	Kaikoura - Waiau	Leader Required

### April 1-5 (Easter)

Kayak	[E/M]	Waikaremoana	Kevin Cole & Donna Maher
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### Nelson Lakes

Tramp	[E]	Blue Lake	Amelia Moody
Tramp	[E/M]	Travers-Sabine	Clinton Hunter
Tramp	[M/F]	Travers Saddle– Blue Lake-Moss Pass	Paul Christoffel

### Kahurangi NP (Cobb road end)

Tramp	[E/M]	Lake Sylvester, Diamond Lakes	Leader Required
Tramp	[M]	Waingaro Peak	Leader Required
Tramp	[F]	Dragons Teeth	Jenny Beaumont
Tramp	[FE]	Wangapeka 5-6 Day	Jenny Cossey

# Care of Tents/Flies

*from Marie Henderson – Gear Custodian*



These are useful, and sometimes critical, shelters. Like all gear they can take a bit of a battering. They do better when used the right way and shown some respect. So it seemed a good topic to review. A double skin tent is one like the club alpine tents that have a inner and an outer fly – these can be separated (yes I am not fibbing!) and you can pitch one without the other – either as just a fly or just an inner (useful in dry hot places to maximise ventilation). Double skin tents retain more heat and can get quite tropical on a warm night.

## **Pitching**

Take a good look around for a site – slope, ground condition, vegetation, wind direction (current and expected), general shelter conditions of the area are all things to consider. Basically try to picture where the

bodies will lie and pick a good spot – a little effort now is going to be well worth it. Note that small slopes and holes can be managed with careful placement of some spare clothing once inside. You don't want your hip on top of a bump and even a light slope can mean everything, including people, just slide to the bottom – you are not going to get that comfy nights rest you probably need. Heads up slope are the way to go if you do have some slope.

Before you pitch make sure the ground is clear of anything that might puncture the tent floor or your ground sheet and pad. This is not meant to be a full site excavation – just remove bigger branches and sharp sticks or stones. Remember all the rest of the plant matter will form part of your mattress and give some thermal protection from the ground. Once a tent is up you can check the floor inside by hand to see if there are any sharp twigs/stones under there that you missed, before throwing in all your gear. Even a tiny pin prick size hole can suck in a lot of water through capillary action. Digging a moat to redirect water should not be necessary and degrades the natural aesthetics of a site – using care when picking your site is preferable to 'gardening'. Respectful trampers want to leave a site as they found it or even better (by removing rubbish you find left by inconsiderate others or just by mistake).

When you are ready to pitch, first thread the poles through the sleeves. Don't flick the poles for the sections to join, as you can damage the section ends. Never pull poles through a sleeve. You'll just pull a pole section out of its neighbour and end up wasting lots of time trying to rejoin them in the sleeve and potentially putting lots of little bite holes from the

pole ends in the sleeve as they try to snap back together. Any holes will make your shelter less secure and the threading of poles harder – hardly what you need.

Pitch out the tent/fly using pegs you brought, sticks, trees, rocks, basically anything to hand which will do the job of securing it. Tight is good, floppy or slack is bad. Sometimes you are limited by the terrain, but do the best you can as you might be thankful later if conditions deteriorate. Take care that the guy ropes won't be cut (e.g. the wind can make the guys 'saw' across a sharp rock edge and cut through it). It pays to peg out the guy ropes of a double skin tent too (club tents are these types) as they are designed to pitch best with the guys set – otherwise they will billow in on you and be even more claustrophobic! I like to pitch all the guys I can anyway, as the wind generally chooses to pick up in the wee hours of even the stillest of nights and it is much nicer to be snug in your pit at four am than wandering about in your smalls, in the dark, trying to peg out the guy ropes! You can, in theory, also tension the fly down further using the tabs near the pole ends – I may have done this once or twice in my life, but never found much slack to work with.

Basically pitch so that the smallest surface area is in to the wind and also the back if you can arrange things that way. You don't want that howling southerly coming in your front door. The club tents must have the guys pitched to have any real strength against a wind. Try shaking the tent/fly while holding a pole, once pitched to judge how much strength it will have (if you don't believe me on the use of guy ropes, try comparing shaking it with and without them pitched!).

That dry, sandy stream bed might look comfy, but even light rain could turn it in to a swamp. Moving a tent/fly in the rain and dark in the wee hours is best avoided. Treat all depressions as suspicious looking water catchments. Bucket floor tents (like the club ones) can handle a puddle, swamp or small stream, but better to not risk it if you can. The thing you want most as it buckets down outside is peace of mind – that helps you to better sleep through it.

Most tents have some vents to help with reducing condensation. If you put large loads in to the tent pockets, you risk having the outer contact the inner – which could mean water can run in to the tent. A mop can be handy for removing condensation or any puddles you get from the floor – I use my bandana. Don't fret overly about a little damp, you will stay snug as long as your sleeping bag is not sodden. So even if it is getting a bit damp inside you are certainly going to be better off there than trying to decamp to a hut through a deluge and raging rivers. If you dry clothes by wearing them inside the tent/fly or erecting an indoor clothes line, you are more than likely to make 'indoor rain' and so just spread the damp around more – choose carefully!

If you don't know how to pitch a tent/fly, then when this happens at camp try to pay attention and offer to help. This is how to pick up the basics and also to learn from someone who has some experience. As with most tramping skills, 'doing' is far more useful to you than any 'book learning'.

### **Taking a fly/tent down**

Once the gear is out, un-peg the guy ropes (leaving tent standing still) and give the tent/fly a good shake to remove excess water and any little critters that have decided to call it home. No point carrying water you can't drink and those critters belong with their families. You can sweep out a tent floor with your dry socks if you need to – quite a bit of stuff can collect in there even over one night. Any zips should be done up as the little teeth of the zip as less likely to be damaged if they are together. Some may need a little gap so that air can escape, when you roll a tent say. Remove pegs and poles – again only ever push the poles through the sleeve (see above). Fold the poles up starting from the middle rather than one end as you are less likely to run out of cord 'give' that way – never force the cord though – if you find it gets too tight to take a section apart, just start again.

Fold and roll a tent with the floor side out (as the floor is made of the toughest material it takes handling better). If you roll the poles in with the tent, be careful to make sure the pole section ends are clear of the tent at the ends as they can puncture through material. Rolling with the tent helps get the air out, but I generally carry them separately – hopefully in someone else's' pack! On the down side for this, two packs need opening to pitch the tent – not great in the rain. I sometimes carry poles inside my spare socks for extra protection from the section ends. Clear the dirt off any pegs you carry – again no point carrying stuff you can't use and it belongs where it came from.

Tents/flys (basically everything) should be packed inside your pack. Anything strapped on the outside of your pack makes you look like a chump and old experienced trampers are unlikely to want to give you the time of day while discussing routes graded above 'guided tourist track' with you would obviously be tantamount to manslaughter (if you don't have the nous to pack your pack right, they will think you are a 'townie' of the 'white shoe brigade' and should never really have left the shopping centres). Losing or damaging your shelter (or any other gear) because it is on the outside of your pack not only makes you look silly it raises your risks and costs. Sometimes it can't be avoided, but hopefully this means you are doing one of those trips where no-one will be there to catch you in that state either. For trampers, packing badly is to be accompanied with a sense of shame.

Take a scan of the area before you depart. Pegs especially always want to stay in the bush and not go back home with you.

### **When you get home**

Once you are clean, fed and rested it is time to show your gear some love. Like most un-fun jobs, better to get on with it than to put it off. Tents/flys must be stored dry or they will grow mould – like Wellington homes, this damages the fabric as well as making them unpleasant to live in. So you need to make sure they get good and dry. But don't lie or hang them out in a brutal sun for hours on end – what the sun does to your skin it will also do to your tent/fly, damage and age it. The best (easiest) way is to re-pitch it. If you don't have a space for this, then just lay it out and give it a shake/reposition every now and again. Lying out on a bit of floor somewhere won't hurt it, so there is no rush. A double skin tent dries best if you separate the inner and outer to lay them out. The inner should also be shaken

inside out to clear any internal 'fluff' whether it is separated from the outer or not. You don't want to be crawling in to snuggle up with old bits of hair, skin, toe nails, teeth and so forth next time you take your tent out in to the wilds! No one wants to snuggle up with 'ex bits of you' either, so this is basic politeness with club tents.

Putting a double skin tent inner and outer back together is a bit of a puzzle. But you have been out working on your physical fitness and it is now known that we also need to work on our mental fitness. No puzzle is ever solved by giving up.

### **Club Gear**

If it is a club tent and you really can't get it dry, let the person on the gear room know. Rather than biting you, they will be most grateful to have been told. Also let them know about any other issues you had with the shelter (as with any club gear) the only way we know something needs to be done is if we are told.

Now if you suspect that some punters don't take good care of tents/flys, it might be a good idea to check them before you leave civilisation (as we know it). It is your responsibility to ensure both you and your gear is fit to go tramping and also that you have the right gear. Gear room people will have no sympathy if you found you had no pegs when you set up camp – they are more likely to think 'chump alert' and reply "well did you ask for any?" Gear room people are not mind readers, or soothsayers, or know what gear you may be taking from home.

The club tents are alpine tents and so we only let them out for alpine trips. So if you want to go beach tenting with the banjo, or tenting on any other non-alpine trip, you will need to find your own tent. The club does have a couple of old large 'family style' inners that are designed to have a large club fly thrown over them – they are large and heavy and I would only ever take them car based, or maybe truck based, camping myself.

### **Many fun days... and restful nights**

Huts are great, but you get closer to your environment in a tent/fly and can take it with you. That gives more freedom and ability to get away from it all. I find nothing more restful than holing up in a good, well pitched tent for a few days, patiently waiting out the weather, while it blatters away outside. You might not plan for that to happen, but you should always plan in case it does.

# Purity Hut

Easy Tramp – 20 to 22 November 2009

by Margaret Craigie

*Participants – John Hickey, Daniel Bourke, Karl Stapleton, Margaret Craigie.*

I'd softened. After basking in the Australian sun for the last two years and next to no opportunity to climb hills, I was a tad anxious about my ability to cope with a fashion statement involving boots, let alone for a whole weekend. As part of my easing back into the back-country life, I had welcomed an invitation by friends a few weeks prior, for heading into the Kawekas. A major drawcard was that there were hotpools at the beginning, middle and end of the tramp. My training complete, I then found an Easy-grade trip with WTMC and braved the Wellington traffic to put my name down for Ironbark Hut. Fate was against me that day, the trip having been cancelled because of a lack of interest and/or leader. The only Easy-grade on offer for the same weekend was now into Crow Hut.

At some point during the week, I received a rather odd email from my leader (John Hickey) all about a trip headed in to Purity Hut which was also sent to strange names including Alistair and Gareth and the chief guide, none of whom were on my trip. I ignored it. I did, however, ring John to ascertain dinner requirements and pick-up/drop off in Levin. All went well on the Friday until we got to the start point of the track where we slept in a nearby clearing. "Crow Hut, 5 hrs" stated the highly informative notice. My heart sank as I knew that I had no show of keeping up with my 3 male companions. I decided that it would simply take longer than they had anticipated. After all, Easy-grade punters weren't expected to be superhuman and (I thought ) any challenges would be left until morning.

Having just got the hang of putting up those blue flies, it was completely dark and we had to try and work out those new two-man green thingies. Fortunately, Daniel had brought some spare string or shoelace as a replacement guy-rope and we made a reasonable job of things, my side being completely dry and Daniel's only a little wet by morning.

We went to sleep to the dulcet sounds of a nearby generator. (Mr. Sandman visited me almost immediately.) The morning brought photo opportunities, a calm relaxed breakfast, wishing goodbye to Alistair's group and we drove PAST the track to Crow Hut! I was immediately on full alert with a polite but very puzzled query to my honourable trip leader re navigation. His response was definitely reassuring. Somehow, everyone already knew of certain changes of plan (that weird email) and that Crow Hut was not an Easy-grade in John Hickey's universe and that WTMC had another category; not just Fitness-essential, but Easy-essential too! We were headed for Purity Hut, only a couple of hours in. A huge but silent wave of relief passed over me as we drove through classic Mangaweka farmland. Finally, the moment of truth and we started walking.



The first 20 mins is through flat farmland. The four of us got into the swing of things and were following the orange markers faithfully, relaxing and chatting and putting one foot in front of the other. Eventually, we realised that we hadn't seen an orange marker for a while and there was a ute bearing down on us, beeping like an angry hornet. We had dropped our packs, I had wandered on a bit to see if there were any obvious signs of a track and John immediately whipped out a map and looked as inept as possible. (He claims that this was a deliberate move!) The farmer had spotted us going the wrong way on his security cameras, but John was a natural at appearing the incompetent townie and the farmer's demeanour changed quickly from slightly irate, to incredibly helpful. The track had taken a rather embarrassingly obvious 90° turn, and the markers had changed to white posts. We crossed a stream and headed uphill.

Easy-essential involves taking (a breather) in the view every 50 metres, and it was well worth it. An artistic uprooted tree-stump provided me a moment's practise with my Trade-me camera. My welcome back to tramping also included a vista that was typical Lord of the Rings countryside. Apart from being unable to get enough oxygen (I maintain it was the height we had reached rather than lack of fitness levels), it was absolute heaven.

Climbing the fence, the transition to bush was immediate and our views disappeared as we undulated upwards. Ascending steadily, we eventually came upon a clearing which ought to have had a hut in it. There had been one in years past, but has since been replaced slightly further uphill. What I thought to be a sighting of the hut, turned out to be the dunny! I feel that it was an understandable mistake as the dunny had a double-glazed tinted window. If reading material had been left in there, I would have lost the blokes for days!

Part of the excuse for taking our time to reach the hut had been that there would be little to do on arrival. However, this was not an issue as we were all asleep within 15 mins of unpacking. The weather had been a little inclement and we calculated that Alistair's group would not be braving the tops to meet us. We felt for them, but secretly were rather pleased as we would have had to share our beds. Wellington Tramping & Matrimonial Club may be the unofficial moniker, but I take up all the bed. And I nick the blankets. I'm actually doing people a favour if I offer them a space on the floor inside the hut. AND I expect gratitude...

After a snooze, came dinner. John had organised a curry. Fortunately, he only put in about a third of the spices he'd brought which was just as well as it was just this side of blowing off my head. Edgy, but nice. I still recall one of the first tramps I did with the club, when I and one other simply couldn't eat our dinner at all, despite being rather hungry!

After dinner was a compulsory hand or two of 500 and sharing of stories. At 18 or so, Karl completely blew me away with his lack of cynicism and has forced me to review my outlook on life. Daniel and John also had stories to share and the evening quickly passed until it was time for bed again.

The morning was uneventful and, as my camera has a timer, I took a beautiful shot of the four of us in front of Purity Hut. The only glitch was that I had managed to decapitate us all. I hadn't done my hair, so I wasn't too disappointed. The photo got my best side.

Heading downhill in the rain saw most of us slipping over at one time or another. We descended a lot quicker than going up, and just before the bush-edge, we had a stop. John showed me an utter abomination. Chocolate coated ginger! I love chocolate, but this was true sacrilege and is one of the few ways I know to utterly destroy one of the real pleasures in life. Shortly thereafter, God meted out justice, and John took the final fall of the trip. Initially, he seemed quite injured, but after a pause, fortunately managed to continue for the final stint through the farmland unaided. Most exciting of all was the stream. It was now high enough to require us to link up! This was truly an experience for me as I've only ever practised the technique as an exercise rather than for reality. We then drove the van to pick up Alistair's group and we all lived happily ever after.

## Christmas 2009/2010 Trip to the Gardens Alpine 2 Fit

by Marie Henderson

*Punters: Jenny Beaumont, Sharron Came, Tua Gorgens, Marie Henderson, David Jewel, Mike Phethean.*

*Picture: Sharron, Mike and David discussing the route*

Whenever I sign up for a trip like this it is because I have absolutely no idea what the trip is apart from there will be some glaciers and ice plateaus and so "yes please" pops out well before my rational side can pipe in with "Hmmm well that must also mean crossing some potentially very tricky country... am I sure I am up to it?"

Months of blissful ignorance followed. And then the trip planning began in earnest. Maps and plans appeared and were placed in front of me. "Hmmm looks a bit gnarly and like the packs will weigh a tonne, better start running and



update to some lighter gear" was the direction of my thoughts.

Then, a few weeks out from the trip, David (the trip leader) sent round a link to a website with some photographs of the area. I took a look... "Crikey!" Near vertical bluffs, lumpy twisted icefalls and rotten rock loomed in every shot. "People can't travel through that - these kiwis are mad!" Running and gear checks were supplemented with praying to any God that would listen.

If I had taken something to write with (I left my pencil behind to save weight) my daily diary might have looked like what follows.

Day 1

After delays due to a lack of visibility the helicopter finally dropped us off on Lambert tops. Oh shite it is even worse than expected. In deep do-do now. Somehow David finds a reasonable route over to the Garden of Allah and a protected camp. The clouds cleared for us to see the Garden of Allah and Lambert glacier just as we crested the col, so at least we have seen it. Clag at camp with brief glimpses of our very spectacular surroundings. Mike has invented the term "beaumonting" which I take to mean something like extreme positiveness in the face of both discomfort and peril.

Day 2

Driving sleet from midnight to about 4am. Wake to clag. Later in day get out of pit for a day trip up to Satan's saddle and a look over our route for tomorrow. Fantastic views. See a reasonable size lump of ice fall off Mt. Lambert slopes on the way back. Can hear things moving over on the Lambert Glacier. Clag at camp still. Choci bikkies are yum!

Day 3

Move camp over to the top of the Adams Glacier. Variable clag with fantastic views. I am the bunny in the middle on our rope: Mike - me - Jenny. Either way if someone falls in, I am next in line. Can't get to the unfrozen parts of the lake, so it is melting snow for water still. This uses lots of fuel so we will have to get off the glaciers soon. That will be interesting. Hoping the clag will clear for the descent.

Day 4

Frozen boots this morning. Morning trip to go bag the Garden of Eden. Variable clag with views. Views fantastic still. Back to camp for quick lunch and pack for the potentially tricky descent to Adams flats. Somehow David finds a reasonable route. I go bolshie at crossing something we have called "the slab". David and Mike have to 'restrain me' to get me to cross (on belay). First camp not on snow. We have desserts to celebrate New Years eve and surviving 2009 in one piece. Mmmm the apple pie is very good or I am very hungry. Saw my first rock wren, a friendly pair of kea and a few thar on the descent.

Day 5

Cross the Speculation range to get to next possible camp site. Off the snow, but still using crampons due to steep, wet snow grass. Gnarly and more traumatic as it wasn't expected.

Never relax. David and Mike shepherd us through. Mostly clag. Rain holds off until we reach the campsite. Blue ducks arrive in the creek just after us - nice.

#### Day 6

Pit day. Rain until early morning and then lifts and clears about mid-day. David declares a day of rest and gear drying. Play 500 in the afternoon sun. Get sun burnt. Show David the blood blisters on the balls of my feet, but he doesn't care. He is right - I got myself in to this and I will have to get myself out. Besides everyone else has their own small niggles now too. The packs might be lighter, but we are also less fresh. Good decision by David.

#### Day 7

Biblical rain until early evening. Pit day II. Troops are getting a little restless, but I enjoy a good sloth session. Gossip a few hours away with Jenny. Then finish the day with a few rounds of hearts with Mike and Jenny in the tent followed by more sleep.

#### Day 8

Wake to a damp looking day but rain holds off. Leave for our next camp along the Wilberg range, where some tops must be bypassed. Mostly clag, with some nice views at times. Nice to get back on some snow, but could have done without the driving sleet. Big day, but find it less hairy than crossing the Speculation range. Could be getting de-sensitised to it all. Somehow David and Mike find a reasonable route. Blood blisters are from crampons - but have to have them on. Still got a good amount of food. Chocolate mostly gone, but think Mike still has a few blocks left.

#### Day 9

Plan was to make it out today all things going well. Getting over to Mt. Wilberg takes most of the morning. An old faint route with some markers is picked up from there and gives quick access off of the tops with Mike and David leading the way. The route is optimal as it lands us in a creek that leads back close to town. Fantastic. Suck down a veggieburger, wedges and most of a chocolate cake. Mmmmm town food. Then the clean up begins. Body quietly getting on with its own repairs. Thankfully nothing major. At least one God must have been listening.

## 50 Metres Visibility on the Tararua Main Range Medium Fit Tramp – Anniversary Weekend

by Mike McGavin

*Amanda Wells, Mike McGavin, Richard Lardner and Tim Frank.*

Wellington Anniversary Weekend meant an opportunity to have a slightly longer trip in the Tararuas than the usual weekend, and we used it to visit the middle part of the main range, beginning from Otaki Forks and ending at Poads Road near Levin. The forecast leading up to the weekend was uninspiring, suggesting several large splodges of rain would position



themselves all over the lower North Island, especially on Saturday, but perhaps clearing a little after that. There was no forecast of strong wind and we went ahead with the plan, but somehow boasting about a lack of strong wind didn't convince my work-mates not to laugh at me when I left to visit the Tararuas on Friday night.

We left a van at Otaki Forks a little after 8pm, intending to swap it with another group on their way along Oriwa Ridge. A few others had signed the intentions book so we weren't the only people braving the rain, but most going elsewhere. The only people who'd written about going our way, up towards Waitewaewae, having left earlier in the afternoon, had abruptly scribbled out their plans for a 4 day trip and written OUT. Apparently they'd changed their mind for some reason.

With an hour of light left and wanting to get ahead of the rain, the four of us began walking towards Waitewaewae with an idea of camping on the plateau above Saddle Creek. Despite the rainy forecast, it was still a calm evening without much rain scheduled until early morning. The only small delay was around the significant active slip on the Waitewaewae track, but we figured it out after a few minutes. The last light of the day held out until we were well into trees near Saddle Creek, and from then on we walked with torches. In this creek in the past, during the daytime, I've found it easier to simply walk up the creek than to figure out the entire criss-crossing track, though I think it's a personal preference. By torchlight I think we all decided it was much easier to stay on the track as much as possible. This track is also much more steep than I remembered it. I was too busy looking at the ground ahead of me to properly notice, but others in the party reported that Saddle Creek seems to be a haven for glow-worms. We reached our camp-site at 11pm, which thankfully wasn't too sodden, and set ourselves up for the night.

Next morning I found I was apparently the only person to have had a reasonable sleep, and I still didn't think there had been enough of it. Up at 7am, the forecast rain was yet to begin, although the tent flies were sodden. We were packed and leaving by 8, towards Waitewaewae Hut before continuing on to Nichols for the night. We stopped briefly at Waitewaewae, 90 minutes later, where we met a chap who'd walked in and arrived the previous night. He had an optimistic plan to head up to Te Matawai Hut, then down the entire Otaki River, apparently oblivious to the amount of humidity in the air. Despite declaring his plans he didn't exactly seem in a rush to go anywhere, and as we left at 10am, he returned to his sleeping bag.

It turns out to be quite a big slog up to Shoulder Knob, which is at the bush-line. It's a 900 metre climb, taking us 3 hours in all, including an odd stop along the way. We were greeted at the top by a voodoo-doll-like statue tied to the pole on the knob, just one of those semi-weird things in the back-country that I've trained myself to appreciate.

Visibility had dropped as we approached the bush-line, and soon after leaving it we were in at least 3/4 storm gear, with the cold wind coming from the south. Actually the whole thing was very confusing, especially with no rain. It all felt like sou-easterlies but was difficult to tell, so with wind going clockwise around low pressure, perhaps the system we'd expected had gone further north? We were guessing in any case, but as time went on it was all so dramatically inconsistent with reality that we leaned towards throwing out what we knew of

the following days, and just focused on getting between points of safety, the next of which was to be Nichols Hut. The wind was still fairly light, and that was the critical thing at the time.

We arrived at Junction Knob just before 2pm, the point on the Tararua Main Range between Nichols and Anderson Hut, where the signpost informed us that our destination for the evening was but 90 minutes away. For the remainder of the day, we continued along the main range with about 30 metres visibility, tolerating light but icy winds from the south-east between the occasional eddies and sheltered spots. The high point along here is Mount Crawford (1482), ceremoniously marked with a short drainpipe poking out of the ground. For a few minutes we accidentally began to head down the wrong spur off Crawford, but managed to catch it once the route dissipated more than seemed reasonable and we noticed the bearing didn't appear quite right. In the end, including this detour, it took us 2 hours from Junction Knob before we reached Nichols Hut just off the eastern side of the ridge, and it was a good sight.

The door of Nichols had been barricaded on the outside with a saw-horse, and we soon found this was because the door wasn't clicking shut properly. A couple of notes in the book indicated that the door had been discovered swinging open when people had shown up. Tim and Richard got a fire going, and we settled into an entree of cheese and crackers, followed by Amanda's design of yummy Chorizo Couscous.

The hut literature at Nichols was unexpected, especially the collection of 4 wheel drive magazines given that they were at a hut at 1242 metres altitude on the Tararua Main Range. Unfortunately not much to read, in any case. The picture magazines weren't too enlightening either, though the latest Hunting & Fishing catalogue was advertising one of the funniest looking gun-wielding swamp monster outfits I've ever seen. Heavy rain finally arrived at 8.30pm, just after we'd gone to bed and almost 24 hours later than we expected. It also stopped well short of what we'd expected, only raining on and off and with nothing sustained. No wind either, though I guess Nichols is reasonably sheltered given that it's not tied to the ground as some nearby huts are, and we fortunately had no issues with the door swinging open.

Rain had stopped by 6.45am when Amanda dragged herself out of a sleeping bag on the lower bunk and started a billy boiling. We packed up, feasted on brekkie, and I took a few photos of the door latch to forward to DOC at a later date. We also hunted around for replacement firewood, which was difficult. For future reference I'd suggest that anyone visiting Nichols Hut from the northern direction should grab an arm-load of firewood as they leave the bush-line, only about 5 minutes away. We re-barricaded the door, and at a relaxed 8.45am, we left. Once again it was quite a dreary day outside, with thick cloud and little visibility.

The light but icy wind was now coming from the west, for whatever reason, and we'd given up on trying to figure out how it related to the models issued a couple of days earlier. Wind wasn't as much of a concern just now, anyway, because about 5 minutes north of Nichols Hut the Tararua Main Range dips into the bush-line. It stays there for some time, except for a brief 100 metre emergence to sidle around the eastern side of a peak called Kelleher (1152),

which after 90 minutes appeared high and some distance before us. We continued past an obvious track marker below Kelleher, then sat down in a sheltered area for a quick snack, and to figure out which of the apparent routes ahead was most likely to be the intended track. Amanda and I eventually took alternative parallel options along the slope, both ending up on a short west to east spur.

From here it wasn't clear at all, but through the thick cloud it looked as if we could head towards a little knob not far away, and it'd sidle around Kelleher nicely. Moving to the knob, however, there didn't seem to be any emergence of Kelleher behind it as we'd expected, even after checking where it should be with a compass bearing, which was actually fairly disorienting. By now we should have been able to see a clear outline, or upward-sloping ground, or *something* to indicate the presence of anything other than a void directly beyond in a westerly direction. I guess thick cloud can do strange things to perception on the tops. It makes nearby things seem far away, and short climbs appear much further than they actually are, and on occasions like this it causes trampers to summit peaks like Kelleher completely accidentally. Having eliminated the alternatives, and confirming suspicions with a quick reference to a GPS, we eventually determined we were 200 metres off the side of the route we wanted along the range, and re-traced our steps. At least we didn't waste another two hours heading down the far side, which is what a couple of people writing in the Nichols Hut book had indicated they'd done.

Back-tracking to the previous marker we'd seen prior to having even sat down, and taking another look around, we quickly spotted a giant cairn that led straight back into the dracophyllum. Just over an hour further of walking, we arrived at Dracophyllum Biv, a cute 2 person hut under the trees. It's also well tied to the ground despite being surrounded by trees, presumably for good reason. We stopped for lunch.

It'd taken around 3 hours to reach our lunch spot, the track being peppered with many peaks and ongoing undulation. We thought the next section would be similar, being roughly the same length before emerging from the bush-line, but northwards from Dracophyllum Biv was much faster. An hour or so later we were emerging into more leatherwood and dracophyllum, eventually back into nice alpine scrub. It *still* wasn't exactly raining, either, which didn't stop us from becoming saturated thanks to the fog of tiny hovering water particles that weren't massive enough to figure out whether they should obey the force of gravity or the force of the up-draft blowing over the ridge. For the length on the tops we could clearly hear the Park River, 300 metres below to the east, and had the cloud lifted we'd have been opposite Carkeek Ridge. We never saw further than about 50 metres, however.

The main range leading north-wards to Pukematawai undulates with several spot heights, each of which appeared distant, high and ominous, but all of which we found to be much quicker and easier to ascend and overtake than had first appeared through the deceptively thick cloud... probably because we rarely saw far ahead in the first place. At 3pm we reached a collection of stakes poking out of the ground, just short of Pukematawai, and marking the turn-off point down towards Te Matawai Hut. At Amanda's suggestion, we stopped on the sheltered side of the ridge for a few minutes and put on over-trousers, in anticipation of

being about to walk directly into the freezing westerly wind. It was worth it, too, even just for the first few minutes during which we were most exposed.

From here it was time to say goodbye to the main range. When there's more than a 500 metre vertical drop in the space of about 2.5 kilometres, a track will generally be steep. The last stage of our day therefore became a controlled slippery slide down through the mud to Te Matawai Hut, the highlight of which was the first sign of our entire tramp of the sun finally coming out. It didn't expose itself completely, but as we left the cloud layer on the main range, we did finally get a vague warmth forcing its way through some clouds above us. At one brief moment, there was even a small patch of blue sky. It wasn't until a couple of hours later, however, standing on the deck of Te Matawai Hut with most of our clothes and gear hanging out in an optimistic attempt to dry them out, that some cloud properly lifted for a few minutes revealing large amounts of the main range in the distance, over which we'd spent our entire day. Much of the range is obscured by trees from Te Matawai Hut, but we could almost see as far back as Dracophyllum Biv, and the undulating shape of the ridge that we'd noticed now made complete visual sense.

Tim managed to get another fire going after some effort, and over time we hung out much of our gear inside, actually being able to get it reasonably dry on this occasion. Te Matawai Hut perhaps doesn't get as many visitors as its size implies. It's very large as huts go, yet every time I've visited (this was the third) there's been nobody else. On this occasion it also had much better reading material, including a bunch of old FMC Bulletins. I got the one in which several people had written in to comment about an incorrect answer for question 10 in the quiz of a previous bulletin. It was something about the name of a certain kind of 3-pronged nail that was once used in climbing boots.

After more cheese and crackers, we settled into a nice dinner of a certain kind of satay noodle recipe that Amanda had dreamed up. We'd just gone to bed at 9pm, and it wasn't long after that when we heard someone enter and walk around a little. They weren't there in the morning and never wrote in the book, but it appeared as if there was at least one other person wandering around. Perhaps they were on their way up to Arete Biv, or somewhere nearby to camp. Weird — I'm not used to people who aren't me walking into huts at night.

Our last day was a straightforward walk down the Ohau River. We were away shortly after 8am, and 90 minutes later following a skid further down the hill, arrived at the new South Ohau Hut. Last time I'd been here there was nothing but the fireplace of the old hut, which is appropriately the location of the new hut's woodshed. South Ohau actually looks really nice, and it'd be easy to spend a few days relaxing there. Not being in any rush, we hung around for half an hour before beginning our walk down the river.

The South Ohau River itself is a slightly gorgey river, and even when it's low as it was on this occasion it has a few tricky sections. If it were up even 20 centimetres further, it's likely some parts would be waist deep (as Richard had experienced a few months before), and beyond that it could be very challenging if possible to follow at all. This morning however, it just took time. It took 90 minutes to reach Deception Spur, where the South Ohau meets the North Ohau, and we stopped briefly for our final lunch. The remainder of our river walk,

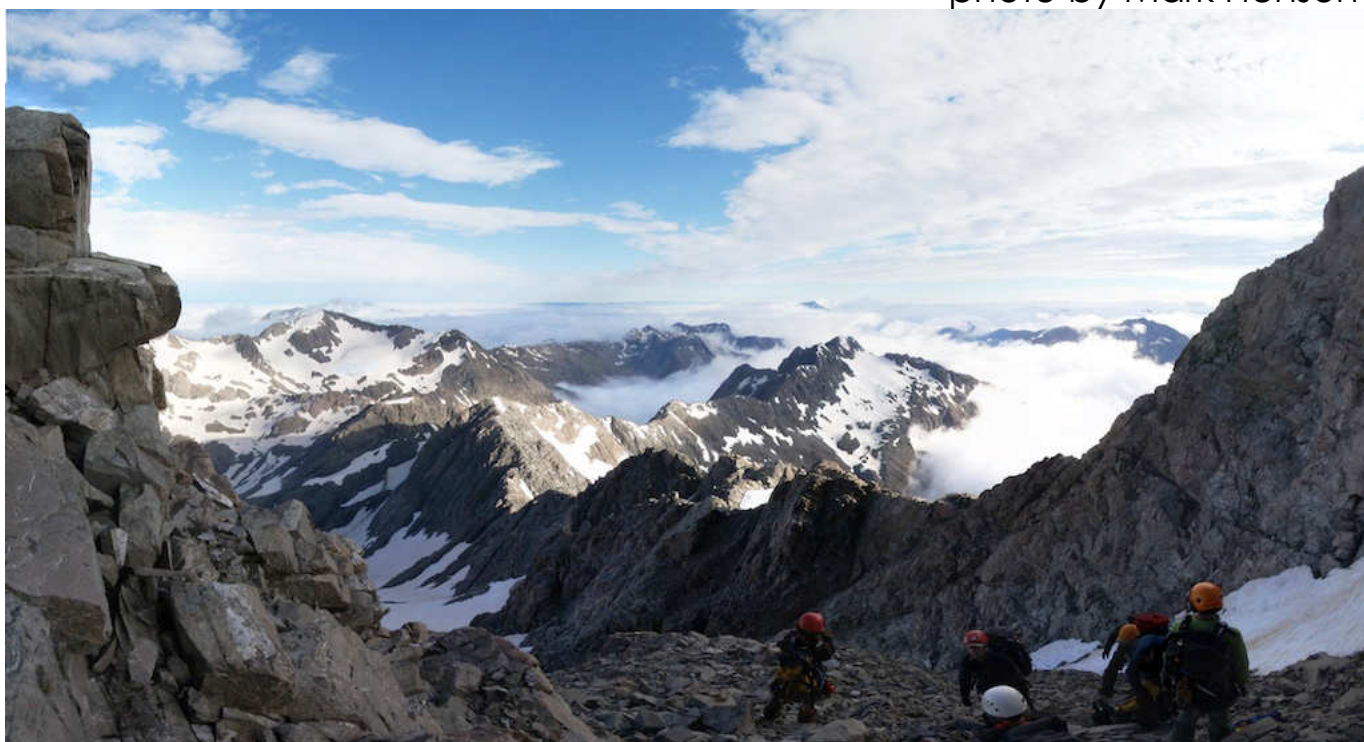


about the same distance again but much more easily navigable, towards where it meets the track out to Poads Road, took only half that time.

Just over an hour later, having walked the last section of track as well as having met the *second* and *third* people we'd talked to in three days — a couple out for a short daywalk — we were standing next to our van at the end of the Poads Road entrance to the Tararuas, nice and early to beat the holiday weekend traffic.

## Mt Rolleston – Arthur's Pass NP Alpine 2 Fit – Anniversary Weekend

by John Marney  
photo by Mark Henson



*David Jewell, Sharron Came, Steve Austin, Adrian Smith, Jenny Beaumont, Mark Henson. Ant Mulick, John Marney*

Holy shit! I am so knackered.

I am lying on one of the top bunks of a small mountain hut in Arthur's Pass national park. It is cramped. There are barely nine inches between my nose and the slope of the ceiling. It doesn't matter, though, because I am too tired to sit up. I roll my head to the side and hear my spine popping. I can read the sign above the door of the hut without moving further: Waimakariri Falls Hut; Canterbury Mountaineering Club; 1963; 1260 metres. Somewhere outside is a view.

I stare at the ceiling. Two guys from Christchurch arrive at the door. With no tent and only one sleeping mat, mug and teabag between them, they are not particularly well equipped and seem disappointed to find the hut already full. Jenny had heard them crashing about in

the bush the previous evening, further down the valley. Having moved on past Anti Crow hut, where we were staying, and then failed to find Carrington hut in the dark, they had spent the night in the open. Sharron makes them a brew and someone pitches a tent for them. I am still hurting too much to pay much attention. There is a bit of small talk, and they disappear outside.

My body aches and my joints are burning. We only walked for about six hours today, and for a couple of hours the night before, and the rest of the party is still full of beans. I am obviously out of condition. I groan quietly. On the bunk next to mine, Steve looks up from the book he is reading. "Pain is weakness leaving the body," he tells me soberly. Clearly, I will be strong tomorrow.

\* \* \*

Tomorrow began at around four o'clock, when David lit the stove and started boiling water for a brew. It was still very dark, a mild morning with a clear sky. The stars were visible above, but there was no moon. We ate breakfast and started sorting out our gear. I gave my rope to Steve, who had been so far ahead of me the day before that I had barely seen him. Outside the hut, I could hear Mark and Adrian arguing as they shared out the rock pro. "Give some to John," someone suggested. I sat quietly, drinking my tea. Never be first, never be last, never volunteer. If they wanted me to carry some gear, they'd have to come and ask me. They didn't. So far, things were going my way.

We started out just after five, walking steadily, first through scrub, then picking our way up through jumbled rocks and scree towards the snow. After a couple of hours or so, we reached the bottom of a long snow slope at the head of the valley, on the true left. This steepened gradually towards a rocky gully, which would lead eventually to the summit ridge of Mt Rolleston.

We stopped to put on crampons and have something to eat, then started upwards. The snow was good: firm but not icy, and easy to climb. First Jenny and then Ant led the way, kicking steps. Adrian brought up the rear. I stayed somewhere in the middle, keeping a low profile and a light pack.

"Rock!"

It was about ten o'clock. By now, we were well inside in the gully, waiting in a line below a more difficult section of rock. David had gone ahead and dropped down a rope. I stood close to Sharron, who was just about to follow him. We both looked up as he shouted. There was a sharp crack. Sharron turned to me. She looked dazed. Already, I could see blood welling up in the middle of her forehead. It began to run down her face. "Rather you than me," I said encouragingly. "It looks bad." And it did. We would have to retreat.

While Jenny bandaged Sharron's head and David made his way back down to rejoin the group, the rest of us set up an abseil. The rock was cracked and loose and kept coming away

in big lumps. We sent Steve down first to straighten out the ropes and test the anchors. The whole arrangement looked pretty dodgy. Once he was out of sight, we threw a couple of slings around another rock and tied them in as back up for the rest of us. Then, one by one, we followed.

By half past twelve, we were back at the hut. The guys from Christchurch were gone. Sharron seemed steady on her feet and uncomplaining. To my disappointment, there was no talk of helicopter rescue. Instead, it was agreed that we would spend the afternoon making our way back down the valley to Carrington hut, and walk out the following morning.

\* \* \*

After breakfast the next day, we started to follow the Waimakariri riverbed out to the road end. It seemed a long way. Within half an hour, the group was strung out ahead of me in a long line. It was hot and hard on the feet. I could feel a blister coming up under my toe. I trudged along miserably with my head down.

The monotony was broken some time later, when Mark was attempting to ford the river. I looked up, saw him stumble, and he was over. Briefly, he recovered. Then the river caught him and he was down again. I could see him getting dragged along, struggling against the current.

Ant dropped his pack and sprinted forward to help. For a moment, I thought about doing the same. But I was tired and a long way behind. I didn't know the guy that well anyway. This was an opportunity to catch up and eat some chocolate. I kept walking.

By the time I arrived, they had already fished him out. He looked alright to me. I dropped my pack and sat down. Ant walked slowly back to collect his gear.



## KAI ON THE FLY

*with Aunty Rata*

*photo by Jenny Beaumont*

It's February already. Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? Speaking of which, Jackie Foster is running a "Best Tramping Bum" competition and your Aunty Rata has been lucky enough to have a sneak peek at some of the entries. She reckons this one is definitely the front runner...

But don't worry you have until the end of the financial year (31 March) to get your entries in. The winner may even be announced at the AGM.

But what about recipes? This month I'm going to share with you the secrets of a meal that, if you have been on a few club trips you have probably savoured already as it is a bit of a favourite. This is not surprising as it scores highly on the three criteria for excellence in tramping kai. It's quick, tasty and hard to stuff up. Like most popular recipes its origin is a little dubious. All good food assemblers are like keas smart, curious and not afraid to borrow and improvise along the way. However, Aunty Rata believes that most of the credit for this dish belongs to Lee Ann Newton our former newsletter editor and great cook.

### **Lee Ann Newton's Moroccan Couscous (serves 4-6)**

#### *Ingredients*

120g couscous per person

Big handful of saltanas or raisins

Big handful sundried tomatoes

Big handful cashews (or other nuts)

1 teaspoon vege stock per person or 1 cube per 2 people\*

2 teaspoons crushed garlic

2 teaspoons each of cumin, coriander, ginger, cinnamon and cardamom#

Chilli flakes to taste

200g feta (another pkt is best for more than 4 people)

1 onion

2 peppers

2 carrots or 2 courgettes

1pkt dried vege (optional)

**\*Chicken or beef is fine**

**# can be hard to find, you can substitute nutmeg**

#### *Method*

- Place a cup of cold water in one billy, add sundried tomatoes, dried veges, stock and saltanas. Set aside to rehydrate.
- In another billy dry roast the spices, garlic and chilli flakes. Be careful not to burn the spices just heat enough to release their aromas.
- Add a little water to the billy with the spices and cook the chopped onion. Gradually add the rest of the fresh veges and cook till almost done. Set aside.
- Add sufficient water to the first billy to cook the couscous (generally equal parts couscous and water). Bring water to the boil. Add couscous and set aside. Add a bit more water if couscous seems too dry.
- Return the billy containing the fresh vege and spices to the heat so the contents can be warmed through and their cooking completed. Add nuts.
- If there is room combine the contents of both billies into a single billy and mix well. Serve. If there is not sufficient space then serve a bit from each billy into the punters bowls and they can mix it themselves.



- Top each serving with some bits of feta. Punters should mix this into their own portions themselves.

Note: If you fail to dry roast the spices this dish will be bland. Congratulations, you have found a way to stuff it up. You may not be asked to cook again.

Send your trip reports and/or recipes to [newsletter@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@wtmc.org.nz) “Best Tramping Bum” entries go to Jackie although I’m sure our newsletter editor will be happy to pass them along.

## Social Corner



For those who are just wandering back after a long festive break... Welcome back! Were you at club on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Feb. for Dave’s talk on his times in Antarctica? Amazing photos and entertaining commentary... Thanks Dave!

Here are a few of the up coming events to put in your diary.

17.02.10 New Members Night.

24.02.10 Sharon Came- Christmas trip

03.03.10 Richard Davies – An introduction to FMC through New Zealand’s wilderness areas.

As you can see, it’s new member’s night on the 17<sup>th</sup>. It’s usually a busy, fun night full of new and more recognisable faces. It starts at 7.30. There will be presentations, displays and cake! Come down and help us show people how great our club is.

And don’t forget to tell all those friends who keep meaning to come tramping with us, but haven’t quite got there yet. Could just be the incentive they’ve been looking for!

Remember if you hear of any interesting topics for Wednesday nights, let us know.

Cheers, Donna and Sally

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All published trip reports (or other written articles that aren’t committee reports) are in the draw to win a \$20 book voucher!

Jenny Cossey wins the December voucher, for the Strawberries and Cream report. No draw was required because hers was the only entry. (Aunty Rata has declined to enter the draws).

*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.*

# FROM THE GREEN CROCS

Welcome back! I hope you all had a great summer break, whether you went tramping or not. I know the weather was not great for some of the groups that went to the South Island over Christmas and New Year, but from the reports I have heard, they still managed to do what they had set out to do and had a good time. I was lucky enough to be in the Coromandel at that time, and I got in a few days walking, including climbing the Pinnacles, which I would recommend to you all. I even ran into a couple of club members that day too! It's a small world!

Soon after I last 'spoke' to you, the Club Journal hit our mail boxes, and wasn't it fantastic! Tony and Jackie have done a superb job, and the quality of the articles was great too.

Next Wednesday (Feb 17th) is our annual New Members Night (AKA Info Night), which has been organised by our Promotions Officer, Amanda Wells. This is a great opportunity for us to promote the club, and our wide range of activities, and we have a large number of people who are helping out. Many thanks to all involved.

Coming up in the near future is the clubs Annual General Meeting on Wed April 14th. One of the most important parts of that night is electing the committee for the following year. In this newsletter, you will find a nomination form for committee. Any club member can be nominated by another member for any of the committee positions. Most of the current committee are planning on continuing in their roles, but we will have 5 vacancies on committee, Chief Guide, Promotions, Secretary, and 2 Vice Presidents. Also vacant is the non-committee position of Gear Custodian. If you would like to know more about each position, you can talk to the person who is currently in the role (or me), or check out Committee Job Descriptions under Downloads on [www.wtmc.org.nz](http://www.wtmc.org.nz). Nominations close on March 31st.

There are lots of ways you can help out the club if being on committee is not your scene. We always need people to do slideshows on Wed nights, write trip reports for the newsletter, greet people at the door, lead trips, drive the van, look after the gear cupboard, and more. You can talk to the appropriate committee person, or ask me if you are not sure who to talk to, if you'd like to help.

The club is running an Outdoor First Aid course on April 23 to 25 at Brookfields in Wainuiomata. Having done this course a few years ago, I can heartily recommend it. We would like as many current or potential trip leaders as possible to attend. The trip sheet is up now if you want to sign up. Paul Jeffries can provide more info on this if needed.

You can always contact me on [president@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:president@wtmc.org.nz), or I am usually around on club nights

**Darren Hammond**

**Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Inc.**

**FIRST NOTICE OF AGM**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club will be held at the Clubrooms on WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010 commencing at 8.00pm.

Nomination for committee positions are now open and must be received in writing by the Club Secretary by WEDNESDAY 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2010. The nomination form is below, and further copies are available from the Secretary on Wednesday club nights.



**Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club**

**NOMINATION FORM**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby nominate  
(name of nominator)

\_\_\_\_\_ for the role of  
(name of nominee)

\_\_\_\_\_.for the 2010/2011 committee.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ accept the nomination for the  
(name of nominee)

role of \_\_\_\_\_ for the 2010/2011 committee.

