



the Mouth'n'Ear



Newsletter of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club



Christmas Tramp – Lewis Pass to Nelson Lakes

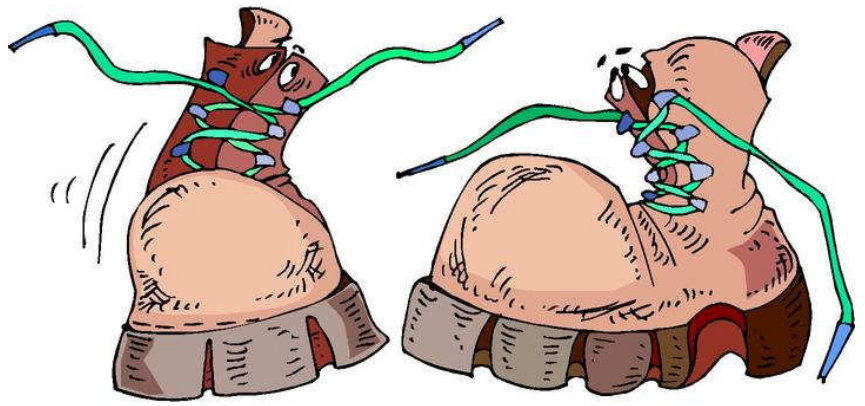
In this June issue: Navigation Tips; Minibus Driving Advice; Kai on the Fly; Wairarapa Cycling; Lewis Pass to Nelson Lakes; Richmond Range; Cycling the Pohangina Valley.

Deadline July Newsletter: 18 June

Send contributions to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz, or PO Box 5068 Wellington.

Track Talk

with Amanda Wells -
Chief Guide



In March I did a Mountain Safety Council river-crossing course, where we threw ourselves into some Hutt River rapids and attempted to exit using a combination of pack floating and limb thrashing. It was one of those courses where your confidence is strengthened through knowing that you're already doing basically the right things. Rivers are the most dangerous obstacle we face in the back country, and it's always worth honing these skills.

The club's had a real focus on instruction in the past month. At the end of April, 15 people completed an Outdoor First Aid course at Brookfields Scout Camp in Wainuiomata. We heard plenty of theory from our excellent instructor, Kate Nickson of First Aid Consultants Ltd, along with fascinating examples from her experiences as a paramedic and in the outdoors, and we treated many gruesome mock injuries. Thanks to Steve Austin, who coordinated the weekend and introduced participants to a game that shall remain nameless but included significant amounts of humming, gesticulation and blind-folded drawing.

If you're keen to improve your first aid skills, but don't want to wait till the next club course in 2011, consider doing the MSC's Outdoor First Aid course scheduled for 27-29 August, which has a cost of \$200. More info can be found at www.mountainsafety.org.nz.

In mid May, we ran a leadership instruction weekend at Camp Wainui. Eleven would-be leaders heard about trip planning and organisation, leadership styles, risk management, navigation, SAR, weather and cooking from a variety of instructors. Plenty of time was also given over to role-playing scenarios (lost punters, injuries and personality clashes all played their



Our new leaders are ready for action (photo by Snalet Shalav)

part). A surprise scenario also saw instructors hiding in bushes with various injuries, waiting for our proto-leaders to figure out what was going on and find us. Some impressive spontaneous organisation saw a search that any tramping club would be proud of. Thanks heaps to Sue Walsh for coordinating the weekend, and to Steve Austin and Melissa Hewson for backing her up, as well as guest instructors Ray Walker, Wayne Stevens and Stacey Dravitzki. Steve again also helpfully provided some “entertainment”.

We’ve also been talking about navigation and the need to get out and practice those compass skills. For example, last month Tony Gazley lead a group (coordinated by Megan Sety) into the Waingawa area to develop their compass and navigation skills; they enjoyed the experience so much a repeat is being planned. If you’re keen to learn more about navigation, please drop me an email, and we’ll see what we can sort out. Similarly if you’re interested in leading navigation-focused tramps or daywalks, please get in touch.



Always carrying some form of shelter is key part of our club ethos (and can remove some of the anxiety when navigating!). Steve Kohler is offering a workshop on making a one-person fly, having previously developed and trialled a successful design (see pic left). The cost would be about \$80 for all materials and venue hire, with the chance construct your own fly weighing only 400g. Steve reserves the right to limit numbers – and you can choose any colour as long as it’s olive. See the notice on the website forum or drop an email to ssko@kol.co.nz.

To help support our leaders, Melissa and I are holding a regular forum, before club on the last Wednesday of the month at the Embassy cafe, where you can run through any questions or spread out maps and talk route details. Watch out for an email invite if you’re leading a trip in the following month, or feel free to

just turn up.

Talking about navigation and risk management often leads to thoughts of what can go wrong. At the May committee meeting, we decided to donate \$500 to the Life Flight Trust (which includes the Westpac Rescue Helicopter) for its annual appeal.

Where the Bloody Hell Are You?

Navigation Tips from Marie Henderson

Aunty Rata (who knows I get lost more regularly than most) asked if I had any tips to share on navigation. Although the newsletter is not the place to learn a practical skill like navigation and there are lots of great written resources already that people can read, here are a few random thoughts on basic things people can do that they might not think of when venturing out.

1. Practice, practice, practice

Navigation is a practical skill that you will only really learn by doing. You might think navigation is for those wanting to go off-track or trip leaders. Not so. Every tramper will need to navigate at some time. Knowledge is not a dangerous thing here, quite the reverse. The more you do, the better you will get.

2. Location, location, location. The technical term is Location Awareness

Location awareness is the critical skill and requires no tools other than your brain, observation (looking and seeing) and (maybe) a map. The goal is to know where you are at all times. Sometimes this won't be exact, but at those times you'll be looking for your next point where you can confirm you are where you think you are again. As clear as mud? An example might help.

Suppose I am walking along a track following a contour in a narrow valley. I will have moved on from my last "know exactly where I am" point (track intersection, creek crossing, etc.). My altimeter won't help me and my GPS isn't getting signal so it is back to basics. I have to use what I can see around me with what's on my map along with some distance travelled estimate. I might be looking for a creek, a slip, counting ridges, any peaks I can see, vegetation changes marked on the map, direction changes, or maybe a track intersection (hopefully you were looking out for that anyway!). I'll track time from the last known point, or count paces – this distance estimate can be used to help 'find' the spot or at least to let me know if I have gone wrong. Basically look on the map to plan ahead for some things to expect and keep an idea of the distance travelled. When the next know exactly where I am point turns up you can sagely say "I think we are here" and point to the spot on the map (ignore any unbelievers who aren't trying to be location aware themselves).

I set up the example so that newer technology wasn't involved, but location awareness is essential even when electronic gadgets come in to play. You can discover why for yourself! You can practice location awareness on any trip at any time. You should work towards being able to pull out your map at any stage and know about where you are and whether there is time to stop for tea or not. When you are looking for particular points for some reason - like where you are going to go up a ridge or cross a river, you need to pay special attention. At such times I will carry my map in hand with a thumb on exactly where I think I am at any time.

Also whenever you are at a good spot, pull out the map and take a look at the land in reference to it too. I see too few people looking at their map and the landscape when they stop for lunch on a top. Becoming familiar with the features takes time, so make the most of those opportunities you get. I also take notes on water spots, camp sites, secondary tracks and places to never go back to. Treat it like a big backyard – the more you know about it, the more you can do with getting around it.



(Photo: Barbara Matthews)

3. Navigation is not needed for track trampers - WRONG.

I suspect that track trampers get more lost than non-track trampers. And tracks are the number one best place to start learning how to navigate. If you can't work out 'about where' you are on a track, there is not much point going off-track. It is important for planning while on your trip too for answering questions like "do we have time for a tea break", "what's coming up next", "do I really need to ration my chocolate" and the all time classic "shall I keep on tramping or just lie down to die here" (just joking). If you are awake, you'll realise I am talking about location awareness again. If you stick to tracks, you should still practice it. No excuses.

4. Oh no, I have no idea where in this big wide world I am!

Getting lost isn't usually a big deal. I know of no-one who suffered serious harm from realising they were lost. The serious harm came from what they did next. The most trouble is probably caused by not realising you are lost as you tend to get yourself in to a much worse pickle. If you are awake and alert... yes that's it, I am talking about location awareness again. If you are going along and what you are expecting doesn't fit with what you see and map, you can quickly realise, go "hmmmm" and stop and think it through. This happens to me quite a lot as Aunty Rata knows! If it seems bad, sit down have a little snack and collect your thoughts as calmly as possible. If you decide you really are lost, and alone, then bunk down and engage survival mode (not discussed here, but there are many good sources for information – with common sense you can be quite okay on what the bush provides, despite the lack of tim tams.).

Lots of people don't stop and think, but carry on getting themselves more lost, more tired, more strung out and eventually end up having to bunk down and engage survival mode in

the dark or worse. Now is also not the time to think “I should have left information with a reliable friend”. Have a basic trip plan and leave it with someone reliable - again seek out further information if you need to.

5. Compasses are complicated - WRONG!

Surfing looks easy, but it is hard. Compasses might look hard to use, but really it is easy to pick up and there isn't that much to know. The problem is just a lack of practice. If you only pick one up once a year, why would you be surprised you can't use it? Why not drag it out of the bottom of your pack and give it a go on EVERY TRIP. That might sound odd, but if you need it, it is better to be good and familiar with what you are doing (things are generally unpleasant when you really need your compass, so one less stress factor would be the way to go).

Sum-up

This hasn't really said anything about how to navigate, but that you should give it a go no matter what kind of tramping you do. One way to improve quickly on map and compass use is to do some rogaining – there are regular fun after work events in Wellington which you can take as seriously as you like.

You can't always expect to rely on others, even the trip leader may be tired or may even not know that much – all people are fallible after all and accidents do happen. For one thing your silently elected navigation person might become your injured party and you may need to find your own way to get help. Plus trip leaders always appreciate help – it is not okay to treat them as your tour guide and if you do expect to not be invited to join trips! Also people do get separated from their party more often than you'd think. And there are advantages to sharing the load which allows for double checking and discussion. There are even some navigation techniques that require working as a team, with each person needing the basics to do their bit to make it work. And the big one is that you'll learn best and fastest from someone with experience in the field – but not if you let them do all of the driving!

There are many great resources around on navigation. For example MSC have books and courses, people in the club, and looking online. A list to get you started is below. Also check your library for any of the books listed.

1. MSC Bushcraft – Basic Navigation Course (next course for Wellington is in August 2010) www.mountainsafety.org.nz/Training/training_results.asp
2. MSC, Bushcraft Manual – Outdoor skills for the NZ Bush, www.mountainsafety.org.nz/Resources/
3. New Zealand Orienteering (links to rogains and other events) www.maptalk.co.nz
4. @home in the hills, Navigation, <http://www.homeinthehills.co.nz/hnavigation.html>
5. Navigation FAQ (Australian) http://www.bushwalking.org.au/FAQ/FAQ_Navigation.htm

MINIVAN DRIVING ADVICE

We may be legally allowed to drive a particular vehicle but unless we are familiar with the vehicle and have driven it a number of times in recent years, it may well be wiser to leave the driving to someone with more experience in driving that vehicle, particularly when passengers are involved! We carry out risk management for the actual tramp, e.g. carrying a PLB and/ or fly, map and compass, extra clothing and food in cold weather, storm clothing, etc, and ensuring everybody is up to doing the trip. But what about travelling there and back on the road? Do we give it a thought? We should! The risk does not start and finish at the roadend. The trip is not finished until all have safely returned home. Risk management would address issues such as having a driver in reserve in case the nominated driver is tired or incapacitated; fatigue after a hard day or weekend tramping; the nature and state of the road; are the passengers all asleep in the vehicle while the driver is expected to stay awake? It is wise to get someone to sit alongside the driver who is not going to fall asleep. Change drivers during a long trip home, and take a break from driving each hour. Coffee stops (and icecream stops) make useful journey breaks!

Driving downhill

It is vital to change down the gears when descending hills – second nature to those of us who have driven heavy vehicles, but unfortunately a skill lost on many who now drive automatic cars. Descending hills is a risk, especially in a heavy vehicle. So, in general, we should descend a hill in the same gear (sometimes lower) that was used to climb the hill. This uses the engine for controlling the speed of the vehicle, rather than the brakes. Our minibus weighs 2.5 tonnes empty and 3.5 tonnes with 12 people and day packs. More with weekend packs. It is, in effect, a heavy vehicle, and one which a few years ago required an HT licence to drive it. Excessive use of the brakes when travelling downhill will heat the brake fluid to above 100 degrees C and can cause brake fade. Any water in the brake system will evaporate and operating the brake pedal will compress the water vapour instead of working the brakes and slowing the vehicle. The result – a runaway vehicle. Not long ago there was a fatal accident near Dannevirke involving a runaway shearers' van where the brakes failed whilst traveling downhill. There have been others. So, change down when descending hills and don't rely on the brakes. Remember gears before brakes – gears to control the speed, brakes to (occasionally) correct the speed.

Vehicle positioning

Concentrate on positioning the vehicle correctly on the roadway, particularly on narrow winding roads. Our current minibus is considerably longer and wider than a car. This means that we need to take left hand bends and corners wider than we would in a car, to avoid running the left rear wheel off the road. Imagine that you are towing a trailer. The rear wheels of a long vehicle don't follow the same track as the front wheels. Furthermore, being nearer the centre of the road means that we need to drive slower, to give time to stop if there's oncoming traffic. We can't swerve left out of the way – there's not enough room so there's the danger of running off the side of the road. We should frequently use the left hand mirror to monitor the position of the vehicle in relation to the left hand road edge. Particularly when there is no centre line to help gauge the vehicle position!

KAI ON THE FLY

with Aunty Rata

Ki Ora fellow trampers.

Of all the carbs you can base your dinner meal around pasta seems to slide down the most easily. This is my excuse for giving you another pasta recipe this month. I often make this recipe at home as well as in the hills because it is great when you need a quick feed after a spot of exercise. Pesto combined with lemon juice is an excellent dressing for pretty much anything containing vegetables.

If you want to bulk this recipe up add some cubed pumpkin, kumara or spuds but remember to add them at the same time as the pasta as they don't taste great undercooked. Not a fan of parmesan? Feta works just as well. Sick of cheese? Add a tin of chickpeas, (rinse and drain them first), or some tofu. A few nuts or seeds or dried raisins would be ok. Do a taste test before adding salt as the dish is already quite salty.

Pesto Pasta (serves 4-6)

Ingredients

120g pasta per person*

2 tablespoons of sundried tomato pesto per person**

4 tablespoons of lemon juice

1 large handful of stuffed green olives (bit more for 6)

Large handful of sundried tomatoes (bit more for 6)

1 pkt dried vege

2 peppers

2 carrots or 2 courgettes

100-200g parmesan cheese#

100-200g salami or chorizo sausage

*small macaroni elbows or rissoni are best

** I use Geonese sundried tomato pesto which is not really a pesto at all as it does not have any nuts in it. Any pesto is ok, it is not necessary to use a tomato flavoured one, you could make your own.

if group is vegetarian 2x100g parmesan cheese or a tin of chickpeas or 250g of tofu cubed and no salami/chorizo

Method

- If you are using salami or chorizo chop it up into bite size pieces and set aside.
- Add a cup of cold water to a billy and place dried vege, sundried tomatoes in the water to rehydrate.
- Chop up the fresh vege.
- In another billy sauté fresh veges with a little water. Set aside.
- Add more water to the first billy, enough for cooking the pasta. Bring to boil. Add pasta and cook. Add pesto, olives and lemon juice and mix thoroughly.
- When pasta is nearly done add vege mix from the other billy if it will fit, if it wont fit reheat briefly before serving.

- Serve the contents of the billies (separately if there isn't room to combine, punters can always mix the vege and pasta in their own bowls).
- Pass round the parmesan and salami/chorizo for punters to sprinkle on top and mix in.

I didn't have enough room last month to give you some variations on the Tomato Mac Cheese recipe. The variations you can try are limited only by your imagination. Bored with pasta and fond of baby food? Try these flavour combos with instant potato mix it's lighter than pasta.

Mushroom Mac Cheese – replace the 1tb per person of rich tomato soup mix with rich mushroom soup mix. (SOUP not SAUCE yes there was an error in last month's recipe. Tomato sauce is a condiment not a core ingredient so yep you could add it along with salt but you should not need it for Mac Cheese and it wasn't quite what I intended...). Add some fresh or dried mushrooms instead of tomato paste.

Onion Mac Cheese – replace the rich tomato soup mix with rich French onion soup mix. Leave out the tomato paste.

Vege Mac Cheese – replace the rich tomato soup mix with rich vegetable soup mix. Leave out the tomato paste.

Chicken Mac Cheese

Beef Mac Cheese....

Marmite Mac Cheese – this along with Peanut butter Mac Cheese is a good one if you don't want to be asked to cook again.

Next month its back to desserts.

Send your tramping recipes to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

Membership Report

This month we welcome:

Richard Lardner as a senior member

Andrea Rudy as an associate member

Lisa Lee Johnson, Annemarine Wood, Maria Cunningham as returning senior members.

Thank you to all those of you who paid your renewal fee promptly. Time has now run out for those who have not yet paid - so if you have yet to pay and still wish to be a member then please email me ASAP.

Any membership queries please find me on a club night or email me on membership@wtmc.org.nz

Jenny

WTMC Membership Officer

Masterton Mystery Cycling Trip, May 8-9th

by Hans Wiskerke

Punters: Harry Smith, Eamonn Flood, Carrie Buckmaster, Mika Verheul, Hans Wiskerke

If people sign up for a Mystery Trip, they might expect that at least the trip leader might know where they're going, what transport would be used, how long the cycling would take, and where they'll sleep. This was however a Mystery Trip of the better kind, where such trivial things even remained unknown for the trip leader (Mika) as she had delegated part of the preparations to Hans. A few days before the trip Harry decided to join, which convinced us that the weather would be great for cycling. Harry also did a last-minute check on the Metlink website, and (similar to his previous experiences) the weekend trains to the Wairarapa don't always run when you need them.

A quick call to Gareth, our beloved transport officer, helped out and the DPY was promptly made available to transport five bikes and ourselves over the hill. The trip was advertised as easy / medium, so we drove off on Saturday round 10AM from platform 9, and started cycling shortly after noon, but not without a caffeine shot. This all meant the 'easy' aspect had been dealt with, so we could focus on the medium part – a few hours of hills and gravel.

Leaving Masterton in easterly direction, soon changing to north-easterly, we headed towards Bideford, enjoying the lack of traffic once off the main road. Some buzzards, hawks, magpies, paradise ducks, a few kingfishers and lots of tree-titters and grass-squeakers gave some counterweight to the omnipresent sheep. Although overcast, the clouds were sitting still at high altitude and allowed a sprinkle of sun during the day – perfect cycling weather. Shortly after Bideford the sealed road turned into gravel, and continued to climb to reach a saddle near Wairere Station. Good opportunity to have another stop, discussing loose associations such as 'why here?' to conclude that the answer would be the fantastic downhill section from here onwards.



With Eamonn and Harry negotiating the gravel on touring bikes, and the other three on broader MTB-tyres, the downhill proved to be not too scary and resulted in only one minor injury - a snakebite. Fortunately the victim was a tube, which could be repaired within a few minutes. Having less than 2 hours until sunset, Eamonn and Hans set out

to be back in Masterton before the campground host's dinner time. Probably the thought of buying some milk increased Eamonn's speed to spectacular levels, so by the time the

remaining three reached the Masterton campsite (quite a nice sample of a 1960's campsite, if you're interested in those type of things) hot water for tea was ready, and the tiny heater had taken the chill off the cabin.

We agreed that going shopping and cooking ourselves would take far too long – all hungry after 80 km – so we ventured out into High Street to test the local chippies. Mac's (no – not the dreadful burger place) proved to deliver very reasonable fries, and a range of fish varieties. Eamonn muttered something about Irish spuds being better, or did he say girls? The luxury of city-life in Masterton (as opposed to hut-life) was found in the local supermarket in the form of vanilla ice-cream and vitamin B-rich rehydration liquid. Meanwhile nightlife in Masterton carried on as probably on any other Saturday night, but we ended up only listening to the occasional screeching of tyres and some distant yelling and singing, to which Harry decided to add a gentle snore.

Right: One of Masterton's hidden treasures – a cyclable suspension bridge

The Mystery destination for day two was a loop along Wainuioru and Gladstone, southeast of Masterton. Having dropped the van just off the main park, the locals could see five cyclists touring along the mini-golf, the duck pond, the playground, the mini-train, eventually finding their way out along the Henley lake. Some ten minutes later we were cruising along a quiet back road, and heading east we soon encountered a few vertical challenges. Needs a bit of work to get to the summit, but on sealed road the descent is a breeze – check the speed limits! Once over the range and turning south from Wainuioru, the road was gently undulating, again with hardly any cars. Halfway point proved to be also the start of the last serious climb, over the range back to the Wairarapa plains. With blue sky above, views of the Tararuas in the east, and the plains far below us, the next five km were only downhill and just about ideal cycling, apart from the occasional passing pick-up truck.



Heading back towards Masterton, centre of the universe for this weekend, the traffic became somewhat denser for the next ten minutes. Another turn off the main road gave us some more breathing space, allowing to chat while riding. As Sunday's tour was about 60 km, we were back in M. around 2PM, perfect timing for a wholesome lunch. Earlier on the day we had spotted two public BBQ's in Henley park, and with a pleasant autumn sun the idea of a sausage sizzle was convincing. A short visit to the supermarket (thanks Carrie!),

followed by the chopping of onions, flipping of sausages and sun-dried tomatoes, resulted in a nice hot lunch for the cyclists, to the disappointment of the local ducks. Next time we might think of a recipe involving waterfowl.

Driving back to Wellington was probably not the highlight of this trip, but the grand finale (through the Shell carwash in J'ville) was certainly an indulgence for DPY.

Christmas Tramp: Lewis Pass to Nelson Lakes

by Bernie Smithyman

Punters Tony Gazley (leader), Rita, Marie, Melissa, Bernie.

New Years Day 2010 a bunch of keen yet slightly crazy trampers jump onto the interislander on a 9 day excursion taking them deep into the heart of the Southern Alps going from Lewis Pass up to Nelson Lakes. The initial plan is to head over three alpine passes Three tarns pass, Thomson Saddle and Waiau but will find out in due course that that won't be possible due to the weather.

January 2 dawns somewhat wet, in which is a precursor for at least half of the trip by which I mean a substance that we shall call liquid sunshine. We pack up our tents and get dropped off at Lewis Pass by those friendly folks at Nelson Lakes Shuttles. Destination for today will hopefully be Ada Pass hut, however by the time we get to Cannibal Gorge hut it is lunchtime so we take stock and decide what to do for the remainder of the day. Tony lights a fire so we can dry out our gear and in due course it is decided to stay here for the night, as the weather forecast for the next few days is very dodgy as well. Tonight's dinner is a beef stroganoff cooked by yours truly and devoured heartily by everyone involved, and roundly finished off with a yummy custard.

The following morning, yes you guessed it dawns again incredibly wet so we do the massive undertaking to get to Ada Pass Hut which takes a whopping 1 hour to get to, yes you read correctly one hour and we all pile into the hut in a big exhausted heap. Tonight's dinner was a pasta dish with salami and other goodies, and incidentally the 2nd and last fresh meal for the trip, with the remainders being joy of joys scrumptious dehydrated meals.

January 4 dawns less wet and a brighter day as well, finally come the sighs of delight. This will hopefully be our first pass of the trip although we are a little behind schedule due to the past few wet days. However before you know it the weather starts packing in again and a collective groan emanates from the masses. But this time it is sleet and hail so no joy. Also, Melissa ends up becoming slightly hypothermic so the collective decision is made and we all head back to the hut, where we will spend an extra night after much discussion of whether or not we should head onto Christopher hut. Thereby we have now changed our plan.

January 5 dawns with what's this? A big shiny orb thing in the sky, and we all start worshipping the warmth that it seems to emit. We then cross the Ada River, before heading

up the Waiau Valley and camp roughly one hour below Caroline Creek biv. Today was river flats travel so not much really in the way of scenery till we get nearer towards our campsite and I think I forgot the tent pegs while drying out the tent so run back to lunch site and double check but can't find them until Melissa tells me she put them in the poles bag and so I didn't have to run back and exert myself. Damn wasting all that needless energy. Tonight's dinner was a dehy chicken curry and marshmallows singed in the fire for dessert.

January 6 greets us with another fine and sunny day and we have brekkie and pack up our campsite. Check out Caroline Biv (sweet little spot) before strolling further up the valley and find that the Matagauri is not as bad as some others were making it out to be. We end up having a little bush bash before having lunch and start our climb towards the Waiau Pass and first proper ascent of the trip (yay a hill). We now know that we are getting closer to our goal as we are right on the border with Nelson lakes National Park. I have got to say I like this climb, as there is a decent rock scramble towards the top and an even better view down over Lewis Pass and then Lake Constance and the Sabine Valley on the Nelson Lakes side. It was an absolute grovel around the lakefront and we were relieved when we reached Blue Lake hut after a massive 13-hour day.

January 7 we are greeted once again with very wet weather and so it is only a two hour day down to West Sabine Hut. So not much to report on as it is pretty much head down and go for it to get to the hut. Dry out gear, have dinner etc etc. Find only 2 other people in hut tonight so we spread out quite extensively as we are probably sick of each others' faces by now or more so the fact that we have all this extra room to enjoy.

January 8 the rain has eased off and starts clearing as the day progresses. So once again it is a river valley day. We then end up having lunch at Sabine hut, and find that the jetty is literally almost under water due to the sheer volume of water that has been coming down the rivers over the past few days, and seems not to have dropped due to lack of settled weather. From here on in it's all uphill to Spear Grass Hill.

January 9 dawns fine again and walk out final two hours from Spear Grass Hut to the road end at Mt Robert Car Park. However we have to walk into St Arnaud township where we have a lunch at a Café (how swanky is that), only to find myself desensitised to coffee after all this time away in the bush and would probably have to have another just to get used to the taste again. All of us bar Tony (as he has a few other tramping trips to do over the next few weeks) have dinner at the pub and stay at the YHA for the night plus shower before taking the ferry back to Wellington the following day and another week of holidays (for some of us) before the daily life of grind begins again.

Midnight special

by Tony Gazley

The special theory of relativity formulated by Albert Einstein in 1905 predicts that time slows for fast-moving objects. Presumably then, by moving quickly objects should have plenty of time to reach their destination. But we now have irrefutable proof that Einstein was wrong - because on a recent trip to the Richmond Range although we knew we were moving really fast everything always happened late.

The week before leaving on Friday evening Jackie and I had both been busy at work and we left in a rush to get to the ferry. But although we arrived travelling fast the ferry sailed late at 7:30 and not the usual 6 pm, putting us an hour and a half behind schedule to reach our first destination before we even started.

The crossing was calm and quiet and the pies edible. We left Picton and drove to Top Valley Road and camped comfortably in the grass under the trees that were still showing their bright autumn colours. And although there was a Met Service heavy rain warning for Saturday we woke to a calm morning with only light mist about the higher peaks and a valley fog that was slowly clearing.

We drove up the winding gravel road to the carpark, packed our gear, and wandered easily down the track to Lake Chalice. Jackie had made two recent trips to the area and neither had been particularly successful, and it had been a long time since I had been there so we were hoping that this would be an enjoyable one without any major dramas.

The track continued around the lake and was gentle easy walking. At the far end we sat on the sandy beach for a while looking over the mirror calm water as tui called from the surrounding forest. Then on down the Goulter River with the low sun casting an enchanting light through the tall beech trees. We reached the point where we reckoned the ridge on the opposite bank of the river would lead us up to Mt Edelweiss and which would then eventually take us on to Rintoul Hut for the night.

We knew that there was a long-abandoned track along the top of the ridge and that it was not shown anymore on the new edition of the map, but we hoped that there would be some trace of it left, or at least a few markers remaining to make travel a bit easier.

Although the climb was fairly steep and nearly 1,000 meters continuously up, the bush was open and the travel simple enough for us to think we were making good progress. We soon reached the shoulder of the peak but had not seen any sign of our hoped-for track. But this didn't worry us too much as it was easy enough to contour between the tall trees along the side of the ridge watching the compass to make sure we were heading in the correct direction and not being lead astray by any smaller side spurs.

We made good progress for a while but then the further we went the more difficult the travel became. The open beech forest slowly gave way to smaller spindly trees that were so close together that it was often impossible to squeeze between them. Eventually we realised that further sidling was hopeless and so we headed straight up to the ridge crest thinking that our long-lost track may be there and make for easier going.

However, there was no sign of a ground trail or markers. But now we were committed to the ridge and with some cursing at the spiky stunted trees that caught clothing and packs we pushed on.

Then suddenly much to our pleasant surprise a reasonably good trail appeared. And then a bit further on there was an old white plastic marker on a tree. This was better we thought as we hurried on now only too aware that we were fast running out of daylight and still much further down the ridge than we hoped.

For the next couple of hours the track kept disappearing only to reappear further on just when we had given up hope of ever finding it again. Every now and then at random places there would be another marker. But all the time the travel was getting even more difficult – instead of a wide, easy-graded, and bush covered ridge there were rocky pinnacles to scramble over complete with low stunted and gnarly trees that we had to push through. At one point a big boulder that I was standing on somehow came unstuck and crashed down the slope fortunately to stop with a shuddering thud against the tree Jackie was clinging to.

It was now too dark to continue without headtorches and just to make things more interesting the dense mist that had earlier cleared away now rolled back over the ridges. So instead of the torch beam shining the way ahead there was just the bright reflection back from the cloud. From here on it was continually awkward travel but all the time we felt happy that we were making reasonable progress as we passed the easily recognisable peaks and saddles marked on the map.

It was with some relief we finally escaped the bush that had been tormenting us for so long and were able to climb the last boulder covered slopes to the summit of Purple Top, even if all we could see was the white glare of our torch beams in the mist. But we soon picked up a marker pole for the track heading down towards the hut although there certainly was no hope of easily finding the next ones when we could only see a few metres ahead.

So we set a compass bearing to follow down the scree covered slope and every now and then we would pass a marker that encouraged us that we still heading in the right direction. Then into the bush and finally easy travel to the welcoming hut where we opened the door sometime after 9 pm. We were happy enough to be there while at the same time realising that somehow we had arrived much later than planned - and also mindful that we still had a long way to go tomorrow.

The next day was misty when we left the hut but it cleared as we climbed the long slope to the summit of Mt Rintoul. And the view from the top certainly made it well worthwhile. Bush

covered hills and rocky peaks filled 360 degrees, while shining in the distance were the Inland Kaikoura peaks with their new dusting of snow, and further south the higher peaks of Nelson Lakes. Mist filled the valleys and a few lazy clouds drifted in a clear blue sky above.



We stayed here for a little while enjoying the warm sun and taking in the view but we knew we had a long way still to go so, all too soon, we hurried off down the other side of the peak. Then there was an awkward rocky slope to a minor second high-point before dropping down to Old Man Hut. Here we realised that in spite of all our rushing we were already behind schedule again and would have to really race from here on if we were going to catch the Picton ferry home.

So off down the track back into the bush. The sunlight filtered down into the deep-green forest from the calm clear sky above, while just below us was the sparkling stream that we would follow to the Goulter Valley. This was Richmond Range tramping at its best, even if we were having to hurry along. Further down valley the track crossed the stream and we looked at the map to take stock of our progress. To our disbelief it seemed we were now even further behind time! There appeared to be still the same distance to go before we even got back to the Goulter and then we still had about a further four hours to get back to the car. At this point we thought that in spite of all our fast travel we had only an impossibly faint hope of getting out in time, but we were not quite ready to completely give up yet even if we decided to ease off a bit to enjoy the rest of the afternoon.

We wandered on for about 15 minutes to suddenly arrive at the Goulter! We instantly realised that the map showed the stream crossing in the wrong place, and that we were actually much further on than we had figured – in fact about exactly where we originally thought we should be! But now it was too late – we had wasted time when we should have been moving faster and had absolutely no hope of making it up again.

But Jackie had important business at work on Monday and needed to be home early enough for last minute preparation so we figured there may be time to get her a flight home even if we had missed the ferry. So the rest of the afternoon was taken up walking as fast as we comfortably could along the tracks back to the lake then up the climb to the carpark where we arrived just as it getting dark. We drove off back down the road as Jackie made some calls to airports – but again we were likely to be just a few minutes later than needed to meet departure times. So again, so much for the rush.

We now both resigned ourselves to the later 10:40 pm sailing of the ferry – getting home at about 2 am didn't seem too bad, and after all we had done that plenty of times before. But on arriving at the terminal to change the tickets we were told by the smiling man behind the counter that the ferry was in dock for repairs, but hey, there was a special cargo-only boat sailing at midnight he would get us on and which would arrive at our final destination Wellington at 3:15 am Monday. So we would finally be home about 4 am!

So there you have it – our travels are obvious proof that you can move as fast as possible but Einstein won't come to your rescue and get you to where you want to be at the time you expect. We will be sending our account of the refutation of the special theory of relativity to a suitable publication sometime soon – but we're in no hurry.

Pohangina Valley Cycle Trip, April 17 & 18

by Mika Verheul

Punters: Sharleen Grounds & Maarten (Fri/Sat); Pete Blaxter, Jill Skinner, Dirk Naish, Hans Wiskerke, Mika Verheul (Sat/Sun)



During a cycle trip last year Hans was positively surprised by the landscape of the Pohangina Valley so this year he made sure it was on the trip schedule again. He suggested that, although you can easily camp near the bridge north of Komako, the campground in the Totara Reserve next to Mt. Richards might even be better. We would have our tents as a base camp and ride loop trips from there according to mood, weather and fitness.

So on the 17th of April it happened. We decided to leave Wellington Saturday morning around 8.30 aiming to be at the campsite at 11 AM. We used our private cars to get there and managed to arrive within a range of 30 minutes, which proved our driving and map reading skills were up to scratch. We met two of our punters, Sharlene and Maarten, who had already stayed here for a night. They told us there were even warm showers! Indeed we found running water, a warm shower, a shelter and lots of space. We decided to set up our tents whilst uploading some extra food and drinks. The campground manager, who we happily called Miss Fulton Hogan given the car she drove, came to greet us and charged a reasonable 11\$ for two persons and a tent.

We set out for our planned 40 km ride at noon. We took the West valley road south bound to Pohangina and the first bit consisted of a well used metal road. It was a nice ride during which we enjoyed the autumn colours from the trees with their bright yellow and red leaves. We stopped at the Waterford cafe in Raumai for an early lunch and some more carbo loading, and switched over to the East valley road which apparently was on the East bank of the river. This was all sealed road and actually had quite some traffic but nevertheless it was still enjoyable. The Ruahines were impressive in the background on the right hand side and the river curved its way through the landscape witnessed by cliffs and slips. Hans, Mika and Dirk made a small detour (Opewa Road) but after 4 km it ended in a private property. This meant returning the same way but now suddenly the downhill turned out to be a climb. However, it was a good way to spot kakariki's.

At 4 pm we were all back at the campsite, lazily lining up for a warm shower. Mika pre-prepared dinner and her home-made meatballs in sweet & sour sauce were almost ready to go. It only required cooking some rice and turning a cucumber into a salad, but unnecessary to say that dinner was prepared in no time. This allowed us to spend some downtime chatting, and listening to the refreshing sounds of Sharlene playing the ukulele. After dinner Sharlene and Maarten left as they had other commitments in Wellington and couldn't join us the next day.

By now it was 7 pm and it was dark. Although there was a fire ban we figured out that we could make a controlled fire in the spacious iron BBQ at the shelter. The wood gathered turned out to be dry enough and we enjoyed another two hours sitting near the fire watching the flames and a clear sky with lots of stars before heading to bed.

Apparently we choose the shadiest place of the whole campground which made us have a late start on Sunday. We left at 9.20 after waiting a reasonable time to find some sun to warm us as it had been a crispy night. We took the West valley road again but this time north bound to Utuwai. We weren't in a hurry and during the more strenuous climbs we slowed

down to have a good look around and to check the metal roads extensively for potholes, loose gravel and alike.

In Utuwai a major decision had to be made. Jill and Pete decided to go westward following the river down to the camp site, whereas Hans, Dirk and Mika decided to go for a longer ride with a detour eastward to Apiti.



It took another 12 km and some more sightseeing, with Mt. Ruapehu in the distance, during a serious long climb to Apiti. It certainly was lunchtime now. The Apiti Tavern turned out to be a pleasant gem in the middle of nowhere and worth a visit. The owner of the place convinced us that Apiti ale is much better than tasteless Tui which actually lacks hop. We left the tavern at 1 pm and from here it was about an hour over the tablelands to Umutoi. The deer at the farms were gazing at us as if they never saw any cyclists before, which might be true as we didn't meet any other riders on our way. Soon the energy boost from our Apiti ale seemed to have disappeared, so some snacks and muesli bars were needed to keep us going. Just after Umutoi there was a nice downhill and a bit later we joined the East Valley road along the Pohangina river again. We followed the undulating road for another hour and after a total of 65 km we were back at the campsite at 3 pm.

A note on the car told us that Jill and Pete left the campsite to drive back to Wellington at 2.30 pm. They had a long and relaxing lunch stop near the bridge north of Komako and covered the rest of their tour surprisingly quick (no serious climbs anymore). The total distance of the shorter loop must have been around 40 km and they arrived at the camp site just after 1 pm.

Unfortunately there was no warm shower for Jill as miss Fulton Hogan temporarily shut off the warm water supply. It was not clear why and for how long as later it turned out – by experiences from the others - that just a bit earlier or later it would have been all right.

We drove back to Wellington over the SH2 to be able to drop off Dirk at his home in the Hutt. It appeared to be 40 minutes longer than the SH1, but doing so we had a good excuse to pay a visit to the Yummie Mummie pie shop in Woodville and the sunset over the Tararua's certainly was impressive.

Alpine Light

Photography Exhibition by Richard Young
www.richardyoung.net

In our busy lives, we don't often notice light unless there is none. In the mountains light and the effect it has on the landscape, becomes more apparent.

Alpine Light is an exhibition of mountain photography, of views of great peaks and mountain horizons, where the effect of light can be seen as it's reflected off the snow and on to it's surrounding landscape.

Exhibition opening Sunday 13th June 2pm-5pm

Exhibition runs 13th-27th June

Bay Gallery, 4 School Road, Plimmerton

Opening times Friday 4pm-8pm, Saturday 1pm-4.30pm, Sunday (20th & 27th) 10am-2pm

Also showing at the New Zealand Mountain Film festival, Wanaka, 2nd-6th July, see
www.mountainfilm.net.nz for details

FROM THE GREEN CROCS

This coming Saturday May 29th, the committee is holding a planning day. Although we meet monthly, we don't always have time to discuss some of the strategic issues that the club faces. For example, at recent years' planning days, we have spent time discussing what the club should do around transport. While we do not have any big issues like that this year, there are several areas where we need to make sure we are well-focussed going forward. Remember that the committee is working on behalf of you, the members, so if there are things you think we should be looking at, let me know, or anyone else on the committee.

We are always on the lookout for new trip leaders, and to that end, in mid May, the club held a leadership course at Camp Wainui. I hope to see all the people who attended, out (confidently) leading trips over the coming winter and spring. Thanks to Sue Walsh, and her team of helpers for running this course.

The cold wet southerly outside my window today reminds me that winter is nearly upon us, and the ski season is not far off. I would encourage you to use the Club's fantastic lodge at the top of the Bruce Road, just a few minutes walk from the bottom of the Whakapapa chair lift. The lodge is available for members and non-members, at very reasonable rates, contact the Lodge Booking Officer, Brian Goodwin (lodgebookings@wtmc.org.nz), for enquiries. The lodge is available all year round, and there are many other things you can do in the Ruapehu area if skiing is not your thing, or the fields are closed.

Submissions on the governments proposed Schedule 4 stocktake (Mining in National Parks) close on Wednesday May 26th, about the time that you will get this newsletter. On behalf of the club, the committee has made a strong submission against any mining related activities in National Parks, and other wilderness areas. I know that a number of club members have also made submission, let's hope that the politicians listen!

You can contact me on president@wtmc.org.nz, or I am usually around on club nights.

Darren Hammond

All published trip reports (or other written articles that aren't committee reports) are in the draw to win a \$20 book voucher! Congratulations to Hans Wiskerke, winner of the April draw, for the Port Underwood report.

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.