



the Mouth'n'Ear



Newsletter of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club



En route to Wooden Peg, Ruapehu behind
(Photo: Stephen Healey)

In this issue (May 2011): Committee updates, Tutuwai, Arthur's Pass, Ruahine: Sunrise Hut, Crooked, Queen Charlotte mountain bike trip, Whirinaki, Waterfall Hut, Kai on the fly, life membership award

Deadline for next newsletter: 27 May 2011
Send contributions to: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz



Scrawls from the Editor

Sarah Young, Newsletter Editor

One of the first things I did upon arriving in Wellington in May 2005 was join the Wellington Tramping club. Through the club not only have I seen some of the most spectacular places in New Zealand, and in doing so have dramatically increased my fitness, but I have also met some of my best friends ... oh, and my lovely husband!

The club has given me so much that I feel I really should give something back, hence agreeing to take over the role of newsletter editor (good arm twisting Amanda!).

Thank you very much to Michael Lightbourne for his extreme commitment to this role over the last 5 years ... I have a hard act to follow, and only hope I can do him proud.

I know many of you still opt to receive this newsletter by post in printed format. Whilst I appreciate you may find it easier to read information in print, I urge you to consider reading the newsletter online. If you opt to read the newsletter online, we will send you a hyperlink every month to the latest edition, so you won't miss out on what is going on ... but you will save a few trees!

I have made some minor changes in format to this month's edition, but before I go any further I'd really like to know what you think. On the home page of the WTMC website (www.wtmc.org.nz), you'll find a [newsletter survey](#). I'd really appreciate you taking a few moments to answer the questions, giving me your honest points of view and any ideas you may have.

I always welcome contributions to the newsletter. If you have an article or point of view you'd like published, please do email it to me at: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President

The 64th AGM has been and gone. Thanks to the 2010-11 committee for their great work running the club and to those members who made the effort to attend. For those of you who missed the AGM I have your names and numbers. The highlight was Sue Walsh being made a life member. Sue is one of the club's staunchest supporters, renowned for her institutional knowledge, sensitivity and tact. If I had to pick a standout achievement it would be her organisation of the club's 60th Anniversary celebrations which ran like clockwork and were greatly enjoyed by everyone who took part. Like any good tramper Sue brings her terrific endurance and determination to club administration. We are considering cloning her.

Most of the 2010-11 committee are staying on for another year. This is because they forgot to resign, were blackmailed, bribed, or they are excited about continuing to help run the club. As a new President who has not served on recent committees I'm relieved that we have a core group of practical, experienced and effective committee members prepared to stick around. We are also privileged to be keeping the services of key people who undertake club administration outside the committee either on various sub-committees or in stand alone roles. I would particularly like to thank Brain Goodwin, Mike Gilbert and Pete Gent who, with good grace and efficiency, take care of Lodge bookings, the club website and club gear respectively. These roles are tricky, time consuming and all too easy to take for granted.

We have managed to trick some new people into joining us on the committee! Sarah Young has taken over as newsletter editor, Richard Lardner is now officially Amanda's helper (assistant chief guide), Jenny Beaumont is enjoying a second coming as a tea lady (co-social convenor), Helen Law is membership officer and Kate Cushing is now president of vice. Kate may need some assistance with this demanding role. We hope to bag a journal editor(s) shortly and co-opt some people to assist with promotion.

If the AGM had a lowlight then it was reading the annual report in preparation for attending it. The annual report indicates that the club, while in pretty good shape considering the current economic climate, is not as healthy as it could be. Our membership, attendance at Wednesday night slideshows, trip activity and Whakapapa lodge utilisation are all declining. Now some perspective is needed here. While they have not yet managed to walk on water I know for sure that we have an extremely dedicated, diligent and effective group of people running our club. We need to bear in mind that other tramping clubs, indeed other clubs in general are showing similar trends.

On the other hand, the stats suggest to me that as we go about the day to day business of running the club there is value in asking ourselves is there anything we can do differently, stop doing or anything extra we can do to make the club even better? The answer may be that we are doing everything we are capable of given the time and resources at our disposal but I don't want to die wondering.

To paraphrase the club constitution, mostly we are trying to make sure that:

- We run lots of cool trips safely and smoothly
- club assets are well patronised and maintained – club vans, Paua hut, Ruapehu Lodge, tea ladies, trip leaders (yep we run training courses just for you)
- We engage, entertain and inform you guys about club stuff so you can contribute
- robust financial management and reporting happens
- we have good linkages and relationships with the wider outdoors community - outfits such as LanSAR, FMC, other tramping clubs.

To this end we will have some planning/brain storming sessions to gather up ideas and assess if any are implementable. This is not a new process, it is traditional for each new committee to “kick the tyres” to see if the club vehicle is still fit for purpose.

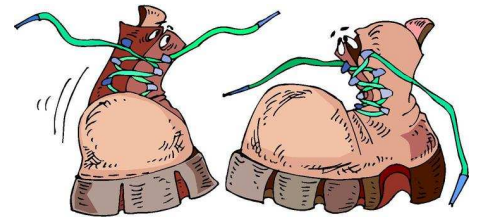
I will be reporting back to the membership on any special projects or areas for particular focus in the 2011-12 year. If you would like to help out or have any ideas or feedback on how the club should be run please get in touch with me or another committee member. We are very open to constructive criticism and new ways of doing things. Some of us bark but biting is not currently in fashion. Meantime if you come along on Wednesday nights please make the newbies feel welcome, some of them are tomorrow’s members.

If this all sounds a bit boring, difficult or serious don’t worry, the committee is not about to forget why we are here and neither should you. Most of us were out in the rain tramping, kayaking or cycling over Easter. Hopefully so were you.

Consider this poem by Brian Turner. He’s from Central Otago but obviously harbours a secret love for the Tararuas...

Place

Once in a while
you may come across a place
where everything
seems as close to perfection
as you will ever need.
And striving to be faultless
the air on its knees
holds the trees apart,
yet nothing is categorically
thus, or that, and before the dusk
mellows and fails
the light is like honey
on the stems of tussock grass,
and the shadows
are mauve birthmarks
on the hills.



Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide

Enclosed with this newsletter is the Winter trip schedule, which runs from May to the end of August. Thanks heaps to everyone who has offered to lead a trip, and also to those who have suggested road ends and come along to the planning night. And thanks to Richard Lardner who has stepped into the role of Assistant Chief Guide. Remember to keep storing up ideas for the Spring schedule!

Lately we have been having some issues with new punters not bringing key items of gear. This becomes a serious risk as we move into colder weather. Things like packliners, ground sheets, overtrousers and thermarests/mats shouldn't be considered optional extras! If you're leading a trip, it pays to do a verbal check with new punters, as email instructions are not always being read. In terms of ground sheets, people have gone round the gear shops and been unable to find one – without realising that a cut-up tarpaulin from the Warehouse is all you need. It all seems pretty obvious when you've been tramping for a while, but sometimes it's good to put yourself in a newcomer's boots and go back to basics. The gear list on the website can also be a helpful link to include in trip planning emails.

Recently I've been lucky enough to acquire a GPS and it's added an interesting dimension to my tramping experience. The ability to always know where you are is definitely tempting – although having a guess first does ensure those navigational skills don't get totally rusty. Being in dense forest all Easter meant landform recognition was challenging, to say the least, so whipping out the GPS became an easy way to measure progress. Like any toy, it has its downsides. At one point, we convinced ourselves we were where the GPS said – just before I realised that I'd failed to change the page and it was displaying an outdated reading... Blind belief in technology rarely seems wise, but in the past when I've argued with a GPS it has always won.

Those of us out in the Ruahines on 8-10 April enjoyed a magic weekend. Blue skies, sun, no wind: definitely not the mountain range I am familiar with. The weekend also coincided with the "roar", about which we realised we knew strangely little. In case you're in the same camp: the Red stag's roar (or rut) runs from March till June, with late March/early April the prime time. The Sika roar runs from mid April to late May. What cues make them roar? The weather, in-season hinds, challenging stags, and (possibly) the moon. I've heard deer roar on several trips recently. Up close they sound a bit like a dog and quite threatening. From further away, it's more like a yawn.

The problem with the roar is not the stags but the hunters. Not so much those who tramp in, but those who helicopter to remote spots and commandeer huts. On that weekend in the Ruahines, heading down towards Wakelings hut, which is definitely in the seldom-visited

category, we met a couple of hunters heading up to the tops. They were friendly enough but told us the hut was “chocka”. Interestingly it was only their group of three in the four-bed hut (though the beer choppered in with them probably occupied equivalent space to another person). We were happy enough to fly camp (and happy that the hunters knew where we were!) but it adds a different dimension to tramping at this time of year.

Remember that Snowcraft is coming up soon, and that it’s now being run only every two years. If you’re keen to acquire some basic alpine skills, don’t miss out on a place on this year’s course.

Murmurings from the Kitchen

Donna Maher, Social Convenor

Well it’s hard to believe that Easter has gone for another year! But no problem, the next long weekend to look forward to will be Queens Birthday which isn’t very far away (6th June). In the meantime fill those winter evenings with a visit to club on a Wednesday evening. It’s a great chance to catch up with what is happening with the club, chat to that person/s you haven’t seen for a while; sign up for some great trips from our winter schedule and hear some inspiring stories or relevant information from our presenters.



Presentations to look forward to are:

- 4th May – Come and hear about my adventures at sea (well, sea kayaking) lately
- 11th May – Grant Newton will talk to us about photography and show us some photos which, of course, will be much better than the average snap shot
- 18th May - Sue Walsh will tell us what really goes on at the lodge and why it’s such a great place to visit.
- 25th May - Rowena will be taking us through the new information about river crossings. Come prepared to get involved as the best way to learn is by doing (Ok, we might not go so far as to having a river in the club rooms but it will be fun)

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

Please remember to help out as this club only functions with the voluntary help of its members. If you think you could help out by giving a presentation on a Wednesday evening I would really appreciate an email on social@wtmc.org.nz or talk to me on a Wednesday night. It can be challenging to find willing speakers for every week.

Cheers and see you on Wednesday.....Donna

Membership Report

Helen Law, Membership Officer

This month we welcome 3 senior members: Annie Van Herck, Bryce Stapleton and Weimen Ren.

Thank you to all those of you who have renewed your membership, renewals are now completed. Within the next few weeks, I will try to produce a Member's Contact List from our club database. Therefore please check that your details on the website are up-to-date. You can do this by logging into the members' page on the website and use your email address as your login. Or if it gets too complicated, simply send me an email with your updated details.

The 2011-2012 FMC membership cards are being ordered and I will let you know when they are sent out.

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

New storage location for club minivans

Gareth Morton, Transport Officer

From 1st May 2011 the 2 club minivans are now being stored at the Inter Islander Terminal. They are being stored outdoors in the terminal car park so should be easily spotted when being collected by designated drivers somewhere along the wire fence by the rail tracks.

You are free to drive your own car to collect the van and leave it in place of the van for the weekend.

Although the ferry terminal is not as ideal as our previous location within CentrePort we had no choice but to relocate as Freight Lines required more space in their warehouse. The club is still searching for a storage location which is ideally undercover, secure, within budget and as close as possible to the railway station or inner-city. If you have any suitable suggestions or know anybody who may be able to help please contact transport@wtmc.org.nz or call me on 021 065 2399.

Tutuwai

16-17 April 2011

Margaret Craigie
Punters: Margaret Craigie

It had been a while since I'd headed into the hills, and my feet were getting restless. The Tauherenikau Valley is the primary reason that I'd joined WTMC after unintentionally spending two nights in the open, without a fly or sleeping bag, in horrendous conditions (including snow), several years earlier.

It was time to face my demons, and Tutuwai Hut had finally made it on to my agenda again. I calculated that if I left Kaitoke by 2pm, I would have plenty of daylight to make it across the bridge, possibly with some left over, and it would then mean that I would be on the same side of the river as a proper hut, rather than only Smith's Creek Shelter as an option. I fully expected to be walking the last hour or so in the dark, but that would just make things interesting. I wasn't wrong.



My pole doing a little navigation

I set off up the Puffer, having a very pleasant time as overcast weather meant that it was not too hot. The sound of gunshots somewhere along Marchant Ridge made me slightly nervous as one female Hutt Valley teacher has already taken a bullet. However, I was soon counting the steps down to Smith's Creek itself, the sound of man faded, and replaced by the occasional twitter of a bird.

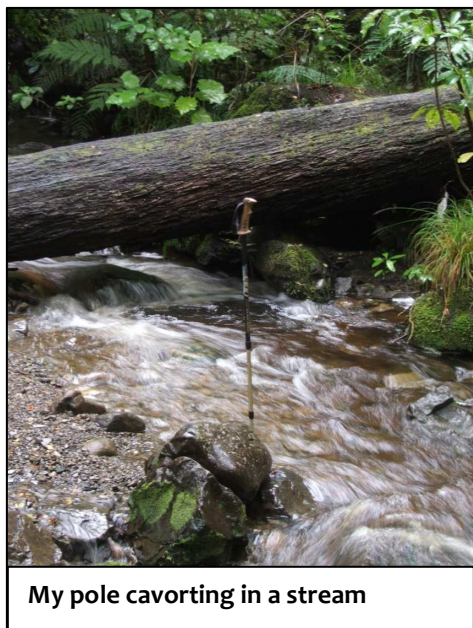
Around 145 steps later, and the gradient flattened to a lovely undulation, occasionally interspersed by a random beech tree which decided it wanted to lie down across the path.

I reached the Doc sign which advised of a slip ahead, and offered an uphill route around it. Having done both routes in the past, I opted for the slip, as it would save me precious daylight. I noted, however, that someone had scratched "girls" on the sign, implying that Doc workers and girls should take the detour. With my grey hair, I wondered how old I had to be before I qualified as a woman, shook my head at the (presumably) male whose ego drove him to ignore safety signs and treat women disrespectfully, and the futility of the actions of a (presumably) female that had scratched out "girls", putting "trampers" in the direction of the slip. Even in the wop-wops, the battle of the sexes cannot be escaped!

I walked on, enjoying the beauty of my surroundings, crossing a few side-creeks and generally having a wonderful time.

Eventually, I reached Smith's Creek Shelter, and stopped for a brief break by the river in the sunshine. Time was marching on, and I needed to, as well. It was not long before I reached the "new" bridge and crossed the Tauherenikau River. It simply looked beautiful. It most certainly wasn't flowing at full capacity as we had not had rain for some time, being

perfectly passable via a river crossing if required. Nevertheless, rain was forecast, and I didn't relish the idea of sleeping outside, so I didn't tarry for long.



My pole cavorting in a stream

The track temporarily headed away from the river, and then uphill. I was now on unfamiliar ground and did not realise it, but was on another Doc detour. The track became dodgy, and I carefully moved forward with only a fallen log holding me up a steep bank. The log stopped, and so did the track! I looked over the precipice to see the last thing I wanted or expected. An orange triangle telling me that I was in the right place. I figured that I had squished a sandfly at some point, angering Tane, and he was taking it out on me via Doc workers carving out ridiculous paths! It was far too steep to even consider using my walking pole at this point, and I abseiled down using the branches of a poor tree that had succumbed. I kept going, cursing Doc and the government. I then came across the intersection with the original path. I noted it, promising myself that on the return journey, I

would at least check to see if the original path was less precarious, as indeed, it was.

Light was fading now, and extra care was needed so as not to trip. The erosion from the river was obvious, with several absolutely gigantic slips having swept away huge chunks of both land and track. I finally admitted that darkness had fallen. At this point, I just wanted it to all be over as quickly as possible. I trudged on. And then, opening out onto Slip Stream, the track completely disappeared. There were no orange triangles, and knowing I did not have far, I took a punt as to where the track might be. And another. And another... It turned out I was no more than six feet off the track, and in plain sight of it – if it were daylight! After a number of attempts, I realised that I had the option of 360 degrees, and only one was right. I cursed Doc and the government again (anyone except myself for not leaving home earlier), and headed to the river. I walked upstream for a few hundred metres, and did a 900 turn in toward the track. Within less than a minute, it appeared, and all was well again. But only for a moment.

It was then that the path suddenly elevated itself 5 feet, re-starting on a new plane with a floating rock. Initially, I was highly impressed with this feat that defied physics, until it sunk in that I too, had to somehow raise myself to new levels, perhaps by growing wings. Yes, the orange triangles insisted I was still on the right path. I cursed Doc once again, and, using muscles that no lady should even know exists, let alone have to use, I somehow shimmied up the vertical.

Surely, I thought, the hut could not be far away? I pushed on, grateful that I had thus far escaped the bad weather. I must have disturbed a deer (or possibly goat), as I heard it running off into the night. Once again, the track came out into a grassy paddock, and disappeared. I was about to curse Doc once again, when in the gloom, I saw a shape. A simple sign that said "HUT"!

With detours and disappearing trails, it had taken me four hours to get there from Smith's Creek, but I had made it! Reading the log book revealed someone stopping just two minutes short of accommodation, so I considered myself lucky to have arrived.

I should make a note about my meal. I had taken in 2 minute noodles. Light, quick to make, and not much space in the pack. I had also taken in a treat for myself. A (glass) bottle of organic lemonade. It was not until I actually saw them next to each other on the table that I realised the absurdity of it.

While eating and generally relaxing I unexpectedly had company. Someone had arrived with a huge bang and crash... then silence. Investigating, I found myself looking at a fine specimen of a male. Possum. My night was occasionally disturbed by the noise of possums running about on the roof, the pitter patter of mice, a bird in the roof whose sleep was also disturbed by something, and roaring deer. As a precaution, I waited for the daylight to clean my teeth.

The first intermittent spots of rain did not arrive until I left, at a rather genteel 10am. Heading back the way I had come, everything was so much easier in the daylight (teaching me a lesson)! It was all rather pleasant apart from the rain which finally arrived at Smith Creek Shelter. Sadly, the shelter is looking rather the worse for wear with toetoe and holes



Kaitoke from Puffer Saddle

in the gutter, and rather dark and dingy on the inside. As recently as 2010, Jonathan Kennett published his book "Taranaki Adventure Guide" and described the place as a "bit of a dump". Perhaps a suggestion for a working bee would be to create some sort of a skylight (perhaps translucent plastic) which would help to lighten the whole place up and make a huge difference.

I put on my wet weather gear, stood up, and walked outside to find that it had stopped raining again.

The rest of my journey was completely uneventful, except for a blister that developed on the bottom of my foot. I have relatively new boots and I'm still getting used to their idiosyncrasies. It took me approximately an hour to limp my way from the top of the Puffer back to the road end.

The WTMC (and other tramping clubs) has done an excellent job of promoting safety and bush skills, if the most exciting thing on my trips these days is a blister, and only a few minutes of geographic difficulty. My thanks to all who have contributed to my education with special mention required of Sue Walsh (trip leader mentor) and Ruth Parnell (bush craft mentor).

Arthur's Pass

Medium tramp, Easter 2011

Spencer Clubb

Punters: Kate (leader), David, Cramer and Spencer

“Arthur's Pass. Arthur's Pass. This is Goat Pass Hut, Goat Pass Hut”

“Go ahead Goat Pass Hut”

“Arthur's Pass, we were wondering if we could get an up to date weather forecast for tomorrow?”

(Sounding slightly irritated that anybody would be foolish enough to go into the outdoors based on yesterday's forecast) “It's much the same as yesterdays. There is still a heavy rain warning. You're going to wake up with swollen rivers running all around you. The wind is going to be 100kts at 2,000 metres”



Ant kindly shows us photos of our intended route when he was last here - without the rain!

“Err, ok, thanks Arthur's Pass. Over and out”

Rain blew horizontally and sometimes upwards past the hut. Waterfalls appeared from nowhere, grew bigger, and turned in to rivers. Mountains came and went from view. Our route over a high pass did not seem very appealing. It was time to hunker down and wait it out.

And so began a long, cold and sometimes tortuous 24 hours in Goat Pass Hut. We all react differently to a hut day. David,

being a seasoned alpinist, barely batted an eyelid as he surreptitiously commandeered my as yet unopened book that I had brought along for just such an occasion. Cramer pulled out his Kindle and selected a title from 50 odd books that were stored on this magical device. Having somehow lost my book, I pulled out my iPod and listened to a backlog of podcasts that had been building up. Kate, unfortunately, had brought a rather tedious autobiography that offered little in the way of excitement or respite from the slow passage of time. It was, she described, turning out to be the longest day of her life...

Goat Pass Hut has no fire. It reminded us of this fact by having a boarded up hole in the roof where once a chimney had been. It was freezing. Kate took on the dual challenge of keeping warm and keeping occupied by making a full traverse of the hut without touching the floor. A good effort, aided only by a single bench, placed below the Hut's own Hinterstoisser Traverse – a varnished wall that not even David was willing to attempt. At least, not without some chalk and a good pair of climbing shoes...



Kate tackles the Hinterstoisser Traverse

24 long hours later

“Arthur’s Pass. Arthur’s Pass. This is Goat Pass Hut, Goat Pass Hut”

“Go ahead Goat Pass Hut”

“Arthur’s Pass, we were wondering if we could get an up to date weather forecast?”

(Sounding mildly pissed off at us) “There’s another heavy rain warning for later today. There’s gale force winds forecast. We’ll give

you another update at 8am tomorrow. By the way, we’re missing a family of two adults and two children. Have you seen them?”

We hadn’t seen anyone.

Bed came early.

8.05am

“Arthur’s Pass. Arthur’s Pass. This is Goat Pass Hut, Goat Pass Hut”

“Go ahead Goat Pass Hut”

“Arthur’s Pass, we were wondering if we could get a weather forecast?”

(Sounding really pissed off) “There’s been 200mm of rain in the west, 100mm in the East. The wind is due to rise to gale about the tops. The Bealey River is un-crossable. We strongly advise you to stay in the hut for another day”

“Thanks Arthur’s Pass.”

Spending another day in the hut was not an option that we were able to process. Going over the tops seemed to be a pointless and unpleasant exercise. Bailing out down the Mingha was our best shot – but to do so meant crossing the currently un-crossable Bealey. We were feeling defeated.

Then David piped up. “I’ve spent the last 25 years crossing raging torrents. Let’s go”.

And so we did. Leaving the hut in the pouring rain, we headed back down the Mingha, with an uncertain future. We crossed the Mingha and various side streams without a problem. They were up, but by less than a foot. The Bealey couldn’t be much worse? But it was further west, and vulnerable to more rain blowing over the divide.

It brightened up and we stripped some gear off. Things were looking good. Then the Bealey appeared. It looked a bit tempestuous. Not in flood, but not relaxing down the valley like the Mingha. It was not going to be a breeze. And to think that we had crossed it without getting wet feet on the way up...

We scouted a route across – it looked mean and fast, but the thing is, you don't really know how deep it is until you try. David waded in and made good progress so we decided to all link up and go straight across the widest part of the river, rather than try the faster flowing braids. It wasn't too bad at all, with David taking all the sting out of the current, we were soon across, no worries. David 1, Bealey 0. Another raging torrent put to the sword.

Crossing rivers is fun, and challenging. It's one of my favourite things about tramping. The feeling of exhilaration when you get across is hard to recreate in everyday life. A real buzz. But you have to know what you are doing.

The hour long road walk back to Arthur's Pass didn't really appeal, so we set off up the river bed. Soon we were blocked by a bend in the river, so headed up to this fantastic embankment that was dead flat and took us on a very direct route back to Arthur's Pass. We made good progress along this path and were soon back into the village, passing the police station and heading down to the road to DOC, where we had promised to drop by and report ourselves as safely out.

The man from DOC seemed unsurprised to see us. "I've been expecting you. The police rang me to say that they had seen four trampers walking along the railway lines. They thought we might be looking for you".

Heads down, we mumbled some excuses about how dangerous the road would have been, then made a sharp exit. A hot shower and a beer beckoned strongly.

The rest of the weekend in Arthur's Pass drifted by without major incident. Kate expertly tied up some loose ends from the trip and Geoff made an appearance in the Café. Things were going well for him and Renee.

It's good to be in the mountains, whatever the weather. Even if someone does steal your book.

Crooked

9-10 April 2011

A Nonymous

Just the name seemed to be a good enough reason for two part-time trampers, who we will call J and T, to go and visit the spur and its crooked hut. So with weekend flights already booked it really wasn't a difficult decision for them to make.

Their usual late Friday night arrival in Christchurch was followed by a drive part way up the Rangitata Valley before they called it quits and found a very nice tree to sleep under. Next

morning a layer of low mist filled the valley and the peaks were well hidden as they drove the remainder of the way to Mesopotamia. But by the time they started up Bush Stream the sun was shining through breaks in the cloud giving the promise of a fine day to come.



Heading up Bush Stream

Travel at first was easy—a mixture of boulder hopping along the banks of the stream, with many crossings, and easy trails through the grass and bush on the terraces. There were bright red rose hips on the small bushes in the lower river which gradually

gave way to that South Island favourite matagouri, but the trails missed the worst of it. J and T didn't hurry and they stopped often for photos and to admire the view. A short but steep climb was needed to pass a bluff just before the final zigzag track up to a crooked hut where they stopped for a late lunch under a cloudless sky and warm sun.

Above them were the open tussock slopes leading up to the big screes running from almost the tops of the peaks to well down into the valleys. After lunch they sidled the slopes above the hut to a rocky spur overlooking the upper reaches of Bush Stream. Here they had the choice of climbing high to camp or dropping a short way to a small grassy flat at the upper limit of the beech forest. The thought of a more comfortable lower camp won the day so they slipped and slid down the grass to the stream below.

And there was a small clearing that was almost perfect. J and T pitched the tent, built a fireplace and collected firewood. Soon they had a cheery fire to boil the billy and J cooked a tasty meal while the sky darkened and filled with a myriad stars.

They left reasonably early next morning and climbed up the stream towards the toe of the scree dropping from Brabazon Saddle. They left their packs here and carried on towards Mount Caton. There were patches of early winter snow on the scree but mostly they climbed straight up the rock towards the peak. The ridge above the scree was a pile of tottering rock that was about as crooked as it gets, but they had expected this. So they scrambled up the ribs and gullies sending many boulders crashing away below them. They eventually reached



The crooked hut



Cooking tea

what seemed to be a high point on the ridge and which they declared to be the summit. Maybe it was, but there was no cairn so perhaps not, but it was near enough for them and the view wouldn't have been better anywhere else anyway.

They couldn't quite see the peaks called the Two Thumbs as they had hoped because they were hidden by a foreground ridge but that didn't matter too much to them because all around were wonderful views—from the dry and barren low eastern valleys to the higher snow capped peaks to the west. J and T sat for some time on the warm calm point that they had called the top—it was just too nice for them to think of going down.

It was already mid-afternoon when they reached their packs again and too late for their planned wander over Brabazon Saddle to Black Birch Stream. So it had to be back the way they had come—but that was ok as the view is always different going in the opposite direction. They hurried along a bit going down the river trying to get as far as possible before dark, all the while watching the sky turn every possible shade of pink and purple before

finally fading to grey and then black when they had to put on head torches to find the way.



Heading back down from Mt Caton (left centre)

They lost the track in the matagouri on the river flats a couple of times but finally made it back to the car just before 8 o'clock. What a perfect weekend trip away it had been for J and T. They had both enjoyed their crooked trip to the crooked spur so much that we can be sure they already have made crooked plans to go back again sometime soon.

Queen Charlotte mountain bike trip

8-10 April 2011

Peter Gent

Punters: Anna Lambrechtsen, Kate Cushing, Colin Bouttell and Pete Gent

It looked like being one of those trips when before you set sail on the ferry on Friday night, they announce that the crossing will be pretty bad, then you feel sick even before you've got past Evens bay, its an ominous sign. Then despite having a rather flat crossing in the stright, the backpackers having no record of your booking or credit card details, it was possibly going to be that trip.

However on a slightly overcast and cool Saturday morning, with the bakery and the foursquare opening on time to allow a post check in dash for the purchasing of last minute food, we set sail on time into Queen Charlotte Sound - or so we thought. It turns out that 4 young ladies decided that they would arrive at 8.05am for the 8am sailing, so we turned around back around into port... Attempt number 2 however met with a bit more success and

finally we landed at Ship cove with a teasing glimpse of blue sky above the outer Sounds being present.

Letting the hardcore Lycra clad group of gentlemen on extra shiny bikes go ahead (they having 50km to cover that day) and allowing for the German tourists to get off the wharf we started what was to be the major ascent of the day. The previous couple of days of rain made it one slippery push up the hill; however we were rewarded at the top with a glimpse into Resolution bay and a family of Aussie tourists who were off to meet a boat, and thankfully out of the way of 8 mountain bikers whizzing down the hills.



Down hill number 1 of the day offered a chance to test the brakes and enjoy it, knowing that the track was clear to enjoy, apart from the friendly Weka who were huffing and puffing their chests at their mates.

The reward for dodging the weka, and 4 gates that were far too close together, was the first view across Endeavour Inlet and following that a good 15 minutes of weaving down through the roots and drop offs, which would prove to be possibly the most enjoyable section of the ride for most of the group. Eventually the track levelled off as we arrived at the cluster of houses situated alongside Tawa Bay.

Lunch was taken by some of the party slightly further round the inlet at Furneaux Lodge. The 4 gentlemen in their lycra were just leaving as I arrived, which offered the bonus of having some others out in front to nicely clear the path for the rest of us on two wheels!

The route along the shore of Endeavour Inlet around to Camp Bay, provides about 90 minutes of 4 wheel drive type track with the odd twisty uphill section and only a few trampers to avoid. It's not the most exciting of sections but allows a wee bit of speed and does not throw up too many murderous climbs to finish off the day.

Arriving at Camp Bay, the challenge to was find our accommodation for the night. Crossing the lawns of both Punga Cove and Mahar Lodge led onto a rather narrow track and a few steps to negotiate with the 2 wheels. However a trail of pink triangles (must be standard issue for QC accommodation?)



guided us to the home stay with Noeline who was rather sprightly for her 80 years. The rooms also came with a 4 legged friend which at least one member of the party had great enjoyment chasing round the house. After a rather yummy meal at the Punga Cove cafe and some evening Milky Way watching, the duvet was calling.



Sunday started with another slightly grey day, but almost perfect conditions for a bike ride. Saying good bye to our host and dropping packs down on the wharf for onward collection back to Picton it was time to go and enjoy the day. The only slight problem from starting at Camp Bay, is that the only way is up. For starters there is a nice climb to around 400 Meters (that's 2 mount Vics), on a very smooth clay track with not much grip.

Despite the mud, sweat and hunters along the top section, there were some great views. Being able to enjoy the sights looking down into the Bay of Many Coves made up for the uphill, with various selection of home brew lookout signs at suitable points to take a break. There were some slightly exposed sections at times, always fun when wet, trying to ride at a reasonable speed but not tumble down the steep hillside below and that was only one side of the track. On the right hand side, fleeting views looking towards Kenepuru Sound were offered at various points to boot. Despite the exposed sections, the downhill from shelter at Black Rock down towards the saddle above Portage provided excellent downhill (quite dry in places despite the previous few days worth of terrible weather) and the bonus of a quiet track to cruise downwards.

A somewhat breezy rest stop was taken at the Portage Hotel for some of the group. I was even served, despite being rather caked with bits of fresh mud from the track, though I resisted the urge to play on the giant chess set on the front lawn in my muddy state.

The ladies decided that the centre section past Torea Saddle, which mainly consisted of a ridiculously steep up hill and an almost unrideable down hill to Mistletoe Bay was best left unriden. Colin and I decided that that would be far too sensible a short cut to take and continued on regardless. Yes



the view by the microwave station was great but I suspect that the road short cut was the somewhat sensible option for a few kms - yes Anna you told me so.

Arriving at the junction down to Mistletoe Bay Wharf, there was just a mere 16kms to the

water taxi. According to the route profile, there is an overall decent down to sea level. Having had some great riding already and views as well, it seemed to just be the final dash



for the wharf. However this final 90 minutes of riding offers some great track, and initially some teasing views into the end of the sound. However at around the 6km mark is a look out which for want of a better word offers a stunning look out to the end of the sound and across to the approach to Picton too. Even on this final section of track, despite its popularity and closeness to the main tourist routes, very few people were encountered which meant less stopping and more speed!

To top the fine Sunday afternoon's riding, the water taxi out of Anakiwa left 30 minutes early and the crossing back into the capital arrived 15 minutes early topping off a fine weekend, despite its somewhat slightly wobblerly start.

Ruahine : Sunrise Hut

Easy tramp, 18-20 March 2011

Annie Van Herck

Punters: Helen Law (Leader), Marie Jessup, Penny Kerr-Hislop, Danniell Bourke, Chris Davies, Bryce Stapleton and Annie Van Herck.

This was my third overnight trip with the WTMC and I must say also the best because of the great scenery, the nice track and the time we had for exploring and relaxing.

We left on Friday evening from the station with another group (medium) led by Kate Cushing. Jo Boyle was driving the van, doing quite a good job even when her patience was

challenged as we got stuck in a very long queue on the Rimutaka Hill caused by road works. We lost a lot of time there unfortunately and it was dark when we stopped for dinner at Café Istanbul in Carterton. That had to be quick, so we all got takeaways. Helen took the wheel then and we arrived at our destination, near the end of North Block Road, rather late. Just as we started walking towards the hut, my torch decided to go on strike and I had to find my way along the farm track in near darkness. Luckily it was only 10 minutes to



Triple X hut (photo by Penny)

reach Triple X hut where we stayed for the night. It's a small very basic hut (12 bunks) with 2 bunkrooms separated by the kitchen, but we were happy that it was there which saved us putting up the fly. We went to bed straight away, and as it wasn't cold some people decided to sleep on the deck. I was glad to be able to borrow Penny's torch.

On Saturday, Helen got up early to drive the other group to the start of their walk along the Waipawa River. Actually, we found out later that they could have reached it by taking the Swamp track which starts near the hut. Never mind, we'll know that next time. When Helen came back we left for the Sunrise Hut. The track was a steady climb all the way to the hut, but mostly wide and easy terrain (it felt like paradise after my last trips in the Tararuas!). I enjoyed going through changing forest types and admiring nice views on the way even before we reached the open tops. A few educational panels along the way showed how popular this track must be with families and school groups. In spite of many stops, we arrived at the top in a slightly faster time than the 2.30 hours that were indicated at the start (that makes one feel good, doesn't it?).

At the top we were rewarded by a superb outlook onto the Hawke's Bay plains. The hut was also quite luxurious. It stands in a wonderful position in a tussock basin beside the bush edge. It has recently been extended and is now very large with several rooms and levels. A wide deck in the front enables you to sit outside and take in the view which you can also see through large windows in the kitchen. It had great comfort with gas cookers and a gas heater.

We had lunch and rested for a while, then we decided to brave the wind and walk (without the packs, what a relief !) up to Armstrong Saddle where the view was even better. From the ridge we were impressed by the rugged mountainside with interesting rock formations due to slips and erosion. We climbed up to where the track leads steeply down to Top Maropea Hut. After a few photos, we returned to the saddle.



Sunrise Hut (photo by Chris)



Chris, Annie, Helen, Bryce, Danniell and Marie at the top of the hill (photo by Penny)



The view (photo by Chris)

Then, as we still hadn't had enough of exploring, Helen, Penny and I walked to the top of the hill situated on the other side of the saddle, while the rest of the group went back to the hut. We joined them a while later and prepared to relax for the afternoon. Bryce led a game of cards. I played 500 for the first time, supported by the experienced Marie who was sitting by my side. 500 is actually very much like "belote", a French card game that I used to play in France. I did some reading as well. Other groups of people were also staying in the hut but there was ample room for everyone.

Then came dinner time and on the menu was Indian rice pilaf, spicy rice and vegetables which tasted delicious. We had so much that we were able to share some with our neighbours. Then Chris came up with instant dessert : something looking a bit like custard, in two flavours : vanilla and strawberry. Very nice.



Dinner in the hut: Penny, Chris and Annie (photo by Marie)

We all went to bed fairly early as we had to get up early enough the next morning not to miss the famous sunrise of Sunrise Hut !

So, on Sunday morning, everyone got up to watch the sunrise at around 7 am. We were very lucky with the weather. There were clouds there, but just enough to make the sunrise interesting. The colours were amazing and lots of photos were taken. It was so beautiful that I could hardly get away from it. We were sitting

there on the deck in our sleeping bags as it was still fairly cool, sipping our cups of tea. What a life!



Sunrise at Sunrise Hut (photo by Chris)



Chris, Penny, Helen, Marie, Annie, Bryce and Danniell on the deck (photo by Chris)

The walk back down the hill was very quick and we still had time to wander along the loop of the Swamp track at the bottom. We didn't really see a swamp but a few birds and enjoyed the lovely track through the forest. Penny and Danniell stayed at the Triple X hut where we had left our packs and chose to lie in the sun instead.

Our timing was perfect as we met the other group just on our way out from the Swamp track. So we all got back to the van and Jo drove us back to Wellington, via the Kapiti coast this time, avoiding the Rimutaka roadworks. Just before the Manawatu gorge, on the Woodville end we crossed the bridge and stopped at the “Beyond the Bridge café”, a very nice place with tables and chairs outside. It must be well known in the area because it was packed. In the yard at the back were some horses which some of us were admiring when we got called back to the van.



Penny on a different type of horse (photo by Chris)

I think this trip was enjoyed by all and I'll be looking forward to meeting some of the group again on other trips. Thanks to all for your friendly company and to Helen for leading us and arranging such a tasty dinner.

Whirinaki

Medium Fit tramp, Easter 2011

Amanda Wells

Punters: Amanda Wells, Richard Lardner

Five years ago at Easter I had to bail on a club trip to Whirinaki because of a cold. Despite multiple sneezes on the day we departed, this time I decided to take a “kill or cure” approach.

We don't often go to Whirinaki because of the distance: seven hours driving under the best possible conditions. But Helen had cunningly booked a backpackers in Turangi and we were drifting off to sleep by 10.30pm. Happily the easy-mediums were easily convinced to depart by 7am, as us medium-fits had a longish day ahead.

After a windy drive to Minginui, Richard and I were tramping by 10. The start of our long loop, to Central Whirinaki hut, was a highway reminiscent of the Heaphy, and it was a novelty to look at the forest scenery instead of your feet. Richard's wishlist for the trip included seeing Blue Ducks and Kaka (and perhaps curing his own cold). Within an hour we saw our first pair of Whio, making loud alarm calls.

We had lunch at a strangely flash A-frame shelter (complete with wood burner!) before saying a quick hello to Central Whirinaki hut's warden and heading off into what was now pouring rain. One interesting feature of this trip was the variation between the official DOC leaflet, track signs, and other track signs. Would it take 3 hours, 2.5 hours or 2 hours to get to Upper Whirinaki hut? The next section stumbling along the river provided a stark contrast to the morning's track.

We arrived soaking wet at 4.30pm, thankful for the lovely and unoccupied 9-bunk hut (after the Ruahines two weeks prior, visions of chopper loads of hunters were hard to shake). Like every hut we visited, it had a nice supply of dry wood, though a bit of conscientious wet wood collection did occur.



Moerangi hut

Going up another river on day two, a flash of orange ahead resolved into a lone hunter, who told us he was fly camping further downstream. We soon left him behind, feeling guilty about disturbing the wildlife (Richard spooked a deer on the track – just after we spotted another pair of Whio).

Lunch was at Upper Te Hoe hut, another seldom-visited nine bunker. While mistily atmospheric, the weather wasn't too wet, making the climb from the hut back up to the ridge almost enjoyable. The final part of the descent to Central Te Hoe hut was on a newly cut track blasted into the hillside (complete with overkill handwires). Little did we realise it then (and in continued contradiction to the information leaflet) but this highway-standard track would persist for the rest of the trip.

We arrived at the hut happy the promised 10-hour day had become only eight. I was not so



Forest giants

happy to realise I'd accidentally abandoned my hut socks at Upper Whirinaki but the 15-bunk hut was soon warm enough for even the sockless. Again, no one else was to be seen. Not exactly what you expect on a long weekend, and it was hard to rationalise the size of the hut given the lack of entries in the log book. It felt very isolated among the ancient trees; real back country.

The next morning, we headed up yet another river, complete with another Whio sighting. The trees seemed even older and more

impressive here, in the most isolated section of the park. You expect podocarps but the beech were giant too. Some identification attempts ensued, of which Illona and Megan may or may not have been proud. And we mostly avoided the nettle that distinctly failed to live up to our now-dubiously-regarded leaflet's warnings.

This third day was in theory the longest; 10 hours with two huts to pass on the way. The descent towards Mangakahika hut was a highlight – primeval forest and liquid bird song. Lunch was at Roger's hut, famous for its stained glass window, and here we encountered

some mountain bikers. They told us that what we thought would be a grovel up a barely tracked river was in fact a purpose-built MTB track. We were not unhappy to hear this news, even if it did make the day's 7am start and forced-march-pace retrospectively redundant. The expected rain front soon arrived in earnest, and it was lovely to reach Moerangi hut by 3.30pm for another night by the fire.

Monday dawned truly wet, and we appreciated the three hours of MTB highway back to the beginning and our rendezvous with Helen's group. It'd been 80km of spectacular forest, with three Whio sightings, one Kaka heard and two colds cured. Even the one hour spent stationary in Bulls on our return journey didn't diminish the experience.

Waterfall Hut

Fit tramp, April 2011

Stephen Healey

Punters: Sharron, Dave, Steve, Ian, Gareth and Stephen

I left the car just after 5:00pm Friday night & headed off to Purity Hut, the first half an hour or so up the farmland is a steep haul but once you get into the bush this is another good route on to the tops. Daylight saving had just finished, so once in the bush the torch came out pretty quickly, but it was still only 90 minutes from the car park to the hut.

Arriving at Purity the weather was much like my last trip to the Ruahines misty, cool and not looking promising. The forecast however was very different to last time with the promise of a day or two of fine weather. By 8:00pm the mist & clag had cleared outside & there was a beautiful sickle moon and a sky full of stars.

There were two hunters in residence at the hut & although not together they were both planning to set off early the next morning & had set their alarms for 4:00am. I got a text



Dave with Ruapehu behind en route to Wooden Peg

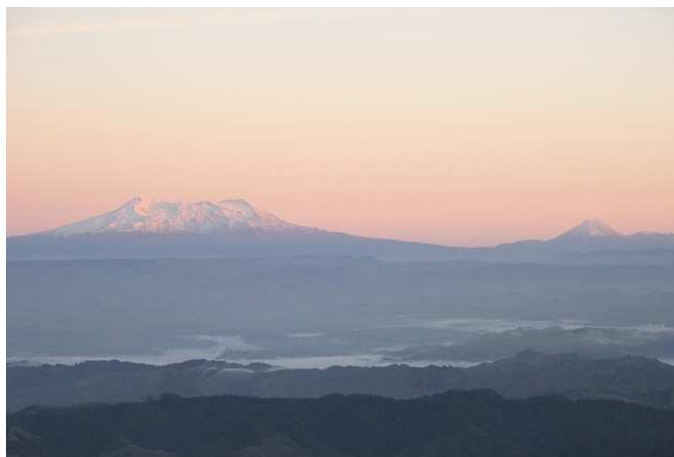
back from Sharron confirming they were still all on schedule & then it was lights out for an early night.

Saturday morning the alarms went off at 4:00am & try as I might getting back to sleep proved difficult, eventually I gave up & pottered around taking a few photo's as the light dawned on the day & then organizing brews & breakfast etc

The rest of the crew arrived on schedule around 9:30 having slept at the road end, a quick brew & we were off up the hill heading for the Pegs. Wooden Peg duly arrived & Iron Peg followed suit shortly after.

It was a great day with only a very light breeze, perfect conditions for tramping

Mt Ruapehu & Ngauruhoe were looking splendid, even Taranaki glistened in the distance. There had been a good dumping of snow in the last week & there was even a dusting still on the slopes all around us.



Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe

Heading south we made good time until we hit the first broken bits on the ridge. There is a broken section prior to the turn off to Pourangaki Hut, but this is really just a warm up to the short section of Pinnacles that follow after this. These sections slowed us up & when we stopped for a snack & another look at the map just prior to Pt 1584, it became obvious that we were probably going to run out of daylight if we continued.

The original plan was to continue to Ohuinga

& then turn North and drop to Waterfall Hut via Broken Ridge. This is very doable; it just requires a bit more time than we had that day. Daylight saving or Purity Hut on Friday night would give you the extra time required.

One of the hunters staying in Purity gave me some route advice for Broken Ridge that looked sound from where we were, he said carry on down Broken Ridge & over the pinnacle section until just before the ridge starts to lose height. There is a big slip there that runs all the way down into Tussock creek below, there is a small tussock spur just to the north of the slip which offers good travel down off the ridge until you are happy to traverse south on to the scree slopes if you don't like the access at the top. That route looked fine from where we were.

Instead we now took a scree slope down into the headwaters of the Kawhatau, this provided good travel, as did the stream bed below & we motored on down eventually reaching Waterfall Hut about 3:45pm.



Ian catching some sun – upper Kawhatau

There were already 3 hunters staying there, though not actually in residence, their gear sort of filled the hut and to be honest the promised flats just down river seemed way more appealing anyway.

We met two of the hunters down river they had been there all week & today was the first day they managed to get out of the hut as the weather had been so bad, their helicopter was coming back for them Sunday so they were trying to make the

most of the 24 hours left to them.

We pushed on downriver a little further to the Rangi Stream confluence, where there are some nice spots to pitch a tent or 3 & by 5:00pm we had tents up & were ready to get dinner on. With darkness arriving just after 6:00pm this was perfectly timed.

Steve got a fire going & a great meal was then followed by another early night. We were up & away by 7:00am the next morning, the night had been clear & frosty, in fact the tents & some boots & socks had layers of ice on them when we rose. A bit of massaging & in some cases hot water was required before the respective socks & boots were good to go.

The river crossings were chilly, some putting it off as long as possible by staying on the true right, those of us who crossed though knew this to be a very temporary advantage as our route lay up a stream off to the true left, so wet feet were only delayed temporarily. The recommended route from here was apparently up Trig Creek but the hunter I spoke to said it was a bit overgrown with spaniard etc in the upper reaches & that the next two creeks upriver provided better travel. We took the second creek and this provided great travel up to a fork, where the main stream had a small waterfall. The true left branch also had a bluffy bit so we scrambled up the spur between, this was steep & spaniardly, so we dropped back into the true left branch again for another few minutes but were then again pushed back up on to the spur. This was challenging for perhaps 10 minutes or so getting up this bit, but leatherwood was almost nonexistent & the going was really quite good just steep. We soon broke out on to the short snowgrass & travel was great from here on up. There are lots of tarns up here & the travel just got better & better.

We popped out up on to the main ridge just 30-40 metres from the pipe on top of Mangaweka, there are remains of the old trig here but it has long gone it seems. All that remained now was to follow the ridgeline back north to Kawhatau Base. The weather was still good at this stage but we could see cloud spilling in from the west, soon Sawtooth Ridge was soon gone & the cloud continued to get closer & closer occasionally wafting across us, but visibility remained mostly good. Fortunate, as there is a messy piece of ridgeline between Hikurangi & Pt 1625 where the route becomes less than obvious, ok when you can see where you are heading but this would be interesting in the clag as the ground trail disappears here as well.



Once we met the poled route from Mckinnon Hut, Steve & I went on ahead as he had a van key & we knew the other trip would be waiting ready to go.

The track down from the bushedge deserves mention as it is unusual, as you get closer to the river there are some very eroded pieces of ridgeline, with the track on a razorback here in places, there is a big slip on one side leading to the river below, it would only take

a few trees to fall to wipe out the top of the ridge altogether here. Then further down the track falls so steeply to the cage that there are dozens of wooden pegs driven into the ground to act as purchase & to help maintain a track. This would be a hell of a haul up from the river.

Arriving at the cage separately, we each decided to take that across the river rather than drop down & regain the height. This is the highest cage I have ever crossed on, I was fortunately too busy turning the handle to spend any time looking down, it's a very long way down to the river.

I'm not sure that this was the quickest way across in the end, winding yourself across, with no help, is very hard work, I think with no-one else to help out that walking down & back up again might be quicker & probably not as hard as winching yourself across on the cage. I was certainly buggered after doing this.

Arriving out at the road end we were given a lift back down to the Mangakokeke Rd end where my car & the other van awaited. We parted here, each with a bit of work to do to get home. Steve had to get back up to Kawhatau Base, hopefully past the locked gates to collect the others & then return & head back to Wellington, while I was back off up north to Tauranga.



Sharron, Dave, Steve, Ian & Gareth & I all enjoyed a fabulous couple of days in the hills.

We were incredibly lucky with the weather as both Friday & Sunday evening were clagged in. It was my fourth club trip to the Ruahines, but this was the first time I actually got to see anything, the other trips up here had all been in the clag.

A fine trip, thanks to all involved, especially Huey.

Kia ora fellow trampers

I hope you managed to eat your fill of Easter eggs and hot cross buns over the holiday weekend. For some time Aunty Rata has been promising advice on baking the legendary Tararua biscuit. There are several reasons for the delay. First, I am rubbish at baking so it has been necessary to consult with specialist tramping bakers in order to gather together some tips worth passing on. Second, I have to confess to a degree of ambivalence concerning the utility of the Tararua biscuit. They were originally invented as a reasonably nutritious, light, versatile and indestructible lunchtime staple capable of staying fresh and holding their shape for a long time while bouncing around in a tramping pack. These properties make Tararua biscuits highly suitable for transporting on long Xmas trips but are they actually edible and are they worth the time and effort that goes into baking them?

I guess the answer lies in how much satisfaction you derive from making your own food from scratch, knowing exactly what has gone into what you are eating and where the time versus money trade off lies for you. In terms of value for money, one thing is for sure, homemade Tararua biscuits are cheaper than the competition whether it be, crackers, muesli bars or one square meals.

WTMC Tararua Biscuits

Makes 14 biscuits = 7 lunches of 2 biscuits = calorie equivalent of 4 slices of bread.

Ingredients

250g wholemeal flour

150g plain flour

125g butter

100g sugar

1 TB golden syrup or honey

Half tsp salt

Baking paper

Quarter cup milk powder

Water – quantity varies from batch to batch

Method

Pre heat oven to 130 degrees Celsius.

Spread a baking tray with baking paper or grease the tray with butter if you have no baking paper. (Ordinary paper or Saturday's Dom will not work).

Mix dry ingredients in a bowl.

Cut butter into cubes and soften slightly in microwave or hot water cupboard.

Rub butter into dry ingredients.

Make a well in the centre and add enough water to form a dry dough when lightly mixed.

Don't mix the dough too much but do knead it a bit to make it stick together.

Roll biscuit dough out to 1cm thickness, cut into biscuits and place on a baking tray.

Bake at 130degrees Celsius until cooked (dry and starting to turn tussock coloured). This will take about 1.5-2 hours depending on your oven.

Once cooked switch oven off but leave biscuits in the oven so they can continue to harden up.

Baking tips

- As with any baking you need to be organised. This means getting together all your equipment and ingredients before you start. There is nothing worse than grovelling round in kitchen drawers with floury hands looking for something that could work as a rolling pin (a pump bottle filled with water is quite good), or finding out half way through the mixing process that you don't actually have an essential ingredient.
- Think about how you will store your biscuits and decide what shape to make them. Aunty Rata has a round biscuit cutter (a glass will do the trick), that enables her to size biscuits to fit into an empty Pringle tin but square or rectangular biscuits might be better if you carry a lunch box on tramps.
- Do not overcook. There is a subtle but important difference between a crisp Tararua biscuit and a rock. Remember visits to the dentist are invariably unpleasant and expensive and there is little point in baking a rock when you could just grab one wherever you happen to find yourself at lunchtime on your tramp...
- Adjust the sugar/golden syrup/honey quantities to suit your taste. Resist the temptation to amp up the sugar quantity though, you are making biscuits not fudge.
- You can substitute some of the flour for gluten free flour such as rice flour or soy flour but no more than half is recommended. Any more and the biscuits start to crumble. Likewise you can substitute olive oil for butter if you have cholesterol issues.
- If you want variety then divide your batch of biscuit dough into 200g lumps (4 biscuits) and add one of the following: 2 TB coconut or chocolate chips or chopped almonds or chopped dried cranberries or sesame seeds or sunflower seeds or 1TB wholegrain mustard.

Once made you can put any topping you like on a Tararua biscuit – cheese, jam, peanut butter, marmite, hummus etc. However, your biscuits should be edible naked. If they are not don't worry as this is when their versatility really comes into its own. They will make serviceable roofing tiles or door stops. You can also throw them at the neighbour's cat if it is trespassing. If you regularly tramp with someone who sets too quick a pace you could always hide a few biscuits in their pack. I have not done extensive testing of their aerodynamic qualities but it is probable these biscuits make good Frisbees or a useful substitute for a hacky sack. Unlike bread or crackers the humble Tararua biscuit may even be suitable for anchoring your tent or fly or as an implement for hammering pegs in. As my old geography teacher used to say, resources are cultural appraisals. So I guess on balance, if you don't treat the Tararua biscuit as mere food you can argue that its utility is without rival.

Aunty Rata would welcome any feedback or tips on baking Tararua biscuits.

Big thanks to Amanda Wells, Illona Keenan and Ruth Parnell who generously shared some of their baking tips thereby enabling me to finally finish this article.

Sue Walsh life membership

Congratulations to Sue Walsh for being awarded Life Membership to the WTMC at the recent AGM.

Sue's commitment to the club began at a young age, with some of her earliest memories going up to Ruapheu Lodge, which her father, Trevor Walsh one of the early Life Members in the Club, played a critical role in building.

Sue has been a valued and critical member of the club for many years, running bushcraft and leadership courses, helping out at new members' nights and leading numerous easy and medium tramps and kayaking trips. To new members, Sue is always incredibly welcoming to the Club and has been credited for being a reason why many members have remained active in the club.

Sue has been serving on the Committee for c. 17 years occupying a range of positions including President, Secretary, membership officer and Vice President and now her current role of Lodge convenor.

Thank you very much to Sue for her invaluable commitment to the club!



Sue on Gentle Annie, coming down from Powell Hut 1991 / 1992



Christmas Trip 1995 / 1996 Dave McDowall, Sue Walsh, Brian Ellis and Greg Crow

Congratulations to Tony Gazley, winner of the April 2011 month draw, for the 'Late for tea again' 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.