



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

July 2011



Mt Taranaki summit. Murray Sutherland

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The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



The committee was so busy we forgot to meet this month. There is a great deal going on administration wise and out in the field. The highlights are recorded in this newsletter. Thanks to everyone who has obliged us by writing trip reports. I'm sure I'm not the only person who looks forward to reading about our outdoor adventures. As we say on our club poster *"how much fun can you have?"*

Work in the priority areas is going well. Forgotten about the big three? No problem I'm good at repetition:

1. lifting usage of the club lodge;
2. membership acquisition; and
3. improving the website.

It's cool that some of you have volunteered to help out with these initiatives. If you would like to join in please get in touch. Meantime there are lots of small, simple, practical things you can do. For example, talking to new people at club nights will make them feel welcome and more likely to stick around and sign up for trips. You could have a go at leading a trip. Day walks are a great place to start if you have no experience with leading and coincidentally we are particularly keen to run more day walks for people trying tramping for the first time. It does not take much effort to gently encourage your friends, colleagues and family to come on trips or utilise our lodge. Do you know some non-members who would be interested in this newsletter? Go on, indulge in a spot of spamming, email them the link.

There has been a lot of focus on the club lodge lately so I thought I'd remind you about our other great facility, Paua hut. Paua hut is much closer to home, located in the Rimutaka Forest Park and just a 2 hour walk from the road end. The hut sleeps 10 people and is a great spot to head for a relaxed weekend. The hut is looked after by a team: Phil and Ann Kendon do the bookings (check out the Paua hut tab on the front page of the Club website) and Marty Green and Mike Pratt handle hut maintenance. We are very lucky to have these members doing this important work for us, thanks guys. Paua hut is popular with families and Mike Gilbert is always keen to hear from people who want to join in family orientated tramps. Email Mike at wtmcfamilies@gmail.com

There are lots of websites that cater for outdoors enthusiasts interested in finding out about local tramping trips or getting information and opinions on issues relevant to trampers. I don't make endorsements lightly, generally a minimum of several boxes of good quality chocolate or a large cash donation is required but I have to confess that for considered, thoughtful, well written analysis of the issues of the day it is hard to go past our own Mike

McGavin's *Windy Hilltops* blog. Even though I've had no chocolates from him and he will probably turn scarlet with embarrassment when he reads this, check out Mike's blog at <http://www.windy.gen.nz/>. You may be interested in the *Freedom of Camping Bill* which is currently out for consultation. The bill is designed to give local authorities and DoC the power to hand out instant fines to people caught violating new by-laws or rules relating to camping in wilderness areas. There is scope for the provisions to apply to some of our road end camping. Mike has undertaken an analysis of the bill. Reading the bill got me thinking about the potential environmental impact of large groups of WTMCers camping at road ends where there are no toilet facilities. This is something we need to think about.

Speaking of tramping related issues, Megan our Promotions Officer was interviewed and is quoted extensively in an article in the June issue of Wilderness Magazine. The article called *Tramping 2.0* looks at why traditional tramping clubs are struggling for new members in the fast-changing digital age.

Finally, on behalf of the Club I'd like to congratulate Ian Harrison. Two of his photos won first and second place respectively in the flora and fauna section of the 2011 FMC Photo competition. Sweet!

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



Sometimes trips aren't as tough as you anticipate. In late May, I made my third attempt on the Maungahuka circuit. This involves going from Holdsworth Road end over Holdsworth Peak and Isabelle, down to Mid Waiohine Hut, up that punishing climb to Aokapanui, along to Maungahuka, down past Concertina Knob to Neill Forks Hut, up again to Cone Ridge, down to Totara Flats, then along and up and down back to the road end. That was how I'd done it on the previous two attempts; the first in a weekend, the second over three days. But this time we decided to give it a go in reverse. The rationale was staying at the new Aokap hut, one of my handful of non-visited Tararua huts. Richard and I would walk to Totara Flats hut on Friday night, then head up, down to Neill Forks, up to Maungahuka and along to Aokap hut (a relatively new two-bunker in the mode of Arete hut). On Sunday we'd head down to Mid Waiohine, then up Holdsworth and down to the road end.

I thought the Friday night might be challenging, with the ups and downs along Totara Creek. But it was surprisingly pleasant to not be climbing (usually par for the course on dark Friday nights), even if the ground was waterlogged from recent rain. There was one person in residence at Totara Flats hut but we never conversed with him/her, arriving

about 10pm and leaving by 7am. The next day also felt relatively ok and we arrived at the happily unoccupied hut about 4pm. Sunday didn't feel too bad either, and we managed in eight hours what we thought might take significantly longer. Maybe it's easier in that direction, or maybe I'm fitter now, but it was an eye-opening experience to repeat what had been my first F trip, nearly five years later. Aokap hut is definitely worth visiting, with a good ground trail down from just south of Aokap peak making it much easier to find than the old biv.

We've rescheduled the leadership weekend and outdoor first aid course for 27-29 October (the weekend after Labour weekend). By holding both courses at the same venue, there will be the chance to share meals as well as ensure that they both go ahead. The leadership course provides the tools you need to lead a WTMC trip (and some skills occasionally useful in everyday life, including advanced navigation and weather reading). The outdoor first aid course will be presented by the same instructor as last year, so comes highly recommended. Please put this weekend in your diary now – sheets will go up on the board in early September, or email lardner.richard@gmail.com to book your place.

One piece of feedback given by newbies (or ex-newbies) is that freezing nights at wind-swept road ends can lead to them never coming back to the club. So one thing we are experimenting with this winter is making Friday nights less painful. This can mean leaving early on a Saturday morning to road ends that are nearby (like Megan's trip to Waitewaewae next weekend, or Ray's trip to Burn hut later this month, or the trips to Putara in August). Or it can mean finding less desolate places to stay, like the road-end camping area at Waiohine Gorge for Jo's trip at the end of July, or the DOC lodge at the Kawhatau road end that we have booked for the trips on 19-21 August. Feedback on this approach is very welcome.

Upcoming trips

1-3 Jul Kahurangi NP and Tararua FP

Tramp	EM	Waitewaewae	Megan Banks
Day	EM	Butterfly Creek	Barbara Keenan

Megan heads in from Otaki Forks for a reliable, all-weather trip to a spacious hut, while Barbara leads a perennial favourite in the hills behind Eastbourne (perhaps with a cafe stop!).

8-10 Jul Ruapehu Lodge

Alp1	M	Tongariro Crossing	Spencer Clubb
Instr	MF	Alp1 and Alp2 alpine refresher	Sharron Came
Family	All	Rimutaka Incline walk/MTB	Sarah Young

There are several options from our comfortable club lodge this weekend, including a bit of crampon, ice axe and ropes practice. Remember that the lodge fare includes all your food for the weekend! Or closer to home, join Sarah (and maybe Alistair and Bella) for a very gradual climb up the Rimutaka incline.

15-17 Jul Tararua FP – Mangahao Rd

Tramp	E	Burn hut	Ray Walker
Day	M	Kapakapanui	Mika Verheul

Join Ray for a trip to a seldom-visited Tararua hut that's just about on the bushline, while Mika does a classic M daywalk around the lovely Kapakapanui circuit near Waikanae (even with a hut to have lunch in).

22-24 Jul Ruapehu Lodge

Instr	M	Snowcraft I	Sharron Came
Tramp	F	Richmond Ranges (4 days)	Jenny Cossey
Day	EM	Canons Point - Birchville Dam	Helen Law
Family	All	Colonial Knob	Constanze Schwind

Snowcraft kicks off at the lodge (email Sharron asap to secure your place), while Jenny aims for an epic on the Te Araroa section in the Richmond Ranges, and Helen and Constanze lead daywalks in the Porirua vicinity.

29-31 Jul Tararua FP – Waiohine Gorge Rd

Tramp	EM	Tutuwai to Kaitoke	Jo Boyle
Tramp	MF	Neill Pk – Neill Forks hut nav	Amanda Wells

Another couple of classic Tararua trips, with the EMs traversing the length of the beautiful Tauherenikau valleys. If you're a confident M, you could handle the MF trip.

5-7 Aug Ruapehu Lodge

Instr	M	Snowcraft II	Sharron Came
Family	All	Mt Bruce wildlife centre	Mike Gilbert

More snowcraft at the lodge, while Mike takes all-comers to the Mt Bruce centre – watch out for the eel feeding!

12-14 Aug Tararua FP – Putara Rd

Tramp	E	Herepai hut	Donna Maher
Tramp	EM	Roaring Stag hut	Paul Andrews
Tramp	F	Neill Winchcombe	Richard Lardner
Day	E	Colonial Knob	Ray Walker
Family	All	Plimmerton daywalk	Ally Clark

Donna and Paul head into the road end near Eketahuna, with Donna's E trip heading for the well-placed Herepai hut just near the tops, and Paul making for the riverside Roaring Stag. Ray leads the popular day trip to Colonial Knob (no prizes for spotting the mistakes in the printed version of the schedule!) while Ally heads to the beach.

If you'd like to sign up for any of these trips, come down to the club rooms on Wednesday nights from 7.30pm.

Editor's chat

Sarah Young, Newsletter editor



Wow... another bumper newsletter this month. I couldn't do it without you! Thank you so much for all your contributions this month; they make a great read. I have to admit that some of the tales that are told of tramping trips do leave me somewhat envious and longing to get out again and onto the tops. However, family tramping certainly has its own merits, and will have to satisfy my longing for foreseeable future.

It is great to see so many articles being published about the family trips that have happened recently. The youngsters who go on these trips are the future of our club, so it is great to see them involved so early in life. Long may that involvement continue!

It is with some embarrassment, and my tail between my legs, that I admit to omitting a thank you in my last months' editorial thank you. The online newsletter survey would not have been published were it not for the help I received from Mike Gilbert and Steve Kohler who actually published the survey to the WTMC website. Thank you very much to you both.

Not only am I now looking for submissions to the newsletter every month, but am also now collecting articles to be published in this years WTMC journal. The photographs published with the journal have to be amazing! Research tells us it is the photos that encourage people to read the article, rather than the other way round. So, if you have been on a

fabulous trip recently, and took some amazing photographs, do put pen to paper and send me your story. Deadline for submissions to the journal: September (exact date to be confirmed).

With our second child due to arrive in the world in September, I am not going to have the time (and will be slightly sleep deprived!) to put the journal together. So, we are looking for a volunteer. The articles will have been collected for you; they'll just need to be edited and formatted into the journal for publication. Please do put your name forward by emailing me at newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

In the meantime, do keep sending me your trip reports for the monthly newsletter. Club members love reading about trip events. I hope you all love writing them too!

Send trip reports to: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz. The deadline for the next newsletter is 29 July 2011.

Murmurings from the kitchen

Donna Maher and Jenny Beaumont, Social convenors



Kia Ora

Hard to believe July is almost upon us! This is the time of year to be positive about the months ahead. Winter tramping trips can be very spectacular and well worth the effort of getting out there. Even when the trip was not as you either planned or imagined (refer to the Lake Christabel Easy Medium trip report in this edition of the newsletter) it's great to be in the outdoors and to be with a group of like minded people.

At the club on Wednesdays in July ...

Kevin Cole will return on **July 20th** to talk about some of the kayak trips he has been on. I warn you I may feature in some of the photos but I'm hoping this won't be too bad and I'm sure you will enjoy the evening anyway.

Jonathan Kennett, who has written several books on tracks around New Zealand and has been involved in developing tracks for mountain biking, will be at club on **July 27th**. Come along and find out more about Jonathan Kennett's latest book, giving plenty of ideas for trips of all sorts in our backyard.

July is your chance to get involved in the club as we have some spaces available to give presentations. If you would like to help please contact me on social@wtmc.org.nz

Thanks heaps to all those helpers who offer their time on the door and greet everyone with their friendly faces. It's a really important role especially for the handful of first timers who come every week - it is scary walking into a hall full of strangers. Remember the club only runs due to all the volunteering and it wouldn't work without you! We are always looking for helpers for the door and for anyone who is interested in helping see Megan at club or email promotions@wtmc.org.nz.

Lastly I would like to take the opportunity (if not done already) to Congratulate **Ian Harrison** who won the Flora and Fauna category in the FMC Photo Competition and also took out the runner up award as well. This was with the photo of the spoonbill which won him both the people's choice and the Judges choice award in our own Competition earlier in the year. Well done Ian - I knew you would do well!

Thanks again and remember we are always looking for presenters and ideas for presentation if you don't feel confident to give the talk. Talk to either Jenny or myself on Wednesday nights or email us.

Lodge update

Sue Walsh, Ruapehu Lodge convenor



We hear that snow is finally falling on the mountain. We're very pleased to hear that as a suggestion has been made that we need a working party to produce snow.

As you know the school holidays are not too far off. The week 17 -19 July has 19 spaces available as at 20 June. The following week is now fully booked. We have a club week from 7 -11 August which has had some murmurings of interest but no firm bookings as yet. I encourage you to book for this week as soon as you can so you don't miss out.

There was a wee typo in the last update regarding the email for bookings. For regular users of the lodge you will know the email address to use, however for those that are unsure, please use lodgebookings@wtmc.org.nz

As with all users of the mountain we are keenly waiting on the snow to fall and form a decent base. Obviously winter equals snow sports and we very much hope the season will be a good one, albeit a bit of a late starting one. No matter what the snow, the lodge is a wonderful place to go and relax so I hope you will book in and take advantage of it.

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



This month, we welcome 7 new members to our club:

Couple members: Dmitry Alkhimov and Tatiana Krayushkina
Senior member (upgrade): Jeanine Langvik
Family members: Stian, Sondre and Axel Langvik-Owen
Associate member: Geoff Owen

All life, veteran, senior and couple club members should have received their 2011/2012 FMC cards through the post last week. If yours has not arrived then please contact me to sort it out: membership@wtmc.org.nz

Forever wild?!

Mika Verheul, Secretary WTMC

On June 11th and 12th the FMC celebrated its 80th anniversary with a two day conference at Te Papa. The Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (FMC) is an organisation which operates at a national level, representing 82 tramping & mountaineering clubs (including the WTMC) and through these a total of more than 15,000 members that actively enjoy the outdoors in NZ.

The conference opened with an impressive powhiri, linking the Maori traditional connection to the land with FMC's recreational appreciation of the land. After this, as is usual at an anniversary, the conference proceeded with a brief overview of the history of the FMC. It was most interesting to see what the achievements have been and changes made since the first big conference on wilderness protection in 1981. This retrospective view almost automatically gave a sense of achievement and pride to all conference attendees. Since 1987 the concept of a 'wilderness area' has been part of the Conservation Act, and in the last couple of years nine NZ wilderness areas have been designated and managed.

The theme of the conference was "Forever Wild" and, although the catering was a notch above the usual bush cooking, the topics covered in several speeches and workshops were food for thought, and also related to the aims of the WTMC.

Conservation, untouched nature and the intrinsic value of the outdoors were intertwined with impressive talks of high quality, challenging, passionate, encouraging and invigorating. It was interesting to take a few steps back and look at the activities of our

WTMC from a wider perspective. And Craig Potton's slideshow definitely made most of us start thinking about the exit sign and our packs, with a wish to head for the bush right away rather than attend a conference.

Here are some topics discussed during the sessions:

- **Pest control:** Without adequate pest control NZ will lose its diversity and flora and fauna will rapidly become extinct. Pests are the biggest threat to NZ conservation and moving fast! Pest control can be 'outsourced' to commercial operators, but also worked on through voluntary work (community involvement). Pest-control has the potential to become a new type of outdoor activity, similar to tree planting and track maintenance.
- **1080:** Is this poison essential to preserve birdlife and biodiversity? Parliament had instigated a survey into this subject, and the clear recommendation is to battle pests where possible. At this moment 1080 is the only tool available with the right high impact, suitable for a wide scale approach, although it does have limited side effects. Forest & Bird put forward the statement that pest eradication is a matter of money. For example, we have the technology to put a cattle grid and a fence at the Auckland isthmus and get rid of all pests in Northland, if we decide we want it! Apparently our politicians make the choice to spend the public money elsewhere.
- **Exclusive capture:** By Act public land is for everybody to enjoy, but you may need to cross private land to access public land and the private owner doesn't always allow access. In 2008 the Walking Access Act established a commission at governmental level to improve access to public land. Their activities are described on the site <http://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz>. If there are any issues regarding tracks or road ends providing access to public parks or conservation areas please contact them. The commission designed a mapping system indicating what parts of the country are public or private land (<http://wams.org.nz>).
- **Geographical imbalance:** Most of the NZ population lives North of Hamilton, but most of the National Parks are in the south. This gives a strong ambivalence when talking about accessibility and favouring our national pride. It is costly to access the wilderness (future fuel prices are likely to increase), so most people won't actually experience it, and it leaves a carbon footprint to get there.
- **Tomorrow's wilderness user:** The wilderness needs to be protected for the 'future generation' but this will vary widely from today's tramping population mix. How do we raise awareness amongst, and subsequently involve, a wider range of people such as Indian, Asian, Maori and young adults? The average trumper in a tramping club is

pakeha, male and 45 yrs old, so it is important for any club to link to the future wilderness users.

- **Intrinsic value:** FMC advocates the intrinsic value of wilderness; the value that can not be expressed in monetary terms. Making decisions purely on the basis of a balance sheet may lead to short term financial gains but would result in loss of habitat, diversity and would cause irreversible damage. Therefore mining for coal / lignite etc. or damming rivers is strongly opposed by FMC.
- **DoC's balance sheet:** DoC's operating budget is currently around \$100 per NZ resident, for which it looks after about 30% of the land area of NZ. Doubling this budget to 1.0% of the national budget would bring DoC in a position where it could fulfil most of its conservation goals. However, after several budget cuts DoC is forced to become more 'commercial', looking for alternative income sources. Should e.g. tourists pay for access to National Parks, or do they already pay enough via GST while visiting NZ? What fees should be paid by commercial tourist operators, mining companies, etc? There now is a large variety in fee levels within the country, and currently only 3% of DoC income is from these concessions.
- **Commercial use:** The current government is pushing DoC to provide more "front-country" services in an attempt to attract money from tourists and potentially from commercial operators. Front-country relates more to recreation than to conservation. It also leads to a reduction of resources available for the back-country, but might attract "tomorrow's users".
- **Permolat:** This is a purely web-based community on the West Coast with the aim to restore local huts and tracks, without getting bogged down in bureaucracy. This could be a new format to get individuals into conservation activities. Started as an anarchistic community of greenies, rednecks and outdoor-lovers to do up a hut or a track section, it now has local support from DoC, and from local and overseas friends giving donations. On their web-forum the 'workers' are encouraged by people who, for example, built huts for the NZFS many decades ago. Why wait for DoC to get a budget if you can hold a hammer yourself? Refer <http://remotehuts.onlinegroups.net/groups/permolat>

On Saturday night the FMC held the annual AGM. I won't trouble you with the dry facts of this meeting, however I believe that as a WTMC member you should be informed about the following:

- Be aware that \$10 of your WTMC membership fee goes to the FMC, for which in return you get an awful lot of discounts, a national representation, and a well established influence at governmental level.

- Our member Ian Harrison won a prize in the photo competition and he was runner up in the same category with a second photo. Well done!
- Our member, Bernie Smithyman, didn't get elected for executive, but we're sure this will only make him even stronger and double-charged for next year's elections.

Any questions? Specific viewpoints? Disagreement?

Please share it with the committee or on the club forum and we'll bring it forward to the FMC. Alternatively we're happy to find your expression of thoughts in the next newsletter!

"Conservation should be seen as an investment, not as a cost"

A day walk in the Wellington Botanic Gardens

Family walk, 15 May

Mike Gilbert

Punters: Mike Gilbert, Ally Clark, Simon, Dom, Hamish,
Christian Hoerning, Gustav, Beth Piggott, Taylor

The wind it blew, the rain it fell
The weather bomb had hit
Did this put us off our walk?
No! (Well, maybe a bit.)

The café was warm, but we couldn't stay
We needed to be fleet
So off we headed up the hill
For sculptures of concrete.

No epic voyage did we plan
Our spines were less than hardened
With our kids our journey took us
To the botanic gardens.

The wall of bright and shiny stone
Meant we had to try
A careful balance standing thing
That made you seem to fly!

With the gales blowing, the sleet a'lashing
A lot of people piked
But right on time, the storm clouds cleared
And the sun came shining bright

We found a place where we could chat
While kids played on the grass
Chasing, shouting, laughing too
When Dom fell on his – face.

'Neath the watery sun we headed in
To where the hot plants grow
To see the ferns and poke the cactus
And the fish that chew on your toes!

Wandering further up we found
The Meteorological Service
So no surprise the rain stopped on time
Back when we thought it'd beat us

But caffeine poor we all did feel
So it was time for tea
And coffee, biscuits, chocolate cake
Gluten free – just for All-y.

The track was steep, the children found
The grade too hard to bear
Until I pulled my usual trick
Of jellybeans to share

At last we made the summit high
With views that went so far
Across the town and hills behind
And look – the cable car!

The cable car made cries of glee
As kids piled on and then
To Lambton Quay and straight back up
(Why did we walk again?)

But Dom and Si were drawn
To the cable car museum
To see the cars of old and yore
Nothing rhymes with Museum!

But me and Beth and others too
Thought the view too good to miss
So we sat around and talked a while
Of stuff, and that, and this.

Eventually we'd had our fill
Of views and history and riding
So down again we ran and ran
To the playground so exciting

The slide was steep and fast and great
With chains of children popping out
The flying fox was long and fast
and loud with screams and shouts.

And that was where our trip did finish
Not the staunchest in this book
But if you want a day with fresh air and
play

The gardens, they're worth a look
So watch for family trips like this
And easy daywalks too
You won't be bagging mighty peaks
But a good time will ensue!

The Zampa Not Tops Trip - Is this what a MF Trip is really about?

Medium fit, 3-6 June

Kate Cushing

Punters: Kate Cushing, Amanda Wells, Richard Lardner,
Megan Banks, Illona Keenan and Kevin Cole

No wonder the Medium Fit trampers make their trips sound so mysterious! I have been aspiring to be an MF for months, no maybe years, and I finally thought I dared to join one of the mysterious MF trips. Well, actually I was thinking that they might not tolerate me as a punter so I put my name down to lead a trip to Lewis Pass. I had time to train - it would be my incentive to finally get in shape! Inevitably, life got crazy and I didn't get nearly enough training in. I started looking at the trip as a bit of a gut buster mission. Surely I could make it; I'd just be a bit slow!

Preparing for the trip was a bit of a mission. All the routes I could find were either too easy for what I thought would be the mysterious MF rating (but looked good to me!) or way more than I could manage, however slowly. So, I asked for the help of my much more experienced true MF punters. There were ideas but nothing solid enough to assuage my nervousness over whether I could actually survive or not! We determined the road end however, so I was able to start working on transport options. We decided that having a

van would give us flexibility on where we came out, and when. I had to wrestle a club van away from the mountain bikers, much to Gareth's chagrin, but worth it, I thought. Then, in talking to the DOC office at Waimakariki, they suggested the van would likely be okay on the road side but I ought to take off the distributor cap or some other vital vehicular organ. Hmm... I had visions of a tagged WTMC van with no wheels on the Lewis Pass Road. Perhaps, not then! This led me to do a detailed search in the area for shuttle services. I found the Boyle River Outdoor Education Centre who will indeed shuttle your vehicle and keep it in their safe parking area for the weekend. Phew! This meant however that we needed to get back to Boyle at the end of the trip thus restricting our choice of road ends ever so slightly. Nonetheless, all sorted.

Then came the weather forecast - oh dear. I was told by a wise Irish-Kiwi that there's no point in planning anything for Queen's Birthday weekend because the weather is always #\$\$%!! I was starting to believe it. The forecast was indicating a lot of rain that would be pushed over the divide by gale force winds. Lots of ominous colours on the maps. We decided that the Nina River valley was the best option for going in as there was a bridge over the Boyle River and this was one of only two bridges. From the Nina River valley there would be many energetic options available and the Nina Hut, at 10 bunks, was one of the biggest in the area.

After a very cushy night at the Murchison backpackers (maybe we should have known that staying at the Lazy Cow would be a portent for the rest of the weekend?) we headed off to Boyle and the Nina River Valley. The weather was wet and the tops were clagged in with high winds forecast for later in the day so, the plan was to simply go to Nina Hut and hunker down. We were hoping for better weather on Sunday and Monday, but we couldn't even bring ourselves to hope that really. Is this what MF trips are about: big plans and lots of excuses? The walk to Nina Hut, with a fair amount of faffing around the bogs and a few botany stops, was a not so grueling 3 hours. We settled in for midday tea and a few of us decided to make a foray for Devilskin Saddle. I headed off to make the climb with some trepidation, worried that I just wouldn't be able to keep up. I was dropping behind but was saved by the short days and a fear of having to slog back to the hut in the dark. We hadn't made the saddle but I would see more tops once we got out adventuring tomorrow!

We got back to Nina Hut to find that an extra 7 people had shown up and not all of those bodies had tents or bed rolls. Four of us intrepid MF'ers were more than happy to spend a night in the tents two of my punters had hauled in. Was that good trip leader planning or a trip leader weighing down her punters? I leave that for you to judge! We got ourselves settled in the tents and then fixed a lovely evening meal, complete with an awesome trifle dessert. Yummy! It was an early night with talk of what to do the next day. It was decided that, if there wasn't too much wind, we would do a strong daywalk up the Grand Duchess peaks to Brass Monkey Biv and back to Nina hut. If the winds were up, we would head up

the Lucretia Stream and camp at the head waters. This would give us a lovely walk across the Lewis Pass tops on Monday out to the road. We would get up at 7am and assess the weather. Off to bed early for lots of rest before my first real MF day! I was a bit worried, but still thought it would be character building.

In the morning I groggily took a look at my watch to see how much more sleep I was going to get, only to find I had slept late! Agh! 8am already! Were all the other punters up and ready in the hut while I lounged in my tent?? It was raining pretty heavily though and we had talked about trying for an afternoon daywalk if it was heavy in the morning; don't panic just head into the hut to face the music. I dragged myself into full rain gear in the tent and headed to the hut. As I approached I got the sense it was a bit too quiet... I peeked in the door to find all the beds full of lounging punters in various levels of sleep! Well, I guess I didn't need to be embarrassed then did I? Some of the non-WTMC guests were up and having breakfast and making to go someplace so, I decided I might as well put on a billy. Gradually the WTMC'ers stirred; no one can refuse a brew, I discovered. We muttered a few hellos and speculated on what the Nina River level would look like. Both of my plans required getting across the Nina. There was a swing bridge across but that was a full hour back down the river; a waste of 2 hours on these short winter days becomes pretty critical.

The Fit trampers, who had decided to join us at Nina Hut, also needed to get across the river to have any fun so, we were all a bit quiet about what we might do. Well, all but one optimistic and determined Fit trumper who was determined the day would clear and they should be underway to be on the tops for the moment it cleared! Us MF types muttered a few things: I suggested in a most leader-ly way that I thought it might be good to wait out the worst of the rain and for a daywalk in the afternoon. I was told by one much wiser than I, that this thought of any clearing was pretty optimistic so, we all settled in for long breakfasts, multiple cups of tea and many pages of books. There was some half-hearted staring at maps and route descriptions. Two keen Fit trampers impressed us all by heading off to cross the river and head up the Grand Duchess. They were gone for quite a while and we had all gotten over the shame of staying in the nice dry hut, when they appeared back to report that they could have gotten across the river, but not back. They decided it was not worth the risk. Very likely a great decision. Us MF'ers were feeling vindicated in piking on the morning walk in the rain then!

We all stirred around midday for a cup of tea and a session of seeing who had the best lunch food. The blue cheese, chutney and Tararua biscuits won out easily, in my books. There was an extensive discussion about who's Tararua biscuits looked more like dog biscuits; Illona, it was decided, has quite a nice coat and clean teeth. There was a surge in motivation after lunch as there was some actual sun shining on the Devil's Rampart that was tempting us to make an attempt at the Devilskin Saddle again. Well a few of us were tempted anyway. So, five of us managed to don boots and make head up the hill. Good

thing I had company too. I couldn't have navigated my way out of a paper bag that afternoon; I kept losing the track in the open beech forest!

It turned out to be a really nice two hour climb up to Devilskin Saddle and the cute new bivvy up there. It would have been chilly for camping so we were glad to be heading back down to our cosy Nina Hut. The skies had finally cleared and we had a beautiful view of the ranges. The red tussock over the saddle was lovely and the track was well marked. Megan and I headed back down after I dumped a litre of water out of each boot. We wanted to make sure we were back for a cup of tea before dinner.

During Sunday dinner we decided that a fairly early start in the morning would give us time to hit the Maruia Hot Springs Monday morning. Yay! Dmitri and Illona managed to play the quietest game of 500 ever while the rest of us hit our bunks early. We had to rest for our big 3 hour walk out!

Monday morning we made quick time out the Nina River valley to the NZDA lodge and then Illona and Kevin headed off to hitch hike back to Boyle for the van. Illona tried showing leg and still no one would pick them up! Ah well- they appeared back soon enough for time at the hot springs and leisurely drive back to Picton for the ferry.

So, what do I think of MF tramping? Will I dare to sign up for another one? I'm thinking that I will need more training with sleeping more than 12 hours at a stretch before I give another MF a go! I might have to learn to drink tea as well... And if you're going to pike on an MF trip it's important to do it well!!

The pikers shall be named!: Kate Cushing, Amanda Wells, Richard Lardner, Megan Banks, Illona Keenan and Kevin Cole. Sorry guys, had to be done! ☺

Lake Christabel trip

Easy medium, 3-6 June

Author: Ian Harrison

Punters: Donna Maher, Clinton Hunter, John Hickey, Deborah Stoebe, Tatiana Krauyshkina, Ian Harrison

I'm used to tramping with 'Fit' tramping groups. They are about efficiency and speed of travel. In automotive terms they are the WRC of tramping; all carbon fibre, welded alloy and blowoff valves. They have a metaphorical go faster lever, so when the call goes out to kick it in the guts, the lever is thrown and the land blurs like the Millennium Falcon has just made the jump to lightspeed and the group ends up at their desired location instantaneously. However, the disadvantage is there is often no place for comfort.

On the other hand 'Easy medium' tramping groups are driven by a different philosophy. One of enjoying the surroundings and the company of the fellow tramper. Comfort comes high on the list of considerations. In car terms these are the white-wall shod 57 Chevys; low revs, plush upholstery and elbows out the window. The price to pay for all this comfort and enjoyment is there's no go faster lever, and that's fair enough. But sometimes, even on an 'Easy' trip, that lever would come in oh-so handy.

In our case its 5pm and night is falling fast. We're standing at the end of Lake Christabel after seven hours' walk. And there's still seven kilometres to go.

It's been slow going because the track is covered with twisted tree trunks and roots. We had held out hope that having reached the lake the walk around its shore would be like walking on the shores of Lake Rotoiti or Wairarapa... or even Lake Geneva may be. But it's not; it's worse. The contours bunch together at the shoreline as if they're not wanting a swim, and the forest has reached an acme of rooty tangledness. The resultant track is a bastard. As well as a twisted tree obstacle-course there are a lot of slippery rocky ledges which threaten to escort the tired tramper off five metre drops down toward the lake.



Someone forlornly looks at the lake in the last of the daylight and comments how nice a boat would be right about now. With no go faster lever there's nothing for it but to plod on. But as John periodically reminds us, it's not all bad. The scenery is lovely, the weather for the most part has held off, it's mild, and the company is very pleasant. We soon fall into a stumbling formation; Tatiana and Clinton at the front route finding (or should I say root finding), followed by Donna and Debbie, then me, with John at the back fighting a rear-guard action against the dark forest and chiming in with occasional encouragements. Six figures dwarfed by the forest with only six puny head torches strapped to six puny heads to hold the darkness at bay.



And so the minutes and hours pass by broken by sporadic curses, when are we going to be there, and grade 30 climbing moves by John to retrieve a bluffed walking pole. My mind wanders...
...most of my current discomfort is caused by the

weight of my pack, and most of that weight is from two kumara I was assigned to take. Such is their mass, when packing I had seriously considered drilling them out and now wished I had. In a moment of clarity I realised Einstein had missed the obvious- The Kumara Theory of Relativity: “The longer one carries a kumara the heavier it becomes”. Some quick mental calculus placed the pair I was lugging about somewhere between lead and rutherfordium on the periodic table.

Finally after two hours we break free of the forest on to gloriously horizontal flats beside the Blue Grey River. Our relief lasts for a good two or three minutes. Then the track peters out. I double-back to check for missed deviations. Nothing.

We have an impressive array of navigational aids including maps, compasses and GPS's; not to mention the two kumara (some say that a kumara spun on end will always fall pointing toward Dargaville in a similar fashion as a spun carrot will always end up pointing toward Ohakune). We are not lost. We can precisely pin-point our position on the Earth's surface. It is the track that's lost.

I'm tasked to scrub-bash at 90 degrees to our direction of travel in case the track is running on a parallel course to us. I walk upright into the first metre of scrub, stoop for the following two metres and then find myself on all fours crawling through matagouri type scratchiness. I get to a point where it's impossible to make progress even crawling. I reverse out and get a Don King hairdo from a scrubby barber. After replacing my hat and head torch on my newly coiffed head and thrashing around in the scrub for a few more minutes I re-join the

others. Donna reiterates that the last marker is actually very close. So we *must* be on the track. The only possible way it could go now is in the river. So that's where I go. It's knee deep but being so near the head of the lake it's hardly flowing at all. Sure enough, 30 metres upstream the recalcitrant track reappears on the bank.

Ten hours after starting and three hours after dark we finally reach Lake Christabel Hut. We're all exhausted.

The next morning the hut wakes at a respectable hour. We're not the only occupants with a couple having walked in via Rough Creek the previous day. They seem very pleasant. The guy holds some sort of position in the Anglican Church. He mentions working with the Bishop of Christchurch so we end



up referring to him among ourselves as “The Bishop”. From his description the Rough Creek track doesn’t sound too bad and they made pretty good time coming in, although they do look fast.

I’m quite keen to head out today as is Donna, no doubt thinking of spending Monday morning relaxing in hot pools and not having to rush for the 6:40pm ferry. However, John is fairly adamant that we need a day to rest up so it’s decided to make an early start the next morning instead. I’m certainly very tired having got little sleep in the night with a sore throat and headache. A few of us go for a relaxing walk up the start of the track that eventually goes over to the Robinson River.

We spend the rest of the afternoon dozing, reading or chatting. Donna somehow manages to get the fire going. A couple of hands of 500 are played. Later in the evening a group of four arrive at the hut having bush-bashed from Jackson Creek to the north including spending a very wet night out on the tops.

The next morning we’re away before dawn at 6:20am. The plan was for 6am start but this is an Easy Medium tramp after all. The track isn’t all smooth sailing but it’s better than the one on the way in. I’m relishing a kumara-free pack and it’s good to be walking in the dark knowing it’s going to be light soon as opposed to the other way around. By 11am we’re on the tops at the high point having climbed 750m in elevation. We name the pass Hickey’s Pass in honour of our leader.

Now all that’s left is to head down Rough Creek. Its slow going getting down to the bushline as the route is steep with big Dr Suess-designed tussock clumps. Based on The Bishop’s times they must have been going at pretty good pace. As we haven’t got a lot of time up our sleeve at the bushline Tatiana and Clinton go on ahead to get the van. And of course just to be consistent the last bit of forested track doesn’t let us go easily. This one is obviously a close relation to the Lake Christabel track.

By 3pm we’re safe and sound at the road but there’s no sign of Tatiana, Clinton or the van. However, after a few minutes the van hoves into view. We gladly take off boots and eat assorted snacks. I often think the end of a tramp is the best part (which is wrong really). We can’t linger too long though as we’re really cutting it fine to make the ferry on time. North of Murchison John phones the ferry to say we’re running late. Short of a valid excuse he adds “because of traffic” as we drive down the completely deserted highway.

The ferry does indeed leave on time at 6:40 and we also do indeed arrive at 6:40 in time to witness it ease out into Queen Charlotte Sound, complete with its cargo of the other ‘fitter’ WTMC groups who we’re not surprised to learn have spent most of the weekend in or around hot pools.

We rebook for the 11:30pm sailing and have a highly deserved beer and meal at the Toot and Whistle.

By the time I get home it's 3:15am. I set my alarm for 6:15 to get up for work and reflect that this easy medium tramping is certainly much harder than I thought. Would I do another one? Maybe, but first I need to do some more fit trips in preparation.

Thanks to Debbie, Donna, Tatiana, Clinton and John who made it an enjoyable trip despite it being tough going at times.

The world was about to end so we got high!

Alleged Fit Trip, 20 May

Murray Sutherland

North Taranaki: Summit via Tahurangi Lodge

Punters: Mike Phethean (leader), Sharron Came, Steve Healy, Murray Sutherland

Platform 9 at the train station, the usual story, but this weekend was different. The world was predicted to end, and the weather was forecast to be clear on Mt Taranaki... It was as if the stars were aligned.

The plan, being to take the club vans to North Taranaki car park and a quick 75 minute tramp up to Tahurangi Lodge (Taranaki Alpine club). The journey out of Wellington was slow as it often is and we didn't get to the car park until quarter past 11. The view of the mountain was clear, even without the aid of a bright moon the snow reflected what light there was and we could see the light on at Tahurangi Lodge some 500 meters above us. When we arrived at the lodge we were well ready to hit the sack.



Saturday 21st May

We got up rather late, people dragging themselves out of bed about 7:30 to 8 am with the intention of setting out for the summit around 9. The view from the lodge was superb – never before had I seen such a view of Taranaki, or more precisely never before had I seen Taranaki this close, every other time it was obscured by cloud.

We met some of the local Alpine club members; of particular note was “Dan of the hundred and one summits”, he had in the last year taken on the challenge of climbing the summit of Taranaki 100 times and made it and went up one more time for good measure. He had made the Lodge something of a second home for himself (and as members only pay \$5 a night why not) and knew the area quite intricately.

So we left the lodge at 9, along with Dan, who decided to accompany us for the climb. Really I don't have much in the way of words to describe this climb and you're better off just looking at the pictures. Suffice to say that it was a fairly simple trudge up to the top, with

crampons required due to the ice. We made the ascent a bit after 12, with only a French couple summiting via the same route.

After a quick bite to eat and some photos we headed down to the lodge via the same route, with some small deviations, and were back at the lodge about 2:30, plenty of time for us to contemplate what we were going to do the next day and discuss the variables that make up a trip fitness grading over well-earned cups of tea.

Sunday 22nd May

We got up marginally earlier, with some intending to summit again if the condition were favourable and others keen to take a tiki tour back to the car park, but the weather had taken a turn for the worse, with forecast showers being heavier than desirable, so we took the easy option and headed straight back to the car park (and café) and re-joined civilisation.



The name is Tongue and Meats!

A geriatric old codger braves the Ranges of Everlasting Mud and Misery

Fit, 6-8 May 2011

Harry Smith

Punters: Amanda Wells (leader), Richard Lardner, Harry Smith (author)

Are you from the Tongue and Meat tramping club?, the veteran Tararua Tramping Club member asked one of Hans's punters in Atiwhakatu Hut on Friday night, when we arrived there after walking in for an hour and a half by torchlight from Holdsworth Lodge. No, she replied, clearly puzzled by such a strange name. Yes we are!, I blurted out.

I was shocked and stunned. How sad. Has the once proud and noble nickname of our club been completely forgotten? Have we really been so overtaken by latte-sipping yuppies and overseas interlopers unaware of our proud traditions that nobody even recognises the venerated name anymore? Is nothing sacred? Has it really come to this?

Alas, it seems that it has. When I think about it, it is a long time now since I last heard the name. So here for the youngsters is a history lesson. The club has traditionally been known as the Tongue and Meats. How did this name come about? There seem to be two different stories. One says that it arose from confusion between the initials of our club and those of the Wellington Tongue and Meat Company, a local Wellington meat processing company back in the early days of the club. The other says it was a deliberate insult inflicted on us by members of the rival Wellington tramping clubs. Personally I think this is the more plausible version. But whichever the case, club members adopted the name with pride. Hordes of Tongue and Meats roamed the hills far and wide, feared by the rival clubs. There were the Tararuas, there were the Hutt Valleys, and there were the Tongue and

Meats. And others envied the name; when they couldn't rightfully claim it, they stole it. Apparently the Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club began calling themselves the Palmerston North Tongue and Meats. Perhaps they still do.



The name even served as the basis for themed trips. Who can forget Struan Little's famous (or infamous?) Tongue and Meat Gourmet Trip? I can't, and I wasn't even on it! The only food allowed for all meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner was - you guessed it -

tongue and meat! Keith Strode-Penny was apparently violently sick at the end of it!

And now what has happened? After decades of proud use, has the name and all it stood for disappeared? Has the club gone vegetarian? Have stews and fry-ups been replaced by

salads and meringues? Have good old greasies on a Friday night been replaced by effete espresso slop-houses selling foreign muck ending in “o”? Has tongue and meat been replaced by sushi and quiche? Should we now be known as the Tarragon and Mints?

But I digress. After such a depressing and inauspicious start for an old codger, the trip itself was almost an after-thought. There were three of us, Amanda Wells, Richard



Lardner, and myself, and we were heading for Dorset Ridge, via Baldy and around the tops. The weather forecast, as usual, was awful. (Many would say that that is essentially a tautology in the Tararuas.) We decided to head to Mid-King Bivvy instead. I was happy because I had never been there before. We would have made it around to Dorset but it would have been unpleasant and it might have been interesting trying to get back over the tops or crossing Dorset Creek the next day.

We arrived at the bivvy at 2.00 o'clock and settled in. It was a squeeze trying to fit three people and all our gear into the small space. I had the raised platform on one side and Amanda and Richard shared the remaining floor space. Looking around, I noticed that DOC had thoughtfully provided a large glow-in-the-dark FIRE EXIT sign enabling confused bivvy users to locate the door – it was good to see that our conservation tax dollars were being put to such good use. Fortunately the bivvy walls were too small for the vast array of other bold and dramatic DOC warning signs that seem to adorn all our huts these days. Danger this, danger that – it's a wonder people aren't too scared to set foot in the outdoors at all these days. (“Danger: Beware of Falling Meteorites if Venturing Outside.”) There was however the usual warning sign about the “water provided at this facility”. “This facility” – now would that be the bivvy? And the “water provided” – would that be the stream 20 metres away?

After whiling away the afternoon we came to the highlight of the day: dinner. Dinner that evening was.... pasta with olives and pesto! I looked on in stunned disbelief! I was aghast! Not only was it foreign, not only did it not contain any meat (or tongue), but it ended in “o”! I could sense whole generations of past Tongue and Meats turning in their graves. Paul Critchley would be throwing away his frying pan in dismay. Geoff Crockford would be throwing away his rifle and selling off his venison freezer. Kevin Thompson would probably elect to eat his leather shorts instead. But I faced it manfully, surreptitiously decanting the olives into the others' bowls when they weren't looking.*

Next morning the rain was bucketing down and the wind was howling in the trees - a fairly standard day in the Tararuas. It would have been pretty unpleasant up on the tops, so we

decided to drop down the spur below the bivvy to Mitre Flats and head back to Holdsworth Lodge via the sidle track over to the Atiwhakatu.

Heading down the untracked spur gave me a chance to observe the tramping habits of the younger generation. These new-fangled GPSes are all very well, but what are the youth of today going to do if the batteries go flat?

Whatever happened to good old map and compass? The skill of following a compass bearing? The instinct of following a spur?

And this is not just idle speculation:

somebody recently told me the story of a tramping party whose GPS went dead while tramping in the Tararuas not too long ago, so what did they do? Called up Search and Rescue and got choppered out, of course! I hope it isn't true, but I suspect it probably is. All I can say is, I hope they got charged



for the chopper flight. And that they weren't from the Tongue and Meats.

And as for Camelbaks, don't get me started! Whoever convinced the Youth Of Today that they would instantly seize up in hideous convulsions and die an agonizing death from dehydration if they didn't take a sip of water from their plastic bladders every 17.3 seconds must be laughing all the way to the bank! But our supermarkets are full of bottled tap water, so obviously you can fool most of the people most of the time if only you put you mind to it. (I wish I had thought of it – I could be retired in luxury rather than living in penury.) Carrying water in the Tararuas makes carrying coals to Newcastle seem like sound and sober economic policy. Why would anybody do it? It's beyond me. There are always rivers and streams around, and enough tarns on the tops. And anyway, in my experience if you want a drink in the Tararuas, nine times out of ten you can get one by the simple expedient of holding your mug out in front of you in out-stretched arm for 10 or 15 seconds, mouth-end up.

We reached the bottom of the spur without having wasted *too* much time with the GPS, made our way down beside South Mitre Stream, which was up and raging, and picked up the bottom of the sidle track. Now it was just a matter of plodding on, putting one foot in front of the other. You couldn't possibly go wrong, not even with a GPS. We stopped for a quick bite to eat on the saddle and another at Atiwhakatu hut, but time was short and we were soon on our way out down the track in clearing weather. We arrived back out at the carpark just after 3 o'clock; naturally, having come out of the hills, it was now sunny. It had been a good trip with the Tongue and Meats.

* Just joking, Amanda. It was superb. Even if it did end in "o"....

Matiu/Somes Island, Wellington Harbour

Family trip, Sunday 12 June

Sarah Young

Punters: Mike and Angela Gilbert, Toby (8); Colin Boutell, Nathaniel (8), Isaac (8)
Kelvin and Melanie Thiele, Cameron (8), Bradley (4); Sarah Young, Arabella (22 mo)
Alison Stevenson, Paul Grimwood, Ellen (2); Amanda Ellis, Keric Chin, Mitch (8)
Beth Piggott, Taylor (4), Carly (2); John Sinclair, Jack (8)

A day out to the island in the middle of Wellington harbor, catching up with old tramping friends I have not seen for years, learning some history and kids having the chance to run and run and run! All in all, a very relaxing chilled day ... a highly recommended day trip.



Legend has it that Matiu Island received its original Māori names from Kupe, the semi-legendary first navigator to reach New Zealand. He named the island after his daughter (or, in some versions of the tale, niece) when he first entered the harbour about 1000 years ago.

In 1839, after European settlement, it fell under the control of the New Zealand Company and the island was renamed after Joseph Somes, the company's deputy-governor and financier. In 1997 the New Zealand Geographic Board assigned the official bilingual name of Matiu/Somes in recognition of the island's colourful European and Māori histories.

The walk around the island, which can take anywhere from 1 – X number of hours depending on how long your legs are, and which is also very achievable with a buggy, takes you past a lighthouse, originally built at the island's southwestern end in 1866, replaced in 1900 and later automated and many other buildings which serve as reminders of the island's history.

Throughout the 20th century the island has served as a human and animal quarantine station, an internment camp, and a military defence position. These buildings today not only offer some fascinating history, but also a great place for playing tag or hide and seek if you are a big or little kid!



In 1942, the island was fortified with heavy anti-aircraft gun emplacements on the summit, but these were never used during the course of the war. This whole area was levelled flat

for the purpose of this construction, removing 17 metres from the island's previous overall height and creating a great place to stop, have a long leisurely picnic lunch and admire the fabulous 360 degree views of Wellington Harbour. A degaussing station was built to provide protection for ships against magnetic mines.



Matiu/Somes came under the full control of the Department of Conservation as a scientific and historic reserve in August 1995. Since 1989 it has been free of introduced mammalian predators, such as rats and mice, allowing it to become be a stronghold for the little blue penguin, several species of shag, skinks, geckos the silver gull, Brothers Island tuatara, North Island robins and fluttering shearwaters

Wellington tree wetas and Cook Strait giant wetas and several rare and endangered species of plants. On arrival at the island you will be asked to check all bags and shoes to ensure you are not bringing any nasty stuff which may affect the islands habitat. And are given a thorough history talk.

The Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust has been in existence since 1998 to help protect, nurture and enhance the island by raising funds for projects that increased biodiversity and enhanced visitors' enjoyment of the island. You can volunteer on the island through "The Friends of Matiu/Somes", DoC or the Forest and Bird group.

For further information about Matiu-Somes island:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/wellington-kapiti/wellington/matiu-somes-island/>
Return ferry to the island, with East by West ferry, \$22 per adult.

Pouakai Circuit, Egmont National Park

Medium trip, 20 – 22 May

Paul Christoffel

Punters: Kate Cushing, Christine Latimer and Paul Christoffel (leader)

Most of my tramping gear is kept in the attic, to be fished out every month or two. There are several pairs of everything up there, which can lead to mix-ups on occasions. One of those occasions was when I agreed to lead the Pouakai Range circuit trip in Egmont National Park in May. The trip is described in the main tramping guidebooks, so it was



North Egmont camphouse

well-reviewed – although we found that, for our group of three, the recommended times were greatly overstated, especially the part of the loop via Holly Hut.

There's a 'camp house' at the North Egmont road end, so we booked into it for Friday night. At \$35 each it was a little expensive, especially as we made no use of the hot showers and minimal use of the ample cooking facilities. However, it was nice having a warm comfortable bed overnight, so I'd do it again. We

awoke to a crisp reasonably clear day, and set off at 8.30 after dropping the van down at the main car park. It was around then that I noticed that my gaiters didn't match. Whoops! Christine politely pretended not to notice. Kate hardly mentioned it either (insert Tui slogan here). I later claimed that my non-matching gaiters were an experiment to see which performed best, but I don't think the girls bought it.

In pre-trip planning I promised my punters great views of Mount Taranaki, and they were not disappointed. After climbing a huge number of stairs we set off towards Holly Hut. There was snow on much of the track, which was icy in places. The Dieffenbach cliffs above were impressive, and, in case I didn't mention it, there were great views of Taranaki. But it was soon apparent we were walking into not such nice weather. Jackets were donned to ward off the drizzle, and the rain started just minutes after we entered Holly hut for an early lunch. We shared



The Dieffenbach cliffs

the hut with a rat that didn't seem the slightest bit concerned at having visitors. By the time we left, the rat had disappeared and the rain had reverted to drizzle and soon disappeared.

The next part of our journey involved crossing the Ahukawakawa sphagnum moss swamp, which was much better than it sounds. The swamp was created 2000 years ago when a landslide blocked the Hangatahua (Stony) River, which now snakes across it. (The DOC website uses the much sexier term 'wetland' for the swamp). We headed across the boardwalk and up the Pouakai range, pausing regularly to take in the wonderful views (which, in case I didn't mention it, included Taranaki).

We reached Pouakai hut by 1.30 pm. After a break, Kate and Christine headed off to climb Pouakai peak, the highest in the range at 1400 metres (before it blew its top 250,000 years ago, it was supposedly as high as Taranaki). The tops cleared for a while, but had clagged in again by the time they got to the top. We were on the western side of the park,

where the weather was coming from. I decided to read instead, although the others alleged that I appeared to be snoozing on their return. Admittedly I only seem to have read a couple of pages in the hour plus they were away.



Christine heading across the swamp

Pouakai hut is less than two hours from a road end near New Plymouth, so is well-frequented in the weekend. A number of Taranaki blokes and blokesses arrived during the afternoon, two wearing gumboots. One group had a bottle of Canadian Club, several litres of mixes, and some beer. Despite that, they were surprisingly quiet and didn't disturb us at all.

Sunday morning the weather was not so good. The Pouakai track being a circuit, we continued clockwise around it. As with previous day, the track was well-formed and often boarded, for much of the way at least. But in the bush it turned into a more conventional tramping track that became rougher as we went on. The Taranaki bush has no beech trees, so provided plenty of variety from what we were used to down south. The streams carve large chasms, meaning a lot of up-and-downing, much to Kate's annoyance. At one point we stopped by a sheer cliff with the river far below to admire a rainbow and a glimpse of mountain. But those were our views for the day, and it soon started to rain on and off. We were all pretty wet by the time we reached the club van at 1 pm to meet up with the M/Fs, who had scaled Taranaki the previous day.

Kate suggested that the trip would be better done anti-clockwise, and I would agree. You get the best of the views without having to look behind you and, despite what DOC and the guidebooks say, the second day would be shorter that way. And for the record, the \$50 Outdoor Research gaiter performed better than the Kathmandu gaiter purchased on sale for \$24.95 (note: gaiters not for individual sale).

Not your usual trip report

Easy Medium trip, Waiopehu Hut, 28 – 29 May

Paul Christoffel

Punters: Barbara Keenan (co-leader), Marie Smith (co-leader), Anna Lambrechtsen, Oleg Vlasov, WeiMin Ren, Anna King, Ed Churchouse

This trip report is a collaborative effort written much like a childhood story game. The first few sentences were emailed to the next punter who added their thoughts who then

emailed it to the next punter, and so on. This could make for either a very interesting or a very incoherent report!

Our tramp began with a very civilized Saturday morning start. Rumour had it that one of the co-leaders refused to do a Friday night road end. Surprisingly, there were no complaints, but that was probably because we didn't have to share the van with a higher grade trip. Softies unite!

We departed Wellington on a sunny Saturday morning, only to approach the Poads road end, outside of Levin, where the Tararuas were covered in cloud.

We made it through the narrow looking bridge to the main car park where we all got our gear ready before starting the trip via cowpat fields. Some were wearing gaiters and thinking maybe that was a good idea.... One hour in and have found that if you want to avoid the muddy bogs you need to be pretty good at swinging from trees/bush and have acrobatic balancing skills, the challenge commences.



Following our "Thoroughbred", the 7 hours recommended trip became less than 5 hours. We proudly felt that we are not medium fit, but F fit. We were rewarded with luxurious hot drink and relaxing in the hut that is located near the top of Waiopahu

overlooking Levin Township and west coast. We conversed and consumed our goodies until a beautiful sunset appeared in the horizon and slowly blanketed us and the mountain ranges with warm orange sky.

We sat in the somewhat smoky confines of the hut chatting & gossiping till we drifted off to bed at the late late time of 8pm-ish.

Next morning dawned clear with magic views up to Pukematawai and of the main range, marvelous. The enthusiastic ones went for a walk up to a better viewing point while the rest of us sat around the hut reading and relishing the lovely sunshine.

Enthusiastic ones though were generously rewarded. Less than half an hour took them from Waiopahu hut to Waiopahu peak (1094 m). Unfortunately the memorial for the person that died in severe storm in 1936 was disassembled and removed for repair. Still weather was particularly well for the season which let us enjoy views of Dundas Ridge as well as nearby



peaks. Experienced team members held an interesting lecture about North Tararua's geography.

Around 10ish we enjoyed one last look at the view and then started our tramp back to society. The going was easier with there being less mud, water and slippery areas on the track...and of course having lighter packs from the previous day made our speed and progress good. With a couple breaks and a lunch, we got back to the van in just over 4 hours.

On the drive over the Poads road bridge, driver number one made it, with only the side mirror making unexpected contact with the bridge (no damage, Gareth). Driver no 2 had spent the whole weekend knowing her big challenge would be to get the van back across the bridge with no bangs or scrapes. Lined up, she put her foot down and the van flew across the bridge without touching the sides. A loud cheer from freaked out punters provided the appropriate end to a great weekend.

Butterfly Creek, Eastbourne

Families trip, 29 May 2011

Alison Stevenson

Punters: Dom, Hamish, Iona, Charlie, Charlie, Ellen, Carly and Taylor and assorted parents

On Friday night Ally Clarke's grand total number of punters was none at all but come a fine Sunday morning there were 8 children ready for a tramping adventure in the hills above Eastbourne. Dom, Hamish, Iona, Charlie, Charlie, Ellen, Carly and Taylor, and assorted parents started up the track towards Butterfly Creek.

For 2 & 1/2 year old Ellen the motivation to keep going round the next corner, up to the big tree, or on to the spiky bush was the promised rations of "special tramping food" (broken plain biscuits, and jellybeans for the tough hills). I think everyone over the age of about two walked almost every step of the way up the steepish path which augurs well for the WTMC membership in the 2030s.

At the top we decided that continuing on to Butterfly Creek would likely involve lots of child portage so we quit while we were ahead and stopped for an early lunch. Iona, Charlie and parents were the honorable exceptions - they carried on to the creek. On the ridge top, food was consumed, the parents enjoyed the views,



and Taylor, Ellen, and Charlie disappeared into the bush to find, apparently, chickens, horses and cows to milk for cups of tea.

Coming down was lots of running and laughing and holding hands with new friends. Some beautiful fungi were poking out of the bank beside the path ("Look! Don't touch!) and some reassurances given about possible trolls under the little bridges ("Trolls don't live in Wellington!")

Once back into Eastbourne we rounded off a lovely trip with gelatos for all and a visit to the play park.

Thanks for organising Ally.

Ruahines, Daphne Hut

Easy Medium, 17-18 June 2011

Ray Walker

Punters: Jo Boyle (leader), Clinton Hunter, Marie Smith, Ray Walker, and Katy Glenie

Kashmir Road on the eastern side of the Ruahine range is probably the worst road that I have ever encountered. It is unsealed, very steep, very narrow and quite scary in places. Nevertheless, we got to the road end without incident. Thanks Hans, for your superb driving!

There were five punters on this trip: Jo (trip leader), Clinton, Marie Smith, Katy, and myself. It was Katy's first trip with the club. I thought she was very brave doing her first trip in the middle of winter. The weather forecast was not good; in fact it was quite bad. Jo had investigated the possibility of camping at a better location on Friday night, but in the end it made more sense to camp at the actual road end.



EM punters taking part in strange pre-tramp ritual
(Photo by Clinton)

On Saturday morning we did the usual easy trip stuff: get out of warm sleeping bags, have breakfast, pack, wave goodbye to the medium trip punters, and have the mandatory photo session just to prove that we had actually been there!

The plan was to go up the ridge from the road end to Long View Hut, then head north along the adjacent ridge, and down to Daphne Hut. Well, that was the plan, but it did not eventuate.

Although it was rather cloudy, the really bad weather never happened. The climb from the road end is quite steep and it certainly got the blood pumping; especially mine. In fact I was really struggling at the back of the group. I was obviously very unfit. I advised Jo that I might have to bail out at Long View Hut while the rest of the group continued to Daphne hut. To ease my pain the other punters kindly carried some of my gear. (Thank you - it was much appreciated).

We arrived at Long View hut just as the medium trip punters were leaving after their morning tea break. Although it was not raining it was very cloudy and there were certainly no views to be seen from this location. It was suggested that the name of the hut should be *Short View* instead of Long View hut.

The plan for the weekend was changed. Instead of continuing to Daphne hut, we would stay at Long View Hut for the night, and those who wanted to do so, would do an out-and-back walk from the hut. After having our lunch Jo, Clinton and Katy headed off into the mist to Otamore peak and beyond. Marie stayed back and read Katy's book. That was quite a cunning plan - Katy carried very bulky and heavy paperback, and Marie read it!

Meanwhile, I had a damn good snooze in a warm sleeping bag.

At about 3.00pm the clouds miraculously disappeared and the *short view* did indeed become a long view. Marie received a text from Jo saying that they would be out for a little longer than planned and would now enjoy the views.

Jo, Clinton, and Katy arrived back at the hut around 4.00pm. Dinner followed a couple of hours later, along with the usual hut banter and activity. We had the hut to ourselves for the night which was not surprising as the weather forecast would have deterred a lot of people from tramping in this area.



Jo and Katy checking the map to find the route while ignoring the helpful signs they are sitting on. (Photo by Clinton)

Sunday morning arrived and we were packed and ready to go at 8.30am. The really bad weather had still not arrived and we were very thankful for that. We set off back to the turn-off about 10 minutes away from the hut and then headed north along the ridge that we had originally intended to take to Daphne Hut the previous day. The route was unmarked but Jo used her map and compass to make sure we kept going in the right direction. Soon the alpine terrain stopped and the forest began. Marie spotted an orange track marker on the other side of a small gully so we were now back on a track. A short time later we turned to the east on the track that goes back to Kashmir road.

We arrived at the road before the medium group. We had time to walk the 2 kilometres to the road end to pick up the van and sort out our gear before the other group arrived. I must say that in daylight Kashmir road looks even worse than at night.

Many thanks to Jo for leading a good trip. Well done on first trip as leader Jo.

Howletts Hut

Medium Trip 17-19th June 2011

Anna King

Punters: WeiMin Ren, Chris Davies, Colin Bouttel, Mika Verheul,
Hans Wiskerke, Anna King, Ivan Andrews

The trip began at platform 9, Wellington Station. Our group of 7 plus another group of 6 going on the EM trip to Daphne Hut filled all spaces in the van. We all headed off to the eastern Ruahines to Kashmir Road end arrived sometime after 10pm. We brought tents as



the weather forecast predicted a rainy weekend. As it turned out a bit of rain while we set up camp and some through the night, most of us had a relatively good night's sleep. Early bird leaving was planned without a brew as the leaders wanted to be sure to get destination hut before dark!

Off we set. It was my first medium trip and I was feeling a little apprehensive as I had an email prior to trip to say that the trip will be a fast medium! I thought 'no time to back out' now - I had done lots of training and felt ready for the challenge.

The first hour or so was uphill, through some misty steep terrain and I felt ok. By the time we reached the top to turn off to Longview hut it was pretty foggy. It's here that you realised how easy it is to get disorientated. A good look at the map helped to get our bearings and we headed off in the right direction towards the first hut for a cup of tea and biscuits – bliss. We had a leisurely time, developing our navigation skills guided by Mika before it was time to leave fully nourished and watered. We donned all wet weather gear and passed the other group on leaving the hut.



Onwards and upwards and am thankful for the

odd stop to catch my breath and a group photo opportunity. By the time we were ready for lunch, an opening in the clouds gave us glimpses of the wonderful mountainous views. Very excited, but then we could clearly see where we are heading: steep downhill followed by a long climb up to the other ridge. Loved it when I reached the top – Chris and Weimins cameras came out and Howletts hut seemed not so far away. Hans had time to hide (search and rescue training) and softly shouted out to us, whilst we searched for his movement in the hillside grasses

The top ridges revealed a distinct weather change from warm air to cold air with huge mist forming on one side of the ridge followed by clear mountain views on the other side. Amazing.

The hut is glorious with its pot belly stove; we are soon warm and ready for dinner. Ivan entertained us all with history and cannibalism.... Plenty to read on the history of Howletts Hut or just look at the pictures if too tired!



Next day: I forget that packing is not my forte and am a little behind everyone - faffing says Mika! We make it out and head, I thought, for an easy downhill walk to river and then easy climb back to Kashmir road.

Well it was a relatively easy climb down to Daphne hut with time to try a pepper leaf. First river a crossing to Daphne hut, then a quick snack before walking down the river, crossing over many times trying out the SAR technique of buddying up with three – Brilliant! With an upward climb, after about half an hour Hans and Weimin left our group to speed ahead to let the EM trip group know we were behind schedule.

Lots of faffing: Not me this time!! We make it up to the ridge bluff where we then headed back down to Kashmir road. A lovely easy ramble down through the bush and it started to rain. We get to a lookout spot and viewed the minibus in the distance and I'm delighted to see it. However, it was a muddy, slippery steep descent down and carefulness was required. We all met at the bottom of the descent and with two more little river crossings to go. Finally, at the van we quickly changed into dry clothes, loaded the packs and climbed in. Time for lunch then slept until Woodville where we stopped off for yummy cheesecake!

I am thrilled to have been a part of this great group and the trip was amazing taking us through all sorts of terrain from mountain views to river crossings and bush walk. Fabulous.

Giddy fellow trampers.

Daylight is in scarce supply, precipitation is abundant, the temperatures are finally beginning to drop and the next long weekend is miles away, it must be winter. Winter means that if you go tramping you may encounter snow and for some of you it means brushing up on your alpine skills or maybe taking the Snowcraft course. While alpine tramping is mostly an extension of ordinary tramping there are a few differences that mean you may want to acquire a few extra pieces of gear. Now is a reasonable time to hit the shops because the weather is too crap for doing much else and the snow base is yet to consolidate, plus the outdoor shops are having their winter sales. Remember though it may not be worth spending big coin on extra gear until you decide you like alpine tramping. You can always hit up a mate to borrow some kit or look for second hand items.

So what do I need that I might not already have?

- Waterproof, windproof **shell layer** ie **raincoat, over-trousers, gaiters + waterproof gloves or mitts**. Why? Because, as any skier will tell you, snow is cold, wet and highly abrasive. Look for items that are light, durable, practical and not too expensive e.g. a coat with pockets, over-trousers with side zips to facilitate getting them on and off while wearing your tramping boots, gloves with drawstrings that prevent snow sneaking in round your wrists. Gaiters keep snow out of your boots and prevent you tripping over your over-trousers if they happen to be a big baggy. Waterproof gloves are expensive but worth it, wool or polypropylene gloves are also needed but they get cold when wet and they aren't windproof.
- **Boots** that can take crampons. You probably already have tramping boots but if they are highly flexible they may not be much use for keeping crampons on. Ideally you need leather boots with at least a *semi rigid sole* as these will be comfortable for both tramping and alpine climbing. If you are unsure about your current boots bring them along one Wednesday night and get an alpine person to check them out for you.
- **Crampons** and **ice axe**. These are crucial aids for walking in snow and can be hired from the club.
- **Helmet**. A helmet is compulsory for Snowcraft where instructors will be making you undertake gymnastic feats in the snow. A helmet is a must have for alpine climbing trips especially if you expect to encounter NZ weetbix rock so named because, like the breakfast cereal, it is great at absorbing moisture and can be relied on to crumble under the slightest hint of pressure. Most of us earn a living using our

heads ergo a helmet is a good idea. A bike helmet is adequate but a specialist climbing helmet is better as it is specifically designed to mitigate the danger posed by falling rock and ice, at least some of which will be distributed courtesy of your climbing companions. Helmets can be hired from the club.

- **Extra socks, gloves + hats.** You will get cold and wet. Polypropylene gloves are light and cheap. Aunty Rata prefers gloves to mitts as you retain full finger function but mitts are warmer because your fingers are together. A **balaclava** is a good friend in wet, windy conditions as it protects most of your face from sleet exfoliation and keeps your neck warm, (we lose lots of heat from our neck). It is recommended that you wear your balaclava like a hat in more benign conditions or when visiting your local bank. Aunty Rata takes both a balaclava and a woolly hat.
- **Insulating layers** ie lots of extra layers of clothing. Layering gives you flexibility to add and subtract as your temperature rises or falls so you can be a comfortable temperature at all times and possibly get a job as a stripper if your climbing career doesn't pan out. Warm air is trapped between the layers. This is why lots of thin layers are better than one thick down jacket or jersey. Think breathable, light and no cotton. Long sleeves are good for keeping off snow and sun. With leather boots a **plastic bag** worn between your socks and the boot can help keep your feet warm. Courier bags are particularly good but supermarket shopping bags are fine too, if not particularly robust.
- **Wicking layer** next to the skin. You want any sweat to be taken away from the skin to minimise the chill factor. The aim is to look cool without freezing. Synthetic fabrics are good for this purpose however you may find woollen garments less itchy and smelly.
- **Sun layer ie sunglasses or goggles, sunscreen, lip balm + sunhat.** Sunglasses are compulsory whenever you venture onto snow. Without eye protection you risk snow blindness. You do not want sunburnt corneas, this condition is extremely unpleasant and as with most sunburn you will not notice until it is too late. Glasses should be of the wrap around variety not so much so you can achieve a gangsta look, more to maximise sun protection and minimise the chances of snow being blown into your eyes. Look for lenses with a yellow, grey or brown tint as these are the correct shades for optimal contrast and hence visibility in overcast (flat light) conditions. In windy conditions goggles are excellent. Look for glasses or goggles that block UV rays. A \$4.99 pair from your local service station is a false economy but second hand shops sometimes have decent glasses or goggles abandoned by would be ski bunnies. If you wear prescription glasses and don't have contact lenses then goggles that fit over your glasses are your thing. Think about carrying a spare pair of sunglasses or goggles.

Snow is an excellent transmitter of sunlight so it is vital that you apply sunscreen regularly to all exposed skin especially on overcast days. Under your nose, under your chin and behind your ears are areas that are easily missed and very painful, not to mention unsightly, when sunburnt. Keep a small tube of sunscreen + lip balm in a pocket so you will remember to reapply it. A sunhat with a neck flap is a good idea for protecting your neck, (or a shirt with a collar).

- **Hydration and nutrition.** An alpine environment is a cold, dry environment. Walking in snow can be surprisingly tiring especially if the snow is soft. You will need lots of high energy snacks and lots of water. Keep snacks in your pockets for easy access. A Camelback or equivalent is good but remember that if it is cold enough to make snow the water in the tube may freeze. You may wish to keep the tube inside your pack which means a **water bottle** may have equal utility.
- **Navigation equipment, signalling devices and emergency shelter.** Carry a **map** and **compass** and know how to use them. A watch with an altimeter, barometer and an alarm is useful for impressing your companions and knowing your height and what the weather is doing. Also alpine starts are difficult to achieve if you have no means of rousing yourself. A **whistle** is also a good idea as visibility can be lost very suddenly in an alpine environment. Always take a **survival blanket** and a **PLB** for the group. As snow is wet a map cover or laminated map is a good idea so is a cell phone if you can keep it dry, you may have coverage. Always take a **head torch** and **spare batteries**. In winter darkness can fall very quickly and you will often be out and about very early to take advantage of firm snow. A torch can help you find your way or keep visual contact with the rest of your group when clag rolls in.
- **Shelter.** A good **sleeping bag** along with a liner is essential as is a **sleeping mat**. If you are snow caving or tenting in snow a closed cell foam rubber or **snow foam** mat is a far better insulator than its more expensive cousin the thermo-a-rest. If you have room a piece of cut down snow foam is a good thing to pack on day walks so you have something to sit on at lunchtime instead of the cold snow. It is also useful for bum sliding. A bivy bag is necessary if you are using a snow cave, at a pinch a large pack liner will do but you will not make many friends as they are very noisy.
- **Cooking.** A robust **stove** and **fuel** is necessary as is a **tin foil wind shield**, it can get quite breezy up high. Also important is something to put under the cooker to insulate it from the snow. An insulated cooker will boil your water far more quickly. Aunty Rata takes a thin, square piece of wood. If you know there will be suitable flat rocks where you are going then they will be fine.
- **Avalanche equipment.** Snowcraft will cover the use of **avalanche transceivers**, **shovels + probes**, more importantly the course will teach you a little bit about what

you don't know and to take a precautionary approach to travelling when there is a risk of avalanche. When heading out on alpine trips you should always consider whether to take avalanche equipment with you, such equipment is useless unless the entire group has the gear. The exception being a snow shovel which is a good item for a group to take regardless as you may need to dig an emergency shelter or a pit to check snow conditions. The club has avalanche probes and snow shovels. You can hire transceivers from Bivouac.

Finally, remember that **organisation is crucial**. Even more so than when tramping lower down, tramping in the snow requires you to have your clothing and equipment sorted. You can have all the right gear but if you can't locate it quickly when you make your group risk management more difficult than it needs to be. Weather and snow conditions can change very quickly and you must learn to anticipate this. If you are camping in snow you need to be prepared to move efficiently into camp setting up phase. Fumbling round in your pack looking for a vital piece of kit wastes precious daylight and may leave you at best with freezing fingers and toes and at worst with sub optimal shelter.

Use a gear list. Think about what is planned for the day and what stuff you will need at different times and where that stuff is. The technical alpine term for this is *getting ones shit together*. Experience makes you a better judge of this; meantime you can observe the actions of your more experienced companions. Use plastic bags to organise gear in your pack. Always bring spare plastic bags to house wet stuff. Have a system for securing pieces of kit that might blow or slip away – carabineers and cords are useful. You do not want to have to hike down the hill to retrieve a glove or snow shovel that slid to the bottom or blew away because it was placed carelessly on the snow. On slopes that are not flat you can use your ice axe to secure your pack to the slope or dig a flat space for gear storage. Practice with kit you are unfamiliar with so you are proficient before you have to use it in unfavourable conditions. For example, practice putting on your crampons at home with bare hands and then with gloves on just don't walk around in them on a newly polished floor!

Forgotten what gear you need for tramping? Check out the WTMC gear list online.

http://www.wtmc.org.nz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=69

Other news, notes and reminders

Two pairs of Scarpa boots to a good home

There are two pairs of Scarpa boots, Size 42, in the gear cupboard. They have been kindly donated by the estate of Jane Perkins' and are available to a good home. Perhaps you are new to tramping and would like to use these boots before investing in a good pair? They are both worn, one pair more than the other, but still have plenty of life in them. There is also a LED headlight available. See the gear custodian for more information.

If the gear is suitable a koha to Greenpeace or the Cancer Society would be appreciated.

Wild trip articles needed by Wilderness magazine

Have you been on any great trips lately? The Wilderness magazine is keen to hear from you and feature your adventures in their "Wild Trips" article. It can be on any kind of trip so doesn't have to be tramping. The article will need to be between 400-700 words, as an overview of the highlights, challenges, vistas, interesting historical features or flora and fauna etc, how long it takes and what you would need, where you stayed, even what you had for dinner (was it gourmet??).

The idea is to share the ideas and options for all the great trips that are out there with other outdoor enthusiasts, and it is great promotion for the club. :) Good quality high resolution photos will be needed.

For more information see Megan at club or email promotions@wtmc.org.nz.

Oh .. and Wilderness magazine pay for the "wild trip" articles!

Deadline for submissions to the August WTMC newsletter: Friday 29 July

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.