



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

August 2011



'Self arresting'
Photographer: Tanya Drayushkina



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In this Issue

The Nature of Things	3
Track Talk.....	4
Editor's chat.....	6
Lodge update.....	7
Membership.....	8
Butterfly Creek day walk	8
Tongariro Devil Creek Crossing	9
Who really wants an uneventful tramping weekend?	11
Snowcraft – 1st weekend: A brief report from the Podium Group (Not to be confused with the 'elite' group...)	14
Getting away with it.....	16
Interview with Wayne Stevens	17
Other news, notes and reminders	19

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



After a super mild autumn and a slow start to winter the snow suddenly arrived in dramatic fashion with a couple of good winter storms. Whakapapa now has a respectable 140cm snow base making skiing and other stuff not only possible but enjoyable. With impeccable timing we managed to slot the first weekend of Snowcraft into the space between the two cold snaps and just as well too, it is seriously hard work knocking would be alpinists into shape.

With your help Amanda and Richard are knocking the Spring trip schedule into shape. If you are planning to get off the couch as the days get longer or to escape the RWC hype now is the time to come forward with your suggestions for trips and offers to lead them. As I mentioned last month, we are particularly keen to get some new leaders out in the hills and day trips are a great place to start. You don't have to wait for our Leadership course, (coming up in late October), to lead a trip. If you don't feel confident leading a trip by yourself you can always offer to organise a trip and grab another experienced tramper as your wing man.

If you fancy a week of skiing based at the Club Lodge get in touch with Brian at wtmclodge@xtra.co.nz or leave a message on the answer phone 04 4796799. The next ski week specially reserved for club members and their friends is from 4pm Sunday 7 August to 4pm Friday 12 August. If you are a rubbish skier you can book ski lessons easily enough - just consult Google.

It was great to see the clubrooms full last week when Jonathan Kennett gave his talk on how wonderful the Tararuas are. Like most people it seems, Jonathan used to belong to our club! Wouldn't it be great if we could fill the clubrooms every Wednesday? If you have any suggestions for Wednesday night talks or any other social activities let our tea ladies know or email social@wtmc.org.nz. Still thirsty after your post slideshow cup of tea and biscuits? Well there is nothing to stop you leading the charge down to the Welsh bar or similar watering hole. Likewise if you want to help out with the MAG or other promotional activity have a word to Megan or email her at promotions@wtmc.org.nz Actually Megan is also the President these days so she is pretty busy. Have a look in the latest issue of Wilderness Magazine for what she has to say about danger spots in the Tararuas.

A small group of us are beavering away on the website project. You may have noticed the rotating pictures on the homepage. There is heaps more to come so watch that space. Big thanks to Sarah Young, Steve Kholer and David Jewell who have been putting in some serious time in front of their computer screens. Thanks also to those of you who have been posting advice on the Forum or sending advice by email or helping with the card sorting exercise Sarah ran. We are stoked with the level of engagement.

Any ideas or feedback about running your club, or, if you want the job of editing the club Journal please get in touch with someone on the committee. Have fun in the hills and come home safely.

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



We're in the throes of Spring schedule planning. If you're reading this online, it's not too late to come along to the planning night, this Wednesday 3rd August, from 5.30pm onwards at the clubrooms. Bring maps and ideas, and get some free pizza in return. Thanks heaps to everyone who's sent in their ideas for road ends so that we can have a skeleton schedule ready for Wednesday. Once we've got the schedule sorted, it's time to start hounding you to lead trips...

If you'd like to lead a trip but would appreciate a confidence boost or basic skills brush-up, we're running a leadership course on the weekend of October 29-31 (that's the weekend after Labour weekend - and the Rugby World Cup will also be out of the way!). On the same weekend, in the same location, we'll also be running an outdoor first aid course. Sign up sheets for both these courses will be on the board in early August or you can email lardner.richard@gmail.com to register.

When I wrote my last column, I wasn't sure whether a long-planned tramping holiday to the Australian outback would get off the ground. Qantas' approach to ash saw us stuck in Wellington for three long, uncertain days, wondering if we would ever make it to Alice Springs and our 10-day Larapinta appointment. Kate has promised to do a slideshow very soon, so I won't relate any more of what became an epic story. But it was another lesson that the things you worry most about in advance don't end up the real problems...

Lately we've had a few cases of punters not bringing ground sheets because they assumed they would get a hut bed. Even if you make it to your intended destination, there's no guarantee the hut won't be full. But the main reason we bleat on about groundsheets is that carrying them plus flies equals shelter and relative comfort if something unforeseen occurs. Shelter is not an optional extra on club overnight tramps, no matter what your intended destination. Anyone who's been caught out will be a staunch advocate for this policy - and the experience isn't as rare as you might think.

I remember a club trip in 2006 where we spent hours bashing down a leatherwood-infested ridge. As darkness fell, trying to follow a compass bearing down a steep slope became obviously stupid, so after finding a stream we set up a precarious camp. While our fly pitching wasn't worthy of awards, it meant none of us felt particularly worried by our situation. Light dawned and we made our way out, on time and pretty happy. In contrast,

last week I happened to catch a radio interview with an "experienced" trumper who endured several unexpected days in snow-bound country near Arthurs Pass. Not carrying any shelter meant this couple kept pushing on towards a hut in difficult conditions, but still ended up spending a night out crammed into a single packliner. While you might say that the lack of shelter wasn't as significant as their inability to read snow conditions, it might have prevented the interviewee losing part of a toe to frostbite.

Groundsheets, gaiters and packliners are all occasionally seen as optional extras by new trampers. It's worth verbally checking with each new person before the trip that they have these items - doubly so in winter. The last thing you want is a minor problem becoming a survival situation.

Sometimes people don't have groundsheets because they don't know what they are or where to get them from. Asking the tramping shops around town can apparently draw a blank. The Warehouse has blue tarpaulins in their "car" section of varying sizes that can be cut up nicely to meet your groundsheet needs. Or Bunnings/Mitre10 Mega type places have rolls of polythene (often in the gardening section). Polythene is slightly lighter than the woven blue plastic tarpaulins but not as durable. Both seem relatively waterproof and cost only a few dollars per groundsheet. Cutting the ground sheet so it's long enough to fit your pack as well as your sleeping mat can be beneficial when camping on mud/wet grass.

Hopefully we'll soon be heading into warmer weather. But in the meantime, here's a selection of upcoming trips:

19-21 Aug Ruahine FP and Inland Kaikouras

Tramp E	Daywalks from Kawhatau Base	Helen Law
Tramp M	Pourangaki hut	Jo Boyle
Tramp MF	Wakelings hut	Kate Cushing
Alp1 MF	Mt Tapuae-o-Uenuku (3 day)	Steve Austin
Alp2 F	Alarm or Mitre (3 day)	Mike Phethean

It's not too late to go on these tramping trips to the Eastern Ruahines – with Kawhatau base hut at the road end already booked for Friday night, and for Saturday night for the Easy group. The chances of encountering snow will be good! You need to sign up soon though. Alternatively, head down to the Kaikouras for some mountaineering adventures with Steve or Mike.

26-28 Aug Ruapehu - Ohakune Mountain Rd

Tramp E	Blyth hut	Clinton Hunter
Tramp EM	Mangaehuehu Hut	Pete Gent
Alp1 MF	Tahurangi	Sharron Came
Family All	Ruahines - Sunrise hut overnight	Mike Pratt
Day E	Atiwhakatu	Barbara Keenan

Head to Ruapehu with Clinton or Pete for easy tramping around the mountain, or tackle the climb to Tahurangi with Sharron. Mike takes all-comers into the Eastern Ruahines' Sunrise hut, a short, very graded walk to a hut with an awesome view over the Hawkes Bay area. Or visit the new Atiwhakatu hut in the Tararuas with Barbara (and marvel at the extent of the boardwalk).

Editor's chat

Sarah Young, Newsletter editor



Safety whilst on trips is the strong theme of this month's newsletter ... not something that was planned for this edition, but something that is obviously top of mind for many club members. Perhaps it is the winter months, the shorter daylight hours and the much colder weather that is making safety be more top of mind at the moment? Read all about some club members experiences on an elongated day walk (ref: Tongariro Devil Creek Crossing article) and gain some handy hints and tips on what not to forget on a tramp in 'Getting away with it'. You may also like to read about what could happen if it all goes horribly wrong in Aunty Rata's interview with Wayne Stevens.

Thank you very much to those of you who have contributed to this year's Journal to date. Sadly, we have still not received any nominations / volunteers names for the very important and vital role of journal editor. If this year's journal is going to go ahead, we really do need someone to put their hand up. All the hard work of collecting articles will have been done for you – all you need to do is edit the articles, format the photographs and work them together in to a presentable journal publication. Go on, give it a go ... you know you want to!

Lodge update

Sue Walsh, Ruapehu Lodge convenor



The southerly front that came through the other week certainly curled up the fingers and toes however the more snow we can get, the more appealing the lodge becomes. Don't forget to check out the lodge winter schedule and book yourself in for some fun time up there.

We recently took part in an event on the mountain to promote the lodges. Unfortunately for a number of reasons it didn't draw in a large crowd but it has set an expectation for future promotional events which will draw more interest. It was interesting talking to other lodge representatives and hearing about their experiences with their respective lodges. Even though there was only a small number taking part, all had the common goal of trying to increase users and attract the public to them. All have different draw cards, from live-in custodians and chefs, to easy to get to lodges. After having these chats, it's nice to come away knowing that we are set up fairly well in comparison to others and that our location is a definite draw card, which I always knew, but it's nice to have that reinforced. We also have the added benefit of not being just a ski club, and I think that is a definite plus for us to remember when we go up there. Seeing the snowcraft participants come back absolutely buzzing from the adventures they've been having is really inspiring, and seeing all the skiers whizzing past is, well, almost enough to get me back on skis.

The new cookbook is in the lodge now and up on the website. A reminder that it is the trip leader or designated food person only who can contact Andrew, our food officer, regarding the menus for the weekend or week. *A reminder too that contact must be made no later than 9.00pm on the Monday prior to you going to the lodge.* Any later, and Andrew will put through the food order as per usual. Another gentle reminder that the food stock-take must be completed and faxed to Andrew to ensure the correct ordering of food.

I'm looking forward to heading back up to the lodge soon and seeing some of you there. In the meantime, stay warm, and enjoy the snow.

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



This month, we welcome 2 new senior members to our club: - Anna King and Rowena Johnstone.

Another great benefit of being a club member is you get a copy of our annual club journal - great reads over and over again. As we still have spare copies of last year's journal, I will be sending these out to our new members shortly.

Please send any membership queries to me on membership@wtmc.org.nz, or find me at the club on Wednesday nights.

Butterfly Creek day walk

Easy medium, 2 July 2011

Jo Shrigley

Punters: Barbara Keenan (leader), Ray Walker, John Harrison, Annika Magdorf, Deborah Stoebe, Orla McCarthy, Eileen Scott, Lynda Bushe, Jeremy Vincent, Jo Shrigley, Tim Duke, Natascha Sauber

The butterfly creek walk was our first with the Wellington Tramping club. My partner Tim and I wanted to try out a day walk with the club that wasn't too easy and wasn't too hard, and was fairly easy to get to. So Butterfly creek was it.



When we arrived at the bus stop, it was great to see 10 other like minded international looking people in a similar age group. We kind of felt at home.... And we were surprised to hear that there were at least a couple of others, for whom, it was also their first walk.

So off we went, in the bus, from Wellington to Wainuiomata to our get out point. We used \$9 Bus-About day passes, which turned out to be really handy. In fact, in the end, people were able to use them to get all the way home, beyond the central bus station.

Unfortunately, the weather was pretty grey during the trip, but the rain held out, and it was amazingly still!



The walk itself had lots of ups and downs, and was extremely muddy, so there were definitely a few slips and slides during the trip. The highlight for me, as a newbie, was chatting to people along the way, sometimes oblivious of where I was actually going!

Towards the end of the walk, there were beautiful views overlooking Wellington harbour and the city, before we descended down to Eastbourne to the Beach Cafe for a well deserved coffee and cake.

All in all, a nice experience for us as newbies, and we'll definitely be back ;-)

Tongariro Devil Creek Crossing

Alp1 Medium, Saturday 9th July

Illona Keenan

Punters: Spencer Clubb (leader), Tracey Grose, Jo Boyle, Megan Banks, Illona Keenan, Ian Harrison

With an appalling weather forecast it was decided that a weekend trip to the lodge wasn't a goer; chances are the Bruce Road would be closed and we wouldn't even get there. Spencer was keen to lead a local day walk instead and I for one really needed to stretch my legs, so did Tracey, Ian, Jo and Megan.



“It is only a day walk” was my attitude, leaving packing till the last minute on Saturday morning, frantically trying to get to the Railway Station by 8am. Meeting up with the punters there was a debate on where to go. Options put forward were: North Ohau, Akatarawa or Kapakapanui. It is always interesting trying to make a group decision. I had recently been to Kapakapanui so was NOT keen, however Tracey cunningly mentioned the tops would be nasty and it was on the schedule in a couple of weeks, (she had recently done it too but her rationale didn't sound as selfish as mine!). There was also discussion on the nor-west weather system meaning the eastern side of the Tararuas might be “nicer”. We decided on Walls Whare as a road end. Luckily more organised punters had a selection of maps, so we were equipped with those. Walls Whare meant there was a compulsory stop at the French Baker. Over coffee we decided on a round trip: Up to Reeves (an old route), down to Tutuwai, along to Cone and back to the road end. A quick calculation indicated

we had just enough daylight. I discovered I was the only one without a headtorch (whoops – the first of many “only a day walk” incorrect packing decisions).

Thanks to the bird monitoring for Project Kaka, the track up to Reeves had been recut and well marked so the navigation part of the trip didn't eventuate. It is a nice ridge up with bush astelia and rifleman. There was hail and wind and generally unpleasant weather but with lunch at Tutuwai all was well. Thunder and lightening started shortly after lunch and continued for the rest of the walk, there was resistance to leave Cone Hut due to the heavy rain, but as day length was limited, it was onward and upwards. Thunder and lightening continued, with hail and heavy rain, which meant that stopping wasn't really an option. The track down to the Waiohine River was very muddy and slippery but we arrived at the bridge with day light to spare and were greeted by a falcon at the bridge.

There was the usual changing out of wet clothes at the car, and again the "only a day walk" attitude meant that some punters didn't quite have a complete set of nice dry warm clothes – but hey what do you need if you are safe at the car, and only have to drive home.

Two kilometres down the road Devil's Creek ford was un-crossable. Yes we picked our day walk route that was largely stream free. However, we didn't factor in that we had crossed a ford on the way there; it was brown, swollen and above my knees, and more importantly above the door clearance of my car! Hmmm! There was the 'she'll be right - you could get through attitude', however I didn't fancy trying to dry out a wet car interior.

As it had recently stopped raining, Tracey put rocks on the water edge so we could monitor the water levels. Then along came two nice hunters and their extra lovely vizsla dog. Their ute would get through, no problem, they offered to tow us through, mentioned that we were welcome to stay at their bach down the road if we couldn't get through, and asked if they could contact anyone for us. We gave them Pete's number so people would know we were fine but stuck! When they went through the ford we were all saying "weren't they nice, thoughtful" and all sorts of other adjectives not usually associated with hunters.

Our rocks told us that the river was slowly going down, and as it still wasn't raining we thought we might as well wait a bit longer. About 30 minutes later the hunters returned. I crossed the ford on foot to chat to them; they again offered accommodation and presented a care package. I was a bit overwhelmed. I said we would wait a while longer to see how much the stream would go down in the next hour. When back at the car I opened the care package it contained:

- Cans of old crow bourbon and cola
- Large bottle of bourbon, that didn't have bourbon coloured liquid in it
- A pack of cards
- A towel
- Head torch and another torch
- Spare plastic bags
- Packet of corn chips

We were all so impressed, and interested in what the hunters thought were essential items. The corn chips were opened and consumed, the towel and torches used, the mystery bourbon bottle was opened to reveal curious coloured water. And our attitude "it

is only a day walk” was discussed. After a three hour wait, the stream had gone down sufficiently to send the boys in to stand on the upstream edge of the ford, providing guidance for us to drive through. We met the hunters further down the road. They were coming back again to check on us – bless! We returned their wonderful care package – minus the corn chips!

We thought it appropriate to outline what we learnt from our being stuck experience.

- When packing, consider that it might turn in to more than a day walk
- Take an emergency kit
- Consider having extra blankets, food and clothes in your car
- Don't forget a map and compass
- Gaiters can be useful even for a day walk
- Head torches are necessary even for a day walk
- Take the club van – more clearance!
- Don't eat your chocolate bar until across the ford
- Remember dry socks
- Take more dry clothes for car afterwards
- The attitude “it is only a day walk” can be left behind

Who really wants an uneventful tramping weekend?

Burn Hut Easy trip, 16 – 17 July

Laura Kelly

Punters: Ian Yeoman, Ray Walker (leader), Laura Kelly,
Yingjie Zhang, Daniel Bourke, Margaret Craigie

After having come into contact with WTMC for the first time only 2 Wednesdays earlier, here I was at Wellington train station meeting a bunch of random people for a weekend in the Tararua ranges. First good sign was a newish, sturdy looking WTMC van in the car park with 2 or 3 people milling about nearby one of whom commented, as I strode over, “you're looking far too good for this time of the morning!” I thought “we're going to get on fine!”

We chatted and drank bad takeaway coffee while we waited

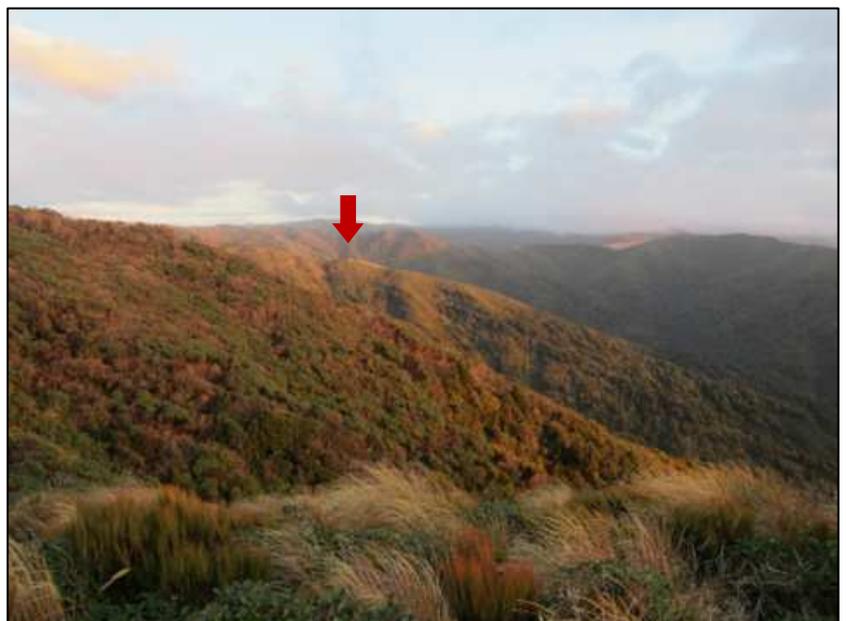


for the last of the punters to arrive. Once all present, we piled into the very spacious van



and made good time to Shannon where we stopped briefly to grab some more coffee and carbs and where an interesting lady in the cafe made it known to all that she wasn't happy about me leaving the door slightly ajar. Good driving by Ray on the gravel road for a while that took us into the ranges towards the Mangahao river where we parked up at the upper dam. The day was starting to warm up quite nicely by that point as we found our stride back along the road to the start of the track that would take us to Burn Hut.

The first section was pleasant then quickly got narrow and steeper as we progressed along the banks of the river up into the forest. We seemed to have quite a range of 'foot planting confidence' in the group but we ambled along at a steady pace. There was the occasional scramble over trees and an impromptu rest stop a little way along after one of our group lost their footing and ended up down the bank getting a closer look at the river. We carried on through to what would be the biggest climb of the weekend, a few hours worth, a little steep in parts and feeling very good after having found the zone. Tummies soon started rumbling for those who hadn't indulged at Shannon so we stopped for lunch under the canopy. We tramped through the afternoon, fuelled by the occasional chocolate fish from the stash I'd brought along (an idea nicked from a trail running event last month where the marshals were handing them out to race participants and trampers – brilliant!). As we neared the end of the climb, the day was starting to draw in. We were rewarded with a beautiful light that moved rather quickly into sundown which drew attention to the semi-alpine freshness we were out in. On top of the ridge, Burn Hut came into sight looking right across the valley, and we headed for our home for the night.



See, it's not that far away is it?!

As it turns out, the hut wasn't as close as it looked and the track deteriorated, along with daylight, so that progress was slow. This last stretch in the dark took longer than anyone had anticipated and, after a tense moment re-gathering as a group that had split for a while, we trudged and stumbled onwards until the hut eventually came into sight. I think we were all pretty happy to see those 4 walls and we set up house and home, shovelled down a hot pasta meal, put on some more clothes and nursed a brew before diving into our sleeping bags.

Ah, the glorious feeling of being horizontal after a days tramping. Under a full moon we rested, then in the morning slowly woke and prepared for the coming day, the plan being to complete the loop back to the dam where the van was parked. After a bit of inevitable group faffing (or fluffing as Margaret called it, I had to point out that was a completely different activity altogether!), we set off on day two.

A climb to 830m at the start helped us keep warm and not take too much notice of the low cloud and drizzle which luckily dissipated as we descended down to the bush line (which is when the sun came out of course!). The lush bush was a welcome change of scenery after the scrub and tussock of the higher points. We chatted and lunched under the canopy finding great hilarity in our Sunderland-born Ian saying 'Wallies' instead of the NZ famous 'Watties' brand.

A short descent brought us back to the river. Now, Ray had mentioned a 'river crossing' on Sunday and this is what we did for the next hour and a half, spending a fair amount of time in the river as well as crossing it; not sure about anyone else but I got a lot more proficient at finding stable ground in a river! We caught our breath after one of us went for an unexpected swim at the bottom of a small waterfall, and eventually the track markers appeared on land again, hooray for that!

After 6 hours walking, our energy levels picked up again for the home straight back to the bridge over another impressive dam, then back at the van. The panini and latte that we'd been discussing had to wait as we drove past a shop in Shannon that had shut up shop for the day. Instead we had a short roadside stop to find some tools to tighten the bolts on one of the wheels that had come loose from a previous tyre change: minor catastrophe averted, well done Ray and Daniel! I'm a stereotypical woman when it comes to vehicles and their noises!

A sunny and satisfying end to the weekends tramp.

All back safe and sound, we went our separate ways to homes with heating and hot showers and I was left with the feeling of having been on another planet for a time – very invigorating and refreshing and pleased to have completed a reasonably challenging (actual easy/medium) tramp with the WTMC. Although I've reined in my ambitions regarding the difficulty level of my next trip, I've already signed up for my next one. Bring it on! Thanks to everyone for a memorable weekend.

Snowcraft – 1st weekend: A brief report from the Podium Group (Not to be confused with the ‘elite’ group...)

Snowcraft 1. 22-24 July

Hans Wiskerke

Punters: Donna Maher, Rowena Johnstone, Katy Glenie, Mike Travers, Weimin Ren, Anna King, Paula Vincent, Tanya Drayushkina, Simon Lovaatt, Mika Verheul, Hans Wiskeike, Ian Harrison, Dmitry Alkhimov

Leaders: Sharron Came, Mike Phethean, Steve Austin, Jenny Beaumont

When signing up in the balmy month of May, it wasn't there yet. And even for many long weeks into June, there was hardly any snow on the ski fields at the big hill in the North, which we can often see on a clear day when tramping in our Tararua backyard.

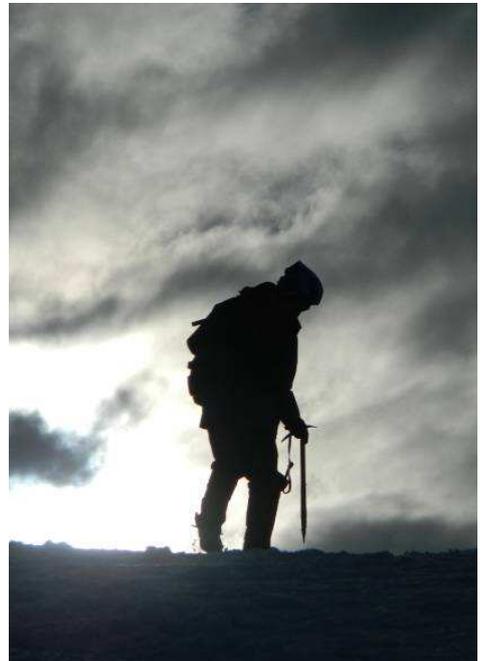
However, we still believed the group that had signed up could be good at the 'craft' bit, as we learned from web research:

*“Historically, **craftsmen** tended to concentrate in urban centers and formed the guilds. Trade occupation and the need to be permanently involved in the exchange of goods also demanded a generally higher level of education and in societal hierarchy the **craftsmen** were usually in a more privileged position than the peasantry.”*



On the last Wednesday before the big outing we collected our tools to clearly distinguish ourselves from the mere peasants of our society: an ice axe and two kinky thingies to tie under your boots. Those who remember Mike McGavin's valuable contribution to the 2009 WTMC Journal will appreciate what an ice axe does for your self esteem.

And thus we went with an overdose of confidence (or was it pigheadedness, considering the weather forecast?) to the big hill in the North, surviving kebabs, curries and bulls on the way, only to be blown off our feet at the Top o' the Bruce. On Saturday morning all eager students were divided over two manageable herds, and yes – we did listen to the good advice although turning it into practice was sometimes challenging. Let's just say the first weekend of the Snowcraft course was a success, and let the photos of the Podium Group do the talking!



Getting away with it

Spencer Clubb

In “An Inspector Calls”, a family are accused of a heinous crime by a police inspector. After having established their guilt, by piecing together their individual mistakes and mishaps, he disappears, only to be revealed as a fraud and not an inspector at all. The family breathe a sigh of relief and prepare to carry on their lives as if nothing had happened. The fact that they had got away with it was all that mattered; not whether they had done anything wrong or could learn from their mistakes. The play ends with another twist: that maybe they won't get away with it after all.

I think tramping can be a bit like that sometimes. We forget our head torch on a day walk, but thankfully we get back before dark. We have a hole in our pack liner and our down sleeping bag is at the bottom of our pack, but luckily it doesn't rain heavily. We carry no spare food, but we get out as planned.

But when things do go wrong, and if you spend enough time in the bush they inevitably will, simple mistakes like those mentioned above can end up making life more than a little uncomfortable. Over winter especially, they could even be fatal. Maybe it is time to learn from our mistakes that we 'got away with' at the time, and not just breathe a sigh of relief and carry on as if nothing had happened.

Most of the time it's just a question of keeping your gear in good condition, and deciding or remembering to pack everything, even when you think you won't need it, such as on a day walk. Some top tips that are not rocket science, but can make a huge difference to your safety margin in the hills include:

Shelter. Use a survival bag as a pack liner and check it for holes before each trip. Best to carry a groundsheet, sleeping mat and fly or tent even if planning on staying in a hut.

Shell layer. Make sure you look after your waterproof jacket and trousers. Wash them regularly and reproof them so they bead nicely when they get wet, rather than soaking through after 5 minutes.

Food. Take extra snacks in case you end up having a mission, or getting stuck the wrong side of a river.

In your car. Keep a blanket, water, snacks, and enough dry clothes to keep warm if you have to leave your car (or sleep in it!)

On day walks as well as tramps: Always take a map, compass, EPERB, headtorch, extra snacks, survival bag, first aid kit, cellphone. Always use a packliner. Matches and cut up inner tubes are a good idea too in case you need to light a fire. Take spare batteries for your head torch.

Finally, always tell someone where you are going! Oh, and carry a pocket knife. You never know when you might need it....

Page 16 of 20

Interview with Wayne Stevens

Aunty Rata

If there is such a thing as a typical Kiwi bloke then Aunty Rata likes to think it is Wayne Stevens. Wayne is one of those guys who epitomises the expression “flat out like a lizard drinking”. Behind the laid back, casual, understated exterior there lurks a lively intelligence, practical nous and well developed sense of mischief, not to mention a heart of gold. By far the coolest thing about Wayne though is that he makes a difference to peoples lives.

Wayne is a long-time member of WTMC. He was President for half a decade before sneaking off to get married and have kids. He doesn't get out on so many cycling and kayaking trips these days but manages to keep up his Land Search and Rescue work and has trained as a paramedic so he can help out with the St John's Ambulance in Wellington.

Aunty Rata has fond memories of going on her first club kayaking trip with Wayne. It was a rare calm day in the capital and we were able to paddle across Wellington harbour and convince the council security people to turn a blind eye to us camping beside the Hutt River before paddling back via the Chocolate Fish Café the next day. Wayne had to give me a bit of a tow on Sunday afternoon as my arms weren't quite up to it and we had a stiff head wind to contend with. It was a fantastic trip, one that spurred me on to go kayaking in Abel Tasman National Park.

How did you come to get involved with Land SAR Wellington?

When I was at Vic Uni in the mid 1980s I discovered tramping in a big way. The Vic Uni tramping club was really into SAR – maybe it was the free pizza or sausage at the end of the SAR operations that lead to quite a few Varsity club members joining SAR. Anyway I just tagged along and 28 years later I'm still doing SAR.

You've been participated in lots of searches, is there one that particularly stands out, and if so why?

The Wilkinson search on the Southern Crossing in Jan 2005 was particularly memorable. Louise Wilkinson had attempted the Southern Crossing and had taken really poor gear and either hadn't checked the weather forecast or had discounted it. Anyway, she got stranded on the side of Mt Atkinson in the middle of the Southern Crossing with hypothermia and had sent a text to her brother asking for help. The Westpac rescue helicopter was sent in to extract her but couldn't get near her due to the high winds, (and in it was so rough that a couple of crew members on the helicopter threw up). So anyway, ground teams were flown in and I led the first Wellington team that was sent in.

A couple of police members from the Wairarapa managed to locate her but they were not equipped to stay with her. We managed to fly as far as Quoin Ridge in probably the roughest ride in a helicopter I've ever experienced but we managed to get on the ground and scrambled along the Southern Crossing to locate Tracy. That night it poured down – the bridge at Otaki Forks was washed away and there were some floods in the Hutt Valley. My Olympus tent collapsed at one stage and we had water flowing through the tent (it was

Page 17 of 20

a memorable night). The following day we were relieved by another team and spent the night at Alpha Hut. On the third day we had a large group of searchers at the hut and we carried Louise by stretcher to a spot on False Spur where we could just manage to get a helicopter in and get her out.

Are there any common mistakes trampers who get lost, make when they head out into the hills?

Lack of preparation, prior to heading off, is probably one of the most common mistakes. Good planning - taking the right gear, having appropriate skills (bushcraft, navigation etc), looking at the weather forecasts and changing plans accordingly is key to making sure you have a good time.

What are the 3 key things trampers can do when they head off on trips that would make searching for them easier?

- (i) Good intentions that are left with a family or friend who can notify us when somebody is overdue.
- (ii) We typically search the huts first (important to fill in those log books). Then main tracks, side tracks, and rivers. If you are on one of these we will find you. If you are wondering around off track in the bush, then it is a lot harder to find somebody.
- (iii) When things go wrong acting calmly – i.e. it's not the end of the world to be a day or so late out. Sure, there could be some embarrassment but everybody makes a mistake at some point in their lives. It's about dealing with the situation you are in, in a calm and collected way so whatever has gone wrong doesn't lead to an even bigger problem.

You are a trained paramedic and you help out with the Wellington Free Ambulance Service on Friday nights, what do you enjoy most about this work?

It's great just putting something back into the community. When we go to patients they are often having their worst, or one of the worst, moments in their life. It's good to help them out – people are just incredibly grateful for the help that you provide as a paramedic. Sure while car crashes, cardiac arrests, delivering babies etc are the high profile things we do, we also help out some of the most vulnerable in our society such as elderly who are living alone who have had a fall.

Some of these jobs are not that pleasurable – I went to one elderly lady who had forgotten to use the toilet for some months (I can still smell the smell even today...), but it's really good to help such persons out and give them the same level of care as a wealthy or prominent person.

You've been a member of WTMC for a long time, any highlights?

Gee there are quite a few highlights. I've particularly liked the kayaking trips to Fiordland or around the Sounds. I've also really enjoyed the social side of the club. While having 3 young kids at present stops me from going out on all those backcountry tramping and

kayaking trips that I used to do, I still long for those days in the Club and keen to get back out.

You've done loads of cycling, kayaking and tramping trips both here and overseas, where is your favourite spot for outdoor adventures?

While I've tramped, cycled and kayaked in numerous places around the world my favourite is definitely Fiordland. I've done a couple of 2 week sea kayaking trips down there years ago. I really loved the remoteness (it feels like you are in one of the most remote spots on the planet) and the scenery is just fantastic.

Do you think tramping clubs are still relevant in 2011?

Yep, definitely. Clubs are the best way to acquire the skills for looking after oneself in the backcountry and also to meet people with similar values or interests. There is always a WTMC trip going almost every weekend of the year; there is great variety in the type of trips or activities and the transport is sorted. If you try to arrange things with friends it can take a lot more to organise (ie trying to get the same free time). Having club transport is also a big benefit and shares the costs and driving.

Other news, notes and reminders

WTMC club secretary heading to Nepal



From 2nd of September to 18 December 2011 your club secretary, Mika Verheul, will be in Nepal for a couple of months. Mika will be working as a volunteer medical doctor for the International Porters Protection Group. The provided care is to support the porters who are generally not insured and lack medical care at high altitude. It is a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity for Mika, and one which she would regret turning down. In Mika's absence the Club secretarial duties will be cared for within the Committee.



For more information about Mika's voluntary job you can visit www.IPPG.net. Mika will be presenting her experiences on a Wednesday evening club night in January 2012.

Latest FMC newsletter now available

The latest FMC newsletter is now online at:

www.fmc.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter/Club1107.pdf.

This month's newsletter includes notes on: a new book on native trees; the freedom camping bill; a new tramping club calendar; Milford sound air access and discounts on the Interislander.

Leadership course - October 29-31

Learn vital skills, and pick up some great handy hints, you need to lead a WTMC trip including advanced navigation and weather reading.

Outdoor first aid course - October 29-31

Do you know what to do if someone in your group needs urgent first aid whilst on a trip? The outdoor first aid course will teach you those vital skills using a classroom and practical format. The course comes highly recommended!

Both the leader's course and outdoor first aid course are being run on the same weekend at the same venue. 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.

Spring schedule planning night. Wednesday 3rd August, from 5.30pm onwards at the clubrooms. Bring maps and ideas, and get some free pizza in return.

The Rimutaka Forest State Park is looking for volunteers. They are particularly looking for help with their Dawn Chorus Project, the Catchpool Restoration Project and the Kiwi Project. See their 'Wanted' page (<http://www.rimutakatrust.org.nz/wanted/wanted.htm>) for further information

Deadline for submissions to the September WTMC newsletter: Friday 26 August

The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club. Any queries or comments should be directed to the writer of the article. The editor of the newsletter reserves the right to edit and publish articles.