



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

May 2012



Body contortions, Kahurangi National Park
Nigel Case

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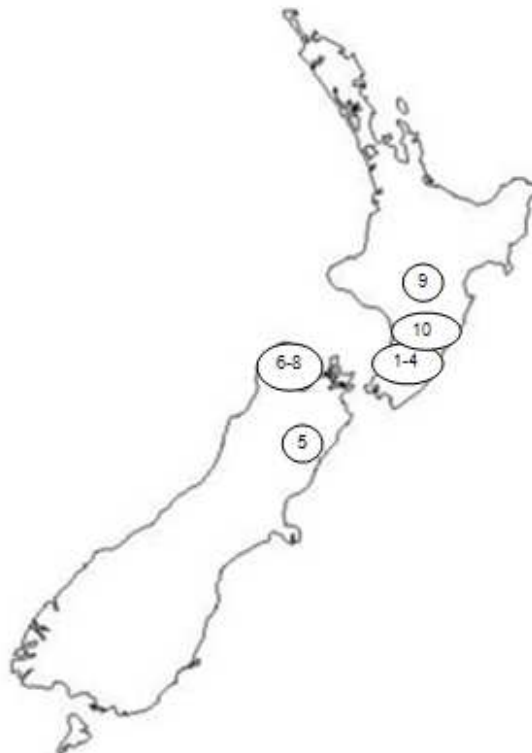
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The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Three cheers for everyone who showed up for the AGM, especially those who were brave enough to participate in the informal discussion on trips, vans and the club nights. We welcome feedback on anything to do with running the club so feel free to talk to a committee member on a Wednesday night or send an email.

I'm really keen to meet people who have joined the club over the last couple of years. Don't wait for me to approach you, hunt me down! I'm usually skulking round the kitchen or up the back near the door. I'm bound to pay attention if you say something particularly memorable such as "I'd like to lead some trips for the club" or "I'm happy to be the club secretary" or "I'd like to be the promotions officer". Please spread the word that we are still looking for a couple of people to join us on the committee. We can get loads more done and have a better functioning club with a full committee. If you aren't up for that kind of impact you can always check out our fabulous new look website. Click on the "contributing" tab, top right, for an up to date list of stuff that needs to be done and who to contact.

Tramping trips are the heart of WTMC. If we didn't run trips we'd soon run out of oxygen, membership would dwindle, we'd have to sell the vans etc. The winter trip schedule is up on the website. Big thanks to those of you who have committed to lead trips. If you have been on more than five or six trips with the club it's time for you to think about whether you have what it takes to lead trips. This is not a job for everyone but we have noticed a distinct lack of new faces in the trip leader line up. This needs to change if the club is going to continue to offer a good mix of trips each weekend.

We are thinking about running a leadership course to give people the confidence to lead trips. We are wondering what other barriers there are to trip leading. If you are keen to pick up some trip leading skills or can enlighten us as to why people shy away from leading trips get in touch with Amanda or Richard or chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz. We're keen to hear from experienced leaders who may be able to help with training, mentoring trip leaders or generally providing assistance with aspects of trip running. For example, it would be good if someone had time to implement some of the great suggestions we got at the AGM such as designing and running a survey to help us find out what stops people leading trips.

Winter means lots of snow, hopefully, so remember to book your spots at the club lodge. The new electronic booking system will be up and running from 1 May. Any queries you can always contact Eric at lodgebookings@wtmc.org.nz. In May we run our annual Lodge working bee and food stocking weekend. This is a great opportunity for members keen to help out with running the Lodge to learn how everything works and meet the Lodge team. You can sign up at the clubrooms or talk to Brian or Colin. Be in quick as places are limited.

If you want to get into trans-alpine tramping we have our Snowcraft course coming up in August. The trip sheet is up at the clubrooms now or you can email alpine@wtmc.org.nz, talk to Jenny or Steve or check out the website. Also, watch out for Jenny's promotional slideshow.

Finally, thanks once again to Hans and Mika for running Bushcraft 2. Mika even staged a partial drowning to see if participants knew what to do – that is dedication for you! Also, a friendly reminder that Sarah is happy to publish club related notices in the newsletter so long as you take responsibility for writing them.

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



With this newsletter, you've received the Winter trip schedule. Thanks to everyone who's committed to lead a trip – you play the most crucial role in the club.

Only once you have lead a trip, do you appreciate the work that goes into it. And only then can you fully appreciate being a punter. I was lucky enough to go on a trip led by Sharron to the Dragon's Teeth in Kahurangi at Easter. The weather was superb and so was the route, thanks to a significant amount of work beforehand by Sharron getting inside information from DoC. Part of the joy of being a punter is not necessarily having to worry about where you are going and how you will get there, and to spend time focusing on (or gripping) the scenery.

But being a leader has its rewards, which is why people keep coming back for more. I remember the sense of accomplishment after the first trip I lead – and it had been a daunting prospect! I spent weeks staring at the map of the Nardoo range in Nelson Lakes, planning the menu (which included carrying about 500g of brownies for dessert to induce punter happiness) and figuring out what exactly I was supposed to organise. Ironically as I write I'm about to head back to the vicinity for a five-day ANZAC trip that has been the recipient of considerably less organisational effort. The new club cookbook makes sorting out four meals a breeze. If you are feeling that vague sense of inspiration/guilt re trip leading, then we do have lots of helpful material to support this process.

We are also thinking again about how to best run leadership training. One idea is a weekend day or half day, based at the clubrooms with some practical work in the Mt Vic bush. Another is a weekday evening followed by a skills-based day walk on a weekend day. What do you think would work? What would be appealing to you? Please email me at chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz. Also if you want to share any pet hates or things about leading that put you off, please do let me know and we will see if we can work to mitigate or resolve them.

It was great to hear all the ideas at the AGM on leading and schedule planning. Please keep them coming. It's not too soon to start thinking of ideas about the Spring schedule (September to January); feel free to email them to me at any time! We are also going to set up an online "ideas" document where you can record them (watch this space for the URL). In general, the current schedule development system seems to be delivering good results but we should always be striving for continuous improvement. This is the start of my third year as chief guide, and I'm aware that it's very easy to just keep doing things the same way. This is one reason why we have a healthy rotation of people through committee roles; it's not too early to start thinking about what role you might want to pick up in 2012/13! I'll be thinking about taking on a different role and would welcome anyone wanting to shadow aspects of the chief guide role towards the end of this year.

But a year is a long time away and there are many exciting trips ahead! As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we're reinstating monthly leaders' forums – for those about to lead a trip and those contemplating leading (or those who just want to hang out). This is happening Wednesday 2 May, 6.45pm at the café above the Embassy. It can be really useful to talk through your route, even if it's just to get an estimate of how long your group might take to complete each section.

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



First of all, we want to say, "Congratulation to Murray Brown on his 50 years membership of WTMC ... he has been with the club since 1962!" He joined the club during his secondary school years and today he still very much enjoys the outdoors.

Also this month we say congratulation to Nigel Case who has joined us senior member. Welcome!

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

Social corner

Jenny Beaumont, Social convenor



I hope you have enjoyed the variety of talks/presentations we've had on a Wednesday night recently – a good mix of overseas travel, local tramping and even some wild-ice skating in the S Island!

Coming up in May:

2 nd May	Kate Cushing is taking us to South America where she explored Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego
9 th May	Sharron Came takes us to the spectacular Dragon's Teeth in Kahurangi National Park; a WTMC Easter trip. (See the write up by Rob Cross in this newsletter)
16 th May	Jenny Beaumont will talk about some past alpine trips to show what you could get up to later this winter if you sign up for our snowcraft course!
23 rd May	will be confirmed soon – keep an eye on the club's website!
30 th May	Spencer Clubb will take us back to Kahurangi and tell us about his group's adventures over Easter

Please get in touch if you would like to tell us about your trip, or if you know of an interesting speaker we should ask to come and talk to us!

Happy tramping,

WTMC taxi service

Gareth Morton, Transport Officer



In an effort to increase van utilisation I wish to remind the membership that the club is happy for members to pay the transport fare should there be any spare seats in vans. This will suit people who wish to go tramping by themselves or with a friend, rather than on a club trip. A club member may also pay the transport fare if they wish to use the vans like a taxi service, for example, if a club van is heading to Ruapehu lodge a club member may get a lift to Bulls or anywhere en-route subject to seat availability. The return ride would have to be negotiated with the driver to arrange a suitable time for all concerned.

The club trips will always have priority with seats and also on deciding what time they are departing from Wellington or a road-end upon return.

If you are interested in the above suggestion please check the current schedule to see what areas the vans will be going to each weekend and keep an eye on the Forum as I will post details each week when trip numbers and destinations are known to advise of seat availability. You may also email me on transport@wtmc.org.nz.

Why do we need Intentions sheets?

Kate Cushing, Vice President



I thought it might be good to remind everyone why it is important the trip leaders provide the Intentions Sheets for their trips. And why, as punters, we need to provide emergency contact info and medical conditions. It's really not because I want an excuse to send out copious emails!

The Intentions Sheets provide very important information about the skill level and health of the people in the hills, the intended and alternate routes and, very importantly, the PLB the group is carrying.

All of this information will be invaluable to SAR and the police should something happen on your weekend in the hills. In fact, they will want heaps more information but I am resisting making the sheet 6 pages long!

Here's the basics on how the system works:

- I get a volunteer to be available by mobile phone for a weekend and wait for your trip leader's call on Sunday night to say your trip had gotten out safely.
- The contact person only has to do something if either they get a call from SAR (which hasn't ever happened!) or a group is late out.
- WTMC has Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) which, if one is set off, will alert SAR. SAR will call the WTMC mobile phone. The WTMC mobile phone is forwarded to the contact person. Therefore, SAR automatically reaches the person with the Intentions Sheets. SAR determines which PLB has been set off and the contact person shares all of the information on the Intentions Sheet. SAR will then give the contact person advice on next steps and whether to alert family and friends from the information provided in the Intentions Sheet.

See how important the Intentions Sheet is yet?

If a trip is late out the first step is to try to contact the trip leader to make sure they haven't just forgotten to send the "we're out" text. The contact person will consider the skill level of the group and the weather conditions and, if they have concerns, they will call Amanda and Sharron to discuss whether any action should be taken. We may also call our SAR contact for advice. Again, the info on the Intentions Sheets is invaluable!

This is a two way system, so if your family or flatmates are concerned that you haven't arrived home when they expected, they can call the contact person to find out what's happening. Remember to pass this info on to your contact when your trip leader sends it through.

The next time you are leading a trip, (and I know we all have too many forms in our lives) please take the time to put all the valuable info into the Intentions Sheet. And the next time you are a punter, be sure to provide your emergency contact info to your trip leader and

also the club contact person's info to your family/flatmate. That way we can all be in contact if anything less than idyllic happens out in the hills.

On a happy note, the only action our emergency contact person has had in the last two years was sending a van back to Ngawi to pick up some bedraggled punters after a few navigational mishaps! We still made it to Wellington in time to see the RWC final so, disaster averted!

Have fun in the hills and keep making it easy for our emergency contacts.

Trip reports

Holdsworth to Waiohine family tramp

14-15 April 2012, Family trip, Tararua Forest Park (map #1)

Andrew Bichan

Punters: Mike Gilbert (trip leader), Benjamin Lewis, Adam Lancaster, Leo Lancaster and Andrew Bichan (scribe)

Pretty much perfect weather all weekend: overcast for the climb on Saturday clearing during the night to a brilliant, cloudless Sunday. Virtually no wind.



The trip starts with pie and chips for breakfast in Carterton at the Goodness Food Café. Don't be fooled by the humble exterior, the food is good and they threw in a couple of free hot chocolates.

After a bit of car juggling assistance from a local contact, the group leaves Holdsworth road end around 11.30 and heads up the excellent and easily graded track to Rocky Lookout for lunch. Leo (age 6) sets the pace throughout the day, carrying his own good sized pack

and only stopping when bribed with Jelly Beans.

Mt Holdsworth is only visible as a series of spurs disappearing into the cloud but it's not cold, there's no wind and the sun is trying to break through so the going is good.

The drop into Totara creek is interesting with a little bit of clambering required before the trek down the right bank, which always seems to take a little longer than expected. A few

sections of track have been cut out by the creek and there's a number of big trees down. However the track is easy to find and DoC seem to be clearing the worst tree falls.

Reaching the end of Totara Creek there is a glimpse of Totara Flats Hut across the Waiohine River; indicating that we are just minutes away. First though there is the impressive swing-bridge across the main river, a far cry from the cage and cable that one member of the party recalls. It's coming on for 5:00pm, just a little a bit over the DoC estimate of 4 hours. But pretty good going for a 6 year old with his own pack.



Totara Flats Hut is a large, comfortable and well managed facility. Quite a few families clearly think so, judging by the number of younger trampers that are having a brilliant time when we arrive. This includes a number of other WTMC members: the Kendons, Carrs and Connollys who are returning to Holdsworth Road end after a second night at Totara Flats.

There is really no excuse for boring, stodgy or heavy tramping dinners with the help of the club recipe book.

We prepare Auntie Rata's Tomato Mac Cheese. The dried coconut milk works its transformational magic and there is more than enough.

The younger members in the hut have pretty much retired by 8pm and by 10pm the last of the adults switches off the candles and silence descends. The hut is full (about 40) so Adam and Leo sleep in their tent whilst the others bunk down on the deck in preference to the floor inside or pitching a fly.



The hut is good natured chaos in the morning and we are the first of a number of parties to head out onto the sunlit grass flats. With a passing nod towards the location of the old new Totara Flats Hut we potter down the flats and regroup at the end to try to catch a glimpse of Sayer Hut across the river – not a chance.

Benjamin and Andrew had stayed there two weeks previously but no-one was game to get their boots wet this early in the morning to check it out.

Although the track pretty much follows the course of the river there is a fair amount of scrambling up and down old river terraces and across side streams. This is fine for adults but is a little more challenging at age 6. Leo throws himself at every bank and obstacle but having half the stretch and pace means he has to do twice as much and it becomes clear that we will take longer than the DoC time estimate.



Benjamin and Andrew forage ahead to arrange the car shuffle pausing to note a few items of minor botanical interest; the odd stand of Nikau, a single rata flower, and a slightly passed-its-best basket fungus.

When steps, culverts and board walks start appearing on the track we know it's not far to go. The trip culminates with the spectacular Waiohine bridge; enough to say that if you haven't seen it, you should.

The party is out by 3:00pm, giving a tramping time of nearly 6h against a DoC estimate of 3 1/2 hours. Plenty of time to enjoy the bush and the scenery.

So, a highly successful tramp providing an interesting round trip which a six year old managed and with more than enough to keep the adults entertained (but allow more time than the DoC estimates). And to top it off, two prospective club members completed their second club tramp.

Post Script: We noticed that it's a long way along the road before you get cell phone coverage at the Waiohine road end so don't rely on it to call your driver.



Elder Hut trip

9-11 March 2012, Medium tramp, Tararua Forest Park (map #2)

Paul Christoffel

Punters: Rob Cross, Nigel Case, Tommy Rush, Graeme Corin,
David Heffernan, Paul Christoffel (leader)

In November 2010 I did a great trip to Elder Hut in fine sunny weather (yes, this was the Tararuas). The views from the hut were brilliant, and it got the sun until late in the evening. So when the trip was put on the proposed WTMC summer schedule for March 2012, begging for a leader, I took the opportunity to do a repeat visit. This was something of a risk, as the trip would really only work if we got a repeat of my 'fine sunny weather'. And few of you need reminding that summer weather in the early months of 2012 was in short supply. But we were owed some, right?

Elder has only four bunks, so I was keen to restrict numbers. But after two late entries we had a party of six. Fortunately Nigel volunteered to take his tent, as he was in training for an Easter trip, but that meant at least one punter would have to sleep on the floor. Friday was a pleasant evening as we headed up to Field Hut. It seemed to be a pretty fast group for a medium, and we were all there within two hours. The hut was full, mainly due to a host of people who had tried getting to Kime that day but were turned back by strong winds. However, the winds were minimal by Saturday morning when we headed up to the tops.

There's not a lot to say about this day's journey, as nothing went awry to make for an interesting story. The weather was fine and sunny all day, with just a slight cooling breeze as we headed past Kime and up over Hector. The views were great, with the snow-capped Kaikouras seeming to tower over Wellington. Everyone was at Elder hut by about 3 pm.



In the year since I had been there, the mattresses had become covered with mildew. Elder hut is only about four years old and, as has become standard with huts above the bush line, has no heating. Rob explained that all it requires is a party to come in wet during a period of little sun, and the damp will quickly take hold. I'd seen the same phenomenon in Tarn Ridge and Neill Forks huts. We put the mattresses out in the sun for a couple of hours in the hope that would improve things.

By early evening the wind was getting stronger by the minute. We retreated inside, although the keen photographers popped out to get pictures of the sunset. Nigel searched for places to erect his tent, which proved something of a challenge. In fact there are almost no camp sites in the area, which could have made things difficult for us if the hut was occupied. In the end the best (only?) site seemed to be one right by the hut, exposed to



the strong nor-wester. David kindly volunteered to sleep on the floor, on the basis that he'd been a late entrant to the trip, and no-one argued.

The next morning the strong winds were blowing drizzle at us as we headed down towards Renata Hut. The plan was for the two M/F punters, Richard and WeiMin, to pick up the van from Otaki Forks and drive it around to Waikanae. This would enable us to walk out over Kapakapanui rather than going back the way we came. The M/Fs planned to visit the 'Snowy River' hut, rumoured to sit somewhere near the Waiotauru (ie 'Snowy') River.

We were all at Renata for an early lunch around three hours after leaving Elder. The hut was occupied by a solo trumper, who had bivied out most of the night before being woken by the rain and beating a retreat to shelter. We were all pretty

wet, but the walking was oddly enjoyable once we got away from the exposed tops into the bush. Tommy and Rob, the two speedsters, went on ahead. I had told the M/Fs we'd try to be out by 3.30 pm, and wanted to make sure at least two of us made it by then. The trip up Kapakapanui was pleasant, but with a pretty continuous climb from Renata. I walked at the back with Nigel and David. As we neared the bush line, I was thinking that maybe we needed a rest before heading up over the exposed tops. I checked this out with Nigel, who was still coming through the bush, but by then David had disappeared into the mist. He probably wasn't that far ahead, but I figured it would be useless to try and call him back in the blustery wind, and went back to join Nigel in the shelter of the bush. David spent much of the next hour wondering what had happened to us, having waited at the top of Kapakapanui, then leaving just a minute or two before we arrived.

On the way down off the top of Kapa we ran into a party of four trampers consisting of a tall young man in bare feet carrying a large pack, and three young women trailing behind carrying little or nothing, all wearing trainers. Nigel and I chatted very briefly to them, not wanting to seem too nosey, then spent some time speculating as to what exactly they were doing. (Staying at Kapakapanui hut? But no evidence of sleeping bags unless Mr Bare Feet was carrying them all. Doing a day walk? But it was late afternoon and they still needed several hours to complete the round trip). Eventually we caught up with David, who seemed happy to see us. He had no more idea than us as to the plans of Mr BF and his entourage. (On another trip in the Tararuas, Jenny Cossey and I encountered a naked trumper – although I do believe he sported footwear).

At some point the ground changed from damp to dry. There clearly had been no rain here, making the travel down the steep track a lot easier. Eventually we reached a stream at the bottom of the hill, much to our relief as we had all run out of water. After guzzling half the stream and having a quick wash, we headed off towards the road end. To my surprise, this involved several stream crossings. We finally reached the van at 4.20, way later than Rob and Tommy who had got there at 3.30 on the dot. I gather that Richard and WeiMin had

been waiting some time, having had a short walk out after failing to find the alleged Snowy River hut before nightfall the previous day.

On the way back the traffic soon came to a virtual halt. This led to some lively discussions as to the likely cause, and about roading policy in general, provoked largely by the discovery that Graeme's job had something to do with road design. It turned out there had been an accident at Paramata. The traffic eventually cleared, and we were soon home after a very satisfying tramp.

Sayer Hut

31 March – 1 April, Easy tramp, Tararua Forest Park (map #3)

Andrew Bichan

Punters: Tony Gazley (trip leader), Ray Walker, Marie Smith, Margaret Craigie, Ashley Pendree, Yao Liu, Angela Gilbert, Vivienne Lewis, Benjamin Lewis, and Andrew Bichan (scribe)

Weather

Fine start on Saturday, overcast developing with a couple of light showers in the afternoon cloud breaking for a clear Sunday. No wind.

Track conditions

The track appears to be infrequently maintained; so although generally pretty easy to follow, there are quite a few tree falls which haven't been cleared so there is a bit of scrambling. I wouldn't want to do it by torch light.

The trip

The club van comfortably took 11 people to the Mangatarere Valley road end North West of Carterton. We had to park off the road about a kilometre from the end as the concrete base of the ford at the start of the private road was broken (a high wheelbase 4WD would get through fine). Apart from that, the road is well maintained and it is a short walk to the track (easy to find).

We follow a small stream for a couple of hundred metres then cross and climb steadily about 500m; through patchy scrub then into open beech forest and mossy, stunted goblin forest at the ridge top (772m).

The ridge separates the Waiohine River valley from the Wairarapa plains. Older maps show a track leading north along this ridge but it is absent on the more recent series. We pause at the top and note that you can still see where that track runs.

The track follows the ridge top for about half a km south, but before it drops 580m into the valley we stop for lunch and a few (shameless) final text messages. Ray also takes a moment to discover that the goat skull he thought to give Marie a wee fright with, still has some exceedingly smelly brain matter attached. The odour lingers.

We arrive at Sayer Hut after about 4 hours, to meet a party just leaving, including a 7 year old claiming his 30th hut.



Sayer Hut is one for the hut baggers. On the left bank of the Waiohine River, across from the south end of Totara Flats; it's not really on the way anywhere. And there's not much call to get your feet wet to pay a visit, when you're on the way through Totara Flats (although it is a logical hut alternative provided you keep an eye on the river). It is an aging deerstalkers' hut, hidden in a tiny clearing, completely invisible from across the river. It bunks 6 comfortably with floor space for more and plenty of spots for flies/tents amongst the surrounding trees and grass.

We have the place to ourselves and although one or two have found the track conditions a little challenging; everyone is soon pitching flies, cooking dinner, and gathering wood. An old bush saw hanging on the wall is recalled into service, providing more amusement than firewood.



Rather than sleep on the floor; 5 sleep outside including Benjamin who trials a bivvy bag. The next morning as we tidy up and contemplate doing what we did yesterday only in reverse; a handful of people turn up from Totara Flats to bag the hut.

It takes a little longer to retrace our tracks. One of our party has an (ex)crutiate(ing) knee issue but Tony accompanies a small rear guard who make their own speed and seem to enjoy themselves (based on the level of chatter). After about 4½

hours we are back at the van; quickly changed, packed and gone.

In review; Sayer Hut is well worth a visit. It has bags of character (i.e. old, grimy with a few additional residents), is fully functional and appears to be well appreciated by those that stay. Although the climb and track conditions are possibly a little more challenging than your average easy trip; it is two relatively short days. Alternatively, it is an interesting alternative route to Totara Flats rather than Waiohine gorge or Totara stream. Well chosen Tony!

Links

DoC doesn't have a lot to say about it:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/backcountry-huts-by-region/wairarapa/wairarapa/sayers-hut/>

A tale of two tubing trips

17 March; 31 March, fun, Tararua Forest Park (map #4)

Harry Smith

Punters:

17 March: Harry Smith (leader) and Snalet Shalav

31 March Spencer Club (leader), Harry Smith, Sam Thornton

What has happened to tubing in the club? Once it was an extremely popular summer activity. It's a great way to see stretches of river that would otherwise be inaccessible. And of course it's great fun! As Ratty said in the *Wind of the Willows*, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, so much fun as simply messing about on a river in a boat (or a tube).

The Tararuas are full of gorges that make excellent tubing trips. One of my very first trips with the club was a day tubing trip down the Hutt Gorge from Kaitoke to Te Marua, and it attracted a whole busload of punters. And I don't mean a piddling little 20 or 24-seater like the club's former bus, the Orient Express – I mean one of the large 40 or 42-seater Runciman buses that the club used to use for transport back in the days before we first bought our own vehicle (the late, lamented truck, The Duchess). In those days the Hutt Gorge used to appear on the trip schedule most summers. Now tubing seems to have died out to such an extent that I can't remember when the club last did this trip – it must be years ago, despite the fact that it's one of the best tubing trips in the Wellington region and, unlike most river trips, you can drive right to the start of it. Another popular trip was the Tauherenikau Gorge, from Smith's Creek out to the Wairarapa. This does involve a walk in up the Puffer and over the saddle to Smith's Creek, but it's no more than a couple of hours on an easy track, and when you reach the Tauherenikau you spend the rest of the day on the river. I've done both the Hutt Gorge and the Tauherenikau Gorge three times over the years. The last time I can think of that the club did the Tauherenikau Gorge was a trip 5 or 6 years ago now led by Ally Clark (a real water rat if ever there was one). It's completely straightforward with some fun rapids and there's a nice boulder beach about halfway down on the true left that catches the sun and makes a perfect lunch spot.



1989 Pelorous - Harry Floating

Every Anniversary Weekend in January the club would run a tubing trip on the Pelorus River in Marlborough. This must surely be one of the best tubing rivers in the country. You would spend the first day walking in over the ranges from Nelson, and then two superb days tubing out to Pelorus Bridge on the Picton-Nelson highway. There are also some superb tramping trips you can do in the same area, such as up the old Dun Mountain Railway behind Nelson to Dun Mountain, a geologically interesting area of ultra-mafic rock, similar to the Red Hills a bit further south, with superb views from the summit. From Dun Mountain you can drop down to and follow the track out down the river. I only ever tubed the Pelorus once, in 1989, but BJ (Brian Johnson), surely the club's foremost water rat, must have done it a dozen times!

BJ was on the trip the time I did it (of course!), along with such stalwarts of the club at the time as Eric Evans (a former Chief Guide and our new Ruapehu Lodge Booking Officer) and Anita Catchpole (another former Chief Guide). Brian Goodwin was also there, plus a German couple called Peter and Sally, and one or two others. I seem to remember Julie Catchpole and Murray McRae were also there that weekend, although I think they must have been on one of the tramping trips rather than the tubing trip. I remember Eric's tube exploded under him on the last day – he was left with nothing but a piece of shredded rubber and had to walk out! And earlier in the trip there was one rapid where several people's tubes got punctures, one after another in succession – there must have been a strategically placed sharp rock lying in wait just below the surface! This is a great trip – why don't we do it again? Anniversary weekend next year – Amanda, are you listening?! I'd be keen to do it again and I'm sure there must be a few other river rats out there who would be interested in going as well.



Harry BJ Anita Eric Peter Sally Pelorus 1989 (photo Brian Goodwin)



BJ and Harry - Pelorus River 1989 (photo Brian Goodwin)

Recently I've done two easy day tubing trips on rivers in the Tararuas. In mid-March I led a trip on the Waiohine River down from Walls Whare (or what used to be Walls Whare before this club, in its wisdom, decided to pull it down). The original plan was to get there by train and bike, and at one stage I had four other people signed up, but for various reasons it ended up being just two of us, myself and Snaiet Shalav, and we went over in Snaiet's car. We parked at the Waiohine Shelter and walked for half an hour up to the end of the road. Then it was into the river for a superb float down the gorge. "This is the life!" I said to Snaiet as we bobbed our way leisurely down the first few rapids, then floated slowly down the following flat stretch of water in the sunshine. Then on the very next rapid I lost



Waiohine Gorge



Snaiet. Waiohine Gorge

control, slammed into the rock wall at the bottom of the rapid, and came off into the deep pool! But there was no harm done and I just paddled to shore and hopped back on again. That was the only time either of us came off. Maybe one of the reasons why tubing activity seems to have almost died out is because of the paranoia over safety and the totally inflated and misconceived notions of "risk" that seem to be associated with any activities in the outdoors these days. In the old days people just went and did trips; a bit of common sense and experience and tramping nous would see you though. These days you almost seem to have to fill out a detailed safety plan in triplicate and swath yourself in polystyrene padding from head to toe before you're allowed into the outdoors.

After about an hour and a quarter we came to the track leading out of the river and back up to the Shelter and the waiting car. We did have the option of continuing a bit further – there are two other possible exit points a bit further down – but we decided to get out here. Further down, the river becomes wider and more sluggish and you have to paddle more,

and besides I was getting cold! (Snaiet had a wet-suit top but I just had a few layers of polypro.) So we clambered out up the track and dried out in the sun before heading home. It had been a superb little day trip, although I'm still keen to do it the way I originally intended sometime: by train and bike. It's about an hour's bike ride from Matarawa railway station and the trains work out perfectly with about three-quarters of an hour to spare. Maybe next year when summer rolls around again!

A couple of weeks later I did another day trip on the Ruamahanga led by Spencer Clubb. There were three of us, Spencer, myself, and Sam Thornton, and we went over in Spencer's car. I took a tube, Spencer took a fancy little one-man inflatable Canadian raft, and Sam just took a wetsuit! We walked in up the sidle track above the river for about three hours, then dropped down the short track into the river just before Cleft Creek. Here we stopped for lunch and I inflated my tube (with a bit of help from Spencer and Sam - it's damn hard work pumping up a big truck tube with a little bike pump!). Then it was off down the river. To begin with the river was easy travel with boulder banks and gravel beaches. Spencer and Sam just walked while I tubed down, stopping every now and then to wait for them to catch up. After about an hour or so it closed in and become more gorgy with deep pools. Here Spencer inflated his raft and Sam donned his wetsuit. By this stage I was beginning to shiver as I stood around waiting – the water was freezing, it was a cloudy day, and it was really a bit late in the year to be doing river trips, especially since, unlike the other two, I didn't have a wetsuit!. I put on every last layer of polypro I had, including my hat! Then it was back into the river for a superb section of gorge. I bobbed down on my tube, Spencer cruised down on his sleek little raft, and Sam just walked and swam in his wetsuit!

Eventually the river opened out again and we could get out and walk down the shingle flats, occasionally hopping back in to shoot a few of the more fun-looking rapids. Finally after about four hours on the river it was time to climb out and back to the waiting car. It had been an excellent day trip on a section of river I had never done before.

Sawcut Gorge

20-22 April 2012, Easy tramp, Inland Kaikouras (map #5)

Mike Phethean

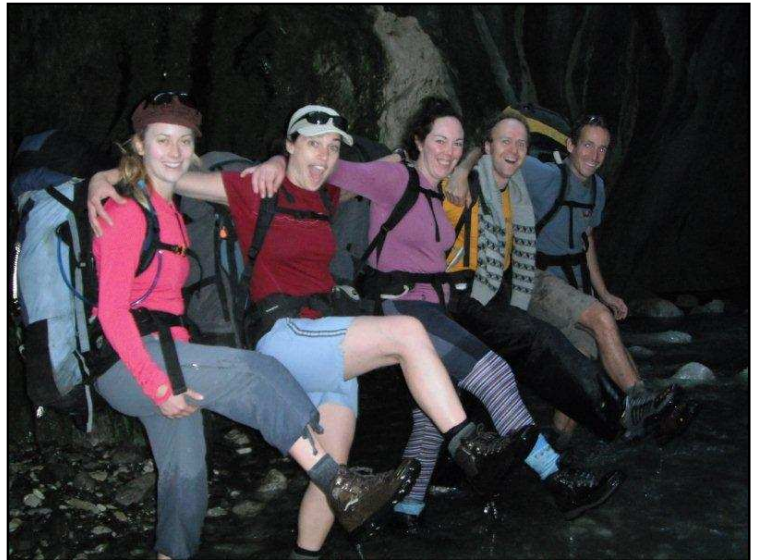
Punters: Katy Glenie (leader), Sarah Young, Ashley Pendree, Paula Vincent, John Price, Mike Phethean

It is always difficult to write an article when the newsletter editor was actually on the trip. She will firstly change the text so that the truth is actually recorded and secondly will also be suspicious of any of my future articles.

I had wanted to go to Sawcut gorge for a long time. Katy co opted me into helping her with her first trip as leader. So this was a great chance to have a wander through the wonder.

We had whittled down the punters to six by the time we met on Friday night for the ferry. Luckily they all had their jobs allocated to them as below (from left to right in photo):

Chief Navigator – Ashley Pendree
Chief Leader person – Katy Glenie
Chief Instructional Officer – Sarah Young
Chief Sitting Bull – John Price
Chief Insubordinate – Me!
Botany Specialist (and Chief Photo Taker) – Paula Vincent



We arrived in Picton and with no rush to get to a road end for an early start we settled into a nice cozy back packers.

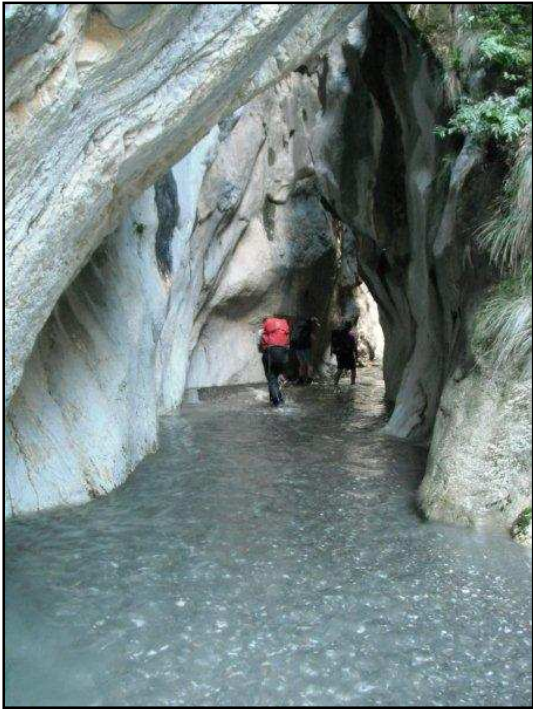
Morning came, and with it the chance to get some good coffee and the papers, there really is something to be said for easy tramping.

Still we all left at the anointed time of 9am and drove down SH1 to just south of Ward where we turned up the Waima Valley. As you park your vehicle in the farmers front yard (thanks for the access again) we stopped for a yarn with him before setting off at 11am.

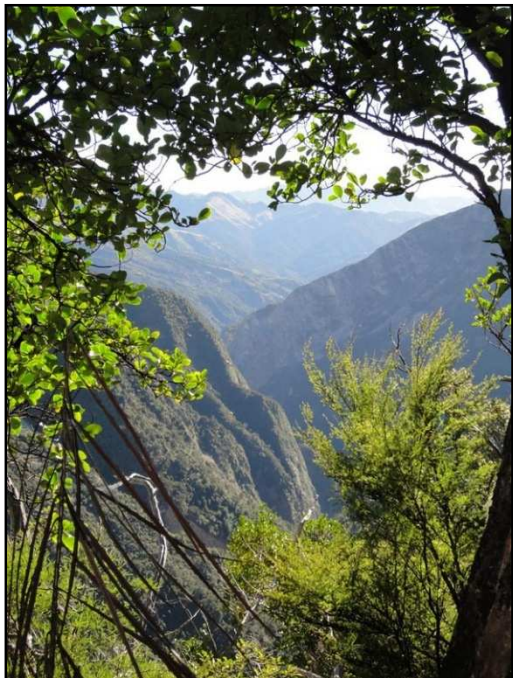
The route follows the old homestead 4 WD track to the river and once feet are wet just follows the river the whole way. As an introduction to river travel this trip is ideal for gaining confidence in crossing the stream and selecting a route. It was good to see the more novice trampers go from nervous doubting looks to beams of sunshine.

Exploration was helped by the chief instructional officer deciding to spend the afternoon in the challenge of not using any of the sidle paths.

We stopped for lunch in the last of the sunshine just before the turn off to isolation creek. As we progressively headed up stream, the side walls got taller and closer in.



The high light of saw cut gorge is the knife cut section. Here the stream is gentle but the walls close in to about 3 to 4 m across rising above you about 100m they twist a bit forming an effective roof and blocking the sunlight. It only lasts about 100m horizontal but is well worth the visit. You are definitely going into Indiana Jones territory here!



The walk up the gorge continues to be spectacular with large rock faces looming on one side or another for another hour or so of walking. Eventually a fork is reached and on a bench above the stream is Isolation hut our stop for the night. Sarah opts for the tent and the rest of us grab a bunk.

A bit of lazing around followed by a good Thai curry takes us into the night time and soon everyone falls asleep.

In the morning we went for a bit of an explore up to the Brian Boru saddle and introduced the group to hook grass. (We will save Spaniard for another day.) We stopped at a good view spot, overlooking Isolation hill and the valley below.

Then it was back to the hut and pack our bags. We retraced our steps down the river moving more quickly with new founded boulder hopping confidence. The fantails were more numerous than the day before urging us along and we made good time allowing us to have a quick swim.

An important chat to the farmer got us a very nice place for coffee on the way home at the East Coast Inn (state highway 1, just south of Ward). Soon we were on the ferry dozing off before arriving back home in Wellington.

Kahurangi Tablelands 2012

5-9 April 2012, Medium tramp, Kahurangi National Park (map #6)

Nigel Case

Punters: Spencer Clubb (leader), Paula Vincent, Kevin Cole,
Dirk Naish, Simon McAuliffe, Rowena Johnstone

Seven keen folk explored Kahurangi Tablelands for four days in exceptionally fine weather and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

We arrived at the road end, where we dossed for the night in the shelter, around 12:30am Friday morning, after a three hour ferry crossing and about a three hour drive. Another WTMC trip group arrived soon after us and camped in the car park.

Day 1: We roused in the morning to a gorgeous day and headed soon after 8:00am for Mount Arthur. Conditions were faultless: clear sky, breathless and a dry track underfoot. First stop was Mount Arthur Hut where we stopped only briefly. The track to this point passed amongst typical beech forest flora punctuated by the occasional mountain Naenae, (which always remind me of Dr Seuss stories). The track from here abruptly changed to open grassland, which accompanied us for much of the day.



Mount Arthur

Packs were dropped at Gordon's Pyramid junction for us to ascend Mount Arthur less burdened. Around late morning we arrived at a bare rounded summit that consisted mostly of fragmented limestone. There was a low rock drywall made to offer shelter and largely superfluous on this glorious day. The views from the summit were remarkable, with not a cloud in the sky they felt near limitless. We lunched back at the junction before pushing on for Salisbury Lodge via Gordon's Pyramid. The cool alpine air was a welcome accompaniment to the unhindered sunlight.

Coming down from Gordon's Pyramid we passed through some grass flatland. The track for a short duration became quite sandy. Sundew plants and pixie cup lichen were to be seen trackside. After stopping to take a few photo's I found myself separated from the rest of the group and hurried to catch up only to encounter an intersection in the path and no sign of the party. I wasn't particularly concerned, as I knew I was within a short distance of the hut. I did however head the wrong way and was amused to encounter some primary school aged kids who put me right. Nice one. Our esteemed leader was less amused. We arrived at Salisbury Lodge around 5:30pm. This was a large Hut, sleeping approximately 22 in bunks. For this night the lodge exceeded capacity and 4 of our party tented. There were several other tents in use also, meaning that good tent site ground became scarce and a healthy discussion ensued regarding the merits of camping on the area designated for helicopters. The conclusion of which is likely not fit for publication. With tents pitched efforts were steered towards our evening meal. Simon and Rowena had other ideas however and with some small effort erected a pair of HF radios and proceeded to pursue prearranged sched.'s, (not sheds, which makes no sense at all). All of the meals were great (all WTMC recipes) cheers Spence. After protests to the contrary we managed to polish off for pud the good part of two ginger loafs topped with custard, yum. I concluded my day with Spencer with some moonlit evening photography and later retired for the evening very satisfied with the day.

Day 2: Discussions the night previous had us revise our general route; the objective to tramp the length of the Cobb valley and summit Mt Cobb was forsaken in lieu of giving us a more conservative fourth day, the upside being that we had more opportunity for side trips. This day therefore started around 8:00am with a short loop walk to the Sphinx Valley Cave and surrounding sinkholes. Walking back across the grasslands was spectacular with the morning light glinting off of the frost endowed tussocks. We spread out a bit as some of us took to capturing the moment in pixels and regrouped again at the mouth of the short Sphinx Valley where we mused the loss of the sphinx head from the rock formation. It was pretty cold in the shade and I soon regretted not bringing a warm top. Some rock clambering became necessary to gain access to the valley, many of the rocks were slippery with ice and I gained first hand appreciation as to the hazard this presents. Thanks to Rowena, whose firm grasp prevented a larger fall.



Cave amusement



Body contortioning

Four of us gained access to the cave mouth, which we explored via camera flash as would you believe it nobody thought to bring a torch. Much amusement was had, which upon reflection may not have occurred had we bought torches. I am sure there is a moral to this story and am hopeful that some reader will work this out and be kind enough to share it. Our walk continued around many large sinkholes, which were great to behold. There was one moment when our silhouette was cast nicely across a sinkhole to its other side and much body contortioning ensued as we endeavoured to represent various acronyms. ☺.

Back at the Lodge, at about 10:00am, we quickly packed up our now dry tents and headed off to Balloon Hut, where we stopped only briefly for a snack and to hydrate. There was a sole fellow tramper here, who was enjoying the peace and quiet and the magnificent outlook over the tablelands. We left him to it and continued up to Lake Peel. Here we deigned to travel the marked track in preference for circumnavigating the lake and visiting the summit of Mount Peel. This was a

great choice as there was much to be seen and experienced. The sunlight reflected off the Lake as we passed south of it and it sparkled spectacularly. So much so that I surmised that it may be due to silica particles suspended in the water. A theory disproved later when viewed from the North.

The climb to and the summit were very much like Mt Arthur, with a rounded ridge populated mostly with limestone shards broken only by the occasional band of alpine plants working together to resist the effects of erosion. At the summit we encountered a delightful wind vane clearly constructed from found objects – bicycle parts and a supermarket trolley. The route along the North of the lake was punctuated by large rock outcrops, the largest of which had our party split in two as we sought the easiest way around. Upon regrouping we suffered our only casualty of the trip: Paula's boots were losing their soles (souls). With a liberal application of strapping tape by Dirk and Rowena they were given a new lease of life. Great stuff.



Wind vane constructed from found objects

Descending down into the Cobb Valley and back into beech forest the path seemed to steer to the East for an excessively long time before finally turning back. We arrived at the valley floor with the late afternoon sun and concluded the days walk with a rather dull ½km trek along a metal road to Trilobite Hut, arriving, I am told, at 5:32pm. With room in the hut to spare, 4 of us still elected to tent. The day wound down with another grand meal listening to the radio wave junkies and dining on Easter eggs and chips. Ta very much folks for all the treats.

Day 3: Started brass monkey cold. Frost covered everything outside, including tents and the edge of my boot that had poked beyond. Even the resident weka was single foot standing to offer his other foot relief from the cold. At about 8:15am after a quick breakfast we abandoned our gear to the camp and spent the morning walking up to a decrepit Chaffeys Hut. The walk proceeded through a mix of alternating open meadows and beech forest fragments with each consecutive meadow displaying less frost as the day warmed. The track followed the Cobb river up valley at a very gentle and even gradient and we arrived at the hut in good time. The hut was great to see and reminded me of a Canadian architect and his habit of referring to old buildings as elders.

Chaffeys Hut looked positively geriatric: weatherboards exhibited a generous peel back exposing framing at advanced stages of decay. The floor undulated as the framing sagged either side of the rocks that were used as foundations. To the rear an aged fireplace with holes banked on the outside using stacked river stones and with a well rusted and patched flue held in place with fencing wire. Tired indeed. A little beyond was a pile of building materials, which we learned were to be used to restore the hut, though I doubted that any of the existing could be saved. Investigation of the interior was not possible as we disturbed a young hippie couple, who had taken up residence in spite of the huts worn condition, and who were in the region for some 'Rainbow Festival'.



Chaffeys Hut

Returning once again to Trylobite at about 11:00am we packed our now dry tents and gear, had some kai, and braved the road again in search for the alternate route back out of the valley. Having passed during the mornings walk several reasonable swimming holes I was reluctant to pass up a dip before leaving the river. I found a suitable spot and bathed briefly in very fresh water in a spot just shy of the reservoir. Not to be outdone Simon,

Kevin, Spencer and Paula followed suit with Paula impressively donning a bikini for the occasion. That no one dallied is a fair indication that the water was friggin' cold.

Nicely cooled we resumed our tramp, not far from the swimming spot we left the road for the Bullock track. This turned out to be the steepest part of the four day tramp and for 30 minutes we did less talk and more grunt up a quick 200m climb. This was followed by a pleasant and gentle descent through beech forest. For a period this part of the track was well littered with beech tree debris, and for a while the sound of twigs crunching underfoot accompanied each step. This in contrast to the delightful call of a bellbird which joined us for most of the journey to Lower Junction where, after a brief deliberation regarding the nights sleeping options, we elected to head up to Asbestos Cottage.



Asbestos Cottage

My mind now turned to the health hazards of asbestos and whether there should be any need for concern, (which transpired to be a needless concern according to hut literature). Certainly there were moments on the track where the rock formations looked more fibrous and crumbly and I was prepared to accept that this might be natural asbestos, (equally likely though just another fallacy of my imagination). We arrived at Asbestos Cottage around 4:15pm. From the exterior this looked a very simple board and batten hut with a couple of small windows looking eastward over the valley. Interestingly the timber siding seemed to have been conditioned by

charring, a practice which I had believed exclusive to traditional Japanese construction. Inside we were treated to an array of memorabilia from the Chaffey's time and the mining era. This was greatly enjoyed by all and the knowledge of lives lived there in time gone by added much to the atmosphere of our brief stay there.

As per previous nights Simon and Rowena set to erecting their radio equipment and I enjoyed listening to them as they talked to friends and strangers alike over the air. This evening they managed to speak with some folks in the Cook Islands. Brilliant. The evening was relatively balmy and once the food was cooked we dined outside to another excellent WTMC meal.

I must say with the windows being so tiny it was quite dark in the cottage even when we arrived at 4:30pm. This impressed upon me how grim it would have been living here through the winter months. As Mr Dagg would say: "We don't know how lucky we are!". Nice one. Adjacent to the cottage clearing and under some tree cover was a nice little tent site which Kevin and I took full advantage of. Another great day.

Day 4: We woke to a mild morning, no frost on the tent and our trip leaders esteemed voice rousing us to action, (lest we be late). With the road end to be attained before 1:00pm we found ourselves bagged up and on the track by 7:30am. Yawn. Lucky we had

been getting early nights. We retraced our steps back down to Lower Junction and then continued where we had left off the previous day for Upper Junction and then the Gridiron Rock Shelters. The walking was easy, broken only by a couple of swing bridge crossings over some nice looking streams. The rock shelters looked great and if Asbestos Cottage hadn't been so good I would have been sad that we hadn't stayed here. As it was it was certainly a nice spot to stop for a moment.

We stopped again soon after to check out the Upper Gridiron Hut, which was also very cool, a little hut, with a couple of bunks, constructed within the wedge under an overhanging rock. Outside its own little terrace complete with swinging bed/seat and fire pit. About the only detraction, other than I suppose the risk of not wanting to leave, were the profusion of stinging nettles on the path side nearby. Back on the track we were fortunate to spy a pair of Whio in the river below us. If we had had more time I would have been happy to stay a while and watch them. As it was we needed to be moving on which was probably the best for them.



Upper Gridiron Hut

As we neared our objective we encountered twice in short succession reasonably large moths being attacked by much smaller single wasps. In both instances the wasps had attached themselves to the front of the moth and were attacking the moth just under its head. We were unsure why this was happening but felt that this didn't bode well for our native moths, who appeared defenceless from this kind of attack. This added to my sense of melancholy felt as our great trip drew to an end. We had a brief stop at Flora Hut and I got a quick peak at the pretty river nearby before arriving at road end around 12:30pm. We lunched by the van, ever alert for foraging weka, while we changed for the journey home. And thus ended a very enjoyable tramp. Cheers guys, I look forward to future tramps with each and any of you.

Chasing the Dragon

Easter 2012, Fit tramp, Kahurangi National Park (map #7)

Rob Cross

Punters: Sharron Came (leader), Dmitry Alkhimov, Rob Cross,
David Jewell, Richard Lardner, Kurt Mullis, Michael Phethean, Amanda Wells

Contemplating our wounds during lunch half way through the scrub bash back to the tops of the Douglas Range, someone remarked that this was like childbirth: we'd forget the pain and do it all again.

That certainly rang true for three of us. Sharron, who'd laboured here with David and me five years before, had organised the trip, and I was among the first to put my hand up. Indeed we had forgotten the pain, because we remembered the Dragon's Teeth. The astonishing landscape between the Aorere and Cobb valleys of North West Nelson is certainly unforgettable. The country's oldest rock is folded, faulted, glaciated and eroded through crazily dissected ranges as though the raw material made Nature pull out the stops.

Eight of us were drawn to explore the resulting wonders, just as surveyors, prospectors, geologists and palaeontologists have been drawn since the start of European settlement. We assembled in Takaka and shuttled to the start of the Heaphy Track. A discreet veil must be drawn over where we stayed. Besides, suggesting that Brown Hut was empty at Easter, that eight people turned up at dusk without booking, took over the place, and left at dawn without Great Walking sounds preposterous.

An hour up the Heaphy a track peeled off to Shakespeare Flat. We followed, and having crossed the Aorere River on a perfect Good Friday morning, we rock-hopped upstream for 3 kilometres.



Heading up the Aorere looking for our spur

Sharron and DJ had planned a novel route up a spur to a nameless highpoint in the vicinity of Mt Olympus. A mate at the local DoC office had told them it was 'do-able', meaning that 'people had definitely done it'. Though they didn't say who, when or why, or indeed whether they had enjoyed it, we knew better than to fuss over trifles, and trusted them implicitly.

Our first attempt to bash onto the spur ended at a wall of kiekie. Our second was successful. A sharp blade led up, and above the lush lower third the beech opened out.

Though the travel was good it was hot and a 1200m climb to the bushline. We had lunch half-way, and took another long break to enjoy the views we finally earned of the Aorere Valley, the Goulard Range and the ancient route Heaphy followed west.

We topped out at 1510m a few kilometres south of Mt Olympus. No Greek gods were there though it was an immortal sort of day, fine and clear without a breath, and it wasn't hard to believe you were in their realm, heading north along the range with everything beneath. First camp was on the ridge leading to Mt Trident. The setting was majestic, with the Dragon's Teeth set in line before and above us, looking more like a single grey adze jutting at an angle. But there was no water. Dirk and Sharron went to find a stream and Kurt, who started the tramp with deep cuts to one foot, struggled back heroically with a pack full of bottles and bladders.

During dinner, a full moon rose as the sun set.

People may well have done it, but there was no sign the next morning bashing toward Trident. Bare outcrops among the dracophyllum and scrubby beech afforded views across to the more conventional route we took last time, along the Lead Hills. The ridge narrowed to pinnacles that gave pause for thought, but proved negotiable, and the intimidating southern flanks of Trident were sidled, bringing us to a saddle where we dropped our packs and scaled the 1490m peak.



Sharron and the Dragon's Teeth from the top of Trident

The best views of the Dragon's Teeth were from here. Sharron and David had provided the satisfaction of taking an adventurous route and succeeding. We owed our elation to them.



Team photo high above Adelaide Tarn. DJ, Dmitry, Rob, Sharron, Mike, Kurt, Richard and Amanda

So it was down from that height to the hut at Adelaide Tarn, rated by some as the most beautiful place in the park, where you swear you'll return some day and linger. After taking on water we followed the route up to a saddle where the decision is made whether to inspect the Dragon's dentition or avoid it by heading down into the head of the Anatoki River. Like most without rope, we descended.

A cryptic cairned route weaved among the headwaters' branches. After the river formed and plunged into a gorge, we climbed away on the true right and bashed around the toe of an imposing spur leading up to Anatoki Peak. The vertical bluffs on one side are joined to climbable ones on the other, interspersed with vegetation ranked just below leatherwood for piercing spikes and dermabrasion.

An old snowfoam strapped to Dmitry's pack was gradually shredded, marking our route with blue crumbs.



Time for a munch, a brew and to soak up the last of the sunshine. Everyone had their own Tarn ensuite at this campsite.

We were all bleeding at lunchtime, which is where this story started, half way up to a camp site perched above the valley. There aren't many places to pitch tents worth shedding blood for, but this was one: small tarns set in steps on the shoulder of a ridge that is a perfect viewing platform for the surrounding ranges. Here, the Dragon breathes down your neck, with teeth bared above sheer jaws of volcano clastic rock.

From the tarns we could contemplate the route ahead to the Drunken Sailors, gaze across

the Anatoki Valley at the Needle, and see all the way out to Golden Bay through a northerly chink.

And we had arrived early enough for contemplation. We brewed up and lazed around, comparing scratches, until Dmitry announced he was off to collect firewood.

Dinner was served and we were starting to worry when Dmitry staggered back with an armload of wood of Siberian proportions. Pyromania is normally frowned upon, but there are those among us deeply imprinted with the primal urge to make the fire on which our survival once depended, and for whom tramping affords liberating opportunities that benefit others.



Dmitry went back down into the bush to gather firewood

So we encouraged him. The ensuing blaze kept the hard core up 'til 8.30, and could be seen from Motueka.

Once again we decamped soon after sunrise. Traversing beneath the jagged slabs of the Douglas Range was slow going last time in mist and drizzle, but cruisy on a calm still morning, and we assembled to rest on a saddle beneath the Drunken Sailors with time up our sleeves.

A pleasant meander down to Lonely Lake, then back onto the ease of a formed track, albeit uphill to regain the ridge beyond the Sailors and complete the traverse to the Cobb. Tops travel doesn't get much better than that Sunday afternoon. Easy, with splendours of landscape everywhere you looked, and intriguing changes in vegetation and geology. Mike pointed out rich iron ore on the eroded slopes, and said for no-one to tell Gerry Brownlie. The route sidles Kakapo Peak (1783m). Only Kurt had the energy to drop his pack and climb the extra 300m.



Sharron and Kurt and Waingaro Peak, Peel Range behind

On completing the traverse by late afternoon, we had the option of dropping to Fenella Hut in the Cobb Valley or camping in a magical snow grassed basin below Waingaro Peak. Those of us who knew the place swayed the doubters, and we were soon lying around our tents as the sun set. The basin is a long, glaciated scoop out of the apex of a ridge, fringed with banks of moraine and gnarled beech draped in blue-grey moss. A massive cairn stands at one end like a Buddhist stupa, appropriate to the place.

There was a hearth and plenty of wood, so Dmitry lit a fire again. Having studied thermodynamics, he informed us that the temperature at the core was 350 degrees C. But at 1350m it fell fast at our backs, and we soon retired.

Monday brought a hard frost and an early start. People were just starting to stir down at Fenella Hut, overflowing as we guessed it would be, so we breezed through and out down the valley, arriving at the road end with hours to spare.

We had come a long way in four days. Unpacking in the heat outside Trilobite Hut, named after a fossil, we started feeling a little Cretaceous. Kurt's feet resembled brachiopods, I was moving like a nautiloid, and Sharron, infuriated by a plague of bumble bees and wasps, started screaming like a troglodyte.

After a day or so, I longed to go again.

Rocking rock shelter

Easter 2012, Easy, Tablelands Kahurangi National Park (map #8)

Ian Harrison

Punters: Barbara Keenan, Craig Bellhouse, Ian Harrison, Illona Keenan,
Jo Fink, Kate Cushing, Megan Banks, Yukari Kaihori

This Easter trip promises to be a sort of easy-going natural history expedition. That's what Illona's billing suggests: moa bones, caves, an asbestos mine, a historic hut, rock shelters as well as Kahurangi's flora and fauna, plus gourmet dining every night.

We arrive late at Flora Saddle car park on the Thursday night and pitch flies in the cool clear night. The next morning weka snuffling around the camp wake us; one cheeky bird almost manages to run off with Craig's head torch. After breakfast we set off to Asbestos Cottage. It's very pleasant walking especially after Flora Saddle when it's all downhill past Flora Hut to Grid Iron rock shelter where we have lunch. We scope out the route to a cave that Illona read about that's meant to have moa bones in it. We don't have too much spare time so decide to return tomorrow and continue on to Asbestos Cottage.



Asbestos Cottage

Happily Asbestos Cottage is not, as the name suggests, made of asbestos. It gets its name from the asbestos mine which is about half an hour's walk away. The cottage was home to Annie Fox and Henry Chaffey who lived here for nearly 40 years from 1914. Annie had eloped with Henry to escape an abusive husband. When her husband finally died about 18 years later she

and Henry married at the cottage. Coincidentally we are here the day after their 80th wedding anniversary! We say happy anniversary to Annie and Henry and start dinner with cheese and cracker hors d'oeuvres, soon followed by the main course of laksa, tofu and veges with soba noodles.

Barbara and Yukari have secured bunks in the cottage but the rest of us are happy to sleep under flies as there looks to be no chance of rain.

The next morning is as fine as the first. Not a cloud in the sky. Tiring of breathing nothing but fresh air we head off to the asbestos mine. The mine was worked between 1940 and 1964, although asbestos had been extracted from the area in small amounts before then. You may be interested in a small mineralogical aside at this point: Asbestos is the



Barbara and Yukari



Asbestos mine

name for a family of silicates all of which have a very long thin crystal structure. There are six types of asbestos; the type here (chrysotile) is the least dangerous as the crystal fibres aren't as fine as the others and don't get airborne easily. Also it's only when asbestos is processed and refined that the trouble really begins. The most dangerous type is blue asbestos (or crocidolite) because it is made up of extremely fine fibrils that can lodge in the lungs. Asbestos is (or was) an extremely useful product. A small selection of things it was used for are: building insulation and cladding, fire

resistant theatre curtains, car brake pads, suture thread for use by heart surgeons, cigarette filters (want lung cancer and just can't wait??), an ingredient in crayons and as artificial snow for Christmas decorations. Damn.

The mine today is a quarried area of soft green ultramafic rocks. There's not much evidence of the operation aside from that though. It's not hard to find asbestos fibres in the rock if you have a bit of a fossick. Having seen enough we return to Asbestos Cottage. There's talk of making some scones but I suggest that it would be wrong to light a fire on such a warm day. Unexpectedly people listen to me so the scone baking is postponed (oops sorry), so we shoulder our packs and head back to Upper Junction. It's noon by the time we arrive and so we stop for lunch. As some sort of karmic offset for the asbestos mine a pair of whio in the river provide some post-lunch entertainment.

By this stage everyone is feeling very National Geographic so we go in search of Illona's diligently researched moa cave. The route to the cave starts beside Hodge Creek on the track between Gridiron rock shelter and Upper Junction, and here we drop our packs. It's a steep bush bash but there's a marked trap or bait line that weaves up through the beech



trees and marble tomos and outcrops. With the help of a GPS we find a cave in approximately the right spot. Barbara hasn't got any troglodytic tendencies so waits outside poised to raise the alarm if we don't return, but the rest of us are in there like rats up a drainpipe. It's cool. I mean the air is cool but the place is also cool. It's nice and spacious and goes on for some distance. Moa bones (already neatly lined up... we certainly aren't the first to go in here although it feels like it) are discovered not far from the entrance. There are also quite a few

lovely cave weta hanging out on the roof, one of which jumps on Megan. The going is easy and it's quite exciting so we keep on walking. After 15 minutes of slow exploration we come to another entrance to the cave; much larger than the one we entered by. We turn

around and slowly retrace our steps nurturing our inner spelunker as finally we end up where we entered and re-join Barbara.

Unfortunately Craig tweaks his knee on the descent back to the main track. He's still mobile and the track to Salisbury is excellent so although sore he can continue. We're not too sure where we're going to camp tonight, but aim for Dry Rock Shelter which is about 1km short of Salisbury Lodge. We'll also assess Growler Rock Shelter which is on the way only 1km from where we are now. Growler Rock Shelter turns out to be very small and immediately beside the track. An ideal place for a DOC toll booth, but not for us.



Dry Rock Shelter

We arrive at Dry Rock Shelter in good time. There's space to sleep about a dozen including on a wooden platform built under the shelter as well as a large flat area of compacted dirt. A family of three arrive at the same time but I think they're put off by our numbers and leave for Salisbury. Then a couple of guys in their 20s turn up. They seem a bit displeased by our presence, which is somewhat concerning as one of them is carrying samurai sword. It's one of the more impractical bits of tramping equipment I've seen but I guess not as bad

as carrying a parking meter... or a Stairmaster maybe. Anyway head chef Illona with help from a couple of sous chefs cooks another fantastic meal of smoked salmon with shiitake mushrooms and about five cubic metres of mashed spud. The two guys have warmed up a bit and fears of a samurai bloodbath have eased by the time we hit the sack.



Illona cooking scones

I get up early in the morning hoping to get some good photos in the dawn light. It's misty and the light isn't great and I should have stayed in bed, but that's the way it goes. Eventually everyone is up and the sun burns off the mist to reveal another fantastic day. We've got an epic easy walk this morning; all of about 1km. It takes half an hour to get to Salisbury Lodge. All of last night's occupants have left or are leaving and the fire they made in the woodburner has burnt down to embers ideal for scone baking. Within minutes Illona has made a batch of scones in a frying pan found in the hut. The fire is hotter than expected and they burn underneath, but a bit of scone surgery fixes that. We eat them with butter and jam. Easy tramping at its best!

Illona, Kate, Jo and Yukari go for a day walk up to Gordan's Pyramid. The rest of us laze around the hut. Eventually Megan and I go for a short walk on the Sphinx Valley track. I'm keen to look in Sphinx Cave which is at the base of Mt Arthur and has a stream flowing into it. I'd

been in it about 25 years ago and at that time got a reasonable distance in, but this time some flood debris had blocked the way not far in and it looked muddy and uninviting. Mt Arthur alone has over 72km of surveyed caves under it. I've only been in one lengthy cave and that was on a school camp at Rotoiti. Our 'outdoor instructor' took us down a cave near Mt Owen. I remember our safety briefing was being told to wear a beanie as protection in case we hit our heads on the rock. It was great and only one of my classmates nearly died. Sometimes I wish I'd got into caving but I'm too old and soft now.

Back at the hut pasta with sundried tomato sauce and parmesan is on tonight's menu. If that's not enough Illona makes some Easter nests for dessert (cupcakes containing a melted 62% cocoa Whittakers chocolate and golden syrup mix topped with chocolate eggs). Full of cocoa and sugar we go to bed with wide staring eyes.

The last morning dawns brilliantly fine yet again. Craig leaves for Flora Saddle before us as he's concerned if his knee really packs up he could delay us getting out in time for the ferry, but he ends up easily beating us back to the van. The walk out is idyllic and I can't believe how good the weather has been (I must be too used to the Tararuas). We stop for lunch in Motueka before continuing to Picton where we arrive in plenty of time for the ferry. It has been one of the most interesting and fun trips I've done. Thanks to Illona for organising everything (especially the food) and to Barbara, Craig, Jo, Kate, Megan and Yukari for the great company.

Ruapehu, fun for all the family

17-18 March, Family, Ruapehu (map #9)

Angela Gilbert, Mike Gilbert, Marg McLachlan

Punters: Mike Gilbert, Angela Gilbert, Toby Gilbert (9)

Tommy Rush, Yingjie Zhang, Alex Huang (10)

Nick Wood, Marg McLachlan, Iona Wood (7), Charlie Wood (4)

A summer trip to Mt Ruapehu is a favourite of all of ours, so quite a few of us headed up for the family tramping trip in March. It ended up that we had three trips in one, with all of us doing different things at different times. Here are three perspectives on this trip.

Angela's story...

We've been to Ruapehu in the face of weather bombs and blizzards, so it was a great surprise to see great weather as I drove up with Yingjie. My husband, Mike, and I had been frantically packing late on Thursday night and were driving up separately in two cars.

Mike appeared an hour or so after me, and the first thing he discovered was that he had forgotten to bring his tramping boots! I had even left them out in the middle of the porch so he had to step over them to get in and out of the house. Silly Mike.

Saturday morning dawned clear and crisp. Myself, Toby, Yingjie, Alex and Tommy were hitting the Tongariro Crossing, and Mike was performing car shuttle duties. 9:30am saw us

walking up Mangatepopo valley in clear skies and crisp conditions. The boys were complaining a bit during the ascent, but after we reached the first crater, everything changed. The terrain became fascinating to them. Alex and Toby had a hard time keeping to the path as they rock-climbed and explored their way over the crossing. We ate lunch in the south crater and then headed up another steep section. Once at the top, Toby and Alex were amazed at the view into the other big crater. Steam was coming out in places and the colours (and smell) were amazing. After that, the boys scampered down the scree slope, past other crossers timidly picking their way down, to the brilliant emerald and blue lakes. They both explored the lake shore, fascinated by the colour of the water.



We started on the long downhill section and that is when my legs started to feel it. It was great to see Mike walking in to meet us with some cold drinks, to the envy of other crossers slogging the last part of the trip.

We all drove back to the lodge, kicked off dinner and burnt the chips completely. Oh dear. But everyone was full anyway. We ate burgers and enjoyed relaxing.

Sunday morning was another lovely morning. Mike and Tommy prepared to climb to the summit of Mt Ruapehu and we all tidied up the lodge in preparation to leave. I carefully prepared my day pack, with my lunch, change of clothes and car keys.

When I set off for the day I discovered that Mike had packed my day pack into my car, locked it up, and headed up the mountain! What was he thinking. By the time I got hold of him he was well up the mountain. So our days plans were thrown into disarray and we sat around in the clean lodge waiting for Mike and Tommy's return. I sat around and read Robinson Crusoe until I fell asleep in the sun for a little while. Toby and Alex played outside, scrambling over rocks around the lodge.

Mike and Tommy eventually got back from their climb at 2.15pm and we all set off. We met up at Levin for McDonalds (yuck!) and we were home by 7pm.

As I sit here now, my big toe's toenails are very tender and I hope I don't lose them. My body is also a little sore. But the fun of watching Toby and Alex's amazement at the colours and shapes of the Tongariro landscape, and all the other excitement of the weekend, means it's a good pain!

Mike's story...

We were the last to arrive after a pleasant drive up, and folks descended on our car and helped us up with all our stuff. This is when I discovered that Angela hadn't packed my tramping boots! She had assembled everything except for them into the pile in the lounge. Oh well - it couldn't be helped. I suggested she be more careful in future.

So when the Saturday dawned, my first job was to head to Ohakune and pick up some cheap boots. I then had the day to explore, before my pick-up duties at the other end of Tongariro Crossing.

I decided to go find the Tuapapakurua Falls, a great little excursion that starts about 10min drive from National Park. The track is maintained by a local volunteer group, and I discovered they had a unique way of asking people to help them out: At the start of the track were several buckets of gravel, with a note asking you to carry them part or all of the way in to a specific drop-off spot, so they could then spread them on the track. Smart!

Soon I was at the foot of the waterfall. Beautiful it was too, well worth the trip. I strolled back to the car and after a quick side trip to get the Tongariro punters it was time for relaxing in the Lodge.

Sunday dawned bright and clear. Tommy was keen to head up to Ruapehu after bagging

Tongariro the day before, and I decided that I should go with him. You don't get too many days this good, and I'd never been to the top of Ruapehu in the summer before.

So off we headed, first up the chairlifts, and then somewhat surreally planned our ascent over coffees in Knoll Ridge cafe. It all looked clear enough so off we headed - following the T-bar and then drifting left and going up a spur to Glacier Knob.

About two-thirds of the way up the T-bar track, my phone rang. Angela had put her car keys in the big pile of luggage to be packed in the car, and now they were locked inside! But I was past the point of no return. I chided her for being so careless, and continued on my way.

We soon reached the plateau and what a different sight it was compared to winter. Tommy and I trekked across the plateau, trying to stick to the small snow drifts that remained. Soon we had skirted under Dome Ridge and approached the lake. After a brief look at the lake, not getting too close, we headed up to Dome Shelter and admired the view.

Soon we were heading down again. With a bit of bum-sliding down snow in the sheltered gullies, we were soon back at the chair lift and heading down the hill. Angela was awaiting us; she seemed a bit tetchy at me. She must have been frustrated at her carelessness.

So off we headed back to Wellington. I headed back via Whanganui, which was quicker than I expected and a far nicer drive than the main road. A quick stop off at McDonalds (yum!) and we were soon home with great memories of a fantastic weekend.

Marg's story...

Staying at the WTMC lodge at Whakapapa without snow and ski crowds is a different and wonderful experience. I enjoyed being able to stroll out the door, without having to get all rugged up, into a marvelous, rocky, moon-scape. Our family loved exploring all around the

hills and crevices of this remarkable environment... climbing up to an arch rock formation, then picking our way carefully back down. It was fun (though slightly scary) to take two chair lifts right up to the top (or so it seemed) of the mountain, enjoying the view and even finding a small patch of snow to play in.

Another highlight was walking the Old Coach Road, near Ohakune, now part of the New Zealand Bike Trail. With an easy gradient and good information signs it was a pleasant walk up. At the summit there's an



historic railway tunnel, and a little further along the old viaduct bridge. We were lucky

enough to be standing right under the new viaduct when the Overlander went through.

There's certainly a lot to see and explore around the volcanic plateau area any time of the year. We'll be back!

Ruahines reindeer ramble

24-26 February 2012, Easy medium, Ruahines (map #10)

Colin Bouttell

Punters: Peter Gent (leader), Colin Bouttell (author), Rory MacLellan, Derek Moore, Maren Luehrs, Anita Su'a, Margaret Craigie

A blustery Friday evening saw 12 eager punters off along State Highway 2 over the Rimutakas towards the Ruahines in Southern Hawkes Bay. 5 destined for an Easy grade walk to Sunrise Hut and 7 for the Easy Medium aiming for Top Maropea Hut. A slightly longer than expected but worthwhile wait for kebabs in Carterton had us held up slightly.

The van rocked and boogied its way along with the drivers successfully fighting the howling Westerly to keep on the left side of the road. The straight open roads off the Takapau Plains North of Dannevirke gave way to narrower wiggly roads weaving in around the Wakarara Range to the Ruahine foothills. We received a friendly greeting by the local farmer at the road-end car park who was gratefully keeping an eye on people arriving after dark as mischief making and vandalism had been encountered by nefarious miscreants in the past. A short 20 minute walk to Triple X Hut had us in our sacks around 11 with Karl and DJ from the Easy group electing to fly camp and only 1 other person, a deer hunter, in residence who seemed pleased to learn we were from a tramping club and not rabble rousers. Overnight the roaring sound of the wind in the trees outside was mysteriously replaced at some point by... nothingness. An eerie dead silence descended over the hut.



Morning was greeted by calmness in weather and mood, and a sense of quiet anticipation of the 700+m climb ahead. The route to Sunrise Hut could better be described as a path rather than a track, and while the zigging and zagging of said path made the ascent longer in distance, it was easier in terms of effort. Arrival (pre-midday) at Sunrise Hut which could better be described as a 'lodge' saw some of the EM group destined for the more rustic Top Maropea Hut, experiencing pangs of 'hut envy'. For the Easy group, this was looking like a very easy trip.

So the Easy Medium group after a good look around the Sunrise Hotel, picture taking and feeding set off along the ridges and up another 150m past some spectacular erosion scars. A mild Southerly breeze brought a brief shower along the top but didn't amount to much.

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The descent in a Northerly direction down a spur to Top Maropea lit by intermittent sunshine was uneventful albeit steep at times with the hut situated in a small flattish clearing at around 1200m. A leisurely lunch was had followed by discussions about



whether we would retreat to the more luxurious surroundings of the Sunrise Palace with its gas heater.

The conclusion reached was that the other group would be inundated by hordes of other overnighers from Hawkes Bay. Besides, the historic quaintness and sheltered peaceful tranquillity of Top Maropea seemed more appealing. The decision was cemented by the prospect of an extra side trip further down the spur to a pretty waterfall which Kate C had tipped Pete off about. So off we trotted happily

with a spring in our step, unburdened by the weight of packs, down the spur to the stream below. Following a slightly tricky descent there were a few reflective moments by the waterfall and vague contemplations of stripping off and jumping into the inviting green splash pool which were quickly dashed by a check of the water temperature.

Later there was some lazing around by the hut in the sunshine, which was becoming less intermittent, although some rain clouds threatened from a distance. Earlier in the day some curious wild red berries were consumed by some in the group, leading to speculation as to what effect they might have. When Derek commented on the threatening clouds in his Celtic brogue that "it looks like rain there" sounded to one of the group (who shall remain nameless) like "Reindeer" and excitedly looked into the distance presumably hoping to spot Santa and his sleigh. Amusing assertions of the potential hallucinogenic effects of wild berries then ensued.

The lazing was interrupted by the unanimous desire to cook and eat. Alfresco style dining with pasta Bolognese on the menu was later followed by S'mores.

Contribution from Anita on the subject of "S'mores":

>>>>>>>>> The mysterious surprise for dessert that night was soon uncovered while the group were warmly content outside sitting by the log fire. Colin (co-leader) began by telling us how he came about this dessert on one of his trips to America, and how he decided that we would be one of the lucky groups to experience it. "S'more" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S'more> was to be our dessert for that weekend.

It seemed that Rory, fairly new to the club from Canada and working in NZ temporarily, was destined to be part of this group for a purpose. As Rory grew up with S'mores, he was elected to be our educator in this delectably delicious dessert. First off, he hunted around in the bush for the right type of marshmallow holder as this had to be held over the open fire. After handcrafting 7 stalks, he then demonstrated over the fire various ways of melting marshmallows, from lightly

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toasted around the edges to almost burnt (for some, a desired result). *(This may be common knowledge for everyone, but for those of us who grew up in the city, never having experienced the outdoors growing up, believe me, it's a handy piece of information to learn.)*



Once toasted, he then placed the marshmallow in between two chocolate biscuits, in our case – chocolate wheatens. He then squeezed the two biscuits together giving you a delicious oozing creamy middle in between the biscuits. As the name suggests – the group did try S'more, once, twice, and for some, three times. The chocolate biscuit packet, sadly for everyone, started emptying way too quick so it was then onto the next best thing – the addictive

toasting of marshmallows. Derek found a way to discontinue his addiction by throwing his stick into the fire, others were unwilling to follow, but in the end reluctantly surrendered their sticks to the fire.

“S'mores” are a quick and easy dessert for tramping trips and really fun to make. It's addictive, but who cares, you're going to be walking it off the next day anyway so who's counting? Thanks Colin for introducing us to this new scrumptious dessert, you've probably started a trend if it hasn't already been discovered. And if you find punters beating down your door to be on your next trip, you'll know why.

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After our fill of toasted marshmallows and toying with the remains of the fire, the clouds cleared as the sun went down and stars thickly filled the moonless sky. Huddled under the fly, maximising the thermal properties of tightly zipped sleeping bags, again a deafening silence descended over the site.



We awoke to a frostier than expected morning with a generous coating of ice on the inner and outer surface of the fly. The three who elected the hut for their quarters presumably stirred more readily from their bags than those of us outside. We were greeted by a calm cloudless day, but long morning shadows hung across the hut site until just before 9am when the fly could begin to thaw and dry.

The tramp back up the spur to Sunrise Hilton seemed much quicker than the descent the day before, and there were some brief stops for obligatory photos of the



uninterrupted albeit distant views of the Rangipo Desert, Mt Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe to the West, and all the way out to the sea in Hawkes Bay to the North East.

Upon arriving at Sunrise Inter-Continental we learned the Easy group had left already and taken a longer route via the Waipawa river which may be documented in another story. A busload of silver haired Forest & Bird members met us on their way up the hill as we marched down with friendly greetings and enquiries about whether

we were the WTMC group, having noted our van in the car park. Great advertising win.

We were back to the van at 1pm, as had been carefully planned by Pete, so we hit the road again and were in Pahiatua by mid-afternoon for ice-creams, snacks and a play in the playground. An excellent weekend was had by all and the treat of the Ruahines in good weather was a sublime experience.

Deadline for submissions to the June 2012 WTMC newsletter: Friday 25 May 2012

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