



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

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August 2013



Photo: Tony Gazley

Can you name the location of this trig and the town in the background?

A **chocolate bar** to the first person who sends an email to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz with both of the correct answers. Chocolate to be collected at WTMC Wednesday club nights.
(photographer excluded from winning)

Been somewhere amazing? Taken a great photo? Want to see it featured on the front cover of the newsletter? Send it to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

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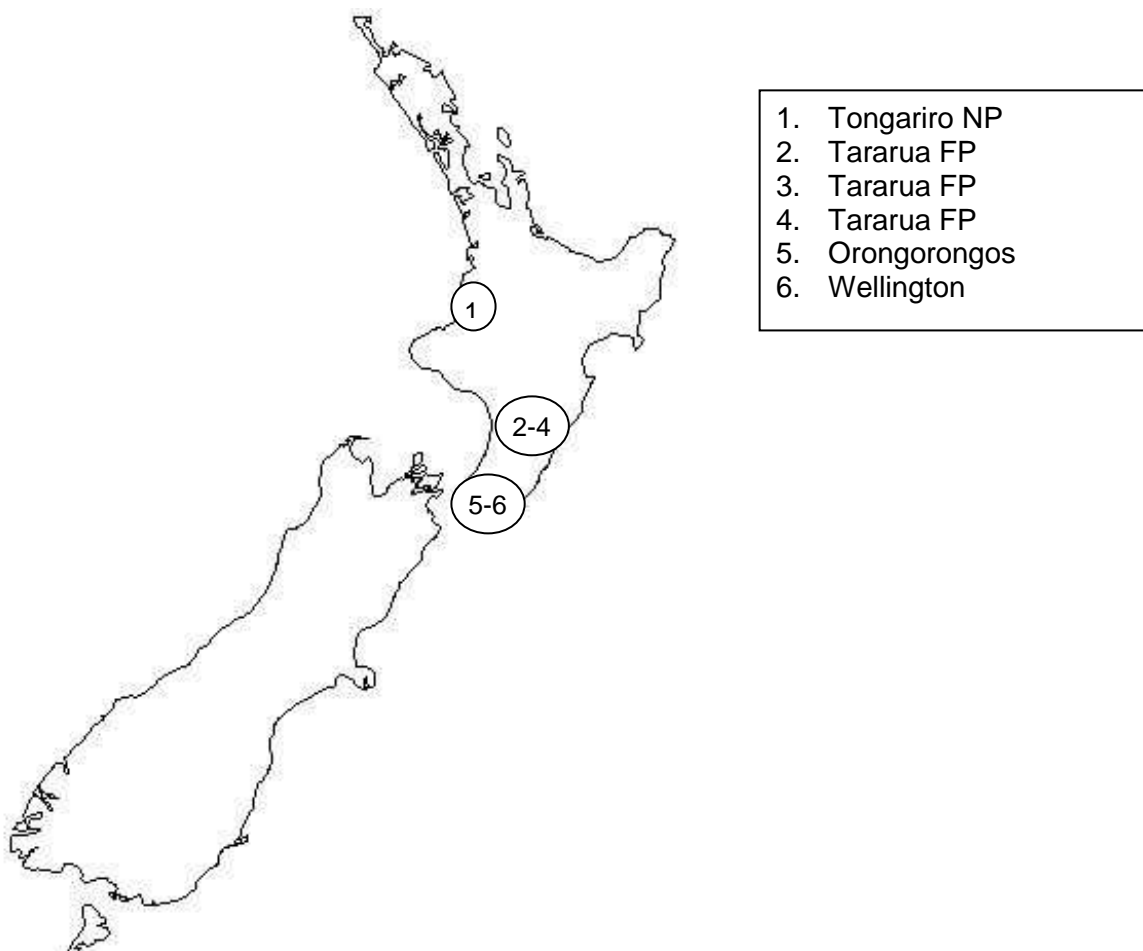
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Committee Reports

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Big thanks to everyone who came along to our trip planning night on 24 July, it was great to see some new faces as well as the usual suspects whom we count on to come up with great ideas for the trip schedule. It would be fantastic if the rest of you could take a look at the draft schedule and see if you can lead a trip or two. You don't have to have done a leadership course to lead a club trip and we are happy to provide advice and support if you want to try out trip leadership for the first time. Most members are capable of leading a day trip so please consider it. The draft trip schedule is on the website in the forum or email chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz

Last month I talked a bit about the importance of only signing up for a trip if you actually intend to go on it. Sometimes we get queries about how to contact trip leaders without coming to the clubrooms. This is relatively easy if you are a club member, just go onto the website and utilise the search function. Provided you know the name of the trip leader for the trip you want to go on you will be able to access their contact details and contact them direct. Having trouble driving our search engine? Our webmaster is happy to provide guidance webmaster@wtmc.org.nz. Signing up for alpine trips is even easier, just check the schedule on the website and email queries to alpine@wtmc.org.nz.

We are very open to ideas for making our trip processes easier for both trip leaders and other trip participants, provided this can be achieved without compromising safety or undermining our trip policies and the community spirit of the club. If you have any ideas, and the time to help implement them please contact the Chief Guide or Assistant Chief Guide. Likewise, if you happen to be reading through our policies, (on the website) and note stuff that is clearly out of date or seems a bit stupid we'd love to hear about it. One of the strengths of our club is that we have coherent and comprehensive systems in place for running lots of great trips – we want to keep it that way, this means being open to making changes if appropriate.

I'm pleased that loads of you have been getting out on trips and coming to the club nights to experience the great entertainment organised by Sue. It is also good to see people taking the initiative to send pictures from trips to the facebook team fb@wtmc.org.nz and to post interesting stuff on our forum and the FB page. This is a great way to generate interest in what we do. Tony our journal editor is on the hunt for trip reports and pictures for the 2013 Journal, don't forget to send your contributions to journal@wtmc.org.nz – the sooner the better. If you want to know what is coming up on the Wednesday nights you can go onto the website and check out the google document that lists what is coming up. This is worth a look as we have secured some excellent speakers for the coming weeks.

The Lodge is getting good patronage at the moment and I was particularly heartened to meet a member in the Bulls Kebab shop on Friday night who was taking a group from his work up to the Lodge. This is how we get better patronage of the Lodge by you guys telling

your friends and colleagues about the Lodge and how to book it. There is a good snow base at Whakapapa at the moment so skiing, boarding and climbing are not only possible but enjoyable. Andrew is doing a brilliant job organising the food for the Lodge as he does every year and Eric and Brian have been very busy in their roles as Lodge Booking Officer and Lodge Convenor respectively. If you have an interest in helping out with Lodge related stuff, for example marketing the lodge or acting as a Lodge leader or driving people to the Lodge, get in touch with Brian lodgeconvenor@wtmc.org.nz.

As usual we have a few jobs that we'd like to find people to help out with. If you attend the Wednesday nights fairly regularly you may be able to help out on the door and/or with banking the night's collection of \$2s. If so please let David promotions@wtmc.org.nz, Sue social@wtmc.org.nz or myself know president@wtmc.org.nz.

Look forward to seeing you on a Wednesday night or out in the hills.

Track Talk

Mike Phethean, Chief Guide



The trip planning meeting was held last Wednesday and I would like to thank all of those who attended and all those who submitted road end ideas. Looking at the draft plan I believe we have some exciting ideas for the next four months.

The next stage of the planning is the recruitment of the trip leaders. The draft plan can be found at this web address:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AkDzOy07CMNpdGtvOGUzMFZiLWVTNTFtRnVZUnVoQmc#gid=0>

To sign up to lead a trip, you just need to put your name against the trip and preferably colour it in blue. Whilst trip leading is not everyone's cup of tea, I would like to encourage those members of the club who have not led a trip to step up and give it a go. Both Debbie and I are available to support you through the process if need be.

Equally I would ask more experienced members of the club to assist new leaders if they are on their trip. Just a "good job" here and there can go a long way!

The other development in chief guide world is the creation of the *trip money person*. This is a bit of a mouthful so I will shorten the phrase and call this person Donna. The idea of this role is to lower the burden of work of the treasurer who has to not only grumble about the vast sums of money the chief guide spends but also check that people are paying their transport fees.

The way the process works is shown below, note the differences for South Island trips which require more booking time for the ferry:

	North Island	South Island
1)	Trip members pay their subs 9 days (two Wednesdays before the trip leaves.)	Trip members pay their subs 16 days (three Wednesdays before the trip leaves.)
2)	Donna checks the bank account and sends an email to the trip leader with a list of people who have paid their trip fee.	Donna checks the bank account and sends an email to the trip leader with a list of people who have paid their trip fee.
3)	If anyone has not paid, the leader will either check why and remind them to pay, or remove them from the trip.	If anyone has not paid, the leader will either check why and remind them to pay, or remove them from the trip.

When paying trip fees, please use the reference system on the website to make Donna's work easier. More details can be found at: <http://www.wtmc.org.nz/trip-costs-and-how-to-pay>

And finally if you have some photos to share, why not post them to the WTMC Facebook page. Send your cool photos to fb@wtmc.org.nz and give your trip the glory it deserves. We promise to screen the photos first.

Membership update

Helen Law, Membership Officer

This month we welcome Rebecca Day & Gareth Gretton joining us as couple members; Tom Fanning and, Alistair Shelton as Senior members and also the Tabor family with Joshua as Senior, Duncan as Junior, Aidan as Associate and Emerson as Child member. Congratulations!



If you have any questions about membership of the WTMC please find me at the club on a Wednesday night otherwise contact me on membership@wtmc.org.nz or send it to PO Box 5068, Lambton Quay, Wellington 6145.

Members are encouraged to keep the club's database up to date with any changes in contact details by emailing me at membership@wtmc.org.nz

Some interesting presentations coming up

Sue Walsh, Social Convenor



We've had an amazing array of presenters for July and there were many highlights, however I think my personal favourite was from Wednesday 24 July when Sue Keall from Victoria University brought out Spike the Tuatara. The looks of excitement, sheer delight and wonder on everyone's faces was magical to see. You couldn't tell the adults from the kids. Our range of fantastic speakers continues into August.

We have a change of presenters for 7 August - Kate Cushing is temporarily back from Kiribati, so she has snuck in on the 7th to give a talk about her experiences there before heading back.

Other presentations coming up this month include:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 August | Tony Gazley talking about tramping photography |
| 21 August | A double act with Lorriane Johns and Nina Sawicki talking about their alpine adventures |
| 28 August | Megan Sety takes us on a journey through Idaho in the US. |
| 4 September | Grant Newton has kindly agreed to do a repeat presentation showing the images he took in 2011 when he went to New Zealand's Sub Antarctic Islands. Grant has amazing photos that show the abundance of flora and fauna that is rarely, if ever, seen on mainland New Zealand. |

I welcome any suggestions for presentations either by you or someone else so please don't be shy, contact me on social@wtmc.org.nz

Look forward to seeing you in the club rooms.

Trip reports

Tupapakururua Falls, Tongariro (Lodge Based)

28-30 June, Easy tramp, Tongariro National Park (map #1)

Author: Anita Su'a

Trampers: Meena Kadri (photos), Thomas Keir (trip leader/photos), Donna Maher, Anita Su'a

On Friday evening, the Fit and Easy groups met up before heading off to the Lodge. The compulsory dinner stop in Bulls had all the punters feeling well fed and ready to continue the journey up north.

After arriving at Whakapapa village it was surprising to note that the roads were not covered in snow which meant the chains were left in the van. Not having been to the lodge for many years and seeing so much snow around, was for me a long lost experience. It was like my very first trip to the lodge in snow; the staircase, nowhere to be seen.

After bringing up food for the weekend and having organised bunk rooms, the groups assembled in the lounge for David's informative speech on the lodge and the important safety aspects. The groups were then off to get some well deserved sleep.



On Saturday, we woke to a fine cloudless sunny morning. The fit groups had already departed and after a good hearty breakfast, we drove down to the National Park to the start of the Tupapakururua track.

It was approximately 30 minutes to the entrance to Tupapakururua Falls, the track (on the left hand side of Fishers Road). Once on the track we were greeted by beautiful stunning bush. This old Forest Service track had been recently upgraded by the local community in partnership with DoC. It began with an easy 20 minute walk to the Taranaki lookout with a view towards Mt Taranaki which was concealed by clouds.

In various sections along the track, we came across numbered buckets filled with stones, and were mystified for what their purpose would be.

DoC had done a wonderful job of placing various information stands along the track about the beautiful stunning flora and fauna. The track followed the ridge and then descended down to the stream. There's a wonderful diversity of plant and tree species with good stands of tawa, mature rimu, miro and totara. Ascending from the stream, the track wound its way around bluffs with beautiful forest views.



Not long after, we arrived at the Tupapakururua Falls.

The falls, although not comprising as much volume of water as others, we still enjoyed the surrounding beauty and being able to view the falls from a distance. You could walk down to see the falls which would take 20 minutes but we were told by locals that the track was a bit marginal. We were happy with what we could see so decided to make use of the seats to have lunch.

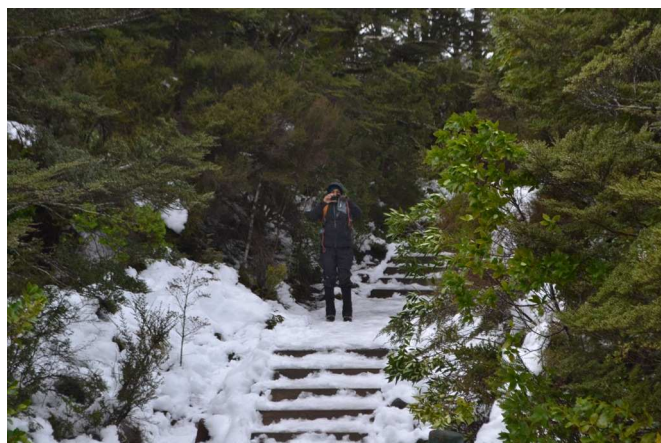
Our return was back the way we had come, so we were fortunate to have a repeat of the same lovely bush and being able to experience things we had either missed or hadn't noticed on our way in.

The Tupapakururua Falls is a very easy walk, with a short straightforward access to the road end.



When driving back to the lodge the weather had changed, we'd lost the sun and blue sky. Once back at the lodge, we were greeted with David and Yibai who had already returned from their climb. The next fit group arrived then, Jenny and Bryce, not long after.

As we were enjoying an idle afternoon, we noticed the lodge beside us (that I was told had lost its roof many years ago) had its members pushing up a large box of some sort through the snow to their lodge. A few minutes after, the services of our strong punters were required. Michael volunteered – we felt sorry for him as he'd only returned from his arduous trip, just sat down when he had to put his boots back on again. It was quite a while when we watched from the lodge our neighbours (including Michael) pushing another large box, containing some appliance, into their lodge.



Dinner on the menu that night was spaghetti bolognaise followed by ice cream and fruit. Delicious – well done chefs!

Sunday morning, Bryce (from the fit group) decided to join us. He'd developed a cold from the day before. The Easy group had decided to do a short walk to Silica Rapids. I'd walked this track quite a few times in the past, but have always loved returning as it has always been one of my favourite tracks in this area. A

short walk, with stunning panoramic views of the mounts, lovely bush and rapids. I loved coming upon Mt Ngauruhoe in all its majestic beauty, once you neared the end of the track.

This time, my visit to Silica Rapids was a completely new experience for me. For a start, it was a dull day. Snow: so much snow on the tracks. A quick walk to the rapids had us enjoying the surrounding beauty.

It was with haste that we began our return journey back to the village as Thomas (our thoughtful leader) had come up with the idea to have High Tea at the Château. As I had never heard of High Tea before, I was intrigued and became exceedingly excited, especially because of all the food that I was likely to indulge in. When on trips I'm not known to indulge very much, being a closet eater, but on the odd occasion I can be tempted just as much as everyone else. High Tea, as was explained to me, comes with your own choice of tea, followed by a layer of sandwiches, macarons and sweet cakes, scones with fresh cream and jam. On a trip I had undertaken a long time ago, I had joined other trampers in another section of the Château (most probably where the plebs hang out) but I'd never set foot in the front part of the Château before.

As we sat in the lounge, enjoying our High Tea and panoramic views of snow outside, we listened to the sounds of a lone pianist, having no choice but to guess the title of every song he played. The fits turned up at the Château at the allotted time, and we were once more in the van along with Jenny who had decided to do a quick walk to Whakapapaiti.



Back at the lodge everyone did their bit to clean up for the next group to come in. Gear was loaded into the van, and then we were on our way driving back to Welly. One stop in Ohakune for a quick bite then back on the road again. Approximately 7.30pm all were delivered safe and sound to platform 9.

The Most Epic Family Trip Ever (So Far!) to Kapakapanui

29-30 June, Family tramp, Tararua FP (map #2)

Author: Barry Cuthbert

Punters: Ella Cuthbert (10), Toby Gilbert (10)

Porters: Barry Cuthbert (scribe), Mike Gilbert (leader)

The weekend following the fiercest storm to hit Wellington since the Wahine Storm, proved an ideal time to take the kids for a winter tramp.

Once Saturday morning sports were dispensed with, the car was loaded up with packs and the relatively short drive to Waikanae was in bright sunshine. We arrived at the roadend in time for an early lunch, which lightened the porters' packs somewhat. The first part of the route lies over farmland with open pasture shortly giving way to regenerating bush before the first river crossing is encountered. The snow-chilled water blew away any last lingering doubts about the trip being in winter despite the sun. Toby and Ella briefly struggled with the frigid water before parental encouragement, coercion and bribery got them across.



Another couple of crossings later we reached the junction between the two ridge routes. We took the direct route to the hut given the fairly late start and the unknown condition of the open ridge. Another six or seven rapid-fire crossings of the stream saw the party reach the bottom of the ridge. One final adjustment of clothing and sugar levels preceded the start of the climb.

The track up the ridge is a typical Tararua's grunt, initially a steep line up the spur over roots and rocks until about 550m where the slope eased somewhat to a more gradual incline. The storm had added mud, broken branches and leaves to the mix. Areas of blown down trees provided fun climbing opportunities for the punters.



The climb was dragging on for the punters and upon reaching the goblin forest Toby and Ella launched into a deeply involved discussion of ranking fairytale characters such as fairies, pixies, goblins, trolls and orcs. The use of Mike's new altimeter proved invaluable in giving encouragement and incentives to the punters. Every 100m climbed was worth hard-earned chocolate.

At about 750m the ridge flattens and the eagle-eyed punters spotted a give way sign high in the tree, which marks the intersection of the track up from Mangaone South Rd. As the track rises towards the hut further traffic signs haphazardly nailed to trees were noted.

Kapakapanui hut sits in a small clearing at 850m and the break in the canopy had allowed 10cm of snow to collect, and two tiring punters somehow found new energy to start a snowball fight and work on a snowman. All up about 5 hours walking, including breaks for tree climbing etc. for the kids.

The hut was full with our party of four and two guys up from Otaki Forks. The hut is well maintained and was cosy with a warm fire. One odd thing about the hut are the short bunks of less than 6 feet, necessitating one to sleep with your feet hanging off the side of the bunk.



Bowls of dinner were quickly devoured, with the family trip "tradition" of interesting desserts continuing with chocolate thins biscuits topped with chocolate squares were toasted on the wood burner, then further topped with whipped cream and a second biscuit. The consensus was "Yum!"

Next day the weather was cool and overcast with a gentle breeze. Two parties we had met the previous day doing the circuit had told us of half a metre of snow on the tops. An early start gave us plenty of time to play in the snow and complete the round trip with a thousand

metre drop back to the car. To prevent frozen toes from the wet snow, feet were encased in plastic bags.



It was a fairly slow trip across the tops to the trig on Kapakapanui with numerous trips into the snow drifts for playing as the excited punters experienced the novelty of tramping in snow. As we approached the summit the clouds parted briefly to allow a view down to the Kapiti coast below and the steep ridge we were to follow. Upon reaching the trig, the wind had picked up and the temperature had dropped so it was time to get moving out of the snow.

Once the bushline was reached the track down the ridge was quite steep for the punters and travel down was again fairly slow with some of the climbs down the root ladders having seemingly impossible stretches for shorter legs. Blown down trees made a couple of the steep sections slippery work through the exposed clay.

A short break to refuel with lunch on some convenient logs saw renewed vigour from the punters (for a while at least). The last 200m descent back down to the track junction seemed to drag out forever.

The car was reached after about seven hours after leaving the hut. The porters were glad to be rid of the packs, and the punters were glad to get the last of the chocolate. It was agreed by all that this was The Most Epic Family Trip Ever (So Far)!



Kiriwhakapapa Nav

6-7 July, Medium/Nav tramp, Tararua FP (map #3)

Author: Debbie Buck

Trampers: Debbie Buck, Amanda Wells (Leader), Alistair Young, Sam, Andy

We made a 7:30 am Saturday departure from the Railway station, with a couple of guest punters, Gareth and Steve coming along to do the van driving and their own gourmet tramp. After passing through the Wairarapa towns without kebab or coffee stops, we were at the road end and ready to tramp at 9:15am.

It was novel to leave a Tararua road end and not instantly start a grunty ascent. We briskly meandered SW along a flattish track next to a stream and then had a micro-ascent of 150m to a saddle where we de-layered and snacked. I was glad to have the pleasant weather and reasonable pace to enjoy the bush as the track descended and then followed the Mikomiki stream until a footbridge at the junction with another stream on our right.

Since this was a Nav trip, I'd been diligently practicing my locational awareness so fortunately we didn't miss the footbridge and proceed blithely over it and further along the track! Instead, with some delegating and encouragement from Amanda, I took a bearing up the side stream and started out following old tram tracks. That was fine for about 300 metres until the tram tracks stopped abruptly at a steep bank above the stream. So we stayed on the same side of the stream and proceeded to bush-bash and swamp-sink upstream, occasionally rediscovering the old tram tracks and following them. Soon we were not far below .535 and sidling on quite steep terrain, with the weather deteriorating.

To avoid travelling in the stream, a collective decision was made to head up to .535. It didn't take long to get there or for the rain to arrive. After a brisk lunch, we took a bearing up along the ridge to Bruce Hill at 975 metres just in case the well-worn foot pad and non-DoC markers disappeared as we progressed. We moved swiftly on the foot pad as the wind and the rain intensified. Fortunately the bush gave us shelter from the wind. At Bruce Hill most of us put on overpants and more layers. Taking bearings and debating where the foot-pad went, we scouted around for the best route onwards, and got a peek of Te Mara through the mist. Moving between exposed scrubby ridge-line and then into cloud forest, it was getting colder and my hands were numb...so out came the waterproof fleecy gloves. Onwards we tramped, down to a saddle and then up to .995 for a speedy snack. It was another kilometre with another saddle to descend to before the final grunt up to Te Mara at 1104 metres.

Since we were all cold and had successfully navigated our way so far, we decided to head for Blue Range Hut for the night. We made a beeline for the main DoC track and after what seemed far longer than the 1 kilometre distance on the map, arrived at the empty and exceptionally windy Blue Range Hut at 4:45pm. There was plenty of room for the five of us and our wet gear – Sam got a toasty fire going, Alistair (cosily) kept out of the way by being tucked up in his bed on a mattress on the floor, whilst Amanda, Andy and I prepared a delicious meal of pasta with (many) vegetables, tomato and chorizo sauce. Alistair washed up, with Amanda providing QA, and we finished with chocolate biscuits and a cuppa. After venturing outside for some star-gazing, we had an early night.



On Sunday morning we slept in whilst the rain came and went and came! We couldn't really find anywhere to get navigationally challenged, so after collecting firewood, we set off at 9:30 back to the road end. It kept raining most of the way, and seemed to take longer than we expected to get close to the road end. But soon the last 100 metres of altitude was lost and we meandered the last 400 metres, taking significantly less than the 20 minutes DoC estimates.

The rain was bucketing down as we spread out at the enormous table in the shelter, boiled the billy for morning tea and waited just in case Steve and Gareth turned up. They arrived

with seconds to spare before the scheduled time for us to leave to collect them from the Pines road end.

Guided by a double, full span rainbow, we made our way back through the Wairarapa. The forecast was for high winds on the Rimutaka Hill, so we refuelled with custard slices and hot drinks in Carterton – just to provide ballast for the blustery trip over the hill back to Wellington.

“Old Codgers Trip”, Tutuwai – Mt Reeves

25-26 May, Easy-Medium tramp, Tararua FP (map #4)

Author: Harry Smith

Trampers: Steve Kohler, Kaleb Smith, Harry Smith (trip leader), Alayne Wright

When I put this trip on the schedule it was intended partly as a joke at my own expense, partly as an attempt to lure some of the people I went tramping with 20 or 25 years ago out into the hills again, and partly as a theme trip with old-style clothes and gear. My promotion of it at club night didn't meet with much success, despite the fact that I promised to allow “honorary” old codgers to come along as long as they had the right old codgery attitude – the only person who had already signed up at that stage promptly crossed his name off the list! I'm not sure what that says. Perhaps he couldn't live without a GPS or Camelbak, which were strictly banned. Perhaps the threat of endless recitals of the Monty Python sketch about *livin' in cardboard box in middle o' road* was simply too much to bear. But I did get some punters who signed up by email, and therefore obviously didn't hear my spiel, and in the end there were four of us: two genuine old codgers – myself and Steve Kohler, and two honorary old codgers – Alayne Wright and Kaleb Smith. Kaleb turned out to be the son of Bruce Smith, who I did some tramping with 25 years or more ago! Now that really did make me feel like an old codger!



We drove up to Walls Whare on Saturday morning with the Easy and Medium trips and got away at about 10 o'clock. Steve had got into the spirit of things and was dressed in a bushshirt and rubber gummies. I had my old moth-eaten bushshirt and my old framepack.

Genuine old codgers will remember when the “Walls Whare” roadend actually had a Walls Whare (a hut owned by our club, which for some reason decided to pull it down), and the swing bridge across the river actually had a tendency to swing, unlike the present solid construction which could probably support a herd of buffalo. From the bridge we had a long trudge up the

track up the hill and along towards Cone Saddle. I had last been up this track a couple of months earlier on the way to the top of Mt Cone on a tubing trip led by Debbie Buck. (Why on earth were we climbing Mt Cone on a tubing trip, I hear you cry. You'll just have to ask Debbie!) That had been in the middle of the drought and the track was as dry as a bone, without any mud. Now it was back to more usual Tararua conditions.

After two or three hours we arrived at Cone Hut. Built in 1946 out of slab totara, this is a hut to gladden the heart of any genuine old codger! We stopped for lunch, and were soon joined by the Easies. After lunch we wandered down valley for an hour to Tutuwai for the night. Cone might have been a more fitting place to stay for an old codgers trip but the Easies had claimed it for themselves.

I've gone past Tutuwai often enough in the past but I'm not sure if I've ever actually stayed there before. I don't think I have, but when you get to be an old codger your memory starts to fail you. These days I find it hard to remember yesterday, let alone what I did 10 or 20 years ago. It's not totally impossible that I've actually stayed there a dozen times. Steve provided some entertainment for the afternoon with a cryptic crossword from an English newspaper, and man was it tough! We got some help from an English woman in the hut but came nowhere near completing it. She and I swapped our favourite cryptic crossword clues. Mine was HIJKLMNO (5 letters, starts with W) and hers was OF OF OF OF OF OF OF OF OF OF (10 letters, starts with O) and the fiendishly clever and difficult SELF-PROCLAIMED BIRD WATCHER (7 letters, starts with S). A chocolate fish will be awarded to the first reader of this trip report who solves all three of them. Email me your answers!

Late in the afternoon a group of about eight or ten boy scouts turned up, accompanied by three adults. Immediately the peace and quiet was shattered, and it was to stay shattered for the rest of the evening and well into the night. Even a shout of "SHUT UP!!" which inexplicably escaped my lips at one point failed to have any effect on the incessant noise.

Sharing a hut with a large group of scouts must be the ultimate disaster on any tramping trip. I remember once many years ago staying at Totara Flats hut (the former one, up near the base of the hill halfway down the flats, not the current one opposite Totara Creek at the northern end of the flats) when a large group of boy scouts walked in. Immediate evasive action was required! "There's a nice empty hut up the end of the flats" we told the adult in charge of them, and we watched them trudge off towards the Old Totara Flats hut - a rat-infested dive further up the flats that has long since been pulled down! I almost expected to see them return to our hut after an hour or two but they didn't.



That evening we had a genuine old codgers stew for dinner with meat and spuds – none of this pasta or couscous or other newfangled stuff.

Next morning we set off up the track behind the hut heading towards Mt Reeves, which I hadn't been up for many years. The drizzly weather of the previous day had cleared up and it was sunny, though cold. From the open, scrubby top of Reeves we had superb views in all directions – across to the Marchant Ridge and the Southern Crossing, down the Tauherenikau Valley towards Kaitoke, and out across the farmland and towns of the Wairarapa.

My plan was to follow down the eastern side of the Mt Reeves track for a couple of kilometres, then take the old track down the ridge to the west of Coal Stream which leads back down to the Walls Whare roadend. This track is no longer marked on the current topo maps and I wondered whether it would be hard to find and hard to follow. I needn't have worried. The start of it is marked by a huge and dramatic DOC sign warning that the walkwire across the bottom of Coal Stream has been removed, and the track itself is clearly followable and marked by blue plastic triangles. (Why blue? I'm not sure. Maybe DOC is using this colour for "unofficial" tracks as opposed to the standard orange for "official" ones).



A howling gale blew up as we descended the ridge – I was glad we weren't back up on top of Mt Reeves. Towards the bottom the track dropped off down into Coal Stream, which was easy to cross without the missing walkwire, although it could be tricky if the stream was up. Once across, a short sidle track down the stream and a short, steep climb brought us back to the end of the Walls Whare swingbridge. It was only early in the afternoon but the other trips were already out so we had an early drive home. I've never done this exact circuit before but it makes an excellent trip for an easy-medium trip, and it was good to revisit Mt Reeves for this old codger.

The Editor's Picnic

21-23 June, Jungle Safari, Orongorongo Valley (map #5)

Author: Ed Journal

Trampers: Tony Gazley & Megan Sety

A two day retreat away from city life is always good for breaking the stress (or boredom) of a working week and so Ed Newsletter and I decided that, in spite of a MetService severe weather warning for the North Island mountains, we would head into the local hills. A wander over the Orongorongos to the coast and back seemed like a nice idea. So on a fine but windy Friday evening we headed off to Paua Hut. A warm fire, nice meal and a good sleep in a cosy cabin was our reward.

The next morning we woke to the wind roaring through the swaying and creaking trees, sand and gravel blowing down the valley, and clouds darkening the sky in the west. We packed and headed up river then started up Mathews Stream. Normally this is easy travel

but the lower stream was now filled with a thick new growth of Buddleia, an invasive plant that runs riot once established. Fortunately higher up the stream it was clearer and easier going and we were soon at the last climb up to North Saddle. And here the forecast rain arrived. Gentle for a short time but soon quite heavy, and all the while the wind increased. Just before climbing out the bush we stopped to put on extra clothes in readiness for the anticipated water blasting we would get on the ridge.

And what a blasting! It was utterly impossible to stand. We crawled on hands and knees along the ridge unable to look into the stinging rain as it lashed around us. I couldn't stop laughing at the sight of Ed clinging to the grass and her laughing at our helplessness as we were spun around then dumped in the wind. But when we finally dropped down the Wairarapa side of the ridge it was quite calm. We followed Wharekauhau Stream towards the coast, past the waterfall that on a previous visit I had difficulty climbing down because I couldn't find a better way but this time was easy because Harry Smith had told us of the sneaky secret pathway hidden on the true left.



We stopped further down for lunch and while here Ed Newsletter became acquainted with her first ever hippopotamus. That she seemed genuinely surprised was strange to me because I had become accustomed to lots of them in the Orongorongos. That the hippopotamus was green also surprised her as did the yellow rabbit. But she soon got used to them and in fact to my mind seemed almost too taken by them.

But soon we were on our way again and it was now quite pleasant walking down the river bed. As we neared the coast the sky lightened and the rain cleared. We climbed to a grassy headland and there in the farmer's paddock was a green mother hippopotamus with a calf, an orange rabbit, as well as the usual white sheep. Ed was not surprised by these animals anymore and in fact was quite obviously becoming more partial to them all the



time as she now seemed to be expecting them every time we stopped.

We strolled around the coast as the wind whipped up spray from Palliser Bay and then we started up Mukamuka Stream. Here we came across a battered vehicle in the riverbed partly buried in gravel which we assumed to be the abandoned transport of a previousz safari to the area—perhaps searching for hippopotamuses. We didn't have to go much further before we found a sheltered camp site in the grass among the

manuka on the river bank. It was a pleasant place to put up the tent and cook tea as the first stars appeared in the clear night sky. And the only animals we saw here were black cows.

During the night we could hear the wind roaring down the valley but in the shelter our tent hardly gave a flap. The next day dawned reasonably fine although the wind had increased further and it made for hard work when we started heading upstream.

Crossing South Saddle was definitely windy but nothing like the day before and there was no rain and we were soon back down in the Orongorongo Valley having a rest in the shelter from the wind.

While here Ed Newsletter made it quite clear that there would be no more hippopotamuses or rabbits for me as over the last two days she had obviously become quite addicted to them and now wanted them all for herself. But I didn't mind as I was rather bored with them anyway.



So with the last of them wrapped in a plastic bag and stuffed in her pack we headed back along the five mile track and home. What finally became of them I can only guess.

Editor's note: No real animals were harmed during this jungle safari, only Iced Animal Biscuits.

Hawkins Hill Day Walk

13 July, Daywalk, Wellington (map #6)

Author: Tony Cimino

Trampers: Chris Bolton, Tony Cimino (author), Helen Law (leader), Edd Lucas, Hannah Whattam, Jeremy

The walk started up the track near the intersection of Landfill Road and Happy Valley Road. Still evident were the effects of the scrub fire which occurred in late February this year. Blackened scrub covering higher regions of the hill contrasted with the lush green below the main track which must have acted as a barrier to the flames.



The weather was surprisingly well behaved considering the persistent rain during the week or so prior. We had been prepared for continuous downpour but there was only a brief drizzle.

The start and end of the walk gave clear views of the landfill, which didn't look as bad as it sounds, and was bustling with

earth-moving equipment. The fog and artificially terraced hills around the landfill gave the feeling of being in an entirely different country.

After 1.5 hours of walking mostly uphill we reached level ground just a few tens of metres from “The Castle”, a large distinctive three storey peach coloured building. The similarity of features between medieval fortified structures and the crenellations and cylindrical tower of this architectural anachronism were obviously intentional. I was told that it is a private residence whose owner has a small collection of high-end automobiles. That day a South African flag was flying on the mast, but apparently other nations’ flags are flown in regular rotation.



Further along our excursion, with a view of a distant line of wind turbines, we came to the radar dome; a large sphere, perhaps 8 metres in diameter, with a very interesting arrangement of geometric patterns on its surface. The purpose of the dome is to assist with aeroplane navigation; at least that’s the official word from the powers that be.



Sometime after stopping for lunch, there came a junction where we could choose between a relatively level route or a slightly shorter but steep downhill and steep uphill route. We settled on the latter which resulted in a couple of stream crossings and minor stumbles on slippery and uneven ground by several members of the party.

Decades ago, the area was used to farm cattle. Evidence of this remains today in occasional dilapidated sections of wooden fence.

At the end of the walk, we drove to the nearby Penthouse café in Brooklyn where we discussed topics ranging from art house cinema to comparisons between New Zealand potato chips and British “crisps” while consuming tea, coffee and chocolate brownies.

Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 30 August 2013

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