



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Editor: Megan Sety
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Photo: Tony Gazley

Jan and Brian Goodwin look to make their own tracks. What peak are they heading to?

Hint: They might have ventured not far from the WTMC lodge on a ski weekend.

A **chocolate bar** to the first person who emails newsletter@wtmc.org.nz with the correct answer. To be collected at WTMC Wednesday club night.

Been somewhere in the amazing NZ bush? 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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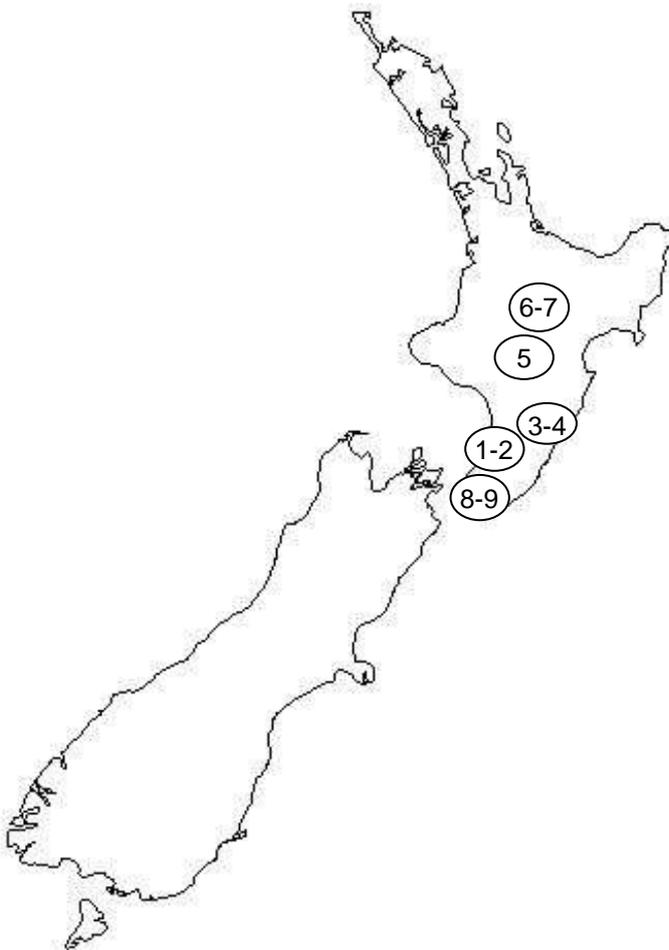
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Committee Reports

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Greetings fellow trampers. The spring climbing season is upon us and I have lots of trips planned so I'm going to keep this column short and blunt.

I like to think that WTMC is a friendly, welcoming, inclusive club. This is certainly the culture the committee is trying to foster. As warmer weather descends upon us and daylight saving kicks in we can expect more potential new members to turn up to our Wednesday night sessions. It would be great if we could all take the time to make the new people feel welcome. It takes a brave soul to come along to an unfamiliar environment where they don't know anyone and there is nothing worse than making the effort only to find that everyone stands round talking to their mates and ignoring you or giving you a cursory "hi there" then turning straight back to the conversation they were in the middle of.

I don't doubt we can all think of great excuses for not bothering to be friendly to strangers, my response is JUST DO IT. If you see people hovering round by the trip sheets looking lost this is probably because they are. This is a great opportunity for you to help out by simply asking the person if they are looking for a trip to go on and explaining how our systems work. If you don't feel you can provide the required help look for someone in the room who can and make the necessary introduction.

While I'm on the subject of what you can do for WTMC, don't forget to send any tramping recipe ideas to Megan at newsletter@wtmc.org.nz. Illona is in the process of updating our fabulous cook book and she needs your contributions. If you have not seen the cookbook, check it out on our website at <http://wtmc.org.nz/wtmc-recipe-book>.

Been on any good trips lately? If you have not written them up for the newsletter there is always the club journal. Send articles and photos to Tony at journal@wtmc.org.nz. Keen to lead some trips? Mike and Debbie would love to hear from you. Email Mike at chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz or ask for him on a Wednesday night, he is usually in the hall somewhere.

If you regularly read my columns, and yes, I'm aware that not everyone does, you will be aware that I generally devote quite a few words to pointing out opportunities for members to contribute to the smooth running of the club. I make no apologies for this. The WTMC does not run itself and the committee consists of a group of trampers who give up some of their precious spare time to help with club administration. Club stuff however, is everyone's responsibility regardless of whether or not you are on the committee. Clubs like ours thrive or perish based on the collective effort of the membership. In 2014 I will be standing down after three years as Club President. Steve Austin will be standing down after at least seven years as Club Treasurer. Pete Gent will not be undertaking the role of Club Secretary as well as Club Gear Officer. We will be counting on new people to come on board to carry on

the good work. Now is an excellent time to think about where you see WTMC going and what part you want to play in our future. If you want to join the committee in 2014 please get in touch president@wtmc.org.nz.

See you on Oct 9 for New Members Night. Enjoy your Spring tramping and stay safe.

New Members Night

David Heffernan, Promotions Officer



The Club will be holding its next New Members Night on Wednesday, 9 October from 7:30pm. The night is a chance to reach out to those who are keen to join us or those looking to get out in the great New Zealand outdoors for the first time.

We are still looking for a few members to help out with staffing the tables on the night, so please email promotions@wtmc.org.nz to volunteer, especially if you can talk about our cycling and kayaking trips.

If you know somebody who might be interested in attending then invite them to come along, or tell them to email promotions@wtmc.org.nz if they have any questions.

Track Talk

Mike Phethean, Chief Guide



Help the Chief Guide - Go to the pub:

(Something tells me our president was expecting this sub-title in my very first newsletter article!)

The club is hosting a new members night on the 9th October. It is important that we make new members welcome every night. This is not limited to the first time they turn up to the club. It is very encouraging to see that club members are taking the time to explain to new people how the sign up sheets work and how the trip grading system works. Please continue the good work, if you see someone who looks new at the sign-up boards, help them out.

Welcoming new members does not just involve their first visit. I am sure you all remember your first few visits to Wednesday nights when there seemed to be this bunch of people who all know each other talking earnestly about tramping (well mostly tramping). The club may no longer seem like that but it hasn't changed, you are just one of the people who knows lots of people. Most people really start to enjoy the club when they get to know people here.

So to make people feel welcome please carry out some of the suggestions below. Somebody would have done this for you, so it is time to pay it back!

- 1) If you see someone new from your last trip, go up and chat to them or even better introduce them to the people you are talking to. Find out how they went. Suggest trips to them as a follow up to the one they have been on.
- 2) (*This one is going to be a bit hard!*) If you see people on their own, go up and talk to them. You can guess if they are new as they are usually holding the schedule and looking a bit lost (this is actually the reason for pink schedules to make it easier to spot new people).
- 3) If you're going to the pub after club, invite them along.

On this note we often but not always go to the Hop Garden after club meetings. Please do not wait until the chief guide / Spencer tell you they are going, feel free to go anyway. Also if one of us mention we are going, please feel free to tell other people as we feel too much like alcoholics canvassing the room every week. Oh and they do serve nice beer there too!

Trip Planning – Road ends:

In November we kick off the next round of trip scheduling with our trip planning night on the 6th November. I will send out an email to trip leaders but if you wish to suggest any road ends, trips or just areas of the country you would like to go to please email the chief guide on chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz. In the same vein of thought, if you would like to become a trip leader please get in contact.

Over a cuppa

Sue Walsh, Social Convenor



We have another great month lined up for you as follows:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 2 October | Tom Fanning takes us along the Camino. |
| 9 October | A definite night to come down and talk about the virtues of our amazing club at new members night. Your enthusiasm will help make the night a success and ensure that we continue to have new folk come along. |
| 16 October | Bivouac will visit us to talk about gear specifically aimed at new comers to tramping. Even though this is the aim, you never know what tips/hints you might pick up so pop this in your diary. People new to the club who attend this night can also receive a time-limited voucher for 10% to use in the Mercer Street store. |
| 23 October | Bring your appetite! The second edition of our cookbook will be released and I believe there might be a bake off of some kind. Keep your eyes on the forum site for further information. |
| 30 October | Pete Gent takes us on a journey to the top of the world and tells the story of his recent trip to Svalbard. |

I'm always on the look-out for presentations and presenters. Funnily enough you bunch seem to be quite shy about talking about the wonderful adventures you've had. Strange, as you don't strike me as being the shy type. Here's a couple of things to keep in mind:

- People are curious and want to know.
- If you leave it to the next person, the next person has left it to you too.
- Slides are more than welcome, mould and all!

I have some ideas for future slide shows. However to make them work, I really need volunteers from you. I will think further on the ideas and pop something into the next newsletter and on the forum. I really look forward to hearing from you, and you can always contact me on social@wtmc.org.nz

Ruapehu Lodge Report

Brian Goodwin, Lodge Convenor

Jan and I have just returned from another two weeks at Ruapehu after seven continuous days of excellent skiing. The weekend 14-15 September saw us waking up three mornings with fresh snow on the ground followed with fine weather.

Unfortunately, the great spell of fine weather did not continue into the weekend of interclub ski sports and I presume these were cancelled for this year. Also as a result of the warm rain over last weekend there has been a large loss of snow which has resulted in happy valley being closed for the season and the lower two lifts being used for access to the upper mountain only. Hopefully the snow forecast for this weekend will at least be a bonus for the school holidays coming up.



On the edge of the crater lake on Ruapehu.

We will be having a meeting shortly to discuss work requirements on the lodge for this summer so we can prepare for next season which is forecast to be the year of the big snow! If anyone has any ideas, wish lists or grumblings please let me know so that we can discuss. Email me at lodgeconvenor@wtmc.org.nz.

Remember the lodge is open for business over summer, so if you need a great place to stay or have a wedding or a family gathering or just to spend time with a group of friends, the mountain is a great backdrop to do an endless variety of activities. So get some people together do some planning and then book!

Find all the details about the lodge on the website: <http://www.wtmc.org.nz/ruapehu-lodge>.

Editor's Highlights

Megan Sety, Newsletter Editor

This month's newsletter manages to capture the full range of club activities which go far beyond tramping (though we managed plenty of that as well). Read on for tales of family trips, mountain running, cycling challenges, alpine adventures and daywalks.

A few tidbits you might notice while you devouring this month's issue:

- If reading all about the Golden Brick Road family trip gets you inspired to pack up your children and get tramping, you might want to check-out the active group of WTMC family trampers including all ages (even the ones that have to be carried alongside the pack, nappies and all!). To find out more, contact families@wtmc.org.nz.
- Looking for some fitness training while enjoying the bush? Some of the successful Mukamuka Munter runners are looking for trail running buddies. Read the best little trail run to find out what you might be getting in to and then drop a line to president@wtmc.org.nz.
- If cycling is more your bag, why not sign up for the Taupo Cycle Challenge this November. Read about two different approaches to this event and choose your own adventure.
- Some trampers have found yoga a more relaxing alternative – consider checking out Yoga for Trampers, running most Wednesdays 6-7pm before Club nights at the club hall. Contact megan.sety@gmail.com for upcoming dates and more details.
- The week following our new members night (where people can learn all about tramping and the club), Bivouac will be giving a talk on 16 October about what to look for when shopping for packs, parkas and boots as well as answering any of the technical questions you gear heads can throw at him. This will be especially helpful to new trampers and Bivouac will be handing out vouchers for 10% for people who aren't yet club members.



And if you still don't know where to start, swing by Wednesday club night. Tea and biscuits are on at 7:30 for mingling, followed by 8pm slide shows and talks. You're sure to be inspired or at least find a trip that will whet your appetite.

Trip reports

Along the Golden Brick Road to Atiwhakatu Hut

24-25 August 2013, Family tramp, Tararuas (map #1)

Author: Barry Cuthbert

Trampers: Ella Cuthbert (10), Isaac Davies (6), Nysha Davies (6)

Porters: Barry Cuthbert (leader and scribe), Chris and Zaheda Davies

The long range forecast for rain morphed into a promise of a beautiful warm sunny weekend and with a nice hut at the end of an easy walk, a great weekend out was on hand.



Ella and I had a rough start to our morning as we received a call from home advising us that all our food was sitting in a plastic bag in the fridge rather than in our packs as I thought. I did wonder why the packs seemed lighter than normal when putting them in the car, but had I put it down to highly efficient packing. A hasty diversion off SH2 to Pak-n-save Upper Hutt saved any further problems for this porter for

when the punters would demand their ration of chocolate (not to mention more prosaic needs such as lunch, dinner and breakfast).

DoC has been steadily upgrading the Atiwhakatu track to a walking track standard this year by creating a smooth paved path with a top layer of golden crushed stone. Pretty much all streams the track crosses are bridged and extensive boardwalks have been installed over boggy terraces. Even a climb up beside a slip that once was a rough detour has now transformed into something more civilised with steps. The only work remaining on the track is building the final suspension bridge twenty minutes out from the hut. Apparently DoC has a program to extend the sleeping capacity of the hut to 24 before Christmas.



The walk to the hut took a relaxed three and a half hours to accommodate the wide range of ages on the trip. There were many convenient stopping points for scroggin along the way with track junctions, many different designs of bridges and the occasional break in the bush to enable a view down the valley or up to the ranges above. The kids found it hard to get their shoes wet and dirty (which made for a pleasant change!) except for the final unbridged stream and a short section of temporary track ticked that box for them.

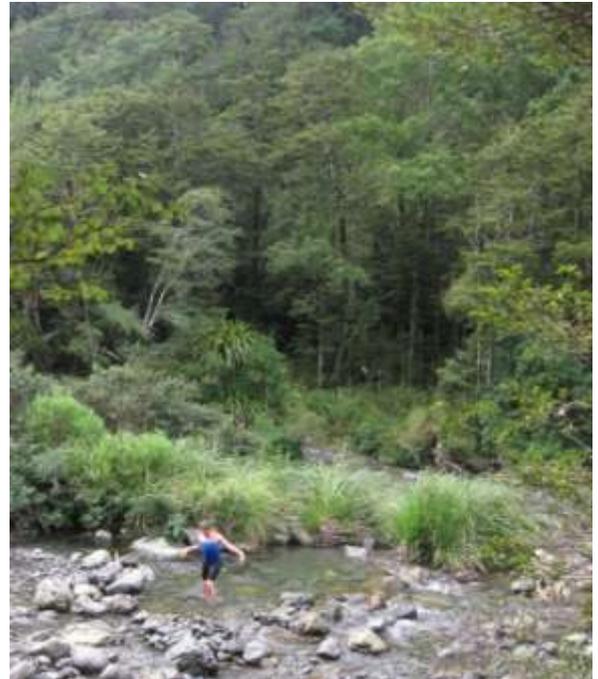
As it seems typical on any fine weekend, Atiwhakatu hut was full to overflowing with twenty people in for the night: a group of teenage boys celebrating a fifteenth birthday (with a

couple of tag-along dads), a couple of families travelling together, and some university students that had left Putara a couple of days previously. The kids went off exploring the stream and the bush flats alongside, leaving the porters to organise the dinner of creamy chicken pasta and s'mores. Post dinner contentment set in and sleeping arrangements were sorted out, with most people managing to fit on the platforms. Chris chose the hut floor, and I was out on the veranda as I found the fire in the hut too warm.

The next morning was even more pleasant than yesterday, so much so that Ella decided to go for a dip in a swimming hole in the stream. How a girl who feels cold during summer can manage to swim in a freezing and probably snow-fed stream during winter confounds me.

The walk back went very similar to the previous day except for a stop for lunch in the sun and a second swim at Donnelly Flat.

While many prefer the greater remoteness of the back-country, introducing the wonders of nature in enjoyable and manageable chunks pays dividends to the kids. Ella already is planning her next tramp and has some designs of completing some of the classic trips in the Tararuas this summer. Damn, someone will need to go with her. "Ah Honey, I'm going to be busy all weekend..."



Best Little Trail Run in the Orongorongos

7 September 2013, Trail Run, Orongorongos (map #8)

Runners: Sharron Came, Harriette Carr, Sarah Fisher, Eddie Hussey, Phil Kendon, Gareth Morton (leader), Alastair Shelton

Author: Sharron Came

As Gareth and I headed up the south coast into a lively northerly breeze with about 100 other punters the same two thoughts were going through my mind as last year (1) this landscape is stupidly beautiful and (2) how many scratches and bruises will I incur on the way to the finish line?

Sand and sea views give way to boulders, gravel fans and uprooted trees as we head up the Mukamuka valley. It's easier to navigate the second time round although this doesn't prevent me from nearly sending myself and a couple of other runners up the wrong way. A loud yell from behind saves the day. This year there being no strong southerly breeze the marshals are not crouched in the bush and it's not necessary to cling to vegetation in order to negotiate South Saddle.



There is no clag to mask the great views back to the coast and up to Mt Matthews.

A bit of scrambling over gravel mounds and across the main river sees a group of us hit the Big Bend track in convoy. Knowing this 3km section is undulating rather than flat and that it is possible to take a wrong turn if you don't have your wits about you and there is quite a bit of mud proves useful. In no time we were at the bridge that crosses the Turere stream from whence after a short brutal uphill section, the track really is flat for the remaining few kilometres to the finish line.



As we did last year, WTMC put in a great effort with Alastair Shelton 4th Open Man home in an impressive time of 3.10. Harriette Carr was the first Vet Woman home. No major falls this year, in fact remarkably few injuries. In my case a large bruise and matching scratch on one leg where I encountered some resistance from a tree branch in the Mukamuka Valley.

There are many things to like about the Mukamuka Munter. I like that it is run as a not-for-profit local event with lots of support from the local community. Big ups to *Better Than TV* (Shane and Jill Ross), for running events like this on a shoestring – the race cost just \$25 to enter. Big thanks to all the race marshals and other volunteers particularly the Athletics Masterton Club who provided all the hot drinks and to Kate Jenkins, Andrew Shackleton and John Taylor who baked delicious fruit cakes for us to eat.

While it is stressful for the race organisers I like the fact that because the race crosses the Orongorongo river which is prone to flooding the race can only really be run in good weather (this year the race had to be postponed). Finally, I can think of no other local trail run that encompasses such a great variety of scenery and route conditions. While there is no doubt that the race can break you there is no more beautiful place for fitness testing. I'm really looking forward to next year!

For details, more photos and next year's race, check out: <http://www.betterthantv.co.nz/>. Sarah and I are training for the Kepler and a few other things which means we will be heading out on longish trail runs most weekends we are in town over the coming months. We will also be doing mid-week runs now that daylight saving has arrived. If you're interested in joining us flick me an email at president@wtmc.org.nz.



Mangatarere Roadend to Sayer Hut in the Rain

17-18 August 2013, Easy, Tararuas (map #2)

Author: Mike Gilbert

Trampers: Regine Deleu, Logan Day, Ryan Day, Mike Gilbert (leader), Marloes Van Kleef

There's no point in roughing it until you have to, so Saturday morning breakfast was not cold muesli with reconstituted milk, but salmon on sourdough and espresso from the French patisserie in Greytown. I couldn't resist slipping a tuna mayo roll from there into my pocket too.



Mangatarere Roadend is a place less travelled. It's at the end of a long, winding road that goes to gravel pretty quickly, narrows to one lane wide with lots of blind corners. Previously, there was a concrete ford that had been half washed away. We saw that the council had indeed solved the problem – they had put up a big sign saying 'End of Council Maintained Road' just before it. Someone had built up the broken concrete bits with gravel so it was navigable. However, when we reached the roadend we dubiously eyed the pouring rain and decided discretion was the better part of finding a raging torrent that we couldn't get our cars back through on the Sunday. So back we went and left our cars safe and sound on the other side of the ford. It was only a short walk back anyway.

We headed off in steady rain that didn't dampen our spirits. It was still warm and calm. After a short piece of indecision about which way to go – you stay on your side of the river, not crossing a rickety bridge to Mangatarere lodge – we were soon ascending the slippery, muddy ridge that would bring us to the unnamed knoll.

We rapidly formed two groups – Logan, Marloes and Ryan forming the advance party and Régine and I bringing up the rear. While the Sayer Track is a short walk at 3-5 hours, it's a bit of a surprise for trampers accustomed to easy tracks. Roots, mud and treefall, not to mention that for almost all of that time you're grunting up to the unnamed 771m knoll and then torturing your knees on the descent, make it a challenging few “easy” hours.

As the last party had warned us, there was plenty of big trees down over the track to climb around and over. Someone had been through with a chainsaw though, and cleared the worst of it, but not all of it.

The rain didn't abate but neither did the warm and still conditions so it was certainly not unpleasant to walk in. Forest ranged from mighty towering beech forest to lower shrubby bush to beautiful goblin forest. The misty rain gave it an ethereal quality where you could imagine dryads and pixies just out of sight, laughing and giggling at these unlikely interlopers in their midst.

Soon we were on the top ridge and passing '771m knoll', unnamed and unmarked. The DOC person assigned the job of track marking had celebrated this peak in their own way by putting up a plethora of orange markers but otherwise it was unremarkable.

Then it was down and down, interminably down. Knees begged the hut to be near. The whole walk was in beautiful forest but with only a few chances to peek out at tree clad and mist framed peaks and valleys. But eventually and abruptly we met Sayer Creek and the Waiohine River flat. A short skip down the blissfully flat track led to a peek of corrugated iron and a rustic old hut in a clearing. The rain had eased during our descent, and we reached the hut in clear weather.

What a wonderful hut! Though fixed and added to and changed over the decades, this hut has the same structure as it did when built at the turn of the 20th century. Rough sawn and

hand shaped wood and logs abounded, and a range of road signs and farm business advertisements showed that cheeky thieves have been with us forever.



Ryan, Logan, Marloes were already there and waiting for us with a blazing fire that Logan tended to all night. It was only mid afternoon so we went exploring. The Waiohine River was well up, with strong flow and whitecaps in the main channel, and crossing it wasn't an option. No chance to explore Totara Flats or anything like that (it could be possible to bush-bash

up our side of the river to the Totara Flats footbridge, but we didn't try that). There was a big grassy area near the hut that would be perfect for camping, and plenty of fire sites attested to people doing just that.

The next day, we foraged for firewood to more than replace the substantial pile we'd burned through over yesterday afternoon. We cleaned up, and then set off as the same two parties that we'd formed on the way in. There was only one way out - the same way we went in, and over the same 771m knoll. I built a cairn at the top from what rocks and branches I could find - it seemed to need more than just a few orange triangles to mark the achievement of summiting it. The rain had returned, along with a chill breeze - the top of the knoll was the first and only time I felt a little cold.

The descent was muddy and slippery but went quickly. Again, all of a sudden we were at the Mangaterere Stream that signalled the end of our descent and the short flat walk back out to the car.

The ford we were nervous about was indeed up and fast flowing, probably still passable but I was glad I didn't have to try.

We quickly changed into (mostly) dry clothes and piled into the mostly dry car. Engine on and heater on full - we headed to the Greytown cafe where the cafe owner took pity on us and gave us our very own heater. Soup and wedges got us warm and comfortable and ready for the drive home.

Top Gorge - Ruahines

30 August - 2 September 2013, M, Ruahines (map #3)

Author: Megan Banks

Trampers: Megan Banks, Debbie Buck, Katy Glennie (leader), Mike Phethean, Megan Sety, Marloes Van Kleef

The goal was to get to Top Gorge hut in the Ruahines where none of the group had been before. The forecast was variable, however it was predicted that the main issue was going to be the condition of the snow on the tops as the route involved a long day with a number of hours on the Ngamoko tops.

On the journey to the roadend it was agreed that Brendan's driving was impeccable and we got to the carpark safe and sound and keen to walk the half hour to Alice Nash Memorial Heritage Lodge. A bunch of hunters were in their bunks in the hut but soon woke up and moved to make space for us and the six from the other two trips; although nearly half the group chose to get some fresh air and slept outside on the deck.



The next morning we walked in convoy with the EMs (Brendan and Bridget) to Iron Gate hut where a cup of tea was brewed for morning tea as preparation for the uphill stint to the tops. As we moved up above the bushline the weather closed in and the snow continued to get deeper. The day was getting away from us.

As the conditions deteriorated we changed our goal to Longview Hut which was closer and going to be less travel on the icy tops. At 3pm we were just short of 1500m and not yet at the turnoff on the main ridge. We deliberated whether to continue or return to Irongate. It was going to be around another three hours, navigation going well, to get to the hut in poor conditions. As it was a medium trip most of the group confessed to not being mentally prepared for such a day as well as the prospect of another big walk out on the Sunday as the route had changed.



It was decided the safest and most sensible option was to go back down to Iron Gate which would only take a couple of hours with the steps already having been plugged, and the thought of the roaring fire that the EM group would have was very appealing!

We got back to the hut without incident but alas there was no fire as there was no dry wood. Efforts were made to spark it up but our energies soon focused on the main priority of preparing

and eating dinner. Just as we were going to bed the report from the floor was the fire was successfully alight and looking after itself.

On the Sunday we wandered back to Alice Nash lodge to find the MF's waiting for us having spent another night there after also turning back off the tops. Two from our group including the leader had gone AWOL in search of blue duck so while waiting some yoga poses were executed on the deck led by the club yoga teacher Megan S. The classes before club on Wednesdays are highly recommended!

Once the duck hunters turned up a pleasant stroll was taken back to the carpark, followed by a pleasant stop for beer and ice cream at the Kimbolton café and the return to Wellington feeling refreshed for the week ahead after a fun excursion in the hills.

Tunupo via Alice Nash Heritage Lodge

30 August - 2 September 2013, MF, Ruahines (map #4)

Author: Sarah Fisher

Trampers: Sarah Fisher, Mike McGavin, Craig McGregor (leader), Alastair Shelton

Our tramp got off to an interesting start with Craig educating me in the week leading up to the tramp on what to do if I was ever chased by a bear since we had been talking about his Alaska trip. I was seriously hoping I would never have to put his advice into action. Although according to some entries in the Waiopahu Hut intentions book, there's a pack of bears roaming the Tararuas chasing unassuming trampers up the hill and these bears have probably migrated to the Ruahines since!

On Friday night we all walked to Alice Nash Heritage Lodge. The DoC website had stated that there were two slips 10 minutes from the carpark which were very difficult to negotiate. After 20 minutes of walking we decided our MF group was either going very slowly or the slips had been cleared already and the website had not been updated since (it was the latter).



On Saturday we headed up to Tunupo. The snow was below bushline but wasn't too deep, so luckily I couldn't partake in my favourite past-time of continuously sinking knee-deep into snow. Once we got above bushline we all took turns at the tiring work of trail blazing.

As we approached the summit of Tunupo it was getting very windy and very cold in the exposed places. On the summit of Tunupo we had sleet pelting straight at us almost horizontally and visibility was very limited. It was here that common sense prevailed and we then made the decision to turn around because we were going to be spending the next few hours wandering along the tops directly into the sleet and fierce wind while making slow progress due to the snow. After snapping a photo on the summit as evidence of the peak we had just bagged, we headed back down to Alice Nash Heritage Lodge. On

reaching the hut we were very fortunate that it was occupied by some hunters who had a much appreciated roaring fire going for us to defrost.

Dinner brought some challenges. Half-way through dinner the gas stove went out and we realised the gas canister was now empty. I had felt that this MF trip needed some additional challenges and had placed the new gas canister I had brought for the trip next to some half empty ones and had mistakenly picked up one of the half-empty ones.



Luckily, Craig had his little stove, but it was not really designed for such a big billy. However, a bit of skilled manipulation from Craig, Mike and Alastair did the trick. This was probably a good thing otherwise I probably would have been sent out to hunt for an alternative dinner.

The hunters we were sharing the hut with provided some interesting conversations covering everything from how wonderful

Kathmandu was to 1080 poisoning which Craig very skilfully diverted. They also felt very sorry for Craig and Mike who had chosen to sleep out on the porch, despite my reassurances that they habitually slept on hut porches, regardless of the season. As it turned out Craig and Mike made a very wise decision because the hut ended up like a sauna during the night since one of the young hunters had only brought a emergency blanket to kip under so was keeping the fire roaring all night.

On Sunday morning we went for a wander down to the river to pass the time until the other two groups turned up. We thought the Medium trip would have not made it to Top Gorge hut due to the weather conditions and would have spent the night at Iron Gate, so we were expecting them back around midday. Sure enough right on schedule they turned up.

However, to maintain our reputation as a MF tramp we told all sorts of stories about our tramp; it ended up sounding like the four of us had all been on separate trips. Unfortunately the M and EM group didn't quite buy our story that we were so efficient that we had done the entire loop around to Longview and Leon Kinvig and made it back in time to the hut for lunch. Some light-hearted ribbing ensued when they realised that they had both walked longer than us.



Snow-related fun around Tongariro

6-8 September 2013, Alp1, Tongariro (map #5)

Author: Emily Shrosbree

Trampers: Fiona Elliot, Tony Gazley, Marie Henderson (leader), Rowena Johnstone, Emily Shrosbree

Camping high in vicinity of the Emerald Lakes with a possible Ngauruhoe summit was the plan; a windblasted dash past Red Crater and a good proportion of the Tongariro Northern Circuit was the reality – a great post-snowcraft introduction to alpine trips for me!

Chitchat over fish and chips in Bulls produced several alternatives to our original plan. Given the forecast of high winds and a fair amount of precipitation it was unlikely we'd be camping as high as we might have hoped. Said chitchat also revealed that two amongst us had never tasted L&P which nicely provides this trip report with hydration-related sub-plot number 1.



Arriving at Mangatepopo Hut sometime after 11pm, we stumbled over our final punter (Tony) who had set up camp on the veranda (or is it a deck?), then headed straight to bed. In the morning, we managed to contain our excitement at the discovery of electric lighting in the hut, and our horror that one anonymous party member had forgotten their teabags (hydration-related sub-plot number 2), just enough to make some arrangements for the van to find us at one of our exit options sometime around Sunday lunchtime. We didn't fancy walking back to Mangatepopo straight into the forecast 70km winds.



Our party of five, with teabag supply for four, left the hut in pretty murky but mild weather and headed up the solid track that forms the start of the Tongariro Crossing. We were passed by two runners in just shorts and trainers who momentarily made us look rather over-kitted.

We stopped after an hour or so to don crampons in the South Crater, which made tackling the slope up to the Mangatepopo Saddle and the ridge along to Red Crater in reasonably strong winds achievable. We were now glad we had more kit than those two runners! Another hour later we stopped for a jelly bean boost on the sheltered side of the ridge having decided not to attempt Tongariro summit in the cloud. And cloud there was, although every now and then it cleared just enough to taunt us with the landscape we might have seen had it been clear. We headed south-east skirting the Emerald Lakes and continued down towards Oturere Hut where we'd decided there would be time for tea and decision-making, reaching it around 1pm.

Decisions, decisions... Tony's campaign trail would march us on to Waihohonu Hut for the night, then back to Whakapapa the next day, while Rowena was keen for us to keep the weekend wholesome by steering clear of luxury Waihohonu and instead staying at the more modest Oturere Hut, before heading back up and over to Ketetahi on Sunday. Not much between them in terms of exposure or time. Marie declared herself neutral, and Fiona and I were game for either option. Others arriving to stay at Oturere chipped in with their preference for us to stay put to help keep them warm. In the end we opted for making the most of what was turning into a nice afternoon and heading on to Waihohonu.

We broke the 2.5hr tramp with a 20min rest on a very comfy and colourful bit of tussock, sunbathing while we rested our legs. Both Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe made appearances through the cloud to provide a stunning backdrop to the afternoon.



Waihohonu Hut was all the palace the campaign slogans had promised...with only one other group of four to share it with. We got the fire going and the temperature inside soon hit a tropical 23 degrees thanks to the insulation – far from the cold night camping we had anticipated.

Time for more tea and the discovery that a second anonymous party member had left their teabags at the previous hut. Sunday morning brought wind and some rain, but nothing as bad as we thought we might get – more of concern was the dwindling supply of tea – some leaves were on triple-dunking duty! After a brief visit to the historic Waihohonu hut with its separate male and female quarters and photos of women skiing in wide-brimmed hats and skirts, we marched on towards the Tama Saddle – the ~~meto~~erpathway took us directly under a beautiful rainbow...or at least that's how we tried to make it look in the photos.

Just before the real rain came in we took the 10 minute detour up to the Lower Tama Lake where we paused for some discussion on why the lake levels were SO low – was it just the dry summer and lower snowfall this season - and whether they would ever recover. The last hour or so back to Whakapapa village was pretty grey and wet. We met several day walkers heading up to the lake looking particularly miserable in their emergency ponchos. I think we were all pleased to see the van.

On the journey home Marie got her first taste of L&P and we declared her probably the first person in history to describe it using the words "it tastes just like the chocolate!" I can't comment as I have also yet to try the liquid stuff. A fantastic trip – with all the options discussed, my list of adventures to be had in this area has just increased about three-fold!

Taupa Cycle Challenge – The Time is Now!

24 November 2012, Cycle, Taupo (map #6)

Author: Andrew Bichan

Most running or cycling events have their own attraction but I'd never really understood those that feel the urge to turn up at the same event year after year. That is until I completed my first 'round Taupo challenge. It's great fun, particularly if you go in a group and has earned its iconic status with great scenery, good natured crowds and good organisation.

The 2013 event is coming up on 30 November so you still have a bit of time to dust off the bike and get a few miles under the wheels before the day. Think of it as the perfect way to get fit for summer tramping trips. If you're a bit shy of having a go at the full loop (a bit under 160 km - let alone those with a shaky grasp on reality who go around up to 8 times), there are plenty of options (seventeen in all!) including a MTB challenge to choose from. Check out the website: <http://www.cyclechallenge.com/>

You can be as un-serious as you like; my sister has been known to take a picnic and stop for coffee (her version follows next). My first crack was in 2010 on a MTB but I wouldn't really recommend that. There are training programmes on the web, but my acid test is if I can survive a loop of about 130 kms around some of Wellington's hills than I reckon I'll be ok on the day. In 2012 I only managed to fit in a few weeks training due to a badly timed holiday but tramping and running fitness were enough to get by. This is how it panned out for me...

Driving up on the Friday night gives the opportunity to check out the last 50 km of the course from Turangi, including the infamous Hatepe hill (not as bad as the Akatarawas!).

In the morning my start group is scheduled to set off at 7.30 (you preselect based on your anticipated finishing time, but it's pretty casual). There's a bit of a wait in the chute but plenty of people to chat to.

This is the time for ticking off final mental check lists. Shirt pockets contain a light jacket, banana, gels, a one square meal. And on the bike I've got: 2 tubes, repair kit, pump and two water bottles (one with electrolyte). Let's hope it's enough.



And it's into the chute and off. This year I have a simple plan; go out a little harder and try to get some early bunch riding. The first part of the course climbs gently but consistently and the wind is not too strong. Bunches form, but tend to break on the next hill so as often

as not, I potter along on my own. Knots of spectators gather at intersections and there's plenty of encouragement. The morning is overcast and cool; perfect.

Fitness from cycling around Wellington and tramping pays off on the stretch to the west of the lake. It's fairly hilly and the day starts to warm up. There's the usual mix of experience amongst the riders with some making bunch riding very difficult with unpredictable riding styles. Most riders however are pleasant to be around. Around the 40 km mark, head down and in a world of my own: a voice suddenly says from over my shoulder; "you're on fire!" There is a moment of confusion during which a sluggish mind drags itself back to reality; what could be burning? How did it happen? Do I need to do something?? The voice enlightens me: "you're cracking along; I've been bludging off you for miles!" I reply that I may just call in the favour and he obliges good naturedly.

Eventually (around 95km in) there's the long glide down Waihi hill then it's flat for ages. This is a cue for cyclists to start flocculating into large clumps. Bunch riding can be a little intimidating at first but it significantly eases the load and you get used to it pretty quickly.

The bunch I'm in clips along to Turangi, where I take my turn at the front but manage to get boxed in when we catch some slower riders so find myself at the back again. Here I learn the importance of not getting stuck behind someone that varies their speed (e.g. stands up to stretch their bum or wobbles as they extract goodies from their pockets). Eventually it gets a bit much, so with a bit of effort I push on ahead.

Etched into the chronicles of the race is Hatepe Hill. About 20 km from the end, it is not particularly high or steep but it stands on its own and riders often get there in the heat of the day. Being wide and open it has a curiously depressing psychological effect and there are always a few people trudging up beside their bikes. It's not too bad today despite the warmth. Ideally you join a bunch from the top but not today; there's just solo riders. The road takes a long easy roll down (it always seems to be a head wind here) before a sudden plunge to the lake.

The last few features of the ride flick by: the tiny rise on the water front; increasing numbers of people cheering the riders; the first of the shops; the start of the crowd barriers; the right angle bend into the finishing straight; a bus ... "What the #\$\$@%?" ... it just manages to lumber out of the way. Then it's the last few hundred meters and, not a moment too soon, the timing strips. The crowd is gratifyingly generous with its applause for all riders. I'm happy with a quicker time than last year and knowing I couldn't have put much more into it.

So there it is. Whether you want to give it heaps and go for a personal best or just enjoy the scenery and stop for a picnic, Taupo should definitely be on your 'to do' list. The only question is; why not this year?

Round Taupo with Picnicking & Coffee – Will you go?

24 November 2012, Cycle, Taupo (map #7)

Author: Iona Bichan

Iona tells of accompanying a friend who is completing the second of two laps (the enduro).

My friend Helen has called in at our motel for an inter-lap pit stop and is soon feeling freshened up after a shower and breakfast despite having cycled since 1:30am. We set off in the brightening morning light and proceed round the back streets to join the course at the roundabout on SH1.

Helen's keen to get some miles under the tyres before we hit the main crowds. It's pretty clear going as we miss any start groups on the first hill and head west past groups of excitable kids and a strange selection of red-clad cheerleaders, obviously from one workplace - maybe it's their community service plan? The enduro and relay riders take a slightly longer route so we enjoy the relative solitude and the cool morning air on the hills that take us to the highest point of the course in its top western corner. I even have a chance to take the lead for some of the distance.

The great thing about Taupo is the social encounters. As everyone is labelled with their name (or at least the one they've chosen for the ride) you can do things like cry out "George Bryant! Fancy seeing YOU here!" as you pass random strangers.

The transition points and drink stations are entertaining with the slight anxiety caused by inept relay riders launching themselves like wildebeests into the fray. One year we saw Buck Shelford cruising in, only to fall in an undignified heap as he failed to unclip from his pedals at a drink stop.

Things go smoothly, although it's all I can do to keep up with Helen, despite it being her second time 'round.

It's a great run down Waihi Hill with few riders to impede my no-brakes descent. On the flat again an Australian is bemused with the noise of my pannier bag, containing my picnic food and drink, and drops behind to avoid it. The bag is a source of great amusement to many, getting nearly as many comments as Helen's enduro cap.

The licorice cafe is a welcome sight; Helen beats me there and has just started her coffee and has mine waiting on the table.

Helen's brother Andy turns up and we re-slather ourselves in sunscreen while shovelling down coffee and food. A quick visit to the salubrious cafe loos and we're off again.

Andy is supposed to be pace-setter for Helen on the last 40 km to Taupo. This soon proves to be needless as Helen starts zipping past any bunch in her way - and there are many. I manage to keep up for a while, but just before Hapete I let her go and cruise in the shade of the gum trees while cooling my head.

Hatepe has its usual littering of walking cyclists and others swerving all over the lane having made ill-advised gear changes. Then it's all pretty much downhill but for the

seventh year in a row the wind prevents a speedy trip down Hatepe. I manage to get up to 62km/hr but not without having to pedal furiously.

A certain camaraderie arises among the riders (at least those that can still speak), and yet again I'm left wondering if I should have perhaps put in more effort... Nah, I like the fact that I can enjoy the views of the lake as the road leads down and 'round the corner into the chute.

Helen and Andy are still eating their ice-blocks when I join them at the finish line. I help myself to the complimentary pineapple before we wend our way through the crowds and back to the hotel to peel away layers of sweat and sunscreen in the shower.

It's a happy bunch that convenes for venison stock pot, custard, fruit and a single malt or two after. Bragging rights of course go to Helen, what a legend.

Naturally, bed time is early and most of us have one of those too-knackered-to-sleep-well nights.

All over for another year and the trip home passes quickly: new socks in Taihape, coffee and slice in Foxton and some Swazi tops in Otaki, finally, a quick nip over Paekak hill with no slow traffic.

Next year? Each year so far I've said "maybe" and ended up deciding to go near the last minute. The chances of paring back my time looks slim, unless I do something extreme like not bringing panniers of picnic items. Still with a bit more training and a better start bunch ... maybe I will come back in 2013!

Mt. Kaukau to Karori

25 August 2013, E Daywalk, Wellington region (map #9)

Author: Ray Walker

Trampers: Paul Crozier, Matthew Hedges, Barbara Keenan, Ingrid Shouler, Deborah Stoebe, Ilske Verburg (leader), Ray Walker, Ian Wilson

The plan was to meet at the Wellington Railway Station and catch a train to Khandallah before starting the walk proper at the bottom to Mt. Kaukau. I chose to meet the rest of the team at the start of the track. This gave me a chance to have a quick coffee at the café in the park before the others arrived, right on time at 10.30 am.

It was Ilske's first trip as leader and she managed to arrange some great weather! The route for this walk was to include the main track to the top of Mt. Kaukau and then the Skyline walkway as far as Karori. The walkway now goes as far as Makara Saddle, but that part was not on the agenda for this day.



As I was the only person that appeared to be taking photos, I was ‘volunteered’ to write the trip report. I noticed that there were a lot of people on the track and at the summit. I surmised that this was probably due to it being the first really fine day for some time. I have walked this track a number of times and I cannot recall seeing so many people.

After a short rest we set off along the walkway to the south. The people on the walk were a mixture of members, non-members and first-timers. Other than the climb from Khandallah to Kaukau, the track traverses an open ridge mainly through farm land. The ridge is exposed and not a good place to be in windy weather. However, on this day there was hardly any breeze; just enough to make the distant wind turbines turn rather slowly. The views from the ridge were expansive. The South Island was in clear view and in the other direction the harbour which appeared to be dead flat. As they say “there is nothing like Wellington on a good day!”

We stopped for a leisurely lunch at some point along the track. It was nice to sit on the grass and not get a wet backside. Yes, spring cannot be far away. Barbara kindly offered me and a couple of others her sun screen. I had not brought mine along as it was still ‘winter’.

After lunch we continued on towards Karori. We met a small herd of cows on the track. They were obviously used to the presence of people; they made little effort to move out of way. Once past that hurdle and further along the track we entered an area of scrub and pine trees. IIske knew that the turn off to Karori was easy to miss as the sign is positioned for people going in the opposite direction. So we kept an eye out for it as missing it would mean we might go to Makara Saddle. Fortunately we found the turn off and changed direction accordingly. One last hurdle was a fallen pine tree which according to a sign had been blown down in the storm that hit Wellington in June.

The trip took about 4 ½ hours. There was one last thing to do, and that was to have refreshments at the café at Karori Park which is housed in a building with the rather pompous name *Catley Curtis Nimmo Pavilion!*



Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 25 October 2013

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