



# Footprints 2009

Auckland University Tramping Club





*Disclaimer: The club would like to thank AUSA for their contributions towards the publication of Footprints and other events through the year. Opinions expressed in this journal are the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Students Association or the Auckland University Tramping Club.*



# Footprints 2009

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**The Annual Journal of the Auckland University Tramping Club - Volume 63, 2009**

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## **Committee 2009**

*President:* David Gauld

*Captain:* Rion Gulley

*Secretary:* Kat Collier

*Treasurer:* Richard Greatrex

*Social Officers:* Charis Wong/Tom Goodman

*Memberships Officer:* Kylie Brewer

*Hut Officer:* Brad Lovett

*Website Officer:* Rob Connolly

*Publications Officer:* Rebecca Caldwell

*Trips Officer:* Craig Smith

*Safety/Instructional Officer:* Anton Gulley

*Gear Officer:* Rowan Brooks

*Alpine Officer:* Miles Mason

*Duke of Edinburgh Officer:* John Deverall

*Archive Officer:* Brian Davies

*Vice Presidents:* Andy Baddeley, Anthea Johnson, Jane Dudley, Owen Lee, Antony Phillips

## **Front Cover Photo**

**Best Scenic Photo of the Year winner: "Lake Daniells" ~ by Keri Yukich ~**

"Good use of portrait, like the mist, sharp and well exposed", as commented/judged by Shaun Barnett

## **Centre Insert Photos**

**Mt. Taranaki, Nth Island ~ by Aidan Thorp ~**

**Lake Matheson, Sth Island (A3 Centrepiece) ~ by Rebecca Caldwell ~**

**Tongariro-Alpine Crossing Great Walk, Nth Island (via moonlight) ~ by Andy Baddeley~**

## **Back Cover Photo**

**Most Hilarious Photo of the Year winner: "Business as usual" ~ by Erik Tomsen ~**

"Excellent pose, nice sepia tone, good use of portrait and angle of cigar", as commented/judged by Shaun Barnett

## **New Zealand Maps (North and South Island and Back Page)**

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New\\_Zealand\\_location\\_map.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New_Zealand_location_map.svg)

Courtesy of Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NZOMC.PNG>



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# Editorial



Welcome to the latest edition of Footprints. 2009 has been an interesting year for the tramping club and many improvements have been made to keep the club alive and kicking. Being actively involved in the club allows many opportunities to grow personally, mentally and physically. It has certainly enabled my personal growth and better management of my time (juggling between work, uni, committee duties, family & friends).

There are many benefits to tramping, which I think can be summed up in four words; 1. growth, 2. challenges, 3. differences and 4. friendships. These can be further explained as:

**1. Growth:** Tramping can bring out the best and worst sides of anyone ... even with the best map, gear and tramping companions, tramping can still deal all sorts of challenges; weather changes, different moods under pressure, seeking new routes on damaged tracks or the unfortunate situation of getting lost (or thinking you are). All of these situations bring out the real thoughts and sides of people (sometimes through angry unhelpful words, complaining, sulking or silent treatment – doesn't matter whether you are loud or quiet, none of these characteristics are helpful/constructive), which often allow no room for hidden/false pretences, especially when facing a near death situation. As such, growth can only be enhanced.

**2. Challenges:** Every time I go on a tramp, I still learn something. Even working in the committee for last two years, I have continued to learn, whether organising large social events, publishing this magazine, or understanding (and still) the different ways people do things. Nonetheless I've grown and still I find myself not knowing how everything works, except realising that challenges never cease!

**3. Differences:** In each tramping party, you have different personalities, needs and speeds.

The different personalities and needs are great for fine honing leadership skills and teaching patience. As for different speeds, I sometimes find the fast people and slow people in particular get slack for their speeds (and not just jokingly). When no selfish agendas are involved, I don't think this promotes fair thinking. You are often thankful for the fast ones when they run ahead to find a route when you are lost or have hot soup waiting for you when you get to the hut. The slow ones shouldn't be looked down on either, they are giving it a go. It takes courage to be at the back and keep going (often get less breaks) and no matter what their level, they are developing their fitness/experience and this is something that ought to be encouraged and fostered. Try putting them in front, or hang back and take lots of photos, or if you don't like being held up, maybe try alternating with someone each day to go at the back so everyone gets the opportunity to go at their speed.

**4. Friendships:** The club can give you some lifetime friends as you share the same adventures and challenges together. On this cheery note, I would like to thank a few people (space limits thanking everyone) that I've met in the tramping club and whom have made a big impact; both tramping and personally. To Rob, for your unceasing love/support, integrity and challenging me to keep giving things a go. To Claire, for your integrity/reliability and constant streams of support with difficult uni papers. To Jeremy, for challenging me on each tramp and giving me a harder one each time (yes I'm serious ... I sometimes swear, but the challenges have only helped me learn more about tramping and what I can achieve).

In short, tramping adventures means more stories to share! :)

**Rebecca Caldwell**



# Captain's Report



2009 has been a strong year for AUTC with lots of tramping trips heading out into the bush. By my guestimates from O-week till October we have had close to 60 club trips heading out, amounting to over 150 days worth of tramping. These expeditions have been to a range of places across to Te Ika a Maui, from Cape Reinga to the Tararuas, plus all the excursions to the South Island that occurred over the summer and in the breaks. The difficulty in levels of these trips has varied from day plods to epic adventures.

Financially the club is in a very sound position with a strong membership base. Our collection of gear and safety equipment is constantly expanding to meet our members' needs. AURAC and AUTC have finalised an *Inter-Club Alpine Agreement* which strengthens our relationship and involves the pooling of alpine resources for the betterment of both clubs. Contact has been renewed with MUAC and VUWTC so that we can all learn from each other.

The snake that was lurking in the grass this time last year has been pacified. The Waitakere Ranges are highly unlikely to be given National Park status and ARC has indicated that they will renew O'Nuku's license in March. There are still a few issues that may derail the club in the future, on which we must unite to fight. Currently before parliament is ACT's Voluntary Student Membership Bill which if passed could reduce AUSA's budget by 60%. As their subsidiary, AUTC will feel huge repercussions as well. Similarly our membership numbers are likely to decline in the future as the government has removed the discounted fees that German & French exchange students have enjoyed in the past.

Another notable achievement this year has been the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the enormous contributions life members have made to our club. It gives me great pleasure that our

President David Gauld has now joined their illustrious ranks. David is seeking to retire from the Presidency after 10 years in the role, so if anyone is aware of any University Staff members who are keen, can you please contact David.

We have caught up on past Footprints and the website's importance continues to develop. Social events have blossomed again this year and have oozed tramping classiness.

A fallacy that I hear occasionally is that the committee is the centre of the club. This should not be the case; instead a committee should only act as a guide not the hub. I would encourage the next committee to take actions to avoid this trap. The ballot sheets for the elections were full compared to previous years and not everyone got elected. To those unsuccessful candidates, you can still be involved in the club without being a committee member and I encourage the officers to harness your energy and that of other members to further the club.

I would like to thank you all for your support and for the opportunity to be your Captain; I found it both rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable. Thank you to all the club members who have made this year what it was. Thank you to the committee for all your hard work and I wish the replacements good luck. I would particularly like to thank Richard Greatrex who was nice enough to disappear to Singapore for last year's election, and who has been my right hand man, whose wise opinions was valuable in beating down my stupider ideas. Also whino [rhino] deserves my acknowledgements for keeping a lookout for things sneaking up on me.

This year we were ONLY nominated as AUSA's club of the year, I guess that gives us something to sort out next year.

**Rion Gulley**



# Social Officers' Report

## Socialising tramping style.....

**The 2008 social officers' report by Charis Wong and Thomas Goodman**

(Some photos are from Tony Siu, Rosanna Walton, Kylie Brewer, Andrew Baddeley)

“Have you ever partied in a cave or bush in the middle of nowhere before?”, we asked. “Hmm, no..!?” they replied. “Well,. how about Phonebook Games?, or Table Traverse? Have you tried that?”, we asked again.

For this is what AUTC social events are like... After talking to Rebecca and Kylie (our last year's social officers), and reading through the social officers book that has been passed along since 1988, dominated by “warnings” and “careful advice”, we both felt relatively nervous, but at the same time rather excited for a full year of awesome events to plan. Throughout this year, we have tried to bring in a mixture of new ideas to spice up our events, and the long-going unique flavour of our traditional events (the Club is 77 years old now, and some of the events and hut games have been running for more than 30 years!) that have been passed along for many years.

*“We tramp some of the times, but we are friends most of the times....” From the social officers book and blurb written by Martin Wright AUTC Social Officer 1987*

There is no doubt that tramping is all we are here for in AUTC, but when we are out of the bush, these social events have become the secondary media for us to strengthen our friendships and find buddies for our next adventure! We believe we had a successful year with lots of social events held within.

The events that were organised this year were; Orientation Party at our dear O'nuku Hut, Wine and Cheese evening at Mt. Eden, Cave Party at Whatipu, a re-worked Progressive Dinner, a Cocktail Party, May Camp at Waitawheta, Dessert Night, Hut Birthday Party, Outdoor Clubs Party, ‘Scavenger Hunt’, Posh Dins and the annual Christmas Party.



Our annual **Orientation Party** at O'nuku Hut is always one of the biggest events of the year, and this year was no different - 83 people attended on the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> of March. A quick bus trip out to the Cascades, which was followed by choosing your own easy, med or hard tramp to the hut. The hut was decorated with streamers, fairy lights, spot lights, and a mirror ball with music being played for the whole night. A gourmet dinner was served with burgers, salad and apple crumble for dessert. And yes, these were all happening in the middle of bush! Great thanks to Claire Oliver for organizing such a beautiful meal! It was then followed by our famous hut games. Great thanks to the whole committee for their help. And great thanks for everyone who gave me a beautiful 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (same day as Orientation!), it was definitely memorable.



**Wine and Cheese evening** (12<sup>th</sup> March) and **Cornwall Park BBQ** (4<sup>th</sup> April) were the other two events followed by Orientation. We spent a lovely evening consuming wine and cheese at Mt. Eden. Despite the not-superbly-good-quality of wine (It's cheap wine! haha), and a howling wind that forced us to take refuge on the lower slopes, the beautiful night view of Auckland City and good company from our fellow trampers made for another enjoyable night. A sunny day was spent at Cornwall Park with a BBQ and playing relaxing games like Frisbee. A **Dessert Night** and **Cocktail Party** was also organised and based at Tom's house. Both events were well attended, with lots of amazing food, and great company from our fellow trampers. Thanks to Andrew Draper for mixing an inordinate number of cocktails, and to everyone else for bringing such an amazing range of desserts!

**Cave Party** was held (18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of April) at one of the sea caves at Whatipu in the Waitakere Ranges, with the theme 'Pirates and Smugglers'. Naturally this involved bush-bashing, a round of cave-exploration, and treasure hunting was a must-have. The cave was filled with black pirate



balloons, fairy lights, wooden boxes, pirate flag, candles and a parrot etc. After burritos for dinner, we all headed into the wilderness to hunt for treasure, with clues scattered throughout the swamp in the true smuggler style. Unfortunately it proved that most simply weren't cut out to be a smuggler, despite tall claims to the contrary, as only one team found the gold coins buried in the end. The night was spent in the cave with mozzies gleefully seizing their new prey. We were all exhausted after the weekend and

realized that it's not an easy life being a pirate or a smuggler.

**Progressive dinner** (23<sup>rd</sup> May) took place this year in a new-and-original format - the recession striking fear into students far and wide. Delicious home-made pizza at Sarah's house was followed by a quick (car-assisted!) progression to Tom's house for dessert. At some stage, Andy and Anton decided the pizza wasn't coming fast enough for their liking, and hit upon Kat's toes as a suitable substitute. Soon, Kat was surrounded by a ravaging horde, fortunately she escaped with only bite marks



on her big toes. After dessert, a round of charades started, providing plenty of entertainment for all.



**May Camp** was held on the weekend from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of July. Based on the fact that it has been held in the Hunuas and Waitakere area for quite a long time, we decided to try a new camp venue, the Waitawheta Camp at K gorge. The theme was “life is too short to buy cheap clothes...”

Friday night started off with ice-breaking

games and the camp’s famous flying fox that did its best to throw people off - it didn't succeed much. The next day the sun was shining brightly for a day of tramping, for which we must thank



Andy for sacrificing a possum on his drive down to the weather goddess. Claire Oliver and a team of helpers again did a beautiful job in food prep with a three course meal. Sarah and Tom organised the quiz while everyone enjoyed their delicious dessert with sugar to boost up their brain activities! Kat’s 21<sup>st</sup> was also celebrated, with a mountain cake being scaled by gummy bears, and another, somewhat ruder version....

Our O’nuku Hut had just turned 65 years old, so our annual **Hut Birthday Party** (29<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>

Aug) was relatively special this year with the unveiling of the life members’ plaque in order to celebrate their contribution to the club. It was an amazing weekend to meet the life members, who provided us with lots of the old memories, photo albums and many amazing stories of life in the



good 'ole' days. Our common tie to AUTC bridged the age gap (quite substantial in some cases!) as we all shared our stories, talked about our trip plans, sang, and even played hut games together! Their passion for AUTC was an inspirational for us all, and as they said when they left, “It is very nice to be back ..”.

A **Scavenger Hunt** (19<sup>th</sup> Sep) had been carefully planned for September, with lots of cool questions and problems to be solved at Cornwall Park, but unfortunately, the clouds opened and after much frantic organizing, we all convened at Andy’s house for a BBQ and Anzac slice that was provided by our excellent host. In order to encourage brain activities as planned for the event, we decided to play 'Cranium'. An exciting contest ensued, all were surprised by the literary and artistic skills displayed by all.

**Outdoor Clubs Party** (9<sup>th</sup> Oct) was held in conjunction with AURAC, AUCC, AU Dive





Club and AU Ski Club at London Bar, and was themed 'Dangerous Liaison'. It was an amazing night with people costumed dangerously. An honourable mention is also due to the DJ who was released upon an unsuspecting crowd. Out of the huge range of imaginative costumes on show, no-one could beat the creativity and effort from Ming (a broken condom) and Laura (as Gogo Yubari from Kill Bill), who won best dressed male and female, taking away the very cool jackets sponsored by Snowgum. Great thanks to the reps from other clubs: Chloe, Ally, Ming, Mai, Craig W and Hannah, and also to Snowgum and Living Simply for their sponsorship in prizes.



We had our lovely **Posh Dins** (20<sup>th</sup> November) at Mission Bay in order to welcome in summer. It was an evening with suits and ball gowns on the grass by the beach with fountains and lovely trees around. Handling food with hands or drinking wine out of cups was not allowed/encouraged. NZ's favourite 'fish and chips' was served with knives and forks on plates, and wine was served with wine glasses (ah hm well, plastic-made wine glasses), followed by a fine dessert. It was posh! Finally, the last event was the **Christmas Party** (6<sup>th</sup> December), which was held at Wenderholm Regional Park (a sudden departure from tradition). It was a lovely day on the beach with a BBQ and pot-luck picnic. As per tradition, the

incoming captain made an appearance as Santa Claus, with the role of Mrs Claus being filled by the incoming club secretary (distributing the secret santa presents that everyone had brought with them). Santa, perhaps ignoring the company brief that requires a child-friendly image, required a story of each person's first kiss before receiving their gift. This caused red faces all round. The remainder of the day was filled up with swimming, soccer and chatting over vast amounts of sweet food. It was a lovely day spent with our fellow trampers to cap off another fine year.

We hope that you have all enjoyed an awesome year of tramping and these social events. Great thanks to Sarah, the "third" social officer who helped us in most of our events and all the other members of the committee for their help and advice.



Happy Tramping!



**Your friendly Social Officers 2009,  
Tom, Sarah and Charis**





# 2008 Missing Social Reports

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## May Camp 2008

**Author:** Rebecca Caldwell

We started out with trying to get the projector to work (took 20 mins) to then watch the movie "Starters for 10" in a very smoked out hall (but atleast we weren't too cold). Following the movie, we then tried the "Burma trail". What a hoot! or a scream for the ones who successfully managed to scare some of the innocent few ;-)  
Thanks Aidan, Rob and others who helped lay a great trail. Certainly had a few *twists*!!!

The next day, we woke to rain, rain and more rain. Apparently we were in for a storm that hadn't been this bad for a decade. Nonetheless, Craig kept up the enthusiasm and everyone but a small few, dressed appropriately and went tramping on various tracks (easy, medium or hard).

A few of us stayed back to go on a shorter walk and then help out with the big task of feeding the masses for dinner. Things were going reasonably well until 2pm. The power went off and didn't come back on til 12am. We had one commercial gas oven stove (thank God) and with this we managed to cook two entrées, three mains, vegetables, cheese sauce, chocolate brownies and berries. Thanks to all the cooks, you guys did a fabulous job, especially given the unhelpful powerless circumstances.

Amidst entrées, dinner and dessert we had Quiz Mania by candlelight (well headtorches), to which "Suicidal Heifers" won. You guys knew a fair amount of knowledge - well done!

Next out came Rob's Home Brew Beer and Kylie's Vodka Punch and then the 'battle of elasticity' began .....

John and Richard organised some fabulous games in front of the warm pot belly stove fire (super athletic body needed to pick up piece of cardboard or penny from the ground using your mouth only - no hands, table traverse, the broomhandle challenge, twister and more).

Craig also set up his car stereo to blast as powerfully as it really could. It really did try! ..... for others who just wanted to boogie.

Finally at 12am, the power came on ..... so did the stereo! and we boogied on til 1.45am.

The ferocious storm wasn't as bad as the media and weather reports had made out. Hail and a few extra rocks on the road when driving back but nothing to lose sleep over.

The powercut made things harder, but thanks to headtorches, a gas oven, a fire place, great helpers and great people, its not a weekend I will forget in a hurry. Lots of fun (stressful cooking times and all)!



*“The car stereo was set up to blast as powerfully as it really could. It really did try!”*

## AUTC Christmas Party 2008

*December 2008*

**Author:** Kylie Brewer

**Attendees:** Kylie Brewer, Jenny Waite, Keri Yukich, Christina Ergler, Neil D'Cruz, Kieran Beggs, Claire Oliver, Aidan Thorp, Anton Gulley, Rion Gulley, Andrew Draper, Craig Smith, Tom Goodman, Sarah Wyse, Christina Fullerton, Galina Redkina, Stefan Wender, Andrew Young, Luke Kristensen, Ben Bauer, Jeff Small, Peter Luk, Rebecca Caldwell, Rob Connolly, Mel Abbott, Sebastian Herberling, Jake Nana, Rob Leyland, Ryan Barron.

The final event on the AUTC social calendar was the Christmas party, one last night of mayhem and shenanigans at the hut before we all head off on our summer adventures.

A keen group of trampers met Craig at Britomart to catch the train to Swanson to take the more traditional route into the hut via the scenic route, while everyone else took the slightly shorter Anawhata Road track. The evening started off with the annual Rambo Run, a bush bash down to Pig Wallow Stream, this year's winner was Craig Smith with a time of 3 minutes, 12 seconds. However not everyone who participated made it back and a search and rescue operation begun, when after half an hour Aidan and Sebastian failed to return. Within 10 minutes of the searchers venturing into the bush on a mission to find him, Sebastian returns and 15 minutes later so does Aidan much to everyone's relief. More searchers were then dispersed to find the original searchers to tell them all is well!

We christened our new bbq which was worth waiting for (Thanks Kylie!) followed by dessert of Christmas pudding which proved to be incredibly popular. Then it was time for Santa to hand out presents. Keeping with tradition, Rion our 2009 club captain was Santa with John our 2008 club captain as Mrs Claus and Anton as Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. Everyone

went and sat on Santa's knee but before they got their present they had to say one good thing they'd done this year. There were some unusual and unique presents including Dalmatian dominoes, a pirate journal, door stops and a Christmas tie!

Then it was time for crazy games led by the one and only AUTC party Queen Mel Abbott!! First up was 'Where are you Moriato'? We paired up and were blindfolded and one person in each pair had to try and hit 'Moriato'. Most of us ended up whacking the floor let alone 'Moriato'. Next up was the 'Cut the Chocolate' game where you had to put on the pile of random clothes in the right order and start cutting up the chocolate before the next person pulled a picture card from the pile. Sadly not many people got an attempt at the chocolate. Then it was time for the real mayhem of the night and the Piece de Résistance "The Big Score". We divided up into teams of 6 and each person had to decide whether they were either a flexible, a sculler, a sucker, a swallower, a blower or a spanker. Each team had to come up with a name, mine being Flight of the Wrongchords – thanks Ryan! The first round was the beer sculls and it was a race between a member from each team as to who could be the first to drink the can of beer. Next up was the flexibility challenge where we had to bend over and pick up a cardboard box with our teeth without our hands or knees touching the floor. I found I was more flexible than I thought but not quite flexible to pick up the box when only half of it remained. The third challenge was the sucking challenge where the suckers had to pick up and transfer M&M's using a straw between two plates. Next up was the blower challenge to see who could blow the most bubbles in a minute. This was followed by the swallower challenge to see who could eat their custard the quickest! Some managed to get more of it down their front than in their mouth! The final challenge was to find out are you a spanker?, where teams paired up to see who could hit each other the hardest. An extra challenge was added to the mix to pass a lolly between team members on tooth picks, not easy at the best of times but even harder in the dark! A fun end to a fantastic year of social events!





# Life Membership



David Gauld – AUTC Life Member, 2009

**Author:** Kat Collier

Amongst the many achievements of the club this year has been the creation of a life members' plaque, which now hangs on the wall in O'nuku. It was whilst we were researching the past life members of the club that Rion and I came to the somewhat surprising realisation that David Gauld was not yet on the list. This matter, we thought, had to be rectified immediately.

At the hut birthday party, we took the opportunity to speak with many of the Life Members, most of whom reflected our surprise and expressed their desire for David's immediate elevation to their ranks. All of this will give you some indication of how loved and respected David is within the club.

David Gauld joined AUTC in 1961, at a time when the club seemed to be almost entirely populated by an overabundance of Daves. He was Captain in 1964/65, and has been our devoted President on and off for the best part of the last 30 years. Always a fountain of wisdom about club traditions and relics, David is still an active trumper, and this year led an immensely entertaining tramp up Destruction Gully, for which he even wrote an accompanying theme song!

Throughout his time in the club, David has had many adventures, and been involved in some truly historic events. In July 1963, he was one of the six AUTC members who travelled to the

Kaimais to assist in the Search and Rescue operation for a missing plane (incidentally, the first New Zealand SAR mission in which helicopters were used). All 23 passengers aboard the flight died, and it remains New Zealand's worst domestic air disaster. Throughout the search, the members of AUTC distinguished themselves by their bravery, level-headedness, and their determination to reach the site of the crash.

Trip reports from David's early years in the club show, in a very comforting and familiar fashion, that nothing very much has changed. Trampers like David have always been with us – excitable, madcap, cheery, anarchic, equally ready to stroll along barefooted over rough rock whilst composing witty little tunes, or to slog their guts out up slopes in conditions which no sane person would ever attempt. Despite having tramped in some truly memorable places throughout the world, David retains a great fondness for local tramping. In 1967 he summed up a trip report on Yosemite National Park with these conclusions: 1. American hikers make up for the larger number of people (California, slightly larger than N.Z. has seven times its population) in the mountains simply by ignoring them. 2. I still reckon the Waitakeres are a good area for a weekend trip and 3. A brief article like this cannot hope to do justice to David's remarkable tramping spirit.

Suffice it to say that his Life Membership of the club is richly deserved a hundred times over, and by now well and truly overdue! Thank you, David: wise sage, generous leader, and an inspiration to us all.







# Instructional Courses

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## Beginners Snowschool

*July 2009*

**Author:** Kimberley Greenwell

**Instructors:** Rob Frost, Anton Gulley, Jane Dudley

**Participants:** Nadia Wollkopf, Preston Saunders, Harrison Pyne, Zachary Brierley, Tony Tse, Alastair Michaels, Johannes Trapp, Kimberley Greenwell

The morning started slowly as we sorted our gear and practised cutting steps on a slope in between the arriving skiers and snowboarders. When the instructors had finally run out of things for us to do off the snow, we started our ascent in the shining hot sun. We made several stops for fluids and to shed clothing on our climb, trying to stuff everything in our oversized packs, much to the amusement of people passing by.



We reached the hut for lunch and geared up for self arrest practice. We had no problems throwing ourselves down the steep slope, however stopping was another matter. The slides became longer and longer and the climb back up more difficult as we attempted to arrest from all four positions. We were all relieved when it started getting dark so we could go back to the hut and shed our sopping wet clothing. Thank goodness for a drying room.

After a dinner of what tasted of ginger, we had lessons on avalanches, mountain weather and snow cave making, although I'm not sure if any of us paid attention as we were struggling to keep our eyes open.

We woke early in the morning to a howling gale and the shuddering of the hut on its foundations. The instructors advised that the wind always sounds worse than it is, however when someone from another party got blown backwards a short distance from the hut, it was decided that we would be staying here for the day. To make matters worse, the luxurious indoor toilets froze and would not flush. This meant filling buckets with water to 'flush' the toilet bowls. The instructors came up with a few ideas to overcome our restlessness, one of which included being roped up so we could take a short walk out in the wind to see what it was like. The others watched from the windows as one by one we walked the short distance up a small slope, and it became a competition to see who could fall over the least. Ropes were tied up inside for some of us to try prussicking, and for others showing off their skills (or lack of them). The evening concluded with the phonebook game, another ginger flavoured dinner, and our great chefs' attempt at chocolate custard, which only Anton could stomach.



The weather improved, so we could venture outside the next day. The ski field did not open till late so we had a short walk to practice our

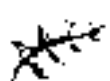
crampon walking on the ski runs. We achieved our 'summit', and if you angled the camera to avoid the pummel lift to the left and the mountain looming behind you, it actually looked as though we had reached the top of a mountain.

We packed up in the hut, just in time for the toilets to defrost and start flushing on their own. When the cheesy one-liners started from Rob, we knew it was time to leave. The descent involved some sliding, some planned and some not, and we reached the car park far too quickly.



*“We made several stops for fluids and to shed clothing on our climb, trying to stuff everything in our oversized packs, much to the amusement of people passing by”*

*“The instructors advised that the wind always sounds worse than it is, however when someone from another party got blown backwards a short distance from the hut, it was decided that we would be staying here for the day”*



## Advanced Snowschool

- Of Avalanches, Mayhem, and a  
Rather Improbable Trifle -

July 2009

**Author:** Kat Collier

**Madhouse escapees:** Rob Frost (beloved dictator), Joe Nelson (alpine guru and single-handed upholder of AURAC's claim to that second 'A'), Rion Gulley (Boss-man, nutcase, and all-round inspiration), Anton Gulley (he of embarrassingly tight inside-out polypro fame), Rowan Brooks (fanatic, drunkard, and provider of a ridiculous amount of lentils), Charis Wong (most noble shiverer on behalf of the group), Jane Dudley (creator of absurdly complex trifles), Andy Thompson (animal impersonator), Dan Scott (purveyor of foodstuffs, including a lamentable lack of coffee), and Kathleen Collier (scribe, daredevil, and homicidal driver).

Following immediately on from a week's worth of tramping in the Whirinaki and Kaimanawas, it needs be said that it was a less than enthusiastic Kat who shivered in the back seat of Andy's car outside a glaringly lit information shelter in National Park waiting for everyone else to arrive for what was to be the epic Advanced Snowschool '09. A gloomy silence had fallen over the vehicle, as Charis toyed listlessly with her mobile phone and Andy and Dan in the front seats stared broodingly in opposite directions. Your scribe, meanwhile, contemplated the various great dilemmas of the modern world, such as the fact that my boots were still full of icy water, and all of the chocolate was buried beyond hope of excavation beneath a bristling layer of axes, snow stakes, crampons, and other sharp pointy things. It was dark, it was cold, and the walk up to NZAC had never looked less inviting.

A wild squeal of brakes accompanied by euphoric war-whooping cries alerted us to the arrival of the others, who spilled out of the car into the night air with entirely too much *joie de vivre*. There followed approximately an hour's mucking round as we sorted out the ridiculously large piles of gear into slightly more

manageable portions, and everyone tried to avoid having to volunteer to carry the ropes.

The walk up to NZAC was as unpleasant as anticipated – freezing wind straight out of the arse end of Antarctica, accompanied by a sullen, sulky sort of rain, which took an indecent delight in freezing solid onto everything we owned. There was an avalanche warning out, so we avoided the nice snug valleys and instead plodded our way up a charmingly exposed ridge, weighed down with ropes, ice axes, hammers, snow stakes, transceivers, probes, helmets, shovels, emergency shelters, crampons, slings, harnesses, assorted hardware and an absolutely ludicrous quantity of food. All that could be said for this was that it at least prevented Charis from being blown off the ridges. Rob, suspiciously, was in unfailingly chipper spirits, and bribed us lesser beings onwards with a steady supply of chocolate.

Cries of ecstatic delight greeted the sight of our beloved NZAC hut, and we scrambled the final few metres with a surprising alacrity. Inside, we dumped our gear gratefully, and attempted to prise frozen chunks of metal from the outsides of our packs. It then became apparent that everyone was starving, and the only provision we had made for the night's dinner had been to swipe a large quantity of lentils from the Umakarikari trip. Dubiously, we poured most of the bagful into a pot of boiling water, and Rowan and I were left in charge of turning it into high cuisine on the grounds that, as vegetarians, we were best qualified to deal with 'lentil mush'. Over half an hour later, everyone else was severely doubtful of our claim that "lentils are a really quick meal", and decided just to eat them crunchy. Not recommended.

Having finally managed to extract from Rob a promise that he wouldn't drag us out of bed *too* early the next morning, we collapsed thankfully into blessed slumber.

The next few days were spent very studiously, as we applied ourselves to learning as much as we could about snow in as short a space of time as possible. I can safely say that I learnt more in that week than in an entire semester of



coursework (though given my status as the token Arts student of the group, this was hardly surprising). I have very little memory of Monday, other than the fact that one of the Gulley brothers was responsible for burning the porridge, and was soundly abused by the rest of us for the duration of breakfast. From memory, the morning was devoted to theory-type stuff (I defy anyone who has spent any time at all studying knots not to think that they're super-cool), and the afternoon to the practise of roping up in pairs in order to cross glaciers. One hitherto unsuspected advantage of this was the opportunity it provided for skipping games, at which Rob proved himself remarkably inept.

Tuesday morning we practised our anchor setting; whether due to some extraordinary skill on our part, or to the particularly wonderful quality of the snow that day, even our most bizarre designs seemed to hold, despite being subjected to the full weight of Rob, Rion, Joe and Anton combined. The afternoon was spent practising our pitching (awesome, awesome fun, despite the tendency of bucket seats to freeze your arse off), and the evening engaged in a funky little rope trick known as 'escaping the system', which involved dangling various bodies from the rafters of NZAC for extended periods of time. This is inclined to very quickly become a lot more painful than it sounds (unless, of course, you are one of those fashionable individuals who has a harness specially padded with sheepskin).

Wednesday's promised hurricane failed to eventuate, and we were left instead with a mild, summery blue sky, soft, powdery snow, and the lightest of breezes, which we took advantage of to practise our crevasse rescues outside instead of inside as originally planned. I spent a highly enjoyable morning sunbathing on a bit of bedroll just outside the hut and reading *The Lord of the Rings*, occasionally giving a bit of a tug to the rope attached to my harness as Anton, further up the slope, struggled heroically to rescue me from this appalling danger. That afternoon, we engaged in a slightly more realistic simulation, in which your partner leaps with gay abandon off the edge of a small cliff, and you engage in a lot of swearing as you

attempt to hold their weight and set an anchor, whilst being unable to move outside of a half-metre radius on the grounds that your foot balanced precariously on an ice axe is the only thing preventing them from dragging you down into the crevasse as well. Once you've managed this seemingly impossible feat of contortionism, you then have to escape the system, ascertain somehow whether or not your partner is alive (surprisingly easy, if they happen to be engaged in a furious snowball fight with all the other poor 'victims' who have simultaneously fallen over the edge of a cliff), and rig up an immensely complicated pulley system involving six separate lines in order to extricate them. I was lucky, as Charis is a particularly light and obliging victim, but Rion was less fortunate, ending up with approximately 30cm of rope to work with after Rowan 'jumped too far', and having all the while to duck missiles from his entirely unapologetic partner.

After each of us had rescued our (overwhelmingly grateful) partners, it was our turn to take the jump. Hanging about on the end of a rope in the snow for half an hour starts out fun, but not for long, as then the wind comes up, and the sun drops, and all the feeling in your extremities starts to recede as you begin to shiver uncontrollably. Eventually, only Jane and I were left down in the crevasse, watching the snowmobiles wend their way through the darkness like some species of bizarre, ungainly insect, their headlights bobbing and winking in a friendly fashion. By now, the cold had started to affect us more than a little, and we became remarkably silly, bouncing up and down on the ends of our ropes dancing the Macarena in the hope of attaining some warmth, and composing witty songs about the rest of the group. Jane's ability to create rhymes under pressure is remarkable (the rhyming of 'Rob' with 'blob', for example, was inspired), but she found it particularly difficult to discover a rhyme for 'Joe', getting through 'row', 'blow', 'ho', 'go' and 'mo' before discovering the obvious (we were sitting in about 2 metres of it).

We greeted our eventual, almost un hoped for rescue with delirious joy, and made all speed back to the hut in order to begin the process of

thawing out. As the weather had held, we decided to mount an assault upon the plateau the next day, so with any luck that would be our last night in the hut. This being the case, a party was in order; Rowan broached a cask of truly high quality (and very well-travelled) red, and Anton and Jane, unable to choose what to have for dessert, decided simply to combine them all. There followed a pudding of truly epic proportions, which we christened a trifle, though its exact classification remains shrouded in mystery. When complete, it was a thing of awe-inspiring beauty, and just the tiniest bit intimidating. At least six distinct strata could be discerned, comprising biscuit-crumble base, chocolate instant pudding, strawberry instant pudding, chunks of strawberry and port wine jelly, custard, and a delicate gravel of chocolate shavings. Whilst this monstrosity was being prepared, the rest of us carried on with a bit more escaping the system, and Anton took it into his head that it would be a good idea to practise his prussic knots by tying me up in them. For some incomprehensible reason I agreed to this, with the single proviso that I still got my dessert. Between them, Anton and Rowan managed to hog-tie me and carry me to the bench, where I was propped against the table and force-fed trifle, in serious danger of choking because I was laughing so much. Our antics were watched with bemusement by the bunch of Aussies with whom we were sharing the hut, but they must have decided that we were harmless, as they later joined us for a bit of high-spirited idiocy involving phonebooks, tables, brooms, chairs, bottle caps, etc. etc.

Thursday dawned brilliantly clear and still, with a dusting of the perfect squeaky powder one generally associates with Christmas cards. Because the valleys were still avalanche-prone, we took a ridge route up to the plateau, with Rob and Joe pointing out features of the snow as we walked. We played a bit of a game guessing which were the most likely avalanche paths, and examined some really rather fantastic ice formations. We reached the plateau sometime in the early afternoon and set about digging ourselves some snow caves for the night. It soon became apparent that the slope we'd chosen was one of those lovely ones

constructed from layers of 3-inch thick ice at 10-inch intervals, and we had a hell of a time hacking through them in order to get anything approaching shelter. Two hours in, Anton described the result of our labour as "about big enough for one person in the foetal position", and the rest of us were forced to agree with him. Jane then suggested that we turn to igloos, as the snow was decently blocky, so we divided into two groups – one to quarry and arrange snow bricks, and one to carry on with the painfully slow work of enlarging the cave. The sun was just setting when we came to the unwelcome realisation that our igloo was destined to collapse inwards in the night, so redoubled our efforts at snow caving. Hacking apart the ice was good, hard work, and kept us nice and warm, but outside the wind had come up again, so everybody outside had a tendency to freeze to whatever they touched, and it was cold enough for Anton to proclaim "we'll just have to squash into the cave and have a big orgy to keep warm". It probably speaks volumes that that was the best idea I'd heard all day. At one point Joe scrambled in with an urgent summons from Rob, instructing us that we had to get our arses outside immediately. Dreading news of hypothermia, broken legs, and people lost in avalanches, we rushed outside *en mass*, only to be greeted by a slightly bemused Rob with "Oh, I just thought the moon looked pretty".

Our shelter situation now becoming a little desperate, we sent the Gulley brothers into the cave and let them go mad, wielding picks, hammers and shovels with a terrifyingly manic enthusiasm. Rob and I were dispatched to cook dinner, and huddled miserably inside the minimal shelter provided by our half-built igloo trying to get the gas cookers to light and wondering why no one had thought to bring MSRs. Finally, about 3 hours after dark, we had a strictly functional meal of singed macaroni (hey, at least it was hot...), and a surprisingly serviceable snow cave big enough for about seven of us. Undaunted, Captain Rion then explained his plan that he, Rob and Joe would sleep in the freezing pit of our abandoned quarry, with an emergency shelter rigged up over the top to prevent them from being snowed on. Can't say I envied them. Particularly, given

Rion's peculiar sense of humour at times and his desire to be real cozy with his bunk mates.... At any rate, we finally snuggled into our sleeping bags, and the usual standard snow cave shenanigans followed. Anton was responsible for procuring from somewhere a rather misshapen pastry penis, which astounded Andy with its... um.... firmness.

Thursday was the most glorious day in living memory, which was rather fortunate, given how much of our gear had frozen overnight. Apparently the temperatures in the pit had reached around -14°. After a slow start we roped up and traipsed across the plateau, then started up towards the two peaks on the Northern side, Te Heuheu and Tukino. They were as superbly wondrous as one might expect, particularly Tukino, which had a funky little ice stair to climb for those of us of a slightly madder persuasion. We spent a fair amount of time dicking around on top of the peaks, making 'aw' noises about the view, camera-whoring like mad and drinking frozen coke, courtesy of Rion. We cruised back down along Pinnacle ridge in the blazing sunshine, and were back home at NZAC in time for a late lunch (after bumping into

Anthea and Michael on the ski field and stopping for a bit of a chat).

As we were all sleepy, sunburnt, and feeling pleasantly lazy, we took the chairlifts back down to Whakapapa, managed to excavate the cars from a few metres of snow, and headed homewards (not without a slight chuckle at Anton, Rob, and Jane, who were heading back up to instruct Beginners' in what promised to be some of the foulest weather of the holidays).

Rion and I listened to Meatloaf and debated politics in the car on the way back home, and somehow managed to keep each other awake enough not to drive off the road. Cunningly, we took the back roads in order to avoid the grasping clutches of Hamilton, and Mrs Gulley's brave little red car excelled itself by fighting most of the way from Matamata to Bombay on an empty fuel tank. The lights of civilisation were met with cries of joyous relief, and it was at last permitted to surrender blissfully into the arms of Morpheus. Overall snow school verdict: Awesome.



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*“Does anyone need some more wine?” “Yep. If Rob’s going to teach again I’m going to need to fall asleep”*  
– Rowan and Rion

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*“Made with wine from France, Chile, Australia, Argentina, Zimbabwe and New Zealand”* – Definite quality from the cask

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*“There’s about room for one person curled up into the foetal position”* – Anton re the snow cave

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*“Oh, I just thought the moon looked pretty”*  
– Frosty, after hauling everyone out of their warm snow cave



## Ark in the Park

**Author:** Jenny Waite

The Ark project moved into the area around O’Nuku this year and we were invited to join in the control of predators in this area. We ran three events plus regular checking of stoat traps that have so far caught a rat and a possum. The three joint events ran smoothly despite the rain that seemed to accompany each. Large group from the Ark turned out to help with the first two events, with the final baiting round completed by us.

A number of people have helped out from the club so I won’t list them all but a huge thanks to everyone involved.

This year 327 bags of bait were put out that has resulted in a large increase in bird numbers already. We’ve had our first Tomtit found in the hut, a pair of swallows are nesting on the deck and there is a resident Morepork that is regularly seen during the day often being chased by one of the many Tui that have moved into the area. This year the Ark has released Robins, Hihi and Kokako so we can look forward to these birds moving into the AUTC area soon.

More importantly everyone has had fun crashing through the bush, getting cut by Kie Kie and cutty grass and enjoying a BBQ at the end of a good days work. So thanks to everyone who has helped out this year and we can look forward to more exciting things next year.



*“We’ve had our first Tomtit found in the hut, a pair of swallows are nesting on the deck and there is a resident Morepork that is regularly seen during the day often being chased by one of the many Tui that have moved into the area”*



# Pigeons, A Serious Issue and Following the Trail

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## Pigeons and a Serious Issue

This is a selection from a series of emails among a real tramping club in New Zealand. Most of the string is silly and in good humour, but along the way is a good discussion of an important safety issue.

I have noted a disturbing trend growing in the club of parties walking at vastly different speeds. This is a potential safety risk. It is alright for the group to be spread over a small distance as long as the leaders know they must keep within ear shot/stop regularly especially at junctions or when the track is unclear. Please try in all your trips to not let the people in front run too far ahead, unless you have agreed on a stopping point/time and you are confident of the nature of the track.

Perhaps at least one member of each party and preferably two people carry a whistle and use it at various intervals. If the group at the back can't hear the whistle of those at the front then that's a sign the group needs to stop and let the others catch up.

Why doesn't the club invest in some \$100/set rechargeable 2-way radios? If the front person and back person have a radio each, the chances of losing people is reduced, and for a \$100 investment it seems crazy that we don't have them already.

I think the point was that we did not want to split up at all. Shouting distance was an absolute maximum. We are trying to keep trips small and with people of similar fitness so there

is no need to split up. I think whistles are great but only in an emergency.

Radios seem like fun but also like an excuse for poor leadership and planning on a trip.

I was thinking more along the lines of safety - if someone goes above the tree line to get cell phone reception to helicopter someone out, if two people are tramping and someone gets injured where there's no cell phone contact, etc. Although I see where you're coming from. Why not trial them and see how they're received? If nothing else, they'd be useful on hut work- days when groups are split up.

"Why not trial them and see how they're received?" You're so puny.

I notice that the thread has drifted from the original idea: Tramping parties should stick together.

When the group is together any incidents can be dealt with at once, not whenever the people at the front realise the people at the back haven't caught up (then backtrack). Individuals can't get lost. Groups can't turn down different tracks at junctions.

Everybody gets to make input into decisions. The leader can monitor how everyone is feeling and regularly make sure all are present. Morale is generally improved.

The group will always arrive at the speed of the slowest person, and in fact if the slower people are near the front the group moves faster as a whole. A good way to manage this is to have an

experienced person at the front to route find and a slow person at the front to pace set (occasionally these will be the same person). Ear shot is OK, but remember the people at the back will need a decent rest when they catch up to where the front people stopped.

Thanks, though I don't think anyone was disputing that point. No-one disagreed, we were simply discussing it in an open forum. Is that OK with you?

Of course, I enjoy open forum discussion as you well know! I thought I would restate the original, tried, tested and sure one, which seemed to have gotten lost in the noise, as it were.

Seeing as we are in an open forum, I'd also like to suggest that the club purchase a large supply of homing pigeons. These would be trained to fly to the safety officer's house. Then, in an emergency, you write down a message for help, strap it to the pigeons leg, and release it. Despite the odd falcon casualty or pigeon loss, this is far superior to an EPIRB because you can get details of the problem out as well as a location. Each member of the party could carry one, so that when they become lost or hurt and the group has spread out, they can call for help via homing pigeon straight from the club without having to bother their trip leader who might be miles away by this stage. Pigeons are also cheaper than EPIRBs, radios, or whistles. Also at night in the hut or campsite, instead of playing cards, we can listen to pigeon song. Does anybody know how pigeons get on at altitude? Would these be suitable for Alpine trips as well?

Thanks for your valuable contribution. Clearly you've done wonders for this conversation.

I second the homing pigeons idea. They have the added bonus that, should every party member carry one, and the party gets lost, they can prioritise the needs of rescue with the requirement for emergency rations. Using pigeons as an emergency food source has the added advantage that you shouldn't get bored, (plucking pigeons is interesting work.), and if

you break the golden rule of staying put, people should still be able to find you from the trail of feathers.

I'm not aware of the alpine abilities of your average pigeon, but the populations formally residing in parks in London and the large number I found nesting in the roof of a church in Edinburgh, indicate that they are quite able to survive cold temperatures..., although we may require special imported "alpine pigeons" for use only on alpine trips.

One of the random contacts I've made over the years was with a guy called Bill from the Pigeon Fanciers club. They were after a place to store their pigeons and wanted to park their trailer at the warehouse. The gist that I got was that they fancied racing pigeons, not the pigeons themselves. I've got contact details.

This all reminds me of the time I met a new club member wandering along a track in the dark one night without a torch after having been blitzed in pace by some then members on the way out to the hut. There were competing priorities on the night. It was cold, drizzling, and everyone wanted to get inside as quickly as possible which may be why she got left behind. It's actually really easy to accidentally leave someone behind so it always pays to be conscious of it because people are never quite aware they're doing it until it's too late. We have a few rules which are used by some tramping clubs in this regard. They are; basically, stopping at every intersection, every river crossing and other significant places.

Having been party to the previous discussions on the virtues of homing pigeons as a modern and safety critical communication method, I have hereby decided to 'upgrade' this mailing list to use aforementioned technological advances. All club communication will now be made on small roles of parchment attached to the leg of the official club pigeon (who will be named Gerald). If anyone has any questions I'll be in the 16th century.

I think that the main thing is that it is a group exercise, not a race. If you've ever had the

experience of being in a group that gets separated you know what a pain it is to get the group together (and how incredibly time consuming it is).

On another note, if the group agrees, you could split the group into smaller groups with a suitable leader in each. That way the fast people can go at a speed that is suitable for them and the slower people can go at a speed comfortable for them.

The practice of separating groups into fast and slow needs a cautionary note. Make sure that each group still has all the essentials (shelter, food, first aid, map etc.) and are able to navigate safely to wherever you are going. If you are on an easy track, with good visibility etc. you can break up safely I think. Generally I prefer keeping the group together as a whole, because it is so easy to take a wrong turn off if the track is ill defined etc. and in certain

conditions (i.e. snowy tops in a blizzard) losing your way can be very dangerous. If you keep everyone together you can make group decisions, and use the experience and judgement of the whole group.

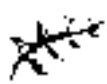
If groups are split up, designated leaders ought to communicate with all members, the times each group would expect to arrive at the destination and devise a plan if either group does not arrive within a certain time after the scheduled arrival.

Pigeons do sometimes have tendency to go to the great big aviary in sky without warning. We'd need to factor in replacement costs as well. How much do homing pigeons cost and how many were you thinking of buying?

I decided I would be the sole dissenting voice of sanity.







## Following the Trail

**Author:** Peter Aimer

(1953-56 and Life Member)

Animals mark and follow their trails by means of scent and body odour. But the insensitive noses of humankind are useless for that purpose, and our civilised sense of decorum is a further deterrent. Instead, we resort to visual cues: cairns in barren rocky country, poles across the grassy flats or above the bush line.

These haven't changed much since pioneer days, but within the bush, there's an historical sequence from basic to more elaborate trail-marking techniques. First came the blaze on the tree - an axe-cut, taller than wide, and deep into the wood so that a scar remained for many years, perhaps for the life of the tree. Early editions of the trampers' bible, "Moirs Guide Book" (my copy is dated 1950) repeatedly directed parties to blazed trails: 'cross the river near an old camp site and a blaze will be seen entering the bush'; 'From the Pyke Valley to the Olivine Flats a good blazed trail starts near the top end of the shingle fan'; 'the track is well blazed and leads through the gorge of the Wills River'. Blazes were not always easy to find or follow as they aged and faded to the colour of the trunk. Philip Temple, recalling his descent of Scotts Creek into the Copland valley in 1960, writes of Harry Ayres 'fingering an almost imperceptible blaze' before plunging into the bush to follow 'an old indistinct track' ('Change is a Fine Thing', p78). The party's relief at the sight of this tiny and primitive signpost pointing the way is palpable.

In the early years, the resourceful pioneers supplemented blazes with the circular lids of jam jars and tin cans. They were readily available, economical, able to stand up to the elements, easily nailed against the trunks of

trees or the stems of saplings, and were not only visible by day, but even mildly reflective at night - until the rust set in. A few can still be seen on older tracks.

But as the network of National Parks grew and more trampers went into them in the second half of last century, and perhaps also as plastic canisters took over from tin and aluminium (who can remember M&B tins?) lids gave way to white-coated metal strips - like off-cuts of venetian blind. Rust was no problem (though in time they could become dulled by fungus), and the white colour made them easy to spot in the bush. The end of a strip could also be shaped to a point like an arrow and the strip angled on the tree to signal a change of direction ahead. Or, more dramatically, several strips could be overlaid into an attention-grabbing cross or asterisk to announce with reassuring clarity the start of the track, or a significant junction.

The art of trail-marking by visual cues was thus gaining in sophistication, but there was more to come, and white strips in turn have now lapsed into obsolescence. Nothing that had come before could compete with the slick, bright orange, plastic triangles that now guide legions of trampers and hikers along the usually glaringly obvious tracks (rarely merely trails) that criss-cross DOC territory. Highly visible, rust-proof and probably resistant to fungus, DOC's triangles come with nail holes ready-made. They also can be angled to warn of a change of direction or a sudden ascent or descent. And note those super-size triangles at the beginning of a track or where it continues on the other side of a stream. No more anxious searches for 'imperceptible blazes'.

What then of the future? Look out for markers that are not only visible by day, but glow in the dark - constantly, and not only when the beam of your torch strikes their reflective surface, or markers which make up your own innovation.





# Early Years and Present Day of O'Nuku Hut

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## *"Piano Music"*

**Author:** David Gauld

"Freshers' Hut Weekend, March 1961 - We freshers tramped along Cutty Grass Track from the Scenic Drive Friday night. About half way along Ridge Road, we were entertained by piano playing - there was a piano on a small grassy clearing (which is now covered with 10m high trees)! In the morning, some of us were hauled out of our bags and sent back to collect the piano. So, for a few years we enjoyed piano music in the hut. Alas! the rats discovered the joys of piano playing too, but their version involved removing the felt, making the piano useless. In 1965, a new piano was bought in by man-powered trailer and we played chopsticks for the last time on the old piano (only this time with an axe!)"

## *"Chaos or Calm"*

**Author:** Peter Aimer

(Student 1953-56 and Club Captain 1955)

For me, as for many others, most visits to O'nuku were spontaneous, opportunistic excursions, sandwiched between essays, term tests and organised Club tramps. They might have begun with a scribbled note pinned to the cloisters noticeboard (a busy socialising point and hub of Tramping Club activity) announcing who was catching the 7.30 or 8.15pm evening train to Waitakere, or getting the Piha bus to Anawhata Road (the soft option). For some, this urge to go to the hut for the weekend seemed almost obsessive. It was what we might today call their 'brand', defining who they were in the Club and sometimes sadly taking its toll on the units (two or three linked papers in a

subject at first, second or third-year level) they passed at the end of the year.

Of course, going to O'Nuku did not always mean staying in the hut. It was often a base for forays further afield - such as down the RGB track to the Anawhata swimming pool, or to Centennial, McKenzie and Piha gorge; and there was always the more strenuous challenge of a night in the Muirs (old hut, where now a day shelter is in the Pararaha - it was a mosquito-ridden hell hole, guaranteeing a sleepless night), or perhaps on to DG (Destruction Gully - in those days a reasonable campsite overlooked the Manukau and Huia). But first you had to 'go up to the hut'.

I remember that nights at O'nuku ranged from 'chaos to calm', depending on who and how many were there. Among those memories, I would not want to dwell on the awful, destructive (of person and possessions) water fights, the crush of bodies on dusty, lumpy mattresses in front of the fire, the scurry of rats, or the military pacing of possums on the roof? - but ahh - the simmer of the stew in the billy over the fire; the warmth inside as the rain crashed on the iron above; the creative genius of the mural map on the end wall. Fond and homely memories.

Yet it was getting to the hut and the moment of arrival, that generated my sharpest memories. First there was relief - for going to O'nuku on Friday night was often a solo effort of 2-3 hours of solid tramping by torchlight from station to hut steps - I can admit now that there were some scary bits on the way. Along Bethells Road, after you left scattered houses and before the bottom of Long Drive, there were darkly

shadowed places where the crunch of clinkered boots (metal objects on edge of leather-soled boots which, along with hobnails, protected the sole and gave added grip on slippery ground) on the gravel was bound to alert whatever demons lurked in the undergrowth and then along the track, there was always something spooky about Smythe Corner and Simla (remains of derelict buildings). So O'nuku was always a welcome refuge from one's own nervous imagination, or from the physical reality of wind and rain.

My memories live in the sense of sight (coming in from Piha bus, you caught a glimpse of Waitakere Reservoir and saw O'Nuku's roof with possibly a bit of smoke from the chimney signalling prior occupation), sound (on still nights, you could hear the distant drone of west coast surf, or sudden crashing of a pig in the undergrowth) and smell (distinctive, welcome redolence of creosote/wood smoke at the hut)."



## "Present Day"

**Author:** Rebecca Caldwell

O'nuku is still a dusty, rat infested hut. No more piano (I guess the rats got the new one too) but there is still the mural and dusty mattresses, albeit less lumps :o). But in saying that, a lot has been done with the Hut in recent times and thanks to our hut officer of 2008-09, we now have two new composting toilets.

Smythe corner and Simla still looks spooky, particularly with very little torchlight, but even with the still of the night, yet to hear the distant sound of west coast surf or the sound of a pig falling in the undergrowth - by the time you might hear this, you are probably too tired as this is usually 3am when everyone has gone to bed after partying the night away.

*NB. These articles were published in the second edition of "Belch", 2009 (AUTC's newsletter), after O'Nuku Hut celebrated its 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Since this was written, a few of our committee members got inspired and moved another piano into O'Nuku Hut - lets hope the rats don't make the same use of the piano as per the quote below.*

*"So, for a few years we enjoyed piano music in the hut. Alas! the rats discovered the joys of piano playing too, but their version involved removing the felt, making the piano useless"*

# NORTH ISLAND





## New Years 2009 – Kai Iwi Lakes, Northland

*30 December 2008 – 3 January 2009*

**Author:** Kylie Brewer

**Attendees:** Kylie Brewer, Jaimee Wieland, Craig Smith, Marcus Smith, Jeremy Chirnside, Aidan Thorp, Claire Oliver, Kristine Illsley, Jeremy Beckham, Gracie Xiao, Kat Collier, Alan Surrey, Alison Alvares, Tom Goodman, Tony Siu, Andrew Draper, Galina Redkina.



The 30<sup>th</sup> December dawned overcast and wet and not very promising for a fine new year, yet ever optimistic we departed from my house fully laden with all sorts of camping gear and more than enough food to feed the army! By the time we arrived in Dargaville for lunch the weather had cleared, the sun was shining and it looked like an afternoon of swimming and



sunbathing was ahead of us. Finding lunch in Dargaville proved to be a bit of a challenge due to a lack of cafes but we found something and

joined the others at the reserve overlooking the river and wondering where one carload had got to. A quick text later we learnt they were already at the campsite setting up their tents. Back on the road again we arrived at Kai Iwi Lakes mid afternoon. After unloading gear and setting up the tents it was off to explore, swim or just chill out - after all this is what the camping lifestyle is all about! For dinner that night we had a big BBQ with salads. After dinner it was time for more relaxing (with a glass of wine of course!) and we were treated to the most spectacular sunset.



New Years Eve finally arrives and it's another glorious day. Some members of our group were



up early exploring the lakes by bike and swimming. A while later the rest of us emerged from our tents for a leisurely breakfast.





Shortly after breakfast a few of us hopped into the Land Rover and headed into Dargaville, myself buying more group food for the BBQ that night and Andrew to collect his trailer after an unfortunate incident the day before. On arrival at the supermarket we soon learned that it's not wise to shop on New Years Eve as everyone goes into their "the shops are closed for a day and I may not survive" panic. The place was mad and we waited ages at the checkout, even joining separate queues didn't help. Eventually we were free from the mayhem. Although, the madness wasn't quite over yet... we had to push start the Land Rover in the middle of the Woolworths car park, somewhat embarrassing especially when one guy laughed at us thinking we had a flat battery even though we didn't. We made it back to the campsite without further dramas. Back at the Lakes it was time for lunch. The others had had quite a busy morning out, walking and biking around the lake seeing what they could see. As the afternoon rolled around it was time for more swimming, lying on the beach and reading. Galina and Andrew headed off for some 4W driving along the coast, while the rest of us were lured by the beautiful lake. Later that afternoon exhausted from swimming, the troops came crawling back lured by the smell of the BBQ. After dinner it was time for games, first up, pass-the-parcel. However this was pass-the-parcel with a difference, each layer had an alcoholic shot which you had to consume. Later in the evening the weather changed and the wind picked up, there was a mad rush to secure everything down and tighten guy ropes. We headed down to the beach to catch the last sunrise of the year, which sadly was not as spectacular as the previous evening. Back at our site it was time for more drinking and games including Rocks (Poker) and twister, trying to

pass the time while we waited for midnight to arrive (in between dodging the showers of rain)! We even went for a walk to see what the other campers were up to but it was all surprisingly tame. Later in the evening Claire brought out her glow sticks and we set about trying to transform ourselves into glow worms! Finally midnight arrived and it was time for countdowns (of which several could be heard throughout the campsite), champagne, hugs and fireworks (thanks to some other campers). We then headed down to the beach for more late night antics before retiring to our tents, listening to the sounds of revelry from other campers.

New Years Day and we were woken up at 8am courtesy of Andrew deciding to play the Prodigy's 'Smack my bitch up' nice and loud. It



didn't win us too many friends among the other campers who were obviously hoping for a sleep in after too much partying the night before. Thankfully the music that followed was a bit more mellow and soothing. Slowly and surely we emerged from our tents and set about



cooking our pancake breakfast complete with bacon yum! After breakfast a group of us consisting of myself, Jaimee, Craig, Tony, Marcus,

Galina, Alison and Andrew, piled into the Land Rover and headed off to Omamari beach for

some 4W driving. It was so much fun hurtling along the sand and driving over rocky outcrops and the slightly hair-raising moment when we thought we were going to get stuck in the sand as the waves came in. Marcus and Andrew found the lure of the dunes too much and eagerly clambered to the top before jumping down in their best superman impressions. After the beach we headed back to the lakes and decided to check out Lake Waikere where we were rewarded with spectacular views of Lake Waikere and Lake Taharoa looking back towards the campsite. There was even time for a chance to lie in the grass watching the clouds and contemplating our new year's resolutions. After a bit more off-roading it was time to head back to the campsite for lunch where the others were still playing cards. New Years afternoon was spent as one should spend a beautiful sunny day, lying on the beach with a good book and playing around in the water. As the Lakes are also a public domain, the beach was pretty packed with families and holiday makers. Once 5pm rolled around the beach began to empty which meant it was time for afternoon drinks and nibbles. Dinner time rolled around and it was gourmet pasta before people disappeared their separate ways and a few of us continued to sit and enjoy our glass of wine. It wasn't going to be a boring evening as I suddenly spotted smoke coming from the Land Rover that was being used to power the stereo. Realising this wasn't 'normal' I yelled out to Andrew that perhaps he might want to check this out. I haven't seen anyone move that quickly for a while as sure enough there was a small fire in the electrics. It was soon extinguished and we resumed our previous activities and watched clips of "Man vs Wild" (an interesting programme to say the least).

January 2<sup>nd</sup> dawned and we were up early for our day trip to Tane Mahuta and the Hokianga Harbour. We set off with the first stop to the info centre at the start of Waipoua forest to learn about the history of the area and the logging which took place at the turn of the century – it was no easy life! It was then a short drive up the road to see the 'God of the Forest' himself - Tane Mahuta, New Zealand's tallest (kauri) tree. We also took a couple of side

tramps to see the second tallest and the 4 sisters kauri trees which were impressive in their own right. We piled back in the cars and set off again, this time for the Hokianga. Upon entering the harbour we were greeted with the most amazing view of the harbour and the sand dunes across the harbour. Upon arriving at Opononi we split into groups and headed our separate ways – some to buy lunch at "4 Square", others to laze in the sun on the beach. Andrew, Marcus and Alison set off in the boat for some sand boarding down the sand dunes while Jaimee, Jeremy and I sought lunch and shade in the form of the Opononi Speights pub and thus where we spent a leisurely afternoon later joined by Claire and Aidan. Eventually we regrouped for fish and chips at the local takeaways before heading back to the camp site where we enjoyed a swim as the sun set over the lakes and some chocolate brownies as darkness rolled in. Eventually people started heading for their tents with a few brave souls choosing to sleep under the stars! All was going well until someone began to snore... the culprit was never found.

January 3<sup>rd</sup> dawned and I was up early for a bike around the lake. On my return, some tired but happy campers began emerging from their tents. Breakfast was a casual affair before the big pack up began. It was rather epic as 17 people create a lot of mess over 4 days, not to mention all the gear we had. One by one we finished and it was goodbyes all round before departing our separate ways. While everyone else headed back to Auckland, Alison, Jaimee and I headed off to Baylys Beach, a surf beach close to the Lakes. Sadly the weather was threatening to rain so it was a short stop before heading to Mangawhai where we were joined by Andrew for an evening of entertainment with comedian Ewen Gilmour and great kiwi band 'The Feelers'.





# Pouakai Circuit Trip Report

*Auckland Anniversary Weekend - January 2009*

**Author:** Aidan Thorp

**Keen Trampers:** Claire Oliver, Aidan Thorp, Sebastian Heberling, Lina Stepick and Velizara Passajova.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2009 at 8:30am, five smiling and keen people assembled at the quad to embark on a brief leg stretcher doing the Pouakai Circuit on the Northern side of Mt Taranaki.

Time was tight as we had to accommodate driving down, stopping to see all the sites and sounds in Otorohanga (of which there are



many), and tramping for 4 hours to the first hut. When we finally arrived at North Egmont, the sun was shining and we could see our track snaking up the mountain. Gaily we set off at a very gentle pace reflecting our general lack of exercise and excesses of unhealthy drinking and eating over the Xmas and New Years period. The path was called razorback but was in excellent condition and the grade was not overly steep as it meandered up the mountain. The bush gave way to sub alpine herbs allowing us to catch sight of magnificent volcanic spires and outcrops high on the mountain. We were convinced that someone should build a monastery or castle atop these peaks. The 'Naki then welcomed us by lifting its clouds and gifting to us a stunning view of its black rocky peak, we also saw the curiously perfectly

circular tree/pasture line at the base of the mountain. The path crossed an ancient rock slip that was about a kilometre long. We reached the luxurious Holly hut and cooked a mean feed of foodtown specials such as '4 for \$2' sweetcorn and tinned baked beans. The hut had a radioactive potbelly and several tonnes of coal and wood stored. We resisted the temptation to make our own pet volcano with all that fuel. We watched the sunset over the hills then drifted to sleep in the spacious hut all by ourselves.

The next morning we ditched the packs and went for a short walk to Bells Falls which thundered through a gap in some 200m high cliffs. Then we went back to the hut and headed out over a large sphagnum moss swamp between the Pouakai Range and Mt Taranaki.



The track then climbed steeply up the Pouakai Range which had two hills shaped like two golden bosoms. Oddly there was much anticipation by the girls in ascending these. When we reached the top of the range, Sebastian, Velizara and I ditched the packs and went off to climb Pouakai while Claire and Lina decided the hut would give them better rewards. We practically sprinted up Pouakai without the packs. Then we spent a good hour taking ridiculous photos and using the Trig for everything it wasn't designed for. We met up with AUTC life member Andy O'Loan and his Mum, Eileen at Pouakai hut completely by surprise. (These were the only people we saw on the tramp apart from one 70 something naked trumper who had snowy white hair *everywhere* on his body, anyway AUTC REPRAZENT!) We settled in at the hut, had



another mint meal and watched the sunset over Taranaki. The hut had a million dollar view down the mountain and over New Plymouth which made our \$15 hut fees suddenly seem very reasonable. Velizara and Sebastian showed their European toughness by sleeping on the deck under the stars.



The next morning we got up at the very social time of 5:05am to see the sunrise and get Velizara and Lina home early to study for their exam the next day. The rest of us were very impressed at their keenness to go tramping prior to an exam. We discovered that it was an ideal time for tramping as the air was pleasantly cool and the light on the horizon was a surreal

beauty. We reached some tarns as the sun began to rise and took some splendid photos. Ruapehu and her younger siblings were clearly visible in the orange glow. We walked with unholy speed and had Skippy cornflakes and rice milk for breakfast atop Mt Henry at 7:00am sharp. The track then descended down to rejoin the flanks of Naki and gave us a pleasant bush walk back to North Egmont.

Sebastian and I raced each other the last two kilometres up to the car and were thoroughly worn out by the end. We said goodbye to the Naki and promised to be back soon to summit it.

I would highly recommend the Pouakai circuit as a relatively easy and accessible 3 day walk. The track was generally excellent and the views were sublime. While it would be possible to do the tramp in two days (staying one night at Pouakai hut), logistically this would be either a huge day driving and tramping 7-8 hours or involve staying the night at the camp house at North Egmont which would cost \$30. I wouldn't go if the weather was marginal as the track is completely unsheltered and exposed to the elements on all but the last few kilometres of the track. Thanks to Claire, Velizara, Lina and Sebastian for being sweet as companions.



*“The track then climbed steeply up the Pouakai Range which had two hills shaped like two golden bosoms. Oddly there was much anticipation by the girls in ascending these”*

## Hunua Ranges Trip

21-22 March 2009

**Author:** Jenny Long

**Attendees:** Peter Luk (leader), Luke Kristensen, Sander van Noorden, Eric Lalot, Marcus Chau, Sean Ng Kee, Pratibha Seethepali, Tom Wright, Anna Tokareva, Katherine Heacock, Johannes Trapp and Jenny Long

**Where:** Hunua Ranges. From Upper Mangatawhiri Dam carpark to Trig K hut via Liburne Road and Mangatangi Ridge Track. Upper Mangatawhiri Track and Ernies Track to the Dam carpark.

Our group could reminisce about the pretty streams, views, lakes but it was the team escapades and spirit that really made the tramp such an enjoyable weekend.

The tramp got off to a good pace along a logging road. At the first stream most of the group took the more 'traditional' route of jumping over the stream. Shaun decided that throwing a heavy pack across the stream was more efficient than leaving it on his back when he jumped as his fellow trappers had. Our resident French monkey decided that climbing a branch which leaned over the stream was a better way to get to the other side. Throughout the trip Erick had disappeared out of sight, to be found a few minutes climbing a nearby vine or tree. The climbing fascination was particularly concerning because our French Monkey was carrying our breakfast eggs. It's a miracle they all made it in one piece.

The fast pace at the beginning of the tramp soon slowed into an epic climb up an epic hill. The climb was supplemented with blazing sun, lots of wasps and little wasp-like children out on a Macleans College Duke of Ed trip. Our team dug in our heels to overtake the wasp-like children to claim the supreme lunch spot at the summit. Despite the hills, team spirit remained really high.

After the hill we took a track through dense bush, following a sign labelling the track as 'experienced trappers only'. This sign was a little surprising to the group, as the tramp had been marketed as a beginners tramp. More hills were climbed to reach the trip point where we were to spend the night. Shaun's previous knee injury caused him some grief so we shared out some of his gear and made frequent rest breaks. Our willingness to take these breaks may have been due to Shaun's constant supply of nuts and raisins.



Our rest spot for the evening was the trig point marking the highest hill in the Hunuas.

We had imagined setting up our tents here but suitable ground was only available for one tent. Eleven of the group spent a rather cosy night in a two-person hut. Peter's (our leader) fantastic home-made chocolate cake, with chocolate sauce helped ease any discomfort.

The following morning we followed a similar 'experienced trappers only' track, and tested our ability to follow track markers in parts. We had lunch by a beautiful stream. The final two hours of the second day followed another logging road to allow us a quick pace to the cars and comfort.

During the two days, Shaun and Anna had a close race for winning the most points for falling over. Shaun emerged the winner and the two treated us to a two-course meal at the top of Mt Eden following the tramp: appetisers and banana chocolate ice cream. Mmm mmm. Thanks Peter and to everyone on the trip for making it a great weekend!



## Summiting the Pinnacles

**Author:** Loren O'Sullivan

**Team:** Kristina Aluzaitė, Beatrice Bayly, Phil Billings, Raplh Kappus, Rosemary Ke, Georgina Langdon-Pole, Linda Lew, Peter Luk, Loren O'Sullivan, Tanja Pfennig, Arvin Wang and Jaimee Wieland.

One bright Monday morning 12 keen trampers set off from Auckland Uni not really knowing what they had got themselves into. Driving towards the Coromandel, looking up to the mountains, we realised that this trip was going to be one way – up!

After a bumpy pot-filled driving experience, we made it to the start of the track in one piece. Wanting to take a group photo, we were all surprised to find that Jamie had not only brought a very fancy Canon camera, but also a tripod! It rose to the occasion, and we got some beautiful pre-tramp shots.

Blessed with some amazing blue sky, we set off, uphill. And, it kept going – up, that is. We all started regretting bringing half our gear after heading up those evil stairs and evil they were. But thankfully they came to an end. We managed to find a nice clearing to have lunch in. Thanks to Peter we didn't go hungry. Yummy tramping food was a great highlight of the trip which we all appreciated after those stairs. We relaxed after lunch for a bit, until we realised it was time to put our packs back on, and head up once again. But this time it wasn't too bad. We all knew what we were in for and began to relax and enjoy the scenery. Someone found a little path which lead to an amazing view of the valley below. We all clambered onto the rocks – some a little too close to the edge - it was camera time!

One funny part of the tramp was the signs of civilisation. For example, the power lines littering the landscape, reminded us that we weren't so isolated after all and Peter's cellphone randomly going off in the middle of the tramp! Good he didn't answer it, but still!



We certainly knew that we had reached civilisation once we got to the hut, or should I say mansion. Let's just say that the Pinnacle's hut was way above my expectations of tramping huts. A huge kitchen, a deck, a BBQ, beds, fireplace, longdrops, a shower – it was paradise. Enjoying the rest of the sunshine, some keen trampers headed up to the Pinnacles, while the rest of us lazy buggers relaxed and sunbathed.

Let's just say it was worth bringing all that food up to the hut, because we had a feast. Sorry guys about the burnt pasta though... On top of it all Peter surprised us with a magnificent chocolate cake and chocolate sauce! Luxury! I think we all enjoyed digging into that while hearing gruesome stories from Phil the fireman.

After dinner we all entertained ourselves, in whatever fashion we deemed necessary. For me it was adding twists to card games of SNAP or Go Fish (or should I say Go Mackerel), while the more acrobatic of us, thought it was necessary to traverse the table. That's right, climb underneath the table (like a monkey) and come out alive. It was pretty impressive, I must say. On other levels, just wrong. But that's a matter of judgement I'll leave to you.

Exhausted, we all got an early night sleep, knowing what the next day would bring - 5am

start. No-one complained – amazing! We headed up to the Pinnacles after some yummy porridge. That’s right, UP again. But we all knew it was worth it. To see that light on the horizon suddenly burst into a bright ball of sunshine... breathtaking! Having a hot drink up there on top of the world, was a great start to another sunny day.



The rest of the day we pretty much slogged it. Downhill this time. We had a great lunch stop along a river. Some of us decided it would be great to go swimming. Others thought it would be entertaining to throw rocks in the water to splash everyone else. The best part was watching a Lithuanian throw a rock at an Englishman with a German trying to be neutral in the middle. World War III had broken out. But it was all happy tramping back down to the carpark. We got some pretty good views on the way down – one being a pretty amazing waterfall, with some adventurous people abseiling it.

Once back at the river, near the carpark, we cooled down and relaxed our aching bodies. A dip in the freezing (and I mean numbing) water was a challenge for some – for others just entertaining to watch.

Ice-cream and fish and chips at Thames was a great way to celebrate our success of making it out alive. For many of us it was our first proper tramping experience. Hopefully it won’t be our last.



*“The best part was watching a Lithuanian throw a rock at an Englishman with a German trying to be neutral in the middle. World War III had broken out .... But it was all happy tramping back down to the carpark”*



## Karangahake Gorge

29 March 2009

**Author:** Tom Goodman

**Present:** Sarah Wyse (Leader), Thomas Goodman (Leader), Craig Smith, Rachel Simister, Gabriel Schwartz, Jesvin Boparoy, David Bade, Huiling Chen, Ianna McCarthy, James McArthur, Adiba Nur, Jacob A. Korzun, Eugene Krimkevich

In recent years the K Gorge has become an increasingly popular destination for AUTC, and this was no exception, in the end 13 intrepid trampers made their way, battling the prospect of rain, the evident chumminess and easy distractability of their two leaders, and heavy fog on the road (always an experience at 100kph!).....

The rain threatened but never really came to anything, and soon the group was winding their way up the side of Mt Karangahake, with glorious sunshine and some spectacular views. Mining tunnels close to the track proved irresistible to some, for others the remnants of native bush was preferred. Nervous moments followed when it transpired that Tom and Sarah



had only actually made it to the summit once, and they hadn't really paid much attention to how they got there ... but with little delay we were all on the summit, with time for a lunch break (best taken while standing atop the trig). A leisurely break allowed the most to be made of sunny weather, giving great views of the

Hauraki Plains below, and the other way, across to the Bay of Plenty. Below us the Karangahake Gorge was a tempting prospect for those sensible enough to bring their togs!

Before we knew it we were again in the valley, looking up and wondering how (and perhaps, more importantly, WHY?) we had climbed that bloody tall hill so damn fast. A brief interlude followed before starting part two of the adventure, a casual exploration of the mining tunnels, and a walk along the gorge itself. The water flowed beneath us, and more than one was tempted to just dive in, but fortunately



persuaded to wait for that beckoning swimming hole.

The tunnels were thoroughly explored, especially by Mr Smith, who found not just one, but two different, not-entirely usual, ways of getting into one particular old working. Large steel gates and 'keep out' signs, clearing no obstacle here!



A swim in the river followed next, however, its appearance proved quite deceptive, and despite attempts at bravado, soon all were forced from the water. Back the way we came, hurrying to beat the sun and our rumbling stomachs, but still time to explore more tunnels that went deep into the earth.

From here it was into Paeroa, where we proceeded to empty a local Chinese shop of all its produce. Amazing the appetite one can build up on a day walk!

From here, our travellers made their way home, fatter perhaps, but hopefully happier than when they came.



*“Before we knew it we were again in the valley, looking up and wondering how (and perhaps, more importantly, WHY?) we had climbed that bloody tall hill so damn fast” ...*

*“a brief interlude followed before starting part two of the adventure, a casual exploration of the mining tunnels, and a walk along the gorge itself”*

## Tongariro Crossing and Pirongia Walk

5–7 April 2009

**Author:** Aidan Thorp

**Keen Trampers:** Dan Scott, Claire Oliver, Scott Thorp and Aidan Thorp.



With the two sweet weeks of mid semester break ahead of us, our group of 3 engineers and an architect decided we needed to get back to our roots and go bush for a few days. Our plan was to walk the Tongariro crossing and then climb up the bush clad Mt Pirongia.

So we drove down to National Park stopping at a mean Thai restaurant in Taumarunui. We



stayed at the backpackers where we enjoyed bouldering around the indoor climbing wall which was conveniently right outside our bunk

room. In the morning we drove to the Mangatepopo Road end and started the walk in brilliant sunshine. I got interviewed by some poor Asian dude carrying a gigantic video camera up the devils staircase who was making some kind of documentary (I put in heaps of ‘yeah na’, ‘sweet as bro’ and ‘for sure’ for effect). We then decided to climb Ngauruhoe clearing out any accumulated leg flab from six weeks at uni. The view from the top was spectacular. We could see the Tama lakes, Mt Ruapehu, Mt Egmont and Lake Taupo. The deep crater atop the mountain was impressive. After carefully running down the mountain scree we continued along the path up to Red Crater and then down to the cold and beautiful Emerald Lakes. We then walked up to Blue Lake where Dan took a swim. I had to run off at this point down to the carpark to catch the bus. The others enjoyed a leisurely walk down to the carpark checking out the sulphur deposits by Ketetahi hot springs and then through the lush bush. As a note: I got a one way bus ride back from Ketetahi to the Mangatepopo Road junction and then ran halfway up the road till I got a lift the rest of the way. This ended up with us only having to pay around \$3 pp for track transport rather than the \$30 pp we would have paid for all of us to take the bus. We were all pretty tired after the walk but we had epic feed of homemade nachos.





The next morning we got up late and after hearing the weather report, decided to bail on our initial plan of camping at the top of Pirongia. Instead we decided to drive there and check out some caves and the tallest NZ native tree in the world. We walked up Bell Track through 2km of farmland till we reached the

bush. The bush was very lush and we saw many wood pigeons and fantails. We also gorged ourselves on the largest and most plentiful Kaihikatea berries I had ever seen. The path was in the process of being turned into a doc state highway with magnificent glulam bridges and wide flat metal paths as part of the Te Araroa walkway. We reached the caves and really enjoyed squeezing our way through the thin damp limestone fissures. We saw lots of big cave wetas and there were a few stalactites. After an hour of walking alongside a stream we reached the 66.5m high Kaihikatea tree. It was like three trees stacked atop each other and well worth the look. Scott ingested some of the fallen berries from the tree and we debated how many dining room tables the tree could make. We then walked back to the car and drove back to Auckland, concluding our tramp with watching 'Dancing with the Stars' together.



*“We then decided to climb Ngauruhoe clearing out any accumulated leg flab from six weeks at uni” - “the view from the top was spectacular!”*



## Destruction Gully Tramp

6 June 2009

**Author:** David Gauld

**Attendees:** Marcus Chau, Abby Jacobs, Craig Smith, Laurence Brown, David Herron, Lizzie, Tom Lazelle, Kat Collier, Alan Surrey, Rachel Simister, Legita, Eric Lalot, Andrew Draper, David Gauld

If you go up to Alfred Street;  
On Saturday 6th you'll get a treat;  
The trampers go in booted feet;  
To the Waitakere Ranges.

We drive to Destruction Gully at first;  
It should take under an hour at worst;  
Then you can quench your tramping thirst;  
In the Waitakere Ranges.

The leader he is old and grey;  
He's sixty-six if he's a day;  
You can bet your boots he knows the way;  
Round the Waitakere Ranges.

We start across Omanawanui;  
The views will make you go all gooey;  
If not I say to you "then phooey";  
In the Waitakere Ranges.

The track goes down to Whatipu  
With yet another view or two.  
You can even use the fancy loo  
In the Waitakere Ranges.

It's time to tramp by the sea-side;  
We must hope that it's about low tide;  
Or else you'll get a wavy ride;  
From the Waitakere Ranges.

Keeping a wary eye on the sea;  
And scrambling o'er ledges, such fun you'll agree;  
We'll find the odd rock climb a bit tricky;  
By the Waitakere Ranges.

With luck we might even see a seal;  
It looks like an overgrown eel;  
Don't get too close or its teeth you'll feel;  
By the Waitakere Ranges.

We finally get to D. G. Track;  
Up to the cars it will get us back;  
Some chocolate will stop your energy lack;  
Up the Waitakere Ranges.

Now if you want to sing this song;  
Then you had better come along;  
The tramp is fun, don't get me wrong;  
In the Waitakere Ranges.



## Southern Crossing Attempt, Tararua Ranges

*1-3 July 2009*

**Author:** Jane Dudley

**Attendees:** Jane Dudley and Anton Gulley.

Anton and I had planned to do the Southern Crossing in the Tararuas using only our legs and public transport. I had just finished my contract at the Ministry for the Environment, and we had some time to spare. We allowed ourselves 3 days to do the crossing, and would get in via train and bus, hitch or walk the rest of the way in to the track end and then hitch and walk out and catch the train for the rest of the way.

### **Day 1**

We started the day at 5:00am. We got ready, had breakfast and from there we walked from my flat in Kelburn down to the main Wellington train station, where we caught the train in to Paraparumu. We saw Kapiti Island framed by the pink morning light. From there we caught the bus in to the small township of Otaki (great outlet store shopping for you outdoors fashionistas/Ice breaker fanciers) and then made our way to the local Information Centre. From there we talked to the lady behind the desk about our intentions. 'So you're doing the Southern Crossing....hmmm...not many people do that in winter.' She also told us about a shuttle that operated further down the road that could potentially save us the walk from Otaki to Otaki forks, the start of our track. The road walk was about 20km, which we were comfortable with. At a good pace that's about 4 hours, which was fine given the amount of time we had allowed for the trip. We set off down the side of the highway, then turned down the long road that headed to Oraki forks. We arrived at the backpackers and met the owner who ran the shuttle service. When we found out that the shuttle to the road end was \$50 we rapidly backed out of the door and headed on our way. We put our thumb out but didn't get any lifts from the cars passing through the country side. We saw another hitchhiker in a hoodie going in the opposite direction, it turned out his cousin

had taken his wallet, and he was trying to get to the Hutt valley. We kept going and eventually a car stopped for us. It was a lady who was off to go hunting on her horse, so she took us part of the way down the road, and then we kept walking. We walked past some farmers herding their cattle down the road, and then we stopped for some food and to put sun block on. A car was coming down the road, so we put our thumbs out again. The car stopped and the lady inside gave us a lift all the way along the rest of the road. She was a local, and loved this area. We got to the car park and had some lunch, and then walked over the bridge that crosses the Otaki river. It had been raining, but it wasn't too bad heading upwards. We passed through some farmland and then started to head into the beech forest. We managed to get up to historic Field hut in about half the track time. We had some food, and talked about carrying on. There was some more time in the day, and if we kept going we could get up to Kime hut and minimise the amount of time we would have to spend on the tops the next day. So we set off again, and headed up towards Kime hut. The track time said it would take about 3 hours. About 10 minutes above Field hut we got out of the bush line, and we started to see snow around us. We continued on up, and the snow around us got thicker and thicker. The snow poles were sparsely placed and the mist was starting to roll in. The snow started to get so thick that Anton and I would plug steps, sometimes the snow was thigh depth. Being in snow conditions like this is exhausting; because you need to haul yourself out of the snow once you are in that deep. We kept on going up and got up higher. We were in a bit of a hurry because there wasn't too much left of the day, being winter it gets dark at about 5:30pm. The snow started to get a bit icy, which was a bit of a concern because we only had ice axes and no crampons. We kept on going upwards, the ridge started to plateau and the weather became worse, it was snowing and windy, and very cold. We kept on going in the gathering gloom and mist and strained our eyes for the next snow poles. We had a good sense of where we needed to go but we had our compasses and maps with us as well. Map and compass were both absolutely necessary in the white out, freezing conditions. Although we had

a good sense of where we were, it was a good feeling to get to a well sign posted junction which pointed us in the way of Kime hut. The signs were covered in ice, with thick lumps of wind blown ice sticking out of them. By this stage we were surrounded by thick snow, covered in a coating of ice. The only vegetation we could see was lumps of frozen tussock. The conditions were windy, misty and freezing. I felt a tinge of anxiety for other trampers that might come here - we were fairly fit, had a tent if we really needed it, and we were having a hard time. What about other people with less experience/luck than us? I knocked some of the thick frozen ice off the signs so other trampers could see the signs a bit better when they got to them. It was getting darker and darker. Anton and I both knew we couldn't afford to get lost, even though we had brought a tent with us. The conditions were so cold and windy, they were ripe for hypothermia if we were forced to pitch it. It was getting colder as the darkness fell, and we continued on through the blizzard conditions. Our packs and jackets were covered in a layer of ice and we were starting to slip on the ice beneath our boots. All I wanted to do was to get to the hut, and you know what it feels like when you are in those conditions and you finally see it. We saw the Kime hut. We were filled with relief. But it was completely covered in thick ice, with large icicles hanging from its roof. We couldn't get in through the door, so we had to break off enough ice to get in. For a minute I thought we might not be able to get in, but we bashed our way through the ice with our ice axes and levered the door open. Once we were inside we saw that wind blown snow had filled the hut. It was freezing, but we peeled off our wet and soaking gear and got into warm clothes. We walled off a corner of the hut with the mattresses we found there to insulate ourselves against the cold and made ourselves dinner. Kime hut was originally built as a shelter as a reaction to trampers that had died of exposure on the long stretch of tops on the Southern Crossing. Kime hut has no fire, and our boots froze to the floor in the night.

## **Day 2**

In the morning, we woke up to a beautiful day. The sun was beaming down, the sky was bright

blue and clear. Anton didn't have his sunglasses so I fashioned him some out of a muesli bar packet. You can make Inuit style sun glasses using cardboard and cutting slits in it for the eyes. It restricts the amount of light coming in, so it protects you from snow blindness.

We put on our still frozen jackets, unstuck our ice axes from the frozen table and we set off to finish the rest of the crossing. Above the hut we had a fantastic view across to Ruapehu, Taranaki and the Kapiti coast. We got up to Field peak, but the snow was so icy we had to constantly cut steps. Modern ice axes aren't really suited for step cutting, being shorter than the old wooden handled ice axes, which were the perfect height for step cutting. We were also wearing modern tramping boots rather than old school hob nail boots, which would have been handy in the conditions. I felt a bit bad that we hadn't brought crampons, I had heard from two experienced sources that you don't really need crampons in the Tararuas in winter, but I guess the conditions were worse than usual. From where we were we could see, the weather just started to turn for the worse, so we made the decision to turn back to Kime hut. The funny thing is, turning back is harder than going on. You think that determination is hard, but self restraint and patience is much harder. It was a real disappointment: we had wanted to do this trip for ages, we were right here, and it would be a hassle to get back out from Otaki forks. But it was definitely the right decision, and in a way, that turned out to be the best lesson of the trip. Above the bush line, things are so much less forgiving, and being able to back off is a good skill. As the late Sir Ed used to say 'patience is the greatest virtue of the mountaineer.' Not that I think Field peak counts as a mountain, but yeah, patience is good. So we retreated back to Kime hut, and took off the next morning. From there we knew our way back down the ridge. The snow got softer, and we got back to the bush line. Getting into the bush felt like an embrace. It was sheltered and we were out of the wind. Ten minutes later we were in Field hut. We got the fire going, and put dinner on. We felt really happy and relaxed. We had turned back where we needed to, but we had also done a great Alpine tramp up to Field

peak, seen amazing views, and gotten back safe. Field hut seemed like a warm haven compared with freezing Kime hut (A.K.A the fridge on the ridge). Although that had seemed like a haven at the time too.

### **Day 3**

We packed up and headed down the track and got out into the dewy countryside at Otaki forks. We walked down the road for about 30 minutes until the first car that went past gave us the best hitch ever, all the way down the road and back to Paraparaumu. We were back there by 11am that morning and caught the train back to downtown Wellington. It felt a bit strange to be back around suburbia after a few days in the

wilds. Overall it had been a great trip, despite not making it all the way across the Southern Crossing.

### *Postscript*

About two weeks after our trip, two trampers died on part of the same track that we had gone on. They had headed up from Otaki forks, past Field hut, and continued on, attempting to get to Kime hut. They were in blizzard conditions and had lost their way and became hypothermic in the thick snow. It was a sad reminder of how dangerous conditions can be in bad weather on the tops.



*“So you’re doing the Southern Crossing....hmmm...not many people do that in winter.”*

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*“You can make Inuit style sun glasses using cardboard and cutting slits in it for the eyes. It restricts the amount of light coming in, so it protects you from snow blindness”*

## The Adventures of Five Hobbits

– (Actually a dwarf, a wizard, a hero king of men, a shield maiden with an attitude problem, and an unnervingly slimy, fish-smelling creature. Oh, and a Rhino).

**\*\*\* This was a trip with a difference with a 'Lord of the Rings' theme in the Kaimanawas \*\*\***

July 2009

**Author:** Kat Collier

**The Fellowship were:** Rion Gulley, Nick Gulley, Andy Baddeley, Andy Thompson, and Kathleen Collier. Now see if you can work out who was who. :-P

*'When Mr. Rion Gulley of AUTC announced that he would shortly be celebrating the July holidays with a tramping trip of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton ....'*

### Day One:

\* Council of Elrond called. Location, on second glance, is not in fact Rivendell, but the lair of strange, manky, fish-smelling creature somewhere in Taupo.

\* It becomes apparent that Fellowship is minus entire contingent of hobbits. Including ring-bearer. No elves either. Or shifty-eyed men of Gondor with an unhealthy fondness for horns.

\* Bold questors refuse to be daunted by such trifles.

\* Gimli disappears into pub. Cannot be extricated, even with the application of Gandalf's staff, shards of Narsil re-forged, and a fairly hefty crowbar.

\* Strange, manky, fish-smelling creature has an inordinate fondness for home makeover shows. Fellowship beat a hasty (but honourable) retreat to hot pools.

### Day Two:

*'I need no map,' said Gimli, gazing out before him with a strange light in his deep eyes. There is the land where our fathers worked of old, and we have wrought the image of those mountains into many works of metal and of stone, and into many songs and tales. They stand tall in our dreams: Baraz, Zirak, Shathûr. Only once before have I seen them from afar in waking life, but I know them and their names ... Yonder stands Barazinbar, the Redhorn, cruel Caradhras, that in your tongue you call Mt. Urchin; and beyond him is Silvertine: Celebdil the White, Zirak-zigil, that you call Umakarikari'. (Dwarves, as you can see, are rather more verbose in Tolkien than in Jackson.)*

\* Hills. Lots of hills. Éowyn begins fervently to wish that she had brought her horse.

\* Fellowship reaches the top of Redhorn pass. Yes!! Much triumphant war chanting and loss of clothing ensues.

\* Éowyn spots Crebain from Dunland. 'Spies of Saruman!' shouts Gimli, throwing himself face-first into the nearest snowdrift. Cunning ranger of the wilderness, Aragorn, conceals himself behind marker pole and attempts to look as thin and metallic as possible. Other members of Fellowship look on in bemusement.

\* On closer inspection, Crebain prove to be a distinctly un-threatening species of small finch. Emboldened by this victory, Fellowship storm onwards towards the peak of mighty Caradhras.

\* Weather becomes fouler and fouler. Fellowship curse piker Legolas and his tummy aches. Just when an elf might have been useful in order to skip merrily over mountain ranges and drag back the sunshine.... No consideration at all...

\* We faced the wrath of Caradhras!! Much needed Lembas break. Gollum and Gimli celebrate conquest by engaging in jet plane dog fights. Must be training for Nazgûl attack or some such.



\* Attack!! Gandalf and Éowyn treacherously ambushed by heavy barrage of missiles. Orcs suspected at first, but no... Tricky Gollum has betrayed us! Wielding his ice axe, Gimli charges into the fray, but the hopes of Gandalf and Éowyn are soon dashed. With a hoarse cry of “Barûk Khazad! Khazad ai menu!” a treacherous snowball is launched straight at Gandalf’s head. Gandalf and Éowyn are beaten back, caught between a cliff face and a precipice, and shameful defeat is near....

\* Suddenly, out of the mist strides Aragorn, son of Arathorn, with the shards of Narsil, the ice axe re-forged in his hand! He smites Gollum a great smite with a snowball, and the wretch tumbles from sight, cursing and shrieking mightily.

\* Rightful king of men now turns his attention to the treacherous Gimli. Éowyn and Gandalf leap back to the affray. First proof of the well-known fact that forces of good ALWAYS triumph over evil! Huzzah!

\* At about this point, Gandalf and Gimli both begin to feel desperate need to acquaint themselves with Moria long drop facilities. Fellowship thus reunited by pursuit of common goal.

\* Fellowship reaches hut!! Gandalf barricades himself in long drop and explains to Gimli in an entirely civil and non threatening fashion exactly why he shall not pass.

\* Dinner of many lentils. Somehow, does not quite match up to anticipation of honey cakes and spiced elf wine.

\* Boys play endless rounds of 500. Éowyn, somewhat anachronistically, fills in hut book in elvish. Boys play more 500. Éowyn scribbles elvish graffiti on every available surface. Combination of Gollum-ish sneakery and dwarvish guile emerges triumphant over the Gandalf/Aragorn wisdom-and-heroics combo.

\* Gandalf reads bedtime stories from *Footprints '07* - great epic legends of the past. No songs, thankfully.

### Day Three:

\* Nothing much of note. Lots of snow. Gandalf shows dignity befitting to one of his advanced years by attempting to catch snowflakes on his tongue.

\* Gimli and Éowyn argue about whose character got most butchered in movies. Gimli claims he gets best deal, as he gets free ticket to undying lands and kinky elf lady all to himself. Éowyn refutes this by pointing out that she gets Faramir. Faramir = hot.

\* Gimli called upon to tell tales of ancient dwarf realm. Gandalf asks for a story about the origin of Cabbage Trees of the Valar. History has become legend, legend has become myth, and the real truth is now known to none.

\* Gollum attempts to join tale-telling by disproving existence of the fabled alpine Rhino. Gimli swiftly sets him straight on this count.

\* Mountain defeated, all jet planes consumed. Probably ruling ring was also destroyed, but no one can remember it happening.

*‘At last the companions turned away, and never again looking back they rode slowly homewards... and they went on, and there was yellow light and fire within; and the evening meal of beer and chips was ready, and they were expected...’*

*Somewhere, a Rhino drew a deep breath. ‘Well, I’m back,’ he said.*

*(Plagiarised with cheerful impunity from J.R.R. Tolkien.)*













## Kaimais Trip

1-2 August 2009

**Author:** Ellen Barnard

**Attendees:** Lisa Chang, Eric Lalot, Kynan Bleaken, Peter Luk, Luke Kristensen, Ellen Barnard, Jenny Long (leader), Scott Hutchings, Mingyi Huang, Tony Sui

**Where:** Te Rereatukahia Loop Track

We started off on Hot Springs Rd after leaving the vehicles; an oldish, knowledgeable-looking bloke by the track entrance suggested that we do our stream crossing early on in case it rained on us. Hence we took the flatter route up to the hut, enjoying various views of bush along the way.

The hut was visible a long way off thanks to its nice white chimney. Besides our group there were two fellow trampers residing within; combined with the extra bloke who turned up after dark. Card games ensued after a good dinner of mince and pasta. Chocolate was also provided. *Scum* was the game of choice, then *500* for the people who weren't yet ready to sleep.

We set off without our packs on Sunday morning, intending to find Wahini Rock somewhere along the old track. Paying our respects to the 'experienced trampers only' sign, we clambered up the hill avoiding as many

potholes as possible. It was impressively windy along the top and there was no rock in sight. There was some creative interpretation of the track markers through the thicker scrub but we made it through back out to the knee-high stuff in good time. Frolicking ensued for several.

Alas, we reached a point where the track dropped sharply into indeterminate bush, still with no giant rock. Peter and Eric climbed up a nearby tree to improve their view, losing Eric's pack in the process. Then a branch broke and dumped Peter 2m down where he landed on his feet next to the aforementioned pack. As he was unharmed this was cause for great amusement.

Giving up on the rock we had an uneventful journey back to the hut, except for some additional frolicking. The trip back down was a bit steep as the relatively-inexperienced trumper fell (me), but we took our time. We did lose Eric a few times; up trees and such like. We had lunch at the track intersection and eventually reached the stream. Our crossing was epic; linking arms, we strode through the mighty waters, some of us even getting wet nearly up to our knees.

The journey along the road to the Sapphire Springs wasn't as exciting, but there was a very nice magnolia tree on the right. The hot pools themselves turned out to be lukewarm. Oh well, it wasn't half bad. There was some confusion over who had achieved the *most* falls, but no one topped Peter's tree incident. T'was a great weekend.



*“There was some confusion over who had achieved the most falls, but no one topped Peter's tree incident”*



# Mt Taranaki & Ngauruhoe Trip

4-6 September 2009

**Author:** Craig Smith

**Party:** Craig Smith, Kat Collier, Andrew Baddeley, Christina Fullerton, Lois Alison-Cooper, Jeff Ducrot, Nadia Wollkopf



On Friday afternoon we set off for Mt Taranaki, with some carrot fights and playground fun along the way. Eventually we found our way



from New Plymouth to Mt Taranaki. We cooked dinner in the shelter of the Taranaki Visitor Centre toilets foyer. Mince and veges, courtesy of left-overs from the Hut birthday, with nachos and cheese. Andy T and Dan arrived in time for dinner and with our gear. It was a 1hr walk to the hut via torchlight for a few hours sleep.

3am – we could hear the wind howling. Would we be able to walk up? I managed to get everyone up. We headed up Taranaki in the crisp morning air, by the light of the full moon and clear skies. Part way up, the horizon started to glow and we witnessed a beautiful sunrise over Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe & Tongariro. We were almost alone on the glowing red mountain, our blue shadows contrasted against the pink snow. As we walked up the valley at the start of the track we set off mini avalanches of flowing polystyrene, or sistrugi which was knee deep at times. Half way up the wind increased...would we be able to make it all the way up...whether to continue..? Luckily we did. Once we got around the other side it was more sheltered, well for a bit anyway... Crawling up the last bit into the crater on all fours like a monkey, we braced ourselves against wind gusts and protected our faces from flying ice bullets. I was glad for my helmet. We dug out a seat for a 9.30 'lunch' stop on a steep slope just below the summit where it was more sheltered. The path leading to the summit was like walking on marbles, over a river of glass/crystal like ice flakes (sistrugi). We had a stunning view of snow capped Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe & Tongariro, the west coast and surrounding ranges, and there were spikey cauliflower shaped ice formations. As we walked down, many others were on their way up and we arrived at the bottom to join Kat and Andy's sunbathing picnic (Kat had had to turn back because of her asthma).



We took the forgotten highway to Taumaranui because it's just as fast as the state highway according to Andy T. It was a lovely drive though. We stayed the night at Mangatepopo hut and enjoyed a fantastic view of Tongariro &

Ngauruhoe, by light of the full moon from our balcony, while photographer Andy took some alpine panorama shots.

On Sunday the wind was too high for an alpine start and we were all keen for some sleep. By the time we set off at 9am the wind had died down and we'd been blessed with another bluebird day! Andy explored a new route up the ridge to Mt Tongariro while the others of us headed up Ngauruhoe. What an awesome view!

Tama lakes, Ruapehu, South crater, Tongariro, Lake Taupo, Mt Taranaki. The edge of the Ngauruhoe crater was crusted over with a bench of ice and there were again awesome ice formations but flower shaped ones unique from those on Taranaki. We bumslid down the wicked Ngauruhoe snow slide; leaving our snail trail mark on the mountain. Then returned to Auckland via hotpools. What an awesome trip!!



*“That’s not an onion, it’s a carrot. Can’t you see it’s red?” – Andy, Taranaki*

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*“Were you guys planning on getting out of your sleeping bags at all today?” “Not so much, no” - Craig and Andy, Ngauruhoe*

## Ruahines (Inter-Semester Break)

September 2009

**Author:** Richard Greatrex

**Attendees:** Craig Smith, Richard Greatrex, Eric Lalot, Christoph Baumgart

**Day 0:** Camp out on the side of road by car. Eat Nacho's (tasty).

**Day 1:** Meet Hugh and do a car shuttle. Pack packs - realise what we have gotten ourselves into - shoulder 30kg+ packs and begin walking up to Colenso Trig. Realise we have reached Colenso Trig when we walk into it in the near whiteout. Navigate along ridge in snow to junction with marker poles. Stop Craig from walking down wrong ridge with nifty compass work. Paranoid about missing marker poles. Refer GPS, realise we should have worked out how to use GPS prior to trip. Realise batteries won't last long in cold. Retire GPS. Find marker poles, follow to bushline. Descend through bushline. Continue descending. Continue descending down near vertical slope. Dark falls. Continue descending. Reach river. Crossing nowhere in sight. Track on other side nowhere in sight. Downstream: gorge, Upstream: bigger gorge. Recce downstream, and both sides of river. Nothing. Climb back up scree slope, there is by this point much swearing and tiredness. The packs still weigh 30kg. Call it quits for night and retire uphill to makeshift campsite. Cook stir fry which makes up for everything.

**Day 2:** Wake up in tent. Craig & Christophs sleeping bags soaked through from being on edge of tent. Much swearing ensues. Speak to Mountain Radio Wellington who get DOC to confirm that in fact the track still exists, and so does the hut. Much amusement from MR through this process. Strike camp. Walk *all the way back down* the hill. See track and crossing point half a klick upstream, as clear as the daylight that we now have to see by. Five minutes later at the hut. Go down to river, running dangerously high. A scout up and down

river doesn't reveal safe crossing point let alone any markers or indication of where the track might be. Decide today is not our day, stay in Otukota eating and drinking.

**Day 3:** River still presents challenge. Take alternate route up onto tops, aiming for Crow Hut south along the main range. Swift climb up a steep spur leads to edge of bushline by midmorning. Markers cease, it's map and compass from here. Soft snow makes it's presence quickly known as the leaders drop into knee deep snow every time, thigh deep regularly and waist deep occasionally. Begin to crave hard ice for cramponing...we'll get it higher up. Now higher up...snow still killing us. Try track through a patch of forest on other side of ridge. No, the snow is even worse there and there is the added delight of having snow drop down the back of your jacket as you punch through trees. Back out to the open. Up. Reach top of ridge and it's only afternoon. Still have twice as far to go again and the snow is as soft as ever. The maths doesn't work. Eat lunch looking out over spectacular view with glorious sun. Return to Otukota Hut for yet another night.

**Day 4:** Determined to leave this area now. River lower thanks to sunny weather yesterday. Still no markers. Cross and begin highly orchestrated(!) search for track. Success! Climb up again and have a day of travel through snow coated forest. The snow starts low down and stays soft the whole time. By midday the sun has degraded the open parts so that it is not unlike walking on quick sand. Other than the strength used up in plugging the snow, a great day and another brilliant lunch spot. Icicles coat many of the trees and there is a continuous white carpet. Reach Maropea Forks Hut without incident. This was my favourite hut of the trip, beautiful setting, well built, plenty of space.

**Day 5:** An alpine start to get ahead of the soft snow. The day starts well because my boots had fully dried out overnight and I treated myself to a new pair of socks. We begin to head downriver and I happily note that the water is very shallow. A few hundred meters downstream the river forks and we head up the opposite fork back upriver to the start of the

track. I look at the opposite side, and with despair at the channel between just a few centimetres higher than the top of my boots. With loud comments and much ill-feeling I plod across and resign myself to snow and wet boots for another day. The alpine start works wonders, and by 11am we are standing in front of Wakelings Hut having had a crisp trip, back down to only 900m elevation but already a light dusting of snow covers the river banks, hut and trees.

**Day 6:** Today brings the first of two full alpine passes that we need to get out and back to the car. Making another alpine start we head up the hill, our headtorches illuminating the open forest and bobbing around above and below clearly showing the location for the rest of the team. Losing the route is easy, the markers are widely spaced in places but we quickly get into a routine, always leaving one person to mark the last known track position, the rest spread out in a fan shape uphill scouring tree trunks between ground and waist height for markers. It is snowing but we are well protected in the bush for now. Just around dawn we get to the top of the treeline and gear up for the tops. Extra layers, balaclavas and a quick snack. The rest of us have had our ice axes out for a while but Eric changes his walking stick for his axe, so we know he expects it to get serious.

We head out of the treeline and the wind hits like an express train, luckily blowing us into the slope. I drive my axe down into snow and kick in a deep step. Waiting for a break in the wind I plunge forward across the slope, driving my axe in for another good placement. A few more of those and I have the strength of the wind judged and progress is faster. Craig is 10m ahead but we can barely see the next marker pole through the falling snow, let alone the summit. We look around and decide to press on for a while. We make our way across to the next pole and as we do, the wind picks up a chunk of snow the size of a car bonnet from below us and slams it into the slope right between Craig and I. That was

enough for me and wordlessly (because speaking was impossible in the wind) I gave the cut-throat motion and thumbs down to everyone else. We headed back down the hill and again the bush afforded us so much protection that things were silent. The soft snow is an advantage now, letting us slide, jump into patches and take long steps with the snow giving way and gently breaking our descents. We slalom'ed on our boots through gaps in trees and jumped down slopes that we had gone up on all fours just hours ago.

Back in the hut for another night and we decide to give the open fire a miss. A cunning plan (trade secrets not revealed) sees the gigantic hole blocked up though.

**Day 7:** In the morning nothing has changed and we begin to get worried about making it out with any food left. Mountain Radio gives us a glimmer of hope though... a weather window might open up toward the end of the day. At mid-day Rick, who has kindly put on an extra sked for us, tells us there is no change but reminds us that the next front is still moving in. Within half-an-hour we are out of the hut and heading up the hill. As we go up the weather begins to clear exactly as forecasted. We manage to get up and over our first crossing and down to Crow Hut, making our way across a gigantic swing bridge just as dusk falls. Our weather window is closing fast and we opt for another early start tomorrow.

**Day 8:** We are up on the tops by dawn again and fittingly, we experience our best day of the trip. Perfect snow conditions and unlimited visibility. We set up the mountain radio on the top of the ridge and speak to Wellington again, who arranges our pickup from Kawhatau Base. Now on a timetable, we fast track it down the hill, hitting a very steep slippery scrubby section near the bottom which slows us up considerably. We get a great treat here, and finish the trip with a cable car ride across the river.





## Moonlight Crossing

*September 2009*

**Author:** Andy Baddeley

**Trampers:** Joe Nelson, Jeff Ducrott, David Baddeley and Andy Baddeley

It was a dark and stormy night, three brave trampers were stuck in a hut, wanting to walk outside, but knowing there was little point. After sitting there in the vain hope that the weather would clear, they gave up, and went to bed, setting the alarm for 2 hours later, hoping that, somehow, the weather would then be clear. The alarm rang, one brave tramper looked outside, and saw a break in the cloud so the other two excitedly packed up their gear, got ready to leave the hut and brave the snow. They all headed out onto the deck to find that it was, once again, raining... a result that encouraged them to head back inside and sleep once more.

After several similar stories, with three common points, the desire and intention to walk the Tongariro alpine crossing by the light of the moon, reflected in the pristine snow, my presence, and the presence of rather shocking weather.

Finally after 4 years of trying, the weekend came. Nothing but a full moon and perfect weather was organised, but Friday night at the edge saw a bunch of climbers gathering.., word spread, and by the end of the night, Jeff and Joe, without too much persuasion, agreed that it seemed like a good idea. Persuading David later wasn't especially challenging either.

We departed Auckland at a very respectable hour the next morning, but in a bit of a hurry since we needed to be at National Park before 4:00pm so we could get dropped off at the track end. The trip down was punctuated by a variety of exciting distractions, the purchase of provisions, (including a large, delicious, but cheap bag of carrots, and the moonlight crossing traditional sustenance... a large packet of cookie time cookies and the ingredients for nachos.

As we got closer to the mountains, the weather became more and more promising, one single small cloud was casting its shadow across the slopes of Ngaruahoe, but the rest of the sky was clear. The track into Mangatapopo hut was shared with several huge guided groups of tourists being on their way back from a failed attempt to do the crossing during the day... according to the "expert guides", no one had been able to complete the crossing that day due to "bullet ice" up the top, and as a result of this, we really should not be attempting such a bold expedition, especially at night time. Of course, having never heard of bullet ice before, we carefully considered our future plans, and how dangerous the night could be, approximately 2 seconds later, we decided that the guides were full of it and we probably knew more about the hazards than they did. Upon reaching the hut we met a French guy who had, contrary to what the self proclaimed experts told us, walked over the hill.., and done so wearing light boots and with no ice axe or crampons.

This told us two things, the French guy was a nutter, and the guides were generally reprehensible, taking a bunch of tourists up the hill promising them something that they couldn't safely provide, and citing bad conditions as a reason to turn back when one couldn't have asked for a better snow pack for walking.

After a dramatic sunset, we headed out into the valley, the only light to be seen was the stars above, and the reddish glow emerging over and around the hills toward Whakapapa village. We quickly (it wasn't especially warm) climbed the newly re-routed devil's staircase, and watched the moon rise slowly as we reached the far side of the crater. There was a certain (around -10 degree) chill to the air, but it was so still that as long as we kept walking, we were at no risk of getting cold, so we stopped and posed for photos, becoming aware of how cold it actually was.

There was a little dissent in the ranks, and Ngaruahoe was not summited that night, but we did find our way to the peak of Tongariro, after much playing on rime deposits on the track

markers. We headed north from the summit, dropping down to the valley below, south of North Crater and wandered onward, enjoying the mystic eire beauty of the mountains at night.



- Who could ask for clearer skies? -

We arrived at Ketetahi hut at the very civilised hour of 1am, and crawled off to bed as quietly as possible. In the morning, we breakfasted on a beautiful deck with a spectacular view of the

sunrise before a final carrot sword fight, and an amble down the road.



- Breakfast with a view -

The trip back saw a few more carrot-related shenanigans and my first attempt at “exhaust manifold garlic bread”, the experiment resulted in somewhat inedible results, but was a good proof of concept, next time it will involve more layers of foil and possibly a better bread-retention system.



*“the purchase of provisions, (including a large, delicious, but cheap bag of carrots, and the moonlight crossing traditional sustenance... a large packet of cookie time cookies)”*

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*“We arrived at Ketetahi hut at the very civilised hour of 1am”*

## Cape Reinga

*AKA "A long time getting nowhere in particular"*

*8-11 September 2009*

**Author:** Tom Goodman

**Attendees:** **Commander:** Andrew "Hudson" Hudson and **Ratings:** Gemma "Nazi" Augustin, Thomas "Tent" Lazelle, Richard "Kid" Duggan, Katie "Mum" Heacock, Thomas "Tubby" Goodman, Sarah "Tiny" Wyse, Tony "Token" Siu, Mira Muth

On a crisp September morning, 8 intrepid explorers set off on a journey to the ends of the earth, well, the end of New Zealand anyway. Our first stop was Newmarket to get Andrew's pack, meanwhile Tony, following in the other car, was getting more confused by the minute. Eventually, however, we were on our way. A stop to pay the toll for the northern gateway provided an opportunity for all to stock up on junk food for the journey, and it was then that your author realised his tent was still sitting on his dining room floor. Sarah was not impressed, although it gave the others a certain amount of amusement.

At Whangarei we stopped to collect our last member, with the added bonus of an extra tent! After several drives up and down the main street, some bright spark suggested Pizza Hut all-you-can-eat for lunch. Several hours later, stomach bulging, we negotiated our way out of the city, which seemed rather keen to keep us there forever.

We arrived at Spirit's Bay just as the sun was setting, and headed down the beach. In the distance the Cape Reinga lighthouse could be seen, the moon was shining above us, and the surf produced a display of colour with every wave. After a couple of hours, a mutual consensus was reached to call a halt for the night. Tents were erected, driftwood collected and a fire lit. The air was filled with the smell of frying, as fish burgers were prepared and then

devoured, followed by chocolate log. Our appetites satisfied, we sat around the fire, trying to avoid the smoke, until our beds called us in.



*- tent site on first morning -*

The sun rose and showed our position, halfway down Spirit's Bay and no sign of civilisation in sight. Katie announced that she had been for an early morning swim, strangely no one was tempted to join her. We headed down the beach, stopping frequently to look at bluebottles, much fun was had by all racing waves up the beach. Some were better at this than others.

The end of the beach came at last, bringing our first hill with it. A soft patch of grass provided the perfect place for morning tea, before we left the coast and headed inland, and up! As we ascended this muddy four-wheel drive track, our conversation turned to other matters, religion, politics and philosophy. Those were small steps for men, great leaps for mankind. At least we reached the top, didn't we? Ah no! Before us we saw the rolling hills stretching out ahead of us. It was most deceptive. Here Andrew filled us in on that old tramping adage:

*"Whatever goes up will keep going up, whatever keeps going up will continue to go up, and whatever goes down must eventually go up".*



*- track stretching ahead of us, day 2 -*

Throughout the day these ups got steadily larger, bringing us eventually to the coast. The wind blew in our faces and the waves crashed on the rocks below, it was a wild place. Behind us we could see the far end of Spirits Bay where the trip had begun, ahead we could see Maria van Diemeen, which we planned to reach that afternoon. But first, more hills could be seen ahead. One last steep descent down a rocky headland saw us reach our campsite for the night. First port of call was the local long-drop and the taps where we could fill our water bottles. A look at the map showed we were now at our intended morning-tea spot for the day, were our plans perhaps a little optimistic? An extensive revision of our intended route ensued.

As dinner cooked, the cards were dragged out of their packs, hard-fought games of 500 followed, the contestant wrapped in their sleeping bags. Every so often a nearby tent offered its opinion upon the proceedings, the boys seemed to be enjoying themselves, to the amusement of those outside.

The next day began with a hunt for an AWOL tent-bag, unfortunately our searching proved fruitless, only the peg-bag was salvaged. Who was ultimately responsible for this calamity was never determined. Never mind, we continued on our journey. We rounded the corner, our old enemy The Hill, had come back for more. On the way up we got some great views of Spirits

Bay and beyond to North Cape. Being able to see both the east and west coast of the country at the same time is something you don't experience everyday!

One last down tramp back to the water, one last up, and suddenly we were walking on a sealed footpath, with tourists all around us. Before us was Cape Reinga reserve. We rested briefly before making our way to the lighthouse, where we took the compulsory shots of ourselves and the famous signpost, some individuals were rather creative with the use of this in their photos.



After sitting down for lunch in the Cape Reinga carpark, we scored a ride in a bus 20 minutes down the road to the next part of the track, to the relief of us all. More animated conversation followed, this time global warming was put to the test as we plodded along. Our first camp-site was rejected as the only water was from a nearby trough, and we headed down along the same track we had come along the previous day, towards the beach, where we were to pitch our tents.

The rain arrived just as we did, sending us all scuttling for cover, amidst cries of disgust as wet sand was tramped through our sleeping bags. Eventually we poked our heads out, to find that shelter (in the form of a tent-fly) was waiting in a nearby grove. Gemma's Palace was an inviting place, if you knew the password! After a pasta dinner, everyone was ready for



dessert. An ultra-strong, mostly liquid chocolate goo was soon dished up, but this was rather tasty when actually attempted. A somewhat open discussion followed, spurred by excess brain sugar and the thoughts of pizza. Eventually all avenues of conversation were exhausted, and we reluctantly made our way back to the tents.

In the morning it was raining again, seeing this, Mira was at last persuaded to join Katie in her morning swim, the rest of us watching in some awe. Our attempts to round the headlands and

avoid the final hill, was thwarted by the rising tide, to everyone's great dismay. A quick walk along the back of the sand dunes saw us back to the cars, where the flush toilets proved to be the main drawcard. A nude swim was briefly mooted, until it was pointed out that it was after all mid-winter, and at this everyone got cold-feet. The decision was made to instead head back to that great metropolis of Whangarei, where Pizza Hut was waiting for us. The perfect end to the week.



*“your author realised his tent was still sitting on his dining room floor. Sarah was not impressed”*

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*“Whatever goes up will keep going up, whatever keeps going up will continue to go up, and whatever goes down must eventually go up”*

## The Geographical Embarrassment in Ruahines

(means wise women)

Note to self: Never make a woman angry...they roar..

September 2009

**Author:** Charis Wong

**The offenders:** Andy Baddeley, Kat Collier, Jeff Ducrot, Christina Fullerton, Tina Peissker, Charis Wong

It was mid-semester break! According to my dictionary, "study break" means a break from study...so few of us decided to do exactly what it tells us to do...aka ditch our assignments /studies and go and do a decent tramp! From my trip email to the club, I wrote:

*"In order to fit into the "decent" category, we are hoping to have an exhausting, body aching experience & thinking what-did-i-get-myself-into kind of tramp" (but of course, with joyful souls and great company) :P....."*

Yes, we surely did.

A big HIGH appeared over the New Zealand sky on the weather forecast chart. Perfect, so we, the merry bunch started driving down to the Ruahines on a nice fine day. After a nice long 7 and a half hours drive, we reached the Ruahines in the dark ....and I *kindly* saved 6ish possums/bunnies/hedgehogs ' lives by braking thousands of times..which might have annoyed



everyone else who was driving behind me, sorry Andy :P! After a wee bit of a bedtime story from Andy/Kat, we went to bed.

The first bit of the first day involved walking up Pourangaki River with a fair bit of stream bashing and bush bashing. It was a nice fine day. At some stage, we came across a mudslide remnant. It was rather massive and really cool, Jeff stood in the stream accumulating 30cm of thick mud! As we went upstream, stream bashing became slightly more hard-going with lots of scrambling amongst big boulders and tree trunks, or bush bashing to by-pass the stream. When we reached Kelly Knight's Hut, we reckoned that we will not be able to make it up to the Rangiwahia hut through the range, so we decided to stay at the Kelly Knight Hut for the night instead. It was only 3ish...so we decided to make our own fun by making a wet-boot-tree, a trunk-traverse<sup>1</sup> and squeeze-box-through-the-ladder<sup>2</sup>.

The second day was the most "exciting" day. We woke up early and headed up to the ridge. After quite a bit of climbing through the bush, we reached the tops. We stopped and had quite a few of Andy's famous ANZAC cookies and continued. As we made our way through the ridge following the "very widely spaced" poles, it got foggier and foggier (aw! Where is the big "HIGH" from the forecast?! Ruahine, aka the wise woman decided to swing her mood on us) ...we decided that we should turn back to drop down to the bush via the short track which was just next to the signpost/high point marked on the map. The tussock and grass was very dense and hid the track from us. The tall grasses were up to my waist at times, along with many invisible holes hidden in the ground where we

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<sup>1</sup> Technically, it is the same as broom traverse, but with a tree trunk.

<sup>2</sup> If you have gone caving with Rion or Anton or Miles before, there's this really cool thing called "squeeze box"..where you have to squeeze and traverse from one "hole" to the other, but you have to keep your ankles through one hole while you have your shoulders through the other, otherwise you will be out of the game!

kept falling into! At some stage, the visibility had dropped down to 20m ish. We could not see any of the spurs that branched off from the main ridge, nor could we navigate. After a wee bit of a walk following the “sign post” and “track”, we decided that we had gone the wrong direction, so we stopped for a lunch break and turned back. We tried not to discourage ourselves by saying that was a “nice” detour to our “nice” lunch spot. We were very disorientated by the fog. As we walked and walked, we managed to find the only recognisable movable 20 degrees tilted signpost that was meant to be next to the escape track. But right by the sign post where the arrow was pointing to, was a big rocky steep ugly looking drop, so where was the track? At this time, we didn’t want to waste any more time, it was getting cold, a wee bit wet and the visibility got worse, so we decided to turn back and walk the original way that we came up, the one with “very widely spaced poles”. And yet, we couldn’t find it, yes, we were lost. So, we decided to stay up on the ridge for the night in our emergency tent and wait till the fog cleared the following day to continue our way back. We originally planned to stay in the huts all the way, so we had only carried a 3-man tent just in case and left the other in the car (ah, no!). We found a relatively sheltered spot with weight height grass, and started to pitch a tent. Normal tent pegs became useless with grass like this, so we used our ice axes, which worked really well. After the tent was pitched, I ended up with slight hypothermia... and got very well taken care of with lots of hugs involved. Six of us squeezed into the 3-man tent, and had a very friendly cosy night with very comfy padded grass beneath.<sup>3</sup> At this point, we all agreed that we had reached the objective that I advertised in the club email (as shown above).

The next morning, the sky had cleared up and we found that the track was only 20m away from us!

Garh! We went back to the movable sign post and spotted the way that we wrongly went the

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<sup>3</sup> I believed that everyone was longing for the night to end and the sun to rise throughout the whole night.

day before. After taking a few photos, we made our way back to Kelly Knight hut and found that the “very widely spaced” poles in the fog were actually relatively closely spaced! Garh! Sadly, Tina had unhappy knees which made her descend backwards all the way down with the support of two ice axes.

In the end, we made our way safely back to the cars. Despite the geographical embarrassment, we all had a great time in the trip, never been so



lost in our lives before! Note to self: don’t be too ambitious next time!

*Postscript:* after a wee bit of investigation, we found that the reason for the change of weather was because of me, I failed to sacrifice the 6 possums/hedgehogs/bunnies to our Ruahine weather goddess. Evidence to support this argument: Andy ran over a possum on his way to May Camp at K-gorge, we got awesomely beautiful weather for the entire weekend. So, remember to run over all the possums whilst driving to your next tramp!



## Bethells – Te Henga Day Walk

18 October 2009

**Author:** Kylie Brewer

**Attendees:** Kylie Brewer, Erik Tomsen, Alison Alvares, Sonia Moik, Arvin Wang, Galina Redkina, Erik Lalot



On a slightly overcast morning, seven trampers hauled themselves out of bed to head to a rather blustery Bethells Beach. The weather in town began to clear but upon arrival at the beach car park, rain looked inevitable. The track started out meandering through a paddock before a short climb that offered us a spectacular view of a rather grey and dreary Bethells Beach.



Following the track along, we were then rewarded with some more great views of O'Neills Bay complete with a few keen surfers.

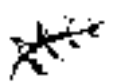
We followed the track along and from here we started a steep climb up to a ridge where we got some amazing views but it was also incredibly windy so we didn't stop for long. The track passed through some farmland at the top of the ridge before descending back to the coast again. We eventually found a nice rocky outcrop where we climbed out to the end so we could have lunch with a view and a bit of a snooze before heading back. The walk back to the cars was much easier as it was nearly all down hill. The weather had cleared and the afternoon had turned into a fantastic sunny day. With plenty of time to spare we chilled out in the sun at the top of the ridge where it wasn't quite so windy anymore.



Continuing on, we arrived at O'Neills Bay where we explored some caves and Erik even went for a swim. On the beach we found the most unusual sea creatures, none of us knew what they were and each thing seemed to have this giant puffy thing which then had several of these creatures coming off it. We walked along the beach back to the cars. After ditching the rather wet and sandy boots we hopped into the cars and headed off to Swanson for a much deserved ice cream. A great end to a fun day's tramping.







## Trip to Ruapehu

-not the most memorable but fun none the less -

*10-12 December 2009*

**Author:** Anton Gulley

**Attendees:** Anton Gulley, Joe Nelson and Jane Dudley

Upon receiving an email from Miss Publications officer saying "Don't forget trip reports deadline - 15 December 2009", I found myself in a spot of bother, I was going tramping with Jane on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> so I would have no time to write it up. I racked my brain for a solution and then an idea came to me. I could write it in advance. All I knew about the trip was that we were going to Ruapehu on Friday night till Sunday. We were driving in my mum's car and there might be some other people coming too. Oh, I had made a big batch of Tararua biscuits too.

So here goes ..... At 4pm on Friday I rushed home to find that Jane had done all the shopping, picked up all the alpine gear, packed my bags and even gone to the toilet for me. All I had to do was hop in the car and drive. I cruised out of the driveway and observed that Jane had done the car up so that it ran on the smell of an oily rag which she was dangling in front of the petrol tank. As we headed out towards the motorway Jane interrupted my thought process ... "I thought they got rid of yellow buses?" she asked.

I was bemused but then I looked ahead and saw a fat man walking down the street in yellow, "Oh, that's just Rodney hide going for a walk, but it's an easy mistake to make" I replied.

Unfortunately I did not get time to finish the article before I left so I decided to write it up after. Here is what actually happened, you can judge for yourselves my powers of prediction.

On Thursday (the plan changed to Thu the 10<sup>th</sup>) night, Joe Nelson, Jane Dudley and myself met

in a driveway in Mt Eden for a car trip down to Mt Ruapehu. Unfortunately the car trip was not as exciting as I expected it to be but soon after we were at the top of the Bruce packing our gear for a two hour walk up to the NZAC hut.

"This place is completely different in summer", said Jane, "there is nobody here".

There was no light except the occasional security lights from one of the numerous buildings which were in a deep slumber awaiting the arrival of another busy ski season. Logic would suggest that during summer this walk to the hut was easier, unfortunately we discovered a few hours later in the small hours of the morning that this was not the case.

We decided to walk up the route to the ski field and we were soon on our way. There was a four wheel drive like road half way up and it made it easier to ascend despite the darkness. After an hour and a half we could pretty much see the hut on the other side of the valley and we knew we were not far off, that was until we saw the snow in the valley. In late spring/early summer the warmer rock beneath the snow melts the snow next to it, creating, in some cases, quite a large air gap in between the snow and the rock. Also the river was running beneath the snow in the valley and would have also carved out a very large air gap beneath the snow. This basically meant that we could not cross the snow for fear of falling through it. We were left with two options, find a way through on rock or turn back. There were islands of rock all over the place and we thought there might be a way through by bashing away the snow in between the rocks with our axes. We soon discovered it was like being in a maze, some of the rock was cream coloured and the snow was white and it looked exactly the same under torch light until really close. Eventually we decided the best bet was in the head of the valley where it was flatter and more likely to be free from snow. Upon a closer inspection we could see this was the case and a clear path could be seen across the head of the valley. As we crossed the river we discovered just how lucky we were. There was a large rock in the river where the water squirted out over the top in such a way that it

would erode any snow above it. We could see that the water then fell in to a huge cavern with at least half a meter of air space. "That's reassuring" I thought to myself, "at least if you fell through the snow and were washed downstream a little bit you would still have room to sit up".

At the hut we discovered that it also gave shelter to a few mice and we had to do a bit of a tidying up and hang all our food up.

At 6am it was a beautiful morning. At 7.30 am when I thought about getting up, it was pouring with rain and there was a strong wind. We were still rather exhausted from the night before and we had enough motivation to pack up to leave but not quite enough to leave. We lay about the hut not doing much, Joe discovered from the microwave instruction book that a microwave causes the water molecules to vibrate at 2.45 million vibrations per second. We sat around discussing how accurate they were and thought about writing to complain that they hadn't taken heavy water into account. We played with ropes for a bit and at about 4pm we went outside. We found some great bouldering outside the hut and did some abseiling at Delta corner.

On Saturday morning we woke up at 5am to do some climbing but the weather was crap so we went back to bed ... 8ish seemed like a good time to get up but we were only properly woken

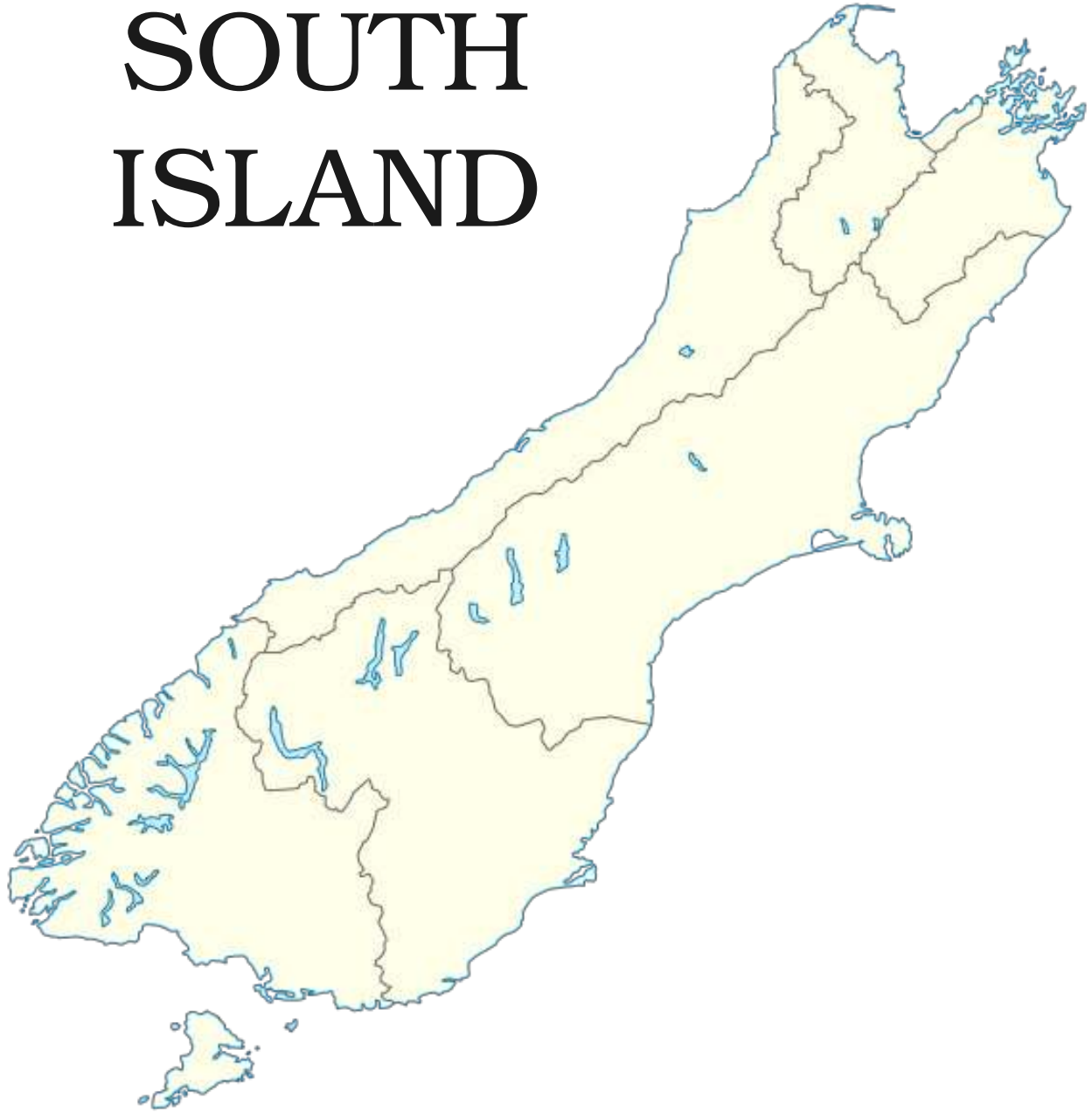
up when Jane screamed. She discovered the mouse trap had caught a mouse. We packed up and headed down the ski field but we were forced to rethink 15 mins later as the stream was now flooded and not crossable at the only point it emerged from beneath the snow. We turned back and plodded down the ridge, stopping to rescue a "danger cliff" sign that had come to rest a long way from any cliff. At the bottom, we thought about climbing Hauhungatahi but it was going to take too long so we decided to go make fun of the "downs walk". At the start of the "downs walk", there is a sign that says "downs walk 20min", as you look in the direction it goes, you can see the end of the walk 100m away. The sign then tries to build up suspense, asking you to guess how the "downs" were formed and saying there is a sign with the answer at the end. Eager to find out we plodded down the track and sat on the seats that were placed after 30m and 80m because we were "so tired". After 30 mins we reached the end, had lunch and drove home stopping for a refreshing swim in Lake Taupo.

My original plan when writing up the trip before the trip was to have some sort of fight between Don Brash trying to sell the mountain to source tax cuts, Rodney Hide trying to make it part of the 'Super City', Gerry Brownley trying to get a sulphur mine at Ruapehu and of course Hone Harawera swearing at everyone.



*“Logic would suggest that during summer this walk to the hut was easier, unfortunately we discovered a few hours later in the small hours of the morning that this was not the case”*

# SOUTH ISLAND



## The Great River Crossing Machine (GRCM)

27-29 December 2008

**Author:** Rion Gulley

**Attendee Units of the GRCM:** Luke Kristensen and Rion Gulley

The Great River Crossing Machine is a machine of much wonder and awe, surpassing every technological advancement by man kind. To really understand this magnificent construction, one needs to investigate the circumstances surrounding its development and construction, near the wane of the 2008 calendar year.

Ironically the Great River Crossing Machine was developed out of the desire to get high, namely 2885m high. It was designed to gain access to the mythical mountain, named after the young chief Tapuae-O-Uenuku of the Arai Te Uru canoe and these days it is simply known by the linguistically challenged, as Tapi.

The approach to this peak is guarded by the magnanimous and majestic enchanter... Hodder. Don't be fooled by his inconspicuous name, like Tim, he has great powers the most famed of his feats being the creation of the mighty Hodder river. Carving through a gorge, the sorcerer makes all travellers in his realm cross the snow feed torrent anywhere from 40 to 120 times, if they wish to get to the base of Tapi.

On hearing of the approach of the infamous GRCM, the conjurer was scared, and sent out his spies to waylay the automation. The flowers grew rapidly and hid the cairn which marked the route down the river. The GRCM was not to be deterred and made its own route bashing through scrub and scrambling down waterfalls to reach the warlock's watercourse. The thaumaturge even coerced the wild

Irishman to attempt to steal the machine's central processing unit but fortunately the machine has many auxiliary sensors and Rhino was quickly rescued.

Once at river level, the machine could begin the task for which it was designed, the crossing of rivers. Quickly the machine had perfected a flawless process that optimized efficiency in the crossing of rivers.

The sensors would quickly assess when and where to cross, the bionic appendages would lock in to place, firmly connecting the two units together, with the larger unit upstream. The spare appendage would quickly identify the destination on the opposite side of the swirling cascade. The machine would then enter the torrent with the up current support fractionally ahead of the others. Swiftly the GRCM would plough through the deluge and once on dry land the units would disband leaving no trace that it had ever existed, until the next river crossing arose.

Hodder was not to be so easily dominated by modern technology so he sent his assassins to try and find a flaw in this, the perfect machine. When dive bombed by falcons the GRCM responded by sprouting trees on its crown, swarms of bees enabled the GRCM to successfully test its stealth mode and the perpetual presence of goats threatening to knock the GRCM over were treated to a swift bombardment using its artillery function.

And that is the tale of the creation of the GRCM, the machine that completed a return voyage that boasted at least 140 river crossing over three days. For those that wish to emulate the feats described in this tale, beware the number of crossings could escalate as the river level changes, due to snow melt rainfall or by the design of the magician, Hodder .... and the ascent of the mountain, you ask, well that's another story.





# 7 days in 7 words; Two Passes, Two Saddles and a Col

9-15 January 2009

**Author:** Luke Kristensen

**Accomplished by:** Peter Luk, Rion Gulley,  
Luke Kristensen

While I am aware that the title is in fact seven words, it is also the following seven words that can comprehensively depict the events that occurred when three adventurous souls ventured into the heart of Mt Aspiring National Park to complete the five passes.

What follows is a dictionary definition of each word and our definition which portray each day.

## Day 1 **Fresh**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: *1.bright or clear 2.invigorating 3.not tired 4.not worn or faded 5.having a healthy or ruddy appearance 6.newly or just arrived*

Our Definition: *1.sparkling foliage following the recent departure of precipitation 2.idle muscles in anticipation.*

## Day 2 **Safari**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: *1.an overland journey or hunting expedition 2.the people, animals that go on the expedition.*

Our Definition: *1.a long adventurous and stunningly beautiful journey 2.helpful jetboat operators.*

## Day 3 **Adolf**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: (Pronoun)

Our Definition: *1. (humorous synonym) An appreciation one has after sleeping in a tent on a still clear night with no fly.*

## Day 4 **Bard**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: *1.one of an ancient Celtic order of poets*

Our Definition: *1.To the sunset with the sunrise Fohn's lakes idle before the eyes. The plateau tantalizing to the north but tantalus taunts us to where we go forth. The fiery beast guards the way to the cow and the end of the day.*

## Day 5 **Perturb**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: *1.to disturb the composure of 2.trouble 3.to throw into disorder*

Our Definition: *1.to fail in meteorology foretelling 2.to fret about forthcoming possible predicaments*

## Day 6 **Flat**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: *1.horizontal level 2.deflated 3.unexciting*

Our Definition: *1.a piss easy day shortened by accurate weather predictions 2.low energy levels.*

## Day 7 **Cigar**

Oxford Dictionary Definition: *1.a cylindrical roll of cured tobacco leaves for smoking*

Our Definition: *1.an aura of wealth, achievement and fulfilment 2.an addictive habit*



## Darran's Report

**Author:** Miles Mason

**Attendees:** Ollie Clifton, Miles Mason and friends

I recognised him by his relaxed Scottish brogue. 'You must be Alastair' I correctly surmise, thereby meeting the first of the motley group of climbers I will be spending the next week with in Homer Hut.

The past two days had passed as such: a hungover plane flight from Auckland to Queenstown, much wandering around the outdoor stores of Queenstown, a stay in a disgusting backpackers and an early bus ride along with a load of tourists bound for the wonders of Milford Sound. Gertrude Valley is the perfect antidote to hectic life in the city – huge, peaceful, beautiful and intimidating in a comforting manner (I don't know how this works – sometimes it just feels good having mountains looming over you).

That night, with a head full of new names and the effects of cheap cask wine – plans are formulated for the following day. Reports of a series of low-angled frozen waterfalls at the head of the valley (ironically named The Gertrude Ice Park) are enticing and when Ollie Clifton encourages me to join him there in the morning, how can I refuse?

We wake at a civilised hour and trot on up the valley – our boots crunching in the well worn trench through the blanketing snow. An easy hour or so and we arrive at the bottom of the first waterfall. It gently rises, bulging above us. We take our tools off our packs and my apprehension grows as I approach the ice. I have extremely limited ice-climbing experience – having only top-roped one 15m route - but I feel I have the ability to climb this waterfall. We start on up and I feel better with every swing of the pick, although the ice isn't the best quality, it's fairly low angled and I feel secure. I follow Ollie on up past halfway and we arrive at a slightly trickier section. Ollie traverses left

across some unconsolidated snow and I move right up a thinner section. A couple of meters later and we arrive at the top – ready to continue on up to Gertrude Saddle.

The next two waterfalls pass uneventfully and we soon arrive at the saddle proper. At this point, a huge cirque opens up beneath and it's possible to catch a glimpse of Milford Sound in the distance. While eating lunch, we realise that Barrier Knob is just a short snow plod away. Seeing how early in the day it is, we dump our technical gear and start on up the broad ridge. After a couple of hours of steep wallowing and a bit of cramp from the old legs we arrive on the summit. What a view! After some standard loitering on the summit, we plod back down in time for dinner.

The next day there are bigger objectives lined up – an ascent of the imposing Mt. Talbot. From the hut, all you can see of it is the vast Psychopath wall, looming up out of the valley floor. But there is an easier route up it, accessed from Black Lake. The majority of it is a snow plod, with some steeper steps to keep things interesting. We start up the staircase, lovingly created by Howie and Steph (thanks guys!) a few days prior. The first steep section is a 45° ice gully – we awkwardly don our crampons on the high-angle snow slope below and dagger up 100m, the wind blowing spindrift down on us, our hands plunging into the freezing snow. At the top I stop to let my hands endure the warming torture, that is the hot aches. We then continue further up – ascending a low-angle snowy ridge, heading for a narrow, sheer-looking couloir which leads the way to the summit.

Reaching the neck of the couloir, we are faced with a 10m step of 80° ice and we eat our lunch while we pull out the rope and rack. I set about making an 'anchor', the soft snow doesn't seem as though it would hold much force in the event of a fall. Once set up, I notify 'On Belay!' Ollie responds with a witty 'Wallowing!', he then continues up to the base of the ice. He places an ice screw and starts on up the step. Another piece of protection near the top and the difficulties are over. I wait while he sets up

some form of 'anchor' and then follow up. Once I reach the base, I feel happy that I am following and not leading, especially with my lack of ice-climbing experience. But I easily second the pitch and lead on past Ollie, ensconced in his cosy bucket seat. After more soft snow wallowing, I reach a short mixed step and gently teeter my way up, finding pick placements in between the rock. I manage to get an ice screw in, then another and before I know it, I've balanced my way onto the hard snow slope which leads to the summit ridge. Much to my displeasure, I hear the call from below '5 metres!' Dam! At this point I find myself wishing I had a snowstake with me. I attempt to hammer the shaft of one of my tools into the slope but it won't go, the snow is too firm. So I wind an ice screw in and equalise it with the pick of one of my tools, along with a couple of steps chopped for my feet; it'll have to do. With a call of 'On Belay... Kinda!' Ollie starts his way up. On his way past he congratulates me on my pitch and the quality of my belay (which I find confusing as the anchor seems like it wouldn't be able to hold a falling 2 year old). After not too much further ado, we reach the corniced summit ridge.

From here it's a mere 50m to the summit proper – which by now is encased in clag. Not lingering on, we continue over the summit and on down the ridge, piled with loose powder snow. I find the ridge traverse rather scary – it's exposed and the features are hidden by liberal snow drifts. More than once we slowly ease ourselves down steeper sections, getting down on our bums for stability, moving just one limb at a time for security. There are some hairy moments where snow falls away to reveal a man-eating abyss but for the most part it's enjoyable ridge travel, wending our way around pillars and across exposed traverses. We presently come to a snow gulley, leading off down to the Gertrude side of the ridge. This is exactly what we have been looking for as a descent route and we easily romp down to the sunshine and easy terrain which await at the bottom. An afternoon tea break and a chance to relax after all the concentration, then we continue down, this time in a carefree manner – often cheekily referred to as a 'controlled

descent'. A wonderfully fast and safe bum slide takes us 200m closer to Gertrude Saddle and more of the well-practised wallowing brings us the rest of the way. On our way back down to the hut I remark 'I don't care where we go tomorrow, as long as it's not Gertrude again'.

That night after several rounds of negotiation, we gain ourselves a place on the in condition ice climb '*Gomer*' III 3. There have been 2 teams on this climb every day of the meet – it's one of the few climbs around with enough ice on it and so it's been getting the brunt of the traffic. A four pitch climb, it takes a direct line next to a huge overhanging wall and generally quality ice (although water was still running underneath). We've been eyeing it up since the start of the meet so it's high time we actually had a go at the thing.

We arrive at the base of the climb after a quick walk up SH94 from Homer Hut – I get my first look at Homer Tunnel as we turn off the road onto the track to McPherson Cirque and pick our way through the snow-covered talus field. There is a team (Terra and Ben from Vic Uni) already on pitch one when we arrive and while they pick their way up, we get ourselves organised for the day ahead. We decide to take just one bag so that the leader can have the privilege of climbing unrestricted. After some sitting around chatting, pitch 1 is free and we solo up a short way to a suitable belay possie. Ollie then leads off up pitch 1, climbing with confidence and ease, gaining good purchase with his antiquated but excellent bamboo-handled Chouinard axe. The short vertical step disposed of, a laid back ramp of ice leads up to the belay at the top. The belay station is under an overhang and Ollie squeezes past Terra (belaying Ben who's leading pitch 2) to set up the anchor. Once this is done, I dismantle the anchor I am attached to and begin seconding the route, winding out ice screws as I meet them. The vertical section requires a tricky high step to overcome it but it's easy to find purchase on the featured ice. I discover that there are a multitude of icicles and pools along the right hand side of the ramp which are great for hooking on and saving energy.

I clip into the belay and hand the rack over to Ollie who then traverses out to the right and speedily leads pitch 2, which turns out to be straightforward. As he climbs, I am distracted by the beauty of the bulge of ice I am attached to, about a foot thick, it is perfectly clear through to the rock beneath – I can even see the tips of the 22cm screws which make up the belay! Peering out to see how Ollie's progressing, a chunk of ice whistles past my head, I quickly retract back under the overhang. Soon enough, I follow up the ramp, the angle of ice gradually decreasing until I dagger onto a small snowfield halfway up the climb. We eat a leisurely lunch and admire the view, Terra is leading pitch 3 above and it doesn't look as hard as the previous sections so we decide that I'll lead this one. Once Ben is almost at the belay, I start leading up, feeling good – my first water ice lead! Screws go in without too much difficulty and I feel happy standing on my front points for the climb. There are some really cool hooks and bridges which I can stand on with the middle of my foot to relieve the pump. Shortly, after fiddling around trying to find some suitable ice for a belay, I start seconding Ollie up – first lead completed! The last pitch passes by, despite some soft snow covering the

ice surface and arrived at the double abalakov thread, which marked the top of the route.

The good thing about doing routes after other people is that they leave helpful things behind – such as nice double abalakovs for abseiling off, or staircases of nicely compacted snow to walk up. After the series of abseils, we arrive at the bottom of the route just as the light is fading and enjoy the walk back down to Homer Hut, with an amazing show of stars above us to light the way.

By this stage, after 3 days of going hard, we're starting to feel a bit lazy. Our plan for Friday is to climb Mt. McPherson via Talbot's ladder and we start the day with every intention of doing so. But once we arrive at Homer saddle, the sun is already disappearing behind McPherson and we both feel cold in the wind which is funnelled over the saddle by the surrounding mountains. So we go back down, arriving at the hut at 3pm for cup after cup of tea with biscuits. We drive down to the river to collect water, enjoying the magnificent scenery - cast into sharp relief by the setting sun. Hilarity ensues as we attempt to keep all the water *inside* the containers on the drive back.



*“More than once we slowly ease ourselves down steeper sections, getting down on our bums for stability, moving just one limb at a time for security. There are some hairy moments where snow falls away to reveal a man-eating abyss but for the most part it's enjoyable ridge travel, wending our way around pillars and across exposed traverses”*

# The Takitimu's

Author: Anton Gulley

**Attendees:** Rion Gulley and Anton Gulley

**Where?** You ask, “where is the Takitimu's”?

Rion and I found ourselves on a small gravel road half an hour south east of Te Anau. We were stuck behind a slow moving herd of sheep (they are all slow) being re-located by a local farmer and we were staring up at a great wispy ball of cloud that engulfed the entire mountain range sparing only a few low down spurs that jutted out beneath the cloud. This image epitomizes our thoughts and knowledge of the trip we intended; we were planning on tramping on a mountain range that only the locals knew about, the staff at the Te Anau DoC centre knew next to nothing, information in pamphlets at the DoC centre was next to nothing and we had a planned off-trail route that even the mighty 'Moirs' guide, the bible of southern off-trail tramping, didn't consider talking about.

The start of the journey was up a well maintained track that was part of Te Araroa New Zealand. Upon reaching the saddle we left the track and bush bashed, sidled and

The following morning wouldn't quite freeze the balls off a brass monkey, but it was pretty cold, however, it WAS CLEAR. We clambered up scree on to our ridge and gazed out over the world. Only the world gazed back with a touch



of menace. Although we could not see the true extent of the problem it was apparent that the way forward was going to be barred by steep screed slopes, cliffs and rocky outcrops. “It was so much easier navigating when we couldn't see anything”, I thought to myself. The day proved to be an epic described by dead ends, in depth navigational discussions to avoid dead ends and intense steep climbing as a result of these discussions. After almost 12 hours on the go we were picked up on a farm road by our eldest brother and driven back to Te Anau for a delicious steak cooked by our parents. Thanks family.



climbed our way up above the tree line. The remainder of the day was spent climbing and navigating our way through a network of screed ridges and the occasional bluff before choosing to camp in a cirque around some tarns just down from the ridge line. The day was a mild white out and we could often see no more than 50 meters. Incidentally it did clear for a minute or two when we were eating scroggin at the top of Clear Peak.

## Information/glossary

**Te Anau** is a town in the south west of the South Island.

A **spur** is a ridge that climbs up on to another ridge or peak from a lower altitude.

**Te Araroa New Zealand** is a walking track opened in 2007 spanning the length of the country.

A **cirque** is an amphitheatre at the top a valley where snow and ice would have once congregated to form a glacier.

**Screes** is unconsolidated rock often found in alpine environments.

A **tarn** is a small lake in a cirque formed by glaciers, they are often formed by rocks being driven in to the ground then uprooted or from moraine (glacial sediment) forming a dam.

**Scroggin** is a mixture of dried fruit, nuts chocolate and other goodies used as a snack food. It is actually an acronym but I forget its meaning.



# Stewart Island - 13 days of Mud, Kiwi and Craig

January 2009

**Author:** Jenny Waite

**Attendees:** Craig Smith, Birgit and Jenny Waite

Craig, Birgit and I headed over to Oban for the longest trip we had ever done. We boarded the ferry with around 70kg of gear between us, included in Craig's 30kg was a thick book, hammock and cheesecake. The next day we set



off along the roads of Oban to the start of the track, no hitching a lift for us (unfortunately because no cars went past us) but we did meet a man trying to sell us a hammock tent, but he was easily convinced that we didn't have room. Arrived at Port William for our lunch where we were entertained (for a bit too long) by a male seal trying to woo a female on the beach. Many photos were taken and techniques observed (notes taken will be published in a separate volume entitled smooth moves of the seal, for those keen, see Craig for details). Slogged around to Bungaree Hut, here Craig tried out his hammock to the amusement of the large crazy Dutch Whanau.

**Day 2-** another slog round to Xmas Village hut. Very refreshing swim and drying in the sun until the sand flies decided I was dry enough to bite.

**Day 3-** Headed round to Yankee hut with lunch at Lucky Beach, but no seals were around so no one was getting lucky today. Only Birgit brave enough to swim today.

**Day 4-** Cruised to Long Harry hut, by now we were walking with Fraser and Jason, two guys who were doing the Northern circuits by themselves - DOC workers camping out at this hut with all their fresh food and BEER! One of them shoots a deer and they were dining on paua most nights, not very fair when we would be enjoying our tuna meals for the whole trip. Craig saw first kiwi in the morning (don't know what he was doing up so early, I like my sleep). Afternoon was spent in hut to avoid sand flies but all good, cause this hut was right up on the ridge with the best views of the beach below.



**Day 5** – Head to East Ruggedy (otherwise known as the ritz) with noticeably lighter pack. Found the quick sand near the hut, awesome fun. Not brave enough for swim. First rain that night. Joined by crazy Czech guy who had skipped a hut, based on this and past experience, have now decided all Czech men are crazy. By now Craig has seen many kiwi, while he's cruising out the front; I don't think the rest of us have seen any. Craig disappears for a while ahead of us and we generally come across him on the track in his hammock reading his book - dam his fitness.

**Day 6-** Long day to Hellfire pass, although am finally feeling fit now and beginning to get pack weight done to sane level. Awesome beach walking, although weather not the best, it still hadn't rained yet. Hut almost out of water which is disappointing as everyone is covered in mud (except Craig who no matter how heavy his pack, can walk on top of mud). Unfortunately beach is 220m straight down a sand dune, Birgit and Jason head down (which is the fun bit) and eventually get back after a 30 minute climb. BY now we can't stop talking

about our cheesecake, much to the annoyance of the rest of the group in the hut, but the Scottish pair had their whisky to cheer them up.

**Day 7–** Cheesecake day! Craig got brilliant video of kiwi on track today.



Quick climb over the head land followed by a long walk that just never ends on Mason Bay. Great swim in the surf; followed by freezing walk back to hut just in time for rain to start but nice ranger had moved our gear out of rain. Very cool ranger takes us up to the dunes to see the sunset, and then shows us one of the rarest plants in the country. Walks to homestead with



us (now the DOC quarters) and gives us the tour. Have a look around old wool shed, crazy Czech and Birgit pretending to be sheep, I think the mud's finally got to them. Finally had cheesecake, mmm goodness, shared with rest of group as 3 people cannot eat a cheesecake by themselves (that's not a challenge to anyone reading this).

**Day 8-** Sad goodbyes to Birgit who's got to head back to the south island to do another tramp with cooler people (tear) and the rest of the northern crew. Horrible walk down Mason Bay, windy and rainy and very cold by the time

we hit the end. Struggled over head land at end, too cold and have no energy. Fall in swamp at the top, why is there a swamp at the top of the hill? Craig's gone ahead by this stage, so luckily he wasn't there to see me fall in swamp. Steep wet descent, very slippery all the way down to Doughboy bay. Hatred of Craig for being so fast disappears when arrive to warm hut with hot water waiting for me.



**Day 9-** rest day! Doughboy awesome, even prettier than Mason Bay. Spend day collecting fire wood from beach and picking up larger items of rubbish. Both Doughboy and Masons collect large amounts of fishing gear that washes up, including trolley bins, buoys and rope.

**Day 10-** First thing in the morning 400m climb, easy as pie. So fit now but still Craig beats me to the top. Again swampy at the top of the hill but makes for quite nice walking. Generally careful of where putting feet though. Walk through swamp just before hut and despite my improved fitness Craig still beats me into hut by an hour (grrrr). I'm getting very low on lunch and snack food now, so its lunch of porridge for me.

**Day 11-** Spend morning waiting for weather to clear and then head up Mt Rakeuhua, so worth it. Fantastic view of the whole island and little dotterals running round blending in very well with the mossy rocks. Head back down and then round to Fred's Camp. Saw first good view of a kiwi today that wouldn't get off track, silly bird. Craig has beaten me to the hut by over an hour this time, but once again has outdone

yimself with not only hot water but also muscles that he collected off the wharf. Big feed.



**Day 12-** Short walk to Freshwater hut, most enjoyable day so far. Some waist deep bits of water in the swamp but waters really warm and washing off 12 days of mud. Meet the couple that had stayed with us at Doughboy Bay heading to Fred's camp to pick up kayaks. Another lunch of porridge at the hut. But finally the sun comes out, so spend afternoon lying in sun as the sand flies have buggered off. River next to hut is very full, black and flowing fast so no swimming for us. When this river floods it goes very quickly, when we first arrived on the island the track here was closed

as it was waist deep in water and in the past it has flooded over the roof of the hut. One story I've heard is trampers being stuck in the hut when this happened and having to escape out the roof and wait to be rescued from here.

**Day 13-** Out of the hut by 5:30am, both of us are too tight to pay for a water taxi back or for accommodation in Oban for the night, so decide to walk the last 2 days in one and be on the 3pm ferry. Mmmmm cold porridge from peanut butter jar for a quick lunch. Good time to the great walks hut, then easy stroll on board walks round to Oban. Knackered by the time we hit Oban though, meet one of the people from Freshwater hut here who had taken the water ferry back and didn't have to pay as had hurt knee, should have said that to the taxi operator. Make it onto the next ferry for a splashy ride back, I quite like being on boats, although got the feeling Craig's not so keen on them.

Awesome trip, awesome company. If you're thinking of heading there, do it. Or if you just want someone to join you on a long trip – take Craig he's possibly the least annoying person in the world. Thanks Craig for putting up with me for 13 days.



*“Hut almost out of water which is disappointing as everyone is covered in mud (except Craig, who no matter how heavy his pack, can walk on top of mud)”*



## Abel Tasman Coastal Track

28–31 January 2009

**Author:** Kylie Brewer

**Attendees:** Kylie Brewer, Jeff Small, Andrew Draper, Hazel Albertyn, Scott Hutchings, Ben Bauer, Alison Alvares.



On 27<sup>th</sup> January seven excited trampers descended on Nelson from all corners of New Zealand. After meeting up at the Paradiso hostel, it was off to the supermarket to buy food for the tramp returning to the hostel for our first group dinner a leisurely evening, of packing and relaxing.



28<sup>th</sup> January and we were up early and running around organizing the last of our gear before the shuttle picked us up to take us to the start of the track at Marahau. An hour or so later we arrived at the start of the track only to realise that Scott and I had left the paper work for our hut passes back at the hostel, oops! After a quick call to DOC it was all sorted, a quick group photo and we set off for a few days of adventure! The first part of the track was fairly easy as we were high above the beach with the track cut into the cliff offering us some spectacular views of the beaches below. We stopped for lunch on the point which gave us our first views of some of the offshore islands, and it was here we made our discovery of Andrew's love of spam. Ben and Andrew decided that a swim was in order and jumped off the point. We set off again with the track continuing to wind its way above the coast, offering more views of the water below. Mid afternoon we arrived at another point this one offering views of the island, that Andrew named "Ruatiti" as it looked like two breasts, we later learned it was called Adele Island. From here it was a relatively short but steep downhill to Anchorage Hut. We arrived at the hut and were greeted by several other trampers. After claiming beds we set off to explore. Jeff, Alison and Andrew were in the campground, a two minute walk from the hut and a large sheltered flat area – not a bad spot! While the others went for a walk along the beach I sat and chilled out in the late afternoon sun watching the world go by. A while later the others returned and we headed back to the hut to cook dinner. The huts in Abel Tasman are quite large to cater for the high volumes of trampers and tourists which walk the track (or parts of the track) every summer along with a few kayakers. What impressed us most about the huts is that they have filtered water – no need to boil or treat! After dinner we sat outside, along with all the sand flies and it was here where Andrew and Jeff ran into their backpacker friend Armand who are been travelling around part of the South Island with them. We chatted for a while before heading off to bed.





29<sup>th</sup> January and we were up early packing our stuff and decided to have breakfast along the track so that we could set off for the tidal crossing across the inlet to Torrent Bay. Unfortunately we missed the signpost for the track where we were meant to cross the inlet and ended up walking back up the steep track leading to Anchorage where we'd come down the previous day and thus ended up adding another hour to our walk and going around the long way eventually reaching Torrent Bay mid morning, by which time the day was starting to get rather warm. After walking for over an hour and having the realisation we'd gone the wrong way we decided to stop for breakfast, out came the cereal and the tea and we sat and pondered where we went wrong... oh well. We set off again and the day started to get warmer. We took a side track up to Cleopatra's pool which looked very inviting but was incredibly cold. I wasn't brave enough to venture in and only got my feet wet, but the boys and Alison did and even found a natural water slide!

We continued on, arriving at Torrent Bay mid morning by which time it was starting to get rather hot. Up until now the track had been mostly inland but every now and again we'd catch glimpses of some of the bays below. We arrived at Bark Bay and decided to make this our lunch stop. By the time I arrived at Bark Bay, my ankles were killing me. A result of wearing jandals so that I wouldn't get wet boots doing the tidal crossing, then after missing the turn off having to walk up a steep hill with a reasonably heavy pack – I won't be doing that again! I was in a bit of pain and wasn't keen on the afternoons walking which involved a steep climb up the saddle. I'd already spoken to a couple of day walkers I'd passed and knew that there were some water taxis due. The big

question would be would I/we have enough money between us for me to catch it? So after consultation amongst the group, a pooling of money, Alison and I decided to catch the water taxi. Alison also had joint problems. So the others offloaded some of their gear that they didn't need for the afternoon, under the false impression that we'd be getting off the boat not far from the hut – wrong! We said goodbye to the others and headed down the beach to meet the water taxi. The water taxi was quite simply a giant speed boat and rather fun. It was quite neat to get a view from a kayaker's perspective i.e. from the water. Along the way we saw a few seabirds, a school of fish, George the dolphin and the driver took us right up to Tonga Island to view the seals. That was pretty cool! It also gave us bragging rights later on.

We were dropped off at Awaroa Bay, a bay with a long golden sandy spit beach which apart from a couple of kayakers was relatively deserted. We gathered our possessions together which had been dumped on the beach and set off. We got slightly lost as the track set off for Awaroa Lodge and we thought we were going the wrong way, but in the end decided to follow our noses and upon arriving at the lodges' café, we knew we must be on the right track. Sadly we didn't stop for afternoon refreshments and instead decided to keep plodding on to the hut. I think the expectation was we were meant to start dinner... From the beach to the hut, it took us about an hour as we passed the lodges' airfield, walked along the beach before coming around the corner to see the hut and from there it was just a short stroll across the sand up the inlet. Arriving at the hut was the best feeling! We claimed our beds and then set about joining the queue for the outdoor shower – the great thing about the huts on the Abel Tasman is that they all have cold fresh water showers – very refreshing after a hard days tramping! After getting ourselves cleaned up we then decided it was time to relax and chat to our fellow trampers. Not long after the other members of our group arrived. They'd stopped off for a pint at the lodge before continuing on but they deserved it. Alison and I started on dinner while the others cleaned up. The unfortunate thing about Awaroa Hut was the sand flies and

much bug dope was needed (Bushman's Deet insect repellent). It was at this hut that we met the three girls from Wellington, one of whom was born in a tent it seemed, as she liked leaving the main door open, not very helpful in trying to deter sand flies from us. We ate our much deserved dinner and then spent the evening relaxing and sitting outside watching the stars, before heading off to bed where we were later to discover that our room mate was the most awful snorer.

30<sup>th</sup> January dawned with many of our group waking up grumpy at being kept awake for some of the night by the dude with the awful snoring. This prompted me to say to him "Dude



you snore – badly!" Well they say the truth hurts and I don't think he was too impressed with me telling him but somebody had to. We packed up our gear and set off early across the Awaroa inlet. Several of our group, myself included, kept our boots on to avoid injuries



from the shells while other members of our group preferred dry boots. Eventually we made it across to the other side of the inlet where we found a shady spot and ate our breakfast before setting off again. We spent the next hour or so walking inland through the bush before arriving at the beautiful golden sandy beaches of

Waiharakeke Bay and followed shortly after by Goat Bay. The beaches were amazing and it was very tempting to down packs and spend the day relaxing. Further along the track we reached Skinner Point which offered us some spectacular views of Totoranui Beach and the clear waters below. Further along the track we caught up with Armand our Belgian friend again. Somehow our group managed to split into two and Scott, Hazel, Ben, Armand and I decided on stopping for an early lunch and some chill out time on Totoranui Beach. We spent an enjoyable hour or so relaxing in the sun with Ben and Scott going swimming. Eventually we decided to keep going as the others hadn't turned up and we figured we'd catch up with them at some point if not at the hut. We set off through the camp ground before re-joining the track again. The track headed uphill and inland before dropping down and we arrived at Anapai Bay where stopping in the shade for a break we met up with the other half of our group again. Setting off again, the track followed the beach and the coast around, before climbing up the cliff which offered more spectacular views of gorgeous beaches. We dropped back down to the beach again this time to Mutton Cove where we found a shady spot under the tree and took time out as it was Friday afternoon after all and what a better way to spend it! Our group split up again and some continued on to Separation Point to check out the seal colony while the rest of us continued on to Whariwharangi Bay and the opportunity for a swim. From Mutton Cove it was approximately an hour's walk to the hut, heading inland with a small climb before an 'easyish' descent down to the hut, however my feet were hurting and it was stinking hot - I was hanging out to get the hut and hoping it would be just around the next corner. Along the way the ranger of the hut passed me and he shattered my dreams by telling me I still had a little further to go – dam! I arrived at the hut after lagging behind the group due to my sore feet and man was I glad to arrive at the hut. The hut was very cute, although quaint may have been a better word, as it was the original homestead and even had a second floor and photos of the families that once lived there. The heat was getting a bit much so Jeff and I headed off to

the beach for a swim; it was a little cold but very refreshing! Soon after, the others returned from Separation Point and told us they managed to see some seals.

Once the swims and cold showers were out of the way, we set about cooking our last tramp dinner. Yay tomorrow would mean real food and a hot shower! As with all of the dinners on the tramp it was an entertaining occasion and meant some interesting conversation topics – tonight's was no different and produced a rather heated debate on whether to honeymoon or not to honeymoon. It turns out certain members of our group were rather anti honeymoons. Who would have thought? Our hut companions for the night were the 3 girls from Wellington again, an annoying Canadian and a couple of others who we never really saw. We were lucky enough to get a room that the whole seven of us could fit into, so we retired there for an early night. Andrew having managed to escape the hut wardens checking tickets every night drew the short straw for the short 5ft top bunk bed which he wasn't too happy about but sometimes you can't be picky.



The 31<sup>st</sup> of January dawned and it meant the last day of the tramp. We got up and had our final breakfast. It was at the end of breakfast that Ben produced his almost full bag of dried apricots and offered them to everyone. Everyone bar one member of our group politely declined the offer and Ben told him to just keep

eating them till he said stop to lighten the load. In the end around 40 apricots were consumed. After packing everything up we set off for the last leg of the tramp – a short day with only 2 hours to Wainui where we'd be picked up by the shuttle. Upon leaving the hut it was an easy climb up to the saddle which offered some spectacular views back to Whariwharangi Bay and down to Wainui. We stopped for morning tea before an easy descent down to the car park where we arrived in plenty of time to have a rest before the shuttle arrived. Alison and I were the last ones to arrive at the carpark after a leisurely walk down taking photos and having a good old chat. Upon arriving at the carpark I noticed one of our group members was missing and stayed that way for a while as I soon learnt, was in the toilet suffering from what we called "the apricot effect". He eventually returned saying that if it hadn't been for the apricots he would have thought he had giardia, as while cooking a couple of nights earlier, someone accidentally used the non filtered water. The shuttle arrived and we had our 'we made it' group photo. We jumped in the shuttle and set off back to the hostel in Nelson. We were pleased to have finished walking as by lunchtime it was a 30 degree day and therefore rather hot. While an uneventful journey we did have to stop along the way for the poor soul suffering from the apricot effect – he won't be eating that many again! We arrived back at the hostel and it was off to the showers before we all marched down to the Hell's pizza's that we'd ordered for lunch. It was well deserved! We spent the afternoon lounging around in the heat and then headed out to town for a Thai dinner and celebration drinks, a fitting end to a fantastic tramp!

P.s It was on this tramp that we coined a new phrase – 'social bread' a term used to describe what would otherwise be called group bread.





## Travers-Sabine

1–7 February 2009

**Author:** Jeremy Chirnside (leader)

**Members:** Craig Smith, Rebecca Caldwell, Kat Collier, Tom Goodman, Jenny Waite, Duncan Hume.

A warm morning and Craig greeted the four of us who had flown down to Nelson Airport. The first task was shopping. At Pak’N Save Richmond, with three shopping trolleys, questions started to be asked about how all this was ever going to fit into our packs; it turned out we had enough food to feed all of us for an extra four days. However, this was not the end. Another three supermarkets would be visited until Craig found the right tuna (it was worth it). On our arrival at St Arnaud, Jenny was waiting for us and Duncan soon joined us from Christchurch. After a quick swim in Lake Rotoiti, we headed up for dinner at St Arnaud’s only restaurant. The conversation could at best be described as open and detailed and the owner of the restaurant visited our table a number of times to ‘see how things were going’.

The next morning we headed down Lake Rotoiti to the beginning of our track. Tom was getting his last texts through to Sarah and became distraught when we went out of range before he had been able to say goodbye; stirring comments from your author didn’t help the situation. The first day up the Travers Valley was not too demanding, and alternated between stretches of open grasslands and beech forest. A very quick refreshing swim was enjoyed at John Tait Hut.

After about fifteen minutes on day two we left our packs for a three hour side trip up the Cupola Basin. This basin included the Cupola Stream flowing through a spectacular series of waterfalls embedded in a chasm, then after a steep climb the valley opened up to impressive mountain views.



*Photo 1: Mt Travers from John Tait Hut*

Returning to collect our packs we continued up the main Travers Valley, crossing avalanche paths including an impressive one where the flattened trees were all facing uphill, suggesting that the avalanche had come down the other side, crossed the valley and gone uphill. Arriving at Upper Travers Hut we had our first meeting with ‘Free Willy’, a foreign tourist who spoke very little English, but his most important attribute was an enjoyment of nudity. Unfortunately for Rebecca two things conspired against her; Firstly she had not reached the hut yet, and secondly the pool ‘Free Willy’ chose to have a swim in was right by the track a good 200m from the hut. The rest of us sat on the deck in anticipation of the reaction. *Note from editor: I didn’t say anything, but moved on very very quickly!*



*Photo 2: Kat surveying the Cupola Valley*

The third day dawned clear giving an impressive sunrise on the surrounding mountains. The climb up to Travers Saddle (1787m), the highest point on our trip, was relatively easygoing and on crossing the saddle

the view opened up to the western side of the park, including Mt Franklin (2340m) the highest peak in the park. From there it was a knee crunching (~800m) descent into the East Sabine valley. Upon reaching the hut we were greeted by the resident sandflies at West Sabine Hut, who as always were pleased to see some AUTC blood.

After three fine days we awoke to the sound of rain on the roof on the fourth day. We took a day trip up to Blue Lake through some impressive moss covered beech forest. Returning to the hut we met a group of four beginning a crossing of the Waiau Pass who had been members of AUTC in the 1960's. The evening's discussion topic was clinginess in relationships, one of the former members overheard us and turned to one of the others in his party and asked "Jim, you don't find me too clingy do you?" Some of us were concerned about what they might have thought about our conversations, however the next morning as I was filling up my water bottle, one of them mentioned he was pleased to see nothing had changed in 40 years. By this stage Tom was really missing Sarah (well OK that started five minutes into the trip) and began pre-writing heartfelt text messages in anticipation of reaching phone coverage the next day.



*Photo 3: Former AUTC members Richard Chandler, Tim Carter, Mike Frith and Jim Frater at West Sabine Hut*

The fifth day was the final day for Rebecca, Duncan and I. The track took us down the Sabine out to Sabine Hut at the head of Lake Rotoroa where we meet the boat that would take us out. We bid farewell to the remainder of the group who would head up to Lake Angelus.



*Photo 4 Our group at Sabine Hut*

*The remainder of this report is written by Jenny Waite:*

From Sabine Hut it was up, up and away! The bush was literally humming from the thousands of wasps all around us feeding on the honeydew as we climbed 1000 metres up a steep track. We made a quick time to the top with awesome views down to Lake Rotoroa. From here it was an easy stroll along the ridge with nice steep drop-offs. The weather stayed clear for us so the views continued but the wind was quite strong and ruffling my feathers so we kept on trucking until we got to Angelus hut. We had a fantastic lunch at the hut which for most of us consisted of eating all the lunch we had left. I was slightly worried by this stage as I had run out of wine, but the beer that I had carried around had survived so I happily enjoyed a cold beer with my lunch. At this point a familiar face appeared at the window - it was Birgit! At first I thought I was imagining it and maybe the beer hadn't being such a good idea but she was really there, having headed up in the hope of finding us at the hut, and we were happily reunited after our Stewart Island adventure. The wind stopped the planned skinny dip in Lake Angelus and instead we spent the afternoon snoozing in the sun in our sleeping bags on the deck; this was very amusing to the tourists who had headed up for the weekend. The hut was very crowded that night and Tom was forced to squeeze between me and Kat after loosing his bunk. We made it very clear to him that there would be no spooning no matter how much he was missing Sarah.





*Photo 5: Craig, Jenny, Kat and Tom outside Angelus Hut*



*Photo 6: Jenny, Craig, Tom, Kat and Birgit with Lake Rotoiti in the background*

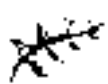
The next day we left the hut and headed down the Roberts Ridge back to the car. The weather again was spectacular with views of both lakes and very easy walking with lots of skipping and running down the steep track. Once back at the DOC campsite there was a compulsory swim in Lake Rotoiti, followed by a quick sunbathe and compulsory texts to Sarah, before we headed to Nelson for Pizza and to pack Tom back off to Auckland.



*“Upon reaching the hut we were greeted by the resident sandflies at West Sabine Hut, who as always were pleased to see some AUTC blood”*

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*“Am I too clingy, d’ya think, Jim?”*

 “You may only hit the driver when travelling under 50km per hour”, and other sordid South Island adventures.

*February 2009*

**Author:** Kat Collier

**Attendees:** Jenny Waite, Craig Smith, Andy Baddeley, Charis Wong and Kat Collier.

A long, long time ago, in the days when men were men and women were women, and trampers were another gender entirely (actually it was last February), a somewhat eclectic collection of individuals were loitering around in a camping ground near Nelson, having just spent a rather splendid seven days up at Nelson Lakes, and were now occupying themselves with sightseeing, romantic sunset strolls along the beach, consuming vast quantities of cocoa pops and chocolate hot cross buns, listening to Tom rhapsodise about Sarah, and generally doing as little as possible.

This happy state of affairs, alas, was not to last. Craig had ambitious plans for a three passes traverse, so we bade a reluctant farewell to our cocoa pops, packed Tom off on a plane back to Auckland, loaded an absolutely ridiculous amount of baggage into Jen’s brave little blue car, and set off in quest of adventure.



*(Backseat bedroll fights)*

There followed two highly entertaining days of road tripping, made more so by backseat games of corners, bedroll fighting (the only stipulation being that you must not hit the driver unless she/he was driving at less than 50km per hour), climbers’ fire drills, and “guess which random item just fell out of the boot and hit me on the head”. To fill the interludes between these, Andy and I took to working our way through our entire (not inconsiderable) repertoire of Beatles songs; a game in which recall of the correct words and tunes certainly gains bonus points, but is by no means essential. Unsurprisingly, the other three were rather glad to reach Hokitika.

Here we wandered along the beach and climbed various local monuments, and in the process, discovered a rather intriguing fact about one of our number, Charis, it was revealed, has a lengthy list of things which she wants to do “at least once before I die” – hence an afternoon full of lying in roads, eating fish ‘n’ chips in the middle of roundabouts, and kissing particularly ugly wooden statues (ok, so that one was me).

We found a cheap camping ground just on the outskirts of town, and proceeded to entertain our fellow campers by practising our body traverses and wrestling moves on the front lawn. One British couple, indeed, seemed to be under the impression that we were part of a travelling circus, and came to sit on the running board of their campervan and watch the show while they ate breakfast.



*(Craig and Charis body traversing)*

It was with a certain reluctance that we bade farewell to our cosy camp ground and headed for the hills, but we were emboldened by the assurances of Craig that the first hut was “only half an hour’s walk from the road end”. Craig, it transpires, is a dastardly liar.

Following a scenic three hour stroll from Arthur’s Pass, in which we meandered along a river valley and stumbled over large stones, we reached the indeed birdless Anti-crow hut sometime around dusk. There, we amused ourselves by observing Charis’ increasingly desperate attempts to climb into the upper bunks, and by playing rounds of ‘500’. Dinner was undoubtedly amazing (though the exact details escape me), and was followed up with an impressive jam sponge cake in honour of Andy’s birthday. This was in turn followed up by a chocolate brownie cake, as Andy, it transpired, had not trusted us to remember, and so had brought his own cake with him from Auckland. Upon discovering that there were only 15 candles in a pack I suggested cutting them in half in order to procure the requisite 27, and was hailed by all with the dubious compliment “you’re almost starting to think like an engineer”.

Our second day’s weather was decidedly unpleasant, and as we had only a short walk to Carrington hut, we decided we could afford to spend the morning lazing around in our sleeping bags with the remnants of the chocolate brownie for sustenance. The afternoon’s walk was damp, cold, and fairly miserable, particularly since the hut kept teleporting to behind the next hill anytime we thought we were getting close. Our best hunting and stalking tactics had to be employed, but finally, we had it surrounded, whereupon it surrendered cravenly, and tried to pretend it had just been playing a friendly game. Your intrepid adventurers, however, weren’t fooled, and proceeded to weigh down the deck with all of our boots and axes in order to prevent its escape.

Once attained, Carrington hut proved to be truly a prize beyond all expectations, with four separate bunkrooms and two open-plan lounge

and kitchen areas, each with its own wood burner. The villain of the piece, was, however, the long drop. It crouched maliciously in a tin shed outside the back door, and was one of those charming European things in which a noisome raft of ‘stuff’ floats on the surface of a scummy pool until someone is brave enough to sink the raft with the aid of a poo-stick. Long drops (something of a misnomer) aside, Carrington hut proved to be a very cosy residence. We cooked dinner and chilled out with a bit of broom and table work. Meanwhile, Andy successfully completed a traverse right around the inside of the hut, which was a fairly impressive feat given the size of it.



*(Chilling on the Railway Lines)*

The next day was to be the big one, so we woke early and started out up the valley. The weather had cleared enough for us to see a decent distance ahead, though the sky was still a threatening shade of grey, and there was a light drizzle as we made our way up through a gorge, following the course of a really rather delightful little stream, which sprang merrily over falls to laugh and chatter amongst the stones, as streams invariably do in narratives such as this. The walk up the gorge was good fun – lots of boulder-hopping, some interesting scree slopes to traverse, and a fair number of falls. From the top of the gorge it was just a little cruise up to the first of our three passes (Harman). It was windy and cold up on top, so

we didn't hang about, but headed northwards past some mist-shrouded tarns and over some more boulders until we reached the snowline. It soon became apparent that the snow was absolutely foul stuff – filthy and gritty, and undercut by a fast-flowing stream which was taking advantage of the summer thaw to turn the entire snowfield into one deceptively thin ice bridge. Nonetheless we managed to traverse this and reach the firmer slopes without major mishap (other than injured pride), and started on upwards. Irritatingly, the weather had closed in again, and the track was marked only with cairns, most of them buried in snow. Several hours later, Andy spotted what he swore was the turn off. Craig wasn't sure. It might have been.... But then, it might not have been.... Was that a marker, way up there? No one was enthusiastic enough to climb up and find out. So we kept walking. After all, it probably wasn't the turn off anyway....

An hour or so later, we were all starting to feel more than a little chilly, and Charis' knees were an interesting shade of puce. The valley we had been following sloped steeply upwards, ending in what appeared to be a sheer brink. At this point, not unsurprisingly, a debate ensued. Accusations of incompetence were made, and aspersions cast on various parties' navigational abilities. At this point, with all the flourish of a conjurer pulling a solution from thin air, Craig produced a map and compass, which had hitherto been notable by their absence. By close examination of the map, it was discovered that yes, we were indeed standing on the edge of a cliff. And that we had overshot Whitehorn pass completely. A few swift calculations were enough to deduce that we would not now be able to cross the pass and reach the next hut before nightfall, and as none of us had much of a desire to stumble around in treacherous snow at night in what was fast becoming a white out, we unanimously voted discretion to be the better part of valour. That being resolved, we dicked around a bit glissading down the snow field, sat and ate lunch in the sunniest patch of boulders we could find, and headed back to Harman pass. Once there, we realised that our trip was likely to be distinctly lacking in epicness unless we remedied the situation swiftly,

so, adhering to the age old tenet that topless is warmer, we dicked around some more by posing for photos in a wind that threatened to freeze us where we stood. The notable exception was Jen, who refused point blank to be induced into removing her clothing, but laughed nervously like a person who finds herself uncomfortably trapped in a phone box with an escaped criminal, and declared repeatedly that "you're all mad".

The wander back down to Carrington was pretty, though rather damp, and otherwise fairly uneventful. Craig did at one point promise to carry home a large boulder Charis liked if she could get it into his pack, but given that it was roughly the size of a small rhinoceros, that didn't come to much. We weren't going to have time for another attempt on the passes, so were all understandably a trifle miffed, but being the philosophical sorts we are, we made the best of it, and comforted ourselves with the thought of cheesecake for dessert. Unfortunately, it transpires that strawberry cheesecake brings out Craig's most anal side, necessitating the use of a compass in order to ensure that the fifths are exactly even.

Predictably, the fourth day dawned cloudlessly brilliant. It was not without considerable jealousy that we farewelled a trio of fellow trampers who had waited an extra day before attempting the passes, and were thus going to have a day of glorious weather up on the tops. On the plus side, they did very kindly leave us the keys to their car so that we could drive it back to Hokitika for them.

Given the fact that we had nothing in particular to do that day, Craig was champing at the bit at an obscenely ungodly hour. Faced with the combined tickling powers of Craig and Andy, the other girls soon gave in and got themselves out of bed, but I was not to be so easily extricated, and managed to resist their villainous advances for a good half hour before I was finally forced to concede that I was indeed awake. Following a leisurely breakfast, we set off for a day trip up the northeast valley. We strolled along down by the stream for the most part, under a brilliant summer sky which



soon necessitated the removal of several layers of clothing. Not content with our sunlit meandering, however, Craig bounded off ahead at a hectic pace. For awhile he could be glimpsed occasionally as a splodge of red jacket against the rocks, but around midday we gave up chasing him and stopped for lunch and a sunbathe by one of the waterfalls. Here we spent an inordinate amount of time attempting to convince Charis to go skinny-dipping, and coming up with ever more outrageous reasons for why Craig had felt the need to escape our company. The general consensus was that it may have had something to do with Andy proposing marriage to him earlier in the day.



After sunbathing a bit more, Andy wandered off to do a spot of climbing round the cliffs, and I went for a paddle up the stream. Eventually, Craig reappeared, after having tramped all the way up to Waimakariri Falls hut, where he had spent the afternoon taking an absolutely ludicrous quantity of photographs of himself. My memory is a little hazy, but I have an idea that Andy then proposed to Craig a second time (it *was* Valentine's day), at which point he very quickly disappeared off into the distance again.

After a morning during which some bright spark came up with the bright idea of trussing Charis up in Andy's pack, the fifth day proved to contain much of the same – that is, Craig bounding off ahead whilst the rest of us strolled casually behind, debating which sort of animal we would most like to be reincarnated as. We were very tempted to play a cruel and sadistic trick on Craig by pretending that Charis had

broken her ankle and the rest of us had had to carry her out without him, but as Charis refused to participate without giggling immoderately, that plan fell through somewhat. We finally caught up with Craig back at the car park, where he had managed to locate our loaned vehicle. Here, we stopped for an examination of blisters acquired and a late lunch. I think I brought a new dimension to the traditional cabin bread by layering it, not only with peanut butter, nutella and cheese, but also with apple, cucumber and chilli tuna. An interesting taste experience.



(*'Carry out rubbish'.*)

On the way back out from Arthur's Pass we played 'guess who got the most texts while we were away', and Andy and I subjected the others to more of our singing. We stopped on the way back to our friendly Hokitika campground to pick up essential supplies, and had one of the most ridiculously huge after-tramp meals I have ever encountered – roast veges, sweetcorn, black pudding, and an entire tub of ice cream. Craig and I also decided that Andy needed a haircut, so took to him with a pair of scissors – probably the most shit-scared I have ever seen him. Then, leaving Craig happily ensconced in front of the TV watching

*The Queen*, we made ourselves cosy in the camp laundry and proceeded to initiate Charis into the art of getting right royally pissed. Games of ‘I never’ were played, in which far too much was revealed about certain individuals’ love lives. After several hours, a disappointingly sober Jen had given up and gone to bed, Charis was merrily passed out on a couch, and Andy and I were engaged in a drunken sob-fest about our miserable lives. Needless to say, Craig was not amused.

Finally, the morning of our separation dawned. Determined to cram as much fun as possible into the trip, we entertained ourselves with piggyback races back and forth across a pedestrian crossing, which allowed the Napier motorists a chance to display their notable grasp of invective. Eventually, Jen and Andy departed on the epic drive back to Auckland, while Craig, Charis and I caught a bus via Arthur’s Pass to Christchurch where we would spend a couple of days making hostel inmates jealous of our chocolate fondue, tying Charis to bedposts, and discovering the joys of Greek takeaways, she-wees, and bicycle crashes. But that’s another story.



*(A minor collision...)*

And to describe the road trippers more: Jenny Waite (most esteemed driver and dissenting voice of sanity), Craig Smith (navigator extraordinaire), Andrew Baddeley (chief instigator of highly dubious activities and champion of the ‘Why don’t you lot grow up?’ brigade), Charis Wong (list-maker, perennial victim, and collector of large chunks of rock), and Kathleen Collier (scribe, coffee addict, and she of the ridiculously ticklish toes).



*“It’ll only take us half an hour from the road end . . .” – A sorely mistaken Craig*

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*“If you were an otter in a zoo, I’d come and give you fish.” – Andy*

## Copland Track and Lake Daniells

*July 2009*

**Author:** Rebecca Caldwell

**Attendees:** Jeremy Chirnside (leader), Keri Yukich, Rob Connolly and Rebecca Caldwell

Jeremy had been keen for sometime to do a winter South Island tramp and after talking to Rob and I about it in January, he inspired enthusiasm to go with him and check out what tramping in winter would actually be like.

Finally the time had come, so after flying to Christchurch, meeting Keri (came down with her family earlier), we picked up the rental car and were soon on our way to do a 3 day tramp on the Copland Track, a couple of days site seeing and then embark on another 2-3 day tramp in Arthurs Pass. The unfortunate thing for us was that the Canterbury High Country had seen so much snow that the option to do a tramp in Arthurs Pass was no longer viable given we had decided not to pack crampons and ice axes. So Lake Daniells became the next tramping choice instead. Despite this drawback, driving through to Arthurs Pass was just spectacular .... snow right up to the road edge. We stopped at one of the lakes (completely frozen) and walked on it (I have never walked on a frozen lake before, unreal).

We had planned to have a few days site seeing in between the tramps to see Franz Josef Glacier, Fox Glacier and Lake Matheson, but the weather was so glorious, we decided to delay doing the first tramp and do these touristy things first. Good thing we had as once we had finished Copland Track, the weather was so foggy, it would have been very difficult to see the glaciers at all.

### **Copland Track**

After leaving the carpark, the four of us walked over the river with no problems (mainly because it had no water in it) to start the

Copland Track. It was a fine clear day, although most of the track was in the shade so we didn't see the sun very much that day.

We had a 7 hour tramp ahead of us and was able to warm up the muscles comfortably with the track being relatively flat for the first part of it. Things got interesting when we started walking next to the river and over big rocks with loads of ice on the surface. These rocks carried on for a long while. Even once you had finished this section and gone bush again, you encountered the same icy rocks on a different stretch a short while later. Despite the slipperiness, it was really beautiful and looked like a winter wonderland.



The boys were ahead and Keri and I finally finished the rocky section and entered the steep ascent in the bush. We came across a couple of newbies who had only done a day tramp before and were keen to try the multi day tramping experience. We stayed with them for a while, negotiating the track with the orange triangle markers. All seemed to be going well until we had difficulty finding the next orange triangle marker on one part of the track. We ended up walking 45 minutes without any site of another marker to go on. At this stage, we still hadn't caught up with the boys and the newbies, Keri and I were starting to worry that perhaps we had gone off track. We had felt like this 20 minutes earlier but decided to keep going just in case. Given we hadn't found the boys and had concerned thoughts of setting up a bivouac shelter for four if we had got lost (we remembered another track and thought we were



suppose to go up that one instead). We decided to turn back and find the last marker we had seen and make sure we had taken the right path. We found the last marker again and realised that yes we had taken the right path, the other track (which merged onto same track later) was nearby the marker and had been closed off, but we couldn't remember this when starting to mildly panic earlier (note to self: always check map's route before tramping next time). We started walking the same track we had backtracked again and only then did we come across people coming back the other way. We asked them if they had seen two men ahead, "yes", they said. Well that was good news, but the bad news was we were now 1.5 hours behind schedule. We finally caught up with Rob, then Jeremy who was sunning himself on the only rock that wasn't in the shade. Keri and I had a 15 minute break (including lunch) and then we kept going because none of us wanted to be walking in the dark later. The rest of the track was mainly ascending. I quickly tired. By the 7th hour, I was put in front, pushing myself with every step. We finally made it up to the hut, 8.5 hours later. If only we hadn't turned back, we would have been there in 7 hours, but in hindsight, we wanted to be sure we had taken the right track. It was now dark but fortunately, we only needed to use the head torches 15 minutes before arriving to Welcome Flats hut. The best thing about this hut was it had a natural hot spring pool, not tiny either. Thank goodness, as the very spacious hut was not very warm and the fireplace was not very effective in keeping the hut warm either. After making ourselves dinner, we donned our togs and enjoyed a great warm soak. Was amazing, soothed the tired muscles and made the trip completely worthwhile. We sat there enjoying no city noise, the serenity and a beautiful starry sky, further complemented with sips of wine that I had lugged up with me. 40 mins later and after some good chats between ourselves and the warden and his wife (who were soaking with us at the same time), we dragged ourselves out of the pool, froze our butts off while dressing and made haste back to the hut. We all slept well that night.

Next morning was a 6hr return day trip to another hut. Was a beautiful day and had no problems staying together or missing markers.



Closer to the hut, Jeremy and Rob decided to go on ahead to find it. Despite our walking pace, finding the hut seemed to be taking longer than necessary and again we had daylight hours against us, so Keri and I headed back to the hut with the view of the boys catching us up. An hour later, the boys caught us up. They said the hut was only 10 minutes walk from where we had stopped for lunch but at the time, it looked like the hut would be further away. Rob said our lunch spot was better than the hut's position so that made Keri and I feel better that we hadn't continued. We made it back to the hut and instead of having dinner, we went to the hot pool first. This time, we had a bit of daylight left so we could see the mountains with snow on top surrounding us - it was magical. It soon became dark and we retreated back to the hut to make dinner. We noted the hut members having difficulty lighting the fire, Rob did his best to light it too, it was an ongoing effort and even when lit, did nothing to warm the masses, except the lucky few sitting in front of the fire.

Next day we headed back down to the carpark. No issues this time, pretty much all stayed together and with the sunshine the previous day, it had melted the ice on the rock surfaces, so no major issues with slipperiness on the way back. Got to the car just under 7 hours and headed to Franz Josef. During dinner at the ale house in Franz Josef we were shaken by a



moderate earthquake, it turned out it was a large magnitude 7.8 quake centred in Fiordland. I initially thought the boys were being funny, shaking the table or the glass of wine had really gone to my head. The following day we relaxingly cruised up to Greymouth and stayed at their local Top 10 camping ground. I made us all a stir-fry dinner with lots of veges and after much talking, resting and drinking a pint at the local pub, we were asleep in anticipation of our next day's adventure.

### Lake Daniells

Stopping for lunch *or two* at Reefton, we made our way to start of Lake Daniells track shortly after. 2 hours later we were at the hut (this track is really good to bring kids on a first tramp), really easy. We didn't care, it was nice to do an easy walk, especially given we got very wet from our first heavy rainfall on the walk up. We soon reached the hut and were looking at a beautiful lake.



Would be a great hut to have a party for the night. Just in winter, make sure you bring lots of warm clothes, as once again, Rob exhausted

all efforts to light a decent fire with wet wood. Only lit a little bit, so the hut was very cold!



Next morning, we had sunshine again and made our way down again, back to the car. We headed back into Christchurch after a nice soak in the commercial hotpools situated in Lewis Pass (albeit not as good as the one at Welcome Flats Hut).

After dropping Keri off at a hostel in Christchurch (she was heading back with her family), Jeremy, Rob and I resided one night in Cashmere, with Duncan, a good friend of Jeremy's. We headed to a local pub and watched the rugby, drank beer and ate a really nice dinner. Next morning we went to a local cafe for brekkie, saw some of the sights close by and by late afternoon we were at the airport, ready to board a plane back to Auckland.

Tramping in winter is definitely colder, but well worth the experience!



*“During dinner at the ale house in Franz Josef we were shaken by a moderate earthquake, it turned out it was a large magnitude 7.8 quake centred in Fiordland”*

## Cass - Lagoon Saddle, Arthur's Pass

*2-6 December 2009*

**Author:** Nicolai Thapa

**Group Members:** Richard Greatrex, Lois Cooper and Kristina Aluzaitė

With an early and wet start to the day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, the 4 of us headed out to Arthur's Pass in the hope of fording the Otira River and proceeding along the Harper Pass route. We knew that the odds weren't on our side due to the heavy rainfall and our fears were confirmed by the DOC staff's very brash advice for Harper's Pass. With the reluctant decision made for an alternative trip we hit the tracks. The trip consisted of the first day doing some quick return trips and then setting out on the Cass - Lagoon Saddle in the Craigieburn Forest, in reverse with numerous side trips, some marked and others marginally traceable.

The Devils Punch Bowl was the first quick return trip. Kristina was the first one to get up close and personal with the magnificent cascading waterfall. She made a bold and long feminine roar. It didn't quite equal the thunderous crash of the water falling from 131m. It was impossible to stand closer than 20 metres from the base as a force field effect was created by the vaporised water being rebounded off the boulders, which succumbed gravity by raging up the walls.

During the descent down the Harper River, I learnt a valuable lesson; don't make an effort to try not to get your boots wet, otherwise you could end up face first into the water. We later crossed rivers that ran down a semi-gorge, in some areas where there were deep pools, the water colour could be described as aqua blue. Upon arrival at the Lagoon Saddle Shelter and Hut, we chose to stay in the shelter as it was more homely. After the radio schedule, we had a troublesome time getting our intentions across. Our transmission must have been dire as

IB Base replied with "You need to speak into the microphone", whereas if Richard had spoken any closer he would have swallowed the radio. Later that evening we started munching on the 1kg of Party Mix lollies.

The following day we reached Hamilton Hut after doing a side trip to the harmonious Mirror Tarn. We crossed a suspension bridge and a 3 wire bridge over ankle-deep rivers (just for the novelty). The hut was situated on a grassy patch above a floodplain with glorious views of the empowering mountains and Stag Hill.

Listening to Lois on the harmonica, whilst gazing at the view, created the moment. Good radio communication that evening with IB Base and distant fellow trampers Rion and Andy, was our sole source of interaction with the outside world. Scrumptious cheesecake was made to perfection in spite of not having the instructions - someone was carrying them very safely (so safely...). Our last moments before hitting the sack were spent playing President/Scum by candlelight.

We had planned to do only a 6 hour return trip to The Pinnacles so it was a blasé start to the morning. The walk was along a very braided river within an openly spaced valley. After lunch, we made a short but steep climb up to the top of The Pinnacles. We admired the view that was slightly shaded by an overhanging tree on top of the sheer face. The sounds of sheep and cows on the other side of the river about 400 metres away invited you to imagine the senses of a stalking predator, preying on clumsy farm animals; sitting on a high outcrop along a loose and crumbly knife edge, breathing easily after the speedy climb, vision adapting and focusing after being out of the glaring sun with the slushing of the river below cloaking the very existence of your presence.

Later that evening back at Hamilton Hut, Kristina had the creative idea to climb a third of Stag Hill to greet the sunrise. With the rest of the party semi-interested, Richard took the idea further by planning a route to the summit. Stag

Hill should really be called a 'mountain' as it is just under 1600m and the grandeur of it enticed us to dominate it. This best describes the spontaneous nature of our trip; a mere casual "let's see the sunrise" suggestion led to an ambitious arduous scramble up to the peaks.

The plan was to get to the top of Stag Hill and go along the ridge for awhile then descend down to Cass Saddle. It was an instant start to the hill climb, certainly tough, but at some clearings we could see the rewarding view. The scene was spectacular from the very top - Mirror Tarn and the hut were visible, the wide valley was just stunning.

At the top there were a few patches of snow. With the clouds brewing we had to descend quickly and abort the planned route along the ridge. Near the bottom it was steep which made for thrilling scree running. Kristina had the fright of her life when her grip was lost on a scraggly branch attached to loose soil. With everyone safe and sound we proceeded to Cass Saddle Hut. The best radio set-up must have been on that day. We went to extreme lengths, climbing trees, creating a mast, hoisting the aerial above the tree tops, and using Kristina's precision throwing.

The last day was easy going but the tracks were rather busy. It was afternoon when we arrived

at the finish. Richard and I attempted hitch hiking for the first time. Responses were bazaar - some would signal a wave as if saying, "See you, bye". After sprinting a narrow 100m bridge and shimmying around a tight bend using the barriers we hastily approached a German couple who were very willing to take us down the road. The conversation was kept basic and short due to their lack of English and the shortage of Richard's German.

After a good spot of tea by the Toyota Surf we made our way to collect Kristina and Lois who were being accompanied by some charming fellows from Christchurch.

There was a good mix of member contribution to our group dynamics:

Richard - Excellent navigation skills and charismatic leadership.

Lois - Extensive knowledge about the ecology of the flora and fauna.

Kristina - Enthusiastic, bubbly attitude and rare Lithuanian and Russian songs.

Myself - Ability to climb/scramble up hills at break neck speed.

By spending so much time together in the Craigieburn Forest, we really did have an enjoyable time conquering the marvels which the region has to offer.



*"I learnt a valuable lesson; don't make an effort to try not to get your boots wet, otherwise you could end up face first into the water"*

