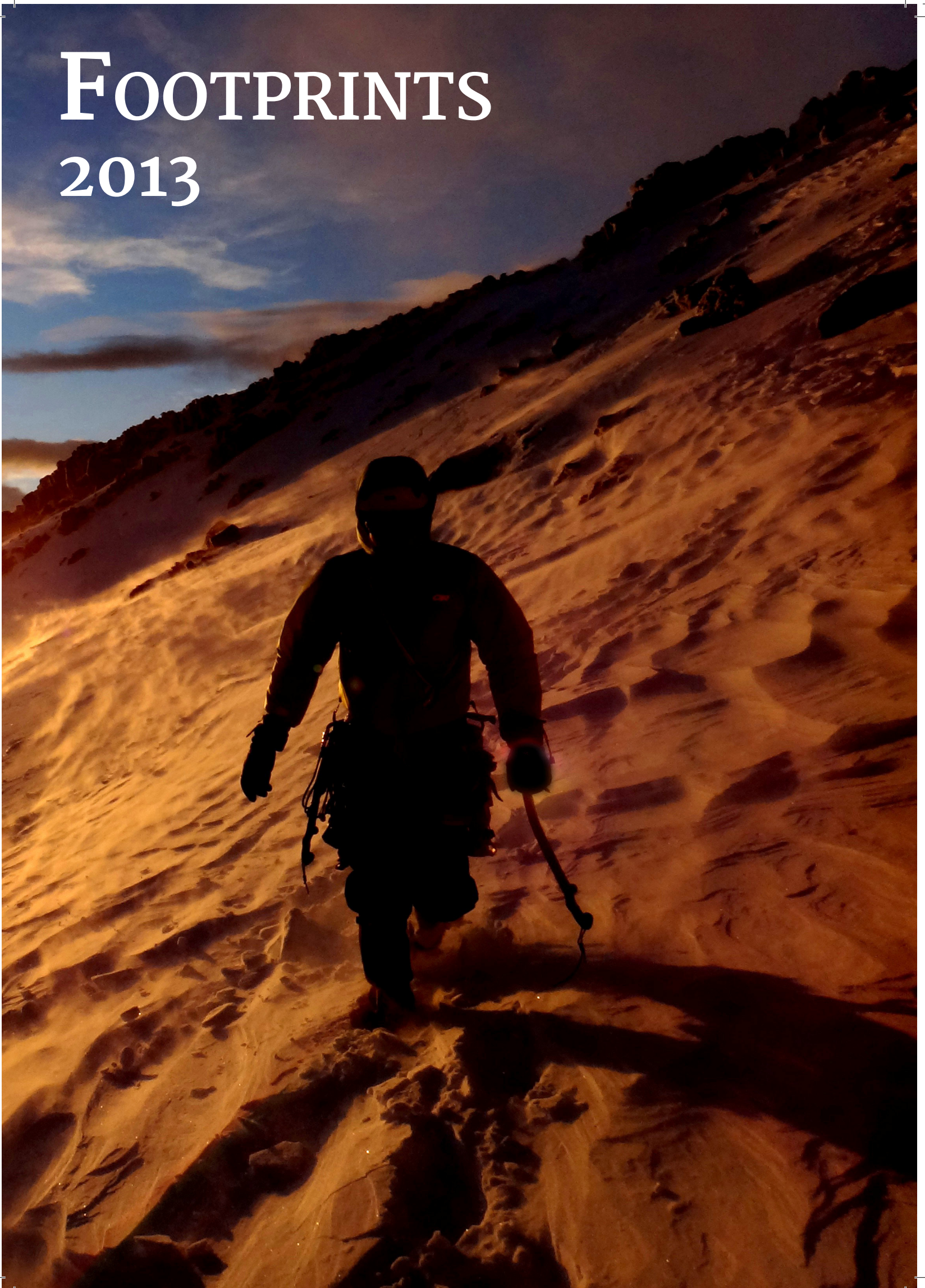


# FOOTPRINTS

## 2013







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

## Editorial

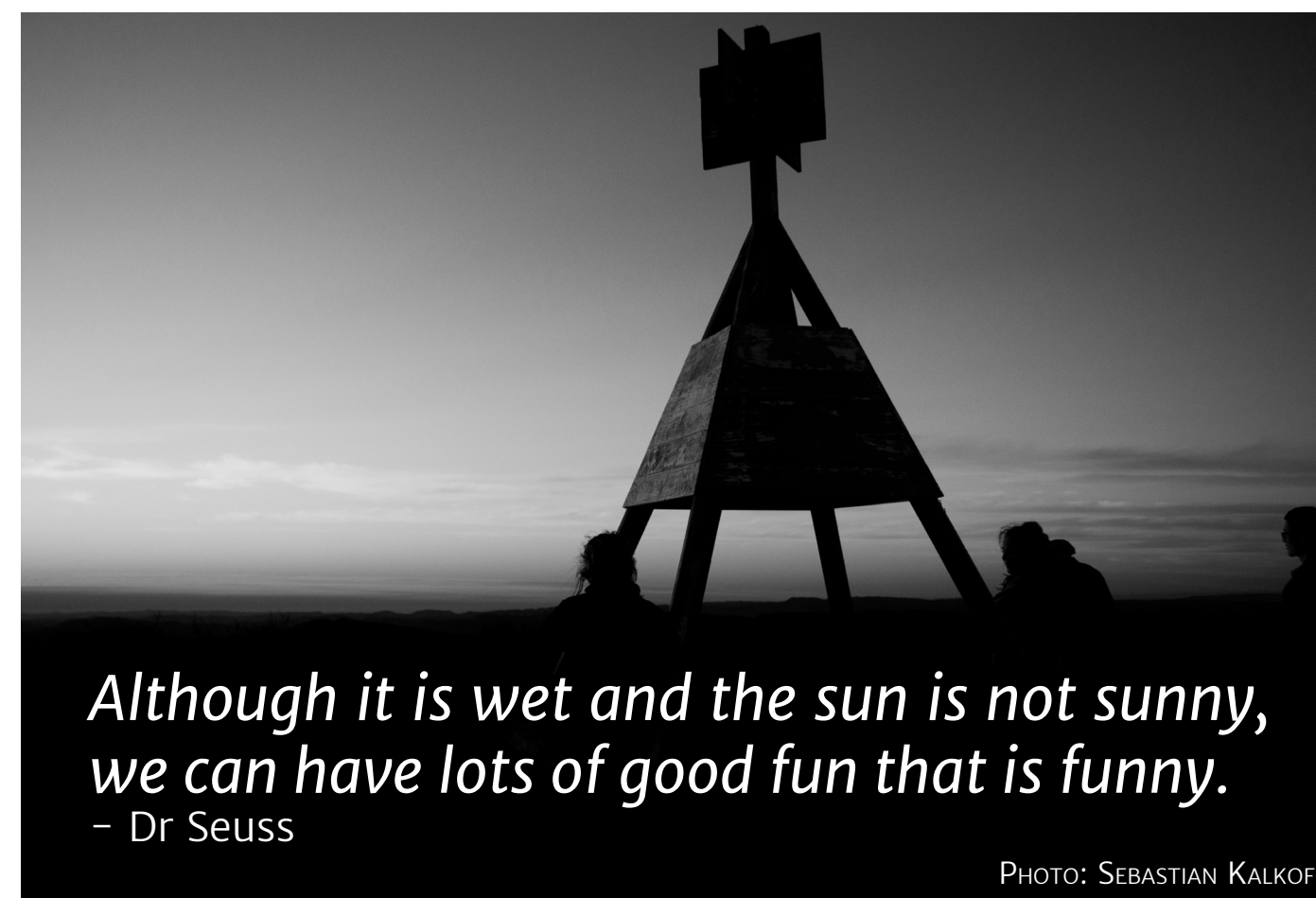
SARAH DANIELL



*Footprints* is a great place to find inspiration for your next tramp and I hope after putting down this years magazine you feel inspired to head to the hills.

*Footprints* also serves as a historical record and hopefully you'll dig this magazine out in many years time to remember exactly who went on that tramp with you. If you never submitted a trip report I'm afraid you'll have to rely on your memory!

As usual, many people have contributed to this year's *Footprints*. Thank you to everyone who sent in trip reports, for without trip reports this magazine would be very thin. I also owe a huge thanks to Hayley Ware, Anna Luo, Thomas Goodman, and my mum, who have helped me with the massive task of proofreading a sixty four page magazine.



*Although it is wet and the sun is not sunny,  
we can have lots of good fun that is funny.*  
– Dr Seuss

PHOTO: SEBASTIAN KALKOFF



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# Captain's Report

**HARRIET PEEL**

Howdy Trampers!

With sunny conditions and even sunnier trampers, O-Camp 2013 promised yet another choice year for adventures, and I'm proud to report that AUTC has delivered once again. Highlights of the 2013 tramping year have since included missions on both of our biggest Islands and even some of the little ones, the rollicking reinvention of a number of social dos including Cave Party and Hut Birthday, and a solid run of snow schools, bush school, TrailWalker, and TWalk. Despite weather inclement, our alpine season was also exciting, with peaks bagged, ice climbed, and avos artfully dodged, thanks to the extra avalanche courses the club set up with AURAC this year which were very well subscribed.

In between our triumphs the club has had some drama, with various trampers plucked from the bush and the mountains by rescue teams when conditions deteriorated quicker than anticipated. These events serve as a necessary reminder of the tramping basics: check the forecast, equip yourselves well, leave sound intentions and expect the unexpected. No serious injuries were sustained, however, and the Club remains grateful to LSAR and the RCC for their assistance.

Behind the scenes, the last constitutional changes to render us an independent Incorporated Society were passed, and our relationship with the University developed. The Club's online presence has moved in part from the website to Facebook, which though more convenient, requires a sharp eye to keep our welcoming club inclusive and up to date. While kauri dieback continues to increasingly reduce the local track options somewhat, our ever reliable O'nuku continues to host stream bashers, party crashers, and the Waitaks' finest rat catchers once again, and deserves some TLC and a new lease next year.

In recognition of the effort on the part of trampers, the committee of this year and the years prior to this one, we received runner up Sports Club of the Year at the 2013 Clubs Awards. We were also heartily represented in the FMC Scholarships, winning trip funding for Ruahines and the Great Southern Alps Traverse. Gratitude and recognition must also go to all of those who help teach and organise Snow Schools, Bush School, the first aid and avalanche courses and social events as well as the tramps themselves, it's the 'each one teach one' attitude which keeps this club special.

Thank you very much as well to the committee of 2013 for your hard work, humour and creativity, it's been a blast and my memories are golden. Best of luck to all trampers, look after each other as you test your limits, seek new adventures, and I'll see you in the hills.

Yours in Tramping,  
Harriet



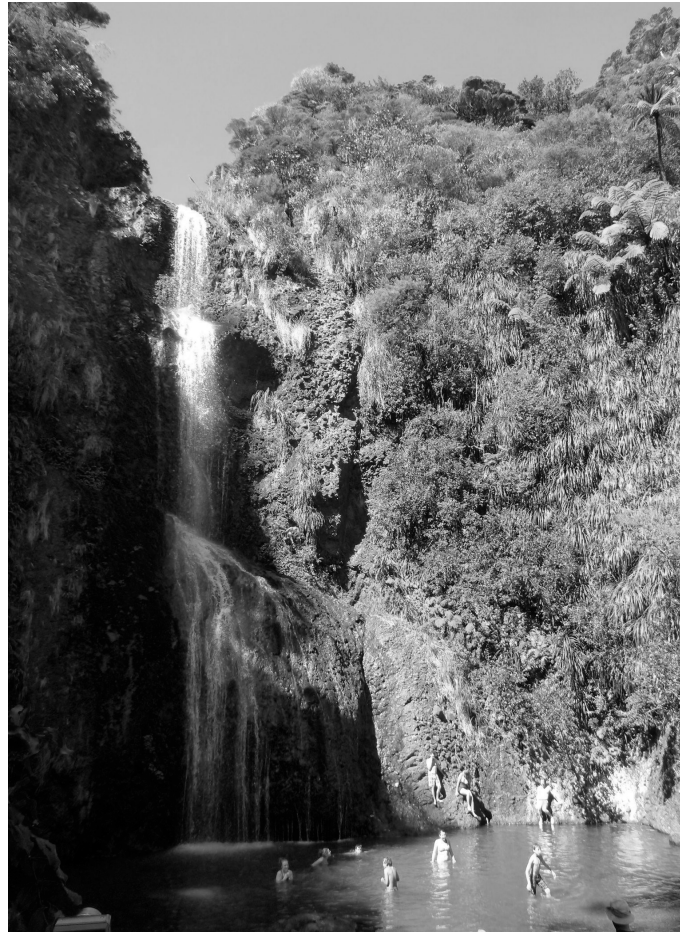


# Social Officers' Report

KATIE HERBERT & LIANE BATTCHER

Thanks to all who came on our social trips, you were a great bunch and we had a blast!

**ORIENTATION TRIP** got off to a slightly dicey start with the hut being booked by another group over our preferred weekend! However, Captain Harriet begged and pleaded so we were given the booking back again, phew! On Saturday morning eighty keen trampers set off to explore the delights of the Waitakeres, taking various routes to the hut via dams, high points, down streams and off waterfalls. Thankfully, it was a gloriously hot sunny day, meaning swimming holes got a fair bit of use and the track was unusually dry! At the hut burgers followed by ice cream filled everyone up and the usual AUTC hut games went long into the evening. The following morning meant a big cleanup/pack down and walk down to stunning Piha, again via some awesome different tracks. It was another hot sunny day and fun and games were had on the beach before the bus arrived to take everyone home.



**THE CAVE PARTY** at Whatipu was another great weekend social. Around forty trampers piled into cars and headed out one Saturday morning, then split into two groups to walk the Omanawanui Track, enjoying the beautiful views over the Manukau Harbour and the roaring Tasman. The afternoon was spent lazing around on the beach and for the particularly brave, swimming. Tents were set up, dinner cooked and eaten, and Flintstones costumes were put on before heading around to the caves. Tea light candles lit up the cave spectacularly and a sound system brought in on a wheelbarrow by Andrew Draper and Jeff Small really set the scene. The all-night dancing and shenanigans meant that the cadets staying at the nearby campsite got very little sleep!

**RE-O CAMP, MAY CAMP, OR PIRATE CAMP** (arhhh!!!) as it became known was held at Waitawheta Camp in the Kaimai Ranges this year. Sixty new and returning AUTC members left from uni one Friday evening in July, eventually reaching the camp without too many carloads getting lost! Everyone got involved with some piratey games before hitting the sack to dream of the next morning's tramping. Despite weather warnings, the sun was shining the next day as we headed off on various tracks. Navigation was an issue for some who ended up on the completely wrong track; however, all made it back in time for a piratey themed dinner. Games were played, including many rounds of Twister, stories were traded and music blasted throughout the evening, all washed down by plenty of grog. There were a few sore heads in the morning to complicate the packing up process; however, all were off by midday and heading home or to the hot pools.



**THE HUT BIRTHDAY**, (also coinciding with Katie's birthday) was celebrated in August this year. Around 20 trampers set off from Falls carpark on the Saturday afternoon, with plenty of rain about to keep everyone moving quickly. A couple of different routes were taken, one was more straightforward while the other went down a stream and over some waterfalls. The hut was nicely decorated and everyone wore K-themed costumes,

so we had crazy kolas, kinky rabbits and kings to party with! A massive potluck dinner was shared, along with two birthday cakes, which meant all trampers were happily satisfied. The new sound system was appreciated as the party went into the night and traditional AUTC games such as table-traversing and the phone book game were entertaining for all! The torrential rain that evening meant everyone was glad to be sleeping in the hut!

There were a few great evening activities throughout the year, such as **WINE AND CHEESE** on top of Mount Eden, where we watched a beautiful sunset on a wonderfully clear evening. Later in the year, the brave ventured to **TAKAPUNA** on the North Shore where we enjoyed some beach games, a swim, takeaways and climbing trees to retrieve our bags.

**POSH DINS** at Denny's saw some people become unrecognisably flash for the evening, **TEN PIN BOWLING** showed off some hidden talent in the club, and **FISH AND CHIPS** on top of North Head followed by exploring the tunnels in Devonport was a nice evening. The Rubick's cube themed **OUTDOORS CLUBS BALL** was another really good night with over 120 people from across the clubs swapping costumes and stories.

Once again, thanks to everyone who came along to these events and massive thanks to those who helped out with organising and running them!

Katie and Liane





# Alpine Officer's Report

THOMAS GOODMAN



PHOTO: MATTHEW BATTLE

The 2013 alpine season got off to a rollicking start, with several large dumps on the Central Plateau and twenty four members of the club exploring Whakapapa on opening weekend. Unfortunately, 2013 demonstrated the fickle nature of alpine weather, and while a number of smaller trips did manage to make it out, it was a disappointing year for the traditional larger trips. Both Summit Luncheon and the Moonlight Crossing had to be called off.

Despite this, it was in many ways a very successful year for the Club. Three beginners snow schools and one advanced snow school were run in the July holidays, all of them highly successful despite one of the beginners snow schools being stuck in the hut due to high avalanche danger (and needing to improvise on how to instruct self-arresting, good one guys). Two avalanche awareness courses were also run through Peak Safety, giving twenty people the chance to learn a bit more about how to be safe in the mountains. It is intended that these shall be run annually.

Some personal highlights for me this year: walking up to Syme Hut at midnight in some of the worst weather I have ever experienced, being on the lucky beginners snow school to get three days of almost perfect weather, and of course wading through waist-deep snow in the Kawekas (and then getting evacuated by tractor – if there is a less glamorous way to travel I have yet to find it).

Thanks to everyone who has been on trips, led trips, or helped in other ways. Special thanks to those who instructed on this year's snowschools, to Christina Fullerton for baby-sitting the gear, and to Anton Gulley for always being willing to offer advice and a helping hand.

Good luck Roman for 2014!  
Thomas

# Harper Pass Harper Womble

## The Circumnavigation of Mt. Niggerhead

SARAH DANIELL

**Date:** 2/1/2013 – 6/1/2013

**Location:** Harper Pass

**Party Members:**

Sarah Daniell

Harriet Peel

Carl Barnhill

Lois Cooper

Hayley Ware



*In late December Harriet and Sarah plan a trip to Harper Pass. A team of fellow last minute planners is put together, flights and buses are booked and food is purchased. The following is an excerpt of Sarah's log [if she were organised enough to keep one].*

**31/Dec/12-1300-Motuihe Island:** Harriet phones. Severe storm warning issued for South Island. New route decided to avoid major river.

**1/Jan/12-0000-Motuihe Island:** New Year's celebrations continue.

**1/Jan/13-2000-Auckland Airport:** Plane boarded. Harriet scared of flying. Interruption to planned nap is unwelcome. Sympathy supplies are low. Harriet not calmed.

**1/Jan/13-2300-Christchurch (Backpackers):** Arthur's Pass road and SH6 closed due to heavy flooding. Harihari Bridge washed away. Forecast upgraded to extreme weather event. Route changed again. Buses rebooked.

**2/Jan/13-1400-Christchurch:** Bus boarded, driver confirms drop off at Windy Point.

**2/Jan/13-1600-SH7:** Bus running behind schedule. Harriet reconfirms drop off point with driver.

**2/Jan/13-1635-Windy Point St James Walkway:** Location determined as not Windy Point. Bus driver's parting comment now making sense: "Good thing I didn't drop you at the real Windy Point". Torrential rain.

**2/Jan/13-1700-Windy Point:** Kind fellow trampers provide a lift 10km back down the road to 'real' Windy Point. Heavy rain continues.

**2/Jan/13-2000-Boundary Stream:** Boundary Stream lives up to its name. All hope of reaching Hope Shelter before dark lost. Still pouring. Five people do fit in two 2-man tents.

**3/Jan/13-0730-Boundary Stream:** Glorious morning dawns. Stream dropped. Tramping begins. Ten minutes later Hope Shelter is reached. Breakfast. Tramping resumes.

**3/Jan/13-1800-Three Mile Stream Hut:** Hut reached later than expected due to snow-damaged track. Route changed again. Route is now simply a circumnavigation of Mt. Niggerhead.

**4/Jan/13-1000-Three Mile Stream:** Track start eventually located. Tramping continues.

**4/Jan/13-1800-Hope Kiwi Lodge:** Free venison and butchery lesson acquired from hunters. Venison greatly improves dinner.

**5/Jan/13** Weather fantastic. Uneventful day.

**6/Jan/13** Weather fantastic. Uneventful day.

**6/Jan/13-1030-Windy Point:** Bus driver arrives, appears mildly surprised we're still alive.

*Disclaimer: This was actually a fantastic trip with (mostly) great weather and awesome people!*



# Three Passes

## Fast-packing across the Alps

ALASTAIR McDOWELL

**Date:** 17/1/2013 – 18/1/2013

**Location:** Arthur's Pass

**Route:** Three Passes

**Party Members:**

Alastair McDowell

Helen Liley

Nico Thorburn

Theo Flower



Driving through sleeting rain across the Canterbury Plains gave us little hope of success on our planned crossing to the West Coast. The Three Passes trip is an Arthur's Pass mega-classic. The route stretches from the stony river beds of the Waimakariri Valley, across the icy Whitehorn Glacier and alpine Lake Browning, and into the lush West Coast river valleys... It was worth a shot.

I managed to squeeze two days off work in Christchurch to meet Helen, Nico and Theo at the airport for the start of a whirlwind South Island trip. We had an ambitious schedule to keep, they had woken up hours before dawn in Auckland, and by mid-morning we were rock-hopping our way up the Waimakariri, and into the Alps.

Full of energy on this first stretch, the fast-packing fever was contagious. Our packs were ruthlessly stripped to the core, for speed is safety, and we needed to move fast to get through this rough four day trip before the weather packed in. Dark clouds and visible rain at the head of the valley were menacing, so although I was enjoying the quick pace downriver I was wracked with nerves. Would the rain allow us to pass through the furious Taipoiti Gorge? Would we have any visibility to navigate up the Whitehorn Glacier? The odds seemed stacked against us.

Helen kept us honest to a strict ten minutes for lunch at Carrington Hut, located at the branching point of the White and Taipoiti tributaries. We literally ran into the rain emptying into the high and narrow Taipoiti Gorge. The stream was steep and flowing raucously, tossing rapids between boulders. The walls were coated in great mossy waterfalls, it was an exciting place to be, and the rain only enhanced the atmosphere. The banks forced us from side to side for the best boulder hopping. It would have been impossible to ascend in much stronger flow – we were lucky. Helen hopped daringly across the torrents, while I mostly chose the safer option of wading through the deeper pools – there was no avoiding getting wet on such a day.



Higher up, the gorge opened out to a perfect saddle: we had arrived at the Harman Saddle, our first of the three passes. The Ariel Tarns weren't so inviting, but in summer it would make a fantastic place to camp (wait – it was summer), and also an ideal stopping point for a three day, three passes, if one wanted to squeeze the trip into a long weekend.

Visibility up to Whitehorn Pass could have been described as 'marginal'. We checked compass bearings and navigated carefully into the looming slipper of rotten ice, slowly melting away in the drizzle. However, moments after stepping onto the ice the apparent temperature drop made itself known, and the drizzle turned to snow, covering our hair and legs in a thin layer of icy spindrift. We marched forward into the light blizzard, gaining great grip in the soft fresh snow settling on the glacier.

Sadly, there were no views to be had on the Whitehorn Pass. We dreamt of gazing down into Canterbury and Westland at the same time, lapping up the contrast. Instead, we savoured the contrast of tramping through a snowstorm while most people were lazing at the beach! We plunged back into Canterbury after technically only a short stint in Westland, following vaguely worn tracks through steep scree slopes. We moved fast as a

unit and soon found shelter out of the strong winds that raged at the pass. Two down...

Park Morpeth Hut was always 'just around the corner' – the Cronin stream stretched on long into the evening. However, the long summer night was relaxed and clearing up magically – suddenly fog and cloud lifted, revealing the freshly dusted spires of Mt Rosamond and the Five Jagged Peaks. Snowfall in February is rare, but anything can happen in the high mountains. The snow would melt by the next day. You have to be there to see it!

Park Morpeth was a welcome sight after an intense nine hour day. That evening the sky was full of stars, and in return it was a freezing night. We all suffered together in our light sleeping bags, with cramping legs slowly recovering after a feed of hot stew.

It was a frosty boulder hop up the Wilberforce to the perilous junction where young Park and Morpeth drowned in 1931. The CMC hut stands near the junction in their remembrance. Several functional cable-ways are still hanging above the gnarlier rivers, but I've found them more dangerous to use than crossing the river itself – exposed pulleys and sharp wires race past your head as you sit in a swinging car clutching your pack, waiting for your mates to winch you across. The clear night had allowed the rivers to subside, although we could taste the fresh alpine melt in the water as we filled our bottles for the imposing climb.

Browning Pass – our third and final – reared up against us early on the second day. As we got stuck in, the sprawling rivers began to present themselves below, snaking into a unified force out to Canterbury. I found Owen's "borrowed" Leki pole to be extremely useful for traction up the steep scree, avoiding the exhausting one up – two down slog. Nico gave the climb his



all on all fours, finally scrambling to a gap in the rock. The views speak for themselves. Summer had returned, and it was definitely time for a swim.

The chill of the lake smashed the sweat from our pores; we felt crisp and fresh again. Shivering but revitalised, we were now running through the hall of the Westland Alps. Heading away from the long gravelled riverbeds and chossy mountainsides of Canterbury, I was excited to see the rich, bush clad mountains of the West Coast. The clouds swirled an amazing show about the freshly snowed tops, and at each corner the great Arahura River Valley opened up in full bore. It was impressive scenery.

Some call the trip 'Four Passes', but the final Styx Saddle hardly deserves note as it is barely a bump in a boggy saddle. But through this final gateway, we could at last set our eyes on the distant West Coast and hazy Hokitika.

Down valley from Grass Flats Hut we were invited to taste a true West Coast river, the roaring Styx. The boulders had amazing texture, carved and sculpted over the centuries by the glacial blue current. Although the track was a breeze, descending ever so gradually towards Kokatahi, we were in homestretch mode and took it easy. Of all the fears of failure we had harboured – high rivers, icy glaciers, poor visibility – we could finally now relax. We had overcome all those obstacles with a mixture of luck, skill and hardy perseverance – it's times like these you're grateful to have the creator of these powerful mountains on your side.

Distance markers on possum traps slowly counted down to the end of the track – Three Passes – done! High fives all round. However, we soon realised our journey was not yet over. 7pm, the traffic coming by Lake Kaniere was non-existent. Our plan to hitch-hike 45km to Hokitika was seeming less than likely as we sat, weary, on the Kokatahi Bridge. A farmer's mansion was spotted on the hillside paddock above the lake. With nothing to lose, we took our chances and wandered up to the gate. The farmer and his family exuded the friendly laid back lifestyle of the West Coast, offering us biscuits, coffee and a telephone for a taxi.

Next minute, we were indulging in a mountain of fish and chips on the Coast, feeling triumphant in the aftermath of our incredible two day crossing of the Alps.



# Sunbathing, Yoga and Massage

ANNIE CAO

**Date:** 26/1/2013 – 28/1/2013

**Location:** Whirinaki Forest Park

**Route:** Mangamate –  
Central Whirinaki Circuit

**Party Members:**

Annie Cao

Julian Bryant

Richard Hosking

Sarah Jelbert



It was Auckland Anniversary Weekend and Annie, Julian, Richard and Sarah headed to Whirinaki to walk the popular three day loop.

Day one from River Road Carpark to Mangamate Hut took longer than expected. Countless river crossings and poor track markings made our progress slow. The patches of cutty grass were impressive enough to rival those found baiting in the Waitaks! Stinging nettle soon made its

abundant presence known – rendering our skin tingling for days. Thank goodness it was summer or else we would have been very cold after walking in the river for a good four hours!

We reached Mangamate around 7pm, put up the tent and feasted on stir-fry and chocolate. Sarah introduced us to a hilarious category game which involved water being thrown at peoples' faces. For example, Richard picked colours as a category and wrote "Red" on a piece of paper which was hidden from the others. Everyone took turns guessing the colour. The person who guessed correctly got water thrown at them by Richard. As expected, we all got rather wet.





After finding out that the walk from Mangamate to Central Whirinaki Hut would only take four hours, we promptly switched on “chillaxed tramping mode” and took our time getting ready the next morning. As a result, we left the hut at an unprecedented time of 10.30am! Day two involved more stream crossings but the track soon graded out into a well maintained path amidst stunning mature rainforest.

We reached Central Whirinaki before 3pm and promptly went for a quick (very cold) dip in the river then sunbathed for the rest of the afternoon. The evening passed by extremely pleasantly. After befriending a group of Scouts, we played the water game together, and “Who am I?”. This was followed by meditation, yoga and a massage train. The four of us were in heaven for over an hour, much to the hilarity of the other hut users. Photos were taken of us as we were compared to attendees at a Buddhist temple. We shrugged off their criticisms – they were the ones missing out!

The third day was again very relaxed. The walk back to the car was a dry one. There were views of the crystal clear river most of the time, and no stream crossings. It was the perfect walk to get lost in your own thoughts. We played more category games and 20 Questions to pass the time. After a lengthy lunch, more sunbathing and feasting, we were back at the car by mid-afternoon. By evening we were already longing for our next massage session – until next time!

**Verdict:** A must-do tramp with a spectacular forest setting. The first day is a bit challenging but the rest of the trip is as relaxed and gentle as a Great Walk.



# Six Days in Nelson Lakes

**ANNIE CAO**

**Date:** 16/2/2013 – 21/2/2013  
**Location:** Nelson Lakes National Park  
**Route:** Travers–Sabine Circuit  
**Party Members:**  
Annie Cao  
Laurien Heijs



**VERDICT:** An extremely satisfying circuit, with fantastic landscape and track diversity. The interesting array of people we met were the icing on the cake.

**DAY 1**  
Our epic six day, 90+ km adventure kicked off with a three hour cruisy walk from St Arnaud to Lakehead Hut. With the heaviest pack I’ve ever carried on my back, I looked forward to the scrumptious dinner we planned for our first night. Penne Mediterranean is a delicious concoction of red onion, capsicum and feta – a must-try for all feta lovers! With wasp infested toilets, bumblebees and sandflies everywhere, Lakehead Hut is not ideally located.

**DAY 2**  
Imagine a crystal clear flowing river, surrounded by the mountains of the Travers Range and you will picture the idyllic scenery of Nelson Lakes National Park. An eight hour day, the track follows the Travers River then ascends steeply from John Tait Hut to Upper Travers Hut. Located just out of an avalanche path, Upper Travers nestles in a tussock covered flat, with Mt Travers towering above. Here we met numerous adventurers walking Te Araroa. Our new idols, a Taiwanese couple, had cycled across the Australian desert, the length of the North Island, and were now embarking on Te Araroa with gumboots and baking supplies in tow. Our trip was a walk in the park compared with what they’d done!



**DAY 3**  
From Upper Travers there is a steep climb to the Travers Saddle. The panoramic views are pretty amazing. From the saddle there is a rapid 1000m descent down to West Sabine Hut, crossing tussock and rock scree. A brief lack of concentration could send you tumbling. Thank goodness I choose to do a backflip tumble off a tussock covered hill rather than a rock face! This sort of terrain divides trampers into two camps – those who prefer climbing



and those who find it easier to descend. Laurien would have preferred to climb the saddle on the Sabine side for an easier descent. I fiercely disagree!

#### DAY 4

Hands down the highlight of the trip was the day walk (7 hours return) to Blue Lake. While this adds an extra day to the circuit, it is simply not to be missed. With only a day pack, the walk up to the headwaters of Sabine River was ace in every way. Blue Lake is stunning. Containing the clearest fresh water in the world, the water clarity is close to that of distilled water! Unbelievable! The lake is tapu, and a spiritual vibe is definitely present. The quick walk up to Lake Constance was also worthwhile.



#### DAY 5 + 6

The last two days might feel like a long walk out but the view of Lake Rotorua at Sabine Hut made the five hour walk from West Sabine worth it. The last day via the Speargrass Track passes delicate wetlands and interesting forests. At the end of it all, my one t-shirt was caked in dried sweat and salt, but also the sense of accomplishment.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

- I survived my first six day hike and there was no need to activate the EPIRB – phew!
- One subject dominates my thoughts on long tramps – FOOD.
- A return trip to walk the popular Robert Ridge to Lake Angelus is definitely on the cards.

# The Fifth Night

## *A traverse of the Arthur Range*

ALASTAIR McDOWELL

**Date:** 18/2/2013 – 22/2/2013

**Location:** Kahurangi National Park

**Route:** Arthur Range

**Party Members:**

Alastair McDowell

Dulkara Martig



A five day traverse of the Arthur Range from Mt Arthur to Mt. Sodom and Mt. Gomorrah seemed the perfect way to end summer. A seven hour hitch-hike to St Arnaud was where I teamed up with Dulkara for the trip just before she left for a ninety day trek across Nepal. Following the very crest of the ridge for the five days, virtually all above the bushline, produced a unique adventure and the ultimate way to see the Kahurangi.

The traverse involved a lot of exposed climbing with a heavy pack & running shoes. The ridge was so dry that we'd carry five litres of water at a time between tarns and rotten snow piles. At times we definitely crossed the line from tramping to mountaineering – standing on a ledge overlooking the Salisbury Tablelands, desperately searching for camp, we almost considered abseiling with our improv sling harnesses and prussic cord. It was only a second look at the GPS that prevented that epic.

Our creativity was not bounded by the day, but each night we found an exciting place to sleep. The first long day saw us traverse from Mt Arthur to climb North Twin, and sleep in a secret cave notched between the two Twins. Perfectly sheltered, we watched Nelson light up with a near full moon rising above Tapuae-o-Uenuku. Other nights we found adequate rest on beds of tussock in dried out stream beds, beside dirty tarns, and on the final night it was a case of simply sleeping 'right here'.

The idea to traverse the entire Arthur Range seemed ambitious enough to be worthwhile, and from our research, not many had completed the whole range – Arthur to Patriarch. Tristan Riley came close, reaching John Reid Hut before bailing to the weather. Armed with beta for every peak, sidle and water point on the ridge, we felt as if we were following Tristan's very footsteps along the Kahurangi crests, almost in competition with his times and way-points. Turns out Dulkara knew him from her Nelson days.

As we crossed Hough Saddle our last two obstacles lay before us: Mounts Sodom and Gomorrah. Straight out of the Bible, we approached their steep slopes expecting some treachery. One short section below the bushline, the first in three days, popped us out into a grove of spiky dracophyllums. The variety of plants growing on the ridge was immense. I don't know much about the flora, but I soon recognised silvery astelia and sharp aciphylla among the tussock and snowgrass.

Studying the map closely, we tried to pick a good route weaving through the great peaks. Our beta specifically told us 'Do not climb Sodom – or you'll never be able to come down'. Somewhat like God's warning to Lot and his family: "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!" It was late in the day so we fled towards the mountains, aiming to sidle at the 1500m contour to end up nicely on Sodom Saddle.





Out of nowhere a booming noise entered the valley, reverberating off the valley walls. A helicopter sped through the valley and over the saddle with minimal clearance, and was gone. Our hearts were by now racing at a speed of knots, but we forced ourselves to keep calm.

Over the past three days of ridgeaineering we had come to thoroughly despise sidling, as it usually involved hanging onto steep hillsides gripping flax, roots, cutty grass, spaniard, and chossy loose rock. Sodom was no exception! The salty pyramid loomed above us as we cautiously traversed its flanks until – bluffs. Dulkara kept a way behind during the exercise while we scoped out this unfamiliar territory, not sure if we'd find a way. I laughed as I saw the bluffs dropping precipitously to the valley floor, it was the logical reaction. The only option was to climb higher up the slope and try to skirt above the bluffs, knowing that a fall would be costly. Not being on rock or snow, I didn't associate this situation with danger, but the snow grass was so slippery that you'd slide as if on ice.

The high traverse worked brilliantly, eventually leading to easier ground and a good way down to the saddle. We didn't dare look back at the horrible sidle we'd endured, else we end up as another salty pillar to add to Sodom's collection. What a drama!

The ridge to Gomorrah was easy, thankfully, but still more elevation on the legs was taking its toll. From Gomorrah we could now see Mt. Patriarch – the end of the traverse – well within sight. But sadly we'd run out of time, and had to descend that night. It was a toss up between the descent from John Reid hut via Chummies Track, or directly down the Gomorrah Track. Chummies Track I knew was DoC maintained and a breeze. Gomorrah would surely be the same, right? We stretched on head torches and prepared for a fun night run down the ridge to finish. This decision proved to be the worst of the entire trip.

As it turned out, the Gomorrah track had not been maintained since 1995. We expected



a great orange triangle marking the start of the track as we entered thick scrub. At last one appeared. A bright light caught my eye, and I thought my torch was reflecting on the marker. I soon realised this was not a DoC marker, but a blood red moon rising above the horizon, piercing through the tangled mass of overgrowth. Hugely demoralised, we both stopped racing, and sat in a heap in the impenetrable forest. But with the sun now gone, we resigned ourselves to darkness and accepted our fate – a long night lay ahead of us.

The next five hours passed as a tense military-style operation as we navigated the ridge by map, compass, GPS and headlight. Permolat markers on the trees were white gold. I let out a relieved cry of "MARKER" every time one appeared out of the night, confirming that we were on track. The trail was so overgrown that my only sense of direction was from my feet, feeling the slightly more compacted trail, and raising an alarm when the ground became

soft and untrodden. At times I couldn't believe myself, my feet had a mind of their own and I was following their call.

The night was balmy and dry, and the moon was now high above but providing no light through our thick canopy. Progress crawled on, achingly slow. Our water bottles were almost dry; we'd consumed about four litres each since leaving camp fifteen hours earlier that morning.

At last our streak of white markers also ran dry, and with Dulkara standing post, I thrashed furiously through bush and dry branches. At the second failed return to post, I slumped onto the forest floor by Dulkara, absolutely drained and distraught. The time was now 2am and we had less than 100ml of water left between us. My mouth was so dry that I felt like an old man as I struggled to get my words out. I was determined to keep going, downhill, at the risk of losing the 'marked trail', if only to find some water.

Dulkara was calm and reasoned we should stop, and sleep there until morning. We would definitely miss the ferry. Thirsty as I was, I gave up arguing and conceded to waiting it out until dawn. That soft mossy forest floor gave the best night's sleep of the trip.

We woke to the light and the sound of birds – it would have seemed beautiful if we weren't both dead men walking from the last night's epic. Four hours later we finally stumbled out to the Wangapeka road. I polished off the last of the food, downed a cold coffee, and knocked off eight kilometres of gravel road to the car in thirty two minutes. Inside the van that Dulkara's friend had left us were instructions to find two beers chilling in a side stream off the road. Classic. Best VB's we'd ever tasted.

Our desperate dark end made us miss the ferry, but the survival story we spun scored the next sailing. We recovered from our wilderness hangovers with a big feed on the InterIslander ferry while looking over our photos and thinking about what had just gone down the past week. An epic for sure, but would we have done it any other way?



# Thanks For Having Us Mt Pirongia

MICHELLE WINDSOR

**Date:** 29/3/2013 - 30/3/2013

**Location:** Mt. Pirongia

**Route:** The Tahuanui Track

**Party Members:**

Jimmy Chancellor

TJ Xuanyuan

Louis Mervoyer

Phyo Aung Kyaw

Michelle Windsor



Over the Easter break a carload of us headed down to Mount Pirongia to spend some quality time with Mama Nature. Our crew consisted of TJ, Louis, Phyo, myself, and of course our leader: tramping legend Jimmy Chancellor. Setting off nice and early, the five of us hit the road with great anticipation (so much anticipation in fact, that I got a speeding ticket. What a great souvenir to arrive in my letterbox a few weeks later. Oops). Bad driving aside, we made good time and by mid-morning had hit the Tahuanui Track (which apparently means 'big heap' in Maori. Don't ask why because I don't know. I guess a mountain is essentially a 'big heap'...).

The track took us along a glorious stream and through some nice farmland before hitting the foresty slopes of Mt Pirongia. Considering that this was a fairly direct route up the mountain, it was surprisingly not too difficult. We arrived at the summit by mid-afternoon and soaked in the magnificent view with a KFC-obsessed man who was kind enough to take a photo of us in between his rants about KFC cravings. Bless him.

We also bumped into some acquaintances of Jimmy's whose evening (we later discovered via text) turned out to be rather eventful! Having charged up the mountain in merely a few hours, the couple decided to take the longer Bell Track down the mountain on the same day. Come nightfall, they were still in the forest with the battery life of their iPhone torches quickly dying and a number of kilometres still to travel. Da da da duuuummmmm. They opted to jump in the stream so they wouldn't lose the path, and they would have taken yonks to get back if it weren't for a solo camper hearing their frenzied swearing and supplying them with a torch and a route back to the track.

Meanwhile, our crew was cozy and well fed (thanks to Jimmy's culinary genius) at the Pahautea Hut. And by cozy I mean cozy. Eleven people in a six-man hut. More specifically, five people on three mattresses. Hello sweaty thermals and minimal sleep. On a more

***'And by cozy I mean cozy. Eleven people in a six-man hut. More specifically, five people on three mattresses. Hello sweaty thermals and minimal sleep.'***

positive note, I successfully silenced a snorer who was sharing the hut with us. Sorry for shoving you whoever you are. Tiredness makes people irrational.

The second day was as just as great as the first. We set off early so that we could get to the Cone (the second-highest point) by sunrise, which disappointingly turned out to be completely obscured by clouds. Nevertheless, it was splendid to be atop a magnificent mountain for the beginning of the new day!

We took the longer route, the Bell Track, back down the mountain, which took us past the tallest native tree in New Zealand and to the Kaniwhaniwha Caves. Enjoyable times all round!

Whilst climbing Pirongia/in conversation with my fellow trampers I learnt a few things:

- Karma is real. TJ (aka the Chinese warlord) had some extreme knee-high black leather tramping boots that were the subject of a joke or two. But let's just say he was better off when we hit the mud.
- I suck at 20 Questions. Who knew 'coconut' would be so hard to guess? Still peeved by that.
- Too. Much. Pasta. In. My. Belly. I thought it would be a good idea to bring along excessive amounts of pasta and not much else. It's not.
- 98% of New Zealand's original kahikatea forest is gone. Good one humans.
- Jimmy got giardia from swimming in a cow trough. You'll have to ask him for the circumstances surrounding this event because he would not tell me.
- Just because it's brown and moves doesn't mean it's a deer. Turns out there aren't even deer around Pirongia, merely oversized goats.
- Mongols used to drink their horses' blood to sustain themselves. Pity there weren't any horses around Pirongia because I could have done with a change from the pasta.
- Polar fleece pants would be a great investment.
- Post-tramping swims are always a good choice.
- Jimmy can't count money. How did he get into med?
- Rainbow paddle pops legitimately taste like rainbows after a hard day's tramping.
- Tramping > studying.

All in all it was an Easter well spent! The ascent of Mt Pirongia filled up our time-in-the-outdoors tanks, allowing us to survive a few more weeks back at uni.

Big ups to Louis, TJ, Phyo and Jimmy for being quality companions! Much love. Extra kudos to Jimmy for organizing the trip and using his handy dandy DoC maps iPhone app to navigate for us (cheating?). What a high roller.

Thanks for having us Mt Pirongia, I'll be back.



# Kaweka Easter Tramp

TUAN CHIEN

**Date:** 29/3/2013 – 1/4/2013

**Location:** Kaweka Ranges

**Party Members:**

Amanda Chapman

Blair Ramsdale

Keely Paler

Keith Runnalls

Tuan Chien



It started as a cold day with little light. The motorway was mostly devoid of signs of life, and houses were barely awakening from their serene slumber. The crew met outside the library and mumbled out some introductions as our brains started to remember how to talk. Soon we were on our way. We snaked along the highway towards Napier, passing various mobile police restaurants. After a quick stop in Napier, we were on our merry way again. The Kaweka

promised land did not disappoint. There were trees, windy roads, road signs and crashed army trucks. Everything one looks for in a national forest.

At the Lakes carpark the journey began. Five university students became five travelling sages, ascending through the dry green pine giants. The earth was yellowish brown with visible signs of cracking. A light haze blanketed all around as the effects of the summer drought were in full blossom. After a moderate march skywards, the party eventually cleared the bush line and eye candy of the surrounding forest and rolling mountain ranges beset our eyes. Then came the descent towards Kiwi Saddle Hut – built and maintained by the Heretaunga Tramping Club. While we walked the sun sank over the horizon and eventually cast a large silhouette over Mt Ruapehu. The hut was quaintly tucked away behind some trees and had a cosy feel to it. It was well maintained. The spaghetti dinner with sautéed onions, portobello mushrooms, capsicum and cheese was prepared by our head chef Keith and sous chef Blair. The sages promptly devoured it like a hungry pack of wolves. Later, we kicked back over a cup of hot chocolate with condensed milk and exchanged stories of terrorist shape-shifting raccoons before heading to bed.

The next morning started with a hearty bowl of diabetes-inducing porridge and a small walk through the bush, past Gun's Camp, meeting our first people of the day. From there, the party clambered out of the bush and stayed on the ridgeline for most of the day. It was a slow ascent through the rolling ridge, often with a 360 degree view of the mountain ranges and dark green pine all around. We could see Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe in the distance, fading in and out of the cloud towards the west. In many places, steep cliffs dropped on either side of the track and connected to the valleys below. Lunch happened on Studholme Saddle in near perfect weather and life was good.

Not long after setting foot towards Kaweka J, a mad rabid dog set upon us. Its menacing jagged teeth and towering stature dwarfed our existence. But the sages would not be so easily deterred. By entering sage battle formation our collective efforts beat back the howling dog. Step by step, inch by inch, we crept forward. The dog was relentless. It tossed. It turned. It threw muddy fits. But at the end of the day, our liberally dispensed sticks of justice prevailed and the mad dog acknowledged our power. The sages were enlightened by the mighty Kaweka J and hastily moved on (sages are weak against cold elements). Having maxed out our Peaks XP for the day, we journeyed down Makahu Saddle in our first death-defying descent, walking a fine line between the jaws of sure death on a thin line of safety.

Dominie Hut provided a quick reprieve and more eye candy before our continued fall from the heavens. Having mistakenly missed our turnoff at Trials Spur, the party proceeded along Makahu Spur and used our sage wisdom and care to navigate down treacherous cliffs



and slips in what turned out to be wonderful training for the days ahead. Slip and slide. Fun for the whole family.

Makahu Saddle Hut beckoned to us but our rightful beds were plucked from us by a group of Korean hikers who had brought half a kitchen and were in the midst of cooking up some amazing smelling Korean BBQ and kimchi meals. After some exploration, we set up camp in a small clearing next to the most luxurious DoC toilet we had ever set our eyes and bums on – it was extraordinarily clean and smelled like bubblegum inside. Next, our powers were used to find water. We met a lady working on kiwi conservation who offered us tank water, which was graciously accepted. She had been tracking two kiwi birds in the region and had a cute kiwi tracking dog which enthusiastically wagged up to confirm the presence of sages and most definitely not kiwi (birds). Dinner this night consisted of couscous with vegetables, cheese, chocolate and wonderful dinner conversation about guns, military treaties, gun regulations, and music. Our camp was ambushed in the evening by a ninja possum foraging through our food bags and once again the sticks of justice came out, this time to chase the ninja possum away.

Day three started out with a gentle uphill stroll through some bush and clearings before eventually coming to Donald Canyon. At this point, I would like to note that according to the original email, we were to cross it “like a honey badger”. Some members of the party were under the impression that honey badgers were furry cute animals that would stroll and skip happily through the forest. This is not the way of the honey badger, nor the Kaweka Easter sages. On our hands and feet we carefully dropped into the bottom of the canyon, through slips and steep drops. All that ninja training from Makahu Spur was now put into full practice. At the bottom of the canyon everyone had lunch and basked in the glorious rays of the sun, while tasting the raw sweet goodness of the Donald River. Once rejuvenated enough to move again, our steep climb on the other side through many slips began. Looking back where we came from we wondered how a track was even possible through the bushy cliff side.

At Mackintosh Hut we laid around like tortoises, reading and soaking in the afternoon sun while celebrating our achievements of the day. The streams had all dried up but thankfully a water tank had been recently installed at the hut. Trampers from Taupo, Wellington and



Hastings were also enjoying the afternoon sun, including a fellow who had walked 25 km that day from Makino Hut.

Around 6pm a group of five Germans turned up in t-shirts and shorts, with no packs, no water, four litres of wine and only cellphones for light. They had come from Mackintosh Spur (a four to five hour trip) and intended to head back the same way that day. After everyone at the hut unsuccessfully tried to convince them to stay the night, they were offered some survival blankets. They took one, and remarked that they did not need any more as one of them was carrying a sweat towel. Like the wind they were on their merry way, never to be heard from again (and presumed safe or dead).

The evening meal consisted of rice risotto with capsicum, cheese and shiitake mushrooms and dessert, as well as musings over the day's events. Keith, who bivvied out, heard kiwi during the night.

On the final day's journey we traversed through more forest and gorges. About two kilometres from the carpark we took a wrong turn and ended up on a path going up. Shortly after, GPS alarms went off and we backtracked to a suspicious junction where the dismissed route ended up being the correct route. This dismissed route had logs put at the junction to discourage entry, and the track markers had been removed. After deciding this was indeed the correct route to take, we proceeded along this overgrown path with no markers. Eventually we made it out with no obstructions or slips along the way, and track markers resumed eventually, before disappearing again closer to the carpark. The sages then underwent an inverse sage transformation.

The trip was not complete without indulging ourselves with fatty fast food in Napier before battling the last of the Easter traffic jams on the way back to Auckland.



# Journey to the Sawtooth Ridge

**SYLVIE ADMORE**

**Date:** 21/4/2013 - 24/4/2013

**Location:** Ruahine Ranges

**Party Members:**

Leighton Watson

Rachael Siohane-Royle

Jake Joubert

Sylvie Admore



A wave of flicking tails and twitching ears pooled around the car. Leighton, chauffeur extraordinaire and part-time astronaut, slowed the vehicle to a halt with calculated precision as we shied away from the unwelcoming gazes of the Ruahine cattle. Bringing up the rear were the farm hands on their quad bikes; they were friendly enough but their bulging quads and calves were a testament to the brutal terrain which lay at the end of this gravel track.

We twisted and turned amongst the foothills, eventually reaching the carpark where we embarked on the preparations for our adventure. Jake and Rachael slid into their full Arc'teyrx body armour (acquired during their respective covert deployments in the 'Nam), complete with waterproof zip pockets (rated to 70kN) while Leighton and I wrapped our ragged scraps of inferior outdoor wear about ourselves.

As we trekked up the hill to Longview Hut we were accompanied by the booming reverberations of Jake's Karakorum alpine boots crushing the mountain behind us. Fortunately, the noise drowned out his quiet mutterings of blisters and bruising (not sold separately with any full shank boot). As we wound our way up the mountain we met two fifths of a deer accompanied by a grizzled looking hunter. As we parted ways, I wondered if we too would return victorious from our quest along the SAWTOOTH RIDGE or whether, like the deer, we would return incomplete, our very souls torn apart by failure and the lead bullets of regret.

The next day rose fine and bright with a blustery wind. We claimed Otumore and Taumatatau with ease and pressed on to the famed Howlett's Hut. Its orange corrugated iron frame was a welcome sight with dusk lurking on the horizon. Also welcome was the freshly trapped mouse which Leighton carefully skinned and added to our bolognaise concoction. We ate with gusto in anticipation of the day ahead: the day to conquer SAWTOOTH RIDGE! Safe and warm within the embrace of our sleeping bags we listened in darkness to the storm breaking overhead. Our hearts sank with each roar that rocked our lonely cabin.

**'We debated  
the merits  
of a Velcro  
tramping suit'**

A foul morning dawned, bringing with it winds that grasped the trees, shaking and wrenching them with evil intent. We applied war paint, loaded the cannons and trundled out the door with all the heavy artillery we could manage. Grimly we trudged through the sparse grove of beech, every now and then glancing up at the clouded abyss that enshrouded our goal. At the tree line we paused to reflect upon our plight- declaring eventually: "she'll be right". She wasn't.

A hop, a skip, a wild canter, born along by the hellish wind, flailing tumbleweeds meeting



the shifting schist, we fell. The ridge beat us back and we returned to the hut still clinging to our dreams of glory. "Tomorrow," we said.

We debated the merits of a Velcro tramping suit 'till dusk, envisioning the ease with which we might wake up and roll around the floor of the hut, progressively collecting our personal belongings. It was a short-lived respite from the reality of the Ruahines.

It was around 10am the next day when it hit us: HOPE. We clung to the storm-drenched hillside, mere metres from the ridge. Rachel was in her element, using her honed climbing muscle to shimmy up a gnarly outcrop to our left. Jake embedded his Wolverine-like retractable front points into the muddy choss, making mincemeat of the mountain. Leighton, using the ice axe he had claimed as booty a kilometre or so back, was hacking steps into the Ruahine rock; we were so very close! In Tiraha's wind shadow we edged our way up to the weather-blasted peak, eyes slitted against the sleet. From the mountain's barren crown we gazed down upon our goal. It was steep, it was knife-like, hazed in a foreboding mist and wreathed in peril: SAWTOOTH RIDGE. It yawned before us like the cavernous lower jaw of some prehistoric monster, and we were afraid. With each buffeting gust our minds strayed back to civilisation and our hearts beat quickly at the thought of hot baths and snugly duvets. So we took one last look at our adversary and bowed to his might. "Next time!" we said.

We had lost the battle, but there is still a war that remains to be won. Many a venturer has been turned back from that inhospitable place; we were not the first to fail and nor shall we be the last. But mark my words, we will return...

# Endangered Love

JUSTIN LOISEAU

*I glimpsed you after dusk,  
Your shimmering silver coat,  
Gliding across the glade.*

*Eyes as bright as stars,  
Heart as dark as night,  
I yearned for your touch.*

*Feelings flew,  
My footsteps followed,  
You felt me from afar.*

*You could not fly,  
Yet you fled,  
Disappearing into darkness.*

*I admitted defeat at dawn,  
My emotion no match for your evasion,  
Kiwi, I'll catch you yet.*

# Queens Birthday Adventures on the Hillary Trail

WARRICK ISAACHSEN

**Date:** 1/6/2013 - 3/6/2013  
**Location:** Waitakere Ranges  
**Route:** The Hillary Trail  
**Party Members:**

Jenny Sahng  
Maud Tissink  
Alex Brown  
Warrick Isaachsen



Sixty years after Sir Ed's adventure to Everest, we begin our own mini adventure.

## DAY 1

The troops rally at the AUTC board in the quad. Enlistees include Alex "Coloursarelegitnamestoo" Brown, Maud "Dutchpirate" Tissink, Jenny "Thisissoexciting" Sahng, and Warrick "Weallcrazy" Isaachsen.

We begin our trip with a bit of creative gear origami, trying to get all the gear and bodies into a little coupe. Easy-peasy-squeezy. Head to Warrick's to pick up Owen, chauffeur extraordinaire. Chill outside because he's just gotten out of the shower. Eventually we end up at Arataki. Shot. After a quick check of the weather we begin the trail with quick sidetrack to a lookout with panoramic views of Auckland. Hillary trail tries to faze us with gravel, boardwalk, dirt, grass, mud and water. Unfazed. Stumbling down the hillside through native rainforest, we arrive at a bridge across Lower Huia Dam Lake. Mirror stillness. We decide to head to Upper Huia Dam for lunch and are rewarded with magnificent green valley views and brief trips through old tramway tunnels. Good call.

The Lower Huia Dam is spilling over and has turned into a wormhole. Vertigo and dehydration make it pretty trippy. Just down the road next to the swingbridge we discover a great swimming spot. The group doesn't look keen until Alex runs past the others to take a running front flip into the pool. 10/10 for style bro! Inspired by his valiant efforts to pretend he's not freezing, one by one we follow after him. Cold and out of water, Warrick suggests that we visit the

PHOTO: MAUD TISSINK





Tamepo where just down the road to beg for water. Half an hour, a couple of gingerbuns, a quartet of cups of tea, and a plate of snacks later, we head back to the trail with high spirits and full water bottles. Cheers, Auntie! We set up camp amongst the myriad cowpats at Karamatura and settle in for the night with some delicious quinoa burgers, thanks to Alex.

## DAY 2

After a quick trip up Fletcher Track amongst kauri, a quick detour turns into an impromptu race for the guys. The girls turn up about a minute afterwards to laugh at the guys' muddy-legged foolishness. Smooth. From the summit of Donald MacLean there are great views across the Manukau Harbour and a good spot for recon of the ridgeline track to Whatipu. Lunch on a driftwood log on the beach. Soooo chill. Blast a quick trip up from the beach and across the ridge, down a fairly steep descent to our accommodation for the night. After debating which tent site was the least sloping, we settled for the one closest to the shelter. It's not lazy, it's efficient. A swim in the cold river is great, but full-on nachos is better (cheers, Maud). Sit and contemplate how perfect life is, when some funny cliff jumping characters turn up at the shelter and offer us rum and Christmas cake. We clap in the Duke of Edinburgh kids whom we met at Karamatura, who got up late and arrive by torchlight. Still legit. Long conversations and our theory of everything as the blue-gray skies give way to glorious orange-pink then black.

## DAY 3

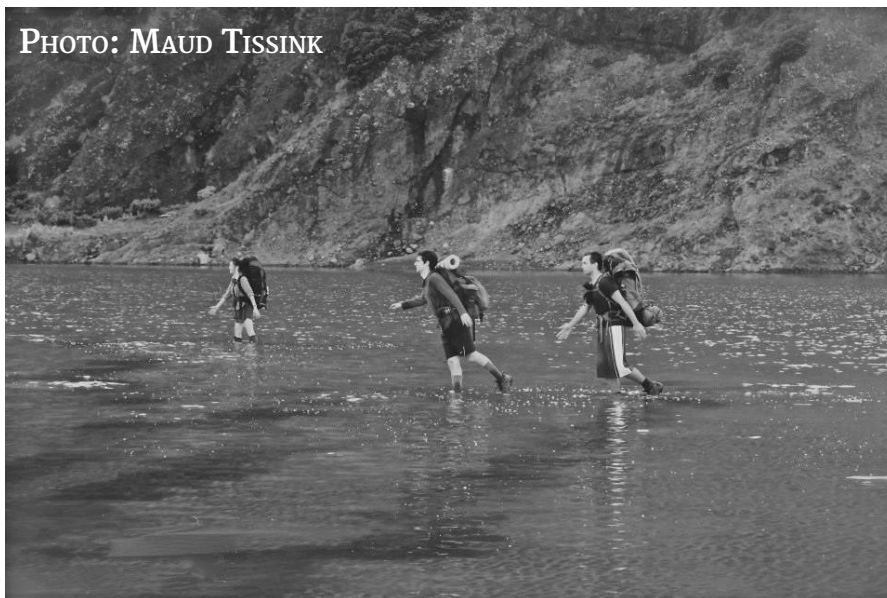
Wake up early in anticipation of a long day. Miraculously we had kept our boots dry until then. Hillary trail decides this isn't acceptable and throws a low river crossing followed by a wade through waist-high swamp at us. Mmmm... swamp juice. The Hillary Trail route seems to have changed as we walk along the beach through a scientific reserve which looks nothing like Mount Zion and is much easier. Nobody is complaining though.



A smaller mini-lake makes for a great impression of Abbey Road. Around the corner is Karekare Falls and a compulsory swimming notice is adhered to.

At Piha everyone settles down to a feed of good ol' fush 'n' chups, along with another compulsory swim with Alex. Freezing, again. A final push for Anawhata leads us to journey's end. Four friends, three days, two nights, one fantastic weekend, zero regrets.

PHOTO: MAUD TISSINK



WINNER: CAMP LIFE  
ALASTAIR McDOWELL  
ANOTHER DAY IN THE MOUNTAINS



RUNNER UP: COMEDY  
ALASTAIR McDOWELL  
GET LOW

# 2013 Photo Competition



RUNNER UP: CAMP LIFE  
JUSTIN LOISEAU  
SPELL IT OUT





RUNNER UP: ABOVE THE BUSHLINE  
**JUSTIN LOISEAU**  
*MOONLIGHT SILHOUETTE*



WINNER: BELOW THE BUSHLINE  
**ALEX WANG**  
*A WAY OUT*





RUNNER UP: BELOW THE BUSHLINE  
**RAY LI**  
*LAKE WAIKAREITI*



WINNER: COMEDY  
**MAUD TISSINK**  
*COOKED BOOTS*



# AUTC in the News...

## Falling tree just misses sleeping hikers

THE SOUTHLAND TIMES  
15 JAN 2013

Trampers were lucky to escape serious injury after a tree crashed through the roof of a Department of Conservation hut on Saturday morning.

Holiday-maker Mark Austin said he and his 14-year-old son Tama were camping with four others in the Rockburn Hut, on the Routeburn Track, when a "massive" beech tree ploughed through the ceiling, narrowly missing the trampers sleeping inside.

The tree was blown over about 12.30am, at the tail end of the bout of wild weather which caused flooding and road closures across the region.

The impact left the roof partly collapsed, one wall pushed out and down into the ground and the chimney damaged, Mr Austin said. The hut's bench and the cooking gear left on it had also been ruined, and equipment drying out near the fire had been covered in rubble.

However, the damage could have

been much worse if the tree had landed a metre closer to the centre of the hut: "We would have been in dire straits. We were very lucky to escape any serious injury."

The noise of the tree crashing into the hut instantly woke all of the trampers except Tama, who somehow managed to sleep through the ordeal, Mr Austin said.

The group began a quick cleanup of the hut and, after a rejig of the sleeping arrangements, returned to bed. "We decided that it probably wasn't a good idea to stay on the top bunks after that."

The pair, on holiday from Lower Hutt, said the escapade was just part of the South Island experience. "We've had so many adventures on this holiday we've just added this one to the list."

Department of Conservation communications relations manager Susie Geh said DOC was still deciding whether to repair or rebuild the hut. As the hut was now closed, trampers were being told to carry a tent instead.



The other trampers in the hut.  
Too slow to be the ones interviewed in the news - Hannah Brightley

PICTURE: BARRY HARCOURT

WAKE-UP CALL: Trumper Mark Austin and his son Tama survey the damage at Rockburn Hut after a tree fell through the roof.



Survival camp - Alastair McDowell

## Injured tramper flown to hospital

NELSON MAIL  
21 DEC 2013

A young Auckland woman was flown out of Nelson Lakes National Park yesterday afternoon after she activated a locator beacon.

The 26-year-old tramper had injured her knee on Wednesday while walking the Travers Saddle. A Department of Conservation resource described the saddle as an alpine pass requiring an ice axe and crampons well into spring, warning that trampers should be prepared for sudden weather changes.

The track from Upper Travers Hut to West Sabine Hut takes between six and nine hours.

When the woman switched on her beacon yesterday, the New Zealand Rescue Co-ordination

"she had done the right thing by waiting a few days at the hut"

Centre in Wellington picked up its signal and tasked the Nelson Marlborough rescue helicopter to fly her out of West Sabine Hut. The helicopter's onboard intensive care paramedic Gary Tobin assessed her and she was taken to Nelson Hospital for further treatment.

Mr Tobin described the woman's actions as "common sense". He said she had done the right thing by waiting a few days at the hut to see whether her compara-



Walk over: Paramedic Gary Tobin, left and crew members of the Nelson Marlborough rescue helicopter help a 26-year-old woman from Auckland who suffered a knee injury while walking the Travers Saddle.

tively minor injury improved, but the helicopter was there to help her when it became apparent she would remain unable to walk out on her own.

"She was well kitted-out, she had everything she needed and people with her, but she still couldn't walk on [the knee] so it made sense to call us."

## Auckland Uni students rescued from heavy snow

THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD  
15 JUL 2013

A group of Auckland students were rescued after they became snowed in during bad weather in Hawkes Bay.

The six students from Auckland University Tramping Club had set out on a four-day tramp in the Kaweka Range, north of Napier, but heavy snow trapped their cars and prevented them from leaving Makahu Saddle on Friday afternoon.

The group contacted police and decided they would stay in a Department of Conservation hut on Friday night to wait out the poor weather. By Saturday afternoon, a decision had been made for the police search and rescue team to retrieve the visiting trampers.

Police Senior Constable Alan Daly said DoC staff and a local farmer assisted with the rescue.

Heavy vehicles including a tractor and four-wheel drive trucks, one with a blade on the front was used to clear snow off the road in order to reach the students.

"There were about six people, all students from an Auckland tramping club. They were fine, in good spirits, and we probably got them out about 4pm [Saturday]," Mr Daly said.

The students were taken to Napier and he expected they would return to Auckland.

They would have to organise when they could retrieve their cars later.

He said parents of the students began calling emergency services when they learnt the trampers weren't coming home when expected. It was a timely reminder for people to check the long-range forecast before "they go into the bush".

"So far we've had three incidents where people haven't checked the weather; two groups became stranded by the snow and another car which became stranded when it tried to cross a ford.

"Also, their cars were inappropriate for the type of terrain they were dealing with."

Mr Daly said the weather was fine when the students began their tramp but people need to look "beyond a few days".

"... and if it is rough, take the safe option and stay away.

The club's captain Harriet Peel said the group had contacted police, family and the club promptly after discovering their vehicles were snowed in.



The team in the limo - Liane Battcher



The carpark - Leighton Watson

## Men missing overnight in Kaimanawa Ranges found safe

SCOOP MEDIA  
23 SEP 2013

At around eight thirty last night Taupo's Greenlea Rescue helicopter was advised by the RCCNZ that a personal locating beacon (PLB) had been set off in the Kaimanawa ranges.

The beacon belonged to a group of three adventure style racers who had set off on Friday night from Kaimanawa road and intended to make their way east over to the Hawke's Bay by Sunday night.

After initially making good progress along their planned route they had become disoriented and subsequently lost due to the low cloud.

The beacon was set off last night (Saturday) however atrocious weather conditions prevented the helicopter flying until this morning.

Using the beacons encoded position and direction finding equipment the helicopter crew and Land SAR volunteers, some of whom had walked through the night in an attempt to reach the group, were able to spot the missing party and hover load them off the hillside.

They were transported back to Motuoapa.



The three missing men with the land SAR volunteers

PICTURE: GREENLEA RESCUE HELICOPTER





CHRISTMAS PARTY  
CHRISTOF LUTTEROTH



CROSBIES HUT  
ROSANNA WALTON

# Adventures on Tiri

**ANNIE CAO**

**Date:** 1/6/2013 – 3/6/2013

**Location:** Tiritiri Matangi Island ★

**Party Members:**

Annie Cao

Richard Hosking

Justin Loiseau



Justin, Richard and Annie spent Queen's Birthday Weekend on Tiritiri Matangi as volunteers for the Supporters' Working Bee. What an incredible weekend!

Memories:

- Two nights of pot-luck fanfare, good food galore, apple cake and ice-cream.
- Night time wanders, hunting for kiwi, listening in on a noisy penguin orgy, stargazing and

shooting star spotting.

- A refreshing swim on the first official day of winter.
- Seal spotting, lazing in the sun, playing Two Truths One Lie.
- Fantastic company and bopping to The XX.

Between all this relaxing, work was also done and our group of twenty or so managed to achieve a lot! The concrete mixer was well used, a new track cleared and raked, a trench dug and a great deal of general maintenance was carried out. On the last day Justin breathed new life into two neglected DoC bicycles, Annie fed the birds sugar water and Richard ran around the entire island.

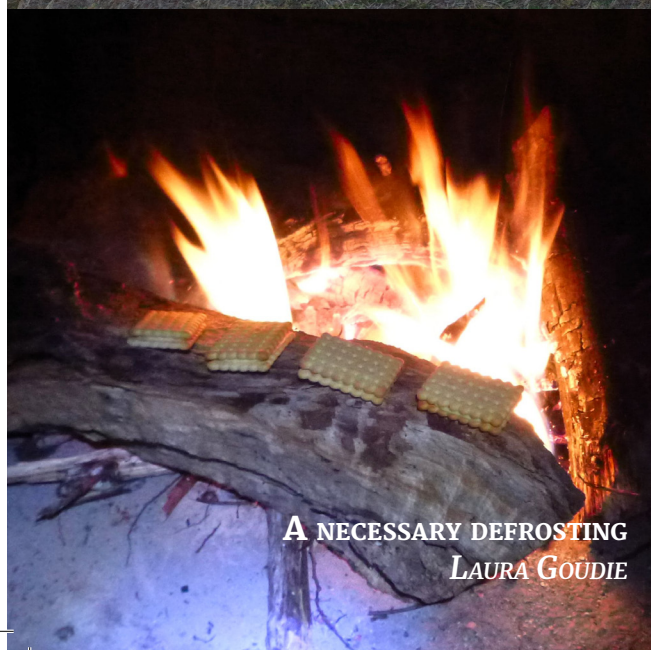
To attend Supporters' Working Weekends, all you have to do is join as a supporter of the Tiritiri Matangi Trust. It's only \$25 a year, and the ferry plus accommodation is all paid for. Other perks of being a supporter include a quarterly magazine and the feel-good factor of supporting one of New Zealand's most successful conservation projects!



MT EDEN WINE AND CHEESE  
RAY LI



GREAT BARRIER  
MARION GAVOILLE



A NECESSARY DEEFROSTING  
LAURA GOUDIE



BLISS  
SID MEHTA





# He's Not a Mountaineer, He's a Very Naughty Boy

SYLVIE ADMORE

**Date:** 28/6/2013 – 30/6/2013

**Location:** Ngauruhoe & Taranaki

**Party Members:**

Thomas Goodman

Kat Collier

Aidan Thorp

Nico Thorburn

Sylvie Admore



After summiting elegant Ngauruhoe that morning, Tom, Kat, Nico, Aidan and Sylvie head west along the Forgotten Highway to the fabled Mt. Taranaki. They reach Dawson Falls car park at seven o'clock at night. The conditions are icy, the way is dark, the travellers are weary, but they make the decision to give it a crack. Well rehearsed in wit and melody, the five begin to sing as they journey up the glistening ridge:

*Some peaks in life are bad  
Climbing up them can seem mad  
Their icy slopes can make you swear and curse.  
But when you're skirting 'Naki's gristle  
Don't grumble, give a whistle  
And that'll help things turn out for the best...*

*And...  
Always look on the bright side of life...  
Always look on the light side of life...*

*Night has fallen on our team  
The slopes before us are agleam  
With the lights of searchers on the hunt.  
We bumped into two upon the ice  
They gave us some advice:  
"Just purse your lips and whistle – that's the thing."*

*Always stick to the right side of the ridge...  
Always keep your headlight in your pack...*

*For when you've made it halfway up  
There's no way you can give up.  
Especially when there's little hope of getting  
down alive  
So we'll forget about the fear and pray the hut  
is near  
We know that it's our last chance anyhow.*

*Always arrest with the right end of your axe...  
Always keep your camera round your neck...*

*Rime's a piece of shit  
When you step on it  
The buff's a laugh and the slope's a joke it's true.  
All we see is snow  
Can find no indication where to go  
Don't want to spend the night spooning the snow...*

*So always sidle to the right side of the bluffs...  
Just before the terrain gets real tough...*

*The weather is quite rugged  
And we are pretty buggered  
The compass bearing seems a little off  
But what's that we see ahead?  
An icy looking shed –  
It's Syme Hut and all our dreams come true!*

*So, always look on the bright side of life...  
Always look on the light side of life...*

By midnight we had peeled off our icy outers and were snuggled in our sleeping bags. The west wind howled outside the hut, emerging as operatic notes from the vent in the roof. Sleep set in as the adrenaline subsided. In 18.5 hours we had climbed 2200 vertical metres, driven 230 kilometres and canvassed conversational topics ranging from the identification of native birds, to the social change effected by smartphones, to the ecological effects of infrastructure and finally to poo (thanks Nico). It had been a very long day.

# Te Urewera Ultimate

SARAH DANIELL

**Date:** 2/7/2013 – 5/7/2013

**Location:** Te Urewera National Park

**Party Members:**

Sarah Daniell

Alice Kenny

Blair Ramsdale

Hayley Ware

Maud Tissink

Carl Barhill

Dan Martyn



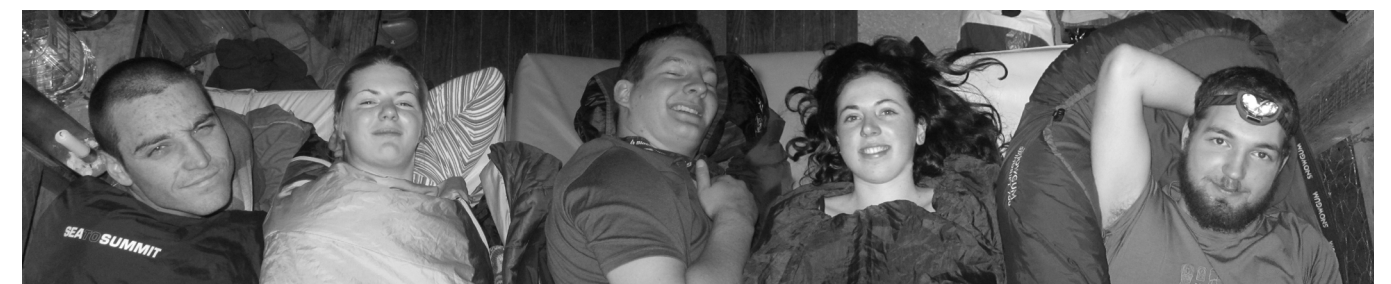
The road out to the track start was gravelly, hilly and dusty. Carl was not reassured by my promises that if his low-lying car got stuck I'd be able to rescue him with the rope of mysterious origins which lived in my boot. Thankfully we never had to test the strength of the boot rope and we successfully located a car at each end of the track, and all seven trampers in one spot.

We began with a gentle stroll along Six Foot Track to our night's accommodation at the slightly rundown Te Pourewa Hut. As we set off we saw a couple of people camped off to the side of the track start; these were the only other people we saw for the next four days.

The following morning we waved goodbye to the wild horses living around the hut and headed off up Otane stream towards Otane Hut. Otane Hut turned out to be a small four-man hut which had been lovingly stocked and cared for by local hunters. When planning this trip I had followed two important theories:

1. You can always fit everyone into a hut
2. Blue lines on the map are basically tracks

At Otane we proved Theory Number One. After dinner, dessert, and several rounds of Blair's card game™ we moved all our packs and gear from the beds to where we had been sitting and leapt into bed in a single coordinated movement. Five people jammed into the three person bunk down the bottom while the remaining two topped and tailed in the single up the top. No one was cold that night...



The next day we set off to continue to prove the validity of Theory Number Two. Up Tawawharara Stream, over a small but grunty saddle and down Te Wehiwehi to Otapukawa Hut. I had called DoC before the trip and been told "our rangers go through there all the time – those streams are quite passable". Indeed we did pass along the streams. However, I'm not exactly sure about the definition of 'quite' passable. Te Wehiwehi turned out to be an epic journey including waist deep wading through steep gorges, climbing, scrambling, sliding down five metre, semi-vertical banks back to the stream (we found the rope afterwards), all with full packs. It was awesome!

For our last day we mixed it up a bit by climbing out of the stream and heading up onto the Otamatuna Ridge Track. The grunt up to the ridge was well worth it in return for the feeling of flying along the flat track at breakneck speed (compared to the last two days of picking along streams). After a very steep drop back down from the ridge we headed out along Ngutuoha Stream for a last bit of 'blue line track' back to the road.



# Beginners' Snow School #1

Laura Goudie

**Date:** 5/7/2013 – 8/7/2013

**Location:** Mt. Ruapehu

**Participants:**

Jarra, Arthur, Izzie,  
Karyn, Rachael, Lilly,  
Jaimee, Laura

**Instructors:**

Andi  
Eleanor



## Day 1 (Friday)

On Friday evening we gathered in the quad, bustling with excitement. Very soon we'd be setting foot upon that glorious mountain, Ruapehu. People were chattering about the weather forecast, which appeared to be rather grim for our time away. My excitement swiftly turned to nervous anticipation. I had never been on the mountain in bad weather before; what should I expect? We split ourselves into car-pooling groups and headed down towards

Mangahua campsite near the base of the mountain. Full appreciation for our drivers, Andi, Jarra, Izzie and Karyn, who transported us all there safe and sound after hours of driving in the dark (passing many trucks that in the night gave us the impression of Transformers, lit up like terrifying Christmas trees). Stepping out of the car, we immediately became aware of the chill. I shivered as I thought about how much cooler it would be on the snowy slopes of Ruapehu.

## Day 2 (Saturday)

Hearing the alarm go off while it was still dark seemed so wrong. Nevertheless, it had to be done. We all got up, packed up camp, quickly ate our breakfast and zipped up the mountain. Thankfully the mountain road wasn't at all icy so we got up quickly without even needing chains. All faces were alight with excitement as we jumped out of the cars. What a breathtaking view! We wondered where that bad weather was; the auspicious towering mountain was mostly in full view, the sky was a deep blue and the sun warmed the chill early morning air.

Some of our group hadn't ever seen snow before so this was quite the special occasion. We had a two and a half hour hike up the slopes ahead of us to the NZAC hut, so we gathered in the visitors' shelter to equally distribute gear and group food amongst ourselves. Whilst gear gathering, we each chose a pair of crampons and adjusted them to our individual foot size... a frustrating task when one (such as myself) hadn't quite woken up yet.

On the way to the hut we were taught by our instructors, Andi and Eleanor, about the correct way to use an ice axe, as well as the range of techniques we could use for walking up slopes. This varied from kicking in steps with our boots, to the North Wall, an ice axe technique that I took quite



a liking to: secure your pick into the slope with one hand, punch the snow with your other hand, move your feet up one at a time, and repeat. Looking down below me to see how far I had come up that steep slope, I was surprised to find myself calm and enjoying the challenge. As we continued to ascend, we enjoyed the pristine views of Ruapehu, Tongariro and Mt. Ngauruhoe. Moments later a great grey cloud wrapped itself around the view and us. Sleet streaked into our faces for the remaining two hours of our walk. Little did we know, this poor weather would be with us for the rest of our Snow School.

I had heard rumours from friends about a drying room filled with heaters at this hut. It sounded rather fancy for a hut to have electricity, but I certainly wasn't complaining. Little did I know, that was only the beginning. Electric lights! Heaters! A flushing toilet! A toaster! A microwave! Oh wow, this was just overwhelmingly good! Many of us regretted not bringing better food, after becoming aware of the decent range of cooking facilities. I looked down at my lunch of crumbling pita pockets and warm salami that I was struggling to find the stomach for, and agreed.

Soon we were back out into the cold. It was self-arresting time. Behind the hut we were instructed to bum slide down an icy slope and bring ourselves to a grinding halt with our ice axes. This was achieved by rapidly turning ourselves around to face the slope and drive the pick into the ice, bringing our full weight down onto the bit with our shoulders (without nicking ourselves with crampons, which we pretended we were wearing at the time). Being rather uncoordinated, I struggled to get the technique right even after multiple attempts.

However, the difficulty only increased. It was time to self-arrest during backwards bum sliding. This progressed to sliding on our stomachs, head first, followed by sliding on our backs, head first. The last one was particularly frightening when Andi and Eleanor proceeded to give each of us a little push for momentum at the top of the slope. Breaking out of the routine, we were asked to sit backwards on the slope, each person sitting directly behind another, hands on shoulders. We pushed off the ridge and powered down the slope at full speed. Soon we came to a slow stop at the bottom of the valley. No self-arresting required. That was certainly a great way to end the session! Loved it. Unfortunately for some shivering cold individuals, there was another lesson learnt during this session – certain items of clothing being worn were in fact water-resistant, not waterproof. With this in mind, we went back to the hut to defrost hands and put on warm, dry clothes in preparation for our next session.

Soon enough we were back outside and learning how to use crampons near the same icy slopes we were just on. After a brief rundown and demonstration on the correct way to use them, we practised walking up and down the slope multiple times. It was a strange yet fantastic feeling to put your foot on an icy incline and not slip an inch. As we made our way back up the hill towards the hut, my mind began to drift to thoughts of hot tea and warm socks. Riiip! In my absent-mindedness, I had kicked the side of my leg with an undoubtedly sharp crampon prong. Thankfully it was only my waterproofs that ripped, and not the skin beneath! I would be paying far closer attention to my stride next time. Following an action-packed day we enjoyed a classic tramping meal of burritos in the evening, and gathered around to discuss avalanches and route planning with Andi and Eleanor.

## Day 3 (Sunday)

This morning we eagerly busied ourselves in preparation for a summit ascent. The weather wasn't looking too great, but we'd at least attempt it. Shortly we were on our way, back down the slopes we had slid down the day before, across and over the valley. Despite this slope being familiar territory, nerves set in. As I began to descend, I became all too aware of this large pack on my back and shifted centre of gravity. Doubt crept into my mind about



the ability of my crampons to keep me upright. Everyone else with a pack seemed fine, but frustratingly I couldn't shake the idea that I was probably going to fall. Panic slowed me down, tensing my leg muscles far more than necessary. I don't recommend exhausting your muscles like that at the start of a tramp, unless you enjoy the thrill of lagging behind the group in the midst of a whiteout. I was so thankful for those who offered to carry my pack after that!

On our way up the mountain we were shown how to interpret the snowpack formation by digging a small hole and analysing the different layers. From this you could tell whether the snow was susceptible to avalanches or not. Scary thought.

At one stage during our ascent the whiteness parted slightly and we had a stunning view of the summit with blue skies up above us. Too bad it only lasted about a minute.



As we continued our ascent the wind grew stronger and stronger. It stung our bare faces with the icy particles it carried. Eventually up at the Knoll Ridge (painfully close to the summit) it was decided that we would head back down the mountain. I was relieved to go back down at this stage, as I had been securing my ice axe into the ground to stop the wind from toppling me over. All edges of my clothing (as well as my fringe, eyebrows and eyelashes) were coated in a layer of ice, and I could no longer feel my hands, or move them properly. They were basically two useless icy blocks! Pretty certain most of us were in the same boat.

Upon returning to our toasty warm hut we defrosted ourselves over hot drinks and lunch. We were then given instruction on search and rescue in the hypothetical unfortunate event of an avalanche. Having split into teams of four, one would be assigned as group leader and then the rest would have tasks divvied up between them: 1. probe prober; 2. shovel shoveller; 3. and transceiver transceiverer. A transceiver was hidden from view and, using another transceiver, we would attempt to find its approximate location. The probe prober would then insert the probe into the snow to narrow down the location and give an idea of how far down the buried person was. Shovel shoveller would then remove snow to help free the person (in this case a buried shovel with a transceiver). Later we gathered around the table again for a talk from our instructors on alpine weather and gear, both of which were highly significant for us given our trip up the mountain that morning!

Advanced Snow School students arrived and soon enough there was wide involvement across both groups in various competitive activities such as table traversing, the broom game and jumping pull-ups on triple storey bunks. I was rather impressed with the display of strength and flexibility! Dessert arrived: chocolate mousse and jelly-filled oranges, both with an appropriate garnish of light, fluffy snowfall. Excitement continued as there was discussion throughout the evening about potentially sleeping out in an igloo that was situated just behind the hut. Apparently it was constructed by another group that had

been staying in the NZAC hut. Late at night, Jarra, Rachael and Karyn decided to brave the outside and sleep in this igloo. I heard it wasn't all that bad!

#### DAY 4 (MONDAY)

I had been particularly looking forward to today. Ice climbing and snow cave building. We split into two groups and started on the two activities at once to make sure we had enough time to complete them (and descend the mountain). Eagerly, I snatched up a harness and made my way to our climbing target. Even if you had done rock climbing in the past, this was quite a different experience. I looked up at the cliff we were to ascend and estimated it to be roughly four to five metres in height. A mixture of snow, ice and rock protruded from its length. Instead of grasping rock with your hands, the ice axes did the work. Finding a good spot to secure the ice axes into was the tricky part though; a lot of the ice simply flaked away with each hack! When you did find a good spot, however, you could lift your feet up and dig the two front prongs of your crampons into the ice and push up to advance vertically. As we ascended the wind roared around us, hammering our forms with its icy contents. I loved the challenge and thrill of this activity, as did many others.

Following the climb, I joined the group busying themselves with the construction of a snow cave. There was one person right in front, digging away at the snow underneath the beginnings of a ceiling. The constant flurry of snow they created was removed by two others behind them. As the person in front tired, the next in line would take their place. We rotated positions every few minutes, although some were quite persistent and dug away for what seemed like a lot longer! Such endurance! It surprised me just how exhausting digging out snow was.

Afterwards we packed up and strolled back down the mountain to the visitors' shelter... after a necessary indulgence in bum sliding and snow throwing of course!

This most definitely was a trip to remember.





# Extreme Snap + Chocolate + Wine = Extreme Fun and Silliness

ANNIE CAO

**Date:** 6/7/2013 – 7/7/2013

**Location:** Pinnacles

**Route:** Billygoat Track

**Party Members:**

Annie Cao

Katie Herbert

Andreas Rohser

Michael Leon

Marion Gavoille

Anna Luo

Amelia Fagence

Charlotte Arrowsmith

Stephen Allely



Add **X**tra rules to an ordinary game of snap. For example, a rule could be: shout out your favourite dessert as you slap your hand on the cards.

**T**he last person to do so will pick up the cards.

On this occasion, everyone started with a bunch of different desserts which soon dissolved

into a simultaneous chorus of “CAKE!” because it was the easiest to say. “CAKE” was always followed by a slightly delayed “PUDDING” or “TRIFLE” from Andreas or Katie, who remained loyal to their favourite desserts.

**M**aybe we were extra silly from the mushroom overload in the risotto for dinner. Four kilograms for 9 people? Hmm...

It was **dE**lish! Recipe courtesy of Katie.

I **a**lso remember Andreas’ super-dense homemade bread, which was shared around at lunchtimes.

Of course we also walked to the top of the Pinnacles, where Andreas set up his tripod

and to everyone’s relief, it didn’t get blown **A**way.

The trip ended in traditional style, with ice cream in **P**okeno. A big shout-out to co-trip

leader Katie Herbert, the **QUEEN** of all Social Officers. Her energy, enthusiasm and effervescence made my last weekend in New Zealand before a big OE memorable.

# Expedition Kawekas

LAURA GOUDIE

**Date:** 8/7/2013 – 12/7/2013

**Location:** Kaweka Ranges

**Party Members:**

Tom Goodman

Liane Battcher

Andrew Luey

Leighton Watson

Sarah Daniell

Laura Goudie



**PRELUDE (THE EVENING BEFORE IT ALL BEGAN)**

I was excited to begin my first alpine trip since Beginners’ Snow School. Although, having just completed Snow School that very day, I was already shattered and in desperate need of a shower (sorry team). It felt odd to think that in only a few hours I’d be starting a multi-day tramp. After meeting up for dinner in Taupo, we made our way to the Mangatutu campsite at the base of the Kaweka ranges. Thankfully natural

hot pools were in the near vicinity. What a luxury in such an isolated area! We relished the warm water; for the next few days would be very cold indeed.

**DAY 1**

Following a leisurely pack-up the next morning, Leighton and Liane drove us up to our starting point, Makahu Saddle car park. Having arrived in complete darkness the night before, it seemed like a completely different world had opened up in the beaming sun. Precipitous cliffs adjacent to the dirt road fell away into forest far below. Looking ahead, we caught glimpses of the mighty ridgeline we’d soon be setting foot on. It looked glorious in this perfect weather. I was stoked.

On the way over Tom had noticed that some sheep in a paddock were coloured with dye on their rear. Tom suggested that this might be so the farmers could tell whether the sheep had mated. Liane asked him, “So why does that sheep over there have blue on its face?”

We ascended Trial Spur, but not without difficulty. Sections of it were not only steep, but covered in countless small flakes of schist. Not the most stable ground. It reminded me of Mt. Ngauruhoe in the sense that for every step forward, you would take two steps back. Feeling like I was one incorrect foot placement away from falling and rolling to the bottom, I went to all fours and clambered up the slopes. “You can call me Gollum.” I told the others.

We rested our quads over a brief lunch at Dominine Bivouac and admired the scenery. Of all the loos I’ve seen tramping, this one took the prize for having the best view.

We then continued up Makahu Spur and onwards to Kaweka J at an elevation of 1724m. “There’s barely any snow here, just a bit of frost,” Andrew observed. “I was kinda hoping for deep snow.” Little did he know, his wish would soon be granted. And whoever granted his wish was probably in





stitches, laughing. We carried on towards Mad Dog Hill and descended into the valley where our accommodation for the night, Studholme Hut, was located.

Now this was quite a small hut and we were two beds short. All of us were decidedly chilly, so we did the only sensible thing; laid down the mattresses in front of the fire and snuggled up in a row to keep warm. Contented, I soon drifted off to a peaceful slumber.

THWUMP.

"Ow!" I muttered. Andrew had sleep-punched me in the back. After shuffling off to the side I sincerely hoped that was a one-off incident and went back to sleep. Following an enquiry the next morning it turned out he was having a nightmare about assassins. Goodness!

## DAY 2

Liane, the early riser, opened the door to the outside world while the rest of us looked on from the comfort of our sleeping bags. The landscape had changed overnight. Snow lazily fell from the sky onto a now completely white ground. Surrounding trees held inches of snow in their branches. I caught my breath. This was just so beautiful.

As we ascended through the snowy beech forest back towards the ridge line, Andrew commented wistfully, "I feel like Snow White walking through this forest..." It did indeed feel like we were in the midst of a fairytale landscape.



We retraced our steps back along past Mad Dog Hill, Kaweka J, and continued along the ridgeline past North Kaweka and Whetu. Unfortunately the weather had rapidly deteriorated and we walked on through a blizzard. Every so often we'd come across signs which gave directions to particular routes with the expected number of hours it should take to complete. Time and time again we'd end up at our destination points a good 30 minutes to an hour behind time. We were keeping good pace though, and couldn't think of how we could so consistently arrive late. Thus, we concluded that the people who came up with these times were hunters who wore stubbies during winter, sported impressive beards, and jogged the entire distance with a deer slung across their backs. I think it was quite appropriate that these times, in our eyes, became 'Real Man Time'.

Speaking of which, Leighton commented that his beard was doing nothing to keep his face warm. What a disappointment. But he did have his balaclava, which was acclaimed to be 'The Purchase of the Year'. My buff failed to stay in position across my face as it had now frozen solid, exposing my shameful nose-icles. Yes, a balaclava would be very nice indeed. We descended (via bum-sliding) back into the valley after continuing along the ridgeline westwards of Whetu. Upon arrival at Ballard Hut we patched up our now hole-ridden waterproofs. As the night progressed, the snow outside the hut increased further and further, making going outside to the loo (in jandals, of course) a rather dreaded task.

Sarah had to have the snow swept off her with a broom at one stage.

## DAY 3

A sense of foreboding loomed over us as much digging was required to retrieve our ice axes and crampons from underneath the hut. There was way, way, way too much snow. And all in one night?! This made the ascent of that hill back to the ridgeline a very strenuous task indeed. We were waist-deep in snow. We had to dig and hack away at the snow to make steps to climb up. It became necessary to rotate the leader every so often, as this was an exhausting task. Two hours for ~200 metres. This was particularly frustrating considering it had only taken us twenty minutes to descend this same hill the day before.



We spent a good portion of the day back on the undulating ridgeline getting blasted incessantly by a blizzard. As we clambered over another hill towards Camp Spur, a glorious sight appeared before us: the beech forest. There we would be sheltered from the unrelenting freezing wind which stung our faces and made our hands numb with cold. As we advanced, to our dismay our legs found themselves encased in snow yet again. The forest now taunted us with its promise of shelter. So close, yet so far. It was agonising to have the forest in view while we struggled with each step, tripping up, falling over and getting stuck every few seconds.

Liane voiced her concern about the animals inhabiting the Kawekas. "Are the birds even happy?" We were all feeling very damp and cold by this stage, yet this was only our third day here. Imagine living in this place, outside. "Food break anyone?" Leighton asked. We gathered around as he brought out a large block of Whittaker's caramello. Just moments after consuming a few squares I felt my energy levels lift substantially. I hadn't quite realised how drained I was from not having eaten anything at lunchtime three hours ago. It had been far too miserable and cold to stop for even a few minutes out in that blizzard.

When we arrived at Middle Hill Hut, we made a snowman. A necessary obligation if one is



to be surrounded by snow. As we gobbled up our yummy dinner of tuna pasta, we breathed in deeply the smell of our burning, steaming socks above the fireplace.

## DAY 4

In the morning my alarm tune blared the haunting song 'The Misty Mountains



Cold' sung by dwarves in 'The Hobbit'. I imagined it would provide appropriate inspiration for what I thought was our last day. Walking was spent mainly in the shelter of the forest, which was very peaceful and pleasant, in contrast to the blizzards over the past two days. We sheltered for lunch in the Kaweka Flat Bivouac. Throughout the day we took any opportunity to slide down snowy paths, adding to the growing number of holes in our now not-so-waterproof-waterproofs. Eventually we arrived at the car park. I was slightly ahead of Tom and had a good view of the cars. My heart sank. "Laura, how much snow is there?" he asked. With a grimace, I replied, "Too much snow..." There was no way we were getting the cars out today. The car park was a foot and a half deep in snow, which also covered the tops of the cars. These were front wheel drive station wagons, not 4x4s. Goodness, we didn't even have chains for the tyres. I helped remove snow from around the cars while Sarah made phone calls to arrange a car-rescue. Hours passed. Leighton began to sing loudly as he worked to remove the bulk of snow engulfing his car. "Uh-oh." Andrew commented, "We all know the situation is bad when Leighton starts singing." I felt helpless and my actions futile after observing our progress and weighing that up against the sheer length of snowy road we hadn't even touched yet. My hands were numb and my feet were on fire from the sheer cold. Later, Sarah brought us good news; the police had heeded our call. SAR would team up with locals (who would bring their beastly tractors) to pull the cars and ourselves out of the Kaweka snow trap at midday the following day.

To our relief, Mahuku Hut was only a few hundred metres from the car park. We spent the night there and made calls to family and friends. We began fantasising about the junk food we'd indulge in when back in Auckland. I was set on having a hot pie and chips.

## Day 5

Someone rustled their sleeping bag noisily in the morning, waking me up. It was Leighton. "A bit too hot there, Leighton?" asked Andrew. "I'm always hot!" he smugly replied. Everyone packed up laughing. Clearly I wasn't the only one who had been woken up by this.

It finally came time to wait by the cars for rescue. One hour passed, then two. Where were they? We were all getting pretty cold, so Liane taught us a series of games that kept us warm and entertained. Eventually we all piled into Liane's car as, with the time ticking on, not even these games could keep us from feeling the cold. By this stage I had lost feeling in both my feet, which was pretty fantastic.

"Is that the tractor?" Relief flooded over me. Yes, that rumbling sound in the distance was the unmistakable noise of a tractor. We were greeted with the unfortunate news that they couldn't take the cars back as the snow had already started to ice over. It had taken them much longer to arrive as the snow situation was much worse than expected. We hopped onto the two tractors (myself in one, and the rest of the team in the other, sitting on a glamorously unsheltered trough covered in hay) and were transported slowly but surely to the end of the road where policemen were waiting to pick us up. Thankfully they were very generous in driving us all the way to Napier and dropping us off at a backpackers. We found ourselves at an Irish pub that evening. My spirits lifted as I laid my eyes upon what was nothing other than fate itself...hot pie was written on the menu.

Reflecting back on that trip, it was definitely my favourite from this year. Despite the poor weather, the cars getting stuck, and the loss of feeling in my two big toes for the next three months, it was a wonderful and worthwhile experience tramping through those rugged Kawekas. I was blown away by the stunningly unique view from atop Kaweka J, and felt captured by the stillness and beauty of those snowy beech forests. It was like stepping into a whole new world. But above all, I couldn't have wished for a better team. There was so much laughter, enthusiasm, positivity and perseverance through it all.

[See page 35 for the newspaper article.... Ed]

# Ted and the Tooth

## Ice climbing on Taranaki

ALASTAIR McDOWELL

**Date:** 17/7/2013 - 20/7/2013

**Location:** Mt Taranaki

**Party Members:**

Alastair McDowell

Harriet Peel

Andrew Thompson



At 3am we found Syme Hut frozen solid, good for climbing, not so much for sleeping. Needless to say, we were a little confused about our night's accommodation.

The night was warm when we arrived at Dawson Falls at midnight, so we made the three-hour climb to Fanthams Peak in the small hours, enjoying a breezy, moonlit night on the icy mountain. Between resting our calves from the

unwelcome strain of front pointing, we squinted to the sky trying to make out the mighty silhouette of the 'Naki.

Ice-blasted marker poles were half buried by snow, but still allowed for easy navigation up the face and across the undulations of Fanthams Peak. Our head-lamps switched to spotlight mode to pick up our awaited hut - all we saw was a faint blob of ice in the distance. A twenty minute ice hacking frenzy eventually gave us headway into the top half of the door, and squeeze into the ice-box hut.



After a few hours kip, cut short by the incredible early glow, we ascended the South Face to find ourselves in a new world. We cut new steps through a freshly storm-brewed summit crater. Like a vector field, sastrugi and magnificent ice feathers told the story of the winds that had sculpted this arena. We traversed the crater rim, climbing and descending a few icy steps in our way. I enjoyed the swing of my Simond Naja technical tools, and looked forward to something steep and sustained to sink them into.

Guide book in hand with lunch, I eyed up the left-hand groove of the most aesthetic Shark's Tooth. Andy stationed on belay, I began the lead. Finally up close and personal with the Tooth, I became accustomed to the infamous hollow Egmont ice. It was insecure at best, layers upon layers of aerated, wind blasted storm ice. I clipped into a screw early on but became less trusting of the ice strength as I climbed. Wired nuts secured me to the face as I climbed precariously to the summit ridge, an airy forty metre pitch.





I brought Harriet and Andy up belayed to two snow stakes, enjoying watching from above as they tackled the face. From our belay we soloed the last few metres to the top of Shark's Tooth, taking in sensational views all around on a perfect bluebird day.

With an early night at Syme Hut, we rested up for the trip's main objective – Ted's Alley. Owen had told us excitedly about a really steep section he had seen near the top of the Alley, a narrowing icy couloir running below the famous East Ridge route. We collapsed into the bunks at 7pm, the midnight mission finally catching up on us.

Next day from Syme, we tackled an hour's icy sidle to the bottom of Ted's Alley. We felt we were slightly cheating the route, starting more than halfway up the mountain, but the climbing below appeared a straightforward walk up from Manganui Skifield, somewhat easing our guilt.



As I glanced upwards, the ice step was immediately obvious. A tingle of nerves and excitement ran through my veins. Andy climbed steadily up to the base of the ice cliff, slinging a large ice horn backed up with a screw as our belay anchor. I followed close behind, mentally preparing myself for the job ahead.

I knew I had to lead the pitch. Though intimidating, I felt a sense of self-imposed pressure to take on the challenge. Andy seemed relaxed and more than happy to be brought up on the blunt end. I racked up with five ice screws, two snow stakes and a selection of nuts. We exchanged few words as I set off up the cliff. The first move was the crux – fortunately I found surprisingly solid, thick ice to sink my tools into as I pulled my crampons over the lip of the rock cliff.

Relieved after the first strenuous move, I put in a screw; it twisted in deep and solid. The nerves had worn off now and I was loving every swing of the axe. I continued up the 65-70 degree icy slope, keeping close to the rock in case any rock protection showed up. The pitch gradually relented in steepness, and I had soon run out the 60 metres of rope. I put in two stakes for an anchor and pulled the rope up fast and tight to signal to Andy, out of sight, that he was safely on belay. After twenty minutes he appeared over the crest, stoked and clearly revelling in the exposure.

Clouds swirled below, just revealing a solid crowd enjoying the snow at Manganui Skifield. We packed up the rope and pros, and soloed easily a few hundred metres to the summit crater. Glorious. To complete our route, Andy led up 10 Second Gully on the south side of Shark's Tooth to secure the double summit.



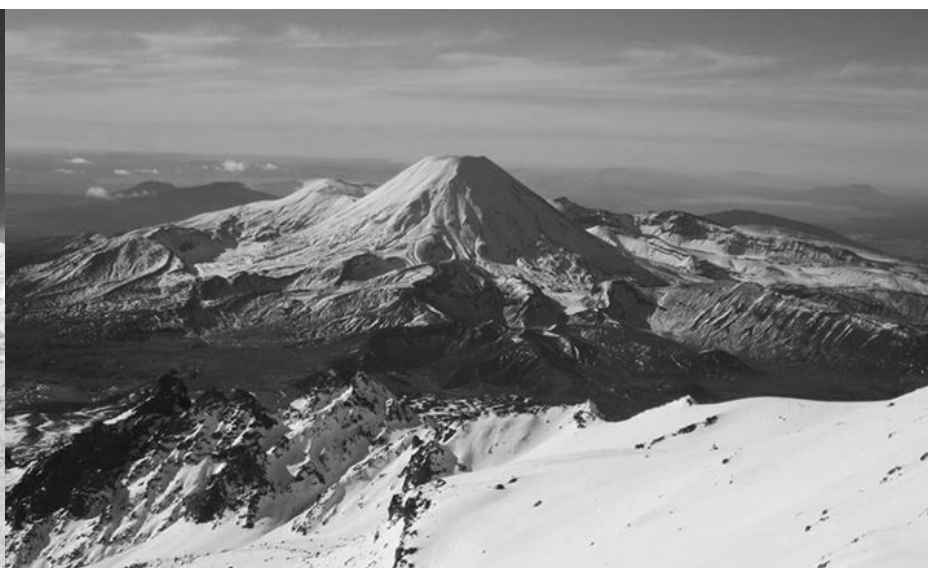
A few hours later we had descended to Syme again, enjoying the last rays from our royal perch on the mountain. We would be back again to climb the East Ridge; in the meantime we were wholly satisfied with our adventure up Ted's Alley and several sharp lines on the Tooth. An amazing three days on the North Island's most aesthetic peak, Mt Taranaki.







# Three Peaks and Two Days Tongariro, Ngauruhoe & Ruapehu



*'When you've found the pack, the tramper's body is usually not far away'*

- RAY



## MOMENTS:

*'Topping out for the two summits was outstanding. Second favourite was watching you all talk up the delicious leftovers meal consisting of cheese and the rejected spaghetti. Mmmmmmm. Third favourite was the moonlight walk to the hut at 12am in order to get up at 6am. Gotta love the alpine!'*

- WARRICK



**Date:** 26/7/2013 - 28/7/2013

**Location:** Tongariro National Park

**Party Members:**

Tuan Chien

Manfred Sauter

Dylan Steeples

Ray Li

Warrick Isaachsen

Mark Smith

Roman Savko



*'Milky Way as'*

- MANFRED



*'I feel like a pornographer.'*

- DYLAN (TAKING HALF NAKED PICS OF RAY)



## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

*'Summit wine might not be a good idea'*

- RAY

*'Perfect weather + mountains + good snowpack = amazeballs'*

- TUAN





# Karekare/Whatipu Day Tripper

TUAN CHIEN

**Date:** 24/8/2013

**Location:** Karekare-Whatipu

**Party Members:**

Tuan Chien, Adam Bacall, Meghan Jacobs, Mark Smith, Liam Speed, Taylor Scott, Danny Crowther, Julie Mankowski, Sarah Chiste, Nick Zeniou, Anne Ringebeck, Jaime Calvert, Maggie Pan

On a warm and clear winter morning, a half-roused group of trampers make their way to Karekare. A skip and frolic up the ridgeline towards Mt Zion rewarded these keen hikers to some magnificent views of eroded ancient volcanic cliffs, beach and the untamed Tasman sea.

"There are some views over there if you like."  
"Some views', hah! Understatement of the century." The eye candy store was open for

business and many of these first time New Zealand hikers were partaking in the candy grab. We ploughed on. Before we knew it, Pararaha Valley faced us.

"Stream crossing? Oh yeah I forgot about that. Time to get our feet wet."

The water was crisp and refreshing. Although it left the familiar slushy wetness in our boots afterwards, it was worth it. On the other side of the stream the beauty of the valley unveiled itself for all to see with its jagged cliff drops all around, blue skies and native flora.

We lunched at the camp site rotunda and proceeded towards Whatipu. The rain that had dumped its load days before became apparent on this section as the track quickly became a muddy bog and the bog became a stream of water. Once we reach Whatipu, the black sands of the West Coast become our highway back to Karekare. Glorious sea views and rock formations made this a pleasant stroll back to our cars.



# Do You Hear the People Sing?

SARAH DANIELL

**Date:** 13/9/2013 - 15/9/2013

**Location:** Mt. Pirongia

**Party Members:**

Sarah Daniell

Hayley Ware

Matt Lillis

Luke Taylor

Matthew Battley



How do you get a nice two night loop track around Mt. Pirongia? You don't. Instead, you go up it twice. Matt Lillis came along because he needed a weekend off from ultra-mega-insane-desert-marathon training. The others came along because there's nothing like going up the same mountain twice.

We started with a steep climb up past Tirohanga Point, eventually reaching a spot only 500 meters shy of the highest peak on the mountain. But today was not the day for conquering mountains, and we turned away from the top to head down Tahunui track to the Kaniwhaniwha campsite. By the time we reached the bottom we were all keen students of astrophysics. Around the campfire that night Matt L terrified us with stories of the infamous Bell Track. Long and slow, he had been on trips that arrived well after dark.

Spurred on by Matt's stories we set off promptly the next morning, eager to get to the hut before dark. It was almost disappointing when we reached the hut by three in the afternoon. Fancy toilets, a continuous supply of food, and several rounds of cards shortly solved our disappointment.

On the third and final day we finally stood on the highest point of the mountain. The view could most poetically be described as a blank canvas. It was a white-out. However, we made sure to admire the structural integrity of the viewing tower before setting off into the drizzle.

*Look down, look down, don't look em in the eye  
Look down, look down, you're here until you die!*

Les Misérables blasted through the trees as we charged down the hill. The songs skipped sporadically between sections as we struggled to remember the words. A brief dalliance with Disney songs was quickly abandoned and Jean Valjean and Javert returned to the forest. We ran out of Les Mis as we approached the bottom of the hill, counted down by numbered bait lines. Popping out into blazing sunshine next to an outdoor education camp, we settled in for an extended lunch and sunbathing session. As we relaxed, medieval knights in full armour sparred around us. Across the field another unit practiced archery. We never established whose army they served, or what battle they were training for.

A text from Matt L's parents promising a feed at their place finally roused us from the grass. After dashing up the Link Track back to the car we drove towards Hamilton with the radio cranked up, the entire car bellowing along to Les Mis.

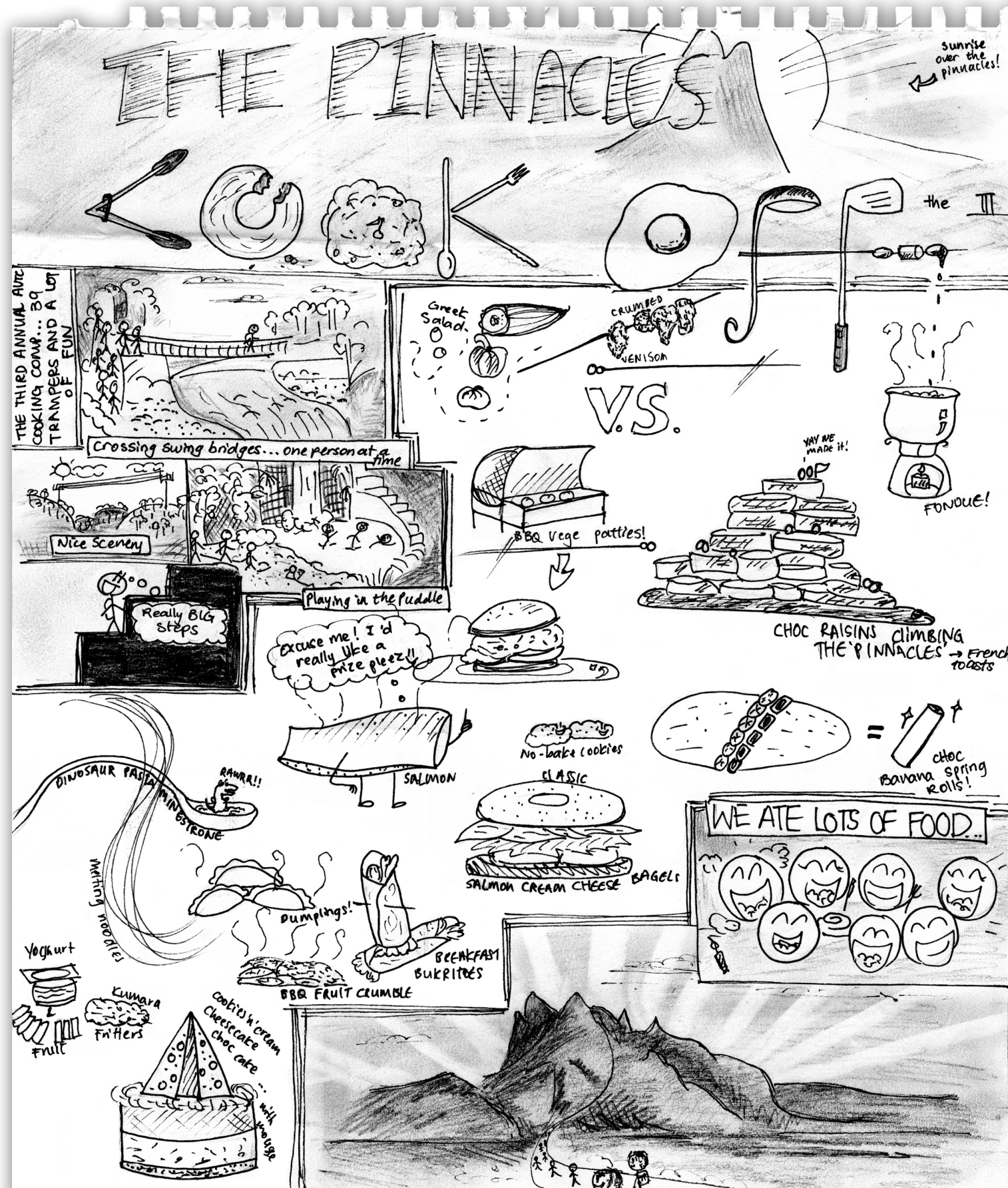
A feast of bacon and eggs from Matt's parents made the detour to Hamilton more than worth it. Not every parent is prepared to feed a car full of smelly strangers who rock up on their doorstep! The Les Mis sing-along lasted all the way back to Auckland, leading to my first voice-loss tramping incident.



# 2013 AUTC Cook-Off

Date: 5/10/2013 - 6/10/2013  
Location: Pinnacles

ANNA LUO



# Dreams Come True on Hauhungatahi

ANTON GULLEY

Date: 26/10/2013  
Location: Hauhungatahi  
Party Members:  
Anton Gulley  
Christina Fullerton



Every year, sitting up in the clouds of the NZAC hut on Ruapehu I stare down at her. She is resting silently but with an inner beauty. I long to step out and walk all over her, but Hauhungatahi is always just too far away.

Then one day it happened, I set forth with Christina (who maybe doesn't quite share my dream of walking all over Hauhungatahi but thought she would come anyway). The route was untracked but suspiciously track-like as though lots of people had been there before. We laughed in her still morning air that was fresh and crisp. We climbed through her forested flanks and over her fallen trees. We waded in her swampy tops and cursed when we lost the track. We frolicked through her grasses and stepped up her summit rocks.

Than it happened...

I stood on Hauhungatahi; it was just as I imagined it would be, unclimactic but satisfying. I stepped back and gazed around at Tongariro National Park, the morning sun was glistening off the snow covered peaks. I looked up at Ruapehu; up past the NZAC hut to the summit and I longed to walk all over her.





# The Great Wanganui River Journey

MELISSA CAMPION & CARL BARNHILL

**Date:** 9/11/2013 – 13/11/2013

**Location:** Wanganui River

**Party Members:**

Carl Barnhill, Melissa Campion  
Gaby Miegerville-Little,  
Kerstin Thiele,  
Sari Ter Huurne,  
Hannah Brightley,  
Siddhartha Mehta,  
Ruifeng Li, Martina Bright, Hayley Pike,  
Daniel Scholes, David André Coucheron,  
Jason Horrocks, Sindre Johnsen,  
Dylan Steeples, Mark Robertson,  
Valentina Lagomarsino, Ella Constable



What better way to spend the second week of midsemester break than do one of the great walks, the Wanganui River? While the trip leader Carl Barnhill originally planned to take only eleven people, nineteen of us showed up on the day of the trip excited to be off canoeing. After a five hour drive, we arrived at Ohinepane where we would start blazing the river the next day. But before we hit the tents, of course we played some ice breakers and began to form friends with those who we would be canoeing with for the next four days.

Waking up early, we had our gear packed in waterproof barrels and were tying our gear in

our canoes at around 9am. In our group, there were nine canoe pairs and one kayaker. The guide from the canoe rental company *Blazing Paddles* gave us a brief canoeing lesson and warned us “there would be a bit of rain,” but we were all prepared for rain and thought little of this.

Yet as we canoed along, some of the newer paddlers were a little unprepared for the swift moving water and three teams capsized before we even had lunch, becoming soaking wet from the cold water. Despite the rain and dampness, we had fun when we stopped for the night after a short stretch of paddling, feasting on burritos and playing yet more tramping games like mafia as we sat around the campsite shelter.

The next day many of us awoke wet from the nighttime rain soaking into our tents. And the rain continued. Albeit not ideal canoeing conditions, the river was beautiful as we paddled down the river and saw multiple waterfalls coming from the cliffs into the grand Wanganui. The river was moving fast and, making good time, we skipped our original lunchtime spot and arrived at the next campground in time for a late lunch, then arrived at our nighttime campsite hours earlier than expected. Luckily for us, all of whom were soaked from the rain, this campsite had a twenty four person hut hidden at the back. We tied our canoes to the post by the river and walked up the bank and down a trail to the hut, where we happily started a fire and began drying our clothes.

The next morning we were



astonished, the river had risen more than the guides had predicted and there were huge trees and other debris floating down the river. The rain had not let up. When Carl went down to the bank in the morning he discovered there was no bank, for the river had risen two metres and many of the canoes were under water. The post that had not even been touching the water the day before was now almost completely submerged. We all ran down to help

pull up the canoes, but two of them were meters from the bank under the fast moving water. With two of our nine canoes submerged, and also having lost some paddles and life vests, we decided to go back to the hut and wait it out until the water went down.

Late in the morning there was the surprise arrival of DoC rangers from down river who had come by jet boat to fix a window. They informed us we would definitely not be able to canoe that day or even the next, even if we had pulled all our canoes out of the river. The river was much too fast and it was rising by the hour. They opened the hut warden's cabin for us so we could wait by the radio for information from *Blazing Paddles* hoping we could get rescued, for none of us were prepared to wait here for two to three days. This was only our first full day in the hut, but by afternoon cabin fever was starting to set in and a few went to explore the surrounding bush as the rest of us tried reading books aloud or various other things to amuse ourselves. Although it was frustrating being cooped up in the hut, we were happy to be dry and we also became closer as a group. While working out the exactness of our cultural diversity we discovered that among the nineteen of us, two were from Norway, one from Sweden, one from Chile, two from China, one from India, three from America, and the rest from New Zealand. As part of the afternoon amusement, we all sang our national anthems, although some sung better than others. Late in the afternoon, after hours of waiting, we finally were able to contact a jetboat company to rescue us the next morning.

After we packed our gear the next morning we snapped smiling pictures of each other as we waited for the jetboat. Two jetboats arrived at around 8am, one for our gear and one for us. We were all excited to travel down the river in the jetboat despite the disappointment of having to be rescued. Indeed, the jetboat driver acted like we were any other group of tourists who had come to the Wanganui for a jetboat tour and gave us three rules of jetboating tours, the last one being ‘have fun.’

It was a blast as we zoomed down the river in the jetboat. Spumes of water sprayed in our faces as the driver swiftly spun the boat around floating debris. We also got to see a hidden inlet that had recently been part of a TV series of New Zealand wilderness called ‘Wild about New Zealand’. Finally, the guide spun the boat in a 360 just as we arrived at the ending of our trip, Pipiriki.





# The Band of Eight

CARMEN CHAN

**Date:** 25/11/2013 – 27/11/2013

**Location:** Tongariro National Park

**Route:** Tongariro Northern Circuit

**Party Members:**

Daniel Scholes

Loreto Soto Valdes

Martin Jaekel

Linda Zhao

Sebastian Kalkoff

Sarsha Gibbons

Rebecca Conn

Carmen Chan



So, I've finally sat down at my desk to write this trip report. My muscles are still slightly aching, my feet are yet to forgive me, and this seat is still feeling too strangely soft to feel right. It's been less than twenty four hours since my return from Tongariro National Park and it's still feeling somewhat surreal to have returned to modern life.

If a time traveller wanted to peruse this tale from the beginning, then they really must start with The Idea. What began as a vague musing on an outdoor first aid course soon became six

weeks of planning, emails, and bookings. What was planning then became a journey three hundred and forty three kilometres down south, a band of eight ready to tackle Mordor, the land of giants and the realm that Peter Jackson immortalised through his rendition of J.R.R Tolkien's Lord of the Rings.

We arrive at the DoC centre at the respectable time of 12:30pm, head still ringing with four hours of James Blunt on repeat. We lounge in the sun before heading to check in with DoC while waiting for the second group who took a detour through Taupo. The weather's set for heavy rain and strong winds. There's a low coming over Northland over the next few days. We reconvene and after discussion decide to continue onwards anyway, with hope that the weather clears up, and a decision to re-evaluate after we reach our first base at Mangatepopo. The track that afternoon was beautiful. With the backdrop of snowy Ruapehu, Mt. Ngauruhoe, and the rolling plains it's almost surreal to believe that such majestic beauty exists within mere hours outside of our central city.

We arrive at the hut after three hours at 4:00pm to meet fellow trampers lounging in front of the hut. We drop our packs, stretch our feet, have casual conversations with the Texan, the Czech, the Dutchman, the Belgian, the Frenchman and other Kiwis before deciding that we haven't hiked for long enough. It's 4:30pm and, following calculations, we decide to attempt a walk up Mt Ngauruhoe. The whole gang agrees and with two day packs between us, raincoats and water bottles, we decide to troop off towards the saddle. Half an hour in, and after talking to various passing groups, we quickly realise that we won't summit the mountain and return before nightfall so we decide to detour up a nearby ridge and watch the sun set over the vast Mangatepopo Valley. Rolling fields extend into the distance. Seb decides to model as Golem by squashing his face on a rock; the rest of us watch shadows branch over Mt. Ngauruhoe as rays reflect off its boulders.

There's something about the mountains. It's when you leave your cosy homestead, strap your house to your back and traverse the wilderness that you realize that all that is really important lies in your pack, with your fellow companions and with the land beneath your feet. There is a beauty to that. Fully satisfied with the detour, we bush-bash our way down the ridge as clouds begin to occlude Ngauruhoe's peak.

The next morning we decide to wait for the weather update before heading forward. The ranger tells us that we're set for rain and 30km/h winds at the Crossing and, with that, we decide to brave the weather and head across the Crossing. I have three things to thank about the fog and rain: 1. Limited visibility means that we are at a mystery as to how far we have to climb before summiting; 2. The rain eliminates the need for a shower; 3. The view from the summit after the climb, and after the fog has cleared up, is absolutely, breathtakingly, stunning.

Following the climb, we slide down the side of the volcano along sandy shale from the Emerald Lakes towards Oturere Valley. During this time, we meet up again with Roel the Dutchman, and pass the Frenchman who is taking a break from his 30kg pack near Red Crater.

The Crossing takes us just under six hours and we bunk at Oturere Hut and play Mafia and Scum for the entire afternoon. Roel joins us for the game, and the Texan tells us that the game is called 'Arsehole'. Sarsha turns out to be a master killer, while Daniel entertains us as story teller with Mary (the Investigator), her incestuous husband (the Doctor) and her sheep (the Villagers). Both Seb and Loreto turn out to be astute investigators, while Roel is quickly killed for being too intelligent. We spend the rest of the afternoon chatting with fellow lodgers and later go and watch the waterfalls and stars during the brief moments of clear weather.

On the next day, the skies are blue as we tramp over to Waihohonu Hut. We arrive at midday, eat lunch and check the weather forecast. The weather's set for torrential rain and 50km/h winds on our final planned day. We decide to gun through and finish the tramp that day while the weather is still clear and following lunch, we head back onto the track. Before leaving Roel hands us pair of jandals that the Belgian had left behind at the previous hut, and tells us that we are more likely to meet him than he is. The Belgian had left earlier in the day. Dubious, we shrug our shoulders, take the jandals and hike through the rolling fields of Waihohonu Valley before reaching Tama Saddle. Following a brief detour to view the Lower Tama Lake, a lounge at the junction and several slices of cheese, we gape with surprise when we meet the Belgian returning from Upper Tama. Somewhat confused, he holds out his hands as Seb ceremoniously hands him back his jandals.

The rest of the trip should have occurred smoothly. Note the past tense. We had planned to finish the track within the final two hours, but during the last hour of the trip, half of us decide to follow Daniel's GPS up a mountainside in search of a shortcut. A few ridges later, and reaching a cliff edge, we decide to turn back and, following an additional half hour of bush-bashing, we find our way back to the track, where we meet the other half of the group. Lessons learnt: 1. Tracks are built for a reason; 2. Don't be stupid enough to go off track and follow the guide of a GPS for unplanned 'exploration'; 3. Tracks are built for a reason.

We finish the trip with a detour through Burgerfuel at Taupo. Hobbling up the stairs in jandals, we round off the journey with coveted kai time. We watch with amazement as Martin polishes off his burger, the condiments and then an additional milkshake before the rest of us are halfway through ours. On the trip back up through Auckland, while listening to Linda, Loreto and Daniel debate the semantics of 'success', I can't help but grin and heave a sigh of relief for the success of the trip. For the first time leading a tramp, it was an epic journey.



# The Southern Alps Ballad

ALASTAIR McDOWELL

The Length of the Alps, inspired we took  
A month to traverse from Arthur's to Cook  
A transalpine journey with heavy loads of gear  
To cross glaciers, climb peaks, breathe sweet  
mountain air

The journey begins at Arthur's Pass  
Waimak gravel makes dull travel fast  
Taipo'iti Gorge blocks last sun rays cast  
On the first night's camp at Ariel Tarns

Cloud pours over the divide at dawn  
As crampons and axes pierce the Whitehorn  
Descent by the Cronin, oh the joy of loose moraine  
Relief to reach Urquharts in the long grassy plains

Boulder hop and river cross  
Snow melt cold and climbing calves hot  
Hokitika Saddle, a steep icy slot  
We plunge into the West Coast, and plunge de-hy in  
the pot

Mungo Hut, so remote, so few  
Have passed through these doors for a rest or a brew  
And just down the stream, sulphur wafts in the wind  
It's raining but we soak in wilderness hot springs

My neck cranes out the Frew Biv door  
The eastern glow sublime and pure  
Cascading stream and forest trails roam  
To take us down to river Whitcombe

Scrambling up river is a trip rich in history  
Whitcombe and Lauper's first crossing victory  
These steep West Coast gorges are woven with  
mystery  
Even kayakers find rapids flowing too swiftly

Landslides wreak havoc with our low energy  
Justin hits the wall and is lost in the scree  
Lunch at Cave Camp sees emotions run high  
But alas, that view of Evans is sealed from our eyes

Cards and fire fill the Neave  
The hut where we wait for rain to leave  
The Bracken, Mt Whitcombe – we dream, we hope  
That weather gods won't cut our rope

Frustrated by weather, a stubborn east'ly blast  
Base camp advances to the Whitcombe Pass  
The winds abate and we seize our chance  
To ascend the Sale to see Bracken at last

Visibility low and spring snow wet  
We reach the col but no Whitcombe view yet  
Objectives shift to Whitty's guide Lauper  
A peak of red rock for our trad rack to slaughter

Nor'wester rising and food running low  
We descend to Rakaia as southerlies bring snow  
But soon the storm passes and rivers receding  
Three days of sun – to the Garden of Eden!

The chopper roars in, Bruce says with a smile  
"Bugger it, here's ya food drop for the trip up the  
Lyll"   
Avalanches thunder as we stagger through moraine  
And plug steps up wet snow, prime avo terrain

A banquet is had at high camp on McCoy  
Cheers twenty-two years for the birthday boy  
We pitched the crux cornice without placing a runner  
Such was our hurry to see the Garden of Allah

The view was a beaut – from Rangi Col we could see  
From D'Archiac to Cook, and Elie DB  
Crunching over the Gardens on perfect icy snow  
Our final challenge rears before us, to climb the  
Great Unknown

Elizabeth Creek sleep-in with Scone Hut so close  
But then we remember, we're now in the West Coast  
Top of Redfield Stream, far below the Perth looms  
Three thousand feet of waterfalls, thick bush and  
loose stone

A highway out the Perth, but with rain the rivers rise  
Hughes rages muddy brown, defeat is in our eyes  
Bush-bash, abseil, straddle the sunken tree  
Thunder roars in anger as we escape to Harihari

While waiting for good weather to permeate  
We fast-pack heavy legs on up to Ice Lake  
As we gain great height our pace becomes slower  
Until at last is revealed the ice queen of Whataroa

Moonlit camp on the névé, clear skies set the freeze  
Smash in a piton, thread the rope, rap the schrund  
with ease  
Crevasse fields, weetbix rock, we've arrived in the  
east  
Our reward lies in Murchison Hut – food fit for a  
feast!

Over into the Tasman, our finish line within sight  
First we climb Hochy Dome to witness the scarlet  
morning light  
On the final day of glacier, still I cannot resist  
Race under the moon to solo Annan and down into  
snow cloud mist

Ten hours later, the damage is done  
The length of the Tasman – we're finished, we've  
won  
A long weary sleep and down the Ball road  
The Southern Alps traverse complete, we're stoked.

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