THE BUSHBASHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAPIER TRAMPING CLUB INC — ISSUE 16, JUNE 2009

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The club meets at 7.30pm every second Thursday at Port Ahuriri School, before the weekend tramp

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Heading towards Bell Rock under threatening skies that came to nothing

The cloud that didn't rain on our parade...

Bell Rock - Taraponui, Wednesday March 18. Map: V19

Trampers: Manfred Hausler, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Thelma Tasman-Smith, Nolene Blair, Peter Youren, John Marshall, Keith Moretta, Vic Bullock, Peter Slagter, Ken Ross, Kelvin Shaw, Robyn Smith and reporter **Alison Greer**

THIS tramp along the Maungahururu Range is popular with the club. Thirteen members drove to Tutira, turned left at the store onto Matahorua Rd, left again onto Pohokura Rd, and passed Boundary Stream, stopping at the car park beneath Bell Rock. It was a sunny morning with no wind, but a lone cloud hung over Taraponui, our objective for the day.

The bush above the car park was alive with birdsong; it was very pleasant to walk through and just listen. They seem to be particularly active at this time of the year.

Arriving at Bell Rock, cool westerly winds made us seek shelter for our morning tea and discuss the next move. We hoped the cloud over Taraponui would lift, but it seemed the forecast rain in the west was moving in. At the time, though, it was fine so we decided to keep to the plan and headed off. Down the gut, up the other side, over the fence, across the hill and down to the road we went, all the time watching the weather.

Nearing the last rise to Taraponui, two vehicles came down out of the cloud and the men told us it was raining at the top and not very pleasant. As it had started to rain - and not fancying eating lunch in the stuff - we changed our mind and went back to Bell Rock via the cliffs to eat.

It was still early in the afternoon when we reached the cars, so the party stopped at Boundary Stream for a short walk before returning to Napier. As so often happens in Hawke's Bay, the threatened rain did not eventuate and on the drive back it was with disappointment we looked back up to Taraponui and saw the dark menacing cloud had lifted and it was now a lovely, sunny late afternoon.

Oh well, that's tramping...

When going downhill seems more like an uphill battle

Upper Makaroro or Barlow's Hut, Saturday and Sunday, March 28 and 29. Maps: U21/22

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Ray Slavin, Murray Goss and reporter **Julia Mackie**

OUR grateful thanks to Ray for enabling us to have dry feet from the start. His wagon was able to ford the Makaroro River and we parked at the bottom of the Yeomans Track. The blackberries were plentiful and we all ate a few.

After heading up the track, we came across an ATV bike that had slid off just before the vehicle obstacle. We imagined that the driver had probably been turning around and ended up down the bank. We were caught up by the day party, also going up the Parks Peak track but turning off to Barlow's Hut, and then out down the river. Ray and Murray decided to turn off and take the track to the Gold Creek junction, and go up river to Barlow's Hut for the night. Paul, Ted and I were aiming for Upper Makaroro Hut. The day was overcast but extremely warm. The day party was led by Colin McNatty and he was closely followed by Murray White and John Russell. Colin and Murray are now the proud users of 'sticks'. Something about old age was mentioned, but we soon began to describe them as the 'stick men'. We also noticed that some others in the day group were also using sticks. The use of sticks was once rare in the club, but opinions are changing.

We climbed the hill, passing and then being passed (while we took a food break) by the day party. We reached the Barlow's Hut turn-off, and said goodbye to the 'stick men'. They waited for the rest of their party to catch up, and we headed further uphill.

This hill seemed to be getting longer and just after noon, we had the last hump in sight but decided to stop for lunch. It was during lunch that we changed our plan and aimed for Barlow's Hut instead of Upper Makaroro. We left our packs on the track and made a quick visit to Parks Peak, because neither Ted nor Paul had seen the new hut. The wind was blowing across the tops above the bush-lined track, and the temperature had been dropping steadily. When we arrived at the hut, a hunter had the Wagoner fire going full blast. He and another mate had arrived from Sentry Box, and were warming themselves up. It was too windy for hunting, they said; maybe tomorrow would be better.

We filled our water bottles and made our way back, passing the turn-off to Upper Makaroro Hut (1h 30m). We picked up our packs and walked back down to the Barlow's Hut junction and then down to the hut. Estimated time 2h 30m, with arrival time near 4pm. We did not mind that much, as it was downhill. But what we all found was that the steep track with a heavy pack is also hard work. The last section before you reach the bottom is especially steep, and you must hang onto the bush when going down, to stop yourself from tipping over.

The Makaroro - fish numbers are declining, due to easier vehicle access

On arrival at the river, the cold water was soothing to very hot feet. We surprised Ray and Murray, and were surprised to find eight other hunters staying at the hut. Ray and Murray had prepared beds for themselves under the tree canopy near the hut. In the event, a party of three hunters arriving back in the late afternoon decided that there were too many in the hut for them, there were no deer to be had, and so they decided to leave. That left a party of five hunters and us five. Murray, Paul and Julia decided to sleep outside, so as not to be disturbed by snoring. After liquid refreshment, story-telling, food and a fire in the 'Little Corker', it was bedtime. The calls of the morepork were just like being at home for me...

The hunters left in the early hours (another reason not to sleep inside), but we had promised ourselves a lie-in; up at 7.30, and ready for the walk out, which we began just before nine. The day was bright and sunny. We stopped to admire all the swimming pools on the way down the river, looking for fish but only seeing one. Their numbers are reducing markedly, probably due to increased access by four-wheel-drive vehicles for some distance up from the ford.

We botanised the moss and lichen on the rocks, using Paul's mini-magnifying apparatus. The bird life in the bush on the track up to the road end was pleasing to hear. A couple of Lacebark (Hoheria Angustifolia) trees' white flowers were easily spotted from the car park when we arrived back after a leisurely walk out.

The ATV - lying dead in a ditch

A drink and a shared bowl of chips at the Chook and Philly ended a surprisingly challenging first day and a second very relaxed one - a good combination.

PS. The ATV had gone... We think that another ATV towed it up back onto the track.

Meanwhile, **Ali Hollington** reports from the day trip:

Trampers: Colin McNatty, John Dobbs, Jude Paton, Colleen Pereau, Melinda Chapman, Rhian Evans, Murray White, John Marshall, Matt Green, John Russell and Ali

AS we approached the Ruahines, the tops were in the cloud and gentle drops of rain fell on the windscreen. We set off across the river shortly before 9am, ate a few blackberries and headed off along the Yeoman track before turning up the Parks Peak track. Lots of stops allowed the weekend group to keep passing us as Ted, Paul and Julia set a good pace with their heavier weekend packs. After about two hours and a morning tea stop, and a wait to regroup (the faster ones met up with three very young hunters going on up towards Parks Peak), we turned left and started the long, steep descent to the river.

Somewhere along the way, we had lunch at 12.15 and everyone admired Murray White's huge hokey pokey Pak 'N Save cookies. John somehow managed to convince Murray to give him a whole one. After lots of slipping and sliding and a few bum landings, we reached the river and meandered down to Barlow's Hut around 2pm, where Murray Goss and Ray Slavin had just arrived and made camp in the bushes. We all admired Murray G's freshly caught trout, about to be skinned and filleted and fried gently in a batter as their pre-dinner snack.

The walk back down the river to the car park took about two hours, the water level being low and a four-wheel-drive track making it relatively easy walking. But some of us ladies dragged the chain a bit for the faster walking men, who sat on logs and waited patiently. We arrived at the car park about 4.45 and were back in Napier by 6.30, just in time for Country Calendar on telly, and to make a huge apple crumble ready for everyone Colin had invited for pudding. But no one turned up, so I'm still eating it!

A damp tramp back into the mists of time

Upper Te Hoe Hut, Wednesday April 1. Map: V18

Trampers: Alison Greer, Ron Morison, Vic Bullock, Penny and Arthur Mead, Paul Exeter, John Marshall, John Mason, Robyn Smith, Peter Slagter, Peter Youren and reporter **Ken Ross**

WE left the van in the Pukahunui car park in the Whirinaki Forest Park to do the in-and-out tramp to the Upper Te Hoe Hut. Light misty rain was falling. It wasn't long before the rain gear was donned. Why didn't I put my leggings on, too? The overgrown track soon had us really soaked. Lesson learnt. Some of the party reached the hut while others returned earlier as they (and the weather) dictated.

The track climbs steadily through distinctive (even foreboding) rain forest. The misty rain added to the effect. Very old (even ancient, to my eye) gnarled moss- and lichen-covered beech trees form a dense canopy. These trees are draped with a range of epiphytes. Large mountain cabbage trees line the track, together with large patches of lush Prince of Wales Feather ferns. This forest is unique and was apparently enough to get David Bellamy excited, with words like "one of the best Mesozoic plant communities remaining on Earth". And we were there.

From the high point (1200m), the track gradually loses height as it winds around before seriously dropping down (or so I'm told) to the hut in the upper reaches of the Te Hoe.

Bird life was largely absent. It was only back near the van that we encountered some. Maybe it was a bit too cold up higher. It certainly was, on our day. The map does say: "snows often in winter".

All were back at the van by shortly after 4pm. The later ones missed out on some of the dual birthday celebrations for the two Johns, though we saved them a few treats. It was a happy way to end a great day.

A great day for a rain forest ramble...

Several triumphs of navigation and timing...

Stanfield Hut - Cattle Creek, Wednesday April 15. Maps: T23 and U23

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Ken Ross, Robyn Smith, Julia Mackie, Ron Morison, Vic Bullock, Peter Youren, Murray Goss, Rosemary Jeffery, Manfred Hausler, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Graham Bell and reporter **Murray White**

ELEVEN travelled by van down State Highway 50 towards Dannevirke. The weather was fine, although we saw some distant cloud hanging around the tops of the Ruahines, which we were confident would burn off.

Ken Ross had been given his navigation briefing for the drive to the road end by the club captain and remarkably had memorised the route perfectly, turning off just past the pub on the northern approaches to Dannevirke. From there, it was up the Umutaoroa Road, before turning into Tamaki West Road to reach the starting point.

The three Havelock North members were already there, standing ready to depart. Three of our more seasoned veterans elected to do their own versions of the trip, with Vic nominating the A-frame as his destination, while Ron Morison and John Marshall decided to travel up the West Tamaki River to Stanfield Hut.

The remainder set off through the gate, down the four-wheel drive track through the bush to the clearing and its picnic shelters, and then down to the river. There was a moment of confusion as we initially started upstream searching for the track to take us up the ridge. A clump of willow in the middle of the stream obscured our view of the track. The party backtracked and began the ascent through the regenerating bush and scrub up to the ridge proper.

Looking across to the ridge to our west, it was clear that the area had been milled over, **>P4**

A look at the new, improved and bigger Mackintosh Hut

Up The Rogue and down Mackintosh Spur, April 10. Map: U20

Trampers: Julia Mackie, Murray Goss, John Marshall, Paul Exeter, Paul Hendy, Denise Payne, Rosemary Jeffery, Gordon Tapp, John Dobbs, Sue Marshall, Alex Thomason, Ted Angove and reporter **Geoff Donkin**

TWO of the group headed off to Mackintosh Hut via the direct route. The rest headed off through the dark forest of Douglas fir trees to the Tutaekuri River. Then up The Rogue with some of us pulling small pinus contorta on the way up. Part way up, the front part of the group disturbed a wasps' nest next to the track. Two trampers at the rear got the insects' revenge.

On top of the ridge, there was still a fair bit of snow, still powdery. Walking along towards The Tits and Kaiarahi, we felt the cold wind coming from the West - a good time to put on windproof parkas.

Onto Kaiarahi, with parts of the track offering some protection from the wind, and down to the start of Mackintosh Spur. There is a lot of large pinus contorta, some of which protrudes right over the track. As we went down, the snow melted and dripped from the trees. We found a good lunch spot in the sun and out of the wind.

Mackintosh Hut has been expanded. It now has eight benched bunks

Relaxing on the new verandah at Mackintosh Hut

with a large verandah, and it's a big improvement on the original. The verandah has hooks for coats and wires under the roof to hang washing, and the windows have little air vents at the top to allow for circulation. There were three hunters in residence.

After lunch, we headed across the plateau and down to the Tutaekuri River. Now that the three-wire bridge has gone, there is no fun in the new solid bridge that's now in place. A steep climb out to the forestry road and back to the Lakes Road car park. We noted about 12 cars parked - presumably owned by hunters - before heading home.

from P3

as larger trees were only now establishing themselves among the scrub. Finally, the four-wheel drive road ended and we came across a DoC vehicle, before continuing through a well-maintained but slippery track.

We had spotted Vic making his way up the West Tamaki River below, but had been unable to attract his attention. By now, the party had split into two distinct groups, with the speedsters pushing ahead while the plodders continued at a more leisurely pace. We dropped down the ridge to the river and, after a few minutes, made our way to Stanfield Hut, having heard shots from on high and then encountering two DoC workers doing track maintenance and sign replacement.

At that point, we had a sit-down, chat and refreshments. Peter Youren, in a cunning ploy, had left his lunch behind and was almost buried in an avalanche of donations from other members. He probably had the most interesting selection of food of anyone. Others saw the advantages, and suggested they might leave their lunches behind next time as well!

From there, it was up-river, where we met John Marshall, who was returning downstream having made good progress. Next it was back into the bush and then there was a significant climb up on to the ridge through relatively open beech forest. The ridge was by no means a doddle; there were a number of saddles where we lost height and then had to climb back up again.

Vic Bullock crosses the Mangatutunui Stream, Ken Ross is clearly delighted to reach Stanfield Hut with Julia Mackie, and dead trees stand starkly on the Ruahine tops, en route to Cattle Creek

By 12.30pm, we had reached the drop-off point to Cattle Creek Hut, which we sighted from the ridge. The hut sits on the true right bank of a stream and the fit and fast had already got there when we stopped on the ridge for lunch. The rest elected not to go down to the hut. After a leisurely lunch and lie-down in the sunshine, we waited until the others rejoined us before back-tracking along the ridge and returning to Stanfield Hut.

At that point, there was a debate about the easiest way back to the car park. Some advocated returning via the ridge, while others elected to return via the river. While the river route made a round trip of it, it was not without some difficulties because of introduced plants and willows, which made travel on the flats a challenge, or blocked progress completely. The river level was exceptionally low, given the dry summer and autumn, and there was a huge amount of shale and rock in the stream bed.

By a remarkable feat of co-ordination, the ridge party and the river party met at the point where the track to the car park left the river. From there, it was the usual change of clothing and off home after another good day out.

The fertiliser bin that leads to some interesting routes

The Fertiliser Bin to Hinerua Hut, Saturday April 25. Map: U22

Trampers: Denise Payne, Rosemary Jeffery, Colleen Pereau, Russell Greer, Alison Greer, Sue Marshall, Matt Green, Julia Mackie, Colin McNatty, Russell Kulsdom (our English visitor) and reporter **Gordon Tapp**

TRAVELLING down highway 50, we noted dark clouds and it appeared we might get the forecast rain. The Transit van handled all three fords on the farm road admirably and got us safely to our parking spot near the airstrip.

As we set off up the hill from the fertiliser bin, the sky had brightened and light-coloured clouds were passing. We appeared to be in for a good day.

Just above the bin, we stopped at a dwelling that has been built in the last three years. The farm owners, Peter and his wife, came out to greet us and even encouraged some to sign their visitors' book. It was nice to be made so welcome to tramp through their farm and to be told about the new roads they have recently bulldozed over the hills. The previous occupant was very negative and discouraged everyone from passing through.

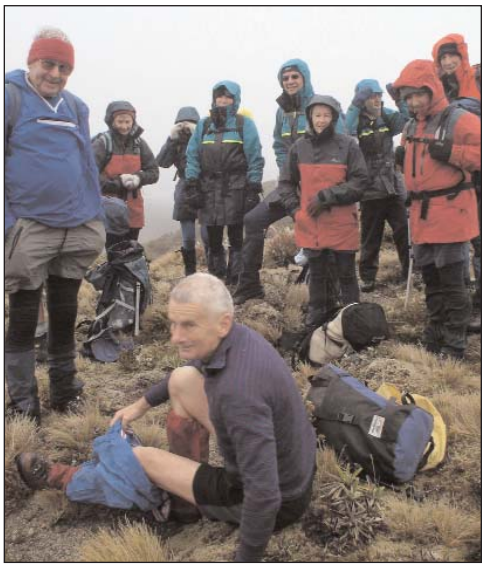
We came to the original walking track branching off into the bush. It was a pleasant climb up to the ridge and along to the Foots Mistake junction, then to Hinerua Hut. We sat on its wooden deck and had morning tea. Some decided to climb up to the tops, but soon returned to say that mist was closing in.

We decided to return via the Foots Mistake track, then beside the Tukituki River, and up a spur. Lunch was enjoyed in the sun on a flat section a little before the high point (908m).

As we got under way again, the darker clouds came over and temperatures dropped. At the lower and flatter open grassed section of the ridge, we searched for the continuation of the track where it ran back into the bush. A yellow plastic tape marker was noticed on a log along towards the South, and this was where we decided to re-enter the bush. Following further yellow tape markers, we made good progress down to the river flats.

On the other side, we spotted the track winding up towards Mill Road. Heading northwest along the river flats, we passed through paddocks until we reached a high bank where a track led down to the lupin-covered river shingle.

Further downstream, we found a track running up a spur and crossed to the adjacent spur, up a track and back to the fertiliser bin, and our van. It was a most enjoyable day, with fine weather throughout.



Clockwise: Gordon Tapp struggles with his over-trousers on the Hogget, watched by an amused crowd; tea break at Hinerua Hut; Rosemary Jeffery on Hogget Top; ice-bound tussock on the Hogget route; and fungi found on the Middle Hill expedition

Autumnal mosaics around the Middle Hill Hut

Makahu car park - Middle Hill Hut - Mangatutunui Stream, Wednesday April 29. Map: U20

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Garry Whincop, Peter Slagter, Murray White, Rosemary Jeffery, Graham Bell, Thelma Tasman-Smith, Vic Bullock, Arthur Mead, Ron Morison, John Mason, John Marshall, Alex Thomason, Ted Angove, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Graham Bell and reporter **Keith Moretta**

AT 0900, we needed an alternative for our planned Kaweka J and Studholme walk, due to heavy drizzle and strong winds. The main party decided to go through to Middle Hill Hut and on to Makahu Road.

Vic, Alex, John, Ron and John drove the vehicles around to Makahu Road. On the way, they stopped to look around one of the last remnant bush stands in the area. They slowly meandered around Balls Clearing, enjoying this beautiful bush that once must have covered most of Hawke's Bay.

Manfred, Jeanne, Graham and Thelma decided to walk to the Iron Whare and returned to the car park.

The remainder of the group began a wonderful day to Middle Hill Hut. Red beech covered most of the way from the Makahu car park to Kaweka Flats Bivouac and, along the way, we crossed the Pinnacle and Boundary streams, and the Makahu River.

The next section from Kaweka Flats to Middle Hill Hut was again through more beech, totara, coprosma, corokia in berry and many other trees, bracken and mosses. The track undulated frequently, with large drops and rises to cross the run-offs in the region.

The rain became a light drizzle, and occasionally clear skies made it a pleasant, warm walk.

After crossing the Koara Stream, the route joined the Ihaka track. To the West of this is Whetu and its surrounding rugged terrain of the Kaweka area. To the East, Middle Hill Hut, where the beech forest quickly changed to kanuka. We reached the hut for a late lunch, and then set off in heavy drizzle towards Pinks Hut and the Mangatutunui Stream.

Part way along from Middle Hill Hut to Pinks Hut, the bush reverted back into beech, and we met up with Vic, who had come in from Makahu Road/Mangatutunui Stream end. We arrived back at the vehicles about 3.30 pm.

It was a day to be remembered for the tracks covered in different coloured mosaics of beech leaves, with many variations of fungi and mosses, set among native bush and the rugged Kaweka Ranges.

A brief tale of longjohns and a short walk

Te Mahanga - Hogget Block, Saturday May 9. Map: U20

Trampers: Rosemary Jeffery, Alison and Russell Greer, Gordon Tapp, Colin McNatty, Ted Angove, Murray Goss, Julia Mackie, Geoff Donkin, Sue Marshall, Denise Payne, John Marshall, Alex Thomason and Murray White

THE van and a car left EIT for Jack Roberts' property, Te Mahanga Station. And oh, the wonder of technology… a red warning lamp on the van's dashboard kept flashing 'cold outside temperature'. No longer do we stick a finger out the window to test the temperature.

Passing over a small bridge, we made our way past an array of implement sheds, outbuildings and an amazing assortment of farm machinery to the paddock, where we parked.

Then it was on with warm gear and off along the farm track down to the Mangataramea Stream. The track is used, with kind permission of the owner, by trampers and hunters alike, to reach the south-western side of the Kaweka Forest Park.

There were large beech trees, many regenerating rimu, fungi and assorted ferns, and a pretty stand of bush with just the odd overgrown section along the way.

Extra gear, longjohns, hats and mitts were donned as we climbed out of the bush for the final ascent through scrub and out onto the tussock tops. The biting southerly wind nipped at any body part that wasn't covered.

Murray G, the only one left with bare legs, finally succumbed and emptied his pack to find his longjohns while we stood round, marking time! Finally on our way again, we followed easy undulations alongside the bush edge, winding round eroded greasy clay pans, past the Hogget and down to the shelter of the bush for an early lunch. It was cool, so we didn't linger.

What we did find surprising was the lack of snow - but there was plenty of ice. The photographers had a field day snapping ice-covered tussocks, beech trees and flowers. Back on track, retracing our way out of the clay pans and onto a spectacular expanse of golden tussock, we could see the base of Mt Ruapehu below a thick bank of cloud, the Manson area, Mt Meany and the distant bluffs of the Taruarau River.

The sun shed an eerie glow but it couldn't compete with the dark-looking front looming from the South as we continued along the tops and down to the bush edge.

We had one last look around as we waited for everyone to catch up, then back down to into the shelter of the bush to meet up with John M who had been doing some track clearance. Back at the cars by 2pm, and with time to spare, Colin suggested he take us on a tiki tour down to the camping sites at Kuripapango. The new site was much larger than we expected and, for the time of year, rather busy; we counted at least 10 tents and room for dozens more.

Left: From Golden Crown to Sentry Box (but in reverse), and, right: Trekking through the snow to Roberts Hut

Fun and sun, in surprising snow

Te Iringa - Roberts Hut, Wednesday May 13. Map: U20

Trampers: Nolene Blair, Kelvin Shaw, Peter Slagter, Ted Angove, Alison Greer, Robyn Smith, Garry Whincop, Murray Goss, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Graham Bell, Manfred Hausler and reporter **Ken Ross**

TO everyone's surprise, the conditions as we got out of the van at the top of the Gentle Annie were near perfect. The weather forecast hadn't been too good. Fourteen set off up the overgrown track, with Ted in front wielding his machete to open it up a bit. The track only just qualifies for the description. At one boot's width, it needs 'eyes down' and doesn't encourage conversation along the way.

We climbed quite steeply to soon open up wide views down to Kuripapongo and out across the region to Hawke Bay and beyond to Mahia Peninsula. The wind was, by then, cold and gusty and we were tramping in fresh snow, in sunshine and with a clear blue sky. We were heading west with the Ngarururo River steeply down to our right, sometimes viewed through rich red tussock and sometimes through light beech forest, where avoiding getting snow down your neck was a priority. The views to the north were fabulous, with the Kawekas deep in snow, reflecting the sun's rays.

We passed the trig on Te Iringa (1324m), then the cairn on Mt Cameron (1326m) and a bit further on a picturesque frozen tarn on the bush edge. Then it was downhill and across some clay pans before we reached Roberts Hut, just inside the bushline. This hut is best described as having character, but not style! It is in a cold, damp site right on the edge of a small stream. A roaring fire and the smell of food cooking might have helped. We didn't stay long but retraced our steps and found a sunny spot out of the wind for lunch. The way home was easier, with the wind on our backs, the route mainly downhill and we could follow our outward footsteps for most of the trip. The track has no markers or signs, so in the day's snowy conditions we had had the odd minor 'off track' experience on the way out.

We arrived back at the vehicles with rosy cheeks - and a hankering for a hot drink.

It all went downhill from here. Gossy heads for the van on the club bike... a trip that was to fall seriously flat

On yer bike, mate!

Golden Crown to Sentry Box, Saturday May 23

Trip leader: Colin McNatty. Trampers: Alison Greer, Murray Goss, Gordon Tapp, Alex Thomasen and reporter **Jude Paton**

SIX hardy souls set out in the teeth of a southerly gale, forecast to deliver 100km-plus winds, lashing rain and who knows what else? We decided early on to reverse the direction of the planned route, to have the southerly at our backs. This also enabled us to stash the bike (a twist on the usual scenario) in a safe spot near Masters Shelter to await our return.

We set off from Sentry Box at 0815. Icy patches soon showed up on the sides of the track. With Colin setting a steady pace, we ascended into the mists and, with a brief stop for smoko along the way, crested the ridge at 10am where we paused for a photo shot.

With an eye to the approaching front, we agreed to continue. Gordon set a cracking pace on Jude's instructions, to warm us all up. We undulated our way along the main ridge, admiring the snowy conditions underfoot and around us. Most of the way, we were in stunted scrubby bush with some protection from the full onslaught of the icy wind. Eventually we found a lunch spot with watery sun that was out of the wind, but minus a view (ah well, two out of three ain't bad!). Twenty minutes was enough to refuel, cool off and want to get moving again.

Another half hour and we reached the signposts for No Mans and Masters Shelter. Gossy drew the short straw and was duly sent down the hill to recover the bike and retrieve the van 7km up the road. The rest made their way leisurely down, knowing there'd be a wait at the bottom. The wind picked up and a couple of the lighter weight members dropped to their knees and hung onto a bush or two on the exposed rocky section. As we got lower down, we warmed up and started to discard hats and gloves. More watery sun greeted us, rather than the rain we expected. A family with two young children had made a fire in the BBQ (no sausages, mind), a welcoming sight, and told us that Gossy had a 20-minute start on us. This was just before 3pm.

After a snack and a natter, we headed on down to the road, where we waited… and waited… and waited, sheltering in a shallow hollow behind a couple of trees, rugged up once more against the freezing cold wind. Eventually the family drove out, stopped to check we were okay and offered to drive up the road to find out what had happened. They arrived back, to report that the bike had a flat tyre and Gossy had had to push it, but he was nearly there.

A few minutes later, the van pulled up, we piled in (no way were we exposing ourselves under those conditions), pumped up the heat and off we went, looking back up at the rapidly receding hills as the southerly closed in, congratulating ourselves on our excellent timing and thinking about future multi-sport days out!

Strange shapes, and a taniwha that sprang out of the bush

Pureora Forest and Waihaha Hut, May 23 -24

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Denise Payne, Sue Marshall, Julia Mackie and reporter **Geoff Donkin**

WE spent the first night in a very cold Taupo. The next morning, we decided not to go all the way from Bog Inn to Waihaha Hut but instead try joining the track at the midway point. Looking at the maps, the old (1983) one showed a metal road south of Tihoi (Pureora Forest Access Road) while the newer map showed a 4WD track.

The old map turned out to be correct and the road was adequate. It contained large puddles with ice on top. Paul dropped us off, drove around to the Waihaha Hut car park and then sneaked in to meet us.

We headed off to the Three Ws track junction in good weather, but there was a cold wind from the south.

The route featured many large trees, including a lot of rimus. A large number of kereru (native wood pigeons) were flying around overhead, probably feeding on the miro berries we saw on the track. There were also plenty of tuis fluttering about.

Further on, a strange and fearsome goblin jumped out from behind a tree and gave everyone a terrible fright. But it was only the sneaky Exeter…

When we arrived at the hut, it began to rain; we'd made it just in time. The hut was warm; the coal fire had been going for some time, as a school group was staying. Fortunately, the Year 10 boys were camping outside, with just six parents staying in the hut. In the end, we all got a bunk - with Ted opting to sleep on the large sheltered porch outside. The school group was from St Paul's in Hamilton and the younger kids do six months of outdoor recreation along with their schoolwork while they are based at Tuhoi. (There was a TV programme about them a while ago.)

For our pre-dinner enjoyment, Paul had brought some chestnuts. We attempted to cook them on the coal fire range top, but they burned too quickly. "Throw them away" cried Paul, pointing at his container. So Ted did - tossing them into the fire, along with Paul's coffee and breakfast supply. What larks and sparks!

The next day, we headed off in dull, overcast conditions with rain threatening but never quite happening. Initially, there were big trees and then young celery pines (two varieties). There were plenty of tuis here, probably feeding on a type of coprosma berry that was plentiful by the track. We passed a dramatic-looking area where the river water has carved out distinctive shapes in the softer rock above a gorge with rocky outcrops, before we reached the car park and made our way home via a coffee break in Taupo.

What Mother Nature does when you're not looking... in the Pureora Forest

The Maungahururus - from end to end, from South to North

Saddle - Maungahururus - Taraponui - Bell Rock - Bellbird Bush, Saturday June 6

Trampers: Murray White, Alison Greer, John Gray, Sandy Ross from Havelock North, Denise Payne, Julia Mackie, Jude Paton, Paul Hendy, Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Gordon Tapp, Colin McNatty, Geoff Donkin, Simon Hill and reporter **John Dobbs**

THE day began mild, but with a possible late southerly change threatening rain. We had a party of 15, including John Gray (recently returned from Thailand), and Sandy, a new tramper to the club.

Arriving at the Taupo Road start-point around 7.45am, John G and President Murray were to drive the hire van and Alison's car around to Pohokura Road. Then they would walk up via Bell Rock and meet the party somewhere around Taraponui.

So off we went along the farm road, with hats and gloves handy for the windy bits. The route climbed to a small quarry, where you bear left over farm tracks. Parts were icy and a few boggy sections were crunchy underfoot. All the while as we gained height, great views over Hawke Bay were emerging.

The contrast of dryish brown grasses, blue skies, the low winter light and clear views out over the bay was impressive, and - naturally - the cameras came out.

Some of the party, particularly Ted and Alison, were confident about the best directions to follow as we cut our way across grassy sections, or wound around hills and through narrow guts. But I lost count of the fence lines we crossed.

Another feature that had us gaping was the amazing rock formations, some quite bizarre and quizzical. The entire area has interesting rock features - and some tomos.

Somewhere around here, Geoff went awol in search of a better route, but after a while reappeared a little way in front of us, returning to the fold. His punishment for straying is to give the talk at the next club meeting!

The views got better and better, including out towards the Kawekas and Kaimanawas, with little snow to be seen. At times, it became quite warm and some were stripping off - until they were hit by the next icy blast.**>P8**

The amazing Bell Rock, and a frozen tarn on the track

from P7

With sublime timing, at noon, we stopped for lunch in the shelter of a pocket of scrubby bush, near the peak of Taraponui which, at 1308m, is the highest point of the range.

There was a dusting of snow towards the top of Taraponui and a cold wind, but great views all round beneath the telecommunications tower. Here we met up with John and Murray and began the walk along the access road.

Then we 'undulated' closer to the escarpment edge and along the fence line. A little further on, we could look down to Galbraith's Hut, set on a grassy plateau below.

There were more evocative formations at the Bell Rock area, with the light making for more good pictures.

Then it was simply a matter of following the old walkway marker posts to a junction sign where we turned right, crossed a stile and descended the track to the vehicles. This pleasant section has some lovely old trees and is quite dense with its understorey and abundant birds, although I only heard two tuis and saw one kereru this time. We were all back at the cars by 3.45pm, or just under eight hours for the entire trip.

It had been a very happy ramble, with great views, good company and pleasant winter conditions. Many enjoyed the regular stop at the Tutira Store for an ice cream or coffee - a civilised way to end a lovely day for everyone. Many thanks to the four property owners for allowing us to traipse across their land.

Happy wanderers around Te Puia

Te Puia Lodge, Wednesday June 10 2009

Trampers: Alison Greer, Murray White, Gary Bowler, Graham Bell, Manfred Hausler and Jeanne Van Den Hout (Makino Ridge route); Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Peter Slagter, Vic Bullock, Kelvin Shaw, Gordon Tapp, John Marshall, Thelma Tasman-Smith and reporter **John Gray**

THE forecast was not good, but 11 trampers in the mini-van met four from Havelock North at the Makino Ridge corner at about 0900, in light rain.

Six set off up Makino Ridge, while the remaining nine headed for The Gums car park, where they departed for Te Puia Lodge, just before 0930. It was a good day for a tramp, with crisp temperatures and light showers. Apart from sighting some good trout in the two large pools on the Mohaka River, the trip was uneventful. We had an early lunch and shared the lodge with three hunters from Palmerston North. Three front-runners arrived from the Makino Ridge arrived while we were eating lunch. We waited a while to see if the other three arrived, but 'no show' so we headed back for the vehicles, about 12.30 pm.

The group set a steady pace. On the return, we sighted more fish (or the same ones) and arrived at the car park shelter just after 3 pm, got changed, kept warm and chatted until about 4pm, when the other three arrived, having gone to Makino Hut for their lunch. We were home by about 5.30, after a good day.

Dancing the night away, with nine tipsy trampers and two fluffy toys

The party, trampers at Black Birch... and two hot chooks strut their stuff...

Mid-winter weekend Solstice Trip to Puketitiri, June 20-21

Trampers: Alison Greer, Julia Mackie, Ted Angove, John Dobbs and reporter **John Gray**. 'Lodge Dwellers': Paul Exeter, Simon Hill, and Sue and Garry Marshall

HOW can I start to tell you all about our winter solstice, mid-Winter Christmas Party, held this year at the Boys Brigade lodge at Puketitiri? At the beginning, I guess. The planning had all been done and we were on our way!

The forecast was only average, but this was an important mission and we departed in two vehicles, more-or-less on time. We were at the lodge before 9 am, moved all our gear in, and bagged a bunk each. We always bring a lot more gear, when driving 'right to the accommodation door', compared to carrying everything in our packs.

Five club members walked from the far end of Lotkow Road, up to Little's Clearing and back. Three stayed behind in the lodge and one arrived late in the afternoon.

Crisp temperatures, rain and light snow showers were forecast and we got them during the walk. We set a brisk pace, which helped to keep us warm. This track is sheltered most of the way, by scrub, secondary bush and pinus contorta, but we got great views of the snowstorms swirling over the Kaweka Range. We were in a better place, for sure!

We stopped briefly at Black Birch Bivvy for a group photo, and arrived at Little's Clearing car park for an early and swift lunch. We tried to find an old track, for an alternative return, but gave up, retracing our steps in the snow for our return journey to the car. We got back about 3.30 pm, for a cuppa and a shower.

At the lodge, Yuletide decorations had been completed, including the usual Winter Solstice Christmas tree, and residents were all formally dressed for dinner - very smart indeed. This year, a proper dinner was planned and the theme was naturally *Dress for Dinner*. We enjoyed snacks, mulled wine, a wonderful meal that included beef stroganoff, BBQ roast chicken, veg and salads, plus desserts, including pavlova, ice cream, rum cake, and winter dried fruit salad. We enjoyed a convivial atmosphere, in a beautifully warm lodge. Then Father Christmas turned up and handed out the presents. And you wouldn't believe that nine adults could be so highly entertained by two toy mechanical chickens doing their dance on the lounge floor - it was hilarious!

The next morning, we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast, cleaned up the lodge, re-packed the vehicles and drove home, after a fun weekend that hadn't included very much in the way of serious tramping...

The club thanks Band Limited, Waghorne Street, Ahuriri, Napier, for helping to publish this newsletter