THE BUSHBASHER

The view towards Kaweka North and Kaweka J, taken from the tops near Whetu in May

MAGAZINE OF THE NAPIER TRAMPING CLUB INC ISSUE 24, JULY 2012

Stepping back in time on a railroad walk

Ruapehu Week, Ohakune Old Coach Road, March 12

Ken Ross reports:

THE weather forecaster got it right. It was raining. So we went down the mountain to some shelter at least.

The Ohakune Old Coach Road (OCR) - no, Ohakune does not have an Official Cash Rate - runs from Ohakune to Horopito along the route of the old coach road. No surprises there.

We didn't do the through trip but settled for an in and out walk as far as the Hapuawhenua rail viaducts, starting from the Ohakune end. There are two. One is a magnificent tall, curved, riveted lattice iron structure no longer in service and the new one is also a magnificent tall, curved structure but of concrete. The old one has been made safe (OSH-proofed) as a historical monument and given Cat 1 status by the Historic Places Trust. It alone is well worth the walk in. The DoC website is also well worth a visit for some views you can't get by walking. If you do walk there, note the lack of vegetation at the time it was built.

Of the walk itself: Great. I particularly liked the gradients, being limited by the available horsepower when the original road was built. There were some views out over the adjacent farmland but on the whole we were walking through lush native bush, mature shrubs and tall trees. You could almost imagine horse-drawn coaches coming towards you along the broad track with overhanging trees. The original rough flagstones are still present, particularly on the steeper bends.

The modern concrete viaduct, with the old iron one in the background

We investigated a disused rail tunnel which - like the viaducts - was curved, thus adding to the experience. Why the curves? It was rugged country in which to build a rail line. The information boards provided along the track were interesting but the one at the viaduct was particularly so. It showed the primitive conditions for the workmen and the hardships they endured while building the original viaduct back in 1907-8.

Unlike the bridge builders, we could retreat to the comfort of dry clothes and then hot coffee at an Ohakune café.

A good work-out, with added history

Shutes Hut, Saturday March 10

Trampers: Julia Mackie, Viv Bramley, Jude Paton, Marc Marchal and reporter John Dobbs

WITH many away to Mt Ruapehu for the week, only five set out for the day tramp to Shutes along the Taihape Road, just past Gentle Annie.

The day started out a bit drizzly but it was mild with no wind. The turn-off road is no longer marked with any signage and with talk of heading to the nearest coffee shop in Taihape instead, the road was passed until a couple of kilometres on, farmland appeared, meaning a U-turn was necessary. **>P2**

The road in to the Comet was in good order and we set off at 8.45am. It was good to see the new DoC signage at the start. The track is in good condition and before long we zig-zagged our way up onto the plateau and through the wilding pines. No drizzle at all and gradually the sky revealed a few blue patches. The patch of beech forest was a pleasant contrast, as were the numerous spotted orange mushrooms.

Then the big descent down to the Taruarau River, seemingly endless, but uneventful. The river itself was running clear and normal so only just over the knees at the crossing.

Then the traverse up and around and through the grassland to Shutes Hut, this section a tad damp and slippery at times. We made very good time, arriving at the hut at 11.15am or 2 hr 30mins, or at least 30 minutes shorter than the DoC signage indicated. As the conditions were now rather nice, we had some group photos and used some huge cut logs for a picnic table just in front of the hut. Jude read us some entries and stories from both hut books and we reacquainted ourselves with the history of the hut and the area. The hut is unique in being stone-built and from the stock droving days. It was constructed in 1920 and makes for a very comfortable place, being in great order and tidiness.

Around noon, we set off to retrace our steps, but not until we had researched all the other track and hut options we could do from here, such as Diane's or Ruahine huts.

Julia had taken her boots off to cross the river and had on sandals; she was pleased to find her boots exactly where she left them.

Then the steady grind up, up, up. No issues encountered, very little birdlife, still no drizzle or wind, so overall ideal conditions. In fact, we were back to the Comet and the van in 2hr 40mins, so a marvellous effort really. The three who had entered the Triple Peaks Challenge race the following Saturday certainly got a good work-out too!

The clagginess and hint of drizzle remained at the Comet, however.

Four of the party decided a coffee or similar refreshment at Taradale's Duke of Gloucester was a fitting end to a very pleasant and sociable group tramp.

Triple Peaks: More than a marathon

Triple Peaks Challenge, Saturday March 17

Club walkers: Solo. Dave Hills – 8h 25min, Julia Mackie – 8h 32min, John Dobbs, Alison Greer, Kelvin Shaw, Jenny Burns

Club Team: John Burrell, Dennis Mitchell, Sue Martin

Club runner: Viv Bramley

Reporter: Julia Mackie

THE 7.15am start for the walkers meant an early rise at home. We had all been putting in the work to ensure that we were going to be fit enough, and we all had the iTRAMP logo either pinned to our backpacks or T-shirts. We heard a lot of good comments on our performance, as we were easily identifiable.

L to R, Julia, Jenny, John B, John D, Kelvin, Alison and David. Missing are Sue, Dennis, team members, and Viv who entered as a runner. Taken at the start line for walkers

The course was in reverse this year, and so we walked up Te Mata Peak first. Then, down the goat track and through the redwoods, and out onto a farm track. From here it was through private farmland, to the first transition at the cattle yards on Tauroa Station. Approaching it, Murray White recognised me, and brought a smile. He was carrying the NTC club banner. Many thanks Murray for your support. We all loved the thought and effort you made.

The support crew of Yvonne and Dianne was at the transition, with encouragement and assistance. I dropped off my light jacket and wallet which would not be needed from my day pack. Had a long-overdue drink and got my nut stash out. A few minutes later, onwards to cross the Tuki Tuki River. It was only up to knee height, and refreshing.

Through a field and then across a road, and onto more farmland. A small ridge to climb, where I caught up with Dave Hills. We could not see Kahuranaki yet. Dave moved ahead (as he always did on the downhill), and then we came in sight of the next peak. A small hill climb onto a limestone access road, leading up to Mt Kahuranaki trig. The wind was cold and the time check volunteers were huddled behind the car to get out of the wind. I asked one of them to take my photo, and then off again, out of the wind and downhill.

It was downhill on the access road, and onto Rochfort Road. John Dobbs, Dave Hills and I had met up again, but then soon moved on at our respective paces to the next transition on the river bank, where the support team gave out barley sugar. This river crossing was again refreshing, and with Mt Erin in sight, the motivation was running high to get up there.

The route was marked over the farmland, but a short cut straight up was a breeze. The peak was not as cold, but another photo with Mt Kahuranaki and the river in the background below was taken. The course then followed a number of ridges to the 'trees' then it was across the 'flats' before ascending one more ridge before heading to Kopanga Road and a tar-seal section to Iona Road and Tanner Street before heading for the finish via Joll Road and Campbell Street. Finally it was through the school and into the Havelock North Domain.

It had been a long way, 47km and three peaks. The finish line in sight, yeah… and I still felt good.

Getting that itch to wander...

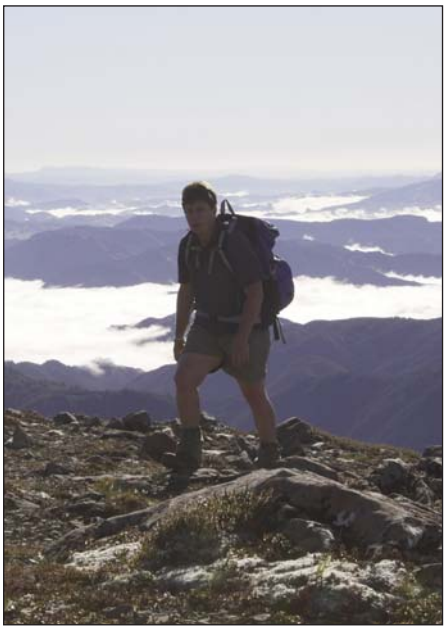
Kaweka J and Back Ridge Hut, March 28

Trampers: Peter Slagter, Keith Moretta, Kelvin Shaw, Gary Bowler, Alison Greer, Jenny Burns, John Marshall, Vic Bullock and reporter Robyn Smith

A GROUP of seven set off from Makahu car park at 8.45am, passed Makahu Hut and moved onto the climb to discover why two Wednesday trampers who had joined the previous Saturday group only got as far as Kaweka J. We were informed it was due to the windy conditions, but the truth may be that they simply piked out when they saw the steep terrain ahead of them. We toughed it out and made the top in 1hr 45mins, then turned west and headed down the ridge, arriving at Back Ridge Hut by noon.

Lunch was in a little clearing away from the hut due to the shade that still surrounded it. We didn't have too long a lunch as first Jenny and then Kelvin seemed real keen to get going again; they kept hopping from one foot to the other. Guess you have to expect that, if you sit on an ants' nest!

Upper Te Hoe Hut, and the hunters' mess. Below: Jenny Burns, on her way up to Kaweka J



Drizzle couldn't dampen the magic

Easter tramp into Whirinaki Forest Park

Trampers: Julia Mackie, Alison Greer, Jenny Burns and reporter John Dobbs

Friday - River Road to Moerangi Hut

HOPING to escape the prior week of claggy, drizzly conditions, we headed off to the northern end of one of everyone's favourite tramping places. The big washout a few kilometres in along the Waipunga Road has been repaired and the access is now quite good. At the Minginui River Road end, there were many vehicles, so we knew we would be coming across plenty of hunters, in for the roar. We left Ted and Paul behind at this point, intending to see them again on Monday at the Pukahunui Road end, which would enable us to complete the through trip.

The drizzle (or threat of it) stayed with us, but not enough to warrant coats on. Track conditions were excellent. The route starts out on the Central Whirinaki track, crossing the Te Whaiti-Nui-A-Toi Canyon, where we all enjoyed peering down into the Whirinaki River gorge (flowing just a little higher than average) and a bit later on, a pair of adult whio on a log in the river. A bit of a surprise, a guy on a motorbike coming towards us – perhaps a trapper? Birdlife was mainly kaka sightings and calls, lovely as we seldom see them in the Bay.

The track climbs, and then sidles around Moerangi Peak. Just after crossing a bridge about five minutes from the hut junction, there was a mass of bright purple native blueberries (Dianella nigra), such a vivid contrast to the glorious dense greenery of the bush and oh-so-huggable giant podocarps and beeches!

After only three and a half easy-going hours, we arrived at Moerangi Hut and shared with three pleasant hunters, leaving just two bunks to go. That seemed like a nice number, so later in the afternoon when a helicopter landed right outside and the pilot came over to see if he could take more hunters off, we did our best to shoo them away - and were successful! Actually, as we were to discover throughout our tramp, most hunters were being dropped off at other than their preferred choice or hut or campsite and most appeared to be in for five days.

Saturday – to Mangakahika Hut

Same, same weather, with maybe less drizzle. A superb easy benched track heading east towards Rogers (Te Wairoa Hut) is now high above the Moerangi Stream, whereas when Alison and I came through this way six years ago, the route was in and out of the river. Some big trees had fallen in places.

Suddenly, a visual delight – masses of sublime Raupeka orchids (Earina autumnalis) in bloom, with masses of tiny white fragrant flowers. Despite being relatively common and not threatened, this was the only spot we saw them.

Rogers Hut, built in 1952, is a real gem – characterful, inside lined with slab beech (exterior is flat iron) and with a lovely stained glass window too. We enjoyed having a brew and snack on the deck for elevenses.

Heading in a southerly direction now, we were basically in a stream valley. The stream was higher than normal and a little discoloured. We enjoyed three encounters with pairs of whio along this section, their plaintive calls quite loud. Other birdlife today mainly consisted of inquisitive tomtits, always delightful.

A place called "Colin's Campsite" was a tad run down, but occupied by three groups of hunters. The track is a rough sidle by Te Wairoa Stream, before it climbs to a low saddle, and drops down again. A while later, we met an elderly couple in gumboots! They turned out to be retired farmers from the Matamata area and had been choppered into Mangakahika Hut for five nights. They had actually been aboard the chopper that we had shooed away from Moerangi Hut.

The hut was only a little way further but after crossing the bridge, we found the connecting track had been washed away and it took us a while to figure out where the hut was. Shortly after, the gumbooted ones arrived. They turned out to be the only others at the hut and were very fine company. We got the fire going and had a pleasant afternoon and evening. >P4

The climb out is steep at first to gain the northern ridge then undulates up to the main range. We were going really well until Alison said: " Don't look up." Bugger, she was right; it was not a wise move.

All was not lost as Peter got his second wind and we were away with just brief stops to admire the great view and soak in the amazing day.

We arrived back at the van around 3.45pm to find John and Vic waiting for us. Vic had set off on a pine tree-cutting mission only to find someone had beaten him to it, so he continued on to Kaweka J. I'm beginning to think he must hold the club record for that climb.

John was not letting on where he went, but did let slip that it was nice and sunny at Kaweka Flat; mind you, that was also the direction the kiwi-hunting ladies may have ended back at, after their helicopter ride!

Sunday – to Upper Te Hoe Hut

Same, same weather, and a bit more drizzle. The track now tended to have more tree-fall, washouts and reroutes, and more muddy sections, crossing the Bullring, a clearing where hunters had set up camp. We heard more stags roaring too. By 11am, we had arrived at Central Te Hoe Hut where a group of hunters were packed and ready to be choppered out, but the low clag made it seem doubtful they would leave today. We enjoyed a brew and snack before tackling a big hill and rocky cliff face with a wire rope for support, all the while getting views to the river below. Lots of lovely fungi varieties and great wads of mosses hanging from the trees which were now in swirling mist.

We found a terrific spot on a little knoll for late lunch before continuing on ever upwards, eventually arriving at Upper Te Hoe Hut by 3.30pm – a 7hr 20mins day. The hut was occupied by an older hunter, his two hunting sons and a relative from New York State plus a lovely Labrador dog called Hunter! The place was untidy - and with considerable alcohol supplies, a slightly rowdy time was inevitable.

They weren't too bad, but three of us decided it was better to put the tents up on the grass beside the hut while Jenny braved the night inside. A good night eventuated, in very calm conditions.

Monday – to Pukahunui road end and home

The morning dawned spectacularly bright and clear! Hooray! Tents were sodden with dew and the bush was the same way, but that didn't matter. We waited until the hunters had set out for the day before packing up, so were not away until 8.30am.

The track was often overgrown and slippery, leading to some interesting tumbles and slides. We met a young hunting couple and their mate who had established a fly camp a bit beyond the track junction. This made a great spot to stop and enjoy the now hot sunshine bathing the saddle, with extensive views in several directions at once.

It was just after midday when we were within sight of the road end and saw Ted and Paul on a rise, aiming their cameras in our direction. It was nice to see them again and to have Alison's car driven around for us.

Vic Bullock, crossing Boundary Stream

Jenny, Alison and John D, among the luscious Whirinaki forest and ferns

Alison's photo was runner-up in the Above competition. The picture is of the Pisa Ra Range road and Lake Dunstan

A club FMC entry in the Flora and Fauna category was by John Marshall, of a bird orchid

Overall, it had been an excellent tramp and quite comforting not to have been shot at, considering the high numbers of hunters in the forest park at this time! On the way home, we just had to stop in at the Tarawera Tavern for a coffee and pie, which we enjoyed in blazing sunshine. The place has new owners and was really humming with people.

Great day for the birds at Boundary

Boundary Stream, Wednesday April 11

Trampers: Paul Exeter, Peter Slagter, John Marshall, Sue Marshall, Isobel Holdaway, visitor Vivian,Vic Bullock and reporter Ken Ross

THE scheduled trip was to have been to Te Waewae but again it didn't happen. Judging by the state of the main highway after the recent heavy rain, we probably would not have made it. The road was a massive mess of slips. One rock which we had to detour round was bigger than the van. So it was Plan B: Boundary Stream.

The day was perfect… the best of the summer so far… which wasn't hard. The van with eight on board stopped at the top end of the Boundary Stream Walkway. We checked out the new kaka enclosure which is opposite. It looked good, and just waiting for the kaka to arrive. Then it was off round the Matai loop and down the track to exit at the Shines Falls car park, meeting the van which was kindly ferried round.

We soon split into a fast pack and a slow pack, with the latter spending more time to enjoy the bush and in particular the birdsong. It was a great day for the birds. The dawn chorus lasted until well after lunch. DoC must have the predators well under control there. The regenerating bush, in particular rewa rewa, also confirmed this. We did, however, see very recent sign of deer on the track and evidence of pigs. Some of the kakabeak plants we had planted with DoC look good but others not so and some had succumbed to the weeds.

The recent rain meant the stream was high. A dry boot crossing was out of the question and care was needed. Shines Falls looked really good although the photos didn't convey it. There was mist and spray all round, just like at Niagara but not quite as noisy!

On the way home, we took a detour to check out the north section of the loop road back to the highway. Like most "shortcuts", it wasn't one but the views were good and we can cross it off our bucket lists. It was something new for all of us. We also checked out Lake Tutira, which was full to overflowing.

the Bushline category of the FMC Photo nge, in Central Otago, between the Crown

Alison, pleased as punch with her photographic success (taken on the Galbraith Hut tramp)

Jude, Viv, John D and Marc on the Shutes Hut track, before descending to the Tauruarau River

Bush, bush and yet more bush

Patiki, Saturday April 21

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Viv Bramley and reporter Marc Marchal

A LARGE group set out on Saturday morning in the direction of the Sunrise Hut. We arrived there around 10am for morning tea. I'd been to 66 a couple of times and therefore decided to join Ted, Paul and Viv, who were going to Patiki. The first half hour or so was straightforward, following the tops. In the cold wind, I was sure I had made a good decision, and indeed as we turned away from the tops onto the ridge on our right, the wind dropped.

We had a couple of minor issues following the ridge, where slips at both sides had left only a narrow sandy mini ridge to walk over. After that, we entered bush. I quite enjoy a bit of bushbashing and this was not too bad. The bush descends to a gully, from where we climbed back up to the peak. There's no path anywhere, so it took us some time, but by 12.15 we reached Patiki in beautiful sunny weather.

We stopped for lunch, out of the breeze in the tussock grass. The plan was to follow the main ridge down and then angle to the right towards the Triple X Hut. Within 10 minutes from our lunch, we found ourselves in quite dense bush. Paul decided to try to skirt the dense stuff to the right and disappeared from

Kelvin Shaw does his bit for DoC, pulling out Pinus Contorta on the Rogue Ridge, Kaiarahi circuit

our views in no time. We waited a while for him in a clearing, and tried to yell him back towards us, but each reply seemed further away.

Ted had in the meantime scouted the area and not found a passage through the dense bush. We were now convinced that Paul was on a smaller ridge to our left, which looked like beech forest and we decided to give up on plan A and follow him down that ridge. Five minutes later, the four of us were back together and started descending the ridge. With all the previous rainfall, it turned out to be a slippery affair. More than once did I find myself slipping, falling, stumbling and hugging trees. I was in good company; all of us took a close look at the forest floor at some stage. Once, we thought we had found one of those lovely shingle slides; unfortunately the one we followed ended in a small fall, and we had to climb back up and cross to the next ridge. This one got us down to the Triple X stream.

From here, I was sure, it was a simple affair of following the river. Unfortunately, the growth on both sides of the river was so dense that we were forced to enter the forest above the river again and try to get out that way. By now, it was around 15.00 and I was trying to remember how much clothing I had stuffed in my backpack; it no doubt can be bitterly cold at night in that damp bush. I shouldn't have worried though, as suddenly Ted made a sharp turn to the right and we connected with the bottom part of the Sunrise track and by 16.30 were back at the cars after some five hours of bushbashing, which by then had lost most of its appeal.

Did I enjoy it? I guess I did. Would I do it again? Certainly not tomorrow. Apparently it takes 18 years to convince yourself that it is a good idea to go to Patiki and follow the main ridge down…

Sunrise 66, Waipawa River - April 21

66 Party: Paul Hendy, Alison Greer and reporter Geoff Donkin

THREE of the group of 16 decided to do the traditional 66 route. There was a cool breeze across Armstrong Saddle. Further around on the track to the Top Maropea junction, we could only see the base of Ruapehu. We headed down to the saddle and up the patchy scrub area. Further up the track, we looked back and saw the Patiki Four on the skyline, heading up to first high point. We also saw another group on the high point near Sunrise Hut.

Once we got to the first high point, going was easier. Then it was along the tops to the trig, across a rocky/shingle bit and down the shingle slide. Shingle slides are always fun.

At our regular lunch spot by the tarn, we joined two others who were doing the same trip. After lunch, we headed off around to the drop-off point. Is it this spur or is it the next one? Alison said she was told by Ted that you go further around than you would think before you drop off. Looking around, we could see a cairn that marked the drop-off position.

It does not take long to get to the Waipawa Saddle if you are on the right track. Heading down the Waipawa River, the going at the top end was OK. Further down, there is a lot more tutu and buddleia scrub. Cairns had been put out recently to show where the track goes from the river into the scrub. Further down, someone had spent time cutting the track through the toi toi.

Closer to the North Arm, the riverbed becomes more open. We decided to continue via the branch track which led to the main Sunrise track. We got back to the van about five minutes before the Patiki Four. **>P6**

The great divide is well and truly closed

Rogue Ridge, Mt Kaiarahi and Mackintosh Spur, Wednesday, April 25

Trampers: John Marshall, Sue Martin, Sue Titter, Jude Paton, Alison Greer, Viv Waterer, Isobel Holdaway, Murray Goss, Vic Bullock, Paul Exeter, Peter Slagter, John Burrell, Jenny Burns, Robyn Smith, Rosemary Jeffery and reporter Kelvin Shaw

WEDNESDAY trampers? Saturday trampers? As of now, there is no such thing. Only trampers from the Napier club. All it took was an ANZAC day off work to complete the transition. With at least one long-serving member tramping on a Wednesday for the very first time, it had to be a good day, and it was.

There were 16 of us, using the van plus one car. The weather forecast was for a cool start and a clear sunny day with little wind. It was 8 deg C when we arrived at the Lakes car park.

The aim was to complete the circuit formed by ascending Rogue Ridge, traversing the tops to Mt Kaiarahi at 1507 metres and then descending Mackintosh Spur to the Mackintosh Hut and returning via the Mackintosh car park, where the van would be waiting, thanks to Vic.

Fourteen of us set off towards The Rogue, leaving two of the party to do their own thing. (Thankfully, Vic was one of the two, as he was to bring the van around later in the day.) The first crossing of the Tutaekuri only meant a few wet feet, as the river was running very low.

At the junction that was "Rogue to the left" or "less adventurous to the right" (shortcut to Mackintosh), we said goodbye to three of the party and set off to The Rogue. Ascending it was a steep climb but not as bad as the rumours would have you believe. We arrived at the top of the ridge to be met by panoramic views of the surrounding ridges and a clear view of Mt Ruapehu in the distance. Ruapehu had very little snow for this time of year. The wind was slight but very chilly, so we did not hang around.

The only negative on this trip was the encroachment of pinus contorta. It was everywhere - and spreading. Scenic views today will become lost tomorrow when the growth blocks us out. Track maintenance will be critical if the next generation of trampers wants to find a way through. We did our bit by pulling them out by the roots, literally in the hundreds.

We had lunch at Mt Kaiarahi in the lee of the wind and bathed in sunshine. One of the party brought shame on the group by checking her cellphone, and then losing it amongst the undergrowth. The final straw was a request from this new-age technocrat for someone else with a phone to call her, so as to help the search for a ringing phone.

We arrived at Mackintosh Hut at about 2.30 and had a short break on the veranda before setting off for the final leg. There was no indication that the three strays from our group had been there for lunch as expected. However, between there and the car park there was evidence of their presence by the number of uprooted contorta. Well done, Paul.

From the hut, the track leads back to the Tutaekuri River for the second crossing of the day and there are a few slips to negotiate, which would raise the heart rate of the less adventurous. The river had a much increased flow but thankfully a bridge kept the feet dry. From there it was up, up, up to the car park where the transport was waiting as arranged. In total, we were out for seven hours on a fantastic day. The Saturday trampers managed to keep up and hopefully we made them welcome enough to see them all again.

The Waipawa River to Middle Stream group pauses, before going over the edge

It took so long, the moon came out

Waipawa River – Waipawa Saddle – Three Johns – Middle Stream, May 5. Map: BK36 Taoroa Junction

Party A: Geoff Donkin, John Dobbs, Jenny Burns, Simon Hill, Julia Mackie, reporter Alison Greer and visitor Phil Enticott

Party B: Colin McNatty, Sue Martin, Marc Marchal and Isobel Holdaway

THE perigee moon had just risen as the group of seven crossed the Waipawa River and trudged up the hill to the car park and the welcoming sight of the waiting van.

Nine hours earlier, we had set off up-river in calm conditions with the cloud surrounding the tops dissipating to reveal blue skies. We made Waipawa Saddle in good time and, looking back down into the river, saw just how steep the climb is.

After a photo-stop, we turned left towards the East and started the short, sharp climb up to the Three Johns (1569m), sidling around to a large rock just below the summit on the main ridge. On peering over the edge or eastern side, we studied the steep grassy slope we would be going down to reach the stream below.

It was noon, so we settled down for lunch on the western sunny side, out of the cool breeze with spectacular views over to Te Atuaoparapara (1687m), the Hikurangi Range and - to the south - Rangioteatua (1704m). Out came the GPS and maps to help identify Mangaweka (1731m), the highest point in the Ruahine Range. There were more group photos to record the scene, GPS readings of the rock we were behind, and then it was over the edge!

It was steep and icy in places, but not too difficult and soon we reached the start of the small side stream leading into Middle Stream. We made good progress at first, but later slowed as the rocks became slippery. Careful footwork was necessary.

For four hours, we manoeuvred our way round boulders, slid down slippery chutes, most of the time on our bottoms, over or round waterfalls, scrambled through buddleia and tutu and finally arrived at the track to the grassy banks by the Smith Stream track.

Most were wet, some more than others, depending on the depth of the stream they had fallen into. It was so good to finally be out of the cold water. With time and daylight against us, we soon got warm hightailing it across the grassy track back to the Waipawa River and the comfort of our warm van. Thanks, folks, for not being grumpy!

The four members who had done a shorter day had to wait for us to return. Thanks to them, and Colin for getting us home just in time for some of us to go out again for dinner that night!

Alfresco trip takes the biscuit

Middle Hill, Whetu, Ballard Hut, Saturday/Sunday May 19-20. Map: BJ37 Kuripapango

Trampers: Simon Hill, Alison Greer and reporter Julia Mackie

THIS was a Tim Tam weekend, but completely unplanned. Five hardy trampers set off with the day party from the Middle Hill car park at the end of Makahu Road.

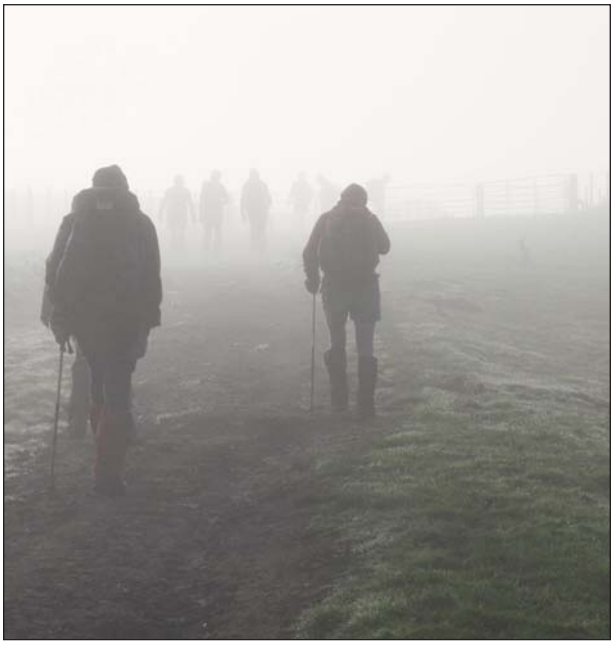
The trip list had us going to Tira Lodge, but we thought: Let's see what the Kaweka Ranges have in store for us, before we make any rash promises. The going was good to Middle Hill Hut, where we all congregated for a break. Two of the weekend party were behind, so a rethink was in order. The tops had a light dusting of snow on them; we wondered if the clouds would go away. It was going to be a tad cold on the tops.

We made it to the bush line, and were pleased to see that some of the day party had also made it. They did have one big advantage... lighter packs.

At the bush line, we donned our overtrousers, hats and gloves or mitts. The wind was reasonably strong. The three weekenders had a re-think, the first of many, and thought that Makino might be a good idea, instead of Tira. We had a quick lunch, and were soon off, to climb the last open ground until reaching the tops. The wind was strong, but we were not concerned. Once we reached the Makino turn-off, we were ten paces down the track, and looked across to the Ballard turnoff. A quick change of mind, and we retraced our steps and forged on across the tops. The snow was not that deep, but the wind was strong, slowing and tiring us. We had a break in the lee of the wind, just before the Ballard turn-off. Munchies time, as lunch had been too quick. It was only 1.50pm, so we did not have to be concerned about time.

On reaching the Ballard Hut turn-off, we headed straight down the scree slopes to the hut. It sits in a small saddle, in bush, with a small high point directly behind. As we had time on our hands, we had a cuppa and we all pulled out a box of Tim Tams from our packs. Three different flavours, too. Once warmed up, we began collecting firewood for Simon to saw up for the storage box. He carried a Silky pruning saw, which made short work of some of the fallen trees around the hut. We then went and had a quick look around from the high point, before returning to start the fire. We settled down, and the wind increased, with a slight dusting of snow showers. The temperature dropped, but we were snug. Thank goodness we had changed our minds. Tira Lodge would have been an ice-box and true to its other name, "Kelvinator" Lodge.

During the night, the wind continued and even increased, and we all wondered what the morning had in store. Would the weather forecasters be right this time? A beautiful Sunday had been predicted on Friday night's TV.



Figures in the mist, making for Galbraith Hut

We woke as the sun was coming up. Cloud on the tops as yesterday, but we were sure this would disappear soon. Yes... they got it right. Once we were back up on the tops, the cloud progressively lifted. The views were wonderful, with fresh light snow everywhere. The plants looked fabulous in their covering.

We made our way back towards Whetu, stopping to take photos of the vistas and plants. One last look before we headed downhill to the bush line again. We took off our protective gear, and had a pleasant walk through the bush back to Middle Hill. We startled a deer near the bottom track junction to Kaweka Flats Bivvy track.

At Middle Hill Hut, we had an early snack with a hot cuppa, and finished off the Tim Tams. Sitting in the sun, we were reluctant to get going again. The final walk back down and out was led by speedster Simon.

The two other members of our weekend party had reached the bush line on Saturday, and decided to return to Middle Hill Hut. They too had a good night, along with two of the Bay's finest hunters.

It proved to be a good tramp for everyone, with great views. Special thanks to Simon.

Season of mists and silhouettes

Galbraith Hut - Taraponui, Wednesday May 23

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Alison Greer, Robyn Smith, Ken Ross, John Marshall, Ann Wilson, John Burrell, Jenny Burns, Diane Hills, Isobel Holdaway, Gordon Tapp, Gary Bowler and reporter Keith Moretta

WE arrived on a beautiful clear, frosty and calm morning, with lifting heavy fog blanketing the Mohaka Valley. A very cold start had the group quickly readied for the day and setting off up the farm track.

The silhouettes of people walking ahead in the fog for the first 30 minutes gave a picturesque air for the day. Steadily climbing, we tramped into sunshine for the remainder of the day. Parts of the farm streams were fenced off for the native trees with horopito, hoheria, kahikatea, kanuka and ferns alongside the track as we continued to climb.

After another hour, we stopped for a morning break at Galbraith Hut. From the farm track, the hut is hidden amongst the native trees. The four-bunk hut was alive with memories from past trampers staying the night.

After 60 minutes more spent steadily climbing up the foothills and passing Ahuateatua, the group began the ridge-top walk to Taraponui. Remnants of snow from the previous week's wintry blast still remained in the southern hollows.

The group reached Taraponui at lunchtime, enjoying spectacular views of Ruapehu and Tongariro in heavy snow, along with the Kawekas, the Mohaka Valley and Maungahururu Range and the Ahimanawa Range.

After lunch, many group and personal photos were taken. Then we had a leisurely return walk, reaching the van about 3pm.

It was a day to remember for long Autumnal shadows, calm and sunlit skies, and for our new member, Ann Wilson, a great day to begin tramping.

Top-class day for a trip to the tops

Kiwi Saddle - Castle Camp - Kaiarahi Circuit, Saturday June 2

Trampers: Rosemary Jeffery, Sue Titter, Murray Goss, Isobel Holdaway, Marc Marchal, Phil Enticott, John Marshall, Denise Payne, Sue Marshall and reporter Alison Greer

IT was a beautiful, frosty Hawke's Bay morning and with the promise of a clear, calm day, it was decided to alter plans slightly, from Macintosh Hut to Kiwi Saddle Hut - taking advantage of the good conditions expected on the tops.

Arriving at the Lakes car park (this time from Castle Rock Road, because Kuripapango Road had been closed for logging), we were surprised to see members of the Hutt Valley Tramping Club who had camped out under a fly after arriving late on Friday night. Thick frost lay on the ground as the sun had not yet reached the car park; I imagine they'd had had a pretty cold night. >P7

Mt Ngauruhoe from Oturere Hut

After an uneventful couple of hours, we all arrived at Kiwi Saddle Hut just before 11am. Here the group split, with five deciding we had enough time to push on and complete the round trip, and the rest walking on as far as a nice lunch spot and returning the same way.

It was a glorious day, although a slight breeze had sprung up from the west. There were wonderful views over to the central North Island mountains; we reckoned the weekend party that went to Waihohonu Hut would be having a fantastic day.

We had a short lunch break near Castle Camp and then tackled the last of the climbing, reaching Kaiarahi round 1pm. The wind was cool here so we didn't linger, but still managed to take photos and gaze over the near all-round views. We meandered along the tops, reaching Rogue Ridge, said "goodbye" to the views and headed downhill.

Here, the track is starting to become overgrown with contorta in places and it needs some attention. There was still frost on the ground at the Tutaekuri River crossing then, after that final uphill, we arrived back at the van at 3.30. The trip was a first for two members of the group and everyone agreed it had been a fabulous day out.

Snap happy weekend around the mountain

Waihohonu Hut, Tongariro National Park, Saturday-Monday June 2-4

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Simon Hill, Geoff Donkin, Sue Martin, Kay Russell and reporter Julia Mackie

HOW many photos can you take of Mt Ruapahu and Mt Ngauruhoe over a Queen's Birthday weekend? Oodles: you just have to take one when you see it first, then get closer, then when it looks pink, then when the cloud partially obscures it, and so on. You get the picture; the scenery over the weekend just begged to be photographed.

Seven of us had decided that we would enjoy the new Waihohonu Hut. We all agreed that it was 5-star luxury. The lights at night, and hot water available were just two of the most immediate luxuries. The design of the hut, with a large kitchen/dining area, and separate bunkroom accommodations, made it feel comfortable even though the hut was full, with each of the 28 bunks taken. The windows facing the two mountains, with the decking and table options which I suspect would be used more in summertime, gave the hut a palatial feel.

We arrived at the hut around midday, and had the afternoon to go and explore the original Waihohonu Hut, and the Ohinepango Springs. The original hut was built around 1904, as a stage on the trip from Whanganui river mouth through to Ketatahi for coach horse travellers.

What intrigued us most was the separate accommodation for the women, banished from the warm fire, and given only a mirror in their sparse bunkroom. The men, meanwhile got the main bunkroom, with the fireplace and were no doubt near the food store.

Back at the hut, we spent a night learning to play Quidler, a word card game that Kay had bought along.

The next morning, we decided to visit Oturere Hut. The day did not look promising, but we put on warm clothing and battled the wind in exposed areas. The track initially climbs and then descends and then climbs and descends again to a bridge, with a small climb through bush, before emerging to the scree and rocky slopes that are characteristic of parts of the Round the Mountain track. Thereafter, no more shelter before reaching Oturere Hut.

We had a brew-up and a long lunch, out of the wind under the verandah, and explored the immediate environs. The view into the valley, headed by a cascading stream, out the front of the hut, just over the rocks, is amazing - as is the view looking back at Mt Ngauruhoe.

We headed back to Waihohonu Hut, and enjoyed a peaceful late afternoon. Most of our hut companions had moved on to their next destination. Another evening was spent playing Quidler, eating Paul's pancakes, and other nibbles.

On Monday morning, some of us decided that we would like to walk to the Tukino Mountain Road, where Ted and Paul kindly moved our vehicles. This would give us a chance to walk through the arid landscape that is part of the Rangipo Desert.

That was the end of the walk, still with amazing views of Mt Ruapehu, with more photos of course.

i TRAMP
www.napiertrampingclub.org.nz

President: Julia Mackie
Club Captain: Alison Greer
Secretary: Jude Paton
Treasurer: Ingrid Stevens

Committee
Julia Mackie 844 0540
trans@ction.co.nz
Alison Greer 844 8152
greer.fans@xtra.co.nz
Jude Paton 835 4649
jude.paton@clear.net.nz
Kelvin Shaw 836 7094
y2kshaw@farmside.co.nz
Sue Martin 835 8144
petesuem@googlemail.com
Colin McNatty 844 4144
colvalm@slingshot.co.nz
Marc Marchal 845 2717
mmarchal@xtra.co.nz
Dennis Mitchell 834 0302
den.mitchell@xtra.co.nz

New members contact:
Kelvin Shaw 836 7094

Transport co-ordinator:
Alison Greer 844 8152

Bushbasher Editor:
Brian Mackie 844 0540

Bushbasher stories to:
trans@ction.co.nz

The club meets at 7.30pm every second Thursday at the Community Rooms, Memorial Square, Napier, before each weekend tramp. Please check the club website for dates and upcoming topics.

This magazine is also available as a PDF file. Email trans@ction.co.nz for a copy.

The club thanks Band Limited at 50 Ossian Street, Ahuriri, Napier, for printing our magazine.

Napier Tramping Club also thanks The Lion Foundation for its financial support to produce The Bushbasher and the club's website.

For the latest information, visit
www.napiertrampingclub.org.nz

To stay right up to date - just click and get RSS alerts via email