

# beechleaves

Newsletter of the Manawatu Tramping and Skiing Club



P.O. Box 245, Palmerston North 4440 [www.mtsc.org.nz](http://www.mtsc.org.nz) <https://www.facebook.com/MTandSC>

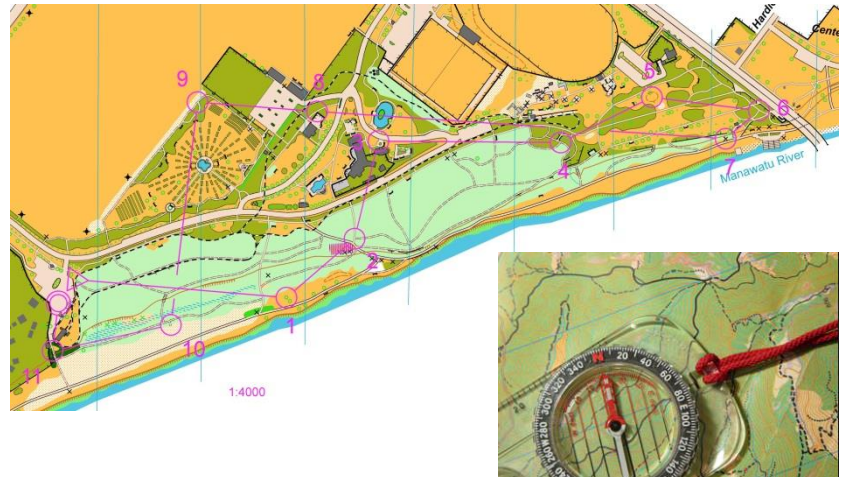
Issue 3: April 2018

## CLUB MEETINGS

Club meetings are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month at the Rose City Aquatic Club Rooms, 50 Park Street, Palmerston North (next to the Lido). Meetings begin at 7.30pm.

### Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April: Orienteering – Ken Mercer

Every trumper likes to look at maps; to plan trips, to figure out where you are or even to use in conjunction with a compass to find your way around in the hills. Orienteering is a great way to help develop navigation skills. For this club night we'll have a short theory session at the club rooms then head out to have a go at the orienteering course in the Esplanade. If your skills are pretty good already come along and help your fellow club members to learn. If you have them, please bring your compass and headlamp along.



### Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May: Birds in the bush – Russell Poole, Forest and bird

Russell Poole will talk about the native birds most likely to be seen or heard on the Club's favourite tracks. The work of DOC, Forest and Bird, and Pukaha (Mt Bruce) in protecting and fostering native birds will also be discussed.



# REPORTS AND NOTICES



## MTSC President: John Beech

[president@mtsc.org.nz](mailto:president@mtsc.org.nz)

*Hi all,* Autumn is here but as yet the weather hasn't cooled off much or deteriorated so plenty of opportunity to get out and about. In my opinion, Autumn is one of the best times for tramping. It is cooler, yet often the most settled time of the year. The snows have yet to arrive and the crowds have left, so it is often perfect for doing those bucket list trips to the South Island.

I am sure many of you will have read Wilderness magazine and a number probably subscribe to it. It is probably the most well-known outdoor magazine in NZ and does a fantastic job of promoting the NZ outdoors. One of their ads caught my eye the other day inviting contributions to the magazine. They provided guidelines on how to do this. Many of the articles are written by the same people who do a marvellous job providing interesting and enticing stories of trips undertaken. However, it made me think that it would be great to see more of our members pen something for the magazine. I'm sure that some members have done so in the past but I'm sure there is room for more. Club members participate in many trips throughout the country. It would be great to enjoy trip reports from our members in the same way we enjoy the presentations at club nights. So, next time you are writing up a report for the newsletter, have a think about possibly sending it off to Wilderness.

Just to finish off, I thought I would include a shot from one of those "bucket list" trips. Hope you like it. *John*



East Matakitaki Hut, Nelson Lakes National Park

## MTSC Lodge Manager: John Lyttle



## Update on upgrade work to the Lodge

The completed, final drawings can be viewed on the club website.

<http://www.mtsc.org.nz/lodge/lodge-20180302.pdf>

These will be submitted to DOC for approval within the next 4 weeks.

We have set up work party dates to get the planned work on the lodge started. Helpers of all abilities and skills required, particularly in the first four planned weekends where there will be a lot of digging and

demolishment. Please contact me if you can commit now to one, or many, of these weekends.

John Lyttle [john@bcsltd.co.nz](mailto:john@bcsltd.co.nz) 027 433 6307

### 2018

20 - 22 October (Labour weekend)  
3 - 4 November  
17 - 18 November  
1 - 2 December

### 2019

20 - 22 January (Wellington Anniversary weekend)  
3 - 6 February (Waitangi weekend)  
23 - 24 February  
16 - 17 March  
6 - 7 April  
19 - 28 April (Easter and ANZAC Day included)

## Obituary Athol Geddes

9 November 1929 – 16 December 2017

Athol led the development of the Tararua Forest Park, the first forest park in New Zealand.

Athol passed away peacefully at Whangarei on Saturday 16 December 2017 aged 88 years.

After leaving school in Lower Hutt in the early 1940s, Athol worked in shops and factories, but quickly decided he wanted the open air. The answer was deer-culling for the Department of Internal Affairs which had charge of wild animal control on Crown land. The wages were lousy, £6 or £7 a week, but sometimes they got bonuses of 7/6d or ten bob a tail. When they told you to go to the Ureweras, you found your own way there, and there was no recompense. The cullers bought their own .303 rifles for about £5, and the Department sold you canvas 'kidney rotter' packs and sleeping bags which you nearly froze to death in.

Athol hunted in the Aorangis, Ureweras, Ruahines and finally Westland. When he was about 20 he was up the Trent, a branch of the Ahaura. It was during the Korean War, about 1953. Some blokes came up on horses, shooting for skins and getting fourteen bob a pound. One of them worked for the Forest Service and told Athol about it, so one day when he was out of the bush he went to Hokitika, and the Forestry people said yes, but you'll have to go to

Wellington for an interview. So he went over to Lyttelton on his motor-bike and across to Wellington, and they welcomed him with open arms.

Athol started as a draughting cadet, but the lure of the outdoors was too strong. He went to Rotorua and worked for two years as a "timber cruiser" surveying blocks of native State Forest for central North Island mills. Athol then transferred to the National Forest Survey team based in Rotorua and over a four year period, the survey took Athol to the Urewera, East Cape, Taranaki, Westland, North West Nelson, the King country, the Napier-Taupo region and the ranges near Wellington. The survey teams spent summers in the field and winters in Rotorua doing their computations.

The National Forest Survey was completed in the mid '50s. Housing was booming and the Tasman mill at Kawerau had been commissioned. Athol, now married, worked there for two years but "kept looking over the fence out into the open." In 1957 he returned to the Forest Service in Protection Forestry (which later became Environmental Forestry), based in Masterton, with responsibility for three forest parks: Tararua, Rimutaka and Haurangi (Aorangi).

The previous year wild animal control had passed from Internal Affairs to the Forest Service, and Athol's first job was to get it back on its feet in the Tararuas. The range had a sprinkling of tramping club huts (Fields, Kime, Alpha, Cone, Allaway-Dickson, Totara Flats, Mountain House, Powell, Waiopehu, Te Matawai, Waitewaewae and a few others) and a handful - Bannister Basin, Dorset Ridge, Anderson's - built by Internal Affairs.

Athol set up a tent camp at Cow Creek with three or four hunters and worked out a strategy. The Forest Service people in Wellington had designed a standard hut (S70 design with 6 bunks). He put the first one of these at Cow Creek in 1960. The other guys and Athol decided all the locations. The only blue they made was Angle Knob Hut which got blown away in 1980. In the 1960s the Forest Service was building not only huts in the Tararuas but bridges too, using a standard design developed by its Head Office engineers. The bridge builders were top-notch men and did the job professionally and inspected the bridges regularly.

By the time Athol left Masterton in the mid-1970s he and his team had built about a dozen Tararua huts and bivouacs and some in the Aorangis, and they'd started replacing older tramping club huts like Totara Flats and Te Matawai too. Some old school trampers were heard to say that the Forest Service were making the Tararuas too safe!

After Athol left the NZFS, he and his family moved to a warmer climate in Whangarei where he took up driving a taxi which I'm sure he would have been good at as he always had a yarn or two to tell! He also worked for DOC for a while in Northland before retiring and continuing to ride his much loved old Norton motorbike and later joining the local MG car club as his wife Diana wasn't such a fan of riding on the back of the motorbike with Athol at the helm.

Athol is survived by his wife of 62 years Diana and his four children Graeme, Janet, Sheryl and John.

RIP Athol

Joe Hansen, January 2018

*Footnote; Many thanks to John Rhodes (ex-editor of the FMC Bulletin) for the use of excerpts out of his interview with Athol titled "A life in the Hills". Number 156 – May 2004.*

## **Notes from the Ruahine User Group (RUG) meeting in February**

### **DOC Hut/Structure plans and work**

**Iron Gate hut** Serious amounts of water have been getting into the walls, when the fire is lit and inside the hut is nice and warm the moisture and mould spores wick through the plywood. While the walls can be scrubbed the moisture and mould remains in the walls. The level of work required to rectify this is at a level where it makes more sense to replace the hut. DOC funding is on a like for like basis and if approved in May, an 8 bunk replacement (good veranda and lots of floor space) is likely to go ahead in the 2018/2019 summer. If a larger hut was desired (10 or 12 bunks), additional funding would need to be raised.

**Rangi and Sunrise huts** The spruce up of Rangi hut is going well. The Sunrise hut containment toilet lasted 4 years before needing emptying = 6000L! The booking system for these huts seems to be working well (DOC have received no complaints) and will continue through to the weekend after ANZAC day.

**Shutes hut** The historical huts bid for the earthquake strengthening of Shutes hut has been successful.

**Aranga hut and Rockslide Biv** Aranga Hut is actually on DOC land but is close to the boundary. Rockslide Biv is also on DOC land but right on the boundary. The track does cross the park boundary in one place so maintaining a good relationship is essential. It would be good for Aranga to remain a useable hut, but it is not on DOC's books as a hut so would need an external agreement (ownership with lease of the land) but could not be a locked hut as needs to be open for public use. If this does not eventuate when it becomes unsafe it will need to be removed.

**Kawhatau Base** The Kawhatau Base has been tidied up, a track will be cut through the Rangitane Reserve to the Kawhatau River giving much quicker access than from the twin bridges but will not be an all weather access as still dependent on river levels.

Simpsons Reserve has a new toilet. Stabiliser work has been carried out on the Crow swingbridge. Kelly Knight hut has had a tidy up.

**Volunteer work**

The Air Force has kindly flown 24 phadges of firewood into Rangī (10), Sunrise (10) and Longview (4), the savings to DOC from them doing this allows DOC to redirect funds into other areas so is greatly appreciated.

The Army were keen to carry out the roof replacement for Daphne hut but got redirected to aid in Tonga, hopefully Daphne will be able to be done at a later date.

Top Gorge hut is to get a major revamp. Lined with plywood, going from 2 bunks to 4 bunks. Cap over the chimney to stop water coming in through the fireplace. Little water tank and spouting. Meat safe. *See story in trip reports for progress!!*

An extension onto Toka Biv (similar to Sparrowhawk Biv) is being investigated by a volunteer. PNTMC have cleaned and gardened around Mid Pohangina and Ngamoko huts. NZDA have done some external paintings and cleared the gutters on Heritage Lodge.

**Tracks & Roads**

40km of tracks in the area of Otukota, Iron Bark, Colenso, Maropea Forks, Daphne and Howletts are being tidied up by contractors.

The Beehive Creek walkway is currently closed due to damage from a flash flood. The Kelly Knight track has a bypass to get around a slip. The Gorge track has some work happening around the big slip, the lookout track is closed due to nearby work by Higgans, and is likely to be closed permanently.

The Hall Block mountain bike track has been extended.

Kashmir Road is not in good condition. It is currently being assessed so a capital bid can be put in to get it fixed.

The Makaroro access is open. Access is along a paper road before the road goes down to the river (that part is private land). There is a car park on the left hand side of the road with space for 4 to 5 vehicles, the route from here is poled and marked, more information is available on the DOC website.

Looking to relocate the Sunrise car park to within the Forest Park, closer to Triplex.

**Biodiversity**

A goat cull has removed 6 in the Southern Ruahines and 26 in the North Eastern Area (No-Mans road).

Aerial spraying of wilding pines is continuing.

An Old Man’s Beard survey on the Western Flank has turned up 3 infestations which have been dealt to.

The “Battle for the Birds” rat and stoat survey (tunnel tracking carried out approx. 3 monthly) picked up no rats or mice and only 1 possum interference. The stoat/rat/other nasty trap line is to be extended around the Unknown area.

Duck survey, snail monitoring and the Ruahine rare plant check are all in progress.

*We welcome Wayne Lincoln to the club.*



| April Wednesday Tramps |  |             | April Thursday Tramps |                         |          |
|------------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| 4                      | Linda Darbyshire                               | 354 6171    | 5                     | John McLeod             | 323 5785 |
| 11                     | Rod McKenzie                                   | 357 0136    | 12                    | John & Gillian Thornley | 356 9681 |
| 18                     | Anne Rush                                      | 357 2529    | 19                    | Brian & Ruth Evans      | 323 7614 |
| 25                     | Bev Akers                                      | 325 8879    | 26                    | Chris Mercer            | 356 2635 |
| April Weekend Trips    |  |             |                       |                         |          |
| 1 (Sun)                | Tour de Palmerston North (cycling)             | Easy        | Karen Tutt            | 021 064 5918            |          |
| 7 – 8                  | <del>Orongorongo Valley</del> <b>POSTPONED</b> | Easy/Medium | John Beech            | 354 9310                |          |
| 14 (Sat)               | Waihohonu Loop                                 | Medium/Fit  | Adam Matich           | 022 358 8062            |          |
| 21 – 22                | Howlett’s Hut                                  | Medium      | Garry Grayson         | 027 269 5934            |          |
| 25 (Wed)               | Castle Rock                                    | Medium      | Jenny McCarthy        | 021 215 2197            |          |

**Trip Intentions:** The email address for leaving trip intentions is [intentions@mtsc.org.nz](mailto:intentions@mtsc.org.nz). Intentions sent to this address will not be acted upon UNLESS a party is reported overdue (e.g. by a family member, flatmate, friend, etc). The email is sent to several MTSC members. This information will be provided to Land SAR/RCC only if the party is reported overdue or a PLB is activated. The email should include: a list of participants and their contact details; a brief description of the intended route and possible alternative routes; starting point; start date; date/time due out; vehicle registration; and any other relevant details.

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April: Tour de Palmerston North - Cycling**

**Easy** **Karen Tutt** **021 064 5918**

We are planning to meet at the carpark next to the Fitzherbert Bridge / Centennial Drive, at 9:30am. It's a 25km loop, mostly on cycle tracks and bridle tracks, although we will have to cycle the length of Ruahine Street, and we might have to divert from the Manawatu Riverside walkway/bike path onto Victoria Esplanade Drive, to avoid the construction area for the new cycle and pedestrian bridge over the Manawatu River. It should take around two hours, not including a coffee stop. We could also stop off in Milson and have a look at the Apollo Butterfly Park.

### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April: Waihahohonu Loop**

**Medium/Fit** **Adam Matich** **022 358 8062**

This day trip will start from the car park on the desert road from where we will sail through modern Waihohonu Hut and at some point head north off the track to climb up to the Tama Lakes and pass through the saddle (BH34 268597) on the NE side of Upper Tama Lake. We will circle round the north side of Tama, down on the flat terrain, and then sidle up onto the ridge which will take us all the way back down through the old Waihohonu Hut site (not the historic one) to the modern hut and then back out to the desert road again. Or we could just follow the Waihohonu Stm down past the base of the ridge and then find a watercourse that will lead us back to the Waihohonu Track. It really depends upon peoples' (meaning mine) mood on the day.

### **21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> April: Howletts Hut**

**Medium** **Garry Grayson** **027 269 5934**

Starting with a drive to Kashmir Rd or Daphne carpark, I'm hoping to either push on via Daphne Hut, up Daphne Spur to Howletts or alternatively make the longer climb up to Longview Hut, over Otumore high point and along Daphne Ridge to Howletts Hut. The trip over the tops will be weather dependent and can be done on either day. Depending on which direction is chosen, there is small walk at end of the last day to reach our vehicle.

### **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March: Castle Rock**

**Medium** **Jenny McCarthy** **021 215 2197**

Castle Rock is accessed from the Desert Road, I have not done this tramp but according to Wilderness Magazine it will take approximately 5 hours to complete the round trip. I am working on the idea that we will have a sunny day to enjoy the views across to Ruapehu, Tongariro and Ngauruhoe.



### **10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February: ~~McKinnon Hut~~ Neill Forks**

Report: Jean Garman

Photos: Jean Garman

With a forecast of heavy rain and strong winds coming in from the North West it was decided that a trip that finished with a 2 hour walk down the Kauwhatau River might not be the smartest thing to try. Instead we opted for a tramp to the South East of the Tararuas which was river safe and where hopefully the weather would arrive later and with decreased ferocity. Our destination was Neill Forks Hut. We started at the Waiohine Road end, the weather was a bit murky but not raining as such. We had a hot, sweaty (very very high humidity) puff up onto Cone, removing lots of reasonably fresh wind broken branches along the way - summer?? We lunched out in the open on top of Cone with cloud shrouded hills all around us. After lunch we headed along the Neill Winchcome Ridge, turning off to drop down the spur to the North that leads almost directly to Neill Forks Hut. Down the spur, there is the odd bit of tape and a few very old blazes on trees but the correct line is not always obvious. Ivan took off in front of Dave and I and we soon realised we had wandered off the spur. Out with the GPS and a bit of sidling got us back on track and we had no further difficulty on the way down but when we arrived at the hut there was no Ivan. A while later we heard a noise outside and I must have sounded very rude when a chap walked in and I said "Oh, you're not who I was hoping for". Luckily Ivan turned up not long after and we settled in for a pleasant evening chatting with our hut buddy Larry. A light rain shower the next day and we headed off up the track onto Cone Ridge, luckily there wasn't much rain as wearing a coat was far too sweaty (still very high humidity). Cone Ridge was as lovely as I had remembered, beautiful moss shrouded

stunted beach forest. On top of Cone, we had pretty great views although it was now looking pretty dark to the North West. Heading down back to the Waiohine River the quite heavy rain eventually caught up with us and after putting on the coat for a short while, I soon decided that being drenched in pure rainwater was preferable to being drenched in sweat. At the road end the rain eased allowing us to change into dry clothes before heading for home.



*Dave & Ivan removing windfall from the track*

*The start of that spur*

*The boys having breakfast*

All in all, a great alternative tramp to one that would probably have seen us either stuck in the hills for a few days or having to trespass to get back to the car. We were Dave Mitchell, Ivan Rienks and Jean Garman, accompanied some of the way by Larry.

## **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February: Somes Island**

Report: Linda Campbell

Photos: Jenny McCarthy

Twenty six of us ranging from 13 months old to 'mature' met at the East West Ferry Terminal on Queens Wharf and headed across to Somes Island on a windy Saturday morning. On arrival on the island, we were herded into the biosecurity shed and welcomed by the DOC ranger. After a lovely welcome and completing a check of our own bags and shoes, we were free to roam the island. Everyone in our group wandered off in whichever direction we wanted and it was great to see family groups wandering off together.

The island has a very varied history and information boards provide interesting information as one strolls around. The old quarantine buildings are open to the public and provide an insight into how they worked in days gone by.

There was perhaps not as much wild life as I have seen on other trips, possibly due to the overcast, windy conditions but we did see a number of Skinks, Kakariki, and Fantail including juveniles, a dead gecko, weta and robin along with a number of sea birds including juveniles learning to fly in the wind. It was very gusty at the trig on the hill top which added a bit of excitement. We kept a good eye out but there was not a tuatara to be seen this trip. Even though it is a small island we did not see all of our party either while wandering around!!



*Picturesque coast line*



*Skink*



*BIG weta*

We learned a new word: "degaussing" which in this case means neutralising the magnetic field of a ship. This snippet of information was found on the information board down at the water's edge.

Those with younger children left the island on the 12.50pm ferry and the rest of us on the 3.10pm boat. Some headed home or to the homes of family members and others to Karori accommodation where we had a lovely pot luck dinner.

On Sunday morning Ken, Mary, Pak, Shona and I went walking in the hills above Karori for a couple of hours before meeting Tim at the café at Karori Park for morning tea. There were fabulous views of the south island from the hill top and also as we made our way down a gravel road back to the tar sealed road and onto the café.

After a delicious morning tea we headed to Zealandia. Being a member, I could get five guests in at half price. We had a great time wandering round enjoying the takahe, robins, kakariki, kaka, the lake, the views and the bush. We were fortunate to see a number of tuatara along the fence line as we strolled along. We had a quick trip up to the site of the old gold mine tunnel before heading out and starting our homeward trip. It was a most enjoyable weekend and I thank Tim, Ken, Mary, Pak, Shona, Dianne, Riley, Catelyn, Daniel, Steve, Jenny, Bernadette and Nick, Helen, Anna-Lise, Ben, Dan, Lisa, Zac, Josh, Robin, Libby, Thea, Penny and Olivia for their wonderful company on this trip.

### Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February: Whareroa Farm and Akatarawa Forest

Report: Bob Hargreaves

Photos: Evan

**“The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry”** Robert Burns

The original plan was to visit Battle Hill Farm and Forest Park, but along came cyclone Gita and the need for a plan B (Branch Road) arose. The day started well, the weather forecast was reasonable, so off we headed bound for Battle Hill on the Paekakariki Hill road. But there were radio reports about serious traffic delays on State Highway 1 due to storm damage. Perhaps these delays would have eased before we arrived? Alas it was not to be and traffic ground to a halt near MacKay crossing, with delays of at least an hour anticipated. Then Dennis suggested going to Plan C, Whareroa Farm. Luckily after some quick phone calls between our almost stationary convey of trampers vehicles. we all managed to pull off at Whareroa farm.

We split into 3 groups with Dennis leading the faster group of 10 up a steep ridge track on the south side of the farm to Campbell Mill Track and then into the Akatarawa Forest. Meanwhile the second group took the horse trail up to Campbell Mill Track and thence into the forest. The 3<sup>rd</sup> group of 4 had a slightly delayed start and followed a farm track up to power pylons. There was a loose agreement for the first 2 groups to meet for lunch in the forest but this didn't happen because the 2<sup>nd</sup> group decided to explore new territory and turned left off Hydro Road into Titi Road.



*it was a wild, changeable day*



*trampers bursts through gorse bushes onto road*



*the long Track (14.7km)*

Along the way we enjoyed good views of the Kapiti Coast with southbound traffic still inching along. During the day there was the odd rain shower and thanks to Gita it was still windy.

Whareroa farm has a great back story. Maori occupation before 1850, US Marines based there during WW2, later farmed by Lands and Survey Dept., possible sale for housing in 2003 thwarted by locals (Guardians of Whareroa). Now a DOC farm in partnership with the Guardians and a great multi-use facility for walkers, hikers, mountain bikers and runners.

It was good to see new tracks on the ground since our last visit and further regeneration of bush. All our party of 24 were back at the parking lot by 2.30pm. The road was clear for our return journey on the Kapiti express way. We then made an enjoyable coffee stop at the Quarter Acre Café, Manakau. Thanks to drivers Chris, Dennis, Anne and Marion

### Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February: Farewell for John Hunt, the Wednesday Trampers Senior Trumper

Report: Bob Hargreaves

Photos: Evan



*John having a cuppa*



*John Holding Forth*



*John and Margaret with Christine*



*Robert our Lone Piper*

On Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> about 30 current and past Wednesday Trampers gathered at the Mount Lees Reserve to farewell John Hunt who is shortly to leave Fielding to take up residence in a retirement apartment in Wellington.

John is about to celebrate his 90th birthday and until recently regularly joined the Wednesday Trampers. It was an indication of the affection in which he is held that so many joined the shared lunch and most the subsequent stroll around the reserve.

John thanked all in attendance for their support and friendship. He and his wife were applauded on their arrival. A feature of the gathering was a short bagpipe serenade played by our very own Robert Bruce and the delicious shared lunch augmented by pizzas shouted by the Club.

## 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February: Mangahao Flats Work Party

Report: Jean Garman

Photos: Jean Garman

Only the 5 of us this year although admittedly lots of the regulars did have good excuses. We took the minibus for the slow drive up to the top dam where there was only one other vehicle present. It was very calm, the only time I have seen a perfect reflection in the dam waters – very pretty. We walked the track in, clearing windfalls along the way, leap frogging each other with only 2 or 3 people working on each wind falls. There seems to be a fair bit of debris down so the first section took us a bit longer than usual. We were just about at the Harris Creek picnic table when we met a couple and their two beautiful ridgeback dogs coming the other way. Apparently their dogs had struggled a bit on some of the steep rocky bits on the gorge sidle track and they were wandering about trying to go back via the river. We told them it was doable but they would have to swim. After lunch we carried on with the track work with a large mess close to the hut and about a 100m section of the track (just before the final creek crossing) that needed to be rerouted as it was in imminent danger of being swallowed by the river. At the hut we cleaned (toilet, windows, gutters, water tank filter, etc, etc) and did some gardening, cutting back encroaching vegetation and beech trees trying to grow in the wrong places.



*Track work*  
*Hut work*  
*The happy crew*

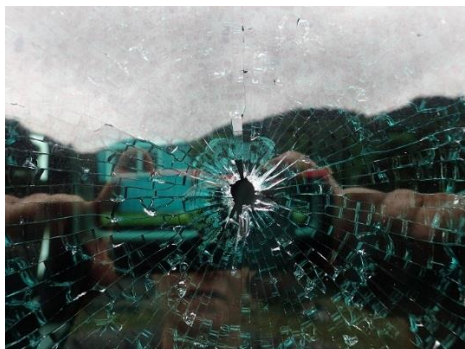
When we had finally had enough, we settled down for an entertaining round of nibbles and drinkies followed by a light dinner and a very heavy dessert which with only 5 of us, we failed to finish in its entirety. After a good long sleep, we awoke to some light rain and spent the morning cutting firewood and noted that some low life had not only removed and burnt some of the dwangs from the wood shed but had also removed the legs from the short bench and burnt those. With a final clean and a trace of the legs from the other bench (so Ivan could make replacements) we headed back out.



The rain did not persist so we lunched again at the picnic table on the way out, but it was gloomy enough to not want to swim the gorge. While munching, we were repeatedly buzzed by the Westpac rescue helicopter which then proceeded to land across the river from us. Thinking they wanted to talk to us and having thoughts about 2 people and 2 ridgebacks possibly being trapped somewhere in the gorge, we hopped across the river towards them, but they took off again before we could get there. Turns out there was a PLB activation up on Dundas Ridge and they were trying to get up there but were being beaten back by the weather.

We also got to shortcut from the swingbridge down the river and back round the side of the dam, making the walk out a lot more pleasant. Back at the dam, there were lots of Sunday drivers around, but when I went around the side of the van I was puzzled as the window on the sliding door looked funny. Ivan had to explain to me this was because it was broken – some bastard had shot the window with an air rifle. They hadn't broken into the van, just shot the window. On the way back out the middle of the window slowly came apart, but it wasn't too windy so didn't detract from the trip home – unfortunately it took about 2 weeks to get a replacement window for it..... Some people.....

We were Ken Mercer, Adam Matich, Jenny McCarthy, Ivan Rienks and Jean Garman



*The hole*



*The window before driving the Mangahao road and after*

### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March: Top Gorge Hut

Report: Adam Matich

Photos: Adam, Jean and Mike

At the Longview road end (Kashmir Rd which is a bit rough at the moment) we encountered a work party waiting for the low cloud to clear for their helicopter to take them into Top Gorge Hut for a lot of painting, lining the hut, building new bunks, installing a water tank and a meat safe. Good thing we didn't intend to stay for the night and not so good for the two hunters who wanted to. The low cloud was a boon for us while climbing the hill from Moorcock Saddle; the cool weather made it almost pleasant, it taking us 100 minutes to reach Longview Hut where Jean left a warning in the hut book about the temporary lack of accommodation at Top Gorge Hut. We then headed south along the ridge past Rocky Knob into a small gully (BL36 664714) which we followed down to and across the stream (there were a couple of tape markers and a cairn on the way) to pick up the cut hunter's track through the scrub on the northern side of this stream. This easy-to-follow track dropped us in the river around 50 m up-river of the stream confluence. The last part of the descent was on a steep grassy slope. From there we had 20 minutes of reasonable river travel down to Top Gorge Hut (3¼ hours). The work party hadn't arrived yet, and we were most of our way through lunch before we had to scatter to avoid the helicopter dropping a load of building materials on us. We gleefully unpacked it all in the hopes of finding some booze or good food to re-task. These people weren't stupid though; they bought the good stuff with them in the final load, so we had a dry trip.



*Load 1*



*Load 2*



*Load 3*

Mark was feeling lazy and shiftless so he badgered the helicopter pilot into flying him all the way back to the road end, leaving the rest of us to do it the proper way; on foot. Half an hour up-river of Top Gorge Hut the river vastly improved

to being pleasant, easy travel. Not far from Longview Hut we had two waterfalls to climb around, the lower one on a short easy track on the true left and the upper, large waterfall, on a formally marked track on the true right. Neither climb involved any fear or loathing. There was a third waterfall further up, but this one was easily avoided by climbing out just below it and making our way to Longview Hut (100 min). From thereon we had an easy hour of travel back down to the car where a well-rested Mark was waiting for us (7hr day).



*The very beautiful upper Pohangina River*

Top Gorge Hut gets quite a bit more use than it used to; largely by hunters. During low flows the river route makes it a nice loop from Longview Hut. It is planned to cut a biodiversity track down to the hut from the high point (BL36 658708) to the ESE, which will provide a safe all-weather route into the hut and will probably increase the traffic flows even more. We were Lazy Mark Learmonth, Jean Garman, Jenny McCarthy, Garry Grayson, and Adam Matich



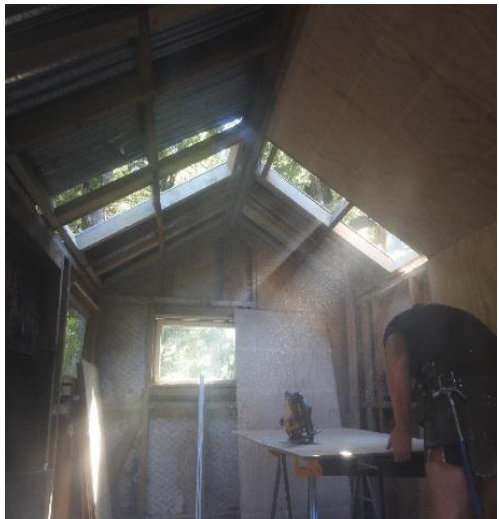
*All the gear + builders  
Matt and Mike*

*Before*

*During*

*After*

*Now a 4 bunk hut 😊*



Many thanks to John Beech and the Backcountry Trust for funding, DOC for facilitation and most importantly to Mike Charlton and Matt Scrimshaw for all their very hard work!

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February: Triumphant return to the Barra Track**

Report: Dennis and Bob

Photos: William

On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February, with the Van not available, 21 of us gathered at Memorial Park at 7.30am to begin our day out in a small fleet of cars. On reaching the Wairarapa, the weather was overcast and very muggy. To reach the

Mitre Flats Hut, the DOC prediction was that we had a nominal four hour tramp ahead of us. A 4pm deadline was set to be back at the Cars with the usual stop at midday for Lunch. We all started at 9.15am. Nine reached the Hut with four arriving within three hours and the rest a half hour later. The walk out for the hut baggers was slower than the walk in so they were 15 minutes later than planned, arriving back at the cars around 4.15pm to find that two cars had already left.

As Chris B remarked 'The Barra Track is a true tramping track with tree roots and rocky streams to negotiate'. Of the 12 that did not reach the hut, four on finding the track heavy going, turned by 11.30am. The remaining eight turned back after a 12.30ish lunch and all were safely out to the car park by approx. 3pm.

This was our third attempt on this tramp having twice before turned by bad weather and raging streams so it was a treat to get a fine but muggy day. This is a beautiful tramp with some of the finest bush and river views in the ranges. Thanks to trip leader Dennis for his persistence (he is not now seen as a Rain God!), and our many drivers for making the trip possible.



A True Tramping Track!



Morning Tea at a View Point



Mitre Flats Hut Bagged



**Contact Details**

**Postal Address:** MTSC, P.O. Box 245, Palmerston North

**Committee 2015 - 2016**

|                   |               |  |              |
|-------------------|---------------|--|--------------|
| President         | John Beech    | <a href="mailto:president@mtsc.org.nz">president@mtsc.org.nz</a>         | 06 354 9310  |
| Secretary         | Tim Swale     | <a href="mailto:secretary@mtsc.org.nz">secretary@mtsc.org.nz</a>         | 06 376 6556  |
| Treasurer         | Arthur Flint  | <a href="mailto:treasurer@mtsc.org.nz">treasurer@mtsc.org.nz</a>         | 06 356 7654  |
| Chief Guide       | Ken Mercer    | <a href="mailto:chief.guide@mtsc.org.nz">chief.guide@mtsc.org.nz</a>     | 06 356 7497  |
| Membership        | Sue Nicholson | <a href="mailto:membership@mtsc.org.nz">membership@mtsc.org.nz</a>       | 06 357 6325  |
| Newsletter Editor | Jean Garman   | <a href="mailto:editor@mtsc.org.nz">editor@mtsc.org.nz</a>               | 021 176 0209 |
| Lodge Manager     | John Lyttle   | <a href="mailto:lodge.manager@mtsc.org.nz">lodge.manager@mtsc.org.nz</a> | 027 433 6307 |
| Mini-Bus Manager  | Ken Mercer    |  | 06 356 7497  |

**General Committee:** Bob Hodgson, Howard Nicholson, Linda Campbell, Karen Tutt, William Laing

**Appointees**

|                 |   |  |             |
|-----------------|---|--|-------------|
| Lodge Bookings  | Hugh & Liz Wilde                          | <a href="mailto:lodge.bookings@mtsc.org.nz">lodge.bookings@mtsc.org.nz</a> | 06 356 9450 |
| Gear Custodian  | Peter Rawlins                             | <a href="mailto:gear@mtsc.org.nz">gear@mtsc.org.nz</a>                     | 06 356 7443 |
| Ski Captain     | Howard Nicholson                          | <a href="mailto:ski@mtsc.org.nz">ski@mtsc.org.nz</a>                       | 06 357 6325 |
| Social Convenor | Bob Hodgson                               | <a href="mailto:social@mtsc.org.nz">social@mtsc.org.nz</a>                 | 06 356 2915 |
| Wednesday Trips | Bev Akers                                 | <a href="mailto:bevakers@xtra.co.nz">bevakers@xtra.co.nz</a>               | 06 325 8879 |
| Thursday Trips  | Merv Matthews                             | <a href="mailto:merv6817@gmail.com">merv6817@gmail.com</a>                 | 06 357 2858 |
| Facebook        | Ivan Rienks, Karen Tutt, Howard Nicholson | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/mtsc.org.nz">facebook@mtsc.org.nz</a>    |             |

**New Members**

Prospective members must be nominated by a Proposer and a Seconder who are current MTSC members and have been so for at least one year. New memberships are confirmed at the next monthly committee meeting. Prospective members are encouraged to go on a club trip or attend a club night before joining. For further information or an application form please see the club website.

## Club Equipment

Hire equipment: we have packs, 2 and 3 person tents, tent flies (small and large), snow mats, gas cookers, size 8 and 9 boots, billies, food dehydrator and two bivvy bags. Ice axes, crampons, and helmets are also available. We have two personal locator beacons (PLB) for which there is no charge. Contact the Gear Custodian: Peter Rawlins on (06) 356 7443.

**Website** [www.mtsc.org.nz](http://www.mtsc.org.nz)

This contains club information, photos, contact details and back issues of this newsletter, Beechleaves. The club website is maintained by Howard Nicholson (06) 357 6325 and is kindly hosted by **Inspire Net**, a locally based company.

**Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/MTandSC>

## Accommodation at the MTSC lodge on Mount Ruapehu

The lodge is close to Iwikau Village, has power, heating, hot showers and is stocked with food. Members and their guests are welcome. For Lodge bookings email Liz and Hugh Wilde [lodge.bookings@mtsc.org.nz](mailto:lodge.bookings@mtsc.org.nz) or phone 021 054 2560. To confirm your booking, payment must be made by cheque to 179 Cook St Palmerston North 4410, by cash in person or internet payment (please email to confirm before depositing) Westpac account number 03 1521 022035300.

|                            | <b>Members</b> | <b>Guests</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Adult</b>               | <b>\$37</b>    | <b>\$52</b>   |
| <b>Secondary School</b>    | <b>\$30</b>    | <b>\$45</b>   |
| <b>Primary School</b>      | <b>\$25</b>    | <b>\$40</b>   |
| <b>Pre-school (3-5 yo)</b> | <b>\$12</b>    | <b>\$12</b>   |

The Lodge phone number is (07) 892 3860.

## Booking the MTSC Van

For bookings: Contact Ken Mercer (06) 356 7497. Cancellations should be made as soon as practicable to accommodate other potential users. A tent fly (in the passenger door) and a Personal Locator Beacon (in the glove box) are available for use free of charge on trips.