

beechleaves

Newsletter of the Manawatu Tramping and Skiing Club



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

Issue 4. May 2020

CLUB MEETINGS

Club meetings are held on the 1st 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.

All upcoming tramps have been postponed until the restrictions imposed by the New Zealand Government to control COVID-19 have been eased sufficiently.

Updates will be provided on the MTSC web site as appropriate. Meantime stay home and keep healthy.

7.30pm Tuesday 5 May Club Night by Zoom: Gaye Philpott: Nutrition for Trampers & Skiers

To register for the meeting, email clubnight@mtsc.org.nz and you will be emailed a link and password. Peter Rawlins and Howie Nicholson have kindly offered to assist anyone who is unfamiliar with Zoom from 7-7.30 pm on Tuesday 5 May. Their contact details are on page 22.

7.30 pm AGM Tuesday 19 May, 2020

This is likely to be a Zoom meeting as well so, if you are not familiar with it, do take the opportunity to try Zoom out on 5 May.

The way Karma works



<https://shareitsfunny.com/how-karma-works/>

REPORTS AND NOTICES

MTSC President: Rob Pringle

president@mtsc.org.nz

When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters – one represents danger, the other represents opportunity.

I can't remember a time in my life where I've been able to spend soon to be five weeks at home, albeit working, unable to travel in the weekends, and unable to visit any of the usual haunts. I've been completely reliant on what's in the 'cupboard' and have had to stick to my 'bubble'

A little while back a group of friends assisted in moving my garage – for which I am eternally grateful. Some were quite amazed at what came out; there was some head scratching, some cursing, and a lot of mumbling that a general clean was required. Well you'll be pleased to know that this crisis has given me the opportunity to embark on cleaning up the shed. I can now almost walk the entire length of the garage without tripping over anything; shelves have been built and items stored appropriately.

One of the challenges I've faced over this shut down period was to keep children busy and occupied in a time that raised uncertainty for all of us. One of the top priorities when ranked by them was to undertake a camping trip, so Camp Covid was erected; it was glamping at its finest, and with some tuition, was able to setup the children with an area where they can read, colour in, and cook. And cook they did, easing into things with burgers, followed by macaroni cheese, as well as haloumi, a good assortment of vegetables and pancakes on the occasional morning! They also undertook a great deal of conventional baking inside during the day... When you take the garage and you shake it to re order things, interesting items rise to the surface... we were able to repurpose a few things to bring a little more joy to Camp Covid. With the repurposing of a few of the 4wd toys, we were able to establish a zip line, combined with a slip and slide, find



fireworks for the evening entertainment, and marshmallow skewers to name but a few. The small humans spending hours each day running up and down sliding and slipping around and had an absolute ball.

I've been super impressed to see some of the antics that families around the country have come up with to keep their small people entertained – it would be great to read some accounts of how many of you have kept yourselves occupied. I've heard a few stories, walks around the block, bike

rides around your 'region' as well as some examples from further a far – one even going so far as to build a 'Ski lift' for his small people in the back yard! Feel free to send in a short synopsis of your adventures. We'd love to get these up on the club Facebook page to keep the stoke alive. ([facebook@mtsc.org.nz](https://www.facebook.com/mtsc.org.nz))

As I finish up writing this, the announcement has just been made that within a week, we will be entering level three for the week, which for the astute will tell you a couple of things. Firstly, I was late submitting my report – sorry Mary. - Secondly, by the numbers we appear to be beating this thing. I encourage you to stay positive, stay classy, and stay creative with the ways that you choose to occupy your time. It's been an interesting 'storm' for all of us to weather. I can't wait till we're allowed out to enjoy mother nature once again without restriction, but the collective health of our people should come first.

Stay safe out there, and we will meet again in the hills in due course.

Rob

Committee Update for April 2020:

by Ewen Cameron

The Committee met by Zoom, a first for the club, necessitated to enable us to both “meet” to progress the agenda but also meet lockdown requirements... Lockdown issues will feature a bit in this report... For many of us, meeting by Zoom was a new experience, so Peter and other experienced Zoom users explained how meeting should work.

Social activities

Linda reported that April’s meeting, to have been made by Claire Veltman on her Te Araroa trail experiences, had been cancelled ... lockdown again. Following some discussion, we agreed that club and committee meetings should continue in whatever form supports getting together. As Linda has organised speakers/activities monthly until October, she was to contact the speakers to see if they are prepared to participate in a Zoom meeting. The general feeling was that we’d need to be prepared to have our May meeting using Zoom and that, by doing that, it would help club members gain experience using Zoom so that, should the AGM have to be held using the same approach (it’s scheduled for May 19th), they’d have had at least one experience with it. Following the meeting Linda has contacted our May speaker, who has agreed to present in a Zoom meeting.



*Photos by John Brock: Castle Rocks Trip
See report below*

Lodge

The Lodge sub-committee has continued to meet to discuss priorities for building work, but found that access for a planned work party was lost as the Bruce Road was closed with very short notice. With easy/vehicular access to the Lodge removed, there was some concern raised over whether the building was properly prepared for winter. This required that the last users had shut down the building properly. [John has now checked and confirmed it was down as required... thanks Feilding High School.] Further discussion took place over issues with fixed costs continuing at the Lodge even though there will perhaps be no/low occupancy this winter. Rob said that RMCA are approaching suppliers to see if member clubs can get some financial relief.



In terms of income and bookings related to the Lodge, as part of making what is happening more transparent, the committee has been considering adoption of an accounting package to replace the spreadsheet-based system in place at present. With appropriate add-ons to an accounting system both membership and bookings could be tracked. At the moment, the Treasurer can get detail of expenses, but not income, committee members

who have used such packages report that the process of collecting financial information and preparing reports from that is much faster than when spreadsheets are used. Progressing this approach is on-going but will be discussed in depth at the May committee meeting.

Ski Season and MTSC Lodge

A (reduced) food carry is still scheduled for June, 2020. The plan is to open the lodge for the ski season within the constraints of the Covid19 restrictions. John Lyttle is also hoping to run one work party before the season starts in earnest. Alert level 4 restrictions have already affected ski season preparations by RAL.

The tramping addict's guide to surviving lockdown

by Hazel Phillips

“We are all in the gutter”, Oscar Wilde wrote, “but some of us are looking at the stars.” Wilde’s wisdom was never more relevant than over the past month while we’ve been in lockdown, many of us confined to small spaces without much more to do than gaze at our navels. For the hardcore tramping addict, lockdown is like being grounded, only Mum has grounded all your mates, too. Here’s a laundry list of how to survive if lockdown becomes a regular thing and we can’t get out in the hills like we used to. The main idea is to use the time as productively as possible, freeing up future time for tramping missions.

1. Dehydrate all the food. If you don’t have a dehydrator, you can use your oven – just make sure the heat is on low and you’re on the ‘fan force’ setting. Try low-cost, low-risk items at first (carrots are great) and work your way up to experimenting with full meals, pre-cooked then dehydrated. Just keep hitting the oven every day and you’ll soon have an impressive stash of dehy food, treats and meals for your next big epic in the wilderness. Bonus: having to keep things in the oven at low temps means you won’t be tempted to crank it up and bake cookies.
2. Clean your boots. If you’re out every weekend, your boots get a hammering, and let’s face it – we don’t always take care of them like we should. Google is your friend to find the manufacturer’s instructions on how to care for them. Get rid of that caked-on mud from your last tramp in the Tararuas. Plus, it’s better for the trees if you’re heading into kauri country any time to have squeaky clean boots.
3. While you’re at it, clean everything else too. Grab some down wash liquid and clean up your sleeping bag and down jacket – they get stinky too. - Packs also need a wash and all of these items can take some time to dry.
4. Write your goal list for the rest of 2020. Go ‘finger tramping’ on the topo map (Hint: you can download the Topo GPS app relatively cheap or use nztopomaps.com free). Aim for at least 10 trips outside of winter conditions and 10 trips you can do no matter what the weather throws



Photo by John Brock: Castle Rocks Trip

- at us. Tip: Waihohonu Hut is a fantastic winter destination – it’s occasionally blessed with a bit of snow, but the terrain means you don’t need crampons or ice axe, it’s a quick walk in, and it’s free with the yearly hut pass, outside of the booking season (i.e. winter). You’ll meet other like-minded tramping lovers there, crank the fire and have a ripping time.
5. Print out topo maps for your trip goals for the rest of 2020, or download hi-res files from Land Information NZ (<https://www.linz.govt.nz/land/maps/topographic-maps>) and cut and crop to get exactly the map you want and nothing you don’t.
 6. Make a list of everything you want to buy at Bivouac once we’re out of lockdown. For me, that’s a proper pair of mountaineering boots and crampons to fit, to match my list of winter objectives on Ruapehu. Support the economy!
 7. Write up trip reports for the club newsletter, for Wilderness magazine, or for the FMC blog Wilderlife. They all need content, and the best content comes from the tramping community.
 8. Done all of those? Hop online and investigate ‘PB2’ – it’s dehydrated peanut butter. It’ll blow your mind.

Origins of the Ruahine User Group (RUG)

by John Beech

1. Remotehuts.co.nz was set up on the West coast some years back by a group of ex DoC NZFS workers under the group name of Permolat. They were concerned about the lack of maintenance in some of their remote west coast huts. DoC had more or less abdicated any responsibility for them and, rather than let them all fall down, set up a trust to try and keep them going. It was very successful and they have put thousands of hours of volunteer time and money into saving many huts set for removal.

*Billy Goat Gruff by John Bock
See Pukurua Bay Circuit below*

2. A couple of years later a community group was set up to meet with DoC Manawatu to look at trying to get both working together for the good of the recreation and biodiversity in the Ruahine Forest Park. The RUG group is not a trust however, and just ended up by piggybacking on the Remote huts website to provide a platform to have a forum. It is open to anyone to join and meets about 3 times a year to discuss Ruahine issues.

3. The Backcountry trust was set up originally when DoC had a surplus of money a few years back and wanted to know if it could be used by the community to maintain those huts and tracks that DoC did not have the budget for. This was in the dark days under National where all the Conservation budget was being slashed and what money they did have was earmarked for large tourism projects like the Great Walks. The money was allocated by 3 groups, FMC, NZDA and Trailfund. Since its inception it has been so successful that DoC has continued to fund it and it has morphed into a trust and the money is doled out to pay for hut maintenance on those huts that DoC has no interest in. They paid for a new long drop that I and a couple of mates built for Gold Creek hut. Anyone can apply to the BCT for funds to do track and hut maintenance.



4. MTSC's involvement is limited really. Jean Garman used to attend the RUG meetings, on behalf of the club, but I haven't seen her for quite a while now. No one else takes any part in it but I report to the committee usually and keep them up to date as I do from time to time on FMC issues. I represent the club and FMC on the RUG group. PNTMC and the various deerstalking groups around the Ruahines are also active in the group. It's a good way to keep up to date with what's happening and maintain a closer relationship with DoC.

Feel free to join up to the RUG group, then you will get all the emails that come through on the forum. It costs nothing and you don't have to do anything. Probably only about a third of the members contribute but all are welcome.



*Mana Island by John Brock:
Pukurua Bay Circuit*

Hut Tickets for Sale

Hut tickets

can be purchased from Howard Nicholson at club nights. \$5/ticket for adults and \$2.50 for youth (11-17 years). Information about Back Country Hut Passes, valid for 6 or 12 months, as well as the use of hut tickets is available on the DOC web site.

Entertainment Ideas from DOC during Covid19 Restrictions

(kindly supplied by Abbi Wightman)

1. [Nature activities for families](#)
2. We've found some more great conservation activities to keep you and your family busy and engaged with nature in your back yard.



Nature ninja

Use your five senses (touch, taste, hearing, smell and sight) to find and photograph the wildlife outside your door.

Colouring adventure

Kākāpō ranger Sarah Little has created this fantastic colouring page. Print it off and break out the pencils.



MAKE YOUR OWN WASP TRAP



What you'll need:



1.5 litre plastic soft drink bottle

Water

Sugar
(can use honey instead)

Vinegar

How to make it:



1 Cut the top quarter off a plastic 1.5 litre soft drink bottle.

You may need a grownup to help you with this bit!

2 Invert the top and glue it back on so the narrow opening faces down into the bottle.

3 Half fill the trap with a mixture of sugar or honey (2 tablespoons), 200 ml warm water to dilute and a glass of vinegar.

Expert Trapping Tips

Ensure your traps are working effectively



Cam Speedy from Wildlife Management Associates has over 40 years of experience in predator, threatened species and ecosystem management. ‘Attention-to-detail’ is Cam’s number one tip for trapping. He believes if you just ‘plonk’ trapping kit in the bush with little thought, it’s a waste of your time. Ineffective kit sitting around, catching nothing and rotting in our forests is an increasing issue we can’t afford if we want to achieve a predator free NZ by 2050.

Join Cam as he [shares his vast knowledge and expertise](#).

Department of Conservation Notice

The Department of Conservation’s priority is to support New Zealand in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.

- New Zealanders are being told to stay home to break the chain of community transmission of this deadly virus. DOC is playing its part. Right now that means DOC facilities and offices are closed **and tracks and national parks are out of bounds** unless they are right by your home.
- Recreation in the great outdoors needs to be put on hold as the country goes into lockdown for the next four weeks.
- All DOC staff who are not involved in Incident Management Teams are working from home. This includes rangers and other field staff.
- We have arrangements in place for essential care services for threatened native species including kākāpō, and other sanctuaries. DOC will be monitoring the situation over the coming days and weeks and may respond in specific situations, should safety issues arise in conservation areas.
- Visit DOC’s website for information including track updates, closures and safety advice: www.doc.govt.nz

Most of DOC's work with wildlife will be on hold while under alert level 4 unless it's essential for animal welfare or to deal with a significant hazard to public health and safety. DOC will continue essential care for animals such as kaki/black stilt, takahe and other species held in captive facilities provided this can be done in a way that is safe for staff and meets requirements for minimal contact under alert level 4. Wildlife emergencies, such as whale strandings or an animal in distress, will be assessed on a case by case basis, while we remain at Level 4 Alert.

Scheduled trap checks for trapping programmes in conservation areas will be delayed while staff, contractors and volunteers self-isolate at home. While we are at alert level 4, DOC is advising people not to check traplines on public conservation land or other public land.

Recreation in the great outdoors needs to be put on hold as the country is in lockdown. DOC has closed all huts and campsites, and asks no one uses these until further notice. People should not use DOC huts and campsites as these are not suitable for use during alert level 4. Closure notices have gone up across DOC's website. No hunting permits are being issued until further notice. We expect the public to do the right thing for their safety and the safety of others.

DOC, like everyone in New Zealand, is currently adjusting to life in lock down. We are figuring out how to do our work with the tools and constraints we have, as I am sure you are.

Tramping Friend

By Dorothy Johnstone

Tramping to the top of hills
She's so very strong willed
Capturing beauty at its best
Her camera at the ready when she rests
Leading the bunch many a time
It's Maureen at the front of the line.
Slithering down on her bum
It was a challenge that she won
To conquer the steep terrain
After the previous night's rain
Coppermine creek was where I saw it happen
I was behind her on that slope, nearly flattened.



Photo by John Brock: Castle Rocks Trip



All tramps and work parties have been cancelled until the restrictions imposed by the New Zealand Government to control COVID-19 have been eased sufficiently to allow nonessential travel and group interaction.



Thursday 16th January, 2020:Maunganui – Searching for an Air Crash Site

(Private) Trip Leader, Reporter and Photographer: Royce Mills

A geocaching friend suggested a good day tramp to find a geocache at an aircraft crash site in the vicinity of Maunganui (708m) in the Akatarawas. I had no problems finding some fellow mid-week trampers to join me, namely Ewen Cameron, Judy Swainson and Judith Tonson. None of us had been in this area before

which turned out to be a delightful tramping area. I'm the only geocacher in the group but the others understand what I was up to and could be very helpful.

About the air crash (information from the geocaching page):

“On November 20th 1941 an airforce training plane crashed at this site in bad weather while on a training flight from Ohakea. The plane was an Airspeed Oxford Mk II and its serial number was



NZ1245. Two young pilots lost their lives in the crash - their names were Charles Baker and Winston Cannel. - Despite extensive searching, it wasn't until April 1943 that the wreckage was discovered by hunters in hill country near Maunganui. The bodies of both pilots were recovered on the 14th of April 1943.

At the site there is still considerable wreckage to be seen, spread over a wide area amongst the bush. Although the main body of the plane was removed in the 1940s, many large aeroplane parts and pieces of twisted metal are still at the site. The site is about 2km from Maunganui and can be reached along narrow unmapped trails.”



The best access is from Valley Road SE of Paraparaumu, then Maungakotukutuku Road. There are a lot of trails in the bush and we had to be careful but it was fairly straight forward finding our way to Maunganui peak. From Maunganui I was using a gpx file which the geocache owner kindly emailed to me. All was going very smoothly until very close to this cache, we could not find any plane wreckage. Then I had all sorts of problems with satellite signal. We widened our search, took a lunch stop and tried again in a different direction but no success with no satellite signal, and I was the only

one with a GPS. We could not find the sign at the location or any wreckage and in the end had to leave without success. Disappointing but not too distressing as it will be a good excuse to go back again.

It was an excellent 6 hour 45 min day tramp, including stops, searching and stopping to admire the views along the way. We all enjoyed the beauty of the bush and vegetation and it was not a steep or difficult tramp; it just requires careful navigation. A good day out with very good company. Looking forward to a return visit in the future!

Thursday 5th March, 2020: Pukerua Bay to Plimmerton Circuit

Trip Leader and Reporter: Craig Ross

Photographer: John Brock

Fourteen trampers headed off from Pukerua Bay on a sunny but breezy autumn day, making for Plimmerton via the Taua Tapu track. The track was an important access way to Te Raupapha's Taupō Pa at what is now



Morning break on the southern end of Taua Tapu Track

Plimmerton. Tapu because it was used by Māori war parties, who were considered sacred, during the 1840s tensions between Māori and European settlers. It's an open track, with a hilly section through pasture paddocks.

We stopped for morning drinks & a snack on a high point overlooking Plimmerton down to Porirua, with the Transmission Gully roadworks in the distance. Lynda and Richard joined us at Plimmerton, to walk part of the coastal track. On the way, we came across a herd of feral goats along the shore, led by "billy goat gruff".

With the breeze at our backs and the sun warming our faces, we tramped the Wairaka Track around the



shingle & rocky shoreline to the old quarry site for our lunch break. I hadn't seen the sea so calm before – there were no waves coming in!

We were back at the vehicles by mid-afternoon, for icecreams at the Pukerua Bay dairy, then back to Palmy before 5 pm.

Thursday 19th March, 2020: Castle Rocks

Trip Leader, Reporter and Photographer: John Brock

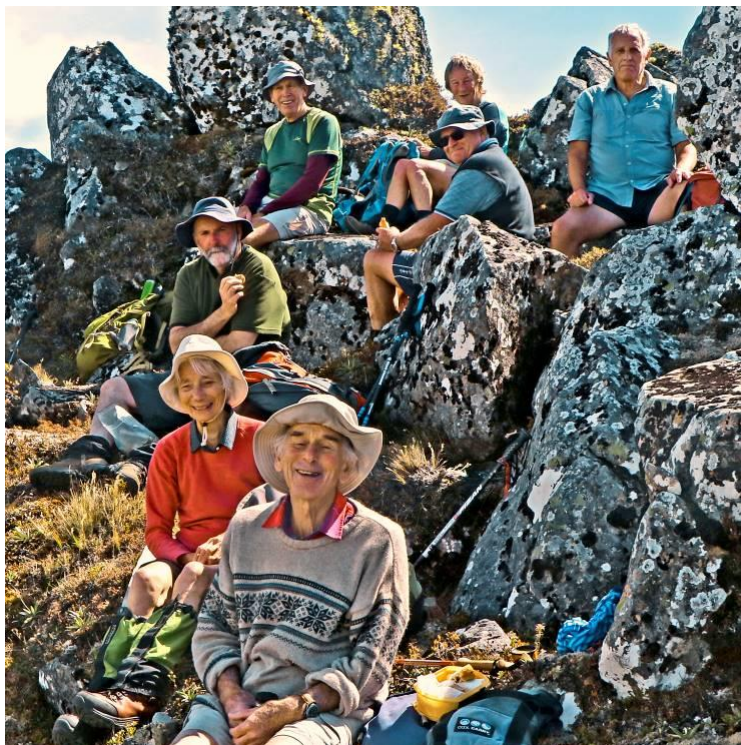
We were 13 when the van and one car left at 7.30 a.m. for Castle Rocks, but on arrival at the Desert Road track entrance at 9.30 a.m., we were 14. That's because Ewen Cameron, who had been on the Wednesday trip to Mt Urchin and stayed overnight at Lake Taupo, met us there. The weather was good but instead of

the totally clear skies of the day before, there was a mantle of low cloud behind Ruapehu and



covering Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. To the east, where we were going, skies were clearer, with opposing high-level winds and low-level breezes making for some interesting cloud formations.

We set a leisurely pace, keeping together pretty well, although a bit like a concertina with the faster ones stretching out then allowing the slower to close up. The track undulated along the ridge, alternating between the tussock lands tops and mountain beech forest clad valleys. The last stretch to the 'rocks', usually quite wet, was dry and dusty, thanks to the long summer drought; the vegetation was a little lack-lustre as a consequence. After nearly 3 hours, 11 of us reached our destination. Lunch, on the 'rocks' among the red tussock, was entirely memorable, as we sat in the sun soaking up the 'sound of silence' in this wonderful environment.



The trip back, also very leisurely, allowed plenty of time for conversations and botanising for those so inclined. Refuelling, both the van and ourselves at the Taihape BP on the way home rounded off the day, arriving back at Palmerston North a little late.

Overall, this trip was not too strenuous or long, topping out at 1475m with only a 388m gain in height from the Desert Road. The ups and downs along the ridge accumulated a greater total gain (and loss) of 1386m (thanks Ewen, for the stats). All in all, it was a good day's walk, enjoyed by everyone taking part. As fate would have it, this turned out to be our last pre-Covid-19 walk, making it perhaps of greater significance in hindsight.

21st – 22nd March, 2020 ~~Dorset Ridge~~ South Ohau Hut

Trip Leader and Reporter: Dave Mitchell

Photographer: Adam Matich

Due to expected high winds on the tops we decided to go into South Ohau hut instead.

The Ohau River was low so the four of us made our way up the river in fine conditions. The gorged part of the river is still quite navigable but it seemed there were a lot of slippery rocks to pick our way through. The last half hour of river travel is much nicer as the valley opens up.



We reached South Ohau about 1pm and Jenny, Adam and Jean got stuck into clearing some of the overgrown

toitoi around the hut. They also cleaned the windows and interior walls. I left for Te Matawai hut to drop off

a new intentions book. Just after 4pm I arrived back for afternoon tea which included a selection of Adams brewed wines.

By 5-30pm we had enjoyed some pre dinner nibbles and wine. As it turned out no else showed up at the hut for the night either, which I thought unusual. After dinner the desert started with a self-saucing sponge pudding which Adam carried in. Then we had chocolates which Jean had carried in. Eventually we all tucked up in our sleeping bags by 8-30pm with Adam deciding to sleep on the deck as it wasn't cold.

It rained overnight and by morning the river had definitely risen a bit. We left the hut about 9am and headed up the river to start of the marked route which leads up to Gable end ridge. It was initially gloomy and wet



as we followed marker tapes up through the bush. Jean added some new tape where necessary. It took well over an hour before we hit the leatherwood zone where Adam started trimming back bits and pieces as we progressed. Just as we came out on the Gable End ridge we met a lone American Te Araroa NoBo (North Bound) walker who had been at Te Matawai. Gable End ridge has some deep mud holes which I found several times; otherwise it is not a bad walk down a track that sees a lot of use. We had a quick lunch stop and were down at the river again by 2pm. The river was discoloured with the extra runoff. From there it was another hour's walk back to the bush edge doing a little track clearing along the way. As we found out later this was to be the last weekend tramp before lockdown. South Ohau hut is a good hut to visit occasionally and DOC appreciates the maintenance we carry out sometimes. Thanks to Jean, Jenny and Adam for the company. We all look forward to tramping again after Covid 19.

Old Ghost Road

by Jill Faulkner

For those who may be interested and wanting to plan for a future tramp, The Old Ghost Road is worth dreaming about and certainly lived up to a memorable and thrilling 5 days. It consists of 85 kms of walking to the West Coast of the South Island, while skirting the Kahurangi National Park.

Day 1 starts at an historical reserve on the Buller River, at Lyell, 30 minutes from Murchison. Lyell used to be a thriving settlement in the 1880's goldrush days of "early" NZ. We commenced the track following an

easy gradient through dense podocarp and beech forest, eventually getting to our hut at Lyell Saddle. All the huts along the track were well made with modern facilities and always a welcome sight.

On **day 2** the original old road fades out and the new track was developed to go high up above the bushline and across the rugged and spectacular mountain tops. We climbed to about 1250m altitude with tussock and harakeke all around. Higher peaks of the Lyell Range are seemingly within touching distance.

Day 3 saw our group descending along the Skyline Ridge with expansive views back to Murchison and more breath taking scenery.

Noisy bird life is very evident each day and friendly wekas and South Island robins, joined us when we stopped.

Day 4: Our much anticipated longest day of 25 kms has arrived. We meander through massive podocarp forests of kahikatea, matai, rimu, and mature lancewoods. Yes, definitely a big day. Track maintenance is on-going; the track is privately owned by the Mokihinui-Lyell Backcountry Trust.



Day 5: The last day had us following the Mokihinui River gorge and enjoying listening to the birds and an active river, as we make our way out to Seddonville. I seem a lot fitter now for some reason.

We were the last group to enjoy the experience before the March 2020 lockdown. I am so grateful for the good memories. Many thanks to my fun companions, Rita, Margaret M and Judy.

The When, Where and Why of a Winter Overnight Tramp

Trip Leader: Bev Akers

Reporter: Bob Hodgson

Photos: William, Pam & Maureen.

To many people, including my Dear Wife, Sue, the very idea of an overnight tramp is anathema (a term meaning something that is vehemently disliked; it had its origin in a papal doctrinal curse)! An explanation is needed for the appeal of tramping for hours through a hostile and wintry landscape while carrying a pack weighing around 15 kg, only to arrive at a primitive hut with barely more amenity than a garden shed with the crude, external toilet facilities. I will attempt to do this by describing a recent overnight winter tramp that I enjoyed with seven members of the Wednesday Tramping group of the MTSC.

The Tramp.

A weather check made a week in advance of our proposed tramp to the Roaring Stag Hut, made promise of a dry warm day. Sadly, as the week passed by, the forecast for Wednesday 16th of August changed from good to poor to worse! On the day, seventeen day-trampers and seven overnight trampers assembled at the Putaru Road end after a drive in that had featured both rain and spectacular rainbows. The original intention was for most to aim for the Roaring Stag Hut and for the more energetic overnights to make their way up and back to Cattle Ridge Hut. Hughie the rain God, had other ideas! The river and creeks were in high flood so at 9-15 we all set off in the direction of the Cross Roads and Herepai. The day trampers had the target of being out by 3pm.

The Track and the River.

The track was very wet and muddy and the river, viewed from the swing bridges, both inspiring and intimidating.

At the point in time when the last of the group of overnight trampers was at the centre of the second swing bridge, a very loud clap of thunder occurred. She responded by bounding across the metal bridge to the relative safety of the bush.



Climbing in Rain and Hail.

As we climbed up from the bridge, conditions progressively deteriorated as the rain increased in intensity and the temperature dropped. In these conditions it was slow going and a good test of rain gear. Then the rain turned to hail! By this time it was cold enough for the hail to float and spin



on the top of the puddles on the track. As the last of the overnights reached the top of the steep climb and were splashing their way towards the junction they started to encounter groups of day trampers making their way back. Not one of them expressed even a slight regret that they were not overnighting!

For the record, six of the day-trampers made it to the hut and kindly kindled the hut fire. Most turned at or near the Junction, see the map below.

The Day-Trampers Emerge.

In the conditions of the day, a tramp that in summer that would be graded "easy" became a test of stamina and sure-footedness. But for a few very muddy butts (!), all of the day trampers were safely out at the road end by 2-45pm and the headed to Lazily Graze in the Café of the same name in Eketahuna.

The Hut as a Haven.

By 2pm, all seven of the overnights were cozily installed in the Herepai Hut where the weather conditions literally washed away any thoughts of secondary tramps. The first priority was to shed wet garments and to brew hot cups of tea and soup. The next priority was to top up the wood supply. There was a plentiful supply of fallen branches in the bush adjacent to the hut. Branches needed to be collected, hacked up into lengths suitable for the hut stove then



dried. This posed a challenge as the available hut tools consisted of two tatty panel saws with almost no set on the teeth, and an axe that needed sharpening! (Memo to self; carry a small file.) In addition, one of us had a small knife sized folding saw. The firewood project was a team effort that kept most of us busy for an hour or so.

The tempest continued until late in the evening as the “Magnificent Seven” enjoyed their evening meals, a shared bottle of wine, traditional hut talk and comforts. It is a convention that each overnighter takes a treat to share; chocolate, popcorn, and dried fruit are examples. Not enjoyed were the flames and fumes from Ian’s ancient white spirit stove that he had resurrected after it’s long



retirement. The stove was a temporal match for his Mountain Mule Backpack returned to use after almost 50 years of storage!

Bed Time Stories.

Conversation in a remote hut between a relaxed group of friends takes on a character that probably has its origin in the early days of humanity. On our arrival our conversation started with practical matters and, over the seven hours that elapsed before the last candle was extinguished, it gradually diverged. We all agreed that the

antics of Trump were not to be a topic of conversation! Some of the topics that were included were: the parlous state of the hut deck (Dear Maggie Barrie...), the reliability of weather forecasts, how to keep socks dry when donning wet boots, how to detect depression in ourselves and others, and finally as a bed time story, an account of a three year OE primarily spent hitch hiking in trucks around the USA, Canada and Europe that included a night camping in London’s Hyde Park.

Sunrise and Departure.

We had a good night; with seven of us in an eight-bunk hut it was a blessing that nobody snored. We were all out of our sleeping bags by seven am and witnessed a brief but spectacular sunrise on the hillside opposite to the hut. We were packed up and the hut cleaned in time for a 9am departure.

The weather was an improvement from the previous day: it was fine but cool day. Conditions under foot were also improved, drier but far from dry. Soon after we reached the first swing bridge the forecast rain for the day started to build and it was in a down pour that we changed out of our tramping gear. It was a happy band of seven that then travelled back over the Pahiatua Track with a welcome stop en-route at the Lazy Graze Café in Eketahuna for coffee and exaggerated conversation.

The Zen of Overnight Tramping.

In my brief account I have described a weather affected overnight tramp. It could be seen as two days of strenuous exercise taken in adverse conditions and punctuated by an overnight stay in a small, remote, crowded, leaky hut with primitive sanitary arrangements. That would be a superficial assessment; we all enjoyed ourselves and agreed that it had been a memorable adventure. Why was this so?

We enjoyed the proximity of the bush in its full winter bloom, the physical challenge of the conditions and the brief simplicity of life. Most of all, we enjoyed the camaraderie and mutual support required by the conditions. Thanks to Trip Leader Bev, and drivers Bev and Ian.

11 May, 2018 Arches National Park

Reporter & Photographer: Doug Pringle

In 2018 we were fortunate to visit some of America's national parks.

The two of us ventured into the Arches National Park, Utah on 11 May 2018. There are some 2000 arches to see, but we settled for those we could do on short return walks of less than 5 km. To appreciate as much as we could in single day our approach was to get an overview by driving as far as we could along the no exit Park road and then picking off the trails that appealed as we came out. The day was fine and warm, but the wind picking up the sand grains in the Devils Garden trailhead area made for stinging on exposed skin and the face when walking in to the wind.



Landscape arch – Devils Garden area



A hole and mature arch on right of hole. Turret arch, Windows Section

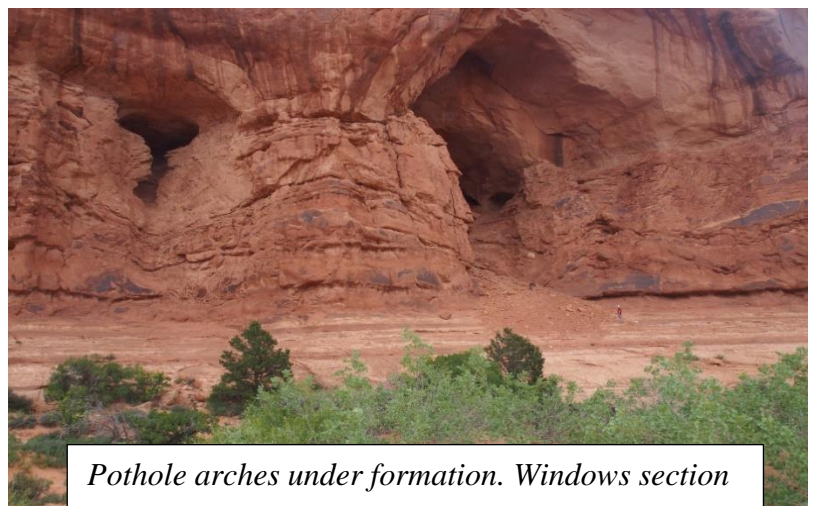
First up to visit was Landscape Arch. Spanning some 93 m it holds claim to being one of the longest spans in the world. In 1991 walkers thought they heard thunder, as part of this arch collapsed dropping an estimated 180 tonnes of rock from the right hand side.

Arches are not static features. As the Entrada Sandstone has been thrust up, it cracked into "fins" or closely spaced ridges. Rainwater dissolves the cement holding the sand grains together. This, along with freeze and thaw erosion, can result in piecing the fin in weaker areas to form a hole. If there is harder slick rock still

above, then over time the softer sandstone material crumbles to form an arch. Wind will blow the sandstone out. The softer material will continue to fall out allowing the arch to grow, till eventually the arch is destroyed by the same forces that formed it.

Another method for an arch to build is through a depression in the sand stone. Water collects and seeps through to the underlying sandstone creating an alcove. This erodes out and eventually the roof will collapse forming a pothole arch. There are lots of pothole arches in the Windows Section area that are easy walks.

The best way to appreciate the size of an arch is get right under it, which then makes it difficult to photograph.



Pothole arches under formation. Windows section

The Park is a desert area and vegetation mostly Cacti species, drought tolerant plants, and wind battered trees. Walking is confined to defined trails or river beds to avoid damage to vegetation. The trails are rated according to difficulty. There is no shade; the day time heat, and wind means it is essential to take drinking water. There is no food or accommodation in the Park. The one and only campground at Devils Garden needs to be booked some 6 months in advance. Back country freedom walking and camping requires a permit.

We were Irene and Doug.



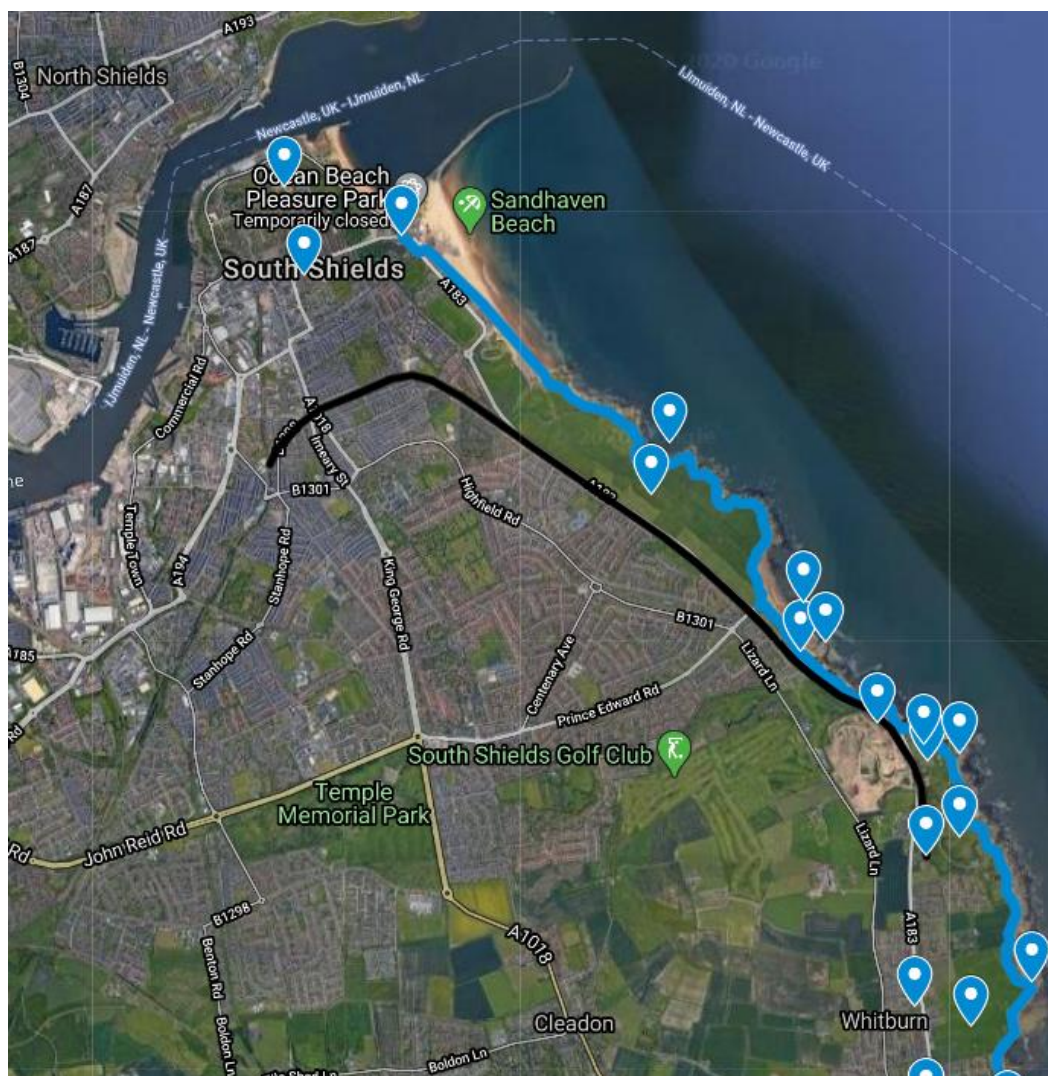
Whitburn to South Shields: Coastal Tramp in the North East of England

Reporter and Photographer: Bob Hodgson

Quite some years ago my wife's family moved from Bolton in Lancashire to the small seaside town of Whitburn, located on the north east coast between Sunderland and South Shields. One of the special pleasures of our

occasional visits is to be able to tramp the local coastal tracks. I have happy memories of these tracks enhanced by the fact that our visits have not been made in the winter when the North Sea can be **very** bleak. In common with much of the NE Whitburn, flourished in the industrial revolution, in this case because of coal mining; it has no harbor.

On this occasion I tramped north in the company of Ian, my brother-in-law. A tramp to the south could be equally rewarding. Before I start my account here is a bit of history. The friendly people of the area are known as



Geordies. There is no agreed explanation for the name but the regional people were staunch supporters of the [Hanoverian kings](#), in particular of [George I](#) during the 1715 rebellion. A practical consequence of this was that the region was granted a monopoly for the production of glass. Sands in the local river mouth, the Weir are still a source of glass fragments used in craft jewellery by my sister-in-law (See below).

Taking the coastal track north from Whitburn the first place of interest is an abandoned army rifle range in the meadows above the low sea cliffs. Next inland to the North about a kilometre, there is the unlikely site of a windmill. This was restored in recent times but was in use from the 16th century until the arrival of the steam age. Nearby is a disused colliery that employed many in the past. Associated with this is the village of Marsden memorable because it has completely vanished! Associated with the village and colliery was "The Marsden Rattler" a colliery railway that ran from 1879 to 1968. The route is



The Souter Lighthouse and Fog Horn

shown as a solid black line on the map but little remains of it today.

After about 35 minutes walking we arrived at the Souter Lighthouse, a major facility now in the hands of the National Trust offering facility tours and an excellent shop and café. My brother-in-law, Ian is a volunteer guide here and has recently been trained and licenced to operate the large diesel engine that drives the fog horn. The horn occupies a dedicated building and is LOUD.

The track, though muddy in places is easy going and not to be compared with a Kiwi tramping track. It is well used by walkers and runners. In shore of the lighthouse and to the north there are a number of disused, industrial sites including a small steelworks and lime kilns. The cliffs gradually increase in height until the next point of interest is achieved: the Marsden Grotto. The vertical shaft is that of a lift that takes people down to a café built into caves at the base of the cliff.



The Marsden Grotto photographed from the beach and inside

There is also a public stair case down to the Marsden Bay Beach; this was the route I chose, partly to look at the sea birds nesting on the cliff face.



The view from beyond Marsden Bay showing both the Souter Lighthouse and the Marsden Grotto

The coastal track then follows the coastline to South Shields and the mouth of the river Tyne. Here there are even some ruins of a Roman Fort. Our immediate destination was a large workshop on the river bank where Ian also worked as a volunteer in an organisation that restores vintage life-boats.



A Restored Life Boat in the river Tyne



The Motto of a local volunteer lifeboat and Ian with a small, restored rowed lifeboat

Our final destination was the sometime Customs House located further up the river Tyne, now reused as a theatre and café. Here after a walk of about four hours, we had lunch and rendezvoused with our support crewe. **Not a tramp as we know it but a tramp full of interesting diversions.**



**Bird nesting on cliff near Marsden Bay Beach;
Bob near the end of the coastal section of the tramp**





Contact Details

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

Committee 2019 - 2020

President	Rob Pringle	president@mtsc.org.nz	020 426 2176
Secretary	Tim Swale	secretary@mtsc.org.nz	06 376 6556
Treasurer	Ewen Cameron	treasurer@mtsc.org.nz	0220341180
Chief Guide	Ken Mercer	chief.guide@mtsc.org.nz	027 364 6475
Membership	Sue Nicholson	membership@mtsc.org.nz	06 357 6325
Newsletter Editor	Mary Mercer	editor@mtsc.org.nz	027 372 5375
Lodge Manager	John Lyttle	lodge.manager@mtsc.org.nz	027 433 6307
Mini-Bus Manager	Ken Mercer	minibus@mtsc.org.nz	027 364 6475

General Committee: John Beech, William Laing, Richard Lander, Howard Nicholson, Peter Rawlins

Appointees

Lodge Bookings	Hugh & Liz Wilde	lodge.bookings@mtsc.org.nz	021 054 2560
Gear Custodian	Peter Rawlins	gear@mtsc.org.nz	027 678 0747
Ski Captain	Howard Nicholson	ski@mtsc.org.nz	027 294 1941
Social Convenor	Linda Campbell	social@mtsc.org.nz	027 333 4493
Wednesday Trips	Bev Akers	bevakers@xtra.co.nz	06 325 8879
Thursday Trips	Merv Matthews	merv6817@gmail.com	06 357 2858
Facebook	Ivan Rienks, Rob Pringle, Karen Tutt, Howard Nicholson facebook@mtsc.org.nz		

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, billys, 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

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 or phone 021 054 2560. To confirm your booking, payment must be made by cash to 179 Cook St Palmerston North 4410 in person or internet payment (please email to confirm before depositing) Westpac account number 03 1521 022035300.

	Members	Guests	The lodge phone number is (07) 892 3860.
Adult	\$40	\$58	
Secondary School	\$32	\$48	
Primary School	\$26	\$42	
Pre-school (3-5 yo)	\$13	\$13	

Booking the MTSC Van:For bookings: Contact Ken Mercer 027 364 6475. 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.