

South Wairarapa Tramping Club

Newsletter for February 2017

www.swtc.org.nz

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14 February meeting: A 6pm BBQ at 57 Wood St, Greytown (back house down a shared drive). Bring meat to barbecue, and a salad or other vegetable dish, and dessert, to share, plus your own drink, plates, cutlery and glass. Tea and coffee afterwards will be provided.

We usually sit round and each describe our holiday activities, but this year please bring a stick or CD with holiday photos to share, so we can see good places to go, as well as hear about them.

Please ring us if you intend to come, as we may need an extra BBQ if numbers are high.

Ed and Juliet Cooke – 304 9497

Trip List

2017

Date	Destination	Trip coordinator	Phone	Fitness
28.1	Kaitoke Loop	Ian Bardsley	379 5251	M
4.2	Matui / Somes Island	Montgomeries	304 9252	E
11.2	Kakahi survey, Wairarapa Moana	Toni de Lautour	027 240 4732	E
18-19.2	Bushy Park & Wanganui	Neil Johnstone	379-5420	M
25.2	Tinui Cross	M & B Lambert	379 6106	M
4.3	Pakuratahi loop	John Rhodes	304 9095	F
11.3	cycling Wellington bays	Ian Montgomerie	304 9252	E
18.3	Herepai	Barry Kempton	304 9353	F
25.3	Finis working party	John Rhodes	304 9095	

If you wish to go on a trip, please let the organiser know by the Thursday prior.

Trip Gradings

The letters after the cost for a trip are an indication of how tough it will be.

VE Very Easy. A stroll suitable for the youngest, oldest and least fit of people.

E Easy. Up to four hours walk. May involve some uphill. Lots of stops.

M Moderate fitness. 4-6 hours walk per day. Lunch and smoko breaks.

F More fitness. Some experience needed. May go off tracks. 6 – 8 hours walk per day.

FE Fitness extreme. 8 – 18 hours walk, fast. Heaps of climbing. Stops are hurried. Enjoyed only by masochists. May take up to a week to recover.

Leaders: Please remember if you are unable to lead your trip it is your responsibility to find a replacement leader / trip.

Supper: At the end of each club meeting, the people who did the supper should pass the supper box to the people next on the roster.

For the March meeting the roster is: Ann and Roger Coventry.

Trip Reports

CYCLE RIDE KAPITI 13 NOVEMBER

On a drizzly November morning six keen South Wairarapa trampers / cyclists set off from Poplar Ave to cycle the Queen Elizabeth Park cycleway. We started with a visit to a local cafe for a starter coffee and clad in windbreakers set off on the track. It is a well defined sealed shared track and we met / passed many other walkers and cyclists. An enjoyable ride undulating through sand dunes covered with flowering lupin and farm land. We arrived in Paekakariki in about an hour, biked a loop and back to the park along the foreshore. Here we stopped for lunch at a very nice spot with tables and chairs and toilets at the start of the Yankee trail. So with yummy sandwiches and thermoses of tea or soup we enjoyed our usual tramping club fare.

The weather had by now turned into a reasonable day and we set off again along the Yankee trail following the signs onto an unsealed farm track, gates and all, to visit the WW II US Marine display at MacKay's Crossing. On the way we had passed a well appointed wetland / bird sanctuary, very nice and well worth a longer visit sometime. We biked on and arrived back at Poplar Ave and our cars about 2pm. The cycleway is six kilometres each way. It had been a good day, sorry for those who missed it due to injury, animals or weather.....maybe next time.

Thanks to Mary and Bruce, Alan, Helen, Wayne and scribe Margaret.

CUTFIELDS HUT 26 NOVEMBER

A beautiful sunny morning saw six trampers leave Martinborough around 8.45 and travel for 1hr 15mins out to Homeburn Station near White Rock. We parked by the woolshed and were warmly greeted by Paul & Cherie Cutfield, saying it was too long since our last visit. The wind had increased so we sought shelter on the verandah of the shearers' quarters for our cuppa. As we set off towards the hill we passed heaps of old fishing nets that Paul had purchased to use as groynes etc. to assist in river control; they did look rather unsightly. On up the hill and a view out to the coast from the top, then down through lovely bush, lots of orchids and then groups of hives set out to collect honey from the manuka and kanuka and other native bush. The bees didn't bother us as we walked by.

Down to the Whawanui River flat and we followed the new metalled 4WD track up the valley on the true left of the river. When we were there many years ago we had just followed a bush track; things have certainly been opened up with the new tracks and for a while we wondered if we were going in the right direction, but Janet did a sterling job and there was the hut in perfect time for our lunch. I have always loved this hut, and looking back through previous visits I have recorded one entry from the visitors' book which stated, "I walked through the Enchanted Forest to see the Gingerbread House." This hut was built by some Austrian gentlemen and is still in good condition, lots of interesting little features. We enjoyed lunch, sitting in the sun beside the hut, away from the breeze, then investigated a little before setting off for our return trip. We passed by the "Enchanted Forest" comprising lots of titoki trees, now fenced off for protection. Previously we had walked through it on the bush track. Back along the flats and up and over the hill to the cars. A great day enjoyed by all.

Thanks to Janet for your expert leadership, and Fay, Barry, Ian & Rosie for your company. Kay.

RIMUTAKA RAIL TRAIL 3 DECEMBER

We had a perfect day to do this trip. It was hard to believe that a train could have been blown off the rail track, when standing at "Siberia" in such calm sunny weather.

Five of us left from the Cross Creek end, four from Kaitoke, and three others walked in from and back to Cross Creek. We lunched together about one kilometre past the summit, on the Kaitoke side, swapped car keys, and continued on our way.

There were large numbers of cyclists on the track, but fortunately no collisions in the tunnels!

Those on the trip were enthusiastic new members Blair and Sylvia Crafar from Perth, Peter and Ruth Graham, Barry Kempton, Carol Major, Ian and Rosie Montgomerie, Jennifer Pomeroy, Sarah Ross, and Ed and Juliet Cooke (organisers).

Thanks to Sarah, and a passing cyclist, for the group photo.



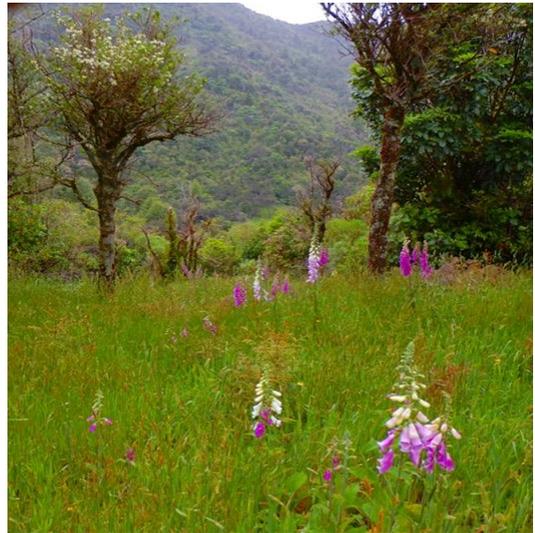
MT WAIOHINE 10 DECEMBER

The weather report for Saturday was for more wind and maybe some showers later in the day so leader Barry was unsure if the trip would be a goer.

We had had several DNRs because of foul weather this spring so I decided that we would go till we either got blown over or very wet.

Our party of three left the Mangatarere in a positive mood. The climb up to the ridge above Totara Flats is through very attractive bush, much of this is regenerated since I first tramped here in the late 1970s. A couple of hours saw us at the lookout over Totara Flats giving us a view up the Waiohine river toward Hector Forks, it was a bit claggy on the tops though. A few minutes on we were at the Sayers Hut track junction. Out came the secateurs we all carried as from here to Mt Waiohine a couple of kilometres away some trimming was needed. As we progressed the wind strengthened so several hundred metres short of our destination we halted in a sheltered spot for lunch. After lunch the wind was very strong but we were relatively sheltered at this point. Fifteen minutes later after a brief bush bash we were on the rocky northern side of Mt Waiohine. After a very brief photo opportunity we headed back to our vehicle. En route we spotted a magnificent flowering rata, the first for the season. The rain came just as we left the car park for home.

Trippers were Ian Montgomerie, Neil Johnstone, Ray Cammisa (visitor from Alaska) and Barry Kempton.



FROG TARN 5 - 6 JANUARY

In a fresh southerly, the Cape Palliser coast is wild. Three trampers watch the pounding sea and think there could be nothing more adventurous than being out on it.

Wrong!

A bit beyond Stonewall Stream, the climb to Frog Tarn confronts them. It's impossibly steep and covered in tight vegetation, and it soars to the sky. Says Nigel: 'It could take a couple of hours to get up there'.

John's urge to go home is strong. Perhaps he could walk back to the lighthouse, hitch-hike to Greytown and hear about Paul and Nigel's trip later. 'You'd have to be out of your mind to climb 700 metres through all that scrub', he thinks.

But every journey happens one step at a time. So—out of their minds—they take their first steps out of Mataopera Stream and into the manuka. Slope and scrub soon demand hands-and-knees work. Paul looks south and announces 'dirty weather coming'. Rain starts, bringing discussion about whether the trip is a good idea. John prays silently for abandonment, but Nigel says, 'Let's give it another half hour'. It eases and they go on.

The flank of this nameless ridge is a battlefield, and each of their legs is becoming a scratched, bleeding miniature of the whole doomed enterprise in its own right; one that will stay with them, slowly healing, for a week—should they ever get home. At lunch John's despair reaches the rarely-attained nadir of drinking cold water rather than tea.

Paul's GPS now reveals that they have not climbed (as they thought) from Mataopera Stream but from the one before it; so even more of this accursed scrub lies ahead. John puts a brave face on it. 'That's good' he says. 'We only have to get to 774 metres rather than 845'.

Fingernails and hope are all that attach him to one spine-tingling segment of the post-prandial ascent. 'Are you there?' call those who picked a better route. John is certainly 'there', but his 'there' risks becoming not a point on this god-forsaken ridge but an airborne trajectory with prickly landing. He hauls himself onto less vertical terrain and continues the climb, counting off each 50 metres on the altimeter. The trampers are like fleas battling up the flank of some bristly animal that resents their audacity in being there at all.

Point 774 is the immediate goal. It pays not to think about anything beyond. The gradient eases at last and—three hours from the coast—774 is within striking distance. John's bootlaces are undone and trailing, but the magnetism of 774 is such that he carries on. Suddenly he cannot move. His right foot is

standing on his left lace. His left foot is standing ... you guessed it. John is fixed to the ground. Try this self-immobilisation technique at home, not on some wretched hill miles from a teapot.

From the ridge they can see into the Stonewall Basin, which has a kind of Promised Land or nirvana status not because of any inherent charm but for its sheer inaccessibility. To reach the basin directly involves climbing waterfalls and rock faces.

Next they must traverse the ridge to point 845, where they should have headed in the first place. John is sure it will be easy. Pencilled notes on his map show that he came this way in 1997 and '99 (in '91 too, but he won't remember that till he checks his diaries). 'There's no difficulty along this ridge' says John. Eight hours of daylight remain, and at this time of year it may even be enough.

The faintest of trails lures them on through the scrub, which is every bit as thick as before but less precipitous. Retreat is discussed, but the nearest water is at Frog Tarn. John wants a brew and argues for carrying on.

Point 845, also called Raeotutemahuta, gives a magnificent view of the White Rock coast and serried waves on azure sea. People would pay for this if they didn't have to shred their bodies to see it.

The ridge is open now, with flat bits where they walk like normal human beings and rocky bits for whose negotiation John can barely summon the nervous energy. He's feeling ever so slightly jaded.

At length Nigel and John reach Paul waiting for them near Frog Tarn which is visible in the kanuka below.

John encourages his companions to say how special this place is. He wants to hear them say they feel lucky to be here. He wants them to say they'll promote it among their fellow-trampers. But any such thoughts are kept to themselves. 'This is our last visit to Frog Tarn', say Nigel and Paul.

On this otherwise desolate ridge, Frog Tarn is the southernmost mountain tarn in the North Island. It appears on no maps and the New Zealand Geographic Board knows nothing of it. Its existence and location are conveyed by word of mouth from hunter to hunter and from trumper to trumper. In 1991 Vince Monk, Woody, Simon Stopford and John walked right past Frog Tarn, not knowing it was there.

They drag themselves to the tarn's swampy margin below the scrub edge. Paul and Nigel put up their tent. John cannot fathom why anyone should do so before having a brew. What is it with some people, that on reaching a camp site on a fine evening their first impulse is to erect shelter? Beyond a trumper's normal liquid requirements, on this occasion several litres of plasma need replacing. It's serious business.

Beside the tarn lies the pathetic corpse of a frog, like a naked homunculus among the reeds. Its spread legs look vaguely indecent, as though its trousers are missing. John, whose need for tea is of more concern than froggish nudity, squelches to the open water and dips into it. Stringers of algae and black specks (frog droppings?) flow into his bowl. Never mind, this must sustain him until at least noon tomorrow.

In bed before nightfall, they listen to the croaking of those Frog Tarn inhabitants that have not yet—in a manner of speaking—croaked. How did the frogs get here? Can frogs walk miles through waterless scrub, or is this spot a centre of parallel, independent amphibian evolution? As John in his bivvy bag looks up through the trees to the stars, all seems set for deep philosophising. But instead he mentally ticks off his options for getting home: some known, some unknown and all taxing for dodgy knees. Mount Barton, a kilometre away, is on Nigel's agenda. He wants to measure the SAR repeater for new solar panels.

The frogs go quiet, and in the small hours the wind rises from the west, shrieking aloft as in the rigging of a tall ship. But the air in their sheltered world of kanuka is still and there's no point in worrying.

Morning, and the gale still screams above. John's stove is on the blink. It grudgingly boils water for tea, but obliges him to eat raw frog droppings—or whatever—with his muesli. Paul opts for dehydration. The

needle of Paul's enthusiasm meter for Frog Tarn as a future tramping club destination wavers from zero to negative.

Abandoning hope of Mt Barton they fight and stumble along the ridge with a wall of rushing air nearly knocking them over. If a trumper lost his hanky here, its next user would be in Chile. If he jumped, he'd stand a good chance of arriving there with it. John seriously considers standing on his bootlaces again.

An hour's highly ventilated travel puts them on Raeotutemahuta again, where *Celmisia* plants carpet the ground.

Nearby is a patch of grass that makes them feel they're on a farm. It has sign of animals too, but they're wild. A trail of sorts leads east through scrub to a knob above Mataopera Stream, then the ridge drops vertiginously. Someone has left sawn ends that are vaguely reassuring. Eight hundred and forty-five metres below is the sparking blue Pacific and a 4WD stuck in the gravel of the Ngapotiki fan like a sand-pit toy.

The knob is reached without drama; then serious descent begins. For every two millimetres of horizontal progress on the map three contour intervals must be crossed. If you were mathematically inclined you could figure it out in degrees, but the only calculation that interests John is the number of hours till his next brew. Paul gets a view and realises they're already off course and must sidle a hundred metres to regain the ridge. They're still 700 metres above brew level. How did they go so wrong, so soon?

John's 1979 map bears the pencilled routes of trampers who've survived trips out from the Stonewall Basin. The one they're on is labelled 'Joe Hansen recommended 8.6.97'. A little to the south is: 'Vince Monk and SWTC party came down bushed branch of Mataopera Stream'. Vince's team was Frances Pike, Bruce Morison, Stan Smith and Clive Baxter, in November 1995. They camped Friday night near the bottom, climbed 774, traversed to 845 in time for lunch and descended in the afternoon, thus accomplishing in one day and with a few 'Hail Marys' most of what at John's reduced speed has taken two. SWTC knees were fit for purpose in 1995.

This descent takes four hours, but Paul and Nigel are expert at waiting. At Stonewall Stream John negotiates the use of Paul's cooker and absorbs a large brew.

Never was it more needed.

Nigel Boniface (MTC), Paul Carson (MTC) & John Rhodes (SWTC, MTC)

Photos are at <http://swtc.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Frog-Tarn-5-6-Jan.-2017-1.pdf>

CROSS KEYS 14 JANUARY

The scheduled trip was the 3 Canoes, but owing to one of the landowners being away, there was a last minute change to Cross Keys Farm, on the coast south of Castlepoint.

A stiff wind greeted us as we got out of the vehicles, by a high point on the road, and it was only after we had descended to the beach that everyone's extra layers came off.

The ongoing erosion round the coast was very evident as we picked our way cautiously over what looked like newly-fallen rocks. The tide was low, so there was no danger of sudden immersion, and we reached the cottage for lunch. The high cloud had cleared away, and we had beautiful views back to Castle Rock.

We continued slightly further round the coast, then climbed up by the southern boundary of the farm. Three gallant gentlemen had rather more exercise than anyone else, going back halfway down for a forgotten walking pole!

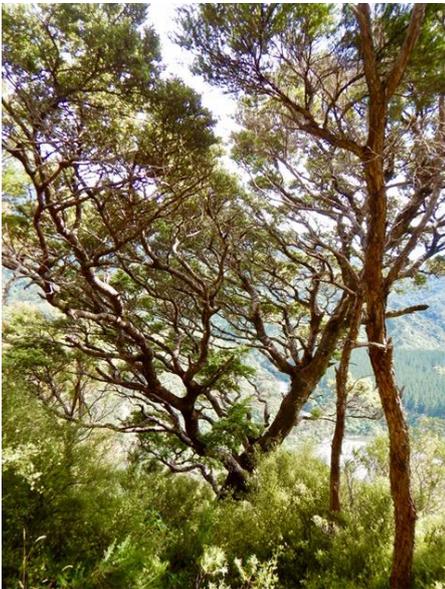
Once we had regained our height, it was a more level walk back to the vehicles, though we had to battle against the increasing wind.

Those on the walk were Chris Cassells, visitor Cyndy from Brisbane, Pete and Ruth Graham, Barry Kempton, Mary Lambert, Ian and Rosie Montgomerie, Jennifer Pomeroy, Merran Cooke, and Ed and Juliet Cooke (leaders).



TAUHERENIKAU GORGE 21 JANUARY

Going to the Tauherenikau gorge with the snow melt in the river was a day to stay out of the water. Our Alaskan companion Ray was keen but the temperature may have turned him into a true blue American. After a later than usual start it was a pleasant walk into the gorge for lunch on the sunny river bed and return on the track. A very pleasant day out with Barry, Carol, Royce, Peter and Ruth, Blair and Silvia, Ray and Ian, scribe.



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