

South Wairarapa Tramping Club

Newsletter for April 2020

www.swtc.org.nz

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Not a lot to say at this time. I hope you are all managing OK. Please remember that you must stay at home, within your own community, so any walking you do must be close to home. You cannot get in your car and drive somewhere to walk. For those in the country their own community is quite large, but those of us in the towns and cities are more limited. Here in Wellington there are police cars drifting around keeping an eye on the scene. I am sticking to my regular walk around the block, which is uphill and downhill, and also a bit of cycling – trying to find places that aren't too steep!

Trip Reports

MIKIMIKI TO KIRIWHAKAPAPA AND RETURN. SATURDAY 29 FEBRUARY (some leaping accomplished!)

Five of us left Greytown on a slightly misty morning, Tararuas hidden in low cloud. We hoped that Greytown would have some heavy showers while we were away, but that the clouds would lift north of Masterton. However the mist was more wetting at Mikimiki and we put on parkas as we left the vehicle. The track is a mostly easy gradient uphill to the saddle between the two valleys, and down the far side. This was John's first trip since his knee replacement, and prudence triumphed over his desire to walk the entire route. He turned back shortly after the saddle, and this gave him photographic opportunities without feeling he was holding the party up. See his photos on the club website.

Four of us continued on, meeting a party of 10 young women biking the route there and back. Whilst admiring their spirit we did wonder at their sanity!

We lunched at Kiriwhakapapa, and then retraced our steps, meeting the cyclists in varying groups, first those who had some mechanical problems and were staggering a bit, and then the main party on their way back from Mikimiki. We eventually caught up with John and, stopping for a drink, Ed found an interesting beetle on his pack that must have been hitch hiking for some time. (See photo). This was later identified by John as a *Hexatricha pulverulenta*, known as the squeaking longhorn beetle. It especially likes living in pine and beech trees, and there were plenty of those with room for beetles!

Including morning tea and lunch the trip took five hours. The trampers were Barry Kempton and dog Sue, Jen Pomeroy, John Rhodes, and Ed & Juliet Cooke (co-ordinators). We emptied our rain gauge on return home - half a ml!



Colin Wheeler, 1937-2020



Colin (second from left) on Mt Crawford, 4 July 1982

Colin died on 9 March, in Masterton.

I met him first on Allandale, a pastoral property that stretched (perhaps still does) from Woodside to Highway 2, where Colin was shepherding for the owner, Bob Tosswill, and lived in a farm cottage. That was in about 1978.

Bob says, 'Colin was a delightful man and we did enjoy his and Jenny's company. His knowledge and personality will long be missed.'

Colin and Jenny had come from the UK with their two children to settle in New Zealand. Before long they bought a house in Humphries Street, just around the corner from us. Colin may not have been a foundation member of SWTC in 1980, but he joined the club early and was a companion on many trips. He was our President from 1989 to 1992. For about a decade Colin was one of my three or four closest friends.

Colin may have been of the working-class, but he was well educated and the Wheeler house was lined with full book-cases. Colin's knowledge of English literature was formidable and his love for it intense.

The house was old and had suffered much amateur 'improvement', which Colin progressively undid. He also re-piled it, a job with which I helped for half a day. I still have the 19th century chisel that we found underneath and which he let me keep. I've never used it.

My most memorable trip with Colin was a middle crossing of the Tararuas in snow in July 1982, led by then SWTC President Roger Coventry. It was an epic by any measure. Colin struggled, and soon afterwards he learned why: he was diagnosed with diabetes, which afflicted him for the rest of his life.

I don't recall all of the jobs that Colin did, but he worked for Mike Beckett at the Featherston supermarket, and later the two of them owned and produced the Featherston *Chronicle*, which was later absorbed into the *Wairarapa News*. Meanwhile Jenny worked as a nurse. Both were staunch members of St Andrew's Church in Greytown.

In around 2000 Colin and Jenny moved to a rural property at Rangitumau and we rarely saw them. In more recent years, as Colin's health declined, they have lived in Masterton.

I shall remember Colin as he was, for his broad Somerset accent, for his rich laugh, for his joy in life and for his friendship.

John Rhodes