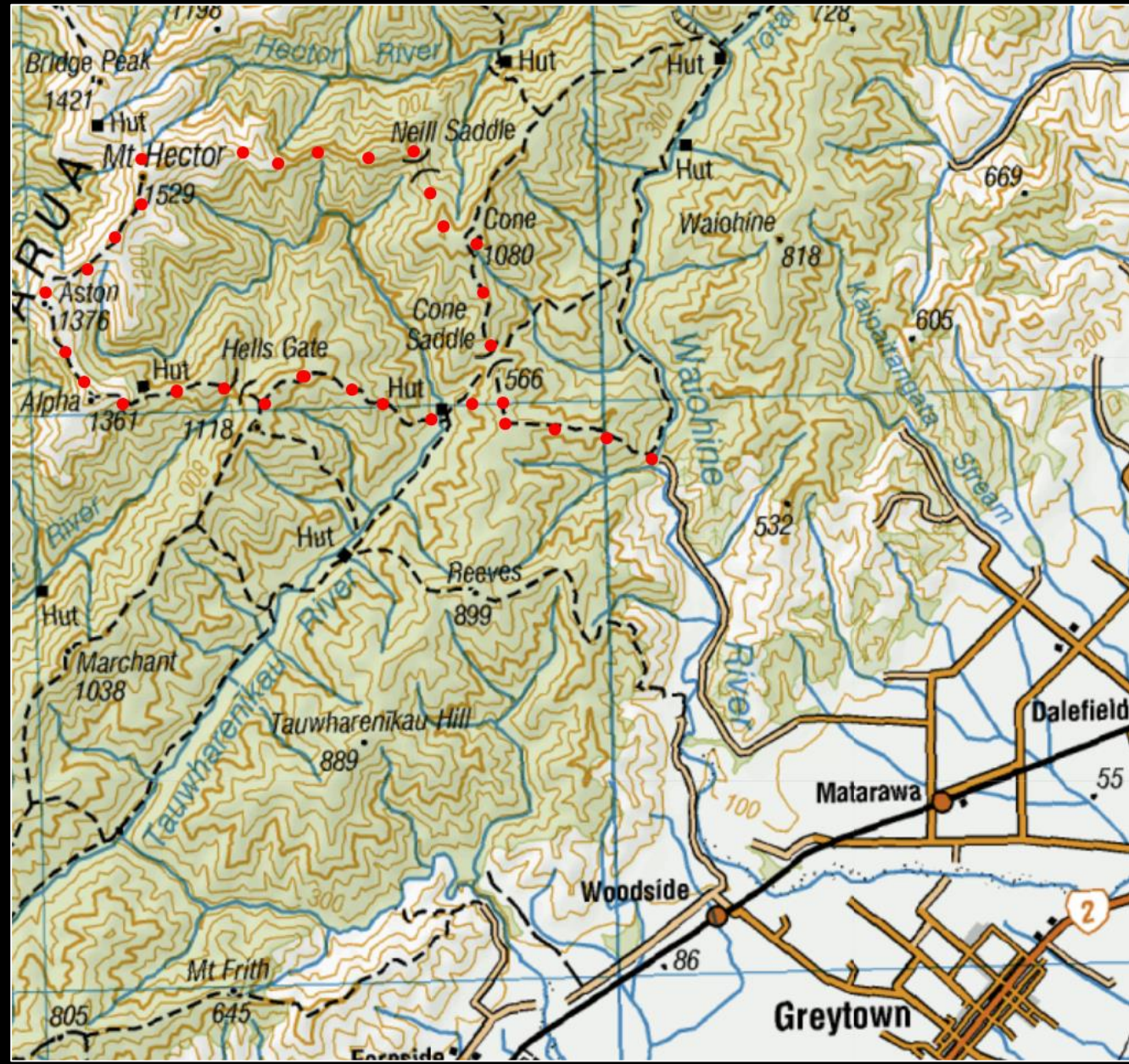


# Alpha - Hector - Cone circuit

Tararua Forest Park

*A combined South Wairarapa Tramping Club and Masterton  
Tramping Club trip*

19-21 March 2024



The beauty of this trip is that it's handy to Greytown.



I started from the Waiohine Gorge road end in the dark, because I'm not sure if I can do this!



Cone Hut (1946)



The Wellington Fault has shattered the rock.



I always stop for a brew by the Tauwharenikau River here. It's one of my favourite spots.



One of the few remaining Forest Service signs in the Tararuas.



Up through the kāmahi  
forest, where ...





... the track is hung about  
with kidney fern ...





... and filmy fern ...



... and moss





I'm nearly at Bull Mound, where people used to come with horses.



Sayer family of Dalefield



The mist is turning to rain



A DOC sign has replaced the old Forest Service one that was here until recently. I want a brew and lunch but it's raining, so a Tararua biscuit will have to do





The Tararua Mountain Race passes this way. I haven't competed since 1992.



A welcome sight, 8 hours from the road. Alpha Hut has just been refurbished by the Greater Wellington Backcountry Network. Thanks guys!







The morning sky looks promising,  
and the cloud recedes  
as I climb Alpha.





There was an earthquake while Ann and I were having breakfast beside this tarn in January 1975.



Much of the route  
ahead is in sight.  
I'm heading for  
Winchcombe Biv, at  
the arrow.



I plan to go down the lumpy ridge on the left skyline. The distant Tararua Peaks can wait for another day.



It's sunny in Wellington,  
with a dying southerly. Up  
here I need parka, long-  
johns and gloves.



Many people come this way, so the mud is deep. Cloud returns.





Mt Hector, the highest point for the trip. I've long held an ambition to take a good winter photo of the cross. This one is by J.L. Anderson, from the TTC archive..





Dedicating the first cross, in 1950. It was replaced in 1980.







I turn off at Mt Hector down the ridge to Winchcombe, leaving the mud behind. This will be my 13<sup>th</sup> traverse of the Winchcombe-Neill ridge. The first was in 1964, in snow.



The cloud thins as I descend.





The south branch of the Hector River,  
where real trampers go.





That's Winchcombe Peak  
ahead. Not far to go!





The Ōtaki River and the west coast.



I have a leisurely brew and a late lunch  
at point 1398 ...



... beside a boulder field.







The cloud has lifted off the main range: Vosseler, Yeates, McIntosh, the Tararua Peaks and Maungahuka. Kahiwiroa and Crawford lie beyond.



A lightning strike?



A stream draining to the Hector River, where real trampers go!

I've never noticed this plant before in the Tararuas. Botanist Barry Sneddon tells me it's a hybrid of *Leucogenes leontopodium* and *Raoulia rubra*.



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My hotel for night 2







Since I was last here a thunder-box has been installed, with a great view!





After fighting through near impenetrable scrub in the morning, it's a relief to find the track—with an old-fashioned disc.



This is moss, lichen and fern country. Neill is getting closer.





The view from Neill, with a red dot marking Winchcombe Biv.

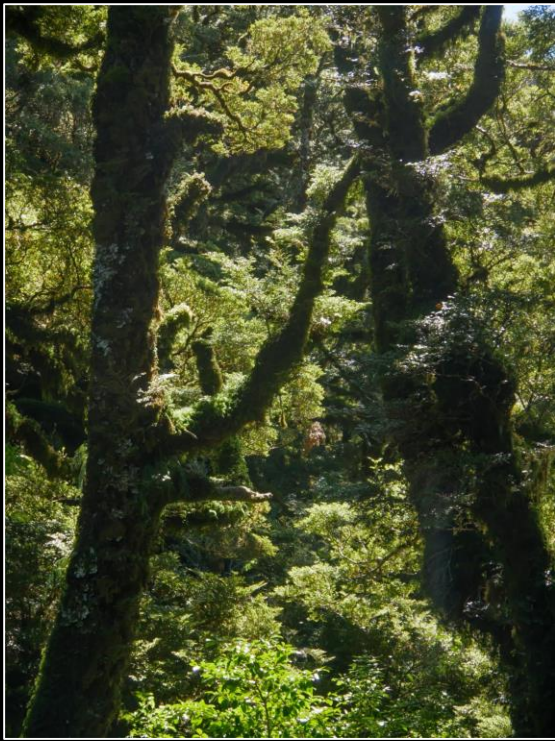


Today, and in 2008





The Tararua Peaks and Maungahuka are just across the valley. I've camped a couple of times beside a lovely tarn at X.



Down into the forest in Neill Saddle, then up again ...





... to Cone (another favourite camping spot) with Mt Holdsworth beyond.



The circuit is complete, and now all I have to do is get down the hill to the Waiohine.