



Hills & Valleys

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HUTT VALLEY TRAMPING CLUB (Inc)



Nicholas John Boyack
March 1961 - November 2024

Please submit your **February 2025** H&V articles to the editor by **31st January 2025**

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CLUB NIGHT PROGRAMME
Starts 7:30 pm promptly



4 December 2024 : John Featherstone – Skiing and Hiking Adventures in the US, Switzerland and France
6:45 pm for drinks and nibbles

A former club president in the 1970s who has lived in the USA since 1980, John will give us a show that highlights some spectacular scenery at ski areas in the US, France and Switzerland. A couple of amazing hikes in National Parks in the US will also be presented.

John was born in Stratford New Zealand in 1944. He earned a B.Sc. and a PhD at Victoria University in Wellington and has been a scientist and University administrator for 50 years. He was active in the Hutt Valley Tramping Club from 1966 to 1980, He was very active in HVTC being involved in club trips, social activities, bushcraft instruction, alpine instruction, helping with renovation of the Ruapehu club hut, and was a vice president and president of the club. He emigrated to the US in 1980 and continued to be an active rock climber, mountaineer and skier. He lives in both the San Francisco bay area and New York City with his wife, Yasmi. They both continue to be active skiers and hikers, with a passion for archaeology.

11 December 2024 : Annual Christmas pot luck dinner
6pm start



This evening will be our annual Christmas pot-luck dinner at the clubrooms beginning at 6pm. Please bring your own food and drink and any plates and cutlery that you require. There will be spot prizes for the best fancy dress costumes that catch the eyes of our judges. This will be our final night for the year – looking forward to seeing you all.

January 2025

Back to standard 7:30pm start, doors open at 7pm

15 January 2025: Welcome back mix-and-mingle

The first club night of 2025 will be informal, a chance to chat with friends about what they did over Christmas and New Year. The usual hot drinks and biscuits will be served.

22 January 2025 : Extra-ordinary General Meeting – Club Van Replacement

Following feedback from the discussion in the November Hills & Valleys, the General Committee has called for an EGM on 22 January to vote on their proposals on options for replacing the club van. Further details will be provided by the General Committee.

29 January 2025 : Jackie & Chris West – Northern Chile, Bolivia and Peru Part 1

In May and June this year, Jackie and Chris West toured Northern Chile, Bolivia and Peru. Tonight's talk covers their visit to Valparaiso, the Atacama Desert in Chile and the salt flats and fascinating landscapes of southern Bolivia followed by a visit to the capital La Paz.

Part 2 on 2 April will cover their time in Peru.

5 February 2025 : Open Night

A chance for members to show about a dozen images of their recent activities or other topics that they feel may be of interest. If you have more than about a dozen slides that you wish to show, talk to Graeme McVerry or email him at graememcv2@xtra.co.nz about making a presentation of your own at a later club night.

UPCOMING EVENT

2024 HVTC XMAS PARTY:



2024 HVTC Xmas Party

Wednesday 11 December 6:00pm onwards at the Club Rooms

Please bring a pot luck main or dessert/sweet treat for all to share

Also bring plate, cutlery and glass and your preferred liquid refreshment.

Prizes for the best dress-up costumes 😊










FORTHCOMING TRIPS



NOTES

Where there is no leader given for a trip, please email tripcoordinator@hvtc.org.nz to volunteer to lead a trip, either as shown or an alternative.

DECEMBER 2024				
Sun 01	D1	Dobson Loop		Leader Required
Sun /Mon 2	T1+	Love Your Huts – Papatahi overnigher		Jackie and Chris
Sun 01		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 03		Catchpool to Baring Head Lighthouse		Leader Required
		Catchpool to Pencarrow Lighthouse		Leader Required
7 - 8	T1	Trip destination and leader required		
	T2	Trip destination and leader required		
Sun 8	D1	Climie Ridge		Jackie and Chris
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 10		Harcourt Park to Mangaroa Circuit		Jackie West
		Harcourt Park to Tunnel Gully		Russell Olliver
14 - 15	T1	Camp on Cone		Mel
	T2	Trip destination and leader required		
Sun 15	D1	Trip destination and leader required		
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 17		Melling to Waiwhetu Stream		Leader Required
		Belmont – Hill Rd – Belmont Regional Park		Andrew R
CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR TRIPS & HOLIDAYS				
tba	T1	Trip destination and leader required		
27/12-7/01	T2	Toaroha / West Coast	Van	Andrew R
JANUARY 2025				
4 - 5	T1	Sayers Hut		Emma / Debbie
Tue 07		Miramar Peninsula Circumnavigation		Leader Required
		Mt Victoria Hataitai Zig-Zag		Leader Required
11 - 12	T1	Trip destination and leader required		
	T2	Trip destination and leader required		
Sun 12	D1	Hawkins Hill Explore		Heather and Rob
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 14		Brooklyn Turbine Ridge South		Leader Required
		Polhill – Hawkin’s Hill		Wil van’t Geloof
WELLINGTON ANNIVERSARY				
18 - 20	T1	Trip destination and leader required		
	T2	Trip destination and leader required		
Sun 19	D1	Trip destination and leader required		
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 21		Explore Wainui		Leader Required

		Wainui MTB Park		Leader Required
25 - 26	T1	Trip destination and leader required		
	T2	Trip destination and leader required		
Sun 26	D1	Trip destination and leader required		
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 28		Belmont Regional Park		Leader Required
		Boulder Hill – Dry Creek		Leader Required
FEBRUARY 2025				
1 - 2	T1+	Field Hut / Sheridan Creek		Jackie and Chris
	T2	Trip destination and leader required		
Sun 2	D1	Trip destination and leader required		
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena
Tue 04		Pauatahanui Inlet North Trail		Tony and Jo
		Colonial Knob Area		Leader Required

FROM THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

Transport review update

Thank you to everyone who sent me feedback about the General Committee's proposal to replace our club van.

23 members expressed support for a new van and four had mixed views.

The General Committee will hold an extraordinary general meeting on Wednesday 22 January for club members to vote on the proposal. We will send more details in the coming weeks.

We are very grateful to a generous member of the club who has made an anonymous donation of \$10,000 towards a new van.

Clubroom audio upgrade

Thank you to club member Patrick Fotheringham, who has made upgrades to the audio system in the clubrooms.

We appreciate your work to improve the experience for everyone at our club nights.

Introductory trips

Many club members supported the introductory trips we ran on 3 November.

Ten new people joined the trips and others expressed interest in the club but couldn't come on the day.

We warmly welcome those who have already joined the club and we look forward to welcoming others in coming months.

Thank you to Mel and Andrew who led the two introductory trips in the Orongorongo Valley.

Marina Skinner

HVTC President

RUAPEHU ROUNDUP

We waited...and waited...patiently...and waited - and eventually the snow arrived at Ruapehu in mid September. Unsurprisingly the lack of precious white stuff made for a quiet winter at the lodge.

While it was certainly not a classic season on the mountain, we had good support from outside groups including Harrison Grierson, Hillary Outdoors, and Tihoi Venture school, with Girls* on Ice to come in January. At the moment we are forecasting about 600 bed nights for the year.

The highlight of our year was the celebration of 75 years of HVTC on Ruapehu in September, where a good time and fabulous dinner was had by all, plus a few turns on the Valley Tbar, hot pools and day walks.

On the ski field ownership front, Whakapapa Holdings Ltd have applied for a concession from DOC to run the Whakapapa skifield and hope to be in business by April next year.



The lodge is available for summer use at \$40 per person per night, and of course Ruapehu remains a great spot to base yourself for a Central North Island holiday, outdoor adventures at any time of the year, or for just enjoying the view. The Sky Waka and Knoll Ridge Chalet cafe are open every day over summer (except Christmas Day) and there are 10 kms of marked trails laid out from the cafe, ranging from 20 minutes to 2.5 hours. Of course from our vantage point at the lodge Knoll Ridge is accessible on foot. Our freezer is well stocked and we welcome you eating a great roast, chicken, pork or beef! If you would like to lead a

tramping/day walks weekend, private trip or extended family get together, or to book at any time, please email ruapehubookings@hvtc.org.nz

We look forward to seeing you on the mountain soon!

Kate

For the Ruapehu committee

GREATER WELLINGTON BACKCOUNTRY NETWORK

Work Programme in 2024-2025

Murray Presland



In the November edition of Hills and Valleys I reported the achievements in hut and track maintenance carried out by GWBN in the past year. It was impressive, as many Tararua trampers can attest, and was entirely due to the efforts of volunteers, encouraged, managed and often led by Derrick Field. The Work Programme for the current year, already underway, follows here. Please volunteer your time, energy and enthusiasm for any of these projects where you are able. A major task will be re-roofing (to be undertaken by contractors) and a complete re-paint of Waitewaewae Hut,

which I hope several of us HVTC members will be keen and able to contribute to. I will keep you informed of the timing for this combined project!

Murray Presland

Recommended Hut Maintenance 2024-2025

1. Dorset Ridge; install aluminium windows, repair leakage at rear of hut, re clad woodshed and install floor.
2. Waitewaewae; repaint interior and exterior; replace ridging on clear-lite - BC Trust propose to fund re-roof with Color Steel, and will fund this.
3. Tutuwai; interior and exterior repaint - depends on raising funds.
4. Hut cleaning (Caring for Our Huts initiative); assess trial and action at all huts.
5. GWBN Hut Notice; encouraging visitors to help with cleaning/maintenance - install notices in huts.
6. Nicholls Hut; accommodation is inadequate during height of Te Araroa season - a working group will submit a proposal for tent platforms or extending the hut or adding another hut at the site.

Recommended Track Maintenance Schedule 2024-2025

Several tracks listed are dependent on additional funding being obtained (from BC Trust etc)

Track Name	Kms	Tasks
Barra	1.8	Windfalls
Bucks road-Frith-Pylon	8.0	Finish-Bucks road
Cone Saddle-Cone Ridge	5.3	Recut (BCT Fund?)
Cone-Winchcombe	5.5	Recut (BCT Fund?)
Concertina Knob	3.8	Recut (BCT Fund?)
Dowling Falls	2.0	Recut (funding?)
Gentle Annie	0.5	Finish widening, recut, annual task
Kaitoke-Smiths Ck	3.8	Annual task to Puffer Saddle
Puffer-Dobsons-Canyon	2.2	Annual task to bush edge
Kaitoke-Puffer-Dobsons	4.0	Upgrade track (funding?)
Kapakapanui-Maymorn	4.6	Recut
Kawakawa-Pararaki	4.5	Recut from Pararaki
Kiriwhakapapa Loop	2.0	Annual task
Marchant Stm-Block XVI	3.8	Mark and cut
Mikimiki	10.7	Annual task
Maungahuka-Andersons	6.4	Recut Maungahuka-Aokaparangi
Pakihore Ridge	4.5	Recut (funding?)
Puffer-Dobsons-Smiths Ck	2.5	Annual task
Renata Hut-Aston	11.7	Recut (BCT funding?)
SH2 Summit-Pylon Road	1.3	Annual task
Smiths Ck- Tutuwai	8.0	Windfalls
Table Top-Penn Creek	2.9	Recut (funding?)
Tauherenikau Gorge	2.8	Annual task
Te Kopi-Washool	4.0	Te Kopi end
Totara Flats - Neill Forks	4.0	Neill Forks section
Waingawa River	4.0	Windfalls at Cow Creek end
Waiotauru Hut-Otaki Fks	8.0	Windfalls to Bridge
Waitewaewae	1.0	Install rafts on Plateau (done)
Waitewaewae	13.6	Windfalls - part done
Yeates	2.6	Recut (funding)
Arcus Loop	1.6	Recut Walk
Field Track	7.0	Recut to Table Top (funding?)
Total Kms	148.4	

Notes:

- Some funding from Back Country Trust etc is assumed will be available. If not, then alternative funding sources will be required, or the program amended.
- Projects reliant on other charitable funding sources will be re-considered if applications are unsuccessful. Charitable funding for Neill Forks-Maungahuka track clearing has recently been confirmed.
- BCT funding for re-roofing Waitewaewae Hut is confirmed.
- The upgrading of the Smiths Creek, Puffer and Dobsons tracks is being considered. This will involve use of a digger, and reformation of track surface and water drainage. These tracks are popular access routes for overnight and day visitors into the southern area of the Forest Park. Erosion of the track surface, resulting in water tables and culverts not functioning, mud areas due to poor drainage and slippery track surface need repairing. Funding will be sought from Transpower and other charitable groups, for this project.

HVTC ENVIRONMENTAL WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

John Simes



For over 40 years the club has had an environmental weekend and in most years this has been the only option on offer for that weekend in order to get a good level of participation. Pinus contorta removal on the southern slopes of Mount Ruapehu has dominated our effort over much of this time. More recently we offered a few options so as to cater for a wider group of members as not all of us are able to deal with the rigours of the gorgy and scrubby slopes of Mount Ruapehu. For 2025 we are offering our usual option of Pinus contorta removal and this will be led by me. We are also intending to offer two other trips following on from last years environmental gardening effort in a native planted patch at Ava Park and the successful trip to a mature native forest patch lead by David Barnes. We are seeking a leader for a continuation of the Ava Park effort which takes the form of a Saturday morning's gardening with a convivial byo morning tea included. We are also seeking a destination and a leader for

an environmental trip on the Sunday. Please get in touch with me or Dennis Page if you have a suggestion.

Regards

John Simes 027 464 1824

COINCIDENCES

**Is a Coincidence
of Coincidences
just a Coincidence?**



**Following Edward A Wilson
into the Unknown**

Club member John Flux has, over the years, noticed similarities between his own life and character and that of Antarctic explorer Edward A Wilson. John produced an extensively illustrated book of these coincidences and has donated copies of it to any and all club members who enjoy it. A number of copies are still available from the club library. Take a look at it and, if you like it, please keep a copy.

ADVENTURE vs EXPERIENCE?

A Week in Patagonia

Murray Presland

At the Club Meeting on 3 November Monique Bon and Mathew Denys, members of WTMC, gave delightful presentations on the expeditions that they led, funded by FMC Youth Scholarships. Monique's groups's experience is also recorded in Backcountry November 2024. What impressed me greatly about each of these expeditions was firstly the participants' enthusiasm in heading off into territory not well known to them, and secondly their resilience in dealing with whatever the weather and the landscape threw at their plans. Neither expedition was "successful" but both Monique and Mathew spoke happily about what they had learned from their experience and their eagerness to continue exploring. I envied their youthfulness!

But hang-on! The Hutt Valley Tramping Club has produced many adventurous members and experiences too. In 1971-72 three members of our Club – Tom Clarkson, Geoff Spearpoint and Ian Thorne, joined by Dave Bamford and Paul Milsom, all in their early 20s – set out to "transfer their customary annual transalpine trip to South America", planning to tramp and climb in the Patagonian Andes. They sailed to Punta Arenas with all their gear and food for 3 months. It took most of a month to get themselves and all of this to their chosen base camp. In mid- January they set off to climb Cerro Hyades (3078 m) on the fringe of the Northern Patagonian Icecap, a long day's climb from a camp at the bushline (~ 1000 m). The weather deteriorated as they approached the summit – Tom made it there – and, caught in an appalling storm, the group built a snowcave-igloo in which to shelter. They remained there for 7 nights with little food, fuel or water, being buried more deeply under falling snow, before the storm relented. After a few days back at their camps for their bodies, especially their feet, to recover, they explored surrounding ranges and then set off to lead their diverse, subsequent, lives. It was 48 years before these adventurers came together again and, with Robbie Burton's oversight, opened their diaries and talked about the experience and about its effects on the decisions made in their lives. Robbie Burton has produced a beautiful monograph from that discussion – *A week in Patagonia*. It's a remarkable tale of care, resilience and thoughtfulness that all of us can reflect on within our own experiences in the bush and mountains – though not often as challenging.

There is a copy of *A week in Patagonia* in the Club Library.

Murray

EXPLORING TIMOR-LESTE (AND WRITING ABOUT IT)

Jonty Crane

As anyone who has been to one my club talks will know, I like to travel, and document and share these trips, particularly to places that most people haven't visited. Very few people have been to Timor-Leste, it is one of the least visited countries on the planet despite only being an hour north of Australia.

I've been in Timor-Leste since February 2024 volunteering through [Volunteer Service Abroad](#). In my spare time I've published four books about the country, which may be of interest to club members, particularly the hiking guide. They're all available from Amazon as eBooks for AU\$3.99 each.

[**Exploring Timor-Leste: A comprehensive travel guide to one of the least visited countries in the world**](#) is the first internationally available guidebook to this remarkable country since the 2011 edition of the Lonely Planet guide. Although small in size, Timor-Leste boasts a wealth of natural beauty and adventure, from world-class diving and snorkelling to mountainous hiking trails and renowned coffee.

Until now, travellers have faced a lack of accessible, comprehensive information about Timor-Leste. *Exploring Timor-Leste* fills that gap, offering up-to-date, detailed guidance on planning a trip, including practical tips, must-see sights, and cultural insights. The guidebook features more than 200 points of interest, over 100 photographs, and helpful maps designed to make navigating the country easier.

Exploring Timor-Leste on Foot

30 incredible hikes in one of the least visited countries in the world
Jonty Crane



[**Exploring Timor-Leste on Foot: 30 incredible hikes in one of the least visited countries in the world**](#)

is the first comprehensive hiking guide to Timor-Leste. The country boasts some of Southeast Asia's most spectacular scenery, with near 3,000-metre-high mountains, serene waterfalls, rejuvenating hot springs, pristine beaches, and an array of diverse landscapes.

Timor-Leste has world-class hiking, but until now there has been very little information available. This book provides up-to-date and accurate guides to 30 incredible hikes across the country, from easy, 1.5 hour walks, to epic, week long, hikes. Of the 30 hikes, 5 are rated as easy, 7 moderate, 9 moderate to hard, and 9 hard. 16 of the hikes are in Dili, 3 on Atauro Island, 5 day hikes to summits around the country, and 6 multi-day hikes ranging in duration from 3 to 8 days.

There is key information for each hike, including distance, duration, elevation gain, difficulty, navigation difficulty, food and drink availability, swimming and snorkelling opportunities, mobile

reception, and how to get to the start. Links are providing to AllTrail GPS route maps, and YouTube videos of the hikes.

[**Exploring Timor-Leste's Religious Sites**](#) is a photography book featuring over 100 high-quality images of places of religious significance throughout this captivating, yet often overlooked, country. Despite being home to a population that is 98% Catholic—the second highest concentration in the world after the Vatican City—Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor) boasts a diverse array of sites from other religions, including Islam, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

[**Exploring Timor-Leste From the Air**](#) is a photography book featuring over 100 high-quality images of Timor-Leste taken from the air, primarily using a drone. It illustrates the beauty and variety of the country, from the coast to the mountains.

Jonty



TRIP REPORTS

TŌTARA FLATS AND HIGH RIDGE

28-29 September 2024

Andrew Robinson

A change of destination has been a common theme for me this year. Chriselda was the only taker for the trip I had planned for the last weekend of September in the northern Tararuas so she suggested we do something a bit closer to home. After tossing around a few ideas we settled on Chriselda's suggestion of High Ridge. It's a route that had been on my to-do list but because I hadn't figured out how I was going to fit a trip around it I'd pretty much forgotten about it. Hut availability dictated we would be going up it rather than down it but that would have been my preference anyway.

We had a leisurely start on Saturday with only four to five hours of walking ahead of us. The car park was full but with bunks booked there were no concerns about fighting for a space in the hut. It was great to see so many family groups in our first couple of hours, heading to or from Powell or Atiwhakatu huts. We left the masses behind when we turned off the high-use track to Powell hut onto the muddy and rutted track heading towards Tōtara Creek. Fifteen minutes down it we stopped for lunch and after lunch descended it a further thirty minutes until we reached the new track on the true left of Tōtara Creek that had been put in about ten years ago. It was good to see that it is still largely free of mud. We eventually got down to the swingbridge across Tōtara Creek and it creaked a bit which had me wondering how solid the timber and the supports were. On the last stretch beside Tōtara Creek we kept an eye out for the start of our route the following day but we didn't see anything obvious. Just before the hut we crossed the Waiohine River on a swingbridge that was new to me, installed some time since I'd last crossed the previous one in 2018. Helpfully it had a sign saying built in 2021. It was an impressive piece of engineering - a swingbridge that didn't swing, despite being on the longer end of the spectrum.

When we reached the hut there was a couple in the hut who told us that there were also some hunters staying at the hut but they were out hunting. A while later the hunters and their dogs turned up. There were I think four hunters though I only ever saw three of them together but they had nine dogs between them. The dogs were very friendly and well-behaved with only one young one trying to climb on everyone. The hunters were friendly as most hunters are.

Chriselda and I went for a bit of an explore to try to find the start of the track for the next day. We found it readily enough and it looked like it gets a reasonable amount of use. It probably hadn't been used for a little while because there was a bit of windfall on the track but I had my saw with me and soon had things cleared up.

Back at the hut a few more people came in but because it's a large hut we only got to about half full.

In the morning Chriselda agreed with my suggestion to postpone the switch to daylight savings until the end of the day, so we were off at 7:20. Chriselda had some route notes which suggested the route would take 4-6 hours to Powell hut although that was for going down rather than up. Going by the amount of ascent (something like 1200 metres) and the fact that navigation is generally easier going uphill than downhill the 4-6 hours seemed a reasonable estimate.

Our main waypoint was Flaxy Knob, about a third of the distance to Powell hut, but with about two thirds of the height gain. We were anticipating a minimum of two hours to get there, but three

seemed more likely. The good ground trail we had found the previous day continued most of the time and when we did lose the trail there were usually markers not far away. Mostly the markers were what I guess were painted tin lids from the 800-odd gram tins that you don't see much these days. That would suggest they date from the 1980s or earlier and if so they have lasted well. When there was a bit of windfall across the track it was usually marked with pink tape.

When we stopped for morning tea we'd gained half the height for the day so that was pretty good progress. When we resumed I estimated it would take half an hour to get to Flaxy Knob but the pronounced spur we were on ended and then we lost the trail. We got into a bit of a gully with lots of fallen trees which slowed us down considerably. It took us an hour to get to Flaxy Knob where there was no sign of flax and there was no view either. It was four hours since we'd left the hut.

At Flaxy Knob we were at the southwestern end of High Ridge and ahead of us lay a full traverse of the ridge, a distance of about four kilometres, with three quarters of it in the bush. Although the ridge didn't do anything devious and therefore, we weren't going to accidentally head off in the wrong direction, I presumed that from time to time we were still going to have problems staying on track. As we left Flaxy Knob the trail was actually the best we'd had for the day and I wondered if the ridge might turn out to be a bit of a doddle but it wasn't long before the ridge broadened and we lost the trail. The bush was open so we could see where we were going and I decided that we should just keep going and would pick up the trail again soon enough. It wasn't long before we picked up the trail again, but then despite there still being quite a lot of markers we lost the trail again. As we had discovered earlier, the problem with getting off the track was it was slower going, with more obstacles and the prospect of mud. With just the two of us we didn't really have the option of spreading out until we found the trail so we just kept going in the right general direction until we found the trail again. We subsequently lost and then found the trail fairly frequently with the difference between on and off trail not significant enough to stop and decide on a strategy to keep to the trail as much as possible. Chriselda had some else's gps track of the route but it wasn't detailed enough and we couldn't tell if it was always on the trail anyway so we didn't use it much.



Top end of High Ridge

An hour and a half after Flaxy Knob we stopped for a late lunch, a bit short of halfway along the ridge. We were in goblin forest by then and I figured the next change in vegetation was most likely to smaller trees and then scrub before we finally popped out of the bush. That's pretty much what happened though we did have a patch of larger trees with smaller trees in the gaps which meant the track was overgrown. Fortunately it was mostly pretty apparent that the trail did in fact go straight through the shrubbery. There were occasional gaps in the trees that we got a view through, not that there was much to see. When we got to the

dracophyllum I knew we wouldn't be far from the bush edge. We finally reached the bush edge seven hours after we'd left the hut. The forecast had been for string winds so it was a pleasant surprise to find there was not much in the way of wind. We could see the rest of the route along the ridge so we weren't going to have any more navigational challenges. The slip shown on the map that I thought might have presented a small problem wasn't going to trouble us either. 10 or 15 minutes after leaving the bush I spotted a cairn off to our left and it turned out to be a memorial to police constable Lester Tweeddale who died in the vicinity in 1969. See the HVTTC centennial publication 1969 story for more. The tussock stretch of the ridge took us three quarters of an hour then it was 10 minutes down to Powell hut. We had a decent break there before the final 3-4 hour stretch back to the car. We just managed to get back to the car without needing to get our torches out. At eleven and a half hours it had been longer than we'd anticipated but we'd achieved what

we'd set out to do and had had good conditions along the way. I'm not planning on doing High Ridge again any time soon but if I do end up doing it again I know what to expect

Andrew Robinson (leader). Thanks to Chriselda McMillan for suggesting the trip and helping to make it happen

Andrew

SAINT JAMES WALKWAY

23 to 28 October 2024

Ann Hayman

The idea of walking the Saint James walkway first came to mind in January 2024 on a day walk to Cannibal Gorge hut as part of the club Lewis Pass New Year trip. We did the tramp in the week before Labour day. Although several others were interested, for various reasons they were unable to do the trip at this time. With luck, this article will inspire others to walk the scenic subalpine five-day journey.

First the logistics;

Getting there – Neil and I took the ferry and drove through Murchison and on to stay at the Lewis Pass motels, a few kms on the West Coast side of the Pass. Next morning we drove over the pass to the Boyle Outdoor Education Centre for secure storage of our car. One of the instructors drove us back to the Lewis Pass to start the walk.

Accommodation – The huts were not bookable and we carried a tent. As it turned out, we had most huts for ourselves, and the tent was not needed. In the meantime, DOC have made the Lewis Pass huts bookable, making planning logistics easier.

Food – We carried dehydrated breakfast and dinner for five days, and an excess of lunch crackers, spreads, biscuits, team milk powder and snacks which, as it turned out, was a good thing.

Walking track category – DOC categorise the track as Advanced Tramping Track. This is probably because of snow and river flooding potential. The track itself is well marked and well formed the whole way. The sign posted times were about right for us, with extra time needed for rest, snack or photograph stops. Distances between the huts made for a moderate day walk without needing to rush for five days. Or for a more adventuresome tramp, six days as we found out...

Our first day, 10km, carrying a five-day pack was along the pleasant Cannibal Gorge trail, meandering up and down the track beside the Maruia River Right Branch in cool "trying to rain" conditions. We stopped for a bite of lunch beside the track and continued to Cannibal Gorge hut for a warming brew. From here to Ada Pass hut was uneventful, except for meeting a lone cyclist coming the other way who had made a wrong turn at 4am in the morning and taken the Saint James walkway track instead of the Saint James cycleway track. Not sure whether to be impressed or stunned, we chatted with him and learnt he had carried his bike half the way. Oh to be young and fit, and perhaps unfamiliar with reading maps and signs again. He continued on his speedy way, and we spent a comfortable night alone at Ada Pass hut.

Next day 10.5km, we travelled over the 1008m Ada Pass in the Spencer Mountains, which is still below the bush line, crossing a fence which made us curious about its purpose. Further down the Ada river the river flats widened making a paradise for abundant flocks of Canada geese. Half an hour before Christopher hut, we looked inside the historic Christopher Cullers Hut, realizing we are at an age when history is a clear youthful memory.

On arrival at Christopher hut I stopped dead in my track upon seeing a large herd of thirty or forty “wild” horses on the river flat near the hut. They were majestic grazing freely. Suddenly they turned and galloped across the valley to greet four horses and their riders coming up the Ada river. We shared the hut with these four keen horsewomen from the Czech Republic who are currently living and working in New Zealand. Their horses were secured in a fenced area, maintained by a Hanmer Springs riding group. We learnt from the riders that the “wild” horses are semi-feral farmed horses rounded up as two-year-olds. Our curiosity about the fence was explained by the horse farming.

On day 3, 13km, to Anne hut we had our warm clothes and parkers off as the valley opened more and the sun came out from behind the clouds. Two more herds of horses were passed. More birds were seen and herd – paradise ducks, skylarks, chaffinches and Canada geese. On the other side of Ada river we saw signs of farm buildings and fences and a four wheel drive track up the river,



Inside Anne hut before the rain set in

likely part of the annual horse roundup. We continued up the Henry river to Anne hut located on subalpine tussock grass with the scenic mountains all around. We had the hut to ourselves and settled into a cosy night aware of the constant and increasingly loud sound of rain outside.

Setting off early for Anne Saddle and Boyle flat hut, 17km, we were unperturbed by the still heavy rain, knowing two of the rivers had bridges. The Anne river under the first bridge was a raging white churning torrent traveling at great speed just below the height of the bridge. Thank goodness for the bridge we said as we made our way up the Anne river track.

The first side creek was flowing vigorously making for very careful crossing. We both expressed sentiments

about challenges with more side creeks like this to cross. The next side creek flowing from Discovery peak, was indeed that challenge. We went up and down, failing to find a place to cross. After taking stock of the turbulent water flowing into the extremely turbulent Anne river not far below, and a final check of the map noting many more side streams to come before the next bridge, made the safe and easy decision to turn back for another night at Anne hut. Neil spent several hours cutting the limited windfall firewood. With the fire going and hut warmer we dried our clothes and made a food reconnaissance. Cutting back to half rations for breakfasts and dinners would stretch our rations for another day. Thank goodness for the extra dehy self-saucing chocolate pudding and lunch crackers, spreads and snacks. We both finished our Kindle novels and made inroads into the hut Wilderness magazines. The sound of rain outside continued as we spent another cosy night in Anne hut.

By morning the rain had stopped and we set of again for Anne Saddle and Boyle flat hut.

The side creeks had dropped to a safe crossing flow and the two big rivers had bridges. The walk



Ann crossing the bridge over the flooded Anne river

up to Anne Saddle 1136m through beautiful subalpine bush seemed along way with the mud and water flowing underfoot on the track. On the other side of the Saddle with the wind on our back, the rain returned, feeling cold enough to snow. We had a late lunch and warm brew in Rokeby hut before moving full steam ahead down the track to Boyle Flat hut. The hut was a welcome sight and shared with one other lone trumper. Our plan had been to spend this night glamping at Maruia Springs and soaking in the hot pools after completing the Saint James Walkway. That

would have to wait for another time.

We awoke in the morning of Labour Day to a clear sunny sky and magnificent snowcapped peaks. The final day, day six and not day five as planned, was 14.5km along a well-marked and formed track through bush with views of the still raging Boyle river to Boyle village and our car at the Outdoor Education Centre. We drove to



Neil with the Boyle River and Boyle Flat hut behind

Christchurch seeing the raging flooded Waiau Uwha river and heard weather reports

of the Labour weekend rain and snow in many parts of the country. Our five-day tramp turned six-day adventure had come to an end. And as an extra bonus, Maruia Springs kindly gave us accommodation later to make up for the missed day.

On the trip: Neil Parker and Ann Hayman

Ann

MCKERROW/CLAY RIDGE 24 NOVEMBER Jackie West.

As I drove from the Coast Road to the Catchpool car park Chris counted the wildlife: rabbits 3, quails 6. The group left the car park at 9:20 am. Jim whose knowledge of the Orongorongo area is better than anyone else in the club said he knew of a good spot for morning tea. He led the way up the McKerrow track and after a climb of about 20 metres turned right off the track and walked to a pleasant spot close to a drop down to Turere Stream. Jim favours this secluded spot because there is a strip of flat land with enough room for Jim's tent. Once refreshed we continued our upward



Morning tea at Jim's secluded spot

climb. About 12:20 there were mutterings about lunch and after a few minutes walking a suitable place was found.

Following lunch but before we reached the junction of the McKerrow and Clay Ridge tracks we met Belinda Jack and her husband checking a trap line. From the junction it was a few minutes walk to the pipe that marks the summit of McKerrow which seems lower than some nearby spots. The obligatory summit photo was taken as for at least 4 of the group it was their first time there.

We then began our return to the car park via the Clay Ridge track. As the afternoon wore on the cloud cleared so when we reached the cars soon after 4 o'clock it was a hot afternoon but a pleasant days tramping..



Chris with the 4 first timers to McKerrow

McKerrow trampers: Jim Cousins, Doreen Courtenay, Elaine Richardson, Jo Mcfarland, Jo Scott, Tony Birtwistle, Vera de Grauw, Abdullah Chaudhry, Chris and Jackie West (leader)

Jackie



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