



*Part of the Makaroro River that will be flooded if the Ruataniwha Dam proceeds  
See 11 March presentation. Photo: Trevor Le Lievre*

Please submit your **April 2026** H&V articles to the editor by **27<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

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**CLUB NIGHT PROGRAMME**  
**Starts 7:30 pm promptly**



**4 March : Ali Carew – History of Gollans Valley 1840-2000**

Ali Carew became involved in the Historical Society of Eastbourne in the late 1990s, and since then has co-authored three books on local history, including *Eastbourne: A History of the Eastern Bays of Wellington Harbour*, published in 2001. She is also the Society's collection co-ordinator and is currently its vice-president.

For many years Gollans Valley, tucked away behind the Eastbourne hills, has been a mysterious place which few of us have ever visited. But soon that will change, as the valley, with its unique wetlands and magnificent native forest, becomes part of the East Harbour Regional Park. Last year, when the Regional Council announced its purchase of Gollans Valley Station, Ali was invited to give a talk on the valley's history. During their research, she and her daughter Meredith uncovered many intriguing stories from the 19th and early 20th centuries, when the valley was dominated by feuding families, and from the more peaceful Burdan era that followed. The research also revealed that in the latter half of last century, local and central governments came up with a raft of proposals to develop the valley for purposes other than farming, most of which had serious implications for the environment and for the local community. So, what happened? All will be revealed....

**11 March : Trevor Le Lievre and Gren Christie of Wise Water Use  
- Proposed revival of the Ruataniwha Dam project on the Makarororo River**

Trevor Le Lievre and Gren Christie, Lead Advocates for environmental group Wise Water Use Hawkes Bay, are veterans of the campaign to stop the Ruataniwha dam v.1. which has had new life breathed into it under the Fast Track legislation. They'll be speaking about the history of the Ruataniwha dam, its current status, and unravelling the promoters' public spin about the project being privately funded and beneficial for the environment. They'll also explore some of the natural features of the upper-Makarororo river, and map the DoC huts in the area likely to have access affected should the project proceed.

**18 March : Jackie West – Walking the Thames Path**

After walking the Cotswold Way, the Wests began to walk the Thames Path. Because Jackie had a leg infection, they missed the first day of walking and started from Cricklade. They took 16 days plus 2 rest days to walk to Richmond where they finished their journey. On the way they passed through quaint villages and large towns, encountered hostile cows and friendly people and navigated a few unexpected diversions.

**Also 18 March : Sales Table 7-7:30pm**

*The sales table is back in its regular spot on the third Wednesday of each month. It made a successful return in February after a two-month break, with another \$125 banked into the HVTC account. Thank you to those who contributed items or made purchases.*

*Come along by 7pm with whatever items in good condition that you wish to sell. Edibles such as baking, honey, jam and relish, vegetables and fruit are consistently the best sellers. Purchasers please bring cash, and sellers remember to retrieve your unsold items at the end of the evening.*

**25 March : David Barnes – Australia's Red Centre**

Club member David Barnes spent a week in Australia's Red Centre last year, walking and taking in the sights

**1 April : Marilyn Sickels – Rebus Puzzles are Back**

Come along and form teams to enjoy a fun night of images, words, phrases and symbols to solve the puzzles.

## SPEAKERS REQUIRED FROM 13 MAY ONWARDS PLEASE

The programme of speakers up to the AGM at the end of July is currently being prepared. The programme is confirmed up to 6 May, but most dates from 13 May onwards are still available. Thank you to those who volunteered talks since the last *Hills & Valleys*. Please let me know if you have a presentation to offer or have come across one elsewhere that you think would be of interest to club members (preferably with contact details for the speaker).

Contact Graeme McVerry [graememcv2@xtra.co.nz](mailto:graememcv2@xtra.co.nz) ph 021 464349



### FORTHCOMING TRIPS



#### NOTES

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

<b>March</b>				
6 – 8 Mar	WP	<i>Pinus contorta</i> Weekend	Van	John Simes
Sun 8 Mar	D1	City to Sea		Tony B / Jo Scott
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena Stowell
Thur 12 Mar	D1+	Gentle Annie Saddle	Van	Bob/Bernice Deller
13 – 15 Mar	T1	Mangatoetoe Hut (FMC LYH/GWBN)		<b>Leader Required</b>
	T2			
Sat 14 Mar	D1+	Kapakapanui		Ann Hayman
Sun 15 Mar	WP	Ava Park Native Plantings Work Party		<b>Leader Required</b>
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena Stowell
20 – 22 Mar	T1+	Kime Hut	Van	Mel Stoneham
	T2			
Sun 22 Mar	D1	Wainuiomata – Taita via ECNZ Track	Pvt T	David Barnes
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena Stowell
Thur 26 Mar	D1+	Smith's Creek / Point 714	Pvt T	Bob/Bernice Deller
24 - 29 Mar	T1+	Paparoa Great Walk (fully booked; wait-list)	Van	Ann Hayman
27 – 29 Mar	T1	<b>Trip Required</b>	Pvt T	<b>Leader Required</b>
	T2			
Sun 29 Mar	D1	Paekakariki Escarpment Track	Pvt T	<b>Leader Required</b>
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena Stowell
<b>April</b>				
<b><i>Daylight Saving ends 3:00 am Sunday 5 April. Clocks go backward 1 hour</i></b>				
3 – 6 Apr		<b>Easter</b>		
	T1	More trips from Ruapehu Lodge	Van	Mel Stoneham
2 – 6 Apr	T2	Rangiwahia-Howlett's-Irongate (Ruahines)	Pvt T	Chris Keen
Sun 5 Apr	D1	Belmont Regional Park Explore		<b>Leader Required</b>
		Bike ride 2hrs - 9.30 from Avalon Park		Leena Stowell

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**THE SALES TABLE : 18 March.**

*See above*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kia ora koutou club members

It's been a busy summer of HVTC trips and I'd like to give a special shout-out to the leaders of longer trips who have put in so much time and energy to mastermind them.

**Chris and Murray McMillan** and their group have just returned from a long and successful trip to south Westland tramping destinations.

After Christmas, **Andrew Robinson** led another trip south to the Hopkins/Huxley river valleys in the South Canterbury high country. **Mary Horner** took a group from Holdsworth to Kaitoke, then organised a Mt Matthews ascent, which unfortunately didn't go ahead because of poor weather.

**Emma Dobbie and Debbie Labett** (with financial assistance from **Leanne Asher**) booked out our Ruapehu lodge for Waitangi weekend and ran a range of walks.

Next weekend, **John Simes** is taking a team to Ruapehu to battle *Pinus contorta* in our annual conservation initiative.

Later in March, **Ann Hayman** is doing the Paparoa great walk with nine others.

At Easter, **Mel Stoneham** is organising more trips from the Ruapehu lodge and **Chris Keen** is leading a mid-Ruahine Range adventure.

Looking back to last spring, **Chris Keen** also stepped up with a Nelson Lakes trip and Nick McBride and **Ann Hayman/Neil Parker** led trips into the Kaweka Range.

Our new club minibus has barely been at home with all this activity and travellers have been happy with its comfort and driveability.

I'm grateful to Transport Officer **Doc Watson**, who has kept the minibus running smoothly. He went above and beyond to make sure the minibus was ready for the McMillans' trip the day after the Ruapehu team returned with a tiny – and very noisy – stone caught in a wheel. Doc has appreciated the care trip leaders have taken with the vehicle.

Thank you also to all the many club members who have supported these wonderful trips. I'm very happy to see strong participation, which our Membership Officer, Doreen Courtenay, outlines in this edition of Hills & Valleys. We can have confidence that our tramping club is good health.

Ngā mihi nui

*Marina Skinner*

President

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS.

I would like to share a snapshot of our club's tramping, biking and environmental activity for the 12 month period 8 February 2025 to 9 February 2026.

We currently have 264 members.

165 different people have participated in at least one club tramping, biking or environmental activity. 24 of these are non-members.

The following is a breakdown of numbers of different people joining in the various activities in this period.

Overnight/Multi-day tramping trips -72

Day trips – 123                      Biking – 55

I have been collecting the information to better understand how active our club is. The information, over time, will also show trends in preference for the activities on offer. I started this project to assess how many members potentially would be using the new van, if we decided to make the purchase. Once I started, I could see other uses for the data. The data at this stage does not include Ruapehu activity, except for tramping trips from the lodge.

*Doreen Courtenay*

Membership Officer

## SUMMER AT RUAPEHU

Summer is here and it is, of course, a great time to visit the club lodge and enjoy time on the mountain. We're exceptionally lucky to be able to have our own place at the heart of NZ's only Dual World Heritage area, and on the slopes of a volcano.

The club is planning to run tramping trips from the lodge at Easter 2026. Keep an eye on your email/Hills and Valleys for more information and how to sign up.

We would love to have more people staying at the lodge, summer and winter. It's a great spot to base yourself for walks all over the national park. Whakapapa, the ski field operator, has laid out 10km of marked walks from quick 20 minute bursts to 2.5 hour walks this summer, starting at either the base area (Top of the Bruce) or the top of the Sky Waka gondola. For more details and a trail map, go to

<https://www.whakapapa.com/summer/short-walks>

NZ residents get discounted prices on the Sky Waka gondola. See <https://www.whakapapa.com/> for details.

And finally:

Summer prices at the lodge are \$40 per person per night. To book your mountain getaway, please contact club booking officer Alison Newbald on [ruapehubookings@hvtc.org.nz](mailto:ruapehubookings@hvtc.org.nz).

Looking forward to seeing you up there!

*Kate Brownsword*

On behalf of the Ruapehu Committee

## TAKING CARE OF CLUB FURNITURE

**Doc Watson Hall Custodian**

Unfortunately, it was brought to my attention recently that another club chair had suffered severe damage and thus making it unfit for use. This brings the number of chairs with broken bases up to three, which is very disappointing.

This damage was not caused by normal use. Some years back I made improvements to all 88 dark grey coloured chairs and so far, this has proved to be successful.

All our club chairs perform quite well providing comfortable seating on a Wednesday evening, and work best when sat on only. They don't work that well as a ladder. The club has a suitable ladder hanging up in the garage when required.

Please discourage anyone from using the chairs for anything apart from seating purposes.

All other hall users will be contacted in regard to this matter.

*Doc*

## FOR SALE - GARMIN GPS UNIT



Garmin 64S for sale with proceeds donated to the club  
An opportunity to pick up a rugged and waterproof GPS purpose made for tramping complete with carabiner clip and pouch. These sold new for \$500 and as well as a very sensitive GPS navigation/plotting system it includes a 3 axis tilt-compensated compass and a barometric altimeter. Runs off 2 AA batteries. Note no Topo maps are loaded on the unit but these are readily available. The unit is still working fine and just surplus to requirements. The entire proceeds from the sale will be donated back to the club. Looking for \$100.

Contact Lex Grubner on 0275 424 652

## TRIP REPORTS

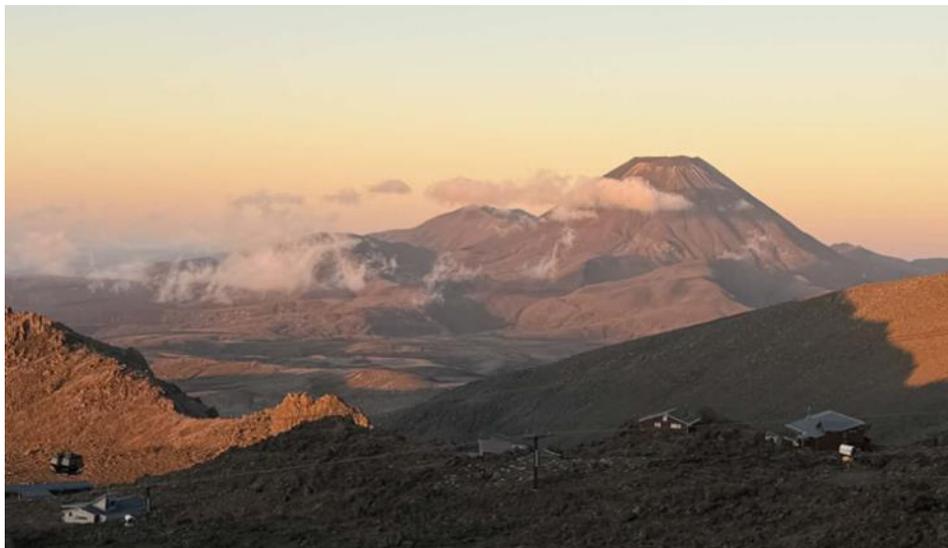
### WAITANGI WEEKEND AT MOUNT RUAPEHU HVTC LODGE

6th-8th February 2026

Ann Hayman and Deb Labett

**Leaders;** Debbie Labett, Emma Dobbie assisted by Leanne Asher

Twenty seven people arrived at the HVTC Mount Ruapehu Lodge using cars, the club mini bus and a hired van by the end of Thursday 5th February. With a big high forecast, those arriving in time enjoyed the meal prepared by Russell and everyone eventually settled down for the night. Rising early Friday morning, we set off for various intrepid adventures on the nearby tracks.



*The view from our Ruapehu lodge*

### **Friday, Waitangi Day Walk to Taranaki Falls (2 hours).**

After walking back from the lodge down the mountain to our transport at Whakapapa carpark and driving to the start of the track, we all set off to Taranaki Falls. Here we admired the vista during morning tea. One group (Mimi, Treska, Antonea, Tony B, Jo, Anna, William, Debbie, Diana and Marina) continued the loop back to the van and returned to the lodge. The afternoon was spent relaxing in the lodge, preparing dinner or taking the SkyWaka gondola to the top café for coffee and admiring the view.



*Morning tea at Taranaki Falls*

### **Friday, Waitangi Day Walk to Tama Lakes (6 – 7 hours)**

After morning tea at Taranaki Falls the other group (Emma, Pam, Marilyn, Doreen, Raewyn, Tania, Russell, Tony J, Janine, Jude, Ann, Hassan, Mel, Sarah, Leanne) continued to Tama Lakes. The well-formed track took us through stunning landscape featuring Mount Ruapehu and Mount Ngauruhoe. Most continued on to either the brilliant blue lower or upper Tama Lake for lunch. We returned on the same track. We were hot and tired making the final walk from the carpark to the hut and were very pleased to relax, shower, admire the view from the balcony, partake in happy hour and tuck into the meal prepared by Debbie and her helpers.

### **Saturday, Tongariro Crossing (8 hours)**

Fourteen of us set off bright and early to tackle the iconic Tongariro Alpine Crossing — and what a day it turned out to be.

**Pre-booking:** Highly recommended (and yes, I'd sorted ours the Wednesday before). **Trip Leader:** Debbie Labett **Participants:** Mel Stoneham, Tony Birtwistle, Jo Scott, Russell Oliver, Hassan Mohammad Pour, Diana Rickman, Leanne Asher, Tereska & Antonea Zaloumis, Anna & William Liao, Ruth Crawford, Marina Skinner

#### **Getting to the Trailhead**

A huge thank-you to **Emma and Tony Jeagers**, who kindly shuttled us to the start of the track. The trailhead was buzzing — people piling off buses, excitement in the air. We checked in with the lovely DOC lady who warned us of high winds predicted from 11am, peaking at 2pm. We mentioned we were from HVTC and she smiled and waved us through. Later we learned several groups were turned away due to wind warnings... but Hutt Valley folks are well-trained in Tararua gusts.

## Route Highlights

- **Mangatepōpō Valley:** A gentle, scenic warm-up.
- **The Devil's Staircase:** Steep, sweaty, and character-building.
- **South Crater:** A welcome breather.
- **Red Crater:** The highest point at 1,886m — panoramic views for miles.
- **Emerald Lakes:** Those famous, vivid colours did not disappoint.
- **Blue Lake:** Cold, calm, and beautiful.
- **Ketetahi Descent:** A long zig-zag through tussock and forest.
- **A Sudden Setback**
  - Less than five minutes in, poor Marina took a nasty tumble — her foot slipped into a ditch and down she went. A sprained ankle meant she couldn't continue (so disappointing for her). I tried phoning Emma and Tony; after leaving a message, Emma called back once she'd found a safe spot to stop. Tony headed back to collect Marina. And just like that, our group of 14 became 13.
- **Group Briefing**
  - We regrouped and agreed on the essentials:
  - Stay together
  - Always keep a buddy
  - Walk at your own pace, but keep others in sight
  - Our first regroup point was **Soda Springs** — a great choice with a lovely waterfall, snack-worthy seating, and conveniently placed porta-loos.
- **On the Trail**
  - Because some groups had been turned away, the track never felt too crowded. We leapfrogged a couple of larger groups throughout the day, spotting the same faces again and again.
  - Lunch was enjoyed overlooking the **Emerald Lakes**, their colours absolutely stunning.



*Emerald Lakes in sight*



*Leanne with the Emerald Lake behind*

- **The Scariest Bit**
- For many of us, the descent down the scree slope from Red Crater was the most nerve-wracking part. Russell came to the rescue with excellent technique tips: *Walk sideways, slide one foot, dig the boot in, slide the other to meet it. Bend knees. Face downhill. Think skiing.* It worked brilliantly. Everyone supported each other — one of the best things about tramping with a club. You learn new skills, enjoy great company, and of course, benefit from that trusty club minibus.
- **A Fabulous Day Out**
- Thanks to everyone who joined us for this unforgettable hike. What a team, what a trail, what a day.

*Debbie* (Tongariro Crossing Scribe)



*The Tongariro Crossing Group*

### **Saturday, Whakapapaiti Track**

Marilyn, Ann, Tony J, Sarah, Tania, Jude, Janine, Mimi, Raewyn, Doreen were on this trip.

We originally planned to walk the whole of the Whakapapaiti track and headed down to the carpark to wait for the van to return from dropping the Tongariro group. We changed to plan B after our transport was delayed returning from the Tongariro Crossing group drop off when a party member sprained her ankle. Tony and Marilyn went back to the lodge to pack up gear for the injured person who checked in at the Whakapapa Skotel as the walk up to the lodge was not possible with the sprain.

With less time, we walked to Silica Rapids for an early lunch/brunch and out along the bush track end of the Whakapapaiti track. It is a scenic and lovely walk with many information signs about flora, fauna, silica streams and rusty (iron) river stones. We had time for a coffee in the sunshine, and the short walk to Tawhai falls before most returned to the lodge. Emma and Ann drove to the Ketetahi Track road to pick up the very happy Tongariro track walkers, arriving just as they completed their walk.

The evening at the lodge was convivial with happy hour, more balcony views, although it was cooler outside, and the hearty meal prepared by Marilyn and her team.

### **Friday and Saturday rock climbing at Meads Wall**

Neil joined us at the lodge, taking the opportunity to rock climb on the east and west side of the recently bolted Meads wall.

**Those on the Waitangi weekend at the lodge:** Tony Birtwistle, Jo Scott, Sarah Spencer, Emma Dobbie, Ruth Crawford, Mimi Hodis, Debbie Labett, Mel Stoneham, Russell Oliver, Hassan Mohammad Pour, Diana Rickman, Leanne Asher, Tereska Zaloumis, Antonea Zaloumis, Anna Liao, William Liao, Neil Parker, Ann Hayman, Marina Skinner, Tania Hatfield, Marilyn Sickells, Pam Smith, Tony Jaegars, Jude Spier, Janine Foon, Doreen Courtney, Raewyn Roberts.

Enormous thank you to our leaders Debbie, Emma and Leanne for arranging and leading this excellent Waitangi weekend trip at the club Ruapehu lodge with 27 members.

# BARKSKINS OF THE HUTT VALLEY

6 February 2026

Bernice Deller

As I watched Andrew, Doc and Mike sawing away in the middle of our tramp to cut down a young, fallen tree that was blocking our way, I kept trying to remember the name of the book I had read by Annie Proulx about woodcutters in the “New World”. It came to me the next day so with a bit of poetic licence I have named my story.

We had left the Hutt at about 8 o'clock and began climbing up Mt Pukeatua at about 9.30am. This tramp is part of the Te Araroa walk. Bob and I had lead the trip from Otaki Forks to the Mangaone South road end quite a few years ago but decided this time we would just do a there and back trip up to the top of Mt Pukeatua. It was red line for Andrew, Doc and Mike and in fact Bob and I couldn't remember much about our past trip so we all enjoyed tramping through the dense native bush on a cool somewhat cloudy day.



We met a few Te Araroa walkers as we tramped upward – even a couple of trampers from Otaki, doing the day trip in reverse of us. Then we came upon the young fallen tree. We could have bush bashed our way around the tree but Andrew got out a cutting tool, the type that cuts young *Pinus contorta* easily, and began the cutting task.

After this great effort by the guys we carried on, thinking that the Te Araroa walkers would be very grateful for all the H V T C hard work. (I imagine after the recent storm that there will be lots more windfall. We did think that we might try the track again next summer but from Otaki Forks.)

We weren't as far along the track as we thought we were, so we didn't actually make the top until about 1.30. It was great to have a rest and some food. The day was still cloudy but every now and again parts of the Southern Crossing appeared and the route along to Elder. For a short while Kapakapanui also appeared.



Photo on the left taken by Mike on top of Mt Pukeatua. Photo on the right taken by a helpful walker near the end of our day's tramp.

The trip down took about 3 hours so it was a fairly long but very enjoyable day. Thanks to Andrew, Doc and Mike for coming along. Those on the trip: Andrew Robinson, Doc Watson, Mike Priest, Bob and Bernice Deller.

*Bernice*

## **MOUNT LOWRY-FERN GULLY-LEES GROVE CIRCUIT DAY TRAMP Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 Heather Eskdale**

### **Participants**

Marilyn Sickels, Jackie West, Ann Hayman, Neil Parker, Felicity Maxwell, Angela Hope and daughter Emily, Hassan, Janine Foon, Louise Gibson, Heather Eskdale

The day dawned a tad windy but oh my, what a lovely tramping day it turned out to be. This route is well known to most trampers but it's always a good leg stretch and of course, there's always a good yarn to be had!

Some car-pooling from Woburn Station led to meeting a few more of the group at the starting point on Cheviot Road. Up the Lowry Track to the main ridge line got the heart thumping and then it was a lovely wander along the ridge line to the top of Lowry, where Felicity was waiting for us (having climbed up from her home using another track). We stopped here for morning tea before heading along the Rata Ridge track to the Fern Gully track which drops down into Wainuiomata. After some enjoyed a fistful of blackberries we walked very briefly along the streets before starting up the Lees Track toward the Rata Ridgeline once more. To be fair, this is a bit of a slog but we all coped admirably, deciding to stop for lunch in a very pleasant, sheltered spot just over half way up. Energy renewed, we climbed back to the ridgeline, back to the Lowry Summit and then descended the way we had come, getting back to the cars feeling pretty happy with our day. There was a great deal of windfall all the way along the route today – most of it, we presumed,

from the wild weather which hit the region last Monday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. Some very large trees were completely uprooted, lying rather mournfully sideways! Smaller debris was everywhere and forced a few small detours.

A highlight of the journey was spotting some Erena Autumnalis, the native orchid. The aroma tickles the nose first, which makes you aware there are some close by. While not in full flourish quite yet, there were certainly enough to feel the thrill and appreciate the beauty.

So all in all, a most enjoyable day – great weather, wonderful company and the splendour of the outdoors. Thank you to all who made the day very special.



*Heather*



## IN MEMORY - PAULETTE MELDRUM

Eddie Meldrum has informed us that Paulette, his wife of 60 years, passed away on 1 December 2025. She joined the tramping club in 1963 and was an 'Ultra Veteran' member. Many condolences to Eddie from all his friends in the club.