

Central North Island Section Newsletter

Jan/Feb 2007

The Central North Island section meet every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7.30, alternating at the McMeekan centre at Ruakura every even numbered month and a more social meeting at Biddy Mulligan's Irish Pub every odd numbered Month.

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Editors Corner...

Happy New Climbing Year from your new newsletter editor Kevin. We have some good section meetings coming up in the next few months so please come along if you can. A couple are arranged for weekends so members from out of Hamilton can come and also do some climbing on co-ordinated climbing days. Thanks to Amanda and Marcus for the great articles.

Disclaimer: None of these views expressed in this newsletter necessary reflect those of the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) or the Central North Island section of NZAC

Gear Hire Rates.

Ice axes, crampons, safety helmet.	\$10.00 per item /weekend, \$20.00 per 'set'/weekend.
Harness (with karabiner & figure 8 descender) and safety helmet	\$10.00 per 'set'/day \$20.00 per 'set'/weekend.
Rock shoes	\$10 per day
Transceivers	\$15. 00 per weekend. [note no discount]
Snow shovels	\$10.00 per weekend
Ice hammers	\$10.00 per weekend

CNI Section members receive 30% discount on above rates.

Please Ring Dennis on 078566754 to hire any of this gear

Whangaehu Hut

Back country Alpine hut above Tukino Skifield, Mount Ruapehu.

A wonderful remote location.

Sleeps 6 in comfort.

To Book and obtain key (for the locked access road) email:Barry

Smith (See Above). Hut fees:
 \$5 Members, \$10 Non-Members



Whangaehu Hut

Indoor Climbing-Extreme Edge Climbing Wall, Hamilton. It is only \$5.50 on Tuesdays to climb if you have your own gear. There are normally a few dirty old alpine club members around so come on down and learn from the wealth of experience down there. (Ask for Kevin, Steve or Marcus)

If anyone is interested we are also going to **Newstead Orchard Wall** on Thursday evenings at 7pm from October . There are lots of new holds and crashmats at the wall and its an excellent place to boulder. Contact Cliff Ellery or Eric Duggan for a lift or details of how to get there

This is a good time to socialise with fellow members, catch up on the goss and a great opportunity to organise trips. Hope to see you down there.

Activities programme

Cliff Ellery is looking at pulling together a natural pro rock course March, Contact him for details

Committee News

The section is looking for funds from local grants to buy a rock drill for bolting
New committee members are needed for this year. Please contact Steve Burrows if you are interested.

Meetings

Wednesday Feb 14th McMeekan centre at 7.30pm Eric Duggan Rock Climbing in New Zealand and Australia

SATURDAY 12th May McMeekan centre at 7.30pm **Norm Hardie** Autobiography from one of the first ascentionists of Kanchenjunga Contact Steve Burrows if coming from outside Hamilton and wanting to do some rock climbing locally on Sunday.

SATURDAY April 14th McMeekan centre at 7.30pm **Pat Deavoll** 'Extreme Mountaineering in New Zealand and Overseas.' Contact Kevin Barratt if coming from outside Hamilton and wanting to do some rock climbing locally on Sunday

For the above two Saturday speakers see the NZAC website or look out for posters in Trek and Travel and Bivouac in Hamilton for final Details.

Five Go Wild In the Mountains...

(Articles sponsored by Milo)

So, what is the best bit of a mountaineering weekend? Is it the beauty of a snow covered Tongariro Crossing glittering in brilliant sunshine, or the real sense of achievement at having completed a challenging two days of physical exercise, or is it really all about the company you keep and the stories you can tell later? For the "Breakaway Snow Bunnies" (christened as such by longer standing members of the club) it seemed to be all about having some fun!

We, (Colleen, Cherie, Amanda, Danny and Mark) met on the NZAC Beginners Snowcraft Course and having found a common desire to do a winter version of the Tongariro Crossing set about planning it in a rather sketchy way. Small plans grew and before you could click your heels twice the five of us were cramming ourselves sardine-style into the car complete with backpacks - some of us (Cherie) preparing these later than others!, numerous extra bags of "stuff", a box of "ice gear" oh and plenty of lollies for the journey.



The "Long Drop Photo Opportunity"

A quick "comfort break" at Taumararua and the crew were feeling fantastic about the co-ordinated plan, weather knowledge, gear, food and accommodation, so we set off singing and dancing down the road, only to have the wind

taken out of our sails by a mean policeman and his speeding ticket!. Preparing our gear in the climbing wall of National Park Backpackers, over grumbles about the pub being shut and the ridiculously early alpine start of 5.30am, we found that all essential team spirit and shared out the mammoth amount of food Mark had bought on a lycra-tight budget! Cherie was the only one who got more than 2 hours of sleep as the rest of us worked in shifts to roll Danny over and stop him from snoring! .Bright and early, we set off in the backpacker's shuttle with a grumpy bus driver who arrived too soon to pick us, up after receiving the wrong instructions. But, nothing could break the smiles as we looked through weary eyes out of the window at magnificent snow-topped Ngaurahoe. At this point, to save you reading on (if you're lazy), I can tell you it took us two days to do a track that most tourists do, in unsuitable attire, in a day. Sounds like a tough weekend but it was amazing!

We hit the trail at 7:30 am (after a breakfast Milo and sticky-porridge) on a cloudless day with the white peaks of volcanos ahead of us and then up the "Devils Staircase" which was definitely a hellish slog. We made use of a 'photo opportunity' at the long-drop loo en-route, to show off our stylish mountaineering attire, including Cherie's silk boxer shorts, Colleen's 'white top, black bra' look, Danny's new trend in lower leg wear, Mark's nappy pants and Amanda's all round stripeyness! The girls happily left most of our gear at the base of Ngaurahoe, taking up Danny & Mark's gentlemanly "offer" to carry a backpack each, and headed off up stunning "Mount Doom". As we started to tire, Mark reached into his pack for the SCROGGIN (an invention Danny was easily convinced that Mark had spent ages measuring out and mixing himself) and realised all the food had been left in the other bags, so the only sustenance was water! Bad planning, that took a toll on us and will never be repeated. Fortunately, we were all so amazed at the view and the sensation of vertigo as you look down the snow slope after each section of 'head-down ascent' that we made it to the top weary but unscathed. Our newly learned alpine skills of zig-zagging up the slope and post-holing stood us in good stead and no ice axe arrests would be needed till the awesome full-throttle bum slide down.

On reaching the first rim, tired bodies (not helped by some route advice intended for much fitter and faster bunnies) and time constraints lead to an executive decision to skip the final cone section and take the fastest route down for lunch - we'd seen the views we wanted to, so there! Not before Amanda noticed that when you put hand over a steam vent it's very hot though. Of course, none of us needed a Snowcraft course to work out the fastest and most energy efficient route down a snowslope... Bum-Slide!!!

Some attractive scree saw Mark taking a solo-run down a different gully to everyone else, leaving Colleen with a frosty wet bum because Mark had her over trou'. We had a hoot as Danny had to backtrack for some loose gear that came off his pack and Colleen had to "ice-climb" back up a section to retrieve Cherie's camera! Amanda spent the first 10m trying to convince herself it was fun and that she wouldn't be killed by this "monster of a slide", but 5 minutes later was racing the "Bunnies" to the finish line. When Mark heard all the funny stories from smiling faces at the bottom of the cone he was convinced "team" was more fun than "solo".

Over a lunch of pitta bread, hummus, meats, cheese, soup, cake and... Milo (packed light as you can see!) we decided that our social antics had probably cost us The Crossing for the day. The idea of five hours of hiking across fast-melting snowy terrain, two of which would probably have to be completed in the dark, was not an option so we headed back to Mangetopopo hut and decided to leave the crossing for Sunday. Pity we hadn't made this decision at the top of Ngaurahoe or we would have taken in the crater.

As we reached the bottom of the staircase ("Oh hell, another round of this tomorrow!") we enjoyed another photo call by the aesthetically un-pleasing long-drop.



Awesome Red Crater

Finally we settled at the hut for the night and jointly prepared a superb dinner with huge amounts of chicken, in a gloriously rich mushroom sauce and rice, rounded off with some very large cups of Baileys, a huge block of orange dark chocolate and some more Milo. The extra weight in the pack meant we did enough exercise to warrant eating that impressive a meal!

An exhausted team eagerly opted for party breakfast had us back on the track, an hour unprepared", being first up and last out! (what? Yes... Milo and cake, to sustain us prepared tourists pass us by) for our "smc and made our ascent up to Red Crater.

New Zealand Alpine Club

The view into the crater was a first for us so blessed by glorious skies. From the top, looking 360 degrees around us, no man could imagine such incredibly humbling views as the snow capped craters, peaks, valleys, lahars and far off ranges that completed this awesome picture.

Photo calls concluded, and after Colleen had socialised with the third person she knew on this tramp, we headed down from the highest point by way of some more scree and another energy-saving giggle-raising bum slide.



"I Love My Board"

At this point, it is important to recognise the commitment and sheer determination of our Irish team mate, who unfalteringly carried the remnants of a sign, lettering long gone, all the way from the top of the Devil's Staircase to Red Crater. After being used as a lunch table, he carried it to its final destination to be used as a sledge down the side of the crater (outside not inside, we should add).

The track headed off from the Emerald Lakes over Central Crater, where Danny and Mark felt a huge burst of energy and took an impressively quick side trip, post holing all the way up to blue lake. Arriving sore, panting, sweating and in

strong winds Mark had to explain, to a fortunately mild mannered Danny, that the lakes were normally really impressive when not iced up and snow covered.

A quick several course lunch of leftover rice and chicken, pitta bread, hummus, cheese, meats, cake and, of course, Milo, before we hit the trail for the final leg down to the bus and back to civilisation.

We had magnificent views of lakes Rotoira and Taupo, and smaller volcano's under still clear blue skies. We made a quick wee-stop at Ketetahi hut, where we were told in no uncertain terms to "get a move on" by the guide from the backpackers or "suffer a 2 hour wait for the next shuttle", then further views of steaming pools, water falls, streams and bush. We were weary, in pain but truly grinning (and stinking - according to our fellow passengers) when we arrived at the shuttle.

Which people in their right minds would have joined us on this journey? The journey that resulted in five exhausted bodies sandwiched back into the car, a car now smelly with sweaty polypro', cabbage feet and beefy bottom burps! Hopefully, the Intrepid Snowbunnies will enjoy the company of some like-minded, challenge-seeking, milo-drinking, exercise freaks on our Taranaki/Egmont adventure at the end of October?



Snowbunnies on top of the world

3 peaks revisited

Niklas Werner first mentioned the idea of doing the 3 peaks, when we were up Ngauruhoe one day a couple of years ago. The idea was to walk from one end of the park to the other, taking in the 3 peaks of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu (Tahurangi) on the way. At the time I thought it sounded like yet another typically crazy idea of his and laughed it off.

The idea returned to haunt me, however, in the form of an article written by Michael Thomas in the last alpine journal. In his article, he described the challenge that he had set himself of doing all 3 peaks in under 24 hours. I now felt compelled to try it for myself. After floating the idea around the alpine circles for some time, I finally found a few other brainless idiots who agreed to come with me and give it a go. We decided to go for the "easier" direction of South-North.

Kevin H, David H, Eric, Christian, and I headed down to Ohakune one evening, ready for an early start the next day. However when the alarm went off at 5:00am, I was still wide awake. I hadn't slept AT ALL the whole night. Rather than being a liability and jeopardising the others chances, I opted to bail before we even started. Kevin, Eric & Chris went on to complete the challenge, finishing at Ketetahi in the blistering time of 16 hours. I was absolutely gutted. With the challenge now "done", and in such an incredible time too, there didn't seem much point in simply repeating what had already been done. The only other option would be to do it in reverse - the harder way, adding another 900m in elevation gain.

This called for some SST (serious secret training as Chris calls it). I blew a day off work the very next week and did the Tongariro Northern Circuit (41k's) in 12 hours. My confidence boosted, the following week I did the first half of the route and felt even better. The next week, Paul joined me on another sickie for a recce on the second half. I now had the whole route scoped and was itching to get into the real thing. This time, the team consisted of Paul McCullagh, Kevin (Captain Underpants) Hammond, myself, and our driver/support person Jo Chizmar. There was a full moon on Saturday 7th October and a small window of good weather forecast for all that day and into the night. Awesome!

By the time Friday rolled around however, the weather had sped up somewhat and it was now looking like it was going to be a bit of a zephyr Saturday evening. The now high avalanche warning didn't help. Nor did the "eruption" the previous day, with climbers advised to stay clear of the upper mountain. Bugger. The only course of action was to drive down Friday night after work and just go for it there and then anyway.

By setting off in the evening, we had the prospect of firm snow conditions through the first half at night. Coming up Ruapehu in the morning sounded a nice idea - that way we could better scope out the avalanche situation, as well as dodge any flying rocks that the volcano may have spat at us.

We set off from Ketetahi carpark at 9:45pm Friday. It took us 1½ hours to get to Ketetahi hut where we filled our waterbottles and Paul & I changed into our plastics. We followed the track up a few turns before heading up towards North Crater. It was the most perfect night imaginable up there. I must have bored the others silly with my continual ravings about how beautiful it all was. But it was - the sky was so clear with not a breath of wind. The moon so bright that Taranaki was clearly visible on the horizon. It was so quiet that I felt I needed to whisper so as not to break the tranquility around us.

We summited Tongariro at 1:10am.

We stopped for a bite to eat at the bottom of Ngauruhoe. I'd brought along a few meat pies (my latest fetish), but found that because we'd started earlier than planned, they were still frozen. A crunchy half frozen pie is not really that good, trust me. Just when I was thinking how

nice it was to finally have Tongariro all to ourselves for once, we bumped into a Russian climber on our way up Ngauruhoe! Damn, if it's this crowded in the middle of the night at this time of year, what's it going to be like mid summer?

We summited Ngauruhoe two hours later at 3:15am

We walked straight down toward Tama, stopping for water and changing back into running shoes below the snowline. We reached the Tongariro Northern Circuit / Tama Lakes turnoff at 5:45am, where we stopped for some breakfast. After getting over our disappointment that Jo wasn't there waiting for us with hot pancakes and steaming coffee, we had a very cold breakfast. It was now 8 hours since we first set off and the sun was just a very faint glow on the horizon.

It was a hot, long way up the Waihothonu ridge to Te Heueu, with the snow softening as we got higher. I remember looking back at Ngauruhoe in the distance and was about to make a comment to Kevin about how our last trip up there went - when I realised that our last trip was only last night! It was hard to grasp that this was still that same trip. The summit of Te Heueu was visible the whole way up and just didn't seem to be getting any closer. We were getting tired. When I stopped for a breather up near the top, I made the mistake of leaning on my axe and momentarily closing my eyes - I fell asleep on my feet and woke up as I started falling sideways! Paul did an awesome job of postholing up the last stretch to the top, which we reached at 11:10am.

It was windy up there. With the snow now so soft we opted to follow the wind and traverse around the ridge of the plateau towards Dome shelter. We were disappointed to find that the crater lake looked exactly the same as before - no flying rocks to dodge, no lahars to surf - not even a bit of ash to be seen. I'd carried my boogie board / deflector shield (snow shovel) all this way to no avail. The only other daring souls we saw up there were a couple of scientists who leapt out of a helicopter, took a hasty couple of measurements and then flew away again. We had the whole place to ourselves - and such a nice day!

We started heading straight for the face up to Tahurangi, but changed our minds after the snow got deeper, and the avalanche risk looked a bit dodgy. So we back tracked and traversed around the back of the ridge, to find Jo waiting for us at the bottom of the last push with yummy treats. We summited Tahurangi at 2:40pm. From there it was a beautiful long bum slide all the way down to the car park at Turoa. Clocks stopped at 3:55pm - 18 hours 10 minutes. I was feeling great until I got in the car. I didn't know whether I was going to be sick or pass out. It had been almost 36 hours since we'd last slept and it was beginning to show.



All in all, a lovely days outing and highly recommended for a leisurely stroll in the hills.

- Marcus Bai

"Round the Hill" in a day

When Jo Ferry suggested that the next challenge should be doing the Round the Mountain as a day walk, it took me all of a split second to commit to the idea. As it was her suggestion, of course she had no choice but to come with me.

The Round the Mountain track encircles Mt Ruapehu. Looking at the map, it works out to be 69kms around, and as such, is normally done as a 4 - 6 day hike. Doing it in a day looked like a suitably stupid and pointless challenge.

We decided to set off from Whakapapa and go anti-clockwise around. This meant we would do the bush sections first and have an easier time route-finding in the dark on the final leg home across the Tama Saddle - the one stage we had both done before.

We set off on 23rd December at around 5:10am, just before dawn. After making our first of many dodgy stream crossings we arrived 2 hours later at Whakapapaiti Hut. We expected a full hut, but found only 2 people here. In fact we were to meet only 3 more people in the entirety of the remaining walk. Upon Jo's insistence, I wasn't to disclose our intentions to anyone we met, for fear that we may be considered nutters (what do you mean "considered"?). Apparently it was this couples 6th day on the track and they were planning on getting back to Whakapapa today. The chap said that it had taken them 7 hours to come from the last hut, so we should make it there OK today. When he asked if we were going to stay over there tonight, I said we'd probably just keep going. At first I tried side-stepping his questions, until, with growing concern in his eyes, he insisted on knowing exactly where we intended to stop that night. When I eventually fessed up and said Whakapapa, there was a long silence. Then, with obvious confusion and some uncertainty, he confessed that he must have missed something. I could see that he obviously thought that we didn't have a clue what we were doing or even where the Hell we were, and that the Search & Rescue would be on their way shortly.

From here we left the bush behind and started climbing. The temperature dropped as we got higher, and the track got rougher and muddier. When we finally reached Lake Surprise (oh my gosh!), any half baked ideas of going for a swim were quickly laid to rest when it started snowing! It was enough to make you feel all Christmassy at this festive time of the year, although I don't think Jo was particularly impressed with my carol singing. It was about here that my knees came to grinding halt going down a seemingly never-ending flight of stairs. I could see by the anxiety and frustration in her eyes, that Jo thought her dreams of her completing this challenge were about to come to an abrupt end. These concerns were soon dispelled however after I simply popped a couple of anti-inflammatories. Oh the miracle of modern drugs!



Marcus near Lake Surprise

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It was still snowing when we reached Mangaturuturu Hut - 4 hours since leaving the last one. We were greeted by two young bare-chested guys covered in blood. It was a little worrying until they assured us it wasn't their blood, or anyone else's for that matter - they'd been out hunting. They dragged in the two headless deer carcasses out of the bush and then bravely went swimming in the icy river to wash off the blood.

It took us about 1½ hours from there to reach the Ohakune Mountain Road. On the way we climbed up the spectacular silica Cascades. Literally seconds after Jo warned me to take care as the rocks were slippery, of course I slipped and fell in.

It was a long 3km trudge down the road in the rain, feeling like idiots every time a car passed us by. It was nice to get back onto the now superb track through the bush and alpine wetland that led on to the spectacular Waitonga falls - which of course I fell in.

We reached Mangaehuehu hut at 4:00pm - 11 hours after we first set off. It had been a long day already and yet we were only half way. We were getting tired. I had a feeling that this was going to become more of a mission than a challenge. After a brief spell at the hut however, we felt much better by the time we set off again. We were now over half way, as opposed to nearly half way - a huge psychological difference.

The terrain was now very much drier and hotter, and all thoughts were focused on the impending Waihianoa Gorge. As we approached the top of the gorge, the scorching sun deteriorated into a hail storm. The climb down, and then out of the gorge on the other side looked a most intimidating sight. We felt a lot better after knocking that bastard off, and then continued on to

Jo conquers the gorge



Rangipo hut, arriving there at 7:45pm. It was starting to cool down now and the sole occupant in the hut had a most welcome fire going. It wasn't until we went into the warm hut that we realised just how tired we were. I shivered by the fire while Jo crashed on a bunk and refused to move. It was oh so tempting to stay where we were for the fast approaching night. We were there for a full hour trying to summon up the courage to go back out into the dark and bitter cold.

The final 7½ hours through the Rangipo desert and across the Tama Saddle was hard going. Jo had in her possession a brand new and very bright headlamp, courtesy of Santa, which proved to be a great help in route finding the rest of the way. I was more than happy

to let Jo blaze the trail home while I followed her heels. The route was poled, but it took a bit of looking around at times to find them in the dark (especially since a lot were lying on the ground!).

Whakapapa village couldn't come soon enough. We were both absolutely shattered. Arriving back to the start after 23 hours, we couldn't decide which part of us was the sorest - I think even my blisters had blisters. I managed to summon enough strength to find the salvation of a hot shower, whilst Jo opted for the stinky option and simply collapsed on her bunk as she was.

Two hours sleep found us revived, but sore, and on our way home.

Yes it all turned out to be a lot harder than we had anticipated, but that only served to make its completion all the sweeter. It's a nice feeling to know that we did it, and without quite collapsing in a pool of sick on the way. Hell, we even managed to keep our sense of humour intact - barely. Maybe that was the real challenge! Still, I don't think either of us would be in a hurry to do again. Well, not for a little while anyway...

Marcus Bai

For Sale

Charlet Moser Axar Ice hammer Nearly New condition \$160 Contact Kevin Barratt

If Undelivered please return to : NZAC CNI Section
P.O. Box 11119

HAMILTON

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