



THE CHRISTCHURCH TRAMPER

Published by CHRISTCHURCH TRAMPING CLUB INC.
PO Box 527, Christchurch, www.ctc.org.nz

We are affiliated to the Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ Inc.

Opinions expressed or events described in this newsletter might not actually represent Club policy
- if they do it's probably pure coincidence.

Vol. 78

September 2008

No. 5

President	Richard Wills	389-8671	Club Captain	Adrian Busby	325-5001
Vice President	Warwick Dowling	981-2045	Trip Organiser (day)	Jenny Harlow	349-2280
Secretary	Jenny Harlow	349-2280	(weekend)	Andrew Turton	332-8275
Treasurer	Malcolm Carr	960-5281	Hut Convener	Dave Watson	981-7929
Editor	Richard Lobb	351-2344	Gear Custodian	Ken Brown	359-2000
Social Convener	Alan Ross	384-6425	New Members	Susan Pearson	337-4914

The **CHRISTCHURCH TRAMPING CLUB** has members of all ages, and runs tramping trips every weekend, ranging from easy (minimal experience required) to hard (high fitness and experience required). We also organise instructional courses and hold weekly social meetings. Membership rates per year are \$35 member, \$55 couple, \$18 junior or associate.

Equipment Hire: The Club has a range of equipment for hire. The Gear Custodian is Ken Brown 359-2000. Note: Club gear assigned to you is your responsibility; please take care of it. Please make sure you put tents inside your pack. Tents attached to the outside of your pack can be easily punctured when bush bashing or even lost. This may result in serious damage to your bank account! Please air and dry tents after taking them on a trip even if they are not used, and report any damage to the gear custodian.

Rates for Gear Hire:

Tent	\$3/person/night
Ice axes, Crampons	\$4/weekend
Harnesses, snow shovels	\$4/weekend
Large/small weekend packs	\$2/weekend
Helmets	\$2/day
Personal Locator	Free
Beacons	Free

Our Club Hut: In the Arthur's Pass township, with all the comforts of home including real showers and inside flushing loos (BYO toilet paper!), but with the mountains at the back door. A great place for a few days away; take your usual gear and a pillowcase. Please book before leaving town to ensure there is a bunk available. For keys and bookings, phone Dave Watson 981-7929; or if he's away, Rex Vink 352-5329; or if they're both away, Andrew Wrapson 980-6006. Hut fees are \$8 member, \$8 member's partner, \$15 non-member, \$4 kids under 12. If you find any problems or maintenance required, please tell Dave.

Social Scene: We meet on Thursdays 7:30 pm at the Canterbury Horticultural Centre (Watling Lounge), Hagley Park South, 57 Riccarton Avenue (entrance opposite the hospital). A variety of social functions are organised, the atmosphere is informal, and tea and biscuits served. If you can give a presentation or have ideas, please contact Alan Ross 384-6425 or email alan.d.ross@orica.com. Please note that formalities start at 7:50 pm sharp, and if there is a guest speaker, he/she will start at 8:10 pm *sharp*.

Trips: Unless otherwise stated, day trips depart at 8:00 am and weekend trips depart at 7:00 pm on Fridays, from Shell Carlton Corner Service Station at 1 Papanui Road (next to Liquor Land and opposite Derby Street). If you aren't taking your car on the trip, park on one of the nearby side streets, otherwise it may be wheel clamped or towed. If you are taking your car please refuel at Shell Carlton, as they are kind enough to hold our trip lists. Every trip gives an indication of transport costs per person. Please bring it in cash to help the leader divvy up at the end. If you have comments or suggestions for trips, please contact the appropriate trip organiser (listed above). New or prospective members intending to go on any trip must sign up at club night or contact the trip leader in advance.

Leaders: Please ask for the trip list box (disguised as a shiny red 'Stanley' toolbox) and post the trip list into the locked box. If anyone turns up after this, the service station has a key to open the box. Spare key holders are listed on the box.

Notices

Email: The club operates a moderated email list, whose address is members@ctc.org.nz. This list is used to send out the newsletter, occasional tramping related messages and other invites, and from time to time a complete list of the email addresses of CTC members. Messages intended for the list, and requests to join or leave the list should be sent to the above email address. Note that the moderator will check as to the appropriateness of all messages.

CTC Stickers: The club has Christchurch Tramping Club stickers for members to stick in hut books when they visit. Please contact the secretary at secretary@ctc.org.nz.

Membership Database: If you know of any updates, errors or omissions, email Susan Pearson susan@toniq.co.nz or phone 337-4914.

Access Database: If you know of any new information that concerns obtaining access to the properties we tramp on (e.g. change of owner or phone number), please call Ian Dunn 343-2155 or email ian.dunn@paradise.net.nz.

Club Hut: When using the Club Hut, please be careful when changing the taps when arriving and leaving. The consequences of cocking this up (pun intended) could be severe, so please read the instructions carefully.

Committee: The Committee meets from 7.30 pm on the second Monday of every month except January. The venue changes between committee members' homes. Club members may attend meetings to discuss matters. Contact the Secretary (secretary@ctc.org.nz or 349-2280).

New Members Welcome: A warm welcome to the following new members: Robyn Frew, Jan Mitchell, David Cockeran, Anna Mulholland.

Hypothermia talk: For those who missed Rob McLean's talk to the club about hypothermia, Honora Renwick has made her notes from the talk available on our website. Click the "Tramplore" link in the menu on the left then "Health and First Aid" and lastly "Hypothermia". Thanks Honora!

Classifieds

Classified Ads: Are available to CTC members at no charge.

Calendar of Trips and Social Events

Saturday 30 August and/or Sunday 31 August	Leader: John Henson 342-3311
Ski touring: We will be running two ski days over the weekend with people welcome to come on the Saturday, or the Sunday, or stay on field for the night and do both. We will be looking at somewhere like Fox Peak or Broken River with the option to ski tour on one of the days. Names will need to be on the list early to arrange accommodation and transport.	Grade: Ski Early close: 25 Aug Map: TBA Approx: \$40
Weekend 30-31 August	Leader: Andrew Wrapson 980-6006
Williams Saddle: Williams Saddle is between the Mingha and Edwards valleys. The route on Saturday is to follow the Edwards track to the Edwards hut where you stay the night. Williams saddle is an unmarked route and is reached via a steep stream bed behind the hut. There are good views from the top. You then travel south for a km before dropping down in a long sidle to the Mingha river and back to the cars.	Grade: Moderate Closed: 21 Aug Map: K33 Approx: \$40
Sunday 31 August	Leader: Steve Bruerton 322-6196
Foggy Peak: Bring your ice axe and crampons and practice your skills from the basic snowcraft course. Yes it's the last official day of winter but we'll still be in winter tramping mode for some time and Foggy Peak (1741m) is 800m above Porters Pass. If the weather is warm(ish) bring some form of toboggan and we will see if any get away and fly off to search for Uncle Bernhard's lost ride. Keener types can continue on up to Castle Hill Peak.	Grade: EasyMod Closed: 28 Aug Map: K35 Approx: \$20
Sunday 31 August	Leader: Bernhard Parawa 981-4931
Mt Binser: Another go at Mt Binser – the last few attempts have been stymied by the weather but it is a very good winter peak so let's hope this one can go. We start up the Binser Saddle track to the saddle (1085m) where we leave the track, heading up firstly through bush and then out onto the open slopes to pt 1753m. A few k's of superb ridge travel then brings us to the main peak (1868m, 1350m total height gain). With a car shuffle at the start we may be able to drop down to the south-west to the road. Expect snow and bring ice axe and crampons, sunnies, etc.	Grade: Moderate (requires snowskills) Closed: 28 Aug Map: L34 Approx: \$25
Thursday 4 September	Club Night
The Dusky Track: Bernhard Parawa will take us on this journey through a part of Fiordland across the Dusky track. When I asked him to describe the trip he used these emotive words: sandflys, mud, rain, snow and even sunshine. Come along and learn more about the trip.	
Saturday 6 September	Leader: Chris Curry 351-5913
Wharfedale Track: The Wharfedale is a real piece of local history. It was originally envisaged as a road route to open up Lees Valley: work started optimistically in 1879 and about \$half-a-million in today's terms had been spent in four years before it reverted to being one of the more expensive 19th century stock routes. Now it makes one of the network of tracks in the Oxford forest and is used by mountain bikers as well as trampers. The track is mostly low level (400 - 700m) through bush and beech forest. We are planning to do a crossover trip if numbers permit, to make the most of the area.	Grade: Easy Closes: 4 Sep Map: L34 Approx: \$20

Weekend 6-7 September	Leader: Ken Brown 359-2000
Pinchgut Hut: Pinchgut Hut is down behind Mt Thomas and is an ideal trip for people getting into weekend tramping. It is only about 3 hours tramping on the Saturday to get to the 10-bunk hut for Saturday night. A round trip can be made by following the Okuku river on Sunday but this requires a car shuffle . Check with Ken for his intended route.	Grade: EasyMod Closed: 28 Aug Map: M34 Approx: \$30

Weekend 6-7 September	Leader: Richard Wills 389-8671
Snow Shelters: If you need "Shelter from the Storm" or if you fancy a "Home on the Range" without carrying a tent, come along and learn how to construct snow caves, snow mounds, igloos and trenches in different types of snow and situations. Discover the benefits of living under the snow – it's stormproof, warm, easily illuminated, endlessly expandable, rent-free and no building permits are required! Participants must have done a Basic Snowcraft Course or equivalent, and be willing to stay overnight in what they create!	Grade: Training Closed: 28 Aug Map: K33 Approx: \$50

Sunday 7 September	Leader: Adrian Busby 325-5001
The Gap: The Gap is the big notch in the Torlesse range visible for miles around and a winter trip there is a real classic. We'll probably go up from Porters Pass (942m) to Castle Hill Peak (1998m) and follow the narrow ridge through to the Gap (1700m). Ice-axe, crampons, and snow skills and experience will be needed. The ridge past Castle Hill Peak has quite steep drop offs both sides. The final section into the Gap, approached by dropping down to the north-west from the bluffs above it, can be anything from easy-peasy to quite tricky depending on the snow conditions. If you have got the skills though, this is surely one of the must-do winter trips.	Grade: Moderate+ Closes: 4 Sep Map: L34 K34 K35 Approx: \$25

Thursday 11 September	Club Night
Antarctica: Craig Beere has kindly lent us the documentary series "Ice", which is a diary from the radio host Marcus Lush as he spends time in Antarctica. Tonight is the first of a series of three evenings over the next three months.	

Weekend 13-14 September	Leader: Honora Renwick 942-8368
3 Creeks Hut: Ever wondered what lies up Woolshed Creek beyond the hut? This pretty little creek leads to a saddle into the back of beyond. We'll cross into a tributary of Taylor stream, traverse a red tussock plateau and stay at a genuine musterers' hut. The trip back will be via the spur between Morgan and Woolshed streams.	Grade: Moderate (requires snow skills) Closes: 4 Sep Map: K35 Approx: \$40

Sunday 14 September (possibly early start)	Leader: Bryce Williamson 351-6366
Norma: A nice 1000m-odd climb to Norma, 1722m, in the Opera Range (Lewis Pass), with a surprisingly good track (not on the map) through most of the bush, then open tussock leading to a rocky ridge. Ice axe and crampons required. Be one of the relatively few people to discover what a lovely tramp this is. We may do an early start - make sure your name's on the list or you have contacted the leader.	Grade: Moderate Closes: 11 Sep Map: M31 M32 Approx: \$30

Sunday 14 September	Leader: Bruce Miller 349-3611
<p>Rakaia Gorge: Rakaia Gorge Walkway is a nice easy trip, mainly following the cliffs above the gorge, and gives great views of the gorge and surrounding landscape. "The scenic attractions of the walkway are outstanding. A number of viewpoints along the clifftop afford dramatic perspectives of the mighty blue Rakaia River as it swirls past the steep bluffs, broad shingle banks and patterned farm terraces . . ." (Pat Barrett). The walkway itself (5k each way) starts in farmland but then enters areas of regenerating native bush, passes the disused Snowdon Coalmine, and ends in a good viewpoint. There is also the option - perhaps for the return trip - of a short loop which takes you down to the Rakaia itself.</p>	
<p>Grade: Easy Closes: 11 Sep Map: K35 Approx: \$15</p>	

Thursday 18 September	Club Night
<p>Fire Water Earth Sky- Arizona and the Grand Canyon: Geoff Trotter will take us for a flight over the Grand Canyon as well as a walk along its rim. He will also take us on a Hummer tour through the Arizona desert.</p>	

Weekend 20-21 September	Leader: Jenny Harlow 349-2280
<p>Maruia Base Camp: Maruria Springs is a good place for a base camp weekend. It has wonderful day trips all round then at night there are the relaxing hot pools to soak your tired bones. Also for those who don't want to cook there is always the pub for a meal and a beer. Some of the more popular day tramps include Lake Daniels (easy), the Lewis Tops, Rahu Saddle, Rough Creek and Mt Mueller (moderate) and Mt Technical (hard). Talk to Jenny for more information on accommodation.</p>	
<p>Grade: Various/social Closes: 11 Sep Map: M31 L31 Approx: \$50+Accom</p>	

Sunday 21 September. Meet at the Sign of the Bellbird 9 am.	Leader: Paul Ashton 358-5570
<p>Geocaching 101: What is geocaching? According to the web site (www.geocaching.com), "Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices". Get an introduction to geocaching by spending a day hunting for nine geocaches (of the 637,280 worldwide) in the general vicinity of the Sign of the Bellbird (Crater Rim track, Ohinetahi, etc). GPS receiver is optional (bring one if you have one). Learning outcomes: be able to identify a geomuggle at a hundred paces; know what you should do with a hitchhiker; distinguish between TFTC, TFTH, TNLN and TNSL; and have a great time experiencing the Port Hills as you never have before. Practising cachers welcome; it would be good to split into a number of small groups, rather than have one big one. Meet at the Sign of the Bellbird car park (not the Shell station) at 9 am (S 43° 37.927 E 172° 37.562).</p>	
<p>Grade: Easy Closes: 18 Sep Map: M36 Approx: \$5</p>	

Tuesday 23 September	Social Event
<p>Climbing Roxx! Tonight we are going climbing at the Roxx, corner Waltham Rd and Byron St, either at the "clip and climb" for \$15 or on the climbing wall for \$14 (+ \$5 for a harness if you don't have your own). See www.theroxx.co.nz. Starting time: 8pm. If you're interested in coming, please contact Ross Ogden on 351 1857 by Sunday the 21st so he can finalise numbers.</p>	

Thursday 25 September	Club Night
<p>Newsletter folding night: As usual we will begin with the newsletter folding. Please bring in some photos to show if you wish. We will have the projector handy.</p>	

Saturday 27 September	Leader: Craig Beere 374-2392
Mt Somers Conservation area: Depending on the weather and the group, we'll head in either on the Woolshed Creek or Sharplin Falls (Staveley) side of Mount Somers and use the good tracks to explore the area. Possibilities include the coal mines and the big new hut for lunch, or the Rhyolite Ridge track, or Sharplin Falls, perhaps the track around towards Pinnacles Hut, or maybe a look at some of the track across the south face . . .	Grade: Easy Closes: 25 Sep Map: K36 Approx: \$20
Weekend 27-28 September	Leader: Linda Lilburne 332-2502
Black Hill Hut Ski Touring: Black Hill Hut is perched high (1200 meters) on the Puketeraki Range just on the bush line and makes a great base for ski touring along the range. The plan is to 4-wheel-drive in then climb up through the bush to the hut and spend the rest of the weekend skiing the tops. On skis we should be able to get a fair way along the tops. This trip is subject to 4WD availability, permission and of course snow at the time.	Grade: Ski Closes: 18 Sep Map: L34 Approx: \$35
Weekend 27-28 September	Leader: Warwick Dowling 981-2045
Buckland Peaks: Buckland Peaks are at the north end of the Paparoa Range on the West coast and there's a new hut perched at the top of a good track just above the bush line. The rough Paparoa tops are well worth exploring and the view from the top on a good day includes all along the Alps to Mt Cook. There could be a bit of snow around so check with Warwick for what equipment you will need.	Grade: Moderate Closes: 18 Sep Map: K29 Approx: \$55
Sunday 28 September (note early start 7am at the Shell)	Leader: Doug Forster 337-5453
Mt Percival: Mt Percival is a straightforward moderate bump (1629m) on the range on the opposite side of Jollies Pass from Mt Isobel (Hanmer area). We will start from Tophouse Road in the Clarence and wander up the leading ridge. Depending on the weather and snow conditions there are a couple of options to round the trip off, either down an interesting little tributary of Pass Stream or along the ridge crest on the south-west side of the tributary. Meet at the usual place at 7am. Make sure your name's on the list or you have contacted the leader.	Grade: Moderate Closes: 25 Sep Map: N32 Approx: \$35
Thursday 2 October	Club Night
Let's go on a tough trip to the Eyre Mountains and the Bealey Range: Grant Weaton, Cathy Kilroy and Lynette Hartley will take us to two seldom-visited ranges: the Eyre Mountains beside Lake Wakatipu and the Bealey Range near Haast. Apparently these are large and spectacular areas involving quite challenging travel. Let's find out on the night!	
Saturday 4 October	Leader: Philip Tree 942-7670
Hinewai: Hinewai is a beautiful bird and bush reserve on the eastern side of Banks Peninsula, accessed from the Summit Road above Akaroa. The reserve has a wide range of natives including some original remnant beech and the newer plantings which are really getting established now. When you sit down you can really hear the bird-song all around you. There are plenty of loop options of varying terrain and distance depending on the group so we can get right down to Otanerito Bay and back up to the car park again or do a shorter trip and find more of the waterfalls hidden in the bush . . .	Grade: Easy Closes: 2 Oct Map: N36 N37 Approx: \$15

Weekend 4-5 October	Leader: Jeff Hall 338-0922
Mt Franklin: At 2145 meters high, Mt Franklin is the highest mountain in the north section of the Arthurs Pass National Park. It looks down on the delightful Lakes Anna and Sally and is usually reached via the Mingha track and Goat Pass. This is not a straightforward scramble and will still require ice axe, crampons and other suitable equipment. Talk to Jeff for details.	Grade: ModHard Closes: 25 Sep Map: K33 Approx: \$40
Weekend 4-5 October	Leader: Richard Wills 389-8671
Navigation Course: Embark upon a voyage of discovery and determination. Decipher the mystery of maps, command a compass with a twist of the wrist, obtain your bearings by degrees, plot your position, spy out the land, and set forth to your destination ... whether marching up in the mist or battling down in the bush. A compass with a transparent base is required. Magnifying glass useful for reading map detail. Check with Richard for advice on purchasing any items.	Grade: Training Closes: 30 Sep Map: L34 Approx: \$30
Sunday 5 October (note could be early start)	Leader: Bernhard Parawa 981-4931
Cloudsley: Cloudsley is one of several 2000m+ peaks on the southern end of the Craigieburn range and a great place at any time of year. Cloudsley itself is about 1300m height gain from Castle Hill village. If the spirit is willing and the flesh not too weak, we could trot across to one of the neighbouring peaks as well (Enys or Izard) so it might be a longish day. From the Craigieburn ridge we can look right over to the gods on Mt Olympus. If there's still snow you should have done your basic snow craft or equivalent. Note this trip may have an early start.	Grade: Moderate Closes: 2 Oct Map: K34 Approx: \$25
Weekend 11-12 October	Leader: Andrew Tromans 379-2686
Mt Williams: Andrew is going to have another go at this mountain which is in the Rolleston Range between the Mathias and Wilberforce rivers. Bad weather cancelled the trip in June but he hopes for better luck this time. Rivers can also pose a problem so talk to Andrew for his back-up plan. Ice axe and crampons required.	Grade: ModHard Closes: 2 Oct Map: J34 Approx: \$40
Sunday 12 October (check with leader about meeting point)	Leader: Steve Bruerton 322-6196
Packhorse Hut and Mount Bradley from Gebbies Pass by MTB and/or tramp: Meeting place either at the garage at 8am or Gebbies Pass 9am. This trip will run as combined bike/tramp. The ride up to Pack-Horse from Gebbies (about 200m) is intermediate biking, nothing too hard but there are few bike-carry sections and some solid hill climbs. Mostly a benched well graded track though. For trampers, it's an easy tramp to Kaituna Pass and the Pack-Horse Hut (about 500m). We will regroup at the Hut and then all walk up to the top of Mt Bradley (855m). Return the same way, or trampers could go down via Orton Bradley and the bikers can shuffle some cars.	Grade: Mod MTB or Easy/mod tramp Closes: 9 Oct Map: M36 Approx: \$10
Weekend 18-19 October	Leader: Andrew Wrapson 980-6006
Cass Lagoon: The Cass Lagoon is a good standard Canterbury trip and the club was meant to run it in early August. Bad weather cancelled Andrew's attempt then but hopefully he will have better luck now. A good marked track, a big comfortable hut for Saturday night and great scenery mean this is always a fun trip and a good moderate trip for those people stepping up to weekend tramping.	Grade: Moderate Closes: 9 Oct Map: L33 Approx: \$40

Multi day trip 25-31 October

Leader: Craig Beere 374-2392

Heaphy Track: Craig is going to walk this classic New Zealand "Great Walk " starting at Labour weekend and going though into the next week. Good huts, a well formed track, wonderful scenery, interesting wildlife at a great time of year ... what more can I say. Come join Craig on what promises to be a great trip. If possible Craig will organise 2 groups to cross over and make transport easier.

Grade: Moderate
Closes: 16 Oct
Map: L26 M26
Approx: \$TBA

Trip Reports

3 August 2008

Steepface Hill

Starting from about 350m elevation where Hutt Stream meets the road on the true left (South Bank) of the Rakaia, we made our way up the 4WD track to the elevated terrace then ascended the face (I guess this is called *steepface* – it would be apt) to the ridge and on up to point 1488. The weather was clagged on the plains but we could see that the cloud base was quite low and the promised SW airstream was clearing things aloft. This made for pleasant conditions for the ascent.

We hit snow at about 1200m: the freeze had also impacted down to about this altitude. Fresh from the enlightening MSC avalanche awareness lectures, we tried to assess which side of the ridge was windward and lee etc and where the snow would have accumulated and which bits would fall off first. After a range of suggestions, we concluded that we were all correct ... both sides of the ridge were windward and both were lee and there were cornices on both sides. The penultimate snow fall had been from the SW but the most recent from the NE which had shorn up the cornice on the North side and formed one on the South ... all nice and stable like a set of synergistic property development finance companies.

All up the conditions were good, keeping to the ridge where most of the loose snow had blown off we were able to avoid most of the patches of deep unconsolidated snow, with a few notable exceptions. We lunched on the top at 1330 hrs so about 4½ hours for the ascent, the skies had pretty much cleared to the west and we had good views of neighbouring peaks: Taylor etc, of the Arrowsmiths and Cook was evident in the distance. Several seconds after starting to contemplate the feasibility of the traverse to Mt Hutt, the team decided to descend to the west over point 1874 and down the ridge on true right of Jack stream which led us to a 4WD track and the road on the South Bank of the Rakaia.

This is what Sundays are for.

Team: Jonathan Carr, Paul Titus, Dave Sutton and Clive Marsh (scribe).

10 August 2008

Mt Oakden

The first really nice weekend day for some time seemed to have most of the club strapping long boards to their feet and doing complicated things with nutcrackers, but some of us traditionalists still headed out tramping. We went up from the canal at the top of Lake Coleridge, lost a bit of blood in the scrub, and then moved into the snow. There was a fair amount of it on the upper slopes – a hard consolidated base with a much softer thin layer on top. Not the kind of conditions that make traversing much fun but not a step plugging nightmare either. We made good time but owing to a somewhat delayed start, got to the top well after lunch. It was [consults thesaurus for underused superlatives and fails to come up with anything that does not sound a cliché] an absolutely stunning picture-postcard-mountains-snow-lakes-panormas-deep-blue-crisp-white-wonderful-amazing day. Very reluctantly we turned around and headed back down.

A bit of bumsliding and a nice scree saw us back at the cars in double-quick time. Now – for the perfect end to a perfect day – where can we get a nice cup of tea on the way home? As it turns out, not at the Hororata Pub. Crowded with ski bunnies, clearly they did not need the custom of a motley group of mere trampers and, denying all knowledge of having previously produced the homely beverage complete with tea-set with matching milk jug, tray, etc, they refused point blank. Shocked beyond measure, we stumbled out into the gathering dark and drove home muttering about what the world was coming to. Still one of the best trips of the year though.

Trampers: Bryce, Kees, Stu, Kieran, Denise, Brian, Cecilia, Adrian, Jenny (scribe).

< photos removed from here >

16 - 17 August, 2008

Youngman Hut/Lillburn Hill

This was one of the times when a scheduled trip was actually the best place to go in the weather conditions. The websites were warning people to stay away from Arthurs Pass as there was even avalanche danger in the valleys. The west coast was experiencing snow to very low levels but we had pleasant weather for our 2 days in the head of the Ashley, to the west of Lees Valley. For a while it looked as though the trip wouldn't go as between me and Stu, we had no car. Luckily Jonathan who is a very "last minute" guy, put his name down on the Thursday night. He drummed up a fourth person to help spread costs: his flatmate, James who has joined our club for its well-organised trip program. I took the front seat to allow the two younger trampers to get an opportunity for bonding. From the stream of thoughtful conversation, they got on well.

There were no other cars parked at the road end meaning we would be sure to secure bunks at Youngman Hut. I was keen to keep my boots dry for the snow plodding so removed them at the crossing of the Ashley and Jonathan followed suit to keep his boots dry for next weekend. We had plenty of time to walk in to Youngman Hut so checked out the private cocky's hut on the true left of the Ashley, just upstream from where the Lillburn River flows into the Ashley. This was a little gem sited in a clearing. We recorded the water meter reading as requested. There is a telemetry site further down towards the road end that can be checked on the Ecan rainfall site.

We picked a sheltered but sunny site for lunch on a terrace before entering the forest proper. I managed to leave my cup (Anathoth jam pottle) by a stream but knew I would find something to use at the hut. I showed the lads the mysterious abandoned red sleeping bag of mouldering kapok in the forest. I had found barely worn size 10 boots there 10 weeks before and carried them home. Googling had revealed them to be Kmart quality \$20 items. Any offers? We took the high route to

the junction of Youngman stream/Ashley River. I enjoyed this as it sidled around to the forest following deer prints. I put on 4 point instep crampons as my rubber gummies have quite worn tread. Because I had inserted insoles made of plastic real estate agent's signs, my soles were insulated and my feet stayed happy. Stu was new to ice axe and crampons so he took the opportunity to familiarize himself with the axe.

On the way in, we looked at a choice of spurs to use to ascend the next day to the ridge of the Pancake Range. The one directly to point 1427 looked quite free of scrub/forest. We noticed cirrus clouds indicating the forecasted arrival of a front sometime. At the junction where the high route track meets the track going up to Tarn Hut I shifted a fallen log out of the way as it was giving the appearance of closing the uphill track. As predicted, we got to the crossing point just before 3pm. The 3 wire was removed many years ago. A shingle bar had become more pronounced enabling some of us to cross the river and keep our footwear dry. Jonathan crossed in his crocs which worked well.

I was surprised to see that no one had been to the hut since Frank and I had visited at Queen's Birthday w/e. We had had to wait for the river level to drop and had busied ourselves sawing wood. Frank had stacked it in a rectangular fashion so it had dried nicely. I even found a china mug. I got the fire going promptly so we could use the woodstove top to warm up most of the water and simmer the pasta meal. We discovered that among us, there was not a single tea bag so enjoyed rooi-bos tea instead. Shortly after, 2 Dutchmen/Kiwis arrived. They were very congenial and one of them knew heaps of people that Jonathan knew. They were carrying delicious heavy food e.g. steaks, wine and a stove apiece and weren't too keen on going up hills. I told them I was carrying a 6kg pack for the w/e. They had come across 2 stags on the walk in.

We had a pasta/fish theme which worked well. Stuart was given back his sardines but we enjoyed his cut up veggies and grated cheese. Jonathan spoiled us by bringing a can of pasta sauce and a big tin of tuna which we opened with a proper can opener that was there. The 3 lads had taken in 3 large billies to be used with the 3 billies already in the hut. I managed to use all 6 billies for our tasty and elaborate meal! I was keen to get to bed early and catch up on sleep. Luckily so was Jonathan so it was candles out around 8.30pm. We planned to get up when it was light. Although the window was ajar all night, it was warm enough that I could just use my Sanctuary 500 as a quilt.

I got up at 7.15 and made a small fire with thumb size sticks inside the entrance of the wood burner. On this I placed a billy as the even-size sticks made for a level platform. This was to save gas and it meant as one billy was being finished to boiling point on the stove, another was warming up quickly using fire. After much weather watching and deliberation which amused the Dutchmen, we decided to go out via the Tarn Hut track as this meant we would avoid unpleasant shoving through snow covered regen. It was clear from studying the intended spur to the Pancake Range that the near side of the spur was a nasty mix of bluff and scrub and the far side necessitated travelling down the gorge which would probably mean river crossing so that was an unpleasant prospect mid-winter- another day, when it's warmer...Jonathan was also concerned that we might encounter the predicted southerly change on the tops. Tony Trewinnard had forecasted it not to arrive until the evening which proved to be correct.

We ascended to Lillburn Hill via the track which was quite open. I took my DriDuck parka off as I would be too hot and later on the lads removed layers. James took the front position as step plugger. It got quite strenuous for him, being thigh deep at the edge of clearings. I wasn't keen to volunteer initially as I am a very slow step plugger but was feeling guiltier and guiltier 'till I finally put myself forward. I couldn't bring myself to persist so resorted to my cheating strategy of crawling on all fours. It was very fast but not very altruistic as those who follow don't have plugged steps to use. Coincidentally at this point as it was clearer and higher, the snow firmed up. James eventually resumed his front position, happy not to employ the strategy of going to the back of the

line. I mentioned how it was an aging climber's scheme to cultivate the company of younger men for this very purpose of enthusiastic step plugging.

It got very pleasant and scenic as we approached the summit. I couldn't think of anywhere else I'd rather be than coming up to the top of a mountain range in these conditions. We rounded the hill. At the summit, the sign indicating the turn off to Tent Gully was buried almost completely in snow. We descended to the hut sheltered in a low point of the ridge. A tracing of the tarn was visible. Time for lunch. Only Bo Tindall had been there since I was there with my brother on June 21. Spindrift had infiltrated via the chimney, a slightly ajar window and the door. The PTC may be there next w/e and will have to bring a little shovel for the snow from on top of and around the stove. The big one is buried in spindrift in the wood shed. The sun came out so it was warmer outside. I swept the floor and closed the window properly.

I talked to Stu about avoiding avalanche terrain. The only slope greater than 25 degrees was uphill of where the track sidled point 1334 just south of the hut but the track was on 10 degree slopes avoiding any trigger points of convex rolls. We should have gone over this hill as the snow was firmer on top of the ridge and I became nervous as Jonathan collapsed in the snow, making a whumph-like sound. James didn't think we should stick around discussing the possibility of avalanches until we got to a sheltered spot under a small bluff and I could see his point so we spread out after this and regrouped beyond the steeper terrain. Once again he'd volunteered as the step plucker but Jonathan took a turn too.

We had a pleasant walk out on the track, Jonathan and the lads discussing whether someone who was brilliant at maths and science could be equally brilliant at art and music and if it was possible for the reverse. Of course Leonardo Da Vinci immediately comes to mind. I wouldn't say I completely understood all the maths/science stuff but I enjoyed listening to the interesting discussion. The Dutchies had come out before us, not taking up my suggestion of following our footsteps across Lillburn Hill. Yes, they'd left my mug by the car. We drove out to the fleshpots of Oxford which turned out to be the takeaways as the 2 cafes were closed so no chance to try out Jo Seagers. Jonathan had a cream bun which he didn't want to share and Stu had an enormous date scone the size of a small dinner plate. It was a very lovely weekend with great company.

Thanks, guys.

Trampers: Stu, Jonathan, James, Honora (scribe).

Please have stuff for the next newsletter to the editor (editor@ctc.org.nz)
by Sunday, 21 September 2008 – Thanks.