



The Official Newsletter of

THE OVER FORTIES TRAMPING CLUB INC.

Going Places.....



NEWSLETTER 459 May 2020

THE STAYING HOME EDITION

CHAIR'S REPORT

We had a committee meeting using Zoom on 17 April. A few things that came out of the meeting:

- Sue Weller has done a sterling job of getting the handbook ready for printing when we come out of lockdown.
- Judy Collin has taken over the role of sending acknowledgements for bereavements and sickness on behalf of the club. However Judy, like all of us, is only in regular contact with her own tramping buddies. To help her in her role, Alison Downard and Kaye Young will be approaching different networks within the club to find those who are able to keep Judy informed. If you would like to be one of those people and are well connected, let Alison or Kaye know. Being one of these liaison people is not an onerous task but one that is essential for helping our club maintain its caring ethos.
- Marcel will be asking the tramp planners to come up with a post Covid 19 plan that will work for either a Level 2 or Level 1 situation. It is clear that while there will be a loosening of available recreational activities in Level 3, we are still restricted to recreating only within our bubbles.
- We are also planning a Mid-winter Nosh. This will also be a celebration of coming out of lockdown. It will depart from tradition and be held on Saturday 20th June, to enable weekend trampers to participate. So mark this day in your diaries, and let's hope we are out of lockdown by that date.

How has lockdown been for you? For me, while I am finding exercising on the stairs a bit of a grind (poor views, no company, but then again no tree roots, rocks or low hanging branches) there have been some surprising bonuses. A lack of pressure to "get things done" has been very freeing. And time with family and friends via the internet has been insightful. Our kids and grandkids seem to be more willing to share what's going on than they do around a table.

A friend of mine who is a clinical psychologist put out a short paper which I heard him speak on. I have taken the following extracts as a timely reminder. His focus is on "Connection"

- * *Isolation is often associated with punishment. Children are sent to their rooms when they are naughty. Prisoners are put in isolation as the severest form of punishment.*
- * *We are intrinsically social beings. Our desire is to connect. In joy and sorrow, in recreation and work, we desire connection. Even if we like some alone time, it's with the knowledge that we can connect again.*
- * *I have received dozens of emails from various sources, such as the Psychology Board, ACC, banks, Real estates, Employment Assistance Programmes, giving advice about how to get through this world crises event. There is so much good advice out there. But if I was to summarise what I believe is the most critical thing it's with this one word, "Connect".*
- * *With whatever technology you have, connect with family, connect with friends, connect with acquaintances, connect with neighbours, connect with strangers (keeping your distance, but connect). It's essential for our souls and for theirs.*

Lawrence Allpress

Post Lockdown Celebration

Midwinter Nosh

Saturday June 20
Sumner Surf
Lifesaving Club

Bring a plate and stories of lockdown to share.

Details on walks prior to lunch to come.

Note the deadline for Newsletter items to the Editor is the 20th of every month for the following month's Newsletter—send to Mavis Airey at mavis.airey@xtra.co.nz AND Terry Stevens at terendy2@gmail.com

Please note — address all correspondence pertaining to Club business to the Secretary

Over Forties Tramping Club, PO Box 6505, Upper Riccarton,
Christchurch 8442

Established 1978 Affiliated to the Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ

www.oftc.org.nz



CLUB CAPTAIN'S REPORT

As I keep saying I see the Club Captain's role as one that ensures that we all strive towards having safe and enjoyable tramping experiences. The current "No" tramp notice will remain in effect until further notice thereby adhering to current Government directives and our own desire to maintain our members health and safety.

So as to maintain some level of fellowship amongst our members whilst this health emergency remains in place I take this opportunity to mention three initiatives that are currently in progress which strive to maintain levels of communication and support within our Club.

Firstly, it is essential for all members to be aware that our Website, web emails and Going Places remain the primary avenues for the circulating of important information regarding the Over Forties Tramping Club and its ongoing activities. Important announcements will be channeled through these points. Your committee remains a functioning body and still has the ability to consider issues as they arise and make appropriate decisions. These will be conveyed to members as and when appropriate through the above channels.

Secondly, what is currently happening? Thank you to Paul Knox and Peter Coursey for getting a "Club" Facebook (FB) page up and running. This is for the sole use of members (only). Outside of the club "Friends" are not to have access. Content is to be of a standard which is relevant and acceptable to all users. This is an excellent initiative and moves the club into the current technological era (I mean era).

Lawrence Allpress has organized a team (of 25 members) and put in place a "ring a fellow member" process so that we may keep in touch with as many members as we can. This has been successfully completed, I trust that all (well most) of you will have received a call. David Jones is putting in place a "Chat Line" through which members can contact a designated member for a chat or even to discuss some issue that has arisen, the burden of which is often minimized through sharing. Sue Weller will assist David, if any other member would like to assist, please contact David or Sue.

Until some form of normality returns, stay warm, stay safe and do adhere to the bubble rules. We all await our return to those places we love, enjoy and are stimulated by.

Marcel Robb

Membership Report (as at 18 April)

Resignations

Peter Mears	352 7282	119 Condell Avenue, Bryndwr, Chch 8053	32 years
Marie Woods	359 6325	62a Bainton Street, Bishopdale, Chch 8053	30 years
Rosalia Kim	338 7926	2 Oakdene Place, Halswell, Chch 8025	22 years
Tony MacRae	852 0177	Villa 12a Sails Street, Papanui, Chch 8053	11 years
Wendy MacRae	852 0177	Villa 12a Sails Street, Papanui, Chch 8053	11 years
Helen Binnie	03 30286205	PO Box 487, Ashburton 7740	3.5 years
Wayne Calvert	027 626 1415	B21/24 Charles Upham Drive, Rangiora 7400	11 years
Alan Haslett	027 655 5041	Moved to Auckland	13 years
Correen Haslett	027 655 5041	Moved to Auckland	13 years

Bereavement

Janice Hockley (past member)		4 Gresham Terrace, New Brighton, Chch 8023	40 years
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Change of contact details

Ross Walker	No landline		
Gary Batchelor	New landline 355 0718		
Chris Evans	New landline 361 1186	Villa 121, Skyhawk Road, Wigram, Chch 8042	
Ben Heese	No landline		
Andrew Turton	No landline		
Lynn Waring	No landline		
Lulu Sun	No landline		
Stephen Cameron	No landline New cell: 027 537 4284		





Advertising of Backpacking and Day Tramps outside of Normal Planning Framework

It is important to the Club that members be encouraged to organise and promote tramps which are planned in addition to those scheduled within our normal Planning Framework.

Your committee has endorsed the continuation of these tramps, however, it considers it necessary to place a framework around the process. With immediate effect, all proposed tramps which have not been scheduled through the Clubs Planning Framework, then the following process is to apply:

- 1) All proposed backpacking trips are to be sanctioned / approved by the backpacking coordinator. (Gerald Edmonds - agedmunds@outlook.com)
- 2) To achieve this, the intended tramp advertisement, in the first instance, is to be submitted to the backpacking coordinator.
- 3) If the backpacking coordinator is unhappy with any aspect of a planned tramp, the co-ordinator is to refer the proposal to the Club Captain and Vice Club Captain, accompanied by comments and recommendations.
- 4) The CC or VCC will then consider and in communication with the proposer, may seek clarification and suggest alternatives / changes as appropriate. The aim of this approach is to arrive at a workable solution.
- 5) The Club Captain will then communicate by email the decision to the proposer with a copy to the backpacking coordinator.
- 6) The decision of the CC & VCC will be final.
- 7) The Finalised Tramp Advertisement will then be represented by the proposer to the backpacking coordinator who will forward to the web team for circulation.
- 8) In the case of Day Tramps, the proposer will submit directly to the Club Captain (Marcel Robb – marcel.robb@gmail.com). Thereafter the process will be similar as for Backpacking but the backpacking coordinator need not be involved.

Marcel Robb
Club Captain (for the Committee)

TRAMP PLANNERS

Note — Please forward your draft list to the Club Captain by the 20th of each month

Saturday			
Wednesday	Veterans	Alec Mills Suzanne Fenwick	338 5002 376 5026
	Grade 2	Lyn Foulds Pamela Gibbons Graeme Brown	355 6348 332 7531 383 3732
	Grade 3	Peter Moody	351 7448
	Grade 3 & 4	Marcel Robb	03 928 3733
Sunday			
	Grade 2	Sheila Downard Gaye Morton Jill Halliburton	337 4201 332 2284 337 4973
	Grade 3, 4 & 5	Ross Walker Lesley Smith Alison Downard Peter Moore	027 558 2126 338 4272 357 2089 027 773 1670

Chat Line

The tramping club “chat line” idea was the result of conversations between tramping club members before and during lockdown. We recognise that we are more than merely a bunch of people who happen to go tramping together. We know that a reasonable number are living alone, which can't be easy in lockdown.

Whenever you ask a member what it is they value and enjoy about this club, nine times out of ten, the response is **people – fellowship, camaraderie** – call it what you will. Certainly for me, my whole sense of well – being is enhanced by being in some incredibly beautiful places with people whose company I enjoy as well as the benefits of the fresh air and enhanced fitness levels.

With this in mind, we felt that a chat line where members could phone if they were suffering from cabin fever, or simply fancied a yarn, as being a good idea.

There are several other people in this chat line group but the first response is to David Jones 027 288 5845

David Jones

Subscription Update

Thank you to all who have paid so far.

Due to the current lock down situation, we are extending the penalty deadline for subscription payments for those who are unable to pay online at present, or who want to pay by cheque. The late payment penalty of \$10 will now apply for subscriptions paid AFTER 31 May.

When paying please note the new bank account:
Kiwibank 38-9020-0367943-00.

For those who have not received a subscription notice, the amounts are:

Internet Newsletters	Single \$40	Couple \$70
Posted Newsletters	Single \$60	Couple \$90

If you are unable to pay by internet:

- If you can get to a bank, please credit the account above
- If you can only pay by cheque, please post the cheque to: Peter Oliver, 82 Hackthorne Road, Cashmere, Christchurch 8022. The subscription will then be paid in your name.

If you have any questions ring Peter Oliver Ph 332 3050

Peter Oliver, Treasurer

Editor's note

Until we are able to resume our tramping programme, Going Places will be online only. If you know a member who does not have access to the internet, you might like to print out a copy for them, so they can remain connected too.





Humpridge Track March 11-14

Five club members went down to do the Humpridge Track with the Milton Tramping club. There were 30 people on the trip with a few from the far North Island. The weather window was perfect with heavy rain the days before our trip and more heavy rain the day after we finished. We were well looked after by the Milton club and the Humpridge track people. What we got to see was spectacular to say the least. 62 km, 22 hours in 3 days. The OFTC group was Andrew Kim, Akky van der Velde, Brindsley and Sarah Archer and myself.

Russell Ramsden



Reminder: Planting Day Bowenvale 2020

NOTICE ISSUBJECT TO THE COVID 19 SITUATION.

Planting will go ahead dependant on Covid 19 restrictions.

It is time for our Annual Planting Day, which we do with the City Council, on the Port Hills. This is one way of putting something back for the continual pleasure that we as a Club receive from the fantastic facility on our doorstep. For over 10 years we have been planting natives under the guidance of the City Council (and also participate in the maintenance of the plants until they get established). All plants and the equipment needed is supplied by the Council – we only have to supply the human input, which depending on the numbers attending, is for a couple of hours.

When: Thursday 21st of May 2020

Where: Bowenvale Valley Carpark

Time: 12.30pm

Any Questions: Contact Gavin Hampton, 343 1291 or salgav@xtra.co.nz

Rest now

Rest now, e Papatūānuku □
 Breathe easy and settle
 Right here where you are
 We'll not move upon you
 For a while
 We'll stop, we'll cease
 We'll slow down and stay home
 Draw each other close and be kind
 Kinder than we've ever been.
 I wish we could say we were doing it for you
 As much as ourselves
 But hei aha
 We're doing it anyway
 It's right. It's time.
 Time to return
 Time to remember
 Time to listen and forgive
 Time to withhold judgment
 Time to cry
 Time to think
 About others
 Remove our shoes
 Press hands to soil
 Sift grains between fingers
 □ Gentle palms
 Time to plant
 Time to wait
 Time to notice
 To whom we belong
 For now it's just you
 And the wind
 And the forests and the oceans and the sky full of rain
 Finally, it's raining!
 Ka turuturu te wai kamo o Rangi ki runga i a koe
 Embrace it
 This sacrifice of solitude we have carved out for you
 He iti noaiho - a small offering
 People always said it wasn't possible
 To ground flights and stay home and stop our habits of
 consumption
 But it was
 It always was.
 We were just afraid of how much it was going to hurt
 - and it IS hurting and it will hurt and continue to hurt
 But not as much as you have been hurt.
 So be still now
 Wrap your hills around our absence
 Loosen the concrete belt cinched tight at your waist
 Rest.
 Breathe.
 Recover.
 Heal -
 And we will do the same.

**Beautiful words Nadine Anne Hura
 Submitted by Sheila Downard**





Over Forties Tramping Club Facebook Page

Hi folks,

Yes, you did read correctly! The time has come to drag our club into the modern world of social media! This move has been precipitated by the Covid 19 lock down and the view of your committee that we need to retain a good level of communication and involvement with members.

There is no doubt that many of you might throw your hands up in horror or fright at the very mention of the word "Facebook", but relax, the Facebook page will not replace the newsletter or the website, but will compliment them.

Peter Coursey and myself have been tasked with getting this page up and running, and we will be the Administrators/Moderators. Setting up the group page has been something of a steep learning curve for us, but it is up and running now, and has been tested by a small group of club members.

The beauty of the FB Page (and we will use this abbreviation) is in its immediacy and two-way interaction. Photos and articles are easily shared and displayed.

Our page is Private, and you have to be a club member to join, in a similar manner as you have to use a password to access the all the information on the website.

We will not be replicating the website information on this page.

Those familiar with Facebook will have no problem joining and we encourage people to do so. The page name is simply called "Over Forties Tramping Club". You will need a Facebook account to be able to access the site, and the process is pretty simple. Just enter "Facebook" in a google search and follow the prompts. From there, you will need to join the group. This process largely automatic. For those who have difficulty, contact Peter or myself and we'll endeavour to assist or refer you to someone else who can help.

We have established what Facebook call "Rules" (we prefer " guidelines") which detail the protocols and etiquette required if you wish to actively participate by posting. Pretty commonsense stuff really, but needs to be spelt out now, to avoid issues later.

Rules (Guidelines) for OFTC Facebook

1. Advertising is limited to club members selling personal tramping gear. Anything else should be referred to the administrators.
2. We're a tramping club so please, no political or religious posts.
3. Please keep funnies, reposts etc relevant and to a minimum.
4. Photos. Photos are great but please limit the photos you post. Aim for quality, both in content and resolution, rather than repetitive photos of similar scenes, with people in the distance. Keep them relevant and be selective. Consider using links.
5. Please keep posts relevant to OFTC activities in general.

We have no idea how many people in the club have Facebook already, or how many will use the page. As time goes by, there will likely be a significant increase in usage, as people see the merits of it. It should also be noted that we are one of the few tramping clubs up until now not to have a FB page.

The lock-down presents an ideal opportunity to sit down at the computer and have a look at this exciting development. We encourage you to do so-have fun! We also welcome any feedback or offers of assistance from people very familiar with Facebook, who could possibly assist others join up, if they're having problems. Please let us know if you can help.

Regards, **Paul Knox**

P.S. One or two people have been unable to find the Over Forties Tramping Club page. Here is a link that *should* work. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/210921613497520/> If you are having any further difficulties, contact Peter Coursey (pkcoursey@gmail.com) or myself (knoxps@gmail.com)





Arrived at Luxmore Hut (Kepler Track) October 2016. It started snowing . Some of the Israelis got pretty excited.



Next morning, it had cleared as forecast. There's got to be a morning after. Photos Greg Steer

Copland Pass May 1970

Myself and another climbing-tramping friend Peter Anderson, decided that a trip over the Copland pass would be a good trip to do in May. This is a high-altitude pass at 2150m or 7050 ft. in the Mt Cook National park.

We checked in with the ranger at Mt Cook and he said that we should be okay as we had a rope, crampons and ice axes. He warned us that conditions were not that good in May as there could be crevasses near the top of the pass.

The first part was the walk up to the now closed Hooker hut. A cold night with frozen boots in the morning despite them being inside but a quick burst from the burners helped the thawing. The next day was clear and sunny so up we went the steep ascent to the Copland ridge. No Copland shelter in those days. We then got into snow but at what we thought was the pass we made an error. We misjudged going to the actual top and after negotiating a crevasse found ourselves on the ridge. This was rather daunting as there was a sheer drop down the Westcoast side, no way back the way that we had come and a very strong wind funneling up from the coast side, so we inched our way along the ridge until we reached the pass.

The descent down to the Douglas rock hut had a rather steep and crumbly piece at first then eventually we found a rough track of sorts. At the hut there were two deer cullers in residence who fed us a very nice stew—chamois and goat were the meat portions.

The next day we wandered down to Welcome flat for a soak in the hot pools which was very relaxing after the last two days. The following day we went out to the main road through the bush and river flats. A good swing bridge helped with the trip out as there was now some rain. Onto the main road and then hitched a ride to Jacksons, had a beer then caught the train back to Christchurch. A great trip spectacular scenery and good weather made this one to remember.



Mt Cook from Copland Pass 1970

Murray Allison

OFTC





Richmond Ranges Trip Postponed ...

Mt Arthur and the Tablelands 01.013.20—07.03.20

Evelyn Sheridan [leader] Alison Mckeachie, Dolly Munday, Steve Cameron and Tim Emson.

DAY 1. We left Christchurch at 7am, had lunch at Murchison and arrived at Flora Car Park to begin our tramp at 2pm. We had great weather but were surprised to see so many vehicles at the carpark. We saddled up like pack horses and enjoyed the 4hour trip to Salisbury Hut. This was a lovely place but after we chose our bunks, only 4 remained....20 out of 24. We met a nice chatty warden for a hut talk and pass check [only warden we ever saw]

DAY 2. On a cloudy day but dry and we ventured out onto the wonderful grasslands, surrounded by beautiful mountainous vistas. We explored Bishops Cave on route and arrived at Balloon Hut for a morning tea stop. Wow! this hut has charm. I'd love to sleep over there one day. We carried on to a ridge above the hut and made our way up and across to Lake Peel, [A hanging lake nestled amongst some mountains] before climbing the Cobb ridge where we found a spot for lunch with views down to the Cobb Reservoir. The track lead us past Myttons Hut and down the gravel road to Trilobite Hut. We were joined by 3 others who had tramped 11 hours from Lonely Lake. Norbid, a German guy tramped in red band gumboots and disapproved of bedtime chatter....not looking at anyone in particular.

DAY 3. Most of the track to Fenella Hut led through a beautiful valley. The weather was cloudy but hoped we would stay dry. But no jackets came out and we huddled in the quaint Chaffey's Hut for morning tea We continued on in the rain until we found Tent Hut, literally a tent with canvas sides and roof. We had a weka lover amongst us...and those birds knew because they always made appearances around a certain member... aye Steve. We ventured on to Cobb Hut and then to Fenella Hut. Fenella hut was amazing. We visited a swimming hole, which was a tarn surrounded by rocks and a vista to die for, 2 furlongs away. Evelyn was tempted to swim but it was near arctic conditions.

DAY 4. Heading to Asbestos Cottage via the Trilobite on a sunny morning. Great to sample yesterday's views in good weather. We lunched at Trilobite before heading 2kms down the gravel road, taking a steep track up onto the Cobb Ridge and across the tops until a track took us forever downwards. A light rain had begun so it was fortunate that we were largely under the trees. At last the track took us up for a while until we saw the cottage. We were ready to crash as it was 6pm and felt tired and wet... Historical Asbestos Hut. It has to be visited once. There were relics and stories of the past, cracks in the floor and walls and a place that rodents seemed especially fond of. There wasn't any firewood so we got into bed after our usual game of Quiddler. We shared 4 bunks between 5 of us... another story...

DAY 5. On a lovely sunny day we headed to Mt Arthur Hut via Gridiron Shelter, the disused Cloustone's coal mine and Gordons Pyramid. Gridiron shelter is a unique accommodation option with mattresses on rock shelves so if you like sleeping under the stars, then this is for you. We took the track on up to the mine and after a quick look we climbed the ridge track leading to the Pyramid. Great 360degree views. Then a steep ridge track took us to a rocky crag that we had to somehow ascend (I lost my number 8 wire toaster on this section) and onto another drop off. By this stage, Dolly's knee was giving her grief, so we lightened her pack by all sharing some of her gear and enabled her to get up on to the last ridge. Here we were greeted by 8 or 9 cheeky keas but they took off in flight as we approached. After an hour long decent to the Mt Arthur Hut we were ready to rest, eat and sleep.

DAY 6. On a beautiful sunny day, Dolly and Evelyn remained at the hut whilst Tim, Steve and I took 2hours to climb Mount Arthur for great views and a nice lunch spot. On our way down we saw cheeky keas attacking someone's pack but they were quickly dispatched with the wave of a walking pole. We got back to the hut to find out the girls had an enjoyable day relaxing and chatting to the day walkers passing the hut on the way to climb Mount Arthur.

DAY 7. After an hour's walk we arrived back to Flora car park and headed home, stopping in Tapawera for a shower and Murchison for lunch. This was a wonderful trip, especially for Dolly who had just become a club member and had completed her first backpacking trip. Well done Dolly. Steve and Tim were great tramping buddies and wonderful leadership from Evelyn. Thank you Evelyn for a great week.

Scribe: Alison Mckeachie



Some Ramblings

Coronavirus, blast the little "nasty". The Club took some pretty drastic steps prior to Level 4's introduction, however, I liken it to the Christchurch earthquakes, although we may have some bad nights ahead of us, we will get through this, there is light at the end of the tunnel. As trampers, our big picture must always remain the mountains, the high country, the foothills or our city and local parks, they await our beck and call. Even the mountain loos now present a fond memory.

Many years ago, one chilly morning, a cobbler (Murray) and I parked our car a little before the Devils Staircase on the Kingston Queens-town highway. We looked across the lake, Lake Wakatapu (did you know that the 1898 Pictorial 2½ d stamp when first released contained the "Wakitipu" spelling), viewing likely routes up from the western lake side vehicle track. This track is now called the Te Kere Haka Track and is well worth a wander. The track side climbs and continues quite a ways past the hut noted on the map, from memory this hut is not lakeside as the map records (had polystyrene internal insulation back then). The main obstacles we were looking to de-tour were matagouri and minor bluffing. Some hours later, some several hours later, after spiking a vein in my wrist with a Spaniard, we entered a basin, with a lovely tarn nestled on the lower level. Here it was MT break, first proper spell for the morning. It is then an easy scramble onto the main ridge, we, arriving just north of pt 1668. Early morning cloud had burnt off, above us the beautiful hues of a bright blue Northern Southland autumn morning. Walking is then a straight forward wander (if a trumper says this do you really believe them?) to the goal of our day, Mt Dick (1805m). We were rewarded by wonderful views across the lake to Devils Staircase, almost below us, behind it James Peak, a worthy day trip, a bit north to Queenstown and Ben Lomond, to our west into the very much underrated Eyre Mountains which extend nearly through to Mossburn, an amazing place. Our journey back, so as to dodge the rugged, in places, ascent, saw us wander in a southerly direction gaining a 4WD track on the 1540m contour at 5pm in the afternoon. It is then 7km to the bottom of the hill. There is a direct route down into Kingston Village however neither of us knew where to gain it from the ridgetop. As it wanders through bluffing it is not the place for she'll be right bravado. Finally down, we made our way back towards Kingston. I see there is now a track, Glen Allen Track running along the base of the hill. But our day wasn't finished, we managed to accumulate a herd of about 1000 merino wether's in front of us who would not let us sneak around the edge of them. Finally, through the golf course, it was too late in the day to be worrying about "four", finally the car. To say we were both pretty buggered would be an understatement. But what a great tramp.

I am frequently reprimanded for my reports being too long, I trust Mavis will be forgiving, just this once. At this point I am still within my monthly word count quota.

Your OFTC Committee

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Deputy Club Captain:	Ian Fussell 03 385 0856 fussei@xtra.co.nz

Whilst in Israel recently, we visited Masada (Hebrew metsada, "fortress"). Lying west from the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Because of time restrictions, we took the gondola to the top. A track, the snake path, would be a much more rewarding option to gain these ancient ruins. King Herod the Great, who had a passion for building, built two fortified palaces on top of the buttress between 37 and 31 BCE. It was always fully stocked with food and water in anticipation of his frequent visits. A clever system of aqueducts supplied water to lower levels, slaves then carried it to the top. After the sacking of Jerusalem by the Romans, a small number of surviving rebels, their families' and others fled to Masada. It was then sieged by the Romans from 73 to 74 CE and ended in the mass suicide of the 960 Sicarii rebels who were in occupation. Indeed it must have felt a hollow victory for the then Roman governor of Judaea, Lucius Flavius Silva, who headed the Roman X legion that laid siege to Masada. Only two women and five children were found alive. (For those who ponder, in Israel, the term CE means Common Era). This would not be easy tramping country, desert, arid, steep sided buttresses and in summer, hot, very hot. From Highway 90, I saw signed tracks heading up into the many steep sided valleys, of particular interest, into the Qumran Valley where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Back to New Zealand, to our high country. My early introduction to New Zealand's high country was with my Dad. You see our family crib was at Te Anau. Dad was a very keen dry fly fisherman, one of the rivers frequented was the Eglinton River which flows the gateway valley to Milford Sound. In those days, the late 1950's and early 60's the Te Anau basin had only limited farming. Manuka graced the lands reaching down to the lakes foreshore. For a lad this was paradise, making huts, stalking frogs and lizards. My later introduction to tramping was indirectly through a group of friends who were into caving at that time. Bullock Creek, near Punakaki being the principal base for our explorations. The upper Dingleburn valley was my first tramp, starting from Ahuriri Base Hut. I had no help in putting my gear together. My boots were shockers, heavy, very heavy, with no ankle support, raincoat, I still have it, was heavy duty plastic (PVC), was wetter inside than out, cooker weighed two ton. Worse than that, the chap who took me was as fit as, a hunter, had no patience and was inclined to be critical. To add to my misery my shorts fell to bits, literally. Apart from the magnificent surrounds, the experience was likened to an unhappy day in hell. Never the less, I eventually found my way into the Hokonui Tramping Club and my outdoor experience blossomed from there.

Will be chatting with you again next month I trust in more forward promising circumstances. Cheers from me.

Marcel Robb

