



Playgroup's back!

LOCAL LIVES



Local parents are very welcome to bring their young children and join the fun at the Upper Moutere Playgroup.

Several years ago, a group of mums set up the Upper Moutere Playgroup as a place to meet and let their young children play, learn and have fun. Back then, it was run out of Neudorf Hall in Neudorf Road and the roll records show that in 2000 the Playgroup counted 27 children.

It continued to thrive until 2004, when it was decided to sell the hall to help fund the build of the Moutere Hills Community Centre. The playgroup then moved to the church hall until the centre opened its doors a year later.

When the Government introduced its 20 Hours ECE programme in 2007, funding the cost of early childhood education for up to 20 hours a week, playgroup numbers dropped dramatically as parents found that their children could attend a kindy or childcare centre for free or a small fee.

The two fires at the centre nearly finished off the playgroup for good, but thanks to three dedicated members it has pulled through. Numbers have steadily grown but there's still space for more.

"We have use of the centre's gym and adjacent kitchen space, we have heaps of awesome resources and the toy library is still available," says playgroup secretary Kristy Bishop.

"We meet up on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm, with music, art, bikes, toys and best of all a shared morning tea! The children love showing what they have brought and contributing with their friends.

"In the future, we will be purchasing more large climbing equipment, bikes and a comfortable mat for our music session – and we hope we will have more friends to enjoy these with. Playgroup isn't only for the children; we find many parents get good support and friendship from coming along, and we also have good coffee!"

This term's playgroup activities have included an Easter egg hunt, a Pirate and Princess Party, pony rides on the sports field, a trip to the Animal Farm in Mapua and art sessions with local artist Helena Morris. "We will have a planning meeting in the school holidays and newcomers are always welcome to come along," says Kristy.

Aimed primarily at the 0-5 age group, the youngest member of the playgroup is currently just 12 weeks old! It costs \$10 to bring your child along for the term, or \$16 if you have more than one child attending. Just pop in on Tuesday mornings and join the fun.

LIKE the Upper Moutere Playgroup on Facebook
www.facebook.com/uppermoutereplaygroup

EDITORIAL

Well, we're over the hump now—the shortest day is behind us and plenty of crisp starts to be endured—but everyone seems to agree, the clear sunny days more than make up for those crisp starts.

You might want to curl up by the fire and enjoy reading about the winter walk Martin Douglass and his companion took recently, it starts on page 13 and might just inspire you to get into the great outdoors.

We can also offer winter soup recipes and if you're keen to get out of the house or get crafty, there's plenty on offer with the Motueka Arts councils programme. Riverside Cafe closes for a short break and renovations but before they do they'll be hosting a end of season celebration, why not join them for one last latte...

Whatever you get up to in the next month, enjoy the few extra minutes of daylight and stay warm!



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UPPER MOUTERE

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Thank you for advertising in the Grapevine – you help us cover the cost of producing and delivering this free community newsletter each month.

The deadline for each issue is 15th of the month.

Please email your print-ready ad to umograpevine@hotmail.com or provide paper-based, print-ready copy to the Upper Moutere Store.

The following prices apply for advertising:

- Ⓞ Births, marriages, deaths and giveaway notices: Free
- Ⓞ Business card size advertisement: \$12
- Ⓞ 1/4 page advertisement: \$25
- Ⓞ 1/2 page advertisement: \$50
- Ⓞ Full page advertisement: \$95 (if space available)

Please deposit payment (and identify it with your name) to our account: NBS 03 1354 0229034 16

We warmly welcome editorial contributions to the Grapevine from all residents in the Moutere and Tasman regions. You make the newsletter an interesting read!

There is no cost to having your articles published, but if you are telling the community about a commercial or fundraising venture, we do appreciate a small donation to help us cover our costs (see above for bank details).

The deadline for each issue is 15th of the month.

Please email your copy to: umograpevine@hotmail.com



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MAKE A BEANIE AND/OR DOG COAT COMPETITION

There is still time to get your creative juices flowing this winter, the Motueka Arts Council are calling for entries for their 'make a beanie and/or dog coat competition.' As the 'Make a Beanie Competition' was so successful last year the committee have decided to introduce a new section 'Make a Dog Coat.' There are 5 classes in the beanie section ranging from most colourful, story book or film character, traditional using only wool, to one made out of recycled materials. There is also a class in the beanie section for students under 14 years.

The dog coat section comprises of 3 classes - most colourful, made out of recycled materials and traditional using only wool. For those that really want a challenge, there is a class for a matching beanie and dog coat.

With any technique and materials allowed, the committee are expecting to see some great entries arrive. All entries will be displayed in shop windows around the Motueka town after judging takes place.

Entry forms are available at Potters Patch and Take Note, High Street Motueka or by emailing tsfrater@xtra.co.nz

Entries to be delivered to Potters Patch no later than Thursday 25th July.

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Snippets from Rural Women New Zealand.

20 KM BOTH WAYS:

The recent trial of the 20km hr flashing lights on school buses held in Ashburton was a real success. We hope this can be extended to all areas.

Rural Women are also concerned about the danger of overcrowding on school buses. If you have evidence of this we would like you to let us know especially if you have a photo.

Pat Moore

UPPER MOUTERE VOLUNTEER FIREBRIGADE

From 16th May - 15th June

12th June—log basket on fire, Gardeners Valley.

A safety reminder—when cleaning out your fire places remember to make sure you use a metal container as ashes can still be hot even after a few days.

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MOUTERE HILLS COMMUNITY CENTRE



A WORD FROM KATRINA

It is with great excitement that we watch the development of the Community Fitness Centre. We believe this is going to be a great addition to our Community Centre and a valuable asset for our community into the future. The Community Fitness Centre will open on Saturday 13th September. There will be more information about this in the next issue of the Grapevine. Staff have been working hard to re-establish programmes and activities at the Centre since we have been back in operation. Things are going well with a full programme of social sports on offer. We do have availability for meetings, functions, kids birthday parties, weddings and events so give us a call if you would like further information or would like to make a booking.

There are a few local people who are doing some work on the history of the area for displays at the Community Centre. If you enjoy history or have some knowledge of the area and would like to share this then we would love to hear from you. Please give us a call on 543 2516.

Kind Regards **Katrina**



UPPER MOUTERE PLAYGROUP

Every Tuesday morning from 9:30am—12noon.

Come along and join in the fun.

Toy Library is open at the same time!



COMMUNITY RECREATION *with Vanessa*

We have a great range of activities on offer for Term 2.

Social indoor bowls is underway on Monday evenings from 7.15-9pm. This is a whole lot of fun and 'very social'.



Come and join us for just \$3 a session!

Cardio tennis hits the courts on Tuesday mornings at 9am. This is a great way to increase fitness levels in a very fun and social environment.



Low-impact aerobics swings into action on Friday evenings from 6—7pm. This class works on core strength & balance with music you can sing along to.



ZUMBA RETURNS SOON TO
MOUTERE HILLS COMMUNITY CENTRE

DATES FOR YOUR DAIRY

Rangers Club Day—Rugby & Football
Saturday 5th July



'Rangers' Quiz Night
Saturday 9th August



Community Fitness Centre Opens
Saturday 13th September



Phone: 543 2516

Email: enquiries@mouterehills.org.nz

Website: www.mouterehills.org.nz



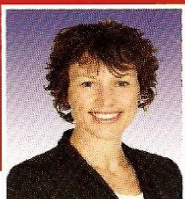
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And not forgetting our Volunteers, Players and Parents too who all help to make Rangers Rugby the great country club we all love!

"THANK YOU"

Look out for Rangers Annual Quiz night 9th August!



Kylie Taikato
Sales & Marketing Consultant

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Tuesday*	6:00am
Wednesday*	5:30pm
Thursday*	6:20am

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\$10 per session

* at Mapua Fitness Mania

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THE WRITE BIAS



The Club now has a new President, Michael Busby. His appointment was unanimously approved at the latest committee meeting, held on the 4th of June. He replaces the outgoing President, Dave England, who served the club well during the past three years.

With the wet winter weather settling in, the Club members are enjoying the Friday night social evenings involving indoor bowls, table tennis, pool and cards which are held in the clubrooms every 1st and 3rd Friday.


A special Midwinter Roast Lunch is planned for Sunday 13th of July. The members are keening looking forward to this event which is sure to brighten the winter outlook.

For information about bowling, coaching or booking the clubhouse and facilities please call Secretary Jean Daubney (540 3281)

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Mondays @ Upper Moutere Community Centre

1½ - 3 yr olds	12.45 - 1.30pm	\$65
2½ - 4 yr olds	1.45 - 2.30pm	\$65
5 - 6yr olds	3.15 - 4.00pm	\$85
7 - 9 yr olds	4.15 - 5.10pm	\$85
9+ yrs **	5.15 - 6.30pm	\$90



Wednesdays @ Motueka Recreation Centre

1½ - 3 yr olds	12.45 - 1.30pm	\$65
2½ - 4 yr olds	1.45 - 2.30pm	\$65
5 - 6yr olds	3.15 - 4.00pm	\$85
7 - 9 yr olds	4.15 - 5.10pm	\$85
9+ yrs**	5.15 - 6.30pm	\$90



** = Parents asked to stay for 10min to help pack up equipment

Term 3 starts from Monday 28th July for 8 weeks.

All classes must be booked in advance, by booking a place you are agreeing to pay the terms fees.

For more information contact Sam on: (03) 5432512 or samantha_slade@hotmail.com



Early Childhood Education & Care

Ki ora. My name is Lorraine.

I live in Upper Moutere on a farm with my husband Colin and youngest son who is now seventeen.



My husband and I have seven children between us and five beautiful grandchildren.

I work in the Ngā Whetū room at Country Kids, and have held this position for the last five years this July, and thoroughly enjoy it. My passion for teaching young children came about when my own children were very small at Play Centre. This is when I decided to embark on teaching as a career.

Last holidays, we held a pet day at Country Kids. This animal interest is still ongoing. To extend this learning, our children have created a mural depicting favorite books; Mrs. Wishy Washy Farm Yard and recently Hairy Maclays Caterwaul Caper where the children have use an extensive array of art mediums.



I would like to take this time also to introduce our fantastic housekeeper Ruth who keeps us on our toes. Without her at times the place would fall apart.

Here's Ruth with her puppy Lucky, a regular visitor to Country Kids.

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1:30pm-3:30pm: 9-13yr olds

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1 Day: \$25 2 Days: \$40 3 Days: \$62

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CHILDREN



News from your Preschool in The Moutere

Kia ora koutou..

A while ago we reported about our successful application for a \$500 grant from the Tasman EnviroSchool Action Project Funding to help with our bush regeneration project, a regular part of FOREST TUESDAY.

Our children are very attached to 'their forest'; they have ownership of their base camp and notice even subtle little changes in their environment. They know how to identify weeds and spot even the tiniest young seedling. They learn to keep their eyes on the ground to protect young seedlings that are just popping up and notice how hard it is not to step on them – reason enough for us to decide to mark a path and not go bush-bashing any more.

Sometimes it is even too hard for the seedlings to survive despite all our care because the soil gets too dry. This problem was discussed in depth at base camp hui (morning group time) and a number of solutions were developed to make sure the 'baby trees' will survive and get enough water. The children certainly expressed a great deal of higher level thinking when they suggested to share the water from their drink bottles with the seedlings, or to 'do' a pump with a tap. How?

"If we had a pipe go under the ground the tap could go on the pipe, then you turn the tap on, the water goes into the tree and the tree grows!" or "We could put a long pump, put holes in the pipe and turn on the pipe and the water go onto the pipe to make the little trees grow!" Now you know...but.... big people expert advice suggested to plant more trees around the outside of our forest, a so called shelter belt of fast growing natives to protect the self seeded seedlings of slow growing trees. And that's just what we did. So far we have planted about 500 trees with lots more. We won't stop anyone who would like to bring some along...one family thought it a good idea to plant their 'NZ citizenship' kowhai at Harakeke. We felt really honoured! This kind of activity not only saves the little bush we have left in this area:

Our children love doing meaningful 'work' and unloading a trailer of compost, digging holes, planting, weeding, discussing options and possibilities, observing changes in the environment after heavy rain as well as constantly making new discoveries offers lots and lots of learning opportunities.

Soon will be the time again where the children can share their special place with families and friends when we celebrate Matariki on the 4th of July. Every year children and their families take their beautifully made lanterns on a procession through parts of the forest to congregate around the 'climbing tree' to sing songs and have a special gathering sharing kai (food) and toasting marshmallows on the outside fire.

For those of you who are not familiar with the festival of Matariki.....please read on:

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Chí

About MATARIKI, the Māori New Year

Matariki is a small cluster of tiny stars, also known as the Pleiades.

Towards the end of May each year, 'Matariki' rises on the North East horizon on the same spot as the rising sun, around half an hour before dawn.

The New Year celebrations are held on the sighting of the next new moon.

As the year moves from autumn towards the shortest day, the sunrise moves north along the eastern horizon. When the sunrise reaches Matariki, it turns around and starts moving south again. This effect can be seen everywhere on the planet and makes the Matariki stars famous world wide.

There are 2 translations for Matariki—mata riki, tiny eyes; and mata ariki, eyes of god. Traditionally Matariki was a time for remembering the dead and the celebration of new life.

Ka kite ano, your Harakeke teaching team.



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There cannot be many local residents who are able to recall a time BEFORE the Riverside Community existed in Lower Moutere. Founded back in 1941 and still thriving, Riverside Community is currently recognised as New Zealand's oldest intentional community and has gained worldwide recognition as an example of cooperative living.



Many readers will know that Riverside Community was founded by a small group of conscientious objectors to the Second World War. They wanted to demonstrate that cooperation and sustainability were practical alternatives to the competitive ways of normal society. Many of the founding males spent the war years on prison farms while their wives and children lived on the newly founded Riverside Community farm.

In current times, the Community still sees its way of life as a contribution towards peace and as an opportunity to put their sustainable living ideals into practice. The 24 members, along with their 19 children of all ages, derive their income comes from the businesses within the community: the Riverside Café, Farm Milk and Livestock, Che Vincent Art Gallery, Meeting Hall and Venue Hire, Pear Orchard, Hostel, and the sale of produce from the Organic Gardens.

Along with their commercial ventures, Riverside Community has presented thousands of courses and workshops over the years, and hosted countless individuals who have been enthusiastic to learn more about cooperative community living. Many weddings, birthdays, births, deaths and every type of blessing in-between have also been lived at Riverside by the extended community. There can be few readers therefore who have not connected in a small, or perhaps significant way, with Riverside Community over the decades.



In early September, Riverside Community will celebrate the 73rd anniversary of their Founders Day. Riverside Café are planning on creating a historic display and photo album as part of the anniversary celebrations which tells the stories of how Riverside has always been part of the wider Tasman/Motueka Community. They would be very grateful to receive any contributions from Grapevine readers that will enliven the captured history of the Community. They are keen to receive both written and verbal recounts of your Riverside experiences, as well as photos or mementos. Any precious photos can be copied and returned to you.

Please do call or email Riverside Café with your stories and/or photos, or, if you can spare the time, drop in and share your memories with them. If you feel you have some significant memories to share, do please contact them in advance so that they can make sure someone is available to receive you when you come!

Tel: (03) 526 7447

Email: café@riverside.org.nz



Hello Animal Lovers

When interpreting animal behaviour there are two main factors to consider - instinct and fear.

Instinct is something that all animals have, it is the inbuilt survival kit to keep the animal safe. In herd animals such as sheep, cattle, horses, etc they rely on each other to avoid danger or unpredictable events. If you have ever been riding a horse and another one suddenly shies or jumps away it is very likely your horse will do the same. If you come across a mob of sheep on the road and you want to drive through them you will find that they all follow each other. It is also governs shoals of fish and flocks of birds. They all seem to move in unison.

Pet owners should take into consideration animals instincts and work with them. Sheep dogs use their basic pack instincts of attack when herding. Drug and detector use their smelling abilities to sniff out illegal substances. Gun dogs use the instinct of retrieval to being back game and guard dogs use their instinct to attack. With trust and training it is possible to get animals to use their basic instinct to work with humans.

Fear is perhaps the biggest single factor with all animals (humans included) whether the fear is real or perceived, the reaction is the same, it is linked to survival. For example if a horse perceives danger its fear response is to run but if it is restricted or contained it will use its teeth and hoofs to protect itself or rear and buck when ridden. Similarly dogs will bite if fearful, also cats will claw as well. Generally carnivores will attack and herbivores will run away but exceptions occur.

Animals fear what they don't understand eg. new situations, unknown communications by people and other animals. They also fear pain. This can come from illness, injury or physical punishment. Often badly fitting saddles on horses can cause pain and fear. Tightness around the neck of a dog will also cause fear and the attack response. There are a multitude of reasons why animals experience fear. Needless to say it is very important that pet owners are calm and relaxed as possible around animals and under no circumstances inflict pain on them. It is sad to think that for years pain has been used to presumably control animals, it is not something that should be done as in the end an animal will attack and often violently which is very dangerous to people. It should be mentioned that if an animal has used a behavioural response triggered by instinct and/or fear it can become an ingrained behaviour through association and requires specialised training to eradicate.

Trying to avoid the fear response is just about impossible but if an animal feels safe and can trust its owner it can be minimised and provide a long and happy life for both.

As always I am always happy to answer any animal behaviour questions.

Susan Mott - Animal Behaviorist 0212664211



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Some warming thoughts from Soo Gee

ROAST VEGETABLE SOUP

Peel and chop the following vegetables into even chunks:

Two of each—carrot, parsnip and kumara. Two cups of pumpkin, 2 red capsicums, one red onion and 4 cloves of garlic.

Put them all into a bowl and toss with 1/4 cup of olive oil, season with salt and pepper.

Line a baking pan with baking paper, spread vegetables in a single layer and roast at approximately 200C for 20 minutes, turn and sprinkle a tablespoon of chopped rosemary over the lot. Bake until cooked to your liking. Remove from oven and set aside a few of the vegetables and puree the remainder. Put pureed vegetables into a pot, add 1 teaspoon of grated ginger and 1 tablespoon of tomato paste and up to 5 cups of chicken stock. Heat slowly then serve with the vegetables you set aside, sprinkle with pumpkin seeds.

Have something deliciously good to finish-

Date and Nut Loaf

Oven at 180C, grease or line a loaf tin.

350g self raising flour, 50 g butter, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 100g brown sugar, 100g nuts of your choice chopped, 100g dates, 2 eggs, 225 ml milk, 1 tablespoon treacle or golden syrup.

Sift flour and salt, rub in butter, stir in sugar, nuts and dates. Combine eggs, milk and treacle, add to flour mixture. Mix until combined then spoon into your tin. Cook 1 hour and cool in tin. Delicious with soft white cheese!



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IN THE GARDEN

- Watch for birds digging in the garden looking for winter food.
- Plant garlic cloves now. Put them in the ground (about 5 cm under the surface) with pointy tips poking upwards.
- Sow mizuna seeds for good winter salad leaves.
- This is a good time to grow bean sprouts inside in a jar. It's a great way to get inexpensive winter greens.
- Plant green manure crops like mustard or lupins now. These can grow over the cold months and be dug in the early spring.

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PIES

Lately I've been reminded about the success of an Australian chap who has opened an Aussie/Kiwi style (meat) pie shop in New York city. Most Americans are only accustomed to large fruit pies and it seems that 'hand-held' meat pies in New York have become a raging success.

Now up here in a North Island city a local bakery and cafe won accolades for best NZ pie - so much so that the local MP weighed in with his personal endorsement in the Parliament. American tourists to the district have also gone on the record adding their praises.

The bakery concerned has quite an engaging radio advertisement which includes the phrase "who makes all the pies?" A chorus of (probably beefy) men reply, *"and we ate all the pies!"*

During a conversation a friend of mine told me his surname is similar to that of Bob Semple who when Minister for the old Public Works Department, 'got things done'. My friend humorously remarked that some present day Ministers and other Parliamentarians aren't at all performing like Bob and probably make up part of the chorus *'eating all the pies'*.

An afterthought - Bob Semple was a South Islander also; a West-Coaster wasn't he?

Stan Clifford



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End Of Season Celebration Sunday 29th June

The café will be closing for renovations in July.

Just prior to this on Sun 29th we are having a celebration day, with live music, free pony rides for kids, complimentary nibbles, plus of course our full menu & mulled wine!

We will re-open on Friday 1st Aug, and once again be open 7 days a week from 9.30am



RiversideCafe&CommunityNZ

POETRY READING AND WORKSHOP

It's not often that a nationally acclaimed poet visits Motueka. In fact, when Riemke Ensing delivers her poetry reading at the Motueka Library on 8th July, it will be the first time the library has ever hosted a poetry reading. And when she delivers her poetry writing workshop as part of the Motueka Arts Council's Winter Workshops over the following two days, it will be a rare opportunity for the region's writers to learn from a professional poet. Ensing is excited about her trip to Motueka, as she lives in Auckland and has never visited the Tasman area.

Riemke Ensing has led an adventurous and successful life. She was born in the Netherlands in 1939, and immigrated to New Zealand in 1951. Although she spoke no English upon her arrival, she developed a love for the language and eventually became a tutor in the English Department at the University of Auckland, where she taught until 1999. Ensing has since been appointed an Honorary Research Fellow (Faculty of Arts) and in 2002 was a Buddle Findlay Sargeson Fellow.

Her poetry is represented extensively in anthologies and her work has appeared in many publications both in New Zealand and overseas. Most recently, Ensing has been honored with a post on Poet Laureate Vincent O'Sullivan's National Library blog <http://nzpoetlaureate.natlib.govt.nz>.

There she writes that "a poem suddenly conjures an entirely different world as well as the one in question." And with this simple sentence she reminds the reader that we all bring a different story to every poem we read - a poem can mean many different things to many different people. Ensing's poems deal with a wide range of her experiences - from a humorous anecdote about noticing she is being observed by a neighbor while in the shower, to a heart-rending description of her feelings after the death of her partner. She writes that she has "always been drawn to the Chinese poets and Japanese Haiku and to the visual", and it is possible to see these influences in the rhythm and imagery of her writing.

Riemke Ensing's poetry writing workshop will be held on Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th July, between 10am and 1pm. Places in this workshop are limited to 20 participants and cost \$50. Riemke will also be delivering a reading of her poetry, followed by a Q&A session, at the Motueka Library at 5:15pm on Tuesday 8th July. Entry to the reading is by gold coin donation. To register for the poetry writing workshop, please contact Pania: manysmalldots@gmail.com, or phone: 03 5284115.



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We have almost passed the Shortest Day and as the saying goes: "As the days get longer, the frosts get stronger". Many outdoors folk hang up their tramping boots and packs at this time of the year and get into other activities thus missing out on the treats that winter tramping has to offer. It's now that those "in the know" slip away for special trips into the hills enjoying great views, empty huts, stable weather and the absence of sandflies and wasps. And of course anyone with a passion for burning firewood can indulge themselves without restraint !

With these thoughts in mind Frank, one of my long-time tramping companions, suggested the East-West Route which joins the Clarence Reserve, just inland from Kaikoura, with the Leatham and Wairau valleys. This 10 day trip crosses the Kaikoura Ranges, the Clarence River and a fair part of Molesworth Station. We thought about dodging the first big climb over the Seaward Kaikouras by flying into Quail Flat beside the Clarence. We were quite keen on this idea until we checked with rafting friends about fording the river and were told we'd probably have to swim it! This seemed a bit excessive but we still had our sights set on a visit to the area, particularly round Lake McRae. So we started thinking about alternatives; preferably a circuit and definitely dry! And there it was, staring up at us from our maps, the obvious solution: a circuit looping west of the Awatere taking in the Tone, Elliott and Robinson Streams as well as Lake McRae. Huts, saddles and stock routes were sprinkled along the way, making this a trip that just had to be done!

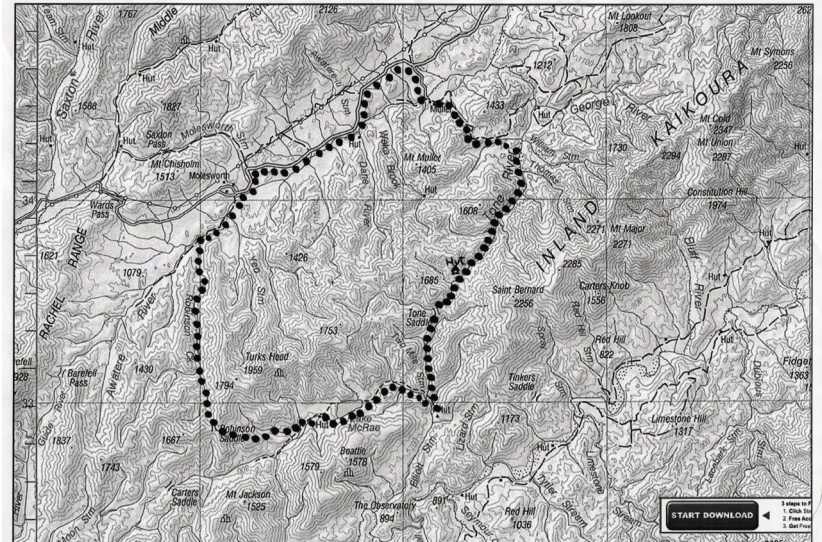
Enquiries to DOC Renwick revealed we'd need a Special Activity Permit because we were planning to approach Molesworth from a "non-standard direction" (truly!). Also we needed access permission from Muller and Middlehurst Stations to go up the Tone. After a fair bit of telephone time we had both permit and permission and were ready for planning.

The SIX ESSENTIALS for winter trips are:

- A fine weather forecast for all or most of the trip.
- A good sleeping bag (although of late I've started using a lightweight down bag with a fleece liner backed up by a down jacket and hood - I use the whole lot on a cold night).
- Some good grog. There's nothing like a nightcap by the fire after a long day and there's nothing like a good whiskey for smoothing a lumpy bed!
- Good lights. LED devices are being used more often these days but they seem to have a real hunger for AAA batteries on long winter nights. For that warm glowing ambience, candles are still hard to beat so I throw in a couple extra.
- A good book. Something to while away those long winter nights.
- And last but by no means least: a trusty companion.

Two seemed a good number for the party because of the small huts we'd be using so Frank and I didn't invite anyone else. We thought four days would do it but supplied for five just in case of delays. We rejected carrying a tent due to weight and bulk.

A fine weather window opened on the last day of May and away we went before dawn for the two hour drive to Blenheim. The rising sun followed us up the Awatere Valley with the low-angled winter beams adding extra colour to the golden-hued grape canes in roadside vineyards. Mount Tapuaenuku was prominent on our left with a fresh skiff of snow adding relief to our views of its upper ridges.



There's 100 kilometres of mainly gravel road to drive from State Highway One near Seddon to Molesworth Station. The road is smooth enough for any car but far from straight and took us the best part of two hours. The scenery, however, more than made up for any slow progress. We cached our two pushbikes under riverside willows at Molesworth and then drove back down 14 km to Muller Station to park the ute. Steve Satterthwaite, the station owner, kindly offered a shed to keep frost off the ute and advice on our route. He said he'd be surprised if any of the huts were crowded even if it was Queen's Birthday Weekend. He was perfectly correct as we saw not another soul for our entire trip.

We wasted little time pulling on our boots and hoisting our 15 kg packs and set off before noon intending to lunch in the Tone. We followed a farm track that climbed steadily across arid looking hillsides very much like Central Otago. Only the gully bottoms grow decent grass which quickly gave way to matagouri and briar up the slopes. The jasper coloured briar rosehips almost glowed in the afternoon light in an otherwise austere landscape of tans, greys and straw-yellows.

We descended from a saddle to the wide and braided gravel bed of the Tone and boiled the billy. Icicles hung from a shaded bank nearby but it was pleasantly mild in the sun. We enjoyed our tea and sandwiches then pressed on to reach the Tone Biv just on dark at 5.30. Here was a pleasant surprise - a modern two bunk hut looking as tidy as the day it was built ten years before. Only two pages had been used in the log book in all that time! Last visitor was a DOC goat shooter several weeks before with 346 goat tails tallied during his stay. The bivvy sees no sun in winter and was surrounded by hoar frost and snow but warmed up quickly once we started cooking tea. We had our meal, shared a noggin and turned in early.



A shaft of morning sun on the opposite side of the riverbed from the bivvy lured us away to a start before nine. Not that we needed thawing out but we didn't want to linger in an icebox either. Half an hour's easy walk brought us to the foot of the Tone Saddle which only took a ten minute climb to reach. From there an easy sidle led us onto Two Mile Spur. All this was a mustering route in former times and is still used occasionally by horse riders.

There is a story that once even a piano was packed through! Why anyone would want to do this and where they were taking it was beyond us but there could be truth in the tale for all that. Maybe the Tone got its name from the jangling the piano made as it bumped its way up the riverbed? Frank rated the going as "extreme" for horses.



Frank at the Tone bivvy

The Spur led us rapidly down toward the Two Mile Stream and we stopped before the bottom to have a good look around with our binoculars. A black pig probably feeding on fallen rosehips foraged on a grassy slope across from us, while on a rocky sunlit spur some 500 yards distant two red deer hinds lay soaking up the warmth of the morning sun. We watched them for a while then gave a few goat bleats and got to our feet. Alerted and then alarmed, the animals bounded uphill and out of sight. We were forced to scrub bash for a few minutes to reach the water's edge of the Two Mile and found its bed to be narrower, with more scrub than the Tone. Nevertheless we made fair progress at the cost of wet feet and stopped for a brew-up only a few hundred yards above the Elliott Junction.

Hereabouts the matagouri appeared to have been sprayed, presumably by Molesworth Station, and the going got much easier. Some people might question the wisdom of livestock farming in this type of country but one thing's for sure: without the influence of man or his animals it would be very hard going on foot. As it was, we were very glad of the gaiters and gauntleted leather gloves we wore to fend off the spines and thorns we often had to brush past.

We were now in cattle country used for winter grazing and passed several beasts as we followed stock trails down the Elliott valley. The Elliott bivvy was our destination for the afternoon but we had a little trouble finding it. Frank pulled out his GPS and announced that we had overshot the building by 203 metres. (We can be SO exact with modern technology!) We pushed through a screen of poplars and willows, climbed a bank and caught sight of the hut roof just set back from the main stream. We approached across a swampy side creek choked with willows and surprised a twenty-strong flock of Canadian geese. In panic the birds flapped and crashed their way through the canopy, leaving the odd feather behind, and it was a wonder there were no broken wings as well.

The biv, a copy of the one we used the night before, looked to be the third building to occupy the site. The substantial remains of a concrete fireplace marked an early musterer's hut while more recent remains seemed to indicate something like a four bunk Forest Service hut had burnt down only a few paces from the present structure. Salvaged remnants had been used to build a porch and open fire as a useful addition to "the Third Edition". With plenty of dry firewood we had a good chance of drying our socks for the morrow and warming ourselves in the process. There were still two hours of useful daylight remaining. Frank happily wandered near the hut while I reccied the route to the Clarence. This wasn't so obvious and I finished my search an hour down the Elliott in a gorge. Clearly I'd missed a turnoff and retraced my steps wishing I'd brought a larger scale map with me. Once more daylight dimmed, the frost ice grew and winter gripped another freezing night. But in our hut the firelight glowed and bowls heaped with steaming food gave us warmth and strength to sleep through the long dark hours.

We woke near dawn to discover our boots had frozen solid but the breakfast fire soon softened them. Another glorious day lay ahead. Frank decided to tramp the three hours to Lake McRae hut early and have a lazy afternoon at the new location reading, resting and taking in the scenery. I was curious about the Lizard Stream, one hour to the east of the Elliott, and strolled there and back for the morning. The Lizard led to Tinker's Saddle and is part of an old droving route that is still ridden on horseback today.

Back at the hut I gathered firewood to add to Frank's. Crunching through a bed of fallen poplar leaves as I did so, I caught a fleeting glimpse of small green birds fluttering round the lower trunk of a nearby tree. Riflemen? Here? And shortly after, the darting form of a stoat that disappeared with a rustle. I heaved my pack outside and tightened the buckles before giving the hut a quick sweep, lifting the mattresses and firmly bolting shut the window and door. The next comers should find things in order I thought as I headed up valley for McRae. I kept a steady pace for the next two hours following an old bulldozed scrape half overgrown with briar. I passed the source of the Elliott that gushes spring like from a shallow cleft in the final slope that impounds the eastern end of the lake. Cresting the last of the rise provided a view both sudden and dramatic of the mile long, willow fringed lake. I savoured the moment.



Martin with wilding pine—Robinson saddle



I now had two choices: to traverse either the north or south sides. The north side is the officially described route which follows a beach that must be waded if lake levels are high. To me it looked shaded, scrubby, icy and cold. The south side looked a far more cheerful prospect with obvious benches and stock trails to follow across a face still drenched in sun. It was a no-brainer.

I made good progress toward the western end pausing only to re-clear a stock path with my folding saw. Someone else had cleared it years before and I felt a sense of community as I cut back the briar and then passed easily along the reopened way. I couldn't see the McRae hut from the lake but presumed it was hidden in a clump of willows a kilometre away in the Tweed river valley. I trotted down an easy slope in half darkness heading for the trees; came over a rise, and there were TWO huts to greet me. Frank was firmly ensconced in a brand new six-bunker built beside an older musterer's hut and had stoked the woodstove to the max. Billies boiled, socks steamed and candles glowed. Altogether a most welcoming sight. Frank lay sprawled on a bunk reading and looking pretty relaxed. "There's something better than a DOC mattress," he reckoned, "and that's two DOC mattresses." The hut stayed warm all night which was just as well; we found out later Molesworth recorded NZ's lowest temperature for that evening at -7 C.

We got going first thing next morning as our biggest day was coming up: the 600m climb over the Robinson Saddle followed by the tramp out to Molesworth. We beat the sun until the last flat where the first rays created an interesting optical effect on the frozen grass seed heads of Yorkshire Fog. As we faced the sun a glittering arch of tiny diamonds and amethysts was created with us at the radius centre. It was momentary, elusive and beautiful. ('Frost arches' are a sort of ground-level equivalent to a circumzenithal arc.)

We started a steady plod up a spur well worn by stock. We paused only to catch our breath, take a few photos and cut down a small wildling pine. Frank's not fast up a hill but he doesn't stop much either, so shortly after eleven we were on the saddle. We had climbed for two and a half hours and gained 600m. Our altitude was just over 1400m and we stopped to enjoy the view and melted some snow for a hot drink. Our way down the Robinson valley was laid out before us and since it looked a long way to the Awatere River and our bikes, we didn't linger. For most of its length the Robinson's grade is gentle with a sunny aspect so it was pleasant enough strolling along the gravel bed although we did have to cross the stream several times. In summer it would be only ankle deep but rain and thawing snow just prior to our trip had swollen all the streams in the area. Fording never posed difficulties for us but flood debris showed that even small streams could rage at times.



Lake McRae

Nearly three hours from the Robinson Saddle we reached the Awatere. Frank, who'd managed to keep his socks dry so far, was dismayed to find a knee deep river barring his path. My thermometer said it was only 4.3 C but there was no way round it and in we went. Thankfully our bikes were only twenty minutes away so we didn't have to put up with squelching boots for too long. We found our bikes untouched and quickly changed into dry socks and warmer clothes for the 14 km bike ride back down to the ute. We didn't linger to look at the historic Cob Cottage, saving that pleasure for another time. The gravel road was good riding but chilly as we coasted downhill in the shadows of dusk. We didn't ride up the hills because of our packs but were rewarded several times as we topped a rise by sunset views of 'Tapi' (Mt. Tapuaenuku).

We reached Muller Station with feelings of both satisfaction and relief. The Satterthwaites kindly invited us in for a quick cuppa and cake before our drive home. Steve and Mary have one of those great, warm farm kitchens where a fire always burns and something's always cooking. They were keen to hear of our experiences and we were only too happy to oblige. We didn't dally long but thanked them and headed for fish and chips in Blenheim and the final two hours drive home.

And the verdict? A top trip and hard to beat.

THE END



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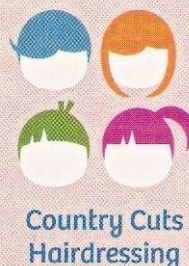
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