



OTMC Bulletin

Newsletter of the Otago Tramping
and Mountaineering Club (Inc.)



The power of Ross Creek/School Creek Waterfall
5 October 2025 (photo by Jade Pettinger)

Upcoming Trips

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|-----------------|--------------|--|
| November | 9 | Bull Creek to Akatore Creek |
| | 16 | Flagstaff/Swampy/Swine Spur/Ben Rudd's |
| | 22-23 | Cycle & Tramp—Mt St Bathans/Manuherikia |
| | 23 | Taieri River Track |
| | 29-30 | Middlemarch Base Camp |
| | 30 | Cloud Forest of Leith/Escarpment Tracks |
| December | 4-8 | Rees-Dart (5 days) |
| | 13-16 | Greenstone Caples |

Update from your committee

It is now two years since the completion of 100 Years for 100 Trips, and the Labour Weekend 2023 celebrations for the club's centenary. Both events were very rewarding, but we knew there was a risk that the momentum attributed to 100 Trips in particular would be hard to sustain.

One area of the club where this has been felt is with the committee itself. The OTMC is definitely not alone in struggling to attract a full committee, although thanks to the concerted efforts of a few, the impact of a smaller committee has not been apparent across the membership.

To my mind, the two most important aspects of the club are our trips, and the social companionship obtained via our meetings and trips -both are currently succeeding very well. On the flipside, we have two challenges we need to collectively discuss and overcome, these being a declining membership and a small base of trip leaders.

We do need more trip leaders, both for day and weekend/longer trips. This is not a new problem for the club, every Day Trip Convenor and Chief Guide will concur with this – there has always been a certain amount of conniving and arm twisting required to fill a trip programme. Leadership skills develop over time and are probably best built up by starting with trips that you are familiar with, that are well tracked/marked and provide a good safety margin. From here, you will become more confident and start taking trips that may be longer or start to include trips that venture more from the beaten track. By following the most basic tramping rule of sticking together, leadership by consensus works well and provides confidence for newer leaders. The committee are actively looking to expand our pool of leaders, so if you have been on a few trips with the club, how about giving it a go? The club has 'rules' in place to assist with safety, such as the requirement to have a PLB with each club party, and a search and rescue process that when followed ensures others in the club know who are on our trips, where you are going and when you are expected to return. Leadership is very rewarding, and as you get more leadership experience, you get the bonus of leading trips to places you want to go to.

In discussing our declining membership, the committee will re-review the meeting notes from the 'Future of the OTMC Post Centenary discussions, that we held in June 2023. This discussion focused on what makes our club great – 100 Trips for 100 Years inherently reintroduced aspects from the club past, and some of these things may be worth pursuing again. Key

themes from the night confirmed that tramping remains our core activity, that enthusiasm builds on enthusiasm, and variety in trips (destination & fitness grades) is important.

A key thing for the committee is to know what members want – the recently revamped Bulletin is one avenue that is available for feedback, or you may prefer to have a chat with one of our committee members – what is important to the committee is that we are facilitating the club in a way that suits the membership, but the committee cannot do everything themselves, all members have an important part to play.

Antony P

Time to reignite OTMC's Outdoor Recreation Group

Chris Pearson attended the October committee to express his deep concern about the proposed changes to how conservation land is managed and how he believes the OTMC needs to be ready to speak up and make submissions to defend the places that define our club's identity and outdoor heritage.

According to recent media reports, the new conservation land framework would make it easier to sell or exchange conservation land and promote commercial use over environmental protection. While national parks and designated wilderness areas are supposedly exempt, many of the landscapes we rely on — like the Rock and Pillar Range (home to our Leaning Lodge) and the Old Man Range (Kopuwait Conservation Area, where we run our snow caving course) — are not protected under these exemptions. That means they could be vulnerable.

These changes are expected to be introduced in a bill to Parliament in 2026. In the past, the OTMC had a dedicated Outdoor Recreation Group (ORG) to advocate for exactly this kind of issue. Given the scale of the threat, Chris believes it is time to bring that group back. Chris Pearson will be attending the OTMC Thursday meeting on **27 November**, and will give a short talk on why he believes we need to re-establish the Outdoor Recreation Group — and how it worked in the past to protect our access and values.

If you care about preserving our wild spaces and want to be part of the effort, please come along to the meeting or **get in touch with Chris on Chris.pearson@otago.ac.nz**.

Chief Guide Comment

It's been quite a few years since I have written a Chief Guide comment! This is a role I have held for several years, and given its importance to the club over years, I was surprised we had received no nominations for the Chief Guide position at the recent AGM, hence why I'm back.

Thanks to Mark Stephenson and our weekend trip leaders, we have a weekend programme in place for the remainder of 2025, and I haven't changed anything with the planned trips. We also have some great looking trips pencilled in for 2026, and this is where I will be looking to get more involved in promoting the trips and supporting our leaders.

The club has previously published a six-month trip programme for our upcoming trips. The earliest copy I have dates from 1928, and these were published more or less continuously up to 2021. 100 Trips had a full 12-month programme, and I am tentatively planning to reintroduce a trip programme in 2026. Aside from providing an upcoming view of trips planned, the past trip cards now form an important part of club history and were invaluable during the planning of 100 Trips.

From a Chief Guide point of view, it is generally relatively easy to fill the January – March/April weekend tramping programme, as this obviously coincides with better weather conditions (but not always!) and we already have trips pencilled in for Brewster Hut /Armstrong, Skippers (would be the first club trip to Skippers in 20 years), East Matukituki, and U Pass (Mistake / Hut Creeks)...all subject to change.

It is easy to overload the trip programme, which has the effect of reducing numbers across all trips, so we are planning to run weekend/longer trips fortnightly. The trips planned thus far are in our upper fitness levels (M-F and above), so we need to give some thought to having options for E & M graded trampers.

Please get in touch if you have any ideas for weekend trips,
Antony P

Trip Reports

Tomahawk Loop—14 September 2025

By Tracy Pettinger

On Sunday we parked up at the Tomahawk car park and the seven of us set off up the beach. It was a super windy day, for once behind us, as we walked towards Smaills Beach. Over the road and down to the track to Smaills, we stopped to take a look at a huge pile of dead possums(?) that I'd seen on the recce and now were starting to smell.

On Smaills Beach, there is a sand dune cliff that I walked a bit too close to. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw it do a mini avalanche, and I managed to not get buried by a quick dodge. Everyone else was walking right behind me, so I think they would have dug me out quickly, but it was a reminder not to walk too close to steep, eroding dunes.

The Karetai Track was lovely. The views are wonderful, and our loop trip is probably good to do with visitors to town, if they are keen on a walk with views, but are short on time. It was windy everywhere, but thankfully not quite as bad as it had been the day before! At the top of the track (now a road), we turned left onto Highcliff Road



Smaills Beach (photo Tracy Pettinger)

and had lunch at the quarry, which is basically a car park or bus turn round point. It was the only place out of the wind. A few of us did a sterling job of ridding the place of some of its litter. We carried on and visited the Soldiers Monument then went down Peg 41 Track, which has been recently reshaped and is now not as muddy as it has been. There was a sheep down there with a large prolapse hanging out the back end, which looked painful. Back down at sea level we walked onto Luke Road and over the playing fields, which I can't remember ever walking across in all my years living in Dunedin.

Some of us on this trip enjoyed the fact that it was about five hours and they could still have some day left to do those other things some of us have to do before work on Monday.

Tracy Pettinger for Richard Pettinger, Gilles Donneou, Jane Bruce, Spen Walker,

Ross Creek Tracks in the Rain—5 October 2025

By Ash Flintoff

On a wet miserable Sunday 9 other stir crazy people joined me on a walk from Woodhaugh gardens up and around Ross Creek, as it is mostly covered by bush we thought it should keep us out of the worst of the rain. We meet at the gardens at 1pm where the rain had just stopped so we assembled in the dry and as we set out alongside the Leith we were all in awe of



Team beside the Leith (photo Jade Pettinger)

the power of the water raging down the Leith.

We started on the Upper Leith walk way with a photo at the look out over the Leith. We carried on past the old quarries and continued up the Ross Creek track.

We stopped at the river crossing but decided it was too deep to cross although we wanted to visit the Ross Creek

Waterfall (also known as School Creek Waterfall). We agreed to take the long way via the Podocarp & School Creek tracks. Once at the waterfall we had a short photo stop break while admiring the flow of water coming down of the waterfall. The sound it made was exhilarating but as the rain was getting a bit heavy we didn't stop long.

We then took a typical OTMC short cut—straight up to the Zig Zag track and returned via the Golf Course and Podocarp Track to the reservoir. It was then a mostly dry walk along the side of the reservoir before heading up the Craigieburn Track for a stop at the Little Ruin. Once under way again it was back down the hill following the Kanuka, Ross Creek tracks and the upper Leith walkway back to the cars. In all we walked 8.5km, enjoyed some good sights and didn't get too wet. A great way to fill in 2 ¼ hours of a dreary, wet day.

Ash Flintoff for Debbie & Jade Pettinger, Lucy Jones, Helen Emmerson, Jane Black, Ruth Thomas, Mark Stepheson, Signe Jacobsen (plus a late comer who missed the list).

The Gap via Tunnels Track —12 October 2025

By Kate Botting

15 intrepid club and a few new members gathered at Woodhaugh Gardens at 8.45 on a brisk morning, where we signed in and sorted ourselves into 4 cars. Our 16th member, Michael, was picked up at On the Spot Blueskin, by Rob. Participants; Rob Seeley (leader), Mark Stephenson, Signe Jacobson, Helen Emerson, Alice Fraser, Claire Ridout, Joe and Sharon Betherton, Michael Priestnal, Chris Meech, Michelle Marer, Megan Lahood, Tom Kirk, Shirley Welch, Peter Barton and the author Kate Botting. It was easy to keep track of people in our car groups also.

We commenced the trip at 9.40am, after Rob opened the tricky barrier gate on Mountain Road gate and followed his orders to park by the red cone. We all enjoyed a gentle descent to the gold mine tunnels at 10.20am, checking out the entrances of the tunnel before continuing along an old water course and down to the first river crossing. We clambered over the rocks, trying to avoid getting wet feet and the track was generally dry along Yellow Spur before enjoying the sun at Phil Cox hut (2.2km) at 11.30am. Reluctantly we continued along Yellow Ridge towards Rocky Ridge and onto The Gap (5km) getting terrific glimpses of Mt Cargill, Flagstaff, etc along the way.

There was a lot of fresh pig rooting that damaged the track so we got good exercise pushing the soil back with a foot as we passed. There was even a moment when there was silence as our chatty group had gone over the ridge where the wind was getting blustery. Due to the cool, gusty wind, we returned to a sheltered area to have lunch before most of the group attempted the overgrown, unformed track to the rocky outcrop at The Gap. The yellow infestation made it impossible to get into the gap so four of us decided to enjoy the sun while it lasted.



Group photo outside Phil Cox Hut
(photo by Rob Seeley)

After exploring The Gap as far as possible, we returned along Yellow Ridge to Phil Cox shelter then descended down a well formed zig-zag track to cross the creek. Generally the path was in very good condition with only a few muddy spots. There are well placed ropes to help, if it was muddy and slippery during large rain events. The final stretch is a very steep grunt, up through the Douglas fir forest to our cars.

During the trip Claire used a Merlin app to help identify the bird sounds, but I think our group was a little noisy as the birds didn't hang around for long enough for it to be successful.

We were relieved to be back at the cars by 5.20ish pm and meet the rain on the freeway home, which helped clean the cars. Above Pine Hill was a magnificent rainbow. We returned to Woodhaugh gardens at 5.45ish and the temperature had dropped considerably. I was pleased to have warm gear in my car, before heading to badminton.

We had a wonderful day with terrific company and a very good workout. Thanks to Rob Seely for organising the trip. Kate Botting for Rob Seeley, Mark Stephenson, Signe Jacobson, Helen Emerson, Alice Fraser, Jo & Sharon Bretherton, Chris Meech, Michelle Mearer, Megan La Hood, Shirley Welsh, Tom Kirk, Michael Presnall, Peter Barton and Claire Ricket

Around Port Chalmers - 27 September 2025 **By Maria Saevareid**

Me and my boyfriend had a great experience walking with the group exploring Port Chalmers with the OTMC. The weather was great and it was lovely chatting and getting to know everyone! Annie was amazing and made sure that everyone was included and that no one got separated during the walk.

We started at the Port Chalmers Town Hall and walked past the cruise ship terminal and continued around to Back Beach. We walked along Peninsula Beach Road, past old cottages, churches, Goat and Quarantine Islands and across the bay, Sawyers Bay. Once we had returned to our starting point we climbed up the hill to the Flagstaff lookout before walking to Lady Thorn Rhododendron Dell where we enjoyed more great views of Port Chalmers. From the Lady Thorn Dell we continued past Iona Church and back to the cars. It was roughly 7km of walking



Enjoying the walk—group photo
(photo by Lucas Adull)

An enjoyable walk and would definitely recommend.

Maria Saevareid for Annie Yohann, Koshy Yohann, Maryam Pervis, Shirley Welsh, Rebecca Armstrong, Mark Stephenson, Ruth Thomas, Sonia Taylor

**A pun time was had by all on Amy's a-peeling
Peel Forest Labour Weekend trip
25-27 October 2025
By Philip Somerville**

Base camp, the DOC Peel Forest campsite, was spacious, picturesque and tranquil, especially after the gales that blasted the South the day before departure.

Although there's no mobile reception in this tucked-away corner of South Canterbury, the main kitchen and bathroom block offer wifi. Amiable Amy secured a cabin for four, while two pitched tents and one bunked in her car. The dawn chorus outside was rivalled by early chirping inside – no names, but Kate and Alice know who they are.

Phil, Saskia, Gilles and Alice peeled off Little Mt Peel via Deer Spur, hoofing



Saskia, Giles and Alice with middle and big Mt Peel in the back ground (photo Phil Somerville)

it up and staggering the long slog to Middle Mt Peel. Three dashed on to big Mt Peel (1743m) to seal the Peel deal and soak up the panoramic Southern Alps views. This was the roughest and rockiest stretch.

Wisely, the group skipped the steeper South Ridge route to not-so-little Little Mt Peel (1311), saving precious time. All up (and down), the round trip clocked nearly 24km, 2017m of ascent, and about 10 hours. Saskia, fittingly, wore orange.

Little Mt Peel return took

just over four hours. We topped up our water at the shelter, where track markings end, although ground trails mostly guide the way onwards.

As that group took the high road, Amy, Rebecca and Kate took to the lowland tracks adjacent to the campground – Acland Falls, Fern Walk and Big Tree Walk.

They read and relaxed and topped up supplies in Geraldine. Those returning from the tops certainly had no reason to whine over the congenial shared meal. Bean there and done that, and rice with spice was nice and more than suffice.

On Sunday, Alice and Kate peeled off northwards, while the others enjoyed

easy walks, a combined visit to gorge-ous Emily Falls, and more lazing in the sun and warmth.

Towering tōtara, mataī and kahikatea feature prominently. Phil barked up the wrong tree more than once trying to ID them by their trunks. As the oldest in the party, by some distance, he was best placed to commune with the 1000-year-old “Big” tōtara. Another shared dinner was followed by another type of wordplay – Scrabble in the cabin.

No surprises with kebabs on the way up, and we jammed into Barker’s in Geraldine for the obligatory pit stop. The next jam, of the vehicular variety, was in holiday traffic crawling into Timaru.

A bite among Oamaru’s historic sights came next. Then it was snow joke – although rather pretty – crossing the northern motorway as the white stuff tumbled down. Fortunately, all the snowflakes were outside Rebecca’s car.

Young Gilles declared it a ripping good time, especially after a sharp rock left his pants decidedly second best. A truly tree-mendous weekend. Amy proved a real peel-ar of strength.



Phil Somerville for Amy Telfer-Chiles, Rebecca Armstrong, Saskia Bronstring, Gilles Donneou, Alice Fraser and Kate, after a pun-packed, peel-good and pun-believable time.



Little Mt Peel on right, middle Mt Peel and big Mt Peel on left
(photo by Philip Somerville)

Maungatua Tops - 26 October 2025

By Rob Seeley

It's been a while since the club has visited Maungatua - or Maukaatua (hill of the gods?) as it is probably more correctly named in southern maori – and this was a first time for many. The name Maukaatua now occurs in the naming of the reserve.

At Woodside Glen our party of 9 disgorged from the two cars into the chilly morning. There were three fresh faces along with a bevvy of the usual suspects; Hannah had returned after the Silverstream ordeal of last year and also Djoeke from the Netherlands and Anaïs from the UK. Having crossed Lee Creek on its rocky stepping stones we quickly got warmed up on the steep path heading up through the forest. Someone up front was setting a cracking pace. A good variety of forest is encountered as you ascend and at one point there's an almost pure stand of mahoe with its open understory. As the tree-cover thinned we began to get glimpses of the view north which was fully revealed as we broke into broom country and full sunshine.

The weather forecast hadn't been exactly spectacular and rain was expected at some time in the early afternoon. We decided to push on into the exposed



On Maungatua (photo by Rob Seeley)

part of the trip while keeping an eye on the weather especially what was coming over the western ridge of the range and ready to beat a hasty at any time. It had been a shocking week of unprecedented wind in the South with fine trees lost in the city – so we were pleased that very little windfall had hindered us. But for now the sky was clear albeit accompanied by a keen westerly and we found ourselves in the fabulous golden tussock country that the range is known for. At one point, at a sign to this effect, the maintained track stops and route finding becomes a little tricky and snow grass slippery underfoot – I was beginning to wish I'd brought my poles. The main ridge proceeds in a series of bumps with the gradient slowly coming off as you gain height. There was an outbreak of snacking at one on the rockier bumps before more bump-bagging ensued.

We pushed on to point nicely sheltered from the wind and giving a fine view stretching from the Silverpeaks to Lake Waihola and had lunch. The weather

was starting to look patchy over in Dunedin so, lunch over, we decided to carry on - now over gentle ground – for just another half hour and head back. A place with a small rock plinth seemed as good as any, we posed for photos (Helen’s trademark group selfie) and turned back north.

The return was largely without event. As Dunedin continued its drenching in the distance, we remained un-rained on apart from a brief flurry of snow/hail. The mat of snow grass took its toll though among some (especially Djoerke who is waiting on some footwear with actual tread on it). Back in the forest we heard an early shining cuckoo (Steffan’s version: Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi! ...aaawww!.....aaawww!) on the lookout for another shining cuckoo before delegating all child-rearing duties to some other poor unsuspecting smaller birds.

Down at the river, which has fine deep pool upstream of the stepping stones, Tomas had his trademark dip to the amazement of some random civilian who was there – but not us of course. Some other clown slipped on the now wet stepping stones and fell in. Reader, I was that clown. So there were ice creams at Outram, Anaïs (she’s a vet) showed Mark and I a photo of a street dog in Sri Lanka that I have yet to fully expunge from my brain, and then on back to the clubrooms. A fine day and thanks go to Tomas for organisation and leadership.

Rob Seeley for Tomas Sobek, Mark Stevenson, Djoeke Baelder-Jansen, Anaïs King, Steffan Rolfe, Laurence Prattley, Helen Emerson, Hannah Fogarty.



Trip reports needed—if you’ve been tramping lately, we’d love to hear from you. Be it a day or weekend trip, please put a few words on paper and let us know where you went. Include a photo or two if possible and send to debspettinger@gmail.com