



# OTMC Bulletin

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



Akatore Estuary to Bull Creek coastline—9 November 2025  
(photo by Rob Seeley)

## Upcoming Trips

- December** 6 Work Party—Pigeon Hill Direct Track (Cowan Road)  
13-16 Greenstone Caples (4 days)  
28/12-4/1 West Coast Extravaganza
- January** 17-18 Brewster Hut / Mt Armstrong  
18 Picnic on Rabbit Island (Blueskin Bay)  
25 Painted Forest via Jubilee Hut
- February** 1 Ship at Anchor  
6-8 Skippers

# Presidents Thoughts

Debbie has been incredibly patient in WAITING for some sort of note from the President for the Bulletin, and to be honest, I have been a bit lacking in that regard. So, how do I feel the club is standing up as we progress into our second century?

In my recent AGM Report I had commented that we seem in good heart, mainly in terms of trips undertaken and numbers attending, which I guess is the bottom line of why we are in a tramping club. Our weekly Thursday night meetings are continuing to attract interest. Also, we are in a comfortable position financially. Antony Pettinger has kept us legitimate with an updated Constitution. Obviously, these and others factors are purely thanks to the efforts of the people involved, mostly committee members and trip leaders.

We must however, while acknowledging that many sports clubs generally are struggling, accept that we do seem to be facing the following concerns: Our Committee is down to 11 members, when historically we have had 14 to 16. Similarly club membership has fallen from around 170 odd at the end of June to 121 more recently.

I've been in the OTMC since 1981, with varying levels of activity over that time. The club had always had periods of ebb and flow in people's involvement, which I think reflects our own individual fickleness or personal situation, but somehow magnified among a wider group.

We have a very good enthusiastic (though small) committee at present who are enabling the club to keep providing an interesting bunch of trips and meetings.

OTMC President  
Wayne Hodgkinson

## Committee Members 2025/26

President	Wayne Hodgkinson
Vice President	Antony Pettinger
Secretary	Jade Pettinger
Treasurer	Amy Telfer-Chiles
Chief Guide	Antony Pettinger
Day Trip Convener	Rebecca Armstrong
Membership Secretary	Tracy Pettinger
Thursday Night Convener	Helen Emerson
Weekly Update	Helen Emerson
Bulletin Editor	Debbie Pettinger
Gear Hire	Andrew Sewell

# From your committee

I'm sure many of you reading this bulletin know me by now, or at least have seen my name in the occasional trip report, but for those I haven't met, let me introduce myself.

I joined the OTMC in the Centenary year - and what a year to join! I had not long returned to Dunedin after 25 years away, and was keen (and still am) to (re-) explore this fabulous region we call home. I was born in Dunedin, and did a reasonable amount of day tramping around NZ with my family growing up. After University, I left NZ, and for 25 years, lived in London and did some walking and hiking in the UK and Europe, in between working and other travel. But there's nothing quite like NZ tramping - and I admit I had some 'shocks' when I returned here and joined the club. My first trip was a day trip into Jubilee Hut in April 2023. It wasn't the Devil's Staircase that bothered me, as much as the 8 creek crossings. What's this - getting my feet wet? And the mud - what are these 'tracks'? Ah, welcome to tramping, NZ style. But once I'd got over that, I was hooked.

The OTMC has played a big part in my return to tramping in NZ. I was quickly made to feel part of the club, and I appreciate how welcoming everyone has been. And as they say, you get out what you put in. I was encouraged early on to give a Thursday night club talk, then to lead a trip. And then to join the committee. There's nothing like 'doing' to get a sense of belonging, and a sense that I can be part of this club's history, despite my newbie status. I know many of you have 'been there, done that' on the committee, or leading trips and organising speakers for our Thursday meetings. So for those of you who are needing time off for a bit - can I ask that you support and encourage others to participate. Next time you're out in the hills with a newer member, explain what you need to think about if you're leading a trip, or tell them about what position on the committee you enjoyed most, and why. And to those who have joined the club more recently, if you are enjoying coming on our tramps, and listening to our fantastic Thursday night speakers, can I ask that you consider what you can do next, to put back into the club. Lead that day or weekend trip, join in a work party or come trap-line clearing (more on that in the new year), find someone interesting to give a talk (maybe that's you!), or plan a fun activity for Thursday night ... Heck, even join us on the committee! The more people we have actively making things happen for the club, (on the committee, or leading trips, writing up trip reports, sending out the weekly email, editing this bulletin, and generally spreading the word about the club), the more we will all get out of being a member of the OTMC.

Helen Emerson

Thursday Night & Weekly Update Coordinator

# Update on the Ben Rudd's property

## **Predator Control:**

Harvey Aughton from the Halo Project team gave an excellent presentation on predator control at a well-attended Club meeting on 9 October. Harvey sought club member assistance to help with clearing trap-line tracks on Ben Rudd's. The trust will receive a list of priority tracks and the traps' GPS location. We may also be asked to assist with re-baiting the traps. A time and date for any working bee will be shared with OTMC club members.

## **Dave Still - Life Member - Tōtara tree Memorial:**

Dick Brasier and Logan McGhie (tramping colleagues of the late Dave Still) wish to donate a Tōtara as a memorial for Dave to be planted. A site has been selected and Dave's family along with all OTMC club members will be invited to the memorial tree planting.

## **Unauthorised Fires on Ben Rudd's:**

Between August and October, two fires have been lit on Ben Rudd's which are a concern. One of the fires was at the skid site adjacent to tussocks and not far from the Flagstaff Reserve. The second fire was lit at the Ben Rudd's Shelter area, where a total fire ban with signage being clearly displayed in the shelter. Dry windy conditions could result in a disastrous out of control blaze on the entire Flagstaff summit area, as happened a few years ago. DCC has been fully informed regarding the fires, which are being taken seriously.

## **Drone Flights for vegetation monitoring:**

Drone flights controlled by a flight plan are a useful aid for locating unwanted noxious flora, and monitoring progress of native flora. A flight plan provides a pre-determined grid covering Ben Rudd's, which makes it quicker and easier to collate the many images captured during drone flights. Also, we can more easily compare successive observations for monitoring trends and control efforts. In May 2025, the flight plan was modified to incorporate the rowans encroaching on the Northeast side of our boundary, near McQuilkans Creek, which includes DCC land. Club members tackled these on 10 September 2022 in what we call the "Rowanberg", and a follow-up is needed. Autumn flights when rowans are bright red are expected to reveal the extent of work. Two flights per annum at this stage seem adequate with the most recent drone flight on 13 April 2025. The Trust acknowledges the expertise of drone pilot Graham McArthur, who has done a great job of recording footage, including proactively making helpful tweaks and suggestions to flight and imagery footage and listening to Trust members' requests. To date, map coordinates of target flora appear quite accurate, allowing seek-and-control work. Trust members and some club members have done this control work but, recently, the lion's share has been done by the Aukaha Weed Team, led by Daniel van den Kerkhof. We are very grateful for this assistance,

although sadly, further help from that Team is not assured due to lack of funding. The Trust thanks the DCC for funding our first trials of this technology, from its Biodiversity Fund. On-going monitoring by drone requires on-going funding, along with your volunteer work.

**Ben Rudd's Management Trust, additional Trustees:**

The Ben Rudd's Management Trust are very keen to hear from any Club members who are keen to assist with managing your property on Flagstaff. Should you be ready to join the Trust, please contact me or any of our friendly Trustees: Teresa Wasilewska, Sam Patrick, Alan Thomson, Richard Pettinger and Secretary Sue Williams.

David McArthur  
Ben Rudd's Management Trust Chairperson

# Paid Parking at Aoraki Mt Cook

If you are planning to visit Aoraki Mt Cook National Park over the summer and park at White Horse Hill carpark then be prepared to pay.

The Department of Conservation is trialing paid parking at White Horse Hill carpark from December through to June 2026. Parking fees are \$25 per day or \$5 per hour. There will be a 20 minute free parking time allowance made to drop off/pick up/short stop. Payment machines will be installed and cameras will record the entry and exit of vehicles with a parking company issuing breach notices to people who do not pay.

White Horse Hill carpark is a popular place to park for several day and overnight walks, including Kea Point track, up to the second bridge on the Hooker Valley track , Mueller Hut and Mt Ollivier as well as the popular White Horse Hill camping ground. Paid parking is being introduced as a tool to help manage demand and congestion in a parking area that is often overflowing with vehicles parking all along the side of the road from the turnoff to White Horse Hill car park.

Paid parking is also being introduced at Punakaiki and Franz Josef. DoC will review the results of paid parking and make a decision about whether to keep it and possibly extend to other places.



# Trip Reports

Akatore Estuary to Bull Creek—9 November 2025  
By Gilles Donneau

We met on Sunday at the clubrooms. From there, we went to the Akatore Estuary. The weather was not the best; a grey sky hung over us, and we all shared a fear that it might rain. However, that was not enough to discourage the OTMC members and their young friends—who were very numerous that day, four high school international students and three university international students. The walk began with a climb on the rocks along the Akatore Creek. While the others were trying to keep their feet dry, some decided to just walk in the water, preferring wet shoes to slipping and getting their whole body wet and injured. Then, we got bogged down in the sand of the estuary, trying to guess which part of the ground was firmer or softer. Finally, after a few dirty, wet and sandy steps, the coastal part of the walk could start. This consisted of jumping above gaps of various sizes on the rocks or finding a longer but safer way to go, walking on the sand of the beaches or the grass of the fields—sometimes both, as they are so close—and passing through, above or under a couple of fences.



We saw plenty of animals during the hike: seals, sea lions (one of them was massive and scary although very sleepy), sheep, cattle and seagulls. We met a few rabbits too. As a well immersed foreigner, forgetting my European state of mind, and with the linguistic help of Helen, I yelled “Shoot the bloody bugger!” instead of the typical continental “Oh cute you are, little bunny...”.

A bit of rain fell in the middle of the walk, nothing problematic. Mike found us some rhodonite stones and wetted his feet for it. The landscapes were handsome, some impressive rocky

Heading to Bull Creek (photo Rob Seeley) beaches full of seals, huge or quite small sandy beaches with some sea lion's footprints in the sand and beautiful paddocks, with hills and bushes.

At the end everybody was very happy. Thanks, Rob, for the excellent hike; I didn't know the area at all and enjoyed it a lot. I'm sure everybody did.

Gilles Donneau for Rob Seeley, Bridget S, Michael Priestnall, David Picos, Martin Molthys, Viola Dercote, Jane Black, Helen Emerson, Rebecca Armstrong, Signe Jacobsen, Sophie Chestenson, Michelle Mearer, Tabitha Heaton, Lynley McArley, Mandy Lungley, Janice Hodges

## Silver Stream Loop—2 November 2025 By Alice Fraser

Ten of us arrived at the Whare Flat carpark (aka Powder Creek carpark, located just off the Flagstaff-Whare Flat Road) and the start of several of the network of track circuits which explore the historic Silver Stream water race.

We followed Raceman's Track, encountering an early obstacle at the ford crossing Silver Stream; those with lightweight footwear mostly decided not to get wet feet at the start of the day and removed boots, whilst others with heavier boots took the risk and splashed on through. We continued along this fairly flat section of Raceman's track, which took a sudden right turn through a farm gate (which I would have missed if it hadn't been for those familiar with the route behind me!), across a small grass paddock and over a sturdy swing bridge to cross the meandering Silver Stream.

From here the track gradually inclined through beautiful bush with plentiful bird song (Rob was a font of bird song knowledge and I learnt the call of the NZ cuckoo whose voice I'd heard in the North Island but had never linked with the correct species). We



Paddling through the ford (photo Alice Fraser)

passed various items of the historic water race system, of which Gordon had good background knowledge. The strong gales during the spring had caused several large trees to block the path, some of which had been skilfully chain sawed through to clear a way; credit for that went to the local mountain biking group (Helen had noted on facebook).

We stopped for smoko on Raceman's track before heading up the steep incline of the North Coal Creek, over boulders, well-paced by Lucy. This led us to the top of the hill where we had some clear views of the Silver Stream valley and could see across to Pulpit Rock in the Silver Peaks. We had lunch on the top in a grassy clearing after which rain threatened but amounted to little more than a short period of drizzle. North Coal Creek track joined Steve Amies Track. We noticed all the symbols annotating the track names on the sign posts (which are shown in the brochure in the link below for interest).

Steve Amies track led us back down the other side of the ridge, with a sharp left turn off, down McRae's track to join Tunnel Track, along which we encoun-

tered the water race tunnel which meant getting into a very low squat (quad-burn) or getting very dirty knees! This track joined the Whare Flat metal road which took us back to our cars (approx. round trip of 6 hours).

A very enjoyable tramp along these historic water race tracks; great to get to know the local area.

Thanks to Helen Emerson for organising and leading the tramp, joined by Gordon Tocher, Rob Seeley, Tom Kirk, Bridget Sutton, Michael Priestnall, Gilles Donneau, Lucy Jones, Helena Schleaher and Alice Fraser.

Useful brochure of the network of tracks:  
<https://www.dunedin.govt.nz/resources/documents/services2/walking-tracks/Silver-Stream-Track-Brochure.pdf>



Negotiating the tunnel  
(photo Alice Fraser)



Group photo (photo by Alice Fraser)