



OTMC Bulletin

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



Fox Glacier from Alex Knob —30 December 2025
(photo Helen Emerson)

Upcoming Trips

- March**
 - 1 Christmas Creek (Silver Peaks)
 - 7 Careys Creek (Silver Peaks)
 - 8 Doctors Point-McKessar Track Loop
 - 21-23 (Otago Anniversary) Temple Circuit**
 - 22 Cedar Spur via Gold Miner’s Direct (Silver Peaks)
 - 28 Silver Stream Water Race Loop (Whare Flat)

- April**
 - 3-6 (Easter) Wilkin-Gillespie Pass-Young Circuit**
 - 11 Painted Forest via Jubilee Hut (Silver Peaks)

What being in the OTMC means to me

Most OTMC members discover their love of tramping before joining the club. However I find myself in the unique position where I have never experienced life without the OTMC. The Pettinger's have been involved in the OTMC in some way or another since the early 1970's - starting with my grandad Mark, followed by my great grandparents Jean and Sid, my great uncle Richard and my father Antony - making me the fourth generation Pettinger to be a club member. My parents met in the club in the mid/late 1980's as well, when my mum Debbie came along on a Bushcraft course that Antony was an instructor on and the rest is history.

Over the years, my involvement with the Club has changed. As children, our family calendar revolved around the weekly Thursday meetings, monthly Committee meetings and weekend trips away into the hills. All of this meant my brother Dylan and I spent a lot of time (especially weekends) with our grandparents, who thankfully were very supportive.

We weren't shipped off to the grandparents all the time, I do have some fond memories of being brought along on some of the more exciting club trips and events. My earliest memory of the OTMC is attending the Thursday night meeting where my Dad received his life membership in 1999 when I was three years old. Other childhood memories include playing on the confidence course at Camp Tirohanga on Bushcraft weekends, trips around Flagstaff with Dad setting up and collecting markers for navigation days and playing in the river at Outram Glen during river crossing.

As Dylan and I got older, we were able to come along on some of the weekend trips. The first one I remember is being in the support vehicle for the Rail Trail bike ride at Labour Weekend in 2002. The highlight of this trip was certainly stopping at every pub along the way for a cold glass of Coca-Cola! I also thoroughly enjoyed the 'Christmas Social Trips' in the late 2000's - the first to Lake Roxburgh and then Pigeon Island in Lake Wakatipu the following year. My first OTMC overnight trip carrying a pack was to Lake Harris on the Routeburn Track in winter 2011. We were spoiled with a bluebird day and thick snow and ice on Lake Harris, meaning we could walk to the middle of the lake.

I took a bit of a dislike to tramping in my teenage years, however this was reasonably short-lived as I started venturing out on some day walks around Dunedin whilst at University and soon realised that tramping is actually a very enjoyable way to see our country. Having been involved with the OTMC in various ways for over 25 years, I decided in 2023 that it was time to give back to the

club which has given me and my family so much, so I joined the committee as Secretary and have been doing so ever since.

The OTMC has played a key role in many people's lives as they have formed lifelong friendships through the club, been able to explore parts of NZ they wouldn't otherwise and has taught invaluable skills through Bushcraft courses. With membership numbers dropping in recent years, we all have a part to play in keeping our beloved OTMC going. I encourage you to participate in any way you can, whether that is simply attending trips, putting your hand up to lead a daytrip or throwing your hat in the ring for a committee position at the next AGM - every contribution is valued.

Jade Pettinger
OTMC Secretary

Pest Reducution on Dunedin Reserves and Tracks

The Dunedin City Council contractor has undertaken around 60 days of pest control targeting hoofed animals across a number of Dunedin reserves and adjoining private land recently. Significant progress has been made with removal of 202 goats, 4 pigs, 1 deer and 3 cattle from Mt Cargill, Chingford's Bush, Swampy Summit, Mihiwaka, Silver Stream, Stephenson's Bush and Nichols Creek.

Over the previous two years, more than 200 goats have been removed (a total of more than 400 goats over the last three years) and with significant concerns for public safety, removal of wild cattle in the Silver Stream/Swampy Summit area has been a priority with nine cattle having been removed so far. It is encouraging to see the tracks in the area are showing little/no sign of cattle and with such a large decline in the number of goats from many reserves, visible signs of vegetation recovery have been seen already.

Going forward the DCC contractor will continue with intensive control of goats as there are still large numbers in certain reserves and increase pig control using dogs and traps which may require some track closures for a limited time.

Trip Reports

West Coast Extravaganza—Okarito Lagoon Kayaking 30 December 2025 By Alice Fraser

Thanks to Roger for instigating and organising this trip on the Okarito lagoon, just 25 minutes drive north of Franz Josef. Roger, Sue and Sharon had all brought their own kayaks, the rest of the keen-to-kayak group, of variable experience, rented sea kayaks through Okarito Kayaks' in 3 doubles and a single; a group of 10 paddlers altogether. The winds on the lagoon were unpredictably switchy that morning, but light enough initially to head out across the lagoon, with some detours via very shallow but sheltered side channels and up into a beautiful, tranquil narrow channel, flanked by thick native forest. The bird life was magical with a constant forest chorus of Tui and Bellbirds and many wetland wading species along the banks and in the middle of the lagoon including some species particularly localised to the lagoon such as White Herons.

We wound our way back to the main lagoon and beached up on a small island for smoko and a review of the weather. The wind was picking up with significant gusts; as a result, most of the group decided to head back across the lagoon back to base. Roger and I decided to battle into the wind across the lagoon to explore a second channel further round the lagoon, and it was indeed a case of head down, keep paddling, with the gusts driving the boats sideways and waves splashing over the bows, but with the knowledge that the lagoon was in fact only knee deep in most places. The channel made the effort worthwhile, allowing for some peaceful paddling and sighting of several elegant White Herons. We returned to the kayak base in lighter winds, where a hot coffee welcomed us, thanks to Baz and Gemma at 'Okarito Kayaks' and met up with the rest of the group for lunch. A really wonderful morning's kayaking and so great to discover such a gem of a lagoon!



Peaceful paddling (photo Alice)

West Coast Extravaganza—Life at the Lodge

By Tina Anderson

Excellent located. A mere 10min leisurely walk from town, 5mins to a great little bar/cafe.

There are 2 bunkrooms with platform style sleeping arrangement. Bunkroom 1 - platform sleeping 4 in a row above , 3 U shaped lower beds. Other side 2 and 2 up/down. Toe to toe. Opening window and double plug for charging phones (handy!). Bunkroom 2 -very similar to #1 with 4 in a row above u shape 3 lower. Double plug and window.



Storage hallway with double sinks. Storage room with wash tub, mop, broom, vacuum etc. Above single bed = Kate's private sanctuary on our trip
Kitchen with oven, fridge freezer, microwave ample plates pots etc. And loo. And shower. Good fire.

Did I mention how hot the shower was and good pressure – OH YEAH

Highly recommended to stay at and not too far to travel to several walks either by foot/bike or car and Fox Glacier which as a few more shops.

West Coast Extravaganza—Karangarua Valley

2 January 2026 By Kate Botting

The Karangarua Valley walk is 26 km south of the Fox village where there is a small parking area next to the Karangarua River bridge. The route starts directly across the road. This is the first time we had a swarm of mosquitoes when we got out of the car. The weather was cloudy, sunny for morning tea, but started to cloud over around lunch time.

Initially the first part of the track has slipped away, so you have to hop across large boulders and look for the track further along. The track is well marked, if you can see the orange markers above the long grass and tussock but generally we walked up the valley through grass, tussock, silver beech and a lovely patch of Rimu, where we had our lunch. We got glimpses now and again, early on, of the overflowing Copland Track car park. We also had many unbridged creek crossings that could become very hazardous if it rained. In fact after lunch, the weather looked as if it was closing in, so we made the decision to return at 12ish.

The track does not follow the river where the Copland convergence occurs with the Karangarua River, so we found a lovely spot under the Rimu to get glimpses of the rivers. We met only 2 hunters at the end of our walk, otherwise, we saw no one. On the drive back we met Tomas and Rodger at their car, looking very wet, as their Fox Peak tramp had been rather wet.

Thank you Rebecca Armstrong and Sandra Divett for a lovely relaxing day out.

West Coast Extravaganza—Extreme Fox, a day on the galcier 28 December 2025 By Tomas Sobek

This day trip kicked off back in November when Steffan suggested a couple of heli-glacier guided trip options to the West Coast Extravaganza group. I reckon mainly due to the cost, only three of us decided to give it a crack. We quickly agreed on one of the options: Extreme Fox. The company website is promising up to 7 hours ice time on this trip and Steffan promised to organize some good weather. Both delivered hundred percent. While it's true that this year's summer seems to be a bit on the wet side, Monday 28th December – the day we picked on our booking forms – was an absolute stunner on the West Coast.

It was a fairly early wake up for us, breakfast, line up for the one and only toilet at our luxury lodge, and by quarter to eight we were already checking in at the glacier guiding company. Turned out there were two other participants in our group, a young couple from Finland. Two guides showed up shortly after eight and we started sorting out our gear. Boots, crampons, socks, over-trousers, jackets, gloves, helmets, harnesses, backpacks... You just bring your own lunch, camera, and sunnies. And before you strap into the harness, one last trip to the loo – thankfully they have more than one. Did I mention it'll be a full day on ice?

My first time in a helicopter. Smooth as, a flyover of the glacier before we landed on the lower part. We're one of the first groups arriving on this gor-



Stepping over a small cravasse (photo Tomas Sobek)

geous blue sky day and it'll be a busy day for the pilots. It's half past nine and as soon as we're on the glacier we're putting on our crampons. Next the guides are handing us ice axes. Brief instruction on how to walk in crampons and off we go. As we progress through

the easy parts near the landing pad, the guides drip feed us more tips for walking in crampons, how to use the ice axe, etc. They test we can all safely walk over a narrow ice ridge without losing balance. By half past ten the



guides have set up our first little climb and one by one we all climb a few steps on the rope. It's fun!

When we all had a go at the climb, we start heading back to the lower parts of the glacier. We'd climbed up a good few hundred vertical metres without even noticing. Descending seems a little more tricky and our guides are taking their time exploring safe options for our group. Eventually we find ourselves not far from the landing pad. And right here the guides found another feature to explore: a hole in the ice deeper than we could see with a small waterfall falling in. The suggestion that they can lower us in and we climb back up was met with enthusiasm and everyone seemed quite pleased with that experience. They even set up a fixed rope for the photographers to be able to get close to the action safely. Cheers!

Ice climbing (photo Tomas Sobek

As we packed up and walked towards the

heli pad we all thought the trip was wrapping up. It was half past three already and my feet were a bit sore from the crampons. But the guides just walked past and took us exploring on the other side instead. At some point they found a big crevasse and asked for a volunteer to get lowered into it and then "rescued". In order to keep their qualifications they need to repeat such exercises every now and then. Steffan volunteered himself. And once he was rescued, we finally walked back to the heli pad. At half past four we were taking off and a few minutes later landing back in Fox Glacier village. What an awesome day!



Tomas Sobek on behalf of Sharen Rutherford and Steffan Rolfe

Ice climbing (photo glacier guides)

West Coast Extravaganza—Alex Knob 30 December 2025 By Sandra Divett

What a name!

Alex Knob is named after Alex Graham, one of the brothers in an early mountaineering and guiding family from the area. The Alex Knob Track is a climb up the hill to overlook Franz Josef Glacier, the track is described as a challenging 17.2 km return with a steep climb up, for advanced tramping taking around 8 hours return.

There was 12 of us and the day was perfect, not a cloud in the sky magnificent! We set off from the carpark, however there is a cost to use the carpark so the 3 cars head back to the highway and we had a 2 km walk to the start of the track. This is our first big walk of the trip, so we are all keen.

We head up! We walk in the bush with a lot of zigzags up. Adding to that the helicopters were continuous passing over our path—they have to make a living, and this was a perfect day. It reminded me of the Bethune's gully track. So during the first part of the track I am thinking I wish I had porridge, a heartier food instead of sultana bran for breakfast.

A lot of the group had passed me as I am slow going uphill. I stopped at the first lookout Rata Lookout and have a snack. Then walk up a fair way over two more hours, with a few big steps up on the track as you get higher and closer to Christmas Lookout however the track is still in the bush. I was stuffed but the view to the Glacier was spectacular with no clouds. Kate gave me a little of her water as I had only Powerade left. Kate is hanging back with me, the slow coach. Anyway, at Christmas Lookout I said to Kate do not wait for me as we had all agreed that the turn around time was 2 pm and I did not want to hold her up from getting to the top.

I was struggling and slow as a snail but I went on, and by now I am out of the bush and people would say not far you are nearly there.

Boy! "So many people say that" I thought "shit I am done," I am not going to the top. I will wait until Helen and whoever comes back

down, then I met Tina who was on her way back and said 'you are so close



At Alex Knob (photo Helen Emerson)

the top it is just there at the marker'. I almost had the wobbles like the marathon runners; it was really hot into the 30's and hardly any wind. I was extra hot. Tina gave me some of her water and I pushed on and made it to the top by 1.45pm. I sat and devoured my bagel, which was so good.

A look at the view and I took a video and a few photos of the 90degree views, a few bodies baking in the sun lucky for them to have time to enjoy the glacier. Anyway, I made to the top and I was so proud. For me it was 5 hours up and then down again which took 4 hours. By the time we were halfway down the cloud had started to cover the top of the glacier.

Thank you, Kate, and Helen for supporting me to get there. A great challenge for me! Magnificence! On reflection I did not take enough water.

Sandra Divett for Helen Emerson, Rebecca Armstrong, Tina Anderson, Mark Stephenson, Gilles Donneau, Alice Fisher, Michael & Bridget Priestnall, Kate Botting, Sue Williams, Rodger Clarkson.

West Coast Extravaganza—Gillespie & Galway Beach **By Mark Stephenson**

Everyone managed to get out to Gillespie Beach and Galway Beach at some point during the week. The Gillespie Beach campsite was full, not surprising as it was typical summer camping weather. A short walk past the old gold dredging machines, through bush and then out onto the beach which led us to a lovely estuary where we eyed the deep tea-brown swimming hole and hoped for sunshine on the way back.

We poked our noses out through the miners tunnel which ends at a cliff face and nice views out to sea. Then back to the sign that said Galway Beach which was 1.5 hours away. We didn't believe it!

It was about right though. A walk through the bush and finally, there is a ladder down to a wonderful wild beach, definitely worth the effort. On the way back



Michael went ahead and we found him, au naturel, in a bathing pool at the end of the estuary, near the surf. In his element, he'd still be there now, given the choice.

I'd recommend this side trip if you're ever in Fox Glacier."

Thanks for an awesome trip by the way, I really enjoyed it.

West Coast Extravaganza—Roberts Point Track 3 January 2026 By Kate Botting

Several carloads left early to walk Roberts Point track due to their booked kayaking deadline, so our car left at a leisurely time. The track begins at the Alex Knob/Wombat Lake car park and is graded an easy walk to Douglas bridge over the Waiho River. We began at 9.45 am.

Once over the Douglas Bridge the track is rougher with tree roots, rocks and slippery sections. There are several unbridged creek crossings (Hugh Creek).

The track winds up the true right of Waiho River, over ice-carved rock and across mountain side-streams to the lookout.

In about an hour, the track opens out onto ice smoothed rock outcrops at Hende's Hut. This hut can provide shelter, but it was built by Peter Hende in 1906-7 and was part of the construction of the Hende's Gallery. Hende was a self-taught engineer, blacksmith, ferryman, mechanic, and climber. Hende would have built it to do blacksmithing for the nearby gallery and perhaps storing his coke to fuel the forge. He would have made the wrought iron rods and supports for the planking and handrails grouted into the rockface. The gallery has had one known upgrade in 1996 with like-with-like with replacement timber components in 1996. Sadly, this remarkable man died at the age of 42 in WW1.



Jacks Point Track (photo Helen Emerson)

The track continues to climb through

open scrubland to a high suspension bridge crossing Rope Creek. The track then continues steadily upward to Roberts Point lookout. Sadly, the mist rolled in and it began raining 5 minutes before we arrived, but it was an enjoyable journey and very popular. It was fun meeting Tomas and Steffan, then Rebecca and Alice on their return journey, with 2 minutes to spare to get to the kayaking trip, I understand.

We had lunch at the lookout and enjoyed meeting fellow trampers before heading back at around 1.30ish. People were all very polite and pleasant as some of the track is narrow in sections and there is a limit of how many can cross the swing bridges.

A very enjoyable day, thankyou Helen Emerson for driving Rebecca's car and leading. Also, great company with Gilles Donneau, Sandra Divett, Tina Anderson by Kate Botting

West Coast Extravaganza—A Tale of Two Lakes

By Rodger Clarkson

Lake Matheson

It was the best of reflections, it was the worst of inappropriate ripples. We set off a little delayed from the lodge, aiming to get to Lake Matheson for sunset. With the sun dropping low in the horizon, Tomas and I ran on ahead of the others to get to Reflection island to capture the moment. The lake was a perfect mirror as we arrived and snapped a few photos.

Then a ripple started and we noticed one of the tourists whimsically splish splashing their feet in the water. After pointing out that the purpose of reflection island was to showcase the beautiful reflection the feet were withdrawn and the reflection returned.



Lake Matheson (photo Tomas Sobek)

Lake Gault

Lake Gault is about a 40 minute side trip away from the Lake Matheson track, and with far fewer people but equally impressive reflections. There was only



one other person when we arrived but they quickly left after Tomas and I had changed into our swimming attire. About eight of us splished splashed, disturbing the perfect reflection, but it's more important to treasure and enjoy these whimsical moments.

Lake Gault (photo Tomas Sobek)

West Coast Extravaganza—Mt Fox 2 January 2026 By Sue Williams

This peak is a great view point apparently. We could see it from the Lodge and the 2nd of January was the day we chose to get up there. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't looking promising - it seemed a bit misty on the hills. However, we weren't going to let that stop us so a couple of car-loads headed the 3km to the car park where we set off.

We weren't intimidated by the enormous DoC warning sign at the start of the

track either and within minutes, we were heading steeply up. People have described the track as gruelling and challenging and both of these things are true. There were plenty of sections of climbing up banks by pulling ourselves up by tree roots and in between there was quite a bit of mud to contend with.

Around lunch time we reached bushline and then the mist began to seem more like rain. While some went to the actual peak at 1345m, I began to question my life choices. With no view, I decided that I didn't need to go right to the top and started the descent. Returning down the track was actually quite a lot of fun and we were soon back at the bottom. The terrible things DoC sign warned us about didn't happen and we all got back to the lodge unscathed. Mt Fox will be tackled again on a day with a higher chance of seeing the view.



Mt Fox (photo by Steffan Rolfe)



The West Coast Extravaganza team (photo by Tomas Sobek)