

# The Bulletin

Newsletter of the Otago Tramping and Mountaineering  
Club Inc. #842 August 2024



*Rock and Pillar Range. 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 2024. Pic Ed.*

## WEEKEND TRIPS

- ★ Rock and Pillar Snow skills
- ★ Green Lake
- ★ Snow Caving
- ★ Stewart Island North-west Circuit

## DAY TRIPS

- Doctors Point
- ★ Pigeon Rock/Cloud Forest

**Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club, 3 Young Street, Dunedin**  
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**Thursday meeting at 3 Young St, South Dunedin**  
**Doors open 7pm for 7.30pm start, all welcome**

# T r i p   R e p o r t s

## 3 and 4 Aug. Snow Skills, Leaning Lodge, Rock & Pillar Range. By Sue Williams

One of the good things about the Rock & Pillars is how close it is to Dunedin. We met at the clubrooms and stood in the road talking until it dawned on someone we were all present and correct. We piled into the cars and had a nice drive to Middlemarch. First order of business was to get straight to the Kissing Gate Cafe in Middlemarch where we did some pre-loading with pies, muffins and coffee.

We started up the hill from Kinvara. The turn-off is just before Lug Creek. There was no wind, the ground was frozen and everyone was happy. We had some lunch once we went through the last gate. Around this point there was some nice powder snow. Once we were nearer the hut the snow was about knee deep and if you were unlucky, waist deep. Sharon C did a great job plugging steps and the first of the group reached the hut after about 3 and half hours.

There wasn't great enthusiasm for any outdoor snow skills once we reached the hut, although Rob tramped off to the top of the range and took some photos. Steffan did reveal his bothy bag and we tried it out inside the hut.



*Self-arrest practice. Pic: Rebecca Armstrong*

There was a noticeable increase in temperature inside within minutes, although this could have just been from the silly talk. We thought that it would be a good thing for the club to look at buying. It's lightweight and can protect 5 or 6 in an emergency.

Everyone was impressed with the new hut which includes solar lights and USB chargers. It was relatively warm inside overnight and there was a wide-ranging

forum on important matters. Hang on... that must have been some other trip I was on. In reality, there was a great deal of absolute nonsense and malarkey, which may have included some silly walks and ambush boxing.

Sunday morning was another beautiful day and we had some instruction from Steffan and Wayne on moving in snow, kicking steps, using ice-axes and so on. We found a good slope and started practicing some self-arresting, finishing with some head first descents. The slope got faster and more realistic the more we used it. Some of the group headed up to the top of the range with crampons on and came back down to the hut for lunch-time.

We then packed up and shipped out. Sadly the cafe was shut by the time we headed through Middlemarch, but were back in Dunedin by around 5:30. 100% success rate! We left with 9 people and returned with 9.

Thanks to Wayne Hodgkinson organising and instruction, Steffan Rolfe for instruction, Rob Seeley, Joe and Sharon Bretherton, Rebecca Armstrong, Mark Stephenson and Sharon Campbell for a fun weekend that also included some learning.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Aug. Doctors Point, Orokonui Estuary. by Jane Cloete**



*On the way to Doctors Point. Pic Rebecca Armstrong*

"The best laid plans of mice and men gang oft awry"

Robert Burns wrote that, and Jane C's plans were partially disrupted too. Sorry about misjudging the tide-time, folks! I'd imagined a bit more sand and a bit less rock, but it didn't seem to matter in the end!

We left Woodhaugh promptly and two families met us at Doctors Point. A beach is always interesting, isn't it? And that beach is especially good for kids: a walk-through cave meant that we couldn't go around it and I think the others

thought I was mad, walking directly at a huge granite cliff! But when you are nearly touching the cliff, it is possible to see the way through. Grown-ups need to duck their heads! Then there was a seal catching fish, and one toddler slipped on a rock into a shallow pool but didn't seem distressed by it. The high-ish tide meant we couldn't get to the pa on the headland.

Back to the carpark, a bite to eat, and off to the Orokonui Estuary: It has a few slopes on either side of the lagoon but the children managed well (I felt a bit sorry for one Dad who had to carry his wee one when she fell asleep!)

Then to the Garden Centre cafe for a nibble and/or a tippie, and we got home about 3pm!

A glorious day in the warm sunshine. Thanks to Rebecca for the family organising. I think that there were about a dozen adults and 3-4 kids, but I'm never good at counting ...!

Jane Cloete, Rebecca Armstrong, Lucy Jones, Ruth Thomas, Alan Hanon, Federigo Drudi, Alison Kim, Andrea Peijsibra, Cameron Davey (+ Rhye (4) & Fennec (2))

John & Rachael Nicoll (+ Daniel (6) & Jasmine (4))

## **10 - 11 Aug. Green Lake. By Kate Botting**

As a family I have a vague memory of visiting Lake Monowai, as my family loved road trips, usually leaving very early, with picnic lunches & a wet face cloth in a plastic bag. I have never stayed at Borland Lodge, but have attempted to do a school tramp into George Sound but had to turn back due to excessive mud and rain. However, the mud was only boot deep, in a few patches and the lakes were low, for this time of the year.

However our trip was like "10 green bottles" with a few cancellations and a total of 64 emails, but Saskia did get the "show on the road" with Chris & Ricky meeting at her place & picking Kate up on the way south - (plan E). We stopped in Gore but only a Chinese burger place was open & not very good. We met Rose at Borland lodge at 9.45pm with terrific navigation skills by Ricky. Jim had allocated us 3 bunk rooms which were luxury, compared to pitching a tent. We had a cosy night (-4°) & appreciated a wall heater, an electric jug for hot chocolates & breakfast in the morning. We had a shepherd's warning with a glorious sunrise and we all felt Sunday would likely be wet on the way out.

We started walking around 9.30. The notice board said it was a 6 to 7 hours walk to Green Lake Hut, which was accurate. We walked through a glorious beech forest, but had to concentrate where the orange tags were, as a few times we had to detour due to fallen trees, and then back track. We had lovely glimpses of



Lake Monowai, at Cuthbert Saddle (974m) then sidled down with deceptive glimpses of Green Lake and felt it rather slow going, with patches of knee deep snow, tree roots and slippery rocks. We arrived at Green Lake hut at around 4.30ish and Chris started the fire and everyone pitched in to keep the efficient wood burner going. Ricky was first to discover the resident large fat black possum outside, who had no fear of us humans and enjoyed sitting on the verandah, looking in.

It was interesting seeing the different choices of food people had made and I was a little jealous of Rose and Saskia, who shared a 3 course meal. We all had a



*Forest travel. Pic Rose Colhoun*

sample of Ricky's Korean food and left over chocolate brownie dessert, on the way out.

We were all too exhausted to play cards by candle light and felt we needed to get out early, in case it rained. We left at 8.28 and found it surprisingly warm, no ice and some of the snow had melted, so we made good time out and did not worry so much about muddy boots and arrived at the cars by 3ish with several good breaks. We said farewell to our trusted team leader Rose and had a brief look at the campground by Lake Monowai before heading home.

We had a lovely Mexican meal in Balclutha at Casa Fuego in the old fire station. The food was healthy and just the right amount.

Thank you Rose Colhoun for organising and thanks to the wonderful company of Saskia Bronstring, Chris Baillie, Ricky Kim and Kate Botting.

## 17 – 18 Aug. OTMC Snowcaving Weekend (Old Man Range / Kopuwai)

by Richard Pettinger

Another fantastic trip on the OTMC calendar – for those who like a bit of a challenge!

Twelve seemed a good number. In the days immediately before, one pulled out and Brendan filled the gap. And had another 4WD. (Yay!) We were good to go.

The weather forecast was great, with the Norwegian weather site telling us it might snow overnight. Yes, we know it always seems early - It wasn't long after 7AM that we got away in four cars, with Amit being on his own, as he needed to be sure to get back in time for a Sunday flight north.

There was the usual briefing about what to expect, in The Store in Roxburgh, over coffee or hot chocolates and second breakfasts(!), then we drove up the road. We made good use of the 4WDs, and a few walked while their packs were taken up. Driving up further than we had ever got before, due to less snow, looked like giving us less of a walk - for the elder ones of us in particular. Alas, the



*Steffan and Brendan in their cave. Pic Amit Myint*

aforementioned lack of snow meant we had a much longer walk – the 1970s' site was almost totally devoid; the next gully up (beyond the rock bivy) had good snow but not nearly enough... so we plugged on for about a whole other kilometre... To a spot in a gully below (on the

right of) the road which proved adequate with our snow probes. It had a small stream, without too much steep drops. Amit's and Steffan's calls that the

snowbank looked okay were welcome and we piled down to join them. Pretty soon all were digging in, eating lunch, watching, waiting their turn, or all of the above. And it took about two hours for comfortable quarters for 12 to be provided in the once-pristine landscape, now resembling a bombsite. There were two caves each with a three-person bedroom, on each side of the entranceway. For this you need only about 3 metres of snow depth. As usual, we recognised that, after about a half an hour, all of us could have spent the night huddled together, if necessary, if conditions were dire.

We had lots of strong, young folk on this trip, which gladdened the hearts of the oldies, whose job it was to nod approvingly and encourage positively, and ensure the workers had adequate snackery to keep the diggery energised. Amit's phone was somewhat advanced with thermal imagery (see the result, where he could measure the temperature of parts of the photo) and made things (people and surroundings) look much more attractive than some of us felt.

Cooker shenanigans made one cave's dinner a bit of a two-part affair, but soon we were all fed and snug. The other cave appeared to be rather better off, with entrees, a main and dessert. (It's amazing what young trampers do these days, eh, Wayne?)

As forecast in Norway, we had some snow overnight (right on time!), and by morning, the katabatic wind was bringing spindrift down upon us. So, we had a "leisurely" breakfast – once the cooks decided to behave – and we set off home. Amit had already upped and left to catch his flight.

A debrief was held in Roxburgh as per usual, this time with FREE hot drinks.

We were all home by about 4pm.

Steffan kindly offered to keep this remarkably important trip going for future year(s), so, as Tracy keeps saying "this is 'our' last time" – meaning at least one of us will stay home in future, having 'done our dash' for revealing to club members the means for survival in snowy places where, for example, tents or huts just aren't there, or fail.

**Richard and Tracy Pettinger (the swan-singers)** for Steffan Rolfe, Wayne Hodgkinson, Annise Boothroyd, Rebecca Armstrong, Ella Bulgen, Tom Craner-Buckley, Amit Myint, Brendan Penwarden, Fynn Jackson, Mark Jackson.

## Pigeon Rock Direct. 18 August 2024. Ed.

The weather forecast for much of the preceding day had been for a rainy Sunday. Later though it had changed its mind and now it was going to be merely very cold. So probably that's why only four people showed for the walk by the George St bridge: three regulars plus a visitor from Ukraine via Oregon.

Starting at the Sullivan Dam carpark I debated whether to stow my down jacket as I usually do before setting off. Luckily I kept it on for as we started up the Three Peaks track, a bitter wind struck us from the right and even the stiff-ish climb couldn't warm me up. Further up though the pines managed to give us cover and conversation was finally possible. Here, on the climb up to the Mt



*A helping hand pic: Ed.*

Cargill road we kept encountering what seemed to be blue dog poo. Some debate ensued as to its exact nature: poison bait? an alien with a bad case of Earth Tummy? Mark though, with his forensic medical background, examined the material with the end of his pole and pronounced it was some kind of blue cloth tightly bunched into sausages. Our best guess was that it was from a dog (probably a Labrador) that had eaten the blue cloth that had finally worked its way through its system.

On the road that vision of the Peninsular that briefly opens up to the right occurred just as Mark was explaining to Oleksandra where penguins might be seen. "...you can see them on Victory Beach – just there!"

Turning off on the new Direct Track, we found a place out of the wind for a quick bite and drink.

We had a brief snow flurry and our thoughts turned to our fellows who might just then be emerging from their snow-holes over on the Old Man Range. The track meanders through broken pine forest and rejuvenating natives over the shoulder of the mountain and joins the Escarpment track just before its major descent.



Last time I was here we had just negotiated the top section of the track and my memory is of this lower part is of relatively easy going. But that was back in April with the track dry. The mid-winter version is more sporting with pools of mud and wet and slippery roots and rocks requiring some thought as to foot placement and tree holding. Our visitor had not expected anything like this but she did very well.

The track also nicely showcases some really fine New Zealand bush with the uncommon cedar dominating the canopy. A bunch of Kereru scoffing Totara berries also showed up as representatives of native birdlife.

Lunch proper occurred again at the powerline in sun and protected from the southerly blast before we carried on down. This is again a really fine track descending through superb podocarp forest... and there is a colony of gnomes and the bush telephone to find. The track's creator has had some fun taking the walker up and down a few stream gullies on one-step boardwalks before debouching onto the Sullivan Dam periphery track ("Experienced trampers only" warns a sign of the track just completed – well, we are now!). Back at the cars, high-fives all around.

Many thanks to Mark for leading this fine trip on a rather marginal day.

Mark Stevenson, Alison Kim, Oleksandra Kozyk , Rob Seeley.

### **Rakiura/Stewart Island, North West Circuit: 24<sup>th</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024**

Day 1: 24th August - Lee Bay to Port William Hut

*Andrew*

After a restless night, fearful of missing the alarm, got up, ate a quick brekky then rendezvoused at the uncivilised Saturday morning hour of 6:00 am at Torpedo 7. Off in the van we yawned and dozed to a gray, showery, windy day arriving at Bluff with about 30 min to spare before the ferry departure.

The ride across in a NW gale with waves often crashing over the bow was very rough with two members of the party looking seriously ill for the dramatic passage. One does wonder what conditions are too rough to travel. Once past the Titi Islands though, conditions dramatically changed to pretty near flat all the way to Oban.

Once in Oban we sought some lunch then headed up town to the backpackers to drop off our clean, post-tramp change of clothes and await the van to take us to the start of the track. Two vans from a local tour operator arrived, organised by Victoria, and 25 min later we were off in windy, sunny weather with some clouds that provided the occasional heavy showers for the first leg to Port William Hut.

This stretch is a doddle, comprising a graveled, boardwalked track that forms the first part of the Rakiura Great Walk. The only incident was coming off the beach where Andrew canned off the bridge approach giving him a bruise that necessitated much slow breathing to avoid some shouted obscenities.

By 2.45 pm we were at the hut in a grassy clearing sheltering in a lovely bay in which a fishing boat was sheltering for the night. Once established, Brendan and his apprentice fisherman, the effervescent Emilie, went fishing. Despite a couple of hours effort there was no joy.

In the hut was a Belgian couple who had planned to take a water taxi to Christmas Village then tramp back to complete the Rakiura Great Walk. The water taxi had bailed due to the sea conditions so they were going to accompany us to Bungaree and tramp back from there instead.

Day 2: 25th August - Port William Hut to Bungaree Hut

*Andrew*

A 9:00 am start the next day and we were into the real Stewart Island with lots of ups and downs into and out of wee gullies and creeks and the occasional beach stretch, all punctuated with tree fall and the infamous mud. There was increasing stands of marvellous rimu forest but having been on a number of previous Stewart Island trips, the bird life this time seemed rather depleted.

Bungaree Hut at the end of a long sandy beach was a welcome sight for a late lunch at about 1:00 pm.

The afternoon was spent pottering about along the beach while the fishing party looked to supplement our dinner. Success for the latter with a brace of banded wrasse, a common fish in these parts and more importantly, some magnificent paua. These were in waist-deep water in a small rocky bay not very far from the hut. The paua were dropped in boiling water for 60 sec and then enjoyed sliced into strips and fried in butter.



*Crossing Murray Beach. Pic. Roger Clarkson*

### Day 3: 26th August - Bungaree Hut to Christmas Village Hut

*Brendon*

Next morning, after enjoying one of many stupendous sunrises, we headed off at 8:00 am in a light frost. The track from Bungaree follows uphill for the first 45 min along the barely perceptible remains of an old bush tramway formation. Those expecting the super highway of the Port Craig area were to be sorely disappointed. A DOC party was encountered. To our delight we learned that they had been dropped off at West Ruggedy Hut some days before armed with chainsaws and other gear to clear windfall from the track as they made their way back to town.

Several of us ducked off the path down to Christmas Village Hunters Hut which is in a gem of a situation with a lovely view over the beach and would get plenty of sun. Like most hunters huts it was well appointed with cooking implements, utensils, plenty of reading material.

With our party spread well out, the first arrived at the wonderfully-titled Christmas Village about 1:00 pm, about 15 min past the junction to Mt Anglem. The fishing party headed off again for some more wrasse and a cod which was too small to take while the rest of us loafed about or headed along the rocky shore in search of some sunshine. Christmas Village Hut is in a location that loses the sun quite early in the afternoon.

### Day 4: 27th August - Christmas Village Hut to Yankee River Hut

*Brendon*

Another early start and super sunrise for what was to be a projected 6 hr day saw



us off climbing up to a long ridge and saddle that terminated in Lucky Beach which was about half way to Yankee River. Andrew tore his right calf and attempted to walk on, with us taking some weight from his pack and sharing walking poles. It was evident however, that continuing the

*Man on wire: Brendan crosses the Yankee. Pic Roger*

whole circuit was not feasible. We did have reception so dialled 111 and called a chopper in. Andrew's free helicopter ride to Southland Hospital would have been better but his camera had gone flat so the superb aerial views remain unrecorded.

Yankee River Hut was awarded 'Most Liked' hut of the trip by many. It has a great aspect looking out onto the Yankee River and is an easy stroll to the rocky beach. A fishing trip was attempted and required a retracing up the track then a bush bash to get to the headland. One wrasse was landed quickly and returned being a little small but then no others. This was the last reasonable fishing opportunity as the seas got very rough. The last beach-front hut, Long Harry, would be safe to fish in better weather.

Day 5: 28th August - Yankee River Hut to Long Harry Hut

*Mark*

Sadly leaving Yankee River hut after beautiful dawn colours, we set off uphill. Sadly, because Yankee River was a special place, I could have spent a few days



*Arriving at Smokey Beach. pic Joe Bretherton.*

there; maybe I will one day.

After two hours we arrived at Smoky Beach. In sand dunes we saw banded dotterel and lots of kiwi prints in the sand. Unfortunately, also a lot of large feral cat prints. Hard to imagine how ground-nesting birds can survive and breed here. We waded the river at the far end of the beach, back into the bush where we saw fleeting glimpses of kakariki. At Long Harry hut, Brendan fulfilled his role as hunter-gatherer, supplementing our diet with banded wrasse.



Day 6: 29th August - Long Harry Hut to East Ruggedy Hut  
*Mark*

What an awesome day. A good climb and then descent to Cave Point. Lagging behind the group, I had my first kiwi encounter as it crossed the track. Then soon after, Brendan disturbed a white-tailed deer – it leapt away, flushing out two yellow-eyed penguins. They waddled off smartly into the scrub, possibly a nesting pair. We saw a few kiwi after that. If you hold still long enough, they come right up to your boots.



*East Ruggedy Beach. Pic: Roger*

After Cave Point we came to Rocky Beach, well named, and we arrived close to high tide. Huge rollers crashed against the rocks, all sound and fury. We had to time our clamber round the point to avoid being swept off the

rocks.

We saw more banded dotterel, and kakariki with red front (species uncertain as orange fronted one has red also). Later we came to a superb view point looking out to the Ruggedy Islands.

Day 7: 30th August - East Ruggedy Hut to Big Hellfire Hut  
*Rodger*

Midnight at the start of day 7 and outside lightning crashes, thunder booms and rain squalls pelt the windows as we lie snugly in our bunks. We'd passed a couple doing the circuit in the other direction with dire warnings about these next two day, recommending to leave at first light as it would take all the daylight hours to get to the next hut with copious amounts of mud. Joe had set a leaving time of 7:30 (ish). 6am and lightning crashes, count the seconds, 10 of them before thunder rumbles – good, the storm is moving away. Off we set with wet

weather gear on. So far the mud had been much less than Stewart Islands reputation, so was today the day we would finally meet some 'real' bog?

As we approached West Ruggedy Beach, near high tide, the wind whipped sand across our faces and rain started pelting. The sea was churning and crashing against a rocky outcrop halfway down the beach so we had to time our run in between waves to get round, with a few getting wet legs if they weren't quick enough. The day started to clear as we went back into the bush and over a small pass in the Ruggedy Range and down to Waituna Bay, just 3.5 km left to go to the Hut and we were looking like we were going to do the day in DOC recommended time of 7 hours...and then the mud started. One close to knee deep section I decided to get my camera out and Mark obligingly fell, trying desperately to keep his face out of the mud as his hand sunk deeper. That last 3.5 km seemed to go on forever so we were a bit over 8 hours to get to Big Hellfire Hut. Still, not as bad as we'd been advised.

Day 8: 31st August - Big Hellfire Hut to Mason Bay Hut

*Rodger*

The next morning was another 7:30 (ish) start and we carried on our muddy way down to Little Hellfire Beach in sunny skies.

Then it's up and over Masons head with a few slips in the mud on the descent and a few bangs on the noggin from overhead branches if we pay too much attention to the mud. We arrive at Masons Bay to do short stint of boulder hopping before about 4 km of Beach Walking to get to the turnoff to the hut itself which is about 1km inland. Another 8-hour day and good to have a wash and clean the mud off bodies and boots with a warm fire provided by one of the locals we met who likes to keep the huts with a good supply of firewood.

Day 9: 1st September - Mason Bay Hut to Freshwater Hut

*Sharon*

As it was going to be an easy day with only 3-4 hours of walking, our intrepid leader let us have a late start, so we didn't head off until 8.50am. We stopped for a while at the Island Hill homestead (Stewart Island's longest operating sheep farm) which is in very good condition as it is used by DOC. An Oban local we met while staying at Mason hut was Danny Leask whose family have been residents on Stewart Island since the 1800s.

The day had started sunny but, as forecasted, the rain began mid-morning; fortunately we only had about two hours tramping in the rain before getting to



*The Team at Hill Island Homestead. Pic Joe.*

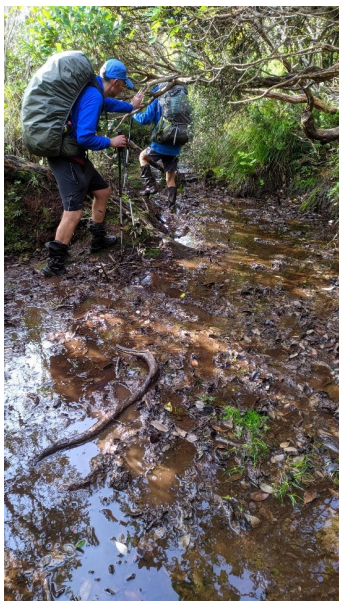
Freshwater Hut for lunch. It was a very enjoyable, relaxed afternoon watching the persistent and at times heavy rain from inside the hut. 'Oban Danny' soon arrived and did a great job of harvesting wood for the fire (he keeps stashes of firewood near huts for days just like this). The afternoon was made even more enjoyable when it was discovered that Danny had some flour and Victoria had dates and 6-day old orange peel. The Damper was cooked on top of the wood burner, it was hot, dripping with butter and devoured!!! What a great way to have spent the first day of spring.

Day 10: 2nd September – Freshwater Hut to North Arm Hut  
*Sharon*

There would be no late start today as we were expecting a longish day and we headed off a little after 7.30am. It was no surprise that the track was very muddy, potentially the muddiest day of the whole trip.

The track climbed steadily up to the top of Thompson Ridge before dropping down to the North Arm of Paterson inlet, where it follows the edges of the North Arm to the hut. Oban Danny (who had left Freshwater before us heading all the way to Oban) had thoughtfully left us two notes on the track describing the views we couldn't enjoy through the grey clouds. We had spent the day tramping in the bush, so the hut was a welcome sight, especially as it was soaked in the afternoon sun. We had the 24 bunk Great Walk hut to ourselves.

Day 11: 3<sup>rd</sup> September – North Arm Hut to Oban  
*Sharon*



*Thomson Ridge: there will be mud. Pic Sharon Bretherton*

The final day was only going to be a 4–5-hour day back to civilization. Once again, we set off early except this time our minds were filled with visions of dinner at the pub – real non-dehydrated food, as much as we could eat – and nothing was going to slow our pace. Being a great walk and with 10 days of ‘walking practice’ under our belts, the track seemed gentle even the up hills, we even enjoyed the patches of mud! Our reward came soon enough with the end of the track at Fern Gully Road End, then just a couple of kilometers of road walking and we were back in civilization. A big thank you to Joe Bretherton for organising and leading a great trip.

The team of eight was Andrew Nichols (days 1–4), Brendan Penwarden, Emily Bruce, Joe Bretherton, Mark Stephenson, Rodger Clarkson, Sharon Bretherton, Victoria Bruce.

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Many thanks to the people who contributed to this Bulletin! All contributions, text and photos, for future publications please to the editor:

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