Bulletin Number 854, May 2026

OTMC Bulletin

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

Careys Creek —7 March 2026
(photo Jade Pettinger)

Upcoming Trips

May	**2** Lake Whare Circuit (Silverstream)
	3 Hermits Cave (Silver Peaks)
	10 Spiers Road—Flagstaff Loop
	17 Government Track
	30-1 (Kings Birthday) Winter Routeburn
June	**7** Akatore Estuary—Taieri Mouth
	14 Rosella Ridge—River Track (Silver Peaks)

Special General Meeting 11 June 2026

Following the update to the OTMC Constitution to comply with the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 at the August AGM , our membership structure has been simplified into four categories: **Full, Life, Honorary and Junior**. All club members, older than 18 years and who are not elected as Life or Honorary are now classed as Full members

The committee has reviewed our financial requirements in line with the new membership structure and will be putting forward a motion to set the subscription rates to take effect from 1 July for approval at the Special General Meeting on 11 June

The OTMC Committee

Treasurers report

Being brought up in Arrowtown, the outdoors was my backyard.

During my childhood I cannot count how many times I went to Macetown, mainly via 4WD when I was younger but in my high school years there were many tramps and mountain bike trips there and back.and also many 4WD trips up the Rees valley to 25 mile hut.

In 2019 I decided to get back into tramping. However, after many years of not walking on anything other than a footpath I discovered I had a lot of work to do! Many hours were spent on walking tracks around Dunedin. In early 2023 I started along the Rocky Ridge track. Pretty quickly I realised it was a track that was best to be walked with experienced and so I decided to join the OTMC. Rocky Ridge is still on my to do list!

The year I joined the OTMC, I also joined the committee and took on the role of treasurer. My role as treasurer involves accounting for the OTMC's day to day incomings such as membership fees, donations, trip fees and outgoings like trip expenditure, insurance, clubroom costs etc.

In general I make payments and reimbursements on Wednesday and Sunday nights. After I process the transaction it can take up to another day for a second signatory to approve the transaction before the system clears it.

How you can assist KEEP FUEL RECEIPTS!!! If you are being reimbursed for fuel from a multi day weekend trip please keep the receipts. I regularly get screenshots of bank statement transactions - while these are better than nothing, as a GST registered entity all payments over $50 should be evidenced by a complete receipt. Many self-serve stations do not automatically print the receipt - you need to ask the payment machine for it afterwards. Below is a link to receipt instructions for NPD - most self serves use a similar process: www.npd.co.nz/self-serve-opt-videos/

When putting funds into the OTMC account please reference “who” the pay-

ment is for and “what” it is for (trip name, membership fees, donation).

Donee Status

In July 2025 the club was approved as a donee organisation by IRD.
This means if you have donated money to the OTMC since July 11th 2025 you are eligible to claim a tax credit. Please see the below IRD link for further information on how to claim a tax credit.
https://www.ird.govt.nz/income-tax/income-tax-for-individuals/individual-tax-credits/donation-tax-credits

Finally, thank you all for your prompt payments, patience and for being such great OTMC members.
It is a pleasure to be part of the club.

Amy Telfer Chiles
Treasurer

Obituary - Ron Keen (OTMC Life Member)

23.12.1938 – 22.2.2026

As a child, Ron spent many Christmas holidays with bouts of asthma and hay fever. All this changed when his family doctor suggested he take up tramping to improve his breathing. It worked! Ron’s tramps started with Scouts where he learnt numerous useful tramping skills. In the late 1950s he left school and began his training as a land surveyor. About the same time, he was accepted into the Otago Tramping Club’s Bushcraft course and he joined the Club soon after.
Ron came into the Club with adventurer in his DNA. In the early 1960’s Ron was the leader of the infamous Easter tramping trip over the Albert Burn Saddle which included instruction course participants. Three parties never

made it over the saddle, Ron's included. A ferocious storm hit and all the tents were shredded. With unusable tents, they had no option but to retreat back to Wanaka.
About this time too, Ron was invited by Scott Gilkison and Bob Craigie (NZAC) to join a group pushing hard for a national park to be established in the Mt Aspiring area. He was joined by Bruce Campbell, John Ford (Catchment Board) and his to-be wife, Sara as Secretary. The hard lobbying worked and Mt Aspiring National Park was established on 10 December 1964, two days before Ron and Sara got married. What a wonderful wedding present.
Surveying was tightly meshed in with Ron's love of tramping with Ron and Sara moving to Te Anau as Ron was part of a Lands and Survey team undertaking an updated version of the Inch to the Mile survey of Fiordland and went on to lead both the second mapping of Fiordland - the 1:50,000 series - and the mapping of New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands.
While living in Te Anau Ron took over the Editorship of the Northern Section of Moir's Guide Book, as the current Editor, Peter Chandler, was seriously ill and that edition came out in 1968.
Ron was very proud when he was awarded Life Membership of the Otago Tramping & Mountaineering Club in 1974.
After Te Anau, Ron got caught up in the Lands and Survey's "compulsory shift" policy and moved to Upper Hutt and Hamilton before moving back to Dunedin in the mid-1970s, where Ron was appointed Project Surveyor back with the Lands and Survey. Marie McDonald and Lyall Campbell had already established the Family Tramping Group with Ron and Sara quickly joining in with their young children. Once a month the family group tramped locally, had occasional weekends away and longer camps at Christmas.
In amongst all this tramping, Ron and Sara followed their love of minerals and crystals. Being a tramper was a great asset as most specimens were rarely beside the road, but instead, over the top of that high hill in the distance!
In 1998 it was time for Ron to retire and foster a travel bug. Ron and Sara had a wonderful time visiting many countries including four years in Australia, where they followed their dream to go on the road. So much to explore. So many adventures. So many stories.
When Ron and Sara returned from Australia, they returned to a newly built house at Lake Hawea. But all this tramping, working in the mountains and collecting, began to take its toll on Ron. After 10 years at Lake Hawea, arthritis won and it was time to move on. They found a home in a lifestyle village in Geraldine with walking tracks and mountains close by. The 100th anniversary reunion of the OTMC was a highlight for Ron, and a privilege to be asked to cut the cake with fourth generation club member, Jade Pettinger.
After Christmas Ron's health declined rapidly and he passed away in his sleep at McKenzie Healthcare, Geraldine on 22 February 2026 age 87.

By Sara Keen and family

Trip Reports

Ship at Anchor—1 February 2026
By Sharon Bretherton

Sixteen trampers met at the clubrooms for an 8.00am departure, followed by an hour's drive to the rolling tussock country above Lake Mahinerangi. After turning onto Eldorado Track, we drove as far along the 4WD road as conditions allowed – most vehicles were 2WD —parking not far from the Mahinerangi wind farm.

The 4WD track provided an easy start to the day, and we followed it to the intake/weir of Dunedin's water supply on Deep Stream, where we used the footbridge to cross. Once over the bridge, we turned right and followed the creek for several minutes before climbing an obvious spur back up onto the tops and from there we sidled our way around towards a stream which feeds into Devil's Creek.

Dropping down to the stream some of the group readily accepted wet feet, while others negotiated a few large boulders to keep socks dry. A climb up the other side got us back up to the tops and it was from here that we walked through what seemed like an unending expanse of gently rolling tussock hills.

The views were impressive as we made our way toward the distinctive rock formation known as the Ship at Anchor.

Ship at Anchor (photo Sharon Bretherton)

The Ship at Anchor is a rock tor in the Te Papanui Conservation Park within the Lammermoor Range and gets its name from its resemblance to the prow of a ship. The rock tor provided a perfect well-earned lunch spot at its base, where we enjoyed the sun and panoramic views that stretched as far as the eye could see. After a relaxed lunch break in the sun, we set off toward Barbours Stream, descending a long ridgeline still enjoying the wide-open scenery. After crossing the stream, our off-track travel came to an end as we picked up a 4WD track that provided an easy return to the vehicles.

Thanks to Antony Pettinger for leading an enjoyable day exploring an area that the club does not often visit. Sharon Bretherton on behalf of Debbie Pettinger, Kath Danaher, Bridget Sutton, Michael Priestnall, Leonie Loeber, Laurence Prattley, Ash Flintoff, Tom Kirk, Joe Bretherton, Helen Emerson, Shannon Sealy, Leanne Jack, Mark Black and Kate Botting.

Bullring—Swampy Summit
22 February 2026 By Helen Emerson

A decent crowd gathered at the Bullring carpark before 9am. Some familiar faces and really lovely to see plenty of new faces too. Welcome! Two versions of today's walk were on the table - and it was a 50/50 bet on whether it would be the health of the leader, or the wind (gusts of up to 100km/hr) might have the final say as to whether the full planned 20km circuit might be achieved. We agreed to set off up the Firebreak track - to avoid having to do that at the end, as is so often the case. Great idea - good to get that out of the way and much easier going up it anyway!

We re-grouped at the Ben Rudd viewing point and carried on our way. The wind was certainly gusty, and clothing choices were questioned. But, onwards. Today's entertainment was provided by large groups of folk in training for the 3 Peaks race (coming up in mid March). Large spray-painted arrows at strategic junctions on the route surely can't be missed by the runners! Anyway, great to see our tracks being used.

Sheltering at the UFO (photo Helen Emerson)

We re-grouped again in the shelter of one of the site buildings near the turn-off to Swine Spur. By now it was absolutely apparent my legs did not have 20km in them today, and Rob, Mark, Roy, and Akari decided to take the scenic - and hopefully less windy! - route back to the cars. The rest of us pushed on to the UFO just, 'cos, and the wind really whipped across the tops! A quick photo was taken and we were happy to turn around.

The return trip was uneventful - just windy! Lunch was eaten, we detoured to the top of Flagstaff - and admired the fabulous track work that has been done to fill in some very deep ruts that had developed. Back at the cars at 1.30pm.

What did we learn today? That it's perfectly possible to walk on Swampy in 100km/hr gusts, but it makes for harder going! Just goes to show that it doesn't matter the weather, it is always a great day tramping in the hills.

Helen Emerson for Rebecca Armstrong, Karenne Walker, Tammy Jackman, Mark Stephenson, Kate Botting, Lucy Jones, Shannon Sealy, Leanne Sealy, Kirsten Bevin, Peter Bevin, Akari Yagishita, Sandra Divett, Kath Danaher, Roy Ward, Rob Seeley

Swine Spur—Big Rock
22 February 2026 By Rob Seeley

.A day of high winds put paid to Helen's larger plans of a long walk from the Bullring to Leith Saddle in a figure of eight. It was well attended however and quite a bunch of us ended up on the top of Swampy. Most would turn back here against the teeth of the southerly but we four, Mark, Akari, Roy and I decided that a longer and calmer way home was preferable. The plan being that we would drop down off the ridge via the Swine Spur track into that maze of tracks and young forest that populate the land between Swampy and Rollinsons Road and arrive back at the Bullring via the Big Rock track. None of us had been up or down the Big Rock track for some while if at all, so this was a good drawcard.

A pleasant time was had navigating the various tracks – Swine Spur, Possum Busters, Porkies, McQuilkan's, before the Jim Freeman Track finally disgorged us out onto the Whare Flat road. There had been a lot of rowan weighed down by red berries, a lot of bush lawyer arcing over the track waiting to snag our hats and leave them suspended in mid-air, and some fine bogs – this is real gumboot country.

Finding the road quite exposed, we retraced a little to enjoy our lunch back in the bush before setting off again, confident of quickly finishing our trip. However, some 600m further up the road where my topo50 app indicated the start of the Big Rock track there was no such thoroughfare to be seen. We had a good recce but no sign of a track that would penetrate the heavy bush in an upward direction could be found.

Disgruntled, we continued up the road resigned to finish our adventure in this boring way until, on the left, now in thick pine forest, a rather good-looking track appeared burrowing into the piney gloom. The consensus was to give it a go and go it did. Made perhaps by some mountain bikers, the track, marked by bottles of varying types and a plastic human skull, eventually cleared the pines, cut through some scrub before finally intersected the Big Rock track some way above the stones themselves. There was a mood of celebration and we were soon back at the Bullring feeling rather pleased with ourselves. What happens to the Big Rock track below the Big Rocks remains a mystery to us.

The skull (photo Helen Rob Seeley)

Rob Seeley for Mark Stephenson, Roy Ward and Akari Yagishita,

Careys Creek—7 March 2026
By Jade Pettinger

This was my second time leading an OTMC trip to Carey's Creek, and both times I have been amazed that most (if not all) of the trampers who have come along have never been there before. The area has quite an interesting history, as the track follows an old pipeline from Black Gully Dam all the way to Evansdale Glen. Black Gully Dam and the pipeline were built in the early 1900's to supply Seacliff Hospital with water, which at the time was the largest public building in New Zealand. The dam and pipeline supplied Seacliff Hospital with water until the 1950's when it was replaced with water supply from elsewhere. The pipeline has slowly deteriorated over time, however significant remnants still remain and make for an interesting walk.

The track begins on an inconspicuous corner on Double Hill Road, and heads steeply downhill for the first 10 minutes. The 14 trampers on the trip happily chatted away as we carefully picked our way down the steep hill towards Black Gully Dam. We spent some time marvelling at the dam and wondering how such an impressive structure was built in the 1900's.

After our short sightseeing break, we continued down the track and further into the gully. The track from here is quite undulating and took us through stunning native bush. The sunlight streaming in amongst the leaves made for a vibrant mix of greens that was simply stunning.

Following the pipeline (photo Jade Pettinger)

The track follows the old pipeline and it was very interesting walking beside the remnants of it. Some sections looked like they might possibly still be usable, while some were filled with holes or completely broken into two sections. Many conversations were had about the pipeline and the effort that must have gone into building it. Some sections that spanned across large dips or gullies appeared to have no supports, making us wonder if they had collapsed over time or were never there to begin with.

If you don't like mud or wet feet, this isn't the trip for you. One thing about Carey's Creek is that no matter when you go, there always seems to be mud galore in some sections. It was interesting watching the different techniques people used to navigate the muddy sections. Some went straight through the middle, with the mud in the particularly bad sections nearly coming up to the top of peoples boots. Others were a bit more strategic, carefully skirting around the outside of the mud in an effort to keep clean(ish).

As if mud wasn't enough, the track crosses Carey's Creek numerous times, making it nearly impossible to keep your feet dry. Most of us embraced wet feet and saw it as an opportunity to wash the mud off of boots and legs, while others did their best to rock hop across.

After an hour and a half or so of the gentle undulating track, we began to drop down steeply to the bottom of the gully. By this time the day had really started to warm up and we were all relieved to be greeted by some cooler air at the bottom. Once at the bottom, we chose a nice flat spot on the bank of the creek to enjoy our lunch and cool down a little bit. This section of track follows the creek to Evansdale Glen, passing the junctions for both the Honeycomb and Rongomai tracks. In fact, much of this section involved walking in the creek as the track zig-zagged from the true right to the true left and back again. By this point everyone had wet boots but no one complained as the cool water was a nice contrast to the beating hot sun.

We regrouped at the Rongomai Track junction, before beginning the final stretch to Evansdale Glen. This part of the track is mostly flat, and quite open. We were pleasantly surprised to see the track had recently been cleared by the Green Hut Track group. The transformation was amazing from when I was there two weeks prior. What was now a wide track was a maze of chest-high grass just a few weeks earlier, making the walk much easier and more enjoyable. It was quickly discovered that there were some very fruitful blackberry bushes along the side of the track, meaning progress along some sections was a bit slow-going as people scavenged for their fill of berries.

Tom going through the mud (photo Jade Pettinger)

Carey's Creek Track is only 9.5km one way, however we all agreed this felt like a long 9.5km once we arrived at Evansdale Glen around 2pm, approximately 4 hours after we set off from Double Hill Road. Having left a car at Evansdale Glen that morning, we left most people sunbathing while the drivers raced up the road to collect the rest of the cars. The trip was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and the fact that it was a one-way downhill trip thanks to the car shuffle was the cherry on top. Thanks to those who joined me for a fantastic day in the Dunedin hills, and particular thanks to Antony and Debbie for helping with the car shuffle in the morning.

Jade Pettinger for Antony and Debbie Pettinger, Mike Scott, Suse Dunn, Tom Kirk, Ness Hayes, Rebecca Armstrong, Chris Richards, Rob Seely, Tracy Pettinger, Kate Botting, Gilles Donneau and Sandra Divett.

Doctors Point—McKesser Track
8 March 2026 By John Kaiser

The Saturday night forecast predicted a fairly damp day for Sunday, but the morning forecast from MetService had changed to light rain between 9 and 10 and then fairly warm and dry till a change around 4pm. Windy.com and yr.no were still showing a drizzly day with a burst of heavier rain around 10am but RainRadar NZ's excellent app was showing the rain drifting past below Dunedin. MetService got it right and 7 of us gathered at the bottom of the new Coastal Connection track in a very light rain.

Top of the hill (photo Bridget Sutton)

Within the first 500m of the track the rain had stopped, and the day got better and better. Having e-biked the shared track a few times I was expecting a somewhat mundane walk up endless zigzags. However, I was surprised how pleasant the walk to Mopanui Road was as the gradient is very consistent and the track wide enough to allow two or three abreast conversations amongst our interesting party. At the track junction we headed up Mopanui Rd. and were soon scrambling up the bush track and rock steps to emerge on Mopanui summit to good sunshine and panoramic views up the coast and across to the Peninsular.

Despite being only 11.20 we decided it was the ideal place for an early lunch/ brunch. We then descended off the peak down a very steep and rocky section of a trap-line that got gradually easier and we were soon on 4WD tracks through bush till we met up with the McKesser track and descended to Purakaunui Station. Several black Piwakawaka entertained us as we took the short bush track through to Osborne. After a warm and sunny road walk beside the bay we emerged onto the lovely beach under Mapoutahi where we had a second lunch break and Michael headed off for a swim.

From there we had a straightforward pleasant beach walk back through the caves to the Doctors Point carpark by 2.30pm. The weather had been excellent but soon after the wind got up and the temperature started dropping as predicted. It was and excellent day out. Thanks to everyone for their pleasant company and to Bridget and Michael for organising the walk.

John Kaiser for Bridget Sutton, Michael Priestnall, Kelsey Chisholm, Michael Lane, Katharina Leitner, Valfrid Jarl.

North Col—Park Pass—Sugarloaf
22-27 March 2026 By Rod Dickson

I have not written an article for the OTMC since 1988, so I have figured now is about time. To mis-quote Bob Dylan, "I was so much younger then, I'm older than that now".

My journey was reflective of past times and sadly, passed friends. My regular tramping buddy over the last forty years could not join me, phoning the day before our departure from Christchurch, advising of a sudden recurrence of a previous illness. Do I continue with the original plan to complete the three-pass trip in Mount Aspiring National Park, or do something a little less demanding?

I had completed this trip in 2006 and 2014 with the OTMC and felt I could manage it by myself. I was aware I could learn a few lessons, this time. I thought that my recall of the route was good. Boy, was I in for a few surprises. My memory failed me at least twice.

Day 1

Walk to Routeburn Flats Hut, two hours. The bush, gorge, and surroundings on the walk to Routeburn Flats is magnificent .

Day 2

Walk to North Col rock bivvy. I found the boulder field in the North Routeburn to be a doddle, although the scrub and boulder travel on the true left was not. I cracked my head several times on the bivvy ceiling several times and was surprised to see blood inside my sunhat the next day. As I completed my packing up next morning, there were two bouts of very loud squeaking. What do mice live on up there? Were they asking me to leave some food behind?

Day Three

The traverse across snow grass slope seemed steeper than I recalled. I got lost in a small boulder field, reminding myself that boulders may be wobbly, and sharp-edged.

The small boulder field below Point 1444 metres yielded two rock wrens (piwauwau) bobbing happily about, in the sun. It was hard to tell if they were a pair, as they were far apart.

Lake Nerine (photo Rod Dickson)

I try to navigate north of Point 1580 to descend to Lake Nerine. Bad fail here. My Samsung Galaxy A31 and NZ Topo 50S helped with the temporary loss of situational awareness. I camped at the usual site that is north of the lake. Future travellers, please note there is a good 2-or-3-person rock bivvy 50 metres directly north of the usual site.

Lake Nerine (photo Rod Dickson)

Day Four

The sun is still shining. I headed around the eastern side of the lakelet. Bad move. I should have gone around the western side. The snowgrass slopes seemed OK.

After getting off route in another boulder field, I got to Park Pass for lunch. For some unknown reason, I felt tired at this point, and decided to spend the night at the local hotel—Park Pass rock bivvy.

Day Five

I got off route a few times in the high tussock. Nothing a bout of cursing and swearing couldn't remedy. The language would have made a sailor blush. The route markers left by the hares can lead you astray. As I crossed the Theatre Flat bridge, it started to rain. Boo hoo. I found an excellent campsite about an hour and a half downstream. Oddly enough, I felt quite comfortable in a two-person tent in the rain, and I fell asleep for two hours. Camping in the rain is good discipline for working out how to keep yourself and your things dry and minimise excursions outside. It rained all night.

Day 6

I packed up in the rain and followed the track over Sugarloaf Pass to the Routeburn Shelter. This took seven hours in continuous rain, arriving at the Shelter at 1800. Enough said. The hot shower at the Glenorchy Hotel was the best I have ever had.

Conclusion

If you are considering a solo tramp over the three-pass trip in autumn, when aged in your sixties, I advise not to do it. Your knees are far too precious. On the positive side, I learned a lot about my own capabilities, fitness, and stamina. Smiles and happiness to all who venture in the hills.