Bulletin Number 855, June 2026

OTMC Bulletin

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

Lake Whare —2 May 2026
(photo Jade Pettinger)

Upcoming Trips

June	**7**	Akatore Estuary—Taieri Mouth
	14	Rosella Ridge—River Track (Silver Peaks)
	21	Stone Hill and Purehurehu Point
July	**5**	Orokonui Lagoon and Beach Walk
	10	**Welcome Flat (Matariki)**
	19	Walk up a Thirst (Signal Hill)

Ben Rudd's Management Trust recent activity

Trapline Clearing:

In conjunction with the OTMC and the Orokonui Ecosanctuary Halo Project Team, a series of 6 working bees were held for trapline clearing on our Ben Rudd's property on Flagstaff during March and April. The Trust wishes to thank all those who volunteered to clear the essential traplines to a high standard, which will allow unimpeded access for the Halo Team to manage the pest traps. The trust is delighted by this excellent work. Well Done! Harvey Aughton from the Halo Team was impressed and is also very grateful.

Dave Still – OTMC Life Member – Tōtara tree Memorial:

A planting ceremony was held as a memorial for Dave Still on Saturday 7 March. The chosen spot for the tōtara is just north from the Skid site beside the Firebreak. Dave's widow, Christine was brought up the hill to the site by 4WD with other family and friends attending. Dick Brasier and Logan McGhie organised the tōtara while Susan McGhie planted it. Some of Dave's ashes were sprinkled around the tōtara, in its pest-proof cage.

Simes' Beech Walk picnic table – part of the on-going amenity provision: Dick Brasier has offered to construct a picnic table for the former pig trap site. This is in a very nice location; sheltered, with great views towards Swampy Summit. The pig trap site is unlikely to be utilized for pig trapping, as pigs are currently managed using drone thermal imaging. The Simes' Beech Walk was cleared during trapline work and is intended to be developed as part of a proposed Nature Trail, starting by Dave's tōtara.

Rowan and Douglas Fir eradication

The Aukaha Weed Team, led by Daniel van den Kerkhof is currently working on site, visiting 45 GPS coordinate locations of rowan and fir trees, identified on our most recent drone flight: 13 April 2025. Daniel is very pleased that the traplines have been cleared, as the Aukaha Weed Team will make extensive use of them for access to the trees.

Toad Rush (Juncus bufonius)

On a very windy Thursday, 16 April at 2pm, Club members joined a DCC contractor team, to pull out and remove near-seeding toad rush which had very recently established itself along the eastern side of the Firebreak. A few days earlier, keen members on a trapline day also removed what they could of a new infestation of pink Centaurium erythraea that seems to have been spread along with the toad rush, possibly through soil on a tracked vehicle.

In Conclusion:

The OTMC recognises with gratitude the on-going support of the community along with the QEII Open Space Covenant reps. all of this work has not cost the club a cent, and supported We farewell QEII's Cathy Rufaut and welcome her colleague, Morgan Trotter.

It is important for Club members to maintain the momentum we have recently received in looking after our land.

David McArthur
Chairman, BRMT.

Leaning Lodge - news from your hut

A new DOC signpost (see photo) at the top of the zigzag track now indicates the right turn towards the carpark, ensuring you don't get lost when you're head-down on a bleak day!

Maintenance continues, a recent work party comprising Trust members Phillip Lindsay and Paul Coffey (and Paul's friend John) completed a rather comprehensive list of small improvements and fixes:

- Vents repaired and additional fixing added
- Final bunk support fitted
- Sliding window channel cleaned and drain holes drilled
- Cleared blocked kitchen waste sump
- Tested smoke alarms
- Fitted new battery to inside temperature monitor
- Replaced zip ties on weather station with UV resistant ones
- Thorough clean of toilet and hut
- Dug channel on uphill side of hut to drain water from foundation.
- Installed new sign at hut pointing to Big Hut and water source and new sign at turn-off to LL.
- Updated notices in hut regarding hut fees and day visitors
- Removed a lot of rubbish – 20 plus 2 litre plastic drink bottles!!
- Software updated on solar equipment and cameras
- Thorough inspection of hut

Additional cleaning solution and mop heads left.

The hut is tidy with no signs of moisture or mould. There is no apparent movement and the deck and railing are all sound. The floor paint is still good, but will repaint after the winter.

The hut continues to be a popular destination, with 174 overnighters this first quarter. Feedback is excellent, solar power is a winner!
An annual fee increase now sees the overnight cost at $20/$10 (from $16/$8) which is still a very reasonable cost for such splendid accommodation!

Leaning Lodge Trust

Trip Reports

Silverstream Water Race Loop (Trap Line)
28 March 2026 By Tom Baird

Saturday 28 th March saw 3 of us head out into the Silverstream area for a loop along several of the trails there to check and clear the trap line that I manage as part of the Halo Project. The weather was pretty rough, however, we had been lucky in that the rain had mostly fallen the night before and kept away for the actual tramp.

Normally, I would park at the top of Rollinsons Road to begin the loop but, given the stream crossings and the very heavy rain we had had the night prior, I decided that it would be best to amend the route slightly and park the car at the entrance to the Tunnel Track on Flagstaff-Whare Flat Road. This meant that we would be able to make a quick exit if we found the going too tough.

Immediately we were met with a pretty rough looking water crossing and, knowing that we could skip it by moving the car to the Silverstream Valley Road car park, we decided to head over there.

Cutting along the true left of the Silverstream from the car park, we headed into the bush. Although the weather left something to be desired, there is something magical about mist in the native forests of the Silverstream trails.

The beginning of the walk started out pretty tame with a short climb before around 3 kilometres of flat track. At the end of this, we were met with another stream crossing. Luckily, this one has a nice wire to hold and much more rocks to scramble across so was easily completed.

Checking the traps (photo Jiutian Xi (Mao Mao))

After the crossing, we had a decision to make, we could carry on my usual route that would include another 2 kilometres of flat walking before a pretty steep 140 metre climb over a kilometre, or we could immediately head straight up the 140 metres over 700 metres. We went with the steep climb.

As we were going along, I shared the process for the trap clearing and setting, however, earlier in the week, I had been out to clear them so that it was a simple look through and see if there was anything caught rather than having to open them all up.

After the harsh climb, the route then continued up the Steve Amies track at a

more leisurely pace, this part of the route is full of Fantails, South Island Robins and many other native birds, hopefully being aided by the predator controls being completed in the area. Many of the birds follow along as you traverse the ridge on the way up to the top of the trail where it meets Rollinsons Road. From then on it was a pretty fast downhill along the roads back to the car

Walking along Rollinsons Road (photo Tom Baird)

The group included Tom Baird, Hannah Baird, and Jiutian Xi (Mao Mao).

Ate all my lunch by 10.30am
10 May 2026—Spiers Road
By Tom Kik

9am at Woodhaugh saw two of us — Tom K and trip leader Rebecca A — head up to Spiers Road. The weather was cold with dark clouds hanging over the hills, likely putting most people off. Tom commenting: "I've not done Spiers Road and need to tick it off." Parking at Spiers Road, we were joined by one other sucker for the weather — Andrew S.

Walking up Spiers Road was for the most part enjoyable, with one of those "holes in the sky" where gloom and grey cloud whispers everywhere around you but you find yourself in a nice sunny spot. The walk up is relatively sheltered with a good clear track, opening out into farmland at Rudds Road.

About to head down(photo Tom Kirk)

From Rudds Road up to the meeting of the Flagstaff tracks, muddiness and increasing steepness became the order of the day. That sunny hole didn't last long and we were back to grey skies and a cold wind. A decision was made to have a bite to eat and a warm drink at Pt668. Andrew suggested heading back down the road rather than retracing the muddy track, which made for a good loop. The cold wind cooled us down fast and we didn't linger — back to the cars we headed. Finished up at about 12:00 for a 7.5km loop.

Tom Kirk for Rebecca Armstrong and Andrew Sewell

Painted Forest via Jubilee Hut
11 April 2026 By Helen Emerson

It was an 8am start at Woodhaugh and Joe is there bright and early. Should we be suspicious that the scheduled leader, Sharon, is no-where to be seen? Joe is our 'substitute' leader. He says he knows where we are going, that will do! Departure time and there's 4 of us, suitably attired in shorts for the warm weather forecast. Let's go!

We agree to a quick march to Jubilee Hut - let's get there for an early lunch to give us plenty of daylight hours for the 'second half'. We make great time to the Green Hut site, and Joe permits a 3-minute refreshments stop. Just enough time for Rob to pour a quick coffee (and another 3 minutes was granted for him to drink it). Onwards to Pulpit Rock where we meet a hunter and stop for a chat about the merits of Rosella Ridge and his chances of finding any deer in the Silver Peaks.

We note the time as we pass the direct track to the Painted Forest - 2 hours to this point. We pause again for (second) morning tea at the top of the Devil's Staircase to take in the views, and put the gaiters on. An hour later and we are treading the new board walk below Jubilee Hut. Wow, what a difference! This is a game-changer. Not only in terms of keeping your feet dry, but in how quickly you can now traverse that section of track! So it's an early lunch at the Hut, a chance to review the intentions book (the hut is very well used) and to check out the toilet - Joe feeling a particular sense of ownership over that toilet, having gallantly held the door open while Sharon cleaned it in October during our 'Love your Hut' efforts.

Raboh Ridge (photo Helen Emerson)

Lunch consumed, it's time for the fun to begin. This is what we came for - the Raboh Ridge (ridge at back of hut). We head up the hill, following something of a track from behind the toilet, and scramble up to the fence line. From there Joe waves his hand up at the rocky outcrop ahead of us and says 'we go up there'. So we do … with a bit of commentary to the effect of 'I think last time we were over to the left' (and a bit of 'or was it the right?') and the beginnings of much commentary on the merits of pigs (and plenty of pig-themed puns, thanks to Phil's quick wit). I take back everything I might have said in the past about pigs ruining tracks. I would like more pigs, taller pigs preferably, and perhaps a little less rooting and more focus on maintaining straight lines, but yes, generally,

pigs are my new besties … If it wasn't for the good pigs of the Silver Peaks back blocks, I think there would still be 4 OTMC members floundering around in a dense stand of manuka asking 'can anyone see a way through here'? But back to the route. Turns out the rocky cliff climb (I dramatise a little) was the easy bit. We got to through the rocky section only to find that the manuka had grown to over head height since the last club trip came through here and the pigs haven't grown accordingly, it seems. Joe's technique of 'poles up, head down' kept his eyes on the narrow pig paths, stopped his poles being snarled in the dense manuka, and he gamely forged a path for us to follow. He will no doubt carry the (literal) scars for some time. Rob's lungs may never recover from the manuka blight dust cloud that trailed behind Joe, Phil and I as we squeezed our way between the scrub. Gnarly branches dug in to our bare arms and legs - did I saw this was a lovely warm autumn day and we were all in shorts? Phil had made a wise choice with a long-sleeved shirt, and I rued my life choices, generally, in the following days as I picked manuka splinters out of my arms. Anyway, after considerable cursing, pig puns, and 'what's our altitude now?' we made Point 700 - a bit over an hour after leaving the Hut. Wait, what? That had felt more like 2 hours of brave battle with the bush. Oh well, time to enjoy the expansive views in all directions, have a snack, and for Joe to patch up his wounds. The views really are stunning, and we lounge around for some time in the warm.

Negotiating the rock bluff
(photo Rob Seeley)

The next section along the tops is straight forward. We are in tussock county, and we are moving fast - it feels great! Some fabulous rocky outcrops (the Golem, in particular) keep us on track, and we are flying for the next hour. And then… we can see the entrance to the Painted Forest. We just have to go down, along and up. All that stands in our way … is more manuka. We form a game plan. We target a couple of rocky outcrops, and a clearing. And then, bam, we're back in overhead-height manuka. Rob cries 'go left'. Phil reckons he's found a pig track to the right. Joe mutters something I can't quite make out. We are so close and yet so far. Left, right, who can tell our direction? A bluff - oops, not that way. And we emerge, triumphant. Yes, we've stumbled on one of those rocky outcrops! Ah, a fence-line. Oooh, the pigs prefer the other side of the fence-

great, we'll take it! Sure, it's a little muddy. Meh, we'll just sing a little Flanders and Swan - they have a song about that. It's now the final push, there's apparently an old 4WD track ahead somewhere, that will take us to the magical gate that leads into the Painted Forest. If I'm honest it's all starting to sound a little mythical by now. The final push strips Joe of all his bandages, and the rest of us of our dignity. Type two fun, for sure. We have stayed close together through these manuka stands - if more than walking pole length separated us there's no way we would have ended up together. And in that final push, ahead I heard Rob shout out 'we've found it'. Moments later, I pushed myself out onto the 4WD track and turned around to watch Phil emerge. At first, nothing. Absolutely no indication there was someone just seconds behind me. Then the bush shook, then an arm with a pole, next a head … and there's all of Phil. We've survived!

Golem (photo Rob Seeley)

Now we are on a clear(ish) track and heading for the forest. Finally, some beautiful beech trees, the remains of the old Dark Horse hut, and before we know it we are climbing up again to look down on the forest, and along the track taking us back to the main route. That all took about 3.5 hours, from the Hut to the junction back on the main track. Felt a whole lot longer!

We took on water and sugar at the junction with the main track, and fly back along the 'super highway' with nothing to slow us down. We are now motivated by the call of Arc Brewery at Blueskin Bay. We have earned our beer! Our legs were tired enough by now to really feel those last 'unhelpful hills' on the final section of the track, but soon we are back at the car (by 5.30pm), still light enough to eat the pears from Rob's orchard, before heading for a beer.

Fantastic day out, plenty of Type 2 fun, plenty of puns, and nonsense chat (and some serious debate too), great company and a quenching beer to finish with. Thanks Joe for leading (and sorry you missed a fun day, Sharon!). Not sure how much longer that 'route' will be passable due to the manuka growth, and it would be a shame if future trampers can't complete the circuit.

Helen Emerson for Joe Bretherton (leader), Phil Somerville and Rob Seeley

Harbour Cone Loop—18 April 2026
By Kate Botting

Eleven OTMC members met at the Club rooms at 8.45 am and carpooling was arranged into three cars. Michael and Kelsey met us at the Broad Bay boat club, meaning thirteen started our upward walk, to Hereweka / Harbour Cone, at 9.30am. We were lucky as despite being cloudy, the light rain showers were intermittent. We had lovely views over the harbour.

Harbour Cone (photo Helen Emerson)

Gordon gave a historical talk about the formation of the harbour and the last eruption phase of the giant Dunedin Volcano that happened 10 million years ago (centred close to Port Chalmers), and left Mt Cargil. There is evidence on the surrounding hills of basalt and repaired stone walls. We also had lovely views over Papanui and Hoopers inlets. Stopping for morning tea we found sheltered spots by old macrocarpa trees, where early settlers used to live. We also passed the restored Larnach Byre.

We continued to walk down and cross the road to walk up the last grassy slope to the top. After lunch, on the cone, the wind became stronger and cooler, so we headed down via the new zig zag walk with Michael and Kelsy leading us though the Smith Creek catchment revegetation project. The community have really gotten behind this project.

We returned to our cars around 1.30 pm, just when the sun started to break through the clouds. Thanks, Helen, for organising this trip.

On top of Harbour Cone (photo Helen Emerson)

Attendees

Helen Emerson, Wayne Hodgekinson, Lucy James, Sandra Divett, Ash Flintoff, Rob Seeley, Thomas Morrison, Qa-ta Amar, Alan Hanson, Gordon Tocher, Kelsey Chisholm, Michael Lane and Kate Botting (author).

North Maungatua—26 April 2026
By Kate Botting

Nine of us met at the Taieri Historical Museum park at 9.30am, and due to adverse weather forecast we did the shorter version over the Minchmore farm, towards McKendry Rd, with the farmers permission. The first obstacle was the gate with many ways of clambering over the gate and trying to avoid gorse. It has been a terrific year for gorse sadly.

Over the paddocks (photo Kate Botting)

We followed a mud map through trees and open fields, under power lines until the first shed, then over further paddocks and roads towards the main highway. We had good views of the future North Maungatua walk up a paper road.

It started to sprinkle with rain, so we headed back to the first shed, where we had morning tea/lunch, then walk down a zig zag track, past a woolshed and into the south side of Outram. We passed Blend cafe along the old road with native planting on the left side, under the Outram Bridge, over the bridge towards the glen and back along the newly formed track via the memorial bridge and up another newly formed zig zag track back to the cars. by 1 pm. The heavens opened 15 mins later, so I am glad the vote was no stopping at Blend cafe.

The new walk is a Lions/Rotary initiative to link Outram township to the Glen and Historical park, off road. We covered around 9.5 km according a few phones, depending on the length of legs and thanks for the great company, who joined the tramp;
Helen Emerson,Laurence Prattley, Tina Anderson, Emily Dimmock, Alison Evans, Lucy, Ash Flintoff, Sandra Divet and Kate Botting, (leader and author)

Newly formed track (photo Helen Emerson)

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

Lake Whare Circuit—2 May 2026
By Debbie Pettinger

Maybe it was the perfect Autumn weather or maybe it was the opportunity to link up many of the lesser-known tracks on Flagstaff's northern side which contributed to 16 people keen to explore the Lake Whare circuit.

We opted to head in a clockwise direction, which meant about 5 minutes after setting off we arrived at Lake Whare. Continuing on past the lake it is good that many of the tracks on the northern flanks of Flagstaff have boardwalks over the worst of the boggy parts and it pays to be careful on the boardwalks as some were very slippery.

It wasn't long before we traded in the idyllic flat around Lake Whare for the Swine Spur track which is a steep, grovely, muddy climb up through the bush. We took our time on this section, making sure we had good footing with each step to avoid slipping backwards. It didn't seem to take long before we popped out at a small clearing, giving us clear views over Mosgiel and Maungatua, and inland to the Rock and Pillars. This seemed the perfect place to have morning tea.

From here we deviated from the Swine Spur track onto the Possum Busters track and sidled eastwards along a very pleasant section of, sometimes muddy track with a few side streams to negotiate. We continued past the Porkies / Smithy's Track junction and carried on until we came a small clearing on the Smithy's Track where we stopped for lunch.

Crossing the boardwalk (photo Jade Pettinger)

The journey back to the cars was is not completely straightforward as there are a couple of larger stream crossings and some steep sections of track to contend with including some parts with ropes anchored into the hillside to aid in the descent. Just as we were starting to relax , we had one last obstacle to overcome - a narrow path snaking around the edge of a small cliff. Not for the faint-hearted and we carefully picked our way around making sure we remained upright and on the track. All in all an enjoyable walk. It is places like this that remind me of just how lucky we are to have such a wide variety of tracks on our doorstep in Dunedin

Debbie Pettinger for Jade Pettinger (leader), Lawrence Prattley, Mike Scott, Philip Somerville, Tammy Jackson, Kath Danaher, Andrew Sewell, Sandra Divett, Lyn McArley, Mandy Lungley, Karen McInnes, Marama Shenstra, James Cruikshank, Sasha Kirkman, Jasper Cruikshank

Hermits Cave— 3 May 2026
By Tom Baird

Sunday 3rd May 2026 saw 10 of us meet up at Woodhaugh Gardens ready for a short drive out to the Silver Peaks carpark on Mountain Road. The plan was to visit a well-hidden Hermits Cave within the Silver Peaks that lacks a nice and easy pin on NZTopo but offers a welcome refuge for those in need. The weather was as good as anyone could have hoped with very little wind, sunshine all day, and a pretty cool and comfy temperature.

It was a bit of a tale of two halves. Drawn into a false sense of security on the beautifully crafted and cleared track from the car park, the first one and a half hours flew by as we made it up to Pulpit Rock for a bit of a rest to enjoy the view. After 10 minutes we headed back down and onto the ridge toward Silver Peak. However, roughly 250 metres before the summit, we hung a right onto what could be described as an animal track. There was definitely a trail to follow but a pair of secateurs or, more likely, a trimmer would be needed to make it less taxing on those wearing shorts.

We followed this track for just over 2 kilometres before coming to the head of an unassuming gully where we were advised that the cave was just a little way down. Somewhat true as there is an initial, smaller cave around 10 metres below the ridgeline. Unfortunately for my knees, it was a little further down (roughly 100 metres) that we found the actual Hermits Cave. The cave was pretty impressive with a chimney, range for cooking, and even a small painting! We ate our lunch and then found a cave journal within a leather case where we left a short note of our visit.

Lunch in Hermits Cave (photo Tom Kirk)

After around 45 minutes enjoying the shelter provided at the cave, we begun retracing our steps. We made a short detour further along the ridge above the cave for some reconnaissance of a potential route that would join with the Yellow Ridge Route between Yellow Hut and ABC Cave. With that done, we headed back through the low bush before regaining the main trail at Silver Peak and followed this back to the waiting cars.

Final tally for the day was just under 18 kilometres hiked and just over 1,000 metres of elevation gain during the 7 and a half hour day.

Tom Baird for Clare Ridout, Peter Barton, Helen Emerson, Jane Black, Rob Seeley, Tom Kirk, Thomas Morrison, Sosuke Fukoshima, Kai-Qui Hu