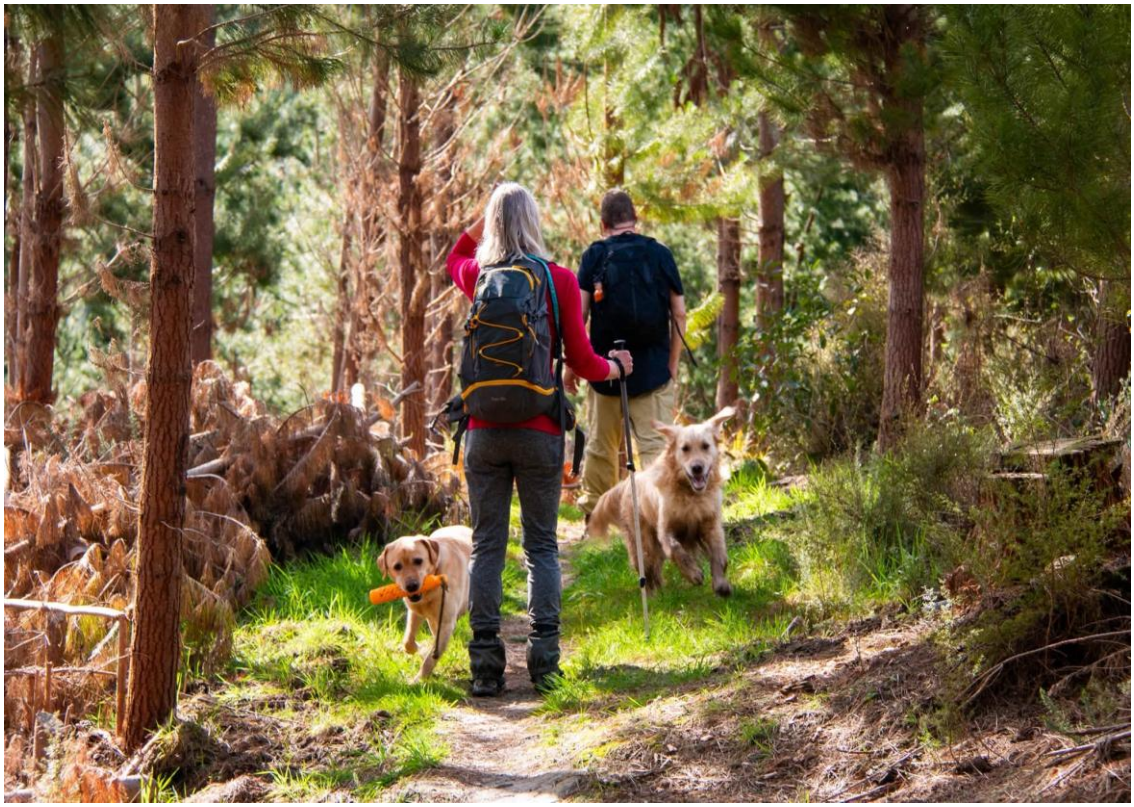
Bulletin Number 859 – October 2026

OTMC Bulletin

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



Our Doggie Day - Enjoying some sunshine in the pine forest *Picture: Jade Pettinger*

Upcoming Trips

October
4 Lawrence Daffodils **E**
4, 8, 10 Ben Rudd's/Flagstaff Track, Trap checking
10-11 Lake Monowai to Green Lake Hut **M/F**
18 Powder Ridge-Long Ridge-Green Ridge **M**
23-26 Labour Weekend Takitimu Mtns **M/F**
31 Purakanui **E** (*Saturday*)

November
1 to be announced – (see Weekly Update)
6-8 Mt Somers **M**
8 Tomahawk Circuit **E/M**
15 Leith Saddle to Evansdale Glen **M/F**
29 Mt Cargill: Bethunes Gully – Pine Hill Circuit **M**

Your Editor's message

Hi, Team OTMC,
I'm your new Bulletin Editor, Tracy Pettinger. I've been in the Club since March 1988 when I married Richard, who is a Life Member and, according to the rules of the time (apparently) I became a member of the Club.

I've been on the Committee for a few years now, too. I hope to bring you the stories of your days tramping in the hills and sometimes on the flat, in the mud, snow and glorious sunshine of our beautiful Otago region - and beyond. These are the stories that will be left for future members to wonder in awe at the antics we got up to, as we are in awe of anyone who went tramping years ago with those kidney-crushing backpacks and other "inferior" gear!

I look forward to reading your adventures and collecting them in the Bulletins ahead.

Tracy

Trip reports

Snowcaving
Saturday 22 August

After a review of the weather forecast (good on Saturday, apocalyptic on Sunday), and info gathered from the previous weekend's reccy day trip up on to the Old Man Range, it was decided to change the snowcaving trip from an overnight trip to a day mission.

We met at the Clubrooms and sorted out the crew with gear for digging. From there, we drove through to Roxburgh and had morning tea at the usual cafe, where we carried out introductions and got to know each other briefly. Next stop was Waikaia Bush Road. We managed to drive up to about 1200 m above sea level, and then started hiking up the road.

There was one spot that I wanted to scope out, before we carried on to the small locations further up the road. So we fitted snowshoes and made our way over to a snow bank.

We carried out a thorough probing of the snow bank, and found an awesome depth suitable for at least 2 caves... Let the digging commence!

The snowcave sites *Picture: Steffan Rolfe*

We ended up with 2 snowcaves dug out. One big enough to kneel in, and would have fitted at least 4 people and, the other, slightly more snug, would have worked for two cozy people.

It was a new experience for several people in the group and, after getting a few pics in each cave, we headed back to the car, off the hill, and back to Dunedin.

Steffan Rolfe, for Rebecca Thorne, Ruth Han, Esther de Lange, Micah Clarke-Prebble, Kim McKeay, and Adrienne Le Pilley.

Davies Track – Nicols Creek (nominally)
Sunday 23 August

The plan was to reach the Flagstaff ridge via the Davies Track, walk along the tops to the Nicols Creek catchment and return that way. But the wind was too strong to allow this (since, in this club, we choose to walk on two legs rather than all fours) and a cunning plan was hatched to keep us sheltered under tree-cover – as we shall see.

Starting off at the Redwood carpark, we seven, ignoring the 'keep out in windy weather' sign, headed up the walking path under the enormous trees. We emerged from this woodland wonderland into the scrubby environs of the upper McGouns stream. Locating the start of the Davies Track and crossing the stream, we set to. This first phase is pretty dismal, zig-zagging through regenerating bush and ankle-deep mud, but our efforts were rewarded as we entered the second phase, of fine native bush.

All is going well and we are easily keeping together, but the howling wind above us is just as bad as ever. Mark and Ross go into a huddle and announce that the third phase of the DT (tussock and low veg) and subsequent ridge-walking should perhaps be left for another day. They have heard of, and possibly at some point been on, a contouring track that leads through the forest to, eventually, the Old Pineapple Track. On a flattish part of the slope, we do indeed find a quite good-looking track leading off to the right and we set off on it. This is later reinforced by some blue markers which, of course, duly disappear along with the track. Undaunted, we contour on, knowing we must meet the Old Pineapple at some point but, to Lucy's relief, we instead encounter some other track rising from below and turning and heading in our direction. This proves, after a while, to indeed lead to and join the Old PT and before long, we are standing on Pineapple Point feeling pleased with ourselves if a little windblown. But what a fine piece of forest this has been – some magnificent podocarps as well as huge isolated cabbage trees growing up tall to reach the canopy. Where did that track 'from below' come from though? I am keen to go back and find out.

Mark, no doubt wishing to restore an element of Nicols Creek into the trip, then led us over the main track into the sylvan depths of the valley below. This, then, is the Pepper Tree Track, a track I hardly knew existed let alone been on – this is turning out to be a trip of discovery. There is a stop for refreshment before our descent continues on what is clearly a well-maintained track.

After Morning Tea *Picture: Tom Kirk*

We cross the two feeder-streams of Nicols Creek before ascending the northern side of the valley and eventually encounter what might have been the Moon Track or something in its vicinity. Either way, lunch proper is announced here and we spend a good half hour here

sprawled amongst the trees talking the usual bollocks (can I say that, Ed? I can't?? - sorry) and eating sardines. Ross expounds on his idea of a three-hour lunch break – something that used to be done in better days – featuring communal boil-up, readings, songs and a snooze in carried-in sleeping bags. Anyway, it's too bloody cold for such cultural carryings-on today and off we set, back the way we came. But there is one more surprise; for there is another track back to the Pineapple, running in parallel and on a higher contour to our outgoing track. This is marked in your copy of *Dunedin Tracks and Trails* (Hamel, 2008, Silver Peaks Press) as 'vague route only' and in pink. But this, too, must have had a spruce up and the going is not bad if a little long-winded and rooty in places.

So, we find ourselves back on the Pineapple Track and from here it's a simple return to the cars via McGouns and the Redwood Forest. A highly enjoyable walk on a pretty marginal day with new places visited for most, if not all, of those involved. Thanks to Mark for leading.

Rob Seeley for Mark Stephenson (leader), Danny Fitzgerald, Lucy Jones, Helen Emerson, Ross Davies, Tom Kirk, Rachel Easson.

Ross Davies (with Danny) adds:

Faces of Flagstaff

It was billed as Redwoods – Davies Track – Flagstaff – Swampy Track – Moon Track – Pepper Tree Track – Old Pineapple Track - McGouns Track. Which would have been a good circuit. Except the MetService had issued an orange strong wind warning for the day. It was a small and brave contingent of eight who arrived at Woodhaugh to motor to the Redwoods car park up Wakari way.

The redwoods were as impressive as ever, but they are slightly scary in high wind with their tops far above swinging randomly in every direction. Soon enough, we started up the Davies track, with thoughts of a Plan B to keep off the tops and avoid the worst of the wind. (I do have a connection with the Davies track – it was established by my grandfather – maybe 90 years ago.)

About halfway up, the track levels off for a while, and here we lingered for morning tea. Then we turned right, off the Davies Track, to follow the plateau northeast. This is a track that is at best indistinct, and otherwise baffling. I've heard it called the Rimu Track, but I call it Track Nine and Threequarters, after Harry Potter and the Platform Nine and Threequarters that you only found if you believed it existed. Same with this track. Even when we believed it existed, sometimes it did and sometimes it didn't.

There was a bit towards the end where we had to crash down a ferny bank to get back on track and then it was more obvious, and we emerged onto the Old Pineapple Track not far below Pineapple Point and the "new" Pineapple Track. After scouting around briefly (it was cold) looking for the higher-level track, we took the lower-level Pepper Tree Track down and across to meet the Moon Track. Just in time for lunch, listening to the wind somewhere above us.

It was easier finding the higher-level track coming back to the Pineapple Track and from the Point we took the original Pineapple Track down to the McGouns Track and thence back to the Redwoods and the end of our interesting day. Windy for sure, but not wet, and good company.

For some reflections and good advice, I'll hand over to Danny:
"My first trip out with the OTMC didn't disappoint. It's nice to find a group of like-minded hikers who think of the formed tracks as suggested routes and aren't shy about following their noses when conditions warrant it. Also enlightening to see how many tracks are out there on the back side of Dunedin if you're willing to do some exploring. The OTMC members were all great folks, and the pace was civilised enough to allow conversation. A couple things I learned that day were: don't eat all your lunch at the first stop, and bring a hot drink."

Groupy Photo (at Pineapple Point) *Picture: Helen Emerson*

Mihiwaka etc
Sunday 30 August

Our day started with the drama of a flat battery and ringing around to get picked up from home! My lovely work mate Tamara picked us up and we were at the Clubrooms just a little after 9am after letting Rob know of our intentions, so they'd wait for us.

The weather forecast was for impending doom and snow/rain/hail, so everyone was desperate for a quick getaway.

Rob changed the meet up car park to the one at Mihiwaka to get the climbing on the slippery rock faces/cliffs done before the moisture caught up with us. It has to be noted that Rob's legs seem to be very much longer than the average leg, which makes following him a challenge at times. It seemed that walking poles are surplus to requirements when scrambling up the bluffs, although they can be used as an eye poking weapon if you get fed up with your fellow trampers. ☺ Not really!

After the climb, was the boggy tops and muddy bottoms. I had my new rain jacket on for the first time. Tamara had her new boots on for their first outing. I'm pleased that her boots were way more muddy than my jacket during the trip!

We found a sign that had 'you are here' in two entirely different places, so we knew we were somewhere.

All the ups and downs were steep on this walk. Rob kept to his word of lunch at 1pm, as we were in a sunny spot in the forest when the time came, near a deck chair that has been sitting there for at least 3 years. Trees have been uprooted but the deck chair sits, stubbornly

immune to air turbulence, alone in the forest, and no one dare sit on it except lovers of the layer of slimy moss. (Nobody admitted this form of passion.)

The Len Lye Memorial doo dah is still there too. The outside ring can be played like the musical instrument the Theremin using radio waves, except you have to actually touch it and twiddle the knobs (well, try…).

We did a couple of summits but didn't hang around too long in the wind and then had an excursion the long way around the Cedar Creek Reservoir and scared the shags off their wing-drying perches. We didn't mean to.

Then, it was a gentle stroll down the Cedar Farm Forest gravel road to the main road and back to the warm cars.

The weather didn't get too bad and I could have worn my old jacket, which is not quite waterproof, after all.

Helen, Richard, Geraldine, Mark, Rob and Tamara.
Picture: Tracy Pettinger

Tracy Pettinger Thanks to Rob Seeley for leading; Richard Pettinger, Geraldine Kerr, Helen Emerson, Mark Stephenson and Tamara Smee.

City to Port Chalmers and Return
Sunday 6 September

Six of us set off from the stadium on Thursday, following the cycle track towards Port Chalmers. Rain forecasts had eased in the days beforehand, and the day delivered – no wind, and lovely views across to the Peninsula the whole way, echoing a walk I'd done along the same route mid-summer.

It took two hours to reach Port Chalmers, where we stopped for coffee – a leisurely hour-long break before heading back. The weather softened slightly on the return leg, with the odd sprinkle, but nothing that troubled the walk. Five hours all up, including the long coffee stop.

A damp trip *Picture: Tom Kirk*

Tom Kirk, for Helen Emerson, Rachel Easson, Raewyn and Laurence Prattley and 1 other.

Helen adds: Thanks, Tom, for leading our trip, down the Harbour path to Port Chalmers and back (approx 22 km). Six of us clocked up a good pace – 2 hours each way plus an hour enjoying coffee and cake in Cafe Santosha in Port. Let's be honest, that's the reason we walk, eh? Perfect outing in light rain – but no wind!! Made for great walking, and a good time-check for completing the full harbour path circuit (including the ferry crossing) in the future. No photos taken by me, too busy talking and walking! Thanks everyone for the great company, and "good luck" to Rachel, Raewyn, and everyone else doing the Marathon (walking or running) the next weekend!

Escarpment Track
Sunday 13 September

This was a fully-loaded OTMC day trip with 16 volunteers to slip and slide across the Escarpment Track.

We started at Sullivans Dam and walked up the 3 Peaks Track to Cowan Road. There was a brief flurry of warm rain on the way up the road but, once over the ridge, we dropped down into pleasant sunshine, and we were completely sheltered from the wind.

As expected, the track on the Escarpment was slippery at times and overgrown in places. A number of stalwarts did a great job slashing and hacking a way through so you can at least see your feet now.

After an hour or so of this, we did grow weary and there is much work still to do. We managed to fit all of us into a small rocky outcrop for morning tea, but in the sunshine.

Escarpment escapement *Picture: Tom Kirk*

After further slog, there was a small mutiny shortly after getting lost in a steep slope. So, we didn't make it to Pigeon Rock for lunch, but all spread out in the grass above the old pines. Lovely spot anyway.

Then, on down through more muck and mud to the Cloud Forest of Leith and back to the cars at Sullivans Dam.

Thanks to everyone who took part, especially the 2 or 3 newbies who seemed to enjoy it too.

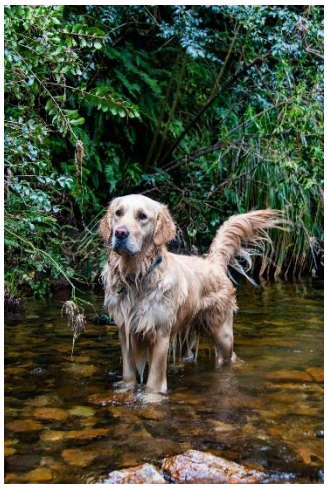
Mark Stephenson for Helena Bailey, Lisa Harkness, Susan Dunn, Wayne Hodgkinson, Ross Davies, Joe & Sharon Bretherton, Tom Kirk, Olivia Cassie, Geraldine Kerr, Helen Emerson, Alison Evans, Danny Fitzgerald and Rob Seeley.

Four people, three dogs and a bit of mud
Saturday 19 September

Who could resist a day trip with the promise of mud and dogs? Four people and three dogs met at the Silverstream car park and instead of crossing the ford, we headed along the track on the true left of Silver Stream. We made good time, as the track climbed and then dropped back to the stream for about five hundred metres until we reached the swing bridge. Opting to continue upstream past the bridge, we took the first track on the right, heading up the hill. This track climbs steadily in height with a few recent tree falls over the track. The dogs found these obstacles easy as they wasted no time ducking under the trees, while the people took a little longer climbing over and then under, before emerging on the other side.

We stopped once we reached the water race for a breather before turning right and following the Tunnel Track for about 1.5 km through native bush and a small pine plantation to the Whare Flat Road, where the dogs enjoyed a play in the stream and the people had a snack break. This was our turnaround point, and we retraced our steps back to where we had joined the water race. Instead of heading down the hill and over the tree fall, we continued along past the tunnel (where no one, including the dogs, were keen to venture in). Both people and dogs had remained reasonably clean up to this point despite a bit of mud on the track; however, not far past the tunnel, the track began to get muddier and, while the people tried to skirt around the edge, mostly it was easier to just go through the middle.

The dogs enjoyed this part and raced each other along the track, through the mud and back to meet us. Part way along, two of the three dogs thought it a good idea to drop down into the water race, landing up to their bellies in thick, black mud. When they emerged, Ollie, having a black coat, didn't look too bad but not so for Eddie with his cream coat and black from his belly down. There wasn't much we could do but laugh while Eddie looked mighty pleased with himself. We thought Arlo had seen the mishap of his two friends and was much too sensible to join them but, not so, for a little further along he decided to join the muddy fun; but thankfully only got in the mud halfway up his legs.



We continued on to the McRaes Weir Track negotiating more mud and another couple of tree falls. The junction with the Raceman's Track was our turnaround point and we headed left beside the stream and back towards the cars. This is a much shorter route back and we were soon at the swing bridge. Crossing the swing bridge, we stopped at the ford for the dogs to have a swim. All the dogs came out much cleaner with Eddie emerging from the water back to his normal colour. Thank you, Saskia, for leading this trip; everyone, dogs and people, had a great time.

Debs Pettinger for Saskia Bronstring, Mike Scott, Jade Pettinger and for the dogs: Ollie, Arlo and Eddie.
Before and after pictures: Jade Pettinger

Silver Stream – Leishman Falls – Chalkies; a walk in three-part harmony
Sunday 27 September

The Singers: Mark Stephenson (Alto/Soprano), Rob Seeley (Bass), Tom Kirk (Tenor)
Picture: Tom

Rob:
Like thunder the forest re-echoed the sound
Of the song that they sang when they met
His inamorata adjusted her garter
And lifted her voice in duet

Chorus:
Mud, mud, glorious mud
Nothing quite like it for cooling the blood
So, follow me follow, down to the hollow
And there let me wallow in glorious mud.

Tom:
She said a good day
Ain't got no rain
She said a bad day's when I lie in bed
And think of things that might have been.

Chorus:
Slip slidin' away
Slip slidin' away
You know the nearer your destination
The more you're slip slidin' away.

Mark:
Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

Rob/ Mark duet:
Tom was just speedin' away
Thought he was James Dean for a day
Then I guess he had to crash
Valium would have helped that bash
He said, "Hey babe, take a walk on the wild side"
I said, "Hey honey, take a walk on the wild side".

Chorus:
And the coloured girls say
"Do, do-do, do-do, do-do-do..."

Rob:
Smiling as the shit comes down
You can tell a man from what he has to say
Everything gets turned around
And I will risk my neck again, again.

Mark:
You can take me where you will
Up the creek and through the mill
Like all the things you can't explain
Four seasons in one day.

Tom:
Blood dries up
Like rain, like rain
Fills my cup
Like four seasons in one day.

Chorus:
And the coloured girls say
"Do, do-do, do-do, do-do-do
Do, do-do, do-do, do-do-do
Do, do-do, do-do, do-do-dooo..."

I do hope to hear the above rendition on a Thursday night - Editor

Bass songster Rob Seeley approaches a microphone…

Followed by alto/soprano Mark Stephenson as back-up…

Picture:
Tenor Tom Kirk
Taken moments before Rob sank to the centre of the Earth.

Please submit your possible creative captions – Editor.
tracy@pettinger.nz

Thursday night talk report:

Volunteering in the Amazon, 2024

Kath Danaher

So, there I was, machete in hand, sweating with heat and alertness, picking my way past enormous and ancient trees draped with wrist-thick lianas and bulging with epiphytes, the cries of the Screaming Piha ringing in my ears, looking for ants.

Specifically, bullet ants.

Actually, that was not my mission. My mission was to cut giant palm fronds and drag them back to base to create a water-tight roof for the peccaries' shelter. However, bullet ants, four out of four on the Schmidt insect sting pain index, were an insect I particularly wanted to avoid making skin-to-sting contact with.

I was two days into my three-week volunteer stay at Hoja Nueva, a research and rewilding centre in the lowland Amazon of Peru. This centre, accessible only by boat up the Las Piedras tributary of the Amazon, devotes itself to rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing animals involved in the illegal wildlife smuggling trade, as well as doing research on the macro-fauna of the Amazon, in particular cats.

I recommend it.

Granted, there's intermittent power, no hot water, outside toilets, bugs the size of your hand and Limited Food Choices. But there's also a sense of awe inspired by the immensity of the trees, the density of the vegetation and the vibrancy of the insect, animal and bird life on a scale that is difficult to imagine.

Just a caveat though – volunteering is a bandwagon like any other trend, so if you're thinking of volunteering, do your homework to find out where your money is going, and how the local people and environment are really benefiting. In this case, all my money went directly to Hoja Nueva for their endeavours towards research and animal rehabilitation.

Relax: these are not bullet ants. They are just Very Big Ants. *Picture: Kath Danaher*

So, give it a go! Doesn't have to be the deepest, darkest Amazon – could be the local hospice shop. You'd be much more likely to find Paddington Bear there, if that's your gig, and much less likely to be stung by bullet ants.

Thursday evening coming events and speakers

A round-up of the people who have come to talk to us at our recent Thursday meetings.

3rd September:
Harvey Aughton
On protecting our Ben Rudd's property from pest animals. And, help bring birdsong back to our beloved Flagstaff. Dunedin's citizens will love us for our enthusiastic work. (See also 24th below.)

10th September:
Kath Danaher contributed her talk on her trip to the Amazon (see above, in this edition).

17th September:
Trip planning. Numerous possibilities were put forward and considered and, now, Chief Guide Mark Stephenson has abundant options for us all to look forward to over summer.

24th September: Harvey Aughton (again)
This time, the lovely Harvey regaled us with stories from his past, showed us his unique artwork, spoke about bats and his passion for them, and enlisted Club members for pest trap maintenance, now that so many of us have recut the traplines. He entitled his presentation: "Poetic Licence, From Outdoor Instructor to Conservation Coordinator"

Helen is doing a terrific job of finding entertainment for our Thursday nights at the Club. Please help her by offering to talk and/or finding a speaker for a Thursday night.

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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: Tracy@pettinger.nz

The tribute to Len Lye by Andrew Drummond

As seen on the 30 August Mihiwaka trip

Picture: Tracy Pettinger

(See page 5)