



*PTC Monthly
Newsletter
April 2020*

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| PTC | Affiliate of Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (Inc) |
| Postal Address | The Secretary, PTC, PO Box 13 258, City East, Christchurch 8141 |
| Web address | www.ptc.nz |
| E-mail | secretary@PTC.nz |
| Facebook name | Peninsula Tramping Club Christchurch |
| Correspondence | All correspondence to the Secretary, including change of contact details |

Executive Committee

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------|----------------|----------|
| President | Diane Mellish | 337 5530 | Quartermaster | Brian Smith | 355 9945 |
| Vice-President | Gary Huish | 332 7020 | Social Events | Margot Bowden | 332 7020 |
| Treasurer | Mike Bourke | 332 7097 | Committee | Kevin Hughes | 332 6281 |
| Trip Planner | Kerry Moore | 359 5069 | | Alison Maccoll | 322 8540 |
| Secretary | Merv Meredith | 322 7239 | | | |
| Editor | Raymond Ford | 351 9496 | | | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------|---|
| New Member Enquiries: | Stan Wilder | 260 2340 | Contact Stan to request an info-pack. You will also receive three complimentary newsletters |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------|---|

Our Club

The PTC consists of people of all ages who tramp for recreation. Regular trips are organised, ranging from 'easy' to 'hard', day trips to long weekends. In addition to the monthly club meeting, a variety of social events are also held every month.

COVID-19

While the country is in lockdown, all our advertised tramps and social events are cancelled until further notice. The Executive Committee is working behind the scenes to keep the essential administration happening, and we will keep you informed by Communicator of anything you need to know about.

You will notice a few changes to the April Footnotes. We have not advertised trips, club meetings, and social events in the newsletter. When the COVID alert is downgraded to a level where tramping becomes possible again, we will quickly respond and advertise imminent trips through the PTC Communicator email system, and hopefully, get back to listing upcoming activities in the newsletter.

There is a new section 'Diversions' which features tramping related items. So if you have any ideas or short articles, e.g. tramping recipes, please send them to Raymond fordrm@snap.net.nz.

NOTES

President's notes

Hello all.

I hope you are all safe and well, whether on the front line providing essential services, or in your isolated bubbles at home. Making the best of an unexpected and challenging situation is relatively ok while our precious loved ones are well, the weather is so nice and it is still a novelty. But I know it will pall as time goes

by, especially with the financial repercussions, huge work demands on some, concern over loved ones in far-flung places and so much uncertainty about the future. Rather than dwelling on the battle ahead, in my quiet moments I am visualising life beyond the pandemic when we are all out in our beautiful mountains again, enjoying the freedom we are accustomed to with friends and family.

The Exec. is still managing to function with remote access technology. It is a great pleasure to welcome Alison Maccoll to our exec team and with regret we farewell Maureen Thompson and Keith McQuillan. A big thank you to both of you for your contributions to the club administration. Maureen, you are such a social livewire and you came up with so many good ideas for fun social activities. Thanks for being willing to continue with Facebook while your travel plans are on hold. Keith, many people have commented on what a great tramping companion you have been over many years, and thank you for being the base-camp expert in recent times. I wish you and Marion all the best as you settle into your new life in Kakanui. No doubt you will meet some of my old tramping buddies in North Otago Tramping & Mountaineering Club.

Our annual trip planning process for July 2020 to June 2021 is under way. You will have received a Communicator from Kerry inviting input on what trips you would like in the new program. If scrolling through that very long list he emailed is too daunting, or if you have some exciting new ideas not on that list, you could email your suggestion to secretary@ptc.nz instead. Please put TRIP SUGGESTION: ATTENTION KERRY in the subject line and Merv will forward it to Kerry. It is a big help if you include the following: locality, brief route description, duration of trip (i.e. how many days), grade, preferred time of year, are you willing to lead it?. Please get these to Kerry soon, **deadline 21st April**.

Thinking of you all and wishing you good health and best of luck with maintaining your fitness and cheerful demeanour.

Diane Mellish

April night sky

After sunset, brilliant Venus is low in the north-western sky. Well above it is the constellation Orion, with its instantly recognisable triple-starred belt. The bright stars Sirius and Canopus are still almost overhead in the evening sky; Sirius slightly northwards and Canopus slightly south. Well south, the Southern Cross and the two pointers, Alpha and Beta Centauri, rise higher into the evening sky as April and May go by.

Around midnight, a triple procession of planets starts to rise in the East, forming a rough straight line: first bright Jupiter, then Saturn and finally orangy Mars. They'll make a very impressive sight in the pre-dawn sky.

First quarter moon is on 1st April, full moon on 8th, last quarter on 15th, and new moon on 23rd.

Graham Townsend

New Executive Committee member – Alison Maccoll



Hi, my name is Alison Maccoll and I am the newbie to the PTC Executive. I grew up in Christchurch leaving when I left school and returning about 2 weeks before the 2011 earthquakes. In between, I have lived and worked in various parts of New Zealand and the world, where I have been fortunate to be able to get out and enjoy tramping and the amazing natural world around us. Growing up in Christchurch, I wasn't much into tramping so when I returned I decided that belonging to a club would be a great way to discover new places and meet new people who share the love of the outdoors.

I am looking forward to contributing to the Club through the work of Exec. After just one Exec meeting, I am already aware that there is so much that goes on behind the scenes that most of us don't see which ensures the Club runs smoothly. I also look forward to meeting more of you at Club nights and out in the hills as soon as we can venture there again.

Membership

The club welcomes new member - Donna Marie Grice, and we accept with regret the following resignations: Miriam Preston, Carolyn Catt, and Helen Tapper.

Deadline for the May newsletter: 2 May 2020 – please send items for the newsletter, e.g. trip reports, notices, etc. to: Raymond Ford fordrm@snap.net.nz

Next Committee Meeting: Tuesday, 28 April 2020.

DIVERSIONS

Try playing the dice game 'Zilch'

This game is easy to learn and lots of fun. It is ideal for those evenings in the hills or when you are hut bound because of the weather. All you need is 6 dice, and a pencil and paper to keep the score.

Here are a two links to sites which show you how to play the game: <https://grandmaideas.com/zilch> or <http://zilch.playr.co.uk/rules.php> If you are still have difficulty understanding the rules, ask a couple of our experts on the Executive Committee – Diane or Gary.

Browse 'New Zealand geology: an illustrated guide' by Peter Ballance.

The late Peter Ballance, formerly Professor of Geology at Auckland University, has written a comprehensive illustrated guide to New Zealand geology for students and people with an interest in what is happening on our major tectonic plate boundary. The book has a large number of very good colour illustrations, and various geological concepts and processes are clearly explained in topic boxes. It is divided up into regional chapters which you can read as you visit different parts of the country.

The book is free and can be downloaded from the Geoscience Society of New Zealand website: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tFnp3Fd2XLGKLMvaVKBEsOw6YUNt7JtQ/view>

TRIP REPORTS

Gorgy Creek Lake Trip, Arthurs Pass National Park -mid-January 2020

After several weather-thwarted attempts to run this trip over the last two years, I took advantage of a good weather window with low river levels. At short notice I rustled up the team of people who had signed in previously and off we went.

Route Information: This route starts on the Waimakariri Falls track. Just past where Campbell Creek flows in, climb a steep face to tarns at 1390m. We chose the right hand side on this face, climbing up a very steep bouldery scree, a rib, then a steep vegetated gully to a little lookout above a very bluffed-in waterfall on our right. This leads to a bigger, more open, but still steep boulder fields which are best negotiated by staying close to the stream bed. Some of us stayed well to the left, which was not a good idea. The tarns at 1390m are an ideal lunch spot with great views.

We took 4 hours from our camp at the foot of the face to the tarns. From there, it is an easy amble down to Campbell Pass, approx.1.5 hours. We dropped straight down and crossed Tumbledown Creek, and then sidled low on the true right of Gorgy Creek. This took us through several eroded gullies and steep sidles with exposure to nasty bluffs beside the creek below us. It would have been much better to go high, over 1445m, before sidling over to the lake. Our total time from the Campbell Creek- Waimakariri River confluence to the Gorgy Creek Lake was 9 hours. A younger, fitter party would be much faster! We decided to abort Plan A, which was to climb over to Waimakariri Col the next day, as we had ice axes, but no crampons or helmets. Some of us also had less than ideal boots for the alpine section. It would be a great option for suitably equipped parties. Instead we did the easy sidle around to Bijleveld Col and out via Hunt Saddle and Kellys Creek. Once we struck

the flood-damaged sections of the old track up Kellys Creek, we dropped into the main riverbed and stayed there, which was fast and easy travel. I suspect the final big climb through the bush that we did to exit the valley to the carpark was a flood track, and we should have stayed in the riverbed. Must go back soon and check this out.



Figure 1. Phew! Made it up the bluff. Photo courtesy of Di Mellish.

Our Experience: We took a leisurely 4 days for this trip in perfectly fine settled weather, when even the sandflies at Kellys Creek carpark were not biting. How lucky can you get? Camp 1 was at the Campbell Creek-Waimakariri River confluence, Camp 2 at Gorgy Creek Lake and Camp 3 at Hunts Creek Hut. We all loved the variety of challenges and terrain, the views, the way we pulled together with route finding and supported each other in the scary bits. Meals were delicious, relaxed affairs, sitting outside in the most gorgeous settings. We could afford to go at a leisurely pace.

It was a trip that just kept delivering the best aspects of mountain adventuring and camaraderie. Even to the extent that Merv came back from a long hitching mission to retrieve his car just buzzing with excitement. A generous young Spanish tourist picked him up, was very interested to hear of our adventures and insisted on shouting him coffee at Arthurs Pass on the way through!

Highlights: Flat, friendly terrain and lunch at the 1390m tarn after hours of grovelling up the bluff. Beautiful alpine vistas opening up as we approached Gorgy Creek, which cascades down a long sequence of spectacular waterfalls from the alpine tarn to the lower valley. Camping by the lake with a big mountain cirque surrounding us. A long leisurely morning tea break on Bijleveld Col soaking in the views and reminiscing about past adventures. Marvelling at the beautiful vegetation in Hunts Creek valley – glossy mountain lily leaves the size of huge serving platters and flowers everywhere. The feel of the cool mountain air on my skin and the subtle scents of scree and scrub in the early morning. The rare joy and relaxation that comes from not having to weather-watch. This was one of my best trips ever. Thanks to my daughter Belinda for inspiring it.

We were **Diane Mellish (leader), Jane Liddle, Peter Umbers, Kerry Moore, Merv Meredith** 🏔️ DM



Figure 2. Camp site near Gorgy Creek Lake. Photo courtesy of Di Mellish.

Trans-Alpine Trip to the Mathias Catchment - 26 January to 1 February 2020

Mona Anderson refers to the mighty Rakaia River in her book 'A River Rules my Life', and as the Wilberforce River ruled Anderson's life, so the Rakaia River, its tributaries and the weather ruled our trip, and provided this inexperienced Aussie trumper with an insight into braided rivers, their differing moods, immense power, force and beauty. This was one of my many experiences on this year's transalpine trip.

Our original trip, held a week earlier than previous trips, was a traverse across the neves from the Franz Josef to Fox glaciers, and if that wasn't possible, a circuit up the Paringa River via Marks Flat and returning via the Otoko River. Neither of these options were feasible, because of the unsettled long-term weather forecast. As an alternative, Geoff suggested we explore the Rakaia and Mathias valleys. This remote region, lying to the east of the Main Divide, is seldom visited, and it offered a number of trip options, big valleys for shelter in the event of inclement weather and lots of new country for the group to explore.

This was my first transalpine trip, and although I felt slightly disappointed that we weren't traversing mountain tops and neves, I was thankful the trip wasn't cancelled. Despite the change of plan, it was a fantastic trip, with a great group of like-minded souls that challenged my endurance and skill and provided me with invaluable mountaineering and river crossing experience.

We completed a circuit over seven days, starting from the road end at Glenfalloch Station, across the Rakaia River to Manuka Point, up the Mathias Valley to the confluence of the North and West Mathias rivers, following the west branch for about 5km, then backtracking to the South Mathias River, over Observation Col and down Cattle Stream. We followed the Rakaia River downstream to Manuka Point where we crossed the river to our parked cars.

It was sunny and warm when we departed Christchurch. Our group of eleven met at Darfield, then the convoy of three cars drove to the road end at Glenfalloch Station. This was my first encounter with the mighty Rakaia River. Groups of three or four people, linked arms and crossed the channels. In the main channel, despite the river's subdued appearance, you could feel the power of the current. Once safely across, we hid two pack rafts that Jane M. and Geoff had bought as a contingency in the event of higher river flows on our return crossing. Carrying heavy packs while trudging up the Mathias Valley into a strong northwester resulted in a few hours of unpleasant tramping. Later that afternoon, a sheltered campsite adjacent to Big Paddock Creek provided a

welcome reprieve from the wind. Copious numbers of brews restored everyone's spirits as did Jane's pasta dinner with fresh smoked salmon.

The wind continued unabated overnight. Next morning, we continued up valley into the northwester. The view back down the valley was breathtaking; the size, scale and beauty of the landscape was completely new to me.

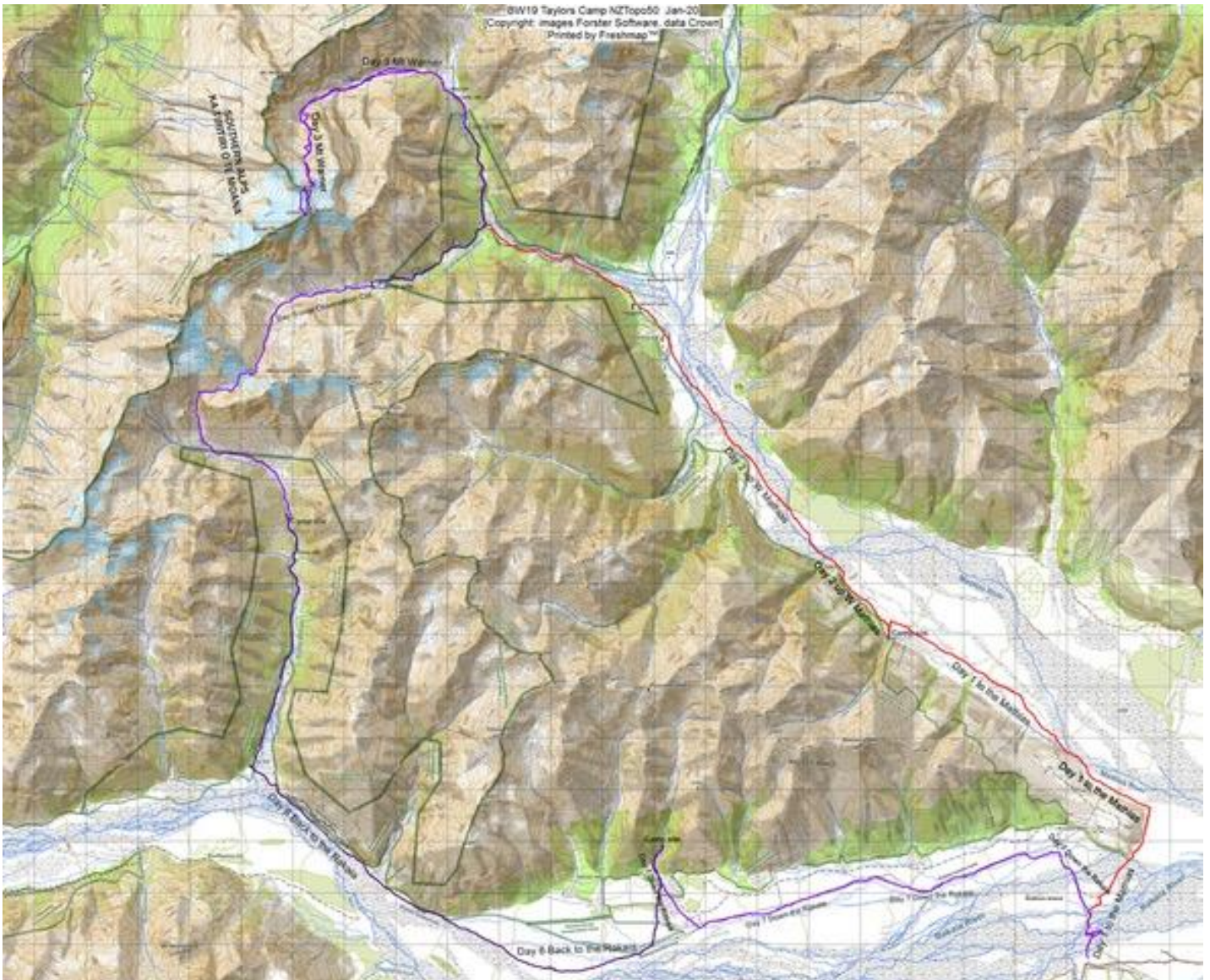


Figure 3 Route map of the 2020 Alpine trip. Courtesy of Doug. Foster

We stopped for morning tea at Mathias Hut, a well maintained hunters hut, located near the confluence of the North and West Mathias rivers. With the weather deteriorating, Geoff suggested two route options; head up the North Mathias and climb over Kea Pass to West Mathias River, with the caveat that the route required fine weather, or go up the West Mathias River, climb Mt Warner and Bonds Peak, and then up the South Mathias River over Observation Col to Cattle Stream and back to the Rakaia River. The second option received the group's unanimous vote.

Just north of the hut, the map shows Centennial Cabin. We dropped packs and went to have a look, only to find remnants of the building's chimney. What caught my eye was the prolific flowering and sweet scent of mountain holly and lancewood. The whole mountain side was a rich tapestry of white and green. Above the confluence, the West Mathias Valley narrowed and the river flowed swiftly around large boulders and scree. We stopped briefly at the well-hidden and cute West Mathias Bivouac before continuing upstream to find a sheltered campsite for the next two nights. This two kilometre section provided the group with several challenges, climbing large boulders and scrambling through scrub close to the river, with the expert guidance from Geoff and Jane M. and help from of Gaylene, Tony, Raymond and Gary.



Figure 4. Arriving at Mathias Hut. Photo courtesy of Raymond Ford

Waking to a fine morning, there was a feeling of excitement that buzzed through camp with the prospect of climbing Mt Warner. We set off early up the river carrying day packs. About one kilometre up from our camp, we turned off into a large unnamed side stream where we steadily climbed across tussock grass terraces on the true right before dropping into the river. Travel through this terrain was challenging due to the steep banks, numerous boulders and loose scree. On our return, we descended the spur on the true right of the river, which provided a safer and quicker route. Once above the river, large slabs of rock offered easier travel to the snow line at 1800m. We were now on the Main Divide, but to our disappointment the views of the surrounding peaks were obscured by a thick smoke haze blown over from Australian bushfires. With crampons affixed and ice axes in hand, our group climbed slowly towards the summit through some steep and challenging terrain, on the way unexpectedly disturbing a deer and a fawn that quickly fled across the snow. On the summit of Mt Warner there was remnants of a platform for a trig station and below it another smaller platform presumably constructed for the surveyor's camp; a harsh and exposed environment to live in a tent for extended periods. It wasn't a place to linger in a freezing wind.

To the south of Mt Warner is the impressive Bonds Peak. Geoff and Jane M. invited others to join them climb to the summit. Initially, I declined, but quickly changed my mind as it was a good opportunity to climb with extremely experienced mountaineers. Five of us, Geoff, Jane, Raymond, Gary and I, departed for our second ascent, while the remainder of the group began the long descent back to camp. Our small group hastened towards the summit, taking a line up the snow basin on the north side of Bonds Peak, which included a short climb up a very steep snow face that was exhilarating and fun! The final section of the climb involved scrambling up very loose scree followed by a short rock scramble to the ridge and along to the summit. More low cloud and smoke haze drifted in further reducing visibility, however, we had good views of South Mathias Valley and mountains to the north. We made a rapid descent reaching the camp on dusk, exhausted, after 13 hours on the mountain.

Rain set in overnight and exhausted bodies remained wrapped up in their sleeping bags till late the following morning. Thoughts of a rest day were dashed when Geoff announced we were leaving camp to get a head start on the next days climb over Observation Col.

Although it was a comparatively short distance from our camp to the South Mathias, travel had become far more difficult due to the rain and swollen river. Three hours later, we arrived safely, thoroughly drenched and cold, at our new campsite on flats about half way up the valley. Tents were quickly put up then followed by silence as everyone disappeared inside to get dry and warm. Everyone, but Geoff who organised boiling water

for soups then cooked dinner and delivered bowls full of comforting hot risotto to everyone inside their tents. I understand it took Geoff some time to warm up after he finally retired to his tent.



Figure 5. Geoff arriving at the summit of Bonds Peak. Photo courtesy of Raymond Ford

The next morning, the camp resembled an outdoor laundry with numerous pieces of clothing placed on nearby shrubs to dry in the early morning sunshine before we departed up the valley. A large unnamed side stream flows down from Pt 1816 to join the South Mathias, we stopped here beside the stream for morning tea, some of us were tempted into its chilly waters, but the cold breeze discouraged most of us!

We headed up the true left of the stream, a steep climb to the snow line where we put on crampons and continued climbing to the base of Pt 1816. From here our group, in tight formation, zigzagged up a short steep slope below the ridge to the saddle between Pts 1816 and 1970. We were rewarded with superb views of the southern peaks and the headwaters of Cattle Stream.

Dark low clouds moving from the northwest plus a strong wind deterred the group from dropping packs and climbing to the summit of Observation Cone, besides it was time for lunch! We found relatively sheltered spot for a break on rock slabs by a small stream below the col. Jane L was a bit concerned about descending the snow slope, Gaylene took Jane's hand and I watched as they skipped off together down the snow slope, past the remnants of the glacier to the snow line. There was a short section of rock scrambling which we negotiated safely, followed by an easy and quick descent down tussock spurs to Cattle Stream. Finding a good sheltered campsite proved more difficult. After a bit of toing and froing, we found a site in the scrub on the true right of the stream. Geoff promptly lit a fire that provided a lovely ambience to the camp plus copious amounts of boiling water for hot drinks. Despite the cold and the long day it was a pleasant social evening.

Overnight the wind strengthened, buffeting the tents and the rain set in clearing by mid-morning. The stream, which we had easily crossed the previous afternoon, had risen overnight so crossing wasn't an option. Staying on the true right, we made good time down to Evans Hut, by the Rakaia River, for lunch. The tents were hung up to dry and everyone enjoyed the sunshine in the hut surrounds, although frequent gusts of wind funnelling down the Rakaia Valley had people jumping up to secure tents, loose gear, hats and lunch items.



Figure 6. Descending from Observation Col into the headwaters of Cattle Stream. Photo courtesy of Raymond Ford

After lunch we headed down the flats on the true left of the Rakaia. Crossing Cattle Stream presented no problems as the channels in the lower reaches were much wider and shallow. The strong norwestly gusts pummelled the group and made walking extremely difficult and exhausting. Although we were grateful for a tail wind we had to brace ourselves from consistently being blown over and pushed around by the wind, our packs acting like large sails with each gust. After a few hours of walking, many of the group were feeling tired and suggested heading out a day earlier than planned. After much discussion, Geoff decided, for safety reasons that we should stick to the original plan, camp overnight and cross the Rakaia River in the morning, rather than push on.



Figure 7. Party by Cattle Stream, looking up the Rakaia River. Photo courtesy of Raymond Ford



Figure 8. Crossing the Rakaia River. Photo courtesy of Sonja Risa.

Finding water and a sheltered campsite became the next priority. We walked up Rocky Spur Creek until we found water and surprisingly, in amongst the trees there was a small sheltered terrace where we could comfortably camp. That evening Pete cooked a pasta dish, and as often on the last night together the group discussed potential trips for next years alpine trip. Much to my relief, the strong gusts abated at sundown.

The Rakaia River was running higher than when we crossed it a week ago. The next morning we stood on the edge of the main channel and assessed the river conditions. It was decided that a small group would attempt a crossing. I linked up with

Gaylene, Tony was the anchor, and Peter at the end. All was going well until we entered the main channel. It was deep and the water was moving swiftly. The bow wave came up to Tony's shoulders as he struggled to anchor the group, then we collapsed into the water. Remaining linked and safe, Gaylene said push with your feet, and we managed to manoeuvre ourselves onto the bank of an island. But I was caught by the current and pulled back out into the flow, Gaylene pulled me to the bank and helped me out of the water as I was drained of energy from fighting against the current. Crossing the next channel at the same point wasn't an option. We walked downstream for a short distance and found a relatively shallow section where we could cross safely. The remainder of the group linked up, followed our line, and crossed with no problems. Once across the river, almost immediately our thoughts turned to real coffee and lunch at the Darfield cafe.

A big thank you to Geoff and Jane M for a wonderful trip, great leadership and ensuring the safety and comfort of the group, throughout the trip.

We were: **Geoff Spearpoint (leader), Jane Morris, Gaylene Wilkinson, Tony Lawton, Jane Liddle, Gary Huish, Peter Umbers, Doug Foster, Raymond Ford, Sonja Risa, Callum McIntosh.** 🏠 SR