



CAMP REPORT

BACKGROUND:

Date:	Wednesday 14th December to Sunday 18th December 2016
Camp Director:	Tim Wiel
Leaders:	Kynan Gray, Steve Wiel, Rochelle Wiel, Allison Paton, Christina Bailey
Speaker:	Tim Wiel
Campers:	Micah Currie, Giana Thomas, Megan Stringer, Levin & Jadin Coulter, Natasha Ware

GENERAL:

The 2016 tramping camp was planned to return to the Huxley and Hopkins river valleys as we had completed a rotation of tramps over the last 5 years and I was planning to start again – however the lure of the South Coast and probably more the epic jet boat ride out on the last day was too much to ignore.

The South Coast track is one of my more favourite areas to tramp in New Zealand – it is steeped in history and is relatively easy albeit the long distances for weary legs.

Enrolments for the camp started strong early in the year once word got out we were doing the South Coast again. The camp was full several months out and remained full despite two campers pulling out due to lack of fitness we were able to fill their spots with others on the waiting list.



We had great weather (when we needed it) and there were some challenges for all that went.

It was great to have my wife, Rochelle with us again this time as we both enjoy tramping and it is a passion we both love to share with young people. Likewise it was a pleasure to lead aside Kynan, Steve, Allison and Christina Bailey (nee Paton). These folk made for a very experienced tramping leadership team and a leader-camper ratio of 1:1 which was great for fellowship and discussion with the campers.

It is still my opinion this type of camp in the outdoors away from the mod-cons and technology gives one of the best opportunities for fellowship and sharing the Gospel. The tramping camp each year remains one of my favorites and still feels a bit like a holiday for me – I did in take it as annual leave.

Having been through here 3 years ago I knew the track, distances and huts well. I also knew that huts can be full when you arrive so again we choose to carry tents just in case. Was it was both huts we stayed in were at capacity on our arrival so Micah Currie elected to sleep on the hut bench/floor each night so us "oldies" could have the bunks. We did offer to squeeze him in but perhaps my socks smelt to much for him to take the offer up. Thanks Micah.

Huts provide a great shelter from the storm, protection from sandflies and are a great place to fellowship with others when opportunities present themselves.

PROGRAM

Wednesday

I choose this year to make tramping camp a "5 day camp" as every year for the past 5 years we have stayed somewhere on the way with almost all the camp staying on the first night. This meant leaving on the Wednesday for an overnight stay before we started out early on our tramp. As everyone (except Micah) was from Otago we met at CYC Waihola on Friday afternoon and traveled to Riverton to stay in the Smith's holiday home. It was a wonderful place to stay with scenic views of Oreti Beach. On the way South, we elected to stop for a quick visit of Hamish's new son, Caleb before going through Invercargill for tea at McDonalds (and Subway for those more healthy folk).

What a storm came through on the Wednesday night! We were all glad we were not in tents or tramping in it! Thanks to the Smith's for allowing us to use their holiday home. This meant we were closer to our starting point.

I did have bit of a problem the week before departure quickly finding a new van we could all fit into as the usual van we borrowed was a 12 seater and a policy change of the church we borrowed it from meant we couldn't use it anymore. Despite looking at rentals, other groups and the like I could not find a 12 seater. We hired a 11 seater van from East Taieri and thanks to Kynan also bringing his vehicle we were able to get everyone there and back albeit with a higher transport bill.

CYC Waihola may into the future need to look at buying a van for our offsite camps. Vans allow fellowship and can sometimes be where the best conversations are had

Thursday:

After a hearty breakfast, we departed Riverton and stopped at Tuatapere to collect hut tickets for the huts and pick up Micah. Coffee and snacks were consumed before departing to the tramp car park. Much discussion was had about the impending dark clouds, rain and drizzle on the way.

It was briefly sunny when we arrived at the carpark. Rain jackets were adorned and the obligatory "before" photo was taken before shouldering our packs for the journey ahead.

The tramp along the beach which was usually wonderful was abandoned on to the 4WD track in the bush just alongside the high water mark due to rain, wind and a very high tide. There were opportunities along the way to get down onto the beach for a brief moment before carrying on.



Lunch and our first talk was had at a hunting hut along the way at Waikoko stream. It was a blessing to sit under the cover of the veranda during the rain showers.

After a long day we arrived at the hut weary and a little bit wet. There were just enough beds until we discovered the reported 20 beds were actually 19. Micah elected to sleep on the floor. Thanks Micah.

After a quick tea we headed down to explore the Port Craig saw-milling remains and offered ourselves to the sandflies as meals. We also were able to find the cave bivvy that would be suitable for a tramping camp should the Port Craig hut be full next time we are down this way.

There were several others in the hut including a family with 3 or 4 young teenagers the same age as the campers. This meant the evening was even more entertaining as we played "The Greatest Game in the World". The evening was filled with laughter and fun times.



Friday:

Friday dawned with more of the same cloudy, overcast drizzle type weather. The temperature was nice for tramping but stopping to long meant getting cold.

We ambled along the well benched track stopping to admire the viaducts each time. They were impressive feats of engineering.

Lunch and our 2nd talk was had at the Percy Burn viaduct hut with views of the viaduct through the windows. Again great to have a shelter and reprieve from the sand-flies and weather whilst we regained strength for the final leg through to the Wairaurahiri Hut.

Once the Humpridge track left our track the route quickly changed to a "proper tramping track" with bogs

and overgrowth but nothing we couldn't handle. The tramway track has very long straights in places where we could see everyone even though at times we were spread out over 500m.

Several types of wildlife were observed including native tui's, bellbirds and fantails along with a couple of infamous stoats playing in the sun.

Arrival at the hut was welcomed and again it would have been just the right number of beds if the reported 14 bunks had not been 13 in reality. Micah slept on a bench seat. Thanks Micah.

We were thankful that we could use the hut and not tents especially as it seemed the sandflies the size of blackbirds had migrated from Port Craig in 2013 to Wairaurihiri in 2016. It is safe to say that the sand-flies were particularly voracious and persistent on the South Coast.

A quick explore to the beach was undertaken after tea whilst others rested.

Monday:

Having visited a particularly scenic spot when we were down here in 2013 I was keen to find the deer yards again this year.

A day tramp through the beautiful Waitutu Forest with its fern undergrowth and mature trees was magical. A large group of native Kaka were either really happy to see us or very angry to have us intrude. Either way it was great to see them. Getting to the deer yards required a bush bash and a couple of questionable skirts along the top of a cliff and creek gorge but it was worth it as the view was spectacular and the sun even came out whilst we ate lunch.



During lunch we had talk 3 then time for a play. By play I mean, getting across a fairly deep tannin soaked lagoon to the beach on the other side. It was interesting to think we might have been the only people here since the last time we found it in 2013. A very remote piece of beach indeed!

Tramping back was easy once we found the track again. The evening was spent chatting, playing the "greatest game" again and visiting the Waitutu Lodge side of the Wairaurahiri river.

Tuesday

With us due to leave just after midday on the jetboat we found time to tidy up, pack, have an early lunch with talk number 4 before exploring the eastern side of the Wairaurahiri river mouth.

A view of the Solander Islands was breathtaking as was the rugged coast. Cellphone reception from Bluff gave the opportunity for those with cellphones to check in with home.

The jetboat was caught just after lunch and was the highlight of the tramp. 90 minutes, 35km and breathtaking twists and turns were made more enjoyable by finding the heated handrails.

Lake Hauroko was calm when we arrived to sign out of the river at Teal Bay but quickly, as is its reputation, turned to a squall of waves. Jadin was in hysterical laughter the whole way across the lake which I think unnerved the driver more than the squall itself. I can still picture in my mind poor Micah sitting in the upwind and rear side of the boat getting completely soaked with each wave the boat crested. It was comical to see him putting his sunglasses on then wiping them off (and repeating) to try to find some abatement from the constant drenching. It was a fairly exciting trip across the lake with the wind coming up stronger and stronger as we went.

After a quick change for those that were wet and coffee at Clifton bridge it was home time for some tired and weary souls. Most agreed that it was the best tramp they had been on and can't wait until next year's tramp.



SPIRITUAL:

Again this year a minor issue with staying in a hut (with other people present) is finding space to do the talks each day without creating an uncomfortable situation for the visitors. I solved this issue by doing the talks whilst we were having lunch which gave the opportunity to chew over more than just food.

This year I spoke to the campers on "What is the meaning of life?". Most of the campers attending either would indicate they were Christian or came from youth group backgrounds. My talks were based on a series of new books out from Mathius Press in Australia. I spoke predominantly from the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon explores the world and attempts to gain pleasure and satisfaction from it but concludes in the end that everything – work, play, relationships, worldly pleasures (sex, drugs and rock & roll) – are all meaningless and lead to nothing. That without God our lives are dust. I read Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 as an introduction on Wednesday night in Riverton which set a fairly

sombre picture to life. I then worked through "Looking for meaning in life", "Who we are?", "What is grace and why is it so amazing" and "being a citizen of heaven".

Whilst there wasn't much response from the campers - our best talk/discussion was at the deer yards in the sun on Monday when we discussed the concept of grace and that we are sinners before an angry God. Our default position is we are enemies before God - a position we remain in until we accept his offer of grace and salvation (his free gift) - we just need to accept it. I used the illustration of a "Software Licence Agreement" with the tick box at the bottom. Before you can move on to install the software you need to agree to the terms - the default position is not to agree with the licence - that is the box is unticked - likewise until we accept God's free gift and the box is ticked with God we remain his enemy.

WHAT WENT WELL/WHAT DIDN'T:

The location worked really well - whilst it was long distances it was not a technical tramp with hills or river crossings. Many breaks meant all were able to achieve it well.

The good number of leaders to camper ratio works really well. It provides a high level of experience which reduces the stress on the director having to worry about taking people out into the wilderness.

The transport to and from the tramp was a problem. I have now worked out an arrangement with East Taieri Church to hire vans but the cost is now higher than vans we could "borrow" previously - these transport costs will need to be budgeted into all offsite camp fees in the future. The budget for this particular tramp was fairly tight (even with all leaders paying fees) with the jet boat being about 1/3 of the total cost of the tramp.



Next year I need to place a bigger emphasis discussing expectations and tidiness in huts before we leave our first night accommodation. Whilst most campers contributed to keeping things tidy - especially when you are sharing the hut with other hut users - some minor issues did arise such as leaving dirty dishes lying around and poaching all the bench space in the hut.

Allison and I discussed that perhaps food should be portioned better so that everyone carries their own food rather than us sharing the group food amongst everyone. Inevitably the leaders ended up carrying the heavier items and the bulk of the food as campers either didn't have enough room in their pack or were "down-right too lazy" to carry a fair share.

SUMMARY:

Thanks to council for giving me opportunity to lead this camp and to all the leaders that made this camp a great one. I am already planning next years tramp up the Huxley, Broderick and Hopkins.

Tim Wiel

Tramping Camp Director 2016

