

Chief Guide Summary 2007

2007 has seen trips ranging from rock climbing to pirate raft races, mountain biking to horse riding, canyoning to mountaineering and the list goes on. 2007 has been another great year for VUWTC, with a large number of trips going away and good membership numbers keeping the club in a healthy position for the future. There has been growth in the interest and experience in alpine climbing by a number of the more experienced members of the club. While at times this has impacted on regular tramping trips going away, this growth in knowledge and experience has helped build an experience base that had dwindled over the past few years.

The year began with the traditional 'freshers' trip to Totara Flats that saw 56 keen punters (new & old!) heading off into the hills. While I had some lame excuse about offshore yacht races, I'm assured that a great time was had by all, and this was evidenced by seeing a number of new faces floating around the club.

This year a greater focus was placed on having 'day trips' as well as the traditional weekend trips. As a result many weekends had both a day trip and a weekend trip scheduled on them. It was pleasing to see the majority of weekends having both a weekend trip and a day trip going away. I believe the inclusion of day trips helped broaden the base of members and should be continued in the future.

It is testament to the level of activity of the club that it is simply not possible to mention (or remember!) every trip that has gone away this year. However below I will outline a few of the year's highlights.

Rock Craft at Baring Head and the infamous after party at Bryan's flat, provided a good introduction about what climbing is really about to those new to climbing. A big thanks goes out to Ollie our climbing officer and Kate for their efforts promoting climbing within the club this year.

Bushball saw a change of location this year away from Paua hut to Baines hut due to safety concerns. It was incredible to see many of our members dressed up and looking a lot less feral than usual! While Baines proved to be an awesome location, during the search for an alternate hut many other options were also identified. I'd encourage future organisers of bushball to look around the many huts available in the Orongorongas to help add variety from year to year. It has been suggested that a padded floor or no windows may be required to avoid future head injuries! A huge 'thankyou' to Craig Scott and Kate for their efforts organising an awesome bushball.

To continue the dress up theme, an old tradition of the 'cross dressing southern crossing' was brought back and proved to be disturbingly popular! Many of the male members in the club now appreciate the difficulties which skirts present, particularly when bush bashing.

AIC this year was a terrific success, with 40 people heading along. So high was the demand that we had to hire extra gear from WTMC to make sure everyone had an ice axe and crampons. While the weather wasn't exactly kind, this helped the participants realise that it can really be pretty cold and unpleasant in an alpine environment. Of course there isn't usually a pub and house to stay at on

Saturday night when you are in the hills, but the America's cup beckoned! A huge 'thankyou' to all the people who helped out as instructors on AIC – without you we couldn't do it.

Mid winter followed shortly after with three groups and a total of 18 people heading off to battle the elements down at Kahurangi national park for 8 days. In true piker style I thought up the excuse of frostbite to avoid this one! However, despite the weather, I'm assured a great time was had by all. A huge thankyou to all the leaders of groups, and in particular Kieran who took over the final bits of organisation for the trip as I headed off down south early.

Mid Winter Christmas proved to be a hit with over 30 merry members making it along. Santa even appeared, giving out presents and drinking scrumpy! Secret Santa proved to be a hit, with a particularly disturbing photo of Regan and a pottie emerging.

Ambitious plans for snow caving, cricket and bbqs on the summit plateau of Mt Ruapehu were interfered with by the weather. As a result, everyone found themselves with a decidedly warmer night than they were anticipating on Saturday as the decision was made to retreat to Turangi.

Jess's horse riding and a pirate raft race down the Waikanae river added to the crazy antics of the year.

Interspersed with all these trips have been many 'standard' trips to the Tararuas and Ruahines. Also a good number of members headed off and did alpine courses with the NZAC or Glenn Pennycrook, as well as personal trips to Mt Taranaki, Mt Ruapehu and Mt Aspiring. This helps provide a solid base of alpine experience for years to come.

This year I have taken full responsibility for injuries, incurring the only helicopter flight and only stitches of the year. On a serious note, however, it is important that the club, and in particular the chief guide, remain aware of safety issues and ensures reasonable precautions are taken on all trips. It is too easy to take a 'she'll be right' approach to safety. While it is an unpopular role of the chief guide it is important that the chief guide maintains a general overview of club trips and is prepared to step in where they feel it is appropriate. It is vital that the chief guide receives support to do this role from the committee, even if some members do not share the chief guides concerns.

The success of the club depends on the efforts of volunteers. As with all clubs the challenge is to recruit and retain as many people as possible to help spread the load. This year I have been fortunate enough to be assisted by many enthusiastic and capable trip leaders. While there are too many to name, I would particularly like to thank Kieran, Craig Scott and Alyn for the tremendous amount of work they put in this year organising trips as well as our wonderful president Annabel and my assistant Andrea. Without these sorts of people the club simply wouldn't function.

I will not be standing for the committee next year as I finish uni this year and my plans for next year are uncertain. However I would welcome the opportunity to assist the new committee find their feet. I encourage everyone to get involved in the club, be it through the committee, leading trips or volunteering for other jobs – the club needs you.

See you in the hills, up a mountain or piking in the pub!

Craig Ryburn