



Newsletter May to August 2024

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On the afternoon of 14 January 1948 a Nelson schoolboy discovered New Zealand's oldest fossil near the present day Trilobite Hut. The boy was my cousin, Malcolm Simpson, and the story of his discovery is at the end of this newsletter. Above is a photograph of the piece of Itrilobite imestone that he chipped off the outcrop.

Henry Chaffey of Asbestos Cottage makes an appearance in the story and also in the trip report of the Flora/Asbestos tramp of 30th June.

John

Committee



President:

Vice President:

Secretary: Lynne Flood

Treasurer: Heather Adams

Membership Officer: Kathy Chandler

Committee Member: Ann Giggs

Committee Member: Kathleen Famularo

Walks Committee: Maggie Pidgeon and Sonya Lloyd

New Members



A big welcome to:

Andy Clark

Daphne Hamilton

Gillian Walker

Jo Kay

Lynda Pogson

Marie Wood



Trip Reports



Jenkins Hill

05 May 2024

Leader and Writer: Helen



Plan....walk up Jenkins hill 776 metres

The group departed at 0900. It was a “bluebird” day. We walked up the Barnicoat track

which is a forestry road. Most of the trees have been felled and removed. The views were beautiful and made up for the dirt road. There were quite a few mountain bikers getting out and enjoying the day with their whanau.

We followed the road around until

we got to the crest of the hill. This is where we stopped for morning tea. We passed the glider road turnoff and soon entered the bush which was very pretty. We sidled around this track until we reached the “top of the involution” junction. There is a seat at the junction plus a dog bowl for the thirsty dogs. It's a nice place to stop, and there are usually people mingling around there with their bikes and dogs.

The track had a good gradient up until then.

We then started to climb up a steep hill which had small slippery rocks.

After about 45 minutes we reached another junction where there is the fencing from the bird sanctuary. I thought this was Jenkins Hill but it was not. Alan had a GPS and along with Marie they found the crest of Jenkins Hill. It was not well marked and a little overgrown. But the bird song in this area was beautiful. It was good to get off the road to discover this.

We had lunch in the sun and then we descended down the rocky road (all the way to Dublin 12345) Do you know that song? We then reached the involution junction and made our way down to the carpark. We gave Scouts track a miss as it's too steep.

We were back at the cars by 3pm.

Thank you to everyone for a nice day out. Sonya thank you for collecting and returning the PLB.

See you next time.

Trampers: Alan, Helen, Jo, John, Lynne, Maggie W, Marie and Sonya L.

Photo: Jo





Charleston

10-13 May 2024

Leader and Writer: Kathy

Day 1

Arriving at Charleston.

The weather Gods turned on some magnificent sunshine and calm weather for our time on the west coast so it was a very pleasant day for travelling!

By mid-afternoon, once everyone had settled into the Charleston Lodge, with Debbie, Judy and Yvonne spending time in Murchison on the way, exploring the galleries, we headed off for a walk down to Constant Bay to enjoy the Loop Walk. We were in awe of how big ships came into that narrow bay during the gold mining days, and of the harbour master who had leapt into rough seas on many occasions to rescue passengers from floundering ships.

The track first took us along the coast and then headed through flax and native bush until we reached viewpoints where we saw dramatic cliffs which fearless rock climbers can scale. There were beautiful views of the mountains and coastline and stunning surf fiercely crashing against the rocks. We were amused by Marie finding us some “bonking grass” along the cliff edge, which was a very flattened type of grass adapted to seals lying on it, so we decided that it was probably the seals doing the bonking! (Marie’s app proved to be very useful to identify unknown plants.) It was a very pleasant walk back close to the shore in the evening sun.

Back at the lodge (we had 4 separate rooms with varying degrees of kitchens) we met in Kathy and Marie’s room for a delicious shared meal with nibbles and wine to start.

We had an early night to prepare for our long walk the next day up Mount William.

Day 2

Deniston Plateau and Mount William

We had a fairly early start as it was a fair drive and woke to find the car windscreens covered with a thick layer of frost which Kathy’s scraper removed. It was a beautiful calm sunny morning, but we took it carefully because of potential ice. After a quick stop off for the viewpoint at the Deniston Plateau (amazing and rare to see such a vista so clearly there), and then another quick stop at interpretive signage and a view of Mount Rochford, we headed off to the start of our track to Mount Williams which was opposite the Coalbrookdale Loop.

Kathy was glad she had done a recce, because the track markers had been confusing at one point and not always easy to see higher up. The track began quite gradually along a stony track and a bit of 4-wheel drive road before entering a boggy section before we reached the ridge. Once in the bush, it was stunning and we were following

a ridge all the way. The vegetation was amazing, so green, lush and beautiful with lovely energy. We were accompanied by lots of birdsong and saw robin, tomtits and lots of fantails as well as a constant chorus from tui and bellbirds. There was a wooden sign with Anna's Track written on it and research indicated that she was the wife of one of the main track makers on the plateau. Morning tea was in the bush and then a stunning section through goblin forest with rocks, nooks and crannies and so many emerald green mosses and lichens. It was very steep in places so it required a lot of concentration. When we had emerged into the sunshine, we found a lovely spot on some rocks for lunch with great views of the coast and Westport. Now to the top! It was about another 10 minutes through ancient forest before we came out to a tarn on the open tops and made our way to the trig point. There were spectacular mountain views in all directions and we tried to identify some of them. We were joined at the summit by 3 local girls, from Ecuador, Netherlands and Denmark. It turned out that one of the girls was friends with my daughter Vicky!





Descent was slow because we did not want any injuries and it was particularly hard for Debbie and Judy with joint issues. We still had plenty of sunshine left when we reached the end of the track though so spent a bit of time exploring the signage and artefacts at the incline as it was Lynne's first visit there. A very interesting place and the signage really brings it to life so that you can imagine what life was like in the mining days.

Back at the lodge, we had the very sad news about losing our dear friend Moppie, but decided to focus on all the beautiful times we'd spent with her when we went to the Charleston Pub next door for a nice dinner.

Day 3

Exploring Charleston and its environs.

We had booked a ride on the train up the Nile Valley to the caves for 11am so there was time for an early walk before this after breakfast. Judy wanted to let her hip recover before the next walk but went on a shorter walk to the old cemetery which she found very interesting. The rest of us walked along the new cycle track, across the lovely new bridge to Beach Road where we walked along the beach at low tide to clamber over some rocks at the end to a viewpoint across to a little rocky island and to see up the coast. It was mesmerising watching the waves crashing and the surf pounding. Walking back along the beach, we managed to spot some garnet sand on the beach.



Our next adventure was to drive up the valley to catch the train. Our driver proved to be a real character who had been involved in the train and caves project from the start. He was very entertaining and informative. We walked the last part to the cave, across a swing bridge and a very well maintained track, and explored the cave as far as you could go without a paying trip to see the glow worms or to raft. Debbie and Kathy had done this trip previously and recommend it.

We snacked and meandered back through the bush and along through the gorge with spectacular limestone scenery and followed the beautiful Nile river. After a quick break at the lodge, we were off again!

This time we headed to Tauranga Bay to see the seal colony. It was very entertaining watching the baby seals and it was amazing just how many seals you could see, once you were tuned in! Most of us were feeling a bit tired by this time and not keen on completing the loop so didn't go much beyond this point. We then drove to the other end of the bay and Kathy tried to lead the group on a short walk she'd done with her daughter 3 days before to see another viewpoint looking further south where the new cycle track is going and also to see what the volunteer planters have done. I say tried, because we ended up going round in circles! Next we drove further along the coast following the cycle track until it went across some paddocks before it crosses 2 rivers to re-join the track in Charleston (to be finished by December).

We'd all done enough walking by then and after admiring the setting sun, returned either to eat leftovers or have another pub meal, joined by Kathy's daughter Jenny.

Next morning everyone left in their own time, either exploring further, or heading straight back, or in Kathy's case, clearing gorse and brambles on her daughter, Jenny's section!

Thanks to the company of Debbie, John, Judy, Lynne, Marie and Yvonne H.





Courthouse Flat

19 May 2024

Leader and Writer: Dave

A relaxed day following Blue creek to the stamping battery and resurgence, returning to walk Nuggety creek to more mining machinery and water races.

Informative plant and fungi identification from Marie and Ann had everyone on the lookout for the weird and wonderful.

Weta watch in Colossus mine had some quick retreats, rounding off the beauty of the rivers and native bush enjoyed by all.

Report: Dave

Trippers: Ann, Becky, Charlie, Jo, Kathleen and Marie.

Photos: Various people.







2 June 2024

Porters Rock

Leader and Scribe:
Kathleen



On 2nd June 15 trampers (including 2 newbies), set off from Canaan car park about 9.30am. Morning tea was had at the lookout point with great views over the grasslands of Canaan downs. After morning tea we walked on, entering the bush of Moa Park basin and crossed a couple of shallow streams. We paused for a wee while at Moa Park shelter then decided to carry on to the rocks for lunch where a nice view of the Abel Tasman coastline was visible. We got back to the cars about 3.30.

Yvonne, Kathy, Marie F, Marie W, Becky, Una, Andy, Jo, Lynne, John, Debbie, Sonya, Alan, Dave and Kathleen.





Punakaiki

21-24 June

Leader and Scribe: Lynne

The weather was mild so the blowholes were calm and quiet, with no booming or spray but it meant we could go down on the beach below the steps and that was dramatic with a vast cavern with an overhang like a dress circle. We did the Truman walk and this is a fine example of ancient West Coast coastal bush, with huge ratas and kiekie. Our accommodation at the Beachfront Motels was superb, with two cottages and a new unit providing space for everyone. On the Saturday we did the Croesus track, albeit later than we had intended! This track follows a miners' track and winds up the hill, following a gentle gradient, then crosses some slips and gets steeper. We didn't get to the bush line but made it to a saddle that had views of the tops and ocean views and stopped there for lunch. We were down by about 3.00pm. We booked a table at the Pub for dinner, with a bit of trepidation as the rugby was on, but our worries were unfounded as the pub was quiet, with family groups and only the odd person looking at rugby.





Sunday we opted to do the Pororari river walk and then onto the Inland Pack Track and up to Cave Creek. The river walk passes through beautiful stands of nikaus and the river was fuller from the overnight rain. Then we came to the sign about Grikes, so if you don't know what a 'grike' is, then you need to do this walk!

The bridge on Bullock Creek Road has gone, with just piles of rotten timber left, and we followed a new four wheel drive track round and over the river, without wet feet. We did the 6km road bash back to our accommodation and got back about 3.00pm.

Trampers: Deb, John, Judy, Lynda, Lynne, Marie, Sonia C and Yvonne H
Grike Photo: Lynda. Others; Yvonne H





Flora/Asbestos

30 June 2024

Leader and Reporter: Sally



This trip was popular and several of our keen walkers could not be accommodated. 12 of us set out on a stunning day. The track from the Cobb, originally the old mine access road, was easy and well formed. The bush was cool and peaceful, with the usual stops to examine unusual plants along the way. The birdlife was wonderful due to the dedicated work by friends of the Cobb. We met two of their team busy re-baiting the traps along the track.

The Asbestos mine and surrounding deposits were interesting and our group stopped to examine the artefacts remaining by the track.

Kathy told us the story of Annie and Henry Chaffey, an amazing story of isolation and devotion. We stopped for a drink and snack on the way, and lunch on the way back, sitting in the sun outside the cottage. The scenery is beautiful, but I don't think I could manage the remoteness for 40 years.

A lovely walk and great company.

Photos: Sally, Yvonne and Jo

Crossover starting at Flora: Heather, Yvonne, Christine and Sonia C

Crossover starting at Cobb: Ainsley, Angela, Lynne, Daphne and Marie

There and back Cobb to Lower Junction: Kathy, Jo and Sally







Te Hapu

5-8 July 2024

Leader: Marie



We arrived at the Te Hapu Woolshed at about midday and decided to explore the main (Gilbert's) beach to start with. This was an easy stroll down to a beautiful west coast beach with encircling limestone bluffs with nikau palms popping out of crevices and bluff edges. It was quite windy but we found a sheltered spot for lunch. We made our way back overland investigating more rocky bluffy bits, animal tracks and nikau groves. The woolshed has a good kitchen with gas and solar light, but hot water is via the wetback, so Dave got a great fire going.

The next day we did the Dolphs Bluffs Hapu Beach Circuit. We got a good start just before our planned 09:00 departure time. The day was cool and sunny with a light SW wind that would gradually increase all day. After a short farm track walk, we headed uphill on the Woolshed Bluffs track to join the Dolphs Bluffs Hapu Beach Circuit track. All we had to do then was to just follow the red line on the map and the red paint markers in the field!



We all soon realised that our initial idea of easy farm track walking was about to be changed. We walked up and down reasonably steep hills, past Volcano Rock and then got up to the top of the highest point by about 10:30. What amazing views in all directions! The tide was nearly full so the estuary side looked beautiful and so did the seaward view. We spent some time identifying Mt Lunar on the northside of Whanganui Inlet then dropped down the leeward side for a cosy morning tea.

The next part was a bit of an adventure - down through a chasm in the limestone rocks via a wooden ladder (very solid) and a rope. Great fun..until one walking pole was inadvertently donated to the god of the very deep hole near the bottom of the ladder. We had another ladder and rope on the way around the Dolphs Bluffs - a bit easier to manoeuvre than the first one. Here one of our more imaginative trampers christened this area "the Grove on steroids!" - very apt with fantastic eroded shapes. The walk along the top of the bluffs was spectacular, especially peering carefully over the edge and down the vertical face. By 12:15 we reached Hunter's Cave which has a very steep approach so several scouts went ahead. Their report of 'black stalactites a long way up' did not entice the rest of us to go down so we went back up to a sheltered spot just down from the ridge for lunch with a sea view at 12:30.

The track then headed down towards Te Hapu Beach. It was an easy decision to take the middle track home - the beach was covered by the tide and the bluffs track looked hard!

A few more ups and downs across farmland brought us to the airstrip and gravel road. From there it was an easy saunter back to the Woolshed.

Comments after the walk - "Harder than expected but much more interesting". and "It felt more like a 16km walk not 8km."

"Way better than just easy farm tracks."

Distance: 8 km. Total time including stops: 6.25 hours.

On our final morning we explored the Labyrinth and the Maze - all areas down on the beach with lots of limestone rocks, some eroded out by the sea. The tide was again too high to get down onto the beach (a possible future trip could be planned to coincide with a low tide at about midday) . On all of the walks you are always encircled by the magnificent Dolph Bluffs which tower over the coastal strip. There are valleys which end in pockets of native bush (with nikau) that look a great place to explore. One such valley goes up towards the Hunter's Cave. Participants: Ann, Dave, Judy, Kathleen, Kathy, Lynda, Maggie (scribe), Marie (Leader & partial scribe)
Photos: Judy



*Fantail Photo Bomb
What a great photo!*





Motueka Sandspit Walk

28 July 2024

Leader and Writer: Heather

It was a cold, calm, drizzly morning, but a small group assembled in the Raumanuka carpark about 10am, partaking in morning tea while others arrived, including two prospective members. All dressed in our best wet weather gear we headed out along the sandspit, armed with a couple of plastic bags should we happen upon any rubbish to remove. In the end there was very little, but that is a good sign that our community is pitching in well and keeping our environment clean. We talked about the seeming demise of the black-backed gull population – we saw one. I noted that I had seen more of them in orchards where they like to perch on the posts, on farmland, and perched on street lights; maybe our sea-gulls are evolving into land-gulls to adapt to climate change. Our walking paces were variable (as anticipated) and we spread out a bit, but this walk was well-suited to that; however we all arrived back at the carpark together about lunch-time and went on our way to warmer, drier environs. Heather Adams on behalf of Mike T, Sonia C, Yvonne J, Ann G, Gill W and husband.





Hanmer Springs

4-7 August 2024

Leader and scribbler: John



There were four of us away on this Sunday to Wednesday outing which included 2 days tramping. We did a number of walks including the Waterfall Track (also known as Dog Stream Track), Spur Track, Conical Hill Track, Nature Walk Track (a ten minute job this one) and the Chatterton River Track which we had to turn back from because of tree felling operations.

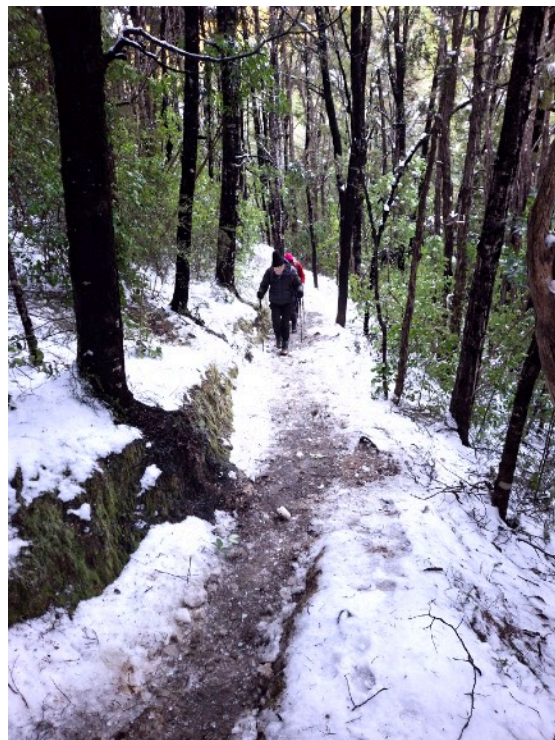
The track up to the 41metre-high Dog Stream took us through mountain beech forest. It was a magical landscape because of the snow and ice on the ground and the snow in clusters up in the trees which represented all sorts of exotic animals and which occasionally fell in large disintegrating clumps. The waterfall looked very graceful and had icicles hanging alongside. We returned via the Spur Track which had some great views.

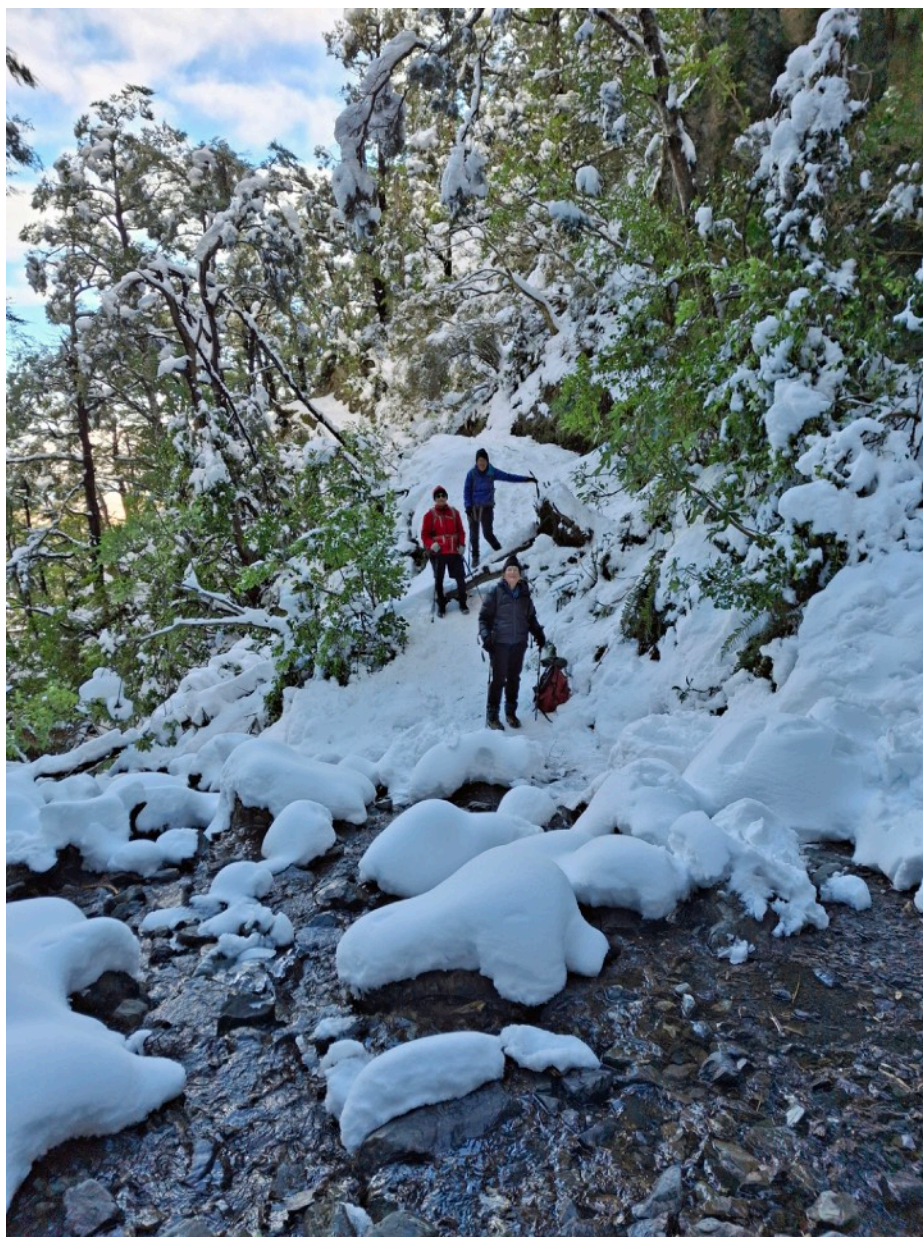
Returning to our motel each afternoon we would walk across the road to the hot pools and spend some time in them. Kathy and Lynne met a woman there that they had both known, independently, in Auckland.

The roads there and back were pretty much ice free for the most part. A stop at Rivers Cafe in Murchison both there and back.

Participants: John, Kathy, Lynne and Marie.

Photos: John (but not the one of the pools).







Collingwood

16 - 19 March 2024

Leader and Writer: Maggie



Friday

After the usual reviving coffee stop at Takaka Wholemeal café, we drove on through the Devil's Boots to the end of the road and headed up to the Aorere Goldfields walk. We walked up adjacent to the old water race, visited the Ballroom, deciding that you would need to be a pretty agile dancer on that earth floor, and the impressive Druggans Dam (much bigger than expected). We were surprised and dismayed to see a lot of hakea bushes in seed on the sides of the track.

A chance photo of Johnsons United Stamper Battery convinced us to walk on further up the 4wd track and explore this amazing restored relic – “this is the last intact and well-preserved stamper in the South Island” (DoC brochure). Two smart walkers decided to wait for us at the top in the rain as the rest of us disappeared down a very steep, slippery gully that just went down and further down. Finally, after a much longer walk than expected (about an hour), we finally arrived at a very large impressive structure, yes indeed! How did they ever get all that heavy machinery up there?! Going back up was thankfully much easier and quicker.



The return walk via 4wd track was cool and damp in increasing rain.

Day's distance approx 15km in approx 7 hours.

We were pleased to find that our accommodation at Masons Place in Collingwood was very well set up with a fully equipped kitchen, washing machine, drier, lots of heaters, plenty of room for the seven of us (we even had one spare bed), plus a specially locked china cabinet.

Saturday

The weather forecast was for rain later in the day so we headed off by 0800 for the Sollys Dolomite quarry just 7km from Collingwood, Maggie having phoned and gained permission from Sollys to go up the road (weekends only). We parked our cars at the bottom and walked up the unsealed road to Mt Burnett. Some walkers may have expected a rather dull walk but in fact it was a really delightful walk through lovely bush with lots of fantastic rata trees and we also found an endemic daisy - which grows only in north west of the South Island (we think it was *Brachyglottis hectorii*). We reached the top of Mt Burnett just before the mist came in and enjoyed fabulous views to Whanganui Inlet in the west, farewell Spit and Golden Bay. On the way back down we went up another of the 3 sisters (also has aials and masts) but today no views. It was about 14km return and 5.5 hours total. A really excellent walk. Can totally recommend.

Sunday

The weather forecast was again for a very wet and windy day, so the obvious choice was a walk around Milnthorpe. We had a lovely morning beach walk without rain or wind but as soon as we entered the bush the rain came down. It was a pleasant, easy walk for a wild weather day. Exploring Collingwood, having a gourmet buffet dinner at home and playing Rumikub were some of the fun events of the rest of the day.



Monday

We had high hopes for a better weather day so all set off nice and early to the start of the Kaituna track. However, it was pouring rain when we got there. Coffee at Takaka easily won out and we headed home early, through the snow falling over the Takaka Hill.

Maggie, Yvonne H, Lynda, Kathy, Judy, Sonia, Una.

Photos: Kathy and Judy





Booth Cottage, Howard Valley

25 August 2024

Leader and Writer: Yvonne H



Well decorated Miners' Memorial. Photo:John

Seven of us went on the trip to Booth's Cottage - Dave, John, Kathleen, Lynda, Lynne, Sonia and Yvonne. It was a fine day in Motueka but the area around Glenhope looked like it would attract a bit of rain before the day was out. Being a hardy seven, no one asked to pull out and we packed wet gear and got to Louis Creek Goldfield Picnic Area at around 9.30am. We did return somewhat 'damp' but not drenched at about 2pm after a very pleasant day.

We crossed the Louis Creek at road level and then followed the 4WD track up the hill. It is now a substantial road as the pines are being harvested, and after about half an hour came to the well decorated Miners' Memorial, and morning tea.

This first part is not very attractive with the slash from the pines but after the memorial we walked through regenerating native bush. The various, ferns, mosses, lichens and fungi under the beech trees gave the bush a very lush flavour. PHOTO 1 Yvonne. The amount of rocks, now attractively covered, and water races are obvious all the way up showing the massive amount of earth works, mostly done by hand, by the seekers of what from the reports we have, was not a great deal of gold.



Booth Cottage. Photo: Yvonne

Another hour and a half from the Memorial got us to a clearing and Booth's Cottage and shed. The Cottage was built in 1933 and Sid, Eva and their son Teddy Booth lived there for 10 years. It was restored in 1955 and Teddy participated in that work. It was great to see the cottage so sympathetically restored as a testament to the Booth family and reflection for us all on how hard it must have been for the family. On the way up and around the Cottage are artefacts of the day including what Dave thought was the chassis of a Model T Ford - now well vegetated. PHOTO 2 Yvonne

We returned down the same way. Next time, in dryer weather, it would be good to cross the river and walk along where modern day gold fossicker still seek out gold or down the advanced mountain bike track between the river and the logging road.

This was the first time our Club has done this walk, although it seems to be regularly done by the Nelson and Waimea Clubs. It is a reasonably long drive in - thank you drivers. If we try it again an extension of the trip could include walking back up the road from the car park at Lewis River on to the Porikiri Track, up and then down to the Cottage and out via the track we took, the river or the MBT. This would probably add another 2 hours.



Well vegetated chassis. Photo: Yvonne



Other tramps



Lake Cristobal
25-27 May 2024
Did not happen

Conical Hill
16 June 2024
Did not happen

Brook Waimarama
14 July 2024

Mid Wairoa Hut
20-22 July 2024
Did not happen

North Branch Graham Valley
11 August 2024

Indistinguishable molluscan remains?

On the afternoon of 14 January 1948 a Nelson schoolboy, Malcolm Simpson, a member of the party on Professor Benson's first visit to Cobb Valley, knocked a fragment of a low limestone mound on the floor of the valley to disclose indistinct fossils. These were later identified as Late Middle Cambrian trilobites, about 505 million years old, and this was the first time Cambrian fossils had been found in New Zealand. Trilobites are an extinct form of marine arthropod.

During the Christmas - New Year break of 1947/48, Professor Benson and his wife were on holiday in Nelson, staying with Sir Theodore Rigg. Rigg was Director of the Cawthron Institute and, like Benson, was a Quaker. Benson expressed a wish to visit the Cobb Valley area from where, with R.A. Keble of Melbourne, he had described graptolites 20 years before. Rigg telephoned 'Jerry' Meredith who was in charge of Nelson District for the State Hydro Electricity Department asking him to facilitate Benson's trip (The Cobb River dam was under construction at the time).

Meredith was a friend of Reg Webber, Head of Engineering at Nelson College, and he told Webber of the proposed journey. Webber, in turn, was a friend of Malcolm Simpson's family and, having studied geology under Professor Bartrum in Auckland in the 1920's, he had been encouraging Malcolm's strong interest in the subject. So when he learnt of Benson's field trip he arranged for Malcolm, then in Form 4 at Nelson College, to join the party. Webber himself did not join the group.



Malcolm Simpson 1948

So it was that on the morning of Tuesday 13 January 1948 Meredith picked up Benson and Malcolm Simpson in Nelson city. They travelled via Motueka to Upper Takaka and after a detour to Takaka and Onekaka went on to the Cobb Hydro village at the confluence of the Takaka and Cobb rivers. There they met Stuart Preston, Cobb Station superintendent, and went on with him to the abandoned Hume Pipe Company's asbestos quarry, to meet Henry Chaffey, a local prospector and identity.

That night was spent in the hostel at the Hydro station and next morning, Wednesday 14 January, the three drove up the road to the Cobb Valley - a scenic drive through beech forest on to the ridge overlooking the valley and hydro works, then down the steep descent to the floor of the glacial valley where the construction of the dam and intakes was under way. Here Meredith remained for the afternoon to attend to business relating to the project. After lunch Benson and Malcolm, under the guidance of Eric Heine, an engineer at the site, and a colleague, left for the temporary dam further up the valley.



Henry Chaffey (left)
and Prof Benson
13 January 1948

At the dam they moved into a dinghy powered with an outboard motor and, steered by Heine, they went to the head of Lake Halley, named after the resident engineer in charge of the construction site.

Leaving the lake they went on foot further up the river flats. From previous visits Heine was aware of limestone outcrops on the valley floor and when the party reached a point about one mile east of Mt. Peel, they stopped at a low hillock of this limestone. It was on this rock prominence that Malcolm hammered off some of the weathered edge to expose the fresh limestone containing indistinct fossils. Malcolm passed these fossils to Benson but he showed little enthusiasm, suggesting that they were "indistinguishable molluscan remains", and the limestone was part of the Ordovician Haupiri Series (reasonable assumptions in the light of what was known of the geology at the time). Today, Malcolm Simpson ascribes Benson's initial indifference at the time to his frustration with the course the expedition had taken so far. He was the only professional geologist in the party and considerable time had been spent on non geological activities. Another factor would have been the effect on Benson of a strenuous two days of activity (he was 62 years old at the time). Whatever the circumstances, Benson, as an experienced geologist, would, in any case, have been cautious in making a field identification of the fragmentary material. Both he and Malcolm collected specimens. The party then returned by boat and car to the excavations for the permanent earth dam before Meredith, Benson and Malcolm continued to Nelson.

On his return to Dunedin, Benson discovered that the rock samples he had collected contained trilobites so he immediately wrote to Malcolm changing his on-the-spot identification of "indistinguishable molluscan remains". He then sent them off to C.J. Stubblefield at the Geological Survey of Great Britain for identification. Three months later, Malcolm received an excited telephone call from Benson to let him know that the fossils were the first Cambrian fossils discovered in New Zealand.

In 1998, on the 50th anniversary of the find, the Geological Society of New Zealand awarded Malcolm the Wellman Prize for his contribution to palaeontology.

From Hamish Campbell, 'Fossils - Oldest fossils – Paleozoic', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/9026/malcolm-simpson-1948> (accessed 25 July 2024).

