

# Otaihape Alpine Club

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[www.otaihape.org.nz](http://www.otaihape.org.nz)

## July 2011

While winter has been slow in coming, it looks like it is finally here with Whakapapa and Turoa getting good falls in early July. The school holidays are just around the corner and there are still some places available in the hut.

### New Members

A very warm welcome to the Helas, Murray, Nicholls, Mickelson, Gibson, McMartin and Holbrook families and Andrew Millar. We are thrilled to have 2 more Taihape families on board. I am sure you will find yourselves well looked after and welcomed.

### Procedure for subs and bookings payments

Please cease using any previous method of payment or previous bank account numbers and use the forms on the web site. The submit button sends copies to the booking officer, treasurer and membership officer. The correct account for payment is on the forms. You can make your own payment with your online banking as you would with any normal bill, or if you prefer, send a cheque, but still submit the form online with a note that payment is by cheque. Please ask for help if needed – email [president@otaihape.org.nz](mailto:president@otaihape.org.nz)

### Membership booklet

The updated information booklet will be sent out shortly.

### President's piece – 2010 review

2010 has been a year of action for the club. A very special event was Patron, Johan Bonnevie, celebrating his 85th birthday with family and friends in the lodge.



Johan Bonnevie celebrates his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday at OAC.

Johan instigated the refurbishment of the living area with a generous donation of \$500 with the stipulation that the work be completed by the next AGM. Members leapt in to action and the refurbishment was achieved within a couple of months at minimal cost to the club thanks to other members, inspired by Johan's gesture – also donating towards the cost.

Updating has been ongoing this year with new toilet pans, waste plumbing and in particular sterling effort from the small team who completely removed and replaced the front living room window to repair a serious leak.

Upgrading has also occurred with the computerized management systems of the club. These improvements are ongoing as we evaluate and create more user friendly systems. A new web site is creating more interest and enquiries; a large part of its success in searches is due to Judith Hamblyn's wonderful articles/blogs.

Neil particularly has given so much to the club over the years and I am pleased to announce he has been made Life Member. While he has stepped down as Club Captain, he will continue his very vital maintenance role.



Life Member Neil Ranford (right) with Hayden Muter.

See article about Neil on page 3.

The club weekend was resurrected last year – it was very successful and enjoyable with club races and cups awarded for the first time in many years and a fun club dinner to top it off.



Club weekend 2010.

Now that the snow is here, I look forward to evenings in the lodge catching up with you all and wish you an enjoyable and happy season.

Yvonne Holcombe, President

### **AGM 2011**

There was a good turnout at the AGM on 2 April. 2011/12 office holders are:

President: Yvonne Holcombe  
Immediate Past President: Peter Fletcher  
Treasurer: Jenny Mower  
Club Captain: Judith Hamblyn  
Vice Club Captain: Hamish Bell

Secretary: Jon Torgersen  
Booking Officers, Kim & Alison Duncan  
Membership Officer: Lorraine Illston  
Patrons, Johan Bonnevie & Selwyn Sawyer  
Committee: Barry Evans, Geoff Sawyer, Blair Muter, Garry Hawkins, Phil Oliver, Don Stratton, Neil Ranford.

### **Maintenance**

Last summer a lot of work went on at the hut to get it up to scratch for this season.

There were two advertised work parties, which were well attended. In addition to the long list of the annual jobs; the mattress covers, pillow slips and blankets were taken off the mountain and washed, the last of the old clay sewer under the hut was replaced and new toilets installed, all window sills were prepped and repainted along with the upstairs hallway and bathrooms. Paul and Yvonne have been doing a fantastic job of lifting the standard of the décor with their advice and practical help gained from years in the trade. The attic also had a good cleanout in anticipation of reinsulating the ceiling and three wool fadges of rubbish were flown out as a result.

One workparty was also held “by invitation only” (master builder Geoff Sawyer and just enough grunts to help him with the heavy lifting) to remove and repair the front window in the lounge to stop it leaking. An enchanting Saturday evening was spent

sitting in the lounge with clouds drifted through the hut from the open window cavity.

As well as the organised workparties, a number of members did jobs around the hut while they were there over summer. Jon and Sachi Torgersen have got the outside looking spick and span again with another coat of stain on the walls.

The kitchen now has new vinyl laid, covering the old vinyl for a bit of extra insulation.

As an energy saving measure, switches have been installed on windows in all the bunkrooms so that the heater goes off when the window is open.

Don Stratton has donated a Freeview dish and decoder which is in the process of being installed.



Lorraine Illston - Getting the hut ship shape at a working bee.

Thank you to everyone who has spent time working on the hut this last summer. A huge amount has been achieved and the hut is looking the best it ever has due to your efforts.

Neil Ranford, Maintenance Officer

### **New phone**

To save money we have disconnected the hut telephone and installed a car phone in its place. This will save us around \$800 in fixed charges per year.

It is a prepay phone and a small amount of credit will be put on it each year to keep the account active. The new phone is there for external callers to contact the hut and for emergency calls (111) out. If the credit is used up it will not be topped up until the following year.

The number of the new phone is **027 50238009**.

## **Energy efficiency project**

A sub committee has spent a considerable amount of time putting together a proposal and costings to install a central wood pellet boiler with radiators in all rooms of the hut for space and water heating, increase the level of insulation in the ceiling, and install a gas cook top and oven.

A funding bid has now been lodged with the Trillian Trust and we are waiting to hear whether we have been successful with some or (hopefully) the entire bid. At around \$85,000, it is a big project and may have to be completed in stages as funding permits. However, even if we cannot complete the whole project in one hit, the work done so far gives us some options to address the risks associated with rising energy supply costs to the club.

Thank you to everyone on the sub committee for the huge effort required to get this proposal together.

## **New members**

Early season is a great time to encourage family, friends, and colleagues to join the club. Otaihape has lots to offer prospective members – we are one of the friendliest clubs on the mountain and offer ski-in, ski-out accommodation. We are currently offering a special –the joining fee will be waived for first the 20 to sign up before 31 August 2011 (at committee's discretion). Half-price joining fee for the rest of the year. For more information about membership go to [www.otaihape.org.nz](http://www.otaihape.org.nz) or contact Lorraine Illston at [membership@otaihape.org.nz](mailto:membership@otaihape.org.nz)

## **Hut subscriptions**

Invoices for subs were sent out in May – we rely on subs being paid on time to ensure we can pay bills for maintenance and hut usage. If you haven't received your invoice please email Jenny Mower on [treasurer@otaihape.org.nz](mailto:treasurer@otaihape.org.nz)

## **Neil Ranford – Life Member**

Neil first stayed at the Otaihape Alpine Club hut in 1976 on a weekend ski trip with the Taihape Scout Group led by Ernie Cooksley, while his family was living in Taihape.

Being a good scout and trying to always be prepared, he arrived at the hut with his gas cooker, plate, cup, utensils and torch, expecting the hut to be like the other back country huts that he'd tramped to with the scouts. He was absolutely floored to find the hut was fully furnished, had electricity, running water and was just like a home away from home, which it indeed became in future years.

That first trip to the hut awakened Neil's passion for the mountain and skiing.

After this, Neil's parents started taking the family up the mountain skiing a few days a year, sometimes for day trips and sometimes to stay at the hut with the scouts.

In 1981 Bob Gray, an electrician in Taihape, who was a driving force in the club started to take Neil up to the hut for the weekend with his sons, and convinced his parents to join. They moved to Wellington shortly after this. Neil left school and got a job with the Railways. The Otaihape Alpine Club then became a big part of his life. With cheap travel as a perk of the job and buying a Whakapapa season pass made it

possible to travel up to stay at the hut and ski most weekends over the ski season relatively cheaply. He was soon roped onto the committee and managed to make it to most committee meetings by taking the afternoon railways bus from Wellington Station to Taihape then back down to Wellington on the night train.

Neil was made Club Captain around 1985 and apart from a few years while working on Ski Fields in the US, held that position until this year, keeping the members in touch with what was going on in the club and taking a prominent role in planning and executing all the maintenance work that is required to keep a building in good condition in the harsh environment encountered on Ruapehu.

In 1987 after realising he was already spending a lot of time travelling to Taihape to committee meetings and most summer weekends to go tramping in the Ruahines and with the winter coming on, work, studying for an electrical engineering qualification and travelling up to the hut frequently to ski was just going to be too much to fit in, something had to give. So he resigned from work. He made the Otaihape hut home, skiing during the day and studying in the evenings. This netted Neil 63 days skiing for the year, got him through his final exams at the end of the season and gave him experience living in an alpine environment to show on his CV.

6 years working at Whakapapa Ski Area on Lift Operations followed, working the off season at Heavenly Valley ski area in the US for the first 2 years then later working on Tracks for DOC at Whakapapa Village over the summer.

Staying in the hut during Cyclone Bola in 1988 when the hut almost lost its' roof was a scary experience. He couldn't sleep at night because of the buffeting and creaking noises and spent a lot of time in the ceiling the next day with bits of wood and nails to try and tie the rafters down while the wind gusts were lifting the entire roof up and pulling nails out. Neil spent a lot of winter evenings in the ceiling that year, adding nail plates and wiring the rafters down to re-secure the roof framing and prevent any recurrence of that frightening experience.

Neil has been in a number of facilities maintenance jobs over the years since working on the ski fields, helped in securing these positions by the knowledge of building services gained from working with members of the Otaihape Alpine Club on so many work parties. Neil enjoys being able in return to use experience gained in those jobs to help keep our great little friendly club in tip top condition so that he and our other members and guests can continue to enjoy the special experience of staying high on a snowy mountain in comfort.

Currently employed as the Area Asset Planner for DOC Ruapehu Area at Whakapapa Village now allows Neil to still be close to the mountain so that he can visit our great little hut frequently and continue to indulge his passion for skiing.

We are a very very lucky club.

THANKS Neil

## **Contributions welcome!**

This news letter is for all club members. If you have any news and/pictures you'd like to share please email [Judith\\_hamblyn@yahoo.com](mailto:Judith_hamblyn@yahoo.com)