

New Zealand's South Island has an abundance of inspiring walking areas and this has been recognised by the many official "Great Walks" which have been declared. Fortunately there are many more which are worthy of this description and not so-labelled, so are less crowded.

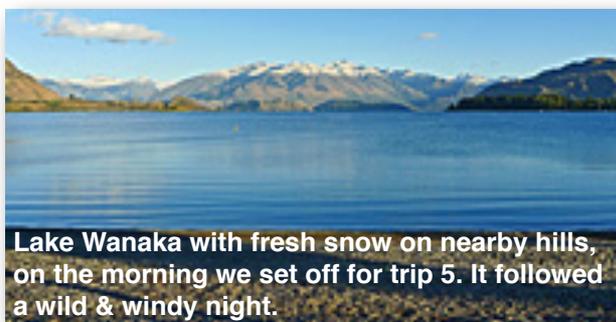
This years NZ trip continued the recent CMW tradition of Bas-led trips there, of unofficial "great walks". It resulted in an excellent series of walks in and near Mt Aspiring National Park shown. It was my first taste of one of these "Bas trips" and I was not disappointed!

This summers weather had been quite dry, so the river flows were very low (for NZ), making river crossings on our walks easier and safer.



Crossing the Wilkin: Easier this summer with low River flows

People on the trip: Bas, Hester, Alf, Duncan, Margaret & Rob



Lake Wanaka with fresh snow on nearby hills, on the morning we set off for trip 5. It followed a wild & windy night.

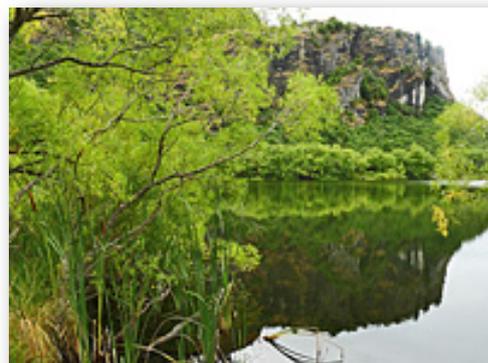
There were significant practical problems on last years trip caused by Christchurch's Feb-11 earthquake, so this year we picked up our hire van from the airport and drove straight to another town (Timaru) to do our trip food shopping.

After that our base between trips was Wanaka. As well as supermarkets, hardware (Mitre-10) and a National Park office (maps & guide books) there is a very good selection of gear shops. The latter I found useful, as I was easily able to find a comfortable pair of new boots, to replace those which disintegrated on my first walk (No blisters, with no wearing in!). We did some day walks from Wanaka, and visited its climbing gym.

Mostly though our stays in Wanaka were just overnight: to restock, refresh and re-organise. One of Bas' first tasks there, would be to jump on-line in the Caravan Park and check the weather forecast modeling and decide the next trip.



One of our daywalks followed the Breast Hill Track from Lake Hawea (A) up some very steep ridges to the new Pakituhi hut.



We spent an interesting few hours on an easy circuit starting from Diamond Lake (B)

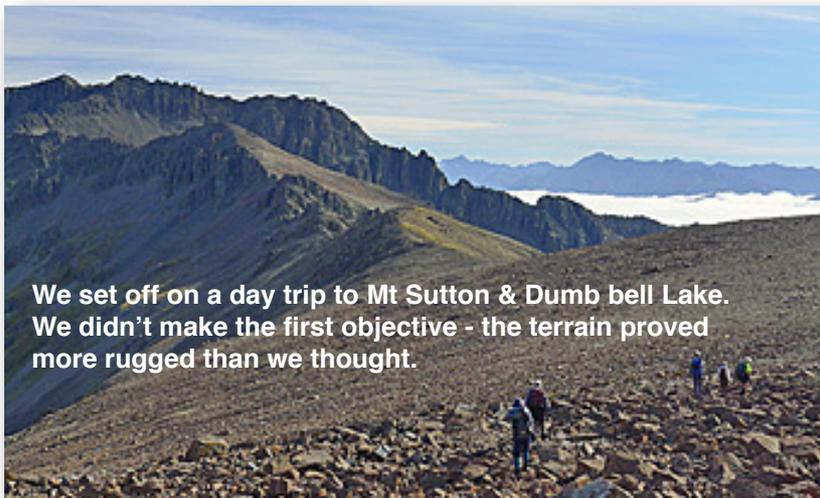
Trip 1: Ohau Range



Our warm-up walk was in the Ohau Range. After spending the morning driving there, we climbed to the Range from near the Lake via Sawyers Ck. We descended 3 days later via Freehold Ck.



We base camped in the upper part of Sawyers Ck, which gave easy access to the Range



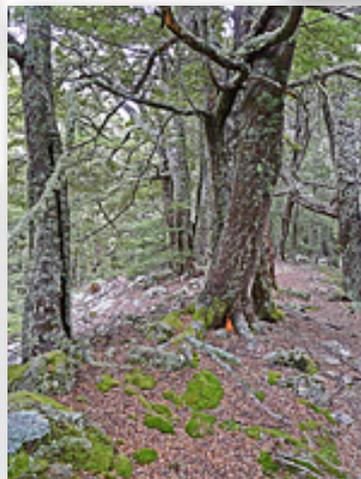
We set off on a day trip to Mt Sutton & Dumb bell Lake. We didn't make the first objective - the terrain proved more rugged than we thought.



Day 2: Awoke to cloud in eastern valleys - this stayed there until midday



The way out was in misty-drizzly conditions. We cut across to the marked route up Freehold Ck



The wet weather saw the end of the glue holding the soles onto my old (Scarpa) boots and they **both** began to separate. Fortunately I carry Duct tape and a small roll of it was just sufficient to hold them together until I returned to the van.



Trip 2: The Wilkin Valley



Peeking up the Nth Wilkin



Approaching the junction of Nth & Sth Wilkin (Top Forks) ... the route crosses the River



Lake Castalia - Nth Wilkin



The Wilkin is described as one of the finest valleys in Otago. It is superb: its mountains, forests, river valleys and alpine lakes. The walking there has some challenging routes.

We accessed this valley using a jetboat ride from Makarora, beginning our walk near Kerin Forks hut. We walked up to Waterfall Flat & returned the same way.

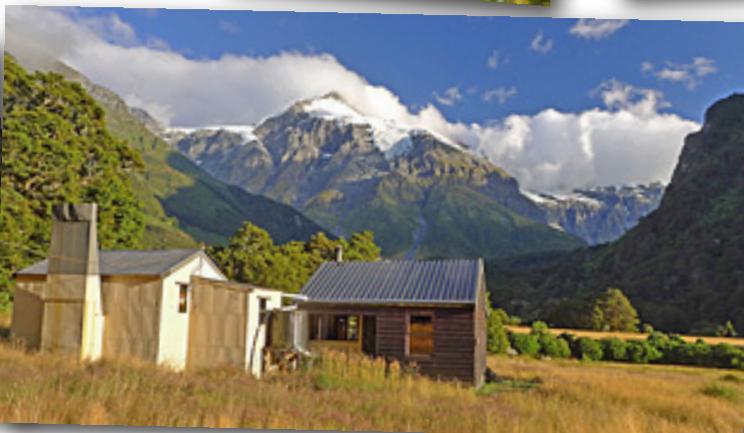


Alf and Kerin Forks hut. The lower valley is freehold with cattle grazing

Walking tracks frequently meander through beech forest in these valleys.



At Jumboland (flats). Wonderland Stream in background. (Jumbo was a horse belonging to an early grazier)



↖ Duncan tried out his raft in the Wilkin. Later he used it to paddle back from Kerin Forks to Makarora

We stayed at the Top Forks Huts for 3 nights. Its outlook is to Mt Pollux & Nth Wilkin.

← Bas & Hester in the Warden's hut

Alf protecting food from mice in main hut ↗

Drying out after Waterfall Flat →





(Bas photo)



A daywalk into the Nth Wilkin basin visited 3 superb lakes: Diana, Lucidus & Castelia



L. Lucidus



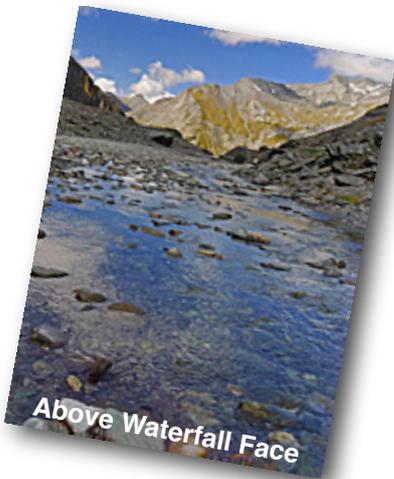
Mt Cook lily - mountain buttercup



Mountain ribbonwood



Olearia sp?



Above Waterfall Face



Waterfall Face, 200 m height

Camp

Twilight Pk



Dolichoglottis scorzonerooides

We camped at Waterfall Flat (Sth Wilkin), near the foot of the difficult Waterfall Face. In the afternoon, I climbed the Face and reached Rabbit Pass.

The next day we climbed about halfway up Twilight Peak, before abandoning it - too misty & no view.



An easy part of the ridge up Twilight Pk (Bas photo)



Rabbit Pass - named by explorer Douglas (1890's) when he saw rabbits pouring through from Wanaka to reach summer feed

Trip 3. West Matukituki



On the drive to Raspberry Flat. Freehold land and Stations occupy the Matukituki valley nearly to Aspiring Hut, so there were cattle, nearly to the Hut.

We had planned to walk in the East Matukituki valley, but that was to be a camping trip (with no huts). Rain was forecast, so we opted for the West Matukituki with its selection of huts.

I had spent a week there once, on a mountaineering course. I looked forward to returning and just being able to look around (not under the constraints of a Course), in any weather.



Aspiring Hut (NZAC) was large & comfortable. Above in clearing weather and below in typical weather. Built of local stone, post WW2.



Walking around the valley in the rain wasn't satisfying enough for Duncan. When he returned, he put in an hour cutting firewood for the hut's heater.

Near the start of the walk into the valley was the worthwhile diversion into the Rob Roy Stream - its forested path and its open basin with spectacular views of glaciers.

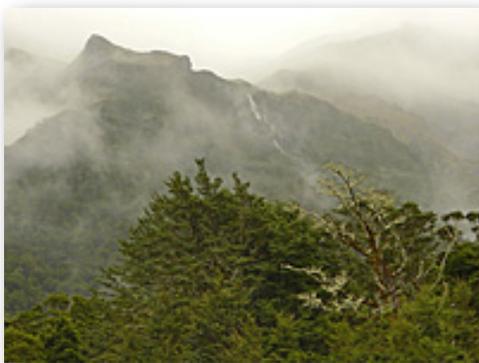


Shovel Flat

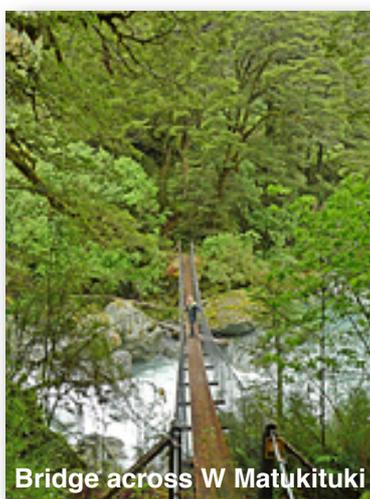


Bas photo

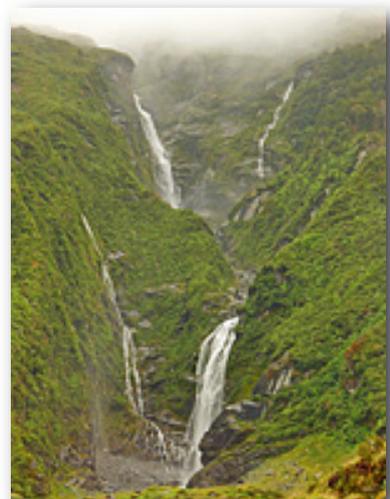
Duncan, Margaret & I explored some of the valley's forests and grasslands the next day - a wet day. There were limited views of the mountains, but the streams were impressive.



Track to French Ridge Hut



Bridge across W Matukituki



Trip 4: Huxley - Temple



The Huxley-Temple was an excellent walk, especially for the 3 of us who were able to complete the circuit via the spectacular V-Notch pass route.

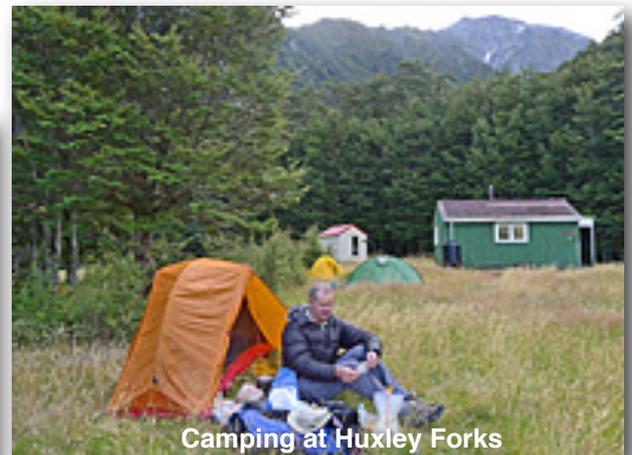
The walk was in a conservation reserve rather than the adjacent National Park areas (Aspiring to the south and Mt Cook to the north), but it lacked little by comparison.

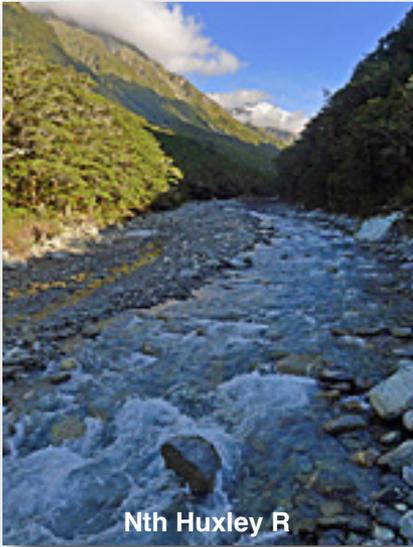
← The walk began along a private road up the broad Hopkins valley. The Hopkins valley floor is typically broad - 1.5 to 3 km wide gravel flats.



The Huxley is a narrower valley. A track avoided the gorge near its junction with the Hopkins.

We camped at Huxley Forks Huts. The huts were occupied the first night, so we camped outside. Mice were a big problem in the old (green) hut as well as for camping in close proximity.

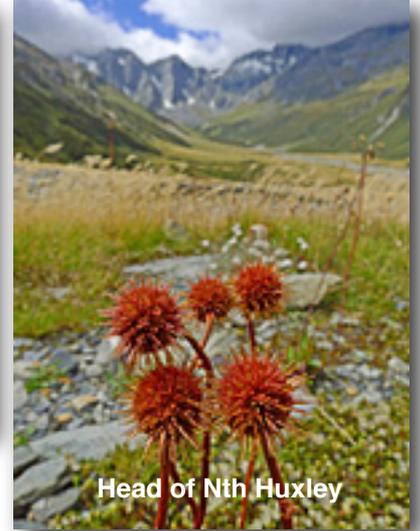




Nth Huxley R



A day trip up the Nth Huxley to Broderick Hut and halfway up Broderick Pass



Head of Nth Huxley

Acaena sp.



We walked to the head of Sth Huxley before crossing into Sth Temple Stream via V-Notch Pass



Camp at head of Sth Huxley



Climbing out of the Huxley



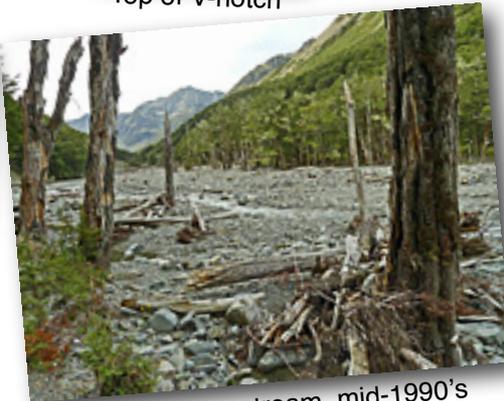
Top of V-notch



The other side of V-notch pass



Not forest, but an interesting mixture of scrub in the upper part of Temple Stream...



...Further downstream, mid-1990's floods had cut massive swathes through beech forest



In the re-sited Sth Temple Hut
Resting after the crossing: Rob, Margaret & Duncan

Trip 5: Brewster Hut



The Brewster Hut trip was a return walk from the Haast R (450 m) to the new (2007) Brewster Hut (1450 m).



The Hut's heavy duty door handle



On some nights of our trip, we had clear skys



The ascent to the Hut follows a steep path through forest, then a steep tussocky ridge. There had been light snowfall the night before. It was still evident when we arrived a the Hut, but not for long afterwards.



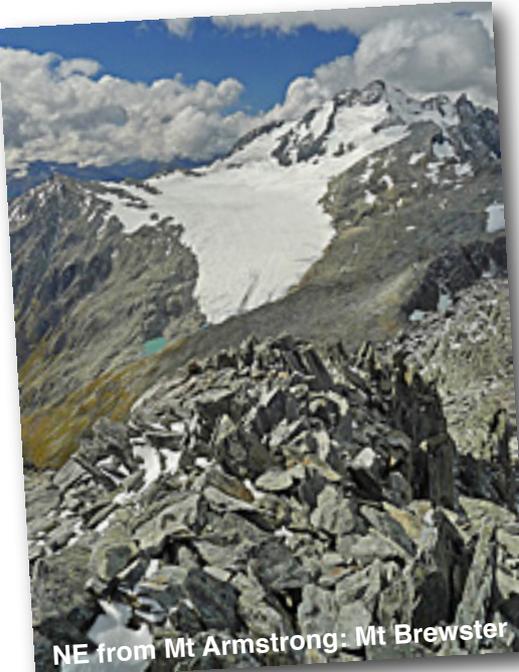
Raoulia grandiflora?



There are outstanding views from the hut, including of Mt Brewster and its Glacier.



Celmisia sessiliflora

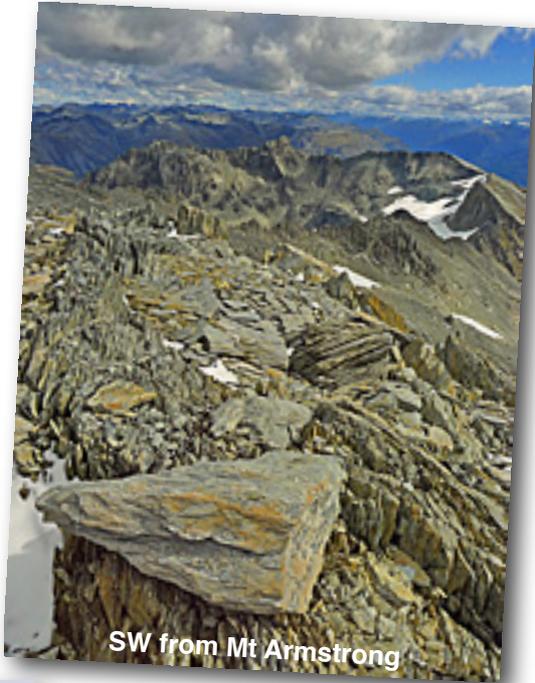


NE from Mt Armstrong: Mt Brewster

From the Hut interesting walks are possible and we did some: to Mt Armstrong (2174 m) and to the Brewster Glacier.

While we were there, there was a group doing a mountaineering course on the Brewster Glacier. We met them coming down.

There were also some day visitors through our 2 night stay.



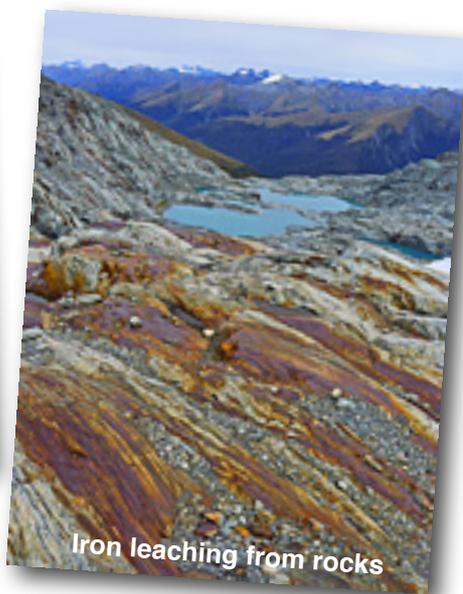
SW from Mt Armstrong



Scratch marks from the Glacier



Mt Brewster & the Brewster Glacier



Iron leaching from rocks



Sth Island Edelweiss



Glacial retreat is being measured here. Over the period 1977 - 2005 ice volume in the Southern Alps has decreased 17%.



Close to the glacier, it was noticeable how cold the air was.



Dolichoglottis scorzonerooides

