

Back(wards) Round the Temple

(with Bill)(scary eh ??)

by John Hore.

The sound of laughter drifted up from the creek , waking us from our light sleep . There seemed to be a lot of joviality among the late comers . Ross' watch says 11.05PM . They're 5 minutes late !! There's some clumping on the veranda and some heavily laden figures come through the door into the candle light . "You've made good time," we comment , as a very wet Bill comes in . They hadn't left Oamaru till 6pm. and here they were at the South Temple hut after just over 2 hours in the torchlight from the carpark . "It was like walking through a tunnel ," someone commented , " the going was really good till Bill put his foot in a hole on the river crossing ." "Well , you know he always likes to freshen up before bed , but usually he takes his clothes off !" says a voice from the top bunk . There's introductions all round as some of us haven't met . Sleeping bags are rolled out , food hung from the roof above mouse level , and wet boots and clothes are put near the fire to dry as we gradually settle in , to get some well earned rest before what will be a strenuous day tomorrow .

The program said , North temple - South Huxley - South Temple round trip , but rather than have to pitch tents in the dark , Bill decided that we would go to the South Temple and stay in the hut on the first night . A bit of a worry as this would be the opposite way round to his last trip round this circuit, and our tramp leader is not one to look back very often to see where he's been . He said Ross and I could go earlier if we liked , as Margie , Colin , Jim and he couldn't leave town till 6 PM ., and wouldn't get to the hut until about 11 PM . We took the early option , as we both had memories of our friend Neil falling from the Hollyford trail in the torchlight , and his long recovery ; so we had a leisurely walk in , arriving to a sunlit hut with the evening sun shining through a gap in the mountains surrounding it . We'd looked up to Mt. Maitland , remembering our attempt to climb it and the avalanche that crossed our tracks after we had turned back and sat looking where we'd been , from the big shingle scree on the other side of the valley . We'd found another log bridge had replaced the last one and were able to cross to the hut with dry feet . (Sorry Bill.) We'd gathered wood for the wood shed from the driftwood piled against the bank down from the hut , then stoked the fire up to boil the billy while we cooked tea . Someone had flogged the good billies that used to be here , and I could only find one I'd like to eat out of , so rather than blacken ours , we'd cooked on the Primus , banking the fire so there'd be hot water for the "moonlighters" to have a hot drink when they arrived .

The sun sparkled on the water as it rushed between the boulders as we broke through the last patch of scrub and found the trail again . I'd led everyone astray after we'd crossed the river , following an animal trail that had us floundering through thick scrub for half an hour or so . We'd been making good time in the cool of the late March morning . The day was fine and clear and beginning to warm up as the sun reached deeper into the valley . We look at the slopes ahead to try to see the best route . " Burns reckoned right up the middle , then up under that shadowy bit to the left ." I say . We look at the tussocky slopes nearer to us , to see if they're negotiable then we