

**THREE HUTS: WAIHOHONU to KETETAHI**

**Map:** Tongariro and Ruapehu, 1:50,000 T19 and T20 – Refer Figures 1, 5 and 6

**GPS:** Geodetic Datum 1949 – Refer Figures 14a (Geographic) and 14b (NZ Grid)

**How to get to the start**

- Exit Taupo down the lake on **SH1** through Turangi onto the **Desert Highway (SH1)** for just over 15 km.
- Turn right off Desert Highway just after the Rangipo Intake Road on gravel, motor track signed **Waihohonu Track**
- Drive in the few hundred metres and off-load in the car park.

The route to the start can be followed in Figure 1. The route of the tramp can be seen as the brighter red line with dark dots running in a curve from sheet T20 to the middle of sheet T19.

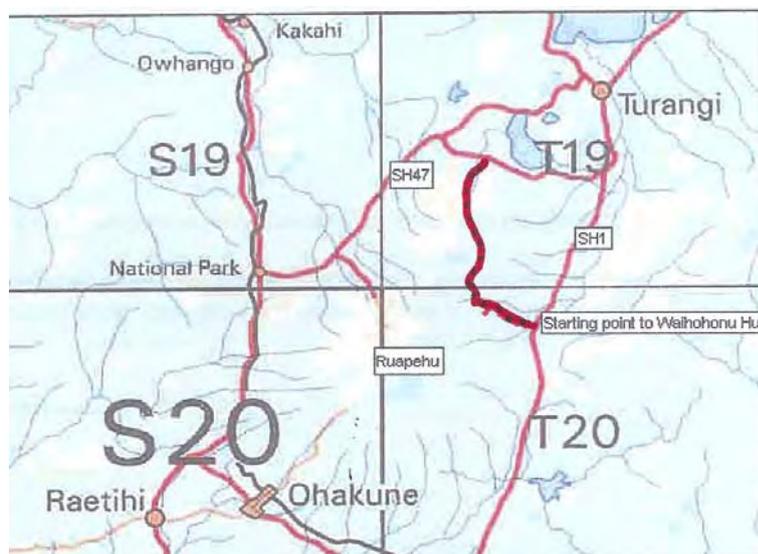
The start is labeled at the top of sheet T20 off SH 1.

**Rough Description**

This is a three day, two-night, moderate to fit tramp passing the Waihohonu Hut and sleeping at the Otutere then Ketetahi Huts. Being an A to B tramp transport is required to drop you at the start off SH1 and collect you off SH46.

The objective of undertaking this tramp was to supervise three teenagers doing their D of E Silver award and the opportunity was taken to study the route and map accuracy – hence there is more data in this report than normal.

Day one consists of 1:30 minutes walk into Waihohonu Hut on first rate, virtually level track then another 3 hours on to the Otutere Hut still on good track but which is steep in places. There is about a 100 metre altitude gain to reach the Waihohonu Hut then a further gain of about 200 metres to the Otutere Hut.

**Figure 3 Back over Central Crater from Blue Lake****Figure 1 Map Sheet, Access to the Start and Location****Figure 2 Approaching the Waihohonu Hut**

Day two is a bit more strenuous but relatively short. The walk consists of 3:30 minutes with some rather steep slopes, which are almost a scramble in some weather conditions, up to past Red Crater (altitude gain of about 600 metres) followed by a flat section past Blue Lake and Central Crater then a zig-zagging section down (altitude loss of about 290 metres) to the Ketetahi Hut.

Day three is easy though it can be tiring as it is all down hill (altitude loss of about almost 700 metres) but there are a lot of steps and some parts are quite steep. Allow 1:30 minutes to 2 hours from the hut to the car park on the gravel road which feeds out to SH46.

The huts are all first class; sleeping space for around 24 – but more can and do squeeze in, piped water system, gas cookers and gas heaters. But they can be busy – especially the Ketetahi!

**Detail – Day 1**

From the car park just off SH1 (**WP1**) it is a relatively easy, straightforward walk along the wide track. Some slight confusion can occur when descending towards the stream line on entering some trees – just stay awake and look for signs bearing in mind that the track bends round slightly to your left here and not to the right. You know you are on-course when you reach a small bridge (**WP2**) after about 1.25 kilometres. In fact this section of the walk can be rather boring as it is a bit flat, unexciting and on windy days slightly exposed – these comments are more appreciated when walking out from Waihohonu Hut. You know when you are almost at Waihohonu when the notice board (Figure 3) is seen (**WP3**) where the path to the Ohinepango Springs goes off on your left. Even when carrying full packs the Waihohonu Hut can be reached in about 1:30 minutes from the car-park. The route can be seen in Figures 5 and 6.

If you are on a day walk, or have plenty of time, diversions can be made to the Ohinepango Springs and also to the Old Waihohonu Hut. The old hut as shown in Figure 4 is worth visiting. Directions for the above deviations can be found in the description of the Waihohonu Huts tramp.

**Figure 4 The Old Waihohonu Hut**



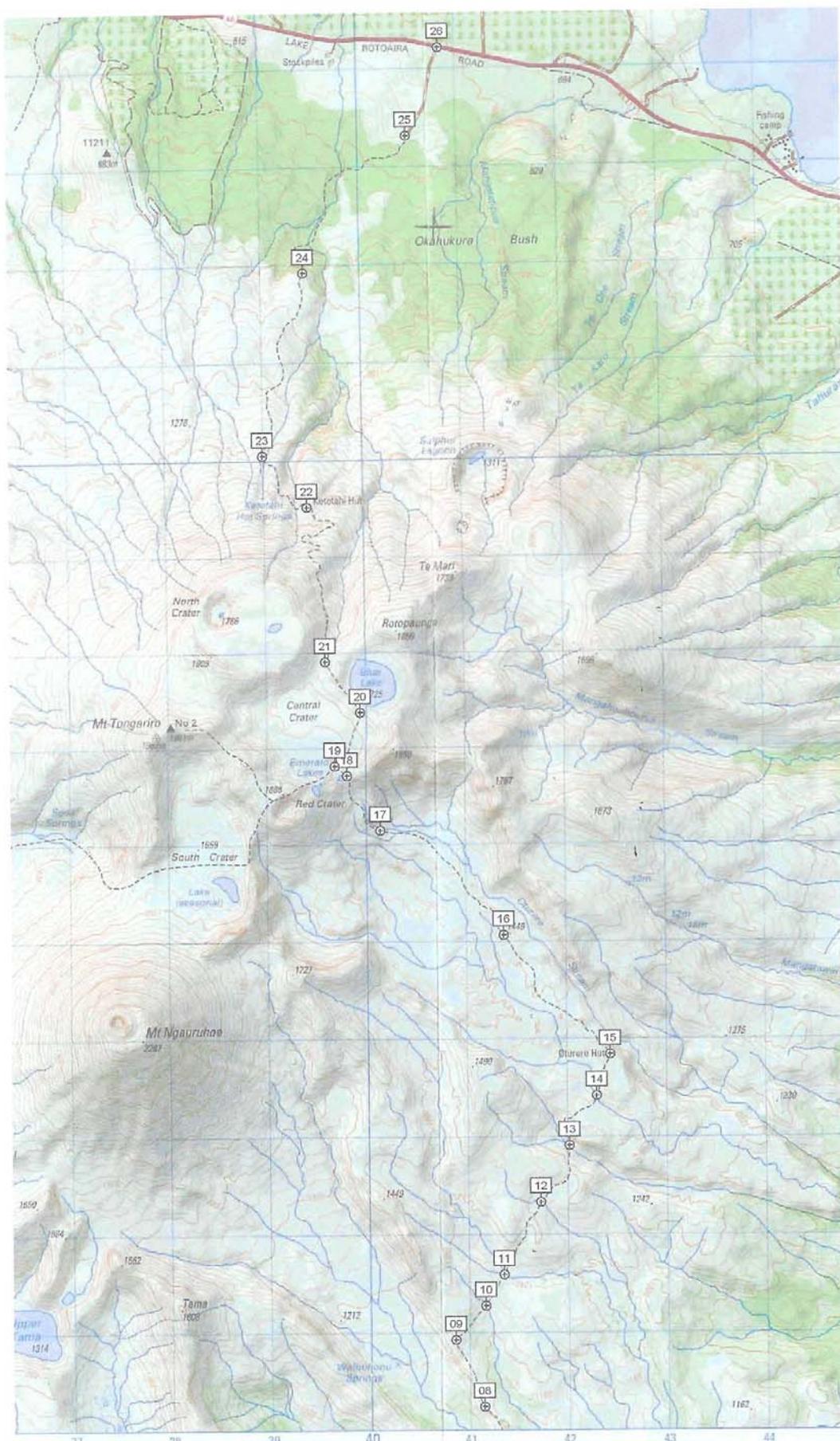
From the new Waihohonu Hut the walk now starts going uphill (Figure 7) and your next target is to reach the minor crest (**WP5**) at about 1240 masl. Soon after this a small track will be seen on your left but the map shows this goes nowhere.

A very clear change of direction occurs (**WP9**) when you swing round from going NW to NE. As you proceed upwards in this direction you do have some hard work as there are 5 stream crossings (**WPs 10,11,12,13 and 14**) with their own descents and re-ascents – however, look behind you at some point for a fabulous view of Ruapehu ( Figure 8). After stream number 5 you soon arrive at the hut having taken around 3 hours from Waihohonu.

**Figure 5 Extract of Map with Critical Waypoints and Route – Sheet T20**



Figure 6 Extract of Map with Critical Waypoints – Map Sheet T20



**Figure 7 Waihohonu to Otutere**



**Figure 8 Mount Ruapehu from NE Heading Track**



**Mapping Comments Day 1**

The GPS track shown on the right as the green line is almost "spot - on" the mapped track, which is shown as the dotted line, in some sections - mainly from the Desert highway to the Waihohonu Hut.

But, there is a major disagreement at the junction from Sheet T20 to Sheet T19 - in fact there is a mapping problem here as the tracks on the two sheets do not meet.

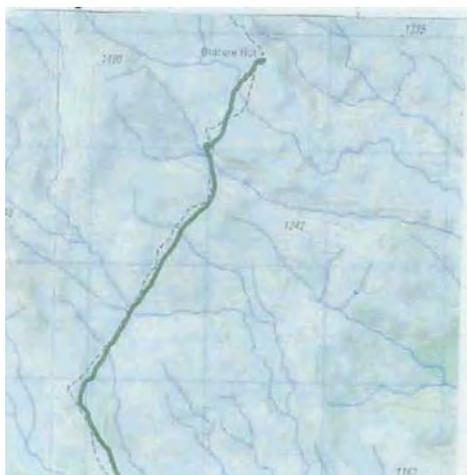
As can be seen the "true" situation is that the track crosses to the ridge east of the mapped track. Once onto sheet T19 the GPS track does follow the mapped track on that (T19) sheet.

Trampers should be aware of this mapping irregularity in case they are trying to follow a compass led route.

**Figure 9 Map Sheet T20 Ruapehu 1:50,000**



**Figure 10 Map Sheet T19 South of Otutere**



The GPS track, shown as a green line in Figure 10 on the left, agrees very well with the mapped track which is shown as the dotted line.

The minor deviations could be errors in GPS set-up or track realignments.

As stated on the comments above or sheet T20 the error on Sheet T20 does not continue on T19.

No problems would be expected from following a compass led route in this section.

## Detail – Day 2

When this tramp was done the foul weather that hit overnight whilst in the Otutere Hut caused quite a long delay in setting-out as long discussions were held on the wisdom of attempting the crossing to the Ketetahi Hut. There is a lot of hard work climbing up to Red Crater and it is very exposed and the possibility of slipping on this ascent does exist. In the event the crossing was made in the bad conditions with no mishap but, the weather was so foul – wind and rain – all got rather wet and tired as it was just not worth stopping for lunch on the way – plus the fact that absolutely nothing was seen due to the low cloud and rain.

The climb starts as soon as the hut is left and it is through very rugged terrain with no vegetation of note seen. A “high point” is found about half way up (**WP16**) and then the real climb starts when you find yourself on a narrow ridge (**WP17**) parallel to the stream line – this section is NOT easy and care must be taken. Near the top of this steep climb you should see Red Crater followed by the Emerald Lakes and the junction with the Tongariro Cross path is then met (**WP19**).

Expect to start meeting large crowds of people here – some quite inappropriately dressed for the crossing they are doing (Tangariro Crossing). The area here is flattish and can be very wet and messy going as you head towards the Blue Lake. There are some good lunch spots around here in good weather.

A long descent (**WP21**) on a zig zagging path soon starts after the Blue Lake and eventually the Ketetahi Hut can be seen then reached (**WP22**).

You may well have to fight your way through the hundreds of people milling around and in the hut as it is a main stopping place for day walkers doing the Tongariro Crossing. However, this hut does have a warden and normally day walkers are kept out of the hut so overnight people can have access etc

Figure 11 Looking SE From above the Blue Lake to Ngauruhoe



Figure 12 Kitchen Area Ketetahi Hut



Mapping Comments Day 2

Figure 13 Otutere to Ketetahi Hut

The GPS track as shown as the pink line on the map on the right overall shows very good agreement with the mapped track apart from the section from the Emerald Lakes to the Blue Lake.

From the Emerald Lakes the GPS track lies slightly to the East of the mapped track and follows a curve rather than a straight line.

This area between the Emerald and Blue Lakes is rather wet and it is possible there has been track realignment which would explain the apparent discrepancy.

The upper part of the climb from Otutere to the Emerald lakes shows a slight displacement but this could be due to the track being on a narrow ridge and some poor GPS signal in places due to being slightly off the actual ridge line and hence shaded from a clear view of the sky for the GPS unit.

However, little problem would arise from following a compass led route on this section.

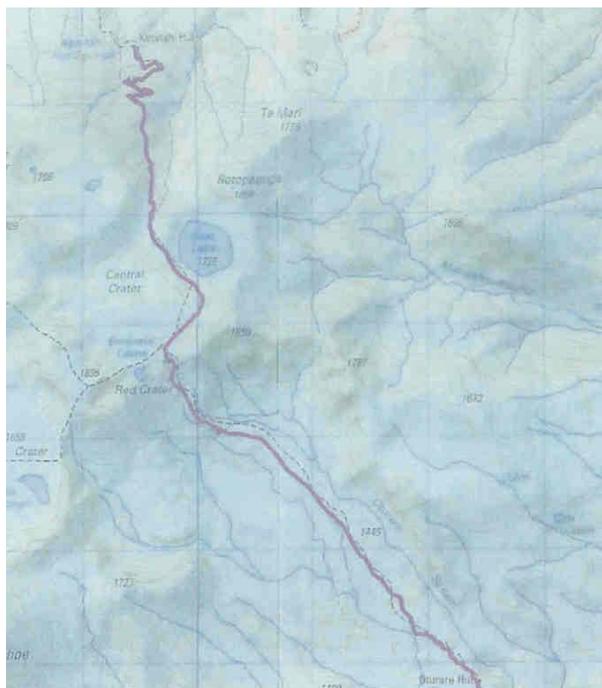


Figure 14a GPS Waypoint Data – Geographic Format

Datum : Geodetic Datum 1949

Waypoint File : D:\Walks & Treks\NZ Tramps\GPS Data\Waihohonu Huts.wpl

03/08/2005 10:39:23

Num	Name	Latitude	Longitude	Alt(m)	Description
1	014	-39 13 44.8	175 43 56.7	959	Waihohonu Track car park SH1 0:0hrs
2	015	-39 13 42.7	175 43 04.9	983	Bridge 25min walk
3	016	-39 13 28.3	175 42 17.3	1045	Viewpoint / coffee stop 1 hour walk
4	017	-39 12 49.6	175 41 14.0	1090	Enter trees on track 1:25 min walk
5	018	-39 12 42.0	175 40 49.6	1096	Tracks cross, go right to Waihohonu Hut 1:35 min walk
6	019	-39 12 36.8	175 40 45.8	1097	Waihohonu Hut - 1:40 min walk
7	020	-39 12 39.8	175 40 20.9	1111	Old Waihohonu Hut 2:10 min walk
8	021	-39 12 59.6	175 40 40.1	1085	Stream after steep downhill with rope - 3:15 min walk
9	022	-39 13 06.8	175 40 39.9	1083	Bridge over "spring" stream - 3:30 min walk
10	023	-39 13 04.8	175 40 34.1	1084	Ohinepango Spring 3:35 walk (Total return 5:15 min)
11	01	-39 13 43.6	175 44 07.0		START Junction with desert highway
12	02	-39 13 41.5	175 43 12.5		Footbridge @1.25 km
13	03	-39 12 43.8	175 40 59.9		Junction to Ohinepango springs
14	04	-39 12 33.7	175 40 49.3		Waihohonu Hut - lunch
15	05	-39 11 57.8	175 40 22.6		Crest at @ 1240metres
16	06	-39 11 52.1	175 40 18.0		Footpath to nowhere on LHS (SW)
17	07	-39 11 38.9	175 40 17.4		Sheet edge to T19 mis-match
18	08	-39 11 34.9	175 40 30.2		Mis-match to sheet T20
19	09	-39 11 12.8	175 40 17.6		Turn from NW to NE direction
20	10	-39 11 01.1	175 40 30.0		Stream crossing 1 of 5
21	11	-39 10 50.4	175 40 37.4		Stream crossing 2 of 5
22	12	-39 10 25.7	175 40 52.4		Stream crossing 3 of 5
23	13	-39 10 06.6	175 41 03.8		Stream crossing 4 of 5
24	14	-39 09 49.5	175 41 14.9		Stream crossing 5 of 5
25	15	-39 09 35.5	175 41 20.1		Oturere Hut - night 1 stop
26	16	-39 08 56.6	175 40 34.6		High point below spot height 1449 m
27	17	-39 08 22.7	175 39 42.2		Steep area ahead, path parallel to stream
28	18	-39 08 04.9	175 39 27.9		Emerald lake on LHS (SW)
29	19	-39 08 01.7	175 39 22.7		Junction with Tongariro path
30	20	-39 07 43.4	175 39 33.1		At Blue Lake bend from NNE to NNW
31	21	-39 07 26.8	175 39 18.0		Start descent on Zig Zagging path
32	22	-39 06 35.0	175 39 09.4		Ketetahi Hut - stop Night 2
33	23	-39 06 18.2	175 38 50.3		Junction in valley to springs
34	24	-39 05 16.5	175 39 06.0		Commence steep descent into trees
35	25	-39 04 29.4	175 39 48.4		Car park at track / road ends
36	26	-39 03 59.4	175 40 01.3		Junction with Lake Rotoaira Road

**Figure 14b GPS Waypoint Data – NZ Grid Format**

Datum : Geodetic Datum 1949

Waypoint File : D:\Walks &amp; Treks\NZ Tramps\GPS Data\Silver award tramp.wpt

03/08/2005 09:50:18

Num	Name	Zone	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
1	01		2746183	6216116		START Junction with desert highway
2	02		2744879	6216220		Footbridge @1.25 km
3	03		2741754	6218096		Junction to Ohinepango springs
4	04		2741509	6218414		Waihohonu Hut - lunch
5	05		2740903	6219540		Crest at @ 1240metres
6	06		2740797	6219721		Footpath to nowhere on LHS (SW)
7	07		2740794	6220127		Sheet edge to T19 mis-match
8	08		2741107	6220241		Mis-match to sheet T20
9	09		2740825	6220930		Turn from NW to NE direction
10	10		2741134	6221282		Stream crossing 1 of 5
11	11		2741321	6221608		Stream crossing 2 of 5
12	12		2741702	6222357		Stream crossing 3 of 5
13	13		2741993	6222938		Stream crossing 4 of 5
14	14		2742277	6223456		Stream crossing 5 of 5
15	15		2742414	6223885		Oturere Hut - night 1 stop
16	16		2741360	6225115		High point below spot height 1449 m
17	17		2740132	6226198		Steep area ahead, path parallel to stream
18	18		2739805	6226759		Emerald lake on LHS (SW)
19	19		2739685	6226861		Junction with Tongariro path
20	20		2739951	6227418		At Blue Lake bend from NNE to NNW
21	21		2739604	6227940		Start descent on Zig Zagging path
22	22		2739444	6229543		Ketetahi Hut - stop Night 2
23	23		2739002	6230072		Junction in valley to springs
24	24		2739437	6231964		Commence steep descent into trees
25	25		2740498	6233384		Car park at track / road ends
26	26		2740837	6234298		Junction with Lake Rotoaira Road

**Detail – Day 3**

This is the day with the shortest distance and time but it is a bit hard on the knees when carrying a full pack as it is virtually all down hill though there are a couple of quite steep climbs soon after starting from the Ketetahi Hut.

The path is not quite so good for the first 30 minutes or so and is in need of maintenance, but this section of track is NOT the responsibility of DOC since this area falls within Maori land - though there is no restriction to passing through as long as one stays on the track.

There are notices to this effect and these should be respected.

If the weather is clear Rotoaira Lake should be visible from a few places on the descent

**Figure 15 View over Rotoaira Lake During the Descent from Ketetahi**

When you get into the second of the stream lines (**WP23**) in this early part there is a notice giving details of the hot springs that are noticeable upstream to your left by the clouds of steam. Once out of this valley the track improves and soon becomes slightly less tiring on the knees as the slope eases and you work down a long spur or ridge. The descent becomes a bit steeper again when you enter the trees (**WP24**) and there are quite a few stair-cases to negotiate. The end of the walking track (**WP25**) is reached in 1:30 to 1:45 minutes from the hut and, all being well, you can get under the shelter until your transport arrives if it is not there waiting for you. At busy times of the year there can literally be hundreds of people hanging about here after completing the Tangariro Crossing.

**Figure 16 The End – Shelter and a Seat**



### Mapping Comments Day

The GPS track, shown as the brown line, on the map on the left generally shows good agreement with the mapped track the dotted line.

The disagreement that does occur happens on entering the trees / bush (shown as green on the map) and would most likely be associated with weak GPS signals. The GPS unit needs a clear view of the sky to be accurate and the area in question is heavily wooded (also wet when recording was done) and on steep slopes:

Wet vegetation gives poor signals due to the signal being masked and reflections off the wet vegetation. Steep slopes means that the GPS unit cannot always have a clear view of the sky when one is in a valley

.However, it should also be considered if:

- There has been track realignment, and
- Could the originally mapped track be clearly seen on the aerial photographs from which the map was compiled?

On the ground the track is so obvious and well marked that no problems would be expected from a compass led route.

**Figure 17 Ketetahi Hut to Car Park**



### Notes

(Garmin Summit GPS on **Geodetic datum 1949** with good signal)

**WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit

**masl** = metres above sea level (Note that not all altitudes were taken during this tramp but they can be obtained easily from the map)

Several of the photographs were taken on other tramps in the same area as that described but in better weather.