

**New Zealand
Outdoor Recreation
CONSORTIUM**



“A partnership to maintain and enhance backcountry facilities”

Top Crooked Hut



Location

West Coast, inland from Greymouth. Top Crooked Hut is located in the Crooked valley headwaters on a terrace on the TL of the river. It was shifted to its current site from one closer to the river by the army in 1991 because of an encroaching shingle fan a short distance upriver. The forest around the hut is predominantly rata/ kamahi & the peaks of the Kaimata Range & Morgan Tops provide a picturesque backdrop. The Crooked is a rugged little valley with great remote ambience. Visits to the hut are infrequent, mostly groups doing the Lake Morgan Tops circuit.

Type

Top Crooked Hut is an unmodified NZFS S81 four-bunk design with an open fire. It is believed to have been built by Don Cowlin, the Ranger at Ahaura between 1963 and 65. It is lined with the original tar paper. There is a toilet & water is from the River.

Condition

Top Crooked Hut is in good condition. DOC painted & resealed it & did some basic maintenance in 2004 & revisited in 2012 to rebuild the woodshed. Our plan was to replace a few of the outside piles if they needed replacing, fix a leak in the roof above the cupboard & do some track work on the spur up to Morgan Tops.

Maintenance status

Top Crooked Hut is designated as 'minimal maintain' by DOC. They undertook track clearing in much of the Crooked valley in May 2015 but have yet to clear the section below the Morgan River confluence. Martin Clapham, Kevin Cohen, Craig & William Benbow & Paul Reid, all from the Permatat group did some hut maintenance & further track work late May 2015.

Worked completed

We took advantage of a DOC backflight (as they were flying crews out of both the Top Crooked & Jacko Flat Huts respectively) & flew into Top Crooked Hut the afternoon of 22 May where we based ourselves for 2 nights.

Saturday 23 May dawned fine & crisp with a dusting of snow overnight. We climbed the steep & freshly cut track to the bush-line & onwards & upwards through sub-alpine scrub to the 1260m contour & a flat spot where the orange sleeved waratahs & post driver had been flown to the day before. We gathered them up & continued climbing the spur & begun driving in the waratahs at regular intervals as previously there was a distinct absence of them. We followed an obvious terrace/ bench at about the 1350m contour towards the east which heads towards a low point on the main Morgan Tops. The last waratah we put in place was at 1420m. Map grid reference 1492850 5272930 or NZ Topo50 Map BU21 928 729. We returned the same way & 'drove home' a few more waratahs between the point they were dropped at & the bush-line. Refer to www.remotehuts.co.nz for a route description from Top Crooked Hut up on to the Morgan Tops.



Above: Craig Benbow positioning a new waratah



Above: A great day to be on the Morgan Tops

Sunday 24 May again dawned fine, so we set about doing some work on & around the hut. The hut door was removed & the bottom trimmed off as it was scragging the floor where the base of the door had swollen from water ingress. To complement the trimmed door base a metal door sill was

cut to measure & installed. A liberal amount of Metalex was applied to the wood surface prior to attaching the flashing.



Above: Martin Clapham (L) & Craig Benbow (R) trimming the base of the door



Above: William Benbow (left rear), Kevin Cohen (right rear), Martin Clapham (left front) & Craig Benbow (right front) hard at work



Above: Securing the new door sill flashing

The dwarf-height wood shed was cleaned out & restocked with firewood that DOC had cut into rings. Based on the 10 or so parties to visit Top Crooked Hut yearly there is quite a few years' worth of wood cut & split, awaiting to heat the hut.



Above: Wood shed before & after

An angle door flashing was moulded to the base of the door to direct water away. Where the flashing meets the door a liberal amount of sealant was applied. To attach the angle flashing an additional piece of treated timber was screwed into place that allowed us to realign & permanently sandwich the loose tongue & groove door boards. Small flashings were made to cover the ends of the floor bearers as seen on the far left pile in the photo below. The outside piles we had planned on replacing were not replaced because they are in good condition.



Above: New door sill & door angle flashing



Above: Flashings on pile bearers

A significant amount of shrubbery & vegetation was cleared away from the front of the hut to let more light & air in to the hut site. Vegetation was removed from around the piles & base of the hut. The hut now has a view of the river on the terrace below.

Loose & rusted lead-head nails were replaced on the hut roof with hex-head rubber washer screws & likewise, to flat-head nails on the exterior walls of the hut.



Further work

A few more waratahs are needed in the sub-alpine zone, particularly at the point on the main Morgan Tops where people should drop off & head southwest towards the terrace/ bench & subsequently to the bush-line.

A step outside the hut on the existing concrete pad would be a great addition as currently it is a large step up or down from the hut onto what can be a slippery pad.

At some point in the near future the roofing iron should be removed & new wire netting & building paper applied, as well as installation of Bitufoam to eliminate the significant draughts from the gaps under the roofing iron. This would help reduce dripping & condensation building up.

Installation of timber to enclose the piles & underfloor area of the hut would help keep the hut warmer & prevent rain driving in under the floor with its associated impact on rising damp.

The toilet could do with some building paper under the roofing iron to stop the drips.

The wood shed would benefit from a splash of paint & installation of building paper under the roofing iron to reduce condensation & dripping onto the dry wood.

Many thanks to

The High-Country Consortium, specifically FMC for funding to facilitate the project. DOC for flying in the purchased materials when they headed into the valley, Simon Lawn from Ahaura Helicopters for dropping the waratahs & post-driver high up on the spur & to Martin Clapham, Kevin Cohen & Craig & William Benbow for their excellent work.

Paul Reid

Project leader