

TUNNEL CREEK HUT PARINGA VALLEY SOUTH WESTLAND APRIL 2015

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HISTORY

Tunnel Creek is a classic 6 bunk hut built by the NZFS sometime in the late 1960's. The sign on the door indicates a build date of 1965, but photos and discussion with Peter Fullerton, who spent a night in an older hut across the river in 1967, indicate the current hut did not exist at that time. (pers comm). This older hut on the true right had an associated meatsafe. The concrete base and iron cladding remains can still be seen (2015). At the current hut, finger writing in the fireplace concrete indicate a date of May 1970. I would love to hear from anyone who can provide more information about either the old hut, tracks in the valley, or the current hut. Here are 2 photos of the old hut on the true right taken in 1967.



DOC MAINTENANCE

The current logbook indicates that DOC came in at times to inspect/carry out limited work. In

April 2002, two staff (Haast) spent one night and cleaned the hut, scrubbing the walls, laying rat poison and scrubcutting.

Oct 2006 three DOC staff (Fox Glacier) spent a day cleaning, inspecting and doing a site cleanup around the hut before flying out.

Jan 2008 four staff (DOC Sth Westland) spent one night in the hut, cleaned it, and put in the current toilet before flying out.

June 2011, two DOC staff (Fox and Haast) flew in and out on a hut inspection.

March 2015 one DOC inspector flew in for an hour, inspected, replaced some signs, secured a loose piece of ply then flew back.

About 10 Helo flights servicing two overnight visits and three daytrips.

There are also a few hut users recording ongoing maintenance. Eg; Les Battersby notes, 'Spent a couple of days on firewood and cleaning mattresses.' And I think

it was Les who repaired a hole in the floor with an old Anchor can carefully flattened out and tacked down.

Another party in Nov 2010 went up to the rock bivvy and 'retaped the route through the middle section'.

Tunnel Creek Hut, July 2012



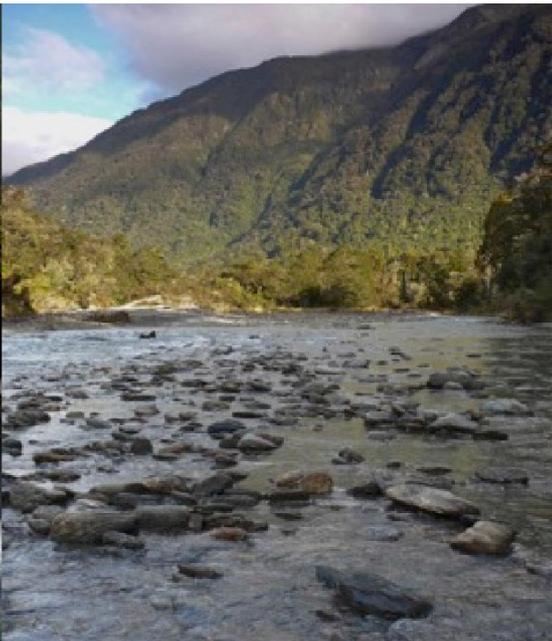
MY INVOLVEMENT

My first visit to Tunnel Ck Hut was in the mid 1990s, as part of a 10 day Christmas trip to Marks Flat and Mt Hooker. In the late 1960s, I had been up the Otoko to Marks Flat, exiting via the Moeraki. As part of ongoing research for updating Moirs Guide North, which I edited, I returned in mid July 2012 for a 4 day tramp. I was well aware the department had little interest in maintaining the hut or track, and took along my loppers and surveyors tape to trim and mark the track, and camera, ruler and a notebook to record the state of the hut, inside, outside and underneath.

The hut is in a very useful strategic position for parties heading over to Marks Flat, and trips into the Clarke and Moeraki. It is also a popular hunting base, especially in the roar. It is also an easy valley to walk up in a day (about 5hrs), and provides something of a wilderness or remote experience with the added security of the hut for some, with several small flats nearby and easy access to see the spectacular Tunnel Creek falls. The forest is mature open red and silver beech forest, and very scenic, with kaka, kea, morepork, blue duck, parakeets, brown creeper etc. The river contains trout, and the emerald water colour reminds me of North Island rives like the Waiohine, and South Island rivers like the Route Burn. It is a gorgeous place, too good to let moulder into obscurity.



Above, Douglas Spur from the bushline rock bivvy, Below left, Tunnel Creek Falls, Below Right, Paringa Vly.



Left and right bottom, Paringa riverside just above the hut.

MY INITIAL ASSESSMENT

In 2012 I found the Paringa valley track virtually unfollowable in many places, and I retaped where I could to remark it.

Beyond the hut, the track up the spur to the Rock Bivvy at the bushline was mostly followable, but I taped a missing midsection again.

At the hut,

there were buckets hanging from the ceiling inside the hut to collect rain drips.

The doorhandle was so rusted as to be only half working.

One window sill was completely rotten.

The metal doorstep protector was rusted and ripped.

The roofing iron had many rust spots on it, the ridging was badly rusted.

Water ran inside under the door due to bad door design.

Many ply panels inside were delaminating and peeling from the ceiling.

There were damp, rotten and broken floorboards beside the fireplace, at the door, and a couple of other places. There were holes in the floor.

The skylight was narrow, badly affected by UV and had darkened with age to be of minor value any more.

The steel liner in the fireplace was rusted out.

Firewood jammed in the porch (which is at the sthn end of the hut) left the porch continuously damp.

A makeshift piece of iron lean-to on the south side of the hut was meant to hold spare firewood, but being on the south side attracted dampness and sandflies to the door.

Nails holding some of the flatiron on the walls and roof edging were loose, leaving wider gaps into the framing.

The last painting of the hut with brown seems to have been poorly done or was done in poor weather. Much of it was peeling or had gone, though in many places the original orange coat was still useful protection. The exception to that was the roof, where many rust patches were coming through the paint, indicating wider failure.

At the toilet,

a major tree collapse had cut off access to the toilet, which is a little distance from the hut, and a new route led to it, but it wasn't marked.

The toilet door was rotten in one corner, and the 2 hinges completely underspec, and more appropriate for a kitchen cupboard.

The bolt had rusted off, and the door was being kept shut with a rock.

On the plus side, the hut building itself was mostly fine structurally. It appears to have been built with H4 treated pine. A careful study of the subfloor indicated almost no rot in the bearers or plates. And subsequently where I pulled open ply, or replaced flooring, the studs all looked mostly fine too. Same with the rafters and purlins. The piles are absolutely fine at the moment, but I may look at

replacing a few just before my 10 years management is up. The cladding could be resurrected apart from the ridging, which was too far gone.

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

Armed with this knowledge, and comfortable I could sort the problems, I came out to talk with Wayne and Ian at Franz DOC, who were very receptive and supportive. I really appreciate their helpfulness. They were encouraging and gave me the space to just get on with it. As a volunteer manager, that positive trust makes a world of difference.

At a 1hr meeting with Wayne Costello and Ian Singleton on 11 March 2014, I signed a Community Management Agreement for Tunnel Creek Hut, lasting for 5 years, with right of renewal for a further 5 years. At the time the Consortium didn't exist and I expected to fund the operation largely myself.

THE WORK PARTIES

There have been 5 work parties to the end of March 2015.

SAFETY

A First Aid Kit, locator beacon, and other safety items were carried on each trip. I deliberately kept party numbers to small groups of trusted friends, making site management easier and safer. I flew an aluminium ladder in and took all normal precautions when using it; ie base support from another when higher up on it, and kept a roofing ladder on the roof whenever up there. A rope was used at times for support, and no one went on the roof when it was wet with dew or damp. There were no health and safety incidents on any of the trips.

The first work party of Liz Stephenson (my partner) and myself ran from 21.4.14 to 27.4.14. Getting gear and materials onsite was my biggest financial challenge. I rang Helo pilot James Scott and asked if he had any backflights. He offered us a backflight in when picking up hunters in 2 days time for a minimal rate. James has been very supportive of the restoration on all flights and I really appreciate that. He has helped my shoestring budget considerably. I took timber, tools, and materials from home. I bought some materials in Hokitika, including a new axe, broom, and cordless drill. We flew in and got started.

The second work party of Andrew Buglass, Hugh van Noorden and I ran from 12.6.14 to 16.6.14 inclusive. This focussed on trackwork in the valley and we tramped both ways.

The third work party of Peter Fullerton and Hugh van Noorden ran from the 3.12.14 to the 9.12.14. This involved 2 flights, one of people, the other an underslung net load of materials. Much of the main building work was done on this trip, and quite a bit of painting. Walked out.

The fourth work party was Hugh van Noorden and his partner Tracy Lee Burkhart in Feb 2015, who, over 4 days, tramped in and out and continued the painting, inside and out.

The fifth work party was Liz, Hugh, and I, from 8.3.15 till the 13.3.15 flying in and walking out. We did a variety of finishing work and painting inside and out. Toilet repairs and painting were also carried out.

THE RESULTS TO DATE

THE PARINGA VALLEY TRACK

The track up the valley is recut and marked from Ben Monk's Hut by Stew Creek up to Tunnel Creek Hut, but there are a couple of spots I want to improve over the next few months. I have painted up small neat signs to indicate where the track to the toilet splits off the down valley track a few metres from the hut. The toilet isn't visible from there.



Andrew Buglass left and Hugh van Noorden right working on the track, 2014

TUNNEL CREEK HUT

OUTSIDE

THE DOOR

The door latch mechanism was replaced with a new one.

The metal floor guard at the doorstep was replaced with new coloursteel flatiron.

A weather protector was added to the bottom of the door to shed door water away from the hut and floor.

A wooden strip was added to the inside bottom of the door to seal it from vermin etc.

The door was stripped down and given an undercoat of Primer, then two top coats of Dulux Coatsville Red gloss.



Left, Hut door assembly and bolt, July 2012.



Right, new door



Coloursteel doorstep installed, 2015.

THE BACK WINDOW

I flew in a new windowsill sourced from a recycled building yard and Hugh and Peter replaced the rotten one under the back window. To do this, we took out the old window then reflashed the window.

The window facings inside and out were cleaned, sanded, painted with primer, and then paint I had brought from home, British Paints H20 Enamel white higloss. Trim on the window by the fireplace was cleaned and painted similarly.



*Removing the rotten sill and replacing it, 2015.
window partly finished.*



The sill replaced and

THE ROOF, WALLS AND CHIMNEY

Short and longer Tech screws as appropriate were used to fasten flatiron back to plates and studs, and the same was done replacing loose roofing nails. Sealant was used as appropriate.

We wire brushed all the roof, especially the rusted spots. We treated the rust spots with CRC Rust Convertor (similar to Black Guard). This halts the rust and forms a Primer seal that can then be painted.

Painted the whole roof with Dulux Quit Rust Primer (and all the outside walls as well, after the same treatment). The exterior of the hut was then painted in Dulux CONZ40 'Mangatainoka' gloss. This looked a bit pale and bland on the whole hut, so on the next trip I bought 4 litres of Dulux Weathershield 'Coatesville' red Higloss to do the roof and door, 2 coats each. Looks much better. The exterior walls have all had primer, and 2 or 3 coats of Mangatainoka to finish.

I bought new wide ridging to replace the rusted and poorly fitted existing sections, screwing it down with tech screws and sealant. The ends were cut and folded down and screwed, with sealant.

The skylight was replaced with new clear Suntuff polycarbonate corrugated sheeting. I have been aware of inside condensation issues with these skylights

for years. Plastic sheeting underneath designed to catch condensation quickly breaks down and sags. So I have trialled clear PVC/PVU sheeting, often used for windows in caravan awnings etc. This is of midweight, and I am hopeful it will work. The screws were removed from the Suntuff corrugate (bar one at the top) and the PVC was then run underneath the corrugate to continue to the outside at the wall. A batten holds the PVC evenly near the ridgeline, and the screws replaced. A batten keeps it secure outside under the eave. I had thought I would need side battens to keep it stretched out, but that has proven unnecessary at this stage.



Left, Bucket and billy set up by someone to catch drips along the skylight ridgeline, June 2012.

Right, Skylight replaced and PVC liner in place underneath, 2015. Condensation is only on the outer corrugate. Ill monitor the liner and see how it performs.



Above left, Skylight off, 2015. Above right, Ridging and skylight replaced, 2015. Below, skylight and PVC sheet.



Above, Hugh scraping down the walls. Below, Hugh and Peter painting the chimney.



INSIDE THE HUT

THE FLOOR

I replaced 5 floorboards near the door, after a brace sitting on the bearers was added between the joists to give more support in this hard used area (photo). Because of dampness and the fact that some boards had rotted here, I used Metalex to better preserve the bearers, joists and plates here too. I also used Metalex in a couple of other places on the hut- other broken flooring, under the door, and framing around the replaced window sill.

Replaced a broken floorboard in the middle of the hut, and others at the corner of the fireplace where a couple had rotted.

All the flooring is now solid and sealed.



Left, Rat hole beside door, 2012.
Left, Rat hole beside door, 2014.



Right, Replaced boards beside door.



Left, subfloor detail after rotten boards were removed beside the fireplace and Right, floorboards replaced, 2014.

THE FIREPLACE

The freestanding steel plate fire liner in the hearth protecting the chimney was replaced with a new one of 3mm mild steel, and concreted in.



PLY LINING

All the warped and delaminating sheets of ply on the walls and ceiling were replaced. The bunks were pulled out from the walls and put in the middle of the room then all the interior walls and ceiling were scrubbed down with what detergents we had and cleaned off before painting. They were given mostly three coats of white semigloss paint.



Above, Peter removing ply, Dec 2014. Right, Peter undercoating ply panels.



Left, Tracy Lee painting (Photo-Hugh van Noorden) and Right, Liz painting.



Above, The interior of the hut finished, March 2015, Below, the inner porch restored.



CHATTELS

An unstable sitting bench was cut down to the same height as another in the hut, improving it's stability considerably.

The mattresses provided some consternation. They were covered in greasy mould and initially proved very hard to clean using Jif. Liz struggled for a couple of days on them. Since then we have discovered that the secret is bleach. Bleach kills the fungi and lifts the mould off. The mattresses are all clean and tidy at the moment. Antimould in the paint should help cut down spore numbers.



Left, Liz scrubbing the mattresses, April 2014, Right, The original can opener by the fireplace, restored.

THE WOODSHED

The only wood storage area was the porch and a damp lean-to less than a metre off the ground nailed up with local beech poles to the wall beside the door. I was keen to offer a practical alternative to a porch full of damp musty wood. I brought in H4 treated pine posts and 100x50 railings for the frame and coloursteel for the roof from Christchurch. The walls are older iron salvaged from my roof. The dimensions are approx. 2.2m across the front, 1.7m high and 1.5m deep. I sited it for maximum sun, and concreted in the posts. The rafters were then metal strapped to these posts for strength in wind. The corrugated iron walls were cleaned and initially painted with 2 coats of Dulux 'Iron Pot' inside and out, but the colour didn't go well with the hut. Since then, I have taken in a couple of litres of roof paint from home, Taubmans 'Greenstone' gloss, and repainted the outside. Looks much better. The woodshed appears to be working well.



Building and painting the woodshed, 2015.

THE TOILET

The toilet was scrubbed down outside and inside, top and bottom using sugar soap. It does not need resiting. A fallen tree has hit the corner of it, distorting it slightly, but it remains weatherproof and functional. No need for action on this. I went around and put quite a few short tech screws in to close gaps around the walls and bottom. It is well sealed from vermin around the base.

The toilet door was taken off and rebuilt, cutting out most of the rot. However, it may need replacing in a few years, and I will keep my eye on this. I replaced the hinges with more appropriate ones, and also added a new bolt on the door. The outside was painted with 2 coats of 'Mangatainoka' orange exterior gloss Dulux paint, and the inside with Dulux 'Iron Pot' mushroom colour. This has improved the hygiene and look considerably. The wooden doorstep to the toilet was very greasy, and I mixed sand/gravel fines into the paint and sprinkled more on top to produce a non-slip surface. I also properly marked the track to the toilet with red/white permolat.



Left, The toilet, July 2012, and Right, the toilet with door rebuilt scrubbed and painted 2015, Below, directions.



DRAINAGE

To ensure good drainage under and around the hut, Peter dug a shallow channel around the edge and continued it out to the riverbank.



PAINT

Most of the paint was supplied by Dulux via DOC. However it is all a learning curve, and I missed one or two tins, such as primer, a second exterior colour, and external gloss white higloss for window trim.

I used two additives in the paint inside. One for anti mould protection which I hope will help reduce fungal spores and help the mattress situation, and another called Bug Juice, which kills insects such as mosquitos and sandflies that land on it for several years. It is marketed for this and is a pyrethrum type preparation. It's a bit of a trial to see how it works.

COSTS

To date, Ive spent about \$1,200 personally on the project, and the Consortium has granted \$3,300. There should be few other costs for the next several years.

Here are a series of photos before and after.

Tunnel Creek Hut at the beginning of work, April 2014



Almost completed, April 2015



Back wall and side, almost completed, April 2015



The hut and woodshed from across the river.



Up to date. Three of the main restoration team, Geoff, Liz and Hugh outside Tunnel Creek Hut.

And that is where maintenance of Tunnel Creek Hut is, at the moment.

Geoff S

April 2015