

**New Zealand
Outdoor Recreation
CONSORTIUM**



“A partnership to maintain and enhance backcountry facilities”

Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut



Location

Inland from Greymouth on the West Coast at an altitude of 865m. Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut is located in the head waters of the Trent River, a tributary of the Tutaekuri & Ahaura Rivers respectively. The hut sits on the TR of the valley just above a large shallow tarn, probably the "Lagoon" from which the hut derives its name. A female & male Kiwi were heard calling upon dusk both nights. The bush around the hut is montane forest with a lot of big old broadleaves, mountain holly, pink pine & pahautea (mountain cedar). The hut book goes back to 1992 & averages around three entries per year, a ratio of one fly-in to every two foot parties. There was only one visitor in 2011 & in 2012 there were no overnight stays. 2013 saw a couple of visits & both 2014 & 2015 has seen numbers swell to 5+ visitors annually. The hut is surrounded by the tall picturesque peaks of Mt Dixon & Wilson to the south & Mt Elizabeth & Monotis to the north & the area has a remote feel to it.

Type

Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut is an NZFS S81, four-bunk design built in 1960. Peter Robins recalls walking up there to replace the then-rusting fireplace around 1965, however both the fireplace & chimney have been removed since. The bunks are wire netting on wooden frames & there are 4 mattresses. The hut is lined & there is a narrow sky light on the south side of the hut. There is no toilet & water is from a small creek 30m behind the hut up the Mt. Dixon tops track. The hut has an interesting welcome sign on its outside wall, taken from a line from Dante's "Divine Comedy".

Condition

Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut was in an 'ok', mostly solid & sound condition before our intervention. In 2003 DOC repainted it inside & out, put some bracing between piles & bearers, replaced a pile & dug a drain across the grass area in front of the hut door.

A mid-winter reconnaissance trip by Martin, Kerry & Jan Clapham identified delaminated & bubbling ceiling & wall ply, a few more dodgy piles, rotten studs, a door that does not fully close, rusted & popped lead-head nails, a brittle skylight & window sills in need of some TLC. Our plan was to attend to & rectify as much of these identified issues as possible.

Maintenance Status

Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut is designated as minimal maintenance. Having received funding from the High Country Consortium for the project, DOC kindly back-loaded building materials to the site in March 2015 in readiness for a future working party. This past September, 8 members of the Permolat group, led by Paul Reid conducted a major working trip into the hut. The tracked & poled route to the hut over Trent Saddle from the Haupiri valley remains fully maintained & an earlier reconnaissance trip found this to be in generally good order. Access from Mid Trent Hut up river is untracked apart from a short section providing access from the river bed to Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut.

Worked Completed

Over the space of 3 fantastic days the hut was a hive of activity with the demolition & then resurrection of parts of the hut. The industrial sounds of sawing, hammering & the banging of nails over-shadowed the songs & calls of the birds in the nearby bush as men & women alike, sweated & toiled in the sun.

The working party replaced three piles, including a pile that was effectively doing absolutely nothing to support the hut as the bearer above it was non-existent. It gives new meaning to a 'dozy' pile. The 3 piles were replaced with 125 x 125mm H5 treated piles & concreted into place. The 'absent' section of bearer was replaced & braced.



Above: Not so good piles



Above: Much better & solid looking

The ceiling ply panels on the south side of the hut close to the skylight were removed but what would we find hidden underneath.



Above: Kevin Bolitho & Kerry Clapham about to find out what lies beneath

It was not a pretty sight with yet more rot, so 2 new rafters, a centre board, top plate, top plate support & 2 purlins were installed, along with a support brace for one rafter.



Above: Rot in the ridge board



Above: New ridge board, rafter & purlins



Above: Rot in the sky light top plate



Above: New top plate support & rafter

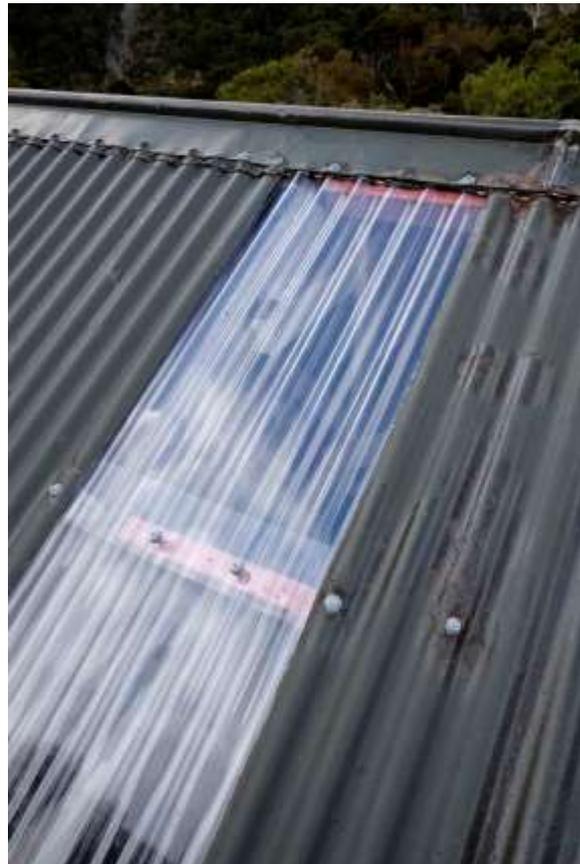
At the same time as the internal ceiling ply was being removed the brittle skylight on the south side of the hut was replaced with a new piece of Suntuf clear polycarbonate corrugated roofing. A piece of PVU type clear plastic sheeting was installed beneath the Suntuf to prevent condensation on the corrugated roofing from dripping into the hut. A wide strip of 'flashtack' folded back on itself was used to replace much of the ripped & broken lead flashing.



Above: Geoff Spearpoint & Emma Richardson prepping a roof rafter



Above: The new sky light framing in place

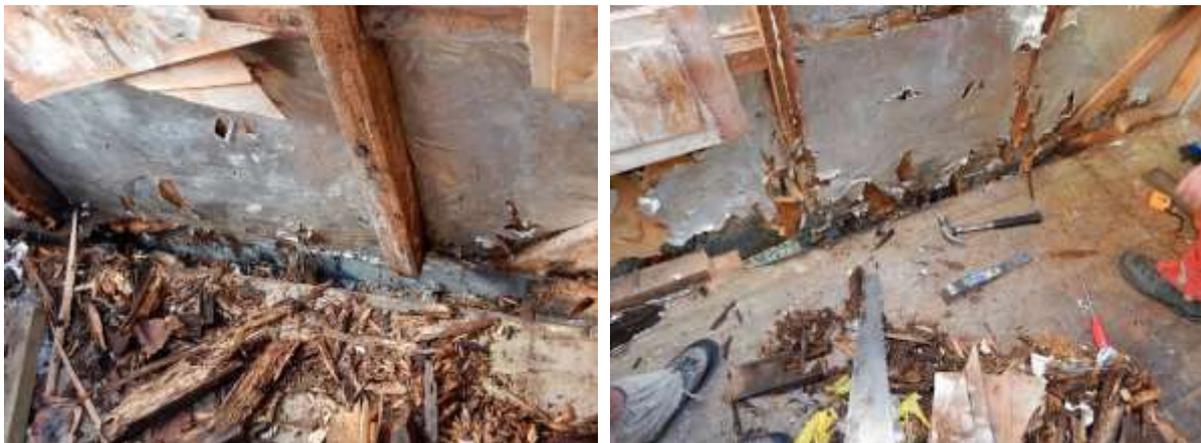


Above: The new sky light secured into position

The south wall of the hut received an extensive 'make-over' with replacement of large sections due to extensive water damage & significant amounts of rot. Sections of both the top & bottom plates, 4 dwangs, 2.5 studs, the wall-ends of 4 joists & some T & G flooring were cut out & completely replaced & in some cases double-braced in order to provide additional strength.



Above: Kerry Clapham discovering the full extent of the rot in the south wall



Above: Out with the old



Above: In with the new bottom & top plates, studs & 2 of the 4 dwangs

The eastern door stud was completely rotten & the door no longer closed fully as the door jamb had swollen in places. The bottom plate by the door had rotted out. The door stud & bottom plate were replaced & a new door jamb was installed. The external door bolt was loose & moved freely in the door as the original lead-head nails had rusted so these were replaced with hex-head screws.



Above: Rotten door stud



Above: The extent of rot in the door stud was astonishing

Another section of ceiling ply in the south eastern corner of the hut was delaminated & bubbling, hence this was removed too, only to reveal ... more rot. The centre purlin & a section of the outside wall rafter was well beyond being useful so a new purlin & rafter brace were put together & then put into place.



Above: The rotten purlin. Note the rusted nail not attached to any timber



Above: Martin & Kerry Clapham designing a combined purlin & rafter brace replacement



Above: The combined purlin & rafter brace in position. Note the extra block where the old lead-head nail came through the roof

Liberal amounts of Metalex was applied to sawn & cut wood surfaces prior to being put into place. The hut mattresses were thoroughly scrubbed clean with bleach & a metal flashing was placed over the end of the new bearer & pile. Sections of the flat iron walls where nails had rusted & or become loose were re-secured with a combination of square head screws & liberal amounts of sealant or hex-head screws with washers. The hut roof was spot sprayed with a rust killing product. The tracks

in the immediate vicinity of Top Trent (Lagoon) Hut, namely the track from Trent Saddle, the track up from the river bed near the head of the Trent River to the hut & the track that leads up on to the Mt. Dixon tops were all recut & marked as needed. Maintenance work was completed on various ditches to keep water flowing down the Mt Dixon tops track from heading towards the hut.



Above: Neroli Aymes applying a bit of elbow grease to the mattresses & trimming away vegetation



Above: New flashing to protect the new bearer & top of pile



Above: The camera shy Alan Jemison tackles another pile



Above: Low level scrub cleared away from around the hut clearing

Further Work

Half of the top plate on the eastern wall needs to be replaced.

The upper & right door jambs need to be replaced.

Various sections of internal wall-lining ply need to be replaced.

Some piles will need replacing in due course but otherwise they are sound.

Both window sills need attention, including replacement of some pieces of external window surrounds & sanding & fresh coats of paint applied.

A new corrugated iron or Coloursteel roof, wide ridge capping & wide barge board flashings would be hugely beneficial to the longevity of the hut. The installation of wire roof netting, building paper & Bitufoam under the iron would be a good course of action.

A toilet would be a useful addition.

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 over the valley. Gloriavale Christian Community, specifically David Steadfast for access. Simon Lawn from Ahaura Helicopters for the transportation of both tools & volunteers. Finally, I sincerely appreciate the efforts of Martin & Kerry Clapham, Kevin Bolitho, Emma Richardson, Geoff Spearpoint, Neroli Aymes & Alan Jemison for their excellent work, guidance, advice & support in the completion of this project thus far. It's a job well done.

Paul Reid

Project leader