



and booked into the local hotel to try and nod off for 2 hours, which was simply wishful thinking. We packed our packs, trying to keep them as light as possible. There is a kit list that everyone must bring which we thought was ridiculously long. But we ended up using everything except the foil blanket. The weather was amazing but once you have been tramping uphill for 5 or 6 hours and perspiring it is surprising how quickly you get cold you get when you stop. Nutrition and liquid are super important to keep energy levels up, also spare batteries for night lights and good merino and outer wear.

We were picked up at 10.30pm and driven to the starting point, Rarakau car park for the briefing. At this stage we are super nervous, not just about the distance but about the lack of sleep. There were 41 of us for the inaugural Stump the hump varying in ages from 19 through to 79. The group was made up of 25 women and 16 men and this was definitely not a race (running is not allowed).

At midnight the gun was fired and we were off. All excited, chatting and laughing at this stage. We walked through bush, down steps and along the beach. It took us a few kilometres to get used to our

headlamps and the darkness. The further we went the more we were spread out. We crossed several swing bridge and the water from the streams can be drunk as there is no giardia down here. At this point we turned inland and started climbing. The track was very steep in places and super dark as we were now under the canopy. We could not see more than 1 metre without our lamps. We soon lost sight of others and thought we were lost several times. Glow sticks were placed every so often along the track and we were more than pleased when we sighted each one. We continued up to Stag Point and finally across the gully to Okaka Lodge, which took us about 5 and a half hours and we were very hot and sticky by the time we arrived. We were greeted with hot porridge and hot drinks, boy were they good.

While here we watched the sunrise over the Southern Ocean and Stewart Island. This was amazing going from scarlet red to orange to yellow, a never to be repeated experience. The conditions were clear and calm, while the rest of NZ was experiencing floods and high winds, someone was looking after us. We rested here and took photos for half an hour and found we were really starting to stiffen up. Our longest