

'St Michael' goes south



Frontispiece: In Smith Harbour, under the bluffs of Falla Peninsula, 17 January 1973

# 'St Michael' goes south

A 31 foot motor-sailer in support of  
the 1972/73 Auckland Islands Scientific Expedition

Tudor Atkinson

Cover photograph: 'St Michael' rides at anchor in Norman Inlet, Auckland Island, 17 January 1973. The background is a hydrographic chart for the Auckland Islands (NZ 286), published by the Hydrographic Office of the Royal New Zealand Navy in 1992. It is reproduced here by permission of Land Information New Zealand.

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# Contents

Foreword	vii
Preface	ix
Introduction	1
Passage south	6
At the Auckland Islands	14
Homeward passage	108
Appendix 1. The motor-sailer 'St Michael'	121
Appendix 2. Mileages, running hours, fuel	126
Appendix 3. Sketch plans of uncharted areas	127
Appendix 4. Letter to Hal Atkinson	129
Appendix 5. The Auckland Islands from 'St Michael'	131
Appendix 6. Some published sources	136

# Foreword

I am delighted to write the foreword to Tudor Atkinson's personal account of the voyage of the motor-sailer *St Michael* to the Auckland Islands in support of the 1972/73 Auckland Islands Scientific Expedition. I included fourteen pages of extracts and sketch plans from his account when I edited the preliminary results of the expedition, published by the Department of Lands and Survey in 1975. For the past 26 years these have been the only parts of Tudor's extended log that have been available to the general reader. With this new publication, we now have a full account of the entire voyage, along with Tudor's descriptions and observations, maps, plans and some of his photographs. This is an extremely important contribution to the formal history of New Zealand's subantarctic islands.

Tudor and his brother Nicholas were partly inspired to undertake this voyage by the connection their father Esmond Atkinson (1888-1941) had with the Auckland Islands Expedition of the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, which sailed in the Government Steamer *Hinemoa* in November 1907. The results of that expedition, the first multi-disciplinary investigation of the subantarctic islands organised by New Zealand scientists, were published in two volumes edited by Professor Charles Chilton in 1909. These handsome documents inspired in many of us a lifelong interest in the natural history of the subantarctic islands.

Tudor's log is not just a record of *St Michael's* movements. It is a unique, day-by-day account of the expedition activities as seen by the Atkinsons, along with valuable observations of weather and sea conditions, landscapes, plants and animals. Furthermore, it demonstrates the meticulous planning in preparing the vessel for the voyage, which subsequently proved to be trouble-free.

Looking back on the voyage today, it is revealed as a truly courageous undertaking in a small (9.5 m) vessel built in York Bay and used until then mainly in the Wellington, Cook Strait, and Marlborough/Nelson areas, with one trip around the South Island. Tudor and his crew took *St Michael* into the notoriously stormy seas of the Southern Ocean, where good anchorages at the islands are rare, and the weather can be rough and unpredictable. Moreover, the uncharted inshore waters at the islands, with many unmarked rocks and reefs, are extremely hazardous. Dramatic photographs are included here of *St Michael* negotiating the narrow and turbulent Victoria Passage between Auckland and Adams Islands. Tudor made valuable sketches of tidal streams and safe depths in this area. These, together with Tudor's clear nautical descriptions, demonstrate his skills in technical drawing, navigation and sailing, gained from naval experience.

Few possess these skills or this daring. They are the stuff of fiction: Captain Werner Schmidt, in June 1945, took the great minelaying submarine U-119 out through Victoria Passage at low water, and ran aground on a reef. The impact ruptured the fuel and ballast tanks and tore a long split in the battery compartments. This is recorded in the wholly fictional action novel *Tyler's Gold* written in 1999 by the New Zealand author Andrew Grant. Captain Schmidt would have benefited from Tudor's sketch map!

Returning to subantarctic reality, Tudor's log also illustrates the value for a multi-party expedition in having small vessels such as *St Michael* available to ferry teams and their supplies among localities in the island group. Together with the support from Alex Black's *Acheron*, this enabled the expedition members to more safely broaden the scope of their activities.

I have a personal link to *St Michael* to be proud of—the privilege of helping to build the vessel in 1944–45, while learning some of the skills of carpentry from Hal Atkinson at York Bay. Later, I introduced Hal to L. R. (Laurie) Richardson (1911–1988), Professor of Zoology at Victoria University, which led to the use of *St Michael* for longline fishing during a deep-water research project that I was involved in from 1954 to 1958.

Now, after a wait of quarter of a century, join Tudor, Nicholas, John, and Sam Atkinson as they travel south with *St Michael* on their adventure to the Auckland Islands.

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January 2001

# Preface

The five subantarctic island groups—Auckland Is, Campbell Is, Antipodes Is, the Snares, and the Bounties—though mere specks of land in a vast oceanic realm, are vital as the resting and breeding grounds of countless numbers of seabirds and seals. They are also among the least modified natural habitats in the world, and harbour many species of animals and plants that are endemic (found nowhere else), rare and/or highly specialised. As such, the islands are strictly protected as national nature reserves, and in 1998 they were inscribed on the World Heritage List in recognition of their outstanding universal natural values.

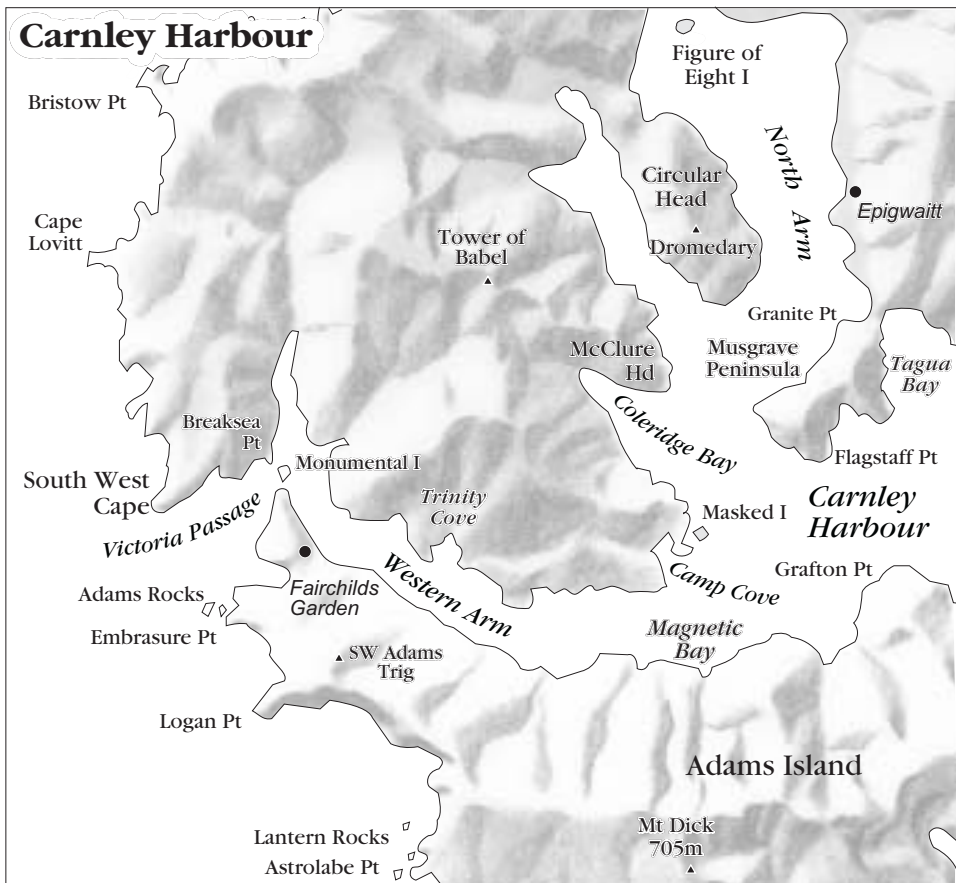
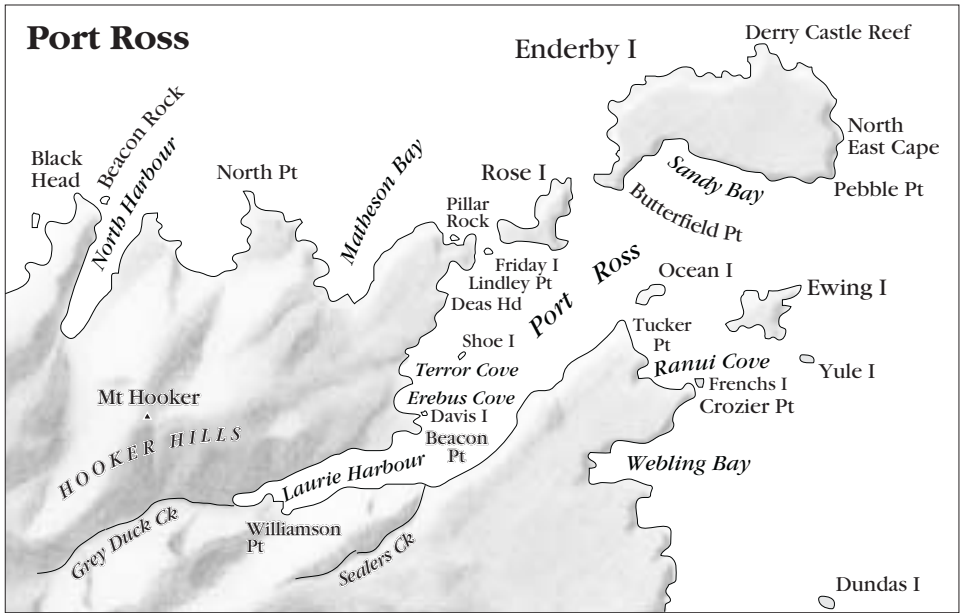
Although the natural history of the islands is well known and documented, far less is known of their fascinating human history, which includes sealing, whaling, farming, shipwreck, wartime coastwatching, scientific exploration, and modern-day tourism. Original accounts such as ships' logs, personal or official diaries, and field notes are rare, but are extremely valuable for conveying first-hand the human story of the islands. Publication of this material is important in making known to a wider audience the human dimension of these internationally significant nature reserves. The situation is improving slowly. Notable among recent histories of the islands are Madelene Allen's *Wake of the Invercauld*, based on the account of a castaway stranded by shipwreck on the Auckland Islands in 1864, and the *Enderby Settlement Diaries*, which recounts from two official diaries the story of the ill-fated British colonial whaling settlement at the Auckland Islands in the mid-19th Century. Thus, the Department welcomes the opportunity to publish Tudor Atkinson's personal log of the 1973 voyage of *St Michael* to the Auckland Islands to add to this growing literature. It signifies a commitment to build the published record of the human association with New Zealand's subantarctic island outposts.

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Detail of Port Ross and Carnley Harbour

# Introduction

I suppose Nicholas's and my interest in the Auckland Islands developed very early as a result of our father Esmond's indirect involvement in the 1907 expedition. He had been nominated to go, perhaps by his professor at Victoria University College, where he was studying botany, but turned it down because he felt he must sit the end-of-the-year exams. He later worked with Dr Cockayne, from whom he must have heard much about the Islands, and he remained deeply interested in their botany in particular. I had forgotten, until I saw it in flower there, his describing the magnificent blue *Myosotis capitata*, but that recollection brought back others of his stories of the plants and the place. Nicholas and I, when we saw the place ourselves, thought how magnificently Esmond would have painted it, even in those early years - has anyone but C.N. Worsley done so I wonder?

When 'St Michael' was building, one of the voyages Hal Atkinson talked about was to the Auckland Islands, to take Esmond and John Moore. Many years later John Moore gave me his Chart 1022, which includes the Islands, and Hal, Nicholas, and I would discuss the feasibility of the trip. It seemed an entirely reasonable proposition, but the time needed for preparation and to make the stay there worthwhile did not seem to be available.

More recently, John Kendrick told us about his trip there in 1966, when he spent six weeks with the Wildlife Division's party on Adams Island, and he showed us his magnificent colour film of the Island. This revived earlier interest, and towards the end of 1970 we began to think quite seriously about the possibility and to question John about weather and anchorages and so on. His enthusiasm fed the flames, and when he saw that we were beginning to be serious about the trip he asked if we minded his mentioning it to Brian Bell of the Wildlife Division who had led the 1966 trip. As a result, early in 1971 John, Brian and I spent an evening discussing ways and means. Brian at once proposed to put in hand moves for a scientific expedition to the Islands to take advantage of our visit, for, as he pointed out, not since the Second World War coastwatching expeditions had anything but a dinghy been available to parties on the Islands. He saw that to have even a small ship there and ready to move the scientific parties about would greatly widen their scope. In turn I felt that to have a worthwhile job of this kind helped to justify a voyage which would need a great deal of preparation and which should allow for a reasonably long stay. There was also the feeling that if we did get into trouble, always a possibility, we should not be so far from help. Hal, when Nicholas and I talked it over with him, was at once enthusiastic, as we knew he would be, although he did not feel he could go himself.

So as a result of the meeting with Brian we undertook to plan for a trip, of up to three months, to the Auckland Islands, where we would fit in with the needs of the shore parties. Late in 1972 seemed to be the earliest that it could go from Brian's point of view, and as Jinny and I had already arranged our three month trip to the UK for May to July

1971 this fitted well as far as I was concerned. Brian then set to work behind the scenes and I heard little more about it until we had settled back in York Bay again after our tour.

It had been clear from the first that 'St Michael' would only be able to carry her own crew needs on the way to and from the Islands, and Brian's first idea was to have the main parties deposited and lifted by a Deep Freeze ship or the Navy. Later he was able to arrange for Alex Black's 'Acheron', 78 foot twin-screw replacement for his ex-HDML 'Alert', to be the main expedition provider. She had been finished early in 1971 and is well fitted in size, accommodation, and gear for such work, while Alex Black's wide experience of the offlying islands and interest in their natural history made enthusiastic cooperation sure. Eventually, about mid-1972, enough money became available for the expedition to allow 'Acheron' to spend most of the three months down there in addition to carrying the parties there and back.

In the meantime, from the spring of 1972, we set to work to get 'St Michael' into first class order for the Southern Ocean. The main things, apart from the usual overhaul, included: burning off the accumulated 15 years of anti-fouling paint below waterline, drawing both propeller shafts and replacing shaft bracket bearings, drawing the rudder pin and checking its fittings, fitting a radio aerial and earth, overhauling both engines, making and fitting new standing rigging, buying a new suit of sails, and building a new dinghy. The ship was put on the hard at Evans Bay in December 1971-January 1972 for three weeks and the underwater work done and aerial fitted. Peter Serkin was a great help with the engine overhauls during the first half of 1972, Nicholas went ahead with the new dinghy, and I spent weekends which were unsuitable for working on board making the new shrouds. The new 9 foot dinghy, 'Bosky', was a replica of 'Walnut' but with 3 in. more freeboard fore and aft and 2 in. more amidships, and with built-in buoyancy, about 120 lb of it, along each side. Nicholas made a new mould for her, capable of being modified for 8 or 10 foot boats.

We had made an early guess of 'St Michael's' fuel needs down at the Islands, assuming then that 40 gallon drums would be used. These would of course have been an awkward job to get on board, and to fill from, and the risk of fuel contamination would be real enough. Quite late in the planning Alex Black suggested providing the fuel, and as his capacity is 4000 gallons, our modest needs of 300 gallons or so would not be noticed. This turned out very well, and fuelling from 'Acheron', which we did twice, was quick and easy.

Clement Atkinson borrowed for us a Marlin marine radio transmitter/receiver and John Kendrick spent much time checking it over and lining it up, during a good deal of which time I breathed down his neck. As will appear later, this was just as well. Through Tony Shearman we were lent a six-man inflatable liferaft by Alex Relling. I had been doubtful about this at first, chiefly because I could not think where we could stow it conveniently, but having found out its size we decided it would fit; in fact it went most neatly abaft the after coachroof, where it was partly under the dinghy when stowed aboard, but still easily accessible. Other special equipment included two horseshoe lifebuoys and a home-made danbuoy made by Sam. One

lifebuoy sat in a pocket lashed to the rail abreast the wheelhouse and had a water-activated light and the danbuoy attached to it, all arranged for easy throwing overboard. We fitted two new fire extinguishers, and had the existing one overhauled, bought a new set of flares and smokefloats, rove new running rigging, bought a second 60 lb fisherman anchor and 60 fathoms of 2¾ in. nylon warp, fitted 4 fathoms of ½ in. chain to the working 60 lb. fisherman and to the CQR, and bought 40 fathoms of 3 in. manilla for the latter, and so on.

Preparations seemed endless, and no definite crew were in sight. One difficulty was the time, as Brian's expedition plan had confirmed the first idea of three months down there. I had to cut our share down to two months, partly to make it a little easier to get hold of a crew, and partly because both Nicholas and I felt this was as long as we ought to be away. But with 'Acheron' being available for the whole time (except for 2½ weeks in the second part of January) as now seemed probable, we would not seriously affect plans by leaving about the beginning of February, when 'Acheron' returned, and this arrangement became firm. 'Acheron' would take the parties and equipment down in two trips from Dunedin towards the end of November and early in December. We would aim to be at the Auckland Islands by about 9 December. 'Acheron' would return to Dunedin with some of the first party about mid-January and bring another group down about the end of the month. We would leave for the north a few days after 'Acheron's' return

Sometime in August or September I thought of John and Sam and told them about the trip. It was tempting to make it sound more attractive than, by that time, I was beginning to think it might be, but they read up one or two books and thought about it and first one, then the other wrote/phoned to say they would like to come. This was a great weight off my mind, for both as company and as hands I knew we were in luck. Things looked more cheerful after that for a time, then I found my list of things to be done growing just as fast at one end as I crossed things off at the other, while the time left grew shorter at an ever-increasing pace. Nicholas was working long hours on the dinghy and Sam and John put in much work on the ship and on stores, but before I started my leave on 1 December it was plain that we had to have more time.

Brian Bell had gone off south on about 25 November and I had told him we would be leaving later than 3 or 4 December as first intended. We thought 6 or 7 [December] might be managed but arranged to call him up from Stewart Island (Port Pegasus) for a weather check before leaving there. Meantime I had been to see the Marine Dept about a survey and clearance for the trip. When they had made it clear that they were not really cut out to survey yachts but that the local clubs had experienced surveyors who did this for boats taking part in ocean races, I got in touch with Bill MacQueen. We had already booked the Boatharbour slip for three days for the beginning of November and Bill arranged that he and his fellow surveyors would look her over while there. We slipped on 1 November and Ned, John, Sam, Nicholas, and I all worked to scrub her down and paint topsides and under water. At the surveyor's request we also took out the lavatory skin fittings (I had already had the lavatory itself ashore for overhaul) and we found most of the through-hull studs as rotten as carrots! They were tobin bronze

and most of them broke into short lengths on being driven out. We replaced them with copper, with our conviction of the danger of using tobin bronze in sea water fully confirmed. John and I worked late one night to put the skin fittings back so that we could get afloat again the next morning, 4 November. The surveyors had a further look over the ship that morning, and cleared her subject to the rest of the equipment specified in the NZ Yachting Federation's guide for ocean racing being provided.

By the end of November, activities were close to the frantic level. John and Sam had been working full time on preparations since the middle of the month and I finished work on 1 December (with leave until 12 February, made up of four weeks' long-service leave plus my 1972 leave and half 1973's). We had been unable to get the new 30 lb. CQR I had ordered, in spite of determined efforts by Tony Shearman and Hugh Barton, nor were they able to get the Marlin echo-sounder which I had hoped to fit. But we did get a VDO quartz-controlled 12 volt clock and fitted this where it could be read from the wheel, and it was a great success and very accurate. We reviewed progress on 4 December and decided that we must have until 9th to get finished. 'Bosky' had her trials on 7th, and Jinny and I had two hectic half days with the car in town, buying all kinds of things - from prints of the chart of the Auckland Islands which I had drawn over the winter to fire extinguishers, spare light bulbs and proplon rope for lashings. John was very busy with stores, which he and Sam organised and stowed so well that I never had to give them a thought, and Nicholas, with the dinghy finished, and I, rigged the liferaft, tried the new dinghy on board and sorted charts and navigational equipment. I had bought a set of new charts for the East Coast and decided (as it turned out not altogether wisely) not to fill up the chart drawer with the detail charts of the West Coast sounds.

Late in the week, John, Sam, and I ran into Wellington to let Laurie Mackenzie, one of the honorary surveyors, have a final look at our equipment, and he cleared us with what seemed to me to be a sensible stretching of the rules to fit the difference between an ocean racer and a cruising motor-sailer. We carried Ian Macfarlane back to York Bay, for an interview for the *Courier*, tactfully and thoroughly done, and photographs with Nicholas when we reached York Bay. Sam and I took the first reasonable day that offered and swung the ship about one of the shoal beacons off Point Howard, for a new deviation card which I then drew up.

By Saturday 9 December we could hardly be said to be 'in all respects ready for sea' but we had all the essentials done and the weather forecast was good. The four of us were longing to get going and no doubt families and friends were reaching the point where they wanted to see something in return for all kinds of help and support provided. I had aimed to get away about 9 pm, which in theory, if we had no delays on the way, would bring us to Bluff in the morning: I had in mind our somewhat anxious dusk arrival in 1959, when we had left Wellington in the morning.

Mercifully it was a calm evening, windless indeed, and although overcast there was no rain. We seemed to have, even at 10 pm, a whole pile of gear still to go aboard but with Ned in 'Walnut' helping we piled it all on board somehow, John and Sam and Nicholas stowing still.



Loading up, York Bay, 9 December 1972.  
Sam and Ned on 'St Michael', Nicholas in 'Bosky'

By 11.15 pm, with a patient farewell party sitting on the beach, we realised that we had finished, said our farewells, and hoisted and stowed 'Bosky'. Slipped the mooring at 2315 for a run close inshore to the beach and for Ned to take some flash photographs, and off we went.

# Passage south

***Saturday***  
***9 December***

There was no time for enjoying the harbour reflections: the ship needed all the tidying up we could manage before we reached the Heads and we stowed and lashed down until near Blinking Billy, by which time we were manageably shipshape for weather as quiet as this.

***Sunday***  
***10 December***

Started watches at 0020, John and I to take the middle, Nicholas and Sam the morning and so on. We worked two dog watches so as to get a daily change.

The log was streamed and set to zero off Barretts Reef at the start of the watch and compass course set 199° to take us about 8 miles off Cape Campbell with allowance for the south-going Straits tidal stream, and we settled down to a weary middle watch, hour on and hour off at the wheel. There was a southerly swell, rather steep at the Entrance then longer, but no wind until after daybreak, when a moderate NW came up and the cloud cleared off to a bright day. Off Cape Campbell at 0545 course was altered to 195° compass for Kaikoura Peninsula.

I have a clear picture from that day of the Kaikouras, high and blue with a few stationary summer cumulus about their tops and their feet in sea haze, dominating much of the day. The NW wind was brisk and sparkling and we bent and set the main soon after noon; our progress seemed slow because the mountain mass changed imperceptibly, but we were about ten miles off Kaikoura Peninsula at 1345, the log reading 8½ miles from Pencarrow, and we altered course a little easterly, to 182°, for Banks Peninsula. Two coasters, one northbound and one south, passed us during the day and at 2045 in the dusk a large container ship - one of the Columbus Line - passed northbound looking very businesslike at maybe 20 knots. The wind dropped at sunset and we furled the main.

***Monday***  
***11 December***

A quiet night with little sea but some NE swell. Nicholas and Sam had the middle watch and at 0130 ran into a fog bank with visibility down to maybe 100 yards at times, but very patchy. They had seen the lights of a northbound coaster earlier but were disconcerted when her lights glowed out of the fog close to port, and then realised how poor the visibility was.

They called all hands and we set a lookout right forward and used the torch/siren which Jinny had found us, as a foghorn. A feeble enough noise it seemed but perhaps more penetrating than we thought it, somewhat deafened as we were by living with 'St Michael's' diesels. I was rather put out as I was expecting a sight of Steep Head on Banks Peninsula, and while there were clearances when we could see most of the stars overhead, it seemed that we might have to close right in to the coast to give ourselves a position check. However, in one lift Sam



sighted Steep Head light at 0215, and at 0320 with the fog clearing we altered course to close the land, log reading 166½ miles.

A moderate southerly breeze came up and by 0530 we were close under the cliffs near to Pompey's Pillar and heading for Akaroa Heads. For we had decided that there was much to be done to get the ship really in order for a strong blow, that we had had two nights of only patchy sleep after starting tired, and that a day's good meals would be very welcome, and that all this meant that about 24 hours' spell in Akaroa would be time well spent.

The southerly which came up with the dawn brought ragged cloud down over the coastal cliffs while inland there were glimpses of early sun on the high country of Banks Peninsula. Akaroa Head light was close abeam at 0625 and we took in the log, reading 184 miles. Akaroa entrance was impressive, great gloomy lava cliffs with an easterly surge breaking along their rocky feet. As soon as we were inside and clear of the outer swell we stopped engines at 0645 and tried a radio call to John Kendrick, but without success although I think he just heard us. So we moved off again and found a sheltered cove on the south (weather) shore about 3 miles in, where we anchored at 0715. Weather was brightening by that time with a moderate to fresh SW wind. We enjoyed the peace, had a large and leisurely breakfast, and sat around relaxing after it until we remembered why we had stopped here, then turned to, to make a better stow below decks and to bend the jib, make more new lashings, and generally to put the ship in better order.

The day improved steadily, the SW wind fell off and a light NE came up, and after lunch we set off, at 1415, for Akaroa to send off a telegram. A hot fine day and the town small and attractive for all its rather self-conscious cultivation of its French ancestry. We stopped briefly at the main wharf to find out where the Post Office was, then to save a hot walk moved further in to Dyer's Wharf at 1515, old but with just enough water for us at low tide. Nicholas stayed on board, the rest of us dealt with the P.O. and bought icecream which had to be hurried back to Nicholas before it melted. Under way again at 1600 and at 1655 we were again anchored in our cove. But the wind backed to a fresh NW, which we could see coming from the harbour after it had pulled a cloud blanket over the far hills, and after putting up with the resulting lollipop for a little, we moved at 1750 across to the NE shore, John having a rather busy time keeping the dinner from jumping off the stove. Anchored in quietness again at 1805 for an early dinner and bed.

***Tuesday***  
***12 December***

A quiet night and the freedom from watches was appreciated even after so short a passage. We turned out at 0430 to a moderate NE breeze and cloudy sky and got under way at once, having Akaroa Head light abeam at 0455 when we streamed the log, still at 184 miles, John and Tudor taking the watch. Our course was initially offshore, about 120°, until 0540 when we altered to 199° for Otago Peninsula, the log reading 188½ miles. There was enough breeze by 0645 to hoist the main and we then stopped engines and again tried a radio contact with

John Kendrick. Reception was very good but we could not hear him although later he told me that he heard us; I think I had just not developed skill enough to tune in in the short contact time. So at 0705 we got going, again with both engines, the wind backing to WNW and dropping until by 1000 there was not enough to keep the main full so it was taken in.

Tanker 'Earne' overtook us  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to starboard at 1145 and disappeared over the horizon ahead, the day became fine and hot with little wind, and we changed watches and helmsmen, the watch below sunbathing on deck or building up a reserve of sleep in its bunk and the duty watch taking its job very easily. A moderate SE breeze came in in the early afternoon and we reset the main at 1415. We were well at sea, only the distant Canterbury foothills to be seen. We took in sail at sunset as a southerly change was forecast.

***Wednesday  
13 December***

A northbound ship passed several miles to port at 0115 and we could see the loom of Okahau Point light, still below the horizon on bearing  $235^\circ$ . There were one or two unidentified lights, probably fishing boats, to starboard and a smallish ship came up astern and passed close to starboard at 0240. Wind was still light NE but about 0430 a fresh SW wind arrived, with rain, very much as expected from the last forecast. With dawn the coast came into sight out of the rain at 0530, somewhere near the Karitane Peninsula and by 0730 we could pick out Taiaroa Head lying ahead of us, our course still  $199^\circ$ . There was a moderate but tiring sea on the starboard bow but this slowly eased as we closed the land which looked rather bleak. We were about two miles off Taiaroa Head at 0845 and altered course to  $180^\circ$  along the coast, log 347 miles.

It was clear that we would run into a bigger sea round Cape Saunders so at 0925 we turned into a bay just south of Taiaroa Head and circled slowly while having a large breakfast. It was quite an impressive place, rocky Otago Peninsula headlands north and south and a long sandy beach between, a heavy NE swell rolling in and breaking in sweeping plumes blown back by the fresh offshore wind, a grey and rather cold morning. We moved off again at 1045, log reading 351 when we streamed it again, and by 1145 we had Cape Saunders lighthouse about a mile abeam, log 357 miles, and altered course to  $205^\circ$  for the Nuggets.

The wind freshened steadily and by mid-afternoon was blowing half a gale with a fair head sea, but the going reasonably good. Rain squalls alternated with sun and sunset was magnificent: Nugget Point a blue-black silhouette 20 miles ahead, sunset-lit rain squalls passing over to seaward and a knife-sharp horizon out to the SE. The wind then moderated slowly and at 2015 we altered course to  $195^\circ$  (log 397 miles) as we looked to be heading too close to the Nuggets. This was an illusion, no doubt helped by the very clear visibility which made the Point seem much closer than it was, so at 2315 we altered back to  $205^\circ$  (log 414 miles).



John,  
exhilarating  
progress

***Thursday  
14 December***

We had the same difficulty getting up to Nugget Point as I remembered from 1959, a NE-going coastal set making our progress slow as the headland loomed up dark and the light flashed out almost dazzlingly. Eventually it was abeam three or four miles off at 0020 with log reading 419 miles and at 0350 (log 435 miles) altered course to 230° off Long Point.

With daylight we could see we were further offshore than intended and as the coast trended westerly all the time it would shorten our distance as well as providing variety to close in. Accordingly we altered course to 245° at 0455 and to 260° at 0645 until 0730 when we were perhaps half a mile off that interesting coast and came round to 240°.

This part is partly farmed but is rugged and varied until the shore flattens out beyond Slope Point. The Brothers Rocks were abeam at 0740 with the log reading 454 miles, a fine morning with moderate SW wind offshore, forecast to freshen later. We were off Slope Point at 0930 (log 463 miles) and altered course to 250° for Waipapa Point.

A fuel injector pipe on the port engine broke during the forenoon and we did not notice it for a little time so that fuel oil was well sprayed round by the time we stopped the engine. We had spares of course, and in about half an hour's work had replaced it and had the engine going again. Cleaning up the mess took rather longer!

We were off Waipapa Point at 1045, log 472½ miles, and course was altered to 265° to cross Toetoes Bay. This is a curious place after the

steep-to SE corner of Southland, for the eastern Foveaux Strait islands, Ruapuke and so on, are low-lying as is the long sandspit south of Awarua Lagoon. Ahead, 25 miles away, the Bluff stands up hazily and now also the huge chimney of the aluminium smelter on Tiwai Point. We closed the sandspit at Bushy Point, not easily identifiable but for its group of trees, since from our low eye level the 'point' formed by the sandspit was hardly to be seen. The SW wind blew into hard squalls with heavy rain from time to time and bright sunny intervals. We were relieved when the squall which came over as we approached the somewhat tricky inshore channel past Tiwai Point cleared off so that we could pick up the leading beacons from the confusing background of wharves and town. We were in the entrance at 1415, with a moderate ebb tide, and took in the log which showed 491 miles from Wellington Heads.

We went alongside the inner side of Main Wharf at 1430 and after some enquiry (no-one seemed at all interested in what berth we occupied!) we were advised to move to the inside of the Grain Wharf, which we accordingly did at 1500. This was quiet and handy and the regular occupier did not turn up until we were ready to leave on Saturday.

There were two things we wanted to get right in addition to fuelling and watering. Although there were still three replacement fuel injector pipes on board I thought we might have more trouble with them and should have more spares. (As so often happens, we had no other trouble of this kind at all.) And it had quickly become plain that even with the generators cut out there was too much radio interference to allow us to listen out when under way except with engines stopped. So it was obvious that we could not get away until Saturday.

The first thing was to order the injector pipes, and I phoned MacEwens Machinery in Wellington, fortunately getting through at once to their capable Lister spares man who put the pipes on to NAC's airfreight the same evening. A phone call to their Invercargill depot next morning and the parcel was in Bluff at the bus depot by noon on Friday! Then we arranged for fuelling next day, picked up our letters from the Post Office, and tried to find radio suppressors for the generators, and some more proplon for lashings. But Bluff seemed to have nothing, not even a good ship chandlery. I did manage to speak to the Superintendent of Awarua Radio, as suggested by Brian Bell, to tell him our callsign, who we were, and what we were doing. This was slightly cloak and dagger, as the Station phone number is confidential and the Postmaster had to make the call and hand me over!

***Friday  
15 December***

So having spent this morning - still fresh SW but fine and warmer - vainly trying round for the radio gear, I was finally directed to the marine electrical contractor for the local fishing fleet. He was too busy to do the job, but helpfully told me what was wanted, that the condensers were difficult to come by but might be found in Invercargill. While the others fuelled the ship (we took on 98 gallons), bent the mizzen which we had not had an opportunity to do before,

bought perishable stores, and tidied the ship, I took the bus to Invercargill and spent a warm and busy three hours in the Christmas shopping crowds. I found all we wanted, and helpful advice on fitting the suppressors, after a good deal of coming and going, and was back in Bluff by 5 pm. I fitted the suppressors at once, while I remembered what the radio shop had told me. We also filled up with water, having used 34 gallons or about 9 gallons a head in five days; we had not made any effort to economise, of course.

The evening before, we made by chance an acquaintance with the shipkeeper on 'Wairua' the Government-run Stewart Island ferry. He invited us to use the ship's hot showers as he was the only one on board and we did so, gratefully. We passed the time of day with him and found that he had had two or three seasons' whaling in the Antarctic in the 1930s and had helped, when crewing the Bluff dredge later, to salvage 'C. A. Larsen's' anchors and cables after she had grounded off Stewart Island. A kindly and interesting person, so we were sorry indeed to hear, on our way back through Oban in February, that he had just died.

***Saturday***  
***16 December***

A fine morning. SW breeze still fresh, but a good forecast and we got under way at 0900, going out astern as there was no room to turn until clear of the wharf end, 100 yards down. Entrance Buoy was abeam at 0925, and we set course 170° for East Cape. With visibility clear and a coastal run in prospect we did not stream the log. Hoisted the main at 0955 and ran off with a fine quartering breeze past the many and varied islands of Eastern Foveaux Strait. At 1205 we had Kametoi I. a mile and a half abeam to starboard and were closing the NE coast of Stewart I., rugged and heavily bushed, golden sandy beaches between granite headlands and islets. We could not resist a brief visit, so called in to a perfect cove just south of East Cape and anchored at 1350 for lunch, wishing we had time to explore such a lovely place. But we were driven by the unexpressed feeling that we had planned to be down at the Islands a week ago, and that while the weather behaved we would be rash not to keep going, so at 1440 we got under way again, passing ¼ mile off Tia I. at 1510 and admiring, respectfully, the swell surging over the many offlying rocks and the two reefs to seaward.

This part of Stewart I. was resurveyed fairly recently so we felt justified in taking a short cut through the channel inside Breaksea I., which we passed at 1540, keeping a very careful eye open for sunken rocks. The coastline is deeply indented here with long granite headlands and strings of small islands, a fascinating coast to explore in good weather; there were glimpses of sandy beaches inshore and the bush came down close to the sea, even on the islets. Once out on to the east coast we were in quite a big head sea, steepened by tide as the wind was moderate SSW, dropping steadily with a grey overcast spreading from the west. We passed ¾ mile to seaward of Black I. at 1725, a rounded black lump with the swell surging high on it. Passing half a mile off Seal point at 1830 we steered 235° for the southern

entrance to Port Pegasus. However, after a consultation and consideration of the weather we agreed that both it and the time being favourable, we should stop for a meal only and set off south at once unless the 2045 forecast was unsuitable. Accordingly we found our way into a small cove just south of the south entrance to Port Pegasus and anchored there at 2000. The wind had gone and it was a quiet grey evening; four seals (sea lions?) played round the ship in the crystal clear water and we watched a few fish among the sea-lettuce on the sandy bottom perhaps 3 fathoms down. Rata all round and the fantastic rock hummocks of Port Pegasus beyond, and as dusk came down a cloud of sooty shearwaters overhead calling plaintively and circling.

The forecast was a good one and while the dinner was cooking I had a careful check of the course and distance to the Islands. From Broad Head Stewart I. to NE Cape Enderby I. is 203 nautical miles on a course 195° true. I decided to keep to the nearest 5° compass courses and accordingly divided the distance up to give 175° compass for the first leg and 170° for the second. The obvious place to head for was NE Cape of Enderby I. with the understanding that if we did not sight it when expected we would keep off to the east until well south, before heading inshore. Our time of leaving would ensure daylight at landfall and I felt that Bristow Rock, about 3 miles north of Enderby, would have to be dealt with by a very sharp lookout, since we might well have no opportunity for fixing our position before coming up to it.

So having eaten well and cleared and stowed the main cabin we got under way again at 2145, in the last of the light, clearing the cove entrance at 2155 on a course of 142° to take us offshore. Streamed the log, reading 491 miles (to which our day's run of 56½ miles must be added), and at 2210, log 493 miles, altered course to 175° for Enderby I., the sea glassy but with a long SW swell, and the night rather dark. We soon lost the loom of Stewart I. off to starboard. This record of facts sounds prosaic enough but I think we were all - I certainly was - conscious that we were now committed to the Southern Ocean and 'St Michael's' first offshore voyage, even if a fairly short one.

A comment here on navigation is appropriate: I had Hal's sextant, the accurate quartz-controlled clock, and tables for 1973 but had been quite unable to beg, borrow or steal a copy of the 1972 almanac. And although I had read up a good little book on astronomical navigation and knew what to do I have never fixed a ship's position in this way. On the other hand we had a new deviation card made out after Sam's and my swinging of the ship, and the patent log, and the trip south had confirmed the accuracy and reliability of both. I knew too that we might well have overcast weather and no sights, and that provided we planned a daylight landfall and made sure, if visibility was bad, that we were to the east of the main island and well south before turning westwards, dead reckoning by compass and log could be trusted to bring us in safely, an error of a few miles being unimportant using this strategy.

***Sunday***  
***17 December***

Came in with a very light NW wind and a high fine-looking cirro-cumulus sky at sunrise clearing off from the NW during the morning. There was a long, occasionally large, SW swell and a few birds kept us company: sooty shearwaters, fairy prion, one or two cape pigeons, and one wandering albatross.

The morning became fine, and during the afternoon the light wind veered to NNE. I took several sights about 1430 and tried to make sense of them using the 1973 tables (on the basis that they gave a method for their use in 1974 and I thought that perhaps if I reversed this correction I could use them in 1972!). This was not successful, the observed altitude being about 63° and the calculated 56°, altogether too great a difference!

Later in the afternoon it became hazy but the wind remained light; during the first watch an overcast spread from NE and the wind freshened. At 2210 the log read 645 miles, 152 miles in 24 hours, exactly 6¼ knots.

# At the Auckland Islands

***Monday***  
***18 December***

Wind was moderate NE when John and I came on watch at midnight, with rain. We altered course to 170° at 0100, log 664 miles, as planned, the wind increasing steadily, and at dawn (about 0430) it was blowing half a gale from NE with rain and visibility apparently poor, looking like about half a mile. Later I came to the conclusion that it was deceptive and was nearer three miles or so between rain-squalls, and perhaps a mile or less in rain.

However, it was a little disconcerting to have visibility closing in at such a time, although with wind and sea astern one could sit comfortably on the half-closed wheelhouse slide and keep a good and easy lookout. The sea was getting up a little but it was clear that we were already in the tidal disturbances north of Enderby I. and presently we passed kelp strands, obviously bottom-anchored. I was not worried by this as bladder kelp grows in 30 fathoms or more; nothing could be seen of any breakers. We altered course to 160° for a time (due to a misunderstanding which reminded us to be meticulous in handing over and taking over the wheel) then to 180° and I became certain, as we had run our distance by about 0600, that we were to the eastward of Enderby I. This was in order and we held on for another two hours to get well south, altering course to 220° at about 0800 and seeing wore weed from time to time but no land, though the sea remained irregular.

At last, at 0820 a low island came in sight bearing about due west perhaps three miles off, and soon afterwards breakers southward of it. First thought was that it was Green I. (it looked green!), but the breakers, over Blanche Rock, identified it as Dundas I. and we accordingly altered course to 250°, still without a sight of the main island. The sea was steep and rather irregular and there was much kelp, but as we were now sure of our position and that the water was deep, we did not worry, except at picking up weed on propellers or log rotor. But at 0840, with Blanche Rock about a mile abeam to starboard, we took in the log (reading 711 miles, total from Wellington Heads 768 miles) and altered course to 270°.

There were many muttonbirds and prion about, and when we sighted the basalt cliffs of the north head of Chambres Inlet, about a quarter of an hour later, the hills behind lost in mist, a sullen grey sea on our starboard quarter rolling us in and breaking high on the steep shore, we all felt, 'Well, this is the Auckland Islands, and no more than we expected!' We had headed for Chambres partly as being the nearest sheltered anchorage and we wanted a quiet breakfast, and partly because we suspected that in this strong NE wind Port Ross might not offer much in the way of sheltered anchorage. At 0920 we passed the entrance and headed up between shores rising steeply from low cliffs to bush, scrub and then mist, the swell from seaward dying out as we ran in, and three or four light mantled sooty albatross resting on the water to bring home to us that we really had arrived.





Landfall at the  
Auckland Islands:  
Approaching  
Chambres Inlet,  
18 December 1972

The first cove on the SW side of the inlet looked sheltered and we rounded-to, outside a dense belt of weed 75 yards offshore, and anchored at 0955, a quiet anchorage hardly disturbed by squalls from outside. Large ratas covered the shore and overhung the water and a substantial waterfall showed through the bush a quarter of a mile astern. We marvelled at all this (and at our cleverness at reaching it), and went below for a large breakfast revelling in the absence of engine noise and the ship's steadiness.

In the afternoon we listened to Awarua Radio for the weather forecast and heard them call us after it, only to find our transmitter dead. There was nothing for it but to open up the set, and I was thankful that after watching John Kendrick's work on it I knew just a little about it. An RF coil had broken completely free and it was a puzzle where from. While John and Sam looked for two fresh wire ends at the right distance apart, I tried to look as if the circuit diagram made sense to me; between us we decided that the coil should go back there. So we soldered it in and in some uncertainty put the set back together, switched on and pressed the 'transmit' button: it worked! After the 2100 weather forecast Awarua called us again and I made my first radio contact, they hearing us clearly but not strongly. The message was from 'Acheron' to say that there would be no-one at Ranui Cove until Tuesday but that there was a party on Enderby I. After that excitement, a quiet night and sound sleep.

***Tuesday  
19 December***

The weather had improved and there were patches of sun, but in our sheltered corner it was not easy to say where the wind was. We tidied up, oiled round engines and checked our fuel: outer tanks both full

and total fuel 140 gallons with header tanks full, so we had used 54 gallons from Bluff and 152 from Wellington, just 5 miles to a gallon.

Under way at 0915 for Port Ross and we cleared the north head of Chambres Inlet at 1010 to find a fresh SE wind with the NE swell from the day before still breaking spectacularly along the shore, and a fair morning. The coast was clear north and south and we steered NNE for Kekeno Point and picked up the landmarks which had become familiar from the chart: Kekeno Point, Dundas and Green Is, and Blanche Rocks on the starboard bow, Haskell Bay opening out to port, and astern a receding vista of headlands of the eastern inlets, as yet unidentified but waiting for our future exploration.

We were off Kekeno Point at 1055 and lined up NE Cape of Enderby I. between Yule I. and Ewing I. to clear the shoal patches west of Dundas I. The NE swell was breaking heavily on Yule and Ewing and on the reefs off French's I. and we considered a little before deciding that with a deep channel inside Ewing I. and good leading marks (western end of Rose I. in the centre of the channel between Ocean I. and the mainland) it was safe. But frightening(!) as several large swells, apparently close to breaking although in 6 or 7 fathoms, rolled past us as we headed westwards through the channel at 1130. We rounded Ocean I. somewhat relieved to be clear of the swell and

steered across to Sandy Bay on Enderby I. It was soon clear that landing was not practicable, although we looked carefully at the eastern end of the beach which was a little sheltered but very bouldery. We saw someone ashore, and sea lions and penguins, but could not arouse much interest even after writing a message about a radio schedule on the bottom of the dinghy with Sam's drawing charcoal. So at 1230 we set off up Port Ross close to the SE shore, and nosed through the weed into a tiny cove on the south shore opposite Beacon Point and which we later found to be Sealer's Cove. Rata overhung the cove, there was a stream at the head, two independent sea lions, and on the point a pair of skuas with a large chick.



Moored in Sealers Cove  
19 December 1972

This was our first landing, and we spent a happy afternoon looking at plants and rocks and seaweed and photographing the quite fearless skuas and rather more reserved sea lions. A fine mild afternoon with light wind and at 1730 we eased ourselves out of the seaweed and steamed across to Erebus Cove, where we anchored at 1800. Here we found some interested Auckland Islanders at last, by chance: Mike Rudge and John Campbell, DSIR scientists whom we got to know well later. They were studying the goats around Port Ross, Mike the zoologist and John the botanist, and had their main base in Erebus Cove. So I was able to deliver Mike's mail promptly to him, and we found out what was going on, although John and Mike had only fleeting contacts with the expedition base at Ranui Cove, having only a walkie-talkie radio which was not very effective.

Before we had got very far we looked out to seaward to see 'Acheron' heading in to Erebus Cove against the sunset and she anchored astern of 'St Michael' at about 1830, rather surprised as she had not seen us against the light! They had just come up from Carnley Harbour, having left via Victoria Passage then by the west coast as the wind was offshore, and had had a magnificent day of observation of the western cliffs and bird colonies and had found the first cape pigeon nesting colony on Beacon Rock off North Harbour. They had been taking gear down and setting up camps in Carnley Harbour for later occupation, but no-one had stayed behind. However, as she had come round N and E of Enderby I. she had dropped off the Wildlife party and other scientists at Ranui Cove, so we met only 'Acheron's' crew at this time: Alex Black, Ian Macdonald mate, Alan Partridge cook and deckhand, and Sandy Black deckhand and Alex's 17 year old son. And Gerry Clark sailing 'Ketega', 20 ft 6 in. plywood singlehander, from Kerikeri to Auckland Is to Campbell I. to Chatham Is to Kerikeri on a sponsored trip to raise money for restoration of the Stone House at Kerikeri, but really because he had always longed to see some subantarctic islands. We had in fact seen 'Ketega' anchored in Laurie Harbour at the head of Port Ross as we came over from Sealer's Cove and had wondered who on earth she was, and felt in fact rather indignant that the place was so crowded, and had not realised no-one was on board. Gerry had gone south with 'Acheron' to see more of the Auckland Is after a 23 day trip from Kerikeri.

When we had passed the time of day and made tentative arrangements for next day, and fixed morning and evening radio schedule times, 'Acheron' went off, leaving us with an invitation to dinner later in Laurie Harbour. We followed her there at 1915 and at 1950 anchored on the edge of the shoal water near Williamson Point, a fine evening with a light south wind. Dinner with 'Acherons' and Gerry Clark was a very civilised meal in her large and comfortable saloon; plenty of room for the nine of us and Alan's skill as cook, helped by the magnificently equipped galley, appearing in the food.

So after our slightly forlorn hunting for recognition earlier in the day, here we were in the middle of Port Ross society and looking forward to joining in with the expedition's work in the morning. A lovely quiet evening with a full moon.

**Wednesday  
20 December**

A fine nearly cloudless morning, with light SW wind, becoming overcast during the forenoon. After the 0730 radio schedule between Ranui Cove, Enderby I. and 'Acheron' we were under way at 0745 after confirming arrangements with 'Acheron'. Later on we had our own schedule with Ranui and 'Acheron' on 2045 mcs, since we could listen only on the wavelength used by the others, and Enderby (and later the Magnetic Cove camp) could not listen on 2045 mcs.

The channel between Ocean I. and Tucker Point has plenty of water but much bladder kelp too, so we looked at it gingerly, having been warned by 'Acheron' which suffers cooling water filter blockage if she takes too much interest in weed. However, tides being near springs and the resulting current through the channel keeping the weed down, we ran through the channel at 0830 and ten minutes later anchored in Ranui Cove. Here there was still a good deal of surge from yesterday's south-easter and we went ashore, unable to see round into the cove from our anchorage, and intrigued by the mass of chewed-up seaweed in the cove, and by the two sea lions who followed us in, surfacing in our wake at intervals with heavy breathings. One of these was a constant escort in later visits and we appointed him harbourmaster.

A further party of Auckland Islanders was waiting for us under the overhanging ratas on the bouldery weedy beach of the cove: Brian Bell, expedition leader, Ron Nilssen from Dunedin, and Rod Russ cadet from Nelson, these three of the Wildlife Division, Mike Soper bird writer and photographer and expedition doctor from Arrowtown, and Graham Wilson zoology student from Canterbury University studying fur seals.



Expeditioners in the saloon of 'Acheron': from the left clockwise, Brian Bell, Mike Soper, Ron Nilssen, Gerry Clark, Graham Wilson, December 1972  
(Photo: Alex Black)

Much further exchange of news, of course, then, as they had work to do before setting off on a 'milk run' round Port Ross, we were shown the path to the Lookout, the shrewdly hidden wartime coastwatchers' small hut just below the survey observation point half a mile up the hill and about 200 ft above the sea.

The Ranui Cove camp was in the main building of the coastwatchers' base, in good condition after repair by the 1966 expedition and with large living room, kitchen with kerosene stoves and even a sink, bedroom and storeroom, and a covered passage outside where we could shed gumboots and parkas. And a good old-fashioned cast iron copper with three lionspaw legs, much in demand for hot water and fed with rata blocks unearthed from a pile left in 1945. There were also two large sleeping/working tents behind, and two other storehouses, one for general equipment and one turned into a drying room, for botanical specimens mainly but used for clothes if one could find room, and heated by two continuously burning kerosene heaters. And a tall 3 in. by 3 in. radio mast looking rather shaky but which survived the gales chiefly, I suspect, because the whole base camp was set well down only a few feet above high water level and surrounded by close-growing rata. A consequence of this situation was that it was far from easy to see what the weather was doing, unless one walked out along the boulder beach to the 'South Point' of Ranui Cove, seven minutes' walk; accordingly an exchange of views on the weather always started off the morning radio schedule, usually at 0730 but earlier if something special was in view.

We set off across the nearby stream (bridged by the remains of a wartime structure) and followed the 'telephone line' up the hill, this being, indeed, the line to the lookout hut and consisting of No. 8 fencing wire strung to insulators screwed into trees, the line now long past being usable or useful - except as a guide!

Brian Bell confessed at one stage that Auckland Is flora was just about his standard, having only five main trees/shrubs in the bush: southern rata, *Dracophyllum longifolium*, *Pseudopanax simplex*, *Myrsine divaricata*, and *Coprosma foetidissima*. Of course he knows many of the smaller plants, too, but I found the comment comforting, and certainly one soon became used to the simplicity of the bush. We met two sea bears (female sea lions, so to speak) presumably youngsters, on the way and encouraged them with broken branches to let us past. The track climbed up the small Observation Knob, and just below the top was the lookout room, glass-fronted and still in fair repair, with a superb view from nearly south round through east to north-west, yet most cleverly hidden among stunted rata. We looked carefully for it from seaward later and could not pick it although knowing just where it was.

The door was ajar and inside was a litter of magazines of 1939-1940: *Picture Post*, *Wide World*, *Auckland Weekly* and others, and a book with 'John K. L. Webling' on the fly leaf, my mechanical engineer boss at Roxburgh whose brother was captain of 'Ranui' which served the wartime coastwatchers and gave her name to the cove. On the walls were identification charts of German and Japanese ships and aircraft. Curious to think of it all sitting there for nearly 30 years, and rotting quietly away still.

This was just at the upper limit of the rata hereabouts, and beyond the observation point was open gently rolling 'heath' country for want of a better word, running back a long way until the land rose to the hills westward. A mixture of dracophyllum, cassinia and coprosma scrub and a few dwarf ratas, with considerable areas of tussock and marshy fellfield scattered with tight little clumps of gentian of white, pink, purple, and, perhaps, magenta in their flowers. Other small plants, too, not yet in flower, which I could not identify, but later on - in January - we found a variety of orchids in flower in this part.

From the top we had a fine allround view, of the eastern part of Port Ross from Erebus Cove nearly west of us, Deas Head, Lindley Point, Rose and Enderby Islands, and, over Tucker Point below us, Ocean and Ewing Islands, Yule Island beyond. Ranui Cove we could not see, as its immediately surrounding rata hid the cove and camp and only 'St Michael's' mastheads showed. Beyond the cove French's Island and Crozier Point and further out Dundas and Green Islands and breakers on their linking reefs and on Blanche Rocks. Southward a long view of inlet headlands, Chambres already familiar. Further round to the south-west the higher hills covering with misty rain and running right round to the gap of Laurie Harbour at the head of Port Ross and to the sweeping tussock slopes of the Hooker Hills beyond Erebus Cove. We were interested first in the channels leading each side of Rose I. since if one of these was navigable we would be saved a slow and lively run round Enderby I. whenever we wanted to go out to the north coast. Tidal streams through them were obviously strong and the eastern passage, between Rose and Enderby, looked discouraging with several breaking reefs across it. West of Rose, however, the channel looked a little more hopeful, although with breakers in it, too, and we promised ourselves a closer look at it before long.

Back to the base to find the chores done and the five ready to go, in the Wildlife dinghy, a 12 footer with outboard. We got under way at 1210 with the two dinghies in tow for Ewing I. to take water and other supplies to Milton Weller, American zoologist, studying the Auckland I. flightless teal there. Just a short run of course but complicated by the heavy belt of kelp quite surrounding the western beach and, when we landed there at 1235, by the large boulders and the substantial surge still persisting after the north-easterly and south-easterly weather. The island is nearly completely covered - in fact the trees overhang much of the shore - by *Olearia lyallii*, thought to have been brought by whalers/sealers from the Snares and spreading to the main island in what seemed to me to be an aggressively successful way. Large sprawling trunks 20 to 30 ft high and large leaves of a pale rather blue-green on top and furry-white below, the whole effect slightly alien and tropical. As we found later, the shore olearia (that is, where it was more exposed) was fiendishly difficult to get through although apparently no more sprawling than the rata which gave easy going.

Milton was on the beach to welcome us, or perhaps his water and stores, and we met the local shore pipits, so tame that one was afraid of walking on them, and some of Milton's flightless teal, rather shyer but quite prepared to let one look quietly if not too closely. He was

most interesting about the teal and the Ewing I. birds generally, having already been living alone with them for two weeks or so, and his talk with Brian and Ron gave one an inkling of the conscientious and precise observation that studies of this kind need.

The weather had closed in to low cloud and mizzling rain and at 1330 we left again for Enderby with Brian and Mike while Ron and Rod with Graham headed back to Ranui in the 12 footer. We were hoping to get ashore at Sandy Bay on Enderby to leave them one or two things (including a flagon of sherry) and to pick up Gordon Williams, Wildlife Division's Director. But there was still quite a considerable surf on the beach when we got there at 1410 and, with the Enderby I. population: Judy and Basil Marlow Australian zoologists, Hugh Best NZ zoologist, these three studying sea lions, Jerry Vantets Australian ornithologist, Auckland I. shags, and Gordon Williams watching, Nicholas and Brian went off in 'Bosky' and - capsized! Out of the flurry emerged two weed-draped figures and the bottom of the dinghy, and when it had been hauled out and emptied and the oars retrieved there was much wading about in the surf in a vain hunt for the lost bottle of sherry and a pair of rowlocks. Then the dinghy was prepared (we had a spare pair of rowlocks lashed in place) and there was a long delay with Brian chest-deep in the surf holding the dinghy straight until a lull came and they got off very neatly, but without Gordon as he had a good deal of gear and conditions were marginal.

So at 1510 we were under way again for Ranui Cove, Nicholas and Brian warming up in the engineroom then having a fresh warm water wash and clothes rinse after we had anchored off Ranui at 1530. There were no other duties so we left again at 1600 and with the afternoon brightening up went across to Rose I. and landed, again on a beach of large boulders covered with bull kelp and made a little tricky by a considerable surge, near its western end. Our aim was to look at the western channel but there was much to see ashore: a different kind of vegetation including gentians, phyllachne and a kind of chickweed with open tussock and a 'turf' of *Rumex neglecticus*, shore dock, with flat shiny leaves like a small lettuce, in a smooth windswept slope above the shore; a nesting yellow-eyed penguin with chick under a low bank, giant petrels and chicks, skuas, and one or two sea bears on the slopes and among the tussock, and a good view, from the low cliffs a little further north, of the channel. We looked carefully at this for breaking reefs or tide-swirls over sunken rocks and decided it looked quite good, and as it was nearly slack water ebb when we returned on board at 1825, we went out to sound through the channel. We stemmed the ebb tide and let her drift slowly astern whilst Nicholas sounded until clear out on to the north coast, then returned still sounding on a different line. A clear passage with a minimum depth of just under 3 fathoms with tide low, and this left us confident to use the channel later on and a little pleased with ourselves for resolving this uncertainty.

The mizzling rain had cleared off in the afternoon with a fresh SW wind and cloud caps on the hills but by this time the wind had dropped away and the sky was clearing to a fine evening with a few light clouds. We moved off close along the shore to Terror Cove where we anchored at 1925 then changed our minds after hearing the

1930 radio schedule and moved again to anchor in Erebus Cove at 1945. Later we looked out over a calm Port Ross to the full moon rising above Enderby I., a lovely quiet evening.

***Thursday***  
***21 December***

A quiet grey morning and as arranged last night with Mike and John we got under way with them at 0735 for Ranui, where they wanted to pick up some stores and gear and then be moved with a fly camp to Laurie Harbour. 'Acheron' was at Ranui on her way to pick up the three American botanists and John Farrell, DSIR entomologist, from Musgrave Inlet where they had been for some days; we spoke to her then anchored at 0820 and ferried John and Mike ashore. Brian confirmed our arrangement with them and we got under way at 0935 with the Wildlife dinghy in tow and Brian, Mike Soper, Ron, and Rod for Rose I. where we dropped them off at 0955 to ring skuas and giant petrel while we continued with Mike Rudge and John. While we were there we saw Gerry Clark's little 'Ketega' ghosting out of Port Ross on her way to Campbell I. We were sorry not to have seen him again but would hear of him again through radio schedules with that island; he has no transmitter. A courageous man to face the Southern Ocean alone in so small a boat but a very competent one. Out of devilment, really, we ran out through the Rose I. passage against an incoming tidal stream of nearly six knots, then back again soon afterwards at 1020 and on to Erebus Cove, where we anchored at 1045 while Mike and John collected their gear.

There was a little time to spare and so we set off, at their suggestion, to find the 'Victoria' tree and see some of the relics of the Hardwicke settlement of 1849-52. These were plain enough as there are many old rata stumps obviously cut by man, and after some wandering around Sam found the tree and called us to it. A large dead rata trunk, the eastern face adzed off smooth and deeply carved into it by a skilled shipwright:

H.M.C.S. Victoria  
Norman Capt.  
In Search of Shipwrecked People  
Oct. 14 1863

This was readily readable (only the second figure of '14' being a little uncertain) but added alongside, where decay had gone further and the lettering was not so bold, were other later messages which we could only decipher in part. H.M.C.S. is presumably 'Her Majesty's Colonial Ship'.

We made our own ways back to the camp and I found several old broken wine bottles and two unbroken, though one of these had its neck neatly removed by someone too thirsty to draw the cork, perhaps. I also found the worn leather sole of a shoe, hand-stitched and square-toed. The many stumps and the hard work they implied and the scattered relics (John and Mike had found many more bottles) and the knowledge that Hardwicke was evacuated in August 1852 with the settlement virtually destitute, gave me a feeling of



Sam Atkinson at the historic  
Victoria Tree, Erebus Cove,  
21 December 1972



melancholy in that quiet place, even on such a day of bright sun. Yet one is thankful that the Islands have been left alone.

Under way again at 1155 and anchored at 1225 at the head of Laurie Harbour which shoals rather quickly beyond Williamson Point, and into which flow two substantial branches of Grey Duck Creek, running out from the south and west down a long, gently curved glacial valley. The day was now quite fine, with a moderate west wind and sunny between passing cloud; the hills, certainly, have a family resemblance to Banks Peninsula with their long sweeping slopes, tiers of low cliffs, and occasional curious rampart tops. It should not be surprising, I suppose, as their volcanic structure and glacial shaping have probably been fairly similar; the vegetation gives them a very different texture and colour of course.

We lunched after Nicholas had taken John and Mike ashore, 'trailos', cheese, coffee, tangelos still from Nancy Collins' present, then got under way at 1340 for Rose I. again. I think it must have been on this occasion that we were first followed for a time by a group of three or four younger sea lions (Laurie Harbour was a favourite haunt) which 'porpoised' in our wake; with flippers and tail streamlined they were not at all easy to recognise as sea lions and we took them for dolphins at first. Back to Rose where we anchored at 1430 in the SE bay inside a

shelter belt of kelp, and landed on a rock ledge. Mike Soper was photographing several teal along the shore and the others had not returned so we had time to cut across the narrow neck of the island to the black columnar basalt northern cliffs, perhaps 100 ft high and enclosing a wild bay with a tidal boulder beach accessible only from the sea on a very calm day. Shags and sooty albatross along the cliffs and on their tops the peat cap of the Island scoured to rock and the loose rocks thrown back into a 'beach' where the seas drive over in storms.

We were back on board with the Wildlife party and under way with their dinghy in tow by 1515 and returned to Ranui Cove to find 'Acheron' there and to speak to her before Brian and his party went ashore. Under way again at 1545 and at 1635 anchored in Erebus Cove, the wind WNW moderate to fresh and the weather overcast with mizzling rain which later became heavy. John and I went ashore, he to find the Hardwicke and castaways' cemetery, I to have a rather bleak and rainy wash of myself and clothes in the creek - refreshing afterwards! Later on the rain cleared to another lovely evening.

***Friday***  
***22 December***

A fine morning with a fresh westerly winds and under way at 0720. These morning runs down to Ranui frequently coincided with breakfast as we tended to be a bit slow with it and I did not want to keep people waiting at Ranui; breakfast of rolled oats (plates brimming) with golden syrup when we had any, 'trailos' and marmalade, and coffee or tea.

'Trailos' deserve a sentence - a paragraph perhaps! - to themselves: they are the Wildlife Division's expedition biscuits, trail biscuits, formulated by Dr Muriel Bell we believe, and produced only in batches of 600 lb or more by Cadbury Fry Hudson. They are about 2 × 3 × ¼ in., rather crisp and nutty, and apparently habit-forming! Certainly most sustaining and, although we were always appreciative when 'Acheron' produced a loaf for us out of her deep freeze we never felt it hard to have to depend on trailos. They come in kerosene tins with press-on lids and are packed in cellophane-covered 50s.

'Acheron' arrived at Ranui Cove as we anchored at 0755 and we talked with the shore group until they were ready. Under way again at 0840 with Brian, Rod, and their rifles and the Wildlife dinghy and steamed over to Lindley Point where they went ashore at 0910 pig hunting; two were in sight along the shore a little. We moved over near Friday I. and the four of us went ashore, to find that the white boulders which had puzzled us were lichen-covered, and that in the deep tussock on the central hump of the little island were one or two bad-tempered sea lions. The island has a low ledge of rock running over towards a similar ledge on Rose I., and the spring ebb sluiced out between these like a river, breaking right across when it met the seas rolling in with the fresh wind. 'St Michael' was anchored in the little channel between Friday I. and Lindley Point, nearly surrounded by kelp strung out on the ebb tide. As we rowed out we realised that with a little carelessness we could find ourselves swept out into the breakers just through the channel.

We picked up Brian and Rod and their dinghy at 1000, two gory corpses for the pot on its bottom boards, and headed off for Enderby, anchoring off Sandy Bay beach at 1025. They went ashore and we followed, the landing reasonable although there was still quite a surge, and the beach thick with kelp thrown up by the strong south-easter and the kelp in turn being covered by sand. Several flourishing sea lion harems, and we followed the Enderby Islanders' example in treating them with respect, and if necessary with the flat of an oar. Because the beach was rather full we landed on the rock-shelf at the foot of the low cliff at its SW end, where an inlet ran into a small cave. This became known as 'The Wharf' and we used it much of the time, except when it covered at high water, as it was convenient for loading and unloading and 'St Michael' could stand in very close to the shelf. The Wildlife people usually dropped an anchor off, backed in under oars, and when ashore let the dinghy go off again with a sternline; if properly managed this is very effective and the boat keeps out of trouble.

'Acheron' was anchored in the bay and had brought Ron and Mike Soper over - we all went ashore. Nicholas and I joined Brian and his three to see the royal albatrosses which they were going to band and we set off in the direction of Butterfield Point, first through open rata and across a cave which opened on the landward side into a sinkhole ringed with asplenium ferns, then out into the chest-high cassinia scrub along the coastal cliff and when it thinned we turned right towards the NW coast,

The Auckland I. shags were starting to settle down to nesting and there was a constant undercurrent of comment from them as we followed the clifftop nearby.

Once clear of the higher cassinia scrub which thins out to dwarf plants 12 or 18 in. high on the northern half of Enderby we came to the bulbinella fields: *Bulbinella rossii*, acres and acres of elegantly splayed-out broad-based tapered fleshy leaves with candles 12 or 14 in. high, like short red-hot poker and about the same diameter but rich butter-yellow, a superb sight either individually or by the acre. They were mostly past their best but fortunately I had the sense to photograph them, for when we returned after the Christmas Eve gale they were all brown. All this is rabbit country and we saw them from time to time but it is I think a little open for them and they seem to prefer the higher scrub and surprisingly the rata bush. But there were pipits all through the island top.

Brian and Rod went off towards Butterfield Point to band some giant petrels there and when they returned we went off north-eastward to find the royals, the NW cliffs a few hundred yards away on our left and the roar of the breakers below them in our ears. Soon we saw the first royals, showing up like square-riggers above the low scrub and refusing to be alarmed by our approach. We found them no less magnificent than we had expected and even bigger, sitting firmly with that impressively serene look which seems so characteristic of the albatrosses and as we realised later, particularly so of the royals. The banding was necessarily undignified, involving first a careful approach and grasping of the massive beak in a heavily gloved hand, then lifting the bird off the nest with an arm round its breast and



'St Michael' and 'Acheron' at Sandy Bay, Enderby Island,  
22 December 1972

holding it for ringing, and weighing and measuring of the single egg. But the skill of the ringers and their obvious affection for the birds, tough young Rod as much as any of them, made the indignity unimportant, although some care was needed with one or two birds to encourage them back to the nest.

We watched the banding for a time and photographed a little, and looked hard with the others for Antarctic terns' nests as they kept flying round and diving and screaming at us as if we were about to step on their eggs. No success although Mike Soper later found and photographed at least one nest and Jerry also found some. Then Nicholas and I left them and walked out to the northern cliffs here about 120 ft high, black basalt in more or sometimes less regular columns, mostly dead black but some dark grey. At their feet a tidal ledge sticking out into a moderate sea which yet looked pretty savage bursting against those cliffs, the white break and the black cliff in dramatic contrast. Nicholas and I had the illusion (perhaps?) that the island underfoot shook under the heavier batterings.

The island (and Rose I. too, and presumably the main island as well) has a cap of peat, sectioned near the cliff edge and up to about 12 ft deep. It looked as good a fuel as Scottish peat but we did not get round to trying it. Where the northern cliff is rather more exposed it was obvious that a good many seas drive over the top in heavy weather (indeed, we had spray at times on some visits), for the peat was cleared back perhaps 50 ft and all the loose rock thrown back to a 'storm beach' along the peat edge leaving the cliff top clean rock. A

very impressive hint of the violence of the weather at times. In retrospect it is a pity, perhaps, that we did not go out to those cliffs during one of the gales we had!

We looked out to the north to Bristow Rock about 3 miles off, labelled on the chart 'seldom breaks', not expecting to see it. But it broke and again at every swell. On other visits we saw it break more often than not: so much for chart comments! The breaking was quite a sight, a great mass of white water; I felt that when it was breaking regularly or even rather infrequently one would have difficulty not seeing it in good time in daylight, even in poor visibility. After this we caught up with the banders again. The birds are well scattered, there being 30 or 40 pairs nesting on Enderby and many nests  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile or so from nearest neighbours. On the other hand we did see occasional meetings of temporarily unemployed birds, six or seven in a conversational group. Otherwise one would see a distant white head above the low scrub and others widely scattered, four or five in sight, others hidden in the slight hollows, but all close to good areas nearly clear of scrub for take-off and landing. We worked round to the north and east, virtually along the 'crest' of the island though this gives a wrong impression. It is very gently contoured, rising very easily from Butterfield Point to the highest part about two-thirds of the way along then falling at the eastern end.

On the top we met Jerry Vantets on his rounds and he joined the banding team. Nicholas and I went beyond the royal nesting limit and looked down on Derry Castle Reef, a rock ledge above high water rather than a reef, running out nearly a third of a mile with the seas bursting on its western edge. Then we hurried back to join the others in a short-cut through the bush back to Sandy Bay, a track cleared and marked by Jerry. Although the island is small and clear practically all round the coast as well as on most of its northern half, it is not difficult to get into strife with the scrub along the bush edge and one can spend a considerable and very frustrating time struggling through it, into the clearer rata or out into the low cassinia scrub, as Nicholas and I found later. We also found how easy it was to miss our way in the open going under the ratas, and thereafter took care not to lose Jerry's marked track in taking a shortcut back to the bay. The low relief of course makes route-finding more difficult.

Auckland I. parakeets and tomtits in the bush, tame but very difficult to photograph, and when we got out on to the rumex/liverwort 'turf' at the back of Sandy Bay and, so to speak, pushed our way through the rabbits, we came across a small group of the islands' wild cattle, black or black and white, horned, the bulls rangy and looking as though they should be in the bull ring, but all very shy. So Brian and the others stopped and hurriedly fitting telephoto lenses stalked the group to make the most of a rare chance. The cattle can be seen from time to time in this part but are usually on the open tussock-land of the north-east. Then we looked down on the main beach and the sea lion colony, with noisy and aggressive bulls and their harems of cream and dark brown sea bears, and already many pups, cream and brown spotted and bleating like lambs.

Nicholas and I had had only a snack for lunch and it was now 1600 so we went out to 'St Michael' as there was no sign of John or Sam and

made good the gap. They had gone out by Jerry's track to the north coast, where they found the 'Derry Castle' burial place and old pieces of timber almost certainly from her. They arrived back  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour later having come round the eastern coast. We came to realise that Enderby I. is one of the most interesting of the group, with its variety of coastline as well as of birds, animals and plants, as Brian maintained. Comparing notes on this day's visit gave us our first appreciation of how much it offered.

The day had remained typical of south-westerly and westerly weather; fresh to strong winds with quite long sunny spells interrupted by heavy rain and sometimes hail showers. These could be seen driving down in grey gloom over the Hooker Hills so that one had time to huddle down in the nearest scrub until the shower passed, usually quite quickly; the royals sat stoically through it all (probably thinking it delightful weather), only settling themselves down on to their eggs and retracting their heads low into their back feathers.

We got under way at 1705 and went right to the head of Laurie Harbour where we anchored at 1810 for a short time, then not very taken with the rather open anchorage decided to move down to Erebus Cove. 'Acheron' normally anchored overnight in Laurie but she naturally needed a good deal more swinging room and could not tuck herself away very well in the places we preferred. We anchored again in Erebus Cove at 1850 and had a large dinner to make up for the day's privations. 'Acheron' had a busy radio day sending off Christmas messages (which included ours) to Awarua Radio.

***Saturday***  
***23 December***

A fresh WNW wind and an overcast rather gloomy morning with showers. We were under way at 0730 and saw 'Acheron' heading down as we left but we went through the Ocean I. channel so that we both arrived at Ranui Cove together at 0800. 'Acheron's' cruising speed is, I suppose, close to nine knots. We left again with some gear for Enderby at 0815 and stopped in Sandy Bay at 0835 to land this and to pick up Gordon Williams for a cruise round Port Ross. He had no special programme other than to see the settlement relics in Erebus Cove so we went there first, anchoring at 0935, and Gordon went ashore with John and Sam. 'Acheron' was there having brought the three American botanists (whom she had collected from Musgrave Inlet the day before) and invited us all to lunch, while handing us the York Bay telegram which had come in that morning. Lunch was leisurely and pleasant and we did not continue our cruise until 1500 by which time the day had improved greatly and we in 'St Michael' moved round to Terror Cove then to the smaller cove just north of it. This has two instrument stands of roughly concreted brick, one with a carved memorial slab, much covered in moss, where the 1874 German expedition made astronomical and magnetic observations. Gordon, Sam and John hunted round for relics; I stayed with them for a little then went and sat on the warm boulders on the beach and enjoyed the sun on the clear water and the rata-overhung headlands and 'St Michael' with her background of Enderby I. and the clouds from early afternoon receding seaward. Nicholas had a quiet spell on board.

We moved on again at 1635 and cruised round Deas Head and around the cove to Lindley Point then anchored at 1655 at Friday I. for a longer look at it. Shells - what little beach there was, was all broken shell - tussock, a few massive gnarled *Hebe elliptica*, and wide rock shelves. At 1750 we steamed across to Rose I. and anchored off the old boathouse at 1805. This is now derelict and collapsed, the totara framework sound but the galvanised iron rotting. But leaning against it was the 'Derry Castle' punt - so named by others on the expedition but as it was about 12 ft long by 4 ft beam there is some doubt, for 'New Zealand Shipwrecks' third edition says that the punt was 'an oblong box 6 ft long by 2½ ft wide with the ends turned up'. On the other hand the Rose I. punt looked as if made with crude tools, of some kind of pine, which might well have been ceiling from the ship's holds and it had turned-up punt ends with small decks. But why was it on Rose I.? After crossing in their punt from Enderby to the Erebus Cove depot the 'Derry Castle' survivors found the boat there unusable and, I assume, must have continued to use their punt to transfer the rest of the party to Erebus.

It was very pleasant in the late sun, speculating about the 'Derry Castle' but we were all getting rather hungry and there was an evening duty trip for us so we left at 1825 calling at Sandy Bay at 1845 to land Gordon and pick up Hugh Best. Nicholas took the dinghy in, and landed dry but he and Hugh got wet coming off - Sandy Bay living up to its reputation! We were off again at 1920 and anchored in Ranui Cove at 1945 for an evening meal with the Ranuis, another very pleasant Port Ross social occasion. Afterwards we listened in (inevitably, as the radio was in the only living room) while Brian talked with Campbell I. This was good value for they were able to tell us that Gerry Clark had arrived at 0100 that morning after a good voyage and was then engaged in watching a film so could not talk to us. But it was welcome news and we sent our combined good wishes to him. There was lively and amusing give and take between Brian and the Campbells, each party interested in the other's activities and they suggesting that we should drop down there in 'St Michael'. However, Brian told them we were hard at it here!

After this we sat round chatting and waiting for darkness, then collected various pieces of gear including a very neat portable generator and spotlight, and warm clothing for the party going out to Shoe I. for a spotlighting evening. This involves an island with a variety of burrow-nesting nocturnal shearwaters, and the spotlight which when skilfully handled so as to follow a bird picked up in its beam will usually dazzle the bird, moth-like, and bring it down to the ground where it can easily be caught, measured and banded. The Ranui party Brian, Mike, Ron, Rod, and Hugh were taking the Wildlife dinghy and equipped themselves with warm clothing and snacks. We set off at 2105, dusk and a beautiful evening of very light NW, put them off at Shoe I. at 2140, and continued to an anchorage in Erebus Cove at 2150. They were hoping to capture Auckland I. prion among others but the fine evening did not promise very well.

We emptied the starboard inner fuel tank during the day and opened the cross-connection to the wing tank. Another item for the record was that high water was sometime between 1400 and 1500 this day.

*Sunday*  
*24 December*

Came in with a fresh NNE wind and overcast sky. We picked up Brian's party who had brought their dinghy into Erebus Cove and spent what was left of the night in the camp there. They were bleary and a little subdued. Little success with the spotlighting, unfortunately, as the night had as expected been too fine. I am not sure whether in such conditions the birds go far afield or whether in good visibility they go straight out from the nesting ground and return directly to it without flying around but experience shows that misty nights are necessary for successful spotlighting. Perhaps it is nothing more than the effect of mist in diffusing the light so that its scope in dazzling and confusing the bird is much wider.

We were under way at 0725 for Enderby first where we put Hugh ashore at 0815, picked up John Farrell, and set off again at 0835. At Ranui at 0910 and spoke to 'Acheron' which was bound for Tandy Inlet to pick up two Americans. Otherwise the day's activities were called off as the wind was freshening and rain was on the way. Brian's party went ashore, and we left again at 0925 to find a snug anchorage, as the starboard exhaust pipe was leaking at the top of its loop under the deck and Nicholas and I wanted to get at it. Anchored at 1010 in the small cove under Beacon Point, just south of Erebus Cove, the wind now fresh to strong NNE with rain.

Nicholas and I set to work, taking out the exhaust pipe and gingerly peeling off its asbestos rope covering (since we had to put it back later, having none to replace it) to find the copper underneath, originally 3/32 in. thick, paper thin in one section. We had some sheets of copper and cut patches to cover the thin places, wired them on, then plastered the lot over with 'Plastibond'. Then carefully rewound the asbestos rope, very important as the patch being close to the deck, it would not do without insulation; more 'Plastibond' was plastered on to hold it all together. Meanwhile it poured with rain, and the open skin-connection through the hull just above the waterline made gugging noises and occasionally spat at us as the squalls passed by.

Sam, meanwhile, had been busy with an elaborate lunch; Nicholas and I scraped the mess off our hands and finished off with 'Ataway' (one of the few occasions we needed it: I must have had a vision of a series of major engine repair jobs with the mechanics black to the elbows for we had tins and tins of the stuff!) and then made the most of a very fine meal. It was, however, slightly spoilt because the 'Plastibond' had come from a very old tin and there was much uncertainty as to whether it was going to set off, needing frequent visits to see if it was showing any signs of hardening. It did eventually and we refitted the exhaust pipe with some relief, which would have been greater if we had foreseen the gale which blew up later.

Partly to give the engines a run and the repair a chance to 'cook', and partly as we wanted exercise we got under way at 1600, the weather gloomy again after a bright spell in the middle of the day, and steamed up to Lindley Point, anchoring close inshore at 1625. Wind was now fresh to strong NNW with sunny patches again and there was quite a surge along the bouldery beach, coming through the Rose I. passage and smoothed right out in this sheltered corner. We all went ashore, John and Sam along to the nearest stream to wash themselves and



clothes, Nicholas and I to go overland through the bush and out to the clifftop tussock near Pillar Rock.

There is a deep geo-indentation in the cliff with the sea running into a cave at its inner end - where we reached the north coast and we struggled along to the west some way, in high tussock heads and battered by the strong wind, until we were opposite Pillar Rock. This is - to use another Highland word - a stack, about 100 ft high, separated from the cliff about 75 yards, sheer-sided and its top level with the clifftop. It looked very dramatic, sunlit for a brief minute against the wild breaking sea and the distant black cliffs of Enderby off to the NE. Its top had one large twisted *Hebe elliptica* in flower, and stilbocarpa in flower of a variety of colours from white to pale purple, and tussock of course, the vegetation different from our clifftop because unaffected by goats or pig.

We scrambled back through the tussock then down through the bush to Lindley Cove and waited for Sam and John to appear, looking out to 'St Michael' just outside the kelp-belt ranging about in the squalls even in this sheltered corner. The others appeared and picked us up and at 1805 we were under way running down to Beacon Point, with the wind, now working up to gale force, astern. 'Acheron' was anchored in Laurie Harbour in 3 fathoms on the edge of the shoal and we anchored west of her at 1840 using the 60 lb fisherman as we normally did overnight, the evening closing in dark and stormy. However, our anchor dug firmly in and we showed no slightest sign of dragging even in the now fierce squalls.

At 1930 we listened to Ranui Cove talking to Enderby I. and to 'Acheron' on 2284 mcs then had our own turn with Ranui on 2045 mcs; warming to have this link on such a wild Christmas Eve. A little later the wind backed to WSW, blowing right down Grey Duck Creek and out past Williamson Point in tearing white squalls. We had another radio round at 2100 after Ranui had talked to Campbell I., exchanging Christmas greetings with them and hearing that it was blowing a gale there too, that Gerry Clark was looking round and staying on for a few days and that he had a snug anchorage. 'Acheron' then reported that her barometer showed 966 millibars, which was thought to be about 20 mb low but was nevertheless the lowest Alex had seen it. We had listened to Awarua Radio's weather forecast just before this and the duty operator, whose human style we had already come to appreciate, wished his audience a merry Christmas, having just told us to expect 40 knot gales in Foveaux Strait!

After this we stowed 'Bosky' on board about 2130 and lashed her down, looked carefully round on deck to see that everything was clear and chafing gear in place on the anchor warp, took a careful check of our shore marks in between squalls, and went below. I sat in my bunk recording my usual evening 'diary,' on the tape recorder, and a brief run of wind in the mizzen rigging which sounds very feeble. We arranged that whenever any of us woke he would go up and look round, as we knew that the ground, very firm clay, gave excellent holding and that we were not moving so that an anchor watch seemed a little pedantic. We switched on masthead and stern lights at about 2200.

About 2330 John looked out and seeing 'Acheron's' lights realised she was under way. What had happened was that she was riding to her 190 lb Danforth on chain; it did well in a sense and was deeply embedded by the NNW squalls, but when the wind backed eight points to WSW at about 2000 it could or would not swivel, and as the gale blew up again the only possible thing happened: the shank, about 6 in. x 1 in. steel, bent and in due time of course the anchor pulled out. We heard the details next day: they were about to turn in some time before 2300 and were discussing the question of anchor watches when Alex looked out and said 'We're away!' Although they were very quick they only just got going in time and thought they had touched, if so on the relatively soft shoal edge. They steamed back into position, changed over to their 120 lb Danforth and tried to get it in but hardly surprisingly could not get hold. So they hove in and resigned themselves to a Christmas morning patrol up and down Laurie Harbour; with radar and echo-sounder this was not too difficult, though Alex said he was glad of our sternlight as a top marker.

***Monday  
25 December***

Blowing very hard in the squalls. About 0215 Sam came up and could not see 'Acheron's' lights so called me. We saw them after a time in a brief lull, away down the harbour about 3 miles off and watched as she came back, realising why we had not seen her when the squalls swept down and the spindrift hid her entirely except for her mast-head light. She turned near us and set off on another leg, 55 minutes each circuit! I stayed up until about 0345 by which time there were intervals of moonlight, it was plain we were still firmly in place, and the squalls seemed a little easier so I turned in.

At 0730 we had our morning radio schedule with Ranui, Enderby, and 'Acheron' and exchanged (in our case by proxy with Enderby) Christmas messages. 'Acheron' was back at anchor and we heard some details. The wind was still strong W with perhaps a little north in it, but there were sunny patches and the tops were clear. However, it was not much of a day for activity although we had agreed the day before with Brian that we should make the most of it if weather allowed; by general agreement we made it a day off. I did hear though that Mike Rudge and John Campbell (at this time at Ranui Cove) were out working during the morning, characteristically.

We in 'St Michael' had a lazy morning and a brunch meal during which we opened our Christmas parcels, and exciting they were too: food, chocolates, books (mine were Villiers' 'Cook the Seaman's Seaman', Mary Renault's 'Fire from Heaven', and Jane Austen 'Emma', very welcome choices), and each lot carefully hidden by the rest so that they really were surprises. At the noon radio schedule, arranged in the morning, we did not think the weather improved enough, and after it 'Acheron' called across by loud hailer to ask if we would like to join then for Christmas dinner at 3 pm. This was very generous and with their company (and perhaps their well-filled deep-freeze and magnificent galley also!) in mind we accepted enthusiastically.

Obviously we should dress for dinner, which we did in varied ways, and fortunately the weather was brighter and the wind easier when

we rowed over to be met ceremoniously at the rail by Ian McDonald and carried off to the saloon for some chat while Alan finished off his preparations in the galley. The results were very fine: turkey or chicken, roast and boiled potatoes, and peas, with a white wine, then fruit salad and icecream and a variety of lively conversations. Then we were allowed to help wash up and sat round for more talk and tea, and then realised that it was 1930 and time for the radio schedule. So we collected in the wheelhouse and listened to Ranui and Enderby, Brian and Basil quipping with Alex against convivial background noises and followed by appropriate singing. John and Sam sang their little piece about the pub with no beer, a gentle crack at the Americans at Ranui whose beer was in 'Acheron'! And finally we went back to 'St Michael' about 2030 for a quiet snack and cocoa.

At 2130 the wind was moderate, perhaps just W of north, cloud down on the tops but the weather looking reasonable.

***Tuesday***  
***26 December***

A fair morning, though overcast and rather cold, and a light SW wind. We were usually glad of jerseys over woollen shirts and long trousers tucked into thick socks and gumboots even in the middle of the day, though bare feet were not unusual, Nicholas being the hardiest. The mornings were often quite cool and we would be glad of the galley stove warming up the cabin and of large plates of hot porridge; we gained a reputation with Ron Nilssen, who handled the stores at Ranui, for excessive consumption of rolled oats, and this was one of the first things he noted for 'Acheron' to bring down on her return!

We were under way at 0715, 'Acheron' having got away ten minutes earlier after circling us in a pointed manner. Ranui Cove at 0805, where 'Acheron' was loading up two parties for Carnley Harbour, the Americans with John Farrell for Camp Cove, and Ron, Gordon and Rod for Magnetic Cove on Adams I.

We kept out of the way and looked at the passage inside French's I. off Crozier Point; tide rather high and 1½ fathoms in the channel so we went through, admired the sooty albatrosses patrolling Crozier Point cliffs and returned to seaward of the island. 'Acheron' got away at 0850 and we were back in Ranui Cove ten minutes later to pick up Brian, Mike Soper and Graham with the Wildlife dinghy to go to Enderby, and Mike Rudge and John Campbell for Erebus. Under way at 0915, and realised half way to Sandy Bay that we need not go right across so dropped off Brian's party in their dinghy at 0930 under outboard while we headed for Erebus Cove, where we put Mike and John ashore at 1005.

Then back to Sandy Bay to pick up the Wildlife dinghy again with Brian's party, Judy and Basil Marlow, Hugh and Jerry at 1100. On our way across to Ocean I. we lost the Wildlife dinghy briefly, from painter trouble, which recurred later in more difficult conditions. This time we saw it at once and lost little time. We were heading for Dundas I. hoping for quiet enough conditions to land the sea lion specialists, in particular, there. Off French's I. at 1145 and anchored, after a careful approach through shoal water, close to the northern shore of Dundas at 1220. It is low-lying, about 250 yards by 350 yards, with a tidal rock-shelf along the north shore, boulder and shingle



Transshipping scientists: from the left clockwise, John Campbell, Mike Rudge, Brian Bell, Mike Soper, Graham Wilson, Sam Atkinson

beaches above and around the coast, and long rocky reefs running out from the NE and S sides. A central stand of low *Hebe elliptica* is surrounded by mud-wallows, left, I believe, by sea elephants, and by a fairly large area of tussock; the beaches were crowded with sea lions and bears and their pups.

The wind had freshened during the morning and was now blowing fresh from SSW with prospect of strengthening and cloud was increasing. Tidal streams are strong in this part, and there was a two to two and a half knot current past the island. We watched the break on the nearest rock-shelf then Brian and Graham went off in the outboard dinghy for a closer look during which they went right round the island and got quite wet plugging up to windward on the south side. Brian thought landing was quite feasible but not wise with conditions probably deteriorating, so we decided to leave Dundas for the present and getting under way at 1240 steamed across to Kekeno Point two miles off, anchoring close in on a sandy bottom at 1310. The bay (in the outer part of which we were anchored) just north of Kekeno Point is wide with rocky shores in its outer part, then narrows to a long shallow estuary with rumex/liverwort 'turf' on sand at its head, all surrounded by rata. Before going ashore we all squeezed into the main cabin where John and Sam did wonders in providing for ten of us: soup, trail biscuits with butter, cheese and jam, and coffee. Then while Brian took the passengers in to the head of the bay, Nicholas stayed on board and Sam, John and I went ashore first on the Kekeno Point side then across the bay to a dramatic storm beach of large rounded boulders running out under low cliffs.

The others came off with a number of sea lion skulls and left a further collection of bones ashore, and at 1505 we weighed and returned round the shore of Webling Bay and Crozier Point and inside French's I. Brian, Mike and Graham dropped off at Ranui Cove, with an invitation to us to join them for dinner, and at 1630 John put the Marlows, Jerry and Hugh ashore at Sandy Bay and we returned to Ranui Cove, anchoring at 1700. Port inner fuel tank was empty this afternoon and the cross-connection opened.

Dinner with the Ranuis was lively and cheerful as usual - pork, fresh meat certainly but tough - and afterwards we tried to raise Campbell I., unsuccessfully. We heard later (when they surfaced the next day) that they had been keeping their end up with a Russian oceanic research ship which called in over Christmas! We did make our usual schedule with 'Acheron' anchored in North Harbour Carnley, near Figure of Eight I., in quite a strong wind, and with Camp Cove and Enderby. Ron and Rod, at Magnetic Cove we could hear but not decipher and 'Acheron' relayed them to us: going well banding wanderers and intending to camp out on the top of Adams I. the next night.

Several interesting sightings today: five sooty albatrosses near Shoe I., after we had put Mike and John ashore, a pair of grey teal and drake in Ranui Cove and they had seen a chick, and a king penguin looking at the crowded beach at Sandy Bay and deciding against coming ashore to moult. Enderby reported in the evening, however, that he had changed his mind later. And many Auckland I. prion, cape pigeons and giant petrel as we went down to Dundas I.

The wind was fresh from SSW with some showers as we returned to 'St Michael' but the cove being quiet in this wind and with an early start in prospect we stayed where we were.

***Wednesday***  
***27 December***

Came in with wind still in the SSW, the sky partly overcast, and a rather cold morning. Still the weather seemed right for North Harbour and Beacon Rock, the DSIR pair wanting to see about goats around the former and Brian and party wanting a closer look at the cape pigeon colony on the rock. So we were under way at 0730 with Brian, Mike and Graham and at 0805 picked up John and Mike Rudge from Erebus, putting their gear ashore in passing in Deas Cove (just north of the Head) at 0835.

Off again at 0910 and through the Rose I. passage at 0925 at easy speed with a strong ebb current and breaking seas. This went smoothly: we kept rather close to the Rose I. side in the outer part of the passage then kept on in the spreading fan of ebb and broken water until clear before turning westwards. The coast was a fine sight, first the headland west of Pillar Rock with a steep talus slope down to a rock-shelf and with a small group of goats to be seen on it, then Matheson Bay and the long tongue of North Point, at its outer end a group of rocks awash in the surge then a great sweep of 600 ft cliffs round to the east headland of North Harbour, rounded and steep and the sea surging up on to it, and behind the rising sweep of tussock running back to the Hooker Hills. With this coast to see and a run of only about four miles we were in North Harbour almost before we knew it. Some goats to be seen on the

western aide and we put Mike and John ashore there, near the head of the inlet at 1015, arranging to pick them up at the same place at 1400. Then we returned to Beacon Rock and had a close look at it, in clearing weather with a good deal of sun. We found we could go in very close to it on the south and east sides where it had a rock-shelf just above the bigger waves. To seaward there were offlying rocks and Beacon Rock itself, 130 ft high and overhanging on one side while to the west there were narrow gaps only between a reef of rocks running in to the 400 ft sheer cliffs of Black Head, the seas breaking through the reef. After watching the cape pigeons and the surge for a time we decided a landing would be all right and Nicholas and Brian went off in 'Bosky' while we stood close in about 30 ft off. The surge rose and fell perhaps 8 or 10 ft, and the best landing point had a small shelf at mid height, waiting to hook over the dinghy's bow or under it. However, if they were tipped out we could very quickly pick them up, and we could see (as they could not from their lower level) when larger swells were coming round from seaward and give them some warning. Nicholas and Brian managed very neatly and he was soon up on the shelf, finding that he could climb about and reach a number of nests. Then it was Graham's turn: unfortunately we did not see that he was doing what so many do in a dinghy, gripping the gunwhale, and in approaching the landing a finger got crushed between the rock and the dinghy.

Nicholas brought him back and Mike Soper bandaged him up while John gave him hot tea. His main reaction was annoyance with himself and disappointment, as with one hand a landing was not really practicable; the finger must have been very painful. Meanwhile Brian's report was encouraging and Nicholas next put Mike ashore, again a neat effort by both, and they set about finding their way about and finding birds to photograph and band/measure. There were a few shags but mostly cape pigeons, their nests tucked away in the ledges running round the Rock. Meanwhile we cruised round the Rock, Sam and John rowed round in the dinghy, and when he had recovered a little Graham asked us to go along under the cliffs of Black Head where he was able to pick out, on the boulder beach at its toe a number of fur seals, about 40 altogether. Then back to watch Brian on the top ridge of Beacon Rock.

Later we picked up the dinghy and went round the headland westward. By now the sun was bright and the scene as it opened up to the west was magnificent indeed. Compadre Rock, separated from the cliff, tussock-topped, was a third of a mile away, a deep bay in the high overhanging cliff just inshore of us, and further west a long rugged line of cliffs running out to the great stacks, 330 ft high, of North-west Cape. The surge clear turquoise until it broke in brilliant white, sooty albatrosses and cape pigeons along the cliffs and shy mollymawks and prion over the sea. We rounded Compadre Rock to find a huge cirque of cliff, nearly a semicircle, inside it, overhanging and three or four hundred feet high and a high thread of waterfall dropping down from the tussock uplands further west to a narrow beach backed by a low debris slope thick with hebe, running along for a mile or so towards the Five Sisters Rocks.

Fascinating as all this was we did not want to leave the Beacon Rock party too long, so returned to them and took off Mike at 1330. He had managed some photographs but found all the accessible nests poorly lit. After exchanging shouts with Brian we left him at work at 1355, picked up John and Mike, and anchored at the head of North Harbour at 1410 for lunch. The harbour is a long steep-sided trench with a wide, gently shelving beach of sand at the head running back to low sandhills backed by rata; above, the valley divided and ran up high into the Hooker Hills. It was very quiet but it must be a funnel for SW gales, whipping over the western cliffs to a clear straight run of miles.

We had some slight pangs of conscience about Brian while we enjoyed our lunch but he had so obviously been engrossed in what he was doing - we could see his grin when we first put him ashore - that we could not feel sorry for him. We weighed again at 1450, collected Brian at 1505 without any trouble, then went briefly round Black Head so that the others could see something of the western coast. However, Graham's finger was beginning to be painful (although he said nothing) and Mike Soper suggested quietly to me that it would be as well to get back to Ranui without too much delay. So we gave away the detailed look at the coast which we had planned to make on the way back and made a straight run to Rose I. passage. But the coast was a very fine sight in the bright afternoon sun, the tawny uplands running back in long cloud-shadowed slopes to the fifteen hundred foot gentle top of Mt Hooker, the sea a wonderfully rich blue breaking in vivid white at the foot of the black, and in places red, cliffs. We slipped through into Port Ross with a strong flood tide at 1540 and at 1625 put Brian, Mike Soper and Graham ashore at Ranui, setting off ten minutes later for Deas Cove, where we anchored at 1705. Nicholas and I went ashore to help move John and Mike's gear from the beach up to their new camp site, and to help them set up, and John and Sam set to work and prepared a fine dinner to which we brought the other two back - with their sherry flagon - later. Another very pleasant Port Ross social occasion and when we put them ashore at 2045 and got under way for Ranui Cove it was a perfect evening, very light WSW with high cloud faintly salmon-pink reflected in the calm water away eastward.

We slipped round to Ranui Cove and anchored there at 2120, going ashore to see how Graham was. And found ourselves offered supper - tea and Christmas cake. Mike had fixed the finger up and found no serious damage but the nail had to come off (under a local); Graham was in good form but would no doubt be a bit handicapped for some weeks. We listened to the radio schedule with Campbell I. who told us that Gerry Clark had been out - round the island? - with one of the base staff. They had been carried offshore by strong currents and had had a rough beat back, the unfortunate passenger very seasick. Then we spoke to 'Acheron' who reported a good day and a fine evening with light westerly and high cloud. Ron and Rod had set their camp up on the top of Adams I. and looked like having a good night - but more of that later!

Back rather late to 'St Michael' and we stayed in the cove with the possibility of an early start for Disappointment I. if the weather was right.



'Bosky' with Sam and John at Beacon Rock, 27 December 1972



From Beacon Rock, North Harbour, 27 December 1972  
(Photo: Mike Soper)



**Thursday**  
**28 December**

As arranged we had a radio talk with Ranui at 0630 but the weather was overcast with rain and heavy showers at intervals, wind westerly moderate, but rather cold. Not a day, at this time, for anything ambitious we agreed, so having made another schedule for 1000 we in 'St Michael' turned in again. It was a cold morning and we had been late last night after a long day!

After our 1000 talk, weather still the same and a late breakfast, we got under way to go up to Laurie Harbour as we had only a few gallons of water left. Under way at 1020 and through Ocean I. passage to find the wind true W and moderate to fresh, then at 1035, without any fuss at all the wind backed quickly to SSW still moderate to fresh, the clouds started to clear and patches of sunlight appeared. We dithered for a little then decided to return to Ranui Cove where I went ashore at 1100 and Brian asked us to pick them up in an hour. So we potted along the coast, close inshore, north of the cove as far as Ocean I. looking for a watering stream without success. South, down towards Crozier Point we did find a good stream coming down a rocky chine through the low coastal cliffs from the rata and peaty tussock inland.

It was too late by that time to water so we picked up Brian, Mike and Graham at Ranui at 1210 and ran over to Enderby where we landed them at 1235. The wind was now strong in squalls but the weather was clearing; we went back to Ranui Cove and on to our stream where we dropped our anchor close in and took a sternline and the watering hose ashore. There were sea lion tracks on each side of the stream but nothing horrid in it, at least within the limits I examined, so although the water was brown we considered this only a product of the peat country and rigged the hose, high enough to give a reasonable flow to the ship. We had about 3 gallons left so were able to mess about as we wished for several hours sustained by the comfortable thought that we were watering ship. John and Sam went off in the dinghy exploring, after putting me ashore, and Nicholas set to work on one of the wheelhouse windows which was stiff. I messed about along the cliffs, finding some *Stilbocarpa polaris* in flower and a neatly rounded hollowed nest in a patch of tussock above the water that I took to be a pipit's nest. There was one egg which I photographed and returned; it was quite cold and I had seen no bird about - later Brian and Mike confirmed that it was probably a pipit. It was pleasantly warm as the cliff and bush above sheltered us from the rather cold SSW wind and the sun shone right in on us.

We filled right up and left at 1725, picked up the Enderby party (who had found an albino yellow-eyed penguin) at Sandy Bay at 1800 and at 1830 anchored in Ranui Cove and put them ashore, the wind still fresh SSW, fair but rather cold.

I had been puzzled by the engineroom bilge filling up with water while we were under way; it might have been the stern glands but they showed no undue leakage, so the the possibility was engine cooling water. But until today I had been unable to find where it came from: during the day I at last found it in the plastic suction pipe between the hull intake and the pump. The hole was almost hidden where the pipe came through from under the engine; once found it took very little time to fit a new length of hose. While I was messy I also greased the stern glands; on the whole I think engine and steering gear were

regularly and fully serviced, as we were of course running up engine hours quite steadily.

We listened in to the talk with 'Acheron' and Magnetic Cove. Rod and Ron had been blown and rained out of their fly camp high up on the slope of Mt Dick last night, but had nevertheless had a good day's work; 'Acheron' had found a falcon's nest with a chick, so the Deep Southerners were doing pretty well.

***Friday  
29 December***

A fair morning with high cirrus but increasing low cloud and freshening WNW wind. Although there was little swell from eastward and no break on Yule I. we decided against trying Dundas I. again as the outlook was not very bright. So at 0900 we were under way for Enderby I. with Brian, Mike and Graham on board, anchored at Sandy Bay at 0930, and put them ashore. They went off to go round the royals again; to band all birds means several visits since they are, in general, most easily captured on the nest so one has to wait until the watch has changed. We all landed soon afterwards and went off across the open land behind Sandy Bay to Jerry's NE track through the bush. Once out into the upland fellfield John and Sam turned west and Nicholas and I, this time equipped with lunch, continued out to the NE towards Derry Castle Reef. The day was now grey and misty with a fresh to strong NW wind and it remained this way, without any real rain, however, the mist just dropping right down from time to time. But it was a satisfactory sort of day for a coastal walk. Derry Castle Reef is about 600 or 700 yards long running out from a rough boulder beach at a point where the northern cliffs run down to sea level, the inner reef low-lying and clearly swept right across in heavy weather at high water. There are scattered pools of salt and fresh water and erratic basalt boulders detached from the cap, 12 or 15 ft of basalt split along curious curved planes, over the outer part of the reef. The outer part is higher, I thought perhaps 20 ft, above the sea, presumably protected from erosion by the hard basalt cap which has been broken away in places to expose softer strata below.

We reached the coast further west and followed the cliff edge along watching sooty albatrosses and shags doing clever things with the strong updrafts, and disturbing a number of yellow-eyed penguins. These come long distances, and here must have come ashore up to half a mile away and walked, energetically but not economically of effort, along their well-marked cliff trail, and into and out of each little stream gully. One group was standing about in one of these streams, which ran out from the peaty tussock and cassinia over a 'meadow' of liverwort and rumex then dropped over the cliff, here perhaps 50 ft high, into a sea-filled geo, a deep indentation running into a cave the roof of which looked altogether too thin to stand. We gave it a wide berth, no doubt unnecessarily as it must have stood up to much hammering from sea and wind.

We dropped down to the end of the reef and found after a little searching a place to scramble down the last low stretch of cliff on to the low-lying inner reef. There were many birds about: shags in large numbers coming and going, redbills, blackbacks, a pair of mallard, Antarctic and white-fronted tern, a few prion, a flight of what I took to be turnstones, a few sooty albatrosses and giant petrel, skuas, and of

course the yellow-eyed penguins. We found a rusted piece of angle-iron with rivet-holes jammed under a reef boulder: 'Derry Castle', perhaps, as she was iron-built? Then worked our way out to the escarpment rising to the outer reef and looked round: a grim place, the basalt dead black (locomotive black, Nicholas calls it), wind-driven spray drifting across from a rather wild sea breaking, along the weather side, and the fellfield above the low coastal cliff inland looking misty through the spray and backed by a lowering sky. So we decided we needed some lunch to cheer us and found a sheltered niche on the escarpment; a single sleek sea lion, in a large pool below us, took exception to our presence, clambered up the rocks towards us, and had to be discouraged with a few stones. I must say it looks most uncomfortable for sea lions getting about on these very sharp and abrasive volcanic rocks; their progress on flippers and tail is effective but one wonders why they do not wear out their 'elbows' in no time!

We moved off again eastwards, first along a rough shingle beach joining the eastern edge of the reef to the coastline which is, indeed, a shingle beach for some distance, backed by the liverwort/rumex turf and tussock. There were pauas here, the Auckland I. variant of *Haliotis virginea*, and a few other shells including very large limpets, and at the top of the beach many scattered pieces of ship timber: teak rail caps and handrails, presumably from 'Derry Castle', and we brought some of these back. Then the shore cliff began again with the usual tidal shelf; we kept looking over into more-or-less inaccessible bays hoping to see a glass net-float! But the only one I found, rather further round, was a broken mess inside its net.

For compensation we had the shags, settling in the tussock on the cliff-top and working away to detach beaksful then flying off sturdily into the strong wind to their nesting sites on the northern cliffs. There were two large bays north and south of NE Cape, both inhabited by a number of large, surely full-grown, sea lions; I suppose they were relaxing from the war and responsibilities of the Sandy Bay breeding colony. We treated them respectfully for all their apparent indolence, but were surprised for all that a little later: we had stopped for a snack, on a low bank looking out over the rocky foreshore towards Ewing I., with a couple of elegant sea bears fifty yards away. Chocolate and raisins were spread out when something made us look round - a snort, I expect - and a few feet behind, almost literally breathing down our necks, was an active young sea lion. We moved very fast, rescuing some of the food, and he bumped down the track we had blocked to talk to the ladies; when we had recovered we agreed that he was probably only trying to tell us that was what he wanted.

Further along we came across what I think was a young sea elephant, lying on a heap of dead kelp at the top of a small beach between the rocks, and plainly moulting. He just lay there, looking up with huge soulful brown eyes, but spoiling the effect completely when I went closer for a photograph, by opening a large pink mouth and producing revolting belching noises. This stretch of coast, the 'North Head' of Port Ross so to speak, is low-lying and rocky but with a convenient belt of turf and tussock between the shore and the scrub,

and this clear going continued to the eastern end of Sandy Bay. There were many parakeets about, we watched (and tried to photograph) a tomtit feeding its chick, and later came across two very young and fluffy skua chicks, finally coming down through the sandhills and along the back of the Sandy Bay beach. Many French Grey rabbits all over the dunes and the turf behind the beach - hundreds in sight, I suppose, and not much disturbed by our passing.

John and Sam were back about the same time and we returned on board, weighing at 1630 then picking up Graham, Brian and Mike, whom we put ashore at Ranui Cove at 1705. The Cove did not look attractive in that strong NW wind, and we went off therefore to Lindley Cove, under the point of that name, where we anchored at 1745 and took anchor bearings as the wind was freshening. By 2125 it was blowing a gale from the NW but apart from the usual slight roll coming round the point from Rose I. passage we were very snug. I started to read the barometer regularly from this day: it was 30.47 in. at 2145. How true the reading I do not know, but the relative readings may be interesting. We fairly soon concluded that we could not make very much of them!

***Saturday***  
***30 December***

A fine morning, wind fresh to strong from WSW, cumulus cloud over the tops. At the 0730 radio talk we arranged to be at Ranui Cove at 0930 and accordingly left our anchorage at 0850 going round Ocean I. as we had been having a good deal of trouble with seaweed in the channel. We were under way at 0950 with Brian, Graham and Mike for Ewing I. and anchored off its south end at 1005. Brian and Graham wished to go round the coast and I joined them; Mike Soper went off on his own photographing; Sam and John also went ashore and then went their own ways; Nicholas stayed on board with the dinghy.

The landing was a little awkward, on to the usual tidal rock-shelf with some surge, then along a beach of rounded slippery boulders half-covered with rotting seaweed, which we were obliged to use as the *Olearia lyallii* overhangs the beach and is very troublesome to work through. We worked along eastward until the coastal cliff began and with some difficulty got up on to it. Thereafter the going was very pleasant, along a strip, very narrow in places, of rich tussock and stilbocarpa between the bush and the cliff edge. Round on the east side the clifftop, and further round the low broad rock-shelf, here not intertidal, was exposed rock, the ends I think of the basalt columnar cap forming the cliffs. Anyway the effect was of a rather crazy pavement, the column tops forming a remarkably regular pattern but some up and some down, and holding many little pools of water. These had delightful miniature rock gardens round them with small sedges and succulents and in places masses of small starry flowers in green cushions, and the drier rocks covered with lichen, predominantly pale or white. Brian spotted a number of interesting things: there were many parakeets and tomtits on the bush edge, pipits, and he flushed Auckland I. snipe once or twice without catching one; we also came across flightless teal several times.

When we reached the wide clifftop shelf looking out to Yule I. a large flight of several hundred Auckland I. shags settled on the cliff edge; they appeared to have been fishing offshore and to be ready for a smoko; certainly it was not one of their nesting areas. They stood three or four or six deep all along the edge for sixty or seventy yards and, after we had admired them from a distance, we came closer, finally sitting down among them, close enough to reach and touch while they preened and necked and just stood around and we photographed and looked. How handsome they are in breeding plumage: predominantly blue-black and white, with dark-brown bill and orange gape, lemon-yellow 'cheek' and royal purple round the eye, feet heavy and powerful and light salmon-pink. They were a little uncertain at first when one slid, sitting, within a few feet, but soon became quite unconcerned; we could hardly tear ourselves away. There was a solitary yellow-eyed penguin in the middle of one group, looking a little lost, and the usual escort of red-billed gulls on the make kept coming and going from the outskirts of the group.

We moved on to the large eastern bay of Ewing, wide rock shelves a few feet above high water and two small boulder beaches overhung with olearia in the centre. The day was now bright and, on this lee side, hot. We tried to photograph tomtits and did photograph a pipit feeding its chick, for all their tameness too quick to be easy to take. Sam appeared having come through the centre of the island which has a remnant of rata.

We left Sam there and went on northward, finding our way up a low escarpment of rock (ten feet?) with some difficulty. There are one or two fair-sized terns on the NE rock-shelf and many white-fronted and Antarctic tern were about but we were unable to find nests. Further round, we came on a pair of skua with chicks and, as with skua earlier in the day, tried to catch them for banding. The technique was to catch first the young, whose squalling brought a parent very close, and Brian was usually able to net the parent (he carried a small butterfly net). However, the second parent could be difficult and if once missed was too shrewd to allow a second close approach. With this pair we did capture both adults but the second one got Brian's finger very firmly in its beak; it needed Graham's and my combined efforts to separate them and Brian lost a good deal of skin while I had some scratches from its razor-sharp claws. After sorting ourselves out, when we moved off with the chick moving away from our advance, we were 'shot-up' by the parents, a low fast flight very close overhead, never actually touching but I believe they sometimes drop their feet in such passes. As they are burly birds with massive bills and feet this is disconcerting even when they do not hit one.

On the north coast the pleasant rock-shelf petered out and we found two deep indentations, not easily circumvented. The second had an intertidal rock-shelf with a long narrow slot in it opening out at the shore end into a small shingle beach; the gentle surge ran into this and spilled out over the slot as it ran along for about 50 yards before dispersing on the beach. Thereafter the shore became too difficult and we cut across inland to Milton Weller's beach facing Ranui Cove. This sounds easy, as it was through large olearia bush; there was a good deal of fern but otherwise 'open' going, but the prostrate (live)

trunks and low branches made it very trying, the more so because it looked not bad, not unlike the going in the rata bush. Sliding about on the slippery weed-covered boulders of Milton's beach was comparatively pleasant when we did reach it and we had to go inland again briefly to reach the south shore and 'St Michael'.

John had been out on to the western spit and had collected a glass float after some argument about ownership with a sea lion. We found a pair of flightless teal on the shore and photographed them while waiting for Nicholas to collect us, and at 1645 were all back on board and under way, putting the Ranui trio ashore there at 1705 and ourselves going on to our sheltered anchorage under Lindley Point. The wind was still fresh from the west, fine weather with cloud over the tops and barometer at 2215 30.80 in.

***Sunday***  
***31 December***

Wind WNW, overcast with low cloud, barometer 30.51 in. We had no duties other than to move Mike Rudge and John Campbell back to Erebus Cove, and I rowed over to them, half a mile away close to Deas Head, at about 0800. They had decided to move at once so I returned to 'St Michael' and we weighed at about 0830 and stopped close to their camp to load up. Under way again at about 0845 and anchored in Erebus Cove at 0930 where we helped Mike and John land their gear. The wind had backed to SW with a heavy rain shower at about 0830 and by 0945 weather was clearing to sunny with cumulus, the wind strong from SW. So it remained all day, with a few passing showers.

Nicholas and I had been looking for a chance to get up on to the hills and this looked like it; Sam and John were happy to stay near the ship which was in any case very snug. Accordingly we found out the best



'St Michael' moored in Erebus Cove, Shoe I. in background, 31 December 1972

way up to the Hooker Hills from behind Erebus Cove from John and Mike and left at 1100, Nicholas in gumboots as he had not brought heavy boots. Care in finding a reasonable way up pays because the scrub above rata level is often very dense and always tough and can be extremely slow and trying going. John Campbell's description was clear and there is a good track up past the old cemetery and along the crest of three low bluffs near the bush line. Then a wide 'shelf' rising to steeper slopes up to the first tussock ridge on the immediate skyline something over a mile away. There are curious clearings in the covering scrub of dracophyllum, pseudopanax, myrsine, small rata, coprosma and hebe; there was much speculation about their origin, John and Mike at this stage thinking they were originally caused by burning off, which could well be patchy and whose pattern could then be maintained by the strong winds restricting growth in the clear-burned strips. However, Nicholas and I found this hard to accept and Mike and John changed their views after seeing the same effect much more strikingly shown around Carnley Harbour. We came to call them 'windlanes' as they seemed to align with the prevailing winds from westerly quarters as modified by adjacent land forms.

Anyway, windlanes provided our route from the bluffs, their difficulty being that they were not continuous but longer or shorter, overlapping with adjacent lanes and not necessarily leading where we wanted to go. The secret is to pick the long ones and to cross over into another (through a narrow belt of scrub) at the right point. We could see reasonably well from our bluff where we wanted to go, but even from its level we were not really able to pick the best way and in the end we just set off. The lanes make excellent going, being open with only scattered bushes and tussock underfoot and 20 or 30 yards wide at times. But one cannot see adjacent lanes over the 'hedges' and it is never clear whether the closing-in of the scrub ahead is just temporary or whether it is the end of that lane and the sooner one crosses over out of it the easier it will be! And we should probably have followed the lanes rather more north-west where they wanted to go instead of making for the shoulder shown as 785 ft on the map where we did. This is making rather a drama of it since when we did run out of lane into shoulder-high scrub on a moderately steep hillside it was slow and tiring but not for too long and once out of the scrub into tussock and, indeed, bog or boggy fellfield, the going was very reasonable.

Eastern Port Ross spread out below us, the sou'wester sent down occasional short sharp showers and buffeted us and the sun and cloud shadows made distant islands, sea, and tussock rich with colour. Ahead the slope eased to long gentle sweeping moorland running up to Hooker 1435 ft and its eastern ridge, wide acres of tossing upland tussock tawny in sunlight, grey in cloud-shadow, and exhilarating. Underfoot were many flowers, mostly small bog plants with starry flowers or bright berries, these last bog astelia and a minute creeping coprosma, but there were also gentians everywhere, few of them yet fully out but of a great variety of colour from white to deep purple-red. Further up were groups of a small celmisia: rosette of strong glossy spiky leaves, white petals and purple centre, and we soon

found *Hebe benthamii* growing in deep sphagnum bog, most of the flowers over but a few still of a wonderful deep blue.

We went on to Cave Rock overlooking the head of Laurie Harbour from which we had become used to it dominating the northern skyline, and found a hollow in the tussock sheltered from the cold wind while we had something to eat. There was a fine view south-westwards up the long trough of Grey Duck Creek to its head at the edge of the western cliffs, and southward to Mt Eden and the central high country, but the wind was too cold for long viewing. Instead we lay on the sheltered side of the rock looking north and east, from Haskell Bay round to Matheson Bay and out to the Southern Ocean eastward. From here one had a strong impression of the smallness of the Islands and the wideness of the sea: once clear of the land's disturbances the sky and clouds had an oceanic look.

We did not think we had time to go as far as Hooker, still more than a mile away, but walked across to Signpost (there was no sign of it incidentally) then eastward to Point 1102 ft, a rocky ridge on whose sheltered face we found our first plants of *Pleurophyllum speciosum*, magnificent large deeply grooved leaves and the flowers just starting to come out, and *Anisotome antipoda*, the rather feathery high-country one. We dropped down across the shallow head of the valley and back to Point 785 ft and so back to Erebus Cove. This time we had a much better view of the windlanes through the scrub below and as a result found our way through it very readily and were back on board at 1630. We had seen, from the tops, 'Acheron' coming up the coast from Carnley Harbour and soon after our return she called by after dropping her passengers at Ranui, to pass the time of day before going on to an anchorage in Laurie Harbour.

The wind still blew strong and rather cold and brought occasional hail showers which passed off eastward in great towering anvil-heads brilliant in the late afternoon sun. We had persuaded John and Mike to have a meal with us and they came off at 1800; we had an entertaining evening in their good company until they went ashore at 2130. Barometer at 2145 30.82 in., fine cold evening with just occasional passing showers, the wind still fresh to strong.

I think it was probably on this evening that we had an interesting experience at the last radio schedule: 'Acheron' in Laurie Harbour, we in Erebus Cove and Brian at Ranui Cove were successively interrupted by a hail squall, the interference starting with slow-tempo clicks (from electrically charged hail) which built up to block out reception until the shower had blown over. What was fascinating was the time lag as each was affected in turn by the passing squall. On the whole we were very little worried by interference as we were well away from other users on or near our working frequencies, though we did hear Japanese from time to time. I think there is not much doubt that they use the Auckland Is on occasions, though naturally they knew we were there and we saw nothing of them, nor indeed any signs ashore.



**Monday**  
**1 January**  
**1973**

Fresh WSW wind, overcast, barometer 30.95 in., the wind later veering to NW. We picked Mike and John up at 0840 and left for Ranui Cove, where we anchored at 0915 and they went ashore to sort themselves out in readiness for going south with 'Acheron'. The weather was clearing somewhat after a heavy shower and squall and we decided to keep out of the way until 'Acheron' had come and gone so went off through the French's I. and round Crozier Point. In its lee it was quiet and we went close in to watch shags and sooty albatross both of which nest on these cliffs. Then we went across to Yule I. and as there was very little surge John put Sam ashore while we stood by in quite a strong tidal current. Sam found mosses and a few small succulents around the central cap which has a wide skirt of rock-shelf washed at high water. There was a group of 20 or 30 Auckland I. prion on the far side.

Still no sign of 'Acheron' so after picking up the boys we went off round the eastern and northern sides of Ewing before returning to Ranui. 'Acheron' was arriving as we came round after a good rest in Laurie Harbour which they needed having been fairly hard at it. They collected Mike and John and Graham and left for the south at about 1130. The news of Dr Falla's knighthood had just come through and everyone was delighted; Alex put it into words, saying 'Well there's one that's really well deserved'. Brian had the bright thought of sending him a radio message and Alex did this: from all at the Auckland Islands including 'St Michael', which was nice of them.

We anchored in Ranui Cove at 1130 and picked up Brian, Mike Soper, and Milton (on brief 'leave' from Ewing I.) at 1220 landing them at the Enderby 'wharf' at 1245. We anchored at 1255 and all went ashore. I am not sure where John and Sam went this time; Nicholas and I went along the coast track towards Butterfield Point then across the open herbfield to the north coast, by this time looking rather grim as the wind, still WSW, was quite strong with mizzling rain and rather cold. Then we turned eastward to the nesting royal albatross and sat down very near one for a snack. We were soon accepted and she (or perhaps he - we could not tell) went off to sleep again, head under feathers and looking, indeed, remarkably snug for such a cheerless day.

It was not very pleasant in that exposed place and we turned down towards the bush, picking up another of Jerry's tracks, fortunately without difficulty and so back to Sandy Bay. John and I spent some time trying to photograph Enderby bunnies, not altogether simple in spite of their tameness. Milton stayed behind on Enderby when we left at 1615 with Mike and Brian. They had asked us to a meal, but as we left, the wind veered to NNW and blew strong with heavy rain, so that by the time we put them off into their dinghy (which they had left anchored in Ranui Cove) at 1635 we had agreed that it was not a suitable occasion with the weather beginning to blow into the cove. Accordingly we left at once and went right up to the head of Laurie Harbour, where we dropped anchor on the edge of its friendly firm clay shoal at 1735. We had quite a dusting on the way up, the wind nearly gale force on our beam, heavy rain and poor visibility, and every short sea over us. It was quiet enough in Laurie with just occasional squalls but heavy rain, until later when the wind backed



'St Michael' in Ranui Cove (Photo: A.J. Black)

again to WSW from which direction it is rather more open down Grey Duck Creek. The weather cleared partly with the wind change to showers and anvil-heads of cloud, but closed in again later. As we came up the harbour in poor visibility, we were thankful to feel so much at home in Port Ross as not to be concerned; rather like moving round Wellington in such conditions, in fact!

At the 2045 radio schedule 'Acheron' reported a satisfactory trip south, but that she had found Ron and Rod flooded out at Magnetic Cove; they had nonetheless banded 120 wandering albatross during the day, a fine effort. We checked fuel this day: starboard 43, port 51, total including headers 98 gallons. Barometer at 2100, about 30.60 in.

***Tuesday  
2 January***

It blew strong, very strong at times, from a sou'westerly direction all night and unusually steadily, probably because it was coming straight down the valley of Grey Duck Creek. We looked round in turn as we woke up, and may have been a little restless, but the ship never moved and we thought we must have put the anchor fluke back in the hole it was in on Christmas Eve! At 0700 it was fresh to strong SW still, partly cloudy, cold, and the barometer 30.90 in.

We weighed at 0715 and were at Ranui Cove at 0800. At 0830 Brian, Mike and Gordon (who returned from the south on 31st) came on board and we took them, with the Wildlife dinghy, to Enderby, casting them off there at 0855 anchoring at 0900. The wind fresh from SSW with partly cloudy weather, and while Brian and Mike with Milton went along the coast towards Butterfield Point in their dinghy the rest of us went ashore. Nicholas and I went up through the bush by Jerry's western track immediately behind the camp and - 'bushed ourselves'.

We lost the marks and fumbled about along the edge of the bush looking for them and finally gave up and pushed out into the scrub, on hands and knees mostly, I may say, with occasional surfacings to see, if we could, which way we were heading. Where the scrub was high we could crawl underneath it reasonably well but where it was chest high this was not on and one just had to push through. It was the very devil, but fortunately we only had perhaps a quarter of a mile of it before we were clear; by climbing a couple of small trees on the way we found the shortest way out into the herbfield and to the albatrosses. The sun came out and we talked to our two albatross and asked them for some more photographs, then back through the bush, this time without trouble as the way from the north was familiar - and it was only ten minutes' walk!

We picked up Gordon with Judy, Basil and Hugh and got under way at 1135, anchoring in the rocky cove on the east side of Rose I. inside the kelp barrier at 1150. Brian, Mike and Milton had come across in their dinghy and we all went ashore, except Nicholas who preferred to stay on board, and went off as we felt inclined. I headed first for the channel on Enderby side after crossing over a short headland covered with rata skeletons, and came across a flightless teal with two chicks which disappeared into deep tussock just above the beach. It did not occur to me to tell Milton until we were back on Enderby and even then I could not tell him if the chicks were still in down; he was nice about it and pleased to have this first sighting record of chicks, as he had been expecting to find them about this time.

The channel was quite a sight as the sun was now bright and there was a big sea breaking on its reefs and against the Enderby cliffs beyond. I found a large black cod (and a small one) in a rock pool - it disappeared under a boulder too large to move but I met John a few minutes later and, somehow, he caught it. I left him working out how and went on round the shore, watching an impressive blowhole which we had seen before from a distance, and working my way through a maze of fantastic sea-battered rocks out to the north coast. Here I could see along to the north-western corner of the island to which we had come on 20 December and not feeling quite energetic enough for a full circumnavigation in the time left, headed inland to look at the finger-post still standing on the highest point of the island. This is one of the provision depot signposts but had long since lost its message, except for the mute one, and is deeply weathered from the battering it gets in such an exposed position

Then I turned down again to the 'neck' of Rose I. where the northern cliff is deeply indented towards the cove where 'St Michael' was anchored. I spent a long time here, watching the seas rolling in on to a wild boulder beach under the overhanging cliff and enjoying seeing the shags and pairs of sooty albatross using the lift along the cliff edge and sometimes giving me a chance for a photograph. The sootys had nests on a ledge on the opposite side of the bay in the cliff, and it was fascinating to watch them making passes at the ledge until position, attitude, and speed were just right and they would land. I have said before that in one sense I think these must be the most skilful of albatross fliers, since they nest in places awkward for a small bird to land on and how much more so for an albatross, even a small one.

After a time I went on and met Sam, who had come the other way; we passed the time of day and then separated again. I soon turned inland towards Port Ross, across a high bank of peat and isolated tussock clumps and down to the edge of the bush/scrub on the south shore. There were a few rabbits about, 'ordinary' ones so far as I could see, and they looked rather bedraggled; I believe they suffer from some deficiency. They are quite isolated and much fewer and less vigorous than the Enderby French Greys. There were also many birds: bellbirds and tuis in the bush, tomtits, parakeets and a number of yellow-eyed penguins, including one parent with two large fluffy-chicks. I came across them in a hollow below me and watched and photographed them unnoticed.

We collected again by degrees at the landing, where there were several rather tame flightless teal which Milton had been photographing, and returned on board for a brew before leaving at 1630. Put the Enderby people ashore at 1655 then stood by for a time until Brian and Mike came off and we left with their dinghy in tow at 1720. They had had a useful day and Mike had found an Antarctic tern's nest and set his hide near it. This was up among the royals, where the terns were always strident as if one was about to put a foot on their eggs, but where Nicholas's and my careful searching had found nothing. We anchored in Ranui Cove at 1750, and our passengers went ashore leaving an invitation for us to have dinner with them; we followed at 1830.

There was a good deal of talk about future plans: first, that we were to take Mike south to Waterfall Inlet next day if the weather was right, where he would be taken over by 'Acheron', from whom we would pick up Mike Rudge and John. Then plans for moves after 'Acheron' had gone back to Dunedin on 13 January, when the four remaining at Ranui (Brian, Mike Soper, Ron and Rod) wanted to go south to Camp Cove, in Carnley Harbour. Brian proposed taking two days going down the coast and looking into each inlet, a plan which suited all of us very well. We would all stay down there until a few days before 'Acheron' was due back.

We arranged an 0700 radio schedule with 'Acheron' for the morning so that we could see what the weather offered, and later listened in while Brian talked to Campbell I. He and their operators knew each other well by this time, although they had never met, and we heard that Gerry Clark had left at 0530 that morning for the Chathams with a good forecast and their good wishes (ours too!). We stayed in the Ranui Cove anchorage, a quiet evening with light wind around W, overcast and very mild. Barometer 31.00 in.

### ***Wednesday 3 January***

The wind backed round to SW during the night and was blowing fresh to strong at 0700 with low overcast and barometer 30.76 in. The feel of the weather as much as the fall in pressure decided us that it was not going to improve soon and we called off the day's plans. We spent the morning quietly in Ranui Cove, the wind increasing steadily, and after lunch, at 1545 got under way to move up Port Ross to an anchorage with a little more shelter.

It was blowing a full westerly gale by then and we rounded Ocean I. and headed across to Rose I. to take advantage of its lee. We looked out at first, the Enderby-side channel then the mainland side; they were very impressive, seething is really the only word, with masses of spume driving down into the harbour. On the NW corner of Enderby, which is relatively low, we could see periodically a great sheet of white shooting up well inland from the point. The Friday I. passage looked much the same, a savage mass of breakers, a lowering scudding sky and hard squalls forcing 'St Michael's' bows off unless they were kept dead ahead.

We ran down round the offlying kelp beds of Lindley Point and turned thankfully into the sheltered cove, going right over to the little cove immediately northward of Deas Head. There we had only short fierce puffs and a slow surge coming round from the Rose I. passage, and anchored in heavy rain at 1600. We talked on the radio to Ranui Cove at 1945 after listening to 'Acheron' speaking to Magnetic Cove and reporting a full gale down at Carnley. Alex commented that they were at least getting 100 gallons or so of fresh water from it! Then Ranui talked to Enderby and Basil reported, predictably, a northerly gale - he seldom reported anything but a north wind! Then we talked to Brian and arranged a schedule for 0700 in the hope of better weather. The Awarua forecast, specially put on for Gerry Clark, spoke of 30 knot winds increasing to 40 knots so he was getting the other half of our weather; we were all thinking of him, battling with it out there.

At 2200 it was still blowing a full westerly gale, barometer 30.59 in. We discussed the need for anchor watches, after bringing on board and lashing down the dinghy and putting the second anchor (CQR) ready to let go, but decided that, as the ship was, as usual, firmly in place and the squalls were random and short where we lay in spite of their strength, a watch was not necessary. We set the engines ready for starting, switched on the compass light, checked the ship's position, and turned in.

#### ***Thursday 4 January***

Wind was WSW, still strong, the sky overcast but brightening, and the barometer 30.44 in. when we spoke to Ranui at 0700. As the weather seemed to be clearing we decided to have a look outside with Mike Soper and see what it was like. So we got under way at 0820, finding the wind fresh to strong out in Port Ross but the sky clearing, and were down at Ranui Cove at 0845. We picked up Mike and his gear and left at 0900, Brian being left to himself for the day. He suggested we bring Mike Rudge and John and ourselves to dinner with him that evening on our return as he would be ready for company by then.

The wind was still strong, pulling a close cloud-cap over the high-country inland so we could see only the headlands as we went down the coast. Kekeno Point was abeam at 0935 and we set a course of 170° compass for Waterfall Inlet and hoisted the mainsail. This steadied the ship and we went along very well.

The strongest impression of the morning was of the vast number of Auckland I. prion, that beautiful little grey and blue surface-feeder, so swift and flirting as to be almost impossible to photograph. They

were all round the ship, whichever way one looked, for three hours. Mike Soper, an experienced observer, said he had never seen a bigger concentration of birds and guessed that there may have been millions; I would certainly not argue with that. In retrospect I think we must have been there at just the right time for their feeding after the previous day's gale, which may of course also have helped to bring much plankton to the surface. There were also a few black-bellied storm petrel, cape pigeons, muttonbirds, a few shoemakers and shy mollymawks, and as we approached Carnley Harbour a few wandering albatross. But the prions remain the most vivid recollection: used as we now were to very many seabirds about, we did not again see anything so striking except, perhaps, on Disappointment I.

We were about 3 miles off Shag Rock at 1045, the weather clearing somewhat, and some attention being needed to keep track of which headland we had reached. In these conditions they looked rather similar and I did not want to turn at the wrong gate, so to speak! We took in the main at 1145 in a heavy rain squall between periods of bright sun and cumulus cloud, and anchored in Waterfall Inlet at 1205. We had talked with Ranui Cove and 'Acheron' at 1100 and with 'Acheron' again at 1130 and arranged to go on to Carnley Harbour and meet her there.

The rain cleared off as we entered Waterfall, a beautiful inlet, an enclosed bay within a bay, a boulder spit on the south side and a steep rocky shore running in to rata-covered bluffs on the north. Behind, the country sloped up rather easily on the whole but interrupted by lines of bluffs to the high country, the last downpour filling streams which were blown about spectacularly as they poured off the bluffs. This reminded us that 'Acheron' on her trip down the coast on Christmas Eve had been almost convinced that there was a fire ashore at the head of one of the inlets; they realised after a time that it was a waterfall, the water carried up in a column of spray by the violent wind.

We lunched in Waterfall Inlet and would all have liked to stay and look about, but having a rendezvous with 'Acheron' had to leave again at 1305. It was now quite bright but after rounding Cape Bennett (a noble headland 200 ft high) we were swept by a violent wind pouring down the long slopes below Mt D'Urville and out across the bay, so that we were thankful for the shelter of the cliffs again as we approached Cape Parr. It was plain that there was a very strong wind also blowing out of Carnley Harbour; we admired the fine cliffs and waterfalls and kept in as close as we could for shelter.

Eastern Carnley Harbour is a five-mile-long wind-tunnel with high steep straight sides, and our first introduction to it was impressive. The wind was about 50 knots, just lifting the spindrift and very steady and we set ourselves to a long plug dead to windward, every wave driving over us so that our impressions were necessarily fleeting. After a time we saw 'Acheron' coming down and talked with her on the radio; Alex suggested either going outside again to transfer our passengers or steaming further up to the first sheltered cove near Tagua Bay, on the north shore, and we chose the second. Accordingly 'Acheron' turned to lead us up there. However, she had the (second) Wildlife dinghy in tow and this one also had a deficient painter and broke adrift. When we turned back for it and told 'Acheron' the

dinghy was adrift she first thought it was ours - ours, which was firmly stowed on board! This misunderstanding took a little sorting out in 'Acheron', and in the meantime we chased and picked up the dinghy, not altogether easily as it was sailing downwind, beam-on, at about five knots. We received one or two superficial bruises in the process, and later Brian, apologetic, suggested that Wellington office of his department should provide a working bee next time 'St Michael' is slipped, as compensation for failing to keep their dinghy painters in good condition!

We followed 'Acheron', a little concerned by how much water the dinghy was shipping, to the cove just before Tagua Bay, where there was just enough room for both of us to tuck into shelter. Mike Soper was ferried over to 'Acheron' and Mike Rudge and John Campbell came back to us and after a brief exchange of news and an introduction to their brown and black piglet (whose mother had been shot that morning) we set off again at 1545. The run down with the wind astern gave us a chance to look about: this part is dramatic but the high straight slopes are somehow daunting, and rather bleakly treeless.

I decided to follow the coast closer on the way north, thinking that the strong wind was general, and we set a course  $320^\circ$  for Shag Rock accordingly on passing Cape Bennett at 1655. However, it was quite reasonable, with nothing more than rather stronger squalls as we crossed each inlet entrance. We were lazy and did not set any sail, and altered course to  $350^\circ$  at 1825 half a mile off Shag Rock. There were still many birds about but not the extraordinary concentration of prion we had seen in the morning.

The wind moderated as we went north and we were off Kekeno Point at 1935 with a fair tidal stream pushing us along. Then I did a silly thing, perhaps being a little tired: I tried to go inside French's I. (a thing we had already done several times) but did not notice what should have been obvious, that it was low tide. So the inevitable happened and we grounded on the rather bouldery bottom and stuck; what was more disconcerting was that before I could put the engines into neutral, one propeller hit something. There was a very slight surge but everyone reacted quickly and energetically and we had the CQR anchor run out and were kedging off in very little time. Hauled off and had a careful look round without finding anything wrong - so far as I could see there was no propeller damage (it was still broad daylight of course). We then moved off again, this time round the outside of French's I., I feeling a complete fool and thankful, as it became clear from our smooth running that the propellers were all right, that I had not done any significant damage. At least we had been moving very slowly when we hit! We anchored in Ranui Cove at 2055.

Brian, with whom we had been touch on the radio during the afternoon, had expected us at about 2000. He was not at all put out by our late arrival and had a fine rabbit stew ready as we came ashore. It was good not to have to set about getting a meal ready so late after a fairly long day and it was a cheerful evening. A quiet night and we stayed at anchor in Ranui Cove.