



OTAGO TRAILER YACHT SQUADRON
CRUISING GUIDES & ARTICLES COLLECTION

Stewart Island

Author Chris Bathurst (undated). A crossing from Bluff to Stewart Island in a Noelex 30, and details of an extensive cruise round the Island.

Authors Helen & Ian Simpson 1981. Detail about transporting trailer yachts to Stewart Island and a subsequent cruise for a fortnight in Paterson Inlet.

STEWART ISLAND

Stewart Island is separated from the South Island by Foveaux Strait, with a minimum distance of 27km between the Islands. It has an area of more than 170,000 hectares, and a coastline measurement of 755km. The extensive coastline length is in part due to its main inlet - Patersons Inlet - which is the major cruising ground for trailer yachts in this area. Patersons Inlet extends 15km westwards into the heart of the Island, with an average width of 4km and plenty of deep water. Because it is largely enclosed from the open sea the area is sheltered from the worst of the notorious Foveaux Strait weather, and has therefore, a number of pleasant and safe anchorages.

Preparation:

We contacted both the local Police Constable, and the N.Z. Forest Service representative both of whom were very helpful with the information they provided. We also contacted as many people as we could find who had already been to the area. Information gleaned has been included in this article.

Transport to the Island:

There are three ways of getting to the Island (apart from swimming) and they are as follows: 1. Ferry - The 'Wairua' can take boats up to 25'. Small boats are lowered into the hold and others are carried on the hatch cover. It pays to book early if specific dates for crossing are required. When booking it is necessary to contact the First Officer on Wairua to check loading times and requirements, and relate the size of your boat. The cost, of course, depends on the size, but at Christmas 1980 for a Hartley 18 was \$85. We received a lot of help from the crew, who were very careful both loading and unloading the yachts.

2. Sailing from Bluff - This I understand can be a great experience if you have the time to wait for favourable conditions, but it is necessary to obtain a good deal of local knowledge about both Bluff Harbour and Stewart Island. Much of this information can be gained from Harbour Board staff in Bluff, or else from Jack Salter one of our Squadron members. Jack was Dredge Master in Bluff for a number of years, and has also made the crossing to Stewart Island and back in his Hartley 18. However if you choose to sail across it would be advisable to have the company of other yachts, as this strait has a world-wide reputation for being very rough, and with little warning.

3. By Air - People only, but this may have some use for crew. There are a number of flights per day, the cost being \$50.00 return from Invercargill.

Transport on the Island:

There are a number of carriers on the Island but most places are within easy walking distance of Oban. The local Policeman will launch boats which have come over on Wairua, as long as he is contacted beforehand. There is a Trailer park close to the ramp at Oban. It is not possible to launch boats straight into Patersons Inlet, but there is talk about building a ramp for this purpose.

Provisioning:

The store at Oban has everything you would need, however, as is to be expected, it costs a little more. Fresh meat and vegetables need to be ordered two days in advance. Petrol may also be obtained at Oban, though supply is sometimes a problem, and preference is given to the locals. There is a rich supply of sea food and fresh water within Patersons Inlet.

The following information was supplied by the Forest Service and reference should be made to the map.

Anchorage:

Little Glory Cove (1) a good little anchorage tucked round the corner, however it can be very lumpy if the wind comes strong from the North-West.

Sailors Rest (2) probably the best small anchorage ever, with a nice mud bottom and sufficient water for trailer yachts. To be recommended.

Across to the North, in behind the Spit at Bravo Island, is another pleasant anchorage in which you can tuck yourself really far into the corner (3), again with a good holding bottom. Good shelter from North right round to South-Westerly, but to be avoided in an Easterly.

Big Glory Bay (4) anchorage is quite close to an old wharf, again sheltered from most winds, even North-Westerlies if you tuck yourself in well. However be careful of some rocks off the wharfside of this entrance close to the shore.

South-West Arm (5) There are two aspects to this; one, close behind Ogles Pt with a shallow and relatively muddy bottom. This is a more open mooring, good in Easterlies but could be difficult with strong Westerlies. Fred's Camp, just North of (5) has a wharf, which gives access to the track system. Not really to be recommended as there is considerable tidal movement.

Whalers Base (6) has plenty of shelter and leads into Kidney Fern Arm, another excellent anchorage, with soft bottom, plenty of bush and good scenery. Be careful on entrance, it is desirable to follow the line of Whalers Base because if you are too close to Millars Beach there are one or two off-lying rocks. These are marked by single posts and white tape markers which are difficult to see in glare or rainy conditions.

Kaipipi Bay (7) another excellent land-locked anchorage in the Northern part of the arm. It is recommended that you make an entrance here in low water, as there are several ballast piles from the old whaling days which could cause grief.

Vaila Voe (8) around the Islands Faith, Hope and Charity. A convenient mooring close to the road end from the village. Entrance should be made here from the Eastern headland as the other two entrances through have reefs. With local knowledge and briefing you can use the other two entrances

Deep Bay (9) as with (8) a mooring used by local boats. Has a soft bottom, good holding, a quiet mooring except in a very strong South-Westerly.

Euchre Creek (10) Scenic and sheltered for most winds, take care with North-Westerlies.

Sidney Cove (11) on Ulva Island, one of the most scenic parts of Stewart Island. Note, however, these islands have only day time visiting, no overnight stops allowed on land but the anchorage could be used. Avoid if the wind comes in any of the Easterly quarters, or if there happens to be a strong roll coming up from the South.

There are now three cautions. (a) Between Harry West and Dynamite Point, you can expect a high steep short sea here, particularly in a North-Westerly wind against a flood tide. This comes up fast and can be more than just a little difficult.

(b) Between Ulva, Crayfish and Groper Island, another wind and tide rip. A big sea, apparently coming from nothing, avoid it with a strong Westerly and strong flood.

(c) Off Prices Point keep quite close to the Point whilst making for Millars Beach as there is a long razor backed reef off-shore. This is marked towards each end by white topped beacons but can be difficult to see.

This information was found to be very accurate, and a visit to Mr Tindall (N.Z.F.S.) Oban was well worthwhile.

We spent two weeks in Patersons Inlet but were unable to see everything in that time, there would be no hesitation in recommending this area to other trailer yachties. There were a number of huts and shelters around the Inlet which we made use of and found them to be clean and well maintained. There are a number of walking tracks starting at various points around the Inlet for those so inclined.

Sandflies are probably no worse than other frequented sailing areas. A course of Vitamin B1 for two weeks prior to departure and whilst down there seems to work.

Historically the Island and Inlet is rich with whaling playing an important part in the early years of European settlement. There are still many relics from the past to remind you of how life was 100 years ago.

Conclusion:

All of us who cruised in Patersons Inlet (Christmas 1980) were very impressed with its beauty and tranquility and would be more than pleased to share our photos and experiences with anyone planning a cruise to this area. Those involved were:

Brian and Anne Wolff
Mike and Lynn Gazeley
Ian and Helen Simpson

Arthur and Barbara White
Jill Wolff and Wayne Alexander

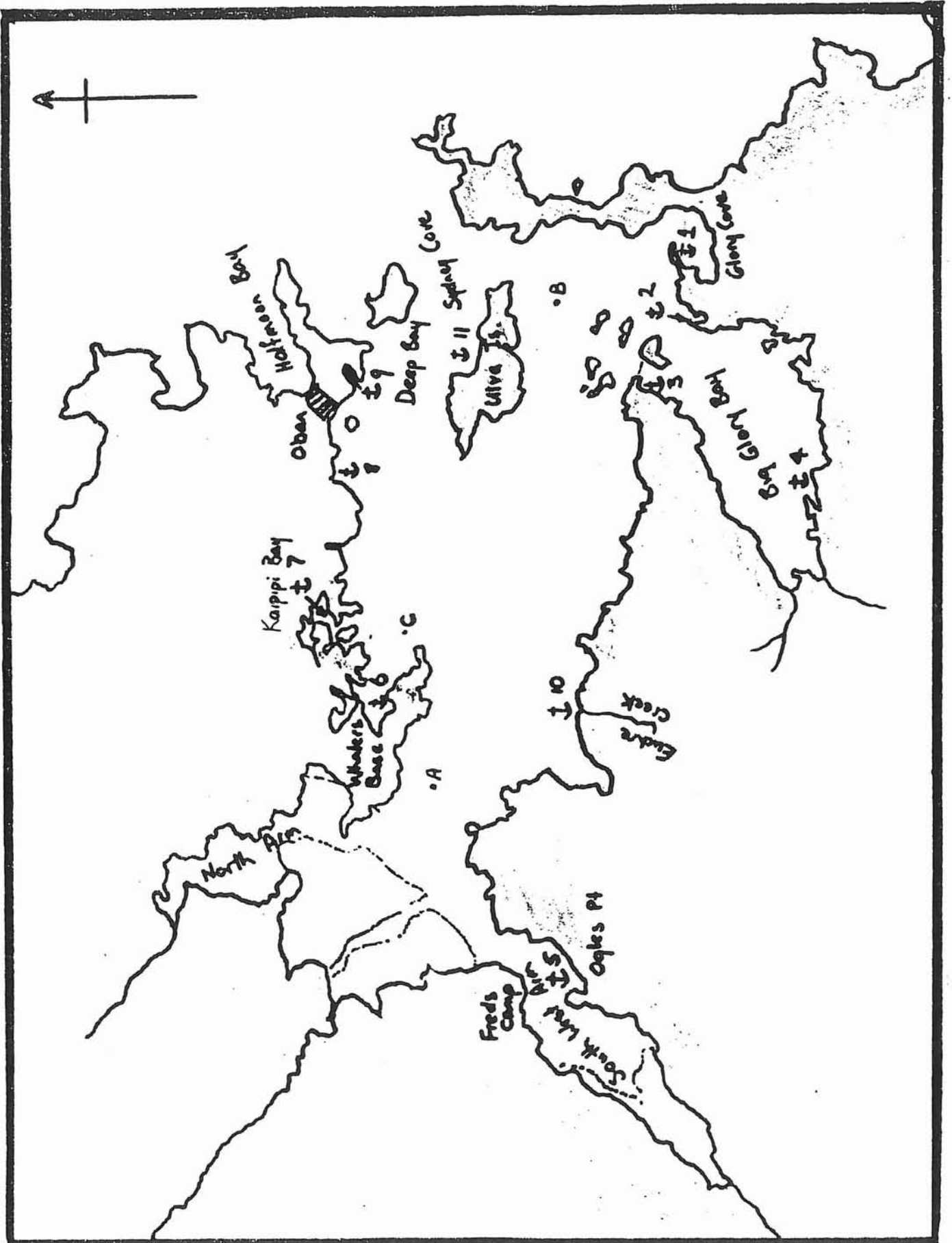
Good Cruising
Ian and Helen Simpson

References:

Lands and Survey Map NZMS 219 Stewart Island. Hydrographic Chart NZ 6723 Paterson Inlet. Stewart Island (Pamphlet) Lands and Survey. Rakiura Basil Howard (Published - Reed).

There are a number of other books available in the Public Library.

PATERSONS INLET



1989/90 STEWART ISLAND

Many times, sailing to Stewart Island had been discussed, this Christmas holiday we decided we would go!

Preparations began about October, three families on three trailer yachts would make the trip. The Simpsons on a Caribou 20 "Tennille", the Brown's on a Farr 6000 "Eres Tu" and the Monk's on a Nolex 25 "Revel"

We all had long lists of jobs to complete before the holidays, several very busy weeks proceeded our trip. A new gas bottle locker for "Revel", a new battery and charging system for "Eres Tu" and new stanchion for "Tennille", plus many other smaller jobs.

All of our party had been to the Island before, but it was a first time for all of us to sail over. We had a good knowledge of anchorages, hazards, good fishing spots etc.

We sailed from Bluff on the 16 December after spending the night alongside the wharf and excellent new ramp. Much discussion was had about the weather with a SW change due in the afternoon. We had breakfast as we motored out the channel and eventually hoisted sails in a westerly of 5-6 knots with a 1/2 metre swell. We decided to head for Port William as this is the closest landfall should the weather change early.

We arrived off Port William in about four hours with the wind swinging to the south west, we hoisted the spinnaker but could only make a couple of knots against a strong tide.

The front we had been expecting arrived just after we had entered Patersons Inlet. We sailed the last couple of miles to Sailors Rest in a 20 knot squall of rain and hail, not a nice introduction to Stewart Island.

The next day dawned very similar with strong southwesterly and squally showers. We ventured out to big Glory Bay Salmon Farm where fish processing was in progress. A most interesting hour was spent here and the staff made us most welcome. The Salmon were loaded onto the Endeavour and sent to Bluff for further processing the same day.

Fishing at Stewart Island has got to be one of the highlights of the trip, almost every day fish was on the menu for at least one meal, sometimes two. You only have to fish for 20 minutes and you have more than enough to eat, Blue Cod being the most common fish caught. We moved the next night to a sheltered spot in Little Glory called Goose Bay where we spent several nights until the weather improved. Here we did a little hunting with no success, although one deer was seen. Virginia Deer are common on Stewart Island and make it a popular spot for hunters. Venison for Christmas dinner would be a popular treat!!

Our two year old daughter had many hours of fun watching, feeding and catching fish off the boat while at anchor. The water in all areas except up the rivers is crystal clear. The bush colours the water in the rivers peaty brown.

We moved next to Millers Beach, an idyllic golden sand beach fringed with bush. Nearby, via a bush track is the now deserted Whalers Base which was finally abandoned in the 1930's, but many relics can still be seen. Large rusting propellers, an old boiler, many foundations and other steel parts. The heavy bush quickly conceals any evidence of the large settlement. All three of our boats towed small tenders which were very useful in this the Kaysysi area for exploring and diving. Scallops can be found in most bays in this area.

The bush on Stewart Island comes right down to the sea in almost every area with some sandfill areas being the only exception. There are many tracks all around the island with many good walks available. Some tracks are quite rough and good boots etc are needed. The Department of Conservation can answer any questions and give good advice if required.

The next memorable event was in North Arm, near the head of the inlet. We were recommended an anchorage behind a small island. However much to our dismay, on a fast falling tide we were stuck there for the night propped up with sticks. We made an early retreat with the tide in the morning!

With only a handful of good summer days so far, the weather was not a high point of our holiday and when the forecast for Christmas was not good we decided to seek shelter up the Rakeahua River via the South West arm. High manuka and a good grassy bank to moor beside gave us a sheltered spot to celebrate Christmas day. The day dawned wet and windy so we spent the day exchanging gifts and drinks and nibbles and drinks and had dinner at about 5.00pm.

I think a great day was had by all.

Boxing day rained even harder in the morning, eventually I decided to go for a hunt in the pouring rain, I got lucky and bagged a white tail deer for a New Year feast.

We had planned to walk from Freshwater Landing to Masons Bay. The Freshwater River, like the Rakeahua River is navigable at high tide, so we made our way up in time for New Years Eve, having to spend 1/2 hour waiting on the tide to fill in to get over the sandbanks. Two of the weaker sex Heather and Ngaire decided to walk to the landing from the Fred Camp Hut. Maybe they are not as weak as I thought, they almost beat us to the Landing, the walk was supposed to take 4-5 hours! After a meal of venison steak and a very quiet New Years drink, we got to bed early for our trek to Masons Bay the next day. The weather was the best of our trip with brilliant sunshine and a light breeze. Many trampers were seen on the track, most having walked the North Circuit around the top of the Island, which takes about a week to complete.

It took us 4 1/2 hours to get out onto the beach past the old Farmhouse, woolshed and trampers hut and we had another 4 1/2 hours to get back to our boats! We had a long paddle in the Southern Ocean and spent time beach coaming. Everything imaginable is washed onto this beach, we found some very handy craypot floats which we carried back, they make good fenders or markers. The Simpsons didn't join us on this trek so the four adults took turns carrying Jane, our two year old, in her backpack. The track is mainly flat and well defined but can be very wet and muddy in places depending on recent weather, we were always glad to hand Jane onto the next donkey.

Next day we went out of Freshwater on the early tide and had breakfast on the south side of the inlet. After breakfast we caught half a dozen cod from the boat without moving from our breakfast spot. We then sailed in a light breeze down the inlet into Kaipipi Bay to meet up with the Simpsons again.

During our stay, fresh provisions were available from Halfmoon Bay which was a 20 minute walk from Golden Bay where we tied up. Petrol was the main reason to venture into town and at \$1.22 per litre we only used as much as necessary.

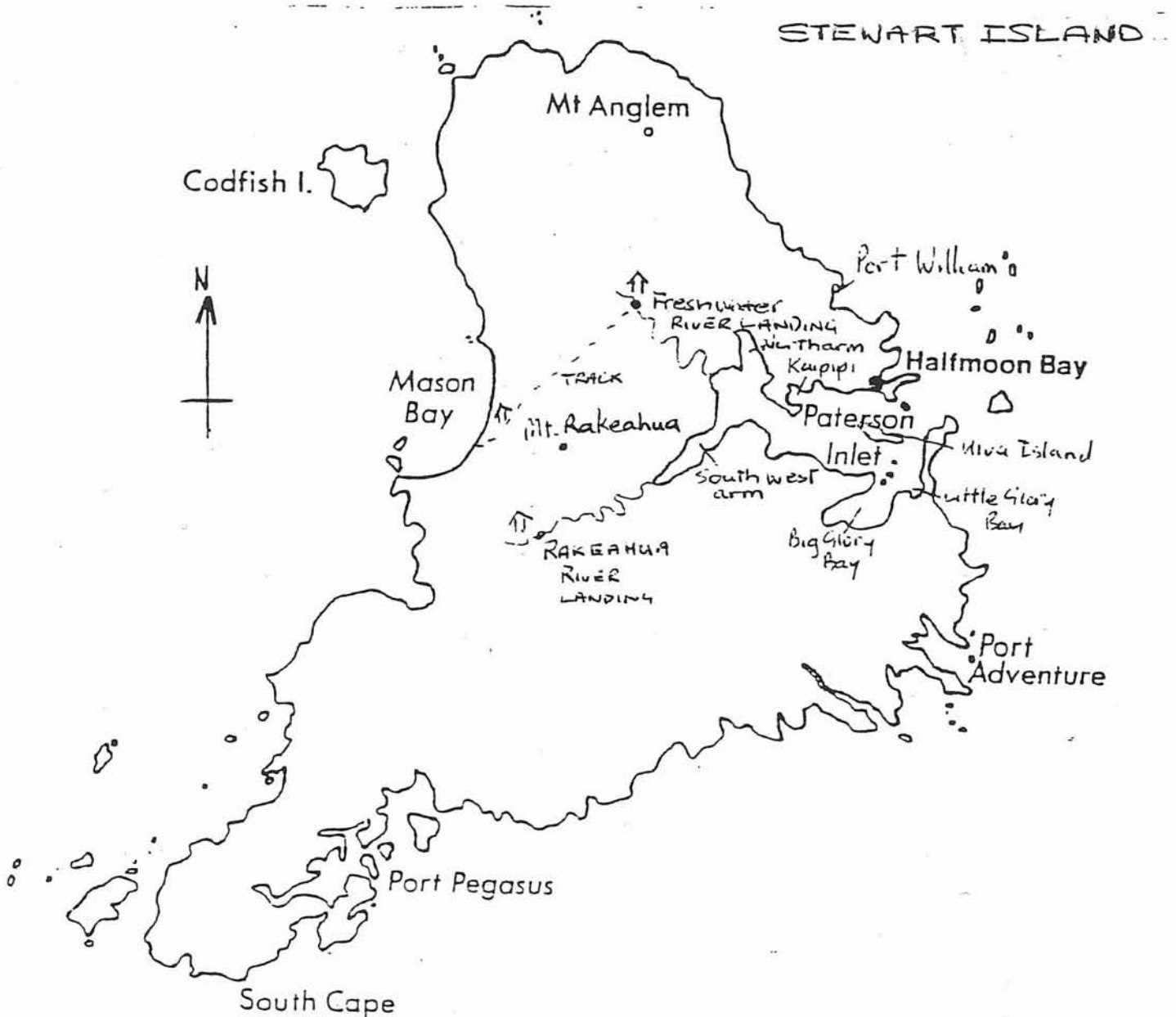
We did all the things we had planned except for a trip down to Port Adventure which will be first on our list for next year.

The weather had been generally unsettled and we decided we would head up the coast to Port William a few days early and await a suitable day for our return to Bluff. The evening we left for Port William, a good stiff westerly gave us a rough ride around the two headlands and into shelter. The motor in the well is a blessing in rough conditions, never loosing grip with the sea.

We spent the next four days fishing, reading and walking. We weathered one gale with reports of 60 knots. A good test of our ground tackle. All three boats were fitted with VHF radio's which meant we could get first hand weather information off boats in the Strait and had good communication between each other at all times. On the last Saturday night of our holiday the sky cleared the wind dropped. We would get up at 5.00am and check conditions. Forecast for little change until next afternoon. We left Port William in flat calm at 5.30am. The swell increased as we neared Bluff but with only the lightest of northerlies, on the nose we arrived at the ramp at 9.00am, a very uneventful trip, motored all the way, note it is essential to have a favourable tide when entering or leaving Bluff harbour.

Although the weather during our three weeks had not been the best (the same as the rest of the country), we had some excellent days and thoroughly enjoyed our holidays. The most memorable times in the evening when all three boats would raft up and have a few drinks and hear all the stories of the day, being another meal of scallops, cod, oysters, venison etc etc. We will be going back, see you there!!!

"Revel"



Separated from the South Island of New Zealand by Foveaux Strait, which has a minimum width of 27 kilometres, Stewart Island has an area of about 172 200 hectares. The island lies between $46^{\circ} 40'$ and $47^{\circ} 18'$ South Latitude and between $167^{\circ} 19'$ and $168^{\circ} 17'$ East Longitude. It measures about 65 kilometres from north to south and 40 kilometres from east to west and has a coastline measurement of about 755 kilometres. Its main inlet, Paterson Inlet, which extends 15 kilometres westwards across the central portion of the island, has an average width of 4 kilometres and a deep water area of at least 65 square kilometres. The highest point is Mount Anglem (980 metres).

Stewart Island County, which includes Ruapuke and its outlying islands, covers an area of 1746 square kilometres and has a permanent population of about 400.

The island's settled area which is centred on Halfmoon Bay has some 250 residential, commercial, and recreational buildings. Of the residences, 57 percent are occupied permanently and 43 percent are holiday cottages.