

Codes of Survival

a project on the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand

Lloyd Godman



Low resolution version

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Contents

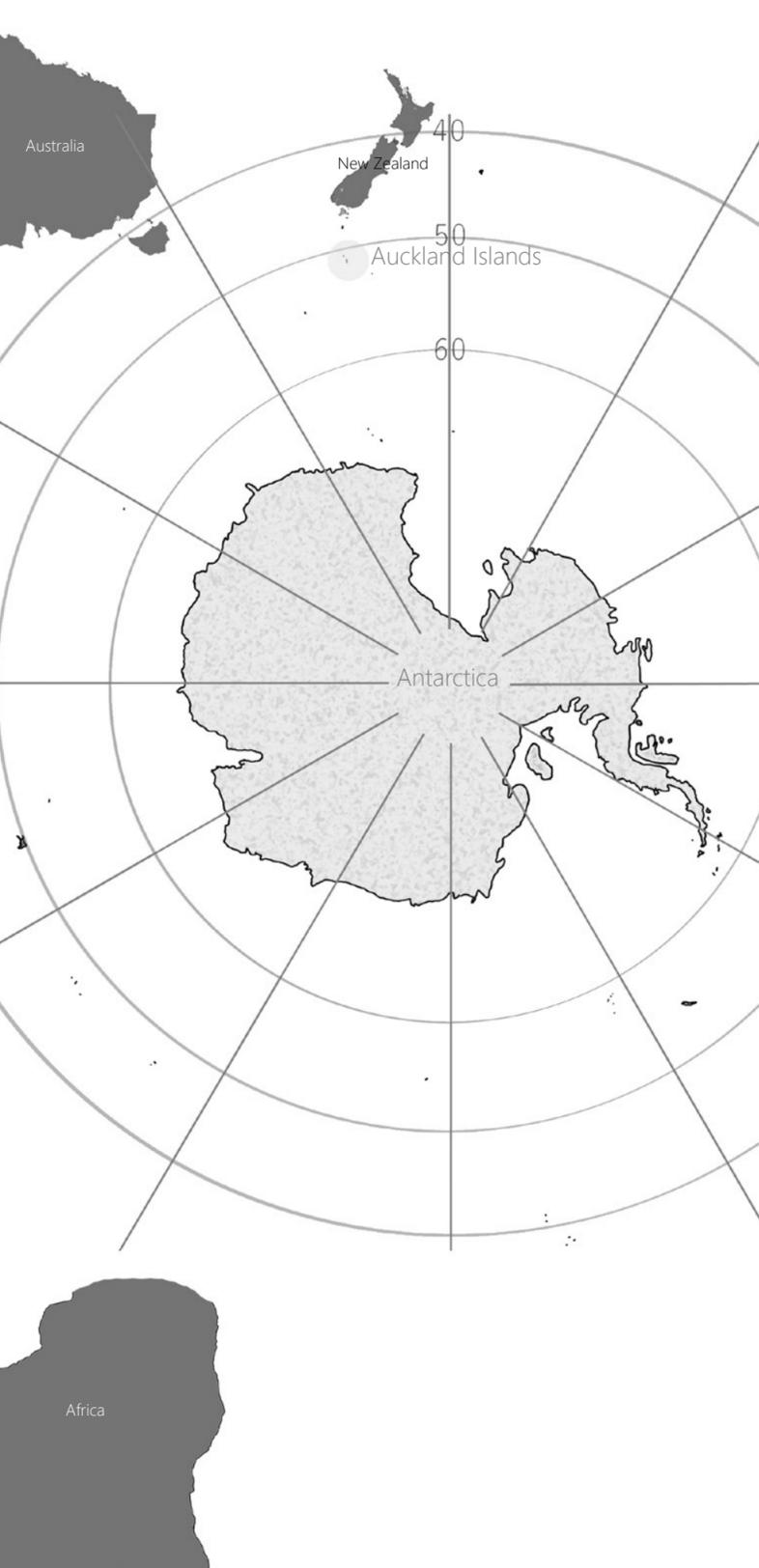
Page 3 [Introduction](#)

Page 15 [Combination photogram/photographs](#)

Page 130 [Codes of Survival - Gallery Installation](#)

Page 134 [Codes of Survival - Scripts](#)

Page 259 [Combination Photogram/Negative printing](#)



Introduction

The complex photographic works (combined photographs and photograms) and the series of fictional manuscripts based on the history of the Islands that make up Codes of Survival project, eventuated from the opportunity to experience the New Zealand's subantarctic Islands through a project titled Art in the Subantarctic. This was an unusual and innovative ground breaking project and the following is as an introduction as an explanation of this project.

During the early 1980s I read of a surrealist proposal in the 1930s for 'an art expedition to Easter Island', it fascinated me. For the surrealists, like Breton, Eluard, Aragon, Tzara, Ernst, Lam, Matta, Penrose, Oceania and the exotic was of great interest, mysterious and intriguing. The Surrealist map of the world, (From Vanetes, Brussels, June 1929), shows Easter Island in gigantism, and resembling a teddy bear pointing towards Peru. Evidence of this surfaced in their journals and they engaged in the collecting of artifacts from this region. The primate mask was of particular interest, so it was not surprising that the 'dream' of an arts expedition to a remote, exotic location like Easter Island was appealing to this group of artists.

The seemingly extravagant and certainly exotic idea of the expedition to Easter Island, was to involve the leading artist of surrealism as a probe from a familiar space and time into the unconscious space and time of this remote island. Apart from Henri Storck's film, Easter Island, 1935 which was part of an ethnographic expedition to the South Seas that explores surrealist use of documentary, the concept of the expedition was never to eventuate.

But the idea intrigued me! This dream of artists away on an expedition of discovery stayed with me, like an air bubble forming below the water and rising to the surface, the bubble kept floating upward in my thoughts from time to time



Looking through the bridge window of the Acheron as the expedition heads south into a growing swell on the first voyage



Captain William fixes position of the Acheron with a sextant



Looking through the spray lashed bridge window of the Acheron as the expedition heads south into a growing swell on the first voyage



The single mega herb plant of Anisotome growing on a cliff edge where introduced animals could not reach it on Enderby Island

During 1984, I finished work on the Last Rivers Song project. While working on this series of photographs of the Clutha and Kawarau Rivers, I became increasingly more sensitive to the unique qualities of the New Zealand landscape. The raw sense of 'Chaos' watching a timeless flood of water ripping and clawing at the hard bed rock and banks binding the water to a course with a finite destiny.





Researching the history of the Auckland Islands revealed varying accounts of human intervention. Whether intent on establishing a settlement at the Islands or exploiting natural resources, the climate and isolation challenged all who ventured there in a manner they could not overcome, it rebuffed the invasions of humans eventually reclaiming the land as an uninhabited natural wildlife sanctuary. Infamous were the islands for the numerous shipwrecks which produced struggles of human survival beyond comprehension, often with fatal consequence. “Died from Starvation”, reads a gruesome epitaph on a headstone in the cemetery at Enderby Island as a reminder of a struggle lost by a marooned destitute. Scant reminders of futile attempts at farming, agriculture and settlement, shipwreck survival and scientific expeditions have been left to the ‘Chaos’ or ‘Order’ of the islands; left to fall back to nature.

Birth of the Project

So it was by the end of 1984 that I conceived the fusion of the two ideas; the Auckland Islands as a destination of ‘Chaos and Order’, and the surrealist idea of an arts expedition of discovery, that related to New Zealand’s culture.

I floated the idea with colleagues at the art school like David McLeod, Shaun Burdon, and from here planning for this project began in 1985 when a loose group of artists interested in the project began inquiring as to the realistic possibilities of the project eventuating. We made plans and researched the government departments overseeing the Islands. It seemed like an ambitious risk, but a letter outlining the exciting concept and initial inquiry was posted to the New Zealand Lands & Survey Department, who had jurisdiction over the area.

The response from the official government department was mild to say the least. Where we had envisioned a project that offered an exciting fusing of the artists creative contribution as a new way of “seeing” this special wild environment, and the expertise and logistic support

of the New Zealand Lands & Survey Department, the Department saw their role as one of administration only and offered little support. Our idea of using the New Zealand Navy for transport for instance was far too extravagant; any application would have to be put through the Lands & Survey Department for detailed consideration and they could find “No Way” to back the proposition of using the Navy because the limited positions on the Frigate were too valuable in terms of transportation of serious scientists to the islands for “real” research.



The anchorage of Port Pegasus, Stewart Island where the Acheron sheltered



Royal Albatross nesting near the top of Enderby Island

It seemed no room at all could be made for the frivolous dreams of artists. Like anyone, ‘we were welcome to apply for permits to the islands, but the Department could offer no assistance’. We would have to fully fund the expedition ourselves, transport and other logistics, while also paying for a representative of the Department to accompany us at great expense to make sure we would not put at risk the uniqueness of the environment. The cost of this would be prohibitive and effectively mean the project would remain like the surrealist project, only a dream.

Some response to an innovative and sharing idea!



The DOC hut where the expedition stayed on the Main Auckland Islands.



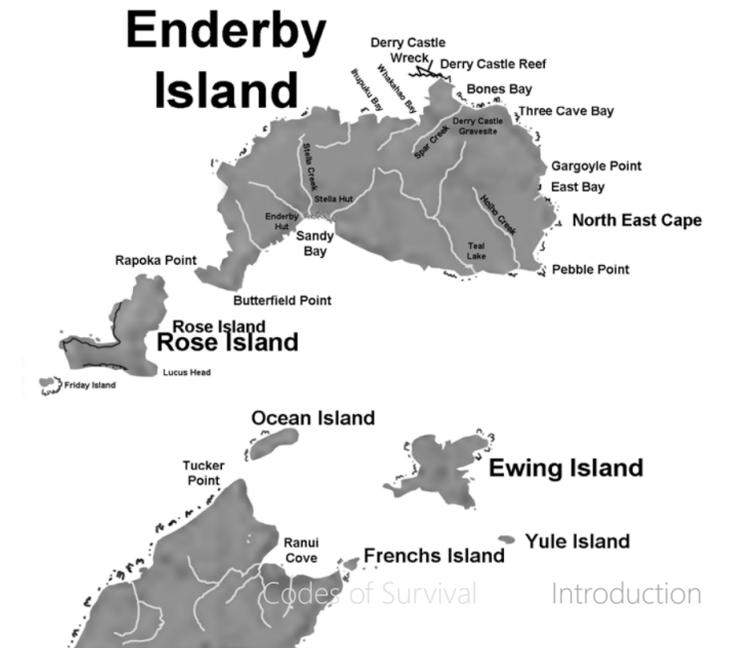
A DOC worker looks on as Laurence Aberhart adjusts his large format camera while photographing the Victoria Tree Erebus Cove, on the main Auckland Island

Advantage of a re-structure

Apart from an enthusiastic response from the then director of the New Zealand Arts Council, John McCormack whom I detailed the project to in Dunedin there seemed little reason to proceed. John wanted the project to proceed with up most haste, but the project lay dormant for a number of years. Every good idea has its time, and eventually, the wheels of government began to change with the inevitable re-structure of Government Departments, and with this a seismic shift, the jurisdiction of the islands passed over to the newly formed Department of Conservation (DOC). It seemed that now was time to reignite the potential of the project, and after an initial settling down period, an approach was made again to DOC in Invercargill who now had jurisdiction over the Subantarctic islands.

Russell Beck, Director of the Southland Museum and Art Gallery had also become interested in the potential of the project and as part of his own innovative plans for the gallery, had the vision to see the project as part of a larger ambition to establish a Subantarctic Centre in the redevelopment of the Southland Art Gallery and Museum that was underway. This involved constructing a 6 storey pyramid over the entire old building. Russell was amazing and became a huge force to see the project through, and like so many of the projects he envisioned, he never doubted that we could realize it.

The project was also steadfastly backed by Jim Tomlin head of the School of Art Otago Polytechnic where I worked teaching photography, who saw the project as a way of associating the reenergizing art school with an innovative project that would place it on a national map.





Together, Lou Sanson Russell Beck and myself (with the help of two of the original group of interested artists, Shaun Burdon and David McLeod) began planning the project in earnest. Both Russell and Lou were sensational and very enthusiastic about the idea. Lou was Conservator for Southland Conservancy in charge of Fiordland National Park, Stewart Island and the Subantarctic World Heritage Area and later in 2013 became Director General of DOC. Lou could see the potential of the project in terms of the Department's policy of promoting an awareness of the Subantarctic Islands throughout New Zealand. He was sympathetic to our argument that artists are researchers, they just research in a different manner, on a visual level and communicate in a different way than scientists to a different audience. The potential of artists creating work based on the direct experience of these islands fitted with DOC's new mission statement of communicating the uniqueness of the Islands to the wider public and artists were a vehicle to achieve that. He understood artists could do this in a way that scientists simply could not.

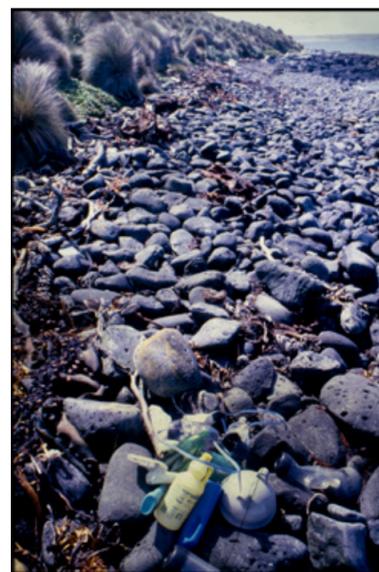
As a member of the Art Gallery Directors Council, Russell Beck proposed the idea of a touring exhibition at the conclusion of the expedition in Southland. Russell and Lou had far more skills in proposal writing and presentation than any of the artists involved, and also a greater range of contacts and from this point took greater control of the project planning. As an artist aspiring to go on the exhibition I took a step back.

Russell and Lou wisely decided to bring forward the planned date for the project to become part of New Zealand's 1990, celebration of its sesquicentennial: 150 years since the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi.

As well as the artists, DOC was planning an extensive season of activity at the islands which included hut building and other such projects, preservation of historical sites (like the Cemetery at Enderby and the Victoria Tree), wild life management, (shooting of the goats in-

roduced onto the Main Auckland Island), and further scientific study (sea lions, botany plot surveys). The artists would be included as part of this much larger expedition and the interdisciplinary mix offered an exciting potential.

However, further problems arose when it was suggested that women artists would be part of the team and consequently be allowed to sail aboard the precious naval frigate. The navy refused, stating that "woman NEVER sail on our boats", and we would have to find alternative transportation. Planning stalled for some time. About this time I had a visit from another well acknowledged artist who had spoken to John McCormack and was keen to join the expedition. From my discussion, he realized that to gain permission from the navy for women to be part of the expedition would be tricky, if not impossible, he sensed we were bogged down in red tape. So he set about presenting a personal proposal to the Arts Council for himself to sail to the islands and experience the environment and create some work.



A selection of rubbish washed up on the shore line of Ocean Island. This inspired the use of the photogram technique in the Codes of Survival images.

We needed something special to cut through the Navy red tape and enlisted the help of Michael Cullen a cabinet minister at the time, and later deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand as patron. Combined discussions between DOC, Michael and the Navy eventually opened the pathway to a resolution that allowed the radio room to be used as sleeping accommodation for the women, but this meant only one woman could be transported on each trip. I remember in a letter that Michael sent to the navy that he "trusted the artist would enjoy the delights of naval food". However it was groundbreaking and the very first time women had sailed on board a New Zealand Naval vessel.

Once this was confirmed, I rang John McCormack at the Arts Council to set in place an application for funding. His response was that the project had already been completed by the other artist who had applied for a grant to travel to the islands by himself.



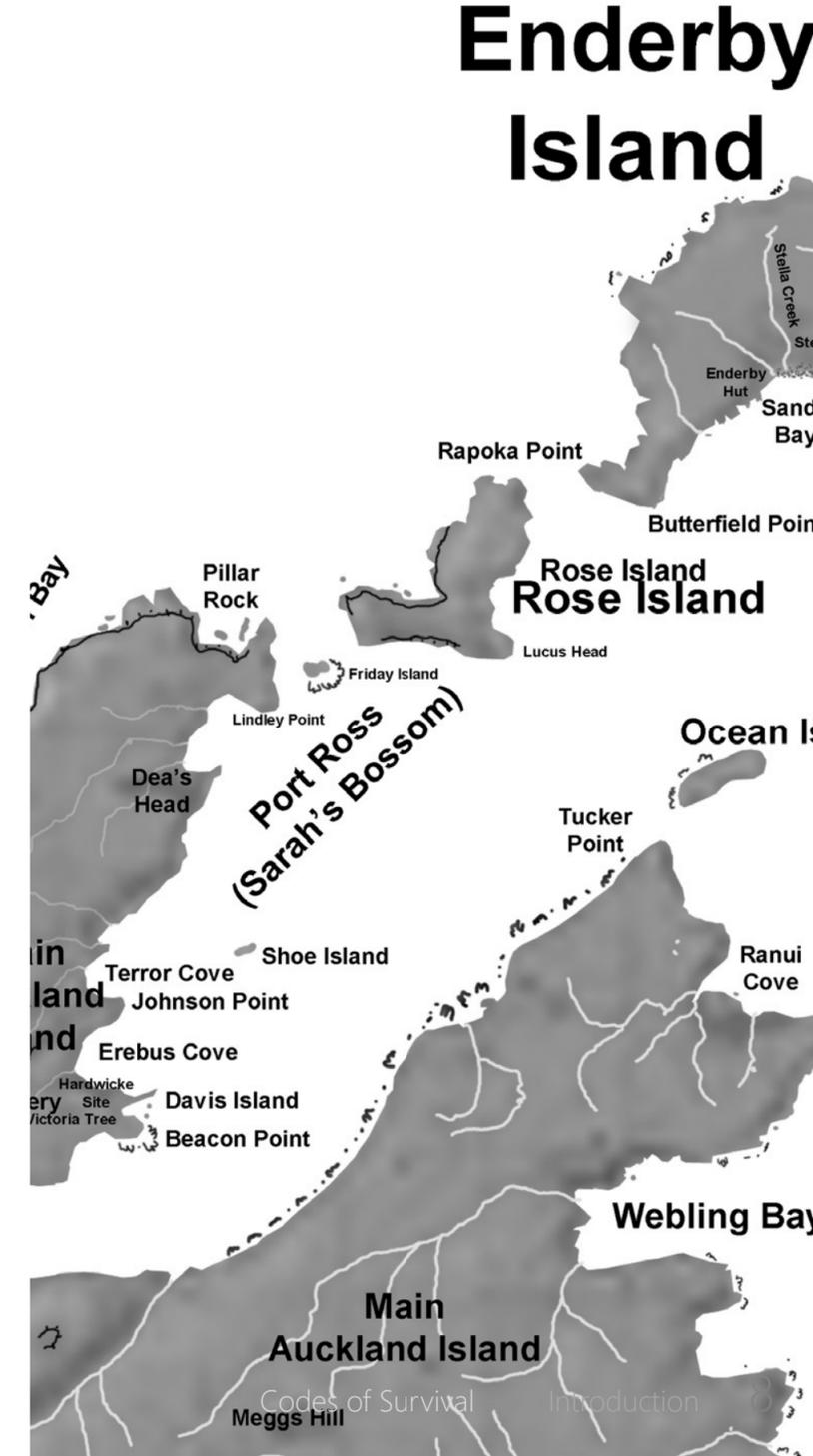
Bulbinella rossii, growing on a cliff top, Enderby Island

I reminded John that we had letters of support from him for the project dating back to September 1985 and that Michael Cullen was patron of the project and would be more than interested to learn that he had broken our confidence by supporting the other artist. There was deafening silence for about 30 seconds, to which he replied in a quivering voice "Ok you will get your funding but I will never support you in any other project". Although we did meet at several other functions and gallery openings, he never ever spoke to me again. We "generously" gained the same amount of money for the 11 artists travel costs on the expedition as the other artist gained for himself, but despite this, it was enough to see all the selected artists take part in the project. Such is the life of politics in art.

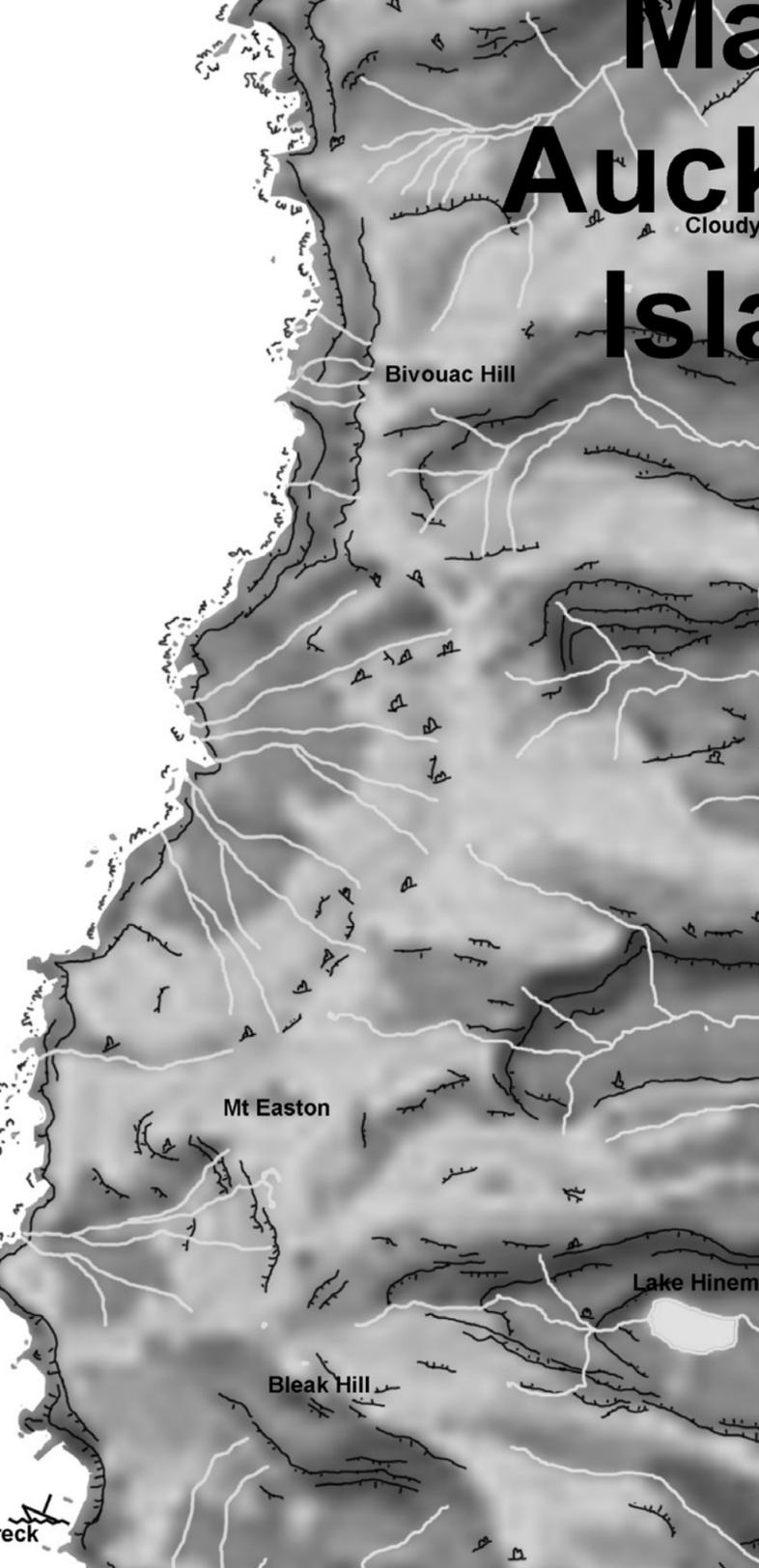
Finally, in 1989 plans for the project were firmed up and eventually all the delays came to an end and the planning came to fruition. An expression of interest was finally called from artists interested in becoming part of the expedition. A special selection panel was established to select the artists from the more than 80 applications, from which a short list was drawn up, before the final group of 11 artists were chosen. The selection included a range of mediums, both men and women, artists that had experience with the natural environment and those with a more urban base, while taking into account cultural differences.



Some of the decaying tins of food found in the Coast Watchers Hut, Ranui Cove - these were buried in a deep hole by the Doc Staff



Enderby Island



An exhibition of work based on the artists direct experience in the islands would be curated and opened to coincide with the opening of the new pyramid extension at the Southland Museum and Art Gallery as a 1990s project, with a touring exhibition of many New Zealand galleries to follow this. (In fact it was the most toured show the Art Gallery Directors council had ever supported to this date)

However, due to the Governor General, Sir Paul Reeves and party being offered berths on the naval Frigate, problems with Naval transport arose at the 11th, hour, which meant that fewer artist could be transported. Suddenly organizers had to find \$27,000 in four weeks for the project to continue as had been planned.

The fix was to hire a charter boat, the mv Acheron, which was significantly smaller than the frigate with a length of 23.16m, beam: 5.49m, draft: 1.90m and limited by favorable weather conditions, it offered a more adventurous form of travel. In fact on one previous excursion to the southern ocean part of the deck house had been damaged by a huge wave and the vessel had to limp back to New Zealand in the lee of a larger fishing ship. By bringing a film crew from TV NZ, who would film the voyage, onboard the funding was secured and the project was still alive; TV NZ would fund the short fall.

Transporting everyone in a single expedition was impossible and eventually, the project planned to take 11 artists on several trips at the end of 1989 over a 6 week period to the sub-antarctic islands, some to the Auckland Island, others to Campbell Island.

The selected artists included ceramicist Chester Nealie, painter Bill Hammond, photographer Laurence Aberhart, photographer Helen Mitchell, photographer Lloyd Godman, painter Shaun Burdon, painter Geerda Leenards, painter Linda James, sound artist Rudy Adrian and others.

The group I was connected to saw Chester Nealie, Helen Mitchell and Shaun Burdon transported down on the Leander class Frigate HMNZS Southland, then a second group Bill Hammond, Laurence Aberhart, Geerda Leenards and myself transported down on the Acheron a few weeks later. The first group were then transported back to New Zealand on the Acheron while the second group were picked up later by the Frigate. Each group spent about 4 weeks away including the transportation time.



Pillar Rock, Main Auckland Island



Bill Hammond among the Rata forest at night Main Auckland Island

The first voyage

The group I was in saw us assemble at Bluff, to embark onto the Acheron. I met up with Laurence, Bill and Geerda where we excitedly discussed the expedition. They were all scathing of the other artist who had "jumped the gun" and organized his own expedition. Aboard was Russell Beck and Ken Sceden from the Maritime Museum in Wellington, and a TV NZ crew were also part of the sailing party. As the thud and whine of the large diesel engine filled the air we moved our gear on board and found a bunk. It was now getting exciting, this was actually happening.



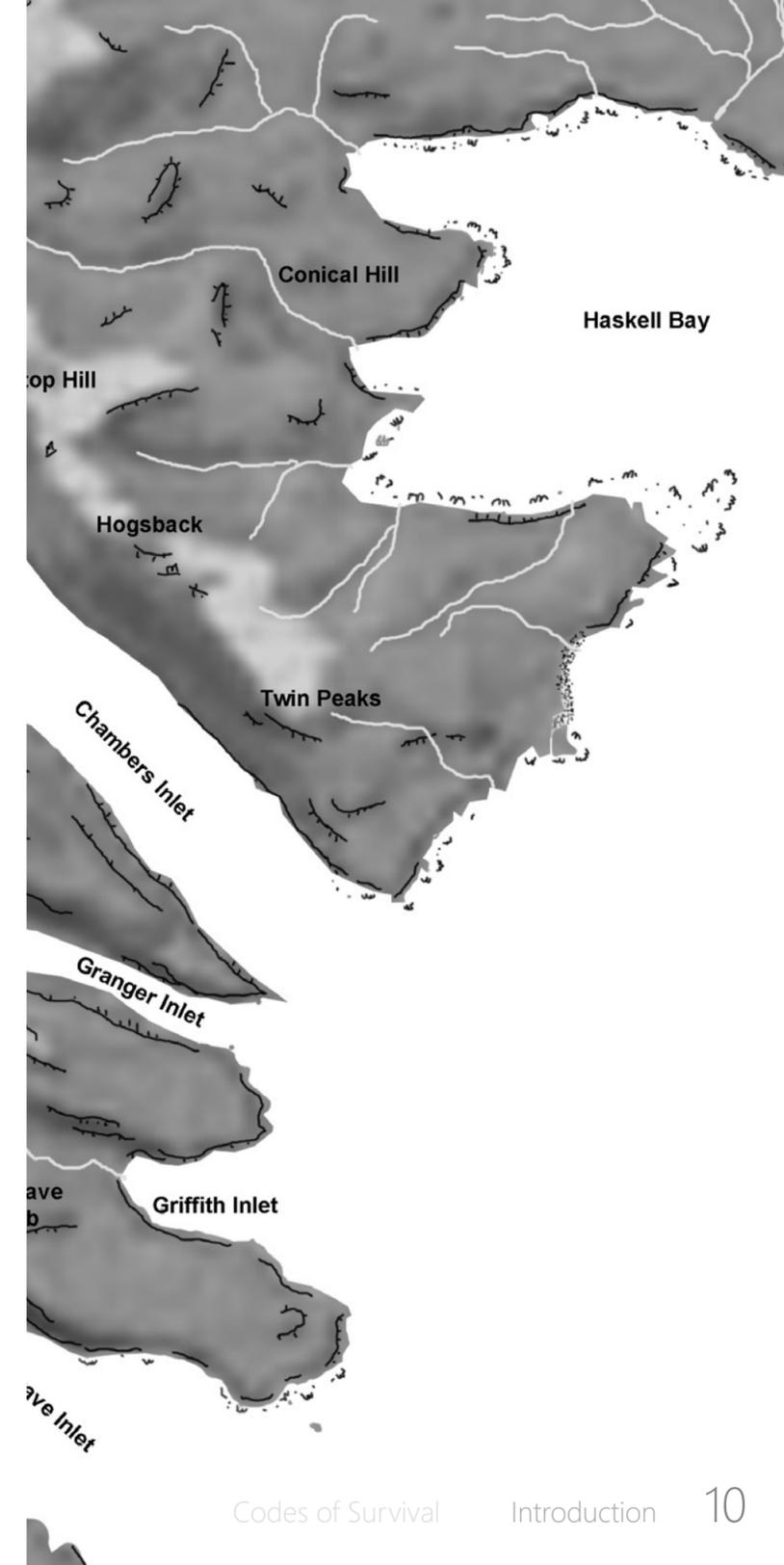
Sea cave, Enderby Island



DOC and Navy staff pick up the expeditions gear from Deas' Head for the return voyage

As we headed out of Bluff harbor, the weather was changeable with a wisped grey sky and a building swell. The glowing sky above Stewart Island revealed a shoreline of, craggy rock outcrops, inlets and bays, which passed by one after another. Arms of thick bush reached down the folds in the hills to the water line with little sign of humanity. The further south we sailed, the more the swell built and waves began to brake the bow sending sheets of water and spray across the bridge wind screen. Cautiously we kept sailing onward, then when we rounded Break Sea Island at Port Adventurer to face the full brunt of the great ocean, it was obvious the small frame of the Acheron was struggling with the rolling ocean. If we continued and were caught between Stewart Island and the Auckland Islands there were few options. Brought in especially for this charter, master mariner, captain Williams changed the plan and decided to continue sailing but to put in at the southern tip of Stewart Island where we would shelter at Port Pegasus until the storm passed. He anticipated we would have a window of calmer waters to sail the two days to the Auckland Islands later in the week, so we could shelter here for a few days. The thump of each wave got louder, the creaks of wood more intense, the locker catches rattled, while we were thrown from side to side.

Eventually we sailed through the passage by Noble Island and into the welcome shelter of the South Arm in Port Pegasus where the wild weather moderated. Even so, the water was peppered with strong gusts of wind that beat beautiful textures on the surface that scurried across the bay though patches of light and shadow; but the large threatening swell was gone.





There we anchored up at the very sheltered Sylvan Cove beside a sturdy fishing boat with the same idea, while the wild winds whistled over the hills and more importantly our heads. Ken Sceeden kept us amused with tales of the many ship wrecks and harrowing stories of survival from the Islands. The next few days were spent exploring the sheltered bays of the Port, climbing rugged hills to the spectacular granite outcrops of Smith's Look Out that sat high above us in the sheltered anchorage far below. Then a climb of Bald Cone to the north east with the spectacular peaks of Gog and Magog ominously reaching for the wild sky. These are peaks of raw granite where no vegetation has been able to take hold. On the lower slopes stunted rata trees and other bushes cling to the rock growing at an incredibly slow rate away from the harrowing wind, until the abrasive effect of the fine air-borne granite sand driven by the wind finally cuts through their fine trunk and they finally die. Life here on these wind-blown slopes is tenuous. Twisted lines of dead, bone white trunks litter the lower areas of the hard rock. Sustained survival on the tops is impossible with weather sculptured rocks strewn like ruins in every direction.

Some of the photographs I took here were used in a later series of photograph/photogram image in the Adze to Coda project.

We examined the ruins at Ship Builders Cove where we saw the efforts of men falling back to nature. This experience of the Port Pegasus area was an added bonus and a wonderful prelude that set the scene for the Auckland Islands expedition which would follow. We walked through the small gut from Disappointment Cove to Broad Bay and watched the squalls descend on the ocean like a beating hammer, where the ocean surface suddenly changed texture and even saw a willy wall (an old fashioned term for a water spout) far on the southern horizon.

The fisherman on the boat beside our anchorage was an interesting man, very articulate and gentle spoke and not what one would expect from a Stewart Island fisherman. Because of his interests in classics he preferred to sail alone. He would play classical music as he worked and save money to tour the ruins of Greece and Rome, so he was sympathetic to the work we did as artists. One night he turned us on to a magnificent sea food feast from his chiller. There was some fishing and lots of eating. Years later I learned that he had died at sea in a tragic accident, apparently washed overboard his boat was found abandoned.



Leander class frigate HMNZS Southland anchored off the Island for the return voyage



Naval staff move the Derry Castle Punt in a specially made cradle from the shed where it was stored on the Auckland Islands to the Frigate where it was transported to the Southland Museum and Art Gallery

The second voyage

In fact over the days we spent waiting for the weather to improve, we ate so much it was decided to sail back to Bluff, refuel the boat and restock the food before setting sail again. After a few days back at Bluff the weather was not looking good and the talk from DOC was that if it did not clear the trip would be cancelled. We were like wild animals in a cage. Bill and Laurence headed for the Bluff pubs, I had the offer to go bush with one of the DOC people and spent a few day at the mysterious Lake Hauko in southern Fiordland.



Naval briefing on the deck of the frigate

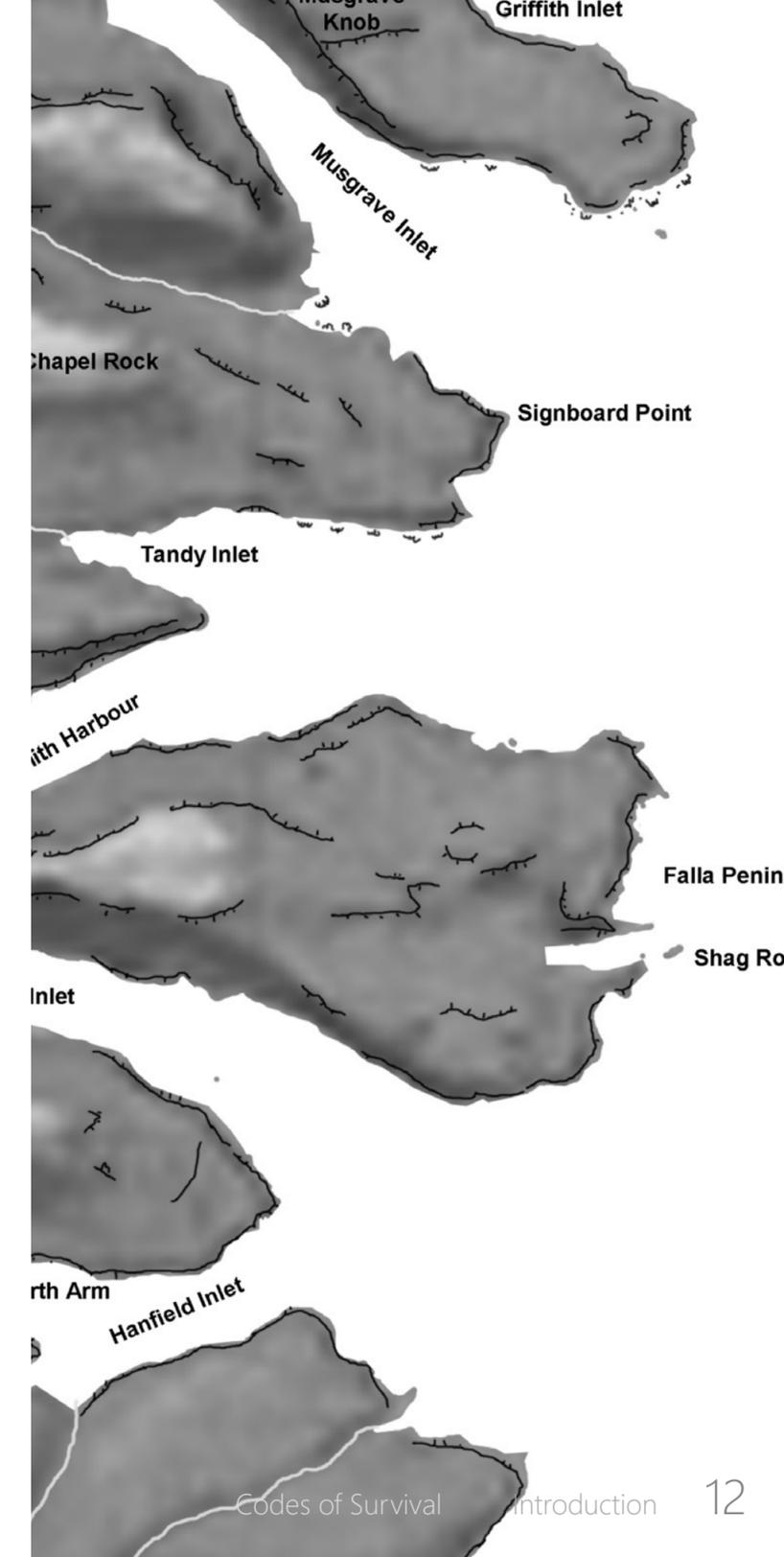


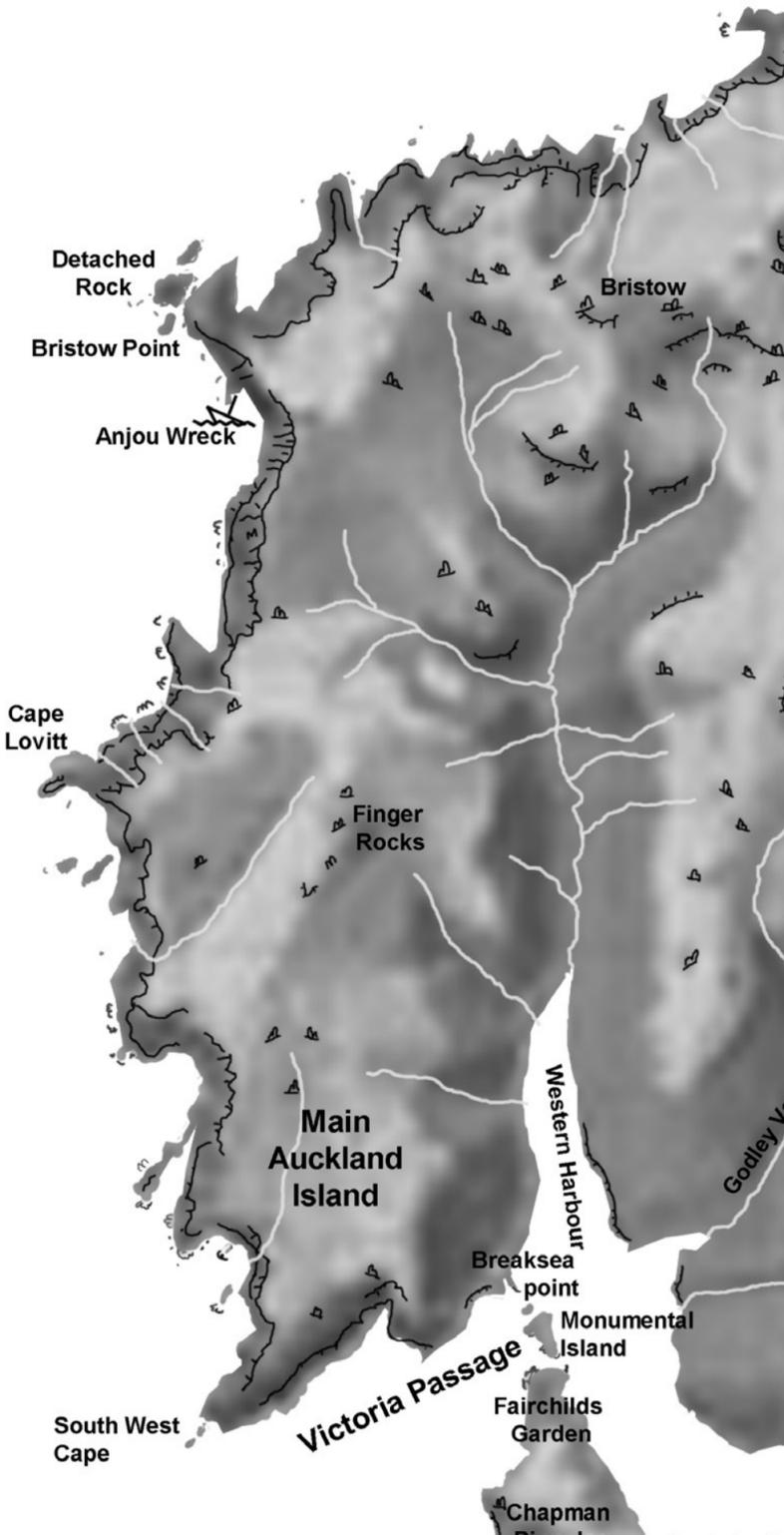
Lloyd on the frigate talking to one of the naval personal



However after a few more days the forecast had improved and we were once on the open ocean sailing south, past the same coast we had navigated a week before, past Port Pegasus and south to the Auckland Islands. The two day voyage was in much calmer conditions and the ocean quickly expanded into a vast expanse where only waves and seabirds caught our eye. At one point, I watched Captain Williams with the sexton calculate our position, his navigation was spot on and within the next day Enderby Island materialized from the vastness. Instantly sea lions greeted us swimming with ease around the hull.

Once we arrived at the Island we met the other artists who were already down there and would return on the Acheron within hours. Chester Nealie, who was in the first party invited me back to the hut on Enderby Island for a cup of tea and toast. He unwrapped this mould green bread and proceeded to cut the green bits off all sides until in the core was something that resembled bread as I knew it, a square about 2 inches. He then toasted this and smeared another 2 inches of jam on it. "You have to make the most of your bread and stretch it out as long as you can" he said, "there are no more supplies than what you land, it's camp rations from here on".





I had an underwater camera housing with me and within the first few hours decided to swim out at Sandy Bay, Enderby Island and shoot some photographs. I asked the scientist working on the sea lion population if it was safe. "well you will be fine in the water, they will just swim around you" - "but when you get out and walk up the beach the dominant male will either try to fight you or fuck you". He looked at my slim stature in the tight black wetsuit and added "I don't like your chances, mate".

At the time the arts expedition went to the Auckland Islands, Enderby Island had rabbits and wild cows, the main Auckland Island goats and pigs, Rose Island rabbits. These had been introduced to provide food for anyone who might become marooned and were now considered a hindrance in returning the island to their former flora. I was fortunate to experience islands like Ocean island that had no introduced animals, and here the flora was totally different than the islands where rabbits, cows etc had been introduced. Large areas of mega herbs, like *Stilbocarpa Polaris*, with huge, round hairy leaves covered the ground. I found the spectacular *Pleurophyllum* flowering on Ewing Island. These did grow on Enderby, but only in the most inaccessible cliffs where no hungry mouth could find them.

We spent most of the time at Enderby Island. The hut we stayed in was at Sandy Bay and I would set off alone early in the morning walking the shores of the island, the basalt cliffs, exploring the caves, or walking through the scrub over the tops. The first thing I was struck by was the dead remains of so many creatures. In this place there was a 'code to survival' and the inattentive paid an ultimate price. When I came across these remains I photographed them with a sense of the wider environment behind.

Then we moved to the hut near Dea's Head and walked through the rata forest track to Terror Cove, Erebus Cove to Beacon Head. Other trips included walks to Matheson Bay, high up the Hooker Hills, Pillar Rock, Rose Island, Ocean

Island, Ewing Island and Frenchs Island. We stayed a night in the Coast Watchers Hut at Ranui Cove. But the wild country to the south alluded us, it was simply too far with the small inflatable boat we had. We thought perhaps the Frigate might sail down this way on the route home, but they had plans to impress the Governor general with target practice.

The very last thing we did before we left was work with the Navy to rig the Derry Castle Punt onto the navy's inflatable boat and motor it out to the Frigate where it was hoisted aboard and transported back to the Museum at Southland where it is still on display.

Among the various experiences from the expedition to the Auckland Islands, were two that proved to be seminal in developing the Codes of Survival work.

Before we arrived at the islands, I had wrongly believed that the Islands were a pristine environment, a last bastion of wilderness, and while there is some truth in this (Adams Island at the southern end of the group is the largest island in the world with no introduced species) they are islands and the very isolation that protects their wilderness status undermines them in another way.



On the return voyage, the navy engaged in a shooting drill - small arms fire from the deck of the frigate

Along the rugged coastline we found rubbish washed up on the shore, detritus dating back to a time when the island was first discovered but also reaching to the present. So while the Southland Museum and Art Gallery asked if we could retrieve any useful artifacts from the past (but only if they were venerable to damage, the Department of Conservation asked if we could collect rubbish to either burn or bring back to New Zealand. When we asked for a distinction between artifact and rubbish the explanation was not clear, no distinct date or significance of the objects encountered could be given. With time rubbish becomes an artifact.

We brought the inorganic plastic rubbish aboard the Naval Frigate for our return journey aboard the RNZN Southland, but during the first night at sea, this was dumped into the ocean along with other rubbish from the Frigate. This practice of dumping rubbish at sea is common among most vessels, but only sets up a situation where the material eventually washes back up on a coast line somewhere.

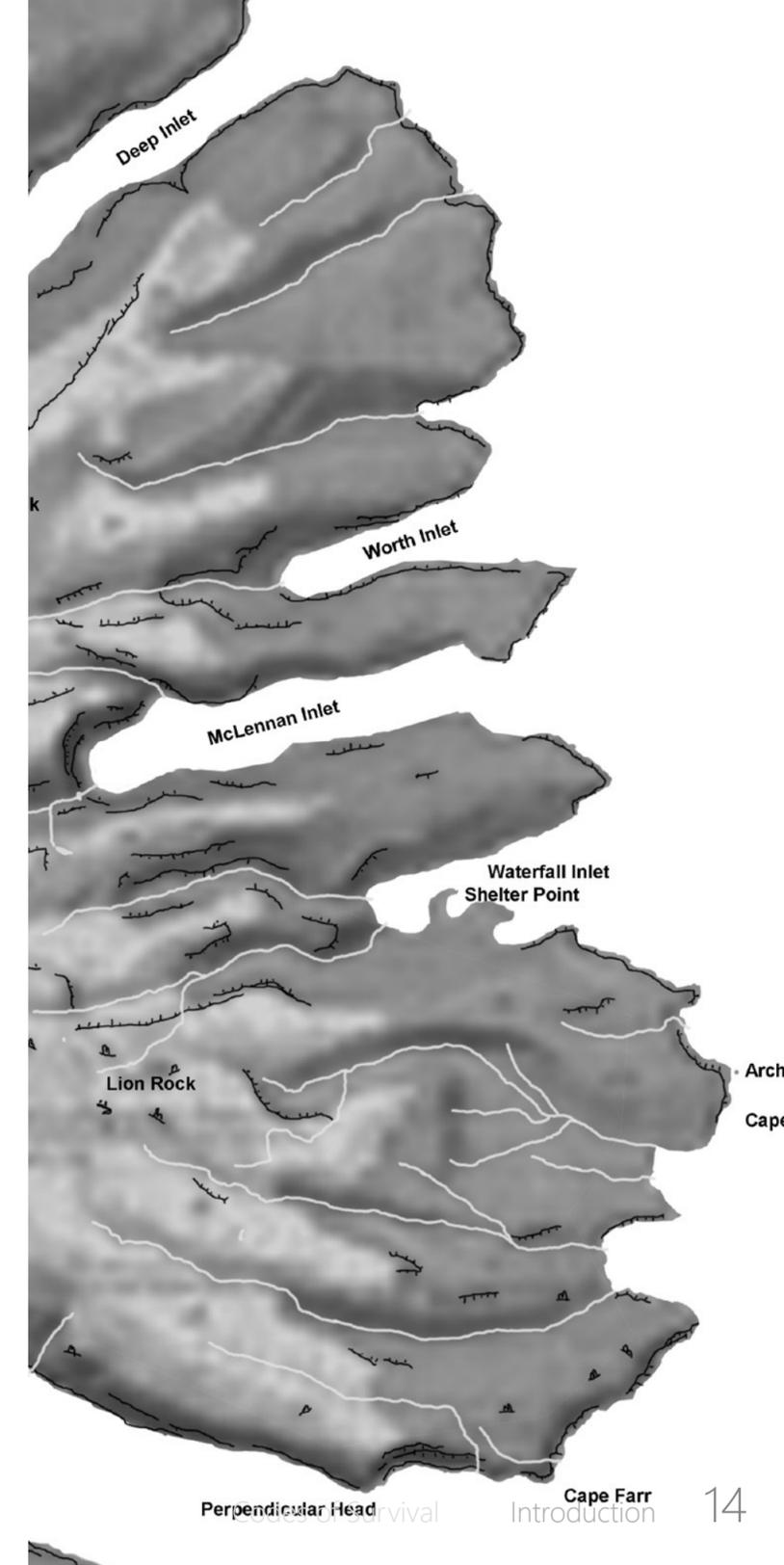


Sir Paul Reeves, Governor-General of N.Z. at the time and party were also offered a shoot. Sir Paul is second from the right

On a still blue ocean the navy prepared for "target practice" to impress the Governor-General's party and then proceeded sailing around an object dumped in the water firing deck guns with random accuracy. Later small arms were directed at the target by the navy, after which the Governor-General's party were

offered a shoot and during this an albatross was accidentally shot. As the Governor-General was patron of DOC this was an embarrassing moment. Eventually the goat shooters were offered a shoot and proved to be the most accurate shots.

Back in New Zealand, some sort of normal life returned, I struggled with how to interpret the experience of the expedition through the photographs I had taken and the event of the rubbish being re-dumped back into the ocean kept returning to me. The stories of struggles and survival Ken had told us and my own reading of these suggested the way forward was to somehow combine the photographs with another medium that would express this. I came to a conclusion of the photograph as a sort of visual island in the centre surrounded by a "sea" of rubbish, but this needed to be somehow more abstract. The photogram technique surfaced and I looked at ways to combine the two. Initial experiments suggested that there needed to be a visual separation between the photograph and the photogram.





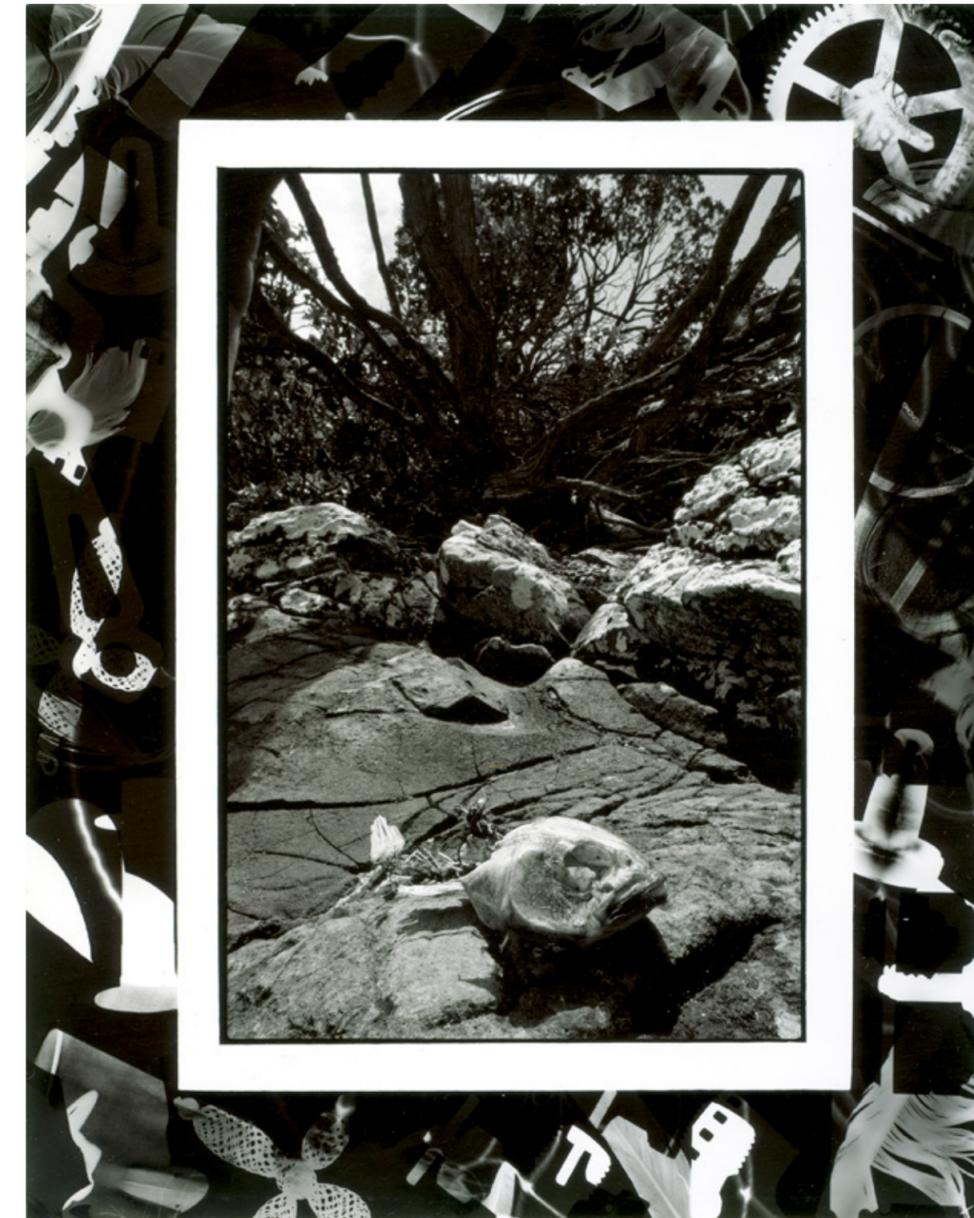
Codes of Survival

combination photogram/photographs from the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand

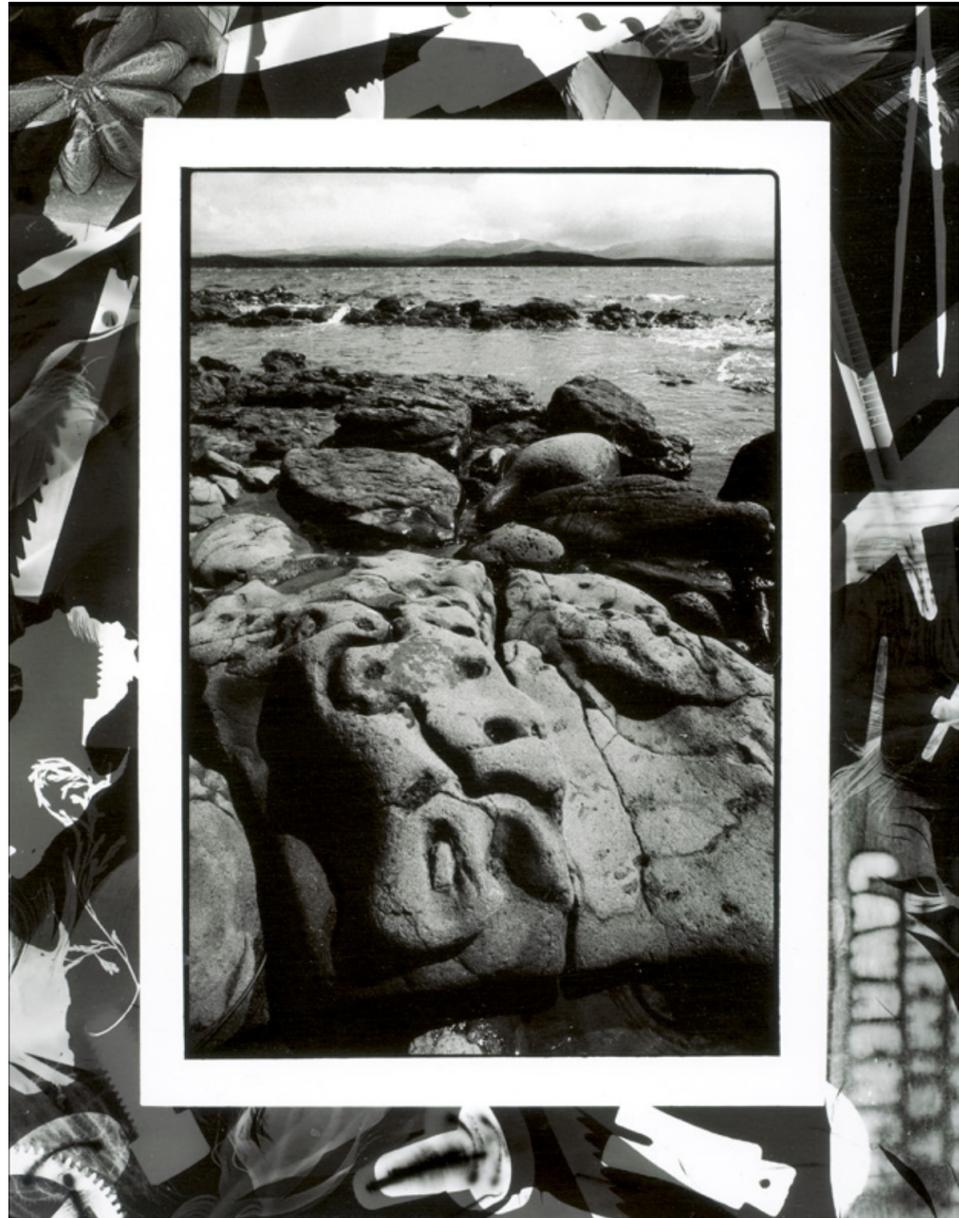


Survival Code I triptych
 left: Dead Cod Fish, Ewing Island
 centre: Ewing Island with Main Auckland Island in the distance
 right: Remains of Prion NE Cape Enderby Island

Original selenium toned gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code I* triptych
 left: Dead Cod Fish, Ewing Island



Detail: *Survival Code I* triptych
centre: Ewing Island with Main Auckland Island in the distance



Detail: *Survival Code I* triptych
right: Remains of Prion NE Cape Enderby Island



Survival Code II triptych
 left: *Stilbocarpa Polaris*, Ocean Island
 centre: Dead Allbatross in *Cassinia* Scrub, Enderby Island
 right: Enderby Island, Looking South West

Original selenium toned gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code II* triptych
 left: *Stilbocarpa Polaris*, Ocean Island



Detail: *Survival Code II* triptych
centre: Dead Allbatross in Cassinia Scrub, Enderby Island

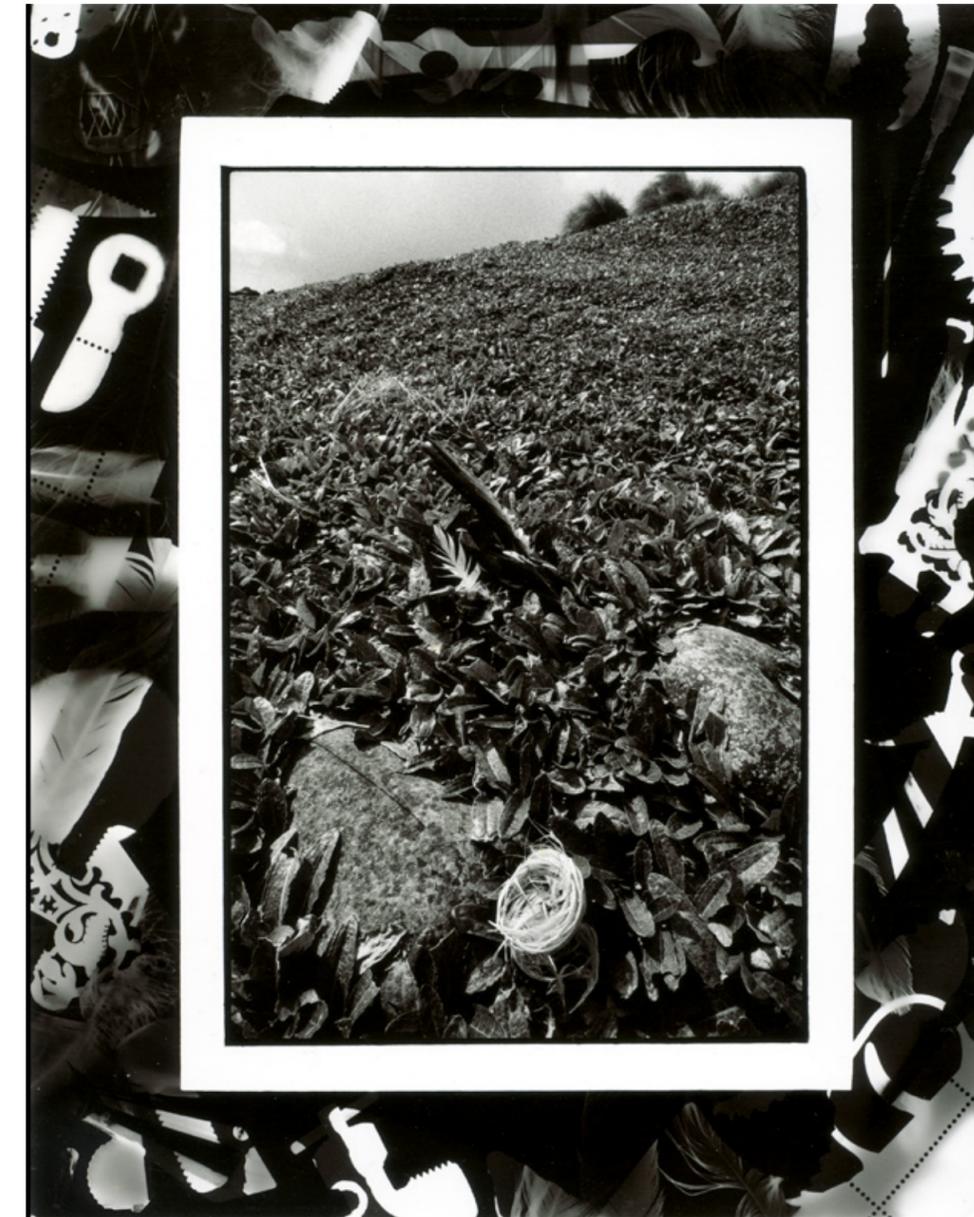


Detail: *Survival Code II* triptych
right: Enderby Island, Looking South West



Survival Code III triptych
 left: Spit ball and Rumex neglectus (native dock), Rose Island
 centre: Rata Forest, Main Auckland Island
 right: Cliff top, N.E. Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code III* triptych
 left: Spit ball and Rumex neglectus (native dock), Rose Island



Detail: Survival Code III triptych
centre: Rata Forest, Main Auckland Island



Detail: Survival Code III triptych
right: Cliff top, N.E. Enderby Island



Survival Code IV triptych
 left: Cemetery, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Islands
 centre: East Coast, Ewing Island
 right: Cemetery, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Islands

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code IV* triptych
 left: Cemetery, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Islands



Detail: *Survival Code IV* triptych
centre: East Coast, Ewing Island



Detail: *Survival Code IV* triptych
right: Cemetery, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Islands



Survival Code V triptych
left: *Stibocarpa Polaris*, Ocean Island
centre: Whale Bone Sandy Bay, Enderby Island
right: *Carex tifida*, Ocean Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code V* triptych
left: *Stibocarpa Polaris*, Ocean Island



Detail: *Survival Code V* triptych
centre: Whale Bone Sandy Bay, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code V* triptych
right: *Carex tifida*, Ocean Island



Survival Code VI triptych
left: *Poa litorosa*, Mathesons Bay, Main Auckland Island
centre: Dead Allbatross in *Cassinia* Scrub, Enderby Island
right: *Chionochloa antarctic*, Hooker Hills, Main Aucklands Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code VI* triptych
left: *Poa litorosa*, Mathesons Bay, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Survival Code VI* triptych
centre: Dead Allbatross in Cassinia Scrub, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code VI* triptych
right: *Chionochloa antarctic*, Hooker Hills, Main Auckland Island

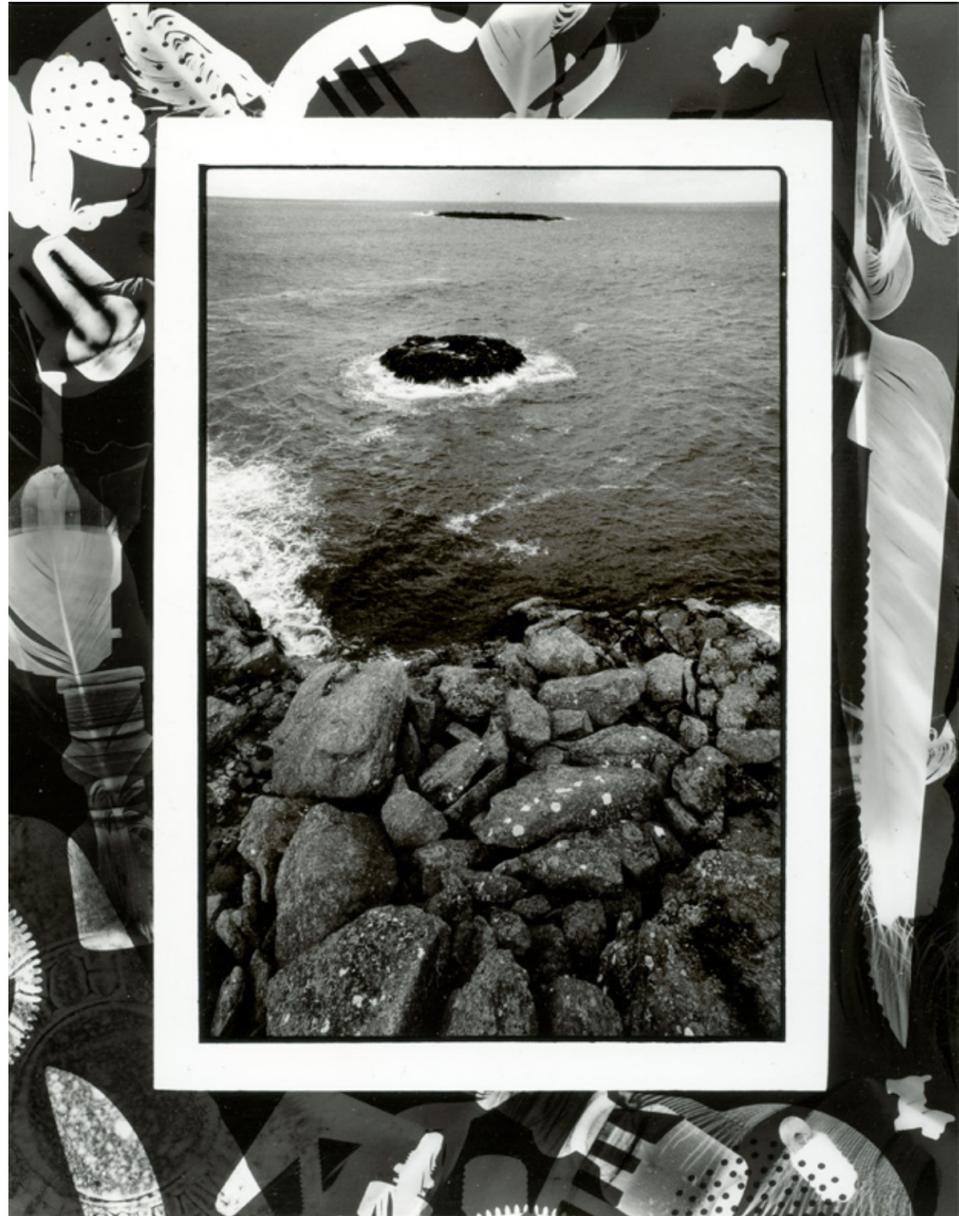


Survival Code VII triptych
 left: Shell grave yard, Rose Island (Enderby Island in Background)
 centre: From Ewing Island to Yule Island then Green Island and Bird in sky
 right: Remains of Southern King Crab, Ranui Cove, Main Auckland Island (Ewing Island on Horizon with Yule Island on right)

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



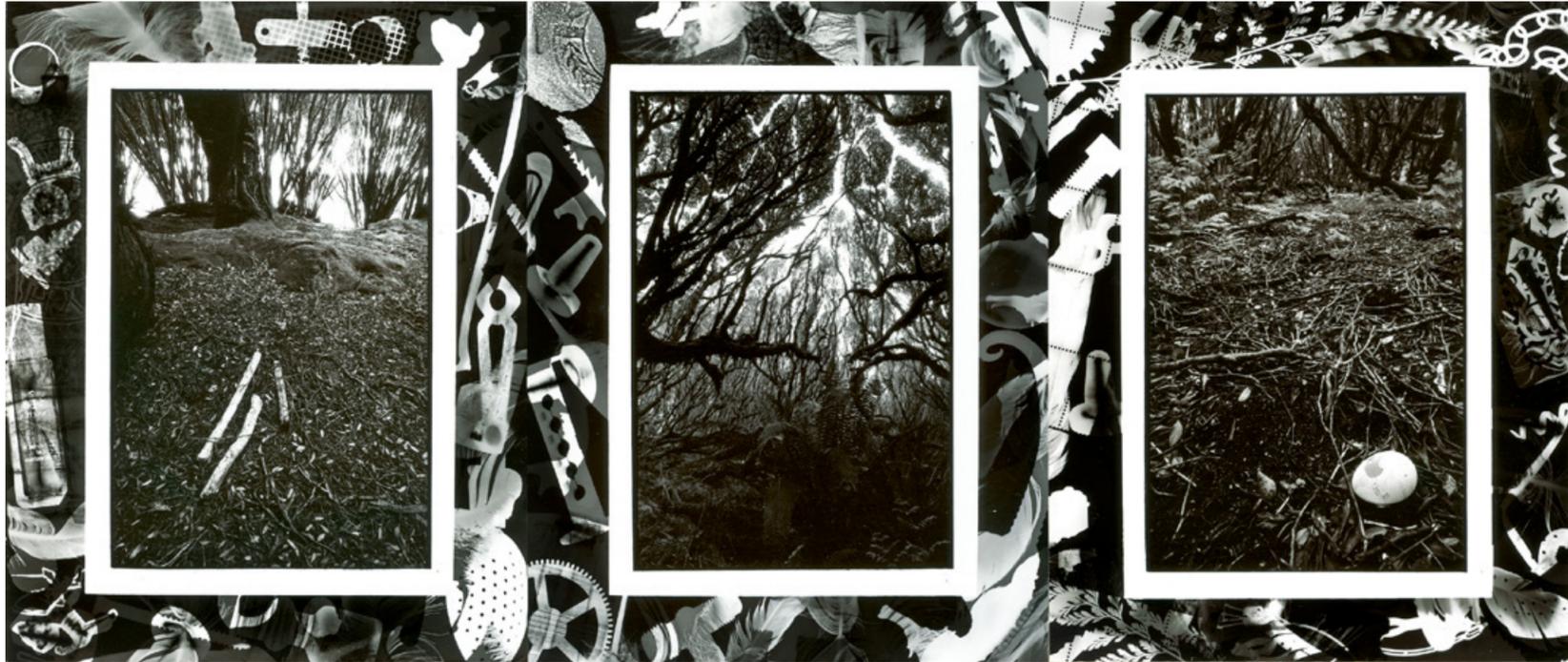
Detail: *Survival Code VII* triptych
 left: Shell grave yard, Rose Island (Enderby Island in Background)



Detail: *Survival Code VII* triptych
centre: From Ewing Island to Yule Island then Green Island and Bird in sky



Detail: *Survival Code VII* triptych
right: Remains of Southern King Crab, Ranui Cove, Main Auckland Island (Ewing Island on Horizon with Yule Island on right)



Survival Code VIII triptych
 left: Rata Forest Floor, Terror Cove, Main Auckland Islands
 centre: Rata Canopy, Enderby Island
 right: Penguin Egg, Enderby Island

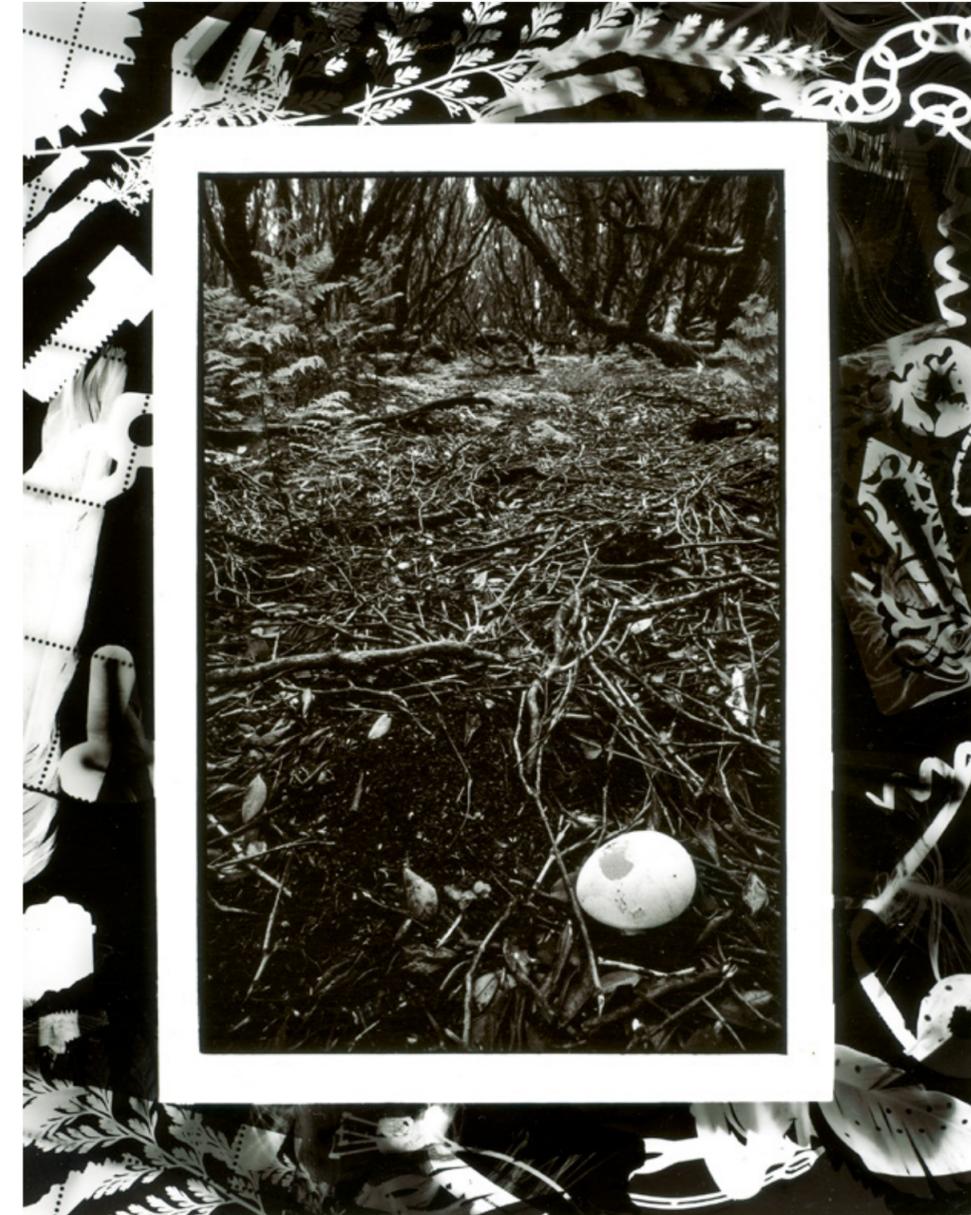
Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code VIII* triptych
 left: Rata Forest Floor, Terror Cove, Main Auckland Islands



Detail: *Survival Code VIII* triptych
centre: Rata Canopy, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code VIII* triptych
right: Penguin Egg, Enderby Island



Survival Code IX triptych
left: Dead Bird in Teal Lake, Enderby Island
centre: Remains of Small Prion, Johnson Point, Main Auckland Island
right: Prion Wing in *Bulbinella rossii*, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code IX* triptych
left: Dead Bird in Teal Lake, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code IX* triptych
centre: Remains of Small Prion, Johnson Point, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Survival Code IX* triptych
right: Prion Wing in *Bulbinella rossii*, Enderby Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion II triptych
 left: Rata Trees Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Rata Tree Matheson Bay, Main Auckland Island
 right: Rata Forest, Deas Head, Main Auckland Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion II* triptych
 left: Rata Trees Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion II* triptych
centre: Rata Tree Matheson Bay, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion II* triptych
right: Rata Forest, Deas Head, Main Auckland Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IV triptych
 left: Regenerating Forest, Lindley Point, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Regenerating Forest Lindley Point, Main Auckland Island
 right: Regenerating Forest Lindley Point, , Main Auckland Island

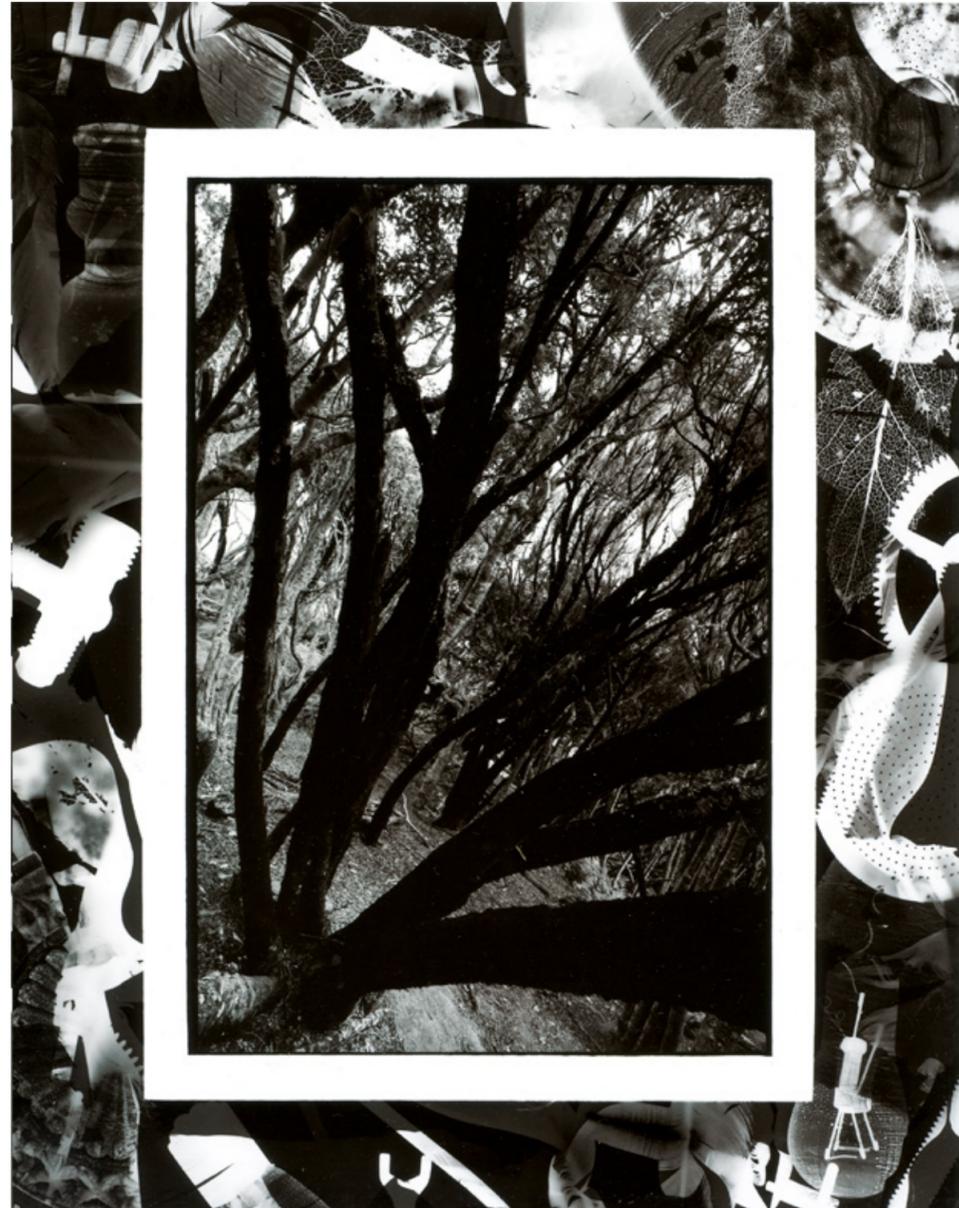
Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IV* triptych
 left: Regenerating Forest, Lindley Point, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IV* triptych
centre: Regenerating Forest Lindley Point, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IV* triptych
right: Regenerating Forest Lindley Point, , Main Auckland Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion V triptych
 left: Rata Trees Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Rata Tree Matheson Bay Main Auckland Island
 right: Rata Forest, Deas Head, Main Auckland Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion V* triptych
 left: Rata Trees Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion V* triptych
centre: Rata Tree Matheson Bay Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion V* triptych
right: Rata Forest, Deas Head, Main Auckland Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XII triptych
 left: Dracophyllum Trees, Dea's Head in the Distrance, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Rata Tree, Main Auckland Island
 right: Rata Forest, Main Auckland Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



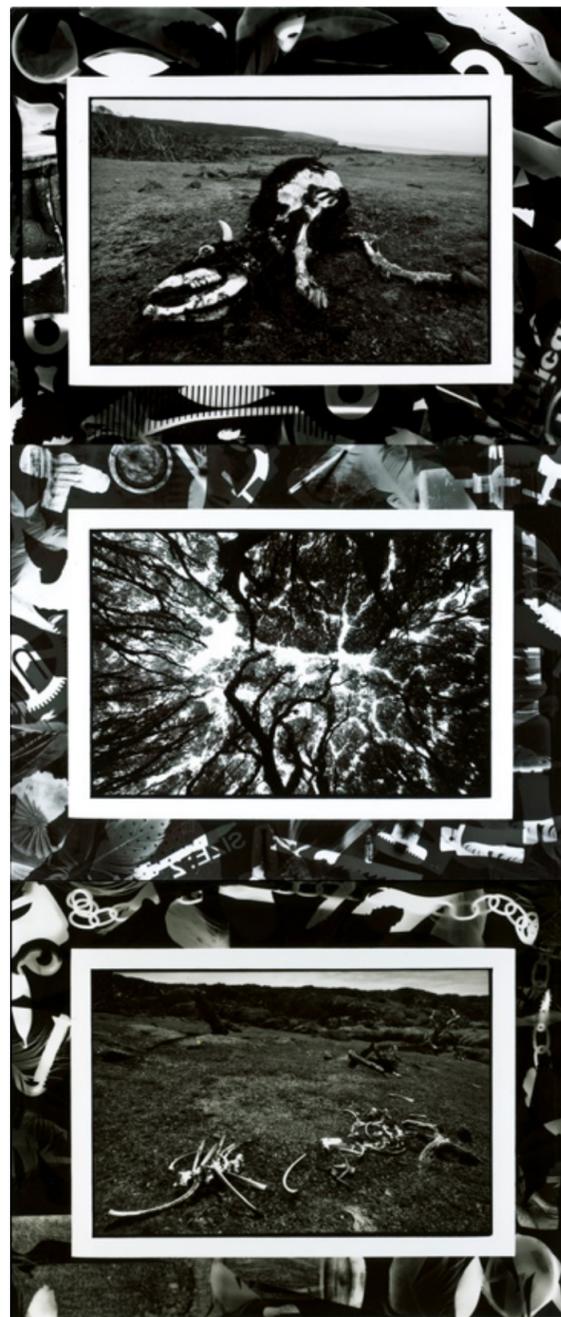
Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XII* triptych
 left: Dracophyllum Trees, Dea's Head in the Distrance, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XII* triptych
centre: Rata Tree, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XII* triptych
right: Rata Forest, Main Auckland Island

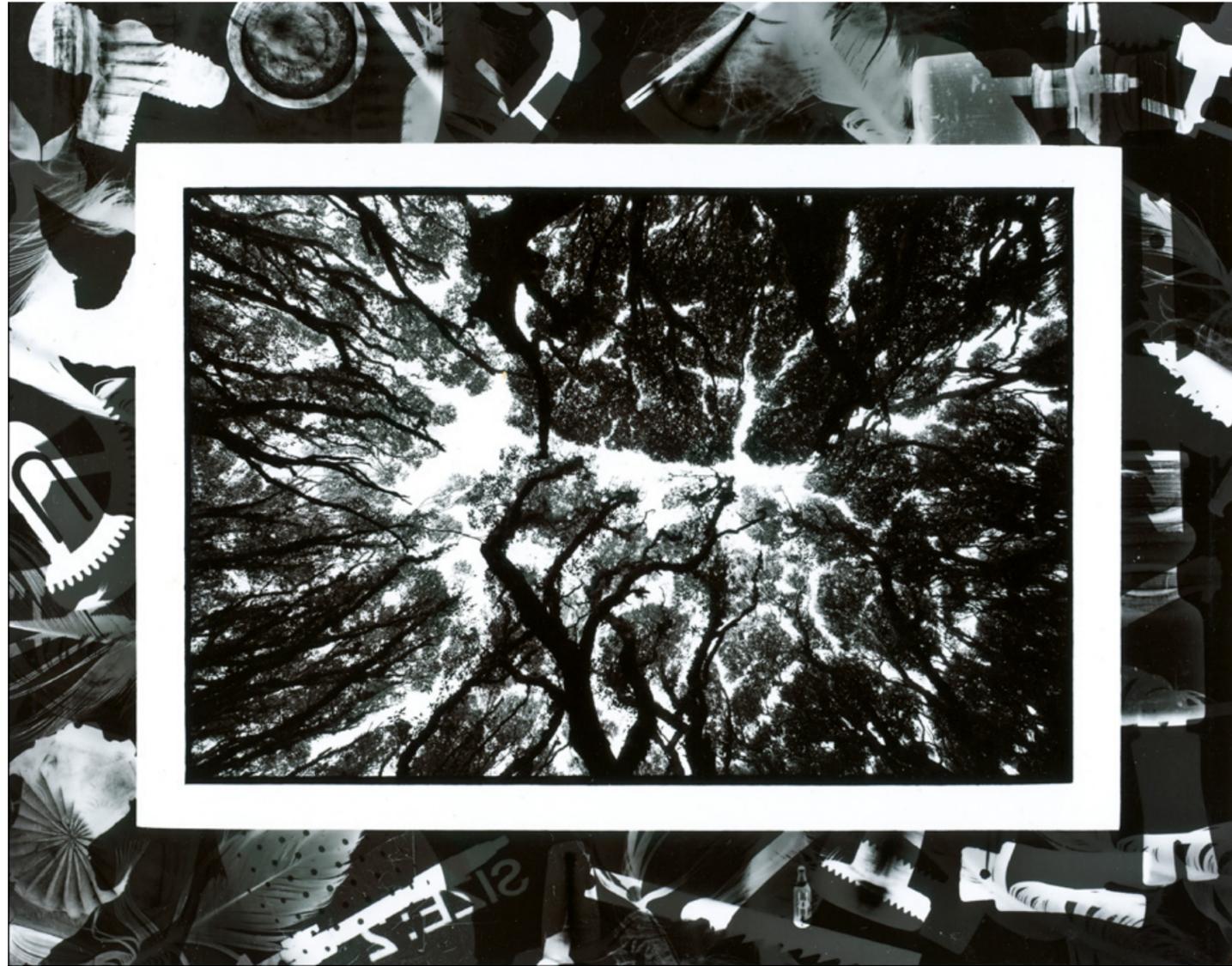


Survival Code X triptych
top: Dead Cow, NE Cape, Enderby Island
centre: Forest Canopy, Main Auckland Island
bottom: Dead Sealion Remains, NE Cape, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code X* triptych
top: Dead Cow, NE Cape, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code X* triptych
centre: Forest Canopy, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Survival Code X* triptych
bottom: Dead Sealion Remains, NE Cape, Enderby Island



Survival Code XI triptych -
 top: Dead Rata Stump, NE Cape, Enderby Island
 centre: Tarn, North Coast of Enderby Island
 bottom: Burial Place, Derry Castle Reef, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code XI* triptych -
 top: Dead Rata Stump, NE Cape, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code XI* triptych -
centre: Tarn, North Coast of Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code XI* triptych -
bottom: Burial Place, Derry Castle Reef, Enderby Island

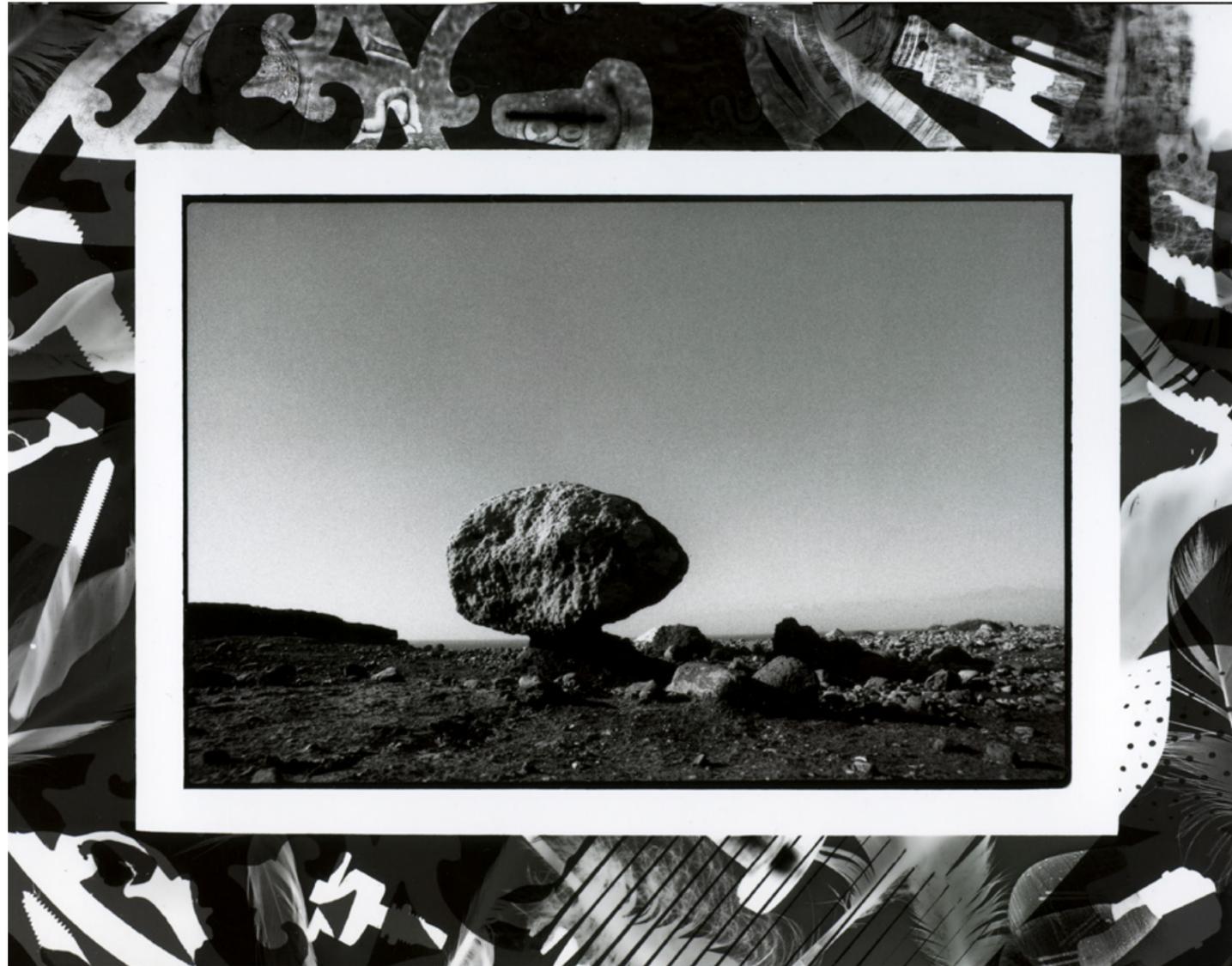


Survival Code XII triptych
top: Dead Rata Stump, NE Cape, Enderby Island
centre: Cliff Top North Coast of Enderby Island, Auckland Islands
bottom: Dead Seal, North East Cape, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Survival Code XII* triptych
top: Dead Rata Stump, NE Cape, Enderby Island



Detail: *Survival Code XII* triptych
centre: Cliff Top North Coast of Enderby Island, Aucklands Islands



Detail: *Survival Code XII* triptych
bottom: Dead Seal, North East Cape, Enderby Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion I triptych
 top: Rata Forest, Nocturne, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Rata Forest, Nocturne, Main Auckland Island
 bottom: Rata Forest, Nocturne, Main Auckland Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion I* triptych
 top: Rata Forest, Nocturne, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion I* triptych
centre: Rata Forest, Nocturne, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion I* triptych
bottom: Rata Forest, Nocturne, Main Auckland Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion III triptych
 top: Hebe Matheson Bay, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Rata Tree Matheson Bay, Main Auckland Island
 bottom: Dead Rata Trees, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



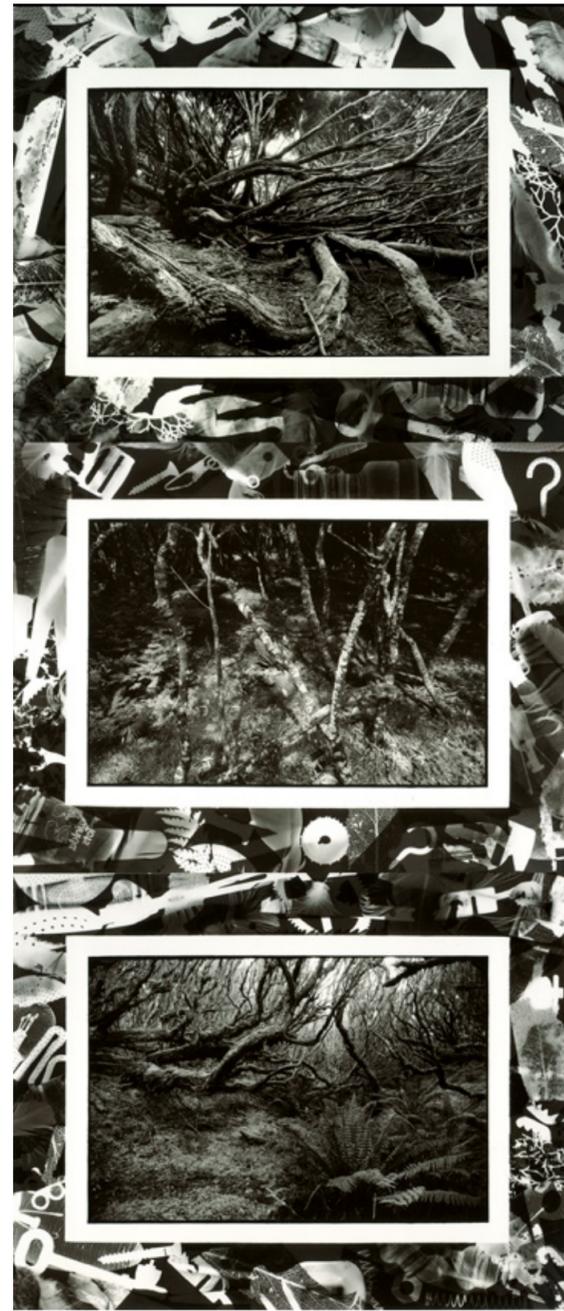
Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion III* triptych
 top: Hebe Matheson Bay, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion III* triptych
centre: Rata Tree Matheson Bay Main Auckland Island

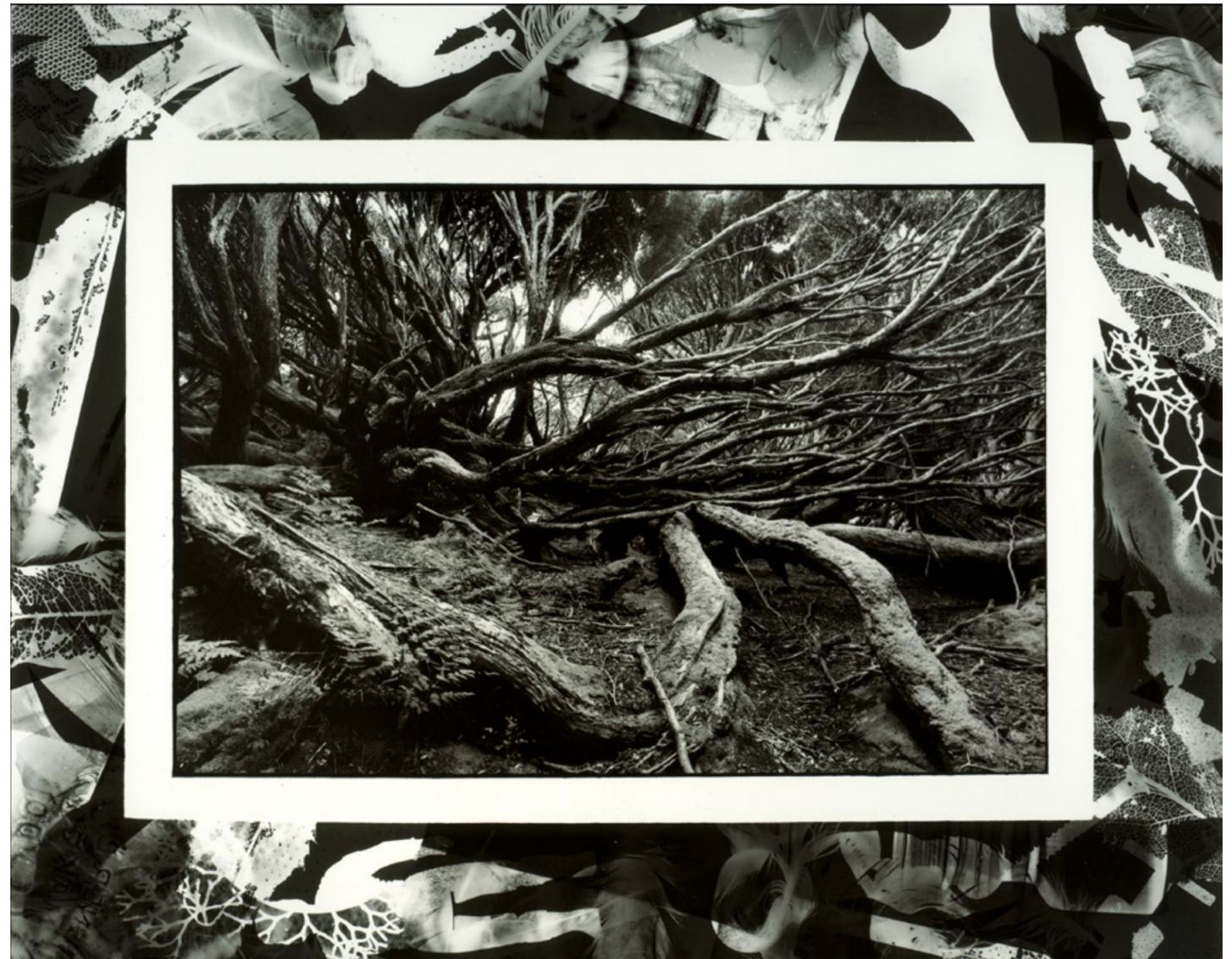


Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion III* triptych
bottom: Dead Rata Trees, Enderby Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VI triptych
 top: Rata Forest, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Forest, Enderby Island, Auckland Islands
 bottom: Forest, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



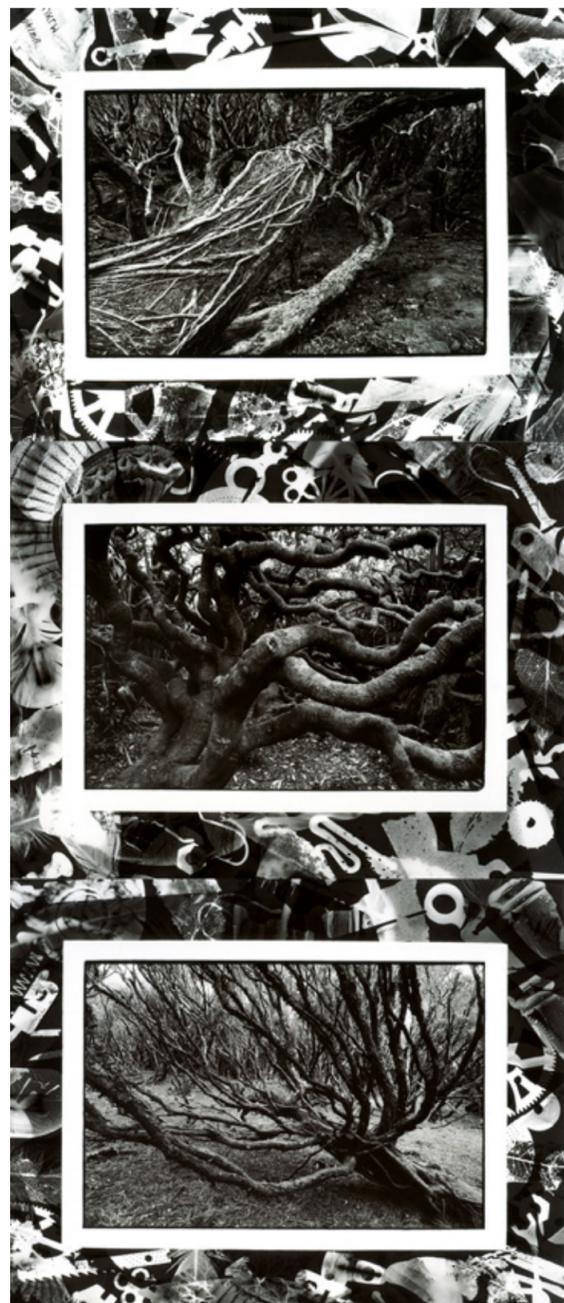
Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VI* triptych
 top: Rata Forest, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VI* triptych
centre: Forest, Enderby Island, Auckland Islands



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VI* triptych
bottom: Forest, Enderby Island

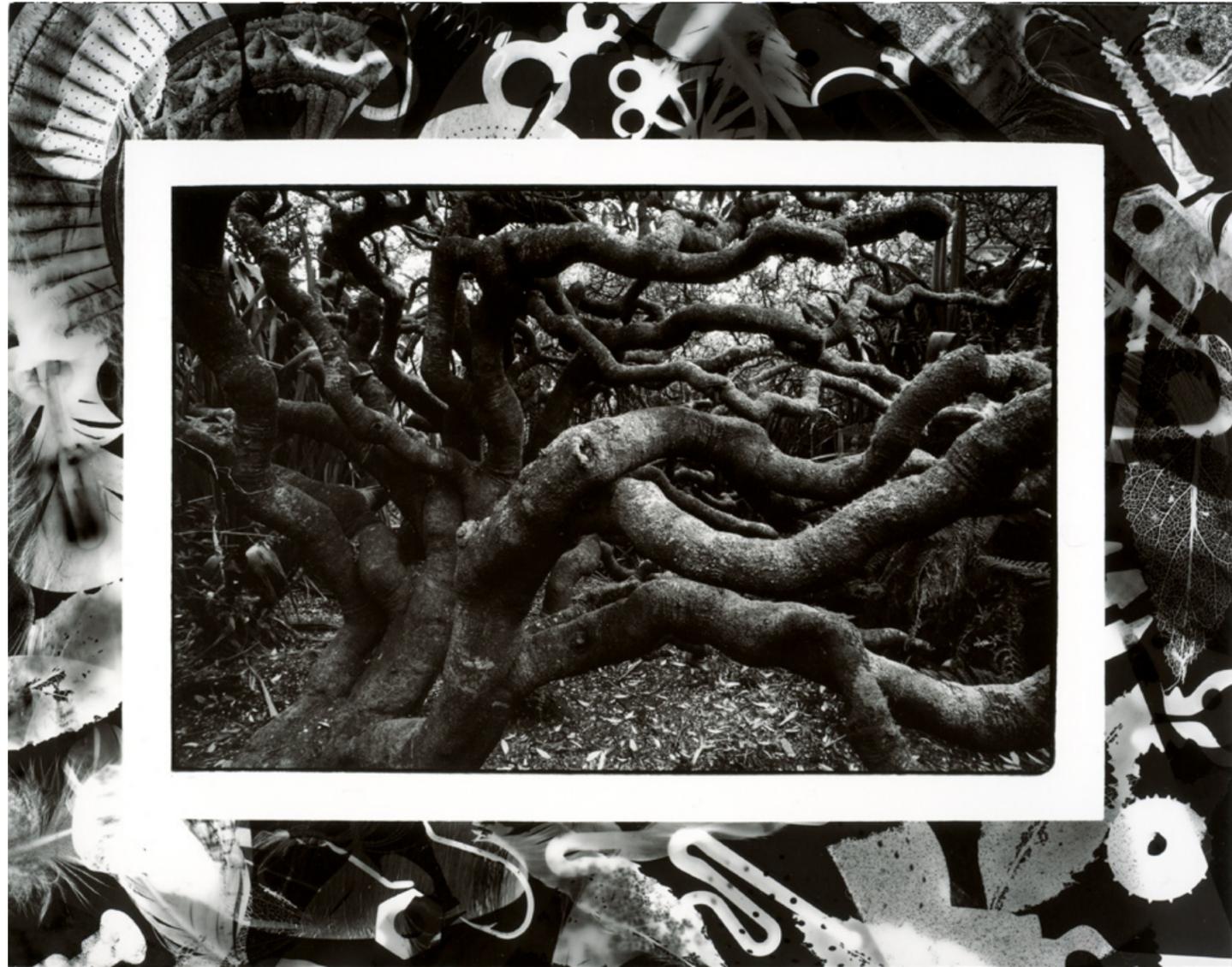


Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VII triptych
 top: Rata Trunk , Erebus Cove Main Auckland Island
 centre: Tree Ranui Cove Main Auckland Island
 bottom: Tree Ranui Cove Main Auckland Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VII* triptych
 top: Rata Trunk , Erebus Cove Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VII* triptych
centre: Tree Ranui Cove Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VII* triptych
bottom: Tree Ranui Cove Main Auckland Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VIII triptych
 top: Regenerating Forest Enderby Island
 centre: Regenerating Forest Enderby Island
 bottom: Regenerating Forest Enderby Island

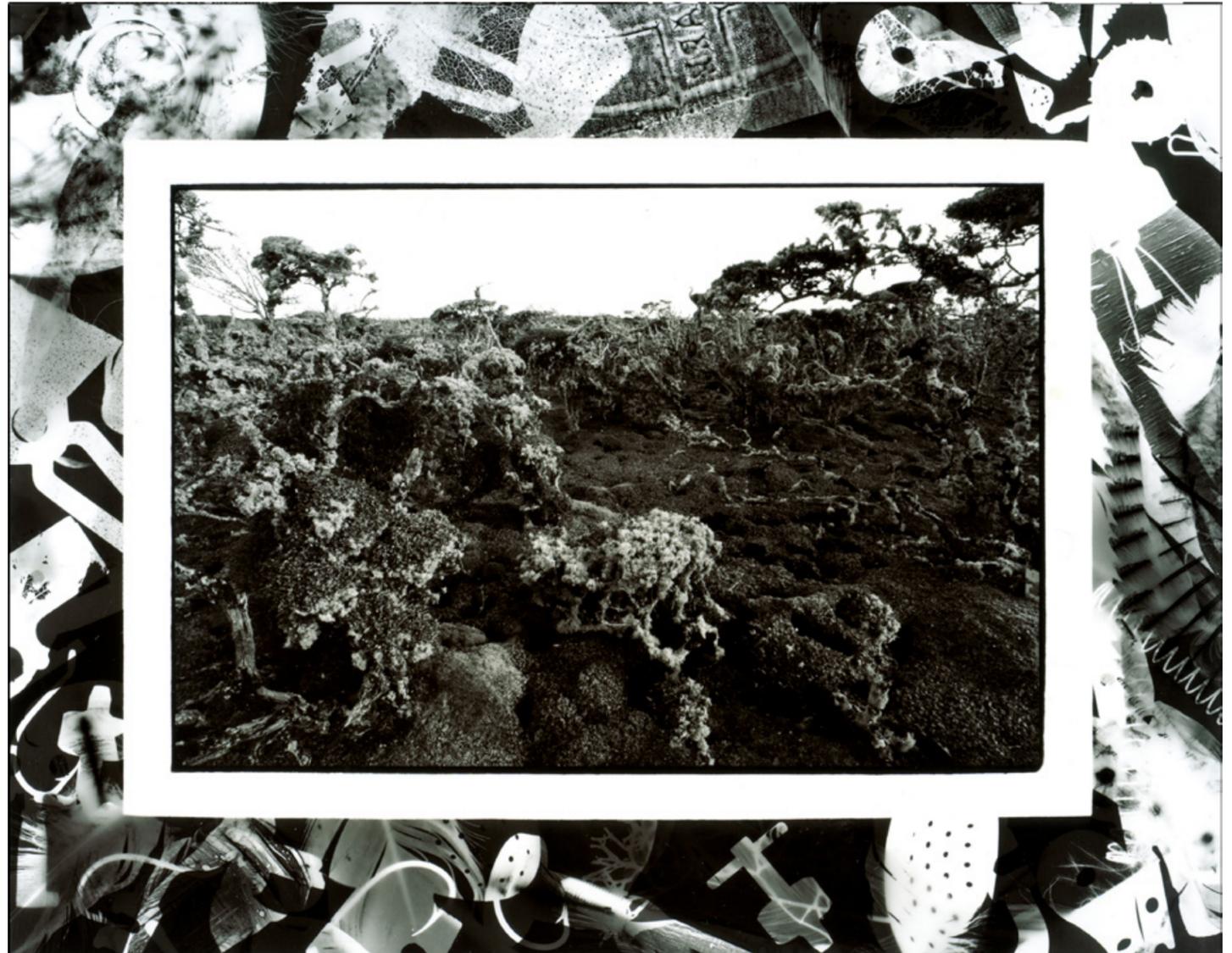
Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VIII* triptych
 top: Regenerating Forest Enderby Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VIII* triptych
centre: Regenerating Forest Enderby Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion VIII* triptych
bottom: Regenerating Forest Enderby Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IX triptych
top: Rata Forest, Enderby Island
centre: Flag Pole with a Triangle Beacon Mounted on it in Oleria Forest Inscription Carved by
H.M.S.Blanche 1870
bottom: Rata Forest, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IX* triptych
top: Rata Forest, Enderby Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IX* triptych
centre: Flag Pole with a Triangle Beacon Mounted on it in Oleria Forest Inscription Carved by H.M.S.Blanche 1870



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion IX* triptych
bottom: Rata Forest, Enderby Island

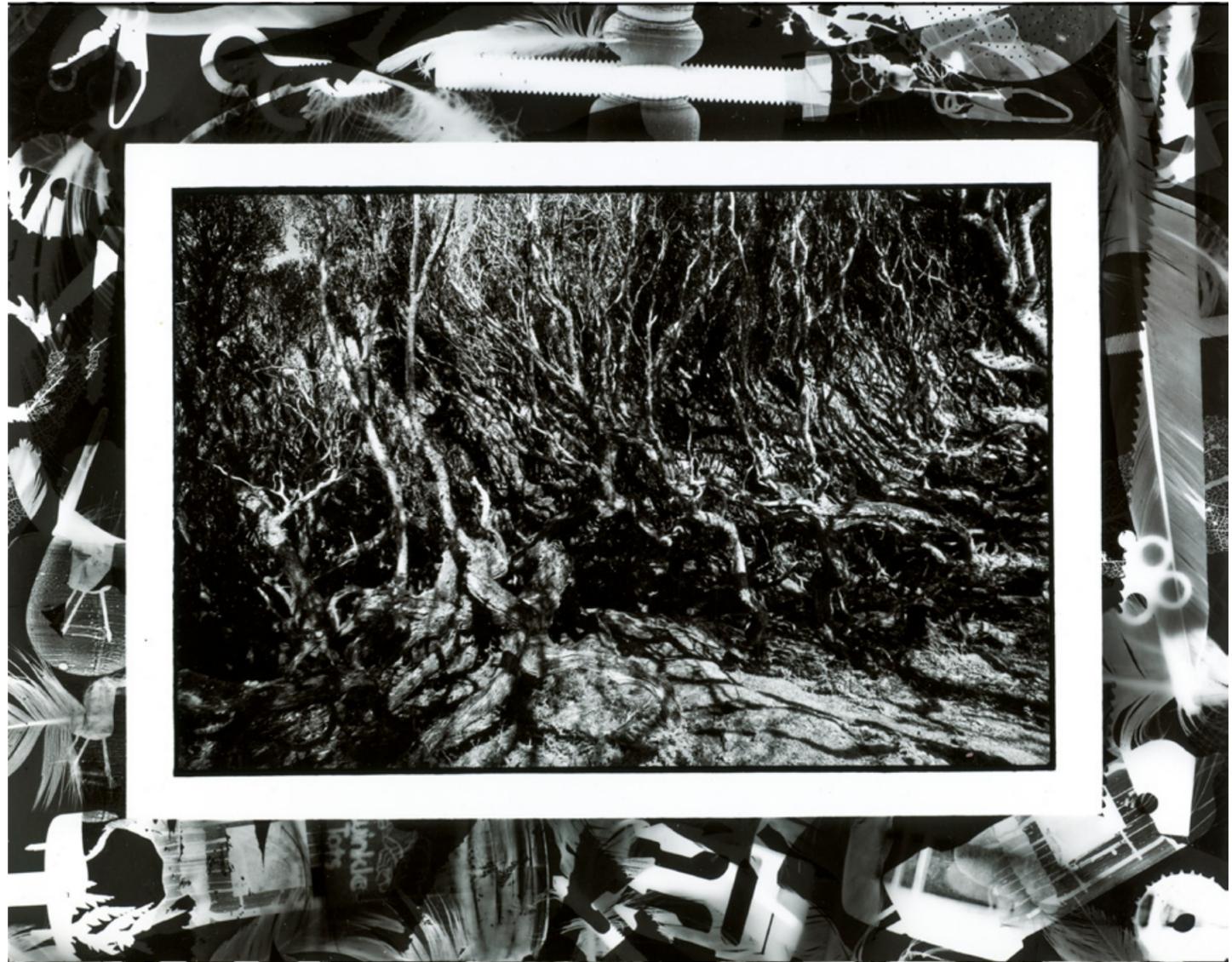


Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion X triptych
 top: Rata Forest, Terror Cove, Main Auckland Island
 centre: Regenerating Rata Forest, Enderby Island
 bottom: Rata Forest, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion X* triptych
 top: Rata Forest, Terror Cove, Main Auckland Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion X* triptych
centre: Regenerating Rata Forest, Enderby Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion X* triptych
bottom: Rata Forest, Erebus Cove, Main Auckland Island



Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XI triptych
 top: Olearia lyalli Trees, Ewing Island
 centre: Olearia lyalli Trees, Ewing Island
 bottom: Olearia lyalli Trees, Ewing Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver prints
 Three 8" x 10" (20.3 X 25.4 cm) - overall image size 10" x 24" (60.9 X 25.4 cm)
 Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1990
 published image - digital scan and remaster from original prints



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XI* triptych
 top: Olearia lyalli Trees, Ewing Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XI* triptych
centre: *Olearia lyalli* Trees, Ewing Island



Detail: *Tree of Knowledge, Forest of Confusion XI* triptych
bottom: *Olearia lyalli* Trees, Ewing Island



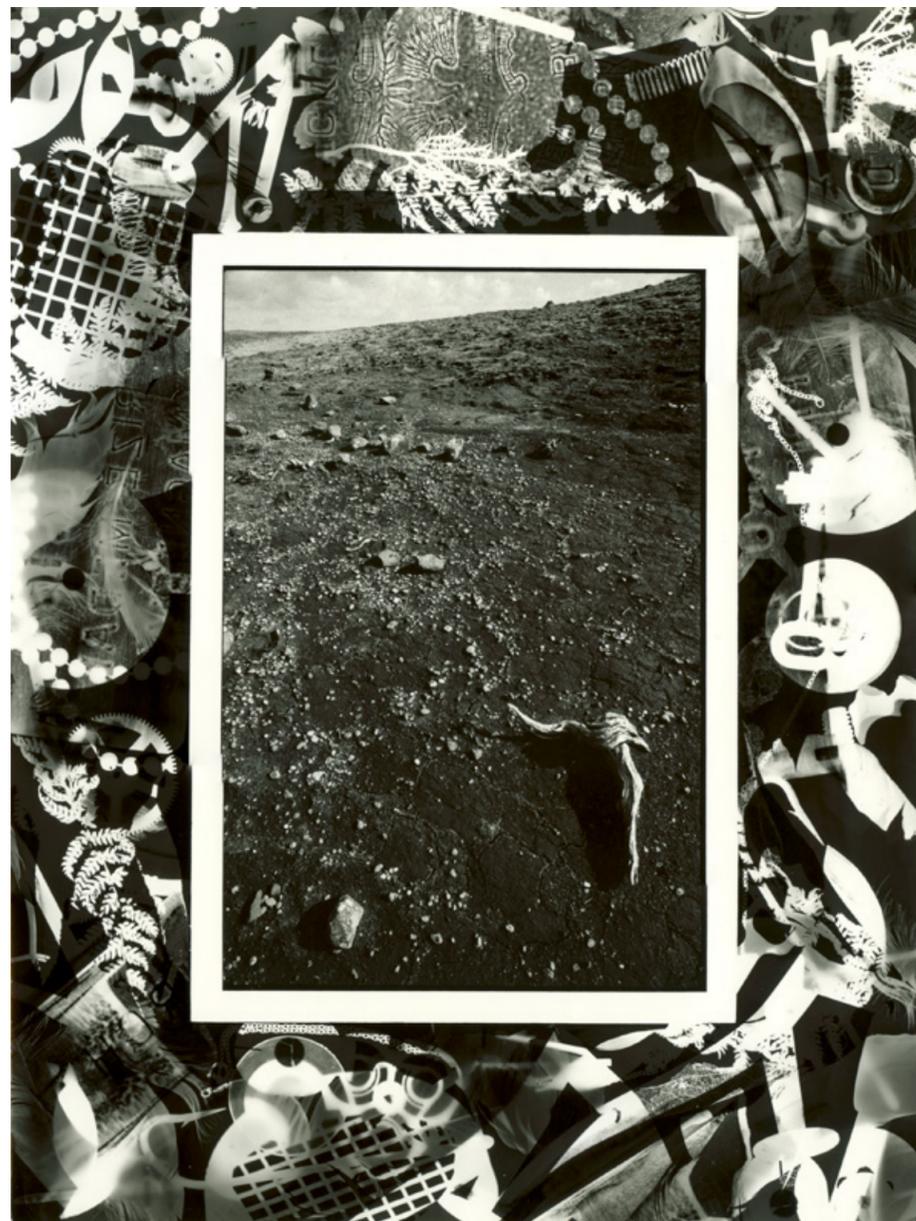
Insignia II
Back of Dead Crab, East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"x16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia III
Dead Prion Wing North East Coast Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"x16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia IV
Rata Tree Root in Eroded Peat Bank, North Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia V
Small Bones, North East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



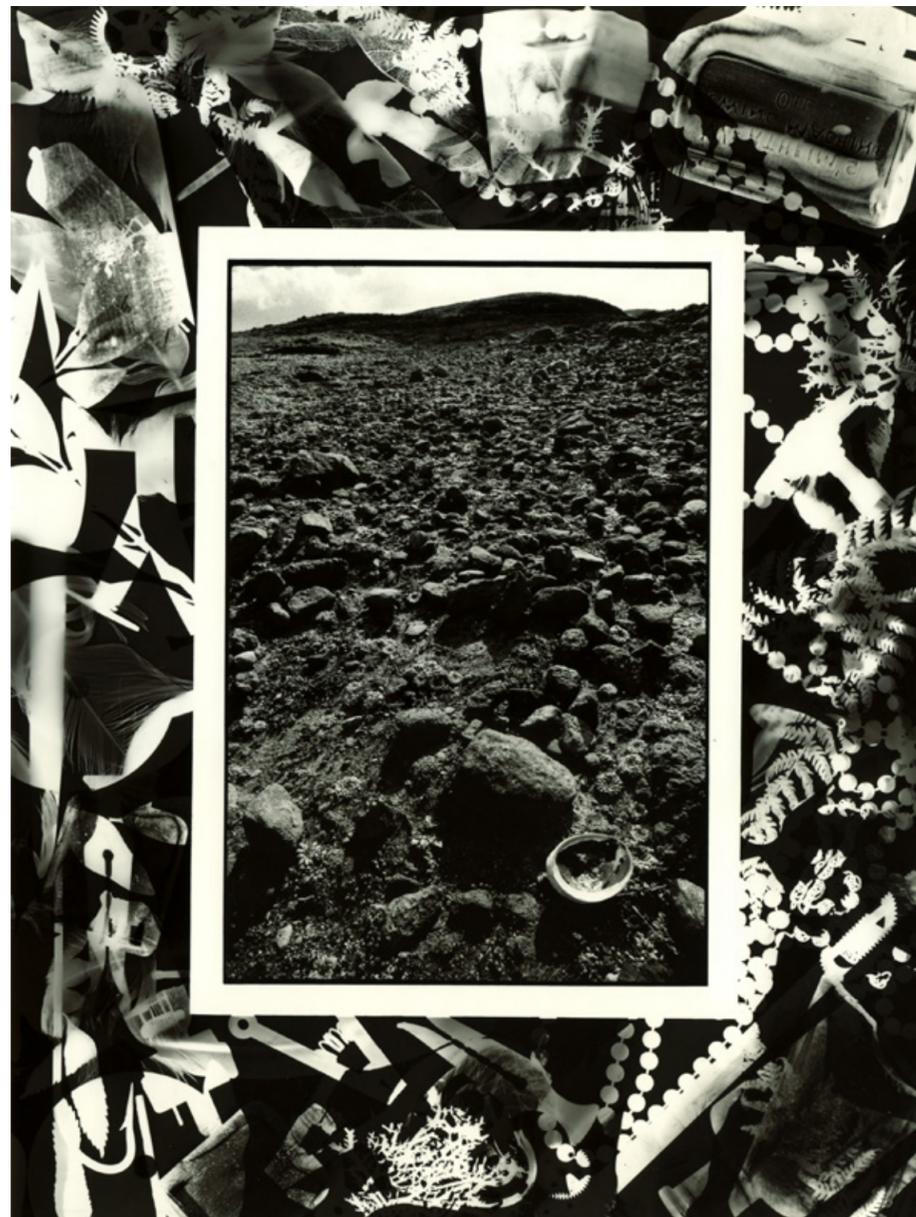
Insignia VI
Buried Mussel Shells, North End of Sandy Beach, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



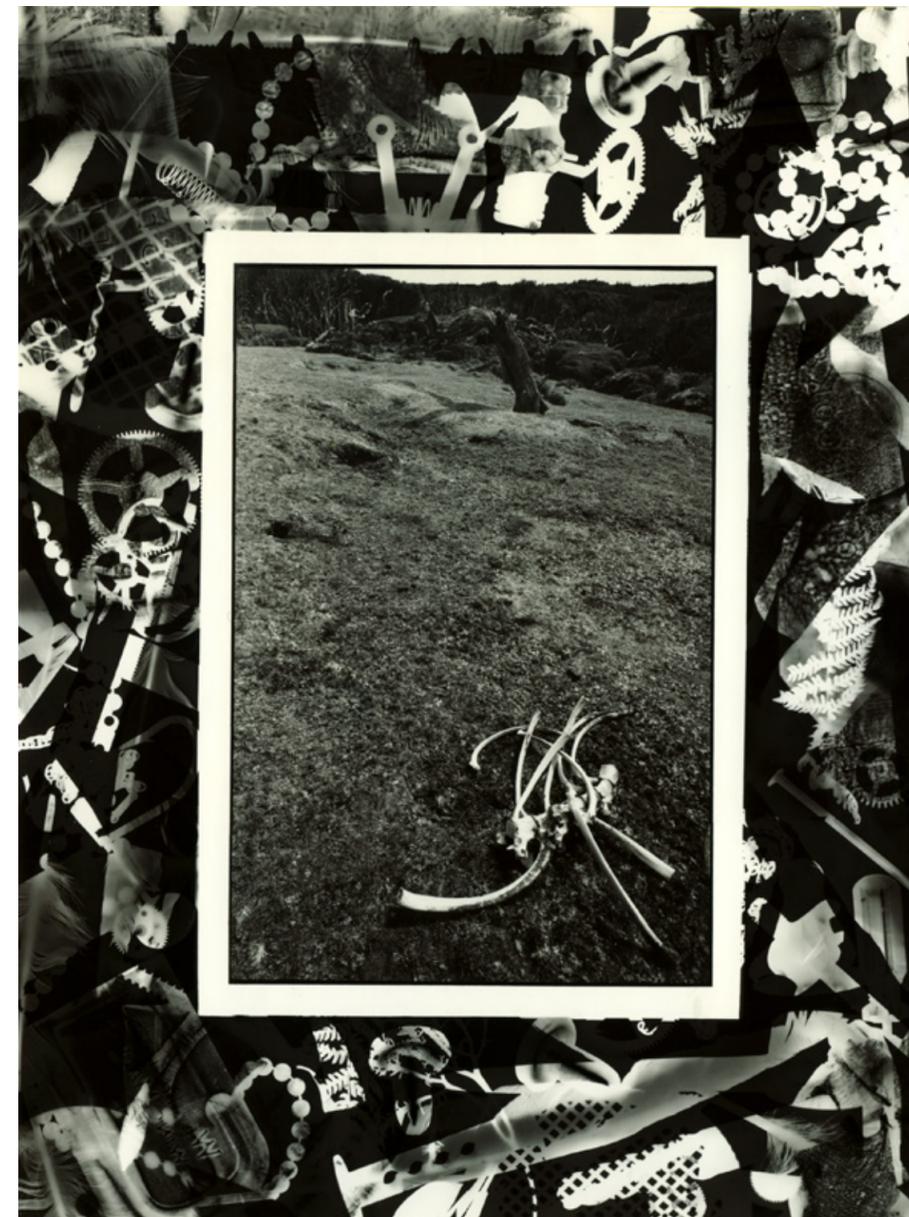
Insignia VII
Trail of Feathers from Bird Strike, North East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia VIII
Queen Paua Shell on Cliff Top, North Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia IX
Dead Sea Lion Remains, North East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



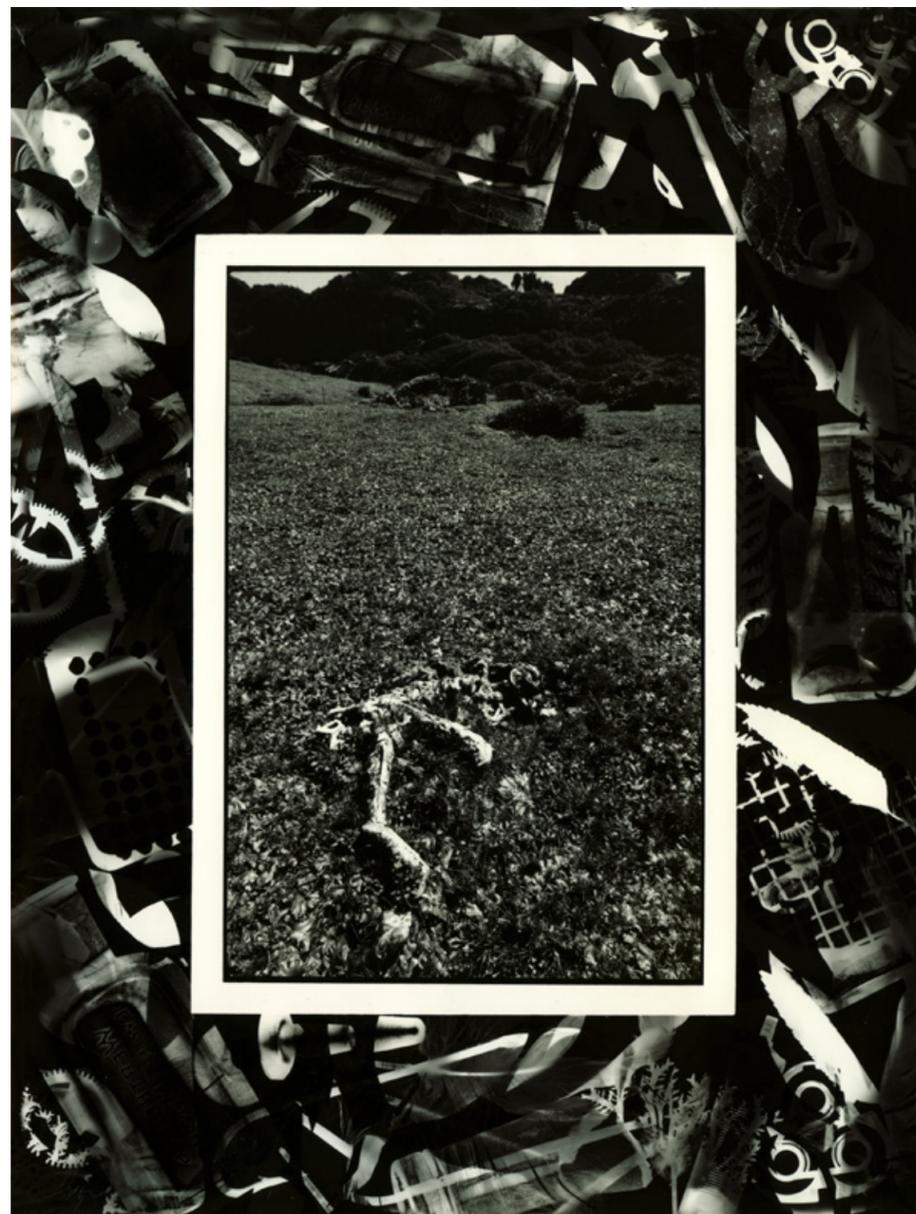
Insignia X
Rabbit Skull and Bones, North East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia XI
Albatross Feather Caught in Cassina Scrub, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia XII
Rabbit Carcass, North East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



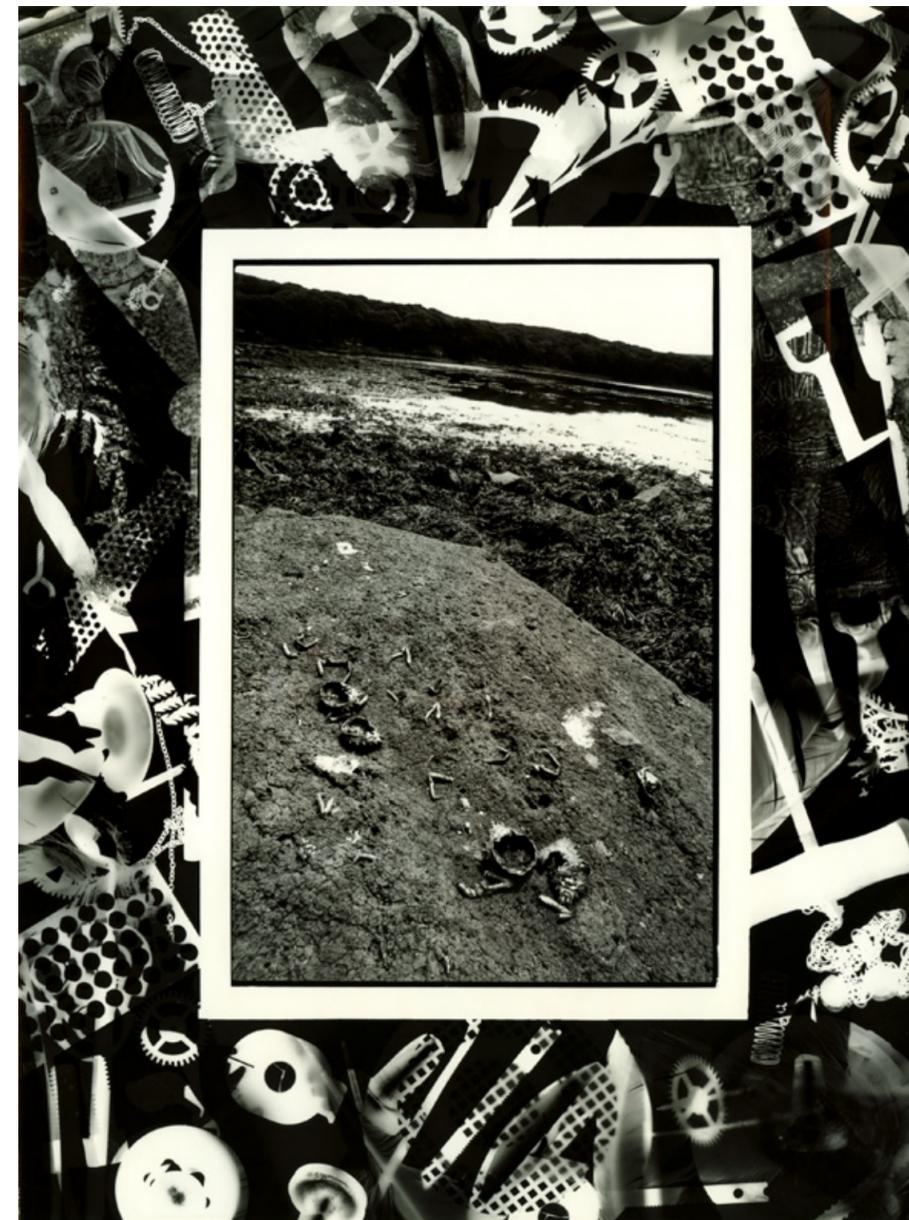
Insignia XIII
Remains of Dead Rabbit, North East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia XIV
Albatross Skull, French Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia XV
Crab Remains, Port Ross, Main Auckland Islands

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia XVI
Spit Ball North, East Coast, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia XVII
Dead Cow in Sea Cave, South of Sandy Bay, Enderby Island

Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X 16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991



Insignia I
Dead Rata Tree, East Coast, Enderby Island

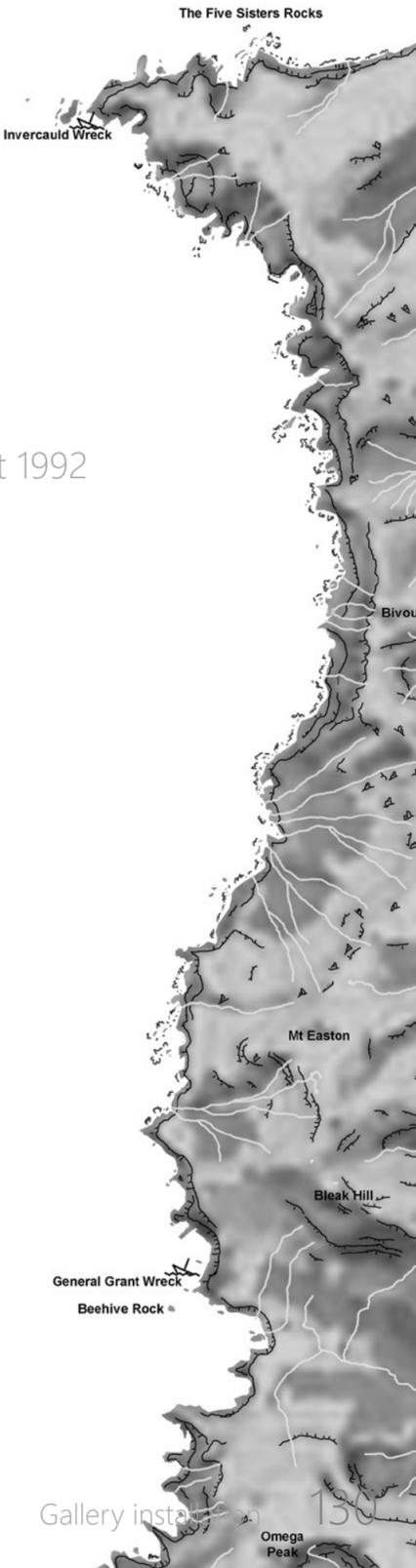
Original selenium toned, gelatin silver print - 12"X16" (30.5 X 40.6 cm)
Photographs taken 1989 Photograph/photogram created 1991

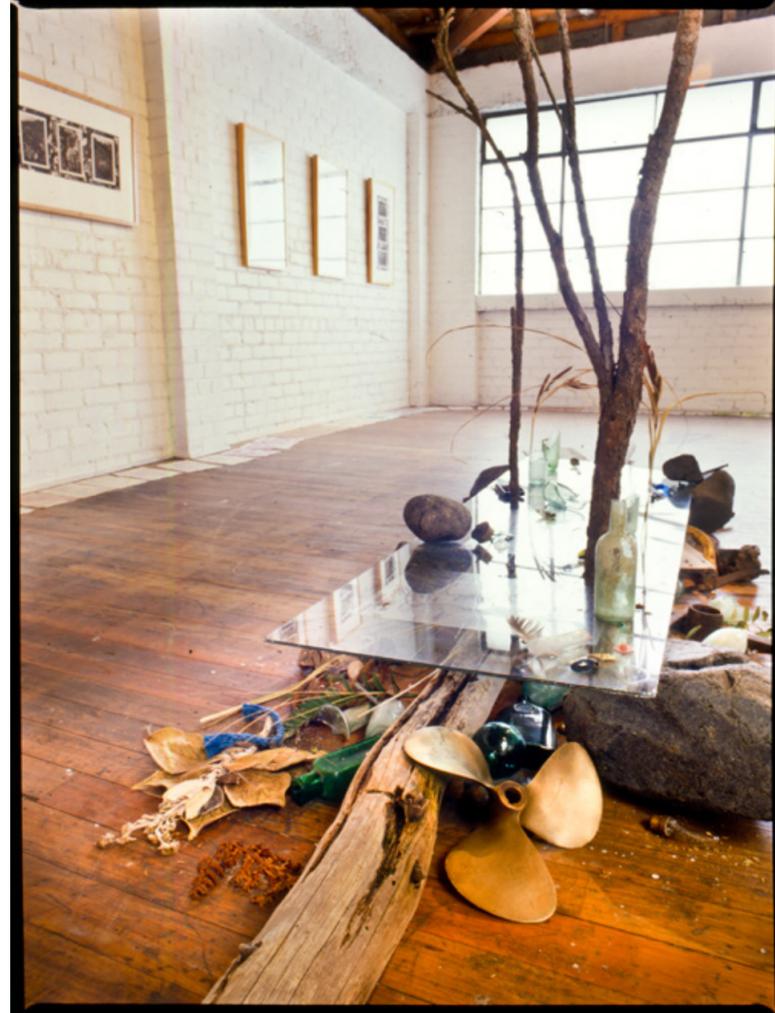
Codes of Survival

Gallery Installation Solutions Gallery Dunedin New Zealand August 1992



Disappointment Island





Codes of Survival - Installation
Solutions Gallery Dunedin
August 1992

The installation consisted of the photographic works on the wall, the manuscripts laid out around the perimeter of the gallery, two table like structures of shattered glass suspended on basalt rock with dead Rata branches growing from the floor through the glass with scattered artifacts used for the making of the photogram images, and an original sound track Te hokioi, composed by Peter Adams.

Though they had searched with every eye of every man, that could raise a head, there was no land to sight, not a speck. Not a sign of earth, plant, bird or beast in any direction across this watery expanse, though all the time the heat haze as a shimmer on the water played tricks with their tearful eyes, and their eyes to their minds. For the mind can be a trickster of the most amazing imagery when in this state of half dead. The confusion of the real, meshes as one with the wanderings of the mind. So often land had floated low on the horizon and as they approached the lushness of a country enriched with luxuriant green growth and a promise of cool fresh water running in a rush to the sea. It would never arrive! In a flash it would inevitably vanish from their course, their grasp and vision or bound further off into the distance as a dog that will not heed a masters call. Only the salty blue of seawater that laughed at their them and their dilemma, lay in every direction. It permeated their every sense as if a claim on all their souls it had already made.

Eventually, despair overcame any hope of return and as the hull was pushed unmercifully on the currents further into the unknown; all aboard expected the worst. Somehow, the best attainable prospect without doubt could be that of a new land, unfamiliar, uncharted, and even inhospitable, but dry land, perhaps even Terra Incognita the fabulous super continent of the south. They could concede the fate of living with a new and foreign people, perhaps for the rest of their days. In a culture primitive and barbaric populace away from their companions, away from their kin, they could concede that over death.

Or as some believed from the stories of years gone by, would the Carabel just simply fall off the edge of the world into an unknown abyss where they presumed this ocean of water would fall with them forever cascading downward to hell? Then there was the certainty of hideous sea monsters that writhed repugnant awaiting in the depths of the uncharted to attack and devour them in one gigantic swallow, ship and all. With cavernous throats that could engulf the world if they so desired, they lay in wait for men such as them. For they had all listened to these stories from the old salts of the fabulous creatures that manifested themselves from the conundrum of the deep. 'Ghouls of the ocean lurked in the depths', some would say.

While for others it was giant squid like monsters as large as one thousand Carabels, with razor teeth, a breath of fire and green with anger. These creatures were as the drawings that swam the unknown edge of the maps they used, and all this all played hell on their minds. Would they too learn the fate of ships that never return; would they all become ghosts of the oceans lost in the boiling mass of time? Gobbled up by the unseen Leviathans of the unknown billows of this endless brine.

Within the week, a sight no eye should see, the weaker lay in death below, and it was no rebellion when the first passed away during the night. This man had been sick for a large part of the voyage with a ship's sickness which all else on board had managed to elude, and his ill health with the effect of the pitiful rations hastened his last breath. But from then on, the hurt was real, the pain was true, when one by one the rest began to end the struggle and perish. Till the rate of their deaths was so fast, the living had not in their limbs the strength or in their minds the will, to bury at sea the corpses now dead on the decks. Delirious they just living lay about the carnage amid the stench of the deceased as the Carabel sped along now in a fresh breeze, the water slapping the planking and the blocks banging uncontrolled on the decks.

But now the minds of the few still left as living, cared not for the speed or the direction, of this lumbering hull, for they were too far from logic and too close to a final demise to fathom their condition or salvation. The breeze sharpened to a strong wind with the creaking timbers and strain of rope as the death cries echoed the agony of those delirious few still alive, for this was the wind they had needed all too long ago and now none had mind or strength to steer a chosen course.

About the decks lay only skeletons, ghosts of bleached bone. Souvenirs of the flesh and blood that had walked the decks in months before. Bones that had fragmented across the deck as a tale of the storms at sea this vessel had self-navigated. There were the roundness of skulls, the long, straight branch-like bones and the grace of the rib bone curve, all piled together in evidence of their rolling across the decks with the pitch of the sea. In confused heaps they now lay, lodged with other debris, tight in the corners of the deck structure fused in an illogical, abstract weld. Devoid of flesh and the substance of life, these macabre remains rode the waves of the mighty southern storms, where the vessel had now found her way, on a craft with no mind or logic other than the will and currents of the ocean that held her afloat. Up the swells, down the troughs, through the foam across the chop, forever onward. The sails now in rips, tears and tatters; the ropes broken, snapped or rotted, the timbers below the ocean's lapp, grew green with weed, this vessel persisted upon her way in an infinite sea through times of night and day, storm and calm, rain and calm, forever on.

For it was years and more than a thousand of leagues of open ocean before this wooden vessel approached any land at all; not off the edge of the world, not the serpent monsters of the deep, not a super continent, but a small group of islands in an as yet unknown southern ocean.

Ahead, great black vertical cliffs through the rainy winds and sights no human eye had seen. This ship now on a collision course with the solidness of land they once prayed for just misses the black teeth of basalt cliffs and in astonishing speed is carried through a narrow gut into a passage between islands of human isolation on a tidal torrent of flowing sea currents. It turns and twists in a wild hobbing dance. But this miss with such hard black rocks is to no avail, as inside the gut, a submerged, jagged reef catches the tender oak planks and tears with a crack and a shudder, a fatal line through the failing timber right to her heart. With a rush of water to her cavities, quickly she sinks and with the time of tide and storm smashes into ever smaller fragments, that sink or float in a carnage of shipwreck debris that scatter far and wide.

In 200 years little is left but a few remains washed high by the violent storms. Perhaps some of the iron fittings that had been attached to the broken timbers, rough with layers of rust biting to their core. A quadrans vetus reduced by the fury of the waves to a shabby incomprehensible board with all the necessary fittings torn off. An astrolabio, a small misshapen part of an oil lamp from the bita'cora, the twisted remains of the nautical quadrant, the ballestilla, the napolleta, the clay fragments of an old urn, an ink stand, maybe a silver coin or two; who could tell? The last metal braids of a cord used to tie up the labishness of a forgotten cape. The bent remains of a small universal equinoctial dial, the brass, rotten but rich with a green patina and the intricate lines of the engravings now unrecognizable.

Perhaps some small items of personal possessions of the men who once graced her decks. Small blue glass beads wearing down smooth, with the gravel of the beach. A tiny bell once fastened to a leather belt. All precious and each with its own use. Now buried from view under the rocks and sands of the coast line lie the only evidence of the ghost ship that sailed off the edge of the world. Or perhaps they all lie at the bottom, submerged beside the heavy ballast stones that dropped straight down once free from the disintegrating hull.

A Secret Burial 1796

These islands had never seen creatures the like of this before!

They did not come here by the purity of a swim in the ocean or graceful wing glide on the wind flows as did the familiar life forms that make a home of this land. This was something new. These creatures had not evolved from the genetic bank of the islands life over the eons of time, as much that lived here had. They had not arrived here by the chance of nature, a fluke or a roll of the cosmic dice.

No, they had arrived in curious floating vessels of wood as large as a whale, with flapping canvas sails to drive them along and a tiller to steer by. Bolt upright these beasts stood and moved about in a finesse of balance that could only be compared to the penguins. They made strange sounds on the air; not a roar nor shrill bird-like whistle or a squawk, with a series of yells and a laugh they converse. They knew the ways of fire and the forge of steel, the use of the saw and the function of deception, though they needed a strange form of wrapping around their bodies to keep them warm. But little they knew of the bountiful food source of the island preferring to bring most of theirs with them inside the vessel.

These were men, human, human beings, homo sapiens and theirs was a grisly task, a secret task, a task of chicanery that no one back in their home port should ever know the truth of. They brought a colder air of evil to this place that no wind could blow, and one no creature here could contrive or aspire to understand.

There had been a fight, not like the sparring for food that some of them knew, no this was a hell of a bloody scrap and now a man was dead.

It seems, the dead man had hidden a fortune on board amongst his things unbeknown to another soul. Deep in his chest was the unmistakable heavy weight of gold and an ample amount at that. By the hand of fate he had been found out by a drunken scoundrel that had shared his space, then after much contention the tiff had erupted with a rage and fury that ended in the mortal fight. Before this skirmish of fists and cursing was noticed and stopped the violence had left the man dead with a split in his skull as the fatal blow.

Nevertheless, the cuts and abrasions over his face looked much more injurious suggesting his being had escaped into the ether with the thick red blood that had oozed across his rough skin. Initially, the captain was going to exact a justice on the villain for the price of this life; that was, until the extent of the poor man's wealth was evident. Surprised, it was obvious that there was enough here for all aboard to have more than their desire if they were to conspire against the truth. Within no time, all the slain man's gold and wordy possessions had been split amongst the disloyal captain and the treacherous crew in an evil pact that left them all with an even share, but the captain with double.

All his wealth, except the small band on his finger, the labyrinthine ring of woven gold that once had been the envy of all aboard, but was now trifling, forgotten in the excitement of the fight and the thrill of all the dead man's wealth as their own.

It was an inevitable fact they would have to dispose of the body and it seemed that over the ship's side into the ocean was the only option, for a man can disappear with ease and the sorrowful fable of a storm at sea to his friends back home is an authentic sounding tale to even the most suspicious of friends. The ocean can swallow a man and the truth in the sound of a splash. Gone to the deep, body and soul.

Land ho! Land ho!

1796 A secret burial

Was a cry from the fore deck as then they all left the body and the wealth in a mad scramble to reach a vantage point to view the territory ahead. In this excited time of distraction, all had forgotten the sea and the remote prospect of land. It was land all right, across the pitching expanse clearly visible ahead off their starboard beam on the horizon. The ship was in a vast area sailed by few and this island was on no chart any man aboard had seen or could recall. Even the old timers that could reminisce about the old dieppe maps of an age before could not remember a land in this part of the world, for their chart had no mention to this region of the globe. Without a further thought, they would call and harbour at this new found place the captain ordered. A stopover would be good for all aboard, and the discovery of a new land was a prospect not to be passed up by any ship at sea.

But after the initial digression of this new excitement of land ahead, died from their conversation there was still the question of a body growing cold and stiff, forgotten in the cabin below their feet, that sat warmed by the pulse of blood in their boots on the wooden decks above the deceased. There was still the quick solution of the ocean in the minds of many, but now that there was this land approaching ever larger, perhaps they owed him the decency of a proper burial on real soil.

But if they were all conspirators in the spoils of his fortune and the cause of his death, did it matter at all where the body was cast? In the ocean or in the soil, with solicitude or rashness, once he was gone it mattered not at all.

Discussions, heated and quarrelsome continued for hours or longer while all the time this island ahead projected larger in their vision as they advanced, for the ship was on a clip across the waves with the stiff breeze that thrust them along from behind. Till all at once the boat was embraced by a wooded land amid a selection of bays and small islets and there remained only a safe anchor to be found and established. In time this was found in a sheltered cove in the lee of the prevailing weather where a gentle stream ran from the uplifted high lands through the forest that gathered itself in a cloak about the coast and under the steep hills that rose up from the ocean. But the argument aboard continued unabated, and there the body lay, still and colder on the deck beneath them all.

At last the Captain took some control, for he had lost his command among these profane men with the deed he was partisan to and this greed that had reduced them all to squabbling equals. 'The man would be buried in the turf of this unknown land' this was the order. 'With a proper religious ceremony they would all partake and bear witness as a pact to their silence of the truth upon their return to port', the captain had spoken.

But, lost at sea, though killed in a fight and buried in an unknown land the truth would always be.

Around a deep wet hole in the peaty soil they stood with the pretence of decency amid a sinful act. The sharp steel of axe and spade had cut through turf and roots while their sweat dripped into the cavity where the body would lie, ignored eternally. There, a pile of turf and brown muddied boot marks about the waiting open hole that filled with his corpse as the ropes were lowered hand over hand. Around them the twisted trunks, the crooked branches, the thin twigs and every fine fibre of every leaf could tell the truth, to any who asked, for they heard every word and every breath, they knew the looks and every emotion of every man among the living on the day of that secret burial on that isolated island in the south.

After a pompous and bumblingly long ceremony by a quivering voice drunk with treacherous remorse at the grave, they stood in silent thought as they kicked the sod from under their feet down onto the stiff corpse all of six feet below their leathered boons. Right then and there, at the unmarked grave, now covered up, they had all made an alliance 'that the man was lost at sea and this secret island had never been sighted, it never existed, and they were all never to return if they desired to keep their wealth'.

There had been a hollow drumming sound as the turf had hit his chest and a gold ring on a cold finger had vanished overlooked or ignored from the vision of the immoral eyes above. With the spade and the clinch of metal tools they finished the work, turned their backs and walked away. He was part of the soil, part of this place, but lost at sea.

BRISTOW 1806

Not but a year before, the expectant belief of us all was that this southern ocean would envelop us during the many weeks of sailing. Then, when we had least expected land, there it had been amid the ocean, it was such a welcome change to the vastness of the ocean we had anticipated.

At that time, the "Ocean" was in quite a sorry state of repair due to the puissant violence of the many storms we had encountered during our sealing activities so, unfortunately we were in no condition or had not the time to spend on the exploration of all the land and bays that made up the land we had discovered. We had been returning from Van Diemen's Land when we sailed within sight of hitherto unrecorded islands on 18th August, 1806.

Initial observations suggested there did seem to be a generous sealing grounds around the seaboard of most of the islands and one could well expect that it should abound with their number. With a tight, but lofty forest down to the ocean on the east shore, the island was of a moderate height. We had a look over what we could in respect to the land, both in the ship and briefly in the long boat, but it had not allowed a survey of the land the way that I would have liked because of the lumbered state of the ship. Certainly, then there was no time to come ashore at any point of the coast on that voyage of discovery.

In some haste but in the appropriate demeanour and tradition, by the Queen's name we had claimed all this in her possession. I venture that the company would want a further exploration at a later date as there was surely some commercial gain to be made from these islands. At that initial time, I hoped that it would be I and the "Ocean" who could return and complete the appraisal, having been the one to find such a tiny speck in the vastness of this ocean. The weather at this time had been quite moderate and clear, and all on board felt that, if this was any indication of the clement climate it could become a sizable sealing and whaling base.

There seemed little doubt that it should afford an excellent harbour to the north of our amiable anchorage at what I supposed is a Latitude of 50 21' South and its greatest extent is in a N.W. and S.W. direction, though the strand in places was rugged with rocks that could dash a ship.

As first discover of the island, or islands, for good fortune, Lord Auckland Islands I bestowed upon it. This was after that good friend through my father, Lord Auckland. Like all these craggy islands, there is no significant wild stock and on this second trip, I had brought some young pigs to be set free. I had the ship's company release several of these pigs to the land of the largest island of the group. The men reported how they scampered off into the thickness of the larger trees and the shrubbery eager to be free. These pigs should thrive in the forests and high ground of the island, as there seems to be a suitable climate for them to thrive.

Hopefully this foresight will provide ample food for our return and any others who land in the years to come, while at the same time clearing the land in some small way. This we shall see if we have the time and chance to return once again for a third visit and conduct an even more thorough survey of the surrounding country.

During the short time of our first stay, the men had spent quite some time at the chores of cleaning the lumbered state of the ship. There was much they could do in the way of small jobs, but the larger work was a more difficult task, quite beyond our means. I had some of the crew and the ship's wright do what they could with these repairs at the time, but we could only do so much of the work and we agreed the ship would have to wait until we were back in port for full refit.

With the violence of the storms during the weeks before we had discovered the island, there had been many small items of the ship's galley and other things, including some personal effects of the crew that had broken and had lain as rubbish about the ship. From time to time, they had been tossed around and across the decks in our neglect to secure them. Billy, the young cabin boy had the task of cleaning the areas of the ship worst effected, though he had put his mind to the task and had fulfilled more than that which we asked from such a lad. All this worthless and unwanted pile, he had collected into a large barrel, and with the help of several sea men it had been lifted up from below then, all had been tossed over board with a splash into the ocean.

All manner of debris amongst this piled rubbish had tipped from the side, and it was fair evidence of the transparency of the cool water as the heavier material that sank in an instant, could be seen as a shimmering white mass on the bottom below us after the tide had carried of the surface floaters. For several hours later, when the surface had cleared, I could lucidly make out the fragments of old plates and cups several fathoms below us through the unclouded waters in the sun light as there these unmistakable shapes lay at rest on the sea floor.

Our return to these islands has not been in the "Ocean", but in the "Sarah" and now she sat at anchor in a large bay at the north end of the island that we aptly called Sarah's Bosom. It was from here we would chart as much of the intricacy of bays and headlands that made up this part of the island providing an excellent harbour for any ship. Our attention was directed to the coast with its tangle of reefs, rocks and scattered islands with the purpose of providing navigational aids for the future. All up the bays and coves of this eastern coast of the island, the water retained this quality of exceptional clearness with equal consistency from bay to bay.

The Broken Links of a Sealer's Chain 1809

Strike it had been an apt day.

A man loses a sense of time in the frenzy of the hunt with gutgeon in hand and the haste of work to be done there is no twinkling to revere the splendour of the domain about one. These beasts, not long ago alive on the rocks, they now be dead from our work. The seals that escaped the confusion of the kill by a swim to sea, shall have to wait another day, for so intent on our kill were we, their escape raised hardly the brow of an eye.

But the kill had been a bountiful one, with over one hundred and twenty full grown seals, and but a few young pups, now dead on the rocks and sand red with blood. It was a sly and secret location, a place not known to another, out of a ship's eye on Bristow's land. It was an easy one to get to, not by ropes dangled down a hundred feet or more, from a rocky cliff top as we had been lowered before for less than a dozen beasts. (That was hard and treacherous work that any man could well do without). Nor was it through some wretched track that had to be cut through the tangles of brush by force of hand. No, here, a ship could anchor less than a chain away from the shore and be safe in all weathers, though we'd still been left for a month or more thereabouts before the ship's return.

We were in the relative silence of the island's lee so now that the noise and intensity of the kill was over we could sense that outside the island confines was a real wild storm upon us and not once to best be in. But it was sheltered here, even warm and the roar of the wind in the bending branches above on the hill mattered not. Nor did the turmoil of wind driven water that pounded the windward coast and beat about the shores amid the rock cliffs, from where we had sailed the day before. Our shore boat was high up the bank, though it was as safe as any sailor in church from the waters of this cove. We were sheltered for the time and the challenge of the ocean could wait until we were ready before we would have to find another bay further down the curve of coast.

The smell of these blubbery beasts enticed the large blue flies into a frenzy and we cursed everyone of them for they can blow a woollen garment in the space of ten minutes or the turn of one's back. The carcasses of these beasts lay in places three deep where they had died, and it would be some work to render them down at the "Hall of Smells". The overawing stench of this process was the worst of it all. Though this at least was a place we could set up the try, and with some effort could yield them down, unlike the places where they were left to rot and as the old hands reckoned, then no seal would return to this foul place for years to come.

Tired though we were, we all knew there was ample to do before our catch could be counted in rolled, salted skins and prime barrels of oil below in the hold of our barque, when she did at last return. First we would begin the skinning with the sharpest of knife while later the other gang could finish the rendering down of the carcasses, for this would take time enough. But here we may be for weeks, just with this handsome lot. As we worked the sun even broke through the thick vaporous clouds and small green parrots called with curiosity above in the twisted limbs of the ironwood tree that seem to litter the land and all the sky above. The brown seahawks that are a plague to this place, following us everywhere we go in these parts, became a large group that set about devouring everything we cast aside. They squawked and skirmished over the slightest morsel in a clumsy display with manners worse than ~~any~~.

About 3 o'clock in that afternoon the gang leader signalled a stop for a break and well earned drink. We had chosen a place just inside the forest canopy with our gaze out through the curving trees toward the ocean and a spot from where we could survey the fine catch of seals on the rocks.

I remember, there was the crack of burning logs amid the rich glow of embers and flames, and showers of smoky sparks as we poked the camp's fire in conversation. The beads of sweat hung thick on our brows as covered in a mix of this human grind and seal blood we passed the grog bottle from one set of chapped lips to the next for a well earned swig. We wiped our brows with a forearm, sniffed back the snot and joked the wickedness from before the mast. I remember as Jones pulled the bottle away from me the liquid spilling; the cold trickle running down my stubbled chin and right down my chest to the grey mat of hair.

At this point there was a crash in the undergrowth and an enormous roar as a large bull or wig as we call them came charging from the thickets through the trunks and fallen branches of the iron wood towards us on his way to the ocean.

Initially this was a startling fright to us all, even though we had killed so many of them earlier in the day. Upon gathering some sense, I reached out for my stick and by the time the handle was raised to enforce a kill on the beast saw it crash into Jones sending him and the bottle in opposite directions. With a smash of green glass on the rocks and a bemoaning cry from Jones I beat the beast across the skull with the whipping chain. The first blow was off the mark and it took several strong well directed blows of the gutgeon before it lay dead on the forest floor with all of us panting and laughing at Jones, still moaning with pain. The man swore and cursed as we laughed at his plight. We reeled on the ground, us in jest and him in pain.

It was no joke as a matter of fact, as his brother had been killed by a herd of wild seals that were trapped in a cave during a kill and came charging out on top of three men in the hunting party. All were trapped and then cut or crushed by these rampaging beasts, with only but one alive to tell the sad tale. After the joke had passed and we were sober enough to stand upright, Jones had told us the tale and it was then that I realised that this was no joke, not one at all. I went to lift the gudgeon to find to my dismay that the chain had broke and must have flown far into a thicket of scraggy undergrowth, perhaps on the last stroke. Most men here use a stout stick for the kill, but I had made this gudgeon with the chain on the end which worked more than well enough for me.

We searched for an age, but the secret spot where the chain concealed itself evaded all our efforts and the entanglement of ferns claimed its possession in the end. The direction to which it had gone was hard to tell. For this forest is thick with a growth on the ground that is protected by the branches above. For a place to hide is easily found in any a tight nook and cranny and for all I know, the fragments and splinters of dark green glass from the broken bottle and the oiled links of chain may still lie there as I write, for we found or removed neither.

FOR THE PLEASURE OF. 1815

I don't know 'ow the swine 'ad done it. Sure had us baffed.

Some 'ow that bastard o' a captain 'ad managed to a 'ave a convict woman released into 'is care to take to sea with 'im as personal company. Right into 'is tender lovin hands. And we'd all knewed what that seaport those monthls ago. He'd even dared during tha daylight hours if tha waters were calmer an' he's got a mind, or ther's nought land insight. Tha sounds they made 'd us all the more envious o' the scoundrel, for we'd all a'd dreadful wants o' a woman in 'ese lonely waters and he's tha only un ta 'ave 'is need satisfied on 'is sea. We'd 'ave to wait till we reached the dock o' some port before we'd be in with a chance. Ten only if our wage was a good un from our cut o' tha catch and ther's un that's a willing on the dock at tha time that we'r in. He had nought to wait, nor nought to want.

She's a screamer o' a wench, we'd all hear that, for she'd cry out strong an long from 'is bed when the 'r in tha midst. But he's nought but a dog we thought, from 'is grunts and the thumps 'ed make of tha time. They'd go for hours at a time and 'end start again. Night af'er night, e'r since we'd left tha seaport those monthls ago. He'd even dared during tha daylight hours if tha waters were calmer an' he's got a mind, or ther's nought land insight. Tha sounds they made 'd us all the more envious o' the scoundrel, for we'd all a'd dreadful wants o' a woman in 'ese lonely waters and he's tha only un ta 'ave 'is need satisfied on 'is sea. We'd 'ave to wait till we reached the dock o' some port before we'd be in with a chance. Ten only if our wage was a good un from our cut o' tha catch and ther's un that's a willing on the dock at tha time that we'r in. He had nought to wait, nor nought to want.

He'd told us 'ow it was all above the boards, an' he was ta be 'er escort for tha journey from Australia to New Zealand. Said "she'd finished 'er term and was af'er a new start way from tha penal colony town. 'Is job was ta deliver 'er safely and in good 'ealth. God knows what she'd did ta be thar in that penal colony any 'ow. Could 'ave killed a man or worse, for alls we'd knows.

We'r 'ere out of Melbourne in tha southern seal grounds af'er as many as we could till April by which time we'r ta sail to New Zealand and land tha convict woman as a free soul. It seemed a dubious arrangement ta us. We'd never seen 'er escorted ta tha ship, she'd just appeared when we'd lost sight o' tha big land. And our guess 'was that tha old fool had brought 'er for tha pleasure o' tha journey from an unscrupulous prison warden and as long as she's willing ta 'is pleasurable antics she'd go as a free woman when we'd reached a new colony far from Sydney town. If she'd not do at all, in tha play of 'is games, he'd turn 'er in ta tha prison wardens again on our return. At tha rate she was at she'd be well free by tha voyage's end and we'd no doubt of that; that's if our guess was right in what he's up ta.

Whiskery Jock, we'd called 'im that because o' 'is beard and love o' a spot, 'ad heard o' it before on another ship 'ed sailed on, but tha captain on that un would share 'er round with tha crew. Tha captain one night, a crewman tha next. T'was a amiable arrangement for all concerned, that's what we'd thought. We'd 'ave 'ad a share if an ofer's made, no doubt about it. If she's aboard we'd 'ave a right ta a share, a man could think, and you couldn't blame nought for that. T should be like tha kill where we'd allot it out ta a man's worth on tha trip and 'ow he'd done on tha voyage. We'd got a right greedy un 'ere and from what we knewed, he was a right randy one too for we'd knewed from 'is time ashore and tha company he kept he liked 'is women ta 'imself.

1815 For the pleasure of

We'd spend our long nights on the ship with a pipe of bacco, a small jug o' tha grog and tha songs o' tha sea with a jig or a three, while he 'ad ample brandy and ample woman ta 'imself. We'd sometimes joke about what tha dirty old bugger was up to in tha dark light o' 'is cabin with 'is frolicking and guess at tha noises they made, god knows there's enough. The blitter would jam tha door shut in a wink and we'r sure he'd filled all tha cracks in tha walls, for nought we'd see at a try, even in tha bright of day. 'e must'a thought we'd be dumb ta 'is hoax, if that's what it was, for 'ed look at us straight in tha eye with nought a wink nor a smile at tha few times he'd surface on deck.

E'en when at anchor in tha bays of tha seal islands, tha old oaf would barely leave 'is cabin when she'd be inside. Then only ta dish out tha orders o' 'is command for us lubbers ta carry out. Probably didn't trust us ta get near 'er for a span. 'Twas tha first mate who's a running the ship we all knewed that and he's a good un. We'd follow what he'd say without a gripe. He'd never talk about tha captain or tha wench. Just say 'twas no place for our nose and ta keep it out', so we'd learn nought from 'im.

'Twas 'is time though when tha two o' 'em left tha cabin for a trip ta tha shores o' one o' 'em islands o' Bristows land. We'd ta put 'em ashore in a secluded bay out o' sight from tha ship and not go near it we'd feared our life. God damn 'em, they probably had a right go there on tha forest floor, while we'r engaged in tha tasks o' tha ship. Swabbing tha decks 'twas what I had ta do while tha lubb was 'way with tha madam. From tha few times that we'd tha time ta gaze upon 'er, she's a well bosomed wench, tallish with short blond hair from tha prison as they did 'at to 'em all and she'd have done any or all of us at once we'r sure. The prison 'ad taken nought away, she'd all of it there. She'd a big round buttocks that I'd 'ave a yearn ta touch on any a day on tha sea. Ay, but 'twas not ta be while we was crew and he's captain on 'is wicked boat.

They'd taken a packed picnic lunch and we'd 'eard tha bottles o' grog clink as tha picnic crate was lowered into tha long boat below. Shit we'd all been ta sea for times before, and talked o' 'aving a woman aboard for our fancy, as a joke it was said more than once. For there wasn't a voyage when we'd not want o' a wench o' a kind in tha cold o' tha night. But now we'd un on board, 'twas worse. 'ere she's so close and none of us could lay hand on 'er, not even a finger for a day. 'Twere enough ta make a man cry o' tha pain. Well tha picnic went on till 'twas nearly dark in tha sky. All o' tha day they'd been on tha land. He'd signal us ta get 'em, we'd heard 'is cry and knowed he's finished for tha day. Then af'er they's aboard, we'd 'ave ta clean up tha long boat and 'is picnic mess in tha dark.

We'd looked in tha crate ta see what he'd 'ad and 'twas all tha best of tha store from below. We'd knew they'er there from tha days that we'd left, but we'd had few for fact. We'd loaded 'em in ourselves, everyone had laid a hand, we had. The bottles they took o'er, they never came back, he'd left 'em behind, so we'd never know what he'd had ta drink with tha wench. But we can guess, finest brandy, could smell it on 'is breath.

He'd lost 'is great thick coat too and he'd never sent us back for it. We'd thought 'is was queer as he should 'ave got it, we all knows that. Can't leave things like that behind. It had a big brass buckle and 'em buttons ta match down tha front, in dashing blue, but worse for sea wear. God knows where it be, but it don't come back to 'is boat, that we'd see.

GALLOWS POLE 1818

Ironic, the golden sun, hung as a bright warm orb in the clear blue sky. It was a sun, in a way that I had never known one before. It was warm and bright beyond belief, in a way I could hardly imagine.

My eyes squinted as we were led through the cobbles with cold, hard stoned walls on all sides, to the green grass where the three gallows poles waited for us like dead trees. Was it the sun or something in my soul, I can not tell as a single tear slid down my taut cheek. With a brawny sniff and a hard swallow, I was a man again and the tear had gone. I could face death with a hard cold stare. Step by fateful step the three of us were led in chains though, escape was far from our heads. And after the disenchanted experience of the past, none of us would have wanted anything but death as closer to the gallows and our death we walked. Then as we reached the softness of the green, we were offered one final pipe of tobacco. A last pleasure before we would become a victim of the rope and be judged by our maker.

God it seemed so absurd squatting on the grass in the warm forenoon sun smoking the pleasure of a good pipe, while the gallows waited only but a scant few paces away and the watchful eyes of the smirking guards upon us. The great wisps of blue smoke curled off into the air with an aromatic air. And then in a flash, the memories of my short life flashed before me. All the woeful memories of our ill fortune came flooding back.

The chance escape from this very same prison, recollection of an unlocked gate and a dark, dark night, the risk of the small boat found upon the shore, then stolen from our need to survive and the jeopardy of taking her to sea; for there was no escape on that island and the chance of the open ocean was the only gamble to decide our fate. Then alone on the unforeseeable ocean with no land insight for many days with little nourishment and being found by a sealer en route to the southern islands. Mistaken we were, for we had thought we were safe at last; free from the bonds of our penal days as this captain had offered us all work as an exchange for a passage to England. We knew the life of a sealer was hard and even dangerous though we had no choice it was clear, so we all agreed.

We had been right on that one for sure, it was as hard as it comes and one of the crew died in the task, before our eyes, fell from the rigging during a fearsome storm, never to be seen again. Didn't even hear the blighter scream on the way down into his watery grave. We searched for the poor soul but he was gone. We worked our hands till they were hard and calloused with wear and then the coldness of the wind cracked the skin with an added pain. But we endured it, every hour, as for us four there was little choice. We worked our way with the best of the old hands, being certain of our safe passage. We chucked in with them all.

1818 Gallows pole

For weeks we tried to avoid that perilous cliff, but we could not help being drawn to the edge to peer over and see if he had yet fallen over into the sea. But no, there he was caught like a fish to a hook, and slowly being pecked apart by the seahawks, as they do to the other dead creatures on the island. Torpidly it seemed, the flesh was ripped off and in a matter of weeks, we could see his guts ooze out. God it was an insufferable sight. In a rotten mass part of it slid over the edge and landed on a lower ledge further below. But at least from here it was swallowed up by the gulls and there was no sign of that part of him for us to dwell upon.

But sorrowfully there on the ledge above remained the rest of his corpse. Sometime later there were bones beginning to show through the parts of the clothing that were worn or pecked away. For the bells of hell I can't tell why we kept going back, but that we did. We were all pulled by some inner force right to the brink to peer down time after time, even though we would all say this would not be done, and we would keep away.

By the time we left, or at the last time I looked, there was little left but the whiteness of bones and his crumbling clothes, maybe the few things in his pockets that he had with him. For our fate had turned for the best, as a ship had called and willingly had taken us on board and away from this ghastly island that held us as free men but still imprisoned our body and souls.

It was so good to be free of that gruesome place, that not one gave half a thought to the events that might be when we would berth in Australia. For if was Sydney this ship was bound for and once we found out, though we pleaded to be taken somewhere else, there was not a chance of that. We had thought there was a chance to slip unseen in the crowd of a busy dock, and this we even planned. But it was not to be, and the captain delivered us direct to the authorities who identified us and duly handed us over to the penal system to meet our ultimate fate.

In turn they returned us to the horrid site of this colony here in Norfolk island, and after a short internment trial were condemned to hang, without delay.

Now I had sucked the last wisp of smoke from the warm bowl of the pipe I held in my trembling hand and as I raised my eyes to the waiting guards, yes, it was I who was the last of us to finish and it was time for us to be hanged.

As I stood there with the coarse, thick rope biting tight on my neck, of all the thoughts and emotions I could have held, I still dwelled in wonderment at the fourth escapee and if he still remained lodged on the ledge no more than bones and a few personal artifacts that had not rotted with the threads of his clothes on a forgotten island somewhere in the south oceans.

It was on our return that things went sour, for the supplies of food were not enough for us and the regular crew to sail the months to England. So we were put ashore with a few potatoes and little else on some sparse island to fend for ourselves. It was rotten, but at least, we had thought there was a chance of staying alive in the hope that another ship might call some day to take us away, for there were birds we could kill and cook by a fire we never let die. There was fish abound that tasted fine, and we had even found a sheltered place the potatoes would grow enough for our needs though not large at all.

Then there was the problem of John, dear John. For the first year or so he was right as the rain, for it fell as good as it can in this island, to be sure of that. But then he was struck with a mild bout of melancholia. He had to be alone for awhile, and we could yield to that, for at times we would all wander off by ourselves for a quiet time of contemplation, until we could face each other square once more. But he would spend days detached from any thought of us or the rest of the world, there he would hide, in the darkness of that cave high on the cliff. It was a dreadfully exposed site if ever one could choose; and there he would lie for days at a time with nought food, just him in the dark and the wet drips from the roof falling on his thick head.

But his bouts got worse by the month, for each time was longer than the last and upon his return he would swear and curse all of us and even the air itself. This got worst by each woe-begone attack. But the worst of it was the brawls he would pick over the slightest thing, and these grew more furious by degrees, until we all felt they were almost vicious and we feared the sight of him in every way.

Consequently, we felt he would kill one of us if not all, if left to run amuck, so we had posted a guard in the nights that we slept, for he could creep through the trees as a rat or a dog and be upon us in the most ungodly of hours to send a chill up our backs. The man had mislaid his mind, it was clear for sure. It was as if the forceful winds of that solitary cliff where he lived in that cave were blowing it away with each gale. We had been a gang of four and now it was three and one melancholic on the hillock. We couldn't live the way we were, we couldn't face it for another month, so, as evil as it was, we plotted to slay the imbecile at the earliest chance to save ourselves. He had forced it to us.

By fluke or fortune, we three were on the cliff after some sea bird eggs for a meal when the dolt came screaming from the thickets wielding a stout stick in his palm. Charging like a wounded bull on a full moon, cursing at the top of his voice he rushed straight at the three of us. It was not hard to dodge his unwieldy steps and then with a push send him over the slippery edge in an echoed scream that disappeared with him. We all thought he would hit the water and be carried away on the tides, and waited for the splash, for it would have been much simpler for us, but there he was hooked on a rock ledge in the last gasps of life.

It brought back such a deluge of perturbing memories and loathsome emotions to me, as it took an eternity for that small shadow of a ship to sail back up and into the empty arm of the bay. It was as if every foot of headway it made through those cold forsaken waters was as a day of my time spent on that lonely island with the memories of my embittered existence over these past months flashing through my feeble mind. Behold, here before me, at last, there was help at hand. Rescued before death I would be; or was this once more a dream, another disappointment to add to the endless list. Oh I dearen't think of the bitter disillusionment I would face if they turned and sailed out to the openness of the sea once more, or this was no boat at all but a trick of my eyes. But no, this was a ship with a real mast and sails heading directly towards the bay.

So many emotions flooded over my withered wane of a body, from the first minute we had realized the brig was up anchor and sailing away without us. We had been with the rest of the party, then led astray in the thickets of the woods. There, in the sullen unanswered echoes of the valleys, we had been left alone from the rest of the party, which aloof had scampered off to the boat as quick as they dared and away on the next tide. Not one answer to our anxious calls had we heard, as we hopefully stumbled about in a search for the elusive coast.

And when we did find, through a poke in the brushwoods, an opening to the water, there we saw the ship in full sail and off on the breeze, away without us. At that point we had surmised that it was only off for a short while, for a mission we knew not of, and surely it would be back in the days that followed to pick us up. It would only be a matter of making do with the discomforts of this land till they returned. As we had done many times before, there seemed few problems at the beginning. Oh, how wrong I know we were. Now I fathom it was a purposeful act by a wretched man who dares to call himself a captain and take the helm. He and all his comrades have much to answer to if ever we chance to meet again on any dock side. Did they so much as think twice of the act they had done? Did they deem our true plight, with no stores of any kind? Scumbags, surely they must all be.

No!

We mattered I doubt at all in their minds. I pity them for their despicable deeds, and the miserable heads on their postfestering shoulders, though I shall never forgive one of them for a single second. What kind of a man from the sea would desert another in this forlorn part of the world? Scumbags to be sure.

I reasoned after a few months or maybe more, that it was the secret of that seal-filled bay we had all found but a few days before their tricks, and that captain's mistrust in us to hold our tongues as forsakes from another sealing vessel in the same waters. I wish I had never beheld that other damn ship let alone transferred to the company of that wretched crew. The ship we had sailed to the sealing grounds in and been a part of the crew had since left in the weeks before and now that these dogs had also left, we were here, cut off with no escape. It was a wilful act by a merciless captain to be sure, and I've not found a bigger scumbag in all my days.

Marooned, that's what we had been!

Left to our own devices. And too few of them we had been left with by those wretched dogs. For a kinder act may have been the shot from a musket clean through the heart, a quick death. For this was a grisly, torpid way, and almost just as certain. I was the only one to survive, and then only scarcely, for Wilson had failed and died from the vice for life. I had watched the blighter wane and wither away and I knew I was close to the same. That was real pain to see him go. They had left us to run a ragged dance through that rugged land in the months that passed by. Desperate in a hostile land. I had to scrape a hellish hole in the earth as best I could with only a firm stick, to lay that thin hint of a man down. It took far too long and asked too much strength of me in a dirty drizzle before I had anything that looked like it could take his gaunt remains, but was nought like a proper hole. It had to be done, but I had not the might to lay the soul to earth proper.

God, if those first few weeks were bad, hungry cold and wet; it only forewarned of our true plight with the real trials and tribulations to come. There just was so little to eat of any real substance in this land, it was a desert, though there seemed verdure enough to exist upon on the hills and such an extensive coast line. Limpets are not exactly apt for every meal one sits at. And how long does it take to clean a bay from the very last one within easy reach? Raw sea birds have a hell of a fish taste at the best of times and there was too many but not enough times for me. The few plants that appear palatable are bitter to the taste and could only be forced down with the greatest of difficulty. At least prison food is regular. This land asks too much of a man.

Right from the first few weeks, as cold and hungry as we felt, there were times when we would both lie backs on the ground, our eyes gazing at the procession of endless cloud sweeping past us, while pondering our fate though talking little and wishing for a rescue or the quickness of death. Suddenly a blast of hail would bring us back from this dream and with as quick a run as we could manage on our weak limbs, we would dive for the shelter of the woods where we could find some refuge of a kind and plan our next move. But what move could we make? Where could we go? There were only questions to ask.

Dwarfed by the long arms of land that reached out from each end of the bay, this small ship sailed further into the inlet. They did know I was here, they had seen my markers, I felt sure. I must be rescued. It was so unreal, the sight of that ship in the bleak expanse of the bay.

With a gust of this ever present wind, my beard blew across my arm and I realized that I must be a dreary sight, my hair and beard were unkempt and tangled with brushweed while my clothes hung, rags on a haggard old body. If ever they did find me, would they ever want me aboard? Many a night I had pleaded with god to send a ship to spare my soul. For a changed man I would be in the eyes of the almighty if ever I reached a civilized land once more. And here now was such a ship, white with sail and as bold as an eagle, she cut the waters of the bay towards me ever closer. What a sight.

For all I could take away from this land if ever I did leave, there would always be too much left behind. I had lost so much weight from my body that surely it must lie on the island somewhere embodied among the roots of the trees or stems of the grasses that billowed on the breeze. Or perhaps it vanished upon the airs, was blown away with this unyielding wind and was here not at all? My clothes and boots had lost much too, for where was the fabric and the leather now worn bare to little less than fragments of the garments they once been? Where? I ask indeed, for both had been quite new and strong when I first set foot among the shores of this land. The pieces that had once filled the holes must lie somewhere.

While I still had my knife, though the blade was worn to a fine slither of roughly sharpened steel, where was the metal worn from this blade? The filings scraped off on the hard stones? The few coins that had been in my pocket, quite by accident when we had been cast ashore were gone forever. They had worn a hole through the lining and slipped out. Where were they now? 'Tis a wonder that I still had my mind, for it too could have been claimed by the land and I left thoroughly maniacal. Or had it already claimed this too? Oh, I could never really escape this place for the rest of my days? It had left its mark on me, but had I left any on it? Perhaps a few scratchings under the trees, a few empty limpet shells, and at best a few fish and bird bones. I was such a pitiful specimen in this island.

But I had lost my fear of death here too, for I had been as dead as a live man can be. My body had felt sensations of tiredness, pain, cold that bit to the bone and hunger that defy description.

Now, the ship was about to drop anchor, and I had hardly turned a thought for the walk to the coast. Surely I should be as a bird or a hare and off in a race to where I could call out to the ship. But, when I did start down the knoll, a tiresome walk was all I could make with my aching legs, like anchors below my mind. I had lost my strength, maybe only for the time, but it felt as if I should never have it back. I had lost too much to this land, far too much.

MRS MORRELL'S UNDERWEAR

1830

It had been a frightful voyage deep into this southern latitude, and the past few weeks had been among the worst in terms of the inclement weather that persistently whipped across the expansive ocean around us. I can only relate it to a journey to Scotland's far north we once embarked on, when the wind and rain were constant for almost two weeks. A dreadful time. I have seen little of the outside in the past few weeks and can only imagine the blustery conditions from the ceaseless frightening agglomeration of sounds and vibrations within our cabin and also the constant reports from my dear Benjamin. He has been so excited and busy since our arrival.

The reason I had seen so little is due to my being quite ill, not only with the interminable tumbling action of the boisterous ocean, but also with a high fever and a terrible kind of dysentery that had me running for the toilet much more often than I would have liked. This dysentery has been the worst of the effects I have had to endure. It would not have been quite so bad except for my situation on the boat, an only woman among an entire crew of men. For as one may imagine, the sanitary conditions aboard leave much to be desired and there is also the embarrassment of the seamen knowing my plight, my every move as it were. For it is they who have to deal with my frequent uncontrolled reactions to this dreadful illness, which happens much more often than I can abide. The embarrassment is much more on my part I am sure, because the seamen are really very good, caring and helpful about this problem, as many of them have experienced a similar illness from time to time at sea, and some I am told are still as ill as I.

Benjamin happened to be on one voyage where several of the crew had even died of the enfeebling illness. Only as a wife at sea does one fathom the conditions on board these ships that the men have to endure for months at a time.

My loving husband, Captain Morrell, being the good navigator that he is has brought us safely into the bays on the south east side of the island, and after all my prayers of a calmer ocean, I finally sensed a great relief as the hull now seems quite easy in the calmer waters of this pleasing harbour. The sounds of the boat at anchor are quite different to those when we are under way, and I much prefer this time to the endless pandemonium and confusion from the weeks at sea. The weather has been quite warm and large patches of blue sky are clearly visible from my small cabin window; this has brightened the gloom in the cabin and also my resolve to regain my full health once more.

As the days have passed we still enjoy the pleasant stillness of this bay. Although convalescing, as yet I have not been well enough to venture onto the deck for an unobstructed view of the islands however, it sounds a wonderful land from the glowing reports that dear Benjamin has brought to my bedside. There are fine sandy beaches and magnificent groves of such refreshing verdure that it must be a sight to behold. He has brought me some unusual flowers that are said to abound within parts of the delightful forest, and these charming blossoms have added a gratifying atmosphere to our abode. Among them there are some lovely bright yellow conical-shaped blossoms and some wonderful purple daisy-like flowers. They look so sweet among the stuffy wooden interior I have had to endure for much of these past weeks, that I must surely be on the mend.

I have been told whole forests and great woodlands embrace the land untouched to the waters edge. Benjamin believes the weather is mild and the lowlands would be a resplendent place for a new settlement with whaling and sealing augmented with the wonderful fertility of the soil for growing crops and grazing once the woods are cleared. It seems such an idyllic paradise for a new settlement, a place to start afresh. The abundance of lofty timber could support an industry of ship repair and many shipwrights at least, he says. The whalers and sealers that sail these depths could well do with the service in such a place. Benjamin has great expectations for these islands.

I am feeling much recovered now and have regained my appetite somewhat, to allow me enough strength to enjoy brief visits to the upper decks. The freshness of the air is rejuvenating to my wellbeing, and I am convinced that in no time at all I shall be back to my full health once more. Benjamin is right, the land does have a pleasant vigour about the coast-line from where the brig is at anchor, and the full splendour of the land is a gracious sight after the weeks upon the rolling ocean and my interminable confinement to the cabin. Later, when I am well enough, Benjamin has promised me a trip ashore among the grandeur of forest trees and flowers, perhaps even for a picnic. It seems there are whole gardens of new woodland plants beneath the shelters of these tall trees, and song birds that are new with sound.

This morning I am able to move about with some comfort without the fear of my illness striking me, and I ventured about the ship in the rejuvenating sun-shine for a time. To be steady on one's feet once more felt so miraculous. However, in the afternoon I did have a minor relapse that ended in a major humiliation for me and an unpleasant chore for two of the crew. In my enjoyment of the space, fresh air and glorious vista of the countryside from the upper decks, I ignored the distance from these raised platforms to the sanitary facilities below and in my preoccupation with the vistas of the island, I was quite unable to reach the proper facilities in time. My under garments were so badly soiled from this miscalculation, that they could not effectively be washed to clean though we tried in vain. Benjamin said the only reasonable thing to be done was to bury the clothing ashore, as the spread of the disease among the ship is to be stopped at all costs.

It had been a lovely garment, a loved gift from my aunt Emily, and I had treasured it in her memory, so it saddened me to have this tragedy happen. Although past its very best, there could still have been some wear left in the weeks at sea to come, as any garments are an asset on a journey such as this. There had been lovely lace inserts from the top of the bust down, and a row of tiny braided beads sown around the waist that added a delicate touch to the frilliness of the fine cloth. I had been so fond of it as it reminded me of my dear deceased aunt and the cheery times we had spent together before she had passed away. I shall miss it from my wardrobe. It was such a hapless end to a once gracious garment, it was not how I would have parted with it, given any choice.

Benjamin had two unfortunate crewmen quickly embark upon the task of disposal, and through the port in my cabin, I saw them disappear stroke by stroke in the dinghy towards the shore, with a spade and the soiled mess in a bucket beside them. Despite my utter embarrassment, it must have been an unpleasant task and perhaps even a larger embarrassment for them.

THE ENGLISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION 1840

20 November 1840

The expedition is at anchor at Sarah's Bosom, and both ships, the H.M.S. Erebus and the H.M.S. Terror, are sitting easy on the water, for they had arrived not a day apart in this northern bay. Part of our survey work included making magnetic observations at various points through out the world, and these islands had been chosen because of the desirability that these readings and observations be taken in high altitudes of the south of the globe. The Auckland islands were seen as a spot from which one series of readings may be successfully taken, hence our course to this location.

Almost as we dropped anchor, one of the mariners, with watchful eyes, spotted two painted boards erected upon poles at the beach head directly in front of us. These signs stood distinct among the green of the forest along the edge of the rocky shore and aroused our interest as to their purpose. Uncertainty surrounded the reason for the poles, and a boat was despatched at once with an officer to examine their exact rationale, as they could have indicated any manner of information that might have compelled an urgency of action. After a time, he returned with the news that these posts recorded the visit of American and French expedition to the islands not the previous year. Both expeditions had been independent, but had been scientific in their nature. It appeared the "Porpoise", the ship from the United States Exploring Expedition, had left a note of communication in a corked bottle under one of the signs. Unfortunately, the cork had been insecurely fixed allowing moisture inside and the writing was now almost indecipherable with only the odd string of words comprehensible, and little was gained from the script.

On this, our second day, the observatories were landed and all hands set to work in the task of clearing the ground from the trees and undergrowth. Once this, with much effort, was achieved, we embarked upon making a firm foundation for the instruments to rest on. This became quite a task, for so deep was the peat bog, however, that no firm and dependable foundation could be found at all. After digging a hole to quite some depth, the only alternative was to fill it with large stones and rocks from the beach and casks of sand which solved the problem and at last provided a satisfactory base. Later we set up the instruments with some simple preliminary observations being made by the end of the day.

28 Nov

This day saw the major experiments carried out under good conditions. Messrs Smith and McCormick, two members of the scientific staff, were intrigued with the highly magnetic property of the rocks on this island group. Their excitement led to numerous experiments at various points, and the findings indicated that the island was proving to be one large magnet. It made the ship's compasses quite unreliable with erratic swings this way and that in some areas, and this was nowhere more acute than when we passed Shee Island in the harbour where the magnetic deflection was particularly noticeable.

30 Nov

During our stay, Dr Hooker had opportunity to make a thorough collection of the varied botanical specimens, as he was able to gather a collection of very interesting specimens. Much of the flora is unrecorded, and his work should form the basis of a new collection. I have the utmost confidence in him to procure an excellent collection of specimens as a legacy and reference of our scientific expedition. A diverse variety of bird life was also reported by those who, when ashore, found them quite unafraid of men. They would fly right down to one with a friendly curiosity. One party that was ashore to collect fire wood, found two newly born kittens, still blind and in the interests of the gentle native birds, these were destroyed. The cunning mother, though, managed to escape into the wilds of the island despite all efforts to catch her.

It was also noticed that the pigs that Captain Bristow had liberated on the island had multiplied greatly, for although few were seen, the extent of their rootings were quite obvious. Their few, but clearly defined tracks through the thick bush cover was ample evidences of their increasing numbers.

2 Dec

Our expedition had been donated a variety of stock to be released on the island, for the future. A certain Mr Anstey of Hobart Town had provided pigs, rabbits and hens to be left on the island, while the expedition itself also had some sheep. Accordingly, a ram and two ewes had been landed on the western side of the large harbour by the Erebus. From the Terror, a similar number were taken with some difficulty inland some miles to the southward of our position. All these seemed to rapidly accommodate to the new surroundings and will provide a wealth to these islands in the future. A pair of goats were to be put ashore, as well, but one of the poor unfortunate creatures died the day before the vessel arrived at the islands, and there was no logic in releasing only one such beast.

Mr Anstey had also donated seeds of turnips, cabbages, mustard, cress, radish and some other varieties of vegetables. We spent some time on the main island clearing a suitable site for a garden in which to plant these. Dr Hooker had in addition, a number of gooseberry and currant bushes, raspberry and strawberry plants that were distributed over parts of the main island. The rabbits were kept on board the vessel to be released at a later time on Enderby island slightly to the north of our position.

4 Dec

The bush cover can be very difficult and hindering to walk through, and Dr McCormick has written a lively account of his scrambles through the broken country and dense brushwood during one of his shore excursions around Rendezvous Harbour. Poor chap, seems for most of the day he thought he was lost for good or entangled for ever. Many of the expedition members delighted in these shore excursions for pleasure but loathed any movement through the country as at times more than difficult for even the strongest men aboard.

7 Dec

Today, we saw a sight of great magnificence, though from a thoughtless act. Some of the officers ashore, finding their progress slow, in an attempt to reach the distant western hills, set alight the dense growth, hoping to clear it away and create a path before them. Although to some extent achieving their aim, this was a thoughtless prank and might have been provocative of much harm besides destroying so much valuable wood, for a strong breeze that was blowing at the time, caused the flames to spread wildly until it grew quite beyond any control or direction. This fire then burnt throughout the night, and although we talked of the damage it was causing, we stood and watched from the foredeck of the vessel, this magnificent display with delight as the whole island appeared to be ablaze with a glorious red. Great red tongues leapt high into the dark sky, the glow reflecting across the deep waters of the bays.

8 Dec

Next day, we found out that the party involved in this hapless incident of torching the forest had several days before been researching and collecting samples above the bush line. Upon their return they had to fight through bush and scrub so thick and tangled that the precious samples they had collected along with their equipment hindered their progress back to the shorecamp. So difficult was the terrain, that in sheer frustration at their lack of progress, their favoured equipment had to be discarded and left behind in favour of returning to the ship with the hard-won samples. They had returned cut and scratched, with the samples but their precious equipment left behind. The chance of ever retrieving this would be an absolute impossibility, and so the next day they had decided to set off to explore a new location and set fire ahead of them to make the path easier.

In a few days, when the fire did die, there were great black scars up the side of the valley that evidenced the path of destruction the flames had cut. The long fingers of flame had now left fingers of black.

THE PANG OF BIRTH 1845

I should never have left the pa. I should have listened to the Whanau and stayed in the Whare Kohanga where they are still waiting for me. They must wonder where I am. But I had to be gone from there, and get some air as it felt stale and stuffy in the confines of the dark Whare Kohanga. It will have been built and burnt for no purpose if the birth is here in the Tane. Can I help that?

There are none of our old medicinal plants that they could use for the birth on this island. No Kotukutuku (Fuchsia) or Tararamoa (Bush lawyer) grows here on the land, and the knowledge of the old ways is of little use though the old women try with what they have. They have been using other plants that grow freely on this island, but they are not effective and made me feel so unwell, and this is the reason that I wandered off alone. But I had never thought I should walk so far.

So here I am, alone in this Tane to give birth? It is not a choice I would gladly make. There is no family, friends, not even a slave to help. There is no shelter except for the canopy of the forest and the hollows in the ground among the fairy rings of ferns. I am on my own. I shall have to rely upon my own strength. I am myself. I must be strong.

My waters had broken earlier with a warm rush. Then I knew the excitement of the birth moment had arrived and it was at last my time. It was happening quite suddenly and something I had not prepared for at this time, caught so unawares was I. The waters had run down my legs right to the earth. I could even feel the wetness between my toes mixed with the humus of the land. I had wandered much further than I had imagined and it would be some effort to get back to the pa in time. This was my second birth and it was all happening much faster than the first, for, the contractions were coming much faster than I would ever have liked and now they were here I tried to remember all that I had been told about the event and the experience of the first birth.

It was sore, a strange mixture of pain and pleasure, much like the first time. At times I fell to the forest floor doubled with the pain in an uncontrolled writhe. I felt hot and cold at the same time, dropping my blanket and stripping off the clothing from my body because of the sweat and the ease of movement I would have. It felt a natural thing to be done. There I lay naked writhing on the Papa-tu-a-nuku. Ignoring the pain, with the help of a stout branch I pulled my self up again thinking that I could make my way to the pa in time.

I was mistaken. The mamae came stronger, I fell to the ground once more with my eyes closed and clenched teeth. I was breathing hard with lips opening and closing with each motion. I grabbed another strong branch of a tree and pulled myself up to a squat. For there was no flax to bind the sick to two trees and I could not contemplate this old tradition. With my eyes closed I sang a birth karakia. Loud and strong. Loud and strong, again and again I cried to the goddess of child birth. This was as my mother had been when each of us had been born, and all our mothers before. It was the tradition of the Whanau, it was the sneeze of life.

1845 The pang of birth

I had my eyes closed with the pain, but above me, I sensed the rustle of the trees that moved gently in the slight breeze. I was lucky the weather was not in the mood of a storm. I managed to find a forked tree with a long branch wedged in the fork at the right height to aid my birth. With both hands held high in a tight grasp on the stick, I pushed down hard and felt a warm movement inside. This I worked at for some time pushing harder and harder, breathing and breathing, push below and pulling on the stick with my hands above. I could feel the stick begin a great bow from my pressure. This life inside me was moving downward out into the world. Beyond my control was the will to bear down but so quickly the progress of the birth was that it will shed all too soon. When I reached down with one hand, I could feel the form of the small head wet and round now starting to enter the open air. For some time, I felt round across the warm head.

I pulled harder with my other hand on the branch and it bowed still further with the pressure. Shortly the head was completely free and I could assist with my free arm, gently pulling as the body would follow to the out-side world. The skin felt new and crinkled, but I could not tell if the new born was breathing yet or if it was a boy or girl.

Suddenly with a few last easy pushes and a pull with both hands on the new-born there was the new baby warm wet and slippery in my arms. With one firm slap on the bottom, the cry of the new-born filled the air and I fell back on the ground relieved once more panting with the new born clutched to my firm breast. There I lay for some time between exhausted breaths gently chanting a birth song overcome with joy. It was a new son I held in my arms and Rangi would be pleased with his new-born. As I chanted and regained my breath I was not even aware of the placenta expulsion, before, there it was on the ground beside me and I realized that the cord was still attached to the baby embraced in my arms. Tau mahi ra, e te iti kahurangi!

There were few things that were in my fibre kit to cut the umbilical cord, but there were some broad splinters of green glass from a broken bottle found on the island and that I had kept to cut any number of things as it had a very sharp edge. I used this to cut through this line that had tied us together. My stomach that had just been full, fat and round was now withering with loose flaps of skin like that of the baby. As soon as I could gather my thoughts, the new born was at my raised nipple. My breasts were firm and full with the liquid before the coming of the new milk. They had swollen so that when I looked down before this birth all I could see was them like large round hills and my stomach even rounder sticking out in front of me. It had all felt heavy.

I lay the small one gently in a soft bed of dry fern fronds while I clothed myself with the few garments I had earlier thrown aside in the haste of the birth, for I felt cooler now and also the day was turning to the cold darkness of night. Besides there were clouds shifting in from the north. With a short stout stick, I scraped a hole in the earth as deep as I dared in the time I had and with care placed the placenta in the hollow before covering the birth sac with loose earth and a scattering of fallen rata leaves. There were few rocks to be found in any of these dense forests, and on top of this special spot I placed several large fern fronds and a large forked branch as a mark of the Tapu that remained in this place.

Down the path I walked almost in a run with the joy of my success and the soft whimper of the new one wrapped tightly between me and the blanket. It felt so different to have him born to the world and now touching me on the outside rather than kicking and wriggling on the inside. Through the twisted trees that lined the path way down to the pa I ran. I felt both weak and strong at the same time. It felt strange. Suddenly there was an outburst from the sky as heavy drops of rain poured from above. It soon wet my hair and thick cold drops trickled in runs down from these long black strands, flowing down my back and chest. I could feel it run between my breasts and the baby as this is where I supported him as I ran. The water felt cold but in a refreshing way I enjoyed it, though it did make the baby cry from this new experience. In protection and comfort I held him closer to me, and tightly as I ran further on.

If I could have found a place to shelter I would have waited, perhaps even until the morning, but as there was no refuge from the torrential down pour that was now falling in great sheets from above I decided to keep on towards the pa. The track had become thick with water running down the beaten earth of the path from the downpour making my way hard in the slipperiness of mud. Several times I slipped and fell right to the ground with my small child clasped tense in my arms. He would cry with the fright of the fall, but I always managed to shield him from the tumble and any harm. The pa was now nearer as there were noises from below, through the last scattering of trees. Although I could see the dwellings I could not see a soul out in the open. The rain had driven them all to shelter, and only the lazy smoke trails drifting up showed any sign of life.

When I arrived at the door of the Whare there was much excitement, everyone called out at once. They had all been worried for me and now my return with the newborn child was a great joy to them. At once there were others emerging from whares, and there they all gathered around me in the confusion of the rain. We stood out in the pelting rain greeting and hugging each other almost without thought for the wetness. It seemed, in turn everyone had to greet me. Once inside I stripped off the sodden garments. It was a shock, but the kete was not among them. It could have been left at the birth place, though I was sure I had it when I left the site. Perhaps it was lost at one of my falls on the slippery track, it could have been thrown far to the side of the track or squashed deep into the mud. Perhaps this was gone forever. E kore e kitea he toki huna. I warmed around the fire with several large blankets lent by the fussing older women, and the loss of the kete with its contents was of little concern. They wished to help so much that they had all offered their warmest clothing. They had also snatched away the baby as if it was their own to look after and I could hear them chattering to it across the fire. As the rain continued to pour down outside, the odd drip falling through the shelter on our heads, there I sat with all this fuss from my Whanau, feeling much warmer and stronger. I had done all this by myself. I felt a great sense of mana.

THE THROW OF A FRUSTRATED WOMAN 1851

It had been an unpleasantly, troublesome year. The weather I have never seen the like of it. The men are always venting their anger about the appalling conditions to us, and the women among us seem to always end up with this as a topic of conversation, no matter how we try to avoid it. We can't say too much to them because then the men defend the decision to come here to settle, and tell us, 'the weather isn't as bad as we make it out to be. Things will only get better if we will give it a chance'. If we could see some small sign, we might begin to believe this may be true, but alas we see no such change, only much of the same.

It pains many of us to see them pretend they are comfortable, as we know they are not well fed, and their clothes are rarely clean and dry, when we know none of us would tolerate this back in England. If the climate is hard, the work they undertake is harder as we see them each day at their labours. Building a settlement the like of this, with roads, barracks, store houses and our cottages, is hard in the least, while the clearance of thickets for farm and plantings takes much of their time.

We would not mind it if we could see some consequence, but the company's venture is not at all successful. The whales we have seen are never caught while the many plantings and crops will not grow well even with the thatched shelters to break the winds. The natural plants of the island grow so well with leaves as large as one could need from any vegetable but our best efforts to grow familiar vegetables, become little more than stunted remains of those we knew and enjoyed back in the old lands. It is quite frustrating.

The food we all endure is not good, with the rancid flour bad to the taste even when cooked while the salted meat grows mould with ease in this misty weather. If it were not for the experience, knowledge and the good will of the Maori people here, it would be a worse cross to shoulder. We all know they are far more equipped to endure the wilds this land possesses, than the meagre attempts of us poor souls. Sometimes, even with their friendship and knowledge, I feel we are two groups of people in a frigid zone at the end of the world, forgotten.

There can be months without even the single sighting of a sail on the forlorn line of the horizon. Our leader, Enderby, the Lieutenant Governor of the settlement is no example to behold, and is known to all as both the lawmaker and law breaker. But worse, he has an unfortunate air of piety and arrogance that is of little comfort or reassurance to any but himself. We women, avoid his arrogant struts as he surveys the work each day. The men despise him even more, and scorn his every move.

The single men behave so boorishly, mostly when they are in a state of grogginess from their perpetual drinking, and they frighten us badly with their uncalled for manner. At times we feel they are little more than a group of lazy booze bousers, at odds with our true endeavours and we find their scurrilous behaviour is no less than deplorable. They will oft make crude gestures and rude remarks as we go about our normal way. While more than frightened we may be, they have troubled the Maori women terribly with untimely visits and would try the same on any of us I have no doubt if we were without the protection of a spouse.

We have heard there have been several Maori men and these pranksters out to molest their women. In one incident, one chief accused his poor wife of leading them on, and so upset was the flustered women, that she tried to hang herself with a scarf before they could rescue her from the tree and begin to calm her anguish. Still she was upset and in another desperate attempt, she tried to drown herself in the cold waters of the ocean. The poor woman was eventually saved, but it is the feeling of us women, and most of the decent men that it was the fault and cause of the uncontrolled drunk single men, not this Maori woman. Such is the shame those fools can bring to the courteous English race, we dread to acknowledge them as one of us.

Last week I felt so depressed with the whole situation, that one evening I just had to allow myself a time of aloneness. It was one of the few calm nights when it was light enough by the moon to walk a beaten way, even though the sky was not clear, being mottled with thin wisps of curling cloud. There was a thin pale half ring of rainbow across the sky in the opposite direction from the moon that hung in the sky as a halo. The sky was also filled with the pulsing colours of the southern lights rippling in the darkness above. In all, it was a sight to behold.

But there had also been so few times that I could take the occasion to sneakily take leave unnoticed from the others to walk at night also. For many reasons, not the least of which was the single men, we had been constantly warned against walking alone and never at night. Should we be lost or become injured there may be no saviour among the tangle of gnarly trees that make up the forest or the harshness of the climate. We may never be found in life or death. And if one was caught unawares by a single man, it hardly bears the thought of their actions. It was hardly a place for a man and no place for a woman in the dark of the night.

Despite my countless fears, and the excitement of adventure, that beat my heart faster, I aimlessly wandered up the path with little sense of direction or purpose. I passed the plots of vegetables, with the wicker weave of shelter breaks to cut the wind, upright and pagan-like in the night. And then further, past the cleared land further up the sloping hill, till there I stood, durnly amongst the few lonely graves on the hill side at the cemetery, with a feeling of utter despair and nearly in tears. I prayed for each and every one of those lost souls, as God they seem so alone and far from their home in the forgotten mists of this weebegone place. Had the almighty deserted them in life and death?

As we sit in our butts, with a fire's glowing warmth at night, they must lie here cold and wet in the winds of the darkness. I cast an eye across each and at the sight of the child's maker I felt the full pathos and could restrain no longer. A passage of tears I could hold no more at the sight of Janet's young one, as I had helped with the difficult birth and the fact of its death in but a few days, was hard on us all. I wept openly over her daughter as if it were my own; for God I know at times it could have been.

Then the bushed air of the night was broken. For across the still night, from below, came a disturbance of yelling and abuse. As a knife it cut through the stillness. For quite some time it carried my way. I guessed it had come from the single men's but in the village and sounded like the usual drunkenness and disobedience again; they never learn nor want for to stop. It made me so mad to hear their antics. I shook in despair and desperation, my body no more than a tremble of tears at the unavailing failure of life here.

Then there in my tearful eyes, a glint, a discarded empty liquor bottle lay, beside one of the wooden grave markers where it must have been left by some impertinent buffoon. Further infuriated by the object and the act, in utter disgust I reached down to grasp the bottle and with streams of distressed tears but in absolute rage, I threw it with all my might and passion into the gnarly woodlot of trees in the hope all my troubles would disappear with it, be gone with the night. My troubles remained, but it did feel better for the effort and hence the finding of a knife in my apron brought a similar response as it too was thrown as hard as I could into the thickets. I had used it in the preparation of the evening meal and had thought it handy to keep at my side, if afflicted upon my walk by beast or buffoon. In fact, by surprise, many items I found in my possession that were all thrown into the trees with this same frustrated disgust. There may have been a comb, a hair clasp a candle end. I'm not sure, my anger was such that my thoughts were unclear.

Upon daylight I felt so awful about it, I tried unseen by the others, to find and regain their possession from the envelopment of tangled forest. But I could only find the broken glass of too many green junk bottles cast aside by more drunken oafs among the thickety woods and the other items were never seen.

MAHUE MATAU 1854

"Kore te hoe, te tata. (*No paddle, no bailer*)

Is this the place we shall remain forever? Haha te whenua, haha te tangata (*In a desolate land, man is deserted*). We have travelled so far across moana, tangaroa and we have not seen Hawaiki, we may never do so, it is too far from here. Are we lost? We are far far from kainga. It makes us weep. It is such a sad thing.

Ah, it is hurokuroku hau, ua rangi (*Ah, it is continuously windy and raining*). There is no escape at all.

Do we have to die here away from kainga, huna with no mana or tumanako a hoki (*Do we have to die here away from home, with no prestige or hope*)? We are neither Maori or Pakeha; are we mahue ki te nei whenua (*are we lost to the land*)? This is the home of Tawhiri-matea, Tonga Tonga and tangaroa, for it is always Te ngaunga a Hine-moana upon the whenua. We live in tumakuru, but just survive. It is hard, it is hard. Tangaroa pukanohi nui is all around us (*Big eyed Tangaroa*). There is no escape. There is no escape. We are turingongengonge (*crippled*) to the ways of the past anyway, we wheta to rerenga. The world is changing, the world is changing. We are here in isolation, the Pakeha are changing the old ways. It shall never be as it was. And if we are left here we shall never know.

Me kauhi ranei koe ki te huruhuru kakapo pu mai o te tonga. (*Shall I cover you with a kakapo feather cloak, heaped up here from the south*)? E makariri ana te hau. Ae, ka nui te makariri. Kei te huka oku ringaringa (*The wind is cold. Yes it is very cold. My hands are frozen*). The wind it blows and blows. The cold it bites and bites. We must suffer this too. It is bad.

The few hunched figures sat prodding the fire with the thin end of a stick. Across each arched back the warmth of a thick blanket broke the slash of the wind. It was still cold under the warmest of cloth. And beside them, on the sands laid out as a meagre offering to their bodies were a few small fish caught that day ready to be cooked. He torutoru rawa nga ika i mau i a matou i te ata nei (*We caught very few fish this morning*). But maybe this will be enough. We have some fern roots as well and a few potatoes left behind. But these potato are nearly all gone.

Food here is neither varied nor plentiful. Tena ko te toa mahi kai e kore e paheke (*A warrior who works hard at growing food will not fail*) and yet, E rua tau ruru, E rua tua wehe, E rua tau mutu, E rua kore kai (*two years of wind and storm, two years when food is scarce, two years when the crops fail, two years of no food*). We need Te iti oneone i kapunga mai i Hawaiki (*a little bit of earth from Hawaiki in the hollow of the hand*). We need some fortune just to keep us alive.

Kia eke au ki runga ki te puna o Tinirau (*I might as well be sitting on the blow hole of a whale*). He kai tangata, he kai titongi kaki (*Another man's food is food that mocks the*

1854 Mahue matau

throat). We can but dream, we can but dream. He whiunga nui tenei (*It is a great misfortune*). There is still Te Tutanga te unuhia (*the portion that can never be withdrawn*). And we do have this.

Are we Ka ngaro i te ngaro a te moa. At this time when we should be working together not thinking of war. Ko tireki paku kore (*This is Tireki which does not possess the smallest thing of value*).

Are we lost as the Moa is lost. The tribe has been divided even here with fights and squabbles. We fight as dogs about silly things. Ko nga ngarara a Rauhina (*Like the lizards or monsters of Rauhina*). We should be one family. Since the Pakeha have left, the fighting is worse. There seemed some purpose then. It is impossible now, there is no future. He iti whaingia, he nui te paremata (*A little dispute, a great revenge*). This is all they think of. E kore ratou e pai kia houhia te rongoa? E kore. Ka whawhai tonu, ka whawhai tonu. (*They will not make peace? They will not. They will carry on the war as long as they can*).

There are several groups of us now, we are dispersed as the puawananga kano that blows on the wind. Some at Ranui and other parts of the main island, also those of us here at Enderby Island. Those here could not stand the silly fights any longer and have little contact with the others.

It was not so bad when the Pakeha were here. That time brought its own problems, but there did seem some purpose. We are such a small group now that we can't afford to fight, and yet here we are split into two groups. Ko te uri o pani (*Offspring of an orphan*). We are all orphans now. Orphans of the whanau, orphans of the land. There has been no ship, no people, we are mahue. Now we have no kuri, they are gone too. The Pakaha had us destroy them all because they were attacking the animals. Now there are no animals, no Pakaha and no kuri.

Sometimes there is a seal we can catch, and these taste good, but these are too few. At night there is the sound of hokioi, it is the only other creature. It terrorises us, but it can never be seen, never be caught and could never be eaten.

A long thin hand reached out with a final prod to the fire where the hot red embers glowed in the gathering night. The few fish were nearly done and it was time to bring over the others to share in the kai. In the half light they gathered about and ate. These fish had a thread worm, they had no choice but to eat it though. In Aotearoa they would never eat this, there would be no need, but here it was different, there was no choice.

The children laughed and played after dinner, for they knew nothing else. They all cuddled up as one warm group, and this felt better. There was some mild laughter and story telling, but not as they had known in the years before they had come here. Before long it was time for sleep. At least it was good to have some whenua. There was little else.

In the gaining light of morning one after the other they crawled out of the whare and stretched with a yawn on the sandy beach. The children brought wood for the fire and soon

there was the welcome warmth of the flame. For another day the wind was soft, the day could be clear and it looked good for fishing. Ko te ra maeneene a te rahui Tangaroa (*This is a calm day for the flocks of Tangaroa*). Kei te pari mai te tai (*The tide is coming in*). There could be fish jumping, there could be fish to catch. There was a rush for the fishing equipment, and off they set.

But somehow, the best fish hook had vanished. No matter how they searched it was gone. Something had stolen in during the night and taken it away. Was it man or a ghost of the darkness, who could be sure. It was one of the few bone fish hooks, it was the one that caught the most. It was a real loss. All the other hooks were there with the lines, but in the night this treasure had been taken or lost. E kore e kitea he toki huna (*A hidden adze cannot be found*). The fish hook is lost. It may never be found, it may never be found.

DEATH OF AN IMMIGRANT

1857

A speck alone in the vastness of the Southern Ocean

Wave tumbled and adrift at mercy and the fate of the sea.

Abandoned to the elements among the incessant surging pulse of the ocean that explodes in a mass of spray-splintered whiteness and blows off as effluvium. Lashes of rain squalls dive from the south west in heavy curtains across the surface with a persistent voracity that causes the large rain drops to ricochet upwards a meter or more with the impact; like bullets from ten thousand automatic weapons.

Majestic sea birds wheel and dive in ultimate roller coaster rides from crest to crest. Large is the Albatross and petite is the prion, this sea is their home, each a ruler in a vast expanse of ocean kingdom. The cold breath of the southern convergence bites obliquely at the sensitivity of the shimmering surface, causing a refraction of swells that roam the ocean undisturbed by any significant land mass, building larger and larger with each circumnavigation. This tempest of swell, that surges in infinite lines of unabated power across the open expanse, it is unique to this place.

This surface; where the lifeless upturned corpse dressed in fresh garments brought and packed so carefully for the excitement of an immigrant's landing on the soil and promise of a new land, now floats on the swollen undulations. This; no more than a broken dream upon the shock of illness and the tragedy of death. Upon embarking on the voyage, this soul could, have flown with the sure wings of an eagle all the ocean's length so high were his spirits at the prospect of a new beginning, a new life; but now it is gone with his death, never to be.

Under strain of wind-filled canvas, the boat sails onward, intact the living dreams of the others though clouded amid the grimace of tears and memories of their lost son still warm in their hearts. A father's tears, hidden from the others fall drop after drop in private from the ship and melt into the wholeness of ocean, while by the minute the physical distance grows between the dry and living and the brine-drenched dead grows. The brotherless children weep in the warmth of a mother's arms, together. But to what end is the body of an ocean burial destined? Does flesh and bone float or sink? Is it eaten by the ocean beasts? Or does it rot on the sands of an ocean floor? Can they tell?

In three months there is little more than a torn, water-worn coat, washed high up a black stoned beach, the neat folds and pressing forgotten, it lies rejected in a tangle, sea tossed. The woven fibres rotting into the fabric of the earth, it rests at the high water mark amid other remains, that of bleached sea lion bones, shells and dry seaweed, rata leaves twigs and grass. Tangled in a new weave of the fragments from other lives, now dead together. The human body; no trace.

But flung far up the beach is a single button now free from the sutch, foreign in its new environment, eternally forgotten by an excited family settling a new land.

It lies in a sandy hollow with last year's discarded rata leaves dried to brown in the summer sun and a large skua's spit ball of feathers and bird bones.

THE FORGE 1865

We were right! It did work. It needed an extreme effort, but eventually it did perform the function as we had hoped.

For weeks, we had talked this idea over and over in the evenings before we decided to try the likelihood through practical experiment. It all seemed possible. And then, the concern became not the idea, but a matter of how we would set up the forge, and together we offered as many ideas as we could about our observations and experience on each matters.

Now we had built it, and here it was, primitive and simple in its structure, but with all the elements we needed to make it work. With a new sense of optimism we stood around in an excited, craned group as we lit the fire and watched the flames flow through the dry bracken we had found for the base. And as the flame grew, we added small pieces of dry twigs and finally worked up to the full sized logs. The intensity of flame finally waxed into a full raging fire.

Enthralled, we gathered around the heat of the blazing flames in expectation. It drew us into its warmth, it held us as a tight fist might, with our gaze on the gathering race of fire, the licking flames. There was something magical happening here amid the intense heat of the blaze, the sparks whizzing up with the great flying balls of smoke, the logs crackling at us, and the rocks ever growing hotter and hotter. With one and sometimes two men pumping full tilt on the handles of the sealskin bellows the fire became a roar and we knew we could generate enough heat to melt the metal.

To assemble these makeshift bellows had been a task in itself, but they did work and as so the work was warranted. The right skins had to be selected and then the arduous task of the fine stitching took hours. The fixing of the branches to the skins, the hinge mechanism, it all had to be deliberated and then only through experimentation with each part could we succeed.

In the bright, red glow, the thin strip of iron poked anxiously into the flickering flaring heart slowly warmed, became hot and then turned into the pliant red and yellow material we had yearned for. And quickly, at this necromancy of colour, a good strike between two specially selected rocks, one as a flat anvil the other as an improvised hammer, left the desired indent in the metal and it had grown into another more desirable shape. Time after time we heated the strip until it glowed redder and redder and then we would briskly hammer hard until it spread again closer to the shape we were after. It was as though we had discovered this for the first time, and we yelled with mirth.

The finished article was rough, no denying that, rough as I've ever seen in fact, and few of us would have accepted it if we were to purchase such a nail, but still one we could drive the spike into a pair of planks, and that's all we had care of. Although it was a success it also betokened the hard venture ahead if we were to shape any sort of a boat that could carry us off here north to New Zealand. We would need lengths of planks and piles of these hand forged nails to hold them together. We even debated the making of bolts for certain key areas. We were so lucky we had been able to salvage much of the Grafton, when she broke up. There would have been no chance of that on the rugged shores of other parts of these islands. For a ship there could be dashed to bits and gone forever.

We did have the iron to forge the spikes, we did have the planks washed up upon the shore that had been gathered months before, we did have some tools and now with the forge, we were able to make some further utensils to help us with our work. We now had the forge and the wood to power it, we did have the bellows to enrich the flame and boost the heat. And most of all, we did have all the time in the world to dare this venture. We just might succeed.

Despite the tired arms, the aching limbs, Masgrave and Reynal still found more energy, and both kept writing feverishly in their diaries as if trying to out do each other. We would all lie tired watching them, and while we could hardly move a finger, their hands were moving line after line across the pages, flowing out their thoughts and the accounts of the day. Long ago they had run dry of ink from their small bottle and now the fluent words flowed across their blank pages not in black, but in fresh, red, thick seal blood. It took longer to dry than the typical black ink used in the earlier pages that recorded our life here, but the red blood had a richness of colour that desegregated the inexplicable circumstances of our ordeal. It was a total expression of our life here and the struggles we had endured.

The exhilarating satisfaction of the work and our success subterfaged the hardness of the work we had engaged upon. But it didn't take long before the reality of our ambitions manifested itself as a daunting task. Day after day we would cut the wood, stack the fire, pump the bellows and heat the metal. With blow after blow we hit and shaped the molten metal. We became better with the shaping and faster with each spike that dropped into the finished pile and slowly the pile grew, and every day we exhausted ourselves with the smell of smoke and the black of soot on our wrinkled brows.

Keeping up the wood up to the hungry fire was never ending. We needed so much heat and the flames ate fiercely at the fuel. The more wood we burnt, the further we would have to trudge to gather the next load, and this grew further each day. Wet though much of it was, we had no choice but to burn it, for we had no time to dry it.

That we still had to survive while all this exhausting work continued only caused to slow our progress. We still had to search for widgeon and seals about the rocky shores to shoot and then as usual cook up for dinner. The routine tasks about the hut still had to be done daily also, and this took some time. But then, there had been times at the beginning when we could do little more than these key tasks. And then the weather would sweep in with icy blasts and lashes of rain and hail that could stop the work for up to a week at a time, and who felt like work in that? It all added to thwart our fervour, but on we kept with our work.

Cheerful as we were at the work, we continued for weeks, and even while the pile of spikes grew, it became obvious the gap between our finished efforts and our needs still appeared as a great empty chasm. Although Reynal and Masgrave kept our hearts up with their cheerfulness with which they drove at the work, after some time, even they could see the enormity of our task and they began to discuss other ideas. That of lengthening the existing dinghy by using the existing materials we had made over these past weeks to add to it.

After some further time, this was our plan, and we set about the lengthening of the boat with great gusto. We sorted through the planing to find the most suitable pieces and with some slight modification and shaping were able to begin the work. After all our efforts, it felt good to begin driving these spikes through the timbers and begin forming the extended shape of the vessel we were seeking in our minds. Each one of these nails had taken so long to make and we had to make them all count. Although it was larger, it appeared so scanty for such a voyage, but on we pushed.

There were few, but occasionally the old nail would spin off onto the ground as we stuck it for the first time, and among these most were found and red-iron through the timbers. But the ones we never found, they irked us. All that work, just to fly off and be lost.

THE GENERAL GRANT 1866

About an hour after sighting land, which the captain had assumed to be a small island off the Auckland group, there was another more larger and foreboding mass of great black cliffs that affronted us: They rose sheer, towering above us for at least 1200ft by reckoning. Huge bolts of black rock gathered from the ocean and rose in a wall of impenetrable defence in our path. With failing steerage as the breeze died to a breathless lull, the barque creaked in unease at her closeness to the rocks on the somewhat choppy sea.

As we watched from the deck, it seemed a certainty that we would collide at sometime and then, within half an hour at about 11.30 p.m. there was quite a sharp crack from above as the "Grant" struck the cliffs. The jib boom was carried away as it appeared it became stuck in a crag, lodging, then in a crack and a shudder of the ship tearing free to remain on the bluffs. There were screams, women were wailing and young children shrieking, in a din that struck terror among the stoutest of hearts.

The ship then fell astern uncontrolled, to an extended point of rock that rose in a pannicle high aloft. There was another crash, this time more violent, as the spanker-boom and rudder were carried away in a crippling blow that sent rocks spilling from the precipice in a barrage of splashes as they fell to the water or bashed into the side of the ship. In the dark, it was hard to tell exactly what the situation was, but as the disbelieving passengers gathered now in small whispering huddles around the decks, the drift dragged the hull unyieldingly towards the entrance of a great black opening in this seemingly impervious wall. It became obvious we were entering a great cave as the flickering fingers of light from the fire lanterns, reflected in an eerie luminescence from the walls and roof. All night she drifted further in surges, up inside the lengths of this great cavern as if embodied by the womb of the earth itself, or swallowed by a great whale of stone.

The quiet huddles and whispers that had developed since entering the cave had by now turned to a quiet but high anxiety as the echoes in the grotto bounced with the dim reflections from surface to surface. The lap, lap lapping of the waters up the side of the cave walls, and then, every so often the puffing explosion of great breaths of escaping air as the air bubbles trapped under a rock ledge burst to the surface. The slithering lengths of kelp attached firmly to the walls, swirling with the heave around the hull. The drip, drip dripping of the water from the damp roof above. The gentle creak of the ship timbers. All this mixed with the troubled voices, made for an unearthly sleepless night.

Suddenly there was a loud crack, as the foretop mast hit the cave roof dislodging large pieces of rock that fell down upon the ship in a rash of devastating crashes. The massive chunks of rock had stove in the forecastle, leaving gaping holes amid the debris of smashed timber. With this the mood among the people changed still further, there was panic, screams, yelling that overrode the earlier echoes. Before this, it had felt as though this great opening had offered a strange protection as a womb to the child, a burrow to the hare, but now it was as though we were trapped inside a huge stone Leviathan, and would surely die.

From here, each knew the ship was damned to destruct and in hysterical alarm the prize possessions from their kits below were searched for. If we were to be ship wrecked on this desolate island, what would we need? Three men and myself had hauled the ship's medical chest up from below while the crew were assembling a store of food tools and blankets. If there was some escape in the morning through the longboat and other small craft aboard there just might be a chance to retrieve some of these essential items. But beside the three with the medical chest, were miners fresh from the fields in Australia, from the fields of Ballarat and Bendigo, with their fortunes of gold wrapped in blankets and tied to their backs. There were women and children, seamen that worked the boat, the cooks, rich and poor, all in terror.

It seemed the night would never end, as the ship rocked in a bounce on the lap of the water, slowly moving further and further inside the tunnel-like cave. The crew had been taking soundings and there remained a constant twenty-five fathoms under her stern as she struck forward, which would at least keep us afloat. Eventually, there was a faint glow of pink that turned to gold and then faded with all promise to a dull grey, at the entrance of the cave which heralded the beginning of a new day. This we had all been told, was the time for us to abandon the ship and attempt landing in the smaller craft on another part of the island. As the glow brightened it was clear we had troubles unseen in the dark. The chop on the surface had turned to definite swells that entered the cave and ran in a wild surge along the walls, lifting the hull, before passing us and crashing on into the end of the cave a further 100 to 200 yards inside this enormous cavern.

However, the men had erected a boom over the stern and quite soon the boats were lowered. We watched as the pinnace was dropped down first, and three able seamen were sent with stout lines to attach them in an attempt to lay a kedge for hauling out the smaller craft. Once done, the gig was put to use and with some jostling on the growing swells, the chief officer, three seaman and one brave passenger cleared the entrance of the cave. We felt much better at this success until there was a brittle crack that sounded the snapping of the top mast which had been jammed on the cave roof for the past hour as the new tide pushed its way upward. It was this that had jammed hard onto the roof holding the ship fast, and now to our dismay, she was free to drift deeper inside. There were shrill confused shouts from below that signalled a strong leak as the hull had opened and a torrent of water poured in. As the mast had broken, it had also pushed a gaping hole in the bottom of the hull. There was real panic from here on, with the ship now taking on water.

Children were crying in the arms of frightened mothers, brave men at the departure were now fearful in expression. The captain and crew were shouting in an echoed din that confused their messages. Chaos reigned. It was clearly day by now, the tide was beginning to gain all the while, as the wind rose and the swell pushed ever higher up the walls of the cavern. They were lowering Mrs Jewell, who had been an admirable stewardess on the voyage, for she was the only woman to be coaxed into attempting to gain the boats below. Slowly down to a boat she swung, when there was a lurch, she lost her grasp and tumbled into the cold water with a splash. In an instant her loyal husband had dived over the edge and had grasped her in tow towards the waiting craft. She was along side the small craft bobbing in the water for a few moments with her husband beside her, before being hauled into the safety of the boat. There they sat, cold and wet before they were joined by two other men that had also jumped into the water to help with her rescue. We had missed their leap as our attention was elsewhere, being quite close to Mr Jewell. As they sat there, we cheered them.

Our regard now turned to the seas overwhelming the poop of the "General Grant". They were sweeping in through the entrance of the cavern, and running straight down the tunnel to break across the ship in such a manner as to free the long boat afloat. In reflex there was a mad scramble as a dozen or so frightened persons scampered aboard. I was left with the screaming wife and two children of one wretch who had made it on board and had made not an effort to drag them along with him. All the craft then made a desperate dash for the open sea, for the pinnace had at least 40 crammed aboard, while the rest of us were left behind on the sinking ship, among them the captain.

There was more chaos when we saw the long boat swamped at once by a large wave. Perhaps there were three rescued by the other craft, but we heard the screams for help as others drowned in the clear coldness of the waters. At this point there was a great sweeping crest that washed the ship from end to end and the only choice for me was the loose hatch cover that floated in the foam beside me. In another crash of white spray, and before I could find a thought I was floated free and far up inside the cave a way from the hull. The sudden coldness had taken my breath and I gasped deeper and deeper for air I could not find. Beside me was all manner of debris, floated off the decks. On the mizzen-mast clinging like rats, were the captain and a single seaman, while far out through the entrance I could make out the bold stroking as the boats headed off out into the ocean. There seemed little chance for me, although I had floated right to the end of the cavern and found solid ground under my feet. I remember the round boulders were slippery as I hauled myself up to the dry rocks in front of me, and collapsed panting with exhaustion from the cold.

When I regained my senses, after a time could hardly guess at. I realized I was alone; inside an enormous vaulted dome that formed the head of the cavern. Beside me, the cold rocks and the debris of our sunken ship, now little more than two masts projecting from the water. There were the bodies of five poor souls, and that of a child perhaps five years, being thrown by the surf across the round rocks. I was weak, cold and I shivered uncontrolled as my clothes clung wet to my wretched skin and my head raced with uncontrolled thoughts. After some uncomfortable effort, I managed to drag what bodies I could to higher ground. It was a pitiful sight, the child I had seen not the day before playing on the deck with a boy's check and all had now been battered by the action of the waves so that I could hardly recognize them with a glance. There were other items floating in the surges that crashed up onto the rocks, and it occurred that I may find items for my survival.

At the end of the day, with increasing difficulty, I had retrieved wet blankets, a wide selection of coloured bottles that contained assorted mixtures and had broken free from the medical chest somehow surviving the trip to shore. There was even a box of wet biscuits, strips of canvas and lengths of rope, a great supply of broken timbers strewn across the rocks, though no matches. The night was coming and in preparation, I constructed a shelter from broken timbers and the strips of canvas, as far from the shore and the crashing waves as I could.

During the night, the roar in the cave became deafening, and sleep was an impossible thought for the second night, but as the light crept into the cave, I could see huge swells pouring in the entrance and running several hundred yards surging along the walls before crashing violently into the shore in front of me. It was much more violent than the day before. The great round boulders were being rolled in a hideous grinding sound as the waves swept in and then sucked back out once more tossing them ever round. The air hung with the rain like thickness of sea spray and I could hardly see the open entrance of the cave. There was more ship's debris high up the shingle bank that formed the protection between me and the surging turmoil of wave.

The wet biscuit tasted terrible as I sat there shivering, watching this terrifying display, contemplating my slim chance of survival. There was no water, and little food other than this wet salted biscuit. It was certain that I had been abandoned by the others, presumed drowned. And even if I was known to be alive, there was no chance of a boat entering the cave for some time with the tremendous fury of this storm. It seemed I would slowly die, probably of dehydration here in this enormous tomb. There were the others dead on the rocks below me, perhaps they were lucky. Perhaps I at least owed them a burial while I was still in the land of the living.

I found a further six bodies, including two children and a woman within reach, while there were many others among the rocks and seas that I dared not venture to retrieve. Each I laid out side by side and constructed piles of round rocks to cover them. At the head of each I placed a makeshift wooden cross I had managed to construct from the wreckage. It was only a token. As I moved the body of one man, a handsome soul I had talked with on the boat, I noticed he had a blanket rolled and tied to his back. My curiosity caught the better of me and I had to unroll the blanket. There, in the centre, was a heavy canvas bag. Inside the unmistakable shine of gold; these miners had died with their fortune. I buried it with the man as it seemed to have no further purpose in this strange world.

This had taken most of the day, and as the light began to fade outside the cavern, it was then that I laid myself out in a hollow beside these others, and one by one swallowed the acrid contents of the many medical bottles washed ashore the day before. Though they had lost their labels, and I could only guess at the contents of the greeny blue coloured glass jars, I knew one or all would kill me quickly, and I could soon lie with the others in eternal sleep, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

A BEACON AND THE VICTORIA TREE 1869

Ere, we felt cold. Chilled, shivering to the spine we went about our workings in this windswept weebegone land. Pervaded, did the brassy cold seep through, right past our flesh down to our very bones. Yet, we were solely here in the open for hardly more than a day at a time and it was hard at that to fully suffer as a castaway might. How could the poor souls shipwrecked on these bleak islands survive the cold alone, perhaps even without so much as a match? What a plight.

Ironic was it? Here we were heartily hammering up a beacon to alert any piteous wretches that may have the misfortune to be wrecked on these craggy coasts, with a message that help was not far at hand and all would be well, yet we could hardly stand the cold winds and the ceaseless mists and dowsings for a day ourselves. Hold on tight lads, take a full grip, we'll be back, you're nary forgotten. Just survive here for as long as it takes however you can. Irrevocably, you'll be rescued, if you can last that long. What famous last words they could be to a wretch dying of cold. Double entendre is the last thing any poor soul left here needs. We couldn't attest to any return in time to save them.

Poor blighters. Wouldn't swap a place with them for all the teas of all the Chinas of the world. Nary for a second. The sooner we's away from here to warmer latitudes and calmer seas, the better. I can't seem to stand the place in any ways at all. Inhospitable and a bleaker place I can't foresee any where on the globe. To our safe return, warm sun and a dry land I'll raise my glass any day.

Even in this cold and foul weather, we's did erect the beacon though. High on a promontory there stood a large flagstaff, placed here by the Hardwicke settlement to alert any shipping of their scant town's existence. What a sparse time they made of this severe land. Never were they going to succeed from the day they left, and never they did. A man can't tame this place, but only with luck can leave alive.

All of seven feet off the ground, we's affixed a large triangle of wood as the beacon to this towering flagstaff on the hill. With eight stout nails at the apex and a further six on the bottom it should hold steadfast against the gravest of elements. Upon our marker, the designated Inscription read "H.M.S. Blanch Painted and Refitted Beacons, Examine Replenish Necessaries, March 1869". We's were here in late summer and bad it's been now, but these blighters might have to stand the wholeness of a cruel winter. Pity is nary the word, god save their souls.

Over to the right of the staff and beacon,, across the cleared area on the top there was another marker of a former voyage. A large tree, or the sad remains of it. One of these taut rata trees by fact. And down the seaward facing side a large sawn flat face, with a deeper inscription than our own. The words read, "H.M.C.S. VICTORIA Norman, (that was the captains name) In Search of Shipwrecked People Oct 13, 1865" and then the names of several people below. It seemed these names were the crew of their ship "Blanch".

Lopped off at the top were all of the upper branches of this sole tree. The dismembered arms attempted to reach upward, but finished, abrupt in a saw cut. And it had been painted all over, black and white to attract any attention of some desperate soul. Seen, it could be from quite some distance about the bay and it was because of this we had decided to erect our beacon on the flagstaff near the ghosting shape of this "Victoria" tree.

To cut the inscription in this "Victoria Tree" must have taken some effort. Deep were the incised letters and longer their message and it had to be carried out here on the windy knoll top. Ours had been carved in the comfort of the cabins of the steam ship as we lay in the bay and hardly cut the surface of the timber. They could only endure the weather for each single letter till the full message was sliced into the hard wood.

That they had been here as we, but had spent longer we couldn't doubt. The tree stood as their mark. They had fired guns to alert any stranded beings at regular intervals as they sailed about the shores. At the same time, they had released animals as food for the castaways, but little else was found. Musgrave was on board. He is a legend of these parts. What man would spend twenty months castaway, build a boat and sail it in a full storm for five days and nights without a wink of sleep back to the colony, then turn his tail to sail back as soon as he could to rescue his mates and finally embark on another trip to set up provision depots and search for other poor souls castaway as he had been. Martyr or fool, I can't decide, but I do admire him.

When I return to some form of civilization, I sha'n't come back. Never to islands as this isolated place. Almost ill I feel from being here. Enough for me is just the once. Then only in some comfort, for I could never survive as a castaway; I've had my fill with that wretched trip down on the ever heave of the ocean. For a sailor I fear I am not.

We carefully left some more vital supplies in the depot before we at last turned to leave. Flour, sugar, tea and another rifle with ammunition. There is game aplenty if one can find it about the tangle of trees upon the land. We spotted one of the pigs grunting through the scrub, but it was soon gone at sight of us, no doubt hard to shoot. Some bottles of rum, unopened to boot, salt and some dry clothes. May the man that needs these find them in time, for he deserves them all in the brassy winds of this land.

IN SEARCH FOR A STAR AND THE LOSS OF A LENS 1874

I had no idea that the island we had come to would look as strange and as foreboding as this. Here, it was the forest that had me intrigued the most. Gnaris without and great knots within. They seemed to be twisted and tortured in a way that I had never seen any forest before in any area of Europe. Certainly, the great forests back home I have never seen look like this. Even the deepest depths of the Black Forest seem a kind place by comparison.

We had spent much longer installing a firm base and accurately setting up the instruments for the observation of the Transit than we had anticipated. Our main problem had been the finding of a solid foundation within the subsoil. Though we had chosen a site quite close to the coast, the peaty earth, well water saturated, could not provide the necessary stability required for the necessary solid foundation. We had to embark on digging through this spongy layer to find a firm rock base. A full four meters of this material was dug through before the obligatory solid base revealed itself. This spongy black layer was surprising in its thickness, comprising assumedly the rotting remains of the many forests fallen in the thousands of years before.

As it appears the climate of this area affords a slow growth to the lofty of these trees and I suspect they may be of a great age perhaps even hundreds of years old. We counted the growth rings on one of the smaller trees we had cut for the building of the accommodation area, and it far exceeded one hundred thirty years. It may be even more deceptive as to the age of this strange earthy substance that makes up the soil than we can estimate. The water saturation of the soil is a by-product from the weather, as there is a permanent mist and rain that plagues the climate, and it drips lingeringly through the earth as it runs down to the ocean.

The water is a by-product from the weather, as there is a permanent mist and rain that plagues the climate, and drips through the earth. It was very doubtful and a chance affair that our venture would succeed in any way with this consistent cloud cover and unclearingness, that threatened to foil our expedition. Apart from the odd glimpses of a pale sun and wisps of blue sky behind the lead grey, little had been seen by us of the settled, clear and fine weather we had hoped for and needed for the success of the expedition. If the climate we have experienced while here is typical, it could be said the sun in this land is as cold and cruel as a Russian, heart and an extended period of life here would become a desperate search to see the sun. There is a general greyness that prevails, and it is often only replaced with the dense black of storm clouds of rain and hail that blow in with the tempestuous winds.

We had spent some considerable time and expense in the arrangements for the buildings of the expedition, and while questioned by some right up to our departure, it proved more than justified in the inclement weather of this land. These buildings were vital to our sustaining the expedition. When we had all the buildings and tents erected, it was like a tiny village in the wilds of the land. There was a terrace area of bricks which extended out in front of the main building. The main building itself was quite large and more than one level in height. We had formed good access around the camp site through a number of small stepped tracks that casually meandered around the uneven contours of the hills from both directions of this main building. Above the main service area and laboratory building, on much higher ground, was the camp site for the main accommodation tents.

Twice, we were so rained out that we all had to sleep in the main area and salvage the sodden remains of our tents several days later, so the substantial investment in buildings and this service area was a wise and necessary decision. We were careful with the site, both in choice and our treatment; all rubbish that was not to be taken back to Germany was buried in a deep pit, some distance behind the camp, dug for this exact purpose. We had cleared some amount of the larger trees by the time of our departure, both from the ease of movement among our camp and the constant supply of fire wood needed to keep these "home fires" burning during our occupation. This had left the hills quite bare in some places, but I suspect that the trees can grow back given time.

Right to the exact night of the transit, it seemed still to be this cloudy weather that would play the largest part in the achievement of our expedition, but somehow, on the day during the exact hours needed, these broiling mists parted enough to allow the necessary observations and the Transit of Venus was observed by most of the expedition party. A miracle it may have been, but the expedition purpose was fulfilled and our spirits cheered with this limited success.

I had taken opportunities as they arose to photograph as much of the typography with the inclusion of the weird forest as I chanced to. It was this that fascinated me perhaps more than our designed purpose, though I never let my true feeling be known to the others of authority in the party. There was quite some time at the disassemblage of the buildings and clean up towards the end of the expedition which I was able to exploit for the purpose of my photography. Though this time grew shorter by the day, and I rushed to expose as many plates as I could manage on the final few days that belonged to our stay on the island.

The trees were of a very hard wood, like iron, and great trunks had been blown flat to the ground by the gales. But even from these hard iron-like trunks, large branches reached tentatively upwards for the failed sunlight. These great trunks lay knurled, knuckled and gnarled in a way beyond belief. All the twisted lengths grew away from the brutality of the wind direction; in our area this was towards the sea, as if an escape there could be found. Strong blustery winds must inflict these small island constantly. These trees are sure evidence to the persistent intensity and direction of the gales that inflict this part of the globe. Evidence is also suggested by the ill-fated ships that have recently blundered onto the rocks with the tragedy of many fatalities. I had spent time at the grave sites on the bush clad hill above Port Ross and felt so moved by the human tragedy of the island as to afford some photographic plates to their existence. Travelling through the forest, even with assistance of another can become a difficult task in many places, with the accompaniment of the photographic equipment a hinderance one could well do without. In all I had shot 115 pictures, 95 with dry plate and a further 20 with wet plate.

Though I had few problems with my photographic equipment, even managing to keep most things relatively dry over the stay on the island, I did lose a small lens at one of the sites for a photographic study, and it seems just simply to have been forgotten to be packed with the other equipment once we had finished the exposure to move on. We made more than an attempt to find it, but the nature of the rippled untamed land is such that the same pathway is impossible to follow twice on any one day. The task would be that in nature of finding a needle in a hay stack. Though I could spend an hour of every day for that last week searching, I finally acknowledged the loss as permanent once the "Alexandrine" sailed with us on board for the home land.

THE NELSONS 1877

It was such a pitiful sight. Two people bedraggled in isolation. Dressed in rags, unkempt and half hungry by the look of them. They looked as if they could do with a good bathe in a warm bath and a bar of soap. They had been nine months without being visited by any soul, and were almost demented with their own presence it seemed to us. As alone as one could be. Yet they refused to come away no matter how we tried to persuade them. We offered them a free passage with us more than once and still they were adamant in their desire to stay down here. They may have been a close couple that liked isolation, but staying here by themselves was just plain folly. They may have been half simple too, for we could see no reason to stay. I suppose the woman must have had to endure the worst of it, at times it must be shocking. It was hard to imagine why they would want to prevail in this lonely land at the end of the earth.

These people, they didn't really have to be here, they didn't have to come and disturb us. We don't need them. All they seem to want to do is talk us into going away from here. This is our place, we know it and we'll be here when all these blighters have gone, I can bet you of that. We won't go. Bloody old Watts has probably been in cahoots with Monkton with this lot, I reckon they're all out to get us off here. Bastards all of them. There's no way we'll go, not a show at what they're planning. We've got strength that they couldn't guess at.

The man was probably coercing his poor wife to stay here. He was conspicuously resentful of their failure to farm this land and the intention to replace them. It appeared that the run holder Dr Monkton who was trying to make a go of this place had replaced them with another farm manager, a Mr Watts in 1875, and he was to take over, but this man and his wife had refused to accept the termination of their position and just would not return to New Zealand. We had heard a report before we arrived down here, that they had no intention of co-operating with the plan for them to return, and stubbornly remained. So they had been down here independently since then surviving by themselves. It seemed that Monkton had secured the first grazing lease from the Dominion Government, but the whole venture had been a disaster from my limited observations, as the land was not good for this purpose, sailing and supplies were difficult and this trouble with the Nelsons was a sad affair also.

The way the bastards looked at me. I could feel their lewd eyes, I knew what they were up to. They scanned their look all over us, I could see them shake their heads and look down upon us with a frown. But James and I are going to stay, nothing surer; the bastards, who do they think they are? We'll be able to make a go of this place when they all go and there's just us. James can do it, I know he can. We know how to break in this land properly for the stock. We could clear away the thick scrub much better than Watts. Bloody Watts hasn't got a clue. Lazy blighter. It won't be long until they pack him up and we can have a proper go once more.

It seemed they had seen a few people in the years they were down here. They talked of meeting the German Transit of Venus Expedition in 1874 and spending a few evenings with them. There was the infrequent visit from the "Awarua" that would call in to check supplies at the castaway depots, and they had also had some contact with the "Gazelle" that came here in search of the "General Grant's" gold. No one knows if they ever found it, as they disappeared on the return trip never to be seen again. It was said they sank, but maybe they were secretive about their find and sailed off to a discreet port. But these past nine months must have been hell for these two; no one at all had visited.

We're steadily building up a good stash of top grade seal skins; in time they'll be worth a fortune. Once we get that lot back to New Zealand and sell them for a top price. That will fix old Monkton and Watts when we have got enough to buy out his lease. If we can just keep going, we'll be able to do it in no time. I know we have had to borrow a few items from the castaway stores to keep us going. Only bits and pieces over a long time, and I know the provision depots look a bit bare at the moment, but we can easily replace them with the extra money from the skins. And if we can't, once we make a go of it and we have a bit more money, we'll be able to replace it all and everything will be square once more.

This poor couple showed us the results of their strenuous efforts and all it amounted to was little more than a few seal skins. They had been here for years, since 1874 in fact, and in all that time all they had accrued was these few motley skins. It was pathetic! What the hell were they about? I can't figure them out. I kept eyeing them over in wonder at their stupidity. The woman looked so badly, and I could hardly keep an eye from her, rough were her hands, worn her sealskin coat and the skin around her neck was thick in the folds with worn in grime. If one dared to look there might have been enough dirt in her ears to grow potatoes. It was so hard to glance away, as I had never seen such a pathetic woman, even in the worst squalor of London; it was sickening to say the least.

The blighters, all they could do was stand and gawk. Stare us up and down. Is that all they thought we were good for a snigger, a giggle? Lord knows what they really thought. Had they never seen keen people before? Could they not see we were thin and fit with work, they were so a fat and typical of lazy affluent oafs, it nearly made me sick. They wanted us to fail, I could tell, just like Watts and Monkton. They'll see we were right in the end, we'll work hard. James and I will stay here until we win a pound I'd bet on that.

Even if they were indignant about their sacking, did they really have to stay here? What were they trying to prove, and to whom? There was also the shocking question of the castaway stores. Right back in 1875 they were suspected by some of raiding the provision depots for their own needs, and it seemed that they had continued to do so for all these years. Even the very boots they wore appeared to have come from the stores depot. There was little doubt that they had made constant raids on the provision depots on the islands from our observations. These had been set here for the relief of any desperate castaways, not for the welfare of these self-inflicted introverted hermits.

We didn't want their offers of help. It was all aimed at getting us off the island. But we're steadfast. James only asked them for one thing, a pocket watch. We both longed to see the hands turn round and round and keep track of the passing hours. James had lost his in the thick scrub behind our dwelling. The bastards couldn't even give us that. It proved they were in cahoots with Watts all right, couldn't even spare a watch. The sooner they go off again the better. Bastards all of them. Just go and leave us alone.

The man asked if we could lend him a pocket watch. Said he had lost it in the scrub and he could do with another one. What would anyone need a watch for in a land like this? The only one we had was a present from my father and though I felt stingy at not being able to offer them the one thing they wished for, I just could not. They would have to be the strangest pair I have ever met and seem like white aboriginals without a tribe in the isolation of the antipodes.



DERRY CASTLE 1887

With much excitement, we stroked for shore. The roughly made oars, cumbersome to use and hard on the palms, were making some effect on the distance to the island. The craft we had assembled from no more than the washed up wreckage of our old ship, fashioned with only bare hands and a sole rusty axe head found on the island, was slow to move despite the strain of our endeavour. It was mainly due to the shape, chisel-nosed at both ends, more of a punt than a boat, and lined with wrinkled canvas on the outside to keep it tight from the sea. It was an ungainly shape we had to push through the water rather than cut or glide as a proper boat would have. It meant hillshaking hard work for us, but it did stay afloat.

After the wreck of the Derry Castle in the dead of the darkness, we had spent too long on Enderby island. It had all been a terrible span right from the unexpected time we struck the reef, with the mutilated bodies of those drowned at the wreck to bury as best we could, little food of any worth, wet cold clothes that hung to us and inevitably dried stiff as boards with brine and no fire to warm by (till we managed to strike a single cartridge found in a pocket, to smoulder and coax in to flame). And no boat, of any kind that was the worst of it, that's why our simple punt meant so much. We had a means of movement from one island to another.

We had looked, all of us, long and hard for hours at a time, across the water to the outway depot on the other island at Erebus cove. More frustrated by the day we became from the need of a boat to cross the water between the two islands. There could be all the supplies in that shelter that we would need and then some more, even though the depot on Enderby had nothing more than a confounded solitary bottle of salt. The rest, the essentials we so desperately needed, we can only assume must have been taken by an inconsiderate fool.

Yes, the bulk of those supplies must have been commandeered by a visiting ship, despite the notice on the lid of the box that read, 'CASE AND S'. The curse of the widow and fatherless child light upon the man who breaks this box, whilst he has a ship at his back. All we found was the empty box and these unheeded but telling words, with the single bottle of salt. It made us shudder in our boots at the thought that our wives could be the next widows and our children the next fatherless, while at the same time we were mad with rage at the scoundrel who has pilfered the bulk of the supplies. May the curse of the sea fall upon him as well and find him an eternal grave.

We were not brave or perhaps foolish enough to cross the strait in one single sweep, from point to point in this frail craft. No, we hugged the coast in fear of any fast approaching storm, though the day had held calm and clear. Then in a frantic burst of energy, we would cross the straight from island to island hugging the coast line as close as we dared once more. Eventually after this island skipping, we reached the main island following the coast line closely around the points and bays there too. Right down, along the rocky shore, past bay after bay and past a great fluted knob of rock that rose vertical from the ocean as a headland we stroked. It was surprisingly hard, as it took a full day to cover a distance that we could normally have rowed in an hour.

Finally we pulled the heavy punt well clear of the ocean and tied it to a tree as well as we were able, for the last calamity we could do with was to lose this only craft. This punt we might need again to cross the strait and bring the others over one at a time. The supply depot was here, right in front of us, and with some excitement we walked up the over-grown path way to the doorway. With some hesitation the door was finally opened to reveal inside a full hut of the supplies we had dreamed of.

In utter jubilation, in we rushed. The others could well have heard our happy cries across the ocean as box after box we ripped open.

There was biscuit, more than we could have imagined, and we immediately crammed our mouths full to the brim with this dry and crumbly food. We feverishly crunched away as we ripped out the other items from the welcome boxes. 'Blankets', Rennie called 'and matches'.

But I had found tea, sugar and dripping among the packages and called back.

'There's knives, fishing lines and hooks, an axe and saws' he exclaimed. 'we'll be right from now on, god we're saved'.

In my next box was preserved meat, medicine, and when I lifted the lid of the next box beside me, there were fresh and warm clothing, boots as well.

Rennie had found cooking utensils and rifles complete with ammunition. There was even more salt! We would all have more supplies than we could have dreamed of. Now at last, we could all deal a blow to the beast of famine. The very first thing we did was to make a cup of tea to wash down the dry biscuit. I never have sugar in my tea, but this once it tasted sweet and as delightful as I had never imagined. We sat on the now empty boxes chatting about our outlook and sipping on the hot tea. It felt good.

After some time and maybe the third cup of the refreshing tea, we discussed the prospects for us. All now we had this abundant supply of essentials. It seemed we were safe. But what if we were here wretched for years, how would the supplies last out then? Perhaps there was too many of us and they would run out in no time? As we had opened them, it seemed there was ample, but now the pile had suddenly diminished and there seemed not so much to last awhile, and it worried us. We talked over all kinds of wild scenarios and we were both determined that if anyone would survive this ordeal, it would be the two of us, for it was us two who had taken the risk in this uncertain craft across the changeable strait.

We decided then to have an extra share for ourselves, and hide some supplies unknown and away from the others, in the bush that we could use if things become tight. So, we gathered up enough that could not be missed when the others arrived, both in terms of essential food, and also clothes, a rifle, ammunition and fish hooks. These we carried far off into the bush and hid them in a dry sheltered spot that we covered with branches. We had already decided that the best option was to have two 'private' depots for only our use at a later date. One with food at the south of the shelter, and the other with the rifle, fish hooks, clothes and some more food. This second stash, would be used as a last resort, while the other one could be used more freely to supplement our normal diet.

After this, we managed to find the dingy left by the Government steamer, and set off rowing back to the main island. In time, through a series of crossings, all the castaways were enjoying the luxury of the supplies of the depot. We spent several months in relative comfort, and the supplies held quite well for all our needs. Unfortunately, after a period of months, the two of us became greedy, and would sneak off through the trees to the first supply depot for extra food to add to the normal rations at any chance we could. This we had indulged in for a few weeks, till we were apprehended by one of the other castaways.

It was an embarrassment to have been caught with no reasonable excuse, and it caused all hell in the camp. We felt so low and untrue to our comrades when they all found out. I couldn't face them for weeks after with anything like an eyeball to eyeball look. They would look at us with the foulest of expressions, knowing of our true deeds and thoughts. We felt like heels for the rest of the time we all spent together on that island.

It was about a month later that we were all rescued by the sealing vessel 'Awarua'. In the dead of night, through the dark, we heard an anchor chain rattle and splash into the ocean. We hailed as loud and long as we could, but the sea was boisterous, coming in from the north east with the effect of defeating our efforts and blowing our cries ashore. It

was also too rough to chance a row in the boat out to the ship in the dead of the night, but in the morning we could see the welcome ship and easily alerted them of our presence. From here we were in good hands and certain of our survival.

The second stash of supplies with the essentials in it are probably still hidden, as we dared not tell the others that we actually had two lots of supplies hidden from them. These must lie, dry in the shelter we chose and now remain forgotten forever.

BROKEN PIPES 1891

Such winds we had never seen in all our days in the brine. Even the old salts were in awe of the storm though they tried to calm us younger men. The ocean by day was white with the spray whipping across the rolling waves; like feathers of fine vapour in a vortex of confusion the scud flew across the current of air. Williwaws spun across the surface in an overwhelming display. Undying in our ears, the noise was a deafening fury that frightened us with a whistle and whine through the rope, the bashing of the blocks, the trill through the weave of the halyards, the creaking strain of planks and timber, and the crashing boom of tumbling wave. It was a full chorus of the ocean's every breath, and one to be wary of.

We stood in fear of our lives clutching the safety of the parts of the brig that seemed to offer some protection and support, for one could be thrown from one side to the next with no warning at all. We all knew our ship, and as good a sea boat was hard to find, but we knew her limits too and that she could hardly take any more in this tempestuous sea. The old seamen said it would be a luck not to be flapdragoned by the turmoil of water that drove as mountains around us and turned our sea boat into little more than a cork in a torrent whirling out of control. With a reasoning we can't tell or understand, we did remain upright amid this boisterous confusion of water, and we managed some kind of unerring heading.

But somehow we kept onward with as little sail as we could on the masts, but as much as we dared to steer her by. Great waves would come sliding over the side from time to time, running across the deck then spilling back through the scupper-holes into the ocean again. The deck cargo and fixtures rattled thumped and banged with each breach of the gunwale, and if not tided down with a proper fastening, would have been ripped free in seconds. The worst of it was the alarm of the sudden hull lurches that awkwardly flattened her to the bulkheads at the most unexpected times. While the near broaches left the taste of a fast beating heart high in ones mouth. For this deluge came from all sides and above all at once. Visibility was poor, as a grey line of mist cut the horizon but a few miles ahead, reducing our clear vision ahead to hardly a few leagues.

If it had not been for the watch of the first mate we could easily have been caught between the cruel rock and the hardface. For there was land off our starboard bow. Was it heaven or hell; an island in the midst of this? For shelter we could in the lee, but to steer untrue by more or less a few points was the certainty of a ship wrecked on the rocks. Nothing is more close than the fact of those vertical black rocks laughing through the suspended mists of spray, and the course of the ship. For we could so easily have been castaways amid the deathly action of the sea and the enormity of those cliffs if we had not, by the grace of god, not been able to steer the course through the pass in the jagged rocks and tossing breaking rollers.

This inhalation and exhalation of the ocean at the land's edge in a tempest of swell that threatened to toss us all to hell was an awesome sight. Death at sea is a terrible thing for any man young or old. It was hesitant probing as we eased a course through the great crashing swells that broke on the reefs around the gut between the islands jeopardized our ship. But in a sudden surge and tremendous explosion of spray uncontrolled we were shot through the fine gap between the reefs and out into the open bay beyond.

Once through this group of rocky islets and we had gained their protection from the violence of the ocean, the rollers moderated and the foamy surface abated to a pale grey with only the tale of thick slicks of scud. Little more than a whisper of the shout outside became the seas. To hold our course and not sail past the shelter of the island was a demanding task for the best of captain and crew, for to beat back up to anchor in a storm like this could be nigh impossible.

The further we sailed into the safe harbour, the more the storm concealed its fury. We finally dropped anchor at Port Ross, though we all preferred the old charted name of Sarah's Bosom. It reminded us all of the family we had or the friendship we kept and the warm loving bosoms we had left back in Melbourne and now all longed for. It is a strange thing, for once at sea you yearn for the warm bosom of a loved one and a strong embrace; but once close to this loved one the yearn for the sea and smell of salt it calls you back. We reveled in the relative safe haven of this place and the sight of land, uninhabited and murky though it was.

Without delay a party was made ready and sent ashore in the ship's dinghy to explore and find fresh water, as our supply barrels had been smashed and salted in the storm. With the swirl of wind eddy, the odd williwaw blasting away farther out to sea and unpredictable unseen gusts blowing down from the hills, a dinghy was hard to steer a true course to the rocks of the bay. Then once we did, dry ground was strange to the feet, for it moved with a regular roll and a pitch as if an ocean itself, it worried us not for we knew the feeling well from the countless other voyages on the swells of the sea we had all endured. The trees of this forest we found ourselves in, were no less than a twisted mass great of branched trunks, corkscrewed by some extraordinary natural force of growth. We stood there for some time, breathing the ambience of this eerie place, imagining the countless storms that had thundered onto the island forcing these trees to grow as they did.

Once the barrels were landed and filled, we decided to explore the lie of the land somewhat as we had finished the task in less time than we supposed, and there was little to do till the fury outside abated. Ahead there was the resemblance of a track, and we could tell this was used by the wild pigs that were free here by the marks in the mud and their rooting up of the earth. We started up through the muddy line, brushing aside the scrub that overhung the track in places.

There was some ground that lay clear of the larger trunks to our left, and by some effort we were able to cross the ridge dividing it from ourselves. We deduced that it may have been the remains of some activity on the island some years before. But now a resurgence of new plants left the area overgrown with a thick covering two to three feet high as the plants fought a vigorous battle to cover the ground that had once been cleared. It may have been for some kind of farming venture, as it seems they had attempted a settlement here years before. But there were sealers too who had cut the trees for fires of warmth in the months of their stays, and this area of clearing could well have been from them.

We were hardly across the divide when it seemed the time for a pipe of tobacco was about right. There were five of us, and we all smoked pipes, so it seemed that one would have a vestal and it was true that we did. We had some good pipe tobacco too, but as we each brought out our pipes from our kits, there wasn't a good one among them. All broken they were. Broken on the shanks and the only way we could have a smoke was to suck on the broken ends with half a bowl full. The smoke is much hotter with less than half a stem, but it was welcome in our lungs in the cold grey of the wintry day.

From the hill we could see the barque far out in the bay and a fine sight she looked at anchor in the shelter of this bosom. We could also see the waves and spray from the ocean proper that we had been in not a few hours before whipping across the peaks of another smaller island off to the north. After the pipe, there seemed little use for the broken stumps of clay we had used, for the ship had more than enough to supply all of us with Ben - Wintry cutty pipes along with good tobacco, so we tossed the useless clay ends into a heap on the fire we had lit and covered the lot with a few loose stones and rocks until we were certain the last flicker of life was dead. It almost resembled a small monument by the time we had succeeded in quenching the flames, such was our concern to leave no chance of the fire spreading to the undergrowth of the thick bush.

There was a loud clang, clang clanging of the ship's bell as signal for us to return, for we had become quite preoccupied with our wanderings that we had forgot the time, and it was now nigh time to return before the evening light failed completely and we were stuck here for the night amid the brush. So off we set back down the hill in a slippery race of the shore and the boat.

Observations and Collections

1907

Upon the arrival of the entire expedition about midday on the 17th of November 1907, we had been greeted by a lowering sky that darkened the atmosphere to that of late evening even though it was just after noon. There was a fresh north-north-west breeze that brought occasional shrouds of mist sweeping across the sky and obscured the tops, and every so often there was the odd fine drop of rain falling on the wind. Similar weather had prevailed for the past few days on the island, although the wind direction had swung markedly on the compass during this time.

We had been more than surprised to find a bedraggled group of castaway seamen from the barque the *Dundonald*, firmly entrenched and residing at one of the Government stations we had called at. They were certainly elated to see us and realise that at last rescue was at hand. From their delirious accounts and garbled conversations, these poor chaps had struggled through a real hard time of it. We spent quite some time making sure they were recovering now they had found the supply depot. We added to this with our own stores and felt assured they would have no fears of running short of food or medical needs.

Initially, they told how they had been wrecked on Disappointment Island and had miraculously managed to scramble ashore on the sheer cliffs. It seemed that island had no supply station because of the very fact no one thought that the cliffs could be scaled. Poor chaps were a little perplexed to learn that although they were rescued, they would still have to suffer this place a little longer, at least until we had finished our scientific studies and could return with them to New Zealand and civilization.

The weather was not fine in any sense of the word, as we eventually began our studies, but it did not stop us working at all, and in fact was perhaps more pleasant to work in than the heat of the dry alpine ranges on a summers day back in New Zealand.

The first samples I had taken, *Notothenia colbecki*, Boulenger, were not unexpected, as it had already been partly described through an earlier collection and taken from Campbell Island. At the kind invitation of His Excellency the Governor to join his party for a tour of the southern islands at the beginning of the year, in February this year, I had been able to take some specimens at the Antipodes Island, where I found it quite common. While at anchor on the north-east side of the island I caught this cod, very readily on several lines I had over the side and once hooked it affords no sport at all, being hauled unresistingly to the surface, almost dead on arrival!

Many of the fish caught here at the Auckland Islands were infested with fluke like parasites which glided over the surface skin of the body. The gills harboured crustacean parasites which Dr Chilton identifies as *Livoneca novae-zealandiae*. There is also an internal worm that appears to severely attack the fish. Together these varied parasites render the fish unusable and certainly most uninviting for eating with no one requesting fresh fish from the cook at any time during the expedition.

1907 Observations and collections

The head of this fish is not exceptionally broad, and as its width is equal to its length, is quite round in nature. The fine scaleless nature of the skin means that it is smooth and naked, with the exception of the upper part of the cheeks and opercles, for here it bears small imbedded scales. From close behind the opercle, the upper lateral line arises, and in a slight initial rise, runs almost straight to beneath the last dorsal ray; the lower line occupies the middle of the caudal peduncle, arising posterior to the centre of the anal.

The fish has a row of widely spaced canines that stand in front of each jaw, behind which sit a broad band of villiform teeth that narrows at the sides. There are no teeth on the vomer, palatines or on the tongue.

While there are some variations, the outline of the dorsal fin is rounded and it commences slightly behind the opercle, the second spine being the longest, 3.9 in the length of the head. The length of its base is twice the diameter of the eye and that of the second dorsal 2.3 in the total. Beneath the sixth dorsal ray arises the anal and this extends further back than the dorsal. By comparison, the pectoral is weakly rounded and does not reach to the vent, the ventral stretches to the centre of the pectoral rays. This is equal to the caudal in length, or one half of the head. This caudal is slightly forked, and the depth of the peduncle is one half longer than the diameter of the eye.

This species is inexplicitly marked with an olive coloration above and a distinct pale yellow beneath, while the fins are dark brown with the median ones being margined with pale yellow.

I have concisely listed all the measurements from all the fish caught for future documentation and research, but I suppose over all, the fish would be no longer than 510mm and these larger fish would be about 400mm without the caudal.

Among the other species caught in the first few days was *Bovichtus variegatus*, Richardson; *Notothenia microlepidota* and *Rhombosolea tapirina*. I found *Bovichtus variegatus* also living in the various nooks and crannies around the enclosure of the bays. One I had hooked was immediately swallowed by a large *Notothenia*, and in one move, I was able to obtain both specimens. I found *Notothenias* abounding in the sea weed of the shallow water, and although they are of a sluggish habit the young are quite fearless and will follow a bait right to the surface of the water. The survivors of the .Dundonald. wreck that we had picked up, told me that they had not been able to catch fish and they had all concluded that there were so few because of the presence of the seals, yet I found them fairly plentiful.

We did get off the boat in those first few days, which allowed some limited work along the shore line, and at this time I was able to beach dry some specimens successfully in the limited sunlight and heat though I don't know how. I would spend the morning, as the tide was low then, among the cluster of exposed rocks that clung along the coast and I was nearly always accompanied by the resident sea lion or two. Mainly the younger males. They were very interested in my activity and came quite close at times with a big splash and roar, before they would swim off faster than they arrived. This became a game with a couple of individuals, and every time I was near they would investigate my presence in a flash. It can be quite slippery along the edge after the tide has dropped and the sea weed is left above the water. I had a few minor falls as I slipped and slid across the rocks at times.

I would catch three or four fish at a time before carrying out some basic measurements and classification on site, for I am not one to have a total mess of specimens and an equal amount of figures to sort out once I reach some semblance of a laboratory, the way some disorganized scientists work. I feel the more I can record on the spot the more meaningful and relevant the information may be, and the fewer chance of mistakes.

It must have been after one of these fishing stops that I left my rule out and did not put it back in my kit. When I found that it was missing I retraced my steps to find it. I have done this before and have somehow always managed to find it again about the same location that I thought it was left. But this time, it must have been once too often, for it never turned up, even though I searched for some time and some of the others in the party were alerted to keep an eye out for it.

A GOOD PILE OF RUBBISH 1912

I was sauntering along the river bank on a quiet morning in early autumn. It was a morning of great pleasure with the warm sun streaming through the turning colours of the willow trees, the large boughs casting long shadows across the rich green grass still dotted with the last few summer flowers. There was the sound of birds about their business in the hedge rows, cattle in the distance, the gentle trickle of the water across the worn rocks on the bank as the stream slipped disappearing under the many bridges that criss-crossed her.

Best of all, I had all the time in the world to wander through this tranquillity. It was a long way from the high seas and my work as an able seaman, and of this time I now had at home in England with my cousin I could hardly have asked for more.

Up around the next corner there was a long curl of blue smoke that slowly rose as a feather, wisp-like into the air, twisting this way and that, almost at one with the harmony of this serene place. As I approached, I could make out the shape of two youthful figures tending the bonfire. Beside them was a great heap of interesting and assorted odds and ends that they were sifting through. They bid me 'hello' and stopped from their work to tattle about the pleasantness of the day as one does when meeting a stranger.

After awhile I inquired as to their task, as while we had talked, I took note of the fact that the great pile before us contained many items from ships and the sea, so much so, it virtually smelt of the salt, and this was an interest to me being a man of the sea myself.

To which they replied that, their old grandfather had died not but the week before and they had this chore for the family of sorting through his possessions and cleaning his lodgings. The old man had been a man of the sea all right, 1st mate in fact, and during his years at sea had brought back here to his abode any item that he had a fancy for. They said the family saw it as a real Pandora's box and while much of it was just plain junk which was for the fire or they had piled on an old cart to be taken off to the village tip, there was also a few items of worth, which had quickly been snapped up by the rest of the family. It seemed the lads themselves had got very little of any value, and yet were stuck with this chore.

I roved a tighter eye over at the large pile and there lay all manner of items of good use to a seaman among the heap. Then, I thought back to the months we had spent as castaways on the Auckland Islands and here were these two burning and discarding some bloody good stuff, no doubt about it. They may not have understood their actions and could not answer for them, but I could hardly restrain myself and without temperance and delay gave them both an earful of my thoughts.

"This is no junk to toss away, you young fools" I began "Aye, you two should be in want for a few simple needs at some time, then you'd keep the lot my lads, aye yes the lot". They looked at me with a startle, the peace of the morning suddenly broken with my now abrupt voice. "A man can find a use for any of this if he has a need", I announced now in a much more serious tone than the pleasantries of our greeting.

Before they had an ounce of time to react or utter a sound, I broke out again. "I, my lads have been in real need, I know what the want of the most simple things can mean. I stood close, so close to death that I know his eyes. I have seen them my lads, and they ain't too kind".

"When we'd needed a spar or two, we could find but not one stick. We'd crossed that treacherous strait of water in a craft with a frame from the spindly bushes that grew on the isle. Most twisted wood I'd ever seen, not a bit with two straight feet in length. Bound together we could make a frame of a kind all right and no more than a skin of canvas stitched up with thread from the sails and needles from small birds we'd had to kill. Aye that's all what we'd had to keep out the water. That canvas there on the pile, now that's good quality sail canvas, your grandfather knew what he was about keeping that, look at the thickness and the weave. That stuff can take the strain of great winds boys, such as you never would know the like here, that's what we used for our coracle, but ours was worn and torn with time, so we had to bail all the whole time we's afloat. You can't let that go out, not while I'm here".

"Six miles of ocean lads, that's what we had to cross. Six miles of ocean that could be as rough with great foaming rolling waves and winds so strong as to blow a man down, time after wretched time, that we'd not chance the voyage for more than a month after we'd finished the coracle, for never did the storms relent. That's the way it was. Even when we'd built that craft we had to wait. And then when we landed, god, she just broke to bits, right under our weight, it was a hairs breadth that we made it at all. The bush on that island of dreams lads, aye, it was as thick as ever a man could see, and we had to fight our way through every inch to the provision depot on the far side, while all the time the rain came down upon us. Soaked to the skin lads, wet but again, and all of us feeble".

They seemed to listen to every word and then as I took a breath, for I was fair out by now, the young one said "I've always wanted to go to sea, I've always wanted to be a seaman, and grandfather thought that I would one day".

"To sea lad, to sea you say. Perhaps if you knew what being a sailor really means you would not be so anxious for that one. It is hard and dangerous work, and a stiff is soon spotted both by the officers and the crew my boy; if you have any doubts of mind or strength lad, stay to the land, don't ask to test your sea legs at all".

The larger lad been eating from a pail of apples as we talked and had finished at least three in this time. Now, as he made his crisp bites, he struck one that had a grub in it and he cast it far out into the river with a curse.

"Food laddie, aye good food like an apple, if you had to endure the food that we had for all those weeks, by god son you would never cast aside a scrap, not a scrap son you hear that, not a scrap". I was getting a little carried away but the lads needed a good lesson and besides these lads burning up some good gear had made me right furious. "Those first few days, we could only survive by eating the raw flesh of mollyhawks which are like a common gull, you hear, and scraps sea weed straight from the sea. And it was only then if we had the strength and will to catch them. We needed the warmth from their bodies to lads. And the root, yes, we found a plant that had a root great thick stems but god it was tough".

"Where do you think we lived? Not in a lodge as you would with a nice warm feather bed." Not one of the lads dared move a muscle now nor say a word so shattered was the peace of their morning. "No we had to scrape a hole right there in the earth with our bare hands and then build a scanty frame work of sticks to support the roof of grass tufts. And then lads, the whole affair had to be held down with great mounds of turf, for the winds would blow it away like a shot. And the bedding, aye we did have a feather bed of a kind, it was the wings and skins of them birds we'd been eating, all tossed about with the long grass. Aye, I'd like a shilling or two for every night I'd spent there my lads, then I'd be a rich man!"

And then I began to spin out the whole tale and the terrible times of near starvation and the needs we had had.

"Aye, I've been shipwrecked in the cold of the subantarctic waters. Me and my shipmates from the barque 'Dundonald', well, we had spent five months on Disappointment Island initially, and believe me the name is most apt, for that place, as a more cold and desolate place one could never wish for. It could break the heart and soul of the toughest and we had a few tough characters on our barque, as tough as I ever sailed with my lads. That suit of clothes on the fire there lads, now if we had possessed attire as warm as them, but no, what we's had was thin and ripped, no chance to keep out the cold or the rain that never stopped to fall from above. We had to don our clothes in the dead of night, as we struck that treacherous reef and floundered, and there was no time at all to dress real and proper if you understand. The wind, it drove it in from the ocean as sharp as a blade and numbed our limbs. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and it sure done that to us. And our clothes were soaked through day and nights on end with rain. If only we'd had another set of dry warm clothes then lads. I could never burn a stitch in waste like this, not a thread you hear".

"Christ lads, them boots, they're far too good for the dump. Why if only we all had boots at the time. You see we'd throw them away to get on dry land in case we'd have to swim, but we got to shore, if you's can call perching on that great rock cliff land, by means of a rope. Never touched the sea and we had threw those boots off for nought. For nigh on a few months all some of us had was socks and then's only if's we'd been lucky. Imagine burying your feet in the mud lads, to keep them warm at night, aye, can you imagine that! Out in the open with rain just pouring down and just mud to try and keep your feet warm".

"The old spars there, You can't burn such an article, for they have more purpose than that if one has the will. God knows we'd found some from our ship later when we'd crossed to the other island, but we had no strength to use them then, none at all. That other island was what we called the island of dreams. We'd look at that for days at a time through the grey mist that hung in the air ceaselessly and wish for a crossing of that impossible savage ocean. For across there on that dream island, there was a depot for men with just the needs like us. A depot stocked with all stores we could ever have wished for, right on that island across the strait it was."

"When we'd at last crossed the strait, and stood on that stony beach, we'd found whole parts of our old ship thrown high up the beach and battered to bits by the storms on that island of dreams. The power of that ocean, for it could break to bits an iron barque and wrench the parts off the reef, then throw the lot up that beach of boulders more than six miles away in no time at all lads. God help a man that chanced to fall into the deep, for if the cold hadn't killed him the tumble of all that water would. All manner of debris lay about on that beach on the island of dreams, but we had to leave it all there as we carried ourselves with difficulty and great pain during this time. For we were as weak as a new kitten and then a drowned one at that, for it never stopped raining laddies, not for a day, I tell you, not for a day to be sure. You stand here with all your strength, burning this rubbish in the sunshine, and we would have claimed it all in our weakness, damp through and through, we would have claimed every scrap".

"How did you start this fire? By the powers, if you knew the want we had of matches and a fire. And when we did find a strike you never let it die, not for a second lads not a god damn second, for your life depended on that very one fire every day in that island of bitter disappointments".

"Have some respect for your grand father lads, for he knew the way of the sea, he knew her ways", I said.

"All this has a use, a purpose, leave it on the land lads, some one can make use of it, but for to burn it or throw it out ain't not sense at all. Not a scrap. There is nothing like a good pile of rubbish when a mans in need, if you take my point" I declared. "Nothing at all. Aye lads, how we would have given for a pile like that one when we were in need, waste not want not I say now. Leave it all be if you take my meaning!"

As I began to walk away, they hardly moved at all just stared in a spell bound way as if I was a mad man and I knew they understood not a word, for the fire broke into flame and this place warm in the sun, was worlds away from the isolated chill of the southern gales that lashed those isles of disappointment that I had survived.

As I bade them farewell, and wandered off, disappearing into the distance, the serenity of the morning returned. With a turn back at them, I saw them throw on some more of this precious rubbish. How could they ever know the difference between their quiet existence and my struggle to survive, how could they ever understand?

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And then I began to spin out the whole tale and the terrible times of near starvation and the needs we had had.

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SALVAGE 1916

We had expected rough weather, and for the past six weeks there had been a violence of continual storms about the ocean such as I had rarely seen. The "Enterprise" was at anchor in Carnley Harbour during all of this time, and other than the few futile attempts to clear Victoria Passage in the launch, and the once we had made an over land trip to the western cliffs to locate the wreck site, there was little to do except wait. On the overland trek, we found the thick bushed terrain more difficult than the ocean, leaving us totally exhausted from the expedition. From this it was obvious the only chance we had of success was an entrance from the ocean, however long it might take.

Eventually the weather had improved enough to clear the sea passage, and the launch finally succeeded in reaching the cave to allow the preliminary salvage work to begin. The cliffs matched all the expectations we had heard, stretching high above us with a stark blackness that made us feel very small. Just when there appeared some headway with the project, and we were beginning in the task of initial soundings, the wind rose with a fury, giving us a real concern as the launch was nearly wrecked upon a submerged rock, so there was little left but the return to our camp.

On the 13th of May, fifty years to the day since the wreck of the "General Grant", moorings were laid at the entrance of the cave and it seemed that with this coincidence, at last it was our time. With the "Enterprise" brought round from Western Harbour, the weather remained calm as the vessel, now dwarfed by the black cliffs that must have been over 600ft and over-hung the water with physical unease, lay at anchor all night. Through the night, a watchful eye was kept on impetuous nature of this ocean, and in the first light all remained well enough for a first dive. During the day, several dives were made, and though the water was reasonably clear, there was no evidence of a wreck site of any kind. By the end of the day though, the weather had the final say and with the frustration of another freshening wind we were forced to return to Western Harbour where we had now set up camp.

There in the wilds of this land we remained for more than a month, confined to the land by the ceaseless storms that raged night and day, enduring the frightful conditions. At the first opportunity, we moved camp to North Harbour and by chance, soon struck a suitable day to take the "Enterprise" round the north-west cape to the cave.

The settled weather suggested that we may at last have encountered enough calmness to explore the area for some time, but once more our attempts were thwarted, as after only the first dive, there was a dramatic change in the conditions, and once more we had to abandon the site. The wind had set in from the north-west with a fury, and rather than chance the beat-up wind, we ran for the shelter of Carnley Harbour once again. This was proving to be a very difficult salvage task, and all due to this unyielding and unreasonable weather.

However, these periods of rough wether were at last followed by a remarkable spell of calm that surprised us all, and with some trepidation, we were actually able to take the cutter right inside the gaping entrance of the large cavern.

I made many dives over this time, and began with the sea floor just outside the cave entrance. Even the buttresses where the "Gazelle" had reported finding the wreck in 1877 showed no signs at all of a wreck, though I located what may have been a rock ledge that might have been mistaken for a wreck working in a heavy swell and the limited equipment of those times. The water was clearer than I had expected, and I adopted the method of being suspended on ropes below the cutter while it moved slowly backwards and forwards over the whole area, this way I could cover a large area in a short time.

The sea floor was likened to a great level sheet of rock that stretched over the entire area with the only exception a few pinnacle-like teeth of rock, right at the entrance and I felt that perhaps these could prevent a sunken ship from being carried out to sea. So from here I concluded that maybe the hulk was in the cave itself, and if we wanted to explore further, there was little to do but dive far inside the depths of the cave. As the others of the party were more than concerned than I at this prospect, I rowed in and dropped and anchor which allowed us to pull the "Enterprise" in stern first. Although the weather was still holding, the reverberating backwash from even the small swells inside the cave were difficult to contend with and made the diving an arduous exercise.

However, without too much difficulty, I spent the next two days examining the cave floor with little success except for two anonymous pieces of timber wedged between large boulders against the cave wall. There was certainly no sign of the wreck, and apart from these obscure timbers not a sign of any thing like a speck of the gold. Not one ounce of the 25700 oz in the manifest or a drop of the further unknown amounts of the miners personal fortunes that were en route to England. From my deductions, I had concluded that the large amount in the manifest would have been in solid bars, heavy in weight and difficult to shift by even the fiercest of submarine storms.

The dive was easy in terms of depth as it would have been in about 30ft at the mouth of the cave and this shallowed to 21ft at the inner end. The roof continued from the mouth in one straight line for about 600ft into the cliffs and would have been about 60ft above the high water mark. A ship of a reasonable size could sail in all right, there seemed little doubt of that, and it would have accommodated the "General Grant" easily. Far, at the very end was a stepped boulder beach, with great hunks of rock that had fallen into the water having been ground into spherical boulders and pushed to the posterior of the cave. Even here on the stony beach, there was no evidence of the wreck, not a plank, or even a nail.

It was with bitter disappointment that we had to accept utter failure and made ready to leave this spellbinding place. After all our efforts, I can only conclude that the crew of the schooner "Daphne" may have lifted the gold in their attempt in 1870. Surely, it must have sunk with them as they were never heard of again. They were all drowned with the gold, and only the ocean and God would know the truth. Perhaps though, it was washed far out to sea with the violence of the extreme storms that must inflict these coasts. Or slim as it may seem, there may be another cave, as yet unfound, and we had located and worked the wrong the wreck site.

So, it was with embittered exhaustion and disgust, that we raised the anchor to depart for the last time. However, at this last hour, one of the anchors had become lodged in a jam of boulders, and no matter how we tried to free it, there it stayed tight. I prepared for a dive, to solve the obstacle once and for all, but as we grappled with the equipment to begin the dive, a large sea lion broke the surface and with a loud roar and a show of strong sharp teeth, I fell back on the deck of the boat. The beast stayed close as if defending its space, and I felt uneasy about the prospect of sharing the water with such a large powerful creature. Across the ocean there was the unmistakable sign of another approaching squall. This, with the likelihood of the sea lion still in the vicinity, made us quickly abandon any plan to retrieve the anchor and the rope was soon cut. Straight away, we were steaming for the protection of Carnley Harbour, where we packed the camp, before our eventual return to New Zealand.

DEAR CELIA 1922

Dear Celia,
Here I am writing this letter on board the Hinemoa. I bet you can't believe it.

Daddy has finally succumbed to my continual nagging and at last allowed me, against his better judgment I might say, to accompany him on one of his trips south to the subantarctic islands. So, I will finally see this intriguing place he has always talked about so much upon his return from his other trips.

I am sure he used to tease us with those stories he would tell, when you would come to stay, though we wanted to believe every word of it. You never thought that I would be able to do it, did you? Remember when we used to joke about going way down there, and you said I would never be able to talk daddy round to it. Mummy was more of a problem, as she worried like anything about me going away with daddy. It took quite a while before she finally said yes, and it was only that uncle Jack was on board as well that convinced her in the end. She fussed right to the time we waved her bye bye at the wharf, her wee face looked so concerned and upset as she faded into the distance as we steamed off down the harbour. Her wee face is probably still at the wharf.

I feel quite grown up down here, independent and certainly much older than just 18, as I have the full run of the ship. We did have a good birthday together last month, it was so much fun, and I have your lovely comb and brush set with me. It gets a fair workout down here, as the wind never stops blowing, and I think it would be much easier to just give up though I have all the time in the world to deal with it! So, I do try to keep my hair done and dress smart, as there are two nice boys working on the boat that wink at me when daddy isn't looking. I think they are a little too old for me, but they are so nice, daddy would have a blue fit if he knew they were winking at me, and more of a fit if he knew I was looking back.

I should really wear some warm clothes, as the wind can be exceedingly cold and bitter on the open decks, and can cut through the thin dresses that I have, but all the warm coats are so bulky and I just end up looking like another man on the ship. I am a bit naughty with my dress, but I do enjoy the winks from the boys so I will have to brave the cold for a while yet, unless daddy catches me, as he keeps telling me to keep warm clothes on.

Today we passed the Snare Islands, and daddy sailed slowly around them to let me and uncle Jack have a good look. They seem little more than a few black rocks in the middle of nowhere covered in thousands of sea birds. I had never seen so many birds in my life. At night as the dusk falls, they fly in from the ocean to rest and the sky is literally black with the moving shapes of birds. They circle for hours it would seem. The wee penguins are fun to spot in the water, and daddy took the Hinemoa past where they jump out of the water to hop and jump up a steep rock slope to the bush above for the night. Over the years they have worn quite a track up the rock face, with their coming and going.

As the daylight paled to darkness, we left these islands and sailed further on to the south. We spent the night playing cards or reading. With me, there was uncle Jack, the first mate and daddy. The rest of the crew, including the two nice boys, were away in another cabin of the ship. I had a fair few cups of tea that night, while daddy and the others had a quite a few glasses of whiskey I think. I thought I might be able to bid him into letting me have a little drink with them, but he did not like this idea at all and I was restricted just to the sober, plain old cups of tea. He would really go mad if he knew how we would sneak into his study and have a small sip from his liquor from time to time. Oh we are naughty girls!

1922 Dear Celia

The next morning, about 9 o'clock, we could make out the Auckland Islands ahead. As the dark shapes became closer, I just had to put on one of those warm coats as the wind became really fierce and a light rain began falling. I enjoy being on the deck and watching the great sea birds swoop across the wide swells of the ocean. Uncle Jack would spend hours pointing out the different types of albatross, but once he had left, they would all look the same to me as they fly so fast when they swoop past.

Daddy said he could anchor at Port Ross and that he could row me ashore in the small boat to have a look at the cemetery and the bays inside the anchorage. As we sat there, he pointed out Shoe Island and told me stories of how it was used as a gaol during the Enderby settlement. They used to call it Rodd's Castle, as the surgeon was the only one to ever use it, and then only to keep him off the perpetual drinking he indulged in.

We did all go for a walk on the island, and it felt strange being off the ocean and on the land again as we walked up the overgrown track. It was good being with daddy, as he knows where all the tracks are. I would be hopelessly lost, as often the tracks and the bush look much the same. We saw the flag pole with the beacon on it and the fading inscription carved by H.M.S. Blanch, and also the victory tree with its message. They are both still there after all these years.

Then on the way back we walked over the old Enderby settlement, but there is not much of that left though, and finally we looked over the cemetery and the few lovely graves in the middle of the bush. While we were there, I picked a few large leaves from some of the oleinra trees that only grow on this part of the island and have them carefully pressed between some large books daddy has up in the bridge. These leaves are large enough to write on, an old custom from Stewart Island, and I hope to send you one with my letter.

On the way back out to the Hinemoa, we saw a sea lion in the water and it swam right up to us. They are really quite large. The only thing that spoiled the day was that it had been raining all day and we were soaked and cold by the time we returned. Daddy had some of the crew help me up out of the boat, but unfortunately, one of those nice boys weren't able to help me on board, and I had a couple of old timers take my arm. Late in the afternoon, daddy sailed off to the south part of the island and we anchored here in Carnley Harbour. We spent the night here.

Next morning, as it was quite fine, daddy promised to take me over to Epiguaiti, that means a dwelling by the water. This was the place that the castaways from the Grafton wreck lived. Remember all those shipwreck stories that daddy use to scare us with? Well this is the site of the first ship wreck on the island. Remember the one that they made the bellows and the forge? There are still bits of wreckage washed up and old bits of rusting metal bolts and a few remains of their old hut. Uncle Jack even found a slate with some writing on it under an old rotting board.

It seems that a lot of people that come here leave a mark of their journey. As there were lots of old names scratched with a knife or a sharp stone into the tired boards of the hut. I scratched my name and the date into an old drink bottle we had taken over for lunch and placed it beside the remaining structure of the hut. Some one will probably find it in a hundred years or more and wonder how it got there and who I was.

If I keep writing as the voyage continues, this is going to be a long, long letter, so I have decided to say bye bye for now and start writing another one to you tomorrow, that way you can have the fun of opening two, or perhaps three when I post them on our return to New Zealand.

Best wishes from your loving friend,

Louisa

P.S. Perhaps in the next letter I will have some exciting news about those nice two boys on the ship.

A Saw Cut 1939

It was evident from the events of the past year or so that war was in the air. War on a grand scale, and here we were, on the German steamer *Erlangen*, in a quiescent enemy port, waiting as it seemed to be seized with the first official announcement of hostilities. There was considerable interest and gossip from the people of this place about the movements of our ship due to the imminence of war, and we sensed that a prolonged stay in this area of the world could be folly.

We were the Chinese crew accompanying the German officers of this vessel which was berthed at Port Chalmers, in New Zealand. There had been much talk about the boat on the street, and that which we could understand suggested the captain was well aware of the situation, though here we were, tied up and about to be impounded at any moment it would seem. We became frightened for our safety in this place and felt the sooner we left this port the better.

On the 26th August, as unassumingly as possible with a ship the size of the *Erlangen*, about 6000 tons, we slipped quietly out of Darned Harbour and with a coil of black smoke from the furnace as the only trace in the evening sky and disappeared without any alarm or problems out in to the vast safety of the southern ocean.

Captain Grams, we presently found out, had a problem we had not realized. The haste in our departure meant we had insufficient coal in the bunkers to steam to any amicable port, and this was the predicament we were faced with. This news had spread throughout the ship once we were well under way and was backed by the fact that we were only steaming at half speed and had been making such slow progress now we had the sanctuary of the open ocean.

Early on the morning of the next day, the captain called a meeting of all officers and crew in the mess. It was true, we did have a problem and the captain, after clearly explaining the circumstances we now faced, asked all of us as equals for any ideas that we may have or could offer to the situation. We had never been asked, or included in any such meeting before, as these were usually only for the German officers. To us, it underlined the severity of the position we all now found ourselves in, though none of us Chinese had any real idea of a convenient plan and added no real comment.

At the meeting, the captain told how he had briefly studied astronomy at higher school and in particular the transits of Venus. These he said occur many years apart and are always followed by serious scientists zealously. He recalled the relative success of the German Expedition in 1874 that travelled to the Auckland Islands just south of our position, and he had even read the journals of some members of the expedition and seen some of the photographic plates taken on that expedition. These islands were near, and his feeling was that we should steam as quietly as we could there and wait further developments there via the radio as his original idea of steaming for Port Kembla in Australia now seemed equal to staying in Darned, in terms of our fate.

We all sweated, under the strain of obtaining supplies of this hard wood. The saw work was hard enough, as the rough fashioned handles cut blisters in our hands, but the splitting was even worse, as the twisted trunks over the years, seemed to have wound around themselves in a way that made them impossible to tell which way the grain ran. It was a physical task with a special jigsaw to fathom. We would joke with the German officers that it was in the way one held their mouth and worse than a Chinese puzzle. The dry twigs and branches of the dead wood on the ends of the trees could inflict a nasty scratch, but sore as they were, few caused bleeding. A few days before the finish of the cutting however, I caught a particularly nasty piece of dry branch and cut my arm quite deeply. This cut was very sore, and required a more elaborate dressing which I had to return to the ship for, than the simple plasters most of the others were covered with.

Transportation of the timber was the next difficulty. Once cut, it became quite an effort to move the weight this firewood, as most of it being newly felled, was wet and heavy. We were making slow progress and it seemed it could take months to move it, until the captain decided to risk beaching the ship to allow easier access to the winches on the boat. This worked well, and we soon established a system where by we could manage to cut, transport and load from 20 - 25 tons of wood a day. There was some hazard in this, as the ferocity of a storm could drive the ship high up the beach preventing our escape, or even break the *Erlangen*, amidships. There was also the chance that once loaded, the ship would not refloat, or perhaps the war would start for us and somehow we would be caught here high and dry.

As we continued with the wood, the chief officer and the Chinese quartermasters worked at fabricating two improvised sails from the heavy tarpaulins used to cover the deck cargo. In a rig with yardarms made up from the derricks they managed to fix the sail in such a way that it would fill with the wind and offered the hope of some extra sail assistance to the wood we were cutting.

The ship had been beached with specially selected round logs under the keel and then winched up onto these rollers. It now sat fully loaded and waiting. We had dispensed with much of the unnecessary fittings on the boat and as many of these were made of iron, it lightened the ship but also created more space for the wood. Unfavourably, the wood, being newly felled, would use most of its energy drying itself to burn rather than producing the heat that we desperately needed to heat the boilers, but it was the best we could do. For this reason, every space that it was possible to store in was filled with piles of lumber. The question was, would this be enough?

On the highest tide in that last week, it was with a great cheer, the chains were released that held the ship and as to plan, with no problems at all, it rolled with a great splash backward into the ocean once more. It took some time to fire up enough steam to drive the ship, and during this time, we carted all the discarded fittings and the remains of the improvised saw blades far off into the bush cover to hide them from any view while also making sure to conceal our well worn tracks as best we could. By the time this was finished, the ship had steam up and we were under way for Chile, safe at last.

After some debate, much of which was in rapidly spoken German that we could understand little of, the captain decided to attempt this game of waiting at these southern islands, as no other ideas were forthcoming from any other than himself.

These islands were a few days distant and to the south of our position. Once we reached them we found the shelter of a wide open harbour at the north west end of the bays at the southern end of this island. There, we found ourselves at anchor in an arm of this large inlet. After some days of anticipation, it was suggested that the large trees of the land could provide an answer to our current fuel problem, for there was an abundant forest of great trunks, thick with wood. This idea was soon adopted as our only means of escape, and we were all now put upon the task of felling and splitting the timber to fill the bunkers as fast as we were able.

It was decided to act as secretly as we could, by concealing our activities and cutting the timber from an area that was hidden by a large knob of land and would not be seen obviously from the harbour. But this would also mean much more work in the transporting of the heavy wood down the hill side and out across the water in small lifeboats. The timber itself was as hard as stone, and the few axes we had on board, though sharpened as well as could be done, bounced off the trunks with little effect. With much effort from a team of workers a tree could be felled, but it still presented the problem of splitting this stubborn red wood. It was as though the wiry trunks were bound up in knots.

Days later, the captain had the ship's engineers examine the chance of making saws from the fittings on board. After a few days they had been able to fabricate a type of toothed saw from the curved winch covers. With a great deal of effort one cover had been shaped into a usable blade, with each tooth filed out separately by hand and set with a strong pair of pliers. This, rough blade, then had to be hardened and a great fire was lit on the beach, that heated the blade to red hot, at which point it was rushed to the water and plunged in deep with a bang, and great hiss and smell of steam.

As this blade worked well, being much easier than the axes to cut through the trunks, the captain had the officers and engineers embarked upon the task of manufacturing a series of saw blades from the other winch covers. Initially, it was the Chinese that engaged the cutting, but as more blades were finished, we all joined in the cutting and splitting. Except for the few men whose task it was to continually sharpen and set the makeshift saw blades. During the time of the cut, with the constant filing, these wore down at an alarming rate, what with us continually sawing and the sharpeners filing and resetting the blades.

A SEARCH FOR THE ENEMY 1941

Dec 13

The others have left on a trek to the other reserve station to research penguins, carry out tidal observations and do a general check of the location, and this has left just James and myself here. The weather in the morning was quite fine although there was a stiff breeze blowing from the south east. In the afternoon the wind had moderated and there were a few mild skiffs of rain about. James spent most of the day in the top lookout, but once more there was no sign of the Jerrys.

Dec 14

Today was quite fine almost for all the day. Then in the evening we could see a thin line of grey fog out on the horizon. Before long it was creeping in from the sea across the land and covering everything. We had walked to the top of Meggs Hill in the morning on a track clearing exercise and had enjoyed for once the fine day to work in. By the time the fog had appeared, we were well set in the hut with a good fire for the night. We saw that strange albino penguin that has been about for the past month once more scurry off into the water before we left in the morning. It is quite a strange sight and is almost pure white. We have not been able to get close enough to see if there is a pigmentation difference in the eyes at this point.

Dec 15

This thick mist has been here all day and we can see very little in any direction. From the doorway, even the end of the hut is almost obscured, by the swirling vapours, and as there is very little wind and it seems to seep in from the sea rather than be blown in. It has been a good time to catch up on a few odd jobs around the hut, and the door lock that has never been fitted since our arrival was finally screwed in place. The chimney had been smoking in the northeast winds, and though it rarely blew it always seemed to blow it back down again and out into the room. So with a little time on our hands, we managed to construct a cowling to direct the gusts away. This is a makeshift arrangement and will only prove its worth once we experience another gale.

Dec 16

The mist is thick as ever and we just spent most of the time curled up in the hut with a good fire to dry our ever-present pile of washing and read books. We always have a mass of wet and dirty washing to deal with, and this would be one of the few times we had got close to getting on top of it, though it may still take some time to dry. If there is any enemy out there we can't see them in this thick blanket.

Dec 17 1941

The wind sprang up and blew last night and all today from the NNE. There was little rain, just thick mists again, and we have not seen Ewing Island for three days now. Looking for any ships in this is impossible. We didn't even try and spent the day reading and playing cards once more. The Germans could be right outside our hut and not be seen; still sound carries well in the still mists, and we have heard nothing strange, so we can only suppose all is well.

1941 A search for the enemy

Dec 18

There is a cold breeze from the sw and a change in the weather, as the sky is now sunny and clear, at last the mist has cleared. There were no sightings again yesterday, so we are still safe, just the ocean and more ocean so New Zealand can still sleep easy. The others are still away and there is just the two of us to keep the fort. There have been sporadic bursts of fighting between two young male sea lions sparring below in the bay. Fights of territory seem to be the main reason for their skirmishing. I have started carving a small boat from the packing-case wood using my pen knife to pass the time in the lookout. It won't be long till Christmas and the excitement of something special to eat. We should be able to spend it together for one large celebration this year with any luck.

Dec 19

A storm broke again last night with a real downpour so the stream is up in a torrent past the door. It even swept up and over the small bridge we had constructed to cross it. We both spent the day away from the hut, and I was right up at the top lookout. No sign of the other party or the enemy. Read two good books and carved some more of the boat. On our return, a young sea lion somehow got inside the hut. It did no real damage except for knocking over most of the furniture and dragging in a little more dirt than we normally do. It was probably one of the two from the bay. We will have to fix the catch or start to use the new lock we had fitted to the door from now on.

Dec 20

The weather is about as calm as it gets and the reflection of the bright red flowers of the rata canopy in the waters of the bay is a wonderful sight. The two young sea lions fighting in the bay have taken to opposite sides of the inlet, and James and I still can't get used to sudden outbursts of their fighting when they meet up. Every time it happens I think the enemy has arrived undetected. I've finally taken to locking the door to keep them out of the hut, and this has kept out the sea lions so far.

Dec 21

We have had two days of still fine weather on end, and it would be great if this could hold for Christmas. Last night a small prion crashed into the window of the hut; we wondered what the hell it was until we found it dead below one of the windows. I lost the key to the hut in the afternoon and no matter how we searched there was just no sign of it. Keys! They're worse than the enemy to find. The spare keys were inside, so that meant we were firmly locked out. Just my luck to be embarrassed as the others arrived back as we were looking for the key; it was good to see them all safe and sound but not so good to be the joke of the lost key. We had to break in through one of the windows in the end.

A TIN OF PAINT 1954

MacQuarie Island is the most bleak and desolate place I have ever seen. There is hardly a plant that could raise itself more than a few inches off the soggy soil due to the incessant force of the wind. And if it did, it would surely be cut through by the persistent flying hail and fine sand as if attacked by sand paper. I was sure glad to leave that inhuman place!

We were now on the return to New Zealand, and the 'Holmlea' had called into the legendary Auckland Islands, which presented a welcome change to the view of endless sea. There was bush here. In some places, dumped right down to the water's edge, and great trunks, twisted by the same winds that swept MacQuarie Island. The welcome song of bell birds drifted among the higher branches which merged in a total compact head of leafy clusters that appeared to hug together for protection. The forest seemed to snuggle across the hills like a single coat from one gigantic merino fleece.

It appears that each inch of growth this forest makes enables the next plant to grow an extra inch higher. Its neighbour bears the brunt of the driving wind storms as the wind sheer factor afforded from the foliage toward the wind, offers enough protection for the whole living forest to gather itself from the ground and gain the full height of about thirty feet over a distance of several hundred feet. Sadly where the forest at Enderby has had this cover broken, it appears that the wind is cutting through and killing off the forest from inside out.

We could sense the history and folklore of the place, the hardships, trials and tribulations of the various people that had passed through for what ever reason. We knew some of the history of Hardwicke, the failed attempts to settle and farm that had only ended in bitter disputes. We knew also of the shipwreck days and the plight of the desolate castaways.

As we stood beside the few isolated graves at Erebus Cove, the peeling paint and recessed letters caved into the stone tombs revealed as brief facts, the truth of those times and the fatal struggles of people now long buried beneath the soil.

The death of a child, but a few weeks old. A shipwrecked seaman from a lack of rations. Those were demanding times, when a life could be taken at the whim and the change of a wind. They knew few of the modern comforts that we enjoy today. They were pioneering times when the world was still young and waited discovery and the promise of fortune. I wondered if the memories of these miserable deaths had faded faster than the paint that now peeled from the zinc plaques tacked to the disintegrating wood of the rough grave markers. It seemed as though no one knew the truth of their existence or the tragedy of their deaths; perhaps these tombstones stood not as an epitaph to the life or death of these people, but as an epitaph to the age in which they lived. They were as much about the people as they were about their era, and that intrigued me.

It was an age that forged much of what we are now, our attitudes and the very society we have become. Strong, they stood for the evolution of a people and the growth of a nation. As much as it was these people who were responsible, it was the nature of the land and the climate that was conceived in these very areas of the ocean and then came sweeping up towards New Zealand with unpredictable vengeance. These few lonely graves held such a fascination for me, and the others in the party too. They made me think, they made me feel who I was. They were as much about us, as we were about them. I felt some meaning here.

1954 A tin of paint

We had brought with us a stiff brush and sand paper to prepare the surface and clean the chalked, flaking paint that was the only record for us to freshly retrace the lines. For these freshly painted lines would become the only written legacy for those who would come in the following generations, to ponder the history, the people, their death and perhaps themselves.

There were but a few colours for us to choose from; a black, a white and a small tin of gold. And yet their colourful lives seemed to demand an extraordinary array of colour. First we cleared away the vegetation that was gaining a hold on the area around the cemetery and across the raised earth of the graves. The dracophyllum tree grass was the most evasive plant among the moss covered ground. But there were also small rata trees beginning to grow, and low to the ground, even small green hooded orchids shooting upward for the summer. It seemed a pity to have to pull all these plants up by the roots and toss them aside, but they would soon have overgrown the cemetery.

There should really be a strong fence erected around the markers and graves, as there is some sign of the wild pigs that occupy this Island rooting the ground, in some places right next to the markers. However, that may be a job for another party that visits the Island sometime in the future, as we have neither the time or the materials for fence construction.

Once we had cleared the area, we began the painting. Across the markers was a patina of flaked and peeling white paint mixed with the subtle variations of green, yellow and orange from the moss and lichens the clung across the surface. There was some work in brushing and scraping this away, but eventually, we had a clear surface ready for the first coat. We gave them three coats of the thick white paint, and while the paint dried between coats which took about 8hrs, we had time to wander through the remains of the old Hardwicke settlement.

There really was little to see as a remembrance to the buildings that once stood here. We located the few remaining floor boards of the Governor's house, now only partly visible above the ground as they disappeared under the earth in a contorted twist. There were a few old bricks, the chalk red now completely covered with olive coloured moss, and only recognisable by their shape, scattered through out the bush cover. At one time there had been an active community here with 18 dwellings erected, in addition to the barracks and Government house. There were also workshops, half a mile of road and even a gaol.

All this had been right here, under our feet, right where we stood, and now it was all lost to the land except for these few remains and the graves we tended. These settlers had planted all kinds of vegetables, berry fruits and fruit trees, around which they had built shelters. They brought in horses, cattle, sheep and pigs, but now there was no sign of any of this except a few surviving pigs and goats that endured the climate on this main Island. The rest had died off over the intervening years. There was even a story of the release on the Island of possums and the fact that they all died off due to the harsh climate! Enderby Island still had its cattle and rabbits though.

This was a place where the land had defeated the efforts of man, it was a place that belonged to itself, a place beyond pacification. Once the grave markers had been prepared, we began the careful job of repainting the telling words that defined the person and their fatal situation. The contrasting colour flowed in fine lines to form the words that spelt the legacy of these graves. Every word seemed to cut deep into my mind.

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'Isabel Younger, aged three months, Died 19th November, 1850, of Inflammation'

'Thomas Cook, Mariner, aged 22, Drowned on 7 September, 1851'

'Janet Stove, aged fourteen weeks, died on 10th October, 1851 of Convulsions'

'John Edward Downs, Mariner, died on 21 February, 1852 of Dysentery'

'SACRED to the memory of JOHN MAHONY Master Mariner second mate of the ship Invercauld Wrecked on this Island 16 May 1861 Died of Starvation' clearly read the recessed letters as the light cut across the inscription carved in the stone at an oblique angle in the next tomb stone. It was actually the ship 'Invercauld', spelling mistakes carved in stone are there forever, if you have the chance to make them.

'David McClellan Aged 60 Died 21 September 1867'

'In memory of Jabez Peters R.I.P Late Mate Barque Dundonald Wrecked on Disappointment Island Where he died of exposure Died 25 March 1907' This wooden marker was rotting away with time, and the circle that had once embraced the point where the cross met had fallen away on the bottom and the top half hung together on the barest of threads.

Then there were the markers that had no words to trace and would have to stand the impartial ambivalence of only the thick white paint. We stood back almost breathless, though there had been no real physical effort in our task, gazing at the clean earth with the crooked markers now freshly painted poking upward unlevel from the swelling roots beneath the ground.

At the base of the track is a boat shed that had been built to house the dinghy, and was put there to assist any castaways by the Government steamer, and inside with the falling timbers that had once been this boat, we left the tightly capped tins of paint and the brushes that were now clean. Inside were also other reminders of the days of the castaways, the broken cases that contained the essential supplies they had used, bottles of one kind or another, a few slate tiles from the Enderby settlement, iron fittings from some long forgotten source.

Perhaps sometime in the future when others are visiting this isolated and unfrequented island they may come across our tins and brushes and have the thoughtfulness to repaint the same words on the same grave markers for the next generation to remember.

A Bloody Good Time 1958

They were having a hell of a hoot of a time, with plenty of real serious drinking.

After the first few days of rambling about the bays of the place, they had found an old abandoned house at the end of a small but deep inlet, right up in the bush. It was tucked away, hidden from the outside world, not only, by the isolation of these islands, but by the camouflage of this concealed place. It was just a simple shell of a structure really, with little comforts to speak of. A couple of old chairs, a table and a bunk room. Just a bit more than a shearer's hut, you know the sort of thing one might find way up in the hills of the sheep stations. And like these, it was always fair enough for anyone to stay over in them.

They had set up a good camp in the bush initially, but once the existence of this house had been discovered, they quickly packed up and moved down all their stuff to this new spot. The building seemed so deserted and disused, that they had all felt that nobody would probably ever think of that place again. It appeared that the place was abandoned for good. God, they had only found it themselves by sheer accident. It was just left to turn to rack and ruin in the total forgottenness of the land. It was basically going to rot here neglected for years to come, until it eventually just fell to bits.

It was a bonza place to set up though. The weather could throw all the crap under the sun at them and unlike in the tents, (for there were some frightful leaks on the deck, and the water could seep in and run down with a constant drip all night), they could sleep dry for a change. For here at least, in this old place even though it was a bit run down, they did have a dry space to stretch out. There was another room that must have been used to dry their clothes out on, as it had long racks.

Their small craft had approached the bay under sail, running far up the hidden arm of the bay, that disappeared visually into the bush but then opened up to provide a perfect anchorage, sheltered and hidden from the outside. It was here that they anchored the old tub. It was pretty shitty weather outside with squalls sneaking through unexpectedly all the time and just as it seemed to be picking up, there would be a hell of a din on the roof as a heavy burst pounded out of the sky on to the corrugated iron. It had been quite a trip down too. They always knew that it could be, but in a boat like their one, well they were just glad to be here, and as they were all a bit crook the less said about that the better.

1958 A bloody good time

They had a 303 with them, and after they had woken about 10 a.m. they would make their way out the back of the house where there was a sort of concrete thing. It was perfect for placing bottles on and popping them off. If they missed, the ricochet would send the bullet screaming off in any direction. It was a hell of a laugh. They pretended the concrete stump was a German, and they were the coast watchers popping them off. Ever time that Jack missed, he would run up in a rage and bash the hell out of the stump with the back end of the axe as a sort of punishment for his own bad shooting. The others would piss themselves laughing. Cripes, there was stuff all left of it by the time they packed up and left. And that lump of concrete had split to bits from the heavy blows that Jack kept inflicting on it.

There were some good windows in the place going to waste too, so they got out the hammers and a crow bar from the boat and started ripping out the best ones. Bert said he could use them for his place at Colac Bay. They had double sheets of glass in them, not like the windows that you see in most houses back home in Invercargill. It was a fair job to get them out and took the best part of the afternoon to do much. It was easier to pull them inside and take them out through the door. Some were a bit big though and they came up with the idea of widening the gaping hole where one of the windows had come out of. So, they set to smashing great bits out of the wall.

It became quite an organised game to see who could smash out the largest section in one hit. Only one swipe at time with the crow bar or the hammer, take your pick. There was rubbish flying about in all directions. It became quite rousing smashing things up, and they had all got more excited as the afternoon went by. At the end, they were running across the floor and jumping through the air to crash into the side of the wall. When they stopped for another drink, for it was hard and thirsty stuff, the screwdriver was wedged in between two boards with the point sticking out, and Dick went over to the table where one of the old tins of baked beans were sitting, for there were miles of tins left behind by the war mob.

In one great motion, he yelled out "Bloody baked beans again", and the tin went flying through the air, hitting right on the end of the screw driver. The sharp point of the screw driver went right through the lid and the horrible familiar orange liquid oozed out onto the floor. They all burst out laughing and it was made worse, as Jack had a bottle of beer up to his gob and when he laughed, the piss went everywhere. Then he got up and with his finger over the bottle opening, shook the hell out of the bottle and then sprayed the shit out of all the others. They chased each other about the house for awhile spraying piss everywhere. Shit they all laughed.

You wouldn't read about it, one throw straight on to the sharp tip of the screw driver. And they had a few bets to see who could do it again. So they all thought they would give this throwing a go and their attention turned from the windows to throwing tins of baked beans at the screw driver point. It was quite hard to begin with, and Jack's first throw had been a lucky one. There was a bit of a knack involved, but with some practice, they could all score a hit after about three throws with each tin.

Bert was getting the best score by far and had six hits in a row at one stage. God they cheered. Once a tin was hit and slit open, it was turned upside down on the table to let the stuff run out. There was a hell of a mess by the time they finished. Not only had they thrown all the tins of beans, but all the tins of spaghetti and jams had hit the spike, as they called it, as well. There was a hell of a mix running out across the table and trickling on to the floor. In all George had scored 16, Dick 22 and Bert was well ahead with 34. It left bugger all on the dusty shelf of any worth. There was a couple of bottles of Roses Ship's Lime Juice, and a bit of tined beef, plus a few tins of milk powder. Still, no bugger would be back here for awhile.

It was starting to stretch out towards evening, and they lugged off to the boat the windows that were lying on the ground. It was obvious after awhile that they had taken out too many. The boat was only going to be able to take about three, and they had ripped out at least six. Still, it didn't matter a damn, as the whole place would have rotted apart anyway, and the wreckage from their stay was stuff all in the run of things. They managed to get every thing sorted out as the dark set right in and they spent one last draughty night in the house, but they were all up at the sparrow's fart to leave the next morning.

As they walked out for the last time, the house looked pretty amazing and you could tell there had been some wild parties here at some point. The tins of food were stacked up on the table and the food still oozing out in all directions, and there was the great gaping holes in the walls they had smashed to get the windows out. There were plenty of broken glass from all their smashed piss bottles about as well. It was real evidence of their bloody rip-roaring time on the island. Still, it was doubtful that anyone would ever be back here again. What would be the reason?

Once a firm anchorage was jacked up, they proceeded to bring ashore all their stuff. They had also brought a fairly decent supply of liquid refreshments with them, and all that had to come ashore as well. They had intended a some good nights with a few beers beside a raging fire right from the outset. There were sleeping bags, blankets, washing stuff and the tucker and that had to come ashore too, so there were a few trips in all before it was finished and they were snug inside.

It took a while, but once she was all safe and sound, they began to poke about the place a bit more. There were even older huts and shelters scattered around the bush. Most of them had sort of junk and stuff in them, certainly nothing of any real value or worth taking back as a souvenir. One had a few sacks of coal which was great for the fire. Away up the hill was a sort of tree house. It hung way out on a limb over the bay, and further up the hill, right at the top was another hut hidden in the shelter of the bush. It had big windows facing out to sea and provided a commanding view of the greater bay area. Once they found this hut, it wasn't long before they worked out what this place was all about.

Apparently it had been used by the army during the war to keep an eye out for any Germans and Japs in case the dirty devils got any smart ideas about creeping up from down south on us. There were even the old charts for spotting the different types of ships still pinned to the wall. Shit, it must have been a cushy number. While they were away with the blood and guts brigade in the danger zone, these blighters must have been here with a few pair of binoculars and all the time in the world to fart about. Cripes, some blokes get all the luck. Bloody poofters.

It was after about three nights in the house that the real fun started. They were all getting pretty pissed every night and each one had got better than the night before. They could go on to about 11 p.m. with the hurricane lamps burning a way, and the odd flicker of a candle, and as the night drew on things would start winding up. That third night wasn't too bad, but the next night, Jack had got up for a pee and as he made his way for the door in the dark, over he tripped and staggered into a chair that was in his road. In one of his usual fits, he sent the thing flying and the leg stuck clean into the wall. Geez it looked funny sticking out of the wall. George got pretty upset with him waking everyone up and after a hell of a lot of yelling, they had a fair dust up fighting on the floor, both were pissed of farts of course. It was George that had the black eye the next morning though.

THE TRIG 1964

Black, white.

*Steel deep in stone
Black, white, black.*

*Solitary,
Black white, black, white, black,
Amid the eternal storms, a marker.*

*One straight vertical line straight to the sky,
Drenched in wetness of rain,
Ringing with the stony bite of flying hail,
Shivering, unsheltered, ignored.*

*Alone, atop the fell field.
Wide the vista, stretching out beneath
Far to the oceans of two coasts,
Where the waves gnaw at the black rocks
And a gull cries unheard above the chaos.*

*Isolated, lost in the glut of mist,
Black white, black white, the stake
Driven strong into an earth heart,
Held with a tight fisted grip of cement, and stones
One steel pole, a gesture left behind
A mark in time, a mark of place.*

*Great howling, whistling, sirens
Chanting songs of the wild swirl of winds.
Gales, blasting squalls,
Whipping strands of snow tussock
Lashing thin tongues
Shrill laughs in the pitch of the night.
Resonant, but unheard,*

*Licking flames of a gathering dawn
Embers of an evening's final glow,
The penetration of drizzle, greyness, total.
The pulse of australis lights.
The death of any light,
Cold night black.*

*A sentinel of gravest isolation
Black, white, black white.
Scant cloaks of flaking paint
Marked protection, forgotten
Fading in the meekest sun.*

*At a distance
Watching, waiting for when?
Wondering why?
Unmoved by wind or logic.*

*Black, white,
Remaining, atop steady,
The sentinel.*

*Enduring the wait,
Suffering the winds, the clouds.*

Black, white, black, white.

1964 The Trig

1969 A woven net

The penguin was a determined little yelloweye and had been far off the island in the openness of the ocean feeding since early sunrise. When in the dawn the sky was torn with reddened gold and the chiming chorus of the forest birds pierced the uneasy silence, off she had set. Down through the scrub thickets she had waddled by herself. This underbrush that scraped across her body as she passed by, but offered ideal protection during the dark nights, and also for her nest where her young one waited during her long absence at sea. Then with a wiggle and a waggle, one pink foot after the other, she crossed the forrest floor under the larger twisted reaches of the rata trees. Then with a pausing caution she would peer out through the forest to see if the way was clear, before hopping out of through the bush where others of her kind were also making their way onto the rocky cliff top and down the steep narrow ledge to the ocean.

The resting place and the nest site of a small yelloweye must be a closely guarded secret at all times. Then, once together, they would waddle through the mud of the tarn edge, where the water from the peaty up landsoil drained dark deep brown, into this ponding area, before dripping down to the ocean. Finally, there the penguins would all stall in congregation on the rocks at the brink of the splashing ocean waiting for that right moment to plunge off the abrupt edge through the air and into the water that allowed them a freedom that the land could not.

Since they were young they had loved the freedom of the ocean and the ease of movement it granted. It was a much different world than the land they could only waddle across. They could speed through the weave of sea weed that reached from the depths in twining strands towards the surface. They could chase each other and any small fish that hid in the deep blue shadows. There were the fanciful sounds of the ocean too. The gurgle as the smooth currents surged past the rocks, the splash as a wave impacted on the rugged shore line, the burble as a stream of escaping air bubbles rose surfaceward. There was the way the light filtered through the water and seaweed in a wonderful display, particularly if the sun was shining, when the radiant fingers searched towards the depths.

They could swim way down to the depths then come racing upward, sometimes even leaping right clear of the surface, and out of the water. But there were also dangers. The great black shapes of seal lions could sweep through the water and chase them relentlessly and catch them unawares if they were not careful. There were other dangers too, leopard seals and even sharks.

Once they had sprung off the dry rocks and were in this water, they all would swim in a group of seven or eight, far out to the feeding grounds. Sometimes they would porpoise in an undulating motion that broke the surface as they raced away seaward. Here they would spend the whole day fishing for a full belly to feed their waiting young.

But now she was returning and something had gone horribly wrong. At first it had scared her, as she had felt as though it was a bite from some large creature. But, no, she had been snagged by a loose piece of nylon fish netting that had been floating like a trap, suspended in the ocean. It had entangled her and though she could continue to swim for the shore, it was strenuous work. Her other kind had swum past her long ago and now, with the darkness sweeping down from the sky, so that the ocean embraced her with a cold blackness as the last glow faded above, she battled shoreward exhausted. Every so often she would stop to surface and check her whereabouts. She was gaining on the even blacker form of the land and she would soon be able to attempt to attain a foot hold on the rocks.

And this was the next dilemma, how to leap from the water with this tangle of netting attached. She could not get enough speed to leap from the water in a clear vault up onto the hard surface of the rocks above. After several attempts it was clear there was no way that her waning strength would succeed. However, there was the entry they had used when they were first introduced to the ocean as juveniles, and it was here that she found something of an easy path out of the ocean and up the rocks. Even this was not simple though, as it presented a host of new problems with the net catching on the sharp protrusions of the rocks. It all added to hinder her progress.

Eventually, there was a way through the traps that had held and bound her down or at least the tangle of matted net broke free from the snare enough and on she could move through the blackness. On top of the rock bluff she stood and exhausted in the pitch shadows of the night breathed deep to regain some strength in the crisp air.

Then with all the might she could muster and the thought of her hungry chick waiting at the nest she dragged herself and this tangle of netting towards the track that led through the twining trees that rose to the sky blacker than the blackness of the night. Closer she edged to the nest and her waiting chick. Well she knew this line that ran from the hills down to the sea. From all those trips to the sea she knew it blindfolded and surely she was on the right path. But again there was a foiling snag. She was caught firm by the tangle twigs that grasped the net. Exhausted she waited, there were the calls of the night from other penguins long safe in the bush. There would be a small chick waiting in the darkness also, waiting for a mother that should have been home. Waiting for the food she still held in her stomach but could not deliver. But this snag would not disengage, and she was held fast.

There lay a small tangle of old fishing net, somehow away from the ocean, right up in the bush. It was among the dead branches and yesterday's leaves, discarded they all lay together jumbled in a pile under a large distorted rata trunk. Beside this was the line of a well worn track that had been trod habitually by some small creature the size of a large bird or perhaps a penguin. For among the tangle of synthetic fibres of the mesh lay the fine bleached bones of some such beast. Fine in their scale and fine in their structure they lay set among the twist of this deathly trap.

FAIRCHILD'S GARDEN 1973

Who would have guessed that at the this, the most exposed area of the whole group of islands, there could lie a place that could boast a name such as Fairchild's Garden? It was a botanist's delight, a fairy tale world of plants unequalled anywhere in the world. Whole hillsides of undisturbed subantarctic megaherbs had me shaking my head in amazement. Great thick leaves covering the ground in an undulating pattern of rich green curves and swirls on a grand scale across the hill side as far as the eye can see. Growth, luxuriant as one could only imagine in a tropical paradise, an Amazon valley.

But no, here they are at the south west end of these islands right on the most exposed tip of Adams Island, bearing the full force of every ravaging storm that had passed this way, drenched with the salt spray that swirls in the air from the gigantic waves that crash headlong into the cliffs and then explode in a boisterous mass of foam and mist that drifts with the wind far across the island. Salt air, combining with the incessant rain and hail that often drives with such force that it almost angles parallel with the land is a constant elixir of moisture upon these extraordinary plants. It is a combination of many elements that combine to make the special state that allows these plants to thrive, and even the howling wind is part of this, as is the lack of bright sunlight and the thick and constantly damp peaty nature of the soil interspersed with the rock scree in which they thrive and grow. A more unlikely association could hardly be imagined, but it is perfect for these distinctive plants to flourish.

A friend had taken some small plant samples, complete with roots, back to New Zealand on one of the previous expeditions in an attempt to establish them as an experimental garden for subantarctic plants, but they grow in such a specialised climate that after a few years they had all failed and he could only conclude that "They took three miserable years to die". A Canterbury summer is nothing like the ecology and climate of these islands. These wonderful megaherbs have evolved perfectly to exploit this extreme climate and the temperate nature of the main land he had brought them to was just too mild as an opposite extreme for them to survive.

It was Captain Fairchild of the Government steamer 'Hinemoa' that made the locality of this area known, and the location is his namesake. Rickwood had told us of the history of the "garden" and that the name had been in common usage since 1890 but had not been officially recognised. He was applying to the New Zealand Geographic Board to have many of the common names of these islands accepted, and among these was this magnificent Fairchild's Garden. It seemed so apt, as the name suggested fair children playing in an untouched and natural garden, a sort of lost imaginary paradise. Was it luck or fate that the Captain's name was Fairchild and not something that might have been unsympathetic?

Rickwood seemed doubtful that they would accept the word 'garden' as a geographical term and that they might require it changed to bay or something less sensitive and perhaps more common. After we had experienced this place there seemed no name that could describe the geography, and we could all bear witness to the claim of 'garden' as a "proper" geographic term. Strange, how some burks in Wellington can make decisions about such a wonderful place without ever having been here, still that's Wellington for you. If 'garden' isn't in their vocabulary, then it should be if only to accommodate this one place.

Adams Island is a jewel in the top of the crown that is these islands. It is the largest island in the world with no introduced plants or terrestrial mammals and the endemic flora and fauna enjoy a freedom that few other places in the world can offer. A place committed scientists can complete their work in unmodified natural surroundings. Apart from a short time of grazing by a limited number of sheep on the island, which were eventually shot out, it has not had even a mouse ashore to disrupt the sensitive ecosystem. It is here that one can see and study by comparison the true effects of the changes that introduction can bring to an island. It is here that one can see the way some of the other islands might have been before people arrived and disrupted the balance. The present difference in the nature of each island is quite obvious, and where the main Auckland island has goats, pigs, mice and wild cats the effect of these can be directly seen on the endemic ecosystem and in particular the flora.

While some of the same plants that grow so prolifically here in Fairchild's garden do grow on these other islands, they are sadly now reduced to a few stubborn survivors well out of the reach of the munching mouths of these introduced animals. Perched on bluffs or down cliff sides, they cling to a tenuous survival. I believe there are now plans afoot through the Department to try and remove these pests at some point in the future, and the sooner the better. Though ironically it was the Government in the past that had animals deliberately introduced to provide food for castaway sailors who had struggled to survive. Now those wild and woolly days are gone as there is little chance of a shipwreck and the islands are managed as a natural reserve, there seems little need to have these animals here destroying the remaining plants that could form the only means of recovery. The goats seem the easiest to remove, and a count on their approximate numbers is under way at present. How the world can change and a boon can become a curse in less than a hundred years!

But, here, before us on Adams Island, one can see the striking endemic plants of the subantarctic islands in an original situation. Prolific, vigorous and vibrant, they really are quite astounding. The peculiar conditions of extreme exposure and rock have allowed Fairchild's Garden to develop into an extraordinary natural garden where large coastal herbs such as *Stilbocarpa polaris* and *Anisotome latifolia* are more than abundant. Together with the bright yellow flower of *Bulbinella rossii* and large grey silken leaves of *Pleurophyllum speciosum* with its tall upright daisy-like flowers they form a thick cover that has to be seen to be believed. While there is some presence of the coastal shrub *Hebe elliptica*, the fell field is benefited by the absence of rata that could have formed a large canopy, allowing this wide unforested area to flourish. So striking and abundant are these plants that it seems criminal walking over them, but no path can be found through or around the denseness of this grand garden. It seems no footpath was in the gardener's plan.

We could have spent an eternity in that wonderful place, and in some ways we did, for it will always stay with me in my mind and heart as a special place. But we had taken our soil samples and collected the plant specimens for John, and now it was time to proceed to the next task at hand so off we trudged down through the spreading thickness of this wondrous site. The weather, though a drab grey mist that merged the sea and sky as one, had held off any real threat of wind and rain, and this had been welcome as we all knew the stories about this end of the islands.

At the lower section of Fairchild's Garden, we had erected a large two foot by three foot sign in clear view of anyone landing. This was supported by two poles driven deep into the soil, and it had taken some time to secure a firm footing before we could nail home the marine ply sign itself. The wording clearly indicated that this region is a flora and fauna reserve, the name of the island, and that landing is by permit only. There has been some substantial damage from people landing illegally in the past, and while it is almost impossible to catch them, there are few warnings of the status of the islands. The hut at Ranui was a typical example where some vandals had caused a large amount of damage smashing the buildings up and stealing the double glassed windows. At least a few strategically placed signs might indicate that it was illegal to come ashore without authority. It looked completely out of place in the pureness of the land, but it had to be done for the better protection of the island.

The rest of the party had been at work down at Boatshed Bay which was little more than a short walk down towards Carnley Harbour from the garden. The namesake of the bay, the boatshed built for the castaways, was in utter disrepair and inside was the remaining recognisable castaway boat of these islands. It had been decided that a team effort could perhaps recover the boat for return to New Zealand and possible restoration. It is important that we attempt to save what historic remains that we can from these places, for once they are gone no force on earth can bring them back.

The shed itself was almost useless and any timber that might have been of some use was to be taken back to Ranui Cove and stored for future use. The coast watcher's hut there had been wrecked some years before by some fool vandals that had caused all sorts of damage. No one in the department could understand it, as there seemed no purpose at all to their vandalism.

Fairchild's Garden extends from the rough strait at the north-west end of Adams Island along the perilous shore to the first piece of bush, and then up and over the top of the ridge summit, in all about 400 acres. As we descended down the slope towards the boatshed with some regret at leaving this place, we could see them below at work on the dilapidated remains of the building. We had landed here earlier with the boat and passed the boatshed on the way up to the "Garden". The shed itself was now little more than a few sheets of rough corrugated iron, clinging on in places to a twisting wooden frame work. Most of the sheets were missing down one side and a few from the roof, while the other side and end were still quite intact.

The wooden boat itself sat slumped over on one side, with a few small clumps of carex grass beginning to grow within and one remaining crate, that had contained the castaway stores, now empty and tipped on its side, inside the hull also. The boat showed few signs of seaworthiness and its purpose here was indisputably finished. Though it had been a fine strong boat in her day, if it had been left here it would soon have deteriorated further and then been well beyond repair. Of the missing sheets of iron, little was found except a few pieces here and there among the bushes and we could only deduce that they had come loose and the blown away with the strong gales. Although we cleaned up the site as much we could, there were still fragments of rubbish, and the hole scraped in the ground where the shed had sat, but I suspect these will soon be grown over in less than a few years and this episode of the island's history will be no more than a few lines in a forgotten book.

A LARGE LAMP 1975

There was a glint among the cold black hardness of the resting rocks. Between the broken spherical mass of shore boulders, a glistening sparkle that only glass can make as the direct light of the sun strikes its reflective surface and bounces up. It stood as a beacon, salient in the reach of wet rocks. An extrinsic flicker of another world among the natural antiquity that has lain here through the obscure eons of time and is now invaded by this unknown mentality.

It was glass all right, and it revealed itself as a smooth curved surface, broken at the top, sharp and jagged as a bizarre weapon might be. It pointed upward as a virulent trap for the unsuspecting, the unwary or any unknowing flesh that might happen to step upon it. And there, attached at the bottom where the glass drew inward, a greening patina of extruded metal with some earlier rationality so extraneous to the completeness of this balanced ecosystem that I was just beginning to absorb.

As alien as it seemed, it was only the remains of a simple light bulb. A large lamp at that, certainly not the normal lamp one might use in the electrical socket of an ordinary house. No this was a lamp of uncommon proportions. Something special, an object with a secret purpose to match this unique size. I puzzled over it for more than a time, for as well as the mysterious source, the full unbroken glass form could only be imagined. The missing pieces lay nowhere near here for me to complete the jigsaw, and imagination was all I had.

Where had this come from? How had it got here? The ocean was the only logical answer, I knew that, but this was too naive and still left too many other questions from the real answers I searched for. Such a large lamp washed up here on the isolated shores of an isolated island in an isolated sea. It seemed hard to envision a scenario that could land this trash upon these shores, but here it was, defiant and bold upon the rocks with this bright sparkle among the black.

The magical enclosed glass rounded vessel had been floating buoyant on this ocean for more than a year. Thrown on the storms, tossed on the great waves, blown with the frantic winds, ever on the move as a restless being. It was a huge continuance of ocean this fragile vessel had the freedom of. It was an ocean that this vessel could cut a wide path through, when all it needed was the smallest of gaps. Any course through this ocean offered a passage way, with few obstructions of any kind to end its wild dance, and it seemed that it could sail forever, unheeded and free. With an arrogance that defied its own fragility, it had sailed as a living entity in the sucking spitting wash with more than a fair chance of surviving a complete circular polar course right around these cold waters uninterrupted.

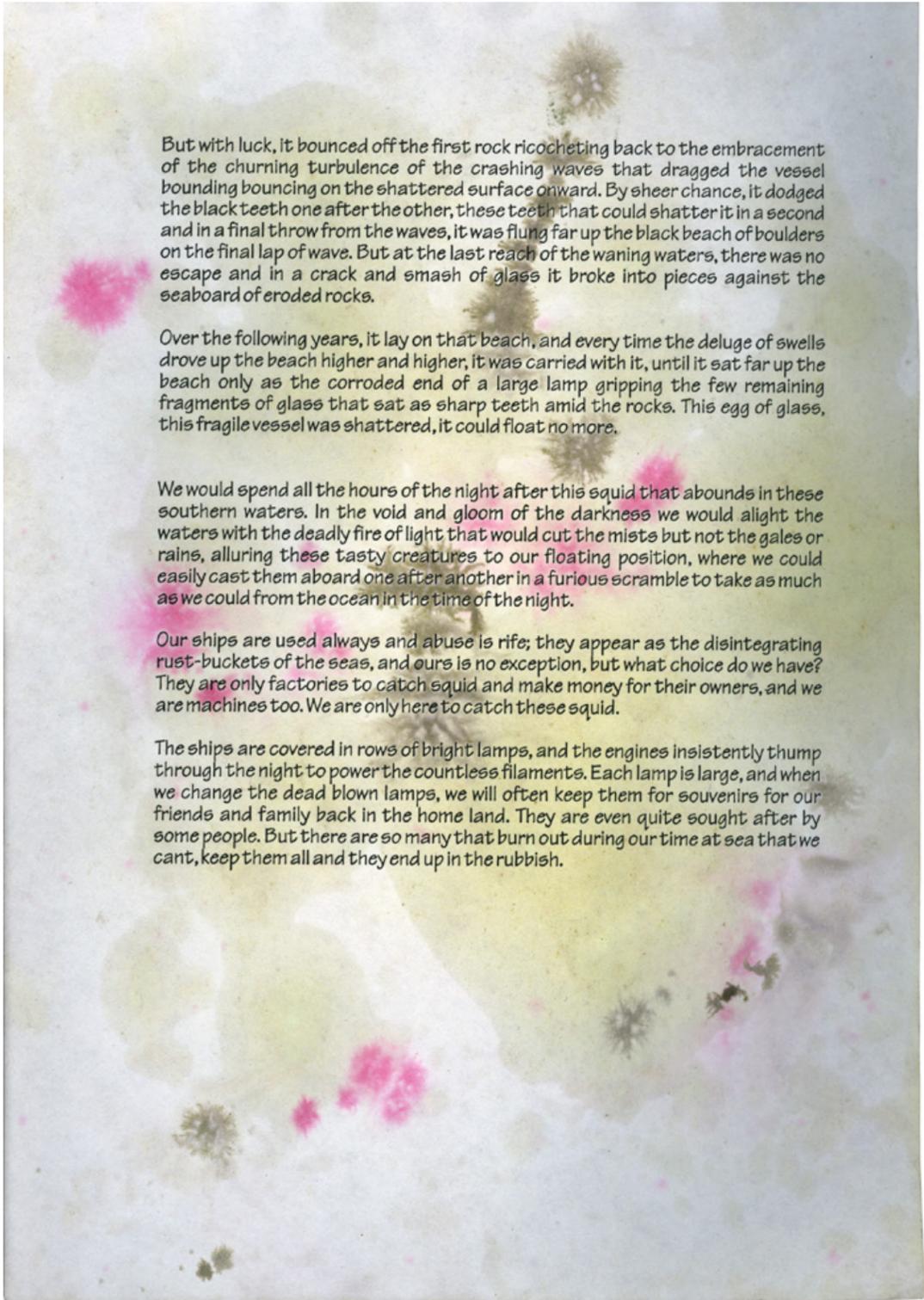
It continued in a vibrant frolic, bouncing on the crests, diving in the troughs, buried by the tumbling wash of white water, but always surfacing to dance onward again and again with the boldness of a vessel exploring the world for the first time. A capsule intact as a self in an infinite broiling sea. An unhatched glass egg with no embryo, no real purpose.

As open an expanse as that ocean was, it wasn't interminable, and it was inevitable that some obstruction would loom through the wind swept spray that lifted from the surface of this liquid ocean to affront the passage of this daring vessel made of glass. And here now it was. Dark grey profiles reaching from the ocean ahead of these driving winds and heaving swells that powered the tiny vessel full ahead. At first they seemed to carry little weight and appeared only as obscure, flimsy cutouts on the horizon. But as the distance closed, they grew ever larger, blacker and menacing, until they surrounded all the paths ahead and the vessel was trapped.

With no steerage there was no escape. Closer the ethereal glass vessel bobbed and jostled on the relentlessly pouring swells toward the hard black shape of land. It was alive, only as long as it remained in the water and could avoid the brutal hardness of land, for the ocean was like an embryonic fluid that held it in suspension. Ahead, there were immense waves breaking on the shore, not like the tumbling tops of the largest open ocean waves it had survived many times before.

Here the swells gathered themselves and rose to their full height. Here, in anger, they made a final desperate vigorous death throes at the coast line, to bite at the stone, to carve up the land. Here, in a matter of moments they unleashed the puissance of all their energy. Here they opened all their strength stored from the undulative journey around the polar ocean. These were crashing waves, with all the wrath of their last dance as they crashed headlong against the coast line in a sudden explosion of sound and spray. They stood full, upright with a reflexive arch and curve of their bodies with a sudden thrust, a last orgasmic frenzy before peeling over in a thundering turmoil of white water as they charge ahead. An ultimate upward twist of tautness as they curved up, over and down with thunder.

But alas, the glass ship had reached the area where the swells gathered themselves, and pushed off the shallowing bottom with a jerk and an ultimate last surge towards the rugged shore. Then, with a whoosh and an exhilarating rush of speed, the vessel was caught in the cascading pitch, and thrown in a free fall to the sequential eruption of foaming white water below. Amidst this roar of breaking wave it was swept straight to the waiting black rocks ahead. It seemed it could never survive the landing, the berthing intact.



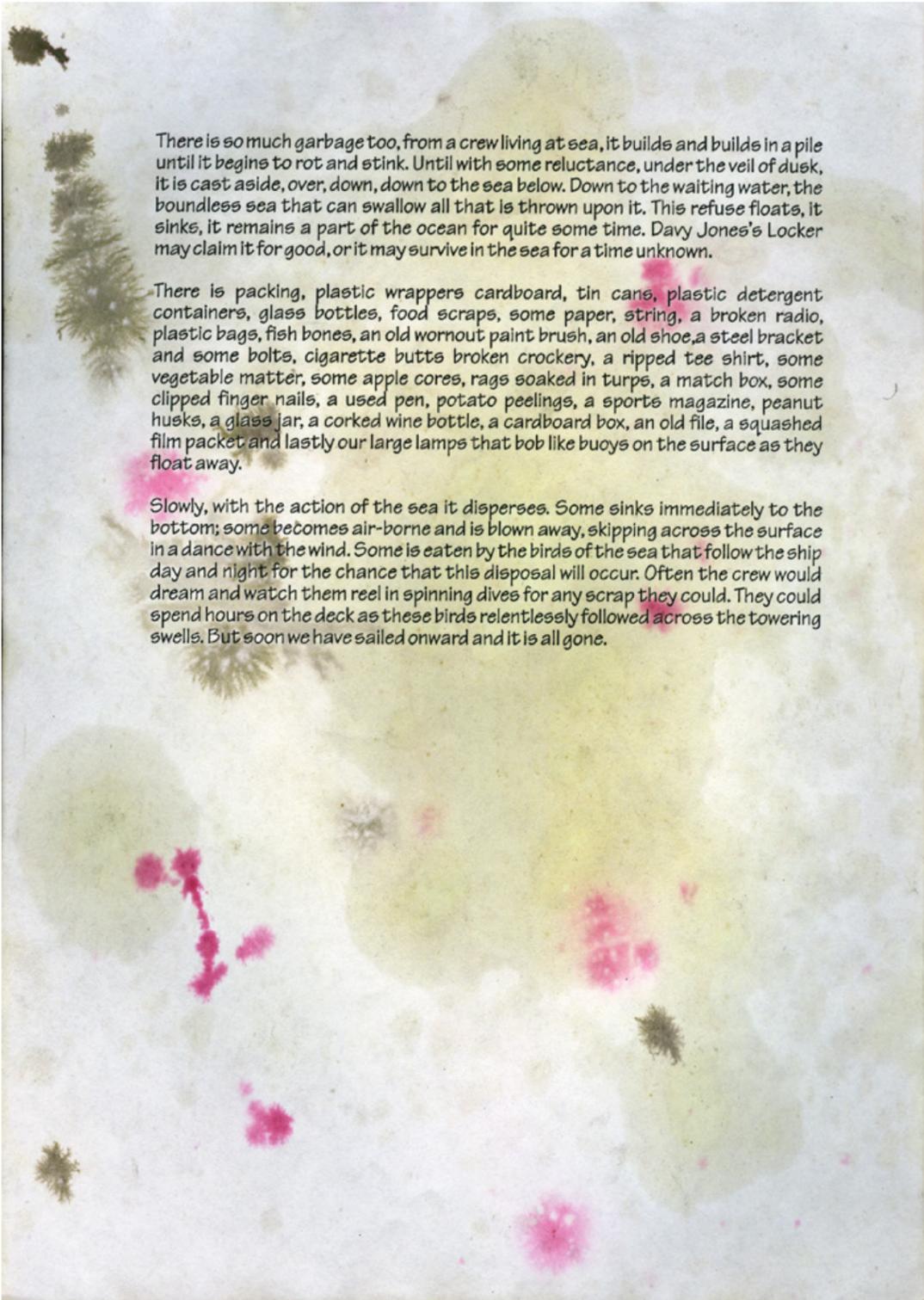
But with luck, it bounced off the first rock ricocheting back to the embracement of the churning turbulence of the crashing waves that dragged the vessel bounding bouncing on the shattered surface onward. By sheer chance, it dodged the black teeth one after the other, these teeth that could shatter it in a second and in a final throw from the waves, it was flung far up the black beach of boulders on the final lap of wave. But at the last reach of the waning waters, there was no escape and in a crack and smash of glass it broke into pieces against the seaboard of eroded rocks.

Over the following years, it lay on that beach, and every time the deluge of swells drove up the beach higher and higher, it was carried with it, until it sat far up the beach only as the corroded end of a large lamp gripping the few remaining fragments of glass that sat as sharp teeth amid the rocks. This egg of glass, this fragile vessel was shattered, it could float no more.

We would spend all the hours of the night after this squid that abounds in these southern waters. In the void and gloom of the darkness we would alight the waters with the deadly fire of light that would cut the mists but not the gales or rains, alluring these tasty creatures to our floating position, where we could easily cast them aboard one after another in a furious scramble to take as much as we could from the ocean in the time of the night.

Our ships are used always and abuse is rife; they appear as the disintegrating rust-buckets of the seas, and ours is no exception, but what choice do we have? They are only factories to catch squid and make money for their owners, and we are machines too. We are only here to catch these squid.

The ships are covered in rows of bright lamps, and the engines insistently thump through the night to power the countless filaments. Each lamp is large, and when we change the dead blown lamps, we will often keep them for souvenirs for our friends and family back in the home land. They are even quite sought after by some people. But there are so many that burn out during our time at sea that we cant, keep them all and they end up in the rubbish.



There is so much garbage too, from a crew living at sea, it builds and builds in a pile until it begins to rot and stink. Until with some reluctance, under the veil of dusk, it is cast aside, over, down, down to the sea below. Down to the waiting water, the boundless sea that can swallow all that is thrown upon it. This refuse floats, it sinks, it remains a part of the ocean for quite some time. Davy Jones's Locker may claim it for good, or it may survive in the sea for a time unknown.

There is packing, plastic wrappers cardboard, tin cans, plastic detergent containers, glass bottles, food scraps, some paper, string, a broken radio, plastic bags, fish bones, an old wornout paint brush, an old shoe, a steel bracket and some bolts, cigarette butts broken crockery, a ripped tee shirt, some vegetable matter, some apple cores, rags soaked in turps, a match box, some clipped finger nails, a used pen, potato peelings, a sports magazine, peanut husks, a glass jar, a corked wine bottle, a cardboard box, an old file, a squashed film packet and lastly our large lamps that bob like buoys on the surface as they float away.

Slowly, with the action of the sea it disperses. Some sinks immediately to the bottom; some becomes air-borne and is blown away, skipping across the surface in a dance with the wind. Some is eaten by the birds of the sea that follow the ship day and night for the chance that this disposal will occur. Often the crew would dream and watch them reel in spinning dives for any scrap they could. They could spend hours on the deck as these birds relentlessly followed across the towering swells. But soon we have sailed onward and it is all gone.

THE LOSS OF A COMPASS 1978

During that day I had completed three 50 meter plot lines. One at about 1200 ft, just below the summit, one adjacent the trig at about 1000 ft and the other just below 800 ft. I had estimated on the walk up, that each plot line should have taken about one and a half hours work to complete. Initial observations seem to reveal quite a diversity in the plant distribution, but I will have to wait until my return to New Zealand until I can run a final analysis from my charts. I find the complexity of these miniature plants hugging low to the ground and the interspacing and action of the various species a totally engrossing area to study.

The view from the top of the Hooker Hills was unexpected, as the land seemed visually much flatter than the frustrating climb through the tangled sections of *Dracophyllum* scrub would suggest. The panoramic spread of the main island and the smaller offshore islands from the heights is impressive, to say the least. It stretches out in all directions and confirms the windswept ruggedness of the islands. Mt Eden is marked clearly on the map as a rock knob, and it sat prominently on the skyline to the southeast, while the long arm of Larrie harbour spread out before me stretching off towards the fragmented coastline where Ewing, Ocean, Rose and Enderby islands hugged close to the main island. To the north I could see the sloping valley that led down to Matheson Bay, where the strong winds swept up from the ocean and across the tops in a rush. Further around to my left North Point and Blackhead rose up clearly visible in the morning sun. The sight was enough to delay the plot lines for several minutes while I gained some breath back, stretched my tired back without a pack, and admired this wonderfully wild land below me. The weather was quite calm with the sky clear and fine during my ascent early in the morning at 7 a.m. And later when I started the first plot line about 9.30 a.m. it still held the promise of a good day. As it was so fine I decided to climb to the summit and work down the slope in the chance that the weather could suddenly change. Later in the day this proved to be a good strategy.

During the first plot line, the bold snow tussocks sat upright and dignified in the still air though their heads still had a definite lean for the last blow across the tops. However, by the time I had finished the first line a strong s/westerly breeze had sprung up from nowhere and it sent the fine white tussock heads dancing into life with the play of sunlight through them. At this highest altitude, an abundance of *Hebe Williamsii* was just starting to project its bright blue flowers, making an attractive feature in the plant cover. Much of the plant cover is modified because of the destructive browsing of goats and pigs. Unfortunately, magnificent species like *Pleurophyllum* and *Bulbinella* are now reduced to a few hardy specimens clinging to the rocky outcrops far out of searching animal teeth.

It's criminal to think that people actually released a wide range of animals onto these islands for food. On the islands where they were released the vegetation is so modified, and without a visit to another unchanged island, it is hard to imagine how it must have been. This, the main Auckland Island, has goats and pigs that cause damage to the plants, and the other animals that were here have either been removed or died out by themselves from the unsuitable climate. It would be great if steps could be taken to eradicate the goats and pigs from here at some point in the future, and there was a chance for these plants to return. Adams Island only ever had sheep, they have long since been removed and the island has made a full recovery, becoming a showpiece of endemic species. Though a little smaller, Disappointment Island has never been disturbed, and I would give a month's salary to research areas of that land. Rabbits are only on Rose and Enderby Island and modify the land in a different way altogether.

I had been so engrossed in my work, that quite without any warning I had not sensed a change in the weather. But as I was about halfway through the next plot line, the wind had become so strong that trying to retain and write on the flapping pages of my data book was almost impossible. Now the tussocks were whipping wildly in the air and lashing violently at my legs. The still silence had turned to a chorus of ethereal wind songs with the haunting whistles in the rock crevices, the whipping hiss in the tussocks and the buffeting force of the wind on my clothing and the land. Away to the southwest was a spiralling line of dark black cloud that annulled any vision and obliterated all. It became larger and larger until a dark shadow overtook my position and the sun was gone except for the disappearing rays on the geography to the north.

I felt pretty insignificant in the centre of this elemental intensity happening before me, and within 15 minutes, I lay defenceless in shelter as the voracious storm pounced around the hills like a wild animal. I had to seek shelter from the ravenous gusts, but on the way to a rock outcrop, I had been blown flat to the ground three times and the last 50 metres to the shelter of a rocky outcrop I could barely manage on hands and knees. A wall of even blacker darkness descended as the heavens opened and a torrent of wind-driven hail bounced off the ground spinning across the terrain with the direction of the wind. Such elemental intensity is hard to imagine yet describe. Almost in fear of my life, I crouched in a fetal position, below a rocky bluff about 100 meters away from the plot line I had been at minutes before. I sank into the warmth of the clothes that I wore while a thousand thoughts of shipwrecks, castaways and these unique plants I had been plotting that thrive so well in this environment raced through my mind; this really was the Auckland Islands.

Within half an hour the last ragged clouds of the front were scurrying away revealing a much kinder sky with even the odd patch of blue here and there. The wind had lost some of its intensity, well at least enough to stand upright once more, while about the ground lay the large glistening hail stones now beginning to melt. It was an amazing experience I would have exchanged nothing for.

Then, as I slithered from the protection of the tight corner of this impromptu shelter, my pack slipped with me, spilling objects in all directions. In the haste to find shelter, it seemed that I had completely forgotten to close the damn zip. Some objects landed safely on the ground in front of me while others rolled off and over a steep ledge. There was a solid tangle of plants that grew on this side of the rock which had grown slightly taller due to the extra shelter offered from the extreme gales.

It took a while to gather all the pieces and I found all except my old compass. Though I looked at length there was no sign of it at all and it was lost to the land. I felt a curious sense of achievement, as that compass could lie there for maybe an eternity; without trying I had left a curio of my trip behind forever.

Devils From The Deep 1983

We'd been down there about a week. The weather and the cruise hadn't been too bad actually, cause we'd been told it can get rough at times. Though, I shouldn't imagine it could get much worse than some of the storms we'd been in south of Stewart Island. We'd seen some wicked stuff pound through there in the last few years. Some of that stuff would really put the shits up you at different times.

The boat was at Sandy Bay, and we'd got a good anchor down and then managed to get into the two huts to stay, which made living better than on the boat. We weren't supposed to be anywhere near the place as you need some kind of permit thing from the official bods that run the show, but we thought we could bluff it if we'd been caught. We'd meant to be after fish and testing some samples of those damn big crabs around there, but really it was the islands that were the real buzz for all of us. Kirk had some really wicked smoke and we'd been hootin' it up all week. The island wasn't that bad to walk around and we'd been to most of the good spots in no time. Kirk had his 202 and we'd spent a lot of time shooting rabbits. There's so many and they're so tame that ya just walk up and blow them away. We had this contest to see who could bowl over the most. Kirk won most days. God it was great fun! They're bloody tuff to eat though when we'd try to cook the odd one. Thought we'd have a go at one of those old cows on the island for something different, could've done with a fresh steak each. They're probably as tough as old boots any way, but never quite got around to it.

Nick new something of the history of the place and we'd spend the nights gettin' wasted and soaking up these shipwreck stories and things. Shit it was scary stuff man. They must've had a hell of a time eating nothing but raw birds and fish for years. Well one night just before we left, we'd been at it again and were really away; gettin' into these stories of them dying of starvation in the hills, bad storms, the "General Grant's" gold, death at the shipwreck sites and other things. Well, I had to go out for a piss cause we'd been havin' a few beers as well, and sort of wandered off into the forest for a good spot. It was really mind-blowing as there was a good wind and the trees were whipping about in the torch light. It looked really spacey man, with lots of unreal patterns and weird shadows everywhere I shone the torch. I sort of got carried away and kept walking for awhile spacing out on this light in the trees. Thought I'd be all right as long as I could see the sky through the opening in the trees to the ocean.

I was really gettin' into this tree thing and suddenly there was a great roar and fuck I just dropped the torch as this great black shape crashed through the trees towards me. The bloody torch light had gone out and I couldn't see a thing, just this great noise rarking up in the bush beside me. I'm sure it was a sea lion now, but at the time with me being wasted and that it could have been anything. First I thought it was some sort of monster or something and I just took off in any direction as fast as I could. I got away from the noise but had lost the torch and I couldn't see a bloody thing in the dark. I couldn't recognise the bush around me either and was startin' to think I was lost. Shit, what a place to be lost! The winds and trees were doing weird things to my head and I started thinking of dead castaways creeping about. Like Nic had reckoned there were heaps that had died right near here, and shit I was scared. Every gust of wind sent the trees going with their rustle and creaking. Somewhere ahead came a kind of high pitched squawking from the bush, it was probably a penguin, but it only made things worse.

1983 Devils from the deep

When we'd been out at the other end of the island I'd ripped off the metal plaque from this wooden tomb where there had been a shipwreck and heaps of them had drowned trying to get to shore. Nic reckoned they'd had a hell of a time and the ones that were washed up had the eyes pecked out. They had all had no food and when they had got to the shore on another island some of them had tried to rip off the food from the others. Anyway, I'd got this plaque thing back into the fishing boat without anyone knowing and had it stashed away to take home for a souvenir of the trip. I use to do the same with those A.A. signs back home when we went somewhere new. I had Milford Sound, Bluff, Gore and even Queenstown when we'd been there once. I also had an amazing collection of car badges too, like Mercedes Benz, the lot. Anyway, this one off the grave was quite a new one and big too. It sort of said about the ship that had sunk and fifteen of them had drowned around 20 March 1887. Well, we'd landed about the 20th of March and I reckoned their fucken ghosts had the whole thing planned from the start.

Well, I just thought the ghosts from that bloody grave had come for me. They were screaming like fuck and their faces were coming out of the dark and shooting away again into the trees. I found this bank that dropped down to a stream and jumped down to hide from it all. I had this swiss army knife I had been given by Janice for xmas and I sat there hunched up with about four blades drawn, waiting in the dark. I waited for bloody ages man, shit it was so scary, the faces were still coming but they couldn't seem to find me. All the commotion and chaos I had started seemed to increase as there were roars, squawking and those bloody trees waving around coming from all directions. It was coming from all over the place now. It just seemed to keep coming till I couldn't take it any more so I jumped forward and away like a shot. Shit, I started running as fast as I could. More times than I can remember I kept tripping up and crashing to the ground or hitting trees. I just ran like hell, like it was worse than the cops chasing you after you'd done a job. Then the bush changed and was hell to get through as it scratched the shit out of me. It was as crappy a bit of bush as I've ever been through.

I started thinking about those late night movies we'd seen in Christchurch years ago. You know, the scary jobs like Dracula and Frankenstein and that. We'd spent a whole winter going to as many as we could, even the ones that started at midnight. They were always the best. Suddenly there was devils from the deep, castaway ghosts, Dracula; the lot were after me. Every horror movie I had ever seen had come to life. My heart was going something wicked. Werewolfs, goblins, witches, giant spiders, christ I was shitting myself. It was me and one swiss army knife against the hordes from hell. The gnarly trees were like something from "Lord of the Rings" and slowly they started to laugh at me while slowly turning into zombies that started chasing the shit out of me too. There were old seamen in nothing but seal skins ripped and torn and as thin as fuck in the face. They came straight out of the blackness with screams and laughs as cold as hell.

Christ it was gettin out of hand. I was out and bleeding, the undergrowth attacked me with each new step. It just got worse and worse. I kept tripping up as well and crashing down banks. I would fall in a heap and be on my feet in a flash as I thought these bastards would get me once I was down. The larger branches hurt when I hit them and I was at least glad there were no real big trees in this part of the forest or I could have really knocked the shit out of myself.

Then I lost the knife and really thought I was a goner; there was noise and chaos all round as everywhere I went there were more high pitch squawks and every now and then great roars and barks from the seal monsters. I just seemed to set them going as I crashed on. Christ, it was inches from death stuff man.

I just knew I couldn't last much longer at this rate, the old ticker was going like fuck.

And I somehow jumped through bushes like a mad man in any direction. The next thing I knew I crashed out through the bush onto the grass area about 200 meters from the hut and it was all gone. Just seemed to vanish into thin air, apart from the odd squawk and that. God it was a fucken wicked night. I was alive but absolutely stuffed. I stood there on the grass for awhile till I got some breath back before I went back to the hut. I never told the others about it when I got back to the hut and they never asked. I thought they might ask about the rips in my clothes, and scratches to my face. Shit I was covered in dirt too. But they were too wasted to say much anyway.

We hauled our arse out of the place next afternoon and I've never been back. Christ she's a fucken scary place all right. Christ knows what happened to the torch and the knife, but I threw that bastard of a plaque over the side into the sea on the way home without anyone seeing. Those damn ghosts can have the fucken thing back cause it won't be going into my souvenir collection.

1984 Holly roller

HOLY ROLLER 1984

The spiritual sojourn had been the most rewarding to date. During the days on the open sea, we had been able to spend long hours of prayer both group as true brothers and sisters, and also by ourselves. The group sessions of devotional song were exceptionally rewarding and spiritually enlightening to every one I talked to. We would all begin to gather in the lounge about seven thirty and after about half an hour, would begin with some contemporary songs, followed by some more traditional ones then a few swinging contemporary numbers to finish with. We could still be there singing well after ten, after which the singing would formally conclude and there would be an evening prayer and then easygoing group discussions over a welcome cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit before we would all turn in for the evening. Some of the keen ones would gather in their cabins for a more quiet song and prayer sessions or just a talk till the early hours. There was often a bit of tom-foolery and harmless nonsense from the more energetic that broke the silence of the night, though the leaders tolerated little of it.

I have had time to read once more and have been engrossed in Frank Morison's book, "Who Moved the Stone". It is quite a fascinating account from a non-believer turned believer through study and scholarship. So I would spend the late evenings in my bunk with a book reading while there was some of this juvenile nonsense in the surrounding cabins.

The weather, though full of that overcast cloud that seems to prevail in the lower half of New Zealand, around Invercargill and Dunedin, was calm with little wind and just a slight swell to the ocean. Most of us even enjoyed the casual rocking of the ship, and we visualised scenes from many of the Bible stories of fishermen and the sea when we talked together. Consequently, the voyage was a comfortable one with no one as I know seasick, which just seemed a small miracle considering the nature of the waters we were sailing through. We were able to walk the decks in our free time and view the ocean from these heights with great enjoyment. It was a good time to meet people too, and Jason met a friend of his brothers that he had done some surfing with and he hadn't realised was even on the ship. It's surely a small world we live in.

The many sea birds that follow the ship do so with an almost spiritual ease, with the really large ones cruising with the grace of an angel across the surface. At the slightest lift from even the small swells that we have seen, they rise with a pureness and grace that is a pleasure to watch. Great albatrosses with a wing span of at least ten feet aloft above this sea as if for them gravity did not exist. If god had meant man to fly surely this is how it would be, with the elegance and dexterity of these wonderful birds; they just make it look so easy. Here these great birds are like the gentle but giant angels of the oceans.

I was convinced the Lord would be with us on this passage, and after the reports of the violent weather that most often predominate in these oceans, I was sure those weeks of prayer for a calm and safe voyage had been answered. I had read quite a few books on these islands in the month leading up to our departure, and there was no doubt that the ocean here can get quite rough, to say the least. It seems there had been more than a few shipwrecks around the area during the years also. So we were blessed to be on waters so calm. Jason was a little disappointed though as, being a surfer, he enjoys rough ocean swells and had been looking forward to as rough a passage as possible. Sorry Jason.

There were only fellow brothers and sisters of the Lord here with us which created such a wonderful feeling that pervaded throughout the ship.

The next morning, the swell did begin to rise, and the pitch and lift of the boat became quite intense, perhaps a little too much for some, but we had nearly reached the islands and by 10 o'clock we were in the shelter of the island and life was becoming comfortable once more. After this time on the ocean, the sight of the islands felt like a haven in the middle of the southern ocean. Small panicles of hope among the vastness of ocean, it was like finding an oasis among the barrenness of the desert. A place of solitude and isolation, a place of undisturbed natural beauty, a place for an ultimate spiritual experience. A place where each of us could begin to reach out from the wilderness to God as Moses had done. As the anchor was dropped, from up on the ship decks we could see great sea lions resting on the beach. There was a wind-swept ruggedness about the bush that implied a dependency on each tree to shelter the others. They clung en masse as if some fear of letting go would destroy them all, it was quite a sight.

About eleven o'clock, we were all gathered for a prayer of thanks for the safe passage and an early lunch before we were allowed to disembark in small groups towards the island. We were only allowed two groups there at one time and each one with a guide. There were about 25 in each group, and we had strict instructions to stay on the marked tracks to minimise the damage to the fragile plant life. Enderby Island abounds with rabbits that had been introduced as food for the castaways at some point, and the cute little things bounded off in front of us. They are quite blue in colour and make a delightful sight on the green grassed area above the beach they have created with their constant nibbling. I was fortunate to be in the second group, and as we approached the beach in the landing boat, we could see the sea lions swimming below in the clear water. The wind had sprung up by now, and although there was still no rain the wind felt cold as it cut through my clothes. Luckily I had taken a good parka and once warmly wrapped up inside I felt quite insulated from the bite of the strong wind gusts.

We were all able to walk up the wonderful bush track to the higher altitudes of the island with the guide from Dept of Conservation. Nearly at the top, we came across several pair of nesting Royal Albatross, and what large and significant birds these are when you can see them at this range! Further above this they allowed us to separate and find places of solitude where we could engage in deep meaningful meditation. We managed to spend over an hour alone on the tops searching the questions and answers of our own spirituality.

We had stopped several times for photo spots on the way up through the trees, and also where the albatrosses were, and by the time we had reached the top, I had finished a whole film. The wind was almost a gale on the top, blowing straight up the rocky cliffs that faced out over the ocean where the great waves were rolling in from the south and crashing onto the cliff. There was a wild mix of spray among the blustery conditions that whipped across the tops. Not the best place to have a camera, but I decided to risk a few shots all the same from the tops but needed to reload the camera. The force of the wind can only be measured in the speed by which the film packet disappeared across the tops. As I loaded the film, I accidentally dropped the foil packet and the cardboard box that came with the film, and in an instant it was in the wind and away. As hard as I chased it across the open low-growing plants on the tops, it just disappeared in leaps and bounds and was gone in a flash. I felt pretty sad about littering such a wonderful place, but it happened so quickly that I had no control at all.

After the photos, I spent about another half hour near the edge in deep meditation, and so deep was it that I hardly noticed the wind and spray drenching me, and by the time I left, I was drenched almost through. Luckily the camera was well protected in its case and was fine.



THE FRENCH NEXUS 1986

THESE ISLANDS ARE A GEM IN THE SUB-ANTARCTIC OCEAN. THEY ARE A UNIQUE PLACE, THAT EXISTS ONLY IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, AWAY FROM THE HANDS OF MAN, WHERE THE CREATURES AND THE BIRDS ARE LEFT IN PEACE TO LIVE THE WAY THEY HAVE FOR CENTURIES.

THE TEAM ARE GLAD TO ANCHOR THE CALYPSO TO THESE SOLID LANDS, AS THERE ARE SO MANY VIOLENT STORMS WE HAVE HAD TO ENDURE DURING OTHER EXPEDITIONS IN THIS AREA OF THE GLOBE. THIS IS AN AREA OF THE WORLD WHERE THE STORMS OF THE POLAR REGIONS SWEEP ACROSS THE OCEAN UNSTOPPED BY THE NUANCE THAT ARE THE SPECKS OF LAND AMID A VASTNESS OF OCEAN. THE VIOLENCE OF THE STORMS NEVER SEEMS TO CEASE AS THESE POWERFUL CYCLONES CIRCUMNAVIGATE THE SOUTHERN OCEAN UNDISTURBED. IT IS THESE SMALL ISLANDS, SUCH AS THE ONE WE ARE AT NOW THAT BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE RAVAGING STORMS BUT PROVIDE AN ESSENTIAL RESTING AND BREEDING PLACE FOR THE CREATURES OF THIS SOUTHERN OCEAN, AS THEY ARE NOW DOING FOR US. THERE ARE MILLIONS OF BIRDS THAT FLY THE SOUTHERN OCEAN, SOME VERY LARGE AS WITH THE ALBATROSSES AND OTHER QUITE TINY AS WITH THE SMALL PRIONS; EACH OF THESE NEEDS THE SANCTUARY OF THE LAND FOR BREEDING AT LEAST.

WE DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT LONG AFTER OUR ARRIVAL, OR EVEN TO SEEK THE WILD LIFE AS IT IS FIRST TO COME TO US. WHEN WE HAVE HARDLY ENTERED THE SMALL BAY, THERE ARE SEA LIONS IN THE WATER THAT SURROUND THE SHIP IN PLAY AT THE CURIOSITY OF THE SHIP AND OUR ARRIVAL. THEY SWIM OUT THROUGH THE CLEAR AND CALMER WATERS OF THE BAY WE HAVE ANCHORED IN, DIVING DEEP BELOW THE SHIP, RACING ACROSS THE SURFACE AND BREAKING THE WATER WITH AN EXPLOSION OF AIR FOR ANOTHER BREATH. THEY SEEM TO ENJOY OUR PRESENCE AND ALMOST SEEM TO CALL US TO COME AND PLAY WITH THEM. WITHOUT DELAY THE TEAM ARE PREPARED FOR DIVING, AS IT SEEMS THEIR INQUISITIVE NATURE IS AT A HEIGHT ON OUR ARRIVAL AND WE ARE ATTRACTED TO FILM THEIR PLAY WHILE THEY ARE HERE AND THEIR CURIOSITY IS AT A HEIGHT.

THESE ARE GREAT CREATURES, LARGE AND FAST IN THE WATER; WE ARE IN THEIR DOMAIN AND SURROUNDED MAINLY BY JUVENILE MALES. INITIALLY, WE APPROACH WITH SOME CARE AND CURIOSITY, AS THEY HAVE VERY STRONG AND SHARP TEETH THAT COULD INFLICT A NASTY GASH, THOUGH THE ACCOUNTS OF THIS HAPPENING TO DIVERS IN THE WATER ARE VERY FEW. THEY SPEED TOWARDS THE TEAM UNDER THE WATER AND IN THE LAST POSSIBLE SECOND VEER OFF INTO THE MURK OF THE SEA BEYOND OUR SIGHT. THE LINE OF BUBBLES FROM OUR TANKS EXCITES THEM AS THEY SPEED THROUGH THE WATERS AROUND PIERRE AND MICHEL. THEIR PLAY IS ALWAYS AHEAD OF THE DIVERS, AND YOU CAN'T HELP FEELING THAT WE ARE TOYS FOR THEM TO ENJOY, A WAY FOR THEM TO PASS THE MORNING.

UNFORTUNATELY, THESE WONDERFUL CREATURES WERE ALMOST HUNTED TO EXTINCTION IN THE EARLY PART OF THE 19TH CENTURY FOR THEIR SKINS AND OIL, AND HAVE ONLY RECENTLY BEGUN TO RECOVER IN ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS SO THAT THEY MAY BE SAFE IN THESE ISLANDS FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY IN THE FUTURE. THE ISOLATION OF THESE ISLANDS MAY AFFORD THEM SOME PROTECTION, BUT THERE IS STILL THE THREAT OF INDISCRIMINATE FISHING THAT CAN SNAG AND CAUSE THE DEATH OF MANY OF THEM EACH YEAR. PERHAPS IT WILL BE PUBLIC PRESSURE AS WELL AS THE ISOLATION AND THE LAWS OF THE GOVERNMENT THAT MAY PROTECT THESE CREATURES FOR TIME TO COME, BUT IT IS ALL TOO CERTAIN THAT MANY HAVE DIED THIS WAY OVER RECENT TIME. WE MUST ALSO LEARN TO FISH IN A WAY THAT WE CAN SHARE THE BOUNTY OF THE SEA WITHOUT DISRUPTING CREATURES SUCH AS THESE IF THEY ARE TO TRULY SURVIVE.

1986 The French nexus

AFTER HALF AN HOUR FILMING THE TEAM FEELS MORE RELAXED AND ABLE TO INTERACT WITH THE SEA LIONS WHO HAVE BECOME VERY EXCITED AND INQUISITIVE AT OUR INTEREST IN THEM. THEY SHOW GREATEST CURIOSITY FOR OUR CAMERAS, AND THERE IS NO PROBLEM FILMING, EXCEPT THEY OFTEN COME TOO CLOSE FOR THE FOCUS OF THE LENS. THE REFLECTIVE SURFACE OF THE LENS IS TOO MUCH FOR THEM TO RESIST, AND THEY COME TIME AFTER TIME RIGHT UP TO THE CAMERA. THE ACTIVITY BETWEEN US REACHES A PEAK AFTER AN HOUR, AND THE TEAM HAS TO COME ABOARD FOR A MEAL AND THE WARMTH OF THE CABIN. THERE ARE FEW BLUE SKIES IN THIS PLACE AND AS MUCH AS THE WIND IS COLD, THE PERSISTENT GREYNESS IS QUITE CHILLING TO THE MIND.

IN THE AFTERNOON, WE LANDED IN THE INFLATABLE ZODIACS WITH THE INTENTION OF VISITING THE MOLLYMAWK COLONY WHICH ARE IN THE HEIGHT OF THE BREEDING SEASON. THE YOUNG CHICKS HAD JUST HATCHED AND COULD BE BUT A FEW DAYS OLD. YOU HAVE TO WALK WITH CARE ON THE ISLAND AS THERE ARE OTHER SMALL PRION THAT NEST HERE IN BURROWS AND IT IS EASY TO BREAK THROUGH THE TURF AND CAVE IN THEIR BURROWS. IT IS HARD TO TELL, BUT THERE ARE ANOTHER SMALL CREATURE THAT SCAMPERS OFF INTO THE TALL TUSsocks, AND SOME OF THE PARTY THOUGHT THAT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A RAT. NO MATTER HOW WE SEARCHED, WE COULD FIND NO TRACE OF THE SMALL CREATURE TO CONFIRM OUR SUSPICIONS. IF THIS WAS SO, AND THERE IS A RAT ON THE ISLAND, IT COULD HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT ON THE BALANCE OF THE ISLAND WILD LIFE, AS THIS IS AN ISLAND THAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE RAT-FREE. WE WOULD LATER REPORT THIS TO THE AUTHORITIES BACK IN NEW ZEALAND, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS SOME WAY OUT OF OUR SCHEDULE. WE ALL FELT THERE IS A DUTY TO REPORT SUCH A SIGHTING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THESE ARE ALL RAT-FREE ISLANDS AND SOME ARE FREE EVEN FROM MICE. IT IS TO THE CREDIT OF THE VIOLENCE OF THE STORMS THAT LASH THIS PART OF THE WORLD THAT NO RAT HAD SURVIVED THE CRUELNESS OF THE OCEAN DURING ONE OF THE MANY SHIPWRECKS THAT HAD OCCURRED OVER THE LATE PART OF THE 19TH CENTURY. INDEED, THE VERY BAY WHERE WE WEATHERED THIS STORM WAS MARKED ON THE CHART AS CASTAWAYS BAY, AND THIS SMALL ISLAND HAD BEEN THE SCENE OF A DISASTROUS SHIPWRECK AND THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE FOR THE CREW. THERE MAY BE A VERMIN-FREE ISLAND WHERE THE BALANCE OF NATURE HAS EXISTED UNCHALLENGED FOR CENTURIES. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE ISLAND REMAIN IN THIS BALANCE, AND PERHAPS THESE ISLANDS NEED MORE PROTECTION THAN THE RESERVE STATUS THAT THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT HAS PLACED UPON THEM. FOR OUR LANDING HERE IS BY CHANCE, AS WE INTENDED TO HEAD FURTHER SOUTH TOWARDS THE EVEN COLDER WATERS OF THE ANTARCTIC, AND THE DECISION TO RESEARCH THESE ISLANDS HAS BEEN QUITE AT THE LAST MINUTE. WE HAD NOT THE TIME TO ARRANGE THE NECESSARY PAPERS AND ARE REALLY HERE UNKNOWN TO THE AUTHORITIES. WE HAVE SEEN NO OTHER VESSEL IN OUR TIME HERE, AND OUR STAY AND LANDING COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE BEEN BY ANY SHIP THAT MAY HAVE HAD NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE VENERABLE ECOSYSTEM OF THIS ISLAND.

DURING THE EVENING THERE ARE EXTREME GUSTS OF WIND WITH RAIN DRIVING IN AND POURING DOWN ON OUR CRAFT. WE ALL FELT GLAD OF THE DECISION THE DAY BEFORE TO ATTACH FIRM LINES FROM THE SHIP BACK TO THE SHORE, FOR THERE IS SOME DOUBT AS TO WHETHER EVEN A GOOD ANCHOR COULD HOLD FAST OUR SMALL SHIP IN THIS STORM. WE CAN FEEL THE SHIP MOVE THROUGH OUT THE NIGHT AND ARE VERY GLAD OF THESE THICK LINES THAT RAN FROM BOTH THE BOW AND THE STERN TO A SECURE HOLD ON THE ISLANDS. THIS BAY IS NOT REALLY A BAY AT ALL AND HARDLY MORE THAN A SMALL DEPRESSION IN THE STEEP CLIFFS THAT RISE AROUND THE ENTIRE ISLAND, AND AS SUCH OFFERS LITTLE PROTECTION FROM THE OCEAN.

NEXT MORNING, THE WINDS ARE JUST AS STRONG AS DURING THE NIGHT. EVERY SO OFTEN THERE ARE STRONGER SQUALLS SWEEPING IN TO SWIRL AROUND THE SHIP IN A BARRAGE OF HAIL OR HEAVY RAIN. THESE ONLY LAST A FEW MOMENTS BUT WERE VERY INTENSE. AS THE TEAM SIT HERE IN THE SHIP'S MESS AT BREAKFAST, WE CAN FEEL THE VESSEL SWING ON HER MOORINGS AND JERK HARD AS SHE REACHES THE END OF EACH TETHER, BEFORE SHE SWINGS OUT TOWARDS THE OTHER LINE. WE HAVE BEEN IN THE LEE OF THE STORM IN THIS BAY AND COULD HARDLY IMAGINE THE TRUE VIOLENCE OF THE STORM OUTSIDE IN THE OPEN OCEAN.

WE DECIDED TO CAST OFF FROM THIS BAY, AND UNLIKE THE DAY BEFORE, AS THERE ARE FEW SEALS AROUND, WE LEFT UNNOTICED. CASTING OFF FROM SUCH A PLACE IN WINDS THAT STRONG IS NO EASY TASK, BUT WE DECIDED TO SEEK THE BETTER SHELTER OF THE BAYS ON THE OTHER LARGE ISLAND.

HERE, THERE WAS BUSH AND REAL SHELTER FROM THE WINDS THAT BLEW AT THE "CALYPSO" DURING THE NIGHT BEFORE. IT WAS MUCH MORE OF A HARBOUR WHERE WE COULD ANCHOR WITH EASE AND KNOW WE WERE SAFE FROM THE WORST WEATHER THAT THESE OCEANS CAN OFFER. THE WILD WINDS THAT BLEW ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND COULD ONLY RAISE A FEW SWIRLING RIPPLES ON THE SURFACE HERE FROM THE SUDDEN EXTREME GUSTS THAT BOUNCED OFF THE HILLS ON THE WAY OUT TO SEA. WHEN WE ARRIVED, THERE, WE ARE ALSO GREETED WITH OUR FRIENDS FROM THE DAY BEFORE, AS ANOTHER DEPUTATION OF SEA LIONS FOUND THE SHIP. PLAYFUL AS EVER UNDER THE BOAT, THEY INVITED US TO JOIN THEM. THE YOUNG MALES SPENT SOME YEARS APART FROM THE REST OF THE GROUP. IT IS A TIME WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER A PUP AND NOT YET STRONG ENOUGH TO STAKE A CLAIM ON THE BREEDING BEACHES. THEY FIND A BEACH OR BAY OF THEIR OWN AND PROTECT IT FOR ALL THEY ARE WORTH.

WE ARE ABLE TO SPEND MORE TIME ASHORE HERE ON THIS ISLAND AND FIND THE TIME TO WALK SOME OF THE ROUGH TRACKS INTO THE BUSH. WE ALSO FIND THE TIME TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THE WASHING THAT INEVITABLY SEEMS TO BUILD UP ON THESE TRIPS. ON THE SHORE WE SPENT TIME BURNING UP MUCH OF THE RUBBISH THAT HAD ACCUMULATED ON BOARD OVER THE PAST MONTH OR SO AS WELL.

WE ARE ABLE TO SPEND SEVERAL DAYS IN THIS BAY BEFORE WE FINALLY HAVE TO LEAVE ON OUR WAY TO NEW ZEALAND.

THE PENCIL OF AN ARTIST 1989

Finally we are here.

From the onset, uncertainty surrounded our arrival; for the elements had forced an extended stay in Port Pegasus at the southern end of Stewart Island, and while an interesting diversion, it was one we could have done without. With the added frustration of a return trip to Bluff, for more supplies and an indefinite wait for that break in the weather, it was a marginal affair that we would be here at all. The wind fair howled for days while we waited, and the ocean could only be described as worse than Cook Strait on a bad day. But now, we strained with our essential possessions that would be all we could have for the next few weeks. Across the sandy beach, past the skuas and those sea lions that lay like great rocks in the sun absorbing every ounce of heat that was to be had, we were actually here!

Then we struggled with weighted packs, bags, and boxes up the manicured grass, where the blue rabbits bounded like wound-up toys in front of us, to the three small huts hugged by the mass and tangle of trees that fell from the forest to this area of grass. It did have a strange air about the land, a strangeness of the earth itself, of a harsh and tragic history but also of a future not yet known. Immediately it was fascinating to my senses, it allured me into accepting this eccentric place as a kind of normal that I would never have condoned back home.

The strangeness of the land was worsened by our first bizarre meal in the hut. Introduced to the various D.O.C. staff in the hut, and the offer of a cuppa, here we were trying to eat bread that was green with mould. The worst edges trimmed it still had a decided greenness that would put anyone off and only have made the compost bin back home.

Even disguised with jam or some other spread, it looked as wicked as any substance I had ever had the need or will to eat, and it was an effort to take the first tentative bite let alone gulp the inevitable swallow. The worst of it was that the D.O.C. people, who had been here for some time, were munching through the stuff as though it was a delicious feast for the famished. It seemed as though they were shipwrecked sailors enjoying their first meal for more than an age. The others in our party looked with unbelieving eyes, that this is what, (and worse perhaps) we will have to endure for the next few weeks. The bread can only get greener by the day, and god knows what the other food is that we shall have to survive before we have the chance to return to civilization.

The large tin mugs full of tea were at least hot and welcome and showed no signs of greenness. It was this with a swish in the mouth that eased the pain and helped wash down the dry bread we were all tentatively chewing on. You don't realize just how dependent we are on civilization for our food.

It was difficult to know where to start on the project after the "Acheron" had left for the southern part of the island with the artists that were in the way home. In some ways it felt a little unfair, as we had the problem of the weather on the way down to contend with that had nearly taken a week off our stay, and they had scored a few extra days on the island. Now they were going to trip right round the coast, and it might be doubtful if we could see that on the way home on the frigate.

Well I did make a start that afternoon and set off for a short walk with my sketch pad and pencil. It was the twisted dead trees at the other end of the bay that had attracted me from the door of the hut, and it was there I made for in the golden light of the late afternoon. I had seen the twisted gaunt shapes silhouetted on the horizon as soon as we had arrived. Immediately they had acted as a large inescapable magnet. The sun takes so long to set down here in the long days of midsummer, and there is an enveloping golden glow about the atmosphere that would be wonderful to explore with paint. There was all the wild life that I had imagined right here on this beach too. The great big male sea lions that dominated the beach with their groups of cows, I think that's what they are called. They must have it all worked out, but the males seem so large and fat and I pity the slender, smaller cows. Really they are just great horrible lumps of blubber with sharp teeth at one end and bad breath, while the cows are sleek, slight beasts and generally much more attractive to the eye. The males seem to spend all their time protecting their herd of females as a greedy man would his fortune, and the beach theatricals never stop as other young males try out their strength.

The penguins are my favourite as they waddle out of the water, across the sand and up the grass before disappearing into secrecy of the bush. They have a wonderful air of wit about them, and unlike the sea lions, I can't tell the difference between the males and females by either their size or their manners. They have a comical look and manner that makes me stop and laugh as they scurry about their business.

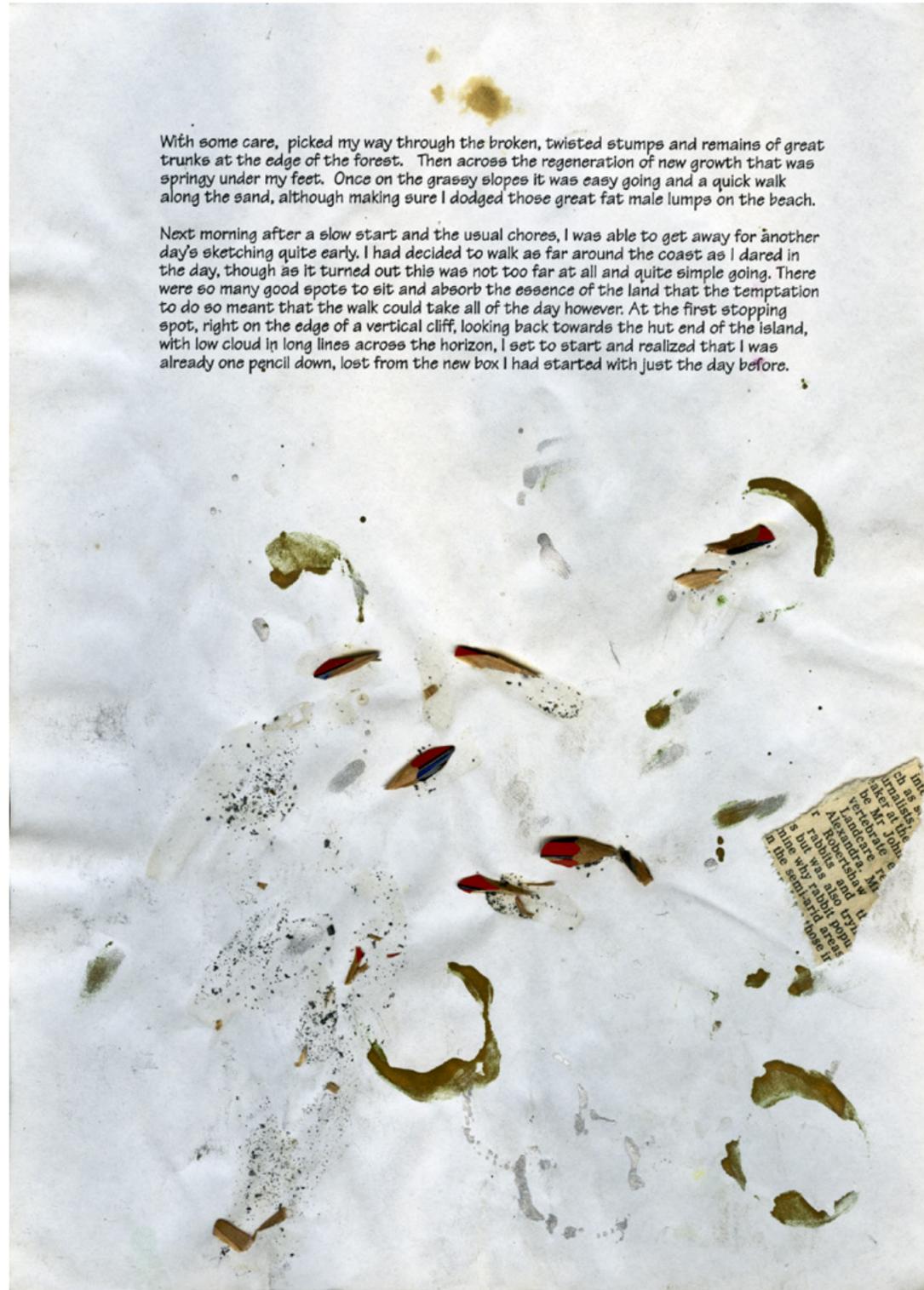
As I neared the ghostly tree trunks, across the large grass "golf course" that the rabbits keep trimmed to a green, neat as a golf course, the trunks of these once great trees were twisted in a way I had never seen before, and here I sat down under the bleached, dead, reaching arms with my sketch pad and sharp new pencil to make the first marks on the page as reference drawings and ideas for a later time, when I could extend these with paint back home.

As I sat alone on the ground, the peace and isolation of the island crept from the inner sanctum of the deep forest behind me, to envelop me completely. Quite suddenly I could feel something permeate me. It was really hard to describe, and the only other time I can recall something similar was once in the ruggedness of the Rimutakas Ranges just outside Wellington. We had fallen asleep on the grass, in the sun beside the dark green tangle of bush that stretched to the tops. There was an enormous rock that had been burnt black on one side with a great fire at some stage. It may have been from a party, as there were old rusty and burnt beer cans and also the familiar broken brown glass that littered such sites. We woke suddenly with a tiredness that frightened both of us undecipherably in fear of our lives. It was as though a Tanaiwha was about to devour us if we camped here for the night, and together, we both knew we must move from there as quickly as we could to find another camp site before dark. It almost felt like the fairy story of Rip Van Winkle; we were sure we could have fallen asleep right there and then for more than a thousand years.

This was the same eerie feeling, but somehow I did feel welcome in this place and time. I felt as if I had a spiritual permission to be here, I felt a sense of belonging that had not been evident in the wild hills of the Rimutakas. Because of this "spiritual permission", I stayed far too long sketching till the dark shroud of the night had dropped her cold cloak and the only light remaining was the fading air-brushed pink and blue glow in the clear sky outside the forest.

With some care, picked my way through the broken, twisted stumps and remains of great trunks at the edge of the forest. Then across the regeneration of new growth that was springy under my feet. Once on the grassy slopes it was easy going and a quick walk along the sand, although making sure I dodged those great fat male lumps on the beach.

Next morning after a slow start and the usual chores, I was able to get away for another day's sketching quite early. I had decided to walk as far around the coast as I dared in the day, though as it turned out this was not too far at all and quite simple going. There were so many good spots to sit and absorb the essence of the land that the temptation to do so meant that the walk could take all of the day however. At the first stopping spot, right on the edge of a vertical cliff, looking back towards the hut end of the island, with low cloud in long lines across the horizon, I set to start and realized that I was already one pencil down, lost from the new box I had started with just the day before.



A STRAY BULLET 1989

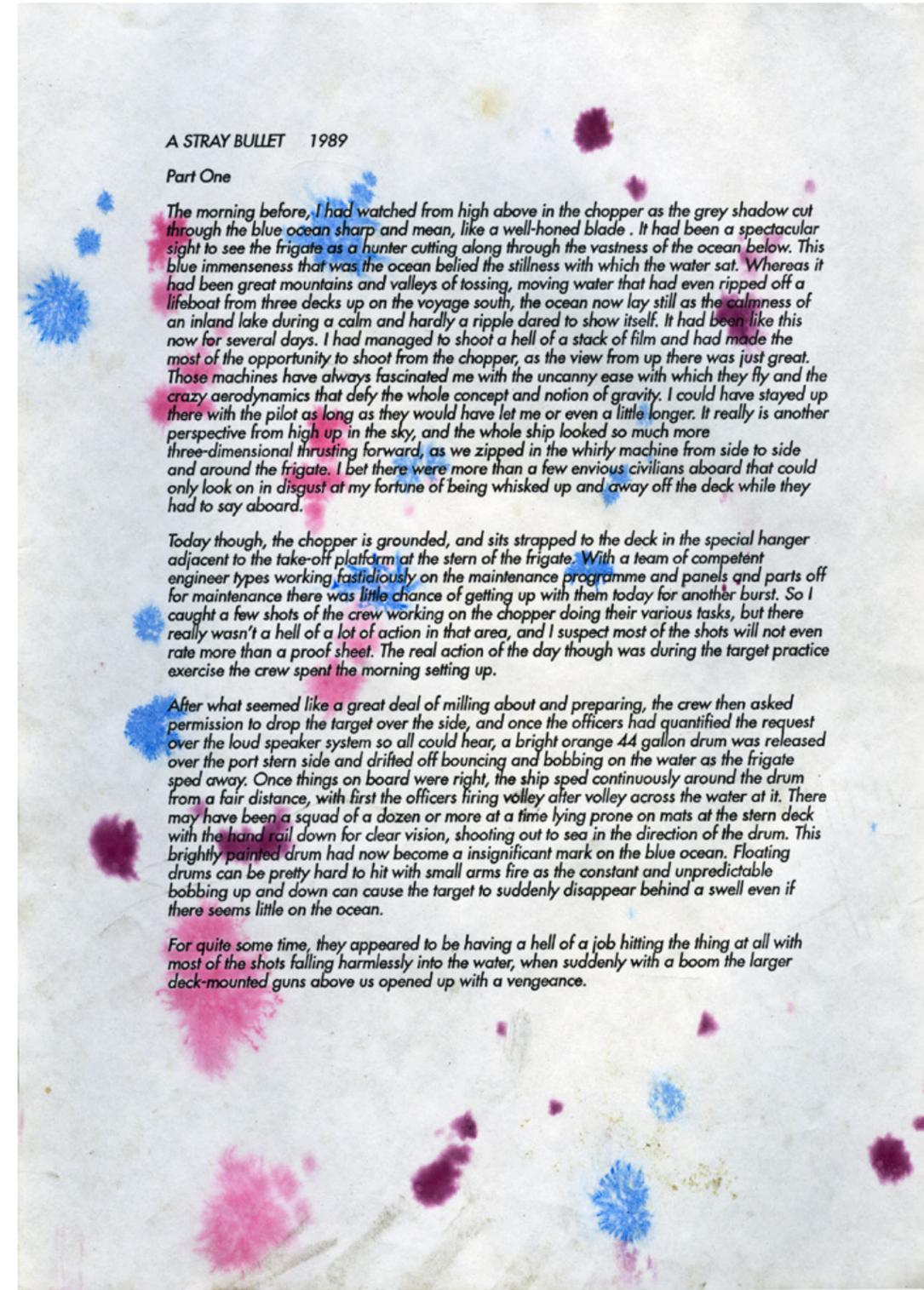
Part One

The morning before, I had watched from high above in the chopper as the grey shadow cut through the blue ocean sharp and mean, like a well-honed blade. It had been a spectacular sight to see the frigate as a hunter cutting along through the vastness of the ocean below. This blue immenseness that was the ocean belied the stillness with which the water sat. Whereas it had been great mountains and valleys of tossing, moving water that had even ripped off a lifeboat from three decks up on the voyage south, the ocean now lay still as the calmness of an inland lake during a calm and hardly a ripple dared to show itself. It had been like this now for several days. I had managed to shoot a hell of a stack of film and had made the most of the opportunity to shoot from the chopper, as the view from up there was just great. Those machines have always fascinated me with the uncanny ease with which they fly and the crazy aerodynamics that defy the whole concept and notion of gravity. I could have stayed up there with the pilot as long as they would have let me or even a little longer. It really is another perspective from high up in the sky, and the whole ship looked so much more three-dimensional thrusting forward, as we zipped in the whirly machine from side to side and around the frigate. I bet there were more than a few envious civilians aboard that could only look on in disgust at my fortune of being whisked up and away off the deck while they had to stay aboard.

Today though, the chopper is grounded, and sits strapped to the deck in the special hanger adjacent to the take-off platform at the stern of the frigate. With a team of competent engineer types working fastidiously on the maintenance programme and panels and parts off for maintenance there was little chance of getting up with them today for another burst. So I caught a few shots of the crew working on the chopper doing their various tasks, but there really wasn't a hell of a lot of action in that area, and I suspect most of the shots will not even rate more than a proof sheet. The real action of the day though was during the target practice exercise the crew spent the morning setting up.

After what seemed like a great deal of milling about and preparing, the crew then asked permission to drop the target over the side, and once the officers had quantified the request over the loud speaker system so all could hear, a bright orange 44 gallon drum was released over the port stern side and drifted off bouncing and bobbing on the water as the frigate sped away. Once things on board were right, the ship sped continuously around the drum from a fair distance, with first the officers firing volley after volley across the water at it. There may have been a squad of a dozen or more at a time lying prone on mats at the stern deck with the hand rail down for clear vision, shooting out to sea in the direction of the drum. This brightly painted drum had now become a insignificant mark on the blue ocean. Floating drums can be pretty hard to hit with small arms fire as the constant and unpredictable bobbing up and down can cause the target to suddenly disappear behind a swell even if there seems little on the ocean.

For quite some time, they appeared to be having a hell of a job hitting the thing at all with most of the shots falling harmlessly into the water, when suddenly with a boom the larger deck-mounted guns above us opened up with a vengeance.



1989 A stray bullet

There was a hell of a thump each time these fired round after round, and it sent great reverberations of sound waves right through my body as the heavy bass at a loud rock concert might. It seemed to shake my very existence, rattle my bones, each time they fired, such was the whack from each shot. It was pretty neat, but my ears were ringing with the thunderous sound after a few rounds. You could see the large splashes from the bigger guns whamming into the water far out near the target. There still weren't a hell of a lot that were hitting the drum though, which surprised me. Eventually the drum did get clobbered enough to start filling with water and finally sank lower on the surface until it disappeared altogether, at which the request was placed from the squad on the deck to throw over the woven willow cushion used to stop the frigate from banging on the wharf.

Permission was granted over the speaker system, and it too went over the side, at which only the small arms opened up with a new contingent of crew behind the sights and triggers. This proceeded for some time until it was decided to allow the Governor General's Party who were aboard to take command of the weapons and shoot with them from the deck as the crew had done. I had already shot a bit of film and moved in a little closer to the official party. There were quite a few in the party, and after they had been given adequate instruction on the operation of the weapons, they began firing at random. For some time they fired at the floating target. With no warning, right in the middle of their shooting, there was a large albatross that swept down from the sky; in a flash the thing turned straight into the line of fire. Oh shit!

Who actually shot the large bird is impossible to confirm, but there it lay dead as a door knob, with not so much as a flicker, upside down on the water, quite close to the frigate. Everyone looked on at the embarrassment, dead on the water, but the shooting kept up. The whole thing was made much worse because of the DOC people on board who were obviously shocked but could say stuff all about it. There were just hushed whispers from the small groups of civilians. I heard one of them say that these birds have only one mate for life and that the other bird circling the sky could be the mate. There were also some of those snotty-nosed little artist types taking it all in as well, so it was a bit of an embarrassment all round and best not talked about. I couldn't help but think of the familiar rhyme of the Ancient Mariner though and the plight of the Albatross.

Part Two

There it floated, quite buoyant from the trapped air and oil of still warm feathers, as the titanic grey shape of the frigate disappeared with a thumping of engines and gun fire. Like a crazy beast into the distance it powered, and the foamy spray of its wake dissolved slowly away, with the warmth of its diesel fumes vanishing into the ambience of the cool southern air. But this once noble bird floated for perhaps half a day, sinking slowly, until there was a splash on the surface, and in an instant some new interest was shown in the carcass. There, in the deep of the ocean, a single skua had come to investigate the prospect of a cheap meal, and with little hesitation, a sharp beak began tearing at the dead bird.

Then from the distance, high in the sky it was seen by another of its kind, and down it swooped with a splash on the water. Soon there was a throng of squacking fighting feathers and beaks devouring the creature in a long series of feathery mouthfuls. It took some time for them to gobble and gorge at the carcass, leaving nothing but a flurry of feathers blowing away on the airs and sailing off on the water as the only trace. The death of one creature in this place is the meal for the next, and has always been so. It is how the balance is struck.

Back on the beach a sea lion lay on the rocks seeking the sun and warmth that rarely comes to this place. Stretching the bulk of its being unaccompanied, it dozed in peace, digesting. There are certain things a young male can do and certain things they can't, and it is for this reason that the sea lion was on another island away from the main breeding beaches where the great beach-masters dominated the herds. An island, small as it may be, is a castle, and sometimes comforting to have to one's self away from the fights and constant beach theatre.

Further over from the sea lion, alone as well, there was a single skua, sitting still, waiting. With digestion, food can grind away in a cauldron of juice, gases and solid matter for a long time in a skua's gut before it decides to move in any direction. But, eventually, it had to come, the digestion system of a skua can deal with some heavy material, but there are some parts that are just too demanding. So, after several chesty, then throaty coughs which were like the bark of a small dog, there was one great hooke followed by another and a neat and woven nest-like spit ball came flying out onto the ground some distance away from the brute. It was as if it had been skilfully woven using the fragments of feathers and bone by some small bird for a nest. There on the ground lay the parts of an albatross that refused to digest, and now were rejected.

But inside the twisted braid of fibres and tendrils, there lay a trivial misshapen piece of lead, a bent shape of a spent bullet caught by chance in a hard knob of bone and swallowed down in a frantic gulp. The very same tip that had instantly ended the great bird's life the moment it had entered. Such a small but deadly fragment. This insignificant leadened distorted bead now ashore, against all and every odds, as were the odds that it may never have killed the bird in the first instance.

SEA STORM 1991

I have been through some rough times at sea. Not rough in the sense that the word could suggest fights and wild times or just plain rough work, but rough in terms of the worst weather one could ever imagine. But you can expect that from the ocean if you have been about it for some time and its actually a fun part of the whole life style. For twenty five years now I've seen all kinds of storms in every ocean of the world, and few, in fact none, have put me down. Even this last one in the South Tasman sea, it was about as bad as any I can remember and still it didn't have me worried to any real degree.

It was a hell of a storm as far as they go, with force ten winds, gales of whipping spray that streaked across the surface in a fine salt mist, obliterating the bow of the ship from the wide view out from the bridge. On a clear day the view is spectacular, right down the length of the ship, across the tops of the containers and far off to the ocean in the distance.

This storm had 22,000 tonnes of ship rolling from 40 degrees starboard to 40 degrees port with the constant heaving pitch of the immense swells that hammered at the ship. I had absolute trust in the ship and our ability to come through it. The technology and standard of ship building these days is so good that there really is no risk in the hands of a qualified captain and a good crew. The computer-guided navigation systems and computer loading and weighting systems means there is few problems with these aspects of the ship too.

With this storm there was, though, a hell of a furore of crashing and banging all the way across the sea, and even during the slightly quieter voyage up the southeast coast of New Zealand there was still a certain amount of crashing about. Every time a great wall of water struck the ship there was a shudder and the banging of metal that could be heard above the sound of the storm itself and continued until the next wave hit and it started over again. It didn't take too long to detect the source of all this commotion, and it turned out to be some large rolls of sheet steel. We deduced that these had been poorly secured at Melbourne and once they had broke free inside the containers, they began bashing about uncontrolled in the chaotic rolling motion of the ship. Backwards and forwards, from side to side, any way they pleased, the 10 tonne rolls made a hell of a mess rolling about. There must have been some real force as they hit the container walls. It was good to see all our twist locks had held fast and all the containers were still anchored down.

Most of these heavy rolls smashed straight out the side of the containers and into the ocean, leaving gaping, jagged holes in the steel walls as evidence of the brashness of their hurried exit. We never saw one of them go out, the visibility was that poor. The side of the ship, the "Columbus Australia" had dints and gouges where they had caught bits on the way out and down to the ocean. Then there was the ones that never made it all the way to the water and just kept rolling around the deck until they became lodged in some tight nook or cranny and could go no further. There were about fifteen to twenty containers that the rolls burst out off, god knows the value of that lot, but there is a fair bit of damage to the deck and support structure of the ship that will take some repair.

When the storm was at its full height, it was a matter of surviving and grabbing hold of something very solid, secure, then holding on for grim death. If you miscalculated the flying furniture was evidence of one's fate. The tables and chairs were rolling about all over the place and most of the time there wasn't a hell of a lot we could do about it but let them go. If a person hit the walls or deck with the same force, it would be broken bone time for sure.

Luckily I thought of my computer early and managed to save that as the storm was just beginning to build and hit the ship. It was just beginning to slide about, but had not quite toppled off the desk onto the floor yet by the time I got there. I searched for a quick certain way to protect it and in desperation grabbed a thick blanket off the bed, wrapped it up in it and stowed it in the safety of my locker. It was well jammed in there and lay nestled in the tight space for the rest of the trip. It still works fine, so I was glad I got there before things got too bad.

All the rest of the crew were fine, although there was probably a few who were a bit more shaken inside than they would care to admit. We had a German tourist working her passage between Australia and New Zealand, though, and she was really shaken. Looked as white as a sheet. She was absolutely convinced we were going to sink. Poor girl, I can't blame her, for when we were way down in the troughs it must have seemed as though there was only mountains of waves on all sides and we were half way down to the bottom already. She struggled up onto the bridge at six in the morning and all she could see was waves crashing in all directions and the spray whistling across the air so that it cut the visibility down to about thirty feet.

The steel was on the way to Philadelphia out of the port of Melbourne. I can only suppose that those heavy rolls of steel are well gone to the bottom, I can't imagine that there could be any way they could float. At least there had been no containers lost over the side. They can make treacherous ocean hazards, especially for small ships and yachts.

He was right, they had gone straight down to the ocean floor. But the steel rolls had been strapped down to wooden pallets, and as the storm hit the metal strapping had slowly loosened and then sheered in a snap, and this is what had allowed the rolls to smash about. Some had taken the pallets still attached out with them and these had sunk too. But some other pallets had been totally free, and as they crashed out of the jagged gaping holes in the containers to the water below, they floated off on the resolute tides to where they pleased. This floating dunnage still held the remnants of the steel strapping attached to the pallets and had scars of wood chipped away where they had earlier been hit by the rolls.

Right in the middle of the ocean we found a bloody wooden pallet floating. Half way down the southern ocean, here was this damn thing floating about. It was with luck that we saw it at all, for it was floating just and no more and awash with water. If we hadn't passed within a few feet of it I am sure we would never have seen it. God it makes me mad the crap some morons throw into the ocean, the bastards will never learn. For one thing they have no respect for the ocean and just see it as some endless junk pile where everything disappears out of sight, and for the other, what a bloody hazard. If a charter boat as ours hit the thing at full speed in the night I'd hate to imagine the fright it might cause and perhaps even some damage, and as for a small yacht it could rip the hull clean to bits. It would be a hell of an experience in these cold waters.

Well, we circled around for a while before we could get a hook and line attached to it and then we were able to fish the sad-looking thing out of the water. It weighed quite a ton, and as we began to haul it up the boat lurched over a little and so we ended up dragging it round to the stern and pulled it up in a series of motions there. Even though the ocean was quite calm, we strapped it securely on board, and proceeded on our way through the southern ocean. Other than this it was an uneventful voyage compared to some of the previous trips where we have encountered storms, with extremes of wind, wave and rain.

Once down at the Auckland Islands, we decided to land at Enderby and leave the pallet there beside the hut. It would have been the right thing to take it with us all the way to the Falklands and South Georgia, but it would have been right in the way. At least it was no danger to small shipping now, and we could feel relieved about that. We left a note at the hut for the DOC people to let them know how it had got there. They are often down here with the Navy and they can probably arrange to have it taken back on that sometime. By the time we did have it ashore the rusty steel strapping band had come right off the timbers, and we left that along side the hut also.

But the winds in these islands are extreme, and over a period of extreme gales, the strapping eventually blew out from the shelter of the hut and unravelled like a large spring, which made it even more sail-like and able to blow off in an uncanny snaking, whip-like manner, springing across the ground with a twang and ping in spastic convulsions every time the strongest winds hit it. Eventually it sprung up into the bush and finally came to rest under a pile of fern fronds at the bottom of a stream.

A PLASTIC BOTTLE

1992

Finally, the others in the party were out of both sight and sound. I was now around past the next bay. I was alone at last.

Me as an island on an island, detached is / land, isolated totally, a(gland) in the sea. No where on the land could I see any signature from the signare, of a transfigured landscape, signature, civilization was anaesthetized at last. Vestal wilderness surrounded me on all sides, primus fundamentals of the primeval spirits pervaded, it was what I had aspired to from the very beginning, it was the invitation/motivation for coming and yet there was an eccentric over omnipotence that drove through all my senses. An undescribable perception/percepti'eve of unequated/antiquated/unacquainted claustrophobia pervaded, and this I had not conciet/conceived/conciet or anticipated by any preclusion.

Was the date 1992, 1892 or the epochs of thousands of years ago? How could one reference the visual? It was exactly as I wished. But perhaps I should never return to my time/\space again, perhaps it didn't exist/sexist any longer? Perhaps I was lost amid the rambunctious confusion/con/fusion, without any relative cosmic synchronism, without context/con/text. My rampant malignant fears irked me and the only way I could dispense with them and shake it off was to reassure myself that civilization still persevered somewhere, though perhaps far far from here, and in another time sphere. Incongruently, I tingled with an invigorating idiosyncratic coalescence of excitement and vacillation. It was an evocative challenge.

This was not at all as I had envisioned the visioned, vision. I was supposed to be contemplating the meaning of the great experiment that is civilization for my new book, and as a contradiction, this isolation in the wilderness was meant to be a felicitous environment in which to honestly consolidate my disseminated thoughts absent from the influence I was to survey. To consolidate the assimilation of ideas on civilization, I had surmised that the supreme place to sojourn was as distant from the derivation/deviation as I could challenge myself, and here I was in the pristine environment of the Subantarctic Islands. A place of unconstructed/deconstruction. But suddenly, here I was also apprehensive, and burdened with other thoughts/emotions about my own unimportant/important differentia, mortality.

Ahead was the reassurance I seeked. There on the beach a modest plastic bottle. What a multifarious object, it clearly positioned me in the contextual correlation I needed, but exemplified the exorbitant position and predicament/resolution of civilization to date. I picked it up with delighted conviction/victim as it alleviated my deleterious anxiety but quickly concluded that it was simply rubbish and should be taken away from this pristine environment-territorium in the justificative/justification of conservation. The inexplicable objectified object was so extra in the position of extraneous to the terrestrial nature of the rocks that its myopia/providence was indisputably not here and I should make sure of that.

1992 A plastic bottle

Formed in a luminous pink, an ostentatious modern fluorescent pink, the moulded described, indentations of inscription on the refined sides, reflected Japanese style characters that were of an uncelebrated rhetoric. Was this another logocentric insignia from the from a similar but foreign phallogocentric insigne. I knew nothing of this textural construct/context, (unconstructed) parenthetical, as I did of the innerspace contents now outerspace and it edified inconsequential evidence of the former liquid contents, context. Were the contents, probably a synthesis of (codexed/complex) chemicals as synthetic as this pretentious plastic, also now in the ocean? Had it infiltrated / filtrated / fil / rated the ocean as a toxic/(us) waste, through the lacing network of subterranean drains in some land far from here? Or had it dripped into the ocean from a foreign fishing boat somewhere close to these islands/a/gland? What ever the scenario, some-how the container had washed up here to jolt me. For the bottle with the unscrutable, inscribed, inscription on this beach unknown to the inscribe(r) seemed to have no context, epitomised as a con in text.

On I strolled with the plastic bottle firmly gripped in my hand until I came to an obliging headland which appealed as a nice place to take a welcome rest.

Here, I settled down on the bush verge to indulge in a well deserved snack of scroggin and to gain a mouthful of drink. The glistening waters of the open bay were strangely still and the irresolute sun was even shining through the misty cloud that hung around the high hills. As I sat, the sea lions and shags were going about their lives as though I did not exist or was insignificant / sign/it/er. My fears alleviated, I stretched out and began to relax; now I was glad I had come all this way. The notebook I had brought was out of my day pack, ready for the issuing/ensuing ideas I antic/ipated. These are the type of islands where one can contemplate complex issues undisturbed, in peace. I had made the right decision.

But still, the debate of the effect of civilization on the integrated ecosystem entered my reasoning not the precept-civilization per se. Had we progressed to the verge, where our sophistication and intellectual actions, act/lon threatened our own existence along with much else that was living? Was this the incontrovertible, critical interface between the technological and biological con/ con/solid, consolidate, where to proceed further with the technological meant the extinguish/extinction of the biological? In the search for the ever intr/icate clandestines of the universe that we assume are ours by right, had we subterfuged our selves, and half the other life forms on the planet as well? Ultimately, would the reality of life on earth exist only as axiom?

How, alternatively, does a place like this reciprocate to the transfigurations we continuously inflict upon it? Is it a question of autocratic puissance once again. Dominance of the power bureaus sUpern/Us. As the world I know is a male construct imposed unwillingly upon women by the patriarchal for thousands of years by dispassionate power bureaus, does the physicality of environment-territorium that is the earth/ear have analogous encumbrances placed upon it that likewise, are beyond its own domination, that is dom/lonation? The patriarchal society has always had the power, and through the autocratic society they dictate the way we are prerequisites, and act. Perhaps at the heart of this is the ritual (rit/us) of the covert male gaze.

Without invited reservation, of the (reservat/lon) It is argued that the gaze is key, acting as a suppressant of women and demeaning us as only possessional objects to provide a service, a commodity as one would possess a car, a house or fine painting. But do we all eye the earth in the same manner or is it only the conditioned response of the male gaze that coerces us to view it only in terms of possession, possess/lon and or exploitation at the expense of life? The power of ownership, the responsibility of act/lon.

Are these islands analogous and powerless to the changes we inflict upon it in much the same way? How can the environment react to this ozone of parenthetical issues for instance in an instance of the bio/geological clock? Is power the key once again? The powerful of any society impose their convictions upon another, exploiting the humiliation of the weak. Is the world always set up to be polarized into north and south, two opposing forces, the polarizer versus the polarized-to-be? Does even the democratic, post patriarchal, eco-synchronous, undissembling socialist de/reconstructed community posse problems to the sig/nature?

Yet there could be other ways of looking at the situation. Take that there could be the perception of examining the existant constructs and deconstructed, postconstructed, futconstructed, fluxconstructed constructs from other intents, unperceivable to our limited discernment. A new world of another perspectiva unverificare. The very lignum vitae we seek. The fus/lon. It may be that we are conditioned by the omni-powerful force, and that as yet that may not be found in terms of differentiated/difference/difference. It may be physical, monetary, intellectual or indeterminate. We know of course, this force is also subtle, not like that of armed extortion, (extort/lon) it is that with the existing command structure and civil conditioning, that affects even the deconstructed sig/nature with the most dollars, or political persuasion and is patriarchal.

But, is it any different to the dominance of differ/ant species on the planet, or minority groups within any species? Is not the sig/nature of life to dominate, dom/lonate? Are we not all authoritarian with our personal of responsibility, intellectual tyrannizes and the decision of act/lon, towards the rest of the earth?

I was miles from my anticipated/ant/lon strategy, but suddenly it seemed so essential.

I can't tell. Was it the oppressive (inpressive) uncharacteristic environment? Was it the way the rugged bush swept/wept down at me with every leaf and twig and insidiously kept creeping closer and closer to my nervous tendon now doubled in anxiety while at the same time the interminable ocean appeared to rush up at me all the way from the apparent horizon? Or was it the licentious thoughts rushing through my head?

For, incongruously, I was beginning to feel a twinge of a migraine coming on and in sudden irony felt the need to return to the others.

I instantaneously packed and in an expedite burst, rushed off across the fluxconstructed path I had come and would go.

Only after I arrived at the visual sanctuary of the boat and the added effects of some paracetamol had time to react did I relax in any way. It was too late, this time the captain wanted to sail on to another anchor and I could not return along these shores. At that time, /I/me inevitably realized that even with the most conscientious of intentions, the pink plastic container still prevailed, as the pre/veil of the inscribed, as the inscription by the inscribe, on the fabric of a pre-civilization precept beach.

1996 - Explosion!

The sound kept echoing through my brain as if my head was a chamber of endless hallways.

Boooooom! Boom!

The bang and crash of crumpled iron sheets falling to the ground, rolling across the grass with extraordinary speed, the crack of burning dry timber as the hut was completely destroyed in minutes. But there before us was only the heaving ocean, the deep rhythmic thud of the diesel engine like a heart deep in the hull below us driving the ship through the swells and the cry of gulls as we steamed back home. It was an empty feeling, a journey with a wasted purpose. In an unplanned and strange manner, we had become another part in the extraordinary history of the Auckland Islands. But then the vision kept returned to me again. I just could not extinguish it. The sight of the cylinders bursting into fire balls, white hot balls of exploding gas, orange flashes red flickering. Shattering glass. The brightness of the fire light in a gray landscape. But it was the memory that had more effect than any talking we could do.

Boooooom! Boom!

I just could not get the sound out of my head. It was firmly etched in permanently, as a reoccurring flash back. The whole episode had been like a scene from a Geoff Murphy Movie. The hut just blew to pieces in a series of explosions and a fire that burned the rest to the ground. All the stores and our equipment destroyed in seconds. Quite unbelievable! The boat had nearly been ready to embark on the journey back to New Zealand, and we were to be left on Enderby Island for some considerable time during our research project. The expedition had taken so long to plan and organize, it seemed ironic it had lasted such a short period of time. We kept asking the question if it had actually started. It had been a relief to have the last boxes of stores finally off the boat and safe in the hut. What an asset the computer equipment would have been on the project. At that point I was finally resolved to the fact that the expedition was happening.

It was a cool day, with a low grey sky and constant biting wind from the south west. We had lit the gas heater to warm the hut and were on the beach fare welling the crew when it happened. It appears there was a gas leak that had filled the hut and built up until there was the unexpected blast.

Boooooom! Boom!

The memory flashed back again! All we could do was watch the hut burn up and make sure the last flames and embers were extinguished. We had stacked up the remains and place large rocks on the charred twisted corrugated iron to stop it blowing away in notoriously strong the winds that lash the islands. So with empty hearts, all our possessions and dreams gone, all we could do was return to New Zealand with nothing started, on the boat that had brought us down just hour before.

1996 Explosion

2000 - Branded

Even in the high summer of January, I have seen the weather turn to shit. Amid the blaze of red rata blossom and the call of the sub antarctic parakeets, rage days of winds, squalls, hail and more of the same for weeks and weeks. Seems such a bizarre contrast. But so far, since we have begun work anyway, it has not been too bad. In fact sometimes it has been quite warm and despite the insects we have often had to strip off and work in tee shirts as we engaged in the Branding Program.

Although we worked as a team, it took some time to anaesthetize each of the sea lions, then set up the right banding irons heat them up and burn an impression onto the side of the animals. We also had to record as many details about each animal as we could to form an accurate data base for the future. Some of this material had already been collected and we could associate it to any of the sea lions that still had the plastic tags on their fins. So for these animals it was an opportunity to update the old information. It does not actually hurt the animal but in 3 to 5 second just burns off the hair follicles to create a recognizable number on their side. There is quite a distinctive smell associated with the burning that even over rides the strong smell of the sea lions.

We have slowly worked our way up to animal 169 and estimate there are around another 280 or so to do. Like the weather and the environment it seems a contradiction to be branding the sea lions in this manner, but with such a threatened species it's essential that there is an effective method of identification. Even with the best of intentions many sea lions are caught in fishing nets and die, there are also operators who don't give a dam, and then there is also evidence to suggest a few are indiscriminately shot at sea by unsympathetic fishermen, then left to wash up on some isolated beach. And then there is the mysterious deaths where many pups die in a short time for no apparent reason. There had been problems with other identification methods, tagging and transponder chips had their problems that meant they were not permanent and could not be totally relied on. These more traditional methods would leave us with information about an animal that we could not identify or even know if it was still alive. This branding idea had come from a Californian based initiative where they had branded the young sea lions as a means of permanent identification. It's part of the need to learn more about individual sea lions to build a knowledge base about the biology and population dynamics of the species. Ultimately this knowledge will benefit the animals and give a more accurate picture of their social structure.

After each full days work, we were quite tired and all slept well secure in the shelter of the hut. There was a roster to cook the meals and wash the dreaded dishes, so we had a variety of meals each day. Although they are quite small, they are comfortable and provide enough space for all of us, so we have not had to use the tents. We have set up a wash area some-way off in the bush to afford some privacy. The shower is a strange arrangement where a hose is placed into a bucket of hot water and run through a treading unit to a shower head above. It is a weird feeling standing naked in the forest and treading on the unit to pump the water up to the head, but it does work effectively. It can be an art to time it so you have finished rinsing off before the water runs out. There is quite a history attached to these huts now and you could feel this in the atmosphere. Scientific expeditions I had read about when I had researched my thesis had used this shelter for their projects many years before. Martain Carthorn who had been involved with the sea lions for years had used the facility many times in the past. DOC people had used them on and off, and the shooters who cleaned the islands up of introduced species.

There is also a skill in moving around the colony without disturbing the animals unduly or stirring up the sleeping bull sea lions. Although all the animals have to be dealt with it, pays to pick a specific path through the colony that allows a gentle means of completing the task. During one afternoon, sitting on the round rocks I found a plastic tag lost from one animal, but as I reached to grasp it, it skidded off an under the gap between the boulders. As much as we tried to find it it worked its way deeper and deeper between the cracks.

NUCLEAR CARRIER GROUNDED ON ISLAND

Auckland Islands, New Zealand (Reuter). - The stricken nuclear carrier Usaki Maru which struck a rocky outcrop on the craggy western cliffs of the Auckland Islands lay stuck fast as dawn broke in the area this morning. The vessel was still intact at this stage, but fears of it breaking up were confirmed as storms continued to lash the area.

The Liberian-registered carrier was blown onto the jagged rocks near Bristow Point on the south-western tip of the main Auckland Island, south of New Zealand on thursday night and the vessel was pounded by extreme hurricane-force winds through the night raising fears of an environmental disaster. For the past week it had been drifting immobilized in the southern ocean and all attempts to take the vessel in tow by the escort ships had failed. Fierce storms with 10m waves had constantly lashed the area making the task impossible before the ship ran aground.

The Usaki Maru was enroute to Japan from Europe in a continuing series of plutonium shipments that have been strongly protested since their beginning in 1992. Green peace have always claimed that no ship is safe in the ocean with nuclear material on board. A spokes person Ms Jen Thompson said " We always knew the risk and the consequences of these irresponsible actions, for it to happen in such a pristine environment is an absolute tragedy, we are devastated. There is little chance of alleviating the inevitable disaster." Greenpeace have condemned the slow action to rescue the ship, and have challenged Japan and France to offer all the assistance at their disposal.

The carrier had hardly moved from where it had become ensnared but one eyewitness said he believed the ship was beginning to break up and the bow had now drifted off the rocks. The coastguard escort ships and authorities however denied this and believed it was still possible to recover the ship or remove the deadly plutonium canisters before they were lost with the ship. Two of the escort ships were positioned offshore to undertaking a salvage but they were unlikely to attempt to reach the carrier in the present conditions.

Two rescue tugs are heading for the area from New Zealand and another three from Australia, while the USS destroyer "Michigan" was being diverted to offer assistance. The Dept of Transport has declared the area an international disaster and said it will accept any offers of help as the situation is beyond its means, although an offer of assistance from the Russian nuclear submarine "Glazertion", also in the area, was declined by the New Zealand Government. The minister of the Environment Mr Bill Land said the New Zealand Government are concerned at the lack of safety procedures followed by the escort ships, but added that he was optimistic that situation could be resolved. He said that an shore party landed yesterday by parachute had set up a base on the island and had already ascertained that the plutonium canisters appear to be intact at present with no undue radiation levels detected.

The Japanese Government has apologized for the incident and hopes that the carrier can be salvaged intact. Japan has said that every effort will be made to avoid the loss of the plutonium canisters and has offered unlimited assistance to the disaster. A team of Japanese experts is being flown to the area to assess the situation. However it will take nearly three weeks for a suitable rescue ship with the necessary salvage equipment to sail from Japan to the area, and other means of transportation were being explored. With the plutonium being shipped from France to Japan, at present there is no comment from the French ministry on the disaster, but an announcement is expected to follow.

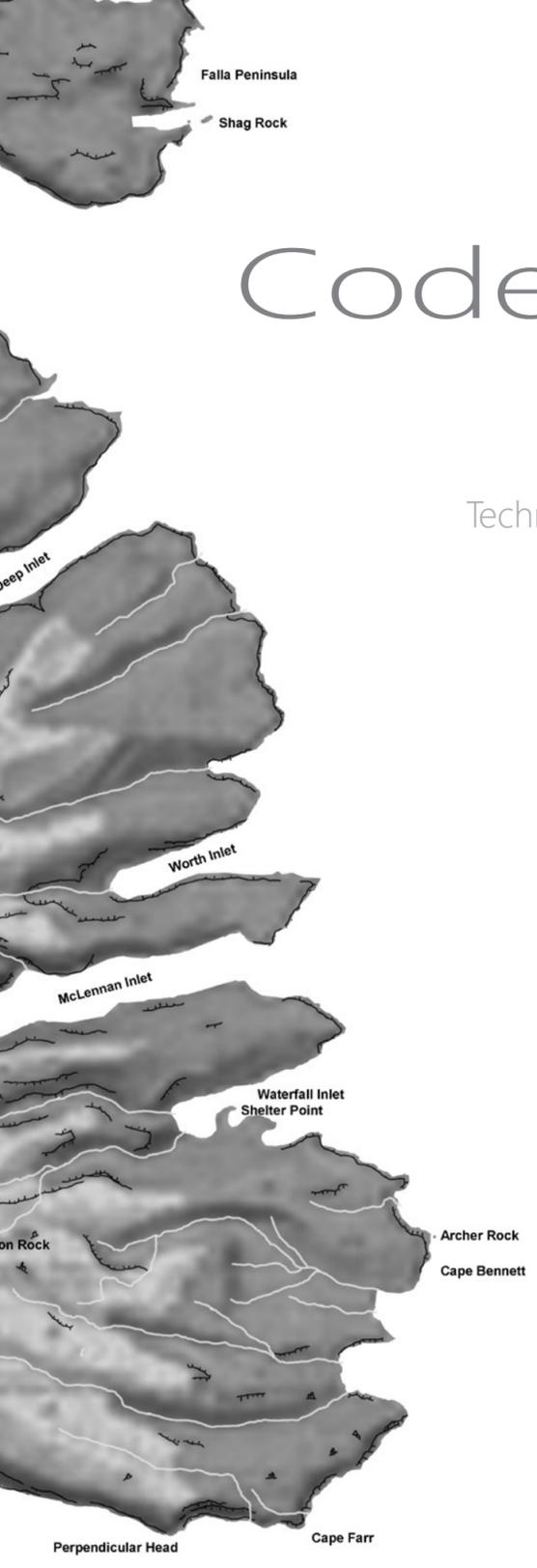
Fears that the carrier could break up with its cargo of commercial plutonium creating a major environmental disaster that would leave a deadly legacy for at least a century were increased when the tanker began leaking fuel oil during the night. Oil from the carrier could be seen drifting on the sea and was being whipped over the vertical cliff tops by the strong winds in a mix of spray and foam.

The islands are renowned as a seabird and wildlife reserve and have become a major tourist destination of wildlife cruises in the past few years with the limited allocation of visitors being subscribed for the next three years. All tourist wildlife tours are on hold for the time being and Japan has indicated that the tourist ventures will be compensated for any loss.

The stormy conditions in the area are expected to continue for the next three days although the high seas are expected to abate during the next day and some salvage attempt might be possible.

127

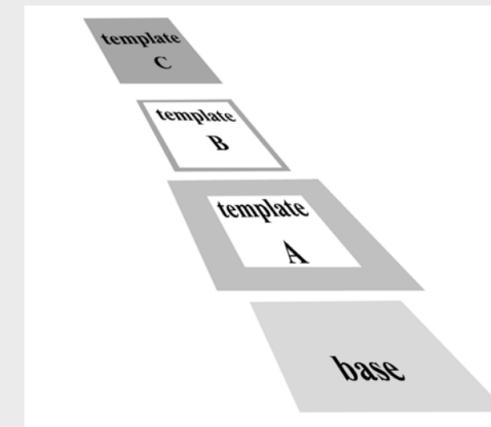




Codes of Survival

Technique of Combination Photogram/Negative Printing

The images created for the Codes of Survival project, and Adze to Coda, I use a combination of two photographic techniques, traditional photographic enlargements made from standard negatives and the photogram which are camera-less images where objects are laid directly on the photographic paper. To print a combination of both on one piece of photographic paper demands considerable skill, great patience and a little bit of luck. Because of the combination and photogram aspect, each image is a unique print.



1. There may be many ways of achieving this but following is an account of how I worked to create the images for Codes of Survival. The combination technique requires that the photograph aspect is enlarged and correctly exposed from a traditional photographic negative onto the photo-sensitive paper first. These images required 4 precise cardboard templates, that dovetailed into each other.

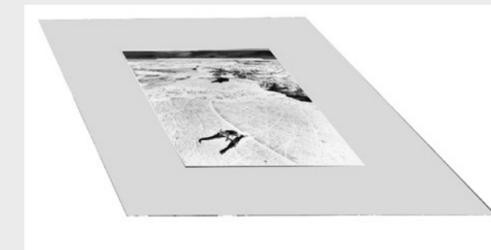
A base board that allowed all the templates to align

template A which was used to protect the area where the photogram was to be while the negative was exposed

template B which stayed in place for all exposures to create the white boarder

template C which was used to protect the area where the negative was exposed while the photogram was exposed

In the normal manner I established the size the photographic image was to be, made a series of test strips and work prints. I noted this information, the height of the enlarger head, exposure time, f stop etc. for later.



2. I lined up the projected negative on the base board so it fell exactly where I wanted it in the centre for the size of the photo paper I had selected, and within the opening for template A with template B inserted. I carefully cut a cardboard template the exact size of the photo paper and cut a rectangular opening where the projected negative was to be exposed. When this was placed on top of the paper, it allowed me to line up any enlargement exactly within the opening and consequently the centre of the photo paper. (I kept the insert as you need this for this for the centre) for future prints and also to line up the insert to block any stray light falling onto the area of the paper where the photogram will be exposed.

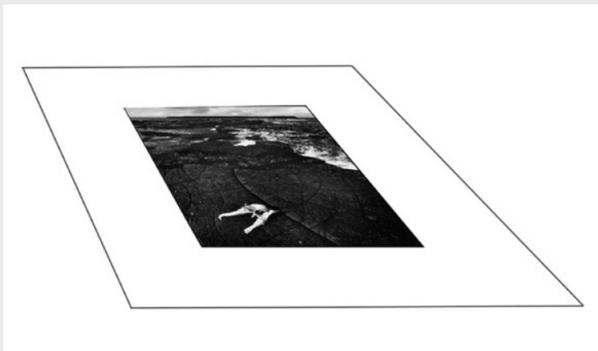


This exposure through the negative was made with template A and B in place

3. I next worked out relevant exposures for the photograms. The negative was taken out of the carrier so there is light falling on the objects on top of the photo paper outside the area where it is intended to expose the photograph. Also the head of the enlarger needed to be raised to give full coverage over the area of the sheet of paper. Establishing the exposure times and then discovering the light does not cover the full area of the paper means a recalculate the exposure times.

Most often I would double expose the photograms moving the objects between exposures and also placing a different set of objects on the paper. This gives a complex visual over layering effect. But a single exposure for the photograms can also work.

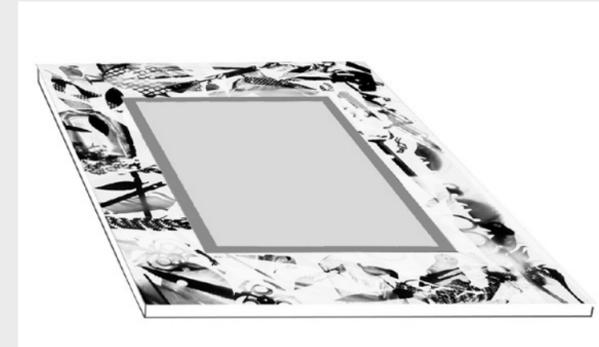
Using double exposures, the exposure time can be varied which helps to build up a sense of tonal depth and layering. Say 6 seconds for the first, 4 seconds for the second. It helps reduce the risk of making a mistake by working with the same f stop as for the negative exposure.



If the paper was developed at this point there would be a standard photographic image in the centre of the paper surrounded by a large white boarder.

4. Once the templates have been cut and the relevant exposures calculated, the neg was placed in the carrier in the enlarger, and the image was aligned as planned and the exposure made on the paper for the same time as the test. This exposure was made with template A and B in place.

As the paper is not safe until it is fixed, the process was carried out in a safe light through all these stages.



5. Remove the negative and raise the head of the enlarger to where you had it to make the photogram tests. Use the large outside template to align the inside center piece of card over where the latent image is from the exposure of the negative. This will block any light from the photogram exposure getting onto this area. I found it is useful to use black card and also to use magnets to hold it in place. Once the inside card is in place lift away the outside template.

6. Next objects are laid randomly around the edge of the paper, an exposure based on the tests is made onto the paper.

If only this photogram exposure was made and the paper developed there would just be a boarder of photograms around the outside of the paper



7. After both exposures have been made the paper is developed in the normal manner.

There are many potentials for failure, the image may not be aligned, one of the exposures may be wrong, the card might have been moved etc. If the paper was exposed with the photogram first and then developed the image would look like this.

8. For the Codes of Survival project I discovered that it was difficult to match the two card templates in a manner that produced a clean line between the photograph and the photogram. Also there was a visual confusion where the two images butted onto one another. So I decided to create a white boarder between the two.



A finished photograph/photogram print sits at the centre of a random sample of objects, artefacts and detritus used to create the photograms.

Exhibitions

The exhibition *Art in the Subantarctic*, curated by Russell Beck from the works created by the 11 artists opened at the equinox in Sept 1990. The exhibition opening was part of wider celebrations for the major extensions to the Southland Museum and Art Gallery as part of New Zealand's sesquicentennial: 150 years since the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi. Consequently *Art in the Subantarctic* toured 11 other gallery spaces throughout New Zealand, including Southland Museum and Art Gallery, Otago Museum.

The project was a huge success and opened the way for future collaborative projects between DOC and artists that continues today. Selected works were purchased for the Southland Museum and Art Gallery collection. In some cases, for the artists, the experience proved to provide a catalyst in the development of their work, and this was no more so in the cases of acclaimed painter, Bill Hammond and Lloyd Godman.

There were many people and organizations that made the project possible, The School of Art Otago Polytechnic, the Southland Museum and Art Gallery, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, 1990 Commission, Department of Conservation, the Royal New Zealand Navy, Television New Zealand, Trust Bank Southland and the Art Gallery Directors Council.

Codes of Survival – Solo Exhibitions

1992

- Codes of Survival, Solutions Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand

1993

- Codes of Survival, Bill Robertson Library, Dunedin, New Zealand

1995

- Codes of Survival, Southland Museum and Art Gallery, Invercargill, New Zealand



Lloyd Godman at the Auckland Island 1989 - photograph Neville Peat

In 1984 Lloyd Godman conceived the idea of take an expedition of artists to the remote Auckland Island 465 kilometres south of New Zealand, experience the wild environment, create a series of works that would tour New Zealand as a series of exhibitions. While these remote protected islands are most often the domain of scientists, Godman argued that artists are scientists, their research is on an aesthetic and conceptual level. Beset with many problems and political brick walls, the project took years to materialize but with perseverance in 1989, eleven artists visited the Islands in a groundbreaking and highly successful project titled Arts to the Subantarctic. Works created by the projects 11 selected artists were curated into an exhibition that toured art galleries and museums throughout New Zealand for over 2 years.

Codes of Survival is Godman's own contribution to the project, and the first series of work where he incorporated the photogram technique into his work. It was a watershed where he began moving to camera-less photography and an interest in photosensitivity that lead to his living art works with plants.

