Year Away

Coastwatching in the South Pacific: Disappointment Island from the western cliffs of Auckland Island
(from: *Coastwatchers* by D.O.W. Hall, War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1951).

Year Away

Wartime Coastwatching on the Auckland Islands, 1944

Graham Turbott

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

The cover incorporates observer charts for ships and aircraft used by the coastwatchers (from the author's files); photo and outline map are from *Coastwatchers* by D.O.W. Hall, War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1951.

These memoirs were published with the financial support of the Department of Conservation, Science & Research Unit (Manager Social, Historic and Technical: Paul Dingwall). Editing and illustration research was done by Janet Hughes; the layout was by Jeremy Rolfe; Chris Edkins designed the cover and the map. Graeme Taylor alerted the publisher to the manuscript and, with Paul Dingwall, provided factual updates. Production by DOC Science Publishing was managed by Jaap Jasperse and printing co-ordinated by Sue Wilkins.
Publication was approved by the Manager, Science & Research Unit, Science Technology and Information Services, Department of Conservation, Wellington.

ISBN 0-478-22268-8

National Library of New Zealand Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Turbott, E. G. (Evan Graham)
Year away : wartime coastwatching on the Auckland Islands, 1944 /
Graham Turbott.
ISBN 0-478-22268-8
1. Turbott, E. G. (Evan Graham) 2. New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Expedition
1941-1945. 3. Coastal surveillance—New Zealand—Auckland Islands—
History. 4. Military surveillance—New Zealand—Auckland Islands—
History. 5. Natural history—New Zealand—Auckland Islands.
6. Auckland Islands (N.Z.)—Surveys. I. Title.
993.99032092—dc 21

Printed on recycled paper by Hutcheson Bowman & Stewart, Wellington.

In loving memory of my wife

Olwyn

The journal upon which the book is based was written for her.

How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
What old December's bareness everywhere!

William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 97*

Foreword

Lake Turbott, named for the author of this book, is among the most distinctive landscape features of the Auckland Islands. Occupying an elongated, sheer-sided bowl (known to geology as a cirque), the lake is a successor to a large glacier—one of many that carved the spectacular fiord-like topography of the islands. During wartime coastwatching duties at the islands in 1944, Graham Turbott accompanied the first survey parties to map these islands, so he knows the place as well as anyone. He describes the discovery of the lake as a highlight of his year-long sojourn there.

Time spent apart from coastwatching duties afforded Graham, and other eminent scientists including Robert Falla and Charles Fleming, a unique opportunity for field research. Their studies, published as scientific papers, are fundamentally important for our understanding of the biology of the New Zealand subantarctic realm. The present memoir by Graham serves a different purpose. First, as an account of the daily life of a coastwatcher, it is a rare insight into a fascinating period of human contact with these remote island outposts. Secondly, his insightful, first-hand observations of plant and animal life open the natural world of the Auckland Islands to a general readership in a way that has never been done before. The fact that Graham has retained an interest in the islands since his time there, and has interwoven new information into his narrative, signifies the hold that these islands can have on the visitor, whether scientist, professional conservationist or modern-day tourist.

Since Graham's stay on the islands, they have continued to be protected as nature reserves by the New Zealand Government, and their elevation to World Heritage status in 1998 recognises their global significance for science and conservation.

The biology of these internationally important island ecosystems is now well-documented. Publication of this memoir will reveal more of the human dimension of our subantarctic islands—a story that is still only partly told. The Department of Conservation, therefore, welcomes the opportunity to publish Graham Turbott's memoirs in its series of publications on the subantarctic.

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Preface

The journals kept by servicemen during World War I and World War II and subsequently brought home must number many thousands. A natural response to stress and isolation—as the poet C. Day Lewis puts it, to 'war's long midwinter'—most have found resting-places in war archives and libraries. Many others remain among treasured family papers.

The New Zealand subantarctic coastwatching stations were initially front-line operations owing to the activities of German raiders; but at a later stage they could have been little more than an exercise in relieving boredom and a monotonous routine. Their role as meteorological reporting stations was, of course, very important to the war effort; but once coastwatching requirements had become minimal the maintenance of all three stations for weather reporting alone could hardly have been justified. (The value of subantarctic weather reporting was recognized in 1945 by the retention of Campbell Island as a permanent station.) As it proved, no member of the Cape Expedition found the year's isolation intolerably boring and unrewarding: for all of them, the fascination of a place so scenically dramatic and rich in wildlife brought daily interest to even the most mundane and repetitive tasks.

The idea of reviving my coastwatching journal is based partly on a belief that information on a comparatively little-known wartime activity would be of some interest. Another consideration was the growing general awareness of subantarctic wildlife and ecology.

Natural history recording and collecting was considered important enough, both for scientific purposes and to boost the expedition's morale, to form a recognised activity, and to justify the inclusion if possible of experienced naturalists at each station. In addition to my post as meteorological observer, I was responsible for co-ordinating my party's natural history observations and collections. For the final four months I was relieved of station duties and accompanied the survey party, giving me the chance to spend much time in the field and visit most of the high points in the southern islands in the group.

The records from my journal and additional natural history notes recorded here should contribute usefully to the extensive body of information now available on New Zealand subantarctic wildlife. While much of the natural history research material obtained during the expedition has been described in specialist reports or been incorporated in general works, some field observations including many in this account have remained unpublished; and these, it is hoped, may prove to be of value.

Since Cape Expedition days, research on the wildlife and ecology of the area has expanded greatly. It is to be hoped that in due course a comprehensive account of the region's wildlife will be prepared: this would be a major task quite beyond the scope of this book.

The New Zealand subantarctic has recently become widely recognised as one of the world's outstanding wildlife and conservation regions. Areas familiar to us as coastwatchers are now being visited regularly, too, by enthusiastic ecotourists; although only limited land access is possible, the organised visits now offered in suitable vessels are highly popular. All this has emphasised the need for close attention to conservation issues affecting the area, a need fortunately fully recognised since World War II by New Zealand governments. The efforts of all concerned were finally recognised with the declaration of all the islands as National Nature Reserves. More recently the region achieved international distinction when it was named a World Heritage Area—a fitting climax to a lengthy period of successful conservation.

E.G.Turbott
Auckland 2001

Acknowledgements

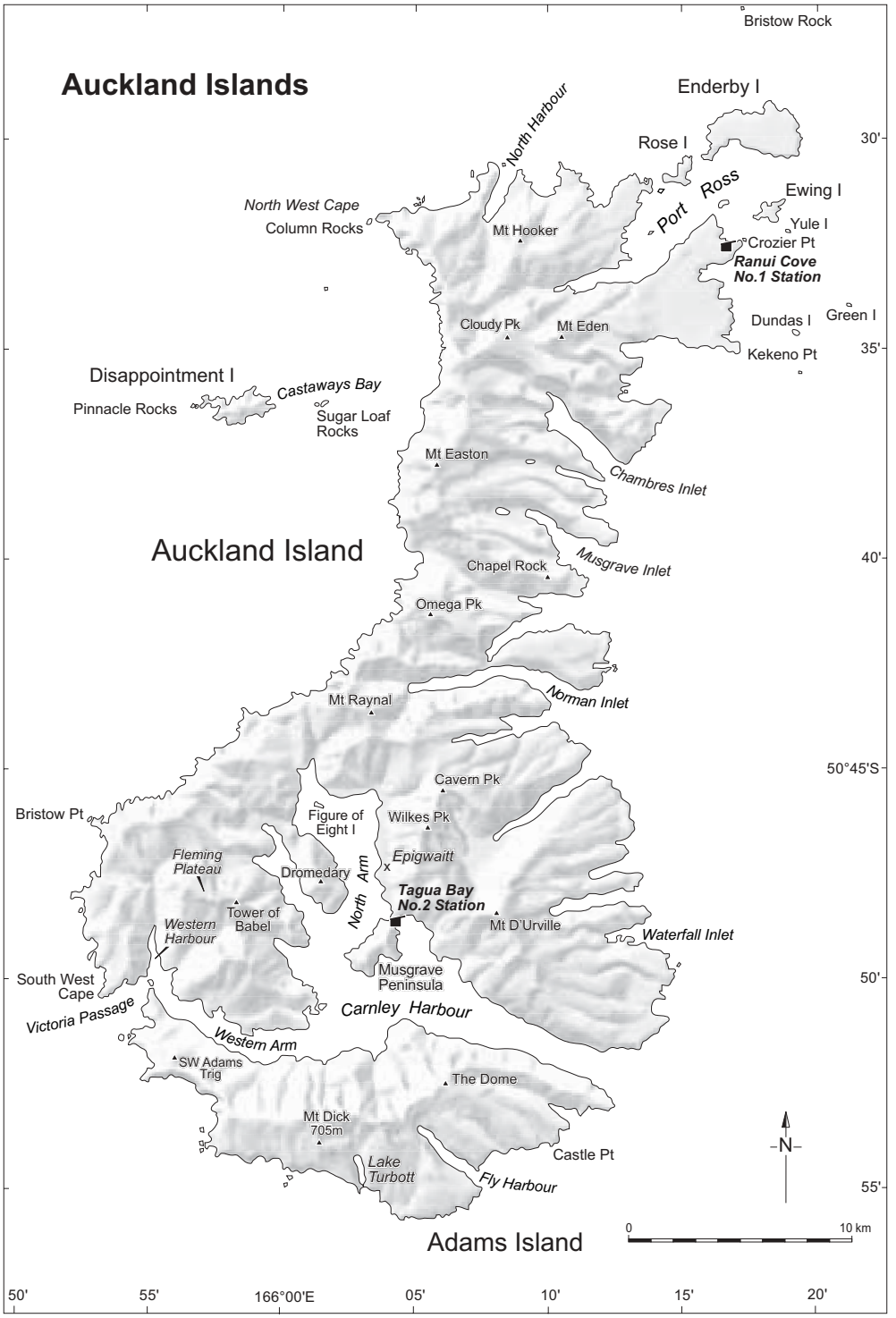
My thanks are due to three of the last few Cape Expeditioners—George Easton, John Jones and Geoff Prichard; their patience in answering questions and providing helpful comments has been much appreciated.

I am greatly indebted to Dr Eric Godley, leader of the 1966 research party on Adams Island, for reading through the natural history and some additional sections and for numerous comments. Keith Wise and Ian McLellan assisted with the entomological, and Jim Waygood with the meteorological sections respectively. Dr Janet Davidson provided information on the preservation of the boat from the Adams Island castaway depot.

That my often illegible handwritten draft was translated into faultless typescript by Patricia Kessler, of Remuera Secretarial Services, could be regarded as almost a miracle. For advice on the arrangement of chapters and for his work in editing the draft at an early stage I am indebted to Christopher Paxton.

I am grateful to the Department of Conservation, for their decision to provide funding and for the contribution made by Paul Dingwall and Jaap Jasperse of Science & Research Unit. The suggestion that I should write up my Cape Expedition journals came originally from Graeme Taylor, of the Department's Biodiversity Recovery Unit. Copy-editor Janet Hughes has made a major contribution in putting the book into its final form.

Finally, I am grateful to Myra McLachlan who read the original draft and provided helpful criticism, and to Garth my brother whose encouragement throughout and suggestions especially as regards war history have contributed materially to a lengthy project.



Note: Altitudes given in this work have been updated from Infomap 260 Auckland Islands, edition 1, 1991, 1:50 000; metres were back-converted to feet where appropriate.

The Cape Expedition

The 'Cape Expedition', code name for the World War II coastwatching operations on New Zealand's subantarctic Auckland and Campbell Islands, began in 1941. German raiders were in action off the New Zealand coast, and there were reports of German warships heading south in the western Pacific; it had become clear that the good anchorages at these islands were likely to be put to enemy use. Prisoners from the *Turakina*, sunk by a German raider in the Tasman, were later released and reported being taken to a harbour in a colder climate with snow and tussock-clad slopes.

Coastwatching was already fully operational in the Pacific to the north, where stations had been established by the Aerodrome Branch of the New Zealand Public Works Department. The obvious sites for subantarctic stations were the large, sheltered harbours in the Auckland Islands—Port Ross at the northern tip and Carnley Harbour in the south, and Perseverance Harbour on Campbell Island.

Above: Port Ross from the Hooker Hills; Erebus cove in the foreground, Ewing Island in the background. Photo: A.W. Eden.

Right: Carnley Harbour from Mt Raynal; Circular Head on the right, Musgrave Peninsula in the middle, and Adams Island in the far distance. Photo: A.W. Eden.

As soon as the New Zealand War Cabinet authorised the expedition, D.O. ('Doc') Haskell of the Aerodrome Branch and Dr R.A. Falla (later Sir Robert), the curator of Canterbury Museum, were asked to help choose station sites and find suitable personnel. Haskell was an exceptional leader who took a close personal interest in establishing and manning the stations. Falla was well known for his interest in New Zealand's outlying islands and expertise in organising island camps and exploration. They realised that the basic requirement was to provide living quarters suitable for an indefinite stay in a rigorous climate, from which radio contact with New Zealand could be maintained. The stations needed to be carefully sited for maximum concealment, yet near lookout points from which a watch could be kept from dawn to dusk. It was decided that an expedition vessel should be included, both to extend coastwatching coverage and to provide an emergency link with New Zealand. A small 'emergency hut' would be set up at a hidden site a reasonable distance from each station, to provide shelter and cover for radio transmission should an enemy landing make it necessary to evacuate the main stations.

The choice of personnel for this venture was carefully considered: isolation and long spells of monotonous routine were clearly of the essence of coastwatching. Parties of four men (later increased to five) were decided on. While isolation for up to three years was provided for, each party was scheduled for relief after one year. Personnel would come from the armed forces or reserved occupation manpower.

The move to set up the stations was made in March 1941, transport being provided by the auxiliary schooner *Tagua*. The *Tagua* made a second trip in June 1941 to deliver bulky materials, and on this visit the three shore stations were established. Each comprised a well-designed pre-fabricated hut with double plywood walls and an exterior fabric coating. The huts had efficient wood- and coal-burning cooking stoves and 'hot dog' space heaters, capacious storerooms and generator-charged batteries for lighting and radio transmission.

It was decided that the expedition's permanent vessel would be the Public Works Department's 57-ton auxiliary ketch *Ranui*, with a complement of four. She was to be based in the secure Waterfall Inlet anchorage on the east coast of Auckland Island, from which she could regularly visit the two Auckland Island stations and the station on Campbell Island. For the first three years of the expedition the *Ranui's* captain was in overall charge of the year's 'relief', as each group of replacement personnel was called.

Until the second relief in 1943, the expedition members wore civilian dress, and if captured were simply to say they were fishermen. Then, with the war with Japan at its height, a change in policy became necessary: a group of civilians, including New Zealand radio operators on coastwatching duty, was summarily executed on Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands in October 1942. So from December 1942 Cape Expedition parties were enrolled as military personnel; we were each given the nominal rank of private, but stations were organised on the same democratic basis as they had been in previous years, with one member appointed as leader. For our own protection, we were also issued with full army kit from December 1942 onwards.

Ranui and *New Golden Hind* in Port Ross, January 1944. Photo R.A. Falla.

The auxiliary ketch *New Golden Hind* was requisitioned in early 1943 as the supply vessel for Aerodrome Branch stations in the Pacific. In 1944, the year of my own relief, she replaced the *Tagua* as expedition transport vessel. That year the Aerodrome Branch wanted to produce a current map of the Auckland Islands, so a survey party of three joined the expedition. At this stage of the war coastwatching was considered much less urgent, and the two Auckland Islands stations were reduced to four men, freeing up facilities and accommodation for the surveyors. The survey party, under Flying Officer Allan Eden, based itself mainly at the Port Ross (No. 1) Station but used the Carnley Harbour (No. 2) station as required. As well as heading the survey, Flying Officer Eden was in overall charge of our relief.

The Roaring Forties

When I saw her at Wellington's Queen's Wharf, I thought the *New Golden Hind* looked too small and elegant to carry us safely to the far edge of the Roaring Forties. I went aboard with the others in my relief. We found our bunks and stowed our gear, then spent the early afternoon helping load supplies for the coming year.

The *Hind* was less a utility workhorse than a graceful luxury yacht. She was built for an Auckland businessman and deepwater yachtsman by the Deeming brothers of Opua; nevertheless with her 91-foot [28-metre] length and 100-tonne capacity, she was well suited to the task of transporting gear and personnel to the Pacific wartime outposts. Her tall, slender masts and light rigging worried the old-timers on board, who more than once were heard to wonder aloud what a blow down south would do to those tall 'sticks'. Her auxiliaries were powerful diesels, one British and the other American, referred to affectionately in the engine room as Mr Churchill and Mr Roosevelt.

New Golden Hind at Auckland Island. Photo A.W. Eden.

Captain W.R. Webling, the skipper of the *Hind*, was an old Cape Expeditioner with long experience in southern New Zealand waters. He had previously captained the *Ranui* and had been officer-in-charge when the expedition was established in 1941. My relief party companions on board were the leader and head surveyor Allan Eden; the assistant surveyors, Les Clifton and George Easton; and four station personnel—Norm Hart, Len Hoskin, Robin Oliver and Bob Pollard. Four further party members were to come south in a few days time in the *Ranui*.

Ours was an unostentatious departure from Wellington, because wartime security—especially for our expedition—was tight. The *Hind* pulled out at 4.30 p.m. on Monday, 20 December 1943, and outside Pencarrow Head quickly struck a lively breeze. Next morning we were off the Kaikoura coast. The light on Tapuaenuku and its surrounding peaks was pale and clear. We had two days in Dunedin, and at daylight on Christmas Day were at sea off Otago's rugged east coast. By the evening of 26 December we were at anchor in Port Pegasus, Stewart Island's southernmost harbour. This was to be our taking-off point for a dash through the Roaring Forties.

We were relieved to reach the calm of Port Pegasus after two boisterous days at sea. We had been driving into a strong wind all day on the 26th without sail, and my head was full of the beat of the two powerful engines. The seas increased with the westerly, to the point where the helmsman often needed help to hold the wheel. Now tuis and bellbirds sang in the stillness of Acheron anchorage. The forest came down to the water's edge on both sides of us. The ratas were red with flowers and russet-tipped young leaves. Further back, forested slopes led up to the bare granite of the two peaks, Gog and Magog, which gleamed in the sun.

For most of Monday 27 December we lay anchored at Acheron, waiting until evening to begin our run south. The crew tested the engines, and rested up in preparation for a hard trip ahead. We made a huge catch of blue and red cod, tarakihi, and gurnard, plus one shark. Towards evening kakas flew screeching overhead and we could hear yellow-eyed penguins, hidden in the bush at the water's edge, crying shrilly.

At 7.30 p.m. the *Hind* weighed anchor and we soon felt the lift of the ocean swell. We passed through the narrow entrance of the sound between Anchorage and Noble Islands, then swung south to follow the rugged coast of Stewart Island. Familiar oceanic birds—black-and-white cape pigeons and big mollymawks—quickly joined us. Further out there were big flocks of muttonbirds (sooty shearwaters) swooping and wheeling against the horizon. By 8.50 p.m. we were off South Cape and on course for the Auckland Islands.

Our only full day at sea, 28 December, began with a subantarctic landfall; by daybreak the main island of the Snares group was full ahead. We had made 56 miles [104 km] from Stewart Island, and were close enough to distinguish the main valley of the flat-topped island. Its mantle of the Snares tree daisy *Olearia lyallii* showed whitish-green in the sun. The group, with its remarkable twisted forest of this tree daisy, and dense populations of Snares crested penguins and sooty shearwaters, is one of the most interesting of the New Zealand subantarctic and fortunately very little modified. Quite close to the main island the first penguins appeared, their massive orange-red beaks and bright yellow eyebrow-tufts vivid as they rose and fell on the powerful coastal surge. Just a little later another group passed us, 'porpoising' at high speed in graceful curves.

Our brief view of the Snares over, I settled to a day of seabird watching. The weather was calm, but the progress of the *Hind* was always lively as she responded to the open ocean's lift and surge. The seas around us were confused and sometimes towering. Albatrosses and petrels swooped into the troughs, then climbed away. Species typical of colder waters began to predominate; the most distinctive was the white-chinned petrel, large and dark brown, and differing from the more abundant sooty shearwater in having a wholly dark instead of silvery-white mottled underwing. Fragile-looking black-bellied storm petrels performed their dance on the water, tipping the surface lightly with their feet. They breed on the Auckland Islands. Pale grey prions (or whalebirds) began to appear; they were probably of several species, although they are hard to distinguish at sea. There were always 50 or so cape pigeons about the *Hind*, clustering on the water if food was thrown overboard. Large species—white-capped and black-browed mollymawks and giant petrels—followed the ship constantly and swooped down to join the cape pigeons in battle for the scraps.

We continued south all day under full auxiliary power with reefed main and mizzen sails and a staysail; at 8 p.m. we were 160 miles [300 km] south of Stewart Island. High cloud was increasing and the wind and seas were building up from the southwest; by 9 p.m. we had begun to look out for the high peaks of the Auckland Islands. As darkness fell we reduced speed and kept a close watch.

I came on deck at 4 a.m. on Wednesday 29th to learn that land had been sighted several hours earlier. The *Hind* stayed out from the coast, cruising at low speed and waiting for daylight and improved visibility. As I looked south a low dark outline of land appeared out of the mist; unmistakably Enderby Island, at the northern entrance to Port Ross.

At this moment the full force of a southern squall struck the *Hind*. Rocked by rain, high wind and pounding seas, we were soon plunging into the storm, keeping well out from the Enderby coast. We could see that the land here was clothed in wind-moulded, sombre scrub; on a projecting point sea lions reared their massive heads—a vivid first impression of our new surroundings. Captain Webling decided that until the worst of the storm was over it would be best to go up Port Ross to shelter, rather than attempt to reach the station anchorage in Ranui Cove. At 5.58 a.m. we anchored in Laurie Harbour, the narrow inlet at the head of Port Ross. A welcome breakfast included rum and coffee for all hands.

From the anchorage we absorbed our first impressions of the main island in the Auckland group. High land rose steeply from the shore, with dense rata forest on the lower slopes. The rata was in bloom, and the scene was altogether less sombre than we had expected. Higher up the tops were in deep mist, which sometimes lifted to reveal scrub-covered, tussocky slopes. In many places open tussock lanes ('clears') made a striking pattern, running down through the scrub into the low-level forest.

No. 1 party on arrival at Ranui Cove: (from left) Graham Turbott, Alan Paine, Geoff Prichard, Len Hoskin (January 1944). Photo A.W. Eden.

We thought we were safely sheltered below the high western Hooker Hills, but during breakfast the wind swung south, blowing directly along the inlet towards us. The anchor began to drag; it was clearly time to move and we hastily motored to Terror Cove, a little to the north down Port Ross. Even here it was necessary to double anchor; in Port Ross out past Shoe Island there was a considerable sea and the *Hind* was rocked at intervals by fierce williwaws (whirlwind squalls). It was now distinctly cooler; later patches of blue sky showed through but the wind stayed high all day. The same conditions persisted for most of the following day, as we waited in Terror Cove to move round to Ranui Cove to our intended anchorage. By dusk (about 10 p.m. at this season and latitude) the wind began to drop and the storm was almost over.

Early on Friday, 31 December we moved round and anchored off the station. The No. 1 party leader, Bob Falla, accompanied by two other members of the outgoing party, Ron Balham and Johnny Jones, rowed out in the station's small green dinghy to have breakfast on board. Later we went ashore to inspect the station and made a start on landing our gear, ready to settle in and learn about of our centre of operations for the coming year.

The Station

Over the next week or so there were many urgent jobs to attend to and little time to linger over first impressions or unfamiliar tasks. Gear and stores were unloaded by mid-afternoon on 31 December, then the *Hind* left to carry out a similar operation at No. 2 Station in Carnley Harbour at the southern end of the island. The members of last year's No. 1 Station relief went south in the *Hind* for the ride, except for Bob Falla, who as leader stayed to introduce us to the station and our new routine.

Ranui Cove and jetty. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

The site for the Ranui Cove station had clearly been chosen carefully to ensure maximum concealment while maintaining good access for our operations. Ranui Cove is a small indentation on the northeastern shore of the square-ended peninsula at the southern entrance of Port Ross. No. 1 Station was close to, though not actually within, the main harbour at this northern end of the Aucklands, and in a good position for checking on any shipping or suspicious movements in the area. Wartime security required that all references to the three subantarctic stations be by their code-names; so at Ranui Cove we were always 'No. 1', Carnley Harbour station became 'No. 2' and the station on Campbell Island, 140 miles [225 km] to the south, 'No. 3'.

The main station building was a sturdy well-insulated hut, camouflaged in khaki, brown and grey, and well hidden in 30-foot-high [9-metre] rata forest. The station's buildings were quite out of sight from the sea, although the roofs would have been clearly visible from an aircraft overhead. Two small streams flowed into the cove; at the outlet of the larger one previous parties had worked hard to build rock jetties, landing stages and a slipway for our dinghies. Much effort, too, had gone into 'corduroy' walkways—transversely laid sections of trunks and branches of rata and *Dracophyllum,* necessary to maintain foot access over the peaty ground. However, care had obviously been taken to keep signs of track and walkway construction to a minimum.

Above and right: No. 1 Station, Ranui Cove. Photos: G. Prichard (above) and A.W. Eden (right).

Station humorists had signposted the tracks and vantage points with a selection of Wellington's place names, often those of the seedier streets—'Lambton Quay' led to 'Town Belt' then to 'Cuba Street' and finally 'Haining Street'. A small clearing on the nearby coast with a clear view of the eastern horizon was 'Fort Dorset'.

Inside, the hut had a spacious living room, two bedrooms with comfortable-looking built-in bunks under their windows, a gloomy kitchen with an Orion stove, a tiny bathroom and a big storeroom. On the western side a porch ran the full length of the building, with racks for oilskins, wet boots and other outdoor gear. Good housekeeping was evidently a station tradition; on the first night ashore our party slept in bunks with clean, carefully folded sheets, and I even inherited an eiderdown.

The other buildings at the station were a workshop, tool shed, two store huts, a tiny 'biological laboratory', a long-drop lavatory and a couple of tent flies on frames for vegetable storage. Allan Eden's survey party quickly erected an additional prefabricated hut which would be the main base for their mapping and survey work.

Home for a year—the author's bunk and belongings. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

Bob Falla's first task was to introduce us to the coastwatching Lookout. It was reached by half a mile of partly corduroyed track. On the way we took in our first detailed view of the local landscape; the tall rata forest around the station soon gave way to more patchy forest and scrub, and at several points the track crossed open lanes ('clears') leading up through scrub to the tussocky tops. Two conspicuous landmarks were a flat-topped knoll to the south, Meggs Hill (374 feet or 114 metres) and, to the southwest, Mt Eden, which rises fairly steeply (to 1361 feet or 415 metres) and is topped by a distinctive 50-feet-high [16-metre] rocky knob. The Hooker Hills (reaching 1509 feet or 460 metres) lay to the west of the Lookout track.

We noted the five commonest species of Auckland Island bush birds on this first walk. There were tuis and bellbirds singing and feeding on the nectar of the flowering rata, yellow-breasted tomtits, and two species of parakeet, red-crowned and yellow-crowned.

The Lookout proved to be a small, substantially-built hut, completely hidden by scrub and bush. From the Lookout (at an elevation of about 200 feet [61 metres]) there could be seen a sweeping panorama of Port Ross and the two large outlying islands, Rose and Enderby, with the open sea beyond. Round to the right were Ocean Island and Ewing Island, and Green and Dundas Islands were distant specks out to sea in the southeast.

There was a telephone link between the Lookout and the main station. Magazines and books littering the hut told of interminable hours spent there by earlier parties, who had manned the Lookout continuously from dawn to dusk. With the war in the Pacific now steadily retreating northwards, less vigilant coastwatching was required, so our regime for 1944 would become much less rigorous—we were now to do three brief rostered checks daily, at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m.

I worked out a daily routine with our radio operator, Len ('Sparks') Hoskin, so we could both meet our regular commitments. The five daily scheduled transmissions (6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., 6 p.m.) to the nearest main receiving station at Awarua had to be maintained, and I had to produce a coded weather report for each transmission. I was still new to 'met.' observing and had to work hard at it at first, making several quick trips daily to the Lookout to get the hang of wind directions and cloud patterns in the Auckland Islands. Later I found I could construct the weather report adequately by going the short distance to 'Fort Dorset', where our thermometer screen was also located. But information from the coastwatcher at the Lookout often contributed significantly to our reports. Len and I shared a bunkroom as our tasks—especially early waking for the 6 a.m. schedule—necessarily overlapped. We had been able to discuss the met. and radio schedules briefly on arrival with our predecessors, Ron Balham (met.) and Johnny Jones (radio), before they left for No. 2 Station.

Our new routines demanded much concentration, but there was time for a little exploration. It was particularly important for me to find time to discuss research plans and the natural history of the islands with Bob Falla before his departure.

It was midsummer and there were still several hours of daylight after the final weather report at 6 p.m.; so on the evening of 2 January, Bob Falla, Allan Eden and I made a brief visit to Ewing Island, which lies just northeast of Ranui Cove. Our outboard purred easily through the great floating kelp beds that grow in summer in the relatively sheltered water between the cove and the island.

Immediately on landing I had my first view of the remarkably tame Auckland Island teal (or 'flightless duck') which we were to meet again round the Port Ross islands and Adams Island. There were also handsome mottled Auckland Island snipe and large, spectacularly colourful yellow-eyed penguins. Allan and I walked across the island through the forest of *Olearia lyallii*—the same pale-leafed tree we had seen as we passed the Snares—and had our first encounter with a sea lion, a huge shaggy-maned male that reared up suddenly in front of us with a coughing roar.

Len [Sparks] Hoskin at his radio. Photo: A.W. Eden.

On 4 January the last members of the relief arrived in the *Ranui* from Dunedin. These were Alan Paine (our No. 1 Station leader) and the fourth member of our party, Geoff Prichard, together with two of the Carnley Harbour (No. 2) party, Basil Stallard and Jim Orange. The *Hind* returned from Carnley Harbour on the following morning, with last year's parties from both stations on board, and they were joined by Bob Falla. By 1 p.m. the *Hind* was ready to leave.

We spent the last afternoon on an excursion to Sandy Bay, the spectacular sea lion breeding beach on Enderby Island. We were all keen to go, even old Cape Expedition hands who had seen the colony many times before. The visit was of particular interest to Peter Whitchurch, who had come down in a double capacity, as mate on the *Hind* and to make a movie of the expedition's activities. Peter was well-known in the radio and cinema worlds, and his film of the voyage, entitled *Fifty Degrees South*, received high praise.

Landing beach, Ewing Island. Photo L. Clifton.

It was a fine afternoon with a good southeasterly breeze and although Captain Webling was impatient to leave for New Zealand, he agreed to delay departure for a few hours while the combined parties went ashore. The Bay curves east and west for 600 yards [550 metres] on Enderby's south coast: such a stretch of flat, open sand is unique on the otherwise rock-bound Auckland Islands and therein lies its attraction as the ideal hauling-out site for the sea lions' breeding season.

The New Zealand (Hooker's) sea lion is found only on the coasts of the southern South Island and round the Snares, Auckland and Campbell Islands, though stragglers sometimes reach other subantarctic islands. It breeds only on the Snares, Auckland and Campbell Islands; by far the largest breeding colonies are those at Sandy Bay and Dundas Island in the Auckland group.

We did not try to land through the surf, which can be treacherous as we later found to our cost, but as it was calm we had no difficulty stepping ashore on the rocks at the bay's eastern end. At this end of the beach, we came across a group of 'bachelor bulls', big dark-brown animals who kept themselves apart from the main colony, which occupied most of the central portion of the beach. The sand in the centre was about 50 yards [46 metres] wide, and gave way at the top of the beach to a smooth, vividly-green sward composed mainly of grasses and docks, and speckled with small white daisies. Behind the sward was low scrub, with an area of bare sandhills and gullies to the east.

Our first impression of the colony was of intense, noisy activity. A powerful fishy smell hung over the whole area. The breeding season begins at Sandy Bay with the arrival of the males in October and early November; the females arrive in early December, the season then builds up to the short and furiously busy birth and mating period (mid-December to mid-January). The season is over and the beach almost deserted by mid-February. Like all members of its family (the 'eared' seals) and some of the more distantly related 'earless' seals (including the sea elephant) the sea lion has a polygynous breeding system. The mothers must come ashore to give birth, and the breeding system which has developed is based on territorial dominance by the competing males.

Landing on Sandy Bay, Enderby Island. Photo A.W. Eden.

We quickly realised the colony was divided into a number of distinct, compact groups. In the centre of each was a massive dark-brown bull and clustered closely round him up to 30 much smaller and more slender pale-fawn females (known to the sealers as 'sea bears'). These groups—the 'harems'—had been formed earlier when the females arrived and attached themselves to one of the dominant territorial males (the 'beachmaster' bulls). We could see these beachmasters had no chance of relaxing their control over the harem; on the outskirts were equally large males ready to challenge and supplant them. Yet amazingly enough, in view of so much fighting and challenging, the pups born in the harem rarely fell victim to the constant aggression of the huge males, by whom they could easily have been crushed to death.

We saw many fights, the heavy animals rearing up with a loud roar and lunging sideways in attempts to wound with their big canine teeth; many had scarring or recent wounds on shoulders or head. Scattered round the beach were a number of less mature but well-grown bulls; these would chase any female making the slightest move to leave the harem, which no doubt helped keep the group round the beachmaster more compact.

Our visit was well into the period of birth and mating. Some very young pups lay with their mothers at the edge of the harem, but many older pups had been marshalled to the top of the beach, where they lay in small groups out of harm's way (these groups of pups were known to the sealers as 'pods'). Sometimes one of the mothers at the edge of the harem would lie on her side to suckle her pup.

The harem system is highly effective in ensuring successful breeding: the females come on heat (oestrus) within seven or eight days after bearing their pups, and are ready to mate with the dominant bull. We saw no births, but beachmasters were mating with females which had recently pupped. This continues until mid-January, when the beachmasters have mated with all the females in their harems.

Most of the mothers of the older pups at the top of the beach were probably away feeding at sea; others might have been among the scattered females wandering or lying about between the harems. Mothers bellowed anxiously to their pups; the pups replied with a thin bleat, much like the voice of any young farmyard animal.

There were some mature males lying motionless at the top of the beach, possibly exhausted after weeks of unceasing territorial combat. It seemed likely, too, that the groups of 'bachelor' males at each end of the beach were resting after bouts of challenging and fighting.

We found we could approach quite closely to the harems to watch or photograph, although it paid to be sure of a safe line of retreat, especially near the challenging bulls. When we approached them the bulls would rear up, displaying discoloured mouths with stained brown teeth. They sometimes charged at us; females would also charge and even the pups tended to snarl at our approach, refusing to be handled or stroked. We noticed that even the youngest pups were distinctively coloured, the males much darker than the females.

We counted at least 1000 sea lions of all ages in the colony. There were six fully-organized harems as well as a number of widely scattered animals, both male and female. Some 20 big dark-brown skuas—scavenging and predatory relatives of the gulls—hovered overhead, and darted among the sea lions searching for afterbirths or disgorged food scraps.

We had just three hours ashore to absorb our impressions and record as much as possible about the Sandy Bay colony. At 4 p.m. it was time to reassemble on the eastern rocks; the *Hind's* company and homeward-bound parties left in her boat, and our group from No. 1 followed in the station dinghy. At the ship's side it was time for goodbyes all round: 'See you in 12 months'—'You can keep the Station!—'Stay away from all those glamorous sea bears!'

The *Hind* motored out of the bay and quickly made sail, disappearing round Enderby's eastern point. We were to see her again in about a fortnight on her return with the new No. 3 (Campbell Island) party.

Sea lion pups and females, and skuas, Enderby Island. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

The Coastwatchers' Routine

January and February were settling-in months at the station—we needed to develop a routine for every task from coastwatching to cooking. For my part, I had to work out how to increase the efficiency of the five three-hourly weather reports. The surveyors were coming to grips with cross-country travel in difficult conditions in the forest and scrub, and had soon set up their first trig stations.

We were not yet living in complete isolation, for the *Hind* was soon to return with the new No. 3 (Campbell Island) party. She was sighted from the Lookout on the evening of 19 January but spent the night in Laurie Harbour, coming round to us early next morning. The four members of the No. 3 party on board included Laurie Pollock and Ron Balham from last year's relief, who had both opted for a further year with the Cape Expedition. A fifth No. 3 member, Robin Oliver, who came down with us on the *Hind*, had finished two weeks of geological field work at No. 2, and would now be picked up and taken to Campbell. Bob Falla and Lt C. Whitmore of the RNZNVR also arrived in the *Hind*. Their task was to review the organisation and role of all three stations.

The author at the met. screen. Photo: A.W. Eden.

Visitors and urgent work meant that our precious letters from home were skimmed through hastily on the 20th, to be set aside and re-read many times over the coming weeks. I spent as much time as possible with Ron Balham, now an experienced met. observer, because I had been finding it difficult to line up my elementary training as a met. observer with subantarctic cloud patterns and other phenomena. With Ron's help I drew up a weather information schedule for the Lookout coastwatcher to phone down to the main station. The details I needed from the coastwatcher included wind force, visibility and cloud height judged in relation to various high points.

At 4 p.m. on 20 January the *Hind* and *Ranui* left for Campbell Island via No. 2 Station at Carnley Harbour. The survey party was aboard the *Ranui*; they had decided to quickly check a few details to complete Les Clifton's Campbell Island map; the *Ranui* would remain at Campbell until they were finished. Alan Paine accompanied them, so just three of us—Geoff Prichard, Len Hoskin and myself—were left at No. 1.

The *Hind* returned from Campbell with Bob Falla, Lt Whitmore and last year's party on 4 February. We spent two full days with our visitors; then on 7 February, the ship left for Dunedin, and the three of us were again alone, awaiting the *Ranui's* return with the surveyors and Alan Paine.

The visit of the home-going Campbell Island party, including their highly-experienced naturalist, Jack Sorensen, had been most welcome. We all appreciated this final chance to exchange ideas on the biological collecting programme and to compare subantarctic experiences. The party also visited the sea lion colony on Enderby.

The evening of the *Hind's* return from Campbell was set aside for a grand dinner for our greatly expanded company, produced in style by Geoff Prichard. Then on the following evening Bob Falla and the No. 1 party were demolished by the old No. 3 party at table tennis.

The following entry in my journal for Thursday, 30 March describes an average day at the station:

> The alarm went off at 20 to 6 although as in most cases recently I woke about half-an-hour earlier and went to sleep again (will I wake at 20 to 6 when I get home?). It was quite dark and I switched on my torch keeping the light half hidden. I know exactly where my clothes are and could dress in the dark but the torch speeds up the process. Len Hoskin stirred as usual on hearing the alarm but probably subconsciously realizes that he has another quarter-hour. My mackinaw was not necessary this morning as it was warmer than for some days past. Slipped on gumboots at the back door and went along the corduroy track to 'Fort Dorset' in case of any distant fog visible over the sea to the east; went warily past the spot where there was a bull sea lion last night. Read the thermometers at the screen and checked the wind direction (a glance round the sky made this easy as broken cloud was passing over). Back to the station where Len is turning out ready for action at 6 a.m.; completed the report with the barometer reading, checked the barograph above my bed, coded the message and I finally relax as I hand it over to Sparks.
>
> This morning as I was neither cook nor coastwatcher (otherwise I would have washed and lit the fire or, if coastwatcher, set out for the Lookout) went back to bed to doze until woken by the cook with the usual blast of loud radio music at 7 a.m. After breakfast—starting a little earlier than usual but not finished until 8—I had an hour before the 9 a.m. schedule; this was partly occupied in the extremely careful folding and stowing of my blankets to avoid fly attack. I had decided to spend any free time today in mounting accumulated insects and completing the met. record forms for February and made a start on the latter.
>
> After doing the 9 a.m. schedule, walked round the cove to take the sea temperature; this is always a pleasant task and today I was able to watch an immature sea lion which was clambering over the rocks

opposite and bleating in a strange kind of falsetto. Next came the 9.30 a.m. standard met. observations—these are not transmitted and can be done at comparative leisure.

Les Clifton had lost a photographic negative needed urgently so I gave him some help, finally locating it; Les is addicted to a mid-morning cup of tea but this was forgotten because of the search and much to his disgust we had to substitute a glass of lime juice. Finally went to the 'lab' and mounted and labelled a series of insects. Later stacked wood for half an hour.

Met. schedule at 12, followed by another spell of mounting and labelling after lunch; Alan Paine brought in another spider for the collection so this was bottled. Switched to wood-sawing to get some exercise before the schedule at 3. Worked on the met. records, then persuaded Alan Paine to cut my hair.

Dinner (known as 'tea') has by general consent been changed from 6 p.m. to 5 p.m. now that the evenings are shorter. I brushed my hair in honour of the new haircut, and swept the met. forms from the table just in time before the cook raced in to set the table. Had dinner with an eye on the clock with the 6 p.m. schedule coming up. Allan Eden was coastwatcher so he hurried off as soon as dinner was finished to be sure of phoning the weather report from the Lookout.

Geoff Prichard had been saying that he would like to make a trip to Enderby one evening to pick up a piece of timber which had washed ashore and been spotted on an earlier visit; since the weather as reported by Allan had seemed promising, Geoff, Len and I set out straight after the 6 p.m. schedule. Donned our seagoing gear and launched the dinghy—but when we got away from the cove it began to drizzle, turning to rain, and the wind increased. We decided that it would be unwise to attempt the crossing to Enderby so I suggested a visit to Ewing; we landed on the southwest point, walking past the usual half-a-dozen or so bull sea lions to the south coast. Here a big rippling swell was coming in and the wind was still increasing from the north. Thus after a brief spell for collecting we set out for the station; got home after a fairly rough passage, but without any really big seas.

I am writing this in the quiet of George Easton's hut as Len has the radio at full blast in the living room; Allan Eden and Alan Paine are in occupation of the kitchen for photographic developing and printing. George is obviously writing home even though the *Ranui's* mid-year mail and supplies trip is still so far ahead.

To be on the daily roster as camp cook represented a first hurdle for most of us, although perhaps it seemed less formidable to old hands like Geoff Prichard and Alan Paine. We had a storeroom packed to the ceiling with canned, dried and dehydrated food, and every type of cooking ingredient and utensil. A reasonable breakfast, lunch and dinner—not just take-it-or-leave-it direct from the can—was expected, and they had to be produced from our stores. Breakfasts were reasonably easy, with porridge a top favourite, followed by bacon and the ever-popular baked beans. Soup for lunch always gained high marks in that cold climate, and even the less practised cooks amongst us quite often succeeded with scones. Dinner was notable less for the inevitable bully beef (not easily disguised even

Rowing to Ewing Island, Port Ross. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

when euphemistically labelled 'spiced mutton' or 'corned beef') than for the combinations of really excellent canned vegetables we managed to produce. For the first few months—and after the *Ranui's* mid-year visit—we had fresh vegetables in quantity; these were stored in cool, shady conditions in a tent at the landing and most, especially the potatoes, kept well. We brought a supply of eggs with us, as did the *Ranui* when she came down at mid-year. Each supply lasted several weeks.

Fresh bread and meat provided variety and nutrition in our diet, which would otherwise have deteriorated to the monotony of canned and dried food and biscuits. We soon discovered breadmaking was a satisfying and rewarding task. The storeroom had massive supplies of dried yeast, and white and wholemeal flour, and an Otago University nutritionist had prepared a special wholemeal-boosted formula and instructions we found quite easy to follow. We soon learnt that accurately judging kitchen and stove temperatures was just as important as thorough mixing and kneading; fortunately, our Orion range worked quite well on rata firewood. There were some dire failures but we all finally managed to produce quite satisfactory loaves.

We also had a source of fresh meat—since 1942 sheep had been brought down to supply meat for No. 1 and No. 2 stations. They were kept on nearby Ocean Island, and one of our regular tasks was to care for the flock. Although goats could be hunted on the northwest side of Port Ross, wild pigs throughout the island and wild cattle on Enderby Island, they provided only an occasional source of fresh meat. The No. 3 party on Campbell Island could hunt sheep descended from animals introduced during the island's early farming operations.

There were several competent cooks in our party and we took care to leave precious items such as fresh meat in their hands. Sometimes cakes and even pastries were produced by the experts, and others were keen to prepare special dishes. Len Hoskin had a particular urge to bake a jam roll, but throughout our stay his attempts always resulted in a despairing shout of 'burnt' or 'collapsed'. We estimated Len would have used about

The author making bread. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

150 tins of jam if he had ever produced a recognisable product.

In addition to our commitment to the five three-hourly met. and radio schedules each day, Len and I took our turns on the cooking and Lookout rosters. This led us both to smartly dovetail our daily timetables: thus my journal for 21 June (midwinter eve) says:

> Set the alarm for 5.40 a.m., returned to bed after handing the weather message to Sparks. Up again at 7 to make breakfast (porridge, bacon, spaghetti, tomatoes) eaten at 8.15 (my own breakfast interrupted for the 9 a.m. schedule); made soup for lunch (interrupted for noon schedule). Some spare time before and after the 3 p.m. schedule; by 4.50 had prepared dinner (canned sausages and vegetables, Stormont's plum pudding and custard), finished by 5.30, and met. for the day ended at 6 p.m. Still dark at 5.40 a.m. and quite dark by 5.30 p.m.—the light was still quite dim by 9 a.m., although a patch of sunlight appeared on the treetops shortly after 9.

The survey party members, Allan Eden, Les Clifton and George Easton, also took their turn on cooking and coastwatching rosters when they were not away at field camp.

There were few opportunities to supplement our diets with locally grown, farmed or fished produce. Serious vegetable growing was not on our station programmes, though for several years at Campbell Island a small supply of salad greens was produced. Apart from the obvious security threat if a garden were spotted from the air, history shows how unlikely gardening is to succeed on the islands, because of their peaty soil and wild, intractable climate. The settlers in Port Ross in 1849–52 found that acid soil, low soil temperatures, wind and high rainfall doomed attempts at gardening self-sufficiency, and, eventually, contributed to the downfall of the colony.[1] R.E. Malone, who visited the Enderby settlement at the time of its abandonment wrote:

> the potato and vegetable gardens are fenced around with stakes; and every fourteen feet inside with the same, to keep the wind off, looking like sheep pens, but all to no purpose. The potatoes are about an inch and a half [4 cm] in diameter, and bad; and the turnips run down like miserable radishes.'[2]

For most of their vegetables, the settlers had to trade with a group of Maori fugitives from the Chatham Islands, who lived near the Enderby settlement. Malone says the Maoris' greater experience of gardening under rigorous conditions meant they were more successful; however, even their best crops, the cabbages and turnips, were of extremely poor quality.

Strangely enough, neither was fresh fish a feature of Auckland Islands coastwatchers' diets. There was a simple reason for this: although the

[1] The history of the settlement is detailed in the next chapter.

[2] R.E. Malone, *Three Years' Cruise in the Australian Colonies.* (London, Bentley, 1854) p. 64.

Antarctic cod group (family *Notothenidae*) is common throughout the subantarctic and easily caught, we found the fish subject to heavy infestations of parasitic fleshworms—not an appetising dish to even the most fish-hungry coastwatcher.

Because the wild pigs, goats and cattle on Auckland and Enderby provided coastwatchers with an extremely irregular and limited meat supply, it was decided to release sheep on Ocean Island, which has an area of about 10 acres and lies just off the point between Ranui Cove and Port Ross. The decision was not made without some misgivings on the part of Bob Falla, other expedition organisers and Aerodrome Branch staff, because they realised the animals could further damage Ocean Island's vegetation. It had already suffered greatly, having been ravaged by goats liberated in sailing-ship days as food for castaways. A few of their descendants were still present in 1941, although earlier No. 1 parties tried to eradicate them, and these we destroyed. The vegetation was so impoverished that little natural grazing was available and the sheep survived only by foddering. When the *Ranui* brought 20 sheep down to the Aucklands, she also had to bring hay, oats and chaff to feed them. Geoff Prichard—in civilian life a farmer and shepherd—supervised the installation of self-operated feeders on Ocean Island and although these worked reasonably well, we had to check regularly that they were still in working order.

Later a few sheep were moved to Rose Island—also a greatly modified island but providing more natural grazing than Ocean—but these had all been used for food by the end of the year. In Allan Eden's book on the 1944–45 survey, *Islands of Despair*, he says the last two Ocean Island sheep were used for a bumper Christmas dinner.[3] This was at the end of 1944, when the survey party still needed six months to complete its work at No. 1. I missed the event as by that time I had left for home.

However limited in variety, and based so largely on canned and preserved foods, our diets proved to have been adequate when we were finally medically assessed. Our health on our return was in all cases remarkably good, reflecting perhaps both our regular supply of fresh wholemeal bread, and the care taken to vary our meals and to keep them interesting.

For cooking and heating, we had some coal but mostly had to cut wood, a regular task gladly undertaken for the exercise and for the entertainment it provided. Earlier parties had mainly used dead rata, but by 1944 it was necessary to cut live trees; we took prostrate trunks and branches from the surrounding forest, taking care to cut wood in scattered locations and thus avoid conspicuous gaps in the canopy. We worked in pairs with the big crosscut and got much satisfaction developing our skills and comparing performances. The wood was carried back to the station on backpacks and chopped to size for the Orion and 'hot dogs'. Rata burns exceptionally well, even when green.

The cook rostered on duty was expected to see that everything was swept and tidied inside the hut. Otherwise housekeeping consisted mainly of an occasional bout of spring cleaning ('walls and ceiling of the kitchen scrubbed with soda,' says one of my journal entries).

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[3] London, Melrose, 1955, p.154.

It wasn't long before we discovered that a special factor had to be allowed for in all Auckland Islands housekeeping, even on field camps—the ever-present threat of blowfly attack. The large New Zealand bluebottle *Calliphora quadrimaculata* is well known on the mainland—and particularly in the South Island mountains—for egg deposition on woollen clothing and equipment (even axe handles!); here on the Auckland Islands, this occurred in an extreme degree. When we arrived, we met stories of the fly menace with some disbelief: a large poster on the living room wall said: 'SARAH'S BOSOM CALENDAR—EVERY DAY IS FLY-DAY!'[4] but we took this to be just another of Bob Falla's puns.

The shock of the first attack was memorable—blankets or clothing, used or clean, and not stowed away, would be suddenly glued together with a filthy egg-mass! Packing up all clothing in fly-proof containers immediately became our most urgent task; I had a large wooden box for my equipment and books and in this I was able to stow most of my spare clothing, as well as bedding each morning before daylight. It was equally urgent to store food away.

Even after we had learnt our lesson from these first unnerving experiences the problem continued to break out unexpectedly throughout our stay—a journal entry later in the year says despairingly: 'Flies have blown the inside of my slippers right to the toes'. (After careful cleaning I did manage to wear the slippers again!).

Fly outbreaks would come at the most unlikely times and places. After the *Ranui* returned at mid-year with fresh supplies, I wrote in my journal: 'Fresh food stored in racks but counted without the flies…they laid myriads of eggs in the sack of Brussels sprouts doing away with half of them…fortunately they do not touch onions or leeks.'

The nuisance value of the blowflies in field camps (I experienced this when I joined the survey party later in the year) is recorded with much feeling by Allan Eden in *Islands of Despair*:

> They...will lay their eggs on anything at all, even including billies and slasher blades. But wool is their real joy. Leave a blanket or a pair of socks in an accessible place and you will return to find a crust of eggs an inch or more deep, with blowflies completely embedded in the mess. It is fiendishly difficult to get the eggs out of woollen articles. (p. 49)

And at a later camp:

> When we reached camp I found my tent in a shocking mess… The layers of eggs were so thick that dozens of flies were completely buried in the encrustation…it was after midnight before I had the tent reasonably clean, and even then I had several hours' work next day getting the eggs out of such things as packs of tobacco and the sleeves of my oilskin coat…I think that every member of the survey party found these loathsome insects the most objectionable feature of the islands. (pp. 122–3)

At first, Allan was convinced the site chosen for the camp was mainly responsible for such extreme fly damage, and that pitching the tents in more open spots meant flies would appear with the first rays of sunlight,

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[4] Sarah's Bosom was the name given to Port Ross by Captain Abraham Bristow, who discovered the Aucklands in 1806. He gave the name on his visit the following year in the whaler *Sarah*.

ready to attack. However, even though he subsequently chose the shadiest possible sites, attacks continued; we found in the end that taking the time to wrap all our possessions in tight bags or containers was the only solution to the fly problem when camping, and followed this routine rigorously throughout the survey.

At least fly attacks on the Aucklands were nothing new—after the wreck of the schooner *Grafton* in Carnley Harbour in 1864, Captain Thomas Musgrave managed to get ashore with his crew. He wrote (in *Castaway on the Auckland Isles*): 'We must get a place to live in, for the tent we are now living in is a beastly place...the blow-flies blow our blankets and clothes, and make everything in the most disgusting state imaginable'.[5]

Even now, after so many years, it is hard to think back calmly on our problems with the blowflies. In the end one of the *Ranui's* crewmen, George Bish, a man normally noted for his equanimity, had the last word, much to our delight. Discovering the latest dastardly attack, he shouted the customary string of epithets, rising finally to '…blue-arsed maggot-blowing bastards!'

[5] Edited by J.J. Shillinglaw. Lockwood, London. (Melbourne edition published by H.T. Dwight), 1865, p. 8.

Enderby Island and Castaway Depots

After the first few weeks of settling in we were able to make short trips to see a little more of our surroundings, and as an antidote to station routine. However, there was no easy way of moving about inland from the station: there were a few tracks through the surrounding bush, in addition to the Lookout track, but the rata was otherwise extremely difficult to negotiate—an amazingly dense tangle of prostrate or arching trunks with an often thick undergrowth of several kinds of medium-sized smaller trees and wiry shrubs. As Allan Eden describes in *Islands of Despair*, the survey party spent a lot of time cutting access tracks through the coastal forest and thick mid-level scrub before they could work on the higher tops. All over the island, the access problem plagued the surveyors throughout their field programme

The alternative was to make frequent short excursions with the station dinghy and outboard. The neighbouring sheltered sections of the coast and adjacent islands were readily accessible, and by this means all of us—including Sparks Hoskin and myself between our three-hourly met. and radio schedules—were able to explore most of our surroundings.

We had two dinghies; the new 14-footer [4.6 metres] that came down in the *Hind* immediately proved herself perfectly suited to our requirements. She was well-built but light enough for three—or in an emergency even two of us—to beach readily or pull up on the slipway; and with her 5ft 3in [1.6 metre] beam she had excellent stability if we were caught offshore in a sudden squall. The old 12-foot [3.9-metre] dinghy, although still fully serviceable, was kept mainly as a reserve craft.

George Easton working on he boat, No. 1 Station. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

The Johnson T.S. 15 'Sea Horse' outboard served us well, although like all early outboards it was temperamental: John Steinbeck immortalised them in his description of the idiosyncrasies of the 'Hansen Sea-Cow' in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*. We all learnt to make adjustments to and even to dismantle the motor if required, and could generally rely on a quick and safe run home.

Because we used our dinghies and outboard regularly, we had to pay special attention to their regular maintenance. Our party also made a big effort to improve the landing jetty at the creek mouth and add efficient runners to the slipway: my journal records a surprising number of entries about 'collecting stones for the new wharf' or 'continued building work on the jetty.'

The *Ranui*, of course, carried out any major sea transportation, such as transferring the survey party from camp to camp. But there were plenty of nearby destinations for which we were able to make use of the dinghy and outboard: these included the regular inspection of the sheep-feeders on Ocean Island, natural history collecting or observation from Port Ross or on Ewing Island, and even some shorter survey trips. Alan Paine and Sparks Hoskin were also making regular tow-netting circuits in the relatively sheltered water between the station and Ewing Island as part of a continuing programme studying marine plankton distribution, set up the previous year by Bill Dawbin (in civilian life a university lecturer in zoology and marine biology).

On some memorable days of really fine weather—just a very few in our whole stay—Sparks and I were able to join the rest for six or even nine hours free of met. and radio. The weather was typically monotonous, nearly always overcast and noted for quickly succeeding spells of strong wind and rain. But it was in order on an undoubtedly fine day to 'retard' the weather report—that is, to omit one or more of the schedules; so we were able to take part in some of the more ambitious excursions, generally to Enderby Island.

Royal albatross chick, Enderby Island. Photo: E.G. Turbott.

A day on Enderby was always particularly attractive, for, in addition to the complete change of scene from forest-enclosed Ranui Cove, the sea lions and the royal albatrosses and other nesting sea birds were of outstanding interest. Enderby, unlike most of the main island, is largely cleared, open country; much is covered with scrub at various stages of regeneration, while there are considerable areas of closely-grazed sward including English grasses and the handsome native lily *Bulbinella rossii*, a unique regenerating ground-cover. The island's natural vegetation was first modified when the Enderby settlers burnt and cleared much of the original forest behind Sandy Bay. Modification intensified as successive leaseholders started farming on a few parts of the islands; today a visit is a little like stepping back in time to rough pioneer farmland with uneven regeneration following clearing and fire.

In 1944, wild cattle and rabbits continued to modify the vegetation. The Enderby Island cattle herd originated in 1895 when a leaseholder, W.J. Moffett, attempted an ambitious farming operation and brought in sheep and cattle; the rabbits—a handsome breed known as 'French Blues'—had been released earlier, probably as food for castaways. Moffett had a typically pioneering attitude to the island's native wildlife. In a report to the government he wrote: '.... the presence of the sea-lion (an inferior kind of seal) is in the highest degree detrimental to the depasturing of stock. That particular species of seal... has literally overrun the more accessible, and, consequently, the best grazing grounds.'

Apart from the visit to the Sandy Bay sea lion colony in January, I had been able to see a little of Enderby when the *Ranui* made two trips to land and pick up the survey party in late February. But on 19 April an exceptionally fine day gave us the chance to explore more thoroughly, as described in the following entry from my journal:

> After the 6 a.m. schedule set the alarm again for 7 … It was still dark but there was already some light in the east; the whole sky was amazingly clear except for an eastern cloud-bank just beginning to show round the edges the light of the rising sun. After breakfast and the 9 a.m. schedule there could be no doubt that we were in for an exceptionally fine day, so we got out the boat for a trip to Enderby. (The No. 2 party at Carnley had the same idea—we picked up their signal at 9 reading 'No schedules until 6'; in the meantime we had more modestly signalled 'until 3 p.m.')
>
> A quick trip in the calm—passing through flocks of diving petrels and Auckland Island shags—to land on Sandy Bay where the boat came up easily on the slipway provided by stranded kelp. The main island seen from Enderby lay in peace and a strange quiet under a cloudless dome of sky, its high outline impressive without the usual fog and mist; however a cloud-cap was beginning to form on the main peaks.
>
> The central portion of the beach, packed in January by the extensive sea lion colony, was now completely empty. At the far eastern end was a small group of five bulls of varying ages—although none fully mature—together with the same number of females (sea bears); a couple of younger bulls made half-hearted moves to chase any bears attempting to move in the direction of the water. A few immature bulls and adult bears lay scattered at the top of the beach just below the green sward.
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> The sward which is closely cropped and extends well inland was alive with blue rabbits. Several Auckland Island pipits in fine, fresh plumage fed on the grass; on a twisted stump at the edge of a patch of rata forest a falcon perched fearlessly, only moving at the last moment as we approached. We walked up the western stream through the patch of scrubby rata and *Dracophyllum* in which the surveyors had camped in February. There is much standing dead rata here where the original forest was burned in past farming operations; by the stream the remains of an early building, probably from the farming period, had been exposed by a washout.

Pushing on uphill through low scrub we came out at the royal albatross's nest with its chick, now exactly 53 days old. [I had the good luck in the case of this nest to first examine it on 26 February; when the sitting parent was moved off gently the chick was found sitting amongst shell fragments with its down still damp, indicating that it had hatched earlier in the day.] The chick was now clothed in long, spotless white down and was able to clatter its beak vigorously at us like its parents; one of the parents had probably just fed the chick and was resting on the ground quietly some 100 yards away. [This nest was of much interest since one of the parents proved to be a bird banded by a previous party; the nesting record of the parents was thus of special interest, in addition to my own observations on the development of this year's chick.] The nest site is in an open, somewhat boggy area on top of a ridge, the vegetation consisting of various ground and cushion plants, with a little prostrate scrub no more than ankle-high; close to the nest stands a conspicuous single dead shrub.

Leaving the nest we walked downhill in the direction of Derry Castle Reef, the most prominent feature of this exposed northern coast; the breeze outside was quite strong and big seas were pounding on the foot of the cliffs. The clifftops are mainly open with a mixture of low scrub and grassy sward. The Reef was today almost hidden under the boiling surf whipped up by the strong surge—this was a relatively calm day and we could imagine the scene when the full force of a storm came down on the low jutting promontory. The wooden memorial tablet to the 15 men lost in 1887 in the wreck of the iron barque *Derry Castle* was erected here in February by our party to replace the original memorial, the vessel's figurehead, which has been taken back to New Zealand for safekeeping.

At the base of the Reef is a gravelly area merging into closely cropped sward; a small flock of 25 banded dotterels in non-breeding plumage which had been resting on the gravel flew up as we approached.

Time was by now passing rapidly, so we decided to go back straight over the hill to Sandy Bay, rather than continue further round the north coast. On a grassy area was a group of sea bears surrounding a submature bull—apparently a rather weakly held harem of the type tending to form after the height of the breeding season—and closer to the foot of the hill was a small valley in which a number of well-grown pups were playing and mock-wrestling beside a stream. A few bulls and females were scattered about nearby. The adults were all moulting, their fresh new coats showing through under loose patches of yellowish-brown dead fur.

At the Reef we had found a cast-up plank which, like all stray timber, we carried back for possible use at the station; on top of the hill we sat down on the plank and had our lunch. Round us were a number of moulting sea bears, lying in the ankle-high prostrate scrub. From here we could look south over most of the main island, still under unbroken blue sky although the cloud cap on the tops was heavier. (The cloud cap means that in spite of the perfect day the surveyors, camped at Musgrave Inlet, will have been unable to continue their observations on the tops.) We could see that the wind had risen slightly; after pushing the boat off at Sandy Bay we found that it was

still calm enough to go on to the island's eastern point for another bigger plank that Geoff Prichard had noted earlier and which we meant to tow back to Ranui Cove.

The trip home, burdened by the plank, became something of a struggle against the now really fresh breeze and a tide flowing strongly against us through the Rose Island channels. We reached the comparative shelter of Ocean Island a quarter of an hour later well soaked, only to run out of petrol just before the cove; however rowed in and got ashore safely well in time for the 3 p.m. schedule.

A further entry describes an 'Enderby day' under very different weather conditions. On 8 July I was accompanied by Les Clifton of the survey party and Sparks Hoskin:

Weather settled enough for an afternoon visit to Enderby—a few slow-moving showers about but the sea oily and perfectly calm for the half-hour trip; at Sandy Bay practically no surf and landed easily pulling the boat up over the usual masses of stranded kelp.

The beach was deserted with no sign of either sea lions or skuas. Sparks stayed behind to shoot rabbits, while Les and I climbed the hill to the albatross nest. The chick was sleeping with beak under wing, a ball of spotless white down; when I called out it whipped up its head and continued to face me as I walked round the nest, clattering its beak. With help from Les weighed the chick: 21 lbs [9.5 kg], i.e. heavier than normal according to Richdale's data for its age of 133 days (approximately 4 months); however, it may have just been fed.

At the north coast wind and currents were churning up high-peaked waves, especially where western and southern currents converge out to the east; below us the surge was foaming into caverns apparently extending well into the cliffs. On the way to Derry Castle Reef over the short-turfed tableland passed groups of sleeping sea bears, their newly moulted, smooth coats dry and almost white. A noisy group of still quite small pups were playing vigorously in the stream above the Reef as on my previous visit—all seemed to be males and there was much fighting and gruff barking. Just before the Reef a large bull had just landed and gazed at us as he struggled inland streaming with water from coat and mane. At the base of the Reef several yellow-eyed penguins were wandering about; then two emerged from the boiling surf, their wet plumage glistening as they walked towards us—as they walk they flip their pink feet sideways producing the characteristic rolling gait.

There is still a good deal of weathered teak about the Reef area, from the *Derry Castle* and possibly other wrecks, and Les had collected a load of this for mementos and possible use about the station. We returned passing grazing black cattle which hardly lifted their heads; above the ridge towards our nest and chick two adult royal albatrosses were sailing overhead a little unsteadily, but as the wind was freshening we did not wait to see whether they were going to land: there is another nest a little to the southwest and more nests scattered over the ridge to the east.

The wind had swung round to the west but the sea remained calm for the trip home; however, heavier showers were obviously building up over Port Ross and the high land to the west.

On our trips around Port Ross, we visited most of the places where the 1849–52 Enderby settlement was built. The establishment of a new British colony on the Aucklands followed from the enthusiastic—but mainly highly imaginative—reports of the group's potential by various early 19th-century expeditions, most significantly that of Sir James Clark Ross, whose British Antarctic Expedition was at the Auckland Islands in November-December 1840. Since its discovery in 1806, the group had been heavily exploited by sealers; but by the 1840s sealing was over and attention had been transferred to shore-based whaling. In the Aucklands this was combined with land clearing and farming. Charles Enderby of Samuel Enderby and Sons, one of the most active British whaling companies, proposed a settlement, and his plan found favour with the British government. It was also strongly backed by Ross (who had earlier proposed the group might be developed as a convict settlement to replace the New South Wales and Tasmanian colonies, which were advancing beyond the penal stage.)

Enderby and about 70 settlers landed at Erebus Cove in Port Ross (previously known as the Bay of Sarah's Bosom) in the December–January period 1849/50. Prefabricated cottages, barracks, workshops and stores were soon erected in clearings in the rata forest. The town's first industries were whaling facilities and workshops for refitting whalers, but Australian livestock was to be sent later when farms were established. Enderby had a large house and was directly responsible to the British government as Lieutenant Governor, as well as being the Company's Commissioner (the group was not brought under New Zealand administration until 1863). The temporary settlement, with around 200 residents at its height, was expected to grow into a township to be named Hardwicke, after the Earl of Hardwicke, Governor of the company—but the town never eventuated.

Disaster dogged the new colony from the start: no whales were killed in the first season and few were seen or taken subsequently, while the dismal climate and the waterlogged, peaty soil defeated all efforts at farming or agriculture. It became necessary to import food and stores from New Zealand and Australia, and the settlement became the scene of constant, sometimes violent, unrest. Finally in 1851 two Special Commissioners, George Dundas and Thomas Preston, were sent out and recommended without hesitation that the project be abandoned. The Special Commissioners found that only about 20 acres [8 hectares], including some on Enderby Island, had been cleared: it was obvious that as a self-supporting operation the settlement had been a complete failure.

When the settlers arrived in 1849 they found Port Ross already occupied by nearly 70 Maori and Moriori refugees from the Chatham Islands. Enderby came to an amicable agreement with this party, many of whom were employed by the company and who continued to have some success growing vegetables. The settlement was abandoned under the supervision of a British warship, HMS *Fantome*, in August 1852. The Maori settlers also asked to be taken back to New Zealand but their request was declined, and they were only able to return to the Chathams in 1856, when Chatham Island Maori chartered a ship to bring them back.

The diary of Enderby's Assistant Commissioner, William Mackworth and that of the accountant William Munce[2] throw much light on the trials of the settlers. The notably sunnier climate and sandy beach of Enderby Island made it something of a health resort, where families and anyone in need of a change could have an outing away from the hardships of the mainland. In July 1851 he 'sent a man [Cripps] to Enderby Island with his family for a change of air and proposed allowing all the men with their families to spend a week there in turn'; in May 1852 he 'had the pleasure of accompanying Mrs Munce, Mrs Barton and families and also Captain Glennys and some of the *Fantome's* officers, to Sandy Bay where a constitutional run on the sand, as well as dinner was indulged in.' In 1944 we were living in comparative luxury and, more importantly had the end of our isolation in sight; but for us a 'constitutional' on Enderby—even at the height of summer when Sandy Bay was fully occupied by the sea lion colony—was the same special treat it had been for the early settlers.

Almost the only trace of the Enderby settlement in Erebus Cove today is the small cemetery, and even there the headstones are mainly those of seamen buried later during the shipwreck era of 1864–1907. Out in the middle of Port Ross is Shoe Island, a mere scrap of volcanic rock with striking columnar basalt cliffs, which served as the settlement's gaol. We landed on the island several times but could find no trace of former occupation. The gaol was generally known to the settlers as 'Rodd's Castle', after the medical officer, J.S. Rodd, whose periodic bouts of inebriation resulted in gaol for drunkenness; but it seems likely that the shelter provided was never more than a wooden hut (and apparently at one stage at least, just a barrel!)

In the years following the Enderby settlement, Erebus Cove became the site for the main castaway depot on Auckland Island. A series of tragic shipwrecks between 1864 and 1907came to dominate the group's history. The Aucklands lie directly in the path of the old sailing-ship trade route from southern Australian ports round Cape Horn; further, their position was at this time inaccurately charted, so major disasters were practically inevitable. After the *General Grant* was wrecked on the main island's west coast in 1866, the New Zealand authorities established the first two castaway depots at Sandy Bay on Enderby Island, and at Erebus Cove. Following further wrecks, from 1877 government vessels began regularly maintaining supplies at castaway depots throughout the group, as well as elsewhere in the subantarctic and round much of the New Zealand coast. This service continued until 1927. By that time the depots had become unnecessary, partly because of the coming of wireless communication and improved navigation methods, but also because the replacement of sail with steam meant the abandonment of the old routes.

The three main Auckland Island depots were at Erebus Cove, on the east coast at Norman Inlet, and near Camp Cove, Carnley Harbour. At first an abandoned farmhouse was used at Erebus, but later this was replaced by a more substantial building, with space for stores and accommodation, together with a boatshed; smaller depots and in some cases boatsheds

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[2] *Enderby Settlement diaries. Records of a British Colony at the Auckland Islands 1849–1852.* Diarists: William Augustus Mackworth and William John Munce. Edited by P.R. Dingwall, C. Fraser, J.G. Gregory and C.J.R Robertson. Wild Press, Wellington and Wordsell Press, Auckland, 1999.

were placed on outer islands, including Enderby, as it became clear that castaways could be isolated on any of these, although within sight of the central depot. Signposts, each with a finger pointing towards the depot, were erected in many places round the coast; several such as those at the head of Laurie Harbour and on Sandy Bay still stand, a picturesque reminder of the shipwreck era. When we visited Disappointment Island at the end of the year, we were to see one of the last boatsheds to be installed, which was placed there after the wreck of the *Dundonald* in 1907. We found that the boat was unusable and only the shed's framework remained.

At Erebus the main depot building was in an advanced state of decay: iron from the roof was lying about, and the structure seemed ready to collapse. The other two buildings, the boatshed and a smaller store—evidently built much later to supplement the main depot—were still in quite good condition. The small store contained rusting metal food boxes and a pile of French and Italian gospels—mission organisations supplied tracts, gospels and Bibles which were distributed with the food and clothing supplies to all depots round the New Zealand coast.

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