

Just Cruising on Just Jane

Jo Capel

Concluded from our last issue.

As we had to pick up our friends in Milford Sound, we decided to get there fairly quickly and cruise back again. For the next few days, we sailed and motored in and out of the Sounds, with an overnight hop to reach the entrance to Milford Sound at 0615 one morning. The snow-capped mountains of the west coast of New Zealand were spectacular! Fiordland Sounds are noted for their wind tunnel effects, and as we entered Milford Sound we experienced 40-50 knot head-on winds, but, wow, what a sight! We motored at a speed of about two knots, feeling very small under the rugged grandeur of the mountains round about us. They rose above the clouds, and we could just see a touch of sunlight above the snow. Towards the end, dolphins accompanied us into Deep Water Basin, where we tied up to some mooring piles. There the local sandflies felt obliged to make us feel welcome.

The Fiordlands are well known for their sandflies. These little black things swarm all over you, particularly if there is no wind. They bite you, fly away to tell their relations, and bring them all back to join the biting party until the itching is even worse than being seasick. We burned mosquito coils, sprayed ourselves with insect repellent and had netting over the companionway. We killed thousands, but unfortunately their relatives attended the funeral!

Our friends joined us, bringing much needed duty-free bottles of rum and brandy. We pottered round there for a few days. Tim caught fish for breakfast by throwing bread crumbs into the water and scooping fish into a net. Twice we headed out of Milford Sound, only to turn back to enjoy another day there because of very strong head-on winds and confused seas. We didn't want to scare the hell out of Liz and Adrian by punching into huge seas, and we were now in cruising mode (and not all that brave).

Finally we headed down to Thompson Sound, had breakfast in a little cove, then headed into

Doubtful Sound to anchor for the night in Blanket Bay. As the water is very deep in the sounds, we anchored very close inshore and took stern lines to trees. Most anchorages were between forty to sixty feet, and often our depth sounder could not find the bottom. Charts often indicated that no bottom has been recorded. According to our book on Fiordlands, Doubtful Sound is 22 nm long and is the deepest at over 420 metres to the seabed. It is divided into three arms called First, Crooked and Hall. Hall Arm was the most breath-taking and awe-inspiring, and Commander Peak rising to 900 metres is an imposing sight at its entrance.

In Blanket Bay we anchored between an island and the shore, very close to a magnificent waterfall. Adrian, in sheer excitement at being in such a magnificent place (or because he had consumed a reasonable amount of rum) stripped off and leapt under the waterfall, and Tim joined in. Arnold and I had already experienced the sheer coldness of the water in these latitudes from such tasks as checking the propeller shaft, so we opted out of the adventure and sat back to see just how blue our crew members would become before requiring resuscitation.

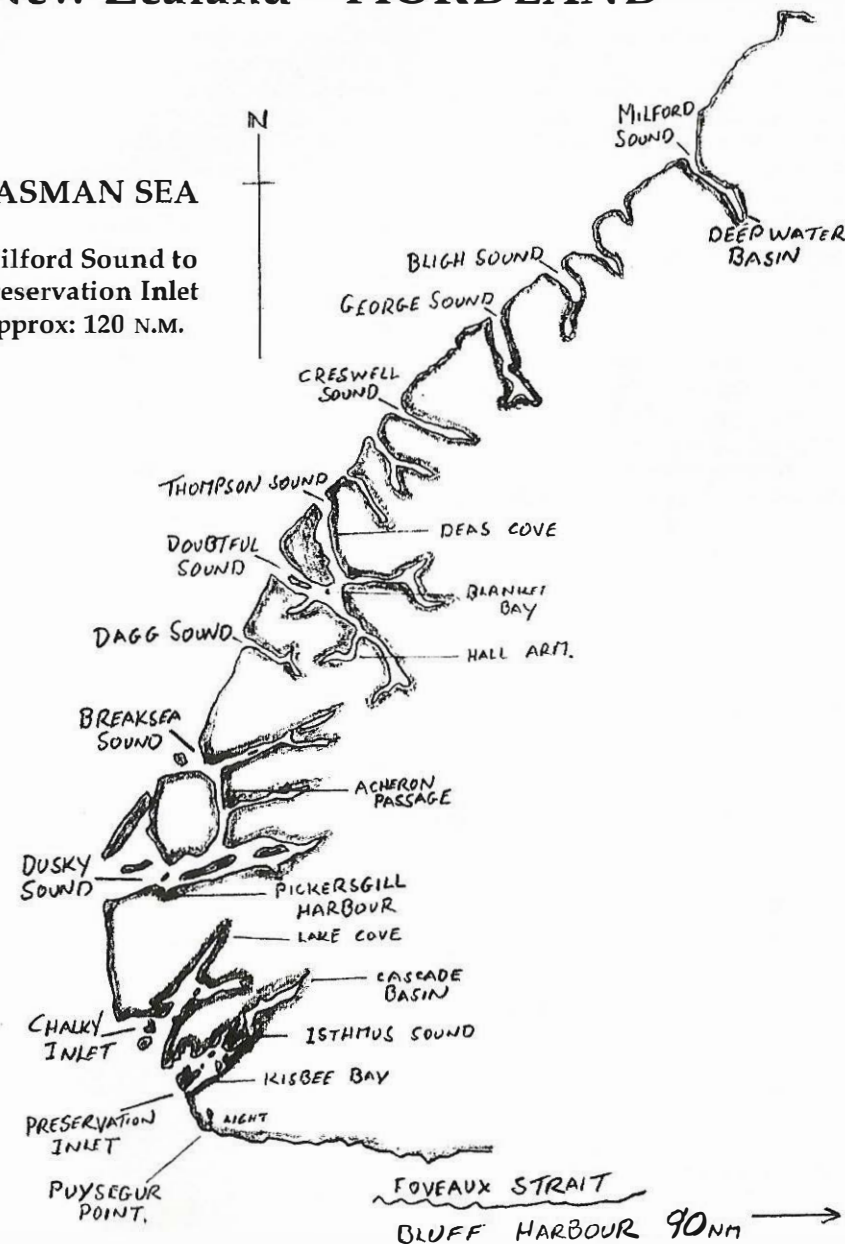
After Tim and Adrian had warmed up, we dinghied across to Blanket Bay Hotel on the tiny island. There isn't a true hotel there. Blanket Bay was used as an anchorage by fishermen as far back as 1940. In 1967 a ramshackle wharf and living quarters were built by people involved in the fishing industry. Additions were added, including fuel tanks and a large freezer, used extensively by fishermen in the area. It became a place to have a chat and a beer, hence the name, 'Blanket Bay Hotel'.

A few days later, with fair winds we went down the coast to Breaksea Sound. Once again it was very deep and steep-sided through the arms into Acheron Passage, which led us into Dusky Sound, which at 24 nm is the longest fiord in Fiordland. There we anchored in Pickersgill Harbour, following Captain Cook's passage on the western side of Crayfish

New Zealand – FIORDLAND

TASMAN SEA

Milford Sound to
Preservation Inlet
Approx: 120 N.M.



Island. The Fiordland book said it was Captain Cook's passage, but other information we had later claimed differently. [Captain Cook promoted Richard Pickersgill to be Master of HMB *Endeavour* on 2 July 1771, vice Molineux deceased — Ed.] This was narrow, shallow, and exciting, as we needed someone at the bow to look out for uncharted rocks. We walked to Astronomer's Point, where there is a bronze plaque to commemorate the spot where HMS *Resolution* was moored in 1773. A dinghy trip to a nearby rock shelf collected bucketfuls of mussels.

On leaving Dusky Sound in 20 knot NW we found the swells at the entrance to be very rough and confused, despite the wind not being very strong. As well as north and south swells, there was probably a reflected component off the coast. We ran into Preservation Inlet to anchor in Kisbee Bay opposite Kisbee Lodge, which never got going and has no licence to operate. The only person there was a caretaker named 'Peanut'. We called him on the radio to see if he had supplies of coke for our dwindling stocks of rum. He didn't, but invited us over for hot showers. While were chatting to 'Peanut' (whose real name we never found out), the trawler *Hustler* called him to advise us to go to Isthmus Cove, an all weather anchorage. As a pretty severe front was forecast, we headed there and anchored behind a tiny island. This was obviously a place for the fishing trawlers to tuck into, as there were already shore lines attached to a buoy, and we ended with *Just Jane* about ten metres from the shore.

Pretty soon *Hustler* and another trawler joined us, and before we knew it, Rex and Horn from *Hustler* invited themselves over for a drink, presumably on the basis of our radio conversation with 'Peanut' seeking coke for our rum. They brought a bucket of beer, as well as six crayfish and a huge pot in which to cook them. Horn drank the last dregs of our rum (without coke), cooked the cray and went back to his boat for more beer. We spent a fantastic night with them, the cray was delicious and Tim expanded his vocabulary from the extensive range of 'unsuitable' words flowing freely from Rex and Horn. (I wrote 'amazing range', and

the Editor wanted to know whether it was the range of words which was amazing or the words themselves? Rex and Horn used a multitude of swear words in every sentence, and some were certainly unfamiliar enough to amaze us, quite apart from what they may have done to Tim.)

The weather deteriorated fast, so for the next couple of days we stayed put in Isthmus Cove, waiting for favourable winds to retrace our passage to Bluff Harbour, where Liz and Adrian were to leave us. If the weather in Fiordlands was unpleasant for cruising, Foveaux Strait would be impossible. It soon became obvious that we weren't going to get our friends back to civilisation in time to catch their booked flights home to Adelaide and work.

The problem was soon solved by mentioning our predicament over the VIIF to Horn, who decided to keep in daily contact. (Maybe he thought we might still have some rum left.) There is a superb radio network among the fishing guys in the Fiordlands, and very quickly an alternative was organised. We were instructed to meet a trawler called *Cindy Hardy* at 0800 next morning at Cascade Bay, which is about 15 nm away at the end of Preservation Inlet. From there they would be flown out by helicopter. Liz and Adrian were not entirely sure about this arrangement, but we assured them that it was only another adventure. At the required time we pulled into a magnificent cove, complete with two spectacular waterfalls, and tied alongside *Cindy Hardy*, which was anchored in about 70 feet in the middle of the basin. Our friends somewhat dubiously joined a group of deer hunters, who were heavily laden with sporting rifles. They were all whisked ashore in an aluminium dinghy to be herded into a helicopter which had done a clever landing on a small sandspit. The chopper flew out of the basin enclosed by mountains to give Liz and Adrian an exciting finish to their holiday with us. Arnold, Tim and I spent the next few days relaxing and pottering round these magnificent sounds, until the weather abated and we could continue just cruising on *Just Jane*. SQ

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