

New Members

We welcome —

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John Andrews	Catherine Kimber	Phillip Stump
Geoff Bigwood	Stephen Lewis	David Taylor
Robert Birse	Angus Lohmeyer	Eric Taylor
Leslie Briscoe	Jessica Lohmeyer	Mark Tomlinson
Anthony Callus	Trevor Manoel	Robin Vandegraaff
Simon Chappell	Tony McDonald	Ben Vincent
Peter Cooling	Richard Murray	Roger Vincent
Colin Daly	Ray Mylius	Bryant Walters
Lindsay Dodd	Neil Perkins	Kimble Warren
Robert Gilbert	Garth Prideaux	Robert Westlake
Peter Heysen	Daniel Rantanen	Ronald Woodman
	Trevor Rose	Zak King

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News from Legs Eleven

Gatesy and Ali

Gatesy and Ali keep many of us in touch through frequent and interesting e-mails, together with some excellent photographs. It's not feasible to publish a wave-by-wave account, which would take more issues than the Editor can expect to survive to produce. Accordingly, we will have to confine ourselves to selected extracts, with intermittent Editorial comment.

16 January 2003

Constitution Dock
Hobart, Tasmania

As the sun rose at Matsuuyker Island, so did we. It was time to round the most southern point of Australia. For me this has been a long awaited moment. South Cape was rounded in 20-25 kts from the W with two reefs and the No 3, comfortably doing high sevens.

I rounded the eastern most point (Cape Byron) in *Kango*, and I've been round Cape York twice, the first time with Dee and David Henshall in *Lara III*, the second in *Kango* with Bret. Now only the westernmost point awaits!

In Hobart, we berthed at the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, who were currently hosting both the Mirror and Dragon National and World Titles. Whilst perusing the photographs and trophies of the club, we came upon *Morning Hustler's* photograph of pilot whales.

We found a cheaper abode in Constitution Dock, and felt quite at home with Mike and Helen from *Piping Shrike* across the river, and the McLarens with their travelling bus in the car park adjacent.

22 January, 2003, 1200 hrs

We are off to New Zealand, the crew being Jeff Dinham and Bern Baumgarten. The boat is better prepared than ever and down to her lines with food, fuel and water, but should get lighter as we go. Next port is Bluff, as we could not get permission to enter the country at Milford.

3 February, 2003

Bluff Harbour S 46° 35.51', E 168° 19.99'

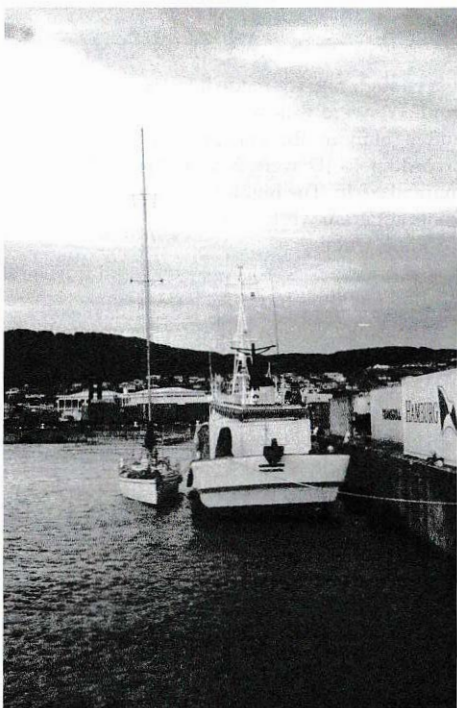
After a successful crossing of the Tasman, in that we were very conservative in only putting up

just enough rag, we made it in six days and one hour. We were welcomed to NZ with 50 knots and a bath in the cockpit. The highest seas according to JD were 3 to 4 stories, but were more like 6 m. The highest wind reading was 48 knots apparent while doing 7 knots down wind. (55 knots true).

Bluffed - some interesting facts

- Preparing for night watch on the way to Bluff involves donning boxers to stop bot rot, long johns, two thermal tops, fleece pants, vest, and jacket, socks, balaclava & beanie to keep warm. Then wet weather pants and two wet-weather jackets and boots in an attempt to stay dry. Then lifejacket & safety harness before bum bag with emergency gear.
- Compass error is 24°, not 7° as in Adelaide.
- Chart Cautions for Bluff include, 'Magnetic Anomaly: compass deviations of up to 140° have been experienced.'
- At the port Entrance the tide runs at up to 7 knots with standing waves.
- It's windy; 55 knots is not uncommon and gale warnings are an everyday event.
- It's cold, and when they forecast 200 mm of rain in a day it's called heavy rain.
- When we arrived, the fishermen had not been out for two weeks due to the weather.
- They have an excellent VHF radio set up with very helpful radio operators. Mention needs to be made here of Meri of Bluff Fisherman's Radio, who is like a Mum to all on the water.
- Fishing is the main industry (cray & blue cod are caught in pots; scallops, oysters and fish are trawled for).
- Bluff is known as the best place in the world for HF radio transmission.
- The people are very friendly and a little amazed that we sailed here. 'We don't get many yachts around here.'

[For the remarkable photograph of two Squadron vessels, *Iniquity* and *Just Jane*, tied together to the wharf



Legs Eleven at the wharf, Bluff Harbour, New Zealand.

at Bluff, see the cover of the issue of *Squadron Quarterly* for December 1997.]

- You can buy a house that's worth NZ \$126,000 on the North Island overlooking the water here for \$30,000 and that after a 30% increase in house prices.
- Bluff is the start and end of Highway One.
- Bluff has three pubs and a tavern, but don't expect all to be open at any one time. Therefore a pub-crawl is not even a full round of drinks.
- Hardly any of the shops ever open. In fact if they do open and business is slow, they just shut again.
- Bluff has the most southern railway station in the world.
- It has a great Maritime Museum.
- Some locals believe there may have been a laundromat once.

- It has an excellent walking track in the Ocean Beach Track.
- What we call deli's are dairies; and the ice is good and cheap.
- It's windy.

We left Bluff with a cheer on Tuesday 4 February at 0625 hrs. The forecast was for SW winds to 20 knots, so squalls in Foveaux Strait to 35 knots were not unexpected. Bang! Bang! Bang! to windward makes you shudder both physically and psychologically, wondering how long it will be before the mast is driven through the hull. The shock loading forces exerted on the boat in these situations are extreme. But due to the westerly three to four meter sea, there was nothing to be done but dodge the biggest of the speed bumps. At 1000 hrs snow was sighted on the building mountain peaks ashore, so pulling the collars of our jackets up higher and our beanies lower I decided that I have no desire to sail any further south. Point Puysegur, the place of all those awful westerly gale warnings, was abeam and we were motoring in a failing breeze by dusk, so much more enjoyable than being swamped at night under bare poles, which was still fresh in our minds. Night soon fell as we coasted along in the shadows of the unseen range of mountains, some far exceeding 1,200 meters.

After seeing a cruise ship approach and then veer off towards Dusky Sound, at 0100 hrs a bright light to the east caused us some concern before its ever increasing altitude gave it away as the morning star. Dawn brought the wonder of the place alive, with sheer mountains rising straight up out of the ocean, deeply gouged with fiords before again rising as a cliff with waterfalls to the next peak. I have never in my life seen mountains and sea meet as such, the stark flatness of the vast ocean to be broken by mountains so strong. It was like a border with each sending in its strongest forces to gain an upper hand and win territory. The unrelenting Tasman Sea with waves from Antarctica fights against the fortress walls of New Zealand. The Fiords were the gaps in which we were to enter like small alleyways between tall buildings. We felt incredibly small and susceptible to attack. We wrote earlier in our journey of Macquarie Harbour and Port Davey, but they now paled to insignificance as we motored into Doubtful

Sound meters from the shore, with 238 meters under our keel and over a thousand meters above our mast.

There can be few places left in the world as untouched by history as Fiordland. Deep in the past, we are told, the mythical hero Tu-te-rakiwhanoa chopped the fiords out of a previously unbroken mountain wall to create the spectacular mix of mountain and sea, of fiords running deeply between almost vertical cliffs, of islands scattered like chips from the blows of that mythical adze. This physical nature of the region and the prevailing weather explain why human impact has been so slight. In a way no longer possible in the rest of New Zealand, we can, with imagination, recapture the experience of those who have been here before: the Maori seasonal visitors foraging for food from the sea and for greenstone; Cook, Vancouver and other explorers; sealers, miners, scientists, fisherman and adventurers.

It would be hard to visit Pickersgill Harbour without a thought for James Cook, for his extraordinary seamanship and skills as a marine

surveyor; to brood on the remains of Richard Henry's house, boatshed and bird pen on Pigeon Island without being moved by his devotion and the tragedy of his heroic attempts to save the kakapo and other flightless birds; or to fossick for the remains of mining machinery deep in the dripping bush of Preservation without a thought for the toughness of the men and women who built the booming but short lived township of Cromarty in Kisbee Bay.

This is not a cruising ground for the faint-hearted or ill-equipped, as the challenge remains to remember Cook's description of, 'A prodigious swell from the SW which broke with great violence on all the shores which were exposed to it.'

Look up Dusky Bay in the index to the Journal of Cook's second voyage. 'Rain' or 'hail and snow' have more entries than anything else.

A little before noon [on 14 March 1770] we pass'd a small narrow opening in the land where there appear'd to be a very snug harbour form'd by an Island lying in the middle of the opening at least such was the appearances. It lies in the Lat^d of 45°16' S. in land

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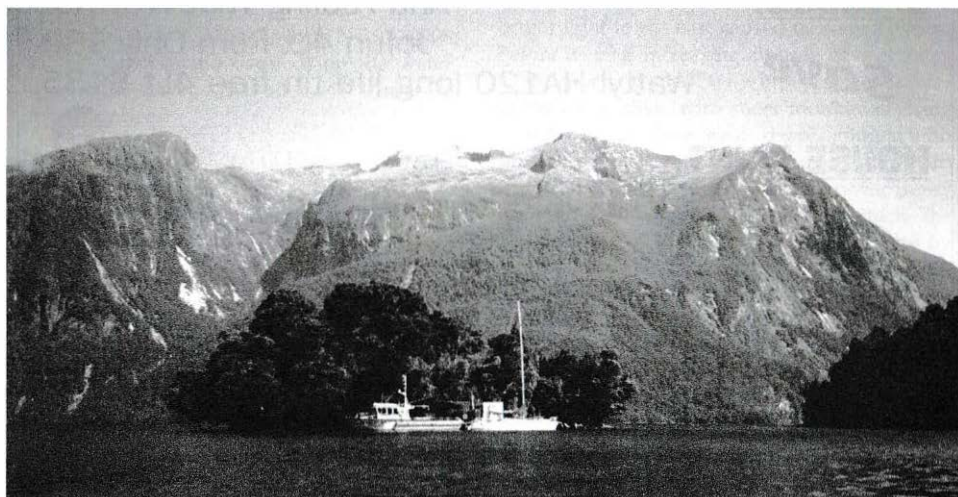
behind this opening were mountains the summits of which were cover'd with snow that seem'd to have fallen lately and this is not to be wonder's at for we have found it very cold these 2 days past. The Land on each side of the entrance of this harbour riseth almost perpendicular from the Sea to a very considerable height and this was the reason why I did not attempt to go in with the Ship because I saw clear that no winds could blow there but what was either right in or right out. This is Westerly or Easterly, and it certainly would have been highly imprudent in me to have put into a place where we could not have got out but with a wind that we have lately found does not blow one day in a month.

Endeavour Journal of Captain Cook 1768-1771.

Captain Cook first sighted the entrance to Doubtful Sound on his first voyage to New Zealand in 1770, and though his scientists urged him to enter, he judged that the risk was too great due to the wind direction and sailed away, naming it Doubtful Harbour.

Doubtful Sound is 22 nm long and is the deepest sound, being in excess of 420m to the sea bed. There are three arms to the Sound - First Arm, Crooked Arm and Hall Arm. The last mentioned is considered by many to be the most breathtaking and awe-inspiring area in Fiordland. The sea cliff of Commander Peak rising to 900m is an imposing sight at the entrance to this arm. There are a number of waterfalls in the fiord. One of the more spectacular would be Browne Falls which source from is Browne Lake and cascades 619m to the fiord.

A Boaties Guide to Fiordland.



Two fishing boats moored at the Blanket Bay Hotel, Doubtful Sound

We made our way up First Arm to Snug Cove, where we anchored to rest and dry wet weather gear. It wasn't long before we were joined by our new constant companion, the sand fly or should I use plural, as there are millions of them. Trying his hand at fishing, JD had a double header hooked before the line reached the bottom. The bait was a small piece of bacon fat. The breeze increased from the wrong quarter and the cove was no longer so snug, so we upped anchor to move to Blanket Bay, where we tied up to the wharf in front of the 'Hotel'. The story has it that the island was bought from a tribe of crazy natives for one blanket, hence its name, but thoughts are now that this is a fishy story.

After bidding farewell to the two crew members who crossed the Tasman, Gatesy and Ali continued to explore the grand scenery of the west coast of South Island.

Thompson Sound was next on the list and was initially named 'Puerto De Pendulo' by the Spaniards, who visited Doubtful Sound in 1793. The present name was given by Captain John Grono in 1808 after Andrew Thompson of New South Wales, who owned the vessel *Governor Bligh*. The sound is nearly 11 miles long and one of the four fiords in Fiordland that run from open sea to join with others — in this case Doubtful and Bradshaw Sounds.

Deas Cove was our chosen anchorage for the night, and is a beautiful protected spot with a

combined mooring/sternline. It is also the first time we had seen crystal clear water since arriving in New Zealand. (Tannin from vegetation stains most of the Sounds). The water was so clear in fact that it was very difficult to judge depth, causing some wet feet on arrival ashore from the dinghy trip to explore the hut and walk across the low marshland separating Deas from Neck Cove.

10 February, 2003

Eleanor Island
Charles Sound, N.Z.

S 45° 05.91' E 167° 08.52'

Rising early to beat the forecasted 30-knot head wind, the morning light gave a completely different colour to the vegetation. It all seemed lighter and the lines sharper. Even the smell was different and more pronounced.

We motored out of the Sound in a light breeze, which freshened from the SE as we lay course for Charles Sound, convincing me that it was time to air the jib. It set looking lovely for a good five minutes before dying and going on the nose. Oh well, lucky I didn't go the mainsail. Ali, however, had more luck spotting six dusky dolphins jumping at least three meters clear of the water, landing on their sides as whales do in a breach.

Charles Sound we found similar to Bradshaw in the way of terrain, but every waterfall is different and fresh in its own way. I will, however, remember this Sound for its islands, small low and heavily vegetated with moss-covered beech trees that look ancient. On their protected sides

in the small bays fishermen have strung lines from tree to tree, which act as fore-and-aft moorings if you are game to go that close to the rocks and overhanging trees. At Catherine Island, Gold Arm the line reaches from the Island to an islet, a span of 60 feet, but the *Guide* warns to take care, as the ebbing tide can push boats into the shallows between the islands.

We chose Eleanor Island for the night, where Ali braved the sand flies in search of dinner. After a couple of belated starts of losing hooks and a sinker and one time where there was no bait but the fish were attacking the sinker with a laugh of joy, we had our first fish. Things picked up and dinner was caught in no time, being a blue cod and a red sea perch of decent size. It was the biggest fish Ali has caught in her whole life.

12 February, 2003

Head of Caswell Sound N.Z.

S 45° 02.51' E 167° 17.49'

We woke yesterday to rain, which continued into the morning so a lay day was called to catch up on important things like reading and sorting all the digital photos into a slide show using PowerPoint. The sandflies constantly knocked on the door so we spent most of the time hiding down below, occasionally moving in search and destroy mission when we were invaded.

This morning saw us up early and revitalised ready to move on to Caswell Sound. Out through the mouth of Charles and around some pretty gnarly looking rocks with salt spray mist

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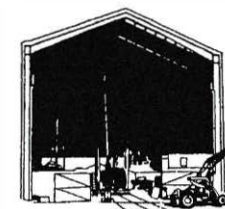
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being blown over the boat, made me wonder if we would do this at home. Emmes Reef and surrounding waters now look like a walk in the park. Next it was time again to thread the needle and, believe me, the Entrance to Caswell Sound looked bigger on the chart than it really was. Rocks to the right of me, a cliff to the left with a bit of jostling from a three-meter sea and bounce back. 'Are you sure the GPS is right? It seems to want to run us into the rocks!' No, I wouldn't want to come in here on a big day, but from the inside looking out it seems easy.

13 & 14 February, 2003

Head of Caswell Sound NZ

S 45° 02.51' E 167° 17.49'

We are stuck at Caswell Sound with gale warnings, but I wonder whether it's all a farce; or is this just one hell of a protected anchorage. The trees above don't move, there is hardly a ripple on the water, although the clouds at times scoot across the blue sky. We have had plenty of rain at night, but what are we hiding from? Maybe it's dead calm outside as well. I suppose we won't know, as we just hide in our little cove down below away from the sandflies. Occasionally we

venture on deck after a good spray of Rid and commence the sandfly dance brushing all exposed skin constantly whilst cursing the little critters. From a distance we must look very strange.

15 February, 2003

Alice Falls
George Sound, NZ

S 44° 58.60' E 167° 26.43'

We had some interesting fun last night plotting today's course from one chart to another. I found my way-point, which was very conservative on one chart and on land on the other. I got Ali to check it, with the same result. The most recent chart is labelled as provisional, and it's based on a survey by HMS *Archeron* in 1851. Although it was printed in 1991, it was engraved in 1881. There is a note, 'Mariners without local knowledge should proceed with due caution.' If I had local knowledge, I probably wouldn't need the chart. Another note: 'Coastline reported to lie 1 mile further NE.'

To be continued. At the time of going to press, news had just been received that *Legs Eleven* had safely arrived in Tonga.



After alighting from Brian and Margaret Dawson's *Tamanui*, John Moffatt escorts his daughter Cathy to her wedding to Sharon Wells on the *Quarterdeck*, 3 May 2003.

In Tranquil Waters

Life Member Dr Geoffrey Webb Verco
(1913–2003)



Geoffrey Webb Verco was a son of a general practitioner surgeon, Dr Reginald John Verco, and thus was a member of a well known Adelaide clan, many of whom were doctors. He was born in 1913 and died on 20 January 2003. He graduated in medicine from Adelaide University in 1937; and was in England at the outbreak of the Second World War studying for a surgical Fellowship. Members of the Reserve of the Australian Army Medical Corps were required to return to Australia at their own expense to enlist, with the threat of otherwise being arrested for desertion. Geoff returned on a Blue Funnel ship with his friend and contemporary, D'Arcy Sutherland, who had sailed with him at the Squadron. He became Adelaide's premier cardiac surgeon. They tossed a coin to see who would be ship's surgeon and thus have a free passage. D'Arcy won. The voyage took them to Cape Town and then far south, within sight of Kerguelen Island, where it was foggy and bitterly cold.

After the war, Geoff became a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1950 and went on to practice as a urologist.

His nautical career was fostered, like many of his contemporaries, by Major MOH ('Micka') Forbes, who was in charge of scouting at St Peter's College. By the time Geoff was thirteen, he already had his first boat, a cadet dinghy called *Mermaid*, which he raced from the Squadron. Dr Stan Verco (his father's cousin) found it in a bathing shed at Grange. [Stan Verco was a prominent radiologist, who had two vessels named *Solace* and sailed from the Squadron for many years.] This was before the development of the small fleet of cadets provided by the generosity of Professor Mark Mitchell. Geoff remembered Mr Fisher's *Reverie*. Another vessel was *Eva May*, which was kept at the Port. Geoff acquired an eighteen-footer named *Culwulla*, with a very thin mast, of which Geoff broke the top twice. It was originally built by Claussen for Bill Birnie, when it would have been one of the dozen or more of his yachts always called *Wyla*. Its fate is not known, and, like many yachts of the time, it may have been converted to become a fishing cutter. When his father bought *Carina* for him, Geoff disposed of *Culwulla* by raffling it. He never saw it again.

In about 1930 or 1931 Geoff left school, and drove with his friend Rex Lee on holiday to Sydney. Rex's father was the captain of the *Moonita* or *Minnipa*, which traded for years in the Gulfs. They stayed at Neutral Bay and on Sandman's slip Geoff saw an almost new cedar twenty-one footer, *EOJ III*. She was built for a celebrated wealthy Sydney yachtsman named Milsom. He had taken her to Brisbane for a Forster Cup series, but she performed poorly in the light airs of that year. Geoff's father bought it for him for £199 and renamed her *Carina*. A man named Fechner from Largs Bay built a shed for Geoff in order to protect *Carina* when she was hauled out every weekend after racing. Old railway sleepers remained from the work done on the northern breakwater, and Geoff borrowed the *Pioneer*, the Saints sea scout boat, to transport some to the pool for the purpose.

When they came in from a race there was a lot of work to be done. The mast and ballast were removed, and a cradle was lowered from the big slip. The boat was hauled out, using the main