

# The Hamer Newsletter



**28 February 2014**

Hello to One and All,

The last edition ended as we were sailing across the straits from the North Island to the South Island of New Zealand. We found the place names in the south just as impossible to pronounce as those in the north, and the weather still warmer and drier than expected.

**15 January 2014**

Our ferry crossing was perfect – calm seas, blue skies and much warmer than expected. The approach to Picton through Queen Charlotte Sound is truly beautiful with the deep blue water, green forested slopes on both sides and houses with jetties dotted along the shore.

On arrival at Picton we were soon driving off and along the scenic route through Havelock



and Nelson and on to Tapawera to Bev's sister's place. We parked in the paddock next door for 4 nights while we enjoyed the hectic lead up to the wedding, and then the big day itself and the wedding was held in Gary's family's hop fields.

All went very well, the weather was great and a good time was had by all. We also took the opportunity to visit friends John Buchanan and Heather. We first met John in Tasmania in 2008.

**19 January**

We left Tapawera and headed west, visiting Lake Rotorua briefly – the sandflies were thick – and then on to Murchison for the night in an NZMCA park. It was warm and sunny and as usual the scenery gorgeous.





## 20 January

Continuing west through the very scenic Buller Gorge to Westport on the coast in misty rain.

Then north to Ngakawau to do a walk at Charming Creek Walkway along the old mine rail tracks to a waterfall.



Then we headed to Cape Foulwind for a look at the seal colony where there were lots of baby seals and their Mums.

Our overnight camp was on the gravel beach reserve at Westport with heavy rain overnight.

## 21 January

A grey and misty day. We headed south along the west coast to Punakaiki



to see the Pancake Rocks. The sea mist and cloud was very low and heavy, but it was quite warm and very calm. It was low tide so we missed out on the blow holes, but the walk around the Pancake Rocks was great anyway. A little Weka came to visit when we had lunch.



Next stop was Greymouth, then up the mountain to Lake Brunner for an overnight stop in a caravan park to do the laundry.



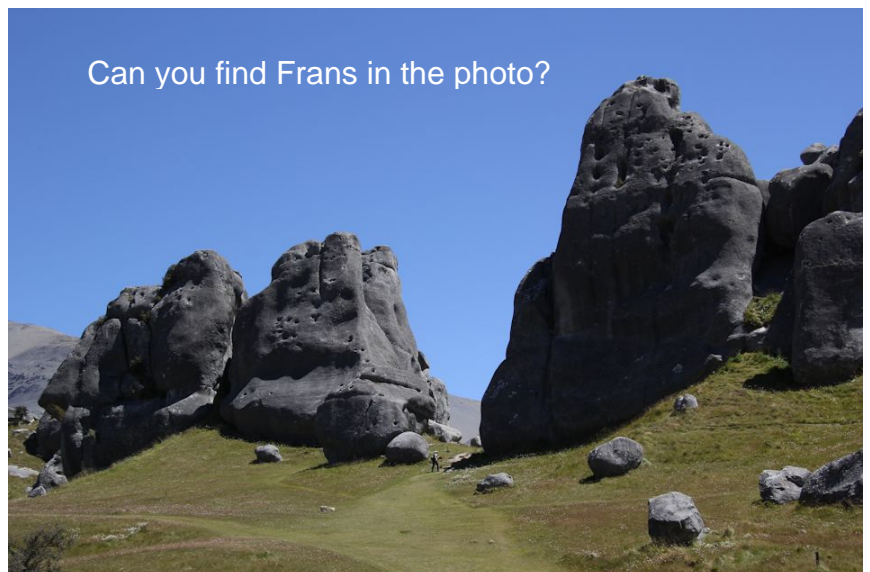


**22 January**

Still cloudy and cool as we drove to Arthur's Pass. We remembered this road from our last visit to NZ and it is still a spectacular trip climbing through the Otira gorge and over the viaduct.



At Arthur's Pass village we did some short hikes to look at waterfalls in very cold and windy conditions, followed by lunch at The Wobbly Kea. Then on down the mountain to Castle hill



where we walked through some amazing limestone formations. Some of the battle scenes in "The Lion, Witch & Wardrobe" were filmed in this area. Finally we headed to the east coast to stay at another NZMCA park at Ealing.



**23 January**

Sunny and warm as we headed inland up the mountains to Lake Tekapo. It was beautiful but so



windy and cold that we took the obligatory photos, and moved on to Lake Pukaki and stopped for lunch. Still too windy to stay the night, so we found a



camp spot in a sheltered forest at Lake Wardell. The diverse scenery on this trip is amazing, from flat coastal pastures to high mountains, forests and wide shallow rivers.



## 24 January

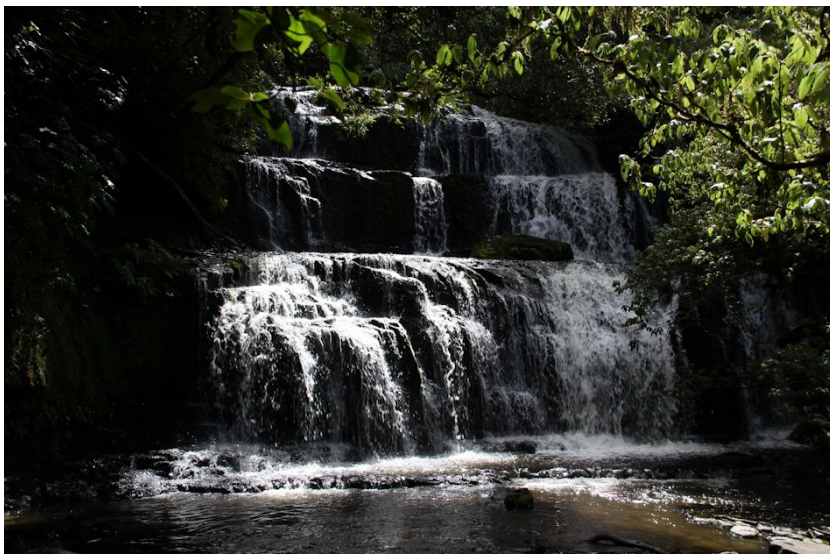
Another glorious day as we travelled south east again and detoured around the Waikati Lakes. These beautiful lakes are part of the hydro power system and had camp sites all around the edge. Moving on to Oamaru with its historic harbour precinct



and Steampunk HQ, then to Moeraki to see the unusual boulders on the beach, to Shag Point to see more seals. Finally we arrived at Waikouaiti and stayed the night parked at the golf club.

## 25 January

A cold morning as we left and drove to Dunedin for a look at some of the historic buildings – the most famous is the Dunedin Railway Station. Dunedin is a very Scottish city and there is a statue of poet Robert Burns – his nephew was the Reverend Thomas Burns who was the first Minister of the “First Church of Otago” in Dunedin.



From here we travelled the Southern Scenic Route to Purakanui Falls – very beautiful falls often featured on calendars and tourist publications – and then on to Niagra NZMCA park for the night.



## 26 January

Wet, windy and cold – but then we are close to Antarctica! More driving on the Southern Scenic Route to Curio Bay with its petrified forest – fossilised logs in a rock shelf on the beach – and to see the rare Hector dolphins playing in the waves. Then the coldest and windiest experience of all, walking to Slope Point, the southern most point of the south island. At least we made use of the warm clothes we had been carting around. Next stop was Waipapa Point to see the lighthouse and sea



lions lazing on the beach, then to Bluff Lookout for great views, and through Invercargill to the Riverton Race club for the night.

## 27 January

Still following the Southern Scenic Route and stopping here and there for photos. We ended up at Tuatapere Town and Country Club for the night.

## 28 January

Heading towards Fjordland, we detoured to Lake Hauroko to see the deepest lake in NZ – 463 metres deep. The journey through the forestry, grazing land and National Park forest is beautiful. Then another detour to Lake Monowai for lunch, but

the sandflies were horrible so we stayed inside the motorhome. The final leg was to Lake Manapouri where we parked overnight behind a motel which welcomes NZMCA members.

## 29 January

To the beautiful town of Te Anau. We had booked into a caravan park for 3 nights so we could do trips in Fjordland. We went to a small wildlife centre and saw the very rare Tahake (only 200 left in the world) and various other birds.

Apart from doing the laundry we just lazed around for the afternoon – a rest from all the driving and sight seeing.



### 30 January

A bus trip to Milford Sound run by a small local company, with lots of photo stops along the way, a walk to a cascades and morning tea at a bush camp. At Milford Sound we boarded a small



tourist boat for a 2 hour cruise around the fjord, with the sun shining and calm conditions it was a fantastic trip. Then the trip back in the bus to Te Anau. It was a long day, but the best way to do the trip – much less travel than the tourists on the Queenstown tour buses.

### 31 January

The highlight of our trip – an overnight cruise on Doubtful Sound. We went with a local Te Anau



company and had the best possible experience. Their coach picked us up at the van park and drove to Lake Manapouri to board the ferry across the lake. That in itself was a lovely trip.

We were met at the other side by the Skipper in another coach, and driven over Wilmot Pass to Deep Cove where the boat was at anchor.





It was a 6-cabin boat, but with only 3 couples on board we had great service from the Skipper and his 2 crew.

Lunch was freshly caught and cooked lobster with salad and

warm crusty bread. The cruise through Doubtful Sound was perfect, with warm sunny weather and very calm conditions.

Bev went kayaking and then we caught some fish which were cooked for dinner, along with

roast chicken and all the trimmings. Later we anchored in a peaceful spot and were all in bed by 10pm.

### 1 February

We were up before first light and motored to the lobster pots which the crew hauled up full, ready for that day's new guests lunch.

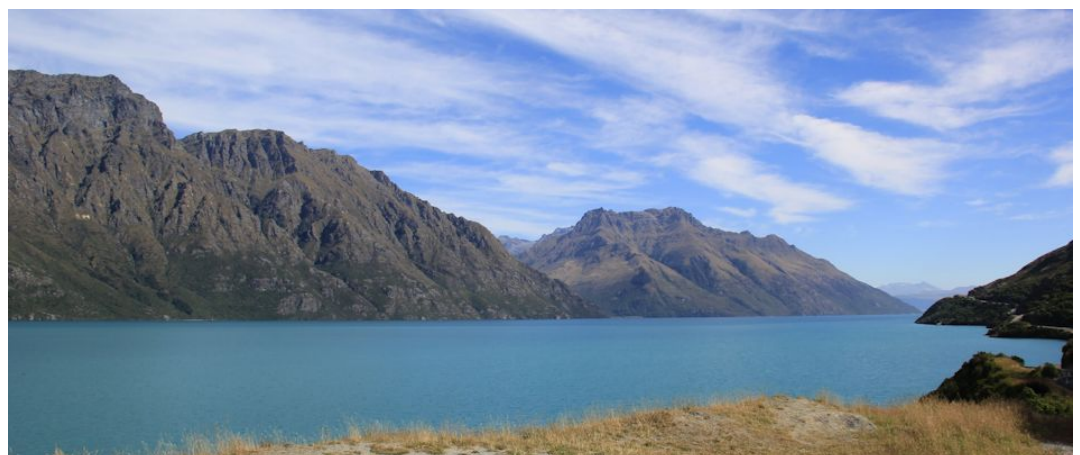


By 10 am we were back at the dock and boarding the bus back to the ferry for the return trip. What a memorable and unforgettable trip – and many photos to show for it.

Once back at the van park we packed up and headed east to Lumsden via a café to indulge in home made venison pies and ice cream.

### 2 February

We drove to Queenstown alongside the beautiful Lake Wakatipu, and gave up our plan to go up the mountain on the gondola because we could not find anywhere to park. This is a winter sports town, but is still full of tourists in summer.







So we continued on to Wanaka after stopping at Lake Dunstan for lunch. Wanaka was so warm and sunny that there were hordes of bikini-clad tourists lazing on the lake side. We then went via Omarama to a campground on Lake Benmore for a very quiet and peaceful night.

### 3 February

A leisurely breakfast by the lake and a slow start to the day. We drove through increasingly populated areas as we started to approach Christchurch and stayed at our final NZMCA camp at Weedons.

### 4 February

To the lovely “French” town of Akaroa with



its beautiful harbour. We had a particular purpose in mind. We have taken up Geocaching and friends in Australia had asked us to place a special Geocoin commemorating the lives lost in the Christchurch earthquake of 2011 in a cache in NZ. We identified a spot at Akaroa and placed the Geocoin there. We spent the night behind the pub in Little River. Just along the road is a new accommodation complex being built from steel grain silos – an interesting concept.

### 5 February

Our final day in the motorhome. We went into the centre of Christchurch and found there is still a lot of damage from the earthquake 2 years ago. Many buildings are still in a mess or propped up with shipping containers filled with rocks and the roads still under repair. We had coffee in a café in the “Restart” shopping centre, built from shipping containers as a “temporary” measure. Even the banks were operating out of shipping containers. It was all very well done

and many people there want them to stay permanently.





We spent our last night in a caravan park near Bev's nephew Ben, and saw him to say goodbye.

## 6 February

We checked in to our hotel near the airport, and returned the motorhome to the Wilderness base. Our NZ trip was at an end, but what a lot of photos and memories we have to keep, and if we win the Lotto we will go back and spend lots more time there!

So now it is back to normal for us and we will continue our travels in Australia.

Regards,

Bev & Frans



Frans checking Sharemarket Bull's trading strategy



Bev portrait being painted by statue of artist Charles Meryon at Akaroa



New chess pieces at one of the damaged building sites in Christchurch





Dunedin Railway station



A little windy at Slope Point



Dawn on Doubtful Sound



Travelling NZ style



Are we there yet?



Church with a view