

STEWART ISLAND NEWS

CELEBRATING RAKIURA

MAY—JUNE 2007

\$2

The roadwork is finally nearing completion. Drivers went through a tricky patch in the midst of the upgrades, when access to Elgin Terrace and Ayr Street was closed. As Ted Rooney aptly put it, *It's been like Snakes and Ladders trying to get around the place!* Whether we wanted the new roading and pathways or not, everyone can agree the workers did a nice job putting it all in. With the changes came some grumbling....Now, several objectors have conceded they rather like the new walkways, while a few proponents for the plan are now concerned about parking logistics.

If you're sick of Jack skiting about his appearance on the front page of the *Southland Times*, imagine how impossible he'll be when he finds out the story of the Pub reopening was reprinted in the *London Times!* The Pub drama lasted until the 11th hour and then some: even though he was informed that beverages were promised for a memorial service the next day, the Grand Poobah of Liquor Licensing kept management in suspense. He wouldn't



Wee Dash. On a cold day I suggested that his owner put a merino jersey on him (we were outside the Glowing Sky shop) but it was explained that labradoodles, originally bred in Oz, naturally already have wool. Famous "doodle" owners include Henry Winkler (the Fonz), Christie Brinkley, and Tiger Woods.

give them an official nod to reopen until late the next day, because he had a meeting in the morning.

The Pub has had interesting visitors: members of the Royal NZ Airforce "dropped in" for an evening; and several Highlanders and an All Black arrived in time for Cocktail Night. Always funny to see big blokes with colourful froofroo drinks... although the publican grappling with the wee ice-grinder and fiddly bits of fruit for every *Pina Colada* and *Mojito* probably wasn't so amused.

Some folks recently raised concerns about the DoC marram grass project. Alarmed by rumours of Saharan conditions and stressed kiwis at Mason Bay, I did some investigating and

have reported my findings below.

There will be a public meeting on 21st June to discuss the issue. If anyone is interested in doing their own homework on marram grass, there is a collection of (non-DoC) publications available at the library. Of course, a trip to Mason Bay and chitchat



Mason Bay sculpture: stone, water, sand

with a dune geomorphologist never hurt anybody; and, to my knowledge, Brent Beaven doesn't bark or bite.

Have you met Dash? He does bark occasionally, particularly if his lunch is overdue. I'm talking about the black labradoodle puppy you might have seen on the Environment Centre porch.

On the night of 15th May, fierce winds buffeted the Bay, and fire destroyed a house at Deep Bay.

On a happy note, many people attended a party on 9th May to wish Coral a **Very Happy 80th Birthday!**

Marram grass

Last month, I was horrified by rumours that DoC was busy destroying kiwi habitat at Mason Bay, along with hectares of native bush, and generally wreaking havoc on the whole beautiful place.



Dying marram grass amidst healthy pingao, and other native vegetation, Mason Bay.

Visions of Arabia in a sandstorm, stumbling over dead sandblasted kiwis with their poor wee feet in the air, came to mind.

(Continued on page 6)

www.stewart-island-news.com

Did you know that each month, the *Stewart Island News* travels around the world? Through its many subscriptions, this wee paper goes to Oz, Montreal, Corsica, Wyoming, New York City, a cider brewery in British Wells-next-the-Sea, and dozens of places in between. Now...*S.I.N.* has been launched into space! Cyberspace, that is. Yes, your local newsletter is now on-line. Since its launch on 25th March, close to 2,000 people have viewed the site which includes a gallery (work in progress, please send photos for it), links to local non-profits, a community notice board, and archives. (Please don't cancel your subscriptions, the website archives have a 2-month lag, and also, we do count on your subs to keep the whole thing going!)

To post a notice on the virtual community notice board, please contact the editor.

Inside this issue:

DoC Spot	8
The Galley	10
Garden Circle	12
HMB Habitat Restoration Project	9
Letters 	5
Museum	2
Yellow-eyed penguins	8

And much more!!

The Rakiura Museum Publishing Committee is seeking information about the following boats for the Museum records and for the boat book.

If you know anything about these boats or have a photo of them, please contact Loraine Hansen 2191 133 or Elaine Hamilton 2191 027.

ALERT

Owned for many years by *Alex Black*, and used for scientific expeditions and sea scout work, this vessel is 72' long. She was sold to *George Wast*, and used as a mother ship for paua fishing around Stewart Island and Fiordland.

ALERT (1)

Owned by *Milton Roderique*, she was swapped for the **REX**, owned by *David Whaitiri*. She was used by *Whaitiri* to fish for cod and crayfish in Stewart Island waters.

ALERT (1) was originally a wooden tugboat.

AMETHYST

Built in Tasmania between 1950/53, she is 40' long, of steel construction and powered by a Volvo engine.

AMETHYST was used as a tugboat during the construction of the Bluff Island Harbour.

She was bought by *Jim Richmond* and was fished by *Peter Tait* amongst others.

On May 28 1963, she sank while moored at Manuka Point, but was salvaged and repaired. In 2002 she was still working out of Bluff.



Photo: Herbie Hansen

Check out the Rakiura Museum's page at the new *S.I.N.* website.

Go to
www.stewart-island-news.com
and then tap on
LINKS

A screen will open with a list of various Island organizations, just click on
Rakiura Museum
and you're there!

The on-line Rakiura Museum page includes a complete list of the boats about which the Rakiura Museum Publishing Committee would like more information for the boat book and for Museum records.

If you know heaps about Stewart Island boats and think you might be able to help, check the site.
One of those boats might ring a bell!

And don't forget, virtual visits are fun but nothing beats a *real* visit to your wonderful local Museum on Ayr Street. There's so much to see there, you'll notice something new every time!

A FORECAST.

WE venture to become prophets and picture the scene to be witnessed on the Awarua on Wednesday next. The spirits of the passengers will run high at the start, laughter will be the order of the day, and for 20 or 30 minutes all will go well. Gradually, one by one, they will sit down, with a thoughtful look towards the bulwarks. Then will come the frantic rush (we all know it), as singly and in groups they will make tracks for the side—or *anywhere!*—clutch the railing with the grasp of woe, and gaze intently into the depths of the deep blue sea. The occupation will become increasingly interesting, for with the exception of a stand-aloo fish two or three, all will take up the pleasing pastime. Mothers will do so; fathers (an accompanying baby under each arm) will be there; and the voice of the young lady will be heard. Here and there she will gracefully recline at the bulwarks—quite a charming picture!—but soon the grace will forsake her, and the studied position at the bulwarks will surrender in favour of a heap of garments scattered over the deck “anyhow.” Those who have a soul above this sort of pastime will look on pitilyngly—while up their sleeves they will laugh unrestrainedly. And the most curious thing of all is that after it is all over, the young gentlemen who lay flattest on the deck will indignantly repudiate your “kindly insinuations” that their health on board ship did not seem to be of the best!

**An excerpt from the
Stewart Island Herald, 1892, shared
with us by the Rakiura Museum.**

**OLIVE BRENDA NILSEN
(NEE LEASK)
BORN 8 NOVEMBER 1926
DIED 17 APRIL 2007**

Mum was born in Invercargill on the 8th November 1926 to Eunice and John Leask.

She only ever expressed two regrets in her life, one that she was born a girl and the other, as she grew older were her big hands. These she blamed on Poppy who had her doing man's work from a young age, like rowing dinghies, painting boats, pulling up nets, cutting tracks and repairing all sorts of things. However we all know how wonderful these big hands were and just what they could do. Oh yes there was one other regret that she had in her latter years, she had always wanted to write a book about her life entitled "One Pair of Hands" and she made numerous starts in notebooks found everywhere around the house and on tapes, but it was all too much as her life was so full.

CHILDHOOD

Mum had a very happy childhood even though times were tough. They were carefree days with Marion, Nancy, Ellen, Peggy, Sheila, Alec and the Dawson family (the Ringaringa and Leask Bay Clan), running barefoot to school, playing on the beach on the way, then hearing the bell ring and being scared that they would be late. You got the strap in those days she would say. She didn't just have a quarter acre section with a yard and a garden to play in, she had, as an islander, 680 square miles and over 1000 miles of coastline for a playground. She often said that in the good old days the seasons were in season, summer was November, December and January, when they had long sunny days on end lots of light easterlies and as a child often spent all day in her bathing suit when on the boat and whenever at anchor she would always be swimming or diving. Mum must have been very proud when Poppy considered her old enough to steer the Olga and work with him.

YOUNGER DAYS

She was a stunner as a young woman, so no wonder the young men flocked

out on the boat when she was touring with her dad. She had a neat sense of humour too and we heard a little story about how she and Nancy managed to pilfer people's underwear one night and then climbed up the masts of the boats in the Bay and hung various garments there for people to find in the morning. She never liked going to the Mainland as she called it, but once her primary school days were over it had to be. She attended Southland Girls High School, boarding with the Wohlers out at Thornbury and in her early working life ventured as far afield as Timaru, but at every opportunity she was back home where she was the happiest. Her big ambition was to be a Karitane Nurse, but instead she married Norman Battersby, whom she met out touring. We understand that in these early days of marriage she did some modelling. She often said that something good comes out of every situation and out of her first marriage it was Alwyn and Brenda.

Between marriages when mum and her girls were living with their favourite uncle Charlie, with whom she had spent many happy days on the farm at Grassy creek, she was the sub matron at the Boys High Hostel. For those under her care she was like a mother.

Her second marriage was to Blair Driscoll, the Bluff Dredge Master and Blair had great difficulty at times adjusting to inheriting two teenage daughters and mum was continually covering up for unexplained lateness home, sometimes it even necessitated in someone having to quietly turn the clock back when it got to midnight. Unfortunately after spending a considerable amount of time doing up the Olga, which they had bought from Poppy, Blair, along with his cousin Lens, was drowned in Foveaux Strait returning to Bluff after an Easter holiday on the Island in 1973. From this marriage to Blair we gained a younger sister Iona, so she had her three special girls and she always said how lucky she was.

MARRIAGE TO BRUCE

Her third and final marriage to Bruce on 9th March 1974 marked the beginning of the best years of her life. In the twenty four years of marriage not only

did she gain another family but she also achieved all of the things that she had always wanted to do in life. She worked alongside Bruce crayfishing and the Miss Stewart Island was their home. She always had a little vase of flowers in her wheelhouse and it was kept so clean and tidy. On one of her birthdays Bruce said to her that whatever we catch today you can have. It was her lucky day, they landed ten bags of crayfish and from the money she got she carpeted her house and a new TV. Some good nights were had when they were tied up with the other boats after a hard days work and she always fitted comfortably in the presence of other fishermen.

NECK YEARS

On Bruce's retirement they decided the time was right to sell the boat and come ashore. They tried to settle down in the Bay but she was restless and the Neck beckoned them back. She worked incredibly hard during her years there. She had more energy than all of us put together and any day would find her rebuilding the house, fencing, eradicating gorse, digging dams, cutting tracks and she was out in all weathers from dawn to dusk. She built a tunnel house and was particularly proud of her garden—she spent hours hauling kelp up from the beach.

She also built a bottle house—all the time swearing she never drank the contents. She was well known for her home brews particularly her famous rhubarb wine and the periodic tasting.

Her exploits into butchering, shearing and tanning skills are well remembered in the family and nothing was ever wasted. She did her own dental work once, replacing a missing tooth with what some mistakenly thought was a "used tooth." Actually, it was a "ewe's tooth" that she'd found, whitened down and glued into her mouth!

New Years eve celebrations were a highlight of her days at the neck and will all be fondly remembered by many people who visited them there.

COMING BACK TO THE BAY

It was a sad day for them both when

(Continued on next page)



ban **G**lobetrotter *off-Island Adventures.*

Last month, Ben Hopkins described his travels in Norway. This month he continues the journey through the fascinating FAROE ISLANDS...

Continuing on from my journey through Norway, I caught the overnight ferry from Bergen out to the remote Faroe Islands, approximately halfway between Scotland and Iceland. The Faroes, a fully independent group of about 17 islands are part of the Kingdom of Denmark and have a population of approximately



The Faroe parliament buildings at Tinganes, Tórshavn.

45,000. The official languages are Faroese (practically Old Norse, from which the modern Scandinavian languages have evolved and most closely related to Icelandic) and Danish. The ferry ride was disappointingly calm, unusual for the North Atlantic, and was also very foggy. As we approached the harbour at Tórshavn, the capital of the islands and, with a population of 15,000, also the smallest capital city in the world, the first glimpse of land was the end of the wharf as we came in! The fog was as thick as you ever see it and was unfortunately going to plague my entire 9-day



Puffins, Mykines Island

stay on these amazing islands.

On the first day I spent time getting to know Tórshavn, a really nice "city" with all the facilities and amenities you could need, as well as good cafés and restaurants. The parliament



Traditional fishing boats at Famjin, Suðuroy Island.

buildings, on the little peninsular Tinganes, are hundreds of years old with traditional turf roofs common throughout Scandinavia. It is a strange concept seeing people mowing their roof instead of their lawn! Braving the rain and fog I went for a walk over the hill to the other side of the main island. The views from the top are supposed to be spectacular, but unfortunately I only caught glimpses through the fog from time to time. It was a matter of following cairns that marked the track the entire way. On the other side, the

(Continued on page 5)

PHOTOS: BEN HOPKINS

(OLIVE Continued from page 3)

they had to finally come back to their house in the Bay as Bruce was unable to manage over at the Neck any more. Their final trip back together on the Hakatori must have been one of the saddest occasions of their life together probably knowing that another chapter of their life was over. She said that she always felt closed in here after having the freedom of the Neck. After the death of Bruce all of the spark went out of mum. It took her a long time to pick herself up, but being the strong person she was she turned her attentions to her garden to try to ease the pain of her loss.

With her wonderful view of bathing beach and her lovely garden, no wonder several people wrote articles about her and published them even though,

as she said, they never quoted her correctly.

She was in her own right an author and poet too as there are many different poems and pieces of writing around the house that she must have written at times to help her get through her lonely days. It has been great comfort to us as a family to be able to read them over the past days and get strength from some of the more humorous verses and tales that she has left us as a legacy.

Right up to her final days with us she was still the **Boss**, she had us digging up the garlic and crushing it, cutting some rhubarb and cooking it for breakfast, digging the potatoes for tea and giving away her tomatoes. Her special Easter Orchid which she loved was always beside her bed.

Her last few days were spent with her family around her and she had her special girls around for comfort and right up until the last night they gathered around her bed for a yarn and a drink with her.

I think that there will be many people here who will have a little piece of mum's garden in their garden, so her memory will live on.

These are only a few snippets from the life of a very special lady who led life to the full, who loved her family dearly, who had many, many friends and touched so many lives in different ways.

**This is a tribute to you mum
A wonderful lady with
big hands and a big heart.
You are at rest now your
labours are over. We love you.**

Letters

This space is reserved as a positive and constructive forum where ideas and opinions regarding local issues can be expressed. Remember the tagline of S.I.N. is

Celebrating Rakiura. Post letters to Editor at Box 156 or email to editor@stewart-island-news.com

Note: This is not a place to cowardly express to someone what you won't say to their face. Unwelcome in this section are: poison pen letters, nasty letters whinging about your neighbours, weird rambling rants peppered with Bible quotes, letters penned by fictional Stewart Islanders (i.e. Hamilton Johnson-Leask), long boring soap-box preachy stuff, sinister and ludicrous conspiracy theories, or any prose that might give this editor the creeps.

Send it to the Southland Times.



While enjoying the many local walks we were aware of an increasing number of smaller birds — fantails and tomtits in particular, most noticeably on the walk to Acker's Point, and also around the town itself — a big plus for the predator control programme. Keep up the good work!

Sue and Kelvin Holliday, Ashburton



THANKS LOCALS! Wakatipu High Schools Year 13 Geography students would like to say a huge thanks to the locals of Stewart Island who put up with the endless questions and surveys. Without your patience we would never be able to understand the issues you face and the perspectives you hold. We learnt a lot and truly enjoyed your island. Many thanks again!

Yr 13 Geography Wakatipu High School



I would like to hear from people who are interested in having a penpal from New Zealand or another country as I am publishing a penpal magazine and am offering free advertising in it. Interested people should send their name, address, age, and interests to: Bob Stewart, Coal Creek, Greymouth, Westland 7803.

Bob Stewart, Greymouth



I am writing regarding an article entitled "This land and People—New Zealand Weekly News 29th July, 1968: Treasured Memories" by George Howard.

My name is David Nicolson and I am enquiring after the family of Malcolm Adamson a Shetlander mentioned in the above.

Malcolm was an to my wife Georgina. Malcolm and his wife Jean had two sons, Malcolm and John who would have been first cousins to my wife.

John visited Shetland some thirty or more years ago. After that unfortunately we lost touch. My wife who is now seventy five years of age would be grateful for any information regarding her cousins, they would be some years younger than her.

Dave Nicholson
Haygreen, Cunningsburgh
Shetland Isles, Scotland ZE2 9HF



Got any Southland Records? I do the weekly column in the *Southland Times* and I have to round up five interesting facts about Southland each week. There must be a ton of Stewart Island stuff waiting for a bit of publicity. Stewart Island has the southernmost of a lot of things in New Zealand – house, gardens, policeman etc – but it has a lot of other records as well. The steepest street in Southland is probably Excelsior but someone needs to measure it for me. Stewart Island is supposed to have had the record for the most cars per mile of road in the world - can anyone provide the figures? Anyone got a date and a picture of the car-on-the-rock? I'd also like a picture of the Wairua, Dong Won, amphibians, Penrod, Larsen aground, mutton-birding, Belltopper Falls and DC3 topdressing. Also keen to get a scout scarf with the Stewart Island badge embroidered on it. Thanks a lot.

Lloyd Esler
2130404
esler@southnet.co.nz

(GLOBETROTTER Continued from page 4)

weather was clearer and I ended up at a small town called Kirkjubøur, where remains of one of the few stone buildings, the 13th Century St Magnus Cathedral, stand alongside a still-used 12th Century church and a perfectly preserved wooden house dating from the 10th Century. Half of this amazing old wooden building is still occupied and the

other half open to the public. With outer walls tar covered and a grassed turf roof, it is one of the oldest inhabited wooden buildings in Europe. Dramatic views of the very high, spectacular western islands of Koltur and Hestur could be seen from this

vantage point.

The next day I caught the bus to a small town in the north called Gjógy, situated at the foot of a beautiful, steep valley. The bus trip took us through breathtaking scenery edging sounds



Roystovan farmhouse, the oldest inhabited wooden building in Europe.

(Continued on page 9)

(MARRAM GRASS *Continued from page 1*)

Why on earth would DoC do such a thing? Well, in the past they've made noises about eradicating my venison A-steaks—I mean, deer—so I decided not to assume they know best. I donned my imaginary tweed cap (OK it's real, but I only wear it in private) and started sleuthing. The subtle approach works well during an investigation, and I tried my best.

“So, what's up with your man?” I asked Kari Beaven. “I heard he and his goons are sending heaps of sand into the bush and murdering a bunch of kiwis.”

Where do we hear these things? By the mysterious and highly effective small-community osmosis of information, by rumour, and from the *Southland Times* (let's face it, *SIN* isn't exactly a cutting edge vector of news).

In another life, I worked on a newspaper in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, so I know first-hand and very well that you can't trust letters to the editor or glean information from them, as they are often written in a heated moment. Journalism also instructs that a headline using the words ANGER and KILLING usually is reporting a pit bull tragedy, but the *Southland Times* used these buzz words to report on the marram program. Letters to the editor sprouted up like, well, marram.

After offending Kari (who took it in stride, and patiently addressed my accusations) I went to the Internet, I went to the Library, and, finally, I went to Mason Bay. There I met with Dr. Mike Hilton, a geomorphologist dune ecologist (a.k.a. scientist) who has been studying Mason Bay for over a decade.

After Googling, reading, quizzing DoC, listening to scientists involved with the



Mason Bay sculpture: sand, wind.

project, and walking through the dunes and observing the place first-hand, I obtained some information (of course, having faith that no one out and out fed me mincey pies).

Rumour

Sand is blowing all over Mason Bay and ruining it for visitors because of DoC.

Reality

The DoC marram grass program has been on a small trial basis, targeting areas in the northern dunes that total less than ten percent of Mason Bay (map of specific target areas available at DoC). A group of recent visitors to the area who were upset by blowing sand mistakenly blamed DoC, as it was just the usual blowing sand that occurs out there. Not all blowing sand can be blamed on DoC (although the wind is definitely their fault). (Joking).

Rumour

Marram grass is necessary for keeping the dunes intact and the sand in place, it should be left alone.

Reality

Marram grass is a pernicious alien weed, it has spread rapidly since it was planted a few decades ago and according to projections, unchecked it will occupy every square inch of Mason Bay real estate, sending beautiful natives packing. The marram root system travels metres downward and has a death-grip on the dune; the wind couldn't blow it all away at once if it tried (anyone



Looking north from Big Sandhill.

who has visited Mason Bay knows the wind gets an A for effort.) Years

from now, when the marram finally dies off, the native sand binders

will be able to re-establish in its place. Pingao holds the dune too, just not as fiercely, which allows the sand to shift.

Rumour

Airborne sand is bad. It gets in our eyes, ruins our egg sandwich, smothers dune vegetation and bush.

Reality

Those attitudes are anthropomorphic: we don't like sand

blowing in our face so the other creatures and plants must hate it too. The fact is, as Dr Hilton states, “sand is foundation and fertilizer.” The native plants rely on shifting sand for survival.

Rumour

The image of sand encroaching into bush, destroying it, is heartbreaking and horrible.

Reality

Some bush will die as fingers of sand sweep back into the manuka trees. Scientists estimate that over the next decade, the project will result in less than two hectares of bush succumbing to the sand as the dunes reclaim that area. Heartbreaking and horrible, or haunting and heartbreakingly beautiful, the reality of a dune landscape is that at the ever-shifting boundary of forest and dune, there will be overlaps of sand.



Baby pingao.
In Stewart Island: the Last Refuge,
 Neville Peat writes: *Pingao used to adorn beaches from North Cape to Rakiura and was coveted by Maori weavers. It is on the threatened species list today, surviving only where it is not out-manoeuvred and overwhelmed by introduced marram...it is a botanical treasure, occupying a genus of its own; in other words, it has no near relatives anywhere in the world—a sign of long, isolated ancestry. Pingao has presided over eons of dune-building and shoreline change.*

(Continued on page 7)

(MARRAM GRASS *continued from page 6*)

Rumour

Tim Te Aika and Brent Beaven are going to square off and have an old fashioned duel on the new cobblestone semi-circle in front of the shop.

Reality

From an agricultural point of view, Tim's planting of marram at Mason Bay was brilliant, and DoC recognizes he acted in good faith and wisely as a farmer. DoC and many

scientists now determine that post-farming Mason Bay is not an appropriate place for marram. Last year, Tim, who has strong ties to Mason Bay and strong feelings about watching years of his hard work being undone, travelled to Mason Bay and walked through the dune lands with Mike and Brent. Although they don't agree on all points the men have had constructive, civil dialogue regarding the issue. And that thing in front of the shop isn't really cobblestone...more like brick.

Rumour

Marram grass provides precious kiwi habitat and now the birds will be disrupted, homeless, and also possibly poisoned when herbicide is carelessly sprayed on marram as they hide in it.

Reality

Studies with radio transmitters have determined that kiwi don't inhabit marram grass. If startled they might run into the odd clump, but they forage on the beach and in the bush and make their home in the bush. They actually avoid the dense areas of marram as it's difficult to get



Lunch at temporary lake.

through it; if the marram continues to grow Mason Bay will be a solid, waving swathe of dense marram grass, certainly not kiwi-friendly (or people-friendly). Most of the spraying is done on the ground, and the sprayer would know if a kiwi was at his feet. If a bit of the herbicide does land on the kiwi it won't harm the bird. It's safe to say that not a single kiwi will be harmed as a result of this program (or I'll eat my tweed hat).

Rumour

A dune is just a pile of sand,

what's the fuss?

Reality

The Mason Bay dune system is an extraordinary world wonder, and one of the last hold-outs of an active dune system in the Southern Hemisphere. When you walk a few kilometres in the dunes, you will pass through numerous micro-ecosystems, lush areas called coastal turfs, flatlands called peneplains, wetlands, temporary lakes, wee delicate gardens amidst chaotic sculpted rock, and other oases of vegetation. There are different kind of dunes: the high, escarped fore-dunes created by marram grass, the low, hummocky shadow dunes created by pingao and other native vegetation, and the parabolic dune which

describes the overall shape of the dune systems created by wind.

Rumour

Pingao schmingao. Si-rocco has a personality, but who cares about a

dumb boring dune shrub?

Reality

True, pingao (or pikao) is not a feathery fun grape-eating clown. The endangered sedge is a sand binder that gathers nutrients from moving sand. The welfare of a myriad of other delicate mosses, flowers, grasses, sedges and tussocks is also at stake, including *gunnera hamiltonii* (doughgirl), one of the rarest wild plants in the country; and all of the wee insects, critters and birds that are unique to these landscapes, including the skink, pit-pit and the Southern NZ dotterel.

Rumour

Mason Bay has always had marram grass and it should stay that way.

Reality

For eons, Mason Bay was free of marram

grass. This grass was introduced in the 1930s and therefore prevalent in most living peoples' memories of the place. We happen to be alive during a blip



A peneplain, not to be confused with the Beatles' song. This vast expanse of flatland just south of Duck Creek is dotted with baby pingao and clusters of rare flowers.

on the timeline of things where marram grass is spreading on Stewart Island, endangering fragile, already endangered native plants. To the global scientific community, stopping the marram seems like a no-brainer.

But this is where science butts up against the human heart: the mind's eye sees Mason Bay with a specific palette, a wash of grey-green grass and sand. The memories are fond, and it's hard to imagine that beach grass is actually an aggressive European bully with serious boundary



Gentian.



Dr. Mike Hilton admires a shadow dune topped with pingao. The typical shadow dune is shaped sort of like a bicycle helmet.



An entomologist displays his collection of Mason Bay moth specimens.

(Continued on page 10)



Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust news.

Not much has changed in terms of penguin work this month, although there have been a couple of interesting snippets of information. Like me, most other people involved in penguin work have been sitting at desks analyzing the season's data. Our de-brief meeting was held in Dunedin in April, and it was attended by 15 people from the Trust, DOC staff from Stewart Island, Invercargill and Dunedin, and representatives from Otago and Massey Universities. The number of attendees and their diverse backgrounds demonstrates that the range and complexity of topics was quite considerable. It was no surprise that there were no definitive answers about why the penguins did so badly on Stewart Island, but we are narrowing down the possibilities and asking more specific questions, such as how widespread are the effects of disease? One of my main tasks over winter will be to plan for next summer, which is the last season of field work scheduled for this project. I'll be trying to devise a field programme that gathers the right sort of information to answer that question, as well as continuing with our baseline monitoring. It is a matter of juggling resources to get the best value for money. Needless to say, my other main task is to help find funding for next season's work!

Back to those interesting snippets of information:

the birds in the Catlins (which is the nearest South Island breeding area) did quite well again last season. Breeding success there was 68%, compared with 0% at our monitored sites on Stewart Island, and 50% on Codfish. Given these results, and that there are stoats and ferrets in the Catlins, and that these animals are the main predators of penguin chicks in the South Island, this information seems to confirm our belief that something other than predation is affecting the birds on Stewart Island.

Another snippet is that in the last month 5 yellow-eyed penguins have been found in the Banks Peninsula area. Unfortunately 4 of them were dead. The fifth was in poor condition and was taken into care. If it survives it will be released again, hopefully a bit fatter than when it washed up. Only one bird was able to be identified; its flipper band showed it originated from the Otago Peninsula. These findings add weight to the theory that young yeps especially, tend to disperse north after the breeding season. Heading north for the winter perhaps? Not a bad idea – if you survive the trip!

Sandy

Sandy King

Projects Officer Southern Islands

Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust

Dunedin office Ph: 03 479 0011

Ph: 03 219 1102

Email: yeptrust@gmail.com

Email: sdk@callsouth.net.nz

www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz

Department of Conservation **DOC Spot** *Te Papa Atawhai*

Disruption worthwhile

If you're frustrated with the disruption caused by the foreshore redevelopment – the local DOC staff have been experiencing a similar level of disruption within the field centre. A number of building maintenance issues have been tackled over the past few months, which prompted us to reassess how best we could utilise the office space available while various tradespeople were on site. So in the midst of replacing the leaky windows and regibbing rotten walls, we've added a couple of internal walls and reconfigured the office layout. It hasn't been easy concentrating on day-to-day work with all the drilling, hammering and recabling going on, but the end result outweighs that inconvenience. Dale and Brent are happily ensconced in their own offices in the old video room; the computers have been repositioned in the centre of the field

room leaving the wall space for shelving above desks; and the fax, photocopier/printer and other office equipment now occupy their own little space. Over the next few weeks the main visitor centre area will be re-carpeted and painted and the public toilet cubicles will be tiled and the walls re-lined. We're really pleased that we haven't had to expand the size of our office and have been able to keep the costs of the project down. The smart new pavements around town won't be the only treat for visitors next season!

Marine Reserve

On a more serious note, last month court proceedings were initiated by the department relating to two instances of fishing within the Ulva Island / Te Wharawhara Marine Reserve. In this case the defendant was offered diversion and on completion of the diversion contract the charges

were withdrawn. Any future breaches of the marine reserve act are unlikely to be treated as leniently. Rules governing marine reserves are there to protect the marine life for the enjoyment of all and for future generations. For that reason DOC will take a firm stance in the future when the rules are broken.

Coming up

A public meeting to discuss the Mason Bay marram control programme with residents and other interested parties on Stewart Island is planned for 21st June. This is to allow time for the University of Otago research team who carry out the annual independent monitoring of the marram programme to complete their work. Departmental staff will also provide an update on the weed control work at the Mason Bay sites. The meeting will be publicly advertised well in advance.

(GLOBETROTTER *Continued from page 5*)

and passages whose tops disappeared into the persistent low cloud and fog. There are no naturally growing trees in the Faroes, mainly due to the harsh conditions experienced here through most of the year, which adds to the rugged beauty of the landscape. The hills are instead covered with a lush grass, with large veins of black rock and waterfalls. The hostel I stayed at in Gjógv was built in traditional style with a turf roof and the grass hung through the window into my room! The lady running the hostel, a Faroese local, had been to New Zealand 17 years ago and had even been as far as Bluff! That afternoon I went for a hike up onto Fjallið, a 469m hill at the top of Ambadalur, the “hauntingly beautiful highland valley” according to the guide!

I’m sure it would have been, if I could see it! The fog was still incredibly thick and finding my way back down was quite challenging! The following day I took a boat ride around the exposed northern coast of Eysturoy Island, which took us in close under high rugged cliffs, covered in nesting fulmars, puffins and guillemots. While waiting for the bus I looked at the inside of a typical Faroese church, which was being decorated for a wedding. A local girl was coming home to marry her Danish fiancé and it was amazing seeing the residents turning up in traditional Faroese attire. I have never seen anything quite like it.

The next day saw me stuck in the depressing town of Sörvågur for a while, where there is little to do on a weekday and even less

on this particular Sunday! I turned up at the “end of the road” to take a trip to the west-



The picturesque road to the north of Tórshavn, around Sundini Strait.

ernmost island of Mykines, but met with a full boat and the bus back had already left! I walked back up the road for a few miles to the airport, to see if there were any helicopter rides going. Helicopters are a subsidised form of public transport in the Faroes, due to the inaccessibility of some of the smaller islands

(Continued on page 11)

Uninvited guests?

by Kari Beaven

It’s that fun time of year again. Rats born over the summer, till now happily living close to mum and dad, have been kicked out.



It’s getting cold, food’s getting short and the simple answer to that is... check out all those lovely-looking, warm, dry houses! Rats can squeeze through a gap the size of a 20 cent piece (an old one at least) and a house needn’t be untidy, unclean or have food lying around for a rat to want to make its way inside, just to be warm and dry.

This last summer was a very good one for rats, lots of good food and nice weather made for “that lovin’ feeling”. Couple that with a pleasant, snow-free winter and high numbers from the year before, it’s hardly surprising that lots of teenage rats will be hitting the streets in search of mischief!

1000 rats have been caught in the Halfmoon Bay project area so far this “financial” year (though they don’t fetch much). That beats the pants off the previous record of 784 rats from July to June ‘06. Possum captures, on the other hand, have dropped, from 98 last year to only 37 so far this year. We don’t expect pos-

sum numbers to drop much below this residual rate.

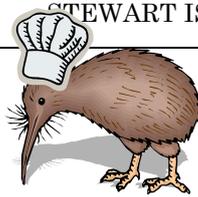
Many community volunteers have put in hours of effort this year to keep on top of rat and possum numbers. Without each individual, there would not be the combined strength which makes this project work.

Despite the obviously high numbers of rats around over the last few years, monitoring within the project is still showing we are “winning” positive results for our wildlife in a number of ways. Forest bird numbers recorded around Halfmoon Bay have just been remeasured and are being analysed as we speak. I am lucky enough to have had a preview and am very excited to be sharing the news.... next month!

If you have rats checking out your house, now is a great time to knock their numbers back before next summer brings new food sources. We’re trying to make it as easy as possible for anyone to make use of a combined community approach and keep your land as a pest-free sanctuary for the increasing numbers of native wildlife around the bay.

For any advice about trapping rats or possums on your property, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us, your local Dept of Conservation or Regional Council. If it’s something we haven’t come across before, we may be able to put you in touch with someone who has.

the GALLEY



As a fisherman's wife, I'm not on my best behaviour when the man's at sea. I lapse into a lazy cooking-for-one mode, and tend to make easy and rather unhealthy batches of comfort food. This recipe is one of my favourites, and also immortalized in Nora Ephron's book (later a movie with Jack Nicholson) Heartburn. Also considered a primo hangover cure:

Spaghetti carbonara

Boil water with salt and a TB of olive oil, add bag of pasta (penne is good with this, or spaghetti).

Cut half a pack of streaky bacon into bite-sizes and sizzle until they are crunchy-cooked, drain pan of as much liquid fat as possible.

In a small bowl, whisk together 2-3 eggs, a splash of cream, a cup of cheap white wine, salt and pepper and about a cup of grated parmesan cheese (freshly grated off the Perfect Italiano wedge from the shop works best).

When the pasta's cooked, drain and return to pot and add bacon and your egg mixture and stir. The heat of the pasta should cook the egg as it coats the pasta, if

it's too runny turn the heat on low and keep stirring.

Fresh chopped spring onions and sautéed mushrooms are a nice addition to this course. Also maybe some exercise over the course of the next few days.



And here's another goodie from Vicki's kitchen:

Best Crumble Topping Ever!

Great for winter nights!

Peel and slice apples and put in oven proof dish. Sprinkle over some granulated sugar and a small squeeze of lemon juice.

Mix together rolled oats, brown sugar, flour and desiccated coconut, about the same amount of each, but feel free to add more or less of things you like. A pinch of cinnamon is nice here too, but completely optional. Rub in butter or margarine until you get a breadcrumb effect.

Sprinkle over apples and bake until golden and crunchy, yum!! Of course you can use this topping for any kind of crumble!



No, not a new bus stop at Crumbling Cliffs; but the end of the much-photographed Golf Club entrance at Ringa Ringa.

from Jenny Gell



Thanks to Ann Hennessy for a very generous donation to the Library. New books include *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult; *Letters to Charlie*, a heartbreaking book of grief over a dead child by her dad Reg Thompson; and the beautiful *White Wolf: Living with an Arctic Legend* by hugely talented wildlife photographer Jim Brandenburg. Marram grass books include *Rakiura* by Rob Brown, *Stewart Island: the Last Refuge* by Neville Peat; and a copy of L. Cockayne's 1909 report detailing pre-farming Mason Bay botany. Hours are 2-3:15 Wed; 11-12 Fri & Sat.

(MARRAM Continued from page 7)

issues. Marram grass may look pretty in small patches but that is not what marram grass is wired to do: its very nature is to spread rapidly, weedily, and take over Mason Bay—aerial photos over the past decades show its alarming rate of increase. If DoC succeeds in ridding Mason Bay of marram grass, the dichromatic colour scheme will be replaced by a multi-

plicity of hues: the fiery orange of pingao, the rich copper of red tussock, delicate spring greens of sand tussock. Your grandchildren will hold different memories of Mason Bay, a more raw, more colourful, wilder place boasting dozens of native plants, rare micro-ecosystems, as it always had been before the brief stint of farming. Ask yourself: is that acceptable to you or not? And if not, why?

Some people have already made up their minds on the subject, but if you're curious about marram grass there's literature available to read and knowledgeable people to quiz. *Rakiura* by Rob Brown is more than a pretty coffee table book: the chapter entitled "Sand" accompanying Mason Bay photographs actually has one of the most accessible pieces about the history of mar-

ram, and Rob explains the nuts and bolts of dune science in a painless way (some of the scientific papers I read sprained my brain).

The next time you're visiting Mason Bay, take time out from your furtive hunt for that hundred-grand chunk of ambergris (sure you'll find it someday...in your dreams) and meander through dune country. You will find true treasures.

(GLOBETROTTER *Continued from page 9*)

and are therefore some of the cheapest chopper rides in the world! The only available flight was back to Tórshavn via Koltur Is. We took off and flew out over the islands before turning back and landing again, because of drizzly conditions on the other side. Our money was refunded and we were provided with free transport back via taxi! A free 10-minute chopper ride was better than nothing!



The small town of Gjógv, which means “cleft” in Faroese.

The next day I caught the ferry down to the less populated southernmost island of Suðuroy. In the sleepy little town called Famjin the first Faroese flag ever to be flown after independence was gained from Denmark, is displayed in the church and is about the town’s only claim to fame! Just about every church has a beautiful model boat hanging from the ceiling to bring good luck to sailors and this one had a particularly fine example. I also visited the local museum in Tvøroyri, where the very animated curator took me on a personal guided tour (I was the only one in there!). He was very interested in someone coming all the way from NZ! I did actually meet two other Kiwis while I was in the Faroes, but I don’t think many call into this museum!



Turf-roofed houses at Kirkubour.

Next day the bus I was supposed to catch to the very bottom of the island was running 10 minutes early and I just missed it, meaning I had to catch the following bus, which didn’t go all the way. I ended up with 4 hours to kill in Vågur, which has nothing! There wasn’t even a café to sit in! Even the local information centre told me there was nothing to do! After I had walked up and down the main road a few times, the locals were starting to look at me funny! I eventually caught a bus to Sumba, at the southernmost tip and walked out to Akraberg lighthouse. The Faroese “Lands End.” As was par for the course, the fog prevented me from seeing anything here too, but Sumba was a

nice town with plenty of traditional fishing boats for me to “inspect!”

Once back on the “mainland” I finally got my daytrip out to Mykines Is, the westernmost point of the Faroes. This place is a Mecca for birdwatchers and the sheer volume of puffins blew me away. These comical birds are constantly flocking around the cliffs in numbers that rival muttonbirds landing at night on the islands back home. There were literally thousands of them on the sea, in the air and on the slopes of the island. If you sit amongst the burrows the clumsy fliers just ‘flop’ down beside you and then waddle off, often with a beak full of little sardines. They are not unlike penguins that haven’t quite lost their ability to fly! The locals still harvest the adult puffins,

but are restricted in their methods. They are only allowed to use a scoop on the end of a long pole, as they say they are too easy to get straight from the burrows. I saw one or two locals catching them in the distance, each with a sizeable pile of puffins beside them.

As we were all back early, the ferry skipper took us on a damp but interesting ride right around the island. The ferry was just a fishing boat, which carried passengers and only had minimal shelter. With only 9 permanent residents and one B&B on Mykines, it is not a place you want to get stuck, but it happens quite regularly with the changeable weather experienced here. The only landing is unusable in a number of wind directions.

The following day was only the second fogless day out of nine and was also the day I had to leave this amazing place. I was told the persistent fog was most unusual and it was a pity not to have been able to see more, but it barely dampened my enthusiasm for these islands. The locals are friendly, the scenery breathtaking and despite being well off the beaten tourist track, the facilities for tourists are first class. I would recommend the Faroes to anybody with a love of the outdoors.

Some thoughts on communication:

You cannot shake hands with a closed fist —*Indira Gandhi*

Two monologues do not make a dialogue—*Jeff Daly*

If you start a conversation with the assumption that you are right or that you must win, obviously it is difficult to talk.—*Wendell Berry*

If speaking is silver, then listening is gold.—*Turkish proverb*

If there is any great secret of success in life, it is to put yourself in the other person’s place and to see things from his point of view, as well as your own.—*Henry Ford*

No one who thinks talk is cheap has ever argued with a traffic cop. —*Henny Youngmann*



Oystercatchers, Mason Bay

You are invited to attend a
PUBLIC MEETING about the
MASON BAY
MARRAM GRASS PROJECT
 7:30pm, 21st JUNE
 at the COMMUNITY CENTRE

The family of the late Olive (Ollie) Nilsen would like to sincerely thank the Stewart Island community for the kindness shown to our wee mum throughout the whole of her life and in particular in her latter days.

We would also like to acknowledge the support you have given, and continue to give to the family.

We have appreciated the beautiful flowers, the cards of condolence, phone calls, words of support, baking and donations of food all of which have helped us to get through this trying time.

You are a unique community.
Kia kaha

Got any spare muttonbird oil?
 Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project is seeking titi grease for the upkeep of their possum traps —if you have any to spare after cooking your birds please contact Kari.

STEWART ISLAND GARDEN CIRCLE

The next meeting will be held
 at the home of Jenny Gell
 at 2 O'clock on Thursday 14th June

Competition: Winter Rose, Fern Leaf
 and Coloured Foliage

Roll Call: Winter Recipe

Garden Circle is delighted to announce
Patricia Soper from the Southland Times

will visit the island in August to
 give a talk. Details in the next
 edition of *SIN*.



**The Stewart Island Community
 Swimming Pool
 is now closed for the winter.**

**Please return your key to Kath Johnson
 at school. (Mon-Thurs) \$5 refund if you
 return your key before 31st May.**

**A big thanks to Bruce Ford for keeping the
 pool running and to Vicky for all the
 fundraising she did for us.**

Stewart Island News is published on a monthly basis as material permits.

**Please send articles and enquiries to Jess Kany at Box 156, or to
 editor@stewart-island-news.com (note new email address)
 The deadline for the next issue is 15th June.**

If you wish to have Stewart Island News posted to you or a friend, please fill out this form and forward it with a cheque made payable to "Stewart Island News" to P.O. Box 156, Stewart Island. The cost is as follows:

- 12 issues to an Oban address \$24
- 12 issues to other New Zealand address \$30

Yes, we can arrange for international subscriptions — contact editor for rates

Name of Recipient: _____
 Address: _____
