

Te Hapu - simplicity amongst Splendour

the woolshed to view farm operations such as shearing) taking the walker up a farm track adjacent to Kahurangi National Park.

From a high point, spectacular views are enjoyed of Westhaven Inlet, Mangarakau Wetland Reserve, the wild west coast, as well as both virgin and regenerating native bush.

Dropping via a ladder into a labyrinth of limestone canyons and native foliage the track then climbs out along the bluff tops before descending to Te Hapu Bay.

A return via the beach, grassland and farm track makes this a superb round daywalk.

The short walk to Gilbert's Beach, half an hour or so from the house presents an array of geological and historic interest, including mollusc fossils and petrified worm burrows.

By continuing north along the cliff edge the delightful Turtle Cove is reached where an historic stand of nikau give insight into the area before European clearance.

Most tracks lead back to the vicinity of the houses, near which the limestone outcrops known as the Sunset Rocks and the 1000 Ton Rock, precipitously perched, provide good landmarks.

A 6km return walk along the gravel road to the Te Hapu Road junction, which

Below: The hills of Te Hapu.



12 Walking New Zealand, issue no 197 2014

snakes beside the calm waters of the inlet between virgin Rata, Rimu, Kahikatea, Totara and Red Beech, can turn into a delightful day's walk with diversions to Coal Point and the quiet picnic bays on the inlet.

Part of this inlet, also known as Westhaven Inlet, has recently become a marine reserve, with Mangarakau Wharf and information panels a short drive from the junction mentioned.

Not far from here the eight to nine hour Kaituna Track, for experienced trampers, emerges from its rugged route which started as a delightful river-side walk off the Bainham Road inland from Collingwood.

The first hour of this walk via the old Kaituna Gold workings near Bainham, makes a delightful family walk to Kaituna Forks. From there the going gets tough, left to the fit members of the family who would need transport arranged at the Te Hapu end of their hike.

This far corner of the South Island offers diversity and a lot of nature to savour for those who venture this way, thanks to those who have tamed their portion and are prepared to share their rewards.

With the variety of accommodation available, including Te Hapu Cottages, Maungarakau Lodge and the Maungarakau Wetland Reserve, lengthy exploration of this area is a real option.

In the f

Quail



Story and photographs by
Andrew Lowton

With many tracks in the Port Hills closed since the earthquakes, residents of Christchurch have had to look further afield for their walking fix. For my wife and I this has involved working our way farther around the Banks Peninsula.

On those walks we have often looked across to, or down on, Quail Island in Lyttleton Harbour and wondered if it was worth a visit.

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Footsteps of Scott on Island



Then an opportunity arose. As part of IceFest, a month-long celebration of Christchurch's position as Gateway to the Antarctic, half-price ferry tickets were on offer due to Quail Island's Antarctic connections. Captain Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton used the island for quarantining and training ponies and dogs before their Antarctic expeditions in the early part of the 20th Century. Reason enough to visit so off we drove to Lyttleton

Harbour.

The ferry was so crowded that they laid on an extra one and five minutes later we landed on the island.

The Maoris called the island Otamahua, which means 'place to gather sea-bird eggs'. The first European to land on the island was Captain Mein Smith, in 1842, and after flushing a number of quail from the bush he named the island after them. The island was eventually acquired by the

Above: Starting off on the circumference walk.

Crown from the Ngai Tahu in 1950. It subsequently changed hands several times until being transferred to DOC in 1987.

The Quail Island Walkway starts from the wharf and offers opportunities for short or long walks. A map is provided by the ferry company.

We opted for the circumference walk which can take up to two hours depending

In the footsteps of Scott on Quail Island

on stops. The walkway starts off following a gravel road, flanked by wind-blown trees, that hugs the coast. At the first bend is the dilapidated old jetty. An information board shows a fascinating old photograph of ponies being loaded from the jetty. It was from here that animals were transferred to Captain Scott's ship, *Terra Nova*, for his ill-fated South Pole expedition in 1910.

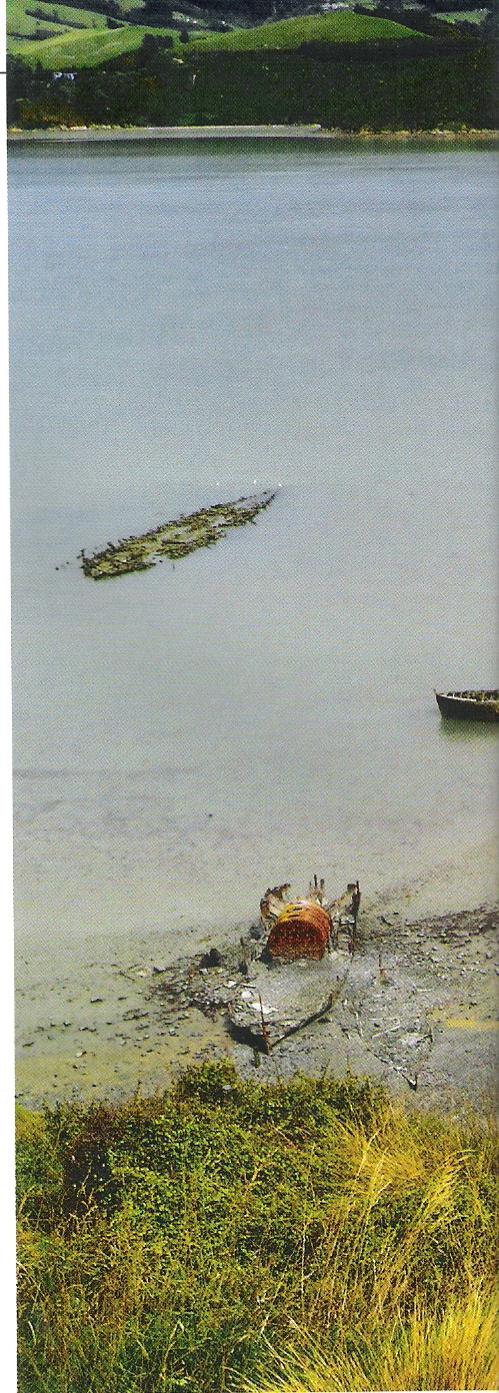
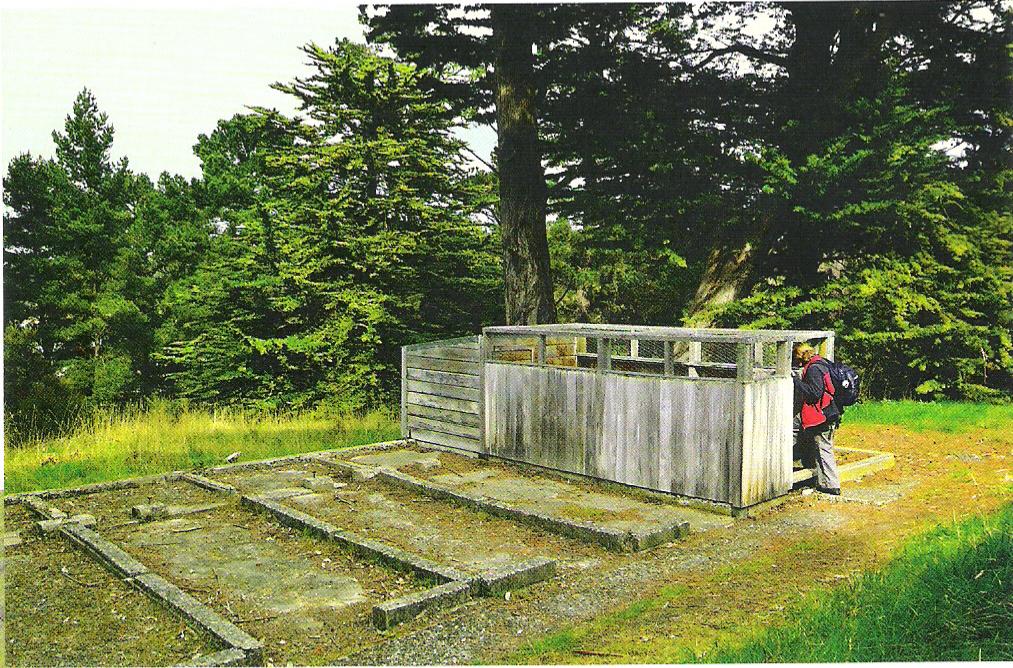
Around the corner further history awaits. Here stands the restored barracks from the quarantine station that was built in 1874 and used until 1931. Because of the risk that immigrants carried diseases like measles and diphtheria, after three months at sea with lack of fresh food and exercise, new arrivals were housed here until cleared to travel to the mainland.

A side-track leads steeply up to the site of the dog quarantine area. A replica kennel was built in 1998 but old photographs show that most of the time the polar dogs from Siberia and the Yukon were tethered outside.

Dropping down to the main track we passed the remains of the foundations of the human quarantine quarters.

On a steep hillside we found a small hut, a replica of the huts that housed lepers in New Zealand's first and only leprosy colony that was established in 1907. At its peak up to nine patients were living here, each in their own hut.

From the hut we followed a wide path down through an avenue of trees and then climbed steeply up to the saddest place on



the island.

On a grassy hilltop is the grave of Ivon Skelton, a Western Samoan, who was the only leper to die on the island. He was sent here in 1918 and died in 1923. He was 25 years old. Old photographs show a tremendous view from the grave out to King Billy Island and Diamond Harbour and this view has recently been restored by the felling of a number of large trees.

Rising steeply up a mown grassy track we emerged out in the open, having left the crowds and the trees behind. Most of



Above: The ships' graveyard.

Above left: Site of Scott and Shackleton's dog quarantine kennels.

Above left: The Quail Island ferry in Lyttleton Harbour.

Opposite page right: The grassy track is well-maintained.



the established trees – pines, cypresses, oaks and sycamores – on the island are confined to the western and southern sides. The centre and eastern and northern sides are largely open grassland interspersed with small shrubs and immature trees.

The next point of note as we walked high above Walkers Beach was a small quarry. Stone from here was used to build walls on the island and as ballast to stabilise early sailing ships for their return voyages after off-loading in Lyttleton harbour in the 1800s.

Wooden benches are stationed around the walkway at convenient intervals. One is rather nicely dedicated to Graeme White, a conservationist who 'departed the island' on 11 October 2007. After passing a small stand of mature trees we arrived at another bench that afforded a fine view

down to a beach covered in shipwrecks.

Between 1902 and 1951 this beach was used as a ships' graveyard and the remains of eight ships can be seen at low tide. The oldest is the steamer Mullogh, built in 1855. It plied its trade out of Lyttleton for fifty years and took miners to Hokitika during the 1870s gold rush before finally being beached here in 1923.

The largest wreck is the barque Darra which had a long and varied history following its launch in 1865. It was a tea clipper on the Orient Line, an Australian immigrant ship, was gutted by fire in Sydney in 1899 and was used in the re-enactment of the arrival of the First Four Ships in Canterbury's Centennial Celebrations in 1950 before being laid to rest here the following year. A well-worn but steep side path leads down the grassy slope to the beach for a closer look.





Above: A replica of a hut in the Leprosy Colony. Below: The middle of the island is open grassland.

In the footsteps of Scott on Quail Island





The track continues to the western end of the island before turning north. On the left, a clay dam, constructed in 1878, still blocks a small gully and offers a home for ducks. It was originally built to provide water for stock when the island was farmed sporadically from 1850 right up to the 1970s.

As we headed north we had the Port Hills and Lyttleton Harbour ahead of us. A bench enabled us to have our picnic lunch while enjoying the views. This northern side of the island has the most dramatic cliff faces.

Three different layers of rock, from three different volcanic eruptions, the last of Mt Herbert six million years ago, can be clearly seen, with impressive basalt columns.

Passing an area of newly-planted trees we moved inland and arrived at the Visitor Centre. Housed in the old animal quarantine manager's cottage it contains a number of interesting displays. One of these details the work of the Otamahua/Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust.

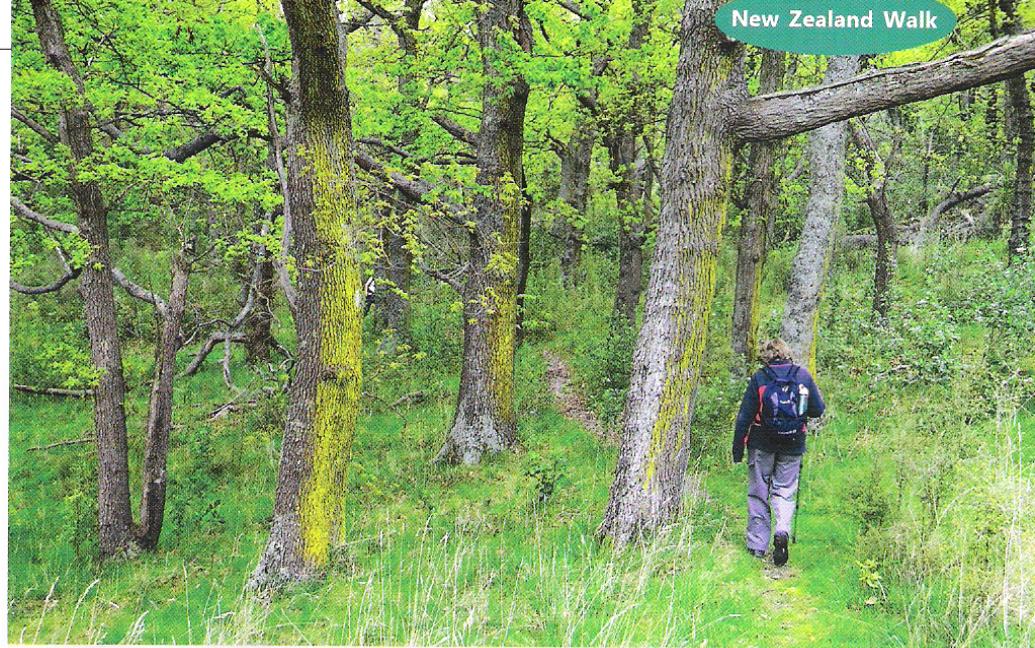
Established in 1997, this organisation aims, amongst other things, to: plant much of the island with native woodland (they have planted more than 70,000 trees and shrubs); remove exotic mammalian pests (this has been achieved but needs constant monitoring as the island can be reached across mudflats at low tide); and reintroduce native fauna. From what we saw and read they are doing a great job.

A few minutes beyond the Visitor Centre we came across the animal quarantine stables. At this point a side-track crosses the island to Swimmers Beach and at regular intervals information boards identify and give information about trees and shrubs. The main walkway drops down a steep dirt road and rejoins the track back to the wharf.

The ferry arrived spot on time and we were soon speeding our way back to Lyttleton. The next time we look across to Quail Island we will know the answer to our question.

Visiting the island is most definitely worthwhile, providing not just a pleasant hike but a journey through New Zealand's history.

(For more information about ferries visit www.blackcat.co.nz.)



Below: Above: Walking through the forest at the eastern end of the island.

Below: Tall trees dominate the eastern side of the island.

