Over the sea to Stewart Island

Separated from the South Island by wind-tossed Foveaux Strait, Stewart Island is New Zealand’s third largest, and most southern inhabited island. Its ‘twin’ name is Rakiura, ‘The Island of the Glowing Sky’. In 1907, botanist Dr Leonard Cockayne described Stewart Island as ‘an actual piece of the primeval world’. Ninety-five years later, most of this somewhat modified ‘primeval world’ became New Zealand’s fourteenth national park, Rakiura National Park.

Stewart Island has a long history. Evidence of the first human habitation — though it did not turn out to be permanent — is dated to c1270. Five hundred years later, in March 1770, Lieutenant James Cook sailed the Endeavour around its southern coasts, resolving the question as to whether or not New Zealand was part of a great ‘Southern Continent’. Europeans were there some thirty years before the first colonists landed at Wellington and Auckland, and the earliest permanent occupation preceded the foundation of shore whaling stations. Even so, when trading posts and whaling settlements became parts of an organised and progressive colony, Stewart Island alone remained outside that development. An unwilling Government finally purchased it from Maori in 1864. Although the first permanent European pioneers were seeking a home rather than a site for commercial or agriculture enterprise, Stewart Island has had eras of sealing and whaling, shipbuilding, sawmilling, tin mining, farming, fishing and tourism. Of these, only fishing and tourism have survived.

Dr Basil Howard’s Rakiura (1940, reprinted 1974), based on his 1934 University of Otago Litt.D. thesis, remains the classical reference book on Stewart Island’s history. Since Rakiura was published, however, sealer John Boultbee’s diary has come to light, plus other historical material. Much of this new information can be found in John Hall-Jones’s well-illustrated Stewart Island Exploded (1994). The Hocken Library has extensive holdings relating to Stewart Island and its satellite islands, and the following lists of books, theses, pamphlets and periodicals provide an introductory guide to these holdings.

Maori
In spite of scattered traces of occupation, little is known about early Stewart Island Maori. The following publications contain some information:


European settlement
Anon. Stewart Island County, 1986.
Anon. Stewart Island County Electoral Roll, 1900.
Bartlett, H.R., Memories of Stewart Island, c1938.
Corbet, Lesley W. Uncle Fred’s Cabin, 2002.
De La Mare, A.J. Tales of Southland History, 1994.


Hamilton, G.D. *Trout-Fishing and Sport in Maoriland*, 1904.


Howard, B.H., Stewart Island Place Names, 1928. (Cutting book of articles from the *Evening Star*, December 1927 & January 1928.)


Morrell, Benjamin. *A Narrative of Four Voyages to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean*, from the year 1822 to 1832, 1832.


Poppелwell, D.L. *Stewart Island*, 1908.

Raynal, F.E. *Wrecked on a Reef or Twenty Months among the Auckland Isles*: a true story... 2003 edition.


Sansom, Olga. *In the Grip of an Island*, 1982.


Westgarth, W. *Half a Century of Australasian Progress, a personal retrospect*, 1889.

Williams, G.J. *The Tin-Tungsten Deposits of Stewart Island*, 1933.


Sealing and Whaling

Sealing, first, and then whaling were an integral part of Stewart Island life for more than a century until the Norwegian Rosshavet Whaling Company ceased operations in 1932. This era is described in the following selected accounts:


Bullen, Frank T. *The Cruise of the ‘Cachalot’ Round the world after sperm whales*, 1899.


(Engraving: sealers at Halfmoon Bay, p. 206)


(From the Archives and Manuscripts Department are the Otago Harbour Board’s files on the mishap and subsequent repairs to the Rosshavet Whaling Company’s mother ship, *C.A. Larsen*. [ARC-0014: AG-200-11/04/0628, AG-200-11/04/0629, and AG-200-11/04/0630])

Natural History

Scientists have studied Stewart Island’s unique and fascinating vegetation, together with the wildlife it supports, for more than a century. In addition, the unacceptable modification by introduced mammals, and the irretrievable loss of native wildlife have also prompted many research and conservation reports.


Anon. *Environment impact assessment:*...
salmon farming proposal, Stewart Is, 1981.
Anon. Stewart Is Between the Tides: key to rock pool animals, 1977.
Anon. Stewart Is Vegetation: Key to Ferns, 1977.
Unpublished internal report.
Butler, David. Quest for the Kakapo, 1989.
Gillham, Mary E.A. A Naturalist in New Zealand, 1965.
Howes, Edith. The Singing Fish, 1921.
Richdale, L.E. Whero: island of sea-birds, c1943.
Sibson, R.B. From Penguins to Parakeets; the first diary of an English naturalist in NZ, 1990.
Slater, M.J. Forests of Northern Stewart Is, 1983.
Slater, M.J. Density and distribution of wild animals in Northern Stewart Is, 1982.
Watters, W.A. Notes on Rocks within the median tectonic Zone near Nelson City and on Stewart and Codfish Islands, 1994.
Williamson, M.J. Resource Survey of Northern Stewart Is. Part Two: Forests and Introduced Animals, 1976. (See also Evans, G.)
Wilson, R.A. Bird Islands of New Zealand, 1959.
Woodhouse, A.E. Guthrie-Smith of Tutira, 1959.

Tourism

Anon. ‘Rakiura’, Isle of the Glowing Skies, 1925.
Anon. Stewart Is: Isle of dreams, c1932.
Anon. World’s Wonder Walk, Fiords, Southern Lakes, Stewart Is, c1935.
Hall, Mary. A Woman in the Antipodes and in the Far East, 1914.
Moore, Colin Wilderness NZ Walks, 1996.
Phillips, E.A. Souvenir of Stewart Is (‘Rakiura’)..., c1926.
Pickering, M. & Smith, R. 101 Great Tramps in New Zealand, 1988 etc.
Seaward, N.S. & Natusch, Sheila. Stewart Is...
Temple, P. Stewart Island Pictorial, 1982.

Fiction

Archives and manuscripts
Check Hakena for archives and manuscripts under headings Stewart Island or Rakiura. Of special interest is a copy of extracts from Thomas Shepherd’s ‘Journal, March 1826 to May 1826’, with a valuable early description of Stewart Island; in G.C.Thomson collection (ARC-0055, MS-040/006).

Barlow, Maida L. Papers relating to Olga Sansom 1686–1991. Olga Sansom (1900–1989) was a third generation Stewart Islander, former director of the Southland Museum, and author of books about Stewart Island and the islanders. Her extensive archival collection, given to the Hocken Library by her daughter, Maida Barlow, includes newspaper clippings, biographical information of early settlers and families, photographs, places and place-names, ships and shipwrecks, sawmills, schools and teachers, Stewart Island County Council, shipbuilding and fishing (ARC-0135).

Natusch, Sheila, R.H. Traill Papers (Misc-MS-1661), and photocopies of his diaries, 1925–1981 (AG-R16). Robert (Roy) Henry Traill (1892–1989), grandson of the Lutheran missionary, Johann Wohlers, was ranger on Stewart Island for 33 years.

Maps
The Hocken holds several copies of British Hydrographic Charts of the survey carried out at Stewart Island and the Foveaux Strait region by Captain J.L. Stokes and officers of the New Zealand and the Foveaux Strait region by Captain J.L. Stokes and officers of the New Zealand. Maps of Stewart Island; in G.C.Thomson collection (ARC-0135, MS-040/006). The Hocken holds several copies of British Hydrographic Charts of the survey carried out at Stewart Island and the Foveaux Strait region by Captain J.L. Stokes and officers of the Stewart Island Council, shipbuilding and fishing (ARC-0135).

Natusch, Sheila, R.H. Traill Papers (Misc-MS-1661), and photocopies of his diaries, 1925–1981 (AG-R16). Robert (Roy) Henry Traill (1892–1989), grandson of the Lutheran missionary, Johann Wohlers, was ranger on Stewart Island for 33 years.

Photographs
The basic alphabetical sequence has a good selection of Stewart Island photographs. Others are scattered among general collections and albums. These are mostly scenic, but there are some botanical and whaling photographs.

Native flowers and plants of Stewart Island (ex Album 204). Portraits, whales, whaling equipment and ships from The Whales’ Wake (Morton Collection P83-014). Rossashet Whaling Company’s Kaipipi Shipyard, Paterson Inlet (Album 54).

Accessioned from the Archives and Manuscripts Department is the Maida L. Barlow collection of papers relating to Olga Sansom, 1868–1991 (ARC-0135). This collection contains many photographs, including portraits of pioneer settlers (ARC-135: MS 1416/001, MS 1416/002, MS 1416/044, MS 1416/045, MS 1416/050, MS 1416/079), and of the saw-milling era (ARC-135: MS 1416/002, MS 1416/060, MS 1416/061, MS 1416/062, MS 1416/079).

Bound volumes of Otago Witness (1899–1928), for which there is a limited index, and the Auckland Weekly News (1900–1942), can also be found in the Hocken’s Picture Collections.

Pictures
Artist unknown, Golden Bay, Patersons Inlet, c1888, in sketchbook of views, 72 x 131mm, pencil on paper (G Xs acc: 7,855)
Artist unknown, Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Is, 1899, 304 x 482mm, oil on board (F Xh acc: A22).
Barnicoat, John Wallis (1814–1905), Cottage, Stewart’s Island, Paterson’s River, 1844, 105 x 197mm, pencil on paper (A B263 acc: 94).
Brunton, Fanny W., Stewart Is, 1876, 55 x 360mm, pencil on paper (G B911 acc: 21,101 31).
Buckland, Jessie Lillian (1872–1939), Stewart Is from Bluff Hill, 1906, 176 x 253mm, watercolour on paper (B G427 acc: 9,988 033); Halfmoon Bay Stewart Is, n.d., 216 x 400mm, pencil on paper (G H689 acc: 9,988 034); South end of Stewart Is, 1877, 60 x 350mm, pencil and yellow wash on paper (G H689 acc: 9,988 063); The end of Stewart Is, 1877, 37 x 174mm, pencil and yellow wash on paper (G H689 acc: 9,988 065); Stewart Is from off the Solanders, 1877, 106 x 257mm, pencil and yellow wash on paper (G H689 acc: 9,988 066).

Howorth, Charles Henry (1856–1945), Mt Anglem, from Lee Bay, Stewart Island, n.d., 283 x 394mm, watercolour and opaque white on paper (AU H865 acc: 23,457).


Nerli, G. P. (1860–1926), Sketch near Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, 1897, 241x 124mm, oil on wood (F N443 acc: 15,743).

O’Brien, George (1821–1888), Half Moon Bay, Stuart’s Island, c1851–88, 302 x 455mm, watercolour and opaque white with scumble on paper (C O13 acc: 7,840); Half Moon Bay, Stuart’s Island, photomechanical offset lithograph on paper (ReKE O13 acc: 77/1 a).

Scott, John Halliday (1851–1914), Stewart’s Is, n.d., J.H. Scott sketchbook, Volume 02, page 71, 90 x 128mm, ink on paper (G S427.5 acc: 77/80); Stewart Is, 1910, J.H. Scott sketchbook, Volume 15, page 31, 180 x 255mm, ink on paper (G S427.5 acc: 77/93).


Written for the Friends of the Hocken by Leah Taylor with the valuable assistance of Hocken Library staff. Edited by George Griffiths. Designed by Gary Blackman.