

## OVERTURE IN MARCH

By Keith Murray

It was the 16 of March 2026 when after three weeks of waiting for weather Overture left her berth at Mana. Keith Gibson had corralled myself and Peter as crew for a seven day cruise.

“Where shall we go?” was the question Keith asked as we were preparing for departure.

“Well we will not have enough time for a trip to the Able Tasman, but we could get to the west side of D’Urville Island,” was my reply. “The predicted south east winds will make that area very pleasant.”

“Pelorus is an option but we can wait until at Cape Jackson before making a decision,” was Keith’s reply.

Our departure time was 0830 and a little after that time we were battling with the entrance to the marina. On the second attempt Overture pushed through the soft sand out into the deep channel. Clear of the narrow channel we had plenty of water to be able to cross the bar. We considered hoisting the mainsail but there was only a light draught from astern that was not going to drive the 12.80 metre yacht. We should have hoisted the mainsail about half way out to Mana Island but deferred the action until a firmer northerly wind arrived. We were nearly at the north end of Mana Island and the usual bouncy conditions there made hoisting the mainsail difficult. About half way up the bolt rope pulled out of the luff track. Instead of using the electric winch in the cockpit we reverted to manual methods. I steered, Keith pulled on the halyard by the mast and Peter in the cockpit pulled firmly on the halyard fed through the jammer.

We used our normal caution by setting the sail with one reef. The genoa was similarly set and we were able to directly steer our course. The motor remained working as the wind was light. The sea was a bit jobby and empty of other boats, the sun was shining, and the air temperature mild.

Our 26 nautical mile passage to Cape Jackson was easy and we munched our filled buns (prepared aboard) as we approached the Cape. There was no significant tide flow through the 500 metre wide passage and I headed the yacht towards Titi Island. There was another discussion about the night’s anchorage and abeam of Cape Lambert the decision was to go into the Punt Rails. To continue to the Current Basin would take another three and a half hours, whereas the Punt Rail was only an hour away.



The northerly wind had died by then and the sails had been furled. A southerly wind was due and it arrived as we rounded Alligator Head. There was boat on the Punt Rails mooring so we headed across to Hikoekoea Bay and took the vacant mooring there. It was 1500 hours by then and with the ship settled Peter and I enjoyed a swim. Keith had by then decided that the cruise destination should be to Tennyson Inlet in Pelorus Sound. After Peter and I had dried and dressed we set off for Warwick Bay. The mooring was empty and we had a very peaceful night after a splendid chicken dinner.



Wednesday morning the southerly has vanished and when we set off there was light northerly wind making a small chop against us we headed north out of Forsyth Bay. Once in the Waitata Reach the wind was fickle so we left the sails alone and motored down to Deep(Winona) Bay in Apuau Channel. It was our morning tea stop. The bay was pretty being surrounded by native bush. There was no sign of land slips that we had seen in Guards Bay and the Waitata Reach.



We decided to cruise on around the coast and went on into Hallam Cove and took the mooring at the head of the bay to the east of Cissy Cove. Unlike Cissy Bay the mooring was in a bay with only

one house and a wharf. The trees would block the sun in the morning and afternoon but for our lunch it was a pleasant stop.

We then headed south to Penzance and picked up the mooring close to the east side. The north wind had departed by then and had been replaced by a draught from the south east. That was bringing a small bobble into the anchorage that disturbed the afternoon swim. I felt that swimming across the waves was better than trying to go downwind with an uphill battle and mouthfuls of water on the return. Besides although the water was warmer than at Hikoekoea Bay it still left my fingers tingling after a few minutes.



There was some wind overnight and the waves were making the usual slapping noise under the yachts stern sections. In the bow, where I had my berth, it was quiet. The wind died by morning. Once breakfast was cleared the dinghy was launched, outboard attached and we motored across to the wharf and commenced our bush walk. I scoffed at the DOC notice advising it took ten minutes to arrive at a view point. Just as in previous years it took longer to arrive at the seat provided, and the only view was of the dense bush towering four metres above. Even further on along the track there was no longer a view out to the sea.



In the late morning we let get the mooring, circled around Tuna Bay, paused to talk to Paula and Murray aboard Aroura and then headed out of Tennyson Inlet and into Elaine Bay for fuel. The fuel wharf there is tricky to enter and gave us problems to enable extrication. The southerly wind became brisk as we headed to the outer end of Pelorus and we thought about picking up the mooring in Camp Bay at Bulwer. When we arrive there the conditions looked a little lively so we went across to Ketu and took the mooring in Onion Bay. It was warm there but the sea water made my fingers tingle a little too soon. Peter however successfully swam to the beach and back.



Aroura arrived and picked up the second mooring and Keith invited Paula and Murray to afternoon tea or a later drink so that Murray could help explain how Overtures' plotter and self steering should work. We had managed to get it to follow a compass course but not to follow a pre-set track. Trying to use the Track function had produced incessant alarms and violent changes of course. While the afternoon passed I spent time studying the manual and at last knew how to clear messages and select the Track function from the cockpit control. Murray and Paula arrived after a ramble ashore and after discussion with Keith, some adjustments were made to the plotter. We hoped it would make a difference.

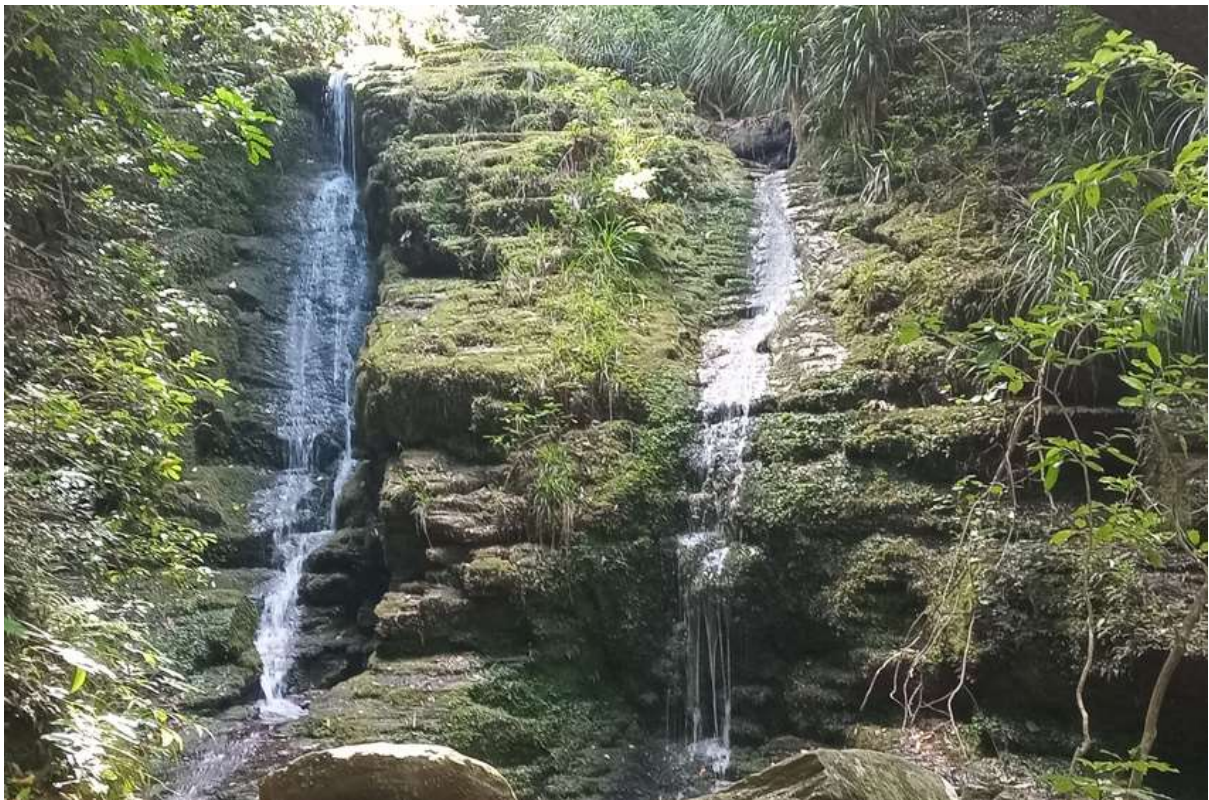
Friday was another blowy night but the sea was calm. We had a decision to make in the morning. Overture would need to be back at Mana by high water at 1300 on Monday. Tuesday was a possible day for return but the high water level was falling and air pressure was rising that would further reduce the water level. Monday looked best. From Ketu the distance was 42 nautical miles and the wind prediction was for a southeast wind of about 15 knots. From Cape Jackson the course would be 102 degrees true and the rising tide would require us to steer a course of at least 125 degrees, almost exactly into the wind. Yachts do not like that, nor do old sailors. Thus the easy decision was to sail into Queen Charlotte Sound and leave from Tory Channel. From there the passage could be made with the tidal flow and with wind on the beam. So Saturday we motored the 26 miles around Alligator Head to Cape Jackson and into Ship Cove. The tide was running firmly with us as we came through the passage at Cape Jackson but there was little wind. Both moorings were free in Ship Cove and once Overture was secured we used the dinghy to get to the wharf and then ambled along the foreshore to allow Peter to view the various plaques on the monument to Captain Cook.



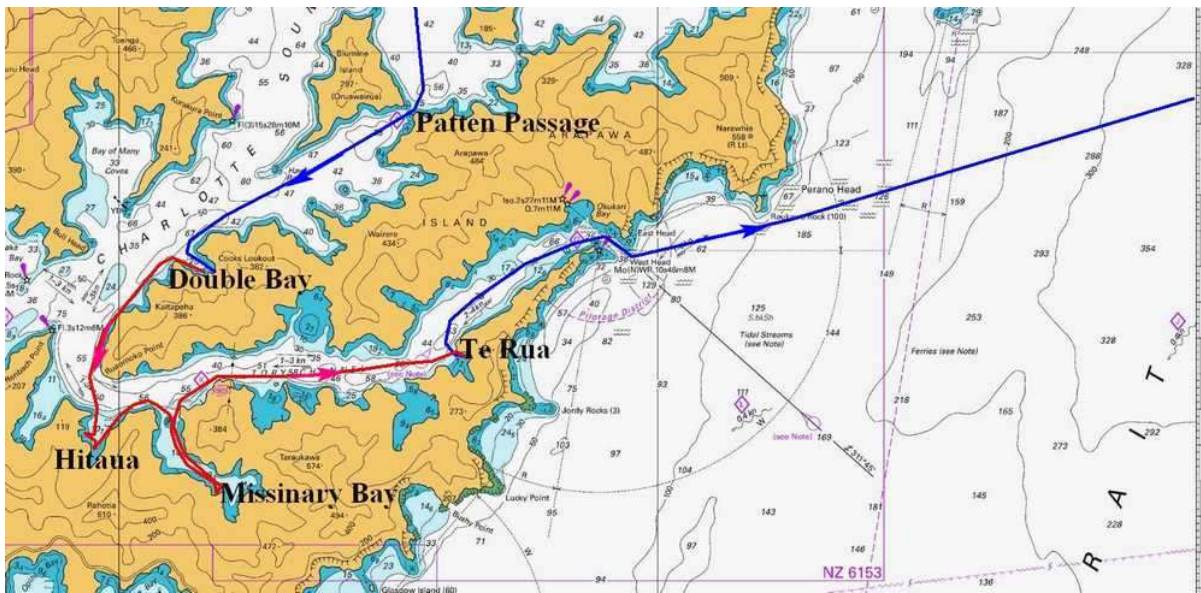
A walk seemed sensible so we took the track to the waterfall. It was well formed and wide at the start but at the half way mark a fallen tree blocked the way.



We scrambled around and were soon at the end of the track. The waterfall was at its most impressive because of the very wet summer.



We had intended to stop at Motuara Island but the southeast wind had arrived and the wharf and anchorage would have been uncomfortable.



I suggested Double Bay on Arapawa Island as a suitable overnight anchorage so we headed there after our walk. As we crossed from Ship Cove to Blumine Island we saw in the distance a Bluebridge ferry adjacent to the western entrance of Tory Channel. The ferry did not turn into the channel but instead came toward us to use the northern entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound for their return to Wellington. As we neared Patten Passage the ferry went by astern of Overture. I was busy at that time trying to work out why my phone had not re-established service. There had been no signal since leaving Penzance but it should have recovered by Cape Lambert. It was not until I did a restart that the phone was again live.

Double Bay had three boats on the four moorings so that meant we could use the last. The wind vanished at dusk and it was another cool night. Sunday came with fog around the top of all of the hills. It was not until after nosing into Hitaua Bay and then Onapua that the fog cleared and we could be warmed by the sun. It seemed a good idea to have lunch while using the mooring in Missionary Bay. While doing that we observed the owner of the new house above a slip on the steep side of the bay cutting back young pine trees.



Peter and I should have had our afternoon swim at Missionary Bay but instead elected to wait until we were at Te Rua. When we arrived the day still seemed warm. I bought Overture to a halt at the appropriate spot in the bay, Keith went up to the foredeck to use the foot switch to lower the anchor and nothing happened. He then came back to the cockpit to see if that switch worked. After some time, and my jiggling the switch on the dashboard there was a slow quiet rumble of the winch and chain. Its speed improved after a bit. I looked with concern.

“You should test whether it winds the chain back up,” I suggested although I felt certain, with a depth of only six metres, we would be able to manage that by hand. Keith tested winding the winch both in and out and all seemed well. Peter and I then went for our dip and that was very short. So close to Cook Strait the water is never warm.

We had another quiet night with the only excitement the Bluebridge ferry passing just after dark



Keith and I were both out of bed at 0630 on Monday. Peter followed once the motor was running. It was just light, cold and calm. The anchor winch refused to work so Peter our younger source of manual strength applied his biceps etc to the chain and the anchor was soon catted and secured. I turned Overture's bow to the west and headed her out of the bay and then to the channel entrance that was three miles away.

Keith had originally thought we would hoist the mainsail in the calm water inside the channel but the lack of wind cancelled that idea. At the channel entrance the tide was flowing against Overture and there was a lot of disturbance. Eventually we pulled clear and headed 75 degrees true to clear Perano Head. Once abeam of there the wind arrived and half of the genoa was unrolled. About fifteen minutes later I unrolled the rest of the sail and stopped the motor. Our speed through the water was soon six rising to seven knots and that was more than enough to get us to our appointment with the tide at Mana. The mainsail remained furled. Occasional small white caps appeared and the sea might have got to a metre in height. The sky was clear and it made for a glorious ride home. We also had some success with the plotter and using its track function. All went well until an alarm sounded with a message. To clear the sound and message the Menu button had to be pushed. That then cancelled the Track command and to reinstate that we pushed the Mode and then the Menu button and progress along the track continued. The problem was the repetitive appearance of alarms about, "no speed data" which seemed odd as the systems all displayed speed.

We crossed the bar around 1230 with just enough water to spare and had to have three attempts to push into the marina. After we had cleaned and tidied the ship Wray Smart joined us for a chat and then it was time to depart. Keith and Peter needed the train to get to Waikanae so I drove them to the Mana station arriving just as the train pulled in. With a quick dash they were aboard and I drove home.