

**Farewell to New Zealand**

# The glow worms of Lake Te Anau

**Around the World in 380 Days**

**Sixth in a series**



By **STEPHEN FROST**  
Herald Staff Writer

After three weeks of dairy farming in Mataura, on New Zealand's South Island, I was more than happy to head off south for the city of Invercargill.

Invercargill sits slightly inland from Bluff, a major fishing port and meat packing centre. Stewart Island is just off the coast from Bluff and is one of the major attractions for travellers. I intended to go to Stewart, but kept putting it off for the three days I was there, because the weather was bad and I was feeling rather lazy.

I did make it down to Bluff, however, with a young lady from Iowa who was educated in Canada. Connie was lovely and I suppose that was another reason I had trouble leaving Invercargill.

At any rate, we both went down to Bluff one afternoon to see the oyster boats coming in and pick up some bargains if we could.

At one cannery, we watched the people separating oysters from their shells. I don't know if any readers have ever tried to open an oyster, but about the only way I can manage it is with a hammer and chisel. These guys opened them with a knife in less time than it takes to bat an eyelid.

When we left, we bought 50 small oysters for \$3.50, the low price thanks in part to Connie's nice smile. I'm sure. That evening she made a chowder with the oysters and fresh fish and vegetables which was superb. Capped off by an evening at the corner pub in good company, it was a most enjoyable day.

**SKI RESORT**

The next day, I caught a bus up to Queenstown, a ski resort in the winter, and a place with spectacular views in the sum-

mer. I was to meet John and his friends, Ralph and Lynn Jeffs there and we would start on a tour of the South Island.

The first time we were there we took a "jet boat ride" up the Shotover and Kararua rivers. The boat is powered by a 350-cubic inch Ford engine and, instead of a propeller, there is a jet-like apparatus that sucks up water from under the boat and blows it out the back. Because of this the boat has an extremely small draft (six inches), goes like a bat out of hell, and is extremely maneuverable.

Farther to the south-east exists the most inaccessible land in New Zealand, Fiordland. It is at once inhospitable and strikingly beautiful. That's assuming you're there on a day when it isn't raining. There are areas in Fiordland that regularly have 350 inches of rain a year.

Because it is so inaccessible, the area was explored late in New Zealand's history, but it is a well-known fact that two warring Maori tribes existed in the area, one driving the other into Fiordland and presumably to extinction. Of course, rumors still abound that there is a lost tribe there and because the area has so much unexplored territory, they flourish.

One other fact of interest is that, recently, zoologists have been finding species of animals in this wet land which were thought to have become extinct decades ago.

For the tourist, the area offers the town of Teanau, located on Lake Te Anau. Up the lake, there's the famous glow worm caves that can be reached by boat in 15 minutes.

**DRY CAVES**  
Most glow worm caves are dry caves; that is, they have no water running through them. The ones at Teanau are

called live caves because they are still being formed by the small river rushing through them to the lake.

To get to the glow worms at the back of the caves, we had to take a short ride in a small boat and then ascend a set of stairs past a waterfall lit by lights.

When we got to the area where we were to board yet another boat, we got a lecture on what not to do when we got into the grotto where the worms were. We weren't to attempt to take pictures, and there was to be absolutely no talking. Both of these would disturb the glow worms to no end and, we were told, they would turn their lights off, so to speak.

From my journal: "Last night we visited the glow worm caves and they proved to be nothing short of mystical, eerie and mind boggling. At the far end of the caves, you're on a boat on a river which flows through the caves. It is utterly black and quiet, with only immense clusters of glow worms like stars in the Milky Way visible. All you hear is rushing water and the effect is unbelievable."

"It's like being on a spaceship and getting an entirely different perspective on the universe. It was the best value of any of the trips offered in and around Teanau."

From Teanau we drove up the Eglington Valley to Milford Sound. We were lucky and it was a fine day, making it one of the most serene places I have ever driven through. The Earl Mountains on one side are very small, but incredibly rugged looking, while further up the valley you come upon the Darren mountains with their glaciers and snow. These mountains drop away into the valley floor in a sheer fall of granite.

**FLASH HOTEL**  
Milford is much the same as many of the sounds in the area, but has a nice pub and a flash hotel for the tourists. More commercial, you might say.

A short walk up the Sound brings you to Bowen Falls, which seem to drop out of nowhere. They're about 250 feet high and the flow of water depends on the amount of rain falling.

The waters in the lakes around here and in Queenstown are reputed to be 98 per cent pure, how they determine this is beyond me. Queenstown pumps its water directly from the lake and it tastes fine, with no chlorine or fluoride. The other two per cent, by the way, is supposed to be trout.

From here we went back up through Queenstown to get to the west coast. We did stay however, for another day or two and went up the Shotover River to see some friends of the Jeffs.

The same trip is advertised as "Skippers and Beyond", the cost being \$12.50. We drove ourselves.

The "Beyond" is a place called the Branches, a spread of 100,000 acres, situated deep in the heart of the Harris and Richardson Mountains. The family that you'll find back on this remote, beautiful spread are the Borrells.

To get to the Branches, we had to drive 30 miles along a one-lane road up the Shotover Gorge. The trip took over three hours and when you see the road you have to travel on, and the way it clings to cliffs a sheer 200 feet above the blue river, you can understand why.

In Canada, we wouldn't attempt it in anything other than a truck or four-wheel drive vehicle. We did it in Ralph's Austin Maxi and it was one of those proverbial white-knuckle rides all the way.

**GOLD RUSH**  
When New Zealanders like a piece of land, they invariably build a road across it. This one is often impassable in the winter and some spots are completely wiped out in the spring.

In all fairness, it was gold, or the lust for it, that built this road.

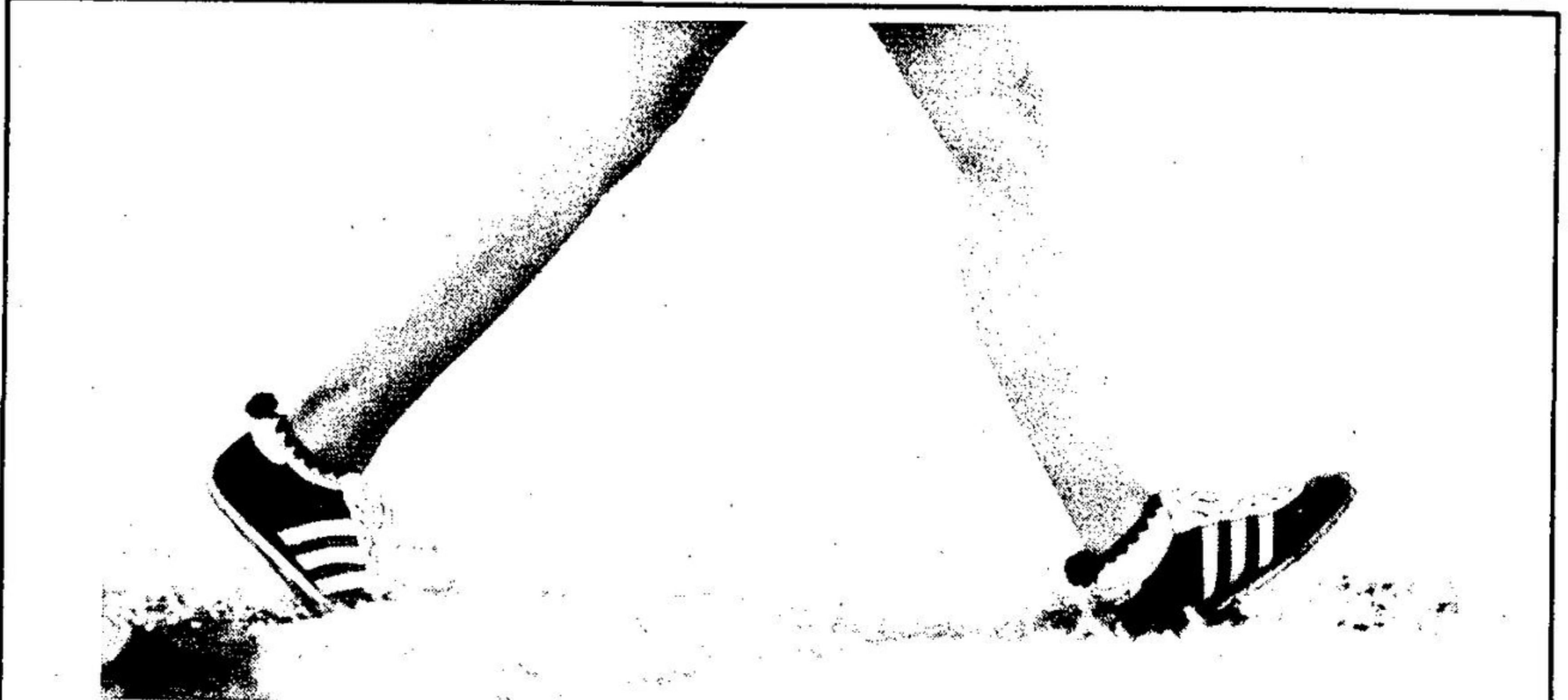
In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the Shotover River was the site of an incredible gold rush, similar in scope to the Yukon rush in Canada. The record for one day's panning for two men is more than 3,000 ounces of gold, worth roughly \$1,960,000 at today's prices. The Shotover remains the second richest gold-bearing river in the world today.

Before you take the high road to the Branches, you invariably travel the low road to Skippers. To get there, we passed over a single-lane suspension bridge anchored in solid bedrock 300 feet above the river. A fine view of this bridge can be had from the top of a bluff on the high road to

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From the top of the Queenstown ski-lift, you can literally see for miles. In the background left. The town sits on Lake Wakatipu, from which all the town's water is pumped directly. The natives claim the water is 98 per cent pure and "two per cent trout". (Photo by John Pladdy)



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At the base of the Fox Glacier, John Pladdy asked the author to take a picture of him holding a chunk of ice that was in the melt water. I was glad to oblige, but he became rather irate when I not-so-inadvertently took a long time to focus. (Herald photo by Steve Frost)



Ralph Jeffs, a friend of the authors, tries his hand (ever hand) at an old miners cable on the Shotover River. The cable enabled prospectors to cross the river as well as bring supplies over. It fell into a period of decay but has since been restored, much to the delight of adventurous souls like Ralph. (Photo by John Pladdy)

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**HOME OF THE WEEK**  
PLAN No. 80-1691  
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This crisply modern three bedroom two storey home design is ideally suited to the narrow residential building lot, yet it contains almost 1,700 square feet of conveniently arranged finished floor area on its two levels. The stylish exterior, finished in mixed vertical and diagonal channel siding, with prominent framed chimneys and a sharply raked roof which could be finished in either rustic-toned shakes or traditional shingles.  
The deeply sheltered entry leads into a compact reception foyer which faces the stairway to the second level. From the foyer, traffic moves naturally to the left, into the large rectangular living room. The living room features a corner positioned, energy-efficient wood burning fireplace, a dramatically sloping ceiling, and sliding glass doors access to a large sunken rear patio.  
The large family room features a second energy-efficient fireplace, which is also corner positioned, and a sliding glass door access to the sunken rear-facing patio. The family room is open to the large U shape kitchen/dinette combination, affording a casual and relaxed lifestyle. The kitchen has an excellent work triangle combination, ample cupboard capacity and generous countertop work surfaces.  
To the rear of the kitchen is a large laundry utility area, containing stacked washer and dryer, furnace and hot water tank, a linen storage closet, and a two piece vanity bathroom. The utility area is conveniently located for serving the upstairs bedrooms as well as the family room and kitchen.  
All three bedrooms are positioned on the second level, accessible via stairway from the entrance foyer. Each has generous closet storage facilities and windows which are strategically positioned to maximize view and natural light, while maintaining privacy from adjacent dwellings. The large master bedroom has full-width closet storage, a three piece ensuite bathroom with tub, and sliding glass doors providing access to a private, front-facing balcony. This is a visually appealing and practical design which provides both comfort and convenience to the medium size family.  
Plans for design No. 80-1691 may be purchased either by the single set, at a cost of \$25.00 for the first set and \$15.00 for each additional set, or by the package. A five set plan package, including the first set, is economically priced at \$135.00 and an eight set package, also including the first set, is only \$175.00.  
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