

# The Boys' Trip...



**L**AST year Darren Shields and I took our sons to Stewart Island. The trip was a fantastic experience for all of us and served to remind me that my boy was growing up, fast.

If I was to get him interested in the things that I loved so much it was clear that I needed to share my experiences with him.

The idea of an annual event was spawned on that Stewart Island sojourn and recently we all headed to South Westland for the second annual 'Boys Trip'. Alistair and Jordan Saville joined the team, driving up from Arrowtown and meeting us at Lake Paringa Lodge.

To make the trip more interesting I armed Jackson, Jordan and James with a camera and instructed them to film their own version of the trip. James is 10, Jordan 12 and Jackson 14. They got on like a house on fire.

Last year while filming on a whitebait stand a character had walked out of the bush and just seemed to materialise beside us. Beansprout lived miles down the coast south of Haast. He looked like a bit of a hermit wearing worn out jandals, torn track pants and blue checked bush shirt. His hair was long and unkempt but his eyes were blue and sparkling. Beansprout lived with his wife and two children in an old DOC hut that had been his home for many years. Clearly they had quite a garden, hence his name. Beansprout was an artist and carver and made his deliveries, after the work had been commissioned, by walking up and down the coast, sometimes for days.

I was fascinated by this character so at the start of 'The Boys Trip' I chartered James Scott's Hughes 500D and set off to visit Beansprout. The flight took about an hour and a half and encompassed many of the great rivers, the Paringa, Arawata and Waitoto. At the mouth of the rivers the whitebaiters were scooping up a few 'bait' and the lads couldn't believe their luck. Scorching down the coast in a helicopter is a pretty wild introduction to the coast. It was blowing a bit too and by the time we headed south of the Haast bridge we were punching a 50knot SW.

We landed, shut down, the boys tumbled out of machine, but Beansprout was nowhere to be seen. "Off delivering some artwork!" I said to James.



"He may not be far away. We'll hang around for a bit."

The hut is at the mouth of the Gorge River, a wild, wonderful spot.

There is an island offshore that suggests crayfish and paua but the ocean was a tempest. Waves heaped up and crashed on to the beach, the bush all around heaved and danced in the wind.

The mouth of the river squeezes out between cliffs and ends in a deep, dark brown pool. Drift wood was everywhere. It was piled up along the rugged coast but there was no sign of Beansprout.

"All this way and we don't even get a cup of coffee," I laughed.

I could tell that James felt a little awkward about the lack of Beansprout but the risk was mine to take. I had booked the helicopter and if he had been home we would have had a great story. The boys ran around, exploring the beach and bush, throwing stones in to the pool and recording a piece to camera about the absence of our would-be star. It became clear that our visit was in vain so we climbed back into the machine and, with the wind up

**ABOVE: 50 knots and building... BELOW LEFT: Beansprout's place; he was out having coffee. BELOW RIGHT: The most picturesque rugby ground in NZ; no stadium here please...**



our tail, raced back up the coast. We landed at the mouth of one of the big rivers, filmed some fishermen, took off again and dropped in to the mouth of the Paringa River.

Merv and Andy had a hut there. It even had a generator. In no time James was fishing, casting a little bibbed Rapala out into the current and hauling it back.

"Keen," said Merv, nodding in James's direction.

"Got one!" yelled the angler and dragged a tiny sea-run brown trout up the grassy bank. Jackson filmed the action. He had slipped in to the role of director/ cameraman. James became presenter and Jordan, who wasn't due until the next day, would share the presenting role with James.

It amazed me just how studiously the boys took up the filming role. We gave them a few pointers here and there but they were like ducks to water and the result was truly awesome.

Peter came over in his jetboat to say giddyay and offered us a ride the next morning.

"Take you up the Hall which flows in to the Paringa. Only takes about half an hour and you wind up in Lake Paringa. Great trip!" he added.

"Cook you a feed of bait for lunch" added Merv.

The guys had only just met us. We fell out of the sky, landed in their lap and they treated



# Graeme Sinclair



us like long lost friends. People are like that on the coast. Friendly, genuine, give you the shirt off their backs. We agreed to return and I asked if I could get my Honda ATV down this far.

"Don't worry," said James, "Meet me in the paddock at 8.00am and I'll lift the bike in." That's what he did and next day included helicopters, jet boats, whitebait patties and brown trout. Not a bad range of adventures for the boys.

The rest of our party arrived that afternoon and the boys headed off to look for eels, went kayaking and generally had a ball. Dean Trolle, Westland Guiding Services, was our guide and the boys thought that Deano was great. Darren and I rode everywhere on our own after the lads met Dean. They were in his car. He was great with them.

An hour before dark Dean took the boys out on to the lake to catch a trout. Beautiful, calm evening, not a breath of wind.

Lake Paringa Lodge is managed by Ken and Mata, wonderful people who could not do enough for us. Out back is a sizeable clear area ideal for a helicopter to settle on. James flew in. "Great night for a deer!" he said as I was bundled in.

Darren jumped in the back and away we went.

To say that was a great flight in no way describes the sheer beauty of that experience.



The Southern Alps reared up behind the lake, the green canopy of bush tumbled down from the yellow snow grass swooping around the lake and moving right on down to the coast. Here and there huge rivers would slice their path through magnificent valleys. The sun was riding high up the bush line as we roared across the tops. Fingers of snow lay strewn around and, with no door on my side, the air was crisp and clean. I had to tie my legs together and wedge them under the foot rest to stop my right leg from trying to leap out into 100knots of breeze.

We did not see as many deer as I expected but in reasonably short order we had two yearling stags or 'spikers' slung under the machine.

Eventually, just on dark, we slid off our lofty perch and chased the darkness back to Lake Paringa. Dean and the boys were just head-

ing in after their fishing trip and the lake was like a black mirror with the bush brooding all around. The scene was breathtaking. We slipped into the clearing and dropped the animals. James settled and eased the throttle. I was helped out and in to my wheel chair.

"For old times sake!" said James climbing back in. The power came on and he was gone.

Three excited young anglers bounded over, their eyes wide and faces covered in huge smiles. Jordan had caught a trout.

Every little adventure had been captured on tape. It was a great day.

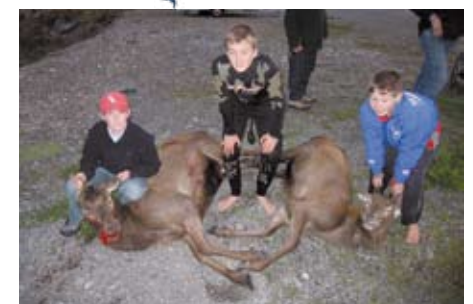
In the morning we joined Sid on his whitebait stand. It was the highlight of the trip for Jordan. He was mesmerised by the schools of bait that swam steadily in to the net.

It was a blustery day and rain threatened.

On the whitebait stand in a little known part of South Westland life was good. I was with my son and his laughter and happiness put a lump in my throat. No one can ever take those kinds of experiences away from us. Adventures stacked on top of each other and you will get to see it all. All of the great people we met, all of the beautiful things we saw and so many adventures.

The one thing you will not get to do though is revel in those experiences unless you bundle up your kids and immerse yourself in outdoor New Zealand. As a school room our outdoors are unsurpassed. Our boys were filled with wonder and learnt a great deal about respecting themselves, each other and the environment. As a parent I found another way to express my love for James. He's a great kid and I'm very proud of him.

Next year we will be away again, perhaps even back to South Westland. Maybe this time Beansprout will be home and I'll get that cup of coffee.



**TOP:** The team; assembled and ready for adventure. **LEFT:** Whitebaiting on a beautiful river; another experience to share with your kid. **BELOW:** Learning to hunt - every kid should have the opportunity to learn outdoor skills.

