



## Peter and Bill's fantastic trout bumming adventure South Island New Zealand



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Peter and Bill have been fishing together for getting on to two decades. After our last time in NZ Peter convinced Bill that we should emulate several folk we know who 'trout-bum around' in a camper and to look even wider afield – so this is what transpired.

### **Mon 20 Nov**

Mark had put us onto a camper rental firm – [RoadRunnerRentals](http://RoadRunnerRentals) in Christchurch where we picked a Mercedes Sprinter. Headed off to overnight at Glenariffe Stream.

### **Tue 21 Nov**



*The morning reveals a beautiful backdrop for our campsite.*

The stream was running hard but we later discovered that Double Hill Creek was contributing a lot of the water.



No rises so we resorted to nymphing. Bill had one good rainbow on for long enough to get the spare line onto the reel but then proceeded to have it spit the fly.

Further upstream and the Glenariffe above the junction turned into a beautiful spring fed

creek. Peter thought a good trout had come out from under the weeds to refuse his fly but nothing rising and no interest shown in our offerings.

Our next night was at one of Mark's secret lakes. We were a bit disappointed to discover the lake is the highest it has been in years – certainly not optimal like it was a couple of years ago when Mark was here. Deep mud prevented us from getting to the recommended river mouth. Shore fishing produced only dropped fish so I'll not bore you with the details

### **Wed 22 Nov**

The Greys River was the scene of some awesome fishing for Peter so he was keen to return. Unfortunately without a 4WD we couldn't get to that part of the river. Instead we were faced by an uninspiring coloured up river with muddy edges. Peter dropped one he thought was 4lb material. Bill was totally fishless as sighting 2m eel doesn't count. By lunch we decided to punch out and head to the headwaters of the Hakataramea.

The upper Haka is a beautiful freestone stream. We were concerned that water depth looked a bit shallow but Peter proved our fears unfounded landing a very solid 49cm rainbow then a poorer conditioned 51cm. He couldn't locate his camera until after releasing his first. Meanwhile Bill spotted a number of good fish





but frustratingly couldn't tempt them.

We moved down to setup camp and Bill failed again. Even with Peter's successful dry fly, unnatural drag spooked the rising fish after a short follow. A pattern was setting in and morale was low.

After dinner the wind had dropped and another foray was made to the previous pool – success, and a highly acrobatic and brightly coloured 56cm rainbow jack was landed. On the board and all's back right with the world.



#### **Thu 23 Nov**

After breakfast we went downstream to Cattle Creek. This has changed a lot since Peter was last here so it was a long walk before we got to fishy water. As to be expected Peter was first on with a 56cm rainbow jack.



Bill spotted a rising fish which he successfully landed 51cm of solid rainbow jack using Dad's Favourite dry fly. Always great to watch the face come up and sip the fly down.

**Fri 24 Nov**

Morning was cool and fishing hard. Peter rubbed it in by catching this 53cm brown on nymph.

**Sat 25 Nov**

Flowing into the head of Lake Tekapo is the Coal River. We'd been told that if the river was in good flow that this time of the year should see big rainbows running up to spawn.



*Peter on the Coal above the bridge.*

The river above the bridge was running hard with few good trout lies so we went downstream and fished back to the van. On the way down we had a surprise when



we flushed out three pheasant including one very impressive male – Peter had never seen them in the flesh.

Almost back to the van Bill spotted one actively feeding on nymphs in a gentle run.

The trout followed but refused a number of drifts with Bill's nymph but behaved well by staying in place long enough for him to tie on a Dad's Favourite. First cast got a reaction but Bill fluffed it by striking too early. Surprisingly the fish continued to feed unspooked. A subsequent cast was taken in deliberate fashion and the delayed rod lift ("God Save The Queen" was uttered) was rewarded with a well hooked active fish – much bigger than expected. It ended up 47cm and around 3lb.



Peter dropped one under the road bridge only and didn't have a good day.



We'd been promised great evening fishing at Lake Poaka so we got a prime position. We had a private point into the lake with a picnic table, though trees surrounding the lake made for difficult fly casting. Surface action was slow to start but just on dark there were some rises. Bill had a big fish bust off his secret marabou muddler pattern but

tying on another with 10lb leader proved the solution with another on in short order. In the end two rainbow hens were landed – both 53cm but curiously the first was pressing 5lb whereas the second looked even deeper but weighed just over 4lb.

**Sun 26 Nov**



*Morning rises had Peter take the 'Gentleman Fly Fishing' to extreme.*

Our plan was to go up to the head of Lake Pukaki. Locals had recommended that we avoid the Tasman River (too much glacial flour in the water) and instead look to the clear spring creeks on the farm flats.

Bill thought we were in for a great day when he spotted a stationary trout. First cast with the dry was short but the next managed to line the fish. Each of us managed to spook one more and then ran out of water.

What next? Mark had suggested Loch Cameron. It was mid afternoon and few were rising (though they were flying into the air chasing damselflies). Bill first hooked and landed a 47cm 4 lb brown then later punched the



woolly bopper into his upper arm – ouch (double ouch as it was deeper than the mostly crushed barb!).



The evening rise was less productive than the previous night. Peter and Bill both got busted off or missed strikes. Bill is running out of his secret night flies with them taken by trout or trees. Meanwhile Peter discovered that ducks are partial to Twilight Beauty flies and major oral surgery was required to release the bird.

### **Mon 27 Nov**

We decide to move on and travelled via the Clutha River/Lake Dunston.

A small point protruded into the river resulting in shallow mud flats downstream and easy (dry) access out to a steep dropoff – perfect. On walking to the water a number of trout were spotted cruising. Seemed to be nymphing across the flats and rising to surface bugs upstream of the point but .... no amount of fly changes led to cracking the code!

### **Tue 28 Nov**

Off to Glenorchy and Diamond Creek.

Pretty stream but does have some of the dreaded dydimos. Bill managed to bustoff on a good sized (rainbow?) in the first good dropoff. We struggled along working the likely lies until some bushwalkers told us of a quiet pool with lots of big rising trout some distance upstream where the water slowed. When we got there we didn't see rises but did see a lot of good fish holding station in the current. Peter later estimated 30 residents. Had a number of follows of Bill's dry but eventually they lost interest. Further upstream a number of modest size and the odd impressive were spotted. In due course a 38cm brown was landed by Peter.

Back to the car and moved to our camp location at Diamond Lake.

### **Wed 29 Nov**



*Morning panorama.*

Next morning we drove back through Queenstown and along the Devil's Staircase alongside Lake Wakitipu. Fished the Mataura above Nokomai Station – very dirty – but the Mataura higher at Garston was clear – a puzzle. Anyway a few fish spotted but none responded.

Mark had told us of a little known stream feeding into the Mataura and the site of some hugely enjoyable times for him. Peter and I had very different afternoons. Peter spotted a few fish on the bottom in between the spring creek weed but had no response to nymph or dry. Meanwhile Bill spent perhaps an hour with one actively rising fish trying most every fly in his collection to no avail. At least the fish didn't spook.

The experience at dusk on the Mataura was similar to the afternoon though this time Bill had perhaps 8 fish in his run. One bustoff at the tippet ring again for Bill – no more tippet rings this trip!!! Very tricky current was his excuse for not

landing a fish. No sympathy for pulling the fly out of one huge mouth through overeagerness though.

### **Thu 30 Nov**



The water is so clear and flat we can count the spots on the brown trout. Tricky to cast to successfully but so much fun to spot them and pass the fly past them – catching isn't everything.

We had been told in the pub last night that there might be good fishing in a tributary of the Mataura called Robert Creek above Fairlight. We headed up there after breakfast, though as it happened we actually fished the Mataura. Bill spotted two: spooking one and losing sight of a big green backed brown while carrying out minor surgery to remove a nymph (fly) from his finger. Even with crushed barbs this can be exciting! Little blood involved thankfully. The fish was hard against the near edge. Bill had caught his fly in the grass and then caught himself as he belly crawled to retrieve it without spooking the trout.

Headed to Mossburn Country Park caravan park for a break from freedom camping. The intent was to use this as a base to access the Hamilton Burn. Peter was reluctant to scramble down from Wreys Bush Mossburn Road bridge. Bill went down but the water was very shallow. We stayed to 8:30PM with only some rises. Bill managed to miss the strike on one and pull the fly out of the mouth of another – is there a pattern setting in here? Also he has been very grumpy tying on anything but a dry – as for “enticing a rise” ... whyever would we be doing that? So many big trout in very shallow water. Much of Bill's casting was guided by Peter spotting from the bridge or to surface movement indicating trout rather than a true rise – few mayflies on the water ... shame. Many trout were spooked after Bill had blind cast to an area. Most were at the foot of the pool – not what he had expected. Definitely somewhere to go if the water was up a bit – also we should stay later.

### **Fri 1 Dec**

Off to Lake Mavora etc or so we thought. We took a side visit to the Hamilton Burn. This time Peter went downstream and spotted heaps in the 50cm class and one well above 60. Some appeared to be willow grubbing contrary to Peter's belief that it was too early in the season. Bill continued the pattern of underestimating how shallow browns can hold in at the foot of pools. After wasting some time here we set off for the Von River. This has been on Peter's bucket list for ages – our mate Ian will understand.







*The views were spectacular.*

Unfortunately the fishing was basically non-existent. Bill spotted the only fish sighted at our first site and it was nothing to rave about. We found an excellent campsite beside the river at the confluence of another stream.

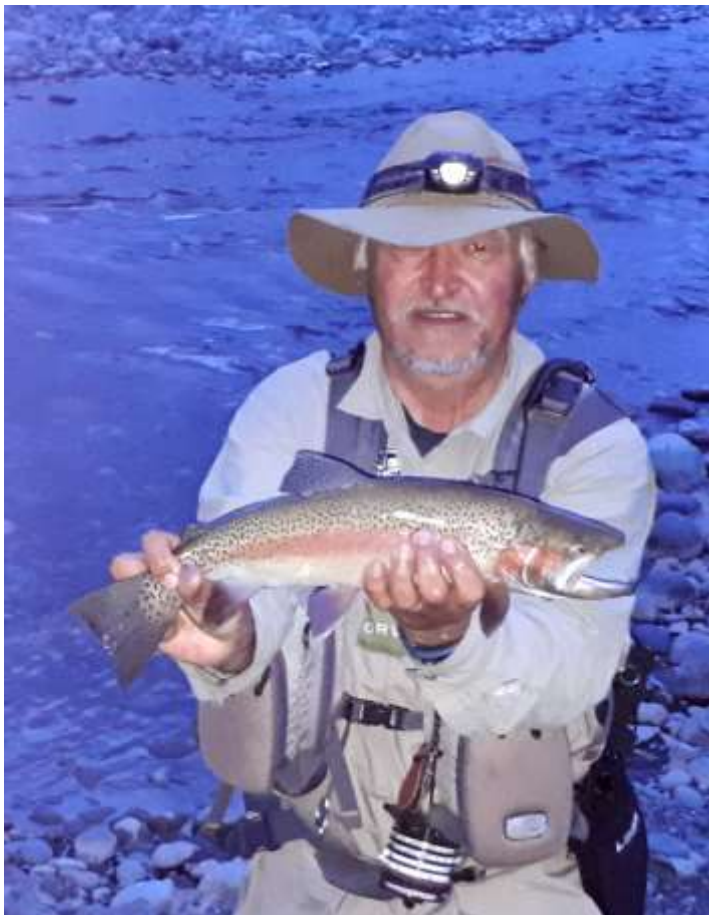
The join resulted in a couple of deep pools and we hoped for an evening rise to restore confidence. We prospected late in the afternoon with Peter spotting a 40+ in amongst the rocks. We each caught a bunch but unfortunately they were easily assessed as undersized in any



jurisdiction.

### **Sat 2 Dec**

Too many sandflies on the Von and those at Mavora Lakes are reputed to be horrendous. Skipped the lakes and fished the Upuk today. We managed to get the camper down the access track without incident. Not a lot of action till Bill got to one deep pool dropping off from a long rapid. Spooked a good rainbow on the eye of the pool. Peter broke a drought with a 48cm rainbow in a run on nymph.



At dusk we went back but nothing happening. Close to the pumphouse we saw two eels but the hint of a rise. Bill spotted a couple of fish disturbed by the eels. One tried to chase an eel away!. Anyway rises by the fish were followed by Bill landing a 46cm jack.



### Sun 3 Dec

We tried downstream but the structure was nothing like Bill remembered. Nothing spotted though we were extremely troubled by the wind and the swooping terns.

Bill was getting lazy and was wandering, unsuccessfully, looking for rising fish. He ended up at the deep pool and landed 'the one that got away yesterday'. 47cm rainbow hen on the iron blue dun.



Was lunchtime so we repaired to the Dales Road access. This was upstream and the second location our Gore mate Barry had taken Ian, Lyall and Bill to a couple of years ago.

Peter headed upstream for little joy especially given the wind. Bill headed down looking for dry fly water – the #14 iron blue dun hasn't been off the line since it caught the fish last night. Saw more than three in one pool but they weren't looking up. In due course arrived at a willow banked run where he had spotted all the fish yesterday – it was going to be a long walk back to the van: even our walkie talkies were just about beyond the ragged edge of their range.



At the risk of JQ and Luke accusing Bill of becoming a 'dry fly purist' ... "it was just like one of those fishing videos" ... a good sized fish was spotted in relatively shallow water, not rising but holding station. One cast a bit short but didn't trouble the fish. The next landed as quietly as one can manage with this wind, drifted just in line with the fish, it

turned to take the fly and further to return to station, pause, rod lifted and it was on for young and old. 54cm brown hen added to Bill's tally. It just does not get better than this!

### **Mon 4 Dec**

Hotfooted it back to Garston. Just to put us in the picture there were fish at our feet on arrival this time. Unfortunately they hadn't read the script and failed to connect. Lunch brought a pause to the proceedings though Peter was seen casting one handed with a sandwich in the other. Recces up and down just brought tales of woe with rising fish spitting hooks.

Rises were sporadic from about 9pm. Bill managed to hook one while the fly drifted downstream in preparation for another cast – these Mataura browns are good at throwing the hook! Was really hard to handle the situation in the dark but extremely disappointing regardless as we hadn't landed any around here.

### **Tue 5 Dec**

A long drive to the Taieri.



*Peter at lunch on the bank*

*Bill's first real cast brought this pretty brown – first fish from the Taieri. Were we going to have a red letter day?*

Subsequently many fish were seen taking Bill's fly but seemed to immediately drop off. Two others were well connected but eventually threw the hook.







*Later the evening saw Peter land a 41cm specimen.*

Bill got his fly rubbed off in the weeds by a fish spotted at our campsite and his evening continued downhill.

### **Wed 6 Dec**

Left the Taieri and after a long drive fished Cattle Creek portion of the Haka again. Sighted a large number but only one rising – quickly stopped before Bill could have a good go at it. Five fish in one hole refused to rise and ignored nymphs.



*Peter hooked a fat 50cm rainbow hen through an 'enticed rise'.*

Bill spent almost quarter of an hour on one fish using multitude flies with no success. Later embarrassed himself by almost stepping on a 60+cm in a foot of water next to the bank – will he never learn!

**Thu 7 Dec**



We left the Haka heading for Omarama and the Ahuriri River along with their 'lagoons' (really billabongs). The dirt road started with a sign 'no camping for 24km – Private Property' – after that you enter a conservation area where free camping is permitted. Unfortunately the key access point was taken. The fishing guide working upstream gave us some advice on an informal access above the lagoons. Well ... Peter may have misheard because it took us 1km of struggling through tussock to get to the water.

Peter was first on via a blind cast but dropped the fish. Fortunately he was back on again in a moment and landed a 50cm rainbow hen. Sometime later he landed a similar one.

*Not the best of photos (though no fingers in view this time)*

Meanwhile Bill was having attitude problems. The wind was blowing a gale from upstream



making it pretty much impossible to cast. Surprisingly the terns were working the water eating insects and miracle of miracles a fish rose also chasing the insects. Bill cast towards it but another fish closer and downstream splashed. A quick line retrieve and the indicator bubble was rushing in the right direction. 'Fish On' and the acrobatics began. The fish continued to refuse to come to the net and finally threw the hook at the last stages. A good look up close revealed a solid rainbow hen in the 40s. Attempts to repeat this exploit failed.

The decision was made to move on as the wind was getting worse. Overnighted at Lake Poaka.



## Fri 8 Dec

Twizel River sounded a good idea though we were momentarily distracted by a HUGE fish cruising the edge of the canal.



Unlike many of the streams we've fished this trip, the Twizel River was up. Favourite holes were much deeper and few fish were spotted. Only one rising fish was seen and cast to with no response.

Lunch and the winds picked up ahead of a forecast storm. We did a bit touring along the Pukaki Canal.

*We dropped in to look at the Lake Ohau control gates and chanced on this happy angler landing a 20+lb rainbow.*



An evening trip back to Loch Cameron was to be our last fishing session. Gusty winds and fish rising inconsistently (and studiously ignoring our flies) made for a frustrating conclusion to our fishing.

## **Sat 9 Dec**

Campervan at Twizel again. Hasn't really rained at all since we arrived and then it started just when we were trying to clean and dry our gear ready to come home. All in all a great trip that deserves to be done again soon.

Read the full blog and see lots more pictures at:

<https://glenysandbill.wordpress.com/category/nz-nov-dec-2017/?order=asc>