

# Whispers OF THE past



**OWEN CLOUGH**

G'day, Owen here

# Thank You

for taking an interest in my book,  
I hope you'll enjoy the first 3 chapters  
with my compliments.

let me know what you think

[cluffyschariot@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:cluffyschariot@yahoo.co.nz)

visit my website

[www.owencloughbooks.com](http://www.owencloughbooks.com)

Like & Share on my book with your friends on

[www.facebook.com/Book1WhispersofthePast](http://www.facebook.com/Book1WhispersofthePast)

# Chapter One

Looking back on what happened to me and my mates, I'm still in a bit of a daze. Where do you start? How do you put it down on paper? I'm not a writer, but I need to categorise what cropped up over the last twenty months or so, not to tell the world as such, but try to and clear my own head about the things that went on up there in the Tongariro National Park. I have kept it quiet, well the government told me to and anyway who the hell will believe my story, it's so unbelievable, but it did happen, and I need to put it down in writing so even I can understand it.

Officially the Government will take a dim view of me if it got out, they will come down on me like a ton of bricks they said. But I need to get the story down on paper for my sake and bugger the consequences.

My name is Bob Kydd, 31 years-old ex-airforce, driver by trade, a keen tramper. I enjoy history, the bush, mountains and music. My two mates Shane Langford 30 ex-army, overseas service in Timor, motor mechanic, he can put his hand to anything, Samuel McInnes, 30 ex-army, he works for the Department of Conservation "DOC," with a degree in conservation. Three blokes from different backgrounds with a common love of being in our national parks of New Zealand, close as mates can be. Furthermore, we all have a passion for music. Sam could play about five instruments, a pretty talented individual. Funny how we met. We were all in the services at the time,

stationed at Linton Military camp on a driver's course, we ended up in the same hut, we were even assigned the same truck, and just hit it off. They called me Brilly or Brill, the name left over from the Second World War, "Brill cream boy" so Brilly or Brill stuck. Shane was, Grunt. He scared the hell out of me for a man of his size creeping around without being seen or heard whilst blending into the surrounding bush it might be because of his Maori heritage a good man to have on your side. I only saw him as a bloke with an all year tan, light at that. My eyesight was really good, and he could still get close before I could catch a sign of him, best to have him on your side. Then, there was Samuel: "Sam" was the Hunter, as excellent or even better than Grunt in the bush, skilled with a gun, an excellent tracker, and could read the bush, including the weather by just looking at the sky. A natural bushman. A quiet man, deep. All big men seem to have these characteristics. Both blokes were far better than I in the bush, though I enjoyed the tramps, the mountains, fresh air on my face. Shooting a rifle was easy for me as I had a marksman badge for the effort, from the air force, though I don't think that cut any water with my mates, they just seemed to have this perfection with any type of weapon

I was the shortest of the bunch, the other two were about the same height just over 2 meters, 6'5," I'm about 1.7 meters, 5'6," now, and again, they would call me "runt". On the rugby field, a different kettle of fish, I could tackle those blokes with ease. It was always nice to drop them to the ground. Big blokes cannot run without legs, and I used to get them every time. We played rugby while at Linton, to fill in when their team was short, another bonding I suppose. We also played a bit of club stuff while in the Manawatu. I even played against them

a few times gaining their respect because a little fella like me could drop them like a sack of spuds and that was enjoyable. I just loved tackling those big fellas, and Shane, thought he was quick, but down he would go when I got to his legs. Our love of the outdoors, quiet nights in the bush, listening to the night sounds, made us close, more like brothers. We were together for over six months, and when we left to wherever, we always kept in touch as much as possible.

Eventually, we all left the services. We made a pact to keep in touch, and do at least one good tramp a year together. We have every year since, in fact, we can get in a couple if we are lucky. We all have a choice to think of, a place to go. We have done a few tramps now, Fiordland, Mount Aspiring, Able Tasman, Waikaremoana, and so on.

This time it was Sam's pick, he suggested Tongariro, he thought, it might be good to include some pig shooting in at the same time. As a DOC employee, they were getting worried about the amount of porkers in the National Park. He said, it would be a good tramp. He will arrange for a chopper to lift out the dead-uns, as long as we bring them back to a pick up point of his making.

We were all for that, humping Captain Cookers out of the bush is hard work. Captain James Cook brought pigs with him to New Zealand, gifting them to local Maori, and of course, they bred. They occasionally escaped into the bush and formed the wild populations that we have today. As a result, feral pigs in New Zealand are often referred to as Captain Cookers. These wild ones look quite different than most domestic breeds. They have a distinctive shape. Large shoulders, smaller rear quarters, larger

snouts and tusks, with a straight tail, a hairier body, more than the domestic ones. Don't give them any leeway as they will turn on you as quick as a wink.

We decided to take an extra few weeks off work, on top of the holidays that gave us six weeks out there in the wide-open space of the Tongariro Plateau.

Living in the South Island, I was working on the Christchurch rebuild, after the devastating earthquakes they had from 2010 to 2012. Plenty of work for drivers, big machine stuff, and making good money. None of us being married was a bonus. Shane was living in Petone Wellington working for Ford, all his family were from the far north. Sam was a rover for DOC, so he could be anywhere, though his family home Dunedin was in the far south of New Zealand. He was a cunning sod actually, choosing the Tongariro area, as he would incorporate this tramp into his job, so did not have to take leave. Lucky bugger, I envied his job sometimes, though not in winter.

So we had a good old chinwag on Skype, decisions were made, and we picked a date, the middle of February to head out. Getting holidays was not too hard, which we pencilled in. We talked about what we needed to take, six weeks in the bush you really have to prepare. Then I started to write lists. Everything had to pack in, pack out, so a lot of thought was required. We should be ok for meat, we would live off the land, and there were plenty of pigs. I mean, that's what we were going to cull, but also deer, goat, and possum. People cannot get their head around eating possum, It tastes just like chicken though, some say it can be tough depending how it is cooked it can be gamey

and it is an acquired taste, but nothing wrong with it, cook it for three hours and the meat just falls off the bone. The possum, is a curious animal, it's not afraid of human scent. Make a noise they will be up a tree looking down at you, so easy to knock off. You just have to be careful, as they can carry "TB." As long as there are no white spots in the liver, they are good as gold to eat. Therefore, meat will be plentiful. Just the other basics, we would have to think about for the whole period, and that was regularly left to me. I was also the first aider, even though we all were competent. The other blokes still had army first aid packs war zone stuff. So we were lucky in that respect, perks of the job eh!

Those army packs were the serious stuff. Bandages, dressings, tape, chest wound dressings, Atropine injection syringes, Intravenous equipment. The list went on and on. You had to have a bit of an idea how to use it all. We all had some training. Really, they were only there if needed, and we hoped it would not be used. So we thought. Legally, probably not, as they had things in those packs, drugs and such like that we were not supposed to have. Hell, some rules are meant to be broken, if they helped us when something went wrong, that's good isn't it?

We will be in contact a lot until we leave, and it's a good chance to catch up with my mates' families as well. We were safety conscious, and the families needed to be kept in the loop, they would know where we will be at any given time, well, up to a point. No cell phone towers where we were going.

Shane's parents were really great. His Mum was a quarter or eighth Maori, his Dad's a retired a builder now. Grunt had



a good handle on the building trade as well, an all rounder. His Mother, loved to talk about her family. I enjoy her stories. Not as though she lived the Maori life, or spoke the language, she made sure her children learnt a bit about their Maori background, just so they could remember who and where he was from. I had a Maori third great aunt way back, so listening to his Mum talk about her family conjured up warm feelings of my dad talking about the early days of our family in New Zealand. It would be great to find this aunt of mine somewhere in the past.

We would catch up with his parents in Wellington. I would pick up Shane at his place. His parents were down visiting so it would all tie in. I was looking forward to it.

Sam's folks were so different to him, his Dad an accountant his Mother a teacher. the apple couldn't fall further from the tree. To have a son as a hunter was a bit unusual, but they were proud of him and he did have his degree. His Mum would say, "Oh our son lives in the bush or mountains." They were from Dunedin, and ancestors from Scotland. He said his third Great Grandparents were from Falkirk.

Sam's Mum was really keen for him to meet a girl. Whenever he went home, there was a young lady around for dinner. Sam joked about it to us, "Mum and her horse flesh. I'm always interested to see whom she has jacked up this time. I feel sorry for the girls." He would say, "We have nothing in common, but Mum would still insist I take them home. So as soon as we are out of the place, we would go down to the pub for a few drinks and a laugh. She would tell me all about how she was



manipulated into coming.” Nice girls, but like us he’s not ready to get tied down.

Me, well, I might have been a disappointment to my Dad. He was a fisherman out of Riverton at the bottom of the South Island. Funny, how I never ran into Sam, or his family, coming from the south, until I met up with him in the services. I use to puke in a bathtub, bloody useless in any type of boat, which left Dad horrified. They tried every medication, including witchcraft, to stop me puking but nothing worked. I use to love the boat, the smell of the sea, but once out in it, I would feed the fishy’s. Therefore, to be a driver was a bit of a let down to him, though he never showed it. My sister took over for me. She was the perfect skipper, loved the sea, the rougher the better, she was the apple of Dad’s eye.

Dad was the only one to move from the North Island, born in Auckland, went south as a young man on the oyster boats and stayed. He went home on holiday, met Mum up in Whangarei, they married, then went to live in Invercargill. Both my sister and I were born down there in the Deep South. So there we were, three average blokes, planning a nice six weeks away from the hustle and bustle of work, no worries in the world, looking forward to the mountains, and freedom of the wide-open places.

Things were coming together pretty well by the end of January. I had most of the provision list worked out and also had booked the mountain radio’s. We never go anywhere without them on any tramp. They can be life or death. I have spoken to the boys quite a few times, making sure that at least one of us had a GPS

phone. I'm still old fashioned. My phone can text and that's it. The others will take their phones with them. They were good cameras as well as nice and light. Sam also wanted a record of how many pigs we culled. The phone was ideal for that. I would take my very small, slim line camera, that would fit into my top pocket. It takes photo's good enough for me. I also found in Dick Smiths Shop, a Multi Function Panel USB Power Solar for 30 dollars that was light and easy to slip into the pack. We can keep our phones charged, a bit of a bonus.

Ammo was also a big thing. Six weeks is a long time, so we had to make sure that we had enough to last. There was no point firing away willy nilly, without hitting a thing, so every shot had to count. Even if you are a good shot, things out of your control can happen. You could wound, or even miss what you are shooting at. We have done a bit of shooting together before and have a pretty good routine. Sam and Shane lock on to one animal. One covers the shot, usually it goes down, but if not the second bloke is there to make the kill if necessary. I am the backup. I'm down on the beast like a bolt out of hell, after we don't see movement, cut its throat, or to finish it off if need be. Now and again I do the firing, if it's a clean shot. I don't mind playing second fiddle to them as they are better than I am, but I do have good eyes and can pick up movement up to a 1000 metres, so they look to me as a human binoculars. It works well, up until now, we have had a 99 percent kill rate, only once when we all cocked it up and the bloody pig turned on us. Three bullets in him and he came for us in a rage. Shit on a blanket, I have never climbed a tree so quickly in all my life. I beat the other two buggers. I was up into the leaves before them, giving them encouragement where the old boar was in relative to their

arse. It was funny to see calm, cool Grunt and Sam climbing over each other, as they tore up the tree, I wish I had an iPhone then.

This was the once, we sure learnt from it, so we made very sure that the animal is dead as a dodo before we moved. We worked as a team, I did the spotting the others did the killing. We only killed for food usually, but if we went into an area where there were a lot of animals we would shoot as many as we could. All this stuff has been detrimental to our bush. New Zealand is a land of birds, but since all the mammals have been introduced, they have sure ruined our native bush. They have no protection, and are fair game.

This hunt was going to be a bit different. Everyone will shoot as much as possible, this was a cull not for food as such. So I was looking forward to having my fair share of culling.

Sam rang to have a yarn, and to tell me he had arranged a chopper to drop us in, which would save us the hike. It was a good day's walk. This would be a bonus, good old DOC. He went on to say they have a hut where we were going, which could be used as a base camp for the duration. From there we could branch out in any direction for any length of time that was required. If the weather were bad, we would have a dry roof over our heads to go back to. He asked me to pass the news on to Shane. Also, he had arranged to leave our vehicles at the Army camp at Waiouru. I was over the moon about this, as it's always a worry when you go out to leave your vehicle unattended for any length of time.

So things were coming together well. All I had to do now is make sure my rifle was ok. I had an old 303 which was my Great Grandfather Thomas's gun, from WW2, a Lee-Enfield with a 10 round magazine. How he got away by not handing it in after the war goodness knows. It was passed down to the oldest son of each generation, so now it was mine, properly registered with the police. Well, I was. The only change I had done with this gun was to add telescopic sites to it, which made all the difference. It was a fine gun. It made me feel part of history, and in contact with my for-bearers. I was only three when my Great Grandfather died. With me being keen on history and genealogy, anything to do with our past, I'm all ears.

In the meantime, things had come together well. The boat crossing arranged a couple of days earlier than necessary. There was enough time to be had with Shane in Wellington. His parents were there staying with him and I wanted to ask his Mum some questions about the far north. I hoped she could remember something. Talking to his parents brought their stories of family alive and evoked memories of my mums family in the far north. Furthermore, I wanted to ask his parents if their family ever heard of a relation of mine, this third great-aunt Mary Tilly nee Hohepa, who married my third great Uncle David Tilly, in Kaitaia about 1891. It was a long shot, but I was really interested in finding out about this part of my family, and had no luck to date.

A phone call to my folks, Dad had booked my wagon over on the ferry as he was a member of the motor club and got a good discount. Then gave me his card ID number, proof that it was him. Saying, "Well, I belong to the club and have not had much

time to use my card so the family should get something out of it.” Anything for a discount I’m all for it. So I was booked on Blue Bridge for a 10am sailing from Picton to Wellington. I would be at Shane’s for a late lunch, about 2 pm, then out for tea with him and his folks. Last-minute preparations the next day. Then off north we would head.

Sam had popped home for a couple of days also. I got a phone call to say he would catch me in Christchurch and head up with me, which ended up bloody good. We would all be together in Wellington before we head north. I rang Shane again “G’day mate. Sam will be with me, put up the bunk for him as well.” “Good as gold Brill, see you about 2 pm Saturday”

Mrs. Langford will be in her element with us being there. She had a couple of daughters who were not married and Sam reckons she was trying to palm them off onto us. They didn’t have their kids until they were in their middle 30s. Lizzy was 29 now, Carolyn 28, Shane is coming up 31 while we were away. So everyone was there to say happy birthday, except his sisters who lived in Auckland. They would ring before we left.

I have to admit Carolyn and Liz are great ladies, but whenever we meet we just talked, had a few drinks, but it didn’t move on from there. Their brother, my mate Shane, is a shy bloke around a woman. He clams up, but out with us get him going and you have to smother him to shut him up. I remember his Mum saying, when he finds the right woman, he’ll be gone in a day. Yea right, I thought.

So it was time to go. I locked up the flat. Mrs Hill next door will look after the key and mail. Any bills, well, I would worry about

that when I got back. Power off and the fridge emptied. Pack full at about 40 kgs was a bit heavy just under half my weight. We were going for six weeks. I had sent the food requirements for the boys, so they would get the stuff that we agreed to. We'll sort our packs out together before we head off, making sure everything was fairly shared with food, etc. That way, if someone loses their pack, or it drowns in a river, we have food in the other two. It works for us. I took one good look around as Sam came around the corner in a cab. "Cut that fine." he said. With a big grin on his face. "Shit, it's good to see you Brill," slapping me on the back, which just about took my breath away. "Bugger me Sam you have got bigger" I spluttered, "what's with the no neck look, Oh! You're a prop, hoping to get selected for the Highlanders mate" He looked at me with a funny smile, "Never told you or Grunt, but I did try out for Otago, but my job was too important Bob, so I said no." Well you could have knocked me over with a feather. I would have given my left nut to be asked to play with a provisional club. Old Sam turned it down. I could not believe it. "Wouldn't be able to keep my job mate. You of all people know how much I like the outdoors. I'm happy Bob. It was nice of them to offer though" "Shit, you must have got better over the years Sam, how did you fit it in, not even a whisper that you were playing."

"Oh, I played a couple of matches for King Country last winter, and they told the Otago coach to look out for me, so while I was home I had a couple of trials, and they offered me a contract. It came right out of the blue. It took me all day to think about it, but in the end, I said no, my job is important and it's what I do" "Shane is going to be bug eyed mate," I said grinning at him, "he always thought he was the bee's knees on the field. He was good,

but he was a fraction too slow for a flanker. I use to get him every time when I played against him remember” Sam grinned, “You sure did mate, me as well, but to tell you the truth, those blokes work their body’s hard, so really for the money, they earn it. No, I’m happy.” “It would have been nice to tell people that my friend is a celebrity in his own lunch time, but now I’ll have to be happy that my friend is a Grizzly Adams.” I replied.

Looking at my watch, “We’d better get a move on, the boat won’t wait for us. Hope it’s a calm sailing mate. I have had my sick pills, should be ok in the Sounds, and just need it to be calm in Cooks Strait.” We jumped into my Toyota 4x4 Surf and headed out into the wild blue yonder. Little did we know that in a few short weeks things would never be the same again.

## Chapter 2

I love the early mornings. Leaving at 5am on a new day is always to me a brand new start. The day we left for Wellington was one of those days. A few white puffy clouds across the sky, the expanse of blue, no breeze as such and hardly any traffic on the road. We settled down, heading north on highway one to our breakfast stop along the Kaikoura coast.

February is a good month to holiday. Schools are back and so is Uni, only the tourists are about, places are not as crowded like in January. The weather is really starting to settle down all over the country, great for tramping.



As we drove Sam would be humming along with the radio. Then we would both get into the song and beat it out. Life sure is for living on days like this. Passing Parnassus, I said to Sam, “My Great-Great grandfather was a stockman here. This was the rail terminus from Christchurch, with just a shingle road to Picton. It must have been back in the 1930s. Later he up and tramped the Haast Pass before the road was in from Wanaka to Greymouth. No one around then, mate, wilderness stuff.” We yarned as you do and came off the Hunderlee Hills to the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. It always takes my breath away, deep blue going on forever. The waves were silky and smooth, no power in them this day, just lazily pushing up the beach to die quietly before the froth slowly draining back into the sea, followed by the next limp wave. I have seen the waves here come up over the road. This was a special day, made for me, as if it knew that I had to get onto a boat and cross the strait, good old King Neptune has calmed it all down for the trip over. I have my fingers, toes and all loose bits crossed, with a few prayers as well.

Sam was looking for a place to pull over for breakfast. We found a good parking area jutting out into the sea. We pulled in and parked. You could smell the seals as soon as you got out of the my Surf. They are New Zealand Fur Seals, brought back from the brink of extinction, now fully protected and coming back in good numbers. They were returning to the rocks to bask and clean themselves after feeding. There is lots of kelp on this coast. We watched, as it lazily swayed in the ebb and flow of the water with some young seals playing in the pools below us.

We got ourselves a good possie to sit. I had made some ham, tomato, lettuce and cheese sandwiches, big thick ones as we

both liked our tucker. Sam got the camp stove going, boiled up the billy and made tea for himself and a cup of coffee for me. We sat down to watch the antics of the seals. You are good as gold as long as you don't get between them and the sea. Just keep your distance. With a mouth full of food, he said, "Neat mate, this is perfect. I'm honestly looking forward to the next month or so if it's going to be like this. It seriously is going to be special." Little did we know.

Behind us arising out of the sea are the Kaikoura Mountains, from sea level to 2600 meters. There are not that many places around the world where you can swim, fish and ski in a matter of hours on the same day. They still had snow on the tops. We will follow them all the way until they head inland toward Nelson. We have tramped these mountains before, and you have to be fit. This was really picture post card stuff, silky seals, blue ocean and snow-capped mountains. It just couldn't get better than this.

Sam said, looking at his watch, "We'd better move, Brill, as much as I'm quite happy to stay, we don't want to miss the boat." "Ok, mate" I said, while trying to shoo a wayward young seal from under the vehicle. "You drive and I'll get some pics." With reluctance, we pulled out and headed north. The traffic was still light at only 6.30 in the morning as we drove through the town of Kaikoura. Whale watching here is the big draw card, with Sperm Whales less than a kilometre off the beach. The Kaikoura Trench, drops 1200meters, and is 60km long. The whales feed there all year round, as well as big pods of dolphins, and other sea and bird life. It is a nice place to visit out of the tourist season. You might have guessed by now, that we do

like the quiet places. I have seen a pod of 150 odd dolphins off the beach. Just an amazing place! I took some nice photos of the road up the coast north of Kaikoura, and then we turned away from the coast and headed inland. Seddon was a pee stop. These poor buggers had earthquakes last year as well just like Christchurch. There were a few places with fences around them, to keep the rubbernecks out, in case they fell on us. I have had enough of earthquakes, so was pleased to move on to Blenheim. We had taken our time. It was just after 8.30, so we decided to have a Macka's breaky. I did say we liked our tucker. The drive from Blenheim to Picton would only take about 30 minutes, so in we went, had a feed, read the paper and we were back on the road just before 9am. We are suppose to be there an hour ahead of departure, but I have found that 30 minutes is plenty, that way we have less waiting around.

Coming off the hills into Picton with the Marlborough Sounds spread out in front of us, I felt a little apprehensive, as we still had the crossing to do. Sam joked than I should take a bucket with me, just in case, then he recounted all the vomit stories he could think of. At the end of all the banter, he said, "You will be fine, mate, it's as calm as a mill pond." We drove into the vehicle holding area for the ferry, showed our tickets, received our boarding passes, and then drove straight onto the boat.

Blue Bridge is a private company. I have always used them. I find the crew really good. I haven't travelled over on The Inter Islander for years. We drove on and parked in the designated area. I rang Shane to give him the update that we were on the boat. We should be on time. The weather was still perfect and it looked as though it would be with us for the next week, which

was a blessing. I don't mind bad weather when I'm out in the bush, but on a boat, it has to be perfect. We settled down for the three hour crossing.

The Sounds always have a magical feeling for me, deep green as the hills drop straight into the water. There is lots of farming here now, mussel, salmon and good fishing. It is the place where I can fish in a boat when it's calm; well, I can for a couple of hours anyway. Anyone who takes me out knows they will only be there a short time.

So we settled down, put the seats back and dropped off to sleep. We came out of the sounds just over an hour or so later, and right on time I woke up. I could see Cook Strait widen as we swung into the strait proper, heading south before turning north to go into Wellington's harbour. I held my breath, trying to keep my mind off my stomach, there was no rolling, flat as a pancake. Right, I'm getting a coffee. I was feeling good with myself. Bloody Sam was just about into snore mode, but I got him a tea as well to celebrate a no vomit day. I woke the bugger, up out of spite, and celebrated a good crossing. We still had a couple of hours to go, but I was confident that I was going to be OK.

Slowly, as we got closer to the North Island, Wellington's harbour opened up. You could see the city with its high rises and houses on the hills. It's the Capital of New Zealand. This is where Sam said all the hot air is bottled and is one of the reasons why it gets so much wind. Yeah, right!

After we drove off the boat, we headed up to Petone. Sam was on the phone to Grunt, just to keep him in the picture. I was

feeling peckish. I had had no food since Blenheim, and I was hoping that Shane had a lunch set aside for us. I didn't eat on the boat, just in case I was crook. Out of the goodness of his heart, neither did Sam. He was talking about how he could eat a horse. So he found some lollies I had in the glove compartment. He stuffed his face and offered me one.

It was only a 15-minute drive from the boat to Shane's in South Street, Petone. We both were getting a bit excited as Sam was talking away fifty to the dozen. When he was like this, I knew he was a happy chappie. I was feeling pretty good also, crossed the strait with no sickness, no troubles on the way up and we had a nice sunny summer day and we both felt on top of the world. A few minutes more and we would be able to catch up with Grunt. We pulled into his drive, a nice white 1930's bungalow that he had bought about five years ago. He was left a bit of a legacy from his granddad Langford, enough for his deposit. He told me it was the best thing he could have done with the money he got as he got the bungalow at a good price and now its worth twice as much.

It reminded me of the crib I have down home in Kawakaputa Bay Southland. I picked it up for a song. Who wants to be there with a southerly coming off Foveaux Strait, in the middle of winter It's bloody cold and the trees grow at 45 degrees. Well, I do. I have missed the place since I have been up north working in Christchurch. It's rented out to a fisherman mate, Ron, for 150 dollars a week while I'm away. It is a nice little earner, as I don't have a mortgage.

Sam has been interested in looking at a place down south for an investment. I've been on the lookout for him. I have even been thinking he could buy into my place, if he wanted to. But that's another story.

We had arrived, we are sitting in his driveway, out came Shane, ambling like a big old shaggy dog. Hell, he is tall, with a black beard, hair down past his collar, black tee shirt, and old shorts. He grabs my hand in his bloody great paw and just about rips my arm off. He hasn't changed a bit. It's been six months since we have all been together. We were just pleased to be brothers again. Sam came around the car, with a mouth full of my lollies and grabbed Shane around the neck in a brotherly love thing. I stayed well clear until they have quietened down. Then Grunt turns and grabbed me, chucked me over his shoulder and proceeded to walk inside, with me looking like a sack of spuds. He dumped me on the floor and then put out a hand to help me up. All this time Sam is looking for food, "Oh, Mate, where is the tucker?" True to his word, the dining room had a table full of meat, salads and fruit, enough for six people. We were feeling really hungry by this time, so we just stopped talking and ate.

I asked Grunt where his parents were. He said they would be back by about 6 pm. They did not want to interrupt us. We would all get together with a catch-up later.

We sat down with a beer, after we polished off the food and yarned the rest of the afternoon away.

Sam was explaining that the tramp come cull, had been given official sanction. They will not let trampers, or day walkers into

the areas where we will be shooting for the next six weeks. I looked at Sam, a quarter of the National Park ours, for six weeks, with no one there, “Holy shit!” This was all good. He went on to say that the chopper was ours for the duration, as well. All meat would be checked by MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry). The meat would then be given to the local Marae for a big Hui near Taupo. They were having a do at the end of March, though after saying that, there will be some choice bits that would not make it out of the area. Sam said, looking at us with a grin.

Grunt and I were pretty excited about this. Shane turned to me, “Did you know about this?” “Nah.” I said, “He kept it all close to his chest. I mean a National park to ourselves, with our own chopper.” We would also be able to be transported to any area of the shoot without the longish tramp. It was coming to be more of an army exercise than a walk through the park. We didn’t mind though, this was much better than we expected and we were as keen as mustard. I had to ask how did he get permission for us to be on the cull, there are plenty of DOC workers to choose from. Sam went on to say, “I wanted you both, as far as I was concerned we are all good bushmen. We have been together a long time, trustworthy and dependable.”

Then they looked at our service records, and I suppose that did it.

Shane had always kept it quiet that he got the NZBM (New Zealand Bravery Award) for getting some East Timor children out of a firefight, saving half a dozen of them in the process. Sam and I were at the ceremony in Wellington. We were proud of our mate, but typical of Shane, he never acknowledged that what he did was brave. He said anyone would have done it, those



kids needed to be protected, and he was the bloke on the spot. Sam had done some good work in Afghanistan, which he would not talk about. He had a few medals to his name, very secret stuff. I did try to get him to open up, but all he said was “If I told you, I would have to kill you.” So we dropped the subject. I got a civil one for plucking a boy out of the bush in a howling gale on the Routeburn track. The crew members of the chopper also got medals. They were the brave ones, flying in that weather. They gave me one for just winching down and picking up the poor little bloke.

So they looked at the records, decided we were upright citizens and let Sam make the decision. We were tickled pink. I thought what good bloody mates these blokes are. Not often in your life you get a good mate and I’m so lucky to have two.

We will head up to Waiouru the day after tomorrow. A day to get our packs sorted, guns checked and all the little bits and pieces done. Furthermore, Sam sprang it on us that all food will be supplied by DOC, and they would supply a cook as well. So we could just concentrate on what needed to be done. Bloody hell! It just gets better and better. Shane beamed, “I hated your cooking anyway, Brill.” This was complete bullshit, as he was the one with the longest tongue, who always licked the bottom of the pan. Cooking for Sam was really hard because it was never enough.

The hut was going to be our headquarters. We will be out every day and overnight, if we are on a roll. If not, we would be in for the night with great meals. It’s better than a hotel. I wish, though, that Sam had told me earlier, as we all had bought a

lot of food. He did apologise, he was only told the day before yesterday himself. We would make use of the extra food and It won't go to waste. We will take it with us if we camp out overnight. If it's not needed the cook would incorporate it into the daily rations. Whatever way you looked at it, this sounded like six weeks of bliss. We decided to take it all, knowing us, we would eat the lot anyway. Sam was a walk-in kitchen tidy, just stand on his foot and his mouth dropped open. He was talking about all sorts of meat with sauces and even desserts. "Hell!" I remarked, "We had only finished lunch." So we yarned until there was a knock on the door and in walked Shane's parents.

David and Mona Langford, were chalk and cheese, His dad was shorter than Shane but the same build, strong handgrip, grey hair, just a bit of tummy fat coming though, but if I looked like him when I was 66, I would feel very good. Mona, a short woman about my height. Had a big smile, all teeth, light brown complexion, which Shane took from her, quite slim for her age 65. Big brown eyes and a wonderful disposition. We all looked at her as our second mum. When she talked, we all listened. David, like Shane was a quiet man, played rugby for Northland in the 60's flanker, who Shane took after. I was really wanting to talk with them. I only had tonight, which was going to be difficult, or first thing in the morning as they were heading off back home to Kaitaia, with a stop in Auckland to see their girls.

Sam was talking away to them, and everyone was talking at once. When Shane said he had booked a table at the Valentines Restaurant in Lower Hutt. We have to be there at 8 pm. That would give us about an hour and half to get dressed and talk at the same time. David was saying they would leave about midday

tomorrow, and make Taupo for the night, but if he couldn't do that, might just stay at Taihape whatever way they would play it by ear.

I said to Shane, I'll use the shower first as I'm the shortest, and I don't need to use as much water as they do. I got a Tupperware bowl in the back of the head for that remark. So off I trotted, hoping that Mrs. Langford would be dressed by the time I was out and was ready for a talk. None of us have much good gear with us for dining out, as we're going bush. I had a pair of jeans not too old, and a Tee Shirt, with sandals. I'm ready. We don't shave from now on, that's a task we would all worry about when we came home, though Shane already had a cracker beard, it goes with his shaggy dog look. Sam normally shaved, but this time he was going to give it a miss. I think because he was with us, not sure, as sometimes he goes into his own world. Though I don't think he shaved when he was overseas.

I went into the lounge and Mona was sitting on the couch. "G'day again Mrs Langford," she held up her hand and spoke. "Please, call me Mona, heck you're over 30, you're a big boy now," it's hard to say no to her. I have always called her Mrs. Langford. It felt uncomfortable calling her by her first name. "Ok Mona, can I pick your brain, I've been wanting to for a while, it's about your family. Do you know your family tree? The reason is, you know I'm into history. I thought I might try to do your tree. A future birthday present for Shane. I'll get it printed, and he can put it up on his wall" She responded, "I know a little, and that is a nice gesture Bobby, what can I help you with"? I had my notebook out of my pack and said, "great, well, can you tell me anything on your dad's family, places of birth, death,

marriages.” Oops, I saw her frown. I thought, oh shit asking too much. I went on quickly, “Or if that’s too hard, any story that you can think of would be fine with me. I can do research when I get back, so the only things you think you might be sure of in your own mind. Rumours, anything like that.” I didn’t want to lose her. I’m a bugger when I’m doing this, asking too much information at once seems to clam people up. Softly, softly Bob for god’s sake.

“No,” she added, “I was just thinking. I can give you my parents and grandparent’s and a little bit from the great great’s information as much as I can remember, but there is a story about some people helping my third great grandfather’s family in the New Zealand wars. Just stories, with no collaboration, have been passed down. No doubt it has expanded to something completely different after 150 years.” Heck, I was intrigued by this, “can you remember any of it?” “Well,” she continued, “I think his name was Watene or something like that. As you know, Maori genealogy is quite hard to trace. The records did not start until around 1911 I think, so registrations were not recorded. Tribes would remember their own births, though a Tohunga, or talking stick or some such thing. As you know, I have not had much contact with that side of my family, but my sister is a bit more clued up. I can give you her phone number and you can make contact when you get back from your little adventure. She lives in Russell.”

“Thanks Mrs. Lang--- oops Mona. That’s good of you, she will be ok with that?” “I’m sure she will” she replied. “She has also been interested in family history” “Ok, that’s good, is there any other rumours or stories that you can remember off hand. It doesn’t

matter if they are far fetched or silly, you never know in this game, anything helps”.

She stopped for a moment with a faraway look. I thought, oh shit, there I go again. I’m pushing her too hard. That’s my problem always too keen to get information, without thinking about the person giving it.

She eventually said, “There was this story, that I just mentioned, really quite out there, so it must be a fable or something, but it has been around all these years. Probably, the story has been changed so much, you cannot tell where the truth is and fallacy begins” she paused to think for a moment, and I wasn’t going to make a bloody noise, just in case I spoil her train of thought. “It was told by my grandfather, and it was passed down from his granddad, so we are talking about the 1860s. It’s all a bit strange. I spoke to David about it, but have at no time passed on the full story to the kids. Well, in saying that, Shane knows a bit more, though he has never shown any interest. He just didn’t think it was that important, being so long ago. The relevance doesn’t seem to warrant much thought. To you Bob it might be the bee’s knees. It’s over 150 years ago, the story no doubt has changed so much from the first telling, who is to say its real or not. I was intrigued. “Would you tell me?” I asked fingers and toes crossed. “Ok Bob,” she said, “But no smirking, as I feel it’s a bit silly really”

“This relation of mine,” she goes on, “went by the name of Watene. I think that’s right, though not sure, but I’ll stick with that, from the Waikato in the 1860s. His wife could have been called Tui, but I’m vague on that as well. I cannot remember when the war started in the Waikato, but it must have been

around that time. The story goes that Watene and his family tribe were planting or digging up Kurama. This was a farming village away from the main Pa but still within its protection. Out of the blue they were attacked by English soldiers. The numbers have been lost in time... There was only Watene and another warrior, the rest were woman and children, and some old men who were digging so the story goes. It wasn't really a battle, they charged in and shot the men, including Watene, though he gave as much back as he could, I gather, too many of them, and he was shot. The soldiers then tried to rape all the women and older girls.

Now this is where it all turns weird, out of the bush come these black face men, they charge into the English. They lay into them until they were all on the ground. I don't know if they were killed or anything like that, the story goes they were laid out. Not a shot was fired, strange!

Then one went into a whare, where I think this woman Tui was about to be raped. The black man, hits the soldier on the head with his fist so hard that he falls out through the wall. They tie him up with all the others. One of the black men helps Tui up. He spoke some Maori. Her husband was shot but was still alive. They took her husband inside, where they looked at him. Watene was able to mumble his name, asked for his wife. When this happened, he falls asleep, I think that's how it goes. Then he is raised on the third day. There is mentioned the light of God, lines hanging. Faces with cloth around them. Sharp steel needles, and light from the mouths of black-and-white men. Hands inside bodies, weird. These Maori people were Christians, all had been Christened by the missionary's in the

1830s and 40s, they believed in what they saw or thought they did. Then when Watene was raised, they took them to a new place to save them from the English. The children were healed as well. They believed that God had sent his angels down to help their people in time of need. One day, one returns with his woman, not sure about that, for how long is not known.”

She stopped, frowned, and said, “I think that’s it Bob, a bit far fetched, don’t you think?” I was sitting with an open mouth. “You’ll catch flies if you don’t shut your mouth Bobby.” “Bloody hell Mona what a story, I am certainly going to run with this, while we are away, do you think you could write it down, and I’ll have a crack at it when we get back” She smiled, “Funny, out of everyone I knew you would be the only one interested. I’ll certainly do that for you, as long as you make sure you take care of your mates” “I always do, and they take care of me as well, we are a good team” I said through a grin. Neat story I thought, love to get my eye teeth into that, but this was for later, time to focus on the tramp and cull.

David walked into the room, Mona turns around and said, “Just telling Bobby about the family story. He was keen to learn about our whanau.” He grinned, “Yeah it’s weird Bob. I would like to know the truth, but after 150 years, everything gets distorted, but you never know, one day the truth might come out.” I never did get to ask her if she new about my family, her story sounded so interesting I forgot my purpose for asking her completely.

Shane and Sam came in saying we had better get going. Sam could eat a horse. We just had a late lunch, bugger me; he could eat. On the way out I said to Shane, “did Sam tell you about the



contract he turned down to play for Otago.” Shane just about tripping over his bottom lip. It was nice for me to walk away with Shane pumping Sam about his defunct rugby career.

A good night out, a nice meal and a couple of beers at the end back at Shane’s place. Mona headed off to bed. Shane’s Dad and the three of us had a nice quiet yarn. Then I said I was off to bed, It’s been a long day. Tomorrow there’s last minute stuff to do, before we head out the day after. I said good night to Shane’s Dad who followed me out of the room. I undressed, piled into the pit. I could hear the waves in the distant lapping against the shore as it lulled me to sleep as I was thinking of the story Mona told me.

## Chapter 3

I awoke to the sound of the southerly pelting the rain against the windowpane and spilling out over the guttering. Bugger, it’s pissing down, so much for the fine forecast.

The house was quiet as I shuffled down to the toilet. I was first up, which meant I get into the shower before everyone. It was going to be another long day.

I was thinking, I hope this weather eases off for David and Mona as they have a wee way to travel, not that far fortunately but, it’s hard driving when it’s raining like this. I showered then went into the kitchen. It was quiet, though the rain was still heavy,

but the wind had dropped. I cranked up the computer to check the weather. It will be clearing by early morning. Well, fingers crossed.

The house started to come alive. Sam came out looking as dozy as hell, “What’s for breakfast Brill” he asked. “Don’t know mate, you will have to ask Grunt, he’s still in night night land.” He looked at me with gummy eyes. “Can’t have that mate” and proceeded down to Shane’s bedroom. He didn’t yell or say a word, just stood at the end of the bed staring at the prone figure of Shane fast asleep. Within minutes he woke up, “What the hell” “What’s for breakfast Grunt?” Sam asked. He got a pillow in his face, with some comment of, “look in the fridge and cupboard, help yourself you dozy bugger.” You could hear Shane ambling down the corridor for a pee.

Sam and I got to work on breakfast, eggs, bacon, snarlers, tomatoes, baked beans, toast, a big pot of tea, and a jar of jam. We had polished it off in no time. We had just finished eating when Shane’s parents walked in. Shane got up to make another pot of tea, and I said “What would you like?” They were looking at the table with all the empty plates and smiled. Mona replied “Toast and jam would be fine, we don’t have big meals in the morning now.” Sam jumped up and put the bread into the toaster. I cleared all the dishes off the table, then moved out of the way, so they could sit down. Saying, “This weather is going to pass quickly. It’s supposed to be over by early morning. So by the time you have had breakfast, showered, and packed all your your stuff into the car, the front will have moved off. At least it will be a bit cooler travelling.”

While they were eating, Sam shot off for a shower and Shane and I cleaned up. Shane was saying. "We have a bit to do Brill. If you move your Surf out of the driveway, I'll get Mum and Dad's car out, then you can back it up and hook up the trailer. That way the folks can just drive straight out." I replied "Good-O mate, I'll do it now. Rain seems to have eased off a bit." It didn't take long, Sam came out and said "Grunt, the shower's free. I'll help Brill, you go and get wet."

We moved the vehicles around and I backed the Surf up to the trailer. This was so much better than piling all the stuff into the boot. Shane had a good hard top trailer. It would take everything and leave us plenty of room in the Surf. It's not too far to Waiouru, about a three-hour drive. My mates, being big men, need a lot of space, so the trailer will work out that much better. With it done and dusted, we popped back inside, then helped Shane's parents with their bags, and packed them into their car.

The weather was starting to clear. Shane arrived with dripping wet hair rubbing furiously with the smallest towel in the world. David said "Son, I think we will hit the road a bit earlier than we intended. You boys have a lot to do. The weather is getting better and I think we will make Taupo today and be in Auckland by tomorrow. We will have a quick shower and another cuppa, then we will be off."

Sam went to the kitchen to make the tea, while they showered. We talked in the lounge waiting for his parents to return. When they came back, he was ready with the pot, we poured ourselves a cuppa and sat back. David leaned forward and from behind

his back he produced a small parcel, which he handed to Shane “Happy birthday son. We won’t be with you on Monday, so this is an early present from us both.” Shane had that schoolboy look on his face as he examined the gift in one big paw. “Aw Mum, Dad, I hope you haven’t gone to too much expense. Just you coming down to see me was all the present I wanted. Though in his eyes you could tell he was really interested in seeing what they had got him. Grunt is not delicate opening pressies. He ripped the paper off and gingerly removed the tissue paper. There sitting in his lap was this awesome Bowie Knife. It had a 635-millimetre blade (25 inch) with a sturdy handle and hand guard. The blade had a sort of half moon curve at the end. I’m not into knives as such, but this was a deadly fighting weapon. It had a hard Indian pouch to slip it into which could be threaded onto his belt. I could see this big smile on my mate’s face. I didn’t realise he knew the history about this knife, his Dad was speaking. “You know your Mum is not happy with this knife. As far as she is concerned it should be locked away, but I want you to have it, It’s part of our family. You know the story.” He turned to Sam and me. “My grandfather was wounded in France in World War I and was expatriated back to New Zealand. The ship stopped off in New York, and the walking wounded were allowed off for a couple of days. Granddad and a couple of his mates got into a poker game and he won this knife in the process. He passed it on to my Dad, who like Shane, loved the bush and then he passed it on to me. I used it a bit at your age, but it’s been in the cupboard for a few years now, and it’s time it came to you, Shane. I thought, since you are going out on this hunt, you will need a good knife, and this one is the best.”

Shane was speechless. This knife was well over 100 years old. Turning it in his hands he noticed the engravings on the blade JL. “That’s my grandfather’s initials,” David said, “Yours are there too on the other side, I, er..., we thought it would be nice to have your initials on it.” Shane turned it over again. The new engraving was there SL. He was certainly taken aback. His eyes were a bit watery as he went over to his Dad and hugged him. He said “This was a wonderful present and I will treasure it for the rest my life.” He turned to his mother and hugged her, “Mum, I will be careful, this is only for skinning and cutting. I’ll never need it for anything else so you don’t have to worry. We are all sensible blokes.” He released her and looked into her eyes. There was something there, a worried look as though she knew what was going to happen. She took his face in her hands, dragging his forehead down to her lips and kissed him hard. “I love you Shane. Always remember that.”

He passed the knife around for us to look at. It was too big for me, but Sam could handle it ok, and it fitted nicely into Shane’s hand. “This must be worth a bit today” I asked. David, was talking to Mona, he turned around and said, “Not as much as you think, although I did price it in Auckland and they thought it might fetch about 500 dollars at an auction. I think it could be due to the design of the moon crescent blade. It is never going to be sold anyway.”

Looking at his watch, David said “Time is slipping by, Honey, I think it’s time we got going. These blokes have a lot to do and we are going to be in the way if we hang about any longer.” Shane was making all the noises of a good son. “No Dad that’s fine, you are never in the road.” His old man said “Bull shit kiddo,

time for us to leave and let you all get on with it.” We wandered out with them to the car. Mona came up to me with a hug and a kiss, and said “Take care Bobby, keep an eye on my only son for me. I’ll write out the story we talked about last night, while you are away, and post it down to you, so it will be there when you return. I’ll give you my sister’s phone number as well. Take care and keep safe.” She grabbed Sam and did the same. “You are all my boys, look after yourselves.” She turned and got into the car with a tear in her eye. Quite honestly, I have never seen her like this before. It was as though she had lost a child or something. David came around and shook our hands. “Good luck on the cull, and if possible, I would like some pork or venison. Sam said “We might be able to get it sent up to Auckland. Liz or Carolyn could pick it up from Whenuapai. I’ll work on it. A little bit of coaxing with the Airforce crew might be the order of the day.” David got into their car, and reversed down the drive with Shane walking beside them. One last goodbye, we were all waving as they turned and headed for the northern motorway.

While we traipsed inside I thought I would ring my parents and Sam was already on his cell phone talking to his. I told my Mum “Shane’s parents have just left, sent their love to you and Dad, they hope to catch up when they are down south in June. They are going skiing with one of the girls, well, just watching really, and hope to call in while they are there. Mona said she would ring well in advance. She also said they hoped to catch up with Sam’s folks at the same time. Would be nice if we could all get together, your place is pretty big, have them all come for a few nights, make a big do out of it.” I know my Mum. She likes to have people around her and she jumped at the idea. As she is from Northland, it was a chance to talk with someone who

knows a few of our family members. "What a good idea Bobby" she said, "I'll work on that with your Dad." We talked for a while until I said. "I have to go, Mum, don't forget to get in touch with Sam's parents well in advance, they are always quite busy. Give my love to Dad and Sasha." They were out somewhere in the Deep South fishing. "I'll be in touch at the end of each week to give you an update, as long as the phone connection is ok. Don't be worried if it's not, we will be in some remote areas, and I'll get word to you when I can." "Ok, love, she said, love to Sam and Shane, take care, and enjoy yourself. Love you". I said the same and hung up. Sam just ended his call as well. I think my Mum is going to get in touch with your Mum and Dad, mate, I said, looks as though Mona and David will be down south in June and Mum would like them all to come to her place to stay for a few days, if they have the time. Sam smiled, "Mum would like that." he said. "Though Shane's parents will feel the cold down where we come from mate." "Yeah you're right there" I said, "But it will be nice to have everyone together."

Shane came in with a couple of parcels left by the courier, which looked interesting. "From my sisters." he said, "Must have bought me presents. Do I take them with me and open them on the day or now?" Sam piped up, "Open them now, mate, you can leave them here if they are not suited for this tramp" "Good thought" Grunt replied, so we sat down to watch him open the two parcels sent by Liz and Carolyn. Liz had bought him Native American moccasins when she was in the States. They were so good, the leather must have been properly cured in order to pass through customs. He put them on. They were a perfect fit. Grunt said, "I wondered what she was up to when she was down last time to visit, wanting to trace my foot because these are just



the right size and they are really comfy. Carolyn's present was quite flat; he opened it up to find a small solar powered unit for charging phones and cameras on the tramp. "Well bugger me" he said, "those sisters of mine sure know their brother. This is superb fellas, we can at least have one of our phones on charge each day, as long as the sun is shining. It is very lightweight, which is great." We pulled out our phones and cords to try it out, plugged them into the socket and bingo, worked a treat. I tried my small camera and that worked also. "Great presents" Sam said, I have to agree, these are really practical for our purpose. The solar panel would be complementary with the one I have as well.

"Well boys" Shane said, getting up, "We need to get organised." It was 10 am and the morning was slipping by. The sun was now out, though it was only about 15 degrees.

The first task was to box all the food. We didn't need to carry it in our packs, only the daily stuff, and extra for overnight if required. The hut was going to be used as our base. What a pleasure it was to be able to take it all out of our packs and box it. Sam labeled each box. As he was a real foodie, he liked to have his finger on the pulse and know where his beloved tucker was stashed. This done, we talked about our guns and how much ammo we would need. I had the old 303 Lee-Enfield, I carried a spare mag of 10 rounds and 10 on the gun, and I would carry another 20 extra each day. I would take 300 rounds and the rest I would leave at base and top up each day. All my cleaning gear I take, the old rifle had at the base of the stock a compartment to store webbing and to hold the pull through. So I was set.

My mates had modern rifles. Shane had brought a Savage Scout rifle, nice dark blue barrel, not the latest, you can buy, but she was a nice looking gun. It had a Leupold scope as well, which I gather, one of the top scopes you can buy. It only weighed 3.2 kilograms unloaded. The magazine held 5 or 10 rounds of 308 ammo, slightly heavier than my 303. So like me he would carry an extra 20 rounds in his pack and leave the excess back at the hut. Shane said "If I cannot kill anything with 40 rounds I'm leaving to join a religious ministry." The only thing missing was the bipod. The newer models have one. Shane had purchased his gun before the latest one had come out. He was a bit disappointed with this. The bipod gives the gun more stability when you are lying on the ground for any length of time. Unbeknown to him, Sam and I had bought him one as a birthday gift, and a bloody big chocolate cake which we were wondering how to transport it up there. Now with us not having to pack in we boxed it and It will go nicely on the chopper. Sam, who's been in the bush more than us, had a Howa rifle, 308 ammo, short blue barrel, with a Leupold scope, and fully load weighed less than 4 kilograms. He was deadly accurate with this. I have seen him bring down a deer at 800 meters, which is getting to the edge of its range. Even without the scope, he has this uncanny skill of drilling anything on the button at 500 meters. He's cool calm and collected. Sam never gets rattled at all, I wish I had his temperament. Though get up his nose and he is a terrier and, of course, on the rugby field he takes no prisoners. We all had knives which complemented the Rambo look. Shane with his family's Bowie, Sam and I had a Kirshaw roughneck 30 centimetre blade, good for skinning and, of course my trusty Swiss army knife. I never go anywhere on tramps without it.

We took everything out of the packs and repacked them. With no food to carry, they were much lighter leaving plenty of room for extras. We checked our maps, mountain radio's, phones fully charged, solar panels and filled the water bottles. All our personal items from clothes, winter and summer, to toothbrushes were ticked off. In New Zealand, the weather can change so quickly that people are caught out on our mountain ranges. Hypothermia sets in quickly and you die. It's as simple as that. Once we had finished repacking, we each checked each others pack to make sure we had not missed anything. It is amazing how you can miss a little item that someone else will pick up. Lastly, we checked torches, wet weather matches and first aid kits. They were ex army and very sophisticated. I check them to make sure they were ok. There was everything there from surgical gloves to intravenous equipment. We would not need this stuff but we were not going to break up the kits for anybody, I would rather have them than not.

I stated, "Keep the first aid kits out of the military people's eyes fellas. We don't want the sod's taking them off us"

We had our wet weather gear, camouflage shirts and longs, both warm and cool, all ex army stuff.

At the bottom of Sam's pack I came across a couple of tubes of black camouflage cream. "Are we going to war mate?" "Oh" "I forgot about them, just leave them there Brill, if we are out in the evening, it would be will be ideal for covering your face and hands as you know your skin can shine in the moonlight, and can be seen by the wildlife. Though in Shane's case, with that bloody beard he has, we cannot see any skin on his face even in daylight." So I left them there in the bottom of his pack.

I looked at the time. It was now 4.30pm. We had worked through most of the day without stopping and I was wondering why I was feeling hungry. I hadn't heard a peep out of Sam. Usually, when it comes to food, he is the alarm clock. I turned to the boys, "Let's get a pub meal. I cannot be blowed cooking tonight. Shane you must know of a good place to go?" "Yeah, there is one just up the road, about a kilometre. They start serving about 5pm, so we have time to wash up and be up there for the early sitting. They have 14 dollar roasts with a beer thrown in". That suited all of us. Wash, shit, and clean our teeth and we're off.

"The Hut Arms" is a cool little pub, dates back to about 1900, and the owners have kept the ambiance of the place. We were one of the first diners in, so there were plenty of empty tables. We sat down, ordered the roast of the day, which was pork. Shane implied "I think we will see a bit more of this meat in the weeks to come." They brought us our beers, and we sat quietly yarning until the food arrived. Big plates, it filled me, but old Sam ordered another one. They were so surprised, that they gave it to him for half price. I quite honestly don't know where the hell he puts it, I think he has hollow legs. We had a couple more beers when we got home. Feeling pretty content, I got out my guitar started to twang away, Sam got his harmonica and joined in. Then Shane, taping his foot on the back of the chair, went and got his ukulele. So there we were making all sorts of noise, hoping the neighbors didn't complain. I sling off at our music, but in actual fact we play pretty well and complement each other. So it wasn't too bad. Shane's got a good voice as well and we all joined in. Time just flies when you are having fun. Looking at my watch I announced "I'm off to bed fellas. I'm

really looking forward to tomorrow. I think we need to be up a bit early to give the place a quick tidy. We don't want Shane coming back to a pig sty." We were coming back to his place for a couple of days when it was all over, before heading home. "So what do you think of 5 am?" "Yeah ok, Brill, that's fine, 5am it is". Sam agreed "If we get away about 7, or 7.30 am we should be in Waiouru about 11.30, or a bit earlier. We have to meet the CO at 1pm, also the aircrew who will be with us for the duration." "Settled mate, I'm off to bed then, catch you two in the morning. I was looking forward to the sounds of the bush tomorrow night" I muttered, as I walked out of the room, "Yeah." said Sam "and the bastard possums on the roof." I heard the blokes head off to bed also not long after. The house went quiet, no sounds of the sea tonight. The southerly had died a natural death. I thought about what was in store for us in the next few weeks. I was excited and really looking forward to it as I drifted off to sleep.

- end of chapter 3 -

Enjoy the read? It gets better! Purchase the rest of the adventure for your kindle or in paperback from:

**Amazon**

or visit [www.owencloughbooks.com](http://www.owencloughbooks.com) to learn **where to buy** from other book stockists around the world.

Read the continuing story synopsis of the Whispers trilogy in the following pages.

The second book in the  
Whispers trilogy

## Shadows of the Mind

due to be  
Released  
early 2018



Samuel McInnes aka Mack, head shot and wounded severely in the attack of Auckland in 1863, comes to on HMS Esk heading to Scotland via Sydney, Australia.

Sam is mistakenly repatriated to Scotland as the army think this is where he is from. With loss of memory, his life becomes complicated, as he falls for a young nurse on the voyage who has a secret that she would not tell him until he was fully recovered

Out of place, out of sync, he finds himself in an alien world. Memories from another time come and go as he tries to adjust to his new life all the time attempting to remember who he is and how did he come to be here. Will his memory return? Will he get home to his own time?



The third book in the Whispers trilogy  
**Clearing of the Mist**

---

Thirty years have passed, and Sam's memory has not returned from a disastrous trip to Rhodesia with his wife Bella changes his life once again.

Heading home to the UK, slowly his memory returns and then he is summoned by Queen Victoria to meet a Maori delegation. At this meeting, he is further requested to meet with the Prince Regent.

The story that comes out of this meeting will send dangerous consequences around the Empire Government agents don't want him or his party to arrive at their destination, and Sam needs all his wits to keep everyone safe, his priority, find the cave and wait for the mist if it is still there and slip back to his own century and safety.

About the author  
**Owen Clough**

---



Leaving school at the age of fourteen, Owen travelled around New Zealand on a working holiday. Then at the age of seventeen joined the Royal New Zealand Airforce, where he spent eleven years on different bases including a time overseas.

He married his wife Kaye at twenty and they are still together today. Over the years

he's had various jobs from driving the big red buses in Christchurch to selling dairy products.



He owned two businesses, a coffee bar/tearooms, and a limousine. Then in 1995 he joined the tourist tram operation in Christchurch and spent the next twenty years with the company, including a year in Auckland helping to set up their operation.

After surviving the devastating earthquakes of 2010 in Christchurch they sold their home after it was repaired, and both Owen and Kaye hit the road in their 5th wheel motor-home. He is now retired, they have two grown children and one Granddaughter.

Owen, a keen Genealogist, motor caravanner, and rugby fanatic with a love of history, has put his hobbies to good use.

He always wondered what it would be like to live back in the turbulent times of New Zealand's history and wrote his first book with this in mind. 'WHISPERS OF THE PAST' is a historical fiction and the first book of a trilogy.

The second book is 'Shadows of the Mind' and 'Clearing of the Mist' rounds up the three book series.

Contact

Owen Clough

---

email

cluffyschariot@yahoo.co.nz

website

www.owencloughbooks.com