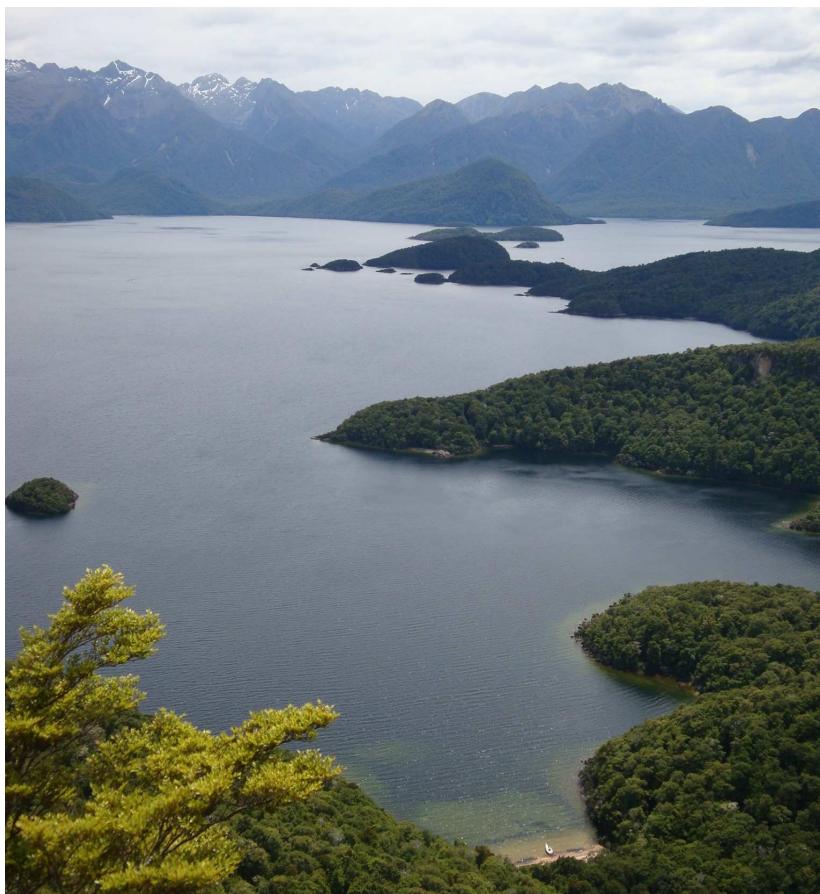


CRUISING LAKE MANAPOURI

Lake Manapouri – the Queen of New Zealand's lakes for some – is a magnificent place for a week's cruise. It can be combined with a visit to Te Anau (which by itself needs two weeks to explore), a trip over Wilmott Pass to Doubtful Sound, courtesy of the weekly barge that services West Arm power station and delivers fuel to the tourist boats, or with the endless possibilities of a land-based holiday in Fiordland National Park. The name of the lake means “throbbing heart” or “anxious heart”; two explanations of the name refer to the anxiety of a canoeist who encountered a fierce storm, and to a myth of two sisters, Moturau and Koronae, whose tears (as they lay dying in each other's arms) rent the hills and created the lake. However, the original name of Lake Manapouri is thought to have been Moturau – one hundred islands – the name Manapouri having been transferred by a mistaken surveyor from one of the Mavora Lakes.



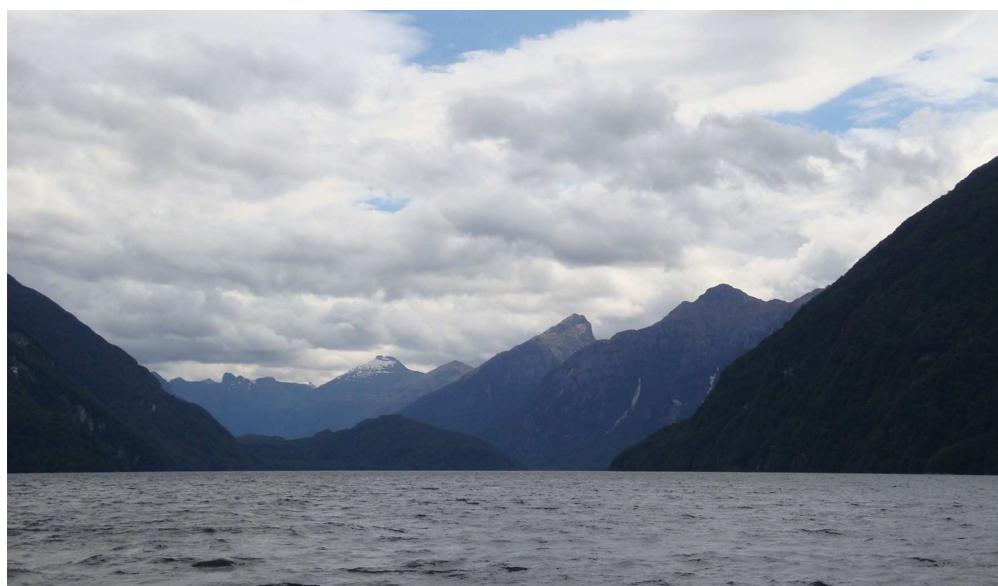
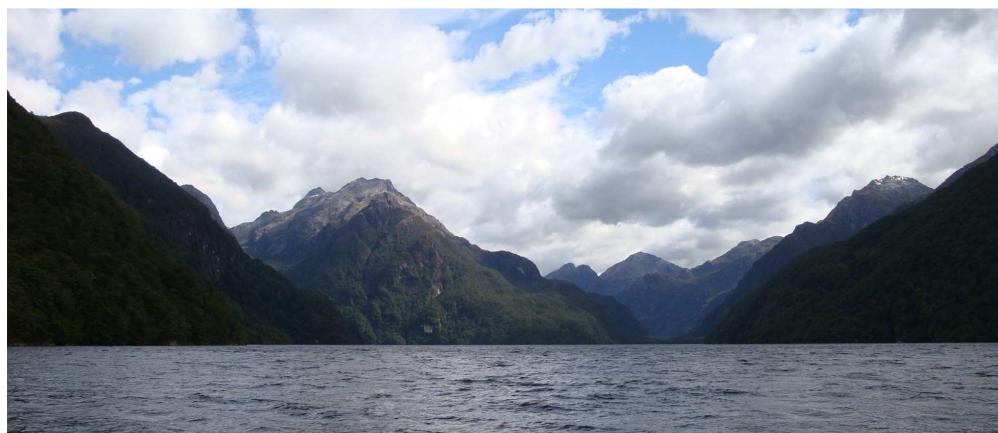
Manapouri from the summit of Monument, with Hope Arm in the foreground and the Kepler Range in the distance. The beach from which the track starts can be seen at the bottom of the photo, with *Silmarillion* a tiny speck.

SOME BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE LAKE AND ITS WEATHER

Manapouri is the South Island's fifth largest lake, with a maximum length of 28 km and a surface area of over 150 square kilometres. It is a glacial lake, scoured out by glacial action to a depth of over 260 m below sea level at its deepest point (444 m).

The lake has two very different sections. In the mountainous western part, there are three main arms – South Arm, West Arm, and North Arm – which have very steep mountain sides along the shoreline, except at the head of each arm and along the southern side of West Arm. These arms occupy classic glacial “U-shaped” valleys, scoured out by valley glaciers during the Ice Age. In the eastern part of the lake, the valley glaciers converged into an ice sheet, and created a more “basin-shaped” feature with relatively subdued topography and

rock hummocks that now create the many islands and peninsulas scattered across the lake. Anchorages in the western part are relatively few – principally at the head of each arm – but are plentiful in the eastern part, at locations scattered all around the lake perimeter.



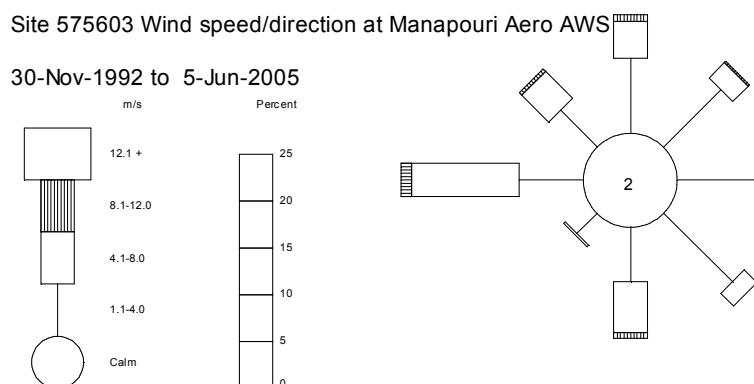
Lake Manapouri: (top to bottom) South Arm, North Arm, and West Arm

Rainfall in the mountains to the west of the lake is 6,000 mm or more per year, with annual rainfall at West Arm around 4,000 mm/y. However, the eastern part of the lake is in a pronounced rain shadow, and rainfall at Manapouri airport is only around 1,200 mm/y. Rainfall is rather evenly spread throughout the year, with a tendency for winters to be drier.

There are around 1,600 hours of sunshine in the eastern part of the lake, and fewer still in the west and north of the lake, in comparison with over 2,400 hours at Abel Tasman National Park. January and February are the warmest months – the mean daily air temperature at Te Anau (representative of the eastern lake) is 15-16°C in these months, ranging between 8°C and 20-21°C during a mid-summer day, on average. The coldest month is July, with a mean daily temperature at Te Anau of 4°C.

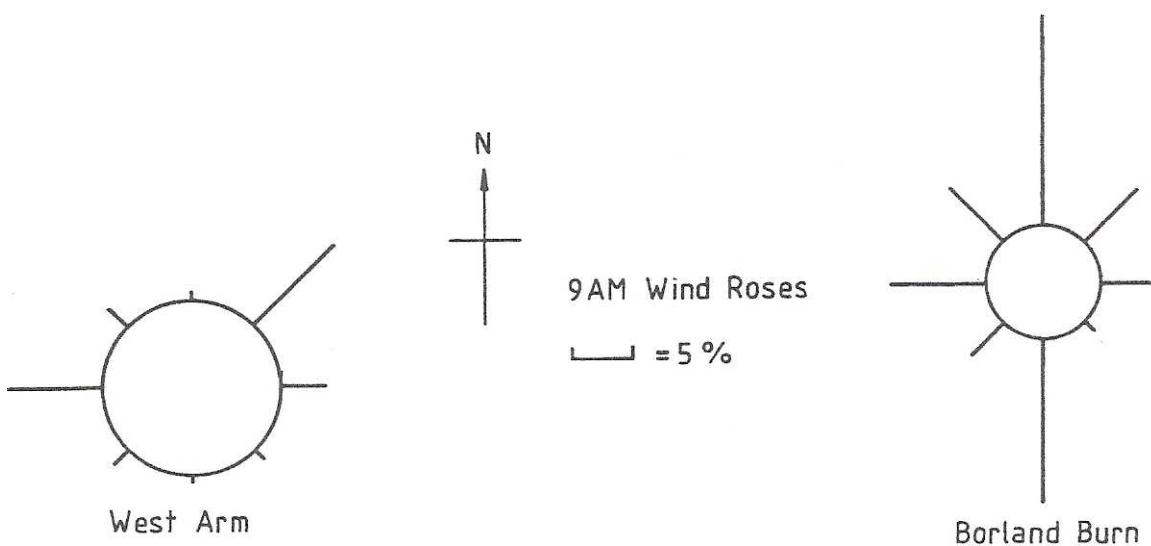
The predominant airflow over Fjordland is from west-northwest. However, winds on the lake are strongly influenced by topography, because moving air tends to go round rather than over obstacles. Hence, generally speaking winds blow either up or down the arms in the mountainous western part of the lake, and only in the eastern lake basin are wind conditions controlled by synoptic (medium scale) weather conditions. Even here, wind patterns can be strongly influenced by the winds blowing out of the western lake and side valleys. *Silmarillion* once sailed almost a full circle on starboard tack around Shallow Bay (northeast corner of the lake), under the influence of the northwest wind fanning out from the Iris Burn valley.

The wind rose for the summer months at Manapouri airport gives an idea of the proportion of winds from different directions that might be expected on the main body of the lake (wind rose kindly provided by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research).



As a rule, with synoptic winds from southwest through to north, the wind blows down the western arms, often rather strongly. At the convergence of the North and West Arms, winds can be very shifty, with an extensive dead area and then a complete reversal of direction. Winds at the northern end of the South Arm and in the vicinity of Pomona Island also can be very unpredictable, and Hurricane Passage to the north of Pomona Island is well named – a place to be avoided except in settled conditions.

There is a strong diurnal variation in winds, with calm conditions commonly experienced in the morning, a breeze blowing up from mid to late morning, and rather robust conditions through the afternoon. This is neatly shown by the 9 a.m. wind roses for West Arm (next page), which shows a large proportion of calms. Observations taken in the afternoon would show a rather different picture. Notice, too the preponderance of westerly and northeasterly winds at West Arm and southerly or northerly winds at Borland Burn south of Manapouri, all strongly influenced by the local topography.



Wind roses taken from 9 a.m. weather observations at West Arm and Borland Burn. Note how the winds are affected by the local topography, and the frequency of calms – observations taken in the afternoon would show a different picture. (Data from *Climate and weather of Southland* (NZ Met. Service Misc. Pub. 115(5), 1984)

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Older cruising guides for Manapouri are available from the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron, whose members have extensive knowledge of the lake. Most of the lake is covered by 1:50,000 topographic map C43, with small sections in the far east and south on C44 and D43 (C43 and D43 cover the southern section of Lake Te Anau also). The maps are not entirely accurate in small but important details, such as the precise shape of shorelines and the location of islets like the one (omitted from the map) off the end of Calderwood Peninsula. The New Zealand Oceanographic Institute published a larger scale (1:31,680) bathymetric map of the lake, now available from NIWA, and Fish & Game Southland have produced a sketch map which is useful principally for indicating navigational hazards.

BOAT RAMPS AND OTHER FACILITIES

There is really only one boat ramp suitable for launching and recovering a Nolex 25, at the Real Journeys depot on the east bank of the Waiau River, about 1 km downstream from Manapouri township. This is a commercial facility, and it is a privilege to be able to use it. The ramp is well used and there is a good amount of parking; if you are uncomfortable about leaving vehicle and trailer here, there is a good visitor's parking area in the township, above the tourist boat terminal. The Waiau River (which here is flowing out of the lake, to the south) is deep, slow-moving, and very attractive; it is well worth while to motor downstream for a kilometer or two, and late arrivals can readily find places to anchor overnight.

The store in Manapouri sells basic provisions and fishing licences and there is a service station, as well as a motor camp and motels for really late arrivals. Nearby, Te Anau has all the services that you're likely to need (hardware store, two supermarkets, three garages, angling/outdoor equipment shops, Te Anau Marine, lots of restaurants for a treat, etc.). There is a commercial secure parking area, in case you want to leave the boat and trailer for a few days and go off to Milford or wherever. And, of course, there is the Department of Conservation visitor centre at the south end of the lake shore, for information about the area, weather forecasts, maps, etc. (phone 03-249-7924)

The heavy rainfall in the catchment gives a good flow of high quality water through the lake system, so lake water can be used for cooking and drinking with no concerns, except perhaps in the vicinity of West Arm jetty, Manapouri township, and in low circulation spots like the lagoon at Holmwood Island. Didymo has established in the Te Anau catchment upstream, so presumably also will reach Manapouri. As always, visiting boats should do their best not to bring noxious weeds like *lagoorosiphon* and *didymo* from other places.

THINGS TO DO

To explore the lake takes a good week. The most popular part of the lake is the eastern area, east of Pomona Island, which offers excellent sailing and lots of anchorages and beaches. The western, mountainous part of the lake has a rather wild feel about it (the West Arm power station and procession of tourist boats notwithstanding), and the weather tends to be cloudier and wetter. South Arm seems to be rarely visited; it is long and rather featureless, with nowhere to land except at the southernmost end, where the Grebe River enters the lake.

For those keen on walking and tramping, there are a number of good options – visit the DoC website or the DoC office in Te Anau for details and leaflets. Perhaps the best is the climb up Monument, just east of Hope Arm, which gives magnificent all-round views. The track starts at the end of the beach that is directly north of Monument (map reference C43:843010). The track is steep and, as it scales the last ramparts of Monument, not for the faint-hearted. There are a couple of pleasant walks from the southern beach at the west end of Stockyard Cove, to a waterfall and to the beach on the western side of Calderwood Peninsula. From Hope Arm Hut, right at the south end of Hope Arm, a track leads to Lake Rakatu, and a 15 km loop can be completed, returning via wetlands to the east of Monument. The Kepler Track loops past Shallow Bay, in the northeast corner of the lake, and offers an easy walk through magnificent forest along the lake shore and up the Iris Burn. Another challenging option is to follow the road from West Arm up to Percy Saddle – a 900 m climb up into the sub-alpine basins and rockfields high above the lake. There is a track from Freeman Burn Hut for a couple of kilometers up the valley, but it can't really be recommended; a final option is an expedition from Safe Cove beach to Lake Virginia – it's only about 500 m, although it seems further!



A beautiful beach on the northeast side of Circle Cove, with Mt Titiroa in the distance. Extensive outcrops of quartzite on the mountain give it the appearance of being snow-covered at all times of year.

There are numerous sand and gravel beaches, particularly in the eastern part of the lake, but sandflies can make life miserable, except for a very brisk walk along the beach! It is worth remembering that Holmwood Island is nearly sandfly-free – it provides a welcome refuge in more ways than one!

ANCHORAGES

There are 15-20 good anchorages for overnight stops; two or three provide all-weather refuges. There are lots more places suitable for a temporary stop for lunch or a spot of angling. In the eastern part of the lake a boat is never more than about 4-5 km from the nearest anchorage (though, of course, whether or not a particular place can be used at a particular time depends on wind direction at that time). Anchorages are rather more limited in the western part, so a trip plan should take careful account of expected wind directions and the exposure of the anchorages that are intended to be used. Always be aware of likely changes in wind speed and direction overnight; commonly, the wind drops in the evening, but not always!

A skipper and crew should always keep a good lookout for underwater hazards – especially sunken trees – when coming in to an intended anchorage. This is especially true in places like Oonah Burn, as rivers carry a lot of debris into the lake during heavy rain. Navigational hazards are well-marked in Manapouri, but the skipper is responsible for the safety of his/her boat, so keep a good lookout, especially in river mouths, around island shores and off points!

We haven't provided the level of detail for anchorages that is found in a coastal cruising guide because, somehow, identifying the right spot to anchor in a bay in a lake seems to be easier than in a tidal bay, and is very dependent on the direction and strength of wind on the day. Almost everywhere that is marked on the three sketch maps, it is possible – if not desirable – to tie the stern back into the shore.

Eastern lake

The Waiau River for about 6 km downstream from the boat ramp offers sheltered anchorages, although overhanging trees make landing impracticable for the first 3 km. There are anchorages also along the eastern bank upstream from the ramp, in Pearl Harbour, with quite a few resident boats moored here. Incidentally, boats should stay well over to the western bank of the river when motoring out to the lake, as the eastern side is shallow.

The beaches in the northwestern corner of Surprise Bay (C43:857035) offer a pleasant anchorage that is sheltered from northerly sector winds – handy for the first night out from the launching ramp. There is a short track across to Circle Cove, and another track from the southwestern side of the bay to Hope Arm. The northwestern corner of Supply Bay (C43:885062) also is very sheltered in westerly conditions; the wharf detracts a little from the wilderness experience, although nowadays it is used only on Wednesdays, by the weekly barge across to West Arm.

The bay (C43:859050) to the west of Stony Point has a nice swimming/camping beach that is sheltered from the south and east, but is very open to wash from the tourist launches. Circle Cove also has several very nice swimming/camping beaches sheltered from the west/north or the south; just north of the narrow neck between Surprise Bay and Circle Cove are a couple of sheltered bays in which one could swing at anchor.

Just to the north of Hope Arm lies the Holmwood Island group, a favourite spot for *Silmarillion* and many other boats. The shallow lagoon (C43:824069) offers a sheltered anchorage in all conditions, although landing generally involves a wade through marshy wetland (watch out for the resident eels). Anchoring also is possible out in the bay that is enclosed by the islands, and in the passage between the north and south main islands (which is navigable all the way through to the western end of the islands).

The eastern shore of Hope Arm has four or five small bays/beaches sheltered from the west/north, and the beach (C43:843010) from which the track to Monument leaves gives southerly shelter, as well as offering good camping and swimming. The eastern end of George Bay also offers anchorage. Right at the southern end of Hope Arm, the beach by the

DoC hut also offers a place to anchor or tie back, although *Silmarillion* has found it a rather exposed spot. The entrance to the lagoon is shallow and narrow – it is said to be navigable, although *Silmarillion* hasn't tried it!

Stockyard Cove (C43:802039) is one of the most popular spots on the lake, with three beaches giving shelter from all winds, as well as tracks through the bush, and camping opportunities.



Sunset from Stockyard Cove.

On the northern side of the lake, the beach at the northwestern end of Calm Bay (C43:809115) gives good shelter, although the bay is not at all calm in westerly/northerly conditions. It is possible to motor into West Mere, keeping a good watch for submerged branches, but this should not be attempted in windy conditions, as the wind funnels down the channel – better to explore in the dinghy. There is a nice sheltered bay two kilometers to the east of Calm Bay, and it is also possible to find shelter in the northwestern corner of Shallow Bay, although this spot is subject to gusts from the wind blowing down Iris Burn. Much of this northern lake shore, and the perimeter of Shallow Bay, has sand/gravel beaches that are suitable for a picnic stop, but they are too exposed for an overnight stop. It is possible to enter the Waiau River mouth lagoon (C43:887099), but the river current is strong, and care should be taken.

Western lake

Anchorages in the western lake are somewhat more infrequent, but good shelter nevertheless can be found in North and West Arms. Fairy Beach (C43:698075) is the first anchorage westwards from Stockyard Cove – a distance of about 12 km. The extreme northern end offers the best shelter, especially if it is possible to nose into the stream mouth, although boat wash can be a nuisance. The beach offers a nice brisk walk – brisk to fend off the voracious sandfly population – and camping is possible for the thick-skinned.

In North Arm, the beaches created by Awe Burn and Freeman Burn both offer good shelter to boats tied back under the tree canopy (Freeman Burn is the better of the two). It is generally possible to motor into the shelter of Freeman Burn itself, by the rather brooding DoC hut, but Awe Burn is (in 2009) badly obstructed by submerged trees.

In West Arm, all-weather shelter is available in the Oonah Burn stream mouth (C43:646066) – as always, care should be taken to avoid submerged trees when motoring in. The Grotto in Safe Cove – an extraordinary feature probably excavated by a subglacial river during the Ice Age – also provides all-weather shelter, but landing is impracticable so it is necessary to swing at anchor. The beach in Safe Cove also is sheltered, and tying back is possible; it is possible also to “bush bash” the 500 m from here to Lake Virginia.



Silmarillion tied back to the beach at Freeman Burn. The trees provide good shelter in the prevailing northerly wind.

At the head of West Arm, it is possible to swing at anchor or tie back to the shore in the little bay near the launching ramp – be sure not to obstruct passage for tourist and cargo boats. It is worth walking along to the DoC visitor centre to view the information displays, and a day walk up to Percy Saddle is well worthwhile for the energetic. However, with Oonah Burn only 3 km distant and very much more peaceful, there is not much reason to stay here overnight.

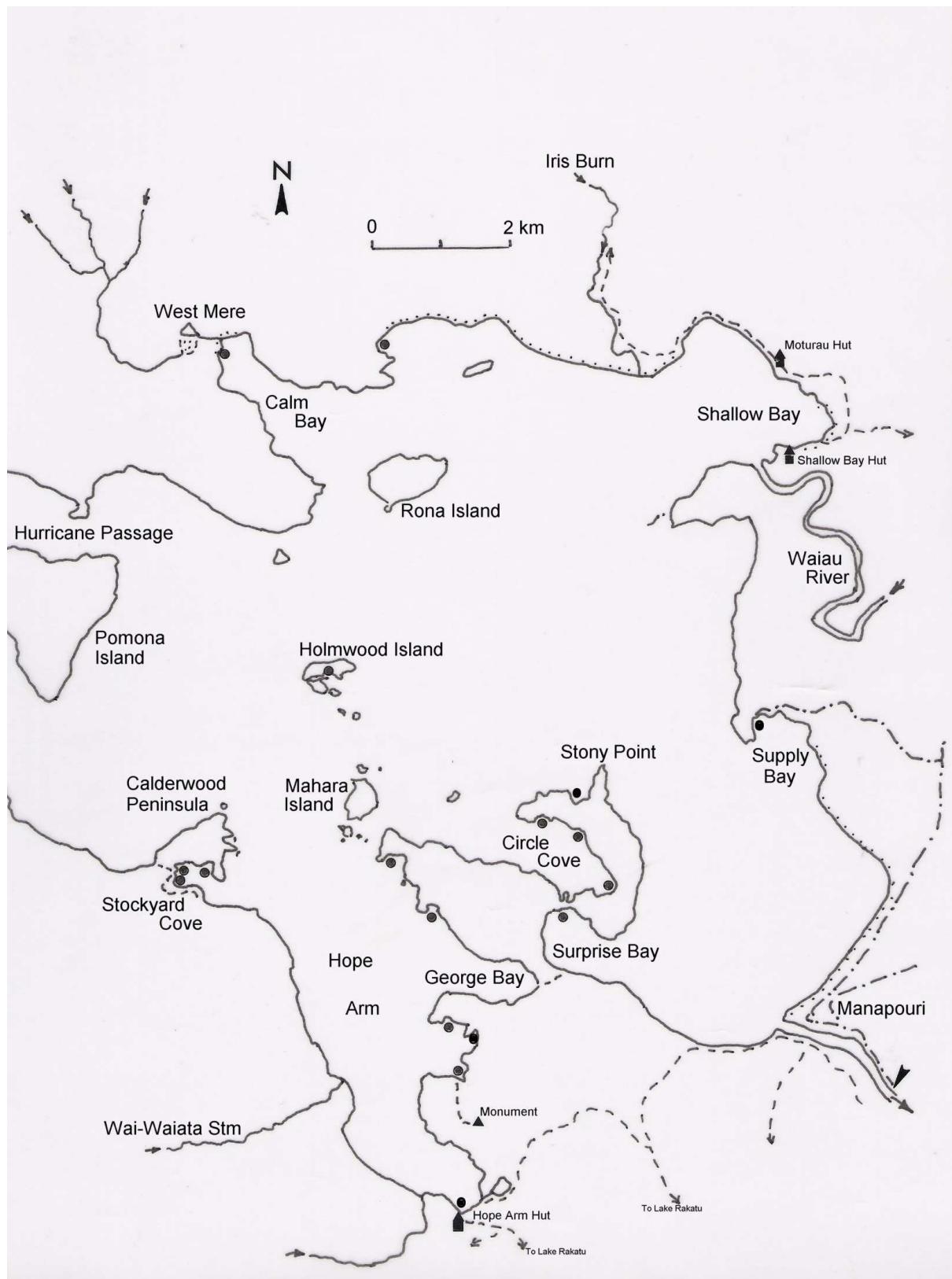


Looking out into Safe Cove from the shelter of the Grotto. There is ample water depth, 6-7 m, at the entry into the Grotto.

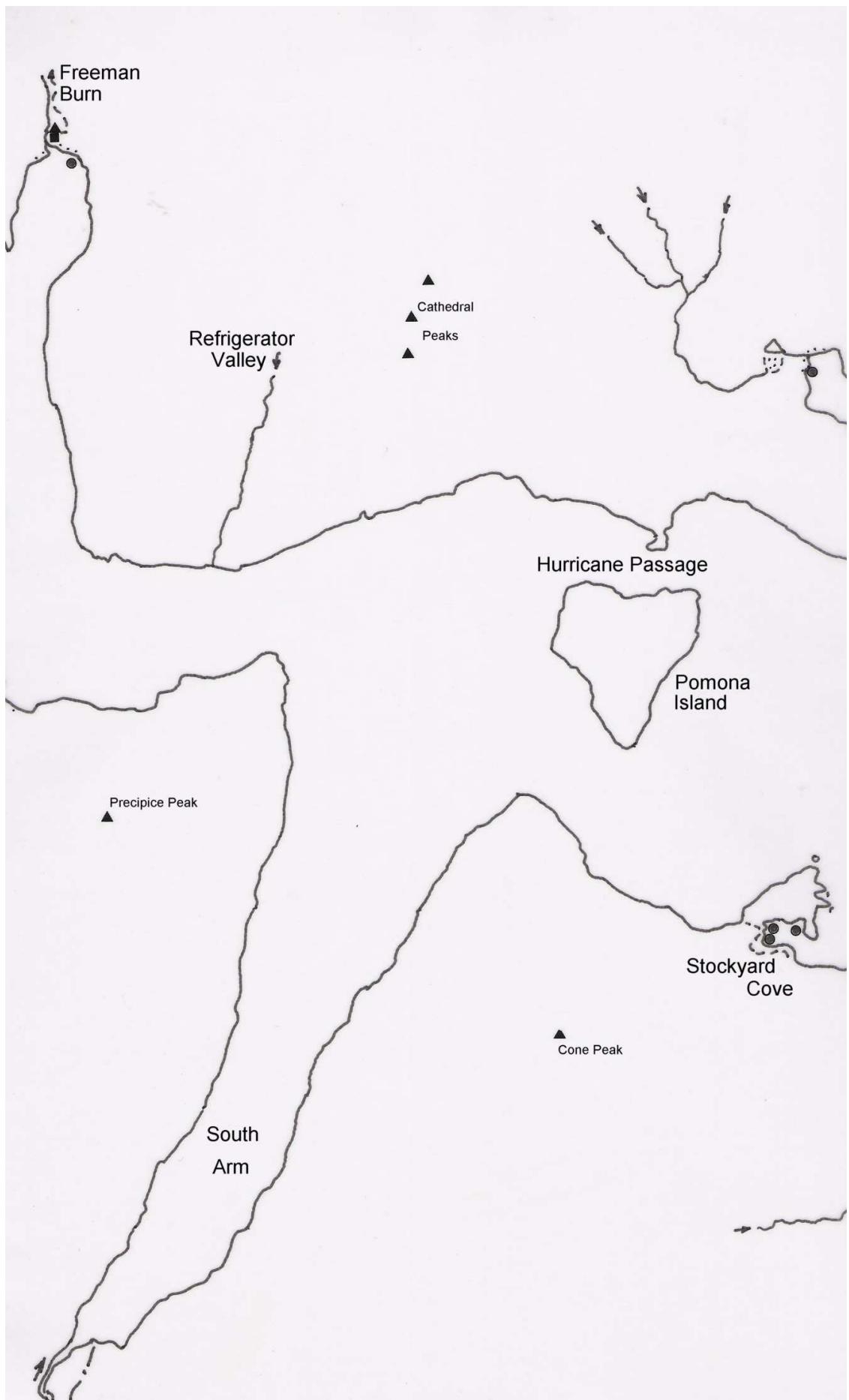
Finally, South Arm. This arm of the lake is about 10 km long, and we have enjoyed good sailing – just for the fun of it – in a gentle southerly. However, there are no landing places or anchorages until the shallows at the head of the arm. There are reported to be places to anchor in the Grebe River when lake levels are not too low, but *Silmarillion* hasn't investigated these.

Enjoy Lake Manapouri – it really is a Queen!

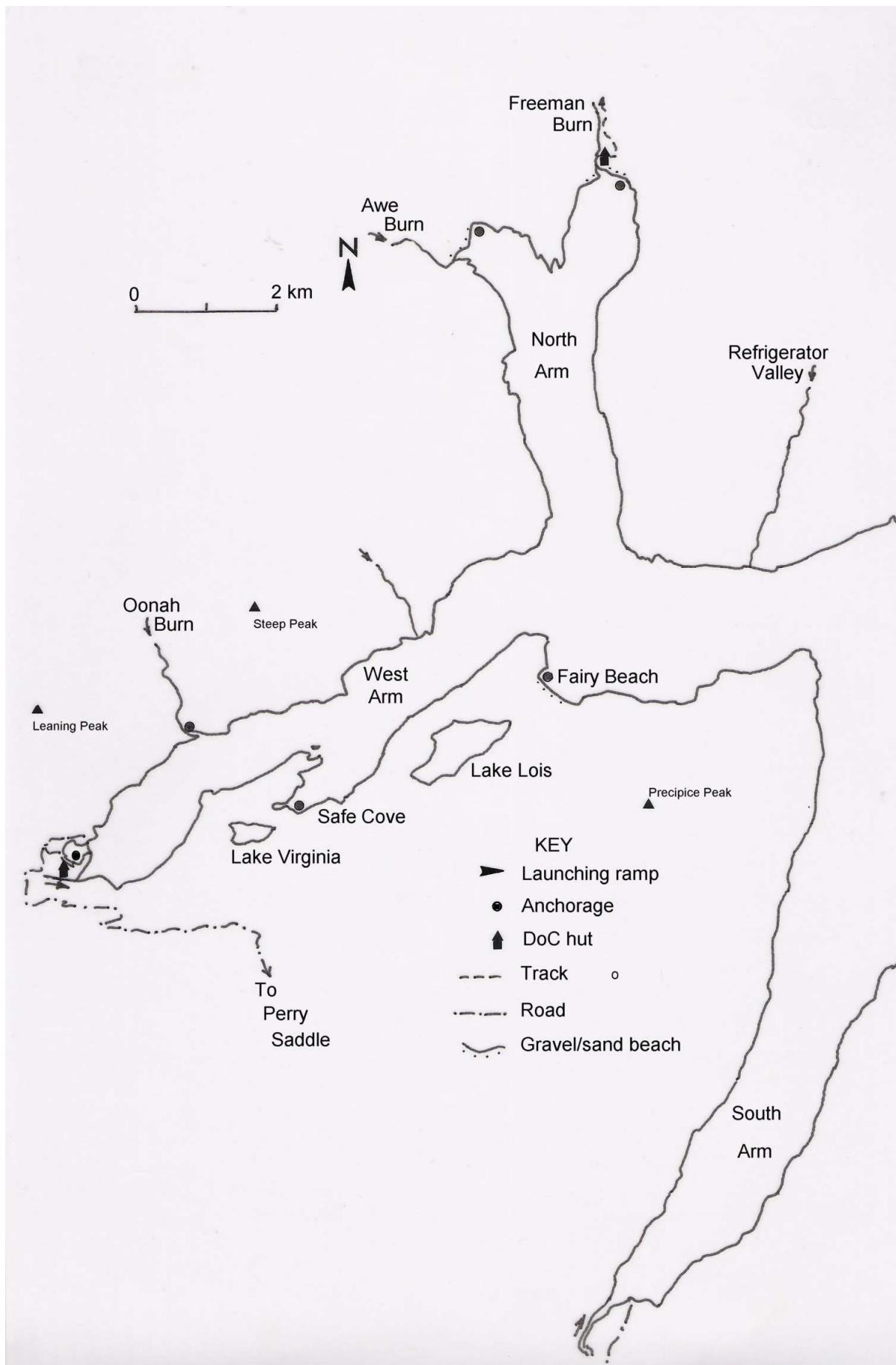
Paul Mosley
Silmarillion



Eastern section of Lake Manapouri



Central section of Lake Manapouri



Western section of Lake Manapouri

