

Below: PETER Bland battles the elements on his recent trek to the South Pole.

Right: LEADING the quiet life ... Peter relaxes at home with his dog at the Gisborne property Elderslie.



Trek of a lifetime

ADVENTURER, entrepreneur and farmer, 27-year-old Peter Bland of Gisborne returned last week from the trek of his life.

Peter was chosen as one of nine adventurers to sail the charter yacht Spirit of Sydney to the magnetic south pole with Brit of the year David Hempleman-Adams.

And if it had not been for Peter, the crew might still be stuck in the freezing Antarctic waters.

When a rope was caught around the propeller, Peter saved the day and the expedition by diving into water one degree below zero to free the rope.

The heroic effort took three dives to free the ropes and Peter still has the frost bite to prove it.

"I've never experienced cold like it in my life," Peter said.

So how does a Gisborne boy come to sail with adventurer David Hempleman-Adams — world famous for trekking for 65 days to the South Pole, and climbing Mt Everest?

"It all began when I took up sail-boarding as a hobby," Peter said.

This led to a love for sailing, which

By SUE MOSES

in the past three years has seen Peter become an experienced yachtsman.

His experiences include sailing in the Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race and chartering yachts around the world, which now means he spends much of his life at sea.

His vast experience was sought for the recent ice-trek adventure.

He became one of the three Australian crew responsible for sailing the 60 foot yacht with David Hempleman-Adams and his six fellow Brits on board, on their icy adventure.

Departing from Hobart, the crew travelled 3500 miles (or about 5600km) in 26 days, negotiating up 65 knot winds and 12 metre seas.

This meant three-hourly watches, spending up to eight hours a day at the helm as well as sail changes, cooking and sleeping occasionally.

Not to mention continuously chipping away the 2.5 tonnes of ice that accumulated throughout the journey, with an ice-pick from the bow.

But for Peter (who never gets sea-

sick) it was a tremendous experience.

"To see unique parts of the earth that man has not yet had a chance to destroy, and to walk amongst animals such as seals and penguins that knew no fear," he said.

He described Antarctica as a harsh continent and unforgiving.

But not to be content with the experience, Peter and some of the crew members returned home last week only to immediately travel to and climb Mt Kosciusko.

The 2248 metre climb took the party five hours.

When Peter has his feet on solid, snowless ground he helps run his parents sheep farm at the historic Gisborne property Elderslie, which is listed with the National Trust.

It is from here that Peter also runs his successful food business, which produces the popular Settlers Cookies.

So what is next for Peter?

Next week it is off to Japan to promote the cookies at the Tokyo Food Expo.

"Then there's always the North Pole," Peter said.



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