

GORE BAY. AN IDEAL HOLIDAY RESORT. By GORGINA FEREDAY.

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Where is it? "How do you go there?' What is the road like?" "Is there a decent place to stay at?" "What is there to see and do when you get there?"

All these questions, and many more, have been showered upon us since our return from a four weeks visit to the beautiful, but little known spot in the Cheviot country called "Gore Bay," and situated on the east coast of this South Island of New Zealand. There in the early days the late Mr W. Robinson, owner of the Cheviot Estate, built a snug seaside cottage for a family summer resort, which still stands, wrapped in its memories of the past. near to a clump of tail blue gums. under the rugged cliffs.

Our train for Waipara left the Christchurch station at 7.35am, the carriages bristling with holiday seekers. Fishing rods, luncheon baskets, and babies were much in evidence. One good man with a severe looking wife, and numberless restless and ill tempered children, betook himself from time to time to a distant corner, from whence issued. the unmistakable odour of strong Scotch whisky, then returning with innocent mien, he fed the children on sticky sweets and dodged the stern glances of his angry spouse. It was a family picnic. I pictured their return.

At Waipara we left the train and the unhappy family to go on their way, while we looked round for the coach which was to carry us on to the Cheviot Township, known by the somewhat awkward name of "McKenzie." As we gazed about, the other travellers on the road rushed the coach. and hastily scrambled into the seats, which were all quickly taken. We saw their luggage and baggage packed, and piled, and tied on at the back, while our modest portmanteaux lay on the ground at our feet. But all things come to those who wait. Our patience was rewarded. A smart light buggy, with a fine pair of horses and a capital young driver were provided for us by Mr Francis, the coach proprietor; so we set off merrily with plenty of room and a light load.

Now we were on the Glenmark Estate, at present in the market, to be sold in blocks or sections to farmers and settlers. Soon we passed the large-entrance gate which at one time led to Mr Moore's splendid mansion, some years ago destroyed by fire and never rebuilt. Our driver pointed out the land sold and the land still for sale, beautiful, fertile undulating country, extending for miles and miles, further than the eye could see; fine plantations round and near what had been the homestead, but treeless on the run itself.

Our first stopping place was Ti-papa, where we had lunch at a wayside accommodation house and an hour's rest for man and beast. Then on again, into the country of the Greta and Hurunui; good roads all the way, with steep dips here and there, through picturesque gullies and past the houses of budding settlers, somewhat bare at present, but with plenty of promise in their fields of grain and in the greenness of the young trees planted about the homesteads.

Next we passed over the Hurunui Greta Bridge with its wire netted rabbit-proof gate, and into the Cheviot Country. About four o'clock we reached McKenzie, the township before mentioned. Here we bade farewell to our young driver, and were received and hospitably entertained by Mrs Morrison at her large, new and well appointed hotel, which would put many a house in town to the blush. Surprise was the uppermost feeling in our minds as we looked round this newly-arisen town among the trees, with its post office, town hall, shops and hotels or should I say. Boarding houses? For on the whole of Cheviot there is not to be found a public-house bar or a drinking shop. One cannot buy a bottle of whisky, or a glass of ale or strong drink at any place nearer than Waipara, a distance of over forty miles.

Another coach now awaited us to take us on our way. We drove by "The Mansion House," as it is called (formerly the residence of Mr W. Robinson), and a very quaint and picturesque old dwelling of earlier date, now occupied by a caretaker, both in the midst of fine old gardens, and surrounded by splendid plantations of English trees. On the way we came upon an enclosure of Ngaios, in which grew seven tall Wellingtonias, planted, we were told, by the late Mr Robinson in memory of and to mark the graves of seven favourite racehorses who were burnt to death in his stables.

The road from McKenzie to Gore Bay runs all the way on a slight decline to the sea, and reflects great credit on those who had the planning and making, and those who now have the care of it. Along this road all the drays of wool from Cheviot pass on their way to Port

Robinson to be shipped in the steamer Wakatu, which rides there at anchor every fourth or fifth day. The returning drays bring the settlers' supplies from the steamer and seldom return quite empty. Passengers from Lyttelton come sometimes by that steamer to Gore Bay but we observed their curious greenness of complexion when landed, and congratulated ourselves that we came by coach.

As we rounded the last corner at the Bay we came in sight of the high and pointed chalk or limestone cliffs which tower above the sea at the south end on the road towards Port Robinson, each cliff face clean, as if cut by a monster knife, showing the well defined oblique lines of light coloured strata. Thanks to the easy travelling, we reached our destination about 5.30 p.m. without fatigue, although we had been on the way for nearly ten hours.

We were somewhat doubtful as to the kind of quarters and fare we should find in so far off a spot; for (as his Excellency the Governor gently remarked to the representative of the "Lyttelton Times." to whom he granted an interview after his recent West Coast tour), the accommodation houses in some out of the way places doubtless leave much room for improvement."

We need have had no anxiety however on this score, for we found a recently erected large square hotel, well furnished. exquisitely clean and comfortably-appointed with all necessary accommodation for visitors or boarders. The beds and bedding were of the best and freshest. The food plain, but well cooked and abundant excellent bread, made at McKenzie, where there are two bakers, Cheviot factory butter, also good capital merino mutton and plenty of vegetables. Such Scotch scones, pikelets. pastry, cakes, shortbread, and omelettes as those made by Mrs Tweedie, our hostess, could not be excelled and are seldom equalled anywhere.

Before attempting to write of the bay, its beauties and its wonders I must speak of the manners and bearing of the people with whom we came into contact during our stay in the Cheviot country. Among them there is an innate politeness and total absence of that brusque, self-assertive air so constantly met with in the colonies. Gore Bay stands in relation to McKenzie as Sumner does to Christchurch, and is the Sunday resort of the young people from the town But of noise, larrikinism, rowdyism or rudeness there is none. Even the small boys about are polite and obliging. The people seem happy, comfortable and prosperous. How much has the control of the liquor traffic to do with this we wondered.

Former seaside experiences had led us to expect a cordial welcome from other summer visitors of a lively kind, so we went armed with a box of Keating with which to greet them. But never a gnat, mosquito. sandfly or flea disturbed our peace, and the box of insect powder remains still unopened.

For the true lover of Nature there is no time to be dull at Gore Bay. Every turn of the road, every step on the beach revealed some new beauty of sea or land some wonder of the deep or of the earth. Native bush creeps down the gullies almost to the water's edge, as if to meet the foam-tipped waves which roll up the sands, or dash their spray among the white rocks. Clumps of Ngaios and Caracas in different parts of the bay give pleasant shelter to picnickers, and make good camping ground for those whose tastes lie that way.

Sea bathing (for which dresses can be hired at the hotel) is safe and pleasant. Along the beach among the rocks may be found lovely seaweeds, of every beautiful hue shaded green, crimson, purple, orange, and purest white. We picked up many curious living creatures on the sands, some of which we were able to preserve for Dr Dendy's inspection on our return. Their history alone would be sufficient to fill my allotted space.

Towards the south end of the Bay lies a reef of snow, white rocks, dazzling at low tide in the Sunshine. Close by, scattered about, as if from some colossal cannonading, are numberless absolutely round and perfectly smooth balls of stone. They are of various sizes, and perfect as if chiselled by a sculptor's hand. Rising above this place is an extraordinary conical rock, slightly leaning like the Tower of Pisa, large at the base, and pointed at the apex, with oblique and well marked lies of strata which appear to encircle it. Behind this again rise some very remarkable formations of clay or marl, intersected by shingle, strata, resembling Egyptian masonry, which I can only describe as huge truncated pyramids.

Indeed many of the geological formations about the Bay have an extraordinary likeness to ancient Egyptian forms. In one deep canyon I came upon a high rock of dark red stone and as I looked I saw the head and shoulders of an evil-looking Egyptian, head gear and all complete. Within this same canyon may also be seen large dark rocks, resembling the chairs of the Rameses.

On the tops of the cliffs are what appear to be ruins of old castles and forts, with crumbling towers, turrets, courtyards, loop-holes and doorways. They are but clay and shingle strata, with here and there a bush of Manuka growing upon them yet; from an artist's point of view they are very quaint and beautiful. But the greatest wonders are hidden among the hills which lie behind, yet within, the Bay. To find these the visitor must betake himself through the grove of Ngaios, up the road known as Cathedral Gully, which leads to the Port Robinson settlement on the plateau above the cliffs.

At the top of this road, to the right, is to be seen an extraordinary amphitheatre known as "The Cathedral" and at the end of a field to the left, a deep ravine overlooking the sea, still more beautiful and remarkable. The resemblance to the interior of an old roofless cathedral in the former is very wonderful. Carefully approaching the precipice and looking down into the depths, one can imagine the chancel. There in one corner is the ruined vestry; near to it stands the Bishop's canopied throne and what might be the organ pipes and pulpit. Farther off is the font, and in the distance, on an elevation, stands the small but perfectly formed chapel, surrounded by buttresses, and with its spire intact. Everywhere are pinnacles and buttresses of singular form, supporting the seeming ruins of walls and cloisters. In the ravine on the left, the formation, though similar, takes a somewhat different shape. Here we saw the high outside walls of some marvellous temple, with its domes and spires and pinnacles, the walls intersected by broad lines of strata like a sculptured frieze. And all these beautiful shapes have been formed by the action of water and wind for ages. Only a scientist could describe them adequately.

I can only speak of their grandeur and beauty. At Gore Bay the artist, the naturalist, the geologist will find days of delight. It would make a children's paradise and a lover's heaven.