

J. R. Guery.
Vices 1923/24

Services for the Month

- May 3—Saturday Waitaha
- May 4—Second Sunday after Easter Ross: 11 a.m., Holy Communion; 7 p.m., Evensong Ruatapu: 3 p.m., Evensong
- May 11—Third Sunday after Easter Wataroa: 11 a.m., Holy Communion Hari Hari: 8 p.m., Evensong
- May 18—4th Sunday after Easter Ross: 8 a.m., Holy Communion; 7 p.m., Evensong Ruatapu: 11 a.m., Holy Communion
- May 25—5th Sunday after Easter Hari Hari: 11 a.m., Holy Communion Wataroa: 7.30 p.m., Evensong
- May 26—Monday Okarito
- May 27—Tuesday Waitaha
- June 1—Sunday after Ascension Ross: 11 a.m., Holy Communion; 7 p.m., Evensong Ruatapu: 3 p.m., Evensong

Far South Again

My journey down the Long South road this time is quite a study in means of transport, or beasts of burden. My "erring" Bessie, as most of you know, got as far as Weheka, where she was caught and brought back to the Waiho.

I left Hari Hari on the afternoon of Sunday, March 23rd, and rode Mr. W. Smith's "Tommy" down to his home in Wataroa. Next day, Monday, I travelled the next stage—to Okarito—in Mr. W. Gunn's car, together with a fishing party. (We caught a mixed bag of smelts, bullies, herrings, spotties and Kawhai.) From there down to Bruce Bay, I went under "police escort," as I had Constable Moodie for a travelling companion—the law and grace-going together as one wag put it. He put his good little mare, Queenie into his gig and drove me down as far as Waiho on the Tuesday. That evening I went out to catch "Bessie" to have her stuck on to a new set of shoes. But to my sorrow I found that she was very lame in the off fore-leg so lame, that she let me catch her without trouble. Next morning (Wednesday) she was a little better, but not well enough to travel. That South journey is

not the sort on which one likes to start mounted on "three legs and a swinger." So I took her to Louis Gibbs and borrowed a good old mare called "Dolly" to see me at least part of the way down, as she was rather old to attempt the whole journey.

It was a beautiful day and we had a very pleasant ride over the three ranges to Weheka. Near the top of the first hill we passed that indomitable couple of roadmenders, Messrs Rochfort and Roberts, and on the second Barney Breeze was busily engaged cutting roadside ferns and clearing out water channels. At the Kupikup we found Mr. McEnroe still held up by the construction of the bridge over that little river by the non-appearance of the monkey to drive the piles. I was informed on good authority that it had joined Wirth's Circus. Possibly so: I've heard less probable things on my travels.

We had lunch at Mr. Fred Williams' hospitable homestead at Weheka, and then Mr. Williams and his daughter Sheila, accompanied us as far as the other side of Cooks River, where they turned up towards their sawmill, and we rode on along the beautiful road to Karangarua. We had afternoon tea with Mrs. Scese and then went on to Mrs. Scott's for tea. I had planned to hold service here on my way down, but as both Harry Scese and Andrew Scott were away that day, I was petitioned to postpone service until my return. By the way, I caused a certain amount of consternation to the inhabitants by insisting that all their clocks were an hour fast. We discussed this question at some length, and having convinced my audience at last, I pulled out my watch again to see exactly how fast they were—and discovered that they were then an hour and a half fast! On further investigations I found that my watch had stopped. It never goes really well unless I wind it.

The next morning, (Thursday), we journeyed on towards Bruce Bay in perfect weather. We crossed the Karangarua with very little water in it, and a few miles along the road met Bob Thompson out looking for some erring cattle. He came back with us and we called in at his house before going on to Bruce Bay for lunch.

There had been a good deal of speculation, when the word got round that Constable Moodie was on his way down as to whom he was after. It is even rumoured that one or two shy gentlemen found that they had important business at the back of the tall timber—not that their consciences were at all uneasy, of course, but still—absence of body is always better than presence of mind. (This paragraph isn't to be taken too literally.) And in reality Mr. Moodie's mission was nothing so exciting as a man-hunt. He was merely collecting agricultural statistics—the Christian names of all your bees and the number of teeth the ducks have cut during the season and all that kind of thing, you know.

We had lunch at Bruce Bay in the hospitable house of Bob Ritchie. I had rung him up beforehand to ask about borrowing a horse, and Mrs. Mahuika very kindly lent me a great old traveller by the name of "Biddy." So I left "Dolly" in Bob Ritchie's tender care, and as Mr.

Moodie had to turn back towards Okarito, I went on by myself to the Mahitahi. I was entrusted with a telegram for Mr. Busch, so I travelled up the Mahitahi riverbed, where I came on him busily drafting sheep with the help of Mr. E. Wilson. I reached the Condon's homestead in the latish afternoon, and as I heard that two of the boys were over at the Paringa Hut, I asked leave again to go over and stay the night with them so as to get a flying start over the long stage next day. As the state of the meat supply at the hut was uncertain, I was entrusted with three parts of a goose to take over. The goose at that moment was in the pot boiling and had about half an hour to go, but was taken out and we had a great wrestle with it all over the kitchen table trying to separate off the bits that were to remain behind. It was very hot and not yet cooked soft, and displayed an astonishing agility in bounding about the table to avoid being taken to bits. However, I can carve almost anything, if only I can get my foot on it, and the goose finally came to bits and my share was put in a biscuit tin and safely conveyed the eight or nine miles to the Paringa hut. We persuaded it to go into the camp oven there and weighted the lid down with wedges, so that it should 'stay put,' and after half an hour's roasting it was delicious.

It was too late in the day for 'athletic sports' this time so Jack and Willie Condon and I had to be content with planning a glorious deer-stalking expedition—up the Paringa and over a pass into the head of the Landsborough and down that river until it joins the Haast. The deer were coming in for a terrible time, but unfortunately I could join in no more than the planning.

Next morning, with a very hospitable send-off, I got away about 7 a.m. on the long stage. The amiable "Biddy" travels along splendidly at a pace of her own invention. I've never met its like before. It's either the fastest thing in walks or the slowest thing in canters that has ever come my way. My own theory is that it's a bit of both—that she walks so fast with her front legs she has to canter with her back ones to keep up. Anyhow it's very comfortable to ride and the miles slip behind at a surprising rate. About three miles this side of the Blue River I came on Messrs Tui Mahuika and Gus Katau busily at work restoring the track to order and straightening up the beds of some restless little creeks which seemed to have been tossing about in them a good deal. Indeed, in these parts, as well as in a good many others, the creeks seem to be like the roadman's permanent boarders—their beds have to be re-made every morning.

It was a perfect day, and it had been very pleasant riding along through the bush in the cool of the morning. But it was very hot going up the five miles of steep rough track beyond the Blue River, climbing all the way on to the Maikifaki Range. I called it the Thomas Range last time, but I find it isn't, as the Thomas is the next one parallel. The sun just blazed on us as we climbed and most of the stout old Biddy's fat seemed to turn to dripping. It was cooler for the seven or eight miles along the top

and the views out over the deep bush-covered valleys were magnificent. Far off through some v shaped gorge on the coast line there are glimpses of the sea, shining vivid blue beyond the olive green of the bush. And, in the mid-day heat, the whole world seemed still, save for the eager rushing of some mountain stream.

I reached the Iron Hut (at the top of the long down grade) in time for lunch and found that Charlie Smith had resigned his position as curator of that wild and lonely bit of track, but I was made very welcome by Jim McGuire who reigns (and is reigned on) in his stead. After lunch, "Biddy" and I took our leisurely way down the long eight miles of hill to the Copper Creek Hut. Just before we got there we met Dick Trovathan, the mailman, hunting his packhorse up the track at a great rate. Dick showed signs of heat, mental and physical. He explained that this packhorse had got away from him in the flax flat, opposite the hut, and that it had been merrily playing hide and seek with him there for the past hour in the warm afternoon sunshine. Finally, with some mistaken idea that he might prefer the fun of a paper chase, it had left a trail of mail-bags behind it, shedding them gaily from the pack. I fear its efforts at humour were not appreciated. Dick said it wasn't at all a nice horse, and proceeded to hunt it along up the hill with a supplejack.

All the way along from Copper Creek to the Haast I was following the recent tracks of some foot-traveller. I had heard at several places of a man on ahead of me who was walking all the way down from the Waiho. And when just at sunset I came out of the track on to the Haast riverbed, there he was, sitting on the stones, with his light swag beside him, busily engaged in warding off the ferocity of the starving sandflies. There is a deep little backwater which runs across the end of the track, and he had gone into wade this, found it too deep, and, not knowing what to do next, had sat down to wait. Jim McGuire had told me where to find a shallow crossing, and when I'd explored for and found it, the footpassenger followed me over. As we made across towards the main river, Ad. Cron came riding over to meet us and kindly gave my companion a lift behind him across the ford, which I'm glad to say, is an unusually good one just now.

I stayed the night with the Jack Crons and heard such thrilling tales of deer-stalking up the river that I immediately began to plot for the stealing of a day wherein to go hunting. Next morning I rode a little way up the Haast Track to where Messrs. Jack Cowan and Reynolds were busy making a beautiful motor-road of it. Hardly that?—well, at least, a thoroughly good pack-track. I then turned back towards Okuru and called in to see Mrs. Ad. Cron, who was still very ill after five weeks in bed. I found there too, Mrs. Condon from the Mahitahi, who had taken charge of the nursing.

Ad. Cron had a cheerful young three year old called "Starling," recently broken in, whom wanted given some exercise to keep her civil. So he asked me if I'd care care to ride her on to Okuru and back. I said

I would like to, so I left Biddy in his care and again set off on a new mount. "Starling," I'm glad to say, did not indulge in any of the higher flights of equestrian acrobats but behaved like a perfect lady, never once, throwing me up and neglecting to catch. The only original suggestion she made was that, when we turned, warm and perspiring, from the travelling along the beach in the sun and crossed a most inviting bit of soft dry sand, she should lie down and have a roll in it—a suggestion which I met with marked disapproval.

I had Jim McGuire's company along the beach, and we crossed the Okuru by the ford (it being low tide) and went down to Mrs. Jack Cowan's for lunch. In the afternoon I went up the Turnbull River, looking in on the Ad. Cowans, Mr. McBride, the McPhersons and finally the Harrises. It turned out that I had timed my visit to Okuru very propitiously, for that evening (Saturday) one of the monthly Euchre and Dances was being held. It was a very cheerful evening and I distinguished myself by being one of four who won 6 games out of 7, but my hand must have lost its cunning, as I was left in the out, and relegated to the "also started." The dance, too, was a success, with Mr. Paddy Nolan as M.C. calling for 450 more coupled that he averred were wanted to make up the sets and Mr. Jack Cowan supplying the music with his accordion. When it was time to go home, I sang them a song—"Waltzing Matilda"—but they didn't go home. They're hardy folk, these citizens of Okuru.

Next Day, (Sunday) we had service at 11 a.m. and at 7.30 p.m. and in the afternoon I went up the Okuru and called on the Nolan brothers and the Len Crawfords. I had originally planned to go out to the Haast on Monday to be ready for the long stage on Tuesday, but, in accordance with my deer-stalking plot, I rode out there after the evening service on Sunday night, thus salving the whole of Monday for an expedition up the river. And sure enough up the river I rode next day, under the expert guidance of Jack Cron, and in company with his son Alan. Time doesn't permit of the giving of any details of that very interesting day. Suffice it to say that I looked on most successfully at the turning of a nice little seven pointer stag into venison, and that we hurried down through the extraordinary black night to get home ahead of the threatening rain. But I'm very grateful to Jack Cron for all the trouble he went to, to give me the expedition.

That night it rained in torrents, and was still hard at it next morning when I went down for an early service with Mrs. Ad. Cron, whom I was very glad to see looking so much better than when I had been there first. But about the middle of the morning, when it was rather late to make a start, the weather, which seemed to be having a seasonable little game with me (this was Tuesday, April 1st) cleared up and was quite fine. However, I waited that day for the rivers to run down, and occupied myself with a little amateur hair-cutting—or plucking would be the better term.

Next morning, Wednesday, was beautifully fine, and Biddy and I set off early. The Haast had run down so that I rode across it without getting my boots wet;

but there is a backwater on the far side the contents of which are very damp. I know, because I had my boots full of it for fifty miles! We were crossing it just deep enough to make me hold my feet up, when Biddy threatened to take a nose-dive over a stick on the bottom, and I brought my feet down with a loud splash into the water. I was wearing splendidly watertight boots, too; These didn't let a drop leak out the whole way.

I got a surprise as I was nearing the Copper Creek hut; I rounded a turn in the road and came suddenly on a fine stag standing in the creek bed; Now I had promised Jack Cron to take some venison up to Jim McGuire at the Iron Hut, but, much to my annoyance, had come away without it. So it occurred to me that, if I could lead this fellow up by the ear it might solve the difficulty. So I spoke soft and enticing words to him—in fact I absolutely fawned upon him—but he refused to recognise me as a little dear and galloped away in the most haughty manner with his head in the air; and though she made a gallant effort, Biddy soon gave up the idea of running him down.

Jim McGuire very forgivingly gave me a cup of tea at lunch time at the Iron Hut. When I came to the top of the hill overlooking the Blue River I could see trouble gathering ahead in the shape of thick black clouds. So I pushed along to get over the Paringa before I met it. I called in at the Paringa hut to ring up Mahitahi to say I was coming, but I couldn't persuade the telephone to tell, so came away and left it to talk to itself. Once across the Paringa I came quietly along and reached the Mahitahi just as darkness and the first of the rain fell. Incidentally I very much surprised an old pig (and myself) by walking on her as I came up the path to the Condon's house.

Next morning (Thursday) the rain cleared sufficiently to let me get on to Bruce Bay with little more than a sprinkle. On the way I called in to see Jack Mulvaney (who was 'enjoying' a touch of lumbago) and Mr. and Mrs. Kidd, who entertained me very hospitably. When I reached the Ritchie's at lunch time I found that I had again Mr. Fred Williams as a companion. He had been down to the Bay with a load of wool and was held up by the floods on his way back. It seems that each of us can pass through Bruce Bay alone without upsetting the atmospheric conditions, but that when we arrive there together its too much for the clerk of the weather, and the sky drips like anything. It dripped very hard all that afternoon. In the evening I had a service in the school, and also the next morning early. After breakfast I walked (or waded—there was a little stream flowing down the road, with fish in it) out to the Wilson's at Hunt's Beach, and had a Baptism Service there; then rode a pony Mr. Wilson very kindly lent me on to the Thomson's at the Manakiaiu, where I held service and walked back to the Ritchie's in the afternoon. The rain cleared off that evening (Friday) and next morning we crossed Jacob's river without trouble. The faithless "Dolly" had got out of her paddock at the Ritchie's and had made for home, but was held up by gates at Karangarua. So I rode one of Mr. Williams'

The Parcel of Ross in 1919/20.

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