

Doc Gray
Royal Oak Print Hotel Rostowick
(has stayed at Kila Hwa)

1 Menu = 28.39 rams.

Parish of Fairlie on the way to the Hermitage

DECEMBER 7, 1951.

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The C.E.N. Parish in New Zealand

Pastoral Visiting in the Mountainous Back-Country

By the Rev. W. G. HEERDEGEN

(Five hundred readers of the "C.E.N." are forwarding their copies to the New Zealand parish which the Vicar, Mr. Heerdegen, describes in this article.)

PARISHES in New Zealand often cover large areas. The clergy who serve in them know all about the joys of motoring in ancient cars over pot-holed and corrugated shingle roads. What is written here, although it describes the work of our parish, is really typical of what happens in many country parishes in New Zealand. The parochial district of Fairlie is just over a hundred miles long. It stretches from the beautiful Te Ngawai River in the east to the majestic and rugged Southern Alps in the west, and covers an area known as the Mackenzie Country, named after a Scottish shepherd who, in the early days, became notorious as "Mackenzie the Sheep-Stealer."

The parish is in the centre of the South Island, and is forty miles from Timaru and 120 miles from Christchurch. It is divided by a main highway which is nothing more than a shingled road which is often snow-covered in winter. The surface is good in

as boulders rolled down the slope—huge rocks that had fallen during the night. But this part of the road was pleasant compared with crossing the scours and streams that ran down from the mountains. Most of the parishioners in this part of the country have sheep-runs which go well up into the snows of the Southern Alps. Some are even tucked in at the base of Mount Cook (12,349 ft.), the highest mountain in Australia or New Zealand. Think of the loneliness of their lives and the distances from centres of population! However, it is good to know that the Church maintains clergy in these areas so that no one can ever say he is neglected.

Keeping Touch

As well as being visited on an average once a year, every member of the parish receives a free copy of the *Mackenzie Churchman*, and recently the church vestry agreed to send a free copy of the *Mothers Union Journal* as well. To augment this literature, I wrote a letter, which appeared in the *C.E.N.* in December, 1950, asking readers to send me their used copies, and as a result of this appeal just about 500 replied. I was astounded and almost embarrassed until I hit upon the scheme of writing to those who enclosed their names asking them to forward their copy direct to one of my parishioners. The scheme is of inestimable value, not only for "confirming the faithful," but for "arousing the careless."

Quite often when I leave my headquarters at Fairlie, my wife packs a bag and I do not return until the end of the week. Wherever I go, people, whether Anglican or not, offer meals and a bed, and they are really glad to have the company.

Festival Day

Here is an account of my last Easter tour. After a service at St. Stephen's Church, Fairlie, on Good Friday morning at 11 (the congregation numbered forty), I drove to Lake Tekapo, twenty-seven miles away, for a service in the beautiful stone Church of the Good Shepherd at 2.30 p.m. There were thirty-six people present, including a group of farmers from Australia, who were on tour and whose bus happened to pass at that moment. I then drove to the Hermitage (the hotel in the shadow of Mount Cook), about seventy miles away, calling at some of the stations to tell them about a service at Lake Pukaki the next morning. After dinner it was announced over



A view of the magnificent lake which forms part of Mr. Heerdegen's parish.

the microphone that there would be a service in the drawing-room at 8.30 p.m. About fifty guests and some of the staff were present.

The next morning, Easter Eve, there was Holy Communion at 6.45, twelve attending. After a drive of thirty-four miles, there was a Communion service in the school house at Lake Pukaki, with a crowded congregation of sixteen in a small room. Then home, sixty miles away.

The following morning was Easter Day. What a beautiful morning! At 7 the sun was shining brilliantly and painting the snow on the mountains pink and gold. The church was beautifully decorated with gladioli and chrysanthemums, and the cross looked triumphant. There were forty people present. At Lake Tekapo at 9.30 a.m. there were about twenty-five, and at Fairlie, at 11 a.m., one hundred and seven.

Of course, the clergy are busier at Easter than at other times, but this is really typical of the travelling the clergy do in the back country.

A Church on a Crag

People who visit the lake district in the parish say that it reminds them of Scotland—the jagged, snowy mountains, the swift-running burns, the deep lochs.

In the heart of this district stands a church. It is in a bleak position, on a rocky crag. It is not adorned except by its own rugged beauty. The dry winds howl across the plains in summer and cold southerlies deposit an offering of snow in the winter. There is no sign of a tree in this pure sanctuary. It is completely bare, save for the unfriendly, but yet familiar,

presence of the jagged matagouri or "Wild Irishman."

Nature is here how God made it—except for that solitary memorial built to His greater glory and in memory of the ancients who left comfort to come out to a different existence.

This is a rugged church of natural stone in a wild setting.

But stand in this Church of the Good Shepherd, gazing through the plate glass behind the altar on to the snowy clearness of the mountains and the brilliant gleam of the diamonds in the green and blue of Lake Tekapo, and God is there with you.

Building a Kingdom

God is standing there beside you and you can feel His presence as surely as you can hear the beat of your own heart.

Man is now harnessing the power of these lakes and rivers to provide electricity, but, fortunately, he is not destroying much of the natural beauty. In the wake of the engineers have come workmen with their wives to live in temporary homes.

So now, those who minister in these parts, minister not only to isolated settlers but to hundreds of hydro-electric employees as well.

The life of a country priest who works in the lesser-known parts of New Zealand is no easy or monotonous one and his position no sinecure.

But he works in the knowledge that he is one of a world-wide communion all working for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. And he knows that his work is richly blessed.



The Rev. W. G. Heerdegen.

parts, but some of the side-roads which pass through creek beds and over mountain moraine are far from comfortable in the Baby Morris.

Rough Riding

I well remember a visit to Glen Lyon station. The road was along a cliff face around the edge of glittering Lake Ohau. Several times the car had to be stopped

Gold, Guns and God

pay-day, life is pretty tough. We must have a man, a strong man, who can handle the situation. Recently,

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