

HENRIETTA MARY McKENZIE, 1897 - 1975

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair.

Milton.

When Hetty McKenzie passed quietly away on 17 August 1975, the Ornithological Society and other kindred societies had occasion to mourn not only a "lady sweet and kind," but also an indefatigable worker whose life had been a shining example of service to the community.

Born at Thames in 1897, she moved with her family to Warkworth where she lived for fifteen years. In 1917 she started her training as a nurse at the Auckland Public Hospital, a fortifying experience; for among those she tended were casualties from World War One. In March 1918 Ross McKenzie, still under 21 but a 'veteran' of the Somme and an amputee who had suffered serious concussion, but was no longer a hospital patient, returned to New Zealand. Though Ross and Hetty had been only slightly acquainted before, they soon became engaged. They were not married till 1921 after Hetty had completed her training and Ross had earned — or, as he puts it — scraped together enough money to build a house at Clevedon, the house on the knoll, which with its extensions is now so well-known to ornithologists from New Zealand and elsewhere.

As there was no trained nurse in Clevedon, Hetty at once began a voluntary nursing service. The nearest doctors came to depend upon her heavily; often and confidently calling for her help. She tended many convalescents. Serious cases she sometimes nursed in her own home; or she would bundle other patients off to hospital many miles away in an old 1929 Chevrolet of blessed memory. This service, which went on for nearly half a century, was greatly appreciated by the people of Clevedon and there was general rejoicing in 1953, when Hetty was honoured by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and received the Coronation Medal. Regularly, but with some diffidence, did she wear it on Anzac Day parades.

Meanwhile, the family had been increasing, three girls and two boys; and in the 1930's there arose the problem of secondary education and boarding fees. The challenge was accepted. While Ross continued as an accountant, the family moved out of Clevedon to the Ness Valley and for nine years Hetty became a 'cow-cockie,' milking twenty cows. Although she had little knowledge of dairy farming, Ross had been brought up to it. With the help of such children as were not away at school, the venture succeeded by hard work and in spite of

hard times. Simultaneously, in the secluded Ness Valley, Hetty did her most demanding nursing. She was also involved in war work, church work and local affairs. She was Matron of the war emergency hospital at Clevedon, attending farewells and home-comings of local servicemen, one of whom was her elder son who went overseas as a radio-operator/air-gunner in the RNZAF. She also served on a committee to help the rehabilitation of those who returned. Involvement with the OSNZ began in 1941 and a trickle of birdwatchers began to reach the Ness Valley.

Emancipated from farming and with the family grown up, the McKenzies returned to Clevedon, but not to a life of leisure. The wonder was that one pair of hands could do so much. Hetty worked a long day. In 1964 she responded to an appeal for qualified nurses and for eighteen weeks she was on night duty as a Sister at Green Lane Hospital, going to and fro, a daily distance of forty miles, in the last of the three antiquated family 'Chevs.' Meanwhile, in more senses than one "Kiltarlity" was a hive of ornithological industry. For more than a decade Hetty performed the formidable task of despatching *Notornis*, about a thousand copies, plus notices, four times a year. From 1960 to 1975 she handled the sale and issue of back numbers. In 1965 she became Librarian, a post she retained till she went into hospital in March 1975.

Hetty was the last person in the world to claim that she was a serious ornithologist. But her powers of observation were acute. Ross's book was very much hers too; for it could not have been compiled without her flair for camping, driving and improvisation. Her great interest was in helping people, especially the young, the hungry or the injured. The 19 members of an expedition which explored Farewell Spit in 1961 still recall with relish the delicious dinner which she concocted in the old woolshed after a Forest Ranger had given a haunch of venison. On tour Ross and Hetty delighted in seeking out bird-watchers in all parts of the country from Spirits Bay to Stewart Island. The title "*In Search of Birds in New Zealand: How and Where to Find Them*" came from Hetty. She was the gentle power behind the throne, proof-reading, checking, never obtruding, always 'on the go' without fuss.

One of her most appreciated services was to visiting naturalists from overseas. How they came to enjoy her home-made bread, her fresh scones and apple shortcake! One of her greatest admirers was Joyce Grenfell.

The Ornithological Society offers its deep sympathy to Ross, his children and grandchildren. To know Hetty McKenzie was to love her. Need more be said?

R. B. S.