

Life at Bush's Beach

Memories by Acushla Adams



The Adams family was the last to live in the old homestead at Bush's Beach. As I was one of the six children in that family I would like to share with you some of the happy memoirs of the time we spent there.

Until the early 50's there was a homestead on the shore of Bush's Beach on Kaiaraara Bay. I understand that the Busch family built it as a guesthouse but I have no idea when. In the early days, before our time, people would stay at the property and boats would moor in the bay using the large jetty to get ashore.

The property was made up of a house, a bedroom annex, outside bathroom and toilet, another small one-room building used as a schoolhouse, boatshed and jetty, smokehouse, milking bails and several paddocks.

At some stage the Busch family sold the property to "the Forestry". Keith Adams joined the Forestry just after the World War II as a clerk and was sent to the Barrier in about 1947. At that stage the family comprised Keith and Danny, Aunty Lannie, Erin, David, Gabrielle, Acushla and Simon. Dinah arrived a bit later.

I remember that the house had a very large kitchen with a big wood stove that was used for cooking and water heating - I also remember that with it, the house was very cosy in the cooler weather! Then there was a huge lounge room – at least it was huge in my eyes - with a wooden table almost the width of the room as its main feature. There were three bedrooms. As I recall Mum and Dad had the main room, Aunty Lannie shared the second bedroom with Dinah (the youngest at that stage) and Gabrielle and I had the third room. The rest of the family slept out

in the annex. There was a verandah at the front of the house, then a grass verge of a few meters, and then the beach! At really high tides the water would lap the bottom steps.

There were four bedrooms in the annex and it had a verandah all around it. The bathroom was out side between the house and the annex.



In the late 40's rationing was still in force with coupons still being used and this made us become as self reliant as possible. A good vegetable garden and fruit trees helped and much to everyone's delight a bounty of fish and other seafood became our main diet – fish, oysters, pipis, mussels were all to be gathered not far from our front door.

Being so close to the water we shared the house with a colony of penguins that lived under it. Many a night they would waken us as they settled noisily. Having had a good feed of fish they would waddle up the beach and back under the house. Cute little creatures but when one decided to come through a hole in the floor and nest in the pile of stove kindling it created some problems. The telephone was directly above the nest and when someone wanted to use the phone all hell broke loose as the penguin protected "its territory"! After a few days of this, Dad eventually captured it, put it back under the house and fixed the floor.

As well as nature's animals we had a menagerie of our own: Jack and Dinah the horses, Ferdinand (of course) the bull, Marion a black sheep, two cows, a pig, ducks, chickens, dogs, cats and guinea pigs.

Marion the sheep had an identity problem and always insisted on going with the cows to be milked – she would enter the bail and once her tummy was tickled she wandered off, quite pleased with herself.

Stories about Dad – Memories by Acushla Murdoch (nee Adams)

When we first arrived on the island, the only way that Dad could get to work at the Forestry office – it still stands as part of the DOC buildings – was by rowing across Kaiaraara Bay. He would row about 500 meters and then scramble up the steep hill and cross Leroy's land, carefully avoiding their bull, and then walk down the road to the office. I don't know where he landed – maybe where 'The Jetty' is today. Eventually our finances allowed him to buy an outboard motor.

Having the boat meant that we could catch a lot of fish, so many that Dad decided to smoke some of them in the smoke house that was there. This was his first and last attempt because the smoke house was so badly burned that it would have required rebuilding and I think that Dad decided "once bitten, twice shy" and left it. Needless to say the fish did not survive either and from then on it was strictly fresh fish.

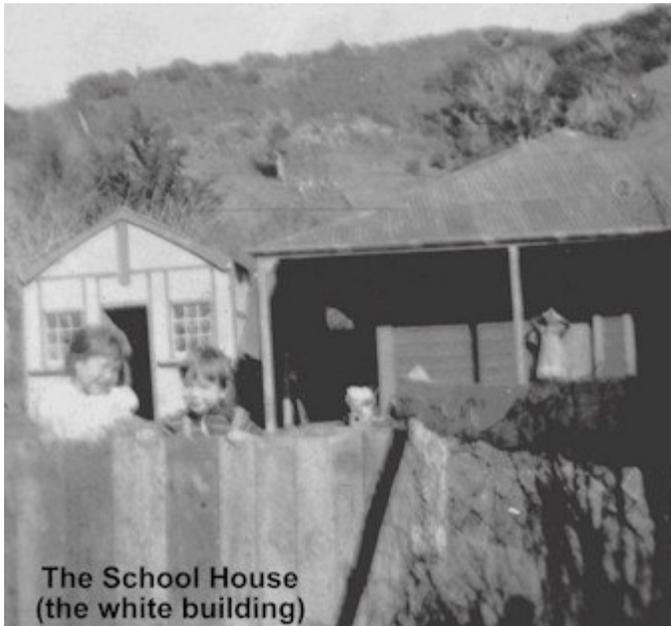
Another time when Danny (Mum) was away in Auckland, Dad thought that he would bake some scones in the wood stove. As anyone knows, it takes time and patience and a judgment of the correct heat. Dad obviously didn't have the patience nor the judgment and the scones ended up as solid as rocks and inedible. Not being one to waste anything, Dad decided that if the scones were soaked in water for a couple of days the chooks might find them tempting but no, the chooks wouldn't have a bar of them either. From then on the baking was left to the women in the family.



Our bull Ferdinand met an untimely death when he caught his head in the gate and in trying to free himself broke his neck. Dad decided that it was too difficult to bury him and thought that the best solution was to have the horse drag the carcass around to the next small bay. The hope was that the outgoing tide would carry Ferdinand out to feed the fish. Next day we awoke to find Ferdinand on our beach! Plan B was to get the bull into deep water and tow it further offshore using the boat – that was the last we saw of Ferdinand!

For a four year old, a day living at Bush's bay was carefree in its simplicity and freedom. However for a five year old, the need for schooling curtailed some of that freedom. It was time for Gabrielle and me to join Erin and David in getting an education. It was out of the question for the four of us to attend the school that I think was at Port Fitzroy in the building that now houses the TIC. Since it was too far away, most mornings were spent doing correspondence

lessons sent from Auckland. Our classroom was the small building off the annex that we called (surprise, surprise) the school house. Making sure that all of us behaved and got on with the



**The School House
(the white building)**

work for the day was Mum, a hard task mistress! As far as I can recall Gabrielle and I spent a couple of hours on our "studies" while Erin and David, being six and three years older than us, spent more time in the school house.

After our lessons it was back to simplicity and freedom! For the rest of the day it was ours to wander the hills and bush surrounding the homestead and explore the beach and rock areas. Carefree as it was, any rustling in the bush would send us rushing home as fast as our little legs could carry us - in those days the island had a population of wild goats and pigs and our imagination had us being chased by one of these.

One afternoon when David had finished his lessons he told us that he had discovered a smugglers' cave and he had actually seen the smugglers. To a breathless audience he described them as being ugly and wearing big black hats and long black coats. Of course he offered to show us where it was. So off we went, David confidently leading the way and Gabrielle and I following warily. As we crept into the very dark cave we heard a low growling noise. At this Gabrielle and I took fright and raced home giving our little legs another workout - David in the meantime must have thought it all very funny and his growling sounds very realistic. It took Mum and Dad some time to persuade us that David had been playing a prank. We used to visit the cave a lot after that episode but were never brave enough to go to the back of it.



**The Cave in 2003
(Acushla and Gabrielle)**

Although carefree, there were a couple of rules that we were supposed to follow. The first was to look out for stingrays before going into the water. The second was to be careful when scrambling over rocks - Gabrielle and I weren't the most popular little girls after one excursion over rocks with oysters growing on them. We followed Mum and Dad's instructions and knew where to walk. Unfortunately we didn't keep an eye out for Simon who was tagging along. By the time we returned home his feet were badly cut - Mum and Dad were not at all impressed and gave us another lecture!

Simon was your typical boy: always in trouble or creating it - in most families there is always one child like that. Simon liked nothing more than to tease anyone or anything that happened to cross his path. His favourite targets, after us, were the animals, particularly the drake (Clementine - for a drake's name?) and our young calf, Heather. One day Clementine said "enough is enough" and decided to take revenge on his tormentor and attacked. Although serious for Simon, the rest of thought it was very funny – here we were, watching a small blonde boy running for all he was worth along the beach with a very angry drake in close pursuit. How close? Well it was flapping its wings and pecking at Simon's bottom and legs. Simon thought that he had found safety when he took cover in the boatshed and shut the door. However a very determined drake went to the other door and rushed inside to continue his attack. Dad eventually went to Simon's rescue



That should have been a lesson to Simon but no! His next victim was Heather - fortunately her horns were small. She too decided on revenge and chased him until he dived for cover into an old food safe, rotting and to be used for kindling, lying out in the yard. Once again, unfortunately for Simon he didn't quite fit in, leaving a little bottom sticking out. Heather took steady aim and gave him such a butt that it sent him through the back of the safe.

Our religious education was looked after by Mum who led us in evening prayers – of course grace was said before the evening meal. On one special occasion I can remember Father Walls, a Catholic Priest paying us a Sunday visit. Our large dining room table was used as the altar to celebrate mass. As I recall, not having attended church for a long time it was a little bewildering to me especially as in those days it was all in Latin. When Father Walls visited us he stayed overnight and he and Dad had many debates about religion!

I remember a magic evening in Bush's Bay when Mum called us from our beds to look at the bay. To our great excitement the water was phosphorescent – with squeals of delight we splashed about in the tide with sparkling drops of water on our arms and legs; we thought we were in fairy land.