

## KATHERINE MANSFIELD'S *AT THE BAY* SOME COMMENTS

Though I read Mrs Maude E. Morris's paper with interest, it has not persuaded me that The Glen, Muritai is the house of the story *At the Bay*.

Most (perhaps all) of the characters in *At the Bay* are drawn from life and Mrs Morris assumes that the 'story' house has its prototype in one of the eastern bays of Wellington Harbour, where the Beauchamp family used certainly to stay.

I accept the assumption provisionally and shall return to it.

Mrs Morris marshals her evidence and concludes:

- 1) that the house at Day's Bay (conveniently called the Downes Point house) is NOT the 'story' house
- and
- 2) that The Glen, at the corner of the main Muritai Road and Puriri Street Extension, Muritai, Eastbourne, is the 'story' house.

With the first conclusion I agree. Indeed Mrs Morris's case against Downes Point may be strengthened in at least four respects.

First of all the Downes Point house, before it was extended, was much smaller than the 'story' house, which had the kitchen whence the three little girls bore their plates of porridge, the living-room where they breakfasted, the bedroom which the grandma shared with Kezia when they took their siesta, the parents' bedroom into which Burnell dashed when they 'made away with' his stick, Beryl's room where she kneeled on a window-seat ('Everybody's asleep'.) and bedrooms probably for the children and for Alice the maid. A porch on the landward side of Downes Point might just qualify as a veranda.

Secondly, the Downes Point house is right on that Point at the northern end of Day's Bay. But after they had rounded the corner into 'Crescent Bay' the shepherd and his flock walked the 'sandy road with shallow puddles' for some distance before passing the gatepost where the Burnells' cat watched for the milk-girl. And after the gatepost they had still to pass the fisherman's hut, the whare where Leila lived, the yellow swamp where the sheep strayed before they were headed for 'the steeper, narrower rocky pass that led out of Crescent Bay'.

Whether the shepherd travelled north or south and whether 'Crescent Bay' represents Day's or Rona Bay or any other, the 'story' house was at neither end but somewhere about the middle of its bay.

Thirdly, there were the stars!. Beryl's room was at the front and from her window-seat at night she saw the road but she also saw stars. Elbows on the sill and veranda ahead, would she have seen them from the Downes Point house? Across the road the hillside is close and steep. But looking inland from the middle of one of the bays one would expect a more open aspect and Beryl might see both 'the sorrowful bush' AND stars.