

*Falkland Watercolours*  
*by*  
*Dora Blake*



*Shallow Bay*  
*D. N. B 21 June 1882*

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## **Dora (Dorothea) Blake. 1853 – 1923.**

Dora Herford was born in Manchester, where her father who had been a Unitarian minister, was building up Ladybarn School. This was run along Froebelian lines and was for boys and for girls. Dora, his eldest daughter, had been his chief assistant since 1872. It was a cultured household, with interests in music, theatre and literature.

Dora had met Robert Blake previously – their mothers were friends – and when he visited England in 1878 after five years living and working in the Falklands, they became engaged. Robert returned to the Falklands, expecting to return to England in 1880 when they would be married. Dora, besides her teaching duties, set about learning to cook and do plain sewing, “for which she had no natural aptitude” (Falkland Heritage). In the event Robert was unable to return until early 1881, and by now Dora had given up teaching in order to devote herself to learning household skills and getting some practical nursing experience at the Children’s Clinical Hospital. She was also on the lookout for a couple to accompany them to the Falklands, the wife to cook and the husband to be gardener and general hand. A Mr. and Mrs. Hutton were engaged. When Robert did return they spent some time planning the building of an entirely new settlement at Hill Cove. At that time the home settlement was at Shallow Bay, where Blake’s partner Ernest Holmsted lived with his family. Dora and Robert were married on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1881, and after a short honeymoon sailed for the Falklands. They arrived in Stanley in November where they stayed with Robert’s sister Emily, wife of the then FIC manager, Fred Cobb.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of that month they arrived at Shallow Bay, along with the Huttons, where they stayed with the Holmstedes. Robert rode immediately to Hill Cove to unload the schooner there and to give instructions about the building of the small house to which they hoped to move as soon as shearing was finished. On February 9<sup>th</sup> 1882 Robert, Dora and the Huttons sailed round to Hill Cove on the ‘Petronelle’, and the small house was ready, though with few creature comforts. They immediately began planning the larger house (still at Hill Cove today) and building the dry stone foundations. Gardens were dug in the valley below the house, and the cowshed, stable etc. were set out. The ‘Border Queen’ arrived at the end of March with all the supplies needed for this venture. Dora was now in Stanley, where her first child, a daughter Elsie was born on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1882. The winter was spent building a woolshed, sheep pens etc. but in October work began again on the Big House, and by autumn 1883 it was fit for habitation and they could at long last unpack large furniture and wedding presents. A son, Robert, was born in June 1884. In December 1885 Dora went back on a visit to England, and her daughter Bridget was born there in July 1886. And so it went on – Violet was born in the Falklands in 1887, Willie in 1890, Dorothy in 1892, Arthur in 1895, and Norman in 1896.

With this large family, it is a wonder there was ever time for the pencil sketches and the lovely watercolours which Dora painted. Some of these seem to have been sent back to England to family members, perhaps to give some indication of their lives in the Falklands. By 1891 Dora was feeling that it was time to take the children back to school in England, she felt that the girls were running wild. “Where in England would one find girls careering about bareback on a pony, or excitedly lassoing a pig?” (Falkland Heritage by Mary Trehearne). Robert was less concerned about the benefits of an academic education, but he had promised that they would go back, and by now Sydney Miller was undertaking more management of the farm.

In early 1892 Miss Firmin was engaged, and she, Dora and the children set sail for England where a rented house was ready for them in Paignton, and it was here that Dorothy was born. Robert came briefly to England, then went south again, to Patagonia where the new partnership and farm at Estancia Coronel, near San Julian was taking shape. By the time he returned Dora, with the children and faithful Miss Firmin, had moved north to be near Dora's family in Manchester, renting a house in Parsonage Road near Ladybarn School, a few minutes walk away for the children who attended daily. Dora's sister Carrie was now headmistress of Ladybarn – still a difficult person, but good at her job. The children loved school, especially the woodwork and other handicrafts. Elsie and Robert excelled at lacrosse. With all the children at school except Dorothy, Dora was able to resume some of her old pursuits, going to lectures, to the theatre and to Halle concerts. She even heard Clara Butt sing.

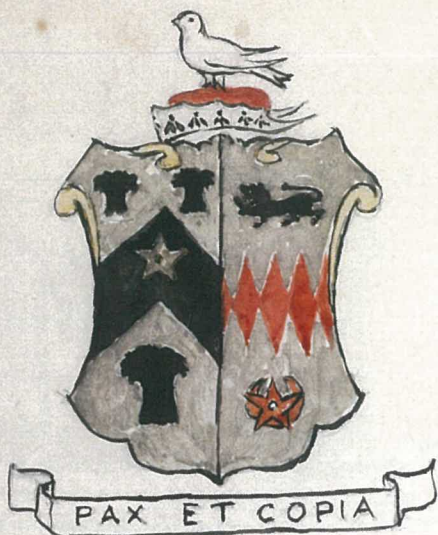
Robert rejoined the family in February 1894. He loathed Manchester, and when the lease on the house was up he and Dora took the children back to Paignton. Because of the heavy investment Robert had made in Estancia Coronel he decided that they could not afford to live in England, so when the two eldest children returned to school, boarding at Ladybarn House, the rest of the family sailed for the Falklands. They left Stanley at the end of October and upon arriving at Hill Cove moved back in to the Big House, while the Millers decamped to the smaller house that the Blakes had lived in and which had been the Millers' house when they first came to Hill Cove. Dora was expecting another baby during all this time, and a son, Arthur, was born at the beginning of May 1895. Robert, although only 44 was beginning to suffer from the arthritis which was to plague his later years, and he spent a little more time at home with Dora and the children, although the Millers had gone on a long overdue visit Sydney Miller's family at this time. Elsie and young Robert came home for a long visit in September 1896, and the following month Dora gave birth to her eighth and last child, a son called Norman. When the Millers returned in December Robert decided to accept a commission from the FIC to "make all necessary reforms in the running of the farm before the appointment of a new manager" – a huge task which lasted from February to June 1897 and resulted in the outline of a practical and detailed programme. He received a generous fee. Dora was feeling 'dull and despondent' (Falkland Heritage) at this time and longing for the return to England where arrangements had been made to rent a house, Yeabridge, in Somerset from 1898, and so it was that they left Hill Cove in March of that year. It is not known how often Dora accompanied her husband on his visits to the Falklands, however she and her daughter Violet were on board the *Oravia* with him when the ship was wrecked on the Billy Rock in 1912. Dora died in 1923.



Robert  
Blake

b.  
1851

Bishop's Hull  
Manor-House  
Taunton.



m.

Platt Chapel  
Manchester  
July 14<sup>th</sup> 1881

Dorothea  
Herford

b.  
1853

Queen's Square

Lancaster





*after a photogr.*

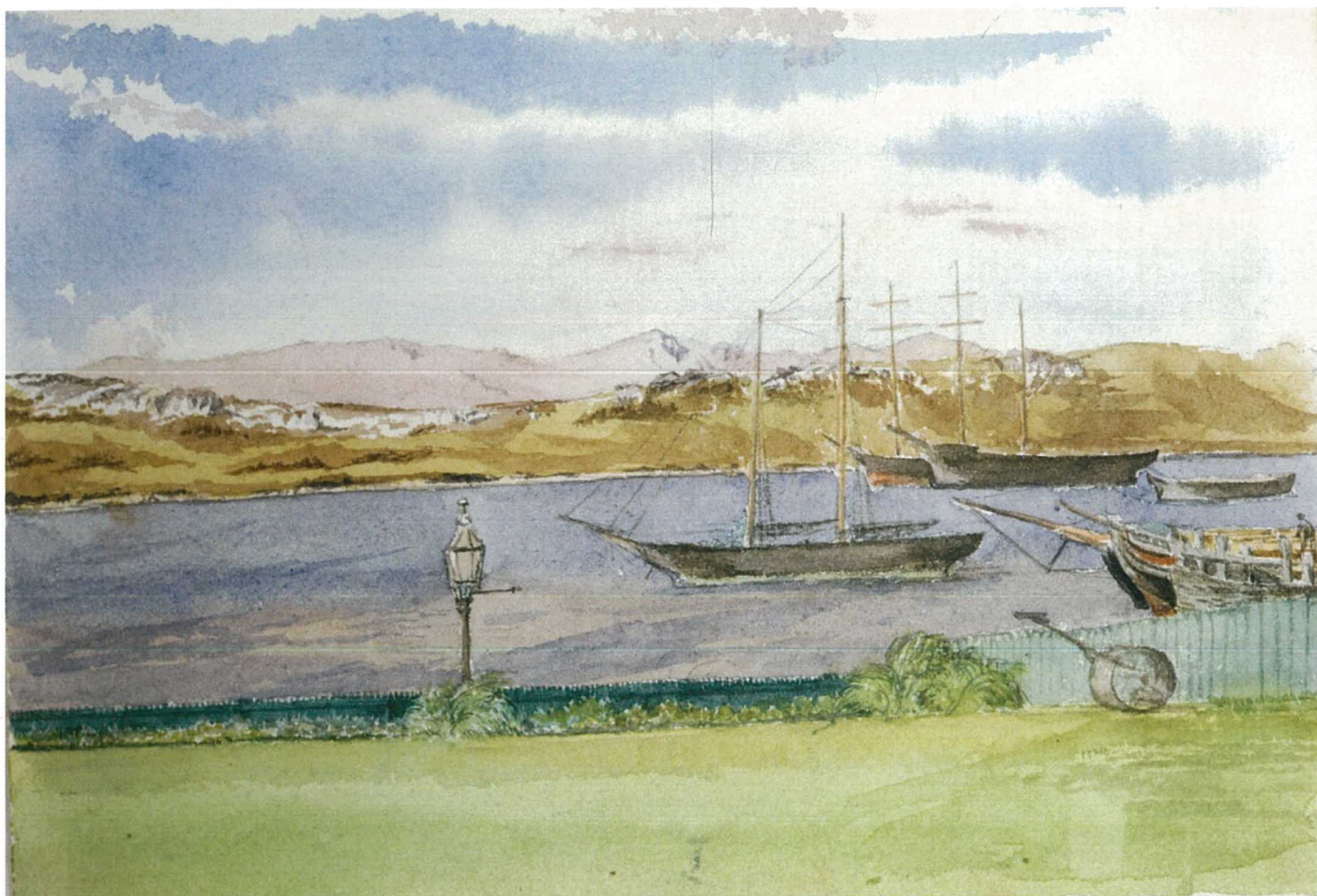
*The Manor House, Bishop's Hull*



*after watercolour by Rev. D. Davis*

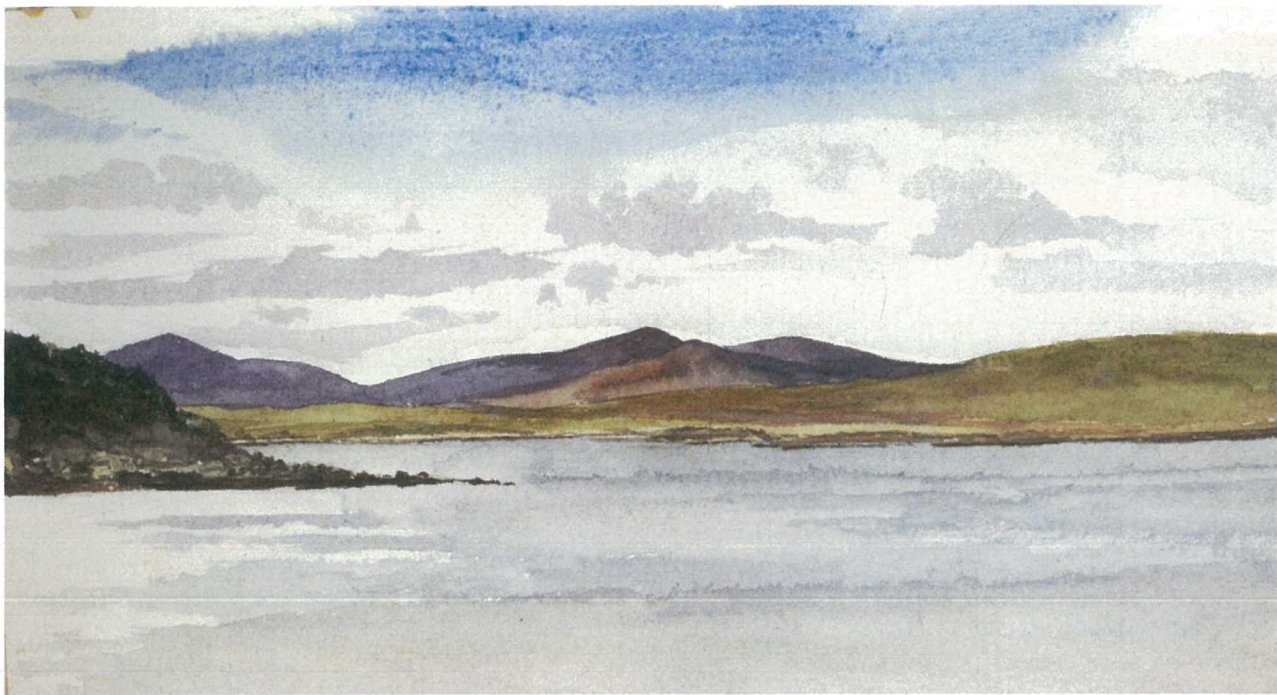
*Garden Front of Queen's Square, Lancaster*





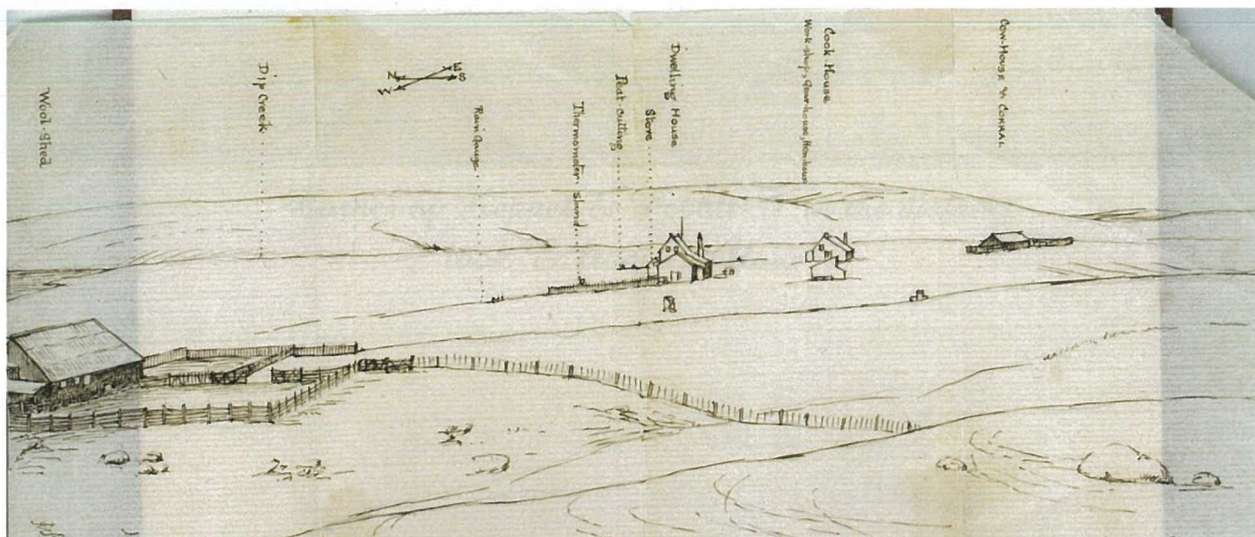
Nov. 1881

*Stanley Harbour  
from Mrs. F. Cobb's drawing-room window!*



Dec: 1st 1881

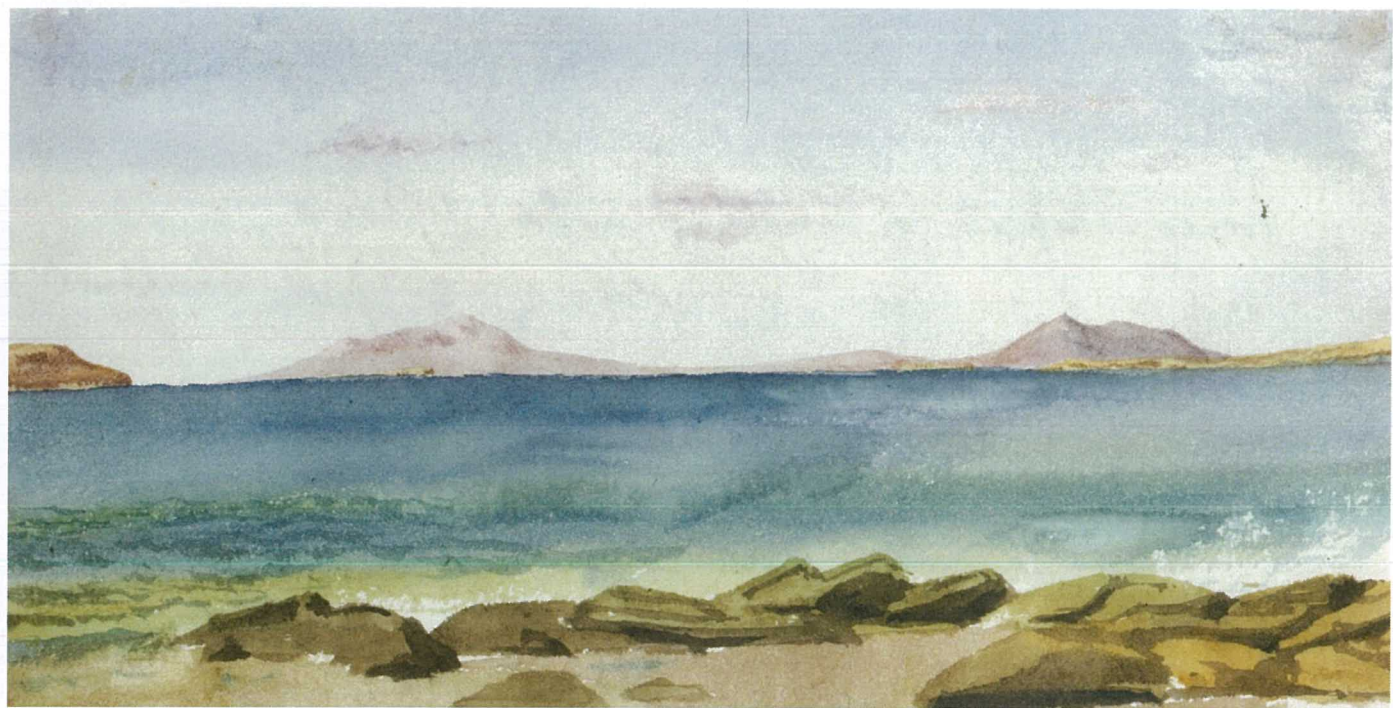
*Saunders Island  
from cove beyond woolshed. Looking W. from Shallow B.*



D. N. B. 31 . 1 . 1881

*Adelaide Station, Falkland Isles*





*Corner of Keppel & Pebble I. in the distance  
look E. from Shallow B.*

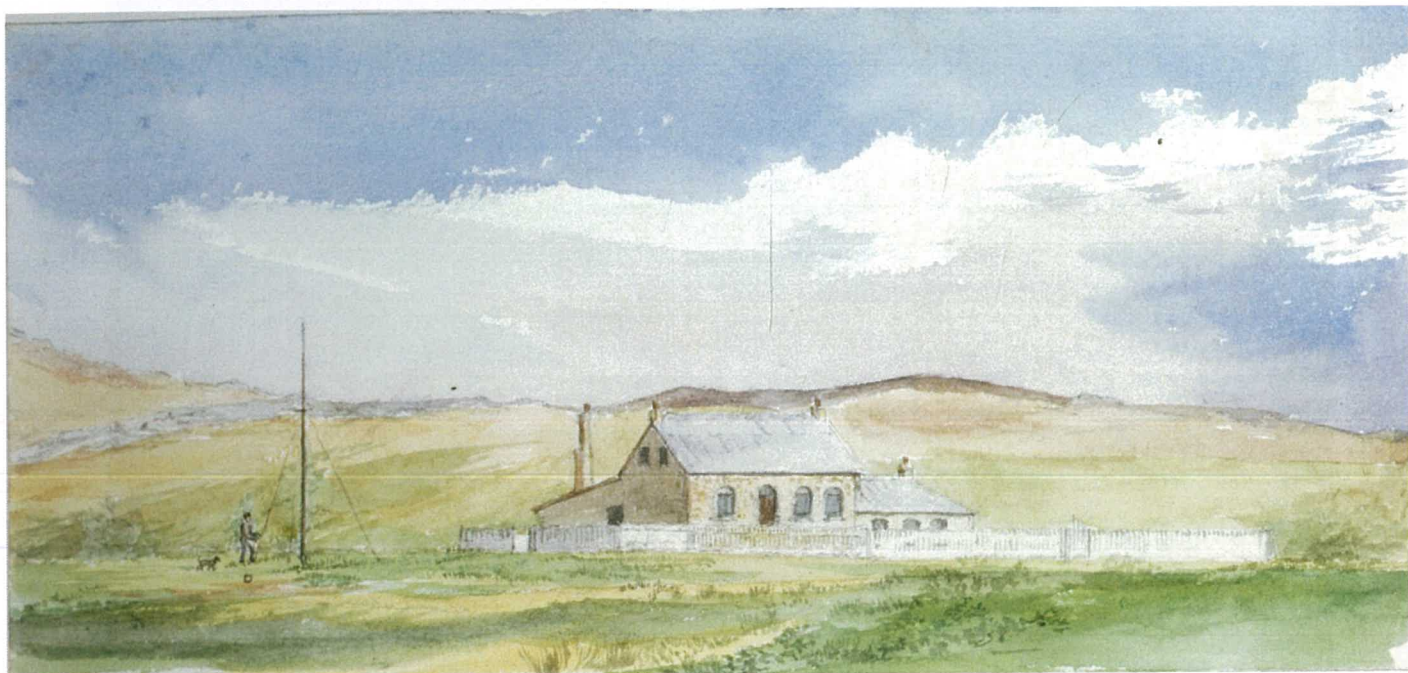


*Shallow Bay  
D. N. B 21 June 1882*

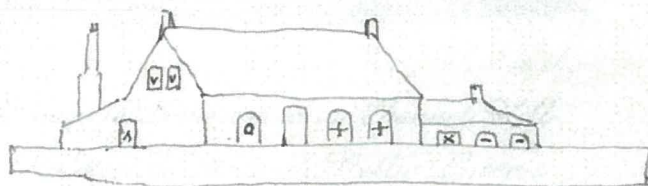
*The dwelling house from the head of the valley opposite the corner of the gorse garden.  
The workshop and fowl house in front and to the right of the house. Rapid Point and  
Keppel Island beyond the water.*



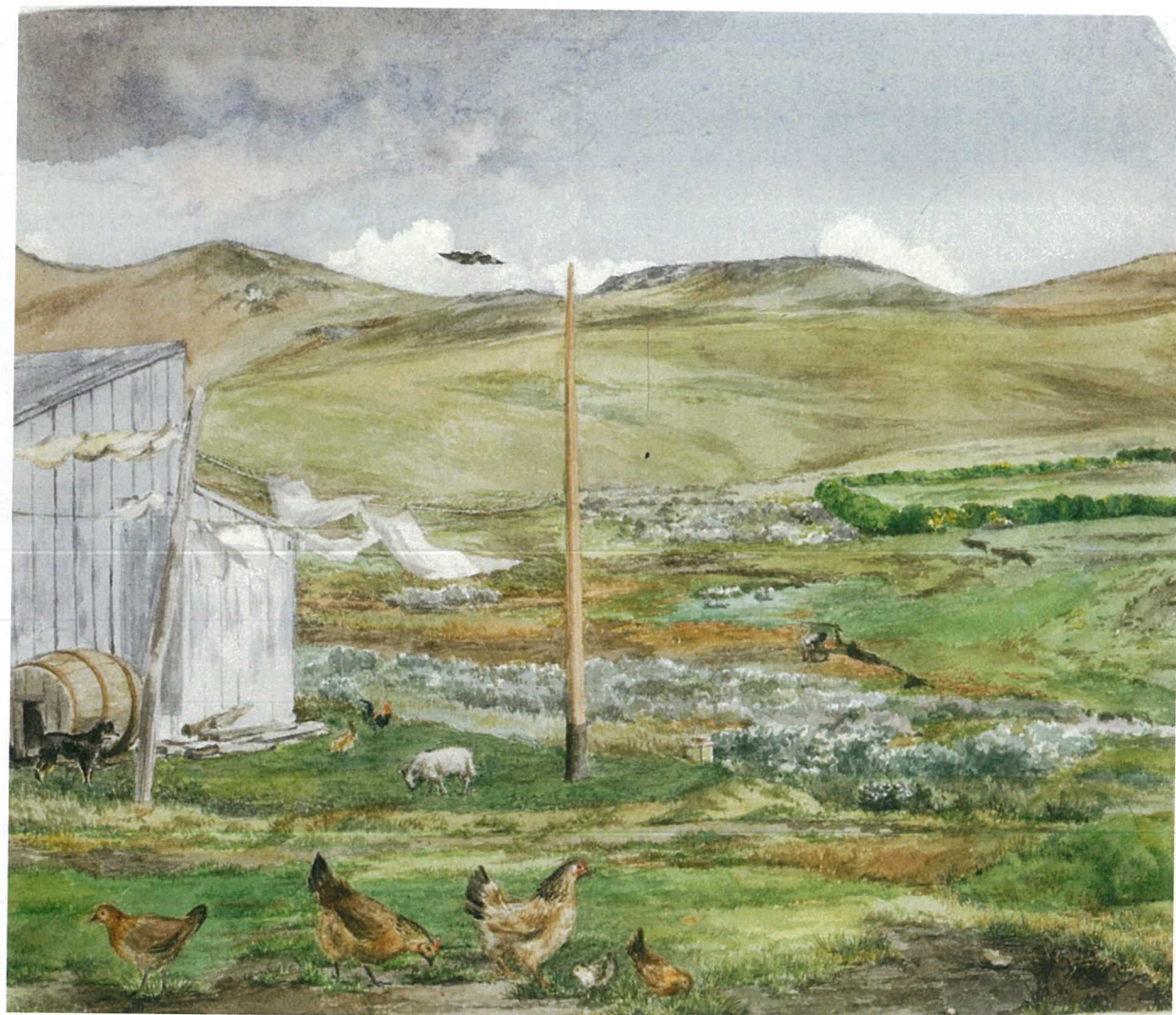
*The dwelling house - Adelaide Station, Falkland Isles*



- ++ windows of drawing room*
- o window of dining room*
- windows of Mr and Mrs H's bedroom*
- x window of dressing-room = lumber room*
- vv window of our bedroom looking east*
- ^ kitchen door*
- Price the meu's cook coming from the cookhouse*



*Finished at Hill Cove Feb: 19. 1882*



*From the back of the house looking due south— up the valley. Shallow Bay Hill is the one behind the work shop & hen house- The ridge leads westward to Channel Hill which is not seen. The dog is "Bull" Mr. Holmsted's, the lamb Nellie Green's charge. The light coloured hen in the foreground with the two chickens are my first care. The light green mound to the right is a balsam bog - some grass is growing on it in one part. The bird in the air is a sea hen - ugly things.*

*Time: 3 to 5 pm D. N. B. Shallow Bay Jan: 24<sup>th</sup> 1882*





*Two of the north view of the first house, Hill Cove*



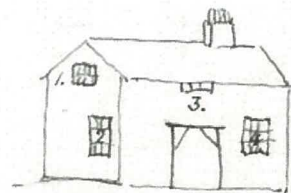
*Two of the south view of the first house, Hill Cove*



*Old Jaguar*



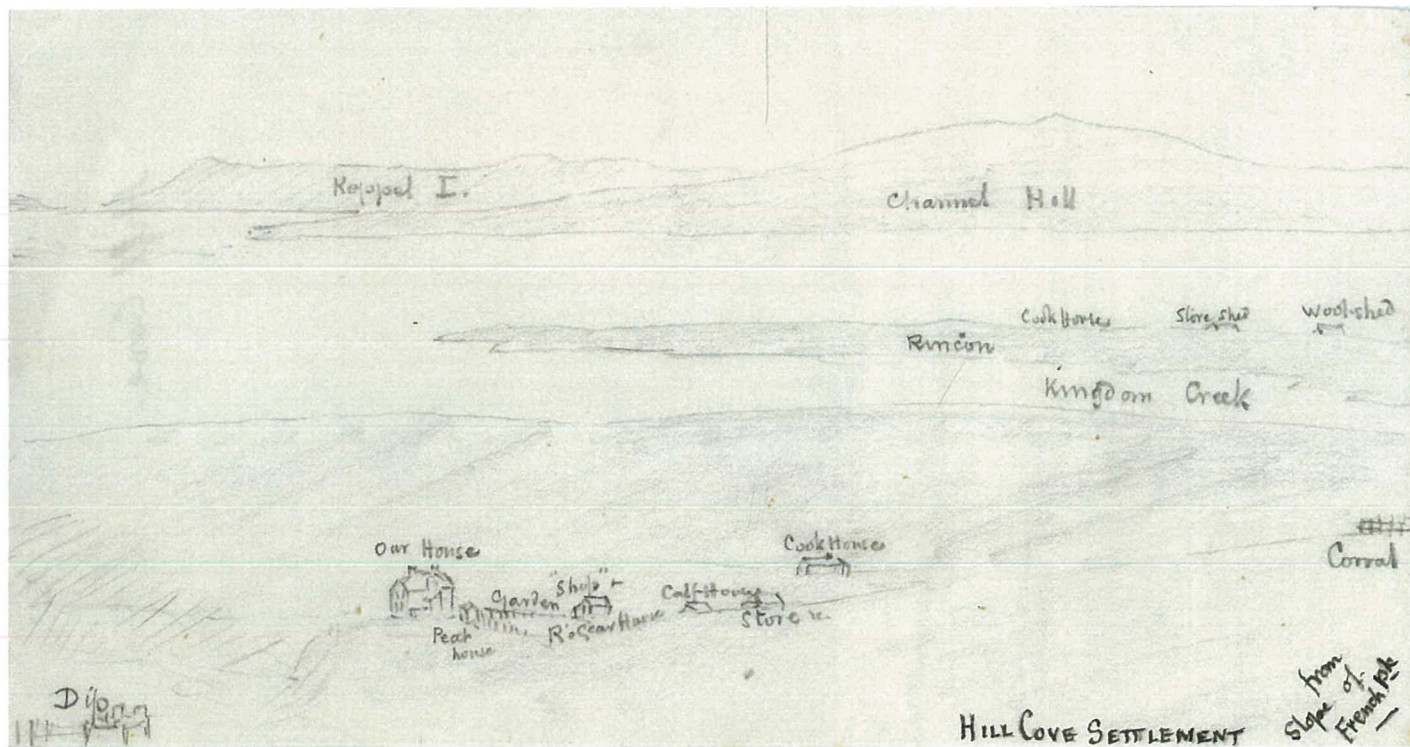
- 1 window of attic = spare-room (?)*
- 2 window of our bedroom (w)*
- 3 window of attic = box & lumber room*
- 4 window of kitchen (s)*







*Living-room in the first house at Hill Cove*



Map of Hill Cove





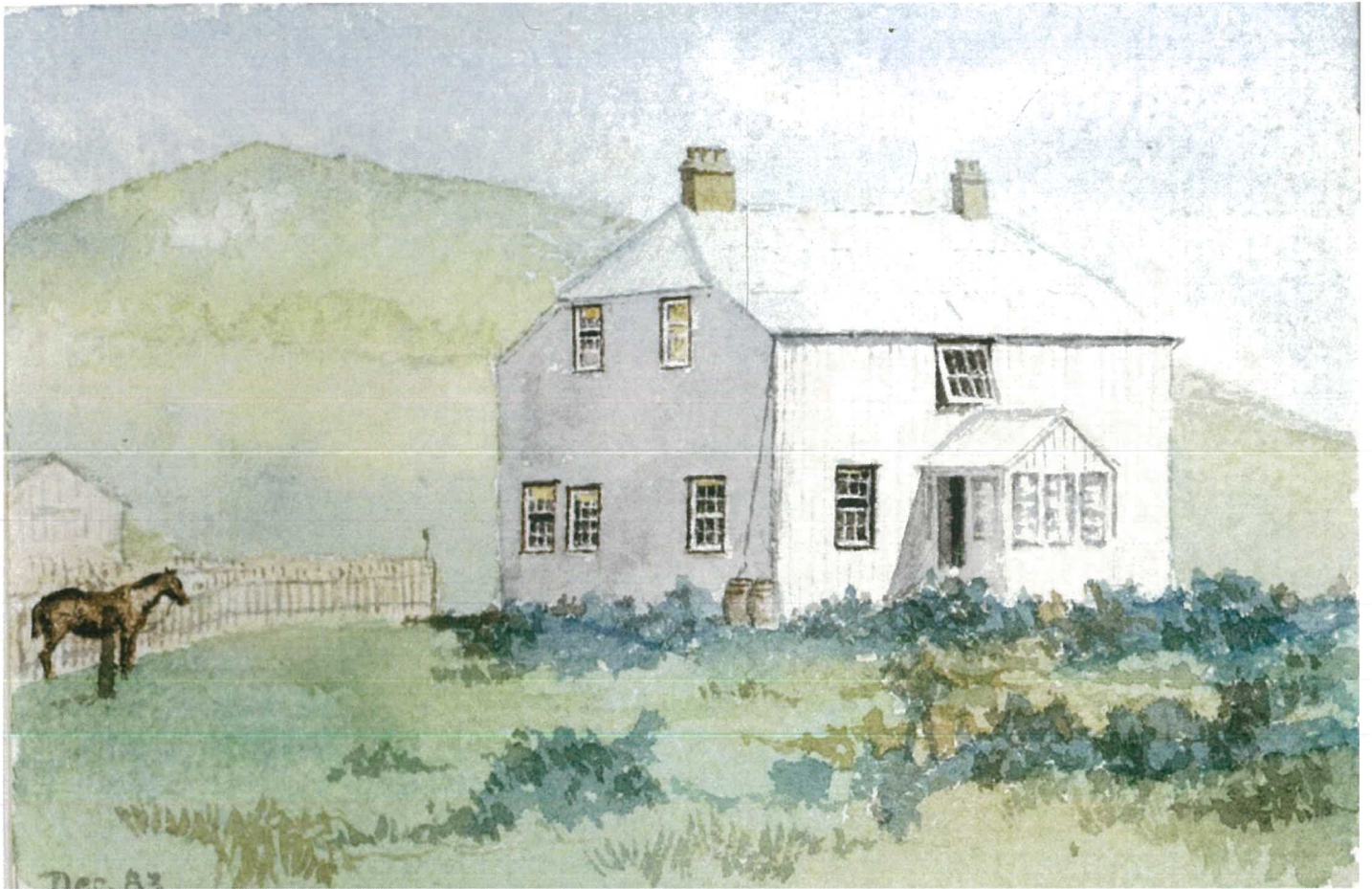
*Hill Cove Settlement  
from the slope of the French Peaks*



*From the mouth of the Dip Stream  
otherwise St..k..g Creek  
Mount Donald (2000ft) behind.  
Aug. 1883.*



*The New House, Hill Cove*



*Begaun out of doors in blazing sun - not finished in any sense.  
The railings show where the garden comes to, now; in the photo: only the first year's bit is  
enclosed.*

*Dec: 83*



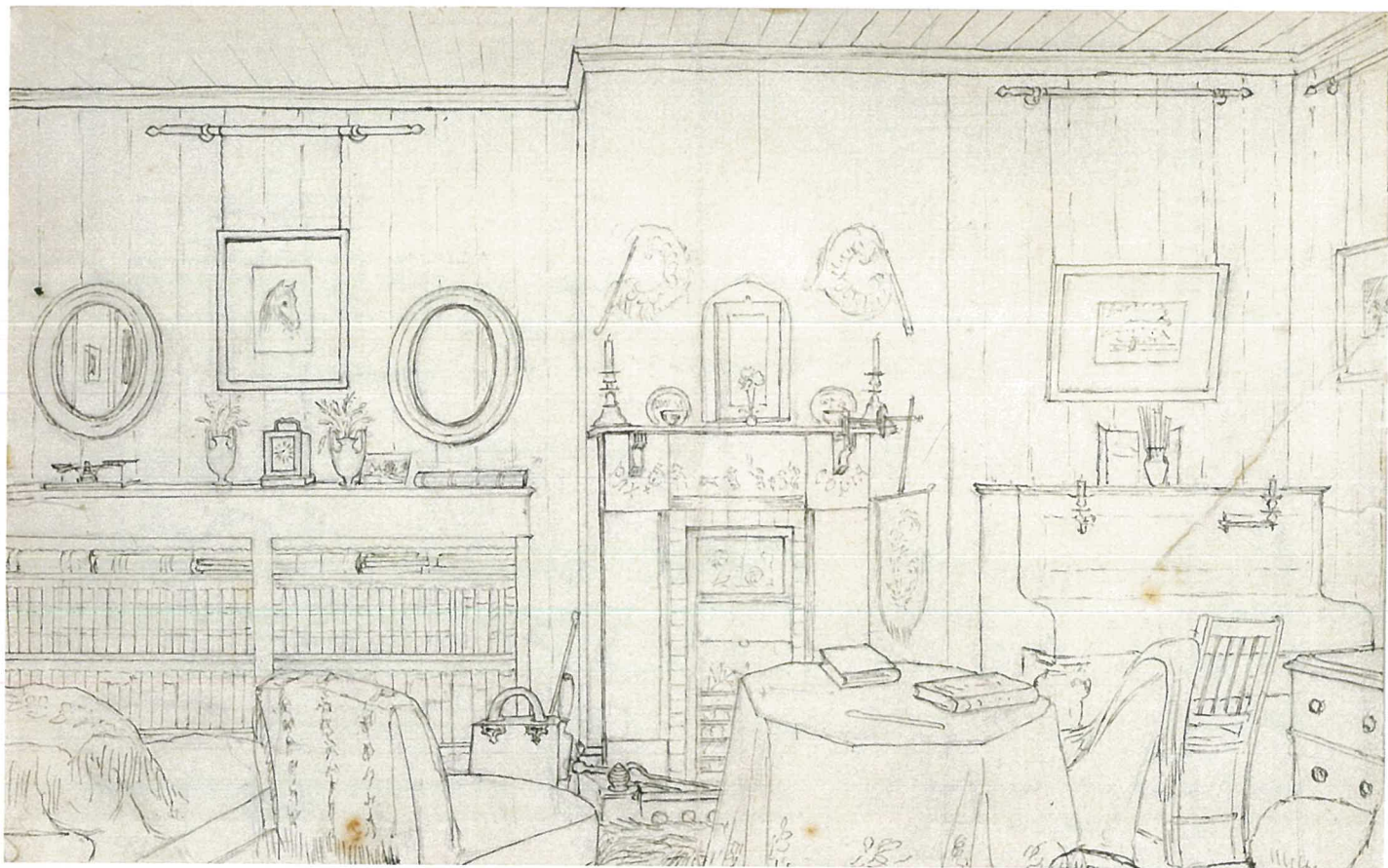
*Mew's Garden*

*View from dining room window (E)*



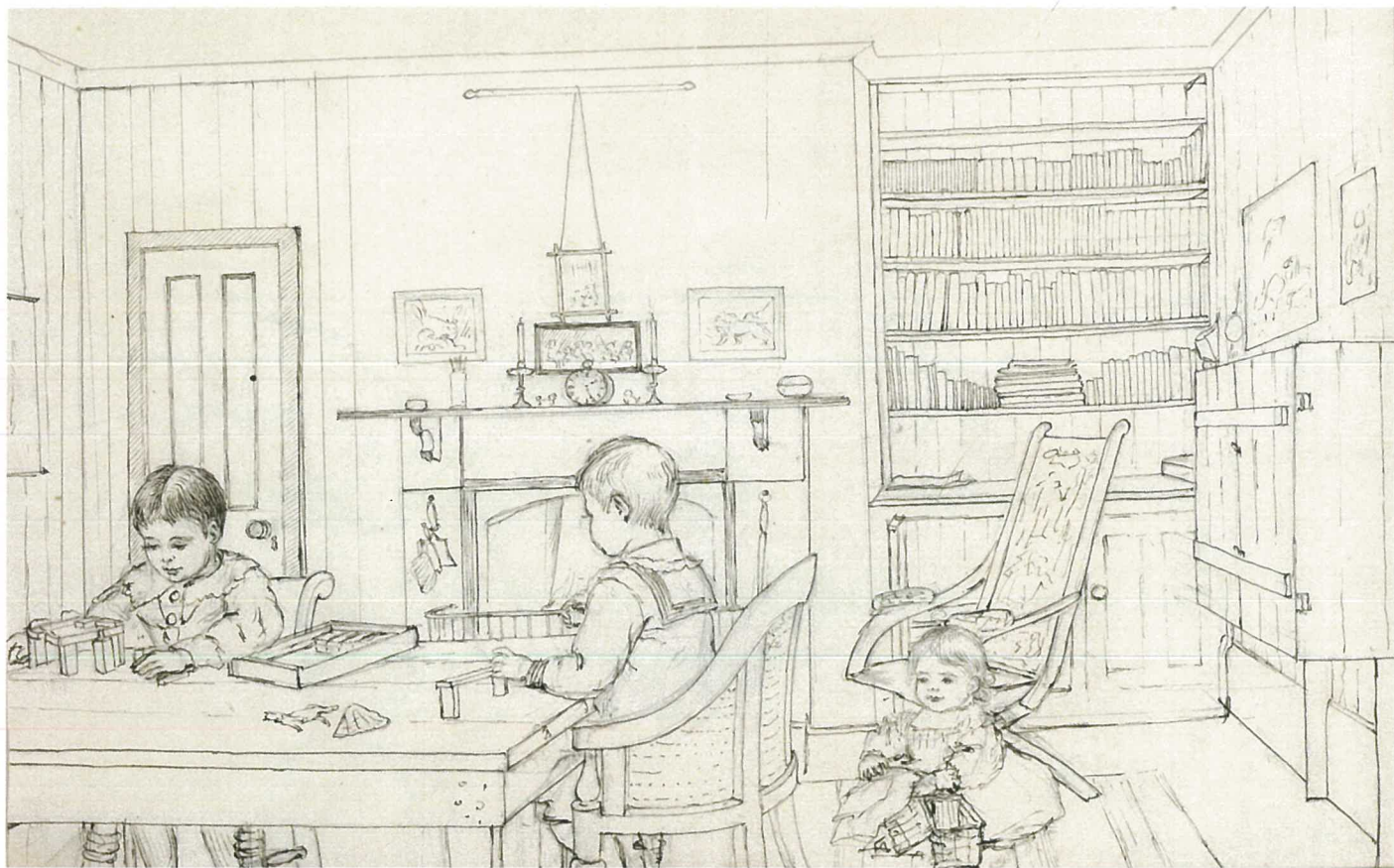


*Elsie on Nugget - Dec. 4 1882*



*Hill Cove drawing room 1887*





*Elsie*

*Robert*

*Bridget*

*Hill Cove Nursery - Sept 1887*

Blakes jr



RAB jr. 2 mo.  
17. VIII. 84

Robert





*Violet*



E W H B (Willie)





*Saunders Island from the valley, Hill Cove.*

*The "Cordova" store ship coming in; fence of lower garden & gorse hedge in foreground;  
turkey-buzzards in the air.*



*East front border - Feb 21 '87*





Hill Cove house from the valley  
7.11.92