

## LIFE AT COCKLE CREEK—Continued

We have two "Pubs" in Boolaroo. One is an unassuming little place in a back street, the other is bigger and stands on a corner in Main Road and receives the larger patronage. The mere two pubs, and the 6 p.m. closing enforced in N.S.W., makes drinking a rather noisy and frantic rush. The atmosphere is cheery, however, and the elbowing of the man after "one for the road" is not frowned upon to any great extent. The serving of warm beer in an Australian pub is considered a criminal act. The beer is generally ice cold, potent and has a lively flavour that is maintained by the introduction of CO<sub>2</sub> into the keg whilst serving. The glasses are partly charged at the barrel and, after standing for a short while, are topped off from a large jug of beer that has previously been drawn off. Quite a procedure by English standards but very essential if one is to receive a good beer. When any other than this procedure is adopted it is viewed with the utmost suspicion by the would be recipient. There is one thing that is more striking than anything else about local drinking; excellent wine produced in the vineyards, not many miles away, is so cheap that it is treated with the utmost contempt, being loosely called "plonk." It is abused both verbally and physically until it has now become what methylated spirits used to be.

Lake Macquarie, a beautiful salt water lake, about twelve miles in length with a shore line forming numerous bays and headlands, plays a large part in the lives of Sulphide workers. It is a "millionaires'" playground without the millionaires. There are parks, swimming pools and beaches galore. The fishing, allegedly not what it used to be, is sufficiently good to maintain a high interest; consequently everyone goes fishing. Grandmothers and five year olds may be seen side by side on jetties and rocks, eagerly waiting for that tug on the line that may mean "a big one." With the fishing, of course, are the boats, and there are hundreds of them, large and small—the pulling boat, the flash launches, speed boats and sailing boats from the small V.J. sailing dinghy to the forty foot schooner "Irene" that recently won the long ocean race from Sydney to Noumea. The Royal Motor Yacht Club, the Lake Macquarie Yacht Club, and the many 16 footer and sailing dinghy clubs cater well for the enthusiast;

sport is good and the competition mad-keen. Only on Sydney Harbour have I seen more sails on any stretch of water. Once in a blue moon the odd shark may be seen cruising around the lake, but this is a very rare occurrence and seems to worry no one. The beauty of the lake and all it has to offer makes the choice of a destination for annual holidays a difficult one. Why go away at all?

Sport of all descriptions is enjoyed by all and sundry. If the bill cannot be filled in the immediate locality, board a bus going to Newcastle and there you may watch or play almost any sport. Both codes of Rugby, soccer, hockey, basket ball are played in winter, while the large participation by young girls from shops and offices in hockey and basket ball is surprising. In summer, cricket, surfing, swimming, sailing, fishing and tennis are available to all. The Australian is essentially a participator. Tennis is actually played all the year round and flood-lit courts make it possible to play from dawn until midnight if needs be, these numerous courts being utilised to the full. I was watching some school-boys, between the ages of ten and thirteen, playing a foursome one afternoon, and the easy professional service and the beautiful backhand shots were a joy to see. They were just average school kids, and that is the form these days, all over the country. Do you wonder that Australia is the premier tennis nation? Leisure hours are spent out-of-doors. Old Sol, shining brightly, demands that we go out and enjoy his company—and we do just that.

Some while back a Sydney artist likened Australian culture to (and I quote)—"a race horse eating hay out of a grand piano." Now this is a little absurd and much too much of a generalisation, but it is also the impression one is constantly receiving, so there is some truth in it. It cannot be denied that racing, the sport of Kings (and Queens), is a major form of recreation here. More than recreation, it is business and pleasure, uplift and downfall in the lives of many. However, I dare to say that it is losing its grip, as the younger generation is not much interested. The race horse, having accidentally twanged a few piano strings in the course of his feeding, is now beginning to appreciate the sound of a few melodic phrases as an accompaniment to his dinner. There is a solid core of culture-conscious people

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