

News from Australia

New South Wales

May 7th, 1955 was a "memorable day in the history of the Country Women's Association of New South Wales." Their journal continues, "Our new Keera House was officially opened, at Victoria Parade, Manley. Here in greater convenience and comfort, many thousands of country women and children—and men too, if they are husbands and fathers—will now enjoy seaside holidays to keep them in health and give them greater zest for that great blessing, life on the land."

The State President comments: "In nine months we have opened two new Seaside Homes and one Club, as well as started work on one new Headquarters and Handicrafts building. All of these are the result of the sterling service given by our members—that service which gives without thought of reward, but which is amply rewarded by the knowledge of a worthwhile job well done."

Queensland

The Editor of the *Queensland Countrywoman* writes: "It is at the great Conference of the Q.C.W.A. held every year, that one really realises the advance and spread of the influence of this Association. Year after year we hear of how in one far-away community after another, as well as in the big cities and towns, women wearing the Q.C.W.A. badge are becoming more numerous and their good works in the shape of hostels, halls, rest-rooms, libraries and other amenities are plain for all to see and enjoy."

In 1955 about sixty members of the 'Younger Sets' attended the Conference, and by their bearing and intelligence reassured the older members that the future of the C.W.A. will be safe in their hands. It is interesting to note that these girls visited a Migrant Camp as part of their programme: "Many of the girls chummed up with New Australians of their own ages and visited homes and had a wonderful time, with many promises of letters to be exchanged and addresses given there and then."

South Australia

Items of news reported in the *South Australian Countrywoman* include: A Commonwealth subsidy of £2,000 for the Home for Aged People "sponsored and carried out entirely by Clare members". A suitable building has been purchased and "will be fitted out and maintained by the Branch".

Seventy-five C.W.A. members helped the 'Children's Holiday Scheme' by inviting migrant children, mostly living in hostels, to stay in their homes—"Some of the older children have remained in the country and commenced work. Here is the desired result of the scheme—assimilation."

The Secretary of Postal Branch tells the story of a member's recent illness. When she collapsed with an internal haemorrhage a gun had to be fired to attract the nearest neighbour's attention. A C.W.A. member who had been a nurse before her marriage, managed to get to her on a fettler's trike and give injections to make the blood coagulate sufficiently for the patient to be taken on a long, wearisome journey on another fettler's

trike to a place where the Flying Doctor could attend to her. Here a C.W.A. member sat up with her all night and subsequently other members visited her, brought her delicacies to eat and looked after her laundry.

Tasmania

An Editorial in the *Tasmanian 'Countrywoman'* reported that "from early Spring to Autumn (1955) interest centred around our own Exhibition and Agricultural Show. Changing years have never lessened the delight Countrywomen show in women's handiwork, especially the needle crafts. No longer are these the products of gentle interest and the filling of idle hours. Too often, work shown has been done at the end of long and tiring days, but, that quiet hour has brought peace to the heart as well as a sense of accomplishment . . . Members, bringing their work to a Show, have put their best efforts into it. They know its weakness and its strength and by comparison may more easily correct its weakness and further its strength. During the last Exhibition it was most encouraging to see bus loads arriving tired, but hungering to see the crafts."

Emerson wrote *If a man sings a better song, or makes a better mouse trap than his neighbour, tho' he builds his home in a forest, the world will find its way to his door.*

Victoria

1955 marked the fourteenth birthday of the C.W.A. Home Help Scheme, and their magazine tells us "the year's report gives evidence of the need for the scheme in the growing number of applications received from members". (253 applications, 188 were fulfilled, 32 cancelled and no help was available for the remaining 33.)

"Of the 677 C.W.A. branches, 394 made voluntary donations to the Home Help Scheme and next year an additional source of income is to be allotted from the 'Thanksgiving Fund'. So if country branches continue their support it is hoped to raise the helpers' wages and so secure more staff. Of the 877 letters received there were many that paid tribute to the scheme and were full of praise for the helper who had been sent to them."

Western Australia

Here too handicrafts are in the news with a light-hearted description by a Divisional President, in the *Countrywoman in Western Australia*, of a recently held Handicraft School: "Can you believe it? There in a room occupied by some 20 females, and C.W.A. members to boot, silence reigned, absolute and complete! It happened the morning Mrs. M. decided to initiate all those interested into the mysteries of the newest way of painting on glass for household use . . . There was Miss A. intent on a lovely cool picture of a skier flying down icy slopes . . . the husky voiced lady from X River had no time for those innocent remarks of hers that had previously convulsed us . . . The sad thing was that I broke that enchanted silence. Mrs. C. presented me with her glass with our joint initials lovingly entwined on the bottom. She said I deserved to be affiliated with her masterpiece all my life!"

Peeps into History

When 'Countrywoman' readers were asked to take part in a competition for an article telling the story of their land, and how they and their forebears have worked it, all the entries were very interesting. Some however, greatly exceeded the length laid down in the rules! Some told the history of their country, instead of the story of their own farm land. But we think you will enjoy the following extracts from articles which for one reason or another did not qualify for the prize.

The Netherlands

"On a fine morning in spring, I was planting our potatoes, and very busy I was—the plant potatoes in my apron, I aimed them at the holes, neatly in a row. Pop one potato in a hole, close the hole, another potato, another kick—and then I see something glistening in the soil. What can it be? A button? But no, it was a coin, an old silver Dutch coin, and after some polishing we saw the date of 1698. Now the castle we see from our garden was just finished then. It was built as a hunting castle for King William III who, perhaps, lost this coin when hunting! . . ."

Our second coin was found near the asparagus beds. The date was 1793, when crinolined ladies and peruked gentlemen from the castle promenaded through the lane of young red beeches—a fine novelty then and much appreciated. Three of these enormous old trees, still in a row, stand in our garden and show the direction of that old avenue.

The children were responsible for the third find—a gold pair of spectacles—like we see in pictures of the Biedermeyer period. An optician, very much interested in our spoils, told us that the possessor must have been the Burgomaster of a century ago who bought a piece of land from the castle and who was the original builder of our home . . ."

The writer, J. Stam Dresselhuys, says it was always a wonder to her that the Germans did not find her own pewter and antique copper which she had buried in the garden when they occupied her home in the 1939-45 war. She says it was some while after the Liberation before she found time to polish all those spotted and rusty treasures again.

U.S.A.

"Retreat Farm lies in the centre of Baltimore County, a section of Maryland well-known for its rolling hillsides and beautiful valleys, and as the horse country. Until August 1953, the property had but one owner—the Gorsuch family . . ."

Religion has always been a controlling influence in men's lives. An outstanding example was the family ancestor, Archbishop Sandys, 1519-1588, of York Cathedral. Following the struggles between churches and State, and depending upon the faith of England's rulers, much of the Archbishop's life was spent either in the dungeons in the Tower of London or at the Cathedral.

As a result of early explorations, it is understandable that the Archbishop's son, Edwin, born 1651, felt, with other Englishmen, earnest desires to form the London

and Plymouth Companies for sending colonists over to the new world and there making permanent settlements. After being instrumental in securing the Charter for the pilgrims who came over in the Mayflower, Edwin became treasurer of the Virginia Company, and is listed as one of the founders of Virginia . . . The Archbishop's great grand-daughter, Lady Anne Lovelace and the Reverend John Gorsuch D.D. were married in 1628 and with their children fled from the fury of the Puritans and found refuge in Virginia. Four of their children came up into Maryland Colony . . .

The name 'Retreat' came from the British invasion in 1814 when John Gorsuch, born 1767, loaded the family, and as many possessions as possible on carts and sent them up the trail to his forest farm. He remained and enlarged the house adding a three storey stone part, with a long upper gallery across the front. Iron bars were in all the cellar windows, for keeping out the panthers and wolves roaming the forest. In the huge cellars beneath them, were stored quantities of food for the many attached to the old homestead . . .

Dickinson Gorsuch, 1826-1882, devoted his whole life to agriculture. Before the Department of Agriculture or Experimental Stations existed, he was experimenting with farm crops, mixing his own fertilisers and developing his orchards and pure-bred cattle. The first Gunpowder Farmer's Club was organised at 'Retreat' in 1870, also the old Glencoe Grange in 1876. In 1878 he was one of the directors of the Maryland Agricultural Society which grew into the present Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Timonium.

The house burned in 1917 with its quaint architecture and old ghosts and forgotten memories."

Retreat Farm was purchased for a nursery garden from the writer *Mary Mitchell*, who is the last descendant of Dickinson Gorsuch.

New Zealand

"Our Story," contributed by Mrs. E. R. E. Blair, "goes back far, to the west coast of Scotland, when the Duke of Hamilton envied the Naismyth's their beautiful residence and secured it in the troublous Scottish times. The family moved to Edinburgh and became known as the Fathers of Scottish Painting. The drawing of the first steamboat was made by the father."

As well as the loss of their home, another dreadful occurrence was the burning of Elspeth Naismyth, whom the populace considered a witch, as she read her Bible with two pairs of glasses and owned a black cat . . . Had I lived then, I'd have fared no better, because I have a black cat, use reading glasses, and if in sun, dark ones on top! The poor woman was the last to be burnt in Scotland as a witch.

The Naismyth motto was 'Non arte sed marte', but James Naismyth, the inventor altered it to 'Non marte sed arte'—not war but art. This noted member of the family invented hundreds of things, the finest being the Safety Foundry Ladle and a Steam Hammer. In the years to come my father's father erected one in his own foundry in Napier, New Zealand."