

OVERSEAS SECRETARY'S TOUR

W. H. McVicker who returned early in September from his visit to New Zealand and Australia now tells more of his impressions

New Zealand Journey

MY trek in New Zealand, partially described in the August issue, totalled almost 5,000 miles, successfully traversed by road, rail, sea and air despite shipping, dock and coal strikes, flood devastation and restricted train services. My thanks are due, for all the excellent planning and unstinted friendship of Howard Trotman, Dominion Secretary, who accompanied me for most of the time, and also for the superb transport provided by the Dominion President, Tom Dunn, who motored me over 1,200 miles in the South Island, including a never-to-be-forgotten visit to the Southern Alps. To travel for two weeks with a personality so kindly, and so alert to further the B.B.'s highest purpose, made one feel that in their President, the B.B. in N.Z. is greatly blessed.



Auckland Battalion Church Parade

I visited not only all the ten Battalions and three Officers' Councils but also several outlying Companies which, despite their great isolation, were often carrying on with vigour. My New Zealand journey ended at its largest city, Auckland, which as is fitting has the largest Battalion. There I saw the biggest assemblies of Boys—some 350 at the Battalion Church Parade and over 300 Life Boys at their Quarterdeck Parade. A Mayoral reception, a Battalion Display, a happy social gathering and a camp-site picnic were also features of Auckland's programme.

While naturally no actual camping was to be seen in midwinter, several Battalion camping grounds were visited. Much time, thought, money and voluntary labour had been expended on their development, including the provision of permanent buildings. The latter seem essential, as the hiring of marquees is impossible and their purchase probably more costly than wooden buildings. How envious one was of these delightful sites, often quite isolated and sometimes extending to a hill-top horizon, with open country all around! Such ventures, however, involve many responsibilities and there seemed a danger, sometimes, of them absorbing too much Battalion energy.

To have had the privilege of attending the Management Committee and the Life Boy Committee, and of meeting, as I toured around, practically all the members of the

Dominion Executive, enabled me to get in closest touch with the whole life of the movement in New Zealand. It was good to see how determined the leaders are to continue to build on the sound and courageous lines first followed by Horace Grocott, from whose founding of the 1st Dunedin in 1926 all the present B.B. work in N.Z. has sprung. I was glad to spend some hours with this veteran whose unswerving ideals have meant so much in the past. The movement's spirit of enterprise is shown by the decision to send an able young Officer home for a year's experience prior to taking up work as full-time Dominion Training Officer.

Contrasts Across the Tasman

Crossing the 1,400 miles of the Tasman Sea in 7 hours by flying-boat was a quick transition from New Zealand, with its less than two million people living in a few moderate sized cities and many pleasant small communities, to the bustling life of Australia's huge cities, especially Sydney's 1½ million population and Melbourne's 1¼ million, as well as the slightly quieter tempo of Brisbane's 400,000 and Adelaide's 380,000.

Different, too, is the B.B. situation. In New Zealand, there are many centres each with its group of Companies, all firmly linked together in one Dominion-wide administration, served by a full-time Secretary and a well-equipped Headquarters and Supplies Depot. In Australia the movement exists on a much smaller scale. Each of the widely separated capital cities has its own characteristic outlook and its own marked differences, even within the same religious denominations. For co-ordinating B.B. work throughout Australia there is Bob McEwan, the indefatigable Honorary Organiser, spending most of his leisure time and holidays in the interests of the B.B.—including accompanying me on most of my tour—and a provisional Federal Committee, soon to hold its first meeting. A Supplies Depot, voluntarily staffed, is also being built up with but little capital resources. But one thing did *not* differ—the warmth of the welcome everywhere and the friendly B.B. spirit with its high ideals.

It was only the Australia of the four South-Eastern capitals that I saw, but one heard much of that other Australia, almost the size of Europe, which stretches away



Welcome to Mr. and Mrs. McVicker at Melbourne



The new Adelaide Battalion on the march

into the sparsely populated back-blocks. Apart from a few towns, mainly near the coast, this vast region holds little opportunity for B.B. development.

The Australian Tour Begins

An aerial view of Sydney's magnificent harbour, graced by its famous bridge, was a fine introduction to Australia, but no less thrilling was the sight of a smart B.B. Guard of Honour to welcome us at the flying-boat base at Rose Bay. From then until at Outer Harbour we were farewelled by officials of the Adelaide Battalion an almost ceaseless programme of engagements, together with 2,700 miles of travelling, was crammed into thirty-four days.

Brisbane, Newcastle and Sydney

First, by air 450 miles north to Brisbane, whose winter sunshine far outdid most English summer days. The 1st Brisbane, started by an Old Boy and ex-Officer of the 1st Glasgow, has kept the B.B. flag flying for 38 years and it was good to see this veteran Company, the oldest in Australia, carrying on so faithfully. Three other recently formed Companies hold the promise of further extension in Queensland, and a keen Officers' Council is hard at work.

Returning southward by air, two days were spent with the Companies at Newcastle, a steel, coal and shipbuilding city. A reception by the Lord Mayor and a joint display featured in the programmes. Then on by road the remaining 100 miles back to Sydney. A Battalion Church Parade in the Assembly Hall was followed by a good March Past with bugle band, and steady ranks during the inspection of the 378 present. In addition to the usual round of Company and Team visits, notable occasions were afternoon tea with H.E. the Governor of N.S.W., Sir John Northcott, dinner with the Archbishop, reception by the Lord Mayor, lunch with Church Youth Secretaries, an excursion on the historic Hawkesbury River with Sydney Officers and their friends, and a L.B. Quarterdeck Parade. The Sydney Battalion with its 35 Companies and well organised Battalion life, is the largest stronghold of the Brigade in Australia, and an attendance of 33 at a recent week-end Initial Training Course augurs well for the future. Its scattered nature—the suburbs of Sydney are almost as widespread as those of London—handicaps corporate activity

but Battalion and Area spirit are being created. It was good to see the valuable contribution being made here and elsewhere by immigrants from the B.B. at home.

Melbourne and on to Adelaide

A sixteen hour night railway journey with change of trains at the State border, because of differing gauges, brought us the 590 miles to Melbourne, where the valiant little Officers' Council had arranged an ambitious programme. The high-light was a dinner at which H.E. Sir Dallas Brooks, Governor of Victoria, and the Archbishop of Melbourne honoured the Brigade by their presence. The Governor paid notable tribute to the 1st Melbourne and spoke of the immense importance today of youth work on a spiritual basis. The B.B. film "Sure and Steadfast" was projected and the fifty present, including many Leaders in youth work, went away with a fuller understanding of the B.B. Consultations were held with many Church Youth Secretaries and I was privileged to attend the annual dinner of the Church of England Boys' Society and to bring it greetings and news of the B.B., to which it is similar in many ways. Following up the interest created by my visit, the Officers' Council is making energetic efforts to extend the B.B. in Victoria far beyond its present two Companies and three L.B. Teams.

Another night journey of 14 hours brought us over the last 483 miles of our tour, to Adelaide. Here the B.B. has only been in existence for three years, and in recognition of the progress made, I was authorised to inaugurate Battalion status for their twelve Companies. The Battalion at Adelaide is thus the second to be formed in Australia, but, alas, a journey of 1,073 separates it from its brother Battalion in Sydney. At an Officers' and Leaders' Dinner there was an almost 100 per cent. representation of Companies and Teams, and there seems real determination to build bigger and better in the future. A Civic reception and talks with many concerned in youth work showed that already the B.B. has won its place in the life of the city.

Spreading the Wider Vision

In all the centres visited in both N.Z. and Australia, there were meetings of B.B. and L.B. Councils, often combined, which was a good plan as the right relations between the B.B. and its Junior Reserve were frequently stressed. B.B. Officers and L.B. Leaders alike—hundreds of Boys too—were given a bigger vision of the Brigade by seeing filmstrips of "The B.B. the world over" and of



Photo: Leicagraph Co. Ltd., Sydney

Sydney Officers Training Course

Albert Hall Displays. The excellent photographs received by airmail, of the B.B. royal occasions in May in London were of great interest and demonstrated what The Boys' Brigade can achieve when it sets its standards high.

Greetings, and Salutations

Everywhere throughout the tour the message of greetings which it was my privilege and duty to bring from His Majesty The King was received with great enthusiasm. If, as we hope, our Patron next year visits his Australasian Dominions, no one will give him a more loyal welcome than his young subjects in the B.B.

To the Brigade at home—yes, "home" is happily still the word used even by those who have never seen the "homeland"—I bring back heartfelt messages of goodwill from their overseas brothers and many a hope that perhaps in 1954 these may be expressed in person.

For my wife and myself, we feel we can never repay all the friendliness and kindness showered on us, and we are glad to have added so many to the circle of our friends.

Salute to all the gallant B.B. Officers and L.B. Leaders who are striving to build up our movement in distant places and in circumstances often very different to our own! Their results may sometimes seem disappointing, e.g. small Companies, lack of Bible Classes, mediocre drill, mistaken use of the badge system, and the like. It must, however, never be overlooked that much of our success at home is built on decades of tradition, on standards which have become second nature but which are not easy to acquire solely from Manual and textbook, and on values which derive from frequent contact with experienced fellow-Officers. Despite the comparative lack of these traditions, standards and values, our brothers overseas are doing the job manfully—let us not only applaud their zeal but also let us seek every means of helping them.

W. H. McVICKER.

OXFORD'S STEDFAST CLUB

The first year of the Oxford University Stedfast Club has been a successful one and the formation of a Club in the University has been more than justified. In spite of a certain numerical paucity at occasional meetings there has been continual interest not only among B.B. men but also other students interested in Christian Youth Work. This year we have held three formal meetings each term with outside speakers and informal discussions on alternate weeks led by members of the Club. We are most grateful to H.Q. for their support, both moral and practical, in that they have given us every encouragement and provided several speakers for our meetings. We were honoured by the presence of the Brigade Secretary at our first meeting and the high standard set on that occasion has been maintained throughout the year. Our talks have included many aspects of B.B. life. In an attempt to woo non B.B. men we have included more general subjects such as "The Church and Youth Organisations" and "German Youth 1945-51."

In fulfilment of Part 3 of our object—encouragement and practical help to local companies—we have not done all we would have liked but visits have been paid to Bible Classes and other meetings. Other outside activities have included attendance at the District Meeting which was held in Oxford, and a visit to the Albert Hall Display.

We would welcome communication from Stedfast Clubs in other Universities, and would ask all Captains who know of B.B. members or ex-members coming up to Oxford to inform our Chairman: D. A. Humphreys, 120 Greenvale Road, Eltham, London, S.E.9, or in term time, New College, Oxford.

DUNDEE ROTARY AND THE B.B.

On the day before the Council Meeting opened the Brigade President received a warm reception from Dundee Rotary Club, when he spoke on "The B.B. in the Modern World." A number of Office-bearers and Officers of the Dundee Battalion were guests.

The President of the Club is Mr. R. Lowry West, well known for many years as a prominent B.B. personality in Dublin, Belfast and London. He said that no voluntary organisation had done more for the Boyhood of Dundee than The Boys' Brigade, and none had such a devoted band of Officers.

Lord Maclay's address was warmly received. After thanking his Lordship Mr. Lowry West said the club could not let the Diamond Jubilee of the Battalion pass without giving some expression of their appreciation of the services rendered to the community by the B.B. and then handed over a beautifully designed table lectern as a gift from the Rotary Club to the Battalion.

Accepting the lectern, Mr. Hubert G. Scott, Battalion President (and a Rotarian), said praise and encouragement were always welcome, but their value was the greater because of the principles of the Rotary Club with its motto, Service Above Self.

"SIX PLAYS FOR BOYS"

By Richard Parker (Methuen, 2/6)

Any Officer who has undertaken dramatic work among Boys of his Company knows of the great need for suitable published plays with all-Boy characters.

That need is now partly met with the publication of this book. We say "partly" because the plays in this book, though excellent of their type, are not suitable for the Company that really wants to get down to dramatic work, enter Festivals and such like. On the other hand, for Company concerts and parents evenings, these little sketches (on which no performing fee has to be paid) are admirable; can be produced with little difficulty; and will guarantee good laughs if entered into with imagination.

The book is obtainable from Headquarters. E.R.S.



Photo: E. Nedergaard

Their Majesties the King and Queen of Denmark inspecting Boys of the 1st Slough Company on their visit to Denmark, the first B.B. party to be thus honoured