

"OUR ISLAND." By Imelda Willis.

Palm Island is a lovely home for me, with its beautiful parks and gardens. A big Recreation Hall where the people enjoy many entertainments and sports. There is Basketball, which is held every Wednesday night. The girls who compete in the games have special names for their teams: Bluejays; Ravens Delromes; Drifters, Shadows and Hondalls.

Every third period of the year, the teams compete for a shield and last year, Bluejays, won the Mc Adam Shield. The Shield was called after a school teacher, who was the basketball committees' Captain here on Palm Island. He also presented it to the Captain of the team, Miss Veronica Noble, before he left to teach in Brisbane. Besides basketball, we've other entertainments. This time the men have their share of fun with the Tribal Dancing, which is held twice a month. They have teams, too and these are called Sunrise, Sundown and Great Northern. Last May, they competed against each other for the Island Dance Cup, which is presented by the Superintendent and this was won by Sunrise team. They won because they brought back the old Dances that our ancestors danced many years ago. There are few young school boys who dance in the teams, too. They are taught to use their skill in dancing, by their elders.

There is a road leading North from the Settlement and this enters a valley and up a very steep hill. On top of the hill the ground is very level, and huge pine trees are grown there. These trees grow to a height of about forty feet and they also

supply us with timber. Furniture is made from the timber, e.g. beds, kitchen cabinets, wardrobes, also tables and chairs. We, on Palm Island build our own boats, made from fine timber. Today, the houses on Palm Island are made out of cement, masonite and iron and different from earlier huts.

In other Aboriginal Settlements the Government supplies the people with vegetables just as on Palm Island. In the South-East of the island is a big pine-apple plantation, also, North-East of this island, grown seperately, are onions, cabbages, lettuce and potatoes, also pumpkins. These agricultural features of Palm Island are usually given out to fifteen hundred of Palm Is. people, during the year, and very often in addition when the school holidays arrive; at North East Bay our Fisherman catch huge fish occasionally. There is another Bay called Casement Bay where the Catholic School is situated.

The Palms itself is made up of many islands. Two of these are occupied with people, including Palm Island. There is Eclipse Island, Possum Is.; Falcon Is.; which has a Channel of the same name. Two other Islands I haven't mentioned are Fantome Island and Orpheus Island. These are the ones that have people living on them, besides Palm Island, as I've mentioned before.

Missionaries of Mary tend to the people with leprosy on the island of Fantome, On Orpheus Is. lives Mr. & Mrs. C. Taylor. Mr. Taylor bought the island and has turned it into a Tourists Paradise.

Their house is built of of fine timber. If you enter the house you will see beautifully embroidered mats made from coconut palms. Mrs. Maudie Miller who is one of the few people who live on the island made these mats for Mrs. Taylor. She does cooking there too; that is how she earns her money.

Like Townsville and other towns Palm Island has its own Annual Show every year. It is held during the month of August. Buckjumping is the main attraction of the Show. Expert ringers take turns in riding bulls, also; they round up a certain number of calves.

And then, one by one, show their skill in rounding up and tying a rope around a calf's leg in a certain number of seconds. The children arrive very early in the morning for the sports when they spend their money for the goodies which the committee sells at a special stall near the Show grounds gate. Tourists come to Palm Island once a week. They come across on Hayles Launch. The Government pays Mr. Hayles, who owns the launch, to travel to Palm Island with provisions from the Government, to supply to the Aborigines.

Going back to the tourists, they come to see the beautiful and colourful reefs which surrounds this island. The Reef itself is made up of coral and shells. There are many different kinds of coral. For example, the cabbage coral is like the cabbage. When, in the water, it is very soft. After you've taken it out of the water, and dry it in the sun, it turns hard like a boulder. The shells are good for eating or for decorating the house. For instance, the spider shell is good for both, and the butterfly shell is used especially by the older people for earrings. This was one of their tribal laws. These shells are found on sand-banks or near an octopus hole. The many lagoons around the island are about four feet deep. The expert fishermen always catch huge fishes in these lagoons with their spears and woomera. Fred Summers, whom I know very well, is a very good fisherman, in December, he came home with a twenty-five pound Red Emperor. His family ate a hearty dinner that day. When people on the island are short of food, a number of men who have engines boats, go and hunt the sea for turtles during weekends.

I think, to myself, that Palm Island is one of the rarest islands in the Pacific, which will never run out of food and water. Its scenery is picturesque one I've ever seen. I was reared up here, and I'll always remember the happiest days I've spent here.

.....
CHRISTMAS.

"At Christmas play, and make good cheer. For Christmas comes but once a year."-Tusser.

.....

.....