

# NATURE NOTES



**VOL. 18  
NO. 10**



# EDITORIAL

NATURE NOTES: A RINGWOOD INSPECTORATE PUBLICATION



Hello there,

Since last month's special issue on desert life, our mail box has been overflowing with complaints from animals who feel that they, also, have been ignored by Nature

Notes. Wally is absolutely worn out from opening thousands of letters from unloved and unpopular animals like death adders, sharks and cone shells. So...to keep them all happy, this month's issue is all about the less cuddly members of the big family of nature.

On another subject, I'd like to thank all the people whose voluntary efforts have helped in the production of Nature Notes and Probe throughout the year. A special thanks to the Ringwood East Primary School Mother's Club is in order for their efforts in collating and packing. Another big thank-you must go to our artists, Carol Measures, Cindy Hunnam and, of course, Wilma Prohasky. Also, the contribution of articles from many busy people, including A. Carmichael, the Asst.

DEBRA BRYDON

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Wilbur and Wally	
Waffle on.....	P.2
by A. Carmichael	
Paterson's Curse.....	P.3
by D. Brydon	
Phenomenal Pholcidae.....	P.5
by A. Carmichael	
Snakes Alive!.....	P.7
by D. Brydon	
Sea Shore Shockers....	P.9
by B. Archibald	
Nature in the News....	P.11
Puzzles.....	P.13
Dear Wally.....	P.15

ARTISTS: W. Prohasky  
C. Hunnam  
C. Measures

Editor, have been truly appreciated. Have a pleasant holiday,  
P. 1



Wally and Wilbur plan their beach holiday.

Wilbur: I don't know if I like the beach, Wally, because I'm afraid of sharks!

Wally: Well Wilbur, more people are attacked by bulls and horses every year than sharks, and besides, sharks only like warm water over 21° C.

Wilbur: But there are over 250 species of sharks Wal!

Wally: Yes, but only 6 types are thought to attack people, Wil. Most are afraid of people, and don't have the sort of teeth necessary to harm people.

Wilbur: Which are the meanest ones Wal?

Wally: Tiger sharks and White Pointers are the two most ferocious types of shark.

Wilbur: Well, we'd best go to a river Wally!

Wally: Sharks are known to attack in rivers, bays, ocean beaches, and creeks. They've even been seen in fresh water.

Wilbur: What brings sharks to beaches Wal?

Wally: Tiger sharks and White Pointers are scavengers Wilbur, they live off rubbish, or dead and injured fish.

Wilbur: Well why do they attack people, is it because they are attracted to blood?

Wally: No, no, Wilbur. When people thrash about in the water, they give off sound waves which sound to the shark the same as fish in trouble. They can't smell blood or food, it has to be moving quickly for them to be able to "pick it up" with the sensory device found on the side of their bodies.

Wilbur: Can sharks see a long way Wally?

Wally: Yes, they have very good eyesight and can even see in muddy water or at twilight.

Wilbur: Well I won't swim when there are any dogs around, I've heard that they attract sharks.

Wally: Only because they splash a lot and thus attract the shark, the same way people can.

Wilbur: Well, we'll definitely cancel skin diving then!

Wally: Divers are rarely attacked Wil, because they swim in an even, flowing motion and don't attract the shark.

Wilbur: Well, we'll go to a cool beach then, with no rubbish in the water and only swim during the day, if the water is clear.

Wally: Yes, that's an idea Wilbur. Easier still, we'll go to a patrolled beach, where they give you plenty of warning if there ever is a shark about.

Wilbur: That's a good idea Wal!

Wally (mutter mutter) Who invented cousins?!!

A. CARMICHAEL. W. PROHASKY.



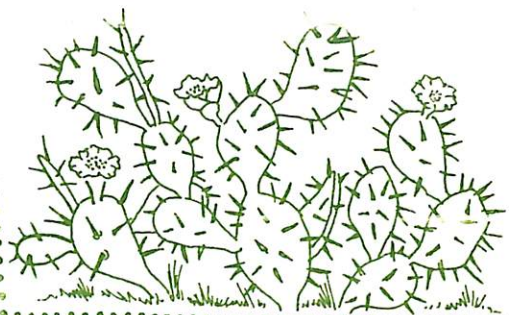
# Paterson's Curse.....

Australia is a land of migrants-and not just the human ones. The spread of European colonists all over the world last century led to a re-arrangement of Australia's flora and fauna. Previously imprisoned in their own country by an enormous ocean their seeds could not cross, new plants came to Australia in the ships bringing new settlers. A red rose from England or an olive tree from Turkey often helped the migrant to feel just a little less home-sick.

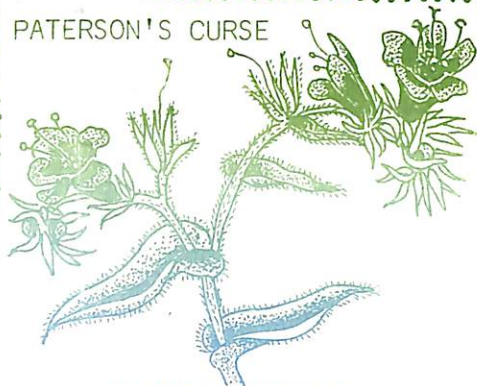
Most of the plants brought by migrants were 'tame'. Garden flowers like begonias and dahlias didn't spread into areas where they weren't wanted. Unfortunately, others escaped from cultivated areas and went wild in the bush. Often they grew so well that they pushed out weaker Australian native plants. These wild migrant plants became known as dangerous or noxious weeds.

By taking it from one part of the world to the other, humans protected the plant from its enemies. The PRICKLY PEAR ran absolutely wild in eastern Australia after it was brought from South America. The fungi and small animals which helped to stop it from spreading too far at home were left behind. For many years, the prickly pear spread and spread and spread. Finally, Australians began to worry. They weren't too keen on the plant taking over their wheat and sheep farming land. To keep it in control, the Cactoblastic moth from South America earned a free trip overseas. Larvae from the moth thought all their Christmases had come at once when they found all the prickly pear in Australia. What a feast!

PRICKLY PEAR



PATERSON'S CURSE



# and other unloved plants.....

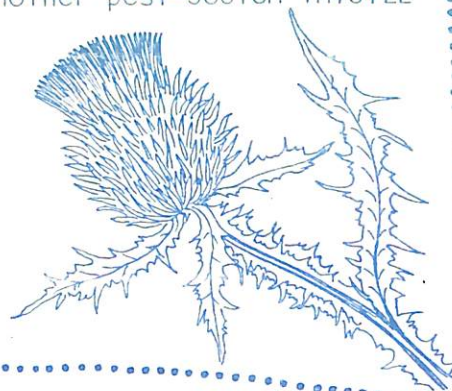
Unfortunately, not all plant pest stories have a happy ending. Paterson's curse (or Salvation Jane if you happen to think that the plant is terrific) covers whole paddocks and hillsides with its spectacular violet or blue blooms. Originally, Paterson's

curse came from the Mediterranean region. Can you find the Mediterranean sea in your atlas? P.C. was probably introduced into Australia in the 1860's. The name Paterson's curse is thought to have come about because the plant 'escaped' from the garden of a family called, of course, Paterson. The plant's other name, Salvation Jane, was coined because in the drier inland parts of the country, it could be eaten by starving animals during a drought. Some people thought also that the flowers had the same shape as the bonnet worn by the women in the Salvation Army. Paterson's curse is a pest because first it smothers the land it grows on and then leaves behind bare ground when it dies.

BONESEED



Another pest-SCOTCH THISTLE



For people living around Melbourne in Victoria, boneseed or the African Daisy is another pest. The actual name boneseed comes from the colour and hardness of the seeds. The shrub is attractive with bright yellow, daisy-like flowers. In its

native country, South Africa, it was kept under control by grazing animals. In the You Yangs, however, boneseed caused the disappearance of many attractive native species. In Victoria (only) it has been officially been proclaimed as a noxious weed. On suburban trains, photos of boneseed are displayed so that people know to destroy it whenever they come across it.

Everyone knows the BLACKBERRY, the worst plant pest of all. The first Victorian government botanist, Baron Ferdinand von Mueller didn't realise what a serious problem he would cause when in 1872, he sent blackberry seeds all over the state to be sown along river beds everywhere. Today we are trying to do the opposite. Do you know why blackberries are so hard to get rid of?



# PHENOMENAL

# PHOLCIDAE.....

The Pholcidae, or Daddy-long-legs, was brought to Australia from Europe, in the holds of ships.

A what-sa-daisy?



The spider loves dark, quiet spots, like in the corner of the shed, or on the verandah.

If the web is undisturbed, it can last several years serving its original purpose for the spider.



He builds a cobweb, which serves as both his home, and his snare.



The web varies in size according to how much space there is to weave it.



These spiders can live until they are several years old (That's a long time in Spider Years.)



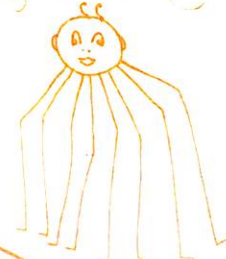
## the delicate

If an intruder comes by, the spider wiggles the web, so he can hide inside the vibrating tangled mess he creates.

You can't see me?



The spider has a thin body, yellowish in color, with long thin legs.



Pholcidae eat all types of insects, especially enjoying slaters.



The mother Pholcidae carries her eggs in a string-bag arrangement, around with her, till they are ready to hatch.



When they do hatch, they stay with mum for a couple of days till they moult, then go out into the wild blue yonder.



The web is a rough structure, anchored by 'guy ropes' to its support.

The spider shakes out any dirt or too large insects from the web.



Native Pholcidae can live in caves, where they lose their coloring and eyesight completely.



They can also live on the Nullabor.

I've crossed the Nullabor.

## daddy-long-legs



# Snakes Alive!

BY D. BRYDON

ARTIST: W. Prohasky

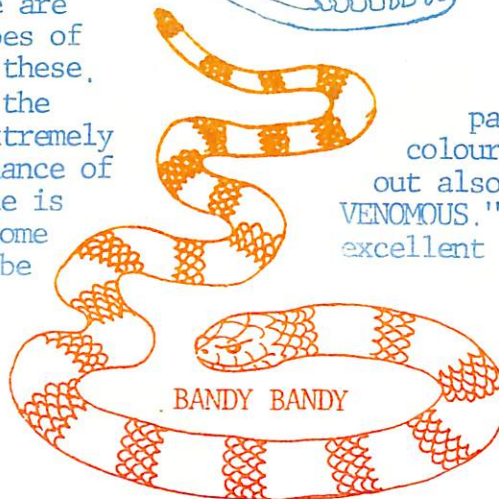
Did you know that there are around 2500 different types of snakes? Australia has 140 of these. Most of them are harmless but the venom of a small handful is extremely dangerous. For most people the chance of being bitten by a poisonous snake is extremely rare. Can you think of some reasons to explain why this should be so?

The Australian snakes on this page have not been given their correct colours and patterns. Can you do this? Find out also whether they are VENOMOUS OR NON-VENOMOUS. "Snakes of Australia" by G. Gow is an excellent book to use for this.

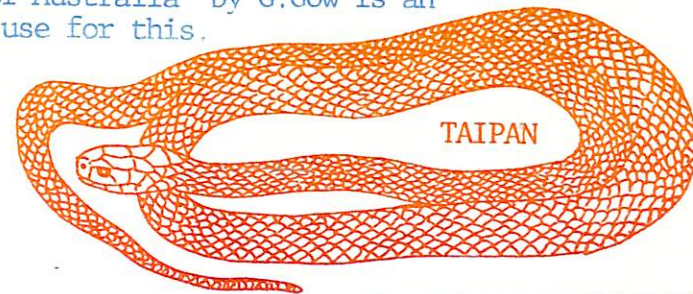
TIGER SNAKE



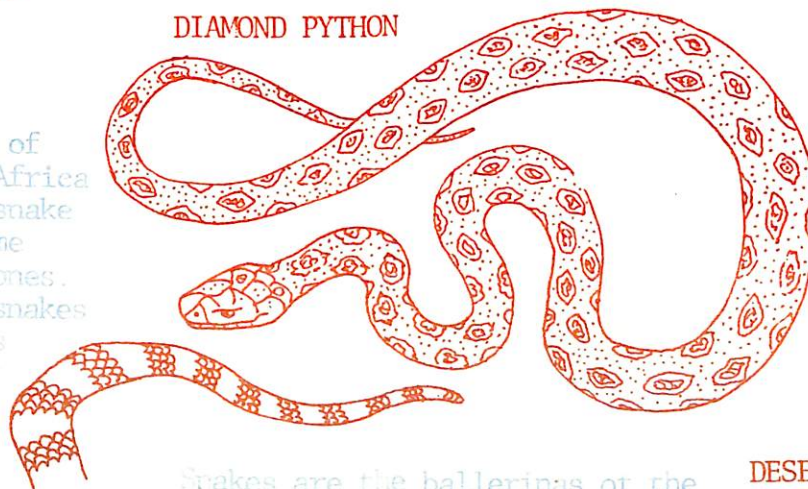
BANDY BANDY



TAIPAN



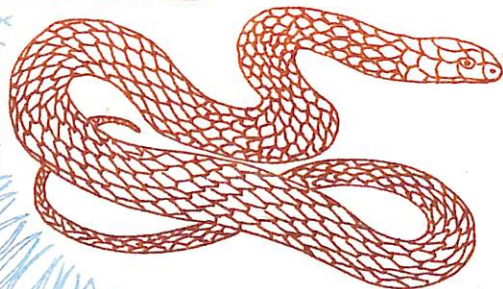
DIAMOND PYTHON



The first reptiles appeared on Earth about 280 million years ago. The first fossils of snakes have been found in Africa and Europe. Eric Worrell, a snake expert has noticed that some snakes still have PELVIC bones. He believes that, long ago, snakes changed slowly from animals with legs to animals without legs. Where is your PELVIS?

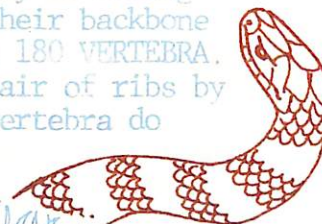
All snakes are CARNIVOROUS. What does this mean? Their food ranges from insects to whole wallabies, depending on how big they are. Snakes have very fine, sharp teeth which are great for holding things but useless for chewing. All food MUST be swallowed whole. How uncomfortable!

COPPERHEAD



Snakes are the ballerinas of the animal world. Their graceful way of moving is caused by the way in which their backbone is made. It is made up of at least 180 VERTEBRA. Each of these is attached to a pair of ribs by ball and socket joints. How many vertebra do humans have?

DESERT BANDED SNAKE



DEATH ADDER

are not able to move very rapidly; the pace of a man's fast walk is about normal. Being able to slither silently along is very useful when catching prey. Can you think why this would be so?





# Sea Shore Shockers

a tongue twisting warning  
by B. ARCHIBALD



## THE BLUE RINGED OCTOPUS

The Blue Ringed Octopus is the most venomous of all octopuses. It is found in rock pools around the coast from South Australia to Queensland. Its food consists of smaller animals, mainly crabs and shrimps.

There are very few people today who do not

know the danger of this "little killer". The octopus measures only a few centimetres across, with a tentacle span of 8cm to 10 cm. When at rest in rock pools, this octopus is a rather drab creature. If annoyed, however, and particularly if taken out of the water, it starts to suffer from lack of oxygen. It then begins to show the peacock blue rings, which give it its name. It is then that bites can occur, if it is handled. The poison of this octopus is highly toxic and acts quickly, hence "prevention is better than cure". You should remember that when beach combing and reef exploring, that every octopus can be dangerous and NONE should be handled!

## THE CONE SHELL

The Cone Shell is a kind of mollusc you may have come across whilst beach combing. It is one of a group of molluscs called Gastropods. They are sometimes called uni-valves and include snails, slugs and periwinkles to name a few. The animal contained within the Cone shell is highly venomous. The venom or poison is produced by a gland and stored until required in a sac behind the mouth cavity. The animal has a highly developed sensory system,

Artist: C.Measures.



## THE CONE SHELL... cont.

and reacts within seconds when likely prey such as small fish or marine worms come close to it. Live Cone shells are quite dangerous and should never be handled. A person who is stung by a Cone shell should have a tourniquet applied above the bite as soon as possible (Do you know why?) Medical treatment should be sought promptly.

## CROWN OF THORNS STAR FISH.

This seemingly attractive fellow should also be avoided if alive. He has already been the source of much concern regarding his extremely damaging effect on our own Great Barrier Reef. Do you know why?

After the animal's meal of coral polyps, all that remains of the polyps is a white skeleton which has been "picked clean" of flesh. The star fish apparently has few enemies, at least when adult and is now found in vast numbers in most of the significant coral reef areas in the Pacific Ocean. Its many arms, ranging in number from 7 to 17 are protected with large "spines". The skin covering contains poisonous material, so if a person steps on a star fish, or is pricked when trying to lift one up, severe illness

can result, including not only pain around the wound, but vomiting as well.

When the star fish is fully grown, it has a diameter of some 60cm.

It can eat about 160cm<sup>2</sup> of polyps every day - that's about 6 square

metres of coral yearly!

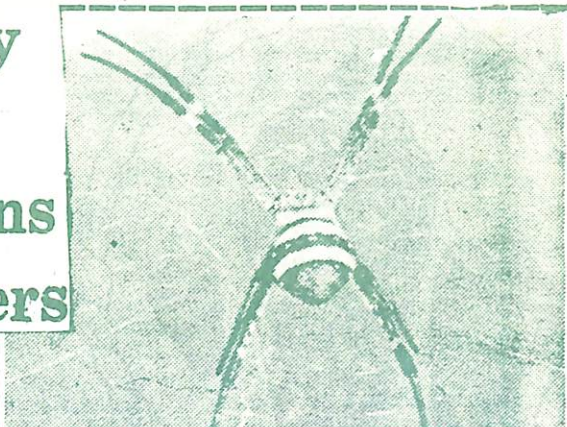
Perhaps you could find out to what extent the Crown of Thorns star fish is inhabiting the Barrier Reef at present. Has its population of the reef been curbed? Why not? How is clam fishing to blame?





## Mystery spider threatens gardeners

An unknown spider with a bite so poisonous that its victims need plastic surgery has maimed three Victorians in recent months. A spider expert said that some kind of unusual wolf spider



A Wantirna woman received quite a scare recently when she came face to face with what is thought to be a rare and dangerous wolf spider.

The woman, Mrs Anne Blythman from Coleman Rd., was hanging her bird cage on the front patio when she spotted the spider in its newly spun web.

Knox council had no record of such a spider ever being reported in the area, but from the description given, a pest exterminator agency believed it to be a rare wolf spider.

The spider, brilliantly colored with three yellow strips on its back and legs, is apparently not a killer but can cause severe swelling and fever if it bites.

The Blythmans recently painted their house and disturbed a nest of huntsman spiders Mrs Blythman said in one day she killed 26.

## Snakes alive — school's in

By KIM TRENGOVE

WHEN the alarm sounds at Yapeen primary school, it doesn't mean the children run outside for a fire drill.

On the contrary — the 17 students at the 165-year-old school outside Castlemaine make a dash for the classrooms and lock themselves in.

The danger? Brown snakes.

A couple of the snakes slithered out from under the school last week causing panic in the playground.

The school's only teacher, Mrs Mary McQuillen, said: "Children were advised to stay home from school last Friday in case we discovered any more."

The first two-metre snake appeared near some bluestone steps last Monday at lunchtime.

was high on the list of suspects. Can you find a picture of one?

Children were taken inside the school and the father of one pupil arrived and killed the snake with his shotgun.

The school was deserted on Friday in fear of another snake which went into hiding after being injured by the mother of a student.

Since then the Education Department has had the school fumigated but Mrs McQuillen and her students are cautious.

"We don't know how effective the spray will be yet," she said yesterday.

THANKS TO "The Sun", 21/10/81, p.15

SPIDER ARTICLE: Thanks to the "KNOX-SHERBROOKE NEWS"

FOR YOU TO FIND OUT..... Why has the Great Barrier Reef been so much in the news lately? Why has East Gippsland?

Photo: Thanks to "THE AGE", 5/11/81, page 5

Text: Thanks to "THE SUN", 21/10/81



Pictures JOHN LAMB

Two of the koalas step out in to the Yarran Dheran Reserve at Mitcham yesterday.

## Island koalas on the move

ABOUT 200 French Island koalas will have new homes next week . . . thanks to the Fisheries and Wildlife Department.

The koalas are being moved to mainland Victorian settlements because of a shortage of edible gum leaves on the Westernport Bay island.

While koala colonies in other parts of the state dwindled in recent years, their brothers and sisters on French Island grew in number — and ended up eating themselves out of house and home.

The Fisheries and Wildlife

Department says there are about 350 koalas on the island. Those in over-populated areas are now being caught by department officials.

After capture, each koala is weighed, measured and tagged before a ferry ride across to the mainland.

What is the "Fisheries and Wildlife Department?

What is its job?

Could the koalas have been moved to any place where gum trees grow? Why not?

## Koalas in take-off

LONDON, Sun., AAP. — Qantas' airline's worldwide advertising campaign featuring a koala seemed to be having a strange side effect, according to a newspaper report.

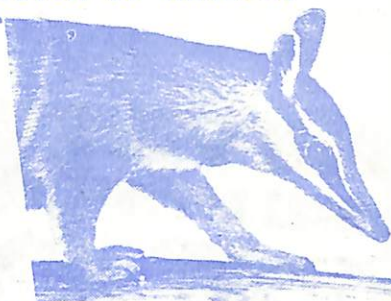
Writing in the "London Day by Day" column in the Daily Telegraph, "Peterborough" reported that the director of Sydney's Taronga Zoo, Jack Throp, said visitors from the U.S., where the campaign opened, have started asking him to show them "those cute little Qantas."



# PUZZLES

Find the mystery letter in the quiz on the right and write it in the first column. When all the letters are there, unjumble them to make a word which describes the protection of nature.

NUMBAT



BANDICOOT

TASMANIAN DEVIL



KANGAROO

**OOPS!  
SOMETHING'S  
MISSING**

How embarrassing! These poor animals have lost half of their bodies. Can you help them by drawing in the missing section?



I am the 5th letter in the name of a type of mammal that can 'think'.

I am the 6th letter in the name of a famous Tasmanian town. Most of the plant life around this town has been killed by mining wastes and bushfires.

I am the 1st letter of a word used to describe animals and plants when their 'type' no longer exists - and never will again.

I am the 3rd letter in the name of the animal family whose members have hollow bones.

I am the 2nd letter in the name of the animal family whose members feed their babies with mother's milk.

I am the 1st letter in the missing word. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE \_\_\_\_\_ ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S WILDLIFE.

I am the first letter in the name of the animal family whose members have scales, lay eggs and are cold-blooded.

I am the 1st letter in the name of a type of shark that does not roar.

I am the 2nd letter in the name of a common garden bird who has nothing to do with Australia's mining industry.

I am the 7th letter in the name of a common edible fungus.

I am the 6th letter in the name of a tiny common garden bird - not an Australian native.

I am the 3rd letter in a word which is used to describe all of an animal's or plant's surroundings.



# DEAR WALLY...

During December, many of you will be going on excursions.

Becky Thomas and Mindy Scott visited the Melbourne Zoo

## The Birds

The birds in the aviary are tame because they are used to being patted and they know people won't hurt them so they don't fly away when you walk up to them. They also like to have their photos taken.

By Becky Thomas  
and Mindy Scott

recently and wrote to Wally about some of the animals they saw there. Perhaps you could drop him a line about some of your excursion experiences.

## The Giraffe

The giraffe is tall and can reach the trees. A mossy fungus that grows on rocks is the strange food that the giraffe licks. They always lick it so they must get a lot of nourishment.

# 1982 ORDER FORM

SEND TO: P.O. BOX 28, RINGWOOD EAST, VIC. 3135.

PHONE ORDERS: (03) 879 1263

WILBUR WOMBAT'S FORGOTTEN TO  
ORDER HIS 1982 NATURE NOTES  
+ PROBE -

"WHAT AM I GOING  
TO DO NOW? (IS LIFE  
WORTH LIVING WITH-  
OUT NATURE NOTES?)"



Boo  
Hoo...

DON'T BE A WILBUR, BE A  
WINNER WITH WALLY. ORDER  
YOUR 1982 NATURE NOTES +  
PROBE NOW!

"FILL IN THE  
FORM TODAY...  
DON'T DELAY!"



Prices for 1982: Nature Notes - 23c } yearly rate  
Probe - 12c } \$3.50

This includes postage, of course.

Minimum order price is \$2.50 to cover postage.

I wish to order \_\_\_\_\_ copies of Nature Notes  
\_\_\_\_\_ copies of Probe.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode....

You can pay now, or be invoiced early in the  
new year.

ATURE NOTES: Registered at the G.P.O. as a periodical Cat.B

P.15