

A Fishing Trip In South Australia

By J. H. SMYTHE

If you look on your atlas at the coast-line of South Australia you will see an island called Kangaroo Island lying in the mouth of a great gulf called Spencer Gulf.

One arm of the land which encloses this bay ends in a rocky promontory called Cape Spencer, the other, rather shorter is named Cape Jervis, and it is of Cape Jervis and the holiday me - that is mother, the two boys and I, spent down there that I wish to tell you.

There are no habitations down on Cape Jervis except the light-house which keeps watch and ward over the many steamers which pass the point on their way to and from Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. So when we proposed making a fishing trip to Cape Jervis we had to provide ourselves with all the necessary equipment for camping out in such a remote spot.

As we intended staying for a fortnight we had to lay in a considerable stock of provisions and it was great fun choosing what we would take with us, and as we all had different tastes in eatables, the list was rather a formidable one - and had to be amended more than once on account of the pressure on space in our ancient bower, but at length everything was settled and one fine morning we set out on our 70 mile journey, towing a 14 foot motor boat, fitted with temporary axle and wheels, behind us. Inside the boat was stowed our tent, blankets, spare clothing, fishing gear, and sundry cases of provisions, plus an emergency mast and sail in case the out-board engine failed.

The journey took us about 10 hours, but we considered that good going as we had rather a heavy load and the way was some of the worst

roads and hills in Australia.

Yet it was a pleasant journey on the whole for the way led for the most part through the most beautiful scenery, and as time was no particular object we had leisure in which to enjoy ~~the~~ the many lovely views which greeted us as we wound our way over the vast Adelaide Plains and up into the foothills of the Mount Lofty ranges.

Through great forests of gum trees we travelled, gums of every species from the small scented eucalyptus to the giant *kanari* which towers 300 to 400 feet towards the sky, while every now and then we would pass clumps of the beautiful yellow mimosa, more commonly known as wattle, Australia's national emblem.

For miles our way would next run through long ^{cool} ~~green~~ valleys in which the white fleeces of

innumerable sheep stood out in vivid contrast to the green pasture and tropical foliage on the hill sides. Rabbits were to be seen everywhere and it was comical to see them sit up, and cock their heads to one side as they watched us go past. No doubt they were thinking how mad people were to go pulling a boat all over a country where there was no water.

Indeed it did seem rather strange, so much so, that the people in one village we went through dubbed us the Dry Land Sailors and chaffingly enquired if we always travelled overland by boat.

We did not mind their joking, however for we knew we would find a use for our boat in its natural element when we reached our destination.

This we did fairly late in the evening and our first consideration

was to get our tent pitched before it got dark.

You must remember that there is no twilight in South Australia, one minute it is broad daylight, and the next darkens falls with disconcerting suddenness so it was essential to make haste while there was yet light.

Having pitched our camp and set our house in order as it were we did not feel inclined to do much more that night so after tea it was bed for all of us and a night's rest in preparation for the next day's work.

The following morning we were up in good time and now all was excitement for we were anxious to get our boat launched and set out for the fishing grounds and try our luck with hook and line amongst the whiting, snook, brim, gurnet, and honey ruff which

were the fish most commonly found in these waters.

Bait was our first concern and now we sought the advice of the light-house keeper, who was an authority on all matters connected with the sea, boats and fishing.

He told us that we must first go out to a point he indicated in the small land locked bay on the shores of which we were camped, and capture a few squid, as a piece of squid was the most deadly lure known, no fish being able to withstand its appeal.

Now the squid is a small species of octopus - or rather cuttle fish, having tentacles or arms ending in a sucker arrangement by which it attaches itself to any object which excites its curiosity or greed.

The usual method of catching squid was by means of a potatoes gently lowered on the end of a line to

where the squid could be seen squirming on the sea bottom through the clear waters of the Pacific. Very soon a squid would extend an arm to investigate the dangling object and perhaps finding the potato to its liking, would fasten on to it and endeavour to drag it down.

Very, very, gently then you drew up your line while your companion got ready to slip a landing net beneath your catch as it neared the surface.

It was now that the tantalising part of squid catching comes in, for squid have an annoying habit of dropping off the potatoe just out of reach of the net and sinking slowly to the bottom again, emitting as they do so an inky fluid which turns the water black, so that you have to wait till it clears again, or else move to fresh ground, and try once more.

We were lucky however in that we got a few good specimens without much trouble and so, our bait secured we started our motor and headed out to the open sea where, about three miles out, lay the whiting ground.

Whiting fishing is great sport while it lasts, which is not long, usually just about half an hour, for whiting do not feed long at a time, but just snatch a hasty meal as it were and then off they go, returning to their feeding ground when hungry again.

Our fishing did not come to an end however when the whiting stopped biting, in fact it was only commencing.

We went after snook.

Snook are fish of the picker type resembling these fish indeed very closely both in form and in habit.

They are fierce fighters and the deadly enemies of all others of their tribe.

living, principally on their unfortunate-
brethren.

Snook have an amazing turn of speed which stands them in good stead when in search of a meal and few fish are able to escape these cannibals of the Pacific Seas.

Squid again was the bait used, though so voracious are snooks that a red rag on your hook is enough to lure them to the attack.

When out after snook however you do not anchor your boat as when whiting fishing, but instead you keep on the move the whole time and as fast as the motor can push the boat along.

A long line is used, anything from 300 to 400 feet, which you keep hauling in and letting out all the time until you strike a fish, while the helmsman steers as erratic a course as he possibly can, so that the bait on your line will resemble

a fish darting this way and that in the endeavour to escape his enemy. One has to be careful not to lose balance and fall overboard when the course is changed so suddenly and so frequently, especially if you happen to strike a fish just as the boat heels over on the turn and you get an added jerk from sea ward.

It is all great sport however provided you are not addicted to sea sickness, for a 14 foot boat going all out and dodging rapidly from port to starboard in a choppy sea is not the most soothing of motions for a delicate stomach.

Our first day out brought us a good basket of whiting and we were also lucky enough to catch three snook, two of about 15 pounds each and a real whale of a fellow which scaled well over 30 pounds.

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Favored with delightful weather we enjoyed splendid sport for a few more days sailing here and there all around the coast until one day misfortune overtook us.

The key which held ~~on~~ the fly wheel of the motor on the shaft slipped out somehow and before the engine could be stopped the wheel had spun off and dived to the bottom of the sea and we had the doubtful pleasure of rowing home three miles in the teeth of the off shore wind which invariably sprung up in the evening. Up to date our out-board motor engine had behaved so well that we never dreamed of taking our emergency rig - the mast and sail. This mishap curtailed our expeditions to the further out grounds, but we had many enjoyable trips closer inshore exploring the numerous

small bays made by the reef formation off the rugged coast of Cape Jervis. A visit to the light house was also a most interesting and instructive experience for ~~all~~^{all} for none of us had ever seen at close quarters one of those great flashing beacons which shall safely - to all who go down to the sea in ships, but - we did not envy the keeper his lonely vigil on this storm swept-rock bound outpost of our empire. Our holiday at an end we regretfully said good bye to Cape Jervis and left for home and duty again in the cool of the evening.

At the top of the long hill which winds its way up for miles from the coast, we turned to wave a last-farewell to the little land locked bay, and the lonely sentinel which we could now see flashing its warning signals over the straits to Kangaroo Island fourteen miles away.