

By gum! She's right

We've been to Point Plomer dozens of times, scrambled over the rocks on the beach, or avoided them, and never dreamt even that once they helped to keep our aborigines alive as a fish trap.

We can see it plainly now, of course. A rock pool so to speak, devised to hold fish in as the high tide receded.

As Isabel McBryde says, in her "Records of Times of the New England tribes," the trap today bears only a resemblance to its once former usefulness, but with a little imagination we can see the aborigines baiting their trap with shellfish or meat scraps and gathering in their harvest with spears as the tides receded.

Isabel McBryde has sent an autographed copy of her book to Mr. Ray Dick, of Allunga Avenue, Port Macquarie, because some of the pictures used were taken by his late father, Mr. Tom Dick, and are now part of a notable collection in Cambridge, England.

There is also a very impressive collection of Mr. Tom Dick's aboriginal photos in the Hastings District Historical Society's Museum at Port Macquarie.

The illustration with this article of the fish trap at Point Plomer, is taken from Isabel McBryde's book.

In two coastal areas

Her book points out that there were stone fish traps at widely distributed sites around and across the continent, and devotes a chapter to two fish traps located on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, one at Point Plomer and the other at Arrawarra, just north of Woolgoolga.

The two sites share many features.

"The Point Plomer trap is the smaller of the two, now consisting of only one square enclosure. It lies in the southern curve of the open Barrie's Bay and is on the northern side of the headland. An extensive accumulation of boulders on the southerly curve of the beach has been used to provide material for the stone walls of the trap. The trap is in a very poor state of preservation, with the rocks widely scattered within the square and the enclosure almost sanded up. Nevertheless, a distinct line of rocks forming the southern wall runs up the beach to the high-tide mark, making a wall 156 feet in length. At the seaward end this wall rises to some three feet above the present level of sand and at this point very large boulders have been used in building the wall. The internal area of the enclosure is 2,500 square feet, the original shape appearing to have been square with sides a little over 50 feet in length. The trap is almost completely submerged at high tide, but is drained well before low tide."

The book then goes on to evaluate the occupation sites and tribe numbers in the vicinity of Point Plomer, proof of

FISH TRAP AT PLOMER

("News" Review)

their presence being contained in the pipi middens and associated "workshops" (stone implements) in the vicinity.

Isabel McBryde has dealt extensively and interestingly with both settlers and aborigines in the coastal river systems and the New England pastoral district.

Tom Dick photos

Two of the late Tom Dick's photos (now at Cambridge, included in the book, show Australian natives (men, women and children) gathering pipis on Lighthouse Beach, near Lake Cumberson, and gathering rather luscious-looking oysters from mangrove swamps in the Hastings River. Another is titled, "the carved design on the tree in the Hastings River district are explained to visitors by tribal elders."

The huge gum tree has a carving six feet deep by three feet four feet wide.

In another chapter, titled "Aboriginal House Arrangements," Isabel McBryde deals with "a strange place on the Wilson River, where there are about thirteen erections, each large enough for a man to get in, being built of loose stones, the stone erections are about two feet across and three feet high... even the old blacks did not know for what purpose they were erected.

There are two illustrations and a plan of the stone erections at Rollands Plains.

"Ignorance of the site may be indicative of considerable antiquity," she says.

A healthy lot

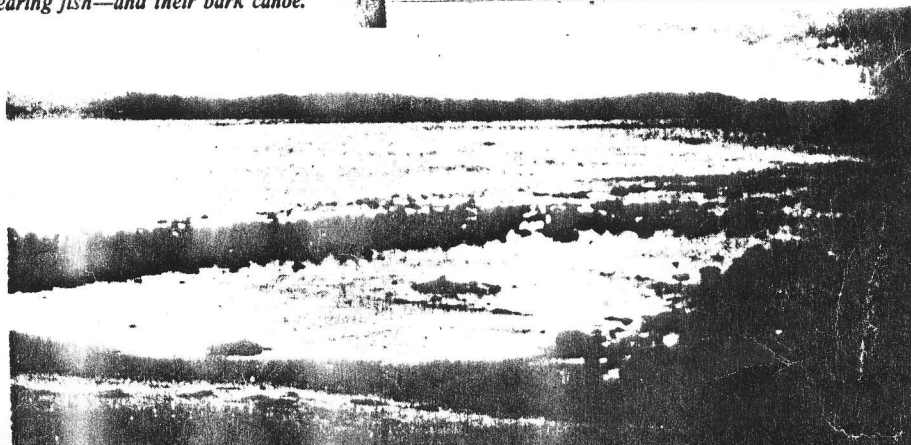
In a chapter in the book, R. E. De Bertrando describes an Aboriginal tribe (Clarence River) and concludes, "it must be admitted they were not the low-down race that many people thought they were. Since the white man has come among them they have learnt to drink and they have been decimated with tuberculosis and tumors... before the advent of white man sexual diseases were unknown; they never washed, and only bathed in water after meals they wiped their greasy hands on their bodies."



A Tom Dick picture of a Hastings River tribe spearing fish—and their bark canoe.

Port Macquarie News.

18th March, 1979.



Aboriginal