

NEWS FROM NEAR AND FAR—

The cane cutting season is still going strong with the Cabbage Tree Island Station gang holding second place among the Richmond River gangs. They have maintained this place under the able leadership of their ganger, Roy Cameron, and won praise from the cane-growing community. The slow turn round of cane punts has held them up, however.

Death of a grand old man—John Coombes

The death has taken place in Brewarrina of Mr. Jack Coombes, a very old aboriginal, who in the past has made a name for himself on the cricket field.

In the years gone by, he played class cricket and had the honour of bowling Victor Trumper. Indeed, some said he was worthy of selection in the Australian XI.

He reared a large family and was respected by all who knew him.

The children of Wallaga Lake were recently given a picnic on Bermagui Beach by the Manager and Matron during their school holidays. Some of the kiddies had never left the Station grounds before, and were in their element when they were told that they were being taken for a picnic. They played to their heart's content on the beach and in the Bermagui Park, on the swings, roundabouts and see-saw.

Old Jim Hammond, who doesn't know his correct age, but is reputed to be over eighty, is still Wallaga Lake's famous bike rider. He went for a fifteen-mile ride recently and returned looking as fit as a fiddle. He has challenged Manager Norton to a three-mile race, and we all look forward to this big event.

Young Max Harrison of Wallaga Lake, who is only sixteen, earned £4 a day recently, picking peas. Max says there is good money in pea picking while it lasts, but unfortunately neither the money nor the peas last very long these days.

Nazi Leader in business again

Hjalmar Schacht the grey, bespectacled 75-year old German who was Hitler's financial genius and who bolstered the Nazi economy to support the dictator's dream of world conquest, is back in business again.

At the end of the war, Schacht was tried before a German court and sentenced to eight years gaol, but served only twelve months. When he was released in 1948 he had only five shillings and all his vast estates had been sold.

Now, after these few short years, he is in business again . . . as a banker with a huge capital to back him.

New Year's Day is the most important day of the year in China, and it is considered the birthday of everybody, no matter on what day of the year birth took place. Most Chinese pay their debts on this day and purchase new clothing. They regard death as the most important event, and a handsome coffin is a greatly prized gift.

The "Traveller's Tree" of Madagascar has a hollow leaf stalk which contains wholesome water even in the dry season. It also provides food in the form of bunches of succulent fruit, while the seeds yield flour. The huge leaves are used for thatching, and the leaf stalks serve in making walls and other parts of buildings. The tree is a type of plantain.

When he shaves each morning, the average man covers an area of about 48 inches. On this area are some 25,000 hairs, each of which, in 24 hours increases in length by one-hundredth of an inch.

Shark skin was used as an abrasive before sandpaper was invented.

The stinging nettle contains an acid fluid in the hairs on the stem which can cause a painful wound on the skin. In China grass cloth is made from several species of the plant, while thread is spun from the product of other species in several European countries. The shoots of the young plants are used for preparing broth and porridge.

The bamboo flowers only once in about 50 years.

The lobster carries its eggs around for nearly a year after they are laid. After hatching, the lobster larvae spend from three to five weeks floating near the surface of the sea. Then the instinct of self-preservation asserts itself and the lobsterlings settle to the bottom. The lobsters take five to six years to mature, and some can live to the ripe old age of 40.

The green turtle, when fully developed, grows up to 8 ft. long and weighs from 700 to 850 lb.

Gold is so malleable it can be beaten out into leaves less than one-hundred and fifty-thousandth of an inch in thickness. Such a leaf is translucent and transmits a greenish light.

The origin of the white feather as an omen of cowardice goes back to the days when cock-fighting was popular. There was an old belief that a white feather in the tail of a gamecock was a sign that it was crossbred and a mongrel, and consequently lacking in courage and fighting qualities.

White turnips consist of 90 per cent water, while swede turnips have 86 per cent.