

TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON AN ISLAND

by R. Sherry (of Burnt Bridge)

THE CLARENCE RIVER

On a holiday trip to the Clarence, a river not far up the coast
I had with me all of the family, that is, except Charley the ghost
Up there in the big sugar canefields, where canecutters all gather to toil
Once a year they cut cane by the punt load . . . it grows in the great river soil
It's there where the big juicy mangoes hang ripe from their short bushy trees
And fall to the ground by the dozen at the touch of a light summer breeze
It was there that I first met Frank Sibly, a fighter gone out of the game
Frank fought the famous Jack Hassen, and still has a good fighting name
On the banks of this long winding river, dairy farmers were planting their grain
It's a rush job from sunup to sundown to get their crops in 'fore the rain
If you like you can stop off at Grafton where everything's tidy and neat
You can walk among big Jacarandas that grow in long rows up the street
Once a year tourists come by the hundreds to see Jacarandas in bloom
It is festival time throughout Grafton, out of town things quiet as a tomb
Then you travel along by the roadway through towns on the bank of the stream
You can try out your luck at some fishing or camp by the river and dream
Or you can travel along down to Yamba a nice little town by the sea
You can swim in the great rolling ocean or rest on the beach peacefully
I spent most of my time on an island with relations and friends that I knew
There was Noel and young Daley Randall, and Wally and his people too
Kevin Randall, Police Tracker from Grafton was down to Maclean for a rest
Kevin's a footballer, boxer, as a sportsman he's one of the best
And I wish all the best to the others that I met on the island up there
One and all they are wonderful people as good as you'll meet anywhere
So goodbye everyone for the present, I hope that this poem brings cheer
Some day I may visit your island again, at the end of a long working year.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Ron Sherry, of Burnt Bridge, has become well known to his fellow aborigines over the years for the many excellent topical poems he has written for *Dawn*.