

A journalist's DIARY

Gough Islander

28/5/63

would go back any time

IT'S a small world, indeed! There I was the other day writing about "Blikkiesdorp", the South African weather station on lonely Gough Island, when living right here in Port Elizabeth was the man who gave the "dorp" its name.

It was Andre van Wyk, now a Railways clerk in Port Elizabeth, who painted the name "Blikkiesdorp" on the station's biggest hut, thereby christening the settlement.

"I can't remember why we decided to give it that name," says Andre, who spent 14 months on the island, "but it was probably because the place looked like a real 'Blikkiesdorp'."

(Mr James McNish, of Port Elizabeth, who visited the island recently, thinks it took its name from the mountain of tin cans dumped over the years in a ravine near the settlement.)

Andre van Wyk, 22, is the son of Mr and Mrs O. A. van Wyk, of Port Elizabeth.



Ex-Met. man **ANDRE VAN WYK** . . . "Blikkiesdorp" painter.

colour and black and white—of the bird and animal life there."

● **Reading.** "I read enough books to last me a lifetime. We were never short of books because so many were sent to us by various organisations in South Africa."

● **Dial-fiddling.** "Our radios were strong enough to pick up stations all over the world. We listened regularly to all three South African programmes, which came through as clearly as if we had been sitting in our lounges at home. The B.B.C., Voice of America and French and South American stations also came through clear as a bell."

Would return

Andre says he'd go back to Gough Island any time. He loved the silence and—"it was a pleasant thought knowing I was saving so much money."

The expedition took to the island enough food for their stay of 14 months.

"Almost everything was in tins—even butter and cheese," he recalls.

They used sterilised milk (which lasts for months) and baked their own bread.

Twice during the 14 months, crayfish boats from Tristan da Cunha arrived at Gough with mail.

Just before his return to South Africa Andre was involved in a dramatic rescue operation.

The South African research ship RSA had arrived with a party of men to move the weather station at "Blikkiesdorp" to a new site on Transvaal Bay.

Twelve of the men went off one morning to clear the new site.

Bad weather came up suddenly and by late afternoon the group were marooned at Transvaal Bay.

If they had tried to return to "Blikkiesdorp" by land, it would have been a day's march—and the weather was far too bad for that. They could not remain where they were because it was mid-winter, bitterly cold and wet, and there was no shelter at Transvaal Bay.

So they say . . .

THE trouble with worrying so much about your "security" in the future is that you feel so insecure in the present.

Their only chance of escape was by sea, but the heavy swell and giant-breakers threatened to smash any small boat despatched from the RSA to pick up the men on the beach.

Nevertheless, Andre volunteered to do the "job" (as he calls it).

Alone in a dinghy he managed to reach the beach without being swamped. The waiting men clambered aboard in the boiling surf, and they safely reached the motor-boat standing by beyond the line of breakers and were taken to the RSA farther out.

● **Says Andre:** "The fellows couldn't have stayed there in the rain and cold. Somebody had to fetch them—I just happened to volunteer first." Modest chap . . .

Just in time!

TALK about luck! Mr D. B. Nelson, winner of the Evening Post's first "Spot the Ball" competition, beat the clock by only a few minutes.

At ten minutes to noon last Friday Mr Nelson telephoned the Evening Post to confirm that it would be in order if he delivered his entry in the competition to Newspaper House, instead of posting it.

He was told that would be fine—if he could deliver it before noon, deadline for the contest.

A few minutes before "time" his entry arrived and was dropped in to the baskets with the hundreds of others.

● **Then came the judging—and Mr Nelson's was the first correct entry opened. As a matter of interest, all the others were eventually opened and his was the ONLY correct one.**

TIT-BITS

GLANCING through the silkily produced magazine of the Humewood Sea Scout Group (it's called the Light-house), I came across the question: "What do the colours of the South African flag represent?"

As you know, the colours are orange, white and blue. But because the Brand Information Bureau collapsed into complete chaos when I asked them to find out what the colours represented, I could only hazard a guess—orange stands for valour, white for purity and blue for tranquillity.

Am I right?
I would also be interested to know whether these three colours were chosen because they were the colours of the Prince of Orange back in the 16th century.

Is there a Scoutmaster in the house?

A MOST odd request comes from a lady reader who lives in the Sunland district. She writes: "You've had a lot to say about home-brewed beer—now what about getting down to brass tacks and publishing a recipe for orange brandy?"

I've often tasted "mampoor," the peach brandy made on Transvaal farms, but orange brandy is a new one on me, lady. Can anyone help?

FIFTY-FOUR fl notes were found pinned inside the sleeve of a night-dress bought for a few shillings at a Portsmouth (England) jumble sale. The buyer told the police, who are now trying to trace the woman who gave it away.

Tailpiece
HOLLYWOOD marriage—much "I do" about nothing.

by Adam Brand

He was an observer in the Met. Office in Pretoria in 1961 when he had the chance of signing on for a tour of duty on Gough Island. Eager for adventure he grasped the opportunity and arrived on the island on March 25, 1961. He was back in Pretoria on May 20, 1962.

(He resigned from the Weather Bureau to join the Railways after he was posted to Port Elizabeth a few months ago.)

Andre was one of six South Africans stationed on the island.

Boredom, he says, wasn't really a problem. He was able to indulge to his heart's content in three hobbies:

● **Photography.** "Gough Island is a paradise for a photographer interested in nature. I took reels and reels—cine,

AM
ND
GORDON'S
LONDON DRY GIN
BERLIN
14-7-61
GERMANY
GORD