

the third of the cadets to undergo basic training in scientific methods, Messrs. Carmichael and M. J. Simpson each having spent nearly three months at the laboratory under the tutelage of C.S.I.R.O. personnel.

Inspector F. A. L. Connell is at present spending much time with the m.v. "Silver Gull" on patrol of the snapper fisheries at Safety Bay.

Cadet Inspector B. A. Carmichael during the last week or two in October was stationed at Bunbury assisting Inspector A. V. Green.

ANNUAL INSPECTORS' CONFERENCE

The annual conference will this year be held in the Board Room at Head Office from December 8 to 12 inclusive. The programme has not yet been finalised, but arrangements are well in hand for the showing of a series of fisheries films, including some recent underwater films from overseas. The agenda for the conference is now in course of preparation, and any officer is free to list any item for discussion. Any such item should reach Head Office not later than November 25, so that the agenda may be sent to all officers in sufficient time to enable them to give some thought to the various items before the conference opens.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S WHALING INDUSTRY

By E. J. Brownfield

Whaling on the west coast of Australia has a history older than that of any other industry, or indeed of any settled community in the State. The occurrence on the coast of the humpback whale on its annual northward migration was noted and capitalised by whalers in the early days of the nineteenth century, principally by American nationals. This annual migration between the months of May and October, when the whales proceed to and from the warmer waters off the North-West, has persisted until this day. In the years immediately prior to World War II it provided a rich field which was exploited mainly by foreign ventures which took from our waters products valued at hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Modern whaling methods were first introduced into Western Australia in 1912 when two Norwegian companies registered in the State and commenced operations at Frenchman's Bay, Albany (on the south coast) and at Norwegian Bay, near Point Cloates (on the upper west coast). Operations were initially successful, but restrictions imposed by World War I resulted in the companies closing down in 1916. At both centres operations were conducted from shore stations, that at Point Cloates being the most modern of its time.

Between 1916 and 1922 whaling lapsed, but a successful period followed from 1925 to 1929 when a Norwegian company leased the Point Cloates station and in four seasons processed 3,425 humpbacks. No further whaling was done until 1936 when two foreign fleets operated off the north-west coast outside territorial waters. Each fleet comprised a mother ship and six chasers and each was reported to have secured 1,500 whales for the season.

The State Government in 1937 permitted operations by two American pelagic fleets in the Shark Bay area. Two mother ships ("Ulysses" and "Frango") and 14 chasers were employed for a take of 3,237 humpbacks. The following year "Frango" and 6 chasers operated and took 913 whales in the same area.

Eleven years passed, including years of war and post-war re-adjustment, before a local company, The Nor'-West Whaling Company, in 1949 re-opened the Point Cloates Station. The plant at this centre had already greatly deteriorated prior to its being swept by a cyclone in 1944, and considerable reconditioning was necessary. The new company made a start on July 5, 1949, with two 120-ton Fairmile launches converted for chasing. Operations for the season terminated on October 12, 1949, after a take of 190 whales. The success of this venture resulted in its flotation as a limited liability company and continuance of operations in the 1950 season.

The Commonwealth Government had meanwhile become interested and had under the Whaling Industry Act, 1949, set up an authority called the Australian Whaling Commission for the purpose of conducting shore whaling on the Western Australian coast. The Commission established a modern station on Babbage Island, near Carnarvon, and acquired three orthodox chasers. Operations

were to have commenced in June 1950, but various delays postponed the start to September 23. In the meantime the chaser "Thorvard" had operated between August 12 and September 28 for a catch of 93 whales, all of which were sold to the Nor'-West Whaling Co. The Commission's other chasers, "Carnarvon" and "Gascoyne" took 40 whales between September 23 and October 31, the closing date of the season, thus enabling a test run of the installation to be made.

In 1950 the operations of the Nor'-West Whaling Co. Ltd. covered the period June 29 to October 9. The converted Fairmile, "Point Cloates", was employed, and, including the 93 whales captured by "Thorvard", the total take was 348.

The following year, 1951, saw both stations equipped and ready for full scale whaling, each with an objective of 600 humpbacks, which was the quota allotted to each station by the Commonwealth Government. The Nor'-West Whaling Co. planned to use three catchers, but several mishaps prevented their full use. A start was made on June 23 with "Point Cloates" and on July 11 "Haerami Star", 114 tons (another Fairmile) was commissioned. This vessel operated alone from August 1 to 18 when it was joined by "Vigilant" (120-ton Fairmile). The catcher "Point Cloates" was again in commission on September 7, and two days later "Vigilant" left the fleet. The company ceased operations on October 14 after taking 574 whales (including 2 lost). The Australian Whaling Commission experienced a very successful 1951 season, taking a total of 650 whales between June 25 and October 9. Three whales were lost to sharks. The chasers "Gascoyne", "Carnarvon" and "Minilya" (formerly "Thorvard") were employed throughout.

It had been anticipated that a third venture would operate in 1951 and a quota of 50 whales had been allotted. Since the new venture was unable to commence in 1951 its quota was re-allotted to the Australian Whaling Commission which was thus enabled to increase its take to 650 humpbacks for the season.

The whaling industry is now firmly established in Western Australia and this year, 1952, has been the year of greatest activity in the history of the State. Sited at King George Sound, Albany, on the south coast, a third company came into being and commenced whaling on June 14. Known as the Cheyne Beach Whaling

Co. Ltd., it originally proposed to operate from Cheyne Beach (about 40 miles east of Albany) but later decided on the Frenchman's Bay site in King George Sound. This is a site very close to that formerly occupied in 1912 by the old Norwegian company. The new company's 1952 quota of 50 humpbacks was later in the season increased to 75, but the company finally closed down for the season on August 8 owing to the scarcity of whales. Its season's take had then reached 51 humpbacks. The experience gained, processing results achieved and the smoothness of plant operation all augur well for the future.

The Australian Whaling Commission experienced another successful season in 1952, taking 600 whales between June 2 and September 1, using three chasers; although "Minilya" did not operate until August 13.

Three chasers were employed also by the Nor'-West Whaling Co. Ltd., although "Vigilant" came into operation only on July 30. Whaling ceased on October 9, with a total take of 536 humpbacks for the season. High winds during September - usually the most productive month - interfered with whaling, with the result that the quota was not reached.

The participation of so many nations in whaling on the high seas and the degree to which the various species were being exploited led, in 1937, to an International Whaling Conference. This was held in London and all leading whaling countries were represented. Further conferences were held in 1938 and 1944, and of latter years a conference has been held annually in one country or another. Conference lays down measures designed to preserve the species consistent with rational exploitation and all those countries which are signatories to the Whaling Convention and Protocol are in honour bound to observe these conservational measures. In Australia both State and Federal legislation has been enacted to govern whaling and this legislation embodies those provisions of the Whaling Convention which are relevant so far as Australia is concerned. In consequence a predetermined maximum number of humpback whales is allotted to the Australian industry and operations must cease when the quota is reached.

Table Showing Whale Production 1949-1952

YEAR	POINT CLOATES		CARNARVON		ALBANY	
	Whales ⁺ taken	Oil produced tons	Whales ⁺ taken	Oil produced tons	Whales ⁺ taken	Oil produced tons
1949	190	x				
1950	348	x	40	189		
1951	574	4,166	650	5,175		
1952	536	4,683	600	5,253	51	465

+ All humpbacks

x Not recorded

A LEGAL OPINION

The following advice received from the Crown Law Department raises a very interesting point, and is published for general information.

"Re Fisheries v

The above case came on for hearing in the Perth Police Court on the 24th September, and was withdrawn as examination of the facts and the Act disclosed that there was no case to answer.

The defendant was charged pursuant to Section 46 of the Act, which reads:-

"(1) Any person who is found on any waters in a boat containing any net the use of which in such waters is prohibited by any proclamation made under sections nine or ten if guilty of an offence

The proclamation in this instance was made pursuant to Section 19, and Section 46 therefore is of no effect.