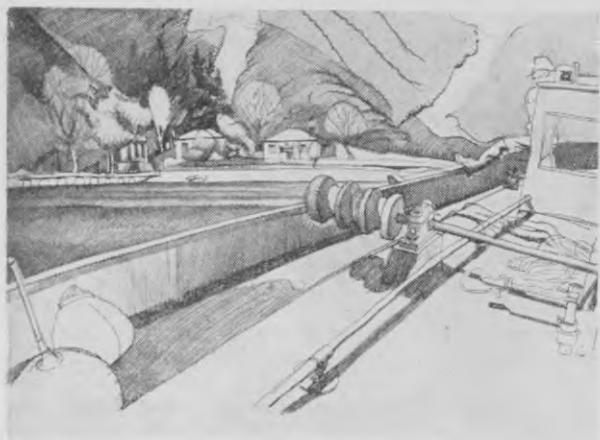




*The "Rex" in Fishburn Bay, Queen Charlotte Sound.*

usual way of rowing, and, after practice, it is more efficient than the more usual method. We smack gently against the side of the "Rex." Stores go aboard, nets, lines, buoys, crew, passengers, luggage, and we chug-chug, with oily smoke and foul fumes, out of the boat harbour, 5 knots full steam ahead.

Three hours and more it takes from Island Bay to the calm of Queen Charlotte Sound. It is eighteen miles across these straits; approximately the same distance as across the English Channel. But no person has ever swum Cook Strait. The coldness of the sea and a tearing rip even on the most peaceful of days will never allow that.

They tell us the programme. Queen Charlotte Sound before noon, fix the nets, eat a meal, and between dusk and the rise of the moon the sardines. They are found by their phosphorescence in the water. A large shoal shines like fire; it can be seen a long distance off. By light of day or shine of moon that fire cannot be picked up; it is only with the black of night that there can be any chance of success. Usually the fishing boats make the trip on the nights of no moon. This time, however, the weather had been impossible; now the first quarter was almost a half. We would have to be lucky. If we were, we would be back at Island Bay early the next morning; if we weren't, it meant another night, perhaps even longer.

The fishermen's luck was out—it was Friday when we left, Tuesday before we returned. Without sardines. But we had no complaint; a four-day cruise of Queen Charlotte Sound is an experience not to be forgotten, especially with a 50 ft. launch and five laughing fellows as ready to be as hungry as yourself. And Queen Charlotte Sound is a hungry place. We didn't have any regular meals: all the time we weren't sleeping we were eating.

In Endeavour Inlet, Cos stopped the engines. Bill dropped a line with three hooks over the side. Fey lit and pumped the primus. And ten minutes later we were eating blue cod for our lunch; blue cod cooked in olive oil, with wedges of bread and huge pots of tea. Olive oil before the war cost these fishermen 9s. 6d. a gallon. These wartime days the price is £4. but national customs are hard to forget.

They told us, with cups of tea and cigarettes, with an English language that took them, and us, into strange corners and unexpected laughs, with gesticulating hands and heads and arms (to tie their hands, keep their bodies still, would be the same almost as striking them dumb) of Italy, of the country and living round Naples twenty years ago.

Marianna started fishing on his father's small boat when he was eight. All night and every night, for twelve hours at a