

Vol. 19 No. 5 (2 May 1938)

Date : 12/09/21 1:42 PM

<https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-386032541>

Copyright Undetermined

Reason for copyright status: Serials have an open range of dates.

Copyright status was determined using the following information:

Material type: Literary Dramatic Musical

Copyright status may not be correct if data in the record is incomplete or inaccurate. For more information regarding Copyright in Library Collections visit <http://copyright.org.au> and <http://www.nla.gov.au/copyright-in-library-collections>

The National Library of Australia supports creativity, innovation and knowledge-exchange but does not endorse any inappropriate or derogatory use. Please respect indigenous cultural and ethical concerns.

INN-GROWING CULTURE

By PETER LINDSAY

● The inns of England are being made the focal point of an experiment designed to encourage a wider appreciation of our language and literature in its highest form. At first glance a laudable ambition.

Headed by John Massfield, the original sponsors of the scheme include the Bishop of Bristol, the Dean of Rochester, Dame Sybil Thorn-dike, Sir Edwin Lutyens, E. V. Lucas, and a host of others, few of whom, I imagine, can be classed as authorities in the psychology of beer drinking.

The experiment, in short, is to give readings and recitations of good verse and prose and the performance of first-rate plays in the inns themselves: "a ready-made and permanent centre of recreation and communal life"—so says the brochure.

I made the journey, on a foggy night, to the "Crown" at Willesden Green, in London, to see for myself. The lounge bar had been cleared of all its traditional impediments and in the hands of smocked "Chelsea" assistants, a small stage was in process of erection.

I sensed the "arty" even before I saw those assistants and I thought to myself—"this is no way to clear the public bar," but I sat down—with a glass of beer—and awaited the arrival of the audience. Slowly they came: the middle-aged ladies in for a free show—and others, obviously friends of the actors, who, one couldn't help thinking, travelled the country round following the show, the publican's wife, perhaps half a dozen habitués of the pub, but not one public bar habitué—the working man—the class it was hoped would be led to the altar, beer in hand, to wed the muse of art.

And it was a good show—the one I saw. Marionettes: excellently manipulated. It was called *The Spectre Bridegroom* and, apart from that feeling of thirst which always assails me whenever I enter the sacred portals of a beer house, I listened and watched entranced.

It was well received. I talked with the organizer. Several people talked with the organizer. We all said how good we were.

In fact, I thought, how very like a score of performances at small "arty" theatres in Hampstead and elsewhere it all was: those airless cellars where Ibsen and Chekov turn everlastingly in their graves.

It ended with one feeling like the last departing guest at a rather pompous cocktail party; not quite certain whether one has enjoyed oneself or not.

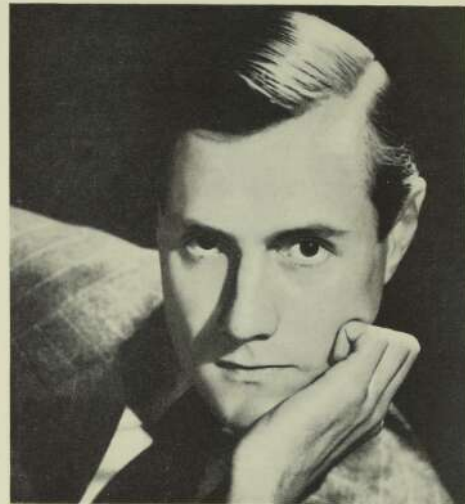
I fear the experiment will fail. Its sponsors have made the usual mistake of starting at the wrong end of the ladder. The fare is too heavy and a man who has lived all his life on sausage and mash must be coaxed to oysters and caviare.

Art is an acquired taste. You can't suddenly pounce on a conscientious beer-drinking navy and expect him to listen reverently to *The Tempest*. That silence which

the uninitiated mistake for an absorbed interest is boredom and shyness. He won't come again.

If, instead, the sponsors chose short, light entertainment with some degree of merit attached, they might, in time, lead up to better things; if there is a better thing than making people laugh.

If I am not mistaken verse-reading by minor poets—appearing in person to expound their own creations—will leave the imbiber of Old and Mild cold and unmoved, or—it will move him to the next pub.



Mr. Patrick White, son of Mrs. Victor White, who composed many of the sketches for the successful London revue, *Nine Sharp*, in which Mr. Cyril Richard starred.



FISHING FROM THE REEF—BY KENNETH MACQUEEN.

A SYDNEY MORNING HERALD PUBLICATION

Price 5/-

THE FIRST EXHIBITION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF ART — FULLY ILLUSTRATED AND REVIEWED IN THE NEXT . . .

ART IN AUSTRALIA

Ready May 16th

6 plates in colour by Sir John Longstaff, W. B. McInnes, Elioth Gruner, Margaret Preston, Nora Heysen and Ivor Hele.

Architectural Section contains work by the two Architect members of the Academy, Professor Wilkinson and P. H. Meldrum.