

The Dutch Society in Illawarra (D.A.S.I.) was founded in June 1952 with the foremost aim to bring some Dutch atmosphere to the industrialised area of Wollongong and surroundings. The steelworks at the best of times is not a beautiful environment, and there was a great need for some diversion and to have a shoulder to cry on (both excellent remedies against homesickness). Also, assistance was needed to make living in Australia easier, insofar as it was connected with language difficulties. For these purposes, the club organized dance evenings in hired premises. The cost of these evenings was very low, and the attendance was very high.

There is no need today to hire premises anymore, as the D.A.S.I. possesses its own building. Its range of activities has not only grown but changed as well. Apart from the dance evenings and the "St. Nikolaas" parties, there is now a billiards club "Pikeur" (started in 1980), a carnival group "De Papegaaien", and most importantly of all, the Senior Citizens Club. It must be stressed here that D.A.S.I. was the first social club to foresee the eventual problems of the aging immigrant and took steps to be able to assist in case of need. The building is continuously in use. In the daytime, coffee is served and it is a bit like a "bruin cafe", in

other words, good old fashioned familiar Dutch atmosphere is being provided.

The club does not favor a specific charity but has from the beginning realised that this begins at home. In 1953, a committee of social workers had already been formed, which helped many an immigrant through difficult times. Lack of a sufficient command of English and the virtual non-existence of social services gave members of this committee often a very difficult task to perform. Fortunately, many things improved over the years, and today the committee's main task is comforting the sick. In 1954 the club filled another great need by establishing a relief fund in case of death (steunfonds bij overlijden). The contribution to this fund was 1 pound. Within three days after the death of one of the members, a sum of 100 pounds was paid out to the dead person's family (approximately 8 -10 weeks' wages). After this, every member immediately paid 1 pound to replenish the fund. In 1956 a "klaverjas-club" was formed, which nowadays engages in competitions. In 1962, most importantly of all, the first Dutch Senior Citizens club was founded. Today the fortnightly meetings on 'pension Wednesday' attract an average of 70 people.

One of the highlights in this society's existence was in 1967 with the purchase of the clubhouse, which was renovated and partly rebuilt in 1971 to what it is today. This building at 647 Princes Highway, Woonona, is well worth a visit and as there are many activities organized for the 275 members, a great opportunity for you to go to one. The society also publishes a monthly magazine, "De Stuw"