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CHRISTMAS ISLAND PREPARES.

On Christmas Island, largest coral atoll in the Pacific, Britain prepares a base for next year's series of nuclear weapon tests. The handy little amphibious D.U.K.Ws do most of the work of unloading the lighter stores brought in by the Royal and Merchant Navies.

Many thousands of tons of equipment are needed to build up the base - including such heavy items as pontoon bridges. The Royal Engineers have already constructed 25 miles of good-class roads, an auxiliary airstrip, and a 7,000-foot runway for bomber aircraft.

Why is it called Christmas Island? Because it was on Christmas Eve that Captain Cook discovered it, in 1777.

It's warm work, all this unloading - for the normal daytime temperature is way up in the eighties, though fortunately Christmas Island is free from tornadoes and violent storms, which could hold up the job quite a lot. One problem is the supply of fresh drinking water - but there's an answer to that, too; a distilling plant to cope with the demands of the increased population. Did someone say "What a waste of a good still?"

A great deal of modern electronic equipment will be needed for the nuclear tests - and bulldozers are busy clearing sites for roadways, laboratories, radar huts, stores, and living quarters.

The padre holds a service in the open air, for the builders of the new base.

Wherever the forces go - the Naafi goes. A coral atoll in the Pacific is a long way from Britain - but if you can't spend Christmas at home, what better place to spend it, than Christmas Island?