

BIG COUNTRY TRIP BY BOARD MEMBERS

Many old friends met

Early this month a party of Board Members, comprising the Chairman, Mr. C. J. Buttsworth, Dr. Grahame Drew, and Mr. A. W. G. Lipscomb, accompanied by District Welfare Officer, Mr. J. K. Burless, spent a week visiting Aboriginal Settlements in the North Western part of the State.

The tour included visits to Moree, Boggabilla, Collarenebri, and Mungindi.

As many as possible of the aboriginal folk living in those centres were seen.

The members were extremely interested to meet so many aboriginal friends during this short tour, and to study on the spot, the living conditions of the people.

The Board recognises that a personal knowledge of the people and the establishment of friendly relations are essential to a complete understanding of their problems. This, too, is regarded as the beginning of many more visits to other centres and it is hoped that in the course of these visits that members of the Aborigines Welfare Board, will make contact with the majority of the dark people in this State.

At Moree, the members noted that the contract for the building of new homes on the Station, was still incomplete, and despite the fact that a large number of cottages are almost ready for occupation, the people are still obliged to live in their humpies, tents and shanties. A determined effort will now be made to try and induce the contractor to complete the work.

The Board hopes that when the new homes are handed over, and are occupied, the people will show that they can care for them, and improve the surroundings by establishing gardens and planting trees and shrubs. Every family, too, should loyally and truthfully abide by its promise, in the tenancy agreement, to pay rent regularly.



By so doing, they will show that they are capable of recognising their duty as citizens, to do something themselves to improve their living conditions.

Mrs. Morgan, wife of the Station Manager, has a delightful troop of twelve little Brownies.

These lovely little girls, all looking very smart in their uniforms, provided a very pleasant half-hour of entertainment for the visitors in the Hall.

The new School is a fine acquisition, with its bright airy classrooms and Home Science Section. As soon as the contractor fences off the playground area, it is understood that the teacher and children intend embarking on a beautification scheme.

Visits were also paid to the Top Camp, where other aboriginal people of Moree have their temporary homes.

Realising the need for a better understanding between the local authorities and the aborigines, the members paid a courtesy call on the Mayor and councillors and it is hoped that a better understanding between the Board and the Council, will result from the mutual exchange of ideas.

After Moree, the Members paid a full day visit to Boggabilla Station. Here they met the Manager, Mr. Forster, and his capable wife, who introduced the visitors to many of the people in their homes. It was a joy to meet some of the old hands of the Station, notably Charlie Dennison, who is now in his 90's and Harry Lang, who still asks for a gill net to catch fish in the river.



Charlie was a very active stockman in his day, but now his sight is fading and he is not so active.

His beloved saddles still rest on the floor of his bedroom.

Harry, on the other hand, is still "full of beans" and can still crack a joke.

As soon as the money can be provided, steps will be taken to have a new hall and a new ration store built, as well as reconditioning all the homes.

From Boggabilla the next visit was to Mungindi.

Here the Board members met about a dozen families, all of whom are living independently, but in unsatisfactory dwellings. These folk gave a warm welcome to their visitors and almost without exception gave assurances that they would purchase suitable blocks of land within the township, if the Board gave some assistance in the way of loans, to enable them to build better homes.

The next, and final visit, was to Collarenebri, where most of the aboriginal people are living in a group of shanties on the stock route, just outside the precincts of the town. A number of these folk also expressed the desire to have better homes, and stated that if the Board would assist them with finance to build homes, they, too, would purchase blocks of land and erect better houses than those in which they are now residing.

For some years past the aboriginal children at Collarenebri attended the Collarenebri Public School but had to occupy a separate detached building and play in their own playground.

That unhappy state of affairs was brought about by the opposition of a few people in the township.

However the old prejudice has broken down, and it was most gratifying to note that all the children are educated side by side with the white children, and they now play together as a happy family.

