

# MICHAEL SAWTELL GOES INLAND

## Along The Birdsville Track

I have just returned from a 2,000 mile tour of the Inland. I talked to the children in the schools at Maree, Birdsville and Boulia, and everywhere I went I found they were delighted with the copies of *Dawn* I gave them.

About 15 of the 20 children at the Maree school are Ghan Abo, the most charming children one could ever meet, and most intelligent. I also met again, my old friend Beja, the oldest Afghan in Australia, and reputed to be nearly a 100 years old. Beja played a leading part in that Birdsville track picture, "Back of Beyond".

Of the 15 children in the Birdsville school only 4 are white. I did not see all the children, as some of the full bloods were away on the coast, where they have a summer camp, the same as our camp at La Perouse. At Boulia there are only about four children of aboriginal blood. At Dajarra about half the population of the town and school are persons of aborigine blood.

I must pay a tribute to the bush police, who are the aborigines' protectors in Queensland. In that State, the police play a greater part in aboriginal welfare, than they do in New South Wales.

The aged non-exempted full bloods in Queensland, are treated splendidly. For example, if an aged full blood works all his or her life for a squatter, they are allowed by the squatters to end the rest of their days in peace and plenty on the stations among their own people.

I was told by the police, that the squatters without exception, voluntarily feed, house and in some instances clothe their aged aboriginal employees.

Of course they do have a different system in Queensland, a system which I consider works very well for those station aborigines.

While these station aborigines are working, the police hold some of their wages, and when they come to retire, they have as much as £500 or £600 to their credit and this is administered for them by the police.

I saw two old women, Lizzie and Kitty, whom I knew when I was a boy 56 years ago, living in comfort at Glengyle station out from Bedourie. The Bedourie policeman told me, old Lizzie must have £300 to her credit, although, she has no idea what that means.

I have great respect always for the bush police, all over Australia, men who meet and overcome every kind of hardship in their determined efforts to protect and help their fellow men.



The best man and the bridesmaid watch with interest as Les Darcy puts the ring on his bride's finger during their recent marriage at Wallaga Lake. The bride was Harriet Thomas.

## KANGAROO WHIPS MADE IN ENGLAND.

Although many of the whips used in the Australian outback are made from kangaroo leather, the whips themselves are manufactured in England by William Osborne, of Birmingham.

Reason for this 24,000-mile round trip from Australia to England and back again is that Osborne is one of the very few whip plaiters left in the world.

Although it has been a dying trade for many years now, Osborne took it up because it was in his blood. For generations back, his family have all been whip and thong makers.

Broadcasting recently over the BBC, Osborne said that Australians naturally wanted their stockwhips made of Australian leather.

Kangaroo hide, because of its strength and suppleness, is the best leather to use in the whips, he added.

The skins, which weigh about two pounds, are tanned in Australia and are ready for immediate use by the time they reach England.

Osborne uses a whole skin to make a 24 ft. thong, but this is not a standard length and he gets requests for whips of anything between eight and 24 ft. long.

In addition to making plaited stockwhips for the Australian market, Osborne also makes other types of whips as well as dog-leads, which he exports all over the world.