

The Briggs's leave Taree

FAIRWELL BY RESIDENTS

By A. NORTON, *Welfare Officer.*

The grand farewell recently organized by the aboriginal people of Taree Aboriginal Station for Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, was not only proof of the affection they had for the Briggs's—who had been with them for over 10 years—but also signified a definite march of the times and a great step towards their goal of assimilation.

When I asked Mr. Briggs what they were having he said, "I don't know, I think a few of them want to say 'goodbye'." To my surprise it was a very impressive function that must have taken weeks of preparation!



Mr. and Mrs. Briggs.

Guests were both white and dark and mixed freely. They included the Matron of the Manning District Hospital, and several nursing sisters, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Buttsworth and many others from the white community of Taree, plus a number of aborigines from Gloucester, Newcastle, Forster and Kempsey. Needless to add, the hall was packed to capacity.

The visitors were met at the door by Mr. Bert Marr and John Wallis who ushered them to their seats.

The hall was tastefully decorated by Mrs. Marjorie Marr, and was echoing soft music played by Mrs. Kate Davis, who played the piano and organ alternately and gave the evening a very delightful introduction.

Charlie Edwards—who was compere—appeared on the stage looking just the part, and welcomed all the guests.

The Station Choir sang "Shepherd of Love", and Mrs. Briggs's favourite, "Ship A'Hoy"; they were accompanied on the piano by Mrs. Bert Marr.

Then Nelly Clarke and Maria Dumas appeared, feeling very shy at first, but soon plucked up courage and sang a duet.

Les Marr played the gum leaves beautifully and also sang. He was followed by that great singer from Taree—Allan Saunders—who could "go places" if he took it seriously. Allan with his guitar enthralled the audience with his fascinating personality and gifted voice and received a tremendous ovation.

Georgie Simon and Ernie Samuels, who are noted comedians, appeared looking like Marilyn Munroe and Diana Dors. Ernie entered pushing a pram and kept everyone in fits of laughter!

Amongst several other good items Max Ridgeway and Warner Saunders sang a few of the latest hits and played the guitar.

The final act was the Aborigine Corroboree, which depicted old tribal customs and dances.

Charlie Edwards and Ernie Samuels were the guiding spirits and enacted, "The Man who Broke the Law", "A Native from the Early Days," "Natives Travelling from Island to Island," "The Devil Sets up Camp" and Charlie gave an exhibition of a "Wild Corroboree".

Mr. Briggs then showed some very interesting colour slides of familiar people and places.

This was followed by a touching speech made by Mr. Bert Marr and a presentation of a posey and a lovely set of silver spoons to Mrs. Briggs and fountain pen set to Mr. Briggs.

In thanking the people, Mr. Briggs pointed out that he was most impressed by the two young lasses—Nelly Clarke and Maria Dumas—who at first appeared on the stage feeling very shy and wanted to run away amidst much laughter by some of the children, but they soon plucked up courage and stood steadfast at what they had come out to do, and finished up singing a very lovely song. This he said should be everyone's aim in life. To make for a goal and stick to it until you have achieved it without losing heart and turning back.

The visitors were then given a very sumptuous supper and the evening concluded with all singing, "God Save the Queen".

It was a very befitting evening indeed for a couple who have given nearly 30 years of their life to help other people, and Mr. Briggs is still "batting" on a wider field as Aborigines Welfare Officer for Sydney and the South Coast, while Mrs. Briggs—though retired—will undoubtedly have the interests of the dark people at heart and do her bit behind the scenes. She will be greatly missed by not only the people of Taree but also Aborigines of Forster who used to look forward to her frequent visits armed with her lovely home made cakes and worm tablets.