

# SANTA CLAUS

## Came by Boat to Cabbage Tree

By  
A Northern Star Staff Reporter

IN the last week or so I have heard plans for Santa Claus to come by car, sled, buggy and, in the capitals, even by helicopter. But one day just before Xmas, he came up the Richmond River in a motor launch and landed at the little wharf near the 58-year old school on Cabbage Tree Island.

He arrived to distribute Christmas presents to the 82 children from a tree installed in the brightly decorated hall in the centre of the 133-acre island.

Nearly all of the island's 150 residents crowded the hall for the occasion. The resounding success was largely due to the leadership of Mr. Bob Bolt, who, with his wife and their daughter Nancy, organised the day with the help of other residents.

The thing that distinguishes a Cabbage Tree Island Christmas party from most others is the fact that it is an almost 100 per cent. island effort.

About the only assistance received was a donation of a few dozen cordials and a slight reduction in the price of ice cream.

The wide-eyed youngsters were deluged with gifts, all of which were purchased from the funds of the island's progress association.

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### "TWO ACTIVE"

The manager, Mr. Bern. Butcher, told me that here again Mr. Bolt took the lead and did an amazing amount of work.

Santa was met at the wharf by a group of the children and escorted past the school, where the headmaster, Mr. R. McCrohon, and teacher, Mr. Leo Tobin, operate; past the home occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Butcher and their two small sons; and then past the small hospital to the hall in the centre of the island.

He was given a very mixed reception for, although most of the children were delighted to see him after waiting patiently all the morning, some of the smaller ones made no secret of the fact that they were frightened.

But the broad smiles on the faces of the adults, the knowing looks of the teenagers and the wonderment and excitement of the children must have been a full reward for Mr. Bolt and his team.

Absent was Mr. Frank Marlowe, who is seriously ill in St. Vincent's Hospital in Lismore. Mr. Butcher said he often held Mr. Marlowe up as an example to the younger people on the island of the type of person they could become.

He said the progress association had raised £66 in he last year. Main sources of income was from sales

of ice cream and drink on the island during the cane cutting season, when a large number of visitors stayed there.

The gifts, although mainly for the children, were not limited to them only.

Youngest recipient was 10½-month-old Gregory Ferguson. By tradition, a small gift is given each year to the island's oldest inhabitants, Mr. Jack Cook and his wife.

Mr. Cook, who is affectionately known as "Poppa", is believed to be 100 years old. A business man in Wardell, who is over 70, said he remembered Mr. Cook as a grown man when he himself was only a boy.

Mrs. Cook, who is 95, was unable to attend the function because of illness.

Mr. Cook proudly nursed baby Gregory, who is his great-great-grandson, while photographs were taken.

### PRESENTATIONS

The affection of the children for their teachers was demonstrated when, while Santa was handing gifts to Messrs. McCrohon and Tobin, their cheers almost "raised the roof of the hall".

Mr. Tobin, who will shortly leave the island, told the children: "If I was not going home I would like to stay here and see the boys win the football at Casino again next year."

A team of schoolboy footballers from the island won the football age championships at Casino earlier this year. Mr. McCrohon presented each member of the team with a pennant to recognise their achievements.

The school children presented Mr. Tobin with a gift.

Mr. McCrohon awarded Bill Caldwell a special prize for his sporting achievements and Albert Moran won a prize for good citizenship.

Prizes for work in school during the year went to Carol Roberts, Marilyn Daley and Sandra Ferguson.

While some of the toddlers who had received small carts from Santa put them to effective use gathering up the wrapping paper which littered the floor, Santa reboarded the launch and was last seen heading in the direction of a cane farm owned by Mr. Ross Garrett.