

MY ANCESTORS, THE ABORIGINES

by

Malcolm Davis

(under 14 years section)



Malcolm Davis (11), of Forster, winner of the under-14 years section of the Essay Competition

All but a few of the Aborigines in Australia today are civilised, healthy people. The majority of us have good homes and we live in the various communities of the State. We, the children of this generation attend the best schools and are given the highest education possible. So it is a far cry from the last century when our people lived very primitive lives.

The living conditions of the Aborigines in those days was very remote, for they preferred to live in the open, rather than build themselves a hut. Occasionally they would erect a rough shelter and these were known as mia-mias but for the most part they were on the move and it was easier for them to live in this manner.

Clothing for these people meant nothing and it wasn't until the white man came to this country that many of them took to wearing a cloth which they called "Naga". In all, their possessions were few and this made it easier for them to move from one camp to another, it also enabled them to travel more quickly.

Food was no problem either, for the bush contained many wild animals and these consisted of their main diet. Also there were crocodile and turtle eggs, wild fruits, fish and honey, so they were never in want.

Their weapons and implements were made of wood or stone. Perhaps the most cleverly, yet simply made ornament by the Aborigines is the boomerang, which to them is a very sacred object. If they live on the coast they also make bark or dugout canoes which they use for the purpose of fishing.

Myths and legends still exist among the tribes and they have songs and dance rites to commemorate these beings. However not all of these rites are religious as many are light hearted affairs carried out for the sheer joy of it. For the most interesting and original of these dances is the "corroboree", a dance festival for the menfolk of the tribes. It is prepared with great care and enthusiasm. Coloured clay and feathers are used to decorate their bodies in patterns suited to whatever dance they are to perform, sometimes a head-dress is worn. Music for these occasions is provided by a didgeridoo a large wooden flute made from the hollowed out limb of a tree also they use pieces of wood which are tapped together to provide rhythm.

Progress and prosperity bring many changes and so it is with the help of the Aborigines Welfare Board and many outside organisations we find that Aborigines are no longer uncivilised primitive outcasts.

They are people with character who have strived hard toward a better future. We are proud of our people who have achieved so much and we hope in the coming year the Aborigines will become more absorbed into the main stream of Australian life.

N.A.D.O.C. Quiz Results

The winners of the N.A.D.O.C. Aboriginal Quiz run in conjunction with National Aborigines' Day were Arthur Ferguson (17), of Cabbage Tree Aboriginal Station (Senior Section), and in the Junior Section Wallis Randall (15), of Maclean, N.S.W.

The judge was Mr. Alan Duncan, Tutor of Aboriginal Adult Education.

Entries were received from young Aboriginal people in all parts of N.S.W., and the standard was particularly high.

Wallis Randall gained 96 per cent. in the Junior section, while other prize winners were all above 78 per cent.

This year the prizes were £4, £3 and £2 for first, second and third respectively. N.A.D.O.C. hopes that next year it will be possible to provide a trip to Sydney for prize winners from the country.

Wallis Randall in addition won a book, "Spotlight on Australia", presented by the Australian Publicity Council.

The full list of prize winners is as follows:

Senior Section: First, Arthur Ferguson; second, Miss Theresa French (18), of Mallanganee; third, Jerry Widders (16), of Armidale.

The prize winners of the Senior Section are now students at the Tranby Co-operative College run by the Co-operatives for Aborigines Ltd.

Junior Section: First, Wallis Randall; second, Leslie Garrett (13), of Bowraville; third, Fred Walker (13), of Bowraville.

Special mention: Patricia Johnson (12), of Murrin Bridge Aboriginal Station, Lake Cargelligo.

The judge, Mr. Duncan, said that the most noticeable feature of the entries was the high standard attained by the Aboriginal children, and the obvious trouble they had taken to ascertain the correct answers.