

# SKETCHES OF OUTSTANDING ABORIGINES

An Address given by REV. GORDON ROWE

at the Maughan Methodist Church P.S.A. on Sunday, 30th January, 1955, and broadcast over Station 5KA.

Tomorrow we celebrate Australia Day, the anniversary of the arrival of the first settlers in this country 167 years ago.

Instead of drawing your attention to our own very remarkable achievements during those years, I invite you to turn aside with me, and take a look at the increasing success with which the original inhabitants of this land are being assimilated into our community.

It has been estimated that they have carried on their primitive stone-age way of life here for 12,000 years. Opinions still differ as to whether ours is better than theirs, but the fact is, that wherever the aborigines get the chance, they forsake theirs for ours.

Naturally, their success is not being achieved without much help. Although there are now only 75,000 left scattered all over Australia, of whom 30,000 are part white, more than 400 full time missionaries are at work among them, on mission stations, government stations, and children's homes.

In addition, all the Australia governments, with the exception of Victoria, have an Aborigines' Department, staffed by competent and sympathetic men and women, who are provided with many thousands of pounds annually to spend on the preservation, welfare, and training of the aborigines.

Interest in them is greater than ever. This is not all due to pity or shame. Much of it is due to the growing realisation that these people are rendering a great service to Australia in many fields—stockmen, shearers, cane cutters, drivers, fishermen, and in water-works, highways and railways, and have shown themselves capable of being trained for other fields as well.

The first team of Australian cricketers to visit England were aborigines. That was as far back as 1868—ten years before the first white team went. They played 47 matches, won 14, lost 14 and drew 19. The outstanding player was Johnny Mullagh, scoring 1,679 runs, and taking 245 wickets.

Let us look for a few moments at some present day aborigines who are doing wonderfully well in their new field of enterprise.

Miss Muriel Stanley of Queensland was the first aboriginal girl to become a qualified nurse. She was born and brought up at the Church of England Mission at Yarrabah, twelve miles from Cairns.

As a girl her ambition was to become a nurse and work among her own people. On passing the required educational standard in 1941, she was received for training at the Women's Hospital in Sydney.

At the end of 1944 she passed the Final Examination of the New South Wales Nurses' Registration Board, and was presented with her certificate in January, 1945.

Later she returned to the Yarrabah Mission where there are 600 people, and has since been Matron of St. Luke's Hospital there. In the working of the Hospital she is assisted in the nursing and domestic work by aboriginal girls, who have become quite competent in those departments.

Matron Stanley is a member of the Church Army, and in 1953 while attending a Church Army Conference in Newcastle, was the Guest of Honour at an afternoon tea party given by the widow of Canon Campbell.

At that gathering she contended, as she has frequently, that education is the main need of her people, and that without it there can be no advancement for them.

Following her example several native girls in other parts of Australia have taken up nursing and obtained their certificate.

Albert Namatjira of Central Australia received the inspiration to paint in 1934, when at the Hermannsburg Mission he saw an exhibition of water colour paintings done in the district by Rex Battarbee and John Gardiner.



Albert Namatjira with Lillian Kunoth, one of the stars of "Jedda".