

SKY PILOT NEWS

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MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 29, Castle Hill, N.S.W. 2154. Telephone 629-1555.

Director: K. Langford-Smith, Th.C., F.R.G.S.

Secretary: Mrs. Norma K. Warwick, Th.C.

Residential Address: Acres Road, Kellyville.

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Mr. and Mrs. Ken Nash with (left to right) Mr. and Mrs. Robert Nash, Peter, David, Mary, Timothy and Philip.

MARELLA MISSION FARM: A RESUME

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY. In 1928 Keith Langford-Smith went to Arnhem Land, in the Northern Territory, as a missionary of the Church Missionary Society. In 1930 he returned south, determined to obtain an aeroplane in order to break down the isolation. In spite of the great depression, and handicapped as he was by lameness, he raised the money for an old, second-hand aeroplane, learned to fly and returned to Arnhem Land with the Gipsy Moth which he named "Sky Pilot".

Langford-Smith made over 200 landings in Arnhem Land and completed over 20,000 miles of aerial exploration in country where no aeroplane had previously operated. For this work he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Later he obtained his ground engineer's licences, repaired and patched up the old aeroplane time and time again. Proper spares were seldom available; he improvised with parts of a T-model Ford, lengths of waterpipe, green-hide and fencing wire, and patches torn from a shirt

and "doped" on to the wing with flour and water. He established a "pigeon post" (as there was no radio in those days in Arnhem Land) and so the isolation of Arnhem Land was conquered.

MARELLA MISSION FARM. Some years later Langford-Smith returned to Sydney to establish a Home for Aboriginal children but at that time there were few, if any, Aborigines in the city and he could get no help for his venture. Everyone he spoke to said the proper place for such a Home was in Arnhem Land, not Sydney. As he felt strongly that the day would come when such a home would be needed, he borrowed the money from his family and in 1939 bought a 30 acre property at Kellyville, N.S.W. nine miles from Parramatta, towards Windsor, which he named "Marella".

War broke out and many Aborigines were evacuated from Arnhem Land and sent to Sydney. Some of these girls, who were over fifteen, came to work at Marella alongside the Land Army girls who staffed the farm after the men folk joined the forces. One by one they were given further training and many of them found positions in the community. But by now many Aborigines were beginning to leave country towns in N.S.W. and migrate to the city, and the real need was to take smaller children who could not work the farm.

SKY PILOT'S LOG. In 1948 Langford-Smith commenced a daily radio session which he called the "Sky Pilot's Log". This consisted of real life stories, mostly from Arnhem Land, which were dramatised with the help of the late Mr. Sid Everett and Messrs. Jack Keniry, Ted Husband and many other voluntary artists from 2CH and other radio stations. Mr. Everett, as "George", became known and loved by thousands of listeners throughout the State. Such was the appeal of the humour and pathos of the stories that day by day they were listened to in homes, factories, workshops, milk bars, hotels, etc. by Christians and non-Christians alike. As a result countless people were helped, encouraged and converted — as well as entertained. There are ministers, missionaries and Christian workers active today because of the Sky Pilot's Log. Dark folk also learned, by the session, that there was someone who loved and understood them; they laughed and cried over the stories and when in trouble came to the Sky Pilot for help.

SKY PILOT FELLOWSHIP LTD. In 1954 the Sky Pilot Fellowship Ltd. was registered as

a non-profit making company and shortly afterwards was registered under the Charitable Collections Act. About this time the first of the small Aboriginal children came to Marella and the number grew steadily over the years until about 28 boys and girls were accommodated in the Home. At first temporary accommodation and double-decker beds were the best we could provide for the children but it was warm and dry and infinitely better than what some of them had been used to on the fringe of civilisation.

ONSLow HOUSE. In 1961, through the generosity of friends, we were able to purchase a Housing Commission hut and have it moved, in two sections, to Marella. This building was 100 feet long and 20 feet wide. It was named Onslow House in memory of the late Mr. George Onslow, one of our earliest and most faithful supporters. This provided accommodation for our children for some years, but as the children grew older, it became necessary to provide separate accommodation for the boys.

A new Boys' Wing was built in 1968 at a cost of over \$20,000 and this catered for 14 boys and included bathrooms, toilets, playroom and staff bed and sitting rooms (with separate shower and toilet).

SALES OF WORK. Each year we hold an Autumn and a Spring Rally and Sale of Work on the property on the first Saturday in May and the last Saturday in October, respectively. In 1966 a large pavilion was erected covering over 5,000 square feet. This was used for Refreshments and also for the Public Meeting at the Rallies. It included a small platform and public address system for the meeting, at which the Aboriginal children usually sing several numbers.

FARM MANAGER'S COTTAGE. The Mission Council decided in 1970 to build a Farm Manager's cottage on the property. Before this was commenced, Mr. R. P. Davis, of Castle Hill, very kindly donated his modern cottage to the Mission provided we could have it moved. This was done and this fine cottage is now being used by the Farm Manager and his family.

MRS. K. LANGFORD-SMITH. Mrs. K. Langford-Smith has acted as Matron of the Home since its commencement. She has been working with her husband amongst the Aborigines since 1936. As well as supervising the children, attending to visitors and attending meetings she has also done the cooking for the "family" of about 35 children and staff. The time is coming when

she will have to retire from this arduous work. The difficulty of replacing her is very real. The Mission Council is investigating the possibility of the Mission eventually being rebuilt under the "cottage system" in which only about six or seven children would be housed in each cottage under the care of house parents. The children would thus be living as nearly as possible a normal family life for each cottage would be more or less self-contained. This would enable Mrs. Langford-Smith to retire.

Mr. Langford-Smith, as the Founder and Permanent Director would continue as Chairman and his experience will be available to guide the policy of the Mission.

MRS. NORMA WARWICK. Mrs. Norma Warwick has been the Secretary and Treasurer of this Mission since 1950 and has had a very real part in establishing the work and keeping everything up-to-date. Without her the work could not have advanced as it has to its present stage. Just as God raised up Mr. Sid Everett to help with the radio session so God has raised up Mrs. Warwick for Marella Mission Farm.

STAFF. The children, especially the smaller ones, need constant care and supervision. Some of them have come from very unfortunate backgrounds and they are not used to our way of life. Over the years we have been very fortunate in having many devoted women on our staff who have given these children wonderful love and care. This is exacting work and it means long hours and being on call even during the night. Without suitable staff this work would be impossible.

Following the illness of Mr. Bruce Langford-Smith we were fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Ken Nash as Farm Manager. He has taken up residence on the farm together with his wife and their three youngest children; we look forward to Christian fellowship with this fine family. Mr. Nash will be responsible for the farm work, garden and general maintenance of the property.

THE CHILDREN. Since this work commenced about 200 Aboriginal children have passed through our hands. Some have stayed here only a few weeks or months, others from ten to eighteen years; but each one has been cared for at a time of need when parents were unable to cope with circumstances and each one has not only been provided for materially but has had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel Message of Salvation through faith in a risen Christ.

At the present time we have accommodation for 28 children — 14 boys and 14 girls. The Home is registered by the Child Welfare Department whose inspectors visit us regularly. The ages of the children range from five years to school leaving age or older; we do not now accept the care of children under five.

THE MISSION COUNCIL. This work began through the inspiration and foresight of Mr. Langford-Smith and for many years was managed by him entirely, ably assisted by Mrs. Langford-Smith and Mrs. Norma Warwick. It is now under the direction of a Council consisting of ten men and women (who belong to Churches of different denominations) led by Mr. Langford-Smith as Chairman. The Council is elected annually by a General Committee consisting of about forty men and women.

VOLUNTARY WORKERS. We have very active Women's Auxiliaries in Parramatta and the Blue Mountains. The Parramatta Branch organises the Street Stalls in Parramatta and the Spring and Autumn Rallies and Sales of Work at the Mission Farm. The Blue Mountains Branch has raised the money to build the Administrative Block and to provide all the office equipment.

There are over 100 Voluntary Workers who help at our Sales of Work. We also receive much help from other voluntary workers, men and women, who have assisted with such various jobs as fencing, building, sewing and ironing.

Rotary, Lions, Apex, Rotoract and other Service Clubs have done much to help us with specific undertakings and we will always be grateful to them for their willing co-operation.

A SPIRITUAL WORK. This has always been a spiritual work and we have sought to place God in His rightful place as the centre of all our activities. Each day we have prayers for the staff in the morning and for the children in the evening. There is also a monthly Prayer Meeting, open to friends and visitors, where prayer requests from our many supporters are brought before the Throne of Grace. Over 400 such requests have been received up to the present. We thank God for many wonderful answers; for healing received and problems solved for a wide circle of friends.

AUTUMN 1972 RALLY AND SALE OF WORK. This Sale was held on 6th May and we have much cause to thank God for the result. We have come to expect a fine day for our

functions and over the years we have found that God has honoured our prayers and given us a fine day time after time. This time we had a perfect day and the weather held out until we had finished clearing up after the sale, but from then on it was very unsettled.

Following is a list of the Stall takings:

Boat Rides	15.57	Books	43.08
Children's	114.28	Fancy Work etc.	61.30
Friends of Marella	242.85	Jams & Pickles	63.85
Jewellery	81.32	Jumble	600.00
Parkfield	390.03	Paulian	95.81
Pies	93.35	Plain Work	87.00
Plants	111.00	Pony Rides	8.40
Produce	325.24	Refreshments	151.81
Second Hand Toys	62.50	Soft Drinks, Ice Cr	119.71
Stamps	76.60	Sweets	62.49
Vandykes	173.73	White Elephant	110.28
Youth Fellowship	349.98	Blue Mts. Auxil.	150.00
Donations	630.93	Donations by Mail	222.49

This gives a total of \$4,443.60 less expenses \$490.48 which leaves a net profit of \$3953.12. This is \$431.09 more than the Autumn 1971 Sale, which was a record, and so this is an all time record for an Autumn Sale. Our General Fund was sadly depleted and this money will be a great help to us at this time.

At the Public Meeting the Bible Reading was taken by Mr. Bruce Langford-Smith and the new Farm Manager, Mr. Ken Nash, opened with prayer. The children, prepared by Mrs. Round and assisted by Timothy and Mary Nash, sang several numbers and were much appreciated. Once again Mr. Ken Hodkin provided the music.

We had been concerned about our financial position and we feel that this wonderful result from the Sale was God's loving provision for our immediate needs. It cost us considerably more than we had expected to move the Farm Manager's cottage and have a septic tank installed together with other plumbing and electrical work; we also had to have the cottage painted inside and out.

KITCHEN. The renovations to the Mission kitchen were completed some little time ago and now the floor coverings have been laid and the kitchen is very comfortable and attractive. It will make a great difference to those who spend most of their working hours in this room. Especially in winter time the room will be a lot warmer

and more comfortable. We are most grateful to Granville Rotary and Associated Clubs who provided a great deal of the finance for this work.

STREET STALLS. This year the Parramatta City Council has allowed us to have twelve Street Stalls in all. As each Stall brings in on an average from \$80.00 to \$100.00 this will be a wonderful help with our finances. We are especially grateful to the members of the Parramatta Women's Auxiliary and other friends who so willingly give of their time and strength to man these Stalls. Mrs. Onslow takes the responsibility of preparing and pricing all the goods for these Stalls.

STAFF. On the approach of winter we suffered several casualties amongst the staff due to colds, bronchitis, Asian 'flu and pleurisy. This made it very awkward for a few weeks, but in a wonderful way God provided temporary help which enabled us to carry on, though a great deal of extra strain was caused to the remaining members of the staff. What added to our difficulty was the fact that we usually give each member of the staff, who has worked for the preceding six months with the children, a week's holiday. This makes up for some public holidays that may have been worked during this time. Three members of the staff had this time owing to them in May-June, and we had to arrange for this. At the end of the year, after Christmas, all the staff go away for three weeks' holiday while the children are also away.

WOMEN'S AUXILIARY. We would be very glad to welcome new members of our Women's Auxiliary in Parramatta. This Branch meets at noon every second Wednesday of the month in a hall near the Railway Station. After a basket lunch the coming activities are discussed and planned. It is a time of happy Christian fellowship which is concluded about 1.30 p.m. A standing invitation exists to any woman who would like to join who can spare a couple of hours once a month. It is very rewarding work and it is an opportunity to do God's work amongst the Aboriginal children of our own land. A phone call to Mrs. Warwick, the Secretary of the Mission, at 629-1555 will enable further particulars to be obtained.

In conclusion we would like to ask for your continued prayers for this work. It is above all a spiritual work and we need your prayers as we continue day by day to care for these children and present the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.