

Review of The Tale of a Whale:

Significant Aboriginal Landscapes of the Northern Beaches

Author; Emma Lee with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council

"The Tale of a Whale is a book that will not only change the way you think about places like North Head, it will also change the way you look at every place around you." — Aden Ridgeway, *NSW Senator*

The author is Emma Lee, a Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) archaeologist, in association with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. Emma writes in a personal style as if she is engaged in conversation with the reader. The Tale of a Whale tells the story of the Aboriginal people - the saltwater people - who lived on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, and the links between these people, their culture and their place. We learn about local Aboriginal oral histories and their landscape - the "heritage places", their associations and significance.

The focus of the book is on North Head. With the custodians of this area, and as part of a field survey team, Emma walked North head over six days in August and September 2000 and recorded its Aboriginal stories. She writes about the places of ceremony and burial, the plant and animal resources that were used and where food was prepared and eaten.

Also documented are the encounters between the first fleet and the local saltwater people. The book's title refers to events which led to the spearing of Governor Arthur Phillip during a whale feast at North head on September 7th 1790. Details of this important event in Australia's history are given in one chapter of the book.

The Northern Beaches landscape and the lifestyle of its saltwater people are described. Living on the Dee Why Headland, I was particularly interested to read about the coastal Dreaming Tracks and the food and cultural resources that were used as the people travelled along the peninsula. These included shellfish, paperbark, flax lillies and the Black Swan in Dee Why Lagoon.

Seventy-three pages in length, The Tale of the Whale is a compact book, beautifully illustrated with colour photographs, maps and early colonial illustrations. Also included are the Reconciliation Statements of Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Councils and a comprehensive bibliography.

Funding for this Aboriginal Heritage project was provided by Warringah Council, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW Heritage Office, NSW Ministry for Arts, Macquarie University, and Manly and Pittwater Councils. Along with representatives from these funding bodies members of the Guringai Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the Aboriginal Support Group-Manly Warringah Pittwater, consulted with the project's steering committee.

Warringah Council launched the book at Manly Dam Reserve on Monday December 9th 2002. All schools on the peninsula were invited to send representatives to the launch and were given copies of the book signed by Emma Lee for their libraries. Schools were also given literature about Aboriginal sites and the importance of managing them well.

The Tale of a Whale is an informative and enjoyable read, easily understood by young and old-a valuable resource for every home. Copies can be purchased for \$15 from Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Councils and Libraries and from local bookshops.

Pat Frater – Aboriginal Support Group- Manly Warringah Pittwater

The Tale of a Whale has been nominated for two awards – Energy Australia National Trust Heritage Award (to be announced April 16th), and the NSW Premier's Literary Award (to be announced May 19th)



WELCOME

— Jill Perkins

The afternoon I left Sydney to return to Canberra I was very aware I was leaving the coast. As I drove up Powder Works Road and turned into Mona Vale Road I looked back momentarily and from the past I heard again the shout of our children as, on a homeward journey, they would shriek, "I can see the sea. I can see Elanora!" That was a time- we lived our life in Guringai country, steeped in its beauty.

The journey to Canberra seems to get shorter and shorter on a good highway and it was with surprise and delight we saw the new sign that welcomed us to Ngunnawal Country as we approached the Capital.

On May 28th last year that significant sign was erected and unveiled. Earlier in the month the Ngunnawal Council of Elders met for the first time in Canberra at the initiative of the government. The historic meeting involved 40 Elders from Cowra, Tumut, Yass, Goulburn, Sydney and Toowoomba and it was at that gathering they decided to erect a welcome sign on the Federal Highway at the NSW/ACT border. The Chief Minister of the ACT Government, Mr Jon Stanhope, had consulted extensively with Elders on the initiative, including the appropriate spelling as there has been some dispute about this.

Mr Stanhope stated that the ACT Government is keen to develop a protocol to enable the dual naming of significant sites such as Mount Ainslie, Black Mountain, etc., further recognising that the Capital Territory stands on traditional land. At the unveiling Mr Stanhope said, "The sign is not just a road sign. It is another kind of sign- a sign to the Ngunnawal people that we recognise that the ACT is built on their traditional lands. It is a symbol of our continuing efforts towards reconciliation. It is a sign that we respect the continuing culture of the Ngunnawal people and the unique contribution they make to the life of this region".

GURINGAI FESTIVAL

Theme: Honouring the Ancestors

The third annual **Guringai Festival** will be held from Monday May 26th on the eve of Reconciliation Week (May 27th to June 3rd) to the close of NAIDOC Week (July 6th to 13th). The Chairperson of the Manly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee, Susan Moylan – Coombs, is the initiator and driving force behind the festival, which have presented a variety of community events celebrating Aboriginal culture and heritage. The 2001 and 2002 Guringai Festivals were held on the Northern Beaches of Sydney.

This year the nine Northern Metropolitan Sydney Councils within Guringai Country are participating in a greatly extended program. Willoughby Council will launch the festival at Chatswood, North Sydney Council is hosting two fashion parades showcasing Indigenous talent, and Kuring-gai, Hornsby, Mosman and Lane Cove Councils are organising a range of activities. Churches, schools and community groups are also invited to participate in the festival.

On the Northern Beaches, events are being planned by Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Councils and by the Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater.

The Support Group will be commemorating the **Journey of Healing** at 6 pm, on Monday 26th May at the Coastal Environment Centre, Lake Park Road, North Narrabeen (adjacent to the Lakeside Caravan Park). This fifth anniversary of National Sorry Day will acknowledge the Stolen Generations. All are invited to join the candlelight walk in the spirit of Reconciliation. Please bring a plate for supper. For further information contact Anna Bell on 9913 7940.

Other Support Group events include **Footprints on Celluloid Series 3**. On Monday June 2nd will be the screening of the recent documentary *GULPILIL ONE RED BLOOD*, written and directed by Darlene Johnson, about the life of David Gulpilil. Darlene, who is one of Australia's most talented emerging Indigenous filmmakers, will be guest speaker on the night and will talk about her films and her career.



The second in the **Footprints on Celluloid Series 3** is *WHITES LIKE US*, a documentary film made in 1998 by Rachel Landers. It will be screened on Monday July 7th. This film which explores Reconciliation issues raised at a local reconciliation Learning Circle, won the 1999 United Nations Association Media Peace Award. Rachel and many of the participants will be present at the screening to discuss what the Reconciliation issues are in 2003.

Starting time for both documentaries is 7.30 pm. at the Angophora Room, Nelson Heather Centre, corner of Jackson & Pittwater Roads, Warriewood.

One of the highlights of last year's **Guringai Festival** was the screening (standing room only), of Rachel Perkin's film *ONE NIGHT THE MOON*. At Collaroy Cinema. This year the stunning feature film *BENEATH CLOUDS*, directed by Ivan Sen, will be shown at 10am on Wednesday June 18th at Collaroy Cinema. Following two awards at the Berlin International Film Festival 2002, *BENEATH CLOUDS* won a further two awards at this year's AFI Awards- for Ivan Sen (Best Director) and Allan Collins (Best Cinematographer).

This screening has again been made possible by the generous support of Roy and Josephine Mustaca of Collaroy Cinema, Dendy Films and Warringah Council.

Bookings are essential- please contact Pat Frater on 9971 0735. FREE.

Full details of the **Guringai Festival** are given in the program brochure that will be available from early May. Watch out for it!





The Indomitable Miss Pink

– A Life in Anthropology

by **Julie Marcus**, University of NSW Press 2002. **\$39.95** (Pb.)

As a young student during the 1950's, in Professor A. P. Elkin's Department of Anthropology at Sydney University, I came to share the prevailing academic opinion of Miss Olive Pink, which was, that she was an eccentric loner, a sort of copy-cat Daisy Bates whose research work was not to be taken very seriously. We actually knew very little about her, apart from reading two of her papers published in Oceania, from the 1930's. Certainly, we knew nothing of her struggles with colleagues in the anthropological establishment, and with the Australian National Research Council (ANRC), for the meagre funding that would enable her to continue research in Central Australia.

After reading Julie Marcus's moving account of Olive Pink's remarkable life, I fully agree that she has been badly misjudged and very unfairly treated. Despite her eccentricities, often making it difficult for others to like her, she was an anthropological pioneer who never gained the academic recognition which she deserved during her life-time. Julie Marcus's book has helped to restore her reputation among early Australian women anthropologists.

Born in Hobart, Tasmania in 1884, Olive Muriel Pink, artist, amateur, botanist, anthropologist, lifelong campaigner for Aboriginal rights, spent much of her 90 years among Arnernte and Warlpiri Aborigines in Central Australia. Her interest in Aborigines began when she met Daisy Bates, known to Aborigines as 'Kabbarli,' at Ooldea in May 1926, when Olive Pink was 42 and Daisy Bates was 67 years old. The two were instantly compatible. After tea and cakes of Mrs Bate's own making, she was provided with two 'out-back outfits- one a knitted overall and a cotton one also and old hat and gloves'.

While Olive Pink was too vain to wear the other clothes provided by Daisy Bates, the gloves to protect the hands from the sun and the fly-netted hat or pith helmet eventually became the hallmark of her own outback dress. (p.33)

Olive Pink later became known to Walpiri women by the name Takinjija Napiljarri, and their fond memories of her have been passed down to the present generation by those who worked with her and knew her during the 1930's and later. These remembrances, together with her many letters, published in a separate book Yours Truly, Olive M. Pink, (Olive Pink Society, 1991) have enabled us to appreciate her historical significance, as someone who was well ahead of her time in many respects, and bravely stuck to her principles. "her belief that the truth must be told and that it would, in the end, win out had cost her dearly and had led her from Hobart's genteel middle-class comforts to poverty and social marginalisation in Alice Springs. To her, truth and justice were the same thing, and her search for it made a passionate life a very uncomfortable one". (p.9)

Some of her views would no longer be acceptable, such as her exclusive concern with "full- blooded Aborigines". However most other anthropologists of that time had similar views, as Marcus notes. " Why for example, has it been important to single out Olive Pink from her colleagues and to label her alone as racist? Her opinions on the people she referred to as 'tribal full bloods' and those designated 'half-castes' were shared by Strehlow, Elkin, Cleland, and most missionaries and humanitarian activists. It is the one significant issue on which she differed profoundly from contemporary opinion. (p.300)

In spite of constant opposition, she waged a life-long campaign for land rights, justice, and protection of women from abuse, and insisted that Aborigines must have the right to express their traditional religion and cultural identity without missionary interference. Also she firmly opposed all forms of exploitation, and racism and rejected what she called the genocidal policies of assimilation. "ASSIMILATION IS EXTERMINATION and 'LAND-ROBBERY', of powerless 'WARDS' of the Commonwealth of Australia. (p.4) It was her uncompromising and confrontational approach to administrators, pastoralists, politicians, missionaries and other anthropologists which gained her the reputation of a troublemaker and eccentric. Despite attempts by fellow anthropologists, such as T.G Strehlow, to discredit her and question her credentials, Olive Pink not only carried out serious anthropological research, much of which still remains unpublished, but she engaged in prolific correspondence with the authorities on Aboriginal issues. It is through her letters, one is given a historical perspective on the situation of Aborigines in central Australia from the 1930's onward.

During her later years she lived a solitary, frugal existence in Alice Springs until her death in 1975. "She is still spoken of, and remembered as, a living presence, sometimes with affection, sometimes with anger, and always with curiosity. She is lost in contradiction, her own determined privacy and the mythology that surrounds her." (p.300)

Julie Marcus has written a sensitive and very readable account of the Indomitable Miss Olive Pink's long and controversial life.

Reviewed for the Australian Journal of Anthropology, by Ruth Fink Latukefu.

The High Court and the Yorta Yorta Decision

– Sid Spindler

The Yorta Yorta Native Title claim to their traditional homelands in northern Victoria and southern NSW was lodged in February 1994. It was one of the first claims registered with the National Native Title Tribunal, following its establishment under the newly enacted Native Title Act.

The High Court's decision, with Justice Gaudron and Kirby dissenting, was handed down on December 12, 2002.

In essence, the High Court upheld the now infamous view, first enunciated by Federal Court Justice Howard Olney, that the tide of history has indeed washed away any real acknowledgement of their traditional laws and any real observance of their traditional customs. This view is highly relevant since under the Native Title Act claimants must prove 'continuing connection' with the land being claimed. This remained the main hurdle, leaving aside legal arguments about the value of oral testimony in the absence of written records, hardly the stuff of traditional indigenous laws and customs.

In large part the judgement reflects the current composition of the High Court, with a majority of judges favouring literal interpretations of 'black letter' law. It is an approach which does not serve us well when our legal system needs to respond to a different culture and a fraught and violent common history. The value of a more activist and sensitive approach, conscious of the need to arrive at a just result is demonstrated by dissenting judgements in the High Court as well as by the previous and lone dissent of Federal Court Chief Justice Black, who concluded that Justice Olney was wrong.

For the time being, Mr Howard's policy of appointing conservative, black letter lawyers to the High Court means that the 'literal' phase will continue. This is not the only way Mr Howard cast a shadow over the majority decision. When the Native Title Act was drafted the "continuing connection" criterion contained 'spiritual' as well as 'physical' components, partly in recognition of the deep spiritual connection Aboriginal people have with their land and partly because it was recognised how difficult it would be to prove continuing physical connection.

However, in 1998 Mr Howard's Wik amendments included the removal of the 'spiritual' component, despite the well documented fact that the physical connection was repeatedly destroyed by the forced removal, break up and resettlement of indigenous communities by our very own government authorities.

We are left with the extraordinary result that the effect of 200 year's murderous onslaught by a foreign culture weighs more heavily in our courts than tens of thousands of years of spiritual, cultural as well as physical 'connection'. When legal and political factors intertwine, economic considerations are usually not far behind, even if they serve only to fan irrational fears and prejudices.

The Yorta Yorta claim covers 1,860 sq. km of land and waters along the Murray, Ovens and Goulburn rivers – all of its crown

land and forestry, water supply and nature reserves. None of the claim covered privately owned land (not possible under the Native Title Act) and none of the "farms and backyards" Mr Fisher and Mr Howard falsely claimed in 1993 as endangered. Even so, some 300 people and organisations opposed the application – state governments, local councils, farmers, tourism operators, bee keepers, people involved in the timber and fishing industries. Where to from here?

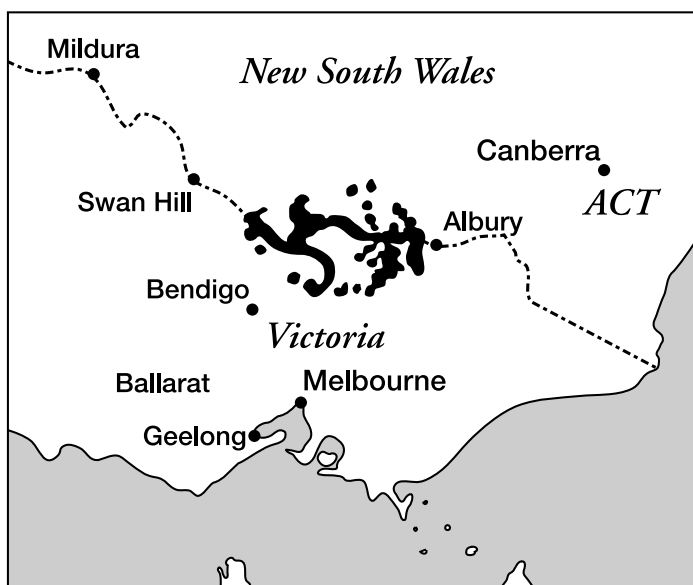
The Bracks Government, having opposed the Yorta Yorta case in the High Court, contrary to a resolution of the ALP State Conference, will now ensure that the Yorta Yorta will not have to carry the legal costs. The Government has also invited the Yorta Yorta to try the mediation route towards a negotiated settlement. That is fine as far as it goes – although it did not go very far in the recently negotiated settlement with the Wotjobaluk along the Wimmera River, which recognised Native Title over only 2% of the originally claimed area.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the judgement is the fact that it has created an unfavourable precedent, not a good starting point for negotiations or for that matter, for any future Native Title claims across Australia. Given that the composition of the High Court is unlikely to change in the near future, the only feasible avenue for progress is to amend the Native Title Act to remove the oppressive and unjust features – a long campaign and long odds, but then this has never stopped community activism in the past.

Sid Spindler, former Democrat Senator and convenor Treaty Sub Committee, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR-Vic)

If you are interested to become a member of ANTaR – tel 03 9419 3613 email antarvic@nativetitle.org

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LOCAL ARTIST

Congratulations to Jessica Birk on her success following last year's Higher School Certificate examinations. A former Cromer High School student, Jessica has had a number of her artworks selected for three current exhibitions.

These include the prestigious **Artexpress 2003**, a selection of works by last year's HSC students from schools throughout NSW. Chosen for this exhibition is a part of Jessica's body of work entitled *Deadly Dubs*, now hanging at the Art Gallery of NSW - one of her goals for art during her final year at school. Jessica has used rich colour and textures to create a beautiful and dramatic work, highly deserving selection for *Artexpress 2003*. She said that it "is about the contribution of three generations of women: myself, my mother and my grandmother, on my identity."

Three pieces from *Deadly Dubs* are also exhibited at the Manly Art Gallery and Museum in **Express Yourself 2003**. Now in its 10th year, *Express Yourself* recognises the creative talent of students from Northern Beaches High Schools.

Thirty seven students are represented in the present exhibition.

On the opening night Jessica was presented with a Highly Commended Award by the Manly Art Gallery society which sponsors the Manly Youth Art Award. This is open to students selected for the exhibition who are undertaking tertiary studies in visual arts. Jessica is enrolled in a Bachelor of Fine Arts, a campus of the University of NSW.

Express Yourself 2003 continues at the Manly Art Gallery and Museum West esplanade reserve until March 23. Opening hours are 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesday to Sunday.

With two of her cousins Jessica has several of her paintings and prints exhibited in **Angwirri Adji** at the Ulugandhi Elders Art Gallery in Maclean. Jessica belongs to the Yeagl language group on the far North Coast of NSW.

Pat Frater

THE BEST WAY TO LEARN ABOUT THE NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA OF MANLY DAM

About sixty people enjoyed a very interesting and informative afternoon on 21 March at Manly Dam. This well organised event was coordinated by Warringah Council's Aged Services Workers Janet Elliott and Angela Doolan, as part of Senior's Week. We are grateful for the continuing support of Warringah Council for the Aboriginal Support Group and for reconciliation.

The afternoon started with a warm welcome from Pat Frater who reminded us that, although the war against Iraq had started and we were all heart sad about that, it was in fact 'Harmony Day'. Being there in that beautiful bush setting created a real spirit of harmony among the group.

Alan Madden, from the Metropolitan Local Land Council, gave the acknowledgement of country and also said that he had the pleasure and honour of launching the ASG bookmarks, a sample of which is enclosed with this issue. Sue Osborn, a greatly valued member of the ASG, has done a marvellous job with both the design and the production, a great contribution to the Manly-Warringah-Pittwater community.

Andrew Lo, a former lecturer in Environmental Economics at the University of NSW, then gave a very interesting and entertaining talk about the environmental factors unique to Manly Dam, majoring on his own love affair with the area.

This started when he planted a gum tree sapling given to him on becoming an Australian citizen 30 years ago. As he got to know the area, he realised its richness including its 70 species of birds, 6 species of mammals and 80 species of reptiles.

The thing that caused the most excitement in the scientific world was the discovery of a climbing fish, a Gondwana creature going back 60 to 100 million years, i.e. before the dinosaurs. This is the only one in the world living in a land locked environment and yes, they really do crawl up the creek bed as part of the reproductive cycle. During the last survey of these remarkable creatures, 48 were sighted. Andrew also made the point that the Guringai people had everything that they needed to live well and that they managed the environment in a self-sustaining way.

Our next speaker, John Lennis, former Aboriginal Education Officer of the Botanic Gardens, talked to us about bush foods and handed out samples for tasting. Then we had a delicious afternoon tea, which included wattle seed damper, bush jam and macadamia butter to have with our tea or coffee. John was a mine of information about indigenous plants and fruits and how to use them.

The day concluded with a short bush walk, during which John and David Watts explained how Aboriginal people used the various plants, fruits and seeds.

All the speakers complimented the National Park Rangers on the valuable work they do to preserve the environment and Indigenous heritage.

Everyone agreed that the afternoon had been a most informative and enjoyable experience.

Carol Macintosh

BIALA HOSTEL REPORT

1ST APRIL, 2003

The first school term this year has gone by so quickly. All the girls will be going home for the school holidays very soon.

Of course, it has been a very busy time here at Biala.

Most of the students returned to Biala this year- Megan Bell, Belinda King, Tatum Moore, Larka Cutmore, Dayle Clarke, Emma Franks, Denise Reynolds, Carissa Gallagher, Emma Marne and Clarissa Kitchener. We also had some new students start with us – Eliza Williams, Joanna Baker, Stephanie Sharpley, Carina Reynolds

(Denise's sister) and Sian and Allira Moore (Tatum's cousins). Belinda and Megan left us during the term.

Of course, Karla King completed Year 12 last year and received a good result in her HSC. We all wish Karla success and happiness in her future. Karla was a Biala student for four years and we all miss her very much.

All the girls have been trying very hard at school (well, most of the time!!!) and have been helped at the Homework Centre by our volunteers. We are hoping to have professional tutors for them next term.

Our staff has included Ray McIntosh, Auntie Dawn as our weekend cook, Angie as our night watchman and Lara and Tania at certain times, as well of course, Zita our wonderful cook.

Our major outing for this term was a great day at Wonderland. The girls all seemed to have a fantastic day, going on as many rides as they could.

Most of the girls have been to the beach quite a few times. Our swimming pool also got a lot of use in the hot weather. One weekend Ray and Carol Ritchie took the girls to Manly Dam for a swim and an exciting game of soccer.

The Support Group has sponsored two girls, Emma Franks and Carissa Gallagher to play soccer with the manly Vale Soccer Club this year. These two girls really wanted so much to play soccer, so we thank the Support group very much for this support, as the fees and equipment needed for such sports are very expensive these days.

Tatum Moore has won a scholarship at NIDA for the Young Actors Workshop which runs on Sundays for the whole year. It is a big effort for Tatum going into the city every Sunday after a week at school, but we thank Carol for her offer to drive Tatum into NIDA most Sundays. Tatum enjoys the course and there has been very good feedback from NIDA about her talents.

Lara Rutley, mentioned previously as working here at certain times, has become the new resident of the local AECG (Aboriginal Education Consultative Group). Lara took a few of the girls to the AGM of the AECG and they have now become junior members. This should be very beneficial to the girls as they will be more involved in this aspect of their education.

The Biala Social Club is trying to find ways to raise funds for recreational activities to make the weekends more fun. The committee now is Tatum Moore, President – Sian Moore, Vice-President – Carissa Gallagher, Treasurer – Emma Franks, Secretary.

We, along with all the girls, are looking forward to Easter and the school holidays. We wish you all well for the Easter break and thank you again for your wonderful support to Biala.

Judy and Ian Patterson
– Houseparents, Biala Hostel.

AN INVITATION TO JOIN US...

THE Aboriginal Support group - Manly Warringah Pittwater
meets on the third Monday of each month at 7.00 for 7.15 pm.

On the first Monday of each month we conduct an Information Night – 7.00 to 9.00pm.

Please join us at either or both of these evenings at:
Angopohora Room, Nelson Heather Centre,
Cnr Pittwater & Jackson Roads, North Narrabeen.

For further information: PO Box 129, Narrabeen NSW 2101
Phone; (02) 9913 7940 or (02) 9982 2431

Elimatta is produced by the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater.

If you use any material printed in Elimatta we would appreciate the extract being set in context, and the source acknowledged.

Newsletter Editor:	Sue Osborn
Layout/Design:	Mark Ansiewicz
Printing & Mailing:	Funded by CDSE grant from Dee Why RSL
Distribution:	Jackie O'Hare & Anna Bell