

1993 JOURNAL WRITING - Joseph Mallard

TO ACCOMPANY PHOTOGRAPHS OF MID-WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FOREWORD

I had taken up what would become a journey of self-discovery and identity as I travelled to Shark Bay of Western Australia in a quest to discover the heritage of my late father in this remote part of Australia.

After graduating in Fine Arts, I travelled to Perth from the eastern seaboard, to visit my grandmother Ivy (Poland) Mallard. It was here that I came into contact with her collection of archival documentary photos of family life and work in the region of Shark Bay. Here wind swept shores, big skies, and eternal horizons dominate the land. Today Shark Bay is listed as one of the First World Heritage sites of ecological significance. My grandmother recounted to me how they lived off the ocean's supply of fish and dugong and the station sheep. Ivy held fond memories of the days on Carrarang Station off Steep Point in Edel Land. She painted a very poetic picture of an isolated yet bountiful existence, living off the land (see interview with Ivy).

I soon headed north of Perth with my camera to Geraldton, half way between Perth and Shark Bay here I discovered my father and his brother attended boarding school at the Greenough convent commencing WW11. My grandmother Ivy was very proud, and wanted her children brought up 'properly' away from the wild frontier town of Shark Bay. In the early part of the century, Geraldton was the last post of civilization before the greater northern frontier of the Kimberly. It was here that I visited the Local Cemetery where I paid respect to the graves of my grandfather and my uncle for the first time. I had met my Uncle as a child however my grandfather died when my own father was only 18.

In the noon-tide of returning to the strange mixture of memory history and existence that constitutes a search for origins, a visit to the central-coast of Western Australia brought me to the Geraldton cemetery. Here I had the uncanny experience of finding my grandfather's place of rest. Before me lay the epigraph of my grandfather:- Joseph Mallard (1901-1957) NEW GUINEA R.A.A.F.

From Geraldton I travelled north to Shark Bay itself. My father Kennedy Raymond Mallard, was born in Denham, Shark Bay. As an adult Ken eventually made his way to Papua New Guinea where he spent the rest of his life. His older brother Vivian Mallard settled in Geraldton working with the Fisheries Co-op. Their father Joe Mallard (I was named after my grandfather) managed Carrarang station with my grandmother Ivy at Brown Inlet, Edel Land, just inland of Steep Point which is the most westerly point of mainland Australia. In those days, Denham was a small fishing village. Most of the men were fishermen, but even station managers like Joe Mallard did a lot of fishing on the side.

I knew little about my Grandfather. However knowing my own father, I was fascinated by the rugged and stoic vocations of these men, the hard work and skills needed to make ends meet. My grandfather was proud of his Service due to the number of photographs in Uniform. After WW II Joe bought an ex- Army truck to ship fish from Shark Bay to Geraldton. He also used it to do drilling operations for bore water around the stations. Joe's father Charlie Mallard Junior worked for Tom Pepper, a lease holder of Murchison and Tamala stations. Work which would have involved droving sheep from Tamala station south to Murchison Station, and dingo hunting.

Back then Shark Bay was a frontier town awash with a fascinating mixture of people. As well as the local Aboriginal people, there were Malays diving for pearls, Indians who came for business, as well as English convicts, Sheep and Cattle Drivers and Boundary Riders. Around the 1930's most people from Shark Bay were mixed race, and my own family tree contains members of all the races of Shark Bay. (photo of Ivy and Joe) My grandmother Ivy's mother, Ada Vine, was a part Indian Malay and was born in Monkey Mia.

To the west from Edel Land and the Bay, across the dunes at Steep Point are the perilous Zuytdorp Cliffs the namesake being that of the Dutch VOC ship that met its fate further south one night in 1712. However it is at Dirk Hartog Island that this shore reaches furthest into the Indian Ocean. The island named after the Dutch Sea captain who discovered Western Australia on route to Batavia in 1616. Here he nailed a Plate to a post which was later discovered and replaced by William de Vlamingh 81 years later. Vlamingh further mapped the area and the Ship's artist Victor Victorzoon provided superb coastal profile drawings.

Another curiosity of this remote area is that the remains of *HMAS Sydney*

were discovered out to sea off Dirk Hartog Island as the most Westerly point, this area is entrenched with the Indian Ocean. My grandmother Ivy who lived on Carrarang station at the time of War reveals the real threat of World War II on Australia's doorstep. This being her witness of the sinking of the *HMAS SYDNEY* off Dirk Hartog Island. (See Extract of her statement.)

My great grandfather Charlie Mallard Jr worked as a boundary rider at Tamala station on the coast where he was involved in the discovery of the *Zuytdorp* shipwreck relics with Tom Pepper. The *Zuytdorp* was one of many Dutch shipwrecks on the West Australian Coast particularly famous because a number of published papers including Phillip Playford's book *Carpets of Silver* make the thesis that the passengers and crew almost certainly survived the wreck possibly surviving with the aid of local Aboriginal Tribes of the Kennedy Ranges, In several accounts including Playford's there is speculation that a genetic disease that my father was ill with (porphyria) had Dutch origins in southern Africa, where the V.O.C. ships would obtain fresh crew from the colony before departing the Cape of Good Hope for the roaring forties thereby possibly providing evidence of transportation of the disease to Western Australia in this genealogy.

Photographed on foot with the same lens, these landscapes are not only the result of a geographic touring of remote coastal and inland Western Australia, but also homage to my father and his forebears. Turning to the landscape as a site of remembrance and belonging as transient lives pass through it, we represent it and it represents us. Of myth and fact, of antiquity and modernity, these photos are a dialogue with a place and in turn its place in time, where the levels of light and land became witness and adjudicator of self and history. [the photographs are indicated as 1993(number) then caption]

This is the beginning of the trip

PERON PENINSULA, SHARK BAY

1993(1) DISAPPOINTMENT REACH

Due west from vista overlooking Disappointment Reach between Carnarvon and Shark Bay.

(journal extracts) Wednesday 3rd November 1993:

I've just committed myself to thousands of km and 4 weeks of driving through my father's country and then crossing the Great Victoria Desert

Thursday the 4th: Disappointment Reach

Martin and I had our first camp last night about 60-90 km south of Carnarvon – just inland from the tip of The Bay.- Disappointment Reach We had a meal and talked about climatology and the possibility of ice melting. The night then overcame us and pushed me off to sleep. I awoke sometime in the middle of the night to find the moon bearing down on me and ants wandering across my body.

1993(2) HAMELIN POOL, SHARK BAY

This place is so still, its unique hydrology resulting in restricted water flow allows the Stromatolites and other significant phototrophic ecosystems to remain unaltered for millennia.

1993(3) CAPE PERON NTH, SHARK BAY

(journal extract) Friday 5th: Cape Peron, Shark Bay.

Once again I had fantastic dreams out under the stars. Last night there was a heavy dew fall due to the lack of wind. I keep forgetting that the moon will rise in the middle of the night and wake me with its solar light. We (Martin and I) are in the most tranquil stretch of shoreline on the west coast of the Cape that makes one of Shark Bay's 'fingers'. I awoke this morning overjoyed at the beauty around me and turned instinctively to share it.

1993(4) CAPE PERON, BIG LAGOON, Shark Bay

I feel I am closer to my father as I first set sight of this place since I was there last with my father when I was about 13, this land is where he grew up, and his father and grandfather, it was a magical sight to see it again after so many years since his passing.

(journal extract) Saturday 6th November, 6:15 am

The air is becoming hot except for a cool breeze that rolls over the hillside just beyond the camp. We are at the Big Lagoon, Shark Bay, on the Peron Peninsula. A flat and lonely place with fascinating textures and shrubs that look landscaped along the side of the lake. It is an arid place, everything windswept and dissolved, about to crumble. I went for a walk for the sunrise which came in a matter of seconds, like clockwork, its red-orange mixture of blazing fire appeared as a perfectly spherical chimera. I took half a roll of film which I am pleased with. Here we are, Martin and I, in some kind of Jurassic Era where seagrasses and stromatolites bridge land and water.

1993(5) CAPE PERON, HERALD BIGHT

(journal extract)

Yesterday was both disappointing and heartening. While I missed out on a dive on to a few reefs off Bottle Bay, I did see that elusive mermaid, sea cow, dugong. I dived in to be with it. Within 10 minutes dolphins came passing through, more dugongs appeared, and a small shark skimmed past, turtles came up for air and large shadow sting rays glided across the bottom. All this while a hundred or so birds flapped their wings all around, washing and basking in the sun. Schools of fish followed the shoreline and a sea snake hovered above some seagrass. This is truly a Day in the Bay!

1993(6) PERON PENNINSULA WESTERN ASPECT, BOTTLE BAY, SHARK BAY

1993(7) DENHAM SOUND, PERON PENNINSULA, Shark Bay.

Due west across the bay. As the name suggests this place is perfectly still and quiet.

1993(8) MONKEY MIA, PERON PENNINSULA, Shark Bay,
 Monkey Mia is where my great grandmother Ada Poland was born, now famous for its friendly dolphins, apparently it was named thus because there was a monkey on board the ship that landed there.

EDEL LAND

1993(9) CARRARANG STATION, BROWN INLET, Shark Bay: due South

1993(10) CARRARANG STATION, BROWN INLET, EDEL LAND Shark Bay. (See interview with Ivy Mallard)

It was amazing to see the Station my grandmother Ivy and grandfather Joe managed for so many years as it was perched near Brown Inlet, it fitted her recall of the life they led here, this was a revelation and I begun to get a picture of the history.

1993(11) BELLIFIN PRONG, SAND DUNES EDEL LAND, SHARKS BAY (a)

I remembered these dunes as a kid, and they stood in my imagination all these years. I finally got to photograph them as an adult here as they stretch alongside the bay.

1993(12) BELLIFIN PRONG, SAND DUNES, EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY (b)

1993(13) BELLIFIN PRONG, SAND DUNES, EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY (c)

1993(14) DIRK HARTOG ISLAND FROM STEEP POINT, EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY

My great grandfather often worked for the station owner of Dirk Hartog Island, who also owned Carrarang St

1993(15) MONKEY ROCK , STEEP POINT, EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY

1993(16) ZUYTDORP POINT , DULVERTON BAY, EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY

Northern Tip of the Zuytdorp Cliffs

1993(17) EPINEAUX BAY (Crayfish Bay), EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY
Beautiful bay where we camped for the night

1993(18) ZUYTDORP CLIFFS, EDEL LAND, SHARK BAY

(journal extract) Tuesday Nov. 9th Zuytdorp Cliffs

The earth is approximately 4 billion years old. Martin (postgraduate geologist) approximates this coastline to be approximately 100-200 million

years old. The Pilbara (south of Port Hedland) Martin tells me, has rock that can be dated to 3.5 billion years old. Almost as old as the earth itself. Life itself is dated at around 3.5 billion years with the blue green algae or stromatolites

This area of limestone cliffs in stark contrast to the red earth of the Peron Peninsula

1993(19) ZUYTDORP CLIFFS, EDEL LAND

This is the northern part of the Zuytdorp Cliffs which stretch some hundreds of Kilometres, and named after the Dutch Ship which came aground further sth from here (I photographed the actual site in 1996 on a return trip). My great grandfather Charlie Mallard claimed he had discovered the figure head of the Ship while working on Tom Pepper's property, There is a photograph of Charlie holding the Figure head in the book by Phillip Playford, *Carpets of Silver* which argues that it is almost certain that there were survivors from the ship.

My great grandfather Charlie Mallard and my grandfather Joe Mallard would have known this country back to front as they worked on the various stations nearby. Charlie Mallard purchased a block of land south of here nearer to the ship wreck site.

1993(20) INDIAN OCEAN, ZUYTDORP CLIFFS, EDEL LAND

1993(21) ME, ZUYTDORP CLIFFS, EDEL LAND

While I was peering over the Zuytdorp Cliffs

(Journal extract)

So far it's been great. I wouldn't trade it for the world. Reading D.H.Lawrence through the inlets, outlets, points and beaches of Shark Bay; seeing Carrarang Station, which Ivy managed along with Joe for 15-18 years; having time to mull over those decisions which I of late always seem to be thick in the middle of.

KALBARRI / MURCHISON

1993(22) ROCKS, KALBARRI COAST

Kalbarri and Murchison House station were prominent stops in the trade

route from Perth in the old days and some of my relatives still have a community at Barrel Well, near Kalbarri.

1993(23) GORGE, MURCHISON RIVER, THE LOOP, KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

1993(24) EUCALYPT TREE, GORGE, MURCHISON RIVER, THE LOOP, KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

1993(25) ROCK POOL, GORGE, MURCHISON RIVER, THE LOOP, KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

1993(26) MURCHISON RIVER, THE LOOP, KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

1993(27) HARDABOUT POOL, MIDDLE MURCHISON RIVER (a)

(Journal extract) Tuesday 9th

We are moving too fast for my pen. Right now we've just set up camp. Kalbarri National Park. It is Martin's turn to cook, my night off to ponder, write, read. At present I'm sitting in a little clearing with a golden grass covering it from tree to tree. It is so beautiful as the evening rolls in with the clouds atop the hill line. A gum tree bends against the scrub. We are at Hardabout Pool. At the edge of the pool lie all sorts of animal prints: emu, fox, kangaroo, small birds. It is a genteel valley, full of tranquillity, not much different in ambiance than the valley in D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers.

1993(28) HARDABOUT POOL, MIDDLE MURCHISON RIVER (b)

GERALDTON AND ON TO THE VICTORIA DESERT

1993(29) WHEATBELT, GERALDTON-MT MAGNET ROAD

1993(30) OUTBACK SIGN POST ON ROUTE TO AGNEW

1993(31) MINING RELICS, AGNEW

1993(32) BLACKFELLAS HILL, SERPENTINE LAKES TRACK,

BEGINNING OF VICTORIA DESERT (west to east)

(journal extract) - Sunday 14th

Rain, first thing. Haven't left my swag yet. I couldn't be more comfortable. The ground here on the plain is flat and the tent provides a cozy little shelter. The morning sun's still up but we've caught the fringe of a thunder cloud, one of the many that have been rumbling around all night. Sheets of lightning illuminating the grotesque cloud formations. It is now raining heavily. We must have passed into the rain of the cloud. The vegetation here is so sparse and delicate, the textures so intricate. There was an article on Van Gogh in the Good Weekend. I shall read it today alongside Lawrence. I should think they should be quite complicit. I will also start researching colour photography for the Ann Beadell Track.

Having made off into the desert on the Ann Beadell track I'm now sitting under Blackfella's Hill on the beginning of a great plain. The shrubbery is all round, the wildflowers and the ancient rock. The ground is perfectly level and mostly exposed. A few things I wish to jot down before retiring under the shimmering stars in my swag. I've come across a great continuity between various things today and yesterday. It is mainly through D.H. Lawrence that I've come to it.

1993(33) PLAIN AND MESAS FROM BLACKFELLAS HILL,
SERPENTINE LAKES TRACK, VICTORIA DESERT

1993(34) SERPENTINE LAKES TRACK, VICTORIA DESERT (a)

1993(35) SERPENTINE LAKES TRACK, VICTORIA DESERT (b)

1993(36) VICTORIA DESERT, SERPENTINE LAKES TRACK
(c)

1993(37) VICTORIA DESERT, SERPENTINE LAKES TRACK (d)

1993(38) VICTORIA DESERT, ANNE BEADELL TRACK, SPINIFEX
GRASS.

(journal extract) Wednesday 17th November.....The Great Victoria Desert

A quick sketch of the map so far. On Monday the 15th we left Yamarna, a

small station on the fringe of the Desert. In fact the Ann Beadell Track actually departed from its back door. There were a couple of exploration miners renting a porta-home and an older bloke (45-50) who supposedly was sitting tight throughout the drought. After Martin and the miner bloke discussed whether the Pilbara rock was older than the rock here or not, we said “cheers” and were on our way. The station owner then emerged from his house. He was a fairly largish man, big belly, jeans just clinging to what little hips he had left. His hair was gray and he swore like a bushman should. He had the manner of an English expatriate and picked Martin off from the start. “Now you be a good boy now. Take plenty of water and diesel.” We discussed the weather, the drought and its perpetuation by the El Nino phenomenon. He also mentioned the “super-highway” they (the Aborigines) were building through the big central reserves from north to south. This was with compensation from the British government (50 million) for the Maralinga Nuclear testing in the late 50s and 60s. The radiation levels there are too high and have displaced Aboriginal people.

From Yamarna we drove until sighting Blackfellas’ Hill and camped there. On Tuesday we were on the Serpentine Lakes Road for most of the day. We drove through Lakes Nature Reserve and Neale Junction Nature Reserve, whereupon we came to Neale Junction with Visitors’ Book and all. The last entry was four days ago on the 11th. We decided to set up camp early in a nice spot. So here we are having spent the night under a billion stars in this small valley in between the parallel sand ridges topped with white barked ghost gums. All around us in this desert the vegetation is the same, the ghost gums, acacia scrub and pale green spinifex grass which lies in a patchwork pattern of rounds and semi-circles on the otherwise smooth red sand.* Do some time here. I’m sure the personality of the valley and what’s in it lend itself to narrative.*

1993(39) NEALE JUNCTION, VICTORIA DESERT

This area in the middle of the Victoria Desert is a Nature Reserve, and you can see why in regards to the flora. While we were here there were showers not far off.

1993(40) ME, NEALE JUNCTION, VICTORIA DESERT

Here I am at a junction in my life, having been reconciled with my father’s heritage and he in turn. This is a major crossroads in the middle of the desert, there is a visitors book here in the middle of the desert!, we make entries.

1993(41) VICTORIA DESERT, MARALINGA LAND.

(journal extract)

After entering the Maralinga/Woomera prohibited area we came into a most beautiful landscape. The first things that stood out, apart from its density, were the pine trees (introduced?) that spread out through the scrub acacia trees and ghost gums. The bed of red-orange sand/dirt created a stage floor for the projections of these various plants.

1993(42) NULLABOR PLAIN

My father used to drive trucks across the Nullarbor in his 20s, it's what took him to Sydney on occasion and where he would live for a while before taking up a Forestry Officer post in Papua New Guinea. I remember we came back across the Nullarbor with him when I was a child, it was a dirt road then.

1993(43) EUCLA BORDER VILLAGE

End of Trip.

This is where I disembark. To return to a job in Carnarvon.

