

Metamorphosis

Chapter One

Introduction

What has been formed is immediately transformed again, and if we would succeed, to some degree, to a living view of Nature, we must attempt to remain as active and plastic as the example she sets for us. (Goethe 1952:24)

I am sitting at my studio table and have a green view out on to the backyard of the recently mown grassy area that falls away to rainforest trees and eventually to the banks of Mullumbimby Creek. It is the time of Kambar, the season that the Bundjalung recognise as bringing heavy rain. I check on the bush turkey that has been turning over the leaves to adjust the incubation temperature of the eggs. According to Gary Opit's Seasonal Synopsis (see Appendix 10) the chicks are due to hatch shortly. The pressure is on to complete my thesis. It too needs to hatch. It has been eight years since commencing its formulation. What I have been working with has emerged and evolved out of the journey of my own life, both professionally and personally and not unlike the restless and unceasing activity of the Goethe's archetypal plant, it has continued to grow and change.

This thesis is presented as a set of layered stories.

The research question around which this thesis is constructed is about a place, Shearwater the Mullumbimby Steiner School. It is also my story, a story about a journey, a songline of learning and doing and how through the meeting and exchange with others, intersects with the songlines of their lives. These encounters happen in place and if they happen often enough with many people, they assume identity: homes, commons, villages, towns, cities and in this instance, a school. In this it is also a story of place making.

At first they came singly, children and parents seeking a haven. Siblings were enrolled and the word spread. The numbers increased and included those that had left the urban sprawl of Australia's cities and overseas locations, in search of a place that would offer their

families a haven, a free and healthy physical and social environment. Teachers and those yearning for change were also drawn to join and support an idea of providing new ways of learning. The idea became a realisable ideal and formed a welcoming beacon to which more children flocked and their parents followed. The idea found a home, a place out on Left Bank Road on a neglected farm, on which there stood a reception centre (which was once a meat packing shed in Queensland) where dairy cattle once grazed, which was once cleared of its pristine rainforest and through which its original inhabitants roamed.

It is also a story finding a new way of seeing, about finding identity in relationship to the Australian landscape. In her book, *Wildflowering, The life and places of Kathleen McArthur*, Margaret Somerville (2004) uses place as a focal point in telling the story of the Kathleen McArthur (1915 – 2001), a descendant of the well-known Durack family, depicted in *Kings in Grass Castles* (Durack 2008). Kathleen was an artist author, biologist, environmental educator and successful conservationist whose 1969 postcard campaigns saved the wallum country of Cooloola, on the upper reaches of the Noosa River, from development.

Kathleen had a passion for Australian wildflowers. In travelling around Queensland she observed that people did not see the wildflowers. She realised that vision and visibility were not just about seeing but came also from consciousness. Those wildflowers lacked associations in the Australian consciousness, which was initially inhabited by British flowers, poems and literature; its inner landscapes were the landscapes of England.

Because our flowers are not settled into our consciousness, they are not even seen. People can drive through miles of massed displays of bloom and simply not see it. (Somerville 2004:71)

If they failed to see the wildflowers what else are they missing? Do they see the trees, the animals, do they recognise the subtle changes of this ancient landscape? Do they smell the acerbic soil, the sclerophyll, the musty odour of rainforest vegetation or the eucalypt oils of the blue forest haze? Do they hear the curlew's call, the chatter of the lorikeets, the raucous carousing of the black cockatoos or the 'pobblebonk' chorus of swamp frogs and recognise who made these sounds? Do they touch the earth gently; do they take care where they tread? Can they hear what the earth is saying? Can they detect the five seasons the Bundjalung lived in harmony with in Far Northern New South Wales or the six subtle seasonal changes of the Gundjeihmi-speaking people of the Murrumburr clan whose land lies in Kakadu? Do they hear the voice of the wind, whose direction-changes determine the five-season cycle of the Nyoongar people of Western Australia's Southwest? What resemblances do these bare to the Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter cycle of the northern hemisphere?

Kathleen goes on to say:

It is only when the mind opens that the flowers bloom. (Quoted in Somerville 2004:71)

So how do we open the mind? This story of place consciousness then is also a story about education. This is about finding ways to educate that might open the mind to the flowers of our inner landscape so that they are seen and so bloom. Place, with the creative wisdom of Nature's formative and shaping processes is allowed a role as a silent teacher. We can explore her silent ways through which we can sensitise ourselves to the subtleties of the Australian continent and live with it in harmonious communion and through an aesthetic education of our children, that takes in account place – where they play and gain their formative experiences – discover healthy and unimposing ways to educate.

In a later article, Somerville (2010:330) goes on to say that ‘... Australian scholars and researchers cannot begin to articulate a position about place without confronting the complex political realities of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships in place.’

Since time immemorial, Aboriginal culture beliefs have spanned and crisscrossed the entire continent through a living oral tradition that has survived the European hegemony albeit, in many cases, in fragmented form (Langton in Behrendt and Thompson, 2003). It is a tradition that is as much concerned with continuity of knowledge and custom, as with description and reaction to a changing environment. These oral ‘texts’ function as maps of the landscape and are appropriate to a nomadic people, linking them to the Tjukurpa – commonly known as the Dreamtime, also referred to as the Law-lore with its stories of the primal ancestral creator beings who roamed the land – and giving them a coherent understanding of the past, to decipher correctly the present and thereby giving indication to the future.

As opposed to the European historical continuum, where time’s sequences and ‘cause and effect’ are primary, the Aboriginal Tjukurpa is linked to place and to the dimension of space. Stories and events are directly linked and belong to geographic locations.

The Aboriginal perspective, with its strong relationship to place, space and time was experienced as Dreamtime. Through place, Aborigines identified and communed with the Creator Beings and their Ancestors. One place was connected with another place via the songlines that marked the journey of the Creator Beings. The ceremonies and stories of place provided spiritual renewal and a threshold for communion with the spiritual world and its earthly reflection. And, in turn, this understanding brought meaning and consciousness to the concept of ‘sacred place’. Like Somerville (2010:330), I believe the Australian Indigenous people ‘...more than any other ... are in a unique position to articulate what it means to learn about place ...’ in a postcolonial, globalised world.

During Garma 2004, I reconnected strongly with Aboriginal culture. Garma is an annual Indigenous festival held in Eastern Arnhem Land. It was as if the years disappeared and I could pick up the thread where I had left it, fourteen years previously, when I was a teacher at Kormilda College Darwin, a school that catered to the needs of Indigenous education in the 'Top End'. While at Garma stored memories of other ways of being were rekindled and became immediate realities in my dialogue with place and people, internally and externally. I reassessed some of the key motivating forces in the establishment of Shearwater, the school at which I was the Director of Teaching. Past merged with present, visions of the future emerged as consequent possibilities of the past.

Appropriating the non-traditional written text, Western Australian, Aboriginal author Sally Morgan (1987) told her story and called it just that: *My Place*. The book was a success, has been enjoyed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal readers alike and has been placed on the English syllabus. This text uses story telling, and stories about place, and acts as bridge between cultures.

Along the songlines of my life, I have positioned myself in place and sought learning through local interchange with geography, people and culture. Like Sally Morgan, I allow place to tell my story and, in so doing, I discovered that the western paradigm of cause and effect, of time as linear and sequential, collapsed into the interior space of 'life experience'. I later found confirmation in this process in what Somerville outlines as the 'key elements' of a conceptual framework, for 'place pedagogy' that our relationship to place is 'constituted in stories, that 'the body is in the centre of our experience of place,' and that 'place is a contact zone of cultural contact' (Somerville 2010:335).

As a son of immigrants, I grew up in Tasmania, speaking German and English and hearing stories of different places. My parents told stories of their places. They regularly told and retold their stories; the far away places they grew up in, the dramatic

times they lived through and their journey to Australia. Through this process, they affirmed their identity, revealing how place and the creation of their songlines shaped who they were. They were also creative place makers. They arrived in Australia with few material assets and made a new start, embracing and enhancing an adopted culture. They worked hard and learnt how to improvise. Their catch cry was to make something out of nothing. Following the songlines of my life, I sought to emulate their creative spirit of place making in new places and through the journey of this thesis I too have found myself appropriating the process of identifying myself through stories of place.

In contemporary times, it is perhaps through the pursuit of individual identity, that the places of our journey become sacred places and such have a profound influence on our values, the way we behave and the way we live our lives and in turn imprint ourselves on place.

By making place my story-telling focus, I hope that experiences, memories, history, thoughts and personal reflections will live meaningfully next to each other in a non-linear, non-sequential way.

The story became a song and the song a dance of celebration and affirmation. The story became a thesis, and is called *Songlines of Learning. The Establishment of Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School as a Centre of Place Conscious Education.*

The Research Question

This thesis starts with the research question:

‘What can we learn about place conscious education when we look at the establishment of Shearwater the Mullumbimby Steiner School?’

In a world where threatening global issues such as global warming, unprecedented population growth, unevenness of wealth distribution, and the scarcity of clean water

intersect with living locally, parents and mindful educators are seeking new ways of preparing their children to become responsive, creative and innovative contributors to a world becoming ever more problematic.

It was my intention in undertaking this research, this body of writing, that it may add to the field of place conscious education, the pedagogies of which educators have historically called for, to address the need to develop sustainable communities of place makers. David Gruenewald (2003: 3) suggests that ‘ [p]lace-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the wellbeing of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit. In the face of an intransigent world with its complex problems, where transglobal/industrial/military power blocs are able to brutally impose their will, in which a non-human automated intelligence of cyber space threatens to rob humanity of an individualised existence, where dehumanising acts of terror seek to create a paralysis of fear, there has been a reactive response. Humanist commentators, philosophers, architects, educationists and environmentalists are considering a holistic education (Steiner 1996a; Wendell Berry 1996), that takes into account aesthetically engaging place related activities (Mumford 1946); (Gruenewald 2004; Sobel 1996), in an aesthetic environment (Orr 1992). In a world where education policy is being impacted by mechanistic thinking and economic theory, which views the human being as potential for realising capital for economic growth (Krautz 2013), I offer this thesis in the hope that by reflecting on the Shearwater Steiner School, its genesis and it's flowering, I will reveal how we might think about place-consciousness in education and what is important to include in constructing a model with which to build other schools and/or to inform educational practice: new ways in meeting the needs of the times.

The activity of education, specifically the education of children, by the very nature of its undertaking, presupposes an understanding of human development and the human being's relationship to the world. From this foundation of knowledge, the direction of education (methodology, content, and intention) would be interpreted and determined. These questions in turn demand a comprehensive and inclusive

epistemology - how do we know? Investigating the question ‘how we know’ leads to the question: ‘how do we learn?’ This in turn points to the ontological question of knowledge and knowledge creation and to the spawning of the great philosophical and eschatological questions of our very existence.

While this work does not seek to provide answers to these questions, it does seek to give philosophical context to the thesis question and the role and contribution place-conscious education can make in creating a stimulating learning environment. This not only includes aesthetic surroundings (buildings and sensitive landscaping) but also a teaching practice that takes into account the process of embodiment and the indelible influence place has in this process.

In reflecting on the inception, growth and development of Shearwater and its social, educational and historical context, a number of emerging educationally related themes identified themselves. These include as already mentioned above, the epistemological exploration of the process of knowing and learning, an understanding of human development and the process of embodiment and the role of place as a silent teacher in determining who we are and how we learn. Added to this is the question of how we communicate our relationship to place through stories - auto-biographical, biographical, imaginative – (Somerville 2010) and other cultural and artistic/aesthetic representations and the development of art-in-education teaching practices (Bamford 2006) that are immediately responsive to place and that take place in place; and living in place and place-making as a field of continual power/knowledge contestation (Foucault 1981).

These themes unfold and develop throughout the course of the writing in a multi-layered form of philosophical discourse, reflective analysis, descriptive and reflective narrative and biographical contextual inclusion. Integral to the unfolding of this thesis in response to the research question and weaving through the layers are the stories of my life experiences, work and learning and what grew to become my songlines and what met me as my destiny.

Context of the Thesis

I have been professionally and continuously involved with Steiner Education for some forty years, and continue to be involved in a full time professional capacity. As founder and Director of Education at Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School, I was fully engaged in building a Steiner School from its inception. I have always sought to align my personal interests with my professional work and have had the good fortune to be able to follow my interests in the world of ideas and world affairs, working in and through the arts, while being actively engaged in the education of children as a Steiner teacher.

In 2004, during the process of enrolling a student at Shearwater, I met Alison McConnell-Imbriotis, an employee of the University of New England (UNE). During an absorbing conversation about education, Alison suggested that I might be interested in pursuing a Masters in education. I was initially reluctant. Maintaining a leadership role in a rapidly growing school was demanding and time consuming. Age was also a question: what advantage would there be in holding an M.Ed? I had no ambition in pursuing employment in mainstream education. I also had little interest in pursuing research in education involving statistics and quantitative processes. Alison talked about qualitative and post positivist approaches to research. I was becoming interested. Much of my work at Shearwater involved the delivery of teacher learning and I perceived that there was interest from the community in developing an accredited education course in Steiner Education. In order to deliver such a course, a higher degree would be an advantage. I also enjoyed study and writing. I enrolled in the M.Ed (Hons) course, later upgraded to PhD candidature, which involved the development of this thesis.

The question became: How was I to find the time?

In the face of my full-time workload at Shearwater, I became concerned about how I might meet the university course work assignment deadlines. I would need to carve out ‘invisible and subversive spaces’ (McConnell Imbriotis 2004:9) and would

continue to need to do so. It was then that life's circumstance played its hand to offer me a travel opportunity that would provide a pattern as to how I might proceed and that was wholly in keeping with the content of my thesis.

As part of Shearwater's Field Trip program Class 10 was travelling in the Northern Territory. The partner of one of the teachers accompanying the trip unexpectedly and tragically died of a heart attack. Her immediate return to Mullumbimby meant that the touring party needed an immediate replacement to meet the required teacher/student ratio. Not having a teaching load, I was immediately able to make myself available. The Class was making its way down the Bulman Road to Yirrkala and then Gulkala to attend Garma, the Yolgnu cultural gathering in Eastern Arnhem Land. My wife Deirdre also decided to come. It was an opportunity for Deirdre and I to reunite with Indigenous culture after leaving the Territory fourteen years previously. There was an airport at Gove and we flew out and arrived the next day. The songlines of my learning and the cultural direction of the School were converging, each reflexively influencing the other.

My experience at Gulkala and the gift of being able to spend another three days at the Yirrkala School were to set an aesthetically pleasing pattern that would show a way I could get my thesis written. I had included in my baggage the Masters course notes for mandatory units I was required to fulfil. Even though, together with another parent, I had six students to supervise, I found time to study. I remember reading Margaret Somerville's resource book *Qualitative Methodologies in Educational Contexts* in my tent, pitched in the back yard of the Yirrkala School. I had found a space, away from the 'distractions' of work and family obligations to pursue my studies.

This had a strangely determining effect on the way the research process unfolded and the methodology that emerged through the process.

The Research Process

I decided to repeat this pattern of working on my thesis. Having accumulated long service leave, I decided to take small three-week blocks and join them to term holidays. It was in these claimed spaces that I would write.

Laurel Richardson suggests that rather than conceptualising writing as ‘writing up’ the research, we need to see it ‘as an open place, a method of discovery’ (Richardson 1994:925). This became a central concern in my approach to the research.

That I needed to find a place in which I could write, free from interruptions and away from the demands of my work-place further shaped the process of my research.

During my sojourn in Darwin in 1988-1990 Bali, in particular the culturally rich town of Ubud with its sophisticated artists, artisans, dancers and musicians, became for me an important part of my songline.

The Island of Bali is considered one of the most magical places on Earth, a beautiful volcanic island, blessed by fertile soil, high seasonal rain and lush, tropical vegetation. It is inhabited by refined, venerative people who are sustained by a rich culture from which no one is excluded. All of this is embedded in a unique hybrid religion of local animism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Balinese view their island as the ‘Navel of the Earth’. What do they mean? The navel is the place where the umbilical cord of the embryo is attached to the placenta. Taking the analogy further, it suggests that the umbilical cord of the Earth was the conduit through which the spiritual nourishment of our creator gods passed and that the Island of Bali was (and is still considered to be) the gateway between Heaven and Earth. It has been my enduring experience, that the gods always feel close at hand in Bali.

So when searching for a place where I could work on my thesis without interruption, it was not surprising that I thought of Bali and in September 2004, I travelled there to commence my studies. My work environment at Shearwater was all-consuming and allowed little time for an equally demanding study program. Friends scoffed at the idea of me getting any work done at all in such an island paradise. Thinking this through, I surmised that the worst that could happen was that I would get a much-needed break. Fortunately, I managed to do both.

As I recorded in my journal, the journey was not without mishap, and I consoled myself with Ehrlich's thought (cited in Cousineau 1998:135) that 'To know something, then, we must be scrubbed raw, the fasting heart exposed'. The journey itself became part of the writing process, which in turn brought about personal transformation (Anderson & Braud 2011).

Journal Entry, September 2004

According to a good friend who walked the Camino across the north of Spain, travelling threatens our comfort zone. The tourist industry goes out of its way to eliminate discomfort and unpredictability, promote entertainment, limit the possibility of life-changing experiences that pilgrims sought in their journeys to holy places. But even the marvels of modern travel are unable to guarantee me a trouble-free journey or save me from consternation on my journey to Bali. Firstly there was the official travel warning to those wishing to visit Indonesia issued by the Australian government, following the Australian Embassy bomb blast in Jakarta. I feel impelled to reconsider my travel plans. I chose to go.

Arriving at Coolangatta Airport at 5.43am, I am told my Jetstar connecting flight to Sydney has closed - there is a strict

thirty minute cut-off point which no amount of pleading can change. Hopelessly optimistic, I buy a premium Virgin airline ticket to Sydney that leaves me with a fifteen-minute window of opportunity to retrieve my luggage, catch a cab to the International Terminal and check on to my Garuda flight to Denpasar. An abandoned check-in counter meets me in Sydney. I have missed my flight. Waiting for my sympathetic Garuda phone contact, I am forced into unguarded introspection and find myself dealing with personal issues of anger, pride, frustration and self-doubt. Finding these preoccupations decidedly unhelpful, I take stock and realise that I had not allowed myself enough opportunity for inner preparation and reflection for the journey. There had been outward preparation - for me, this trip was more organised than usual. The helpful Garuda representative makes alternative travel arrangements and sensitises me to the gentle disposition of most Indonesians. I recall the advice of the Dalai Lama who speaks of obstacles as opportunities for inner strengthening. Getting to Denpasar involves being wait-listed and flying to Melbourne the following morning with no absolute certainty of a berth. Accepting the circumstances, I book a flight to Melbourne, stay overnight in Sydney with my daughter and her fiancé and take my chances in Tullamarine the following morning.

In Melbourne on the following morning, I wait anxiously for an available seat allocation. A distraught family misses their flight due to passport problems. Their misfortune is my gain. The travel gods see fit to grant me free passage.

I had not travelled to Bali since passing through in 1990. I chose to stay in Ubud, the island's artistic centre, where I booked for an overnight stay in a bungalow calling itself Villa Kerti Yasa,

which in Balinese translates as “great blessing”. A modest retreat in the village of Nyuh Kuning on the “undeveloped side” of the Monkey Forest, it did indeed prove to be a place of blessing. And it was there, in that atmosphere of peace and harmony that I stayed and focused on my studies.

Set among the rice paddies, Villa Kerti Yasa with its harmoniously landscaped and luxuriant tropical garden, offered me a refuge from the fragmenting demands of running a large and developing Steiner School of 450 students and 50 full or part-time teachers. Despite being situated among other idyllic green hills, those of Mullumbimby in Northern New South Wales, the School still had to meet the maddening compliance demands of a post modern globalised world.

Ubud itself had embraced the tourist inspired commercialism that many feared would debase the island culture – in 1990, Monkey Forest Road was still an unsealed lane that passed through the rice paddies – but I found the people to have maintained their equanimity, poise and grace. That this was still the case was aided in no small measure by their continued participation in a richly, inspired culture incorporating a complex religious calendar of devotion and ceremony. Every day each household make daily offerings to the deities. Without them, life would be intolerable. Even modern appliances, such as their motor vehicles, are the objects of daily offerings.

Journal Entry, September 2004 continued...

Here, in Ubud where I have started my writing, local custom and respect for place resist and absorb the shock of the homogeneity that accompanies globalisation. Culture, spirit and location coexist on an equal footing with the modern world and

assists my writing in becoming a creative act, and, as Richardson (1994) proposes, a method of inquiry.

In this ambiance of formalised yet undemanding rhythm, I found myself falling into a simple cycle of daily routine – waking, washing, eating, study and sleeping. I walked most places for exercise and to relieve the tedium of sitting. The hawkers soon recognised me as ‘local’ and stopped offering me ‘trarnzpot?’ [sic] and ‘yu bay chip?’ [sic].

Being a keen cyclist, I hired a mountain bike in order to visit outlying areas.

Journal Entry, September 2004 continued...

I have been regularly riding my bike around the hills of the Byron hinterland and having recently toured the South Island of New Zealand, I am delighted to find mountain bikes for hire along Monkey Forest Road. I select a bike that appears to be roadworthy and set about negotiating the infamous Balinese traffic. Fresh from watching Lance Armstrong win his sixth Tour de France on SBS, I struggle to overcome the linear and goal driven emphasis of Western culture within myself. Speed, purpose and even destination lose significance in a culture where spatial awareness and relationship to all sentient things is paramount. On the road, I am being asked to become far more aware: it is also an abode of territorial dogs, flocks of rice-paddy ducks marching home from work, roosters and chickens (giving the perennial question of: ‘Why did the chicken cross the road?’ new meaning), children, pedestrians, religious processions, road works, without mentioning the honking motorised traffic of weaving motor cycles. Ridiculously

laden low-powered cycles with goods in transit imitate crazy circus-acts, balancing tall bags of recycled rubbish, self-styled saddlebags of groceries and a whole family! 'Pak' is driving, 'Ibu' rides as a pillion passenger with baby in arms and Wayan (eldest son) is perched on the petrol tank.

One of my the places I regularly visit is Goa Gajah with its well known 'Elephant Cave' and ancient ninth century bathing temple.

Journal Entry, September 2004 continued...

Ceremonial steps lead down to two separate pools where sculpted water divas pour libations of spring water. Across to the left, a cave entrance into the hill was artfully carved into the mouth of a benign eyed, protective deity. For some reason, it is called the 'Elephant Cave'. At the end of the entry gallery, the cave made a T intersection. The gallery to the left housed a shrine devoted to the Hindu god Ganesha and the gallery to the right, with its black lingam stones, was dedicated to Shiva. Carved meditation niches lined the walls and a cultivated atmosphere of equanimity prevailed.

It was, however, a small out of the way shrine that left a deep impression on me. It was respectfully built to accommodate a gushing spring. Carrying my western dross of worldliness, I had to steady myself as I stepped into that ambience of cleansing energy – that of the 'goddess of the spring'. Feeling faint, I breathed deeply and mumbled a mantric prayer, allowing the burdens of work, real or imagined, to slip off tired shoulders in the gentle wash of the spilling water.

I had experienced places like this before: that active energy of deep peace at Chalice Well in Glastonbury, the message of love in the crypt of St. Francis' humble tomb in Assisi, at Cadbury Castle in front of the Celtic "faerie" doors between this and the other world and observing the humble piety of witness before the magnificent gold-leafed iconostasis painted by Andrei Rublev in the Cathedral of the Trinity situated within the fortified monastery of Zagorsk, forty kilometers outside the city of Moscow.

Journal Entry, September 2004 continued...

Refreshed, I pass through the temple, down a steep stairway, to the ruins of a Buddhist stupa, then down further to the plunging banks of the Petanu River. I followed its cascading course to the relief carving of Yeh Pelu and discovered along the way, carefully attended river side shrines every thirty or forty meters.

I recall when my colleagues and I were developing the Shearwater School and how we wanted to bring into being an inclusive social structure. We took as our departure the Balinese cultural model, which acknowledges the body, soul and spirit. During the day, many of the people of Bali work in the fields tending the rice crops and making a living. In the evening, they participate in artistic activities celebrating their religious festivals and on special occasion (which were many) they were actively engaging in religious ceremony.

Work is something we do well in the West, but artistic activity is often regarded as something separate and apart. At Shearwater we looked to include artistic activity as an important element of our working day. Out of small beginnings, the School's signature yearly community performance event, the Wearable Arts Vision in Education (WAVE) production came in to being. Spiritual activity

was actively encouraged but was considered a personal matter, catered to through the personal study of Anthroposophy.

Working on my studies in Bali on that first visit proved to be successful. I returned to work on my thesis three more times. I could write without interruption and little distraction. I also found that being removed from Australia, allowed me to reflect on the thesis content from a distance and provide that ‘...vital perspective for writing’ that was important for the work of the Australian expatriate writer, David Malouf (The Book Club 1988: <http://aso.gov.au/titles/tv/book-show-david-malouf/clip1/>). In Bali, away from work and place, I was able to consider the area of research (2004), write the autobiographical entries about Tasmania (2005), research and write about place that would provide material for a literature review (2006), and prepare the autobiographical material about my work at the Lorien Novalis School in Sydney (2006). In 2007, I was able to write about the Northern Territory and my sojourn in Darwin.

With the encouragement of my supervisor, I began to realise that I was also, as the sum of my work and my experiences in place, the repository for the content of a meaningful thesis. Rather than follow a traditional autobiographical approach, I decided then to allow place and the songlines that connect them, tell my story. Later, in rereading what I had written and through discussions of my thesis, I realised I was evolving a methodology which challenged the modernist Western paradigm of time with its sequential, linear, goal driven thrust and its accompanying notion of progress. In further reading, I discovered that I was not alone, finding resonance with Somerville’s (2010:326) proposal of ‘an ontology for postmodern emergent methodologies of becoming rather than being (Grosz 1998) ...’ that emphasized ... ‘the irrational, messy, embodied, and unfolding of the becoming self in this research’.

It was in keeping with process of becoming and allowing for aesthetic and textual integrity that takes into account an emergent methodology that I decided to collapse the traditional thesis structure. When editing my thesis draft, I discovered that the chapter I had written as a literature review and the chapter on philosophy privileged

abstraction and reification and the ever-present awareness of place that I was cultivating was subsumed by bodiless and placeless theory. It was not that I wished to remove philosophy or theory from the thesis, but chose to craft and weave it throughout the body of the work. I what I include as acknowledgement of scholarship in the field of place aware theory and discussion is carefully chosen and inserted within the text that implicitly supports my descriptive narrative of experience.

I found the process of writing about place out of place to be fruitful. I commenced a pattern of study, which included journal writing and autobiographical writing. It enabled me to reflect on my work and life experiences and offered opportunities to absorb and consider theory in a contextual and more meaningful way. The writing began to develop as a text in its own right through which the thesis emerged to reveal its truth.

Methods

These included: semi structured qualitative interviews, field notes, transcriptions of interviews, secondary historical sources, unstructured interviews, visits to places of my past, collection of historical primary materials associated with the development of Shearwater (architectural plans, photographs, artworks donated to the school by past students, minutes of meetings, diaries of the early days, school magazine, school newsletters), collection of records from the National Archives, walking my places and places of the school, 'walking interviews', artworks, taking photographs and representations of place made while I was in place, journaling, reflective writing (interviewing the self), writing in place. Many of these overlapped and were clustered around specific events.

Then there are my personal recollections. Some of the recorded conversations took place many years ago, yet they live vividly within the recesses of my memory. I have recreated these exchanges in an interpretative way that seeks to remain true to the spirit of the conversation that took place. To those people who were active in the

conversation and who are still living and are still able to be contacted, I relayed them a draft of my writing. In some cases where the responses were helpful and revealing, I added them to the script. In the case of my father's stories, I consulted my mother while she was still alive and also relied on the recollections of both my brothers. Where discussions with Douglas Waugh are recreated, I have called on former friends and colleagues who were present at the conversation and who had discussed similar content material with him.

Some evaluative researchers may question the veracity of these 'recreated' stories. I did however, find encouragement from autoethnographers who '... value narrative truth based on what a story does – how it is used, understood and responded to ...' (Adams, Bochner & Ellis 2011: 8). Plummer (cited in Adams et al. 2011:8) seeks the 'validity' of a work in 'verisimilitude', in that it evokes in readers '... a feeling that the experience is lifelike, believable and possible ...', that the story could be true. Bochner (cited in Adams et al. 2011:8) is more concerned with the question: 'How useful is the story?' and 'To what uses might the story be put?'

In my reflections of Hobart, I sourced memories of place other than my own, in describing the tall ships on the Derwent River. In the Battery Point night sky, I find memories of a personal nature, of a Spanish location from a deeper past, and my father's story becomes a portal for ancestral memories of Central Asia. The inclusions of historical sketches of places relevant to my life are attempts to capture the collective memory and experiences that belong to those places. I believe the ambiance and atmosphere of place – best captured by writers and visual artists – adds to the profound impact that geography has on the people who live there, particularly during the formative years of childhood.

I visited Tasmania a number of times during the data collection period of the research. In 2005, I visited my ageing mother. Although frail, she was mentally alert and her memory still sharp. With her, I checked the details of my account of the family history. I also visited Ulverstone, my birthplace and place of my childhood. The

Ulverstone Museum kept a remarkable cross-section of archival material of the local area. With the help of Judy Buckley, who I had known as a young girl herding cattle along Gawler Road past my childhood home with her late father Merv Wright, I was directed to interesting archival material for my research. Later that week in Hobart, I was able to conduct further research at the State Archives of Tasmania.

In 2011, I needed to find refuge once more in order to develop my body of writing. Alison, my supervisor, had moved to Hobart. My younger brother owned a historic two-storey sandstone house inland and west of Dysart, some sixty kilometers outside of Hobart where my niece was in residence. It was a place where I could stay. I took the opportunity in May to travel to Hobart and spent valuable time concentrating on finding the centre of my thesis. I also spent two quiet weeks writing the material on the Byron Bay area. Once again, I required the perspective of distance to complete my writing.

During 2008, I found time to work on my thesis without needing to travel. I conducted an intense study of Steiner's biography, philosophy and epistemological work as a foundation for the educational philosophy of what has become known as Steiner Education and its seamless relationship to place.

Displaced

Maximum outer engagement, minimum inner attachment ... (D Waugh, n.d., pers. comm.).

A serious professional turn of events occurred during the end of 2007. Despite the cultural success and health of Shearwater the school was under financial stress. Student enrolments had reached 650 and staff, including administrative staff and groundsmen numbered 70. The various building programs had realised the construction of architectural award-winning buildings, including Primary School classrooms, library and communication, movement and craft facilities and an administration block. The rate of growth was outstripping its capacity to raise finances at short notice.

Shearwater had developed an aura of charisma. As Gillian Rogers, a long-term parent, teacher and board member at the school recalls:

It became more and more apparent that many forces were at work in the school that betrayed a kind of rampant misdirected egotism at work amongst the many new players attempting to shape the future direction of the school. At this time many individuals were also intent on carving a niche out for themselves. (G Rogers, 2013, pers. comm. 5 January)

Despite the fact that I was the Director of Teaching, and not the administrator, I was the one who bore the brunt of the combination of financial stress and this jostling for ownership of the school. I was asked to leave Shearwater.

The job was difficult enough without this loss of support. The personal attrition that accompanied the building of a school that had grown rapidly had also taken its toll. I was not up for a prolonged destructive conflict. As the Director of Teaching, I was consciously aware of making myself redundant by continually restructuring management roles and passing on responsibilities. The rapid growth of the School made this a necessity. I had confidence in the staff that they could sustain the core values of the School's educational direction. Based on my perceived support of the genuine ongoing needs of the School, I resigned quietly to appease the mounting factionalism that would allow the school to recover its equanimity.

I was compelled to question the nature of my engagement in education and the completion of my thesis. Shearwater was at the heart of the work. Over time, I decided to include my severance from the school and my disengagement from place as part of the story of my writing. This part of my journey became a critical part of the songline, which was only revealed as I reached the completion of my journey with the thesis.

It did more than this. It enabled me to throw off the jackets and layers and roles of encumbrance that I had acquired. Having these stripped away, I had an opportunity

to reconfigure and remake my own identity. The researcher, the self, represented in the writing then was no longer fixed and I had to start to consider the aspect of representation of the self-as-other in the process of knowledge making in the thesis. As I came face to face with the ethnographic and postmodern challenge of representation (Denzin & Lincoln 1994) the paradigm of what I understood to be my methodology was burst. What emerged were not only new seeds, from which something could grow, but also an elemental force of movement with which to disperse them: a wind on which the seeds are carried. And on that wind, I heard once more the melody of the songlines that enlivened those places along the songlines that were threatening to become fixed.

I was thrown back on myself and was able to reconnect with another strand of my identity - myself as teacher, myself as carrier of a way of education.

Subsequent reading led me to Anderson and Braud's (2011:xvi) use of the term *individual and personal transformation* to describe this method as a way of informing research practice that can bring about '... increased self-awareness, enhanced psycho-spiritual growth and development, and other personal changes of great consequence ...'.

Songline of the Teacher.

A white explorer in Africa anxious to press ahead with his journey paid his porters for a series of forced marches. But they, almost within reach of their destination, set down their bundles and refused to budge. No extra payment would convince them otherwise. They said they had to wait for their souls to catch up. (Chatwin 1987:229)

Displaced from the school I had founded, I still carried the seeds of the place-consciousness I had developed in Shearwater.

Attending the annual Conference of Anthroposophical Society in Australia, in

Adelaide allowed me to reconnect to people and to my self. As an adjunct to the conference, a camping trip to Brachina Gorge in the Flinders Ranges assisted me in finding a new relationship to place and an attempt to find out about myself through place and through representations of place in writing:

Reflective Response to Brachina Gorge –A Fragment

Sun-fired stones,
Forsaken shards of ruined cities
Clink beneath my feet.

Above, tower monoliths, monuments to memories
That neither bards nor the keepers of history
Can recall.

Battlements and watchtowers tilt at random angles,
Cast aside by titanic upheaval,
Whose forgotten subterranean stirrings
leave no other sign of cause.
Like a herald with an urgent missal,
A gusting wind, animated and troubled,
Rushes through the crumbling ruins,
In search of a recipient.

Like twisted limbs with bones exposed, broken ranges
Arc and meander serpentine,
In artfully modulated corrugations,
Ancient mnemonic layers folding in undine waves,
Pleasing the archaic sensibilities of unseen eyes.
Dry riverbed cuts through primal gorge,
Abandoned cross-section of an archaeological dig,
Rhythmic patterns of a story revealed.
Here are found petrified hieroglyphs
Sentential strata and geomorphic paragraphs.

Periodic unconformity reveals
epochal tomes with chapter headings
Borrowed from Lyell's Celtic imagination:
Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian.

A distant voice resonates deep within,
Giving voice to that ancient script,
Promising to unfold mythic sagas:
Vision of a departing Moon,
Oceans of dreaming stromatolites
quicken a vaporous orb,
Floral-faunal forms swirling diaphanous in Lemurian seas.

Could it be that this ciphered memory is also my memory?
Do the Dickensonia, - the humble segmented flatworm -
And I share a common ancestor?

As I struggle to decode the fossil glyphs
Of the paleontological record
I ask myself:
Are the myriad forms of nature
Ontogenetic signs we ourselves have left behind,
Like footprints on the path through the forest,
Reminding us of our primal origins?

I turn my gaze inward and behold
The endless layers of personal memory,
No less perplexing and mysterious:
The cascading conglomerate record of carefree childhood,
The rhythmic layers of middle age deposition,
The fine, sifted drifts of considered mudstone maturity.
Then the trials of the soul;
From deep within the testing fires purify,
Cool waters soothe and form,
Winds shape and sculpt.

And what landscape shall I leave behind me?
As I slough off the cicada-shell of my earthly sheath,
Shall my song still be heard?
Will it be bourn to others by a haunting wind?
Who might they be
In newly found form
Those, whose percussive footsteps,
Pass over the imprint of my deeds?
Will I be one among them?
Searching for a memory of long ago?

Konrad Korobacz, January 2009

During the conference, the Milkwood Steiner School in Darwin sent an urgent call of assistance: they needed a teacher.

Deirdre (my wife) and I considered the offer of this job as a teacher in Darwin. It was a lifeline in the creation of new personal and professional direction for myself. Darwin was familiar to us. We had been there twenty years earlier. It would give me distance from Shearwater with its internecine struggles. It could help me get back in touch with the day-to-day learning needs of children. Without Deirdre by my side, a part of myself felt like I was going into exile. Deirdre and I had lived and worked closely together for twenty-one years and we had known each other for thirty-five. Within two weeks I had packed the Toyota Prado with some basic possessions and left Mullumbimby, setting off on the road trip to Darwin via outback Queensland. The siren call of the songlines held me in its thrall once more.

Returning to Darwin took me back to a place I had inhabited earlier in my life. The place there is timeless. But I was different. And again I was there as a teacher. I had become a different teacher and by the time I had left I was a different teacher again.

After ten years of educational administration I became a class teacher again to twenty-seven children primary at the Milkwood Steiner School. These children were of varying ages between seven and nine and formed a composite Class 1, 2 & 3. In meeting the learning demands of this group, I threw myself into the task at hand and rediscovered my love and enthusiasm of primary school education. That lived experience occurred during the process of making and writing this thesis and this lived, reflexive time was folded into the process of research. While at Milkwood I met Di Lucas and was able to observe her work in place conscious education. I was experiencing teaching and observing place making, a reversal of my time at Shearwater where I was experiencing place making and observing teaching.

Another reflexive move occurred during my stay in Darwin. In order to meet the registration requirements of the Northern Territory Registration Board, I needed to acquire a teaching credential. I had taught exclusively in NSW for thirty-five years, where a teaching credential in education was not required until relatively recently. Given my teaching experience and completed Masters units, I was given credit for four units of work but was expected to complete an extra four of the course units. During this course of my study, I became an academic observer of my own practices.

Direct work on my thesis came to a stop.

It was also during 2010 that Shearwater reached its lowest point when it was passed into voluntary administration and consequently ‘... subject to the dictates of bureaucrats and financiers.’ (R Tomlinson, 2010, pers. comm. March 12)

On my return from Darwin to my home in Mullumbimby I entered into an intense period of data collection. It was at this time that I did all my interview work with a sense of detachment created by my sojourn in the Northern Territory. I had come back a different person. I thought the thesis was under control, I enjoyed the data collection process. But my professional life direction was unclear, and shifting.

It was at this time that Deirdre and I decided to travel to Uluru , ‘... a powerful place of spiritual and cultural significance as is acknowledged by Indigenous culture’ (Watson 1990).

Journal Entry, April 2011

This place hums with energy and life. I recall New York and my astonishment at the manmade Manhattan skyline and its pulsating energy that throbbed unceasingly like a great generator. This is different. The energy is youthful and fresh. I'm confused. One reads about how ancient this continent is yet out here life flows freely and easily as from an artesian spring. It had been raining out here. The spinifex, mulga, grevilleas and desert oaks that make up the four hundred plus species of plants that live here are shining and glistening in an extraordinary display of green, that contrasts in a pleasing way with the red of the soil and the great monolith itself.

I write now and re-read the journal entry and immediately I hear that deep resonating hum and am drawn back into that moment of possibilities of knowing.

The energy here is more inward and mysterious and the voices of my inner dialogue noisy. It is said that all the major energy paths cross here forming a nexus point. I feel as if I were standing in the centre of a compass rose from which all directions are possible

‘What am I doing here?’ I ask myself in reflection. ‘My songline doesn't run through here!’

‘But it is connected, never-the-less,’ interrupted another voice.

‘You want change? There are many pathways you might care

to choose.'

This inner confrontation was scary. One could daydream and wish about wanting a change of direction but being offered wide-awake alternatives was sobering and demanded responsibility.

The change in direction did come. I was offered the position of Principal of Yallingup Steiner School, near Margaret River, Western Australia. There I have been able to consciously take the model of place conscious education developed at Shearwater, and bring my experience to bear in response to the needs of the School.

Out of the Western Australian wildflowering, and my deep interest in Goethe's morphology, has emerged the metaphor that I have used to structure this thesis.

The Structure of the Thesis

Empathising with Goethe's restless need to escape from the ever-increasing demands and duties asked of him as personal counsellor and advisor to Karl August, Duke of Sachse Weimar, I read with interest his *Italian Journey* (Goethe 1970). Imbuing himself with nature and the Classical art of Italy, Goethe found the inner transformation he sought for. Part of this process involved a deep penetration in to the secrets of nature and what was revealed to him. Through his observation of phenomena and the unfolding of his own inner activity, he was able to lay down the foundations for an evolutionary or developmental way of understanding life, a way of seeing appropriate for its study in which '...idea and experience comprehensively interpenetrate each other, mutually enliven one another, and become one whole' (Steiner 1988:6). This came to fruition in his theory of metamorphosis and in particular, *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (Goethe 1978).

In his observation of the growth and development of the leaf, Goethe (1978) noticed that in their ever-changing, in their mutability, they stayed true to a determining life force that was unchanging. He observed that each leaf, though different from the others, acknowledged the one that came before and provided a platform for the leaf that would follow. It was as though an unseen force breathed out a

leaf, breathed in and then breathed out another leaf with a different form and then withdrew again. With every contraction and expansion a change took place.

Goethe observed three active and determining principles without which no organic enfolding development could occur: metamorphosis (its quality of unceasing transformation and change as found expressed in organic nature), polarity (the duality expressed in nature: day/night, light/dark, height/depth, hot/cold) and enhancement (when observed in organic nature, the tendency of organisms at all stages, to seek new and emerging elaborations and expressions of self).

Goethe also maintained that if we can comprehend the developmental laws of the archetypal picture of the plant, we have access to the 'holy open secret' from which nature issues forth in each plant. Every expression of change realised in the plant world is a manifestation of the Primal Plant's capacity to accommodate the surrounding conditions of the outer world and each other. The outer conditions (latitude, climate, soil, availability of water) bring the primary inner formative forces into being in a particular way.

Using the metaphor of plant metamorphoses, I found that a Steiner School might be thought of as a seed that takes root, develops stem and leaf, buds, blossoms and fruits, releasing new seeds, which have the potential to be carried to a new location and again take root. Each Steiner School finds its unique identity and character as it responds to different outer conditions. I have framed my thesis with this in mind in order to give it a living structure. Initially I was tempted to place the chapters in a neat chronological order, complete with the sequential development of form as expressed by plants from seeding to fruiting. I found this, however, not in keeping with the emergent nature of the work that allows place to tell the story.

Goethe's *Italian Journey* recorded the events and observations of his extended travels. He allowed the idea of the Archetypal Plant to emerge in a synthetic way,

following continual interplay between reflection and observations. This led me to rearrange the chapters in the way that best corresponded to my relationship to place and education. I emphasised this consideration by inserting my autobiographical writings as a folio between each of the chapters with the title *Songlines of Learning*.

Introduction

Chapter One

Metamorphoses

Chapter Two

Rooting, Sprouting and Leafing

Place of Convergence

The Establishment of Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School as a Centre of Place-Conscious Education.

Chapter Three

Seeding

A Call to Mindful Action

Chapter Four

Polarity

Knowledge of the World and Self-knowledge.

How do I Know the World and How do I Learn?

New Ways of Learning.

Chapter Five

Budding and Flowering

Establishment of Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School as a Centre of Place-Conscious Education

Chapter Six

Enhancement

Fruiting

Working Artistically in Place

The Wearable Arts Vision in Education (WAVE)

Chapter Seven

Seeding

Conclusion

In these folios, I have chosen those stories, recollections and reflections from the course of my life that relate directly to experiences, observations of the place, people and events that have influenced the development of my vocation in education. I have also included a selective history of my places in acknowledgement of the role they have played shaping what I have become and in navigating my life's journey that has lead me to places, people and experiences that have become part of my learning.

In this way the songline of my autobiography, reflection, the voice and stories of colleagues and the stories of my places begin to dialogue with the chapter content with its historical perspective, literature review of place and place conscious education, educational theory and emerging methods of teaching practice. The conversation becomes noisy and argumentative at times, at odds with itself and often problematic. It is in these moments of contestation that fresh thoughts and new directions often arose. It also identifies this thesis as product of my lived experience as a learner and a teacher and in context to the time in which and the places where I have and continue to live.

Methodology

This thesis relies on an emergent methodology – that is the methodology emerged out of the process of the research itself. In applying the practice of palimpsest - a narrative of 'layered of voices' (Aoki 2005) – I am seeking to create what Somerville (2010) perceives as '... an ontology for postmodern emergent methodologies of becoming rather than being (Grosz 1998) ...' (326) that treats the self as a work in progress, in a continual state of becoming and inherently multiple.

In acknowledging place as inextricably bound to self, I have discovered that '... in trying to understand place, I am trying to understand myself' (Yi Fu Tuan (2004:45).

The use of the Shearwater school with which I was so integrally involved meant that I needed to locate myself in the research in a way that was rigorous. I needed to make clear my subjectivity and to hold that up for examination by the reader.

My initial teacher learning occurred within the Steiner education system. Steiner Education considers teacher learning and the development of the teacher as critical to the ongoing enrichment of creative educational practice (Rawson 2010). Consequently my personal learning is an integral component of my ongoing professional development. Making this visible to the reader became a central strategy of the research and critically informed the methodological choices.

In this thesis I use my learning journey and its relationship to place as an auto-ethnographic lens to explore place conscious education. The challenge was to find a way to examine my biography (its association with place and education) and theory about place while still keeping place and the school present and visible in an act of place consciousness. Out of the shifts and changes, the impossibility of representing myself as a fixed self as other, the presence and absence of place, the constant melody and the ceaseless movement along the songlines, the methodology for this thesis has emerged. The juxtaposition of personal narrative, personal recollections and memories, stories of others, reflective journaling, historical research, stories for children and poetry, and other narrative forms involving place, is an attempt to develop an ethnography of place making.

Powerful forces – water, wind and fire have shaped the places we know and these have left their imprint on us. We in turn ever make our mark on places, continuing to add, erase and transform. The ‘... landscape is both a medium for and an outcome of action and previous outcomes of action’ (Tilley, cited in de Cateret 2009:28). In a world of high population, industrial pollution threatens to indelibly scar the landscape. The challenge today is to become conscious place makers.

In becoming conscious place makers I believe we need to ask: ‘How has place shaped me?’ What can we learn about the places we have made and the effects produced? How can we enter into an intentional and conscious act of place making? Is it possible for place conscious learning methodologies to inform today’s conscious place makers and those of the future?

Just as the landscape is multi-layered, bearing the imprint of the past (natural and human), so do our experiences layer themselves. These experiences and consequent action are in turn inscribed on to place. Layering becomes a complex process that in the hermeneutic language of Gadamer ‘intertwines the self’ with the other that fuses intersubjectively in a ‘we’ (Aoki 2005: 212). I suggest that we also intertwine ourselves with the landscape in a way that place becomes part of our identity, something that Australia’s first peoples recognise as a matter of course (Grieves 2009). According to the OED *to lay* is to place on the ground (or other surface). In digging below the surface and revealing buried meanings we give voice to emerging understandings and stories and thus adding new layers. In giving voice to these experiences of place, of community and self and of place itself, I have employed an autoethnographic approach combined with narrative inquiry and autobiography.

‘Auto ethnography uses life experience to generalize to a larger group or culture, as well as to enter and document moment-to-moment, concrete details of a life [which is] an important way of knowing.’ (Ellis & Bochner 2000:737).

In writing this thesis towards the latter part of my life and using my vocational involvement in education as a major part of my content focus, I found my professional and personal journey and its context to place to be inextricably intertwined. Having been troubled by the canonical ways of doing and writing research during my undergraduate studies, the emergence of the new Social Sciences during the 1980s has allowed me to willingly participate as a researcher. In recognizing that the researcher influences the research and that the research in turn has the power to transform the researcher, the lens of inquiry of the world has expanded to accommodate and acknowledge subjectivity and emotionality. Inspired by postmodernist thinkers who rebelled against the master narratives that were inflicted on the public *ex cathedra* (Lyotard 1984) and having understood the importance of the relationship between authors, audience and texts, scholars, writers and artists introduced new ways of reaching people and helping make sense of the world, themselves and others. Personal experience was key to producing evocative and meaningful communication that would

sensitise the audience to issues of identity, empathise with difference in others and give expression to silent inner experience.

I remember clearly when television was made available to Ulverstone and Dad bought our first TV. One of the crime shows I recall watching began every episode with the following observation:

'There are eight million stories in the Naked City and this one of them.'

I soon realized that the eight million referred to the population of New York and that every person had a story. My father told us his story, in fact his life consisted of many stories and so at a very early age I realised that narrative was as ubiquitous as place and that together the number of stories was as endless as the stars.

Being dependent on language, narrative is an elusive medium that has a potent influence in determining human communication. Research narrative is popular, considered difficult and by turns 'inconsequential and deeply meaningful.' Having no clear definition '... there are no self-evident categories on which to focus...' and no covering rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation, or the best level at which to study stories' (Andrews et al. 2008:3).

It is its very refusal to yield to fixed forms and interpretations that makes the chameleon nature of narrative attractive to the emergent nature of this thesis. In experimenting with alternative forms of writing, including autoethnography, personal narrative, and writing stories, I was able to feature some of the 'conventions of literary writing' identified by Ellis (2004) that autoethnographers advocate: '... concrete action, emotion, embodiment, introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot. This has opened a way for me to create multiple layered accounts to explore my research and has allowed for diverse and at times contradictory layers of meaning to dialogue with one another and disrupt any sequential narrative

that threatens to erase deeper meaning and association. It also attempts to invoke readers to enter in to the ‘emergent experience’ of writing research (Ronai 1992), (Somerville 2010) and conceive of identity as an emergent process (Anderson & Braud 2011) in which epiphanal moments that change the trajectory of our lives are given voice. We may come to terms with intense experiences, insights and after images that linger long after the event has taken place (Bochner 1984). It is in these unguarded moments that spiritual intuition (Steiner 1979) occurs, that the possibility of spiritual experience opens. This is not something removed from life but is something that thinkers (Zanjonc 2009; (Bortoft 1996), scientists (Goethe 1978; Lehrs 1958) and artists (Beuys 2004) regard as forming the very matrix of the embodied experience.

Calling on and encouraged by Laurel Richardson’s (2007:923) commitment to writing as ‘... a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about a topic...’ and that ‘... form and content are inseparable ...’, I felt comfortable and confident in viewing my writing as data collection, analysis and representation.

Journal Entry, May 11 2014

Even at this late point in editing the thesis, I continue to be surprised at how in the process of writing, new perceptions about old problems, where the personal are intertwined with the professional, emerge unbidden out of the deposited layers of deeply embedded memory. The problem of how to integrate the ‘Lorien Stream’ of Steiner Education in Australia not only with mainstream education but also with the European model of Steiner Education arises from something that lives within me.

I recognize it is a creation of a deep underground river within that flows inexorably onwards through measureless caverns and determines the journey of my life leading me to meet the experiences that shape my embodied self. I realize that this thesis as a body of research and writing wishes to acknowledge this

hidden river as its source and celebrates those moments when it breaks its way through the layers of compliant deposition to surface momentarily, unbidden and in revealing itself, disappears once more. When it wells up and springs forth, it ululates like the sylvan laughter of children, which not unlike Prospero's castle, vanishes in the face of clumsy intrusion.

Within the camera of my creation, I perceive that I have allowed my writing to become a form of meditative reflection and contemplative inquiry, where my personal journey- the '*voyage interieur*' meets the songlines of my embodied learning. And so, in the spirit of Odysseus – though I have a nagging concern that it may be more in the spirit of Coleridge's ancient mariner, I invite the reader to embark on this vessel of words and accompany me on my journey on the sea of events and places that is my life and that informed the experiment of building place conscious education schools and practices.

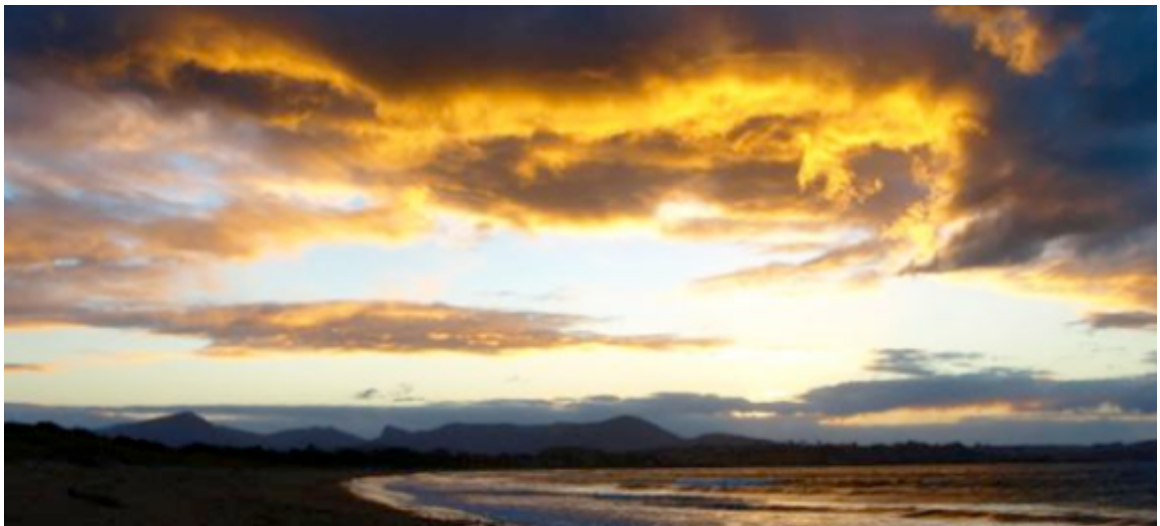
The use and opening up of my meaning making, my self and my places to the scrutiny of others is presented as a means of revealing and uncovering that which might be important in becoming conscious place makers and place conscious educationalists.

Songlines of Learning

My Learning Places

1

Place of Birth



Understanding Place

Understanding Self

In this the first of my folios I set out to give voice to the place of my birth, Tasmania. I allow it to speak through personal recollection, the stories of my parents and my brothers, the challenged imagination of explorers and the artist, John Glover and the historical narrative of English settlement. Through my writing and work in education, the reader may discern the deep influences this place has made on my work and me.

Partial histories are completely impossible. Each history must be a world history; for, only through its relationship to all of history is the historical treatment of an individual situation possible. (Novalis, quoted in Barnwell 1999:411)

Once more I find myself sitting at a desk. This time I am editing this folio, with its focus on the songlines of my life and learning. I have just returned after a walk along Whale Cove, a small beach that nestles among enormous granite boulders, overlooking the vast body of sheltered water that is King George's Sound, where three ore carrying vessels lay at anchor. We have never been here before. The port town of Albany reclines easily on the edge of Princess Royal Harbour. It is the Labor Day long weekend holiday and Deirdre and I have rented a country accommodation on the outskirts of town. The walk along the pristine water's edge, over clean white sand has stimulated my blood circulation and filled my lungs with clean air and the wind has cleared away the detritus of stale thought. As we drive away from Whale Cove, its name reminds us of the old whaling station in nearby Frenchman's Bay that only closed down as late as 1978, where thousands of whales were processed after being slaughtered. Images of bloodied seas draw a bleak cloud over our mood. I read later that the ships that transported convicts to Western Australia were whaling ships, which after delivering their wretched payload, turned to hunting whales on their return journey.

The gently breaking waves and the scent of pungent seaweed is still washing over me as an after-mage as I find myself reflecting on the layering effect of human and natural

activities on the landscape. The convict past of Albany, the forced removal of local Aborigines, the Nyoongar people, the stern stone buildings erected by the town fathers in the nineteenth century break through the surface of the present, what Gerry O'Reilly (Mels 2004) termed 'pentimento', like the exposed monumental granite batholiths that surround the town. In turn, their presence leaves its impression on me. As an adult I can choose to stay or leave. As a child, the impress on my life of the environment, natural and cultural did its work. Until adulthood, I had little or no choice about staying or leaving.

I recall the following conversation I had at Kormilda College in Darwin with William, an Indigenous student from the Top End. It provided an epiphanal moment that revealed my relationship to place.

'Sir, where you from?' asked William gently.

'I was born and grew up on the North-West Coast of Tasmania,' I replied.

He looked puzzled.

'Its down here in the South, an island off the Mainland, like Goulburn Island, where your mob comes from, but on the other side of Australia,' I volunteered.

He frowned, and shuffled in his newly issued white sneakers.

'Sir, where's your mob,' he asked apologetically, as if intruding.

'My mob live in Fannie Bay, Sydney, Hobart and Adelaide.' Then as an afterthought, I added, 'Germany and Russia.'

Now his puzzled frown became concern and pain. With a nod of acknowledgement and unable to contain his embarrassment for me he turned away.

On reflection, I realised William was sorry for me. At worst, he may have considered me an outcast, flung far from home, isolated from country, family and ceremony.

To know a place is also to know the past. (Tuan 1975:65)

Place Of Birth: Castra

A most magnificent country... Its soils and forest are not to be surpassed in Tasmania. (Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Crawford of the Third Bombay European Regiment quoting James Erskine Calder, The Crown Surveyor's description of a tract of land between the Mersey and Leven Rivers, quoted in Shakespeare 2004:233).

I was born on a sunny autumn day in March 1951 in the Leven Bank Hospital in Ulverstone, Tasmania. Soon after, I was taken to my first home in Upper Castra, a Forestry Commission home that was allocated to my father, Viktor, earlier that year. He had cleared the ubiquitous blackberries and killed over a dozen black snakes and tiger snakes, and, for some unknown reason, which was then customary, ceremonially draped them over the nearest fence. My mother, Lisa, skilled in craft, transformed the interior of the house with reminders of her hometown in Germany.

A year and a half earlier, on September 15th 1949, my parents, together with my older brother, Victor Jr. disembarked in Melbourne after a long and tedious four-week journey from Naples on the *Nelly*. They were bussed with 1,560 other New Australians to the Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre on the outskirts of Wodonga near the Victoria/New South Wales border.

My father, Viktor was not the type of man to hang about in the migrant camp at Bonegilla. As part of the condition of immigration, the men were expected to give two years of service to a Government Department. Many went to work on the Snowy Mountains' Hydro Electric Scheme. Asked to choose between working the sugar cane fields of Far Northern Queensland or in the pine plantations of Tasmania, my father chose to work for the Forestry Commission in Tasmania, clearing and planting acres of *pinus radiata*. Together with a number of other migrant men, they crossed a stormy Bass Strait in early October, on the *SS Taroon* and disembarked in Burnie.

The Settlement of Castra

From the northern slopes of Tasmania's Central Highlands, the Leven River flows through wilderness and rolling farmland and then through picturesque town of Ulverstone before emptying into Bass Strait.

The Leven was given its name by Van Diemen's Land Company surveyors in 1826, who passed off its pastoral aspirations for the wilderness that once covered the idyllic farm landscapes of my childhood, as too daunting a prospect. Later, the historian James Fenton when visiting the Government-employed surveyor Nathaniel Lipscomb Kentish, who was working in the Leven district with a gang of probation convicts, wrote of his overnight stay in his *Bush Life in Tasmania*:

We found the back country as far as we went – and that was not very far – densely scrubbed, broken by hills and gullies; in short, a 'desolate, howling wilderness.' (Quoted in The 'primeval wilderness' that was Leven country 1981)

In contrast, some forty years later, James Erskine Calder, the Crown Surveyor described a tract of land between the Mersey and Leven Rivers as '[A] most magnificent country... Its soils and forest are not to be surpassed in Tasmania.' (Quoted in Shakespeare 2004:233).

Following retirement from military service in India, many British soldiers found it difficult to acclimatize and assimilate into English society. Having visited Tasmania whilst on leave, Colonel Crawford of the Third Bombay European Regiment was impressed by what he experienced and so wrote – and had published – his *Letters to the Officers of H.M. Indian Services* which extolled the virtues of Tasmania's air, water, climate and soil, urging those seeking an alternative to England, to settle in Castra, the area described by Calder. As a result, paying £640 each for a three hundred acre block on speculation, forty-one retired officers immigrated to Tasmania and uncleared wilderness, which they promptly referred to as 'jungle'.

Only twenty of the original community remained in 1880. One of those who fared well was Edward Braddon (later Sir Edward Braddon), a successful senior Anglo Indian administrator who was later elected Premier of Tasmania and ended up being instrumental in drafting the Australian Constitution and supporting the cause of Federation.

Isandula

On arrival in Burnie and together with five other immigrant men, my father was immediately dispatched to the isolated Forestry Commission camp of Isandula, located some thirty kilometers inland from the coastal town of Ulverstone.

Wives and families were left at Bonegilla, until decent accommodation could be arranged. When this didn't look like it was happening, letters from Viktor urged Lisa and young Victor to come nevertheless. Undaunted by red tape, Lisa organized for my three year old brother, Victor, and another small family, Hedwig Savchenko (whose husband Peter also worked at the camp), and their daughter Nadia to make the final journey over Bass Strait with her.

Flying from Melbourne to Launceston, they took the train to Ulverstone and hired a taxi (driven by Don Bates who was to become a life-long friend) to take them

up into the bush of Isandula where, to the delight of the respective husbands, they found the forestry camp.

On weekend summer days, laden with billies and other enamel containers, family and friends would drive the winding gravel road inland, up into the hills of Isandula to harvest blackberries and laurels. The point of disembarkation was the home of the Michalski's, friends of the family who lived in a Forestry Commission home opposite a plantation of neatly planted pine trees (pinus radiata). The blackberries, which thrived in the North-West, and were something the farmers considered a pest, grew in profusion along the edge of the plantation, between a vehicle access road and the fence that marked the boundary of the neighbouring farmer. Ripe berries hung off prickly, barbed fronds and were picked with care, not so much as to preserve the delicate fruit, but to avoid being seriously scratched.

After some hours harvesting, leaving laden billies with our parents and mouths and fingers smeared magenta, we ran off to play in the pine forest. It was a magical place, with a soft, flat needle-strewn floor, cleared of the obstacles that generally blocked one's way in the Tasmanian bush. The dark green canopy soughed overhead and the ever-present wind was held at bay from penetrating to the forest floor. Here we played variations of Cowboys and Indians or Romans and Barbarians, building pine needle fortifications and hiding places. When tired of these games, we would explore the western edge of the plantation and locate the two prefabricated, barrack-style huts, overgrown with blackberries. We rarely dared enter them, fearful of black snakes. This was the place where my father, together with five

other immigrant men, had camped in and worked at after their arrival in Australia.

Causing consternation among Forestry Commission officials (the camp was no place for women and children) the Forest Ranger Jack D'Emden promptly located more appropriate housing. Viktor and his family, together with the Savchenkos, were allocated an abandoned farmhouse in Upper Castra. It was in urgent need of repair. The decaying shingle roof was replaced with corrugated iron and the dilapidated rooms cleared.

The Farthest Place

In the early days of settlement around Sydney Cove, *Terra Incognita* lived up to its reputation for mystery and inhospitality, giving little respite to the convict colony attempting to transplant British culture on an alien environment. At best, little effort was made to try and comprehend an ancient continent that had until 1788 an uninterrupted Aboriginal occupation of up to 60 000 thousand years. The First Fleet was an ark of European animals, plants, equipment and people totally born out of and adapted to their European origins. To further disadvantage the fledgling colony were the convicts who were expected to transform the wilderness into a counterpart of their land of origin. Most however were thieves and miscreants from the streets of London and had little knowledge of farming, building or engineering. Very few were skilled with a trade. The self-interested New South Wales Corps, sent to supervise the convicts, soon monopolised any trade (particularly rum), fell foul of the Governors (culminating with the so called Rum Rebellion) and acquired the most productive land with preferential allocations of convict labour.

Under British Navy administration, the colony struggled to survive its infant years and was totally reliant on British Government support to feed it. The crops failed, the cattle herd was lost, supplies ran dangerously low, the convicts were reluctant to work and the hot unfamiliar antipodean weather patterns and unforgiving vegetation all conspired to undermine morale and drive the small population to drink and dissolution.

Also, having earned the enmity of the Eora, the local Aboriginal population led by their warrior leader, Pemulwuy, the early colony faced daily a frustrating guerrilla campaign against them, which seriously threatened its existence (Willmot 1988). Nevertheless, with the determination and unbending will that characterized the British Administration, the colony survived and expanded.

In 1798, George Bass, an adventurous ship's surgeon and Matthew Flinders an enthusiastic disciple of James Cook, circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land proving it to be an island. In June 1802, the scurvy-ridden crew of the French corvette, the *Geographe*, appeared off the Heads, to be followed by its sister ship the *Naturaliste* two weeks later. Commanded by Nicholas Baudin, the ships were part of a French scientific expedition to the southern lands during a peaceful interlude in the Napoleonic Wars. Much to the alarm of the anti Republican Governor, Philip Gidley King, Baudin had sailed up the east coast of Van Diemen's Land and named the prominent features after members of his crew. These included Cape Peron and Freycinet Peninsula. Despite the delicate relation between Britain and France, Governor King allowed them to land in order to regain their health and, later, to take on provisions.

Fanned by rumour of French colonial intentions for Van Diemen's Land, King commissioned Lieutenant Governor Collins to establish a settlement on the Derwent River estuary. In August 1803, Captain Ebor Bunker unloaded a party of 49 passengers off the *Lady Nelson* and the *Albion* at Risdon Cove. In October of the same year, King organized a larger force of 181 and the British Government authorized Colonel Paterson, head of the New South Wales Corps, to establish a northern settlement at Point Dalrymple at the head of the Tamar River. The settlements at Risdon Cove and York Town were dismal failures and both moved to sites that later proved successful: Hobart and Launceston.

Hobart, 1989

It was a desolate, overcast day as I struggled up the steep incline of Colville St and onto Hampden Road. Making my way around the



Replica of *The Windward Bound*, a two masted brigantine on the Derwent River.

quaint mariner's cottages of Arthur's Circus, a chance meeting with Ike Solomon seemed more likely than clutching hold of those elusive threads of destiny. As the mist descended, I ventured onto Princes Park, home of the battery built in 1818. The grey mist hung shroud-like over the Derwent River. As if on some Theatre Royal repertory cue, a Thespian wind opened up the grey curtain to reveal a ghostly flotilla of tall ships silently tacking their way up the Estuary. In that unguarded moment before realizing that this was part of the awaited Bicentenary First Fleet re-enactment, I found myself transported to the Hobart of the early half of the nineteenth century with its convict ships, traders and whalers.

Savage Places

There are, of course, places where the inhabitants do not really interpret their landscape, which results in a sense of alienation. They do not attend to what the land is saying, ignoring what the landscape is trying to communicate. (Brierley 2004:188)

Replacing the troubled rule of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Davey as Lieutenant Governor in 1816, William Sorrell noted pessimistically that the settlement held 'a larger portion, than perhaps ever fell to the same number in any Country, of the most depraved and unprincipled people in the universe.' Reoffending and recalcitrant convicts from new South Wales had been routinely dispatched to Van Diemen's Land.

In 1818, regular shipments of convicts began arriving from England. In order to deal with the worst of the offenders, Sorrell founded a penal settlement of further banishment that was intended and became the hell pit of the English-speaking world. Situated on Sarah Island, 20 miles into Macquarie Harbour from its treacherous and aptly named Hells Gates seaward entrance, it was one of the most isolated places in the world.

During the 1970s my brother Alan worked on a number of fishing boats around the coastline of Tasmania. Sailing as a lone deckhand on Paddy McGrath's forty two foot lobster boat, the *Nelly D*, the two of them were working out wide, catching crayfish off the mouth of the Spero River when they were caught in the onset of a Southerly Buster which churned the surging Indian Ocean swell into a raging force seven storm.

We had collected on board fifty-nine score of crayfish when the weather began to crack up. The Southerly Buster had stirred up the swell to a height of seven meters with its howling winds breaking up the wave crests into swirling spray. Lashing down the cray pots, we were left with only two alternatives: shelter on the leeward side of two rocky islands called the Pyramids off Hibbs Point; or make a run for Strahan. Even with the protection of the Pyramids, the Nelly D would still take a pounding and there was no indication how long the storm would last. Even though sailing to Hell's Gates required four hours of steaming through stormy seas, we decided to make a run for the haven of Strahan.

As the storm descended all around, Paddy took the helm in the wheelhouse where the two of us were tossed about and into and on top of each other. I headed for the living quarters in the fo'c'sle where I huddled in the top bunk in an attempt to prevent myself from being thrown around. This problem was a result of having to sail north with a seven-meter swell surging at forty-five degrees from behind us. The skill of the helmsman was to ride the crest of the wave, without plunging beam first down the other side, and then slide bow first into the trough. On the few occasions this maneuver failed, the Nelly D groaned and creaked, as a plank split and, on another occasion, I crashed heavily on my bunk, which disintegrated under the force of my weight.

We made it to the entrance of Hell's Gates where we noticed the Fianne, a sixty-seven foot steel-hulled fishing boat riding the storm half a mile out to sea. We made shelter in the relative calm, south of the entrance break wall in Pilot Bay where we sighted Albert Reardon's forty-six foot fishing boat.

Here we bagged the 'crays' to protect them from being contaminated by the fresh water of Macquarie Harbour, and then we contacted Albert by radio. He decided to take a shot at getting through the narrow entrance, flanked by the Scylla of the sandbar and the Charybdis of the rock built break wall. We watched apprehensively as Albert negotiated the surging gauntlet with a well-timed run.

Now it was our turn. The angry swell broke into foam and spray and boiled over the sandbar. Coming to meet it from the harbour was the relentless push of the outgoing tide and the flow of a swollen Gordon River. We sailed out to sea to prepare for our run. The danger would be the rogue waves that could break over the Nelly D and dash it into the rocks or expose it to the waves if it foundered on the sandbar. Surfing experience had taught me that waves came in sets. I suggested to Paddy that we count the sets and time our run accordingly. I stood at the side of the wheelhouse and started counting the waves. Without warning or signal either way, Paddy gunned the engine and steered us towards the narrows. Should we succumb in our attempt, I prepared as best I could to abandon ship if required. With an adrenaline surge to match the raging sea we penetrated the entrance and skimmed into the relative calm of the harbour, only just ahead of a monster wave that would have crushed the wheelhouse and wrecked the boat. (A Korobacz, 2008, pers. comm. 20 April).

Surrounded by impenetrable, primal forest, and lashed by the pitiless Westerly winds and Australia's highest rainfall, the convicts suffered severe privation even

before being threatened by the lash of brutal overseers. Many considered hanging a preferable alternative and perpetrated crimes to meet their consequence in the form of capital punishment. The convicts were expected to fell the unique rot resistant and easy to work with Huon Pine (*Decydium cupressinum*) and drag the logs down to the water of the harbour. Considered the best ship's timber in the world, the milled planks were transformed into barks, brigs, schooners and cutters. The rest were shipped to Hobart. Other distinctive timber to be harvested included celery top pine (*Podocarpus asplemfolius*), myrtle (*Betula Antarctica*) and light wood (*Acacia melanocylan*). Also found nearby is King Billy Pine.

Hounded unmercifully and malevolently by Anthony Kemp, a wealthy land owner and trader and former New South Wales Corps officer who had made his wealth through the sale of spirits, Sorrell was replaced in 1821 by a pious, but tough-minded, administrative disciplinarian, Sir George Arthur, after whom the infamous prison of Port Arthur was named (Shakespeare 2004). Making sure he was able to run the island with the autonomy that a separate colony needed, he sincerely believed that he could uphold the morality of mankind and make it good. With experience as a reformer – he had been commandant on the slave island of Honduras –, he was not unhappy in declaring: ‘The whole territory is one large penitentiary’ (Cited in Shakespeare 2004:71). Up until 1853, when transportation was abandoned, 76,000 prisoners were transported to the island panopticon. Most of these were able to serve out their time and eventually lead useful lives as free citizens. However, included amongst this number were the ‘irrecoverably depraved’, the re-offenders who were imprisoned at the notorious institutions on Sarah Island in the isolated wilderness of Port Macquarie and later in Port Arthur on the Tasman Peninsula that was built to replace it. It is the horror of the brutality, cannibalism and bushranging that occurred at or because of these places –including the recent fatal shooting of thirty-five people in Port Arthur outside the Broad Arrow Café – that has contributed to the stain of the sorry reputation Tasmania has been asked to bear. Added to this of course is the disappearance of the full-blood Tasmanian Aboriginals, the ruthless extinction of the thylacine (*Tasmanian Tiger*), the flooding of Lake Peddar and the logging of primal old-growth forests and the resulting bitter dispute between Gunns and the environmentalists (Flanagan 2011).

My Urban Places

It is impossible to conceive a country that promises fairer from its situation. (Tasman quoted by Bowen 1744)

If we can revise our attitudes towards the land under our feet; if we can accept a role of steward, and depart from the role of conqueror; if we can accept the view that man and nature are inseparable parts of a unified whole then Tasmania can be a shining beacon in a dull, uniform, and largely artificial world.

(Inscription at the entrance to the Strahan Information Centre, attributed to Olegas Truchanas.)

In contrast to these bleak shadows, there is a paradisiacal vision of Tasmania, which changed in name from Van Diemen's Land in 1856 in an attempt to disassociate itself from the shame of the past. One cannot fail to be impressed by the rich geographic diversity and raw beauty of its rugged landscape and wilderness; its impenetrable cold-climate rainforests, torrential rivers and its distinctive glacier sculpted peaks and ranges reflected in mirror-like lakes and pools. For the most, pure unpolluted water flows through its tea tree stained rivers and its air, driven by the relentless Roaring Forties wind, is considered the purest in the world. What a contrast to the 'hideous blank' of the unappreciated desertscape of Central Australia and the unpredictable cycles of drought and flood that stalk the Mainland. The idyllic pasture country in the south east, the rain-shadow, sheep friendly rolling plains of the Midlands and the rich volcanic soil of the North West Coast attracted settlers and immigrants, seduced by the similarity of the landscape to England and Europe. Added to this was the bonus of a temperate climate where the summer '... his [*sic*] a great deal warmer than England and the winter is nothing so cold as home nor the days his never so long nor yet so short.' (R Bowler quoted in Rolls 2002:126) It promised to grow the fruit and vegetables of the home country that were being rejected by the insects, hot weather, unreliable rainfall and poor soils of the Mainland colonies. Alexander Riley, appointed by Governor King as Storeman to the Point Dalrymple settlement in the North was convinced that these high latitudes were conducive to the successful productivity of plants and fruits with a climate that shed 'fruitfulness on the earth and happiness on mankind in general'.

In the flourishing backyard of my childhood, I remember well grazing in a veritable Garden of Eden that my father had planted: apricot, apple, pear, lemon, peach and plum trees, red and black currant bushes, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries and rhubarb. It was with interest, on visiting his family village of Scribowski in White Russia when I was led in undignified circumstances to the back of the property to relieve myself of the contents of my stomach – I certainly didn't possess my father's capacity to drink vodka –, that I noticed through the paroxysms of reverse osmosis, that the garden looked familiar: raspberries, strawberries, currants, endless vegetables and the curiosity of the hens.

On the 18th of February 1831, the renowned landscape painter John Glover 'the English Claude' arrived in Van Diemen's Land at the ripe age of 64, declaring that, 'the prospect of finding a Beautiful World – new landscapes, new trees, new flowers, new Animals, Birds ... is delightful to me' (quoted in Hansen 2004:86). Van Diemen's Land did not disappoint. He applied and received one of the last large land grants in Van Diemen's Land and in the following year settled at Mill's Plains (Deddington near Evandale) on a property he named Patterdale.

After achieving fame for his idyllic landscapes of England and the Mediterranean in the style of Claude Genée, also known as Claude Lorraine, one might have expected Glover to retire to the country. As if receiving a new inspiration however, he produced a major body of commissioned work for the landowners of the colony.

I was either eight or nine years old when I ventured out extensively to establish my songline. My parents had bought their first car, a second-hand FX Holden sedan and after securing their respective driving licenses, it was decided to travel to Launceston to visit friends for the weekend. Launceston was seventy miles to the east and the

three-hour trip along the narrow winding Bass Highway seemed an eternity, especially on a dark Friday night.

Though only a large country town, Launceston was the first city I visited. It had a two-floor department store with an escalator, a drive-in cinema, a fifty-meter swimming pool with diving boards, a botanical garden and a museum.

My mother had told us about the museums and art galleries of Nuremberg and the paintings of Dürer, Altdorfer and Cranach that hung in the 'Germanische Museum'. I had leafed through her art books and was impressed by the beauty of colour and form in work of the great Italian Masters: Raphael, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Titian and Caravaggio.

Finding none of these in the Launceston Museum, I was initially disappointed with its modest offerings. The paintings I saw on display left me with an initial impression of ugliness. I do however remember vividly a scale model of the SS Taroon, the boat my father disembarked from in Burnie and the intriguing landscapes paintings of John Glover, especially those that included the figures of the Tasmanian Aborigines.

At first glance, the Classicism of Glover's earlier Arcadian Style seems to be comically and naively transposed onto a Tasmanian landscape. Idyllic streams flow through pristine landscape and Aborigines – the last of the noble savage – dance, hunt and live around sheltered lagoons, under primal 'glades' of eucalypt. On closer inspection, one can notice that his style transformed itself in response to the unique light and landscape of the island. He was first to notice and depict the '...remarkable peculiarity of trees in this country however numerous, they rarely prevent your tracing



Glover's painting of Patterdale, his home near Launceston in Tasmania. As in many of his painting of Van Diemen's Land, he captures its idiosyncratic quality of light. Note the English garden, a reminder of his origins. (Photograph taken from Hansen 2004).

through them the whole' (quoted in Hansen 2004:98). The originality of his work, in which he depicts the landscape as a welcoming paradise for the European settlers, established him as the father of Australian landscape.

So what is it we see when we look into the landscape? In his book, *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama (1995) explores the way people's view of landscape is conditioned by experiences and cultural myths that have come to surround groups of natural geographic features and the connotations they carry for each of us, even from stories we hear as children. He continues: 'Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock' (6-7).

So, in the early nineteenth century, what did the first settlers *see*? Was it the isolated landscape that has ecologically more in common with Patagonia or a landscape reminiscent of their experiences and memory?

Employed as architect and surveyor to the Van Diemen's Land Company in 1826, Henry Hellyer describes what he encountered after climbing out of what is now known as Hellyer Gorge.

We ascended the most magnificent grass hill I have seen in this country, consisting of several levels of terraces, as if laid out by art and crowned with a straight row of stately peppermint trees, beyond which there is not a tree for four miles along the grassy hills. The plains ... I call Surrey Hills. They resemble English enclosures in many respects, being bounded by brooks between each, with belts of beautiful shrubs in every vale. The kangaroo stood gazing at us like fawns, and in some instances came bounding towards us; and if we shouted, they ran like flock of sheep. (Quoted in Rolls 2002:112)

In my childhood, long journeys were uncommon It was not until my teens, when my brother left to study at the University of Tasmania, that I made my first trip down the Midlands Highway to Hobart. With my imagination, regaled in childhood with stories of Central Europe with its castles, churches, ruins and painted autumn forests, I was delighted to accept the humble historical offerings of the convict built sandstone government offices, churches and bridges of Campbell Town, Oatlands and Ross and the odd Georgian mansion dotting the landscape. Planted along the roadside, the oaks, maples, planes and sycamore trees shedding their coloured leaves and the freshly sprouted spring foliage of rows of poplar thrilled me as much as the sculpted animal topiaries. For a distance of some ten kilometers, these delightful creatures lined the then narrow highway, changing shape and form every three hundred meters or so. A kangaroo was followed by a giraffe, which was followed by a possum and then a bear and so on. We couldn't wait to see what was coming up next! As for the sculptor? I do recall seeing an ABC post news interview with him, but am unable to remember any detail.

Driving along the Lakes Highway forty years later I pondered why some of these grand sandstone mansions looked in need of repair and why some were used to store machinery and hay. I passed through the picturesque town of Bothwell, also looking a little worse for wear, which with its carefully planned streets and sandstone buildings seemed as if it had been directly transplanted from England.

Tasmania seems to have a way of patiently shrugging off any imposed vision, grand and dangerous as some of them have been. Hellyer's Surrey Hills was taken up and abandoned by the Van Diemen's Land Company as being too cold and wet and the grass too rank for sheep. Hellyer felt he had failed. Harassed by a vicious convict who accused him of homosexuality, he committed suicide in 1832.

All that remains of the Van Diemen's Land Company's million pound investment by English Midlands wool manufacturers is the Van Diemen's Land Company Store – an architect-designed bluestone building on the seafront that now provides boutique guest accommodation, and a desolate ruin overlooking the small town of Stanley, nestled at the foot of the imposing volcanic plug known as 'The Nut'. I remember visiting Stanley as a child with family and, its only remaining asset, Woolnorth, a sprawling sheep and cattle station of over two hundred and twenty square kilometers. Initially requesting an unrealistic five hundred thousand acre land grant, Governor Arthur in wisdom rightly halved the grant request and demanded that this land be well away from settled areas. He wished to ensure there was enough left for further free settlers who he recognised as being important to the colony's future.

In the 1880s, silver and lead were discovered near Mt Zeehan (the name coming from one of Tasman's ships) and the attraction was powerful enough to settle some of the most impenetrable and inhospitable country on the island. At the turn of the century the large vibrant town of Zeehan, 'the Silver City', sprung rapidly to life, boasting a population of ten thousand (the second most populous town in Tasmania), twenty-six hotels and performances by Dame Nellie Melba and Enrico Caruso at the Gaiety Theatre that packed in audiences of over a thousand patrons. By 1908, the

major mines began to fail and the town fell into decline. As a child, I recall climbing through the extensive wastelands of rusting corrugated iron ruins and mining processing equipment, perplexed by the ghostly scene of abandonment.

Places Of Work

Luina

In the summer of 1968-69, before commencing university studies, I found holiday work at a newly opened tin and copper mine in Luina, operated by Renison Bell Ltd. Luina was situated in the middle of the West Coast wilderness between the small mining towns of Waratah and Savage River. I lived in an all male camp, where I first came into contact with its rough and tough itinerant workers.

It was a desperate and isolated place, cut off from the temperance of polite society, where people from over the world gathered to make quick money before the place drove them crazy. Due to its isolation and unapologetic about not providing family or other social facilities (other than the Social Club which was nothing more than a licensed drinking premise) there was high worker turnover. The workers were divided into two sections: the miners - who worked underground - and the mill processing workers that included tradesmen and maintenance staff.

Fortunately, I was placed as a tradesman's assistant (TA) and spent my time between the workshop, mill, conveyor belt and crusher. The operation functioned 24/7. The ore was carried from the mines in giant trucks called euclids. I remember their tyres as being as tall as a door and requiring retreads every week. They dumped their load at the crusher that broke up the ore into small pieces, spitting them out on to a long dinosaur-like ascending conveyor belt that in turn disgorged them into the top of the mill that was purposely built on the side of a hill. Passing through a chemical flotation process, it descended its way

to the bottom of the mill where the refined ore was collected in powdered form and bagged.

Whenever machinery broke down, the tradesmen were appointed to fix it. My job was to assist the tradesmen. I became adept at repairing the conveyor belt and remember spending a lot of time on a machine called the 'copper dryer' I also spent a lot of time walking between the job and the requisitions store, picking up specialist tools and machinery replacement parts.

One of the tradesmen I worked with was a tough German called Karl. He claimed to have fought with Rommel's 'Afrika Korps' and had never been able to settle down since, telling me many stories about his travels. Like most Germans, he was organised, efficient and capable. He too was there to make quick money before 'getting out'. Other memorable men I encountered were two New Zealanders, one an aggressive South Islander and the other his restrained Maori friend. The more talkative of the two claimed that they had played for the fabled All-Blacks and later produced photos to back up his claims. Who was I to contradict him?

I soon realised that the quick money was made working double shifts. As the mine functioned twenty-four hours a day, this industrial giant demanded constant attention. Work was divided into three eight-hour shifts: midnight till 8am, 8am to 4pm, 4pm till midnight. As there was nothing to go back to at the camp, one might as well run double shifts. These offered time and a half and double time after a number of hours had been worked consecutively. Over the Christmas break there was a mill shut down in order to run a full maintenance check over the machinery. Working double and triple shifts over this period earned me more money than I ever previously had.

At about the same time as the Zeehan mines were thriving, gold was discovered along the Queen River but it wasn't until 1891 that the Mt Lyell Mining Company began mining the extensive reserves of copper from Mt Lyell. It commenced as an open cut mine and eleven furnaces were built to fuel the smelting process. At the turn of the century the population of Queenstown rose to five thousand, boasting fourteen hotels and twenty-eight mining companies. The Mt Lyell Company eventually bought out most of these companies. Vital to its mining interests was the construction of the twenty-four kilometers Abt railway connecting Mt Lyell to the port of Teepookana on the King River - completed in 1896 - and then on to Strahan on Macquarie Harbour in 1899.

I visited Queenstown on at least three occasions in my teens. The first was in the 1960s with the Ulverstone Municipal Band to engage in the annual Tasmanian Brass Band Competitions. Part of the competition was playing on the march in formation, performing military-style marching manoeuvres. Adjudicators kept pace with us, recording our time and checking if we wheeled evenly and turned correctly. This was always conducted on the local football field. The Queenstown Oval was unique in that, in keeping with Mt Lyell's sulphurous moonscape, its surface was not of grass, but of fine sandy white gravel! It was a smooth, firm surface to march on, but to play footy on it... was another matter. Australian Rules is a hard tackling game and a lot the time is spent being dragged to the turf, in this instance on to the gravel.

The local club played on it most Saturdays. We did witness a game and apart from a few bleeding knees and thighs (which were treated with iodine to prevent infection), the game went its usual course. In hindsight, considering it rained some three hundred days in every year, the gravel oval would have drained extremely well. It was

also at this competition that I was introduced to a former bandsman, Eric Reece ('Electric Eric') Premier of Tasmania.

My second visit was not long after, as part of a Devonport High School Matriculation Geology excursion in 1967. This involved visiting interesting geological sites as well as visits to the Zeehan Geological Museum with its fabulous specimens of rare crystal formations of crocite, the Rosebery Tin Mine and, of course, Queenstown where we were put up in the local pub. We toured the Open Cut mine and the smelting processing plant and witnessed close up the devastation wrought on the slopes of Mt Lyell. It resembled a World War I Western Front battlefield. Not content with cutting the heart out of the mountain, its flanks were denuded to feed the fires of the smelters before the advent of electricity and the sulphur fumes from the processing ensured nothing would grow on it. Fuelled by sulphur impregnated soil and stumps, raging summer bush-fires burnt whatever was left holding the soil together. Inundated by the state's heaviest annual rainfall of over 100 inches, all topsoil was washed away until only bare rock was left.

It left a haunting apocalyptic slag-scape that oddly attracted tourists as a staring crowd might be drawn to the carnage of a car accident. After the mine was closed down, vegetation began to appear on the mountainside. However, some of the locals complained about this, preferring to retain the moonscape.

Chapter Two

Flowering ...

Place of Convergence



**The Establishment of Shearwater The
Mullumbimby Steiner School as a Place
of Place-Conscious Learning**

As human beings continue to enhance their power to manipulate and destroy ecosystems and cultures, it may not be too much of a stretch to claim that place making has become the ultimate human vocation. Ultimately, the kinds of places that we acknowledge and make possible will determine the kinds and the quality of human and nonhuman life in our communities, bioregions, and on our planet. This prospect suggests an active role for schools as centers of both inquiry and action in local, regional, and global space. (Gruenewald 2004:638)

Rainbow Country. View looking over the Left Bank Creek valley in which Shearwater is situated. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

There seems to be widespread agreement that stories are central to the business of constituting both communities and self. (Lessard, Johnson & Webber 2011:7)

In this chapter I examine the establishment of Shearwater the Mullumbimby Steiner School and how it came into being. To do so I want to make visible to the reader both the place and the people involved. I will draw on interviews, geographic descriptions, oral histories, published written material (books, articles), photographs and my part in its establishment and my experience of the place itself.

I am aware that in creating this narrative of events and observations, I am writing from my position as a directed self capable of holding multiple points of view, that seeks to include the voices of others and the narrative of Shearwater as a place of learning that has and is adding further layers of human activity to the physical and socio-cultural landscape. Through the activity of writing I am not only recording the stories of others but adding another. Not unlike Clifford (cited in Lessard, Johnson & Webber 2011), I am not so much concerned with creating an overarching narrative with which I expect everyone to agree, nor do I wish to erase the events and stories of the past, but to recast, reposition and juxtapose in order to re-evaluate, reinterpret and create the stories of the new settlers and the story of Shearwater.

Much of this chapter is a narrative account of the European settlement of the Wollumbin caldera and as such betrays my learning in history as an undergraduate and my life-long interest in the stories of the past and of contemporary events.

The story of the region is told from the perspective of the Shearwater School and focuses on the role of the new settlers who moved into the area in the nineteen seventies. It was their interest in alternative forms of education that led to the establishment of the school. The summary history of those times before the arrival of the new settlers is intended to serve as historical and social context. An attempt to cover the cultural contribution of the local Indigenous people of the Bundjalung in understanding place is made in Chapter six.

I have just returned from a meeting of the Yallingup Seiner School planning committee. It was attended by enthusiastic members of the school community, freely giving their time and energy to planning the further development of the school. As with every meeting, the Chairman of the School Council acknowledged the Wardandi custodianship of the place, past and present, the contribution of previous place makers to the school, love for the needs of the children the reason for the gathering and enthusiasm for their future. In reflection I have come to appreciate place as a venue for creative social activity, distinguished by openness and allowing change. I see these as critical factors in establishing a place-conscious centre of learning, where teachers, students and parents have the possibility of participating meaningfully in the process of what Gruenewald (2004:643) termed ‘...place making, that is in the process of shaping what our places will become’ (Journal entry, August 24 2013).

Shearwater, the Mullumbimby Steiner School, is nestled among the green hills of the Byron Shire hinterland, 3.5 km from ... Mullumbimby, New South Wales. Along Left Bank Road and backing on to Mullumbimby Creek, the property was part of the 19th century rural development of the Mullumbimby Valley that cleared the rainforest to make way for grazing and, later, banana plantations on its north-easterly facing slopes. (Shearwater Handbook 2007:5)



View of Shearwater from the Tristan Road ridge, circa 2000. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

PLACE OF CONVERGENCE

... as a species, we have gradually become "autistic" and have forgotten how to hear, communicate, and participate in meaning making with our places on the living earth. T. Berry (1988) quoted in Gruenewald 2003:636)

In the early 70s, young people seeking an alternative lifestyle from the cities and their suburbs, looked to rural locations to settle. Mullumbimby with its warm sub-tropical climate, the verdant beauty of rolling hills and hinterland escarpment, its proximity to the iconic surf beaches of Byron Bay and relative isolation and affordable land prices, made it a popular choice for relocation.

Following the resounding success of the Third University Arts Festival held at Nimbin in 1972, which was called the *Grassroots Age of Aquarius Festival*, large numbers of young people were attracted to the Wollumbin Caldera area for its scenic beauty, its rich fertile soil and growth-friendly climate, seeing it as a paradisiacal escape from the Australian East Coast's urban centres. Many were interested in natural and sustainable lifestyles and came to the area to cultivate environmental, social and alternative religious and spiritual ideals. Settling in communes and wishing to raise families, young mothers sought out natural birthing alternatives to the perceived alienating practices of hospitals. The new 'earth mothers' preferred midwives and home births. This was supported by a pioneer in the home birth movement in Australia, Dr David Miller, who practiced in the Byron Shire (Miller 1990). As their offspring reached school age, their parents also sought out forms of education other than that provided by the mainstream.

The Wollumbin Caldera

The geological foundation of this scenic wonderland is the Wollumbin Caldera, which gives the Far North Coast region of New South Wales its unique identity. The eroded remnant of a massive shield volcano that first erupted and evolved some twenty three million years ago, its complex geology of weathering has resulted in spectacular and diverse natural scenery of picturesque outcrops, gorges, river valleys and the expansive flats of the caldera itself (Blanch & Keane 1995). Years of ensuing rainfall weathered the volcanic cone, exposing the igneous extrusions of diorite (ring dykes – Mt Uki, the Sisters, and Brummies Lookout) surrounding the magma chamber and petrified central vent of the volcano, which remains today the region's sentinel peak, Wollumbin or Mt Warning as James Cook named it in 1770. The north and northwestern rim of the caldera is known as the McPherson Range (including the Border and Tweed Ranges) and the southern rim is called the Nightcap Range. Extensively eroded by the sea, various reefs and islands (Julian Rocks) form its not so obvious eastern boundary.

The caldera is part of a greater region known as the Northern Rivers. Inland from the coast runs a continuous chain of mountains extending from the southern end of North Coast to the New South Wales Queensland border, forming part of the Great Dividing Range. The range creates a great catchment area for hundreds of creeks and streams that tumble, flow and collect to become the Manning, Macleay, Clarence, Richmond, Brunswick and Tweed Rivers. Draining the eastern slopes, they meander through the coastal plain, down to the sea. The warm humid weather, high rainfall, the rich chocolate basalt soil of the caldera and the rich alluvial soils of the plains promoted lush plant growth.

From the Richmond River to the Tweed River and west to the Dividing Range, the land was covered by magnificent lowland sub-tropical rainforest and wet sclerophyll eucalypts on the ridges. The coastal areas abounded in wetlands and paper bark swamps, coastal mangrove growths and sand dune systems. From the mountains to the sea, the environment offered the people of the Bundjalung nation (an estimated 2000 – 4000 people) (Medcalf 1989:18) a rich source of edible plant life and game and natural materials such as vines, grasses, bark, timber, stone and ochre for the production of tools, weapons, shelters clothing, carriers and adornments. Their pathways and tracks, which spoke of the song lines that sustained their seasonal wanderings, led inland from the beaches along the ridges to the interior (Nayutah & Finlay 1988).

Contributing to the abundance of the area is the Caldera's role as a convergence zone. It is sometimes known as the Macleay McPherson Overlap, a sub-tropical threshold, where plants, animals and fish from both high and low latitudes converge. For better or for worse, it also became a convergence zone for people of different ways of living: its Aboriginal inhabitants, the first European settlers with their exploitive approach, and the restorative and sustainable values of the new settlers.

In understanding this place, I take into account the layering effect of human and natural activities on the landscape and how the consequences of these actions appear through the surface of the present and in turn affect the lives of those living in place.

New Settlers, Counter Culture and Life Style

Our relationship to place is constituted in our stories/representations... Through our storytelling, landscape, stories and people are mutually constituted in place: Landscape does not just shape language; the land itself is transformed by words... Our relationship to place involves multiple contested stories. (Sommerville 2007:154-155)

The ‘new settlers’ or the ‘long-haired hippies’, as the locals referred to the young people escaping the cities, were part of a continual wave of settlement of the region since the arrival of Europeans.

Despite a number of recorded massacres of the Bundjalung people (Medcalf 1989), the exploitation and devastation of the Big Scrub sub-tropical rainforest, the clearance of native vegetation to make way for pasture land, cane fields, banana plantations and the establishment of unattractive secondary industries such as butter factories, abattoirs, meat works, piggeries, whaling stations and sand mining along its pristine beaches, the coastal region of the Wollumbin Caldera (Brunswick Valley, Byron Bay) has always been remarked upon for its natural beauty, making it a destination for visitors and holiday makers. As early as 1885 the local newspaper, the *Northern Star* suggested that ‘Lismore folks’ would do well to pay the Byron district a visit or two during the summer months’. It remarked on the ‘delightfully cool’ climate, the ‘splendid schnapper fishing to be had’, and that the mountain scenery to the west and north was ‘particularly good, especially after rain, when the smoke from hundreds of selection fires [had] cleared away’ (quoted in Stubbs 2006:96).

Accordingly, people who lived inland from the sea sought to escape the summer heat and retreated to Byron Bay by train to enjoy surf bathing, fishing and

camping. Surf bathing became so popular that in 1909 the Byron Bay Surf-Bathing Life-Saving Club was formed. In November of the same year, a branch of the Royal Australian Life Saving Society was also formed in Mullumbimby and a squad of lifesavers was assembled to patrol the North Beach at Brunswick Heads.

Although bypassed by the railway, the advent of the motor vehicle greatly boosted tourism in Brunswick Heads. Between Christmas 1926 and New Year's Day 1927, it was estimated that between 30,000 and 35,000 people, most of them Queenslanders, visited the place (Brokenshire 1988:206).

Following post-war economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s the tourist industry boomed just over the state border on the Gold Coast, while interest in Byron waned. Sand mining had not only exterminated the stunningly beautiful littoral rainforest that had existed until then just behind the sand dunes, but had also caused a massive drop in fish numbers. The stench of the abattoirs, whaling station and piggery turned people away from Byron Bay and the loss of the rainforest to primary industry in the Brunswick Valley saw visitors flock instead to the protected rainforests in the Border Ranges where they stayed at Tamborine Mountain, O'Reilly's Guest House and Binna Burra Lodge.

By the late 1960s, surfing had gripped the imagination of a new generation of nomads in search of the perfect wave. Word had got out that Byron Bay was the place and despite the efforts of the local police sergeant to evict from his town anyone with long hair and a surfboard, the tide of surf-riders swelled in increasing number to experience the highs of riding the waves at The Pass (P Waugh, circa 1982, pers. comm.). This rising swell of newcomers increased to tsunami proportions with the influx of young people of the counter-culture. In those days the Brunswick Valley, of which Mullumbimby is the centre, was the first 'hippie haven' in Australia (A Gillard, 2010 pers. comm., 14 March). Following the *Grassroots Age of Aquarius Festival* (Third University Arts Festival) at Nimbin in 1972, which focused on natural lifestyles, a host of young people abandoned the unsustainable cities and 'dropped out' in favour

of an alternative lifestyle in the 'wilderness' of northeastern New South Wales.

Nicholas Shand, the founding editor of the *Byron Shire Echo* later described the invasion as

... a wave of patchwork colour, an unwashed wave, a laughing wave, a wave of love and confusion, a very hairy wave and very often a stark-naked wave; a wave full of new thought and old ideals a wave of alternatives.
(Quoted in MacCallam 1996:1)

Coinciding with the economic decline of primary and secondary industry in the area and despite local distrust, the new settlers brought relief to the struggling towns with their money, (including government welfare benefits), fresh energy and new business ideas. They pooled their resources and bought up struggling dairy farms and banana plantations to establish intentional communities and experimented with new forms of labour and commercial exchange. And they stayed (I Howden, 2008 pers. comm., 16 May).

The Byron Shire has come to be acknowledged as an experimental community at the epicentre of alternative living in Australia, particularly in relation to spirituality and environmental activism. 'Byron Shire serves as a cultural laboratory for an emerging worldview and a new way of doing business and government that reflects a new ecological paradigm' (Tatray 2002:i).

Much of the public face of the new settlers has been given over to environmental conservation issues. The Shire was coming under intense development pressure. Its natural beauty was promoted overseas as an important Australian tourist venue and with improvements to the Pacific Highway, the Shire was considered in some development circles as part of the highly populated South Eastern area of Queensland.

In the 1980s Alan Bond bought up undisturbed land in North Ocean Shores. He had plans drawn up for a 'Surfers Paradise' style development in the Byron Shire

where he hoped to defend the *America's Cup* yacht race. Plans included creating an artificial harbour surrounded by canal estates, high-rise residential and office towers, a marina, shopping centre and a golf course. 'If he had have been successful, Byron Shire would have looked like the Gold Coast' (J Mangleson, 2001 pers. comm., 21 August).

In 1992 Club Med attempted to establish a large tourist resort west of Belongil Creek. This too was successfully resisted.

In the lead up to the 1995 Council election Nicholas Shand, editor of the *Byron Shire Echo* expressed a shared community view when he wrote:

Anyone who is watching the dreadful development between Lennox Head and Ballina, as well as the slow but steady denigration of the Tweed Coast north of Pottsville, can see what we want to stop happening here. Eventually Byron Shire will be an island of sanity in the middle of a third grade housing development from Coffs to Brisbane (quoted in Tatray 2002:iii).

Since that local Council election in 1995, four local council elections have been run and won almost entirely on Green issues. For the past two terms, The Greens Jan Barham has led the Council as mayor and working collaboratively with the community, is seeking to prevent wholesale and unscrupulous development in the Shire.

Ironically, the constraints on development made the Shire's environment and culture the more attractive to buyers as well as developers. As the desirability to be part of a unique green-conscious environment increased, the price of property became inflated.

Conservation, which had out of necessity become the public face of the new

settlers, had deep roots into the soil of the 1970s counter-culture movement. It was a holistic social movement embracing social justice, the arts, peace and the environment. It was out of this deep soil that the need for an educational practice other than that provided by the mainstream arose.

A Place Where New Ways of Learning were Seeded.



First School Day, February 8 1993. Celebratory gathering of parents and children of Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School. (Photo by J McCormick, Shearwater archive)

On February 8th, 1993 thirty-eight children (ten enrolled in the Kindergarten and twenty-eight students in the combined Class 1/2 (Shearwater Class List, 1993) gathered with their families and friends in the gardens of Stan Stevens and Sally Davison's property at 12 Azalea St. Mullumbimby to celebrate the opening day of

Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School. Despite giving the community such short notice of the intention to establish a school (late November 1992) the commitment and fire of can-do enthusiasm saw to it that teaching premises and classroom furnishings would be ready for the commencement of classes at the beginning of the new school year. Stan and Sally had given over part of their home and gardens to ensure the school had at least a temporary home.

The outdoor opening ceremony included the planting of palms and ferns by each of the founding students and their families. The event was commemorated by local photographer and recorder of social events, John McCormick and published in the *Brunswick Byron Echo*. (McDonald 1993:18).

Shearwater proved to be the last of a healthy number of surviving alternative schools that were established in the region, following the influx of the new settlers.

As the children of the counter culture generation were born and growing to school age, awareness of place and its connectedness to the creative process in education became an important part of community need. This was clearly articulated in Shearwater's first information handbook.

At Shearwater ... we aim to develop an Art of Education appropriate to this uniquely beautiful part of the world through an awareness of the nature that surrounds us. We strive to create new stories, sing new songs and dance a new dance in harmony with the pulse and rhythm of this place we want to know more about. Accessing the uniquely creative energy which has developed in the Mullumbimby area over a long history – and more particularly the last 30 years, when it became the focal point of many artists and people with a broad range of experiences and talents – our School endeavours to provide an aesthetic educational experience reflective of where we live. Mullumbimby and Anthroposophy have blended warmly together, and the result is a school both well accepted and truly respected by the community at large (*Shearwater Prospectus: 1993*).

One of the earliest alternative educational enterprises sprang from the fertile soil of social change at the Tumble Falls Community. Immediately following the Aquarius Festival in May 1973, a ‘...meeting was held to discuss an ongoing commitment to the spirit of the festival’ (Tumble Falls Community web page). From this was born the ‘May Manifesto’ which contained many of the ideals and principles, which formed the foundation of the well-known Tumble Falls Community in beautiful rainforest adjoining Nightcap National Park. Attracted to an alternative lifestyle, many people moved to the immediate vicinity of Nimbin or its adjacent valleys, either buying land, joining existing communes or forming new ones, such as Billen Cliffs, Moondani, Blue Springs, Bodhi Farm and Siddha Farm. Subsequently Nimbin became synonymous with the counter-culture movement in Australia.

Tumble Falls Community School

With the formation of a preschool on the Tumble Falls Co-operative, the establishment of a primary school in 1981 naturally followed. Located on Tumble Falls Co-op land this venture reflected the wishes of the community ‘... to provide a different educational environment to the State system for their children’ (Tumble Falls Community web page). Being a co-operative *place-conscious* initiative, the school buildings were constructed with voluntary labour and financed in large part by fundraising activities of the community and parents. It also took enrolments and invited commitment from families who lived outside of the Co-Operative.

Central to the school’s philosophy were the community’s counter-culture values of ‘... respect for the child’s creativity and self-empowerment’ and focus on fostering ‘... the development of self-esteem and awareness through self-expression, ecological awareness, conflict resolution, self-paced and guided learning’ (Community Directory Private Schools Tumble Falls Community School).

Daystar

Receiving positive responses to an advertisement canvassing interest in starting

a Steiner school, Jenny Gidley was able to open a Pre school/Kindergarten at the Cawongla Hall in 1984. She not only attracted the interest of parents seeking an alternative to mainstream education for their children but a number of Steiner teachers, artists and associates who had connections with *Lorien Novalis School* in Glenhaven, Sydney. As a strong and determined nucleus of parents, friends and children was formed, the Daystar School was gifted a parcel of land by the *Lilyfield Community*, a multiple occupancy property initiated by Andrew Penny, a parent of a child at the school (K Ward 2011 pers. comm., 15 May). Despite steady growth and the construction of a number of beautiful buildings, the school closed due to financial difficulties in 1995. The State Government purchased the school and relocated the Barkers Vale Primary School to the site. Parents and teachers, who maintained their interest in Steiner education, regrouped and opened the *Rainbow Ridge School*.

Linda Brown and the Beginnings of Steiner Education in the Byron Shire

The thread of Linda Brown's life story weaves through the tapestry of the lives of 'new settlers' and their search for an alternative life-style in the Byron Shire (L Brown 2011, pers. comm., 9 June). Born to English parents, she immigrated to Australia as an infant and settled with her family at Oyster Bay, on the southern outskirts of Sydney.

In 1972, she became what she described a 'surfie chick' and traveled to the pristine beaches of Byron Bay with her surfer friends. Working as a private secretary and stenographer in Sydney held few charms for her and the siren call of the surf and the white beaches lured her away from city life. Despite warnings from an urban friend to watch out for hippies, she fell for Royce Brown, an American ex-sailor who had acquired a deserted banana plantation off Blindmouth Road in Main Arm, where no one had lived for thirty-six years. Royce had opted for a simple meditative life in the bush and in 1974, Linda joined him in his banana shed home, living with neither electricity or running water. They grew organic vegetables the hard way, tilling the soil with hand tools and watering the garden with a bucket. They traded their produce with

friends and walked or hitched a ride into town when required (L Brown 2011, pers. comm., 13 August).

Linda gave birth to her three children (including twin girls) at home and when it came to thinking about their education, she wished to keep them out of the mainstream education system and have them home-schooled. Not being a teacher, she began to look for a viable education alternative.

Following an encounter with David – she couldn't recall his surname - an Anthroposophist from New Zealand, Linda and her friend Ruth Pellen began to meet with him regularly to learn more about Rudolf Steiner and the foundational understandings of Steiner pedagogy. This in turn led to contact with Susan Perrow, who as a student was involved with Gordon Lang's *Educational Smorgasbord* in Ballina. She then became involved with Anthroposophy and early childhood education in Sydney (S Perrow, pers. comm circa 1974). On request Susan offered to convene a hands-on gathering at the Civic Centre in Mullumbimby, where eight to ten mothers met regularly to learn about early childhood education based on indications given by Rudolf Steiner and developed by Steiner educators. This involved learning about child development and was complemented by handcraft activities and story telling (L Brown 2011, pers. comm., 13 August).

As Linda and Ruth's children were nearing school age, they began to meet regularly with the aim of commencing a Steiner School in Mullumbimby. A local resident and young mother, Gabrielle Mangleson, who later became a founding parent and is now a teacher at Shearwater, joined the group and became secretary of the committee. They ran street stalls to raise funds with which they bought Steiner literature and quality learning materials such as Stockmar wax crayons and watercolour paints. Roger and Lena Eliot, potential teachers for the school became associated with the group and in 1986 an application was approved to commence the school at the

Mullumbimby Show Grounds. A foundation grant of \$20,000 was also received to develop a teaching space.



One of the early posters seeking public interest to start a Steiner School in Mullumbimby, (1986).

Despite a public advertising campaign seeking enrolments and the best of intentions, the time to commence the Mullumbimby Steiner School had not arrived. The grant of money was passed on to Susan Perrow and Lyn McCormick who went on to initiate the Periwinkle Pre-school in Bangalow.

Linda went ahead and home-schooled her children, receiving help and instruction from Alan and Susan Whitehead in Anthroposophy, Steiner education teaching practice, watercolour painting and eurythmy. Alan and Susan were co-founders of the Lorien Novalis School in Glenhaven and were attracted to the

Brunswick Valley by the creative cultural potential offered by the counter-culture movement and its 'new settlers'. Moving into the area, they designed and built a home on the edge of the Mullumbimby township along Main Arm Road where they offered a focus of anthroposophical learning for the community.

When Linda reached the limit of what she herself could do with her children, she enrolled her eldest at Mullumbimby Primary School and her twin girls at the Cape Byron Steiner School in which she was indirectly instrumental in helping to found. Her girls also attended the Saturday morning children's art class at the Epicentre in Byron Bay.

Periwinkle Preschool for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education

Perceiving the community need for an alternative education option in the Byron area, Susan Perrow founded *Periwinkle Pre School* in February 1986. Its first home was a rented church hall in Bangalow, catering '... to two groups of 16 children, both for two days per week' (Periwinkle Pre School Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Preschool, Byron Bay, Australia web page). After spending another two years in the 'Moller Pavilion' at Bangalow show-ground, Periwinkle moved to its current location in Sunrise Beach in 1992 on land donated by the Byron Shire Council. Once again this community-supported initiative provided voluntary labour and a successful fundraising campaign ensured the completion of the building project.

Cape Byron Steiner School

As at Tuntable Falls, The Cape Byron Steiner School was founded in the wake of a graduating preschool group, in this case the Periwinkle Pre School's class of 1987. Commencing with a Kindergarten in 1988, Class 1 began in 1989 in the Bangalow Show-ground shed (Cape Byron Steiner School web page).

In 1990 the school moved to its permanent home in Balraith Lane, Ewingsdale on a parcel of land donated by the Mackellar family.

Cape Byron Community Primary School

1989 also saw the foundation of the Cape Byron Community Primary School in response to the need for an education that was founded on shared community values. It welcomed parental involvement.

The involvement of the child's family and wider support networks is an important part of our team effort as we believe it will take all of us to provide each individual child with the guidance and support they need to fully develop their sense of self in the modern world (Director's Report, Cape Byron Community Primary School web page).

It also wished to foster a holistic educational approach:

We work to provide a safe environment where children are able to reach curriculum expectations whilst integrating social and emotional skills (Byron Bay Community School web page).

A Studio for Science and Art Education

'The Epicentre', Byron Bay

On a wet evening in May 1990, Deirdre and I drove into Byron Bay after a three and a half thousand-kilometer road journey from Darwin. A flat silver expanse of water spread across and over the flood prone fields of the Tyagarah Turf Farm and the approaches to Byron were likewise inundated - and for a moment an image of Kakadu during the wet superimposed itself over the waterscape. We took rooms in the Beach Hotel motel style accommodation on Bay Street with a view across to the Julian Rocks in the bay and the splendid silhouetted hinterland range in the west. John Cornell had purchased the hotel and preparations were being made for its demolition and subsequent architectural reconstruction. During the previous summer holidays we had visited the Byron area with a view to returning on a permanent basis.

During the previous summer holidays we had made contact with Wayne Armitage, who was instrumental in floating and promoting the idea of transforming the meat works buildings at Belongil into an arts complex. This became known as the Epicentre. A family company headed by Duncan Mackellar purchased the meat works. He had a strong interest in the visual arts and was a prolific collector of art by artists living in the Byron area. We were able to acquire generous studio space and for three years ran a studio teaching painting, drawing and sculpture, as well as Steiner teacher education courses. One of the most popular courses was the children's art class, which we ran on Saturday mornings. We also traveled to the Chrysalis Steiner School in the Thora Valley (inland from Bellingen), Casuarina Steiner School in Coffs Harbour, Daystar at Lillian Rock and Kangia Steiner School in Murwillumbah to conduct teacher education courses and seminars. Apart from offering teacher education classes at the Cape Byron Steiner School, I also taught there regularly as a relief teacher.

Place Making

The Founding Parents and Seminal Events



Staff and Year 12 students beneath the embrace of the White Fig, Summer 2005.
Photo: Shearwater archive. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

A sense of place and the social relationships among people are inseparable. (Upitis 2007:3).

Culture and place are deeply intertwined (Casey quoted in Gruenewald 2004:210).

Among his numerous commitments Rudolf Steiner spoke to the parents of the Waldorf School in Stuttgart in 1921 about the important role they play in supporting the school. The wise words and sentiment of the following extract are still relevant today.

When we bring to the child, just at the right moment, matter appropriate to his faculties, to his disposition, then what has been thus introduced will become a re-creating source of refreshment for the child throughout the whole course of his life. If the parents of our children perceive that we have the will to work in such a way that we place into the decades lying before us people capable of dealing with the ever-increasing difficulties of life – but still having questions to ask of life – then the parents will stand in the right relationship to the school. For it is upon the parents' understanding that we must build. We cannot work, as do other schools, protected by the state or by any other authority. We can only work supported by a community of parents who have this understanding. We love our children; our teaching is inspired by knowledge of man and love of children. And another love is being built up around us, the love of the parents for the true essence of the school. Only within such a community can we work towards a future of mankind able to prosper and withstand. (Steiner 1996b:74-75)

Despite the growth and success of the Cape Byron Steiner School, the idea of a Steiner school serving the local Mullumbimby and its surrounding valleys never left the hearts and minds of its residents. Many Mullumbimby parents were sending their children to the Cape Byron Steiner School but were not happy with the distance they were required to travel. This in itself was a reflection of an estrangement of community, which so many 'new settlers' sought to avoid in moving from alienating urban environments.

These concerns were highlighted in the latter months of 1992 when questions were raised regarding the teacher selection process and its associated politics led Tracey and Ian Howden to meet with Steiner education consultants Alan and Susan Whitehead (I Howden 2011, pers. comm., 11 April). Ian, a consultant homeopath and former lecturer in Sociology at the University of NSW, and his partner Tracey had a daughter Grace who was enrolled at the Cape School and two other infant boys, Will and Oliver. Leaving Sydney, both had independently come to live in Mullumbimby in the early 1980s. Alan and Susan, co-founders of Lorien Novalis School for Rudolf Steiner Education in Glenhaven, had also left the Sydney region and were in the process of writing and self-publishing a series of educational booklets based on their experience of creating a new and innovative approach to Steiner Education. This has since come to be recognised as the 'Lorien' or 'Australian' stream in Australian Steiner Education (Mazzone 1995).

Alan and Susan's advice was clear and direct: start another school. The minimum requirement is a teacher and a temporary space. The effect was enough to fan into life the dormant embers of the fire lit by Linda Brown and her friends a decade before. Ian recalled that the power of this realisation and the responsibility it entailed caused him to break out in tears (I Howden 2011, pers. comm., 11 April).

They immediately went to see their friends Stan Stevens and his partner Sally Davison, who were also concerned parents of children at the Cape Byron Steiner School. Stan was raised in Melbourne and had settled in Holbrook to run his cattle farm. Following the birth of his second child Richard, his wife Jenny, was diagnosed with cervical cancer from which she never recovered. Following her passing, Stan moved to Sydney where he met Sally who was employed as the children's nanny. A strong relationship developed and Sally who came from a large Casino family, encouraged Stan to move to the Byron area, where within a short time, they had bought a house on Azalea Street in Mullumbimby. Stan's children, Sally and Richard were enrolled in the Cape Byron Steiner School and the birth of twins, Grace and Ruby, followed (Stan Stevens n.d., pers. comm.).

Ian and Tracey expressed the reality of the new school with the words: 'We're pregnant with a Steiner School' (I Howden 2009, pers. comm., June 9). Stan and Sally declared their support and Stan rang me on the following evening.

I clearly recall the telephone conversation I had with Stan when he first broached the idea of starting a Steiner school in Mullumbimby. We were acquainted through contact at the Cape Byron Steiner School where Stan had been elected as a member of the School Council. Both Sally and Richard attended our Saturday children's art class at our Studio at the Epicentre, where, for the preceding two years, Deirdre and I had made a strong connection with the community. The Studio became the source of a number of student enrolments and two of Shearwater's future primary class teachers, Dhyana Di Biase (Gillard) and Mary Fearnside. Both came to be involved with the school following attendance at our classes.

Stan asked if I was interested in becoming the founding teacher and I immediately detected that hum of energy that accompanies the reality of a venture that separates it from just another good idea. My experience in helping build and develop Lorien Novalis informed me that the steely resolve of a group of capable parents was required to support the enthusiasm of initiative of such an important venture. I expressed my willingness to commit to the task on the condition that the parents also demonstrate a firm commitment.

A date for a public meeting requesting attendance of those interested in launching a new Steiner school was set for early December, 1992 and advertised in the local independent newspaper, the *Brunswick Byron Echo*. The venue for the meeting was Stan and Sally's home. Their dining/living room area was packed and there were not enough chairs to accommodate all those in attendance. Ian spoke eloquently about

the intention of commencing a new school and the effort that would be required. He also outlined a comprehensive educational and cultural vision for the school that included ‘ ... an early childhood care centre, primary and secondary schools and a Centre for Teacher Education and Adult Learning.’ I spoke about Steiner education and proposed the name ‘Shearwater’ and the geographical identity and educational intention that it suggested (‘Mullum Steiner’ 1992:4). I also brought to the meeting the inspiring words of commitment attributed to Goethe, that were to become the cornerstone of the Shearwater’s development.

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. **Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.** [my emphasis] (Attributed to Goethe, quoted in *Shearwater General Handbook 1993*).

Committees and sub-committees were formed, guiding principles were established and I committed myself to becoming the founding class teacher. Inspired by the magic of the moment and the distinct possibility of founding a school for their children, this initiating body of parents enthusiastically and wholeheartedly supported the venture (Rogers 2000:11). The ‘hat’ was passed around and with the donations collected, a small foundation fund was established. This grew with a gift of money that had been left dormant in Linda Brown’s Mullumbimby Steiner School account. She also donated a small library of Steiner literature from the Association.

Before the request to join this educational venture, Deirdre and I had organised an overseas trip. We considered cancelling but decided to continue with our plans. Given our previous experience with new independent schools, we were wary of pushing our own agenda independent of the community. We wished to allow the parent body to consolidate their commitment and resolve and assume ownership and

share responsibility. That resolve proved to be strong and I returned two weeks earlier than anticipated to assist with getting the school ready to commence teaching in Term 1 1993.

To raise further funds a garage sale was organized for early January 1993. Prospective parents Lou and Steve Perry offered as the venue for the sale, their café (Lulu's) on Dalley Street. An advertisement was placed in the local paper '... inviting applications for enrolment to Kindergarten and Class 1 ...' (*Brunswick Byron Echo*, Vol 7 No 30) on December 23 1992 and it immediately yielded a host of enrolment enquiries (Howden 1994).

An appointment was made to speak with Terry Chapman, the Executive Director of the NSW Association of Independent Schools and a meeting with him took place on December 29 (Howden 1994). Speaking to Ian Howden and Stan Stevens, Terry outlined in cool, matter of fact terms the processes, formalities, regulations, governance and financial estimates required to commence operating a new school. This included information about NSW Board of Studies registration, award salaries, superannuation, worker's compensation, insurance, local government compliance and the need for a realizable long-term vision. To cap this seemingly insurmountable task was the injunction that no government financial assistance would be available to the school for the first two years of its existence (Howden 1994). Undaunted by these obstacles, the fires of enthusiasm burned strongly.

Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School

The Naming of the School

In selecting the name, Konrad says the school wanted to identify Australia's relationship to the Pacific and South East Asia, and the Mullumbimby school will be making contact with other Steiner schools in Japan and the USA. (McDonald 1993:18)

At the first community gathering, where it was resolved to establish a local Steiner School, there was already a call to find a name for this as yet unborn entity. Identity was important from the outset. I suggested the name Shearwater, a migratory bird that flies annually in flocks of great number around the Asia-Pacific region. I wanted the school's name to indicate our region's geographical, economic and future cultural ties with Asia and the Pacific.

Although obvious today with Australia's economic prosperity harnessed to Chinese economic expansion, in the early 1990s Australia had only recently dismantled its White Australia Policy in 1973. With the fall of Singapore in 1941 and the withdrawal of British influence in South East Asia, Australia sought new alliances and trading partners. Providing the resources that fed the Japanese post-war economic miracle, Australia began to acknowledge its geographic proximity to Asia and realized that its future prosperity could be found there (Keating 2000).

We hoped that the school's cultural aspirations and direction would resonate with the image of the shearwater and its sun-inspired migratory activities and identify us with the region its flight encompassed.

After nesting on the south-eastern corner of Australia – mainly on the Bass Strait Islands – the short-tailed shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), or mutton bird as it is often known, follows the sun north and back again south on a spectacular migratory flight path around the Asia-Pacific and North American region. Their journey takes the form of a gigantic lemniscate (figure of eight) some 32,000 kilometers in length, carrying the shearwaters to the Bering Sea and back, taking advantage of the prevailing winds. After leaving island and seashore burrows, the Westerly Winds have the birds veer over the Tasman Sea. Skirting the Solomon Islands and up the western side of the Pacific Ocean, the Trade Winds see them fly over the eastern islands of Indonesia, and then in the northern hemisphere, have them sweeping by Japan and the Kamchatka Peninsula. Finding themselves in the northern summer, they feed largely on krill (euphausids) while continuing their journey, looping around the Bering Sea and

commencing their homeward flight. They travel down the west coast of Canada and the USA before the Trade Winds guide their westerly pilgrimage across the Pacific Ocean and back to their Bass Strait burrows. Matthew Flinders first sighted these returning birds in the Bass Strait in 1798, and estimated that there were at least one hundred million birds in just one great continuous single flock (Flinders 1814:cxxxiii).

As the school grew and developed its high school, contact was eventually made with Japanese schools and cultural field trips organized to visit Japan. Visiting home stay groups were also organised to stay with Shearwater student families. A class of high school students traveled to China and visited its the first Steiner School in Chengdu. Three students from the Chengdu School also came to study at Shearwater. In the Pacific region, a village in Vanuatu has become a regular point of contact for senior students studying marine zoology and working on building projects (a dormitory and a classroom) developed by a Shearwater teacher. (See Chapter 6)

Through its full name: *Shearwater, The Mullumbimby Steiner School*, the school in the first instance chose to identify itself geographically with Australia's place in the Asia-Pacific region. 'Mullumbimby' identifies the School locally, acknowledging the Aboriginal presence before the recent arrival of the Europeans, and lastly 'Steiner' not only points to the Steiner based educational understandings and practice, but also expresses its association with European culture and spirituality.

Stan and Sally's Place

It will not come from governments. It cannot come from governments. Quality education comes from the community. (G Otero cited in Gorman 2013)

Although enrolment enquiries flooded in, there was no public response suggesting or offering a venue for the school. In order to open the school in Term 1

1993, preparations needed to be implemented immediately. With options for a venue failing to materialise, Stan and Sally offered their storage garage and outbuilding as a temporary home for the school. Working bees were immediately organised and money collected from donations and from the garage sale went towards materials to transform Stan and Sally's garage into a teaching space and to build desks and chairs. There was no shortage of voluntary help and the long summer days rang with the banging of hammers, the whine of electrical saws, drills and sanders and the laughter and play of children who joined their parents in what were to become festive occasions of community service. Founding parents Mark and Pru Bleasdale recalled the 'joy of service' of those 'memorable days'.

We wanted to be involved in the education of our children and the establishment of Shearwater gave us that opportunity. Many of our friendships were formed through our shared work in those founding years with the Shearwater community (M & P Bleasdale 2011, pers. comm., 10 June).

Pru and Mark had moved up from northern beaches of Sydney where Mark was a boat builder and in 1982, established the Sherry Creek multiple occupancy where they still live.

It was during those balmy summer days while the working bees were in full swing that I conducted enrolment interviews with prospective parents on the lawns of Stan and Sally's garden under the shade of rustling bangalow palms. In questioning the parents as to why they were interested in finding an educational alternative to the mainstream for their children, almost all expressed their disappointment at what they found in the local public schools. 'It was horrible', recalled one of the parents, 'the principal was unpleasant and rude when we wished to talk to him about difficulties our son was experiencing at the school' (Jenny D. 2011, pers. comm., 13 June). Another founding parent, Barrie Phee, who was instrumental in renovating the garage and who would work for years to come as the school grounds-man, summed up what he and his wife, Sandra were looking for in the education for their children.

We were looking for an education that offered a hands-on, practical approach. Apart from acquiring foundation numeracy and literacy skills, we wanted our children to be artistically and practically engaged (B Phee 2011, pers. comm., June 22).

Barrie was born locally and had met Sandra (from Epping, Sydney) at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. He was studying Agricultural Science and Sandra, Welfare. Barrie's maternal grandparents had been dairy farmers from Wyrallah, south of Lismore and his mother told stories of riding to school from Terania Creek to Tuntable Falls. His father had come from a family of Cessnock coal miners to cut cane in New South Wales' far north and settled in the Lismore area. Barrie and Sandra moved back to the Lismore area and started a family.

On February 8, the Shearwater School was ready for flight. To accommodate the Kindergarten and its newly appointed teacher, Bev Clarke, Stan and Sally gave up their main bedroom. The front verandah was also seconded and fitted out with a makeshift kitchen.

The old ramshackle garage was transformed into a light filled space with freshly plastered and painted walls and ceiling, glass sliding doors and scrubbed back wooden floorboards. Brand new desks and chairs modeled on those designed by Rainer Fieck for the Lorient Novalis School and built by the parents were arranged in the classroom before a newly painted blackboard. In the following years parent participation in the preparation of their child's desk on their entry into Class 1 became a tradition that ensured a symbolic bonding process of the important relationship between parent, student and teacher.

The fire of can-do enthusiasm saw to it that facilities would be ready to commence at the beginning of the school year. In the meantime, the sober commitment of realizing the School's long-term vision was carried by Ian Howden, Stan Stevens and myself (Konrad Korobacz).



Parents building the school's first desks in January 1993. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

... Stan was responsible for administration and finance: Ian for community and communication and Konrad, education: all three worked tirelessly on planning and decision making, approaching banks and liaising with politicians. They continued over the years to lobby local politicians and this persistence paid off in the long run. Larry Anthony, (MP for Tweed) Don Page, and Ian Kingston (Mayor of the Byron Shire) were key figures in helping to set up the political atmosphere in which the school could operate. (Rogers 2000:13)

Employing the Lorien Novalis School model, Ian Howden worked on incorporating the school and writing the school's constitution and rules of association. Wroth Wall, a solicitor working out of Mullumbimby gave legal advice, waiving his fees for two years. 'Konrad documented the primary curriculum for the Board of Studies with great success. On the day of [the Education Department's Board of Studies] inspection, the school was registered Kinder to Class 4' (Rogers 2000:13). Stan negotiated a \$25,000 overdraft with the National Bank, which provided materials for the day-to-day running of the school.

Shearwater was proving itself as a viable educational alternative and through word-of-mouth communication, new enrolments swelled the numbers in Konrad's combined Class 1/2.

We heard about this new school from our friends. We weren't happy with what our girls were getting at the local school, so we sent them to Shearwater. The girls loved going to school, they loved the painting and drawing and the craft activity. They were happy, we were happy (Susan N., former parent 2011, pers. comm., 1 July).

Enough enrolment enquiries brought pressure to bear to add a Class 3 to our growing primary school. Deirdre Korobacz, an experienced Steiner teacher and artist was asked and accepted the appointment of Class Teacher for Class 2/3 beginning Term 3, 1993

In late March, a potential site for the school was suggested by local real estate agents Jan and Jim Mangleson, who were also grandparents of children attending Shearwater. A new site for the school had become necessary, not only because the increased numbers could no longer be appropriately accommodated, but also the Byron Shire, while showing sympathy and patience, were demanding compliance to building and occupancy regulations at Azalea Street. The new site, owned by Ned and Cora Cook was called The Willows, a function centre located on Left Bank Road, three and a half kilometers from Mullumbimby.

To the Manglesons, the place had personal associations. Gabrielle, their eldest daughter, a founding parent, volunteer office assistant and later a teacher in the school exclaimed excitedly: "Ned and Cora's son was my first boyfriend and we used to swim in the waterhole on their property. And my two sisters were married at 'The Willows' (G Mangleson, 2011, pers. comm., 30 June).

The Willows

A string of straggling pencil willows traced the banks of a minor water course, lending the function centre its name, while along twenty meters of its bed grew a profusion of arum lilies. Towards the front of the property, and what excited interest in accommodating the school's short term teaching space needs, was a large building that served as a function centre for weddings and other private events. It has been relocated from Southern Queensland where it had served as a meatpacking shed (N Cook 1993, pers. comm., c. July). It was rectangular in shape, built on a concrete slab and its high ceilings and wide verandahs provided shelter beneath 150 square meters of covered space. Clad in profiled Hardiplank panels and with a roof, discovered with some consternation later to be made of corrugated asbestos, it was at best an ugly building painted in eucalyptus green.

The building came with a large working kitchen/catering space, complete with gas stoves and ovens, fridge, freezer and catering equipment. This enabled the strong food culture at Shearwater to develop from very early on.

Purchase of The Willows

We all need to feel that it's the right place to be and we need to raise the deposit. (*Shearwater Newsletter*, 7 April 1993)

There was a feeling of certainty among the members of the School Council that The Willows would be the home of Shearwater. Ned Cook's asking price of \$235, 000 (Rogers: 13) appeared well out of the financial reach of a small developing school but the can do enthusiasm and good will of the parent body prevailed. After speaking to the Commonwealth Development Bank, a loan was possible, provided a 15% deposit could be found. Ian Howden, the Council Chairman called a meeting of parents and friends to ask for support. To facilitate confidentiality, he handed out a sheet of paper and pencil to each person attending the meeting and asked them to state (anonymously) how much money they were prepared to lend to the School in order to make up the deposit amount.

Having no expectation, it was with wonder and great appreciation that a sum of \$33,000 was promised that met the deposit asking price. The rest is history.

The property was purchased and building alterations were made to the 'shed'. This large open space was converted into six classrooms using volunteer parent labour and funds raised through the efforts of the parents. The building project was co-ordinated by Mark Halford, a parent and architect. Apart from designing the renovations, this involved arranging the loan of power tools and the scheduling of work rosters that rationalized the various skills of the parents and the time they had available to help. Work went on seven days a week. At the same time two major fundraising events were coordinated - the Art Auction and the Summer Fair. The money raised by these events funded the renovation program. At the commencement of Term 4, on October 11, the children and teaching staff took possession of the property and buildings.

Towards the end of 1994, the western portion of the Cook property (four hectares of land including the existing house) was purchased with the assistance of a government Block Grant Authority (BGA) grant. The house was converted for the use as a Kindergarten and Pre-school. (Shearwater letter to parents, December 6 1994). The extra land was designated to accommodate the future high school.

Early in 2006, the School also took possession of the Foster's property adjoining its western boundary. This fifteen-hectare parcel included a house, which the School renovated to accommodate the Play Groups and Parent Craft groups. The additional grounds provided a valuable addition to the Shearwater property, which was struggling to meet the demands of a growing school, whose enrolment numbers had already grown to 590 students. Space for play areas and sports fields, biodynamic gardens, an orchard and future buildings (Stage 6 - two Science laboratories and a new Art and Design complex) now became available. The newly acquired section of Mullumbimby Creek was added to the successful Rainforest Creek Regeneration Program (Shearwater 2007: 12).

INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan has been commissioned to analyse the current site occupied by Shearwater to allow for the future growth of Shearwater to a full Steiner School comprising:

Pre-School,
Kindergarten,
Single stream Primary School of 7 Classes, and
Single or double stream Secondary School.

In particular it aims to assess the capacity of the site to accommodate the above development and to generate a Master Plan that considers location & areas of:

Buildings
Playing fields
Agricultural Land
Parking
Pick up & Set down points
Services

The Master Plan is based on briefing notes and site survey supplied by Shearwater and various meetings and forums held with the school community.

A summary of briefing notes is included in this study as Appendix A

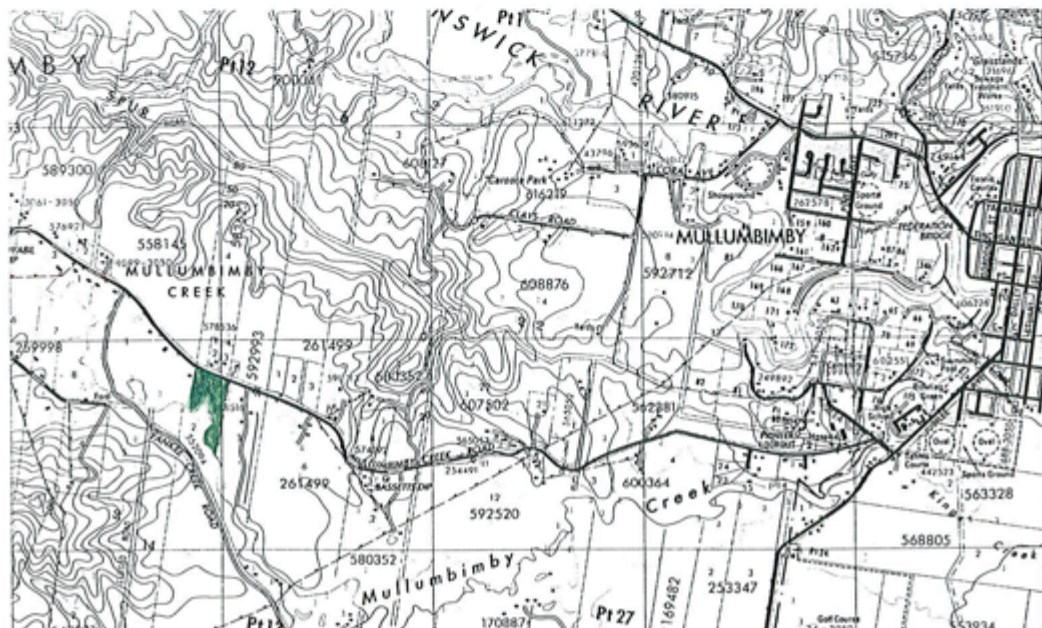


Figure 1. Shearwater Master Plan. The contour map shows the site of the two original land purchases (green) bordering Mullumbimby Creek to the south and Left Bank Road north. Its address, 359 Left Bank Road, indicates the distance (3.59 km) from the Mullumbimby Post Office. (Baxter & Jacobson 1995)



CREEK BED DEPRESSION

Existing buildings separated from main portion of land by dry creek bed which flows and dams during continual rain.



EXISTING BARN STRUCTURE

Currently accommodates all classes, eurythmy and staff/administration. Existing structure is in poor repair and should be demolished in long term.



FRONTAGE TO MULLUMBIMBY ROAD

Existing vehicular entry drive and exotic landscape gardens surrounding existing buildings.

Figure 2. Views of the property following its purchase. The referred to barn structure was ‘The Willows’ function centre. The Creek Bed Depression photo is now the site of the Administration building and the wetlands area. In the composite photo below, the school hall now occupies the house site. The brown building far right was the cow bales, which for many years served as a craft space. It eventually made way for the technology building



A School festival event held under the shade of the camphor laurel trees, 1994. (Photo: Shearwater archive)



Figure 3. Views of Mullumbimby Creek at the time of purchase. Note the fig tree. It played a pivotal role in siting the buildings.



View west through what was the Foster property towards the Koonyum Range escarpment.

In this chapter I examined the establishment of Shearwater the Mullumbimby Steiner School. I had intended to give a coherent account of the place and the process of establishing a school. Instead I found myself telling the stories that belonged to other people, their songlines. In the intersection of the biography of my songlines with those of others we created a zone of social convergence. In learning each other's stories, ideals were shared.

I struggled with trying to evoke the place itself, and to keep place in focus. It was only when I started to move away from a coherent account and started to insert photographs and maps, accounts and lyrical descriptions of people's experiences in place, journal entries, letting them jumble up and disrupt the account, that the sense of that particular place started to live more in the chapter.

Through writing this chapter, I discovered that the activity of establishing a school is a serious social undertaking, involving the conscious effort of place making by contributing place-makers. I found that even though there was a community of people with an intention to form a school, the act of conscious place making only really commenced when the community made a commitment to a particular place, when the land was found and bought. The school had become embodied and it was at that point that the act of place making began and the school started its journey as a place of intentional place making.

From The Rubble Of Europe

**The Songlines of my Parents and their
Ancestors**

In this folio I retell the stories of my parents and how they found their way to Australia as part of the wave of post-war immigrants following the end of the Second World War. They brought with them their European values, stories and culture, including Steiner education and in so doing, played their part as place makers in helping Australia become a multi-cultural society.

If Australians have learned one lesson of the Pacific War ... it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers.

Apart from British migration, the door is always open within the limits of our existing legislation to peoples from the various dominions, The United States of America and from European continental countries. (Calwell 1945)

In 1945, the Chifley Government under the direction of its Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell initiated Australia's most ambitious and experimental immigration program. With the memory of the threat of a Japanese invasion fresh in their minds, the catch cry of 'populate or perish' put paid to any misgivings by Australia's Anglo-Celtic population may have had about allowing non-English speaking immigrants into the country – so long as they were European.

Following the invasion of Poland in 1939 and of Russia in 1941, thousands of people from Eastern Europe were brought to Germany to labour in German industries. Later, they were joined by millions of refugees and displaced persons who trudged over the rubble of Central Europe and swarmed into the Western Sectors of a broken Germany during or in the aftermath of the retreat of the once invincible *Wehrmacht* and in face of the ruthless advance of the Soviet Army. Like the bedraggled troops of Napoleon's failed Russian campaign, the *Volksdeutsch* of Silesia, Poland, Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia), Ukraine and others from the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) made their way west to the internment camps pushing prams loaded with their few possessions. Unable or unwilling to return to their homelands, they dreamed of a new life far from the Soviet rule.

On July 21 1947, the Commonwealth Government entered into an agreement with the International Refugee Organization (IRO) covering the resettlement of European Displaced Persons (DPs) in Australia. Under this agreement, the IRO undertook responsibility for provision of transport and the care of the Displaced Persons until their disembarkation in Australia. Prospective immigrants were invited to apply for immigration. Screened by Australian immigration officials who were sent to Europe shortly after the war, successful applicants came under Commonwealth responsibility for reception in Australia, placement in employment and care after arrival.

It was not until 1949 that my parents and elder brother applied and were accepted for immigration, setting out from Naples on board the immigration chartered ship *The Nelly* on August 13 1949.

I have returned from my Sunday walk from along the Cape to Cape Track, that stretches along the rugged southwestern coastline of Western Australian, between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin. Looking out to sea, I observed a large ship making its way along the sea-lane down the coast after departing Fremantle, bound for the eastern states. I found myself imagining The Nelly plying its way down the same sea-lane with my parents and older brother on board, following a stop over at Fremantle back in May 1949.

I am rereading my writing in which I outline the biographical narrative of my parents and their ancestors, and recall many hours listening to the stories of my father. Not given to flights of fancy, Viktor was nevertheless a charismatic storyteller, as he periodically regaled us with episodes of his life and family over many evenings from where he held court around the kitchen table. He spoke with an authenticity prized from the depths of his hard won experience. I am only now beginning to appreciate the extent of the influence he had on me, stimulating an abiding interest in world history, geography, travel and a curiosity to experience the unique qualities of place. In recording his stories I consulted my mother, who

in old age had an exceptional memory, and my two brothers. Reflecting on the veracity of his narratives, which he continued to tell and retell, we could not recall any inconsistencies.

My mother also told her stories, which were connected to her home city of Nuremberg, for which she retained a fondness. After my father's death, she revisited the city many times, catching up with family, old friends and her association with Anthroposophy.

My father, Viktor Fillipovich Korobacz, was born on August 3 1917 in Yekaterinburg, a city just west of the Ural Mountains in Russia. It was there that the Czar maintained his summer residence. It is now infamous as the place where the Russian Royal Family was murdered. My grandfather, Phillip Korobacz was a Captain in the Czar's Guard and often acted as personal courier to the Royal Family. It was Catherine the Great who established the Guard and demanded that all the men should be no shorter than two meters in height. According to my father, who took after his mother's side of the family and was short, Phillip was a tall man who definitely fitted the requirements.

It was in Yekaterinburg that he met my paternal grandmother, Anna Filipowa. Her father was a wealthy industrialist who owned and ran a ceramics factory in Yekaterinburg, specialising in tiles and the production of those imposing tiled Russian stoves that required dedicated space to install and around which whole families could sleep during the long and cold Russian winters. The family apparently owned city residences in Moscow and St Petersburg where they visited and took part in the events of the social calendar.

But of course, 1917 was also the year of the Russian Revolution. As a White Russian royalist whose family had provided three hundred years of unbroken dedicated service to the Russian military civil service and the Russian Orthodox Church, Captain Phillip Korobacz joined the fight against the Bolsheviks as a matter of course. The conflict raged in the eastern part of the Empire until 1920, after which many White Russians escaped to and settled in Harping, China. In my grandfather's case, he had my grandmother and father sent to the safety of Skribowski, a small village in the

White Russian Sector of Poland, close to the Lithuanian border. It was in this area that my great grandfather, Ignaz Korobacz presided as a district court judge. (He was apparently a man of integrity who when it was demanded of him to preside over German run courts in the district following ‘*Wehrmacht*’ control of the region during the Eastern campaign of World War I, preferred to take a public beating rather than condemn his own people.) The village was the home of the Korobacz family who had been given a grant of land by the Czar in recognition of services to the Empire.

My father told many a story of my grandmother weeping for days after being forced to abandon the privileges of comfortable city living (including maids and a nanny) and to embrace the rustic village life of Skribowski.

He often retold the story of the ‘Korobacz treasure’, buried somewhere over the border in the Soviet Union. Phillip, who had also spent time in Paris attempting to garner support for a counter-revolution in the early 1920s with a dissolute Russian prince who was a distant relative, had been responsible for transporting a payroll for the White Armies. Passing through Bolshevik territory they became aware of the presence of enemy patrols and decided to bury the war chest of gold rubles. My father recalls the Korobacz men plotting on cold winter evenings the best way to recover this hoard buried somewhere in the Soviet Union... but I believe this dangerous foray never eventuated.

On his return from Paris, Phillip (which translates from the Greek Philipos as ‘lover of horses’) took up horse breeding, his major buyer being the Polish Cavalry. Tragically, it was the same cavalry that ordered the world’s last charge, against the mechanised might of the German *Wehrmacht* during the 1939 invasion. As a child, one of my father’s immigrant Polish friends, Tony Tresewicz, who was a regular visitor, told us stories about his time as a Polish cavalryman.

A serious fire in the village that destroyed a number of farm buildings in the 1930s evaporated hopes the family had of Viktor studying to become a doctor. I remember him having an aptitude for healing with an intuitive feel for health and a decisive and steady hand when it came to home surgery, such as the removal of splinters. Instead, he trained as a butter and cheese maker, a profession that would prove to be decisive in choosing Australia as a place to emigrate.

In 1938, at the age of 21, he was drafted into the Polish Army and true to family tradition, enjoyed the military lifestyle, winning a medal for marksmanship. Groomed for officer training, a rare recognition for a non-Pole, his hopes of a profession in the military was abruptly halted by Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1 1939. The patriotic but anachronistic Polish Army, more suited to engage Napoleon at *Borodino*, was no match for the *Blitzkrieg* tactics of the *Wehrmacht*'s modern army of lethal Panzer Divisions and the deadly striking power of its '*Luftwaffe*'. Viktor vividly recounted the screaming vertical dive-bombing raids of '*Stukas*' and a moment that defined his destiny. Stranded in an open field with companions, they were strafed by a German ME 109 fighter plane. With spitting machine fire ranging in on them, they hit the ground. He thought that it was the end. As the plane swooped by, he found that he had survived but his companions lay dead either side of him. He knew at that point that he was meant to live out the course of his natural life, whatever it might bring.

As part of an anti-aircraft unit that he described as pathetically inadequate, he found himself in the front line against an advancing German Division on its way to Warsaw. The battery was ordered to lower their skyward pointing guns to ground level and blast the oncoming motorised German reconnaissance patrols. The battery was, however, quickly routed and his unit was left to fend for itself. Making his way to Warsaw in the company of some companions, he came upon two dead bodies in Polish uniform. Sensing something was amiss, he examined the bodies more closely to discover that under the Polish uniforms were German colours. Inside their breast pockets he discovered hundreds of thousands of zlotys – the Polish currency. Relieving the dead of their burden, he was able to finance his and others escape south. It was only

later that he realised that these dead German soldiers were forward insurgents spreading counterfeit money in order to wreak havoc on the Polish economy.

Joining thousands of Polish soldiers moving south, he crossed the border into Hungary where they settled for some months. Later he discovered that this stream of retreating soldiers was cut off by the eastward flanking *Wehrmacht*. By this time, with the final subjugation of Poland, the *zloty* had lost its value. Contacted by British intelligence, they signed on to fight in Britain with what was to become the fiercely nationalistic and effective expatriate Polish army. Having been issued with money, they were to follow a route through to the Adriatic and on to Britain via the Mediterranean.

With survival instincts well honed, my father sensed with some prescience that expatriate Poles would be small players in a world conflict where global interests were at stake. So Viktor decided to try and make it back home and hoped to cross the border back into Poland through Zakopane, an elevated mountain town in Southern Poland. Zakopane served as an underground staging point between Poland and Hungary. Viktor and his companions, while attempting to negotiate a mountain pass, were betrayed to German guards. Being taken prisoner, they made no mention of any connection with the Polish Military, persisting with their story of being- stateless White Russian citizens caught up in the chaos of the German invasion.

He was placed in a prison where he sat for ten months, suffering stress and severe deprivation, the after-effects of which would never quite leave him and possibly caused his premature death at the age of 69.

He told stories about these difficult times with the same objectivity with which he told all his stories. In acknowledging the hardship, he always sought the positive lessons. In a way it was this tough preparation that helped him to survive the scrutiny

of the Gestapo while working in Nuremberg, Germany. For a short time he was to share a cell with the infamous *Gauleiter* of Franconia, Julius Streicher.

Meanwhile, his Carpathian prison held an indiscriminate rabble, where politicians, intellectuals, teachers, priests, and civil servants were thrown in with hardened criminals, sexual deviants and murderers. In this *King Rat* situation, it was a degenerate survival of the fittest. The food was a watery soup in which one was lucky to find a slice of potato but worst was the daily roll call of prisoners who were taken away and never seen again. Would he be one of them?

Despite the harsh conditions, he befriended a man who happened to be a skillful tailor. The local Commandant had picked him out to sew his uniforms and treated him with respect. On hindsight, my father believed the tailor was instrumental in bringing about a change of circumstance. Viktor believed he had put in a good word for him. Following ten months of detention since his capture, my father was brought before the Commandant who asked if he would prefer to work in Germany or 'stay in prison and rot'. He took the proactive option. He was issued with a stateless pass, took the train to Germany and commenced work at the *Bayerische Milchversorgung*, a butter factory in Steppach, a small village near the medieval town of Bamberg in northern Bavaria.

Within a week of arriving in Steppach, he met my mother, Elisabeth Stützing, who was running a child-minding centre where mothers could leave their young children while they went to work in the fields or in factories to support the war effort. She described him as pale and gaunt with flashing brown eyes and charismatic charm.

Elisabeth was born in the medieval city of Nuremberg, a centre of the Northern Renaissance and home to Albrecht Dürer, Martin Behaim (inventor of the first world globe), Hans Sachs (the poet and dramatist) and *The Meistersinger* immortalized in opera by Richard Wagner. In more recent times it gained infamy for Hitler's Nazi

rallies on the *Zepellinfeld* and as a venue for the post-war trials for those Germans charged with crimes against humanity.

The records of my mother's father's family stretched back to the fifteenth Century – when Rudolf II of Prague issued the family with a crest. They had a history as capable craftsmen and administrators. Her father, Konrad Stützing (after whom I was named), was a precision machinist and toolmaker and, in his leisure time, a noted gymnast and trapeze artist. The family of her mother Barbara, the Gräbners, was from the Oberpfalz in the Regensburg area, near the Czech border.

Lisa, as my mother was known, was an Anthroposophist, a student of the teaching of Rudolf Steiner. She had come to the Movement at the Kindergarten Seminar where two of her teachers imbued the course with the wisdom of Steiner Education. Being very much given to hands-on practice, these teachers were able to communicate practical processes and ideas without invoking names and philosophies except to those who recognized the underground stream of wisdom that flowed through the teaching. Lisa chose to know more. She was later introduced to members of the associated Christian Community and met its founder, Dr Friedrich Rittelmeyer, and the religious writers Emil Bock and Dr Wilhelm Kelber. She also practiced Eurythmy, a new spiritual art of movement with one of Steiner's first Eurythmy students, Agnes Spieler.

Indeed, it was in pre-World War I Nuremberg (1908) that Steiner delivered his remarkable *Lectures on the Revelations of St John the Divine* in which he retraced, through a procession of great cosmic pictures, the evolution of humanity and the world as envisioned by the writer of the *Apocalypse* (Wachsmuth 1989:108). But, as with Freemasonry and other religious organisations, Anthroposophy was suppressed during the Nazi administration of the Third Reich and forced to go underground.

Lisa was also forced to go underground, literally, during frequent Allied bombing raids on Nuremberg. The *Altstadt* or old town was surrounded by extensive

masonry fortifications, together with moats, gates, turrets and towers, having retained its medieval architecture and character. Dominating the town was the *Burg* or castle that was built into the top of a sandstone outcrop. Underneath the castle, an extensive system of tunnels had been excavated since medieval times and, in some places, ran under the town walls beyond any besieging army. There were many access points and the town folk used the space as cool cellars for the storage of sauerkraut, wine and other perishables. In wartime, it also served as an air raid shelter, safely protecting up to five thousand residents. It also housed the treasures of the *Germanischemuseum*, including the *Kleinodiendienst* and accompanying reliquaries, which Hitler had removed from Vienna following the *Anschluss* with Austria in 1938. On January 2 1945, the medieval city was extensively bombed and destroyed, some say in revenge for the bombing of Coventry.

Viktor and Lisa conducted a nerve-racking clandestine relationship during the course of the war. Under Nazi race policy, where everyone was expected to produce a genealogy of their family origins to prove ‘racial purity’, a union between a German and a Slav was considered *verboten*. If revealed, it would have meant incarceration for both of them. Following the cessation of hostilities, they were eventually married in 1946, choosing as their venue the chapel of the Baroque Palace of Pommersfelden, set on the outskirts of Bamberg.

Viktor continued work at the butter factory as a foreman, now in a paid capacity. Despite being one of many enforced foreign workers, Viktor was always regarded as a trusted and valued employee. At the end of the war as General George ‘Old Blood and Guts’ Patton’s Third Army was taking control of the area, his boss, Heinrich Utz, a Nazi party member and fearful of reprisals, had attempted to shoot himself. Viktor, who was quick of mind and reflex, snatched away his Luger and told him that as he had treated his workers decently, they would put in good word for him. Both men retained their respective positions.

During and following the war, there were severe food shortages. Butter was as powerful a means of exchange as any during the heady days of the post-war black market economy. With ready access to butter, Viktor reveled in the adrenalin rush of wheeling and dealing and kept family and friends fed and in good health until the economy righted itself.

However, my father also released his tensions in heavy drinking and often provoked fighting. In moments of clarity, he realised something had to change. There was no way he could return to his White Russian home whose territory had been resumed by the Soviet Union. (Indeed, and unknown to Viktor at the time, his brother Vladimir was sent to serve time in Siberia as punishment for performing law enforcement duties on behalf of the German occupying forces). On leave in 1943, Viktor had returned home to see his parents and family for the last time. They were astonished to see him, believing he had perished in the conflagration of war. Taking the advice of Grandfather Ignaz who had witnessed Russia change hands four times since 1915 and about to see it change hands again, Viktor saw no future there with the Soviet advance closing in. Hearing the Russian artillery in the distance, he caught the last train out of the region. Partisans had already destroyed track and train changes were frequent. He arrived back in Germany to a crumbling Reich and presented Lisa with some antique jewellery that his mother had gifted her.

At the end of the war, many of his fellow Russian workers wanted to return home. Speaking out of trusted prescience, he warned them against returning, knowing that Stalin would condemn as traitors men who had worked in Germany. His best friend Vasily, a Ukrainian and former NKVD employee (Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del - one of the state security agencies that preceded the KGB), took his chances and headed for the Russian sector. Instead of being welcomed back, he was placed in an internment camp. Heeding Viktor's warning at last, he escaped and returned to Nuremberg. Later he and his wife would travel out to Australia with Viktor and Lisa and settle in Sydney.

Despite his stable job, Viktor felt alienated in German society. He also felt that the German nation was broken and that American economic interests would, for some years at least, determine its destiny. He never complained about the Germans, nor applied for compensation when encouraged to do so. He appreciated the help and support that many had given him. He also had grave reservations as to Stalin's European intentions with the Cold War tensions building up in the late 1940's. Russian invasion was perceived as a real threat.

As a foreigner in Germany, he perhaps felt it better if both he and Lisa were foreigners together in a new land far from Europe. He investigated where his skills as butter and cheese maker could be applied and narrowed the options to Venezuela and Australia. Conditions in Australia appeared to be more favourable. They applied and were accepted for immigration to Australia in 1949.

I remember when playing under the house, the large pine crates my grandfather had constructed to carry Viktor and Lisa's goods and chattels to Australia. They had lift-up, hinged lids and, even packed with stored items, we could hide in them. On their sides, large black-painted writing confidently proclaimed ownership and destination. Inside were packed treasures that we often played with, especially my mother's childhood kitchen set, complete with miniature ceramic teacups and saucers, plates and cooking utensils.