

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

July, 1993
No. 24

ISSN 07285531

Editors
June Factor and Gwenda Davey

Published from: The School of Early Childhood Studies,
University of Melbourne
\$6.00 in Australia, \$8.00 including postage outside Australia



NOTES AND NEWS

WORLD PLAY SUMMIT

In our last issue, mention was made of the then upcoming, grandly named World Play Summit. That gathering of scholars, sport and recreation professionals, playground designers, folklorists, teachers and ever so many other people with an interest in play, duly eventuated at the University of Melbourne in February. The attendance was well over 500 people, many from overseas, and the conference was widely considered a great success. Our compliments to the exhausted organisers.

In this issue we publish a paper presented at the conference by Heather Russell and Kate Perkins which aroused much interest. A number of delegates took the opportunity to visit the Australian Children's Folklore Collection; many, particularly those from other countries, donated homemade and traditional playthings for display in the Children's Museum at the Museum of Victoria.

EDITORS KEEP BUSY

Both editors have been busy for the last six months on folklore-related activities. June Factor presented one of the keynote papers to the Play Summit, as well as speaking to a number of schools and other interested organizations. Collins Dove will publish her research on Australian children's colloquial speech, beginning with a dictionary of

children's slang. She sends out a special call to readers of the ACFN: please let her have any examples of words and phrases used by Australian youngsters that you know, remember or overhear. She has a special questionnaire for those interested. Teachers: it's a great language project for students at all levels!

Gwenda Davey completed both her doctorate and the co-editing of the impressive Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore, which of course contains many references to children's lore. [A review will appear in our next issue]. As executive officer of the Victorian Folklife Association, she has also been organizing a series of lectures on folkloric topics, one of which will focus on children's traditions. For further information, ring Melbourne 417.4684.

New Subscribers Needed

The ACFN, like all small, independent publications, depends on its readers for financial support. We would like to increase our subscriber list by 100 before the end of the year - an ambitious but not impossible goal. If you can help - by encouraging friends and colleagues to subscribe, by introducing the ACFN to your school or local library, etc., - it would be much appreciated. And, if anyone has a little surplus cash, we will gratefully accept donations to the newspaper.

Our special thanks to the cultural journal *Overland* and its editor, Barrett Reid. Barrett printed a half-page advertisement for the ACFN in the last issue of *Overland* without charge. We are glad to reciprocate by including information about the long-lasting and always stimulating publication in our newsletter.

Thanks to Veronica in the Staff Secretaries' Office at the School of Early Childhood Studies, for typing this issue, and to the reliable, behind-the-scenes Don Oliver for layout, design and distribution.



TWINKLE, TWINKLE, SOUTHERN CROSS: The Forgotten Folklore of Australian Nursery rhymes.

Robert Holden, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1992. Reviewed by Gwenda Beed Davey.

Robert Hold is the former Director of the Museum of Australian Childhood in Sydney. In this book, he has drawn on the collections of the National Library of Australian and other institutions to present a masterly survey of published rhymes for Australian children, and of attempts to indigenise Australian nursery literature. The book contains splendid illustrations, many in colour, mainly taken from publications held in the National Library.

Chapter 1, 'Nursery Rhymes in Colonial

Australia: Who killed cockatoo?', is an interesting discussion about the first colonial attempts to 'provide Australian children with simple rhymes on local subjects', to use Louisa Anne Meredith's words from her 1891 *Waratah Rhymes for Young Australians* (Holden; p.7). Some of these attempts borrowed images from the classic nursery rhymes, as in Meredith's use of 'Miss Muffet'. Others were adaptations of nursery rhymes, such as William Cawthorne's *Who Killed Cockatoo?* (1870), a version of 'Who Killed Cock Robin'.

The chapter proceeds to an account of rhyming alphabet books, popular in both the United Kingdom and Australian in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and Holden includes the full text of *The Young Australian's Alphabet* (c. 1871). The reprint of the cover illustration of *The Australian ABC Book*, published in the 1870s, is notable for its depiction of a kookaburra wearing a slouch hat, a popular icon often thought to be of later vintage.

Chapter 3 introduces an important discussion about *The Bulletin*, and its 'discernible editorial policy' of promoting Australian literature and folklore (Holden; p.24). The chapter also includes an account of the essay written by Donald E. Fraser, an Inspector of Schools for the Public Instruction Department who published his writing under the pseudonym of Jimmy Pannikin. Holden (p.25) describes Fraser as 'one of the earliest and most persistent advocates for a significant Australian content in the school curriculum', and notes (p.28) that this period in the early years of the twentieth century was one of 'an emerging concern for indigenous culture on all fronts'.

Chapter 4, 'Folklore Made to Order', is one of the most significant in *Twinkle, Twinkle, Southern Cross*. Before discussing the chapter further, it is necessary for me to now state my disagreements with Robert Holden about his use of the terms 'folklore' and 'nursery rhymes' throughout the book.

As I stated earlier, *Twinkle, Twinkle* is a splendid survey of attempts to indigenise

Australian nursery poetry. Holden's sub-title is The Forgotten Folklore of Australian Nursery Rhymes; it would be have been more accurately sub-titled 'forgotten attempts to create Australian nursery rhymes'. The contents of this book are not folklore and not nursery rhymes. They are also not all forgotten; some have become classics, but a classic is not necessarily folklore.

Robert Holden has attempted to place his book within a folkloric context, not only through his sub-title but from the beginning of his Introduction, where his first section discusses the Opies' Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes (1951), the classic work in the field. He has, however, misunderstood both the Opies' research methods and the content of their research. Holden correctly quotes the Opies' definition of nursery rhymes as 'those verses which are traditionally passed on to a child while it is still of nursery age' (Opie, 1951, p.1), but has chosen to ignore the phrase 'traditionally passed on' in order to insist that anything written for the nursery can be called a nursery rhyme. He has also misinterpreted the Opies' accounts of their sources; the Opies did not 'draw their nursery rhymes from ... adult as well as juvenile literature, from chapbooks, broadsheets, moral pamphlets' (Holden, p.1). These were some of the historic sources which the Opies consulted in order to document the earliest appearance in print, or the possible origins, of what are now called nursery rhymes.

It's simply not acceptable to use the term 'nursery rhymes' when what is meant is poetry written for the nursery. The term 'nursery rhymes' has acquired a highly specific meaning in the English language, notably supported by the seminal work of Iona and Peter Opie. The Preface and Introduction to their Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes makes it abundantly clear that the Opies are referring to traditional material which can be documented over several centuries, material which has a strong base in current oral tradition and which has been continually reprinted. The Opies' first paragraph refers to Halliwell's classic nineteenth century collection of nursery

rhymes, 'collected principally from oral tradition' (Opie, 1951, p.v). On page vi they note that in deciding which version of a nursery rhyme to include in the Dictionary, they bore in mind 'how the rhyme is commonly known today'. On page viii they make a statement of particular significance to this discussion, that 'it has not been our object to resurrect pieces long forgotten, and when the contrary might be supposed we have been careful to supply evidence of contemporary or recent vitality'.

Robert Holden has resurrected many 'pieces long forgotten'. However worthy they might be as literature or social history, they are not folklore, and it diminishes the worth of his study to claim that they are. Many of the items and publications noted in Twinkle, Twinkle have not survived their initial printing, and have not passed into family memories. Books such as Snugglypot and Cuddlypie and The Magic Pudding have become Australian classics without becoming folklore, although the names 'Snugglypot' and 'Cuddlypie' have acquired some folkloric connotations as family terms of endearment. Few Australians could recall from memory - or recite - any of the content of these classics, as they can recite 'Hey diddle Diddle' or sing 'Pop Goes the Weasel'. What makes a book into a classic is a fascinating question, beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to comment that it is probably a joint decision of the academy, of commerce and the folk.

The National Library of Australia has two consultants in Australian folklore, and it is a great pity that neither were involved in any significant way before the Library published with its full imprimatur a book which purports to be about folklore, and is not. Does this happen in other areas of the Library's operations?

Chapter 4 of Twinkle, Twinkle, Southern Cross is, as I noted earlier, one of the most significant chapters in this book. Entitled 'Folklore made to order', it deals with a notable attempt by The Bulletin in 1917 to create Australian nursery rhymes. On August 30th, the editor Arthur Adams offered through the 'Red Page' 'a guinea ...

for the best nursery rime (sic) written by an Australian'. A thousand entries were received, and on October 18th the 'Red Page' was given over almost entirely to the results of this hugely successful competition. A selection of competition entries was subsequently published and sold for the price of one shilling, with the proceeds to the Children's Hospital in Sydney. Its title was Australian Nursery Rimes, and it was illustrated by notable artists such as Norman Lindsay and David Low.

Robert Holden has earned the gratitude of readers and researchers into the indigenisation of Australian literature by reprinting in Twinkle Twinkle the full 'Red Page' from 18 October 1917 and a facsimile of the complete Australian Nursery Rimes, published by The Bulletin in time for Christmas 1917. He is, however, wrong in his description (p.32) of The Bulletin exercise as 'the first major attempt in Australia to record children's folklore'. As quoted above, Arthur Adams invited his readers to write, not to record, and some of the entrants in his competition were well-known writers such as Hugh McCrae. The Bulletin's guinea was shared by Walter E. Perroux and D.H. Souter, the latter being also well known as a regular Bulletin cartoonist. Souter's winning entry was 'The Man from Mungindi', the location being altered to 'Menindie', for the Christmas publication. The full contents of that book were as follows:

*The Man from Menindie
Rain! Rain! Come, down with you rain
Sonny boy, sonny boy, just me and you
Little Billy Bandicoot
Wallaby, wallaby why do all the birdies fly?
Muster, muster all of a cluster
Three ha'pence for tuppence
There was a little rabbit
Little Ji-ka Ji-ka
Tinkle tinkle telephone
Five grey rabbits who lived in a log
There was once a baby 'Roo, Baby 'Roo
What are you doing O little grey bear
Old Mother Kangaroo, stop! stop! stop!*

I stick to my statement of July 1989 in the Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter

(No.16, p.5) that only 'Little Ji-ka Ji-ka' has remained to any extent in oral circulation, and that feebly. Holden quotes two cases where some of the rhymes have been remembered, one of which was supplied by myself, but two cases hardly constitutes an oral tradition. Holden (p.43) believes that I am unduly dismissive of the printed word in stating that the Bulletin exercise of 1917 shows that you cannot write folklore to order. Not so! If 'Little Ji-ka Ji-ka' or any other of the Bulletin's 1917 competition winners had been continually reprinted, then their case for folkloric status might have been stronger. Such reprinting has, however, not taken place.

Robert Holden's final chapters continue the chronological survey of Australianised writing for children, up to the present day, and some of it is very fine writing indeed. A personal favourite of mine is C.J. Dennis's 'Traveller':

*As I rode in to Burrumbeet
I meet a man with funny feet;
And, when I paused to ask him why
His feet were strange, he rolled his eye
And said the rain would spoil the wheat;
So I rode on to Burrumbeet.*

Like Holden, I would be delighted if such rhymes passed into the Australian nursery rhyme tradition. Only time and 'the folk' can decide if they will.

★★★★★★★



TWINKLE, TWINKLE

Authors and Sources

by
Edel Wignell

I have enjoyed reading Robert Holden's Twinkle, Twinkle Southern Cross: The Forgotten Folklore of Australian Nursery Rhymes (National Library of Canberra, 1992), and was delighted to find the origins and authors of some of the rhymes which I used when I was a student teacher (1954-56) and an infant teacher in primary schools in Victoria (1957-64).

In those days we did not have many commercially prepared materials, and no "school" money to buy them. As students, one of our assignments was to collect poems and songs, and I remember spending much "busy time" copying by hand, then neatly re-writing into personal collections (which were submitted for evaluation!).

Usually authors and sources were not acknowledged, and I guess this explains why many items were regarded as "folklore". Verses from "The Red Page" in the Bulletin, sent in response to a nursery "rime" competition in 1917, are of particular interest (pp.33-40).

These are the ones I remember (page references Twinkle, Twinkle, Southern Cross):

- Annie R. Rentoul "Kangaroo Song", p.19.
- Angela Kennedy "Little Ji-ka- Ji-ka!", p.34.
- Racey Beaver "There was a piccaninny", p.37.
- D.H.S. (D.H. Souter) "The Man from Mungundi (Menindie)", p.38 (we said Menindie).
- Ethel Pawley "What are you doing O little grey bear?" p.39.
- Leslie H. Allen "Puff-tail Peter", p.56.
- The Perfesser & Alter Ago (Launcelot Harrison) "The Wallaby and the Bull-ant", p.60.
- Marion Sinclair "Kookaburra", p.63

Forgotten authors, neglect. At last I can acknowledge the debt I owe to people whose work I used. The verses gave pleasure to hundreds of children.

A new book has been published in the US which offers historical perspectives on childhood play in that country. Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840 - 1940, includes chapters on children's play in American autobiographies and play in American country schools. We hope to publish a fuller review in our next issue, but for those readers interested in this book, we suggest approaching a good bookseller who will order it from the US: Kathryn Grover (ed.), Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840 - 1940, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1992, 272 pp. 160 illustrations, US\$50 cloth ISBN 0-87023-792-6, US\$16.95 paper ISBN 0-87023-793-4.



CENSORSHIP

A recent book on censorship in school libraries in Australia, Brought To Book (ALIA Thorpe, Melb. 1993), is arousing much interest and public comment. The authors, Claire Williams and Ken Dillon, both academics, have presented a well-researched and hard-hitting analysis of the overt and covert censorship that takes place in Australian schools. We quote one small section which we believe will be of particular interest to our readers.

[There] seems to be [a] perceived need [by school authorities] to do the impossible to 'protect' children from their own culture. Specifically, language children use and hear every day is held to be unacceptable to be read in their books. This is most vividly illustrated in the case of June Factor's books of children's playground rhymes including All Right Vegemite!, which contains one particularly contentious stanza:

*When Susie was a teenager
A teenager Susie was
She went 'ooh ah, lost my bra,
Found my knickers in my boyfriend's car!*

Ironically, 'what children had created to chant in the school playground was then interpreted as being unfit for them to read' (Michael Dugan, 'Playground idiom Censored off the Page, The Age, 24 April 1991) [from Brought to Book, p.72]

CHILDREN'S RHYMES FROM THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER

From 1908 to 1931, the well-known Australian poet Mary Gilmore edited a women's page for the Sydney Worker. Although that paper had a predominantly male readership and focus, this page was especially popular with readers.

Between August and December of 1914, Mary

Gilmore included a number of counting-out and other children's rhymes in her column. We publish a few of these rhymes here, and ask our readers to contribute their memories of such play lore for subsequent issues of the ACFN.

August 20, 1914

COUNT-OUT RHYMES

I

*Queen, Queen Caroline
Dipped her nose in turpentine;
Turpentine made it shine,
Queen, Queen Caroline*

II

*Two, four, six, eight, ten,
Baptis, mantis, Englishmen.
Keury, query, victus, veery,
Usum, icum, cacum, out!*

This sometimes ends:-

*One, two,
Sky blue;
All out
But you.*

III

*One, two, three,
Nanny caught a flea;
Flea died, Nanny cried, Out goes she.*

IV

*Oh, dear doctor, don't catch me,
Catch the nigger by the tree;
He stole the money, I stole none,
Put him in prison till half-past one.*

V

*Onery, ooery, ickery, Ann,
Phillis, fallisy, Nicholas Jam,
queeby, quarby, Irishman,
Ticklum, tacklum, Out!*

[There is another on the alphabet, the run of which I have forgotten. But it begins, "Albacy, Deffigy, "i.e., A.B.C. (joined in sound), D.E.F.G. (ditto), and so on, Y and Z being given as plain Y and Z. Does anyone know it, and can anyone send it? Any others will be welcome as an addition to our collection.]

September, 10, 1914

Dear Madam,

I do not know the alphabetical rhymes you mention, but send you two others. My father used to say the first one when playing nearly fifty years ago, and we girls use the other one now.

Dulcie Rae Glenorie

I

*Eena, deena, dinah, dust,
Kateela, wheela, whila, wust;
Spit, spot, must be done;
Twiddlum, twaddlum, twenty-one!
Back fish, white trout,
Irry, orry, you are right out!*

II

*Ellery, belbery, rippity rye,
Rippity, roppity, nollah!*

Very glad to get these. One received from G.B., Parliament House, Sydney. We hope other readers will send us yet others.

September, 24, 1914

The count-out rhyme our little correspondent Maggie May sends is as follows:-

*Ena, dena, dina, doh,
Katherine, wheela, wila, woh,
Black fish, white trout,
O-u-t spells out.*

October 1, 1914

Seeing that you are printing some of the count-out rhymes of our childhood, writes W.W.W., I got some of the Narramine bairns to recite some favoured in this district. Although they were not unanimous as to the exact technical wording, they seem to run something like the following:-

I

*Kangaroo and wallabee,
Hopping o'er the mountain free;
Paddy-melon not too slow,
One, two, three, and out you go.*

II

*Ninkle, dinkle, catch a winkle.
All de little star dey twinkle,
When the silber moon's about,
Not you, not you, but you go out.*

October 8, 1914

A count-out rhyme:-

*Ho! ho! off I go,
True blue! Y-o-u you,
Hurrah! A-r-e are,
Without doubt, o-u-t out.*

James Daley

'LET'S PLAY IT AGAIN'

Children participate in the re-design of their primary school play environment

by
Kate Perkins
and
Heather Russell

A teacher at Pembroke Primary School in Victoria, Kate Perkins and Heather Russell, a play consultant, presented this paper to the World Play Summit in Melbourne in February, 1993.

Whilst sitting amongst two and a half acres of school ground, a six year old proclaimed: "We need more to do at play time." How could this be? Pembroke Primary School has won Victorian State School Garden Awards. The school community prides itself on its efforts and money raised for grounds' development and play ground equipment. What could be missing? Can an acclaimed garden setting be balanced with a play environment that caters for children's needs?

In searching for the answers to these questions the project "LET'S PLAY IT AGAIN" was conceived. The project's aim was to provide students with "more to do at play time".

To achieve this the school's staff had to find out more about children's play needs and habits, then enrich the present setting by developing an open-ended play environment that encouraged diverse play.

Unable to tackle the project alone, experts were called upon. The design team included landscape architects May Jeavons and Gini Lee, play specialist Heather Russell, an architectural model maker, the school's staff, and the true experts in play, the 310 students of Pembroke Primary School.

Funding, a crucial part of any project, came from the Victorian Government's Ministry for the Arts "Artists in Schools Program". (This

program provides grants for schools and artists or designers to work together on an Arts project.) This funding was minimal in relation to the total project, which relied heavily on people's voluntary work and their commitment to the concept of children designing their own play space.

The project was a four stage process.

Stage 1 - observing and documenting children's existing play practices and their use of play spaces.

Stage 2 - children documented their own play through 2 and 3 dimensional art work and by conducting on site tours and interviews. These activities were repeated when children investigated and designed ways to enrich the school's playground.

Stage 3 - the development of a concept plan based on all the data collected from stages 1 and 2. The concept plan was developed by the landscape architects, then interpreted by the model maker.

Stage 4 - the realization of the plan. This is now being undertaken by the school community.

The Pembroke Primary School Playground - a description.

Pembroke is a large school on the eastern outskirts of Melbourne, with an enrolment of around 300 students. Located in a natural bush setting, the grounds of the school are large and very well maintained. The play area by most primary school standards is spacious and well treed.

STAGE ONE Observation and Documentation

Observation and documentation focused on three elements of children's play:

- a. children's existing play patterns at recess and lunchtime.
- b. children's use of and interaction with the play space.

- c. the broader context - teachers' influence on children's play.

a. Children's existing play settings

The purpose of observing children's existing play patterns was to understand which activities or types of play dominated at recess and lunchtime and which types of play were inhibited or under-represented. Observations took place over a period of a month at lunchtime and recess time using a simple pencil and paper recording technique. All areas of the play space were observed systematically.

Types of playtime activity were categorised as follows: traditional games (e.g. *Chasey*, *Skippy*, *Marbles*, *Four Square*); formal sports related games (e.g. *Basketball*, *Football*); play on fixed equipment (e.g. monkey bars); socio-dramatic play; constructive/interactive play (e.g. digging in sandpits); pastimes (e.g. reading); mucking around (e.g. rough and tumble); negotiation (e.g. counting out rituals); walking or running; sitting, standing or watching; school work or detention work.

Preliminary analysis of the observational data showed that during the month-long observation period, boys' play was dominated by formal sports-related games - in particular *Basketball* and *Football*. The next most popular form of play for boys was on fixed equipment - usually playing *Chasey* games such as *Off Ground Tiggy*. For girls, playing on fixed equipment and playing traditional games (*Four Square* was in season during the observation period) were the most popular play activities. A large number of girls were also observed standing around, sitting or watching others play rather than being actively engaged in play themselves.

Even though the play space had two sand pits, relatively few children were observed playing in them. There was little constructive play and little socio-dramatic play observed. The observations of socio-dramatic play were mostly of girls.

b. Children's use of the play space

Surprisingly, the observations (and later child-led tours and interviews) revealed a significant tradition behind the use of many natural and man-made features in the playground. Various trees, bushes, fences, seats, fallen logs, fixed equipment, tree stumps, etc., had a long history of association with a particular game - an association which went back at least six years (according to the Grade 6 children), and in some cases, further back than that (according to the Principal).



Games of different types - traditional games, sports related games and socio-dramatic games - incorporated particular playground features. These features either marked the boundaries of the game (like the trees in the *big park* which were goal posts for *Football*), or inspired fantasy games by their physical shape or location. For example, the *log* (a very large fallen tree, about a meter high and fifteen metres long) was the *space ship*, and according to older children, has always been known as the *space ship*. The controls, the engine, the key to the spaceship (all natural features of the log itself) were identified by children of all ages. A cluster of small bushy hakeas at the bottom of the *big park* was known as the *girls' room*. Seven year old boys would chase girls, capture them and take them to this special place.

A recurring element in children's choice of play space was the need for appropriate boundaries. For example, a group of 10-11 year olds explained that at recess they played *Off Ground Tiggy* using the new pine log equipment as the boundary. This meant more tigs in the fifteen minutes recess time so the game was fast with lots of changes. However, at lunchtime they played *Round the School Tiggy* because there was more time for long chases and one person could afford to be *It* for longer. Similarly, the 12 year old footy players preferred to play Footy in the *big park* using carefully chosen trees for goal posts. This way more goals could be kicked in the allotted time. On the oval, time is wasted chasing balls and running between goal posts that are too far apart.

These descriptions of play by the older children indicate a need for highly interactive play experiences, particularly during the short recess period. Children's choice of small, clearly defined areas allows for lots of action and interaction and ensures that everyone gets a turn.

c. Putting children's play in context

Any description of children's play is incomplete without a description of the wider context within which play is allowed to take place. After all, play in school playgrounds only takes place because the DSE allows it to. In many schools in the United States, 'recess' is now a supervised Physical Education class (Smith, 1990). Whilst this has not happened in Australia, 'free play' at recess and lunchtime is more and more restricted. Through the physical design of playgrounds, and teachers' rules and expectations of play, children's activities at recess and lunchtime do not always represent free or spontaneous play. For these reasons, the broader institutional context, the rules and regulations of play and teachers' provisions for play, were documented.

Some of the more controversial rules at Pembroke Primary were: 'No picking up sticks off the ground'; 'No picking flowers and leaves off trees and shrubs'; 'No digging in clay or dirt - digging is only allowed in

the sandpits'. These rules meant that children couldn't play with the natural environment that surrounded them.

Provision of play equipment

Each classroom had a supply of balls - mostly basketballs, plus some footballs, cricket sets and skipping ropes.

No sandpit toys or equipment were provided by the school, even though the school had two sandpits.

No jacks, marbles, elastics, long skipping ropes or any other paraphernalia used in traditional games were provided by the school.

These findings support the view that schools as educational institutions do influence and direct children's play opportunities (Christie & Johnson, 1989). These influences are expressed overtly - via school rules like 'you must not pick up or play with sticks', and covertly by providing sport equipment but no sandpit toys such as bucket and spades, or materials for playing traditional games like *Jacks* and *Skippy*. The message children were given at Pembroke Primary was that ball games - and particularly sports-related games - were good games to play. Games that involved interacting and manipulating the natural environment were not allowed. This kind of play was considered messy, potentially dangerous, and too destructive of the gardens and the natural environment.

Play traditions - another dimension

The Pembroke Primary School project highlighted the strong element of culture and tradition which connected children at Pembroke Primary with their play environment. Children's game traditions in Australia have been extensively documented (Factor, 1988). However, the Pembroke project was probably the first time that children's play in an Australian school setting had been documented along with a detailed examination of children's physical use of the environment. The findings revealed a new dimension in the culture of

the playground, one that goes beyond the rules and rituals of play and links children's play closely to features of the playscape itself. These findings had significant implications for Stage Two of the project - the most important being the emerging respect that teachers and other professionals on the project team developed for children's intimate knowledge and connection with the play environment. This in turn highlighted the critical role that children needed to take in the design or redesign of their playspace.

As children began to produce work, common themes emerged. The youngest children (4, 5 and 6 years) painted pictures of themselves on, in, under or around fixed features in the grounds - the monkey bars, "my tree". Places were important, especially the "big park". The "little park", an area set aside for younger children, featured rarely.

Children aged 8 to 9 years depicted themselves in similar situations but involved in fantasy games; camping in a secret spot, playing "Mermaids" under the monkey bars. Through modelling activities these children recorded their emerging involvement in recognized games such as hop scotch and basketball. This also appeared to be the age for interactive environmental play in the schoolyard.

Older children, 10 to 12 years illustrate their involvement in activities such as basketball, walking about, mucking around or just sitting.

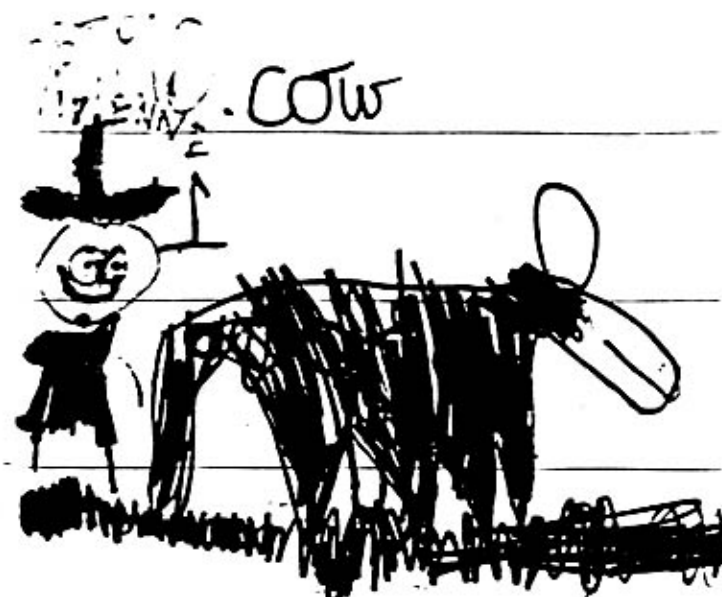
Evident in all the work was the importance of fixed features of the playground. For example, the bare, seemingly boring shelter shed and seating areas were the traditional site for the teacher-pupil game of "FooFoo". The gutters were important for marbles.

All areas in the grounds were represented in the art work, but the "Big Park" with its fallen logs, and the hard-surfaced areas featured most frequently.

Following the recording of their play, children's knowledge and ideas about play and play spaces was extended through philosophical discussions and by viewing a B.B.C. documentary on play around the world and a variety of slides about play spaces.

Philosophy is a regular part of this school's curriculum. Around the subject of play children generated questions such as: "Does play only happen outside?" "What is play?" "Is play important?" "What does play teach us?"

These questions were discussed at length by



STAGE TWO

Children's Documentation Of Their Own Play

To initiate art activities, children were asked questions such as: "What do you do at play time?" "What places do you like to use in the schoolyard?" The wording of these questions was important. Asking simply, "What did you play?" seemed to indicate notions of partaking in recognized games, e.g. basket ball. Visual activities children were involved in included painting, modelling, collage and drawing. All activities and media used were appropriate to the artistic development of the child.

students of different ages. Their discussion of the question "Is play important?" included comments such as: "Play helps make better friends." "You learn to use your imagination." "Play helps you cope with change." "You can believe in yourself during play." "Play - it's a time when it's safe to make mistakes."

Philosophical discussions were used to introduce the notion of planning to enrich the playground. The issue of redesigning space is not easy. Children had to learn that the physical environment is not a fixed entity but one which can be changed. This notion took a long time to gain general acceptance, as it challenged some children's security and the world as they knew it. This was a particular problem for the 6 to 8 year olds.

What children wanted in a redesigned playground

Through their paintings, models, drawings and discussion, the 5 to 6 year olds expressed a need for equipment and places where socio-dramatic play could occur. "Cubbies" featured strongly in these children's plans.

Children aged 6 to 8 years worked hard at this redesign stage. Using garden supplies (e.g. dirt, stones, rocks, foliage, etc.), these students made a model of a playground inside a dirt pit. It took many hours of cooperative group work for these children to accept improvements and changes others suggested. Once children were happy changing the environment inside the dirt pit, they worked on site drawing up plans of how they would enrich different spaces. Common themes in this work included: water and sand areas, cubbies and treehouses, large pieces of equipment connected off ground by bridges and ladders.

Creating imaginative play spaces with areas for interactive play - digging pits, ponds, trees, small gardens and meandering paths - featured in the work of the 8 to 10 year old children. This age group also included elevated areas for socio-dramatic play - forts, castles, tree houses.

Older children included seating and shade

trees on the fringes of high density play areas. These older children aged 10 to 13 years also commented strongly on the need for spaces to retreat to for privacy.

In recording their own play practices and preferred play environment, children's art work highlighted the play value and popularity of existing features in the playground. The art work, playground tours, interviews and mapping gave strong messages to the project team about what was important to preserve. This work also provided a window through which the project team could come to further appreciate and respect the child's perspective of play, in particular the diversity of play needs and the extraordinary traditions and attachments that feature in children's physical use of place space.

As a school community, teachers and parents gained valuable insights into children's play lives, which changed some adults' attitudes to "playtime". During 1993/4 the Little Park will be relandscaped. This area will feature a sand stream with a variety of digging patches, a look-out, and an on-ground treehouse.

The careful, thoughtful design of Mary Jeavons and Gini Lee, coupled with a rethink of the school rules, will give children a quality environment in which to explore their interests in constructive, interactive play. It will probably promote socio-dramatic play as well, thus balancing the environment that is already provided for children's ball games and formal sports.

Bibliography

- Christie, James F. & Johnsen, E. Peter (1989) *The Constraints of Settings on Children's Play, Play and Culture*, 2.
- Factor, June (1988) *Captain Cook Chased Chook: Children's Folklore in Australia*, Melbourne: Penguin.

Jeavons, Mary (1988) Children's activity in the everyday landscape of the suburb, Landscape Australia, 3.

Linderman, Earl W. & Linderman, Marlene (1984) Arts and Crafts for the Classroom. (2nd. Ed.) New York: Macmillan.

Moore, Robin (1980 March/April) Metropolis: Collaborating with young people to assess their landscape values, Ekistics, 281.

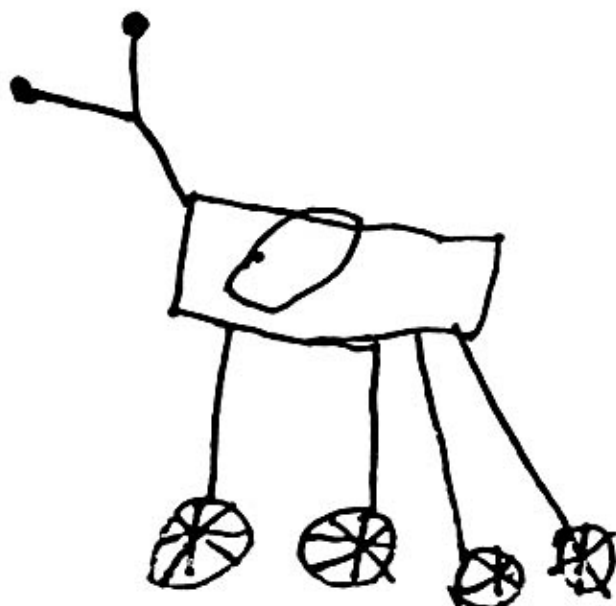
Nettleton, Brian (1987) Parks for Children: Some Perspectives on Design, Landscape Australia, 3.

Noren-Bjorn, Eva (1982) The Impossible Playground: A Trilogy of Play, Leisure Press, N.Y.

Sutton-Smith, Brian (1990) School Playground as Festival, Children's Environments Quarterly, 7(2).



The ACFN is produced for Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter By the Staff Secretaries' Office, School of Early Childhood Studies, The University of Melbourne. Illustrations for this issue are by Vivienne Richards.



subscribe to overland

contemporary Australian literature, comment and ideas

"...an articulate and highly readable journal worth the serious attention of Australians keen to keep their finger on the literary pulse."

—Robert Dossaix, *the Australian*, 9.6.90

"I am writing to tell you that each issue of Overland is cover-to-cover pleasure. Its arrival in this household results in several days of unplanned meals, unwashed dishes and missing socks. I have found the consequences of this to be outweighed every time by the sheer pleasure of reading it, although I believe my children have a different view of its influence." From a Reader's Letter, 8.6.90

Published quarterly *Overland's* subscription rate is \$26 including postage. This rate also applies to New Zealand, P.N.G. and neighboring Pacific countries. For pensioners and students there is a flat rate of \$20. Overseas: \$50, \$90 airmail.

Overland PO Box 14146, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 Australia

☐ I wish to subscribe to *Overland* for years at \$26 a year

☐ I wish to re-subscribe for years at \$26 a year

Name

Address Postcode

☐ I wish to make a gift subscription at \$26 a year to

Name

Address Postcode

☐ I enclose my cheque for \$

☐ Please charge my Bankcard/Mastercard/Visa for \$

Expiry Date Name on Card

Signed

Bankcard/Mastercard/Visa number
(Please specify card)

or

☐ If you feel that time is on your side, why not consider a life subscription at \$300?

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

eds June Factor and Gwenda Davey
Published twice a year since 1981. Australia's only regular
publication devoted to children's games, rhymes, and other
folkloric traditions.

PLAY AND FRIENDSHIPS IN A MULTICULTURAL PLAYGROUND

by Heather Russell (first published 1986)
A study of the friendships and play patterns of children at
a Melbourne inner-city school in the 1980s.

CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE IN AUSTRALIA: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

by June Factor (first published 1986)
The first comprehensive survey of published and unpublished
writing on children's folklore in Australia. Includes a
section on Aboriginal material.

RING-A-ROSY

by Gwenda Davey and Heather Russell (first published 1986)
Video tape of traditional games, songs and rhymes for young
children in English, Turkish and Vietnamese.

MULTICULTURAL CASSETTE SERIES

by Gwenda Davey (first published 1979)
Cassettes of stories, poems and songs, traditional and
contemporary, in English (2), Greek (4), Italian (4),
Macedonian (2), Arabic (2), Serbo-Croatian (4),
Spanish (4), and Turkish (4), plus accompanying manual.
Transcripts available for Greek and Italian cassettes.

TOODALOO KANGAROO

by Heather Russell (published by Hodder and Stoughton, 1990)
A cassette and book in which lively, funny and sometimes
cheeky songs and rhymes of childhood in Australia are
presented by children and professional musicians.

ORDER FORM

NAME.....
ADDRESS.....
.....POSTCODE.....

- () Annual Subscription (2 issues) Australian Children's Folklore
Newsletter \$6.00 (in Australia) \$8.00 (airmail)
() Specimen Copy ACFN \$3.00 \$4.00 (airmail)
() Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground
\$8.00 (Vic) \$8.50 (other states) \$12.00 (airmail)
() Children's Folklore Bibliography \$6.00 (Vic) \$6.50 (other states)
\$9.00 (airmail)
() Ring-a-Rosy \$15.00 (Vic) \$16.50 (other states) \$25.00 (airmail)
() Multicultural Cassette Series: Audio Cassettes \$6.00 each (Vic)
\$6.50 (other states) \$8.50 (airmail) :
2 English () 4 Greek () 4 Italian () 2 Macedonian ()
2 Arabic () 4 Serbo-Croatian () 4 Spanish () 4 Turkish ()
() Manual \$12.00 (Vic) \$13.50 (other states) \$16.50 (airmail)
() Transcripts (Greek, Italian) \$6.00 each (Vic) \$6.50 (other states)
\$8.50 each (airmail)
() Toodaloo Kangaroo \$16.00 (Vic) \$18.50 (other states)

SEND TO: Australian Children's Folklore Publications
School of Early Childhood Studies
Private Bag 10
Kew, VIC 3101