



Handwritten text in cursive script, partially obscured by the landscape and metal textures.

UNDER A REGENT MOON

In 1890, Joseph Bradshaw was drawn into the exploration and pastoral development of the Kimberley. He established Marigui Homestead on the remote Prince Regent River. In this endeavour, he was assisted by his cousin Aeneas Gunn. The pastoral venture failed, but Gunn wrote a remarkable memoir, 'Pioneering in Northern Australia', in two dozen articles of graphic prose. These long forgotten items now form the basis of a new book on the history and background to the Marigui settlement. Gunn was later immortalised as 'The Maluka' in his wife Jeannie Gunn's Australian classic, *We of the Never-Never*.

**BY TIM WILLING AND
KEVIN KENNEALLY**

The Prince Regent River, in the far north-west Kimberley, remains one of Australia's most remote wilderness areas. No roads penetrate its rugged sandstone ranges, and a tide-race with formidable whirlpools restricts access from the sea. Upstream, from the veritable inland sea of St George Basin, the Prince Regent River runs straight as an arrow into the heart of the Kimberley Plateau, following an ancient fault line. The Prince Regent Nature Reserve, created in 1964, covers some 633,825 hectares and protects almost the entire river catchment. The reserve was nominated as an UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in 1978, in recognition of its outstanding, intact wildlife and pristine values.



NAMES AND LEGENDS

The first-known Europeans to gaze on this 'Regent' scene were the botanist, Allan Cunningham, and ship's surgeon, James Hunter, in September 1820 on the survey vessel HMC (His Majesty's Cutter) *Mermaid*, under the command of Lieutenant Phillip Parker King. While the ship was undergoing emergency hull repairs at Careening Bay, the pair had climbed a prominent hill, which they named Mount Knight. From this peak, their eyes were drawn to a glimmering inland tidal basin, as well as to a skyline dominated by a spectacular tilted mesa (an isolated, flat-topped hill bounded on at least one side by a steep cliff and having an extensive summit area).

In the oral traditions of the Wororra, the local Aboriginal people, this mighty mesa, *Ngayangkarnanya*, had been carried in the Dreaming from the north by a vast shoal of fish, sharks and crabs. The colossal weight of the load not only exhausted them, it squashed many

flat—creating in the process both rays and shovel-nosed sharks.

Unaware of these ancient legends, Phillip Parker King and the crew of the *Mermaid* ventured in to explore the basins and navigable lower river, bestowing British names with patriotic zeal. The Prince Regent River was named for the Hanoverian prince who would shortly succeed his incapacitated father, George III, and reign in his own right as King George IV. The 391-metre-high mesa was named Mount Trafalgar by Phillip Parker King, in honour of Nelson's great naval victory of 1805. An adjacent lesser peak was named Mount Waterloo, after the Belgian village that witnessed the decisive defeat of Napoleon by the Duke of Wellington's army.

MARIGUI

Seventy years later, another sailing ship, gliding in on the flood tide, ghosted into St George Basin in sweltering November heat. On the deck of the ketch, *The Twins*, three months out from Melbourne, stood hen coops, dog kennels, a pair of goats and a dozen expectant humans. Leading the party was Joseph Bradshaw, a Collins Street

Previous page

Clockwise from left: View of St George Basin from Mt Trafalgar; a segment of botanist Ferdinand Mueller's manuscript description of a new plant he provisionally named *Bradshawia macrosiphonia*, based on specimens collected from the Prince Regent River in 1891 by Joseph Bradshaw. In 1891, the species was formally published and named by Mueller, *Ramphicarpa macrosiphonia*. It is now known as *Lindernia macrosiphonia* (see photo on page 51); riveted galvanised sheeting from the Marigui site and Bradshaw (Gwion Gwion) figurative rock art. Photos – Tim Willing and Michael Cusack

Below: One of Gunn's 'huge scowling cliffs' along the Kimberley coast. Photo – Kevin Kenneally





investor, who one year earlier had secured a one-million-acre pastoral lease over the entire Prince Regent basin from the Western Australian Government. Also aboard were Mary Jane Bradshaw, Joseph's musically-gifted wife, her maid, a Chinese cook, a Scottish sea captain and several sailors, hailing from Mediterranean ports.

Bradshaw named their settlement 'Marigui', based on information contained in Phillip Parker King's published journals. King had visited Kupang (Timor) in 1818, and was advised by one of the fishing fleet leaders that large numbers of Indonesian vessels made annual visits south to fish for *bêche-de-mer* (also called trepang), a delicacy in Asia. King recorded that the name they used for the northern Australian coast was 'Marega'. However, it has now been established that the name Marega was more accurately applied to Arnhem Land and the Gulf of Carpentaria. The name given by the Indonesians to the Kimberley coast was 'Kaju Jawa' or 'Kai Jawa', a name apparently derived from a type of mangrove tree, the bark of which gives the *bêche-de-mer* a distinctive red colour.

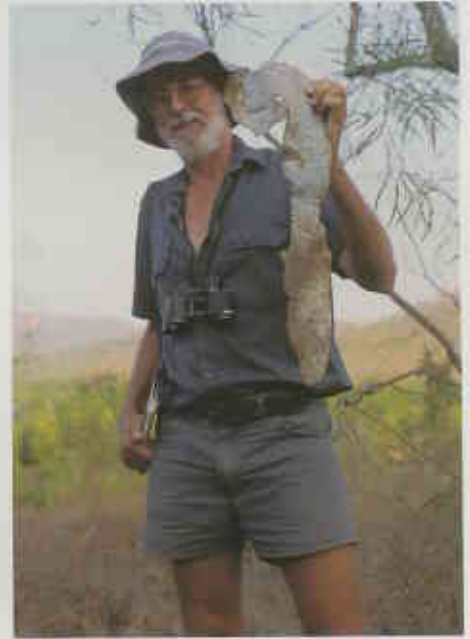
A search for water by Bradshaw's party ensued, leading to the discovery of a spring trickling to the mangrove-fringed shore below Mount Waterloo. Tents were duly pitched under boab trees, but Bradshaw's failure to include mosquito nets caused the party much discomfort. Bradshaw supervised the construction of a timber and iron



homestead, and laid plans to stock the run with sheep. Observing the scene with a discerning eye for detail, a poet's soul and a larrikin wit was Aeneas Gunn, Joseph's 29-year-old cousin. When the Marigui venture failed, Bradshaw—remaining undeterred—began yet another pastoral empire on the Victoria River in the Northern Territory.

SCOWLING CLIFFS

In Melbourne, some eight years later, Gunn converted into newspaper prose his vivid recollections of the party's hair-raising northern voyages, philosophical musings and tragicomic debacles in the service of his hero, Joseph Bradshaw. The modern voyager to the Kimberley coast, aboard a luxury charter



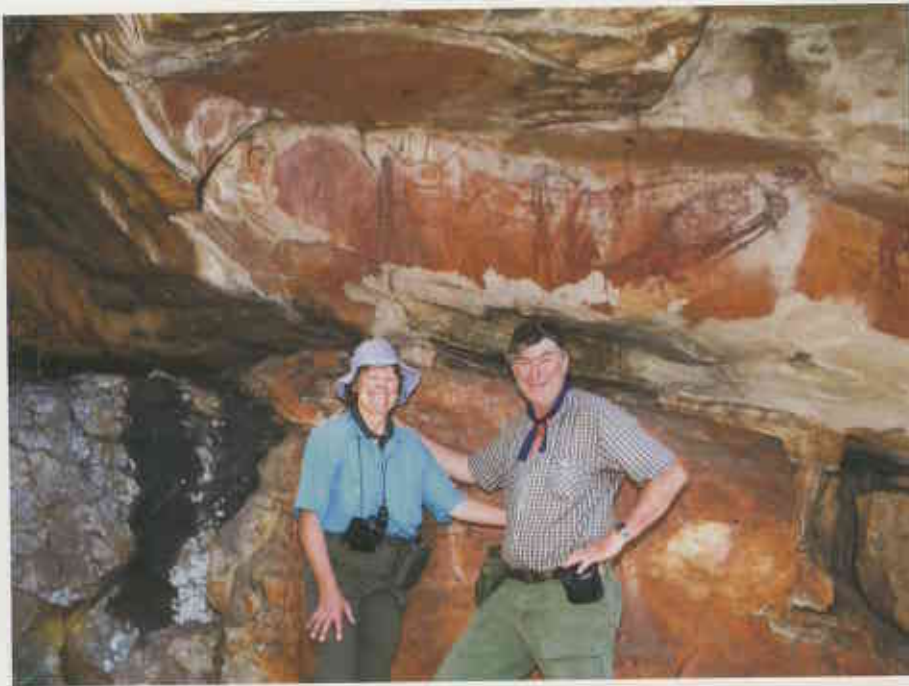
Top: Bradshaw and Gunn's landing area cut into the mangroves in St George Basin.

Above left: *Lindernia macrosiphonia*, first collected from the Prince Regent River by Joseph Bradshaw and named by botanist Ferdinand Mueller.

Above: Tim Willing at the Marigui site with a piece of lead solder.
Photos – Tim Willing

vessel, can simply record highlights of the passing scenery on video. This contrasts strikingly with Gunn's era, when a deft literary touch was needed to convey such imagery. Gunn recalled from the deck of *The Twins*:

"The run thence [from Cape Londonderry] to the Prince Regent River was along a coast, the scenery of



which is to the voyager a long panorama of wild grandeur. Huge scowling cliffs and bluffs of sandstone frown with red-hot angry faces on intruding ship and encroaching sea. The faces are scarred, gashed and wrinkled by the eternal onslaught of the elements. Centuries of ceaseless change have contorted the mountain masses into wild fantastic shapes, or built them into semblances of ruined towered cities, battered fortresses or crumbling amphitheatres. The pushing tides have gnawed deep bays, long reaches, and wide harbours out of their stern adamantine walls or wrenched from them masses of rugged rocky islands.

Day by day we sped past towering islands, clad with rich folds of tropical vegetation from rocky base to flat-topped summit, past tall commanding promontories with rounded basalt bases, down narrow channels fretted through wild lines of ragged rocks, and through noble straits dotted with islands and indented by secret coves and broad bays. At night the schooner, like a tired bird, would fold its wings and rest in some quiet haven hewn out of rocky hills or lie rolling to her anchor..."

FOOTNOTES

Retrieved from obscurity, and presented consecutively for the first time since publication in 1899, Gunn's 24 articles were originally headlined 'Pioneering in Northern Australia'. Comprising the heart of the new book, *Under A Regent Moon*, they will prove a revelation to all Australians, detailing a forgotten chapter in the history of the Kimberley frontier. Gunn's perspective is without parallel and, at times, frankly controversial in depicting the hostile relationship that soon developed between the would-be settlers and the Wororra warriors, defending their country. Besides editing Gunn's erudite memoirs with extensive footnotes, and locating Gunn's sketches in Sydney's Mitchell Library, the authors have

Top left: Wendy and Michael Cusack at Bradshaw's 'cave of paintings'.
Photo - Michael Cusack

Centre left: Boab tree at Marigui used by Bradshaw's party for target practice.

Left: The Prince Regent River runs straight as an arrow into the Kimberley Plateau.
Photos - Tim Willing





A view from the summit of Mt Bradshaw.
Photo – Michael Cusack

delved deeply into the Western Australian State archives. They uncovered Bradshaw's forgotten maps and original correspondence, as well as his pressed plant collections preserved in the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne.

In 1988, staff from the Department of Conservation and Land Management rediscovered the ruins of the Marigui settlement, while investigating sites for a possible field research station in the Prince Regent Nature Reserve. Encouraged by Chris Done, who manages the department's Kimberley region, a *LANDSCOPE* Expedition returned to investigate the area in July 1997. Walking through the dry grassland at the base of Mount Trafalgar, expedition members found a boab tree with the inscription 'A J GUNN' carved into the trunk.

Bradshaw's name has continued to echo through the Kimberley to the present day, through his connection with Aboriginal rock art. Before his marriage and the Marigui fiasco, Bradshaw led an overland expedition from Wyndham across the central Kimberley watershed to a point we now know was in Prince Frederick Harbour. Believing himself to be on the Prince Regent River, when he was actually well north on the Roe River, Bradshaw sketched striking tassel-adorned ochre

figures, which he had observed in some caves. The sketches were later published in his expedition report, making him the first European to document this art style, unique to the north Kimberley region. Incredibly, it was only in 1997 that Bradshaw's 'cave of paintings' was successfully relocated by Kimberley Society members Michael and Wendy Cusack. The name Bradshaw is now synonymous with this much-celebrated style of rock art, although some prefer to use its Aboriginal name, Gwion-Gwion.

By a strange twist of fate, Aeneas Gunn became a familiar figure to generations of Australians as the station boss known as 'The Maluka', in his wife's best-selling memoir *We of the Never-Never*, published in 1908. After a

stint as Librarian in Prahran, Victoria, Gunn married Jeannie Taylor, a Melbourne teacher, in 1901. The couple swiftly relocated to the Northern Territory, after Aeneas accepted a position as manager of Elsey Station. Malarial dysentery sent him to an early grave in 1903, at the age of 41. Jeannie returned to Melbourne and did not remarry, achieving international acclaim as a writer.

It remains a poignant irony that Gunn's own writing has been allowed to languish in obscurity for more than a century—until now.

Under a Regent Moon—A historical account of pioneer pastoralists Joseph Bradshaw and Aeneas Gunn of Marigui settlement, Prince Regent River, Kimberley, Western Australia, 1891–1892 is published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management and is available from large bookshops for \$25.95.

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Native animals need tree hollows and people need wood. How are these conflicting uses managed? See page 20.

An exciting range of recreational opportunities are being offered in some national parks, creating employment for locals. See page 28.



Declining water levels threaten a remarkable community of cave-dwellers in Yanchep National Park. Turn to page 34.



The search to find out the cause of a new tree killer known as Mundulla Yellows. See page 41.



Re-discovering the long-forgotten memoirs of a Kimberly pioneer. See page 48.

FEATURES

- BENEATH THE BUSSELTON JETTY**
ANN STORRIE.....10
- FOREST HOLLOWES: WILDLIFE HOMES**
KIM WHITFORD.....20
- THE GUIDED EXPERIENCE: A NEW JOURNEY**
GIL FIELD.....28
- THREATENED WILDLIFE OF THE YANCHEP CAVES**
JOHN BLYTH, EDYTA JASINSKA, LYNDON MUTTER, VAL ENGLISH AND PAUL THOLEN.....34
- MUNDULLA YELLOWS**
DAGMAR HANOLD, MIKE STUKELY AND JOHN W RANDES....41
- UNDER A REGENT MOON**
TIM WILLING AND KEVIN KENNEALLY.....48

REGULARS

- BUSH TELEGRAPH**.....4
- ENDANGERED**
MT LINDESAY-LITTLE LINDESAY.....19
- URBAN ANTICS**
DALKEITH "POSSUMS"?.....54

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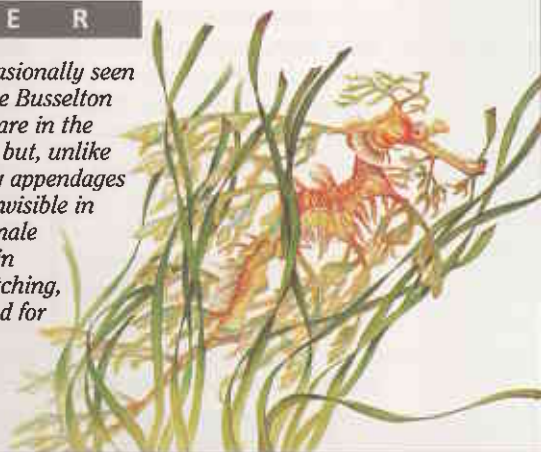
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COVER

Leafy seadragons are occasionally seen in the seagrass around the Busselton Jetty (see page 10). They are in the same family as seahorses but, unlike seahorses, they have leafy appendages that make them almost invisible in their surroundings. The male carries the eggs in the skin beneath his tail. After hatching, the young swim off to fend for themselves.

Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinksy



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