

TRACKING DINOSAURS

A COMMUNITY HISTORY OF DINOSAUR TRACKWAYS ON THE DAMPIER PENINSULA

PART 1: 1900-1967

The *Community history of the dinosaur trackways on the Dampier Peninsula* reflects the long-standing community interest in the dinosaur tracks. Extensive research for Part 1 of the Community History (1900-1967) has been completed and is currently divided into 9 sections. A summary of each of these sections is as follows:

Section 1: Daisy Bates and Ernestine Hill

In 1900 Daisy Bates spent 3 months assisting Fr Nicholas Emo and Bishop Gibney at Beagle Bay Mission on the Dampier Peninsula, thus beginning a life-long passion for Aboriginal culture. Bates returned to Broome during 1901-1902 with her husband Jack and son Arthur, and lived on Roebuck Plains Station. From here, Bates documented ceremonial life and collected traditional stories from around Broome, including the legend of Warragunna, (the Eagle Hawk), one of the Dreamtime figures closely connected to the dinosaur footprints. Bates published some of her observations in *The Passing of the Aborigines*, (1938), a publication that was co-written by Ernestine Hill. Decades later, in *Kabbarli, A personal Memoir of Daisy Bates* (1973), Hill indicates that Bates was aware of 'a dinosaur track in the sandstone rock' on the Peninsula and that she saw it as 'an arrow, pointing her into the Stone Age' (p.44).

Section 2: Sheila and Flora Milner: Broome Girl Guides

In September 1935, the Broome Girl Guides held their annual camp at Minyirr (Gantheaume Point); they slept and cooked on the verandah of the lighthouse keeper's cottage, swam in Anastasia Percy's pool, and explored the reefs on the equinox tide. It was on these exposed rock platforms that Sheila and Flora Milner stumbled upon the tracks of a mysterious giant three-toed creature. Flora Milner remembers: 'It was quite scary – it looked as if whatever had made them had just passed by, so clear and perfect were they.' (*A Pearling Master's Journey*, p.232). The Milner family has retained a life-long interest in the dinosaur trackways; in later years, Sheila Milner corresponded with WA Museum Paleontologist John Long regarding the dinosaur tracks she had discovered in Broome decades earlier.

Section 3: Walter 'Snowy' Jones

In 1945, Walter 'Snowy' Jones came across the dinosaur tracks at Minyirr whilst collecting shells on the equinox tides; Jones immediately alerted Ludwig Glauert, the Curator of WA Museum, who confirmed Jones's suspicion that he had made an exciting scientific discovery. Jones made a rough cement cast of one of the tracks, and his wife took the cast with her on the *Koombana* and delivered it to the WA Museum in January 1946.

Jones obtained information from local Indigenous informants that the tracks belonged to Warragunna, the Eagle Hawk, a giant bird who had chased a man all the way to Willie Creek. Correspondence between Jones and Glauert, and newspaper reports of the time indicate the excitement of the discovery and the implications for the scientific community.

Section 4: Elizabeth and Mary Durack

In the months following the discovery of the tracks by Jones, Elizabeth Durack and her children arrived in Broome: the family spent Christmas of 1945 staying at the lighthouse keeper's cottage at Minyirr, where Elizabeth familiarised herself with the dinosaur tracks and the legend of Warragunna. Durack spent 8 months in Broome, and painted nearly 100 artworks for her first solo exhibition, entitled *Time and Tide – The story in pictures of Roebuck Bay*. The first painting in her exhibition was *Legend*, which celebrated the newly discovered dinosaur tracks and depicted the story of Warragunna, the Eagle Hawk. Mary Durack and her husband Horrie Miller also became captivated by the dinosaur tracks. In 1958, Mary's poem *Down there my dinosaur* was published in *The Australian Bulletin*. Mary Durack's husband, Horrie Miller, regularly combed the reefs at Broome searching for new tracks.

Section 5: Bardwell family: shells and fossils

The Bardwell family was instrumental in dating the dinosaur tracks cast by Walter Jones in 1945. Bernard and Beresford Bardwell were pearling masters of Broome in the early 1900s. Their father, Everett Henry Bardwell, was a keen naturalist and had contributed specimens to the WA Museum, as well as to the WA Naturalist Club. Both Bernard and Beresford continued the family interest in shell collecting, as well as maintaining their relationship with the WA Museum. As Fisheries Inspector, Bernard was in a position to supply the Museum with marine specimens from the pearling fields. The Bardwell brothers both bequeathed their shell collections to the National Museum of Victoria, but a smaller collection held by their sister Phyllis McDaniel remained in Broome and was famously viewed by Queen Elizabeth on her royal visit to Broome in 1964.

The Curator of the WA Museum, Ludwig Glauert, was aware of the Bardwell family's interest in shells and fossils, and was able to date the dinosaur tracks found at Minyirr by examining plant fossils collected by Capt. BE Bardwell that were obtained from the same rock platform as the tracks.

Section 6: Ludwig Glauert

Ludwig Glauert was the Curator and Director of the WA Museum. He was a broad-minded man with a passion for engaging the community in the world of nature and science; he worked closely with educators and naturalists such as Vincent Serventy and Harry Butler to encourage WA schoolchildren to develop an interest in the wonder of nature and science. Glauert, the foremost expert in paleontology in Western Australia at the time, wrote the first scientific paper of the Minyirr tracks, entitled *Dinosaur Footprints Near Broome* (1952). Glauert was unable to visit the site in Broome and relied on information from the Broome community. The illustrations in his paper were based on the drawings and cement cast made by Walter 'Snowy' Jones. Dating the tracks had eluded Glauert for many years; he only able to accurately date the tracks to the Cretaceous period after 'plant remains in the associated strata' (ie plant fossils from the same rock beds) were provided by Capt BE Bardwell, of Broome. Significantly, Glauert acknowledged traditional knowledge of the tracks and provided details of the Warragunna legend in his paper.

Section 7: North-West Camp School 1954 - Vincent Serventy and Harry Butler

In 1954, over 200 school children from Broome and the Kimberley region attended the first North-West Camp School in Broome. Vincent Serventy and Harry Butler, both employed by the WA Education Department, and advocates for Indigenous education, attended the week-long educational camp. Special guests included pianist Rex Hobcroft, later Director of the Australian Conservatorium. Serventy and local schoolchildren made a cast of the Minyirr dinosaur tracks, which were later exhibited at the Perth Wildlife Show and in the WA Museum. Serventy retraced the legendary steps of Warragunna along the Broome coastline to Willie Creek, but found no new tracks.

Serventy and Butler's visit is well remembered by Kimberley locals; his photographs of Kimberley schoolchildren examining the dinosaur tracks were published on several occasions. Serventy and his family revisited the tracks in Broome over the following decades.

Section 8: *Journey among Men*: artists and naturalists

In 1961, naturalists Dom Serventy, Jock Marshall and artist Russell Drysdale spent several months exploring parts of the WA coast and the Kimberley region. The illustrated account of their travels was documented in *Journey Among Men* (1962). In Broome, the men were taken to see the famed dinosaur tracks by the barmaid of the Continental Hotel.

Drysdale was to base his last important series of artworks on the experiences he had in Broome. These pieces include *Broome Barmaid*, likely to be the barmaid who befriended them at the Continental Hotel and introduced the party of naturalists and artists to the dinosaur tracks at Minyirr.

Section 9: Track casting: Mo Gower and Archie Whittaker; John & Edgar Tapper & Edgar Lovegrove

In 1953, Mo Gower and Archie Whittaker, keen reef-walkers and shell collectors, revisited the site of the tracks found by Walter Jones in 1945 and found another 26 tracks in the area. The men made a plaster cast of one of one of the 13-inch tracks.

Over the next 10 years, Gower, a wharfinger, continued his involvement with the dinosaur tracks, including an attempt in 1964 to make another casting with Harry Butler, and Vincent and Carol Serventy, who had just embarked on their national *Nature Walkabout* expedition. Earlier that year, Gower, along with John and Edgar Tapper, and Edgar Truslove had worked tirelessly to assist visiting scientists EH Colbert, from the American Museum of Natural History, and D Merilees, from the WA Museum, to complete their scientific studies of the tracks in Broome. In *Cretaceous dinosaur footprints from Western Australia* (1967), Colbert and Lees attributed the tracks at Minyirr and Riddell Beach to a twenty-five foot carnivorous dinosaur, which they named *Megalosauropus broomensis*.