

Daisy Bates Papers

MSS 572.994 B32t

Series 5: 'Notes not for legends or included in Aborigines: Odd notes only'

Series V, 3. Manuscript [continuation of DMBs record of service], 6p. (p 1 missing), transcribed by Jane Walkley

Précis: for which I received quiet unofficial approval of the then Ministry and an inscribed gold watch from the R.C. Bishop and Dean.

1902-1910 Working among the derelicts of Perth, New Norcia, Gingin, Albany, Esperance, the Eastern and Murchison and other Goldfields, Broome and Norwest areas obtaining their social organisation, dialects, genealogies, totems, [...?] and especially their vocabularies and local customs, diseases, death and burial etc. etc. superstitions. These years included a special visit to Dorre and Bernier Islands Lock Hospitals and investigation into matters connected therewith. As a result of my report and suggestions to the then government these hospitals were closed down.

1911 at Katanning Camp an epidemic of measles gave me 40 patients to tend with no hospital facilities, no tents, no mattresses etc. The epidemic was raging among the white people of the township and no help could be given me. However none of my native patients died though the white population children and adults succumbed daily.

1912 East of Albany, Ravensthorpe, Esperance and then on to Eucla, to Balladonia and Hampden.

1912-14 Eucla: Where records of the remaining derelicts were secured before their extinction.

1914 Visited S.A. via Nullarbor Plain to attend Science Congress of which I was an Australian Member, Guest and Hostess

1914-18 Investigating all derelicts east and north of the Eucla and Bight areas, Fowler and Streaky Bay and derelicts from Boundary Dam, Ooldea and other areas north of the great Nullarbor Plain. (The centre of the plain was never crossed by natives until led from the Bight Head to Murgaru Water (north edge of Plain) by Chichester Beadon, an Englishman and dweller of Eucla for health reasons - for many years a great friend of the natives and a great and fine Englishman.

[...?] 26 miles from Fowler with blind and diseased derelicts camped at Wirilya From Ooldea, Tarcoola etc etc at Yuria 45 miles from Fowlers an old camping ground where Tarcoola, Wainbring, Fowler and Streaky Bay natives foregather at seasonal periods for ceremonies etc.

1918 Was requested to perform special service in connection with Returned Soldiers Home – (similar in its scope to my special commission at Dorre and Bernier Islands). This task was also quietly performed for the authorities (both special commissions that took four months to complete).

1918-1935 Conditions existing on the E-W line (which had been opened in 1917) called for service in the Ooldea area, Ooldea having been known to the aborigines as a permanent and abundant water for thousands of generations and for over a thousand mile radius.

My work at Ooldea lasted from 1918 till 1935. I remained at the same camp and during those years I have to record that not one half caste was begotten at my Ooldea Camp. This fact became known to the passengers on the E-W trains, to Churchmen, Governors, Tourists etc. and the knowledge passed on to England and America.

My presence was (and is) specially needed in that area and I am returning to some spot that will be chosen for me by some of the older natives who came to my camp during those years. They came from regions as far north as Mann Peterman and other ranges, Ayers Rock and Mt Connor areas and from the W.A. areas west and norwest of the W.A. / S.A. border. Their forbears had all known and visited [?] Ooldea water (Yooldil gabbi) from time immemorial, had fought and killed and eaten each other and before white settlement in Australia, had usually returned to their respective areas after visits and orgy were over. Since the beginning of the construction of the East West Railway, groups have been arriving from those far off outer areas but these groups never return to their own areas again.

Their system of relationships, totemic and social, extends practically throughout all Central and Norwest Central areas and they are early initiates by their [?] and uncivilized relatives into the freedoms and restrictions of the white population with its Police protection. From my first year at Ooldea camp (about 1 mile from Ooldea Siding the groups already present at Ooldea came to me and learned to like and respect my presence amongst them. Each new group that travelled down from the northern and N.W. area was brought to me and I made [?] contact with them (As J.P. for W.A. and S.A.) I adjusted all their quarrels, grievances etc. with each other and had no fatal quarrels during the whole term of my association with them. Also during this time, while placing my camp are out of bounds to the railway people at the siding – these people generally respected my motives and were kindly disposed towards myself and my desire to keep my natives morally clean.

All my work has been covered from my own personal economy. I sold my leaseholds and freeholds from 1914 onwards and until they were exhausted, when I kept my natives and myself through my newspaper articles etc. at home and in Australia, always collecting and collating and trying to prepare my MSS for future ethnologists.

So much of my MSS holds the records of tribes long extinct, especially in W.A. where my first teachers were the derelicts of the once numerous “Perth Metropolitan” group areas, that its value cannot be reckoned in currency. I have kept to simplicity throughout and future inquirers and students may easily read and understand the typescript records of the vanished natives. There is not a word that cannot be understood by young or old. I had wonderful advice given me from great men. The Rev. John Mathew of Victoria was my colleague till his death. The late Prof. Stanley[?] of S.A., John Fraser of the Eastern States, A.W. Howitt, Victoria and Andrew Lang of Edinburgh who revised my totem chapter, Professor Brien O’Haddon?, Cambridge who were so keen on the genealogies and social organisation. All these and others, the best of their kind in these various subjects, helped, advised and encouraged and not one condemned my system, though a few would have wished it were less simply expressed but they respected my simplicity and I have retained it throughout.

The American ethnologists, especially those who have studied the American Primitives, are, I am told, desirous of forming some joint (University) Expedition to Australia financed by Rockefeller probably and will probably make my manuscript their textbook.

I have indirect private information of this intention through a New York firm interested in my book which was published in America.

Verso p.5 Précis to be forwarded to ?