

## **JOSEPH BRADSHAW – GETTING LOST IN THE KIMBERLEY AND THE ART NAMED AFTER HIM**

On 1 October 2008, Michael Cusack, a founding member of the Kimberley Society, spoke about his keen interest in rock art and the late Joseph Bradshaw. Michael has been on numerous bushwalking trips looking for Kimberley rock art, and, after extensive research, he and his companions discovered the location of the paintings originally recorded by Bradshaw. Those paintings were among the numerous images of art, places and documents shown during the talk.

By way of background, Michael mentioned that Phillip Parker King made four voyages to parts of the west coast. The voyage in HMC *Mermaid* in 1820 was significant, where Joseph Bradshaw was concerned, as King sighted and named features mentioned in the talk – the Roe River in Prince Frederick Harbour, the Prince Regent River in the St George Basin, and Mt Waterloo and Mt Trafalgar.

Lt George Grey, supported by Britain's Royal Geographical Society, arrived to explore the north-west in 1839. He was the first European to describe the Wandjina art. His glowing report and recommendation of the area was later used to entice settlers to participate in the ill-fated Camden Harbour venture of the 1860s.

Alexander Forrest, sent north by the WA government, traversed the Kimberley region in 1879. He sent reports to the government, settlers and speculators, telling of large areas of good pastoral land. The pastoralists who arrived included the Duracks and the MacDonalds.

Who was Joseph Bradshaw? One of seven children born to a Melbourne landowner, he was young and ambitious when the 1890s Depression was looming. Looking for opportunities elsewhere, he read glowing reports on the Kimberley and formed a small syndicate to take up land on the Prince Regent River. Michael thinks it was mainly King's influence that persuaded Bradshaw to focus on that locality. He would have imagined prime pastoral land either side of a large river, thinking of it as such because King had sailed up the river and said how good it was.

In June 1890, aged 35, Bradshaw sailed on a coastal steamer via Adelaide and Fremantle to Derby where, going out east of the town, he visited Lillmaloor Station. No vessel was available to take him to the Prince Regent. Going by land was also out of the question as few Europeans knew of a way through the rugged King Leopold Ranges. On 31 October 1890, he received approval for 20 blocks, of 50,000 acres each—one million acres of land all told—sight unseen, along both

sides of the river. The tenure on the leases ran from 1 January 1890 to 31 December 1907.

On 31 January 1891, Bradshaw left Melbourne for Wyndham, in anticipation of checking the Prince Regent River pastoral leases. Sailing by steamer with his older brother Fred and a Victorian sheep farmer, William Allen, he spent three weeks in Palmerston (Darwin), waiting for a steamer to take them further. While there, Bradshaw was introduced to Mrs Durack, and he added two of the local Larrakia Aborigines, Harry Pinadhy and Slocum, to his group. He later added another young man, Hugh Young, who had been a fellow passenger from Melbourne.

On reaching Wyndham on 9 March, they found much of the town flattened by a severe gale. As there was no accommodation, they camped at the Six Mile (on water that distance out of town) while they got the last of the expedition together. They had brought most of the necessary pack saddles and equipment with them but they had to get horses and further essential supplies. The eleven horses they needed for the expedition were extremely expensive, and hard to obtain in such a remote locality. They used six horses for riding and five for their packs.

On 14 March the party left the Six Mile, which had a small hotel dating from the Halls Creek gold rush of 1886. Bradshaw had his own hand drawn map, which is now in the hands of John Bradshaw, a great nephew, from Sydney, and it looks to follow Charles Burrowes' survey map of 1886, drawn for the Victorian Squatting Company, another syndicate. Michael used an image of the hand drawn map to show where Bradshaw's party rode after leaving the Six Mile; south and west to get around tidal flats and past Mt Cockburn, then north-west and west; very heavy going in the "Wet".

Other Europeans, including Harry Stockdale, Alexander Woodhouse and Bob Button, had already been into the area, looking for pastoral land and gold. Burrowes had shown the course of the Woodhouse River on his map, entering the Drysdale River from the west, and he probably gave it that name because Woodhouse was in charge of the company's sheep. Woodhouse had camped between the Forrest and Durack Rivers in 1885, waiting for Burrowes to locate the company's leases.

On the map Bradshaw was following, he marked his expedition's camp sites only until he reached Yellow Creek near Mt Horace (north of where the Woodhouse joins the Drysdale). He noted in his journal that his next camp was on the Woodhouse River. An old Victorian Squatting Company camp there had been burnt out but some watermelons remained. Michael thinks Bradshaw had lost his bearings by that stage and was really on Buffalo Flat Creek, a tributary of Meelarie Creek, which runs

parallel with the Woodhouse. From there Bradshaw went due west for three days and described the travel in his journal. If he had been on the Woodhouse, further south, his description of the land passed over would have been quite different. With Bradshaw having lost his bearings, it becomes important to note that, with the Prince Regent and the then unnamed Moran River following similar directions north-west, Bradshaw presumed too soon that he was near his blocks of land on the Prince Regent. In his journal, he started calling the river (the one we know as the Moran) the Prince Regent, although he later called it the Eastern Regent and, later still, called the lower portion the Marigui.

After a difficult few days on the plateau, they eventually found a way down, travelling along Boa Creek to the river (the Moran, but the one they thought of as the Prince Regent). Bradshaw and Allen rode out and climbed a small mountain that he named Mt Allen. On riding back he found a ceremonial stone arrangement and vendetta site. He made a depot camp on the river and then, riding northward onto a tributary, he saw some lovely cascade falls, 95ft. high, which are now named Pinadhy Falls. In this vicinity (according to a paper he gave to the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia on 10 September 1891) they took an observation of their position with a reading of latitude approximately  $15^{\circ} 50'$ . Also, by dead reckoning and triangulation, they estimated their longitude at  $125^{\circ} 40'$ . No readings appear in the journal. Bradshaw was carrying an aneroid barometer, which enabled him to record heights of hills and campsites, but he probably had no equipment to fix positions. He mentioned having made another map, on which he marked good country green, east of what he was calling the Prince Regent River, but that map has not been found.

The position Bradshaw recorded is on the Prince Regent River, between Pitta Creek and Wulunge Chasm, well south of where the expedition actually travelled. From where they were, after striking a sandstone barrier to the north, they went west and came onto another river. That discovery prompted Bradshaw to start using the names Western Regent (actually the Roe River, into which the Moran flows) and the Eastern Regent (the Moran). On Friday 10 April 1891, they camped at what he described as a roaring cataract, 80 yards wide. They then went north and saw mangroves growing on the tidal portion of the river (where the Moran enters the Roe). He described seeing many Aborigines there and he named the area Nigger Gorge. (Michael has since had it renamed Marigui Gorge, because Bradshaw heard the local Aborigines using the word Marigui to describe the river and the locality.)

Returning south along the east side of the Roe River, which is basalt country, compared to the sandstone on the west side, Bradshaw camped near a very large boab (where the surveyor Fred Brockman also camped in 1901). After this, he

continued along the river until he was stopped by a sandstone gorge. Here he rode out, west of the river, and came across a site with exquisite art in a great pile of immense rocks in a secluded chasm. The next day, he did four sketches of the art, which he described as being of great antiquity. Today Aboriginal people call the art "Gwion Gwion" but in 1938 the Frobenius Institute started calling it after Bradshaw. For the talk, Michael called the paintings "Bradshaw art".

Bradshaw decided they could go no further south so they headed east, passing what they named Lalirimir Glen, where they planted some seeds, and then went over the watershed to their depot camp (on the Moran River). There they camped for two days, and Fred and Joseph rode out, went up a mountain, and blazed a tree B91. (Brockman found this tree in 1901, named the peak Mt Bradshaw, and proved they were on the Moran River and not the Prince Regent.) From depot camp, Bradshaw and his party followed their outward tracks as they were running out of rations. They reached the Six Mile on 6 May.

Back in Melbourne, Bradshaw's report recommended that all blocks on the west side of the Prince Regent be abandoned and that land be taken up between that river and the Roe River. He was thinking that this was the good basalt land seen in their travels. Bradshaw decided to settle on the new leases straight away and, with that in mind, he purchased a schooner called *The Twins* (also known as the *Gemini*). On 5 August 1891, he married Mary Guy in Melbourne and, almost simultaneously, the schooner sailed out of Port Phillip Bay carrying his cousin Aeneas Gunn and others with supplies and equipment for the station.

In September, Bradshaw gave a paper to the Royal Geographical Society, Victorian Branch, called "Notes on a recent trip to Prince Regent's River", describing the art and other features. Then, in October, he and his wife sailed from Melbourne to join the others in Darwin. The whole party then went on to the Prince Regent River, to settle on the station, which they called "Marigui", at the base of Mt Waterloo. Owing to the isolation and unsuitability of the area, and the imposition of a state livestock tax, they never fully stocked the station. It was abandoned in May 1894 after Bradshaw took up land on the Victoria River, in the Northern Territory. He settled on the new station, "Bradshaw's Run" and, in 1898, his brother Fred joined him there.

After keeping the audience enthralled with his summary of Joseph Bradshaw's life up to that point, Michael then commented briefly on more of his photographs, which included a wide range of "Bradshaw" art and a selection of other types of Aboriginal art. There were also plants, wildlife, scenes and camps photographed during walks

in a beautiful and interesting part of the Kimberley. The talk proved very popular, attracting an audience of 96.

*Cathie Clement (using Michael Cusack's notes)*

### **Further reading**

**Bradshaw**, Joseph. Journal of Joseph Bradshaw from January 31st 1891 to June 6th 1891, Mitchell Library, B967, microfilm copy held by J S Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth, Acc 1271A.

**Bradshaw**, Joseph. 'Notes on a recent trip to Prince Regent's River'. *Proceedings of the Victorian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*, vol. 9, part 2, 1892, pp. 90–120.

**Parker**, Adrian and Bradshaw, John and Done, Chris. *A Kimberley Adventure: Rediscovering the Bradshaw Figures*. Gecko Books, Marlestone (SA), 2007.

**Willing**, Tim and Kenneally, Kevin (eds). *Under a Regent Moon: A historical account of pioneer pastoralists Joseph Bradshaw and Aeneas Gunn at Marigui Settlement, Prince Regent River, Kimberley, Western Australia, 1891–1892*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth, 2002.