

BRADSHAW FOUNDATION

On my return to England I did some research but could find nothing about the Bradshaw paintings. To my eyes they were equal to the finest Rock Art in the world, and yet nobody seemed to know anything about them! Something had to be done and I knew where to turn for help.

I wrote a letter to Damon and Robert suggesting that we publish a book of Grahame Walsh's photographs of the paintings, along with a written text by him. Both men gave their support to the idea and told me to contact him.

The first thing to do was to persuade Grahame that it was a good idea! I wrote a letter thanking him for giving us such an incredible trip and for his patience over our adventure on Mt Agnes. I went on to tell him how excited we were about the Bradshaw paintings and that we would like to help him get his work known throughout the world. I suggested that the way to do this was to print a sequel of the same quality as his beautiful book on Australian Aborigine paintings and asked if he would be interested. If he was, then all the *profit from sales* would be passed to him to help his research.

He replied to my letter agreeing to the idea and promised to co-operate fully. He pointed out that he was desperately short of money and could not help in any way except by providing the photographs, silhouettes and the text required for the book. He then went on to tell me the story of what had happened after we had left him.

For many years he had heard tales of Wandjina paintings on Bigge Island off the coast of Kimberley. He had been told they were quite extraordinary because the paintings showed *Wandjinas smoking pipes!* He was desperately keen to see them because if this were true they would be unique.

By chance he had met a couple of men who were flying around the Kimberley coast in a seaplane. After hearing the story of the pipe-smokers from Grahame, they had offered to fly him to the island and help search for the paintings. Days later the three of them took off and flew out over the clear blue waters of the Timor Sea towards the island.

They landed on a calm sea, rafted ashore in an inflatable and started to search. Suddenly the weather changed and the sea became choppy so the pilot said that they must leave immediately. The pilot did a run but failed to take off because of the waves. He tried again and lifted clear, but just then a freak wave caught one of the floats and flipped the plane over on its back! As the plane settled the two men dragged Grahame out of the cockpit onto the wing. Grahame had cracked his head violently on the cabin roof as they had turned over and was unconscious, having sustained severe concussion.

He regained consciousness as they pulled him up onto the wing and told them that he couldn't swim, so they had better leave him and save themselves! This they would not do and began swimming towards the shore half a mile away dragging Grahame behind them. The plane sank taking all Grahame's camera equipment with it!

There are three major problems with the sea around the coast of Kimberley. One, there is a 40-foot tide that produces violent currents. Two, the sea is infested with sharks. Three, the mangrove shore is home to 30-foot long salt-water crocodiles. It is definitely not a good place to go swimming!

Somehow they all managed to reach the beach and get Grahame into the shade. They were marooned on a tiny waterless island off an uninhabited

coastline and the situation could not have been much worse. The next thing he remembers was coming to and asking them what they had done about attracting attention in the hope of being saved.

They assured Grahame that they had collected brushwood and damp seaweed so as soon as they heard a search plane they could light a smoky fire. The pilot had managed to hit the radio's May Day signal button as they had flipped over, so someone should come looking for them soon. Grahame pointed out that they had built the fire in front of their shelter where a rescue plane couldn't see it instead of out on an exposed point of rock. They assured him that everything was under control and advised him to rest.

Grahame disagreed, he thought everything was definitely *not* under control, so he collected wood for another fire using his one good arm, having broken a collarbone in the crash, and took himself out onto a rocky point. He was suffering from a splitting headache, but stayed lying out in the sun listening for the sound of a plane. His Herculean efforts paid off! When he heard the hum of an engine he lit the fire, the smoke billowed up and a few minutes later the plane buzzed the beach. An hour later a helicopter arrived and took them to hospital. The pilot told him later that he would never have seen the other fire as it wasn't in the open!

Reading this story in Grahame's letter filled me with admiration for the man and left me with an even stronger desire to publish a book on the Bradshaws. I wrote back to Grahame suggesting that if he agreed to be our guide we would hire two helicopters for six days for five of my friends so he could show us as many Bradshaw paintings as possible. He agreed as long as we promised to spend one day on Bigge Island and help him find the *Smoking Wandjina*. I agreed to this as I thought we would all want to see such an oddity.

I told him that at the end of the tour I would call a meeting and put to my friends the idea of creating a Foundation based in Geneva, whose aim would be to publish a book on the Bradshaw paintings.

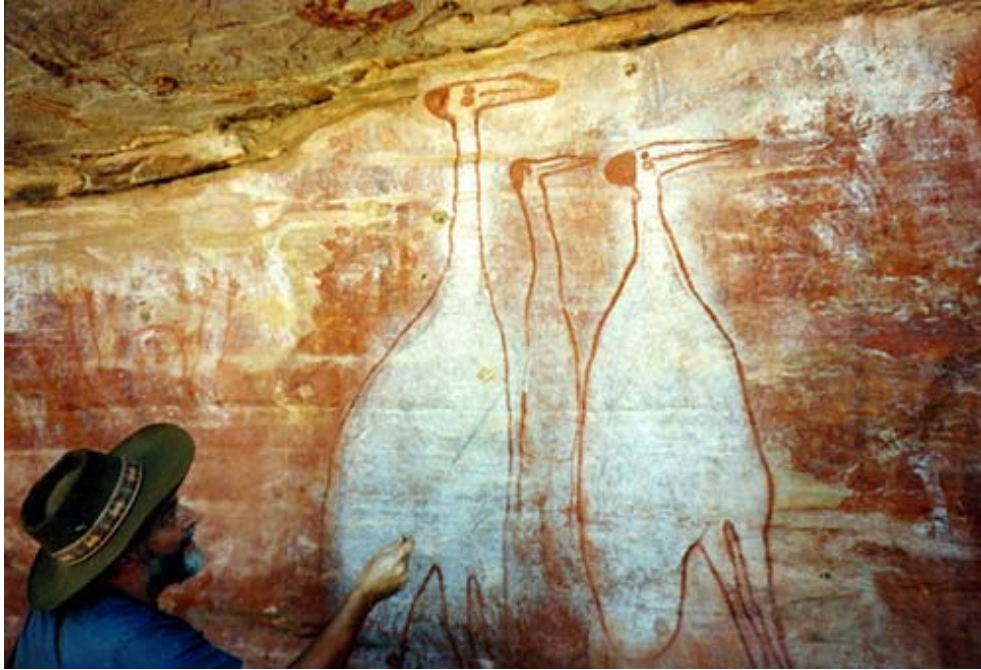
The next problem was to find three more people willing to join us. The plan needed five men to put up the money for the expedition. Two helicopters are not cheap, not to mention all the other costs, like airfares, food, drink and accommodation. I worked out a figure of what it was going to cost each man and started to look for takers. I couldn't afford to pay anything myself so my contribution would be to organise the whole thing!

Robert and Damon wanted to come. Damon's friend, Michael McGuire, a Professor at UCLA, California, was also interested as was his friend, Giles Mead, a Naturalist and winegrower in the Napa Valley. When I told Bruce Dyson about our plans he asked if he could come. Suddenly we had a full house and the finance needed so Grahame booked our accommodation with his friends, Anne and John Koeyer, the owners of Drysdale River Station. Anne arranged the helicopters and the charter flights from Darwin and everything was set. My friends didn't like the sound of green Staminade so Dyson was put in charge of ordering a wine supply!

The six of us arrived in Darwin from around the world on the evening of June 21st 1993. Of course it was sheer coincidence that 42 years before I had met Andreas and Katharina Lommel on June 23rd in 1955, but there did seem to be a thread reaching between the two dates!

A bus collected us and took us out to the airport at first light and two small planes flew us straight to Drysdale River Station in the heart of the Bradshaw Country. Anne and Grahame met us, showed us to our rooms, gave us breakfast and put us into the helicopters for our first adventure.

So began a week that I am quite sure none of us will ever forget, as what Grahame showed us was way beyond our wildest expectations. He was a brilliant guide and completely captivated our minds with his stories.



Grahame and a Wandjina of giant broлга cranes

Flying over Kimberley at 100 mph at a height of 50 foot with the doors off, along rock walls that reached way above us, over azure blue seas, plunging over dry waterfalls into deep canyons, and camping in the Outback all added up to a unique adventure. Swimming in a rock pool that possibly had never been visited by white men since Joseph Bradshaw was lost in 1891, was without doubt one of the great experiences of my life.

But the most incredible part of the trip was seeing the Bradshaws. They were everything that I had thought they would be and much more. I have since been privileged to visit the French caves of Niaux, Lascaux, Le Portal, and Chauvet, but nothing in my humble opinion touches the Bradshaws. I believe this because the Bradshaws are of humans, and, 'man is the measure of all things'. The French caves all have their own unique magic and there is nothing like the *Sorcerer* of Les Trois Frères, the *Bison* of Niaux's Black Chamber, the *Bulls* of Lascaux, or the *Horses* of Chauvet, but the Bradshaws have a mysticism that none of these have, *because they are images of humans*.

The Bradshaws are supremely beautiful and equal to any work of art I have ever seen, being in a class of their own and completely unique. They dance across the walls of one of the most remote places in the world, locked into the rock for ever. My imagination is simply staggered by their existence and by the talent of the artists.

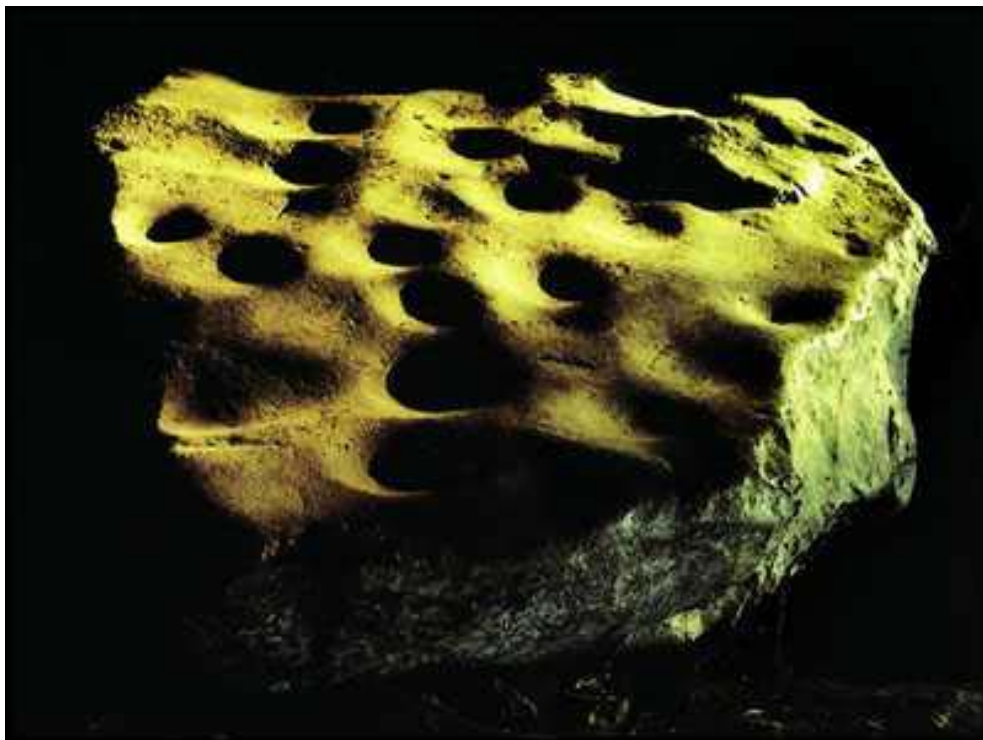
We flew out over the vastness of Kimberley only feet off the ground. I had one foot stuck out of the helicopter resting on the landing bar, leaning out

over the side to film the scenery. I was well strapped in at the waist so felt completely safe, rather like being in a hot-air balloon. The difference was that we were travelling at 100 knots! I had ridden for hundreds of miles over this type of country on the back of a mule when I was 20 and it had been very hard work. This time I was flying like an eagle!

Ten minutes after take-off we were coming in to land at the first site. To reach it in a jeep would have taken all morning! Before the blades had stopped rotating we were walking towards a cliff and Grahame began teaching us the mysteries of Kimberley paintings.

Other people had occupied the land before the Bradshaw artists and we were about to see two separate phenomena that proved this. One is that some of the Bradshaws lie over the top of another type of painting, which Grahame calls the *Irregular Infill* that are all of animals whose bodies are outlined and then randomly filled with parallel brush strokes.

The second proof is that a people who had lived in Kimberley before the Bradshaws had left their mark by pecking *Cupules* into the rock surface. I have seen examples of 'cup carving' all over the world from Scotland to Easter Island. They are a very ancient symbol of the behaviour of *Homo sapiens*, possibly the earliest of all Creative Art.



Cupules

No one is really sure of their meaning or purpose. The only sensible explanation I have ever heard was from Doctor Georgia Lee who is an expert on Hawaiian and Easter Island petroglyphs, the name given to pecked images on stone surfaces. She tells a story of recording cupules on a sacred flat lava surface in Hawaii some years ago. She had been unable to complete her work so returned the following season to finish the job, only to find there were three new cupules on an area she had already recorded! She went to the villagers and accused them of vandalising the site. "Not at all," they said, "there have been

three new babies." Georgia asked the Elders why they had not told her this was the reason for the cups and they replied, "We thought you knew!" It transpired that when the scab fell from the navel of the newborn, the parent pecked a cupule and left the scab in it as an offering to the Earth Mother. I have heard a similar story from another very reliable source, so maybe it is true!

Grahame led us across to a large rock overhang. We climbed up onto the top of an enormous rock that had fallen from the ceiling of the shelter. On the ceiling we could see where the rock we were standing on had come away because the shapes fitted like a jigsaw puzzle. Painted on this now exposed surface were several very fine early Bradshaws!

Grahame then asked us to look under the rock. We did so and could see that there were several cupules pecked into the surface. These could not have been done after the rock had fallen, as there was not enough room to work a percussion tool. The cupules were obviously done before the rock had fallen from the ceiling and the Bradshaw paintings afterwards!

We then followed Grahame to a cave only yards away with sides 20 foot long and 9 high. At the back of the cave was a rock shelf, four foot above the ground, on which were stacked Wandjina skulls, lower jaws and thighbones, some painted with red ochre. On the left wall were some 3,000 pecked cupules!

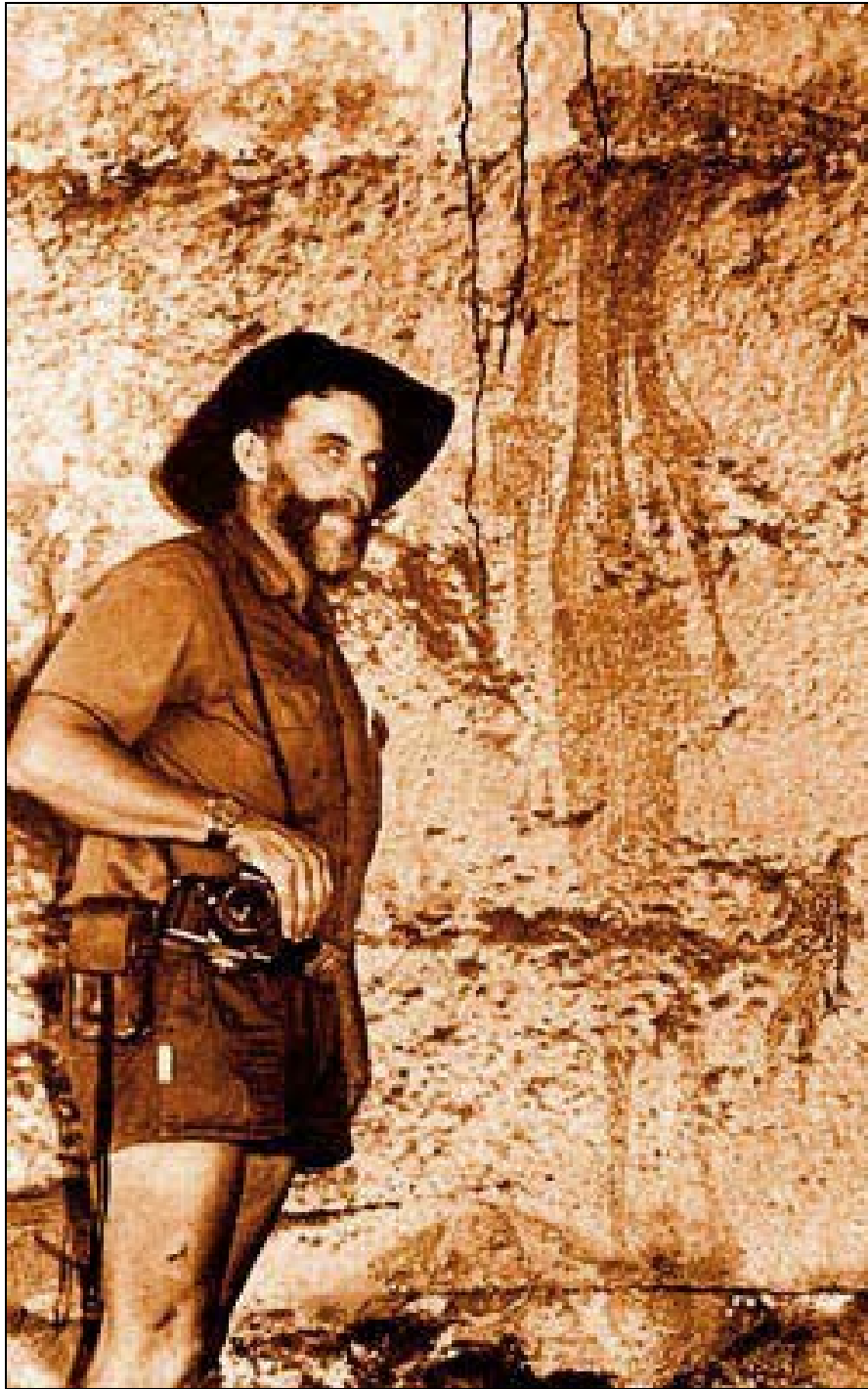


Skull ▲

3,000 cupules

The conclusion had to be that three different peoples had considered this site as sacred over completely separate periods of occupation possibly spanning 30,000 years! The evidence showed a sequence comprising of cupule sculptors, Bradshaw painters and Wandjina burials.

We left the site and flew along towering red sandstone cliffs to see the life-size Bradshaw painting that Grahame had told Robert and me about the previous year. We hovered out from the cliff face, passing back and forth, located the shelter, landed and then climbed up a bank of jumbled rocks that covered the base of the cliff.



Dr Grahame Walsh and a life-size Bradshaw painting

Painted on the rock face was a tall elegant human figure. There was no indication of gender, as early Bradshaw figures never seem to show male or female features, which is unique in all the Rock Art that I have seen in life or in books. More often than not the gender is the centre of interest, as most paintings are about 'fertility'. The early Bradshaws show no sign of male, female, mating, pregnancy or birth. I personally believe that this is a very important element of the paintings and should never be forgotten in any discussion concerning the Bradshaw art as there is nothing similar in the world. In fact you could say everything discovered so far concerning the Bradshaws is

different to all other Rock Art. These paintings are quite unique and only found in a relatively small area of Kimberley the size of Ireland.

Next to the giant was another figure half the size, and beside them two smaller figures, one of which Grahame described as having *Popeye* arms and legs because of the bulging muscles. Grahame thought it to be unfinished, as it does not have a headdress, although it could have been done with a white pigment that had disappeared through weathering before the red paint was locked into the rock under a layer of silica called *desert vanish*. The line running between the figures is the remains of a white ant tunnel.



Popeye

Over the following days we saw several Bradshaws that had bits missing, bands around the wrists and ankles, or parts of boomerang and spears. Nearly all the paintings are incredibly detailed. There is one painting that shows a figure with a necklace, another one with a beard and nosepiece, and yet another with wavy hair hanging to the shoulders! (see www.bradshawfoundation.com)

By now it was late afternoon so we headed back as we had to land at the homestead before sundown. We zoomed in over the trees onto the landing pad as the blazing red ball dipped beneath the horizon. What an incredible day!

The following day was to be special for Damon, Robert and me as the paintings that Grahame wanted to show us were near Mt Agnes. We planned to fly around our sacred mountain and then land by the Resurrection Grass that Rick Tudor had discovered.

After half an hour's flight we arrived over Agnes. As we slowly circled around the top of the mountain I thought of all the walking I had done with my friends to reach this spot! There was 'Jacob's Ladder' running up the side of the rock that I had first climbed with Peter in 1981 and then again with Margie and the de Laszlos in 1989, and lastly at night with the Robert and Charles Hefner in 1991. There was the spot where Robert had nearly stepped on the giant cat snake, and there was the spot where I had suffered such violent cramp before falling asleep naked under the full moon! What memories!

I wondered what Damon and Robert were both thinking as we flew by. The mountain didn't look very formidable from the chopper, but the three of us knew that it was a tough climb.



*The summit of Mt Agnes from the helicopter
(Jacob's Ladder is on the far side)*

We flew across to the other side of the valley towards Mt Tudor and I immediately saw the patch of Resurrection Grass in its little salt pan so landed and walked over to take a look. It appeared even less significant now than it had been when we found it, but was obviously still alive! It would have been great to have had time to do a slow fly around the area looking for other patches of the grass, but we needed to hurry on.

We took off and started to fly down the Prince Regent River. What a gash in the landscape! The river follows a rift fault towards the sea 20 miles away to the north-west and is almost dead straight. High cliffs run either side of the roughest country I had yet seen. Occasionally we could see pools of water squeezed between the massive rock walls. Halfway along this valley there is a small canyon branching off to the north. We landed at its mouth on a tiny patch of open ground and switched off the engines. The ground was littered with chunks of the white quartz crystals that the Aborigines used to make rain.

We climbed down to the pool and along the side of the cliff that rose 100 foot above us. Crossing over to the far wall Grahame showed us Wandjina paintings and a shelf of skulls and thighbones, some coloured with red ochre. The Aborigines, who had inhabited this land up to 50 years ago, used to expose the bodies of their dead in trees until all the flesh had been cleaned from the bones by birds and ants. They then collected the long bones, painted them with red ochre and wrapped them in bundles of bark. The final package looked exactly like a giant Christmas cracker. These were then placed in sacred sites on a rock ledge.



▲
Wandjina burial site

This site was obviously of immense importance and had been used quite recently as one of the packages was as good as new. One end of the cracker is visible in the centre of the photograph above the ▲. Most of the bundles had

disintegrated, destroyed by the rock wallabies that passed back and forth along the shelf. Over the years they smash the bundles to pieces and knock the bones off. Moving down the cliff we came to a group of tiny slender Bradshaw figures, which Grahame said were the oldest that we had yet seen.

Across the narrow canyon we could see Devil Wandjina paintings high up on the wall. To reach this site the artist must have climbed along a very thin ledge. On another part of the trip, Grahame showed us some Bradshaws that were far out of reach of the ground, 30 foot up a sheer wall of rock. How did the artists get up there to paint them?

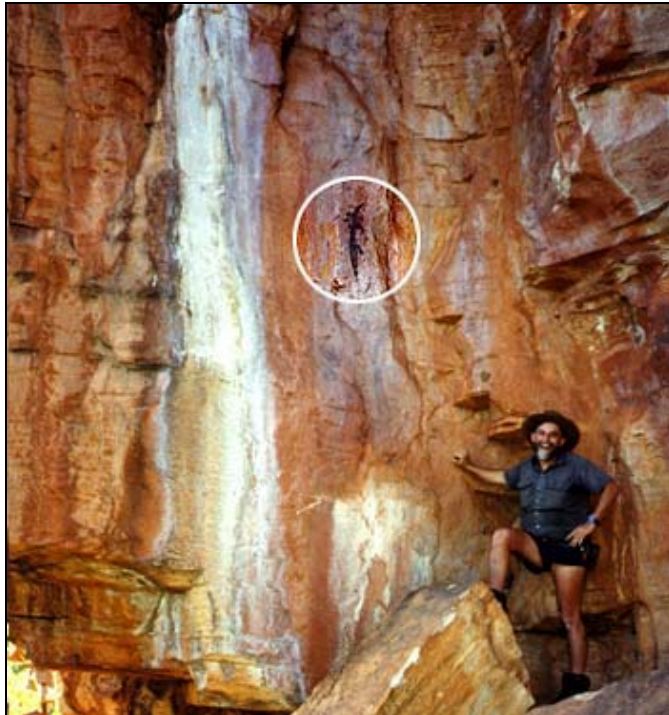
The canyon was becoming as hot as a blast furnace, so Damon, Michael and myself stripped off and sat in the water to cool off and talk about what we were seeing. The majesty of the site was as awe-inspiring as any cathedral I have ever visited. All too soon Grahame called us to attention and we returned to the choppers for the next revelation!

We took off and flew up the Prince Regent River and headed towards the homestead. About halfway there we stopped to see an enormous Wandjina panel. It was all of 30 foot long and Grahame told us that it was a father figure and that the heads along the horizontal body were his children. At the end of the painting the reclining father had been given big black feet, a sign of power. There was no secrecy about this painting, as we had seen it from 100 yards away as we walked towards the cliff.



'Marnyangarri', an enormous Wandjina near Donkey Creek

Way above the painting of the Giant Wandjina, high up on a rock edge, was a tiny little Bradshaw figure. I wondered why the Wandjina artists had used the same sites if they thought that the Bradshaws were *rubbish paintings*. Another hop took us to the next Wandjina site. This time we saw emu, and kangaroo painted on the walls of the shelter, as well as a collection of portable Wandjina slabs that Grahame said were very rare. We moved closer and stopped. A large fat cat snake was watching us from a ledge beside the paintings. It had the same marking as the one Robert had encountered on our night climb. No one volunteered to go in and shoo it away, so we retreated all the way back to the station for a well-earned dinner.



Tiny Bradshaw above a Wandjina site



Portable Wandjina slabs

That night I had everyone up at three o'clock to see the Magellanic Clouds. I felt that my friends could not leave the Southern Hemisphere without seeing these Galaxies, our next-door neighbours! The Milky Way cuts the Heavens in two and the Southern Cross points across it to the Clouds. Grahame told us that they played an important part in Aboriginal mythology as they believe they are the smoke rising from their ancestors' campfires.

Next day we set out to start our own camping leg of the journey. We had promised to take Grahame to Bigge Island to search for the *pipe-smoking* Wandjinas, the paintings he had been looking for when the seaplane crashed. The poor man was still suffering from headaches caused by hitting his head on the roof of the cabin as the plane had flipped over.

The plan was that we would visit the Roe River in the morning, before meeting up with Anne Koeyer on the King Edward. It had taken Anne five hours to drive from the station with all our camping gear, food and wine!

Roe River was important to visit because this was where Grahame believed Joseph Bradshaw had first recorded in his 1891 diaries seeing what he called *Egyptian Paintings*. Grahame had studied the text very carefully in conjunction with the latest aerial maps of the area, trying to follow the route described by Joseph. We flew off at dawn and headed for Roe River. Grahame pointed to a spot on the map and the pilots took us straight there, quite a different story to when the Bradshaw brothers were crashing around in the Bush on horseback!

Roe River lies in a ravine, at the head of which was a rock hole that became known to us as *Paradise Pool*. It is a vast round 300-foot wide pool of crystal clear water, surrounded by towering 100-foot high cliffs.



Landing on the edge of 'Paradise Pool' waterfall

We landed on the lip of the dry waterfall and gazed down into the pool. I have never seen such a grand sight in my life. It was simply breathtaking. Giant steps mounted the side face, so getting down was not going to be a problem!



Paradise Pool on the Roe River

Loaded with cameras Grahame hared off down the riverbed with his assistant. This was new country to him and he was on the scent of Joseph Bradshaw's paintings! We climbed down leisurely, step-by-step, looking for our own Bradshaws. We soon found some, and then others, and then more! We also found paintings of kangaroo and a pair of fish of the earlier Irregular Infill style. We wandered along the riverbed, revelling in the scenery. It was Nature at her purest and most beautiful, untouched by man. It was almost as though we were walking on sacred land! Monet would have gone mad with delight at the little fish darting between the water-lily leaves in the crystal pools.



One of a pair of Irregular Infill fish



Paradise Pool cascade

A trickle of water was running, sending a shower of sparkling diamond droplets tumbling down the cliff face. We came back to the pool, stripped off and dived in, having decided that no salt-water crocodile would have reached this far up-stream! I don't think I have ever been sorrier to leave a place.



The walls of the pool were covered with Bradshaws

Grahame arrived back but had found nothing, which was very disappointing. Personally I felt that this was a very unlikely place for Joseph and his brother to have been on horseback. They were cattlemen so surely they would not have been tempted into this extremely rough terrain. For miles around it was rock, rock, and more rock, cut up by massive cliffs and ravines. It certainly wasn't cattle-grazing country!

We took off and headed back towards King Edward River where we would meet up with Anne and camp for the night. On the way we stopped and Grahame led us around an island of rock into a shelter where on the wall were some extraordinary figures, quite different to anything that we had seen before. Grahame called them *Elephant Heads* and the fact that the elegant Bradshaw painting overlaid the larger ones proved they were younger.

Their heads did look like elephants, round with a big ear on one side, and a trunk coming out of the other side. Grahame thought that they depicted people with brain damage. They were very odd and very unattractive while the little Bradshaws were elegant and appealing.



Elephant Heads

Across from the Elephant Heads in another shelter were some quite superb Bradshaw paintings done in a terracotta pigment. Close by them was a Wandjina painting and a pair of skulls coloured with red ochre, clearly demonstrating three periods of occupation at the same sacred site by the art.



Amazing Tassel Bradshaw painting



Wandjina at King Edward River site

We flew into camp to find Anne had a fire going and a hot meal waiting for us! She had had a long and tiring trip, but even so had glasses out, red wine breathing, and vodka and ice at the ready for Giles. We were each given an air mattress and bedroll and chose a spot to lay it out. We had all settled down nicely on our backs and were watching the stars, when Michael announced that his air mattress had a leak and had gone flat! What a difference to our previous trips! I dropped off to sleep thinking about Paradise Pool. As long as I live I shall dream about that place. It was a Garden of Eden.

Next morning we set off for Bigge Island. Flying low over an azure sea we approached a white sand horseshoe beach and landed in the grass above high-water mark. The first thing I saw was the three-foot wide track left by a turtle that had climbed the beach to lay her eggs. The nest was empty and we were a long way from the shell line, so the little fellows must have had quite a scramble to get to the water and I hope they had made it.

We split up and started to explore as Grahame thought that this was the right place as it was the only beach on the island. Bigge Island is big, so I sincerely hoped he was right as there was no way that we were going to cover the whole island in this heat. I arrived back dripping wet after climbing around on top of the cliff, to be told that they had been found in a cave. Michael took me to the cave to see the *pipe-smokers*.



Pipe-smoking Wandjinas

Near the painting was another quite amazing one that Grahame thought represented a giant yam root, but reminded me of the Irish Celt carving in the New Grange tumulus! Underneath the tattoo painting was a large goanna.



A goanna and possibly a yam root

I walked back to the other end of the beach along the high-water line and could not believe what I saw. When Margie walks on a beach she looks for cowry shells, and if she is lucky she may find one tiny one. Here nearly every shell was an inch long cowry; pink, purple, white or golden. I collected two whole pocketfuls of beautiful specimens, throwing away many that were not perfect. When I got home I bought a silver chain and hung a dozen of the best from its links. When Margie wears the bracelet it makes a soft tinkle that takes me straight back to that beach, the Bradshaws, Paradise Pool and the time I spent with my friends under the Magellanic Clouds.

The tide was going down. We had landed at high tide but now it had fallen 40 foot! It was incredible to see, especially as I am accustomed to tides of no more than six foot. It was as though the ocean had been sucked dry! A black island had appeared in the middle of the bay where there had been no sign of one before. It looked as though a giant nuclear submarine had surfaced! I have never seen anything so powerful as that tide in my life, and gazed with wonderment at the visual proof of the strength of our moon.

The night before we had drunk half the wine that we had brought to last for three days. I had warned my friends that we still had two nights to go, so they had better steady up, but my words fell on deaf ears and by the time we fell into our swags on the second night there was not a drop left. This called for a major decision. Would we head for home or would the following night be dry? Next morning we started back to the station. We had found Grahame's 'pipe-smokers' so there was no point in a 'dry night'!

On the way home Grahame took us to Mitchell Falls to see some very old *Irregular Infill* paintings that were 40 foot up a cliff. Just how did the artists get up there to paint these images? It is thought the artists must have dipped knotted grass in paint and then thrown them against the rock face. One thing

these paintings did show was that whoever did them knew how to tie knots. My friend, Ronnie Brown, says that the Stone Age should really have been called the Knot Age, pointing out that tying knots was one of Man's first skills. Apart from the hundreds of other uses for knots like fixing sharp stones to spear heads, women gathering tubers and fruits needed both hands free, so tying the baby onto their back was essential!

We climbed down a ravine to see an amazing painting of a *Battle Scene*. Seven little men face nine large men. Boomerangs and spears have been thrown and one of the nine lies dead between the two opposing armies, with a spear sticking in him. The painting is a Bradshaw and probably the oldest picture of warfare in the world! This painting is important as at first glance one might imagine that the smaller people are pygmies, but this cannot be because the spears that are behind the small people are short, while the ones thrown by the smaller people, that lie behind the larger people, are long. The fact is the artist who did the painting knew about perspective, which is quite remarkable. There is no other example of the use of perspective in Rock Art in Australia and I personally don't know of any like this in the world!



The Battle Scene



Grahame's silhouette of the 'Battle Scene'

Grahame had saved the cream of the Bradshaws to the last day. By now our brains were racing with ideas, opinions and interpretations, but we were still not ready for the final art gallery and what we were about to see.



Drysdale River

We flew to an enormous rock pool on the Drysdale River and landed on the rim. This was the Great Python's nest of Aborigine Folk Law. Grahame had never been here before. It was a bit like Paradise Pool, but had none of the charm. From there we flew down the river for ten minutes until we reached a second pool where Grahame had discovered some Bradshaws.

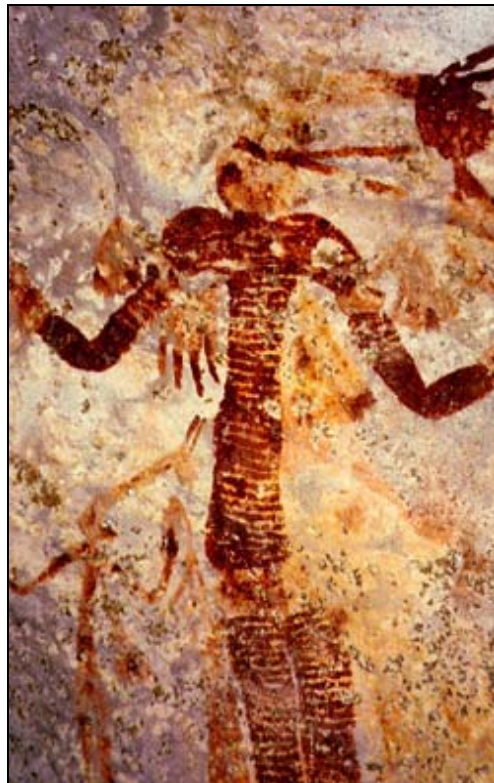


Mushroom Rock Gallery

There was not room for both helicopters to land at the site, so some of us had a difficult climb up from the river to a great mushroom rock. Under the lip of this rock we saw Bradshaw paintings that will stay in my mind for ever. First we saw a painting that Grahame called *Zebra* figures: two perfect figures dancing, dressed in horizontal-striped pyjamas. He told us that they were the only ones that he had ever found.



Two 'Zebra' figures and an older 'Irregular Infill' animal



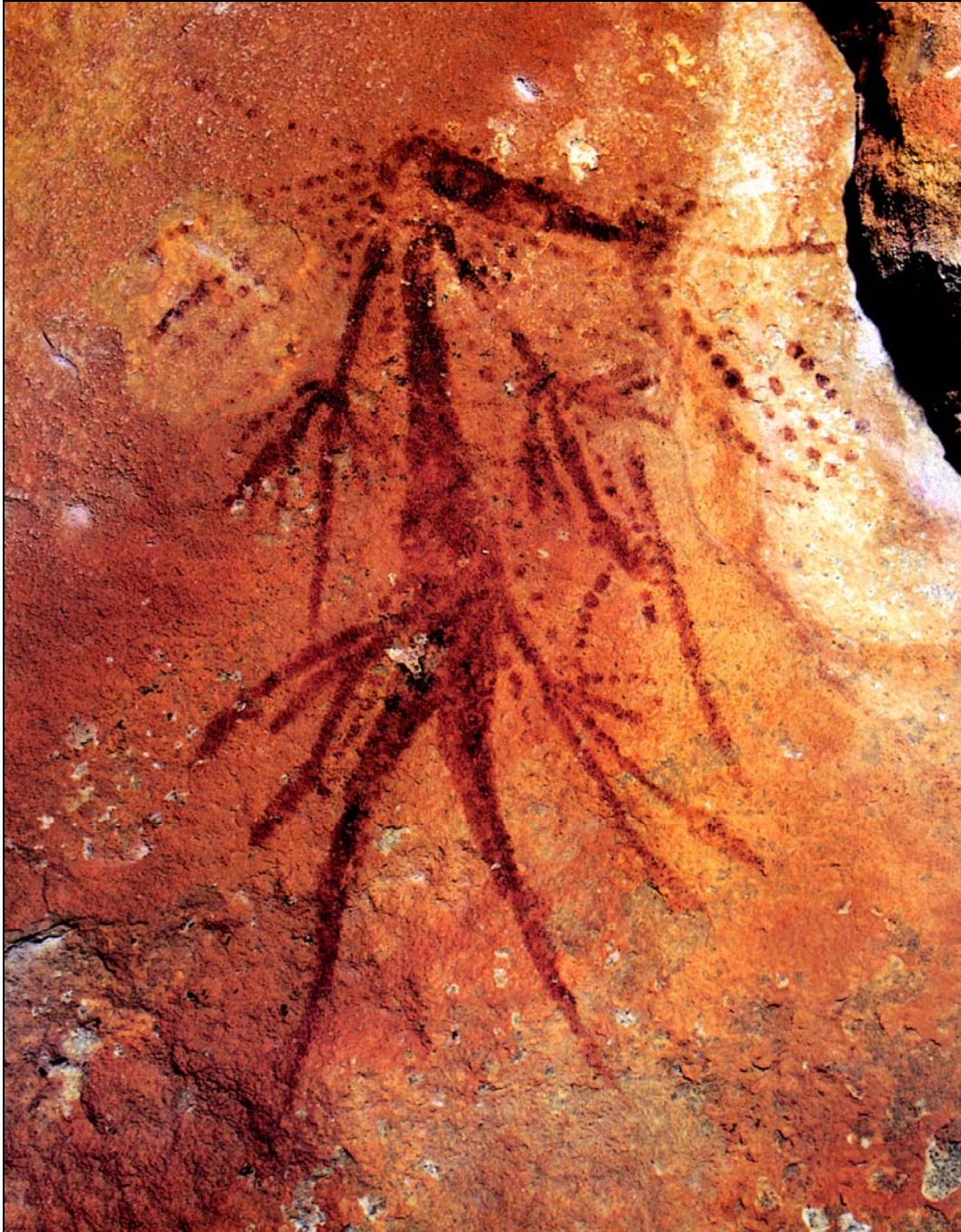
And then we saw what I think is a painting that can stand against any other painting in the world. It is a gem. The concept, movement, spontaneity, are all things that would make any artist gasp with envy. *Dancers*: four little feet point to the ground as the dancers leap upwards. They are joined at their calves and their aprons. One has a headdress with a pom-pom, and the other has two feathers sticking out of the back of a turban. One waves a boomerang, while the other has a flywhisk. It is utterly amazing.



Dancers

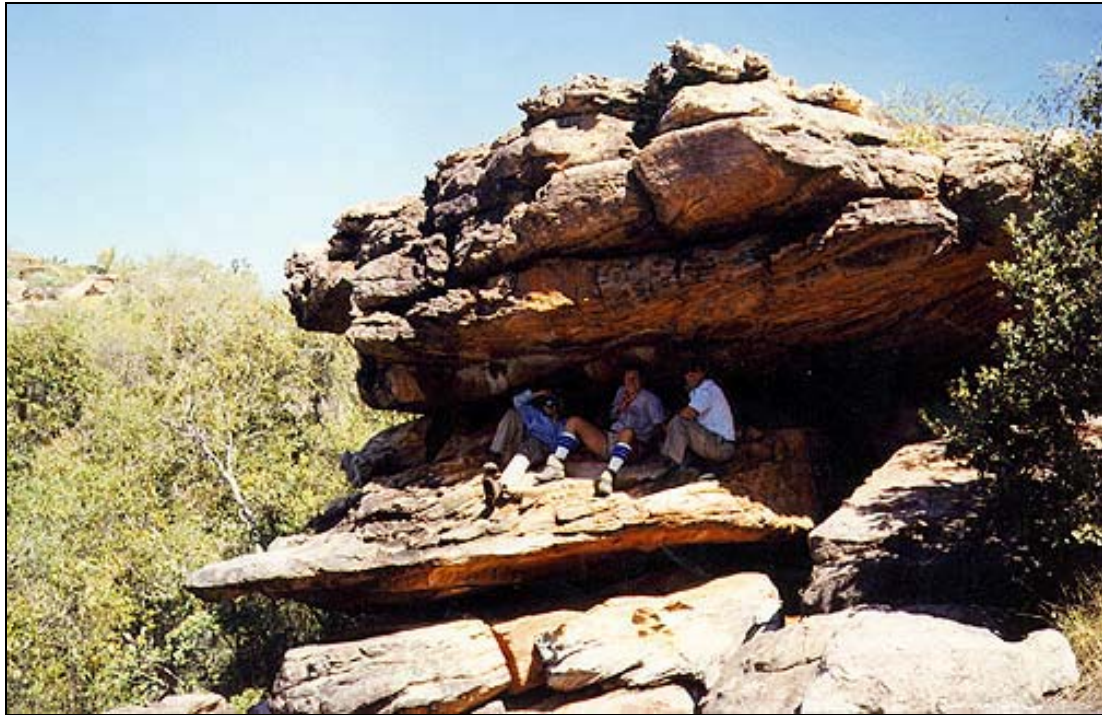
I could go on talking about this painting forever, but still could not express how I feel about it. What it does say is that whoever painted it was an absolute genius. It is vibrant and supremely beautiful.

Next we saw a *spotted* figure, which I immediately thought of as the *Sorcerer*. This tiny lone figure is surrounded by dots that flow out from its head and arms. Was this a painting of someone hallucinating?

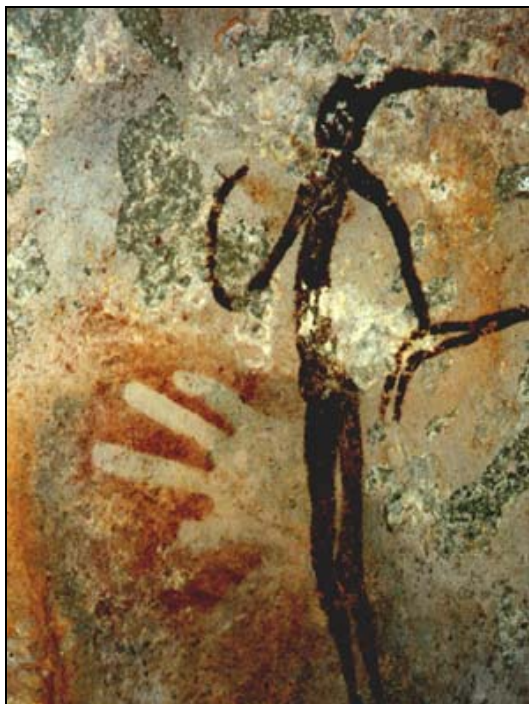


Sorcerer

I am quite sure in my own mind that this is a portrait of a Shaman figure, just like the one in both Les Trois Frères and Chauvet caves in France.



Studying Bradshaws above the Drysdale River



Bradshaw overlays a Hand



Woomera and two boomerangs

And then there is the 'when' of the Bradshaw paintings? Exactly when in time were they painted? Grahame believes that these paintings were done by a race of people who occupied Kimberley before the present Aborigines. My mind was reeling and I was glad that we had come to the end of our time. We had been left us on the crest of a wave, and what better place to be?



A fine Bradshaw painting with a small unfinished one, top right

Grahame now has proof that the Bradshaw paintings are 17,500 years old. He was able to obtain the date from a *fossil mud wasp nest* that overlaid a painting. This means that this painting was done at the same time as those at Lascaux!

When we had cleared the table for the last of Anne's gourmet dinners, I suggested that we should have a meeting. I proposed that we should form the *Bradshaw Foundation* in Geneva and publish a book on the paintings. I was sure that we all agreed that we had seen art of great importance over the last few days, and I felt that we owed it to the rest of the world to share this privilege.

I told my friends that I had had a talk with Grahame and had asked him if he would like us to publish a book about the Bradshaw paintings, and he had said that he would. I visualised that the book should contain 100 of Grahame's colour photographs of the Bradshaws, (each accompanied by a black and white silhouette), and include a 50-page text. I told them that Grahame had agreed to this as long as it cost him nothing and the printing was not his responsibility, as he could not spare the time.

I had made a rough calculation of how much such a publication would cost, but as I had no money I suggested that my share would be the editing and supervision of the printing. Would the other five trustees be responsible for the cost? The outcome of the meeting was that the Foundation was formed and the trustees agreed on condition that Grahame and I had the book ready by July 1994 so we could launch it at the International Rock Art Conference in Flagstaff, Arizona. (ISBN 2-970022-1-3)

If I had known how time-consuming and difficult it would be to organise the book I would never have made the offer, but then I look at the Bradshaws and realise that the paintings were worth the headaches.



The most dynamic dancing figure we saw



Bradshaw Clothes-Peg figures

I had a sand-blasted engraving of several of the Bradshaw figures done in the Czech Republic. They turned out well but unfortunately also too expensive.



Bradshaw Clothes-Peg figures

I took delivery of the first six copies of the book at the end of June 1994, a month before the launch at Flagstaff! The book was endorsed by one of Europe's leading archaeologists, Professor Lord Renfrew, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge University. Also by Sir Roger de Grey, the President of the Royal Academy of Art, and Nigel Winser, the Deputy Director of the Royal Geographical Society.

Thanks to Grahame and the Bradshaw Foundation we now had a superb book on some of the finest Rock Art on the Earth. Lord Renfrew summed the book up by saying that it was a 'grand achievement'.

So far I have only mentioned the names of the men who came on the trip. I must also include the name of my friend, Michael Ball, who joined us as a trustee when I told him about what we were planning. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch agreed to become our Honorary President and also promised funds to help Grahame continue his research in the field. Ron and Betty Beaver agreed to sell the books in Canberra through the Beaver Gallery and hand the proceeds to Grahame. Lastly my dear friend, Anna Coyle, who handled all the finance for the Bradshaw Foundation through Trustco Management, Geneva. Without the aid of all of these people there would be no book.

Of course things didn't go as smoothly as I had hoped because the Australian Aboriginal community suddenly started to take an interest in the Bradshaw paintings. Until then they had called them *rubbish paintings* and said that *they were before their time*. Now they called them *Gwion Gwion* and claim that they were the creators of the *Wandjinas*. The outcome of this was a political row, bad media publicity and a demand for a ban on Grahame ever going into Kimberley again, as well as a cessation of his research!

The last thing the Bradshaw Foundation wanted was to be involved in a political fight so I decided to cut it into two parts, one half to deal with International Rock Art and the other to deal with Grahame and Australian Rock Art. Dame Elisabeth and Bruce Dyson kindly agreed to run the Australian half on their own and cut all association with Geneva.

At this time Grahame also met Maria Myers who became his Patron. Maria has since bought properties in Kimberley and employed Grahame as a curator so he can continue researching the Bradshaws. She and Dame Elisabeth financed a second book by Grahame, and like us with the first one, they also have passed all the profit from sales on to him. (ISBN 0958744610)

The split suited me as an idea was beginning to form in my head that concerned the World Wide Web. Computers had suddenly come into my life and I could see that they and the Internet were going to touch every aspect of our future. I felt that the Bradshaw Foundation should become part of this new world and the information in our book should be available on the Web.

Having an idea and bringing it to fruition are two very different things, as we all know. However, right at this time I happened to be in Aspen for the unveiling of an edition of *Janus* that Robert had given to the Aspen Institute for Physics. The Institute employed a photographer named Charlie whom I met when he took photos of the sculpture. In conversation he told me that he had just started an Internet company in Aspen to build websites, so I made an appointment to meet him the following day.

So began my involvement with the World Wide Web. Charlie was keen to build a site for us so I asked him to register www.BradshawFoundation.com.

Before returning to England I left Charlie and his able assistant, Archie, detailed instructions concerning what I wanted them to do and the amount of money they could spend. They did a wonderful job, but I soon found out that planning something in an office as we sat side by side was a completely different kettle of fish to doing it from abroad. When costs went way over budget I ended our relationship, although I had absolutely no idea of how to continue running the site.

This was very frustrating as I wanted to add a site that covered my trip to Malta to explore the ancient temples, the oldest buildings in Europe, predating the Egyptian Pyramids. Damon and Robert had agreed to finance the website and I was keen to keep it alive. I could see that if the site was to be recognised as one of importance we would have to make it truly international and include other Rock Art. I also wanted to include places that I wished to visit in the future, like Easter Island and the island of Campeche, off the coast of Brazil.

With this problem turning around in my mind I happened to call on the printers in our local town of Castle Cary. I knew the owners as they had printed the book of my Symbolic Sculptures that Edition Limitée had commissioned in 1992.

I walked into the little office and found a young man named Ben working at a computer. Ben turned out to be the son of one of the printers and had just finished a four-year course at Bristol University on Graphic Design. Ben was converting their business to computers while looking for a job.

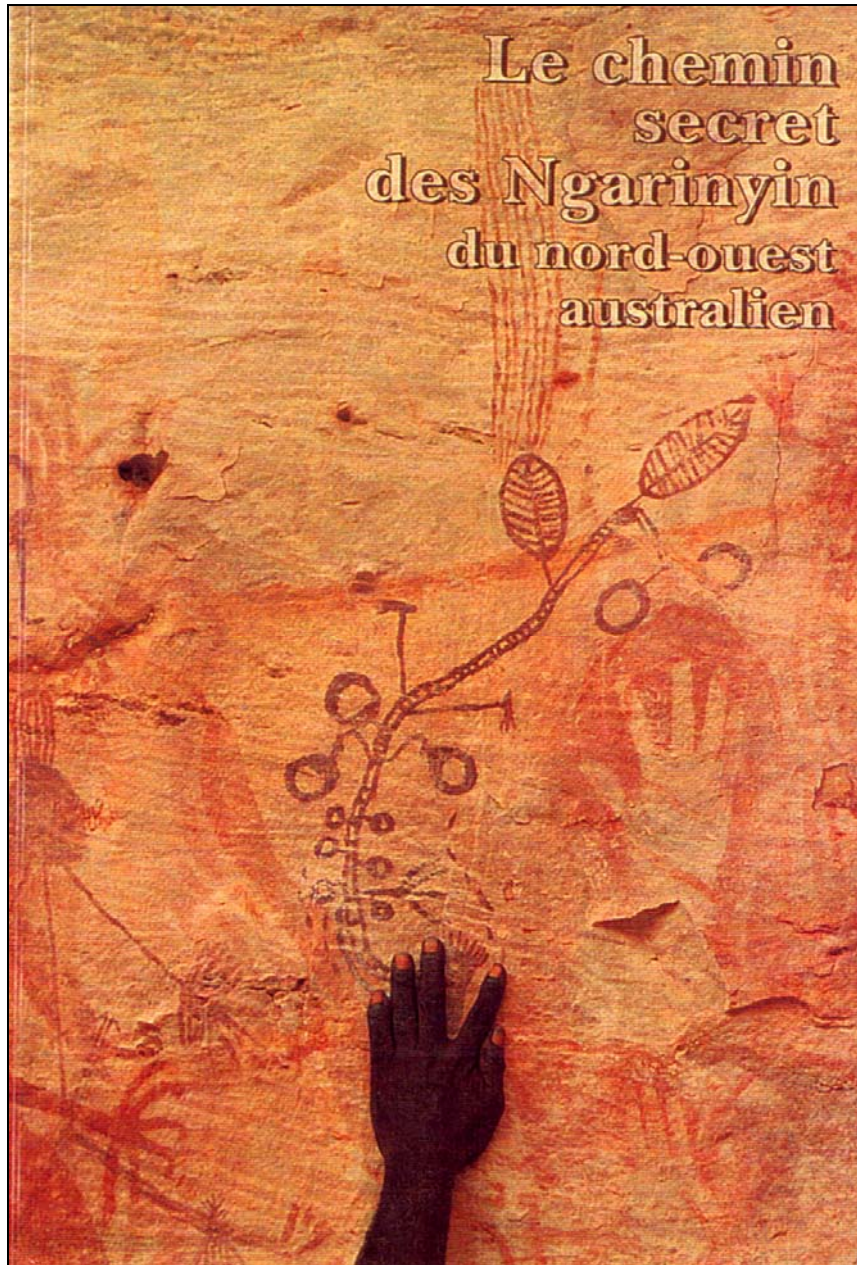
I asked him, "Know anything about websites?" Ben told me that he knew enough about the Internet to design pages, but he admitted that he had a lot to learn. I asked him if he would be interested in coming out to Agecroft and looking at what we had done so far and then add a new page on Malta.

So began my association with Ben Dickins. At first because of my experience in Aspen, I insisted on being in charge of the page design, but by the time we had built the Malta site Ben knew exactly what I wanted and took over. He was soon coming up with brilliant suggestions and through his ability the Bradshaw Foundation site blossomed into a first-class presentation. As the site grew my son, Peter, joined as Project Controller and then took over as Editor. He and Ben have now pushed the Bradshaw Foundation webpage to the top of the Google list of recommended Rock Art sites.

In 2004 the Foundation won an award from *Scientific America* as the best archaeological and anthropological site on the Web. The magazine *Science* and the *National Geographic* recommends the site to all their readers. Little did I then think that by 2005 the site would be receiving twelve million hits annually. It is amazing to think of the number of people around the world who would never have known about the Bradshaw paintings without our website. I honestly believe the hits will reach 100 million by 2010, something I find amazing! The Foundation have recently expanded to selling Podcasts for student study.

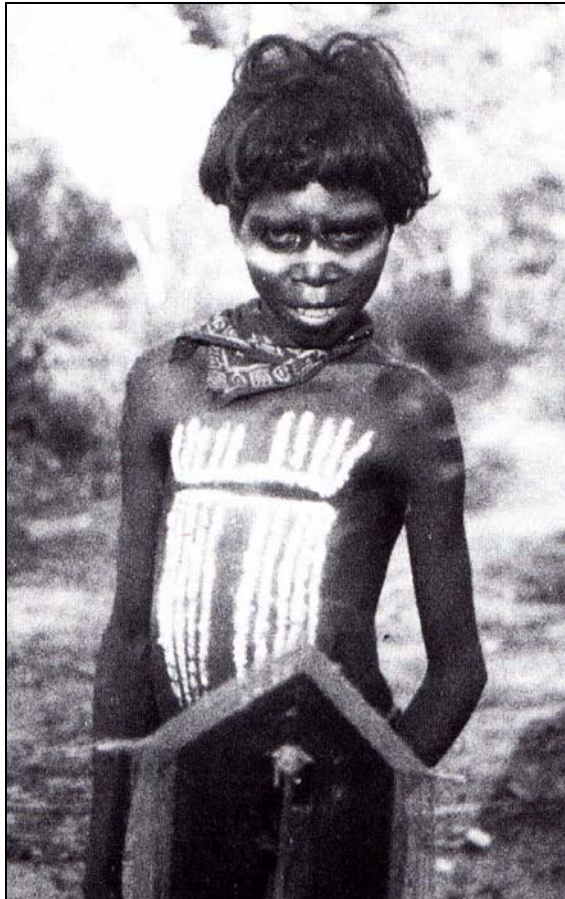
In 1994 finding material for the site became an important part of my life. I had met Dr Jean Clottes at the Flagstaff International Rock Art conference when we had launched Grahame's book. Over the last few years Jean has stimulated a vast amount of new material by arranging for me to visit the French caves of Tuc d'Audoubert, Lascaux and Chauvet, as well as involving the Foundation with the research on the 'Dabous Giraffe' in the Sahara. My Seventh Decade has been extraordinary and I can't wait to start writing about it. If you get that far I think you will agree in has all been very exciting!

However, before I leave the Bradshaw painting saga there is one more twist to the tale I have to relate. It concerns a trip that Damon and I made to Paris on June 16th 1997. We had been invited to a forum by the Head of UNESCO's Department of Cultural Heritage by Dr Andreas Lommel, the man I had met in the King Leopold Range in 1955 when part of a mounted police patrol. We had made Andreas a member of the Foundation's Advisory Board.



Cover of official guide to the UNESCO Exhibition in Paris

As you might remember Andreas Lommel was a member of the expedition that visited Kimberley in 1938 that was arranged by the Frankfurt-based Frobenius Institute to study the customs of the Aboriginal tribes of north-west Australia. He took many black and white photographs of tribal dancing ceremonies, and individual Aborigines, including David Mowaljarlai, who was then a young boy aged ten.



David Mowaljarlai, aged ten, photo Andreas Lommel, 1938



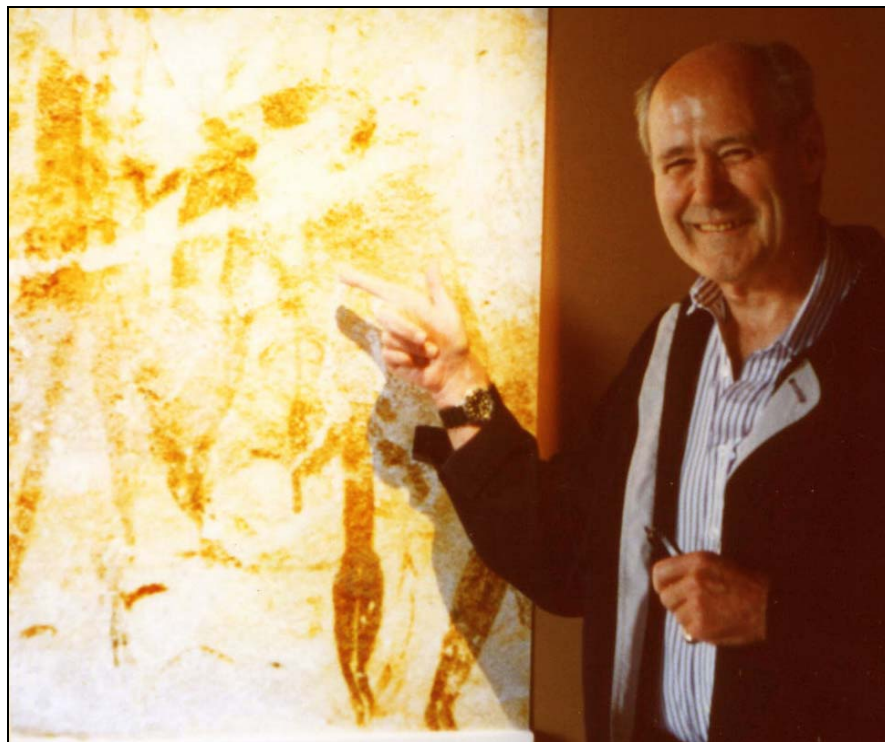
'Corroboree Dance', photo Andreas Lommel, 1938

When Mowaljarlai wrote his book *Yorro Yorro* in 1993 he included many of Andreas Lommel's photographs as well as asking him to write the Foreword. In the book, which he states is about 'the religious beliefs of his people', there is no mention of the Bradshaw paintings or even *Gwion Gwion*, the name the Aborigines now use for the paintings. Mowaljarlai subsequently claimed that the *Gwion Gwion* paintings were part of the Ngarinyin tribe's heritage and in fact were actually the creators of the Wandjinas! So why didn't he mention them in his book? He wrote: *I have been carrying these old-time stories with me like a swag*. Power comes from the east, from the sunrise, that is my statement. This is how the Wandjinas sorted out the real estate before handing it to the people. Ngadjar is above all, the Incomparable One and before our time... the master of all galaxies.* (*bedroll)

When Andreas first saw the Bradshaw paintings in 1938 and had asked the Unambal people about them, he was told that the paintings were, quote: *before their time – were rubbish paintings – and – painted by a little grey bird using a tail feather dipped in its own blood caused by bashing its beak against the rocks!*

The Paris exhibition was not due to open until midday, but the organisers kindly let Damon and me in early after we had explained that we had been invited by UNESCO and that I was an Australian. The display was composed of over 100 superbly-mounted colour poster-size photographs hung around the wall of a large gallery. There was a map of Kimberley at the entrance showing Mt Hann, but not Mt Elizabeth Station, or Mt Agnes.

The exhibition was equally divided between photographs of living Aborigines and Bradshaws paintings with only two Wandjinas. The exhibition was all about Bradshaw paintings! We set off to inspect the display and I very nearly died when I came to the first poster. I knew the painting! Not only did I know it, but I also knew its location – *Hann River Crossing on Mt Elizabeth Station!* In fact 90% of the photographs turned out to be from that one site which we had found in 1981. The exhibition was a fraudulent con!



▲
We discovered this 'plumbed' figure in 1981



Hann River-Crossing shelter on Mt Elizabeth Station

The rock shelter shown in the exhibition has a painted area of about ten square foot. By taking photographs of separate scenes on the panel, but having no overall shot, the impression was given that these paintings came from a wide area, in fact as wide as the map of Kimberley at the entrance of the exhibition! The main photograph is about 18-inches long and of a line of dancing figures led by a man in a plumed headdress. You can see the same figure in the overall photograph above my head, top right ▼▲.

This group of painted figures shows five dancers in Indian file, with the leader wearing a plumed headdress, two of the followers have bushy fox tails, one of them carrying an object that looks like half a tennis racquet, while others carry boomerangs.

We took several photographs of the exhibition and Damon signed the Visitors' Book as Chairman of the Bradshaw Foundation. The show was laughable and UNESCO had been taken for a ride!

What would I have said to myself in 1981 if I had known that I was lying only a ten-minute walk away from this particular Bradshaw Gallery? Over a period of 16 years the Bradshaws had led me on the twisted path of amazing coincidences from the banks of the Hann River to a museum in Paris. I had never heard of the Bradshaw paintings in 1981, as had hardly anyone else. Now they are being recognised as numbering amongst the most sophisticated works of art ever created by prehistoric man. This is entirely due to the discoveries made by Dr Grahame Walsh of hundreds of paintings spread over an area of land the size of Switzerland. Not only are they a complete mystery, they are superlative art. So who were the people and where did they come from?

The coincidence of my meeting Andreas Lommel on Gibb River Station in 1955 and being in Paris in 1997, 42 years later, I find to be remarkable. I hope that I have not been too long-winded in telling this story, but I feel it worth recording because it provides a background to all the controversy that has been published over the last few years concerning the Bradshaw paintings.

Still laughing we boarded the train and the following weekend Damon and I painted a 'Dancer' on the wall of his swimming pool. In the photograph it looks as though I am hanging from his hat, which could be an omen!



Taking the plunge!

Quite often our Australian friends ask if their children can come and see us when they are doing their tour of Europe having finished their schooling. One of our favourite of these girls was Julia, and it so happened that we would be in Victoria on business the day of her wedding. We drove up to the Western District and stayed in a motel at the foot of the Grampians for the celebration. The view from our room of the mountains and the giant red gums was awe inspiring, especially as I could see a creature in the rocks!



'Grampian Tiger' or 'Mt Sturgeon'

When we booked in to the motel I was very surprised to see that the dining room was decorated with the posters that I had printed of Grahame's Bradshaw silhouettes for the launch of our book at Flagstaff, Arizona.

The receptionist then asked me if I had seen the silver casting in their conference rooms. I was bowled over by the beauty of what I saw. A pair of brothers named Flynn had modelled a two-foot high wax copy of the 'Dancers' and cast them in silver. They were simply magnificent!

As soon as we got back to Melbourne I called the brothers and asked if we could come and see them. We only had one day left in town as we were due to depart for England that evening, so it meant leaving by car at dawn, as they lived several hours' drive out of Melbourne near Kyneton, to spend an hour in a tiny shed looking at their superb work. But it was well worth it.

I asked if they would be interested in casting a copy of the 'Dancers' for my friend in America. I knew Robert would love the work so took a gamble and ordered an edition for him. It turned out I was correct, as he did love it when I delivered it six months later. I also asked the Flynn brothers if they would cast some miniatures for me as brooches. I ordered four and when they arrived I thought them to be the most beautiful jewellery I have ever seen.

I can't help but wonder what the Bradshaw People would have thought about the silver castings done 17,500 years after the originals. I am sure these figures had the same intense meaning to the Bradshaw people as the Chauvet animals did 35,000 years ago to the Bear Clan who worshipped around an altar topped by a cave bear skull. In fact I think the figures had as much importance as any symbol ever used by any religion. You don't paint sacred objects just for the fun of it!



Dancer



Dancers

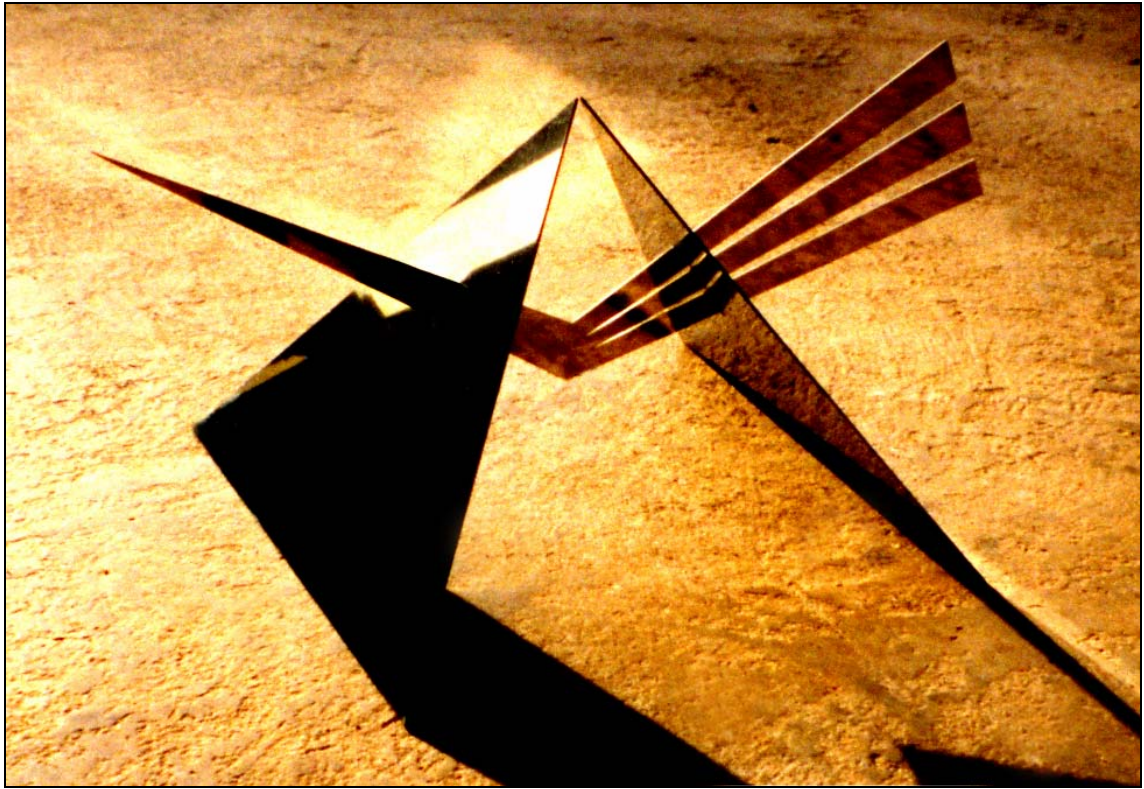


Zebra Dancer

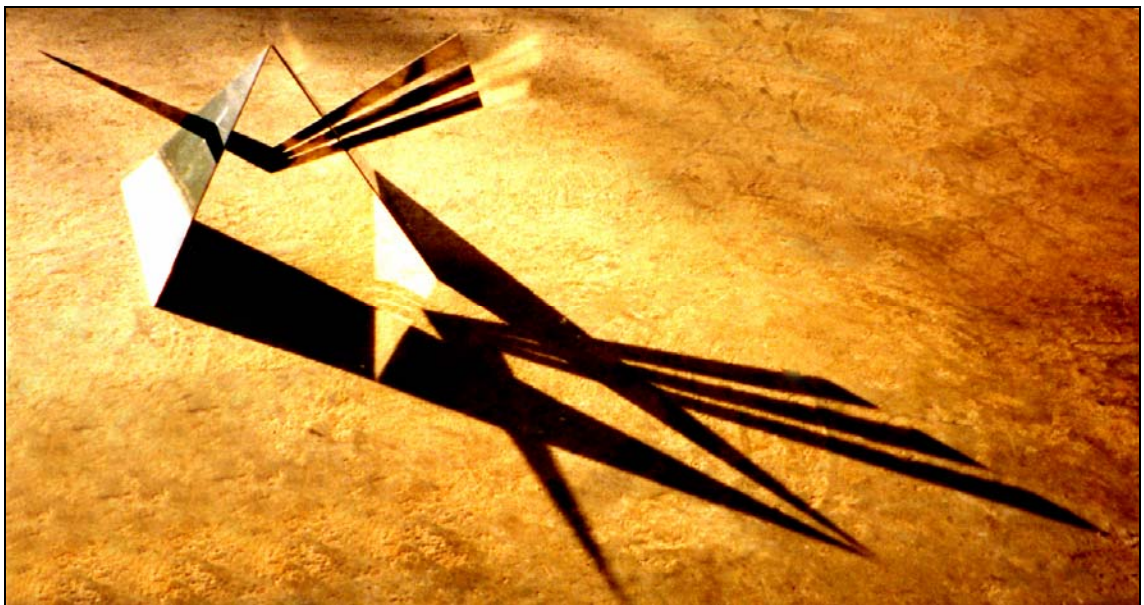
I took a video of the 1993 trip and recorded Grahame's explanations of each site. I watched this film recently and, although the quality of the images is poor, the sound is crystal clear. By the end of the film I was again staggered by the amount of knowledge Grahame had imparted to us, and his dedication to his life's work.

I am glad to be able to write that at last Grahame Walsh's amazing discoveries have been recognised and he has been awarded a Doctorate by Melbourne University.

However, I am afraid the close of this adventure is touched by sadness as Andreas Lommel passed away on January 9th 2005. Katharina had died just a few months before him. I shall never forget the day I met them both by a Wandjina painting in Kimberley in 1955, nearly 50 years ago. Two wonderful people, one a true scientist and the other a talented artist. What a privilege it has been for me to have known two such gifted people.



Light



Isaac Newton memorial at sunset