NATIONAL CENTRE for AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE Inc

BEHIND THE IMAGINED

ISSUE 02 2018

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

ISSN 2207-8622

Published by the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature Inc

Editor: Jane Carstens

All enquiries should be addressed to:

The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature Inc
The Library
University of Canberra ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA

You may also contact us by email at lu.rees@canberra.edu.au

The Centre actively seeks donations under the Cultural Gifts Program. The Centre also accepts monetary donations for which donors may receive a taxation benefit. See back jacket cover for details.

For more information, please contact Belle Alderman on (02) 6201 2062
or by email at belle.alderman@canberra.edu.au.

Behind the imagined: The Journal of the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature is indexed in APAIS (Australian Public Affairs Information Service), ALISA (Australian Library and Information Science Abstracts) and in Children's Literature Abstracts (Austin TX 78757).

Table of Contents

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the second edition of Behind the Imagined. This edition is a celebration of the skill and dedication of women in literature, and of people's generosity (you will understand why when you have read the articles).

Belle Alderman, Jane Brummitt and Tania McCartney with May Gibb's watercolour created as a preliminary piece for her first published work in Australia, *Gum Blossom Babies* (1916). This artwork was donated to the NCACL by Jane last year.

May Gibbs is the subject of the first two articles by Jane Brummitt and Tania McCartney respectively, and if you think you know a lot about May and her work, then read on. There are gems found in every paragraph of these articles. For example, did you know the wonderful Ms Gibbs wasn't a good driver because she was always on the lookout for flowers to sketch? You will also find out what a generous giving person May was.

Doris Chadwick, editor of *The School Magazine* for 37 years, is also remembered and celebrated by her great-niece Diana Brown. While we often know a lot about a person's professional life, their back-story brings them to life. Thanks to Diana, we not only know more about Doris, but the information is now recorded for prosperity (don't you just love archives!).

Finally, Nicole Godwin draws the curtains back a little bit more about the world of self-publishing, including the offer of a free eBook to our readers about bringing one of her books to life (until the end of May).

I know you will enjoy these articles. They are more threads in the literary world that, when woven together, create the rich fabric of Australian children's literature.

Jane Carstens

Editor

Giving of Gum Blossom Watercolour

By Jane Brummitt

While a young friend told me about a 1915 painting by May Gibbs MBE which he had noticed in an antique shop, he showed me a photograph of it on his phone. When I saw the original I recognised that it was a May Gibbs work - in progress for her Christmas 1916 book, *Gum Blossom Babies*. Her name is printed in the bottom left hand corner, but not in that characteristic circle she gave her finished works – once she had stopped using her early and demeaning nom de plume 'Blob' for fashion advertisements and caricatures of politicians.

Jane Brummitt with the May Gibbs' watercolour she donated to our Centre last year

Gumnut Babies and *Gum Blossom Babies*, both published in December 1916, were May's first Australian books. This painting is just visibly dated 1915 and is a delight to compare with the finished work of 1916.

In an illustrated article headed 'Miss May Gibbs: her creative work; Mother of Gum Nut Babies', an un-named journalist in Sydney's Sunday Sun of 5 September, 1915, wrote at about the time May created this watercolour:

> *Miss May Gibbs…specialises in painting Australian wildflowers, and has invested certain of the blossoms with such fantastic personalities that many people have come to look on them as funny little human friends and follow the various vicissitudes of their lives with much interest.*

Having trained in London and visited Paris, May by 1915 was a highly skilled artist. Born in England she had come to South Australia with her artistic parents at the age of four and moved to what she described as the 'glorious, delightful free bush' of Harvey, Western Australia, at the age of eight – where 'indulgent parents allowed unrestrained freedom' – her words.

She was inspired by Harvey and loved creating imaginative stories about its bush for her young cousins when she visited them there. Years later she recalled these creations when it was reported that:

> *she wants the children of Australia to know of all the quaint, delightful wonderful things that throng the bush of their native land….which is peopled with characters she thinks more fascinating than any that ever lived in the pages of Grimm or Hans Andersen.*

Until she wrote her books, Australian children read only books with English settings. In London she attempted to publish a children's book, she called *Mimie and Wag*, set in Australia and based on her childhood there. The unfamiliar landscape of Mimie's adventures on the back of a kangaroo and accompanied by her dog, led only to a rejection slip. Undaunted, May changed the site of the adventures of *Mimie and Wag* to the chimney pots of *London*. The result was success and her book About Us was published in 1911. Soon she received commissions for so much work from the English publisher George Harrap that her health reached breaking point. In 1913 she returned home, to her family in Perth, accompanied by a fellow suffragist English friend, Rene Heames.

Encouraged by Rene and Sydney friend, Win Preston, who also recognised May's prodigious talent, May moved to Sydney to explore the greater publishing opportunities there. She rented a studio at 4 George Street, in the city, travelling there by ferry from a boarding house called 'Derry', in Phillips Street, Neutral Bay.

May rejoiced in Sydney's bushland and on 4 December 1913 she registered her first gumnut baby image for copyright. How astute and business-like to do that! Almost immediately her Gumnut Babies made their first appearance in the banner heading of a serialised newspaper story by Ethel

Turner – *The Magic Button*. I have read it right through and there is no mention of gumnut babies in Ethel Turner's plot!

Gumnut Babies and her other designs became instantly popular among magazine covers for *The Sydney Mail* and she was commissioned to create 25. The Lone Hand, a magazine which deliberately encouraged the artistic work of women, also featured May's gumnut babies on a cover.

As well as being recognised as a prize-winning botanical artist who had exhibited at the Paris Exhibition, May was also a fine portrait painter and water-colourist.

She regarded her very popular and imaginative gumnut works as pot boilers. These so called pot boilers made her work very well known and much loved, particularly after World War I broke out. They included nostalgic postcards from gumnut land, dispatched with the Red Cross parcels sent to diggers in the trenches. As well as the Gumnut Corps going to war and 'making things hum by gum', there were postcards of kookaburra aunts and gumnut babies knitting for victory and a kangaroo with her joey keeping 'the billy boiling, dear, till you come marching home'. May said that because her cards went sent to bring cheer to the soldiers, no work gave her greater pleasure.

During this time, she was also commissioned to illustrate books by Australian authors. However in 1915 she told a Sunday Sun journalist that to realise her dream of a book about the Australian bush she had realised that she must both illustrate and write the book herself. First and foremost an artist, she created her pictures and wrote stories around them.

During 1915 May worked extremely hard at creating ideas for Gumnut Babies and Gum Blossom Babies, inspired by Corymbia calophylla, often referred to as the May Gibbs gum tree, with its urn shaped gumnuts. The painting dates from that period but the artwork is not as refined as in the two finished books, the original work for which you can see in the Mitchell Library. There I marvelled at her skill with pen and ink and her delicate work as a watercolour artist using a myriad of shades to depict a cicada making music for a crowd of gumnut babies.

When Angus and Robertson commissioned May's first two Australian books, *Gumnut Babies* and *Gum Blossom Babies*, on January 11, 1916, she was again so exhausted by her work that she headed back to recuperate at her parents' home, The Dune, in South Perth.

After a couple of months there she returned to Sydney revitalised. In October 1916 *The Bulletin* announced that Angus and Robertson would be bringing out two gumnut babies booklets and 'countless Christmas calendars' before Christmas. Accompanying *The Bulletin* article was a

vibrant photograph of May decked out in gumnut memorabilia she had created – and making it quite clear, thanks to *The Bulletin*, that she preferred her work to idle chatter.

In December 1916, once *Gumnut Babies* was in the shops it sold out immediately, and when *Gum Blossom Babies* followed, even though it was more expensive, it too sold out. By 1920, 65,000 of these two books had been sold. In the meantime May had also published three more exquisite flower baby books – *Boronia Babies, Flannel Flowers and other Bush Babies,* and *Wattle Babies*.

With *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, published after the armistice, May Gibbs became a household name throughout Australia. Her most famous book, it has never been out of print. Its editions vary greatly in quality but the 2007 one is particularly good – as are first editions!

In 1919, in Perth, May married the cultured James Ossoli Kelly, a mining engineer who was far from wealthy. In theory he was to be her manager but in reality she fought the battles. On the strength of her earnings, in 1925 she had Nutcote built on a block sloping down to Sydney harbour, in her much loved Neutral Bay. Architect B.J. Waterhouse interpreted her needs brilliantly and in that house she wrote many more books and hundreds of comic strips for which she was paid half as much as Bancks was for Ginger Meggs – because she was a woman.

May's proud, artistic and cultured parents visited Nutcote several times – staying conveniently next door in what was then a boarding house called Wallaringa Mansions. While they were there, May's father Herbert Gibbs painted numerous watercolours of May's Neutral Bay environs. I have given one of Kurraba Point to the National Gallery, which holds only three of Herbert's paintings and none by May.

I couldn't resist buying this May Gibbs painting because it is a precursor to May's ideas for *Gum Blossom Babies*.

In her published book of that name May uses the idea behind her painting of gum blossom babies listening to a cicada giving a recital. Her take on the finished scene in sepia is that only two gumnut babies are present and listening, whereas in the painting there are four. 'Lovers of Music' is her clever title for the finished page in her book.

Unfortunately the provenance for the painting has proved elusive, except to note that it did not remain with the original paintings and pen and wash works, for the book. Twenty-five years later, in 1940, it was in the hands of piano restorer and tuner Lucien Parent, a Dutchman based in Adelaide and esteemed in his field. After he died, I bought it from Oxford Antiques - in Adelaide.

May was always generous in giving her works to friends and relations and I can't help wondering whether she gave the painting to the man who tuned her piano.

May's generosity was also reflected in her will. When she died in 1969 at the age of 92 she bequeathed her priceless copyright and artworks to two children's charities which support children with disabilities – Northcott Society and Cerebral Alliance. Curtis Brown, the literary agency which first managed May's gift of copyright and artworks, viewed it (and I quote) as its 'real money spinner'.

May left her much loved Nutcote and its contents to UNICEF, to benefit the children of the world. Sadly UNICEF's charter meant that it could not hold property and so all was auctioned by Peter du Plessis' at what has been described as his most prominent 'celebrity auction'.

Nutcote remained in a time warp until the 1980s and it gives me enormous pleasure to know that it was never bulldozed and replaced with town houses but has now been saved, thanks to North Sydney Council. That Council bought it for the nation in response to a long and difficult Australia wide battle, between 1987 and 1991. This battle was initiated by Marian Shand, the daughter of one of May's very significant first cousins from Harvey, her medical husband Neil who shared May's love of boating, and heritage architect John Wood and his wife Helen, a May Gibbs enthusiast who was particularly appreciative of May's art and the inspirational love she had for her garden.

Nutcote is managed by the Nutcote Trust, and it is lovely to see former Trust member and publisher Margaret Hamilton here tonight.

Digressing for a moment, as we are in Canberra, the new home for this painting, I thought you might enjoy a thumbnail sketch of May's trip to Canberra in the early 1930s, at the wheel of her Dodge, the car which she always referred to as The Dodgem. Sitting beside her was her husband, who didn't drive, and in the back seat was their housekeeper Nell Conran, plus three Scotties remembered by Nell as dashing from side to side with excitement - for themselves but not for her. Nell admitted in an interview that May was not a good driver - one reason for this being that she was always on the lookout for flowers to sketch. The trio, along with May's Scotty trio, stayed at what they called 'The Grand Hotel'– a couple of Government run tin shanties where the only cooking facility was a camp fire!

It is a great pleasure to give this painting to the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature, steered by its inspirational director, Emeritus Professor Belle Aldeman, AM. Assisted by a dedicated band of volunteers, Belle has initiated much that makes the Centre the success that it is.

Thank goodness for May. I hope the painting gives as much pleasure to the National Centre as May Gibbs' work has given me.

Mamie – A celebration of May's life for modern children

By Tania McCartney

Tania McCartney delivering this speech at our *Still touching hearts: an evening with May Gibbs* event in Canberra in 2017 at ALIA House

I'm almost certain that most of you are here tonight because you grew up with, and fell in love with, May's stories. And perhaps many of you tumbled down this magical May Gibbs rabbit hole as a child. That was me. I still have my hard cover books from childhood—this version of *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie Find Ragged Blossom* is from 1977 and has loose, yellowing, well-thumbed pages, and the ubiquitous name, address and phone number neatly written inside the front cover.

So, I was very young when I fell in love with May, and the irony is that these books did not feature her original works. The Young Australia series actually featured reproductions of May's work by artists such as Noela Young and Dan Russell. As a child I, knew no better, but nevertheless fell in love with May's creations.

Like most kids today, I knew nothing of the woman behind the artwork and the stories. Kids don't often relate to authors and illustrators as real life people with relationships, trials and successes. They don't often understand that the stories of real life people are quite extraordinary—and that fact is so oftentimes even stranger, more exciting and interesting than fiction.

This is why biographical picture books for young people have become so popular, particular in the last five to ten years. They tell tales of extraordinary people like May, yet there is a clear lack of biographical picture books on Australian women. The US has a more balanced representation of the genders, but in Australia, bio books on men far outweigh women.

This is an issue in terms of bias, of course, most especially as boys continue their reluctance to pick up a book featuring girls or women, and even preferring books written by men over women (with creators like JK Rowling and L Pichon famously encouraged by publishers to ditch their first names in order to appeal to their overwhelmingly male audience).

But of equal issue here is the fact that both boys and girls are being robbed of the chance to learn more about some incredible Australian women, who have led rich, adventurous, remarkable lives that will absolutely inspire and uplift both boy and girl readers.

I feel impassioned with addressing this gender imbalance by writing books about glorious Australian women, most particularly May Gibbs, but also such luminaries as Florence Broadhurst, Stella Miles Franklin, Nancy Bird Walton and Ellis Rowan.

When it comes to May, I have already discovered that it's difficult to write about an artistic icon, both in terms of illustration copyright issues and also the tight hold her copyright holders have on her legacy. In essence, May has become a 'brand', and while it is absolutely important to protect her works, it's equally important to have the chance to share her life and legacy with new generations of children.

For the third book in my This is… series with the National Library of Australia (*This is Captain Cook* and *This is Banjo Paterson* are the first two titles—you will notice, both about men), I had hoped to write about May. I tirelessly researched her life, almost drowning in researcher's bliss in the pages of Jane Brummitt's and Robert Holden's superb book May Gibbs: More than a fairy Tale.

During the research process, I felt an even greater connection with May and her life, relating to her in so many ways. I even discovered that we worked in the very same building in Sydney—and these little coincidences are what fuelled me on my journey, as though May was looking down on high, sending encouragement when things got tough.

Books published by the National Library require the use of Collection images in their addendum pages. Sadly, the NLA does not hold copyright of much imagery on May, and the cost of using works or photos became prohibitive and too hard. This is May Gibbs did not go ahead. I cried for a week and resigned myself to the fact that a book may never come to be.

Tania with her prize of the stunning May Gibbs' quilt

Then the quilt happened.

In celebration of 100 Years of May Gibbs in 2016, the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature ran

a raffle to raise funds—and the prize was a beautiful quilt using May Gibbs-branded fabric. Of all the people who entered, from all over Australia, me and my tiny little ticket won. It was an astonishing sign.

At an event at the National Library a short time later, I was chatting to NCACL director Belle Alderman about my desire to write about May, and how perhaps the quilt was my sign from above. Belle told me of Jane Brummitt and I confessed I had just read her book. So, Belle put us in touch.

A long phone call and endless emails later, Jane has shared with me a deep love, passion and knowledge of a woman who lies at the heart of both our creative culture and what it means to be Australian—in relation to the land, the arts, mateship and, of course, irreverence. I'm so grateful for all that Jane has shared with me, because without her support, knowledge and encouragement, I would not have had the courage to pursue this picture book on May.

Mamie (this is the name May's family called her all her life) is not a typical biographical picture book. It does not outline May's life in an expected, episodic way, but is rather a simple narrative aimed at early childhood readers. This age group is a priceless time to infuse a love of real life people and story in kids.

Mamie is simply about a little girl. We meet her as a baby who grows up with song, dance, nature and the smell of oil paint in the air. The opening talks of her friends—the traditional pixies, elves and fairies of England—and then follows her family as they tip the world upside down and migrate to the bottom of the planet. To a place of gumtrees and billabongs and a hot sun in endless skies.

But where are the fairies?

The simple narrative follows Mamie's quest for bush fairies and features subtle reference to May's real life—from the gate post featuring the year of her birth, the mention of Blob (her cartooning pseudonym) and Scotty dogs, to illustrating, writing and stapling picture books together, and of course dreaming of the baby with a gum nut on its head (which inspired May's real life gum nut babies).

As of tonight, I have illustrated a third of the book using vibrant watercolour imagery, and it has truly been one of my greatest creative joys to date.

Mamie is as yet uncontracted but has interest from an Australian publisher (addendum: it is now contracted to HarperCollins Publishers Australia). I want it to be a simple, classic narrative that references May's life and pays homage to her as a woman and full blown creative, not just the mother of an iconic brand.

©Tania McCartney, December 2018, from *Mamie* by Tania McCartney. Published by HarperCollins Publishers Australia.

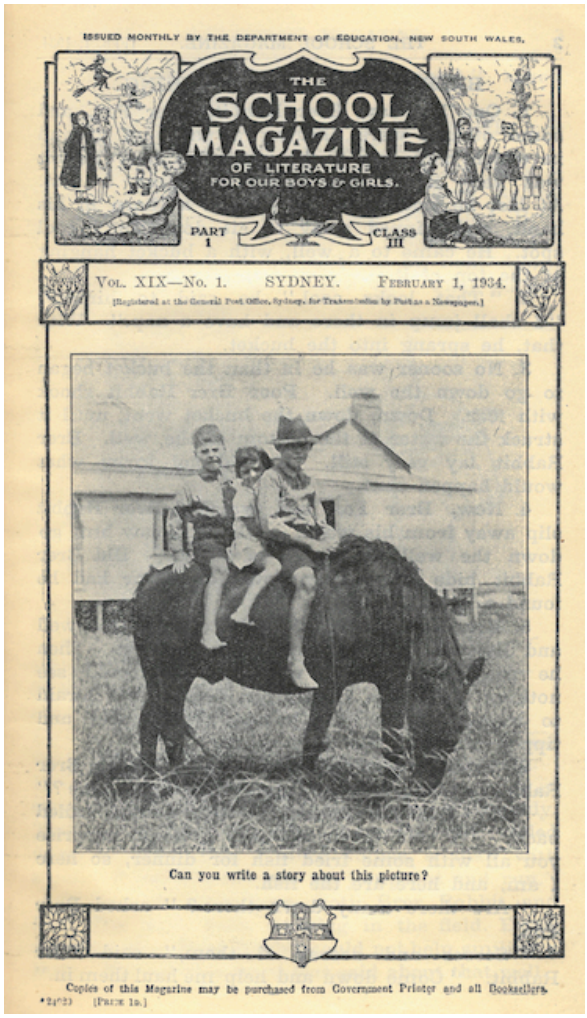
May was a strong, vibrant, witty, multi-talented, progressive, artistic, nature-loving, innovative, generous, funny, intelligent, travelled and social woman, with her head in flights of fancy and her feet firmly rooted on river banks with the red gums.

She was and still is a powerful role model for girls, and I can only hope Mamie becomes a book that inspires our children as much as May has inspired me to work hard, do what I love, and to daily take dreams in hand.

With multiple coincidences indicating May is watching from above, I am hopeful Mamie can in any way celebrate the woman she was, and the joy and magic she continues to gift to children everywhere.

“So there you are, you see”: Remembering Doris Chadwick

By Diana Brown



On the cover of the February 1934 edition of *The School Magazine* is a photograph of three children astride a bare-backed pony (pictured), who like any sensible equine has grabbed the opportunity to graze the long grass. The boys are wearing shorts and long-sleeved shirts; the smiling little girl wedged between them appears to be in a dress. The older boy is holding the reins, and on his head is a stockman’s hat that is too large for him. Barefoot and skinny-legged, they look like siblings. The caption reads, “Can you write a story about this picture?”.

The little girl is my mother, and the two boys are my uncles. The photo was in fact taken in the first summer of the Great Depression, when my mother was five years old. The pony was on permanent loan from the neighbouring farm. Poor old Tim had been retired from pulling Ma Green’s sulky because of his advanced age and swollen, damaged knees. (My grandparents did not actually buy a horse until 1939, when Jack, the boy in his father’s old hat, joined the Australian Light Horse.) I can scarcely recognise the farmhouse in the background, for the garden and fence are absent. The family had only recently moved from the Richmond River to a dairy farm on the Clarence. The house came along too; it was dismantled plank by weatherboard plank and then reconstructed on the site of a demolished ancestral cottage. In case you’re wondering, the boys made it through the war relatively unharmed and became farmers, one on the Richmond and one on the Clarence. My mother, unusually for the times, made it to university.

She and her brothers found themselves on the cover of *The School Magazine of Literature for Our Boys and Girls*, as it was then called, because their maternal aunt, Doris Chadwick, was the

magazine's editor. Indeed, it was she who took the photograph. Her tenure, from 1922 until her retirement at the end of 1959, was nearly three times as long as that of the next most abiding editor, Jonathan Shaw. Not surprisingly, she is something of a white-gloved legend in children's literature circles, as I discovered when I attended a small event in Canberra to honour the centenary of the magazine for primary school children that was first published by the NSW Department of Education in February 1916, and remains the longest-running children's magazine in the world. In the delightfully nostalgic anthology *For Keeps: A treasury of stories, poems and plays celebrating 100 years of The School Magazine*, the February 1934 cover is reproduced in miniature on page 4. As the little girl on the pony is now ninety-two, it seemed like a good time to ask for her memories of Auntie Doris, to whom she was always close. Like the rest of us, my mother laments that she did not listen more attentively in her youth, but it seems to me that she listened and remembered better than most people. Some vagueness about dates is of course inevitable after so long.

One of her earliest and most vivid memories of Auntie Doris belongs to the time of the photograph, probably January, 1930. On her way back from a holiday in Fiji and Far North Queensland, Doris turned up at the farm with a pile of fresh coral from the Great Barrier Reef. It must have been the early days of Reef tourism. My mother remembers the smell of the coral being boiled on the stove and the clean, white result, which in her innocence she treasured. How shocking it is to us now, the heedlessness of those populate-or-perish days. What's more, people rode on the backs of the magnificent turtles as they returned to the sea after laying their eggs. Doris took photos of that too. If she were alive today, I don't doubt that she would be as appalled as we are by the plight of the Reef and the oceans' burden of plastic that is killing turtles and other marine life. I was quite little when she gave me my first lesson in the biological control of pests: the story of the prickly pear's invasion of Australia and its successful eradication by the larvae of the cactoblastis moth from South America. I remember my fascination with the word cactoblastis. Just because she was talking to a child was no reason not to use the correct genus name.

From Sydney, Doris would regularly send books to her two nephews and two nieces up on the Clarence. "Without her," says my mother, "our book knowledge would have been sadly lacking." Although my grandparents respected books and learning, and believed wholeheartedly in the education of women, there was barely enough money for necessities during the Depression, let alone for storybooks. The so-called library at Lawrence consisted almost entirely of cowboy stories, which my mother read out of desperation. Even winning prizes at high school was accompanied by a sense of letdown when she contemplated the limited selection of titles at the

Grafton newsagency. So it is thanks to a kind, book-loving aunt that my mother was not deprived in girlhood of one of her generation's defining imaginative experiences: the life of a spirited redhead, Anne Shirley, which begins with *Anne of Green Gables*. The dearth of books in those days brings home not just the importance of *The School Magazine* but its necessity. My childhood in the sixties was blessed with books – Australian, British, North American; but when the magazine was handed out in class, I still felt a shiver of excitement. Imagine what *The School Magazine* must have meant to rural children growing up in homes with few if any books and attending one-room schoolhouses far from libraries: the smell and feel of the paper, the enchantment of poems and illustrations and stories, the joy of possessing one's very own copy. Doris understood that. She wanted every child, not just the privileged, to be enriched by good writing. She believed, naively perhaps, in the civilising powers of literature. After my mother left home in 1941 to attend Sydney University, my grandmother lent the precious Anne books to local girls and encouraged them to read.

I have no memory of my grandmother, ss oldest sister, but Doris and the middle sister Muriel were important figures in my childhood. Maiden aunts, they were called back then; the Great War created a disproportionate number of them. Not that there were no offers or so-near-yet-so-far moments in the marriage market. Muriel, who was a nurse on the home front during that war and by all accounts quite beautiful, broke at least one soldier's heart. She would have married the young man had she not been told by doctors that she had a heart murmur and therefore would not live long. In an act of self-abnegation that is almost unimaginable nowadays, she turned him down because she believed it would be wrong to accept him. As it happened, she outlived her baby sister Doris, with whom she had lived most of her life, and died at the age of eighty-nine. After Doris turned sixty and retired from the Department of Education – she was born on September 25th, 1899 – the aunts, as we always called them, set off on the ship for England. Their fourteen pieces of luggage would have included Doris's Royal typewriter and the manuscript for the third book in her series of historical novels for children, *John and Nanbaree*. It was the first trip to Britain for both of them, although their father was English-born. My mother says Doris knew more English history than anyone she has ever known, here or in Britain. My great-aunt must have been in historian's heaven as she roamed far and wide by bus and train. But she was also adventurous and perennially curious about the world, and so she leapt at the chance to join a group tour to the Soviet Union in July 1962. As was her habit, she took notes on the trip and later typed up a detailed account, single-spaced and carbon-copied, with some amusing anecdotes about her fellow travellers – "I always avoided sitting next to him, for his bulk offended me" – as well as her reflections on life behind the Iron Curtain.

Before my sister and I knew the aunts themselves, we would have been aware of their existence thanks to the dolls they sent us from their travels abroad. We adored those little emissaries, all of six inches high, in their alluring traditional costumes. On the sea voyage home from England, in April or May of 1963, Doris fell and broke her hip. My mother arranged for an ambulance to meet the ship and deliver the patient to Sutherland Hospital, which was the closest hospital to where we lived in Cronulla, on the southern seaside edge of Sydney. Doris complained that it was like being sent to Siberia, because it was too far for her city friends to visit. Nonetheless, once she had recovered, the aunts took a flat together in Cronulla. By their own admission they were not the hugging and kissing type, but they were affectionate towards us in their maiden aunt way. I remember the Marks and Spencer pinafores with pleated skirts and the red Jumping Jacks shoes that they had brought us from England. Doris knitted us cardigans, Muriel made us beautiful soft toys – yes, golliwogs – and they both turned up at school open days. In the holidays, while my mother worked as a librarian at CSIRO Fisheries and Oceanography, Doris would supervise us for a week. I remember her striding down the hill from the bus stop carrying her handbag and a stash of reading matter. Probably to get us out of the way so she could think in peace, she would supply us with money and send us up to the old-fashioned bakery at the local shops. She didn't seem to mind what we bought for lunch as long as we ate some protein and fruit. Meat pie and apple pie and the odd cream bun: our parents would never have allowed it! On several occasions over lunch she demonstrated the correct procedure for peeling and eating an apple at the captain's table. All I have retained is the oddity of the concept. Most of all, however, she liked to tell us about the early days of the colony of NSW, and she would round off each anecdote with "So there you are, you see". It was the white version of history, of course – settlement, not invasion – but she had real sympathy for Aboriginal people. She died without knowing about the Stolen Generations. As children, we would often talk among ourselves about 'the olden days', some mythical time before television, but when my sister and I had the chance to listen to someone who really knew Australian colonial history, we just wanted to go outside and play. Once we no longer needed minding, the aunts moved to a flat in Greenwich on the North Shore so they could be closer to the city, their friends and, importantly for Doris, the Mitchell collection at the State Library of NSW.

When I conjure the Auntie Doris of my childhood, I see an energetic, cheerful, upright woman with tightly permed greying hair. Quite a bit shorter than her sister Muriel, she is dressed in a skirt of fine grey wool and a twinset of cashmere or lambswool. Her stockinged calves are strong from so much walking, and with her hands behind her back, she is bouncing on the balls of her feet as she asks my father what he thinks about something the Menzies government or the Labor opposition has done recently. Having lived through the Depression and seen the crushing effects

of poverty, she remained a loyal Labor Party supporter all her life, to the dismay of the dairy-farming family up on the Clarence. She was also quite religious, although I don't suppose I had much sense of it at the time. She would have known better than to tell us Bible stories, more's the pity; I might have remembered those. She herself was brought up Presbyterian, but when she was teaching in the town of Young, on the southwestern slopes of NSW, she had a romance with an Anglican clergyman whom she hoped to marry. Among her papers is a photograph of the town's stone church. He chose someone else, but she frequented the Anglicans thereafter. I treasure her miniature Book of Common Prayer, inscribed 'Doris, 1/1/26' in her careful hand – not because I have a Christian faith, but because she had.

Disappointment in love, however, was but a passing affliction: something far more serious was happening to the young teacher. Doris was growing increasingly deaf, and the medical knowledge of the day could do nothing to keep her in the classroom. She left Young, and high school teaching altogether, at the end of 1921, when the Department of Education transferred her to the Bridge Street office in Sydney.

Doris Chadwick

After a stint at the Correspondence School, the twenty-two-year-old was appointed editor of the children's publication on which she would bestow her energy and devotion for the rest of her working life. While she was still at *The School Magazine*, probably in 1954, she put her name down for a new surgical procedure – fenestration – to correct her type of deafness. That was characteristically brave of her. It had been most successful on younger people, and no one really knew how long the results would last on the middle-aged, assuming the operation worked in the first place. Of course she wrote about the experience, but unfortunately the first five pages of her account are missing. She describes the lead-up to the surgery on her bad ear, the special nurse assigned to her afterwards (a "middle-aged spinster" like herself, and excellent at her job), the pudding of bandages over her right ear, and her recovery. Happily for Doris, the operation, which lasted three or four hours, proved worth the risk. Her hearing returned over a month until the trams sounded dreadfully loud. She wrote, "The noises continue.

As the ear heals they become more constant. It's a mad noisy world, and the old gentle silent one had its compensations."

During the Second World War, my mother would return to Sydney from her university vacations, which were largely taken up with farm labour, on the interminable afternoon-and-overnight mail train from Grafton. After dumping her suitcase at Women's College in Newtown, and without even changing out of her sooty clothes, she would hop on the tram and head straight to the aunts' place in Double Bay, laden with eggs and vegetables and a plucked chook that had been unsentimentally dispatched the previous morning. The aunts were living with their frail mother, who was born on the clipper *Flying Cloud*, in a small rented flat. (Doris never owned property, because for most of her life women were not permitted to borrow money in their own right.) The dash across town with the raw chook was the least my mother could do for her fond aunts. If she needed a dress for a college ball, Doris would whisk her up to David Jones and buy her something pretty. It was simply not acceptable that her niece should appear less well dressed than her university friends, even if she had less money. Doris also took her to concerts at the Town Hall, where they sat right up close to the orchestra to accommodate Doris's poor hearing. Neither of them, sadly, had had any formal musical education. Perhaps that explains all the music reading exercises on the back of the magazine during Doris's reign.

To collect her pocket money from her aunt, my mother had to report to the office in Bridge Street, where she would be entertained at a special tea club composed of "kindly old inspectors", all men. They probably weren't so old; it was just that my mother was very young. She remembers especially Doris's dear friend, the amiable and charming Hector Melville, who was quite a bit older than Doris, at least from my mother's unreliable perspective. On one of those visits Doris insisted that her niece accompany her to the Government Printer, several blocks away, where she was taking the magazine copy to be printed. My mother was impressed with the respectful way her aunt was treated. Miss Chadwick always walked the copy around herself and was a familiar face at the printer's. In the Department of Education she had a reputation as an imposing figure, and apparently some of the younger staff were quite intimidated by her. As a woman with some authority, she would have expected a certain deference. She worked hard, dressed impeccably, and insisted on accuracy in everything she wrote and edited. No doubt she demanded the same high standards of others. And woe betide anyone who did not treat the books in the staff library with due care! I wonder, though, if Doris's deafness might have made her seem more fearsome than she actually was. She never seemed so to me.

My favourite photograph of Doris was snapped by a street photographer in Sydney. Judging by the turbans on the women in the background, it's the early to mid 1940s. (How is it that such an

historically-minded person neglected to write the date on the back of the photograph?) Doris is wearing stockings, which doesn't necessarily mean the war is over; apparently she always had a supply of hosiery in those dark years. She and Hector are striding along a busy city street. Doris is svelte, elegantly dressed, gloveless, with her handbag tucked under one arm. Her hat sits at a jaunty angle, and she wears a spray of flowers on her left collarbone. Hector is wearing a three-piece suit and the obligatory gentleman's hat; he is carrying a folded newspaper. Doris is turning to him and smiling. They are of similar height and look like equals, in a yin and yang sense. What they certainly do not look like is a pair of adulterers sneaking out at lunchtime. Was there office gossip about their friendship? Who knows, but I doubt it. Hector would have been considered avuncular, and Miss Chadwick, in all likelihood, hors de combat – more hard-of-hearing dragon than femme fatale. The most curious thing about their friendship was that Doris would accompany Hector to rugby league matches. His wife, clearly a woman of taste, could not abide the game. Doris seemed to enjoy the experience – perhaps the players were less thuggish in those days – although her enthusiasm probably had more to do with her fondness for Hector and her appreciation of male company and conversation. She lived in a manless household, after all, and she had lost her big brother and beloved father before she entered adolescence. I suspect she found the domain of men fascinating.

It was mostly a boy's world that Doris explored when she combined her love of Australian history and interest in children's literature to create her historical novels for children: *John of the Sirius* (Nelson, 1955), *John of Sydney Cove* (Nelson, 1957) and *John and Nanbaree* (Nelson, 1962). The books were praised for their historical accuracy and the accomplished storytelling that brought the First Fleet and the colony of New South Wales to life. Here is the dedication to *John of the Sirius*, with its rather odd line breaks and capitalisation: "This book is my gift to / THE CHILDREN OF AUSTRALIA / to my friend / H.P. Melville / and to my sister / MURIEL." The second book is dedicated to Australian families, in particular to the family of her close friend, the novelist Kylie Tennant. When it came to research, the two women were as dogged as each other. Doris, who never in her life wore trousers, joined her friend on a camping trip with beekeepers in Queensland. Kylie was gathering material for her novel *The Honey Flow* (1956). Afterwards they both stayed at my grandparents' farm on the Clarence River, the place Doris thought of as her second home. The friends' correspondence of many years is now in the National Library. In the dedication to the final John book, Doris remembers the readers of *The School Magazine*, 1922 – 1960, and all who helped her edit and produce it, including the NSW Government Printer, V.C.N. Blight. She kept up friendships with quite a few of the wonderful writers and illustrators whose work appeared in the magazine. Indeed, when she retired, according to a *Sydney Morning*

Herald article entitled 'Nearly 40 Years an Editor', the contributors held a separate farewell party for her and presented her with a new desk. I wonder what became of it.

Doris left many traces of her adult and professional life, but the child Doris is harder to find. Only a letter from her ailing father and an autobiographical story, presumably unpublished, offer glimpses of the grief and disruption of her early years. In August 1912, when her thirteenth birthday was less than seven weeks away, her father died of tuberculosis, aged 47. By that time the riverside family home in Grafton had already been sold – later it would be demolished to make way for the bridge across the Clarence – and Doris had been shunted around among relatives and others while her father sought recovery in a sanatorium in Dalby, Queensland. For a few years before his illness, Sheldon Western Chadwick had been the editor of *The Clarence and Richmond Examiner*; alongside a young Dr Earle Page, he had championed the interests of the river communities. Had he lived, the family story goes, Sheldon Western would have entered politics. (Fortunately 'the Doc' had similar plans. In my mother's family Earle Page was revered almost as much as S. W. himself.) Doris never spoke to my mother about how she bore her father's absence and untimely death and the hardships that ensued. One didn't complain, and one didn't discuss feelings. The autobiographical story, 'Red Shoes with the Flaxen Hair: A River Tells her Story', is narrated by a proxy, the Clarence River itself. There are happy scenes of Doris / Red Shoes' childhood in Grafton – shrimping in the river with her father, zooming around with arms spread like wings because Blériot had flown the Channel – but they do not last. Sorrow comes with the death of Sailor Brother and the bringing home of his body from New Zealand, and yet more sorrow when the Bearded One falls ill and eventually dies. With her adored father lying dead in Grafton Hospital, Red Shoes sobs bitterly as she waits in the cab for Big Sister (my grandmother, a 'pupil teacher') to arrive by boat from Lawrence – "and the cabbie leaning from his seat and trying to comfort her through his peep-hole". Big Sister's life was also affected by the death of their father: she delayed her marriage to the Farmer (my grandfather) so she could help her little sister through high school and university. "Like Jacob for Rachel he had waited full seven years."

The letter from her father that Doris kept all her life bears as its date and place only "Sunday / Dalby". It is written on fine onionskin paper and signed "Your loving father / S. W. Chadwick". His name is underlined with a confident flourish, as if he were still a person of influence in the world, not the seriously ill man confined to a sanatorium who must have known that he would never live with his family again. The punctuation is his.

Dear Doris,

> *I was pleased to get your letters and learn that you were well. Just fancy Elsie [my grandmother] riding a pony. It seems as if her dream has come true. When you were a very little girl you went to the circus and saw a little pony that you admired. "Some day, I said, I will buy you a pony like that." Perhaps you may get a pony after all. Just wait till I get well and see what good times we are going to have. […]*

Doris may well have remembered that letter when she photographed her niece and nephews on old Tim. Her riverine narrator tells us that Red Shoes has learned "the hardest lesson of all, that she had to take the grave with the gay". The pony surely stands for both.

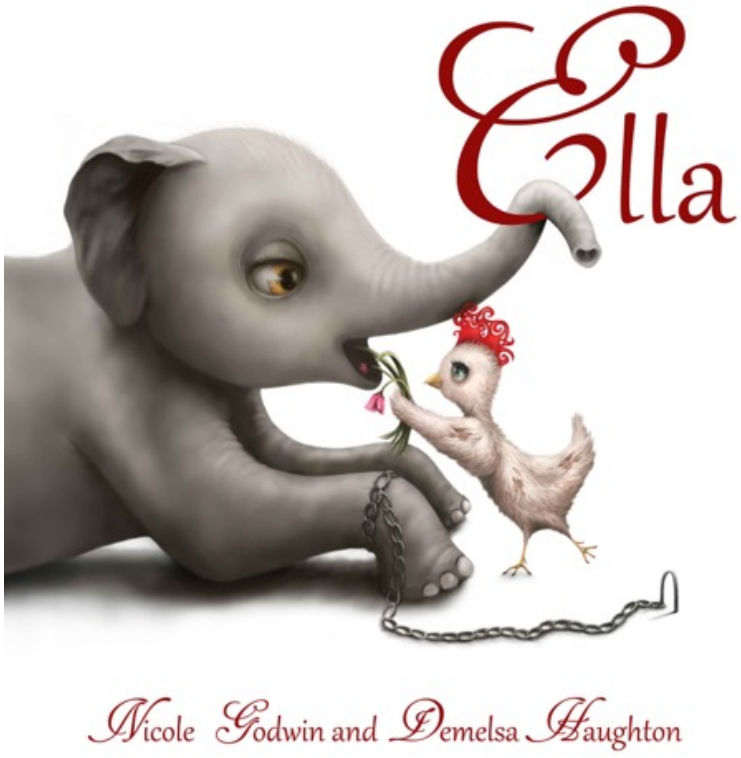
Now that I have reached the age at which Doris retired from her long career with *The School Magazine*, I take comfort from the busy, productive life she led in her sixties and beyond. One of the projects she pursued at the Mitchell Library was family history, which included the painstaking investigation of an ancestry that was not hers – a labour of love if ever there was one. It was she who discovered that on my grandfather's side (the Farmer who married Big Sister) we had a couple of convicts. Doris was working on an index to the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* when she suffered the stroke that put paid to her independent life in the Greenwich flat. My mother managed to find a nursing home in the Sutherland Shire, Siberia again, that would take the two aunts. To separate them would have been unthinkable. Following Doris's wishes, one, or perhaps both, of her nephews – they are gone now, those boys on the pony – scattered her ashes over her father's grave in Grafton. In a letter about the Chadwicks to one of my cousins, Doris wrote, "Yes, Libby, my father was an English gentleman in the best sense of the word, not a snob, a great liberal, and a great humanitarian." Those were the values she embraced in her life and work. She was, as my mother likes to say, someone.

With thanks to Joan Brown, née Clark, for her memories.

The world of self-publishing

By Nicole Godwin

Self-publishing can be an incredibly rewarding and exciting experience, but don't be mistaken, it's a hard and time consuming slog with many ups and downs. If you are looking for a fast track to high sales and global notoriety, then self-publishing may not be for you.



I self-published the picture book *Ella* in 2016 and am due to launch my next self-published book, *Billie*, in July 2018. *Ella* was launched with much excitement and a huge crowd at the Canberra Writers Festival. *Ella* is now sold in many bookstores throughout Australia, online, at markets and festivals, and in elephant sanctuaries in Thailand.

What is self-publishing?

Self-publishers manage all aspects of book production and distribution. This typically includes writing, illustrating, editing, graphic design, typesetting, printing, promotion, website development and management, publicity, registering for Public Lending Right and Educational Lending Right, setting up an International Standard Book Number (ISBN), marketing, social media management, and of course distribution. You can outsource some of these elements, but you are the one in control.

Why self-publish?

My main reason for self-publishing was to have full creative control over the book. I had a very specific message I wanted to impart through my storytelling.

I did not self-publish with the express view of making a fortune, although I did aim to cover all expenses at a minimum. My main motivator was to create a book that resonated with children. I wanted them to fall in love and empathise with the character *Ella* as much as I had in the creation

process. As Hugh Howey, author of the novel *Wool*, says, “Remember that it’s okay to write and publish just to make yourself happy, to make yourself fulfilled.”

What costs can you expect?

The biggest costs for self-publishers are printing, illustrations (unless you are also an illustrator) and postage. Don’t forget the dreaded postage for online orders. Keeping it under the magic 500 grams (including packaging), will significantly reduce your postage costs. You may also have to pay for website related costs (domain names, hosting, email addresses), editing, graphic design, typesetting, an International Standard Book Number (ISBN), packaging, public liability insurance (to sell at markets and visits schools), promotional products, market stall costs and merchandise. They all add up!

Three top tips

1. Have high standards - I cannot stress how important it is that you set your standards high so that your book is on par with traditionally published books. I have picked up self-published picture books before and I know in an instant that it is not a professional product. The story may not hit the mark or suit the audience, the text may be too long or include errors, the illustrations may not be up to standard or they may not work well with the text, the layout and typesetting may let the book down, or the printing may be second rate. To ensure your book doesn’t have these issues you may need to seek outside assistance such as getting a manuscript assessment, using the services of an editor, or engaging a graphic designer or typesetter.
2. Expect failures - With such a big undertaking there will be frustrations and mistakes. You can scream and throw things, but then you need to channel just a little bit of Dalai Lama-like calmness and keep moving forward. If you expect challenges, they become learning opportunities. If you get into a spin with every hurdle, you will never end up with boxes of books being delivered to your door. As the ever-wise Yoda said, “Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny, consume you it will.”
3. Don’t underestimate distribution - After the emotional high of finally having your picture book in your hands, you have to make sure it also reaches the hands of children. There are companies you can engage to assist with distribution, and local booksellers are very supportive, but it is a challenge to set up a distribution network that leads to a continued volume of sales. Expect to play an active role in continuing to keep your book visible and available for sale.

You can read more about my picture books at www.tuskbooks.com. If you would like to learn more about my self-publishing journey including more detailed insights into crowdfunding, printing, editing, the book launch and so much more, please email nicole@tuskbooks.com for a free copy of the eBook '*Bringing Ella to life*'. The eBook will be available for free for readers of the Behind the Imagined newsletter until the end of May 2018. It usually retails for $9.99.

Nicole Godwin

Donations to the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature Inc are tax deductible

Since the early 1990s, the Centre (formerly the Lu Rees Archives) has been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as a deductible gift recipient under Subdivision 30-BA of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, item in Subdivision 30-B, 12.1.2 public library.

Under this program, the Archives has received the papers, manuscripts and artwork of many leading Australian authors, illustrators and publishers.

Enquiries about this program should be directed to:

Dr Belle Alderman AM
Emeritus Professor of Children's Literature
Director
National Centre for Australian Children's Literature Inc

The Library
University of Canberra ACT 2601

email: belle.alderman@canberra.edu.au
phone: 02 6201 2062

A guide to donating to the Centre under the Cultural Gifts Program is available on our website at http://www.canberra.edu.au/national-centre-for-australian-childrens-literature/donations/cultural-gifts.

Endorsement as a deductible gift recipient means the Centre is also eligible to receive monetary donations. Printable and online donation forms can be accessed by the above link.