

L a g o o n

Lagoon

—— Anna Lanyon Carmel Wallace ——

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Lagoon

This suite of etchings explores the natural and social history of Fawthrop Lagoon, an ancient intertidal lagoon that lies at the heart of Portland on the far south-west coast of Victoria, Australia. The work records and interprets essential moments in the life of the lagoon, the plants, birds, insects, water-creatures and humans who have lived and continue to live around its shores.

GALLERY
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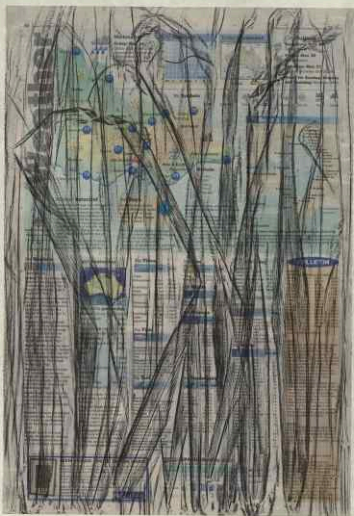
Glenelg Hopkins

CMA

Regional Arts  Victoria

Portland. No in Oregon or in Maine but at the other, the farthest end of the earth: World's End, at five and six miles, facing south toward Antarctica. Portland. Named for an English male who never knew this distant shore had another name before his friends came. "Lay-hallett" as some people had called it for the lagoon that lay at its heart. "Lay-hallett": place of long guests, sacred place of visits. A visitor of four years had made the lagoon, had carried her from the world, had spread her wings

low across the mudflats, had been her still shimmering, he near the moon and to the lay for a thousand and one night, while the ancient stars shone above her, and the storming clouds, and the thunderous seas roared, over her. She listened & waited for the pelicans and they came like galleons in full and glorious sail. But not alone. They came with other birds, of sea and sea and fresh water birds of prey and wading birds, with egret, spoon-bill, ibis, heron, sandpiper, curlew and gull-like, in five banners the shining popple, mint and sea urchin, paperbark, beside the sleeping monkey flower, the mighty headed gill-worm, the swilling lizard, the pretty Moss. As last



one day the woman came, as elegant as the ibis, as willow as the royal spoonbill. She came through the woods they covered by her water-side, their infants on their backs, and she heard them call her "pretty" (Bianca) and - in gathering - "carrot carrot" (blackberry water) as they dipped their heads in her hair. She felt the pull of their hair as they braided through her tresses and, their night. She saw their faces peering in her southern steps beneath the drooping oaks and the blackwood, where they bring and bring they would return to her on other days, one other night, to drive from her and fish in her, to be her people, the people of her place. They came to her the night the eastern mountain roared with fire. She saw them pass beside the crimson bay and trouble at its margin, heard them calling the volcano by name as they slipped it to be forever. "Pygmy", they called it. "Pygmy", though it was the fiery center buried for them deep and night, breathing to her with its power, breathing into the sea, until the long and extinguished light, the residence of the gods she saw man, woman, men and children, parables and even, asleep at last.

amongst the mudflats, had been her like a winged bird, the sea and the sea, reaching her with her hand, her in a thousand night and one, while the moon shone on her gathering waters and the wind rose and howled through the paperbark and the dark forest the night with her cries. Then, sleeping with the fire light of dawn, leaving the lagoon, to her pelicans and ibis, egret and spoon-bill, the golden sea, the royal, shimmering light to give like a queen, she left to night, her own house right to left, in their house for last. And then the woman came, the more and children, as elegant as the ibis, as willow as the royal spoonbill, as elegant as the spoon-bill, and they the lagoon, their heads, the dance of sea and hand, down and up, down and up, from the lagoon's water, water in their left legs, down and up, and as night fell, they walked in the southern steps, to the drooping oaks, to light their feet - a moment's light, a moment's place of rest.

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Edward R. Rieu

Portland. Not in Oregon or in Maine but at the end of the earth,

World's End, El Fin del Mundo, gazing south toward Antarctica.

Portland: for an English duke who never knew this distant shore
had another name before his vassals came. Ley-hollot its people

called it, because a lagoon lay at its heart. Ley-hollot: place of

long grass, sacred place of reeds. A ribbon of fresh water made
the lagoon, carried her from the west, opened her like a silver fan

across the mudflats, lay her still and shimmering beneath the

moon, and so she lay for a thousand nights while the ancient
stars shone down on her and the storming clouds and

thunderous skies moved over her. She listened and waited until

the pelicans came like galleons in full sail, not alone, but with
other birds of salt and sea and fresh water, birds of prey and

wading birds: the egret, spoonbill, ibis, heron, sandpiper, swan

and pardalote, to fish beneath the shining peppermint and
scented paperbark, beside the creeping monkey-flower, the

brightly beaded glass-wort, the woolly tea-tree and prickly

Moses. Then women came, as elegant as ibis, silent as the royal spoonbill, and stepping through the reeds they crouched by her waterside, and she heard them call her pretty place and carrap

carrap,, abundant water, as they dipped their hands into her. She

felt their nets trawl through her shallows and saw their fires on her southern slope, beneath the drooping she-oaks and the

blackwood, heard them singing and knew they would be with her

on other days and other nights, would drink from her and fish in the drooping she-oaks and the blackwood, her, would be her people: the people of heron place. They came

to her the night the eastern mountain roared with fire. She saw

them gaze toward the crimson sky and tremble, heard them implore the mountain to be quiet. But Potypim defied them with its thunder, hurled rocks into the sea, until its fury was

extinguished, until, in the obsidian grey of dawn she saw them:

women, men and children, pardalote and swan, asleep at last.

A ribbon of fresh water made the lagoon, carried her from the west, opened her silver wings across the floodplain, led her like a serpent toward the she-oaks and the sea, coiled her in a sinuous dance. And so she lay for a thousand nights and one, while the moon shone down on her. The wind sobbed through the paperbarks, and the owl pierced the night with her cries then disappeared with the first light of dawn, leaving her, the lagoon, to the pelicans and ibis, the egret and spoonbill, the yellow and the royal, sweeping like pendulums, from left to right, from right to left. The women came, the men and children, elegant as ibis, hungry as the spoonbill, and began their own rhythmic dance with arms and hands, down and up, down and up, from the lagoon's clear water to their lips until, as night fell they withdrew to the southern slope, to the drooping she-oak, to light their fires and murmur thanks to Ley-hollot, place of reeds.

[illegible][illegible]

moving from Lake Superior to the Connecticut River. He was also a planter of corn, but his corn was not as good as the corn that he raised in the Connecticut River. He was also a planter of corn, but his corn was not as good as the corn that he raised in the Connecticut River. He was also a planter of corn, but his corn was not as good as the corn that he raised in the Connecticut River.

[illegible]

A quiet man has come to walk beside me. Is he Begelhole or Beagalhole? Beaugalhall or Beauglehole? His name is Beauglehole, descendant of a sturdy Lowlands man of stone, one Petrus Begelhole, who never dreamed that a boy of his blood would be born one day in Terra Australis Incognita, this ancient, silent land. But born he was, to my west, amid apple trees and milk cows, to a mother who watched the flight of the Great Cape Barren Goose and a father who recorded, in sadness, the passing of the last Black-Tailed Wallaby. It was 1920. They called their son Alexander Clifford and gave him Leach's Bird Book. He walked to school along the bridle-path observing roseate feathers, dove-grey plumage, a shattered robin's egg. He heard the Kurrawong sing and learned the names of the birds above his head, in the grass at his feet, and drinking from the flowering eucalypt. Alexander Clifford Beauglehole loved the Eastern Spinebill, the Silver-Eyed Honeyeater, the Yellow and the Flame Robin, and later, when he grew, he saw the jagged wire, the shattered glass, the shredded rubber and rusting metal that scarred my face and body. He saw the botanical enemies

invading me and, like Cassandra at the gates of Troy, he foresaw the devastation that would come. "I have traversed and surveyed thousands of areas of public land," he wrote. "Unless

we obey the warnings we will lose hundreds, even thousands of trees and shrubs ... [they] will fall victim to Greater Birdweed, Ivy Groundsel, Gorse and other vicious intruders which can smother and kill, as they have in the past." He had better luck than Cassandra. "Make a list," the lagoon-lovers begged him.

"Tell us what to do." He made a list, or two, or three. (He had been doing it all his life, since those walks along the bridle-path that led to the village school.) Beware the Mirror-Bush, he said, or it will destroy the Bulrushes; remove the Basket-Willow or it will annihilate the Water-Ribbon. Do not let the Greater Bird-Weed and the Cape Wattle advance any further, or the Ivy Groundsel penetrate the reeds. Willows do not feed the birds, he warned. Indeed there is not a bird's nest to be seen among the willows. "But note," he said, "the lovely nests in the taller Blackwood, Acacia melanoxylon." I listened with a grateful heart and gave him thanks. (Yes, a lagoon can hear and has a

heart-beat). How did I thank him? With the ebb and flow of tidal water across my glistening mud-banks, with the pendulum sweep of the Royal Spoonbill in my shallows.

Mr. Beaglehole prepared a list of the plantings that belong with me, the birds and insects that inhabit me. "It was a difficult task," he said, "but I have tried to select the trees and shrubs indigenous to the lagoon . . . Acacia Melanoxylon, Drooping She-Oak, and Silver Banksia, and Sweet Bursaria, Prickly Caprosma, Manna Gum and Swamp Gum, Shining Peppermint and Tree Everlasting, Prickly Tea-Tree, Lance Beard Heath, Coast Beard Heath, Scented Paperbark, Twiggy Daisy Bush (Olearia Ramulosa) and the Common Boobialla." Mr. Beaglehole signed his list on 12th November 1989 – his gift of life to me, for which I never will forget him: Mr. Beaglehole, child of a Renaissance man of stone from the Lowlands, via Cornwall, to Terra Australis Incognita, Unknown Southern Land.

"I was born in Sydney," a young man wrote. "I was captain of a boat, and we landed where the creek from the lagoon enters the sea." Other sealers came and went, but this young man, who was only seventeen, he stayed. "I built a house," he recorded. He lived in it and then he left, in a floating house with billowing sails. I waited. "I again came to Portland Bay in March 1831," he later wrote. "I landed again at the same place, and returned to my house and lived in it for over twelve months." He took a wife, not from among the people of heron place who fished in my waters and lit their flickering fires on my southern shores. No, he brought her from a distant island in the south, or so I heard them say. They didn't know her tongue and she did not know theirs, and so she lived in silence speaking only to the young man, in a language they invented day by day. He had no grandiloquent plans. He lived to fish and hunt for seals and smoke a pipe at his cottage door, but she longed for her island and I knew she called in sorrowful tones to it. Time passed, time passed, and new men came rowing through my shallows. They cut their stone and mixed their mortar and built a place for gunpowder on my northern slope. Magazine Hill, they

called it. So Portland could have been like Delft that morning in

October 1654 when the gates of hell were opened by a lantern spark. Or like Halifax in Nova Scotia centuries later. But

Magazine Hill survived. Napoleon did not come to conquer, nor Augusta Emerita with his regiments, nor the Kaiser, nor the Tsar of All the Russias - only Englishmen in leather boots in floating

houses. They had plans for me, these arrivistas. They built a wall to capture me, but I festered in the sun until they set me free.

They did not try again; the memory of the great sickness, and those who died of it, remained with them. So I lay in peace once

more while the heron and the ibis, the pelican and royal spoonbill - only stalked my shallows until one day another bird appeared. I heard

it coming from beyond the sea, heard it cry as it hovered above

me like no bird I had seen. I saw it stretch its wings and lower its claws, as if to grasp a baby swan or water rat. But this curious

eagle landed and from its belly appeared a man and then a woman, to the sound of many hands clapping. Or was that the

beating wings of swans? My tranquillity was never assured for there were always men with plans for me. Like this in 1954: Dear

again; the memory of the great sickness, and those who died of it, remained with them. So I

Sir, it is desired to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 25th ultimo... The Fawthrop Park Reserve being temporarily reserved by the Governor in Council on 7th December 1891 as a site for public purposes, an excision therefrom can be made."

They say he brought her from a distant island south, or from beyond the volcano in the west, or its sister in the east. I never knew her homeland, but one day she vanished.

Another visitor came: a man of the sea with boots of leather, a quiet man, marooned on the southern hill above me, beneath the drooping she-oak, where the fires used to flicker. From his walls of stone he looked down on my obsidian water, looked to the eastern sky for a flag, a flare, a beam of light, to tell him it was time. When the signal came he descended my slope. I heard the clatter of his pony's hooves on the jetty he built among my reeds.

(Later I would share his name, as if I were his daughter, or his wife: Miss Fawthrop, Mrs. Fawthrop, Lady Fawthrop I presume?)

Each day he cast away his moorings and sailed along my flanks. I waited for his return, for the sound of wood on water and knew that he was back among the trees.

lying flat, spruce like a silver fan beneath the "crescent moon," I heard them come, heard them first, then saw them. Forty men, walking silently, heads bowed, their hair in braids, their clothes tattered, limping to reach the garden. Banned! Gated between them, 30K-wrapped soldiers swinging, rights and consciences upers as they glanced into my depths. What had they told the magistrates? That they had come from Canada, across the sea, from Texas? That the heavenly Embassy, wherever the dominion of the Emperor be, As Chin told their story. And about the Village of Gilman, how about the good ship "Independence"?

And, the Captains who had been by them, saying that as much as they could be welcome, it was nothing so easy for them, for that they would have taken their whole lives to save what is in Ballenas; they would find their much in gold, as just one day. The Captains did tell them they would sell a thousand mules to find those fields of gold, as were them of the reasonable wishing to arrest them. And so, forthwith, because they came lying around any shores, among the 1615 and the coast and the royal speech, the

permeated the presence on their way to dig the soil, prepared the garden bed. Behind the kindly gaze of Mr. Allen they had other defenders. The editor for example, of the Boston Guardian, and Westminster Correspondent, they took the case of Mr. Lee thing goes wrong, for the editor cited Mr. Lee as an interpreter at Fryer's Court and his land he is known to cultivate the following plants, viz - Sugar cane, the Chinese orange, tea, bananas & several kinds of fruit as well as flowers." We can find personal experience in the gold fields, hear testimony to the industry and peaceful character of the Chinese, and if you are higher ground than your comrades, we could have even our protest against the injustice of that law which aspires to subject them - the Chinese - to a capital slave tax. The capital tax is a relic of that barbarism in legislation suitable for Algeria or Turkey alone.

Zonitoides per. Goldf.

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the Celestials," I heard them say. The Celestials say: Poor man, born angels, on their cotton tunics and broken slippers, bearing abundant gifts from their distant celestial throne — gifts of knowledge, a fine art of cultivation. The gifts of fortune & salvation — but really, for the blessed few, dross, dross, and edges — rather, their burning feet in my water from their presence in the gardens, in their shovels and their axes, their gythys and their and gentle feet. All full of promise, a promise sent by the Celestials sent by Heaven to earth, from this land.

Spread like a silver fan beneath the Paschal moon I heard them come, then saw them. Forty silent men, bowed heads, braided hair, slippers torn, they limped toward the gardens, bamboo poles between them, silk-wrapped bundles swinging, sonorous sighs and whispers as they glanced into my shallows. What did they tell the magistrate? They said that they had come from China across the sea, from Tian Chao, the Heavenly Dynasty, beneath the dominion of the Emperor. Mr. Ah Chee told their story. He explained about the voyage to Guichen Bay, about the good ship Independence and its captain who had lied to them, saying that at Guichen Bay they would be welcome and would pay no entry fee, that ten pound tax that would have taken them a lifetime to save whereas in Ballarat, he promised them, they would find that much in gold in just one day. The captain didn't tell them they would have to walk a thousand miles to find those golden fields. He didn't warn them that the constable would be

waiting to arrest them and so, forlorn and footsore they come

limping around my shores, among the ibis and the egret and the royal spoonbill, a procession of pigtailed prisoners on their way to dig the soil, to prepare the garden beds, beneath the gaze of

the curator, Mr. Allitt, who admired their courage and tenacity.

He was not their sole defender. The editor of the Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser protested at the

injustice done to them: "Talk of barbarous legislation and the dark ages!!" he thundered. "Take the case of Mr. Lee Hing Jae Jung ... an interpreter at Fryer's Creek ... on his land he is soon

to cultivate the following plants, viz: sugar cane, the Chinese orange, tea, bananas and several kinds of fruit as well as the flowers... We can from personal experience on the goldfields

bear testimony to the industry and peaceful character of the

Chinese, and if upon no higher grounds than that of commerce we would here enter our protest against the injustice of that law

which at presents subjects them – the Chinese – to a capitation

tax ... a relic of that barbarism in legislation suitable for Algiers or Turkey alone.” The Celestials, I heard them called: wingless angels in cotton

tunics and torn slippers, bearing gifts from their remote shore, gifts of knowledge, fortitude and stoicism. They came with

bleeding toes to bathe their burning feet in my cool waters; then walked on toward the gardens, to their shovels and their hoes, their scythes and sickles, and Mr. Allitt full of praise for these

Celestials sent from heaven.

Tidal water, salt marsh, freshwater swamp and birds that feed on airborne insects; Australian Pelican, Great Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Little Egret, Sacred Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Black Swan, Cape Barren Goose, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Musk Duck, Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swamphen, Masked Lapwing, Red-Capped Plover, Black-Fronted Plover, Common Sandpiper, Silver Gull, Sharp-Tailed Sandpiper, Whiskered Tern, Crested Tern, Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo, Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Fork-Tailed Swift, Laughing Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Crested Shrike-Tit, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Satin Flycatcher, Restless Flycatcher, Willie Wagtail, Little Grassbird, Clamorous Reed-Warbler, Spotted Pardalote. Did I survive? I did, and they with me. They flourished in my tidal waters, fed on my airborne insects. What was it we survived? Surrender, divestment, revocation and excision of what had once been given for posterity. "Whereas by proclamation ... dated the eleventh day of December One thousand eight hundred and ninety-one, land in the then Borough of Portland was set aside for use as a site for public purposes also excepted from

occupation for residence or business under any miner's right or business licence, the description of the land being as follows: seventy-three acres commencing in the north-west angle of Allotment 1 of Section 1A, bounded thence by that allotment bearing southerly and easterly to the south-east angle thereof; thence by Percy Street southerly and by Hood Street easterly to the north-west angle of Section 44; thence by that section south-easterly and easterly to Bentinck Street; thence by that street and the road to Cape Nelson southerly to the north-east angle ... thence by that allotment and allotments 57, 58 and 62 westerly and north-westerly to the north angle of the last-mentioned allotment; thence by a line bearing N.45 degrees east to Glenelg Street; and thence by that street easterly to point of commencement." The dimensions were mine. The excision was made, the revocation, the divestment and surrender of my southern shores. Now a rattling iron creature comes on summer nights, bringing wheat from the northern plains and coloured boxes from across the sea: red for Hamburg Sud, green for China Shipping (from the port of Lianyungang), Maersk-Sealand from Denmark, orange for Harpag-Lloyd, blue for P&O, a lighter green for Linea Mexicana and Columbus Line. Far from their homelands, yet at rest beside my reedbeds. I've seen the Purple-

Crowned Lorikeet on Linea Mexicana, the pelican on Columbus Line. I've watched the corellas feed on fallen wheat while the black swans applaud with their wings. The iron girders gleam on moonlit nights and from Harpag-Lloyd the barn-owl hunts her prey. I have learned to live with the creature and her orange men who walk and ride along my flank, who move the coloured boxes beneath the watch of the Pacific Gull, the Caspian Tern, the Long-Billed Corella, the Singing Honeyeater, the Straw-Necked Ibis, the Little Raven, the Pied Currawong, the Curlew Sandpiper, the Whistling Kite, the Grey Fantail, the Purple Swamp-Hen, the Magpie Lark, the Little Grassbird, the Spotted Pardalote, the Olive Whistler, the Eastern Yellow Robin, the Masked Wood-Swallow, the Eastern Curlew, the Pied Oystercatcher, the White-Breasted Sea-Eagle, the Azure Kingfisher, the Little Black Cormorant, the Royal Spoonbill, the Brown Falcon, the Australian Kestrel, the Tree Martin, the Fairy Martin, the Jacky Winter, the Satin Flycatcher, the White-Eared Honeyeater, the Eastern Spinebill, the Little Grassbird, the Silvereye, the Great and Little Egrets. They come and go as I do, with the tidal waters' ebb and flow, with the coloured boxes from across the sea, with Maersk-Sealand, with Harpag Lloyd, P&O, China Shipping, with Columbus Line and Linea Mexicana.

[illegible]

Price, among the 12, thanked the audience for its support. In the tradition he built a wooden stage, decorated with flowers, and gave a performance of his famous "Crying in the Chapel" in a 19th-century style. For his music, his words and message, he became the first person to perform on the stage with his electric guitar and a keyboard. Price, who had been in the music business for 10 years, said he was proud to be the first person to perform in the "Crying in the Chapel" style. He said he was proud to be the first person to perform in the "Crying in the Chapel" style. He said he was proud to be the first person to perform in the "Crying in the Chapel" style.



He longed for his family. He wrote his mother, "I wish you were with me, with the dog, the chicken, your father." He wrote his father, "I wish you were with me, with the dog, the chicken, your father." He wrote his mother, "I wish you were with me, with the dog, the chicken, your father." He wrote his father, "I wish you were with me, with the dog, the chicken, your father."

The captain came from Plymouth [plimuth], in Devon, on Plymouth Sound, at the confluence of the Tamar and the Plym, from where Drake set out to meet the Armada, from where the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for the Americas. He was born in the time of Nelson and Napoleon, of midshipmen called Horatio, to parents who had come from Scotland to the river-mouth, who called him James and raised him in the cobbled lanes of old Plymouth. He saw mermaids glide along the wharves, heard timbers straining, and the shouts of men and knew his path lay out across the ocean. He grew and took command of ships of sorrowing convict exiles until one day in 1840, when he was thirty-six, he set sail for Portland Bay. He made a clearing in the trees above my southern shore, built a house for his wife and children and looked every inch a harbour-master with sturdy face and resolute eyes beneath his tight-curved hair. Twice a day an oarsman came for him, and every day he entered in his journal the names of ships that came and went in Portland Bay. In 1858 when he was fifty-four, a new life-boat was brought to him: of double-planked New Zealand Kauri, with an iron keel, copper-fastened with roves, demountable mast carrying loose-footed and gaff-headed mainsail with jib headsail. Its dimensions: 9.15 m length, a beam of 2.46, draught loaded 0.43. Displacement loaded 4 tonnes: redoubtable, reliable, unforgettable, because

of the calamity to come. It happened the following year, on a Friday, in darkness, two hundred miles from where the Captain slept. An immigrant ship named for the towns between which she plied, sailed innocently toward a reef that lay in wait for her. The dance of death began with a crash of stone through timber, with a shudder of broken hull, with men, women and children torn from each other's arms by heaving waves in the darkness before dawn. The Captain slumbered on. He knew nothing until Monday, when word came that a ship had foundered on Cape Northumberland, that only Portland's lifeboat could save the survivors. The Captain stepped into his dinghy, the oarsman pulled, they slid through my quiet shallows, past the swans and pelicans, along Salt Creek to where the men and women and children of Portland stood waiting, feverish yet silent, thinking of those other men and women clinging with their children to the broken hull off Cape Northumberland. The waiting people pushed the lifeboat through the waves, watched their husbands, sons and brothers disappear toward the west, and then returned to their homes to wait and pray. The Captain told them later what he found when the lifeboat reached Cape Northumberland: human figures in distress, desperate to be saved but weak, too weak, from hunger, thirst and terror. The Captain took the lifeboat close, a crewman fired a rocket with a rescue line, but

the drowning victims could not grasp it. The seas rose up, darkness fell, the lifeboat withdrew. "At daylight," the Captain said, "we stood in for the wreck, anchoring the lifeboat about the same spot as the previous day, and veering about our line quickly we were soon near the wreck - threw a line over them, which was fortunately received - and we were only a few minutes in rescuing into the lifeboat the living remnant of nineteen human beings . . . Having received our precious charge we soon cast off from the wreck and one exultant cry rose from every creature in the boat; it was a tumult of joy."

When the Captain set out that terrible night William Rosevear and Abbot Carey went with him. So did Charles Patterson, Phillip Francis, James Kean, John Frederick Johnstone, James Dimond, Thomas Ward, Hugh McDonald, Thomas Tweedle, William Kerkin, John Dusting, William Booth and William Guy. Together they rescued twenty-three men and one solitary woman, who later told her story to her children and her grandchildren. But the Captain, he returned to his cottage on my southern hill, to his wife, his son and daughter, and lived on until, at seventy-four, he died, this man from Plymouth, whose name I bear.

[illegible]

I've heard a thousand voices from my watery bed. I heard the ibis-women murmur to Tommy-Come-Last who saw the ocean for the first time, and the Major declare that at Portland Bay "the anchorage is so good that a vessel is said to have rode out a gale, even from that quarter ... and a fine stream of fresh water falls into the bay there ...". I heard that Mr. Blair required a man to watch a blind bullock on Mt. Clay, and that one October night a ship from Portugal vanished to my east. "And did you hear that Mr. Blair has found in favour of a Roman Catholic herdsman? Or that three of our gentleman councillors have suggested mixed bathing be permitted at the public baths!" The voices come and go around my shallows, the voices and the birdsong, the sound of clapping swans' wings, of trumpets, pipes and trombones the day the Great War ended. The voices called me Swamp, and Mallons' Swamp, although the Vagabond objected: "The lagoon," he wrote in 1884, "which the inhabitants of Portland foolishly call the swamp, "... is a fine sheet of water into which flow many streams from the surrounding hills." Later Mr. Idriess came to tell me I was "lovely by sea and land." As did a certain Mr. Bonwick: "The swamp is no bed of fetid mud exhaling malaria," he wrote, "but a fine sheet of water fed by springs from the hills." He also observed that twelve years earlier Rev. T. Y. Wilson had "found the swamp in rather a swampy condition",

but then, in what other condition could a swamp be found? There was worse to come throughout the hundred years that followed. My mudbanks and my reedbeds filled with jagged metal, broken glass and shredded rubber, with wire that rips through skin and feather, but all the time I listened to the footsteps and the voices. "They say she rode from Melbourne," I heard the voices say. "On horseback! She sat in the front street and — you will scarcely believe it — but she rolled a cigarette and smoked it, in broad daylight, for all to see!" "And he, I'm told, is quite taken with her." The femme fatale, she of the horse and cigarette, joined the restoration committee. Mrs. Edgar too, Mr. Trewavis, Mr. Woolcock, Mr. Beauglehole, Mrs Stringer, Mr. McGuinness, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Sharrock, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Jessop and Mr. Patterson in the chair. The chairman lamented the many plans drawn up for me in the past, "some of them horrifying and some unusual." In May the planting began on Magazine Hill, and in May the following year of 1984 the Governor General came to honour Mr. Beauglehole. Oh, the voices that day when the ribbon was cut! I heard the clapping of wings, the swish of the spoonbill, the laughter and whispers. "He was like, you going to the FREEZA on Friday? And I was like Wow! (But tried not to show it.)" "And what did he say?" "He gave me this ring ... and wrote on the path that he loves me, so it must be for real." Now

here comes the mad woman of Magazine Hill, the woman with the dog. In the grey light of dawn she admires my obsidian water and my sea-green containers and thinks she is in Mexico, or Chile. She hears the poet of Isla Negra: "Some other time, man or woman, traveller; later when I am no longer alive, look here, look for me between stone and ocean ... look here, look for me, for here I will return, without a word, without voice ... here I will be lost and found: here I will, perhaps, be stone and silence."

The voices come and go, and a man who was once a boy on Magazine Hill recalls the sounds of birds rising from my shallows on summer evenings. He would go outside, he writes, and look out across my "silver patch of water". He would hear "plovers calling over on the flat by the creek ... the rustling of moon-silvered reeds ... the sweetness of the breath of sleeping trees ... the softness of the summer night ... " "It must have been a very lovely place for the original citizens," he thinks, "before the white man came." And so we go on, beneath the drifting clouds, the shattered stars, the cavernous skies, while the peppermint shines, the she-oak droops, the paperbark exudes her fragrance, while the black wallaby hides among the southern trees, while the pelicans sail like galleons, and the royal spoonbill, the ibis, the egret and the black swan fish my waters.

