

OUR ISLAND HOME

Magnetic Island, Great Barrier Reef WHA Area, Australia



Plate 10: Memorial plaque, Picnic Bay jetty, Magnetic Island



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*Oh Magnetic Island in your sea of blue
How can I explain the love I have for you?
The peace and tranquillity for all in your care
That those on the mainland never share.*

*The beauty of your wildlife scattered around
Those lovely walks and beaches which abound
When I die my body may be far away
But on you, my heart will stay.*
(Barnes 1997, viii)

The previous two chapters have introduced a community living within a relatively small and contained World Heritage listed place. Avebury was added to the World heritage list on the basis of its cultural heritage values. Magnetic Island as a study location differs on two points: first, the residents of the island are but one of many residential communities associated with the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area; second, the World Heritage listing of the Reef arises from its natural values. In common with Avebury, however, the community of the island is immersed in a broader heritage landscape that has been claimed by both national and international communities. The Great Barrier Reef is one of Australia's most lauded, loved and marketed icons – and the extent, diversity and beauty of its coral reefs has been recognised in its acknowledgment as one of the wonders of the natural world.

The discussion in this and the following chapter reinforces the understandings of attachment, identity and place found at Avebury, but more specifically grounds this in the relationship between people and the natural environment. It shows how attachments to nature are predicated on experiences, practices and engagements with the environment, in which community and place are mutually constitutive. Individuals, as members of the island community (which is characterised by various unbounded community groups), engage in a quest for identity and authenticity,

investigating the relationship 'between the practice of identity as a process and the constitution of meaningful worlds' (Friedman 1992: 837). In the process, the past is selectively constructed and organised in a relationship of continuity with the lived experience of the natural environment and the nostalgic recreation and reinforcement of community.

Overview: Magnetic Island and the Great Barrier Reef

Covering approximately 350,000 square kilometres, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area is the world's largest and most complex expanse of living coral reefs. The borders of the Marine Park and World Heritage Area are slightly different, but the latter in its entirety is encompassed within the existing park boundaries. The Great Barrier Reef is the largest World Heritage listed property. It stretches for more than 2000 kilometres along the continental shelf of north-eastern Australia. The management challenges of the Great Barrier Reef have historically been directed by the protection of its scientific, natural values. They have been compounded by the range of major uses along its length, including commercial fishing, recreational boating, large ship movements, and around 1.5 million visitors annually. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) has been described as 'a bold experiment in economically sustainable management which allows for a multiple use area' (Lloyd 1999: 103). The management of the GBRMP is predicated on this policy of 'multiple use'. The balancing of these various uses causes the greatest conflict and occupies much of the available management resources of the Commonwealth statutory agency responsible for the reef, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) (see Lawrence et al. 2002).

These management complexities are further entangled with the interests of thousands of residents living either along the neighbouring coastline, or on one of the numerous islands dispersed throughout the waters of the reef (720,000 in 2001, ABS 2001). Many of these residents are enmeshed in management interests through their occupations or leisure pastimes; that is, as 'users' and 'stakeholders' in the Reef. Many others have a less 'resource extractive' and more organic relationship with the reef environment, creating places simply through 'being there'. However, the history

of management of the reef and its relationship with people has been principally concerned with understandings of reef-uses and physical impacts; the result is that even those studies that may have engaged with the deeper meanings that people attribute to their experiences of the reef environment have primarily investigated fishing and tourist experiences.

In contrast with many of the inhabited Reef islands, the Magnetic Island community is not critically composed of tourists or of those supporting tourism and its related activities (see Barr 1990 which contrasts the close association with tourist development in another part of the reef). It is a place where people choose to live, while in pursuit of the professional and recreational pursuits associated with Queensland coastal life. Magnetic Island lies 8 kilometres north of Townsville, Queensland's second largest settlement, across the waters of Cleveland Bay (see Figure 2). The island is a suburb of Townsville, administered under the local government jurisdiction of the City of Townsville. Many of the people who live on the island regularly commute to the mainland for work, school and other activities. A ferry service links the island and the mainland between around 6 am and midnight: there is no bridge between the mainland and the island, and as is discussed below, this is a feature of the island that many residents are determined to retain. However, bridge or no bridge, the island and its community is constituted in terms of a complex and inseparable relationship with the mainland, albeit often posited as one of opposition.

Magnetic Island has a resident population of around 2500 people. The island community is concentrated in four settlement areas: Picnic Bay, Nelly Bay, Arcadia (Alma and Geoffrey bays) and Horseshoe Bay (Figure 2). A number of other uninhabited bays, including Florence, Radical and Balding bays, are small, secluded, attractive places visited regularly by both locals and tourists. More than half the island area is included in the Magnetic Island National Park, which has a considerable influence on land use and development. The surrounding waters are contained within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and are subject to various use-zoning provisions (see Appendix 2).

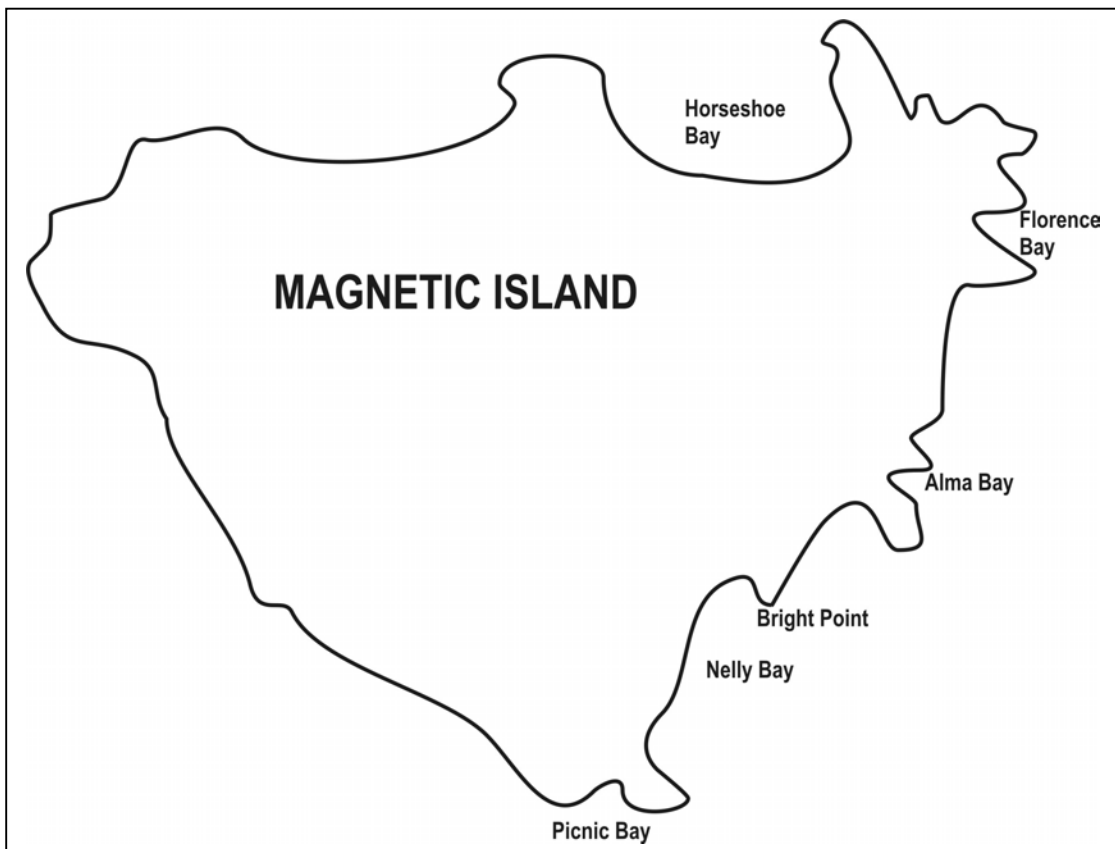
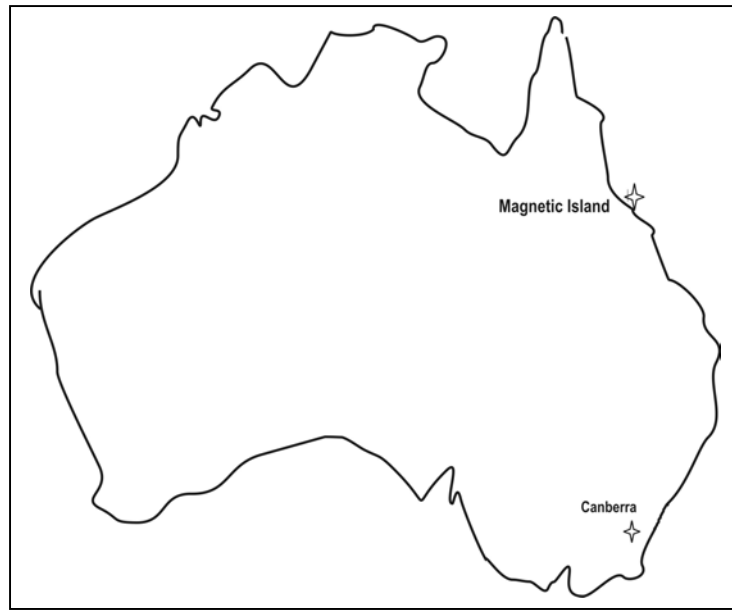


Figure 2: Location Map, Magnetic Island

The island has a land area of approximately 5200 hectares, bounded by some 40 kilometres of mostly rocky coastline. The small landmass consists of scrub-covered granitic hills, the highest peak being Mt Cook. The island is surrounded by a narrow coastal fringe, broken by the series of bays. Apart from restricting the land on which settlement can take place, the geology has added to the unique beauty of the island in the form of massed granite boulders (plates 11 & 12). The boulders, small beaches, palm trees and clumps of hoop pines on the foreshores create a visually beautiful landscape, enhanced by a distinctive and varied wildlife, and the presence of fringing coral reefs. As well as rare plant species, the island's natural attractions include a wide variety of bird life, koalas, possums and rock wallabies, and diverse marine species, one of the more notable being the dugong (see Porter 1983 for a broad discussion of the island's natural attributes).

The Great Barrier Reef was added to the World Heritage list in 1981. An overview of the World Heritage listing of the Great Barrier Reef and community management issues relevant to the World Heritage Area is included in Appendix 2, as is an outline of the various legislative instruments and management agencies that direct the identification and management of heritage on the island. As with other reef islands, although contained within the boundaries of the World Heritage Area, the heritage values of Magnetic Island are not contributory to the World Heritage listing. How the islanders variously engage with understandings of the World Heritage listing is of interest, however, and is discussed below.

Rowland overviews the prehistoric archaeology of the Great Barrier Reef region, noting that while the Queensland coast may have been inhabited for at least the last 40,000 years, the majority of the islands were not in existence until around 6000 years ago (1996: 193). Brayshaw (1990) has compiled the ethnohistorical evidence for Aboriginal occupation in the Herbert Burdekin district, which includes Magnetic Island, noting that one of the earliest sitings of Aboriginal people on nearby Palm Island was recorded by Cook and Banks during the 1770 voyage of the *Endeavour*. The Aboriginal people living around Townsville and on Magnetic Island appear to have spoken Wulguru (Brayshaw 1990: 34; also see Taylor 1989).

A number of sources provide historical background to the island's post-contact period (for example, see Magnetic Island History & Craft Centre. n.d.; Barnes 1997; Fraley & Fraley n.d.; Gibson-Wilde 1989; Jensen & Ralph Power and Assocs. 2002; Macqueen 1952; Porter 1983. For a comprehensive history of the Great Barrier Reef, see Bowen & Bowen 2002). It is thought that the first Europeans to sight the islands may have been the crew of a Portuguese ship in 1522 (Gibson-Wilde 1990), but it was not until Captain James Cook's 1770 voyage in the *Endeavour* along the east coast of Australia that the island was given a European name. Cook had noted that the ship's compass seemed to behave oddly in the vicinity of the island, so he called it 'Magnetical' Island.

The first record of a European landing on the island dates to 1860. In his search for a port to support the settlement of North Queensland, George Elphinstone Dalrymple and a party from the ship *Spitfire* landed on the island to effect repairs. Dalrymple noted that the island was

... high, rocky, and pine clad ... separated from the mainland by a narrow strait partly dry, exposing banks at low water. The formation of this island also is granitic, immense boulders of this rock lining the shores and being piled on the summits and strewn over the slopes of the hills in wild confusion. Lofty pines spring out of the crevices of the rocks, giving considerable beauty to the scenery. (in Gibson-Wilde 1990)

In 1864 a port was founded at Cleveland Bay: the settlement was to become known as Townsville. It was not long before the new residents set themselves to exploring the attractions of the nearby island. Non-indigenous use of the island was initially recreational, epitomised in the naming of the first settled island area as 'Picnic Bay'. Within a year of being settled, Townsville inhabitants began to cross the bay to the island for picnic excursions, and to clamber around the rocky outcrops on the shoreline, collecting plants, shell and coral. The abundant natural resources of the island – such as fish and timber – soon led to exploitation and the establishment of more permanent occupation by non-indigenous people.

The parcelling up of land and appropriation for use, whether recreational or resource driven, soon led to the dispossession of the original inhabitants. Although one small

Aboriginal group survived on the island into the 1890s, they were removed to the mainland by the turn of the century. It is only in the last 20 years that members of the Wulgurukaba, the Traditional Owners, have returned to live on the island.

In 1918, Magnetic Island was formally included within the boundaries of the City of Townsville, leading to it becoming the only Queensland island recognised as a city suburb (Gibson-Wilde 1990).

Although hire boats had been ferrying people to and from the island since the mid-1880s, what is today the Magnetic Island Ferry Service was established at the end of the century by Robert Hayles, whose family still plays a prominent role with island projects (Barnes 1997: 12; also see Hayles Magnetic Island Service n.d.). A permanent ferry service was important as it created an essential physical link between the island and the mainland. It also fostered the ongoing relationship between the island and members of the mainland community who could regularly and easily participate in Magnetic Island life without permanently residing on the island.

It wasn't until after World War II that it became possible to travel between the various bay settlements by road. Previously this could only be achieved by foot or by boat. One of the impetuses would have been the continuously growing island population. Cable electricity from the mainland was finally connected in 1960, a lack of infrastructure and facilities having been a characteristic of the island for the first half of the 20th century. For many, happy to be removed from the demands of the modernising world, this was one of the island's appeals.

The 'Unauthorised' Version: the Way 'Maggie' is the Way She is ...

By coincidence, my fieldwork with the Magnetic Island community overlapped the preparation and public release of a local government heritage study of the island (Jensen et al. 2002; see Appendix 2). As an 'authorised' statement of the island's cultural heritage, it conforms to the general approach taken in heritage studies, and provides valuable information on the history and architectural significance of the island's structures.

The study exemplifies the approach to heritage understandings critiqued in Chapter 2, where I suggest that existing practices attribute significance to the tangible attributes of places through exercises in technical judgements and conservation strategies. There is often minimal understanding of community values and meanings, and little interest in them when they are not attached to a feature of the built environment. The result is that although reports such as the Magnetic Island study state the intent to investigate 'social value', the end result is more consistently a list of structures: a process of cataloguing and classifying cultural heritage that has led 'to a kind of commoditised pre-packaging and "quality control" which permits of no deviation from a sanitised, politically and commercially acceptable standard' (J. Kapferer 1996: 77).⁷⁹ While such lists are valuable, they are indicative of neither the extent of places to which the community attaches meaning, nor of the nature of these attachments.⁸⁰ The 'social value' of such places is more closely reflected in expressions of lived experience and meanings that relate to the understanding of place within a larger environmental, landscape and community context, and it is this that I explore below.

Our Island Home

'Our Island Home' has become a colloquialism for the island, its genesis in the name of an early guest house in Nelly Bay. The house is listed on the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate, with the statement 'Our Island Home is a rare local survivor from the early period of Magnetic Island's history' (<http://www.ahc.gov.au/cgi-bin/register>). The irony is that the building no longer exists, having been destroyed in the development of Nelly Bay (discussed in the following chapter).

⁷⁹ Note also the comment by Johnston (1995: 389): 'A more serious defect is that the categories used in heritage studies do not reflect the way people perceive or value their environment. For example, at a recent local workshop ... on history and historic places, participants, in commenting on the special value that certain places had for them, did not distinguish between places of natural significance and those of cultural significance ... As practitioners we often impose on the community the frameworks that we have developed for our own convenience'.

⁸⁰ Out of 98 places, the Magnetic Island Heritage Study specifically attributes community attachment to only two: the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) Hall (Arcadia; Property No. 249270) and the Memorial Gardens (Nelly Bay; Property No. 241480).

An undated oral history held by the Magnetic Island History & Craft Centre⁸¹ records that 'there is evidence to suggest an element of escapism was part of the motivation of early (and current) residents', and that even today there is a protective mechanism in which the islanders jealously guard their past with a 'look but don't touch' defence, and an assertion that the island and the islanders have done and will continue to do things 'their own way'. Paraphrased in Australian vernacular, the message is one of: hands off ... we're all right mate ... we do things differently here.

Part of the escapism of island life was reflected in the delayed establishment of facilities and infrastructure, enhancing the ideological distance between the islanders and the 'real/modern world' and the identification with a pioneering and alternative mode of existence. The more pragmatic members of the island community insist that being a suburb of Townsville should accrue infrastructure benefits equivalent to (and no more expensive than) those on the mainland. This contradiction – the desire to be both removed and different from mainland Townsville, and the demand for equal residents' rights and all the benefits of a 'Townsvillian' – has been interpreted as one of the impetuses for the community's sometimes bipolar character, or 'the way "Maggie" is the way she is' (MI History & Craft Centre n.d.: 23). The attraction of island living is compelling, but even more so when it can be combined with the advantages of proximity and easy access to mainstream life: 'The island is only 5 miles from the city ... but it seems so much further away once you are there' (Townsville resident with holiday house on island).

The history of the island is characterised by a divergence of views between those desirous of a modern, forward-thinking and developed island, and those who wish to retain a more reclusive, pristine and development-free environment. Jessie Macqueen (1952: 16) encapsulates this dichotomy when she muses about the reaction from the island's long-deceased first European settler, Harry Butler:

⁸¹ The centre is made up of a small group of island and mainland residents with an interest in the island's history and in art and craft. They meet regularly, and among other activities stage various exhibitions.

It is well, Nell [Butler's daughter] and I think, that he is not here to witness the present bulldozer epidemic now laying bare the grand old forest land and uprooting gigantic trees, merely to build roads from bay to bay, so people may walk in city fashion, instead of hiking like those of old through perfectly delightful scenic tracks.

And

It must be borne in mind that the early visitors to, and residents of, the island did not want development. (There are many island residents who still do not want it). What they came here to do was to fish, relax get away from it all and soak up the island ambience. Let the people on the mainland immerse themselves in the mania of development, but leave the island alone. And there are those who will tell you that the island 'eventually claims you'. (MI History & Craft Centre n.d.: 11)

Within the array of Magnetic Island residents, in addition to the anti/pro-development polarity, there is at least one other distinguishing characteristic that in certain contexts will segregate residential groups: 'oldtimers' versus 'newcomers', where the latter can hope to gain acceptance as a 'real' islander after a period of some 10 years (depending, of course, on who you speak to). The comparison with old families and 'blow-ins' at Avebury is unavoidable; although it is perhaps a quirk of historical consciousness that allows in favour of Australian acceptability at 10 years, while it takes at least two generations to gain authenticity in the rural English village.

Since European occupation of the area in the 1860s, there has been a close and ongoing relationship between the people of Townsville and Magnetic Island. It is incomplete to talk about community attachments to the island without considering the nature of these attachments as experienced by regular island visitors who are otherwise residents of Townsville. The 1990 Townsville City Council Magnetic Island Management Plan records that the largest proportion of visitors to the island came from Townsville City, and that many of them have equally strong opinions about protecting the island from further development, and preserving the relaxed and peaceful atmosphere and lifestyle (Gutteridge et al. 1990: 78–80, Appendix 9). It is also relevant to note that before the implementation of a regular ferry service many of the island 'residents' were mainlanders who maintained houses on the island. They had the 'best of both worlds' with a modern weekday existence and the ability to

escape on weekends and holidays to the simpler, more relaxed island lifestyle. Consequently, in addition to people who currently live on the island, many 'Townsvillians' have strong attachments to the island: some have either previously lived on the island and/or regularly visit the island, whether for day excursions, because they maintain a residence there, or because they engage in an island associated activity – for example, fishing, swimming or surf life saving. Aboriginal communities living in Townsville have an ongoing connection through their relationships with the Traditional Owners of the island, the Wulgurkaba people, and an ancient and continuing association with the island and the surrounding waters.

The Way We Were and Always Will Be

Historically, the lifestyle of the islanders was 'conducted in a social environment more open, free and uncluttered' than the mainlanders' mode of existence, particularly when considered in the context of the conservatism of the post-Victorian era. Although larrikinism had been established as one element of the 'Australian character' during the first half of the 19th century (see J. Kapferer 1996), the more structured and conservative aspects of society were often difficult to escape – unless of course you moved elsewhere ... to an island for example.⁸² 'It is no wonder then, that Magnetic Island, so beckoningly close, would attract the freedom lovers of the nation, to begin yet another iteration of the development of the Australian ethic, as an escape from the trammels of conservative society' (MI History & Craft Centre: n.d.).

J. Kapferer (1996: 77, quoting Morris) suggests that Australians have lost the 'space of splendid isolation' which was available to them in the 1930s – 'a space which allowed the freedom to discover, interpret, create, rework and above all put to personal, everyday use a chaotic variety of meanings, understandings and knowledges of ways of being, traditions, heritage and cultures'. Many of those to whom I spoke identify that the island enshrines this sense of isolation and freedom to explore a way

⁸² J. Kapferer (1996: 51, 62) lists qualities that are considered to be quintessentially Australian as youth, audacity, loyalty, a care for the underdog, ingenuity, suspicion of authority, fatalism and a well-honed conception of social justice that is based on equality before the law. The symbolic 'type' of the larrikin represents an enduring Australian myth, particularly represented in characteristics associated with flouting authority and convention.

of life that has been lost in the modern urban experience – to simply live uncluttered by buildings, noise and people and to engage with the environment in a way that allows the experience of being part of it, not merely an observer. Environmental concerns are implicated in a sense of place, and its development on different scales. These concerns encompass a range of emotions that express oneness or connection with the environment, rather than the externality of the environment (see Frawley 1992: 220).

Members of the island community and regular visitors appear to seek and highly value a life that is simpler, safer and more community conscious than is represented by perceptions of living in other places in today's Australia.

We came over to the island in the early fifties ... we lived in Townsville and came here on holidays ... there was no mains power, no mains water; you lived with hurricane lamps and wood stoves ... sort of stepping back in time. (MI History & Craft Centre n.d.)

My family first came here for holidays as it was seen as an unspoiled area and the way Australia may have been some years ago ... the big attraction is it is not suburbia ... no glitz ... it's a family place and it just doesn't have the same sort of social problems as other places ... it's stuck in a time warp ... there's no need to comply with social norms and there is a wonderful community atmosphere. (island resident, runs a small business on the island)

My Mum talked about what it was like in London before World War II and I think the island is the same – a sense of village community ... there is an immediate friendliness. (island resident, works in Townsville)

I want the island to stay as it is, or maybe even like it was a few years ago ... there should never be anything on the island to destroy its beauty. (Retired Townsville resident with house on island)

For some on the island there is a sense of trying to regain a way of life that has been lost; for others there is a desire to allow their children to experience the same joys of childhood they themselves remember. Either way, there is a nostalgic imperative that seeks to link the present with past times and places, and that emphasises a relationship with and close proximity to the natural environment.

One Townsville resident in his late thirties describes his life-long association with the island. His grandfather settled in Townsville in the 1930s and took his family to Magnetic Island most weekends, finally retiring there. His father continued the pattern, allowing his children to spend most of their holidays on their island. Today, by taking his own children to the island (where he owns a holiday house), this Townsvillian is introducing a fourth generation of children to the island. His wife also used to visit the island as a child and they want their children to have the same experiences and advantages. By choice they would live on the island, but schools and work and the children's activities make this difficult. But he stresses that he wants his children to be able to do the same sorts of things he did as a child:

There was always plenty to do ...snorkelling, spearfishing or just swimming and if it's blowing a gale you could go surfing ... the kids love fishing and snorkelling, especially the reef near Picnic Bay and Geoffrey Bay ... the kids love going to these places ... also bushwalking. (see plate 11)

Casey (1993: 37) tells us: 'Nostalgia ... is not merely a matter of regret for lost times; it is also a pining for *lost places* ...' (emphasis in original). Chase and Shaw (1989: 1) more closely relate nostalgia to an imagined and conceptualised *sense* of the past, suggesting that the distinctly modern and metaphorical use of the word 'nostalgia' means that the home we may miss is no longer a geographically defined space but is a state of mind. It variously serves to connect the past to the present, often through generations of people. They argue that nostalgia will only exist in cultures that conceive of time as linear, as in other cultures this crucial distinction between past and present does not exist: the implication is that Western societies will be most prone to the 'syndrome of nostalgia', faced with a present that is in some way considered to be deficient. This desire to re-engage with a disconnected past can be contrasted to Aboriginal attachments to land and 'country' where the emphasis may be more intensely placed on retaining an ongoing connection. The role of the island, and more particularly its bush and maritime resources, in maintaining and re-asserting identity was recounted by one representative of the Wulgurkaba, a man in his forties who had lived on the island for a number of years, who stressed the relationship

... is all about culture ... using the bush to educate our kids, to reinforce their identity and allow them to be strong to survive ... it strengthens them on the right track and they need this even if it is the only thing they have.

Lowenthal (1989: 21) allows us to recognise that nostalgia is not alone in its distortions, as no *non*-nostalgic reading of the past exists that is by contrast 'honest' or authentically 'true': many other historical perspectives have the same 'presentist' bias as nostalgia. Nostalgia in his words is a 'social pariah' that 'tells it like it wasn't', where trends in art, social science, and environmental awareness have acted to reinforce nostalgia for supposed past simplicities. For the most part his concerns appear to be with 'the commercialisation of nostalgia (and concomitant unauthenticity); nostalgia's pervasion of the media; its reactionary slant which glosses over the past's iniquities and indignities' (1989: 29). J. Kapferer (1996: 80) refers to this gloss as the selectivity of collective memory, which allows a celebration of an existence that often can only 'be rendered "romantic" or charming through the safe distance of a later time, a welfare state, modern sanitation and technological progress'.

The past that many islanders seek to recreate on the island is no doubt one that is 'glossed-over' and eclectic in the values it recalls, particularly the relationship with the environment. However, the island as experienced today – for all its modern sanitation and trappings – is far from an attempt at what Lowenthal critiques as the commercial recreation of an unspoilt past, or a media perversion presented as 'heritage'. Unfortunately, such concerns may well become justified, not because of the attempt by the islanders to reclaim a desired 'sense' of the past, but rather in the face of a development-driven marketing program that emphasises the island's nostalgic, 'village-like', laid-back lifestyle values and community – the very attributes that are most threatened by commercial development.

The overwhelming nostalgic desire for things past 'can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery' (Hall 1990: 236). As has been discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the old families and long-term residents of Avebury seek reassurance through the attribution of significance to the more recent

past. Their sense of being and community is enmeshed in a relationship with place and landscape; however, while they share a commonality with Magnetic Islanders in valuing their place and community, it arises from an *emplaced* continuity with the past. Many of the islanders lack the historical longevity of place experience and memory that characterises the oldtimer Avebury villagers – most have moved to Magnetic Island as adults.⁸³ The linkage between the past and the future more closely suggests Hall's 'state of mind' and encompasses an 'alternative' lifestyle. For many this represents a now-gone, simpler and safer past – one that is predicated on a guardianship relationship with the environment that imbues 'Maggie' with meaning and gives rise to its many narratives and its sense of place. Many of the residents have consciously chosen a present, and a future, that have emerged from a remembered, remixed, reworked and re-imagined past with roots not only in other places, but in other people. Jean Paquet directs attention to

... a past which is never fixed, but which is continually being reworked, according to the problems we face, the means at our disposal and the needs of the present. To some extent, we can be seen to choose our past and so doing, we choose our future. (quoted in Blowen 2000: 88)

One of the freedoms sought within the island revolves around the issue of safety, security and honesty. Of the residents I spoke to, many highlight this as something they value about the island, with the implication of personal and family wellbeing and knowing that a house or car could be left unlocked and remain unthreatened by theft.⁸⁴ This is not restricted to recent opinion: 'In the 1950s [the island] was always considered a safe place for young people' (quoted in MI History & Craft Centre n.d.). Barnes (1997: x), an ex-policeman who moved to the island, also lauds the lack of crime: 'The crime rate on the island was about nil and idiots few (and they were soon exported) so I decided that I was mad to stay in Victoria with weather awful, crime rate shocking and no benefit to my health'.

⁸³ It is only in the last few decades that ferry services have been regular enough to allow commuter-living on the island. A similar period has seen the island become more attractive with the installation of 'livable' levels of infrastructure and services.

⁸⁴ Herzfeld (1991: 66) notes similar yearnings for safety and honesty in his work with a community in Crete: they would 'entertain images of a past in which people kept their word and could rely upon another, hospitality was always offered and never abused, craftsmen and customers enfolded their dealings within the social ties of mutual dependence' where the cornerstone of this kind of nostalgia is reciprocity and mutual respect.

J. Kapferer (1996: 4) notes in a summation of Australian attitudes that 'the vision and experience of community (however subverted by the mythopoeisis of nationalist passion and by the egocentricity of individualism itself) is a constant and cherished ideal'. The ideal of community is a valued component of the islanders' expression of place, identity and belonging, and one that is inextricably linked with nostalgic notions of the past that can legitimately be used to deepen old or construct new identities that challenge received ideas of history (Smith 1994: 6). The island is the place where many local people have lived (and continue to live) their lives – either in full or part, have passed on their knowledge of places (indigenous and non-indigenous), of fishing, boating, swimming, hunting, picnicking, collecting shells and food, and exploring the bush, beaches and reef flats. It is, therefore, a landscape that is inextricably bound into the lived experiences, identities and connections of both past and present individuals and communities.

In discussing why Magnetic Island is important, many ground their attachments in their 'place' within the broader community, and express a need to preserve the community and its cohesiveness as an important inheritance for their children. 'Sense of community' is inseparable from 'sense of place'.

We came here for the community ... the current community is diverse, daggy and dysfunctional ... we all know each other and of each other ... it is a *real* community ... there is a sense of a far away north Queensland community with space and place. (island resident, retired)

The community is great ... it is safe, you can leave your houses unlocked, everyone gets on ... they are forgiving and supportive, and you don't have to mix if you don't want to. (island resident, works in Townsville)

The things that people value are often familiar, special, and local. It is these things that form a basis for self and communal expression, and create a willingness for communities to tackle communal problems and sustain their communal wellbeing (Munjeri 2000: 43). 'People care because they associate the idea of community with people they know, with whom they have shared experiences, activities, places and/or histories' (Amit 2002: 16). The institutions and practices that are an integral part of such processes serve to develop and sustain community relationships, often

accommodating both local and global conditions of life and providing stable and significant foci of cultural identity.

'No Man is an Island', but maybe a Community is ...

A singularly important value expressed by both residents and visitors is that 'Maggie' is 'an island'. Living on an island and being 'an islander', is a significant factor in how people identify themselves and differentiate the island community from the 'everyday' people on the mainland. There are elements of romance, adventure and of escapism, of being removed from a mundane existence, directed by abstract rather than contingent needs and desires. For many, it is a conscious determination to become 'other', where otherness is created by defying the perceived norm. The island community is created through a combination of non-orthodoxy and physical displacement.

Community is never simply the recognition of cultural similarity or social contiguity but a categorical identity that is premised on various forms of exclusion and construction of otherness ... it is precisely through [such] processes that both collective and individual subjects are formed ... with respect to locality as well, at issue is not simply that one is located in a certain place but that the particular place is set apart from and opposed to other places. (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 13)

However, the way in which the community internally divides, creates and recreates itself also relies on a sense of sameness, although alliances are mutable and far from exclusive. Amit (2002: 16) argues that 'the relational character of community is as likely to be derived from the multiple attachments of its members as from contrasts with collectivities in which they are not members'. Communities 'organise and express only some of the attachments, activities and identities in which their participants are engaged'. None, therefore are 'terminal identities', such as those ascribed to ethnicity. On the island, groups variously form through fluid attachments and oppositions: artistic, political, pro/anti-development, 'green', oldtimers/newcomers, Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal, professional, retired.

The island has attracted a distinctive 'artistic' and alternative community (plate 12). However, the Magnetic Island community is diverse in terms of the range of impetuses that have acted on 'migrants' to the island. The island has been a haven to many who are idiosyncratically 'alternative' or eccentric, but it has also attracted those more commonly associated with mainstream lifestyles. Hence the population includes many professional people who commute to jobs in Townsville, and retirees. A Townsville resident notes that the Magnetic Island residents are 'certainly interesting', and that while not 'quite like Nimbin',⁸⁵ the island has a similarly philosophically constituted population. This suggests a prevailing attitude that is grounded in 'liberal individualism' (Henry 1999: 146, 173), which can be seen to create a tension between the concepts of society and of individualism and thereby create the sorts of social conflict that characterise the islanders' approaches to development and change.

Ban the Bridge ... but Save Our Jetty!

One Townsville resident in his 50s, who is a keen fisherman and politically active through various groups, thinks that the attraction of Townsville is inseparable from its association with an island, citing the opportunity to just 'hop into a yacht' and go for a sail to the island and back. An island resident of some 20 years described the sense of 'splendid isolation' and of being in a place that was bounded and contained: 'Part [of the attraction of coming here] was the physical place ... an island with boundaries – either you are in the place or not'.

The idea of separation and removal from the mainland is one of the more vigorously defended ideals of both island residents and mainland visitors. A bridge between the island and the mainland has been mooted over the years, the roots of its impetus being lost in the grey zone of urban mythology, although there are those who believe it remains an item on the local council agenda. In interviews, I introduced the possibility of a future bridge. The responses were almost universally defensive of retaining the physical disconnection between the island and mainland Townsville:

⁸⁵ Nimbin is a small alternative ('hippy') community in northern New South Wales.

Bridge? – no, bad idea. Then it wouldn't be an island, and wouldn't have that attraction of being separate and away from the mainland.

The attraction of the island is that it is remote but is so close to Townsville ... it is significant that you have to cross the water to get there ... I would hate to see a bridge constructed ... everyone on the island has to use the ferry and this creates a real sort of community closeness.

No bridge should ever be built – leave it the way it is as this is part of our heritage ... Maggie needs to remain separate ... Australia is just 'that other big island over there'.

A bridge would write off the islanders – they [we] would all want to leave.

There should absolutely be no bridge ... ever!

I suppose it would be good from a real estate point of view ... but it would *not* be good because it would make the island just another suburb of Townsville

Only one response favoured a bridge. This was a comment from a Townsville resident in her thirties, who with her partner owns a house in Nelly Bay but has moved to the mainland because of advantages for their children. They regularly visit the island as a family. She does not think she is alone in expressing a wish for a bridge, but that others are less likely to voice it: 'It would be great for commuting and being able to take the kids to activities ... and yes, this means the bridge might appeal much more readily to people with small children'. However, she expresses another common feeling, that the trip on the ferry is an important aspect of island living. It provides an opportunity to talk to people and feel a sense of community togetherness. Another island resident sums it up: 'The ferry is a fabulous social event ... a great way to chat to people.' Apart from the challenge to the conception of the island as a separate and contained place, a bridge would threaten one of the mechanisms that reinforces the 'communality' and cohesiveness of the island community. It would also remove a part of the experience that many of the people I spoke to mentioned as an emotionally charged moment in their relationship with the island, that of alighting from the ferry and walking along the Picnic Bay Jetty (Plate 1):

I came for a diving holiday in 1995 ... got off the ferry and walked up the jetty and thought 'hooley dooley' people actually can live like this'. (island resident, runs small business on island)

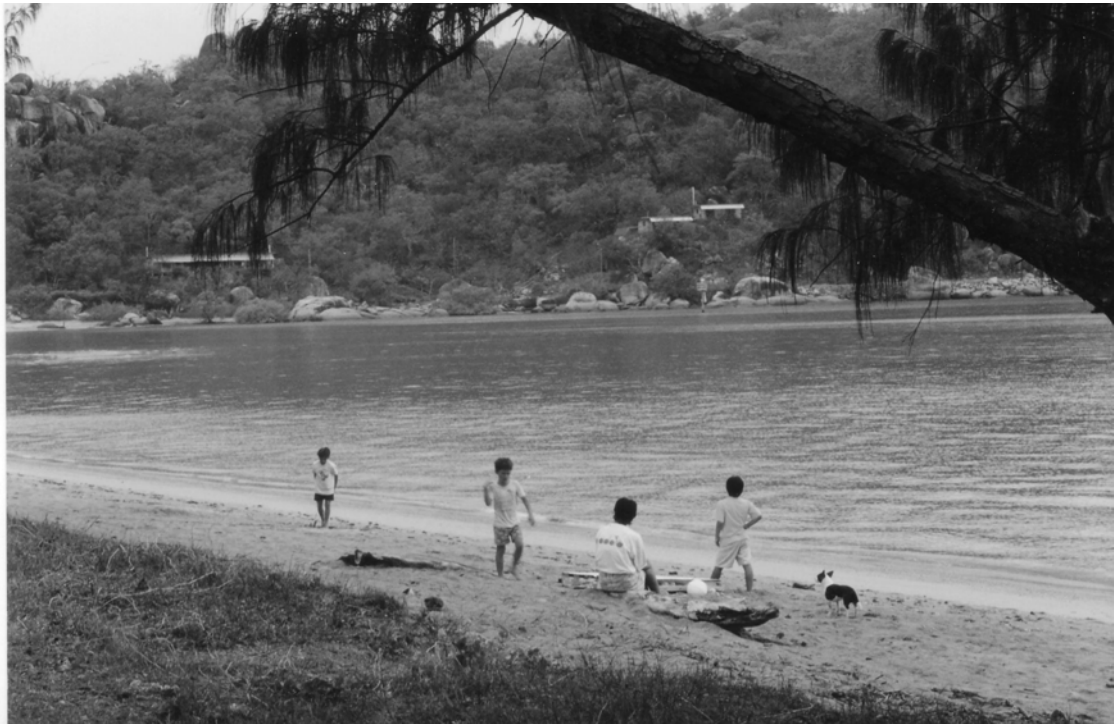


Plate 11: Family group on the beach at Geoffrey Bay. The island's characteristic granitic boulders are visible on the opposite shore and skyline.



Plate 12: Artist at work in Alma Bay, framed by Casuarina trees.

We came for a holiday in 1981 ... got off the ferry and onto the jetty and decided we should stay ... (island resident; with her husband runs small business on the island, involved with local heritage group)

Picnic Bay is everyone's first point of call so the jetty is important ... it was there first ... it reaches out to Townsville in a lovely way, like a native animal retaining individuality and wanting to make contact. (island resident, retired)

This is an island, and what is an island without a jetty – can you imagine coming to an island without a jetty! (island resident, comment made at a meeting of the Magnetic Island History and Craft Centre)

It is not surprising that a threat to the future of the Picnic Bay jetty has engendered an emotional community response. With the construction of a new ferry terminal as part of the Nelly Bay development, questions have been raised about the viability of structurally maintaining the jetty once it becomes 'redundant'. These primarily relate to which statutory authority would take financial responsibility for its upkeep. The 'worth' of the jetty in this sense is strongly connected to its ongoing use as a marine facility. However, the value of the jetty to the community is inseparable from the jetty's role as a mnemonic, as a symbol of journeying and arrival, of its affirmation of the island's isolation from the mainland, and as a place of community reinforcement through shared departures and arrivals. It is a place of gathering, fishing and strolling. It is the place where most people meet the island for the first time, a symbolic portal or gate, where the present is strung with a series of narratives that link to the past and the future. There is a small brass plaque at the end of the jetty in memory of Mario, who died in 1990: this was his favourite fishing spot (plate 10). There is the retelling of the story of a car going over the edge of the jetty in the 1970s with five people on board. The island-based narratives interweave with those of journeying and arriving, of coming home, of a destination that is both tangible – in the sense of the island – and intangible, in the sense of belonging, community and being in place. Importantly, the jetty symbolises the conjunction of sea and land that reinforces the significance of being an island place. The jetty is thus both physically and experientially an extension of a more central story that embraces the island and the mainland, and links the community to the world at large.

The front page headlines of the *Townsville Bulletin* (9/07/01) pronounced:

'1500 Rally for Jetty': They arrived from throughout the island or sailed over by ferry and in private craft ... to wave placards and chant 'save our jetty' ... Transport Minister Steve Bredhauer has said the jetty is likely to be maintained for recreation but he says the end section where ferries moor will be pulled down ... supporters wanted the jetty left as it was.

The story on page 4 (headlined 'Walking the Planks' and 'Pier has special place in people's hearts') reported:

[The rally co-ordinator] said island residents were vowing to chain themselves to the historic jetty ... "these are long-time residents and pensioners who would not normally be a part of any radical behaviour – it's that sort of passion" ... long-standing Magnetic Island residents used the rally to reminisce about midnight fishing, diving off the jetty as kids and New Year's fireworks. They told of the historic, recreational and aesthetic value of the jetty⁸⁶ ... "it's a tangible link with our past ... At the end of the day when the visitors have gone home, the island heaves a sigh of relief and you'll find people lying on the jetty watching the sky"... Sylvia McDermott began visiting the island in 1952 and later made it her home. She remembers fishing off the jetty and holding parties there. "It's very special ... I would hate to see it go" ... "The first thing I saw (in 1953) was that jetty and every time I come across from the mainland it makes me feel happy".

Another island resident, Vandhana, is quoted in a *Townsville Bulletin* article a year later (13/07/02, page 49):

I think the jetty is symbolic of the journeys people do – whether for recreation, holidays or settling in new places. I guess jetties are a link with the past, of how the first white people came to Australia, off ships and down the jetty. A jetty gives another view to where you come from. It is a symbolic journey's end.

In 2001 the jetty was nominated for addition to the Queensland State Heritage Register. Although the Heritage Council has given an 'in principal' recommendation that it should be listed, a final decision is pending discussions with 'interested parties' (Helen Lucas, pers. comm. 20/02/04). The nomination document and assessment

⁸⁶ Revealing the familiarity of either the reporter or some residents with cultural heritage terminology.

report have taken community values into account,⁸⁷ but while acknowledging and placing importance on such values, it is unlikely that any final statement of significance will describe the attachments and narratives that imbue the jetty with meaning.

In February 2004, immediately prior to the Queensland State Election, the local sitting member made an assurance to the community that the pier would be kept, but suggested that its retention may depend on changing the wooden rails to metal, and the removal of the waiting area at the end of the pier. The office of the state government heritage agency in Townsville has been 'bombarded with phone calls and letters from the community' demanding that no such changes be made (Helen Lucas, pers. comm. 20/02/04); the rest is a matter of waiting, although it is likely that decisions will be more strongly guided by political fatalism and economic considerations than heritage concerns.

A Sense of Place

The beauty of the island, promoted extensively in marketing campaigns to attract tourists, has influenced the decisions of many visitors to permanently settle. The attraction of the island features in many local histories and reminiscences (see Barnes 1997; Fraley & Fraley 1997; Macqueen 1952; Townsville Pastoral, Agricultural and Industrial Association 1924). In its engagement with a range of sensual expressions and experiences it embraces far more than the visual aesthetics of the island's physical features. Harry Butler, the first white settler on the island, expressed sentiments that share a commonality with those of contemporary residents and visitors:

I liked the look of it [Magnetic Island], and I made up my mind then and there to settle on this little island. Brother Charlie of course tried to persuade me to go to Cardwell, but as I say I got a sort of feeling for Magnetic and nothing would change me. (Quoted in Macqueen 1952: 7)

⁸⁷ Of particular relevance is section 23.(1)(g) of the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* which states as a criterion for listing: 'the place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons'.

In the 1930s Ted Butler decided to relocate his import-Export business to Magnetic Island after spending one day: '[He] missed the return boat to town and had to stay the night. That was the beginning of a love affair with Magnetic Island' (Fraley & Fraley 1997: 116). Contemporary attachments echo similar emotions, often profoundly expressive of 'being in place', of belonging and of becoming. I have included a number of these personal commentaries below. The selection is representative of commonly expressed views:

The island provides a special life experience ... I needed something that was here ... smells, sites, feelings and people ... the atmosphere is different here than anywhere else ... the island lets you in but it has to like you ... it is a two way experience ... if I couldn't live on the island it would take a huge chunk of my life, my potential and capacity to realise my life. (island resident, runs a small business on the island)

I think I've always had a need to find an alternative place ... a way to find myself ... we came here for an Easter holiday and as soon as I stood on the jetty [at Picnic Bay] I knew this was it ... I had no preconceived conceptions, just looking for an escape, my privacy, my life things, natural environment, little pollution, trees, water everywhere, natural charm, few people, no man-made things ... Australia as it should be. (island resident, works in Townsville)

I came back for a short holiday [10 years after living on the island for a year] ... spur of the moment, I felt I just had to come here ... I saw the headland and the water and it was like coming home ... all the same friends are still here, and the island never looked greener ... I only came for a week 'to see' and decided I couldn't leave so bought this house just for the land ... I am working on making the building more me ... the land has a special feeling, very feminine and powerful. (island resident, artist)

The island is a very special place, where I can live, recover and heal ... I feel spiritually connected to the island ... it is somewhere I can be 'un'stressed' ... it's a mecca ... abundant sea life and natural elements and a place that is protected ... a place to rediscover nature and wildlife. (island resident)

I came to Townsville, went to the island, I loved it and I stayed ... I had a boat ... I loved the people and the bay [Horseshoe] ... this was in the early 70s ... I think the people are as big a part of the island as the environment ... a big part of the picture ... I miss the people and the lovely clear winter days. (former island resident of 20 years)

I've been going to the island all my life ... it's the place our family went for holidays ... it was where we had our first holiday after my Dad died ... in our teenage years it was the place we went to 'be adolescent' ... it was seen to be a safe place and we had more freedom ... sort of a 'rites of passage' experience

for many of us. We would go and camp at Florence Bay for the waves, the 70s surfie thing ... after having [my daughter] I wanted to give my child the same experiences I had ... when I am immersed in Alma Bay and the waves are rocking me I feel really healed and safe. (Townsville resident)

Magnetic Island is my place now ... I discovered it by accident and decided I had to live here ... all the things found here have a part in this place. They are not mine though. I can't take them away, or erase them ... you can't look at something like Magnetic Island and do an audit of only the material things ... that's only half of it, the other is the stories – we need the stories to account for the other parts we can't touch or see ... I had a good feeling when I first came here, maybe a dream come true ... The package comes with the community too, so the nature and cultural as part and characteristic of the place sits well ... I have a sense of fitting in – snuggling into the community like a cloak. (island resident, works on island)

All my life Dad and Mum would bring us over just about every Christmas ... [we] brought our kids to the island as my family brought me in my childhood and in 1987 we bought a block of land here ... it's a really special place. It has its own distinct feel and atmosphere. I feel that in its natural environment and in the community. (Selina Hale, island resident, quoted in Hirst 2001)

The above expressions emphasise community, security, spirituality, environment and the island as a 'special place', where attachment and attribution of value are reliant on what are often mundane activities. Yet the broader landscape is experienced and conceptualised at varying spatial and temporal levels, in a fluidity of place that allows personal and community spaces and places to merge and diverge. Places can overlap according to scales of action, interest, movement and concern. 'Place is an irreducible part of human experience, a person is "in place" just as much as she or he is "in culture"' (Tilley 1994: 18). People live out their lives in place, and places, and have a sense of being part of place and landscape, where attachment is often derived from the stability of associated meanings. The island is a mosaic of multi-conceptualised places and meanings, some of which are 'more' personal and important:

I used to go to Horseshoe Bay [sailed from the mainland] but not any more ... I now go to Maude Bay as it is uninhabited, with peace and quiet ... Magnetic Island has potential ... to provide a special place for people to recover psychological peace and health. (Townsville resident, active in nature conservation)

Florence and Radical Bay are really special, because of the beach and the environment and snorkelling off Florence is fantastic. (Townsville resident with house on island, former island resident)

Florence Bay ... the old school at Horseshoe Bay ... the hill drive between Horseshoe Bay and Arcadia ... I love to walk down the Picnic Bay jetty, both to greet people and to look back at the view of the island ... the rock seat at the end of Olympus Crescent [Arcadia] ... the melaleucas in the grounds of the school. (island resident, works on island)

... the places we use to fish ... and the mangroves for catching crabs and prawns and fishing ... the waterfalls, and the walks up the valley. (Townsville resident with house on island)

Alma Bay ... I love the beach anywhere ... and being in the saltwater ... what I love the most is the rocks ... I can sit on my chair in the mornings and look out the front door through the gum trees to the big rocks that have little caves ... they are like sculpture ... there is an artistic thing about them that I get a lot of pleasure from. (island resident, retired)

The important places are our cultural sites and special places for hunting and fishing and for certain types of food ... but mainly having the bush ... I miss it when I'm not there ... there's no traffic, no noise ... you leave it all behind when you jump off the boat ... you go there and chill out and relax ... you can go walking in the bush and get away ... Florence Bay is beautiful but not better than other spots on the island ... they are all special in their own way ... the important thing is being able to go into the bush and use it for a whole gamut of cultural activities, hunting and other things ... education is important to secure this for the next generation. (Traditional Owner, Townsville resident, former island resident)

Getting to Radical and Florence Bay should only be accessible by walking or boat ... if people can drive it will take away a valuable human experience of walking to the bays ... Florence Bay is a spiritual place. There is something about that place and the experience of being there that is set up from the process of walking there ... this is part of the essence of being on Magnetic Island, in these places that are somewhat remote ... you won't get that sense of place from a 4-wheel drive ... one of my original sensual experiences was the isolation and inoccupation of the remote bays ... I would like to not leave any mark on this world ... less is more. (island resident, works on island)

The bays, most notably Florence Bay, stand out as places island people value.⁸⁸ The expressions of attachment appropriate the aesthetics and natural attributes and capture

⁸⁸ Florence Bay is the only part of the Magnetic Island National Park to have a management plan (see Appendix 2). Its natural attributes have meant that it has a history of proposals for development, all of

them as integral parts of the *experience* of nature, of being absorbed within the bays' ambience. These experiences include travelling and arriving, and once there of participating in activities that are inseparable from the experience of the environment: snorkelling, fishing, swimming, boating, walking or simply listening to the leaves moving in the wind. Being in place is also a reinforcement of *not* being somewhere else. For the islanders it is also a strong expression of the indivisibility of the experience of the land and the sea. The bays gain significance as centres of bodily activity, and emotional attachment. Tilley (1994: 15) identifies the experiential component of place: 'The meaning of place is grounded in existential or lived consciousness of it. It follows that the limits of place are grounded in the limits of human consciousness ... places are contexts for human experience, constructed in movement, memory, encounter and association'. As Casey (1987: 199) further discusses:

The relationship between emotion and expression is close indeed, and it is therefore not surprising to discover that the expressiveness of landscapes is linked to their inherent emotionality. This link is especially evident in the case of 'special places', which bring with them, as well as engender, an unusual emotional claim and resonance. The power of such places to act on us, to inspire (or repel) us, and thus to be remembered vividly is a function of such emotionality – but only as it finds adequate expression in the features of landscapes.

The 'special' places of the island are not simply points or locations – they have distinctive meanings and values for individuals and for communities and are bound up with personal, community and cultural identity. They are also implicated in broader, 'expressive' landscapes, through which flow multiple discourses that merge local stories and meanings with more global narratives and attachments.

Nature

Assertions that experiential relationships with the environment more closely link place, nature and community in a network of collective meanings and categories than

which have been thwarted to date. It is possibly this ongoing threat that has resulted in its popular identification as a place of great value to the islanders.

do biological (scientific) values are supported by the Magnetic Island community. Nature is an integral component of lived and embodied experience:

The island is somewhere where the body and mind are meant to be ... it is important because you can be so close to nature and the bush ... our house backs onto the national park and we all love this and the close connection with the animal life. (Townsville resident with holiday house on island)

We bought a block of land at the back of Nelly Bay ... very private ... very beautiful with its own stream ... I am quite desperate to get over there and would be bereft if I couldn't get there ... it is an opportunity to commune with nature ... I enjoy the solitude and being so close to the national park. (Townsville resident building new home on island)

There is nowhere on the island where people live that is not close to nature ... everybody values this, as well as the gardens and the aesthetics. (island resident)

I came here because it was my father's country ... it is important because of the bush, and the ocean for hunting ... (Traditional Owner, Townsville resident)

A woman in her fifties who lives in Arcadia describes her home as an integrated complex of features, some natural, some constructed, where the view and sound and experience of the trees, birds and streams from within the house are a significant contribution to her sense of place and home. It is not the house alone that is her 'home'; rather, the security and harmony that she seeks is created from a complexity of interactions between the natural and built environment of where she lives.⁸⁹ As expressed by several other residents, she sees her relationship with the island as one of a right of use arising from 'cognitive ownership', rather than a claim of legal or economic ownership. It is a matter of feeling at ease in a place that has been appropriated and integrated into her ongoing life (see Boyd et al. 1996: 125; Casey 1987: 191–192).

The narratives of the islanders suggest a spiritualisation of the natural environment that values (re-values) the surrounding land and sea in non-economic and non-material

⁸⁹ The house itself is listed in the Magnetic Island Heritage Study, with a brief comment on its architectural merits and historical associations.

terms. A number of islanders relate a holistic relationship with the natural environment to respect for Aboriginal attachments, but this is by no means a universal stance. The division of interests on the island include opinions on the relationship between the islanders, the Wulgurkaba, and land rights, although in my own discussions with non-Aboriginal residents these were rarely expressed. A few indicated a close association with Aboriginal people on the island and/or respect for their long association with Magnetic Island; most did not raise the issue. This does not mean that debate regarding Aboriginal interests in the island is non-existent; however, further discussion here is not possible.

Much has been written about non-indigenous attachments to nature in terms of a re-imagination or appropriation of indigenous land knowledge, sustainability, and sacred attachments (see, for example, Jacobs 1996; Strang 1997). One result is a new ecological imagination that draws on primitivised, ahistorical and romanticised understandings of Aboriginal associations with the land. Aside from misplaced implications of stereotypes and of the passivity of those 'whose identities and cultural properties are seemingly appropriated' (Jacobs 1996: 142) there is a reflective rendering of other attachments, those expressed by non-indigenous people, as non-organic and predicated on external and 'appropriated' attachments. In his exploration of non-indigenous attachments to the land Read (2000: 109) suggests that there is a search for connection with the spirit forces by means of the landscape in a non-contentious, non-aggressive assertion of values that counters the more explicit moral claim to the land by Aboriginal people. Arguably for others it is the impact of this generation's increased environmental awareness, and for some it is a harking back, however mythologised, to the time when our 'pioneer' ancestors were 'one with the land and the Australian bush'.

Senses of evocation, or emotion, are animated by concepts and practices associated with a place: 'evocation illuminates a universal dimension of human experience: that all people sense and mark certain experiences as special, acknowledging the ways they evoke behaviours, moods and feelings heightened by awareness, yet central to a local sense of identity' (Feld 1996: 66–67). Attachment to the land and a sense of

being in the environment provide a focus for both individual and social identity, where that identity comes from an intimate relationship with the unchanged, natural landscape, not from efforts to impose external order (but see Strang 1997: 166–167). The community becomes the landscape's 'spiritual underwriters' (Munjeri 2000: 43), in a relationship that is grounded in an understanding and construction of the environment that is cultural, not natural. Hummon, with reference to Tuan, reinforces this correlation between emotion, place and environmental meaning:

In the everyday world of personal and social life, emotional components may well predominate sense of place: our perceptions of what places are like are always couched in a language of sentiment, value and other personal meanings. Whatever the balance of emotive and cognitive components, sense of place involves a personal orientation toward place, in which one's understanding of place and one's feeling about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning. (Hummon 1992: 262)

Lovell (1998: 9–12) reaffirms the instrumental role of nature in shaping social relational discourses, and its contribution to social praxis. But nature is mutually reflexive in its own rapport to human beings, serving to shape human consciousness about emplacement and the workings of the human body. Nature reflects the human imagery of the self at individual and social levels, so that nature and humans become what they are because they constantly interpenetrate each other as realms of experience. The result is the transformation of the relationship between humans and nature into a dialectical process embedded in memory. They also become embedded in phenomenological terms, because the synchronicity of time, space and place allow the landscape to become historicised. Nature becomes part of the dynamic processes which engage with remembrance of settlement and belonging (see Connerton 1987).

World Heritage

Unprompted discussion about World Heritage listing remains consistently and conspicuously absent. While one resident of the island is very supportive – 'it is wonderful and should be retained ... it is part of what makes the island special' – most others agree with the philosophy of the response: 'It is not something I have really thought of ... not really connected with Maggie Island ... it's sort of 'over there' and

not really part of the island ... but I love the reef and going there' (Townsville resident with house on island). Another island resident expresses this feeling as:

It really isn't a big issue one way or the other. Most agree with it, but don't think it is essential as we look after the island anyway – the point is *we* know it is important so it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks ... probably only a few minority groups would even be concerned if the island was excised from the World Heritage Area ... to us, it isn't the reef that is important – it is the island – so it's not of interest to outsiders ... but at the same time the islanders acknowledge the reef, a sort of 'it goes without saying' thing, as they look after that as well – keep an eye on what people in boats are doing.

There is, however, an understanding expressed by a few that World Heritage listing provides an additional layer of legislative protection to the Reef. Island residents who have engaged with heritage issues, either through professional involvement or in advocacy situations, have a greater familiarity with the legislation. There is a varying understanding that the protective mechanisms do not encompass the heritage issues that are relevant to the island landmass. References to the island as 'World Heritage' do occur, invariably in association with marketing material aimed at either tourists or investors. The implications for protection of the coral reefs in Nelly Bay led to its enlistment in arguments for the protection of the bay's marine resources during the construction of the harbour facilities. A small group of residents has banded together to form a group called 'World Heritage Island Alive', that is advocating not only a broader understanding of protection that should be applied under existing legislation and protocols, but also that the Aboriginal heritage and natural attributes of the island have the potential for the island to achieve World Heritage listing status.⁹⁰ However, for the majority who express a strong emotional attachment to the island, their identification of the island as a special place is minimally, if at all, influenced by the World Heritage status of the surrounding area.

⁹⁰ See also the discussion in Greer et al. (2000) that argues that Australia's obligations as a signatory to the World Heritage Convention include a more inclusive approach to the protection of heritage values in World Heritage listed properties, than just those that are of 'outstanding universal value'.

Conclusion

The attachments to place, and expressions of personal and collective belonging, community and identity expressed by the Magnetic Island community create a vibrant and multi-layered landscape, imbued with sensual and emotional affinities. These act in a mutually reinforcing process to bind people and the environment so that nature is implicated in lived experience and the creation of place. The islanders do not simply view nature, they are inside it. That the islanders consequently find prospects of major development of the island threatening is of little surprise. However, the threat is as equally to their sense of being and sense of community as it is to the physical environment.

A 1988 tourism concept plan for the island foreshadows such concerns, albeit from a different perspective: 'increased pressures will be placed on the island's existing communities to permit more intensive and aggressive development. This in turn can bring significant and often negative change to both the physical and social composition of these small communities' (Helber et al. 1988: I-1). The same report records, I suggest erroneously, that 'there are no strong heritage stories or folklore associated with Magnetic Island which can be woven into visitor attractions or points of interest' (ibid: III-4). At the same time the report comments on the island's laid-back and easy going lifestyle, but despairs because to other than 'repeat visitors' the 'island communities appear somewhat tired, rundown, and unkept.' This seems an odd critique, until it is realised that by 'communities' the authors are in fact referring to the physical built setting:

They [the 'communities'] have developed slowly over the years, with little architectural continuity or distinctive character. There is little evidence of prosperity as reflected in residential home sites and commercial and public facilities. There is also a sense of local complacency, with little regard to the island's unique natural landscape and scenic attributes. (Helber et al. 1988: III-4)

In fact, the authors, in making such a summation, are themselves negating the elements that contribute to 'the strong heritage stories or folklore' that they failed to find. The vernacular and haphazard character of the architecture, the defiance of the

need to display wealth, and the day-to-day engagement with a unique and much appreciated landscape are the very aspects that inform and identify the contemporary island community and encapsulate the history of that community's development and engagement with the island. The chapter that follows, through a discussion of a major development project at Nelly Bay, explores the way in which such meanings and attachments can be stripped from an environment, in a process that mutes community expressions of being in place.

