

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

CHS 110

THE BETH ROBERTS COLLECTION

Authors, Tasmania

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INTRODUCTION

Madeline Beth (known as Beth) Roberts, born on 30 September 1924, grew up on “Dungrove”, a sheep and cattle property near Bothwell. The daughter of Keith and Madeline Downie, she was a fifth generation Tasmanian.

Educated by governesses until she was 10, she attended Collegiate School in Hobart as a boarder until she was 17. She joined the Australian Army working as a nursing orderly at the 111th A.G.H. (Australian General Hospital), Campbell Town, from 1944-1946, then studied occupational therapy in Melbourne, gaining her Diploma of Occupational Therapy in 1951. She married and had two children, Joanne and Bill.

Beth had been living in Western Australia for about ten years before she resigned from her work as an occupational therapist with handicapped children in 1974, bought a four wheel drive Willys Jeep and travelled around Australia for several years, often working as a locum.

Her career as an author began when she was 50, after raising her two children alone. In 1974 she attended an Australia Council for the Arts Film and Television Board seminar in Brisbane, subsequently obtaining a grant to write a book about the way of life of the last Tasmanian Aborigines. This led to the 1979 publication of her highly successful and best-known book, *Manganinnie*, which was made into a feature film by the Tasmanian Film Corporation in 1980. The film won many awards and the book was translated into French, German, Italian and Japanese.

Beth returned to Tasmania and in 1976 produced her first children’s book, *The Little Lake Who Cried*, which was illustrated by her daughter Joanne. Between 1976 and 1999 she wrote 11 children’s books and by the end of 1999 had sold 150,000 copies of her books around the world. She established Rainbow Books in 1987 to publish her stories, thereby having control of her work and the freedom to market where she chose. She published nine of her eleven books and reprinted two books before selling the business in 1999. Rainbow Bay Books published Beth’s last book, *The Broomstick Wedding*, in 2000.

Beth Roberts died on 10 March 2001 at Hobart.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in July 2002. Access is restricted until 1 January 2010.

1. Correspondence

1/1	Correspondence with Edward Ogden re script for film, <i>Manganinnie</i>	1975-1977
1/2	Correspondence re film, <i>Manganinnie</i> , 1975-1982, 1989-1996	1975-1996
1/3	Correspondence with Tasmanian Film Corporation re film, <i>Manganinnie</i>	1977-1988
1/4	Correspondence with Macmillan Co. of Australia re book, <i>Manganinnie</i>	1978-1986
1/5	Correspondence etc re book, <i>Manganinnie</i> , 1985, 1993, nd	1985, 1993
1/6	Correspondence, 1987, 1991, 1994, 1998-2000	1987-2000
1/7	Rainbow Books, correspondence; <i>Mercury</i> cuttings, 8 May 1999, 11 July 2000 re sale of Rainbow Books	1990-2000

2. Published Books

2/1	['Manganinnie'], several pages and chapters of the manuscript	nd
2/2	<i>The little lake who cried</i> , illustrated by Joanne Roberts, second edition, two copies with variant cover colours	1977
2/3	'The magpie boy', typed story outline, 1980; correspondence, 1980, 1981, 1987; manuscript, 1985; Australian Christian Literature Society, Christian Book of the Year, highly commended certificate, 1990	1980-1990
2/4	<i>The upside-down bird</i> , Rainbow Books; also manuscript	1987
2/5	<i>The wombat who couldn't see in the dark</i> , artwork by Janet Fenton, Rainbow Books; also manuscript	1987
2/6	'The Tasmanian Devil who couldn't eat meat', manuscript	1988
2/7	<i>Flowers for mother mouse</i> , illustrated by Carolyn Daly, Rainbow Books; also manuscript with revised ending, 1999	1989
2/8	'Midget and the special people/riders', manuscript; drawings; drawings by Janet Fenton; two newspaper cuttings, 1992; information re publication, 1993	1992-1993
2/9	'The three stragglers', folder of illustrations by Kev; letter	1996

2/10 'The broomstick wedding', manuscript 1999-2000

3.Unpublished Works

- 3/1 Beth Downie, 'And then the storm', handwritten poem in an exercise book nd
- 3/2 'An island is born/Jo-Jo and Manganinnie, manuscript 1974
- 3/3 Poems: 'My bones are getting old', 1976; 'Creativity', 1980; 'The tree', 1982; 'The sun betrayed', 1988; 'The warning', 1988; 'White collar', nd; 'Tasmania our island state', nd; Untitled, nd 1976-1988
- 3/4 'The old red mill', 1980, story outline; 'Corn mill grinding', nd; 'Lugga', framework, 1986; 'Tonna', framework, nd; 'The first rainbow', 1988; 'Granny runs away from home', 1995; 'Around the world', nd; 'The pip', nd; 'The eye of the wind', nd; each one page only 1980-1995
- 3/5 'The Cattle Duffers' ['Jake'], manuscript; correspondence with Rolf Harris, 1981; request for Pro Hart to do illustrations 1981-1987
- 3/6 'The little wind'/'The first wind', manuscript 1984-1999
- 3/7 'The other side of the world/the secret diary/journal/the colonial boy/lad', manuscript 1986-1994
- 3/8 'Madeline Mouse and the green-eyed cat', manuscript 1989-1997
- 3/9 'Madeline Mouse and the librarian', manuscript 1990
- 3/10 'Mister Robinson/Manganinnie and the bricklayer', manuscript 1990
- 3/11 'We never said goodbye', manuscript 1999-2000
- 3/12 Folder of items concerning Bill Roberts and the writing of 'We never said goodbye' 1996-2001

4.Scrapbooks

- 4/1 Scrapbook of certificates; examination papers; invitations; newspaper cuttings; 111th A.G.H., (Australian General Hospital) Campbell Town, *Newsreel*, vol. 1, no. 2, December 1944 etc 1936-1949
- 4/2 Scrapbook with newspaper cuttings etc re the film, *Manganinnie* and the book, *Manganinnie* 1975-1981

4/3 Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings, letters etc re books written by Beth Roberts 1976-2000

4/4 Scrapbook re film, *Manganinnie* 1979-1982

5. Newspaper Cuttings

5/1 Newspaper cuttings re film, *Manganinnie* 1976-1986

5/2 Newspaper cuttings etc re French translation of book, *Manganinnie et l'enfant vole* 1985-1987

5/3 Newspaper cuttings, review etc re Japanese translation of *Manganinnie* 1988

6. Miscellaneous Items

6/1 Typed 'Extracts from the diaries of Frederick McDowall of Bothwell, born 1851', with undated covering letter 1891-1904

6/2 Occupational Therapy School of Victoria, letter certifying Madeline Beth Roberts graduated from the school in 1951; also on the same page a photocopy of Beth Downie's birth extract 1965

6/3 Mersey General Hospital, letter re Mrs M B Roberts' work as locum tenens in occupational therapy department 1976

6/4 Miranbeena Pre-educational & Training Centre, Burnie, letter re her work at the Centre from 1977 1979

6/5 *Manganinnie*, Tasmanian Film Corporation brochure about the film, two copies, one signed by Mawuyul Yanthalawuy; *Manganinnie: a study guide to the film*, prepared by the Education Department of Tasmania [1980]

6/6 *Manganinnie*, two posters advertising the film **Oversized item** [1980]

6/7 'Sheepskin saddle helps disabled people to ride', article on Beth Roberts and the saddle she designed in *The Economic Monitor*, Manila?, 26 October-1 November 1981, p. 13 1981

6/8 'The Manganinnie experience', typescript by Beth Roberts re making of film 1981

6/9 Diary, mostly concerning her publications 1992-2000

6/10 'Imagination went to print, in spirit', article on Beth Roberts in *Crosslight*, July 1992 1992

6/11	Usui Shiki Ryoho, certificate re completion of course in Reiki Method of Natural Healing	1993
6/12	'In the beginning: a slice of life', Beth Roberts' account of the beginning of her career as an author	1994?
6/13	'History of Manganinnie', 1979-1995, typed page	1995
6/14	'Spiritual reading with Doug Osborne, 25 March 1996, Cygnet, Tasmania', [15] typed pages	1996
6/15	'Tasmanian author says Island State is for her', article in <i>Intouch</i> , July-November 1997	1997
6/16	Lists of publications etc	1999, nd
6/17	'The Beth Roberts short story competition', one page of information re competition	2000?
6/18	Order of funeral service for Madeline Beth Roberts, 14 March 2001	2001
6/19	'Manganinnie', talk given to a Rotary Club, four typed pages	nd

7. Photographs

7/1	Miscellaneous photographs: Beth Roberts with Willys jeep, nd; Scene in Thorpe flour mill during filming of <i>Manganinnie</i> , 1980; Beth Roberts at Heathrow Airport, London, 1980; Small head and shoulders photo of Beth Roberts, nd; Beth Roberts with disabled horse rider, nd; Photo of Beth Roberts which appeared on front page of <i>Tasmanian Country</i> , 4 April 1996; Beth Roberts displaying jumper with sheep pattern, [1996]	1980-1996
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8. Videos and Tapes

8/1	Manganinnie, 27/11/1979, video	1979
8/2	Magpie Boy, ABC TV news, 26/7/1989, video	1989
8/3	Botanical Gardens Book Launch, 27/11/1990, video	1990
8/4	Magic Waterfall launch, Nov. 1990, ABC video	1990
8/5	Live interview, Hervey Bay High School, 12/7/1993, video	1993
8/6	Beth Roberts book, 5/5/1997, Win Television video	1997
8/7	Manganinnie, video	nd

8/8	TV credits, video	nd
8/9	Manganinnie tapes: 27/2/1978; TBU, 26, 27/11/ 1979; “Hear a Book” service, two cassettes, nd; Royal Society Blind Deaf, nd; cruise ship, RDA, nd; 7NT, nd; four tapes, nd	1978, 1979 nd
8/10	The Little Lake Who Cried, “Hear a Book” service, tape	1985
8/11	Magpie Boy, Mother Mouse book reviews, two tapes	1989
8/12	Magpie Boy, “Hear a Book” Service, tape	1991
8/13	The Tasmanian Devil who couldn’t eat meat, “Hear a Book” Service, tape	1993
8/14	The 3 Stragglers tapes: ABC, 17/4/1994; Straggler wool competition, ABC, February 1996; five tapes, nd	1994, 1996, nd
8/15	Little Lake, 7NT, tape	nd
8/16	Magpie Boy, 7ZR, tape	nd

OTHER SOURCES

Mercury 13 March 2001, p.3, obituary for Beth Roberts

<http://www.women.tas.gov.au/significantwomen/search/beth-roberts.html>

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Library has signed copies of *The little lake who cried*, *Manganinnie* including the French edition, *The Upside-down bird* and *Magpie boy*