

A Case of Natural Attraction: Tracing the appeal of the Lord Howe holiday since 1788

Zoe Murray

On Christmas day, 1925, eighteen-year-old Ellen Ward penned 'Arrived at last!' into her holiday diary in large, emphatic strokes. Ellen and her father spent the next three weeks staying at 'The Pines', one of Lord Howe Island's two comfortable but by no means luxurious guesthouses.¹ However, 'arrived at last!' had a dual meaning: not only was Ellen eagerly anticipating her holiday, she was also jubilant that the 'horrid' trip in what could only be described as a 'fearful old boat' was finally over!² By emphasizing both the attractions and detractions of travelling to Lord Howe, Ellen highlights an intriguing puzzle surrounding its tourist history. Why did Ellen and others, in an era of luxury ocean liners suffer the 'antique' *Makambo* to arrive at the little-publicised Lord Howe?³ Closer to the present, how did Pinetrees Lodge, the Island's largest accommodation provider, both maintain its 1950s guesthouse style and retain popularity with 1990s tourists?⁴

¹ Ellen Ward, *Holiday Diary*, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection, 25 December 1925 – 16 January 1926, 52

² *Ibid*, 1

³ According to Ellen, this was the euphemistic description of the ship favoured by its stewardess. *Ibid*, 3. The fact that the Island was little advertised as a holiday destination is clear from contemporary Burns and Philp *Picturesque Travel* brochures. The 1920 brochure, for example, does include a brief blurb on Lord Howe Island but seemingly as a sight which will be passed on the way to other Pacific Islands and without any reference to the possibility of holidaying on the Island. In fact, this option is only mentioned under the Norfolk Island section that the brochure and then only by implication: 'Both Norfolk and Lord Howe are ideal places for a rest cure.' Burns & Philp Company Ltd, *Picturesque Travel*, (Sydney: Burns Philp & Co., 1920), 33-34. For more on developments in steamer travel in the first half of the twentieth century see: Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, 'Messing About in Boats', *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870*, (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 29-58.

⁴ See: Davidson & Spearritt, *Holiday Business*, 307 and Richard White, 'The Heyday of the Holiday: 1945-75', *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia*, (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005), 119-152

These anomalies continuously occur throughout the history of tourism on Lord Howe Island. Three eras can be defined by the changing modes of transport that conveyed holidaymakers to Lord Howe. From 1898, a regular shipping route was established by Burns Philp between Sydney, Lord Howe and Noumea, making it possible for the first holidaymakers to stay on Lord Howe in family guesthouses for a planned length of time. A flying boat service to the Island, launched in 1947, was the first dedicated tourist transport system, enabling modest growth in tourist numbers, accommodation and infrastructure. Finally, the construction of an airstrip in 1974 – combined with the Island’s 1982 World Heritage listing – improved access to the Island while promoting and protecting its environmental assets, culminating in a stable tourist industry which has withstood the Global Financial Crisis.⁵ In sum, the puzzle is that Lord Howe, while often appearing out-of-step with broader tourism developments, has continued to appeal to holidaymakers since the late-nineteenth century.

To some extent, however, this puzzle both poses the question and supplies the answer to this paper. As John Urry argues, the fundamental component of the tourist experience is its apparent difference from everyday life. He says, the ‘tourist gaze’ is ‘constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness.’⁶ This paper will extend Urry’s argument by showing that Lord Howe appealed not merely because of the contrast it

⁵ Lord Howe Island Board, *Report of the Lord Howe Island Board for the year ended 30 June 2011*, viewed at: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/la/latabdoc.nsf/0/BDDCD5C1CD741B6CCA257952000192F3> <last viewed 24/06/2012>

⁶ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990), 2

offered to everyday life but also to other holiday experiences. I will argue that the Island's natural attractions and also its resident community have been represented and, indeed, re-presented as an ideal escape from everything ordinary and mundane.

Natural attraction

At 2pm on 13 March, 1788 HMS *Supply* dropped anchor at the newly discovered Lord Howe's Island. A boat was lowered, and a group of officers dispatched to 'examine' the uninhabited Island – its first visitors.⁷ Along with another landing party from *Lady Penrhyn* two months later, they discovered the striking natural abundance of the Island. The sea was full of fish and turtle 'much superior' to any they had ever seen and the land teemed with birds of all varieties.⁸ As the *Lady Penrhyn's* surgeon, Arthur Smyth, drifted to sleep beneath the leaves of a 'Cabbage Tree', he pondered the Island's abundance, meditating on Ovid's 'Golden Age', a mythical moment when humans lived in harmony with their environment and each other. By evoking an image of harmony, Smyth wrote an 'anti-conquest' narrative of the first order, obscuring the way the Island's natural abundance – fish and fowl in particular – was already being put to expeditious use by Her Majesty's Navy.⁹ They were not the only visitors who called at Lord

⁷ Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, *Supply Logbook*, 13 March 1788 quoted in Max Nicholls, *A History of Lord Howe Island*, (Sydney: Dash, 1939), 10

⁸ A fact noted by the *Lady Penrhyn's* surgeon, Arthur Bowys Smyth in his journal, Arthur Bowys Smyth, 'May 16th 1788', *A Journal of a Voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales and China in the Lady Penrhyn, Merchantman William Cropton Sever, Commander by Arthur Bowys Smyth*, being a fair copy compiled ca. 1790, Mitchell Library

⁹ Mary Louise Pratt defines the 'anti-conquest' genre of travel-writing, as that which constructs a 'utopian, innocent vision of European global authority' that obscured 'conquest, conversion, territorial appropriation, and enslavement'. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and*

Howe to plunder its natural resources. For the next century, the Island was a haven for whaling ships, denoted on one map by the caption 'choice refreshment ... pigs, onions but no maidens.'¹⁰

The image of Lord Howe Island described by the First Fleet officers – pristine and bountiful – has endured, with the Island consistently represented as the ultimate 'romantic' tourist destination. The romantic gaze, according to Urry, valorises 'undisturbed natural beauty' and its contrast to urban life.¹¹ This contrast was often mentioned in tourist literature, such as the characterisation of Lord Howe by 1960s columnist 'Andrea' as 'a small Eden where I could unwind and relax, undisturbed by phones, open exhausts and the everyday brutalities of urban life.'¹²

The Island's early visitors certainly made use of its natural abundance and, as Smyth's account suggests, sometimes dwelt upon the 'semi-spiritual' significance of their experiences. There was an exceptional period, however, in the early twentieth century, when writers chose to dwell on the rarity rather than the abundance of the local fauna and the fragility of the flora as well as its luxuriance.¹³ The quintessential tourist tale of this era was the arrival of rats on

Transculturation, (Routledge: London and New York, 1992), 38-39. In addition to mentioning the fish taken aboard the *Lady Penrhyn* ('in the space of 3 hours served the whole ships Company 3 days'), Smyth also made a survey of what seemed to be the Island's most useful flora: 'Broad Beans ... Scurvy Grass, Samphire, Endive & Spinnage.' Smyth, '16th May 1788', *A Journal*.

¹⁰ W. M. J. Dakin, 'The Pacific Ocean', Map in William John Dakin, *Whalemen Adventures: The Story of Whaling in Australian Waters and Other Southern Seas Related Thereto, From the Days of Sails to Modern Times*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1938), inside cover.

¹¹ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 45

¹² "Andrea", 'Andrea's visit to Peyton Place', *Daily Mirror*, circa 1962, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection

¹³ M. S. R. Silverland, 'Lord Howe Island: Delightful Holiday Resort, Jewel in the Pacific', *The Mercury*, 4 January 1927, 8

the Island in 1918 with the wrecked *Makambo*, unleashing destruction in the Island's forests which 'as recently as seven years ago were melodious with the songs of myriads of birds' but 'today' were 'silent.'¹⁴ Although Lord Howe was still construed as a romantic holiday destination, there was a sense that its natural beauty was a precarious resource: praise for the 'glorious scenery' and 'rich and varied flora' sat side-by-side with foreboding descriptions of how the Island had 'suffered from our vaunted "civilisation".'¹⁵ As economist Edward Mishan has argued, awareness of natural fragility can heighten the appeal of the romantic holiday, increasing the incentive to go while the natural beauty remains relatively undisturbed.¹⁶

Considering gloomy predictions about the sustainability of the romantic holiday destination, it is remarkable that natural attractions have remained central to Lord Howe's tourist appeal. As current tourist literature emphasises, Lord Howe has largely been able to resist threatening pressures and – with more than 80% natural forest intact, a maximum of 400 tourists allowed on the Island at any one time and a World Heritage Listing - is today praised as an eco-tourist haven. In recent years, the rat tragedy has been replaced by a story of the endemic woodhen's triumphant return from the brink of extinction thanks to a captive breeding program in the late 1970s.¹⁷ Many commentators explicitly or implicitly contrast the Island with other destinations where natural beauty has

¹⁴ Rev Alan Rivett, Letter to *The Australian Worker*, 1927 reprinted in Barney Nichols (ed), *Lord Howe Island Signal*, vol. 5 no. 18 (22 October 2004), 2

¹⁵ See: Silverland, 'Lord Howe Island', 8 and Rivett, Letter to *The Australian Worker*, 2

¹⁶ Quoted in: Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 42

¹⁷ Jim Hutchison and Margo Pfeiff, 'Lord Howe: British Heirloom', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1992, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection. See also: Eastern Australia Airlines, *Lord Howe Island: The Natural Choice*, Tourist Promotion Brochure, circa 1991, 4B

faded. Repeat visitor Michael Osborne praised the ‘simplicity’ of Lord Howe holidays, explaining that locals have recognised ‘the need to protect’ the natural environment and ‘by doing this ... have ensured paradise would not become overcrowded.’¹⁸ By retaining romantic appeal, the Lord Howe holiday has been constructed as a ‘unique’ break from holiday destinations that are ‘trampled to death.’¹⁹

However, it’s not *just* that Lord Howe’s towering mountains, lush palm forests, and crystal-clear lagoon are innately attractive. Rather, as Julia Horne argues, ‘their physical existence provokes an imaginary artifice, a canvas, upon which people pour words and images shaped by particular intellectual traditions.’²⁰ Throughout the twentieth century, a number of historically specific constructions of the Island’s natural attractions have been used to distinguish the Lord Howe holiday from everyday life. In the 1920s and 30s, for example, Lord Howe was promoted as an ‘ideal place for a rest cure’, reflecting growing recognition of nature’s restorative effect on the mind and body. From 1982, when Lord Howe Island was inscribed on the World Heritage list, new scientific explanations of nature’s value emerged, couched in terminology such as ‘evolution’, ‘ecosystem’, ‘habitat’ and ‘species.’ This shift was exemplified in the dramatic change in the style of tourist information literature, from the romanticised clichés of 1960s Curio Shop souvenirs, to the abundant inventory

¹⁸ Quoted in: Eastern Australia Airlines, ‘Lord Howe Island’, *Airlines*, vol. 19 (January, February 2000), 23

¹⁹ Kiernan, ‘Paradise Found’, 67

²⁰ Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder*, 195

of biological and geological literature produced since 1982 by the Island's naturalist-in-residence, Ian Hutton.²¹

The most pervasive construction of Lord Howe's natural attractions, however, is the notion of Lord Howe as a 'Pacific Island' – despite being geographically located in the Tasman Sea. In the early twentieth century, Burns Philp *Picturesque Travel* brochures listed Lord Howe among South Pacific destinations; the current tourist information website unabashedly declares that Lord Howe is 'widely regarded as the most beautiful Island in the Pacific'; and, in her holiday diary, Ellen Ward excitedly reported seeing the South Pacific Ocean on a walk to Middle Beach.²² This strong association with Pacific Islands drew upon long-established intellectual connections between Islands and the ideal, the Pacific and the exotic, to represent Lord Howe as an appealing escape from the ordinary and mundane.²³

Tourist interest in Lord Howe's four endemic palms is further indication of the appeal of Lord Howe as a tropical paradise. As Katherine Manthorne demonstrates, nineteenth century European travel to tropical Latin America was closely linked with the quest to re-discover Paradise. The prevalence of palms in

²¹ See: Shirley Hines, *Lord Howe Island: Holiday Highlights and Historical Facts*, circa 1960, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection; Ian Hutton, *Plants of Lord Howe Island*, (Lord Howe Island: Hutton, 2002); Ian Hutton, *Ferns of Lord Howe Island*, (Lord Howe Island: Hutton, 2010); Ian Hutton, *Birds of Lord Howe Island*, (Lord Howe Island: Hutton, 2002); Ian Hutton, *Rambler's Guide to Lord Howe Island*, 2nd Edition, (Lord Howe Island: Hutton, 2002); Ian Hutton, *The Woodhen*, (Sydney: John MacLulich, 2005)

²² Clarson, 'Madeira of the Pacific'; Burns & Philp Company Ltd, *Picturesque Travel*, 33-34; Shirley Hines, *Lord Howe Island: Holiday Highlights and Historical Facts*, circa 1960, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection, 5; Lord Howe Island Tourist Association, 'Homepage'; and Ward, *Holiday Diary*, 20

²³ See: Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860*, (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3, 32-42 and White, *On Holidays*, 4-14

these areas imbued them with idyllic and exotic qualities.²⁴ This representation was reinforced by the images associated with Cook's voyages to the South Pacific and, in particular, William Hodges' romantic paintings of Tahiti.²⁵

Lord Howe's tourist advertising has long drawn on the palm, which dominates written and visual depictions of the Island, as a rich symbol of all that was desirable in a holiday – rest, pleasure and tropical abundance. The connection between palms and relaxation was suggested implicitly by a *Junior Farmer's Gazette* article that glowed with superlatives as it reported how palms 'literally covered the island, growing anywhere and there is no finer sight than any of the Island roads, winding along their tranquil way with the tall graceful palms rustling in the sea breezes and forming a haven of shade on the sandstone roads.'²⁶

By the second half of the twentieth century, however, the 'Paradise of Palms' image had become somewhat clichéd. In a 1961 *Walkabout* article, Lew Friday reflected on the significance of Lord Howe's palms:

Lord Howe palms ... grace the world's nightclubs, and the palm courts of luxury hotels and liners. With string orchestras, ukuleles, an artificial moon, and maybe a swaying girl in a hula skirt, they ... give people who have never been there the illusion of glamorous Pacific

²⁴ Katherine Manthorne, 'The Quest for a Tropical Paradise: The Palm as a Fact and Symbol in Latin American Landscape Imagery, 1850-1875', *Art Journal*, vol. 44, no. 4, American Art (Winter, 1984) 374-382

²⁵ Richard White, *On Holidays*, 11

²⁶ 'Lord Howe Island', *Junior Farmer's Gazette* (Xmas-New Year 1963-64), 91

nights.²⁷

Here, Priday contrasts the 'real' Pacific Eden, Lord Howe, with the illusion of tropical paradise created the Island's palms. Priday suggests that, when isolated from its Island habitat, the palm becomes an empty signifier, merely highlighting the superficiality of inauthentic holiday environments. For Priday, the appeal of the Lord Howe holiday was not merely its contrast with everyday life but also its authenticity compared with holidays spent in 'luxury hotels and liners'.

Community Life

For most of the twentieth century, natural attractions were only one part of Lord Howe's tourist appeal – the other was the Island community. Firstly, there was its quaintness and curious social structure but secondly, and equally important, was that holidaymakers felt they became part of the community. This section will examine this less-acknowledged aspect of the Island's tourist appeal to argue that the Island community was essential in creating a sense of difference between the Lord Howe holiday and the normal conditions of everyday life.

A brochure from the 1960s informed tourists that Lord Howe's 'inhabitants' were 'white people; their customs, way of life and social institutions ... similar to those of their fellow citizens on the mainland.'²⁸ Evidently, this was not assumed knowledge and yet, even in the process of correcting misconceptions, the

²⁷ Lew Priday, 'Lord Howe – Pacific Eden', *Walkabout*, (October 1961), 12

²⁸ Lord Howe Island Board, *Lord Howe Island*, Tourist Information Brochure, (Sydney: V.C.N. Blight, c. 1962) Lord Howe Island Museum Collection, 2

brochure left room for doubt, saying the Islanders' way of life was *similar to*, but not *the same as*, their fellow citizens. This uncertainty reflects the way the Lord Howe community, like the Island's landscapes, has been exoticised by holidaymakers since the late-nineteenth century. Lord Howe travel-writing frequently reads like ethnography. Many European stereotypes of non-European cultures were applied to the Island community - not to criticise the Islanders as examples of European degeneration, but to celebrate their apparently simple, easy lives. Mary Louise Pratt notes that nineteenth century Europeans who valorised non-European societies valued their 'supposed *lack* of government, professions, laws, and institutions.'²⁹ Similarly, Lord Howe holidaymakers invariably commented on, and idealised, the Island's lack of typical European structures of governance. Alan Villiers concluded that, 'here the people ... know how to live. There is no Collector of Customs, no Magistrate, no Governor, no mumbo-jumbo.'³⁰

Islander experiences of work and leisure were also recorded with fascination, as a sort of tourist spectacle. Exporting palm-seed was the Island's main industry in the early-twentieth century, and proceeds were shared amongst Islanders according to a shareholder system administered by the Board. In effect, the Island's principle industry was community-owned and its fruits were shared equitably. This 'interesting social organisation' was expounded in most tourist

²⁹ Emphasis original. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (Routledge: London and New York, 1992), 45

³⁰ Alan Villiers, *Cruise of the Conrad*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937), 271. By the 1960s, the Island may have had Government representative, the Lord Howe Island Board's Superintendent, but this story lived on, albeit slightly modified. The focus was then on the absence of any means of law enforcement, Lord Howe being 'without a police officer and virtually without crime.' Priday, 'Lord Howe - Pacific Eden', 12

literature and led holidaymakers to, once again, imagine themselves in a utopian paradise.³¹

However, the unusual organisation of Islander's working lives were idealised in another way, again in typically cross-cultural tropes. Villiers observed that 'for little tilling the land yields much' while *The Mercury* reported that the Islanders were 'inclined to take life easy' and devoted 'three days a week to recreation.'³² These observations closely resemble the stereotypes used by earlier Europeans to describe non-European subsistence communities. In records of their 1768 voyage through the South Pacific, Captain James Cook and Joseph Banks celebrated Tahiti as a paradise where the people were virtually free from work. Lord Howe holidaymakers seconded these images of 'Paradisiacal Polynesians', also imagining themselves immersed in a society that was simple, carefree and almost on perpetual holiday.³³

The fact that holidaymakers exoticised their experiences of the Lord Howe community perhaps demonstrates the ongoing effect of 'transculturation' described by Mary Louise Pratt. Clearly, European understandings of non-European cultures expressed in earlier travel-writing continued to resonate throughout the twentieth century. Yet these descriptions of the Lord Howe community also call into question historians' longstanding reliance on race and class as primary analytical devices. Pratt, for example, distinguishes between

³¹ Reverend Rivett, a staunch socialist, was especially ardent in his praise of the community's 'absence of "pose" or any indication of a snobbish class superiority' and pondered whether its 'decidedly communistic' organisation suggested 'what might be possible in other and larger conditions.' Rivett, Letter to *The Australian Worker*, 2

³² Villiers, *Cruise of the Conrad*, 272; Silverland, 'Lord Howe Island', 8

³³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 45

Europe and 'the rest of the world' and uses class, and the notion of European degeneration, to account for the application of racial stereotypes to Europeans. However, the very modes of representation earlier applied to non-European colonial subjects could also be used to celebrate the lifestyle of the predominantly European community.³⁴ Ralph Stock, for example, fondly remembered the Island community as 'a white people with all the spontaneous warmth of true islanders.'³⁵ Like earlier Europeans, Lord Howe travel-writers expressed a clear fascination for strange customs and cultures but this was particularly because of the way they added to the extraordinary quality of their travel experience.

In the 1950s and 60s, tourism replaced palm-seed as the Island's main industry and community life on the Island came to more closely resemble the Australian *status quo*. The community was not strange enough to be a tourist spectacle but it was still central to the appeal of Island holidays. In particular, community life was being imbued with nostalgia, reminding tourists of a time that, everywhere else, had already passed. If Lord Howe holidaymakers of 1930s and 40s stepped into another culture, tourists of the 50s, 60s and 70s felt they were stepping back in time. In the 1970s, Australian media tycoon, John Singleton, celebrated what was *lacking* at Lord Howe: 'there are no big hotels. No phones, ... All the accommodation is splendidly 1950s guesthouse standard ... it's exactly as though the 1950s have been allowed to stand still.'³⁶ The community had certainly

³⁴ See: Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* especially 'Introduction: Criticism in the Contact Zone', 1-11

³⁵ Ralph Stock, *The Chequered Cruise*, (London: G. Richards, 1916), 102

changed, but it could still be constructed as a feature of the Lord Howe holiday, something that stood apart from everyday life in mainland Australia.

Observing the idiosyncrasies of the Island community *from the outside* was just part of the social appeal of the Lord Howe holiday – the other part was being included in it. Until the 1960s, this was the result of the prevalence of guesthouse accommodation on the Island. MacCannell has commented on the modern separation between front and back regions in tourist experiences.³⁷ For the first half of the twentieth century, Lord Howe guesthouses, and indeed the community itself, had no clear separation between front and back regions. Guesthouses consisted of an extension to the family home, although holidaymakers often slept in cottages nearby.³⁸ The home – especially the dining room, parlour and lounge – was the centre of tourist social life. It was here all three meals were served, evening card games or singsongs were enjoyed and rainy days were whiled away.³⁹ Familial relationships were established: Ellen Ward came away from her holiday having gleaned a number of recipes and housekeeping tips from her hostess.⁴⁰ Joyce Petherick remembers how her father Gower got their guests involved with the chores at Ocean View, ‘they were [really] made to feel like family.’ This even extended to Gower ‘supervising’ the guests as a ‘father figure’. One mixed-gender group of guests who planned to

³⁶ John Singleton, ‘The Best Island in the World’, Unknown Source, c. 1974, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection

³⁷ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 2nd Edition, (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 97-107

³⁸ Lord Howe Island Board of Control, *Circular No. 33*, 12 November 1935, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection; Lord Howe Island Board of Control, *Circular No. 42*, 13 February 1940, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection; and Taylor, ‘Lord Howe Island Holiday’, 2.

³⁹ See: Ward, *Holiday Diary*, 1-55; Lilly Dunn, *Holiday Diary*, 25 June – 15 July 1936, Lord Howe Island Museum Collection, 1-31

⁴⁰ See, for example: Ward, *Holiday Diary*, 13 & 15

read a novel together in their bedroom found Gower forbade it, stipulating that that any reading should happen in the lounge-room 'where everyone could hear and know what was going on.'⁴¹

Close relationships formed between Islanders and holidaymakers (especially the large proportion who returned annually). Some of the relationships formed on holidays were with other visitors but – given that both locals and visitors were involved in most social activities including sports, dances and picnics – this was not an important distinction.⁴² It was no 'staged authenticity' either but an arrangement that also served the interests of Islanders. In a community of approximately 200 people, it was tourists who helped make up requisite numbers for sports and dances and topped up the donation box when pictures commenced screening after WWII!⁴³ If, by the time Andrea visited Lord Howe in the 1960s, she was frustrated at the boundaries to community integration - 'fraternising' with the Islanders 'was out' – she ruefully admitted how quickly she was integrated into other aspects of the community's social structure. As a single, older woman this meant being adopted into the ranks of the Island's widowed women who had 'lapsed into a state of aunty-ism: Aunty Ruby, Aunty Sue, Aunty Jean, Aunty Beth ... and blow me down, before my week was half over I was Aunty Andrea!'⁴⁴

⁴¹ Murray, *Oral History Interview with Marge Rayward, Joyce Petherick and Ilene Douglass*

⁴² Dunn, *Holiday Diary*, 1-31

⁴³ As Clark pointed out, the Islander/non-Islander distinction had an added 'convenience' in relation to sports events where 'the opposing teams were commonly made up of the two groups.' Hubert Lyman Clark, 'Paradise of the Tasman', *National Geographic*, July 1935, 124

⁴⁴ "Andrea", 'Andrea's Visit to Peyton Place'

Conclusion

Unlike most holidaymakers who recorded their experiences on Lord Howe, Ellen Ward devoted little attention to the Island's scenery. The only statement in her holiday diary that explicitly mentions natural attractions is, however, very revealing. She wrote, 'this is a glorious Island: a beautiful conservatory of palms and little houses and gardens.'⁴⁵ Ellen does not separate her appreciation of the Island's natural features ('palms') from its social framework ('houses and gardens'). In so doing, Ellen highlighted the two main attractions of the Lord Howe holiday which were, for most of the twentieth century, inextricably linked: natural and social. When holidaymakers spoke of the Island as a 'paradise' or 'utopia' they could have been referring as much to the 'unusual charm' of the Island's social organisation as the 'paradise palms' that swayed in gentle sea breezes. Similarly, representations of the Island as an exotic Pacific Isle were reinforced both by its 'tropical verdure' and the strange customs of its inhabitants who seemed, to mainland Australians, to bear striking resemblance to 'true Islanders.'

There is, however, another sense in which the tourist appeal of Lord Howe Island is not just 'natural'. A 1990 brochure that declared Lord Howe to be 'the natural choice' for any holidaymaker, playfully highlighted the fact that the Island's quietly prosperous tourist industry had come to be seen as the inevitable result of its natural beauty.⁴⁶ Indeed, as a Lord Howe resident since childhood, this was

⁴⁵ Ward, *Holiday Diary*, 8

⁴⁶ Eastern Australia Airlines, *Lord Howe Island: The Natural Choice*, Tourist Promotion Brochure, circa 1991, 4B

an opinion I unconsciously held until researching this paper. In contrast, I have argued that the realities of the Island – natural and social – have been actively constructed by both tourists and Islanders as an attractive escape from everyday life.

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