

FOREWORD

I said many times I would not write autobiography – partly because it might signal, either to my inner self, or to others, a ‘signing off’ as a writer; and partly because I did not want to mark off areas that were fact in my life from those that might yet be invented. Fiction likes to move, disguised and without a passport, back and forth across that border, and prefers it should be unmarked and without check-points.

But age and the lack of a compelling idea for a new novel have combined, with a very positive response to my most recent non-fiction book, to change my mind. *Book Self: The Reader as Writer and the Writer as Critic* was intended to be just another selection of essays, public lectures and reviews; but the autobiographical elements that got into it seemed to add greatly to the interest and the warmth (apart from small predictable areas of deep-freeze) of response. This means, however, that in the later chapters of the present book there are a few small overlaps with *Book Self*. That was unavoidable, because of the way memory frames and edits the distant past: two or three stories had to be repeated, and I think bear repeating.

The other fact that made the present book possible was that it was conceived, right from the beginning, as a self-contained narrative that would begin at birth, or as soon afterwards as memory

set in, and go up to my first departure from New Zealand at the age of 23. I suspect there are grand precedents: Goethe? Wagner? Certainly Yeats, in his *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*. But with or without the back-up of big guns, I wanted to do it this way because I felt that whatever has followed, whether in the way of achievement or misdemeanour, was inherent in what I had been, and had done, in those first 23 years. I was, for good and ill, and for ever, a product of my genes in concord and combat with mid-century Auckland, New Zealand; and to tell this story was, or ought to be if I got it right, a way – one way – of telling the story of my time and my place.

I owe acknowledgements and thanks to old friends who helped me: in particular (taking them in the order in which they figure in the story) Barry Catton, Rob Dyer, Diane McKegg, Jill and Don Smith – and of course Kay Stead. One or two I would like to have talked to have vanished without trace; many, alas, are dead. Jock Upton's daughter, Shirley, kindly gave me information which confirmed my recollection of him. Margaret Scott helped me with relevant extracts from the Charles Brasch journals which she is transcribing.

I received great help and co-operation from my old school, Mount Albert Grammar, and particularly from Brian Murphy, the school archivist, and Chris Long, its development director. Similarly, Ruth Taylor at the University of Auckland helped me with facts about myself and others. Balmoral Intermediate School had no records that went back so far, or none that could be found. New Zealand Army Archives supplied me with my own undistinguished military history. David Verran at the Auckland Central City Library and Dr Michael Bassett provided me with useful records and information in support of my recollection of my father's role in the Labour Party, and subsequently on the Land Sales Court. The Hocken Library supplied me with copies of my correspondence with Charles Brasch, and the Alexander Turnbull Library with copies of letters to Frank Sargeson. Jeny Curnow gave permission

to quote two stanzas of 'Spectacular Blossom' by Allen Curnow and Margaret Edgcumbe gave permission to reproduce lines by Kendrick Smithyman.

The rest is memory, which I have relied on, and have found no reason not to trust.

I completed final revisions, additions, subtractions and polishing while holding the Seresin Landfall Residency at Gaiole in Chianti during August–September 2009. My grateful thanks go to Michael Seresin and Otago University Press for that opportunity.

When I was about half way through a first draft, and thinking of calling it *63 Kensington Avenue*, I received a broad envelope from the present occupant of that address, Mrs Sue Donnell, whom I had never met and knew nothing of, enclosing a University of New Zealand Certificate of Entrance Qualification dated 1949, showing that Christian Karlson Stead had been accredited in English, history and chemistry. It had been found under the house, and looked as foxed, torn and dog-eared as a document that has lain about in the dust for sixty years should. Difficult to describe what a strange feeling it produced in me, that this should have come, especially at that moment, as if to confirm that I was not inventing myself, but had in truth existed in a past real enough to leave such precise evidence.

C.K.S.

I

CLOSE TO THE SKY

*and I am there still, close to the sky
listening to housewives talk about the War,
watching the pole flash and the red tram
clank off into the future.*

ONE TAMAKI OF MANY LOVERS, AND JACK

From the windows of 63 Kensington Avenue you could see three of Auckland's many volcanic cones: to the south-east, One Tree Hill; north-east, Mt Eden; westward, Mt Albert. I knew the Maori name of Mt Eden was Maungawhau, because it was also the name of my school, only a few hundred yards away, in sight of our house. In those days the wh was pronounced by Pakeha as a w; and even now it takes an effort of will for me to give it the required f – Maungafau. Matters of language learned so early in childhood are almost immovable. I feel, pronouncing it Maungafau, as if I'm making a mistake, a solecism, but I do it, understanding why it is required, and despite the fact that the scholar in me has to be checked from giving support to the child.

Of those three hills only the English names were used by Pakeha; but I knew the Maori name of One Tree Hill was Maungakiekie; and Owairaka, the Maori name for Mt Albert, was also the name of its surrounding suburb.

Mt Eden was grass-covered, with clumps of trees around its base. I used to climb there with other boys during school holidays, and we rode sledges down into the crater. The crater-sides, dangerously steep, got stonier as you sped to the bottom, and no one ever went right from the top. Many arms were broken there, I'm sure, and how far up from the scoria-filled vent you dared make your start was a test of courage, or a measure of folly.

I liked to stand at the summit and look out in all directions. One way you saw the city centre, the port almost at your feet, and beyond it the North Shore and the islands of the Hauraki Gulf. The other way lay the great empty reaches of the Manukau Harbour. Turning half-left from that view you could pick out the main highway running away south towards the Bombay Hills, Auckland's southern gateway. From up there I could pick out Maungawhau School and, using the school as a marker, the red iron roof, one among so many, of 63 Kensington Avenue. Asked once in my middle years to write some sort of autobiographical summary, and trying to imagine how I might give it focus, it occurred to me that most things of real significance in my life and the life of my family had happened somewhere in sight from the summit of Mt Eden.

Mt Albert, visible from that summit and from our kitchen windows, and different from the other two in that it appeared to be smoky blue-grey, was the one I would not get to know well until I enrolled at Mt Albert Grammar, ran the annual round-the-mountain race and played soccer on the field that had been constructed inside its crater, sheltered by Australian eucalypts which accounted for the distinctive colour.

One Tree Hill's visual feature was the single tree that gave it its name, standing out against the sky, an exceptionally large Monterey pine with a wide canopy, a landmark second only to Rangitoto Island as a topographical brand for Auckland. Right beside the tree, softened and partly concealed, stood a monument to 'the achievements of the Maori people', a 30-metre obelisk, designed and bequeathed by John Logan Campbell in 1904, when it was still

being said that the Maori were 'a dying race', but not begun until 1939, by which time it was clear they were going to flourish. It is an example of the kind of irony which always besets protest action that when, many decades later again, in the 1990s, two chain-saw attacks by Maori activists made the tree dangerous and caused it, in the end, to be cut down, the obelisk, that clumsy, well-meaning, foolish Pakeha tribute to the tangata whenua, was left starkly exposed. For the activists, the tree had been 'a symbol of colonial oppression'. But what was the monument, which remains?

Everyone in Auckland, Maori and Pakeha, seemed to lament the tree's passing. Without it, the hill looked stripped and the monument ugly. A young Maori poet wrote a lament for it. Angry Pakeha words were written in the newspapers and spoken on radio. A Maori taxi driver told me how, when he first came to Auckland, he had taken his general bearings around the city from his position in relation to the tree, and now he missed it as a friend. Ngati Whatua told Ngapuhi (the northern tribe from which the activists came) that the attack was an invasion of their tribal area, one which, in the old times, would have led to war. Consultations with local iwi went on (and at the time of writing have continued over years) about how, and with what, the tree should be replaced.

Maori myth has it that the original, pre-European, tree on the top of that hill was a giant totara (Te Totara-i-ahua), grown from the sharp stake that cut the umbilical cord of a great chief, probably in the seventeenth century; but nineteenth-century accounts show that the totara, if it was ever more than myth, had not survived, and that time had replaced it with a self-sown pohutukawa, a tree which in its turn fell, probably to the axes of early settlers in need of firewood. When John Logan Campbell, owner of the hill and surrounding land, decided to grow a replacement pohutukawa there, neither the chosen tree nor any but two, and finally one, of the pines intended only as a temporary shelter for the replanting survived. That was the pine of the One Tree Hill of my childhood; and its story, involving myth and misinformation, inter-tribal rivalry, Maori-Pakeha

disagreement, cross-cultural misunderstanding and the accidents of horticultural survival on a windy hilltop, catches the complexity, passion and absurdity of our (and every) history.*

In addition to tree-planting and monument-designing, that excellent Scottish settler and ‘father of Auckland’ John Logan Campbell gifted to the city One Tree Hill and the surrounding 500 acres as public land, named Cornwall Park after some visiting royal. In my childhood it was much as it is now, open grassland, gardens and trees, including many fine olives, though my recollection is that, unlike the olives that have sprung up all over Auckland in recent decades, Campbell’s grew large but produced no fruit. There were scoria stone walls, grazing sheep and a tea rooms. Once (and probably more than once) when I was very small, my parents, sister and I walked from Kensington Avenue up Ellerton Road and Watling Street to Manukau and Greenlane Roads, to picnic in the park and climb to the summit. I remember it because the park seemed so beautiful that day; and because getting there in the heat I felt a single bead of sweat run down my brow. My father sweated in the heat, and this one salty trickle, my first, seemed a manly and memorable accomplishment.

Later, I used to stay with a boy, and he in turn with me, called Jack Aitken whose house in Wheturangi Road (also pronounced at that time with a w, not an f)[†] had a gate in its back garden fence which opened on to Cornwall Park. Jack’s father was a senior administrator in the Auckland Central Post Office; and I had the impression (possibly mistaken) that he wished me to understand that his status was superior to my father’s, an accountant in the Stores branch of

* Details about the tree come from my colleague and fellow-Albertian Professor Russell Stone. See R. C. J. Stone, *Logan Campbell’s Auckland*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2007, pp. 52–62.

† If f was what the missionaries, who were first to transcribe the Maori language into written form, had heard, they would have used that letter. What they heard was the sound between f and w that was traditionally represented by wh. In other words, the pure f Maori now insist upon (and that is their right – it is their language) is not quite the pronunciation of their forebears.

the same employer, and that he was exhibiting not inconsiderable social flexibility in admitting me to their household. Jack owned a bow and arrow, not the kind I and my Maungawhau School friends made for ourselves of bamboo, but a bought one, the real thing, of varnished wood with steel-tipped and feather-shafted arrows.

Cornwall Park was wonderful boy-territory and we tended to run wild there, or if wild is an exaggeration, then free. A neighbouring tennis court, owned by the parents of a sort of Hubert Lane-ite (we were keen readers of the *William* books), was blitzed with dirt bombs in paper bags. Potatoes were dug up unlawfully from Mr Aitken’s garden and boiled in a billy over an unlawful fire. Coming home from the Victory Cinema at night we set fire to a hedge. I was generally blamed for any decline in Jack’s behaviour; and I suppose that was not unfair, in the sense that two boys together are usually more trouble than one alone. Fortunately the hedge fire was never traced to us or visits either way would have come to an end.

As it happened one of my favourite books at that time, borrowed at intervals from school, was *Young Jack* by Herbert Strang.* The story takes place in, I think, the eighteenth century, and begins with its boy hero, Jack, and his friend Oliver up in the branches of an enormous oak in a village square in rural England, listening to soldiers enlisting, or perhaps pressing, new recruits for war in France. This fictional Jack, together with Jack Hawkins of Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (a novel my father had read to me before I could read it myself), gave the name a special resonance and made it only a short step, in my mind, from fiction to reality and back again. Equally, I identified effortlessly with Richmal Crompton’s lawless William, despite the fact that his household mysteriously included a cook and a maid. It was William who seemed to sanction those dirt bombs on the Hubert Lane-ite’s tennis court.

* Many years later, in an idle moment in the old British Museum Reading Room, I looked up Herbert Strang and found it was the joint pseudonym of two authors, one of whom was surnamed Stead.

The war in the Pacific had begun and an American Army hospital (a cluster of prefabricated huts) was being constructed in Cornwall Park; and somewhere else nearby, possibly on land belonging to the Ellerslie Racecourse, was an American military base. Jack and I sometimes hung about the gates of the base and were given chewing gum by friendly GIs, the flat, stick kind, much superior to our own; and occasionally a nickel or dime as a souvenir. When I wrote my novel *My Name was Judas* and had the boys Jesus and Judas hanging about the gates of the Roman camp, I had in mind myself and Jack and those American soldiers. There was a place called the New American Milk Bar in Newmarket, where you could buy new drinks and confections, milk shakes and ice-cream sodas, and listen to GIs talking 'like the movies', playing jazz, and singing 'Deep in the heart of Texas' and 'New York, New York is a wonderful town'.

This was the time when almost the whole of New Zealand's armed forces had been sent far away to fight in the Middle East, Greece and Crete; but now the Japanese had come into the war, attacking Pearl Harbour and sweeping down through the Pacific. Jack's sister Verona, about the age of William's sister Ethel, was old enough to have American soldier-boyfriends, who gave her silk stockings, chocolates and flowers, took her dancing and taught her to jitterbug. One of Jack's and my crimes, productive of sisterly shrieks and reproaches, was reading her love letters. It was chocolates we were after, not gossip (she had hidden the letters in an Adams Bruce chocolate box), but that was not believed.

The connection between the Aitkens and the Steads must have come through the fathers' workplace, but it was the two mothers and the two sons who were friends. Recently I found from my mother's old address book that Mrs Aitken's first name was Alice, but I don't think that first names were used. She was from a family of South Island racehorse breeders and trainers, and had a noticeable head of red-brown hair. She once 'took a holiday' by herself, renting a flat across the harbour in Devonport, and wrote (neither we nor the Aitkens had a phone – few people did at that

time) inviting my mother for lunch. Although Jack was not with his mother, I persuaded mine to take me along. She dressed herself (as always when 'going to town') in good dress, coat, hat and shoes, gloves as well probably, and me in jacket, cap and tie, shorts and knee-length socks, and we made the trip by tram and ferry. I loved the ferry crossing, the eerie green sun-shafts and shifty green water under the wharf and around the piles, the grinding of ropes on bollards, the beat of pistons and the sudden freshness of wind and swish of waves as you swung out into open harbour.

It was a first-floor flat Mrs Aitken had taken, close to the bottom of Church Street where my father and his brothers had grown up, and we sat having lunch looking out across the street past the public clock to the sea lane off North Head where shipping passed in and out of the harbour. There was an air of something brewing between the two women, something they wanted to talk about that must have been touched upon already in Mrs Aitken's letter; and when the meal was done it was suggested I might like to go and amuse myself on the little beach across the road – something I was keen to do. It must be that atmosphere of secrets between the women that accounts for my quite particular memory of a day when nothing memorable happened; and it is only now, so many decades later, I stop to ask myself what it was Mrs Aitken wished to confide, and what it meant to say she was 'taking a holiday' in her home town. The fiction writer would speculate and invent; the author of this memoir will allow himself only to record.

Mrs Aitken was soon back at Wheturangi Road, but I'm not able to say whether it was before or after her Devonport 'holiday' that I was staying with the family and came into the parental bedroom on a Sunday morning to find her and her husband sleeping late. Neither stirred and I retreated unnoticed, taking with me the image of her striking red-brown coiffure fitted over a head-shaped wooden stand beside the bed, and her bald head shining and pink on the pillow.

ALL THREE OF THOSE VOLCANIC HILLS, Mt Eden, One Tree Hill and Mt Albert, are deeply indented with what were once pa defences and garden terraces around the base, the most elaborate in the whole country; and Tamaki, as Maori called the Auckland isthmus, was often referred to as Tamaki-makau-rau, which over time seems to have been adopted as its official Maori name. It means Tamaki-of-many-lovers, suggesting a beautiful woman much desired and fought over. The climate, the fertile soil, the two harbours only a few miles apart on opposite coasts, and the abundance of fish and shellfish in both – all of this had the same appeal for Maori that it has since had for Pakeha; and the story I heard at school from a teacher called Mr Robinson (teachers had no given names in those days) was that fierce inter-tribal wars had been fought across the isthmus, and that one battle in particular, on the slopes of the hill our school was named after, was so terrible, a tapu had been placed on its slopes which persisted at the time of the arrival of the first European settlers. So the pa sites on Mt Eden, and also the ones on One Tree Hill, had been long-since abandoned, and were covered in bush when the first settler-purchases of Tamaki land were made. Only when those trees had been cleared was the extent of the terracing of pre-Pakeha times apparent.

The young Pakeha consciousness, as it grew during the years of my childhood (I was born in October 1932) was, without knowing it, the ground of a contest between two cultures – Maori and British. In every significant way the British was winning, because the dominant language, the social conventions, the political constitution, the international allegiances, the literature – all were British. But so many of the place-names and the stories belonging to them, and much else yet to be (in the literal sense) discovered during the next half century, were Maori, invisible but alive beneath the surface, and a subtle rebalancing was bound to occur.

And the British heritage was itself complicated, because it brought with it its own contradictory loyalties and antagonisms – Scots and Welsh, and especially Irish, against English; Catholic

against Protestant Irish; and working class against everyone. These very evidently faded with time and distance; but they meant that New Zealand manifestations of loyalty to Britain and the Crown, though genuine and at times apparently fervent, were cross-hatched with qualification and contradiction, so that everything said on this subject seemed, to the intelligent child, consulting his own feelings and observing the behaviour of adults, to consist of half-truths, approximations and, often, nonsense.

Meanwhile most Maori lived outside the towns. There were some few among the children at our school (one of them my own cousin, who lived with us while his father, my Uncle Don, was away at the war); and a few kuia were to be seen in our suburb, old enough to have the faded blue moko on chin and lower lip. But when Maori figured in my consciousness it was mainly in place-names, in stories about our colonial past, in Maori folklore (my sister and I owned a book called *Maoriland Fairytales*), and, most vividly and topically, in news about the Maori Battalion, New Zealand's fiercest infantry force, fighting in Greece and Crete, the Middle East and later in Italy. We were told we had the best race relations in the world, and believed it because there was nothing at the time to contradict it. It might even have been true, but, if so, we would slowly have to learn, and learn to accept, that that was only in the sense that everyone else's race relations were worse.

Yet if the British was far and away the dominant culture, and if European New Zealand was not yet out of its colonial sailor suit, the new identity, when it emerged, would be neither British nor Maori. It's for that reason I have always accepted the self-identification of 'Pakeha', because there is no other word that covers the case of what we are. There is even a sense in which it could be argued that most Maori in the twenty-first century are, or will be, Pakeha also; that they embody the same mix, having come to it from the other side. That, it might be argued, is a description which leaves out too much, and especially the social and psychological damage done to colonised by coloniser. But there is no honest way

of making the history kinder than it has been; and not many ways, none anyway that are quick, of correcting it after it has happened. Time and goodwill must be allowed to do their work. 'The world', as the poet Andrew Marvell said long ago, 'will not go the faster for our driving'; and like Auckland itself (the only one of New Zealand's major cities that was not planned in advance, and by far its most flourishing) the outcome will not look as it was meant to.

But as the children grew
It was something different, something
Nobody counted on.*

So I lived without any sense of absurdity or contradiction as a child whose home address was 63 Kensington Avenue, whose school was Maungawhau, whose nearest suburban shopping centre was Balmoral, and favourite place on earth, Kaiwaka. Neither Kensington nor Balmoral suggested anything remotely English, Scottish or royal to my infant ear. Those words invoked nothing more than the local street and suburb they named. Nor did I think of Maungawhau as hill of the whau tree, nor Kaiwaka as a food-bearing canoe. Those, too, were proper names. Was I living in a condition of colonialism? I would say that already I was becoming Pakeha.

THERE WAS A VOLCANIC CONE – or rather three, known as Three Kings – nearer than the three I have described, not quite in sight from the back of our house, but in easy walking distance. Two of the three cones had been largely destroyed, the scoria removed for roads and building sites. The third was still intact, with much of the surrounding land yet to be built over as the suburb extended in that direction. The rolling fields were neglected, covered with weedy

* Allen Curnow, 'The Unhistoric Story'.

grasses, gorse and blackberry, and here and there some of the original (or, more accurately, previous, since the pre-European tribes had burned off much of the forest from the isthmus) fern, bracken and manuka. This was a place where children ranged about, played games, made huts, fought wars, gathered blackberries in summer and ventured, challenging one another, into the dark of the caves.

The whole area was full of subterranean caves, caused, as it was explained to me, by lava from the volcanoes cooling on the outer side to form a skin, or rock tube, while still flowing on internally, as if blood should form its own vein simply by flowing. Our house was said to be built over a cave; and further down the street, where an alley ran between Kensington and Marsden Avenues, access was dug into it in the back garden of a house during the war, and an official sign put up to say this was our local public air-raid shelter.

It was a typically makeshift arrangement, which I don't think anyone took entirely seriously. No one liked to venture into the private garden broached to provide this facility; and if the time had ever come to use it, those who did would have had to sit in the cold stone dripping dark, because no means of lighting had been provided. Some people had small private shelters, often hardly more than a slit trench, dug in their gardens. I dug one in ours, not much bigger than a single shallow grave, over the top of which I arranged an old fire-screen interlaced with foliage for camouflage. My father kindly ignored it, saying if we had to shelter we would do it under our house, which, though built of wood, had strong stone foundations.

Down there, in a sort of basement accessed from outside, was my grandfather's workbench, a bin for firewood, a sack or two of coal and an ancient cabin trunk which housed carbonettes; there were also garden tools (including an old cutlass, used as a slasher) and the lawnmower. My grandfather's medicine chest from his time as manager on Nauru was there, still smelling of chemicals, and for a time it was used for the tinned food and bottled water we might need during raids. The floor was the scoria rock that formed the

foundation the house was built on. It was always dry, but there was no electric light, only a kerosene lantern and a torch or two; and I found it hard to imagine the five of us sitting down there on boxes, bins and coal sacks while bombs hurtled from the skies.

My father was the local air-raid warden, issued with a steel helmet, a flat canvas bag and a gas mask, as if dressed for a movie about the London Blitz. Since there were not enough gas masks in the country to go around, they were issued only to air-raid wardens, policemen and the Home Guard who, I suppose, in the event of a gas attack, would have been useful in counting the dead and reporting to HQ. The warden's job was to walk around the street each night, wearing his steel helmet and making sure curtains were closed, no chink of light showing. Riding my bike at speed to Scouts in the blackout I ran into the back of a car that had not been removed, as required, from the street. I flew face-first into its rear window, which was glass, and gouged very large pieces out of my chin and forehead, then set off to walk home before collapsing. The scars from the stitching are still visible.

At Maungawhau School a kind of rampart was constructed of wood and soil under a line of thick macrocarpa trees, and in air-raid drills we were marched out and required to huddle there in classroom groups. Each child had to bring to school a small cloth bag, worn around the neck, containing a cork to bite on (some kind of protection against the damage bomb-blast could do), ear plugs and a few other items including ID.

This was a time when it seemed the 'real' war was going on in the Northern Hemisphere, when 'our boys' (represented for me by Dad's brother Don) sailed away, and the whole unfolding drama of it was exciting and enjoyable, like a very good adventure story, one we all followed in newspapers and on radio, in newsreels and movies, and even strip cartoons (comics, we called them), most of it centring on 'the Resistance' (France) and 'the Blitz' (England). This was 1940, the period of Dunkirk and Mrs Miniver, when our own mimic preparations at home did not suggest that real bombs

would ever fall on us or real enemies invade. 'Our boys' were there but the rest of us were not; and it was as if, in some subterranean way, I felt that the very fact of its high value as 'story' confirmed our New Zealand insignificance. We could supply manpower, submit to rationing of food and clothing, export food to Britain collectively, and individually send food parcels to friends and family. We could listen to the BBC news (on short-wave 'from Daventry' – where was that?) every evening. We could be stirred, as those who were there were stirred, by those magnificent speeches Mr Churchill made, about fighting on the beaches, and fighting on the landing fields, and never surrendering. We could read the poster that said CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES, with its picture of a gabby woman and a ship going down, and wonder what secrets we possessed that might have such dire consequences. We could DIG FOR VICTORY – and my father, who already had an extensive vegetable garden, in fact dug up a piece of lawn and put me in charge of it. My mother kept a notebook in which the value of vegetables I supplied to her kitchen was entered to my credit; and this became a cause of mild friction between us when I reminded her of her mounting debt and she accused me of exploiting the war for personal gain. We could make patriotic gifts and sacrifices, and pretend (even the adults were pretending) that the bombs might fall on us at any minute. But we could not be there, where the bombs were falling *really*; could not experience the danger; could not be, or fail to be, heroic.

Soon the school had a new game for playtime and lunch hours. The children had discovered that the soil brought in to make our protective rampart was full of small smooth chips of marble. Following a recent popular movie about gold mining (set, I think, in Alaska) we began to 'stake out claims' and dig for these chips, and even trade them – marbles, or lollies, spinning tops or other prized things in exchange for our takings from the 'mines'. By the time the teachers discovered what was going on the protective structures were in ruins. We were commanded to stop; the 'mines' were closed down, but I don't recall that our defences were ever repaired. In