

that they couldn't read the cues needed to gain entry to games. They didn't follow the protocols. For example they didn't know how or who to ask; they didn't easily accept decisions that went against them; they were argumentative and uncooperative.

As Newcomb & Bagwell (in Pellegrini & Blatchford 2000, p.35) observed, "friendless children display less adaptive social competencies and social skills when interacting with peers". When their request to enter a game was denied they would go (or threaten to go) and complain ("they won't let me play") to the supervising teacher/dinner lady but usually it had little effect. If anything running to tell the teacher further ostracised them from the very group they wished to join.

Activities at playtime are largely based around friendship groups and when you don't have any friends it is a difficult place to be. It is not unusual for children who have no friends, or have trouble making friends, to ask if they can stay indoors at recess and lunch breaks to help the teacher or clean up the classroom. They often visit the library or the computer room – anything to avoid going out to play.

Most schools now have in place programs designed to help all children develop social skills such as tolerance, understanding, problem solving and cooperation. The idea is not just to help those with poor social skills but to encourage all students to be aware of the importance of having a sharing and caring environment to play and work in. We live in a changing world and the school playground is taking on increasing significance because it is the one place where, on a daily basis, children have the opportunity to play with their age peers. It is most important that we do whatever we can to ensure that the playground is a happy, friendly place for all children.

Dr John Evans is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Deakin University, Geelong.

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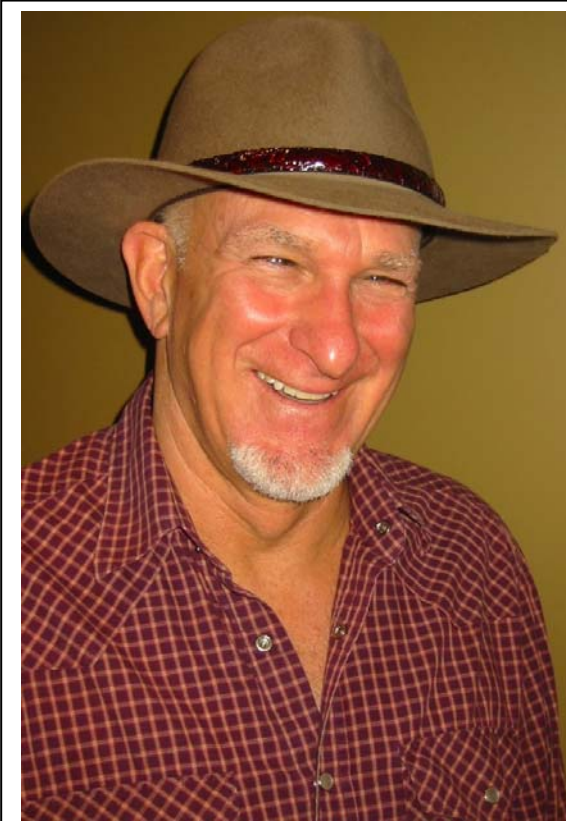
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## COLLECTING FOLKLORE

Warren Fahey



Author – Warren Fahey

“If only I knew now, what I knew then.” As a folklore collector I not only hear this heartfelt plea often; I also find myself muttering it.

I’ve been collecting folklore since the late 1960s and whilst not intentionally collecting children’s folklore I have unintentionally collected quite a swag. When recording oral histories it’s expected that I lead my informants back into their earliest memories. With a bit of subtle prodding most people will “open up” and, just as often, glaze over with nostalgic memories.

Last month I recorded the great Australian cookery writer Margaret Fulton. Margaret, now in her eighties, is affectionately called “the woman who taught Australia to cook”. I wanted to start at the beginning. Margaret was four when her family moved from Scotland to Glen Innes, in rural New South Wales. She recalled glimpses of Scotland but had extremely vivid, and mostly pleasurable, memories of her childhood at Glen Innes. I wanted to find out

how this country girl became the most famous person in the Australian kitchen. She related the pleasures of childhood and how she helped her mother in the kitchen, how she felt about schooldays and how, as a very young girl, she relocated to Sydney to work. There are obviously massive differences for children growing up in the 21st century.

Other people I have recorded take delight in reciting little poems they learnt some fifty or more years back, when in primary school. These poems are typical early 20th century stuff about daffodils, animals and the like. It is not so much the fact that they remember these works but the way they trigger off other memories. It is then that I ask about schoolyard games, birthday parties, diaries they kept, autograph books and special foods they ate or even helped make. Sometimes the floodgates open; sometimes not.

As I went to school in the 1950s, I also tend to travel back with them. I have written extensively (in my books and on my website) about the games I played in the schoolyard – bottle tops, mumble peg, rock, paper, scissors, cockylora, etc – and also about festive occasions such as Christmas and Bonfire Night. I also carry two permanent ‘souvenirs’ of my childhood: a scar on my wrist from an extremely violent tumble from my ‘top of the range’ billy-cart, and another scar right between my eyes where a backyard canon, made by forcing a ‘double-bunger’ down a bicycle pump. Oh yes, I have memories!



I do a lot of research on life in the 19th century because I believe it has a defining influence on our lives today. Those were the golden years of our pioneering spirit when life was far simpler and children knew their place. Those were the days when many people lived in the bush. Those were the days kids took pride in the fact they hardly ever wore shoes. Bindi-eyes be blown! Those were the days when families entertained themselves and the occasional break from routine was a cause of great expectation and delight: a store bought biscuit, even if from the 'broken biscuit bin' (because they were cheaper), was a major event. Those were the days that periodicals carried conundrums, riddles and ditties for children. I have collected many of these and especially ones that mention Australia (and many did). They appeared in journals like the *Argus* and the *Australian Journal*.

I've heard people say that one of their greatest entertainments was to invent games based on the wallpaper. I later discovered that early Australian homes used to make a flour and water paste and stick newspapers on the walls – inexpensive wallpaper. The games included 'I spy with my little eye' and 'collecting' similar words from headlines.

Marbles and knuckles (knucklebones) were also big back then and no self-respecting boy would be without a stash of bloodeyes, bonzas and other king-hit marbles, kept in a 'marble bag'.

As well as recording oral histories and researching in old magazines and newspapers, I have also jotted things down heard in conversation and printed in contemporary publications. I am a bowerbird and I try to return these 'bits and pieces' of folklore through my radio broadcasts, books and performances. I have often said that I see much of my work as a folklorist and performer as 'tapping Australians on the shoulder' to remind them of their unique history and national identity. It goes without saying that we live in very fragile times and that includes our culture. We are continually bombarded with overseas, mostly American, cultural crap. Kids seem to be the number one target so it's little wonder they are obsessed with American popular culture including street wear, cartoon characters, violent computer games and language. I don't know if it's just me but I seem to hear a lot of kids speaking in what I now call 'cartoon voices' – and this is not a put-on voice but their normal speaking voice. It's scary!

But I digress. Two years back I devised a folklore collecting project that set out to survey the 'folklore associated with the city of Sydney'. I obtained funding grants from the Music Board of the Australia Council for the Arts and from the City of Sydney Cultural Fund. I wanted to see what made Sydneysiders tick and folklore can provide some of the answers. The material I collect will emerge in the book I will (eventually) write. In the meantime I have established a website ([www.warrenfahey.com](http://www.warrenfahey.com)) where I post material and observations. There are several sections relating to children's lore, including the oral histories in the Australian Folklore Unit section (these all relate to tapes now held in the Folklore and Oral History Section of the National library of Australia). The Folklore of Sydney section has a designated 'Kid's lore' section and, because of the nature of folklore, kid's material is also in most of the other sections. In many ways the site is my filing system!

One recent addition to the site is a series of 24 Quicktime videos of three eleven-year old girls who allowed me to film their repertoire of clapping rhymes. Many of these are rather bawdy and this, of course, is typical of such rhymes. The one major revelation of the interviews and performances is the growing influence of American hip-hop, computer and similar culture on our schoolyard lore. I also show how the girls teach each other



these clapping rhymes – one of the girls came from a different school to the others. These are the first of a series of folklore films that will go up on the site.

Other interesting parts of the site are the sections on dance, including Maypole dancing at schools, and the sections on school songs and war cries. As a collector I quite often send requests to targeted groups – school songs and war cries was one such email request. I also managed to get a couple of pars in Sydney newspapers. This particular request triggered many responses and I collected a representative national sampling. There's also a wonderful account of school festivities in Ballarat. One of my informants related how they had an annual pageant to the Virgin Mary and formed a human set of rosary beads. She was a bead in the rosary!

Warren Fahey is one of Australia's most well-known and prolific folklorists. He is a singer, researcher, field-collector, broadcaster and founder of Larrikin Records and Folkways Music. His publications include *Eureka: the Songs that Made Australia* (1984, 1989) and *How Mabel Laid the Table* (1992). He is contactable at [www.warrenfahey.com](http://www.warrenfahey.com) and [wfahey@bigpond.net.au](mailto:wfahey@bigpond.net.au) His latest book is *Tucker Track* (the curious history of Australian food), published by ABC Books. It contains much children's folklore, including a section on tuckshops and associated children's kitchen lore.

## THE “TOODLEBUCK” — AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S GAMBLING DEVICE AND GAME

Melbourne Cup Race week, 1-8 November, has been the most important annual horse-racing event in Australia for seventy-five years and more. From early days, according to accounts and memoirs, both adults and children have gambled on the Melbourne Cup horses.

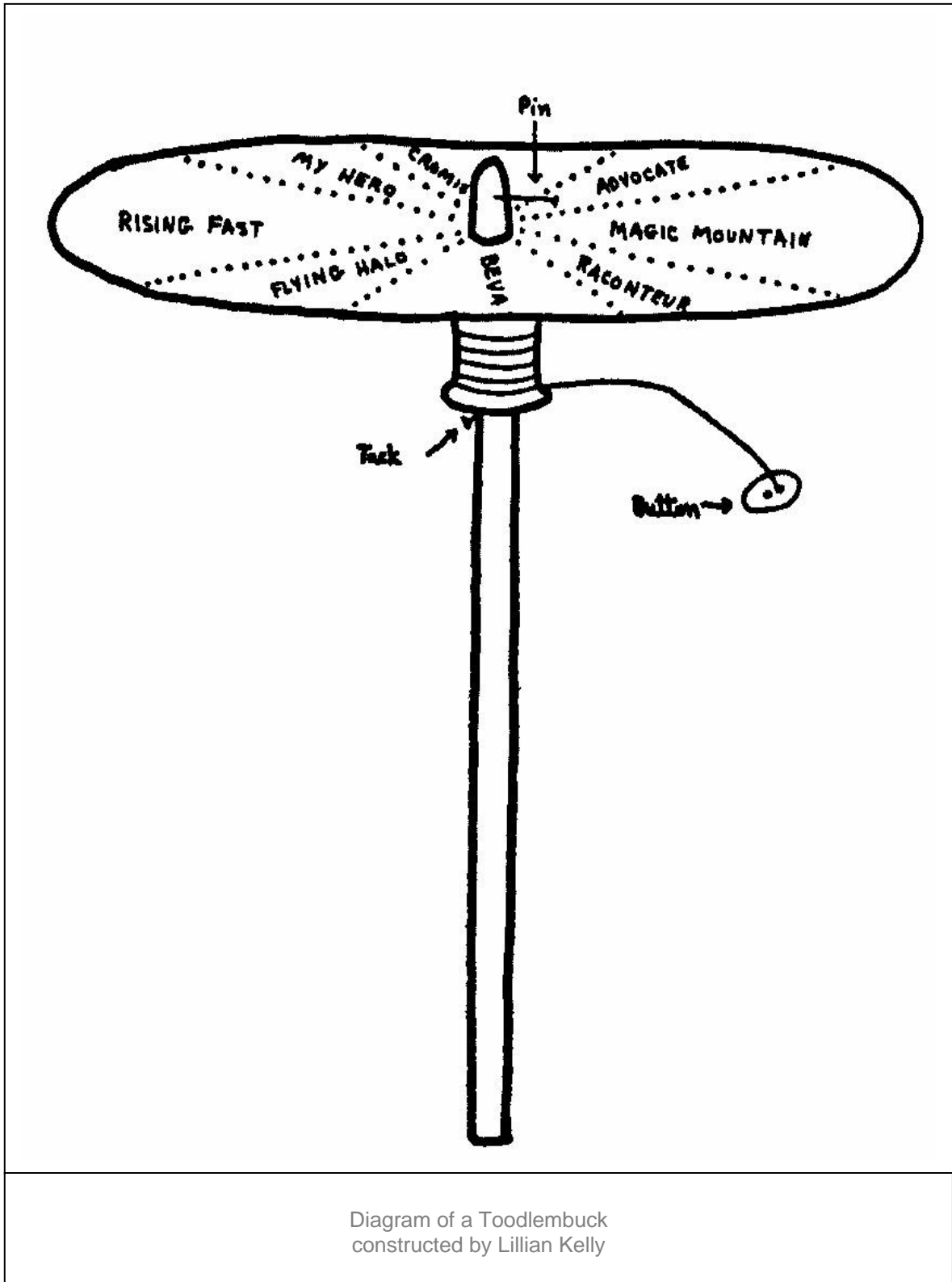
In November 1954, when I was in Melbourne, I collected some odds and ends of Melbourne Cup gambling practices, present and past, of adults and of children. Children of 1954, I was told, surreptitiously organize their own playground sweepstakes, patterned after their elders' office sweepstakes or club sweepstakes, and bet with pennies. But children of the early 1900s had a gambling custom — extinct now, as far as I could learn — claiming the picturesque name of “Toodlembuck” and employing a unique handmade gambling wheel and “cherry bobs” (cherry stones — cherries are in season at Melbourne Cup time) for money.

Lillian Kelly, a schoolmistress in Melbourne, constructed a “Toodlembuck” [see diagram on the following page] like the ones she had made and used as a child (about 1910), then made me a gift of the wheel together with the following description of the device and the game:

*One wooden skewer from the butcher (used to curl the tail piece of a roast of beef around the T-bone). One cotton reel (called sewing cotton spool in the United States), three tacks, one pin, an exercise cover (cardboard notebook cover). A piece of string with a button tied to the end to put between the fingers when pulling the string. Names of horses in Melbourne Cup of the year. Cherry stones used for betting. The owner of the Toodlembuck ran the game. He cried “Who'll go on my*



“Toodlemuck?” Those with cherry bobs picked their horses and gave so many stones to the Toodlemuck owner; and away we went. The owner wound the string around the cotton reel, pulled it, and we watched her spin. The winner took all.



R, J. Murphy of Lyonville, Victoria, reported a similar device in use among children from 1924-1930. When the wheel was spun, the owner sang out: “One, two, three and your old girl back.”



Another type of gambling device called a (or “the”) “Toodlembuck” was described as follows by T. H. Coates, Melbourne University, whose childhood was spent in East Ballarat, Victoria:

*Two four-inch lengths of one-inch diameter broom stick; one trousers button. (Sometimes the word “Toodlembuck” was applied specifically to one piece of broomstick with the button placed on the end.) A circle was drawn on the ground, usually by putting the thumb down as center and using the little finger to describe the circumference. In the center of this circle one stick was placed upright with the button sitting on top. Three yards from the circle a line was drawn and from this line the player had to bowl the second stick trying to knock the first stick over in such a way as to make the button fall into the ring (or outside the ring — I forget which). Marbles (which we always called “alleys”) were staked on the result. The entrepreneur would sing or rather chant: “Try your luck on the Toodlembuck / An alley a shot and two if you win.”*

G. S. Browne of Melbourne University and Brigadier Langley, played Coates's kind of Toodlembuck in their youth but called it “Scone on Stick.”

Originally published in *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 73, no. 287, January-March 1960, pp. 53-54.

Reprinted in *Child’s Play: Dorothy Howard and the Folklore of Australian Children* (2005). Please refer to the back pages for further details on Dorothy Howard and obtaining this wonderful publication.

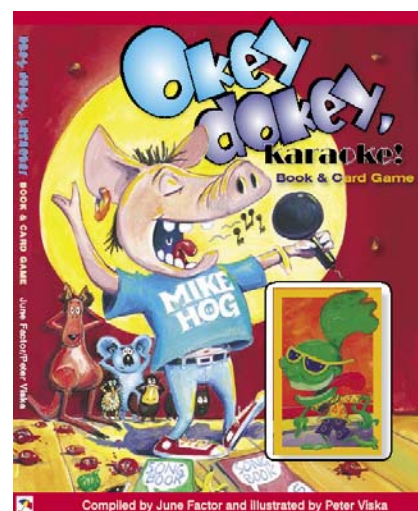
## Notes

1 George Robertson, *The Vagabond Papers: Sketches of Melbourne Life in Light and Shade*, II, 2nd Ser., Melbourne, 1877, p. 136, describes Melbourne Cup Day, 1876: “Everyone, too, from the Governor to children at school, appears to have some interest in the race in respect of bets or sweepstakes. This is really a gambling community; men, women, and children seem to be affected alike, all wishing to back a horse or take a chance in a ‘sweep.’”

### **OKEY DOKEY KARAOKE!**

June Factor has added another book to her series of collections of Australian children’s playlore: rhymes, chants, tall stories, riddles and jokes. *Okey Dokey, Karaoke* is published by Brolly Books, Melbourne. ISBN 1877035 629.

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## CHILD'S PLAY: DOROTHY HOWARD AND THE FOLKLORE OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN

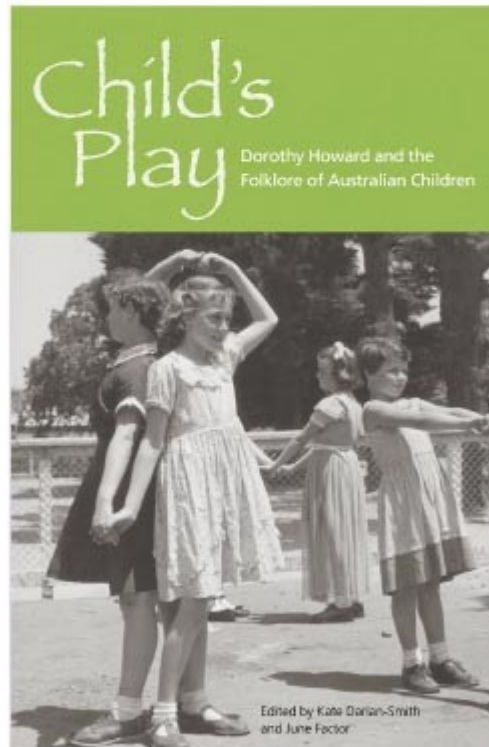
Edited by June Factor and Kate Darian-Smith

### About the book

American academic Dorothy Howard visited Australia in the 1950s on a Fulbright Scholarship: her mission was to observe and document the play and folklore of Australian children. Fifty years later, Howard's original essays have been re-published, along with contextual essays by international scholars in the fields of history and folklore. Howard's meticulously documented accounts of hopscotch, knucklebones, marbles and string games reveal the Australian schoolyard as it was in the 1950s. Her insights into the world of the child are as relevant now as then. Essays by well-known authors June Factor, Kate Darian-Smith and Brian Sutton-Smith pay tribute to Howard's fascination with and advocacy of child's play.

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**Illus:** black and white photographs  
and line drawings  
**RRP: \$24.95**  
**ISBN: 0 9577471 7 9**  
**Publication date: May 2005**

**From the book:** 'I suggest that while we are studying children on the playground, they are studying us in the classroom, at home and in public gatherings; and expressing their findings — not in esoteric, academic jargon but in subtle but direct satire. I suggest we can learn about ourselves by listening to them ...' Dorothy Howard



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