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## Field Trip September 2004 Lake Ballard

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## International Centre for Landscape and Language

### *Field Trip September 2004 Lake Ballard*

#### **The Aim**

The aim of this field trip was to take an interdisciplinary team to the area north of Kalgoorlie to view the fifty-one Antony Gormley sculptures set in Lake Ballard. A secondary benefit was to try out the new “fast” version of the Prospector train and to sightsee in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

#### **The Team**

The participants for this field trip were Glen Phillips (ICLL Director, poet and PhD student), Barbara York Main (biologist and ICCL Board Member), Hugo Bekle (geographer and ICLL Principal), Caroline Horobin (ICLL Manager), Angela Dyson (BA Writing student) and Perdy Phillips (visual artist and PhD student).



Breakfast at Midas Motel, Kalgoorlie.  
Left to right: Caroline, Barbara, Hugo, Glen and Angela. (Perdy took the photo)

## The Itinerary

### Day One

We took the mid-afternoon Prospector from East Perth on Monday 27 September, arriving at Kalgoorlie Central just after 10 pm. Maximum speed indicated during the trip was 145kph. A lot of preparatory reading for the trip was done in the train, including background articles on the great British sculptor, Antony Gormley, who was commissioned to create the 51 life-size figures for the 2002 Festival of Perth. Hugo had also found an article on the migration of stilts to nest at Lake Ballard when it is flooded, while Barbara provided a whole series of reports on ecological planning for the lakes area between Menzies and Koolyanobbing. The group were accommodated for the first night at the Midas Motel, walking distance from the Railway Station in Hannan Street. A surprised Glen Phillips spotted in the motel foyer a large landscape painting of the Goldfields by the late John Blakeley which incorporated a prominent excerpt from one of Glen's poems about goldmining towns.

### Day Two

Once our 4WD "Troop Carrier" was delivered by Thrifty Rentals next morning, the group was underway and heading north on the Goldfields Highway towards Leonora.



Troops on the road

Regular stops at ghost towns and nature reserves allowed much photography and even spider hunting. International expert on trapdoor spiders that she is, Barbara York Main had soon found a very large nest marked by radiating lines of twigs and sealed with its large but well-camouflaged portal.

Lake Ballard Report



The door to the spiders trap

Menzies was reached by midday and luggage deposited in our rooms at the local hotel. Cut lunches were ordered immediately and a barbecue dinner arranged for the evening by the obliging hotel proprietor.

Lunching by munching sandwiches, the six intrepid adventurers were soon on the dusty but broad gravel road heading westward some fifty kilometres to Lake Ballard.

The site of the sculptures is dominated by a conical island hill some 200 metres from the lake's southern shore. Facilities including rainwater tanks, have been installed by the Shire. The first of the sculptures, a young boy, is only metres from the final carpark. Out across the lake, with its extensive mirages, the solitary cast-iron figures seem to be on an endless parade of the shimmering salt. Evidences of animal tracks confirmed that kangaroos, emus and dingoes are also visitors to the area. The climb up the hill rewarded the party with breath-taking views of the whole area and a much better idea of the mammoth undertaking by sculptor Gormley.





General view of Lake Ballard and sculptures

Cameras were clicking and whirring as the ICLL party spread out to see as many of the individual figures as possible in the afternoon. Several were sketching and painting and others collected specimens for future study. Bird life is prolific, especially in the groves of mulga and mallee on the dune shores of the lake. But it was a dry lake, just 'tacky' to the walkers and so no waterbirds were to be seen.

As the afternoon drew to a close the light began to change to that magic suffusion of gold which rewards the keen landscape photographer. Lenses were even busier until the sun had waned. But well warned, the group waited patiently for the full moon's rising and some more spectacular pictures were taken.

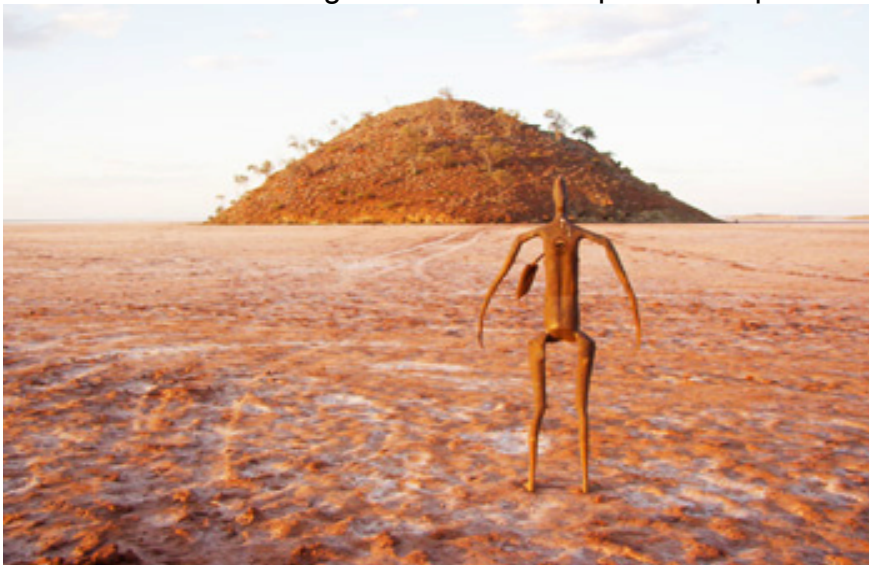


Figure in a late afternoon landscape

Lake Ballard Report

Dodging kangaroos and rabbits, the group made the run back down the road to Menzies quietly and the hotel proved an adequate refuge for the travellers.

### **Day Three**

Early risers at 4am, well before the earliest breakfasters, hastened to load up the 4WD for a second lake visit for dawn photography. This proved even more spectacular with the eastern light discovering new facets of the lake and the sculptures. On the return run to breakfast at the hotel, more wildlife was noticed on the road and several strategic stops discovered further colonies of trapdoor spiders and an amazing range of spring flowering plants and trees. Bird life, including budgerigars, galahs, spinifex parrots, top-knot pigeons, eagles and crows, was plentiful.



Dawn light on Lake Ballard

Leaving Menzies about 10am, the group made a leisurely run back to Kalgoorlie, stopping frequently to look at the flora and fauna of spring in the goldfields. And so to lunch separately at pubs and cafes in Hannan Street before an afternoon's viewing of the wonderful theatre curtain painting of Naples in the Boulder town hall, visits to the Super Pit and Mt Charlotte, the Regional Museum and the historic buildings of Hannan Street. Our overnight bus departed at 11pm to bring us back to the East Perth Terminal shortly after 6am on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> of September.

The Lake Ballard field trip was a resounding success for the participants and highly recommended to ICLL supporters.



Viewing Kalgoorlie from Mr Charlotte.  
Left to right: Barbara, Glen, Caroline, Angela and Hugo. Perdy took the photo.