

On the Beach

Doug. Williams

<http://www.summerhayscottage.com.au> ... doug@summerhayscottage.com.au

Morning swim completed - cleansed, refreshed, baptised, renewed - I stood, as always, with the sun licking the last of the Eastern Channel's pearl drops from my skin and turned my head right and left to survey the beaches of Cleeland Bight. Too many people! From the bridge around to the granite quarry I could see at least 50. That's 48 more than most times of the year. Many head-nodding good mornings on the rest of the walk home today I suspect.

What day is it?

Who cares? but I seem to remember there is something on at Churchill Island. Will I go? Probably not. Too many people. More peaceful pottering about in the back yard.

Better wander on. Breakfast is calling.

Striding along the sand, the first bunch of people I could see in the nearer distance was clearly a family group. Mum, dad and two young girls frolicking - no doubt they'd already had breakfast. Seems like mum and the little one are drawing pictures in the sand. Might even be a simple sand sculpture to appraise as I parade by.

...

What's the little one up too? Could be she's stomping up the beach to look for seaweed or twigs or something to decorate the sculpture. It's tough pulling your little legs in and out of sand when, with each step, you're in well above your five-year-old ankles. Makes you look like you're throwing a tanty.

My ears reached them before my eyes could focus on their sand scene.

Emma you come back here! Emma keeps going.

Emma I'm warning you! Emma drops like drama queen at the outer boundary of the foreshore grass.

Next week you're starting Grade 1 young lady and we have to get your Prep words sorted! Emma wasn't convinced.

If you don't come back here now you won't be going to the festival. A final defiant pause, then reluctant movement down the dune, feet dragging, shoulders slumped.

As I passed, my eyes focussed on the large, near perfect, print script letters engraved in the sand board and I read to myself 'they' and 'their'.

Higher education has a lot to answer for.

To her credit, before I was out of earshot, Emma reached the letters and, from the upside-down side, perfunctorily and perfectly read them out loud, then stomped away again knowing she could no longer be assailed.

No doubt mum thought she was helping.

March 2015