Elizabeth Jolley was a fine writer. Her publishing career began in her fifties in Australia, but as Brian Dibble demonstrates her writing developed through the decades in England and Scotland, from her family of origin, in boarding schools and hospital wards, and into her independent adult life.

The array of wild characters in her fiction—misfits and those on the edge of society—can also be found in the remarkable life of Elizabeth Jolley.

It could be said that the times suited Jolley’s rise as a major Australian writer, when old habits of who and what could be published were broken, but looking back on her body of work shows her importance.

Brian Dibble was given complete access to the writer’s private papers and has spent more than a decade travelling the world to follow leads on the story of Elizabeth Jolley.

This is a lyrical and readable biography, one that presents a world of family and pleasures, but always infused somewhere with an unexpended sadness.

- Brian Dibble interviewed several hundred people face-to-face, by phone or by correspondence, from Australia, Austria, Borneo, Canada, Cornwall, England, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Switzerland, the United States and Wales.

- About half of the people he interviewed were seventy or order, a number in their nineties. About a half of those older people have subsequently died, meaning the information he gained from them would have been irretrievably lost without his research.

- Similarly, Jolley’s authorising Dibble’s access to her personal papers in the State Library of NSW/Mitchell Library allowed him to discover much crucial information that could not otherwise be known for decades (they are embargoed until 2032 or 25 years after her death).

Brian Dibble Biography

Brian Dibble, Curtin University’s Emeritus Professor of Comparative Literature founded what is now Communication and Cultural Studies at The Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin) in 1972. He has published articles on Elizabeth Jolley’s work and written/edited a dozen books, including his own poetry and prose. He has also edited two volumes of William Hart-Smith’s poetry. He had the fortune of knowing Elizabeth Jolley as a friend and colleague working with her at The Western Australian Institute of Technology where one of her students was Tim Winton.