

BORDER MARKERS EXHIBITION AND OTHER NEWS

On 7 October 2009, Wendy Carter spoke to the Kimberley Society about current and past activities of the Kununurra Historical Society (KHS). Wendy has been the secretary of the KHS for the past six years. On the evening of the talk, the audience also enjoyed a PowerPoint presentation in which Wendy's young charge from Kununurra, eleven-year-old Montana Ahwon, showed slides of the KHS Museum, its exhibits, and the various places mentioned in the talk. Wendy's summary of her talk follows.

I moved from Kalgoorlie to Kununurra at the beginning of 2003 and joined the Kununurra Historical Society the week I arrived. I was initially disappointed that the KHS didn't seem to go on any outings whereas this had been one of my favourite aspects of being a member of the Eastern Goldfields Historical Society in Kalgoorlie-Boulder (WA). Fortunately this has changed over the six years that I have now lived in Kununurra so I can report on not only some of our forays into the bush but also on some of results these outings have led to.

My first foray was as a result of a letter received from Gay Morey in regard to her friend Lal Harding, who is now a Kimberley Society member and was present at the talk. Both ladies had lived at Ivanhoe Station at different times. Lal's father had been the butcher at Ivanhoe for a while, and Lal was keen to revisit. This letter led to a wonderful outing to Ivanhoe where Mac Jenson, caretaker at the time, showed Lal & I around, taking us to what is left of the old homestead at the billabong and the graves of Tom Deacon and Neal Durack.

This initial visit led to many happy outings, billed on the annual Ord Valley Muster program as "Graves in the Long Grass", followed by morning tea at the current station thanks to a number of willing caretakers since Mac left. Other Ivanhoe outings have been with local groups such as the congregation of the Halls Creek Catholic Church and with various members of the Durack family. I always find it particularly moving for visitors to the graves to read out some of M.P. Durack's diary entries from *Sons in the Saddle* pertaining to both Neal and Tom.

In 2005 we received a letter from Kevin Markey in regard to his father Dick Markey, who was a chainman on the surveying party which visited the Kimberley in 1927, to build the NT/WA border pillar known as the "Kimberley Obelisk" and to "run out a few pastoral lease boundaries and traverse Sturt Creek." Kevin hoped to visit the Kimberley the following year along with his sister to see the team's handiwork for himself and asked for help from the KHS in locating the pillar in time for his visit in 2006.

This letter led the KHS members into earnest discussions and a lot of poring over maps. On this, as on all our subsequent outings, our President Andrew Barker did a wonderful job of checking out related archives and finding much relevant information. Armed with maps, GPS, billy and lunch, KHS members travelling in half a dozen 4WD's, set off down the Duncan Highway one weekend. After a couple of false starts we eventually gave up on trying to find any decent track and followed a fence line on a very rough and bumpy ride. It took us all day but we finally found both the Kimberley Obelisk and the 1921 Austral Pillar, which South Australian Government Astronomer, G.F. Dodwell and Surveyor C.M. Hambridge along with W.A. Government Astronomer H.B.

Curlewis, used to make their astronomical observations as a prelude to marking the WA/NT border.

As a result of Kevin's interest, our various visits out to the site plus a lot of research, Andrew Barker has put together "The Border Markers" Exhibition at the KHS Museum with photos and information. Other exhibitions include the "Wirraway – Challenge" which displays the cockpit canopy frames and other components of a Wirraway aircraft (RAAF 12 Squadron) that landed on salt marsh near the NT/WA border after suffering engine failure over the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf in March 1942. A KHS expedition retrieved the last pieces of the aircraft in October 2004.

Since 2006 we have made some most enjoyable outings and camp outs. We have visited what is left of the original Newry Station, the current Newry Station and station graves. Also Rosewood Station, where Doug and Joanne Struber have been most helpful in our quests for things historic. We have visited what is left of Dunham River Station and Cow Creek Station, the latter being at Doon Doon. We went to the police camp at Wild Dog Creek (near the border) which was active from 1896 to 1908. The stock inspectors dip on the back road to Wyndham. The memorial at the Aboriginal massacre site at Mistake Creek (near Warmun Community). The old Threeway Hotel which is now on Parry Creek Farm. A boat trip to Adolphus Island where William Nicholls was buried way back in 1819 when he died on the expedition with Phillip Parker King. We also visited the Stewart's Yard billabong, the site of Reg & Enid Durack's first home on Kildurk Station, and saw the remnants of two stone huts connected with Burt Drew, a donkey teamster of earlier days. All of Reg and Enid's children and a lot of their grandchildren were on that trip, which took place on 13 July 2009, the day after a ceremony to inter Enid Durack's ashes and erect a memorial at the Durack homestead museum at Lake Argyle.

We have organised two three-day annual 'expeditions' for the Historical Society of the NT (HSNT), one in the East Kimberley in 2004, the other in the border country of NT/WA in 2006. In July 2009 we also participated in a trip to view some of the historic sites of the former Bradshaw Station on the Defence Department's Bradshaw Field Training Area (BFTA), which took three years of planning by the HSNT. We hosted a trip by a curator from the Australian National Museum, Richard Reid, who is putting together an exhibition on the Irish in Australia in 2011. Richard was looking at the Irish families involved in the early pastoral days of the East Kimberley and NT. And of course all year long we have visitors who used to live in the East Kimberley who come in to see us, as well as visitors who have never lived here but come to write about certain aspects of history for university research, books or plays.

This year, Andrew Barker was instrumental in raising around \$15,000 from local people and businesses in order to buy eight paintings of Elizabeth Durack's from the Costello Collection, to exhibit at the KHS Museum in Kununurra. Andrew flew to Perth early to visit the auction rooms and check out the paintings, seek expert advice etc before bidding for paintings of Kinivan's Yard on Rosewood Station, of Oombulgurri, and the early agricultural days at Kununurra and building of the dams. He then bought a second hand 4WD to drive the paintings 'home' before selling the vehicle. He put an enormous

amount of time and effort into this project. The acquisition of the Kinivan's Yard painting sparked another quest for knowledge and led to discoveries about its builder, Timothy George Kinivan, and its location on Rosewood (just 50 metres from the Kildurk Station boundary).

So, in the words of one of Peter Brandy's songs, the Kununurra Historical Society is now firmly "on the back roads of the Kimberley". If any of the Kimberley Society members have something they would like us to look into, please write care of PO Box 77 and we will see what we can find!

Further reading

Durack, Mary. *Kings in Grass Castles*. Constable and Company Limited, London, 1959, numerous reprints and new editions.

Durack, Mary. *Sons in the Saddle*. Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1983, Corgi Books, London, 1985.

Millett, Patsy. *The Duracks of Argyle: A summary of a pioneering venture and the years 1852 - 1950 in Kimberley, Western Australia*. Access Press, Bassendean (WA), [c. 2006].

For the program of the first annual 'expedition' organised by the KHS for the Historical Society of the NT, see <http://www.historicalsocietynt.org.au/Kimberley.pdf>.

For an account of the Historical Society of the NT's trip to Bradshaw Station in July 2009, see <http://www.historicalsocietynt.org.au/downloads/CampingBradshawStationNTAug09.pdf>.

For coverage of the KHS Museum's 'Wirraway - Challenge' exhibition, opened on 20 March 2005, see <http://www.kimberleyecho.com/archive/2005/20050310/story01.html> and <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/reporter/stories/s1335313.htm>.