



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 106

October 2011

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at
Shenton Park Community Centre, corner Onslow and Herbert Roads

Wednesday, 5 October 2011

Dr Sandy Scott (Lecturer and Leader of travel programs)
“Bays, Basins, Islands and Estuaries of the Kimberley Coast”

Wednesday, 2 November 2011

Sarah Legge (Australian Wildlife Conservancy)
“DEC and Mornington Station cooperative fire management practices”

Wednesday, 7 December 2011

Professor Lyn Beazley AO FTSE (Chief Scientist of Western Australia)
“The Amazing Kimberley - A Science Perspective”

Members and visitors are invited to stay for supper after the meeting.
The Society asks a \$2.00 hospitality fee from non-members.

Kimberley Foundation Australia

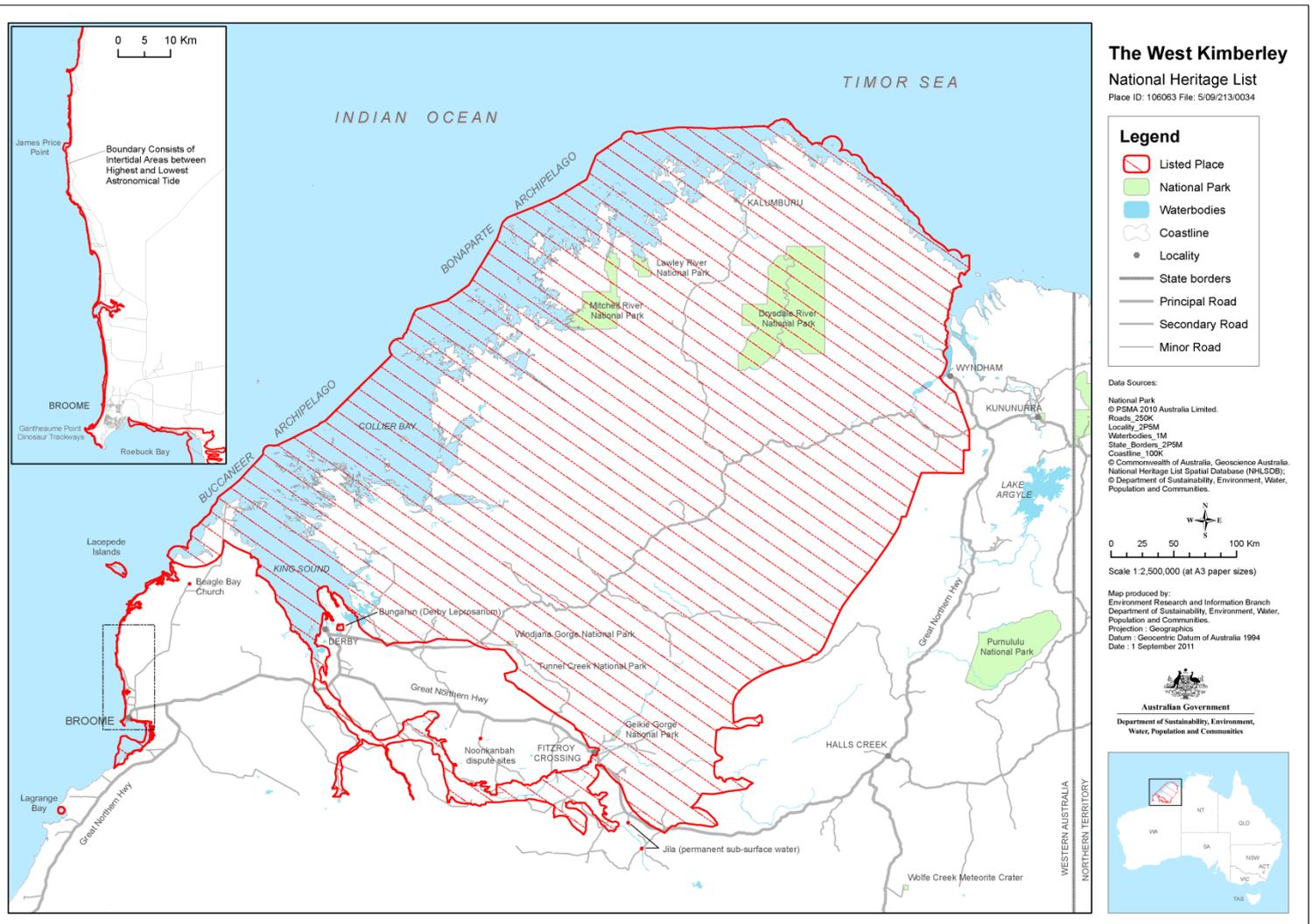
KFA ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE at University Western Australia
Kimberley Climate and People: The Last 100,000 Years
Keynote: Dr Karl Heinz Wyrwoll BSc PhD Lond., MSc McG

6.00 pm, Thursday 17 November, 2011
Auditorium, University Club, UWA Perth
Admission Free

Enquiries: admin@kimberleyfoundation.org.au

FROM THE PRESIDENT

On 31 August the Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke, announced that more than 19 million hectares of the Kimberley region will be national heritage listed. The announcement, which had been delayed to allow further consultation and assessment of the heritage value of the area, was made to a gathering of traditional owners at Gambanan near One Arm Point on Cape Leveque.



Map courtesy of Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

There are now 96 places on the national heritage list, 13 of these in Western Australia, and they include Uluru, the Great Barrier Reef, the Sydney Opera House and Fremantle Prison. The listing of such a vast area is a new and somewhat controversial application of the heritage legislation but, as the Minister said at the announcement, the decision provided the region with the highest level of protection and recognised the ‘outstanding heritage values’ of the region including Aboriginal, historic, aesthetic and natural. The area does not include the proposed James Price Point gas hub 60 kilometres north of Broome and the listing does not prevent further development in the listed area. As would be expected the announcement met with mixed reaction from various groups with interests in the area. The Kimberley Land Council indicated the listing ‘cemented the region as a strong and significant Aboriginal place’. The WA Premier, Colin Barnett said ‘the decision was disrespectful to West Australians’ but he was not surprised that the James Price Point site was not

included in the listed area. A Wilderness Society spokesperson said the listing would be meaningless if the development at James Price Point was approved. The Australian Conservation Foundation congratulated the Federal Government on the listing but Environs Kimberley believe that it 'isn't nearly strong enough'. A spokesperson for the WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy said 'the "broad brush" approach to the Kimberley listing would have negative impacts on present, proposed and future development in the region'.

The Australian Heritage Council has produced a 276-page document as their final assessment of the west Kimberley heritage values and this can be accessed through <www.heritage.gov.au>. The document, although somewhat repetitious and lacking in illustrations, contains much useful information on the region and also has an extensive bibliography. A published booklet *One Place, Many Stories: West Kimberley* can be ordered free of charge through the same website.

Jeffrey J Gresham

REST IN PEACE

James O'Kenny, also known as "Gelignite Jim", died at home in Kununurra on 15 August, aged 74. Widely recognised for his work in establishing *The Kimberley Echo* in 1980 with his business partner Brian Cole, he was fearless in using it to advance his views and to aid various causes. He also worked as a stock and station agent in the Kimberley, a "powder monkey", and an auctioneer. Had he won enough votes in any of several elections, he would also have been a politician.

Nathan Dyer, a fellow journalist, provided further details of this Kimberley identity's colourful life in an obituary published in *The West Australian* on 29 August. Originally known as Jude Kenny in his home state of NSW, James O'Kenny leaves his wife Marion, sons Patrick and Michael, and daughter Frances.

Peter Ross JP, who lived in and around Fitzroy Crossing from the late 1940s, passed away on 27 August. Born near Liverpool in the United Kingdom in 1927, he was raised by Catholic nuns, attended an orphanage school at Leyfield, and was sent to Western Australia as a child migrant in 1938. He went to Tardun and Clontarf, and he was as grateful to the Christian Brothers there as he was to the nuns in the UK. Unlike many child migrants, he was quick to praise the people who gave him his start in life. One of his most treasured possessions was a string of wooden rosary beads blessed by the Pope and given to him by Sister Joseph.

When Peter left the Christian Brothers, he worked on farms and stations. Allan Bain on Woodland Station (out of Meekatharra) told him about the Kimberley and about various station folk with whom he might obtain work there. A stint on Liveringa (out of Derby) followed and, from that time on, Peter worked with droving teams, on Kimberley stations, and with Aboriginal people. For twelve years he was on Christmas Creek (an Emanuel station) and it was there that he formed lasting bonds with the Wangkatjungka Walmatjari peoples from south of the Fitzroy River.

In 1951, Peter married Casey (Nyawanday), a Bunuba woman. Casey pre-deceased him but they are survived by sons Joe and Cameron as well as being remembered by many other people to whom they offered shelter, guidance and love. The eulogy to Peter ("Mangkurla"), delivered by the Hon. Tom Stephens JP MLA, can be read at <<http://www.kimberleypage.com.au/2011/09/vale-peter-ross-2/>>.

Cathie Clement

KIM DURACK, HIS LIFE AND HIS LEGACY

On 3 August 2011, the Kimberley Society heard from Patsy Millett, who is both the cataloguer of the Durack archival collection and a writer of biographies. Her output includes *The Duracks of Argyle: A summary of a pioneering venture and the years 1852 - 1950 in Kimberley, Western Australia*, which was published by Access Press, Bassendean (WA), in 2006 and will soon be reprinted. In conjunction with Naomi Millett, Patsy also edited *Pilgrimage: A journey through the life and writings of Mary Durack* (Bantam Books, Sydney, 2000). Her current work includes the completion of a biography of her uncle, Kim Durack (pictured). The talk presented to the Society drew on that work and is summarised below.



Born into a pioneering family, Kim Durack (1917- 1968) was the second son of Michael Patrick and Bess Durack. Educated at Christian Brothers College in Perth, it was taken for granted in his youth that, like his older brother Reg, he would eventually have some vital part to play in Connor Doherty and Durack ('CD&D'), the family pastoral firm. With this in mind, he decided with the encouragement of his father to undertake a course at Muresk Agricultural College. Thirty-seven years after he first ventured into East Kimberley, MP Durack had come to realise that the open-range grazing method involving hard mustering and long, dry droving treks, was an obstacle to the running of a profitable concern. It was supposed that a new 'scientific' approach might help overcome the predicament of poor cattle in an ever-poorer country for an industry already beset by distant markets, shortage of man-power and the on-set of depression. By the 1920s, the new hope for northern prosperity had become centred on the discovery of oil, the mirage of which happy dream was chased by Michael Durack and the CD&D shareholders to its last faint shimmer.

When in 1936, after completing three years at Muresk, Kim first entered the north he at once saw not only vast acres of 'wasted' land, but a land laid to waste by the long-held methods of pastoralists. A country which had in 1900 operated on a basis of one beast to 20 acres was three decades later supporting no more than one beast to 80 acres. Full of his newly acquired know-how and zeal, Kim sank the first plough into the CD&D soil for the purpose of experimenting with a variety of supplementary grasses, cotton and other crops. After some moderate success, he began a program of lobbying the Government for funds to establish a larger scale irrigation farm. In 1941 his efforts brought about, with his participation, the first survey for a suitable Ord River dam site.

This project sidelined by the more pressing problems of WW2, a modest Government budget was provided to set up an experimental farm on a portion of Ivanhoe station on the river front at Carlton Reach (where Kununurra now stands). Kim's initial goal of attending University and obtaining a science degree was by then set aside for what he saw as a more vital field endeavour.

Showing an extraordinary capacity for killing work, on a negligible salary and without manpower other than the assistance of his brother Bill, Kim established green fields of crops, principally sorghum and millet, supplied by water obtained by a primitive pumping system. The successful project saw much interest and enthusiasm from visitors to 'the irrigation show,' but differing views emerged as to how the scheme might be developed. Kim's focus at this stage was to supply year-round fodder in order to encourage the idea of 'store' cattle. He did not, like many an excited politician, see the north in terms of an Australian food or fruit basket in competition with Asian markets or established Australian industries. For the foreseeable future, it seemed the region was destined to be viable only for the pastoral industry and this would require silage and irrigation schemes. He was convinced that any more

ambitious undertakings called for a painstaking process of mapping and assessing all the available water resources of East and West Kimberley and further long-term experimental projects before anything could be labelled as 'economic.' In this belief and with his complex vision of 'the right way to proceed' he became somewhat at odds with Russell Dumas, the state coordinator of Works and Industrial Development, who had backed him as the man to head a new era of closer settlement through agricultural expansion.

Among the Kim Durack files in the Durack family papers, 1886–1991, as held by the Battye Library (Call number Acc 7273A), are documents, letters and associated papers giving a full account of this early period, including the first survey for a dam and the establishment of the Carlton Reach farm. There are also verbatim transcripts by Kim's sister Mary of the arguments that arose between father and son over methods of improving the industry and the direction of the family company.

Leaving Carlton Reach for wider fields, Kim went to South Africa to study crop growing methods on similarly climate-affected land. On his return in 1947 he stood as an independent nominee for the Legislative Assembly seat of Kimberley, issuing a manifesto, 'A New Deal for the Kimberley.' This position had been a long-term sinecure for a 'do-nothing and don't rock the boat' candidate. Kim was frustrated to find that many northern pastoralists, despite their difficulties, feared change of any kind and clung, like his father, to 'the old methods.' His bid for reform came at a time when, in many instances, the financial situation was too marginal to do anything other than stick to the status quo. He was defeated by a few votes.

Despite the efforts of his sons and daughters to prevent the move, in 1950 MP Durack sold the CD&D properties. The details of this end to a story which had begun seventy years earlier in Western Queensland and brought about the longest cattle trek in history are also covered in full in the Durack archives.

With the sale of the company, it appeared there was no further place in the north for Kim. He attempted, without success, to interest his brother Reg (who had retained a section of the Northern Territory holdings) in establishing an independent irrigation scheme at Kildurk Station. At the same time he began discussions with a number of men involved with a profitable Murray River rice-growing concern. They saw a man of considerable knowledge of northern conditions and experience with irrigated crops who might work on their behalf in a western extension of their business. Kim saw them as having the capital to assist him at a crucial time in further experiment. This, as shown by the preserved data, was the set-up for a likely grievous finale.

Now an employee of Northern Developments Pty. Ltd., Kim acquired a caravan and parked it under 'the foundation boab tree,' on a portion of Liveringa station in West Kimberley. The agreement to excise from the lease some of the best grazing country on Uralla Creek for testing the viability of growing rice came as a result of Kim's established friendship and association with the Rose family, who managed Liveringa.

For six years, with the assistance of a few transient labourers, Kim lived in his caravan and as at Carlton Reach, laboured mightily. The first problem of obtaining acclimatised seed to some extent overcome, there followed a continual battle against the ravages of birds and insects. The method used to counter the latter was by the liberal application of potent pesticides. Through seasons of drought and flood, he persevered, until the land sprang forth with waving fields of rice, mostly of the Magnolia and Zenith varieties. The first bag from Camballin was milled in 1953. After a visit to the site by Australian Rice Industry representatives W Rawlings and SR Bell, a glowing report advised the construction of a barrage dam and more

permanent living quarters. Meanwhile, to strengthen his defences against the possibility of future conflict with his backers, Kim continued to buy Northern Development Co. shares with his £1,000 per annum salary.

The following year, on instructions from head office, Kim received a party of politicians, financiers and press. By this time a dam had been erected and a house built from local stone modelled on the Greek Parthenon was nearing completion. The enthusiasm and praise for his heroic efforts unbounded, he was declared 'Man of the Day' by *The West Australian*. Unhappily for Kim, from correspondence over this period it seems the businessmen behind the project were not pleased to have the spotlight and applause concentrated on their 'Manager of Planting.' A 'visionary' of cautious bent was going to be harder to control than 'an employee.'

Nevertheless, the backers were happy to use the widely-held perception of Kim's personal integrity to obtain an agreement from pastoralists that allowed the Government to allot the first land in the Kimberley for 'agricultural purposes.' This was a tricky and obstacle strewn course, and at the time no one but Kim could have negotiated it. The funds for a large new dam obtained, Northern Developments wasted no time in printing a glossy prospectus to attract wider shareholders. At this juncture, the coming confrontation was seen by many as between the divergent pastoral and agricultural interests.

At the end of 1957 as a result of a Fitzroy River flood, the barrage dam collapsed. In sending advice to NDC about the disaster, Kim took it upon himself to call off a team of Eastern states growers already en route and dismiss another five controversially in situ. The company was informed that the ambitious goal of planting projected for the coming season was impossible under the circumstances. When following a wire in return, Kim refused the demand of Chairman Peter Farley that he continue regardless to declare the 500 to 1,000 acres achievable, a meeting was called. Present in Derby on Jan 24/58 were directors P. Farley, R. Rowell, K. Gorey with a proxy vote and Kim. With two votes recommending his authority cease immediately and R. Rowell abstaining, Kim found himself 'suspended.' The ground for this had been prepared in advance by an October '57 behind-the-scenes share juggle and a stacking and re-arranging of the NDC Board so that Kim, as majority shareholder, was out-numbered.



'The Parthenon'



Kim Durack in flood waters

There is voluminous material covering this period, including a daily work diary kept by Kim and twenty-two letter books allowing for both ends of the business correspondence to be captured for posterity. Through the extracted, summarised and/or transcribed correspondence files, both business and personal, copies of inter-related material and data from other areas, a full and gripping picture emerges. Among these are the letters from his sister Elizabeth, who was staying with Kim at the time of the dam collapse, which give an account of the minute to minute drama of the situation. Relics of the enterprise: a tractor key, the first head of rice, airline tickets, lists of supplies and receipts, a battered suitcase etc, have survived the years.

At first supposing his dismissal merely 'a misunderstanding,' Kim gathered much public support and outraged denunciations of Northern Developments. However, this was countered by NDC who had found a Murray River farmer willing to declare the season's rice goal attainable. New manager, Keith Gorey, moved into 'the Parthenon' with his family and Kim resigned as a director of NDC.

He then drew up a new irrigation scheme for the Lennard River, in West Kimberley. In preparation for this venture he began compiling maps and charts aimed at a comprehensive study of Northern water resources and travelled to Canberra to put these documents before Prime Minister Menzies. Initially, he was given a warm reception and his ideas were received with interest in Government circles.

At this time the Ord River Dam project was being strongly promoted by Sir Charles Court, Minister for the North-West in the Brand Government. Kim had long warned that the experimental stage had scarce begun and that a few crops raised at exorbitant cost could not justify such an extravagant scheme. A public war of words ensued between Kim and his supporters and Mr Court.

Subsequently and likely consequently, Kim's plans were shelved at both a state and federal level.

From 1960, his life became a long and wearing saga of attempting to find anyone willing to listen to him or give him a job commensurate with his experience. It was later discovered that political power-brokers hostile to any opposition to an Ord River Dam had privately spread the word that he was an 'obstructionist' (to progress) and a 'possible security risk.' All doors were closed to him.

The papers written by Kim Durack on many aspects of water conservation, irrigation and northern development as presented to the state and federal governments are housed with the archival collection, as are the many original letters on file to and from Kim and Government ministers of the day. Correspondence with his mother and sisters, Mary and Elizabeth and his brother Bill capture all aspects of his continued, but soul destroying efforts.

From the point of Kim's departure, Northern Developments, under a series of new company names, fell into financial ruin. Documents and papers held in the Durack archives cover the on-going fiasco at Camballin, including sequential newspaper cuttings following the fortunes and misfortunes of US investor Jack Fletcher.

With the failure of Northern Developments, Kim's shares were rendered worthless. Possessing no funds other than those borrowed from family, he struggled on in Canberra, eventually accepting a lowly job with Parks and Gardens. A two-year engagement to an Ipswich girl was broken off as his prospects did not improve.

Kim then began his last journey into new frontiers of the mind. He took up an advanced study of mathematics, physics and philosophy and produced a number of

impressively profound papers. Deeply enthralled by theosophy and theology, he spent the last years of his life writing a thesis, *An exercise in Refutation: Kant and the Ideal of Pure Reason*. All this work, much of it extraordinarily complex and beyond the mind of any but a few eminent academics with whom he corresponded, is preserved in the archives.

By 1967, Kim had become affected by a mysterious illness which was discovered to be A-plastic anaemia – a blood disorder likely acquired from unprotected contact with lethal pesticides. He died in 1968, just before his fifty-first birthday, and was buried in Canberra. From first to last, the story, as preserved in the voluminous files held by the State Library, is deeply engrossing and unbearably poignant.

Kim Durack's rational and scientific approach to the use and harnessing of not only the water resources of northern Australia, but nation-wide, is yet to be properly understood. History since he left the scene has showed that much of what he said and predicted has proved right and that there are yet lessons to be learned from his words, which stand as a legacy to past mistakes and future hopes.

Patsy Millett

DERBY VISITOR CENTRE IS GOING PLACES

As this edition of *Boab Bulletin* goes to press, the staff at Derby Visitor Centre are preparing for a big move. A new purpose-built building in central Loch Street is having the finishing touches applied this week, and the move from the small (tiny) building at the very end of town is expected to happen within days. The new spacious building is about four times bigger than the old, and it has impressive photographic displays of the region's spectacular scenery including the Buccaneer Archipelago, horizontal waterfalls, and gorges. There is even a veritable forest of orange boab trees (synthetic, but well done) and an impressive display of the old Derby jetty featuring some of the original timber piles.



Just up the road, Kimberley artist Mark Norval is setting up a major art gallery to display his substantial personal collection of paintings and etchings, as well as works by Mowanjum artists. He plans to add a cafe and meeting facilities, and expects to be open to the public within weeks.

It is all happening in Derby!

Mike Donaldson

FOOTBALL UPDATE: AFL LISTED PLAYERS

Lewis Broome: After five rounds of WAFL football this young man was leading the goal kicking table with 18 goals. Following this, his form seems to have tapered a little, where he doesn't appear to have been having as many games and certainly didn't play for Claremont on 3 September against East Perth. However I did see him play the week before against Peel Thunder.

Gerrick Weedon: Gerrick initially made the emergency list for the West Coast Eagles against Melbourne on 12 May but his services were not required. He did finally make his debut against Essendon at Etihad Stadium but has been unable to force his way into the senior team since. However he has been playing well for Claremont and will certainly be included in their teams in the final series.

Zephaniah Skinner: Zeph, originally from Noonkanbah via Claremont, Nightcliff and the Northern Territory Thunder, is on the Western Bulldogs list. He did play one game during the season in Round 7 against the Sydney Swans. I thought I may have seen him playing for Williamstown against Claremont in the final of the Foftel Cup but I didn't recognise him there. As reported previously, he did have an article in the *Weekend West Australian* at the beginning of March when he was due to play against Fremantle Dockers at Bunbury in the pre-season competition. He was described as yet another "Kimberley Kid" and he kicked four goals in that game.

Since my initial challenge to anyone else to find an AFL listed player from the Kimberley not known to me, I have discovered one player during the season. **Casey Sibosado** is playing for Perth and is on the Dockers Rookie List. Because of the Fremantle team's number of injuries, he was elevated from the Rookie List and played the final game of the season against the Western Bulldogs. He scored two or three goals, so obviously acquitted himself well.

For anyone looking to support a WAFL team which has several Kimberley footballers on their list it is impossible to go past Claremont. The aforementioned Lewis Broome and Gerrick Weedon are on their list as is **Alroy Gilligan** who has also been playing well for the senior team. He is originally from the Yiyili Tigers but was on the Richmond list until he was cut last year. I note that he was leading the Rising Star Competition noted in the Football Budget two weeks ago. This award was ultimately won by Freddie Clutterbuck of East Perth. Claremont also has **Jamahl Bedford** on their Colts list and he is shown as being from the Cable Beach Club in Broome. Earlier in the year the Football Budgets had **Liam Bedford** whom I assume was a relation but he is no longer on any of their lists. I assume that Claremont will be in the WAFL Grand Final this year if all goes well for them, so, by the time this newsletter comes out, there may still be time to go and catch Claremont in the Grand Final at Subiaco.

Jack Vercoe

OBSOLETE BOAB BULLETINS WANTED

Do you have any early issues of the *Boab Bulletin* that you no longer wish to keep? We are trying to put together a complete set for the Kununurra Historical Society and would be glad to receive copies of any early issues. The missing ones are #6 (Dec 94), #8, #10 (Aug 95), #14 to #18 (inclusive), #26, #27, #37 (Feb 2000), #38, #41, #43, #45 to 52, #54 to 56, #58 & 59, #61, #64, #77, #81, and #84. If you have copies of any of those issues, please bring them to a meeting or send us a note or an email.

KIMBERLEY ARTISTS

Artists from the Kimberley continue to impress judges and collectors. In the 2011 Hedland Art Awards, which opened on 26 August and drew crowds of around 500 to the Courthouse Gallery in Port Hedland, Jan Billycan (Yulparija Artists) took out the 'Best Work by an Indigenous Artist' with 'Kirriwirri'. That \$15,000 award follows her success last year when she took the award for the 'Most Outstanding Work'. Other Kimberley works among the 104 selected for the official judging this year include 'Mustering Days' by Mervyn Street (Mangkaja Arts) and 'Tommy and Mariah' by Rosleen Park (Warmun Art Centre). The exhibition closes on 13 October and some of the works can be seen online (www.courthousegallery.com.au/exhibitions).

Rosleen Park, who took out the \$500 'Encouragement Award' in the Hedland Art Awards, is listed on the Warmun Artists website (www.warmunart.com) among the many emerging artists. She also has several works in the online gallery. If you have not visited that gallery recently, it is well worth a look. Distinctive works on offer include 'Moonga Moonga Corroboree' by Betty Carrington, 'Mulgin' by Dennis Jessell, and 'Yunurr Hills' by Nancy Nodea.

Also on show until 30 October are the 61 pre-selected art works in this year's Telstra Art Award. No Kimberley artists are among the winners but 'Nature Spirits' by Mercy Paymurra Fredericks (Kalumburu) was short-listed, as was the 1.07 minute video 'The Lennard identity' by Balgo filmmaker David Lans, a Kukatja artist. Another Kimberley entry is 'Purnululu' by Patrick Mung Mung (Warmun). The works are online (www.nt.gov.au/nreta/museums/exhibitions/natsiaa/28/gallery/index.php/home or www.nt.gov.au/nreta/museums/exhibitions/natsiaa/28/gallery/_flash/).

The Kimberley Art Prize (Derby, in July) is over for another year with prizes taken by Beverley Hornibrook (Overall Winner), Francis Dolby (Indigenous Award), Jean Elezovich (Oils and Acrylics), Clive Moffat (Watercolours and Pastels), G.T. Sewell (Photography Prints), Mieke Boynton (Photography Canvas Prints), Mark Norval (Mixed Media), Lance Buckle (Youth Award), Gordon Barunga (Local Open), Denise Walker (Open non-Kimberley), and Lisa Uhl (Emerging Artist).

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