



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 112

October 2012

## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

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

**Wednesday, 3 October 2012**

**Mark Moore (University of New England, NSW)**  
"Stone tool manufacture"

**Wednesday, 7 November 2012**

**Clay Bryce (WA Museum)**  
"Kimberley Aquatic Zoology"

**Wednesday, 5 December 2012**

**Kevin Gomm (Helvetica Publishing)**  
"Japanese Air Raids in WWII"

Please note that, with many of our speakers involved in work-related travel, this program may change at short notice. Should a speaker not be available, we try to find a substitute with a similar subject.

Members and visitors are invited to stay for supper after the meetings.

### CONCERT FOR THE KIMBERLEY

On 5 October, Concert for the Kimberley will be held in Federation Square in Melbourne, featuring the John Butler Trio and Clare Bowditch. Opening at 6pm with an address from former Australia Greens leader Dr Bob Brown, the concert will be streamed live at [www.concertforthekimberley.com](http://www.concertforthekimberley.com) and will include a message of support from Missy Higgins, on tour in the USA. The concert, which ends at 9pm, is free and donations for the Protect the Kimberley campaign will be collected at the event. The campaign, backed by the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Conservation Council of Western Australia, the Wilderness Society, Environs Kimberley, Save The Kimberley, the Communist Party of Australia, and others, is focused on conservation and the prevention of ad hoc development.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

September brings an end to the main tourist season in the Kimberley as the weather becomes hotter and more humid as a precursor to another wet season. From all reports, and with some personal experience during our trip to the Drysdale River National Park, it would appear to have been a good season with regard to the number of visitors to this special part of Australia. Tragically a tourist died when she lost her footing at the top of the Mertens Falls in the Mitchell River National Park and people were injured in a bad vehicle accident not far north of Drysdale River Station. The road was shockingly corrugated in the area of the accident. These sad incidents only serve to remind us of the potential hazards and dangers in accessing and exploring this remote region.

We managed to safely get into the Drysdale National Park (5 days solid driving from Perth, approximately 3,500 kilometres) and spent 7 days walking on the Drysdale River and its tributaries. Much of the park had been subject to major bush fires earlier in the dry season. Although this makes for easier walking in places and quicker access to rock art sites, the devastation to the environment was clearly evident. The fire was obviously intensely hot and in places all the vegetation was burnt.

A particularly distressing sight was to see a number of large *Eucalyptus miniata* trees (Darwin Woollybutt) burnt at their base and collapsed on the ground. These trees can be 20 metres high, have a delightful orange flower and have a dark woolly fibrous bark on their lower trunk. The bark catches fire and smoulders eventually burning through the trunk of the tree.

Obviously the fire would have had a devastating impact on the local fauna and we saw an example of this when we came across the dried remnants of a small snake. Another serious impact of these hot fires is that they cause exfoliation of rock surfaces and we also saw lots of evidence of this phenomenon on our walk. This of course puts the preservation of the extensive Aboriginal rock art in the National Park under serious threat.



Burnt snake, Drysdale National Park

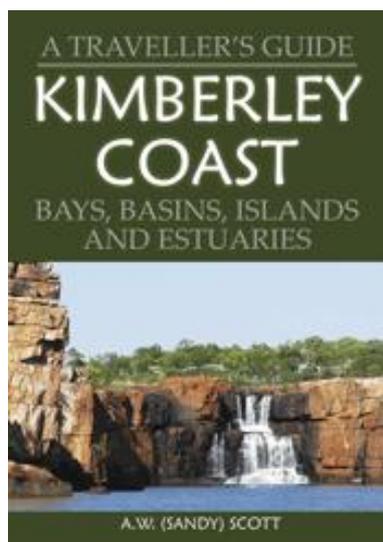
Over the last 2 years at our monthly meetings we have had speakers from both the Department of Conservation and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy present details of fire management in the Kimberley. While both organisations, in conjunction with traditional owners and pastoralists, are making serious attempts to mitigate damage caused by hot fires, the evidence from our walk in the Drysdale River National Park indicates a lot more work remains to be done on this matter.

We were fortunate to have published our *Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development* prior to the commencement of the tourist season. The demand for the book, particularly from outlets in the Kimberley has been exceptional. Of the 2,057 copies that were printed we have already distributed 810 copies. We have invoiced and receipted books to the value of just over \$25,000. We only need to recoup an additional \$4,000 before we completely recover all editing, design and printing costs. This is a very pleasing outcome for the Society.

*Jeffrey J Gresham*

## BOOK NOTE

***Kimberley Coast: A Traveller's Guide to Bays, Basins, Islands and Estuaries* by A.W. (Sandy) Scott. Envirobook, Sussex Inlet (NSW), 2012. Soft cover, 124 pages, illustrated, ISBN 9780858812406, RRP \$29.95.**



Members who attended Sandy Scott's talk on 'Bays, Basins, Islands and Estuaries of the Kimberley Coast' on 5 October 2011 will know what to expect in this book. Those who were unable to attend might have seen the summary of the talk in the *Boab Bulletin* in February 2012 or on our website.

The book explains, with the aid of photographs, maps and diagrams, how some of the diverse landforms of the Kimberley coast developed. The first section, titled 'The Making of Landforms', covers such aspects as faults and lineaments, earth movements, disintegration of rocks, changes in sea level, climatic influences, and weathering. The second section presents case studies of 14 visually impressive places.

While *Kimberley Coast* will be excellent for readers fortunate enough to see the coastline from the sea, it will also interest those who want to know more about the landforms there. A map shows locations and features, with the emphasis on those between Yampi Sound and Vansittart Bay.

The book stems from the author's personal interest in geomorphology and his work as a guest lecturer with Coral Princess Cruises. Having been asked each year about the physical landscape, and why the landforms look as they do, Sandy wrote this compact guide in which numerous colour photographs help with comprehension of the necessarily technical text. Page 54, for example, has images titled 'Saline mud flat on the eastern side of Vansittart Bay' and 'Slabs of beachrock formed on a sand beach on the eastern side of Vansittart Bay'. The facing page carries comments about the formation of beachrock, which, surprisingly, can form in months rather than hundreds of years. Sandy notes that: 'Possibly the most overlooked point about the coastal landforms of the Kimberley is the predominance of terrestrial conditions in their formation. The influence of the sea is a relatively recent phenomenon.'

*Kimberley Coast* can be purchased at: Broome Lottery Centre & News (Broome Boulevard Shopping Centre); Chinatown News (Paspaley Plaza Shopping Centre, Broome); The Bookshop Darwin (The Galleria, Darwin) and Walkabout Souvenirs (Kununurra Shopping Centre). It is also available from Envirobook, 5/168 Jacobs Drive, Sussex Inlet, NSW 2540, email sales@envirobook.com.au, telephone 0401 427 032, or fax 02 4441 2004. Envirobook, which charges no postage on personal orders, sells other Kimberley books that include those by and about Mary Durack as well as Victoria Laurie's *The Kimberley*; Sheryl McCorry's *Diamonds and Dust* and *Stars Over Shiralee*; Di Morrissey's *Kimberley Sun* and *Tears of the Moon*; and John Bailey's *The White Divers of Broome*. A catalogue, mostly devoted to natural science books, is available at [www.envirobook.com.au](http://www.envirobook.com.au) (under the "Distribution" tab).

A copy of *Kimberley Coast*, donated by Sandy Scott, was eagerly seized as the first prize in the September raffle. Six copies will be on hand at the October meeting.

*Cathie Clement*

## REST IN PEACE

On 16 August 2012, Kimberley Society member **Dr Harold Keith McComb**, aged 88, passed away in the Perth suburb of Mosman Park. Highly respected for his enormous contribution to reconstructive plastic surgery in Western Australia and overseas, he was a graduate of the University of Melbourne and the first fully trained plastic surgeon to come to Western Australia. His pioneering work included establishing the Cleft Lip and Palate Unit at Princess Margaret Hospital and introducing interdisciplinary care in the treatment of patients in that field. He was also known for his generosity in training overseas medical teams, an aspect that drew comment in some of the many notices of acknowledgment published in relation to his death. Dr McComb is survived by his sons Peter, John, and Robert. He was predeceased by his wife Dr Athel Hockey (2011) and their son David (1999).

On 8 September 2012, **John Chandler McMicking** (Johnny Mac) died, aged 81, at Mindarie near Perth. Well known as a drover, stockman and bush poet, he spent more than 30 years in the Kimberley and developed a strong interest in its history. He spoke of his Kimberley work in a 60-minute oral history interview with John Thomson in 1966 (Battye Library OH14) and later worked as a stock inspector. After leaving the Kimberley in 1992, Johnny Mac retired to Mandurah, south of Perth. As well as self-publishing a 48-page booklet entitled "Drovers, Drifters, Dreamers and Drongos", which included a selection of his and other people's verses, he had his friend Katy Vickers transcribe his historical anecdotes and autobiographical short stories with a view to publishing. Some of that material appeared online in 'Kimberley Gems and Kangaroo Tales' a decade ago, and some in *The El Questro Story* by Meg Hornabrook (see the Book Note in this newsletter). The full collection of Johnny Mac's writing will be published by Hesperian Press in the near future. John McMicking is survived by his son Gilbert and daughter-in-law Shelley. He was also "Pa" to Brendon, Tanya and Gavin, and uncle to Brad.

*Cathie Clement*

## FOOTBALL UPDATE

In the AFL, West Coast player Stephen Hill from Broome has made a significant contribution to the Eagles depleted forward line this year and is the second highest goal kicker to Jack Darling. Zephaniah Skinner has still only played 2 or 3 games for the Western Bulldogs and had only been achieving 3 possessions per game. At least I know someone who was on the same plane as him earlier in the year!

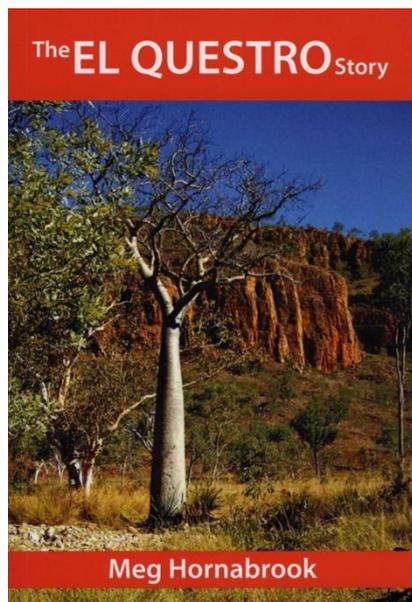
In the WAFL, Kimberley players continue to contribute to Claremont Football Club. They recently won the Foxtel Cup with players Alroy Gilligan from the Yiyili Tigers and Broome player Gerrick Weedon who has recently moved to the back line and appears to be doing well in defence. In the Foxtel Cup, Broome player Kiefer Yu was also in the team to take part in the win over the Werribee Tigers.

Its pleasing to see Alroy Gilligan back playing for the Claremont Senior Team. He had obviously caused some concern and been dropped to the amateur league before forcing his way back through the reserves and now back into the firsts. However one of my friends who is a devoted Claremont fan wonders if he is in Claremont's best 22. With the finals coming up in a few weeks time (from when this was written) we will find out then.

*Jack Vercoe*

## BOOK NOTE

***The El Questro Story* by Meg Hornabrook. Private publication, 2012. Soft cover, 304 pages, illustrated, ISBN: 978-0-646-58079-1, RRP \$34.95.**



El Questro resort and cattle station – a high profile tourist destination – is situated west of Kununurra and accessed via the Gibb River Road. Occupying 1,000,000 acres of pastoral lease, it encompasses the Cockburn Range, part of the Durack Range, and sections of the Pentecost, Chamberlain, Salmond and King rivers. Magnificent scenery abounds, and *The El Questro Story* begins with magnificent colour photographs and an explanation of the station's landscape and geological features. Brief chapters titled 'Human Migration', 'Rock Art' and 'Early Exploration' follow.

Having thus set the scene, Meg Hornabrook then moves into detailed coverage of her favourite piece of country, the place in which she enjoyed eleven treasured seasons working as a ranger.

The book grew out of a manual of information that Meg created for her work as a ranger. Pages 51 to 140 document the exploration, speculative leasing, and land use that preceded the creation of El Questro Station in the late 1950s. Here we read about the Durack expedition (1882), the arrival of cattle in the East Kimberley (1885), the establishment of Wyndham and Halls Creek (1886), and further exploration by Joseph Bradshaw (1891) and F. S. Brockman (1901). The Wyndham meatworks (1919), transportation, and stock routes are discussed, with a handy sketch map of early roads, tracks and stock routes provided by John McMicking. Segments of his recollections are included to show how the Gibb River Road came into being and which stations it served. Prior to the construction of the eastern end of the Gibb River Road, pastoral leaseholders on the land that eventually became part of El Questro used tracks or the stock route for their access. Some of those people are discussed in the book, the most memorable name being that of one of the earliest – George James Williams – who was known as “Cockitup” and “The Mountain Devil”.

Pages 141 to 256 cover El Questro Station, with another batch of great photographs. In this section, Meg Hornabrook documents ownership, use, and development, starting with the lease application lodged by Charles Torrance MacMicking in 1958. Known as Torrance or Torry, he was the older brother of John McMicking for whom an obituary appears in this newsletter. Readers interested in stations and tourism will appreciate the detailed account of one of the East Kimberley's stellar successes. Told by someone who sought information from books, archives and people who preceded her at El Questro, it gives an informative and balanced overview of fifty years of development and change. The book is rounded off with general information that includes bird sightings, origins of placenames, and a chronology for the station.

*The El Questro Story* is available from Kununurra Historical Society, Wyndham Historical Society, Kimberley Bookshop (Broome), Lane Bookshop (Claremont, WA) and Bookpod ([www.bookstore.bookpod.com.au/p/6960236/the-el-questro-story.html](http://www.bookstore.bookpod.com.au/p/6960236/the-el-questro-story.html)). The Bookpod postage is \$12.20 or \$12.85 for express post (up to 4 books within Australia).

*Cathie Clement*

## NOTES FROM KIMBERLEY VISITS JUNE–AUGUST 2012

I had the good fortune to make two trips to the Kimberley this dry season. The first by air (large planes, then small planes, then helicopters) was devoted to rock art. There were several experts with us, both from overseas and Australia wide. Conversation often centred on opinions, theories and hypotheses. The imaginative fancies of those such as the Victorian scholars or von Daniken that concerned “Grey’s paintings” are still alive and well, though nowadays (hopefully) better informed. Nevertheless there is much research and peer reviewing to be done before the innovative ideas can be accepted.

The second trip was car based and just went to show, for the third time, that one should not take an inadequate vehicle down a boulder strewn jump up. (Slow learner and irresponsible are terms that have been used). However this did result in the opportunity to stay in the towns and catch up with old friends. Broome was at the height of the tourist season with the races at the weekend. Our hosts warned us; “if you are out for the evening, don’t mention James Price Point. It will only result in a bitter argument”. The town is obviously deeply divided about the issue. At the bustling Saturday morning market, the stalls of the trinket sellers, musicians and artists were dominated by signs of “No Gas” and “Save the Whales”.

Derby has been transformed since I lived there up to 2002. There has been much new building, both in the town centre and residential areas. There is a brand new “Spinney” and the new Norval Art Gallery where Mark and Mary sell both their own and others’ art works, serve a good flat white, run art classes and have a studio for several indigenous artists. Derby is looking more prosperous because of several factors; mining, the oil and gas proposals (I fancy that Derby residents are in favour of the James Price Point), the Curtin detention centre and the new regional prison, which will be opened next month. This has resulted in large numbers of new houses being built for the staff.

Kununurra is waiting for the next stage of the development of the Ord Scheme. I asked about the effect of the alcohol restrictions. The usual reply from the doctors and others well respected in the community was that the alcohol problem was certainly no better and in some ways worse. This was echoed in both Broome and Derby. Halls Creek was clean and tidy with a noticeable absence of inebriates lying by the hotel, but it would appear that “the problem” has just been transferred from one place to another.

The injuries to my vehicle enabled a more leisurely trip along the Gibb River Road and back to Derby and Broome on the blacktop. This gave the opportunity to promote our *Kimberley History* book. The local enthusiasm and sales of the book have been amazing. Within a week of a box (of 11) being delivered to a remote station there was an email to send two more boxes. The roadhouses en route bought and sold them as did the tourist bureaux and newsagents. All were enthusiastic and a pleasant change from the haughty indifference of some of the bookshops in Perth.

“A great production,” said a prominent Broome identity. “We should be very grateful to the Kimberley Society for such a service. It should be in all the local schools and libraries.”

“Beautifully produced,” said a roadhouse operator. “They come off the bus, look at the pictures and buy it straightaway.”

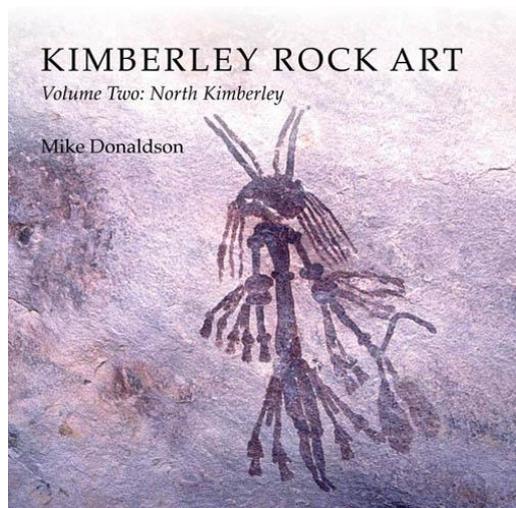
“The cover sells it,” said a station owner who wanted more. “But why stop? What about the next fifty years? When are we going to get that one?”

Now there is a challenge for some brave soul.

*Hamish McGlashan*

## BOOK NOTE

***Kimberley Rock Art Volume 2: North Kimberley* by Mike Donaldson. Wildrocks Publications, Mount Lawley (WA) 2012. Case-bound section-sewn, 27 x 27cm, 395 pages, profusely illustrated, ISBN 978-0-9805890-3-0, RRP \$160, web direct price \$130, Kimberley Society members \$125 plus \$20 postage if required.**



Society member and former President Mike Donaldson has just published Volume 2 of his planned 3 volumes on the rock art of the Kimberley region. Volume 1, which covered the Mitchell Plateau area, has been received enthusiastically by people who have an interest in the wonderful and prolific Aboriginal rock art that exists in the Kimberley. Volume 2 covers the area of the north Kimberley coast and the area encompassing the King George, Drysdale and King Edward Rivers. This is the most remote and difficult to access area of the Kimberley.

Much of the area subject to this volume falls within Balanggarra combined native title claim and it is good to see words from some of the Balanggarra elders and heritage custodians at the front of the book. They recognise the importance and value of publishing photographs of rock art from their country both as an aide to teaching the young Balanggarra people about the paintings and their associated stories as well as allowing “whitefellas” to appreciate the paintings and to help them understand the strong connection of the Balanggarra people to their land.

As in Volume 1 there is a wonderful selection of photographs of both Gwion (Bradshaw) and Wanjina art styles. Of particular interest is a series of photos from the King Edward River of so-called “square” Wanjina paintings. These paintings have eyes and nose and lack the mouth as is typical of the more common rounded Wanjina heads. In places they occur adjacent to more conventional Wanjina images. Numerous excellent landscape photos of both the various rivers and the wild and rugged coast of the North Kimberley help the reader fully appreciate the setting for the art – and some of the challenges in accessing and recording it!! This publication continues the valuable task that Mike Donaldson has embarked upon in documenting and making available to the public the abundance and beauty of the Kimberley rock art.

Copies of Volume 2 (and other Wildrocks publications) can be obtained by going to [www.wildrocks.com.au](http://www.wildrocks.com.au) and downloading an order form. Although the Society gave financial assistance for the graphic design work, the books are not available through the Society but will be on hand for purchase at most Society meetings.

*Jeff Gresham*

**Please don't forget this is your newsletter.**



Kimberley news, articles, and items of interest are all most welcome.

## KIMBERLEY PHOTOGRAPHIC AWARD

This year the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley omitted the photographic categories from its annual Kimberley Art Prize, creating a separate photographic award and acknowledging that photography is an art form of its own. The Kimberley Art Prize has been running for 43 years, and the Kimberley Photographic Award looks set to emulate it with the inaugural award having attracted 60 high calibre entries across eight categories. The exhibition, held at the Derby Civic Centre on Loch Street, was open until 20 September, with the prize winners announced on the 15th. Magistrate Col Roberts, who is well known for his striking photographs of the region, was one of the three competition judges. He applauded the standard of the entries.

All entries were for sale, except the Overall prize winner, which becomes the property of the Shire. Most of the non-acquisitive categories carried prize money of \$1000, while the Overall prize was \$2000 and a Slingair Heliwork flight. That prize went to Mieke Boynton of Derby for a black and white shot titled 'Exit Stage Left' featuring Banjo, her Blue Heeler-Kelpie cross, against a background of old car wrecks and boab trees on the marsh. A different part of the marsh gave Mark Ingram other old car wrecks and boab trees for a colour shot titled 'Old Age' that won in the Creative category. Other winners were 'Tidal Creation' by Nigel Gaunt (in the Landscape category); 'Quick - Shut the Gate' by Robin Maher (A Day in the Life of the Kimberley); 'Chlamydosaurus Kingii' by Dominic Flutter (Kimberley Characters); 'Aboriginal Boys' by Julie Fletcher (Black and White); 'The Stand Off' by Zane McKenna (Youth - primary); 'The Crashes are Heaven' by Brianna Taylor-Ellison (Youth - secondary); and 'Andrew' by Julie Fletcher (Open Category - for non-Kimberley residents). The People's Choice Award was decided on 20 September but the name of the winner was not available when this newsletter went to the printer. Pictures of some of the winning entries appeared in *The West Australian* on 21 September (page 26).

## COUNCIL 2012-2013

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