



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 151

April 2019

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.

Mount Claremont Community Centre, 107 Montgomery Avenue

(see page 3 for information about parking at new venue)

Wednesday, 3 April 2019

David Hough (Robert Mitford Rowell's biographer)

**"Lead Kindly Light: MMA pilot, Harold Rowell's emergency
landing at Fitzroy Crossing, Saturday 31 July 1971"**

David's presentation will follow the AGM

Wednesday, 1 May 2019

Group presentation by Society members

"Aboriginal stone 'monuments' in the Kimberley"

Wednesday, 5 June 2019

**Rhonda Povey (PhD candidate at the Centre for Advancement of
Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Technology Sydney)**

"Schooling at Moola Bulla, in black and white"

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

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I was in Broome and Derby last week catching up with friends and meeting with Aboriginal organisations to discuss access to country and approvals to publish images of rock art acquired over the last 30 years while walking the wild rivers. The friends were still there and enjoying the Kimberley lifestyle, but much else has changed.

Broome is having a facelift with most of the CBD (well, Chinatown) closed to traffic while the streetscape is 'improved' ready for the Dry Season tourist influx. Derby is already beautiful (apparently) with no need for such enhancement, but many of the cafes are yet to re-open after the Wet. It has been a very poor Wet but I still drove through torrential rain (about 100 mm in 30 minutes at Curtin on the way in, and some 65 mm at Willare in 30 minutes on the way south a few days later).

I had requested permission for a June bushwalk on the Glenelg River in the Kunmunya Aboriginal Reserve in what is now Dambimangari-managed Native Title Determined land (Worora Country). This was declined pending a review of standard procedures for allowing access to these remote parts of the Kimberley. This may require a paid Traditional Owner to accompany any such future access. We look forward to seeing these new access conditions over the next year or so, but in the meantime there is no access for most of us.

Meetings with other groups to enquire about any problems in publishing photographs of Kimberley rock art taken over the last 30 years, in many cases well before any Native Title Determinations, were similarly negative, although still subject of discussions with relevant Traditional Owners. Whereas most Aboriginal groups across Australia welcome the promotion of their art and culture, apart from sensitive images, this is not the case with some Kimberley organisations. I fear this attitude will limit cultural awareness and cultural tourism opportunities for these people.

Future of the Society

The Society's AGM will be held at our next meeting on 3 April at the Mount Claremont Community Centre and I encourage all members to attend and have a say on the composition of the management team. Without some new younger participants this will be the Society's last year.

Mike Donaldson

KOOLAN ISLAND

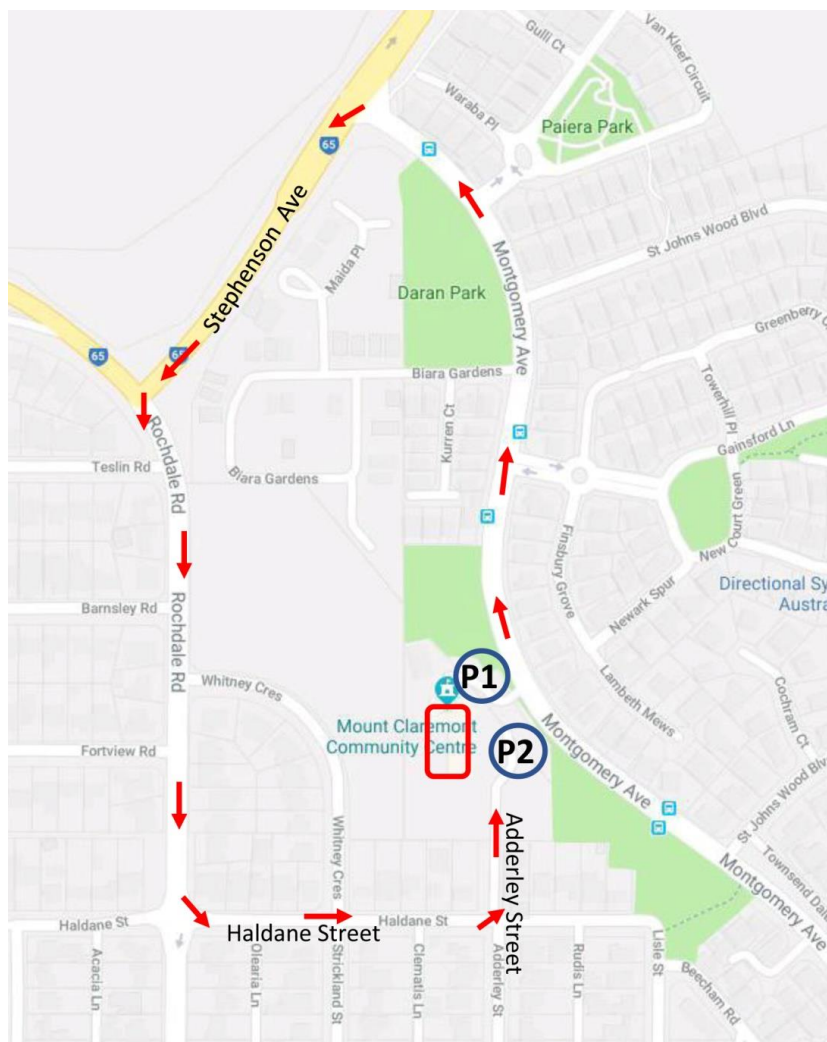
After hosting a variety of marine life for the past five years, the iron ore mine on Koolan Island is about to come back into production. The grade of the ore is such that Mount Gibson has spent approximately \$100 million rebuilding a seawall that collapsed in 2014. The [collapse](#) put 300 people out of work and ended the daily barge runs that delivered staff, supplies and fuel from Derby. A subsequent \$86 million insurance payout went some way in persuading the company to rebuild, as did an estimation that the mine could continue to produce for at least 3.5 years.

The new seawall, built around a 467 metre cement seepage barrier, involved almost two years of work that was welcomed locally on an [economic front](#). Infrastructure has also been replaced, at a cost of around \$70 million. The company has 330 people on the island at present and expects to begin shipping within weeks. Recent [news coverage](#) stated that Hong-Kong listed APAC Resources, which owns a third of the company, will take 20 per cent of the output while the remainder will be marketed by 15 per cent owner Shougang Corporation.

CAR PARKING AT MT CLAREMONT COMMUNITY CENTRE

At the first meeting at our new venue on 6 February there was insufficient parking space in the parking area in front of the building accessed from Montgomery Avenue (P1 on map). There are 28 car bays there.

There is a second parking area with 20 bays adjacent to the building (P2 on map) but access to it is not from Montgomery Avenue. If there is no space available in P1, follow the arrows shown on the map along Montgomery Avenue, turn left onto Stephenson Avenue, then left onto Rochdale Road, then left onto Haldane Street, then left onto Adderley Street. Total distance is about 1.8 km. (Mike says, "Don't ask me who designed this access!")



DRAFT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BUNUBA CONSERVATION ESTATE

The *Jalangurru Manyjawarra Bunuba Muwayi Yarrangu draft joint management plan 2019* has been released for comment, with submissions open until 18 April. The plan applies to several existing national parks and conservation parks in the West Kimberley including Windjana Gorge National Park, Tunnel Creek National Park, Geikie Gorge National Park, Devonian Reef Conservation Park, Brooking Gorge Conservation Park, Geikie Gorge Conservation Park, and part of the King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park. Further information is available [online](#) or from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions in WA.

RIVERS, LAKES AND CRATERS: GEMS OF THE SOUTHERN KIMBERLEY

On 5 December 2018, **Jeff Gresham** and **Tim Griffin** presented an illustrated talk on their trip to the southern Kimberley in June 2018. With their wives Elizabeth Gresham and Steph Griffin, these Kimberley Society members are regular annual visitors to the Kimberley. Their summary follows.

Normally the major focus is on joining others to walk rivers to visit known Aboriginal art sites or search for sites not previously documented. The 2018 trip, instead, focused on experiencing Kimberley landscape away from the flat-lying sandstones that preserve the art so well. Our trip was based around two 4WD vehicles, travelling as light as possible. Despite this our two weeks in the Kimberley were very comfortable, lacking few essentials, and even including some luxuries, while camping in this vast and remote part of Australia.

A consistent highlight was spending each night under the stars, particularly in different landscapes where we experienced amazing sunsets and clear starry skies.

Our first stop was at the camping ground at [Mornington Station](#), a complex facility run by the [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#) (AWC). The station is on a pastoral lease, held by the AWC. It runs cattle as well as being set up for wildlife conservation and research, and tourism. We stayed three nights at a site beside Annie Creek. There are good facilities, including a bar and restaurant. There is high demand for camp sites so it's essential that sites are booked well in advance. This can be done online. People who ignored clear instructions at the start of the Mornington access road—that they needed to phone ahead to confirm a booking—were turned away and had to return the 88 km to the [Gibb River Road](#).



Mornington Station, Australian Wildlife Conservancy campground on Annie Creek

Our two days at Mornington were spent exploring along the Fitzroy River mainly at [Sir John Gorge](#) and [Dimond Gorge](#). These gorges cut through the hard King Leopold Sandstone (1800 million years old) of the Kimberley Plateau giving rise to spectacular scenery best viewed from clambering along the riverbanks or from canoes, which can be hired. The sandstone that make up the gorge walls are uneven and multi-coloured, and, along with the scattered vegetation, are especially attractive when reflected in the expansive stretches of water, up to 3 km long at Dimond Gorge. Downstream the Fitzroy River cuts through limestone of the internationally famous, Devonian Reef Complexes that formed 380 million years ago, creating [Geike Gorge](#) before crossing flat country to the coast south of Derby.



Fitzroy River reflections, Dimond Gorge, Mornington Station

The drive to Dimond Gorge is exciting, providing views of some of the steepest parts of the Kimberley, including Fitzroy Bluff which takes on a vivid red glow at dusk.

There are nature walks near the camp ground that feature plants and birds in the lush, wet creek environment as well as in the dry, rocky hills and open plains. A separate walk on the plains provides an interesting insight into termite mounds that abound in the Kimberley.

On our way back to the Gibb River Road we stopped to inspect the ruins of the [Glenroy meat works](#). Little remains. The airstrip can be identified as an elongated rectangle of short pale grass on the watershed. Buildings are identified by a collapsed frame, parts of a roof, and concrete slabs, and a loading ramp is still in reasonable condition. It's hard to imagine that this was the site of a major and innovative, industrial enterprise that ran from 1949 until 1965. Because there was no onsite freezing, the chilled meat had to be flown out as quickly as possible to be frozen in Wyndham prior to export to the UK. Improvements to the Derby–Gibb River Road, and a switch from aircraft to refrigerated trucks, led to the demise of the Glenroy Air Beef Abattoir.



A remnant of the Glenroy Air Beef Abattoir and Aerodrome



Sunset on Fitzroy Bluff, Mornington Station

Our next planned landform to explore was [Wolfe Creek Crater](#), just off the Tanami Road 150 km south of Halls Creek, so we retraced our route back down the Gibb River Road. Despite having travelled this road many times, it remains attractive as you get great views across the landscape, and wind through steep sandstone country to [Inglis Gap](#). It then passes through the rolling hills of granite country before reaching the plains where it cuts through the Napier Range. Although we took the dirt road beside the rugged hills of the Devonian Reef Complexes, passing [Windjana Gorge](#) and [Tunnel Creek](#), we did not stop as we had visited these several times previously. Much of the 800 km to Wolfe Creek was on good bitumen, however, the gravel roads we used did take their toll with two flat tyres, one of which had to be replaced in Halls Creek, requiring an unscheduled stop until the tyre shop opened on Monday.

We arrived at Wolfe Creek Crater in time to have a good look around, walking over the steep crater rim and into the flat centre of the crater floor that is 60 metres below the rim. Here there is low scrub and some salt precipitation due to internal drainage and evaporation, which creates the bullseye appearance when viewed from above. The rim of the crater is almost circular and 875 metres across. It comprises rough, angular boulders and scattered tree and grass cover. The sun was setting as we were about to leave so we stayed and enjoyed a fantastic view from our elevated position on the rim. It was a pleasure to share this with a young family that had taken a year out to travel around Australia.



Sunset viewed from the Wolfe Creek Crater rim

Wolfe Creek Crater is one of four confirmed [meteorite impact structures](#) in the Kimberley, and well known around the world for its iconic, circular crater rim. The crater is thought to have been formed by a meteorite weighing 50,000 tonnes that impacted about 300,000 years ago. The other impact craters in the Kimberley are much older, located east of Mount Barnett roadhouse ([Spider](#)), in the Müeller Ranges ([Goat Paddock](#)), and in Purnululu National Park ([Piccaninny](#)).



Inside Wolfe Creek Meteorite Crater, 150 km south of Halls Creek

Leaving Wolfe Creek Crater we headed south on the Tanami Road and into desert country (Great Sandy Desert) to spend time around [Lake Gregory](#), known to the local Aboriginal people as Paruku. A permit, that can be obtained [online](#), is required to travel and camp in the [Paruku Indigenous Protected Area](#).



Lake Gregory (Paruku), Paruku Indigenous Protected Area

Lake Gregory is an inland lake that is largely fed by Sturt Creek flowing from the north. The amount of water in Lake Gregory fluctuates with seasonal rainfall. We were fortunate that it had some water when we visited as this had attracted many water birds. The drainage basin for Lake Gregory is extensive, some 80 km across, recognising it has an irregular shape with high country and now high sand dunes within the broad extent of the basin. The water in the lake generally only extends up to 40 km following heavy rain.

Lake Gregory is of major importance to the traditional owners and features prominently in stories and paintings from the region. It is known to contain stone artefacts that are 45-50,000 years old, based on work by [Peter Veth](#) and others.

Of particular interest was the recent history, so it's quite useful to see that [Hema maps](#) show where the current roads and tracks cross the routes of some early European explorers. In 1856 [Augustus Charles Gregory](#), after whom the lake was named, circumnavigated the lake with his party and noted the area was suitable for cattle production. [David W Carnegie](#) and his party visited the area in early 1897 on their return trip to Coolgardie from Halls Creek. We had a copy of Carnegie's book *Spinifex and Sand*, and read about his experiences in the immediate areas we were travelling. It was a very different time, and it's interesting to read about his approach to dealing with the challenges he faced in such a remote and dry environment. By visiting this area and experiencing it first hand, one is less judgmental than from our comfortable homes in Perth.

We left the Tanami Road towards Billiluna and headed south down the [Canning Stock Route](#). Eighteen kilometres from Billiluna is [Lake Stretch](#), a large body of fresh water on Sturt Creek with plenty of trees for shade on its banks; an oasis in such a harsh environment. It has some good signage explaining some of the Aboriginal history. It is named after Mr Stretch, who along with Lewis, Foster and Weekes in 1888, took up the Denison Downs pastoral lease that is now known as Sturt Creek Station. In 1902 it is reported there were 10,000 head of cattle in the area.



Lake Stretch on Sturt Creek, 18 km south of Billiluna

Leaving Lake Stretch we persevered with shocking corrugations, leading to a shredded tyre, to complete the 101 km on the Canning Stock Route to [Well 51](#). Here we left the Canning Stock Route to go around the southern side of Lake Gregory, stopping to enjoy the lake from different perspectives, then around the eastern shore to Handover Campsite. This is the site of the handover ceremony in August 2001 when the Tjurarabalan people, the traditional owners, were formally granted Native Title.



Handover Ceremony, shore of Lake Gregory (Paruku), Handover Campsite, southwest of Mulan, 20 August 2001

One of us, Jeff, was working in the Tanami area at the time, and he was invited to the ceremony. He was able to show us some important historical photographs. One interesting aspect was that at the time of the ceremony the lake was full with water, much higher than for our visit. Nevertheless, the bird life was prolific and we were once again treated to a glorious sunset.

We shared the Handover Campsite with people assisting the community at [Mulan](#), 11 km to the northeast. The next day we passed through Mulan and Balgo before joining the Tanami Road to travel on to [Newhaven Station](#), another Australian Wildlife Conservancy property in the Northern Territory.

We were very impressed with the [art centre](#) in Balgo, however, our experiences with remote aboriginal communities in general were depressing, as it seems these do not provide for an active and fulfilling life for most residents.

Since returning from our Kimberley travels in 2018 we have all revisited the book, *Position Doubtful*, written by [Kim Mahood](#). Kim grew up on what is now [Tanami Downs Homestead](#), and in her adult life has made annual visits to Mulan to assist the local community. Her story about her visits in recent years is an enlightened and sobering read from someone who has a great affinity with the traditional owners.

Despite the harsh environment over most of the Kimberley and its remoteness and vast size, it is accessible if properly prepared. Any opportunity to spend time in this part of Australia to enjoy the landscape, flora and fauna, and night skies is very rewarding.

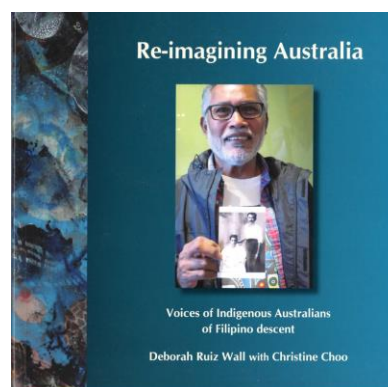
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- Carnegie, David W. *Spinifex and Sand*. Hesperian Press, Carlisle, WA, 1989 (reprint of 1898 edition).
- Mahood, Kim *Position Doubtful: mapping landscapes and memories*. Scribe Publications, Carlton North, Vic., 2016.
- Morton, Martin, Mahood and Carty (Editors). *Desert Lake: Art, Science and Stories from Paruku*. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Vic., 2013.
- Heritage Council of Western Australia. Register of Heritage Places. Air Beef Abattoir and Aerodrome (ruins) and Glenroy Homestead Group, Assessment Documentation prepared by Cathie Clement and Rosemary Rosario. 2006.

BOOK NOTE

Re-imagining Australia: voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent by Deborah Ruiz Wall with Christine Choo. Published by Keeaira Press, Southport, QLD, 2016. Soft cover, 160 pages, 215 x 210 mm, grey-scale photographs & maps, bibliography, ISBN 978-0-9923241-5-5.

Available online from [Keeaira Press](http://www.keeairapress.com.au). RRP \$30.



A compilation of stories mostly narrated as oral history by Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent in the Kimberley and Torres Strait. In the Introduction, the authors clarify the terminology that was used to refer to Asian men who came to northern Australia from the late 19th Century to work in the burgeoning pearling industry. Only a minority of those men came from the islands of the Philippines. They were known commonly as 'Manilamen', even if they did not originate from Manila, and sometimes by the more generic term 'Malays' which included people from modern-day Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and East Timor. A distinction there was that many Manilamen were Catholic while the Malays' religion tended to be Islam. We also learn that in the 19th Century the term 'Filipino' technically referred to Spaniards born in the Philippines whereas the Spaniards called the natives of that country 'Indios'. Many Manilamen married local Aboriginal women and most of their descendants identify as Indigenous Australians, while continuing to acknowledge and celebrate their Filipino inheritance.

The book is divided into three parts:

Part 1 Filipino Descendants Speak has stories narrated by 11 people from the Kimberley area (mainly Broome but also some from Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Derby) and ten from Torres Strait. Those people are descendants of early Filipino settlers in the various localities.

Part 2 Salient Themes discusses three themes arising from the recorded narratives:

- the impact of Australia's policy on naturalisation;
- the contributions of Filipinos to social and economic community building; and,
- 'Belonging' and identification as Australians with diverse ancestral heritage.

Part 3 History of Filipino Pearl Divers in Torres Strait and Broome

There are many interesting accounts of the early life, difficulties, and significant contributions made by people regarded as 'aliens' until quite recent times. The contribution these people made to the early community in Broome is especially noteworthy. The narrators who hail from and/or speak about Broome are Kevin Puertollano, Mitch Torres, James Frederic Jahan, Miguel Castillon, Sally Bin Demin, Elsta Foy, Mary Manolis (deceased), Evelyn Masuda (deceased), Ellen Puertollano, Anthony Ozies (deceased), and Magdalene Ybasco. This book is a valuable resource for people researching this poorly appreciated part of northern Australian history and, in accounts such as the one from Miguel Castillon, we can see how the involvement of Filipinos in the pearling industry gave rise to strong links between families from Broome, Darwin and the Torres Strait.

Mike Donaldson

IN THE NEWS

In *The West Australian* on 23 March, a purple page featuring 'Freo's New Recruits' included **Jason Carter**. Now nineteen, he is the first AFL player to come out of Wyndham. The Dockers' Rookie Players List says: 'The running defender/winger joined Fremantle's NGA in 2016 following an impressive NAB AFL U16 Championships, where he was named All Australian. Injuries interrupted Carter's 2017 season but he went on to be selected to represent WA at the NAB AFL U18 Championships in 2018. At the WA state combine, Carter recorded a 2.87 second 20m time, which was faster than any time recorded at the national combine.'

ABC Kimberley News has an informative [report](#) by Ben Collins on the failure of the Broome-based low-budget cruise option **Ahoy Buccaneers**. Registered under the name Bloo Moons Pty Ltd and operated by Douglas and Shelley Gould since 2015, it was placed in administration in June 2018 and went into liquidation in December. Hopes that the sale of the cruise boat MV *Oceanic* might help to repay some of the \$3 million owed to customers, employees and other businesses seem unlikely to be realised. The recent liquidator's report from KPMG found that the company may have been insolvent from July 2016. During that time, the ABC has run various [reports](#) on calamities faced by Ahoy Buccaneers' passengers and would-be passengers.

The ABC also has Matt Bamford's interesting [story](#) on the eradication of invasive rubber vine from the Fitzroy River. **John Szymanski** has focussed on this locality for eight years. With funding from the WA Government, Kimberley pastoralists and others, he went from initially mapping the infestation on foot with local Indigenous contractors to capturing hundreds of thousands of bushland images using specially-designed cameras attached to the underside of a Robinson 44 helicopter. Dedicated volunteers, who work from their homes around Australia, sift through the images to pinpoint each plant by its distinctive white flowers. Mr Szymanski estimates that less than 1 per cent of the infestation remains in the 270-square-kilometre Fitzroy River area.

COUNCIL 2018-2019

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