



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 155

December 2019

## **NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING and wind-up supper**

**Wednesday, 4 December 2019**

**commencing 7.00 pm**

**Mount Claremont Community Centre, 107 Montgomery Avenue**

**Kimberley Society Members**  
*present*

**“Highlights from 26 years of the Kimberley Society”**



## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### Ave atque vale Kimberley Society

This classical Latin phrase from the Roman poet [Gaius Valerius Catullus](#) translates as 'Hail and farewell' or 'I salute you ... and goodbye'. It is used especially in a eulogy to a high-ranking military hero and I think it is appropriate as we farewell our Kimberley Society with this final edition of the *Boab Bulletin*.

In the following pages Cathie Clement outlines the Society's original objectives and how we have met them, Treasurer Jeff Gresham summarises the financial records of our 26 year existence, and Past Presidents either reminisce or comment on some memorable achievements. We also have several interesting articles.

The Kimberley Society has been a tremendous success and we can all be justly proud of our publication legacy, particularly the books, that will be widely appreciated by residents, scholars, and travellers for many years to come. The monthly meetings have (mostly) provided interesting and educational opportunities to meet with people with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and experience, but all sharing a deep interest in all things Kimberley. Many lasting friendships have developed through these meetings — how else could we have met these wonderful people without the Kimberley Society?

The Society's newsletter, *Boab Bulletin*, has reached members across Australia and in other parts of the world so that those who could not attend regular meetings in Perth could keep in touch with our activities and read summaries of many presentations. The e-mail version that has been available for the last six years added the extra dimension of colour images and live links to relevant websites, as well as speedy delivery to distant members.

Our [website](#) has grown and evolved over the years to become an important resource for Kimberley information with many talk summaries and book notes. The website will live on after the wind-up of the Society as part of the National Library's [PANDORA Archive](#), so all the information will remain accessible. Copies of all *Boab Bulletins* will live on with the website.

The final meeting of the Society on 4 December will be an opportunity to celebrate our achievements as well as lament the passing of the Society. There will be plenty of time to mingle and talk with members while enjoying some pre-Christmas snacks and refreshments before a series of brief presentations of notable highlights by some of our Past Presidents. Our normal post-presentation coffee or tea will provide more time to catch up.

I hope to see many of you there and hope we can continue to meet informally from time to time at a suitable venue yet to be identified ...

### Ave atque vale Kimberley Society

Mike Donaldson



## ESTABLISHING THE KIMBERLEY SOCIETY AND FULFILLING ITS OBJECTIVES

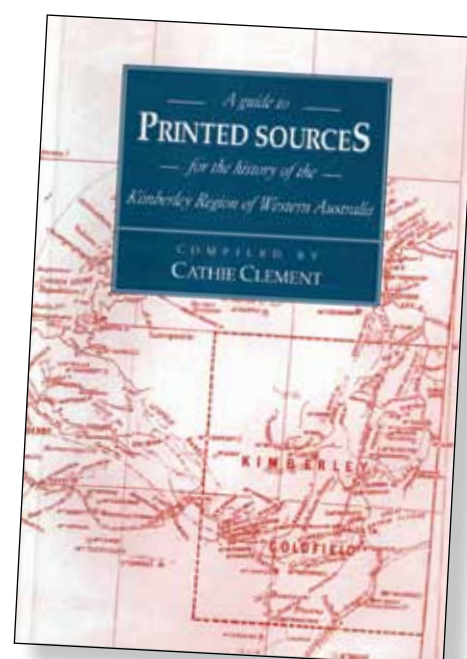
The slow but methodical establishment of the Kimberley Society began in January 1992 when Cathie Clement, David Dale and Lindsay Peet decided to create it. An Interim Council was formed and, at an August meeting, there was an enthusiastic response to a suggestion that our first publication could be an annotated bibliography. In 1981, the staff of the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History had compiled and published the 114-page [Select bibliography of the natural history of the Kimberley Region of Western Australia](#). So, with a diversity of scholarly expertise evident on the Interim Council, it seemed logical to build on the library's work by creating other bibliographies.

But first, we had to create the society. In October 1992, we focused on finances. Each Interim Councillor contributed \$20 or \$40, which was seen as being all or part of his/her first annual subscription. That approach reflected our firm belief that the society should be independent and impartial; a status we have maintained throughout. The councillors involved were Terry Bolland, Bob Bowers, Cathie Clement, Kevin Coate, Ian Crawford, David Dale, Mike Donaldson, Daphne Edinger, Ian Elliot, Kevin Kenneally, Bill Loane, John Long, Jeff Murray, Lindsay Peet, Jenny Perceval, Phillip Playford, Lawrie Short, Jeremy Talbot and Pat Vinnicombe.

On 5 May 1993, we adopted our constitution. It listed the Kimberley Society's objectives as:

1. To encourage studies, particularly collaborative projects, which will enhance knowledge and understanding of the Kimberley's history, peoples, cultures, resources, natural history, heritage, and environment;
2. To encourage personal, organisational, corporate and government actions that will help to preserve the Kimberley environment, and its rich Aboriginal and European heritage;
3. To promote the dissemination of information about the Kimberley;
4. To cooperate with other Associations and any other bodies or persons having similar aims;
5. To produce such publications as may be determined by the Council from time to time; and,
6. To inform and make recommendations to other parties, including organisations, corporations and government, on matters relating to the Kimberley.

The production of bibliographies fitted neatly with our first objective. In 1996, after Cathie Clement compiled a 230-page annotated bibliography ([A Guide to printed sources for the history of the Kimberley region of Western Australia](#)), we contributed \$1000 towards its publication by the UWA Centre for Western Australian History. All members were invited to the launch and offered a \$10 discount off the price of the volume. It was one of many books on which such discounts were secured over the years. Elsewhere in this newsletter, 'A Brief Financial History of the Kimberley Society Incorporated' mentions the Society's own publications. Those volumes, as well as fulfilling our fifth objective, encouraged further studies by making information available on rock art, history and natural history. Other support for outside works included a \$5000 grant made for publication of the anthology [Kimberley Stories](#) and a \$2000 grant for [The West Australian Naturalist](#), Vol. 27, No. 4, 8 April 2011, which was devoted to the findings of a 1990 expedition to Camden Harbour.





In line with our second objective – to encourage personal, organisational, corporate and government actions that will help to preserve the Kimberley environment, and its rich Aboriginal and European heritage – we publicised initiatives that were helping with that preservation. We donated or pledged funds to support some of them, and we ensured that the heritage-listed mud brick ruins of the Old Halls Creek post office were protected from exposure to rain, animals and vandals. That project (undertaken in three stages during a 16-year collaboration with the site's owner, the National Trust, Heritage & Conservation Professionals, and the Shire of Halls Creek) resulted in the erection of a roof that mimics the original, a security fence, and seven information panels.



Old Halls Creek Post Office Ruins, May 1999, more than three decades after the iron roof was removed for use elsewhere. Photo by Heritage & Conservation Professionals, Perth.



Heritage & Conservation Professionals, acting for the owner and the Kimberley Society, had Murray River North erect the roof over the ruins in 2002. Photo by Derek Keene, Halls Creek.

Our third objective – to promote the dissemination of information about the Kimberley – was the easiest to tackle. We started off by presenting talks in Perth, open to the public, every second month in 1994. The following year, we switched to one per month, except in January. Our first regional meeting was held in Derby in November 1994. The speakers at the regional meetings were Kimberley Society members who either lived in or were visiting the region. Our seminars were also a big part of fulfilling this objective.

Our newsletter, which dates from February 1994, appeared every alternate month. Its standard and style evolved over the years, reflecting our access to technology, skills and funds.

In 1996, we splurged on quality paper with full colour images for our first supplement, *Extracts from the diary of the Kimberley Society Coastal Excursion (Broome to Port Warrender, Admiralty Gulf, Western Australia 17-20 May 1996)*.

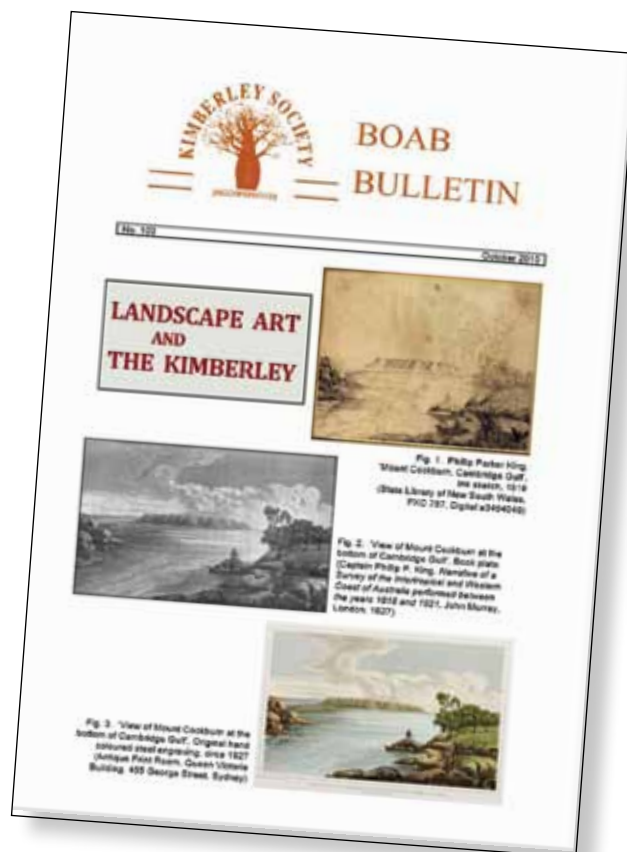


Supplement No. 2 was an index to 24 newsletters, from 1994 to 1997. In 2010, we splurged again on our 100th edition, using full colour for *Landscape art and the Kimberley*.

Over the years, the newsletter has provided a vast amount of information about the Kimberley. It has also offered space for sharing knowledge, seeking help, and airing opinions.

Supplement No. 3, an index to all of our newsletters, will be published online.

Most of our newsletters carried summaries of talks given at our meetings. To augment our Perth-based speakers (members and outsiders), we flew others in from both the Kimberley and the eastern states. Whenever possible, we also offered talks by people known to be visiting Perth. Our collaboration with Kimberley Foundation Australia was particularly fruitful in that regard as we were able to secure some very knowledgeable people who came to Perth for KFA meetings.



Pat Lowe, from Broome, spoke to the Society in Perth on 6 February 2008 about 'Writing, publishing and nature in the Kimberley'. Photo courtesy of Backroom Press, Broome.



Sam Lovell AM, from Derby, spoke to the Society in Perth on 4 April 2018 about 'Past, present, and the future: Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Kimberley'. Photo by Mike Donaldson.



Grahame Walsh, relentless rock art researcher and publisher of two major books on Bradshaw paintings. He spoke to the Society in Perth in March 1997. Photo supplied by Kimberley Foundation Australia.



Moving on to our fourth objective – to cooperate with other Associations and any other bodies or persons having similar aims – we publicised their activities and initiatives, and we had some present talks, e.g. [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#), [Kimberley Toad Busters](#), [Team Sawfish](#) and [The Clontarf Foundation](#). We also participated in an organised camp out in 2001 (see pages 12–14) and helped to sponsor a Kununurra Historical Society History Forum titled ‘75 Years of Ord Irrigation’ in 2016.



Kevin Coate, organiser of the Kimberley Camp Out, and Jack Trust, from Wuggubun Community, in the Deception Ranges.

Reflecting on our fifth objective – to produce such publications as may be determined by the Council from time to time – it is gratifying that many articles, books, newspapers and reports have cited, quoted or reproduced material from our newsletters and our other publications. One reviewer of [The natural world of the Kimberley](#) (Bill Barker, State Herbarium of South Australia, in [Australasian Systematic Botany Society Newsletter 177](#), December 2018, p. 55) wrote: ‘I recommend this highly informative, attractively designed, and copiously and well illustrated book to anyone with an interest in the Kimberley’. Elsewhere (‘[Landmarks in Kimberley exploration](#)’, *The West Australian*, 31 May 2012), a journalist wrote: ‘Some things are born of both passion and true knowledge - a powerful combination. [Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development](#), edited and compiled by Cathie Clement, Jeffrey Gresham and Hamish McGlashan, and published by the Kimberley Society, is just such a creation.’ See pages 30–31 for coverage of our rock art volumes.

In fulfilling the last of our objectives – to inform and make recommendations to other parties, including organisations, corporations and government, on matters relating to the Kimberley – we found that our unsolicited input was not always welcome. But we did receive and respond to invitations to provide input on various matters, e.g. the West Kimberley Aesthetic Assessment: National Heritage List. We also responded to hundreds of questions put to us in letters, emails, phone calls and website enquiries.

For 26 years, the energy, expertise and interests of the Kimberley Society’s management council influenced the direction taken to enhance knowledge and understanding of our favourite region. The challenges involved in finding speakers, organising seminars and compiling our publications were sometimes daunting but the outcomes were always worth the effort. It would have been nice to see the society continue but, without a commitment from members willing to take over its management, winding up was the only option. As we wind up, steps are being taken to ensure that as much information as possible is uploaded to the website. The State Library of Western Australia, as a partner in the National Library of Australia’s [PANDORA Archive](#), preserved the pages from our website 48 times between 7 September 2006 and [10 January 2018](#). The next snapshot should preserve the website in its final form. Thanks to that preservation initiative, much of the material that we produced while fulfilling our objectives will continue to remain available to people throughout the world.

*Cathie Clement*

## REFLECTIONS ON THE ICONIC KIMBERLEY BOAB TREE (*Adansonia gregorii*): A MYSTERY WRAPPED IN AN ENIGMA

No tree is more symbolic of the Kimberley than the long-lived Boab (some estimates suggest 1,500 years) with its somewhat grotesque look. It has been described ‘as if someone planted an elephant which sprouted into a tree’. Throughout the life of the Kimberley Society, the Kimberley Boab ([Adansonia gregorii](#)) has featured in many of our talks. With it also being our logo, I thought it appropriate that the last issue of our newsletter, the *Boab Bulletin*, should reflect on why this iconic symbol of the Kimberley attracts so much interest and attention.

An [article](#) by Richard Pallardy provides interesting background. The vernacular name Baobab (as used for the non-Australian species) is derived from Arabic, which means ‘father of many seeds’. The Australian common name, Boab, is thought to be a contraction of Baobab. Medieval Moroccan scholar [Ibn Battuta](#) mentions Baobabs as early as 1353 and Portuguese explorer [Gomes Eanes de Zurara](#) recorded Baobabs while visiting [Guinea-Bissau](#) in 1448, marking the first European observation of the species. It did not come to wider attention until French explorer and botanist [Michel Adanson](#) (1727–1806), working in [Senegal](#), sent word of the strange trees to Europe. The genus *Adansonia* was described by the Swedish botanist [Carl Linnaeus](#) in 1753. There are only [eight species](#) of Baobabs (*Adansonia*) in the world. The first to be named was [Adansonia digitata](#), a species indigenous to the savanna woodlands of sub-Saharan Africa. A further six species occur in Madagascar. One species (*A. gregorii*), is restricted to north-western Australia. In [‘Origins of the Australian Boab \(Adansonia gregorii\)’](#), it is said that ‘Baobab trees attract attention because of their striking shape and the large number of different uses to which they can be put by human cultures’. Aboriginals used the giants as shelter, food and medicine as well as a source of raw materials for making rope, cloth, twine etc. Carved boab nuts made by local Aboriginal artists are popular souvenirs.

So, what is the origin of the Australian Boab? This is a question that still requires an answer. In an [article](#) published in *The Conservation* in 2015, [Associate Professor Haripriya Rangan](#) from Monash University observed that no one knows when or how the Boab came to Australia, or why its natural range is limited to this region. She dismissed an early hypothesis that Baobabs existed in parts of the supercontinent of [Gondwana](#), which split up more than 50 million years ago and gave rise to Africa, Madagascar and Australia. ‘This was not very convincing’, she wrote, ‘because, for one thing, peninsular India was part of that massive continental break-up, but does not have its own baobab species.’ She also cited [work](#) by American botanist [Professor David Baum](#) and others who found, in genetic analysis of Baobab species from Africa, Madagascar, and Australia, that the three major branches separated just over 6 million years ago, long after Gondwana had split up. Less credence was given to the [hypothesis](#) in which scientist [Jack Pettigrew](#) argued that humans who valued Baobab fruit as food carried the pods to northwest Australia when they migrated out of Africa some 70,000 years ago.

A [study](#) of which A/Professor Rangan was part built on earlier studies in Africa that had revealed a lot of diversity and borrowing of terms for Baobabs between languages. The Australian team decided to combine the genetic and linguistic data for Boabs in the Kimberley, map them together, and see what that revealed. They were amazed by how closely the Boab gene flow patterns and the movement of Boab words between Aboriginal languages corresponded. The overlap was strong enough to prove that humans were mainly responsible for dispersing the Boab in northwest Australia. Further confirmation came from evidence of Boab seed and pod remains from other studies of [Aboriginal archaeological sites](#) in the region.

Ben Collins continued this story on [Curious Kimberley](#) (ABC News) in 2018 with a discussion of the incompatible Baum and Pettigrew hypotheses. Professor Baum believes the most likely explanation for the Boab coming to Australia is that a Boab nut floated across the Indian Ocean millions of years ago.

“The prevailing wisdom has been that they probably got to Australia from Africa or Madagascar,” Dr Baum said.

“There is a remote possibility, however, that the migration direction is the reverse.

“There were some fossil pollen of related groups found in Antarctica, only a few years ago, which just raises the possibility that the group may have started in Australia and migrated westward to Africa and Madagascar.”

Emeritus Professor Pettigrew and his colleague argued that the seed pod of *A. gregorii* has the thinnest shell of all *Adansonia* species, making it unlikely that seed pods would survive such a long journey. They also said that the oceanic currents are unfavourable for the observed dispersal pattern. Curious Kimberley, in mentioning the Pettigrew hypothesis that people probably brought the Boab to Australia, said ‘this idea is controversial, so much so that the genetic calculations used by Dr Pettigrew to arrive at the 72,000-year figure have not been accepted by what he calls “established botanists”.

Further discussion of the Baum and Pettigrew hypotheses appeared in [Australian Geographic](#) in July 2019. There, Alasdair McGregor wrote ‘it seems that until fossilised remains are found that can decode the origins of Australia’s baobab, this Kimberley icon will remain shrouded in an enigmatic allure as distinctive as its striking form and bare-branched silhouette’.

One of the best descriptions of the Boab came from Ernestine Hill. In 1934, she affectionately described it as the ‘[friendly ogre of the great north-west](#)’: ‘a grizzled, distorted old goblin with the girth of a giant, the hide of a rhinoceros, twiggy fingers clutching at empty air, and the disposition of a guardian angel’. Her classic book [The Great Australian Loneliness](#) also carried the description. Common names for the Boab are not very flattering and include bottle tree, upside down tree, [dead rat tree](#), gouty stem tree, cream of tartar tree and monkey bread tree.

Boabs are long-lived [pachycauls](#) (plants with a disproportionately thick trunk for their height, and few branches), immediately recognisable by their swollen trunks. Their survival in the landscape may be partly due to their wood being too brittle and spongy for use. Their soft, fibrous wood can trap so much moisture that the trunk visibly swells and shrinks with the seasons. This was very evident in Broome when concrete seats were built around Boabs near the old Post Office in the ‘dry’ season and exploded when the trees expanded in the ‘wet’ season. Dr Pettigrew and others have suggested that Boabs may have played a role in the survival of cultures that fostered them because of the trees’ ability to carry through a catastrophe when other sources of food might have disappeared.

The Boab is deciduous during the ‘dry’ season with numerous globular, ellipsoid or obovoid-shaped woody-shelled fruits suspended from the ends of its branches. The surface of the fruit when young is often coloured with dense, short, yellowish hairs. The fruits contain black, kidney-shaped seeds embedded in a white pithy substance that is astringent when tasted. During the ‘wet’ season the tree is clothed with bright green leaves and festooned with white showy flowers that are pollinated by [Hawkmoths](#) and [Northern Blossom Bats](#). Aboriginal people know the Boab by names that include [jumulu](#). Boabs are regarded as having a strong spiritual presence. In some African cultures the Boab (or Baobab) is considered bewitched. Its huge grotesque shape is said to possess souls or to be inhabited by ancestral spirits.

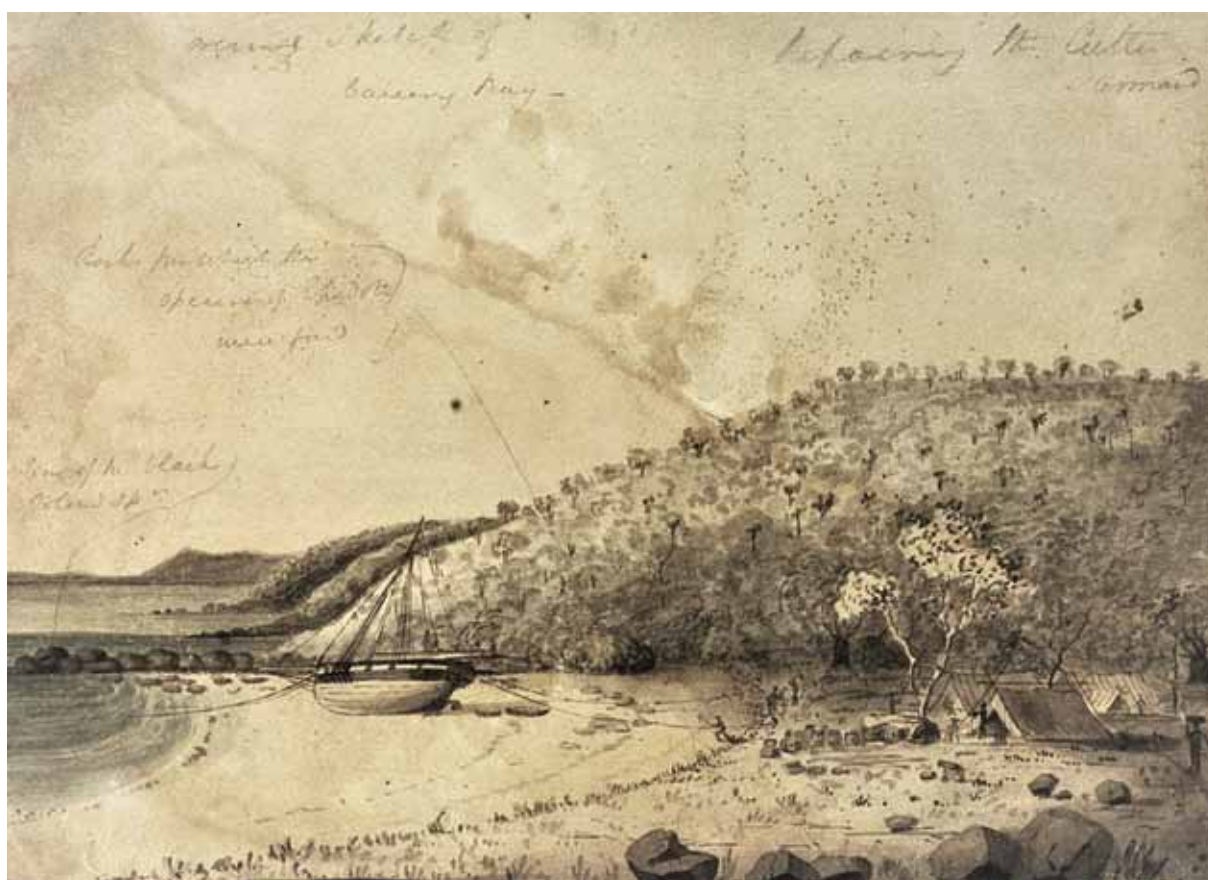
The hollow trunks of Boabs were used as ossuaries – chambers for storing Aboriginal skeletal remains. There are widespread claims that the hollows were also used as ‘prison trees’ to incarcerate Aboriginal people taken into custody. In the early days, police taking prisoners to the Wyndham gaol did make overnight use of the tree known as the “[Hillgrove Lockup](#)”. None are known to have used the so-called “Boab Prison Tree” outside Derby but the signage there, in line with archival evidence, acknowledges that blackbirders might have used it to hold their Aboriginal captives while waiting for pearling boats to arrive.



Other interesting information about Boabs can be found on the [website](#) of Birgit Bradtke who is from the Kimberley. With all *Adansonia* species, Australian and African, having long been used as a staple food source by the indigenous populations, she notes that studies on the [African species](#) have shown parts of the tree to be exceptionally high in Vitamin C, more than ten times the Vitamin C content of oranges! The Australian boab tree is not as well studied, but it is known that the seeds and pith surrounding the seeds are very high in Vitamin C as well. Boab trees provide shade and, under the tree canopy, there are often slabs of stone on which seeds have been ground. When commercially grown [Boab seedlings](#) are harvested at about 6 - 8 weeks of age, the tap-root is the size and shape of a large carrot and they are crisp like water chestnuts. Like carrots they are sold in bundles with the tops still attached, and are peeled, then sliced or grated.

Between 1817 and 1822, [Lieut. Phillip Parker King RN](#) commanded a series of voyages of exploration and hydrographic survey around the Australian coast. The main vessel used in the work was His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*. In September-October 1820, the *Mermaid* was leaking badly and needed urgent repairs. King careened his ship in an embayment he named Careening Bay, now located within the Prince Regent National Park.

During the period the crew were ashore, the ship's carpenter carved 'HMC Mermaid 1820' into the trunk of a large boab. This was no random act of vandalism by the crew. King was following Admiralty instructions that stipulated 'take care to leave some evidence which cannot be mistaken of you having landed'. When King returned to Careening Bay 10 months later in the *Bathurst*, he remarked that the lettering was likely to last 'longer than any other memento we had left'.



Repairing the Cutter Mermaid at Careening Bay by PP King.  
(PP King Album sketches and engravings (PXC767/88), State Library of New South Wales).

While the crew repaired the vessel, King and [Allan Cunningham](#) (the botanist accompanying the journey) explored the area, collecting plant and other natural history specimens. New plant species were described from the specimens Cunningham collected at this spot, and it was here that he first collected botanical specimens of the Boab, although he had observed it on King's second survey voyage in 1819. At Careening Bay, Cunningham only collected fruiting material and mistakenly thought it was a species of *Capparis* and gave it the manuscript name *Capparis gibbosa*. Although he prepared a description of the tree he did not include it in King's published account of the voyages – [Narrative of a survey](#).

[Dr Tony Orchard](#), who recently discovered that the Natural History Museum in London holds a later [draft paper](#) in which Cunningham compared his species with the African genus *Adansonia*, says that Cunningham clearly believed that his name *Capparis gibbosa* should be published. But his premature death in 1839 resulted in his discovery going unacknowledged.

In his manuscript, Cunningham wrote "The name of His Majesty's Cutter was deeply carved upon the stem of the largest Tree on the shores of Careening Bay, Port Nelson, with certain Initials and the Date of the Year of our Visitation." Subsequently, [Ferdinand Mueller](#) described the species, as *A. gregorii*, based on specimens collected near the Victoria and Fitzmaurice Rivers, and this name became accepted for the species.



Mermaid tree inscription. Photo by Kevin Kenneally.

Next year will be the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King's landing at Careening Bay. [Commemorative ceremonies](#) will be held at the 'Mermaid Tree' and at the Maritime Museum in Fremantle. These coordinated events, commemorating the achievements of King and his crew during the bicentenary, will take place on the morning of 25 September 2020.

King was not the only one to leave an inscription on a Boab. For explorers and settlers, they served as easily recognisable landmarks and meeting points. At the [Marigui settlement](#) site, established by [Joseph Bradshaw](#) at the Prince Regent River in 1891, there is a Boab marked 'GUNN' commemorating Bradshaw's cousin and expedition member [Aeneas Gunn](#). Gunn, in his published account of his Kimberley adventures, mentioned visiting Careening Bay in 1893 and observing the Mermaid inscription. He also made a sketch of the tree and the inscription.



Captain King's Boabab Tree Careening Bay, Prince Regent River, N.W. Coast West Australia as seen in 1893. Sketched by Aeneas Gunn FRGS. Reproduced with permission from private collection of Dr Jonathon King.

Herbert Basedow who led a mineralogical expedition to the Kimberley in 1916, removed bark from a boab containing an Aboriginal carving of an emu that was deposited in the Australian Museum. He also reported finding a Boab on Meda Station inscribed 'STOKES' believed to commemorate [John Lort Stokes](#), the commander of HMS *Beagle*, who published, in 1846, his two volume [Discoveries in Australia](#) and included [sketches](#) of a Boab tree and its fruit. Other inscriptions or blazes were left by other Kimberley explorers and surveyors, e.g. [Sir George Grey](#), [Alexander Forrest](#), Tom Kilfoyle, [Fred Brockman](#) and [William Easton](#).

So, when you are next in the Kimberley, take time to admire and appreciate this colossus of the landscape and ponder its chequered history and ancestry through time.

*Kevin Kenneally*



## COMBINED 8-DAY KIMBERLEY CAMP OUT

In July 2001, the Kimberley Society, [Western Australian Naturalists' Club](#), [Wildflower Society](#) and [BirdLife Australia](#) combined to take an 8-day Kimberley Camp Out to "[Kingston Rest](#)", 70km south of Kununurra, for a taste of the Kimberley. Before departure about 70 participants attended a briefing with the organiser Kevin Coate to discuss the itinerary, methods of transport (some pooled resources to hire a bus), etc. About 30 Kimberley Society members, some of whom were also members of one of the other groups, participated. Daphne Edinger volunteered to liaise with Kimberley Society members regarding transport.

The event was well organised and great interest was expressed by Kununurra residents: horticultural farmers generously donated boxes of melons and bananas; Aboriginal interaction was willingly given by [Jack Trust](#) from Wuggubun, and Neita Birch from Mandangala Community on Glen Hill, taking us to various sites within the Deception and Carr Boyd Ranges.

A highlight each night was a talk by an invited speaker on a subject dear to their heart. If needed, a large white tarpaulin was hung from a tree near the campfire as a screen. Speakers from the Kimberley Society were Tony Start, Chris Done and John Lewis.

For ease of management and to avoid congestion each day, the mob was split into groups of 20 plus a volunteer leader. These included Chris Done, Hamish McGlashan and Daphne Edinger.

The camping area on a tranquil lagoon with colourful water lilies and tall paperbark trees was magnificent, with plenty of good camping spots near the water's edge. Many took advantage of the clear water to cool off. Nearby Dunham River proved irresistible for several keen fishers and a number of good size barramundi were caught.



Dunham River Pilot Dam, upstream from the Diversion Dam campsite

Jeff Hayley from [Triple J Tours](#) took 48 people on an interpretive full-day boat trip on the Ord River from Kununurra to Lake Argyle. Others went to [Keep River National Park](#) or [Harry's Hole](#) (a popular swimming place, not easy to get to) in the Carr Boyd Ranges. Alan and Caroline Garstone (who hosted the event) did a marvellous job showing people around the property and many were interested in watching their children being taught by [School of the Air](#).

We were fortunate to have with us John Lewis, the engineer responsible for designing the Dunham Pilot Dam, and to view the spectacular body of water behind it. At Excelsior Reach on the Dunham River, it came as a surprise to find what had been touted as the biggest boab in the Kimberley had fallen apart.



Kevin Coate beside the giant baob (girth 18.7m) at Excelsior Reach, Dunham River, in May 2000 before it collapsed.



The fallen giant - Kimberley Camp Out at Excelsior Reach. July 2001.

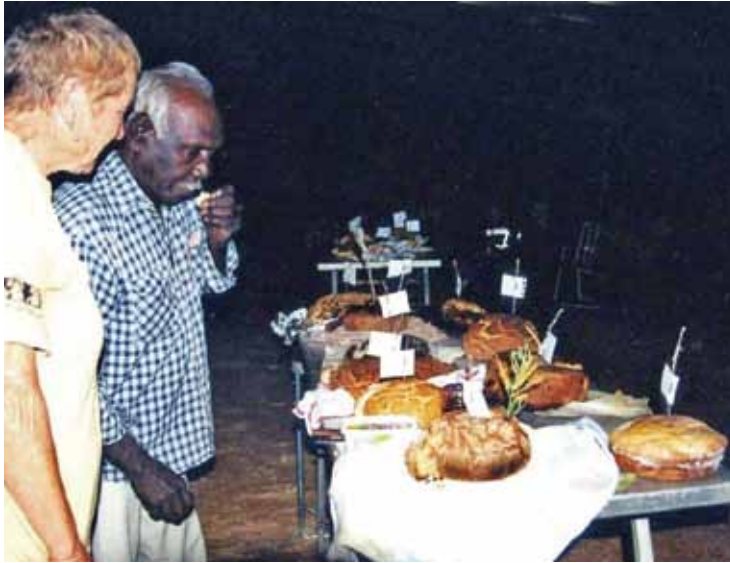


A favourite picnic place: No 2 Gorge at Glen Hill, July 2001.



Kimberley Camp Out participants on Deception Range, looking toward the Carr Boyd Ranges.





Daphne Edinger and George Dixon - judging damper cooking competition. Photo by M Skeet.

Toward the end of the camp out, the group had expanded to more than 80 participants, including a number of children and grandchildren. A damper baking contest was held on the final night and judged by former drovers' cook George Dixon, a Mandangala man from Glen Hill, with free advice from Daphne Edinger. It was a hilarious end to a fantastic eight days in the Kimberley.



Blachford Escarpment on the way to Glen Hill. Kimberley Camp Out, July 2001.

The *Boab Bulletin*, February 2001, pages 7–8, and October 2001, pages 3–5, provided coverage of the camp out, and, like the Society's boat trip in 1996, participants talked about it for years. A reunion of those who attended was held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, with a spit roast meal, on Sunday 28th October 2001.

*Kevin Coate*



## RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO LANDING AT VIEW HILL IN SEPT 1885

On 2 October 2019, Brad Durack spoke to the Kimberley Society about the life of his great grandfather, Patrick Mantinea Durack, the East Kimberley's first storekeeper. The store was at View Hill, near the mouth of the Ord River, on Cambridge Gulf.

Patrick Mantinea Durack, son of Darby Durack and Margaret Kilfoyle, was known as 'Black Pat' to distinguish him as one of the black haired 'Pat' Duracks. He and his uncle [Tom Kilfoyle](#) were on the famous 1883 to 1885 trek droving Queensland cattle to the East Kimberley. Leaving the drive near Victoria River, Black Pat rode to Port Darwin with [Thomas Hayes](#) (his uncle's partner) and purchased stores for the new Ord River settlers and the prospectors known to be heading for Halls Creek to search for gold. In September 1885, after tons of stores were put ashore from the barquentine *Lorinda Borstel* at View Hill, the captain said that Black Pat had looked "broken hearted".



P M Durack (1851-1933).



Topographic map of Cambridge Gulf and the mouth of the Ord River showing the location of View Hill. The town of Wyndham is on the West Arm of the Gulf, 30 km south of View Hill.

In the talk, we heard that Brad's research had included three boat trips to the View Hill area. On the third trip, done on 4 & 5 August 2018, he was accompanied by Chris McLachlan and Phil Sproull from Wyndham Historical Society (WHS) and Andrew Barker, President of the Kununurra Historical Society (KHS). Footage from that trip was included in a 35-minute film that Andrew made for the talk.

Before Andrew showed the film, Brad read aloud part of a 1930s [obituary](#) on Black Pat from *The West Australian*. He then told how [Mary Durack](#), having had access to Black Pat's [manuscript](#) at the age of 19, had [written](#) about Cambridge Gulf and Black Pat's View Hill store. Brad described the remoteness and inaccessibility of View Hill – a hard place, with little room between the hills and the mangroves, coupled with massive tides – to illustrate the difficulties of his first two trips.

Andrew's film focussed on the third boat trip and also covered a fourth joint KHS-WHS field trip made by two vehicles, on 4 & 5 September 2018, successfully driving all the way to Black Pat's boab. That trip relied on a window of opportunity, just a few weeks in the year, when the tides are lowest and the extensive saltmarsh is dry enough to drive on.

On the third boat trip, after arriving at Coghlan's Landing, View Hill, Brad and Andrew did a six kilometre round trip walk to the site of a boab tree that Brad had been to the week before with his "cousin" Mary Durack, granddaughter of Black Pat's brother, Jerry Brice Durack. Mary had found Surveyor Nyulasy's 'Stone Slab', a metre high slab of rock that he had marked with "N" and a colonial government broad arrow in April 1885, six months before Black Pat's arrival. This was about 50 metres from the boab tree.

This feature, which C W Nyulasy recorded as an Instrument Point in his survey book, was shown on the Lands Department's public plans as "Stone Slab".



On reaching View Hill, Andrew soon found an almost illegible 'PM Durack' marked on one of the trunks but not seen the week before. The boab had several trunks, and the ground around it was adorned with pieces of glass from 1885-1886. A larger inscription was noticed blazed on one of the other boab trunks. Nothing was discernible, either then or on the later overland field trip, but studying photographs of it at a later date revealed more:

PM DURACK  
LANDED VIEW HILL  
[an illegible date, likely 27/9/85]  
LEFT [an illegible date,  
likely May or June 1886]

Black Pat had said in his manuscript that he carved his name, the date he landed, and the name of the ship.

He also wrote that they made two boab canoes and used one to transport his goods to where he had decided to build his store. Each trip involved 'a ton of sugar, as well as flour, iron and timber'. Brad and Andrew found two cut-off boab trunks still extant on the inscribed tree. We heard more about that, and other things, on the night of the talk but we have no space here to mention those things. Our online version of this summary will offer further detail and more images.



Boab bearing the larger inscription.



Boab from which trunks were used to build canoes.

## A BRIEF FINANCIAL HISTORY OF THE KIMBERLEY SOCIETY INCORPORATED

After the launch of the Society in December 1993 the first full financial report was presented as at the end of 1994. This indicated a profit or surplus of nearly \$3500 and this was replicated for the next two years resulting in a surplus of slightly over \$11 000 by the end of 1996. In that year, the Society handled the finances for the Coastal Excursion organised by members for members but did not contribute financially to it. When the Society subsequently published extracts from the diary kept on the excursion, that item became its first full-colour work.

The first rock art seminar was held in 1997 and cost just over \$6000. Three hundred copies of the proceedings volume ([Occasional Paper No.1](#)) were printed at a cost of \$3400. These costs were essentially recovered through seminar registrations and sales of the proceedings.

In 1999 the appeal for funds for the erection of a free-standing roof over the heritage listed [Old Halls Creek Post Office Ruins](#) got under way, with Cathie Clement taking on the role of Appeal Coordinator. Given that the Society was going to apply, as an incorporated body, for grants to fund the project, a decision was taken to register the Society for GST and it was issued with its own Australian Business Number. By the end of the year \$5128 had been raised through the appeal.



Roof over the Old Halls Creek Post Office Ruins in June 2004, two years after its erection. Two more louvred gables were added, to match the original roof, when funds permitted. Photo Mike Donaldson.

In 2000 a Lotteries Grant of \$16 500 was paid into the Society's account, to fund research and documentation of the early history of Fitzroy Crossing by Cathie Clement. Fundraising for the Halls Creek project continued in 2001–2002, and with grants from the Heritage Council of Western Australia (\$50 000), the Regional Solutions Program (\$44 000), and Kimberley Development Commission (\$2000), and support in cash or kind from the owner, the National Trust, Halls Creek Shire, corporate sponsors and numerous individuals, construction of the roof and fence was completed in 2002 for a total cost (as recorded in the Society's 2002 Profit and Loss statement) of \$126 000.

A second Lotteries Grant of \$16 500 received in 2002 was used by Cathie Clement to begin researching and documenting the history of Wyndham and its port. A further grant of \$7700 from the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley was made in 2003 for that project. During these early years, grants that the Kimberley Society made to outside organisations included \$1000 towards publication of a [bibliography](#) of sources for Kimberley history, \$500 towards the [Beagle Bay Church](#) belltower reconstruction, \$350 towards publication of the [Handbook of Western Australian Birds](#), and \$250 to the Art Gallery of WA as a contribution towards a research trip to the Kimberley.



In September 2005 the second rock art seminar, attended by 120 people, was held at the University of Western Australia for a cost of just over \$8000. Seminar registration receipts totalled slightly over \$10 000. The proceedings volume from the Seminar, [\*Rock Art of the Kimberley\*](#), was published in August 2007 and proved to be extremely popular. The cost of printing 3163 copies was \$34 000 and sales by the end of the year totalled \$31 000. Sales of the book continued until the final copies were sold in 2013. By this time sales had totalled approximately \$96 000.

In 2010 the history seminar, attended by 150 people, was held at UWA at a cost of \$12 600 but this was almost completely recovered by the seminar registrations. The proceedings volume from the seminar, [\*Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development\*](#), was published in May 2012. Originally 2057 copies were printed for a cost of \$29 000 with the publication cost being recovered before the end of the year. A reprint of 1000 copies was produced in 2016 for a cost of \$12 000 and by October 2019, 2700 copies had been sold for revenue of close to \$90 000.



History seminar participants during a tea break at the University Club at UWA. Photo by Peter Buck.

In October 2016 the Society ran another successful seminar at the UWA titled The Natural World of the Kimberley. Attended by 110 people the cost of holding the seminar was \$13 000 plus printing costs of \$600. These outlays were fully recovered by the registration fees. The proceedings volume from the seminar, also titled [\*The natural world of the Kimberley\*](#) was published in 2018 with 1557 copies being printed for a total cost of \$31 000. To date 619 copies have been sold and distributed and a total of around \$23 000 recovered from sales.

From 2013 the Society has made grants and donations totalling over \$62 000. These include the final contribution for the old Halls Creek post office project, various grants to PhD students researching the archaeology and rock art of the Kimberley, health projects in the Kimberley and donations to various Kimberley based not for profit organisations.

With the winding up of the Society and cancellation of its incorporation at the end of this year the Society's Council has been addressing the issue of assets held by the Society. By far the biggest assets on the Society's books are the unsold copies of the history book (350 copies) and the natural world book (900 copies). A decision has been made by Council to distribute these books to Kimberley related not for profit organisations. To date 275 history books and 523 natural world books have been distributed to seven organisations. Council is also considering various grant applications that would utilise any remaining cash after all outstanding payments have been made.

### Kimberley Society Treasurers

Mike Donaldson	1992–2000	Richard Hewitt	2000–2005
Gilbert Marsh	2006–2012	Jeff Gresham	2013–present

### Financial Summary 1994-2018

Year	Income \$	Expenditure \$	Profit \$	Loss \$
1994	6718.52	3224.01	3494.51	
1995	7328.90	3346.52	3982.38	
1996	15 534.94	11 877.41	3657.53	
1997	11 994.94	13 915.43		1020.49
1998	8528.69	7586.62	942.07	
1999	8119.24	5034.07	3085.17	
2000	25 044.42	5879.54	19 164.88	
2001	16 253.40	29 292.78		12 939.30
2002	151 562.80	152 031.92	469.10	
2003	14 580.24	14 276.98	303.26	
2004	5827.49	5658.22	169.27	
2005	17 449.33	15 399.99	2049.34	
2006	7343.80	8008.83		665.03
2007	58 294.29	57 408.09	886.20	
2008	24 925.50	8322.33	16 603.17	
2009	21 963.87	12 627.92	9335.95	
2010	30 000.00	32 000.00		2000.00
2011	7192.00	6604.00		
2012	48 302.25	28 455.63	19 846.62	
2013	12 005.15	13 818.44		1813.29
2014	15 550.48	15 744.11		193.64
2015	17 028.21	35 966.10		18 937.90
2016	33 800.39	35 889.59		2089.20
2017	16 503.40	19 556.15		3052.75
2018	31 768.75	40 779.70		9010.85

*Jeff Gresham*

### Following pages:

**Kimberley Society Launch, 1 December 1993. Photos by Kevin Coate, graphics by Ian Coate.**

**SPEAKERS:** Top line (L to R): John Long, Elizabeth Durack, Ernie Bridge, Phillip Playford, Kevin Kenneally, Geoffrey Bolton, Mary Durack, Cathie Clement.

**MEMBERS & GUESTS:** Middle line (L to R): Mary Durack, Cathie Clement, Daphne Edinger, Irene Morecombe, Marion Blackwell, Michael Morcombe, Barbara Hale, Eric Green, Helen Wilson, Sallie Green, Norah Brockman, Norma Anderson, Lyn Donaldson, unidentified. Centre left page: Rosalind Denny, Shirley Bower.

Bottom line (L to R): Cathie Clement addressing meeting, Lindsay Peet, unidentified.

**INTERIM COUNCILLORS:** Top row (L to R): Phillip Playford, Lindsay Peet, Jeremy Talbot, Mike Donaldson, Ian Elliot, Ian Crawford, John Long, Kevin Coate.

Bottom row (L to R): David Dale, Jenny Perceval, Cathie Clement, Daphne Edinger, Kevin Kenneally, Jeff Murray.

Missing from the photograph: Terry Bolland and Bob Bowers.









KIMBERLEY SOCIETY LAUNCH  
1 DEC 1993





## FROM OUR PAST PRESIDENTS



**Cathie Clement**  
**Convenor of the Interim Council 1992–1993**  
**President 1994–1997**

In February 1994, our first newsletter told of the Kimberley Society's formation. This newsletter says more under the heading 'Establishing the Kimberley Society and fulfilling its objectives'. As I sit writing this piece, during a break from indexing all the newsletters issued since that first one, I marvel at what our comparatively small group achieved in 26 years.

When I first envisaged a Kimberley Society, in the late 1980s, I saw nothing more than an interest group that might grow out of a journal devoted to the Kimberley. People with whom I discussed that idea thought it best to create a society first and then, if warranted, a journal for the members. No journal eventuated. Our newsletters and the illustrated volumes that came out of our seminars proved to be more than adequate.

Our success owed much to the strong connections that our Interim Councillors had with the Kimberley and with other interested people. We received approval for incorporation on 17 May 1993, and, on 30 September, began using stationery and a brochure to invite 400 people to join the society. Having allowed only two months for that recruitment, we were delighted (and relieved) to have 130 members by the launch date. Founding membership was available until 31 March 1994 and exceeded 200. Since then, the membership has averaged almost 200.



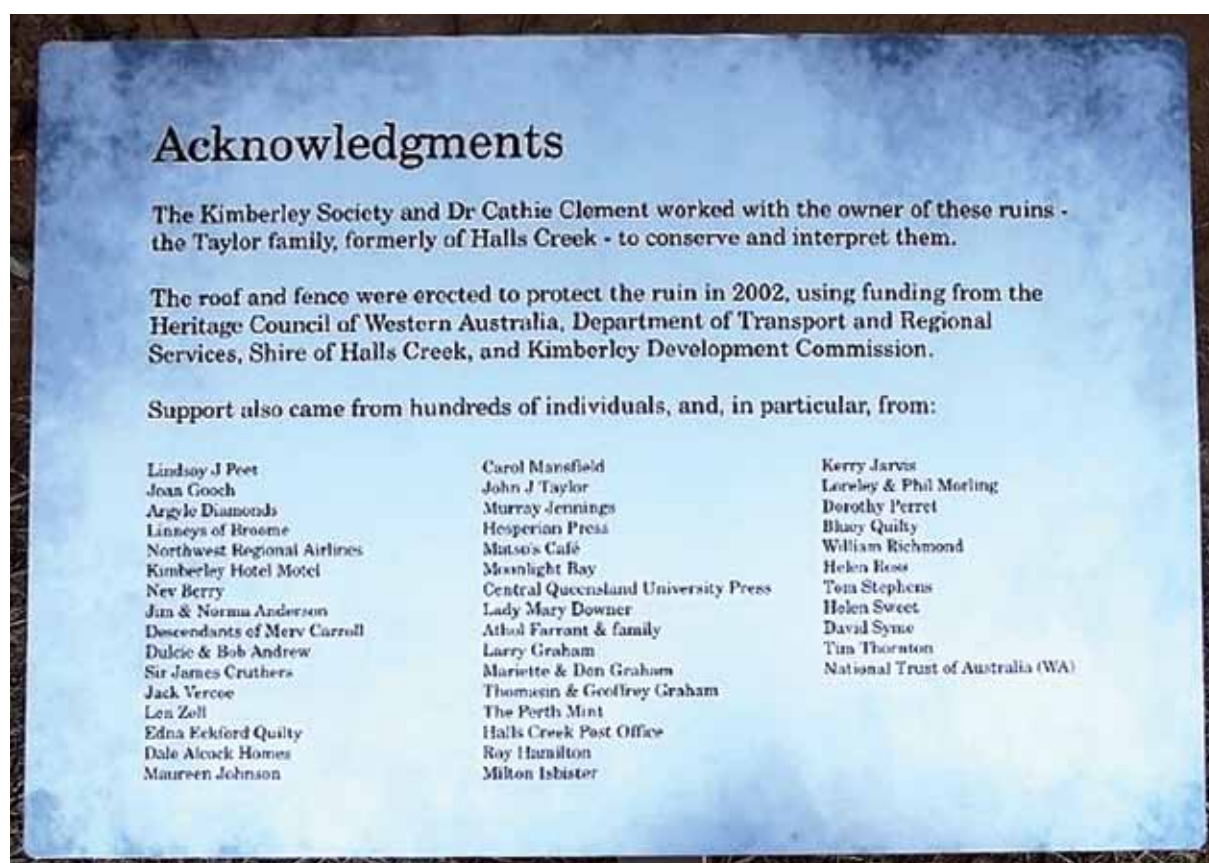
Ready for the launch at the  
Old Observatory, Perth, on  
1 December 1993.  
Photo by Kevin Coate.

In 1996, the full potential of the Society became evident when Kevin Coate (Vice President 1996–1998, and working as Cruise Director and Naturalist on the MV *Sea Lion* for the tour company Travelabout), offered to arrange a familiarisation trip for Kimberley Society members. Sixteen signed up for the excursion, paying \$2800 per person ex-Broome, and, with Kevin Coate and Kevin Kenneally as their leaders, they had a wonderful trip. In October of the same year, Mike Donaldson returned to Perth from a [Bradshaw Foundation](#) rock art seminar in Melbourne and began organising a similar seminar for our Society.

In this newsletter, other past presidents and our treasurer mention the boat trip, seminars, publications, and the funds we have been able to contribute to worthy causes and projects. For me, the highlights of membership included participating in regional meetings and in the conservation and interpretation of the Old Halls Creek Post Office Ruins. It was a huge challenge to complete that project but gratifying to see how the owner, our members, other people, businesses and agencies all pitched in to ensure that it happened.

Generosity plays a big part in the success of any not-for-profit group run by volunteers. In our case, it included the efforts of members such as Lesley and Peter Kemp who assisted with the newsletter for the first three years, Grant Sellwood who set up our first website in 1997, absorbed all the associated costs, and ran it for the next 12 years, and Daphne Edinger who wrote summaries of many of the early talks we heard. Our speakers, a mixture of members and non-members, put lots of effort into preparing their talks, developing PowerPoint presentations, and sometimes writing summaries. Outside support came from the National Trust, which provided, at no charge, the lovely room in which we held our launch and met for the first three years. Publishers, and particularly Hesperian Press, were also generous in making books available for review. Further afield, Kimberley people, businesses and shire councils hosted regional meetings and supported our Old Halls Creek conservation project.

There is no room here to acknowledge individually the many other selfless contributions from members, spouses and outsiders. But, along with those mentioned above, it was this sharing of knowledge, expertise, resources, hospitality and friendship that made the Society not just a great organisation but also one that will be remembered with affection and respect.



The panel acknowledging the support that underpinned the conservation of the Old Halls Creek Post Office Ruins. Photo by Rosmaria Eastman, Shire of Halls Creek.





**Kevin Kenneally,  
President 1997–2000**

I took over the reins from our inaugural president Dr Cathie Clement OAM. Little did we know that Cathie would remain the long-suffering editor of our newsletter and attain honorary life membership bestowed by a grateful Society. A very high standard had been set for Council meetings and the team looked forward to furthering the Kimberley Society's objectives.



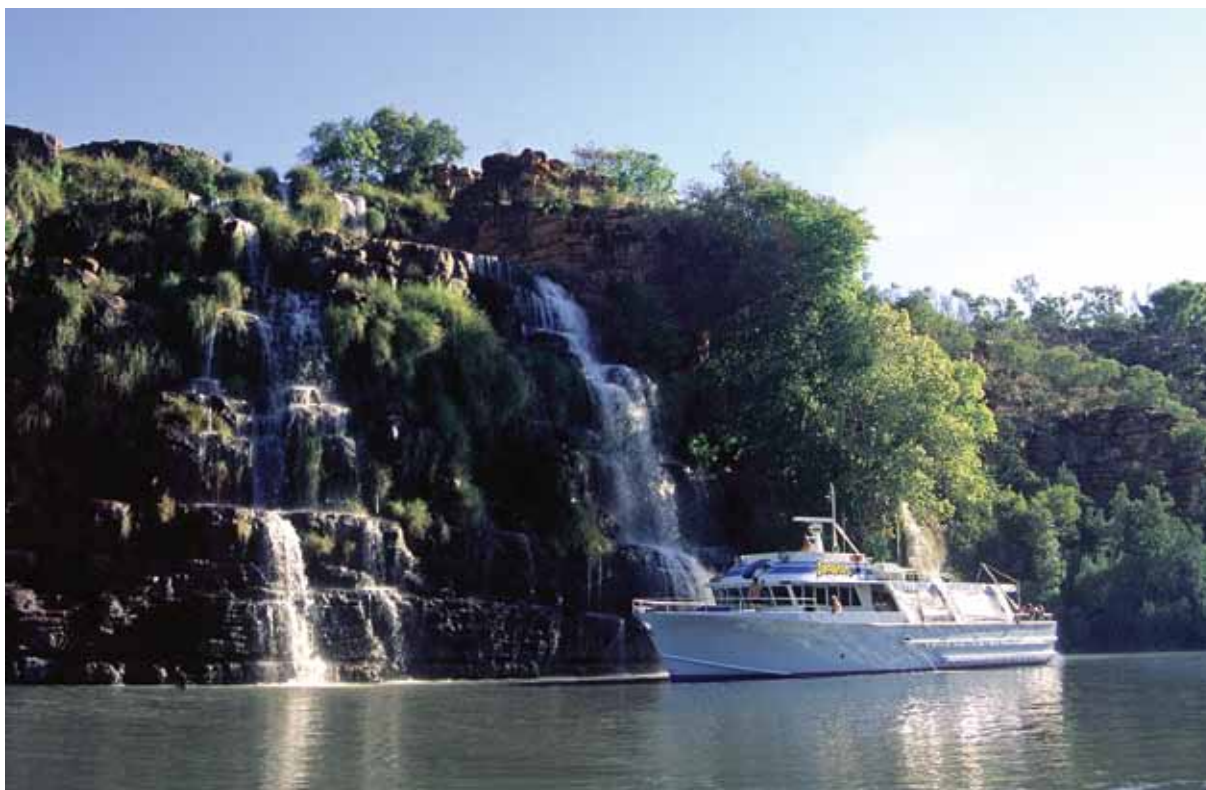
Expedition leaders Kevin Coate and Kevin Kenneally.

In May of 1996, the Society organised a research expedition by boat along the Kimberley coast. This was a major undertaking and memorable voyage. The trip was booked out. As a young Society we were delighted by this response. The leaders, [Kevin Coate](#) – a highly respected naturalist and ecotourism pioneer – and I, as botanist, were accompanied by 16 Society members and a crew of three on the *MV Sealion*.



Expedition members on Mt Lookover, Camden Harbour. Photo by Mike Donaldson.

We voyaged from Broome to north of Mitchell Plateau with numerous stops along the way. At the conclusion of the voyage we flew back to Broome. The specimens and observations made on the expedition were published in the *Boab Bulletin Supplement No. 1* 1996 shortly after we returned to Perth.



MV *Sealion* at King Cascade, Prince Regent River. Photo by Mike Donaldson.



Sunrise over Mt Waterloo at the mouth of Prince Regent River. Photo by Mike Donaldson.



Among the many amazing sites we visited was Careening Bay (north of the Prince Regent River), observing the giant boab inscribed 'HMC MERMAID 1820'. The tree records the visit of [Lieut. Phillip Parker King RN](#), captain of the *Mermaid*, who was forced to careen his badly leaking vessel in the embayment. While the crew repaired the vessel, King and [Allan Cunningham](#) (the botanist accompanying the voyage) explored the area, collecting botanical and other natural history specimens. A number of new plant species were described from the specimens Cunningham collected at this spot.



Members of the Kimberley Society at the 'Mermaid Tree', Careening Bay. Photo by Mike Donaldson.

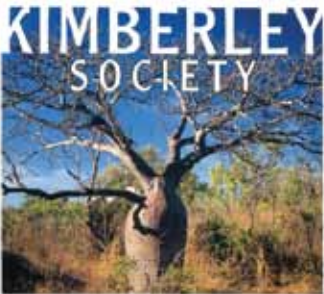
One of the voyage highlights was an evening performance by Dr David Goodall, a thespian of some repute. Alternating between two opposite facing chairs, David provided a riveting monologue, addressing an imaginary figure in the opposing chair. Fellow passengers and crew were amazed by the quality of his performance and it became a talking point for the rest of the trip. David was 82 when he joined the expedition, stating that he "had never previously penetrated beyond Broome". Also, so that "participation should not be pure self-indulgence", he was "collecting lichens, a group of plants rather neglected in this part of the world".

But David Goodall AM (1914-2018) was much more than an actor. He will be remembered as an English-born Australian [botanist and ecologist](#) recognised for his contributions to ecological statistical analysis. He worked as researcher and professor in England, Australia, Ghana and the United States. He was editor-in-chief of the 30-volume *Ecosystems of the World* series of books, and author of over 100 publications. He was also regarded as Australia's oldest working scientist, still editing ecology papers at age 103 and travelling in a [gyrocopter](#) to the remote Kachana station, south-west of Kununurra.

David was a strong advocate of voluntary euthanasia legalisation. He made international headlines when he declared "I want to die. Up until the age of 90 I was enjoying life, but not now". He ended his own life in Switzerland via [physician-assisted suicide](#) at age 104.




On 8 March 1997, the Society hosted its first rock art seminar at The University of Western Australia. We published the proceedings in the same year and helped to establish the Kimberley Society's reputation as a major contributor to Kimberley studies. In 1998, we produced an illustrated colour brochure to promote the Society and attract new members.



The Kimberley Society is an incorporated, non-profit organisation formed to encourage research on and dissemination of information about the far north of Western Australia. Formed in 1992, the Society is managed by an elected Council. The membership comprises people with diverse interests. The Kimberley Society aims to make information on all aspects of the Kimberley available to a wide range of people through meetings, newsletters and other publications.


Kimberley Society (Inc.)  
PO Box 8471  
Perth Business Centre  
Perth WA 6849  
Telephone (08) 9272 3308  
Facsimile (08) 9272 2087



### OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY


The objects of the Society as detailed in its Constitution are:

- To encourage studies of the Kimberley's history, peoples, cultures, resources, natural history, heritage, and environment
- To encourage actions that will help to preserve the Kimberley environment
- To promote the dissemination of information about the Kimberley
- To cooperate with other organisations with similar aims
- To produce publications on the Kimberley
- To inform and make recommendations on matters relating to the Kimberley.



The Kimberley Society meets regularly in Perth and occasionally in the Kimberley. A bi-monthly newsletter (*Bloob Bulletin*) informs members of items of interest.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the Kimberley - just complete the application form and return it to the Society.



### MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the Kimberley. Membership categories and subscriptions are:

Ordinary	\$25
Family	\$40 (one newsletter only)
Institutional	\$50
Concessional	\$20

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE TO:

The Secretary  
Kimberley Society (Inc.)  
PO Box 8471  
Perth Business Centre  
Perth WA 6849

Contact is also available by telephone (08) 9272 3308 and facsimile (08) 9272 2087

Visit our website at:  
<http://www.ocemail.com.au/~kimsoc/>

But what is the future of the Kimberley after the demise of the Society? Like many people I am saddened by the need for the Society to be wound-up after 26 very productive years. The north-western Kimberley, to date, has not been heavily impacted by human development but this is changing. We need to balance conservation values with present and emerging uses in the Kimberley. The Kimberley has vast geological resources, being endowed with oil, gas and rich mineral deposits of bauxite, lead, zinc, nickel and diamonds. With any resource projects there are concerns about the environmental impacts of these extractive activities, including impacts on natural systems, human health, scenery and recreational employment. Exploiting these could have adverse impacts on the biota of the region and presents an ever increasing challenge for conserving biodiversity in the Kimberley. All of this needs to be considered from the perspective of the Traditional Owners. The establishment of [Indigenous Protected Areas \(IPAs\)](#) could avoid past practices where Indigenous people's rights and interests were either overlooked or forced to fit with the structure and processes promoted by government.

For 26 years the Kimberley Society has been a conduit for passionate people who care about what happens in the Kimberley. It has promoted the dissemination of information about the region, held public meetings and seminars, and published newsletters and books. Who now will take up this space and, as an ambassador for the Kimberley, help to keep the focus on sustainable development into the future?



**Jack Vercoe**  
**President 2000–2004**

From 1988 through to 1991, just before the Kimberley Society came into being, I was Paediatrician for the Kimberley, based in Derby. In addition to providing inpatient and outpatient care, I visited remote communities and towns and transferred sick children via the [Royal Flying Doctor Service](#), usually to Perth. A [talk](#) I gave to the Kimberley Society about that work in June 2001 had lots of photos. The ones below are random ones that I selected because I could find them and because they all had memories of some of the wonderful people I met in Derby and in the Kimberley.



Aeroplane and staff, Derby RFDS base.



Jack with Dominic Martin Tjupurrula and Clinic Toyota at Balgo Airstrip.

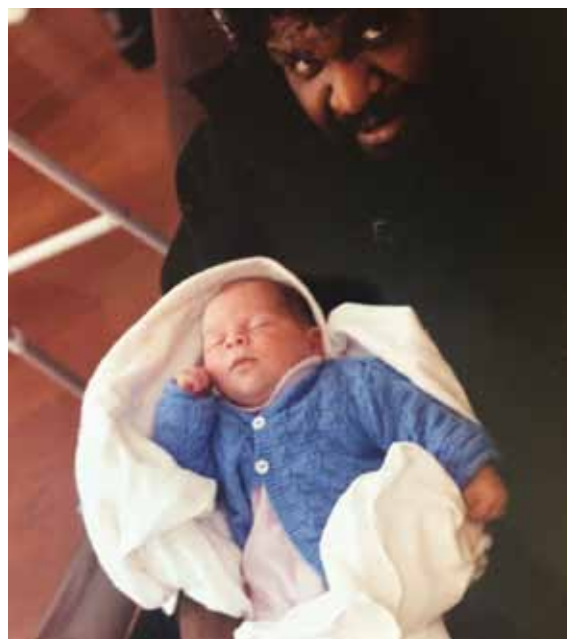
The first photo is of Mike Whiskey Julia (MWJ), our workhorse plane going to Clinics from Derby. It was a Piper Navaho and very reliable. I can't remember the pilot's name but, going up the stairs is Toby, one of the doctors from Derby. Others were going up, too, one person at a time. We went everywhere in this plane. It had come over from Wyndham when they closed that base in 1989 to rationalise the RFDS bases, which were still under the [Victorian Section](#).

My parents were [teachers](#) of the deaf so I grew up with deaf children. [Dominic Martin](#) was mute and there are various stories of how he became so. He was always at the [Balgo Clinic](#) helping. I was later told that he was the Paediatrician. He was a Mabarn man or Medicine Man and his specialty was Paediatrics but at times apparently there were some things he couldn't cure. Dominic was a [classificatory father](#) of mine and I gave my late father a painting of his, which was in his loungeroom. Although Dominic was mute he was able to describe, with sign language translated by a young man from Balgo who was in hospital at the time, the story associated for a painting that he did for me in Derby Hospital many years ago. Dominic's older brother was Donkey Man who was a very well-known and highly respected lawman.

Bruce Njamme is another great Kimberley character. In 1993 Bruce was coming back from an epic lore journey when a ute hit their truck and broke his leg, which already had metal on it. Bruce had originally broken his leg in 1988, and I met him in Derby Hospital through the photographer Nicholas Adler who published [Portraits of an Uninhabited Land](#), a marvellous book of black and white photos of Aboriginal people with their full names and in their own communities.

On the left of this photo (right), you can see Bruce's walking frame and part of the [Ilizarov frame](#) that he had on his right leg in 1993. Bruce spent most of 1993 in various hospitals in Perth until he had the Ilizarov frame, and he spent considerable time rehabilitating in Shenton Park Hospital. He used to come out to our place for weekends for BBQ's and I remember taking him shopping up at Mindarie Keys. It was there he purchased a cap which said "White men can't hump". This was the time of the movie called [White Men can't Jump](#), which featured Woody Harrelson. I don't think anyone noticed but me.

I hadn't heard from Bruce for many years but I spoke to him at Balgo earlier this year. He is well and now has a 16-year-old daughter.



Bruce Njamme and Matthew Vercoe, Sept 1993.



Auntie Nora catching cherubim, Camballin dam.

A hospital GP named "Croc" McGregor used to do the Clinic at [Looma](#). He told me that one day they had gone out catching cherubim after the Clinic. The next time I went out, I asked the Clinic Nurse if we could go out. We all piled into the troupie. The Clinic Nurse, the Health Worker, a few children and Auntie Nora. In the photo, [Annie Milgin](#) (the Health Worker) is on the left, and Auntie Nora is on the right. Soapflakes or chicken pellets were thrown into the dam and then after a short time a throw net was used. They dragged in heaps of cherubim that day. I took them home and ate them in Derby and they were the sweetest things I had ever eaten. It was a tight finish, as Looma is 130 km from Derby and I had to get back before dark to play tennis that night. The people at Looma were wonderful and the Clinics were always a joy to go to. I have some very fond memories of that place.

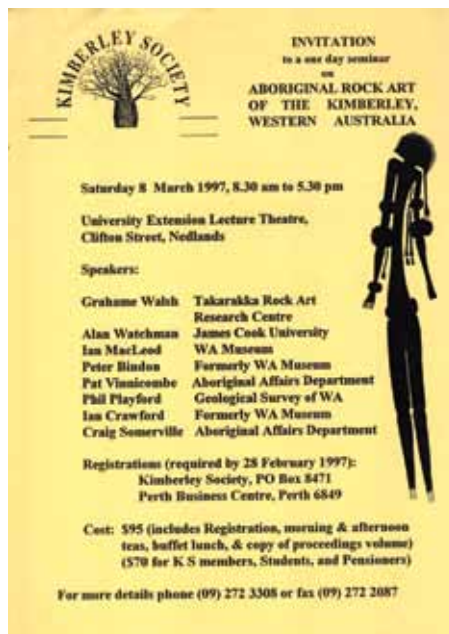




**Mike Donaldson**  
**President 2004–2007**  
**Chairman 2016–2019**

There have been many highlights in the twenty-six-year life of the Kimberley Society but our rock art seminars and resulting publications are some of the best. The Kimberley Society's first seminar, Aboriginal rock art of the Kimberley, Western Australia, was held at the University of Western Australia on 8 March 1997, attended by more than 70 members and friends. It was the result of a chance meeting with Kimberley rock art researcher [Grahame Walsh](#) at a Melbourne University meeting the previous year. Grahame had recently (1994) published his [first book](#) on Bradshaws and he agreed to come to Perth to contribute to a one-day seminar and also give a public lecture at the State Library.

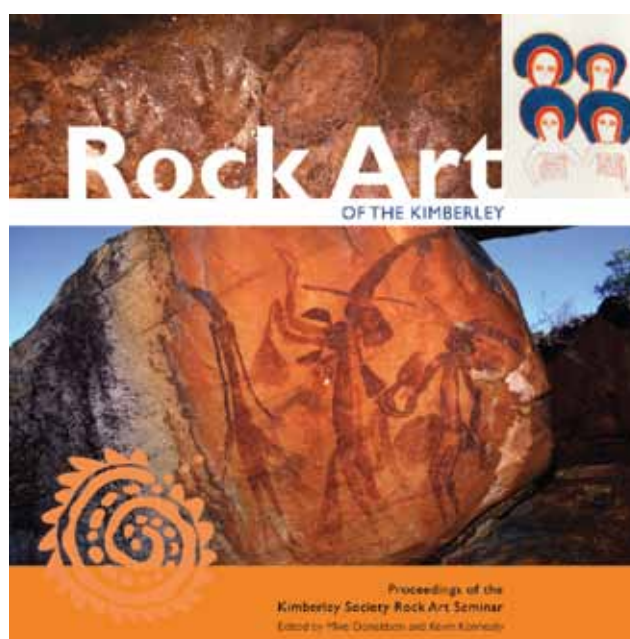
A full program of speakers was organised to cover related aspects of Kimberley rock art, including its cultural importance to today's Aboriginal people, its place in the Australian and world context, rock art dating, and conservation. We enlisted local rock art authorities [Ian Crawford](#), [Pat Vinnicombe](#) and [Peter Bindon](#) (all previously with the Western Australian Museum) and [Phil Playford](#) to complement presentations on Bradshaws and Wanjinās by Grahame Walsh. The seminar was followed by a lively panel discussion session and refreshments. Papers from the seminar were transcribed from audio recordings and carefully edited for publication in an 83-page book, although images of rock art were not included as it was thought at the time to be difficult to get publication approval from traditional owners.



Despite the lack of photographs to illustrate the text, this publication is a wealth of information and it contains important commentary and insight into Kimberley's unique rock art and its continuing role in Aboriginal cultural life. Much of the content is still very relevant today and I urge all those interested in Kimberley rock art to re-read this valuable contribution.

The second rock art seminar was held on 10 September 2005, also at UWA. This was another great success with well-illustrated examples of the many varieties of Kimberley rock art, and much discussion on many issues following presentations. The Society sponsored well-known Kimberley painter and Wororra elder [Donny Woolagoodja](#) to come to Perth, and he was accompanied by [Mark Norval](#), the arts coordinator at [Mowanjumb Aboriginal Community](#). It was great to have Donny's contribution stressing the importance of the art to contemporary Aboriginal people. Excellent summaries of current understanding of deep-time habitation of Australia, including the out-of-Africa origins of *Homo sapiens* were provided by Society member [Jim Ross](#) and [Sue O'Connor](#) from ANU. Presentations by [David Welch](#) highlighting the Bradshaw or Gwion art and Phil Playford covering the rock art of the Devonian limestone country were sensational, and [Ian Crawford](#) provided interesting commentary on the field work he undertook for his iconic 1968 book [The art of the Wandjina](#). A lively discussion session followed the presentations with a particular emphasis on why non-Aboriginal people are so interested in studying the Kimberley rock art. Donny Woolagoodja asked this question and several people attempted to answer it. Ian Crawford's suggestion that paintings are more readily appreciated and understood by 'white people' than traditional songs and stories wound up the day.

The proceedings of the seminar were published as a book, *Rock art of the Kimberley*, in 2007. Over 3000 copies of the book were sold over the next few years and it has been out of print now for many years. It remains a valuable and very readable account of the incredible heritage the rock art represents.







**Hamish McGlashan**  
**President 2007–2010**

In 1988, Kevin Coate led a party of twelve middle-aged bush innocents on the first retracing of George Grey's 1837–38 expedition (described in his *Journals of two expeditions of Discovery...*). This was before the formation of the Kimberley Society, but several on that excursion were foundation and early members of the society and have remained to this day. The tale was told in *Australian Geographic*, Number 21, Jan-Mar 1991, in *Kimberley History* and in many talks to Probus and seniors groups.



The 1988 expedition: Glen Knight, Kevin Coate, Alan Smith, Rosemary McGlashan, David Dale, Hamish McGlashan, Jimmy Allison, Lee Fontanini, Peter Knight, Bob Goodale, Berkley Allen, Michael Cusack.



The gentlemen of the 1988 party. This photograph was reproduced as a centrefold in an Australian Geographic Magazine yearbook.

Apart from the successful retracing of Grey's route, other achievements included the first rediscovery of the "carved head" described by Grey (though it turned out to be just a natural artefact), fixing the coordinates of "Greys Caves" with their Wandjina paintings (of 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March 1838), the identification and first photograph of *Grevillea adenotricha*, which was long thought lost for ever, and a corrected location of Mt. Trevor, which still appears wrongly placed on current maps.

A minor, but fascinating incidental story, was the discovery of a piece of chain around lunchtime on our first day of walking. It was lying on the ground and from its position near where Grey had placed his depot, and from its old forged appearance, we concluded it must have been left behind by Grey himself. As we were all overburdened and carrying two weeks supply of food on our backs, not wishing to carry several extra kilos, we too left it behind, placing it on a rock and vowing to return and fetch it at a later date.



The first photograph.



Kevin Coate, holding the chain.



*Grevillea adenotricha*.

We had been dropped at the tidal edge of a creek the afternoon before and spent an uncomfortable and sleepless night on small uneven rocks while an out-of-control bush fire hurtled down the valley. Clumps of flaming spinifex spiralling off the slopes towards where we were huddling at the foot of the valley and pushing us towards the rising tide and large saltwater crocodile we had seen on the way in. However, the burned-out valley made walking much easier (one could see where one's feet were) and it revealed the chain. Nevertheless, we all found the going extremely tough.



In 2000, a small party which included four from the original excursion (Peter and Glen Knight, Hamish and Rosemary McGlashan) travelled up the coast by boat and sought the chain, this time proceeding from the west over the narrow neck of land that Grey thought might be 'the most important position on the North West Coast of Australia', rather than from Hanover Bay on the west. Only four and a half kilometres as the crow flies. Should be easy, we thought. But it wasn't; no burned land; thick clumps of spinifex and treacherous limestone boulders had us scurrying down the floor of a creek to reach our rendezvous with the boat at the Hanover Bay end. We got there well after dark and reached nowhere near the chain.

My last attempt was in 2014 with a well-researched plan, sleeping out for one night. This time it was treacherously wet underfoot; the vegetation was dense, the going slow and exhausting. Some of us are reluctant to admit that age slows us down.

We camped overnight where we had breakfast the first time in 1988 and clambered up the narrow '87 degree ravine' at first light. We reached the top. There had been a fire. The chain should have been on a rock within a couple of hundred metres. We found a clump of *Grevillea adenotricha*, but no chain.

It must have been close but after searching for a couple of hours we had to hurry back down the valley to the boat.

I had brought along a metal plaque, authorised by and celebrating the Kimberley Society, to fix to the rock where we found the chain. I was not going to carry it all the way back so we glued it to a rock and took photographs. Three of the original expeditioners were present.



Hamish fixes the plaque, supervised by Peter.



The metal plaque.



2014: Peter, Lee and Hamish from the original 1988 party.

So chain and plaque are still there, and there they will probably remain for ever.



This dramatic image taken on Anna Plains near Broome in October 2019 by Mike Donaldson immediately brings Wanjinās to mind.

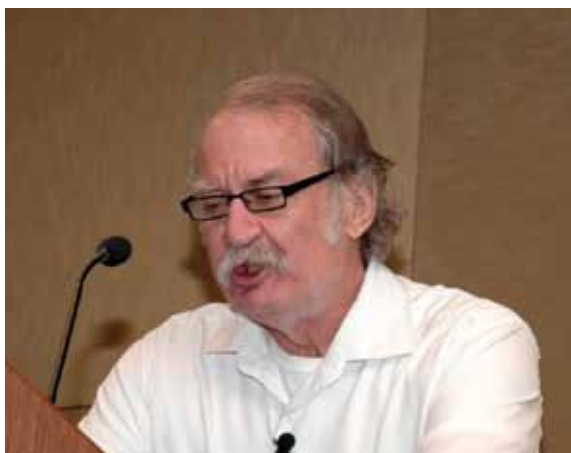
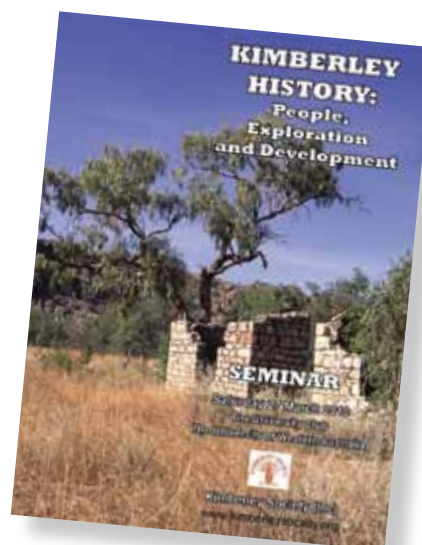




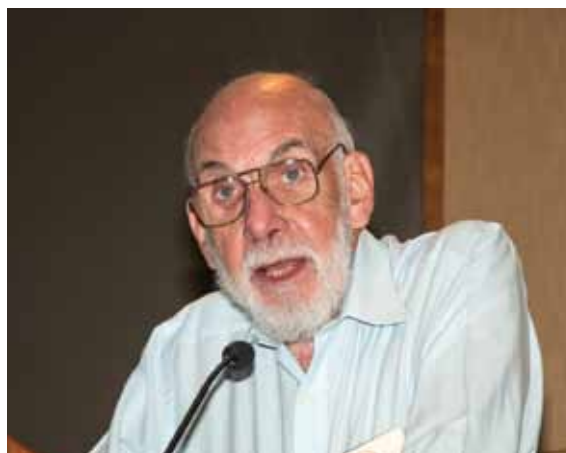
**Jeff Gresham**  
**President 2010–2013**

In mid to late 2009, [Hamish McGlashan](#), who was President of the Society, and I discussed the possibility of organising a seminar on the early history and exploration of the Kimberley. Although there was initially a little scepticism from some Council members about being able to put together an interesting day of talks, it was subsequently agreed that the seminar should go ahead. An interesting and comprehensive program was developed, people were approached to make presentations, and a date, 27 March 2010, was set for the seminar, *Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development*, to be held at the [University Club](#) of UWA. It was also agreed that a proceedings volume would be produced and speakers were asked to contribute papers.

The seminar was attended by around 150 people and was considered a great success. It was organised on a cost break-even basis and this was achieved. As 2010 progressed, draft papers were received and diligent editorial work by Cathie Clement commenced. As is often the case with projects like this, this process took longer than anticipated but, in late 2011, Maria Duthie was commissioned to commence design work for the book. In March 2012 Scott Print's quotation to print 2000 copies was accepted and in early May, 2057 copies of *Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development* were delivered and sales commenced.



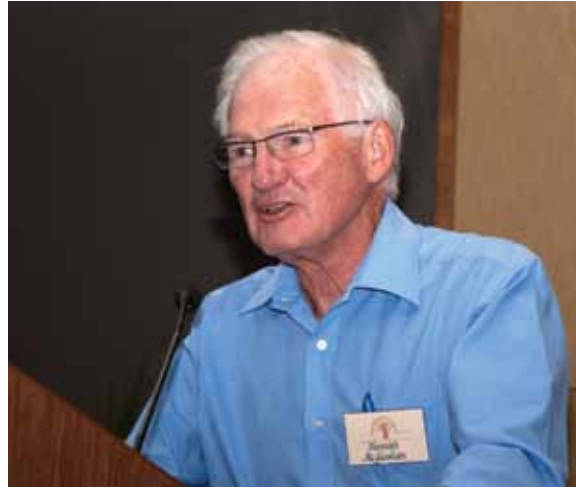
Following Mark Bin Bakar's paper 'My Home the Kimberley', Professor Mike Morwood spoke about the region's archaeology.



Professor Geoffrey Bolton presenting his paper, 'Alexander Forrest's expedition 1879 and early development of the cattle industry'.



Ian Elliot co-authored papers with Mike Donaldson on Frank Hann and Fred Brockman undertaking exploration in the Kimberley.



Society President Hamish McGlashan spoke about George Grey's 1837-38 expedition.



Susan Clarkson (Council Secretary) with past presidents Kevin Kenneally (left) and Jack Vercoe. All photos by Peter Buck.

The cost of producing the book was close to \$30 000 (\$15 per copy) but much of this cost had been recouped by the end of the year through the sale of 800 books. By mid-2016 almost all the books from the original print run had been sold and a reprint of 1012 copies was produced at a cost of \$12 per copy. By the end of October this year nearly 2700 copies had been sold and close to \$90 000 invoiced and receipted.

The success of the book was a significant factor in the Society being able to make grants and donations totalling \$62 000 between 2013 and August of this year. The book is a compilation of a series of excellent papers by authoritative authors and has been an important reference for tour operators and researchers.





**Jeff Murray**  
**President 2013–2016**

During my role as President of the Kimberley Society (KS) the monthly meetings were transferred from the Subiaco Community Hall to The Palms Community Centre. Later, due to renovations, the meetings moved again into the City of Nedlands Dalkeith Hall. After utilising the Dalkeith Hall for a while, the Committee and members chose to stay with that venue.

Amongst my most enjoyable experiences as President was facilitating the arrangements with Cathie Clement to provide signage for the Old Halls Creek Post Office Ruins. This had been a longstanding passion of Cathie to have the funds derived from grants, donations, meeting raffles and a supporting KS grant realised with a well prepared and long lasting conservation.



Rosemary Rosario (Heritage & Conservation Professionals) and Cathie Clement enjoying the shade and the completion of the Old Halls Creek Post Office conservation project in September 2015. Photo by Rosmaria Eastman, Shire of Halls Creek.

With my own adventures to the Kimberley being many years previous, it was rewarding and informative to arrange guest speakers who could provide members with updates and awareness of what was transpiring in our favourite region of Western Australia. I tapped into social and work colleagues to provide diversity to the meetings. Some of the more novel of these included the attendance of the [Dingo Association](#) with its pure breed dingoes. Towards the end of the meeting the dingoes provided a chorus of howls that usually can only be experienced in the more remote regions of outback Australia. Another meeting was presented by my fellow Western Australia Speleological Group (WASG) members on Caves & Karsts in the Kimberley. Ross and Jay Anderson shared their passion and interests on limestone formations that they regularly visit and study at [Windjana Gorge](#) and the [Mimbi Caves](#).

Amongst the great benefits of leading the KS is meeting presenters from many diverse professional and social fields that contribute to the sharing of knowledge and experiences. During my stint as President, the KS was most fortunate to enjoy presentations by [Peter Veth](#) (Recent archaeology research in the Kimberley), [Alan Dench](#) (Aboriginal linguistics), [Phil Playford](#) ([The Kimberley Coastline, Sculpted by Mega-Tsunami](#)) and [Chris Owen](#) ([Policing in the Kimberley 1882-1905](#)), to just name a few.

My own experiences in the Kimberley region featured around accessing the Prince Regent River by vehicle and later representing the Minister for Lands with the [Pastoral Exclusion Project](#). In 1981, my family, which included a 2-year-old daughter, accompanied a very good friend's family to the Prince Regent River. In this era there were no GPS or mobile phones so, once leaving the [Gibb River Road](#) near the [Drysdale River](#), we were totally dependent on our own devices. Both my mate and I were experts in interpreting aerial photography so, whilst one of us cut and cleared a track for two vehicles, the other read the aerial images to determine our location and direction. Allowing 2½ months to get to the river, paddle the fresh water section, and return, we passed Mt Hann to a very narrow and difficult access down to the river. Unable to get the vehicles through we reluctantly returned to our temporary campsite to retrace our path back to civilisation. The remainder of the time was spent at very remote and interesting sites located from months of previous interpretation back in Perth.

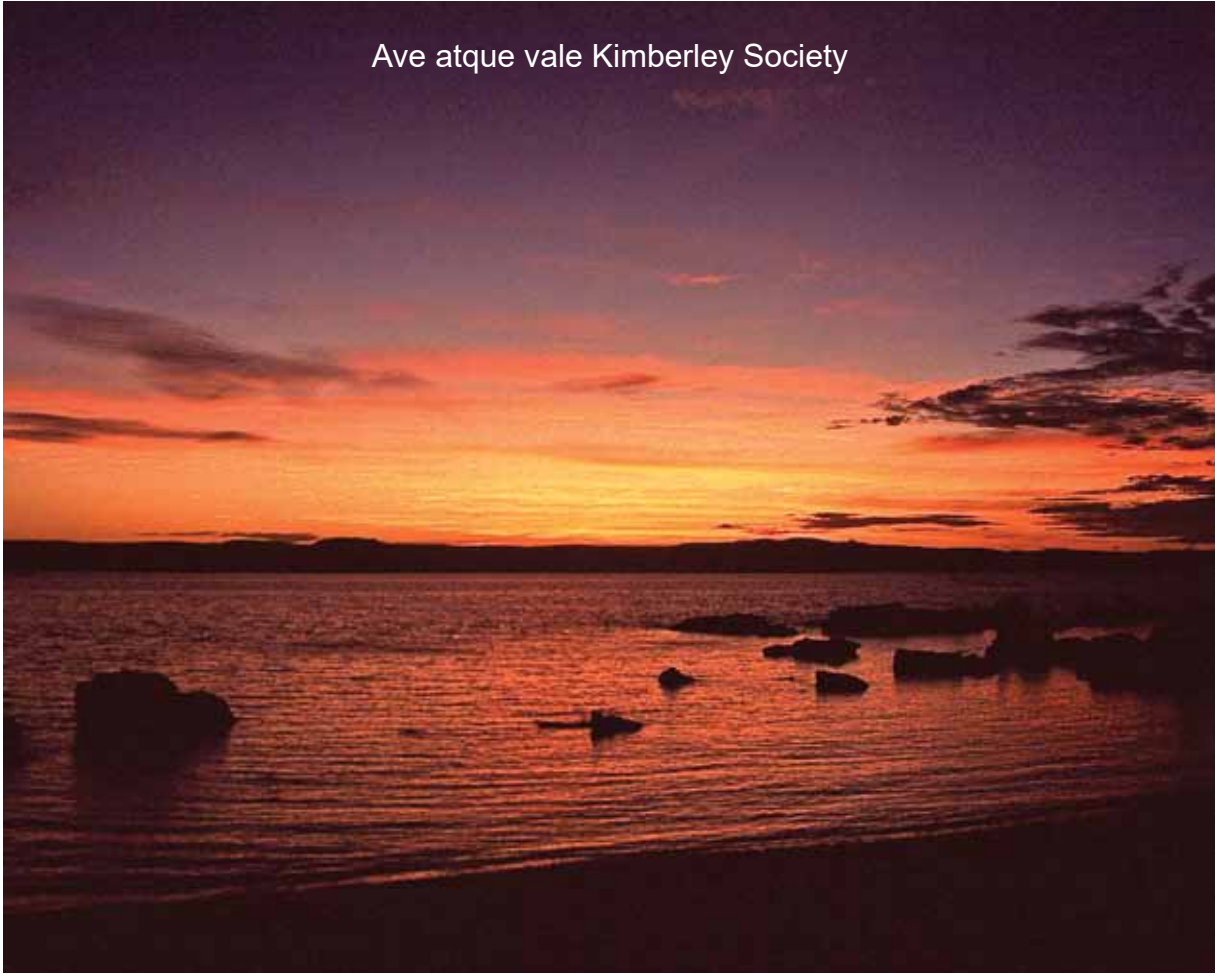


Mount Hann. Photo by Mike Donaldson.

My other opportunity was during the public consultation stage of the Pastoral Exclusion Project. With the direction to investigate opportunities to exclude land from pastoral leases for the benefit of agencies including CALM, Fisheries, Local Government, DIA, etc I had the opportunity to visit many of the pastoral stations and Aboriginal communities throughout WA including the Kimberley over two years. Although my visits were not always welcome, I was always greeted with respect and had many opportunities to meet people who genuinely loved the land that they leased, managed or had traditional ties with. This provided me with greater awareness of the environment and understanding of people's links to land.



Ave atque vale Kimberley Society



Sunset over Port Warrender at the end of the Society's boat trip in 1996, Photo by Mike Donaldson.

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2019

Chairperson:	Mike Donaldson
Deputy Chairperson:	Jeff Murray
Secretary:	Geoff Owen
Membership Secretary:	Elizabeth Gresham
Treasurer:	Jeffrey Gresham
Committee:	Michael Cusack, Tim Griffin, Sven Ouzman, Roger Passmore and Margaret Shugg

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