



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 69

August 2005

## **NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING**

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at

Shenton Park Community Centre, cnr Onslow and Herbert Rds

**Wednesday 3 August 2005**

**Cathie Clement (Historian)**

**'The sheep and cattle stations of the Kimberley  
in 1916'**

**Wednesday, 7 September 2005**

**Sue O'Connor (Archaeologist)**

**'Stone structures in the Kimberley'**

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

**Saturday, 10 September 2005**

**Rock Art Seminar**

**(Venue: University of Western Australia)**

See page 2 for an overview, and the enclosed brochure for details.



## PROGRAM FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2005

- October 5 Dawn Casey (Director, WA Museum) – 'WA Museum's Kimberley collections and activities'
- November 2 Grant Pearson (Research Centre Manager, CALM Science Division) – 'The importance of the Kimberley in bird migration'
- December 7 Geoffrey Bolton (Historian) – 'The Last Years of Moola Bulla, 1949 – 1955'

Please note that, with many of our speakers involved in work-related travel, this program may change. Should a speaker be unavailable, we will try to replace him/her with a speaker on a similar subject. All meetings will be held at Shenton Park unless otherwise advised.

## KIMBERLEY ROCK ART SEMINAR

A program and registration brochure for the 2005 Kimberley Rock Art Seminar accompanies this newsletter. The one day seminar will cover the full spectrum of rock art topics including the importance of ancient rock art to contemporary Aboriginal people, the variety of art styles and subject matter across the Kimberley, geological controls and natural deterioration, the early peopling of Australia, and archaeological evidence for occupation extending back at least 30,000 years. The registration fee of \$120 (\$60 for students and pensioners) covers morning and afternoon teas, lunch, sundowner drinks, and the seminar proceedings. We hope to have a display of contemporary Kimberley Aboriginal art in the foyer where lunch and coffee breaks are located. The talks are aimed at a general audience, so you don't need to be a rock art expert to get a lot from the day. It's a great chance to see and learn about the fabulous rock art heritage of the Kimberley, especially the Bradshaw (Gwion Gwion) and Wandjina art styles, so come along and enjoy! For details contact Mike Donaldson at [mikedonaldson@westnet.com.au](mailto:mikedonaldson@westnet.com.au) or phone him on (08) 9371 6868 or mobile 0409 103 771.

## CANE TOADS: COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND FUNDRAISING DAY

- When: Saturday, 6 August 2005, commencing at 2 pm, with a continuous sausage sizzle (not covered by entry fee), and a night spotlighting adventure for native frog species commencing at the lake at 7 pm.
- Where: Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, Corner Flynn & Selby Streets, Wembley. Phone: 9387 6079
- Cost: Entry is \$5 adults and \$2 children. All funds raised will go towards supporting **the construction of cane toad traps in the Kimberley.**

The WA Gould League will host this community event with the support of Alcoa Frogwatch, CALM, the Conservation Council of WA, the Kimberley Society, the WA Museum, the WA Naturalists' Club, and WWF Australia. The program will include an illustrated talk, presented by Dr Paul Doughty, Senior Curator of Herpetology at the WA Museum, on cane toads and their impact on biodiversity. Native frog species that people may confuse with cane toads will be shown. A CALM representative will outline the department's program as the lead agency in cane toad control. Community groups will also participate. Gayne Doyle from the West Australian Reptile Park will have an exhibit of venomous and non-venomous native snakes.

Please support this event through your presence or by making a tax-deductible donation to the Conservation Council of WA (specifically for cane toad control).



## IT'S NOT THE MONEY IT'S THE LAND

On 4 May 2005, Bill Bunbury, Presenter of 'Hindsight', ABC Radio Social History Unit, spoke to the Kimberley Society about the outcomes of the 1965 Equal Wages Case for indigenous pastoral workers in Northern Australia. The following summary, which Bill generously provided for the newsletter, contains only a few of the oral history excerpts that he played to the audience.

Former Kimberley stockman Jacky Dann said:

*We grew up in station and we bin ringin' in there. And the station manager or the station owner we got to show him where the cattle run and how to get around – but when the works starts we were going from there and never stop – droving cattle, mustering and branding – because we was the cheap labour – Aboriginal people was the cheap labour – And in this land we pay the price – from all that we get nothing back.*

Former Kimberley pastoralist Peter Murray said:

*I think the tragedy of it all was that nobody sat down – nobody thought about the repercussions – they just let it happen. And what always amazes me is that we're supposed to be a clever country, an enlightened country – and yet we allow decisions to take place without any consultation with the parties that are involved and we've got a disaster on our hands thirty years down the track.*

Those excerpts began both the ABC Radio series "It's not the money it's the land" and the book, which I later wrote, on the Equal Wage Case of 1965, and they illustrate the fundamental dilemma that the 1965 decision produced.

In 1997 I was asked to make a presentation at the National Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne. The paper I presented was entitled *Chances Lost Chance Taken*. I talked about opportunities for Reconciliation with the First Australians which were foregone or grasped. Looking back now that title now seems doubly ironic because it was at the 1997 Convention that I first became fully aware of the consequences of an economic decision that was to affect the lives of thousands of indigenous workers and their families throughout the Northern Territory and the Kimberley. Here was a chance well and truly lost.

Later, during the Convention, I found myself listening to Sir James Gobbo, then Governor of Victoria. He reflected among other things on his feeling about the 1965 Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's decision to grant Equal Wages to Aboriginal stockmen. The consequences, he felt, had not been what the Commission might have hoped for.

It set me thinking. In the 1970s and early 1980s I had occasionally driven through small Northern Territory and Kimberley towns, Katherine, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, recording stories and moving on. But what I'd failed to apprehend was why so many Aboriginal families clung to the edge of those communities. They were certainly living rough – often literally camped on the edge of town.

It took another year of research and even more time to interview some of the major players before I'd completed a 3 part radio series "It's Not The Money It's The Land". These broadcasts went to air in 'Hindsight', Radio National's weekly history radio feature, in December 2000. I followed up the series by writing a book with the same title, which Fremantle Arts Centre Press published in February 2002. The title is significant because it emphasizes the major loss for Aboriginal people, that of land, as a result of the 1965 Wages case. And that's a long story, far older than the brief European tenure of Australia.



When pastoralists first entered the Kimberley and the Northern Territory in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, their first contact with the original inhabitants was frequently followed by conflict over the use of land. Both wanted water and access to good pasture. Deprived of game by the introduction of cattle and sheep, the indigenous tribes took to killing the white man's livestock, with inevitable reprisals by the Europeans. Conflict only ended when Aboriginal people entered the pastoral economy, on the best terms they could get. That meant that at least they could stay on their own country, even if they now depended on the pastoralist for food, clothing and welfare, in exchange for their labour.

That way of life persisted until the Equal Wages Case in 1965. Station life did provide an opportunity to stay on or visit one's own country in some cases. Obligations to country through ceremony could be sustained and traditional law passed on to younger people. On the other hand the workers were tied to the stations, often with little freedom of movement or opportunity to seek work elsewhere.

The isolation of station life also meant there was little opportunity for Aboriginal people to become familiar with money, and how the money economy worked, because they rarely saw it. Apart from hand-outs of clothing and tucker and occasional pocket money, say at race-time meetings when the whole station went to town, there was little incentive or education which would have prepared indigenous workers for the receipt of regular wages.

However World War Two caused the first crack in this laissez-faire regime. The Army, when it recruited Aboriginal labour for defence project, paid wages, causing many station workers to question why this never happened inside the cattle grid. At war's end, fewer were prepared to resume the semi-slavery of station life.

Pastoral workers from the Pilbara set a precedent when, advised by a sympathetic prospector, Don MacLeod, they walked off sheep and cattle properties in May 1946, striking for a decent wage. The Pilbara strike preceded the Wave Hill walk-off by the Gurindji people in 1966 by twenty years. It was the first organised indigenous strike in the history of Australian pastoral life.

The role of Trade Unions in this story is interesting. They took no part in the Pilbara dispute and had, in fact, not intervened at all on behalf of indigenous workers in pre-World War Two Australia. If anything, the NAWU (Northern Australia Workers Union), in the 1920s and early 1930s, had evinced hostility and exclusion towards workers whom they saw as competitors with white workers in most work areas. Given that Aboriginal labour was unpaid, they were at least technically correct. Their view accurately reflected the White Australia policy of a high Wage, no cheap labour workforce.

However, by the time the Equal Wage Case came up in 1965, union attitudes had shifted, partly due to the leadership of men like Union organiser Dexter Daniels at Wave Hill and President of the NAWU, J McGinness, both notable and respected indigenous leaders. These men were at the forefront of the campaign for Equal Wages.

When the Commission hearings took place in 1965, only two parties were present to provide evidence for and against the case. John Kerr, later Governor General, represented the pastoralists, and the NAWU represented the workers. Their case was minimal. The Union saw Equal Wages as a long overdue



restitution of almost a century of semi-slavery and assumed that the verdict would inevitably reflect natural justice.

QC, Hal Wootten, was then Junior Counsel assisting John Kerr, and despite his brief, personally sympathetic to the Aboriginal workers' arguments. However he was keenly aware that those most affected by the decision were not present. One of the ironies most apparent to him was the fact that it was the pastoralists who raised the question of benefit to Aboriginal workers.

*They said, "We can see this is going to be very painful for aborigines and we wouldn't like that to happen but it's going to be one of the consequences if this decision is made."*

Pastoralists, in effect, argued that once Equal Wages came in they could no longer sustain the traditional station economy, where the pastoralist or his manager fed and clothed everybody, including dependants. They argued they could only retain a few selected workers. The rest, wives, children, older people and less efficient workers would have to take their chance elsewhere.

The Commission's hands were also tied. Inevitably Australia could not, in the eyes of the world, continue to tolerate a feudal economy within a democracy. It was also influenced by the assimilationist climate of the 1960s. While the Commission was well aware that, as the pastoralists warned, payment of Equal Wages would result in massive disemployment and dislocation, it awarded in favour of Aboriginal workers on the grounds of 'equal treatment for All Australians'. It hinted, as it did so, that the Commonwealth government would pick up the tab if disaster ensued. Sadly that is just what happened.

It is only fair to say that some pastoralists were well aware of the likely social dislocation and regretted the breakdown in European-Aboriginal relationships. Annette Henwood at Fossil Downs expressed this very strongly in a taped interview. She also told me that several pastoralists in her region got together to try to work out how to implement the scheme slowly so that it would not cause the major upheaval they anticipated. But the Award was pushed through and sadly, in most cases its application meant loss of country and loss of work.

The Commission had proposed a three-year delay in implementing the Award in order to give the pastoral economy time to adjust. Unfortunately this became the period of the greatest lay-offs and nowhere more so than in the Kimberley, where, although Equal Wages came late, they hit hard.

For many years the state government had encouraged the retention of Aboriginal communities on station properties, partly because when the inevitable dislocation occurred after the payment of the Award, they were aware that the small towns of the Kimberley, etc. would not be able to cope with the influx of displaced people. Their worst fears were realised in the 1970s when hundreds of people left the stations and crowded on to the reserves of Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Wyndham. They had lost their work, their skills and most importantly their country, the essence of their identity and which gave spiritual and physical meaning to their lives. Now, in town, they were at risk from the worst aspects of white society, unemployment, alcohol and boredom.

One of the last stations to be affected was Gordon Downs, 120 kilometres south of Halls Creek. Here the people were scarcely aware of what the Equal Wage decision would mean to them. Leaving Gordon Downs – as a result of



this situation – meant exile in Halls Creek- temporarily losing their country. That was described on tape by Patsy Mudgabel and Basil Thomas.

One of the important lessons for me doing those interviews at Gordon Downs was to be vividly reminded of the spiritual meaning of land. In one sense people had to lose land in order to regain it. But I remember too, when recording the interviews at Halls Creek, how easy it was misuse word like 'lose'. I'd been asking ex-Gordon Downs stockmen what they felt about losing their land. The conversations were in Djaru, with local interpreter, Patsy Mudgabel translating for the benefit of the radio audience later. In a break in recording Patsy tactfully told me that the stockmen could not understand my question about losing the land. In their view they had never lost it. Rather, the land had lost them for a while. Country and obligations to country were always in their consciousness in exile at Halls Creek. Land was in people's heads and in their hearts, it only awaited their physical return.

But it's at this point that the story begins to turn round.

While the 1970s and early 1980s was a period of massive dislocation, it was also a period of political growth and revival among the Aboriginal communities. Organisations like the Central Land Council and the Kimberley Land Council formed to help people cope with dispossession and to help them get back to country. As Kimberley land Claimant Rex Johns put it to me:

*It's very important that we get our land back.*

Bill: *More important than the money?*

*Yeah – more important than the money – Our dreamtime land you know.*

That phrase – or its gist became the title of both the radio series and the book.

Some Aboriginal communities have now regained their own country and are running pastoral properties on their own terms, sometimes simply as communities free from the pressures and problems of urban life. This is a vital part of the story. For indigenous station communities the loss of work, which accompanied the Equal Wages decision, was matched by dispossession from land where they could carry out obligations to country and preserve much of their culture. It is often hard for other Australians to appreciate how much this meant to people who had been taken out of their own country.

Ribnga Green, who was Development Officer for the Kimberley Land Council at Halls Creek, went with the Gordon Downs people when they returned to land from which they had been evicted. He said,

*The changes I saw in the people from the time after they first arrived in Halls Creek after being kicked off Gordon Downs Station to the time when they moved back to their country, started setting up their tents and organising their affairs which included ceremonies and things like that as well.*

*People were back in their country so they could sing songs again and dance dances and do things that they'd been doing for aeons of time. To see those sorts of changes was the highlight of my working career. I don't think anything will quite equal that.*

So what has this story been about? Have I simply described the inevitable process of change?

I remember driving back from Fitzroy Crossing to Broome early one morning in September 2000. Just as I turned south along the Broome-Derby road three



helicopters rose up in front of me. I couldn't see the cattle they were mustering. They were invisible in the scrub. It was a vivid reminder of how much had changed in the pastoral industry since 1965. Mechanisation and more intensive cattle raising have replaced open-range pastoralism where the stockman and the horse were essential.

It is inevitable that indigenous families would have left the stations at some stage. Many, with greater mobility, wanted more from life and often sought wider opportunities for their children. But the question remains. Could we have done it better? Could we have avoided the uprooting, the loss of morale and the heartbreak, which accompanied that sudden dispersal from country?

Former Reconciliation Council member Ric Farley thinks so. I put it to him that one could argue that the payment of Equal Wages was inevitable, one of those leaps across a ravine that simply had to happen. But as he responded: -

*The ravine certainly was there and it had to be crossed but I'm not sure if it had to be crossed in a single leap. I think if the commission had approached the issue in a way that they're tending to do now, recognising that there is a surviving Aboriginal culture and a surviving Aboriginal system of law. But if things had been approached in a more pragmatic way then perhaps the impact would not have been as great. But certainly it was an issue that was always going to arise. I think as in many other issues it wasn't addressed as well as it might have been.*

So is this episode just a slice of history, one where we can shrug our shoulders and say, "Well it was a mistake and we wouldn't do things that way now". Or is this story still important?

Ric Farley's response is also helpful again.

*Yes, because it's one of the reasons that indigenous people now find themselves facing the sorts of problems that they do. One of the questions often asked is, "Why can't Aboriginal people get a job like anyone else? Why are so many people hooked on alcohol or drugs, living on the edge of river banks or around large towns and cities?"*

*People have to understand that a lot of Aboriginal people were really forced into that position. They were not doing it by choice. That's not how people would choose to live if they had a choice but it's what the forces of history have imposed on them.*

*Now if we're to become a whole and inclusive society then people need to understand that and out of that understanding hopefully will come a much more informed debate about what needs to happen in the future.*

Editor's note: Bill Bunbury's book, *It's Not The Money It's The Land: Aboriginal Stockmen and the Equal Wages Case*, is still in print and can be obtained through bookshops or Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

## REST IN PEACE

Don Wieringa, owner of the Wyndham Zoological Gardens and Crocodile Farm, died in June after contracting a rare virus in the course of his work. In his eventful life he built and sold Fremantle's Pier 21 restaurant, housed the *America II* challenger in his Fremantle Boat Lifters yard during the America's Cup period, and then established the Fremantle crocodile park. An obituary published in *The West Australian* on 11 July described him as an adventurer, raconteur, and larrikin who will be missed by his widow Gill and many others.



## **BAPTISM OF FIRE (A KIMBERLEY BUSH-WALK)**

On 1 June 2005, Victoria Jackson, geologist and bush-walker, told the Kimberley Society about her experiences as a first time walker in the North Kimberley. She started the talk by showing a map of the route travelled from the cave where Bradshaw sighted the first Bradshaw (Gwion Gwion) figures, down Garimbu Creek to the Roe and Moran Rivers, and across the plateau to the Mitchell Falls. This summary relates Victoria's account as if it were taken from her diary.

Originally we were to be a group of eight, but Dick Hewitt and his friend Martin Cole thought our trip would be a bit boring, and so chose a more challenging route. I would still be walking out from that one I think! Our members were Bryan Smith, leader, Nell Iliffe, on her 4<sup>th</sup> trip, David Cameron, a veteran bush walker, Michael Johnson, an Englishman and a great walker, Ian Jackson, my husband, and myself. A particular focus of our journey was to visit the historic site where Joseph Bradshaw first found the exquisite Bradshaw Paintings. The site was too far away from the Mitchell Plateau for us to walk from in 10 days, so Bryan Smith, our leader, arranged for a helicopter to drop us in, to spend a little time at the site, then get us dropped to the start point of our walk. The Gorges in this area were steep and tight, so the walk turned out to be a little more difficult than was at first anticipated. Several of the gorges were impassable so we had to go around them. With others, a lot of climbing was required.

The journey begins with a helicopter ride to the first campsite, which was the Bradshaw site. We saw, as shown in the many photos accompanying the account, tassel, clothes peg and stick figures as well as a great range of more recent Wandjina and animal art, something that looked like a mythical being, and clawed hands.

**On Day 2** we were at Garimbu Falls, an incredibly beautiful place and a great camp-site. We experienced our first "peppermint foot bath" this evening after sipping Nell's green ant tea cocktails. David carried a canvas foot-bath for the entire trip, and treated sore feet in the evenings.

The original plan was to find a way down these cliffs surrounding the falls and follow the Garimbu Creek to the Roe River. However, Bryan conceded that these were impassable so we had to take the long route the next day and go around the ridges.

As this was our first real day of walking, and Ian and my first Kimberley experience, we actually didn't believe that Bryan anticipated negotiating these cliffs in the first place. When we realized that he was serious, you can imagine the huge sigh of relief we breathed when he announced that we didn't have long enough ropes to drop the packs that distance!

We went back up creek a way and traversed the ridge and came across some stone circles, continued on, and, almost at the top of the ridge, came across a stone overhang that had a "ship" painted under it. Over the ridge, first fall of the trip was mine and I did the classic turtle on its back when I misjudged a step down a rock.

We then met an almost dry, narrow creek bed with remnant rain forest. Although it was pretty and a haven for birds, it was quite difficult to travel down as the forest encroached on it, and it was strewn with loose, irregular-shaped boulders and tree branches.



At the end of what seemed like a very long day, we found a camp-site near the junction of this creek and the Garimbu. We named it Morning Star because a resplendent Venus crept over the eastern ridge early in the morning, with a visible waning moon sinking over the western ridge.

**Day 4.** Still on the Garimbu with ceremonial standing stone on the ridge top. It was breathtaking scenery looking back from where we had come.

A most serious threat for us was never knowing if there were any rapids or waterfalls between us and the tidal reaches of the Roe River that salt water crocodiles could not negotiate. So, from this point until we left the Moran and headed for the plateau country, a good measure of caution was exercised when near deep pools.

**Camp 3 on Day 5. Victoria's Relief.** The name of this campsite had nothing to do with ablutions! By now I was wondering how I would make the rest of the journey if it was all to be as challenging as the past few days. Bryan "promised" that the gorge country would open up ahead for a less difficult journey. Wishful thinking I'm afraid! David was such an optimist. He kept on saying that it will get easier round the corner. I thought that he knew what he was talking about and hung on his every word for the first couple of days. More rock paintings of a female crocodile laying her eggs.

The second pack drop occurred at the junction of the Roe. This is where Dave lost his cheap plastic cup, which, attached to the outside of his pack, smashed on rocks. It has taken us 3.5 days to reach this junction. By this time, I think we have all figured out that we are not going to make it back to the Mitchell Falls campsite on schedule, and to start budgeting for yet another helicopter flight.

**Camp 4. Anticipation on Day 6.** I'm still anticipating an easier road ahead! The strata in the sandstones here are quite thick and don't offer the same ease of climbing as the sandstones of thinner strata. By the time we got here, we were all well versed in helping each other with bum pushes, leg ups, pull ups and bum slides!

**Day 7. We meet the Moran; Dingo's Lair to Trapdoor.** We all enjoyed the spectacular scenery at the junction of the Roe and Moran Rivers. We walked around to the lowest point of the headland so as not to have to climb down the cliff face, but the descent was still extremely steep and lined with slippery spinifex grass and crumbling and loose rocks from the top of the spur to the river bed.

Bryan managed a dip in a shallow pool, but the rest of us just tried to shade ourselves from the sun and rest! Wary of crocodiles, we helped each other across the river to continue our journey.

**Day 7. Approaching Trapdoor Camp.** This is a particularly beautiful gorge. We were looking for footprints on the other side that would indicate that Dick and Martin had passed by but no luck. Those we did see weren't theirs.

**Camp 6. Day 8 at Trapdoor.** We named this camp Trapdoor after we left it behind. By now, we were used to thinking the way ahead would be a bit harder than anticipated. This morning was no exception. Our intrepid Englishman took off downstream a few minutes ahead of the rest to see if we could pass through the gorge. Well, foot access dead-ended within about 500m and initially we thought we might have to retreat and go around again, adding yet further time to our journey. We persevered and, after doing belly crawls under



narrow ledges, found a spot where, with great exertion, we could help each other scale the face of the gorge and continue forwards.

**Day 8. Lost Camera Break.** While Michael was busy assisting the rest of us scale the cliff, he put his camera on the ground. About half an hour later, he discovered that he had left it behind. Michael retraced his steps and, fortunately, found his camera while the rest of us took a welcome break at this picturesque spot. We were on our way to a waterfall on a tributary of the Moran, then to head upstream to plateau country and down to the Mitchell River. But we missed our turn off, ignoring the "tributary" which was a snaky, thin watercourse with some muddy patches full of feral bull footprints. When we took a GPS reading, it was obvious that we had taken the wrong path. But what a beautiful lunch spot. We had the usual confrontation with a wild bull, Michael in particular, trying to photograph it.

**Day 8. Camp 7 of Skillion and Boab.** It was getting late in the afternoon, and we kept moving forward looking for a suitable campsite. We had been a bit spoiled with camps along the way, but this was the best we could do this night. Most of us had a pretty uncomfortable night trying not to slide down the slope into the creek. We stuffed boots and clothes under the down slope side of our bedrolls to make an almost level surface to sleep on.

**Day 9. Waterlily lunch.** We were cutting across country to connect with the Mitchell River, and were on the plateau. We spotted a few broilgas, water monitors and a snake along the way and walked through fields of flowers to get to this pretty spot for lunch. The water here was really cold, and there was a patch of water lilies in the creek, but only one flower.

**Camp 8. Frog song Day 10.** This is our last camp and challenges our first to win best prize. The creek cascaded down to a big pool, making a natural spa. There was a natural amphitheatre for a fireplace with perfectly placed ledges for our seating around the fire. The frogs sang all night, but it was a real song, not a croak, and it was a wonderful sound to go to sleep with.

**Last Lunch at Mitchell River on Day 10.** Finally, we reached the Mitchell and by this time we were three days behind schedule. Had things gone to plan, we would have been back at Mitchell Plateau campsite by now. The trip had been quite arduous and we were all pretty tired by this time. The Mitchell was a bit of a disappointment as there was lots of evidence of feral bulls, the water looked pretty foul and there were lots of mosquitoes, flies and green ants around. Bryan called Captain Tim on the Sat. phone and I wasn't shy about being the first to be ferried back to base! Tim did a loop so that we could get some pictures of the falls though it was not directly in our flight path. It had taken us nine days to travel 62 km.

Bryan Smith was the trip organizer and a great trek leader. We certainly appreciate all he did for us. Nell Iliffe's friendship and Kimberley experience was a great comfort. Dave Cameron rolled up with every conceivable medicine and antidote known to man. With the omnipresent threat of Dave administering a Staminade enema, no one dared complain about being dehydrated! Michael Johnson was truly a great walker. He learnt his skills in the highlands of Scotland. He sustained an injury by stamping on a branch to break it up for the fire. Instead, it flipped up and nearly broke his nose! Ian Jackson went to battle with a big slab of rock. It was a couple of meters square and about 15cm thick. Several others had walked on it and it didn't move. As Ian stepped off it, it slid



off its resting place. Luckily it wedged between two other rocks that created a gap in which was Ian's leg. Had it not stopped, it surely would have trapped him. Me, I couldn't have survived without anti-inflammatory drugs and a lot of help from the others.

Both groups reunited at the Mitchell Plateau campground. On reflection, the best part of the trip was the rock art and the scenery and the worst part having to jump from one high rock to another and crying in fear!

When we got back to the plateau, most of the group walked down to the falls and there, floating down the river replete with packs, were Dick and Martin. Their adventure is another story again.

*Transcribed and edited by Daphne Choules Edinger*

**LUCY AND LOONGKOONAN:** New Paintings by Lucy Ward and Loongkoonan  
INDIGENART 8 June to 3 July 2005

What is it that makes someone who is born some time before the beginning of the first World War decide to start painting at the age of about 93? This is the story of Loongkoonan, one of the two artists featured at this exhibition. She only started painting this year mainly because her friend Lucy Ward, who is in her late 80s, had been painting for some time. To have a suite of nine of your paintings bought for \$11,000 by the National Gallery of Victoria at your first exhibition must also be fairly amazing.

Both these women characterise a group of Aboriginal artists who started painting very late in their lives, in their 70s, 80s, 90s and, of course, even Patsy Lulpunda who started painting at the age of 100. The list of painters who have become extremely prominent after started painting late in life includes such luminaries as Emily Kngwarreye, Billy Thomas, Minni Pwerle and Omborrin.

One wonders how many more artists there are to "come out of the woodwork" to put down their stories, country and culture on canvas or paper. Is it driven by a need to document their history, dreamings and stories because they see a culture that has changed dramatically during their lifetime and perhaps have a concern that little of it may be continued in the future? Who knows, but at least we can enjoy these vibrant works that were on display at this exhibition.

It is remarkable that Loongkoonan has just started painting and yet her style is quite distinct and has even had an influence on her friend Lucy Ward's recurring depictions of the sugar bag.

The press release accompanying this exhibition quotes Loongkoonan declaring, "I'm still very lively." This was confirmed by a friend of mine who lived in Derby for two years recently and remembered her walking everywhere around Derby and occasionally complaining that her legs hurt!

It was a stunning exhibition of these women's work and we can only hope that they have more paintings left in them.

*Jack Vercoe*



## REST IN PEACE

On 23 May 2005, Joy Sandford suffered a stroke and died whilst visiting her daughter Virginia in Sydney. Many Kimberley people knew Joy through the years she spent running the store attached to the Crossing Inn, supervising the pub kitchen, and, when necessary, doing the cooking there. Her move from Melbourne to Fitzroy Crossing occurred after her late husband Jack (Sandy) Sandford purchased the Crossing Inn in 1963.

An obituary published in *The West Australian* on 29 June 2005 told of Joy's affinity with the local Aboriginal people and of the tributes that they sent on hearing of her death. It also told of her enthusiasm for life in general, her work with the Karrakatta Club after moving to Perth in 1985, and her involvement with charities that included the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Joy and Sandy Sandford parted amicably long before his death, which occurred in 1997. She is survived by her partner of 30 years, Ian Higham, daughter Virginia, sons Peter and Jonathon, and six grandchildren.

## CANE TOAD CONTROL

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has advertised a 12-month contract, with the possibility of extension, for the position of Programme Coordinator (Cane Toad) based at Kununurra. Full details of the position are available on the Internet (<http://www.jobs.wa.gov.au>) where the position is numbered CLM3029013. Applicants are required to have tertiary qualifications in biological sciences or natural resource management or an equivalent qualification. The job description reads: 'Plan and coordinate the cane toad program, including the day-to-day supervision of the cane toad surveillance team. Develops programs relating to cane toads and their impact on biodiversity, including monitoring programs, eradication programs and biodiversity asset protection and identification.' Applications close on 5 August.

## SALE OF EL QUESTRO

On 30 June, *The West Australian* reported that the 400,000ha El Questro Resort and cattle station had passed to the Voyagers Group, netting Will and Celia Burrell \$17.4 million. The Burrells, having purchased the property as a cattle station for \$1 million, devoted 15 years to the development of El Questro.

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