



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 74

June 2006

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

commencing at 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at

Shenton Park Community Centre, cnr Onslow and Herbert Rds

Wednesday, 7 June 2006

Cathie Clement

(Consulting historian)

'17th century visitors to the Kimberley coast'

Wednesday, 5 July 2006

**'Oil and gas exploration and development
in the offshore Kimberley region'**

(Speaker to be confirmed)

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

ENVIRONS KIMBERLEY

Congratulations are extended to Environs Kimberley, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. The group's latest newsletter includes a range of interesting articles as well as reflection on its achievements and a discussion of some of the challenges that it will face in living up to its charter.

PROGRAM FOR REMAINDER OF 2006

- 2 August 'Journey of a Master Pearler 1886–1942' – John and Verity Norman
- 6 September 'Birds of the Kimberley Islands and their relationship to the birds of Christmas Island' – Ron Johnstone (ornithologist, WA Museum)
- 4 October 'Seaweeds of the Kimberley' – John Huisman
- 1 November 'History of guano mining on Lacepede Islands' – Tim Willing
- 6 December 'Historical, rare, and valuable books on the Kimberley' – Robert Muir (antiquarian book dealer)

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Kimberley Society's AGM for 2006 is now behind us and I thank all those who put their hands up (or didn't pull them down fast enough) for the at times onerous responsibilities associated with being an office bearer or councilor. The Society could not function without the key group of people who organize the meetings, balance the accounts, set up suppers, and of course compile the *Boab Bulletin*. So many thanks to last year's committee and the outgoing treasurer Dick Hewitt, and also to Gilbert Marsh for taking on this role for 2006–2007. The rest are continuing in their roles for at least another year, and I am in my third year as President, which will also be my last as required under our Constitution. And special recognition to our Life Member Cathie Clement for her tireless efforts in getting us all to get our contributions in on time so that she can get the *Boab Bulletin* together in time for the mail out before the next meeting. And on top of that, she is also the speaker at the next meeting on 7 June, so don't miss it!

The Kimberley is rolling along at an ever-increasing rate it seems. A flying visit through Kununurra and Halls Creek last week showed the towns full of tourists, and the roads with plenty of tourist buses, adventure tours, backpackers, and of course the grey nomads in their 4WDs and caravans. Water is still running across the Great Northern Highway near Warmun, and Sturt Creek is still flowing strongly, although a major new high-level causeway completed last year means the Tanami Track remains open. Which is just as well, as the Tanami saw an important event last week with the opening of Tanami Gold's new Coyote gold mine by none other than the Governor-General. (I think we can call the Tanami part of the Kimberley for this purpose!). There were some 150 Tjurabalan people at the opening and they put on a great traditional welcome ceremony. Great to see these developments, which will help to strengthen the Kimberley economy and provide much-needed employment opportunities for all.

Mike Donaldson

BROOME FOOTBALL

Football enthusiasts will enjoy Brian Kane's "Barefoot and Brilliant" Web site (<http://www.stmarysbroome.wa.edu.au/home/barefoot/open.html>) on Broome footy.

WANDJINA

I was delighted to see, in the Autumn 2006 quarterly journal *Art in Australia*, two articles on the Wandjina. The first is by John E. Stanton and the second by Roger Dedman. Stanton comes with excellent credentials of his 1989 book *Painting the Country: Contemporary Aboriginal Art from the Kimberley Region Western Australian* and as co-author with the Berndts of *Aboriginal Australian Art: A Visual Perspective*. He provides a scholarly article accompanied by three wonderful examples of the work of Alec Mijelmarnganu (also Mingelmanganu), Charlie Numbulmore, and the little known Bill Bilanda. However, I think the magazine has transposed the latter two artists' works because, in the Dedman article, a delightful painting by Numbulmore is almost identical in style to the painting attributed to Bilanda in Stanton's article.

Stanton rates Wandjinas as the third most notable form in Aboriginal art—following the desert dot art and the X-ray style of Arnhem Land. He describes the Wandjinas as a uniquely Western Australian icon and mentions appropriations by government departments using Wandjina figures as letterheads without reference to the traditional owners. I also remember a Wandjina image on surfboards manufactured in Victoria in the early 90s. He gives us a history of the development of the Wandjina from discovery by Sir George Grey, and he mentions Ian Crawford's and Donny Woolagoodja's interpretations. David Mowaljarlai's name is misspelt and I thought he was affiliated more with the Ngarinyin language than Worora but that may just be my memory. There is also mention of the latter's role in the repainting of numerous Wandjina images. Stanton continues with a nice elaboration of the place of art in contemporary Aboriginal society.

The three works of Mijelmarnganu are superb and he was certainly a sad loss in 1991 after his one and only solo exhibition in 1980. Apart from mention of Blundell and Woolagoodja's book, *Keeping the Wanjinias Fresh*, there is no mention of the modern contemporary artists painting under the banner of the Mowanjum Artists Spirit of the Wandjina Aboriginal Corporation (MASWAC). Theirs is still a work in progress and their place in relationship to their antecedents is yet to be determined. However, we all remember the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000 with Woolagoodja's Wandjina image taking a prominent part.

After reading this excellent summary of the Wandjinas I wondered why we have yet to ask John Stanton to speak at the Kimberley Society. He has a wealth of knowledge of Aboriginal art from the Kimberley.

The second article is market profile Wandjina by Roger Dedman. Dedman charts the price rise of the older Wandjina artists in the auction houses mainly at Sothebys over the last few years. Mijelmarnganu's work has gone from a painting fetching \$48,300 to a record of \$244,500. The works of Numbulmore have exceeded \$50,000 and even a small Wandjina image on slate has fetched \$19,200. Dedman's other "tips" in the market include Wattie Karruwara. He also mentions how, in the early 1990s, groups of Wandjina barks sold averaging about \$600 each and feels that these will never be available for such a price again. Although he is obviously good with figures, he makes one major error in his article saying that Wandjina figures have been painted in caves from 30,000 years ago. He must have been confused with Bradshaws. Dedman articles charting the auction values of artists appear in other art magazines, and I believe he previously also worked in mathematical permutations of horse racing odds.

Jack Vercoe

WA MUSEUM'S KIMBERLEY COLLECTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

On 5 October 2005, Dr Dawn Casey, the Director of the Western Australian Museum, spoke to the Kimberley Society. The following notes, transcribed by Susan Clarkson, cover the Kimberley content of the talk. Other background material is included in the longer version published on the Kimberley Society Web site (www.kimberleysociety.org).

Those of us who aspire to build and operate today's museums have a great deal in common. Over and above the sheer volume of hard work, meetings, negotiations, budgets and paperwork, we share the challenge of having to make tough decisions about some extraordinarily complex issues. We also need to take into account high expectations, particularly from Governments (who allocate the funds), academics, friends of the museum, and museum practitioners.

Museums have evolved over a long period from privately held collections to natural history museums and then to the plethora of museums we have today. The 1980s and 1990s saw a considerable shift in museology. Conservation moved from a skill traditionally exercised by craftspeople to a profession dealing with increasingly complex scientific procedures and international environmental standards developed for the preservation of collections. . .

What makes museums different from a newspaper or a pub, when it comes to the discussion of hot issues, is our contribution to informed debate. Our foundation in scholarship and research enables us to give background information in a way not available to the front page or the soapbox orator. We provide a venue which is 'safe' in the sense of calm and comfortable, where the rules of engagement encourage respect for multiple viewpoints. Museums are the new civic space, and in museums, there's a crucial interplay between intellectual and emotional knowledge, which brings me to the Kimberley.

Through museums hundreds of thousands of Australians are on their way to being better informed, a bit more thoughtful, and better equipped to deal with the claims and counter-claims of national public life. As a museum, you do have to challenge or surprise people. You must albeit gently push them beyond the comfortable or the familiar. You have to keep on reminding them that their kind of person, or their experience of life, is not the only one. The way we do it risks the disapproval of some, but without risk there is no opportunity. Some people may well prefer a world without risk, where everything is fully guaranteed, pleasant, inoffensive, bland. But that's not a world in which you could hope to learn – or to change.

About 33% of the objects registered in the Australian ethnographic collections registers are from the Kimberley – this is some 3035 artefacts made of wood, shell, plant fibre and contemporary textiles, paintings, etc. A representative range is included in Katta Djinoong. Some of the objects currently listed as "no data" are also clearly derived from the Kimberley. There are also several thousand secret/sacred items. Some communities request that the museum stores these on their behalf as they cannot guarantee their security in the community.

It is not possible to say what percentage of the archaeology collections derive from the Kimberley, although there is material from the excavations in various locations as well as stone tools from surface collections. Famous excavated sites include Miriwun (dating back over 18,000 years) and Monsmont, drowned by the rising waters of Lake Argyle.

In addition, we have a reasonable large collection of photographs taken during fieldwork by Ian Crawford, particularly focused around Kalumburu between 1964 and 1994, and by Moya Smith in Dampierland (Lombadina area) between 1980 and

1997. Ian and Moya also collected plant samples as part of research into traditional plant use. Currently, Moya is keen to resume fieldwork with the Bardi people from One Arm Point, looking at stone wall fish traps and as part of continuing interest in traditional Kimberley maritime economies. Fieldwork of course is dependent on external funding.

The Department of Terrestrial Vertebrates has had a long involvement in research into the fauna of the Kimberley with projects initiated by the department and cooperative projects with CALM and other groups. Many of the surveys listed below were followed up by several trips later.

- Ord River Survey prior to building the Argyle Dam (Ron Johnson) and many visits from 1972 – 2003
- Price Regent River Reserve – with CALM (Ron Johnstone) 1975
- Mitchell Plateau (Ron Johnstone) many visits from 1973 – 2003
- Rainforest Survey with CALM (Ron Johnstone) 1989
- Gardner and Denison Ranges 1997 (Ron Johnstone)
- Survey of Kimbolton Station, Yampi for Environment Australia – 2000
- Return to Mitchell Plateau to assess changes in presence and abundance of fauna-dates.
- Purnululu with Landscape tour
- Mornington Station with WA Naturalists' Club 2002
- Survey of Kimberley islands to assess the morphological and genetic variation between islands and between islands and the mainland 2003, 2004, 2005
- Possible return to the Ord River to assess changes.
- Study of the frog fauna in Kununurra and area with Alcoa Frogwatch – 2005 ongoing.
- Ord River Region – Ron Johnstone
- Kimberley mangrove surveys – Ron Johnstone

The Museum's Department of Aquatic Zoology has had considerable contact with the Kimberley region over the years. Expeditions have been undertaken to the Rowley Shoals and Buccaneer Archipelago in 1982; Scott Reef and Seringapatam Reef in 1984; and Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island in 1986. In 1984, a marine biological survey of the Southern Kimberley was carried by WAM staff together with other institutions. As a consequence of the work carried out and collections made during these non-marine surveys, Dr Alan Solem of the Field Museum in Chicago, largely with USA funding, carried out a number of collecting trips to the Kimberley and published widely on the land snail fauna of that and adjacent regions between 1979 and 1997.

The Mollusc section of the Aquatic Zoology Department has ongoing contact with the Kimberley and its fauna through the work of other government departments. From our experience in that area and the collections of data and specimens made there we are constantly supplying identifications and other data on marine, land and freshwater molluscs (including introduced species and those important to commercial undertakings such as the pearling industry). We also provide such services to anthropological and archaeological researchers in the universities. An example of this is WAM staff, in the next month or so, under contract to an environmental consultancy, a survey of the land snail fauna of Koolan Island as part of an

Environmental Impact Study related to the expansion of the iron-ore mining on that island.

Museum conservators have established the principal mechanisms of deterioration of painted images of rock surfaces in the Kimberley on both sandstone (in the Mitchell Plateau) and limestone (in the Napier Range) sites. They have established micro climate modelling that enables prediction of the environment inside shelters and they have established the major role played by micro flora (bacteria, yeast, moulds and fungi) on the deterioration of the rock art.

The Museum Assistance Program (MAP) is continuing to work with local indigenous community groups in the Kimberley in terms of developing appropriate management procedures for their heritage. MAP has been giving advice to the proposed Mowanjum Museum near Derby and the proposed Bugarrigarra Nyurdany Culture Centre in Broome with planning for sustainable operations. MAP has also had discussions with a number of key stakeholders interested in establishing a regional archive service.

Currently the Museum is undergoing a period of restructure with the Maritime Museum now incorporated with the WAM. Another issue being dealt with at present is the repatriation of human remains and secret sacred objects to indigenous groups. A business case is being prepared for the WA Government for a new museum to be built in Perth.

The current staff numbers at WAM are 120 staff, 30 vacancies, with 10 staff in curatorial positions. Funding is a major issue with 8 museums housing a collection of approximately 4 million items. At the present time, WAM receives cash funding of \$12 million with \$3 million in revenue. The Melbourne Museum by comparison, although double the size, receives a budget of \$40 million.

In a new museum I would like to see at least some, or preferably all, of the following introduced.

- Access should be free
- Holding debates and discussions like tonight
- Richness of history through exhibitions e.g. new spider species found
- Indigenous culture, richness of around 40,000 years.
- History of people e.g. C Y O'Connor
- Shouldn't be deliberately controversial.

Dawn Casey

AN OPPORTUNITY TO CRUISE THE KIMBERLEY COAST

The Western Australian Naturalists' Club have a few vacancies on their 14-day Kimberley Expedition led by Kevin Coate on the 22.2m catamaran *ODYSSEY 2*.

The cruise takes in the Broome to Prince Regent River and Prince Frederick Harbour areas, on 4–17 September 2006.

The cost is \$3,600 per head ex-Broome.

For further information, contact the Western Australian Naturalists Club office by phoning (08) 9228 2495 and leaving a message.

LOST WORLD OF THE KIMBERLEY — THE AUTHOR REPLIES

After what Jack Vercoe rightly called Nicolas Rothwell's 'scathing' review of my book in *The Australian*, it was doubly painful to find Hamish McGlashan and Mike Donaldson saying much the same in the *Boab Bulletin* – Hamish referring to my 'fanciful ideas' and 'flights of fancy' and Mike to my 'wild speculations'.

Yet I can only ask, in genuine bewilderment, what 'fanciful ideas', what 'wild speculations'? Hamish vaguely referred to my linking the Bradshaw painters with Ice Age cultures throughout the world, and perhaps had in mind the single example that Rothwell cited as 'pure fantasy'. Specifically, Theda's Bradshaw panel depicting nine net-clad dancers, a dance which I suggested may be the distant ancestor of a dance by nine maidens still performed on Java in honour of a prehistoric sea goddess. Now get real, Hamish and Nicolas, this is hardly speculation of the Von Daniken kind. Even Grahame Walsh has recognised that the Bradshaw people must have come from somewhere else before they arrived fully developed in the Kimberley. Geographical logic suggests that somewhere else to have been Southeast Asia. All that my book does, tentatively, and with full acknowledgement of the many difficulties and my own personal shortcomings, is to point to a series of indicators of South East Asian links. Some of these suggestions may stand the test of time, some may not. But as a qualified historian who has actively studied the world's figurative art for more than five decades, was it really so wrong for me to try to answer the fundamental questions that the Bradshaw paintings raise concerning who painted them, where they came from, and what happened to them?

Accused as I am of being an 'Englishman' (I am in my twelfth year of residency and ninth of full Australian citizenship), also of dashing off a book on the strength of just one 'very brief' visit to the Kimberley, perhaps I might cite reviews of earlier books that have been published internationally. The *Washington Post* of my book on the Turin Shroud: 'Wilson's outstanding study must surely be the most complete yet undertaken of the subject.' The London *Times* of a book about the evidence for life after death: 'In a field littered with shards of crackpottery, Wilson treads with commendable wariness'. Oxford academic and Shakespeare specialist A.L. Rowse of my biography of Shakespeare: 'Full of good sense. The reader will not go wrong with it... Ian Wilson is conscientious, as a good Oxford man should be.' In every subject that I choose to write about, almost always associated with historical mysteries, I make a point of doing a great deal of preliminary research before approaching key experts in that field. Over the years many specialists in art, archaeology, botany, medicine, forensic science and other fields have responded generously to such approaches and have become personal friends as a result of the correspondence and ideas generated. I adopted exactly the same approach in the case of *Lost World of the Kimberley*. So where did I go so badly wrong with it?

Amongst my detractors the general perception appears to be that any book on the Bradshaws based on a single visit to the Kimberley surely must be flimsy and inadequate compared to the quarter of a century of periodic field-work that has been put in by Grahame Walsh. But as a former Walsh backer, sculptor John Robinson, has pointed out, there is such a huge amount to be learnt from photographs of the paintings that you do not need to have personally visited every site. Had I had access to a properly referenced photographic archive, undoubtedly my book could and would have had more substance, and much less of the chatty travelogue than it became. But Walsh's books, despite their lavishness and huge expense, simply do not provide the data necessary for proper investigative evaluation. Does that mean

that it is in Walsh's direction that any 'lack of academic rigour' charges should be levelled, not in mine?

Let us take a painting that both Walsh and I have seen in person, and have created interpretative drawings from, the panel that I have called the 'bagmen', located near the King Edward River at the site local Aborigines call Munurru. The figures on this panel feature bulky bulbous objects fastened to their waists to which Walsh simply accords the label 'Dancing Balloons'. In my book I noted what Walsh had missed (as evident from his interpretative drawing), that the balloon-like object is further supported by straps from the neck. In this light I gently 'speculated' that the objects could be bags or baskets. And I then referred to anthropological descriptions of Aboriginal ceremonies involving such items. So whose approach did more to further understanding of the Bradshaws? Walsh's, providing no location information, and merely a misleading label? Or mine, identifying and describing the painting's setting, and venturing a plausible constructive interpretation for the mystery object?

Let us take the other piece of 'speculation' that I have been severely castigated for, the suggestion that some figures might represent a 'Great Mother'. Again there is nothing 'wildly' unreasonable about this. A.P. Elkin was a respected 20th century anthropologist who travelled widely talking to Aboriginal elders still in touch with the old traditions. In his book *The Australian Aborigines* he included a map of Australia showing an early "Mother Goddess" cult in a large swathe of northern Australia encompassing the Kimberley and Arnhem Land. He spent five pages discussing this cult. If there was such an early, pre-Wandjina 'Mother Goddess' cult, surely we might expect it to be reflected in the art of the same era?

And sorry to disagree with you, Jack Vercoe, but if you want to begin to understand the Bradshaw paintings, getting the figures' gender right does matter. My now infamous query to Walsh on this issue was in exactly the same spirit as an undergraduate putting a question to his tutor – in the expectation of receiving an informed, authoritative answer. To my huge disappointment, Walsh simply looked at me with cold contempt, and refused to explain his 'all male gender' interpretation, even though there is no adequate explanation to be found anywhere in his books. So who is the one who 'instinctively' knows – me, who has explicitly disavowed any such authority in my Author's Preface, or Grahame Walsh?

What to me beggars belief is the implicit acceptance by Hamish McGlashan and others that there has to be some virtue in Walsh being so generally uncooperative towards others expressing interest in the Bradshaws (as I am increasingly discovering, I am far from alone in receiving the Walshian brush-off), likewise his deliberate withholding of information on where the paintings are located. As I tried so hard to plead in my final chapter: without provision of accompanying location information the Bradshaw paintings have much the same seriously devalued status as antiquities illegally looted in the Middle East and elsewhere. Walsh has undoubtedly provided a valuable service doing the Indiana Jones thing of searching out the paintings. But that surely does not entitle him and his patrons to treat such priceless items of Australian heritage as if their own personal property?

Thanks to Allen and Unwin's exemplary diligence and care as publishers, *Lost World of the Kimberley* turned out exactly the way that I wanted – a much-needed colourful yet inexpensive introduction of the Bradshaws and their mysteries to the public-at-large. Whatever textual or other faults the book contains are my responsibility. Pre-occupied by some complex illustration-juggling at proof stage, I was certainly blind to the elevation error pointed out by Mike Donaldson, and can only apologise and kick myself for committing the very sort of howler that I too deplore in others. In the case

of the indistinctness of the so-called 'reindeer' panel, this was the fault neither of my wife's photographs nor of the book reproduction. It was the weathering that the huge rock has sustained over the millennia. Even when up close and personal, distinguishing the line of creatures was far from easy. Nonetheless there was sufficient for all of us present to be sure beyond reasonable doubt that we were seeing a line of four-legged creatures with antlers, and most definitely not the 'set of genuflecting men' so pontifically asserted by Rothwell.

Which causes me still to seek the answer to the question that I raised in my reply to *The Australian* review: from where did Rothwell receive his higher intelligence? All logic suggests that this was from Grahame Walsh. But if so, what was Walsh's basis for making the assertion? Just as I have answered my critics, perhaps he too might now care to answer this and other issues through the intermediacy of the *Boab Bulletin*?

Ian Wilson

BOOK NOTE

On Australia's Rim: JC de Lancourt's Travels in Australia 1924-1929. Edited by WJ de Burgh, Hesperian Press, 2006, 132 pages. ISBN 0 85905 361 X. RRP \$26.

JC De Lancourt, born in France and raised in England, for a bet attempted to walk around Australia keeping within 10 miles of the coast. (I suppose that nowadays such an unlikely enterprise would be done for cancer research). This slim volume details the part of his trip from Perth to Arnhem Land whence he seems to have disappeared under the unlikely suspicion of being a Japanese spy and leaving substantial unpaid debts. Most of the story is related in articles de Lancourt sent to the *Western Mail* and there are substantial excerpts from relevant letters and reports concerning the man and his trip.

Inevitably I was fascinated by his time in the Kimberley: with a young companion EC Francis and various Aborigines he went from Broome to Derby, (he saw that Beagle Bay mission was having problems—nothing changes!—and there is a spirited rebuttal from the mission itself). Then to the Walcott inlet, Port George IV Mission, Kalumburu and Darwin, terrain well known to the walkers of the Kimberley Society.

Most intriguing was an account of the death of Frederick Easton, "Killed by an Alligator" close to where three of your Kimberley Society Council members frolicked in 1983! Included are facsimile copies of de Lancourt's account, his sketch maps, the police report and a summary from the Coates' *More Lonely Graves of Western Australia*. There are also some interesting observations about rock art and Aboriginal burial customs which were new to me. Food was a problem at times — "we were all pretty hungry...so I decided to kill the dog we had brought from Port George. She was a great thief and was quite useless for hunting so was no great loss. The meat minced and curried, served to feed the party for a couple of days."

Apart from the travelogue, de Lancourt gives his opinions on both mining and agricultural prospects in the Kimberley (not the first or the last to get those wrong!) but he also prophesises that it would become one of the world's great tourist destinations. He has forthright views on flies, missions, government policy and funding, all expressed in the delightful style and fluency of his era.

WJ de Burgh, who met de Lancourt as a teenager, is to be congratulated on his research and selection of articles. This is not only a valuable historical document but

also a telling social commentary on white-Aboriginal relations which still resonates strongly today. With a bit of detective story thrown in for good measure, this is a good read.

Hamish McGlashan

Editor's note: Copies of the book will be available at the June meeting.

THE SALE OF MOOLA BULLA – A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Over my years as a ringer and later station manager in the Kimberly, the name of Moola Bulla always resonated as one of the almost mystical icons of the beef industry. In the minds of many, it was the yardstick by which breeding properties were measured. Local cattle men agreed that, yes, there may be easier places to muster or maybe better fattening properties but, for sheer reliability of turnoff, you could not beat Moola Bulla.

I remember sharing a rum with a couple of old drovers in the Hall's Creek pub around 1963 (yes, under age drinking by me!) and asking, if money was no object, which station would they buy? Without hesitation, they both gestured with their thumbs and said, "Moola Bulla, son". Whatever personal opinions may be, it is certainly *one* of the best.

Through a varied life since station days, I have always tried to keep in touch with events in the Kimberly and, of course, with Moola Bulla. The story has not always been happy. But throughout, the old place has continued to do what it does best: to churn out beef.

When circumstances led to my becoming a real estate agent and valuer, some 30 years ago, it was always my intention to specialize in the rural sector – hopefully with an emphasis on the pastoral scene. I have been fortunate in selling properties in many parts of the state. When it became apparent that Moola Bulla would be sold, for me it was a labour of love as well as a professional challenge: firstly to list the property, and secondly to find a buyer at the highest end of the market. Obviously, I was in competition with larger firms, which were pressing hard to represent the sellers. With the support of one of the owners, I was given my chance – not exclusively, but it was as much as I could hope for, and enough to spark huge enthusiasm.

The greatest pleasure was to speak with prospective buyers who were cattle people and who knew the industry and spoke the language. We understood each other. I dusted off some cobwebs from my station knowledge bank and work became more fun than fun.

My policy has always been to concentrate on absolute confidentiality; only to introduce qualified clients, and to arrange inspections so as to cause minimal disruption to staff and station operations.

Every person that inspected knew what they were doing and had the capacity to perform. Finally, through negotiation with a well-known local cattle man, we made it happen. And the job satisfaction for me was unsurpassed. I hope that the Sellers and Buyers found it equally satisfying.

Joss Harman (Kimberley Society member, Denmark, WA)

Editor's note: In December 2005, the *Boab Bulletin* reported that Moola Bulla was for sale for \$40 million. On 31 March, *The West Australian* reported that Perth-based Great Southern Plantations had signed a contract to buy the historic station for around \$30 million. On 28 May, the *Sunday Times*

(Perth) reported that Great Southern is offering a tax-effective investment in which people 'can buy two droves of four cattle on the company's cattle properties in northern Australia'. Moola Bulla is one of those properties. The other one is Chudleigh Park Station in Queensland, also purchased this year.

ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006 (prepared for the 2006 AGM)

The Kimberley Society has had another successful year. Our two high profile activities, the monthly speaker's meetings at Shenton Park and the *Boab Bulletin* have maintained and even exceeded all past standards. The monthly meetings have been well attended with up to one hundred in the audience for some of the talks. The subjects have been diverse, ranging from history and anthropology to natural history and tourism.

The *Boab Bulletin*, edited by the indefatigable Cathie Clement, contains summaries of most talks, book reviews and notices of a variety of events relating to the Kimberley. A recent innovation to provide a forum for matters contentious is popular and lively.

Outside these routine happenings, the main event was the Rock Art seminar held at the University of WA. One hundred and ten registrants heard and debated with experts from both the Kimberley region and from interstate on a wide range of topics related to the subject. The meeting was professionally recorded and the preparation of a high quality publication, which will be a significant contribution to the bibliography of Australian rock art, is currently in hand.

In August, the society joined with other interested organizations in a fund raising and information day about cane toads. Our President Mike Donaldson gave one of the talks and presented a cheque for \$250 from our society. The advance of cane toads towards the Kimberley is a very topical subject. People's views on what should, or should not, be done about it differ greatly. The Council of the Kimberley Society resolved to support Kimberley residents and others who believe that community awareness and effort can limit the cane toads' impact on the biological diversity of the Kimberley. Not all members support that decision so the *Boab Bulletin* provides room for all points of view.

Another milestone was reached at Old Halls Creek with the completion of the work on the roof over the mud brick ruin of the old post office. Murray River North Pty Ltd, the firm that built the roof in 2002, installed a third gable and the gable ends that had to be omitted (for want of money) when the Stage One works were done. The third gable, which is above the original entrance to the post office, helps to make the roof look as much like the original as possible. The gable ends, as well as being in keeping with the design of the original roof, will reduce the amount of rain driven through the openings.

This component of the Stage Two works was made possible by the generosity of the people who contributed substantial sums to the tax-deductible appeal that the Kimberley Society runs under the umbrella of the National Trust of Australia (WA). The balance of the tax-deductible funds, plus the money that has been raised from the monthly raffle and other sources, is earmarked for the interpretation panels that will be installed this year: work on them has commenced. All of these works, like the Stage One works, are being done with the permission of the owner of the ruins.

After a long period in which the investigation of other options left our Web site in hibernation, Sydney-based member Grant Sellwood has again volunteered his time to look after that important aspect of the Society's public face. In the past month, he

has created a stylish new Web site (www.kimberleysociety.org), making it more informative and user-friendly than the old one.

Your council (committee) has met every other month. During the year two members resigned; Maurice O'Connor who now lives in Broome, and our treasurer Richard Hewitt. We thank both for their contributions over several years.

Financially we are in excellent shape with assets in the bank of over \$20,000. These monies are largely from annual subscriptions, registrations for the Rock Art seminar, and fundraising for the Old Halls Creek project. A large proportion will be spent in the coming year on the Rock Art seminar proceedings and the Halls Creek interpretation.

THE KIMBERLEY SOCIETY'S NEW WEB SITE

The new Web site (www.kimberleysociety.org) has the following additional features:

- a revised electronic index in which the names of the speakers are shown against the titles of their talks;
- short descriptions of the talks for which no summaries are available, plus a few pieces of additional information to provide updates on such talks;
- a FAQs page with Kevin Kenneally's pieces about the correct name for the Australian boab;
- buttons across the top of the screen for navigation, and a bar at the foot of each year's summaries so that visitors can "go to" the summaries recorded in other years;
- electronic links embedded in summaries to take readers directly to related summaries; and,
- a masked e-mail address that will allow contact whilst minimising the receipt of junk e-mail.

Thanks for all your work Grant. It's looking great!

COUNCIL 2006-2007

President:	Mike Donaldson
Vice-Presidents:	Kevin Kenneally and Jack Vercoe
Secretary:	Hamish McGlashan
Membership Secretary:	Susan Clarkson
Treasurer:	Gilbert Marsh
Councillors:	Adrienne Boulter, Cathie Clement (Newsletter Editor), and Daphne Edinger

The Kimberley Society's Web site (www.kimberleysociety.org) is managed by Grant Sellwood and, as well as carrying the summaries of talks published in the *Boab Bulletin*, it has information about membership and the Society's objectives.

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