



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 81

August 2007

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

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

Wednesday, 1 August 2007

Richard Youngs (former RFDS Pilot)
“The Good Old Days of the RFDS in the Kimberley”

Wednesday, 5 September 2007

Speaker to be advised

Wednesday, 3 October 2007

Norm McKenzie & Tony Start
(Department of Environment & Conservation)
“Biological surveys of the Kimberley islands”

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

NOTICE OF A FUNDRAISING BOOK SALE

The family of our late member Athol Farrant has generously donated the Kimberley books from Athol's library to the Society for fundraising purposes. The books, which are mostly recent editions, will be listed, described and priced. Members who would like to receive a copy of the list in a mail-out should contact Cathie Clement (phone: 08 9272 3308; fax: 08 9272 2087; email: clement@q-net.net.au). The books will be on sale from the time of the mail-out, and possibly at the October meeting.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I sit writing this on a cold wet windy Perth evening my thoughts go forward a couple of weeks to when I shall be comfortably ensconced on a warm rock in the remote Kimberley, looking up at the star bright canopy and contemplating, as did George Grey some hundred and eighty years ago, "the beautiful scenery...so fair a land...the curious paintings...and wonder how long these things are to be."

There are still many mysteries surrounding the Kimberley rock art but we have been able to learn from the Aboriginal guardians which George Grey could not. And, more help is at hand as **THE** rock art book is now at the printers and will be launched shortly. It is authoritative, up to date, lavishly and beautifully illustrated. It consists of course of the proceedings of the Kimberley Rock Art Seminar that was held in 2005. The seminar was attended and endorsed by Donny Woolagooodja who has also written a foreword for the book.

This book is an "in house" publication of the Kimberley Society. Mike Donaldson has put in hundreds of hours of work (with Kevin Kenneally) as principal editor, seeker of printer, and proof reader. The cost of printing has come from Kimberley Society funds, with generous loans from several members, who hope they may get repaid some day and to whom the Society is most grateful.

The arrangements for the official launch, or launches, of the book are still being confirmed and, to make the best use of our funds, we are targeting those in the industry whom we hope will sell the book. This means that the general membership will not be invited. The book will have a recommended retail price of \$49.95 but those who attended the seminar will get a free copy, and members can purchase them for \$33.00 at our meetings or by post (plus postage costs).

An order form is enclosed with this newsletter, and more will be available at our meetings. We are undertaking distribution from within the society, so if we sell them all we will make some profit which could go to future enterprises of this kind.

So hurry along and buy one ... or more. It will be well worth it for the illustrations alone.

Hamish McGlashan

KIMBERLEY ART AWARDS

The *West Australian* carried an illustrated story on 13 July 2007 (page 7) about the successes of two West Kimberley artists at the Drawing Together award in Canberra. Loongkoonan, who is thought to be about 98 years old, won \$10,000 for one of her classic bush tucker paintings. It was titled "Bush Tucker in Nyikina Country". The other Kimberly artist was Omborin who won \$1,000, which was the People's Choice Award for his painting of his traditional country. That work was titled "Gullaroonari Munja Country".

Both artists are represented by Indigenart, and I must acknowledge the fact that I have bought art from there and I also opened an exhibition, which included works by Loongkoonan. At the gallery recently I heard that she is in good health and is painting still, and, judging by the quality of her works, she is obviously in fine fettle.

Jack Vercoe

Editor's note: Omborin's "Gullaroonari Munja Country" also saw him selected as one of 35 finalists vying for the rich Fleurieu Peninsula Art Prize in South Australia last year.

TIME TO SHINE: ELLENDALE DIAMONDS

On 4 April 2007, Miles Kennedy (Chairman, Kimberley Diamond Company) spoke to the Kimberley Society about his company's involvement with exploration and diamond mining in the Kimberley. Despite being a lawyer, rather than a geologist, he was involved in the exploration from the outset and, in 1993, he formed the Kimberley Diamond Company. As one of only two diamond producers in Australia, the company comes second to Argyle, which has one of the biggest mines in the world.

Miles explained that every diamond is unique and, as well as being at least 3,200 million years old—as old as the earth itself—they are valuable because they are hard to find. They occur in the diamond stability field, 200 kilometres below the earth's surface, and can be accessed only if a volcano passes through and brings them up to the surface at 600–700 km/hr in what is known as a diamond pipe or lamproite pipe.

The search for Kimberley diamonds began in earnest in 1967 and a syndicate, in which CRA (now Rio Tinto) was involved, discovered some at Ellendale in 1976. The discovery of the Argyle alluvial diamonds in the East Kimberley followed, with the rich AK1 pipe being located in 1979 and brought into production in 1983.

The Kimberley Diamond Company owns the Ellendale Diamond Field some 100 kilometres east of Derby. The first 70 kilometres of access is easy, on the sealed section of the Gibb River Road, before 40 kilometres of unsealed road to the Roberts Road turnoff which takes drivers 24 kilometres south to Ellendale. The difficulty of exploring that area and then building the mine can be imagined because, even now, the road needs to be raised so that the mine won't be marooned for four months every year.

Miles Kennedy and his team started their exploration work in 1994 and lived in tents at Blina, which is adjacent to Ellendale, for four years. They traversed 140 kilometres in their search for the volcanic pipes in the northern section of the Blina tenements and dug thousands of holes. At the first camp, a cement mixer was used for sifting for diamonds. The plant was upgraded in 1999 and diamond treatment plants of greater size were built.

While all of that was going on, the company was engaged in an acquisition program focused on the Ellendale Field. The relationship between the two fields is such that Blina Diamonds NL, in which Kimberley Diamond Company holds a large interest, controls a 1,350-km² tenement package that covers and surrounds the central core of the Ellendale Field. Within that tenement package are fifty identified lamproite pipes and some diamondiferous alluvial channels.

In 2001, Kimberley Diamond Company reached agreement to purchase the Ellendale Project for A\$23.25 million and, in mid-2002, it began commercial diamond mining there. The Ellendale mining lease covers 124 square kilometres, and Kimberley Diamond Company has spent A\$200 million developing it. Most of the diamonds are exported and the company now has an office in Antwerp for direct tendering. In production, the Kimberley Diamond Company has over 8.9 million tonnes processed to 28 February 2007; 637,000 carats sold; and sales revenue exceeding A\$149 million as of 31 March 2007 and about to quadruple. Production is conflict free, unlike that in some parts of the world.

At Ellendale, where up to 500 people have been employed on the mine and in construction, workers stay 14 days before flying out for a week at home. Sixty-one per cent of the workforce are from Broome, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing, and about seventeen per cent are company-trained Aboriginal people. The Kimberley Diamond Company has an agreement with the local Aboriginal people: reached after two

years of negotiations whereby the company pays them \$150,000 per year, or 5% of any dividend derived from the mine, and provides training programmes. The money is paid into a trust for nine different tribal groups.

Today, at Pipe 9, where the company mines one lamproite pipe, the camp is six to seven kilometres in size and accommodates 440 people. Twenty kilometres to the south of Pipe 9 is a new big pipe. This new plant, Ellendale 4, was successfully commissioned in September 2006 at a cost of A\$51 million for plant and infrastructure.

For every tonne of rock processed, the Ellendale mining operation requires a tonne of water. Diamonds are 3.2 times heavier than water: Sp. Grav. = 3.2. In the processing, the mine uses gravity separation to access the diamonds. The mined material is passed over an x-ray and the diamonds are seen to sparkle and fluoresce. There is a huge subterranean aquifer and they have big dams to recycle the water. The revegetation process is an ongoing environmental requirement for the mine. For every hectare disturbed, the mine is required to lodge a bond of A\$15,000 with the Western Australian Government to revegetate. The pipes will become lakes when the mining company has finished with them because the water table is only 30 metres underground.

The diamonds at Ellendale are \$150 per carat. Argyle pink diamonds are the most valuable in the world and, at the Ellendale mining operation, the diamond production is 30% yellow and 70% white. Miles explained that carat is a measurement of weight and is based on the weight of an individual carob seed (a carob seed is always a precise weight, namely, one fifth of a gram) and hence "carat" is derived from "carob". The Ellendale diamonds are not industrial diamonds and are all gem or near gem quality diamonds, making Ellendale the second highest price per carat of any hard rock diamond mine in the world. A total of 650,000 carats will be produced this financial year. The Kimberley signature stone is a Fancy Yellow Diamond (rare and highly valuable).

Miles Kennedy gave a most interesting, informative and enjoyable address and accompanied his talk with a PowerPoint presentation of photographs, geological maps and a Kimberley Diamond Company promotional film. We thanked him enthusiastically for his time and goodwill.

Joy Embury and Daphne Edinger

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE KIMBERLEY DIAMONDS TALK

Kimberley Diamond Company has been in the media spotlight since Miles Kennedy's presentation to the Kimberley Society. Months of speculation about a possible takeover ended on 19 July, when the company's board unanimously recommended acceptance of a 70 cents-a-share cash bid by UK-based Gem Diamonds Ltd.

Gem is said to be ready to pump \$30 million into Kimberley Diamond Company as part of what is described as a 'friendly \$300 million takeover'. The timing and feasibility are linked to the need for expansion of the Ellendale project, which has been impeded by cost increases and the rising Australian dollar.

Towards the close of the takeover negotiations, Miles Kennedy lost his long-time business partner and friend, Graeme Hutton, who died in Broome on the night of the 18th. It was Mr Hutton who convinced Mr Kennedy to hunt for diamonds and then worked with him to prove and develop the Ellendale field.

SOTHEBY'S IMPORTANT ABORIGINAL ART AUCTION

MELBOURNE, 24 JULY 2007

Although this auction will be over by the time our members receive their Newsletter, the results of prices fetched will certainly be in the daily papers. As if to coincide with the publishing of the Kimberley Society book on the Rock Art Seminar 2005, there is a large representation of Wanjinias in this auction.

Charlie Numbulmoore is represented with five lots. Two of these were collected by Jackaroos in the sixties, and the remaining three works come from the Tom McCourt collection. Lot 27 is entitled "Bush Spirits" 1971 and accompanying this is a description of bush spirits other than Wanjinias by Kim Akerman. The pick of the Numbulmoore paintings must be Lot 28, which is a large Wanjina 161 x 80 cm with an estimate of \$150,000 to \$200,000. This is also accompanied with a page and a half entry from Kim Akerman describing Numbulmoore's painting and his craft.

There are numerous other Wanjinias mainly on bark, including a large work by Alec Mingelmanganu with an estimate of \$80,000 to \$120,000. This is very similar to a work held in our own Art Gallery of Western Australia. There are numerous bark paintings by the Karadedas and Ignatia. There are also two small works on slate. One is engraved by Alec Mingelmanganu as well as another painted in earth pigments, which is attributed to Ildelphonse Cheinmoro.

The late Rover Thomas is represented by 10 works, the most expensive being Lot 250 with an estimate of \$380,000 to \$450,000. However, for me, the pick of the works by Rover would be Lot 133, which I saw exhibited at Dreamtime Gallery in 1990. A large work with an estimate of \$150,000 to \$250,000, it looks like a snap!

Many of the senior Balgo artists are represented including a large work by Sunfly Tjampitjin with an estimate of \$120,000 to \$180,000. I would think this would have been the last of the largest works he did and would be an extremely good long-term investment if one had that money to spend.

Jack Vercoe

REST IN PEACE

On 9 June 2007, Robert Mitford Rowell, who was for a long time a prominent resident of Derby, passed away in Perth at the age of 93. An obituary written by Len Findlay, and published in *The West Australian* on 4 July, told how Mr Rowell moved to Derby in 1938 to take over the management of the stock, station and shipping agents known as R M Monger and Co. With plenty of prior experience as an accountant, he purchased that company in 1942, and – operating as R M Rowell and Co. – he built it into one of the biggest in the Kimberley. In later years, his interests also extended to hotels in Derby, Broome and Fitzroy Crossing.

Mr Rowell married Ruth Robinson in Perth in 1939 and she, too, participated wholeheartedly in community life in Derby. Their five children—Elizabeth, Rosalind, Ruth, Robert and Sharon—grew up knowing that their parents were involved in just about everything that happened in town. Mr Rowell sat on the bench for 25 years, served as a lieutenant with 11 North West Battalion Volunteer Defence Corp during World War II, and sat on the West Kimberley Road Board from 1949 to 1960. His civic role lasted much longer and, as well as including 66 years as a JP, it saw him appointed as the first honorary freeman of the Shire of West Kimberley in 1978. He is survived by his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and by his second wife, Angela (nee Devereaux).

ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES OF THE ORD AND FITZROY RIVERS: LINKS AND LESSONS

On 6 June 2007, Dr Andrew Storey spoke to the Kimberley Society about the Kimberley's biggest rivers. Andrew is a freshwater ecologist who works as an adjunct senior lecturer in the School of Animal Biology at the University of Western Australia. Before embarking on his PowerPoint presentation, he mentioned that, despite the government-appointed Appleyard Committee's findings, many people still think water should be exported southward from the Fitzroy or the Ord. That thinking reflects an erroneous belief that the water, which comes from wet season (summer) rains, goes to waste by flowing into the sea. Yet, as Andrew showed, the water serves important local functions and forms an integral part of the Indigenous people's culture.

The Fitzroy River is one of the country's few unregulated major river systems. It carries abundant water during the wet season and, at that time, an essential linkage occurs between the river and its floodplain. Without that linkage, the associated biodiversity and ecological balance cannot be maintained.

Surveys have shown that, overall, the riparian (riverside) vegetation of the Fitzroy River valley is in 'relatively good' condition. High livestock impact in some areas has produced patches of extensive weed invasion and areas of bank erosion, but, notwithstanding that, numerous riparian species have survived, including one, *Acacia gloeotricha*, which is on the state government's Declared Rare and Priority List as a Priority Species.

In other surveys, a sampling of aquatic macroinvertebrates (predominantly gastropods, crustacea and larval stages of aquatic insects) has shown that the Fitzroy River is of relatively high ecological 'health'. In that work, which forms part of the 2000 State of the Environment reporting, using the Australian Rivers Assessment Scheme (AUSRIVAS) models, the prevalence and diversity of insects and invertebrates allowed ecologists to classify the river catchment as grade B. The grades are A (good/pristine), B (low disturbance), C (medium disturbance) and D (heavy disturbance).

Thirty-five species of fish have been found in the Fitzroy River, with 18 of those species endemic to the Kimberley. The fish, which come from 21 families, include Freshwater Sawfish (*Pristis microdon*), Dwarf Sawfish (*Pristis clavata*) and Freshwater Whipray (*Himantura chaophraya*). Each of those three species has been listed as vulnerable or endangered by the IUCN, and the critically endangered Northern River Shark has been found in King Sound. That sighting was most unusual—the first known sighting of the species in the Kimberley waters—with the next closest sightings in coastal Kakadu waters. The system also supports the well known freshwater and estuarine (saltwater) crocodiles and numerous waterbirds.

On the Camballin floodplain, where an earlier attempt to grow irrigated crops failed to produce the expected commercial returns, about 67 different species of waterbirds have been recorded, and the area would qualify for listing under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance. Such wetlands are named after the town of Ramsar in Iran where the first international conference on the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl was held. In addition, many of the waterbirds at Camballin are listed under the Japan-Australia (JAMBA) and/or the China-Australia (CAMBA) Migratory Birds Agreements. The Western Australian Priority Species found there include the Freckled Duck.

Some of Andrew's research came about in response to a 1998 proposal to dam the Fitzroy River. The Western Australian Department of Water manages and allocates the state's water resources and, in 2000, it funded a qualitative field assessment of

the environmental values of the Fitzroy River and its major tributaries. That work, done in conjunction with anthropological work by Sandy Toussaint, Sarah Yu and Patrick Sullivan, involved collaboration with Indigenous groups at Bayulu, Djugerari, Jarlmadangah, Kupungarri, Looma, Mimbi and Yakanarra communities along the river. The two studies assessed water dependent ecological values, associated cultural values, and the links between those two types of values.

Andrew cited anthropological findings to show that water is a major focus of the Indigenous people's culture as well as the basis of many of their Dreamtime stories. He also told how, in accompanying those people to places such as fishing spots, he became conscious of the river providing settings in which they share memories and history and pass their knowledge from one generation to another.

The two studies showed that the Fitzroy River and its riparian zone offer the Indigenous communities food, medicine and other resources. The aquatic fauna in the river and billabongs—fish, frogs, crocodiles, prawns, turtles, and waterbirds—are obvious food sources but riparian plants, eg the fringing Pandanus Palm (*Pandanus spiralis*), also contribute. The palms yield edible nuts while certain other trees have leaves and bark that provide flavours in cooking. Specific aquatic fauna and riparian plants provide medicinal remedies, eg slowly cooked river mussels produce a milky liquid that alleviates cold symptoms. The Freshwater Mangrove (*Barringtonia acutangula*) has anaesthetic properties and its pulped bark and leaves can be used to capture fish by reducing the oxygen content of water. Other riparian plants yield timber for rafts, bark for containers, lightweight shafts for fishing spears, and smoke for ritual healings. The seasonal occurrences of flower and fruit on the plants are also important, with their cultural links to the lifecycles of the aquatic fauna providing a guide to the best hunting and collecting times. Those links, as Andrew, Sandy and the others found, form part of 'a strong association between Indigenous culture and the ecology of the river system'.

The permanent pools in the channel of the Fitzroy River are part of what the Indigenous people describe as "living water". In the dry season, the pools allow the aquatic species to survive. In the wet, the surging waters clean the pools and generate a significant exchange of nutrients between the channel and the floodplain. That process also restocks the floodplain billabongs with barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) and other aquatic fauna. The seasonal floodplain inundation is thus essential for the maintenance of biodiversity and ecological balance in the river valley.

By comparing the Fitzroy River valley and the lower Ord River valley, Andrew showed the type of changes that can occur when the natural flow of a north Australian river is impeded. The Ord River system was modified through the construction of the Kununurra Diversion Dam (1963), the Ord River Dam (1972), and the subsequent raising of the latter dam's spillway to provide greater hydraulic head for a hydroelectric scheme (1996). Those modifications changed the river's hydrology irrevocably but they also contributed to the creation of Ramsar wetlands above the dams (Lakes Kununurra and Argyle). The hydrological changes, reinforced by constant releases of water for irrigation and hydropower generation, include loss of the seasonal inundation of the floodplain as well as simplification and narrowing of the downstream riparian zones. The density of the riparian vegetation has increased greatly, with plants such as Cumbungi (*Typha domingensis*) increasing in density to the point of being a nuisance because they limit access to the riverbanks and reverse the manner in which sediment is deposited. Because the big pre-dam floods no longer occur, the river does not get flushed, and the depth of the river and its tide-affected mouth are decreasing. The dams also form a barrier to

the upstream migration of some species of fish and crustaceans, most notably the barramundi. As a result, a suite of species is now missing from Lakes Kununurra and Argyle. However, steps are being taken to restore some scope for fish migration by incorporating a fish-way into the Kununurra Diversion Dam.

The modification of the Ord River, as well as affecting the ecological values, also undermined cultural values. Places of significance were drowned, as were tributaries and pools in which Indigenous people fished. Dry season crossing places were also lost, thereby affecting people's scope for moving about the country on foot.

The impacts resulting from the regulation of the Ord River provide insight into the possible consequences of damming the Fitzroy River. Some such impacts have been felt already, in connection with the barrage built for the failed Camballin Project. The resulting re-direction of water flows increased inundation on parts of the floodplain, causing erosion as well as ecological change. The barrage itself also interrupted upstream migration of species that include fish and the Cherabin prawn.

On the basis of the work mentioned above, Andrew and others concluded that the Fitzroy River and its floodplain still support substantial ecological and cultural values. They recognised the strength of the linkage between the ecological values (e.g. biodiversity) and the cultural values (e.g. "living waters"), and they noted that many of the cultural values are dependent upon ecological values (e.g. plant and animal species). It follows that, if changes to the hydrology and morphology of the river system affect its ecological values, those changes may also affect cultural values.

Andrew acknowledged that there is still much to be discovered with regard to the biodiversity and ecological processes in the Fitzroy River. He believes, however, that the Fitzroy River should continue to be managed in a way that maintains the natural flow regime of dry periods broken by floods. He also feels, partly because unregulated floodplain rivers are becoming increasingly rare worldwide, that the concept of the "triple bottom line" is particularly applicable to the Fitzroy, ie any new developments need to be economically viable, socially (culturally) acceptable and ecologically sustainable.

Daphne Edinger & Cathie Clement

Selected reading

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- Storey, A.W., Davies, P.M., and R.H. Froend. (2001). Fitzroy River System: Environmental Values. Unpublished report by The University of Western Australia and Edith Cowan University to the Water and Rivers Commission, Perth.
- Storey, A.W. & Trayler, K.M. (2007) Allocating for the future of the Lower Ord River: balancing ecological, social, cultural and consumptive water requirements. [In] M. Leybourne & A. Gaynor (eds) *Water: Histories, Cultures, Ecologies*. University of Western Australia Press, Perth, W.A. Chapter 12, pages 146-170,
- Thorburn, D.C., Peverell, S., Stevens, J.D., Last, P.R. and A.J. Rowland. (2003). *Status of freshwater and estuarine elasmobranchs in Northern Australia*. Unpublished report to Environment Australia, Canberra.
- Toussaint, S., Sullivan, P., Yu, S. and M. Mularty. Jnr (2001). Fitzroy valley Indigenous cultural values study (a preliminary assessment). Unpublished report by Centre for Anthropological Research, University of Western Australia, to Water & Rivers Commission, Perth.

REST IN PEACE

On 14 July 2007, the well-known artist Paddy Bedford died in Kununurra. Born in the 1920s on Bedford Downs Station in the East Kimberley, he began painting for exhibition only in the 1990s. Much of his earlier life had led towards that moment, with ceremonial painting being part of his gradual attainment of the status of a senior law man amongst his Gija people.

In his younger days, Paddy Bedford worked as a stockman on Greenvale Station and the adjacent Bow River Station. He later worked on Bedford Downs Station but, when the introduction of equal wages cost many Aboriginal stockmen their jobs, he moved into other fields. That period saw him involved, among other things, in construction work on the Gibb River Road. He then divided his time between Warmun (Turkey Creek) and Guda Guda—a small community established by ex-Bow River Station people at the '9 Mile' outside Wyndham.

It was at Warmun that Paddy Bedford spent time with countrymen and relatives who would become well known as artists, people such as Rover Thomas, Paddy Jaminji and Freddie Timms. Later still, he worked with art curator Tony Oliver and others to set up the Jirrawun Aboriginal art corporation. It was initially at the remote outstation of Crocodile Hole, and it now has a new studio in Wyndham. In 2002, works by Paddy Bedford and other Jirrawun artists featured in *Blood on the Spinifex*, presented by the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, with the professional support of Tony Oliver and Frances Kofod. From that time, Paddy Bedford's star ascended, with people admiring his work in Australian galleries, in Paris, and in a *Retrospective* in Sydney and Perth. A week after his death, the *Australian* carried a long obituary that paid tribute to his achievements.

BENEFITS OF KIMBERLEY CRUISES

As part of a recent cruise in the Kimberley, a group of expeditioners participated in a fun "auction" to support the Kimberley Society. Once the society's objectives were stated, photographer Darren Jew donated a large Kimberley print, Dr Garry Darby donated an Aboriginal painting from the central desert, and Len Zell—a society member who occasionally lectures on the cruises—donated some of his books. *Aurora* expeditions also put in items, and, most importantly, the expeditioners brought their cash and humour. Their delight in the amount raised for the society was apparent to all. So, too, was the delight of the Kimberley Society audience when the handsome but unexpected contribution of \$985 was announced at its July meeting. It was recalled that Len and Garry also made a most welcome contribution last year after a similar "auction". This year's voyage from Broome to Bigge Island, returning to Broome, allowed the participants to experience the Kimberley as do few others.

Kimberley Society members are popular as lecturers and guides on the coastal cruises and, from what we saw and heard in Tim Willing's talk about the Lacepede Islands' former guano industry last November, that's not at all surprising. Some of Tim's photographs came from his work with Pearl Sea Coastal Cruises.

The latest member to go cruising is Phillip Playford, whose impressive presentations are known to our audiences in Perth and Derby. In September, he will be on the 50-metre *North Star*, speaking about geology and the voyages of Captain Phillip Parker King. The company is offering Kimberley Society members and its readers a \$250 onboard credit, per booking, for those trips. The Society must be quoted to access the bonus. Email cruise@northstarcruises.com.au for prices and a detailed itinerary, or contact North Star Cruises reservations on (08) 9192 1829.

BOOK NOTE

***Knockabout Girl* by Pip Newling.** Harper Collins (Imprint: Fourth Estate), Sydney, 2007, ISBN 9780732283261, 272 pages, RRP \$27.99.

I don't usually listen to 6PR, let alone in the cellar on a Sunday night, but I was at the beginning of this year. Normally I would have been listening to the *Coodabeen Champions*, but perhaps that show had finished. The author of this book was interviewed that night. She immediately grabbed my attention by stating that when she started work at the Halls Creek Hotel she was told three things. They were, firstly not to drink in the public bar, secondly not to wander the streets at night, and thirdly not to have any romantic liaisons with the local Aboriginal people. She said she broke the first rule on the first day and it took her three months to break the lot.

The first half of the book is about her work as a barmaid in the Halls Creek Hotel in 1990. Most of the initial chapters are short, being only 2 to 3 pages at a time, and are really a series of vignettes. They highlight a lot of the problems of drinking and violence in a small country town, and those things are echoed in the second part of the book where she is once again a bar person at Mataranka.

The final part of the book concerns her trip back to Halls Creek some 15 or so years later. Needless to say many of the people had moved on and the police practices had changed.

This book certainly highlights the problem with drinking and violence in a small country town. This is particularly topical with the fact that Halls Creek has been in the news recently highlighting the problems of childhood abuse and sexual abuse. It doesn't take too much imagination from the description of life there to see the background of this situation.

Jack Vercoe

COUNCIL 2007-2008

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Vice-Presidents:	Jack Vercoe and Cathie Clement
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Grant Sellwood manages the Kimberley Society's Web site (www.kimberleysociety.org). It carries summaries of the Society's talks (as published in the *Boab Bulletin* but sometimes with additional images), FAQs, and information about the Society and how to join it.

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