



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 87

August 2008

## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

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

**Wednesday, 6 August 2008**

**Clay Bryce (Aquatic Zoology, WA Museum)**  
**“Of Oceans, Atolls and Lagoons: a marine census”**

**Wednesday, 3 September 2008**

**Sister Brigida Nailon (author)**  
**“Encounter: The past and future of remote Kimberley”**

**Wednesday, 1 October 2008**

**Michael Cusack (rock art enthusiast)**  
**“Joseph Bradshaw”**

**Wednesday, 5 November 2008**

**John Stanton (Berndt Museum of Anthropology)**  
**“Kimberley art: assertion and response”**

**Wednesday, 3 December 2008**

**Frank Rodriguez & Cindy Solonec (Rodriguez family)**  
**“Frank Rodriguez - West Kimberley identity”**

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

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

There has been an excessive amount written about **THE** Boab tree recently; in the national, local and suburban press as well as Jack Vercoe's piece, which follows. However I cannot resist adding my bit; after all you are reading the *Boab Bulletin*.

A Kimberley Society representative was invited to attend the smoking ceremony and I was pleased to do so. Initially I had some misgivings about the expense involved in transporting the tree from near Warmun, previously known as Turkey Creek. (Could it have been better spent for example on the Clontarf foundation?). After witnessing the event and hearing of the benefits derived from the co-operation of so many companies, agencies, departments and communities, any such churlish thoughts were banished. The newly planted tree looks magnificent overlooking the Swan River, and this icon of the Kimberley will be a tourist attraction far from its home.

I was intrigued by a statement in one paper that when established it is hoped to return seeds to the Kimberley, in case there are not enough there I suppose. My thoughts went ahead. Will the tree survive? (Quite possibly). Will it bear leaves? (Quite likely). Will it ever flower? (Unlikely I think). If so it only flowers at night. Also, my understanding is that pollination often involves a specific Death's Head Hawk Moth. (Very unlikely to be present in Perth). So I have visions of the King's Park garden staff or elderly volunteer gardeners ascending ladders in the middle of the night to carry out assisted reproduction techniques with the aid of a feather.

On a (slightly) more serious note, I was forwarded an article from the London *Daily Telegraph* about the proposed import into the UK of African Baobab nut products; "exotic fruit with six times the Vitamin C of an Orange" etc. As our own Boab is closely related and is also known to have similar nutritional and traditional medical attributes perhaps there could be developed a similar industry in the Kimberley. We know it grows well there, it is easily propagated and being indigenous even the most radical environmentalists could hardly object. Mind you, it would have to be appropriately refined. To me the fruit tastes like a mixture of polystyrene and cotton wool.

*Hamish McGlashan*

## 750-YEAR-OLD BOAB ON A ROAD TRIP TO PERTH

In an article in *The Australian* on 16 July, Alana Buckley-Carr described the offer of a 750-year-old boab tree from the Warmun community to be transplanted in Kings Park. By the time you read this article the tree will have been planted in there and be ready for viewing. I would assume that this will now become one of the oldest trees in Kings Park if not the oldest. Please correct me Kevin Kenneally!

The tree apparently was in the way of a new bridge and weighs 37 tonnes. There were considerable logistic problems in that the tree was much heavier than the earlier estimations. Following loading onto a semi-trailer the tree then faced a 3200 km journey to Perth.

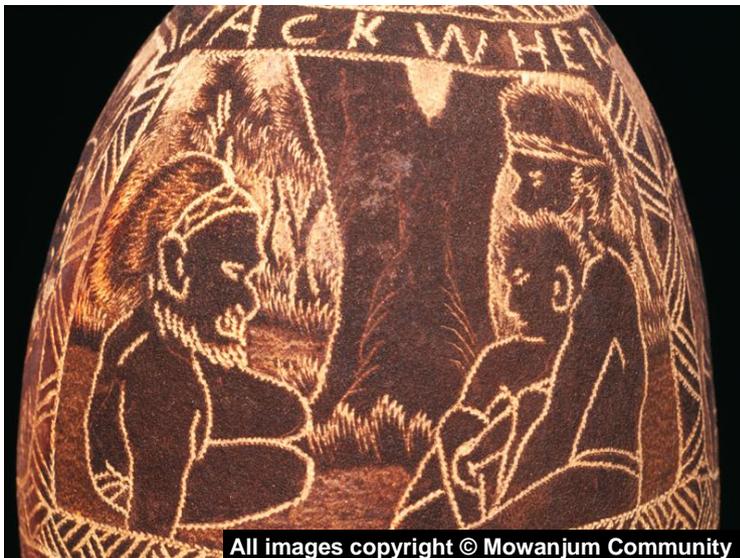
There are 14 other boab trees which have already been transplanted to Kings Park. Unfortunately I was never so lucky as the boab nuts I put in my garden some 15 years ago never turned into anything. I would still love to have a boab tree in my backyard, even though it would need to be kept small in the Japanese style of bonsai.

*Jack Vercoe*

## **KIMBERLEY HISTORIES TOLD THROUGH BOAB NUT CARVING**

On 7 May 2008, Mary Anne Jebb, a consulting historian who works with Aboriginal people in the West Kimberley, spoke to the Kimberley Society about one of her current projects. She is exploring how boab nut carvings, and particularly those done by deceased Ngarinyin artist Jack Wherra, operate as 'objects' or texts that not only represent historical events but also influence ideas, change values, and build relationships across cultures. Mary Anne provided the following summary of her excellent PowerPoint presentation.

From about 1940 to 1976 Wherra carved detailed framed story friezes on boab nuts to present his oral knowledge in a medium that could be transacted and was accessible across cultures. His realist carvings are an Indigenous regional history from the north Kimberley as well as part of a much larger Australian story. They are both general and particular, presenting community contact history from the north Kimberley as well as Jack Wherra's life story.



A frame in a story frieze carved by Jack Wherra, Kimberley Boab Nut Artist and Historian

All images copyright © Mowanjum Community

### **Jack Wherra**

Jack Wherra was born in about 1920 in the bush and he experienced mission life at Kunmunya, on the Kimberley coast north of Derby, mostly with the relatively open minded and well remembered Reverend JRB Love. But Love was not open minded enough to save Jack Wherra from spending 18 years in gaol over different periods, mostly in Broome, for murders that were labelled 'tribal killings', allegedly committed in 1940 and 1945. He received a pardon in 1963 and was released to Mowanjum reserve outside Derby where his Worrorra, Wunambal, and Ngarinyin relations had relocated in 1956. At Mowanjum he made his living carving boab nuts. He sold carvings to tourists, visitors and teachers, plumbers, welfare, magistrates and others who were working or passing through Derby. He gifted them to white people who did him favours, or just as gifts.

### **Boab Nut Carving**

Boab nuts were probably carved as gifts and exchange items before Europeans settled in the north Kimberley but this is open to debate. They are difficult items to date. The naturalist Saville Kent in 1897 and Basedow in 1916 described and photographed engraved boab nuts from the west Kimberley. The Museum of Victoria collection contains a carved nut from the west Kimberley apparently from the 1870s.

They are collected in April and May, when the shell is beginning to dry and harden. After that they begin to crack and can't be used for carving. The nut is first rubbed in the sand to remove the outer layer of fur, revealing the brownish harder shell. Using a sharp object the softer brown slightly furry skin of the nut is scraped away, in the manner of a linocut, revealing layers of the creamy hard shell beneath. Experienced community carvers can often recognize what tool was used and who carved a particular nut from the style of the movements as well as the images or symbols. Artists only carve what they are permitted to carve through their culture.

### **Jack Wherra's narrative style**

In gaol, Jack Wherra carved boab nuts and gave them away or exchanged them for tobacco and other 'luxury items' like Phantom comics, developing his own style of narrative imagery. His detailed three dimensional images are framed story friezes presented like a comic book; the nut is divided horizontally and vertically, some having as many as 12 miniature framed images, to create vivid action narratives. The story contained in the frames is not always read across tiers or down columns. Some individual nuts will have a relatively self contained story while others have one image that links to one two or more other nuts.

### **John McCaffrey**

In 1964 and 1965 an American anthropology PhD student, John McCaffrey, sat with Jack Wherra for months, and taped interviews and discussions with Wherra about his life story, his descriptions of some boab nut images and his extraordinary visionary experiences. McCaffrey paid him for dozens of carved boab nuts. He returned to the US taking a number of Jack Wherra's carved boab nuts with him. He died in 1998 and the art, carved nuts and reel to reel tapes were sold through Sotheby's in Sydney in 2003. The Australian National Museum in Canberra bought some, the Sydney Powerhouse Museum others.

As a regular payer and constant supporter of Wherra drawing what he wanted, McCaffrey provided him with the means to make a series of images that were not sold off one by one at the local pub or to welfare, teachers and police. This series includes narratives on law breaking, punishments and legal chaos, violent acts by white men to Aboriginal people, punishments of men, and of women, pastoral work and life on the reserve; as he said on tape in 1965, a story of the 'Kimberley Native'.

### **'Repatriation' to the community**

Digital images of the carvings held in Sydney, Canberra and in private hands were displayed on a laptop computer for Mowanjum community members to interpret. After community consultations, five men and women became the community 'working group' also operating as a community ethics committee. Select images were shown and discussed by community members in recorded, semi-structured interviews and discussions of each image covered its aesthetic qualities, wider community history and Jack Wherra's life story. Gwen Puemorra his granddaughter and (the late) Pudja Barunga were the main people who helped interpret the images and spoke of his life and times. The words are being used as speech bubbles to help bring the images back to life in the new art and culture centre displays.

### **The recorded metanarrative<sup>1</sup>**

These formal 'repatriation' sessions were recorded and transcribed to form an audio and written meta narrative. In the hands of the community, the images became deeply textured indigenous stories, places identified, events posited, relationships

discussed. The words are being used as speech bubbles to help bring the carved images back to life in the new art and culture centre displays.

### **Transactions across cultures**

The stories told through the images retransmit Wherra's pivotal life experiences and views on justice and injustice for his wider community. The carvings also take his stories into suburban living rooms to be translated and reinterpreted by non Ngarinyin people; they move his knowledge across cultures.<sup>2</sup>

### **Drawing people in to history using boab nuts as remembrance**

Wherra was an active participant in crosscultural exchange, sending out these objects to be interpreted – in ways that he could not completely control, but with 'hopes' of communicating something to the recipients. Beside this being a means to relive/reconnect/engage with and reproduce his own culture; earn some money, tell a story, have some fun, be creative, they also carry a political message of justice.

To use a term, recorded by McCaffrey in September 1964, as a direct quote by one of Wherra's contemporaries, Wunambal artist and boab nut carver, Lockie Nollier, it is a 'remembrance'.<sup>3</sup> Nollier explained to McCaffrey, that if someone went to Kalumburu where many of his relations were, he would send something to them, like a carved shell. They are "rememberances".

The carvings are also Wherra's personal struggle to explain how his past actions, fitted in the context of major cultural shifts that he was able to see and express as an Aboriginal historian using boab nuts to tell Kimberley history.

### **Notes**

1. Toner and Poignant provide analysis of repatriation of sound and images. Roslyn Poignant with Axel Poignant, *Encounter at Nagalarramba*, National Library of Australia, 1996; P.G. Toner, History, Memory and music: The repatriation of digital audio to Yolngu communities, or memory as metanarrative.
2. Stephen Biggins, 'Fieldwork in the living room', in Stephen H. Biggins, ed. *The Socialness of Things*, Mouton de Gruyter, 1994, pp.101-147, particularly p.141.
3. Lockie Nollier, Wednesday September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1964, p.18, John McCaffrey notebook, transcribed by Kim Akerman, original held by Kate Flynn.

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## BOOK NOTE

***Nurses With Altitude: A collection of stories compiled by Gaye Richardson.*** Hesperian Press (Carlisle, WA), 2008. Soft cover, 264 pages, ISBN 978-0-85905-441-6, RRP \$35.00.

Two years ago I was fortunate enough to attend an RFDS Flight Nurses Reunion which was held at Fremantle Oval on a Sunday afternoon. The organisers had arranged a wonderful display including models with old RFDS uniforms, lots of RFDS memorabilia and slide shows from personal photo collections. Associated with this reunion was getting many of the nurses who attended to contribute stories of memorable flights and incidents related to their RFDS flights. Although I never actually worked for RFDS I went on many flights for either clinics in the Kimberley or Pilbara or retrievals of newborn babies all over the state.

These stories resonate the incredible camaraderie that exists between the RFDS staff. To me this is all the more remarkable in face of unpredictable flying conditions, unpredictable aircraft and the politics that unfortunately goes with any organization.

One particular story by Flight Nurse Dianne Graham concerning a Christmas Day and not settling down to Christmas Dinner until late at night after numerous flights certainly reflected the unpredictability of a day's work with the RFDS. My motto was to never travel without a jumper, a book and a credit card.

The book features numerous black and white photographs of flights, patients and locations. It also features an excellent grid reference and map to locate all the towns and communities and air strips mentioned in the book.

Of particular interest to me was a story titled almost like an Aesop's fable of "How the Vickers Cot got its Velcro" by Flight Nurse Carol Ellis. Its said that memory is an unreliable but powerful thing. The story concerns a Vickers Cot being used to transfer a sick newborn baby. The plane was hit by severe turbulence, the lid of the cot jumped open and the baby flew out and landed on the floor. I was the Paediatrician on that flight and have never been on such a rough trip in my life. The baby coming out of the cot was potentially disastrous as being firmly belted to my seat it was difficult to get out and get the baby and replace it in the cot. Following this flight all Vickers cots were fitted with Velcro straps to keep them closed. On reflection, I believe this flight was made from Karratha to Meekatharra not from Derby which was said to be the starting point of the trip. However it's a great story and seeing it is over 20 years between the documenting of the story and the actual incident one will have to accept two slightly differing opinions. Also of particular interest to me is the fact that the aircraft Mike Whiskey Juliet Piper Navaho came to Wyndham in 1975 and was still flying us around clinics in the Kimberley in 1991.

I think this is a wonderful book of stories of outback Western Australia and Gaye Richardson, her husband and Hesperian Press are to be commended in publishing it.

*Jack Vercoe*

## LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS NEWS

Recent reporting on the liquefied natural gas (LNG) planning for the Kimberley has centred on speculation about the possible location of the hub. Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Henderson, will be focussing his re-election campaign on efforts to have the Ichthys gas piped to an LNG plant in Darwin. That announcement pre-empted the expected August release of a shortlist of potential sites for a hub.

## CANE TOADS

On 4 June 2008, Kimberley Toad Buster (KTB) campaigner and volunteer Sandy Boulter enthralled her fellow Kimberley Society members and their visitors with a fast-paced delivery of toadbusting tales. A retired solicitor who specialised in environmental law, Sandy underpinned her tales with a PowerPoint presentation packed full of statistics and photos. She also put two dead specimens on display, and provided attractive KTB bookmarks with images of cane toads, their eggs and tadpoles, native frogs, and the KTB motto "If everyone was a toadbuster the toads would be busted".

The feral toad was imported at the behest of Queensland sugar cane growers more than 73 years ago. Cane toads, in all stages of their life cycle, are poisonous to nearly all Australian birds, fish and animals by a cardio toxin secreted from their skin. Their victims include freshwater crocodiles, freshwater turtles, water monitors, birdlife and other animals and reptiles, some of which are the traditional foods of the local indigenous people. Death sometimes comes too swiftly for a crocodile victim to leave the water. One KTB photo shows three virtually unblemished toads in the stomach of a freshwater crocodile, stark evidence of the power of the cardio toxin.

Such photos come from the scientific work the KTBs do on toadbusts. As well as measuring and weighing the captured toads, some volunteers undertake autopsies on wildlife found dead in or near toad-infested waters. As part of learning everything possible about toads before they get to the Kimberley, the KTBs also note and photograph any abnormalities seen on the toads. That information is passed to interested scientists and researchers in case it points to trends or perhaps proves interesting for other reasons. KTB is also supporting the research of Jordy Groffen, a Dutch student who is investigating the impact of Lungworm *Rhabdias cf hylae* in cane toads at the western front.

The astounding scale of the KTBs' work became clear as Sandy told how this amazing campaign – covering over 240,000 sq kms of the Northern Territory – started through Kununurra-based Lee Scott-Virtue reacting to the horrific sight of toads making uninhibited progress from Queensland across the Territory to her beloved Kimberley. Lee is part of the team at Kimberley Specialists in Research and is well-known for her environmental work in the East Kimberley.

The KTB story is about much more than just the physical efforts made to stem the progress of the toads. Lee, her partner Dean Goodgame, and others donated and raised the funds that enabled Kimberley Specialists in Research to establish the KTBs and toad bust for over a year without government support. Every weekend since September 2005 they have been toadbusting in the Northern Territory, and that involves undertaking round trips from home of up to 900 km. Their commitment and enthusiasm is such that it has resulted in more than one third of the entire Kununurra population taking turns to toad bust, with teams of 10 to 90 volunteers in the field every weekend.

KTB is the only fully volunteer group currently fighting the toad, and it is the only group that is at the front every week. Their demonstration of what can be done has encouraged numerous locals and outsiders to participate. Groups of Vietnam Veterans are only some of those who travel to the region at their own expense to go toadbusting. Even passing tourists are provided with KTB toadbusting kits that will enable them to identify, capture, and humanely dispose of any toads they see while travelling east of the Kimberley.

A range of features helps to distinguish cane toads from our native frogs.

### The adult cane toad:

- Has a dry warty skin (males' skin feels rough if you run a finger down their spine, females' skin feel smooth down the spine).
- Is generally larger than our native frogs and the average-sized adult is 10-15 cm long.
- Is coloured grey, yellowish, olive-brown or reddish-brown, and their bellies are pale often with dark mottling.
- Does NOT have discs or suckers on the end of its fingers.
- Does NOT have webbing between its front feet (but there may be leathery webbing between toes of its hind feet).
- Has a clearly visible ear drum.
- Has an obvious round smooth but bulging gland on its shoulder area behind the eardrum, which may exude (or more rarely squirt) white thick opaque poison if the gland is squeezed or the toad is stressed.
- Has eyes with a bony ridge (brows) that start at nose tip and meet above the nose.
- Has a sitting up on its haunches posture.
- Has a male mating call that is a long loud purring trill, and the males have dark lumps (which are nuptial pads) on their two first fingers in the breeding season (to help grip on the female during Amplexing).



Green Frog



Cane toad *Bufo marinus*

### Egg laying:

- A female toad can lay up to 35,000 eggs, twice a year.

### Cane toad eggs:

- Are found in long strings of gelatinous transparent jelly enclosing double rows of black eggs, which hang in ropey strands that are easily picked up within two days of deposition.

### Cane toad tadpoles:

- Have a shiny black top and have plain dark belly with short thin tail.



Burrowing Frog

All images courtesy of the Kimberley Toad Busters.

All told, KTBs have removed more than 250,000 mature adult toads from the already threatened ecosystems adjacent to the Kimberley. The largest toad they found weighed 1.7kg. Add to that their take of millions of tadpoles and metamorphs, and you have more than 100,000kg of toad biomass. It is impossible to visualise the size (or smell) of such a haul but photos of mature toads stacked in a plastic rubbish bin, and in large bags hung from a vehicle bull bar, gave some sense of how quickly the catch mounts. One of Sandy's accounts involved the KTBs taking 40,000 toads out of a single lagoon over eight weekends. She spoke graphically of the water pollution caused by such numbers, and of their incredibly negative impact on the location.

All of this work inevitably takes an enormous amount of time. The KTBs' tally of volunteer hours so far is more than 900,000 in two and a half years. That tally includes the time spent organising trips, campaigning, and providing advice, as well as the actual work of toadbusting. Much of the work is undertaken east of the Duncan Highway in rugged country, where the KTBs have mapped the pockets of waters that survive the Dry. Toads need to be hydrated, unlike some native frogs that bury themselves during dry periods, and the remnant water holes enable the toads to stay alive on their march towards the Kimberley. When the water fails, some keep going by hydrating themselves in cow pats! There are also cane toads that hitchhike. Some have been found as far from "home" as Perth, in banana boxes. The risk therefore exists that toads will make it into the Kimberley and as far south as Perth in the vehicles or camping gear of unsuspecting travellers.

Unfortunately, it seems to be a case of asking when, not if, the toads will reach the Kimberley. Yet, thanks to remarkable campaign waged by the KTBs, and the work done by all the other volunteers and paid professionals who are tackling this issue, the toads will trickle in rather than arrive in a surging invasion. When that happens, the Kununurra community will be ready. The locals are, to quote Sandy, "expert, educated and prepared".

The change that has taken place in the Kununurra community is part of the intriguing social dividend yielded by the fight against the cane toads. Indigenous and non-indigenous men, women, teenagers and children from towns and remote communities, and from TAFE and local prison camps, work together as KTB volunteers. Uniting against a common enemy has broken down some of the barriers that once kept many locals from mixing with, or even talking to, people outside their own group. With tourists (domestic and overseas), travellers and the Vietnam vets added to that mix, a wide variety of people are learning from one another and making a difference not just in the environment but also in their own lives.

Toadbusting is costing the KTBs over \$20,000 a month in recurrent field costs. They have received insufficient government funding for these costs, and no funding for paid coordinators or employees. The campaign desperately needs paid employees to help administer it, undertake equipment and vehicle maintenance, and take KTB cane toad education into remote communities that are unaware of the threats posed by the rapidly approaching toads. An application made to the WA State government last year for these positions remains unanswered. Donations to the KTBs are tax deductible, and should be made directly through their website to ensure donations go to on ground toadbusting. Sandy is available to talk to any Perth schools and community groups about toadbusting on 0427 508 582. You, your family or friends can also join the KTBs for a toad bust and see the remarkable, remote landscape up close. In the meantime, you can visit the KTB website ([www.canetoads.com.au](http://www.canetoads.com.au)) to keep up to date with the campaign—by reading the bulletins and newsletters posted there—as well as learning more about cane toads and native frogs.

*Cathie Clement, with input from Sandy Boulter and KTB*

## **KIMBERLEY FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA: ITS ORIGINS**

The February 2008 *Boab Bulletin* carried a summary of our December 2007 talk about the Kimberley Foundation Australia Ltd (KFA). Shortly afterwards, the March issue of the KFA newsletter, edited by Susan Bradley, carried an account of the history of the Foundation. The following excerpts come from that account.

In 1993, four Aboriginal elders, David Mowaljarli, Laurie Gawanulli, Paddy Wamma and Paddy Neowarra with the help of Hannah Rachel Bell approached Susan Bradley to help them build 'bridges of two-way understanding and two way learning' between traditional Kimberley aborigines and non-aboriginal people by establishing a week long camping trip in the North Kimberley. These old men were concerned that their culture, their law and traditions were not only being lost to future generations of aborigines, but were not known nor understood by other Australians. . .

They asked Susan if she would help them by encouraging people of influence from the corporate, legal, government worlds and the wider Australian community to visit the Kimberley, so that these old men could share stories of their country in their camp on the King Edward River. As David Mowljarli said "if we share the stories of our country with gudja (whitefella), then they will have our country in their hearts as we do, and they will understand and love it, and never damage it".

Bush University was formed, and people from all walks of life came to the North Kimberley to experience the power and spirituality of the Ngarinyin, their land, their law, their art and their ceremony. After the second Bush University, Friends of the Ngarinyin was formed by those who had participated, but it later changed to Friends of the Wandjina. as Worrora and Wunumbal people joined the Ngarinyin in the Bush University experience.

(The Wandjina people, comprise three tribes - Ngarinyin (the largest group) the Worrora and the Wunumbal.)

In September 1997 at a meeting in Sydney convened by Susan Bradley and Christina Kennedy, it was decided to formalize the Friends of the Wandjina and to establish a Foundation. Laurie Gawanulli and Keith Nenowat who had travelled from the Kimberley for this meeting, suggested the new name, and in September 1998, it was registered as the Wandjina Foundation. At its first meeting soon after, Bush University 'graduates', Mr. Antony Coote, became Chair, Mr Alec Shand, Deputy Chair, Susan Bradley (Secretary) and Christina Kennedy (Treasurer) . Board members were Jim Macken, Bernice Murphy, David Bradley, Peter Thomas, and Zeke Solomon. Laurie Gawanulli and Keith Nenowat preferred to be consultants on issues of importance.

After the death of David Mowljarli, the Bush University faltered for many different reasons. It was difficult to find elders who wanted, or who were able, to carry on the Mowljarli concept of sharing their stories of their country and culture, and after the deaths of Laurie Gawanulli and Paddy Wamma, despite great efforts, the Bush University trips to Marunbabidi during the Kimberley Dry season ceased.

However the Wandjina Foundation continued to develop and to fulfill its objectives.

In February 2002, as the research interest became more widespread in more than Wandjina traditional areas, the Wandjina Foundation was renamed the Kimberley Foundation Australia to reflect its broader objectives. . .

## **INVITATION TO COMMENT ON GM COTTON TRIAL**

Monsanto Australia Limited is seeking federal government approval to trial up to 504 cotton lines genetically modified for enhanced water use efficiency. The 23 places nominated for the trials, which will take place on up to 40 two-hectare sites, include the Shire of Wyndham/East Kimberley. The WA government has apparently been researching the growth of GM cotton there for eleven years. The comment period closes on 29 August (details at [www.ogtr.gov.au](http://www.ogtr.gov.au) or telephone 1800 181 030).

## REST IN PEACE

On 27 July, Grace Enid Durack passed away. Known as Enid, she was born in 1915 – the youngest daughter of Rt. Rev. George and Grace Tulloch – and she married Reginald Wyndham Durack in 1944. They started their family of five on Auvergne Station in the Northern Territory and, in the 1950s, they established Kildurk Station on land that had been part of Auvergne. A move to Perth followed the 1973 sale of Kildurk and, until Reg died in 1998, they retained a strong connection with the East Kimberley and the Territory. Aspects of their lives are recorded in papers deposited with the J S Batty Library of West Australian History and in oral history recordings that Enid Durack made with Ronda Jamieson for the library in 1990.

Two well-known Kimberley men featured in obituaries in *The West Australian* in July. Father Seraphim Sanz died in Perth on 3 June, aged 94. Born in Navarre, Spain, he did his secondary schooling at a Benedictine Monastery in a neighbouring province and volunteered to become a missionary monk in Western Australia when a New Norcia Abbot visited the monastery. He was ordained a priest in November 1938 and went to Kalumburu soon afterwards. From that time onward he spent much of his life at Kalumburu, and he recorded those years in his book *Memoirs of a Spanish Missionary Monk*, which was published by Hesperian Press in 2006.

Doug Dixon of Margaret River Station died unexpectedly on 13 June, aged 71, after trucking cattle from a neighbour. He had been in the Kimberley since 1959 when his future in-laws, Harry and Gwen Fitzgerald, took possession of Margaret River, which is about 110km west of Halls Creek. Doug married Mary Fitzgerald in Sydney late in 1961; they took up residence on the station the following year; and they became responsible for running it after Mary's parents moved to Perth in 1979. The obituary tells of Doug's legendary status in the Kimberley, where he was respected for his knowledge of water levels and wet season rain patterns and for his community service, which included being the president of Halls Creek Shire for nine years. In addition to working with Mary to raise Brahman cattle for export, Doug was an owner-trainer on the Kimberley horse racing circuit and he served, among other things, as a JP, a member of the Agriculture Protection Board, and the founding president of the Halls Creek–East Kimberley Land Conservation District. Mary Dixon remains on Margaret River Station and will continue to run it.

## LATEST ON THE CANE TOADS

Kimberley Toad Busters reported that recent unseasonal rains allowed the toads to progress another 5km, reaching a point only 20km from the border. That information prompted the editor of *The West Australian* to urge the WA Government to work faster to examine the potential of the lung parasite as a weapon. On the ground, the toadbusters' efforts will soon be complemented by the Stop the Toad Foundation's annual event – the Great Toad Muster (20 September to 18 October). STTF has 60 volunteers signed up to help remove cane toads from the front line, but they still need more! If you want to join in, or you know anyone else who might be interested, e-mail Kim at [kim@stopthetoad.org.au](mailto:kim@stopthetoad.org.au) or telephone (08) 9420 7266 or 0400130397.

Overlapping the last week of the Great Toad Muster is National Cane Toad Eradication Week (October 11th to October 19th). STTF will be the central repository of data for that exercise, collating, analysing and reporting the daily tally of toads removed from the countryside. "Imagine", it says, "the possibility if we all have a go at removing cane toads from habitats, households and communities in the Northern Territory, Queensland and northern NSW."

## BOOK NOTE

***Pearls and Pearling Life* by Edwin W Streeter.** Facsimile, jointly published by Hesperian Press, (Carlisle, WA) and Matching Press (Essex, UK). Hard cover, 329 pages, ISBN 0951 8 664 2 7, RRP \$116.

This facsimile of a pearling classic, originally published in 1886 by George Bell and Sons of London, will grace any bookshelf. With original copies having long been scarce, the facsimile will appeal to scholars and book collectors as well as providing fascinating reading for anyone interested in the history of pearls. Its plates (colour as well as black and white) are very attractive, and a fold-out map shows the principal pearling regions in northern Australia, New Guinea and the Asian islands.

The book covers pearls and pearling regions throughout the world, and the author (the founder of the Streeter & Male businesses in Broome) devotes four chapters to Australia. Chapter VIII offers an overview of the north-west Australian pearl shell fishing industry which, although operating mostly out of Cossack, extended to waters off the Kimberley coast. It describes the men involved in the industry, the prevailing practices, the impact of cyclones and other bad weather, the recruitment of Aboriginal divers (who worked as shepherds and shearers in the off-season), and the failure of the Australian Fishery Company (floated in London in 1872). Chapter IX is devoted to Torres Strait fisheries, Chapter X to Streeter's 1883 pearling activities, and Chapter XVII to the famous, or perhaps infamous, Southern Cross pearl.

Also of interest is that the Matching Press published Patrick Streeter's biography of Edwin William Streeter in 1993. In that book, *Streeter of Bond Street*, Chapter 4 discusses the Streeter family's involvement in the north-west Australian pearling industry between 1883 and 1911.

*Cathie Clement*

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Grant Sellwood manages the Kimberley Society's Web site ([www.kimberleysociety.org](http://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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