



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 98

June 2010

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

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

Wednesday, 2 June 2010

UWA Students (St Catherine's and St George's Colleges)
"Community projects at Halls Creek and Looma"

Wednesday, 7 July 2010

Peter Holland (Performer, lecturer and former ABC broadcaster)
"Dr J J Holland and the Legend of Jim Darcy. A Kimberley Story"

Wednesday, 4 August 2010

Cathie Clement (Historian)
"Landscape Artists of the Kimberley"

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

PROGRAM FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2010

We have commitments from three well-known identities for the meetings from September onward but we have yet to find out whether an adjustment can be made to the allocated dates so that we can fit in an offer to premiere a documentary film. The speakers are Victoria Laurie (award-winning journalist whose articles and features appear in *The Australian*); Antoine Bloemen (former Kimberley Magistrate whose large circuit and unusual approach to sentencing has attracted much media coverage); and Lyn Beazley (UWA Professor of Zoology who has been Western Australia's Chief Scientist since 2006).

FROM THE PRESIDENT

On 27 March the Society held a highly successful and well attended history seminar at the University Club of the University of Western Australia. The attendance, including speakers and guests, was approximately 170. Entitled **Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development**, the seminar began with presentations from two keynote speakers, Dr Mark Bin Bakar, a well known indigenous Australian who lives in Broome, and Professor Mike Morwood, one of Australia's leading archaeologists. Using a wonderful selection of photos of the Kimberley landscape and people, both indigenous and others, Mark gave an emotionally powerful talk focussing on the connectedness of the Aboriginal people to the land. Mike then addressed the likely timing of the arrival of Aboriginal people in Australia and his talk highlighted the very limited amount of archaeological work that has been done in the Kimberley. These outstanding presentations were followed by a series of interesting talks on both maritime and land based European exploration and settlement of the Kimberley, the development of early industries and the establishment of missions in the region. All the talks were well illustrated and of a high standard. I would take this opportunity to thank all the presenters for making the event such a success and to the Council members who assisted in the organisation of the day. The plan is to produce a proceedings volume containing papers from all the presenters and this should be a major contribution to the documentation of the early history of the Kimberley.

Speakers for the remaining monthly meetings for 2010 are being finalised, as you will see from this *Boab Bulletin*. A subcommittee of the Council is already working on a program of speakers for 2011 but if any of our members have suggestions as to possible speakers or subjects for future talks please contact me or any other Council member.

With the wet season over many of our members are starting to plan visits and walks to the Kimberley between now and August. The below average rains this wet will mean a lesser abundance of water but that will not deter the more serious amongst us from venturing north again.

Jeffrey J Gresham

UNSEASONAL RAINS IN THE KIMBERLEY

In mid-May, after a deficit of about 40 per cent in the wet season rains, residents in some parts of the Kimberley were relieved to see a low pressure system off the coast deliver unexpected dry season rain. The deluge, which coincided with the State's wettest May day in 13 years, saw Napier Downs Station (out of Derby) receive 190mm. That was definitely in the high range but it was still well below the 250mm recorded at Kuri Bay on 11 May 1997, and the even higher figures that result from cyclones, e.g. Wyndham Port recorded 318mm on 5 March 1919; 278mm on 6 January 1959; and another 440mm on 6 April that year.

Other West Kimberley places faring well in May were Kimberley Downs Station with 121.4mm and Windjana Gorge with 114mm. The risk of flooding prompted the Department of Environment and Conservation to temporarily close the Windjana Gorge, Tunnel Creek, Mitchell River, and Purnululu National Parks, and the campground at Silent Grove. Sections of the Gibb River Road were also closed temporarily.

BOOK NOTE

***Pearling Days: The pearling voyage of the Sarah to the North West and Kimberley in 1880 and 1881, with an appendix on the death of W.H. Lowe during an expedition N.E. of the Gascoyne in late 1881*, by John Brockman. Hesperian Press, Carlisle (WA), 2010, 81 pages, A4 format, ISBN 978-0-85905-488-1, RRP \$22.50.**

This publication will be popular with historians, history enthusiasts, maritime archaeologists, naturalists, and many others who relish the chance to read a good, firsthand account of our history. It presents John Brockman's 1912 reminiscences, which H.G. Stirling, writing under the pseudonym 'Hughkalyptus', edited in an abridged form for publication in the *Western Mail* (a Perth newspaper) in 1918. The original manuscript is handwritten and comprises 388 pages. It is held by the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History (in Perth) and has long been accessible there on microfilm (Accession 462A). The *Western Mail* is available on microfilm too.

Back in the early 1980s, I felt very privileged when Sister Mary Albertus Bain allowed me to spend a day reading and taking notes from a photocopy of the original reminiscences obtained while she was doing the research for her book *Full Fathom Five*. Other Kimberley Society members who have pored over long documents on microfilm will know why I valued that opportunity so highly. To now have ongoing access to the reminiscences in a nicely presented book is even better, especially with the microfilm copy remaining available if one wants to go back to the full text.

Mike McCarthy of the Maritime Museum shares my enthusiasm for this source. In his foreword to the book he writes: "I was unable to stop reading John Brockman's wonderful story (to the detriment of other pressing works here in the Museum)". He also captures its essence where he writes:

Putting aside Brockman's vivid depictions of still-remote north-west and Kimberley places; of ship handling and celestial navigation; of social interactions between European, Aborigine and 'Malay'; of epic salvage and diving methods ..., armed conflict, turtle catching, and a horrifying and fatal crocodile attack while pearling; or of his cutter spinning uncontrollably in a Kimberley tidal rip, Brockman's story is also an inspiration for those who simply admire a 'can do' spirit in any guise.

Readers of the book enjoy several advantages not available to those who go to the microfilm versions. First, our fellow Kimberley Society member Peter J Bridge has lightly edited the *Western Mail* material so that the reminiscences again form a single narrative. He has also added appendices and an index. The five items in the appendices come from various Western Australian newspapers of 1881 and 1882. The first two complement the reminiscences by providing contemporary details of a cyclone that struck the pearling fleet and coastal sheep stations in January 1881. The next two relate to the *Sarah* and the stations, while the final one is Brockman's account of the death of W.H. Lowe (mentioned in the book's subtitle).

Another advantage of the book is the contribution made by Tony Larard, a sailor and pearling lugger enthusiast who, among his other achievements, restored the Broome vessel *Intombi* (now used for cruises) to her former glory in 1979. He has drawn on his knowledge of the north-west and Kimberley coast to identify and comment on places to which Brockman referred ambiguously or with too little detail for an uninformed reader to identify them.

Enough said. This is definitely a book to enjoy.

Cathie Clement

MUNDOO BURROO: A LISTENER'S GUIDE TO THE DERBY MARSH

John Britten, with the close collaboration of his wife Kerrie and the input of many others, has produced an appealing and highly unusual collection of sound recordings about the Derby marsh. As a musician and doctor who has been in Derby for most of the time since 2000, John made the field recordings and played some of the music heard on the various tracks. The field recordings enabled him to mix natural sounds such as birdsong with music and speech and thus create an intriguing sequence of comments, statements and narratives about the marsh.

The full credits, which can be seen online (<http://globalmarsh.com/>) or on the CD cover, include Brian Collings (another Derby musician and doctor), Mark Norval (the well-known visual artist, musician and teacher), and Miki Venn-Brown (a musician and broadcaster who manages radio 6DBY in Derby). The tracks are described below but these words fail to convey the great effect that has been achieved by arranging and blending all the content on the CD.



1. 'Welcome to Country / Darrial Nygenna Bajarri Ngungha' by Leena Buckle Fraser (a Nygenna woman from Derby). She describes Nygenna country, combining words from her language with English, and she asks visitors to respect the country.
2. In 'Dust Flies High', Colin Pigram (a musician, singer, songwriter, and auto electrician who first came to Derby from Broome in 1979), tells of his experiences on the marsh and what it means to him for hunting, fishing, song writing and other activities. Colin has founded various Derby bands and is a member of the seven-piece group the Pigram Brothers (www.pigrambrothers.com.au).
3. Denis Jokovich (a musician, school teacher and golfer) tells of the temporary nine-hole golf course established on the marsh in 2001 when works put the golf course proper out of bounds. The title of his track, 'I Was The Rat', comes from his role as the organiser of the Wednesday afternoon matches. Denis is the co-founder, with Mark Norval, of Brain Haemorrhage, a Derby rock and punk band.
4. In 'Roast Beef In Red Wine Gravy', Joss Forbes (a flight nurse with the RFDS) recalls enjoyable events held on the marsh. After being introduced to "Christmas in July" as a newcomer, she and others progressed to cooking delectable roast beef and other meats in camp ovens for visiting groups of RFDS supporters. Joss recalls first hearing about the marsh as the "sparkling mudflats" that surround Derby.
5. Ashley Oobagooma (a Mowanjum musician, artist and raconteur) speaks briefly about his life as a Derby man, with his comments interspersed with segments in which the song 'Marsh Flat', performed with his band Gulingi Nunga, goes from soft background to full volume.
6. In 'What's Happening Here?', a short track that consists mostly of music by John Britten, Miki Venn-Brown, Denis Jokovich, Leon Jorda, Corrin Martin, and Dylan Oobagooma, the voice of Mark Norval speaks out against pollution and calls for tidal power.

7. Scary stories heard as a child are behind 'Red Dress Lady'. Using Mark Norval's script, Wayne Archer (a well-known Derby sculptor) briefly ponders the stories.
8. In 'The Milky Way Is A Snake of White Dust', John and Kerrie Britten take turns to narrate a man's experiences and dreams relating to the marsh. This intriguing presentation, like the one that precedes it, includes didgeridoo contributed by Ernest Nulgit, a Kimberley identity.
9. With the apt title 'Glass', Leena Buckle Fraser and Denis Jokovich speak of the coloured glass that remains on the marsh, a reminder of bottle dumps that the Port Hotel and the Club Hotel (now the Spinfiex) created from the time Derby was founded.
10. In 'Just Got A Mouthful Of Mud', Rhiana Powers (a young Derby woman) talks about playing mud football on the marsh, getting a few scratches from the glass but having a great time.
11. The longest track on the CD is 'Cyclone Approaches Galawarr' with Janet Oobagooma (a Worora woman of Mowanjum community) reflecting on the strong seasonal rains and winds that Aboriginal people see as an ordinary part of nature but outsiders rank as cyclones; as things to be feared.
12. In 'They Change Things', John Britten's field recordings, baritone ukulele, slide guitar, organ, and percussion introduce Janet Oobagooma's closing comment.

Some of the sound tracks and their transcripts can be accessed through <http://globalmarsh.com/> and the CD can be purchased through the web site or in Derby at the Visitor Centre, the Jila Gallery, or Kimberley Entrance Caravan Park. The retail price is \$15, or John will mail a copy anywhere on the planet for \$20. For Kimberley Society members, he is offering the special price of \$10, posted. You can mail a cheque to John (PO Box 34, Derby WA 6728) or contact him at global.marsh@gmail.com to arrange an internet banking transfer. You are also invited to check the website now and again to see the marsh photo of the week, to offer your photo, or just say something about the marsh.

Cathie Clement

REST IN PEACE

John F. Morgan, who led the 1954 North Kimberley Survey and Mapping Expedition, passed away in Fremantle on 13 April at the age of 86. His life before the expedition was varied, having begun in 1923 in Balingup, in the south west of Western Australia, where his father was the stationmaster. Young John joined the public service but left it to serve during World War II, first in the army and then in the RAAF. He began training as a surveyor in 1947 and surveyed land for soldier settlement schemes south east of Perth in the early '50s. His leadership of the North Kimberley expedition followed, with 26 men in four teams spending seven months surveying and classifying the country between Gibb River Station and the Kalumburu Mission.

The Department of Lands and Surveys published Mr Morgan's *Report on Central North Kimberley Region* in 1955, making his discussion of the resources and the perceived potential of the area available to the public. In 1958 the Nomenclature Advisory Committee named the Morgan River in the Kimberley after him. The continuation of his work saw him lead survey parties into the Great Sandy Desert and elsewhere before he was appointed Surveyor General in 1968. He retired from that position in 1984 and moved to the Peel Inlet south of Perth. Tributes to his work include Ron Moon's 'The last horseback explorer' published in *Australian Geographic*, Issue 88, Oct–Dec 2007, and the name of the Morgan Falls on the Drysdale River. The name was proposed by Kevin Kenneally and others after they undertook botanical work in that area.

BOOK NOTE

***Stone-Age Bushmen of Today: Life and Adventure among a Tribe of Savages in North-Western Australia* by J R B Love, 1936; reprinted as *Kimberley People: Stone Age Bushmen of Today*, compiled and published by David M Welch, 2009, Australian Aboriginal Culture Series no. 6, 276 pages, map. ISBN 9780977503568 (pbk.), RRP \$50.**

The Reverend J R B (Bob) Love (1889-1947) was a renowned Presbyterian missionary who lived with people of the Worora Tribe at Port George IV, from 1914 to 1915, and Kunmunya, from 1927 to 1940. On joining the Mission he quickly learned the Worora language and acquired an intimate knowledge of the day-to-day lives of the people. Although the primary purpose of the Mission was to bring Christianity to the 'savages', Love did not seek to dissuade them from continuing their own religion and most aspects of their culture, seeking instead to serve by example. By the time that he left the Mission in 1940, many primitive cultural practices, such as infanticide, revenge killing, and cannibalism, had almost disappeared. Those practices may have been maintained among the people of this area for many thousands of years, but they almost ceased after only 26 years of life at the Mission.

Love published his book on 'Stone age bushmen of today' in 1936 and it subsequently remained out of print for more than 70 years. The book describes the interaction between some traditional Kimberley Aborigines and Presbyterian missionaries during the early 20th century. The book is very well written and absorbing to read. The most striking and important addition to the new edition is that of many excellent photographs, never before published, that were sourced by David Welch from Kimberley photographic collections around Australia. The new edition contains 167 photographs, compared with only 22 in the 1936 edition. Among the new photos are many that were taken by Love himself and 49, all of which are in colour, are derived from Welch's own field work in the area. To do the photos justice, the book is printed on 115 gsm Lumi Silk artpaper, section sewn.

David Welch is to be congratulated for this excellent book, the sixth in his series of publications on Aboriginal culture. I can thoroughly recommend it to members of the Kimberley Society, especially those having special interests in the Aboriginal people.

Phillip E Playford

BOOK NOTE

Members who are interested in the book discussed above, and the one discussed on the page 7, may already know of Maisie McKenzie's book, *The Road to Mowanjum*. Published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney, in 1969, it comprises 294 pages, illustrations, and maps. It provides a bridge between the other two books with its coverage of the establishment of the mission at Port George IV in 1912 and the subsequent moves to Kunmunya (1916), Wotjulum, opposite Cockatoo Island (1951), and eventually Mowanjum (1956). It also discusses the Presbyterian missionaries' use of Munja, a former ration depot, as an out camp for Kunmunya Mission from 1949.

The Road to Mowanjum is relatively rare but it can be found in second-hand bookshops. The prices start at around \$20 (ex-library) and go beyond \$60.

Cathie Clement

BOOK REVIEW

***Mowanjum: 50 years community history* [compiled and edited by Mary Anne Jebb]. Mowanjum Aboriginal Community, Derby, 2009, 288 pages, ISBN 9780646501239 (hbk.), RRP \$55.**

This collection of people's stories about the history of Mowanjum community, just outside Derby in Western Australia's Kimberley region, was written to celebrate fifty years since the community was established, bringing together Worrorra, Wunambal and Ngarinyin speaking people.

The book is full of fascinating tales, photos and paintings, both traditional and contemporary. The style is personal and as I read it was easy to imagine I was listening to someone talking. (In fact many of the stories are from lightly edited interviews.) The stories are very brief – generally one to three pages – including a liberal sprinkling of photos. This gives the sense of being able to dip in and out. Actually, because the stories are so short, I wanted to keep reading to find out what was around the next corner.

The design by Jody Watts is beautiful. In particular, black chapter heading pages containing a single image are unexpected and arresting. Having a caption for this photo or painting on the preceding page is also a clever editorial touch. It meant that I read about the image as I was finishing off the previous chapter and led easily into reading the next chapter.

Kevin Shaw's photographs of people in the community are stunning and complement fascinating historical photographs. Most of the historical photo captions credit the person or people who gave permission to use the image as well as the photographer and collection. This confers a thoughtful, considered sense to the use of historical photos that could become a benchmark for other texts.

The book contains some beautiful paintings of Wandjinas, along with emu egg carvings by master craftsman Jack Wherra. Traditional stories mix with modern accounts, such as an account of the Wandjinas travelling to their rightful country, followed by Donny Woolagoodja giving permission for a likeness of the Wandjina Namarali to appear at the opening of the Sydney Olympics. The painting 'God was working through the Wandjina' by Margaret Mungulu is particularly effective in illustrating the related stories of Christianity and the Wandjinas.

Two stories about artwork repatriation are touching. Warren Barunga's account of watching his grandfather's 1960s paintings being sold at auction is sad although the beautiful painting that he did out of respect for his grandfather lifted my spirits. There is also a lovely story about the bark painting by Bilanda being given to a missionary in the 1960s, travelling to many places, then making its way back to New Mowanjum Art and Culture Centre when his son, also a church minister, became involved with the community many years later.

An aerial photograph of the region doubles as a map, giving a vivid sense of the rugged landscape as well as locating Mowanjum community and the missions and communities where people had lived previously. Since the map adjoins Albert Barunga's text about Worrorra territory it would have been useful perhaps to identify the boundaries he describes - the Prince Regent River and Walcott Inlet.

I had mixed feelings about the brief history of the community at the beginning of the book. It provides a fascinating overview but is in a smaller font with tiny photographs, making it difficult to see, though it is easy to skip over if you just want to read the personal stories.

This book clearly incorporates the work of many people – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – and the mix of narrators is unexpected and delightful. The book's editor and compiler Mary Anne Jebb has done an outstanding job of bringing together this community publication. Perhaps she has trodden just a little too lightly though – it would have been good to see her acknowledged, where appropriate, as the author of stories which appear in the same font and style as others, but without an author's name (these are presumably Jebb's work). In addition, I would have liked some information about her connection to the community and this project; others such as the designer and photographer are acknowledged, but she is not.

Mowanjum: 50 years community history provides an uplifting account of people's journey through a time of considerable change, as well as some insight into current struggles in the community, such as alcohol abuse and the future for young people. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about Mowanjum people through this book and as a result I care about the community and the people in it.

This review was first published in *Islands of Memory*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal No. 31, 2009, pp. 69–70.

Denise Cook



Please don't forget this is your newsletter.

Kimberley news, articles, and items of interest are all most welcome.

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