



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 117

August 2013

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at

The Palms Community Centre, corner Nicholson and Rokeby roads, Subiaco

Wednesday, 7 August 2013

Eric Gard (outback traveller & author)

“32 years of travelling the Canning Stock Route”

Wednesday, 4 September 2013

Alan Dench (Winthrop Professor, UWA)

“Aboriginal linguistics”

Wednesday, 2 October 2013

Peter Veth (Centre for Rock Art Research, UWA)

“Recent archaeology research in the Kimberley”

Wednesday, 6 November 2013

Barry Smith (Word Spinner)

“Kimberley Trilogy; stories from a novelist and historian”

Wednesday, 4 December 2013

Kevin Kenneally (Botanist)

“Exploration and Botany: The W R Easton 1921 Expedition”

Please note that, with many of our speakers involved in work-related travel, this program may change. Should a speaker become unavailable at short notice, we will try to substitute a similar topic.

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Recent attendances at the Society's meetings indicate the ever growing interest in the Kimberley region. Phil Playford's June talk on evidence of mega-tsunamis along the WA coastline saw long queues waiting outside the venue in chilly dampness. A reorganisation of our entrance arrangements for July ensured greater comfort for the crowd that attended the talk on caves and karsts in the Kimberley.

Currently the Kimberley region is experiencing its main tourist season with most travellers visiting the many interesting and fascinating locations during this period. Although July is the peak of the tourist season with predominantly clear blue skies, the BoM has predicated a wetter than normal season for much of the Kimberley. This outlook is largely a result of warmer than normal waters in the Indian Ocean. During August the day temperatures are forecast to rise so many of the creeks and waterfalls may dry up leaving clear rock pools that are great for swimming.

Recent events that have occurred since the last *Boab Bulletin* include the annual Mowanjum Festival on 11 July. The festival is one of the largest corroborees open to the public, and attracts up to two thousand people. As part of it, more than 100 people performed at the Mowanjum Community's art centre near Derby.

National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) celebrations were held during 7 to 14 July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The week was celebrated not only in the Indigenous communities but also in increasing numbers of government agencies, schools, local councils and workplaces. In Halls Creek NAIDOC events included the Yarliyl Art Exhibition. In Perth the week culminated with the 2013 National NAIDOC Awards at the Perth Exhibition and Convention Centre on 12 July. Although the Apprentice of the Year winner was from Nhulunbuy in NE Arnhem Land, the Kimberley region was well represented by [Jeremiah Green](#), better known as 'Modra'. Coming from Looma, a community in the West Kimberley, he accomplished his plumbing apprenticeship in Melbourne. His opportunity came out of a program developed in a partnership between Looma's sister community of Jarlmadangah, the Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation in Broome, and the Plumbing Trades Employees Union and Cooke and Dowsett Plumbing in Melbourne.

There are many tremendous social events occurring in the Kimberley region while the season is favourable to travel. Look out for advertising of upcoming Broome events including the Kimberley Cup (horse racing) on 3 Aug, Corrugated Lines - A Festival of Words on 9 and 10 Aug, Taste of Broome on 9 Aug, the BRAC 2 Beach Fun Run on 11 Aug, Staircase to the Moon on 21 and 22 Aug (also along the Pilbara and Kimberley coastline), Opera Under The Stars on 31 Aug at Cable Beach Amphitheatre, and Shinju Matsuri 'Festival of the Pearl' during 13 – 22 Sep.

Jeff Murray

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

[June Oscar](#) of Fitzroy Crossing was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for 'distinguished service to the Indigenous community of Western Australia, particularly through health and social welfare programs'. Her work has done much to reduce the harm caused by excessive alcohol consumption in the Fitzroy Valley.

Kimberley Society member [Peter Knight](#) of Quedjinup, near Dunsborough, WA, was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for 'significant service to the community, particularly through support to the homeless, and to engineering'. He has been a director at St Bartholomew's House ('no mere homeless shelter') for 15 years and he was managing director and CEO at Clough Ltd for 10 years.

REST IN PEACE

On 5 June 2013, another of our founding members passed away. **Barbara Hale**, who was born in New Zealand in 1924, lived in the WA suburb of Nedlands for many years. Her strong association with the nearby University of Western Australia dated from 1961. Appointed deputy university librarian there in 1966, she held that position until she retired in 1984. Barbara's other accomplishments included completing two Master's Degrees, the first before leaving NZ and the second at the Library School at Sheffield University during a period of study leave. Her many interests ranged from the environment (natural, cultural and built) to the creation of learning opportunities for young people. Some of those opportunities are made available through UWA's St Catherine's College where Barbara was a resident in 1966–1967 and then served on the Council from 1977 to 1990. Highly sought after is the Barbara Hale Sail Training Award, which covers 50% of the cost of a ten-day voyage on the Sail Training Ship *Leeuwin*. The many accolades that Barbara received over the years included the UWA Chancellor's Medal in 2006 recognising her services to women's education. More coverage is available in an obituary by Patrick Cornish published in *The West Australian* on 15 July. Barbara will be missed by her many friends and colleagues.

TIDAL POWER STATION APPROVED

Western Australia's Environment Minister [Albert Jacob](#) has approved Tidal Energy Australia's plan to build a 40-megawatt power station at Doctor's Creek. Described as a 'wave power station' and the state's first 'full-scale tidal energy power station', it is seen by Greens MLC [Robin Chapple](#) as a hydropower venture that will cause major environmental problems by damming a creek system. Mr Jacob has attached 14 conditions to the approval. Before the project can proceed, Federal environmental approvals have to be granted, customers have to be found, and a contract for the construction of power lines will have to be negotiated.

REST IN PEACE

One of Australia's leading archaeologists and rock art authorities, [Professor Mike Morwood](#), passed away on 23 July 2013 after a battle with cancer. Born in New Zealand, Mike came to Australia in 1974 after completing an undergraduate degree at Auckland University and he was awarded a PhD from the Australian National University in 1980. He initially researched Aboriginal rock art in Queensland and the Kimberley region of Western Australia and in 2002 published the authoritative book *Visions from the Past* on the archaeology of Australian Aboriginal rock art. He gained international recognition in 2003 when he was involved in the discovery of an ancient diminutive human skeleton on the Indonesian island of Flores. The find was named *Homo floresiensis* and soon became known as the "hobbit". The discovery had a major impact on the thinking relating to the evolution of modern man.

Although much of the last 10 years of Mike's work was focussed in Indonesia, he continued his involvement in rock art research in the Kimberley and was part of an ongoing collaborative project focussing on rock art sites in the Mitchell Plateau area. Mike contributed to the Kimberley Society's History Seminar in 2010 and his paper 'Archaeology of the Kimberley, Northwest Australia' is included in the resultant proceedings volume, *Kimberley History: People, Exploration and Development*.

Mike's passing is a sad loss to the country and the Kimberley in particular.

Jeff Gresham and Mike Donaldson

KIMBERLEY — YESTERDAY, TODAY & TOMORROW

On 6 March 2013, [the Hon. Barry Haase MP](#) (Federal Member for Durack, WA) treated the Kimberley Society to his view of the Kimberley. The electorate of Durack extends from Kalumburu to Kellerberrin, embracing Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Port Hedland, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Wiluna, Newman, and other towns, and taking in a vast amount of country beyond those towns. With an area of approximately 1,587,758 sq km, Durack is the largest electorate in Australia. Mr Haase has represented it since 2010, having been re-elected following the 2008 electoral redistribution in which the electoral division of Durack was proclaimed. Before that, in 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2007, he was elected to the House of Representatives for Kalgoorlie.

Discussing **yesterday**, Mr Haase touched on the formation of the Kimberley's spectacular landscape millions of years ago, the arrival of Aboriginal people tens of thousands of years ago, the arrival of Macassan trepangers in the late 17th century, and the arrival of Europeans, at intervals, in and after 1688. An outline of exploration, grazing, mining, pearling, and other pursuits followed, showing how the region came to be as it is today. Viewed from this perspective, the events of the past 100 years or so were seen to constitute only a very small component of the region's history.

Covering **today**, Mr Haase spoke of various industries supported by land, water and resources. He mentioned the towns and National Parks, the Commonwealth Marine Reserve (74,469 sq km), and the major conservation values. After drawing attention to the size of the Kimberley (over 420,000 sq km), he noted that the proposed LNG Precinct at James Price Point would require only 25 sq km (0.006% of the Kimberley) and, consequently, would not result in the industrialisation of the region. Nor, he said, would the precinct have an adverse effect on the Dampier Peninsula. It would occupy only 0.25% of the Peninsula, which, excluding islands, contains 9,890 sq km of land and 1,015 km of coastline.

Summing up his view of **today**, Mr Haase said:

The Kimberley is not as it was thousands of years ago. Everyone has left a footprint of some sort or the other, and some more visible than another.

Entrepreneurs have entwined natural beauty, tourism and industry. Should this stop now, I don't think so.

That led to **tomorrow**, with discussion of coal and live cattle exports, a deep water port at Point Torment (out of Derby), and strategically placed dams that would see many thousands of hectares of black soil plains in the Fitzroy River Valley provide food for a global market. A bright future was also envisaged for the Ord irrigation area – as a food bowl for both Australia and Asia. New infrastructure and a well managed workforce would be the key to much of this prosperity, with residence in the Kimberley made more attractive than fly in fly out options. There would also be enhanced scope for tertiary education, less reliance on welfare, and better handling of the problems arising from alcohol abuse.

While acknowledging that dichotomies exist when development or radical change is advocated, Mr Haase argued that the Kimberley needs both development and change. He anticipated a strong reaction to some of the points he made, and he was not disappointed. The question time following his talk was lively, with no shortage of topics raised for discussion. Foremost among those topics was whether Aboriginal ownership of cattle stations has meant advancement for communities, and whether, as Mr Haase believes, greater integration of Aboriginal people into the workforce will resolve many of the problems they currently face.

Cathie Clement

MY COCKATOO ISLAND HOLIDAY (NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1939)

Ruth Rowell (1915–1983) wrote this account in 1939 during the first year of her marriage. The holiday was the first of several on Cockatoo Island and, when Mrs Starkie visited Derby, the Rowells returned her hospitality. Ruth's husband Robert managed Rupert Monger's stock, station and shipping agency from 1938. After he purchased the agency in 1942, it became known as R M Rowell and Co. Ruth was the local ABC reporter in the early years and wrote articles for The West Australian. She lived in Derby until 1970 and was very involved in the town in her own right as well as a great support to Robert. She set up the Hospital Auxiliary and was involved in the P & C and CWA, amongst other things. The account was made available for publication, as it came, by the Rowells' daughter Sharon.

Winds play a very important factor in shipping and the port of Derby not only has winds but tides to contend with. So it was that my trip to Cockatoo Island in Yampi Sound was delayed several days until a favourable wind should enable the loading of the 25 ton Schooner "Colarmi" to be put into effect during high tide. The difference between high and low water often over 30 feet and when the tide is running it averages a speed of 8 knots per hour and can seriously hamper a tiny boat which can only make a three knot speed against it.

However at 12 noon on Friday we slipped away from the Derby jetty to make a slow journey of 20 hours against heavy winds. The crew of 4 – 2 full blood aborigines, an excellent half-caste by the name of Chris and a white Skipper pulled up the three big sails which assist the little engine. Our cargo of timer, fowls, meat, food stuffs and mail (a very much longed for item by these isolated Islanders) was stowed on and below deck, but Mrs Starkie and I still found a comfortable spot to 'camp' aft shaded by an awning which was thoughtfully erected by us. The sun can be very fierce in the North and despite precautions I suffered a goodly supply of burnt skin before nightfall.

All the afternoon we could sight land on one or both sides of us – the monotonous mangrove swamps which border the country around King Sound. At 6 p.m. Lackey, one of the full bloods, served us an appetising piece of grilled steak and bread and tinned butter and a cup of tea.

Then preparations were made for the night, two mattresses pulled up from the accommodating cabin below and rugs and cushions appeared. As night drew on instead of blackness came silvery light which shone upon the sea and bathed the Schooner in a beauty that is often conveyed to cinema-goers when the ardent 'lover' woos his 'adored' neath a strong light framed in a cardboard sky and surrounded by a studio ship. I sat up, my head and arms resting on my knees and gazed and gazed in silent admiration; then the Skipper and I fell to talking on religion and other such deep topics that seem naturally more in keeping with great beauty; and as the evening wore on and the moon climbed higher in the sky, the Captain went below and I was left to drowse and watch the dark form of the boom and masts dipping and tossing against the silver sea and sky with only a distant flash of lightning hinting at cock-eyes and the glint of white on the tips of the waves broken by the bows of the Schooner to break the splendour. Several times I awoke to look at the time (one can easily read in a tropical moonlight) and always the vigilant Chris was at the tiller, sometimes nursing the ship's cat Rachel and the moon still shining. 5 a.m. and dawn revealing islands north, south, east and west of us with Chris skilfully steering the little craft in and out of the dangerous reefs and whirlpools. Ahead lay Cockatoo, her sheer iron ore cliffs rising hundreds of feet up from high tide level. In common with the many surrounding island only a thin growth and stunted trees covered her heights.

By 8 a.m. we were in the bay and a dinghy was coming out for us and our belongings – the unloading would be done when the tide was full. Barney the boatman amused me with his attractive beard and wide whiskers, shaving is a

nuisance on the Island and so many of the men allow their whiskers to grow, giving one an unconscious reminder of other young men who pioneered the South less than a century ago. The lovely golden beach is sheltered by great iron cliffs; the one to the right has been blasted way to make a winding roadway and a concrete wharf complete with crane and railway line leading inland. This was the first of many preparations (completed and in the course of completion) that I was to see, and all engineered and supervised by the manager, (Mr T. K. Starkie) during his four years of management of the Island for Australian Iron & Steel Ltd one of the B.H.P. group of companies.

We climbed the newly made concrete steps to the top of the cliff and walked up the gravel roadway bordered on either side by white washed iron buildings with green woodwork. The store, the wireless room, Staff quarters, kitchen and mess, the offices (a larger and more pretentious structure which, on inspection of the interior proved to be as good if not better than many city offices, with its filing cabinet, polished desks, wall clock and other appurtenances). And then the Manager's home surrounded by a neat gravel slope (there is very little level ground) and flowering trees and flower beds containing zinnias, vincas, antignan, ferns etc. and a bed of 10ft high tomatoes bearing heavily. The house itself is an excellent one for obtaining all the sea breezes, it is built high up on concrete pillars and wired down as a prevention against willy-willys. It is oblong in shape with two main rooms on end and verandahs down either side, the bathroom-laundry underneath.

After the boat trip we both felt rather tired so a rest and breakfast was acceptable. Then another laze and 11.30 lunch seemed soon upon us. The unlimited supply of beautiful rain water made a shower a joy. Another rest and a swim in the delightfully transparent sea and 5 p.m. dinner. We then took a walk up the opposite hill towards the main iron lode. The road which has been cut is very steep and runs two miles into the body of the Island. When working commences trucks will carry the iron ore down to the wharf to be loaded into ships which, it is estimated, will call twice weekly direct from New South Wales. Our walk over, we retired to early bed.

Sunday up early to partake of 7 a.m. breakfast and be down on the beach ready for Barney to row us out to the "Lady Jane", a very fast and one time well appointed launch but her upholstery and mattresses and curtains have been removed to make room for carrying oil, kerosene and other cargo. Several of the men joined the party including the Engineer – he is a Canadian and has been travelling around the world for eighteen years. Soon we were cutting through the beautiful blue sea on our way to Coppermine Creek on the main land. This Creek has been named after an abandoned copper mine there. On account of fresh water springs portion of the land was once used for the Sunday Island missionaries as a vegetable garden, but it has been abandoned. Mr Starkie has decided to make a vegetable garden on more businesslike lines and he sent ten men over to the Creek some weeks ago to build a road from the landing place to the site two miles inland, the men have had to fence in the ground as a protection against kangaroos, wild goats, wild cattle, four donkeys left by the missionaries and dingoes (the men showed us four scalps they had secured by trapping).

The "Lady Jane" seemed to be heading straight for the rocky coast line and it was only at the last minute that an opening appeared and the boat entered the wide Creek and wound in and out until the disappearance of it in mangrove swamps told me we were at our destination. The dinghy took us ashore and we walked about half a mile to the bush camp that the men are using. Owing to the abundance of fresh water more tropical growth flourishes here and we saw palms and course ferns in plenty. We climbed a hill and gazed down on the creek and the surrounding bush

country (I was surprised to see a southern banksia looking quite healthy). Then back to the bush camp for some tinned pears and cream and some billy tea eaten whilst seated on forms made from narrow saplings. A donkey making off with a pair of trousers drying on a bush provided amusement. Then back to the boat and out of the Creek before the tide falls.

On the return journey we skirted Blanc Mange and Jelly, two small Islands to the north of Cockatoo and hove to to speak to some Koolan Island men who were fishing from their launch. The "Lady Jane" made her way round the back of Cockatoo and into the back bay before dropping anchor. The buildings are actually on a narrow neck of land with a bay on either side – in other words an Isthmus. Mrs Starkie and I hurried up to the house to prepare a paste of soda-bicarbonate for my sunburnt arms and face. Mr Ken Marshall of Koolan Island arrived for dinner and later re-joined the Koolan launch.

Tuesday, up early but just a little too late for the tide and so Mrs Starkie had to walk us across some iron hills to the next bay instead of halving the distance by going round by the roof., however the view from the top of the hill was wonderful, we could see blue sea and Islands from three sides and as the distance increased the far off Islands were lost in mist. If one looked directly below, which I did only once, there was a sheer drop of 100 feet to a menacing rocky shelf. After a short rest we climbed back to a less dangerous descent and partly rolled and partly climbed to the bottom. The hot sun makes the stones a pleasant spot for snakes and we had not been picking our way over the stones for long when Mrs Starkie spied a brown snake swaying and popping its tongue in and out of its mouth at us. We changed our course without arguing with the snake, which was a poisonous variety. The rocks all had a thick coating of the small type of oysters, we only found two large ones and they are not there now! Eventually we arrived at our objective which was a large cave underneath the cliffs, we had a few minutes earlier perched high up upon. The walls of the cave were lined with Schist (a soft slaty powder), but we had no time to do any exploring and were forced to hurry back as the tide was coming in fast. On reaching the beach we had a rest and then climbed the next hill to obtain another fine view of a bay and Irvine Island. Although we had no bathers we had a good swim, some fruit and biscuits and climbed a very steep cliff and made our way along the top of the other side of the Island. It was rough walking over big boulders and at times a fairly steep drop to the rocks below, but the glorious view fully compensated for soaking wet shirt and scratched legs when we reached the house.

Swimming and resting completed the day, together with a trip to the pigsty. Mrs Starkie purchased three small pigs from Broome some time ago and they formed the nucleus of what is now quite a large piggery – sufficient anyway to make the Island independent as regards pork. Later in the evening my attention was called to an uncommon incident – goats drinking sea water! There are a few wild goats on the Island and they climb down the cliffs to drink.

Wednesday morning we were up early to start in the launch for Koolan Island. We were expected for lunch; as there are no women folk on Koolan it is advisable to warn the men in good time that ladies will be calling. Apart from two women missionaries, Ernestine Hill the authoress and Mrs Starkie no other members of the fair sex have set foot on Koolan. Mrs Starkie has the distinction of being the only woman to have spent a night there.

We reached Koolan about 11 a.m. after one and half hour's run. I was immediately struck with the difference in the two Islands. No beach greeted us, but steps leading down to the water's edge. These had been white-washed. We climbed to the gravel platform above and passed into an asbestos office with concrete floor. The Manager

made us welcome and Mr Ken Marshall the Surveyor, Mr Bogue (clerk), Mr Power (Engineer) and Mr Haldane (wireless operator) joined the luncheon party. A long trestle table was set at one end of the room with tins and bottles of condiments etc. and enamel plates and kitchen knives and forks. Delicious oyster soup, fish, jam rolls and mangos from Broome comprised the menu.

Mr and Mrs Starkie were very amused at the ostentatious display of clothes and freshly shaven faces. Several laboured under the strain of long trousers and all had shirts or singlets on. We laughed at the vision of them thankfully discarding their party trimmings as soon as we left. On Cockatoo the men wear khaki shorts and shoes and a helmet. Soon after lunch we said farewell and as the "Lady Jane" steamed out of the little inlet I gazed up at the encircling platform about fifty yards wide with its sheds and railway line leading round to a jetty; a tunnel into the lode at one end and a mess in the middle; the men's huts away up the side of the hot barren cliffs seeming almost impossible to reach in their precarious positions and I decided that a couple of hours visit was long enough to have on Koolan Island.

Silver Gull Creek was the next sight-seeing objective. This Creek similar to Coppermine Creek only a little north of it, was so named by Captain Grey the Skipper of the Schooner "Silver Gull" after his visit there about 1932. Barney (Wilde) was at that time a member of the Boy Scout crew of the Silver Gull, therefore it was no new experience for him to take the "Lady Jane" up the Creek. We passed fresh water springs and plantains and palms growing happily alongside. Eventually the launch reached the farthest navigable point and our party clamboured into the dinghy. The route was then so narrow that only one oar could be used to propel the little boat in and out the winding passage, huge cliffs soared up on either side of us. Whack! and the dinghy hit the side. "Where are the steps?" from me caused some laughter, "You just climb up" was the answer. After four years I suppose one gets a cliff climbing flair, at least Mrs Starkie has it, for she climbs with the agility of a mountain goat. After some assistance and plenty of puffing and slipping I managed to make the first ledge which gives one a surprise for it is a delightful pool about eight to ten feet deep of fresh water and small trees hang over it. Another climb and we reached yet another pool; then the final climb during which we encountered a swarm of green ants which bit one everywhere and anywhere without any compunction – I was still slaying them when we got back to the launch. The third pool is much larger and deeper than the first two and is known as Cleopatra's Bath. There is still a wall of cliff to be climbed and from those who have conquered it I hear there is a fourth bathing pool.

The coolness and shade were delightful and a little waterfall and some fern made the scene very picturesque. Most had a swim but although they assured me of the absence of crocodiles in the pool, I decided to conserve my energies for the descent of the cliffs. A call from the native boy left in charge of the dinghy saying the tide was going out brought the party to a close and a hurried departure. (I managed the downward trip less ably and if Mr Starkie and Barney had not helped I think my skull would have been dismantled in the fast emptying creek below). The dinghy just made the trip out to the launch and deeper water and "all aboard" for home. (We reached the back bay of Cockatoo about 4 p.m. and were glad of dinner and an early bed.)

To get a good two hours on the reef in the back bay we had to start by 7 a.m. carrying a haversack and iron wedge, myself with a camera and thick iron skewer and accompanied by a ten year old piccaninny we set off on the short distance from the back of the house. The route took us over about fifty yards of black boulders big and little, dry and slippery and nearly all coated with small oysters, before we arrived

at the ocean bed which has 20 to 25 feet of water over it when the tide is in. We walked right to the edge of the reef examining each little pool or break in the framework in which lurked fish left by the tide. What I saw recalled what I have read of the Great Barrier Reef on the opposite side the Continent, 80,000 miles of this living museum and aquarium is estimated to encircle it, but the northern warmer waters are more generous in their beauty, and more dangerous. Pools like fairy grottos with vivid green coral water lily leaves, or such they imitated. Almost every growth beneath the water resembled a flower or plant that flourishes on land, - begonia leaves, anemones, ferns, numerous flowers in varying shades of greens, yellows, browns, mauves, purples, light and dark blues, rust, reds and pinks. Minute fish in kingfisher blue with scarlet throats and equally tiny fellows striped in black and white like Zebras were swimming in and out and occasionally a larger fish or a crab put in an appearance. One has to walk carefully on the reef for razor shells are as sharp as their name and squid can give one a poisoned foot and a large clam shell can take your foot right off! We did not see any squid but dozens of clams, of the not so dangerous size. They are hinged in two parts like the oyster, and the corrugated rims are slightly apart to enable the fish to suck in the tiny particles of organism which float about in the water; the clam is so sensitive that the slightest touch causes the strong muscles in the hinge to snap together as tightly as any strong room door. The larger clam which grows to the enormous size of four feet across is classed as dangerous to man, for it is held responsible the deaths of pearl-divers, natives and others, who have stumbled into a closing clam and have been held like a vice and drowned.

Wherever there was any sand a round hole was not an uncommon sight, and Maudie-oh our dusky little companion obligingly fished for the occupant – a yellow and whitish striped fish with a huge mouth and goggly eyes known as a Monkey fish; nearly a chapter is given up to these burrowing tropical fish in Ion Idriess's Forty Fathoms Deep. Many strange flabby sausage-like lumps of various sizes and colour come under the heading of *bêche-de-mer*, some look like snakes and others like lumps of dough, if they are pushed or poked they retain the shape or mark forced upon them. Another quaint growth is a black fern exactly like feather ospreys which trim milady's millinery. Sea egg are the title given to oval slightly flattened eggs no bigger than a duck egg, the minute breathing holes forming a perfect design are a work of art. As I stepped from pool to pool and sat on my haunches examining this and that with the skewer (I was warned against touching things with my bare hands on account of the many poisonous plants and shells, I forgot the time, and it was with a start that Mrs Starkie gave me the warning that the tide was coming in fast and to hurry.) Yes the water was considerably closer and we had to wade through it to reach the rocks and dry land – not so easy either with a load of coral, clams, etc. Maudie-oh balanced quite a fine clam on her head.

The remainder of Thursday was spent quietly sewing and a swim before dinner. After dinner Mr Starkie suggested a visit to the Men's Recreation Room. A gramophone supplied a good choice of dance music. Bobs, quoits and darts were played. Book shelves with an assortment of books testified plenty of reading mater and quite a pleasant evening was spent with some of the men in this large airy room close to the row of numbered huts facing a neat gravel walk commonly referred to as First Avenue.

Friday morning was set aside for a visit to the front bay reef. This reef although lacking the beautiful little pools of its neighbour possesses more shells which can be found by turning over all the lose pieces of rock. Tiny cowrie shells and rather ordinary spiral shells belying the presence of pale green or saxe blue operculums.

Monkey fish holes abounded and Nellie the Mother of Maudie-oh fished out several for us. A small oval fish covered with spikes changed into a round ball and looked as fierce as a porcupine by the inspiration of a little sea water, Maudie-oh pushed the skewer into him and out shot the water and he was inflated no longer and swam away a little oval fish again. A call from the gin and I saw my first Star fish, a large five pointed velvet cushion in appearance with dark green and yellow spots on purple or brown ground. Like all sea life, on being lifted out of the water they lose their brilliance. Three beautiful spider shells with their brown markings and seven spidery feelers covered by mud and barnacles were a good find, then a conk shell, its orange shades also being hidden by sea growth was added to my collection. Here the tide put a stop to our wanderings.

The return journey to the shore proved a fruitful one for Nellie spied a huge bailer or melon shell, natives have a quick eye and the large round mass of grey had not escaped her notice. The shell was rather too heavy to carry with the fish in it, so the iron wedge and the skewer were wielded to extract what must have been three or four pounds of thick dull red meat, and lo! and behold, what should emerge from the centre of the meat but a baby bailer about 6" x 3" – a two-in-one find! On reaching the house all the shells were handed over to the gins to clean.

The afternoon's swim over and 5 p.m. dinner at which Captain Hornsby, the Colarmi's Skipper was present, and a smoke oh on the front verandah. Suddenly Mr Starkie called our attention to some activity amongst the binghis on the beach, we hurried down to see a huge green-back (edible species) turtle about eight feet in circumference lying on the sand, blood trickling from a front flipper where the harpoon had caught. A binghi held the turtle whilst I sat on its back for a photo. A short while afterwards Mr Turtle was dispatched with a bang on the head and the binghi was making fast work of the dissection – the natives love turtle meat which is only found in flippers. A visit to the pigsty to see four black piglets which had arrived earlier in the day and it was bed time.

Saturday was again an early morning so as to walk along the reef at low tide to see a tunnel running into the iron lode. About half a mile along the beach and the presence of the tunnel was apparent by the change from golden sand to glimmering black and silver powder, at this juncture we climbed about thirty feet to a platform for which the compressor and other machinery used to bore the tunnel had been erected. A few yards along the platform and we were at the entrance. The glow from our torch revealed the silver lights in the black ceiling and walls, we walked about thirty yards in and then decided the hot musty small and eeriness could be relieved by a return to the opening. Back by the beach as the tide was still out and we had time to stop and break a large oyster shell here and there amongst the thousands and thousands of small and medium sized ones.

Just after our afternoon 'dip' Charlie the Cook came to show us about 12" of what had been a very long pike fish, as he was drawing in the line on the beach a shark emerged and snatched off the greater part of Mr Pike! Just after our swim I had seen two of the men in the water and also a binghi who had swum in from the Schooner anchored a distance out. One never knows one's luck, eh? Dinner, a game of Monopoly and bed.

Up at 4.40 a.m. and 5.30 breakfast and farewell, or may I say au revoir to Cockatoo Island. The Dinghy was waiting close to the beach and skilfully (or I thought so) avoiding a wave, I jumped into the boat only to find I was standing in several inches of water which lay in its bottom! Aboard the "Colarmi" with my petrol case of shells and Patrick or Patricia the pig – live Christmas cheer to remind me of a memorable holiday.

MONITORING FIRES IN THE KIMBERLEY

In March 2011, the Kimberley Society received a PowerPoint presentation from Ed Hatherley, Kimberley Regional Fire Coordinator with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Ed is based in Broome and he spends, on average, about 100 days per year in the bush conducting controlled burns.

Where fire management is concerned, DEC liaises with Aboriginal community members, the Ecofire program, and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), formerly the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA). An important component of this liaison is an agreement with [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#) (AWC) and Ecofire project on monitoring across tenures.

The DEC Fire Program has changed significantly over the years. The changes can be summarised as follows:

- Prior to 2000 Little coordinated prescribed burning on DEC tenure
- 2001 – 2007 Focus on strategic buffers
- 2008 – 2010 Landscape mosaics with Traditional Owners

The changes reflect evolving patterns of land ownership and use. These include:

- Issues surrounding the viability of the cattle industry and the need to diversify pastoral operations
- Native Title claims and determinations
- Acquisition of pastoral leases by conservation (e.g. Australian Wildlife Conservancy) and Indigenous groups (e.g. Indigenous Land Corporation)

Extensive use of mapping and satellite imagery provides up to the minute coverage of fires, fire scars, unburnt pockets within fire scars, and distance between unburnt patches. This visual overview allows DEC to plot fire scar age distribution and to estimate how much bush will need to be burnt if the fuel age is to be kept mostly under four years. In setting its targets for controlled burns, DEC considers such factors as fauna habitat and desirable patch size. The resulting mosaic leaves vegetation of differing ages in place, and that is much better than the risk of successive intense fires leaving little food or refuge for fauna.

The DEC burn program aims for effective management of the biodiversity 'jewels in the crown' while taking into account the broader landscape management, neighbour relations, and public safety responsibilities. Joint management arrangements are in place where Traditional Owners carry out customary activities and deliver on-ground fire management, e.g. Native Title holders burning on Unallocated Crown Lands. Those arrangements, combined with the work done by pastoralists and Ecofire, are gradually reducing the harm done by big bushfires late in the dry season. The bushfires still occur but, in most instances, their spread can be contained.

Cathie Clement

Editor's note: The website version of this summary will contain maps showing land tenure and fuel age.

Further information

Community Radio Network, '[New meets old - Kimberley strategic fire management](#)' in [The fire prone Kimberley \(series\)](#).

Robert Cox and Ralph Smith (FESA), [Fire Management in the Kimberley](#)

Tropical Savannas CRC, [Fire management in the Kimberley](#), *Savanna Links*, Issue 35, January – July, 2008.

Victoria Laurie, [Radical fire plan for the Kimberley](#), *Australian Geographic*, 12 August 2010.

SUPPORTING THE KIMBERLEY SOCIETY

Our monthly raffles are seldom noteworthy but those at the June and July meetings were a little different. All prizes just happened to be books donated by **Jack Vercoe**. That meant that the whole \$246 in takings went to the Society. Equally impressive was having the first prize winner in June, a visitor, quietly ask that his ticket be given to Phil Playford as a thank you for presenting the evening's talk. Several members or guests have declined their prizes in the past but giving one to a speaker was a first. Phil went home with the traditional thank you (a bottle of wine) and a copy of Kevin Shaw's book *Mates*, which had been saved from the flood at Warmun Art Centre.

The number of prizes offered in each raffle reflects the number of tickets sold. Two prizes are offered if takings are less than \$90; three if they are between \$90 and \$160; and four on the rare occasions they exceed \$160. The books currently available as a first prize include a facsimile edition of J S Battye's *The History of the North West of Australia* donated by **Geoff Owen**. Donated books can be purchased at the meetings if they are not taken as prizes. The raffles, instigated in April 2000 for our heritage conservation project at Old Halls Creek, have raised a total of \$9,527. All the proceeds, which include the door takings, are set aside for special projects.

GRANT ROUND: WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY FOUNDATION Inc.

The [WA History Foundation](#) is calling for applications for funding in its 2013 grant round. An application must demonstrate that the project for which funding is sought meets one or more of the Foundation's Objects. The first of those objects is to 'encourage interest in and knowledge of Western Australian history'. The other objects are listed on the Foundation's website, which also has the full details of the grant round and an application form. An application must also demonstrate that the project 'will result in some public outcome which encourages, promotes or assists Western Australian history' and that it 'will produce historical material (or other public outcome) of good quality'. The amount of each grant is normally to a maximum of \$10,000. The deadline for submissions is 31 August 2013.

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