



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 12

December 1995

LAST MEETING FOR 1995

Kingsley Dixon

will speak about

King's Park's Botanical Activities in the Kimberley

Wednesday, 20 December 1995 at 7.15 for 7.30 PM

All meetings, unless otherwise advertised, are held at the Old Observatory, the headquarters of the National Trust of Australia (WA), 4 Havelock St, West Perth. There is street parking, plus limited parking on site. Tea/coffee/biscuits are provided after the meeting and the Society asks a \$2.00 hospitality fee from guests who are not members of either Kimberley Society or the National Trust. Entrance to the Old Observatory is usually through the door that faces the city.

PROGRAM FOR 1996

PLEASE NOTE THAT 1996 MEETINGS WILL BE ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH DUE TO CHANGES IN THE AVAILABILITY OF OUR VENUE

There will be no January meeting. The first meeting for 1996 will be held on 7 February, at 7.15 for 7.30 PM, and it will probably be a "cameo" presentation with three Speakers. Details will be provided in the next issue of the newsletter, which will be posted on about 20 January.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well, here's December, with the last newsletter for the year and only one meeting to go! Derby members hosted their second meeting in November when Dr Bill McGregor, a linguist, spoke on "The Banjo Affair" and responded to numerous questions about the events surrounding the deaths of Joseph Condren and Timothy O'Sullivan on Old Billiluna Station in September 1922. Guests at the meeting ranged from new Derby residents to long-time Kimberley identities such as Mrs Margaret Wells, Mr Sam Lovell and Mr Gerry Ash. Page 11 carries a report on the meeting, and planning is already under way for a "members only" station visit in the west Kimberley. No meetings have been held in the east Kimberley yet but we hope to be able to report activity in that area next year.

Members had only positive comments to make about the year long trial of holding monthly meetings in Perth. This format will now stay in place until a change seems desirable or perhaps becomes necessary. No-one took the opportunity to comment on the suitability of meeting nights other than the third Wednesday of the month but, as it happened, events overtook us and we lost our access to the venue on that night. As a result, the 1996 meetings will be held, in the same room at the Old Observatory, on the first Wednesday of the month.

We hope you have enjoyed what the Society has been able to offer during the year and that we find you renewing your membership and perhaps enrolling a friend or family member for 1996. We look forward to contact in the new year and, in the meantime, wish you a happy and safe festive season.



Cathie Clement

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Margaret Pieroni, who is well known for her work as an artist and botanist, has produced some striking images to illustrate the new Pilbara ecosystem posters that were launched recently by Greening Western Australia. Margaret's colourful work, as well as presenting the region's flora in detail, helps to explain the relationship between different plants and animals. The Regional Ecosystem Poster series is being developed to support the primary school curriculum package "Our Wild Plants" and thus enhance students' knowledge, understanding and respect for WA's bushland heritage.

Bob Bowers, who spent 38 years in the WA Police Force before retiring as a Superintendent, received a mention in the list of Dymock's best selling WA books in October. His book, *Top Cop in the Kimberley: A Policeman's Story*, was published by Literary Mouse Press in 1991. It contains 246 pages, illustrations and maps and, among the many stories, one can read about incidents that occurred during Bob's service in Broome (1948-1951), Derby (1964) and the Kimberley in general (1979-1983).

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Council of the Kimberley Society is delighted to welcome the following new members:

Miss Tina Coate, KUNUNURRA WA
Mr Alan Garstone, KINGSTON REST via KUNUNURRA WA
Mr Anthony Sachse, BENCUBBIN WA

KIMBERLEY COASTAL EXPEDITION

(Familiarisation for Kimberley Society members)

After hearing talks on the history and seeing slides of some of the spectacular scenery of the Kimberley coast, many members have expressed a desire to visit the area. In association with Kevin Coate, who in 1996 will be Cruise Director and Naturalist on the boat for the tour company, Travelabout, the Kimberley Society will run a familiarisation trip. Kevin will lead the expedition from Broome and endeavour to include in the itinerary the Lacepede Islands, Buccaneer Archipelago, Talbot Bay (and the vertical waterfalls), Walcott Inlet, Isdell River, Doubtful Bay, Sale River, Langgi, Camden Harbour (and the historic sites connected with the failed 1864 settlement), Prince Regent River, Careening Bay (the "Mermaid tree"), Prince Frederick Harbour, Hunter River, Roe River, and Bigge Island.

Expedition dates ex Broome - Departure: Saturday, 18th May 1996

Arrival: Wednesday, 30th May 1996



Cost of the 13-day expedition (plus accommodation in Broome on the night of 30th May) is \$2,800 **ex Broome** for Society members. It includes a helicopter flight from the Kimberley coastal camp at Port Warrender to Mitchell Plateau. It also includes a scenic flight by fixed-wing aircraft, back to Broome via Mitchell Falls, Mt Trafalgar, King Cascades, Talbot Bay and the Buccaneer Archipelago. A cook and all meals will be provided. Numbers are limited to fifteen passengers. If you are interested your application in writing should be addressed to "Kimberley Coastal Expedition", C/o Kimberley Society, PO Box 8471, Perth Business Centre, Perth, 6849, as soon as possible.

Travelabout has obtained the necessary permits to camp at various locations along the coast, and by May several semi-permanent campsites should be established.

A trip of this nature must be regarded as an expedition rather than a tour. Reasonable levels of fitness are required and a doctor's certificate may be required for those over 70 years of age. Some nights, members of the party will be expected to camp ashore in a wilderness situation or aboard the boat because tides in this region can be extreme and the whole program is planned around their rise and fall.

A list of suggested expedition requirements, clothing, etc. will be given on booking. A briefing night before the trip departs will be arranged for participants.

BOAT CHARTER AVAILABLE

If you can't make the Kimberley Coastal Expedition, you may be interested in voyages handled by Peg Leg Marine. Peter O'Dwyer advises that this firm has now been operating the 40ft ketch *Kajupa* out of Derby for three years, specialising in re-discovery and exploratory voyages. A recent three week voyage took in Doubtful Bay, Camden Harbour (3 days), Hanover Bay and the Prince Regent River. Peter says the ketch is not an over-the-top vessel but he guarantees comfortable bunks, good tucker from a well-equipped galley, and a hot shower at the end of the day. At cruising speed of 7-8 knots, other than when tides are utilised to increase speed, a relaxed atmosphere is maintained. Members interested in discussing expeditions can contact Peter at PO Box 483, Derby, WA, 6728. Telephone is 61 91 931027; facsimile 61 91 912063.

LT. GEORGE GREY'S 1838 EXPEDITION REVISITED

On 20 September 1995, members of the Society enjoyed a presentation entitled “My Journal of an Expedition of Discovery in Northern and Western Australia during the year 1838 by Lord Grey, Late Captain of the 83rd regiment, Governor of South Australia, New Zealand and the Cape Province of South Africa, describing many newly discovered, important and fertile Districts, with assistance from P.J. Knight, Esq. Gent. and H.E. McGlashan, surgeon to the expedition of rediscovery”.

Hamish McGlashan, resplendent in formal attire, read from George Grey's Journal, recently republished by Hesperian Press, telling how Lt Lushington was Grey's second in charge and how Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, had instigated their trip with support from the Royal Geographic Society. Glenelg's letter of instruction of 16 June 1837, stated that Grey and Lushington were to embark in HMS *Beagle* going to either Swan River or Cape of Good Hope where they would engage another vessel to take them to Prince Regent River. Once there, they were to explore the openings behind Dampier Land before riding parallel to the coast and investigating any rivers they crossed *en route* to the Swan River Colony. In the process, they were to explore all lands and familiarise the natives with British Traditions.

The tale of Grey's travels and traumas then unfolded, with Peter Knight stepping forward to take us on an illustrated walk. After sailing from Plymouth in the *Beagle*, Grey had engaged the schooner *Lynher* at Cape Town, where he collected seeds, including cotton, for planting. Unfortunately, the party reached the northern Australian coast at the start of an exceptionally wet “Wet”, and Grey and several others almost expired trying to walk from High Bluff Point to Hanover Bay in the heat. Grey was only 25 years old; Lushington was even younger.

During the time Grey's party spent in what would become the Kimberley, they established a base camp, hoisted the British flag to take possession in the name of the monarch, and fetched ponies from Timor. These poor beasts were so small the party had to remodel their saddles to fit them. Exploratory jaunts brought the British explorers into conflict with local Aboriginal people and Grey was speared in the hip. This injury gave him trouble for the remainder of the expedition and contributed to the party not being able to cover more than about 100 km of the journey toward Perth. Grey still managed to demonstrate his potential as a leader, however.

Hamish then resumed the story in the words from Grey's journal, telling how they examined the islands at the entrance to Prince Regent River in St George Water on 13 January 1838 and found lofty paper barks, cascades, isolated pinnacles of limestone rocks, anthills and the “gouty stemmed” trees they called Capparis, meaning our boabs. They reached a noble river, 3 to 4 miles across and complete with verdant islands, which Grey named after Lord Glenelg. The flies were terrible and crawled into their eyes, nostrils and mouths. Exhausted, they halted on the bank of a stream dotted with water lilies, catching fish and a long necked turtle. The ‘natives’ were described as ‘manly and noble’ and the audience, totally captivated by the word pictures created by Grey, were taken completely by surprise when the accompanying slide presentation suddenly switched to the nine noble men from the re-discovery expedition standing in the pool with their manly parts strategically covered by large lily leaves.

Hamish and Peter became interested in Grey's expedition during a 1983 trip to Walcott Inlet. They knew that this first inland penetration of Northern Australia had led to the disastrous Camden Harbour Settlement in 1864, and that Howard Coate had rediscovered the Grey cave paintings in 1958 when he was working for Professor Elkin. Howard is an amazing man who

studied three Kimberley Aboriginal tribes and their languages as well as translating the Bible into the Worora language. Dr Ian Crawford (WA Museum) had also led an expedition to try to find the paintings illustrated so well in Grey's journal. With no exact locations given, they were hard to find, but Peter's wife, Glen, was the first to spot them. The party also took the first photographs of *Grevillea adenotricha* which had been found in 1988 by Kevin Coate, a cousin of Howard's, but never before photographed. Another triumph involved relocating the "head" that Grey had described as a carving. Never short of adventure, they also faced raging bushfire and menacing crocodiles during their 13 day walk!

There were many slides of the cave paintings they struggled so hard to find; including good wandjinas, with one in a long red robe. After 150 years the paintings are in reasonably good condition. There were also excellent slides of all aspects of the modern expedition which was quite as gruelling as Grey's effort. Hamish and Peter intend going back to re-discover Grey's Bradshaw figures, next year if possible. We hope they are as successful.

Daphne Choules Edinger

PIONEER BURIAL SITES

A dozer gouges its way through outback earth in search of gold, uncaringly exposing and disturbing the bones of prospectors and their families, people who died seeking their fortune in the early days. Crunch goes more of our precious heritage! No questions asked.

In the course of travelling around Western Australia recording information on Lonely Graves and Pioneer Cemeteries, I am disturbed at the number of burial sites that have disappeared and/or been relocated into other cemeteries in the Kimberley and the Eastern Goldfields. Mining ventures bring this about, and the trend seems to be becoming more prevalent. It is generally thought no-one cares anyway, and some are surprised to learn it is all documented.

Recently we returned to the picturesque country around Halls Creek and were concerned to find few burial sites now in evidence. The Brockman burial ground consisting of about 14 graves (located beside the creek opposite the ruins of Brockman's hut on Duncan Highway) has disappeared. A mining company apparently widened the creek, taking the graves in the search for gold. An unbroken headstone was rescued and placed inside a nearby fenced and protected Aboriginal Burial Site. Local people's responses to questions about the vandalism revealed that the Department of Mines "was cross about it". A genealogical colleague had asked us to inquire as to the whereabouts of the burial ground at Macphees Gully, where her grandfather was buried. We found that it too had been bulldozed during gold exploration.

Burial sites should be protected by Section 20(5)(d) of the Mining Act, 1978. This Section does not entitle the holder of a mining tenement to prospect, fossick, explore or mine on or under any Crown land that is the site of, or situated within 100 metres of, any cemetery or burial ground.

The humble standard of Western Australian cemeteries in isolated regions is indicative of deprived conditions that prevailed in the past. For many years they have been neglected, unfenced and open to the impact of grazing stock and 4WD's. Some are even threatened by drifting sand and vegetation overgrowth. Evidence of regular maintenance and public interest is known to reduce the incidence of vandalism but some could argue too that, in the outback, signposting and maintenance may draw unwelcome attention. However, since a few mining

companies see neglect as being in their favour - evidence of a “who cares anyway” attitude - options should be carefully considered.

Pioneer cemeteries are the only remaining landmark in many of the old goldmining ghost towns. I was interested to see a shire council in New South Wales asking to be informed of any cemeteries, burial grounds and lone graves found in their area, and of any damage. Their publicity for this initiative read in part: ‘The Council aims to promote conservation of all cemeteries within the shire, as they see these as an important part of Australia’s heritage and possibly the only place in Australia where a person’s life is recorded.’ They are promoting the tourist potential of these cemeteries and imposing a levy on all burials to fund an on-going restoration programme to strengthen, stabilise and reconstruct headstones.

In regard to the ruins of Brockman’s hut east of Old Halls Creek, I understand this structure is the remains of the oldest building on the Kimberley goldfields. By following the appropriate heritage procedures and putting in place a conservation plan and management policy, it might be possible to stabilise these ruins and to erect, somewhere nearby, a wall of plaques (along the lines of the one in Marble Bar which records early prospectors and their families) naming those buried in Brockman cemetery and throughout the Kimberley goldfields. These remnants of the past could thus become a tourist attraction and a valuable asset to the area.

Yvonne Coate

Editors’ note: Some weeks after this article was written, Mr Phillip Pandal, the Independent Member for South Perth and former Liberal heritage spokesperson, drew the attention of the WA Parliament to the problems associated with miners disturbing historic graves. The Mines Minister, Mr George Cash, was said by *The West Australian* to have responded by saying that ‘consideration was being given to remind applicants for mining tenements of their obligations under Section 20 of the Mining Act’.

KIMBERLEY BIRDS

Ron Johnstone, Assistant Curator of Ornithology at the WA Museum, addressed the Society in November. Ron has worked at the museum since 1969 and, with the late Glenn Storr as his mentor, studied Kimberley birds and their migratory patterns. The Kimberley was a great unknown at this time. The first observations of birds were carried out by John Lort Stokes in the *Beagle* in 1838, Knut Dahl who worked in Broome and Derby, Julius Brockman, and the naturalist Dr House around the turn of the century, but not much since then. Ron mentioned J.P. Rogers who collected in southern Kimberley and around Wyndham in the early 1900s, and J. Tunney who used a horse and cart!

In the 1970s the museum, often in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, began its great series of biological surveys in the Kimberley. When the first expedition ventured into the Mitchell Plateau during the wet season of 1973, the party collected 29 new species of vertebrates. These surveys help build a large data base and collection of Kimberley birds including specimens called endemics. Study skins were prepared by gutting them, filling the abdominal cavity with cotton wool, noting the stomach contents and mounting the lifelike final products on sticks. Ron had sample study skins on display - White quilled rock pigeon and Bee eater to name a few - and one occasionally strayed across to the screen to serve as a pointer while Ron showed his many beautiful slides.

We heard the Sahul Shelf was uncovered 8 000 years ago and that, with New Guinea having been linked to Australia, the island of Sumba has *Banksia dentata*, eucalypts, limestone and laterite in common with the Kimberley. Sabu and Roti are also very like the Kimberley, with similar birds and vegetation. This colonisation occurred via the island chains but some birds are reluctant water-crossers, like the pheasants. Many are confined to the sub-humid zone in the mangals or mangroves which is the most species rich area in the world. Twenty-four species are confined to the mangals alone. Ron showed us slides of the zonation of mangals along the coast and pictures of the bright red fiddler crabs which provide food for the birds, especially the Mangrove Heron. The Shining Flycatcher and the Mangrove Kingfisher are also confined to the mangals but other Kimberley birds occur right down into the arid Sturt Creek region of the south east Kimberley.

Speaking about the sea birds, Ron mentioned the Leeuwin Current which begins in the Lesser Sundas and is low in salinity and warmer than other water. It has a huge effect on the avifauna of the Kimberley islands, where some seabirds are residents and some migrants. Masked and Brown Boobies, Frigate birds (Lesser and Greater) and the rare Red-footed Booby breed in profusion here, and Pelicans in eastern Indonesia. The Bridled Tern breeds on most WA west coast islands and, although it was rare up to the 1940s, has now expanded its range into South Australia. The Lesser Noddy, which breeds on the Abrolhos and Seychelle Islands, has also been recorded breeding on the Ashmore Reef. Also of interest are huge numbers of migratory waders found at Eighty Mile Beach on the mainland. They breed in the Palaearctic zone and spend the northern winter in Australia, and they can build up their body weight by 30-40% prior to migration.

The sandstones and Vine thickets are important habitats for many and varied birds such as the Black Grass Wren, Torres Strait Pigeon, Great Bower Bird, and the Peregrine Falcon which has a nest on Mt Trafalgar. Rose-crowned Pigeons, which can be seen in coastal areas and feeding on wild figs, also occur from Timor to Sabu and across to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The White-quilled Rock Pigeon favours the rugged sandstone cliffs.

The savanna woodland consists of tall grasses and eucalypts, and here we find the same birds as the Northern Territory: Partridge Pigeon and Gouldian Finches to name but a few. The latter breed at Beagle Bay and into the Northern Territory and are a spectacular little bird. In the Napier Range area and south, the bird population alters, becoming more like that of the Pilbara with more arid adapted species.

In the South Kimberley Flatlands around the Fitzroy and Ord Rivers, the large trees harbour Blue-winged Kookaburras, Treecreepers and Pheasant Coucals. The birds of the Ord changed as the damming of the Ord River caused the wetlands to rise sharply and attract more waterfowl, especially ducks and egrets.

In the more arid areas are magpies and galahs, which don't penetrate the wetter areas. The Edgar Ranges and desert on the southern edge of the Kimberley sees the last of the Kimberley fauna. This inhospitable area supports only 10-12 species in a 20 mile patch. The adjacent Great Sandy Desert has sparse vegetation of Desert oak and spinifex and it supports only a few birds including the nomadic Budgerigar, Crimson Chat, Pied Honeyeater and the Bustard.

Ron also described the storage of 45 000 specimens of birds in shelves in the museum. Little is known still about many species, for instance their distribution, food, breeding behaviour

and incubation period. We also heard that, because the bones of birds are too light to be preserved, very few remain as fossils. Ossification of the bones of the skull does, however, enable the age of the birds to be estimated.

The Kimberley as a whole is a hard country in which to do research, and the mangroves are especially difficult and dangerous areas in which to make collections. Although small by world standards, the WA Museum's bird collections are an irreplaceable source of information on our bird fauna. Researchers also take soft tissue from specimens that is frozen and used for modern genetic and bio-chemical studies. Ron concluded by stressing that there is still much research to be done on many Australian birds and, after the usual questions, joined the members in socialising over a cup of tea.

Daphne Choules Edinger

Editor's note: our reporter for the October meeting, Lindsay Peet, has been busy with studies at Curtin University and his report of Ian Elliot's talk will not be ready until in the new year.

ANOTHER NAME FOR THE KIMBERLEY?

In the letters section of the *Boab Bulletin* of February 1995, Kim Epton called for action that will encourage people to refer to the Kimberley by its correct name, i.e. Kimberley and not the Kimberleys. In doing so, he reminded me that there was once a possibility of the region being known as "Albert". This story harks from the mid-nineteenth century when, in the days before the creation of the Northern Territory, entrepreneurs and public servants were putting forward ambitious proposals to reorganise the boundaries of the Australian colonies. Figure I shows the position of the boundaries in 1859.

The proposal that covered the region now known as the Kimberley came from Augustus Gregory, Surveyor General of Queensland, in September 1860. At this time, the colony of Queensland had been in existence for less than a year, and Gregory's position owed much to his reputation as a surveyor and explorer.¹ His standing imparted credibility to his proposal and, in recommending it to the Secretary of State, Governor Bowen pronounced Gregory 'the man, of all men living, most competent to form a correct judgement on this whole subject'.² This accolade was undeniably true, but it also helped to mask Queensland's strong interest in having the British officials accept Gregory's judgement.

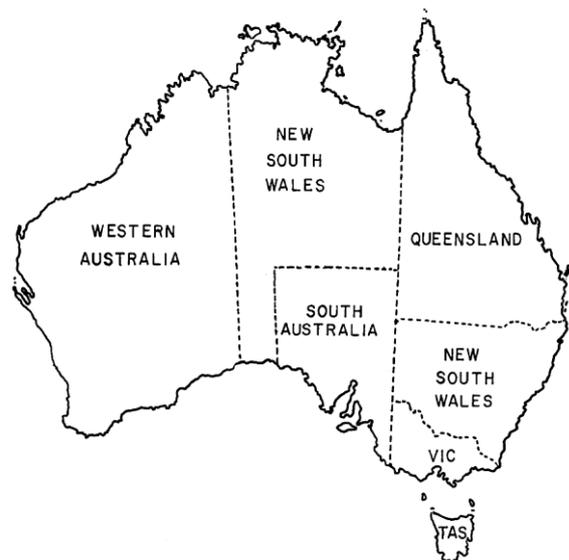


Figure I. Boundaries of the Colonies, 1859.

Gregory's proposal suggested that Britain should, firstly, shift the western boundary of Queensland further west, and secondly, declare a new colony to the west of the new boundary. The colony was to be named after Albert, the Prince Consort.³ See Figure II.

Gregory's boundaries were based on geographical factors, and he argued that the parts of Australia suited to European occupation were both limited in extent and separated by tracts of sterile country. These dry tracts bordered north-western and north-eastern Australia and, in his view, created two natural provinces. Each province, however, came under the control of two governments. New South Wales had jurisdiction over part of each; Western Australia held the balance of the north-west province; and Queensland held the balance of the north-east one. Under Gregory's proposal, all land and rivers in the Gulf area known as the Plains of Promise would fall within Queensland whilst the adjacent drier land would be assigned to the new 'Province of Albert'. A new city on the Victoria River would look after the administrative needs of the new colony.⁴

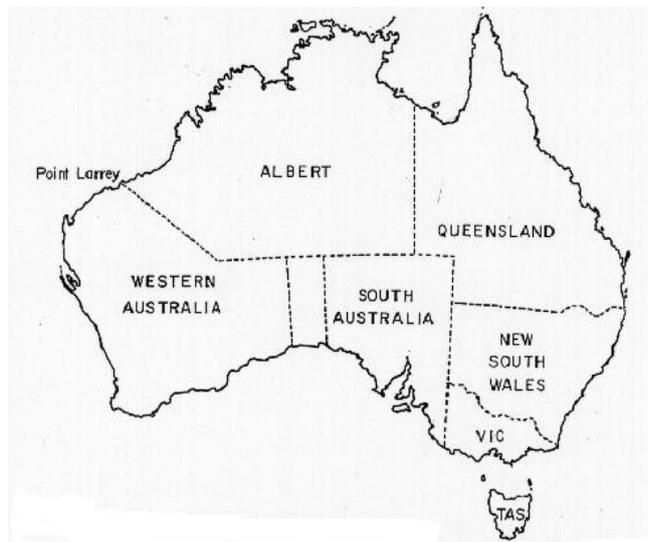


Fig. II. Gregory's Proposed Boundaries, 1860.

Gregory's proposal arose through the Queensland government having realised, whilst considering whether to establish a township at the Gulf of Carpentaria and perhaps a telegraph line to Timor, that the western segment of the Plains of Promise belonged to New South Wales.⁵ Intercolonial competition was particularly strong at the time, and Bowen, dismayed by this realisation, sought to gain an edge over other colonies by using Gregory's expertise to build a case for creating the colony of 'Albert' and thus extending Queensland.

In putting his case to the Colonial Office, Bowen contended that until October 1859 the London officials had apparently shared his government's belief that the lands granted to Queensland reached across to Western Australia.⁶ From this viewpoint, it appeared that Queensland was being robbed not only of land it had once held but, significantly, of the best site for a Gulf town. The case for relocating the boundary thus looked strong, especially when viewed against the recently identified environmental constraints. But the Colonial Office, according to a notation in the margin of the dispatch, rejected Bowen's contention regarding past beliefs.

Gregory, as well as setting down geographical arguments favouring the creation of 'Albert', suggested that the colony might best be established using convict labour for its public works. Only South Australia, he pointed out, had been founded successfully without the importation of convicts. Bowen endorsed this point, likening Gregory's thinking to that of the Reverend John Dunmore Lang, one of Australia's principal advocates of separation.⁷ Lang had urged major alterations in colonial boundaries in 1847 and 1852, using the wonderful title *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia; the Right of the Colonies, and the Interest of Britain and of the World* for the publication that presented his later ideas. It was in this publication that he advocated the use of convict labour to pave the way for an influx of free settlers in the Victoria River area.⁸

Governor Bowen's dispatch included an extract from Lang's writing on the Victoria River, but a less appropriate supporting document would have been difficult to find. The Colonial Office

had long ago rejected Lang and his ideas and, in this instance, caustic notes were scribbled in the margin of the dispatch when someone, presumably in the Colonial Office, objected to Bowen calling Lang a 'writer of large colonial experience'.⁹ It was not this issue that prevented the 'Province of Albert' from becoming a reality, however. Both its timing and its intention of securing additional lands for Queensland locked it into a contest where it vied with bids by the South Australian government and some entrepreneurial Victorians for jurisdiction over central northern Australia.¹⁰ In this contest, Gregory's concept of natural provinces was at odds with the South Australian government's desire for access to port facilities on the northern coast. This conflict probably prompted Gregory to suggest an alternate strategy late in 1862 when he proposed that Britain, if unwilling to declare 'Albert' a colony, could place it under South Australia's control until such time as it became capable of self-government.¹¹

Whether this arrangement would have proved better than splitting the central portion between Queensland and South Australia - to create the Northern Territory - is debatable. Dramatic advances in technology have lessened the difficulty of administering the Kimberley's affairs from the seat of government in Perth but real appreciation of its needs can only come from a prolonged exposure to the region itself. It is therefore interesting to contemplate what might have happened if Gregory had known of the existence of the Fitzroy and Ord Rivers when he put forward his proposal. More than a few of today's Kimberley residents would, I'm sure, relish the thought of local issues being decided in a House of Parliament set high above one of these mighty rivers.

References

1. J.H.L. Cumpston, *Augustus Gregory and the Inland Sea* (Canberra: Roebuck Society, 1972), p. 74; and Gregory to The Secretary for Lands (N.S.W.), 12 October 1859, Queensland State Archives COL/A1, In-letter 59/115.
2. Bowen to the Duke of Newcastle, 30 September 1860, Dispatch No. 79, Colonial Office 234/2.
3. *ibid.*
4. C.O. 234/2. This correspondence was printed in *British Sessional Paper No. 506 of 1863*, House of Commons, Vol. XXXVIII, and in Queensland's Parliamentary Papers. Cumpston, printed Gregory's report, but not the rest of the correspondence, as Appendix C in the book *Augustus Gregory*.
5. C.O. 234/2; and Cumpston, *Augustus Gregory*, p. 84.
6. C.O. 234/2.
7. *British Sessional Paper No. 506 of 1863*, pp. 818-819.
8. J.D. Lang, *Freedom and Independence*, pp. 325-9. For coverage of Lang's philosophy and other proposals, see Archibald Gilchrist (ed.), *John Dunmore Lang, Chiefly Autobiographical, 1799 to 1878: An Assembling of Contemporary Documents* (Melbourne: Jedgarm Publications, 1951).
9. C.O. 234/2.
10. *British Sessional Paper No. 506 of 1863*, pp. 826-827.
11. *ibid.*, pp. 821-826.

Cathie Clement

REST IN PEACE

The Council of Kimberley Society notes with regret the death of former Halls Creek resident Beryl Decima (Des) MacMicking who passed away peacefully at home on 25 November.

THE BANJO AFFAIR

Although Bill McGregor is a softly spoken gentleman, members and guests at the third regional Kimberley Society meeting hung on to every word this well known and respected linguist uttered at the Spinifex Hotel, Derby, on 22 November.

Bill, a Research Fellow in Linguistics at the University of Melbourne, is currently on a field trip in the Kimberley where he is continuing his research. He has recently had published, in collaboration with Jack Bohemia, *Nyibayarri: Kimberley tracker*, which is Jack Bohemia's autobiography. Bill's interest in Kimberley history was sparked primarily by Jack, one of the Gooniyandi men who taught him the language, as well as telling him numerous stories about the history of the region, and his role in it.

Jack was born around the turn of the century at Old Bohemia Downs Station, near Fitzroy Crossing. His mother was a Gooniyandi woman; his father was a Jaru man. From age five, Jack began to learn about stock work, ending up becoming head stockman. When his mother died, he moved away from the station, going into the Fitzroy Police Station to ask for another posting, but ended up working as a tracker for the Fitzroy Crossing police. Ultimately gaining the reputation as the best tracker in the Kimberley, he was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1970 for his 32 years of service to the Western Australia police and the community.

Bill gave the audience an extremely interesting breakdown on Chapter 2 from the book, from both Jack's stories of his experiences with the police in the days before motorcars when cattle were droved, rather than trucked, and also from the perspective of the white historian, which dates the affair, discusses motivations and reactions.

Early in September 1922 an Aboriginal man known by the gardiya name of Banjo allegedly shot dead two white men, Joseph Condren, the station manager and Timothy O'Sullivan, the cook, on Billiluna Station. Then, before walking off the station with his wife, Banjo allegedly raided the homestead and storeroom, sharing out the contents - including rifles and guns and a substantial quantity of ammunition as well as food - to the Billiluna Aborigines.

Contemporary sources are not entirely consistent in their accounts of what actually happened. Constable Jack Flinders of Halls Creek took pursuit and, after losing the tracks entirely at one stage, the patrol intercepted fresh tracks three weeks later. The subsequent killing of Banjo was not attributed to anyone in particular in Constable Flinders' official report, and it was not until nearly half a century later that a written source first attributed it to Jack Bohemia.

Bill's in-depth remarks gave the audience some understanding of the historical context in which Jack Bohemia lived and worked. He then turned the topic of the evening's talk to the episode in which Jack Bohemia was involved as a tracker, and also discussed the substantial body of relevant written material in the police files at the Battye Library. In closing, Bill brought forward many questions which he felt were not quite answered about the story, setting off many thought-stimulating conversations from some of the "old timers" in the audience.

Carolyn Ann Jones (Derby)



**SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL MEMBERS
AND FRIENDS OF THE SOCIETY**



OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

To encourage studies, particularly collaborative projects, which will enhance knowledge and understanding of the Kimberley's history, peoples, cultures, resources, natural history, heritage, and environment;

To encourage personal, organisational, corporate and government actions that will help to preserve the Kimberley environment, and its rich Aboriginal and European heritage;

To promote the dissemination of information about the Kimberley;

To cooperate with other Associations and any other bodies or persons having similar aims;

To produce such publications as may be determined by the Council from time to time; and

To inform and make recommendations to other parties, including organisations, corporations and government, on matters relating to the Kimberley.

COUNCIL 1995-96

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Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Council of Kimberley Society Inc.