



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 144

February 2018

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.

[Dalkeith Hall, 97 Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith](#)

Wednesday, 7 February 2018

Jeff Gresham, Tim Griffin, and Hamish McGlashan

“Seek and ye shall find”

Walking, canoeing, driving and helicopter adventures in the north Kimberley, 2017

Wednesday, 7 March 2018

Kevin Coate (Naturalist)

“The Kimberley Coast – naturally”

Wednesday, 4 April 2018

Sam Lovell AM

**“The past, the present, and the future: Aboriginal cultural heritage
in the Kimberley”**

Wednesday, 2 May 2018

Joc Schmiechen

“The first descent of the Drysdale River: Operation Raleigh 1986”

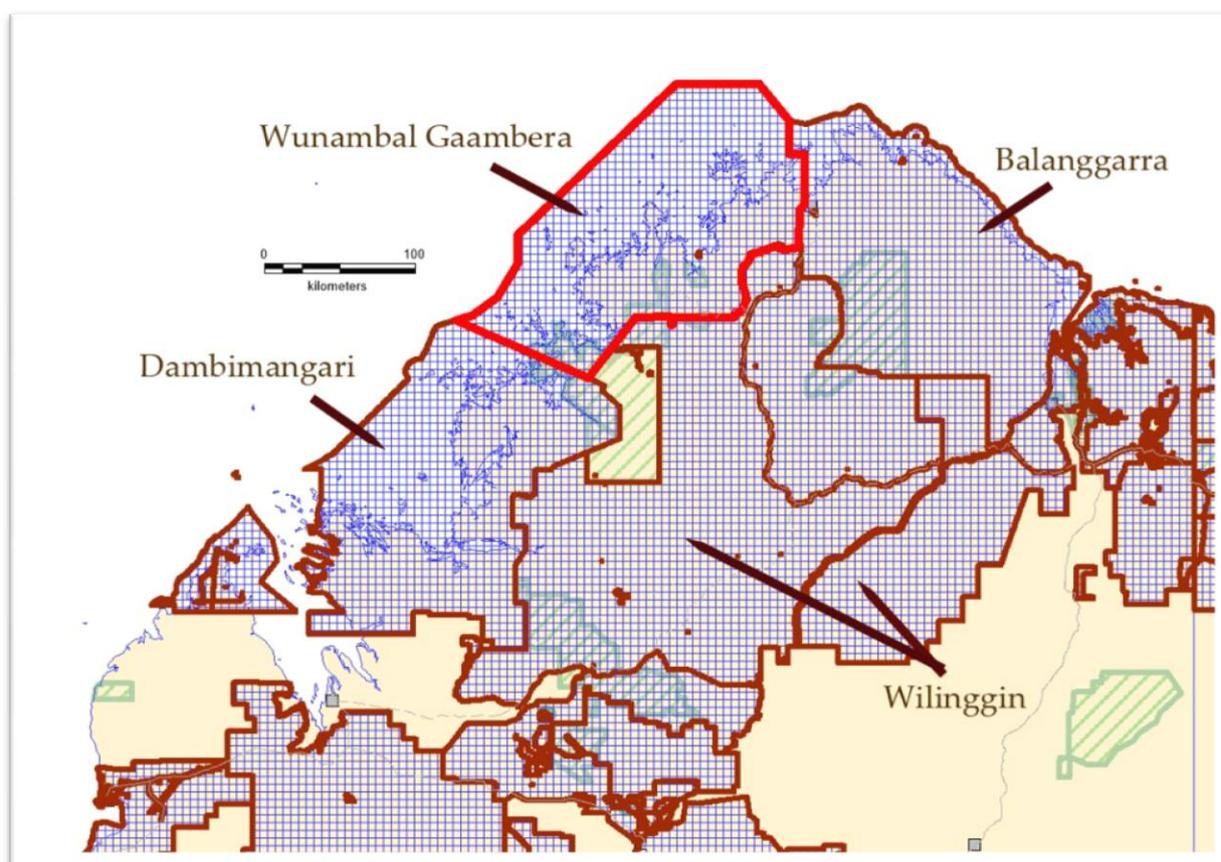
Members and visitors are invited to stay for supper after the meeting.
The Society asks a \$2.00 hospitality fee from non-members.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Elsewhere in this newsletter details of the recently introduced Unguu Visitor Pass for access into selected areas of the Wunambal-Gaambera Native Title lands are outlined. This marks a turning point in access to the Kimberley and it will be interesting to see if other Native Title holders follow the lead of the Wunambal Gaambera organisation.

Negotiations are apparently continuing between the Native Title holders and the State Government over ownership and joint management of existing and proposed National Parks in the Kimberley and it is hoped that these matters can be resolved soon.

With most of the Kimberley now covered by Native Title determined lands as shown on the map below, and access to some areas now restricted, the Kimberley is certainly changing rapidly. Let's hope that the traditional owners' management of their lands provides opportunities for the next generation of traditional owners and continues to allow access to this remarkable country for recreation, scientific research, and controlled mineral and pastoral endeavours.



Native Title Determined areas in the Kimberley (data from the National Native Title Tribunal website).

Only the major group determinations are labelled on the map above. Most of the unhatched areas are subject to Native Title Claims but determinations have yet to be made on those areas.

Full details of Native Title lands are available on the National Native Title Tribunal [website](#).

Mike Donaldson

THE KIMBERLEY 1917 EXPEDITION and adventures of Louis de Rougemont

1 November 2017, the Kimberley Society's speaker was **Hon. Peter Dowding SC** (former Premier of Western Australia and Member for North Province). He discussed an expedition undertaken on the Kimberley coast a century earlier, treating the audience to extracts from a rare film made during the expedition and to many remarkable still photographs associated it. His summary of the presentation follows.

In early 1917, whilst WW1 was raging in France, Australians by the thousands were being killed or seriously wounded in the service of the British Empire. Back in Australia, a Perth entrepreneur and racing enthusiast, A E Cockram, incorporated a company with a syndicate of business acquaintances to explore the Kimberley coast for economic opportunities that could be exploited.

He was well known as a breeder and racer of elite horses and actually owned the Belmont land on which today's racecourse is built; and, as his granddaughter Hon. Robyn McSweeney proudly informed us in her biography of him, he was the owner of the first Rolls Royce Silver Ghost in WA.

He enlisted the support of a Mr Stuart who was an experienced explorer to lead the expedition, and Mr Jackson, an intrepid cinematographer to take both moving and still photos of the event.

The syndicate chartered the lugger *Culwalla* and sailed from Broome on 3 May 1917.

Mr Cockram remained in Perth as the lugger made its way along the Dampierland Peninsula calling in at Beagle Bay, Lombadina, and Sunday Island. The expedition met three of the most notorious blackbirders of the pearling industry: Harry Hunter, Frenchie D'Antoine and the (by then reformed) head of the Sunday Island Mission Sydney Hadley, but were seemingly unaware of their notoriety. The expedition then headed along the coast into the true Kimberley.

They had a small crew of two men described as Asiatics and four Indigenous Sunday Islanders who had been "lent" to them by Syd Hadley.

They had armed "each white member of the party in case the natives [they] encountered should prove hostile" but, despite having many contacts with the traditional owners, they had a peaceful journey to Wyndham.

The expedition had remarkable contact with some Indigenous people living along the coast and the islands whose day to day lives had largely been unaffected by white settlement. Consequently, the narrative and the photos and film clips are a stunning record of the era.

On their return to Broome, arriving back in October 1917, they reported to Cockram who directed them to keep the information about the journey quiet until he had secured fishing and land rights from the Government for the Syndicate.

His efforts to encourage others from Australia, New Zealand and the UK to invest failed.

The still photos and narrative are recorded in a book published in 1923 by Stuart under the title *A Land of Opportunities : being an account of the author's recent expedition to explore the northern territories of Australia*. Portions of the movie film were shown in Perth and London and seem to have been given or sold to a Mr Greenwood Adams, an impresario from Melbourne who arranged showings in various places including France and the USA.

Tantalising portions of the movie have been retained in the National Sound and Film Archives.

An interesting aspect of the expedition was its link with a notorious story teller known as Louis De Rougemont who raised money from Fremantle gentry in the late 1890s and regaled European audiences with stories of his 30 years in the Kimberley living with an indigenous community. One of his least remarkable boasts was greeted with scepticism, namely that he claimed to have ridden a turtle in the ocean. The audiences rejected his story and he died a pauper. Stuart was keen to validate the experience—as he did—with a nervous Sunday Islander sliding into Cambridge Gulf on the back of a turtle, thereby, in Stuart’s eyes, vindicating the story teller.

PS In the course of this research I came across another movie made by others tracking the same journey as the 1917 expedition. It is inserted in the middle of an appalling Hollywood production called “The Blond Captive” put together in the early 1930s and available on [YouTube](#) for anyone interested.

“THE BLOND CAPTIVE”

The Hollywood production called [“The Blond Captive”](#) is, as Peter Dowding notes above, appalling. It was released in 1931, the same year that Edward Arnold & Co., London, published the book titled *The Psychology of a Primitive People : A Study of the Australian Aborigine* by [Stanley D Porteus](#).

It is surprising that Capital Pictures had the gall to state, in the film credits, that it was ‘produced by the North Western Australian Expedition Syndicate under the auspices of the National Research Council of Australia’. The two camera-men and [Dr. Paul C. Withington](#) MD, a Harvard professor, did accompany Porteus on his journey through the Kimberley by truck in 1929 but, as can be seen from the quotes below, Porteus was quick to distance himself after Withington’s ‘most interesting pictorial record’ became part of this sordid, sensationalised film.

Having travelled with me as far as Wyndham, Dr. Withington decided to conduct a subsidiary expedition of his own along the little-known Broome coast between Sunday Island and Wyndham. With the assistance of Captain Gregory, of Broome, he fitted out a lugger, and in company with his two camera-men made an adventurous voyage, calling at Mr. Collier's mission station at Sunday Island, Mr. Reid's station at Munja, Mr. Love's mission station at Port George IV and Mr. Gribble's mission at Forrest River. He obtained a most interesting pictorial record of the life of the natives along the coast. It should be clearly understood, however, that this expedition was in no way connected with the Australian National Research Council, nor have I any responsibility for these pictures, the financial arrangements for which were made entirely by Dr. Withington.

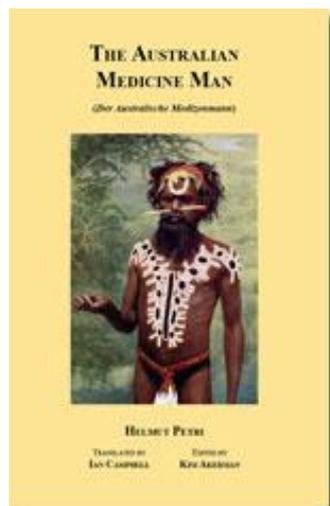
And,

... our arrival in Wyndham coincided with the departure of the steamer *Koolinda* for the south, which gave me the opportunity to return to Perth and later to Adelaide, leaving Dr. Withington to obtain a lugger at Broome and visit the coast between Derby and Wyndham and obtain as complete a pictorial record as possible of the life of the blacks there.¹ ...

¹ This journey was in itself a most adventurous one. Their tiny craft, the *Betty Margaret*, under a half-caste skipper and a native for crew, threaded a perilous way through the uncharted islands and reefs of that region. Without a map of any kind, and using a kitchen clock for a chronometer they made the passage to Wyndham with only one mishap, when the lugger grounded and was left stranded high and dry on a coral reef, until a thirty-five-foot tide ebbed and flowed again. The pictures taken provided a most interesting and unique record of native life, but unfortunately this part of the venture, having been financed independently, was outside my control. The cost of obtaining and developing this film was such that its owners were impelled to sell it for commercial display, and as adapted for public exhibition it may have lost all claims to authenticity.

Cathie Clement

BOOK NOTE



The Australian Medicine Man (*Der Australische Medizinmann*) by Helmut Petri, translated by Ian Campbell, edited by Kim Akerman. [Hesperian Press](#), Carlisle, WA, 2014. Soft cover, French flap, 194 pages, ISBN 978-0-85905-583-3. RRP \$55.

Helmut Petri (1907–1986) was a German anthropologist whose *Der Australische Medizinmann* was based on fieldwork among Aboriginal people in the Kimberley in 1938–1939, but not published in his native language until after World War 2 army service (including time as a prisoner of war). It was written originally as his 'habilitation' or senior doctoral thesis, on Australian shamanism, and submitted in 1949; he had been awarded an initial PhD in 1933.

Petri was a well-rounded scholar who had studied economics, history and philosophy as well as physical anthropology and pre-history (archaeology) in Berlin, Rome and Vienna, and he had travelled to countries such as Greece and Turkey for research purposes before coming to Australia in the spring of 1938 as the leader of an expedition organised by the Frobenius Institute (of ethnology) in his birthplace, Cologne.

Der Australische Medizinmann was published in 1952 and another related work, *Sterbend Welt in Nordwest Australien* ([The Dying World in North West Australia](#)) in 1954; this was first published in English by Hesperian Press in 2011. As with *The Dying World*, *The Australian Medicine Man* has been translated by Dr Ian Campbell of Armidale, NSW, and edited by eminent Western Australian anthropologist Dr Kim Akerman (now resident in Tasmania). Doongan station proprietor [and Kimberley Society member] Susan Bradley, described by the *Australian* newspaper's Nicolas Rothwell as 'queen of the Kimberley' and 'raconteur extraordinaire', has contributed an informed foreword in which she acknowledges Akerman's 'many years in the field', writing 'extensively on the anthropology of the Kimberley'. It was mainly due to him and the late Dr Grahame Walsh, she says, that Petri's 'research was not lost to English speaking scholars, and most importantly the Aborigines about whose identity, country, culture, traditions and forebears, these two studies are written.' Walsh, an authority inter-alia on Kimberley rock art, died before the editing of the Petri books was completed.

In his introduction to [Cologne to the Kimberley : Studies of Aboriginal Life in Northwest Australia by Five German Scholars in the First Half of the 20th Century](#), Akerman commented that he had been able to gain access over the years to various 'papers and other publications' by European anthropologists only by having them translated, and

In the Kimberley, where I have focused a lot of my attention, there was in fact very little academic material written in English that had not been the result of research conducted with a focus on social organisation or modelled on the Radcliffe-Brown/Elkin approach to anthropological research. It seemed to me that only the European trained anthropologists and linguists cast a wider net, one that embraced economics, material culture and rock art – even the latter was, until relatively recently, only peripherally touched on by Australian anthropologists.

Australians in this respect (and others) were

... a monolingual nation. Works that had not been initially presented in English were generally ignored by most Australian anthropologists and rarely referenced.

A R Radcliffe-Brown and A P Elkin were the founding professors of anthropology at the University of Sydney; Elkin was Radcliffe-Brown's post-doctoral student and conducted his first major Australian field research in that capacity in the Kimberley during the 1920s. Some of that research was drawn on by Elkin in what was possibly his most famous work, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*, which as its title suggests, deals with Aboriginal shamanism throughout mainland Australia.

Radcliffe-Brown, an Englishman, had earlier conducted fieldwork in Western Australia with the largely self-taught anthropologist Daisy Bates; they fell out and Bates famously accused Radcliffe-Brown of gross plagiarism at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Melbourne in 1914. Radcliffe-Brown left Australia for the University of Chicago in 1931; he was replaced by Elkin, who held the chair until his retirement in 1956 and continued to edit the journal *Oceania* until his death in 1979.

Elkin's influence was immense throughout Australian anthropology during that period, but his and Petri's paths seem not to have crossed much professionally if at all, which may have something to do with the opinion expressed above by Akerman. Petri does acknowledge some of Elkin's early articles and in particular his influential 1938 book, *The Australian Aborigines: How to understand them*, in his – Petri's – bibliography, but there is no mention of *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* in *Der Australische Medizinmann*, and vice versa.

As Akerman points out, Petri may well not have had access in Europe to the first edition of Elkin's book, which was published in 1945, but Elkin did not refer to Petri's *Der Australische Medizinmann* either in the second edition of Elkin's book in 1977, 25 years after *Der Australische Medizinmann's* appearance in German. This may simply be, as Dr Akerman says, on the basis that 'neither scholar had had the opportunity to read each other's seminal works on the topic.'

In 1977 Elkin did acknowledge that:

During the ten years between 1928, the year of my work amongst the Ngarinyin, and that of Dr Petri in 1938, the Aborigines had improved their English, a result mainly of working on Munja Aboriginal Cattle Station, Walcott Inlet. Consequently at least some of them became better informants and so Dr Petri obtained more material on medicine-men and their making than I did.

But, as Akerman points out, Elkin was referring here not to *Der Australische Medizinmann* but to the relevant sections of *Sterbendewelt in nordwest-Australien*, about which Petri had said:

The accounts about medicine men in the Kimberleys now following are unfortunately incomplete, perhaps no less fragmentary than many other sources for Australian cultural history. That is firstly because the time available for our fieldwork was too short, secondly we made the same mistake from the start as most observers of Australian Aboriginal life: we allowed ourselves to be so taken up by more striking phenomena of the tribal cultures that the figures of the medicine man at first seemed to us to be of not very vital importance. When we realized this error, it was to some extent already too late to make up lost ground.

Given that Elkin's book remained until the Hesperian Press publications one of very few readily available sources in English on traditional Australian medicine men, this gives added point to Akerman's comment about Australian monolingualism. At all events, anyone interested in these matters should obtain copies of these new Hesperian Press translations as a matter of urgency.

Peter Gifford MPHA

Editor's Note: A longer version of this book note appeared in the newsletter of the [Professional Historians Association \(WA\) Inc](#) in June 2016. Dr Peter Gifford is a fully accredited member of the PHA (WA).

VISITOR PASSES REQUIRED for Mitchell Plateau and parts of Kimberley coast

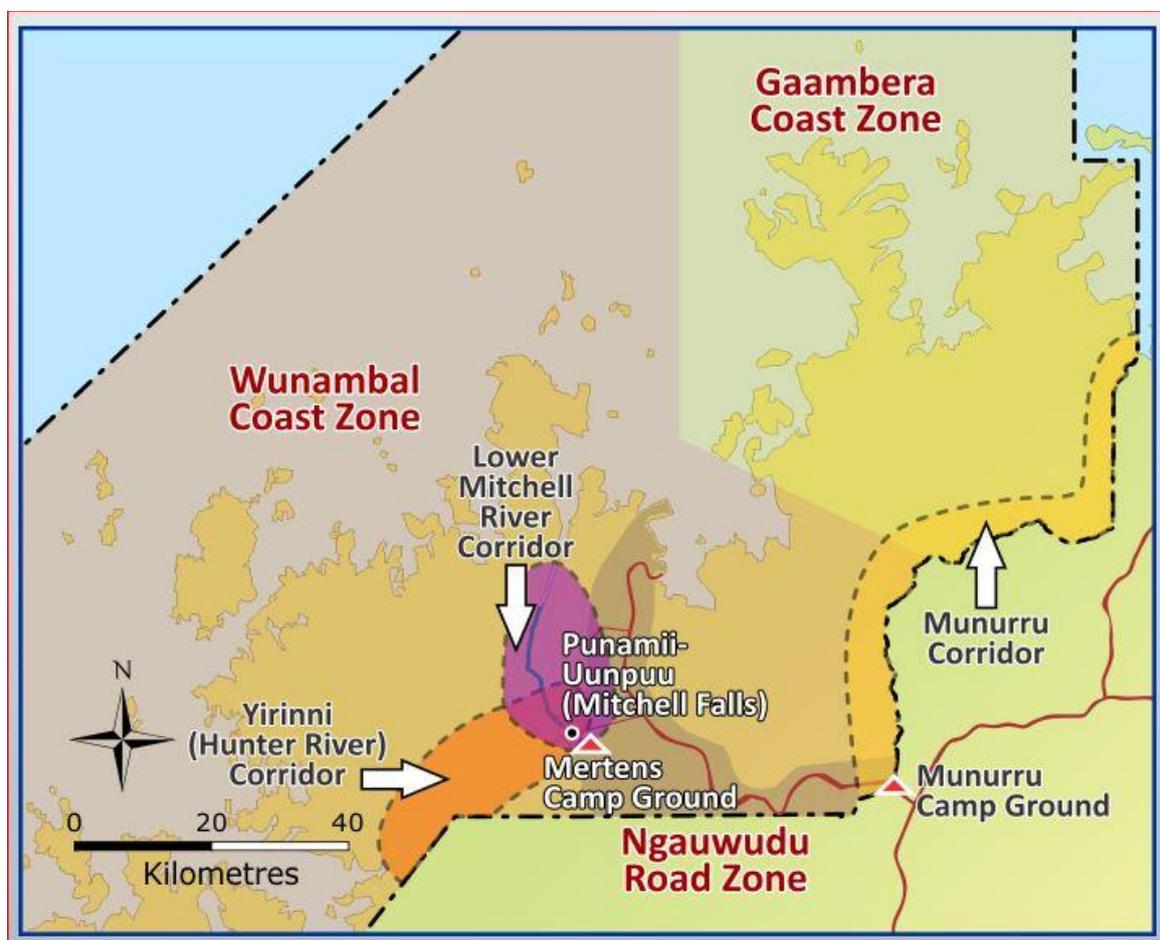
Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation has recently implemented an online entry permit system for access to their Native Title Determined Lands which include Mitchell Plateau and the adjacent coast. Called the Unguu Visitor Pass (UVP), this is being phased in over the next couple of years and the money will be used to help Wunambal Gaambera people manage the 2.5 million hectares of Country within the determined area.

Each independent traveller will need a UVP for the Ngauwudu Road Zone to drive or fly to Ngauwudu (Mitchell Plateau) and Punami-Uunpuu (Mitchell Falls). The cost is \$20 for 2018, rising to \$45 in 2019, and the pass is valid for 5 consecutive days.

Onshore Access to the Unguu Coast Zone by boat, seaplane, or helicopter will cost \$90 for 2018 and 2019 and is valid for 30 consecutive days at 50 nominated visitor locations.

A bushwalker pass will cost \$40 in 2018 rising to \$90 in 2019 and is valid for 14 consecutive days in approved corridors covering the Mitchell River north of Mitchell Falls, King Edward River north of Munurru, and Mitchell Plateau to Hunter River.

These fees are separate to any National Park fees applicable for access or camping in the Mitchell Plateau National Park.



Full details are available on the Wunambal Gaambera [website](#).

Mike Donaldson

REST IN PEACE

On 7 December 2017, at the age of 90, **Dr Peter John Graham AM** passed away peacefully at Hollywood Hospital in Nedlands. A retired ophthalmologist, he was the much loved husband of Gwenyth and father of their children James, Robin and Merrilyn. One online tribute, expressing sympathy to Gwenyth and the family, said "Peter contributed so much to make the world a better place, with you beside him."

That neatly sums up Peter's life. An [obituary](#) by John McIlwraith, published in *The West Australian* on 17 January 2018, mentioned Peter's navy service in the closing stages of the Second World War and his subsequent completion of a medical degree in Melbourne. Then, after he and Gwenyth married in 1954, they made their first home in Derby where Peter was, in the language of the day, the native hospital doctor as well as the leprosarium doctor and the flying doctor. In the last of those roles, he made clinic visits to remote Aboriginal communities. On 5 March 2014, when he was the Kimberley Society speaker, Peter fondly recalled that time and the people he came to know. He and Gwenyth had stayed in touch with their Kimberley friends, especially the "Mowanjum Mob", during many return visits.

Having access to an aircraft, colleagues, and good medical supplies in the Kimberley in the 1950s was a far cry from Peter's next position. In the mountains of West Timor, having accepted an invitation to work in a local hospital, he was the only doctor, had little equipment, no electricity or running water, and sometimes crossed flooded rivers for clinic sessions. The obituary told how, after Gwenyth endured a difficult pregnancy, Peter delivered Robin, and then, ten months later, successfully treated her for meningitis.

A move to West Java, where the hospital was well equipped, provided respite from the risks and the stress involved in running the West Timor hospital. But changes in government policy saw the family move again, first to Sabah in Borneo, where Merrilyn was born in 1961, and then to a more remote area of Sabah. In addition to being in charge of the hospital there, Peter's role as area medical officer involved trekking through the jungle, doing boat trips, staying overnight in tribal long houses, and flying to the Indonesian border in an RAAF helicopter to conduct clinics.

Peter had a diploma of tropical medicine, on top of his original degree, and in 1968 the family moved to Tanzania where he embarked on his ophthalmology career. They returned to Perth the following year. There, Peter earned the respect of his colleagues and recognition from various organisations. In 1998, he received the AMA Annual Award for services to medicine in WA, and, in 2000, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for services to ophthalmology, particularly through the development of programmes in Australia and overseas to save sight and to establish eye health care services in local communities. He was also a life member of, and served as an ophthalmology consultant for, the John Fawcett Foundation, a humanitarian not-for-profit organisation that assists needy people in Indonesia by restoring sight and preventing blindness.

There was much more than this to Peter's life. The obituary mentioned a harrowing experience when a hospital was shelled in Kabul. His 2010 memoirs, *Have schiotz, will travel : selected memoirs of an itinerant eye surgeon*, discuss events in Somalia, Pakistan, Papua and Cambodia as well as the places mentioned above. Participation in church communities was also a common thread and included involvement in a partnership between Nedlands Uniting Church and West Timor Christian University.

The Funeral Service to celebrate Peter's life was conducted at the Nedlands Uniting Church and was followed by a private cremation.

Cathie Clement

HONOURS

In the Australia Day 2018 Honours List, **Michael Morcombe** of Bedfordale, WA, was made a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to conservation and the environment in the fields of natural history and ornithology as a photographer, illustrator, and author. Michael, who was a founding member of the Kimberley Society, published his first book in 1966, and now, with books covering birds, wildlife and wildflowers, he has a huge following among nature-lovers. *The West Australian* described his *Field Guide to Australian Birds* as the definitive work for birdwatchers and noted that the associated smart-phone app has been downloaded 50,000 times. Michael has twice shared his wonderful images with a Kimberley Society audience, first in [1996](#) and then in [2000](#).

Richard John Henwood of Gingin, WA, received a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia for service to the cattle breeding industry. Known as John, he was on Fossil Downs Station in the Kimberley for more than 50 years, with his wife Annette, nee MacDonald, and he pioneered the introduction of the Droughtmaster breed of cattle. He also served as a Justice of the Peace for 48 years. Earlier recognition, in 2015, saw John made a life member of Droughtmasters Stud Breeder's Society Ltd and named as co-recipient of the Rural Achievers of the Year by the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia.

VOLUNTEERING

Kimberley Catholic Volunteer Service in the Diocese of Broome requires volunteers to assist with the work of the local Church in the Kimberley. There are various important voluntary tasks: administration, building maintenance, gardening, shop staffing, cooking, cleaning etc. Placements are preferred for a period of 6 months.

The Service is currently seeking caretakers for the Balgo parish. Accommodation and food is provided. For further details on how to be a part of this experience, and an application form, contact: Volunteer Coordinator: Anneliese Rohr 08 9192 1060. Email: volunteers@broomedioocese.org or via their website www.broomedioocese.org

A feature article on Alice Hann, a 24-year-old teacher from Gilroy College, Castle Hill, who embarked on a secondment year to teach in Balgo, is available on the Catholic Outlook website. Part of the [article](#), written by Elizabeth McFarlane, reads:

The K-8 school commenced in 1984 at the invitation of the local Aboriginal community. With a total enrolment of 120 students, the school also offers courses for Years 9 and 10 through its Kutjungka Trade Training Centre.

The school is founded on Lasallian values: faith in the presence of God, concern for the poor and social justice, respect for all persons, building an inclusive community and providing quality education.

It was Alice's volunteer work with the Lasallians that led to her first visit to Balgo.

"I had been out to Balgo three times prior to this year, in 2009, 2014 and 2015, volunteering at a summer camp with the Lasallian Foundation for two to three weeks each time," Alice said.

"I was doing work in the community, playing with the children and helping them in activities like learning how to swim. When I came out last year, I realised that I wanted to stay and teach."

...

Working alongside eight other teachers, Alice teaches about 15-20 Indigenous students. She is enjoying being fully immersed in the culture and community.

<http://broomedioocese.org/volunteering/> has more information.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 25th AGM of Kimberley Society (Inc) will be held at Dalkeith Hall, 97 Waratah Avenue Dalkeith, on Wednesday 4 April 2018, commencing at 7:30 pm. The Agenda will comprise the President's Welcome, Apologies, Minutes of the previous AGM, Business arising from the Minutes, President's Report, Treasurer's Report and presentation of Accounts for approval, Election of Office Bearers and other Committee Members, and any Other Business. The AGM will be followed by the guest speaker and supper.

Mike Donaldson, President

COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS FOR 2018-2019

The Constitution of Kimberley Society (Inc) requires that the Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, a Deputy Chairperson, a Secretary, a Membership Secretary, a Treasurer, and not less than 3 or more than 7 other persons, all of whom shall be Members of the Society. In the interest of conservation, nomination forms will be available at the February and March meetings, or by request from a current office bearer. Each nomination must be signed by the nominator, seconder, and by the nominee signifying willingness to stand for election, and must be received by the Secretary at least 21 days prior to the date of the AGM (i.e. 14 March 2018). If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies, further nominations shall be received at the AGM. Should any positions remain vacant after the AGM, such vacancies will be deemed casual vacancies and may be dealt with by the Committee according to the Constitution.

COUNCIL 2017-2018

President: *Mike Donaldson*
Vice-Presidents: *Hamish McGlashan* and *Jeff Murray*
Secretary: *Geoff Owen*
Membership Secretary: *Elizabeth Gresham*
Treasurer: *Jeffrey Gresham*
Councillors: *Michael Cusack, Sven Ouzman, Roger Passmore* and *Margaret Shugg*

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