



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 73

April 2006

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

commencing at 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at

Shenton Park Community Centre, corner Onslow and Herbert Roads

Wednesday, 5 April 2006

**Richard Langford (Geological Survey of WA)
'Kimberley from space: art in science'**

Wednesday, 3 May 2006

Gordon Wyre (CALM)

'Keeping Kimberley cane toad-free'

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

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Thirteenth AGM of Kimberley Society (Inc.) will be held at Shenton Park Community Centre, corner of Onslow and Herbert Roads, Shenton Park, on Wednesday, 3 May 2006, at 7.30 p.m. The Agenda will comprise: the Welcome, Apologies, Minutes of the previous AGM, Business arising from the Minutes, Council Report, Treasurer's Report and presentation of Accounts for approval, Election of Office Bearers and other Councillors, and General Business. The AGM will be followed by the CALM presentation on cane toads.

Mike Donaldson, President

Perth, 20 March 2006

PROGRAM FOR REMAINDER OF 2006

- 7 June '17th century visitors to the Kimberley coast' – Cathie Clement (historian)
- 5 July 'Oil and gas exploration and development in the offshore Kimberley region' – Speaker to be advised
- 2 August 'Journey of a Master Pearler 1886–1942' – John and Verity Norman
- 6 September 'Birds of the Kimberley Islands and their relationship to the birds of Christmas Island' – Ron Johnstone (ornithologist, WA Museum)
- 4 October 'Seaweeds of the Kimberley' – John Huisman
- 1 November 'History of guano mining on Lacepede Islands' – Tim Willing
- 6 December 'Historical, rare, and valuable books on the Kimberley' – Robert Muir (antiquarian book dealer)

Please note that, because many of our speakers are involved in work-related travel, this program may change at short notice. Should a speaker be unavailable, we will try to replace him/her with a speaker on a similar subject. All meetings will be held at Shenton Park unless otherwise advised.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Kimberley Society speaker's program for 2006 is now in place, and is given elsewhere in this issue. Again I think it represents the diversity of interests of the Society's membership, and I encourage you all to get along to as many meetings as you can. Dr Richard Langford of the Geological Survey of Western Australia has prepared a spectacular show of Kimberley images from a variety of space-based instruments for the 5 April meeting. Don't miss it!

Publication of last September's rock art seminar is still moving forward, although we are still waiting on the return of manuscripts from some authors. We are nevertheless getting preliminary graphic design work carried out for what will be a landmark contribution to the literature on the fabulous Kimberley rock art. At this stage we still hope to produce a full colour, well-illustrated book, but we will need help to meet the printing costs. We have several options to explore in this regard, and I hope you will all agree that the end product was worth the wait.

Mike Donaldson

AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

The announcement of the Australia Day Honours for 2006 came too late for a mention in the February *Boab Bulletin*. It is noted that Will and Celia Burrell, the founders of El Questro Station, were made Members of the Order of Australia (AM) 'For service to the tourism industry in the development and promotion of outback wilderness travel and raising awareness of the cultural significance of the Kimberley region'. Such awards are comparatively rare and, in being recognised at that level, the Burrells join the likes of Kimberley Society regulars Kevin Kenneally and Frank Colquhoun. They were recognised, respectively, 'For service to the community through a range of organisations promoting environmental education, advancement of botanical knowledge, and interest of youth in natural history' (2005), and 'For service to aeronautical engineering, aviation and the air transport industry since the 1920s' (1997).

CRUISING THE KIMBERLEY COAST

On 1 February 2006, Kevin Coate treated the Kimberley Society to an excellent overview of the development of cruising on the Kimberley coast. The following notes, which he kindly provided, summarise his illustrated talk.

In the mid 1970s when I first began taking tours to the Kimberley, I recall an old fellow in Derby peering up at me over a schooner of beer in the Spinni pub and saying "You're wasting your time trying to get city people up here – they won't like it". Tonight I'm sharing some of the attractions of the Kimberley Coast and talking about the progression of tourism to the present time, to show you how wrong he was. Some of this will be from a personal perspective.

Although tourism along the Kimberley Coast is of a fairly recent origin, it is attracting more and more visitors every year. The coast's rugged beauty, numerous inlets, rivers, and awesome tidal surges become a talking point for all who venture there.

Those with the most knowledge of the area were of course the Aborigines, as evidenced by numerous art and occupation sites along the coast dating back for thousands of years. There are many opportunities for more Aboriginal involvement in tourism along the coast, especially in interpretation of their culture.

From the latter part of the 17th century to the start of the 20th century, trepangers from Macassar regularly visited. Remains of their processing camps are still visible, especially in areas around Vansittart Bay. During the 19th century, American and English whalers, guano miners and pearlers worked the coast. Others who knew the coast very well during the 20th century were missionaries, wartime army personnel, beachcombers, crocodile shooters and those servicing navigation aids.

Workers from the Kuri Bay cultured pearl operation and Cockatoo and Koolan Island iron ore mines spent many recreational hours exploring creeks and inlets around the Buccaneer Archipelago, and up to the Prince Regent River, from the 1950s and 1960s. The latter group established very comfortable camps with iron-framed beds, crockery and cutlery 'courtesy of BHP', at places such as Gibbings Island, Crocodile Creek, Red Cone Creek, Sale River, Camp Creek in the Prince Regent River and St Patrick Island.

Tourism along the Kimberley coast began in a commercial sense in 1980, when Peter Sartori (a commercial fisherman with his 55-foot boat *Piscean*) began taking groups of 6–8 passengers, mainly fishermen. In 1968, he saw potential in the area after an unsuccessful attempt at prawn fishing and involvement in a prawn survey of the coast with Fisheries the following year.

In the early 1980s, the Kimberley coast was about as remote as you could get and few people had any understanding of its potential, let alone its beauty. Tourism was very much in the pioneering stage. When I first began taking expeditions along the Kimberley coast, as an extension to my land-based tours, there were no surveyed (licensed) passenger boats available.

In 1983, when planning trips for the following year to the Prince Regent and Hunter River areas (with 20 passengers), the only boat available was at Koolan Island, owned by the tug master, Boof Price. It was unsuitable in that it was small, unsurveyed, and only carried 4–6 passengers. However, Boof and his mate Ivan Brown gave me an insight into many interesting locations along the coast.

Eventually, I persuaded a Jurien Bay cray-fisherman, whose 60-foot cray-boat *Barbara Anne* was surveyed to carry passengers, to go north to Derby on a proviso I guaranteed two trips to make relocating worthwhile. As he was not prepared to be

involved in catering, I was required to provide food and provisions and employ a cook. I also supplied camping equipment as passengers had to sleep ashore. As four dinghies were required for transportation from boat to shore, I had to be sure there were those in our group who were prepared to operate them. These were exploratory expeditions in the true sense. Through a friend I found a person who had recently retired as a cook at the Graylands Psychiatric Hospital. Although not altogether suited to campfire cooking, he nevertheless turned out some excellent meals under very unusual situations. The overall cost of these 14-day trips was \$1200 per person. This included airfares from Perth to Derby, accommodation with meals for one night at the Spinifex Hotel, and a half-day bus trip to Windjana Gorge or the 17-Mile Dam at Camballin.

The success of these expeditions inspired me to run more trips to the area. I chartered the same boat for the following year to take two trips with 20 passengers per trip. However, six weeks before departure, I was advised that the boat had been sold, and the new owners were taking it to Queensland. This left me in a real pickle. I had to refund passenger's fares for the first trip, but luckily, I managed to salvage the second, having heard the ketch *Opal Shell* was available for charter. As with the *Barbara Ann*, the *Opal Shell* was only surveyed to carry 6–8 passengers with overnight accommodation. Fortunately, it could carry my required number during daylight hours, provided everyone slept ashore at night.

During the mid to late 1980s other vessels such as *Wave Spirit*, *Jodi Anne*, *That's Life*, *D McD* and *North Star* (fore-runner of *True North*) began operating out of Broome, taking fishing and scenic adventure trips. I concentrated on more hands-on nature-based tourism (or eco tourism as it is now known) ensuring my passengers had ample opportunity for exploring ashore and upstream of creeks. Sometimes we made base-camps over several days, for a more in-depth study of flora and fauna in the area.

After the America's Cup in 1987, tourism along the coast entered a new dimension. A consortium that included Brian Coppin, Motive Travel, Lindblad Expedition (an American tour company), Warren Anderson, and Peter Sartori decided to modify the *Motive Explorer* (a large catamaran used as a viewing platform for the America's Cup races), to take up-market tours along the North Kimberley Coast. They re-named the vessel the *Kimberley Explorer*. Although this venture proved unsuccessful, the publicity generated awareness and more interest in the area, altering world tourist perceptions of the Kimberley.

Another significant event that generated a huge amount of publicity overseas, after the America's Cup, was the death of the American woman Ginger Meadows, who was taken by a crocodile at King Cascades in the Prince Regent River. I had a trip scheduled to go to the Prince Regent a few weeks after this, and received a number of inquiries from overseas people who had never heard of the Kimberley to see if I could take them to where the tragedy occurred.

Up to this time many waters along the Kimberley Coast were uncharted or relied on mapping done by early hydrographers, such as Philip Parker King. There was no GPS to mark a track. With the massive rise and fall of tides twice a day, poking around by boat or dinghy could be quite hazardous. An illustration of the dangers is that the luxury ketch-rigged yacht *That's Life* had to be abandoned after striking an island one dark night, while travelling downstream on a falling tide from King Cascades (something few skippers in these waters are usually brave enough to do). In another incident, in 2003, the luxury cruiser *Seal*, with twenty passengers and crew, struck an object and had to be abandoned.

Another mile-stone for tourism was when Zegrahm Expeditions, an American company based in Seattle, picked up on previous advertising by Lindblad Expeditions for the *Kimberley Explorer* and investigated the potential for tourism in North Australia with the idea of extending their luxury eco-expedition tours. Impressed with what they saw, in 1996 they chartered the *Coral Princess*, a catamaran capable of carrying 48 passengers and crew in comfort, to relocate from the east coast of Australia to the Kimberley coast. Zegrahm built a special tender to convey all 48 passengers from the *Coral Princess* in one operation, to the various points of interest. Although they only include two trips to the Kimberley per year or second year in their world programme (some in conjunction with institutions like the Smithsonian or World Wildlife Fund for Nature), the owner of the *Coral Princess*, Tony Briggs, found an ongoing demand for this type of boat in the Kimberley. In 2005 he launched an additional luxury cruise boat, *Oceanic Princess*, capable of taking 72 passengers.

Other new luxury cruise boats to begin operation were the *Orion* carrying 106 passengers, and North Star Cruises' new adventure cruise boat *True North*, which carries a helicopter and has a passenger limit of 36 with a crew of 18. Pearl Sea Coastal Cruises' *Kimberley Quest 2*, also provide a helicopter service. Due to begin operations in 2006 is the 24-metre catamaran, *Odyssey Expeditions*. Most boats carry between 8 and 20 passengers, while smaller, more exclusive vessels, such as *Red Sky at Night*, range between 4 and 8 passengers.

From the early 1980s, when there were virtually no charter boats working the coast, there are currently twenty-nine in operation. This number is increasing with many tours booked a year or more ahead. Cruise boats are becoming bigger and there is a wider choice of tour, from small personalized trips to larger groups on more set itineraries.

With the upsurge of cruise boat and private yacht numbers, there are associated problems with congestion at some of the more popular places such as King Cascades in the Prince Regent River Nature Reserve. While self-regulation works to a degree, it is not the full answer. Conservation and Land Management (CALM) have put in place rules and regulations for charter boat operators, as to where passengers may go ashore and where they may walk.

On the table at the talk were brochures and a list with contact numbers, for all boats currently operating during the tourist season (March to November) although some local operators work off-season if necessary. The list does not include transient charter boats. Prices range from about \$370 to \$1000–\$1500 per person per day, with most being in the \$500 to \$800 range. As a promotion, The Kimberley Cruise Centre in Broome, an agency handling bookings for 16 of the 29 charter boats, offered Kimberley Society members at the talk, a free night at the Mangrove Hotel in Broome worth \$205, should they take up their offer of a cruise.

Most cruises operate between Broome and Bigge Island; others travel from Broome to Wyndham. This used to be a long haul for boats with limited fuel capacity, but there are now places where fuel can be picked up - one being at Dog Leg Creek opposite Koolan Island. Some of the larger cruise boats also include Darwin, Bathurst Island, Timor and New Guinea on their agenda. At Bathurst Island in the Northern Territory, the Tiwi people make passengers welcome. They are given an opportunity to learn a little of their culture and buy artefacts and screen print materials. Overseas visitors love the interaction with Tiwi people and it is surprising that Aboriginal communities along the Kimberley coast have not come up with similar ventures. While most companies work from Broome, three work out of Derby,

one from Wyndham, Darwin and Cairns, and one with no fixed port of call (where passengers fly in a float plane to a pre-arranged destination). The use of float planes or helicopters to transfer passengers to save costly fuel and travel time is becoming more frequent.

Before long, around-the-world luxury expedition type small ships, such as *Clipper Odyssey*, could include the Kimberley on their itinerary. However, this may cause problems if too many vessels, not flagged in Australia and using low paid foreign crew, compete in Australia for passengers. At present, *Orion* is the only cruise ship of this nature working the coast.

In conclusion, tourism along the Kimberley coast is alive and well despite what that old fellow said in the Derby pub. There is still plenty of scope for new operators, especially those prepared to specialize in nature based and cultural tourism involving Aboriginal people.

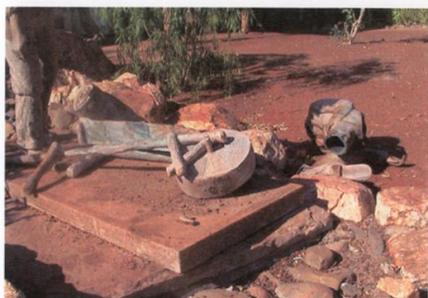
RUSSIAN JACK ATTACKED IN HALLS CREEK

In early 2004, the iconic statue of Russian Jack with his sick mate and barrow (see inset) was maniacally wrenched from its plinth and gutted with an angle grinder. The body of Jack's mate was dismembered and its head impaled on a sharpened tree stump. The insurance claim was \$23,000 for repairs and associated costs.



The extent of the damage indicates the perpetrator's extreme rage and leaves one wondering what fuelled such rage.

Peter McConnell, CEO of the Shire of Halls Creek, said they had their suspicions. It could be someone with a grudge against the Shire. Others thought it might be a boilover from one of the rioting communities. Peter leans towards the former.



Examples of the damage done to the statue.



A \$500 reward from the Shire for information leading to the conviction of the offender is unclaimed. Hesperian Press has offered \$500 under the same conditions as that offered by the Shire.

Peter J Bridge

Editor's note: In addition to having a strong interest in the Kimberley region's history and heritage, Peter Bridge compiled the book *Russian Jack*, which brings together the known facts and legends relevant to the man's life and his heroic Kimberley feat.

THE SAGA OF THE *SHADY LADY*

On 1 March 2006, Lindsay Peet captivated the Kimberley Society with the results of his years of research into a wartime incident on the Kimberley coast. The following notes, which he kindly provided, summarise his illustrated talk.

Shady Lady is the name given to a United States Army Air Force (USAAF) B-24 Liberator Heavy Bomber which, in August 1943, took part in the longest land-based bombing raid in the war to that date. By way of background, by early 1943 the Japanese thrust towards Australia had been halted. To the north-west of Australia an air war was mounted against the Japanese-occupied Netherlands East Indies (NEI). Because the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) did not have a long-range heavy bomber force an USAAF Heavy Bomber Group, the 380th, was based in the Northern Territory from May 1943. Targets of a strategic nature were sought by this Group. One was Balikpapan on the east coast of Borneo where there were refineries, storage tank farms and port facilities for loading tankers.

The date for the first mission to Balikpapan was set for Friday 13 August 1943. Late in the afternoon eleven B-24s were dispatched from Darwin at five-minute intervals, two turned back due to bad weather. Nine reached the target and bombed individually, with eight making it back to Darwin. The ninth one, the *Shady Lady*, ended up on the Kimberley coast. Its saga comprised the rest of my talk.

Before *Shady Lady* took off from Darwin it was assigned an addition to its ten-man crew, a RAAF photographic officer, Flying Officer H R Rustin from Perth, to take end-of-strike photographs of Balikpapan with a special aerial camera.

With extra fuel tanks in its bomb bay and carrying a heavy bomb load *Shady Lady* needed the whole of the runway at Darwin to stagger into the air. On the way to Borneo it entered an intense tropical storm near Makassar which it took two and a half hours to fly through. When it reached Balikpapan the weather was reasonably clear. The pilot, Lieutenant Doug Craig, made a bomb run from the east. Almost immediately *Shady Lady* was bracketed by a Japanese searchlight. Craig tried violent evasive manoeuvres but without success. During this run the intercom between the bombardier and the pilot stopped working hence no bombs were dropped. A second bomb run was tried and the bombs were successfully dropped on a tank farm. A third run over the target was considered an unnecessary waste of valuable fuel so Craig turned the B-24 homeward.

Near Makassar a tremendous tropical front was encountered. Craig and his co-pilot battled with the storm whilst trying to find ways of getting around it. Eventually the pilots heeded the warnings by the Navigator and the Flight Engineer that too much fuel was being used and the course for Darwin resumed. After two hours *Shady Lady* came out of the storm and encountered a huge island across its track. The Navigator decided that it was Timor and recommended a change of course to a closer friendly airfield, that at the Drysdale Mission in Western Australia. Soon, on the new course, the B-24 approached another large island – it was realized that this was the western end of Timor and the previous island was actually Flores. It was estimated that there was just about enough fuel to make Drysdale. *Shady Lady's* track was going over the Japanese Airbase at Penfui; to detour would use too much fuel so the risk of fighter attacks was taken. Two Zeros took off and soon caught up with the bomber and then commenced a series of co-ordinated attacks. As a defensive manoeuvre Craig started turning his aircraft into each attack – this unfortunately used up valuable fuel. The aerial fight went on for about an hour during which time the forward and upper gun turrets of the B-24 went out of action and one

of the waist guns jammed. Eventually some low clouds appeared; Craig flew into them and the Zeros made their final passes.

Miraculously none of the engines or fuel tanks had been damaged and none of the crew had been hit. The amount of fuel remaining became their major concern. Craig announced that he would ditch *Shady Lady* in the ocean if land was not sighted within 30 minutes. Twenty-five minutes had passed when a very rugged part of the Australian mainland, probably Cape Bougainville, was sighted. The bomber was turned to the left in the hope of finding Drysdale.

Flying over the Anjo Peninsula a large salt pan was seen near Mary Island. After consulting his crew, Craig decided to make a controlled forced landing there whilst the four engines were still running. He made his approach from the east touching down on the boundary between the white and grey areas of the salt pan. *Shady Lady's* main wheels bounced once then settled on the ground as power was reduced. Craig kept the nosewheel off the ground for as long as possible; it touched down three times before it stayed down. As Craig could see a low ridge with bushes coming up rapidly he touched the brakes, the result was that the nosewheel broke off and brought the bomber to a screeching halt. The front compartment was flattened and the forward turret damaged. There was only one minor injury. *Shady Lady* had been airborne for just over 16½ hours and it was now Saturday morning.

The crew scrambled out quickly but there was no fire. They knew they were down somewhere in Australia, but exactly where were they, how would they be rescued, and how would they survive in the meantime? They only had a limited amount of food and water. The Navigator estimated their ground position and this was transmitted to Darwin. As the given position was erroneous it was afternoon before a RAAF Hudson bomber found *Shady Lady* and signalled to the downed airmen that a rescue party would reach them the next afternoon (Sunday). Meantime at Drysdale the RAAF was arranging with the Benedictine Mission Superior, Father Thomas Gil, for the Mission's lugger, the *Teresita Moa* (or *Little Flower*) to be used for the rescue; it would be commanded by Father Seraphim Sanz.

By Sunday morning drinking water for the airmen was being rationed. Mid-morning they saw three Aborigines on the other side of the salt pan. In due course they made contact with them, finding that they were Christians from the Drysdale Mission. About this time, Rustin took a photograph of the American crew and three Aborigines. In response to the acute shortage of drinking water the Aborigines found a supply of brackish water in a creek bed further to the south. Later in the day, a party including Father Sanz, four RAAF personnel and about five Aborigines arrived at the salt pan.



The *Shady Lady* on the salt pan, with the American crew and the three Aboriginal men.

After another uncomfortable night the airmen and the lugger party were at the landing beach before dawn. Rustin took photographs at the beach. It took over five hours for *Teresita Moa* to sail around the tip of the Anjo Peninsula to the Old Mission at Pago. The airmen were trucked to the Drysdale airfield where the RAAF's No. 58 Operational Base was stationed. Here they met the crew of the Hudson bomber which had assisted them over the previous two days. Later in the evening they visited the Mission to meet Father Thomas and to thank Father Sanz for his role in their rescue. The next day (Tuesday), the Hudson flew the airmen back to their home base at Fenton in the Northern Territory.

By the end of the week, Father Sanz had taken USAAF engineers out to *Shady Lady* in *Teresita Moa*. With the assistance of about 30 Aborigines the B-24 was raised off its nose for a detailed inspection. It was considered that the damage was repairable and that there was just sufficient length along the salt pan for a take-off.

The repair of *Shady Lady* commenced in earnest on 28 August. Because the *Teresita Moa* had sailed to Broome, the repair effort had to be totally supported by aircraft. A DH-84 Dragon and a DH-82 Tiger Moth were used to ferry personnel and equipment out to the salt pan from Drysdale airfield. The only item which could not be flown out was a wooden and canvas replacement nose for *Shady Lady*: this was carried some 65 km overland on poles by six Aborigines, taking two days. The repair was a race against time because local spring tides were due on 11 September and would flood the salt pan.

To make it as light as possible for take-off, all excess weight was taken from *Shady Lady*. This included removing its guns and clearing out all the used and live 0.5 in ammunition which was simply thrown onto the salt pan. Only the minimum amount of fuel sufficient to warm up the engines and then fly to Fenton was loaded. The crew was kept to two, both volunteers. There was to be emergency assistance, including a doctor, on standby on the salt pan in the event of a crash.

Two days before the spring tides the take-off occurred without incident except that the engines were damaged due to the use of excessive power because the B-24's wheels were starting to dig in. The outcome of all of this effort was that once *Shady Lady* reached Fenton it was carefully inspected and it was decided that it was structurally unsound for further combat operations. It was sent to Townsville for return to the United States, but nothing is known of what eventually happened to it.

I put the saga of the *Shady Lady* together from a multitude of sources some of which I came across fortuitously. Apart from several books, there were two personal wartime diaries in Perth, archives at the Benedictine Community at New Norcia, RAAF historical records in Canberra, Japanese combat records in the Military History Department in Tokyo, material in two archives in the United States, interviews with several crew members, wartime photographs from veterans in the United States, and finally an initial inspection from the air and then two short visits to the site by helicopter. Interestingly, *Shady Lady's* landing tracks are still clearly visible on the salt pan, due to a particular geological process. Much discarded wreckage is still there as is the discarded ammunition, making up an interesting archaeological site which has been classified by the National Trust.

As a final word, in the 1990s I found out that for many years the Coastwatch organisation had been aware of *Shady Lady's* landing tracks, considering them to be made by a modern drug-running aircraft. I was pleased to tell them that it was only a 1943 military site!

Lindsay Peet

Further Reading:

Fain, J. (ed.), *The history of the 380th Bomb Group (H) AAF, affectionately known as the Flying Circus*, printed by Commanday-Roth, New York, 1946.

Horton, Glenn R. and Horton, Gary, L., *King of the heavies*, The Authors, Inver Grove Hts, Minnesota, 1983.

Horton, Glenn R., *The best in the southwest*, Mosie Publications, Savage, Minnesota, 1995.

Wright, J., *The Flying Circus: Pacific war – 1943 – as seen through a bombsight*, Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut, 2005.

MEMBERS' VIEWS OF LOST WORLD OF THE KIMBERLEY

Boab Bulletin No. 72 carried a review of Ian Wilson's *Lost World of the Kimberley*. The opinions expressed in it contrasted sharply with those of Nicolas Rothwell (*Weekend Australian*, 28–29 January 2006) and Bruce Elder (*Age*, 22 February 2006). Other members' reactions to the book were therefore solicited. The space available in this newsletter was insufficient to publish their contributions in full but the following extracts convey the essence of each member's view of the book.

I bought this book after having read the guarded review by Cathie Clement in the Boab Bulletin (it may stir up controversy) and the most destructive criticism I have ever read by Nicolas Rothwell in the Australian (this should never have been published).

I enjoyed the first chapters which give an easy to read summary of the history of the "discovery" of the Bradshaw art and of the research that has been done. I could not help but laugh at his confrontation with Grahame Walsh ("the grey wolf of the Kimberley" according to Rothwell), when, never having seen a site, he propounds a theory stating that Walsh's ideas may be wrong and then asks Walsh to tell him where sites can be found. Even Walsh's friends would tremble at such suggestions!

My trouble with this book starts when, having read Walsh's theories on the dating sequence, he visits the Kimberley, on a quick trip with a guide. With a prose style more fitting to the weekend travel supplement of a popular magazine he gushes forth about his guides, the food, the scenery and the rock art he has seen. All of us seeing the Bradshaw rock art in situ for the first time tend to exclaim "this looks like a..." or "this reminds me of..." or what on earth can that be?" but we really do not know and neither does anyone else. However, Wilson's imagination takes us further and despite disclaimers such as "it may seem far fetched but..." proceeds to link the Bradshaw painters with whatever he knows about Ice Age cultures throughout the world. There are fanciful ideas supported by photos taken by his wife but the reproduction of the pictures is too poor to be convinced of any interpretation postulated: but Wilson "instinctively" knows.

It is sad to see such undisciplined thought and paucity of academic rigour in a book which claims to be a serious contribution to the corpus of knowledge of Kimberley rock art. Surely he could not have written it if he had attended our recent Rock Art seminar in Perth. It is also of concern that because of the power of the written word it seems inevitable that these flights of fancy will be copied, plagiarised, repeated and then become part of popular "knowledge". We still see quoted von Danniken's theory that Wanjinias are evidence of visits from outer space! Now we have reindeer in the Kimberley!

I would have liked to be able to recommend this book for the early chapter summaries and the politics of rock art at the end. But no, I must side with Rothwell in feeling that this book should not have seen the light of day. – Hamish McGlashan

Here in this book we have someone from overseas who has given us a fresh look at the Bradshaw paintings. . . His arguments about the types of rock art, the depictions, classifications and meanings that can be interpreted are quite well argued. However, he is a little weaker on many aspects of the Kimberley. He would have us believe (page 16) that

Worrora, Wunambal and Ngarinyin speakers dominate the Kimberley. However in referring to the Handbook of Kimberley Languages by William McGregor (1988), we find about 150 to 200 Worrora speakers, which would be about the same number as speakers of Wunambal and Ngarinyin. Languages with more speakers include Kija, Kukatja (both with 300) and similarly Miriwoong and Bardi. All of these are overwhelmed by Walmajarri with 1000 speakers. So what does that leave us with?

Here we have an affordable book (\$35), with over 50 colour photographs of Bradshaw scenes taken by the author, his wife or associates. Some of these apparently are not known to Grahame Walsh and hence do not appear in either of his books. There is no messing around and by page 4, there is a depiction of a Gallery called Reindeer Rock with what certainly looks like Reindeer to me. These seemed to have been unaccounted for previously and may be difficult to explain. He also continues some of the themes of the Da Vinci Code with numerous references to the "Great Mother Figures". He interprets many of the figures as being female, which some may debate. A colleague of mine who spent many years in Wyndham, made numerous forays out into the bush, and has a vast collection of photos of Bradshaw figures, claimed that he has never seen a female figure. Does it really matter? Are these figures meant to be asexual in their representations or were only men painted? Who will ever know, and to me this is the whole essence of the mystery of the Bradshaws.

The book is certainly a good description of the varying types of Bradshaw figures that can be seen. The author is quite referential and reverential towards Grahame Walsh who, as we all know, is the acknowledged leader in the study of these figures and this art. Yet Walsh's books, which change hands at between \$1000 and \$2000 are beyond the reach of most people who are interested in this art.

Overall I wasn't as offended at all as I thought I might be after reading Rothwell's scathing report. However, in his introduction, Wilson certainly explained his aims and mentioned the book's possible short-comings. If we follow these criteria I don't think one would be disappointed after reading this affordable and well illustrated book. – **Jack Vercoe**

It is always interesting to read another book on the fabulous Kimberley Rock art, and this book is no exception. Wilson readily admits that he is a newcomer to Australia, and had never been to the Kimberley before his very brief visit to see some of the Bradshaw paintings he writes about. This lack of familiarity shows through everywhere in the book, and one has to ask what does this armchair historian add to our knowledge of these enigmatic paintings. The answer, I'm afraid, is very little. The book is full of wild speculations, and some glaring factual errors, but there is always something to learn from such a work. He reveals some admittedly general location data that is otherwise poorly known except to the few who spend time searching for and researching these art works. And his depiction of a frieze of "reindeer" is certainly interesting, whatever they may be: unfortunately his photos are so poor that it is not at all clear what species they may represent.

Historians live and die by their accurate portrayal of facts. And the author lost a lot of credibility with this reader when on page 2 he talks about his plan "to walk back down from the 3000-metre elevation" at Mitchell Falls. These falls are at an elevation of about 200 metres, although there are hills in the area up to about 300 metres. This is not a trivial error; it is out by a factor of 10! Most Australians will be aware that Mt Kosciusko is the country's highest point, and a 10 second Google search of that name will reveal it is only 2228 metres high! It is easy to dismiss this as a simple typographical error, but it does not instill confidence in the factual veracity of the rest of the book.

Still, the book will certainly create further interest in the Kimberley and its incredible rock art, and it will therefore fulfill the author's aim of bringing the subject and the question of just who were the Bradshaw painters to a much wider audience. – **Mike Donaldson**

Not for a long time have we had a popular Australian book by an author with a craftsman's knowledge of good writing and the knowledge and imagination to put together a book which has the potential to become extremely influential. It is probably the most important book yet

to be written on the Kimberley. This will put Kimberley on the world map as nothing else ever could.

Perhaps the most important aspect is the bringing to the popular mind the understanding that there were multiple waves of "aboriginals", and that there are no truly indigenous peoples, we are all immigrants. As the Europeans displaced the Aborigines, so they had 'absorbed' the previous peoples, and new cultures will morph the current inhabitants. Now DNA results are starting to show what many have suspected, both intuitively and deductively, about the connectivity of cultures and peoples. From other independent researchers we see new data on the stretch of dolmen builders from Western Europe to Korea to Indonesia. De Santillana and Dechand's shattering work on the universality of the fundamental theme of legends. The discovery of tobacco and cocaine in an Egyptian mummy. Europic mummies and blonde princesses and emperors in China. Who were the pre-Maori whites in New Zealand? The ancient measuring of the earth to a higher degree of accuracy than was possible with our civilisation until the late 18C. There is much more to come, if we are to be allowed to know. And it will come from such as Wilson, who are free men, untrammelled by the demons of the establishment's dungeons. – Peter Bridge

NOMINATION OF OFFICE BEARERS AND OTHER COUNCILLORS FOR THE YEAR 2006–2007

The Constitution of Kimberley Society Inc. requires that the Council shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, 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 only at the April meeting or by request from Cathie Clement (e-mail clement@q-net.net.au or phone 08 9272 3308). Forms must reach the Society by 5.00 P.M. on Tuesday, 11 April 2006 and, whilst facsimiles will be accepted (08 9272 2087), the original form must reach the Society by 7.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 3 May 2005. If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the Council, further nominations will be received at the Annual General Meeting. Should any positions remain vacant at the conclusion of the AGM, such vacancies will be deemed casual vacancies and may be dealt with by the Council according to the Constitution.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This newsletter will be the last one received by members who do not renew for 2006.

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