

# Kimberley Society



## Book Note

***Emo and San Salvador* by Brigida Nailon CSB. Brigidine Sisters, Echuca (Vic), 2005. Hard cover, two-volume set. Book 1: *Broome and Beagle Bay*, 300 pages, ISBN 0-9579361-2-5. Book 2: *Cygnnet Bay, Drysdale River and Lombadina*, 270 pages, ISBN 0-9579361-4-1. Both volumes illustrations and maps. Price \$88.00 for the set.**

No single-page book note could provide an adequate description or assessment of this work. It is the author's fourth major piece of work on missionaries and Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and, like its predecessors, it brings a wealth of information to the reader. The incalculable hours that went into it are obvious because, in addition to Sister Brigida providing context and a broad setting for Father Emo's activities, three other Brigidines translated numerous items of correspondence from Spanish and French to English. Images of the correspondence appear beside most of the translations in the book, making the original text available not just to those who are able to read it but also to the scholars of the future. There are also rock art images, which includes Gwion Gwion or Bradshaw figures, copied in or about 1910.

Father Nicholas Emo, who came from Patagonia, worked in the Kimberley from 1895 to 1915. He went there as one of ten Cistercian missionaries selected by Abbot Ambrose Janny to strengthen Beagle Bay Mission. A history of that mission was recorded in Mary Durack's *The Rock and the Sand* in 1969, and the story of some of its Aboriginal people in *This is Your Place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890–1990*. The Beagle Bay Community published the latter book, edited by Sister Brigida and Father Francis Huegel, in 1990. *Emo and San Salvador* complements the earlier books, telling us more about the mission and its people.

Emo was the only one from the Abbot's group of ten to 'persevere in Australia with a missionary vocation'. In addition to working at Beagle Bay, he also worked in Broome and at other places on the Kimberley coast. The information about those places appears in both volumes even though the chronological division of the work assigns most of the coverage of Cygnnet Bay, Drysdale River and Lombadina to Book 2. The chronicle is pieced together primarily from archives held by the church in Broome, and by the New Norcia Benedictine Monastery in Western Australia, the Sept Fons Cistercian Monastery in France, and the State Records Office of Western Australia. Other privately held material used to fill in some of the blanks includes letters sent to Dame Mary Durack by H V Howe, a one-time Broome pearler and later private secretary to Prime Minister Billy Hughes. His letters touch, among other things, on Father Emo's interaction with other people in the Kimberley. All are interesting, and one tells a delightful story about 'the genealogical history of Broome'.

The circuitous route by which this work came to my attention, and now to yours, shows that the Kimberley Society is achieving the third of the objectives identified in its constitution, ie 'to promote the dissemination of information about the Kimberley'. A member in Scotland became aware of it, obtained a copy, and contacted Sister Brigida to ask whether the Society was aware of it. The work had been launched in Broome in May but, not having been reviewed in major newspapers or journals, it had passed under the radar of Kimberley booklovers who live elsewhere. Only 300 sets were printed and, with more than one third sold already [December 2006], only those who act quickly will add *Emo and San Salvador* to their bookshelves.

*Cathie Clement*