



# Kimberley Society

## Book Note

***Itchy Feet : The life and travels of 'Happy Bob'* by Bob Johnson. [Hesperian Press](#), Carlisle (WA), 2012. Soft Cover, A4, 128 pages, illustrated, ISBN 978-0-85905-028-9, RRP \$30.00.**

*Itchy Feet* is an unpretentious account of a life well lived. It is candid, without being self-congratulatory or malicious, and it contains lots of snippets of unusual general information. An account of car trip from Bindi Bindi, for example, reveals the perils of using the early version of synthetic tyres. The absence of a map in the book became obvious at this point but a quick Google showed that Bindi Bindi is in the Western Australian wheatbelt. It is helpful that the places, people and topics mentioned in the text are indexed. Being particularly interested in stations, I was delighted to find that they are grouped together while other places are listed under the headings 'Australian towns & places' and 'Overseas countries'. That, and the usual Hesperian Press style of listing people's names under a separate heading, makes for easy navigation in the book. Not every name makes it into the index, and some are spelt incorrectly, but, with many reminiscences tending to lack an index, it is great to have one here.

Bob Johnson spent much of his working life in the Kimberley and other parts of the north of Western Australia. His anecdotes about those places and the people he knew or encountered provide a valuable and interesting record. Readers who like to know where a person came from, or went to, will find plenty of information of that sort. The fate of George Burke, for instance, is recorded. Bob mentions that this well known Halls Creek storekeeper died in Alice Springs and that, because he died a pauper, the people of Halls Creek paid for a memorial to be made and erected. A few other anecdotes about George expand on what is known of this eccentric character.

Other Kimberley people mentioned in *Itchy Feet* anecdotes include Norm Back, Frank Bridge and other members of the Bridge family, Sid Byers, Jack Gardener, Colin Hayes, Lew McBeath, Thelma ("Mopsy") Morrison (AIM sister), "Bluey" O'Malley, Tom Quilty and other members of the Quilty family, Cliff Sherry (police), Jim ("The Cat") Smith, the Smiths of Halls Creek and Wyndham, Sam Thomas, the Underwood family, Len Tilt (builder), Keith Weaver (police), Jack Woodlands and his family, and Les Wylde.

The Kimberley towns get some coverage, and the stations include Alice Downs, Bedford Downs, Christmas Creek, Elgie Cliffs, Fossil Downs, Glenroy, Moola Bulla, Mornington, Mount House, and Springvale. With Glenroy being the home of Air Beef, that place fits into the author's periodic employment at meatworks, one of the things that contributed to the breadth of his movements. His mobility and recall of events should see many people reading and making use of *Itchy Feet*.

*Cathie Clement*