



Kimberley Society

Book Note

***North-West Bound from the Batavia Coast to the Kimberley* by Carolyn Thomson-Dans. Department of Environment and Conservation, Bentley (WA), first published 1990, completely revised 2007, 148 pages, A4 format, colour illustrations and maps, ISBN 13: 978-0-7307-5568-1, RRP \$29.95.**

Almost one third of the place-based information in this visually appealing book relates to the Kimberley. The places covered are: Kimberley rainforest patches, Broome, Rowley Shoals Marine Park, Dampier Peninsula, Derby, Walcott Inlet, Prince Regent Nature Reserve, Geikie Gorge National Park, Windjana Gorge National Park, Tunnel Creek National Park, King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park, Halls Creek, Wolfe Creek meteorite crater, Purnululu National Park, Kununurra, Mirima National Park, Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve, Wyndham, Gibb River Road, Mitchell Plateau, Kalumburu Road, and Drysdale River National Park. There is also a two-page entry for the Canning Stock Route.

The entries for the towns, as well as providing information on historic places within the town boundaries, also feature adjacent places. The Broome entry, for example, has coverage and an image of dinosaur footprints. That image and the many others throughout the book are of excellent quality. Each one has a credit against it, with most of those in the Kimberley section coming from people associated with Lochman Transparencies. Several others are from David Bettini, and one is from Ann Storrie. Other Kimberley images by Michael Pelusey appear in the general part of the book.

Closer attention should have been paid to checking the accuracy of the history presented in the book. The Broome entry, for example, states that 'Aboriginal divers were often kidnapped by pearling masters to work on their luggers'. It is true that Aboriginal people were kidnapped and forced to dive for pearl shell, but that activity occurred before Broome was established. It therefore occurred before the time of the town's pearling masters. A similar problem occurs where the Derby entry states that 'Boab Prison Tree, eight kilometres from Derby, was used by police as an overnight cell for Aboriginal prisoners'. Legend says that this occurred, but, with no documentary proof available, a more circumspect account would have been preferable. Where accuracy is concerned, the account of the discovery of gold at Halls Creek is one of the most misleading I've yet encountered. In fact, its novelty is such that I have no idea where the writer found the information.

I sometimes hear people say that history needs tall tales to keep it interesting but, from where I stand, those tales need to be accompanied by phrases such as 'legend has it'. If that can't be done, government departments should stop putting unchecked historical anecdotes into books and onto maps and signage.

Whilst the shoddy history in *North-West Bound* will annoy some readers, the book does have much to commend it. The place-based entries refer readers to other books of interest, eg *Broome and Beyond* for information on bush tucker, *Common Plants of the Kimberley* for more general botanical information, and the little known *Bungle Bungle Range* from the Australian Geological Survey Organisation. That type of material, the clear maps, the guidance on the use of roads and tracks—and a host of other useful information about things such as facilities—will certainly assist readers who are new to the regions covered by the book. The advice on personal safety and on access to remote places is particularly pertinent and should, if heeded, prevent newcomers taking unnecessary risks or unintentionally damaging fragile parts of the environment.

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