



Kimberley Society

Book Note

The String of the Last Wreath : Annotated Diary 1896 to 1899 of Henry Charles Berand transcribed by Raymond Thomas Scott. [Hesperian Press](#), Carlisle (WA), 2013. Soft Cover, A4, 74 pages, illustrated, ISBN 978-0-85905-553-6, RRP \$22.00.

One of the graves in the Old Halls Creek cemetery is that of Harriett Sarah Berand who died on 3 June 1890, aged only 37. It is fitting that a photo of her grave should grace this book's cover. Known as Sarah, she was the wife of a local publican and had lived at Halls Creek, with him and their two young daughters, for three and a half years.

Ray Scott's research has shown that Henry Berand, born in Prussia in 1831, spent several decades in New Zealand and eastern Australia where he is thought to have followed various gold rushes. He and Sarah married in Sydney in 1874, and their daughter Ellen Isabella (Bella) was born the following year in the Gulgong district. After moving to Halls Creek, they operated a boarding house and then had the Court Hotel. Their second child, Ruby May, was born in Halls Creek in June 1888.

Losing his beloved wife and trying to look after his daughters in a remote settlement crippled Henry. His diary reveals a troubled man, plagued by ill-health and business worries, battling to do the right thing by everyone.

In 1896, when the diary starts, Bella was married with a toddler and about to lose a baby. Ruby had serious eye trouble and was ill from time to time. Henry, who knew he wouldn't have coped with Sarah's death without Ruby, reluctantly decided that she would be better off living with her late mother's family in the East. He took her to them late in 1896 and got treatment for her good eye. He didn't know whether he would return to the Kimberley but, after visiting goldfields in New South Wales and Victoria, he went back to Halls Creek at the end of 1897, staying there until September 1898.

Henry's diary, with the help of extensive annotation by Ray Scott, offers glimpses of life in Halls Creek and other places in the second half of the 1890s. It is not easy reading and could be seen to have parallels with the writing of Frank Hann (*Do Not Yield To Despair*, compiled and edited by Mike Donaldson and Ian Elliot, Hesperian Press, 1998). Another parallel is with the 1886 diary of R T S Wolfe (published in *Kimberley Scenes : Sagas of Australia's Last Frontier*, Hesperian Press, 1991).

All such diaries, no matter how grim or terse their contents might be, are valuable sources of history. In this instance, Ray Scott is to be commended for the stamina he showed in providing context that enables the reader to gain maximum value from the entries in Henry Berand's diary. As well as providing public access to a diary that tells of family and social life, business practices, medical remedies, travel, and prospecting, Ray has provided a detailed timeline for Henry's life. The timeline ends in December 1898. Henry died in 1913.

Cathie Clement