



Kimberley Society

Book Note

Barunga by Hugh Edwards. [Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation](#), Derby, 2015, 128 pages, illustrated, ISBN 9780646939025.

This book has had a long and unusual gestation. Mary Durack was asked to write the biography in the early 1970s but could not undertake the task due to her involvement with her family history *Kings in Grass Castles*. Hugh Edwards was asked to take over and he interviewed Albert in Derby over a period of three years. Unfortunately, Albert died after a stroke and, for cultural reasons at that time, when there were objections to a dead man's name or photographs being published, the manuscript lay in a drawer for the next forty years. The Dambimangari Corporation then came to the rescue.

Albert Barunga was a remarkable man. His story is also prominent in Maisie McKenzie's *The Road to Mowanjum* and in *Barddabardda Wodjenangorddee: We're Telling All Of You*. He was one of a select band who successfully negotiated the difficult journey of transition from a traditional Aboriginal life to becoming a leader respected by all communities. Hugh Edwards is a polished scribe who has transcribed Barunga's life in a most readable form. I was gripped by Barunga's experiences as a boy and young man, an adventure story that all can enjoy. Ex-Derby-ites will also appreciate the meeting with other citizens they would have known in the past.

The mood of the book reflects the ethos of the time that it was conceived and drafted – the mid-seventies. Although Barunga and his culture, which he tried to preserve, suffered from the intrusion of the *kartia* (white man), there are few recriminations; the mood is less assertive than we are accustomed to nowadays.

This is a short volume in a large paperback format. Anyone with an interest in the West Kimberley will thoroughly enjoy the read.

Hamish McGlashan