

### RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO LANDING AT VIEW HILL IN SEPT 1885

On 2 October 2019, **Brad Durack** spoke to the Kimberley Society about the life of his great grandfather, Patrick Mantinea Durack, the East Kimberley's first storekeeper. The store was at View Hill, near the mouth of the Ord River, on Cambridge Gulf. On the evening of the talk, Brad was accompanied by **Andrew Barker**, President of the Kununurra Historical Society (KHS).

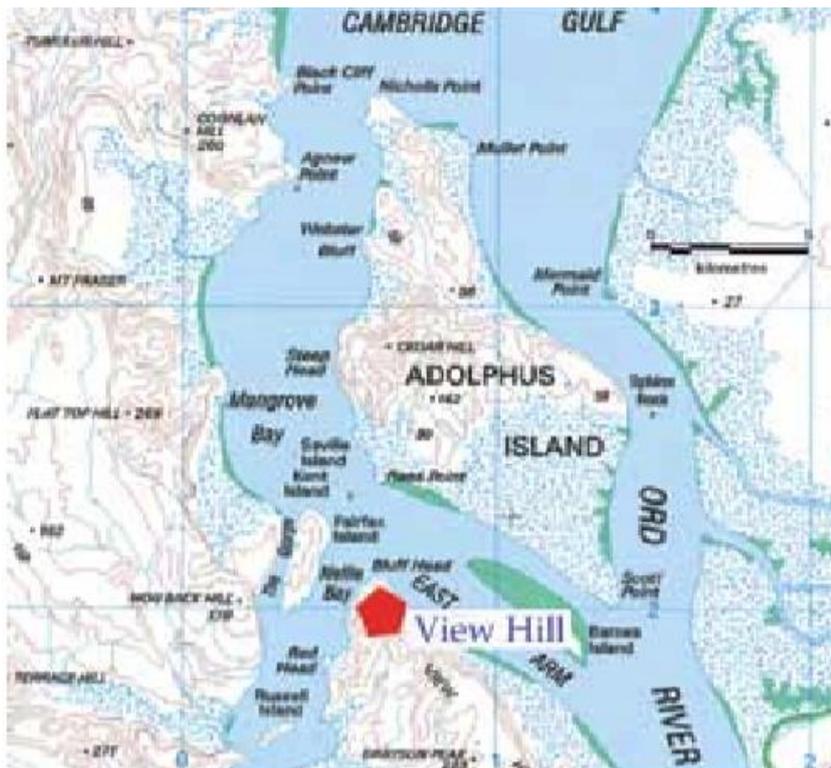
Brad started by explaining how the talk came about – after a one and a half hour first time phone call to Cathie Clement – and then gave some background on what had resulted from research into his great grandfather.

Patrick Mantinea Durack, son of Darby Durack and Margaret Kilfoyle, was known as 'Black Pat' to distinguish him as one of the black haired 'Pat' Duracks. He and his uncle [Tom Kilfoyle](#) were on the famous 1883 to 1885 trek droving Queensland cattle to the East Kimberley. Leaving the drive near Victoria River, Black Pat rode to Port Darwin with [Thomas Hayes](#) (his uncle's partner) and purchased stores for the new Ord River settlers and the prospectors known to be heading for Halls Creek to search for gold. In September 1885, after tons of stores were put ashore from the barquentine *Lorinda Borstel* at View Hill, the captain said that Black Pat had looked “broken hearted”.

Andrew's research on the ship revealed she was a US timber-carrying Barquentine and had brought a load of Karri timber from Hamelin Bay, near Augusta, for the new wharf at Port Darwin. She was chartered for View Hill by Black Pat and the Darwin storekeepers Adcock & Brown, who were travelling further to open a store at Derby. The *Lorinda Borstel* had been named after the wife of the captain, Henry Borstel. The Port Darwin passenger lists showed that Mrs Borstel was also on the voyage.



P M Durack (1851-1933)



Topographic map of Cambridge Gulf and the mouth of the Ord River showing the location of View Hill. The town of Wyndham is on the West Arm of the Gulf, 30 km south of View Hill.

In the talk, we heard that Brad's research had included three boat trips to the View Hill area. On the third trip, done on 4 & 5 August 2018, he was accompanied by Chris McLachlan and Phil Sproull from Wyndham Historical Society (WHS) and Andrew Barker. Footage from that trip was included in a 35-minute film that Andrew had made for the talk.

Before Andrew showed the film, Brad read aloud part of a 1930s [obituary](#) on Black Pat from *The West Australian*. He then told how [Mary Durack](#), having had access to Black Pat's [manuscript](#) at the age of 19, had [written](#) about Cambridge Gulf and Black Pat's View Hill store. Brad described the remoteness and inaccessibility of View Hill – a hard place, with little room between the hills and the mangroves, coupled with massive tides – to illustrate the difficulties of his first two trips.

While Andrew's film focussed on the third boat trip, it also covered a fourth joint KHS-WHS field trip made by two vehicles and included snippets about Phillip Parker King's first survey that named Cambridge Gulf, View Hill and many other features. It was edited at Kununurra in the two weeks before the Kimberley Society talk, which, serendipitously, was exactly 200 years ago in those weeks of 1819. As an aside we heard that, soon after arriving at Coghlan's Landing on one of Brad's three boat trips to the View Hill area, a find was made involving material that sounded like rocks when tapped together. These pieces were taken back to the Kununurra Museum and later proved to be magnetic. It was concluded that they are probably remnants of the 200 gallon iron ships tanks put ashore in 1884 by W H Osmand's luxury steam yacht, the [Cushie Doo](#), with stores for Osmand & Panton's Ord River Station.

On the third boat trip, after arriving at Coghlan's Landing, Brad and Andrew did a six kilometre round trip walk to the site of a boab tree that Brad had been to the week before with his "cousin" Mary Durack, granddaughter of Black Pat's brother, Jerry Brice Durack. Mary had found Surveyor Nyulasy's 'Stone Slab', a metre high slab of rock that he had marked with "N" and a colonial government broad arrow in April 1885, six months before Black Pat's arrival. This was about 50 metres from the boab tree.



This feature, which C W Nyulasy recorded as an Instrument Point in his survey book, was shown on the Lands Department's public plans as "Stone Slab".

On reaching View Hill, Andrew soon found an almost illegible 'PM Durack' marked on one of the trunks but not seen the week before. The boab had several trunks, and pieces of glass from 1885-1886 adorned the ground around it. A larger inscription was noticed blazed on one of the other boab trunks. Nothing legible was discernible, either then or on the later overland field trip, but studying photographs at a later date revealed more:

**PM DURACK**

**LANDED VIEW HILL**

[an illegible date, likely 27/9/85]

**LEFT** [an illegible date,

likely May or June 1886]

Black Pat's manuscript said that he carved his name, the date he landed, and the name of the ship.



Boab bearing the larger inscription.

One of the exciting finds made on the various KHS-WHS trips to the View Hill area took place soon after the discovery of the larger inscription. It became apparent that two of the boab trunks had been cut off a metre or so above the ground, one smoothly and the other with two new branches growing out. These tied in with Black Pat's manuscript where he mentioned having made two boab canoes, the first to move his goods a ton at a time, likely about three kilometres from near Coghlan's landing.



Boab from which trunks were used to build canoes.

In the late afternoon of that eventful day, Andrew and Brad headed off to get back to Coghlan's Landing before sunset to share the news of their successful finds with the others camped there. Having arrived at highest tide midday the day before, they left on the same the following day for the 30+ km voyage back to Wyndham.

After waiting about four weeks for the saltmarsh to dry out more, and for the lowest tide times, another joint KHS-WHS field trip was made by 'road' across the amazing and beautiful saltmarsh country, successfully driving in all the way to Black Pat's boab. This field trip was shown in the film, with another overnight camp allowing more time to analyse the site and to capture the tree inscriptions in different light.



The extensive salt marsh traversed to get to Black Pat's boab tree.

The film that showed the successful search for Black Pat's store was followed by Brad and Andrew answering questions put by their audience.