



# Kimberley Society

## Book Note

*Bill and Mary Mac : From the Kimberleys to Cocklebiddy and places in between* by Jill Campbell. [Hesperian Press](#), 2014, A4, 119 pages, illustrated, ISBN 978-0-85905-535-2, RRP \$35.00.

Reminiscences, photographs, letters and other items have been integrated here to record the lives of Bill and Mary McDonald, the author's parents. Starting with a brief family history, the story soon moves to Bill working in Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Kimberley.

For readers who like good outback yarns, it would be hard to go past Bill's tales of his younger days. In telling of various capers, pranks and tragedies that interrupted the monotony of stock work and droving, he cheerfully acknowledges that, in some instances, fair play and the law counted for nothing. In a section devoted to killings in the Sturt Creek locality in 1922, transcripts of police journals and letters augment Bill's comments.

The Kimberley components of Mary's reminiscences tell mostly of events seen through the eyes of a teenager. Occasionally petty or naive, but most of the time matter-of-fact, they give a lively picture of Wyndham and its environs in the years immediately after the First World War. In that regard, they tie in with Anne Marie Ingham's book *Pioneers of the Kimberley : The Maggie Lilly Story* (Halstead Press, Rushcutters Bay, 2000). Maggie and Mary met as children in Wyndham, and they both mention men, women and children overlooked by contemporary newspapers and books. In *Bill and Mary Mac*, notes provided by Maggie offer additional information about some of the people or places mentioned in the text.

Transcripts of letters sent to Mary by her mother Alice from Hit or Miss Farm outside Wyndham make a valuable contribution to the book. Most are undated, and some are incomplete, but they provide firsthand information about East Kimberley people and events. Like Mary's anecdotes, the letters also reveal the hardships faced by women who worked and lived in remote areas.

Being much younger than her better-known brothers, Mary had little to do with most of them. She relates the oft-told story of one, Jimmy Darcy, being operated on by Mr Tuckett at the Halls Creek post office in 1917. She also comments on Tommy Darcy's career as a Perth jockey, and on him and the others working at places that included Ruby Plains Station (owned by Walter Darcy and David Oliver). Charlie Darcy, who worked on Newry Station, married Gertie Hyland and that led to Mary having interesting stories about the Hyland family and their circus. Gertie features in several of the book's photographs, which are presented in two clusters portraying family members, friends, Wyndham, stations, and much more.

An unexpected aspect of this book is the insight it offers into the strong links that exist between the Kimberley's residents and ex-residents. Mary tells, for example, of boarding in South Perth with the Kelly family who had owned and run Texas Downs Station (out of Halls Creek). When the Kellys went to Adelaide for a holiday, Mrs Neal Durack, whose husband had drowned in the Kimberley, moved in to keep an eye on Mary, the Kelly boys, and a young female lodger.

The book, which is indexed, ends with coverage of Bill and Mary's wedding in 1923. She was seventeen at the time. Bill was twenty-one. Little is said about later times.

*Cathie Clement*