



# Kimberley Society

## Book Note

*Fighting the Kimberley : The 3 Australian Corps Kimberley Guerilla Warfare Group, 1942-1943* by Peter J Bridge. [Hesperian Press](#), Carlisle, 2012, soft cover, A4, 356 pages, illustrated, ISBN 978-0-85905-501-7, RRP \$60.

Over the years, many yarns have surfaced about clandestine activities that took place in the Kimberley during the Second World War. Some, especially those that told of Japanese landings on the coast, sounded questionable. Others relating to the provisions made to detect and deal with such landings often had a ring of truth.

The massive amount of material presented in this book removes all doubt as to how Australia handled the ongoing fear of an invasion. Diaries, letters, reports and reminiscences tell of the deployment and activities of men who were responsible for protecting the Kimberley. Many of the men also appear in the multitude of photos.

While primarily concerned with Major G D Mitchell's 3rd Australian Army Corps Guerilla Warfare Group, the book also discusses that group's predecessor—the Special Independent Company—and other units. The latter were the 101 Field Security Section; Liveringa Commando VDC (part of the 11th North West Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps); the 29th Garrison (Derby); and Special Duties groups.

The book proceeds chronologically, with the sections titled 'The attack on Broome'; 'The defence of Broome'; 'Major Mitchell's first foray'; 'The Kimberley Guerilla Warfare Group'; 'Brief biographical notes and reminiscences of the GWG and associated men'; 'Men of the 101 Field Security'; 'Dissolution of the Guerilla Warfare Group'; 'Arms dumps in the Kimberley'; 'Donkey Patrol, King Leopold Ranges, May – June 1942 by Mac Jensen'; and 'Nominal Roll'. The donkey patrol, undertaken as a commemorative event, endeavoured to follow the route of a 1942 patrol.

For me, the most interesting segments of *Fighting the Kimberley* are the contemporary reports. Major Mitchell's often jaundiced assessments of the locals (missionaries, stockmen, station owners, etc) are revealing, as are his casual comments about arms and ammunition, e.g. '3,000 rounds' left with Harold Reid at Munja. Also of interest are reports and letters that tell of the impact of the military on the locals, e.g. the use of houses and other buildings, requisitioning of equipment, and "booking up" of fuel, oil and other essentials. War correspondent Cyril Longmore's diary and notes (13 March to 7 August 1942) provide snippets about a trip through the Kimberley with Major Mitchell and others. At Fossil Downs Station, he wrote admiringly of the owner, William N M MacDonald, who 'for months has toured the Kimberleys at his own expense, organising the VDC'. Longmore was also a strong advocate of forming a Native Auxiliary Corps at Liveringa Station, and his correspondence about that with Prime Minister John Curtin is included in the book.

The people mentioned in *Fighting the Kimberley* are listed in an index, and most of the army personnel are also listed in the nominal roll. The roll, having been compiled purely for this book, should not be taken as a full list of people who served in the Kimberley. More than 100 other Kimberley men also served in the local VDC. The nominal roll is useful for finding the groups to which men belonged, and thus for finding information and biographical notes relevant to a specific group. Places mentioned in the text are not indexed but a series of maps positioned at the front of the book is useful for gaining a sense of where most of the events occurred. The book's structure therefore allows it to be read as a whole or searched for information.

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