



Kimberley Society

Book Note

Tom & Jack: A Frontier Story by Geraldine Byrne. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2003. Soft cover, 304 pages, map, illustrated, ISBN 1 92073 107 5. RRP \$29.95.

Everyone who enjoyed Mary Durack's *Kings in Grass Castles* and its sequel *Sons in the saddle*, will appreciate this book. It tells the story of Tom Kilfoyle (a cousin of the Duracks), his wife Cattie and their son Jack. It also provides fresh insight into life in the East Kimberley between 1885 and 1947.

The early part of the book tells of the Kilfoyle family's migration from Ireland and the settlement of its members in inland New South Wales and Queensland. Tom Kilfoyle worked for the Duracks in Queensland and took part in early Kimberley exploration. Then, as part owner of one mob of cattle, he participated in the famous overlanding of cattle from Queensland to the Ord River in the years 1883 to 1885. It was hard to find better credentials for starting a station and, soon after his arrival, he established Rosewood near the Northern Territory border. His partners in the station were, originally, Tom Hayes and Galway Jerry Durack, and, in 1902, the Holmes brothers.

In writing *Tom & Jack*, Geraldine Byrne made good use of sources for Kimberley history (both manuscript and published accounts). Surprisingly, she did not draw on the numerous journals written by police who visited Rosewood Station on routine patrols. The absence of that material does not detract from the book, however, because its focus is on the owners' lives. Rosewood is thus more often a backdrop to, rather than a setting for, events in which the Kilfoyles were involved.

Jack Kilfoyle managed Rosewood from 1922, and the second half of the book is devoted to his sure and innovative handling of the station prior to its sale in 1947. Taken as a whole, *Tom & Jack* is both informative and a pleasure to read.

Cathie Clement

Note: See [Fremantle Press](http://www.fremantlepress.com.au) for paperback copies of the book at \$22.99.