

SISTERS, PEARLS & MISSION GIRLS

On 4 February 2004, the Kimberley Society celebrated the completion of its first decade of existence with a screening of *Sisters, Pearls & Mission Girls*. Produced and directed by David Batty of Broome as a Rebel Films production, the film is billed as a moving tale of race, religion and colonisation and an epic story of Irish and Australian nuns in the Kimberley. It is all of that and, at its conclusion, the record crowd that turned out for the event burst into spontaneous applause.

Of particular interest was that Sister Pat Rhatigan, a Kimberley Society member, made a major contribution to the dialogue in the film. There was also footage of the restored bell tower at the Beagle Bay Church. The Society contributed funds to that restoration, which was overseen by another member—architect John Taylor. It was great to see the outcome.

Postscript

On Sunday 25 July 2004, *Sisters, Pearls & Mission Girls* premiered on the ABC Television program, *Compass*. It was great to see the production receive excellent promotion in the week leading up to the premiere. The *Sydney Morning Herald* TV Guide, in hailing it as the "Show of the Week", wrote:

Many of the stories that have emerged from this part of the world about the church and its missions over the past years have been shocking tales of abuse, exploitation and brutality. Which is just one of the reasons that David Batty's and Jeni McMahon's account of the nuns who founded Beagle Bay mission in the north of Western Australia in the early 1900's is a surprise and a relief. . . It's hard not to come away from this documentary with anything but admiration for these strong, spirited, dedicated women who made a home in the remote region and have been embraced by the community there.