DOCUMENTING COLONISATION—THE KIMBERLEY HISTORICAL SOURCES PROJECT

Cathie Clement

This article discusses the author's current use and indexation of archival records relating to European colonisation of the northernmost portion of Western Australia. This region, known as the Kimberley, has been home to Aborigines for more than 40000 years. European occupation, on the other hand, dates back little more than a century, making the Kimberley one of Australia's most recently settled pastoral districts.

The overview of colonisation presented in this article touches on aspects for which Australian historiography has not so far accounted. This situation reflects the sheer immensity of the task that faces any researcher whose work deals with events on a colonial frontier. It is, nevertheless, a situation for which a remedy is well in hand.

History, archives and historiography

The Kimberley Historical Sources Project deals only with data from nineteenth century records, and covers only that portion of Western Australia to the north of the 19° 30' parallel of south latitude. This line separated the Kimberley from the North-West District, and identified a statistical division somewhat smaller than that which constitutes the Kimberley today.

Rich archival holdings portray the Kimberley in various guises. It was considered a treasure trove, fair game to all who were able to reach it. It was a land-speculator's paradise, and it was also a battleground, a burial-ground, and a slave-market. The scope afforded for academic research is tremendous, but has so far been severely constrained by the fact that reliable data has not been readily accessible.

Historically, the intrusion of Europeans into the Kimberley was much more complex and dramatic than is suggested by any existing account.

Attention has so far focused on pastoral settlement, with the result that exploration, Aboriginal labour recruitment, guano collection, land speculation and gold prospecting are now but little known facets of the district's rich heritage.

Continuous pastoral occupation of the Kimberley dates only from 1879, when Julius G. Brockman landed sheep at Beagle Bay. Other colonists had taken stock, mainly sheep, up to Roebuck Bay and Camden Sound in the 1860s. Unprepared for the rigours of a sub-tropical climate, and pressured by Aboriginal resistance, these people all pulled out before the end of 1865. Their stay, though short, involved a good deal of violence against local Aborigines.

In the 1870s, interest in maritime resources made the Kimberley a central, albeit minor, segment of an economic region extending westward to the Seychelles and Mauritius and eastward to Malden Island and Tahiti. The maritime resources of this sub-tropical belt were valuable and, perhaps more importantly, nowhere near as accountable in terms of ownership as those derived from the land.

Considerable entrepreneurial flair characterised the schemes by which men of various nationalities sought to profit from these resources. Browse Island was leased by a company which built and maintained a settlement to house the men who worked its guano deposits. Elsewhere, rights to deposits were fiercely contested, and for some time the American flag flew above Ashmore Reef and the Lacepede Islands.

An outbreak of piracy induced the Western Australian government to establish an outpost on the Lacepede Islands. Concern for the sovereignty of Ashmore Reef likewise led to several men being stationed there. The guano trade gave rise to numerous shipping casualties, but contributed much to mariners' knowledge of the waters off the north-west coast of Australia.

Vessels which already plied between ports in Western Australia, Asia and Mauritius included the Lacepede Islands and Beagle Bay in their itineraries. Alongside them, however, came blackbirders, bent on recruiting labour for the Western Australian pearlshell fishing industry. Primarily men who secured their quota of "recruits" by force, their advent precipitated a renewal of conflict between Europeans and western Kimberley Aborigines.

Forcible recruitment was widespread, and murder occurred as early as 1876. The depredations of the blackbirders affected both the structure and viability of local communities, and the Aboriginal people met violence with violence. It was within this climate of ongoing conflict that the earliest Kimberley sheep stations were established; a fact that has, until now, failed to surface in Kimberley historiography.

By comparison, European recruitment of South Sea Islanders has been the subject of several comprehensive studies. The impact of that recruitment on island communities has been investigated, and much effort has gone into ascertaining the fate of people who were taken from their villages to work overseas. The role of that indentured labour in Queensland's economic and social history has likewise been investigated and chronicled.

In making this comparison, it is not my intention to denigrate either past or present research into Kimberley history but rather to highlight the difference between the two spheres of research. Too few people have delved at any depth into the nature of early European intrusion into the Kimberley. Those who have are well aware of the obstacles that stand in the way.

The present situation may be summarised as follows:

a) Little has been published on early European enterprises in the Kimberley;

b) There is no satisfactory account of early contact between Aborigines and Europeans in the Kimberley, and therefore no ready means of corroborating and dating oral history;

c) A mass of fragmented evidence pertaining to the district's colonisation is buried in archival repositories throughout Australia;

d) Few researchers have the time, inclination, or resources to locate, transcribe and collate such data; and

e) These circumstances encourage the use of trite anecdotal information as factual Kimberley history.

Various projects involving the writing of Kimberley history are currently underway. Unfortunately, resources for these are being wasted as researchers duplicate one another's efforts seeking basic facts with which to work. This stems primarily from the fact that, while published works abound with conflicting claims, first-hand accounts remain accessible only to those for whom time and distance are not impediments.

These basic facts can be made available to researchers. Their retrieval and collation requires only time and energy, admittedly in large quantities. But once available, they will make the Kimberley the first Australian region for which the process of colonisation has been documented at grass roots level. Discussion of the scope, methodology and progress of this work follows.

Scope of the Project

The Kimberley Historical Sources Project will:

1 Locate and transcribe information pertaining to the presence and interaction of Aborigines, Asiatics and Europeans in the Kimberley during the period 1863-1900;

2 Compile data bases for land tenure, shipping, and biographical information; and

3 Publish this information, with accompanying notes and maps, as a series of directories.

In so doing the Project will:

1 Make reliable source material available to individuals and libraries throughout Australia;

2 Create guides to such specific archival holdings as land tenure records;

3 Reduce duplication of research, and thus contribute to the preservation of fragile archival material;

4 Provide information on nomenclature, national parks and sites that are significant to Aborigines; and

5 Facilitate research into the Kimberley's history in the fields of anthropology, culture contact, social and economic history, demography, genealogy and historical geography.

Methodology and Directory Content

This project is an extension of my honours and postgraduate work at Murdoch University. In undertaking both programs, I have been permitted to work almost exclusively in an empirical manner. In the process, I have gained an unrivalled knowledge of archives pertaining to the Kimberley, but have produced little in the form of published work. Hence the move to publish these directories of raw data.

Each directory, in addition to work already already completed, requires upwards of 18 months of full-time work for the compilation of its data base, text and maps. Each will be complete in its own right, and will also complement others in the series. Their efficient production depends on relevant archival records being processed systematically and according to two criteria.

These criteria are, firstly, the overall availability of the data, and secondly, the degree to which the subject matter can be classified as finite. By undertaking the most finite first, those directories containing less finite data benefit most from ongoing archival research. Thus, while only one directory is under way at any given time, note is being made whenever material pertinent to another directory is encountered.

The main difference between this project and any basic indexing of archival records is that identification of people and vessels involved in frontier activity demands a sound knowledge of that frontier. It is also relevant that those people and vessels were highly mobile, and that the majority of records being processed pertain to the whole of Western Australia at the very least.

In general, the records are too fragmented and miscellaneous to allow data to be keyed directly into a computer. Index cards and forms are

therefore being used for the initial recording process. Uniformity is crucial, and these interim cards and forms provide an essential check on the accuracy of information during the later stages of correlation and computerisation.

There are two basic groups of records being processed. Firstly, those pertaining to land tenure, and secondly, those pertaining to shipping and people. The first group comprises bound volumes, files, loose correspondence and cancelled public plans. These are Land Office and Treasury records transferred in part to the State Archives. Notices from the *W.A. Government Gazette* supplement this material.

The second record group comprises bound volumes, files and loose correspondence produced in Western Australia by the Police Department, the Colonial Secretary's Office and the Fremantle Harbour Master's Office. It also contains a wide selection of newspapers, shipping records and manuscripts from the holdings of archives and libraries throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Examination of thousands of items from within these groups has shown that a well-managed program of data extraction will yield a comprehensive record of all major aspects of Kimberley colonisation. On a directory-by-directory basis, the following overview gives some idea of the scope revealed so far amongst the various record groups.

Pastoral Leasing. Records relating to land tenure are by far the most finite of archival materials relating to the Kimberley. Details of almost 2000 pastoral lease applications and more than 700 individuals, partnerships and companies have been indexed. All nineteenth century pastoral leasing is accounted for, and the *Kimberley District Pastoral Leasing Directory, 1881-1900* is now approaching completion.

Shipping. Thorough, but not exhaustive, examination of records for the period 1873 to 1888 has placed more than 300 vessels in the vicinity of Kimberley ports. Many of these were large foreign-registered vessels with no other ports of call in Western Australia. This information is suitable for indexation according to port of registration, type of rig, tonnage, master, previous and subsequent ports of call, and the carriage of cargo, stock and passengers.

Immigrants. Examination of perhaps 40% of the records for the period 1873 to 1890 has yielded names for almost 5000 European, Asiatic and Aboriginal immigrants. The majority of these people visited the district between 1878 and 1888, arriving by sea. This information is suitable for indexation according to name, date and means of arrival, duration of visit, portions of the district visited, and occupational or other activities.

Kimberley Aborigines. Examination of some 50% of the records for the period 1879 to 1890 has yielded names for approximately 1000

Aborigines who were in contact with Europeans. These people were mostly from the western Kimberley, and many worked as pearlshell divers. Indexation of this information is feasible on the basis of tribal name, European name, place of birth, period and type of contact with Europeans, and means of livelihood.

Within each of the directories, the actual organisation of data will be determined partly by anticipated reader requirements, and partly by the degree to which the contents of specific fields are suitable for automatic indexation. In general, however, any given directory will contain at least two indices, as well as support material in the form of text, illustrations and maps.

Unless a more suitable format suggests itself for any specific volume, information will be presented in single line entries using a horizontal A4 layout. This layout is perfect for maps of the Kimberley, and will accommodate text in two neat columns. It thus enables the whole of the directory to be laid out on the one convenient axis.

Every care has been taken to devise a format that will allow readers to move easily between the indices within a directory and between the directories themselves. Indices will be colour-coded, i.e. printed on coloured paper. Printing will be single-sided, using an offset process with plates made from the computer printouts and from map transparencies. The pages will be hole-punched on the upper edge, and spiral-bound into durable one-piece covers which display the title on both the front and the spine.

Pitfalls and prospects

When this project was first devised, I was hopeful that grants and/or contributions sufficient to produce the first directory might be secured from government, local government and private sector sources. This proved to be a total misconception. There is considerable interest in access to the data, but none in bearing portion of the production costs.

Had funds been forthcoming, it was intended that 200 copies of each directory would be published, and that those available after allocations to sponsors would be sold cheaply to interested parties. Given the absence of funding, I now anticipate printing only 100 copies of the pastoral leasing directory and selling the bulk of these less cheaply to subsidise continuation of the work.

Prospects of gaining a sponsor for the Aboriginal biographical directory seem quite good at the present time, but there appears to be little chance of securing funding for the intermediate shipping and immigration directories. Work on these will therefore proceed on a part-time basis with a view to publishing the next volume, the shipping directory, in late 1989.

Some modification of the project will inevitably occur if sales of the

pastoral leasing directory indicate that the production of 100 copies exceeds the demand for such an item. The project will not, however, be abandoned.

The pastoral leasing directory

This volume brings together cartographic and documentary data pertaining to all nineteenth century applications for, and leases of, Kimberley pastoral land. It contains almost 4000 data base records derived from the correlation of a multitude of scraps found in the archival collections held by the Battye Library and by the Western Australian Department of Land Administration.

While this directory overcomes much of the awkwardness hitherto associated with the physical separation of these two holdings, it does not pretend to replace these. Rather, it is a comprehensive guide to Kimberley pastoral leasing, and will enable researchers who require additional information to be more specific in their requests for access to archival records.

The volume consists of four sections.

1. The text: A summary of the evolution of pastoral leasing legislation in Western Australia, explaining how and why land records for the Kimberley became so fragmented. This section has sketches which depict various aspects of land alienation, one map showing station boundaries, and another schematically portraying traditional Aboriginal tribal boundaries. It also contains notes relating to use of the directory and guides to various archival holdings.

2. Alphabetical index to leasing: A comprehensive index which lists the official numbers relevant to the applications made by, and leases held by, individuals, partnerships and companies. Also given is the city, colony or country in which individuals and companies were based at the time of first applying for, or first acquiring, leases over Kimberley land.

3. Numerical index to leasing: This is the directory's largest section, and comprises five sub-sections organised according to the regulations under which specific lease applications were lodged. Each application is listed in terms of locality (i.e. map co-ordinates), acreage, name of applicant and, if granted, date of approval. In the latter instances there are also details relevant to the transfer, alteration, surrender, forfeiture, redemption, auctioning and cancellation of leases. An inbuilt cross-referencing system will enable users to readily identify a range of consecutive leases granted over specific tracts of land.

4. The maps: A series of eighteen maps was constructed for the purpose of correlating cartographic and documentary data. Each of these maps forms part of, and displays co-ordinates from, an overall grid system. The leases depicted on these maps represent the entire chronological range of land alienation, and in most instances are numbered according to the

earliest application for which accurate cartographic information is available.

The cross-referencing system that is built into this directory will enable users to:

* identify the interests of individuals, partnerships, and companies
* identify the individual members of partnerships and companies
* identify all applicants who were successful in their bids for Kimberley pastoral leases, and most of those who were for one reason or another denied leases
* identify the locality in which applicants were resident at the time of first selecting Kimberley land
* trace changes in the ownership and acreage of leases
* pinpoint the locality of leases using map co-ordinates
* identify prior and subsequent tenure over specific land
* secure information on non-payment or late payment of rent
* assess the extent of lease forfeiture and sale by auction
* assess the degree to which leases were mortgaged
* assess the degree to which leases speculation affected the Kimberley pastoral industry.

Further details concerning the availability of directories can be obtained from Cathie Clement at 151 Joel Terrace, Mt Lawley, Western Australia, 6050.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE OF DIRECTORY LISTING: ALPHABETICAL INDEX

NAMES OF APPLICANTS FOR, AND LESSEES OF, PASTORAL LAND	FROM	NUMBERS ASSIGNED TO APPLICATIONS FOR, AND LEASES OF, PASTORAL LAND
ADAMS, Joseph Robert George (with Edward WHITE)	–	K480; K481
ALCOCK, Joseph (with others; as MEDA RIVER PASTORAL COMPANY)	W.A.	K25; K27; K56; K154; K495; K606
ALCOCK, William (with others; as MEDA RIVER PASTORAL COMPANY)	W.A.	K25; K27; K56; K154; K495; K606
ALLEN, Anthony John (with Harry BROADHURST)	W.A.	5/263; 71/136
ANDERSON, A.	–	K289
ANDERSON, Alexander Edwin (with McKenzie GRANT & John EDGAR)	W.A.	5/177; 71/38; 71/136
ANDERSON, Alexander Edwin (with McKenzie GRANT)		K782; K783; K784; K785; K788; 71/39
ANDERSON J.	–	K166
ANDERSON, J.G. & Co.	–	K264; K268; K312; K318
ANDERSON, J.W. & Co.	–	K181
ANDERSON, James	–	K243
ARMSTRONG, Michael Dare (with C.B. FISHER, T. HOGAN & E.H. WHITELAW	N.T.	5/194
AYLWIN, John Howard (with E.F. McGEORGE, J. McMILLAN & A.R. WALLIS)	–	K765; K766; K767; K768; K769; K770; K771; K772; K837; K842; K843; K844
BAIRD, Montague Weller	W.A.	5/209
BAMBRIDGE, Reginald Newton (with Joseph JOHNSON & others)	–	K921
BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES	W.A.	K25; K27; K56; K154; K495; K606; 71/38; 71/39; 71/59; 71/60; 71/61; 71/62; 71/136; 71/160; 71/238; 71/268; 71/274; 71/275; 71/346; 139/98; 140/98; 141/98; 148/98; 149/98; 150/98; 151/98; 152/98; 217/98; 218/98; 516/102

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE OF DIRECTORY LISTING: NUMERICAL INDEX

NUMBER	MAP CO-ORDINATES	ACREAGE	APPLICANT (LEASE APPROVAL DATE); SUBSEQUENT LESSEE (LEASE TRANSFER DATE); GENERAL REMARKS	OTHER RELEVANT NUMBERS
K1 (cont.)	9-E- 7	50000	COSTELLO, T. (18/2/81); GAME, J.A. (5/12/82); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (7/6/87); UNPAID (1888)	Pt.K63; Pt.K219; Pt.71/46
K2 (cont.)	3-C- 9 & 8-D- 9	100000	WILLSHIRE, R.J. (18/2/81); COWAN, J. (15/6/81); UNPAID (1/3/82); SUBJECT OF APPLICATION K728 BY M.W. PASCOE (13/3/82); HAD K728 APPROVED (13/6/82)	K728
K3 (cont.) (cont.)	9-E- 7	50000	MARMION, W.E. & Co. (18/2/81); KIMBERLEYPASTORAL COMPANY (11/11/81); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (2/3/87); UNPAID (1888)	Pt.K219; 71/14
K4 (cont.)	1-A- 2 & 1-B- 2	50000	PEARSE, G. (18/2/81); OPTION RETURNED TO THE LAND OFFICE UNPAID (20/4/81)	Pt.K478; Pt.K789
K5 (cont.)	1-A- 1 & 1-A- 2	50000	PEARSE, S. (18/2/81); OPTION RETURNED TO THE LAND OFFICE UNPAID (29/4/81)	K732
K6 (cont.)	9-F- 7 & 9-F- 8	100000	WELLARD, J. (18/2/81); RICHARDSON, A.R. (10/3/82); GAME, J.A. (31/7/83); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (7/6/87); UNPAID (1888)	71/48
K7 (cont.) (cont.)	8-D- 9 & 9-D- 8	51000	JOSEPHSON, A.M. (18/2/81); MORRISON, Dr. A. (13/2/82); UNPAID (1/3/84); DUE TO LAND SHORTAGE REVEALED BY SURVEY, WAS NOT SUBMITTED TO AUCTION (8/10/84)	Pt.K34; Pt.5/172
K8	–	51000	THOMPSON, G. (APPLICATION DECLINED, LAND ALREADY ALLOTTED)	–
K9 (cont.) (cont.)	3-C-10 & 8-D-10	50000	GIBBONS, R. (18/2/81); KIMBERLEY PASTORAL COMPANY (11/11/81); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (2/3/87); UNPAID (1888)	71/15
K10 (cont.) (cont.)	9-E- 7 & 9-F- 7	50000	PEARSE, S. (18/2/81); KIMBERLEY PASTORAL COMPANY (11/11/81); SURRENDERD UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (2/3/87); UNPAID (1888)	Pt.K71; K353; 71/11
K11 (cont.) (cont.) (cont.)	9-F- 6 & 9-F- 7	50000	NEWMAN, E. (18/2/81); TIMMS, W.F. (11/5/81); KIMBERLEY PASTORAL COMPANY (2/9/84); ALTERED AFTER SURVEY (;); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (2/3/87); UNPAID (1888)	Pt.K38; 71/8
K12 (cont.) (cont.) (cont.)	9-E- 8	50000	DALY, C.J. (18/2/81); DALY, H.B. (5/6/82); UNPAID (1/3/83); FORFEITURE CANCELLED BY THE GOVERNORS AUTHORITY (21/7/83); FAIRBAIRN, R. (8/8/85); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (7/3/87)	71/1
K13 (cont.)	8-D-12	50000	SHENTON, G. (18/2/81); UNPAID (1/3/85); SOLD AT AUCTION TO A. FORREST AS 5/201 (2/9/85)	5/201
K14 (cont.) (cont.) (cont.) (cont.)	9-F- 7 & 9-F- 8	100000	PATTERSON, W. (18/2/81); SUBJECT OF APPLICATION K482 (20/4/81); UNPAID (29/4/81); HAD K482 APPROVED (24/6/81); HAD FORFEITURE CANCELLED BY THE GOVERNORS AUTHORITY (22/10/81); HAD K482 CANCELLED AND THE RENT FROM THAT LEASE CREDITED TO K14 (22/10/81); GAME, J.A. (2/11/83); EXPIRED (31/12/99)	K482; 71/255
K15 (cont.)	8-D- 9	100000	MONGER, J.H. (18/2/81); LUKIN & MONGER (25/11/83); SURRENDERED UNDER CLAUSE 64 of the LAND REGULATIONS (7/6/87); UNPAID (1888)	Pt.K64; 71/55

APPENDIX 3