

WA's hundred years of gold

Joanna Sassoon writes of books celebrating the centenary

Gold was first discovered in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region of WA in 1851. Its centenary has provided renewed impetus for books on the myths and romance of prospectors and the gold mining industry in WA, including Geoffrey Blainey *Paddy Hannan: a claim to fame* (Kalgoorlie: Thomson Reward Pty Ltd, 1993 \$25.95) and Martyn and Audrey Web *Golden destiny: the centenary history of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia* (City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 1993 \$125).

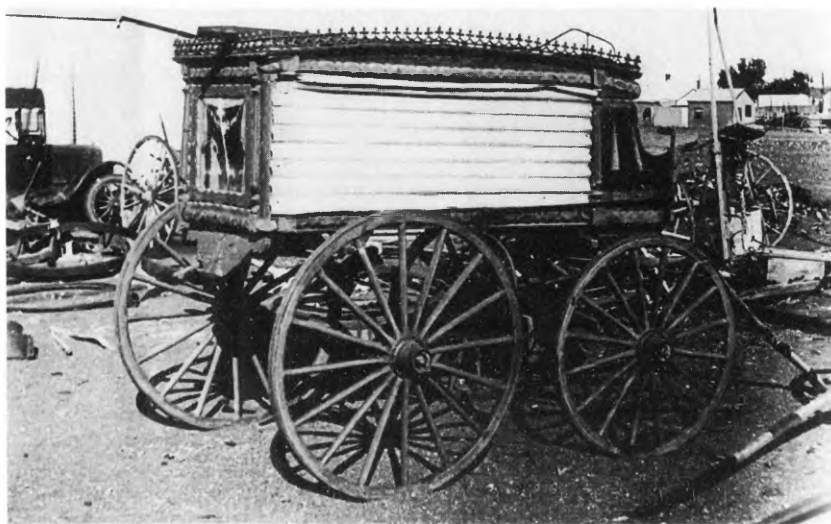
As a sober contrast, the *Kalgoorlie-Boulder miners' Book of Remembrance* has been created within a community which has lost 627 named men in mining accidents on the Golden Mile in its first hundred years of existence. The book, which is based on a British tradition, was born from the personal grief of Kalgoorlie resident Sue Cumming, whose brother Mark 'George' Turich was killed in a mine accident.

The *Book of Remembrance* has been compiled to ensure that ordi-

nary people whose lives have been sacrificed in pursuit of the nation's wealth will not be forgotten. Biographical information, occupations and the place of death of those who died in mining accidents were gleaned from many sources and collated for the first time—details in themselves which will add to the scant records of this transitory group of people. The rag paper was made by the community to archival standards and stained to the

greens and reds of Kalgoorlie. The information was inscribed by Goldfields residents after a series of local calligraphy workshops.

The twenty-centimetre-thick book was funded by the Trades and Labour Council of WA along with individual companies and unions and is now on permanent display at the Museum of the Goldfields, Kalgoorlie—a graphic reminder of important but oft forgotten aspects of the mining industry. ■



This hearse was still in use in the Kalgoorlie region in the 1930s (picture courtesy of the J S Battye Library of WA History).

The First National Book Summit

Frank Thompson, Chairperson of the ALIA Press Board, at the Summit

The First National Book Summit was held in Melbourne under the auspices of the National Book Council with 100 invited participants including librarians, authors, publishers, printers, and booksellers as well as academics, lawyers, and others involved in the book industry. The theme was 'Planning for Action: The Book in an Era of Change'. Over 30 speakers delivered papers of varying length and content, contributing to a plethora of ideas which, with the broad conference theme and the variety of participants meant the summit was not as sharply focussed as it might have been.

If there is a second summit, it should certainly narrow its objectives somewhat, allow more time for the participants to debate the

issues, and hopefully arrive at some coordinated action plans. There is no doubt there are a number of major issues facing everyone involved in books, issues which will not go away and must be addressed urgently. This means such conferences are very important. They must not be allowed to become so diffuse that they lose their power to be agents of change.

The opening address by Senator McMullan, Minister for the Arts, particularly excited the audience because he indicated he was looking for ideas for increased funding for Australian literature. He was not talking of squillions, but was prepared to think in terms of a modest percentage increase in the draft budget of the Literature Board of

the Australia Council. It was not clear whether this increase would actually go to the Literature Board or would be available to other groups involved in Australian literature. In any event he urged participants to submit ideas directly to his office.

Brian Johns, Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority, gave a brilliant keynote address, pointing out how rich Australia is in cultural resources because of our multiculturalism. We needed to promote more non-English leaders to positions of power in order to develop a structured approach to exports. We needed to focus on customers not countries because the markets for literature and books and ideas would be borderless and more focussed on languages ▶

▶ rather than nationalities. Many other speakers at the summit picked up on this theme and talked about Australia becoming not only the purveyors of English language to the Asian region but even the coordinator and disseminator of material in other languages. There was obviously a big role for libraries in this vision.

Other speakers discussed the role of publishers in an increasingly technologically sophisticated world, the revolution in copyright now including the vexed problem of moral rights, how the modern library can cope with the new technologies, the problem of heritage and preservation (including a particularly good paper from Warren Horton, Director General of the NLA), and economic rationalism and the nation's literary culture.

A highlight of the summit was the presentation of the National Book Council's Gold Medal award to Brian Johns at a dinner midway through the proceedings. ■

Two fascinating books received

Any more room in an OS Christmas stocking?

The Desert Coast is based mainly on Edward Eyre's journal of his 1840-41 expedition from South Australia to Western Australia. Ed Stokes spent two months retracing Eyre's footsteps, taking two thousand photographs on the way. He comments: '...despite the safety nets provided by maps, vehicle and a transceiver, the country's dangers were always present...The Bight's coast, as awesome today as in Eyre's time, moulded my thoughts.'

Of the book's 128 pages, fifty carry Stoke's photographs with stunning clarity in vivid colour and generous format. How could they do it at the price? Well, the Arts Council and Cathay Pacific Airways provided sponsorship and we the readers reap the benefit. *The Desert Coast: Edward Eyre's Expedition 1840-41* by Edward Stokes (ISBN 0 86788 691 9) is published by Five Mile Press at \$39.95.

Ronald Doerfler began writing *Dead Reckoning: calculating without instruments* (Houston, Gulf Publishing Company, 1993. 182 pp \$27.25.

ISBN 0 88415 087 9) out of an interest in methods of the so-called 'lightning calculators' of the past, intending to publish a paper in a mathematical journal. It finished up as this book.

These days we all have inexpensive electronic calculators, so why should anybody still want to do it the hard way? Doerfler aims his book at those of us with an interest in mathematics and a general appreciation of numbers, who enjoy exercising the mind with some mental arithmetic. He begins with strategies for performing addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and error-checking the results. He goes on to look at roots, logarithms and trigonometrical functions.

The book is eminently readable, if you have a mathematical bent and are sufficiently interested to work through the examples. Given to somebody who enjoys mind-stretching puzzles, it could be a painless way of enlarging their 'number sense'—and *that* is an advantage in very many professions. Highly recommended. (Our review copy courtesy of DA Information Services.) ■

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