

BOOK REVIEW

SILENT PEARLS

Old Japanese graves in Darwin and the history of pearling

Self published by John Lamb (Bytes 'n Colours)

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As soon as you pick up this book you know it is a quality production. The cover is amazing, and the format is clear and direct. The illustrations, photographs, maps, graphs, paper and colour usage is excellent. The dedication " To all those who died young in an unforgiving environment" inspired me to delve into this book by John Lamb.

I confess I have lived in Darwin for over 40 years but had little knowledge of the size and scope of the Pearling Industry off our coast, involving Melville and Bathurst Islands. I was amazed by the number of these brave men working in such a dangerous industry. Over a hundred Japanese deaths in the NT between 1891-1941.....A long way from home.

To me, it is just as amazing that the graves have survived through bombings, cyclones and the general neglect of time. John's translations skills and the hard work he must have done to trace these people is outstanding. As usual I am left wanting to know more about individuals. This time its Cleo Holmes, arrested in North Bondi March 21 1942 for her "carelessness in observing blackout restrictions" and her very beautiful daughter Lillian.

This book has sifted through many issues.....marketing, supply, ownership, State disputes, Federal Government decrees and interference, different views on interactions with aboriginal people, personal interactions, racism, rise and fall of world markets, price fixing, and PROFITS....sounds a little like 2015 actually.

SILENT PEARLS is a meticulously researched, carefully written and very interesting book. I have already been on TROVE checking out the views of the time. Maybe I still have a lot more to learn about our pearling industry... like, what happened to it for a start. This is a terrific book.