

Notre Dame
Nulungu
**Talking Heads
Seminar Series**



A New Partnership, William Roe, 1994

Two Centuries on: the iconic 'Mermaid' boab tree at Careening Bay in the Kimberley

Date: Wednesday 24th November 2021

Venue: NDB11 Lecture Room 13

88 Guy Street, Broome

Time: 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Also available via Zoom: <https://notredame-au.zoom.us/j/82811499229>

Password: **864290**



Presenter: Professor Kevin Kenneally AM

Abstract

In September 1820, Lieutenant Phillip Parker King's hydrographic survey vessel His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid was leaking badly and in danger of sinking. King careened his cutter in a sheltered bay on the north-west Kimberley coast, now known as Careening Bay. During their stay, the ship's carpenter inscribed 'HMC MERMAID 1820' on a large boab tree behind the beach.

Two hundred years later, it is difficult to visualise the courage, skill and ingenuity of the Mermaid's officers and crew in their unassisted maritime survey work on remote parts of the Australian coast. Likewise, the hardships they endured. But the importance of Careening Bay in Western Australia's science and conservation history and the role of the Mermaid's Indigenous and non-Indigenous crew members, is being recognised and honoured.

The significance of the nautical charts prepared and plant and animal specimens collected on King's voyages has often been overlooked but their discoveries are now being acknowledged. In King of the Australian coast, Marsden Hordern wrote: 'Countless ships, guided safely through dangerous waters by his charts, have reached their desired havens.'

In this illustrated presentation I will talk about the Mermaid's time at Careening Bay and highlight the importance to Australian exploration, contact with Macassan fishermen and of the role played by Indigenous and non-Indigenous crew members and their contributions to science and humanity.

Biography

Professor Kevin Kenneally AM. Kevin is a science graduate of The University of Western Australia and was a Principal Research Scientist with the Western Australian Herbarium. He has conducted research on the vegetation, flora, taxonomy, ethnobotany, ethnoarchaeology and natural history of the Kimberley for nearly 50 years. Kevin's interest is in collaborative projects that build long-term relationships that benefit communities.