

There was a dearth of white women in TPNG and, in any case, miscegenation was frowned upon by the authorities and most expatriates.

This British background may perhaps excuse the somewhat *Pommie*, oft-repeated, 'being on the station' when in Lae, whereas those Aussies who lived on outstations would describe a posting or visit to an urban centre as 'being in town'. Leaving an outstation (or town) on field duties was, as correctly described, being 'on patrol' or 'in the bush'. Again, readers in Europe may well imagine the tortuous road to the highlands, over high passes such as the Kasam and Daulo, being closed due to a mass of snow and rock descending from the peaks due to the "avalanches" (page 40) – rather than a quagmire of earth, mud and a tangle of trees and thick vegetation resulting from a landslide.

If one has read the two earlier books it could be that the sometimes boring and banal chatter between Conibeer and fellow club patrons is a little repetitive. But that is the way it often was in the expatriate dominated clubs and pubs of TPNG's towns!

Marke's use of the English language, and powers of observation of nature during his own obvious experiences of treks through the bush of TPNG, makes for interesting reading. The unlikely situations and outcomes, experienced by Conibeer, make for compelling reading – bearing in mind it is all taking place in the "*Land of the Unexpected – Like every place you've never been*"!

This is not a book about PNG or its people. In fact the latter, like a domestic servant retiring to the *boi haus* after completing his chores, mainly remain in the background. However, former residents of PNG, who are no doubt the targeted readers, will appreciate a number of the scenarios. On the other hand those unfamiliar with Australia's former quasi-colonies will glean some insight into the Country's uniqueness.

The lack of any extensive details of the indigenous inhabitants is exemplified, as in an earlier novel, by the way one could be left with the impression that all country between the highlands and the lowland areas was uninhabited by anyone other than the occasional, perhaps hermit-type, 'bushman'. Could a white man and women really spend days without coming into contact with a multitude of curious *locals* once word had spread of their presence? But, one has to remember that the population of PNG has more than doubled since and, of course, earlier euro-centric perceptions have changed.

Until the mid-sixties most expatriates remained aloof from Papua New Guineans. Social barriers began to disintegrate with 'native drinking' after 1962 coinciding with changing *western* attitudes. Such attitudes saw the end of the last remnants of 'Victorian ideals' and included pressures for equal pay for women as well as their "*liberation*". Even so, I cannot but think that there was more inter-action between the expatriates and 'locals' during the 70s and 80s than there is now.