

Blending history and humour

MAC HOLT

RENOWNED Mid West artist Doug Ryder has now put pen to paper to record centuries of local aboriginal history, old tribal law, dreamtimes and amusing stories.

Doug's mother Lucy was born under a tree at Murchison House Station but was relocated to Geraldton during World War II, for fear of potential Japanese

invaders using aborigines to gather intelligence on the local country.

Doug was born in Geraldton in 1946.

"I have been married five times, have 28 grandchildren and six great-grandkids" he said.

Doug explained the five marriages were Kangaroo marriages.

"To marry a woman I jumped over her broomstick and she became my

wife — to divorce her I went back and jumped back over her broomstick. If she didn't want me any more she would burn her broomstick."

Doug did not say which of his ex-wives ended up with no broomstick, but his current wife, Francis Mippy, still has hers.

The ancestry and cultural history is full of fascinating stories — from the tribal conflicts of women being stolen and taken away, causing inter-tribe killings; to how an emu's curiosity was exploited to enable them to be tricked into moving close enough to

be speared.

The book also tells the tale of a painting of a three-masted sailing ship at Walga Rock near Mt Magnet reputedly painted around 300 years ago.

Was this an image of the *Zuytdorp* which was wrecked off the coast around June, 1712?

Doug's great grandmother Jilba and her sister Venus also worked at the Murchison House Station.

"They heard of a 'good looking black fella' working as a cook at Tamala station," he said.

"So they took the ini-

tiative and walked 90 miles to go and mate with him.

"He turned out to be an Anglo-Indian and we have no details of if they succeeded in their mission," Doug said.

This book will be the first in a series and should be a fascinating read, providing a record not only of his own life but a history of the region and the local aboriginal tribes.

The official book launch will be at the Art Place Gallery in Kalbarri on Thursday, September 22 at 5pm where Doug will personally sign every book purchased.



HISTORY: Doug Ryder signing books at the Art Place Gallery with artist Cynthia Fletcher and 'Fred' Fletcher. Picture: MAC HOLT