

Peter Monteath, ed. *The Diary of Emily Caroline Creaghe, Explorer*. Corkwood Press.

Reviewed by Gillian Dooley in *The Adelaide Review*, April 15, 2005, p. 28.

Historian Peter Monteath has made something of a specialty lately of rescuing forgotten narratives. In 2003 he published *Sailing with Flinders*, the diary of Samuel Smith, an ordinary seaman in the *Investigator*, and now he has resurrected the journal of Emily Caroline Creaghe, a woman who has some claim to be called one of Australia's first women explorers.

Monteath's title endows Creaghe with more grandeur than she claimed for herself. Her own title, scribbled on the title page of *Lett's Australasian Diary and Almanac*, was 'E. Carrie Creaghe – The Little Explorer's Diary.' In early 1883, at the age of twenty-two, she accompanied her husband Harry, with well-known explorer Ernest Favenc and Lindsay Crawford, on an overland exploring trip from the west of the Gulf of Carpentaria to Darwin. About one-third of the distance they covered was uncharted country: the Creaghes were only 'off the map' for about four weeks, a mere walk in the park compared with Favenc's other expeditions in Northern Australia.

Carrie does not appear to have made a significant contribution to the work of the expedition. Even her cooking was not much help. Early on, she proudly records currying a couple of 'fine black ducks' shot by Crawford, but the next day she has to write, 'Currie filled with flies, uneatable. ... The men after discovering that they had had a meal of flies were all ill.' This was a blow, of course: the food and water supplies were major worries, along with avoiding the worst of the heat. Her first attempt at damper was a success, but by that time they were practically back to civilisation.

Creaghe is very young, and very conventional. Her feelings towards the Aborigines are composed of terror with a dash of pity. Sunday observance is something of a preoccupation. She makes remarks like, 'This has seemed very little like Sunday I am sorry to say,' on a day when fleeing the feared 'Blacks' (who never seem to have posed any serious threat) and riding until after dark in search of water had to take precedence. At a Territory homestead, she is scandalised to hear waltzes played on the sabbath: 'It is the first time I have ever been in a house where secular music is played on Sunday. We shall both be thoroughly delighted to get amongst our own set again.'

Relations with Favenc were not cordial. Carrie mutters to her diary about his grumpiness, and Favenc, in turn, confides to his that the Creaghes were 'only ornamental' to the expedition. And indeed, though it isn't entirely clear why she was included in the party, there is a suggestion that it had more to do with public relations than practicality. Monteath quotes another lady explorer's remark that 'capitalists would not fear the savages when ladies had traversed the country in safety.' She returned home unscathed, but was never tempted to venture forth again.