

## **William Bibby: Gold Miner, Engineer & Pioneer - His Life in Australia from 1859 to 1888**

By VICTOR BIBBY

**W**illiam Bibby was the first manager of the Brisbane Raub Australia Syndicate's Gold Mine, the so-called Eldorado of the East, in the British Protected Malay State of Pahang. This mine had been discovered by Robert Sefton, a well-known itinerant prospector who was in the party credited with discovering the Hodgkinson gold field on the Palmer, Queensland. When William Bibby died, the Raub mine had become the largest producer of gold in the Malay States, used hydro-power to produce electricity, had eighty head of stamps, paid dividends and was called Golden Raub. When it began to pay the first dividends in 1896 it compared well with the best low grade gold mines in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of 1899, the total gold extracted was: '2 tons 5 cwts 46 lbs 3 ozs troy of gold'<sup>2</sup> from an average yield of 15 dwts 1 and 1/2 grs per ton.

The Raub Australian Gold Mine Ltd was formed out of the Raub Australia Syndicate in 1892 after the mine began to produce gold on a regular basis and pay dividends. By this time William and the Brisbane Board had recognized it was no Eldorado and certainly not a Mount Morgan but a payable low yield large deposit mine that for many years would give up 1 to 2 oz per ton of stone crushed. It was payable in part because of the low running costs and efficient method of working. William spoke of using electricity from hydro power as early as 1892 and introduced the power source in 1900. Driven by the anticipated long-term low yield returns, stimulated the need for improved efficiency that could be achieved by electrification.

Contrary to William's opinion, up until 1900 the Singapore and London shareholders persisted with the view that it was better than a low yield mine. This was driven largely by a body of speculative shareholders who even resisted early production of gold in an attempt to boost the share price. Although a Singapore Company office with a Board of Directors and a local Chairman was formed, the power remained in Brisbane throughout William's time. Gold production continued uninterrupted except for the period of WWII when the shafts were flooded and sealed. The Company restarted operations soon after the war and continued until it ceased trading in 1961 because it was unable to service a major bank loan at the time. It seems that the reserves had failed to meet expectations, although at the time, the Brisbane Board did not elaborate on its problems.<sup>3</sup>

In early September 1889, soon after William and his party stepped off the ss *Jumna* in Singapore where he had arrived from Brisbane, the press bailed him up, wanting to know from 'These Australians' how soon gold would come from Raub. On William being told by the Syndicate agent, 'You have brought a lot of machinery with you, but you will never get it to Raub', he replied, 'Then it will be a bad place to get to'.<sup>4</sup> A laconic reply much in character of the type of man he was. Likely as not, he

imagined the travelling conditions could not be any more difficult than getting to Cloncurry or Croydon in Queensland, but he would be surprised at the transportation difficulties he would face in at Raub.

William and most of his party, with Sefton to lead the way, arrived at Raub around noon on the 16th September 1889. They travelled by coastal steamer from Singapore to Klang, then via Kuala Lumpur, trekking overland from Kuala Kubu and Frasers Gap in Selangor. There were no roads, just a winding pony track from Kuala Kubu across a steep jungle-clad 3,000 foot range and they arrived without most of their mining machinery. Whitlam the bookkeeper and White (a miner) had travelled with the heavy machinery to Pekan on the Pahang River via Kuala Pahang on the east coast, while larger machinery came from the east coast in Sampans by three rivers, the Pahang, Semantan and Bilut, and would take many more months to arrive. River transport as the primary means would prevail until 1896. A railway engine and steel rails came by river during that time and more stamps and boilers, the bulk of supplies and even roofing iron. Some also got caught up in a local rebellion that nearly caused closure of the mine operation; the local Chief responsible for the trouble, the *Orang-Kayah*, tested William's patience throughout, and captured his eldest son.

William was 52 years of age when he arrived at Raub and had already faced the isolation and climatic extremes of Cloncurry and Croydon. It would be similar at Raub, but in many different ways and in some he could not have imagined. He had a house to live in when he arrived but was not pleased with what he saw on arrival, as there was no gold to be seen, thick jungle everywhere, and as he confided to a correspondent some years later when Raub was well established as a paying gold mine:

Had I not had, all these people with me under an engagement with the Company, I should have turned the next morning and gone straight back again. I was never more disappointed in a place in my life.<sup>5</sup>

Despite his opinion of the place, by 1895 most of his Australian family ended up at Raub, the sons to work at the mine and the daughters to wed. Another son and his wife and child joined them by 1898. and more children were born there. Three sons and their mother would ultimately be buried in the Malay States. William died on 3rd May 1900 in Kuala Lumpur after a carriage accident, and was much lauded in the local press with two obituaries, and a poem. His body was taken to Singapore and he was buried there alongside his wife and eldest son. This was the end of William's story but his road to Raub had been a long one, and perhaps reflects the lives of other mining characters who followed the mining trail.

### **Melbourne and Muckleford**

William Bibby was born in Soho Street Liverpool, UK, in March 1837, near the docks, in one of a row of terraced houses built for the working poor. His mother was a teacher and his father a labourer. His father, also named William, found advancement in the coming of the Railway when he moved to Rainhill where that famous locomotive competition won Robert Stephenson's 'Rocket' was run in October 1829, this at a time when steam power was the god of industry and the industrial revolution in full swing.

William Snr became a railway worker and in 1851 William Jnr was apprenticed to a Rainhill toolmaker named Thomas Robinson, and in time became a journeyman toolmaker working at Crewe Railway workshops. He then moved to work at Lairds shipyard on the Mersey where he watched the mass migrations to the New World and heard the exciting news of gold for the taking in Australia.

He arrived in Sydney from Liverpool as crew on the *Helen Douglas* in January 1859. There was gold at Ophir and other places nearby, but he saw that more gold for the taking was to be made down south. Thus, in early 1859, he travelled to Melbourne as a single man; he was 20 years of age but he had already seen much of life. Before he finally became a journeyman toolmaker he had run away from home to become a Gunner in the Crimean War. He said he arrived in Melbourne with 4 shillings and 6 pence in his pocket having travelled there with a friend by cutting wood for miners. So he was already an accomplished individual with an eye for opportunity. It perhaps explains why he took the opportunity to travel as crew and had so little money in his pocket, because he jumped ship like so many others and was not paid off. He knocked around Melbourne for a year until he got a job as a mine manager. So with no apparent experience in mining he was clearly able to impress others as to his capabilities, or had the 'gift of the gab' as they say. The mine he managed was at Christies Reef near Green Gully, just past Muckleford on the road to Newstead, a short distance west from Castlemaine. This mine is mentioned in the early Warden's reports and can be found on modern mineral maps. Mullock heaps and shafts still remain. Fossickers visit the site to this day, and nuggets can occasionally be found there by the persistent with the gleam of gold in their eye.

Around 1860 he had headed north to take up his new position and arrived in the Castlemaine gold mining district. The echoes of the Eureka Stockade still resounded, but the hated Camps and their Commissioners and police and troopers had gone, and miners had begun to see justice administered in the running of the goldfields. Castlemaine was beginning to be laid out as a proper town. But in that district all the easy gold had been taken and deep shaft mining was where the fortunes lay. He must have heard the early stories and liked what he saw of it when he arrived. However, he did not stay long in Castlemaine.

### **Maldon & Guildford**

By 1861 he had joined The Prince of Wales Lodge number 4770 that met at the hall which was part of and next to Beards Criterion Hotel in Barker Street Castlemaine.<sup>6</sup> This wooden hotel was rebuilt in brick after burning down in 1883<sup>7</sup> and still stands today, the licence continuous since his time. By late 1862 he had left Christies Reef to seek a fortune in gold in his own right, and it appears he had found 'a sweetheart'. He married Ellen Amelia Davies, an eighteen-year old bricklayer's daughter from Taradale, in December 1862. They were married in The Holy Trinity church Taradale, which was built in 1859. Ellen's father James Davies had a large family and was well known in Taradale as the records show, and would make a life building houses and works for that town. No doubt William knew him from the Lodge and met his daughter along the way.

William and Ellen then left for Maldon to start a family and for William to seek his own gold. In Maldon from December 1862 until July 1866, he lived at a place called 'The Springs'. There he paid rates on a cottage known as 'Bibby's Cottage', which had an engine shed attached.<sup>8</sup> 'The Springs' was a popular place in Maldon and was where the townspeople gathered to draw water and where a Brewery was first established in 1856. It was on Crown land and evidence of the dwelling can still be found near the ruins of the Maldon Brewery, alongside the road that runs to the top of Mount Tarrengower, just to the west of the main part of town.

It was in Bibby's Cottage that his first child was born on the 20th October 1863, as announced in *The Tarrangower Times*.<sup>9</sup> A daughter was also born there on 12 July 1865.<sup>10</sup> He had established himself as a family man but also made business contacts, especially with a Mr Honneus, a well-known Assayer and gold buyer in Maldon, the relationship probably being cemented through quartz crushing he had conducted earlier at Christies Reef. His ambitions soon extended to mining on his own account and on 3 November 1863, he took out his first mining lease at Wattle Gully, Maldon.<sup>11</sup> While later taking out several other leases, the Wattle Gully lease was the only one in Maldon. As the mining register shows, he had worked the ground for some months before, so he must have thought there were prospects there as soon as he arrived. The Wattle Gully mining area lay less than a mile north of where his cottage and shed were located, and a short distance to the west of what was the successful Union Hill mine that included four lines of reef, or lodes. Perhaps he was encouraged by that success?

In 1859, before William's time, a battery had been erected and a shaft sunk at the northern end by the first leaseholders, leaving the ground well-worked before he commenced on the ground. The records show a yield of 2 oz per ton being achieved from one of the leases, the Perseverance Co. In 1860 that Company had employed 11 men on the ground, had built a brick shaft, had a boiler, and sunk a shaft to some depth.<sup>12</sup> However, the reef did not pay and the Company became insolvent in 1861. The Cumberland Co. also operated in this gully and went the same way, for while some gold was won, payable yields did not last.

Regardless of its history of failure it was part of this original Perseverance claim that William must have been working on by 1863, as Mining Lease No. 164. Described in the Mining Lease Register, as 'seven acres at Wattle Gully, with a proposed investment of £2,500, employing six men for the first six months, subsequently twelve', at an annual rent of £6 16s 6d, it missed the main lode to the east, and did not pay. In 1865 a notice appeared in *The Tarrangower Times* saying that he was in arrears in his mining lease payments.<sup>13</sup>

By August 1866 he had already given the Warden a letter of notice of the transfer of his lease to another miner. The quartz crushing business also failed and he became insolvent. A notice to this effect followed in *The Argus*<sup>14</sup> in November 1865. Some six months later another notice appeared in *The Tarrangower Times*<sup>15</sup> announcing the auction of his cottage. It was Honneus, his business acquaintance who was the seller, so possibly there was a debt to be honoured there. By mid-1866 with nothing left for him in Maldon, he left for Guildford to start again.

He remained in Guildford until September 1869 and it was during that time a second son was born at Fryers Street in July 1867.<sup>16</sup> In the birth register he referred to himself a blacksmith and so it appears he practiced in this capacity for some time. During his short time in Guildford he also worked at Christies Reef, and from 1868 to 1869, he, along with a Guildford partner, John Favel Green, earned good gold from another mining lease, though this was registered in his son's name, thus suggesting the insolvency was hanging over his head. But once again he was able to readily make new business contacts with those who must have trusted him. This time he recovered his fortune and in 1869 left for Barkers Creek near Castlemaine to get even more gold. The gold from Christies Reef must have been more than that recorded in the gold Commissioner's reports, for only some 270 ozs was in the record,<sup>17</sup> insufficient to explain his next ventures, and to explain how he managed to support his growing family.

### **Castlemaine & Barkers Creek**

In September that year, with a pregnant Ellen and three children in tow, he arrived back in Castlemaine to settle a mile out of the town on the northern fringe of Barkers Creek. The family lived there until 1874, while William successfully worked more gold and prospered. When he settled at Barkers Creek where gold was being found, it would have been a crowded place, though by this time the gold was deeper in the quartz. The underground gravel rivers of gold had gone and the rich claims mostly taken and some abandoned. Nonetheless, during his time at Barkers Creek and in Castlemaine William opened mining claims and employed miners to work them, mainly at Specimen Gully where he was especially successful.

In December 1870, an item appeared in the Castlemaine Gold Production report on Specimen Gully that referred to a Walter and Bibby working at the Specimen Hill mine 'at 230ft down and winning 176 ounces'.<sup>18</sup> Specimen Hill is on the east side of the gully about halfway in, and this was William's Specimen Hill mining lease number 616. It was one of five he worked in and around Castlemaine, and he employed a large number of men to work them. These leases were mostly taken out with partners, three being with a John Hopkins Walter. So only six months after leaving Fryers Street in Guildford he was again getting gold and persisting where others had given up. Contributing to his success was the operation of additional mining leases, and management of a well known and successful mine, the Lewis Amalgamated Co., in which he also had shares.<sup>19</sup> William certainly kept himself busy and industrious, and unlike many others on the goldfields he did not spend his idle hours at the Hotels and Inns.

His partner, John Hopkins Walter was owner of the Old England Hotel and general store, and Barkers Creek Post Office. The Hotel is now a residence but looks just the same as it was in the 1870's when William was there. Walter was an important person in this part of William's Australian story, being a well-known character of the time in Barkers Creek and in Castlemaine where he received substantial media coverage. In the Mining Register, William used Walter's address in one case, suggesting a relationship that was more than just a partnership, and which perhaps

explains why he did not appear in the Rate Books during this time. While he appeared to be solvent, no public release notice from bankruptcy has been found. Perhaps it was because of this that there was an element of wily roguishness in his behaviour as to where he officially lived, or even just to his whereabouts. His place of abode at this time became difficult to trace, although he was definitely in the area if the birth registrations are followed, but there are sufficient accounts in the newspapers and registers other than the Rate Books to determine where he was and what he was doing. Either way, he was no doubt avowing in his mind to succeed, and perhaps he wished to keep to himself but not so, in his business affairs.

In the mining records, share, birth and marriage registers, William called himself an engineer, but never a toolmaker. He was a thinker and always looked at more efficient ways to do things, rather than accepting things as they were. His Letters Patent for his steam driven stamp was issued in 1874,<sup>20</sup> but he did not really believe that steam was the answer to driving stamps judging by his later use of electricity. His recognition as an Engineer was verified in later years when he was inducted into the British Institute of Mining Engineers.

William was also an active speculator as well as a mine owner manager and gambled like all the others in the mad scramble for shares in both good and worthless mines. He was, however, shrewd enough to accumulate a successful share portfolio where many others failed. By June 1872, William's total share portfolio consisted of some 17,000 shares in 16 companies,<sup>21</sup> and was worth around £10,000. Of these 16 companies, not all were in Castlemaine; they were though, among the most successful of those on the Mount Alexander Goldfields. The regular dividends being paid helped him to continue expanding his mining activities by taking out even more claims. The gold obtained and the dividends from his shares no doubt helped fund his next venture some six years after returning to Castlemaine.

## **Family**

This was a productive time for William, and as his family had increased to eight children (one other having been born at Bakers Creek and four others at Castlemaine), The birth of the fourth son in January 1874 in Castlemaine, announced their arrival in that town. From 1875 onward their residence can be tracked through the Rate Books. So it seems he had shrugged off any aversion he might have had for the authorities and was now properly established as a Castlemaine resident, and it would be where the family lived until 1895. After the birth of the fourth son there would be two more and another daughter. Whilst in Castlemaine, the family, particularly the sons made their mark playing cricket and football. Both older sons would play for Castlemaine against the All England Eleven and the eldest played at that Sunbury match where it is said they burnt **that** Bail.

The sons would be named as founding members of a football team<sup>22</sup> that still exists today in Castlemaine, with one becoming team Captain. The children went to a local school still in existence today, State School number 2051, Castlemaine North.<sup>23</sup> The family owned seven houses in the town, some of which they rented out. Some of the sons learned a trade at Thompsons the great foundry and engineering works at

Castlemaine; <sup>24</sup> two became engineers like their father; another an Assayer; and the fourth an Accountant. There are no accounts of what the daughters did and they would all marry later, but not in Castlemaine.

**Figure 1:** *William and Ellen, Castlemaine, ca. 1870*



Source: Victor Bibby Collection.

Constantly changing houses suggests William did not consider Castlemaine to be a permanent place to settle, at least in his mind. Gold in the Castlemaine goldfield was well and truly worked out by early 1875, and the first of many recessions arrived, causing him to leave his family behind in Castlemaine while he travelled to Northern Queensland where gold was still being discovered.

### **Cloncurry**

Following on from recent finds in the Cloncurry region in Queensland, news appeared in *The Argus* that W.O. Hodgkinson and his expedition were looking for a new goldfield beyond Georgetown.<sup>25</sup> Although Queensland was a long sea journey away, news of rushes travelled far and fast and despite the arduous travel and long journey involved distance was no deterrent where gold was concerned. William would have read these despatches, and no doubt he thought to himself there was chance of being in at the beginning of a rush. He was obviously comfortably off by now and at 38 years of age could think of new ventures to undertake and to satisfy his quest for further adventure.

He first left Castlemaine for Melbourne, on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1875 and headed for Sydney and Brisbane before ending up in Cloncurry via Normanton, at a mine called the Gilded Rose (Fig. 2). He had left for Queensland seeking further fortune and adventure but he missed the rush at Cloncurry, if there had been one. But yet again he managed to

win gold from a mine where others had given up. Judging by where he went, and what he next did, it appears his wanderings were as much to do with adventure, as for earning a living, or getting gold.

As reported in the Mining Wardens reports in *The Brisbane Courier*, in 1877:

At Bishop's Creek, the United Gilded Rose Mine has again changed hands; the present proprietors being Messrs. Bibby and Kellick ... Since these gentlemen have had possession of the mine, they have sunk the main underlay shaft to the depth of 120 feet, and are now driving on both sides of the shaft at 115 feet ... There are now fourteen hands employed at this mine ... The last parcel of stone crushed ... yielded nearly two ozs of gold to the ton.<sup>26</sup>

Again, in November 1877, the Warden mentions William and his partner, with the mine said to be 'in thorough working order'.<sup>27</sup> That extract from the report was not unusual, being part of the character description of William that emerged during his working life. It appears he did not suffer fools lightly, and the running of his machinery was very methodical, the care of machinery perhaps a legacy of his early days at Crewe and Lairds. The report also stated pumping and winding gear had been erected and a large area of ground had been extensively opened up. Twenty miners from Castlemaine and Charters Towers were employed. With such a substantial enterprise the means were successfully found to pay wages and to procure new mining plant such as stamps, boilers and pumps - thus evidence he was a man of means. The Gilded Rose became a well established mine which ended up as a large mining operation that he managed, with as many men on one site as he had employed in Castlemaine on all his claims.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 2:** *The 'Gilded Rose' main shaft looking south from the main east-west Cloncurry track and taken c.1900 when it was not in operation.*



Source: Victor Bibby, *Golden Raub – Williams Story*, Sid Harta Publishers, Melbourne, 2014, p. 123.

The Gilded Rose had a history of changing fortunes, but its success under William is evidenced by the fact his company more than tripled the amount of gold obtained as the previous owners had produced over a similar period. Installations included a new ten head stamp from Thompsons Foundry in Castlemaine. He would



make the mine pay for the eight years of his ownership, first in partnership with Kellick who was from Castlemaine, and then with a R.H. Sheaffe from Fort Constantine, a prosperous cattle station owner of some standing in the Northern Queensland community. He was a local politician with business connections and he probably had an influence on what happened later in William's life when he moved to live for a time in Brisbane. However, by the end of 1885, William had disposed of his interest in the Gilded Rose to Sheaffe. The mine continued to be worked off and on over the years and even today is of interest to some promoters.<sup>29</sup>

For the eight years at the mine, from the end of 1875, William spent the bulk of the year in Cloncurry but returned to Castlemaine around every Christmas, travelling by coach to Normanton, then travelling saloon by sea, finally returning to his family at the end of 1885, before setting off again on further ventures, this time he headed for Croydon via Normanton.

### **Croydon**

William had been to Normanton many times on his way south to Cloncurry, but this time he turned east to Croydon. On this journey he would have been accompanied by hopefuls from all walks of life who sought gold, for it was now mid-1886 and the Croydon Rush was in full swing. He would have been used to such a journey, as it was a longer one south by coach to Cloncurry and he would have always travelled via Normanton each time he visited his Gilded Rose. Being a familiar place to him, he would have stayed awhile at one of the many hotels, long enough to be recognized by a newspaper correspondent as events would show. There was no Cobb & Co. coach to Croydon as yet, and he would have bought a horse there for the journey from Normanton. Arriving in July was the best time for him, as he would have been aware that at other times it would have been a different story, with travellers being recorded as falling off horses and dying from heatstroke.<sup>30</sup>

Inspired possibly by what William saw as his fortune to come in the new Croydon gold field was the naming of his last child, Cecil Normanton, born in July 1886. His arrival in Croydon the same month as Cecil's birth was heralded in *The Brisbane Courier* and showed that he was full of expectations:

There have been many visitors, amongst whom Mr. Bibby, well known here and in the South, who has applied for a machine site, and informed me he intends bringing a plant for the Mountain Maid locality.<sup>31</sup>

Although he wasn't digging for gold this time, at last he was there at the beginning of a gold rush. When he first arrived, any alluvial gold had been taken, and shafts were now being dug. There were no crushing mills of any sort and the noticeably rich ore had begun accumulating at the three main mine sites, one of which was the Mountain Maid, where he had selected his mill site. It was clear that he had in his mind to do something else to make a fortune other than digging for it. He knew an efficient stamping machine could earn a good profit with a certainty he could not get from any claim.

His crushing plant, a ten head of stamps, would again come from Thompsons Foundry, and was shipped from Melbourne around Carpentaria and landed at

Normanton. He named his machine the Pioneer, and history records this on the maps of the time, and it is mentioned many times by correspondents and in the Warden's reports. It was the first machine to crush ore at this goldfield, starting in December 1886,<sup>32</sup> and it was in crushing ore that William made his fortune and name in Croydon. But the remoteness and harsh climate took its toll and soon after the mills started to work the warden reported:

... before three months had elapsed from the first fall of a stamper the Pioneer is idle for want of stamper-shoes, after rattling away with the old ones worn to the thinness of a slipper for some weeks<sup>33</sup>.

There are many relics from this mill that can still be found at his mill site today, worn stamp shoes, evidence of a dam site with a stand pipe for drawing water, tailings, paving stones and boilers made from old sea containers. Correspondents report him employing many men and building a framed house at this site and sinking a well on O'Briens' Creek that ran into the Belmore where he had the dam. The well was needed as the Belmore sometimes ran dry, something he did not anticipate at first. From that time on, no matter where he went, drought was to dog him.

He did not entirely give up on mining for gold, as he was a partner in two mining leases, the Ironclad and Pride of Hills. But it was the Pioneer mill that was his main concern. From information in the Wardens reports, his profit from the Pioneer was probably around £100 per week, but by the end of 1887 there were at least six mills operating at Croydon, so no doubt he began to re-appraise his future and made up his mind to move on again.

By the end of January 1888 he left Croydon for Brisbane, not long after a mass meeting of miners he had attended.<sup>34</sup> The meeting spawned the same ideals as on that 1887 Banner in Maldon that can be still seen today.<sup>35</sup> The record shows that he addressed the crowd at this meeting, but unfortunately not what he said. Perhaps he had been inspired by that earlier Maldon event. Even then he was aware of the power of the press and later, in what would be his last great adventure, he would use it much to his own advantage.

### **Brisbane**

After he left Croydon he became, in his own words, a man about town in Brisbane, looking for a new venture. During his time there he dabbled with a Gympie gold syndicate and was on deputations to pressure ministers. One was on behalf of the Croydon town committee<sup>36</sup> to lobby for a new town hall and a railway from Normanton. This was successful, and that town publicly thanked him for his efforts on their behalf. He also joined a large delegation lobbying for the railway to Cloncurry.<sup>37</sup> These activities showed that he was civic minded and did not just think about mining. During this short period in Brisbane he returned home to Castlemaine a number of times, but only on short visits. By mid 1889 he had found a prospective new venture and it wasn't in Australia.

In Australia the search for new gold faltered, there was a well-established recession, and people looked elsewhere to seek a fortune in gold. One such place was in

what was then called the Protected Malay States, a place where tin mining was already established, but where according to a visiting Australian prospector, a so-called gold Eldorado had been found. This was a hole in the ground at a place called Raub in the State of Pahang.<sup>38</sup> That prospector was the previously mentioned Robert Sefton. His stories on his return from his Asian adventures along with Raub ore gold samples in his possession, and with the support of his cohort, the entrepreneur Tom W. Brown, who one colleague said had that ‘terrible gift of familiarity’,<sup>39</sup> helped catch the imagination of speculators in Brisbane. Subsequently they looked around for the right man to turn their dreams into reality. William either stepped forward, or his name was mentioned in the right circles.

So it came about that in July 1889, William was recruited by the Raub Australia Syndicate, a group of Brisbane business and political luminaries that included Government Ministers, a Chief Justice, and Sefton and Brown, to set up a gold mine in Malaya. His starting salary was £600 per year increasing to £1,200 after the first crushing. A modest sum for what was expected of him, but with an option to purchase 10,000 shares in the Raub Australia Syndicate at 6s, well below the floated price of £1, an offer that he eventually took up.

He left Brisbane for Singapore at 1.00pm on the 7th August 1889 with seven men;<sup>40</sup> an engineer, his eldest son William Charles, a bookkeeper, a carpenter, a blacksmith and three miners. With them was 40 tons of mining machinery and equipment in 7 cwt packages, much of it from Thompsons of Castlemaine. Just before his departure at the Brisbane Stock Exchange farewell celebration, a syndicate member asked him how he was going to get the ‘vast amount of gold’ to safety. His reported memorable reply was: ‘Well, my trouble has always been to get the gold; there need be no trouble about the safety of it’.<sup>41</sup>

He did not know then how prophetic those words were, and what was to come before any payable gold was won. The rest of that story lies mainly in the newspapers and images of the time, and of course in his life story, something that will be recorded at a future date.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> ‘GOLDEN RAUB: South African Mines (low grade ore) with the Raub Mines’, *The Straits Times*’ Special Commissioner Singapore 1897, figure 4.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Annual Mining report, February 1899’, *The Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser*, 13 June 1899.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Raub Mine to Close Down, Setbacks End 72 Year History’, *The Straits Times*, 10 August 1961, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> ‘The Singapore Straits Times Special Commissioner’, *Golden Raub*, May 1897, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The Straits Times Correspondent’, *Golden Raub*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Extract of Prince of Wales Lodge records 1861, courtesy Castlemaine Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Destructive Fires’, in Castlemaine Pioneer & Old Residents Association 1930 Jubilee Book.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Bibby’s Cottage’, TT 14.6.66, 3 roomed cottage lately known as Bibby’s being sold by Honneus, *Miles Lewis Card Index*, courtesy of the Maldon Museum & Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup> *The Tarrengower Times*, 20 October 1863.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Justice Victoria Birth Register Schedule A 1865 Births District of Maldon No. 7.

<sup>11</sup> ‘William Bibby (-address- Springs Maldon) applied for 7 acres at Wattle Gully on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1863, with a proposed investment of £2,500, employing 6 men for first 6 months – subsequently 12 men and

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- for 10 years. Work had already commenced'. See PROV North Melbourne, Mining Lease Registers, ML N.164 Maldon.
- <sup>12</sup> 'EXTRACTS FROM MINING SURVEYORS REPORTS MALDON DIVISION Perseverance Co. Wattle Gully', *The Argus Melbourne*, 24 February 1860, states 'Work in earnest is expected to begin in a month'.
- <sup>13</sup> *Shareholder Listing* Castlemaine Courtesy of Castlemaine Historical Society
- <sup>14</sup> 'New Insolvents', *The Argus Melbourne*, Wednesday, 3 November 1865.
- <sup>15</sup> 'AUCTION Victoria Glue Factory Thursday the 16th of August', *The Tarrengower Times*, 16 August 1866, states, Mr. F.F. MORRIS has received instructions from Mr. A. Honneus, to sell by Auction, AT THE SPRINGS HOTEL... The Whole Stock in Trade...Also a Three-roomed Cottage, Lately known as Bibby's'.
- <sup>16</sup> Department of Justice Victoria Birth Register Schedule A 1865, Births District of Guildford No. 35.
- <sup>17</sup> Gold Commissioners Register Castlemaine District, Division Maldon Green & Bibby Christies 1868-69.
- <sup>18</sup> Extract of Castlemaine Gold Productio, Courtesy of Castlemaine Historical Society.
- <sup>19</sup> 'CASTLEMAINE', *The Argus Melbourne*, 6 February 1872.
- <sup>20</sup> Victorian State Library, microfiche no. 164, 'Victorian Patents' sequence at MF367.
- <sup>21</sup> Shareholder Listings Database W. Bibby - Castlemaine Historical Society.
- <sup>22</sup> Minutes of Foundry Football Club inaugural meeting, Castlemaine Historical Society.
- <sup>23</sup> List of children absent with infectious diseases July - September 1884, PROV School 2051,
- <sup>24</sup> Thompsons Foundry Wages Books, Pay Sheet for Friday 7 July 1888 University of Melbourne Archive, Ref, 1977.0133 Thompsons – Byron Jackson 1876-1973.
- <sup>25</sup> 'NEW EXPLORING EXPIDITION', *The Argus*, Friday 3 October. Also mentioned in a number of historic texts.
- <sup>26</sup> 'Croydon', *The Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1877.
- <sup>27</sup> 'WARDENS NOTES The Cloncurry', *The Brisbane Courier*, 17 November 1877.
- <sup>28</sup> 'CLONCURRY Correspondents report', *The Brisbane Courier*, 17 June 1878, states, A machine of five stampers was in full swing on the ground at the time of Mr. Uhr's visit, and about 20 hands employed on the claim.
- <sup>29</sup> Queensland Mining Corporation Presentation Mines & Money Conference Hongkong, March 2011, Company's Objectives and Strategy Major Areas of Focus Slide 10.
- <sup>30</sup> 'Fatalities at Normanton', *The Queenslander*, 6 March 1886.
- <sup>31</sup> 'Croydon', *The Brisbane Courier*, 21 July 1886.
- <sup>32</sup> 'OUR GOLDFIELDS CROYDON', *ibid.*, 30 December 1886. It said two mills had started, the first being: 'the Pioneer, owned by Mr Bibby, late of Cloncurry'.
- <sup>33</sup> 'Croydon', *The Queenslander*, 11 June 1887.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 January 1888, where stated, 'A mass meeting of miners was held on Saturday to inaugurate the Croydon branch of the Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria. The day was fearfully hot, which interfered with the attendance, only 400 or 500 men being present'.
- <sup>35</sup> Maldon Museum & Historical Society Collection contains a Banner titled 'CONTENTION & STRIFE DECLINED - LABOUR & CAPITAL RECONCILED'. In the period around 1882, this banner was carried by miners through Maldon and subsequently Melbourne.
- <sup>36</sup> 'Croydon Requirements', *The Queenslander*, 20 October 1888, states, 'Messrs C. F. Gardiner and W. Bibby, the delegates from Croydon were yesterday, introduced by Mr W. O. Hodgkinson, as a deputation to the Hon. J. Macrossan, Minister for Mines'.
- <sup>37</sup> 'DEPUTATIONS', *The Brisbane Courier*, 31 May 1889 states, 'A very large and influential deputation waited upon the Minister for Railways yesterday to urge him the necessity...construction of Normanton-Cloncurry Railway'.
- <sup>38</sup> J.A. Richardson, *The Geology and Mineral Resources of the Neighbourhood of Pahan*, p. 93. This text details the origin of the Raub hole and the reason it came by its name from old folklore meaning 'scoop'. It also refers to the role of Robert Sefton in the establishment of the Australian connection.
- <sup>39</sup> *The Brisbane Telegraph*, 26 June 1889, where stated, 'In Northern Queensland the name of Robert Sefton is well known...'
- <sup>40</sup> Some names appeared later in *The Straits Times* and *The Free Press*, Whitlam was the bookkeeper, Walker the Carpenter, Laurie the blacksmith, White, Ridgeway and Kinloch miners.
- <sup>41</sup> 'Golden Raub XE', by The Singapore Straits Times Special Commissioner, *Golden Raub*, p. 5.