

Journal of Australasian Mining History

Volume
13

October 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pages

COLLIN

MYERS

1-10

‘The Challenge of Standing on the Shoulders of Giants’,
**Keynote Address to the 10th Congress of the International Mining History Association
and the 20th Annual Conference of the Australasian Mining History Association,
Charters Towers, July 2014.**

REFEREED

Pages

PETER

BELL

11-22

Discovering Gold in the North: the evidence changes

FRED CAHIR & IAN

CLARK

23-41

‘Jon and Jackey’: An Exploration of Aboriginal and Chinese People’s Associations on the
Victorian Goldfields

JIM

ENEVER

42-61

‘The Rush that Ended’: The Quest for Rubies in Central Australia

PETER S.

EVANS

62-78

The Wolfram Mine at Wilks Creek, Victoria

PHILIP

HART

79-101

Benjamin John Dunsheath and his Auckland Smelting Company

NIC

HAYGARTH

102-110

'The Broken Hill of Tasmania': the rise and fall of the 13-Mile silver-lead field, western Tasmania

**SYBIL
NOLAN**

111-126

Robert Menzies: miners and the metals market crash of 1930

**ROBERT W.
VERNON**

127-143

John Taylor and Sons, Mine Promoters and Managers: Seventy Years of Mining in Spain and Portugal

UNREFEREED

**ROSS A. BOTH & WARREN
FAHEY**

144- 159

Songs from the Australian Goldfields, Part 1: Gold mania

**JIM MORRISON & IAN
HODKINSON**

160-175

Don Johnson's Charters Towers Mining History: The Importance of Historical Data

**KEITH
PRESTON**

176-197

The Magnet Mine 1894-1940: 'careful management - constant production'

**WILLIAM
WALKER**

198-222

The Genesis of Heavy Haul Freight Railroads in the Pilbara

BOOK REVIEWS

John Woodland, Money Pits: British mining companies in the Californian and Australian gold rushes of the 1850s **223-226**

Reviewer: **K.G. McQueen**

Garry Richardson, Tin Mountain: the European and Chinese History of the Blue Tier, Poimena and Weldborough **226-227**

Reviewer: **Nic Haygarth**

AUTHOR DETAILS AND ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

Collin Myers: c_mmyers@bigpond.net.au

'The Challenge of Standing on the Shoulders of Giants', Keynote Address to the 10th

Congress of the International Mining History Association and the 20th Annual Conference of the Australasian Mining History Association, Charters Towers, 2014.

Collin Myers worked for 40 years as a mining industry communicator. After an early career in journalism in Australia in Brisbane and Canberra and in the UK with Reuters, he established and built the corporate affairs function at Brisbane-based M.I.M. Holdings Limited incorporating public, investor and government relations. In recent years, he has provided investor relations and financial communications services to mining companies. His corporate career was interspersed with stints in Canberra where he served as Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister.

The paper looks at how past leaders of Australia's mining industry embraced downstream processing of mine production in Australia as a natural extension of their businesses. For them, there was unassailable logic in adding maximum value through smelting, refining and manufacturing in Australia, for commercial reasons and for what they perceived to be the national interest.

As value-adding activity increased in Australia in the mid-late 20th century, ironically there was vociferous criticism that Australia had become no more than a quarry. Today, at a time when the downstream processing of Australian mine products in Australia is being reduced and Australian processing technologies are being applied in other countries, public discussion is muted.

Peter Bell: pbell.2@bigpond.com *Discovering Gold in the North: the evidence changes.* Peter Bell is a consulting historian, based in Adelaide. He has been interested in the history of the mining industry for over thirty years.

Standard histories of mining in the North Queensland region all present a narrative that commences with the first gold being discovered at Star River near Townsville in 1865, followed by a succession of ever-more prosperous discoveries, culminating in the bonanza of Charters Towers. However, new digital research methods have revealed a story with a different beginning. Gold was discovered three years earlier in a different place. The article traces the early events, and the subsequent history of the little-known Fanning River gold mines. It also looks at the economic and personal links between grazing and mining industry, and how some graziers sought to intervene in the process of gold discovery for their own benefit.

Ross Both

rosannb@bigpond.net.au and **Warren Fahey** www.warrenfahey.com Songs from the Australian Goldfields, Part 1, Gold mania. Ross Both is a retired geologist with wide interests in mining history; his previous publications have been concerned with the history of early mines in the Adelaide Hills. His enjoyment of traditional Australian folk music led to an interest in songs from Australia's mining fields and to the collaboration with Warren Fahey in this paper.

Warren Fahey AM is a cultural historian, author, broadcaster and performer. When he founded the Larrikin Record label in 1974 his first release was Man of the Earth - a collection of songs about mining in Australia. He has maintained his interest in mining and in 2013 published an e-book and CD album, The World Turned Upside Down.

Music played an important part in the life of the Australian digger on the 19th century goldfields, both around the campfire and performed by professional entertainers. The first of the goldrushes took place in May 1851 following publicity of discoveries in the Bathurst district of New South Wales and within weeks songs were appearing in local newspapers, depicting the excitement and turmoil as men left their homes in search of fortune. Many of

the songs came from anonymous writers and what they may have lacked in literary quality was more than compensated for by way of intensity of emotions expressed. Others were published in songbooks by goldfields entertainers such as Charles Thatcher and Joe Small.

Fred Cahir f.cahir@federation.edu.au & **Ian Clark** i.clark@federation.edu.au

'Jon and Jackey': An Exploration of Aboriginal and Chinese People's Associations on the Victorian Goldfields.

Fred Cahir is Senior Lecturer in Aboriginal Studies at Federation University (Faculty of Education & Arts). His main research areas are Victorian Aboriginal history and Aboriginal Ecological Knowledge.

Ian Clark is Professor of Tourism at Federation University (Business Faculty) whose primary work has focused on Victorian Aboriginal history and Aboriginal toponymy.

Whilst historians have tended to concentrate on northern Australian analyses of Sino-Aboriginal relationships this paper shall explore the topic of Aboriginal associations with Chinese people on the Victorian goldfields (1850-1900). Evidence is provided that establishes a shared history, both positive and derogatory, which has hitherto been ignored or poorly understood. It contributes to the broadening of Victoria's cultural cartography by including Chinese and their intersections with Aboriginal people on the goldfields.

Jim Enever: jmenever@satlink.com.au

'The Rush that Ended': The Quest for Rubies in Central Australia.

Jim studied mining engineering at Melbourne University followed by a career in mining research with CSIRO, with major interest in coal mining and coal seam gas. After retiring, Jim went back to study archaeology and history at Melbourne University and has for the past 15 years been writing on various aspects of Australian mining history. The current paper is a link between Jim's interests in mining history and gem stone fossicking.

In August 1886, explorer David Lindsay discovered what he thought might be gem quality rubies in the East MacDonnell Ranges. Lindsay's exploration party formed a syndicate in Adelaide to pursue the discovery. A large cache of stones was brought back to Adelaide, which when examined by experts was proclaimed to contain a proportion of 'true Oriental rubies'. This sparked a rush between September 1887 and May 1888.

A debate ensued in Australia and the UK about whether the stones were valuable rubies or 'worthless' garnets. It was eventually agreed that the stones should be popularly classified as 'Australian rubies', a completely new gem species. After the prospect of British capital entering the arena had kept the uncertainty about the nature of the stones alive, it became generally accepted by mid-1888 that the stones were in fact garnets. This realization sparked an exodus from the field and by the end of 1888 the ruby field was completely deserted. The ruby companies progressively slid into liquidation during the first years of the 1890s. As fast as the rush had begun, the rush had ended.

Peter S. Evans:

peter@peterevans.com.au

The Wolfram Mine at Wilks Creek,

Victoria.

Peter Evans studied Applied Chemistry at RMIT before running away to the circus, spending the next forty years in the technical side of the theatrical arts. In the 1990s he spent three years in the Historic Places Section of the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands surveying historic sawmill sites and making recommendations for the Register of the National Estate. He has written widely on industrial

and forest history. Peter is currently semi-retired and works part-time in the Steam Operations department of a large regional mining museum. The Wilks Creek Wolfram mine in Victoria's Great Dividing Range was characterised by two brief bursts of activity during both world wars when the metal Tungsten achieved strategic importance for Australia. This paper provides a background to this activity, and then examines the struggle to operate the mine under adverse weather conditions between 1942 and 1943, at a time when materials and manpower were both in great demand and short supply.

Philip Hart: prhart@waikato.ac.nz *Benjamin John Dunsheath and his Auckland Smelting Company.*

After taking early retirement from the University of Waikato (in Hamilton, New Zealand), to avoid the fate of being head of department for another two years, he has spent much of his waking hours researching and writing about the Te Aroha Mining District. Part of this research requires exploring it on foot, and fortunately it is a easy drive of 35 minutes or so. The particular focus has been on the people, as this is a social history. It is intended to make his detailed research available electronically in the near future as a series of working papers. B

Benjamin John Dunsheath was a small and struggling businessmen who, having been told of the allegedly good ore contained in the Tui portion of the Te Aroha Mining District, decided in 1948 to reopen mines that had not been worked for over four decades. To finance this endeavour, he formed the Auckland Smelting Company, which did no work in Auckland and never even established a smelter. Undeterred by the difficult terrain and by the caution expressed by those with more understanding of geology than himself, he struggled on with a small workforce reopening old levels and commencing a new one. As his company was under-capitalized, funding its activities was difficult, meaning that the Mines Department was asked to assist with finance as well as advice. Questionable propaganda was distributed about the great prospects of the mine, and assay results were selectively reported; indeed, he was tempted to produce fraudulent ones. All was in vain, and the venture had to be abandoned. Its history was similar to many another struggling company, though some features were, hopefully, not common.

Nic Haygarth: lakelea22@yahoo.com.au

'The Broken Hill of Tasmania': the rise and fall of the 13-Mile silver-lead field, western Tasmania.

Nic Haygarth is a professional historian, freelance writer and Voluntary Associate of the University of Tasmania, which awarded him a PhD in history. While passionate about wild places, high country and those who populate them, he is very interested in mining wherever it occurs.

The 13-Mile silver field west of Waratah, Tasmania was bruited, disastrously, as 'the Broken Hill of Tasmania' at the cusp of the 1891 economic depression. In an object lesson in how not to conduct mining, infrastructure expenditure of £26,000 was undertaken at the Godkin mine without a lode first being proven. However, while the Godkin Silver Mining Company collapsed, this investment today stands as one of the richest mining heritage sites on the island.

Jim Morrison: jmassoc@ozemail.com.au and **Ian Hodkinson:** ihodkins@bigpond.net.au
Don Johnson's Charters Towers Mining History: The Importance of Historical Data.

Jim Morrison is a Townsville based geologist with a long-term fascination with mining history. Educated in Melbourne at RMIT and Imperial College (London University) Jim's 48 year career has included over two decades in and around the 6 Moz Charters Towers goldfield where he was Geology Manager for Citigold for 11 years. He is currently a member of EGRU Advisory Board at James Cook University and a former Chair of the AusIMM

North Queensland Branch.

Ian Hodkinson is a self-employed consultant geologist, based in Brisbane. He was educated at Kingston Polytechnic and Leicester University in the UK and emigrated to Australia in 1981. He was heavily involved with mining and mineral exploration in North Queensland between 1986 and 2012. He is a member of the Australasian Mining History Association and has contributed to several publications of the Charters Towers and Dalrymple Family History Association over a period of many years. In 2002 he completed a major review of the history of Charters Towers Central State School to coincide with the 125th Anniversary of the school.

Charters Towers, discovered in 1871, has a colourful history full of larger-than-life characters including Don Johnson himself, an eloquent and erudite, yet occasionally implacable historian/artist of legal background and self-indulgent lifestyle. Don became obsessed with researching and chronicling the early history of Charters Towers. He embarked upon writing a complete history but died prematurely in 1993 with only the first 13 chapters completed. Johnson vividly documented the amazing discoveries of bonanza gold, the riots, roll-ups and rogues, the fortunes made and lost and the characters like Warden Charters, who named the goldfield after himself, and Thadeus O'Kane, the radical newspaper owner who escaped to the colonies following a sensational scandal involving his wife and the British PM. Posthumous publication of Johnson's book was unsuccessful and it was effectively lost for two decades. His diligent research was not in vain, however, as his files are available at the Dalrymple Archives and are regularly used by local government, company and private researchers. They helped Citigold locate previously unknown oreshoots within the old workings and to explore for extensions. He accumulated information not readily accessible, which prevented a calamity in 2006 by alerting Citigold to unknown water-filled mines along the planned Warrior Decline. The fate of Johnson's work demonstrates the need for historians to make known what they would like done with their work in the event of their untimely death.

Sybil Nolan: *sybil.nolan@unimelb.edu.au*

Robert Menzies: miners and the metals market crash of 1930.

Sybil Nolan wrote her PhD thesis on the comparative liberalism of the Age newspaper and Robert Menzies, focusing on the interwar period. She teaches publishing studies at the University of Melbourne, and is now working on a monograph about Robert Menzies' social and cultural connections between the wars.

When base metal prices crashed in 1930, the mining industry rallied its political and media connections in its support. Melbourne, then the industry's chief corporate base, was a centre of this lobbying. One of the issues around which it agitated was the tariff, which since the late nineteenth century had been a token of faith with liberals and even conservatives in Victoria. Robert Menzies, a QC and Victorian politician then taking his first tentative steps towards the federal arena, played a key role in weakening the unalloyed allegiance of the Victorian National Federation to the tariff, altering the party's platform to reflect the need for tariff reform. This paper investigates the development of Menzies' thinking about tariff policy, and how it was partly shaped by his emerging connections in the Melbourne world of industry and finance, both in the Collins House group and beyond it.

Keith Preston: *kpr9101@bigpond.net.au*

The Magnet Mine 1894-1940: 'careful management - constant production'.

Keith Preston is a retired engineering geologist and geotechnical engineer who continues to research aspects of the Tasmanian mining industry, particularly the widespread use of water for power generation.

Development of the Magnet silver-lead mine in the 1890s, together with the Heazlewood and Zeehan fields on the west coast, was instigated by the huge profits generated by the Broken Hill mines in N.S.W. The deposits of limited size were expensive to develop however, due to their isolated location in rugged terrain, and expensive to operate due to high costs of conveying the ore to mainland or European smelters, for all but a ten year period when a smelter operated at Zeehan. Economical mine operation using water for power generation became an operational necessity for survival. Prudent management enabled dividend payments to be maintained despite the high costs of providing the required infrastructure (particularly the demands for increased water storage) being a continual drain on profits. A series of setbacks following the onset of WWI resulted in a gradual decline and eventual closure during the depression of the early 1930s: of these the more damaging included restricted smelter operation during the war, the Broken Hill industrial disputes that immediately followed, depressed metal prices, escalating costs, labour shortages and the limitations of the water storage dams located in a water catchment of inadequate size. Against all odds, The Magnet became Tasmania's most productive silver mine at the time of closure in 1940.

Robert Vernon: *RbrtVernon@aol.com*

John Taylor and Sons, Mine Promoters and Managers: Seventy Years of Mining in Spain and Portugal.

Presented to the 10th Congress of the International Mining History Association and the 20th Annual Conference of the AMHA, Charters Towers, 2014.

Robert Vernon is a retired geologist, with an interest in mining history that spans 45 years. He has written papers and books on a variety of subjects, that includes medieval iron smelting, mining technology, Welsh metal mining, and now Spanish mining. An underlying interest is the spread of mining technology around the world by British mining companies. This paper examines the 19th and 20th century mining activities on the Iberian Peninsula by John Taylor and Sons, the renowned London firm of mining engineers, and mine managers. It also provides a brief account of the development of their business, and the factors that led up to their achievements in Spain. Over a seventy year period, their lead and copper mining companies, particularly in Andalucía, enjoyed success, and one uniquely declared over 100 dividends. Their legacy remains today, principally in the Linares area, with the important mining landscape that they helped to create.

William (Bill) Walker: *williamwalker3@bigpond.com*

The Genesis of Heavy Haul Freight Railroads in the Pilbara.

William Walker is a retired Mechanical Engineer, MIEAust and MIMechE. He worked on British Rail, Kowloon Canton Railway and retired as Railroad Manager, BHP Railroad. After retirement he studied history and is a PhD Candidate at the University of Western Australia. The paper uses a part of his PhD thesis.

The paper examines why a private railway and three private heavy haul railroads were built in Western Australia. The railway and railroads are described with details on how ideas were changed and adapted as they were being built. It describes the early infrastructure and equipment failures and how, by using research and technology, the problems were overcome, until eventually they became 'state of the art' railroads.