



# AUSTRALASIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

All correspondence to: Mel Davies OAM  
Business School, Economics MBDP M251  
University of Western Australia  
35 Stirling Highway,  
Crawley 6009, W. Australia  
Tel. (W) 08-64882926 (H) 08-92953265  
Fax: 08-64881016  
Email: [mel.davies@uwa.edu.au](mailto:mel.davies@uwa.edu.au)

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Patron: Professor Geoffrey Blainey, AC

ABN 96 220 329 754

Web page: <http://www.mininghistory.asn.au>

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### EDITORIAL

The editorial presented below by our President, Ken McQueen, brings up an issue that has only been peripherally touched upon in our deliberations to date. A deserving area for all mining historians who are interested in preserving certain aspects of the past and which will hopefully stimulate a response from our readers.

‘Since the beginning of the year the Executive and Advisory Committee have been busy with a number of activities, including the start of a new membership drive. Maintaining and increasing our membership is critical for the AMHA to survive and thrive. It is particularly important to attract younger, energetic members to ‘carry on the torch’. An advertisement with news of a ‘special deal’ for the first 10 new members in 2017 is in circulation via applicable outlets. Your state and territory representatives have also been active in spreading the word. As a member you can assist by letting interested friends and colleagues know about the great benefits of being a member of the AMHA.

Thanks to those members who have indicated an interest in forming a Mining Heritage working group to examine how the Association can develop a register of significant historic mining sites and relics. We now have the makings of a group, but there is still room for any member who is

passionate and experienced in this area. The plan is for the group to report to the Advisory Committee and Annual General Meeting at Traralgon with a plan for consideration by the wider membership.

Related to mining heritage, the Association is already receiving requests for information and support. Nic Haygarth and I recently wrote a letter of support on behalf of the AMHA for Miles Pierce in his attempt to preserve the historic oil shaft at Lakes Entrance, a key link to the early development of the petroleum industry in Australia (also the subject of an article in our Journal, Vol. 8, by Jim Enever.

**P.S.** As a postscript to the President’s observations, the attention of members may have been drawn by the media to the problem of rehabilitation – or rather of rehabilitation being ignored throughout Australia. As noted recently, it’s estimated that there are more than 60,000 abandoned mines across the country. There are few reliable statistics but lots of evidence to suggest that rehabilitated sites are few and far between. These sites range from sites abandoned during the goldrush era to more recent developments. To see the extent of the problem view the following on-line report:

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/world/floods-prompt-california-gold-rush-zzjjw02pp>

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **AMHA 23rd Annual Conference, Traralgon, Victoria, 25-29 September 2017.**

Along with the newsletter is a registration form and details of the forthcoming Traralgon Conference. As noted, business sessions will be held at the Churchill Campus of the Federation University, Northways Road, Churchill, which is located about 20km from Traralgon. There is a selection of tours and other activities. Our industrious local committee has been busy on your behalf and the members promise to make this another memorable event. They are keen for abstracts to be forwarded asap from those interested in presenting a paper. Note the following instructions:

a) Abstracts must be submitted using the template available on the AMHA website at <http://www.mininghistory.asn.au>

This method was successfully used last year for the Cobar conference.

b) Abstracts should be emailed to Sandra Kippen and Nick Williams:

[dskippen@dodo.com.au](mailto:dskippen@dodo.com.au)

[nicolahw9@gmail.com](mailto:nicolahw9@gmail.com)

c) The abstracts will be reviewed by an editorial panel, and authors contacted if major changes are suggested. Authors will be advised as soon as abstracts are accepted.

d) Authors are also asked to submit a short autobiography (maximum 200 words), to be printed in the conference proceedings. Bios should be on a separate A4 document, using Times New Roman font, body text 12 point, headings 14 point. Borders should be set to 2.0cm on top, bottom and right, and 2.5cm on the left.

e) Both abstracts and bios may be submitted from now on, but the **FINAL DATE** for consideration is **JUNE 1<sup>st</sup>**.

f) Although the theme for the conference is: 'Mining – from the Mountains to the Sea', papers on any aspect of mining history are welcome, particularly those based on the local areas.

f) Authors should aim for 20min presentations, followed by 5min for questions. Time limits will be enforced.

g) Those who wish to exhibit their work but who prefer not to deliver papers are encouraged to submit abstracts for posters.

h) Please direct any queries to Sandra or Nick at the above email addresses.

### **Archaeology of a Chinese Gold Mining Village in Victoria - October 2017**

This archaeology project, mentioned by Paul Macgregor at the Cobar Conference, is now calling for participants. The excavation will be run by The Uncovered Past Institute, a new Australia-based not-for-profit organization, which conducts archaeological excavations on historic sites with public participation.

Join us to discover more about the Chinese miners who once lived and worked in the 19th century Harrietville Chinese Mining Village. For around thirty years from the late 1850s Harrietville was home to many of the thousands of Victoria's Chinese gold miners. This will be the first archaeological dig in Victoria of a Chinese mining settlement. The largely undisturbed site includes mine workings, water races, building foundations, and gardens: a rare survivor of the heyday of Chinese gold mining in Victoria.

*Chinese Village Harrietsville*



*With acknowledgement to Andrew Swift*

This dig will take place over three weeks from the 9th to the 28th October 2017. You can take part for one, two, or all three of these weeks. This is a 'Dig Tourism' project, where fees paid by participants provide the funding for the excavation. Participants will receive intensive training in fieldwork and artefact processing, and work alongside some of the most experienced

archaeologists and historians of Chinese heritage, and mining heritage, in Australia. A key role of The Uncovered Past Institute is to increase the amount of archaeological work undertaken in Australia, through encouraging public contribution to financing archaeological projects.

Ring 03 5797 0155 or use the following link for further information:

[www.uncoveredpast.org.au](http://www.uncoveredpast.org.au)

Email:

[uncoveredpastinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:uncoveredpastinstitute@gmail.com)

### **A Call from Spain**

Those members who recently visited Linares for the International Mining History Congress, and having all become fluent in the language, even if only to ask for a cup of coffee, might be interested in yet another mining related conference drawn to our attention by the Colectivo Proyecto Arrayanes, Linares. The conference is called: "Geological and Mining Heritage, Identity and Incentive for Development", to be held at the School of Mining and Industrial Engineering of Almadén (Ciudad Real, Spain) from 21st to 24th September 2017. For further information contact:

[Mariano.ayarzaguen@gmail.com](mailto:Mariano.ayarzaguen@gmail.com)

An added attraction at Almadén in the World Heritage-listed Almadén Mining Park developed on the site of the Almadén mercury mines that closed in 2003. See:

<http://www.parqueminerodealmden.es/index.php?idioma=in>.

### **Exhibition: 'The Extractive Frontier: Mining For Art', Saturday 18 – Sunday 26 March 2017**

Those members with an artistic bent might be interested in the following exhibition to be held at the Castlemaine State Festival where Colonial history can be viewed as a series of frontier encounters based around the extraction of resources. How are the economies of such extraction (social, commercial, creative and political) reflected in art? In this exhibition, co-curated by Beverly Knight (Alcaston Gallery) and Clare Wright (La

Trobe University), artists from Australia and Papua New Guinea will explore both the artistic heritage and contemporary manifestations of the act of 'digging' in former and current mining towns. What is found and what is lost in the process of excavation?

The Exhibition will be located at: Lot 19, McShannags Lane, off Langslow Street, Castlemaine; Castlemaine Market Building, 44 Mostyn Street, Castlemaine; Castlemaine Art Museum, 14 Lyttleton Street, Castlemaine.

Click on the following for further details: [Further information](#).

### **CONGRATULATIONS**

It must have been a great relief for one of our South Australian members, **Michael Harding**, to have recently been awarded with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. He qualified for his PhD after submitting a mining related thesis, " 'Plenty of Opal Back Then: Opal Pulkah': A History of Aboriginal engagement in the Northern South Australian Opal Industry c. 1940-1980". Hopefully Michael will be able to submit articles from his thesis for our journal and even make a presentation at one of our conferences!

**CONGRATULATIONS** also to Dr. Lenore Layman (WA) who was recently appointed by ANU Vice Chancellor, Professor Brian Schmidt, for a period of five years, as one of five new members on the prestigious Editorial Board of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

### **BITS & PIECES**

#### **Gina's Strategy Revealed**

Those who believe that Gina Rinehart's diversification into the cattle industry is a pathway to supplying world meat markets should think again. All is revealed in the following excerpt from the *SGAT Bulletin*, December 2016. You can be sure that Gina has cleverly captured part of the Australian market associated with the processing of her iron ore:

The research paper "A novel approach for reduction roasting of iron ore slime using cow dung" by S.S. Rath, D.S. Rao, B. K. Mishra has been

published in the *International Journal of Mineral Processing*, 2016, Vol. 157, pp. 216–226. The research is the first ever attempt of usage of cow dung as a reductant in the reduction roasting of an Indian iron ore slime containing 56.2% Fe. The resultant reduced mass generated a concentrate of ~64% Fe with a weight recovery ~66% after being subjected to low intensity magnetic separation (LIMS).

Members interested in cornering the Australian cowpat market are too late, as Gina has already got an army of employees out in the field with buckets and spades in order to feed her iron ore mines.

### **Opal Frenzy!**

Did you miss the Rush? Coober Pedy featured in the news recently when the South Australian Department of Mines opened up a section of the local opal field that had been out of bounds for almost 40 years. Closed in 1977 because of the area's cultural significance, a recent agreement with the local indigenous groups saw a raising of the ban on mining in the 'Shell Patch' area. A total of 221 miners turned up for the ballot of sites, but only 60 of the luckier ones were successful in pegging claims on the best plots. However, after the more favoured spots were drawn, the Mines Department opened up the whole area as a free-for-all. Because of the great interest, the police were called in to keep things under control, but all remained calm.

Recent opal shortage has apparently seen great demand from overseas buyers, a fact which added to the interest in the ballot. As well as possibly enriching any lucky prospectors, the development, it is hoped, will be a shot-in-the-arm to the Coober Pedy economy.

### **Good News**

Further to our concerns on the use of 'Trove' in the last newsletter, we have now learned that the Federal Government has announced funding of \$16.4 million to the National Library of Australia to further promote the programme. A bit of pressure can work wonders.

## **JOURNAL**

Papers for publication in our volume 15, October 2017, have been very slow in reaching the editor's desk. If you have an offering, either for the refereed or the unrefereed section, please submit for consideration asap. Your contributions will help keep the editor sane!

### **VALE DANNY SPOONER**

A number of members have expressed their sadness at the death of member and internationally famed Folk-Singer, Danny Spooner. Among those, the President stated:

"I received the very sad news that Danny Spooner passed away on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. This is a profound loss. Many AMHA members will fondly remember Danny and particularly his musical contributions to the Beechworth and Cobar conferences".

It was indeed a shock to many of our members, yours truly included, as Danny seemed so hale and hearty when we were with him at the Cobar conference just a few months ago. He will be greatly missed from our ranks.

The following obituary has been kindly provided by Ross and Anne Both who were close friends of Danny and partner Gael:

### **DANNY SPOONER - 1936 - 2017**

It is with great sadness we report the death of Danny Spooner, one of our newest members, who died peacefully on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017 in the Daylesford Hospital after a short illness. Danny and his wife Gael had joined AMHA during the conference in Cobar last October.

Danny was one of the outstanding personalities on the Australian folk music scene, with a vast repertoire of traditional British and Australian folk songs. He loved to sing and loved to get others singing. At the National Folk Festival in Canberra at Easter 2016 Danny received a *Life Time Achievement Award* for his commitment and contribution to enriching folk music and culture in this country.

His association with AMHA began in 2013 with the Beechworth Conference when he was invited to entertain the

Conference Dinner with some of the songs of Charles Thatcher, the popular goldfields entertainer from the 1850s-1860s. Rather than just appear at the dinner, Danny and Gael participated fully in the entire conference. They also responded to an invitation to take part in the Cobar Conference, where Danny not only sang at the dinner but also presented a conference paper and sang some mining songs at a joint meeting with the AusIMM.



*Danny Spooner at Mystic Seaport, Connecticut, 2013. (Photo supplied by Gael Shannon)*

The story of Danny's life is a remarkable one and an inspiration. He was born into a working-class family in the East End of London and left school at the age of 13 to work on a sailing-berge which plied the Thames and the south coast of England. During this time he learned British songs and enrolled in libraries along the coast to read their stories. He was apprenticed to the Thames as a Waterman and Lighterman, and after 6 years had earned his Freeman of the Thames. Over the next 10 years he held various jobs including salvage tug and trawler skipper. This varied, almost nomadic, life gave Danny an all-too-rare real-life education in the ways of working people.

In 1962 Danny emigrated to Sydney and did labouring work and began singing semi-professionally. He moved to Melbourne where he joined the resident singers at Frank Traynor's jazz/folk club and worked with actors at La Mama and Pram Factory Theatres. He also researched, wrote, performed and presented programmes for ABC national radio and television, including feature documentaries using folksongs as source material for British and Australian history, literature and religion.

From 1969 to 1978 he was an Associate in the Departments of History and English at the University of Melbourne and a Guest Lecturer at many Australian and New Zealand universities. He enrolled in Deakin University in 1982 as a mature-age student, receiving his B.A. (Hons) in 1986 and followed this in 1987 with a Dip. Ed. from the University of Melbourne. He then became a Secondary School teacher at Mowbray College until his retirement in 2001. This gave him, as he said, the liberty to do all the singing he wanted!

Danny performed in folk clubs all over Australia, New Zealand, Britain and North America. He appeared at every major folk festival in Australia, presenting a vast range of workshops on aspects of folk songs of Britain and Australia. He was also invited to tour Australia in 2007 with Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra and to perform at the Festival of Maribor in 2009 with the Slovenian Philharmonic and members of the ACO.

Although an AMHA member for such a short time, Danny made many friends. He had a big voice and a big heart. We mourn his passing and extend our deepest sympathy to Gael and to Danny's and Gael's families.

*Ross and Anne Both*

With acknowledgements to the following sources: [www.dannyspooner.com/](http://www.dannyspooner.com/)  
<https://www.dannyspooner.com/bio.htm>

**MJD/ March'17**