



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

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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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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AMHA 25th Annual Conference, Atherton, QLD, 6th to 13th July 2019.

Attached you will find a copy of the registration form for our forthcoming conference located at Atherton, Queensland. The local committee led by Jan Wegner and ably helped by Kal Ellwood has arranged an interesting programme and you will find the registration fees to be generous. Please register asap as getting final numbers will be important.

Cairns is the nearest main centre and transport has been arranged to convey people from there to Atherton on the 6th July. There is also a regular bus service serving Cairns-Atherton at: <http://www.transnorthbus.com/cairnsatherton.asp>

It's also advisable to book your accommodation soon for Atherton, and also for Chillagoe for the night of the 13th July if you are attending that tour. The programme starts with a one-day conference tour on 7 July and ends with a two-day tour on 13 and 14 July, with a mid-conference tour on 10 July. We will be visiting mining areas at Mt Mulligan (the local 'expert' will be Peter Bell), Herberton, Irvinebank (where Ruth Kerr will be the commentator), and at Chillagoe where Ruth's comments will be extended with expert information by geologist, John Nethery.

Below are two appetisers for what can be expected from two of the tour leaders, these being the aforementioned Peter Bell and Ruth Kerr:

Mount Mulligan

Ngurrabullgan is an impressive mountain of red sandstone, which was occupied by Aboriginal people at least 37,000 years ago. European explorers called it Mount Mulligan in 1874. Underneath it was a coal seam which became Australia's northern-most coal mine, in production from 1914 to 1957, first owned by the Chillagoe Company and later operated as a State Mine. On 19 September 1921 the Mount Mulligan coal mine was devastated by a coal dust explosion, killing the entire underground workforce of 76, the third-worst industrial accident in Australian history. The town site was abandoned in 1958, the town hospital surviving to become the homestead of the surrounding cattle property, and now part of an upmarket tourist resort. The tour will visit the town site, the mine entrance and the cemetery.

Peter Bell

Chillagoe

Chillagoe was an industrial centre with major smelters for treating the copper, silver, lead, and zinc mined in the Chillagoe – Mungana area. The smelters operated from 1901 to 1914 and 1919 to

1943. Copper was first discovered by Mulligan in 1874 and not developed until John Moffat of Irvinebank sent prospectors to the area of Atherton's station in 1886. His development was stifled by the 1890s depression. In 1896 Moffat succeeded in securing Melbourne capital to develop the mines and erect smelters and construct a railway from Cairns. The Chillagoe Railway and Mines Company Limited opened mines immediately and the smelters and railway in February 1901. The ore was chiefly surface deposits which did not warrant the vast financial investment. The Chillagoe company reconstructed several times and closed the smelters in 1914. They were reopened in 1919 by the Queensland government as a state enterprise and was plagued by scandals through the 1920s resulting in a Royal Commission and court case which destroyed political careers. The smelter remains were auctioned off in 1949. Remains of the machinery and chimneys are within the National Park surrounding Chillagoe and some interpretative signage has been erected.

Herberton and Irvinebank

Herberton and Irvinebank were the centres of the tin industry in north Queensland. Discovered in 1880 and 1882 respectively they were developed into major centres with up to 40 head of stamps at the Great Northern and Loudoun Batteries owned by John Moffat through private companies. John Moffat commenced the Herberton battery in 1881 and the Loudoun mill at Irvinebank on 10 December 1884. Both were custom mills serving individual miners. By continuously upgrading the machinery Moffat continued to make profits and operated a smelter at Irvinebank. In the surrounding region there were many companies promoted by Moffat operating the smaller mining centres as well as the rich Vulcan mine. When the state government failed to build a railway to Irvinebank Moffat's Irvinebank Mining Company constructed the narrow gauge

Irvinebank Tramway to link with the Stannary Hills Tramway. As mines were worked out, profits fell, and Moffat retired. The Queensland government took over the Loudoun Mill as a state enterprise, the Irvinebank State Treatment Works, in 1919, after Moffat died. The brick chimneys of the mill were demolished by the military in 1942 and the tramway closed.

The Great Northern battery at Herberton closed when the world tin market collapsed in 1985 and the Irvinebank Treatment works ceased operation in 1996. The Great Northern battery has been totally removed. The remains of the Irvinebank Treatment Works survive in a fenced enclosure owned by the Queensland government. Both towns continue as Tableland villages.

Ruth Kerr

14th National Folklore Conference 2019

Those members inclined to follow the likes of mining bard, Charles Thatcher, might be interested to attend the National Folklore Conference being held on 18 April from 9.00 to 4.30pm at the National Library, Canberra. This will be followed by the Folk Festival, which runs from that evening until the afternoon of the 22nd April at EPIC, the old Canberra Showgrounds. You can be assured of at least some mining content, as one of the main features will be the appearance of Yvette Staelens who will entertain with her "Cornwall to Kadina, which includes twenty-six Cornish carols".

For further information and to register (note registration is free), email cknow@iinet.net.au

2nd Reminder: International Mining History Association

For those who like to plan ahead, note that arrangements are well under way for the 12th meeting of the International Mining History Congress, which will meet at Laurentian University in Sudbury Ontario, between **18-22 June 2020**. As is usual, we hope to see the AMHA well represented at the meeting.

STUDENT GRANTS

If you know of any post-graduate, honours or final year undergraduate student who would like to be considered for a travel grant to our Atherton conference in July, please spread the good word and encourage them to apply. The Association has available on a competitive basis, two travel grants. The grants will consist of:

\$1,000 for travel and accommodation; free conference registration (including the tours, conference dinner and excursions); also 12 months free Student Membership of the Association (including the *Journal of Australasian Mining History*)

A requirement for a recipient of a grant will be an oral presentation at the conference. Presentations on any aspect of mining history will be considered. Presentations are to be a maximum of 20 minutes in length, plus 5 minutes for questions. Further, applicants will be required to email a **cover letter** to the Convenor of the AMHA Travel Grants Committee, along with an **abstract** of the proposed presentation, plus a **brief curriculum vitae** by the **deadline, 30 April 2019**. In the cover letter, an applicant should explain what he/she hopes to gain from the conference. While applications are welcomed from any student researchers, preference will be given to those students whose studies are intended to lead to a career in history or heritage.

If successful, applicants must accept the grant within 14 days after the offer is received. Successful candidates will be expected to participate in at least the full official conference (8-12 July). Recipients of a grant will not be eligible for further grants.

Grant applications and questions should be submitted and addressed to:

Dr Ross Both, Convener, AMHA Travel Grants Committee, at rosannb@bigpond.net.au.

BITS & PIECES

Moonlighting

Acknowledgement is given for the following that has been taken from the

Digging & Drilling Magazine, January-March edition. Not so long ago, even Jules Verne couldn't have envisaged this as being more than science fiction:

'The far side of the Moon saw the historic first soft landing by China. Does this have any consequence for the mining sector on Earth? It has been reported that China is considering mining the Moon for a rare isotope of Helium known as Helium-3 which is theorized to be used in clean nuclear fusion. Helium-3 is valued at around \$5 billion per ton and is very rare. It is estimated that Earth has a total of 15 tonnes and the Moon has between 1-5 million tonnes. A report prepared for the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission states; 'Chinese analysts conclude that the revenue derived from mining fusion-ready helium-3 could be economically viable and could cover the costs of the infrastructure needed for such a technologically complex endeavor'. Helium-3 could not be used on Earth until the 2nd generation of Nuclear Reactors are introduced, so, this would be at least a 50-year plan.

An important question is, who owns the Moon? The Outer Space Treaty, formally the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other Celestial Bodies ratified by 102 Countries, including China in 1967 states; "The exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind". Ultimately, this will be a question for Space Lawyers to argue. The far side of the Moon saw the historic first soft landing by China.'

The message to our members is to put on your flying jackets and get in early to take a stake in such ventures - but don't expect to see a return on your investment for some time. t

'My name is Charlie'

This is the title of a documentary by an Italian team led by Valeria Messina, who visited Western Australia a few years ago to research the lives of Italian miners who

came to the goldfields in the early 20th century. In particular it's the story of the miraculous rescue of Modesta Varischetti who was trapped in a rise on the 10th level of the Bonnievale mine for almost 9 days following a deluge, that's at the centre of the documentary. Some of our members might recall that after frantic but futile efforts to drain the mine with pumps, he was rescued by two divers who faced the dangers of entering the flooded mine. The rescue attempt attracted the enthralled interest of the nation, and the divers were treated like heroes, which considering the dangers, they truly were.

The documentary shows not only the Western Australian goldfields but also the mining area and the harsh life of miners and their families in the district around Gornese in Italy where Charlie had previously lived and worked. For further details and to gain access to the documentary, see the following link:

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/mynameisc harlie>

(As with some of the other links – if it doesn't open, copy and paste the link into your Chrome or other search engine).

JOURNAL

Time is getting on, and so another appeal for articles to be submitted for consideration for Volume 17 of the Association's journal. Don't be shy about writing up your research, and whether you wish to choose your work to be refereed, or to appear in the non-refereed section, your submissions will be gratefully received.

As a reminder papers of about 8,000 words (excluding endnotes) are the ideal, though shorter applications of merit will be accepted.

Please contact the Ed/Secretary by presenting in Word, Times Roman 12. For further instructions please view the style sheet on our web page, or email me.

The Ed.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Could I please urge those who have not renewed their memberships for 2019 (and there are quite a few) to do so asap? This is the 2nd reminder and the earlier your response the happier we (note the Royal We) will be. Click on the following link (or copy and paste into your Chrome or other search engine) to sign up with Register Now, or request a form from the Secretary, or go to the webpage to download a paper membership form.

<https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/Register.aspx?E=33012>

MJD/March