

BOOK REVIEWS

Lloyd Carpenter and Lyndon Fraser (eds), *Rushing for Gold: Life and commerce on the goldfields of New Zealand and Australia*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2016, pp. 396, Illustrations, PB, ISBN 978-1877578-54-0.

When about to put fingers to keyboard, I read a brief review in the *New Zealand Listener* which concluded: ‘The stories of triumph and defeat, greed and stubborn resilience are told with a vivid intensity that raises the book well above an academic treatise’. Well said, that reviewer! For although it deserves a place on every Association member’s bookshelf, this book will be of interest to a much wider readership.

Most of the papers in this book were presented at a conference on the Otago goldfields organized by the indefatigable Lloyd Carpenter in 2012, but even the most Otago-obsessed ones have wider implications. A central theme is that these rushes were part of an international phenomenon and that their history illustrated experiences and features common to Australasian mining. Many miners, merchants and others travelled across the Tasman Sea, which was a bridge not a barrier, being cheaper and easier to cross than travelling between the Australian colonies. The failures and miseries of mining are emphasized, an important antidote to the romanticizing of mining – at most, the vast majority of miners attained only modest financial success.

The book is divided into five sections: trans-Tasman rushes, Maoris and Chinese, gold-rush women, goldfields society, and goldfields heritage. The first section illustrates how, in economic and other terms, the mid-century Otago rushes were a Victorian event, provision of Melbourne capital and merchandise being vital to the development of these new fields. Victorian miners arrived in waves, often returning when Otago fields declined; fearing the loss of miners, some Victorian newspapers discouraged them from seeking their fortunes abroad. Most of the first to arrive were young, single, and lacked mining experience and capital (forcing them to rely on borrowed money); married men brought their families over later. It is argued that there was a common cultural pattern in Otago, Victoria, and parts of Tasmania in the second half of the nineteenth century, even extending to the layout of settlements and miners’ cottages. The notable similarities were caused by merchants, miners, architects, clergy, musicians, and actors (and many others) moving freely between colonies – as did thieves, single mothers, and fathers abandoning their wives or avoiding paying their debts. The institutional arrangements were modelled on Victorian precedents, and some of the leaders of the new communities had an Australian background, as illustrated by Vincent Pyke’s career.

Maori were involved in the early phases of many rushes, including some in Victoria, and the details of which Maori were involved in which discovery is a significant compilation of scattered information. Successful prospecting by some Maori

would be repeated elsewhere, notably at Te Aroha, where this reviewer's hero, Hone Werahiko, illustrated how some Maori gained respect, and wealth, through their ability.

Considerable and important detail is provided about the Chinese experience, which can be compared and contrasted with what happened in Australia. There was uneasy co-existence and even some intermarriage, with one prominent merchant, Lowe Kong Meng who found himself in that situation, being important in both Australia and Otago. Chinese were invited to Otago in 1865 because the initial fields were fading, and were promised equality before the law. Initially tolerated and treated better than in Australia, from whence they had arrived, they worked collaboratively, generally on poorer ground. Admired by some Europeans for their skills as miners and market-gardeners, being hard-working, law-abiding, uninvolved in politics, and keeping to themselves, they were not seen as a threat to Europeans until late in the century, when concerns about competition meant their numbers dwindled. By the twentieth century the remaining Chinese were elderly and increasingly poverty-stricken; most of the financially successful had returned to China, as originally intended by all the Chinese.

Uncovering the lives of women is dependent on the sources available, which (as usual) reveal more about the immoral than the moral; the many excellent case-studies illustrate this point and show the mixed fortunes experienced. Contemporaries were entertained by the behaviour of their less respectable neighbours, amongst whom the Irish figured prominently. The rushes enabled women arriving from Australia to abandon spouses and, by describing themselves as widows or single, become bigamists yet retain their respectability. As is well known, female hoteliers and sly-grog sellers were prominent in many communities, and case-studies illustrate their importance both socially and philanthropically. It is stressed that domestic servants, the main female occupation before marriage, far from being oppressed were more secure financially than miners or male wage workers, and that Irish women had a better life and more power within marriage than those who remained in Ireland. Despite assumptions by some historians that the initial mining settlements had a 'Wild West' flavour, the permanent settlements formed in Otago demonstrated a desire for order and normality (also a common feature of settlements in the North Island and elsewhere). Miners welcomed the establishment of administrative structures to settle disputes over property rights and to control behaviour, and spontaneously established self-improvement societies and such basic local institutions as schools, churches, sports clubs, and newspapers.

The common myth that merchants in goldfields settlements were parasites flourishing at the expense of miners is challenged, with many examples being provided of their vital role in providing the capital needed to develop the first claims and construct the first batteries and water races, often at a financial cost – many Australian and New Zealand merchants were forced into bankruptcy through providing credit. Small businessmen were the merchant bankers of mining communities, and only in the early days of a rush could storekeepers make windfall profits – often succeeded by financial disaster as ephemeral settlements vanished. And far from being totally separate occupation, some miners became merchants, and vice versa. 'Most miners regarded mining as the means to an end – an end that would enable them to invest the

wealth accumulated in agriculture or business' rather than in mining. 'Like most generalisations, the myth that only the merchants made money on the goldfields can be proven in the exception but disproved in general' (Carpenter, p. 239).

An attempt to identify lawyers operating on the Otago fields reveals that some were unregistered and fell prey to bankruptcy like so many other small-time professionals and merchants. And a chapter about an absurd attempt to construct a main trunk railway line using wooden rails reveals this was one reason why provinces were abolished.

The politics of localism, described in detail, could be duplicated in small towns throughout Australasia; likewise how, once large-scale mining operations replaced the informal partnerships working small claims, the fear of too much democracy was countered by the wealthier. Commercial interests dominated public life and shared and satisfied the miners' desire for public works (roads and bridges and the like) without which mining districts could not have thrived. A useful case study shows how a run-holder, William Gilbert Rees, formerly of New South Wales, adapted so well to an unwanted invasion of miners that he became a leading developer of the Queenstown district. And over time, miners who remained in mining districts became farmers, orchardists, storekeepers and small businessmen, and also political conservatives.

The challenges of interpreting historical sites to visitors are outlined, along with suggestions for avoiding 'sanitising and romanticising the past' (Frost, p. 275). The development of the Otago Goldfields Park and the longest archaeological investigation ever made in New Zealand (with an emphasis on the Chinese dimension) is described in detail.

Words of wisdom from Tom Brooking: 'Judging by tourist promotion of this old gold-mining area, the popular mythology [shared by some historians] that goldminers were wild, rough individuals unattached to family, community, church, organisations or localities seems to have survived decades of quiet revisionism. Much the same can be said of most other New Zealand or Australian gold-mining areas' (p. 206). And words of confusion from another contributor who believes the King James Bible was written by Saint James.

The book ends on a high note (literally, if the music provided towards the end of the book is sung) with a cultural piece on 'Thatcher, Vitelli and Small', a play with music about Charles Thatcher's goldfields experiences and 'vulgar rhymes' thereon. This is a very good publication that will be of interest to all members of the AMHA.

Philip Hart

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Alwyn Evans, *From Wales to Gwalia: a Swansea Editor and his Australian Goldmine*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 2016, ISBN 978-0-85905-630-4, \$50

This book is a biography of George W. Hall (1855-1915), Welsh newspaper editor turned Australian mining entrepreneur, whose principal achievement was to promote and bring British investment capital to the Sons of Gwalia goldmine at Leonora in Western Australia. The author points out, "to date, there has been little historical treatment of his role and importance in opening up the goldfields of that state." Evans also believes the role of the Welsh has generally been neglected in the study of Australian mining, and seeks to improve that state of affairs.

The Sons of Gwalia was no ordinary mine. It operated from 1896 to 1963 with a short gap in the 1920s, a remarkable lifespan for an Australian mine. It was one of the deepest mines in Australia, with an incline shaft 5,000 feet long reaching to 4,000 feet (1,200m) vertical depth. By the time the mine closed, it had produced over 2,500,000 ounces of gold, and paid dividends of over £2,000,000. The dividends represented seven hundred percent return on the company's original nominal capital, and about two thousand percent on the paid-up capital: an average thirty percent per annum over the mine's working life, even when decades of poverty and decline are included in the calculation. Before the gold industry revival in the 1980s, the Sons of Gwalia was probably the sixth-largest mine in Australia, in quantity of gold produced. Only Mount Morgan and four mines on the Golden Mile surpassed its production up to 1963.

Hall's role in this was to recognise the mine's potential at an early stage of its development, and in November 1896 he bought it for £5,000 from the syndicate who had discovered it. He was one of the entrepreneurs who had been attracted by the many opportunities offered by the Western Australian goldfields, a partner in the London and Westralian Mines and Finance Agency, whose business was developing and promoting promising mines. He installed a second-hand mill and developed the mine to demonstrate its potential, recouping his entire purchase price plus the cost of the mill in the first two weeks of crushing. Hall offered the mine to Bewick Moreing & Coy, who floated Sons of Gwalia Ltd with capital of £300,000 on the London market in January 1898. He held both his own Sons of Gwalia shares and an interest in the vendor shares of the London and Westralian company for the rest of his life. By May 1898, the mine had produced £85,000 worth of gold.

Before Hall arrived in Australia at the age of forty, his previous life had been as an editor of Welsh newspapers. His journalistic activities put him in contact with William Pritchard Morgan, a mining investor who historians usually describe with words like "colourful". Morgan encouraged him to invest in the gold mines of Carmarthenshire and Merioneth. Hall became company secretary to two of Morgan's North Wales gold mining companies, which introduced him to the world of mining promotion and investment. In 1895 Hall and Morgan extended their activities to Western Australia.

Perhaps Evans overstates the extent to which Hall has been neglected in Western Australian mining history. I have found his role accurately depicted in the accounts I

have read of the Sons of Gwalia. One very interesting theme of this book is its scrutiny of the role of Herbert Hoover, who became manager of the Sons of Gwalia mine in April 1898. Evans believes that Hoover's role in the development of the mine has been exaggerated, beginning with Hoover's own self-promotional writing, since magnified by others uncritically repeating his claims. I have some sympathy with this argument, for Hoover shamelessly inflated his own importance and took credit for other people's achievements. (Hall himself cannot be described as self-effacing, as Evans acknowledges: "his fame depends as much on effective publicity as on any personal accomplishment".) Hoover was only 23 when he took the manager's position, was subject to stringent oversight by more senior Bewick Moreing staff, and stayed only seven months. The manager's house at Gwalia still stands, and is promoted by the local tourist industry as Hoover's House, as though he regularly gazed at the mine from its verandah, but in fact it consisted of nothing but foundations when he left. Hoover took credit for achieving very low production costs, but W.J. Loreing who succeeded him as manager dropped those costs considerably.

However, Evans may have pushed the pendulum a little too far in the other direction. For example, Hoover redesigned the underground workings, leaving his mark on the mine until the day it closed. Hoover replaced his predecessors' conventional vertical shaft with an underlie shaft dipping at forty-five degrees immediately below and parallel to the main reef, with extraction from levels and overhand stopes. The legacy of this system was a very low proportion of dead work throughout the life of the mine. On the surface, treatment was done by gravity stamps, Wilfley tables and cyaniding. The combination was innovative, although not conspicuously more so than the practice at most Western Australian mines of the time. Hoover himself took credit in his memoirs for first introducing the filter press to the mining industry. In this he was mistaken; its value in saving water from pulp had already been recognized in Western Australia, and Geoffrey Blainey has pointed out that filter presses had been introduced at the Lake View Consols by J.W. Sutherland a year before Hoover first set foot in Gwalia. Wilfley tables, on the other hand, appear not to have been in use at any other Australian mine before Hoover ordered them for his new plant in 1898. He may in later years have recalled the fact of an innovation, but forgotten what it was.

Evans states of Hall, that the Sons of Gwalia "was the one big success of his life". Hall did not encounter any other promising mines in the course of his career. He dabbled in a number of other leases on the Gwalia reef, the Star of Gwalia, Prince of Gwalia, Pride of Gwalia and Daughters of Gwalia, and elsewhere on the eastern goldfields the North Star, Euro, Wilga, Essex, Gwalia Consols and Lake Violet mines, but all of these were, if not outright failures, then mediocre at best. Hall only had one successful mine in him, but it was a big one.

Hall was not really of the mining industry. The extent to which he ever had hands-on management of the Gwalia mine during the fourteen months in which he owned it is debatable. He was an investor and promoter, a middle-man, who could recognise a mine's potential to create wealth and knew how to go about finding the capital to develop it. His role resembles that of William Corbould at Mount Isa or William Knox D'Arcy at Mount Morgan, who understood the capital available to them

was not sufficient to develop the resource, but knew where to find more.

Depicting Hall's two careers brings a structural problem to the book, in that readers attracted to the history of the Australian mining industry are probably not well-informed about or interested in Welsh newspapers, and vice versa. Most likely there is no other link between the two fields than the person of Hall himself. Yet this book skilfully draws the connection, pointing out that Hall's "effective publicity" was extremely important to his role as promoter. Probably more than anyone else in the mining industry, Hall always knew what to say to journalists.

When not at his mines, Hall, like many of the Western Australian mining magnates, lived in the genteel Adelaide suburb of Medindie, in a house that still stands. In 1902 his domestic bliss ended in a lurid and very public divorce, during which Adelaide society was scandalised to learn that Mrs Hall had behaved indiscreetly with a clergyman. She responded with evidence that Hall was in the habit of bestowing gifts of gold nuggets on lady acquaintances. He seems to have become unsettled after the embarrassing divorce, moving restlessly between his Western Australian prospects, and involved in unfortunate mining enterprises in China and Korea. By 1908 he was home in Wales, back in the local gold mining industry. His death was a random misfortune. Walking back to his home alone one night after dinner with Morgan, he apparently lost his path in the darkness and was found dead at the foot of a cliff, an abrupt end to an interesting and complex career.

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CRIENA FITZGERALD, *Turning Men into Stone: A social and medical history of silicosis in Western Australia 1890-1970*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, WA, 2016, pp. i-vii, 1-242, Illustrations, ISBN 978-0-85905-635-9.

The title of this book, whilst evoking pictures of Medusa turning into stone those men who gazed on her beauty, actually comes from a Western Australian doctor who, in 1960 used the phrase to describe what happened to miners who contracted silicosis. The Medusa on which the men gazed to incur this result was their occupation in the dusty underground mines of Western Australia.

Dr Fitzgerald has succeeded in putting together a highly readable book with evidence of formidable scholarship and meticulous research. The study of silicosis at any level is a very complex undertaking, and to follow through eighty years of events is indeed an achievement. Silicosis is one of several diseases classified as a pneumoconiosis and is an outcome of being exposed to silica-containing dust, usually in an occupational context. It is not an easy condition to define and diagnose. In its purest form the particles of silica become embedded in the lungs causing death and damage to the tissues, until the scarring fills the lungs to a point where breathing becomes difficult. It is often masked by the susceptibility of the sufferers to other lung diseases, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, asthma and emphysema, which for the most part could not be

defined as occupational diseases. Even after X-rays were discovered and introduced, diagnosis remained (and still remains) imprecise. It was this uncertainty about what was caused by occupation and what was simply contracted as an outcome of living in a community, which created a complex web of claim and counter claim amongst Government officials, mineowners and investors, the medical profession, unionists and miners. The story of the fight to gain living-wage benefits and compensation for sick miners and their families is admirably handled by Dr. Fitzgerald, as the book sorts through the labyrinthine tangle of legislation and other action, countered by the obstructionist influences from those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo.

Thus, the early chapters do more than merely set the context and framework of the book, they also set the tone that will be maintained throughout. That is, this is more than just an unravelling of many complex facts and figures, the theme that runs throughout is the story of the sufferers and their families, as well as the story of those who tried to help or hinder them in their quest for reasonable working conditions and fair management of occupational disease.

The reader's attention to this aspect of the book is caught early, in the introduction, with the often distressing story of Matti Dressa and his family. Through this one case study we learn much of the impact of mining disease on a family and the innate unfairness of many aspects of the system that miners had to deal with. With the Dressa family as a reference point, it is easy for the reader to be swept up in the drama of the story. The dawning awareness of the disease described in Chapter 1 gives some hope that the plight of the miner will be recognized, an optimism which is somewhat squashed by the events described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 where dust control in mines, although the most obvious solution, was for the most part ignored whilst the argument raged over compensation. There were varied sources of potential income at different times, but that did not mean that applicants would be deemed to be eligible for them. Many stories of applications being made and turned down are interwoven into the text of this book. It seems that only rarely was consideration given to hardship or need - rather, decisions were made on technicalities by men who were removed from the reality of living and supporting a family in poverty, and often acting on the basis of poor or incomplete information.

The arbitrariness of decisions is even more evident when it comes to providing relief for widows of miners. Chapter 4 borrows its title from the Anne Summers book *Damned Whores and God's Police*, to talk about the lived experience of widows who mainly rely on the Mineworkers' Relief Fund. Several descriptions of the circumstances of individual women show the inconsistencies in the decisions made and the way in which they were often based on gendered moral expectations. The stories adhere to the documented historical record, but the author again manages to give the women a voice that is rarely heard in historical writing. Again the reader becomes swept up in the sad drama of their situation, invoking for the most part huge sympathy for the women, and anger and frustration at the bureaucracy that so increased the difficulty of their circumstances.

Chapters 5 and 6 tackle the issue of what happened to men forced out of the mines by mining disease that did not allow them continue to work underground. Miners required to leave their work were assessed and provided with 'suitable' work. The lack of understanding of the disease is seen when it was optimistically believed that working at manual labour in the open air would 'cure' silicosis or at least slow the progress of the disease significantly. Many of the solutions involved putting the miners on to marginal farmland, requiring felling of trees and other hard manual labour, with the added stresses of either having to leave family behind or have them all live together in

rural poverty. These solutions seem to be partly influenced at least by a romantic view of rural life on the part of city-dwelling parliamentarians and public health doctors, combined with a view of city living that had more to do with smoggy English cities than the Western Australian capital city, Perth, in which the miners might have found employment. The Dusted Miners Settlement referred to in the title of Chapter 6 as ‘an unhealthy experiment’ was one of the initiatives generated by the need to provide a living wage for sick miners and their families. The miners who took up the option of settling on a farm became for the most part increasingly ill and unable to work and, having given up mining some time before this eventuated, they were not eligible to apply for compensation. The optimistic view that sick miners could recover in non-dust-generating occupations was simply wrong.

As the stories of ‘dusted’ men and their families emerge, it becomes clear that many solutions to the complex problems were attempted, usually with spectacular lack of success. But the most obvious solution, that of controlling and managing dust in the mines, remained largely in the hands of mine owners and investors and, because this would cost them money, was only ever halfheartedly enforced.

Chapter 7 gives an excellent explanation of the progress and increasing knowledge in the diagnosis of silicosis and tuberculosis and how science influenced the path to compensation for sick miners. As medical checkups of miners became compulsory, mineowners showed themselves often less than co-operative, not wanting to lose hard-to-get labour, especially in the more remote areas. This chapter also takes the reader on the journeys faced by the insufficient number of physicians and X-ray technicians who took on the examination of workers in remote areas. Apart from being made responsible for a huge workload, they travelled long distances on barely-made roads affected by weather and lack of maintenance with heavy medical equipment and vehicles not suitable for the purpose.

Chapter 6 follows up the question of diagnosis with an examination of what happened when compensation at last became available to miners with the Workers Compensation Act of 1926. Diagnosis became crucial in the decision about whether individual miners were eligible for compensation because they had more or less silicosis in relation to other lung conditions, particularly tuberculosis. There were no foregone conclusions in this and, as we saw with earlier funding, there was an arbitrariness in many decisions made, which belied any claims that compensation was awarded according to objective scientific assessment. Throughout the process, we see the mineowners doing their best to take as little responsibility as possible for this disease, although it was certainly caused by working conditions in their mines. In this saga the Mines Inspectors were caught between vested interests.

Chapter 7 examines their role which over the years expanded from safety and sanitation to ventilation and dust measurement – and, it seems, to any other job required of them. Actual dust measurement only began in 1925 with the introduction of the konimeter from South Africa. There were inspectors who diligently tried to measure and monitor dust, but they were continually stymied by the apathy or unrepentant obstructionism of the mine owners. Again in this chapter the reader gets to know some of the Mines Inspectors, who like the outback physicians and X-ray technicians of the previous chapter struggled with insufficient resources and ever-increasing workloads.

The final chapter gives an interesting account of what must be one of the most counter intuitive preventative treatments undertaken, described aptly by the author as ‘bizarre’; that is to expose men to dust bearing a powdered form of element – aluminium – in order to ameliorate or prevent a disease caused by filling lungs with dust bearing another element - silica. This treatment was, on the whole, not well supported

by the medical profession many of whom felt that it was useless, maybe even harmful. It seems it was not used in Australia, apart from in the West, although some of the larger mining towns in other states did investigate it. The Western Australian mining industry and Government picked it up with enthusiasm, as an answer to the increasing difficulty of sick miners. The miners themselves were often not so sanguine, but seemingly felt pressured by anxiety that if they did not comply they would be disadvantaged in seeking assistance or compensation should they in future contract silicosis in the course of their work. The irony is not lost that if the money spent on this expensive treatment had been put towards proper dust control and management in the mines, it would have done far more good in controlling the disease.

The forward of this book is written by John Gordon, Barrister. He makes the point, made by so many before, that “if we do not learn from the lessons of history, we are doomed to repeat them”. There is much to be learned from this book, as mining remains a major Australian industry. We have not seen the end of exploitation of workers, poor regard for health of workers, vested interests finding ways to avoid their responsibilities or even of silicosis and other pneumoconioses.

For many and varied reasons, this is a book to be recommended for, to again quote John Gordon, “just about anyone”. It is eminently readable with accessible and engaging language combined with rigorous scholarship, relevant and well-presented illustrations and graphs, and a flowing structure through which the sick miners and their families are represented with passion and compassion.

Sandra Kippen

John P. Hamilton, *Adjudication on the Gold Fields in New South Wales and Victoria the 19th Century*, Federation Press, Sydney, 2015. (xii, 260 pages, index, bibliography, appendices): \$135.

This is an intense and dense book because of the intricateness of the analysis. The subject matter is vital to an understanding of Australia’s earliest goldfields in New South Wales and Victoria. It is intense because of the depth of research and analysis utilizing primary sources which are all legal – following the ‘best evidence rule’. This adds significantly to the stature of the book.

John Hamilton is a retired Supreme Court Judge of New South Wales who had practiced in mining law since the early 1970s. He began in the field when approached to present a paper on mining law to a legal conference. One of the major cases in his career was his Cadia mine judgement which, after the New South Wales Appeal Court set aside his judgement, was upheld by the High Court in 2008.¹ This case turned on the ownership of minerals in a nineteenth century mineral freehold (a comparatively rare tenure). John Hamilton undertook the study as a PhD thesis completed at Macquarie University and was published by Federation Press.

¹ *Cadia Holdings Pty Ltd v State of New South Wales* ([2008] NSWSC 528; [2009] NSWCA 174, 257 ALR 528; [2010] HCA 27, 242 CLR 195)

The author's aim was to establish and examine what the system of resolution of disputes was from 1851 to 1875. This entailed discovering the surviving public records in New South Wales and Victorian Archives. A range of these records were referred to and quoted from in the analysis of the legal procedures on the goldfields. John Hamilton outlines the changing legislative authorities for the adjudication and his command of his sources and argument is formidable.

The adjudication processes were oral and not committed to writing. The Gold Fields Commissioners (later named Wardens) provided a local service remedying miners' complaints and claims against each other and the government. The very success of the practical and pragmatic system determined that there would be few primary sources covering the cases to be accessed. Nevertheless the newspapers of the time and other government records provided insightful reporting of the resolution of issues.

The system of adjudication was successful in New South Wales and failed in Victoria. The book also examines the reported cases in the Supreme Courts concerning gold fields adjudication, presenting for the first time, an account of these adjudicative systems. The career of Thomas Alexander Browne (who was the novelist Rolf Boldrewood) as the Commissioner at Gulgong in the early 1870s is also examined. He was not typical of Gold Fields Commissioners in that he was at odds with his community.

The use of paragraph numbers within chapters, as used in submissions in courts, provides good reference points and is very helpful. The foundation of the method of adjudication is set out in Chapters 3 and 4 predominantly. The means of adjudication on the mining fields arose out of the role of Commissioners of Crown Lands established under the *Crown Lands Act 1833 (4 Wm IV No.10)*. Section X of the *Crown Lands Act 1839 (2 Vic No.2)* specifically provided the Commissioners with an adjudicative function which they exercised against trespassers in the 1840s and 1850s. This section was adopted in almost identical terms in subsequent legislation relating to adjudication on gold fields. Paragraph 550 sets out Gold Commissioner John Richard Hardy's view of the role of the Gold Commissioner in New South Wales and which summarizes succinctly the basis of their success in adjudication:

I know no more remarkable fact in the circle of social facts than this – that though the Gold Commissioners appeared amongst the diggers with the unfavourable prestige of tax gatherers, they were universally popular and welcome. They were looked upon with confidence, as the protectors and just arbiters of the gold field. The thousand of disputes that necessarily arise in the gold field, were at once, without a day's delay, settled, without the expense, the delay, the tedious formality, that impedes the way of justice in other places – *sub Jove pluvio, in triviis et quadriviis*; the witnesses necessarily on the spot, and all the neighbours, the jury *de circumstantibus*, interested in a just decision, and present to assist in a just determination. If our Gold Commissioners had been of the usual government office type, gentlemen of the broad margin and red tape school, staying at home at ease, making work out of nothing, in well-known and time-honored official fashion – opening at ten and closing at four, gay triflers in the realms of foolscap – the gold field would not have been what it was, an honor and a credit to the government and its directors.

John Hamilton emphasizes that this legal function had a greater impact on Australian mining law than did the English mining courts (Stannary and Barmote courts).

The British Government transferred legal authority over the goldfields to the New South Wales Legislative Council in 1852. Part of the process was the holding of a Select Committee to inquire into the management of the Gold Fields and the collection of revenue from them. Leading New South Wales politicians and squatters, William Charles Wentworth and John Macarthur were to the fore along with the Colonial Secretary and the Solicitor General and six others. The evidence presented indicated that miners were generally satisfied with the adjudication system covering boundaries, protection of property and personal security, by the Gold Fields Commissioners. Hardy did not fare well out of the Select Committee and was dismissed, largely because of his personal views on the Right of the Colony to the Gold Fields and the gold obtained there, his view being different to those of the committee (Para 545). In 1855 he published a pamphlet, *Squatters and Gold-Diggers, Their Claims and Rights* in which he set out the above views, and his analysis of the exchanges in the Select Committee.

The Victorian system of adjudication and its development is explained very effectively in Chapter 6. A local system administered by Gold Commissioners failed by 1854. The Victorian parliament introduced a comprehensive system of Local Courts based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission following the Eureka Stockade in 1854, together with provisions providing certainty of adjudication processes under Mining Wardens. The encroachment jurisdiction was provided separately under Justices of the Peace. The local courts were composed of an appointed Chairman and nine members elected by holders of miner's rights every six months. The courts were successful for a short time but the exercise of judicial functions met fairly quickly with controversy and contention by Judges, resulting in transfer of the function to Courts of Mines.

A possible weakness in the book is the social and economic history of the goldfields themselves as this is not the expertise of the author. However, to his credit John Hamilton has utilized a most extensive array of high standard and legitimate secondary sources on the goldfields history. A small inaccuracy is the statement that wool was always the largest Australian industry. It did not attain this position until the mid 1830s. A study of the Statistics of New South Wales shows this. Such a criticism is minor, as few would have studied the whaling and fishing industries in early Australia to have ascertained that they were higher producers

Also the initial system of adjudication on the Gympie Gold Field in Queensland by an elected group of miners is not mentioned, although it was important in the evolution of Australian mining law because it illustrated the necessity of a uniform set of Mining Rules on each gold field.

The Conclusion completes the book by answering the questions of the reasons for the form of jurisdiction in both colonies, its level of success, and the role of the Supreme Court in formalization of dispute resolutions systems. It is a brilliant book and fills a niche in legal history writing.

Dr Ruth S. Kerr

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Rebecca Macfie, *Tragedy at Pike River Mine: How and why 29 men died*, AWA Press, Wellington, NZ, 2013; republished 2015, 295pp., diagrams and photos; ISBN 978-1-877551-90-1.

Many of us will remember those gripping and tense five days in November 2010 when the world waited to hear the fate of the 29 men trapped underground at Pike River coal mine in the north of New Zealand's South Island. Just three months prior in August 2010, 33 miners were successfully rescued from an underground mine in Chile after 69 days trapped beneath the surface, captivating and amazing the world at what can be achieved with dogged determination in often dangerous and difficult circumstances. This same memory no doubt kept many of the families of the Pike River 29 (as they came to be known) alive with hope that they would see their loved ones re-emerge, buoyed by the knowledge two miners were able to walk out only hours after the initial explosion occurred. Little did they know that the underground environments of the two disasters were like chalk and cheese – the Chilean entrapment was in a hard rock mine, with strong, competent rock that allowed for rescue shafts to be sunk and the mine to remain relatively stable during the rescue. At Pike River, a gassy coal mine deep in the Paparoa Ranges east of Greymouth, the opposite was in fact the case – the level of methane gas in the mine, exposed as a result of various mining and exploration activities, regularly exceeded safe levels. The mine also straddled a major geological fault that called for innovative engineering solutions, not to mention presenting dangerous working conditions. Added to this, the mine had only one point of egress – the main access drive from the portal to the major workings some 2.3 km away - which was severely damaged in the initial blast. An emergency egress ladder fitted to a 111m deep ventilation shaft was practically unusable in normal conditions, let alone in times of an emergency when miners are suffering breathing difficulties and carrying life-saving equipment. Having worked underground myself, even I understand that having two points of egress is a mandatory, minimum design requirement. Not in New Zealand.

Rebecca Macfie's book, *Tragedy at Pike River Mine*, is a masterful example of investigative journalism of a situation that was cursed from the start. Taking information, transcripts, interviews and conversations from various sources, Macfie pieces together a collage of Pike River; a tragic story for which the die had been cast well before the mine was started. A litany of errors, poor decisions and inappropriate engineering decisions years before, led to what culminated over those five days in November 2010. Many times while reading, I had to put the book down as I seethed with anger over some of the decisions made by people who clearly didn't have the health and safety of future workers at the forefront of their mind. The usual story of putting production before safety, coupled with growing debt as targets kept slipping, and there was no coal to market, led to enormous pressure on many of the workers and middle management, many of whom wanted to see Pike River succeed. This pressure was so great that over a 2-year period, 5 people held the role of statutory mine manager, some of whom were not qualified to hold the position.

Every miner, be they of the open pit or underground type, should read this book. At the heart of the story is a compelling justification for the strict regulatory controls that govern mining, why they are required, and how they can save lives. Australia has various regulatory controls, and in states like Queensland and Western Australia many complain they are too restrictive. In the case of New Zealand, these controls had been deregulated some decades before and many may argue had they still been in place along with sufficient regulatory clout, the Pike River 29 might still be alive today.

Regardless of who you think is to blame and who should be paying the price of their mistakes, *Tragedy at Pike River Mine* will have you engaged and enraged, often both at the same time. If you only get time to read a few books a year, this has to be one of them. Five out of five stars.

Jason Nitz

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JOHN MELVILLE-JONES (ed.), with contributions by Nicola Cousen, Steve Mullins, Stefan Petrow and Marie and John Ramsland, *Ludovic De Beauvoir's Visit to Australia*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, Western Australia, 2016, pp. i-xxxvii, 1-313, Illustrations, PB, ISBN 978-0-85905-626-7.

In 1866, two young French aristocrats, the Duc de Penthié (referred to as ‘the Prince’) and his companion Ludovic de Beauvoir embarked on a voyage that took in Australia and South East Asia. De Beauvoir later published his recollections in a three-volume publication, *Voyage autour du monde*, the first volume being devoted to their visit to Australia. That visit to these shores occurred just 15 years after the discovery of gold, at a time when the romance of the goldrush was still fresh in people’s minds, and following a huge increase in immigration. It also followed the Eureka Stockade and the political and social changes that took place through actions of the Ballarat Reform League. The affluence associated with gold and pastoral expansion that saw the rise of the two great centres, Melbourne and Sydney, as well as the ‘democratisation’ that occurred, impressed de Beauvoir to an extent that was both gushing and perhaps exaggerated in its praise of the new society and its developments.

That Australians, in turn, especially the higher classes, reciprocated with a gushing reception of this ‘Royalty’ should come as no surprise when the class-ridden heritage of the country’s British background is considered. The pair were wined and dined and entertained in a way that was probably expected and appreciated by the French guests, who travelled widely to sample life on the goldfields and in the rural areas.

While enjoying the comforts of life, they were also prepared to suffer the hardships of travel along rugged roads and through countryside on horseback, and nothing delighted them more than visiting outback stations to sample the rugged life of pastoralists. On the whole they fell in love with the outback and especially its flora and fauna, though their delight at the abundance of game, both in terms of birdlife and marsupials, was only exceeded by their delight in slaughtering them to excess.

Their observations on both the Aboriginal population and the Chinese would today be seen as appalling, and though many in the general population shared these opinions, it was obvious that their prejudice was based on innate racism and a sense of superiority. If de Beauvoir was to be believed, the extent of the cannibalism he reported (but never saw for himself) should in itself have exterminated the Aboriginal race for posterity.

While readers of this journal will have a special interest in observations of mining activities, despite visits to Ballarat that took up one chapter, and later to Newcastle where they witnessed coal mining, there is little new to glean on such activities, other than to share in de Beauvoir's enthusiasm for the developments and to share his vivid descriptions of the Black Hill mine that he and the Prince visited. These descriptions include the rise of urban infrastructure that had sprung from the bare earth in a matter of a few years: '... the town proper is a faithful imitation of Melbourne. ... it has fine houses and fine streets, by day it is filled with carriages, by night lit by gas; it is full of clubs, theatres, libraries and banks' (p. 102). After describing processes such as stamping, puddling, the use of cradles, and the rise of large-scale capitalistic ventures that he had viewed, along with figures of returns and tonnages that impressed him, he also describes the life and fortunes of the declining population of alluvial miners. While adding nothing new to our knowledge of gold mining in Victoria, readers might still be interested in his comments and descriptions of what he saw and experienced.

In Newcastle they visited the Australian Agricultural Company's Borehole colliery, which they surprisingly noted, gave them the 'opportunity of seeing how much cleaner a coal mine is than a gold mine' (p. 263). However, their overall impression of Newcastle was not complimentary, what with its dangerous approach by sea and its description as 'a town whose solemn aspect is well calculated to contrast with Sydney; after a fairy palace we come to a chimney-sweep' (p. 263)

It is always interesting to see how outsiders viewed the country, and readers might find it worthwhile purchasing this book for that reason alone. They might also get a kick out of looking through de Beauvoir's eyes at a society 'filled, beneath a dazzling light, with English society, fashionable, rich, well educated and happy! Officers, younger members of noble families, men of rank, magistrates and proprietors, who [washed away the convict heritage] ... to make place for more than four hundred thousand honest men, who brought with their honour, either their fortunes, or the energy which has made their fortunes; and so a grand sight is spread before us, full of light and full of liberty' (p. 241). Indeed, an interesting observation, if greatly exaggerated.

The editor, John Melville-Jones, has overseen an excellent translation of this interesting account of de Beauvoir's visit to these shores, and along with editorial commentary by him and his team, will at least entertain and present perhaps a new if rather utopian view on the effect of the gold rush and accompanying developments on the material, political and social development of Australia, as seen through the eyes of an outsider.

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Garry Richardson, *Lottah and the Anchor: the History of a Tin Mine and a Dependent Town North East Tasmania*, Forty South Publishing, 2016, pp. i–viii, 265 pp., with maps and illustrations, ISBN 978-0-9944643-0-9 (HB).

It is great to see Garry Richardson tackling the mining history of north-eastern Tasmania. Those who enjoyed his encyclopaedic book about the Blue Tier, Poimena and Weldborough, *Tin Mountain* (Forty South Publishing, Hobart, 2013), will find similar fare in this companion volume. The Anchor mine and Lottah, the town which developed because of the Anchor mine, were situated at the base of the Blue Tier, more than 100km north-east of Launceston. An open cut operation like the richer Mount Bischoff mine, from the 1880s it was the scene of similar struggles with rugged terrain, physical remoteness, geological complexity, capitalisation and the standard of management. The Anchor also had a significant political profile in the 1890s when Tasmanian Premier Sir Edward Braddon controversially joined the directorship of the company, being accused by his critics of using his official position to further the interests of an enterprise in which he was a shareholder. He was not the only Cornishman to come to grief here. Richardson's book deals with every incarnation of the mine up until the 1990s, as well as the rise and decline of Lottah, its social life and personalities.

Lottah and the Anchor is an attractively presented, well-illustrated hard cover book, its appearance typical of Forty South Publishing, with a glossary of mining terms and a good index. The blurb claims that Garry Richardson is a 'gifted researcher', and there is ample evidence of his dedicated survey map and photo gathering. What is not so evident yet are his analytical and storytelling skills, which hopefully will develop with experience. At the moment the author's habit of quoting sources as a substitute for analysis rather than to illustrate his analysis leaves the reader to find his or her own way through an unnecessarily long, cluttered, funereally-paced text.

There are many cases where the book would have benefited from more analysis. Tasmania has only one surviving former tin smelter, Peter Wilson's one-man reverberatory furnace at Melaleuca, on the remote southern coast. The state's history of tin smelting is rich, with only one truly successful plant, the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company's, at Launceston, but a variety of interesting failures, including the wood-fired Stanhope smelters at Waratah. It would have been useful to have learned more about the failure of the Anchor smelters, particularly in the light of the trials of other, longer lived, Tasmanian tin smelters. Richardson tells us that the Anchor Company built its smelters because it thought the charges for smelting in Launceston and Hobart were exorbitant. Did the company think it could compete with the Mount Bischoff Company for the custom of the north-eastern tin mines? It still had to tranship ingots through Launceston, so it is hard to imagine how the company operating in an isolated place could possibly compete with the heavily capitalised Mount Bischoff Company.

Similarly, analysis of the failure of the English venture at the Anchor, managed by John Taylor and Sons (see Rob Vernon's paper, 'John Taylor and Sons, Mine Promoters and Managers: Seventy Years of Mining in Spain and Portugal', *J.A.M.H.*, vol. 13, October 2015, pp. 127-143) might have shed some light on that company's expensive management of the Tasmania gold mine a few years later.

Significant figures in Tasmanian mining such as Ferd Kayser, Luke Williams, Richard Mitchell and WH Wesley flit through Richardson's text without authorial comment. A succession of Cornish tin dressers battled German academy-educated

Kayser on the Mount Bischoff tin field and, like Kayser, several of them, including Mitchell, Wesley and William White, also applied their expertise to the Anchor. The same arguments about how to mine and dress tin continued there, with White and Kayser trading insults and accusations. Historical context of this kind would have reminded the reader of Richardson's book that, whatever their physical remoteness, mining communities always have a connection to the worldwide mining fraternity. Keith Preston, in his paper about the Anchor ('Anchor Tin Mine, Tasmania: a Century of Struggle for Profitability', *J.A.M.H.*, vol. 10, October 2012, pp. 140-159) claims that 'poor management retarded development and a reliance on Cornish mining practices hindered the implementation of efficient tin dressing techniques'. It is poignant also to recall that north-eastern Tasmanian tin miner Mark Ireland blamed Cornishmen for disastrous attempts at tin lode mining in that district as early as 1876.

The author only references some of his oral sources and a few archival sources, making it difficult to follow up his research. For analysis of the history of the Anchor mine, I recommend instead Keith Preston's paper. Keith points out that it is more likely to be Australian battery house that appears in the photo on p.129 of Garry Richardson's book labelled 'The Anchor battery house, c1890'. *Lottah and the Anchor* is a useful text for gathering together source material, archival maps and photographs about the mine and the town, and also because of the interview material the author brings to the project. His efforts to capture the mining and general history of north-eastern Tasmania are commendable, and with the rich material still at his disposal he has the opportunity to produce a definitive work about a very significant mining district.

Nic Haygarth

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