



# AUSTRALIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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### Editorial

As with good wine our conferences seem to improve as the years go by and proof of this was certainly seen at the recent Queenstown Conference organized by Greg Dickens and his committee. Using Queenstown as the hub, the tours around the rugged but scenic West Coast of Tasmania were a revelation to those used to more arid mining landscapes – and even Queenstown with its recently acquired greenery looked inviting with mountains wreathed in low cloud and occasional flashes of sunshine. Visits to Zeehan, Mt Bischoff and other well known sites of mining fame, as well as to Mt Lyell and places such as the Iron Blow that loomed over the town, made people appreciate the tremendous effort that must have been made by those pioneers and prospectors in this part of the world at a time when communication was to say the least, primitive.

The conference got off to an excellent start with a municipal reception at Penghana House, originally home to Mt Lyell's manager Robert Sticht who used the vantage point on top of a hill to look down on his minions in the town below. With 29 papers on offer there was something to interest everyone and the quality of papers was appreciated by the eighty or so people who attended. A major highlight was the

keynote talk by our Patron, Geoffrey Blainey, who gave an inside story of his young days at Mt Lyell where he conducted his research into his first renown publication 'The Peaks of Lyell'. Not only was this an insight into the efforts that Geoffrey made to come to grips with the written records of this vast undertaking but it also touched upon the human side of his activities whether in playing 'footie' on the famed gravel oval, or in sitting with old miners and their families to catch their version of events, the hardships faced and the characters who inhabited this mining Mecca through days of prosperity and of hardship. Particularly memorable was the service held at the Queenstown cemetery to remember the 42 miners who died tragically underground in 1912 – an event earlier given substance through an excellent paper presented to the conference by Peter Schulze. Attended by local schoolchildren and descendants of the deceased, it was obvious that the tragedy has had a lingering impact. The speech by Geoffrey Blainey on this occasion, as well as the presentation made to him by the community was particularly poignant and perhaps highlighted more than anything else the importance that mining history has in keeping alive memories of the past that still resound today in many Australian communities.

## **Annual General Meeting**

Of interest to everyone was the decision to keep the fees for 2009 at the current rate. However, it was noted that to keep the fees at this level it will be necessary in future to raise some sponsorship, especially to meet the costs of the journal. This avenue will be pursued before the next AGM is held at Lithgow next October.

It was also agreed that presenters be encouraged to illustrate their presentations using power-point, with Greg Drew volunteering to format presentations if there are difficulties.

Leonie Knapman confirmed the running of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual conference at Lithgow, and Philip Hart and Brian Hill announced that the 2010 conference will be held sometime towards the end of June or early July at Greymouth, New Zealand.

A list of officers and committee members is listed at the end of the newsletter.

## **Forthcoming Conferences**

*AMHA 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Lithgow, NSW, 24-30th October '09.*

Please note that the dates of the conference have been put forward a week from those that were advertised at the Queenstown Conference. Unfortunately, it was discovered that the dates previously chosen clashed with the World Masters Games in Sydney. Because of the numbers involved, most accommodation, even in Lithgow had been block booked by the Games organizers. So please change your diaries if you've already committed yourself to attending what looks like being another great conference. Information is contained in the enclosed brochure.

## *8<sup>th</sup> International Mining History Congress, Redruth, Cornwall*

Planning for this event on 12-15 June is now reaching its final phase. Abstracts have already been received, though if you wish to still present a paper approach Peter Claughton at [p.f.claughton@ex.ac.uk](mailto:p.f.claughton@ex.ac.uk)

There's no guarantee that late applications will be accepted! See Congress web page for further details at:

[www.huss.ex.ac.uk/history/imhc/index.htm](http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/history/imhc/index.htm)

For those wishing to plan, the event will start with a lecture on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> and trips will be organised on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June, with the sessions following from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> June at the Penventon Park Hotel, Redruth.

## *NAMHO Mining History Conference 19-22 June 2009*

The 2009 National Association of Mining History Organisations Conference (UK) will be held at held at County Hall, Matlock, on 19, 20, 21 and 22nd - a week after the International Congress. For contribution to the lecture programme: contact Lynn Willies as soon as possible at [lynnwillies@hotmail.com](mailto:lynnwillies@hotmail.com)

The theme of the conference is Archaeological Landscapes. Registration is available at the Museum throughout Friday until 5 pm and then at County Hall Matlock. There will be a reception on the Friday evening at County Hall which will include welcoming speeches from the NAMHO chairman and the PDHMS chairman. Dr Jim Rieuwerts, a founder member will talk about the early days of the Society. Dr John Barnatt will set the scene of the conference and finally dynamic underground photography by Paul Deakin and John Humble

A series of lectures will be held at County Hall on Saturday and Sunday. A programme of underground trips and surface walks will take place on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. This will offer a diverse insight into archaeological landscapes in Derbyshire. Details of the entire programme will be available soon on the PDHMS website, [www.pdmhs.com](http://www.pdmhs.com)

Underground trips are of varying severity and will require suitable attire to be worn. There are also limited places on these trips.

On the Friday and Saturday evenings, food will be available at County Hall together with bar facilities. On the Sunday evening a grand barbeque is to be held at Magpie Mine near Sheldon - the Society's field centre. For accommodation see website: [www.visitderbyshire.co.uk](http://www.visitderbyshire.co.uk)

Information supplied by Robin Hall at: [www.peakmines.co.uk](http://www.peakmines.co.uk)

### **Australian Historical Association Conference 30 June- 3 July 2009**

The 2009 regional conference of the AHA with the theme 'Constructing the Past' will be held at The University of the Sunshine Coast. Proposals for papers should be submitted by Friday 6 February 2009 by e.mail to: [aha2009@usc.edu.au](mailto:aha2009@usc.edu.au)

For registration forms and details see: <http://www.usc.edu.au/University/MediaPublications/Events/EventsHidden/ConstructingThePast.htm> or access via the AHA webpage at: <http://www.theaha.org.au/conf.html>

### **Journal**

Once again the time has come to request early submissions of papers for the 2009 volume of the Association's Journal. Note there are refereed and un-refereed sections (your choice) and before submitting study the style sheet on our web page, or request a copy from the Secretary.

### **Bits and Pieces**

#### **Jim Besleme**

Many of those members who were at the Bendigo conference in 2005 will no doubt remember Jim Besleme from the USA. Jim enjoyed the conference and the company so much that he promised to return. And, indeed he registered and booked his flight to the Queenstown conference but had to cancel when diagnosed with cancer of the lung. I'm sure that there will be many among you who would like to offer best wishes to him. Jim, who, incidentally has promised to join us at a future conference, can be contacted at [Tex61@aol.com](mailto:Tex61@aol.com)

### **Bereavements**

#### **Richard McKinnon**

Richard was a keen geologist interested in mining history who joined our organization just over a year ago. Sadly, Richard had been ill for quite some time and passed away earlier this year at his home in Coonabarabran, NSW. While we don't have a full-blown obituary it gives some satisfaction to our organization to hear from information supplied by one of Richard's friends that he had a passion for the AMHA and really enjoyed going through his copies of our *Journal of Australasian Mining History*. His very last wish was for someone to read him one of the articles, something which was done and that gave him great pleasure at the very end of his life.

#### **Ray Shea**

The following note from Greg Dickens will come as quite a shock to those who attended the Queenstown Conference in October.

'It is with great sadness, that I record the sudden passing of well-known West Coast identity in eighty-year-old Ray Shea on Friday, 7/11/08. Ray was a former councillor and football stalwart at Queenstown's gravel oval. Only recently, he appeared on an SBS Television program discussing the history of football played on the famous "gravel".

However, Ray will best be remembered by the 2008 Conference delegates as the person who made the introductory speech at the Lyell Mine Disaster Ceremony. Earlier, he invited the AMHA to attend the ceremony and brought the anniversary date forward to coincide with the Conference Program. Since its inception, Ray had been the inspiration and facilitator of this annual event.

It was early 2008, when Ray contacted me to enquire about a mining history conference scheduled for October in Queenstown. He had been speaking with close friend, Professor Blainey.

Immediately, there was a request for me to incorporate the Lyell Disaster Ceremony into the program. There was instant delight when I told him that that it could be arranged with both Geoffrey Blainey and Peter Schulze being present'.

During the Conference, Ray made a couple of brief appearances to hear the presentations from Geoffrey Blainey and Peter Schulze.

*Presentation to Geoffrey Blainey at Queenstown Memorial Service for those miners killed in the 1912 Mt. Lyell Mine Disaster*



Left to right:  
Geoffrey Blainey – the late Ray Shea, Shirley Scolyer and Peter Schulze.

### **Sir Bruce Watson (1 August 1928 – 1 November 2008)**

Sir Bruce was a keen supporter and member of the AMHA over many years, and might be remembered by those who attended the Brisbane conference in 2002 as being the distinguished looking gentleman who spoke quietly but with authority on mining issues. Sir Bruce would also have been known to many in that audience even before the conference for his work in the mining sphere was widely recognised and was honoured in June 1985 with a knighthood for his outstanding services to Queensland industry.

Bruce Dunstan Watson attended Toowoomba Grammar School before completing his Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) and Bachelor of Commerce degrees at the University of Queensland in

the 1950s. His formative years were spent in the power supply industry in Tasmania and then in Townsville where he joined MIM's Copper Refineries in 1956. He subsequently worked at Mt Isa developing MIM's coal operations and also at the company's Agnew nickel mine in Western Australia. In 1980 he was appointed MIM managing director, became chief executive officer in 1981, and took over as chairman in 1983.

### *Sir Bruce Watson*



Photo: Courtesy of the Watson family.

He also took an interest in various professional associations associated with mining, served as President of the Australian Mining Industry Council and as national president of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. He was also a founder member and president of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and served as vice-president of the Business Council of Australia from 1987 to 1990.

Outside of mining Sir Bruce also took active roles in other industry, financial and philanthropic related areas. He served as director of both the National Australia Bank and Boral, was vice-president of the Queensland branch of the Scouts Association of Australia and for over 50 years was an active member of the Lions club in Brisbane. He also took great pleasure in supporting the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. For over 20 years he was involved in helping to raise tens of millions of dollars for research and

at the time of his death was still chairman of that body.

Support of the arts was another area where his interest was directed and among his involvement in this sphere he will be remembered for his work as chairman of the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation, through which he was a leading generator of support for the gallery's acquisition programmes.

He has also been described as 'a powerful industry leader', and a 'people person', the latter being associated with his concern for the welfare of his employees and families. It was Sir Bruce, for example, who oversaw the introduction of shiftwork designed to let women work part time at MIM.

In 2004 he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for service to industry and commerce, arts, education and medical research - thus, recognition of his life as a talented, dedicated and multi-faceted man.

We are sorry to see the loss of a valued member and our sympathy goes out to his wife, Lady (June) Watson, and other members of the family.

(An obituary by Annie Sanixay that appeared in the *Courier Mail* on 4 November 2008, p.76, is hereby acknowledged as the main source for the content).

### **Australian Mining QUIZ**

Our good **President** has set the following questions. Says he can't afford a prize out of his huge AMHA stipend but will provide the answers in the next newsletter:

1. What was Australia's first commercially profitable mine?
2. Where was the first Cornish pumping engine installed in Australia?
3. What was the first place in Australia where acid leaching was used?
4. Where is the oldest surviving mining building on the Australian mainland?

5. Where were Australia's first mining company houses built?

6. At which Australian mine was the first horse whim used?

7. Where was the first viable copper discovery made in Australia?

8. What was the first Australian mining field to be served by a railway?

### **AMHA Officers and Committee 2009**

**Patron:** Geoffrey Blainey

**President:** Peter Bell

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Mel Davies

**Auditor:** Glenda Scully

#### **Committee:**

**ACT:**

Chris Carter, Barry McGowan,  
Ken McQueen.

**SA:**

Ross Both, Greg Drew, Graham Hancock.

**NSW:**

Graydon Henning, Leonie Knapman,  
Ross Mainwaring; Graham Wilson.

**NT:**

David Carment.

**Qld** Ruth Kerr, Diane Menghetti Jan Wegner.

**Vic** Sandra Kippen, David White, Mike  
Williams, Nick Williams.

**TAS:**

Greg Dickens, Nick Haygarth,  
Chris Boron.

**WA:**

Patrick Bertola, Wendy Carter,  
Charlie Fox, Richard Hartley,  
Gerry MacGill.

**NZ:**

Brian Hill, Philip Hart.

#### **Newsletter Delivery**

It was suggested at the AGM that some members would be happy to view the newsletters on the web rather than to receive copies by snail mail. Please let me know!