



AUSTRALASIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL

2014 promises to be a landmark year for the Association. It only seems like yesterday when we held our first conference held in conjunction with the Australian Historical Association under the direction of Prof Kett Kennedy at Townsville's James Cook University. We have come a long way from that hesitant beginning, by standing on our own feet, and now approach our 20th annual conference by returning to the Townsville hinterland, again under the direction of Prof. Kennedy. Run in conjunction with the 10th International Mining History Congress, not only will the occasion allow members to mix with colleagues from around the world, but Kett has arranged for many leading members of the mining community to be present. Of particular interest to many should be the special Townsville session on the final Saturday, which will look to the future of the industry in Australia (thus the conference theme: *'Past Heritages: Future Prospects'*). The conference as a whole has been generously supported by the industry and by local authorities, to the benefit of delegates. This is an event not be missed and should go down in the annals as our most ambitious venture.

You are encouraged to register asap. To receive the Early Bird concession, payment will have to be made before the 1st April.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

20th AMHA Conference & 10th International Mining History Congress, Charters Towers, QLD, 2014 – 6 to 13 July 2014

Check out the updated programme and register on-line (this is the only way to register). You will then receive an email to inform you how to pay. To take advantage of the Early Bird concession, payment has to be made by 1st May.

Those wishing to present papers, please submit titles and abstracts by 28 February.

Check out the latest information, including the tours, on-line at: www.ct2014miningcongress.com

We suggest that you book your accommodation soon in the locality of Charters Towers.

JOURNAL

My usual plea to those interested in submitting a piece of work for the 2014 volume of the Journal – please submit your work sooner rather than later. Note that the journal style sheet can be viewed or downloaded from our web page.

When submitting please state whether you wish to have the paper considered for the refereed or for the non-refereed sections. Also submit a brief abstract and personal details. Your contributions much appreciated.

The Ed.

BITS & PIECES

'There's Gold in them there leaves'

A tit bit from the ABC that could see a rise in the sale of axes:

Geoscientists in Perth have discovered gold particles in the leaves, twigs and bark of eucalyptus trees, claiming a "eureka" moment that could revolutionise gold mining. CSIRO researchers believe the trees, sitting on top of gold deposits buried deep underground, suck up the gold in their search for moisture during times of drought.

"We weren't expecting this at all," Dr Melvyn Lintern, a research geochemist at the CSIRO and the study's lead author, said. "To actually see the gold particles in the leaves was quite a eureka moment for us."

Dr Lintern said the trees appear to be telling scientists what is happening under the earth's surface. "The particular trees that we did the research on appear to be bringing up gold from a remarkable 30 metres depth, which is about the equivalent of a 10-storey building."

The research group used the CSIRO's Maia detector for x-ray elemental imaging at the Australian Synchrotron in Melbourne to analyse extremely small particles at high resolution. The portions of gold are about one-fifth the diameter of a human hair. Dr Lintern said even 500 trees growing over a gold deposit would only yield enough gold for a wedding ring.

The researchers said they have also found gold in the leaves of other trees, such as the Acacia mulga. "We've actually found gold not only in trees but in shrubs that are growing beneath the trees as well, so (it is) not restricted to any particular trees at all," Dr Lintern said.

The discovery, the first of its kind in the world and the first time gold particles have been found in living material, will undoubtedly generate huge interest from within the gold mining and exploration industry. Former Newmont Mining Geochemist, Nigel Radford, says the implications for gold exploration are huge. "A lot of this stuff has been

speculated about for some time, but the identification of the gold particles in the leaf materials is completely convincing and very, very important for the future of mineral exploration," said Mr Radford, who has worked in mineral exploration his entire working life, most recently with US-based Newmont, one of the world's biggest gold mining companies.

Mr Radford believes it has the potential to make gold exploration much quicker and cheaper. "Ideally, any mineral exploration team would like to collect their samples on-surface. If you can sample on-surface it saves all the cost and all the time involved in drilling holes."

The web piece drew a few cynical responses from followers of the blog:

- "This is an old story, the focus is that gold has actually been seen in the leaves. Geologists have used bio-sampling for years. Bio-mining is being trialled with GM bacteria. One company has even used Kangaroo-poo as a regional exploration tool (in the 6-hours it takes for the vegetation to pass through the GIT of a kanga, they rarely move more than a few km). Of course, this can only work where there are deep-rooted plants, hence in the wheat-belt, where nearly all of the trees have been removed, soil sampling and drilling are the only way to go!

- Other comments were:

- Eating leaves from trees maybe how the goose got the gold to lay the golden egg.

- Now I wonder if we can enhance this ability. However I would expect a lot of complaints if we were to use GMO technology to do so. Cannot have GMO's can we? As there is some gold in sea water, what about modifying mussels or oysters to accumulate it in their shells. Now that would be an interesting industry, both feed and adorn.

- * Nice of the trees to tell us this. Shame we'll then have to chop them down to get the gold, but thanks anyway!
- So many cynics in this world but as shown in Colorado this month, they've proved there's lots of gold in growing Pot!

Another Oddity: The Tank Church at Boulder

Collectors of mining paraphernalia will no doubt be interested in a piece written by Hilair Natt that was published in the RWAHS's, *History West*, in April 2013. It refers to the erection in 1902 of a meeting place for devout swarms of Welsh and Cornish worshippers on the WA goldfields. With urgent demands for religious sustenance, the Congregational Church of Kalgoorlie hit on the idea of a quick solution when they decided to erect a building that would be both cheap and easy to build. A quick response saw local plumbers and tank builders, Stearne Bros, come to the rescue with a construction that was based on a large version of the cyanide vats common in the area.

Built on the West Boulder mining lease, the church, made of corrugated iron, had a conical roof and as reported in *The Western Argus* in December 1902, 'one fourth of the circle was built in moveable sections and an enclosure formed which would provide seating accommodation for an outside audience during the summer months'. The church, which was built in three days, held about 120 people, and had a large pole in the centre from which wooden rafters radiated to the outer wall where they were supported by wooden uprights. The place was unlined and had a dirt floor, was about 24 feet in diameter with the walls being ten or twelve feet high.



As can be imagined, on a hot summers day it must have been purgatory, even though by June 1903 it could boast an organ driven and played by Miss Florence Bowen, and could host

a famous choir led by the Rev. Craik, who himself boasted a fine baritone voice.

However, progress, always a driving force, meant that the church was doomed to a short life and before long there was a move to the old Mechanics Hall in Burt Street, Boulder, before a custom-made church was constructed.

The Tank Church survived for some years as a boarding house and in about 1922 the building was dismantled with parts of the iron being used to build tanks on farms. A good and early example of recycling.

Beechworth News

Enthused by her recent visit to Beechworth, Anne Both has been keeping her eyes on local news. She thought that those who attended the conference would be interested in the following:

a) *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 25 September 2013:

Indigo Shire has purchased a significant historical building at Beechworth - The Pines, formerly a State Government Asylum for Mentally ill. It is a heritage-listed building - picture included - but not here I'm afraid!

b) *Indigo Shire News*

Lake Sambell dam wall is to be repaired at a cost of \$3.5 million. This repair will take 6-9months. The original dam wall constructed from mine tailings in 1928 was of poor quality construction and is now leaking.

So, no more wet feet for the locals we hope.

Congratulations

Congratulations to one of our more recent members, Coleen Bower, who was presented in late October with the Small Publication Award at the Victorian Community History Awards 2013 presentation ceremony. The award was for Coleen's well researched book, *Water races and tin mines in the Toora District: a short history of the tin mines at Granite Bar and Toora 1870s to 1940's*, Blackburn, Vic., 2013.

Baptism of Fire

It was with relief that we heard that our illustrious Webmaster Stephen Imrie and wife Lola survived the NSW fires during the disastrous events in the Lithgow area in October. These unseasonable fires destroyed over 200 homes, some of them belonging to their immediate neighbours in Dargan. Both were evacuated and had no access to their home for four days, so we can imagine their relief when they eventually returned to find that the fires had stopped the blaze about 50 metres from their back door. If that wasn't trauma enough, Lola had her car written off a few days before the fire but fortunately she got off lightly with minor injuries. Then, there was a technical hitch with the web page – they say these things come in threes, so better luck both for 2014.

'Good Pickings'

Our Vice-President, Ross Both, writes:

'The President of the Burnside Historical Society, Meredith Ide, was recently contacted by email from a Michael Bosworth about a pick found in one of the Glen Osmond Mine workings. The pick is currently held by his friend Richard Wright in Tasmania. The Glen Osmond Mine is one of a group of silver-lead mines that began operations in early 1840s and are widely regarded as Australia's first metalliferous mines, so Meredith asked Ross Both to make enquiries as to whether it is something that might date from the early days of the operations.

Michael's email said in part: '...in 1960 we entered an adit of the Osmond Gilles Mine and, by climbing a rope ladder dropped down a winze and accessed a lower level. It was at the bottom of this winze on that day my friend Richard found a miner's pick. He has kept this "piece of history" all these years. To cut a long story short, he feels it is part of Australia's initial mining history and hopes that there is an organisation where it will be put on display.' He has also provided a photo and pointed out that the handle is not original; it did not have a

handle when it was found.

Peter Bell has seen the photo and commented: "I'm not an expert on picks, but it certainly looks old to me, and could easily be nineteenth century. Miners' picks were traditionally short with only one blade for using in confined spaces, unlike a trench digger's pick which could have a long heavy head in the open air, and two blades for better balance. It's also got a flat back end so you can hammer it into a crevice and use it as a wedge."



Ross would be pleased to hear from any member who can shed light on the likely age of the pick. Contact at: rosannb@bigpond.net.au

South Crofty mine restoration in Cornwall

Visitors to the 2009 International Mining history Congress in Cornwall might be interested in the following piece of information forwarded by Ruth Kerr:

'Restoration of South Crofty mine in Pool between Redruth and Camborne in Cornwall has been completed. Cornwall Council led the project which involved complete refurbishment of the New Cooks Kitchen headgear and two Grade II listed engine houses in Chapple's shaft. It was carried out under an agreement between Western United Mines, which owns the site, and the Council. The pumping house and its detached chimney were built in 1838 and equipped with a 50 inch cylinder and the winder house was built in 1865 with a 26 inch cylinder. Cormac Contracting Ltd, Cornwall Council's Economic Development and

Historic Environmental Services and Cornwall Development Company managed the conservation work on the buildings’.

Source: *Western Morning News* (Plymouth) 14 October 2013, p. 3, including photograph.

Expressions of Interest: Contract Oral Historian Oral histories of Australian Geoscience project (Only Australian residents may apply)

From the pages of *ESGH Bulletin*, 40: The National Library of Australia, in partnership with Geoscience Australia, is seeking interviewers with extensive experience and understanding of history, oral history methodology and a science, geoscience or science history background, to conduct oral history interviews.

The project will document key developments in Australia’s national geoscience knowledge and activities over the period 1960 – 2012, through oral history recordings with individuals who were active in furthering Australian geoscience over this period. In particular, the recordings will capture the technical, political and social contexts for the changing nature of geoscience in Australia, and the evolving role of the national geoscience and geospatial research agencies and their relationship with geospatial industry. Although professional life within Australian geoscience will be the focus, the interviews will cover the whole-of-life of the individual being interviewed and will seek to understand motivations and personal and shared aspirations. The contract interviewers will be guided by the Project Advisory Committee to reflect the key aspects of the history it seeks to capture. The contract interviewers will be expected to record up to 80 whole-of-life interviews of around five hours duration each over a two year period. Training in the use of the National Library recording equipment will be provided; and the interviewer must use Library Rights Agreement forms and follow Library procedure and protocols. Interviews will be documented using established Library

standards and interviewers will be required to make timed summaries. The interviewer must adhere to the conditions outlined in the Library’s Oral History Interviewer Contract and apply the appropriate ethical practices expected of a professional oral historian in all other circumstances. Your EOI must include: Your name and current position · Your Curriculum Vitae including a statement of your skills, knowledge and experience relevant to the position · References To apply, and send your expression of interest to: oralhist@nla.gov.au Applications close at 5:00pm on Friday **6 December 2013**. Any queries can be directed to Marian Hanley, Senior Librarian, Tel. (02) 6262 1545, mhanley@nla.gov.au or Shelly Grant, Acting Curator, Oral History and Folklore, 02 6262 1636, sgrant@nla.gov.au .

SPONSORSHIP PLEA

Members might have noticed that our 2013 journal did not contain an advert on the back page. Because of financial constraints by our last sponsor it came as no surprise when they were unable to renew their support for the printing and mailing of the publication. We are now seeking offers of interest from people in the mining industry who would be prepared to help us finance the 2014 volume, and if possible future volumes of the journal. Should you know of any organisation prepared to help, your information would be greatly appreciated. Please contact the Secretary if you have any leads.

OBITUARY

Norman Craig Shierlaw, 17 August 1921 to 26 September 2013.

At one time in recent history, Norman ‘Norm’ Shierlaw was a household name, not only in Australia but throughout the world, for in 1968 Norm bought at auction a number of forfeited shares in the then struggling Poseidon NL. Becoming the largest shareholder, Norm was instrumental in employing prospector Ken Shirley who discovered a nickel

prospect at Windarra, Western Australia. Combined with labour troubles in Canada where most of the World's nickel was produced, a rise in demand for the metal led to quite sensational results for Poseidon that provided a stimulus to investment in Australian mining in general. Shares in Poseidon jumped from below \$1 in September 1968 to a peak of more than \$280 in February 1970. Many speculators praised the name of Norm Shierlaw, but there came an almost inevitable crash, and in 1976 the company was placed in receivership. The boom and bust attracted a Senate inquiry, with the Rae Report uncovering several scandals (though not to do with Norm's activities) that led to reform of company and securities law.

Norm made little from the Poseidon venture, having held on to most of his shares, but undeterred he extended his portfolio by investing in other mining ventures. He remained a lifelong share-trader until the end of his life.

Norm was educated at St Peter's College, Adelaide, after which he started a degree in Engineering at Adelaide University in 1940. Interrupted by wartime service in the AIF where he served as a forward scout for an artillery unit in New Guinea, it was not until 1949 that he completed his degree. He then joined Broken Hill at the Barrier as an underground engineer but after studying accountancy part time, he joined the firm of F.W. Porter and Co. as a mining specialist. Norm later formed his own company N.C. Shierlaw and Associates. Among his milestones was the floating of Beach Petroleum for Reg Spriggs, and becoming Director of Tennant Creek gold miner, Australian Development. However, it is claimed he made more money out of beer than from mining, having gained a substantial stake in Coopers Brewery where Norm had family connections.

Norm's final wish was to be buried next to his twin brother John, a bomber pilot shot down over Sicily, who died tragically near Berlin during the 2nd World War.

Norm was married twice, first to Pat who passed away in 1987, and to his surviving wife Barbara Lacey, who he married in 1989. There were three daughters, Elizabeth, Jennifer and Sally. Our condolences go out to them all.

Acknowledgements:

Trevor Sykes, 'Norm Shierlaw: Miner's punt on Poseidon paid dividends', downloaded from web 3 December 2013.

'War veteran, engineer and a great in the stockmarkets', *Advertiser*, Weekend Extra 74, 16 November 2013.

MEMBERSHIPS

Its that time of year again when we call for membership renewals. This can be done via Register Now (our preferred method when receiving registrations – it saves a great deal of admin – only costs you \$1.87 in additional costs – saves you postage and provides you with an instant tax receipt). However, if you wish, you can still send in a paper registration and pay by cheque. Please note that because of past problems with the system we prefer that you avoid sending electronic transfers to our bank. Fees remain the same as in 2013.

Click on:

Enter via our web page
[https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/
Register.aspx?E=11343or](https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/Register.aspx?E=11343or)

COMPLEMENTS OF THE SEASON

Somewhat belated, but best wishes to all our members for the New Year. May all your troubles be Miner ones!



MJD/December'13