



AUSTRALIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Editorial

Although we might note with interest and even applaud the boom in iron ore exports and Chinese take-overs that is making fortunes for miners, there are two sides to the story. While on the one hand the thriving West of the country is contributing to our buoyant economy and making shareholders in the industry very happy, on the other hand it is creating mayhem. Not that the 'Dutch Disease, or 'Gregory effect' is something new, as folk with memories of the 60s and later mineral booms will recognise, for the same story is being played out – high mineral prices, massive development and exports that raise the value of the Ozzie dollar and force up costs that impact on our other export earning industries. These become less competitive on the international market as prices in our currency increase and imports become cheaper. The situation also adds to inflation, causes wages to increase, and consequently results in a flow of resources from other sectors to mining. The result is seen in skill shortages, and as witnessed recently in Western Australia, results in a rise in housing costs and rents, to the distress of the less fortunate in society.

There are obviously winners and losers but that has long been the story of booms in the primary sector. Thus a matter of swings and

roundabouts that works its way out with great advantage to some but disadvantage to others. The answer of benefiting all sectors of the economy and population in the process is a conundrum that tends to defeat economists. It's no wonder that economics is known as the dismal science!

This is not to condemn the developments, but just to point out that success can create a plethora of problems. History has a habit of repeating itself and without any meaningful economic solution all that can be said is that in the long run there should be benefits to society! But as all will be aware – in the long run we are all dead.

Web Page

Please note a change of address for our web page. This is now being hosted by web master (mistress?), Judy Rechner, from the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. The new address is: <http://amha.asn.au/> which is about 30 digits shorter than the old one – so a far easier exercise for the brain of those suffering, as is the ed., from shrinking neurons and memory.

Forthcoming Conferences

*AMHA 14th Annual Conference,
Queenstown, Tas. 4-10th October '08.*

Quite a few registrations already received but please don't leave it until the last minute

to send back your forms, as its important that we get a good indication some time before the event so that planning can be finalized. Greg Dickens and yours truly will be disappointed if you're tardy in responding.

As stated on the registration form, there was a limit on the underground visits at Mt. Lyell. **Most places have already been filled**, so before sending in your form, please e.mail the Secretary to see if there are still slots available. Even if there are no vacancies, the surface tour will still provide members with a visit to that famed mining spot where you can breathe in the rare and embracing mineral laden air. Please note: **abstracts have to be in by the 31st July**. To date we have had 17 people respond, so again, hurry if you are to be accommodated. Don't wait - get in now so as to feature as a Queenstown star.

8th International Mining History Congress, Cornwall, June 2009

Roger Burt and his hard working Exeter University group are now publicising the next International meeting of the IMHC. Pre and post conference tours are also being arranged and the conference will be held at the 'bouquet' Penventon Park Hotel, Redruth, between **12-15 June 2009**. See web page at:

www.huss.ex.ac.uk/history/imhc/index.htm

If interested in giving a paper, contact Dr Peter Cloughton at p.f.claughton@ex.ac.uk and provide a title. Abstracts of no more than 250 words have to be forwarded by 1st December 2008. Peter will also be present at our Queenstown Conference to whip up support for this Cornish venture.

Furthermore, appealing to jet-setting Mining History junkies will be the additional conference put on by the **British National Association Of Mining History Organisations [NAMHO]**. This will take place at Matlock, Derbyshire, the following weekend, 19th to 21st June 2009. Details yet to be announced.

Information Wanted

Wangat and Whispering Gully Gold mines, Maureen Kingston asks for help in her research of mines in the Hunter Valley region of NSW. She writes:

'By way of background, Dungog is a small country town located in the Williams Valley, in the lower part of the Hunter Region, NSW. In 1879 gold was discovered at what is now called locally Upper Wangat and Whispering Gully - about 30kms from here. Both locations are now in the Barrington Tops National Park and wilderness areas. Another member of the Dungog Historical Society and I are undertaking research for a book about the mines and the miners and their families. We have got the mine's reports and many of the plans for the mines, the post office records and some family histories and photos and the plans for the village of Upper Wangat, as well as photos of remnants of equipment. National Parks have been very helpful in taking us to areas where road access is usually not permitted. They are also going to take us to the remnants of the village later in the year. The mines in the area are virtually unknown and we believe their history should be recorded - eg unemployed coal miners from Newcastle were sent up here during the depression.

There were also gold mines near Gloucester, known as the Copeland Mines - there is a book about them.

The mines were located in difficult, steep and remote country. There was some alluvial mining at Whispering Gully but the rest was located in quartz veins near Upper Wangat and the Little or Wangat River and the Mountaineer Trail. The mines were never very successful because of the lack of capital and their location. Another problem was that the quartz veins often disappeared because the area had been subject to volcanic activity (I have found a book on the geology of the Barrington's but it is really written for geologists or amateur

geologists) - most of the other papers I've located are very technical - if you have any suggestions about possible articles or books to search I would be most grateful for any assistance. The mining history of the area will not any make sense unless it is put in geological and geographic perspective.

They had stampers, including one with an 18 ft water wheel. We are particularly looking for a photo of the water wheel - we have a photo of a much smaller stamper driven by steam.

If your members have any information, including geological information, photos or family history material about the history of the Wangat and Whispering Gully Gold mines, which could be used in the book, please contact Maureen Kingston, Secretary, Dungog Historical Association, PO Box 3 Dungog, NSW 2420.

E. Mail: maureenk@bravo.net.au

Tel.: 02-49922094.

All sources will be acknowledged'

Journal

The editor is getting worried – June already and only three articles and a comment on a previous article in the pipeline. As stressed on a number of previous occasions, the process for refereeing and editing takes some time, and with the next volume due in September it leaves very little margin to get the material into print. So, if you have something to offer, please submit your paper this month rather than in late August! Articles for both the refereed and un-refereed sections welcome.

Also, please look at the journal style sheet on our web page, or contact me for a copy before you submit. This will save us both time and effort.

Bits and Pieces

Wheal Hughes

Our good President alerted me to the following article written by Sharon Mascall, that appeared in the *Adelaide Review* of 28 May 2008 (so hot off the press!). This may

be of interest for those who went on the underground tour during the 2006 Kadina Conference

“Take a tag and hang it on your belt. You'll need it later,” says Ron Knott, a straight talking miner from Broken Hill with a long white beard that looks like it has been permed. Either that or he puts it in plaits at night. The perfect curl looks too neat to be natural.

Next, we put on hairnets. The ones made of thin, white gauze that you see in emergency departments and cheese factories. Our hair is tucked underneath; a miner's helmet is slapped on top.

“The light's in the wrong place,” says Ron, adjusting the switch on the side of his bulb. Suddenly we all discover our lights and fiddle, like a herd of blinking Cyclops. “The lights used to be angled down so they didn't shine in people's eyes,” he says. Once we are underground I see what he means. Every time our eyes meet, our photons do too.

The blue tag is important. We are about to descend into a real mine, where men have fired holes, detonated explosives and created caverns by smashing rock and ore. We may be tourists, but we have the same rules. Our tags go on a board, hanging at the entrance. If we don't escape the darkness, they are proof we're still there.

The mine – called Wheal Hughes – has also found a way out of obscurity. Located near Moonta, on the Yorke Peninsula, it is one of the few tourist mines still operating in Australia. Six months ago, it faced closure. It was draining the local council's coffers, costing tens of thousands of dollars to run.

“Give the Mine a Go,” said the local newspaper. “Save Our Mine” said protestors with placards. The campaign worked. The council reconsidered and a business plan was drawn up. Costs would be cut by staffing the mine with volunteers. In true Aussie style, a sausage sizzle was organised

to recruit the helping hands: 59 people signed up from Moonta and towns nearby.

The campaign was fuelled by nostalgia and a nose for business. Moonta is a place where engine houses are held in high esteem and stories of Cornish miners fill bookshop shelves. The "Copper Triangle" towns of Moonta, Kadina and Wallaroo take their mining heritage seriously.

While most visitors to the Yorke Peninsula come for the sea – with its Whitsunday white beaches and stocks of fish – the locals know it takes more than whiting and crabbing to win the tourist dollar. Cornish copper mining has become Moonta's marketing mantra. It is "Australia's Little Cornwall" where the pasties are almost always Cornish and the mines are "National Trust". "Wheal" is Cornish for mine and "Hughes" was the name of an early Moonta mine owner – his land revealed the first traces of copper in 1861. Wheal Hughes was a modern mine with an historic marketing opportunity.

While production at most Moonta copper mines ceased by 1923, Wheal Hughes did not open for business until 1990. Exploration in the 1960s revealed a seam of copper that went on to produce nearly half a million tonnes of ore.

At first the money was good. Then, the price of copper crashed. Worth just 74 cents a pound, it cost 72 cents to produce. Just seven years after it opened, management decided to close the Wheal Hughes mine in 1993, only to discover – fifteen years on – that the price of copper has risen 500 percent to \$3.60 a pound. Had the mine stayed open, it would be worth millions today.

Instead, Wheal Hughes became a tourist mine – with reinforced rock faces held firm with bolts and mesh. As Ron drives us down to the black hole – the entrance to the mine – the seam of copper is easy to spot. At first glance it looks like green paint has

been splashed down the cliff-face. At times it is turquoise; in places it is powder blue. The red rocks become a canvas daubed with colour. Then the copper dissolves into green rivers beside the path, and you descend underground.

The tour is as real as it can be. It winds through seams of copper ore to rock faces where explosives have done their worst. "The only difference in a working mine," says Ron, "is the smell of diesel." Here it just smells damp, from the water that drips, forming bright blue stalactites hanging down from the roof.

We hear about hidden gems - Jock McAllister, a Scot with a predilection for fossicking, is also a volunteer tour guide – and how the rock is smashed with explosives blasted at microsecond intervals. Ron knows his dynamite from his nitro. He may be a volunteer, but 20 years as a miner means his expertise is professional, not amateur.

After an hour we rediscover daylight and our blue tags. We hitch a ride to the top of the green spattered cliffs to find an army of helmet-carriers, belt-undoers and hairnet-helpers. Some days there are more volunteers than tourists – but no-one seems to mind. So far the new plan is working, since the mine re-opened in January, it has met its visitor targets.

"It's something to do," says Ron, matter-of-factly, when asked why he signed up as a volunteer. But as the next tour group arrives and he grabs his helmet and blue tag his beard betrays a smile.

Useful Information

Gavin Mudd has a useful page of mining information that he would like to share with members. All will be revealed by clicking on to his web page at:

<http://civil.eng.monash.edu.au/about/staff/muddpersonal/rr5/>

Another link has been forwarded by Rob Glazebrook on behalf of the Willis L. Haenke Historic Foundation, Ipswich, Qld. The Foundation promotes coalmining history in the Ipswich area, and their page can be found at:

www.haenkefoundation.org.au/mainsite/

You'll also find the link on our web page along with a list of other sites.

Photograph Identification

Ruth Kerr was recently given a few mining photographs. One has been identified as Tannymorel in Queensland but the rest remain a mystery to Ruth and folk at the Queensland Department of Mines and Energy. If you can identify any of the photos could you please contact Ruth at: 105 Highland Terrace, St Lucia, Qld. 4067. Tel: 07-38709588.

E.Mail: Ruth.Kerr@dpi.qld.gov.au

Photo 1: *Possibly Tannymorel, Qld.*

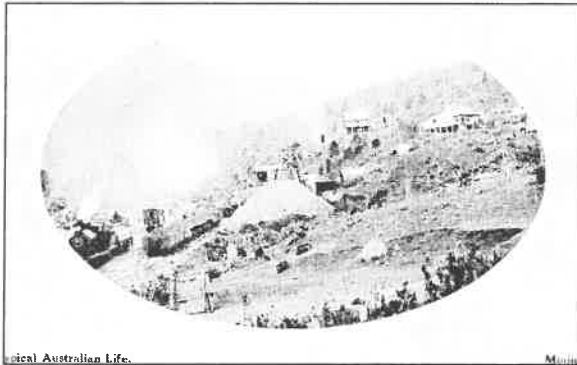


Photo 2: ?



Photo 3: ?



Photo 4: ?

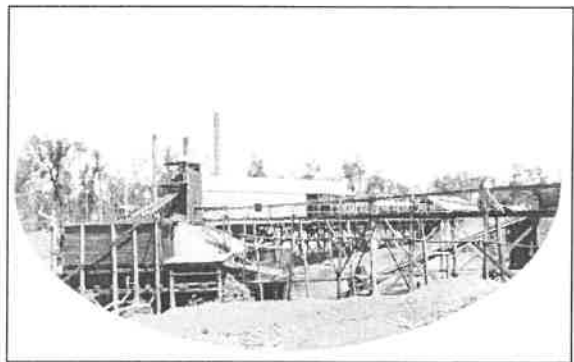
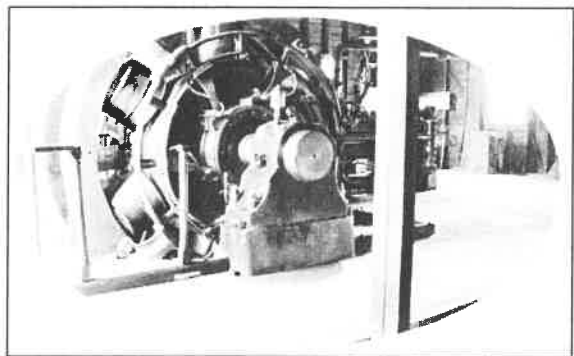


Photo 5: ?



MJD/June'08