



AUSTRALIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Editorial

That mining history has a positive future was well illustrated at the 7th International Mining History Congress held in December 2007 at the magnificent Mayfair Lagoon hotel and conference centre in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India. There were about 150 delegates (and some partners) who attended the sessions, and it was heartening to see that many of our Indian colleagues from the industry who before the conference did not really know what was meant by 'mining history', came out with an appreciation of the value of looking back to the past at mining issues and developments even if only as a tool of understanding the present state of the industry and in learning lessons from the past.

It was pleasing to see AMHA members and partners well represented among those in attendance. As well as yours truly and wife Sharon, we saw Ross and Anne Both; Criena Fitzgerald & Bill; Charlie Fox & Jan; John Hillman; Jeremy Mouat & Linda; Ken McQueen; Ian Schomburgk, and Eleanor Swent. In addition to the presentations, there was an attractive cultural programme, invitations to

meals at the homes of our hosts and some of our members were even invited one evening to an exotic wedding at the hotel. There was also an interesting bus trip to TATA's chromite mine that saw Ken McQueen salivating along the way when we came across miles and miles of bare mountain faces that were being quarried for rock. His sample bag full, it is a puzzle as to how, with the added load, that his plane managed to take off when pointed in the direction of Australia.

For pasty eaters of Cornish descent, it will come as a nice surprise to learn that it was moved and unanimously agreed that the next and 8th International Mining History Congress will be held in Cornwall in 2009. Details will be announced soon.

Forthcoming Conferences

International Conference on Chinese Mining in Australia and Asia-Pacific: Trans-national Histories, Archaeology and Heritage, ANU, Canberra, 11-13 July 2008

To mark the sesquicentennial of the influx of Chinese on to the New South Wales goldfields in 1858 an international conference, hosted by the Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, with the main sponsor being the National Museum of Australia, will be held

at the ANU in July 2008. It will bring together scholars, historians, archaeologists, heritage and museum specialists, and other researchers from throughout Australia and overseas to explore, examine, and share their research findings on the Chinese in Australian Mining History. In addition to the Chinese on the New South Wales mining fields, the conference will be concerned with the comparative history and archaeology of Chinese on other mining fields in Australia and overseas, in particular southeast Asia, the Americas, and New Zealand, as well as within China itself. The four major themes of the conference, for which proposals for panels and papers are now sought will be the following:

- a) Comparative and trans-national histories of Chinese mining communities in Australia and the Asia-Pacific;
- b) Chinese mining technology, technological transfer and innovation overseas;
- c) Historical archaeology of Chinese mining: sites, artefacts, and material culture;
- d) Presenting and representing Chinese mining heritage overseas in the digital age: theme parks, heritage trails, museums, and digitization.

Proposals for panels and papers on other aspects of Chinese overseas mining history beyond these themes would also be welcomed and considered. Pre- and post-conference tours, field work and workshops are being planned to Southern NSW and Braidwood, and to Hill End Sofala, and the Turon, in the central west of NSW.

Expressions of interest and offers of panels or papers should be sent to one of the following convenors of the

conference, from whom further information can also be obtained:

Henry Chan (Chinese Australian Historical Society & University of Sydney), Chair of the Conference Organizing Committee, e-mail: <henry.chan@arts.usyd.edu.au>

Dr Keir Reeves (Univ of Melbourne), <keir@unimelb.edu.au>

Dr Li Tana, (Director, CSCSD, ANU), <tana.li@anu.edu.au>

Dr Barry McGowan (ANU), <barry@cyberone.com.au>

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

'Mines Amongst the Mountains'

Our Tasmanian organiser, Greg Dickens, has been burning the miles to tee up a full and exhilarating programme for Queenstown that will gladden the hearts of all our regular conference addicts and camp followers. Greg reports that conference delegates will leave Launceston at 9.00am, or the Airport at 10.0am, on Saturday 4th October. At the end of the conference, buses will travel on the morning of Friday 10th October to reach Launceston Airport at approximately 1.30 pm. Queenstown, home to the famous Mt. Lyell Mine, is set amongst spectacular mountains, rivers and rainforest. The town is central to the many attractions that are planned for the Conference. Places to be visited include historic Zeehan; Robert Stitch's mansion 'Penghana'; the mining centres of Rosebery, Tullah and Renison Bell; Lake Margaret Power Station; Waratah; Mt. Bischoff Mine; a trip on the Mt. Lyell Railway, as well as a visit to Strahan. A wide range of accommodation is available. Abstracts of papers to reach the AMHA Secretary by 30th July 2008. **Note:** five papers already in! See registration form enclosed.

Bits-and Pieces

Pastie – Pasty!

Yours truly has been sharply and rightly pulled up by Moonta's Richard Hancock who noted that in the December'07 newsletter I scurrilously spelt the delectable Cornish

delicacy as 'pastie'. The true spelling is of course 'pasty'. As Richard points out, 'pastie refers to the twirly attachment to the nipple of a go-go dancer'. Quite a different dish, and perhaps reflecting upon the editor's devious subconscious mind!

Loss of the London North Headframe

Our good President presents this sad story regarding an important mining heritage structure in Queensland:

For many years, one of the remarkable sights of the gold mining town of Ravenswood in North Queensland was the headframe of the London North mine, located beside a main street in the heart of the town. This was probably Australia's last timber mine headframe (apart from modern replicas) standing in an urban area.

The London North was a small mine which opened in 1903 to explore an extension of the London reef, mined from a shaft near the railway station. At that late date the London North was forced to operate on a surveyed allotment in built-up Elphinstone Street. The shaft was sunk to 458' (140m) depth, but production was disappointing, and it was let on tribute in 1907 and operated intermittently until 1915. The London North re-opened during the Depression-era revival in 1937, but closed again a few months later.



London North Mine about 1905 (MIM Holdings Archive)

In September 2007 the headframe collapsed, the victim of old age and long-

term lack of maintenance. It had been recognised since the 1960s that the London North headframe was of heritage significance, as well as a tourism asset to the town of Ravenswood and the Dalrymple Shire. No fewer than five conservation studies advised on the headframe between 1975 and 2000. Public funding was made available for conservation work on the London North headframe in the early 1990s, but apparently used for another purpose. Not one cent had been spent on conservation work on the headframe since 1937.

The Record of Ravenswood's Headframes

Sad as the loss of the London North headframe is, the bigger picture is much worse. In 1975 when the first conservation management plan for Ravenswood was written, there were still seven timber mine headframes standing in and immediately outside the town. These were the Eureka beside the Imperial Hotel in Macrossan Street, Golden Hill near Saint Patrick's church, the London North in Elphinstone Street, and four - the Grant & Sunset Extended, Sunset No.2, Duke of Edinburgh Underlie and Sunset Underlie - on the former New Ravenswood Company leases just south of the town.



London North Mine from the doorway of the Railway Hotel, 1979

Since then the Eureka and Sunset No.2 have collapsed, and the Golden Hill and Grant & Sunset Extended have been demolished in the

course of mining operations. All these losses occurred between about 1977 and 1988. The headframes at the Duke of Edinburgh Underlie and the Sunset Underlie - which was the most important mine in Ravenswood's history - have now collapsed into heaps of rotting logs. The only one left standing until a few months ago was the London North headframe.

This is an abysmally poor record, which raises the question of how effective the whole modern era of heritage registers and conservation grants has really been in preserving relics of mining industry. In the 30 years since Ravenswood's significance was recognised and active conservation measures commenced, the town has lost all of its seven timber headframes.

Peter Bell

Information Wanted

Sydney Quarrying Sites- Coal Mines

LachlanHunter is hosting a growing directory of geological and quarrying sites, working out from Sydney. If any of our members know of any quarry sites around Sydney then John Byrnes (details below) would like to hear from you.

John is also looking for people who know and are interested in coalmines between Sydney and Newcastle. In particular he is interested in the mines of the Swansea peninsula. He also seeks information on the Southern Pacific Colliery at Fennell Bay near Toronto. To date he has been unable to locate any records but knows that it commenced operation and ceased production in the early 1900s. It was a small mine and didn't employ many men.

John's interest in the coal measures and the mines of that area is to discover records that mention fossil trees in order to trace laterally the

fossil forest of Fennell Bay. A story recorded by a missionary states that there was an Aboriginal connection to the trees but contact with modern day Aboriginal sources reveals nothing, though John suggests that it may represent one of those stories which indicate people may have met the megafauna, the experience of which was held in 'cultural memory'.

For further information see web page:

<http://www.lachlanhunter.deadsetfreestuff.com/JB/fennell-bay1.htm>

If you have any information please contact John Byrnes (Geologist), LachlanHunter Associates, P.O. Box 121, Burwood, NSW 1805. Tel: 02-97473701; Email: john.mail@ozemail.com.au

Book news

The following note is from our foreign correspondent, Ruth Kerr (Qld), who spotted the article by John Feary, in 'Mining News', a daily e.mail on the mining industry in Australia (23 November 2007). As Ruth states, cultural heritage and history stories are very rare in that medium.

'THE usual image of Western Australia's Pilbara region is of a dry, dusty, harsh and blokey place that also happens to be one of our greatest national sources of mineral wealth. Less commonly noted is that the area is also a place of great beauty for those who are able to recognise it, including many women.

Now a group of women with long associations with the Pilbara are showing the world the region's intense appeal in a new book, *Red Dust in Her Veins*. Writer Lisa Holland-McNair has interviewed 12 women of the Pilbara for the book, which was officially launched in Karratha on November 14.

The publication of *Red Dust in Her Veins* was initiated by two of the women whose interviews appear in it. Melva Stone was the first European woman to become a permanent resident of the new town of

Newman when she moved there with her husband in 1968, in the early stages of the iron ore mining boom, and later became a radio operator for the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Port Hedland. Erica Smyth was transferred to the region in the early 1970s and her career as a geologist has taken her back there for several stints. Although now living out of the region, both women retained their love for the Pilbara. Smyth was later appointed by the WA Government to chair the Pilbara Development Commission, and Stone continued her association with the RFDS by serving as its WA president. They have also become close friends, and the idea for the book came from the number of people who, hearing about Stone's pioneering role, urged her to write her story.

But in the choice of interview subjects and the writing skills of Holland-McNair, *Red Dust in Her Veins* goes much further than the challenges faced by white women in a tough, male-dominated region. Four of the women whose stories are told in the book were born in the Pilbara, indigenous women who are connected through thousands of years of culture and custom. For Stone and Smyth, it was important that the stories of the original Australians in the region were also told.

Although mining is the Pilbara's dominant economic activity, *Red Dust in Her Veins* also tells the stories of women linked to the pastoral industry and fishing industries. And it is not just a celebration of the attractions of Pilbara, because the women also talk of having to cope with isolation, the strains that led to many family breakdowns, and the health challenges in a place so far from immediate medical aid.

Even as the person who originally proposed the book, Stone said she

never imagined the end product would be so inspiring. Smyth said she also was amazed at the willingness of the women to open up to the interviewer. "They have shared with us places and experiences most of us have never imagined," she said. For both Stone and Smyth, however, the publication of the book has highlighted the loss of regional communities because of the modern trend towards fly-in, fly-out mining schedules. "If you don't have communities," Smyth said, "the blokes don't stay."

The publication of *Red Dust in Her Veins* has been underwritten by Rio Tinto Iron Ore, whose chief executive Sam Walsh described it as a "blockbuster" that he had read in one sitting. Profits from the initial print run of 4500 copies will go to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The book will also be launched in the United States as part of the G'Day USA event hosted by Australian Consul General to New York in January next year. Copies of *the book* can be ordered through the website: www.womenofthepilbara.com.au

There is also a section on the website where others can tell their own stories of women in the Pilbara'. See source at <http://www.miningnewspremium.net/> 23 November 2007

Research Holdings

Members carrying out research in NSW, in particular, might care to examine the offerings for downloading from the following web site: www.ozhistorymine.com/html/services.html

Congratulations

Congratulations to old time members **Michael** and **Jennifer Tracey** who both obtained their PhDs in 2007. Michael (who designed our logo) and Jennifer have since moved from Canberra and will be located close to Ruth Kerr at St Lucia, Queensland. Congratulations also go to **Michael Williams** who was also doctored in 2007! He and Nic continue to contribute greatly towards the functioning of the AMHA. And again, congrats to John Mills who similarly triumphed with his doctorate in 2007.

Journal

Sincere apologies to Bill MacGee for a problem that arose in his article, 'Tragedy on the Strickland: Jack Hides and the Investors Ltd Expedition of 1937', in the last journal, Vol. 5, 2007. Because of some unfathomable reason the overlay that was included in Map 1, p. 51, disappeared and left a blank where rivers and other features should have been shown. An *addendum* will be included in the next volume to try to re-dress the problem.

Regarding this September's Vol. 6: while the editor was delighted to see two articles being submitted even before the print on the September 2007 volume had cooled, the expected stream of articles has dried up. I know there are a number of people out there who are anxious to get their work published but please don't leave your submission to the last minute. In theory we require articles to be submitted **at least** four or five months in advance if justice is to be done to the submitted works. There are referees and editors to consider and most papers require an appreciable amount of vetting before they are ready for publication. So please submit as soon as you can. This will add to the joy of the editor and expectant readers!

IMHC Bhubaneswar 2007

Intrepid mining historians at TATA's Chromite Mine, Orissa, including AMHA delegates and rock fanatics



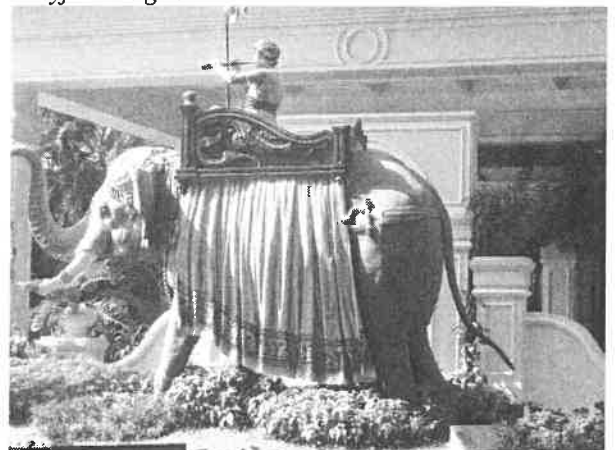
Swimming pool at the Mayfair Lagoon, Bhubaneswar where members 'slummed it' at the 7th International Mining History Congress



Mayfair Lagoon – Lagoon and accommodation



Grand entrance to Bhubaneswar Conference venue, Mayfair Lagoon



Memberships Reminder

Have you remembered to renew your membership for 2008? Early return of forms and cheques greatly appreciated.

MJD/March'08