



AUSTRALIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

All correspondence to: Mel Davies
Business School, Economics MBDP M251
University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Highway,
Crawley 6009, W. Australia
Tel. (W) 08-64882926 (H) 08-92953265
Fax: 08-92956624
E.mail: mel.davies@uwa.edu.au

Newsletter No. 1 MARCH 2012

Patron: Professor Geoffrey Blainey, AC

ABN 96 220 329 754

Web page: <http://www.mininghistory.asn.au>

ISSUE 68

EDITORIAL

There is always a certain amount of cynicism when mining companies and governments state they are using development projects to enhance the welfare and economies of underdeveloped nations, but hopefully the recently announced initiative by the Australian Government will prove the cynics wrong. Coinciding with the CHOGM meeting in Perth in October 2011, the Prime Minister announced a multi-million dollar initiative funded by AusAid that involves a joint venture between the University of Western Australia and Queensland University (called IM4DC). The object is to provide the expertise to allow developing countries to enhance their mining resources so as to develop their economies and to provide social benefits and improved welfare to their populations. It is argued that many projects overseas have to date failed to reach their potential through poor management and know-how and it is the intention to draw on Australian expertise to mentor government and mining personnel from a number of countries. Among other objectives this will be achieved through providing technical and budgetary knowledge; through sponsored visits to Australia to learn from on-site activity and workshops; and to improve skills in mining regulation, administration and geosciences. This in itself is a laudable goal and may

history prove the cynics wrong – only time will tell and in years to come the AMHA may well provide a paper or two that examines the success or otherwise of this laudable venture.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Hot off the Press – International Mining History Conference.

Members will I'm sure be delighted to hear that the AMHA is hoping to run its 2014 conference in conjunction with the International Mining History Congress. Kett Kennedy who is currently sorting out the preliminary arrangements has announced the conference will run from 8th to 12th July 2014 and he promises that it will be an event to remember. Confirmation of the arrangement will be determined at the April International Congress in South Africa in Johannesburg – so keep your fingers crossed that our bid will be successful.

150 Years of Riches: The Central Otago Gold Rush, 1862-2012. University of Canterbury NZ, 29-31 August 2012.

The conference focuses on the *Central Otago gold rush* from the perspective of a wide range of disciplines and fields including but not limited to: History, Archaeology, Maori Studies, Fashion, Literature, Heritage Studies, Tourism

Theory, Sociology, Anthropology, Art History, Cultural Studies, Geography, Museum Theory, Cultural Geography, Landscape Studies, Political Sciences, and Urban Development.

Too late if you wish to present a paper but if interested in attending contact: lloyd.carpenter@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

18th Annual Conference, Waihi, New Zealand, 4-11 November 2012

The registration form is still being finalized and will be circulated with the next newsletter, though it will be available on the web page before that time.

Note: There is no direct public transport connection from Auckland to Waihi but a pick-up will be arranged for those wishing to travel on Sunday 4th November. Details will be advertised on the registration form.

Call for Papers - See the attached Waihi brochure. Also see the latest programme at the end of the newsletter – though note this could be subject to slight changes.

31st Australian Historical Association Conference, Adelaide Univ. 9-13 July 2012

Organizer Dr. Robert Foster is prepared to provide space and time for a mining history stream or session. If anyone is interested in organizing this, or if you wish to give a mining-related paper please contact him at: robert.foster@adelaide.edu.au

To register for the conference, or to submit an abstract (but hurry, submission close on 31 March) go to the website: www.theaha.org.au/connections

The keynote speaker is Professor Sir Christopher Bayly, University of Cambridge, author of a number of books including 'The Birth of the Modern World: Global Connections and Comparisons 1780-1914'

Among the social events will be a Conference Dinner at the National Wine Centre. Another attraction will be the presence of Philip Payton who will talk about his recently published book – see the publications section for details.

PUBLICATIONS

Rick Wilkinson, *Twists in the Sand - 50 years in the turbulent life of Beach Energy*, Media Dynamics, Brisbane, 2011. 450, pp. Over 100 photographs. ISBN 978 1 87607 705 1. Cost \$25 plus postage of \$5 within South Australia, \$15 Australia, \$25 overseas.

Member Rick Wilkinson has recently added another valuable publication to his CV that should be of interest to many of our members. It involves the formation and machinations that have punctuated the chequered history of Ossie oil and gas company, Beach Energy. The book examines the company's highs and lows over the past 50 years – the early disappointments as the junior explorer hit one dry hole after another, and then the thrill of discovery. However, with success came the predators, and the company fell into the hands of the shadowy IRL group in 1987, a move that almost spelled the company's demise. Fortunately, as Rick describes, there was a 'Lazarus-like recovery' following a series of court cases in the 1990s, and the result was that under a new management team, Beach blossomed into a strong and diversified energy group. As a business journalist and oil and gas specialist, Rick tells a fascinating and dramatic story that ends on a high note with a description of how the company has emerged today as one of Australia's largest onshore oil and gas producers with promising exploration projects around the world.

Note that \$20 from each purchase goes towards a beach energy nominated charity. The publication order form can be downloaded from Beach Energy's website homepage at www.beachenergy.com.au

Philip Payton, *Regional Australia and The Great War: 'The Boys from Old Kio'*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 2012 (to be published in April), 272pp, over 70 photographs and illustrations. ISBN 978 0 85989 873 7 (PB), ISBN 978 0 85989 872 0 (HB). Cost \$20 PB, \$60 HB.

Member Philip Payton has added yet

another publication to his already extensive bibliography. The book examines the experiences of regional Australia during the 1st World War by zooming in on the copper mining communities of South Australia's Yorke Peninsula. 'He draws an intimate portrait of Australia at war, from the lives and deaths of local soldiers – all volunteers – in the trenches far from home to the myriad reactions and activities of those in the community struggling to grasp the enormity of the situation in which it found itself'. It shows how these volunteer soldiers fared in the great battles – from Gallipoli to the Western front and looks at the aftermath in the heady days of 1918.

Lenore Layman and Crien Fitzgerald (eds), *110° in the Waterbag: A History of Life, Work and Leisure in Leonora, Gwalia and the Northern Goldfields*, Western Australian Museum in Association with the Leonora Historical Research Project, 2012. ISBN 9 781920 84368 7 PB, 464 pp, Photos and maps, \$39.95.

This hot off the press publication presents a broad based study of Western Australia's Leonora and surrounds from the 1890s to recent times. Much of the story, liberally illustrated with photographs, is based on oral history interviews with ex-residents of the area, a positive spinoff being that the team of researchers gained access to documents and photographs that came to light as a result of these contacts. The result is a wide social and economic survey of the impact of mining, and particularly of gold mining from the 1890s, though gold and the Sons of Gwalia were not the only mining activities in the area. The text is split into contributions by a bevy of historians – many well known to the AMHA membership, including the editors. The various chapters range from the affect on local Aboriginal populations; to transport structures including woodlines; processing and other technical developments; labour relations; health and safety; social and sporting life in the area; economic conditions and financing, including the fortunes and economic fluctuations over the period of study. The

publication will be reviewed in the next edition of the Journal.

BITS & PIECES

Mystery of the Klondike Resolved!

Robin McLachlan has contributed the following interesting piece on the fate of Giles McPherson, one of Australia's pioneers on the Klondike. This adds spice to the other contributions on the role of Australians on that gold field he has presented at past AMHA conferences.

"Thanks to the Guest Weather Report on ABC FM radio's Classic Breakfast, a mystery has been solved. At my request, the weather report was for Dawson City on August 16th, the anniversary of the discovery of gold on the Klondike. Emma Ayers, the programme's host, invited listeners to contact me if they had any information of interest to my 'Diggers on the Klondike' project.

The response from one listener, Bill Macpherson in Busselton WA, proved especially interesting. Bill, in collaboration with Peter Bridge (Hesperian Press) and Professor Alan Macpherson (Memorial University, Newfoundland) shared an interest in the life and career of Gilles McPherson, who went to the Klondike in 1898. McPherson will be well known to many readers for his prospecting discoveries and expeditions in Western Australia. McPherson's Pillar in the Gibson Desert is named in his honour.

The fate of McPherson has long been a mystery. It was supposed in the 1920s, without any evidence, that he had perished in a Klondike blizzard. This has been the generally accepted story ever since and is offered by our patron, Professor Blainey, in *The Rush that Never Ended* (1963), p.173. I grew suspicious of the story after much fruitless searching of Yukon and British Columbian newspapers and official records seeking a contemporary mention of his death, which given his fame ought to have been noted somewhere by someone. While I could locate some possible 'bodies', I lacked conclusive proof as to identity.

The Bill, Peter and Alan Research Collective provided a key document,

namely, McPherson's Scottish birth registration (1 February 1844, as Gillies McPherson), together with a supporting document, his 1892 Western Australian marriage registration (as Gilles MacPherson). His wife (Elizabeth Wisbey) died in December 1893, and their infant son (Donald Graham MacPherson) followed a few weeks later.

With the aid of this information, I was soon able to resolve the mystery of McPherson's death with an online search that took me to the death registrations in the British Columbia Archives. McPherson did not die in a Yukon blizzard. He died on 8 December 1928 in the (B.C.) Provincial Home for Incurables, located in the town of Marpole in Point Grey, a suburb municipality of Vancouver. The cause of death was chronic bronchitis with a contributory cause of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle). The death certificate gives his name as Gillis McPherson, born in Scotland on 1 February 1844, marital status widower. His length of residence in Canada is given as 30 years, which would make his year of arrival 1898, the year of the Klondike Rush. The key biographical details on the birth, marriage and death registrations are all in accord, with only slight differences in the spelling of his name. Similar variations are to be found in other records. His first name variations include Gilles, Gillis or Gillies; his surname variations include Mac and Mc, Pherson and Pherson, and even Mcphearson. I have settled for the time being on 'Gilles McPherson', the name by which he is called in Professor Blainey's work and seems best known by among Australian mining historians generally.

Contemporary accounts of McPherson suggest he was a reclusive man, someone with few close friends. He looks to have drifted away from the Klondike without attracting much attention, and in subsequent years did not keep in touch with Australian colleagues. It is understandable that his disappearance might be attributed to a snowy death in the distant Yukon.

Life may not have been easy for McPherson after the Klondike. The 1911

Census of Canada records him employed as a 'canneryman' working a 60-hour week in a salmon cannery in Richmond, British Columbia. His fellow workers on the production line were almost entirely Chinese and Japanese migrant workers, arguably reflecting his place in society according to the social values of that time. His occupation at the time of death, age 84, was given as labourer and it seems very likely this once wealthy man died in poverty. He was buried by the Masonic Order in Vancouver's New Masonic Cemetery (Plot 263, Grave 04, Section D). There is no memorial tablet on his grave.

Sources and acknowledgements for this item can be found online in Gilles McPherson's entry in the project's webpage on ancestry.com.au. More 'Grave Stories from the Klondike' will be found in my article, so titled, in the May-June issue of *Inside History*. I am always delighted to hear from member of the AMHA who may have information on Australian and New Zealand Klondikers.

Dr Robin McLachlan, CSU Bathurst
rmclachlan@csu.edu.au

INFORMATION WANTED *Australia's First Iron-Ore Mine*

John Blockley, one of our members and Secretary of the ESHG is seeking information on Australia's first reputed iron-ore mine. He writes:

"Having a long-standing interest in iron ore, I was intrigued to see a recent Stock Exchange release by a company called **Proto Resources and Investments Ltd** advising that it was planning to re-open Australia's first iron ore mine located at Barnes Hill near Beaconsfield in Tasmania. The announcement states that the deposit was found by Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson in 1804 and developed with financial assistance from Sir Joseph Banks. The Australian Dictionary of Biography confirms that Paterson (1755 – 1810) was a soldier, explorer and gifted naturalist who corresponded with Sir Joseph Banks and even dedicated a book about his exploits to him in 1789. In 1806 he founded a

settlement near Launceston in Tasmania and was made Lieutenant Governor of the new colony. Although the Dictionary records that he reported the occurrence of iron ore in the vicinity of the settlement, it does not mention that he developed it. However, Tasmanian Geological Survey Mineral Resources Bulletin No. 6 (W H Tvelevtrees and A McIntosh Reid, 1919) confirms that a few tons of ore were taken away by Paterson's ship, *Lady Nelson*, in 1806. A report by P B Nye (later a Director of the BMR) on drilling carried out by the Tasmanian Department of Mines in 1930 indicates that the ore is laterite formed over serpentinite. It also shows that it contains relatively high amounts of chromium, which could be the reason that it has not been developed to date.

All of this seems to have the makings of an interesting item for a future Newsletter and I am wondering if any Member who may have more information about this early discovery of iron ore and its connection to Sir Joseph Banks would care to pass it on to me — or even contribute an article him/herself?"

John can be contacted at:
tiger-eye@iinet.net.au

Captn William Pleitner

Bryan Pleitner is researching the mining activities of his great, great uncle, Captn William Pleitner who was actively involved in mining during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is particularly interested in finding photographs, and also any other information that members might have come across in their researches.

Captn Pleitner appears to have been held in high regard by his peers and while resident mainly in Adelaide, during his career he was active in his own area but also in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia. He was a mine manager but also travelled extensively to inspect mines and report on their viability. In Western Australia, for example, he travelled from the Eastern goldfields to the Murchison. In South Australia he discovered the Bird in Hand mine at Woodside and was requested by the SA Government to visit Europe to

report on new methods on treatment of ores in the early 1890s. He was a foundation member of the SA branch of the Australian Institute of Mining Engineers (1892) and also performed as an examiner for the School of Mines in SA.

He was appointed manager of a number of mines including the New Era (1888), Bakers Creek (1888), Hillgrove (1889) and in addition was manager and director of Blackbornes mine in Southern Cross (1893). In 1906 he became involved and was a director in the Warrenben Oil Claims.

If you have any information Bryan Pleitner can be contacted at:
bryan@pleitner.com

Gold miners, Meekathara, WA

Neal Porter is seeking information on his grandfather Thomas Porter who came out from Ireland to Western Australia where, along with two prospectors Soich and Meehan he found gold at Nannine-Meekatharra. If anyone has any information or if you can suggest sources where information is available can you please contact Neal at:
chiller6@optusnet.com.au

Canoona Mine, Queensland

Jill Morley (nee Arnold) is keen to find information on the Canoona Mine (in the Mt Morgan - Rockhampton area) and on a relative, William John Arnold, who discovered gold there in 1931. She is also keen to trace a photo or photos of the mine. If you can help, Jill can be contacted at:
jillmorley@bigpond.com

More on Adelaide Residences!

Peter Bell reports that according to the *Advertiser*, there's another piece of Adelaide mining history real estate on the market. This refers to *Carawatha*, said to be Sir George Brookman's house, built in 1880, and based on his fortune made in Moonta.

"Moonta?!", did I hear you say? As far as Peter is aware, Brookman had no connection with Moonta. In 1880 his business was a grocery store in King William Street, and he doubts that he had

the money to build this house.

In fact, the story contains elements of truth in garbled form. The house was built for Brookman in 1886, after he'd become a serious investor, but long before his WA mining adventures. If he ever lived there it was only briefly, and a few months later the title was transferred to his father Benjamin. In 1890 this house was sold to Charles Drew, who'd made his money as a storekeeper in Burra and Moonta. The same year Brookman built a new house nearby (later called *Ivanhoe*) where he lived until his death. (Peter recalls that *Ivanhoe* was also on the market a year or so ago).

Even the name *Carawatha* is not historical. Until a few years ago this house was called *Craigmellan*. Perhaps the AMHA could offer a mining history service for real estate agents!

FUTURE NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

We are still awaiting a large number of membership renewals but before sending in your payments please look at the two boxes provided on the membership form that ask you to tick if (a) you wish to allow any of our officers to contact you by e.mail on AMHA business (this has to do with Privacy laws) and (b) if in future you would be happy to receive the newsletter by e.mail. From responses to date it appears that many folk are ignoring this part of the form.

While on the **membership renewals**, if sending your fees by electronic transfer please **include your first and second names** on the payment instruction when submitting at your bank. As mentioned previously, we still have two unknown payees from last year, and one mystery person who sent his \$25 from the bank at Illawara in February of this year. As a reminder, a membership form is enclosed if you haven't yet renewed your membership.

FUTURE PAYMENTS

We are currently looking into various payment systems that will allow members to register for conferences or membership subscriptions on line. We are looking at systems such as 'Pay Pal' that can be accessed via our web page. This will

certainly make it easier for our overseas members and will help avoid the usurious fees charged them for electronic transfers and for charges for cheques. This will still allow those Australian bank members to pay by cheque or by Postal Order if they so wish. The system should be up and running by the time we send out the Waihi Conference registration forms.

WAIHI CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

(Subject to possible minor changes)

Monday 5th – Tuesday 6th November

2-day Field trip with night stay at Coromandel.

Wednesday 7th November

8.45am - President's Welcome.

9.00am -12.00pm - Paper sessions.

1.45pm - Martha Mine visit.

3.30pm - 6.00pm – Paper sessions.

7.30pm - Drama club play.

Thursday 8th November

8.30-12.00pm - Paper sessions.

12.45 - Union Hill guided tour.

2.00pm - 5.30pm – Paper sessions.

6.00pm - Meeting of Executive committee.

Friday 9th November

Visit to Thames with evening meal at Waihi Beach RSA and address on mining archaeology.

Saturday 10th November

8.30am - 3.00pm - paper sessions, including joint sessions with Labour History project group.

4.00pm - AMHA Annual General Meeting.

Sunday 11th November

Field trips:

Battery Waitekauri Valley and Golden Cross plus Waikino battery.

Alternatives:

Helicopter flight over Martha Mine (15 minute flights).

Waihi Cemetery visit.

In total, an anticipated 26 papers by AMHA members and local historians, plus three papers by Labour History Project historians on themes of interest to AMHA members.

See enclosed flyer on call for abstracts

MJD/March/12