



AUSTRALASIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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REPORT ON 25TH CONFERENCE, ATHERTON, QUEENSLAND

Thanks to Conference co-organiser Jan Wegner for providing the following outline of the conference activities. Out of modesty, what she did not say was that it was a very successful week of activities which included a wide variety of papers. Some 70 people attended, plus a number of one-day delegates.

'Far north Queensland hosted the Australasian Mining History Association's conference this year, in Atherton, centre of the farming and dairying lands of the Atherton Tablelands west of Cairns. The theme was 'In the footsteps of John Moffat', as all the conference field trips followed the interests of that base metal mining entrepreneur, whose far-flung interests were administered from nearby Irvinebank. Conference attendees first went to Mt Mulligan, the spectacular sandstone mountain known to the local Djungan people as Ngarrabullgan, to visit the remains of the coal mine notorious for the coal dust explosion which killed all 76 workers in 1921. We were guided by historian Peter Bell, who has written extensively on the disaster. There are many remains on site, of the mine, the coke works including the brick smokestack, facilities for loading the coal on the railway, and the brick kiln. A second field trip went to Herberton to

visit the well-organized mining museum there and the intact early engine houses of the Great Northern mine nearby. We then went on to Irvinebank, where we toured the ruins of Moffat's mill and smelter sites and his residence, Loudon House, now a museum. We also visited Moffat's premier mine, the Vulcan, which still boasts one of the few intact headframes of the traditional four-post design along with concrete machinery bases for the winder, compressor and pump. The third field trip went to the copper and lead mining field of Chillagoe to see the remains of the Chillagoe Smelters, which serviced a large area of north Queensland's base metal mining industry from 1901 to 1943, and the remains of the Zillmanton, Girofla and Lady Jane mines, the largest on the field. Owen Ray, whose Honours thesis in Archaeology examined Zillmanton, was a handy source of information. Talks by local historian Mary Bolam at the Chillagoe museum, and geologist John Nethery at the Information Centre, provided the context. We couldn't visit Chillagoe without a close-up view of the spectacular limestone bluffs and the Aboriginal art in the rock shelters, so the tour included the Mungana art site – also the site of the racecourse for the abandoned mining town of Mungana nearby. We also were guided through the modern Mungana mine-site by the manager, Ian Hodkinson, including the

huge Red Dome open cut, one of the deepest in Australia. This provided a useful contrast in scale between modern and 19th – early 20th century mining operations. A short field trip by Aboriginal member Kal Ellwood also looked at pre-contact Aboriginal mining and ethnogeology in the area surrounding Atherton, which includes several dormant volcanoes, volcanic lakes, and the deep volcanic pipe called The Crater.

Conference papers covered a wide range of topics, from historical analyses of mining and milling all over Australia to the historical archaeology of town sites and cemeteries; mining songs and poems; the role of miners in the extinction of the Thylacine; pre-contact Aboriginal mining; industrial diseases; and transport. Of particular interest was a pictorial and historical presentation by representatives, Jan Godowski and Monika Dziobek of the fabulous Wieliczka Salt Mine and Cracow Saltworks Museum in Poland.

The friendly and obliging staff of the Atherton International Club provided us with a good conference venue and kept us well fed, including the best scones on the Tableland, and AMHA member Stephen Imrie made himself indispensable, looking after IT matters.

A large cast of volunteers made it all possible, including conference organisers Jan Wegner, Kal Ellwood, Mel Davies and Ruth Kerr; Ken McQueen for putting information on the website and helping with the Proceedings document; Nic Haygarth for doing the official approaches to various organisations and people; Carole Hardingham for initial organising of the venue; and Wendy Carter for putting together the accommodation list. Thanks also to Peter Shimmin and the Irvinebank Progress Association for organising tours and lunch, and Ivan and Mary Searston and the great crew at the Herberton Mining Museum for their guided tours and hospitality.

Jan Wegner

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AMHA 26th Annual Conference, Bathurst, November 2020.

It has now been confirmed that the next conference will be held at Bathurst, with organiser Juanita Wong already at work with her team that includes Robin McLachlan, Paul McGregor and Edward Zbik, to select the venues and conference tours to mining areas of interest. With over 12 months to go, that should allow folk sufficient time to save their pennies and to prepare papers for presentation.

International Mining History Congress, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, 18-22 June 2020

As noted in the previous newsletter, the deadline for abstract submissions for the International Mining History Conference, is **1st November 2019**. Submissions should be sent to Prof. Jeremy Mouat, at: jmouat@ualberta.ca

BITS & PIECES

The Charters Towers Stock Exchange

Ian Scott recently visited Charters Towers where he spoke to archivist Michael Brumby. Michael provided him with information on the Charters Towers Stock Exchange and kindly agreed for Ian to forward this piece, which will especially bring back memories of the conference visit to that town in 2014:

‘Alexander Malcolm envisaged his Royal Arcade of small shops and offices to link Mosman Street with Rutherford Lane at its rear. It was to be built in the same style as the same named arcade in Melbourne. Malcolm dreamed big and believed in Charters Towers: from when he first arrived as a miner in 1873, to building a set of six timber shops on this site in 1875-1876, and then replacing them in grand style with accommodation for twenty.

Unfortunately, Malcolm went into debt. His life was troubled, and he moved to Copeland, New South Wales some years earlier, occasionally visiting Charters Towers to look after his

interests. Malcolm succumbed to alcoholism mania and heart failure in the Charters Towers hospital on August 19th, 1891, at a time when his arcade had been given the means to thrive.

The birth of Malcolm's arcade into becoming known more universally at the Stock Exchange Arcade was inspired by one of the arcade's first tenants, sharebroker John F. Hinsch who made arrangements to use the arcade floor for a nightly call: there he would be inviting the public to "respectfully attend and learn the true value of their scrip." Operations commenced on the evening of Saturday 20 April 1889.

It was Sydney architect Mark Day's design of the two-storey masonry arcade with glass-roof, large tiled floored space illuminated by gas light at night that made the difference at least to Hinsch. Here was a large public space for the townspeople to enter the world for making speculative mining investments by purchasing scrip or subscriptions at evening calls.

This was capitalised upon in May 1890 when the sharebrokers dissolved the so-called old institution and formed the Charters Towers Stock Exchange. They were dissatisfied with a private chamber call and arranged for a free call to be held each evening at 8.00 pm from the floor of the arcade: 'to be in better touch with the investing public'.

The Charters Towers Stock Exchange had precursors beginning with an exchange first being set up in the billiards room at the Crown Hotel in 1885 followed by another failed attempt by sharebrokers Hunter and Harte in 1886. The root causes for all to fail were ironed out when the Charters Towers Stock Exchange re-formed under revised rules with a permanent secretary appointed in May 1890. Until then no one was prepared to work as secretary while the members could not afford to pay for one. The first members included William Auld, Sydney Hood Thorp, Thomas B. Bearup, Lancelot R. Beck, James R. Bradshaw, John Bradshaw, Arthur

Wellington, William Levi Davies, George Dunsford, J.F. Hinsch, and I.W. Johnston.'

Sources: Charters Towers Stock Exchange Records CTSE/1 – 4. CTT: 18/04/1889. NM: 18/04/1889. TNM: 23/05/1889 – 3.

Mine Explosions

Following the Atherton conference visit to Mount Mulligan, Harold Gallasch has pointed out that coal mining is not the only industry where dust can prove destructive:

'A small note about the explosion at the Mt Mulligan mine. I believe many people got the impression that this is one of the dangers associated with underground coal mining. While this is true, this type of explosion has been far more common in environments such as flour mills and even cotton ginneries. It is the very finely divided nature of any carbon or combustible material, mixed with air, that can be highly explosive. A spark is all that is required to initiate an explosion, if the mixture is right. It would not require detonation, as was suggested may have happened at Mt Mulligan. However, if there was no pre-existing appropriate mixture of dust in the air, it may have been some detonation, or other explosion, that lifted the coal dust thus creating the appropriate, dangerous mixture, which would only have needed a spark to then detonate and be self-generating throughout the mine'.

(*From the Ed.*) Some members might remember that at one of our Newcastle conferences, when our late member John Shoebridge, a NSW Mines Safety Officer took us to a Safety Establishment and demonstrated how such an explosion could take place, that many of us present came to appreciate, how powerful and disastrous half-a bucket of coal dust can be.

'The most expensive Cheese on Earth'

Ken McQueen sent in an article that reported the opening of the **Gruyere Mine** in WA, located 220km north-east of Laverton, in the Great Victorian Desert,

which has hit the ground running, especially with prices recently touching \$2,044 an ounce.

However, even though the product is yellowish, the mine produces gold, not cheese. The article from the ABC goes on to point out that despite the record prices for the metal, few sustainable large gold mines are coming into production in Australia. Also noted was the long gestation period between discovery and operation of such mines; the fact that older mines are facing diminishing returns, and that limited exploration is taking place on green fields, which is leading to an expected decline in gold production. The decline of about 7% per year will take place after reaching a peak of 350 tonnes in 2020, to reach 250 tonnes in 2024. However, pessimistic as this sounds, members will know that the history of goldmining in Australia has been punctuated with slowdowns and growth spurts, and the question today will be whether exploration technology will reveal more golden opportunities under the sands?

Archaeological Dig - Invite

For some hands-on experience, members are invited to join a dig organised by 'The Uncovered Past Institute' that's being planned for the 4 weeks (either for 1,2, 3 or the whole 4 weeks) from 30 September to 26 October 2019. President of the organisation is AMHA member, Paul Macgregor. This will be the 2nd season of the exploration of a Chinese village in Harrietville, Victoria. This one of the largest known and best-preserved Chinese mining sites in Victoria and possibly in Australia.

At the first excavation a large number of artifacts were discovered, including Chinese bowls, cups, ceramic spoons, ceramic jars, opium and tobacco pipes, European plates, bottles for wine, mining equipment, a camp oven, sewing materials and buttons, etc., all that help explain the lives of the Chinese miners at Harrietville in the 19th century. For further details and information on how to apply,

click on the following link, or copy to your search engine:

<https://www.uncoveredpast.org.au/harrietville-chinese-mining-village-dig-with-us-2019>

<https://www.uncoveredpast.org.au/harrietville-chinese-mining-village-dig-with-us-2019>

Also see additional information on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/UncoveredPastInstitute/>

AHA Prizes and Awards 2019-20

For details of awards and prizes offered by the Australian Historical Association, check out their website at:

<http://www.theaha.org.au/awards-and-prizes/>

CONGRATULATIONS

We are pleased to announce that earlier in the year, two of our members appeared in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2019 list, Congratulations to Dr Lenore Layman (WA) who was awarded the AM (Member of the Order of Australia) for "significant service to higher education, particularly in the fields of Australian and public histories"; and James Lerk (VIC) who was awarded the OAM (Medal of the Order of Australia) for "service to history, and to the community of Bendigo".

INFORMATION WANTED

Alexandre Frederick Theodore Bernier de la Grange,

A request has been received from John Jenkin regarding some of his ancestors who were on the West Australian goldfields. First is mining engineer Alexandre Frederick Theodore Bernier de la Grange, who at one time fled France to come to Australia. Second, is de la Grange's daughter Roberta Bernier de la Grange who married John's grandfather, the Rev John Grenfell Jenkin who was a Methodist minister at Menzies between 1897-1899, and at Kalgoorlie in 1900-1901. If anyone has information, please contact John at: jjenkin6@bigpond.com

AWARD – Barry McGowan OAM

Member Juanita Kwok gave the welcome news that a report by Barry McGowan and Genevieve Mott, *True Australians and Pioneers: A Thematic*

Study of the Chinese People in the Orange, Blayney and Cabonne Shires and the Town of Wellington, has recently been announced as winner of the Heritage Resources category in the National Trust Heritage Awards. For further details, see: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/news/national-trust-heritage-awards-shortlist-announced-for-2019/>

The report was nominated by Alison Russell, Community Museum and Heritage Manager for Orange Council who worked with Barry and Genevieve on publishing it. Juanita was also included in the plaudits, as after Barry spoke to Alison about her research, she accompanied Barry to visit and obtain information from families in Wellington. So, Juanita has also been recorded as a winner alongside Barry and Genevieve.

Juanita points out that this is a great posthumous recognition of Barry's work on Chinese rural communities and Genevieve's collaboration with Barry on this report and *Tracking the Dragon* publications and exhibitions.

Barry would have been extremely proud to gain this recognition, and all who knew Barry will be delighted to see this work recognised.

BARRY MCGOWAN'S LIBRARY

Robin McLachlan has informed that he still has some books and documents available from the late Barry McGowan's library. To find out what's available and how to obtain them **see the attached document.**

OBITUARY

Vale Peter Schulze

Peter Ross Schulze (1935-2019) was born in the front room of a miner's cottage at Queenstown, Tasmania. His father and grandfather both worked for the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company. Grandfather Johnno Pearton, a foreman at the Mount Lyell Iron Blow, received awards for bravery for his efforts to

rescue miners during the North Mount Lyell Fire disaster in 1912. Peter gained a Diploma in Electrical Engineering at Burnie before joining the staff of Mount Lyell in 1961.

During a 26-year career at the mine he rose to the position of engineering superintendent, succeeding in the difficult task of replacing redundant technology without sacrificing productivity. As a result of this work he was awarded a fellowship with the Institution of Engineers and the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. He served local government for eighteen years, including four years as warden of Queenstown 1980-83. He was Legislative Council Member for Gordon as an independent in the Tasmanian State Parliament 1988-99, retiring when the seat was abolished.

Celebration of the centenary of the Mount Lyell Iron Blow in 1983 Queenstown. Governor Sir James Plimsoll (left), Peter Schulze (Warden of Queenstown) (centre) and Tasmanian premier Robin Gray (right).



Source: Mercury Newspaper, 1983.

Because of his family connection to the North Mount Lyell Fire, his familiarity with the underground electrical system at Mount Lyell, and his respect for the people of Queenstown, Peter always took an interest in the 1912 disaster, and in 2011 wrote a paper 'The North Mount Lyell disaster - a miscarriage of justice' in which he rebuffed the accepted story that the fire was deliberately lit, blaming an electrical fault instead. This paper, published in the *Journal of Australasian*

Mining History, (Vol. 9, September 2011, pp. 94-116) was also the cornerstone of his 2012 historical work, *An engineer venue for ouspeaks of Lyell: a quadrilogy*.

Peter was a generous man with a sense of fair play who helped many people on Tasmania's West Coast and made many contributions to the local community (he loved to recall, for example, how he brought television to Queenstown). The West Coast has had few fiercer advocates.

Nic Haygarth

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Australian Opal Centre (OAC), Lightning Ridge, NSW

Those who attended the Darwin conference in 2015 might remember the excellent presentation by Jenni Brammall on the plans for the construction of a new opal museum at Lightning Ridge. We are delighted to say that after a few hiccups, that venture is now a reality with the news that \$20 million dollars has recently been secured for Stage 1 of the project. This, of course, has been after much lobbying and hard work by the team who have secured donations from sources as varied as the Federal Government, the Government of NSW, and the Walgett Shire Council. Work is already going on behind the scenes, with actual construction work expected to commence some months in mid 2020.

While Stage 1 will involve the basic construction of the facilities, Stage 2 will see the implementation of the full potential of the facility which will allow the AMHA to view it as a conference location. On completion this will involve an opal research library, changing exhibitions, collection storage, conference and breakout rooms, and full facilities and amenities to cater for visitors.

The project team are still keen to obtain donations for the project and are also inviting the public to take out museum memberships. There is also a call for people prepared to volunteer their services and skills or who are interested in

offering their professional service (on a pro bono or paid basis). For further details on this exciting project, email: contact@australianopalcentre.com

I'm sure that everyone will look forward to the completion of the facility, hopefully in the not too distant future, as an attractive venue for our annual conference.

JOURNAL

We are pleased to announce that since the last newsletter went out, there has been a flood of articles, which means a full complement of papers for this year's Journal. However, as the goal is to have articles in reserve for future volumes of the journal, any papers you may have, will be welcomed by the editor and will be placed in the pending file.

As a reminder papers of about 8,000 words (excluding endnotes) are the ideal, though shorter applications of merit will be considered. If interested, please contact the Editor/Secretary by presenting your paper in Word, Times Roman 12. For further instructions please view the style sheet on our webpage or email me for a copy.

The Ed.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Following the reminder in the previous newsletter, there are still some renewals to be made for 2019. If you wish to retain your membership, please sign up by accessing a form on our webpage or better still, sign on instantly by registering through Register Now at:

[https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/ Register.aspx?E=33012](https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/Register.aspx?E=33012)

MJD/September 2019

