



**AUSTRALASIAN
MINING
HISTORY
ASSOCIATION**

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EDITORIAL

Whenever we pick up a newspaper these days we see articles on mining activities and those who pull the strings. Not surprising when considered the vital role played by mining in the export market, its place in the politics of the day and involvement of some of the larger than life characters who inhabit the industry. We are also frequently reminded of the tenuous position of mining which these days is so closely allied to what happens in overseas markets. It seems at the moment that if anyone in China sneezes then producers and shareholders catch cold. As they say, we live in interesting times but are these any more sensitive to mining and the economy than in earlier days? The suggestion is that the answer is no, as we can go back in Australian history to see that mining has often driven the economy and over time has experienced many highs and lows, vacillating activity and subsequent impact upon the domestic economy. This is a recurring feature. Gold has been a glamour industry, but today it appears to be the non-ferrous industries, especially iron ore, that presents the shine. Again, not the first time that this has occurred, and indeed copper and tin have had their glamour days in the past, breathing prosperity into local, regional or national economies, and equally bringing gloom and despair when deposits decline, grades

fall, or markets weaken or fail. The bumpy ride over the past few months is spelt out daily and illustrates that mining fortune is indeed precarious, as history has taught us in Australia over the past 200 years or so. Mining has been described as a wasting industry that appeals to gamblers. Fortunes are made and perhaps even more lost, and even large companies are not immune to misfortune or poor decision-making. At the same time it's an exciting industry and perhaps that's why it attracts mining historians prepared to record 'the Good, the Bad, and even the Ugly'. But having said that, and noting the vicissitudes that have punctuated mining history, why do governments, Federal and State, stake so much on forecasting their future budgets on the fortunes of the industry? Recent budgeting plans on the Australian federal scene but also in Western Australia, that were based on expected mining taxes and royalties seem to spell out the unruly nature of mining fortunes. While the federal forecasts were widely wrong in their medium-term forecasting, the situation has been even more forcefully shown in WA where the government treasurer has been forced to downsize his estimates and expenditure less than two months after the State election. Methinks a good dose of mining history should be compulsory for politicians and number crunching forecasters alike.

JOURNAL

Our contributions are looking somewhat slim at the moment, so this is an appeal to those who would like to see their work published, to submit articles asap. If you don't feel confident about submitting for the refereed section, we encourage you to send in your paper to be considered for the un-refereed section.

Note we also have a book review section, so if you come across something worthwhile that needs assessing, then forward the details to the journal editor.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

AMHA 19th Annual Conference 29 September – 4 October 2013,

Registrations for the Beechworth Conference are being received, if somewhat slowly. Lots of members have indicated they will be attending but it would help the organizers if registrations were sent in sooner rather than later! If you require a copy of the registration form, either download through our web pages, or contact the Secretary. Pay by cheque, or online through 'Register Now'.

Would those who have submitted abstracts, or those who intend to, please send in biographical details to Nick Williams at nicola.williams@monash.edu

Nick recommends that people **book accommodation soon**, as the conference falls within the school holidays when demand is high. If there is a problem try the Indigo Shire Tourist office at: www.beechworthonline.com.au For transport see details at end of newsletter.

Note: The organizers report that they now have more than a full complement of papers. Indeed more than the 33 places available for the presentations. It should be an excellent programme.

10th International Mining History Congress, Charters Towers, QLD, 2014

To be run in conjunction with our 20th AMHA Conference between **6-13 July 2014**. A call for papers was announced on 30 April with a closing date of 28 February 2014. Expressions of interest have already been received from overseas mining historians and we are sure that this

will also apply to homegrown members keen to mix it with their international colleagues. This will be a landmark event. Probably never again in our lifetime will AMHA and IMHC convene as one. Organizer, Kett Kennedy, promises excellent value for those registering, there being a full social and 'experiences' programme. In addition there will be a business section in Townsville on 12 July, the forum on 'Future Prospects' featuring world-acknowledged speakers. Check out the latest information at: www.ct2014miningcongress.com

BITS & PIECES

Minerals Council of Australia Fellowships

There are not too many opportunities for mining historians to receive financial and other support for their research but an opportunity exists with fellowships offered by the Minerals Council of Australia. The Fellowships include travel allowances, honorariums and access to research documents and literature in their Canberra based library. One Fellowship of between three and six months will be awarded annually. If interested, see further details at:

<http://www.nla.gov.au/awardsandgrants/minerals-council-of-australia-fellowship>

Fly-in – Fly-out

Members might be interested to read the diverse views of those who recently made submissions to the Federal inquiry on FIFO. The final report is also worth examining. On pp. 8-11 you will see that our ex-President Peter Bell received a mention when a paper of his published in 1998 was used as a major reference in part of the enquiry.

The title of the Parliamentary Paper on this controversial topic, published by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, in February of this year, is aptly titled 'Cancer of the bush or salvation of our cities? Fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforce practices in Regional Australia'. You can find the information at: www.aph.gov.au/fifo

Managing Mining Legacies

In the pages of *Newsletter 3*, March 2013, of the Centre for Mined Land Rehabilitation, there are a couple of items that may interest some of our members.

First is the news that feedback is being received from various interested parties on the December 2012 Version 2 of the Value Proposition for a national abandoned mine hub. This sought views on the support of a national hub; views on funding for such a hub; and seeking concerns and views on risks associated with such a project.

It has been suggested that a face-to-face meeting be held later in the year to develop terms of reference and a forum to discuss sharing information between various jurisdictions. There is a call for interested parties to contact either Director of CMLR, Prof. David Mulligan at d.mulligan@cmlr.uq.edu.au or Corrine Unger at: c.unger1@uq.edu.au

There is also a call for abstracts for a workshop to be held in Adelaide from 6-8 August 2013, called 'Planning for Rehabilitation'. Papers on the following topics are being sought:

- Rehabilitation Planning in Mine Design
- Landform Design and Stability
- Establishing Sustainable Ecosystems
- Regulator and Community Expectations on Rehabilitation Standards.

Abstracts to be forwarded to smikt@ktech.com.au by 12 April 2013 (too late for readers of this newsletter but you might be interested in attending).

Cornish Tin Mines

Anne Both forwarded the address of a web page that should appeal to all Cornophiles in the Association. A brief history of tin mining in Cornwall and some magnificent photos that were published in the *Daily Mail Online* (UK) on 2nd March 2013. Well worth Googling for the photos alone. Click on: www.dailymail.co.uk [Cornwall Tin Mines](#)

North Queensland Mining History Association

A well-attended inaugural meeting of the North Queensland Mining History

Association was held at Herberton on 23rd March. The objects of the Association are to document and record North Queensland's mining heritage present and past; to develop a mining history library and museum and a mineral collection, and to produce monthly bulletins, publish books and run field trips to mining sites about the north. If interested in following the fortunes of the organisation, or in becoming a member see details on their facebook at:

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.533612873357612.1073741830.521836937868539&type=1#!/pages/North-Queensland-Mining-History-Association/521836937868539?fref=ts>

AGC – History Lesson

Thanks to Mike Freeman for alerting us to a video featuring our President Geoffrey Blainey who was interviewed by ABC presenter, Peter Couchman in January 2012. The production of the video was the initiative of the Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) and features a broad history of mining in Australia. The title of the video is: '*How Australia, past and present, has been shaped by mineral discoveries*'. You can view it at:

http://www.agc.org.au/index.php/geoscience-inaustralia?utm_source=AIG+Master+Email+List&utm_campaign=6a0eb191d8AIG_National_Update_April_20130401&utm_medium=email

Local lad expounds on wooden miners' cottages

Peter Bell appeared on a recent ABC documentary to expound on a surviving 1849 wooden cottage at Burra, SA. As he points out, historians have seen the antecedents of the typical miners' cottage on development that took place on the Victorian goldfields but this ignores earlier developments in South Australia. In the late 1840s, the South Australian Mining Association, in a bid to house its miners, imported pre-milled timber to construct wooden cottages. While most people look at the Burra as an area where stone and the famed creek dugouts housed its miners, the fact that wood was a common building material is generally unknown. That the cottage he discusses

still survives is in itself quite amazing. You can view both Peter and the cottage by clicking on the following address:
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/videos/2013/05/06/3752663.htm?site=northandwest>

PUBLICATIONS

Marie S. Jackman, *The Gommock: Exploits of a Cornish Fool*, Marie Jackman, Xlibris Corporation, USA. 345pp. Price \$34.95. Orders taken at:
<http://gommock.enlplage.com>

Author Marie Jackman, now living in the USA, was born in Adelaide in 1929, a fifth-generation child of Australian pioneers. Marie has been so taken with the story of the Burra-Burra mines that she set out years ago to research and write a novel that aimed to bring the mine to life by seeking the help of its inhabitants, the focus being centred on one character 'the Gommock'. Marie offers the following synopsis of the novel that might appeal to some of our South Australian colleagues and Cornish sisters and brethren:

'I had already made a start on *The Gommock* when I met Ian Auhl twenty years ago. Within a few months, his masterpiece, *The Story of the Monster Mine**, would be out for the world to see, so just then he was guarding his proofs and being very careful about showing me pieces of what was ready for the press. Yet he wanted to help me by giving me information about the Burra Burra, about the fabulous wealth that came out of the mine, about the avarice of the mine-owners and the plight of the miners. He wanted me to write my novel and to bring more attention to Burra so as to aid its transformation into a tourist mine.

Burra became a tourist mine without my help, yet I ploughed on with my project. Once I had *The Story of the Monster Mine* on my desk, I realised I must pick and choose among the wealth of information it contained, for a novel needed material from many sources, especially about the Cornish people who would inhabit my pages. I needed details

about their background, their superstitions, their way of speaking.

But the mine was as important to me as any character. And the impact that this spectacular mine had upon the low spirits of the impoverished colony was important, too. South Australia had been founded in a rush of optimism, with what seemed like loads of money to build a fine city. But then, with the change from a spendthrift Governor to a realist, the Treasury was found to be just on empty. Government projects had to be cancelled and hundreds of Government workers found themselves unemployed. The new colony was all but bankrupt.

Yet despite financial difficulties at home, for those few brief years before gold was discovered in New South Wales, South Australia had the reputation of being the state with minerals. It had Australia's first mine, Wheal Gawler, which was opened in 1841 and produced silver-lead. And it had the geologist, Johannes Menge, who, after prospecting in the Adelaide Hills, published a series of newspaper articles entitled *The Mineral Kingdom of South Australia*. "I regard it as my duty to direct the attention of Australians to the mineral kingdom of this province."* "Professor" Menge himself ceremonially opened Australia's first copper mine at Kapunda in 1844. In the veritable mining mania that then took hold of the colony, "surface indications of copper were soon being found in a hundred places" (p.16). "As if a spark had fallen among gunpowder," G.B. Wilkinson wrote in his handbook, "everyone was on the *qui vive* ... everyone set to work hunting about ... among rocks and stones, over hill and dale ... and the whole population seemed in danger of running mad about minerals" (p.31). Cornish miners, who had come to the colony to dig wells, were highly gratified to find themselves in demand as miners. My "gommock" (in the Cornish dialect, it means *fool*) found himself in this happy situation.

The first signs of the fabulous 'Monster Mine' were seen by shepherds,

who were simply wandering around the countryside, following their sheep. In 1845, two shepherds brought to Adelaide samples from two separate copper extrusions about 100 miles to the north. They caused quite a stir. The Governor, with remarkably quick foresight, announced that the land, before it was mined, must be bought and paid for in specie. He accommodated the buyers by distorting the shape of the survey, so that the two sites might be included at opposite corners.

The story of the colonisation of South Australia is quite fascinating since it resulted in two factions among its leading citizenry: the original landowners, and the so-called shopkeepers, some of whom by this time had risen to a position of financial comfort. These two factions refused to cooperate, and so a way had to be found of deciding which party was to mine which site.

It was done by drawing lots. My gommock also held a wager with his wife, and the result was that our family went with the “Snobs” to the huge extrusion of red oxide. The “Snobs” were the ‘shopkeepers’, who had pooled their money with that of the South Australian Mining Association, a company formed a few months earlier ‘to carry on mining operations when the same are advisable’ (p.15). In this way they scraped together half the cost of the land surveyed. And so as the infamous S.A.M.A. they made fortunes out of their red prize, while the green ore that topped the peaks the “Nobs” drew petered out in short time.

As soon as the S.A.M.A had won its prize, its new Secretary, Henry Ayers recruited a Cornish miner as Captain, gave him a crew of miners and a cart of explosives, and told him to get up there and blast the red monster. They did their job in record time, leaving the almost pure ore in massive pieces, which were most convenient and economical to themselves. To the grumblings of draymen who had to manhandle them, and to the complaints of ships’ captains, my mining Captain rationalized: “Tez the weight we em paid

for, no matter if boulder or gravel”. In four weeks, he and his men, with their primitive tools, raised 600 tons of ore.

Yet even while they performed this amazing feat, they were exploring for new ore-bodies: digging costeen trenches, sinking trial shafts. The gommock chose a small outcrop of rock as the starting point of a “square”, and the distance he could throw his pick as its first side. Beneath the square’s surface soil, the rusty crumbs of decomposed rock that the men called *gossan* told him he was close. And so within a calendar month of their arrival at the site, they had discovered four new lodes. They knew the second to be 31 feet long and up to 15 feet wide. The third, 17 feet long and 7 feet wide. The dimensions of two more lodes found, they hadn’t had time to ascertain. The original lode when it was finally cleared from the ground, turned out to have been 35 feet long, 27 feet wide, and 5 ft. 7 inches at its deepest.

Adelaide rejoiced, for from a poverty-stricken half-made town, it became a thriving community. And this happened quite quickly. For instead of the S.A.M.A. having to wait for the ore to be shipped to Britain and sold, and for payment to be returned to them, they were able to draw on the Bank of Australasia against the ore as it lay on the wharf at Port Adelaide. So, with the help of S.A.M.A.’s promissory notes, used as currency by the whole colony, commerce picked up and government works offered employment once again. Roads were laid and glorious buildings that stand in Adelaide to this day, were erected.

*Ian Auhl, *The Story of the ‘Monster Mine’: The Burra Burra Mine and its Townships 1845 – 1877* (Burra Burra District Council, 1986), All page references in the text of this paper are to this source.

TRAGIC ENDING

Members who attended the 2010 Greymouth conference will be saddened to hear that NZ participant, **Les Wright**, recently died under tragic circumstances. An experienced bushman, it appears that Les became lost in the Pueora Forest near Tuapo on the North Island, on 13th May,

while trying to track down the rare kokako bird. Partner Deborah Carden suspects that he must have seen the bird and got lost after following it into the dense undergrowth. Les had erected a small shelter and lined it with fern fronds to stay warm but at some time he must have got up at night and slipped down a bank, knocking himself unconscious. When Les failed to return to the holiday home he and Carden were staying at, the police were alerted but it was only four days later when a meter reader came across a car parked on a forestry track that the search, which had ranged over an area of 300km radius, zoomed in on the location. It's suspected that Les would have heard the police helicopters going overhead but it appears he died shortly before the rescue party came upon his body. The family were told that he probably died from a combination of hypothermia and head injuries. Les, a West Coast historian and prolific researcher was 62 years of age.

Our condolences go out to Deborah and to the family on such a tragic loss.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to our President, **Dr Ruth Kerr** who was recently presented with the John Douglas Kerr Medal of Distinction by the Governor of Queensland, on behalf of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. The medal acknowledges Ruth's contribution to the Society and for her contribution in publishing and officiating in the field of history.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If you still haven't renewed your 2013 membership then an early response would be appreciated. This can be done by downloading and returning a membership form from our webpage, by contacting the Secretary for a copy, or by clicking on the 'Register Now' membership address at:

<https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/Register.aspx?ID=8455>

If you're not certain whether you've signed up for the year, please email or ring the Secretary.

BEECHWORTH – How to get there:

Beechworth is situated in North Eastern Victoria some 290km from Melbourne. There are a number of transport options briefly outlined below.

Flying: There are numerous flights to Melbourne and some flights to Albury. From Melbourne Airport (Tullamarine) the Sky Bus goes to Southern Cross Station every 10 minutes 6am to 11pm and every 15 to 30 minutes at other times. The Sky Bus also has drop off and pick up from a number of City hotels. Fares are \$17 one-way, \$28 return. Further information www.skybus.com.au.

There is a bus service from Avalon Airport to Southern Cross Station \$20 single

Hire Cars: Available at airports and other centres. There are a large number of car hire companies with a large range of vehicles available. Rates vary depending on discounts that may be available, pick up and drop off points, length of hire, driver age and so on. It may well be that those flying into Melbourne would be better off hiring a car at the airport and driving to Beechworth given the cost of \$17 per person for the Skybus to Southern Cross Railway Station and \$26.60 (\$13.30 conc.) per person for the rail fare to Wangaratta plus the bus or taxi fare to Beechworth.

Bus: Albury to Beechworth Monday to Friday only. No weekend service.

Coach - Wheelchair Reservation available.

ALBURY (dep - QEII Square, Dean Street) 08:55, 13:25, 15:45. BEECHWORTH (arr) 09:05, 13:35, 15:55. Further information: Wangaratta Coachlines (03) 5722 1843

www.wangarattacoachlines.com.au

Rail: There is a combined Rail Coach service from Melbourne via Wangaratta with connections to Beechworth. The economy rail fare Melbourne to Wangaratta is \$26.60 (\$13.30 conc.). The combined train/bus fare Melbourne to Beechworth is \$31.00 (\$15.50 conc.). Note trains run daily but the bus connection is not currently available at weekends.

The Melbourne Sydney XPT "Countrylink" service stops at Albury and Wangaratta. For further information contact the New South Wales Railways.