

# GEMBOREE 2017

## INFORMATION E-NEWSLETTER

*June 2016 – Edition 3*

Tony Luchetti Showground, Lithgow – Easter – 14th – 17th April, 2017

### FROM THE E-NEWSLETTER EDITOR

With less than a year remaining before the GEMBOREE 2017, the 53rd National Gem & Mineral Show, is to be held in Lithgow, New South Wales, I'd like to welcome those newcomers to the 3rd edition of the GEMBOREE 2017 e-newsletter.

People have already made bookings for their accommodation for the GEMBOREE 2017 which is being conducted over the Easter long weekend from Friday 14th to Monday 17th April, 2017, at the Tony Luchetti Showground in Lithgow. As has taken place in the past the mammoth event is staged by the Gem & Lapidary Council of N.S.W. Inc. under the auspices of the Australian Federation of Lapidary & Allied Crafts Association Inc.

Already numerous gem and lapidary clubs from around New South Wales are assisting in organising and co-ordinating the various aspects of this national annual event.



It is important that those attending give some consideration to their accommodation needs. Whilst many will be staying on-site at the showgrounds, (be

sure to book ASAP) others will stay off-site at motels, hotels, bed and breakfasts, friends and caravan parks, it's important that you book early as accommodation will invariably be at a premium. Should you need accommodation or other local Lithgow information you can contact the great staff at the Lithgow Visitor Information Centre, 1137 Great Western Hwy, Lithgow. N.S.W. 2790 or telephone 1300760276 or email [tourism@lithgow.com](mailto:tourism@lithgow.com) or [www.tourism.lithgow.com](http://www.tourism.lithgow.com)

A popular eating place, the Lithgow & District Workmen's Club, has been providing excellence in entertainment and leisure for over a century. Fondly known locally as the "Workies", it is quite historic as it is the oldest registered club in New South Wales. It was founded in 1887, growing to over 11,000 members today. The club also caters for the many visitors who come from across the state and around the country to enjoy their excellent facilities. They are the leaders in quality entertainment, dining and function facilities in Lithgow.

The club offers many facilities - ESK Restaurant, Bistro, Cino's Cafe, Bars, Bottle Shop, Wizards Kids Area, Sports & TAB Lounge and Bowling greens. There are no stairs within the main floor of the Club and if you do need to go to the Lower Ground Floor there are elevators for your convenience. The club and motel is centrally located in Lithgow within walking distance to major shopping facilities.

They provide secure monitored car-parking and use closed circuit security cameras to ensure security and safety. It's handy to remember that they also provide EFTPOS and ATM facilities.

The club has an assortment of motel accommodation packages available with on-site car parking. The venue has lifts and elevators, vending machines, is wheelchair accessible and has disabled facilities.

Each of the 36 motel rooms has flat screen TVs, Foxtel - 12 Channels as well as wireless/WI-FI free of charge. Rooms are non-smoking with air-conditioning, tea and coffee facilities, refrigerator, separate bathroom and









## HILLGROVE – ANTIMONY

I, Alan McRae, first really discovered the Hillgrove and Metz area during a number of expeditions and camping weekends to the area, especially those whilst doing my silver Duke of Edinburgh's Award at The Armidale School from 1964 to 1969. I also went out on excursions with the Armidale Rock and Mineral Club led by Professor Ellis from the University of New England. As 'rock collecting' was part of this programme I was able to collect some fine stibnite specimens, many of which are still in my collection. One could still tell at that time by all the abandoned machinery that the mining once had great impetus.

Professor Ellis pointed out to me that gold and antimony was found in conjunction with each mineral requiring a separate process to extract - both being somewhat difficult and expensive.

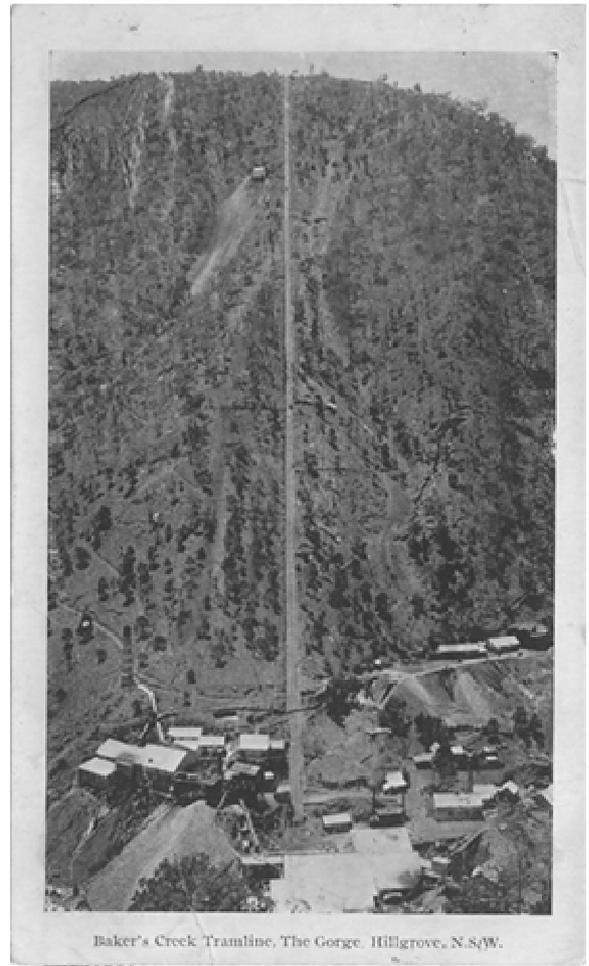
All specimens collected as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme had to be researched so that I learnt that antimony had been known for thousands of years and that the Egyptians had used substances containing antimony for cosmetics and medicines. Additionally I found that the Bible, as well as ancient writings from China, Mexico and India refers to medicinal uses of antimony preparations.

Judge Sir Adrian Curlewis had to inspect and adjudicate on my display on which he noted – "This display shows superb preparation, display ability and thought and is a credit to the spirit and enthusiasm of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Well done, Alan." Jim Graham was The Armidale School teacher responsible for introducing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and was very encouraging of students who took on the project.

I had also been out to the area with my father, Ken McRae, for tours and to look around as we sold explosives, and delivered on occasions, to Hillgrove from our store, McRae's Pty Ltd in Uralla. There was an elderly gentleman, whose name I can't remember, who would show us around and explain 'times gone past'. I do recall him saying that as the various mines got deeper the expense of working them became greater to the point that the owners had no profit and were forced to close them. He felt also that the real decline came when the Eleanora Mine closed down in 1903, two years after Federation and the same year his grandfather had died.

Definitely the most prolific ore in the Hillgrove area is silvery-grey looking stibnite (Antimony trisulphide) which was once needed mainly for use in car batteries to harden and strengthen the lead plates. It is also used in other industries and products such as electric cables, printer's metals, flame-proofing agents, anti-friction alloys for bearings, in refrigerators, paints, aerosol sprays, glass, air-conditioners, ceramics, plastics and medicines to name a few. The stibnite ore bodies are

mostly found within a sedimentary deposit of slates, schists and quartzites. The profit and operation of the many mines at Hillgrove were closely related to the price of antimony, which could fluctuate dramatically from month to month. For example, early in 1907 the price of antimony peaked at £25 a ton, but by May the same year had dramatically plummeted to a mere £5 a ton. At this time the concentrates were sent to Europe, another problem was with the time delay. Often when mine companies were forced to close tributors were allowed to work the property to try to eke out a living.



**Above – postcard of the tramline down to the pithead at Baker's Creek Mine at Hillgrove near Armidale.**

During its heyday Hillgrove was a thriving township and was one of the richest goldfields in the colony of New South Wales.

Like all mining operations the work could be dangerous. For example at the Baker's Creek mine in which the men eventually worked some 1,700 feet underground with declining returns saw conditions even worsen for the miners. In the final depths as tunnels went deeper the pressure on the rock strata saw ferocious rock bursts that saw over the time the death of some eight miners. Despite improvements in mining technology the Baker's Creek Mine struggled as the other mines closed. Despite there still being gold in the rock the cost of extracting the ore as well as maintaining the mine was too costly in the last year of

the Great War was a mere 744 ounces of gold. Within three years the operators had closed the mine after which it was dismantled.



Antimony, which by itself has little value, but which, as an alloy with other metals is useful for hardening, then becomes quite valuable. It has the chemical symbol Sb, from stibium, the old name for the element. Its atomic number is 51 and its atomic weight is 121.75. Its density is 6.691 grams per cubic centimetre at 20° C. It conducts electricity better in its liquid form than as a solid.

Scheelite, one of the chief ores of tungsten, has been another important mineral with Hillgrove being a leading producer in New South Wales with an output of over 1,956.5 tons. The Hillgrove scheelite is mainly white in colour, with small variations in tints. The metal became important in 1898, when it was realised



that high speed turning of steels was possible with this very hard material. Its main uses are in electrical contacts, chemical compounds, tungsten carbide and alloy steels. The metamorphosed sediments have been intruded by diorite and granite, the scheelite lodes being found in the granite. In some lodes found at Hillgrove the gold and scheelite are combined.

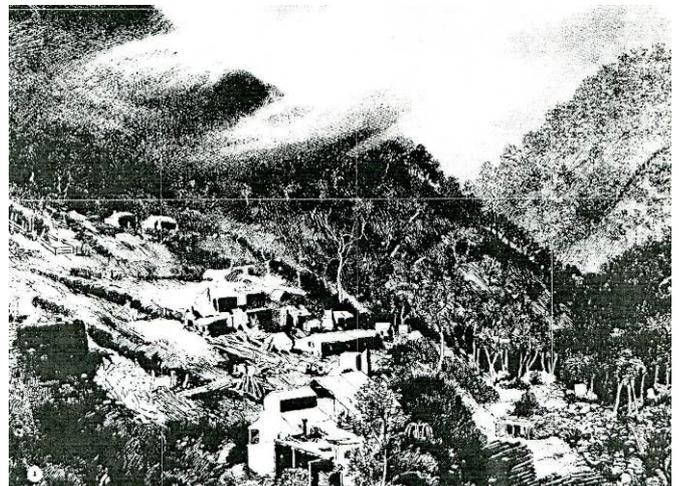
Gold has always been an attraction for miners and Hillgrove

soon attracted prospectors in the late 1850s. Later, at the various Hillgrove mines gold was found combined either with the antimony or scheelite, or in quartz reefs such as Baker's Creek mine. This combination with antimony proved the bane of early metallurgists with satisfactory gold returns not forthcoming until the advent of the flotation process. The continual echoing of the stampers must have resounded throughout the gorge at Hillgrove. In 1893 an escort accompanied the gold concentrates which were at that time sent to the Wallaroo smelters in South Australia.

The miners made themselves into a community where they conducted not only their work as miners, businesses, etc. but held regular sports events for which prizes were given. See the hip flask for the 1902 Hillgrove Miner's Sports, below, and previous column.



A new company known as Eleanora Mines Ltd was formed in 1912 with a working capital of £60,000. The engineer-in-charge in 1913 was ironically a Mr. A.F. Miner who had the South shaft deepened to 247 feet along with the re-erection at the shaft of the first motion winding engine from the Cooney tunnel. Three items from the New Hillgrove Proprietary were also installed, namely two boilers and the single stage air compressor however it was soon found that gold was to be as elusive for the new owners despite the ten head of stamps crushing almost continuously.



The Australian Mining and Engineering Review in 1912 describes a Mr. W.H.C. Lovely, as "an Australian metallurgist with South African experience"

who had erected a tailings cyanidation plant at Hillgrove, to again retreat the large dump of battery sand to extract any residue gold and was making a profit. There were 18 vats on the site with a capacity of 30 tons each with a treatment time of around a week at a production cost of 4s 1d per ton. The large vats were arranged in pairs with a tramway running the full length along the top of them. The skips were pushed by hand to the desired point before tipping sideways.

By August 1914, the Eleanora Mine was forced to close, though later after a brief re-opening, operations again ceased in January 1915, and throwing 100 men out of work. After this numerous enlisted in the Army after the outbreak of World War One of which a number of whom never came back. Again a number of tributors were allowed to work the property.

The debenture holders sold their interests in the Eleanora, Garibaldi and Golden Gate mines to Messrs Cameron and Sutherland in 1916. This Melbourne firm overhauled the plant and carried on experimentally until August 1917, when the mine was finally closed. All equipment was auctioned off on 21st to 23rd November, 1917. The mine's owners had had to contend with a railway strike which prevented shipment of the gold concentrates, the unrealistic costs of mining, problems processing the ore's complex structure and as always the low price of the metal. Later the mine came to life again when mined by New England Antimony Mines.



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**to remember your trip  
to Lithgow**

**at Easter 2017 only \$6  
each.**

### DID YOU KNOW!

# That a mine adit is an entrance to an underground mine which is horizontal or nearly horizontal, by which the mine can be entered, drained of water, ventilated, and minerals extracted at the lowest convenient level. Adits are also used to explore for mineral veins.

# At the November 30th, 1897, meeting of the Bathurst Philatelic Society, Mrs J.L. Brown of Bowenfells was elected as a member. Her great granddaughter told me "the old lady would go up on the train the day of the meetings then go to stay at her sisters in Bathurst overnight, then go back on the train next day. She made nice chocolate cakes (I would say this would have pleased the male members) and collected Russian stamps amongst other countries."

# The earliest known use of coal in the Americas was by the Aztecs who collected soft coal lying around or in riverbank walls to use in their fires. They also used a type of coal called lignite to carve ornaments to adorn their bodies.

# That sometimes the bones of the Chinese dead who died here during the gold rushes were hollowed out and filled with gold, either because they believed the gold would be useful in the afterlife or because the bodies were exhumed and returned to China.

# The mines and graves of the old Chinese gold prospectors in the 1850s and 1860s were rounded so that evil spirits could not hide in the corners.

# The Lithgow Workmen's Club was established in 1887 with an initial membership of just nineteen local citizens. The formation of the club was first discussed by a small group, mostly railway men, in a room at the Court House Hotel, but when the proprietor, Mr. J.M. Hughes learned what the group proposed doing he ordered the men to leave the premises.

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