

Georges Gold

(Third Edition – released April 2019).

**An Ebook
About
Gold Mining in
the Orara**

**Gold Fields of Eastern Dorrigo and
the Gold Mining Pioneers of the era.**

**It is also about Georges Gold Mine
which opened as a tourist attraction
in the Coffs Harbour Area
during the 1980's.**



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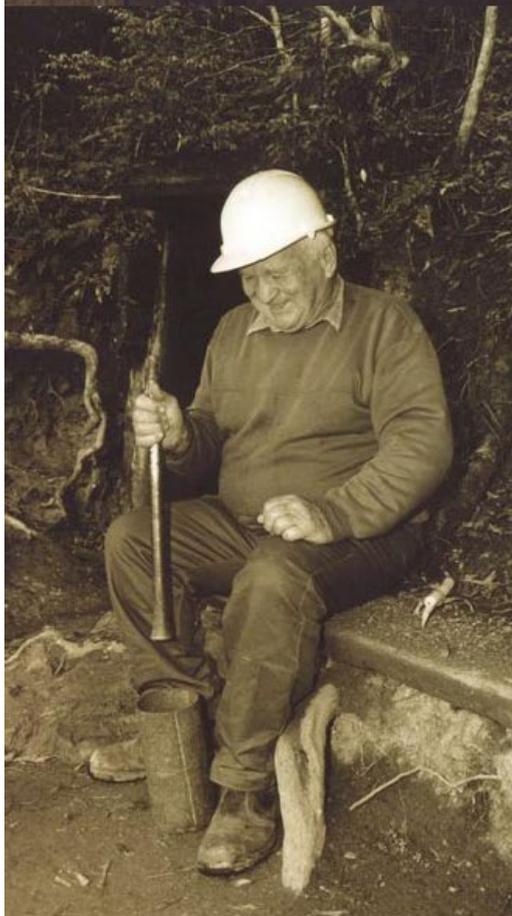
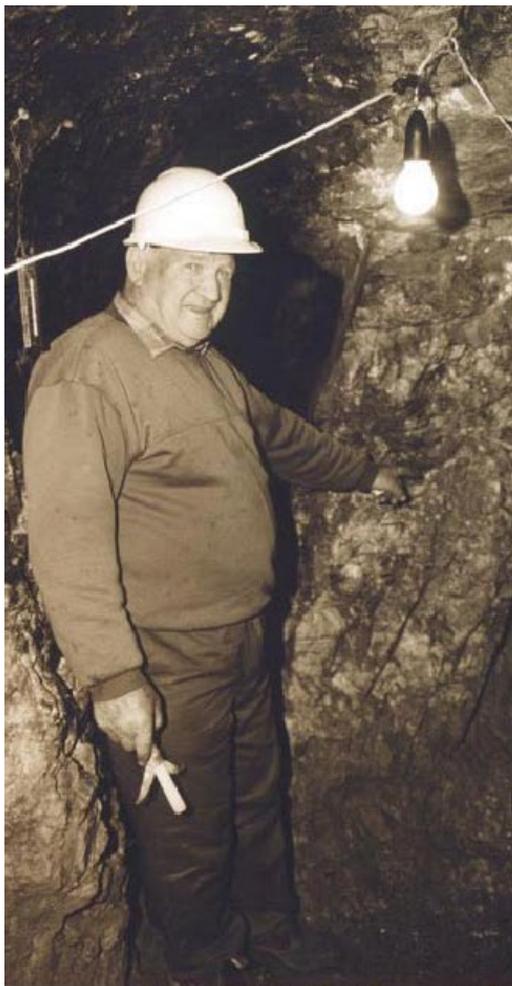
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Foreward by the Author George Robb – owner of Georges Gold Mine



Acknowledgements

In completing this book and having it published, my heartfelt thanks go to my editor and friend Robert Mill.

It was Robert who has guided and motivated me into completing my writing and gathering the stories throughout the past four years.

I first met Robert, then a local newspaper correspondent, when he was reporting on a school excursion visiting the mine.

We started talking and soon I realised he was just the person I needed to help me publish my story.

Since then Robert has visited the mine on many occasions and has also taken a number of photographs of the mine and the area, some of which are included in this book.

Also Robert has been responsible for the retouching (digitising) of many of the old photographs produced in this book.

A special thank you must also go to the staff of the Coffs Harbour Advocate newspaper.

In particular it's editor Howard Spencer and their journalists Belinda Scott, Michael Secomb and Mike Hely, for their publicity of the mine and its 20th anniversary.

Also Prime Television must also be gratefully thanked for producing an excellent television advertisement.

The advertisement was aired extensively during the month of the 20th anniversary, in "Prime Time", and at a considerably reduced cost.

Dedication

This book has been produced to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the George's Gold Mine being open to the public, as a tourist attraction in the Coffs Harbour area, on December 16, 1978.

(It closed in 2007 and George passed away in 2009).

It is dedicated to my family, the Robb family.

Especially to my dear wife Nola and to my children Neville, Deborah, Janelle, Sharyn and Wendy.

Also to all my grandchildren and their extended families.

This book is also a special memorial to my beloved departed sons Christopher and Paul.

It is also dedicated to my many friends who will recall some of the stories.

In particular to my old friends Wally and Jerry Hammond, who have given me very valuable information on mining techniques in the modern world and who assisted greatly by donating to me old mining records.



Introduction By the editor/publisher - Robert Mill

The Mine Was opened to the public on December 16 1978. It celebrated its 20th anniversary as a tourist attraction on December 16 1998. It closed after George's death in 2009. (See page 10 for details).

This book is George Robb's own story as told to me. This Ebook (second edition) is an update of the paper first edition published in 1999 and was released on December 1, 2017.



This book is a story about gold and gold mining. It's also about people, the miners and their families, their lives and their lifestyle.

It is also about a once thriving timber town called Moleton, which is located about 40 kilometres west of Coffs Harbour.

It is adjacent to where the gold mining tourist attraction George's Gold Mine is located.

Moleton today like many small industry towns of its era is no longer.

The rail line (the Dorrigo - Glenreagh) line's tracks that ran through the centre of the town are still there as is the railway station's sign and the railway's water tank but that is all.

The contents of this book are based on recollections by the author George Robb, owner of George's Gold Mine and a central character in many of the stories.

Some of the information has come from notes and enquiries that George has made over the years as well as contributions made by many of his friends and acquaintances, in order to "preserve" some of the events that occurred in the area in an era now well past by.

Over the past few years I have been a regular visitor to the mine, initially as a photojournalist for a local newspaper, then as a friend, helping George complete and publish his book.

George and I became well acquainted during my many visits to the mine, as we both recognised the need to preserve history, for others to share and learn from it.

I also become increasingly fascinated in the mine and the history of gold mining in the area.

When George first approached me to edit his book for him he made a comment, which I made note of at the time and which in a way described his love of the people and the area that he grew up and lived in.

'I really want to tell this story now; about the place I love and have spent all my life.

I want to tell it now, before I get too old and forget so many of the wonderful things I have experienced in a wonderful life'.

That is George Robb, a man who has spent all his years in the Moleton area and who has devoted many of those years to searching for gold.

The Robb family has owned the property where George's Gold Mine is located for the past 50 years, the last 20 of these being open to the public, as the tourist attraction George's Gold Mine. The mine is now owned (but not operated) by his daughter Debbie and her husband.

On December 16 1998 George celebrated 20 years providing a major tourist attraction for the Coffs Harbour area.

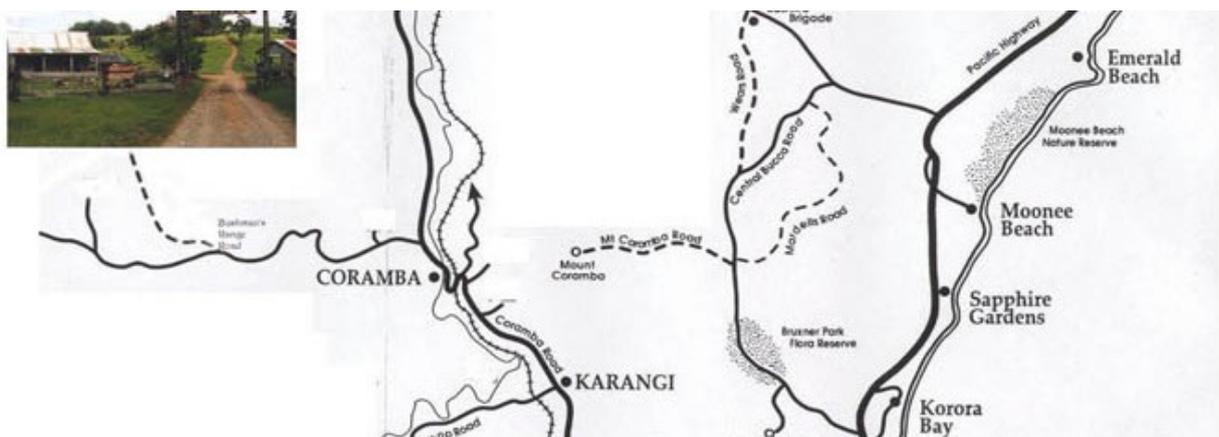
The book is an accumulation of a series of many events that occurred in and around Moleton, near Eastern Dorrigo and Glenreagh, west of Coffs Harbour, on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales.

This is not intended to be a history book, though some of the facts mentioned here are certainly of an historical nature.

It is more of an account of events by someone who took the time to observe the passing of time and make some notes so that one day there would be a story to tell.

Occasionally you will find some quoted (indented) comments the author George Robb has made in the book, which are his expressed personal opinions and as author he has the right to express them.

They are not necessarily the opinion of the editor. The indented paragraphs include personal recollections of the author or his friends.



Important information used in this book's publication.

Weights, measures, money:

Because a lot of the events in this book happened in the "olden days" of the imperial weights, measures and currency, it was decided to leave them be.

There is a simple conversion chart provided below, to the current Australian weights, measures and monetary system.

Weights:

One ounce = about 28 grams

One pound = about .454 kilos

One ton = about 1016 kgs or 1.016 m/tonnes

Measures:

One acre = about .405 ha

One mile = about 1.60 kms

One foot = about 30 cms

One yard = about 91 centimetres

One Gallon = about 4.54 litres

Money:

One pound = about \$2.00

One shilling = about 10 cents

The many George and George's.

It should be forewarned there many different Georges in this book.

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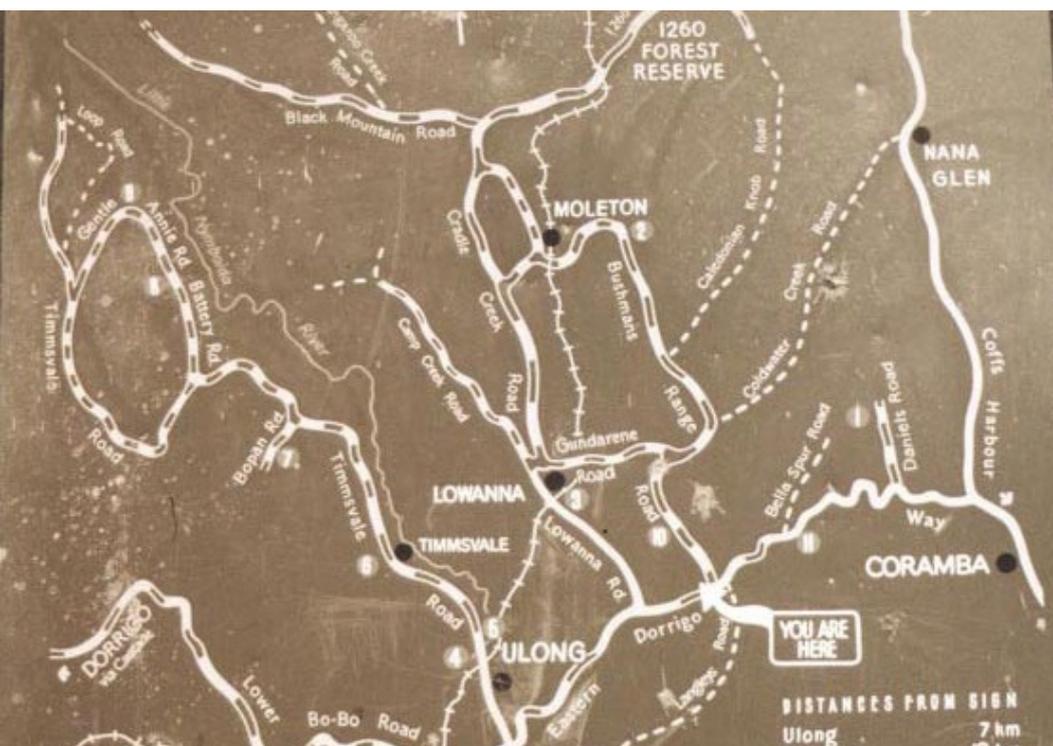
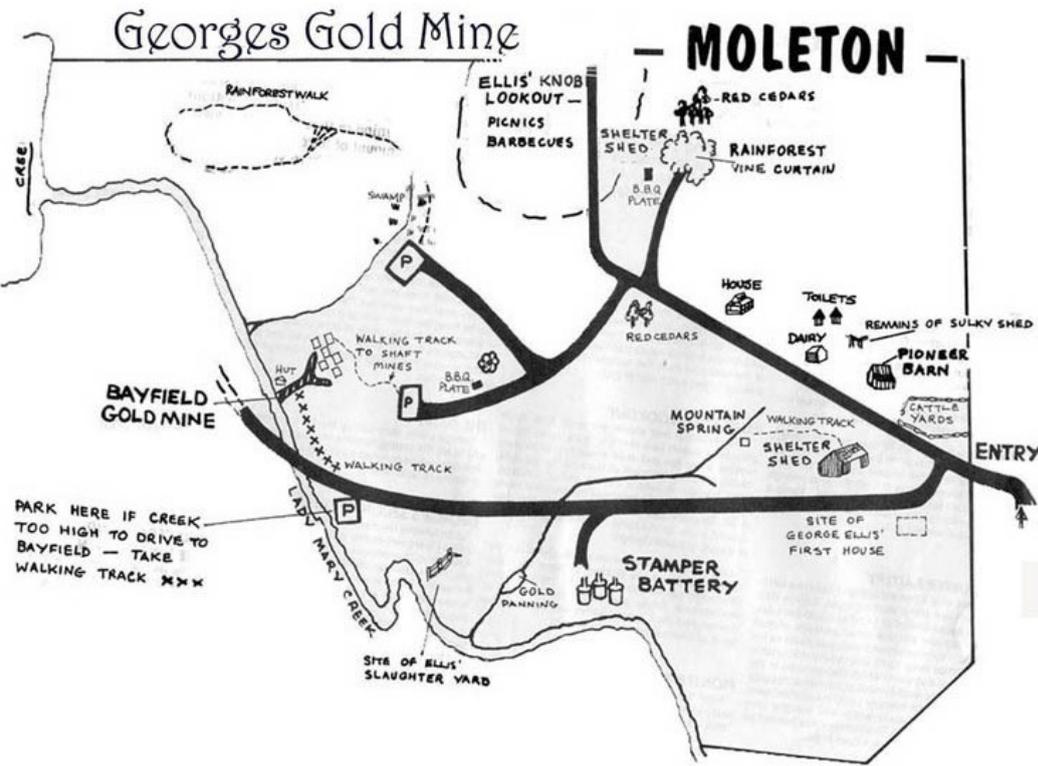
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A CD-ROM was also produced of this book , with the ISBN: 0 9577447 1 4.



Book Post-Update - In 2009 – The Reported Passing of George Robb.

Coffs Harbour Advocate Newspaper 29th Jun 2009 12:00 am, By Bellinda Scott.

Georges Gold Mine Location: SHI number Coffs Harbour City Council Georges Gold Mine 929 Bushman's Range Road Lowanna 2450

George Robb, who died at Coffs Harbour Hospital on June 13 at the age of 79, was described by his family as 'worth his weight in gold.'

It is an apt epitaph for the man who opened George's Gold Mine to the public more than 30 years ago.

For many years the cheerful, sociable host of the landmark tourist attraction at Moleton, George Robb's real-life yarns kept thousands of visitors spellbound as he conducted mine tours; crushed ore in the dolly pot, demonstrated the 1908 stamper battery and passed around ingots and nuggets of locally-mined gold.

George's Gold Mine was the only vestige of the historic Orara Gold Field which was open to visitors.

Although the attraction was named for an earlier miner, George Ellis, it became so much a part of George Robb that the two were inseparable and his bright blue eyes, white hair and friendly smile was an important part of the attraction.

Helped by his wife Nola and family, he carefully preserved relics of early farming and mining on his 96ha farm and built new structures which blended seamlessly into the old, using traditional building techniques and materials to enhance an authentic historical attraction.

The Robbs' approach was commended by historians and educators and drew international plaudits for the attraction, but never made them rich.

The Moleton farmer and prospector loved the land and the mines he happily showed to visitors and was able to convey the backbreaking labour as well as the allure of early goldmining, drawing on his own memories as well as other histories.

George Robb grew up at Moleton, the youngest of four children of a vibrant Irish woman, Margaret ('Maggie') Thornton and logger and bullocky Arthur Oliver ('Jim') Robb.

At Moleton Public School he spent a large part of his afternoons practising fighting on the banks of Mole Creek with his mates like the Jerrett boys, and at school Nola Robb (nee Knight) remembers a 'gorgeous blue-eyed boy who continually tormented and teased the girls'.

At the age of seven he discovered a passion for gold and prospecting which became a lifelong interest, when his father introduced him to the miner George Ellis.

George Robb left school at 15 to help his father and brothers log the bush of the Eastern Dorrigo and drive bullocks, playing footy on weekends for the Orara Valley team and socialising at dances.

He married Nola Knight on March 20, 1954 at St Marys Catholic Church in Grafton.

The Robbs lived and worked at Cascade, Timmsvale, Moleton; Grafton, where George worked in the Brewery; and Glenreagh.

The family returned to Moleton in 1966 on the death of George's father.

George continued to work in the logging industry and manage his farm and cattle until 1977, when he injured his back working in the bush.

In 1978, just before the Forest Fair, the late Lionel Timms and former Federal MP Garry Nehl visited George and persuaded him to open the farm for the Fair.

Although not convinced that people would want to look at 'a hole in the ground' he opened the farm to show them the mine and stamper battery and the weekend was a hit.

George's Gold Mine opened in December 1978 and remained open for 30 years, during which an estimated 150,000 people visited the attraction.

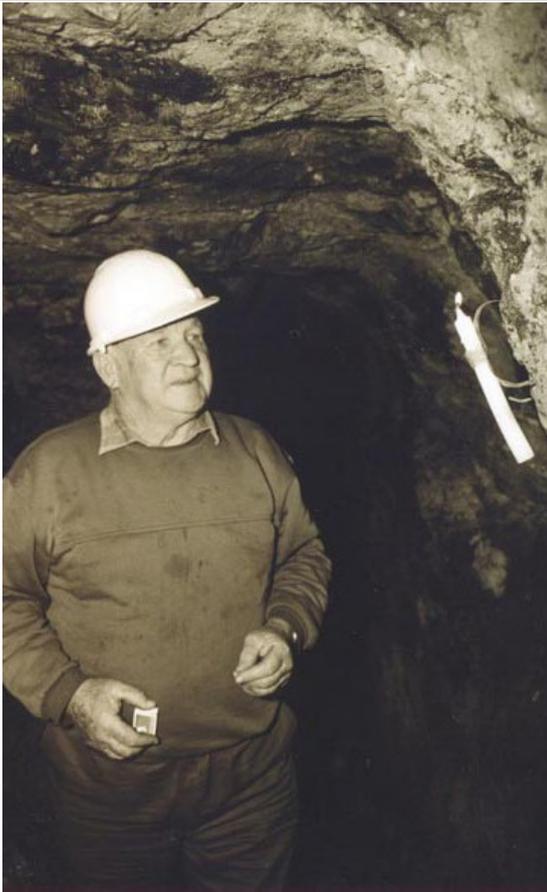
In 1999 George Robb's book Georges Gold was published and stories themed on gold mining and those stories contributed by his mates.

His daughter Janelle described her father as kind, sensitive, sentimental, loving and funny, saying he valued honesty and was courageous, generous and brave and while being eccentric at times, was intelligent, passionate, imaginative and creative.

A family man, he loved his extended family and the Eastern Dorrigo area.



The Robb Family



George Robb

George Robb (the book's author) was born in 1930 and was educated at the Moleton Public School, which was then an integral part of the township of Moleton.

He started school when he was six and continued on until the ninth grade, (which was the equivalent to the current year nine at High School). He left school when he was 15.

In those days children living outside the town of Coffs Harbour had no school transport and students could only attend high school if they boarded in Coffs Harbour (which was at considerable expense).

Most families could not afford to do this teacher to hand out for the students to study.

That teacher then had to also supervise the high school children as well as look after their own K - 6 class.

George recalled that even under this workload the teacher was always there to help us with any problems we had.

On his 15th birthday George left school to work with his father in the timber industry in Moleton. His first job was to help load the logs onto a transport for Sydney.

Some days this would involve loading up to three full rail truckloads by a hand operated crane.

Other Members the Robb Family and Friends

George's grandfather originally came from Scotland. His name was George also and he first settled near Bowral on the south coast of New South Wales.

He married Mary Harrigan in the nearby town of Robertson and they had a large family of which eight survived including the author's father, Arthur Robb. George's grand parents also lost three children from diphtheria, including one nine year old daughter.

In 1880, or thereabouts the family decided to move from the south to the north and they settled at a place called Possum Creek, near Bangalow on the far north coast of NSW. There they selected a property, which was then just thick forest.

After years of hard toil they turned this into a dairy farm, which was worked as such for many years until they decided to move and bought a farm at Tyagarah, which was west of Byron Bay and a few miles from Possum Creek.

The family split up as they grew older and went to live in various places. George's father Arthur went to Mullumbimby, where he cut logs and transported them with his bullock team for a local sawmill.

In 1915 he joined the army to do battle in the 1914/18 (First World) War, for which he was awarded the Military Medal.

While fighting in France, Arthur contracted pleurisy and was sent to recover in a convalescent home in Dublin, Ireland (which was a neutral country in that war).

It was in Dublin that Arthur met his wife Maggie (Margaret) Thornton and they were married in Manchester, England in 1917. A son Jim (James Patrick) was born in 1919 and after his birth they travelled to Australia on the troopship "Thropshire".

When Arthur arrived back in Australia with his new wife and child, they settled back at Mullumbimby where he resumed his work as a bullock driver.

His father set him up with a team of his own bullocks. While in Mullumbimby a daughter Margaret (Rita) was born. Not long after that the area's timber was cut out, (it was getting too far to haul by the bullock teams), so Arthur decided they would have to move to where the timber was more accessible.

In search of a new, more plentiful supply Arthur set off on horse accompanied by his brother Cecil, and a friend Harry O'Meara.

They rode for five days to Dalmorton, on the Glen Innes Road, west of Grafton.

They carried with them a quantity of provisions including bread, tea; heaps of home cooked scones and cakes, as well as billycans.

At night they set up a bush camp and slept "under the stars".

Soon after having arrived at Dalmorton, Arthur was offered work sawmill with his bullock team, which had just opened at a place called Sheep Station, about five miles north west of Dalmorton.

The mill owners were Jim Saye and his family. The men then had to return to Mullumbimby to gather their belongings.

Their furniture and all their possessions were loaded on to a bullock wagon and with their horses hitched onto the back of the wagon, they headed off to their new place of employment to live.

The three teams which consisted of Arthur Robb, Harry O'Meara, and Owen Baker travelled from Mullumbimby to Dalmorton.

In those days the Clarence River Bridge had not been built.

So they all, including the bullock teams, had to cross the river by punt.

The trains in those days were ferried across by the "Swallow", which was a huge highly constructed ferry.

As bullock teams could only travel between 10 - 14 miles a day, the journey took them about 18 days.

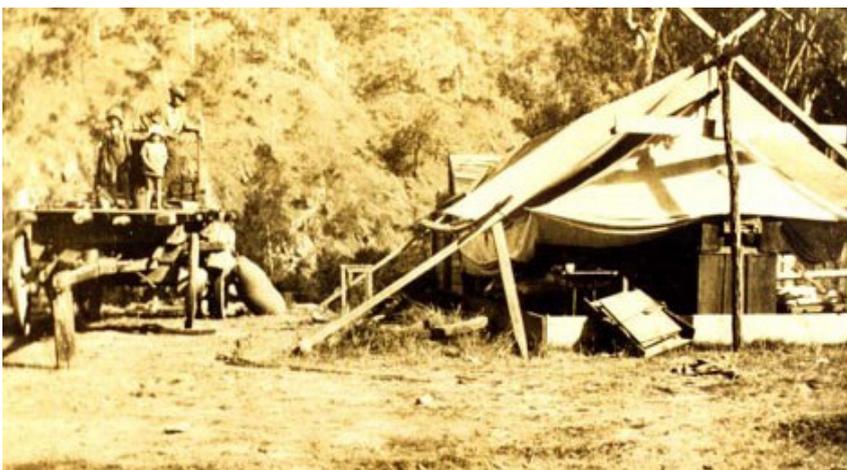
The bullocks had to be yoked up every morning and unyoked every evening and always had to have access to water.

During the trip they usually stayed at travelling stock reserves (T.S.R.'s), which were established for travelling stock and their owners.

Arthur's wife Maggie travelled to Grafton by train with the children Jim and Rita. From Grafton they caught a service car (a small bus) to Sheep Station.

The service car operated on a regular daily trip from Grafton to Glen Innes. They arrived at their destination about three weeks after the men.

The Robb family settled at Sheep Station, which was set in beautiful surroundings on the banks of a place called Little River.



The surrounds were gracious hills sloping down steeply to the riverbank.

Maggie Robb mother often said it was the nicest place she had ever lived.

She used to tell us children how she used to watch the wild animals come down from the mountains to drink at the water's edge.

These animals included kangaroos, wallabies, wallaroos, dingoes and snakes. The river was also abundant with the delicious eastern cod and whenever they wanted fish for supper, it did not take long to catch one!

Nine months after they moved to Sheep Station disaster struck, the mill burnt down. Several men, including Arthur were thrown out of work, as the mill owners decided not to rebuild. This meant the family and many others had to move on.

Arthur had heard of the Glenreagh - Dorrigo railway line, which had been, opened a couple of years previously.

That line had given access and great opportunities to a huge area of maiden forest, with some of the best timber anywhere in Australia. So they moved on again.

He rode his horse for four or five days to Moleton, which was the second stop or station on the Glenreagh - Dorrigo line. At Moleton, Joseph Reid Pty Ltd., of South Grafton had not long opened a large new sawmill.

This sawmill was later to be owned by George Hudson Pty Ltd., of Sydney. Arthur was offered work with his bullock team to help haul logs to the mill, joining other teamsters already there.

After making arrangements about where to settle, Arthur returned to Sheep Station and the family packed up again and set off for Moleton.

This time his wife Margaret (Maggie) travelled in a sulky with the children, mostly staying ahead of the bullock team.

Maggie often told of how she would call into farmhouses to buy eggs and milk. Most of the farmers took pity on them and they were given eggs, milk and other provisions for free.

They stopped for four days at Glenreagh to give the bullocks a spell. Arthur was offered work there with his bullocks, but he had already made plans to settle at Moleton so the family moved on.

They passed through Nana Glen, then Coramba and then up the Coramba mountain road to Lowanna and eventually to Moleton with several nights stops along the way.

The whole trip took about 12 days and would have resembled scenes in the old western movies, with families moving to new areas for new life as in America, but instead of horses drawing them, there was a bullock team. The family finally arrived and settled at Moleton.

A daughter Pearl was born in a tent on the banks of Mole Creek without any experienced assistance; and mother and child were both fine.

A son George (the author of this book) was born in 1930. This time Maggie managed to make it to Grafton in plenty of time for the birth. Maggie said births out in the bush were no joke!

The day Pearl was born there was a cyclone with torrential rain and roaring winds. His mother was terrified that one of the dozens of dead trees standing about would fall over the tent.

This timber had earlier been ringbarked by the settlers to make farming possible. Being so scared must have brought on the beginning of the childbirth and there was a big panic.

George's father galloped off in one direction to find help and his friend Harry O'Meara in the other.

Arthur galloped his horse up to the local post office, where after much difficulty with bad lines, the postmistress Miss Partridge finally contacted the doctor at Coramba.

The doctor then set out in his new car, which was a 1926 Chevrolet, and upon arriving at Lowanna some five miles away he discovered the road to Moleton completely blocked by fallen trees.

The doctor then borrowed a horse from someone in the town and rode out to Moleton, galloping most of the way.

Harry O'Meara on the other hand headed down the railway line towards Moleton village and the first lady he met was an aboriginal woman, Rebecca Chant, who lived with her husband, Fred "Poddy" near the Moleton viaduct.

The Chants raced the short distance to where the baby was being born and discovered the "just new born" baby with the umbilical chord wrapped around it's neck and almost dead. Rebecca removed the chord and got the baby, who was by then blue in the face, breathing again.

Harry O'Meara also contacted George Ellis's wife Elisa, who arrived not long after. The baby was okay, but Maggie was hemorrhaging and both Elisa and Rebecca did not know what to do.

Everyone was panic stricken by the time the doctor arrived.

The doctor managed to stop the bleeding and Maggie though very weak managed to recover after only a few days in bed. Baby Pearl was very healthy indeed and in later years married Terry Smyth and had four children of her own.

Jim Robb

The author's brother Jim could drive a bullock team at the age of six, though his father was always nearby in case of trouble, such as if the bullocks bolted.

By the time he was 14 Jim could yoke and unyoke the bullock team and take them into the scrub to "snig" logs.

While his father was out mining with George Ellis, Jim would often take the team out himself. He would start them all walking by command and ask the leader bullocks to bring the team back towards him in a "U" turn or the opposite.

Jim Robb By the time Jim left school he was a fully capable bullock driver and could handle 20 bullocks with great skill and handling.



Jim Robb with his bullock team.



Jim Robb again with his bullock team.



Jim Robb moving logs.

Jim was also quite a good axeman by this stage too and he could also fell the timber for the logs.

Jim used to fell the trees and cut the logs from them then load them onto a bullock wagon and cart them into the local sawmill, a distance of up to three to four miles away.

One day a girder cutter Jack McCarthy asked Jim would he pull about 20 girders that he and his sons Harry and Ray had cut from the bush to a site where they could be loaded onto a truck on the top of Black Mountain.

Black Mountain was at least 10 miles away. Jack suggested to Jim that he wouldn't need the whole team and that about eight bullocks would do and when they got there they break the team into half. Jack taking four of the bullocks and Jim the other four.

On the day, Jim got up early about 5am and rounded up the bullocks and yoked them up but he then thought he would take another four bullocks to make the work easier.

He headed off to Black Mountain and he had only gone about half a mile when something "spooked" the bullocks and they bolted. Jim followed on a horse but couldn't head them off.

They raced down through the scrub. At least three bullocks had hit trees and had smashed a horn or two.

They all ended up in a big heap when Jim finally stopped them. He had to bring them back to the yoking up yard and unyoke the injured bullocks, as they were in pain.

He finally ended up only going with eight bullocks as originally planned.

This delayed Jim for about an hour but they still got to Black Mountain and pulled out the girders and had to walk the 10 miles back. It was dark when Jim finally unyoked his team.



Jim served in the Second World War and after returning home he married Doreen Crampton, then moved and became a policeman in Sydney.

He retired to Glenreagh in the seventies.

A bullock team hauling logs

George Ellis

The stories in this section and the next “Early Settlers” were as told to me over the years by a number of people. George Ellis himself, his sister Mary, my brother Jim, George’s niece Mrs Ethel Masters, Mr Ted Partridge, Mr. Horace Shipman, and Clarrie Brewer as well as a few others who will also be mentioned here.



George Ellis was the youngest of a family of eight. He was born at Araluen on the Central Tablelands.

There he lived with his brothers and sisters whose names were Bill, Anne, Mary, Lizzie (Elizabeth), John, Louise and Caroline.

The family owned a store and they were in very poor circumstances.

At the tender age of 10 George left home to find work. His mother was very upset when George said he was going but she accepted the fact that he would probably do better if he could find a job even at that young age.

So young George headed off. He soon got work on dairy farms on the South Coast. In most cases the farmers could only afford to employ him temporarily for a few shillings a week and his keep.

In 1892 George heard that there were better opportunities up on the North Coast, so with the small amount of money he had saved he set off on his north bound journey.

George caught a ship from Sydney to Grafton where he sought more employment. When he arrived he found things weren’t going too good there either, as work was scarce.

After a few weeks roaming around Grafton he was told that there was a vacancy as a stockman on a property at Kangaroo Creek about 23 miles out.

George made contact with the owners of the property, (then known as Kangaroo Creek Station), who were brothers Jack & Peter Shea.

Soon after that he bundled his gear together and set off out to Kangaroo Creek by foot. He had only walked a few miles when he was given a lift to Coutes Crossing by a couple in a sulky.

George then continued his walk for the next 10 miles to his destination, camping by the roadside as night caught up with him.

The next morning he set off for the Shea homestead, arriving there at about 1pm. Jack Shea welcomed George with his usual courtesies.

George was then provided with a good meal and shown where his bed and quarters were. George was then 17 years old when he started working for Jack Shea.

George Ellis death at the age of 72 years, at his home in Moleton, was reported in a story in the Grafton Daily Examiner newspaper on March 11, 1948.

The story headed "Gold Mining Pioneer Had Romantic Career" described his death as the severing of one of the few remaining links with the early history of the Eastern Dorrigo - Kangaroo Creek- Nymboida River districts, particularly in the gold mining sphere.

The following paragraphs are extracted in summary from that article.

He was born at Araluen on the south coast and was one of eight children (he had three brothers and five sisters).

In 1893 he arrived on the Clarence and then obtained employment on Jack Shea's Kangaroo Creek station.

As part of his job he sometimes drove cattle through to Kempsey. George married Elisa Manewell of the Clarence in 1920 and she died in 1927."

George's first rich gold strike was at Clay Gully, an alluvial claim, which he took pounds 1800 of gold."

The newspaper story went on to describe him as" an extremely likeable man, with hosts of friends in all walks of life and his property at Moleton was a mecca for sightseers, with a wonderful panoramic view of the forests, farmlands and miles of Pacific Ocean coastline."

George Ellis was also the first settler to the area and was followed others including; Jack Probert, Walter Walsh, the Shannon Family, Partridge family, Ronson family, Hicks, Ables, McCanns, Brennans, Teelings, Warnes, McAnallys and families of the McAnallys, the Hamiltons, Pauls and in later years the Cramptons and Jerretts.

In about 1900 the Government decided to open up more land in the area for farms.

A surveyor, Thomas Loxon was sent into the area and because George knew the area so well he was offered a job assisting him, which George accepted. Later others were employed including Jack and Dan Shipman.

This new area came to be known as the Parish of Gundar. It was divided into 31 farms averaging about 250 acres each and these farms had to be balloted for.

Because George worked with the surveyors they asked him what block of land he wanted and he said "Portion 25".

In 1907 George was granted this land on an unconditional purchase that he would pay a small deposit and pay the remainder off within a set amount of years.

One condition was he was to make a workable and livable farm from it and to do this he had to fell huge amounts of timber and remove a similar amount of scrub, as well as ringbark many of the big trees.

Loxon also employed the Shipman family who selected the property south of his Portion.

George had a lot of money behind him from the gold he had found and could well afford to pay these men.



George's first house had two rooms with a verandah, (similar in design to the house at the mine entrance, though the original one it had a shingle roof).

George hired men to do the fencing and clearing of the land. One fellow who helped him was Jack Probert.



In 1923 George's new house ("the house on the hill") was built up on the hill on the way to the lookout, about 400 yards up from his first house.

It was a house where the kitchen was separated from the main house.

This was because in those old homes they usually had a huge open log fire burning all day and night and quite often the kitchen caught fire.

Horace Shipman told the author how he often thought in recent years of the beautiful timber that was ring barked and felled and burnt in this area when the land was cleared for farming.

This included giant hoop pine trees with many over 100 feet to the first limb.

There was so much timber about at that time you couldn't even give it away.

When the sawmill opened in 1924, the logs could be sold to them, but many of the trees had already been destroyed.

Because there were so many people riding through the property at all times of the night, he declared his kitchen an "open house".

Anyone going through could drop in and make a cup of tea and have a something to eat, as there was always plenty of food in the cupboards.

One condition was they were not to wake him up or disturb the household if they came in at some ridiculous hour.

Just imagine anyone doing that these times, letting anyone come into your "open" house, they'd probably rob you and bash you up and even murder you!

As George Ellis worked with aboriginal stockmen he became very friendly with them and when he selected this property at Moleton there was on aboriginal camp nearby.

He had become a very good friend with them and they used to show him how to survive in the bush by eating different berries and such.

George often spoke about the yams they would gather and how beautiful they were to eat. The aboriginals also gave him some stone axes that are on display at the mine.

In 1926 Arthur Robb met George Ellis who offered him agistment for his bullock team on his property known as Portion 25.

He paid him one pound a week for his bullocks. George had recently married a Grafton woman Elisa Manewell.

As the years rolled on the Robb and the Ellis family became very close friends.

The Robb family soon found out George was a gold miner, and mainly used his property to graze a few head of cattle for domestic use or to kill for beef.

Whenever George and my father killed a beast for food, everyone around would receive a substantial supply of free meat.

The Early Settlers

Following George Ellis there were a number of other settlers who moved into the district. Their names and stories are all below.

The information obtained about these folk came from a number of sources that were mentioned in the previous section.

The stories here were as told to me over the years by a number of people. George Ellis himself, his sister Mary, my brother Jim, George's niece Mrs Ethel Masters, Mr Ted Partridge, Mr Horace Shipman, and Clarrie Brewer as well as a few others who will also be mentioned here.

Jack Shea

Jack was of Irish origin and with his brother Peter selected his property about 20 years prior.

The family owned several thousand acres and also held a lease of government land (now known as the State Forests) of another 75,000 acres.

Jack and Peter were environmentalists 100 years before their time, as they would not allow any wild animals to be shot on their property or leases.

If a stockman told Jack that the dingoes had killed a calf up in the paddock somewhere all he would say was 'Well, they must have been hungry, they have to eat same as us, and have as much right to be here as us humans'.

Around Jack's homestead kangaroos had made their home and lived in complete harmony and safety, even lying about under the shade of trees near the house but Jack wouldn't hear of anyone shooting them.

This attitude of sympathy was never detrimental to Jack Shea, because he ended up a very wealthy man.

It was said that in 1954 when Jack passed away the new owners shot most of the kangaroos, which was a shameful act!

These were men of stamina, ability and courage as well as environmentalists and could not be compared with the "greenies" of today that I consider as ratbag environmentalists. They will stop at nothing to prevent progress in mining and timber cutting.

They hated development or even farming and glorify their cause by throwing people out of work. These "greenies" have burnt sawmills, put steel spikes in logs and sabotaged valuable machinery.

It is my belief they should be treated as the enemy within and should be outlawed, or maybe tarred and feathered.

Nowadays some landowners panic even if they see one dingo crossing their paddock.

I have to reiterate that most of the dingoes getting about now are crossed with dogs and probably more vicious, cunning and destructive than the full-blooded dingo.

While I am not insinuating that the wild dog should not be controlled moderately, it should not be wiped out, as they keep other vermin under control.

The Shea brothers also had great admiration and empathy for the aboriginal people and whenever possible they employed aboriginal men as stockmen.

Jack also had a German working for him and this fellow was erecting a fence in the hills above the homestead.

One day while digging a fence posthole he happened to put the hole fair upon a rich quartz reef of gold, with visible gold everywhere.

When this fencer told Jack he wasn't terribly excited as he didn't want any mines on his property, so he paid this German a very substantial amount of money to forget about it.

It is believed this amount of money was enough to start him in a business in Sydney.

Somewhere in the hills on Shea's property there is a rich reef of gold bearing quartz waiting to be found and maybe if someone had the time to follow old fences, one day it could be found.

Because the Shea's had such a huge acreage of country, this involved a lot of horse riding and mustering.

In the winter when the cattle were in thick bush land, sometimes it was difficult to muster them all, as they end up in the remote areas of gullies and gorges.

The cattle were usually mustered in the spring when they start emerging from their scattered haunts and begin to mob together again, or were being chased out by an insect called the stinging fly.

Ethel Masters

George's niece Ethel Masters told me once of how she and her half sister Daisy Gould arrived in Coffs Harbour on the ship the SS "Fitzroy".'

The sea was very rough and once in port the ship could not berth close in alongside the wharf, as it would damage both the wharf and the ship.

Accordingly all of us passengers were loaded into a rope bucket and swung across the wharf by crane, which she described as "a terrifying experience for all!"

Ethel was George's niece by marriage, (nee Ethel Probert) and she spent most of her early days living on her father's property on the Gundarene Road.

She married Fred Masters, who was George's nephew and they moved to Bondi Junction in Sydney, where she had three sons, George, Leonard and Frederick.

When the Second World War broke out they started evacuating people from the coastal areas in Sydney, as they feared a Japanese bombardment.

Ethel then came up as housekeeper for Uncle George on his farm during the war and remained there until 1950.

Ethel was also a lady of great stamina and she could work as well as any man around the farm.

She had a heart of gold and a very generous nature if she liked you. But if she didn't, it was just the opposite.

Once she fell out with you, she'd have nothing to do with you again. She contributed some (or part of the stories) in this book.

When George Ellis died, he left his property to her, but he forgot to cancel a previous will where he left everything to another niece Emma Hodgkinson in Sydney.

Because of a family disagreement, the beneficiary of the first will challenged the last will in the Equity Court in Sydney. Emma Hodgkinson was named the ultimate beneficiary.

When Emma Hodgkinson was awarded the farm she decided that she did not want to leave the city and gave Arthur Robb first offer to buy it, which he did for two thousand pounds, (a lot of money in those times).

His son George Robb and his wife Nola now own that farm, which is where the tourist attraction George's Gold Mine was established.

The Shannon Family

The Shannon family, who originally came from Ireland, selected the farm adjoining George Ellis's farm to the north.

The family consisted of the parents and three children Phillip, Jim and Mary.

They had to carve out a farm from the jungle type forest and the whole family worked like slaves to achieve this.

In later years the brothers had some sort of disagreement and it was decided to cut the farm in half and they would have one half each.

However things still did not work out, as each brother was incapable of making a living from their part of the farm.

So Phillip went off in a huff and was never seen nor heard from again, until he was found dead some 30 years later near Newcastle.

Jim went to World War One and fought with the 18th battalion, 4th division.

On January 9, 1917 he was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery on the day, then on the following day a second Military Medal. On April 8 1917 he was awarded the D.C.M.

After his death his sister Mary donated the D.C.M. to the Ulong Returned Services Club and it is still on display in the club.

Mary (Shannon) lived alone on the farm property for many, many years until the 1980's.

Their house was located on the side of a very steep and high hill, almost a mile from any road and Jim often carried a full bag of wheat or oats up the hill for chook feed or bags of chaff for the horses.

He was a terribly strong man and there are many more stories of heavy objects he lifted around the farm.

If a cow or horse died on the property, Jim would drag the beast to a stack of logs, sometimes 100 yards away and burn it.

Other farmers would use a horse to do the same task, or just stack tree limbs and other wood on the carcass where it lay!

One time Jim had a job at the Joseph Reid sawmill and they were putting extensions onto the mill.

There was a huge post to be stood up in a hole dug in the ground, which was about 10 feet long and twelve inches in diameter.

While waiting for a few other men to come long and give a hand, Jim said 'I don't know what we are waiting for and then picked up the log and stood it in position.

The mill owners and other workers were stunned at the weight he had lifted.

Mary always said that after the mill burnt down and everyone was leaving Moleton, that one day the town would live again. How right she was, for today slowly but surely the area is re-populating.

The Partridge Family

The Partridge family owned three farms in the area and selected their properties in about 1909. They had moved up from Hunters Hill in Sydney.

The children were Victor, Stanley, Milton, Arthur, Stewart, Eleanor (Lena) and Connie.

Three of the children Vic, Stuart and Stanley were grown up and remained at their work in Sydney, occasionally coming up to visit and help clear the land for farming.

They had adjoining farms due west from their "Portion No:14".

Milton was a dentist from Macquarie Street, Sydney and he moved there and continued his practice from the farm.

He lived there for many years and reared two children, Edward (Ted) and Gwen (Dollie).

In fact dentistry was Milton's only living, as the property similar to most farms in the district of that day, was covered in heavy timber.

People came from many miles away for Milton's dental care and it was in one way a blessing to the area, because the closest dentist would have been either at Coffs Harbour or Grafton.

Milton used to drill fillings with a foot operated professional drilling machine and it wasn't long before Milton had the nickname of "Pro".

Everyone called him as such, all except the children who always called him Mr Partridge.

I never saw a man do so much walking.

Sometimes on his calls Milton would walk to Lowanna and Ulong and even Nana Glen, as some people had no transport.

They knew the dentist was coming on certain days and would invite him into their home to do fillings and extractions.

Milton carried his dental equipment in a small leather brief case and his drilling machine strapped on his back.

Motorists would sometimes pass Milton walking and offer him a ride but I'm sure he never accepted, preferring to walk.

Even today it is still a good walk from Moleton to Ulong or even Lowanna.

I remember one day my father had a severe toothache when we were working in the bush with the bullocks Milton appeared on a nearby bush road passing by.

My father immediately called Milton over and asked him to pull the tooth.

So he sat Dad on a stump and in a few minutes the tooth was gone and Milton proceeded on his way.

My father paid him some other day. In those days an extract cost two shillings and six pence.

The Partridge family set about clearing their property to make it into a dairy farm.

While they had to erect fences and split posts the two daughters, who could use a crosscut saw and swing an axe as good as any man, mainly did this.

They had to ring bark hundreds of trees to grow grass for the dairy cows.

The girls were then aged about 17 or so and they worked from daylight till dark.

One of the daughters, Connie, dug a huge silage pit on her own into the side of a hill just down from the house to store hay.

She had nearly finished it when it was diagnosed she had rheumatic fever which affected her heart and she had to ease up and not work so hard.

She died there at a very young age.

The Ronson Family

Lost reefs are part of the mystery of gold. One of the area's earlier pioneers, Mrs Ronson, owned the farm adjoining George Ellis's on the western side.

The Ronson family selected this farm about 1909. They were dairy farmers and also owned two adjoining farms.

One day when the grandmother Ronson was driving the cows' home to milk, they were walking along a cattle track near a fence when a cow disturbed a piece of rock and it rolled out of the ground.

Mrs Ronson picked it up and it was a piece of quartz about half the size of a football and it was studded with gold.

The Ronson family was not very much interested in gold, as they didn't want their farm dug up by miners everywhere.

This lady used to tease the miners including George Ellis by cheekily showing them the specimen.

She would never let on where she found it because the miners could have taken out a lease over the property, which was quite legal for them to do.

They probably would have found the reef, but they respected the wishes of the Ronsons, in not wanting mines on their property.

Miner Jim Benny, said he saw the specimen and estimated it would go at least 30 ounces per ton and said it was almost as good as the one George Forbes found on Bushman's Range.

Another prospector, Bill Kubank, told me that he sneaked onto this property in recent years and was having a "fossick" around and he found a few pieces of rich quartz not far from the existing pear trees.

He said it was going about seven to eight ounces per ton. But did not then ever return to pursue his find but said he intended to one day.

He told me that I was the only one he had ever told about his find and he asked him to keep it a secret.

George Ellis died not long after the Ronsons sold out and he went to Atherton Queensland to live.

Most of the other old miners had died or moved away too. So on this property is another rich reef of gold waiting to be found.

The Ronson family had four sons and they shared the two farms adjoining George Ellis's.

When the First World War broke out they all joined the army to fight the Germans and the three of them were killed during battle in France.

Their names can now be seen on the First World War Roll of Honour in board in the Coramba Hall.

When the men left for action overseas the women ran the farm. The one remaining son (Bob) returned and continued farming for many years after.

Later on the Ronsons opened a shop at Moleton, which was later taken over by the Hankinson family.

The Pear Trees - The Sheltons and the Essex's

There were some big pear trees that stand about three hundred yards in the paddock in front of the Bayfield Mine that were planted in 1910 by Mrs Ronson.

There was a house about two hundred feet from the trees to the west where the grandmother and father of Ronsons lived.

When they had passed away their son Bob continued farming on the two farms and rented the house near the pear trees to Don Shelton and his family who lived there for many years.

The Shelton family consisted of three boys Eric, Merv, Mick (Michael) and a daughter Edna. When the Shelton family was there the pear trees bore an abundance of fruit, they were cooking or China pears.

As they couldn't eat them all, they gave the fruit away to whoever wanted them and people came for miles away to get a bag full to stew or make jams or preserves.

Even with this amount given away there were still tons of pears falling to the ground.

Later the Sheltons decided to move over to a house in the village of Moleton about half a mile away and Bill Essex and his family then rented the house.

The Essex's wouldn't sell or even give away the pears and there were tons of them there every year. The village people of Moleton were deprived of the pears they looked forward to every year.

One day the local lads decided they would steal some of the pears that evening, so it was arranged that one chap would pay a visit to the Essex family at night.

While one of them was in there talking to the family, the others would raid the pear trees.

It was decided beforehand the visitor was to stand near a window, which faced the pear trees, and if any of the Essex's made a move outside, then the person at the window would light a cigarette.

This would give the others a chance to get going. Their scheme worked very well indeed!

One time the Essex family went away for a week to their farm on the Glen Innes road and they had an old miner, John Morrissey to stay in a hut near the creek to keep his eye on the pear trees.

One night the boys decided to raid the pear trees again.

They did not know the Essex family were away and had a caretaker looking after the property (and the pear trees).

They were busy filling their bags when John Morrissey sneaked up and pounced on them and shouted 'I've caught you this time.'

Two of them took off and ran straight into the net wire of the chook pen.

Besides getting tangled up in the wire and knocking over the yards, there were chooks going everywhere.

John Morrissey couldn't do anything but just stand there laughing.

He seemed to be enjoying his stay guarding the pear trees but the lads escaped covered in scratches and bruises.

Another night three of the local lads again decided to raid the pear trees while the Essex family was away and had loaded up their bags and were walking along the road towards the village.

They never knew that their mates had decided to give them a fright and as they were walking through the dark scrub that surrounded the road.

Someone jumped out of the scrub, and yelled 'we've caught you this time.'

One of them, Rex dropped his bag of pears and went running down the road yelling 'I'm sorry Mr. Essex, don't hit me, I won't do it again,' with the other was in close pursuit.

It was ages before anyone was game to tell Rex who was really chasing him.

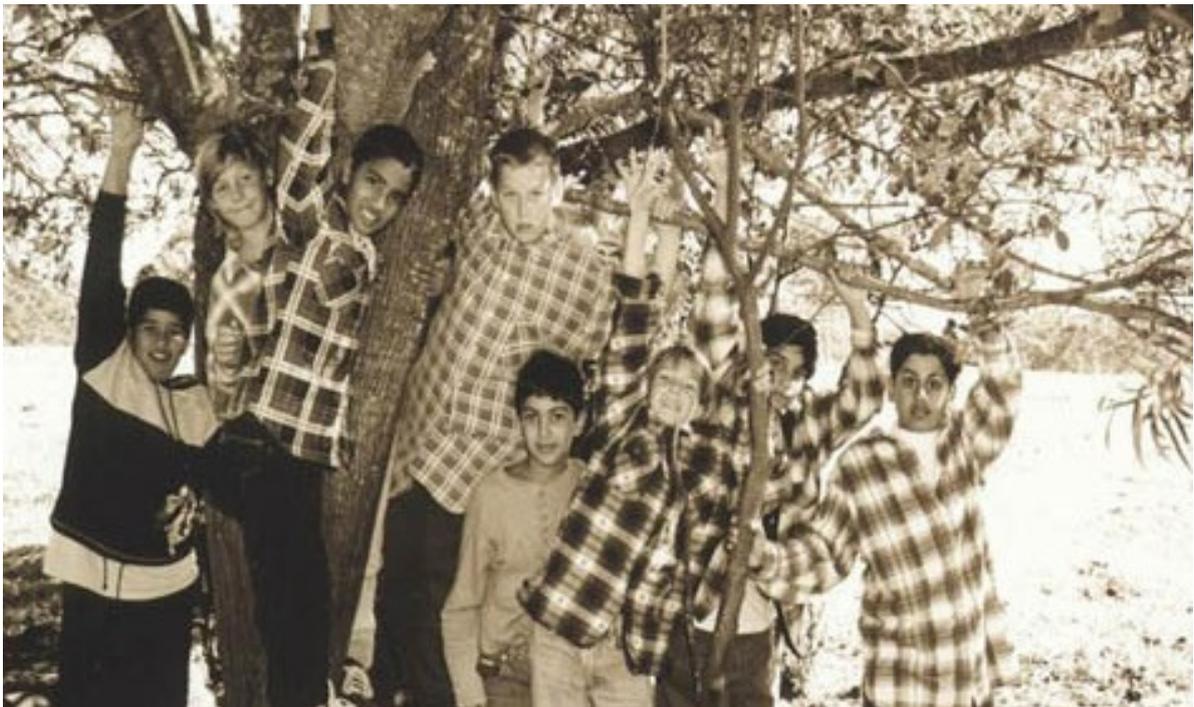
The other two only ran a few yards when they woke up to who it actually was.

Whether these young chaps wanted the pears or not, they had great fun in thieving them, as in those times there wasn't much entertainment about.

There was maybe a dance in the local school every month or so and certainly no television.

They were not thieves at heart, they just wanted to teach the Essex's a lesson in not being neighbourly by not selling or giving away their unwanted pears!

Pic below: Some boys hanging around the old pear tree on the mine property.



Jim Benny

Jim Benny was another miner who worked in the area and had several mines in the Camp Creek/Wild Cattle Creek State forest areas in the years before World War One.

Jim never found any huge amounts of gold, but always was capable of getting a few ounces in a very short time.

He had told of how he worked a mine in the Blue Gum Road area near Moleton.

Jim said this reef was going about six ounces of gold to the ton. He had recovered several hundred ounces of gold from it when a fault developed in the reef.

There was a break in the reef and he could never find the other part of it.

Jim told of how he found a reef not far from this particular mine, which was going two ounces to the ton.

He had dug a shallow shaft on it, to about 8 feet.

Soon after Jim was called up for active service in the army, so he sold this mine to a man for 50 pounds.

He had landed and fought with the Australian troops at Gallipoli and told of the bloodshed that he had seen there while in the army.

Nobody seemed to know Jim's age but apparently he was in his 40's when he joined the army and in his 90's when he died.

After returning from active service in the war, it was many years before Jim went back to the mine.

However he was told that the man he had sold the mine to had disappeared, maybe even died and he had never actually worked the mine.

Jim went to see what work had been done and could not find it again.

In 1958 the author even spent several days assisting Jim in his search, but they still could not find it.

Jim said maybe this fellow filled in the mine, so that nobody would ever find it, a common practice by the old prospectors who in most cases never returned to mine themselves and their secret died with them.

For many years after that Jim worked in the alluvial gold on the Little Nymboida.

One of the stories was about how the miners there once met a group of Chinese miners at the Junction of Little Nymboida River and Bo Bo River. After a discussion they decided to go in two separate directions.

The Aussies chose the Bo Bo River and the Chinese the Little Nymboida River.

Not many days had passed when Jim and his mates realised they had chosen the wrong river, as they couldn't find any quantity of gold, only colour.

They had to back track and follow up the Nymboida River to where the Chinese were. They were most sympathetic when they met up and let them join their group.

One day a young Englishman in his mid-twenties came onto the river to try his luck. He met up with Jim and his mates who were camped about a mile up from the junction.

The Benny party then decided to let this young "pom *" camp with them. The Aussie men had the fun of their lives with this fellow as Jim said he knew nothing about mining and anything they told him, he would believe.

They decided to teach him how to retrieve gold, and every day took him along to their spot. Jim later said seemed quite a hopeless cause and a waste of time.

At one place they had to cross the river to get to their workings and in the middle of the river there was a little island of only about nine feet square which they had to walk across.

This young "pom" would consistently ask them, 'would there be any gold on this island?' Jim and his mates would nearly split their sides laughing at him and would say 'of course not, not in the middle of the river!'

When on a particular day the Aussie men went into Ulong for supplies the "pom" decided he would try this island.

On the first day recovered four ounces of gold from it. In a couple of days he had found nine and a half ounces of gold.

Jim said the other miners just couldn't believe it and never ever laughed at him again. It was very embarrassing for the group!

(* Pom, an friendly nickname for a person from England).

Jim Benny was a very much liked and respected man who had many friends who enjoyed listening to his stories of the war and of gold mining.

He was a fair dinkum Aussie of the time, who only ate the basic foods of the time such as bread, meat, spuds (potatoes) and damper.

He drank black tea that looked more like sump oil rather than tea and always had a pot or billy can hanging over the fire in his camp.

The people of this area will always remember Jim. His photo hangs on the wall at the Ulong RSL Club. He was a true Aussie!

There was a story that Jim Benny told, which the author will never forget.

When Jim was out shooting rabbits near Timmsvale when he shot two crows that were feeding on a dead cow.

Jim plucked and cleaned them and gave them to an Englishman Harry Milligan, who had just moved into the village of Timmsvale.

Jim told Harry they were New England Mutton birds and were good eating and made an excellent soup.

A few days later Jim asked Harry how were the mutton birds. Harry replied 'they made good soup but they were so tough I couldn't eat them,'

Jim never told him they were in fact crows!

When he grew older, Jim lived in a hut at Timmsvale and he also had another hut some eight miles out at the back of the town.

He would retreat there in the winter months, as he believed it was always a bit warmer in the bush.

He would work out there for a few months and cut a few fence posts for a bit of pocket money and he would also do a little prospecting for gold. With him was a young chap called Neil "Dumpy" Stride.

When George Robb first met Jim he was one of a crew of timber workers who were employed by Thomas Timms and Sons, sawmillers of Timmsvale.

One day while out logging not far from Jim's hut a violent thunderstorm came over and the workers went to his hut for shelter.

When the storm had passed one of the workers enquired 'where's Dumpy?' Jim replied, 'oh he's down there in the bush cutting railway sleepers'.

We all responded simultaneously, 'what in that rain?' 'Oh yes' said Jim, 'he's down that track a few hundred yards or so.'

One of the workers said 'let's go down there and visit him a while to see how he got through the storm.'

As I hadn't ever met Dumpy I said 'that's a great idea.'

As we approached, we could see he was completely naked and he was swinging a twelve-pound sledge hammer splitting a log with wedges.

We were quite close when he spotted us and he flew in behind a stump to hide.

He said later he thought at first there was a woman amongst us.

When he recovered from the shock he explained how he'd hidden his clothes in a hollow log to keep them dry, so he could continue working in the rain.

On reflection not a bad idea!

Starlite

Jim Maxwell was a chap who prospected and mined in this area. He was commonly called "Starlite", a name he acquired by his habit of wondering about at night.

It is not certain whether he was up to any good or not, some say 'yes' and others 'no'. Maybe he was just a night owl.

Starlite had worked in the mines in the Avery's Creek and Tallawudjah Creek areas and he was well known around Glenreagh and had a mine called "The Blue Bell" which was several miles down the Kangaroo Creek.

There he also had a one-headed stamper battery that he operated by hand.

He had some sort of springing device on it and when he pulled a pole down the bend the pole would bounce the stamper up and down.

In this manner he would crush the quartz without the assistance of an engine.

It seemed that Starlite wanted a corrugated steel tank for a supply of water to his battery that he would fill by gravity feed from a gully above his mine.

He had heard that along Nana Creek, which flows into the Orara River at Nana Glen, there were at least four stamper batteries.

Right up in the head was an abandoned mine called "The Matilda".

At this site was a 1000-gallon tank, which was in good condition.

So Jim decided to take it to his mine some 12 miles away and the only way to get it there was to roll it.

He removed the tap and overflow pipe so it would roll easier and started off.

He had to roll this tank for at least one mile out of a big gorge till he came onto the Coramba/Dorrigo road.

Then he had to roll it onto Bushman's Range Road, then Bagawa Road, along Mole Creek Road, and eventually to Kangaroo Creek.

Some of these roads were just tracks.

When going down a steep hill he would walk in front of the tank and use his back as a brake.

The McAnally family lived along the Bagawa Road and on a Sunday afternoon after dinner as they were sitting about in the sun outside; they could hear a rumble down the road.

They couldn't make out what on earth it was until a tank came into sight rolling along the centre of the road.

Their horses almost went mad at the sound and they bolted around the paddocks.

So had every horse and cow he saw along the 12 mile route.

Out past Moleton he spotted a team of bullocks approaching, the bullocks panicked at the sight and noise of the oncoming tank and caused great problems for the driver who abused Starlite with very unprintable words.

(Most bullock drivers certainly knew a few choice words!).

Eventually Starlite got the tank to its destination. The trip took about six days.

To see where he rolled this tank was a remarkable task; he certainly must have wanted it badly!

Other families

(This article and the Moleton maps which appear in the photo gallery were contributed by Allen McAnally, who lived on the property "Tralee", near the junction of the Cradle Creek and Moleton Roads.

In 1941 his property was sold to Ted Partridge, son of Milton Partridge, the dentist).

Large families were fairly common in those times and two well know families whose descendants are still scattered around the district are worthy of mentioning.

They were: George and Margaret Hicks, who had 12 children, Myrtle, Tom, Kathleen, Clara, Lorna, George, Jack, Marge, Rita, Aileen, Valerie and Marie.

Also Edward (Ted) and Ivy Jerrett who had 11 children; Tom, Bill, Kathleen, Clifford, Vincent, Herbert, Doreen, Olive, Nancy, Lola and Gregory.

Unfortunately some members of both families are now deceased, but there are numerous grandchildren and great grand children scattered all around Australia, as well as many still living around this district.

There were also other married couples living in Moleton who did not have children while they were there.

They included Jack and Max Shipway and their wives, Tony and Merle Shelton, Noel and Hazel Monckton, Lindsay Ford and his wife and Clarrie Ford.

As well there were many bachelors who lived alone and worked at the sawmill.

There were probably many others who came and went during that time and many who may have only stayed a short while and moved onto other jobs.

There were also many others who were related to these Moleton folk.

The Two Dicks

Dick Harrison lived on a farm at Camp Creek, which is north west of Lowanna. (Paul Lindsay now owns the property).

Dick was a teamster and prospector and he often told the story of how he used to yoke the bullock team at his farm and walk them to the south west of Black Mountain at least 10-12 miles away.

There he loaded pine or coachwood logs onto his wagon and then hauled them to the mill at Lowanna, a distance of about 18 miles, which was then owned by Tom Mulhearn & Sons.

The road they travelled did not necessarily follow the present day Black Mountain Road. The original road being of a much steeper grade in places.

On the Pilot Knob road of today, near Black Mountain there is a sign, which says Coachwood road.

This road winds its way very close to Little Nymboida River.

In this area there was a huge stand of beautiful coachwood timber up to five and six feet in girth and it covered a few hundred acres.

The area also had nice hoop pine spread throughout it. Both these timbers were in demand and the Mulhearns had some big orders for it.

They also had about three teams hauling logs from this area to Lowanna and the drivers were sometimes on contract.

Dick Harrison who owned his team said the distance was too far for them to load up and haul back to Lowanna in the one day.

So near the foot of Black Mountain he made a yard to yoke and unyoke the bullocks and let them feed on the natural kangaroo grass and bladed grass.

Most times they would hang bells on the bullocks so they could find them easier next morning.

Dick told me of the time in the late 1920's, when a team of bullocks bolted on a young driver the Mulhearns had employed.

They stampeded down a steep logging track called a "snig track" towards the Little Nymboida River.

All team drivers develop great affection for the animals they master in the teams and all the drivers in the district were very saddened by this tragic mishap.

Some were so upset they had to take a few days off work.

It was impossible to stop them despite desperate attempts by the driver.

This ended in terrible disaster with 16 of the 20 bullocks being killed when they struck the trees, breaking their necks.

Some were so upset they had to take a few days off work.

When the great depression began in the early 1930's, the sawmills found they could not sell timber for buildings because people just had no money.

But somehow there were big orders for cut hoop pine timber,(possibly from overseas).

Along the banks of the Little Nymboida River were great stands of timber and this was only about five or six miles from Moleton.

Dick and Arthur Robb decided they would get permission from the State Forestry to log this with the bullocks and haul the timber to Moleton railway station.

Moleton was so much closer than hauling timber to Lowanna. Naturally the Government received a royalty payment for every log taken.

A forest ranger named Harry Dunn used to mark the trees for them to cut down. He used to ride up on his horse from Glenreagh and camp out for a few days.

He also had to supervise and mark trees for the sleeper and girder cutters to be felled.

There were dozens of cutters in the Kangaroo Creek State Forest trying to make a living.

As the Government ran short of money these cutters were put on a much-reduced quota.

Dick and Arthur worked their teams in the rugged country month after month and the Forestry were only allowing trees that had been damaged to be felled.

This meant the bullock drivers had to take their teams into more difficult places in order to make a living.

The two men couldn't but notice that just across the river there was a beautiful patch of pine that had never been touched.

It was only a matter of hauling it across the river and they could see big money to be made. This pine was in the Wild Cattle Creek State Forest.

So they decided they would get stuck into this good pine and make out it came from the side they were supposed to be working.

Together they worked this patch for many months, with some of the logs felled being up to four feet in diameter.

They had removed the best of the logs and they believed they were really not stealing them and were only taking the logs from another area.

Harry Dunn used to measure them up at the Moleton railway station after they were hauled in.

Sometimes Harry never came up for a couple of weeks, as he was busy elsewhere.

When he went into the bush to mark the trees to be felled Dick and Arthur would take him into a different patch and they would tell Harry they had cut the previous patch of trees he had marked.

Arthur said that Harry would sometimes say when he was measuring these logs at Moleton 'by gee, these are good logs, they must have grown since I marked them!'

They think he had woken up they were getting logs he had never marked, but never mentioned this to the higher authorities.

Dick Teeling also lived at Camp Creek. He had started work when he was 12 years old, on the North Coast railway and began working in the bush at the age of 16.

One particular day he was working his bullock team, about a mile north of where Harrison and Robb were working, in an area now known as Teelings Creek, (which was named after him).

While his bullock team was waiting to hook onto some logs, one of the 60ft logs Dick had just cut rolled out from the hill onto him and jammed his right leg against a large rock outcrop.

Working on his own and not being able to remove the log, he had to use his own pocket knife to cut off the pinned leg, which was by then holding on by only a few threads of flesh.

Dick managed to scramble onto the back of one of the bullocks in the team and headed them back home.

He was in a very distressed state from the loss of blood when he finally arrived home, some four miles away. Someone took him to Coffs Harbour hospital, where the next week he discharged himself.

Dick Harrison recovered the leg which he buried somewhere on the bank of Teelings Creek. In 1991 a monument was erected on about the same spot in memory of this very brave man.

After leaving the hospital Dick made himself a wooden peg leg, which fitted onto his knee then strapped onto his thigh and waist.

He then continued his work in the bush cutting railway sleepers and logs.

He was fully capable of felling timber from a springboard (*) and could go up three boards high, that's about 10 to 12 feet.

It was an education to see how Dick handled his wooden leg in the rough country and very seldom did he ever fall over (if at all).



(*) A springboard is a wooden board that is sometimes constructed in the forest by splitting a small tree of about four feet long.

This is then placed into a hole cut into the tree by an axe for the timber feller to stand on.

Sometimes a steel plate cut into the shape of a horseshoe is bolted on for extra grip.

The Monday was a wet miserable sort of day, too wet for them to go to work, so having collected the carton from the railway station, they took it back to their camp.

They were sitting besides the big log fire yarning when one of them suggested 'what say we open one bottle and try it, as we've still got another 11 to sell?' 'Great idea,' replied the other.

So one bottle of liquor was opened and in a very short time was emptied.

Then one of them suggested they would still have 10 to sell if they drank another.

This they did and by now were not in a very sober condition and both had trouble finding their way to bed at some ridiculous hour.

The next morning the weather was still bad, and both with "big throbbing heads" they decided to open a bottle of whiskey.

As the weather was still bad both agreed the dance might be postponed but to their misfortune it wasn't.

By the Friday they had drank all the bottles.

When all the men arrived at the dance to buy some grog but there was none.

Dick Harrison said the words of abuse that greeted them were totally unprintable.

The women all thought it very funny because they at least got to dance with sober men for a change because some stayed out all night drinking when there was grog on hand.

Dick Harrison wouldn't be classed as a big man, he was about five feet five inches tall, of medium build and he was of a quiet nature and was always interested in a yarn and drink with the boys but he was never considered a good fighter.

He was someone who would never pick a fight and he almost had to be hit to make him put up his fists.

Often at bush dances some men would start looking for fights after they had consumed a small amount of alcohol. It seemed to give them some sort of false courage.

One night at a Lowanna dance a man picked on Dick for no particular reason and wanted to fight him.

Dick tried in vain for half an hour to talk the man out of fighting but this man was getting increasingly hostile.

Finally, in frustration Dick said 'come on outside' and as they reached the bottom of the steps of the hall and onto the grass Dick hit him with a left to the stomach and a right upper cut to the jaw.

The man lay in a crumpled heap on the ground. Dick had dropped him one! However this was not the end of the conflict.

The next morning the defeated man woke up sorry and sore with a very much-hurt pride and decided he would get his mate and find Dick Harrison and bash him up.

They knew that about noon every Saturday Dick rode into Lowanna to get supplies from the local store, which was then owned by Jack Finch.

These two fellows waited at the Camp Creek Road turn the Saturday after and waited for him. When he arrived they challenged him, saying they were going to bash him up.

Dick casually dismounted his horse, tied it up to a tree and said simply 'here I am, have a go!'

Both men were a lot bigger and heavier than Dick and as he walked from the horse they both rushed at him.

It was all over in a few seconds as both these men lay in a heap on the gravel with blood oozing from their lips and noses.

They pleaded with Dick to have mercy on them. Dick often told people about this and laughed saying that he'd never have any trouble from them again!

Dick Harrison was also a prospector and spent considerable time getting the gold from the Little Nymboida River, mainly as a spare time job.

He often told how one day a miner called John Doran dropped into where he was working on the river and showed him a pickle bottle full of small nuggets of gold he found in a gully coming in from the Cascades side of the river.

Dick said it was the best gold he had ever seen and made the little specks he was getting looked so small in comparison.

Dick had no idea where John had found them, only that it was somewhere between the junctions of the Bo Bo and big Nymboida River.

In about 1948 a bus service was established to run passengers from Ulong and Lowanna to Coffs Harbour.

The proprietors were Dudley Timms and Bob McNamara and they employed a driver Neil McKay.

The following is a story from Neil McKay.

Most men were working during the week and the bus on Saturday was usually packed with people, mostly who mostly were men.

On this particular Saturday in 1950, Dick Harrison decided to go into Coffs Harbour to do his shopping and have a few drinks at the hotel, which was the usual practice in those times.

Amongst the shopping was an axe handle.

On the 4pm return trip another timber worker Alex Amos was seated a few rows behind Dick.

Alex had also purchased a new axe handle.

When Dick got off the bus at Lowanna Alex noticed the axe handle Dick was carrying and thought he'd stolen it from him.

He yelled out to Dick, 'hey you've got my axe handle you thieving old coot.' To which Dick replied 'this is not yours,

I bought it for myself.' Alex then rushed outside the bus after Dick still was accusing him of stealing.

The argument became worse and became quite hostile particularly when Alex tried to wrench the axe handle from Dick's hand.

The next thing that occurred was a fist fight and Dick gave Alex one heck of a bashing, even though others on the bus tried to stop them, though in vain.

When Alex finally got back onto the bus, in a very sore and sorry state, he found his axe handle.

It had fallen down beside the seat he was sitting on.

Alex's pride must have been hurt badly, for he took out a summons against Dick for the assault.

The court case was held about a month later in the Coramba Court House.

Dick was fined 50 pounds for assault and 25 pounds for court costs.

Dick said it was the most expensive axe handle he'd ever bought, but he had to do it, as he was not going to be wrongly accused of stealing.

The Elizabeth Kirby Trust

Back in about the year 1940 a wealthy Sydney lady, Elizabeth Kirby passed away.

In her will she left a very large amount of money to be divided up to buy farms for returned soldiers from the First World War.

It was her belated way of saying thank you to the soldiers for what they'd been through.

The trust had been set up to ensure the exacting details that had been set up in the will were fulfilled.

A notice had been placed in many of the local rural newspapers stating that anyone who was interested could write for an application form, to ascertain whether they were eligible.

Maggie Robb saw the notice in the Grafton Daily Examiner and showed it to Arthur saying 'why don't you apply for it?'

Arthur replied 'it would be a waste of time, I'll never get anything from the trust'. So then unbeknown to Arthur, Maggie sent away for an application form.

Many months later a letter arrived requesting more information about Arthur's war record, his service number, battalion number and when he enlisted.

Maggie filled out a form with all the information, still not telling him.

A few more months later a letter arrived from the Trust informing Maggie that her application had been successful and the Trust would buy a property for them.

When Maggie showed Arthur the letter he could not believe it, he was totally overwhelmed with joy, which was a lot of money in those days!

There were returned servicemen all over New South Wales who had been selected for properties and each were allocated eight hundred pounds,

Then each soldier had to find a suitable property for sale that was about that amount!

About a mile away from where they lived there was just a property for sale, which was owned by a Mr Vic Partridge, who lived in Beecroft, Sydney.

The property was known as "Portion 6" and it was priced at exactly 800 pounds.

The land was not cleared, but on it was many thousands of pounds worth of timber.

Arthur knew the value of the timber and considered when cleared it would make a good farm. Immediately he contacted the Trust who purchased the farm for him.

One of the conditions of the purchase was they must live on the land and make it a livable property and they were allowed 20 years to do this. The trust kept the deeds until all the terms were fulfilled.

Arthur built a small house on the property but never lived in it as Maggie refused to leave her new house they built on Mole Creek road.

Every year a representative from the trust called by to see how the improvements to the land were going.

There had to be a lot of rainforest felled out and many trees ringbarked, then the paddocks sown with grass seed.

Most of the money from the cut mill logs was put back into the clearing of the land.

The Trust then still had a lot of money left and they could see that clearing the land by hand would have taken ages.

The Trust paid for a bulldozer to come in and do the job, about 80 acres of it, (Sid Martin was the contractor).

On the day after the 20 years had passed, the deeds of the farm were handed over to my father, with another small cheque, as the Trust had now been wound up.

The area known as "Portion 6" was 336 acres and is now owned by their son James (Jim) who runs cattle on it.

Many thousands of pounds of timber were taken from that property and there is still a huge amount of timber coming on, thanks to a very special lady, Elizabeth Kirby.

The Coramba - Dorrigo Road

This road was built in the late 1800's, was the main route of supply and access for the residents of the Eastern Dorrigo. Coramba was the main village for supplies of food, hardware etc.

A horse drawn coach travelled this road about once a week, delivering supplies.

It followed the main road and anyone who wanted anything from the coach or to pick up a passenger had to meet it at the main road.

On the Coramba Mountain at the spot known as the six-mile, a water trough was constructed of concrete to water the horses.

The trough was fed from water trickling down from the mountain above and in those times was always full.

The trough is still there though it is now mostly covered with vegetation.

At the top of the mountain, known as the eight-mile, a road branches north called "The Bushman's Range Road".

This traverses the range for many miles and goes past lots of old gold mines and farms.

The bushman's range is believed to be the longest spur range in Australia starting as a branch of The Great Dividing Range out near Armidale.

George Wray, father of well-known area identity Jim Wray, had the job of delivering the supplies to the miners in the Coramba, Nana Glen and Eastern Dorrigo areas.

The supplies were picked up from the store at Coramba and delivered by horse and cart over bush tracks and mountain trails. A very strenuous task indeed!

George started his delivery job in about 1920, not long after the First World War and continued this for many years.

When he decided to stop, the deliveries were taken over by Cyrus Brewer, father of Clarrie, mentioned elsewhere in this book.

A young chap Cyrus Brewer, who was about 17 years old, had some sort of a contract to meet the coach with his horse.

He would then load his cart at the eight-mile intersection and deliver food, bread, meat and other necessities to the miners camped at the mines and also to the farmers.

Brewer told a story of how the bread was just put into chaff bags.

One day near the Advance Mine turn-off a miner came out of the scrub and asked him would he sell him one of the chaff bags that held the bread.

Brewer didn't want to sell the bag but told the miner that it would be worth sixpence.

The miner was fumbling about in his pockets looking for the money so Brewer feeling sorry for him, gave him the chaff bag for nothing.

Brewer asked the man why he needed the bag.

The miner told him the clothes he was wearing were the only e then said to save wearing them out he was going to cut a hole in the bottom of the bag for his head and two holes in the sides for his arms and wear it like a dress.

Whenever he was running late, young Brewer would go down to the Advance Mine and camp there with the miners overnight, as there were yards to hold his horse in.

Most of the miners had horses as their only means of transport.

George Ellis's wife, Elisa, heard about young Brewer staying some nights out there with the miners and was horrified to think that a young chap like Brewer had to stay a night with those "rough miners".'

The swearing and rough talk would be terrible,' she said. So when Brewer called into the Ellis home with supplies.

Elisa offered him a bed and food, which he accepted and from then on he stayed at the Ellis homestead.

Brewer used to go up past the Ellis home and past Shannon's property to the north, over a big hill and continue out to the Kangaroo Creek State Forest delivering supplies to miners and timber workers camped out there.

Moleton

Moleton is situated on the Mole Creek, which was named because the early settlers had seen platypus in the creek and thought they were moles.

Their identification proved wrong in later years, as there are no moles in Australia.

In those days the sawmill and the village were flourishing and it was decided the place needed a Post Office. In 1920 the Partridge family were chosen to be the postmasters.

It was at that time the name Moleton was officially given to the area. They were originally going to name it Mole Creek, but they found out there was another Mole Creek elsewhere in Australia and did not want any confusion about its location.

In 1907 the area was cut into 31 farms altogether and was recorded in the Parish of Gundar. Moleton was once a thriving village of about 25 dwellings, which was built by the timber mill owners to accommodate their workers.

There was not a lot of entertainment, but a tennis court was built and every month there was a dance in the local school hall, with desks having been removed earlier in the day by the students and stacked in the weather shed.

If anyone had a car they could also go to dances at Lowanna and Ulong.

Many rode their horses to the dances and others would come down to these dances from Lowanna and Ulong.

The village also had a small shop, which sold the most needed goods and groceries.

The first owners of the shop were the Ronson family and they were followed by the Hankinson family, who had it until the shop shut after the mill was burnt down and everyone started moving out of the area.

Ice cream was a real luxury in those days. It was only obtainable in town (Coffs Harbour).

Until the 1940's Mr Hankinson the shopkeeper had ice cream sent in every Friday by the noon train from either the Peters factory in Grafton or Kempsey.

The ice cream came in a big canvas container with a great hunk of dry ice in it, which kept the ice cream frozen.

The individual ice cream packs were little cardboard buckets, which came complete with a wooden paddle (spoon).

The ice cream buckets are still sold that way today, though the spoons are now plastic.



The fully laden butcher's delivery truck.

Sometimes even chocolate coated ice cream would also come in the container.

While the Dorrigo line was being built and for a few years after there was also a butchers shop.

But when the railway construction workers went, the shop became unviable and was closed.

After the closure George Thomasthe Ulong butcher delivered the meat down from Ulong, to supply the local needs.

His sons Arthur and Toby assisted. The sons also helped with the slaughtering and deliveries, which they made three times a week.

They also brought the bread in the same truck to our door. Most of the meat was wrapped in old newspapers, which would cause the health authorities of today to have a fit! Though it did save on paper!

However non-one was affected by the unusual wrapping!

The baker at Ulong was Mr Ed Bowlzer, who was of German origin and he baked the bread there for many, many years. He was an excellent baker; baking his bread by using the old method of was mixing the dough by hand, (kneading).

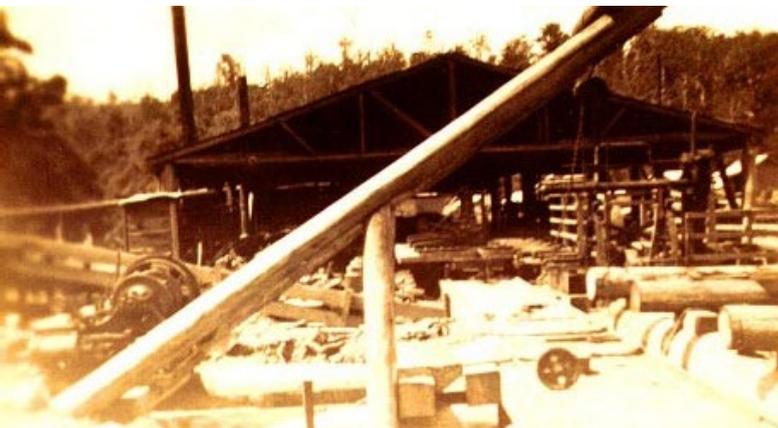
The following information was contributed by Allen McAnally who was born in South Grafton on September 14 1924.

He was the second son of Edwin and Susan and resided at the property "Tralee" which was near the junction of Cradle Creek and Moleton Roads.

The year 1924 was probably the most important one for the locality, because it saw the completion and official opening of the Glenreagh to Dorrigo railway line and Moleton becoming a train stop.

The Glenreagh - Dorrigo railway was authorised in 1910 and construction began in 1914. The line operated until October 1972, when it was eventually closed down.

With the construction of the railway came more workers and selectors to the Moleton and the establishment of the sawmill at Moleton heralded the opening up of the yet untouched forests to supply the mill.



Moleton Timber Mill.



Moleton Timber mill Fire.



Moleton Store



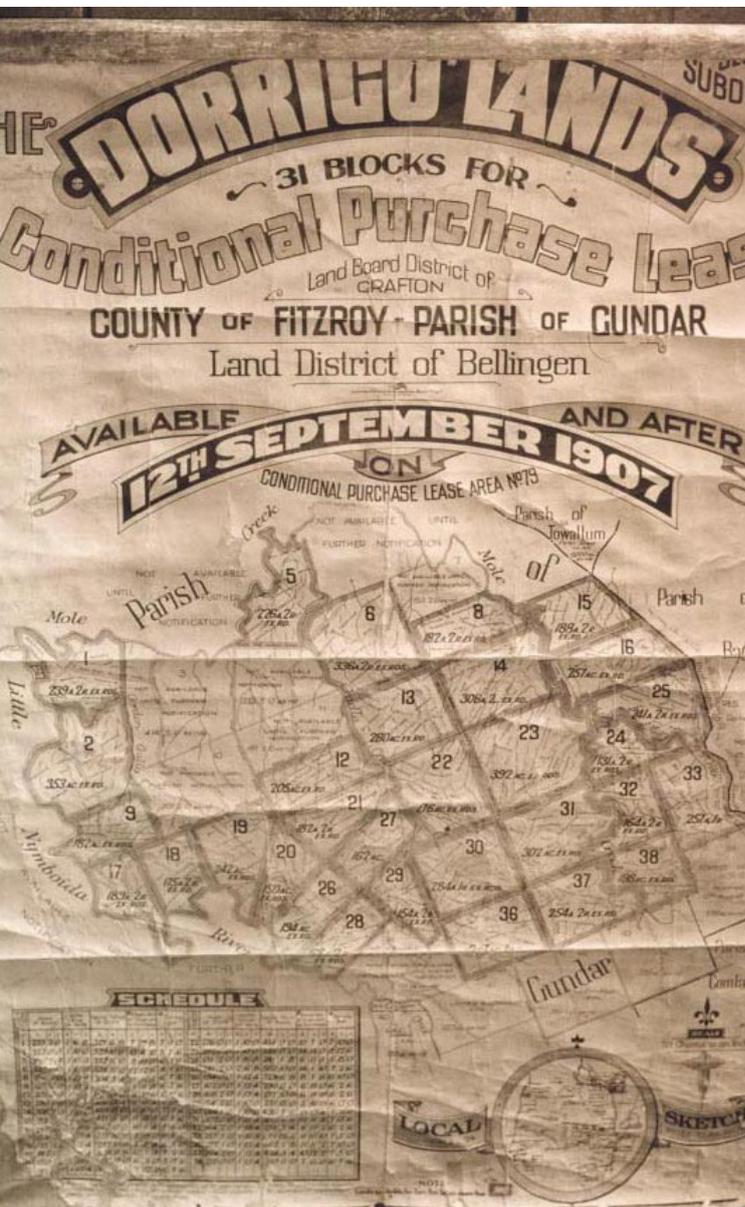
Moleton Rail Station



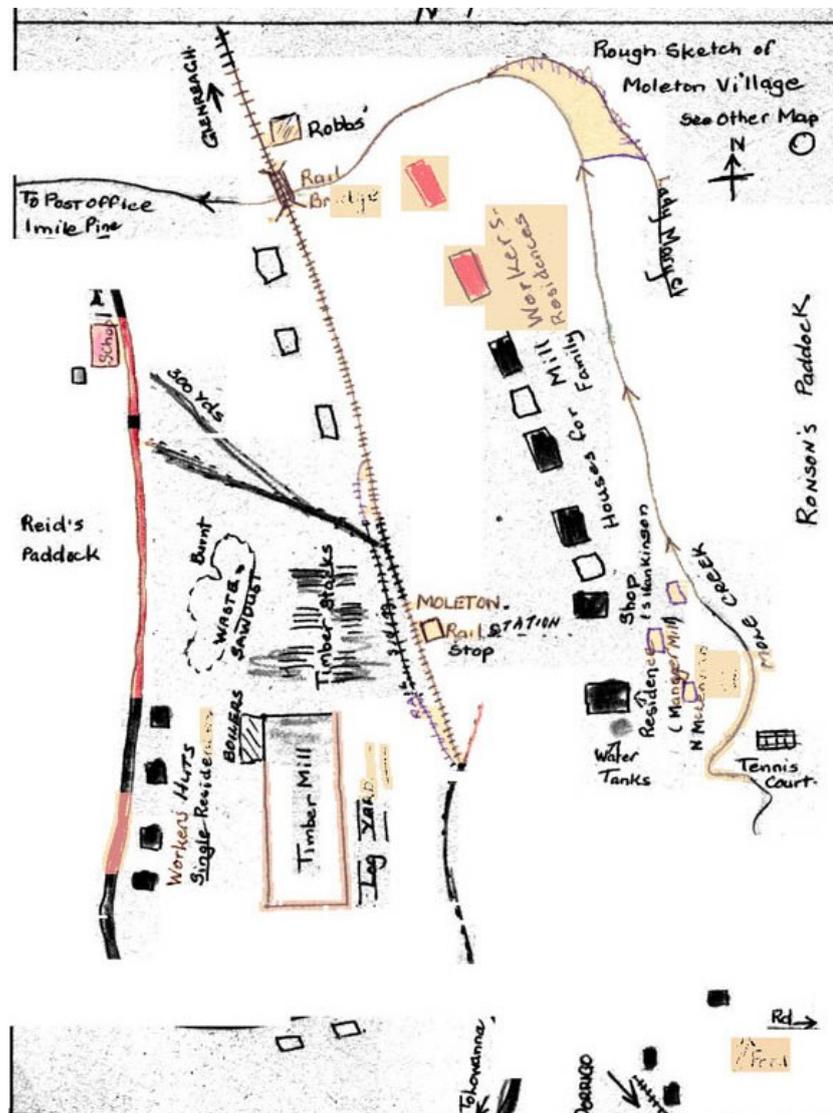
Moleton Rail and Township



Moleton Timber Mill and worker's huts.



Land Sub-Division



A Hand Drawn Moleton Township Map

Everything was centered on the mill and the railway. The workers cottages were clustered on a narrow strip between the road and Mole Creek with the railway line running through the centre.

Water was plentiful and was pumped into water tanks by a hydraulic ram system from the Lady Mary Creek.

Wood and water were the energy sources used to provide steam power generated by boilers to drive the machinery at the mill.

The sawn timber was trucked by rail, after natural drying to a stack system beside the railway.

A hand crane was used for loading logs onto the rail truck.

The sawmill used a huge steam driven crane to load the sawn timber for rail transport to Sydney and other destinations by rail.

Moleton School

A meeting was called and the town grouped together to build a school.

The site finally chosen was on the sawmill land, opposite the mill, on the northern side.

The mill owners donated the timber and all the building was done by volunteer labour, making a first class job of the building, which was ultimately opened in 1927.

Finally the Moleton Provisional School was established in the county of Fitzroy (052), in the Inspectorate of Grafton

It was opened by the (then) Department of Education as a new 6th class school on October 13, 1927, with Mr Arch Hefren as the teacher in charge.

The school was reclassified as a small public school in January 1931 and remained as such until its closure on June 8, 1956.

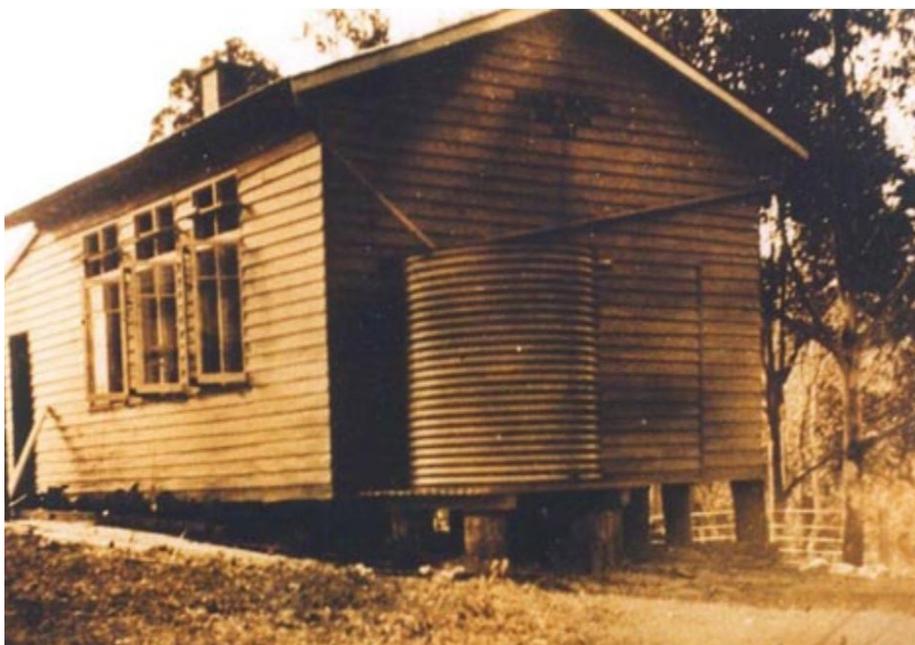
The Departmental instruction to teachers for transport was, "by rail to Glenreagh, then rail to Moleton".

The school was located 300 yards from the rail and one mile from the post office.

When the school closed on June 8 1956, the final teacher was Mr Barry McConville.

During the school's history there were a total of 15 teachers.

Their names and appointments appear in a list in the next page, which was supplied by the Department of School Education records.



The order of listing is: Teacher's Name/ Date Appointed/ Date transferred and where to:

Arch Hefren 13/10/27 1/6/31 Granville Central

Will Gleeson 4/6/29 28/6/29 Wargambegal

Frederick Mott 16/1/31 10/1/33 Mullumbimby

James Lee 20/1/33 9/1/34 Yarrambella

Leslie Kraft 10/1/34 7/1/35 Auburn

Arthur Kaye 7/1/35 28/12/38 Rozelle

Alexander Gallagher 28/12/38 15/1/42 Timmsvale

Reginald Ward 23/1/42 5/12/45 A.M.F Service then Bondi Beach

Terrence O'Brien 27/4/42 28/3/46 Campsie

Neville Falls 27/10/42 5/2/43 Kilgin

Frank Hurley 15/1/43 2/2/43 Burrupine Roberta Prior 5/2/43

Edward Buchanan ___/2/51 27/1/53 Wongavale

Malcolm Goodsell 27/1/53 24/5/55 Wovieybah

Barry McConville 24/5/55 31/1/56 Tondelburine

The author did his primary school education at Moleton, starting with teacher Mr Mott and ending with Mr Kaye before he went to high school in at Coffs Harbour Jetty.

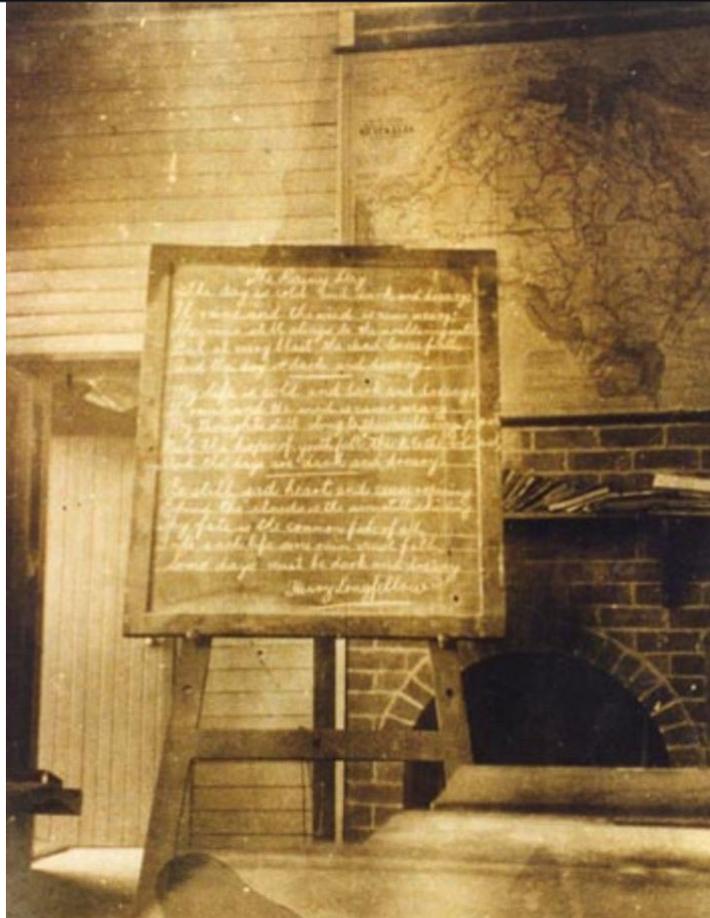
The first students to be enrolled in the school were:

Lucy, Joyce and Basil Atkins, Clara, George and Lorna Hicks, Jim and Rita Robb, Mary and Josephine Blanch, Vera Gordon, Freda Holland, Ron, Allan, Jack, Bob, George, Bert McNally, Mick Mclennan, Louis, Tom and Arthur Manewell. Teacher Alexander Gallagher married Rita Robb in 1939.

Gallagher was a keen photographer and supplied many of the photos now on display at the mine.

The poem on the school chalkboard The Rainy Day is reproduced on the next page:

The Rainy Day Poem on the Classroom Chalkboard



**The day is cold and dark and dreary
It rains and the wind is never weary
The vine still clings to the moldering wall
But at every gust the dead leaves fall
And the day is dark and dreary
My life is cold and dark and dreary
It rains and the wind is never weary
My thoughts still cling to the moldering past
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast
And the days are dark and dreary
Be still sad heart and cease repining
Thy fate is the common fate of all
Into each life some rain may fall
Some days must be dark and dreary.**

Moleton School - List of Students

Some of the children who attended school when George Robb and Allen McAnally attended there.

(* Note: There were no available class records to access and the following names are as recalled by former students in contact with the author, some may have been unintentionally omitted).

Allison, June and Leslie Atkins,

Joyce, Lucy, Basil, Keith and Edice

Ayrs, Edna Blake J,

Hilton, Florence, Benny and Lorraine

Blanch, Josephine and Mary

Campbell, Malcolm Chapman, Edna

Cox, Malcolm and Melba

Crossley, Enid and John

Curnow, Beverly, "Billie" and Lorraine

Dunn, Brian and Helen

Essex, Vera, John, Sid, Dulcie and Eric

Gordon, Vera

Hankinson, Pat, Narelle, Kevin, Shirley and Rodney

Hicks, Bill, Margaret, Leisha

Hicks, Clara, Lorna, Rita, Marj, George, Aileen, Val, Marie and Jack

Hobbins, Bob and Cyril

Holland, Freida, Beryl

Jerrett T, June, Colleen and Ron

Jerrett W, Billy, Ivy, Clydie, Leon and Gail

Jerrett, Tom, Bill, Kath, Vince, Clifford, Herbert, Doreen, Olive and Nancy

Knight, Norma, Nola (Robb) and Shirley

Lindsay and Mrs Ford

Manewell, John , Tom, Lew, Arthur

Masters, Len and Fred

McAnally, George, Bob and Bert

McAnally Ted, Ron, Allen and John,

McLennan V, Shirley and Warren

McLennan, George and Mick

McLennan, Neil, Julie, Dawn and Deloris

Moran, Mavis

Morrow, Edna

Murphy J, Heather

Murphy, Heather

Newby Russell, Peter

O'Shea J, Colleen, Robyn and Rhonda Orr

Owls, Nat

Partridge, Ted, Helen, Daph, Ted and Ray Powell, Ashly, Beverly and Maurice

Pryor, Evan, Roberta, Adrian and Murray

Rainbow, Des, Maureen, Hazel and Graham

Rainbow, Jim, Basil, David, Colin and Dulcie

Ravenswood, Winnie, Jim, Ted, Fred

Rhodes, Joan

Wallace, Merv, Pauline and Richard, Dennis, Mary and Joan

Welch B, Virginia, Shirley and Barry

Welch M, Neville, Noel and Wilbur

Winkler C, Athol, Ted, Olga, Lindsay, Errol, Allan and Peter

Ridd S, Jim, Norma and Louis

Robb, Jim, Rita, Pearl and George

Ronson, Eric, Margaret, Daisy, Muriel and Olive

Russ G, Ron and Allan

Sawtell F, Barry

Shelton E, Leslie, Edna and Donald

Shelton M, Ron, Mary and Pat

Shelton R, June, Gloria Shelton, Mick

Smith J, Marlene and Audrey

Smitheringale, Betty

Teeling B, Joan, Barry and Ruth

Teeling J, Jean

Teeling, John, Pam, Patrick

Tompkins, Terese and Graham

Trenuth, Geoff

Wall, Norm, Ivan and Laurel



Top - Moleton School Class Photo. Inside the Classroom.

The Declining Years of Moleton Town



In 1952, following the old timber mill burning down, the Moleton population declined.

The meat and bread were brought in from Glenreagh which was about 15 miles away, by Merv Ellem, their local butcher.

No matter how bad the weather, Merv would try and get the meat and bread delivered.

One particular time Mole Creek was in flood and Merv could not cross the bridge with his vehicle, so he pre-phoned George Robb to meet him at the bridge and somehow they were to get the goods across.

It was a cold day in winter and the water in Mole Creek was like ice.

I met Merv at the bridge and because I was much younger than he, it was decided that I would be the one to cross the bridge and carry the bread and meat across the floodwaters.

With the water up to my hips I started to go across, but I never knew that some of the bridge decking had been swept away.

I was about half way across when I disappeared into swirling freezing water. But luckily for me I did reappear and I was still on the bridge and fortunately not swept away.

I struggled and half swam the remainder of the stream, which was about 100 feet wide.

I looked up at Merv who had turned his back on me, because he did not want me to see him laughing at me.

When finally he turned around he couldn't speak, because he was still laughing so much. I was standing there shivering and as wet as a "very wet" frog.

We decided to have ago at getting back across the stream. I held a long stick in front of me and prodded the bottom to find out where the planks were missing off the bridge.

This proved to be successful and I got the meat and bread across by holding them up high all packed in a chaff bag.

I don't think I had ever been so cold in my life and I was sure I would die of pneumonia or something similar.

However I never even caught a cold from that horrible experience!

My advice is if ever you cross a bridge that is under water be very careful as the bridge could well be half washed away!

Hauling Logs

In it's heyday there were more than 20 teams logging in and about the Moleton area, hauling logs to the Joseph Reid Pty Ltd sawmill at Moleton.

George Robb said he could clearly remember four teams hauling a wagon loaded with logs to the mill on the road past the family house.

Just about every day you'd see one team driven by Arthur Robb or his son Jim and in later years myself.

Not far behind there was a team driven by George Hicks and coming behind again another team driven by his son Tom and still another team driven by Ted Jerrett, following at the rear.

In from the other directions from the mill, there were teams driven by Ted McAnally, Bob McAnally and Bill Holland and Bill Essex.

Most of the bullock teams had from sixteen to twenty bullocks in them but Bill Essex had always twenty four bullocks.

Bill Holland had the largest team and often yoked up thirty bullocks in his team, with that many bullocks of course he could pull bigger logs.

It was a fact that in those times that the timber merchants in Sydney were paying higher price for logs and several of the other teamsters used to load their logs onto railway trucks at Moleton siding for transportation to Sydney.

After paying freight, they received a bigger return than they would from the local sawmills.

Arthur Robb was a very "early bird" and he would get up very early, have breakfast then catch his horse and ride up to George Ellis's property to round up the bullocks and yoke them up.

Often he was that early he couldn't find the bullocks in the darkness and would sit on his horse smoking his pipe (his favourite pastime) until dawn broke.

Every morning he had his team yoked up before 7am and was on his way out to haul the logs.

Back in the days of the great depression in 1932, work was scarce and if a person had a job you'd be considered lucky but men in the timber industry seemed to manage to survive if only on a very low wage.

The teamsters kept working hauling logs into the mills and they were greatly assisted by large orders for hoop pine timber that was to be exported to England.

Joseph Reid Pty Ltd had large orders also for hoop pine and Arthur Robb was one teamster who hauled fine logs to their Moleton sawmill.

He had worked for about ten weeks but he didn't get any pay and when he asked the mill owners they would say, "you will get paid next week!"

This continued for three months and Arthur Robb had run out of money. His family, who were all but starving, were given butter, potatoes and other provisions from the local farmers.

It ended up the Reid's owed Robb about 150 Pounds, which was a lot of money those days, and whenever Arthur asked for his money they would laugh at him.

Arthur Robb threatened to sue them and this seemed a bigger joke to the Reids, who said 'go ahead and have a go, you won't beat us as we don't owe you that money'.

But Arthur Robb had kept every measurement of the logs he had sold them and he went to a solicitor in Grafton to issue a summons on the Reids.

The solicitor told Robb that he couldn't see how he could lose the case, as they definitely owed him the money.

The solicitor also informed Robb that on the day of the court case there would be a Barrister in town who charged 100 Pounds per day and the case would probably last about three days.

He advised Robb to hire the Barrister, as Reids would have to pay costs if they lost.

Arthur Robb consulted the Barrister although he knew that if he lost the case he would be ruined. He would have to sell his bullocks and all his possessions to pay the court costs.

The gossip around the village was increasing as everyone was saying fancy a bullock driver suing wealthy people like the Reids, he will never beat them and many almost laughed in Arthur Robb's face.

But the laughs were soon reversed because Arthur Robb beat the Reids in court and the company was ordered to pay Robb all the money owing to him plus all courts costs including the days Robb missed work to go to town to consult the solicitor.

Arthur Robb never gave the Reids the satisfaction of refusing to buy his logs so for many years he railed his logs to Sydney.

It was at least 10 years after the court case when one of the Reids approached Robb one day and offered him a higher price for his logs and guaranteed he'd be paid every month on a certain date.

So Arthur Robb accepted his proposition and supplied logs to the Reid's mill, as it was a lot easier than having to load them by a hand crane onto railway trucks.

Very often after school I would go to the railway siding to help my father load logs onto the rail trucks.

Until I arrived George Ellis was usually there and I would relieve him so that he could go home and milk his cows.

After I completed my schooling I learnt to how to drive the bullocks, as well as how to unyoke them after a hard day's work.

My father had always believed in getting up early, then yoking the bullocks up and working them hard for five or six hours, then unyoking them as early as possible, so they could rest and feed until the next morning.

This along with keeping the animals in good condition paid dividends, as they kept strong and well.

Often the bullocks were really only yoked up every second day, because on the alternate days we would have to fell the trees for the logs.

Tree felling in those days was by axe and cross-saw, as chain saws were not really around that much. If there were any, they would have been so cumbersome they would need a horse to carry them and they would probably have taken an hour to get started!

The bullock team usually consisted of 20. Occasionally when rounding up the bullocks some of them would get really cunning and hide in the scrub, so as to avoid a day's work.

This meant reduced numbers on those days, but if there was a really big log to be hauled, then the full 20 were needed, time was spent looking for them.

When the team were unyoked, which was usually about 1 - 2pm, I had the rest of the day off, so I would go cutting railway sleepers, for some extra money.

I cut my first sleeper when I was 15 and with a few hours of work every day it was not long before I had cut 80 of them, which was a lorry load.

The lorry would then cart them to Coffs Harbour and they would be shipped to New Zealand.

When the cartage and royalty was taken out, I cleared about six shillings a sleeper and for this first load I received back a cheque for Pounds 48.

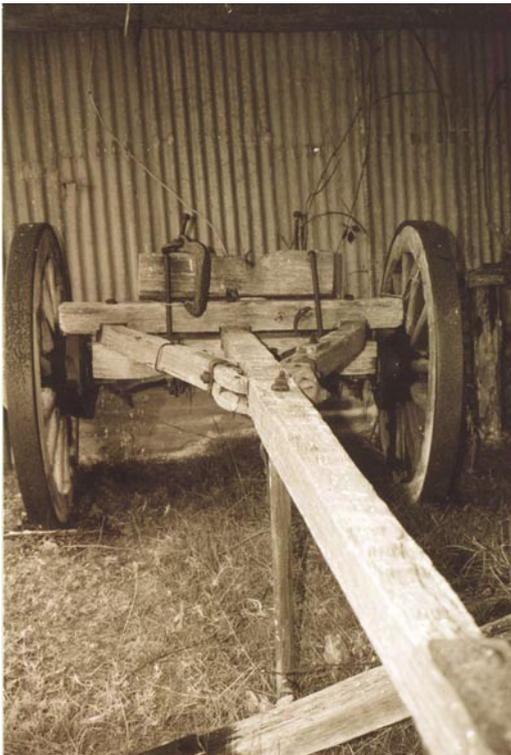
This was good money in those days, especially when my father was paying me also.

When I was 23, I left home and I worked for the next 16 years on tractors hauling logs and felling timber. In the areas where I cut, it is almost impossible to find the stumps where the trees once stood, because of all the new timber coming.

As the years passed, I became better at sleeper cutting and I could cut one every 15 minutes, though some could cut one in ten!

I would also cut sleepers for the NSW Railways, but they never paid as well as the New Zealand government and the NSW sleepers were much heavier.

Work was available everywhere and if anyone felt like a change, they could cut fence posts or work in the sawmill.



A log cart.



Jim Robb loading logs.



Jim Robb's bullock team hauling logs.

The Glenreagh - Dorrigo Railway



A train derailed at Moleton station.

Back in the 1930's, when the author was quite young, only a few people had cars.

His parents never did and the family had to travel into town (Coffs Harbour) or Grafton by train.

The Dorrigo Line was opened in 1924 and was a very busy branch line connecting to the main north coast line at Glenreagh.

This line carried mainly timber and potatoes from the Dorrigo Plateau. I'd once seen a train with about 12 trucks loaded with potatoes transporting them to the Sydney markets.

One train was just for goods and timber only and left Glenreagh every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at about 5am.

It usually had empty trucks and dropped some of them off to all the sidings on the line, and would return next day to pick them up.

On these same days another train would leave Glenreagh about 11am.

This train was called a "mixed train" which meant it carried goods for the shops along the line and more empty trucks to be loaded.

It also had a single passenger carriage, which was full, as well as a compartment for the guard and mail for all the villages along the line.

In about 1929, which was five years after the Dorrigo line was built there was a huge stand of timber adjacent to the north of Moleton.

Most of this timber was of a wanted species, for the building industry and was on the State Forest.

The owners of the Joseph Reid timber mill had the idea that it would be easier to move the timber to their mill at Moleton by train rather than by bullock team along the road, which would be a mile further.

The Reid's paid for the Department of railways to put in a siding at the spot, which is still known as Reid's siding.

The cost of construction was one thousand pounds. A huge steam crane was moved onto the site to load the logs onto the trucks.

They then started the loading and continued in this way for about two years but as the timber was being cut it was further from the line which meant the bullock teams were necessary to haul the timber straight to the mill, so as to save double handling.

As motor lorries were starting to come into the area, making this type of haulage even better. Thus the siding was disbanded, as was transport by rail.

In the holiday time there was an additional carriage for passengers on the line.

This line has one of the steepest grades in Australia for most of the journey so the old steam engine certainly didn't breaking any speed records as well the speed limit on the line was no more than 20 mph.

For anyone who loved steam it was an unbelievable trip through the winding mountain with two tunnels and some very high viaducts (bridges), as well as some magnificent scenery.

Sometimes they used to send up a special train between these times to collect the loaded trucks that the other trains had left behind as they were overloaded.

Quite often they had a smaller engine on the line. Possibly a "19 Class" locomotive. If they overloaded it, couldn't pull its load over the hill near the Gundarene road at Lowanna.

So they would have to bring one half of the train down to the Moleton siding then go back for the other half.

Once they were at Moleton there were no more steep grades to Glenreagh, only a steep decline.

After they put the larger "50 Class" locomotives on the line they had no more problems climbing the steep grades fully laden.

When we were kids we used to look forward to New Years Day because they'd run a passenger train from Dorrigo to Park Beach (Coffs Harbour).

This train had about four carriages and was packed with people going to the beach for the day.

This was in itself quite an outing! When the train arrived at Glenreagh station everyone stayed on board and we were shunted onto the end of another train, which came from Grafton also on the way to Coffs Harbour.

We would finally leave Park Beach at about 4pm and follow the same procedures home, but in the opposite manner.

I can plainly remember the people on the train joining in singing on the trip up the mountain.

Some passengers played their mouth organs, guitars and accordions. We would finally arrive home at Moleton station at about 7pm.

I can still see the glow in the forest as we cruised along.

The glow came from the fire in the steam engine whenever the firemen opened up the door of the boiler to shovel in coal, which was quite often on this heavy pull.

We would look out the window putting up with cinders falling in hair and eyes just to see the sparks flying out of the chimney from the engine.

To hear that beautiful sound of steam, which had something magical about it and to smell the beautiful aroma of coal burning, was all quite exciting indeed.

With the event of the beginning of the school holidays, the railways would run a special train to Dorrigo to pick up the teachers and their families.

Anyone could travel this train if they wished. This train usually came through Moleton just after dark.

As children we used to stand on a small cutting where we lived and watch the train go by all beautifully lit up.

It was a beautiful sight and put a certain amount of happiness into the night and loneliness of the bush.

I remember crying as the train came nearer, because the first teacher, who had taught me in 1938, Arthur Kaye had been transferred and he was on that train.

During the Second World War there was an army camp at Lowanna, where the troops did their jungle training.

I saw special trains coming through loaded with troops and one night two troop trains came up a few hours apart on their way to Lowanna.

A special event every year was the special train from Glenreagh to Dorrigo for the big event - the Dorrigo show.

By the time the train arrived at Dorrigo the train, which consisted of four carriages, and a guards van was usually packed.

The Dorrigo Show in those times was usually held in February and it nearly always rained.

I can remember quite well trudging around in the red mud at the Dorrigo showground.

As kids we thought it was a great thrill to see the streetlights of Dorrigo town as the train steamed up from the Bielsdown River.

This line was closed in 1972, a casualty of the Liberal Government's big plan to close railways and push more and more trucks onto the roads, so they could gather more tax from all the extra fuel to be used, to help the large foreign owned oil companies.

When it closed it was the only railway in New South Wales paying its way.

However its freight was booked onto the main line, which was showing great loss, and the poor old Dorrigo line and its potential as a future tourist line was just ignored.

There has been a move for the last 10 years to reopen this line and moves are now in place for a section of the line to be re-opened.

What a great attraction it would be for the tourists as well as the locals and I wish all those who are trying to open it all the luck in the world, so that it can happen one day and be a huge success.

However without Government financial assistance I doubt whether any one or any organisation would have the money to reopen the line or even part of it.

Trains of the era.



War Stories

(The Second World War) and Spies in our Midsts.

When the Second World War came closer to these shores and a Japanese invasion looked imminent, with a landing at Coffs Harbour being a real threat, all the residents were placed on full alert.

All lights had to be out by dark (a black out was in force).

If an officer of the Civil Defence or police officer came by your house and saw a light on, you were in serious trouble and could have been sent to jail.

Everyone also had to have emergency provisions, such as a couple of blankets a very limited number of spare clothes and some rations packed in a large bag (a chaff bag was commonly used).

The chaff bag was hanging up ready to get away when news of the Japanese landing was broadcast.

Everyone was then supposed to start walking west, not necessarily following the roads, keeping ahead of the Japanese.

I remember my mother saying 'I've got arthritis and I'll never get away from them and they'll probably catch me and shoot me'.

The whole experience of war was very upsetting for the whole family, as it was for other families who had older parents and everyone was extremely worried.

The men were also instructed that before vacating their home, they must shoot every cow and horse, so the Japanese had no food to exist upon.

They were also instructed to burn their houses, so there was no shelter.

This was known as the "scorched earth policy" and was what the Russians did to the Germans when they invaded Russia, cutting off their food supplies.

The last group to leave was also to blow up the roads in places so as to hinder the advance of the enemy.

Even though this would have been only temporary, it would have enabled the civilians to get further away.

It was a common (an unsubstantiated) belief the army loaded the underneath of part of the roads with explosives.

Because Moleton School was close to the sawmill, it was feared the Japanese might have thought the mill to be a munitions factory and maybe bombarded it from the coast some 15 miles away.

Volunteers dug trenches about 100 yards from the school for the children to dive into, if there had been an air raid.

Also the children were given training and when the teacher blew the whistle they were to stop whatever they were doing and race out to the trenches. Fortunately the “real thing” did not happen.

It is now really hard to explain to people who did not experience that frightening era; just how close the war was to us.

During this period of anxiety two people, a man and a woman came into this area and lived in a hut on the Glenreagh road.

The man was supposed to be a sleeper cutter.

They were extremely well dressed and every week they would go into Coffs Harbour.

The unusual part of their travels was they would travel to and from Coffs Harbour by a taxi, which was an expense in itself.

Maggie Robb suggested they may have been war spies and most laughed at her.

One day Merv Welch called unexpectedly at their hut to visit them.

They did not hear him coming and when Merv went inside he saw maps spread all over the floor and the occupants were on their knees studying them.

Upon seeing Merv, they hurriedly folded up the maps and put them away.

Maggie was right, for one day they went away and never returned.

News came later of two spies who were arrested in Coffs Harbour and interned in prison.

In recent years the author while cutting timber in the area noticed a wire attached high in a tree on the hill above the hut where they lived.

It is fair to say this is the place the spies had their transmitter.

As far as I know, the tree is still there, with the wire in it.

Gold

While cattle mustering, George Ellis also came in contact with small groups of aborigines.

The drovers always carried food with them as they could often be away for several days.

They also carried a blanket or piece of tarpaulin to sleep on, as they had to stay at night in very remote and inhospitable places.

All these items were usually strapped onto the saddle and if they thought they were going to be away longer than overnight they would take with them a couple of pack horses equipped with a special pack saddle heavily loaded up with provisions.

There was never any need to carry water in these areas because every little gully or creek had beautiful clear water.

Of course there were no roads at all, in this area, in those days.

Early one September morning eight of the stockmen headed off to begin the muster, as there was a lot of branding to be done.

They had ridden a few miles when they decided to part and go in different directions and to meet at a previously determined spot, called Black Bull, which was on the Little Nymboida River and had bush yards established for travelling stock.

George Ellis who had joined them left the others and at about noon and had been riding for about an hour alone, when he rode down a ridge into a nice little gully with beautiful clear water.

George decided to water his horse and have a drink himself. He stooped down near a rock ledge and as he was drinking he noticed in the yellowish clay of the waterbed some bright yellow spots.

On closer investigation he could see reflected from the bottom were several of them. He put his hand into the one-foot deep very cold water to retrieve some.

When he held this yellow stuff in his hand, he couldn't help but notice it was very heavy and immediately the thought ran through his mind "Gold!" 'No it can't be,' George thought, 'I couldn't be this lucky.'

He wrapped about a half dozen pieces into his handkerchief, which he placed in his pocket and continued on his way searching for cattle.

It was almost dark when he met up with some of the other stockmen and some of them camped near Mole Creek overnight, while the others went to Black Bull.

Just down from where they camped there was a group of men with sluice boxes working on a gravel bed recovering gold.

George approached them and asked could he see what gold looked like.

They obligingly showed him some nice specks they had in a pan. As soon as George saw the gold specks, he knew that it was gold that he'd found.

But he never let on to those men or the other stockmen the details of his find.

The men continued with their muster and had already had over 100 head rounded up, which was considered to be a large herd of cattle and included a number gathered along the way.

They arrived back at Kangaroo Creek about five days after they had set out. They then still had to yard the cattle.

The next few days they were all busy branding and tending to the cattle and the more George thought about this gold the more excited he became.

When he had finished work George told Jack Shea he was leaving his job and going to look for gold, being very careful not to let on he had already found it.

Jack laughed at George and told him he would starve!

However he assured George that if things went wrong he was welcome back there to work.

George Ellis had to go into South Grafton to buy some equipment including a couple of picks, a shovel, gold pans as well as other provisions needed when camping and gold fossicking.

He also bought some kerosene lanterns, blankets, a good supply of flour, pots and a fry pan, a gun and cartridges.

The gun was in case he ran out of food there would always be some bird or even wallaby he could eat.

He then headed back to Shea's and the next morning after gathering his gear together.

George bid Jack and the other stockmen farewell and headed into the wilderness. He had his own horse as well as a packhorse that he borrowed from the Shea's.

The thoughts of gold must have sent George on a “high”, as he made a mistake and rode into the wrong gully.

Soon realising his error, George then rode back to where he should have gone, delaying him a few hours.

Finally reaching his destination, he then had to tether the horses and then make a camp hut from bark.

The following day he also had to fence in an area for the horses. This he made from cutting down some small saplings.

There was plenty of grass in the forest for the horses to feed off and in the daylight the horses were let roam and at night they were probably hobbled and yarded.

George was digging a hole for the fireplace of his hut when he unearthed a three-quarter ounce nugget of gold, which gave a big boost to his adventure.

After that George was very busy every day panning this gold. He found that it was taking at least an hour to pan a dish, because the gold was in yellow sticky clay.

However this was very rewarding, as it was quite common for there to be several small nuggets left in the bottom of the pan, amongst a nice trail of fine and heavy gold.

In the first fortnight he had panned 1200 pounds worth of gold, (valued then at about two pounds 18 shillings an ounce).

From this amount it can be well imagined the quantity of gold he was mining. The biggest nugget George found in the gully weighed one and a half ounces.

One day George was not sure if he was panning it properly, so he rode back to Mole Creek to check on how the other miners were doing and soon realised he was not doing it correctly.

The next day he went back over where he had worked and within the next fortnight he recovered a further 102 ounces of gold he had missed or washed out of the pan.

George also found many small nuggets half an ounce and smaller but the usual run of gold was like grains of corn and wheat.

Some of the bigger nuggets had pieces of red quartz stuck to them.

George then decided to name the gully “Clay Gully” and it is still known as this today.

One such piece of gold was by a freak of nature, shaped like a map of Australia with a small piece of red quartz embedded in it where Ularu (Ayres Rock) is located.

In later years George had this made into a brooch, which his wife wore with a solid gold chain, necklace made from Clay Gully gold.

George used to take huge amounts of gold back to Shea's place where they would lock it in a safe until he was ready to take it back to a bank in Grafton.

Checks were been made with the older banks in Grafton to see how much gold George ultimately deposited, but unfortunately their records only go back to about 1920.

From what others, including Clarrie Brewer have told us, in the two years George was there, he was supposed to have found about 900 ounces of gold.

We have found this mentioned in old records, but they do not actually state how much gold he found, only about the find.

Jack Shea decided to ride out to the Clay Gully to see how George was going. When he arrived he couldn't see George about and called out 'where are you, George?'

George answered from a distance of about 100 yards up in the hillside; 'I'm up here Jack.' Jack called back 'what are you doing up there, chasing wallabies?'

To which George replied 'I don't know about wallabies, but look what I just found', and he held up an ounce gold nugget.

Jack cried out, 'well you'd just about have to be the luckiest man on earth.'

George had a very enjoyable time for almost a year.

Though it appeared that someone had let the secret out about his strike. I heard it was Jack Shea who unintentionally may have done this.

One day George had all this gold laying in pans where he was working when he thought he heard some noise and looking up there were three horsemen approaching.

George didn't have time to hide his gold and the men were stunned to see so much of it.

The men told George they had heard about his find and decided to go looking for him and had been searching gullies and creeks for a few days until now.

George knew these men. They came from Glenreagh, a village about five miles east of Clay Gully.

George suggested 'now you have found me, come in with me and share the rest of it, though excluding what I already have.'

The men told George that was his find and thanked him for the offer and they were not interested in joining him.

After having a cup of tea and some lunch with George the men rode off with a friendly farewell.

As George had already moved his pegs up the creek they had to be content with going down the gully in new ground below where he had been.

It is unknown how much gold this family recovered.

Though by all reports it was a very substantial amount.

When the entire gully had been worked, all the miners conferred together and decided they would search for the mother lode and they also all agreed if they found it they would all go in it together for the rich reward.

George stayed there for about eight months trying to find this reef, still getting a bit of gold and a few of the other miners stayed with him.

They dug trenches into the side of the hills, washed pans of dirt by the hundreds but still the secret of Clay Gully was not disclosed.

Maybe some day in years to come some lucky person will find it.

When gold is in a gully or creek in the form of 'free gold' (not stuck to quartz), it usually means that it has been washed down from a 'mother lode' (or reef) in the hills above.

What actually happens is the top of the reef slowly decomposes which leaves free gold in the soil that is gradually washed into the creek.

This process takes millions of years and it is a continuing process.

In the hills above Clay Gully there are some yet to be found rich reefs that could contain millions of dollars of gold.

People still go out there looking, including myself! Some day, some lucky person will find it.

As my father used to say, 'if you can find this reef you wouldn't have to look for gold again'.

When I was a youth my father would also say to me 'go out and look for it even if it takes you 20 years to find it.'

It is from that point the miners started their searching.

Finally when they were all exhausted and thoroughly disappointed from their lack of results, they decided to call off the search.

George then moved into the Mole Creek area still fossicking and getting some gold but not as rich a find as the Clay Gully.

He built a camp and worked in a creek area called Cradle Creek for about two years. He also worked in Mole Creek and in the Little Nymboida River mining for alluvial gold.

He also worked in Mole Creek and in the Little Nymboida River mining alluvial gold.

Arthur Robb worked in the mines with George Ellis for about five years, however without much luck.

He once told of how the reef they were following was cut off by a huge band of rock, which in mining terms is called "a horst". (In miners terms a horse).

The theory is you mine your way through the horst; the reef on the other side should be very rich.

Accordingly George Ellis told Arthur to "punch" his way through the huge rock face and the results should be very rewarding.

While he was doing this George would continue to extract quartz from the other end of the reef, so at least they would be making some money.

So Arthur started drilling and blasting his way through the hard rock face and it was so hard he could only go a few inches with his drill before it became blunt again.

Arthur spent many hours a week sharpening the drills on a blacksmith's forge.

Nine months later Arthur broke through the rock face, some 90 feet underground, into softer rock and when he did so, there was no sign of a quartz reef.

All George said to Arthur was 'these are the things you have to put up with as a miner,' adding, "we could have been very rich".

Often on a wet day when most stayed in bed reading a book, or sitting by a log fire, George Ellis would be out panning for gold in a gully that was usually dry.

The heavy rain would start the flow of the water.

George would be loaming the soil around the gully to see if any gold had been coming down the hillside and many times this had led him to a gold bearing reef.

An extract from Arthur Robb's ledger book of 1939 showed a miner's earnings for a year.

Gold production lease 152, 1939.

Yields:

12 tons, 24 ounces. Pounds 189.16.00.

20 tons and 30 ounces. Pounds 189.16.00.

The Gold Mines

There were mines springing up all over the district. In 1881 the area was proclaimed a gold field, with the name of the Orara Gold Fields.

To be more specific the Orara Gold Fields actually start down south near Taree then extends north to Grafton and out west past Dorrigo.

There were about 64 mines to the author's knowledge within a 10 miles radius of Moleton!

These mines were mostly hard rock mining with the miners mainly concentrating on quartz veins or reefs.

In this area were mines such as the "Waratah", "Day Dawn", "New Years Gift", "Advance", "Advance Australia", "Jessie Smith", "Little Charlie", "Lady Mary", "Toe Rag", "Highland Mary" and "Russian Bean" to name a few.

Some of these mines are mentioned here in more detail.

The Advance Australia Mine

In the Advance Australia Mine there were two reefs, the Advance running roughly north-east to south-west and another reef which intersected it from a north-west to south-east direction.

They called this reef the Jack Lyons Reef, which the author understands was named after the politician.

At the intersection of Jack Lyons Reef and the Advance reef it was going up to 15 ounces of gold per ton.

At the northern end of the reef it was still producing good gold where the reef "broke" (this is a part of the reef where there was a fault in it, similar to the land breaking up and moving many millions of centuries ago).

Though the other part of the reef was never found, though many other miners have driven tunnels into the ridge without luck.

(George Ellis always believed the reef was there somewhere).

In about 1898 George Ellis was employed at the "Advance Australia Mine", which had already been working for several years, and this is where he obtained his first underground experience.

In 1908 the Advance mine had almost petered out and the owners had decided to abandon it, so George took possession of the lease and continued mining it himself.

When George Ellis took charge of the Advance Australia Mine, he also obtained their three-header stamper battery, which he moved onto his property in 1908 and it is still there today and working!

He also had workers with him in the Advance mine and there his luck continued.

When he was driving a tunnel along the reef, he struck a rich patch of gold and as he described it to Arthur Robb 'as like a jeweller's shop, gold everywhere.'

In one clump he recovered 119 ounces of gold from three quarters of a ton of quartz and another 110 ounces per ton from a ton a half.

As well he found several other tons yielding over 50 ounces per ton.

Then the yield settled down to about five or six ounces per ton on the average. He also found some small half-ounce nuggets in the reef.

George Ellis often mentioned that when they pulled the quartz away from the other rock, referred to as the wall, there was a thin layer of gold, like a sheet of it all over the wall and he removed this with a cold chisel.

This gold was not put through the battery but was melted into ingots in the said form.

Unfortunately I cannot find any mention of this in the Department of Mines records.

Thirty years ago I tried, but the department admitted that most of the Advance Australia Mine records had been mislaid or accidentally destroyed in a fire that ignited in their offices many years ago.

The Lady Mary Mine



In 1887 William and Teresa Shipman selected a property on Tallawadjah Creek, west of Glenreagh.

They had eight children: Mary, Jack, Bill, Horace, Les, Daniel, Arnold and Con.

The Shipmans were great friends of George Ellis and Daniel selected the property adjoining George's to the south boundary ("Portion 33").

That was somewhere about the year 1908, not long after George selected his property ("Portion 25").

After the Shipmans had selected this property, they set about clearing and fencing it. Similar to George, they had to carve their farm out of the jungle.

As mentioned earlier in this book, the boys also helped George clear and fence his property and sometimes their father William would ride up from Tallawudjah creek and give a hand or instruct his sons in how to set up the farm.

Though these visits were infrequent as there was still plenty of work to be done at his own property "on the creek".

Just how many brothers also helped on the farm is uncertain, as the rest of the family worked the family property at the creek.

Every week Mary, who was then a girl in her late teens, used ride nine miles up to the farm at Moletton through uninviting country.

She would then cook heaps of cakes and scones for her brothers, stay a couple of days, then ride back alone home to Tallawadjah Creek".

The creek which runs through the farm and bordering George Ellis's farm was named after her; "The Lady Mary Creek".

In later years Mary married Reginald Walter George Gill, who had migrated from Somerset, England.

The Lady Mary Mine was located on the property adjoining George Ellis's to the south. The Shipmans had been busy clearing the land to run cattle and preparing for a dairy farm.

One day in 1915 Mary was hunting the cows home to milk when she noticed a tree had been uprooted quite recently by a storm.

She couldn't help but notice that the roots had unearthed several nice chunks of quartz.

When she picked up a few pieces she saw also several nice specks of gold on them.

With great excitement she carried some home to show Dan, who the next day started to dig a shaft and it was soon apparent there was a reef there going four ounces of gold per ton of quartz.

That was considered to be very rich, as anything above half an ounce per ton was considered then to be rich.

In 1915 Dan married a girl from Bellingham also by the name of Mary. The family worked together and in the next few months they had dug out 10 tons of good rich quartz.

They hired George Ellis to crush this stone in his little battery on the Lady Mary Creek, which was a few hundred yards from the mine.

They called the mine The Lady Mary; the creek had been previously named after her.

It is uncertain the amount of gold they recovered from the crushing but unofficially it was stated as somewhere about 40 ounces.

The Shipman's only obtained one crushing from this mine when George Ellis offered them a price in the form of a reward for the mine because it was so close to his battery.

The Shipmans knew that George had the monopoly over the batteries in the area and as they couldn't afford one they accepted his offer for the mine.

Now George had the Advance Australia Mine and the Lady Mary Mine, where he had men working for him, as well as two unnamed mines, all in close proximity the mine he had found himself.

One Sunday back in about 1922 (the exact year is uncertain), George decided to do some maintenance around the shaft while the rest of the crew had the day off.

He was descending a ladder about half way down the 80-foot shaft when the ladder broke and George tumbled down the other 40 feet.

Luckily the mine was starting to get water seepage and George fell into the water.

Then some of the timber from the shaft wall came hurtling down and struck George pinning him under the water for a few minutes.

When he released himself he realised he had a broken leg, a compound fracture with the bones protruding out a few inches.

He later discovered had also broken his collarbone and several ribs.

He climbed up the remaining ladders and somehow got over the section where the ladder had fallen off and then reached the surface.

By now his leg was in great pain and he had to drag himself home, about half a mile away, most of the time crawling.

This had all happened before he was married, so there was nobody else at home to look after him. Someone else did come along though. (I think it was Jack Probert).

He offered to take George to hospital at Coffs Harbour but George refused to go.

Jack then rode into Lowanna and called the Coramba doctor, who then got himself, lost on the way to George's house.

Then George decided to fix himself up and then with great difficulty he pushed the bones back in position and sewed the wound up with needle and cotton.

He then asked Jack to go out to fence and get a paling to make a splint, which was cut, to the required length.

Then finally his leg was splintered and bandaged up. At that stage George's leg was swollen to about three times it's normal size but he still would not go to a doctor.

The leg finally did heal, but it was a full nine months later before he could return to his mining activities.

George was very fortunate indeed, for his leg was not infected or worse he could have suffered from gangrene.

Around about this time George decided to give mining away and get together a bullock team to haul logs.

This he did for a few years, but the craving for gold was too great and he sold the bullocks and went back into gold mining.

He bought a steam engine to use at the Lady Mary Mine, from the Mulhearn brothers at Brooklana (near Ulong) and before he sold the bullocks he walked them to 16 miles to Brooklana to haul steam engine back.

When George recommenced mining he had increasing trouble with water coming into the mine.

He used the steam engine to work the pumps and work winches to haul the ore up out of the mine, but the cost of employing more men was too great so George abandoned the mine for about 10 years but he still kept his lease on it.

In the early 1930's George Ellis was approached by a company who offered to take over the mine and work it 24 hours a with two twelve hour shifts.

George accepted the company's offer but retained a percentage of the shares and he was appointed the manager (or assistant) and adviser.

The following miners also worked in the mine - Arthur (Neil) McLennan, Vince McLennan, Merv Shelton, Joe Beddington, Sid Grey, George Chalmers, Jim Jackson, Bill Kubank, Alf Sinclair, Charlie Hutley and a big Maori (thought to be) Darbie Mason.

The company used George's battery to crush and treat the ore. It was stated that some of the quartz was very rich and they took it straight from the mine to the battery to stockpile.

Though it was soon discovered that people were coming in at night and stealing this high quality quartz, so the mining company decided not to cart it to the battery until they were about to start crushing.

The company had put through about three or four crushings when the mine was flooded with a great deluge of water.

They then bought or hired more pumps to place at a higher level. However even by working these pumps 24 hours a day they were not making any impression on the level of water.

It was soon discovered they were pumping the Lady Mary Creek even though they were a considerable distance from it, by about 300 or 400 yards. This meant there must have been an underground stream connection.

Between George and the company they recovered about 600 ounces of gold, and when the mine was closed in 1936, it was still going at four ounces per ton or better.

It is believed there is still a solid bronze submersible steam pump in the mine (a pump that worked underwater), which would be worth a fortune today, even as a museum piece.

The Day Dawn Mine

Jim Jackson, who came to this area in about 1927, was described by the other locals as a loner of Chinese Canadian nationality and a man of quiet temperament.

He had been a miner in Canada and not long after his arrival was fossicking for gold in the creeks around Moleton, particularly in the Little Nymboida River.

He was a highly qualified blacksmith and millwright whose services were much sought after by the local sawmills.

Some of his skill at blacksmithing can still be seen today at the George's Gold Mine battery.

Not long after Jim arrived in the area he met up with George Ellis and both became trusted friends, which was a big factor in those early days.

At that time very few miners dared to reveal their secrets or even a slight hint of where there could be gold, or if they were onto a slightest bit of "colour".

Jim decided to prospect in the Day Dawn Mine, which had been abandoned by the Shipman Family who had previously taken over the mine over from the lot owners Sharpe and Morrow.

The Day Dawn mine was named, because it was found one morning.

The original owners had extracted a considerable amount of good quartz from this mine, (in the vicinity of 30 - 40 tons), which George Ellis crushed for them.

It is uncertain as to the total amount of gold recovered but it has been told that it was somewhere about the 100 ounces mark.

They eventually decided to forfeit this mine because of the host (surrounding rock) getting harder and very difficult to drill by the old hammer and tap drill method.

As Jackson preferred to work alone it took him many months to extract enough quartz to make it worthwhile for a crushing for George Ellis's battery.

It is uncertain of how many crushings Jackson had mined but it is known that the last one was very rich with a yield of five ounces per ton or more!

George Russ, who carted this quartz to the battery in his truck said he had never known much about gold.

But he could see gold quite visibly on every piece of quartz he picked up and examined and he was not a person to tell lies.

Jim Jackson also had a good spot on the Little Nymboida River where very rich alluvial gold from where he had a lease.

After putting the crushing of quartz through George's battery he would take a bit of a spell from the hard and dangerous underground mining for a couple of months and do a bit of light work on his alluvial claim on the river.

He would then continue to get another crushing from the Day Dawn Mine. Two prospectors who were living on George Ellis's property, Dick Portus and Frank Williamson knew of Jackson's luck and knew he had also abandoned the gold mine temporarily to go to the river.

They decided to 'jump the claim (*) on the Day Dawn Mine.

(*) A phrase used when a miner takes over another mans lease and mine, which was legal to do if the miner was absent without a good reason for more than about 10 days.

Portus and Williamson were soon mining rich quartz from Jackson's mine.

One crisp quiet spring morning several weeks later, the two were walking to work the mine and were within about two hundred yards from the mine when there was a huge explosion that shook and rattled the hills for miles around.

The two shocked men then raced down to the mine and after the dust had cleared they could see that it had been deliberately blown in.

The explosion was heard for many miles away and residents in the Glenreagh - Nana Glen area were bewildered to hear such an explosion way up in the hills and became very concerned to what was going on up there.

The damage to the mine was enormous which left big cracks in the walls of the shaft and great slabs of rock hanging precariously.

The mine was in such a dangerous condition Williamson and Portus had no other option but to go home and abandon their high hopes.

It appears that Jim Jackson had been charging the mine up with explosives all night and had timed the charge to detonate at the precise time of the miners approaching. Jim Jackson was not in sight and cunningly returned from the river about a week later.

The old men of the bush always believe in the phrase 'an eye for an eye'.

In other words if someone does something nasty to you can then retaliate and give them a double blast (dose)!

Forty years later and still no one will venture into this mine because of its dangerous state.

About 1940 Jim Jackson moved to Ulong and worked as a millwright in and blacksmith casually for a Mr Timms.

He still spent a lot of time prospecting in the surrounding area and getting gold. One day Jim disappeared, nobody knew where he had gone.

Many years later a Harold Wells found his remains. They were located in thick bush between Ulong and Lowanna. A solid gold dental plate and his teeth identified Jim.

Some say things were very suspicious and the way the body was laying he may have been murdered for the gold he would have been carrying.

In the 1960's there came into the area a man named Allan Maher, who was a World War Two digger. He had a strong urge to look for gold.

Like many other prospectors he had dreamt of striking that rich lode. After hearing the story of the Day Dawn Mine, Allan decided if there was gold in there once of as good a yield, it must still be in there!

He took up a lease on the old workings and decided to sink a new shaft to the east of the original dangerous one. He then dug a tunnel west at the 75 feet level and came under the old workings to where he believed this "good shoot of gold" should still be located.

Allan worked day after day and long hours sinking this shaft. As the depth increased more difficulties arose in getting the rock out.

Clarrie Brewer used to come up from Nana Glen a couple of days a week to help him haul the rock to surface.

On the odd occasion George Robb (this book's author) would also give Allan a hand.

As the shaft was being dug there was also a nice stockpile of gold bearing quartz stacked up at the 70 feet level.

This piece was about 10 inches wide and nice rusty quartz and going about half ounce per ton.

For some unknown reason Allan decided to drive a tunnel east to see what gold was in that direction and leave the good spot until later.

This tunnel extended for about 45 feet. He removed seven tons of quartz that was put through the old three-header battery of George Ellis's.

He also recovered four ounces of gold, or about half ounce per ton. This was all a very low-grade ore.

Allan then decided to leave this area and tunnel west, as first planned, to the rich area because once he connected up with the old shaft the air supply would not be good as it was at present, causing breathing problems.

I was down the shaft one day with Allan and I was gasping for air and hastily got out.

I told Allan that it could be very dangerous and a strain on your heart but Allan laughed and said you get used to it after a while. I looked at him with suspicion.

For I knew only too well from my experiences in the mines what the lack of oxygen was all about.

A couple of weeks later I was working on my farm when I heard a vehicle roaring out of the bush and headed to where I was.

It was Allan in his Nissan Cedric sedan. He jumped out and he was grinning from ear to ear and almost shouted to me the words George, I've struck it at last, have a look in the pan!

With that he swished his gold pan around which revealed a beautiful trail of gold at least six inches long, fine but solid yellow gold.

I was just as delighted as he was. I shook his hand and congratulated him on finding the rich shoot that Jim Jackson had once worked on, though deeper down.

I asked Allan what he intended to do now and he said he would go next day to Sydney to tell his wife Agnes and family the great news.

Allan only stayed away for three days. He was so excited to get back to the gold and commence removing this rich quartz.

The day following his return he was up bright and early to work in his mine, but he had only been gone a few hours when he returned to Ellis's house where he was camping with another two prospectors, Allan McGee and Les Ede.

Allan said he wasn't feeling too good and decided to come back and have a rest on his bed.

As the men used to take turns about cooking and serving up supper, it was Allan's turn and as he was just about to set the table he collapsed.

The other two tried hard to revive him but he was dead. Les Ede came to my house to ring for an ambulance but there was nothing anyone could do.

I helped lift Allan's body into the ambulance, a very upsetting experience and one that I will never forget.

One day, months later, John Payne, Ross McDonald and myself went down into the shaft to see if we could locate the rich quartz that Allan found, but we couldn't find it.

We think he had shoveled a heap of rock on top of the rich patch.

On the way out one of the ladders broke and I almost fell about 30 feet. I received such a scare that I will never go down that mine again. I'm sure there must be a curse on it!

In recent times two prospectors George McAnally and Greg Lee have descended into this mine to try and uncover the mystery.

They have moved tons of rock from one spot to another to try to find where Allan's gold is located, but so far without any luck.

Wells Mine

There were two brothers whose surname was Wells, (unfortunately their first names are unknown to the author), but they were friends of George Ellis.

One brother was a house builder lived at Nana Glen. In 1923 George Ellis employed him to build his new home.

George used to help Wells with his house construction until he informed George one day that he was hindering the construction.

With that George bundled up his gear and rode out to Clay Gully again until he had found enough gold to pay the builder his wages.

During the house building this brother used to ride a horse up from Nana Glen and work and camp on the Ellis property, then ride back home, about once a week.

The second brother used to do a bit of prospecting in the area and one day he found a rich huge boulder of quartz in the head of a gully very close to the Ellis property on the Simpson Ridge Road.

The boulder had apparently rolled off the side of the very steep hill somewhere but couldn't have travelled very far because of its location, only a few hundred yards from the top.

The brother could see specks of gold embedded throughout the quartz and realised that it was rich and he realised it had rolled away from the mother lode.

At this time George Ellis was putting a crushing through his battery on his property.

Wells asked George if he could put this find through the battery for him and George agreed to crush it for him.

In order to transport the find, Wells had to get explosives and shatter the huge boulder into fragments, then he used a draught horse to drag it out of the gully to the battery, this taking several trips.

The quartz rock weighed about half ton and he recovered five ounces of gold from it, which was very good gold.

When it came the “fun” part of trying to find where it had come from, Wells got his brother, George Ellis and also George Chalmers to help him search for it.

About half way up the side of the hill Wells found a reef going one ounce to the ton, which he mined for a couple of years and got between one and eight ton crushings from it. But it wasn't as rich as the boulder originally found.

There must be another reef somewhere there that has not been found. The mine is still known as Well's mine though it is partly closed in now.

Sandstone Gully and the Waratah

This is a small gully that runs into the Little Nymboida River and it starts near the old cemetery on Bushman's Range Road.

On the head of this gully near the cemetery is a gold mine called “The Waratah”.

There is not much on record about this mine though Jim Benny worked it in the 1890's and he said it went up to 12 ounces of gold per ton.

But the gold did not average that amount. Where the gold was rich the quartz was red, hence the name they gave it.

Sandstone Gully was extremely rich with gold and there were a lot of men working it.

Down near where it junctions the river they had driven a tunnel through a ridge to divert the water.

This tunnel, which extended 300 feet, is still there today but it is very difficult to find under the thick undergrowth. When the water was diverted off course they then proceeded to recover the gold.

Jim said it was quite common to get half an ounce from one pan of gravel!

There were many hundreds of ounces won from this gully. The source of supply was never located so this remains another mystery for someone to solve one day.

A prospector, George Forbes picked up a piece of quartz about the size of a football not far from this gully, but further up towards the Waratah Mine.

This piece was studded with gold. He got an assayer to assay it and the report returned said it was going 63 ounces to the ton, which was an unbelievably high amount.

George Forbes dug around there for ages but could never find the rest of the reef from where it originated.

Even if this was just a rich piece in one isolate spot in the reef there still must be a good quartz reef there somewhere.

The three richest creeks or gullies in the area were Clay Gully, Sandstone Gully and Gordon Gully, which was out past Camp Creek.

Many hundred of ounces were recovered from Sandstone Gully and Jim Benny was one of the miners who worked it before the First World War.

The Bayfield and Highland Mary Mines

Sometime around 1920, (or it may have been a little earlier), George Ellis purchased a five headed stamper battery on the Mole Creek near where these days is the intersection of the Glenreagh - Dorrigo Road and Black Mountain Road. George used to crush the quartz for many mines in this area.

Not far from where the battery was located, there was once a boarding house for miners and for workers or travellers who happened to be just passing.

Also in later years for those who worked on the Glenreagh - Dorrigo railway line. A man called Keats had originally owned the battery, as well as the boarding house and he used to mine in the area and crush the quartz.

Originally the battery was a 10 stamper (or two five stampers). This battery has now been moved and erected at George's Gold Mine.

It had always been George Ellis's wish to move the battery to his property and George McAnally finally accomplished this in 1994. It was then donated back to the mine, as a tribute to George Ellis.

Whenever George Ellis had a bit of spare time he used to go prospecting on his own property.

He found several small leads and dug shafts on them but most had no width in them which meant to extract the reef of quartz from the surrounding rock would mean a lot of useless rock to be shifted.

One day in 1932 he found a reasonably sized reef, which was going three ounces of gold per ton, considered to be very rich.

He called the mine "The Highland Mary" and immediately started to dig a shaft and had sunk it to about 32 feet.

He recovered 10 tons of quartz when very prematurely the gold cut out and finished.

He took these 10 tons of quartz to his three-header battery and put it through the normal process with the amalgamation method. He recovered 34 ounces of gold that was then valued at seven pounds per ounce.

On today's price this parcel would be worth about \$20,000.

When gold cuts out like that in a reef, providing the reef is still going down, it could have been possible for to find rich gold at a lower depth, possibly straight beneath where the previous gold had cut out.

But it was a big gamble and George didn't bother going deeper as he had other commitments with the "Advance Australia" mine, so in disgust he went back to it.

All this happened in the days of the Great depression of 1933 and at that time into the area came swag carrying fellow Ken Bayfield.

Ken was of Norwegian nationality and had been working in an antimony mine near Armidale, then on the Moseley's dairy farm near Dorrigo.

When things got really tough they had to ask him to leave, as they could no longer afford to pay him. Ken had heard of gold being found in the Moleton area and went there to try out his luck.

People he met advised him to see George Ellis, as he was the most successful and experienced miner in the area.

It wasn't long before Ken met up with George who showed him around the mines, and explained the mining techniques and how gold was recovered.

George also explained to Ken how the Highland Mary mine had fizzled out and told him that it may make back onto gold at a greater depth.

George suggested to Ken 'if you want something to do go down near the creek and drive a tunnel into a particular hill and come under the Highland Mary.'

This would be about 140 feet below and it should intersect the reef where it could be rich in gold.

At this time the Government wanted more gold to boost the economy as it was running out of funds, hence the Great Depression.

It was decided by Parliament to subsidise gold miners to prospect or mine. This was to give the miners an incentive to look for gold.

The government paid about six shillings per foot for a miner to drive a tunnel into a hill providing there was a positive chance or prospect to find a reef.

The tunnel was to be six feet by three feet.

If it were made any larger the miner would receive nothing extra.

The government paid extra to sink a shaft, as it was much harder work getting the mullock (unwanted rock) out of the ground.

If a miner struck it rich then he was required to pay a percentage back to the Government, somewhere in the vicinity of 25%.

This was a great help to miners who almost starved if they never found any "pay dirt", and many mines in Australia were subsidised by these arrangements.

Ken Bayfield had heard about this grant and made application to the Department of Mines for a subsidy.

In a very short time, a few weeks in fact, Ken had a visit from a Mines Inspector, who after hearing the great prospects of this mine immediately gave Ken the "go ahead" and granted him a lease on the area.

So Ken gathered up a bit of gear (a pick and some shovels) and started digging his tunnel.

He got to about 40 feet when the rock started to get harder and from then on he had to use explosives (gelignite) and blast his way through.

To drill the holes all he had was the old hand chisel type drill, which he had to tap with a four or five pound hammer.

The hand chisel was turned slightly after every hit to make a round hole and so the drill wouldn't jam.

The drills had to be sharpened and tempered on the forge by the miner after a few days use.

The old miners had to also be their own blacksmiths, surveyors and engineers.

Occasionally Ken ran out of gelignite or never had the money to buy it so he had to bash his way through the rock with a tool called a "gad".

This is a sharp chisel or wedge like tool that was forced into a crevice by blows from a bigger hammer, an 8 or 10 pounder.

As the "gad" was forced in it would break the rock, which was very slow and very hard work.

Ken realised it was too heavy and cumbersome to use a hand one-wheel wheelbarrow, so he borrowed a four wheel trolley from George Ellis and laid down wooden tracks as he proceeded his way.

The larger mines used steel tracks or rails but Ken couldn't afford this.

Ken was working long hours, seven days a week; it was well after dark when he emerged from the tunnel.

When blasting, a miner could not go back into the mine the same day, because of the fumes from the gelignite.

If a miner did, they would get a violent headache and probably the fresh air would be so scarce which could well be fatal.

Ken's only light was by candle and that served a second and essential purpose. When the flame started to diminish meant the air was running out, so one immediately got out.

The candles were hung on the wall of the tunnel in a contraption call a "spider".

The spider was a cut out of a piece of star shaped tin and the sharp points of the star hung onto any rough surface of the tunnel.

Larger mines used carbide gas lamps that would have the same effect as a candle as the gas wouldn't burn without oxygen.

Jim Robb told of how he would sometimes go into the mine and say 'Ken, go out and have a smoke and I will wheel the ore out for you.'

Jim was then only about 14 or 15 said he never did this very often.

Merv Shelton and brother Mick who lived in a house near the pear trees in the paddock opposite the mine told me they would sometimes wheel the ore out for him too.

They all said that in the two years they would have helped him only about six or seven days altogether

As they were only young teenagers and had plenty of other work to do for their own family. They never helped Ken together and only for an hour or so on separate days.

Merv told the story of how one day Ken had six charges of gelignite to go off and as he couldn't let them go all at once he asked Merv would he light three fuses and he would light the other three.

They had lit a few candles along the tunnel so they could find their way out and when they lit the fuses and went to run out something had put out all the candles.

With the sudden darkness they were hampered momentarily but long enough for the explosives to start going off.

Merv said when the first one went off they were only about 40 feet away from it and they were both knocked to the floor with rocks whizzing past them.

Luckily they were not hit. They scrambled to their feet and only went another four yards when another explosion went off.

Three explosives had gone off before they got out. Merv said it was a terrifying experience, they thought they were "gone".

Apart from that they were nearly deafened by the noise and almost burst their eardrums. Both were partly deaf for a long time later.

Right at the 100 foot mark from the entrance the Bayfield broke into a huge reef of quartz at least two feet in width.

Ken thought 'this is it, I hope it's rich.'

But when he tested it in the "dolly pot (*)" it only had an odd speck of gold in it. He continued on.

The reef was running approximately north east to south west and Ken's tunnel was going from west to east that meant he came to it at an angle.

He then tunneled through the reef and followed along on the southern side of it testing it as he went. In places he took a few tons of quartz out and stacked it outside to be crushed.

At the 120 foot spot Ken got an idea to veer away from the reef he was following and put another branch tunnel heading south east.

He tunneled in for 55 feet and never found any quartz at all only solid rock.

Nobody was really certain why he did this as it took him almost two months.

The lads who helped out occasionally couldn't remember either.

(*) A dolly pot is a metal cylindrical shaped container where about a hand full of quartz is placed.

The quartz is then smashed finely with a piece of long steel bar called a "dolly" .

Ken then continued following the reef that he was first on. He went another 30 feet when he noticed the reef had a branch coming into it called a "leader".

This leader was showing some nice specks of gold in it and it was going about a third of an ounce to the ton.

He sunk a shaft on the floor of the tunnel to test what it was like where it intersected the main reef but it was still not rich enough.

So he went upwards above the shaft in what is called a "stope" for about 20 feet, as the gold wasn't improving that much.

He realised this was not the rich one he was looking for. He kept on tunneling his way for another 50 feet.

All this had taken him two years and he had a stockpile of about 25 tons of quartz stacked in front of the mine.

For some unknown reason Ken thought it was yielding somewhere between one and four ounces of gold per ton.

He asked George Ellis would he crush it for him in his five stamper battery situated near Mole Creek, about two miles away.

Before George gave Ken a decisive answer he came over with his dolly pot and did about a dozen or so tests on the quartz Ken had mined.

George told Ken that it was only going between one and four pennyweights (*) to the ton.

(*) There are 20 pennyweights in an ounce and 31 grams to the ounce.

George told Ken to dump the quartz, as it was too low a grade to take to the battery to be crushed. Ken just couldn't believe this.

He just couldn't believe he had worked for two years for nothing and he pleaded to George to crush it for him and he would pay him so much per ton to have it crushed.

George must have felt pretty bad about all this, as he was the one that had advised Ken to dig this tunnel.

After a lot of thought George said he would crush the quartz but one condition was that Ken would have to help him get the wood for the boiler.

The batteries were run by steam in those times. So they arranged to go out the next day and cut the wood, which was done by an axe and crosscut saw.

They had to cut several tons of wood, as these old steam engines knew how to burn wood.

They had to drag the wood in with a draught horse but worse still was that they had to get all this quartz over the other side of the Lady Mary Creek, which was a distance of over 100 feet.

This was to be done by hand in a wheelbarrow and then it had to be loaded by hand into a 1926 International truck owned by Ted Partridge.

The wood was then carted to George's battery at Mole Creek.

All this took five days and then it took another five days to put this quartz through the battery and all they got from it was not quite two ounces of gold.

(One and three quarter ounces to be exact).

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When George showed Ken the small bar of gold Ken almost died of shock and immediately accused George of robbing him.

He called George some very nasty names that everyone thought was unjustified.

George wasn't very happy about being accused of robbing Ken. He told Ken that he would never crush any more quartz for him again.

As George had the only two batteries in the area, Ken had no option but to pack up his gear and go.

Ken went out to the Little Nymboida River for a few months to get some alluvial gold and the last we heard of him was that he was mining somewhere in Queensland until he died about 20 years ago.

Someone met Ken in Grafton a few months later and he said he regretted accusing George of robbing him.

At the time he was just so terribly disappointed. George kept the piece of gold in exchange for the use of his battery.

Ken walked out with nothing. Ted Partridge never got paid either for carting the quartz.

George used to say the reef Bayfield had found was not the right one and it was an unknown reef that he'd found.

George would say that some rainy day he would drive the tunnel further himself, but that rainy day never came, as he was too busy with his other mining activities.

Also by saying that he was going to mine it himself kept the other miners away.

Arthur Robb said that George had a funny feeling about going back to the mine and working it.

This was if he went further into the hill and struck it rich other miners and Ken's friends would have thought he deliberately gotten rid of Bayfield.

This would have been very detrimental to George's character and someone would or could blow the mine in, not caring whether George was in there or not when it was done.

The mine was never worked again only an occasional prospector going in to take a few samples of ore from it for testing.

Finally the mine was opened up as a tourist attraction in 1978.

The mine (known better as George's Gold Mine) attracted many hundreds of visitors annually from all over the world.

Many visitors keep returning and bringing their friends.

The story told during the tour of George's Gold Mine has been altered slightly by George to make it shorter but the object is to inform the visitors of the hard work that our old miners had to endure.

Mining is of great mental and physical strain.

The one goal that kept any miner going was the thought that the next day, next week or month, they would strike it rich and never have to work hard again.

It is a sad fact that only one in many thousands has actually struck it rich, just like in any form of gambling!

Victorian visitor and poet Ray Roberts wrote a poem about this mine's story.

The Toe Rag Mine

The Toe Rag Mine is situated about two miles northwest from Moleton Railway Station.

This mine was worked in about 1890, though the owner of the mine's name was not known.

The story told by the old miners was that it was going about four ounces of gold per ton and there was about eight men working it.

They had sunk a shaft down for about 100 feet up on a ridge above Mole Creek, after much difficult work hauling all the rock up by hand using a windlass.

It was decided to go down near Mole Creek and drive a tunnel under the mine which would be about 200 feet below.

They then extract the quartz by the means of a trolley running out along a line and dumping all unwanted rock "mullock" (wastage) on the edge of the creek.

This tunnel went in about 200 feet but they had terrible trouble with water seeping into the tunnel.

The men were working most of the time in water, which meant their boots became soggy and their feet were wet all the time they worked.

It ended up that their feet started to obtain sores from being in the water so long, most sores appearing around their toes.

So they had to bandage their toes up with rags covered in ointment - hence the name they called the mine "The ToeRag".

These miners suffered greatly with their aching toes and put up with this for many months until their suffering became too much and they decided to abandon the mine.

Several hundreds of ounces of gold were recovered before they closed it down.

The tunnel is still open today for any adventurous hunter to wander into but it is very difficult to find as it is situated in thick scrub on the banks of Mole Creek.

Skinner's Gully

About the time that George Ellis had found gold at Clay gully, another stockman was also working for the Shea's.

His family name was Skinner. One day when he was mustering cattle in the area now know as Moleton with another stockman, they rode down a steep slope into a small creek.

They crossed the creek and were riding up the other side.

Skinner noticed an out crop of nice looking quartz protruding from the ground and he immediately dismounted his horse to have a closer look.

He somehow managed to break a piece off the rock and was amazed to see it studded with gold. It was a very rich reef indeed.

At this time there was no civilization about for many miles, apart from the aborigines and he couldn't do much about his rich find.

He could only hope to return in future times.

About 10 years later the area was opened up for farms and roads were constructed into the area.

Skinner had heard about this and returned to take a claim on his rich strike.

In the meantime the settlers had commenced clearing and ringbarking the timber, everything looked different and had changed so much he couldn't find the reef and wasn't sure what creek he had ridden into.

One creek (or gully) that he concentrated on was named after him, "Skinners Gully".

For many years even into the early 1930's Skinner would return and search this area.

He even brought his sons back with him in later years to help him try and locate it, but without success.

Today you can still see the marks of the trenches he had dug along the banks of Skinners Gully.

A sad reminder of a man's lost vision of becoming wealthy. Arthur Robb always believed that Skinner had mixed up the gullies and was looking in the wrong one. Some day, someone will find it, again probably by accident.

Peach Tree Gully

In 1926 when the "timber getters" moved in everywhere and there was a huge demand for a species of tree called hoop pine.

One teamster, Bill Holland was snigging logs out of a gully about a mile south of Clay Gully.

From there the logs were to be loaded onto a wagon and hauled into the Moleton railway station to be eventually trucked to Sydney.

When he was unhooking one log from the bullocks he noticed there was a hunk of quartz jammed into the end of a log.

He couldn't but notice that it was covered in specks of gold. Bill wasn't much interested in gold so he took this piece of quartz and showed it to George Ellis.

George was so excited about this rich quartz specimen he immediately decided to go out to look where this quartz came from.

He even turned his calves onto the cows he was milking at home for the six weeks she was away.

As the log was dragged about half a mile, it was very difficult to find the spot where it had come from.

George dug trenches everywhere, but the reef was never found. The gully was named Peach Tree gully and was situated down the Ring Tree road, which turns off Kangaroo Creek road.

I'm not quite sure now which is Peach Tree gully as there are so many "look alike" gullies in that vicinity.

But I do know there is another rich reef there somewhere waiting to be found not far from Clay gully.

The Other Mines and Miners

The other miners including the McAnallys pegged claims around the Lady Mary Mine but none of them ever struck it rich.

Merv Shelton told a story of how he and three others decided to drive a tunnel into the Lady Mary from the west to see if they could drain the water out.

On doing so they struck a rough patch of quartz about 200 feet from the entrance.

So in the tunnel they sunk (dug) a shaft on this rich patch and followed it down.

The shaft was down 30 feet when one day they noticed a squirt of water coming out of the wall of the tunnel straight above the shaft.

There were two men down in the shaft below.

Someone said 'hit that squirt of water with your pick and see what happens'.

So one chap did, but what they did not know was the water was coming out of the main shaft alongside them and it was only being held by a few inches of rock.

When he hit the water with his pick, the rock immediately broke with the huge weight of water behind it and down came thousands and thousands of gallons of water fair on top of the two in the shaft below.

Merv believed the only thing that saved them was the fact they floated out and were swept down the tunnel.

After this shock they decided to abandon the mine, as it was too dangerous to work!

The Little Nymboida River

Back in the days of the great depression work was scarce. There were no government departments set up to help look for jobs.

As most men could not obtain any work, the next option was to go gold mining.

The Little Nymboida River, which heads into the Lowanna/Ulong area, was once a thriving spot for miners in the days of the great depression.

Dozens of men made a living from gold they recovered from this beautiful river, even if it was only just to survive by.

If they could get an ounce of gold per week they were on a good thing.

Some of the miners lived in the Moleton/Lowanna area.

Some lived near the river and most of them would walk many miles out to the river and start digging on one of the alluvial flats beside the river's edge.

On a Monday they would sink a shaft in some cases up to eight feet deep by eight feet long by five feet wide.

This would take them a few days and when they reached "pay dirt" (the gold on the bedrock), then they would run their find through a sluice box.

Sometimes they would recover two or three ounces.

But if they only got one ounce, that was a week's wages!

When the miners ran the entire heavy wash through the sluice box they usually went home, to get supplies of food and return the following Monday.

Then they would dig another shaft beside the previous one and continue the same operation.

It was too dangerous to drive a tunnel along the bedrock because of the risk of the tunnel caving in and burying them.

Two men who lost their jobs because of the depression were John Morrissey, and Charlie Graham.

Like many others they had heard of the gold being found in the Little Nymboida River.

They had been told of a spot known as Bull Nose Point by a prospector Herb Price.

Herb was a blacksmith and sleeper cutter who was always sought after in the local sawmills and mines.

Herb had found gold in this area, however because of the bad and rough terrain he never pursued his find.

Herb had a 1928 Chevrolet utility and once he had tyre trouble in Grafton and never had the money to buy tubes.

To get around the problem, Herb packed grass into the tyres, in a very compact condition and headed out to the Little Nymboida River to mine gold and believe it or not he made it.

He used to drive his ute down to the Little Nymboida River and it was quite unbelievable just how far he took it.

He also had to fit chains onto the wheels to get out.

Nowadays 4WD vehicles must be used to get out of the river; even then wet weather can still cause all sorts of difficulties.

Charlie and John decided to get stuck into this patch of alluvial gold.

They had no vehicle or horse and they had to walk out from Moleton (a distance of about eight miles), carrying all their gear.

They took several trips to get all their equipment and supplies down to the river, and then they had to build a bark hut near the riverbank.

To actually get to their find, they had to cross the river and when the river was high they had to rest.

Their patch of alluvial gold was very rich, and they installed a very unusual means of extracting the gold from the gravel.

They rigged up a tramline for about two hundred yards down the riverbank, to run down to where there were rapids in the river.

This was done in this particular section of in the water, as it was very still.

They ran a little trolley full of river gravel down the track to a huge sluice box they constructed in the edge of the rapids.

As it was down hill, the trolley went by itself and when it reached the sluice box, they had something to suddenly stop it.

With the sudden jolt of the stop, the trolley would tip the gravel into the sluice box and with water running through the box, the river did the washing for them.

Recovering Gold

There was once a group of men who used to go around the battery sites and offer the owner a percentage for the gold they would recover from the sands.

Using a cyanide method they would sometimes recover hundreds of ounces of gold.

Most of this gold had been coated with iron and would not contact the mercury that was placed on the copper plates outside the battery where the crushed quartz is washed over them.

Once that happens, the gold amalgamates with the mercury in a method known as gold amalgamation.

A German scientist discovered this method of cyanide recovery about 100 years ago.

He travelled the world visiting mining sites showing how his method worked and he became a multi-millionaire, living to 98.

He must have known how to handle cyanide with great proficiency!

There was a man by the name of Gilliland who came to treat the sands at George Ellis's battery.

He soaked the sands in galvanised iron vats (or tanks), coated on the inside with a tar like substance for about one and a half weeks.

The cyanide that was placed in the vats then dissolved everything, including the gold. There are only two things that will dissolve gold that I am aware of.

Cyanide is one of them. Cyanide is used to keep the mercury clean and active and only a small amount, about a teaspoon full in a bucket of water is enough.

Even this amount is very toxic and there's no second chance with cyanide poisoning!

When gold goes into a liquid substance, it appears to be a little like mud, but heavier.

The substance is then run across zinc shavings that look like steel wool, in a very slow flow of water.

Within a few hours of this liquid gold coming into contact with the zinc, a mineral reaction takes place and the gold turns from a liquid back into a gold that is pure (free from other minerals).

The gold then sticks to the zinc, which is then dipped into nitric acid to dissolve the zinc and recover the gold.

This method of recovery is called leaching.

George Ellis did not like this method at all, as there was too greater a risk of being poisoned by the cyanide.

He used to refer to these men “temporary Australians” because of the dangerous nature of their work.

When Gilliland gathered all his equipment together to commence the cyanidation, he would employ one other man to help him.

He would spread the word of a worker being needed and as it was during the depression, men came from all over to apply for the position.

He would never employ a smoker and most of the applicants smoked!

His fear was that a smoker would roll a cigarette while they still had cyanide on their fingers and they would be poisoned.

One applicant, 19 year old Neil McLennan never smoked and he was employed.

Neil later told of how he’d never worked so hard in his life, wheeling tons and tons of the sand by wheelbarrow to the vats.

He then had to shovel the sand into the vats. Then after the cyanide process he had to shovel the sand away.

In between times, he had to pump water from the Lady Mary Creek.

By the end of the day, he was nearly exhausted and the work continued over a few weeks.

When Gilliland had finished, he took the gold away and smelted it into an ingot and came back to show Neil the finished product.

He threw it lightly to Neil to catch, but because of his weakness he dropped it!

He then said to Neil 'that's what you've been working so hard for'.

He then paid Neil 15 pounds, which was three times the normal wage for the type of work he'd been doing.

After Gilliland first started soaking the trailings with cyanide in the vats, he noticed there was no gold appearing in the zinc shavings and he could not make out what he'd done wrong.

Then he realised that he'd forgotten to paint the tanks with a tar substance and the gold was sinking into the zinc coated tank linings.

This caused a major problem and Neil had to shovel all the cyanide contaminated sand out of the tanks and then start all over again. Fortunately for Neil, Gilliland helped him.

After they got the tailings out, Gilliland told George Ellis that he could have all the gold that was stuck to the sides of the tanks.

So George got in there with some sort of scraper and scraped the gold off and as he did Gilliland followed behind him painting the tar on.

George Ellis was able to retrieve several ounces of gold from the tanks.

Apparently they also had to spray a lot of water about and over the tanks before anyone would go in, for fear of poison.

I believe that recovering gold by leaching is still being used in Australia today, though the actual method may have varied slightly.

Tales and Yarns

There were some funny stories associated with mining and living in the district in those days of gold pioneering.

They also include a number of recollections and experiences by the author.

Frog Stories

The Giant Frog

The Nymboida River has always been a good source for fishing, particularly for the Eastern Cod, Perch and fresh water catfish.

The fish seem to bite better at night and most anglers set a few lines drawn on the river, maybe a hundred feet or so apart and every half an hour or so they trudge down to the river and check on them.

There were also plenty of eels in the river. A huge slimy eel would greet you most times when you when you pulled the line in.

Then you have a battle to unhook the wriggling menace. Most times the eels had to be killed by cutting their throats with a huge knife, or cutting their heads off with a small axe or machete.

One night I had a few lines set down on the Little Nymboida River. I was holding one line in my hand waiting for "the big one".

Then all of a sudden in the river, in about the same area where I had a line set in the river, I heard a great commotion of frogs croaking.

It was not the ordinary croaking but a terrified sound coming from them.

It was time to check on the lines down there.

I had a good trek and as I arrived where the frogs were in disturbance I became very cautious because it may have been a tiger snake after them.

Tiger snakes are night predators and were often seen chasing frogs.

I steadily approached where the frogs screaming, then trekked around to see what was chasing them as there were frogs hopping everywhere.

Frogs were diving into the river by the dozens, running the risk by being eaten by the fish, rather than face whatever was "after them".

To my dismay and surprise the predator turned out to be a huge fawn coloured frog, which was about six inches in size.

He already had a frog in his mouth and was still chasing the others!

This huge frog was definitely not a Queensland Cane Toad.

He didn't even look like a toad; in fact he was a very handsome looking frog, smooth with no warts or bumps like a toad.

After eyeing me off for a few seconds, the frog hopped away and disappeared into the thick scrub.

After the episode with the frogs I went back up the river to where my father was fishing.

This was about 9pm and I knew he would soon want to go home, as we had about a half a mile walk ahead of us back up the river.

It was in a particularly rough patch of the river with trees and shrubs leaning into the river into the floodwaters and you had to walk against them in the flow.

Between us we had six nice Cod, weighing up to eight pounds.

Just as we headed off, it started to rain, which made the walking all the more difficult, as all the rocks were terribly slippery and we were having trouble staying on our feet.

We both had torches and we had both gone about half way when all of a sudden something hit my leg, below my shorts.

Within a few seconds it struck a few more times. I was not in any condition to count just how many.

When I shone my torch down there was a huge tiger snake rearing up at me and striking me viciously.

I screamed with shock and I must have leapt six feet to get away from him.

My father who always carried a strong stick struck the snake several times and killed it.

He then yelled at me 'are you bitten' to which I replied I was not.

However I was trembling with shock for the snake was at least five feet long.

My father said it was the biggest tiger snake he'd ever seen.

It appears that because my legs were wet from the rain, the snake could not get a grip and repeatedly missed me.

The torches would have also helped by dazzling it.

The lesson I learnt was that you should never wear shorts while fishing at night near a river at least, or when walking in the bush at night.

It was probably the greatest scare I'd ever had from a snake and the closest I had from being actually bitten.

The Albino Frog

While building the shelter shed at the mine, I was using round poles as rafters.

I had felled a small white mahogany tree (of about six inches in diameter), to use and

I was trimming off a few limbs with the axe and along the pole there was a bump like a knot.

As I hacked the limb, it fell on the ground and I saw something move from where I had made the cut.

I dropped the pole in shock, as I thought it was a huge spider, but after further investigation I saw it was a frog.

Unfortunately I had cut him practically in half and he was dead.

I had a look at the knot I had cut off and there was an entry into a chamber about the size of a match head. In there was a small frog, about one and a half inches long.

It was pure white, like an albino.

He could never escape from that cavity and it was amazing how he got in there.

I'd say maybe he went in there when he was very young.

He must have existed on the occasional ant or insect that wandered into his small hole. When it rained it probably gave him just enough water to keep him going.

I have worked in the bush for many a year and trimmed off hundreds of limbs off trees with knots in them.

I have trimmed knots off poles, but I have never seen such an extraordinary thing as this.

Harry and Bill

Harry

Many years ago, (somewhere back in the 1940's) a group of cattlemen was mustering cattle near Scrubby Creek, southeast from Glenreagh.

With them was a young lad called Harry, who at the time was about 14 years of age.

He had been chasing some cattle that had broken away from up a grassy ridge, which was all scattered scrub and forest country, when all of a sudden an emu came racing out of the scrub.

It had been disturbed by the noise of the cattle, the horses, stockmen and dogs barking.

This emu raced straight past Harry, who had never seen one before.

He momentarily forgot about the cattle and galloped his horse over to where the other stockmen were. Harold could hardly speak, because he was so excited.

He thought he had just saw a giant turkey. 'It must have been 6 feet tall,' he proclaimed, 'and it was travelling as fast as a race horse.'

His fellow horsemen nearly split their sides with laughter. They realised Harry had seen an emu.

Bill

Up the road in the main street of Glenreagh where Harry lived there was a family of old identities of the village. The father's name was Bill.

Bill believed in communism and was branded by the locals as a communist and when ever you got into a discussion with him somehow or other communism came into it.

Harry had heard about this and he often wondered what communism was all about and wondered whether it may have been a good system to follow.

One day finally Harry decided to visit Bill and ask him a few questions about the subject. Bill described communism to Harry in the simplest terms.

He summed it up with the example, 'if I owned three horses, I should give one to the government, one to my neighbour who has not got a horse and keep one for myself.'

Bill said this followed the principles of communism, being that all are equal and no one should be considered better than the other.

Harry thought about it for a moment and with a smile of having learned something he really wanted to know.

'Bill', he said 'you know this sounds great, you know that I do not own a horse and you have some'.

Bill glared at him shocked and said, 'if you want one of my bloody horses, then you can buy yourself one!

I'm not giving any of my horses away!'

Dunnies

The Dunny Man

Most houses today have their toilet facilities connected to an underground system either by sewerage or septic.

In years gone by where there was no septic or sewerage, there were either pit toilets or pans.

The pans were of about five gallons in capacity, which were placed under the toilet seat had to be then emptied by either the father or in some cases the mother.

Other families dug their own pit toilets and when full, dug out a new one and filled the old one with soil dug out from the new one.

The then health inspectors of these towns could see the health risks in using this method.

As the pit toilets were hard to dig and then it was decided that each house or occupancy would go onto a "pan service".

They would pay an amount every month and have a truck or horse drawn cart come along once a week at night or very early morning and take a toilet pan way to dispose of the contents.

In doing this "pan collector" would replace the full pan" with a new clean one.

I may mention this method of sewerage collection is still being used in some remote parts of the country today.

The “collector” was usually a contractor who had four or five workers and he was very highly paid, as it was the only way that anyone would be willing to do such a “dirty” job.

So the story goes, one day one of the contractors up near Dorrigo rolled his truck over on a very sharp corner on the Megan, Dorrigo road.

His truck was full of sewerage on the way to be dumped.

There was a terrible mess, as most of the lids came off the cans.

The driver was not injured though he was prodding about through this mess with a stick.

Another motorist pulled up and asked him was he all right and what he was looking for and the driver said he was looking for his coat.

The motorist replied that the coat would not be much good now, to which the driver responded, ‘I know, but it had my lunch in it!’

The motorist was so shocked he just drove away in disbelief.

The Country Dunny

The country dunny was (and still is) made of many different materials, usually of the material that was most readily available.

Some were made of tin, bark, weatherboard and very often slabs. Some were constructed directly over a pit, but many had a big container called a pan under the seat.

These pans had to be emptied at least once a week, depending on the number of users and frequency of use.

To dispose of the contents, usually a hole was dug and the pan emptied into it, then the hole would be refilled with soil.

I was the one in our family who had to dig the hole, no matter what the weather was like and poor mum was the one who had to do the emptying.

My father would have nothing to do with this “task”, as he preferred to use the bush for his toilet needs.

Mick Shelton (Pear Trees) told me a story of when they lived near the pear trees, across from the Bayfield mine.

They had a slab dunny and on the back of the seat was a slab, which had fallen off leaving a gap, and if anyone wanted to walk around the back, they could see you sitting on the seat.

Mick decided one day to have a joke with his father Don.

Mick hid behind the dunny and when his father sat on the seat he poked a sharp stick through the gap and prodded him on the backside, at the same time making a hissing sound just like a snake.

His father leapt off the seat yelling out 'a bloody snake has got me' and with his pants acting like a hobble around his knees he fell through the door onto the ground outside still yelling out 'a bloody snake has got me'.

His wife came running out of the house to see what all the commotion was about only to see Mick tearing down the paddock.

Snakes

When Arthur Robb (my father) came home from work, it was usually about dark. He usually worked a 60-70 hour week.

After he arrived home he would sit on an old leather couch on the verandah and remove his hobnailed boots, have a wash and then have dinner.

On this particular day, my brother Jim, who was then 14 had killed a huge black snake and thought he'd have a joke with his father.

He put the snake under the couch, where it could just be seen.

When my father arrived home from work and he sat on the couch, Jim shouted 'dad there's a snake under the couch'.

My father immediately sprung to his feet and yelled out, 'get me the gun'.

My mother raced into the next room and hurriedly brought out the shotgun and cartridges.

My father called out 'get back all of you get back while I shoot this fellow'.

Next thing he aimed the gun at the snake and "bang".

He blew the snake into 20 pieces from a few yards away.

Jim had to race outside, as he could not hold back his laughter.

My mother put on a big show of pretending how scared she was and the younger children were crying, as they did not know the snake was already dead.

No one was game enough to tell our father either!

More Snakes

There are no snakes in Ireland.

As legend has it St. Patrick chased them out. My mother hated snakes and would go out of her way to kill them.

She was also warning us children to watch out for them whilst going to and from school and playing.

The first snake she killed was when the family lived on Main Arm road in Mullumbimby, as a young girl fresh out from Ireland.

A tiger snake came into her yard on a day she was at home with two of her children.

My mother attacked the snake across the back with a stick, but the snake refused to die.

So then she found a long leather shoelace and hitched it around the snake, just below the head, then hung it on the clothes line.

The snake did not like this and wriggled furiously, though she managed not to be bitten.

While all this was going on a horseman named Tulk was riding past and seeing show called out, 'what in the world are you doing Mrs Robb?'

My mother called back, 'I'm hanging out a snake.' Mr Tulk nearly fell off his horse with laughter.

The next morning the milkman bumped into the snake and got such a fright he spilt milk all over the verandah as he scurried away.

This became a big joke around the area for a long time.

Snake Bite Remedies

One day when Arthur and his son Jim were hauling logs out of the Tallawudjah Creek, about one mile from Ellis's farm they had trouble with one log getting it out of the steep gorge with the bullocks and were working very late indeed.

It was almost dark and suddenly a Tiger snake bit Jim. He yelled out to his dad and his father raced back along the team to where Jim was.

The snake was still there, so immediately he killed it with the bullock whip handle and then he attended Jim.

In those times in the bush everyone carried a pocketknife and a small roll of string, as well as some Condy's Crystals in a bottle.

If a snake bit someone, a tourniquet of string was wrapped around the bitten part of the body, above the bite, to help prevent the poison from entering the heart.

Then a small incision would be cut into the fang marks, (one for each fang) to try to make the wound bleed and then the wound would be sucked and the contents of the mouth spat out. T

his would draw out some of the venom and when enough blood and venom was drawn out, the Condy's Crystals were rubbed into the wound to counteract the venom that may have entered the blood stream.

The person attending the "patient" had to be sure they had no sores in their mouths or hollow teeth, as the poisonous venom would enter their bloodstream and poison them.

Having done this dad brought Jim back with the bullock team to the yoking up yard back at George Ellis's property, where Jim was placed on a horse and taken home, about another mile away.

There was a dance on at the Moleton School, so dad contacted the school teacher who was there to find out what should be done with Jim.

All teachers had to be proficient in first aid.

The teacher had a look at Jim and said he thought Jim would be all right, as anything that would have happened would have happened by now.

This meant that Jim would have either been unconscious or near death. The teacher did advise dad to keep Jim awake for the next few hours, just in case.

This my father did and Jim survived without seeing the doctor.

This method of treating snakebite is condemned today, but it would have been interesting to know just how many people it did save!

If I was bitten by a snake while out in the bush alone and there was no way I could get immediate help, I would cut the wound to make it bleed, then go for help.

George Ellis did the same when bitten by a death adder while working on his farm alone. He cut out the wound with a piece of glass, forcing the wound to bleed and then he went and lay in the Lady Mary Creek for about an hour.

In doing this he nearly froze to death, but this prevented the poison from rushing to his heart.

The poison did leave him drowsy for a few hours after, but apart from that, he was okay.

Lotteries

Back in the early 1920's, when the NSW government decided to run lotteries, to help fund the upkeep of the hospitals.

It was not only a great boost for the government, but also a great opportunity for people to try their luck.

The tickets were sold for five shillings each, there were 100,000 tickets sold in each lottery and the first prize was five thousand pounds.

My mother, being Irish loved to have a little gamble, so after a few weeks or so she saved up the five shillings and bought a ticket.

In those times if you won a first prize they would send you a telegram and other prizes were listed in the newspaper.

She told Arthur that if she won a prize, she would come over to where he was working with his bullock team (about a mile away) and let him know.

The results for the lottery were published a couple of days after the lottery draw and my mother found out she had won five pounds, which was a lot of money in those days.

She was terribly excited and headed across the paddocks, with two of the children following, to where my father was working.

When my mother reached a few hundred yards of where my father was he saw her and then also saw she was waving a newspaper.

My father immediately stopped the team and yelled out to her 'how much did we win?' To which my mother replied, 'five'.

My father called back 'five what?' and the reply my mother called back was 'five pounds'.

By this time my mother was a lot closer and my father threw down his hat and called out to her, 'you stupid bloody woman, fancy coming all the way out here to tell me we only won five pounds.'

He then raised his whip and started the bullock team up, with more violent words being uttered as he went back to work.

In reality he was only displaying his great disappointment.

The Bad Man

In the early 1900's, when the gold rush was in full force, a chap started a mine in the Upper Back Creek area (now known as Towullum creek), which was a tributary of Kangaroo Creek.

He dug a shaft down about 36 feet and was supposed to be onto a good paying yield of gold.

Then he decided he wanted to get some extra money and he placed an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald.

The ad read something like this: "Wanted partner in good paying gold mine, must be fit and able to work hard. Fifty pounds needed for your half share."

It was not long before there was a reply and as the area at that time could only be accessed by horseback, he had to meet the prospective partner, with a horse to ride back on, at Coutts Crossing or South Grafton.

He planned that when they arrived at the mine, he would show the "new" partner where the gold was by standing as close to the edge of the shaft as possible.

Then he planned to hit him over the head with an axe and the poor victim would fall down the shaft. The belief being that if the axe did not kill him, the fall would.

A ladder would be close by, so that when the victim fell, he could clamber down the ladder and empty his pockets, then cover up the body with some soil.

Apparently this worked a first time and a second, possibly more, as no one was really certain what was happening.

However on the last occasion the victim fell but was not dead and lay there pretending he was dead until the miner searched his pockets, then threw some dirt over him.

When he was certain the miner had left, he uncovered himself and climbed aback out the hole.

He had a great gash in his skull from the axe, but managed to scramble in great difficulty to a farmhouse a couple of miles away, where the owners contacted the police. He was taken to Grafton hospital.

The police came in by horse from South Grafton (there were no cars then) and later rode out again to arrest the man, who was later sentenced to death.

I believe he was the first man to be hanged at Grafton jail.

This story is in the criminal records. The mine is located not far from Clay Gully.

Ghosts

Back in the days of the 1930 great depression and the years leading up to it, there was huge unemployment and thousands of men had to walk around the country carrying their swag on their back, looking for work.

The “swag” usually consisted of a blanket or two wrapped in a piece of canvas, which was then spread on the ground for a bed.

As well there would be a billycan to make tea in, a few personal items and a small bag containing what little food they possessed.

The swagmen frequently called at houses along the way asking for some food to eat and to this author’s knowledge no one was refused, even though times were really difficult.

The swaggies (as they were commonly known) were quite pleased to receive something to eat, even if this was only a piece of bread.

When they came calling my mother would go inside and cut a heap of sandwiches for a visiting swaggie, who would then, without being asked, go and cut a pile of firewood in gratitude.

Our family lived close to the Glenreagh-Dorrigo railway line and it was quite common to see six to eight swaggies walking the line in one day, looking for work in the timber mills, or villages along the way, or looking for a house to call in for some food.

Often we would see them camped not far from the line and always not far from water.

On cold nights, they would sleep close to their campfire.

As kids we would often go and chat with them and they were always willing to tell us of their travels and adventures, where they came from and where they were headed. Many travelled singularly.

Most of the swaggies were quite respectable and many found jobs around the mills and lived out the rest of their lives in the area.

Ghosts - The Ghost and the Swagman

A Ghost Comes Riding By

During the depression there was a huge demand from many of the colder countries for fur for clothing.

So the government decided to open up a seasonal permit for possum hunting and the possums could then be hunted for their fur.

The season, lasting about two and a half months, was to be in winter, when the fur was at it's thickest on the animals.

For each fur received the shooter was to receive five shillings.

This was big money and a great help to the unemployed.

Arthur Robb and Vincent McLennon decided to go out after the possums and equipped themselves with guns and carbide bit torches (differing from the battery torches of today).

They also took Peter, who was a good hunting dog, whom they trained to tell them which tree the possums were in by barking up the tree.

Peter would hold his "marker" position until they had shot the possum.

The two men kept this work mainly as a weekend adventure, as they both had their own permanent jobs, Arthur with his bullock team and Vincent at the sawmill.

Before the possum season officially started (on July 1), the two men decided to "get an early start" by going out a few weeks early to "beat the others" and get a few skins.

This of course was highly illegal, but it was commonly done.

They soon had quite a few skins gathered and pegged out to dry on boards and on a particular Saturday night they decided to go further away to an area nine miles away called Jesse Smith, where they believed no one else would hunt.

They left home before dark and when they finally arrived at their destination, they tied up their horses to a tree and went looking for possums.

Peter (the dog) soon found a few, which they shot and soon skinned.

They then were walking along a bush track when suddenly they heard a horse galloping in their direction.

Arthur gasped and then whispered to Vincent, 'it's the police, quick put out the torch lights.'

They then raced behind a few bushes some ten feet away, and then crouched down.

They also held Peter's mouth in case he barked.

It was a moonlight night and finally the sound went right past them, but they could not see the horse, or anything else for that matter.

Both men were in a state of shock and stood their position for sometime. Frantically they cried out together, 'that was a ghost.' Arthur said, 'we'd better get out of here and now.'

Though they first re-lit their torches started searching the ground for hoof marks, but there was none.

They then headed home and never ventured into the area again. Neither man had previously ever believed in ghosts, but after their adventure they were not so sure.

They spent many years after that wondering just exactly what had they heard.

Jack Shea later told Arthur a story about a white man Jesse Smith, who'd been caught by the aboriginals.

Apparently they tied him to his horse, drove a spear through his body and then sent the horse off in a gallop.

The horse ended up on Shea's property a few miles away with Jesse's body still strapped to it.

The sound the two men heard could well have been the ghost of Jesse Smith and or his horse!

More Ghosts

There's a place on the Glenreagh-Dorrigo railway line, where the Moleton-Glenreagh road crosses the line and this spot has always been known as "twelve-sixty", standing for 1260 feet above sea level.

Over the years there has been some very unusual and maybe you could say mysterious happenings occurring there.

The first instance reported was when "Snow" Smyth of Grafton was a foreman for sawmillers G L Briggs and Sons of Briggsvale on the Dorrigo line.

Smyth lived in Grafton with his wife Winnie and son Rhett.

During the week he camped at Briggsvale and came home on a Friday evening, returning to Briggsvale Sunday night after dinner.

As Snow approached the rail crossing, about a hundred yards away he noticed a light down in the scrub.

The light appeared to be coming rapidly towards the road.

Snow immediately pulled up his car, thinking it was someone in distress, but he could also not help noticing it was also a strange looking light.

Thinking to himself, a lantern never had such a glare.

As he waited, the light came up the road and stopped in front of him.

here was a man holding the light, with his back towards Snow and as soon as Snow came closer he suddenly disappeared.

A creepy feeling went through Snow's body and he drove off thinking to himself he must have been hallucinating.

A few weeks later, the same thing happened. Snow saw this light again coming out of the scrub in almost the same spot.

He stopped and waited. The figure came up on the road and then walked away. The figure was now about 50 feet in front of him.

So this time Snow followed slowly in his car and noted the figure was walking at a normal pace and he continued following it for about 100 feet.

Then as before, it again suddenly disappeared.

Later I asked Snow if it was Bob Morris, who lived on his farm on the Timber Top road.

Snow remarked, 'can you see through Bob Morris, for you could certainly see through this fellow!'

Over the next few years Snow saw this strange vision several times and on each occasion he became more scared and Snow, who was a big man of some 18 stone, was not easily scared.

Finally Snow decided he wouldn't travel that road again at night and he changed his route to Briggsvale via the Coramba road.

During one school holidays Snow's wife Winnie decided the family would spend a week camped at Briggsvale with Snow.

On the Sunday night they set off and Snow feeling a bit more brave with having his wife and son there, he decided to travel via twelve sixty.

As they approached the spot, sure enough out of the scrub came the light towards the road.

But instead of walking away, this time it came towards them, standing right in front of the car bonnet.

It was the first time the routine had changed and the first time that Snow had the opportunity to see it's face.

Snow later described it as a male with a terrible look about it, as if it was in pain.

It was so terrifying, both Winnie and Rhett screamed.

Snow hurriedly sped off and never travelled that road again.

Others have shared this experience, including the Bale family of Lowanna, the Malthouse family of Grafton as well as Una and Kirk Henry.

They all mentioned only having seen the light and never waited long enough to see if there was a figure or not.

The Henry's were the last to see it as they were returning home to Moleton at about 9pm, when right at twelve sixty they had a flat tyre.

While they were changing the tyre they noticed a light coming out of the scrub.

It came up onto the railway line about 100 feet from them and continued towards them, then turned and moved away, disappearing instantly.

Kirk noted the light was really strange looking, without a glow.

Kirk called out to it just as it was leaving, 'hello there what do you want,' but it had vanished by the time he had finished.

Una was scared and said 'that must have been the ghost that George Robb had been telling us about!'

The following morning they came and told me about their encounter and I decided to go down and have a look for myself.

I looked for human footprints down the line, for at that time the State Rail Authority covered the sleepers in ashes.

There were none! I did see where they fixed their tyre and the marks where they had sped off.

It's now many years since anyone else has reported seeing this ghost and I have deliberately travelled that stretch of road many times at night hoping to meet up with the ghost.

But there is always a strange scary feeling about the place, which sends shivers up my spine.

Back in 1952 a light aircraft with two people on board disappeared within a close proximity of twelve sixty.

Howard Wright of Glenreagh heard the crash, but the wreckage was never found.

A lady whom I know and is interested in the spirits told me the ghost is trying to tell whoever it encountered where the bodies are lying and we should go down into the bush where the light originates.

Perhaps this is the answer. Any volunteers?

This story was spread all over the district for many years in the 1920's. It is uncertain as to whether it is true or not, but it certainly dragged out a smile or two.

The Christmas Dinner

The village of Coramba was once a gold mining town and as you will have read in this book, had many old mines in the surrounding hills.

These mines are now abandoned, except for a few hobby mines and prospectors who poke about in them, in the hopes of finding something the old miners missed.

As far back as Coramba's history can be traced the village had a doctor and a police officer, though at times the doctor was absent during changeover of practitioners.

Back in the 1930's one particular doctor had taken up residence with his young wife, who was a city girl.

They had been in residence for a few months and had a few chooks, which included a few young roosters they had reared from chickens.

It was Christmas time and on Christmas Eve the doctor said to his wife, 'I shall kill one of the roosters for Christmas dinner'.

He'd had a busy day in his surgery, with patients lined up to see him.

His wife thinking he would still be seeing patients till after dark, he would not have time to kill the rooster.

She decided to kill and pluck the rooster herself, but she did not know how to kill him.

She thought the best way was to give the rooster an anesthetic and put several drops on a towel, wrapping the towel around the rooster's head.

During this time the rooster was struggling violently, squawking like mad and trying to escape.

Eventually the rooster was put to sleep and plucked, then placed on a plate in the refrigerator.

The doctor having finished his surgery at about 5pm arrived home and was greeted by his wife who was quite excited saying 'you don't have to kill the rooster I've already done it.'

The doctor replied, 'that's great, let me have a look at it.'

The doctor opened the fridge door and out jumped the rooster, who then raced down the hall and out into the yard where there was a great commotion amongst the other chooks who'd never seen a naked rooster before and they scattered about in all directions.

The doctor and his wife soon chased the rooster who went into hiding under the house.

The following morning the doctor found the rooster dead and after an autopsy found it had died from pneumonia and shock.

Christmas dinner that year was without the poultry!

The Mystery Sandstone Slab

At the bottom of a rugged gully on the edge of Bagawa State Forest, near Georges Gold Mine, lies a weathered sandstone slab which is inscribed with a series of numbers and letters.

The rock slab was only discovered in the early seventies by the some local children taking a bush walk and has raised the possible question of who really were the first miners in the district.

The slab that weighs more than one tonne is located in an area where two gold mines were once located; the Advance Australia Mine and the New Year's Gift Mine. Both these mines were worked in the 1880's and were very rich.

The sandstone slab, which is roughly obelisk shape has the letters "HJ.", "O.A.", "N.Y.", "T.W." and "G.P." chipped into the rock.

Beside the letters are some numbers, which may signify dates. Beside the "NY" is what appears to be a back to front "nine" and a four, which possibly signifies the date 1894.

Under the letters "TW" is "Y86" (possibly 1896) and at the bottom of the slab under "GP" appears "31".

Near thigh" are several carvings which could be "180" or "186", which could even be map references, or the beginning of a date, or even some directions.

It is the author's belief the slab would have been too heavy to have been dragged down here and I doubt it was used as a headstone.

More than likely it was used as some sort of marker. A Mrs Webb from Glenreagh told me that she believed the slab was inscribed by the old prospectors of the district and that "O.A." stood for Oliver Anderson.

However the rest of the "initials" were unknown.

It is a mystery that may one day unfold into a rather unique story.



Where do you search for Gold? - Some Tips from the Author

Visitors to the mine, as well as many others are always asking me where do you start looking for gold.

It's a fair question and one that I have had a lot of experience with, over many, many years of "hands on searching" and here I have shared some of this experience with you.

If you are in an area where you are uncertain if there is gold about or not, the first thing you should do is find a creek or gully and with a pan have a look at what's offering.

Have a look for a crevice or a bar of rock crossing the creek and if you can find one, dig down as far as possible, using a pick.

Make sure you wash the gravel or clay you have dug out, in your pan.

I have made small tools to do this, which are made of steel and are the thickness of a pencil and flattened out with hook formed ends, so they can scratch out the crevice deeper down, for a pick to work.

(A sort of a larger version of a dentist's tool). An old file is handy for shallow crevices. The crevice you look for must run across the stream and not parallel, as the gold would not fall into it.

There maybe an odd speck in the parallel, but usually very little. A bar of rock crossing a stream, no matter how small, could hold good gold, but not necessarily on the topside of the rock where the water is coming from.

The topside is where most prospectors think the gold is but usually the downstream side of the rock bar is the best.

As often the force of the water has pushed the gold over the bar and it has fallen on the bottom or downstream.

The area best to concentrate on is the inside of the bend of a stream, as the gold being heavy would have been dragged in.

Also take particular notice if there is any quartz lying about in the gravel, which would mean there probably would be quartz reefs in the area and some is coming, or has come down stream.

It is worth remembering streams have been there for millions of years and in some places maybe 50 to 1000 feet, or more, from it's present location.

The best gold will be found in the original stream. In some places the gold is still shedding into the stream and the flow will probably continue forever.

By following the streams up and if there are continual specks of colour (gold) in the pan, then it can lead you to the source of supply, which you will hope is a massive reef of quartz, rich with gold.

You should always carry a magnifying glass and inspect your gold finds through it. If the gold is smooth, then it is water worn or flattened it has travelled a long way and been rounded by the water and pounded by the rocks.

If the gold is jagged with rough or sharpened edges, then it has not come every far and this is when you can really get excited.

The source (or reef) may not be anywhere near the stream, gully or whatever, but maybe hundreds of feet up the hill or mountainside.

So as you go upstream searching, sometimes dig into the bank and pan the dirt. If the gold is rough looking, this could well mean the source is straight up above you.

So head up the stream and about every 20 feet or so, dig down a foot and carry this dirt down to the water and pan it. Eventually this process will lead you to the “mother lode”.

This same method can be applied to a hillside, to see if there is any gold coming down.

This process is called “loaming” and is highly recommended by the old prospectors and many of the newer ones too, especially in hilly country.

Millions of years ago, the hills above you could have been and probably was two to three times higher than they are now.

Quartz over long periods will decompose (weather) on the surface and decay into a clay type or sandy type substance, which leaves the gold free and it will eventually wash down the hill into streams.

The reef, which is usually quartz, will possibly be still solid under ground and maybe covered in soil or clay.

Sometimes the reef will decay well below the existing surface, which is called a “mullocky (dirty) leader or reef”.

Some mineral or natural chemical substance has probably caused this decay. Often these are very rich. Quartz reefs can run in any direction and I have found the north-south reefs to be the richest in gold.

Though this is not generally a fact, as it depends on the geological formation of the country.

Some great mines have had many reefs running in other directions. When a quartz reef is found, not all will carry gold of any quantity.

Many reefs have what is commonly called a trace.

Though the same reef could be rich deep in the earth, however the cost and time taken up by sinking shafts on every reef found would be prohibitive.

The suggestion is to find a reef that carries gold from the surface so that you are immediately in "pay dirt".

After a lot of experience, you will discover that certain types of quartz are the most likely to have gold in them.

My preference is for a rusty type quartz which shows a little iron (hence the rust).

The best proven quality quartz in this area is white quartz with blue streaks running through it.

When you find a reef, you place a handful of the soil substance into the dolly pot and crush it into a powder, or sand substance if possible and then you pan it.

If it shows a few specks, you know the reef has gold in it, so you dig deeper and try it again.

After that you follow the reef along and every six feet or so you dig on the reef and sample it. Soon you will know whether you have found a rich quartz reef or not.

Gold is usually contained in a reef by what is known as a "shoot", a rich patch of gold running vertically through the reef, sometimes at an angle and can be any width.

I've heard of one being 30 feet wide, but they can go down to any depth.

Though often in hilly country they will cut out or break. It can be very difficult to find the break off section, which is way down underground, as you may not be able to determine which direction it went.

These "shoots" can go down in the shape of a wedge, getting smaller as you go deeper. They can also be in the reverse shape of a wedge as well.

The reefs in the Advance Australia mine sometimes widen out to five feet then squash down to the thickness of a knife blade, then widening.

This is where the gold is rich and most times in this spot you could get up to 12 tons of quartz, enough to put through the battery for a crushing.

Some quartz reefs did not carry the gold in shoots, but in a rich pocket and anywhere in the reef could contain very rich gold.

These types of reefs are very frustrating because it is uncertain which direction to go to find the next one, or at what distance.

One of these reefs exists near the Blue Gum road area of Kangaroo Creek State Forest and the men who were working it were so frustrated they walked away from it, though not before extracting several hundred of ounces of gold.

This reef is still there and has not been touched since. Maybe if someone is lucky enough, the next few feet or less could well be their fortune. One old prospector,

Dick Harrison, (who was mentioned earlier in this book), always said those miners (Charlie Campbell was one of them) left the mine too soon.

Dick always wanted someone else to go back to the mine with him. Unfortunately there was no one around interested.

At one stage I was hoping to, but I never had the time. Gold prospecting is probably best treated as a hobby.

Similar to all gambling, gold prospecting is a matter of chance and there's only one in many thousands who actually strike it rich.

It's the excitement of the find of even a few specks that gives you a feeling of great fulfillment of an achievement having been made.

There's also a little good advice that I have always followed and that is never to wander off into any private property, without permission.

When allowed to enter, respect their generosity and ensure you fill in any holes you dig, so that livestock won't fall in and possibly break a leg.

Also never light a fire unless it's just to boil a billy and never carry firearms of any description.

It's probably a good idea to promise to pay the property owner a share of the find; after all it is on their land.

There may be also be a public liability statement to sign.

Also the State Forests are open to prospecting and again it's not a bad idea to contact the forestry first and let them know of your plans.

Should you decide to make an application for a mining lease, you will have to wait for many years to have it approved and there will be costs to pay.

If you find a reef with good gold showing, for the small operator, it would have to be giving at least one ounce per ton.

After that you would need a battery or access to a battery, to extract the gold. Also you will need a mode of transport to get the quartz to the battery.

Modern crushing machinery costs a fortune.

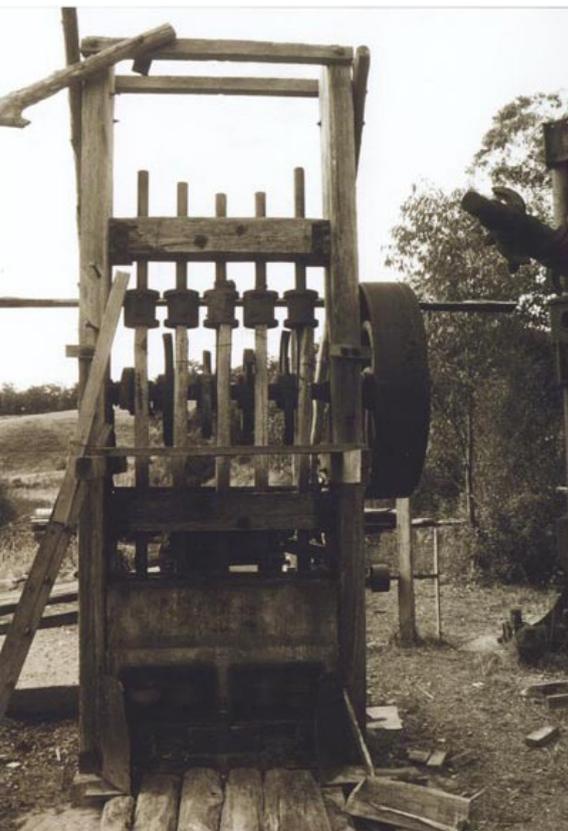
My advice is to have your quartz crushed by a reliable operator, say 5 -10 tons of it, then you will know just how rich the mine is.

As George Ellis used to say, 'the best way to test a quartz gold bearing reef, is to run it through the battery.'

The small three head stamper battery that operates at George's Gold Mine, now mainly as a demonstration unit, has crushed for six mines that have been recorded.

The sand or trailings from the battery were stacked in heaps covering about one half of an acre.

Pics below - the stamper battery at the mine and gold.



The mine since it's opening to the public was always a popular tourist attraction, revealing a historical past in gold mining in the Coffs Harbour area.

George Robb gave the tours himself, sharing a past not to be forgotten, with the visitors.

Many schools visited the mine as part of their history lessons.

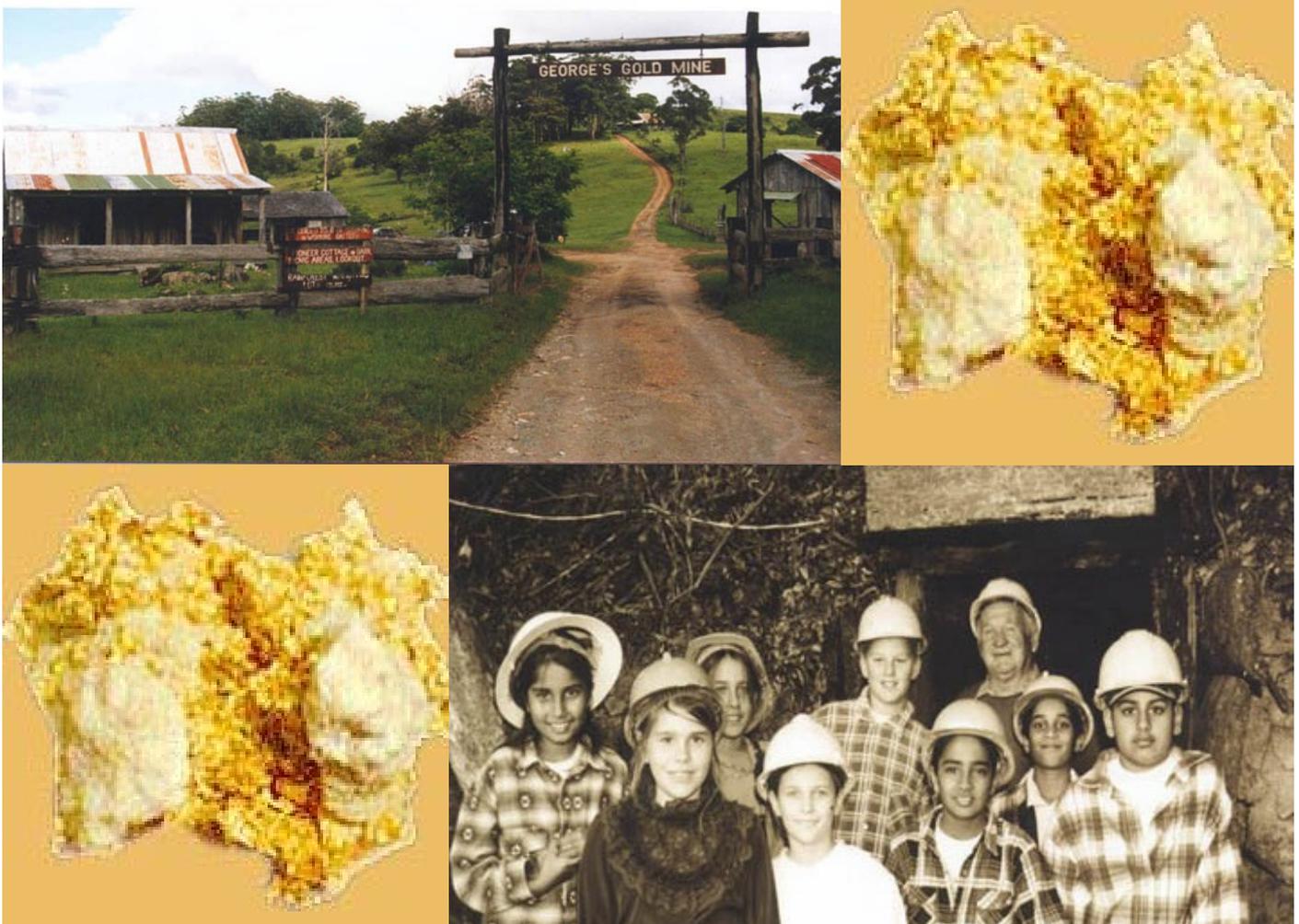
One of them Woolgoolga Public School was a frequent visitor, making the yearly trip with their 'gold rush era' classes.

The Woolgoolga Public School students visit in 1996, which the now editor of this book joined to photograph and write about the mine visit for the local newspaper the Coffs Harbour Advocate features in many of their photos appear in this book.

It was during that particular visit that George mentioned that he had written many notes about the mine, the era and gold mining and he was looking for an editor/publisher to put it all into print.

The rest is now history, as the book was published and the history of the area maintained.

All the photos in this book have either been taken or re-digitised by the editor.







The Mine Site Main Entry



The Hutt at the entry



The House at the Entry



The House on the Hill



Children at the Lookout



The Bayfield Mine Entry



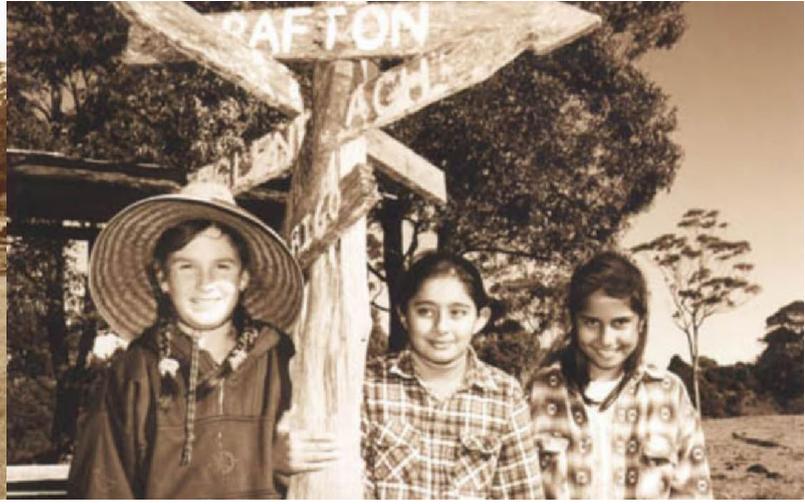
Looking down from the top of the Hill



Looking across at the Stamper Battery



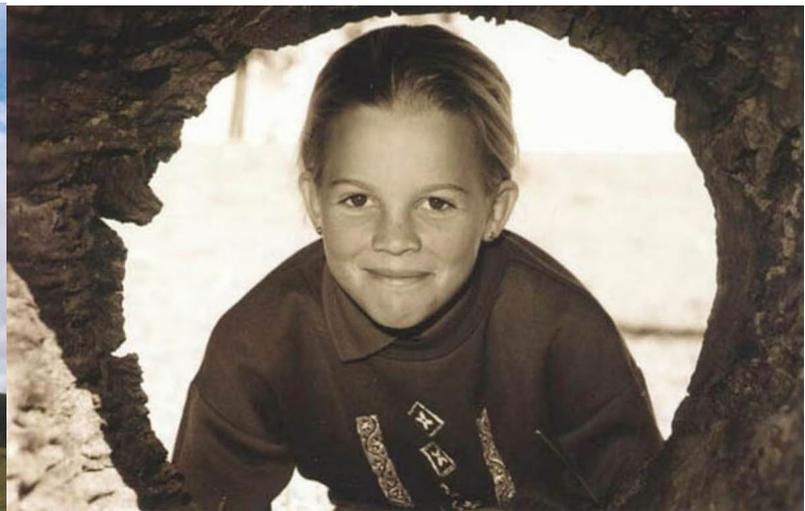
The Old Barn



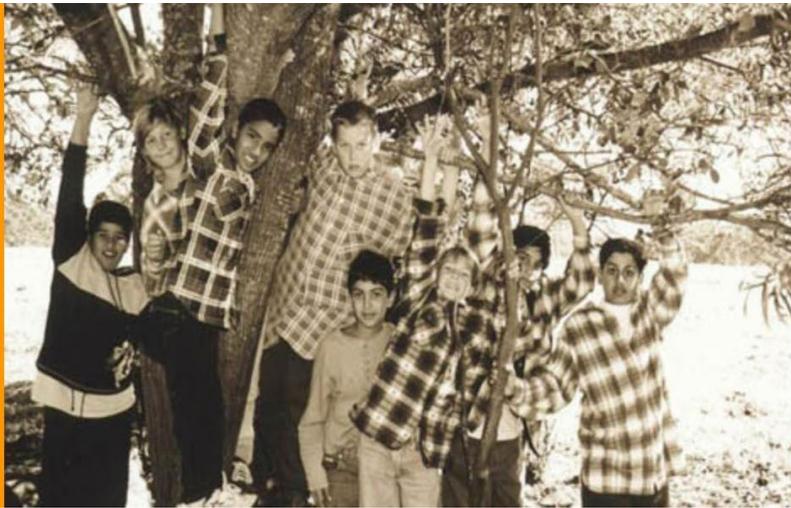
The Signs



More Signs



Plenty to see - through a Hollow tree



The Pear Tree



At the Mine Face



An Old Tractor



Bayfield Mine Directions



The Fertiliser Cart



The Blacksmith Shop



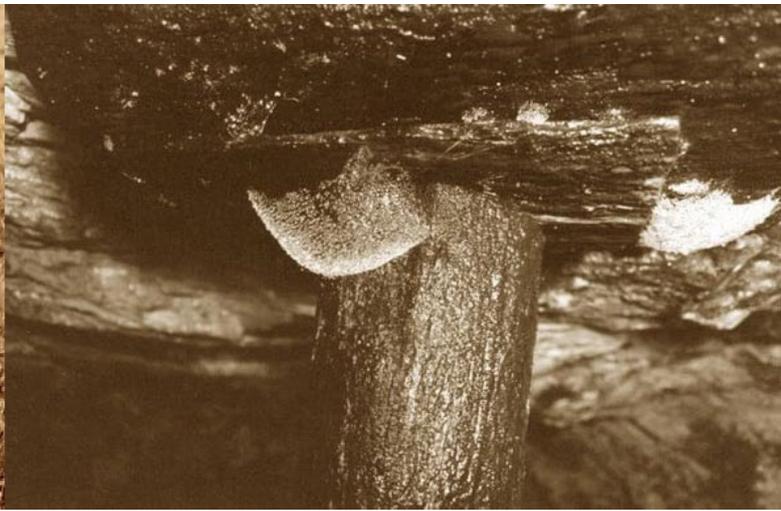
In the Barn



An Old Cart



Another Old Cart



Dew Inside the Mine



Old Farm House



Children Touring the Mine



Children at the Mine



George Pointing at the Mine Roof



Girls with Machinery



Inside the Mine Shaft looking out



Inside the Mine



Another Old Cart



Outside the Mine Shaft



An Old Pony Trap



The Moleton Mill Fire



Camping by the River



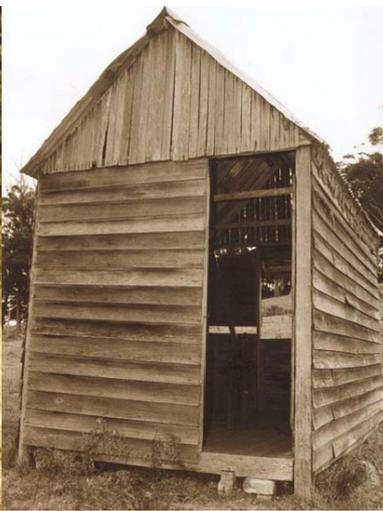
Moleton Butcher



George Ellis on a Tractor



Bullock Team



Old Dairy



George Robb Loading Logs



Moleton Town on the Rail Line



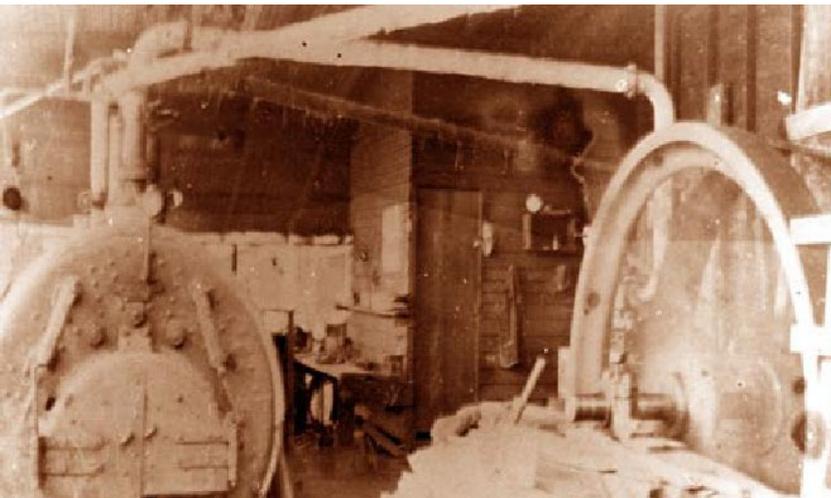
Moleton Station



The Old Stamper Battery



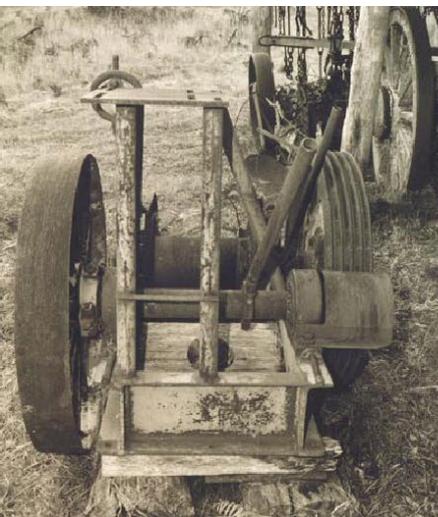
Jim Shea's House



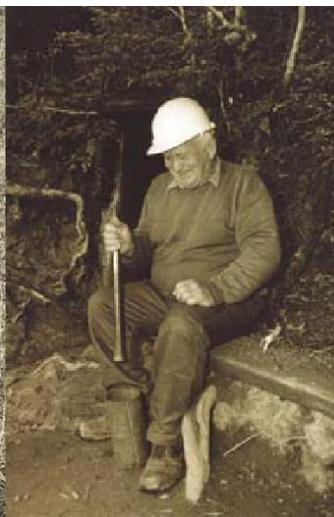
Old Steam Mill



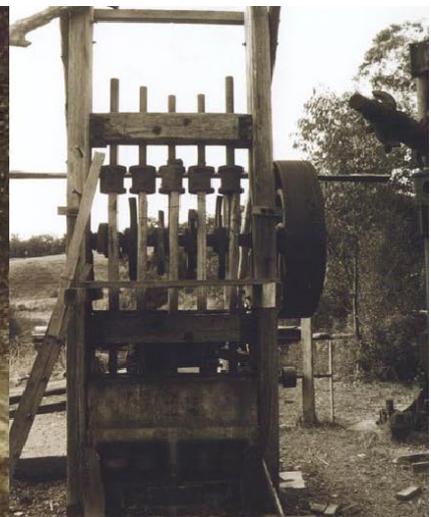
An Old Truck on the Property



Old Equipment at the Mine



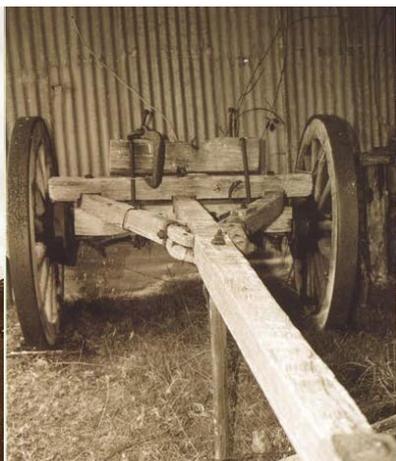
George with a Dolly Pot

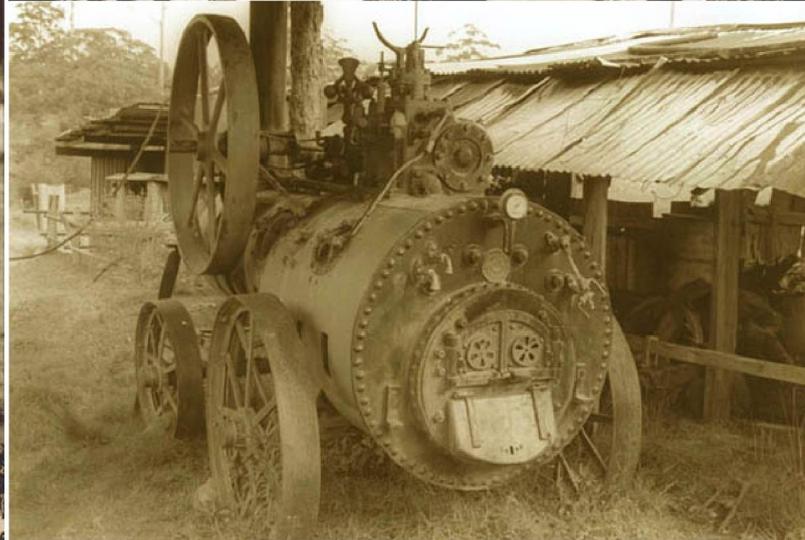
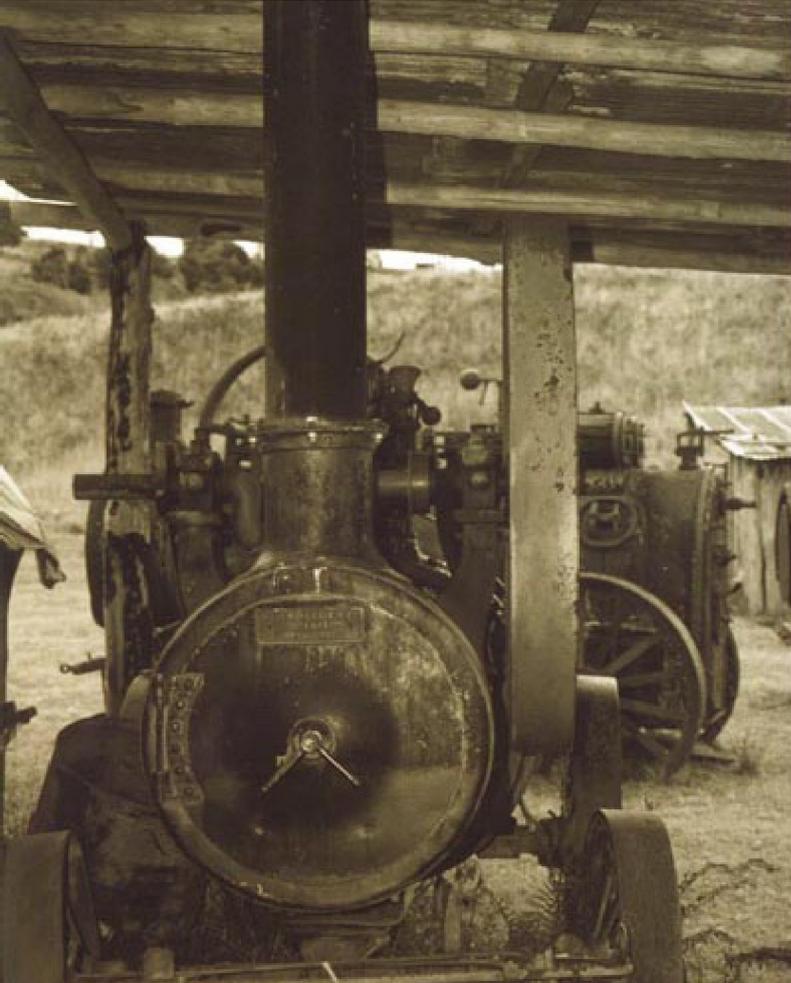


The Stamper



Old Equipment at the Mine





A collection of old steam engines at the mine.



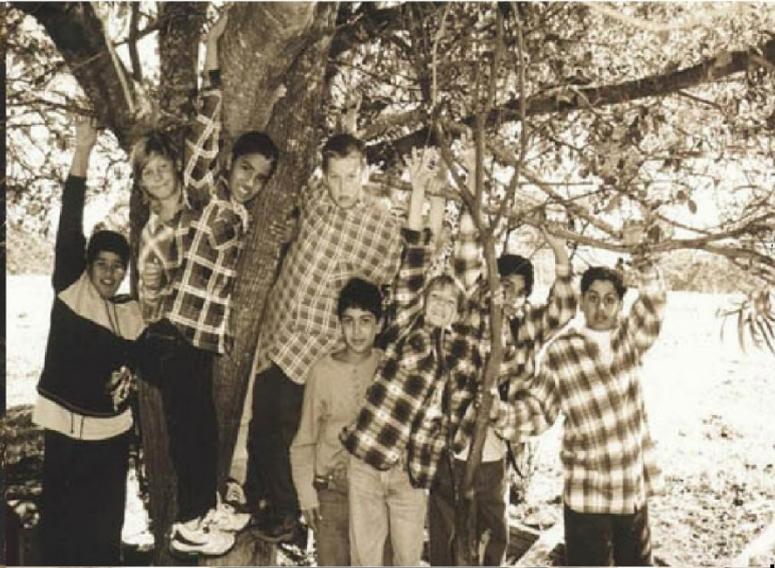
Stamping



Tree Felling



Old buildings

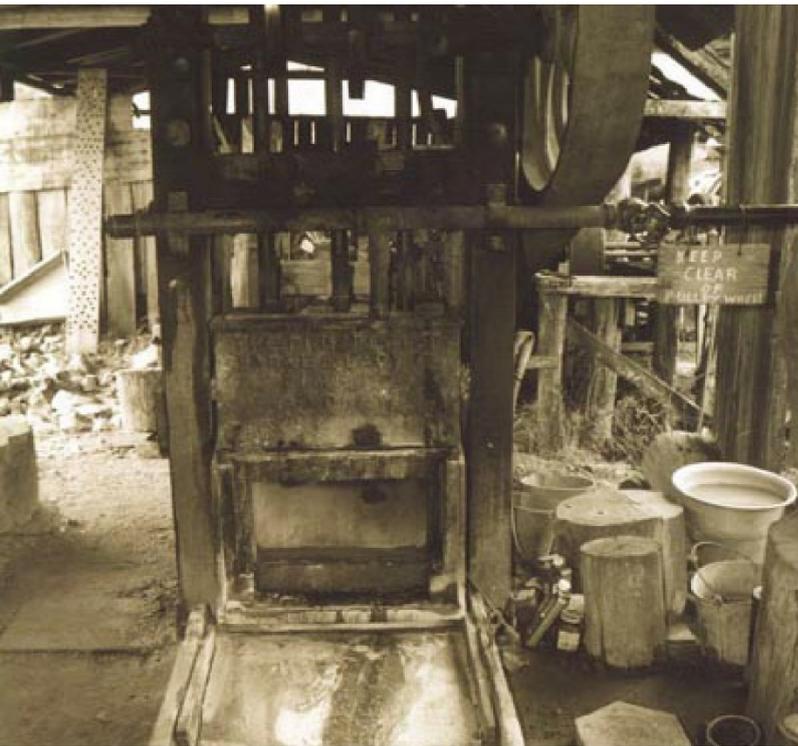




Timber Workers Huts



An Old Wagon



Stamper Battery



Moleton Post Office

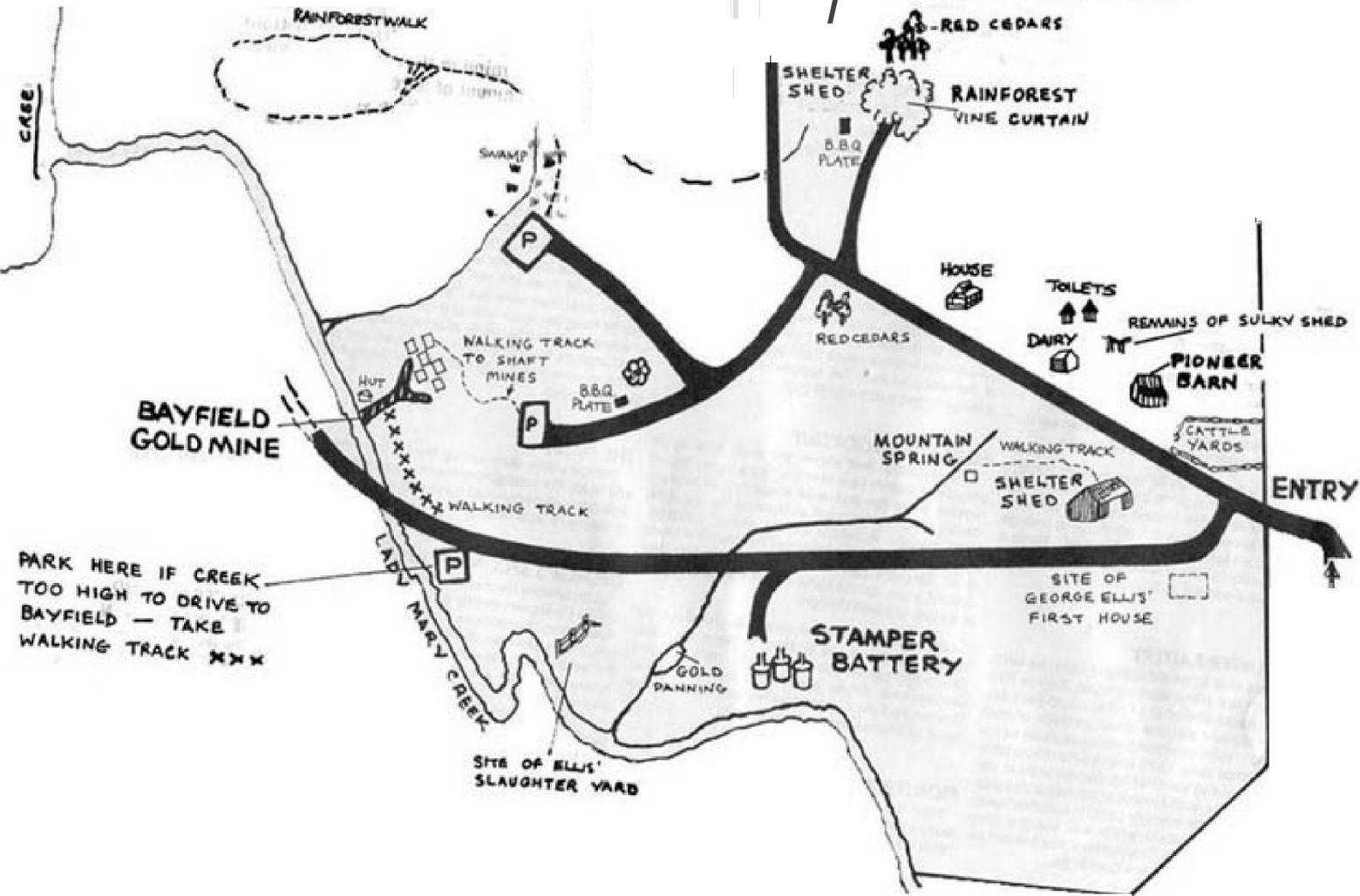


Woolgoolga Public Visit 1996

George's Gold Mine

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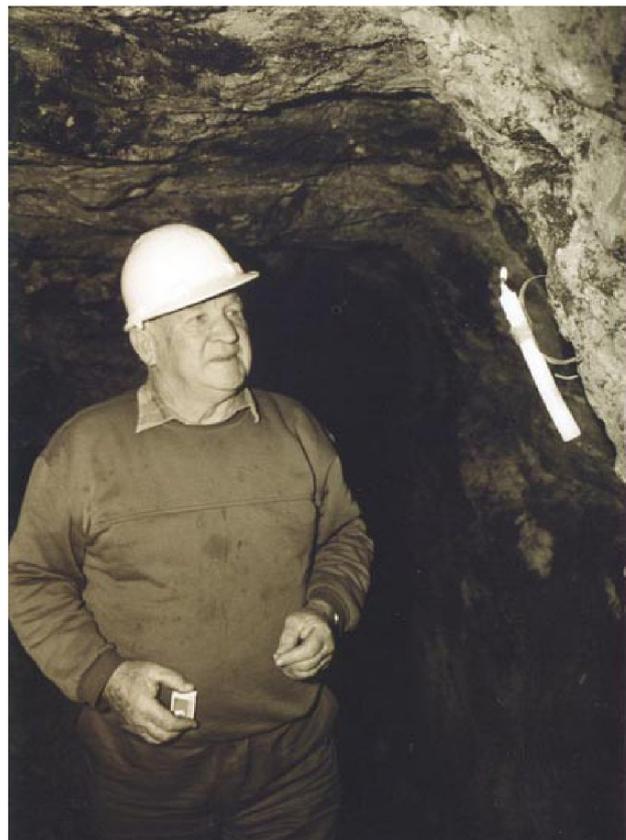
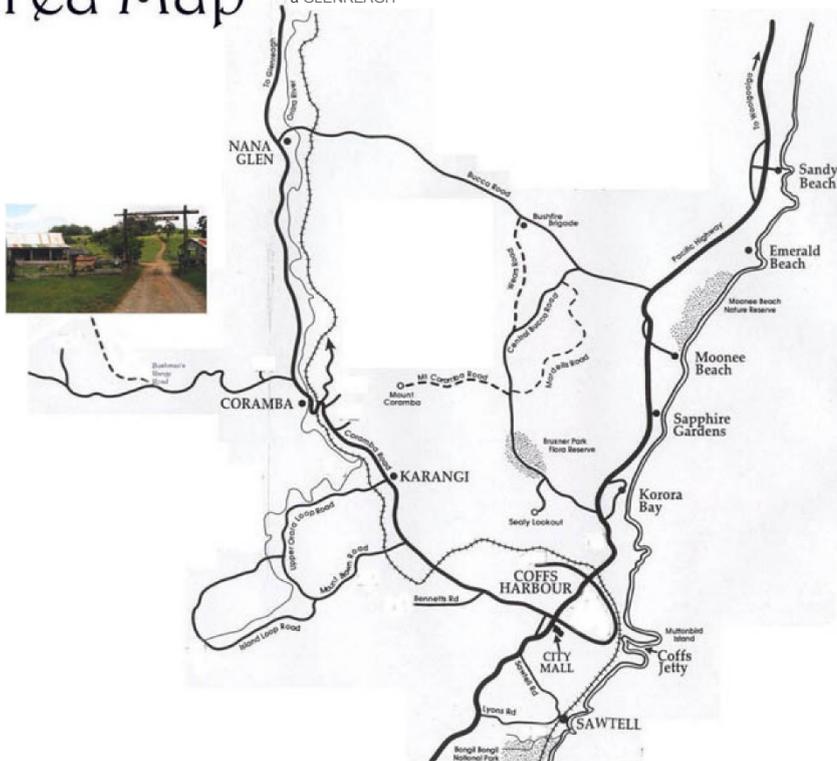
MOLETON



PARK HERE IF CREEK TOO HIGH TO DRIVE TO BAYFIELD - TAKE WALKING TRACK XXX

Area Map

a GLENREAGH



George's memories strike literary gold

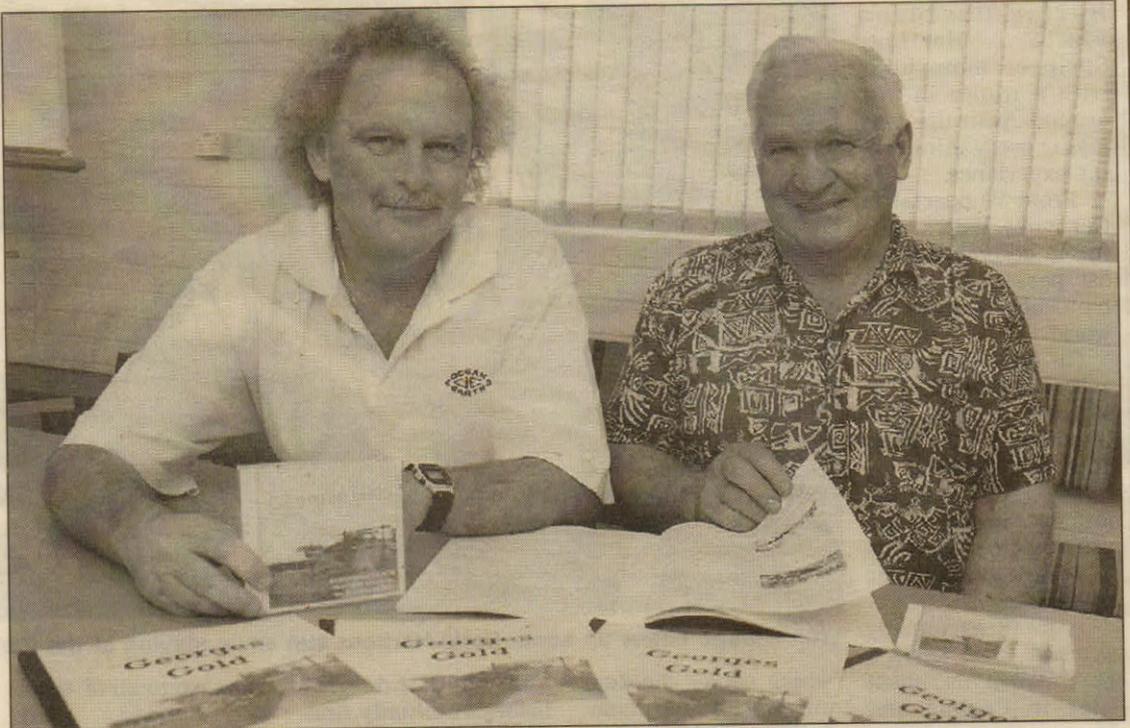
PEOPLE looking for a first-hand account of life in the Eastern Dorrigo need look no further than a book about to hit the shelves by George Robb, of George's Gold Mine fame.

Mr Robb, who has lived in the Moleton area all his life, says his reason for writing the book about himself and the history of the Orara goldfields and Eastern Dorrigo was simple.

'I wanted to make sure it was all down in writing before I lost my marbles,' he said.

The book, 'George's Gold', is 100 pages of photos, reminiscences and gold mining history. It commemorates the mine's 20th anniversary, which occurred last year.

In one of the yarns, Mr Robb tells the tale of a sewage collector whose fully laden collection truck overturned on the Megan-Dorrigo road.



Mine, all mine . . . Robert Mill, left, and George Robb with copies of George's Gold.

The driver of the truck was not injured and a passing motorist stopped to find him poking through the mess with a stick.

When asked what he was doing, the driver

replied he was looking for his coat.

The motorist replied that the coat would not be much good now, to which the driver responded: 'I know, but it had my lunch in it'.

George's Gold was edited and published by local identity Mr Robert Mill.

Mr Robb and Mr Mill are also publishing an interactive CD ROM which includes audio of

Mr Robb as he takes people on a tour of George's Gold Mine.

The pair are looking for outlets to sell the book and CD ROM, which will retail for \$16 and \$26 respectively.

The original book launch article featured in the Coffs Harbour Advocate on 15/09/1999.

Sourced from:

<https://www.coffscoastadvocate.com.au/news/georges-book-a-gold-mine-of-early-history/3284824/>

FOR years it was one of the Coffs Coast's best loved tourist attractions and even had a book written about it.

George's Gold was so much more than the story of George's Gold Mine at Moleton and owner George Robb who wrote the history.

The book told tall tales and true about the early settlers of the area and their lifestyle and gold mining on the Orara fields of the Eastern Dorrigo leading up to the time the mine closed in 2007.

At the age of 79, genial George passed away on June 13, 2009, but made such an indelible impression on his community that requests for a new copy of his collected yarns and wisdom have seen original editor and publisher Robert Mill prepare a free e-book version.

"The book went out of print before the mine closed," Robert said.

"The e-book may be downloaded as an Acrobat pdf file and features many updates from the original print version.

"It is in colour with many photographs showing the mine in its tourism glory."

Robert was approached by Coffs Harbour Library's digitisation specialist Debbie Campbell to see if it was possible to obtain copies.

As a friend of George, he then made the decision to go digital, update the book and offer it as a free download in memory of a pioneer and highly respected character of the area.

It may surprise the mine which opened in 1978 was not named for George Robb.

The name came from George Ellis, a friend and mentor of the later George.

It's estimated more than 150,000 visitors turned up to see the 1908 stamper battery crushing ore over the almost three decades the attraction remained open.

The website to download the e-book is www.rmwebed.com.au

The mine site re-visited in April 2019.

The sign says Georges Gold Mine is Closed Today.

Well that is correct but the mine actually closed in 2007 and George passed away in 2009. I spent some time there in the nineties, when I edited and eventually published the book Georges Gold in 1999.

The book was George's recall of the gold mining era on the Orara Gold Fields, as well as the lifestyle, the township of Moleton nearby, the Moleton school and many of the families living in the area.

After being contacted by a trainee teacher about information on the mine, I decided I should re-visit the site to see what was there. I had not returned since the book was published. The visit brought back memories of an experience never to be forgotten. A piece of Coffs Harbour's history!

At the end of Bushman's Range Road some nine kilometres west is the tourist attraction entry and the Bayfield mine (where George used to conduct tours) is down in the valley below. The road to the entry gate is not sealed but looked as though it was recently graded (probably for the logging trucks) and apart from a couple of hairpin bends was easy to navigate.

On the way back on the right you can see the township of Lowanna in the distance.

Although the entry gate was firmly padlocked and there was a "keep out private property sign", I was still able to see the House on the Hill was still there (what was then George's daughter Debbie's house), the Food Hut, where a sausage sanger cost \$3.00 a steak sandwich \$4.00 and tea and coffee \$1.00 (The sign is still there).

The pioneer cottage and sheds near the entry were still intact, as was the outdoor dunny at the gate. The "attractions signage" was worn, but invited visitors to see the mine, battery stamper and picnic up on the hill (where there were magnificent views across the valley below.

The grounds looked fairly well maintained and the fencing (to keep trespassers out) was in good shape and there was a new entry gate, with multiple padlocks on it.

I could not get down to the Bayfield Mine, but I assume it is still there, as would have been the battery stamper and machinery.

It's a pity the site is no longer open to the public, as it was in it's day a popular tourist attraction, especially for school excursions where students learned first hand about the olden days in the area and gold mining.

An era gone and not to be revisited.

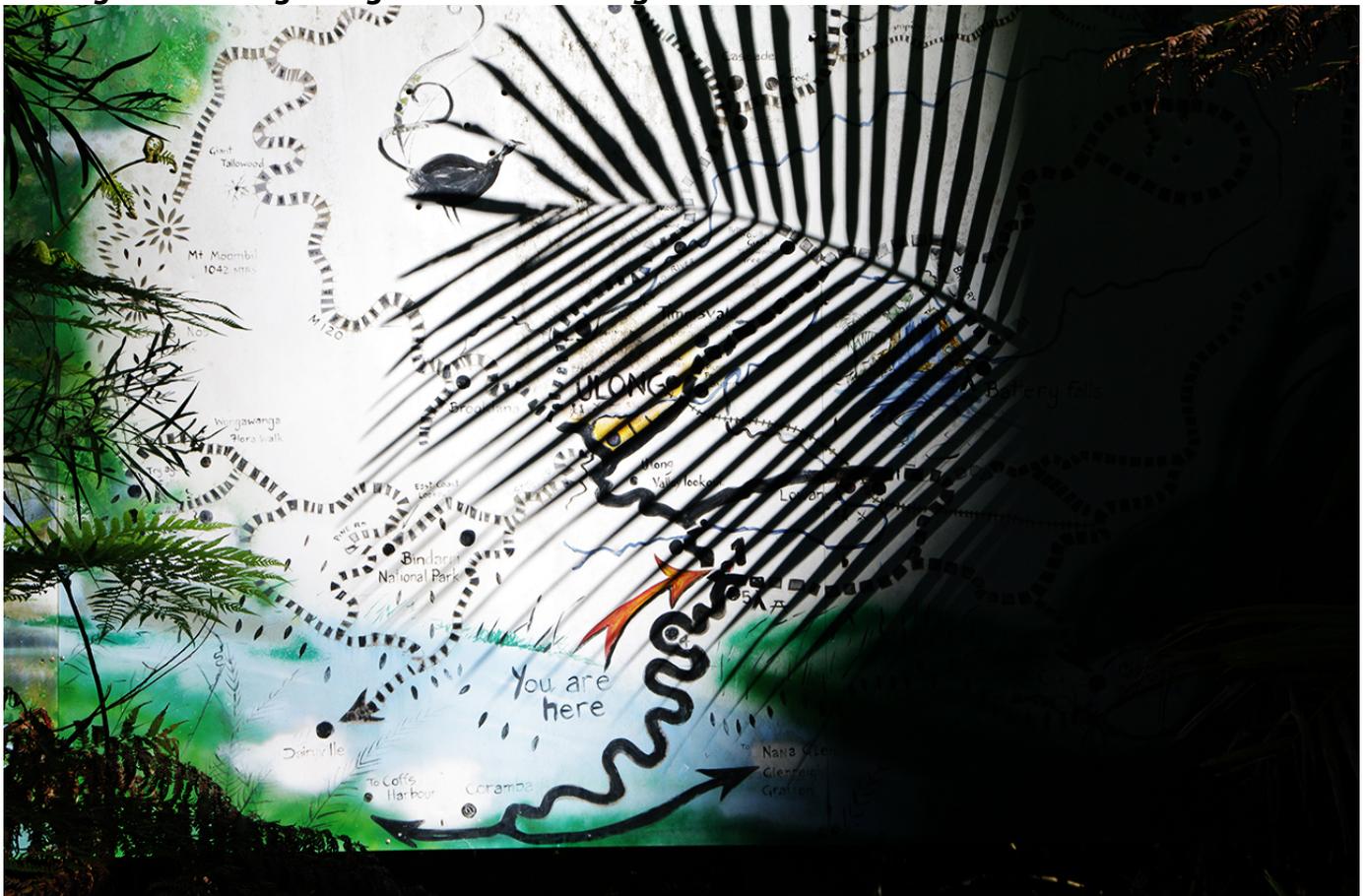
The Georges Gold book, edition three is now available as a downloadable .pdf book, free from the editor/publisher's website www.rmwebed.com.au and follow the links on the home page. There is also a downloadable audio file, which is a recording of one of George's mine tours.

Robert Mill – Editor and Publisher of George's Gold.

The following pages feature photos taken at the mine entry on April 6, 2019.



The signs at the beginning of Bushmans Range Road.





A welcome to the Tallow Wood Country.



Signage to the Mine Site



The mine site entry, with (left) the pioneer cottage, (right) the souvenir shop and in the distance, the house on the hill.



The entry sign, showing wear. From the top “A guide to a working battery”, the Pioneer Cottage & barn and up on the hill picnic areas and the lookout.



The barn and barbecue.



The well maintained grounds, leading up the hill.



The house on the hill.



The fork on Bushmans Range Road, the mine site is the up on the right.



The machine shed at the entry.



Another view of the pioneer cottage with an old fashioned washing copper kettle on the verandah.



The pioneer cottage at the entry and rear the barn.



An outdoor dunny.





The souvenir shop at the entry.



Bushmans Range Road outside the mine entry.