

APPENDIX 2

UNPUBLISHED REPORTS FROM LAUNCESTON CITY LIBRARY

PART 2

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Extract Mercury Newspaper, 26 Sept 1883

Extract Mercury Newspaper, 21 April 1959

LISLE.

[From our own Correspondent.]

I have little now to report about this locality. The alluvial is being gradually but surely worked out, and only those who have the command of water are doing any good. These may continue to get fair returns for years to come, but sooner or later a spirited company will secure all the water-rights, and go in for ground-slucing the whole Lisle Valley, from the gorge upwards, and I believe in that way more gold will be got out of it than it has yet yielded. This is a matter well worth the consideration of capitalists. The fact is a great part of the ground has been "mullocked over" by parties unaccustomed to the work, and this was especially the case when the field was first discovered. Of course it is now impossible to say where the ground has been properly worked, and where not, but nothing would escape a strong party having command of all the water in the creek, and systematically ground-slucing the whole area. The operation should however be carried on during the wet season.

But, though Lisle is not in a flourishing condition, as regards its gold returns, it has, I believe, a grand future before it as the centre of a large agricultural district. For miles round there is good, well-watered land to be had, but the scrub is dense, and roads are wanting. No doubt, as soon as the Scottsdale railroad is completed, or even determined upon, the track from here to Golconda, and thence to the Denison, will be converted into a road, and it may be done at a comparatively trifling expense. The prospect of a road through the district would at once lead to all available land being taken up, and our township would soon resume its former importance. The Government doubtless recognises the importance of inducing immigrants to settle on the land rather than congregate about the towns, and, in order to effect this, I would again urge that a preliminary survey of the land into small blocks should be at once ordered. It seems absurd to expect that new-comers will look for land in a dense bush without roads or information of any sort. The object should be to get small blocks taken up by *bond fide* settlers. A 50-acre block is as much as a working man with little capital should in prudence take up, and 50 acres well cleared will give better returns than thrice the quantity cleared in a slovenly way.

Not long since *The Mercury* called attention, in a leading article, to the remarkably high rate of mortality in Tasmania, from diseases pertaining to child-birth, as compared with the low average death-rate in the island from other causes. To those living in towns, or even in the settled parts of the colony, this may appear inexplicable, but not to the dwellers in the bush. The former have medical assistance always at hand; the latter must, in cases of emergency, send 20 or 30 miles for a doctor. Besides the delay and other expenses, this means a fee of perhaps 20 guineas or more. We must, therefore, rely mainly on the good offices of inexperienced women. If things take the usual course, well and good; but, if a hitch occurs, they are all adrift, and the patient is lost. We cannot, of course, expect medical men to settle in sparsely-populated districts, nor that Government should help us in that way, but I think the difficulty might be met in a great measure by the appointment of certificated midwives, each within her own district. Those women having hospital experience, and having passed a qualifying examination, which should extend to character, would be equal to most emergencies, and, in fact, would be able to give advice as regards other ailments, both of women and children. They might be allowed a small salary by Government, but would be mainly dependent on fees received from their patients.

I must not close without a reference to what is going on at Golconda, which we look upon as a sort of dependency to Lisle. Mr. Furlong's arrangements for starting the battery there are now nearly completed, and another fortnight ought to see it at work. The battery has been thoroughly cleaned and repaired, and the supports for the wheel are in position. The water races, both head and tail, are nearly finished. A good deal of blasting has had to be done, which has caused delay. In forming the pit for the wheel, a large quantity of rock has also been removed. The wheel, which has been sent in pieces from Launceston, is now being put together. It is 30ft. in diameter, and of the latest design, and, it is expected, will require very little water. The battery will, probably, with its 15 stampers, crush from 120 to 150 tons of stone per week. Two reefs are now being worked on tribute, and a third party is about to start on the Black Snake reef. The Darriwell reef, which is 2ft. thick, is yielding about 1 1/2 tons a day per man, and that worked by Meredith and party lately discovered and expected to crush 10dwt. to the ton, is also making a good show. The latter is connected by tram with the battery. The rails have been laid to the end of the long tunnel of the Enterprize reef, and the service stopes in it are ready for the pick, and work will commence as soon as the battery can work. The stone shows fully two feet thick, and ought to give 10 tons a week per pick. This tunnel is also connected by tram with the battery, so that the stone will be trucked direct from the passes to be crushed. There are numerous other reefs in the neighbourhood, but it is calculated that the four referred to will supply sufficient stone to keep the battery going night and day. ESTABLISHED 1841
September 22, 1883.

Gold-Dust Bought Groceries

SOMETIME when the Christmas bush lines the narrow road with white, I shall put a tin pan in the boot of my long-suffering car and make my way to the old goldmining town of Lisle.

By
Wayfarer

Because the old-timers have told me it is the right thing to do I shall first boil the billy, and then turn the pan upside-down over the hot ashes so that every trace of grease is burned off it and the gold dust will not stick.

I shall step into the black-berry-lined creek, and fill the pan with gravel and water, and, swirling it gently, empty out the gravel as I do so.

Then I shall look very hard at the side of the pan, hoping to see in the groove of it the bright specks of colour that are gold dust!

Meanwhile I can't help being fascinated by the history and setting of Lisle, which is so nearly forgotten that it is hard to find on the map.

Set in the hollow of very high hills in the countryside bounded by Lilydale, Nabowla, and Patersonia, there is little left to show that it was once a town of 2,500 people. It had a church, school, four hotels, five butcher's shops, and eight stores.

It received its name—originally De Lisle—from Governor Weld in honour of his wife's maiden name.

Now it has only about three permanent residents, and one of them is the grandson of one of the men who discovered the field in 1878. He is Mr. L. H. Bessell, a Forestry Commission officer.

The gold was found by the Bessell brothers, Charles, Tom, and Alf, and Mark Gibb. By 1883 the town was booming. Altogether 250,000 ounces of gold was recovered and, as the old timers point out, the "mother lode" has never been found!

One of the people I found still prospecting for it in a quiet way was Mr. R. J. Bessell of Mowbray, Launceston, who spends a great deal of his time with his son.

Mrs. Bessell, who grew up in Lisle, used to help in her father's store, and one of her jobs was to weigh the gold dust with which the miners bought their groceries.

A pennyweight was worth 3/9. It was very pure gold, and an ounce was worth £3/18/.

Mrs. Bessell has a brooch made from a nugget. She has also the seal of the Mt. Arthur Post Office (which served Lisle), and she was allowed to keep it when the office was closed.

As everyone was too busy looking for gold to grow vegetables, the people from Lilydale used to load up their packhorses, and take their produce to Lisle to sell. Transport was such a



problem that they shelled the peas to make more room.

It was a big day when Mr. H. Faulkner, whose widow still lives in Lisle, brought the first cow into the village.

But the milkman called earlier than that. He lived some distance over the hill, and brought the milk in two special cans. Each was fitted with a tap and they were loaded on to a very wise pack-horse which was carefully led into the village!

Recently Mrs. V. Edwards of Launceston, who has been doing research on early days, conducted a party of Royal Society members about Lisle, and I think they were all as fascinated as I am.

● Still prospecting in a quiet way is Mr. R. J. Bessell, of Mowbray, Launceston, who is a son of Mr. Charles Bessell, one of the brothers who found the gold in the Spring of 1878.