

MINUTES OF THE MARCH MEETING OF THE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALISTS  
HELD IN THE QCWA ROOMS ON MARCH 24th 1987

Present 20

Apolo gies 5

OPENING President Jean opened the meeting and welcomed all present with a special welcome to Mrs Kita's son-in-law.

MINUTES Moved by Mary Walter and seconded by Ray Marsden that the minutes be read as read in the March Newsletter. Carried

CORRESPONDENCE Inward: Aust. Post - PO Box Account \$23.00; Journals and Newsletters from N.P.A. News; Toowoomba Bushwalkers; Darling Downs Newsletter; Chinchilla Field Nats, and Richmond Valley. Outward. to 4qs with outing and meeting notices. Moved by Esme Lacey and seconded by Errol Walker that the inward correspondence be received and the outward endorsed. Carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT Balance as at 25/2/87 \$149.58 credit. Receipts Subs \$58.00 Room Rent \$6.00, Bring and Buy \$3.20 Total receipts \$67.20 Expenditure Room Rent \$6.00; Magazine Duplication \$6.00; Magazine Postage \$13.00 Fed Tax \$1.00 Total Expenditure \$26.00 leaving a credit balance as at 25/3/87 of \$190.78. Treasurer Joan Moved that the report be received and account Room Rent \$6.00, Magazine Postage \$17.00, Magazine Duplication \$6.00 be passed for payment. Seconded by Robin McCosker. C/d

OUTING REPORT Dore McCosker reported on the campout of March 21-22 to the Emmaville and Torrington area. Forty people attended some travelling down on the Friday. The campsite chosen had to be abandoned because of bees and was set up in the Torrington Caravan Park. Over the weekend mining ruins and machinery were inspected and a mineral display, museum and other places of interest were seen.

NEXT OUTING Under the leadership of Tom Archer is to Hutchins Hill on Kris Carnell's property. Lunch will be carried and had at the top of the hill. Meet at Weeroona Park and leave at 10.30

NEXT MEETING. Programme for the next meeting will be announced in the April Newsletter.

SPECIMENS. from the campout were brought by Robin and Dore McCosker - rocks containing wolfram, topaz and topaz sand which is used in pottery ceramics. A scared kingfisher was seen on the road.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm.

AFTER MEETING PROGRAMME Jean introduced our speaker for the programme Ray Marsden whog.ve an interesting programme on a trip to the Birdsville district. A vote of thanks was carried by acclamation.

EMMAVILLE - TORRINGTON CAMPOUT REPORTby DORE McCOSKER.

When I first visited Torrington with Beryl and Roy Werner, I felt quite excited at the prospect of camping there as there seemed to be so much to explore; so much history imprinted on the landscape.

We visited Arthur Davies' interesting museum and later he directed us to a nice secluded campsite, not far from water. On Friday March 20 I left Stanthorpe with the Stevensons early enough to set up camp well before dark and have things organised for later arrivals. What a shock I received when I saw the "camping spot" filled with bee hives and bees buzzing everywhere. After a hurried conference, we decided to go back to the village and the caravan park there. All's well that ends well and I think everyone appreciated the clean toilets, hot showers and the wood provided for the barbeque.

Early one Saturday morning I set out with Robin and family to visit friends just past Emmaville. Taking a wrong road, we drove to the top of a hill from which extensive views opened out in all directions. I hope we can return sometime to enjoy it at leisure.

We returned to Emmaville, met the others from Torrington and the remainder of the group from Stanthorpe led by Roy Werner and spent time viewing specimens of tin and relics of the mining days at Curnows museum. The rawhide bucket, over one hundred years old, indicated one of the many ways the pioneers had of being self-sufficient. Two great stone wheels on an axle had been cut from solid granite by Mr Curnow and another man and were used to crush ore. They were removed from Emmaville to Torrington in 1981 for the Torrington Centenary.

From an enlarged photograph of the arsenic mine taken when the mine was in operation, Mrs Curnow described the various buildings and their uses. The site of this mine was our next stopping place, this proved a fascinating glimpse into the past.

In 1920 William Cooper and Nephews, manufacturers of sheep and cattle dips, developed the Ottery Mine for production of white arsenic - one of the chief ingredients in their products. 450,000 bricks were used in the construction of kilns, furnaces, flues and cooling chambers with a tall square chimney (higher on the hillside) standing sentinel over all. In 1928, a tin treatment plant was added but production dwindled. The mine was sold in 1936 and some plant, building and equipment was transferred to other areas leaving just a heap of brick ruins fenced off from the surrounding countryside with numerous signs erected warning of the contaminated area.

Architectural shapes, weathered timbers, brick and stoneowrk, rich colours in the slag heaps and the slurry dam provided endless subject matter for photographers.

Around the immediate area no grass grew but two types of plants - an acacia species and cassinia were quite dense.

On to Torrington to wash off the dust from the arsenic mine and enjoy lunch while the Saturday arrivals set up camp. We then numbered 37.

After lunch we visited the buddle and had a closer look at a neat little galvinised home, on then to the crusher and battery where the owner, Fred Sherratt, explained the process.

## Outing Report(continued).

Part of the machinery was being repaired so we did not see it in operation. This type of plant - buddle and battery, is a fine example of what has been in use in mining the area for over one hundred years with only the source of power changing from steam to diesel.

The whole region is incredibly rich in minerals and associated gemstones and the industry fluctuates with the demand and resulting price.

As in Stanthorpe, tin mining began in Emmaville in 1872 and was mainly alluvial. Work at Torrington began in 1881, when the value of tin fell interest turned to wolfram and its associated minerals, bismuth and tungsten for which there was a greater demand. It is these minerals which are being recovered by Sherratts at this time along with the newer product topaz sand which will probably eclipse all the others. Topaz deposits at Torrington are the largest in the world. Topaz is used as a flux in steel making, in ceramics and glass making, as an effective abrasive due to its hardness. Sybil, I think, felt an affinity with the product judging by her exclamation when we were told that the sand is used in the material from which artificial joints are made.

After leaving the stamper battery we called in to Mr Sherratt's house to see the final process when the concentrates are put through a magnetic separator and unwanted minerals extracted leaving pure mineral.

That night we were joined around the campfire by a group of gem hunters from Mitchellton Brisbane and after the ceremony of the damper, we all partook of damper straight from the campoven - thanks to Ray and Sybil and I don't think there were even any crumbs left for that pup that had been on the scrounge all day.

Sunday morning found us at the interesting area of Curnow's mine-named after the finder. The mine became famous as the deepest tin mine known at the time, the shaft being 1.030 feet with workings at nine levels. The poppet head is rotting away, the remains of steam boilers and other unweildly machinery is disappearing under the encroaching trees and shrubbery. The tunnel proved irresistible to the more venturesome, who disturbed a swarm of native bees near the entrance.

Everyone came home with rock specimens of some sort and also, as a bonus, trees and nativeshrubs in pots from a nursery which had closed down. Park owner, Manuel, showed some of the double ended quartz chrystal he has found and promised help with fossicking.

We visited the Torrington Museum, had lunch, packed our camp and made our ways home on the routes of our own choosing. We went through Silent Grove, across the Mole River and back to granite in a few miles.

Fruit trees and European deciduous trees appear in many unexpected places and mark the site of long vanished homes and help us visualise the size of the settlement that from 1920 to 1930 supported hotel, billiard rooms, 5 shops, 2 cafes, picture theatre as well as school and sporting groups etc. There were 400 to 500 men employed by the companies and many others were mining for themselves.

The land around Torrington is Common land, used by all for

## Outing Report(continued)

grazing and it is strange to drive along the road without fences on each side. The rocky granite outcrops and large boulders are like Stanthorpe and it was interesting to see how the land changes to trap rock and back to granite in a few miles.

Wild flowers are showy in spring time but autumn revealed *Olearia eliptica*, *Cassinia quinquifolia*, acacia species and some Eucalypts - hence the bees, and amongst the rocks or grasses *Lobelia gracilis*, *Spiranthes sinensis*, white *Calotis* (a burr daisy) and a golden everlasting possibly *Helipterum*.

Minerals found in the vicinity of the two settlements are tin, silver galena, copper, arsenic, bismuth, cobalt, tungsten while amongst the gem stones are quartz crystal, topaz, tourmaline, zircon, garnet, beryl, emerald and sapphire.

Perhaps we could organise a fossicking campout. Such a place is well worth revisiting.

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Possible Earth Tremor?

This interesting account from Colin Hockings.

On Sunday, February 8, at about 10 or 11am Janet and I were sitting quietly when the house started to vibrate with a drumming sound. We both went outside to see if any heavy traffic was travelling along the road nearby. There was no sign of traffic or aeroplanes.

The vibration continued for about five seconds and was similar to the effect produced by a heavy vibrating road-roller about 50 metres from the house. This is a familiar sensation as Janet's parents live beside the south-west freeway in Brisbane. We spoke to Janet's parents about the event and they telephoned the Geology Department at the QLD University.

Subsequently we received a detailed questionnaire from the Seismology Group to be completed regarding the event.

This was duly completed and returned but, to date, we have received no confirmation or otherwise, as to whether we did experience an earth tremor.

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The programme for the next meeting on Wednesday April 22 will be given by Neil Mungall on his recent year in Finland, this will depend on whether or not Neil is chosen for a major sporting event. If he is unable to be present a programme on the Eulo-Yowah area in springtime will be presented.

NEXT OUTING. Please note change of date. The outing will commence from Weeroona Park at 10,30am on April 26 with Tom Archer the leader. The outing will be to Hutchins Hill at Severnlea.

For this month only the meeting will be held prior to the outing.  
MEETING DATE. QCWA Rooms at 8pm on April 22.