

THE MUSE

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Mudgee Gold – Part 2

by Peter Johnson



In Mudgee Gold – Part 1 (*The Muse* - March 2019) we saw how gold changed Mudgee's destiny. More than any other industry it brought population to the district. When gold was discovered in 1851 Mudgee's population was 292. It had almost tripled to 803 by 1856. The 1861 census showed Mudgee municipality had 1,507 people and Sofala, a town founded on mining, had 1,646. Mudgee was at the centre of the discoveries and goldfields surrounded it at almost every point of the compass. Gold was discovered at World's End, Hargraves, Avisford, Windeyer, Maitland Bar, Merrendee, Bruce's Creek, Pyramul, Grattai Creek, Havilah, Cooyal, Old Pipeclay, New Pipeclay, Green Swamp, Guntawang, Rat's Castle, Broombee, Apple Tree Flat, Cudgegong, Sofala and many other places.

The stores and banks who purchased gold from the miners needed a secure way to transport it to Sydney, and in 1857, after much lobbying, the Government agreed to commence a gold escort from Mudgee. It left for Sydney via Louisa Creek every Friday. Activity on the diggings ebbed and flowed. In the early days the gold was often close to the surface and easy to come by. In 1857 at Pyramul on the Meroo River system, according to the *Mudgee Newspaper*: "There are not less than 150 to 200 ounces (of gold) per week got by our present population.....Even the indolent miner can always make a living here, and grog money too, and the industrious a certain independence. These are the easiest worked mines in the colony.....There seems to be no end to the getting of nuggets, varying in weight from one to twelve ounces".

By the end of the 1850s the diggings were generally at a standstill. There was still plenty of gold to be found but drought was impeding mining. Water was needed to wash the gold from the dirt. A revival took place in 1860 but by the beginning of 1861 business was dull again. In August that year, Thomas Spicer, a grazier, opened his land on Upper Meroo Creek to diggers and a rush ensued. Between 500 and 600 were there within a week and stores and dancing saloons were being erected. Some 200 of the diggers were Chinese and tensions arose with the European diggers. This was about the same time as the infamous riots were occurring at Lambing Flat near Young. A large meeting took place in one of the dancing saloons to pressure Spicer to prohibit Chinese from working the ground. He promised not to allow any more licenses to the Chinese after the end of the month, and tensions calmed.

At many localities mining continued over an extended period of time, with many separate rushes taking place over the period at the same locality as new finds were made. The diggings in the vicinity of Pipeclay Creek, north of Mudgee, provide a good example. In 1856 the *Maitland Mercury* reported there were nearly 100 diggers at new diggings at Pipeclay, five miles from Mudgee, and all were

getting gold. Some “heavy finds” were made there in 1858 and in the same year a row between Europeans and the Chinese caused troopers to attend and “the tents of the Chinese were razed”.

A rich gold strike was reported at the Pipeclay Creek mines in January 1864. The same month payable gold was struck in Sapling Gully. Miners had to dig 40 feet down to find the gold. Earlier finds had been made nearby at Golden Gully. This area began to be called New Pipeclay to distinguish it from the mining area near Budgee Budgee which was referred to as Old Pipeclay. In July that year the *Empire* reported the New Pipeclay population to be 600, with a recent addition of some diggers from New Zealand.

The diggings were said to be fine for the poor man because, being near Mudjee, he could buy food daily at Mudjee prices. Mudjee’s *Western Post* reported that two men had arrived in Mudjee penniless three months previous and got jobs with a storekeeper. After two weeks they left for New Pipeclay with one pound each in their pockets. At the end of the three months they sold £200 worth of gold in Mudjee, the product of their labours. This is worth about \$90,000 at today’s gold prices. Another paper said that “rowdyism” was prevalent at the diggings. In 1864 there were seven public houses and several shanties (illegal grog shops). There were prize fights and foot races and, naturally, the gambling that went with them.

In 1870 the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s travelling reporter did a retrospective on the New Pipeclay diggings. He said the lower diggings (from Pipeclay Creek to about Strikes Lane) were never rich. The gold was found in patches rather than in runs. Sinking was haphazard because there was no distinct “gutter” (ancient buried creek bed containing alluvial gold). The upper diggings (near Snakes Creek - further away from Pipeclay Creek) were somewhat better as there was a more defined gutter and the gold was found in more payable amounts. On the whole he described New Pipeclay as a “poor man’s diggings”, which he dolefully defined as “a diggings which finds you poor and keeps you poor”.

But there was gold mining history yet to play out for New Pipeclay, which came to be known as Eurunderee.

To be continued



GEORGE DAVIDSON

(Reported in Sydney Morning Herald Monday 13th November 1933.)

The death occurred in Mudjee on 10th November 1933, of George Davidson, age 93 years, who was a solicitor in the Supreme Court of New South Wales for almost 67 years, making him the oldest practicing solicitor. Born in Maitland in 1840, he married in 1874, Jessie Watt of Ulinda Station, near Binnaway.

His eldest son, Sir Collin George Watt Davidson was born in Mudjee in 1878 and was admitted to the Bar in 1901.

Mr. Justice Davidson visited his father a week ago and will return to Mudjee this morning Monday 13 to attend the funeral. Enquiries made when Mr. Davidson retired from the active practice of his profession in February shows he was the oldest solicitor in New South Wales and as far as could be ascertained in Australia. The only other veteran legal practitioner who appeared to be in a position to approach Mr. Davidson’s record

is Mr. R.C.O. Fitzgerald who is practicing at Muswellbrook and was admitted as a solicitor 64 years ago.

Mr. Davidson led an exceedingly active life until a month ago and had many interests outside the bar. He was associated with gold mining ventures in the western districts for many years. He has been a newspaper proprietor (at one time owning the Western Post which was then published at Mudgee) and a station owner his name having been associated with Murrungundy and Tort's Creek stations between Cobbora and Mudgee. Mr. Davidson worked for many public movements in Mudgee. He was an alderman of the municipality for many years and was Mayor on several occasions. Mr. Davidson was a member of the Hospital Board, a member of the Railway League, chairman of the Public-School Board under the present act, the treasurer of the Mudgee Agricultural and Pastoral Association. He takes a keen interest in politics and has always supported progress and social well-being. Earlier in his life he was a member of the volunteer military forces and reached the rank of Major.

At Maitland where he was born, he was a classmate of Sir Samuel Griffith at the Local High School. After finishing there he was articled to Mr. Chambers a well-known Maitland solicitor. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1866 at the age of 26 years and the whole of his life as a practitioner was spent at Mudgee. He went into partnership in 1926 with Mr. H. P. Hickson under the firm name of Messrs. Davidson and Hickson and more recently the partnership admitted Mr. R.R.B. Hickson a son of the junior member.

Residents of Mudgee have been conscious of Mr. Davidson's fine record as a citizen and of his long legal life. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his admission to the rolls he was congratulated in the local police court by the official and Mr. A E Prior PM and on the same evening was entertained at dinner by the citizens. He was also entertained at dinner by members of the legal profession on the occasion of the anniversary in 1928. Until his retirement it was usual for him to drive from his home "Arndullie" on the Cassillis Road (now Ulan road) to his office a distance of four miles each morning.

HON. SIR COLIN GEORGE WATT DAVIDSON



Colin George Watt Davidson was born at Mudgee New South Wales on 18th November 1878, son of George Davidson, solicitor, and his wife Jessie nee Watt. He was educated at Mudgee Public School, at the Grammar School, Mudgee, and at the University of Sydney (BA 1899, LLB 1901).

Called to the New south Wales Bar on 24 October 1901, Davidson practised out of Denman Chambers (by 1903) Wigram Chambers (by 1906) and the University Chambers (by 1914). He co-authored with J. H. Hammond, "The Law of Landlord and Tenant in NSW". In 1913 he was appointed a 'reader' in Equity, Company Law, Probate and Divorce at the Law School in the University of Sydney and from 1921 to 1923 he was Challis Lecturer in Divorce. He was a member of the Council of the Bar of New South Wales from 1919/20 to 1925/26. On 12 March 1926 his appointment as a King's Counsel was approved by the Executive Council.

Mr. Davidson was an acting Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales from 8 June 1926. His appointment was renewed in August to October 1926 and expired 12 February. 1927. He was made a Puisne Judge at the Supreme Court from 14 February 1927. By 1940 he was Senior Puisne

Judge. He went on retiring leave, being farewelled by the Supreme Court on 19th November 1948, and retired on 17 November 1949. He was reputed to be the first graduate of the Law School of the University of Sydney to join the New South Wales Supreme Court.

From May 1929 to February 1930 Davidson chaired a three-person Royal Commission to inquire into the position of the coal industry in Australia, and New South Wales specifically. This included production, transport, export, distribution and sale of coal and the causes which had led to the existing conditions. The Royal Commission was appointed by the Commonwealth and the State of New South Wales and presented its final report on 28 March 1930.

From 22 December to 30 January 1931, Davidson presided over an inquiry by New South Wales, under the Gas Act, 1912. He was also chairman in 1934 of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into and report on the coal mining industry.

From August 1938 to May 1939, Davidson chaired the three- person New South Wales Royal Commission on the safety and health of workers in coal mines. Its final report was presented on 12 July 1939 and resulted in the Coal Mines Regulation (Further Amendment) Act of 1941.

In February 1941 Davidson was appointed chairman of the Commonwealth Coal Board and in August a consultant to its replacement, the Commonwealth Coal Commission. From 12 January 1945 to 13 March 1946 he chaired the Commonwealth Board of inquiry into the Coal Mining Industry, under powers conferred by the National Security (Inquiries) Regulations and the National Security (General) Regulations.

Davidson was a Fellow of the Senate of the University of Sydney from 1939 to 1941. His knighthood was awarded on 1 January 1952 for services to the coal industry. The Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy made him an Honorary Member in 1952.

Justice Davidson died at Chatswood on 8 July 1954. He was survived by his wife Phyllis Hinder nee Jones whom he married on 20 December 1928 at Sydney. They had no children.

A SELECTION OF ITEMS ON DISPLAY AT THE MUDGEES MUSEUM







MAJOR GENERAL SIR IVAN DOUGHERTY CBE, DSO & BAR, ED.

Born in the village of Leadville, 6 April 1907, Ivan Noel Dougherty was brought up by his mother with his parents separating when he was an infant.

He attended Leadville Primary School, before Mudgee High School where he was appointed school captain in 1925.

Sir Ivan won a scholarship to Sydney Teachers' College and later graduated with a Bachelor of Economics from Sydney University.

He first experienced military life in the Sydney University Regiment.

While teaching at Armidale, Sir Ivan joined the CMF and when war broke he was commanding the 33rd Battalion (the New England Regiment).

Command of the 2/4th was assumed in Palestine in 1940.

Major General Dougherty participated in the confused and disastrous Allied retreat in Greece and bravely defended his battalion position during the subsequent German airborne assault on Crete.

A platoon of the 2/4th penetrated Fort Solaros in the attack on Tobruk.

The forts commander, an Italian general, his entire staff and many other enemy troops were taken prisoner.

Then a Lieutenant-Colonel, Sir Ivan was awarded a DSO for exemplary conduct in operations which led to the fall of Tobruk and Derna.

His hardest and most costly war fighting came however, when he was posted to New Guinea to command the 21st Brigade, 7th Australian Division in late 1942 before it moved to the Gona-sanandah area.

Casualties were high with the Japanese clinging to their fortified positions.

When Gona fell on December 9, the brigade, which included the 39th Militia Battalion from Victoria – veterans of the Kokoda Track – could manage an all-ranks strength of only 217.

Then a Brigadier. Sir Ivan was awarded a second DSO.

He was in New Guinea again in September 1943 to lead the 21st Brigade in the successful Markham and Ramu Valley campaign.

Commanding one of the assault brigades in the landing at Balikpapan in the final year of the war, Sir Ivan was shot at in the company of the commander, General Douglas MacArthur.

He returned to civilian life first as a headmaster in Sydney, then a schools' inspector before being appointed the first NSW Director of Civil Defence, a position he retained for 18 years.

Knighted in 1968, Sir Ivan was awarded a CBE in 1946 and in 1952 became GOC 2nd Division, CMF with the rank of Major-General.

Known affectionally as 'Doc', Sir Ivan had a reputation for being fair-minded and intensely loyal to those he commanded

Sir Ivan died in Sydney, 4 March 1998, aged 90. He was survived by Lady Phillis Dougherty and their children, Graeme, Maureen, David and Noela.

A full military funeral to honour Sir Ivan was held at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 19th August 2019

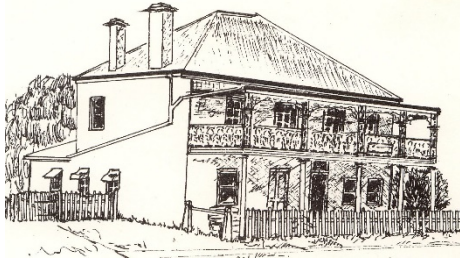
7.00 p.m.

at

The Mudgee Museum

The General Meeting

will be followed by the A.G.M.



COLONIAL INN MUSEUM

126 Market Street, Mudgee
Headquarters of the
Mudgee Historical Society Inc

PO Box 217, Mudgee, NSW, 2850
Tel. 02.6372 7395

Opening Times

Mon. to Fri: 10am to 3pm
Sat: 10am to 2pm
Sun & Public Holidays: 10am to 2pm
Groups by appointment

Admission

Adults: \$8
Concession: \$5
Children: \$2

The Mudgee Historical Society meets on the **THIRD** Tuesday morning of every month, except December, at the Colonial Inn Museum at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership of the Mudgee Historical Society Inc is due for renewal on the 1st July of each year. Is your membership overdue?

Membership: \$15 Families \$30

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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TEL./EMAIL:

Return to: The Secretary, Mudgee Historical Society Inc, PO Box 217, Mudgee, NSW, 2850