

Review

RYAN, J. S., Arnold GOODE, Robert HAWORTH, and Peter O'DONOHUE, *Golden Words and a Golden Landscape: Essays on Uralla gold mining history and a Glossary of the miners' language in Australia from the 1850s to 1905*, Armidale and Uralla, New South Wales, Arts New England and Uralla Shire Council, 2010, A\$20.

This volume in honour of local historian Arnold Goode, to which he also contributes, opens a window on the gold mining industry in Australia. It explores and clarifies the surviving evidence of work in the goldfields of New South Wales within the context of the related records of the landscape. Presented in four principal sections: Introduction, Golden Words, A Golden Landscape, and Some Related Legends, the book provides a fascinating overview of the interrelationships of the early days of the gold rush and the landscape in which it took place.

J. S. Ryan's wideranging Introduction ably revisits and appraises the work of "Rolf Boldrewood" (Thomas Browne), of which he is the acknowledged expert, and assesses the impact of his writings on the dissemination of information about the industry. Professor Ryan then moves on to consider the recorded Australianisms in Boldrewood's writings, and the place of the technical vocabulary of gold and gold mining in Australian English. This leads on to an outline of the methods of selection used in compiling the glossary-concordance, *Golden Words*, which follows. This highly revealing alphabetical list of terms occupies the bulk of the publication, extending to some ninety four pages.

From the wealth of entries in the glossary, which are supported by explanations and illustrative quotations, the following may give an idea of the breadth and flavour of the typical words and phrases used by Boldrewood to reflect the industry and the surrounding terrain: *base line* (marking line for locating claims), *bluey* (blanket), *club of the unsuccessful* (early gold-seekers), *dart* (stratagem, trick), *digger* (gold miner), *fizzer* (rich/successful claim), *fossick* (to search for surface gold), *hatter* (solitary miner), *mullock* (rock containing no gold), *pilgrim* (overseas itinerant seeker for gold), *reef* (vein of auriferous quartz), *saltbush* (stunted form of vegetation), *sandy blight* (ophthalmia), *she-oak* (Australian beer), *shoot* (pocket/section of auriferous material), *sprag* (wooden peg to slow descent by rope into shaft), *stope* (step-like part of mine), *tom* (trough), *whim* (windlass). This small sample cannot do justice to the heady mix of technical and more general terms which pepper Boldrewood's writings and are gathered together here to reflect not only the goldmining process but also its physical and social context. The glossary amply chronicles Browne/Boldrewood's significant early contribution to the lexicon of English.

The section on the Golden Landscape which follows opens with a revealing essay on "Gold and its landscapes: Uralla in the 'Roaring Days'" by Robert Haworth and Arnold Goode. It charts the development and decline of goldmining in the area, including the gold rush of 1856. Particularly intriguing is the fact that much of the mineral was found on hilltops, stranded there by "remnants of vast 100 million year old river beds ... by a process of 'inversion of relief'" caused by volcanic activity. The essay leads on to a Uralla Oral History

of the gold rush, 1851-1857” by Arnold Goode, the dedicatee of the volume. This detailed and fascinating account includes the names of a large number of miners and other workers in the New England District, putting flesh on the bones of the historical record, including many English and Irish names from 1869, and several Chinese names from 1875.

The penultimate essay, “Mining the Rocky River” by Peter O’Donohue, focuses on the ongoing research on nineteenth century mining hydrology and the Chinese presence on the Rocky River goldfield. The boom period in 1856-7 saw “the arrival of the first large groups of Chinese miners”. The diggings in the area were hampered by the lack of water for washing material for gold. The final essay, by J. S. Ryan, presents and discusses in detail some of the “bushranging” legends from the Rocky River goldfield, focusing primarily on stories about “Captain Thunderbolt” who was regarded as “a timeless type of Robin Hood/conscience figure” who became “a folk hero for an emergent nation”. Perhaps equally important are the accounts of his wife, the part Aboriginal Mary Ann and her kin, who played a pivotal role in his life.

The volume includes numerous illustrations, maps, and tables, which contribute substantially to the immediacy of the material presented. This collection of essays offers insights into the goldmining industry in New England and its associated geographical and cultural contexts, revealing a wealth of hitherto unavailable historical evidence, and suggesting avenues for further exploration.

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