



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.3.3 Prospecting for precious metals
- 3.4.3 Mining

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 303 Mining

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is the earliest extant mining shaft in Western Australia. It marks the beginnings of mineral exploration and the commencement of mining in Western Australia in the 1840s, an industry that later became and remains of immense importance to the State. (Criteria 2.2)

Cole's Shaft (fmr) illustrates early prospecting activities in the Perth area of the Swan River Colony in the 1840s, largely as a result of hopes to initiate prosperity at a time of economic depression. (Criterion 2.2)

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is associated with the principals and shareholders of the Western Australian Mining Company, the first mining company to be formed in the State in September 1846. The original Committee of Control consisted of Messrs John Septimus Roe, Samuel Moore, Henry Charles Sutherland, Bartholomew Urban Vigors, William Knight and Robert Habgood. The Secretary was Charles Sholl. Other principals included George Shenton, George Leake and Patrick Marmion, all early Western Australian colonists of great influence. The shaft is thought to have been named after one of the shareholders, Henry Laroche Cole, a Perth merchant and later Chairman of the Perth City Council. (Criterion 2.3)

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is associated with the German mineralogist, Dr F. von Sommer, who later became the first Government Geologist of WA in 1847-8. (Criterion 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is a benchmark site as the first mining shaft to be sunk in Western Australia. The shaft and surroundings have the potential to yield information through archaeological excavation to yield information regarding early mining practices. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is the first mining shaft to be sunk in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is representative of a number of shafts put down in the Darling Range over ensuing years in search of lead, copper, silver and gold. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Cole's Shaft (fmr) has been partially filled with rubble. The remains of the mullock heap at the mouth of the shaft and the granite walls of the section of shaft still open appear to be stable. The open vertical shaft could constitute a danger to the general public.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Cole's Shaft (fmr) has not been used as a mine for many years and none of the infrastructure connected with the sinking of the shaft is extant. The place has a low degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Despite being partially filled with rubble, *Cole's Shaft (fmr)* has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Elliot, HCWA, using research notes compiled by geological student, Shane Scrutton, and other sources.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Cole's Shaft (fmr), first sunk in 1846-7, is a vertical mineshaft about 10 metres in depth on the western face of Bedforddale Hill in the Darling Range. It is situated about 2 kilometres southwards of Armadale town centre on the boundary of Lots 53 and 54 on the eastern side of Summit View.

At the time *Cole's Shaft (fmr)* was driven into the hillside, the Swan River Colony had been in existence for only 18 years. Away from the few main town centres, settlement was sparse and scattered. The colony had been in the grip of steadily worsening depression for several years. Spurred by the

successes being experienced in the neighbouring colony of South Australia where newly discovered lead and copper mines, principally around the Burra region, were raising revenue, prospecting was carried out in the Swan River Colony around the Perth area.¹

In July 1846, specimens of coal of an inferior quality were discovered in the Murray district. A Perth barrister, Bartholomew Urban Vigors, who had witnessed the South Australian mining boom, was already encouraging prospecting closer to Perth in the Darling Range.² By mid August, rumours of mineral finds increased in Perth. Before that month was over, a public meeting had been held and a committee appointed to organise the formation of a company to systematically investigate the mineral resources of the colony.³ The Western Australian Mining Company was subsequently established at a meeting convened at the London Hotel on 17 September 1846.⁴

The WA Mining Co. had the twofold object of promoting the discovery of minerals and buying the mineral land at the price of ordinary agricultural land. It was launched with a prescribed capital of £20,000, divided into 10,000 shares of £2 each. The terms of subscription were four shillings per share on application, the balance payable in calls of 10% at intervals of not less than three months. Over 600 shares were subscribed for at the inaugural meeting. The original Committee of Control consisted of Messrs John Septimus Roe, Samuel Moore, Henry Charles Sutherland, Bartholomew Urban Vigors, William Knight and Robert Habgood. The Secretary was Charles Sholl. Other principals included George Shenton, George Leake and Patrick Marmion and many more, all early Western Australian colonists of great influence.⁵

As a result of the inaugural meeting, the following notice appeared in the Perth newspapers:

The Committee of the Western Australian Mining Company solicits information relative to the existence of minerals in this colony, and is prepared liberally to reward persons affording the same. All communications on the subject to be addressed (post paid) to "The Committee of the Western Australian Mining Company, Perth." Charles Sholl, Hon. Secretary, Perth, 21 September 1846.⁶

This caused much excitement in Perth and many would-be prospectors set out to try their luck.

In October 1846, the prospecting efforts of a 32 year old American sailor, Thomas Gilman, and his 21 year old companion, Samuel Duffield, second youngest son of the proprietor of the Albion Hotel, met with success. They brought news to the company concerning their discovery of promising lead deposits in the Darling Range a short distance south of Neerigen Brook on land owned by John Adams and Thomas Middleton.⁷

1 Battye, J.S. *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth*, UWA Press, Nedlands, Facsimile Edition 1978, pp.184-5.

2 Coy, Neil J. *The Serpentine Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale*, Mundijong, 1984, p.25.

3 *Inquirer* 2 September 1846, p.2.

4 Battye, J.S. *Cyclopedia*, pp. 304-5.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid p.305.

7 Ibid; *Perth Gazette* 5 December 1846 p.2; Erickson, Rica *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888* Vol. II, D-J UWA Press Nedlands 1988 pp.908 & 1202 – Interestingly, the American, Gilman, is also credited with discovering pearl shell at Shark Bay in 1850.

In November, news broke of the discovery of a coal seam on the Irwin River located during explorations by the Gregory brothers. The effect of the intense interest this generated was to cause a further 1,000 shares in the WA Mining Co. to be taken up, allowing it to commence operations in earnest. The committee began negotiations for the importation of mining expertise from South Australia, eventually engaging a qualified mineralogist, Dr Ferdinand von Sommer, and a mine foreman named Thomas to proceed to Western Australia for a six-month term. At the end of November, Messrs S. Moore and J.W. Gregory were deputed by the committee to accompany Gilman and Duffield to examine their find. Their report was so encouraging that the company paid the prospectors a £20 reward and made arrangements with the landowners to enable them to commence mining operations immediately.⁸

This was reported by the local press as follows.

We are happy to be able to announce to our readers this week, the important fact, that Western Australia possesses at last, a mine, and that too in progress of working, and although it is not copper, yet the lead ore of which it consists, is of so pure a quality, that but little doubt remains of its paying for extraction.⁹

The negotiations to acquire the land surrounding the find resulted in the purchase of 50 acres (approximately 20ha) of Canning Location 31 from Adams and Middleton for £62-10-0. Additional mineral indications to the south resulted in the purchase from the government, for £159-0-0, of Canning Location 24, 160 acres (nearly 65ha) adjoining the south boundary of the 50 acre block.¹⁰ J.W. Gregory superintended the initial mining work from 4 December 1846 until the arrival of Dr von Sommer. Miners sent down from Perth were engaged at 6 shillings per day with rations provided.¹¹ The shaft started on the lead lode was known as the 'Kelmscott Mine' or *Cole's Shaft*, apparently after Henry Laroche Cole, one of the shareholders of the company.¹² On Boxing Day that Christmas, the *Perth Gazette* announced that copper had been found amongst the lead ore.

We consider this discovery as the most important which has yet been announced, as it will not only give a fresh impetus to those engaged in the search for minerals, but it will also create competition for land situated contiguous ...¹³

Because of the hardness of the rock, the work was slow and a month's work resulted only in sinking *Cole's Shaft* to a depth of no more than 9 feet (2.7 metres).¹⁴

As the result of Dr von Sommer's arrival in the colony and his examination of the works in progress, the deepening of *Cole's Shaft* was temporarily abandoned in favour of putting down another shaft nearby, 'Northern Shaft'. Under the direction of Thomas, this was excavated to a depth of about 14 metres with no improvement in the mineral indications of the quartz vein being followed. Various other costeens and trenches were opened out, then operations resumed in *Cole's Shaft* which eventually reached a depth of about 9 metres with encouraging prospects of improvement. One of von Sommer's reports included the information that a sample of ore taken from the mine

⁸ Battye, J. S. *Cyclopedia*, pp.305-6.

⁹ *Perth Gazette* 5 December 1846 p.2.

¹⁰ DOLA Original Plan Canning 60; Memorial IV/120; *Inquirer* 29 December 1847 pp.3 & 4.

¹¹ Battye, J.S. *Cyclopedia* p.306.

¹² *Inquirer* 6 October 1847.

¹³ *Ibid* 26 December 1846 p.3.

¹⁴ Battye, J.S. *Cyclopedia* p.306; DOLA Original Plan Canning 60.

assayed 66% pure zinc, 13% sulphur and 10% iron.¹⁵ Von Sommer later took up the post of WA Geologist, examining and reporting on coal deposits in the Murray, Mount Barren and Irwin districts for the colonial government.¹⁶

After the expiry of Thomas and von Sommer's contracts with the WA Mining Co., the work at *Cole's Shaft* was carried on under the management of Edward Forbes. Twelve months from the formation of the company, Forbes reported that, although delays had been experienced from winter rains filling the shaft, the mineral indications were improving.¹⁷ By December 1847, *Cole's Shaft* was 32 feet (9.7 metres) deep and they were squaring it up to enable the vein to be followed in its underlay. He concluded by stating that, 'during each weeks sinking in the vein, the specimens gradually improved as they went down, by the quartz being more impregnated with copper, the lead disappearing, and the iron much lessened.' At that time, he considered that they were approaching a copper lode.¹⁸

Although another call for funds was made upon shareholders, interest in further deepening *Cole's Shaft* appears to have waned for a time thereafter, while the company pursued other mineral discoveries. Joseph Batt was contracted to extend the shaft in 1849 and is reported to have sunk it a further 12 feet (3.66 metres) without encouraging results.¹⁹ In 1854, the local press suggested that the WA Mining Co. was considering deepening 'Forbes' shaft' (presumably *Cole's Shaft*) near Kelmscott because assays of the quartz had revealed auriferous properties.²⁰ Whether or not any further work was carried out at the site is doubtful. The WA Mining Co. was finally wound up in 1906 by a liquidator appointed by the Supreme Court, after it had been 60 years in unregistered existence.²¹

When historian Dr J.S. Battye's *Cyclopedia of Western Australia* was published in 1912-13, it suggested incorrectly that the 'Kelmscott Mine' (*Cole's Shaft (fmr)*) was located near Mundijong.²² This can be disproved by contemporary newspaper references, the land acquisitions of the WA Mining Co. and the survey of these two blocks of land. The survey shows all the shafts, galleries and cuts made during the search for minerals on these lands and clearly identifies them by name, including *Cole's Shaft (fmr)*.²³ Unfortunately, Battye's error led to the placement in 1988 of a Bicentennial plaque near old workings in the hills above Mundijong. The wording on the plaque includes the words 'First Mine' and confuses these workings with *Cole's Shaft (fmr)*. The plaque is on a former heritage trail, 'Jarrahdale Railway Heritage Trail' (since closed), but the wording in the heritage trail brochure is far more cautious than that on the plaque.

Silver/Lead Mine

Near the gates of Yarrabah, along the banks of the winter creek Mundijong Brook, is the now scant evidence of one of the State's early mining ventures. Though there are claims that this former silver/lead mine was W.A.'s first mining venture in the

15 *Inquirer* 26 May 1847 p.2.

16 Erickson, Rica *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888* Vol. IV, R-Z UWA Press Nedlands 1988 p.3157.

17 *Ibid* 6 October 1847 p.3.

18 *Ibid* 29 December 1847 pp.3 & 4.

19 *Ibid* 14 November 1849 pp.2 & 3.

20 *Perth Gazette* 24 March 1854 p.2; *Inquirer* 12 April 1854 p.3.

21 Battye, J. S. *Cyclopedia* pp.306.

22 *Ibid* p.310.

23 DOLA Original Plan Canning 60 of April 1847.

early 1840s, documented evidence suggests that mining did not begin in earnest until 1869 as part of a series of other mining leases along this general area of the scarp. The mine was worked spasmodically until about 1908-09, when the main shaft was over 86 feet deep. Buildings and equipment were removed a few years later and in 1976 the mine shafts were filled in.²⁴

In fact, the Mundijong Silver/Lead Mine, or 'Herbert's Mine' as it was sometimes known, resulted from the discovery of mineral deposits there in 1869 by James Herbert of Fremantle.²⁵ It was situated between Mundijong Brook and the Jarrahdale railway and worked in turn by the Rockingham Bay Mining Company, Charles Steedman, James Sherratt and James Herbert himself.²⁶ This mine has no connection with *Cole's Shaft (fmr)*.

The area around *Cole's Shaft (fmr)* has remained unutilised for many years. In 1999, it was subdivided into residential lots that have now been offered for sale.²⁷

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Cole's Shaft (fmr) is on the western face of Bedforddale Hill in the Darling Range. It is situated about 2 kilometres southwards of Armadale town centre, on the boundary of Lots 53 and 54 on the eastern side of Summit View and above a recently constructed bitumen entranceway giving access to several vacant residential lots in the vicinity. There are sweeping views of the coastal plain from various vantage points in the vicinity and the lots are currently for sale.

First sunk in 1846-7, it is a vertical mineshaft about 10 metres in depth in granite with quartz veins. The sides are solid rock that has not required shoring up with timbers as is common for mines in less stable regions. A modest mullock heap of the material that has been excavated spills down the hillside from the western lip of the shaft. A shallow costean dating from the same period is situated a few metres to the north at the edge of the entrance road.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Although *Cole's Shaft (fmr)* is fairly typical of a number of experimental mineshafts put down along the face of the Darling Scarp, it is the only one extant that dates from the 1840s. Residential areas have overtaken all others from that era.

It has been confused in the past with the Mundijong Silver/Lead Mine at Yabberah Stud in Mundijong and Miners Gully in Lloyd Hughes Park, Canning Mills Road in Kelmscott. However, these mines dated from the late 1860s and early 1870s.

13.4 REFERENCES

No key references.

²⁴ 1988 brochure, 'Jarrahdale Railway Heritage Trail'.

²⁵ James Herbert operated the Rockingham Arms (now the Chesterfield Inn) between 1855 and 1867 and would have been familiar with the geography of the area. Ian Boersma, correspondence dated 24 May 2000, HCWA File P15263.

²⁶ Coy, Neil J. *The Serpentine* p.88-89.

²⁷ DOLA Office of Titles Plan 23727 (1) approved on 26 November 1999 and HCWA site visits on 20 & 21 January 2000.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
