

Cargo Goldfields

The Cargo goldfield was first proclaimed on February 11th, 1869. The boundaries of the first area commenced at the north-western corner, at Cargo proper, of a property then being subject to a conditional purchase by a gentleman named J. Hartigan. The boundary then had a bearing west for three miles; on the west by a line bearing north five miles thirty-six chains; on the north by a line crossing Bowan Creek, this boundary being identical with an old lease No. 33 of the old pastoral district of Wellington. The boundary had a bearing east of five miles, whence a line bearing south five miles thirty-six chains joined with a lease (No. 36) boundary, which in turn connected to a line bearing west and crossing Cargo Creek and so linking up with the point of commencement as indicated.

On 20th May, 1873, the considerable mining activities then in evidence led to a westerly extension being proclaimed, this taking in a new belt of country which commenced at the south-west corner of the old Cargo goldfield and extended eight miles to a blind gully junctioning with Mandagery Creek at Long's Corner; on part of the western boundary by a line bearing north to that junction and thence on the remainder of the west and on the north by Mandagery, Boree and Bowan's Creek upwards to the north boundary of the old field. The further spread of activities led to a southerly extension south two miles by west five miles, this being proclaimed on 16th February, 1875.

The early history of the Cargo

goldfield has been very largely lost so far as definite record is concerned, in that there was no Department of Mines as a separate Government department until 1872. It is interesting here to note that Mr. Long-Innes, a prominent barrister then practising in Sydney, sat on a Commission with respect to the whole question of Mining in N.S.W., and it was following the report of that Commission that a Department of Mines and Mining Wardens began to function.

Geologically the Cargo goldfield has provided a fund of information and interest to those interested in gold occurrence. The field and its former history was deemed to be important enough to warrant a special geological examination in December, 1913. At that time, owing to the earlier operations being more or less unknown, much of the survey carried out had to be based upon the nature of the mining excavations and geological examination of the surface. Considerable and valued information was furnished to the Department of Mines by Messrs. John McMahon and M. Hennessy, of Cargo.

As early as 1875 the old Iron-clad mine, lying about a quarter of a mile west of Cargo, had a main shaft down to a depth of 270 feet., and the early activities were supplemented in the 80's and 90's by quite a marked activity. The failure of mining, that is, to any considerable extent, in the Cargo district, has been due, it is said, not so much to the absence of gold itself in the reefs as the narrowness of and lack of definiteness in the gold-bearing channels themselves. Again, a difficulty has been exper-

enced in the past in treating the sulphides with which the gold is intimately associated below what is known as the oxidised zone. In addition to this, the mining efforts of the past disclose that the nature of the pay ore, though perhaps highly remunerative, has been to some extent patchy.

Before making any remarks with respect to the prominent mines which functioned on the Cargo field, and also the geological features associated with Cargo, it would be well, perhaps, to quote from an interesting and instructive article compiled by the Mining Registrar, Mr. Hutton, in the year 1875:—"The most prominent feature of the Cargo goldfield is the Iron-clad Range, which is of considerable height, about 600 feet, and runs nearly south-south-east and north-north-west. This range seems to have been the feeder of the goldfield, as on it all the principal reefs are situated, and in nearly all the ravines leading therefrom, gold in payable quantities has been found.

The gullies on the eastern side which have been worked with good results, are as follows:—First, Long Gully, which was the first place rushed on this field, and which supported a mining population of from 100 to 500 miners for nearly two years. The next on the same side of the range is Township Gully, which was opened about the same time as Long Gully; it was also highly remunerative, one of the leads running down the centre of Cargo-street. The next was Graveyard Gully, which paid well for working. On the western side of the range are:—First, Scrape Rock and

Tin-dish Gullies. These gullies were very shallow and were soon worked over and produced a considerable quantity of gold. The next is Cooper Gully, on which a good deal of work was done, but the amount of gold was not so great as in the others. All these leads have been abandoned for a time, but there is no doubt several of them will be re-worked, and with good results. The reason of their abandonment was gold having been struck in Gum Flat, another gully on the same side of the range. When this gully was opened there was but a small mining population on the field, and the whole of the miners betook themselves to the new rush, where nearly all of them have remained ever since; the newcomers, finding they could not get in on Gum Flat, did not care to set in to old ground, of which they knew nothing, and consequently left. Gum Flat was opened upwards of three years ago; the gold was first struck in a gully leading thereto, at a depth of 30 feet; from thence it was traced down the flat, on which there were several rich claims; Livemore and party had the best, some of their washings going as high as 4 oz. to the load. The depth varied from 30 to 50 feet. It was then, for a time, considered almost worked out, when a party tried to sink through the false bottom on which the gold had been got, at a depth of about 90 feet, and came upon a vein of wash almost perpendicular or dipping slightly like a reef, and on this vein (which has been traced through nine chains) has the principal work been done for alluvial gold during the past year."

Prior to 1875, the Cargo Gold-field was generally conceded to have proved a prolific gold producer. The natural result of the discovery of gold at Cargo was to effect a return stream of diggers to the Orange district. Ophir had been yielding up its wealth a score of years almost when Cargo was discovered and the event attracted considerable attention.

By the year 1875 the following reefs had been located :—

Ironclad Reef, Adelaide Reef, Pride of Cargo Reef, Victim Reef, Dalcooth Reef, Rise and Shine Reef, New Chum Hill Reef, Homeward Bound Reef, Wreath of Roses Reef, Lucknow Reef, Alpine Reef, Galatea, Mobb's Reef and Prince Alfred Reef.

Some three years prior to this in 1872, Gum Flat had been found to be highly auriferous and within a year or two practically all attention became focussed on the area known as Gum Flat, the reefs referred to being allowed to remain undisturbed in the meantime.

The Rev. Clarke, the Geologist who identified himself so closely with the early survey of the colony had opined that "on the western slope of Canoblas there are heavy deposits of gold but at a great depth." Since the Rev. Clarke had made many observations the accuracy of which had been proved time and again many were of the opinion that Cargo would realise the statement attributed to him. (It will be recalled that H. W. Newman of Lucknow

fame held the opinion of Rev. W. B. Clarke in high esteem).

Looking at Cargo to-day few people can realise that a large population was once centred around that township. In 1875 when mining was quite buoyant, two crushing plants were working continuously to the tune of twenty-one head of stampers in the batteries.

To meet the water needs of the township and the mines was indeed a problem in the first instance, the catchment area of the Cargo Creek above the Gum Flat diggings being extremely limited and apart from this, opportunities for impounding water were all too limited, yet if one could step back through the inter-lacing sixty years or so the water problem would be found met by nine dams.

In Copper Gully three catchment dams had been provided, one dam and a large reservoir supplying the Ironclad Company's plant—four dams in Cargo Creek itself supplying three puddling machines which were dealing with the alluvial deposits on Gum Flat and in addition there was a dam in Township Gully being utilised purely for domestic purposes. The Cargo stream in those days was functioning to a man's advantage before flowing southward to join the Canomodine and thence joining with the Belubela River to swell the Lachlan.

With the close of 1879 a period of mining inactivity became manifest, this year as it were, terminating the preliminary period of the field.

There are no available records of the early output of the field until 1874 when from a total quantity of 6,000 tons of quartz crushed during the year an aggregate yield of 5,000 ozs. was obtained and additional to this is an amount of 2,800 ozs. secured from the alluvial deposits.

The earlier records of the Ironclad Coy. show crushings yielding up to 13 ozs. to the ton.

After a dull period in the mining history of Cargo for some years following 1879, the Ironclad was re-opened during 1885 an English Coy. devoting about £150,000 to the development of the field. Marked activity obtained in this district but by 1890 mining again began to subside in which year "The Ironclad" was dealing with an area of some 24 acres employing only 28 men, although some fine mining plant was in evidence including a treatment plant of a ten head battery together with thirteen Frue Vanners. Krom rolls were also installed. The main shaft had been sunk to 320 feet and new and fine winding engines were hauling the ore to the surface. Owing to the refractory ore met with at Cargo, mining machinery, not seen to any extent in connection with other adjoining fields, was in evidence and old miners will recall the Wheeler's pans for roasting and re-treatment of ore. Again Munday's buddies were employed for dealing the tailings.

The Ironclad mine had a long record of service and produced considerable gold. In the first instance operations centred around the head

of two shallow leads named after Long and Tin Dish Gullies and for almost forty years, with spasmodic breaks, the Ironclad functioned to the benefit of the district.

The name Ironclad became identified with the new Cargo Gold Mining Co. in the late nineties but in 1900 all the machinery with the exception of a 20 head battery, was removed to Mount Hope.

In the early day considerable gold was won in this mine it having been stated that gold to the value of not less than £280,000 was won prior to 1885.

The lack of active interest in this mine is attributed very largely to the refractory character of the ore met with, the presence of copper being a very disturbing factor. No great depth has been reached at Cargo in this or any other mine and the possibilities of the field still remain largely conjectural.

The activities of the Cargo field from its earliest history have largely centred around half-a-dozen mines the names of which are familiar to all identified with the district since its active days. Memories will be revived at the mention of Ironclad, Dalcoath, Golden Clad, Cargo Consols, Commonwealth and Essex and a brief description of each of these mines and the companies and areas associated with them will indicate much of the mining history so far as the major operations on the field are concerned.

The Golden Clad reared its poppet head about half a mile on the Western side of Cargo and was known in the earliest days as the Rise and Shine, the site being in the saddle connecting the New Chum and Ironclad Hills. The records show that the area held under lease consisted of 28 acres known as Gold Lease No. 80.

Rather desultory operations appear to have been associated with this mine until 1879 when ore carrying from 15 dwt. to 3 ozs to the ton was raised. Ten years later this mine was under the control of a company with £30,000 capital, the company having acquired the property from Mr. W. J. Franks.

The Mining Registrar in 1890 reported with regard to the Golden Cloud Gold Mine at Cargo that the mine had then been working about two years since being re-opened and a great deal of money had been expended upon it, at the moment there being 1400 to 1500 tons of stone at grass awaiting crushing.

The Clyde works had treated some ore which gave a return of 18 dwts. to 26dwts. per ton. The main reef of this mine was very large, being 9ft. in width. Machinery had been ordered from England for treating the refractory ores and in 1891 a battery was erected at a cost of £2,500.

Mr. Anderson, the Geological Surveyor, at about the same time reported as follows:—

"On the hills to the north-west of the Ironclad numerous parties have at one time and another sunk numbers of shafts on small leaders, which, however, have

not proved of sufficient width nor thickness to encourage them to proceed to any depth with them. One of these claims is known as the Golden Clad, which consists of thin veins of gossan (decomposed pyrites), which have been sunk upon to a depth of 60 feet. Crushings from this claim are reported to have gone about one ounce to the ton, but the veins are so thin that the expense of getting out the ore in sufficient bulk would be too great to work the vein by itself. The same party have, however, another claim on the south-east of the Cargo and Canowindra-road in which there is considerable bulk of surface stone which, on assay, yields a few dwt. per ton, and which the party propose to treat with the Golden Clad stone. In the claim referred to, on the south-east of the road, there are no evidences of reefs or lodes, but the quartz-porphry has local areas in it which almost entirely consist of ferruginous gossan carrying a little gold. These areas have, no doubt, been originally occupied by iron pyrites which, by segregation, have formed specialised areas, the pyrites in which have subsequently undergone decomposition, leaving a siliceous gossan, containing a small percentage of free gold. One such patch of gossan has already been opened out, and appears to be of considerable extent, but when they are sunk upon, if they extend below the water level, the gold will be wholly confined to the undecomposed pyrites. The occurrence of these segregated patches of pyrites will be found to be very uncertain and their individual extent will be exceedingly irregular."

Before continuing a description of the other prominent mines on the Cargo field in its heyday, the following record will show something of the early difficulties and the productivity of the field:—

The gold obtained in the first days of the Cargo field was somewhat fine in character for quite a considerable amount of prospecting had been done before it was reported in January, 1869, that a slug of 21 dwts. had been found in Tin Dish Gully. In the same month it was reported that a small but exceedingly brilliant diamond had been found during the clearing of a parcel of gold.

Even by this time Long Gully was presenting a very much worked-out appearance and the Alpine Reef was receiving considerable attention.

The Western districts of New South Wales at this time were grievously affected by drought and operations on all the goldfields were stultified to a considerable extent. At Cargo the supplies were practically exhausted as well as what was termed the Edinboro.

The volume of complaint at the lack of water led Mr. J. Suttor, a member of a Western constituency, to move in the N.S.W. Assembly "The desirability of the Government causing a survey for the purpose of devising the best means of securing the necessary quantity of water for the continuous working of the goldfields." The resolution requested the Governor to make available £1000 for this purpose.

Toward the beginning of February, 1869, however, the correspondent of the "Western Post" was pleased to report as follows:—"A thunderstorm burst overt his place about midnight on Sunday and continued until Monday afternoon, raining heavily and

without intermission all the time." Continuing, the correspondent indicated that this had completely changed the aspect of things, digging was going on briskly and everyone appeared to be making more or less gold.

The report terminated: The time has at last come when Cargo will get a fair trial.

The "Western Examiner" correspondent on 13/2/69, wrote: "The rising ground—or technically speaking the made hill—at the back of the township towards the Ironclad Reef was rushed this (Wednesday) morning from about a hundred yards above the White Horse Hotel to some distance below Miss Smith's 'agapemone' where the new run is supposed to run into the Township Gully. The rush originated in Yeomans and party getting 1oz. of coarse gold to a bucket of dirt in an old hole at five feet sinking, with a foot of wash dirt on Tuesday evening; and at the time I write, a little prospect has been obtained from one of the holes near Mr. Johnson's butcher shop, in Belmore-street. The scene here has been of a most exciting character; the allotments occupied for business purposes, and the streets themselves being pegged off by eager gold seekers. As the sinking is so shallow, two or three days will, no doubt, enable me to give a pretty correct idea of the value of this new discovery. From January 12th, 1869, to the 1st inst. (1st February, 1869) Wigmore and Co. report the purchase of 520 ozs. of gold, Bayliss 340 ozs., and Sheridan and Tipper (from 15/1/69) 71 ozs., being 931 ozs. in 14 working days, which, with the parcels disposed of at other stores, or forwarded by the diggers themselves to the Mint, would indicate a yield of 400 ozs. of gold per week from these diggings. Messrs. Wigmore and Co. have purchased about £15,000 worth of gold since they opened business here—the price having started at £3/10/6 and risen to £3/11.

What a difference from 1866, when Cargo Creek identified the locality.

One of the earliest mines functioning on the Cargo field was named the Dalcoath. The location of this mine was some 1½ miles south-west of Cargo and the name applied to a group of mining workings ranged along a line of lode on the Adelaide Hill at its southern end. Many names applied to the various mining points at this part of the field and such names as Dalcoath, Dalworth, The Dogwood and Mt. Durwood all identify themselves with this portion of the field. In 1875 the Dalcoath reef was one of the few important reefs and a considerable quantity of gold was won in this area. Pyrites from this mine was sent to England as early as 1887 and in 1879 Clerk and Thomas who were working this show treated some very payable ore. The Dalcoath met with a renewed activity in the years 1890 to 1899. In 1890 shafts had been put down to 96 ft. and 176 ft. from the surface and considerable driving had been done. At this time a considerable quantity of ore lay at grass pending the erection of machinery and

throughout the following year further large quantities of stone were raised and crushed with very payable results. After somewhat indifferent results this mine was again the centre of considerable activity. In 1898 £12,000 worth of machinery had been erected but owing to a serious lack of water crushing it could not be carried out.

Cargo at this time was a very busy mining centre and the field had about 200 miners engaged.

The Commercial Hotel owned at one time by W. Thompson and again by Mrs. Hamilton, together with the Royal Hotel, owned by the Mayne family and the Post Office Hotel and Hall in the charge of Mr. W. Collins were marked centres of interest and activity.

In 1901 and with intermittent work up to 1908 the portion of field around Dalcoath provided a deal of profitable work and many crushings yielding from 1oz. to 6 oz. to the ton were dealt with.

Another mine laying south-west of Cargo about three-quarters of a mile called the Essex, yielded some fair results and one smelting return for a treatment of 85 cwt. is said to have yielded £1,892-8-2 after clearing all expenses.

A party associated with Mr. A. Tinnock did considerable work on this mine and some good ore patches were met with. A mine which functioned up to a few years before the Great War was the Cargo Consols and considerable investment in this mine was made by people resident in the Orange district. The mine was situated on the northern side of the Adelaide Hill situated some 25 chns. or so south of the Cargo township. The reef this mine operated upon was worked in the '70's but was revived again in 1906 when a large parcel of ore was dealt with for a yield of approximately one ounce to the ton. The Mines Department in 1908 viewed the prospects of this mine with favour and gave assistance as a result of which 280 tons of material returned but £314. Nothing of much consequence has been done on this mine over recent years although it is stated that patches of dense ironstone containing up to 7½ ozs. of gold per ton of ore are shown by assay to occur in the lode.

The Commonwealth Gold Mine functioned on what was known as Mobb's Reef or Gazzard's Reef and was located about 1½ miles to the north-west of Cargo. The shaft in the mine is both vertical and underlay, the first 40 feet or so being vertical, the shaft underlays for something over 100 feet. The Commonwealth Mine offers much interest to the miner who reveals a geological jumble not frequently met with. The hanging-wall country is porphyry and the foot-wall, andesite. The vein worked was composed mainly of quartz, ironstone, kaolin and crushed gossan material with intermittent bunches of calcite and sulphide of iron present in places.

The Commonwealth was one of the most recent mines on the field and first came into prominence in the late '90's. Mr. J. McMahon and

his brother were closely associated with the development of this mine and were responsible for quite a considerable amount of enthusiasm and interest in this field which tended to stimulate and develop the Cargo district and the area contiguous to it.

In the 40 years of mining activity on the Cargo goldfields many companies functioned but the most interesting example was the first company floated called "The Cargo United Quartz Crushing Company." The first general meeting of this company was held in the Temperance Hall, Pitt St., Sydney, on January 3rd, 1870. At the meeting the names of the shareholders representing 620 shares out of a total of 800 shares, with a nominal capita of £8,000 were read out.

At the first meeting 14 shareholders were present, their holdings in the company representing 495 shares

Mr. Alderman Macintosh was the Chairman of the meeting; the report of the provisional committee was received and adopted. This document was of a most interesting character.

The property acquired by this company comprised 10 acres, extending 323 yards along the line of reef with a width of 150 yards. Mr. Ald-

erman Bradford had carried out an inspection of the area and the property had three distinct lines of reef namely, The Western Alpine Reef, running through its entire length—the centre or Carey's Reef and the Eastern Reef. A significant feature was the small cost entailed in floating the company, a mere amount of £116/18/11. Messrs. C. Leicester M.E., and C. N. Carey, M.E., were associated with the promotion.

The report of the provisional committee contains the following significant remark:—"The provisional Board congratulate the shareholders on being the first to establish a company for mining purposes on an honest, sound and commercial basis."

It would appear that hitherto the floatation of mining companies had not conformed to the procedure followed under the Limited Liability Act; again this first company to work the Cargo field evidently contained some substantial men; 14 men held £4,950 worth of stock in the company.

The first directorate elected contained the following names all of whom were prominently identified with the commercial and business life of the country:—Alderman Macintosh, (the Mayor of Sydney), J. Sheridan Moore, Alderman Bradford,

D. Beer, F. C. Muller R. Thame, and J. Peck. The first mining manager was Mr. Charles N. Carey, M.E.

Generally speaking, despite the long period over which spasmodic activities have been associated with the Cargo field, no substantial work has been carried out at a depth and the early activities on this field were manifest at a time when the treatment of refractory ores was little understood. Development in treatment over recent years has resulted in many of the ores which were formerly non-paying now paying and yielding highly profitable results.

The Cargo field geologically is one of profound interest to students of that particular science in that in remote periods the country located around the volcanic pile of the Canobolas has been subjected to violent movements, and there is no degree of regularity about the features of the country, geologically speaking.

Nature appears to preserve, as it were, something of her store of wealth to meet the needs of successive generations and here on this gold field which has been the subject of this brief survey may some day be found those indications again of a marked production of auriferous wealth.