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Oz History Mine

Digging Deeper - a Guide to Researching Mining History in New South Wales

You've gathered all the information from our site relating to your Ancestor or area of Historical interest and wondering what on earth to do now. Depending on how deep you wish to delve there are several lines of research you can take, which are listed below, starting with on-line resources.

Resources on the Web

Department of Primary Industries - Minerals & Petroleum

Unfortunately some early records of the Department of Mines were destroyed in the Garden Palace Fire of 1882, but the collection still contains a huge number of reports, maps, etc.

The DIGS® Database is possibly the finest on-line repository of mining records in the world and many of our indexes relate to material stored here:

<http://digsopen.minerals.nsw.gov.au/>

Report Search - Mineral Resources - Maitland - DIGS

http://digsopen.minerals.nsw.gov.au/

Google | NSW Historic Parish Maps | Canon | Easy-WebPrint | High-Speed Print | Preview | Options | Duplex | View Print List | Account Guard | My eBay | Alerts | Selling | Buying | Favourites | Custom

Report Search - Mineral Resources - Maitland - DIGS

Reports Search

DIGS
Geological Survey of NSW

Tip: Use a comma to separate multiple values in a field, this works as an OR.

Report Number: Annual 1878

Report Identification Number:

Confidentiality: Open File

Authors/Company Name:

Report Title:

Report Description:

Subject Terms/Keywords:

Record Types to Search:

- Minerals
- Mineral Exploration Reports
- Mine Records
- Research Reports
- Annual Report Compilations
- Coal Exploration Reports
- Petroleum Exploration Reports
- Titles
- Record Tracing

start | Report Search - Mine... | Internet | 100% | 10:51 AM

If you are looking for information which is contained in the Annual Reports you need to type in the information as shown in Fig. 1.

Obviously you will need to substitute the year you require for '1878'.

Click on the report on the next page and then select the relevant section of the report you wish to view on the subsequent page.

Unfortunately this may require you to go through many pages to finally get to one the one you require, but I consider this a minor inconvenience for having access to such a great resource.

Fig. 1: Search Terms for Annual Report of 1878

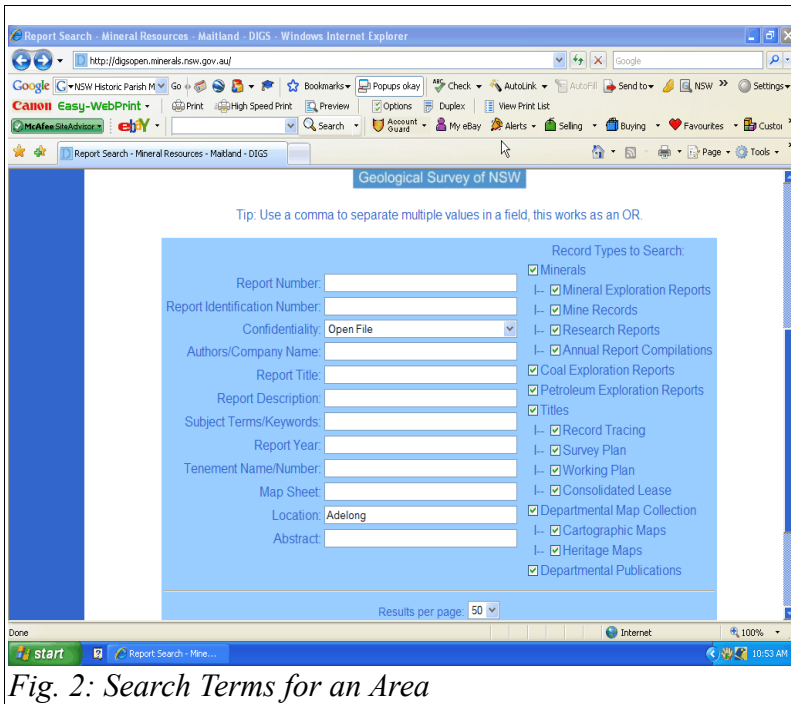


Fig. 2: Search Terms for an Area

If you are looking to research the history of an area try typing it in in the Location field, Fig. 2. Check all the GS's, Geological Surveys, and MR's, Mine Reports, that come up as they often hold information and maps, enabling you to position a lease in an area, that you may not be available elsewhere.

General historical background can be found on various areas in the [Primefacts](#) sheets produced by the Department.

These are just a couple of the ways in which the DIGS®

Database can be searched, but I would suggest that you apply a bit of time and lateral thinking to get the most out of the system !

Two other sections of the site are worth checking:

[Distinguished Geological Maps](#)

[Parish Maps with Geological Information](#)

Remember that any information or images on the DPI site are Copyright and you will need permission from them if you wish to publish any material.

Department of Lands Parish Map Preservation Project

Another excellent on-line resource, albeit a bit awkward to use which is located [here](#). Just click on the 'search facility' Hyperlink and type in the Parish map you wish to view.

Surname	Given	Register No.	Gold Lease or Portion No.	Parish	County	Date	Comments	Locality
Abbott	& Allen	357	GL 72	Jerralong	Argyle		1894 Complaint By	
Abbott	William (Of Yowaka)	343	GL 91 ?	Yowaka	Auckland	26/09/1890	Sole Applicant	Pambula
Abbott	William A., Jr. (Of Yowaka)	401	GL 125	Yowaka	Auckland	10/10/1890	Original Applicant	Pambula
Adams	George	6	GL 3	Nerimungah	Argyle	26/04/1875	Sole Applicant	
Adams	James	102	GL 12	Danjera	St. Vincent	19/10/1885	Original Applicant	Yalwai
Adams	James (Of Yalwai)	249	GL 56	Etrema	St. Vincent	12/05/1888	Original Applicant	Yalwai

Fig. 3: Extract from Index to Lease Registers

If you have found your ancestor in our Lease Register Indexes, Fig. 3, or an Annual Report, etc. Fig. 4, and it gives the Lease or portion Number you can then check these on-line Parish maps to place the lease, or tenement, 'on the ground'. This can sometimes be time consuming, particularly if there are several editions.

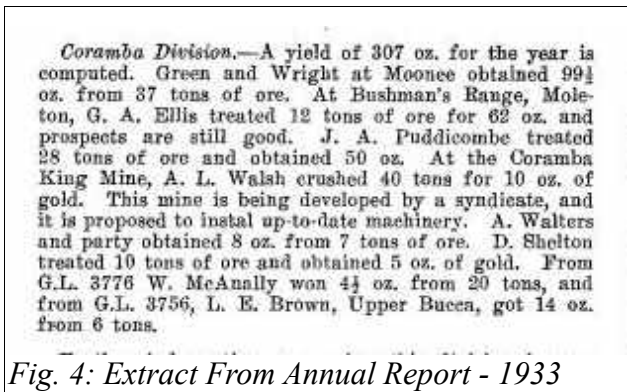


Fig. 4: Extract From Annual Report - 1933

Remember it is the GL, ML, MT or Portion number that is applicable when using Parish Maps and NOT the Register Number. This is referred to as the 'Parish Number' on the map.

If you find the lease on the map you can check the Catalogue, or Plan, Number which will be found in a box along one of the edges of the map, Fig. 5.

This Number, for example G15008, is the identifying number for the original Plane Table Survey of the Lease. Sometimes these are very plain and simple but others record huts & buildings, fence lines, adjoining features, etc. A very tiny number are available on the

[DIGS®](#) Database but you can also obtain a microfiche photocopy from the DPI at Maitland, but you will need to know the Parish and Plan Number as outlined above.

REFERENCE		D.1618		Mining Tenements.		
Parish No.	Catalogue No.	Portion No.	Plan No.	Portion	Plan	Area
1	D.2205	4A.46	6440	MT.1	73457	10ac (Bonython P. H. Herringwood)
2	2936					
3	2937					
		01.43	6240			
		1.44	6240			
		01.45	6155			
		01.46	6155			
		02.48	6200			
		02.49	6200			
		02.50	6200			
		02.51	6470			
		02.52	6470			
		02.53	6470			
		02.54	6120			
		02.55	6120			
		02.56	6120			
		02.57	6120			
		02.58	6120			
		02.59	6120			
		02.60	6120			
		02.61	6120			
		02.62	6120			
		02.63	6120			
		02.64	6120			
		02.65	6120			
		02.66	6120			
		02.67	6120			
		02.68	6120			
		02.69	6120			
		02.70	6120			
		02.71	6120			
		02.72	6120			
		02.73	6120			
		02.74	6120			
		02.75	6120			
		02.76	6120			
		02.77	6120			
		02.78	6120			
		02.79	6120			
		02.80	6120			
		02.81	6120			
		02.82	6120			
		02.83	6120			
		02.84	6120			
		02.85	6120			
		02.86	6120			
		02.87	6120			
		02.88	6120			
		02.89	6120			
		02.90	6120			
		02.91	6120			
		02.92	6120			
		02.93	6120			
		02.94	6120			
		02.95	6120			
		02.96	6120			
		02.97	6120			
		02.98	6120			
		02.99	6120			
		03.00	6120			

Fig. 5: Details of Plan Numbers - Gulph

Contact Details

It Can sometimes be quite difficult transferring the position of a lease from an old Parish Map to a modern Topographical Map but by utilising all of the resources outlined above this can be achieved with enough accuracy to locate a mine or workings. Unfortunately unless there are lease boundary marks on trees or corner trenches still surviving it is near impossible to define the exact boundaries of leases.

Newspapers

In Australia there are very few newspapers available on-line from the era of the discovery of gold in New South Wales.

The [Australian Periodical Publications](#) site has two that contain some background:

The *Colonization* Circular, 1852 onwards, which has some background on the major fields but, more importantly, a summary of mining regulations.

The Colonial and Asiatic Review also contains some excellent background pieces.

The *Australian Mining Standard* was the industry newspaper and an essential source of historical information. The year 1896 is available on-line at the [DIGS® Database](#): Report Number **AMS 1896**. It is well worth obtaining the other years by interlibrary loan, from the National Library of Australia, through your own local library.

New Zealand leads the way in the making old newspapers available on-line with its [Papers Past](#) site. It is surprising how many references there are to mining areas in New South Wales, and the rest of Australia, which were printed in the New Zealand press.

Other Resources

State Records of NSW

When using the records of the Mines department in archival research the most important number is the **Register Number** and not the portion or GL number, see Fig. 3. The register number was allocated once and identified a particular lease for all official purposes whilst GL (etc.) numbers were allocated on a parish level and therefore repeated all over NSW.

The relevant Lease Registers should always be the starting point for your research.

Each lease was allocated two pages; the first detailing the Location, Lessees, Dates of application and issue, hopefully a small plan of the lease, etc. The second page detailed all of the official dealings and correspondence between the Department and the lessees. Here we find a chronological listing of items such as when the rent was paid, applications for suspension of labour conditions, transfers, complaints made under the provisions of the various Acts, tribute agreements, etc.

Letters were always allocated a number, e.g. 95 21184, which means that it was received/sent in 1895 and was letter number 21184. Not all of the correspondence has survived but if you have the number, e.g. 95 21184, they are located at [Correspondence and related records](#) and [Letters received 1874-1960](#) in the Concise Guide.

Unless it was a very simple matter suspensions of labour and complaints were dealt with by the Warden in what, appropriately enough, was called the Warden's Court. So if any are listed consult the records that are located at [Records of Wardens' Courts' and Wardens Offices](#) in the Concise Guide for availability and relevance to the area you are researching. It is also worth checking the various registers here as some of the records they contain are not included in the main series of Lease Registers. But the best resource for information on matters before the Warden is the appropriate local newspaper, usually available on microfilm, which often contain printed reports detailing the proceedings; check with the Local History Librarian of the Library relevant to your area of research or the National Library of Australia Catalogue for availability.

N.B. There are still a large number of Lease Registers that have not been microfilmed and remain un-indexed.

Having extracted all the information from the Lease register it is now time to have a look at the lease document itself which should be held under the records of the [Lease Branch](#) in the Concise Guide. Most people will be looking in the *Miscellaneous Lease Documents, c.1866-1924, CGS 10134, Kw 19/2689-3001.*

REGISTER OF LEASES OF			
Register Number of Lease <i>44.</i>			
No. of Application	<i>NWRA 4-9</i>	Date of Application	<i>29th June 1878</i>
		Date of Possession	<i>17th June 1878</i>
Names of Applicants and style under which it is intended to carry on business		<i>John Leman and Robert Boulton</i>	
No. of Lease	Description of Lease	<i>Gold</i>	
	Extent of Land applied for	<i>Five Acres</i>	
	Term of Lease	<i>15 years</i>	
Locality	<i>... of the Ancient Parish of ...</i>		

Fig. 6: Detail of Register showing Number; SR of NSW.

Remember that your lease document will be the same number as the Register Number of Lease, in this case 44 (Fig. 6). Consult the archivist on duty to ascertain which box contains the lease you require.

Lease documents were of a standard large format contract but many contain additional documents pertaining to the lease such as transfers, tribute agreements, special contracts, etc., and in one that I examined a complete inventory of the equipment and stock of the mine.

The registers and documents are the starting point for researching the Department of Mines records at the State Records Office. Items such as the Ledgers of the [Prospecting Board](#) may reveal that your ancestor received Government assistance to name just one further line of enquiry.

If your ancestor, or the mine you are researching was leased to an incorporated Company it is worth checking the records of the [Companies Branch](#), of the Registrar General, to see whether any documents survive. Unfortunately the paperwork of a large number of companies has not survived, but it is worth checking. We should note here though, that although it was common for contemporary newspapers to report on the activities of, say, the 'Star Company' they were not referring to a legal company but a 'company' or group of miners.

Don't overlook other obvious areas of research in the Archives such as maps, Magistrates Bench Books, etc., which may be useful depending on how thorough you wish to be and the amount of time available.

Although the examples given here deal with Gold Leases the same principles apply to Mineral Leases, which cover everything other than gold.

Newspapers

Prior to 1870 the starting point for mining research is the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

From 1870 onwards always consult the *Australian Town & Country Journal* which contains a wealth of information.

The [Australian Mining Standard](#) is an excellent resource for historians and covers the period 1888-1914.

The best available resource, though, are contemporary local newspapers if they are available for your area and time frame of research. From my own personal experience they not only contain a wealth of mining and 'official' news but also the details of social events and the items of 'gossip' that flesh out and give character to an area. It is here that you are most likely to find references to your ancestor if was just an ordinary miner, as compared to a leaseholder, who had no official dealings with the Department of mines or its officials. Local newspaper research can be very time consuming, e.g. 18 months to research and transcribe the reports covering a century of a smallish mining field, but the results are can be very rewarding and certainly result in a more comprehensive and rich history of an area.

All of these newspapers are available for inter-library loan from the National Library of Australia, on microfilm, if they are not available in your area. Consult your local reference librarian for details.

Other Sources

At the risk of stating the obvious always check the resources at your local library, Museum and/or Historical Society, whilst regional Universities often have archives containing material covering local businesses and individuals, etc. Try to think laterally and you may be pleasantly surprised where you'll pick up information, e.g. The Regional Education Office in my area held material relating to a local family involved in mining including some previously unseen share scrip.

Although this has not been an comprehensive course in 'Mining History 101' you should be, by now, well on the track to 'Digging Deeper' into mining history whether it be from a family or local historians point of view.