

HISTORY

OF THE

DISCOVERY

OF THE

First Payable Gold-field

(OPHIR)

IN AUSTRALIA.

1871.

PRINTED AT THE "WESTERN EXAMINER" OFFICE.

DISCOVERY, &c.

The following history of the discovery of the first New South Wales Gold Field will doubtless be interesting not only in view of a recent application on the part of Mr. Hargraves, for the payment of a further sum, to which he deems himself entitled as the discoverer, but on the broader principle of giving "Honour to whom honour is due."

In a former publication in 1870 of the following history, we omitted one day's prospecting, and for obvious reasons, we deem it of importance that the Legislatures of the various colonies, as well as the public in general, should be made acquainted with the particulars of this day, we see no better way of communicating such particulars than by re-publishing the first history *verbatim*, and subjoining a letter already published in several of our leading country journals, which attentively considered in connection with the former history, will afford every necessary information we are capable of imparting.

Early in February 1851, Mr. E. H. Hargraves came to Mrs. John Lister's, Guyong, and told her and her family that he was on his way to Wellington in search of a Gold Field. Mrs. Lister's eldest son, John, upon hearing his business, exhibited some stones which appeared to Mr. Hargraves to be of an auriferous character, and upon being informed by Mr. Lister as to where he had got them, he proposed joining Lister as a

colleague in the search of a Gold Field in the direction Lister had been previously prospecting; accordingly on the 12th day of February, 1851, John Lister took him to a spot on the Lewis Ponds Creek, some four or five miles south of what now bears the name of Ophir, where Mr. Hargraves washed some earth in a pan or tin-dish, and succeeded in procuring one or two very minute specks of gold. On the evening of the day these few specks were obtained, Mr. Hargraves and Mr. Lister returned to the Guyong Inn (the residence of the latter) and remained there for some days; and upon Mr. Lister informing Mr. Hargraves that Mr. James Tom was a good bushman and that he was well acquainted with the country on both sides of the Macquarie River in the direction of Wellington, it was agreed between them that he should, if he thought proper, join them as a partner. Finding James Tom agreeable to this arrangement in the search of a Gold Field, they decided upon making a tour through the mountains in the direction of Wellington, with the understanding that in case they discovered gold they should share equally in the results (just as a party of six men would now share in any profitable results that might arise from their prospecting together.) After being away on this prospecting tour for some 10 or 12 days they returned home, and although they found a few minute specks of gold in many places, they did not succeed in getting a grain in weight altogether, including the specks that were got on 12th February on the Lewis' Ponds Creek. Matters not being as satisfactory to Mr. Hargraves as he wished, he determined upon carrying out his original intention of prospecting the Wellington district, and accordingly started by himself for that locality, but after a fruitless search of two or three weeks he returned to Guyong and although he told us he had discovered some small quanti-

ties of gold he did not show us any. After this trip to Wellington, Mr. Hargraves prospected no more. He told us that he had seen nothing that would pay for working, and that as he had to return to his home on matters of a private nature, he would leave the prospecting on this side of the Blue Mountains with us. It was, however, arranged between Mr. Hargraves and ourselves, before he left to go home, that we should continue prospecting in this neighbourhood, and that when he had arranged his private matters at home he would make a prospecting tour through the country of Moreton Bay, and that if either party (his or ours) should be successful, the other should share equally in the advantages that might accrue therefrom. This was the expressed arrangement when Mr. Hargraves took his final departure from the Bathurst district. Mr. James Tom having to start to Adelaide about the time Mr. Hargraves left, William Tom, junior, took his place, and after prospecting matters had been suspended for a few days, William Tom, junior, and John Lister started on the morning of the 7th April, 1851, for a point low down on the Macquarie near Wellington, where Mr. Hargraves wished us to give a good trial; but in going to this place Mr. W. Tom proposed to Mr. Lister when they got to Ophir, about one o'clock of the day they started, that they should stop there and prospect that locality through the course of the afternoon—urging that as a man in the employ of Mr. William Lane, senior, had picked up a bit of gold in that locality some years previously it would be wise to do so. Mr. Lister falling in with the proposal they turned out their horses, and after having partaken of some refreshment, they went into the bed of the creek, and when they had been looking about for some few minutes, Mr. William Tom, junior, called to Mr. Lister, saying he had found a bit of gold, when

Lister remarked, "You are only joking," but upon being reassured, Lister examined the nugget himself, and pronounced it to be worth £2. (Its value was about £2 10s.) W. Tom and Lister now decided upon getting a cradle which had been made by W. Tom, junior, and kept in the mountains for the purpose of prospecting. This cradle being procured, they commenced on the morning of the following day to wash some soil from the bed of what now has the honour of being named the "Fitz Roy Bar," and by carrying soil in two 3-bushel bags, and washing the same for about four hours, succeeded in obtaining from the cradle about 30s. worth of gold dust, besides a nugget that weighed one quarter of an ounce. Thus was the fact that Australian soil would pay for working first established, and to us, most pleasingly verified. After procuring two ounces of the precious metal from the "Fitz Roy Bar," Mr. Lister and Wm. Tom proceeded lower on the same course of water, and where a tributary creek joins the main one, Mr. Lister, while he sat on his horse, saw a bit of gold above the ground, and when he got off his horse and attempted to pick it up, he found it was wrapped around a root—presenting an appearance of the root having grown quite through it. This nugget weighed two ounces, and was the last gold we found. As we were quite out of provisions, we camped for the night, and started for home early on the following morning, carrying, of course, our four ounces of precious metal along with us. After arriving home, we communicated all the particulars of what had transpired to Mr. Hargraves, who arrived at Guyong about a fortnight after, and as we regarded him as the principal of our party, we placed the four ounces of gold in his possession, that he might convince the Government that the discovery of a payable Gold-field had been actually made, and that he might also represent our respective merits to the Govern-

ment in as fair and impartial a manner as his sense of honour might dictate.

The four ounces of gold placed in the possession of Mr. Hargraves by us, was sold by him, and divided equally by him between himself and us. We have no wish to detract from the merits of Mr. Hargraves in the first gold discovery—in proof whereof we have in many of our letters given him the full credit of having first introduced the tin-dish system into New South Wales, and of having suggested the form of the first gold-cradle, which was made by Mr. W. Tom, junior, but while we freely accord to Mr. Hargraves the full merit of these particulars, we unhesitatingly deny that he, by his own personal exertions, brought his original intention of finding a payable Goldfield to a successful issue. We think it will be seen by the foregoing history that it was only by virtue of colleagueship with us (which Mr. Hargraves ignores) that he is entitled to any credit in the actual discovery of the first payable Goldfield, for we have shown beyond contradiction that such discovery was made by us when Mr. Hargraves was on the opposite side of the Blue Mountains, or 150 miles away from the scene of our labours. It may be remarked we bore all the expenses of prospecting, and in conclusion, if we had not played the part we did in the discovery of the first payable Goldfield, we would most respectfully submit the question—When would such discovery have been made, and by whom?

which appeared in "The Sydney Morning Herald"

The following is the letter in explanation of the particulars of the one day's prospecting referred to as having been omitted in the foregoing history when first published. "We shall take it as a kindness if you will permit us through the columns of your journal to mention the particulars of one day's prospecting, which we omitted in our state-

ment of the first gold discovery in New South Wales, which statement appears in your issue of the 17th instant. We never considered this day's prospecting of much importance, as in our opinion *at the time*, it fell short of establishing the fact of a payable gold-field having been discovered, and perhaps it was from this circumstance, and being so long ago, that it escaped the memory of Mr. Wm. Tom, junior, till after he had published the statement referred to (in the shape of a pamphlet), and till he saw by Mr. Hargraves' letter to the Legislatures of New South Wales and Victoria, that he (Mr. Hargraves) was trying to make capital out of the omission. The particulars of the day's prospecting are as follows:—When Mr. Hargraves took his final departure before the discovery of gold, from the Bathurst district (about the 20th March, 1851), John Lister accompanied him from Guyong to Mutton's Falls, some 24 miles towards Sydney from Bathurst. On either the day they left or the one following, William and James Tom took the cradle that was on hand for the purpose, and went down along the Lewis' Ponds Creek, to within some 3 miles of Ophir, where by 5 hours washing they obtained 16 grains in weight of gold. Immediately on their return home, they sent the particulars of this day's prospecting to Mr. Hargraves, whose last request of Lister, when he parted from him at Mutton's Falls, was that he would give every particular as soon as he got home, of how James and William Tom had succeeded, but when Lister arrived home (on the fifth day after he left) he learnt that William Tom had sent away every information to Mr. Hargraves, and therefore he did not write himself till after the four ounces of gold were procured, of which the public have the history. If we are called to Sydney to be examined by a Committee of the Legislative Assembly, we shall be in a position to give ample proof that Mr.

Hargraves was in possession of our information about the 16 grains in weight of gold, within two or three days after he arrived in Sydney, and some days before the 3rd of April, 1851. Since we have seen Hargraves' letters, which appear in your issues of the 8th October, and 17th instant, we are quite certain the information he got from Mr. W. Tom is what kept him from going to Moreton Bay, as he had arranged with us to do, and we are quite as positive that it was the same information which enabled him when making his proposition to the Government on the 3rd of April, 1851, to say that he had made "very satisfactory discoveries of the precious metal in several localities on Crown Lands." If he had made the discoveries referred to, why could he not have shown the gold he got in making them? He could not do this, for the simple reason that we had the gold, and that his boasted discoveries were made through the information he had received from us. If Mr. Hargraves was such an adept in finding gold-fields by knowing (as he says in your issue of the 17th instant), that the kind of apple trees in England produce the same kind of apples everywhere else, how does it happen that when a prospecting Commissioner for several years under the auspices of the Government, he could not find either a payable or an unpayable gold-field during the whole of that time, although he travelled over tracts of country which have since been found to be some of the richest gold-fields on the continent? How does he account for his extraordinary failures or absence of success, unless he admits that we were not with him to procure the gold from the soil, or that an American blight was on his apple-trees? Whatever Mr Hargrave may say to the contrary, it is well known, and can be readily proved, that his claim was never recognised by the Government till after he had received the 4 ounces of gold, which

were procured by us, and placed in his possession. We observe in your issue of the 17th instant, that Mr. Hargraves admits having played the part of deception to Lister and James Tom throughout the whole time of his acquaintance with them. This admission, like many other parts of his letter, requires no comment. By the way, we had almost forgotten to say that when we were examined by a select committee of the Legislative Assembly, in the year 1852, we handed in to that committee several of Mr. Hargraves' letters, wherein he more than once or twice acknowledges us to be his "colleagues," by terming us such. We now attribute our partial failure on that occasion to our never having said anything about the 16 grains in weight of gold above referred to. In conclusion, if it can be shown that we have ever made an exaggerated statement against Mr. Hargraves' rightful claims, we would respectfully request the Legislature of New South Wales to dismiss our claim from any further attention, and give Mr. Hargraves the balance of the £5000 to which he deems himself entitled, for we are most certainly of opinion, and we believe the general public agree with us, that any discovery which results in yielding ten millions sterling annually to the colonies, is well worth 15 or 20 thousand pounds over and above Mr. Hargraves' present receipts (£12,381.)"

We may just add that Mr. Hargraves acknowledged the receipt of the information about the 16 grains in weight of gold on the 5th of April, 1851, and at the same time signified his intention of returning to the Bathurst district. This was just after he found he could not succeed with the Government.

WILLIAM TOM, junior.
J. A. H. LISTER.
JAMES TOM.