

DEPARTMENT OF MINES
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ANDAMOOKA AND COOBER PEDY OPALFIELDS

ANDAMOOKA

A Warden's Court was set down for hearing **Plaint No. 411** in the Community Hall at Andamooka Opal Fields on Friday, 4th September, 1959.

The writer was accompanied by the Deputy Registrar (E.F. McMahon) as Clerk of the Court, and the driver of the Landrover (R. Ingham). We arrived at the opalfield on the evening of Wednesday, 2nd September, after I had conducted a Warden's Court in the Courthouse at Port Augusta (**Plaint 414**) on Tuesday, 1st September.

Thursday (3rd Sept.) was spent in making an examination of claims pegged out at Gun Gully, Lunatic Hill, Boundary Riders Hill, and Treloar Hill workings. A considerable number of claims have been pegged out at Gun Gully.

Special Mining Lease No. 30, located at the Jubilee area to the south of Boundary Riders Hill, was inspected. No work at all has been carried out by the lessee, Commonwealth, Overseas Sales and Services Ltd. The two eastern pegs were located. The lease number was not shown on either of them. Duplicate departmental survey peg No. 59 was found and removed.

Precious stones claims on Boundary Riders Hill have been pegged right up to the northern boundary of the lease, and the miners are complaining, because no work is being done by the lessee.

The Warden's Court was held on Friday morning (4th Sept). The decision of the Court was that Precious Stones Claim No. 2461 was liable to forfeiture, and the complainant was given 14 days within which to enter and peg out a claim. A large number of people attended the hearing.

MICROFILMED

After the Court was closed, questions regarding mining titles were asked by many of the miners. These were answered to their satisfaction, and the mining legislation, insofar as it applies to precious stones claims, was carefully explained to those present, particular emphasis being given to the method of acquiring a title by properly pegging out a claim and registering it within 30 days, the claim holder thus obtaining a secure title to the ground which remained his property so long as he properly maintained his pegs and kept working the claim. The various advantages obtainable by registering claims were set out by the Deputy Registrar and myself.

The Stevens Gully and Triangle Hill workings were inspected later in the day. A large number of claims have been pegged out in these localities.

On Saturday (5th Sept.) the diggings at Horse Paddock, Hallion Hill, German Gully, Blackboy, and Yarloo were examined. Claims (and pegs) were very numerous at German Gully. A very large number were removed. Special Mining Lease No. 32 is situated at Horse Paddock.

The workings at One Tree Hill, The Saddle, Warden Hill, and Koska Hill were inspected on Sunday, 6th. It was reported to me that an area at Lunatic Hill, where we had removed the pegs because the claim measured 75 yds. by 75 yds. instead of the statutory 50 yds. by 50 yds., had been repegged. A further examination showed that the new claim had been pegged out by another person and that the dimensions were only 50 yds. by 50 yards.

Two men whom I saw looking around the workings at Gun Gully stated in answer to my questions that they did not hold Miner's Rights. They informed me that they were recent arrivals and were only watching other miners at work. I pointed out that any form of prospecting or mining carried out by a person who was not the possessor of a current Miner's Right was viewed very seriously by the Department and that prompt action would be taken against the offenders. They assured me that before attempting any

mining work they would take out Miner's Rights and peg out claims. The necessity to register claims was stressed by me.

The pegs now used by most miners on this field comply with the Mining Regulations regarding size. Notices are usually painted on tin and nailed to the pegs. Trenches still leave much to be desired. Numerous pegs, without any identification marks, were removed by us, and whenever the notices showed that the claim had not been registered within the stipulated 30 days the pegs were removed under instructions from me. In some cases the persons who had pegged out those claims came to me, and whenever I considered their excuses for having failed to apply for registration as required by the Mining Act and Regulations were reasonable, I granted authority, by virtue of Sec. 41 of the Act, for them to enter and repeg. Each applicant was informed that no further approval would be granted.

Quite a number of gougers had incorrect information on the notices on their pegs, including some of the registered claims. All those who could be contacted on the spot were informed of the fact and others are being informed by letter. The direction trenches in many cases were poorly defined. A few claims pegged out by aborigines were very well done.

There are reported to be about 300 white people, including women and children, on the field, and about 100 aborigines. Numerous caravans and tents are scattered around the main settlement area, and a new eating-house is being erected. Three stores are selling food. There were no complaints regarding the water supply.

A new building of four rooms, for use by the doctor and dentist of the Flying Doctor Service, has been erected.

Special Mining Lease No. 32 was inspected. Satisfactory pegs, showing the number of the lease, have been erected at the four corners. Trenches or stone piles of direction have been cut or placed in position. Smaller pegs have been placed at various positions to denote the boundary lines. Work was being carried out on this lease by two men using a bulldozer. The manager

of Andamooka Enterprises Ltd. was absent from the field. The men are removing all of the overburden at the western end of the lease down to the opal horizon. Mr. Miles, the man in charge, stated that very little opal has yet been recovered from this lease. Some of the mullock is being shoved over the lease boundary in the northwestern corner. This land is below the opal level, but there appears to be a possibility that heavy rain could wash the fine material into the creeks and interfere with the water supply. There does not appear to have been a great deal of work carried out on this lease by the lessees before the present work was commenced, apart from a number of dozer cuts at the eastern end of the lease. Overburden at this end of the lease has also been shoved over the boundary. The claimholders report that claims pegged out recently (and registered) on the southern boundary of the special mining lease are producing some opal.

An area equivalent to three claims had been pegged out on Hallion Hill with the use of only four pegs with three Miner's Right numbers on them. These pegs were removed by me and the position explained to the holder of one of the Miner's Rights. Quite a lot of work had been carried out by means of a bulldozer on this land.

A number of claims at the northern end of Stevens Gully had been worked with the aid of a bulldozer. This type of mining most certainly renders the land useless for further mining by orthodox methods. A bulldozer has also been used at the Koska Hill workings.

Several visiting opal buyers were on the field.

The party left Andamooka about 9 a.m. on Monday, 7th September.

COOBER PEDY

We arrived at Coober Pedy at about 7 p.m. (7th Sept.) after receiving permits to cross the Woomera prohibited area from Woomera to Mt. Eba homestead. A roadhouse-store supplies accommodation and meals. The post office is located at another store. Both stores supply petrol and another petrol pump has been installed at the 8-mile diggings on the main road to Alice Springs.

On Tuesday, 8th September, the claims at the 8-mile workings (to the west) were inspected. Opal is being obtained there in considerable quantities, and a good number of claims has been pegged out. This is the busiest section of the field at present and has been for some time now.

The diggings to the north of the main settlement (the 12-mile, 9-mile, and 4-mile) and at Crowder Gully, Mocking Bird Hill, and The Jewellers Shop to the east were examined on 9th September. There is considerable activity at the 12-mile workings, all of the claimholders being "New Australians" of Greek, Hungarian, and Rumanian origin.

Ryan Gully, Flat Hill, The Big Flat, Post Office Hill, and Koska Hill were visited on Thursday (10th Sept.). Not many claims are being worked on these sections of the field.

On Friday, 11th September, new workings situated about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of the 8-mile were inspected. A number of claims have been pegged on this untried area and shaft sinking is in progress. Larkin's Folly workings were examined and a further visit was paid to the 8-mile area where the workings are becoming very extensive. Many new claims on practically untried ground on the north side of the road to Alice Springs have been pegged out. The final areas visited are located at the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -mile and the 5-mile workings, to the south of the township area on the road to Kingoonya, where there has been little activity in recent years.

An application for a special mining lease over an area of about 5 acres has been lodged by K. Carter and K. Kent. The land required by them is situated at the old "Jewellers Shop" diggings which were worked very extensively in the past. No claims are at present held or properly pegged out in this locality. The applicants have marked out the land to be included in the lease by means of four pegs, with a notice to the effect that a special mining lease has been applied for by them. No recent work was observable in the area inside their pegs. The very numerous old shafts, very close together, are mostly partly filled in, this being apparent when examining a bulldozer cut already made by Carter and Kent. The land here is probably a good location in which to try out this form of mechanized mining.

Quite a lot of work has been done with a dozer at the 12-mile workings. Some of the cuts (about 12 to 15 ft. deep) appear to be very unsafe. There is evidence of falls of earth in a number of the excavations which are made close together leaving a wall a few feet wide in between. At least 10 tons of material had fallen in in one cut.

Several cuts made on a registered claim at the 8-mile diggings are used for the purpose of driving in on the first opal level without having to sink shafts. It is problematical whether this method is considered to be an improvement as it was noted that the claimholders (amalgamated claims) were busy sinking new shafts.

The number of white people, including women and children, on this field is stated to be 200. About 100 aborigines (men, women, and children) are living there at present. The Progress Association has obtained material to build a community hall, and work on the erection will commence in the near future. It was stated that the Education Department intends to appoint a teacher to Coober Pedy and to supply school furniture for use in the hall.

Four opal buyers were on the field. These men are not permanent residents.

A large number of pegs without any type of notice or distinguishing mark was found at most of the widespread sections of this field, and were, of course, removed by us. In some instances, pegs with insufficient information on them, or where the information showed that the land had been pegged and not registered within 30 days, were removed under my instructions.

In a number of cases the persons who had allowed the 30-day registration period to lapse, and who had reasonable excuses for so doing, were granted authority (under Sec. 41 of the Mining Act, 1930-1958) to enter and repeg their claim on the understanding that they would lodge applications for registration at once.

Trenches in some cases were poorly defined.

No instances of a person having more than one claim pegged out were discovered. Anyone who had been so doing must have removed the offending pegs, on the land not being worked, before our arrival on the field, or the extra claims must have been some of those from which we removed the pegs because of the lack of distinguishing information, thus making it impossible to pin it down to any person in particular.

No cases of pegging out more than one claim were reported or pointed out to me on this visit.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of the assistance rendered by Mr. McMahon and Mr. Ingham.

We left Coober Pedy at about 9 a.m. on Saturday, 12th Sept., and arrived at Port Augusta (via Woomera) at about 8 p.m. The party reached Adelaide at 3 p.m. on Sunday, 13th Sept., 1959.

V. T. Geraghty
(V.T. Geraghty)
SENIOR WARDEN

25th September, 1959.