

# Mining permit fiasco:

PUBLISHED WEEKLY TO SERVE THE OPAL INDUSTRY

**OPAL MINERS'**  
15c Weekly

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 1972

## BLAST OFF FOR GOVT.

There's a strong feeling among Coober Pedy miners that the administrators of the Woomera range need a "rocket" under them.

The restrictions placed on miners in the "prohibited" area south of Coober Pedy smell of typical red-tape and hogwash.

Supply Minister, Mr. R. V. Garland, has graciously condescended to allow miners to work in restricted areas, provided they adhere to a ridiculous permit scheme.

THE miners are angry on the grounds that the permit requirements "are so stupid it almost makes you laugh."

Application forms for entry into the 400-square-mile prohibited area have been released by Commonwealth police and the Department of Supply.

Between 1947 and now, these forms have never been needed.

There are so many anomalies in the permit requirements that if there were Jack-asses on Mt. Penryn, they would be cackling their heads off.

And the miners at neighbouring Andamooka are no better off.

For instance:

- Each miner must carry a transceiver;
- He can travel only on roads authorised by the Commonwealth;
- He can mine only in a certain area, otherwise he has to fill in a SECOND form;
- He is greatly restricted in prospecting where and when he wishes.

The inconvenience caused to the miner is enormous.

One day he might be mining in Mt. Penryn, but the following day he may want to

move 10 miles in another direction.

But to do this he will have to have a licensed transceiver station is: If you clear the bug.

(involving a \$2 fee), and it will have to be a Traeger TM3 with a frequency of 5475 and 7465.

Do you mind!

### Evacuate

According to regulations, only one man has to be equipped with a transceiver if a group is working in the same area. But if one decides to head for better ground — which often happens — he has to buy one of those con-founded radios.

And where the devil is he going to find one a few days; they re-

pect the need for security. But they object to the Commonwealth wealth-security hum-

Parliamentary Members have said that the highway of proclaimed area is not there to keep miners and tourist coaches? And in, but to keep others do you evacuate the out.

### Tourists

Now isn't that a really good deal for the miner! Particularly when he has to have a transceiver if he is working two miles off the Stuart Highway, while thousands of tourists pass him by the same road.

In a recent three-week period, nearly

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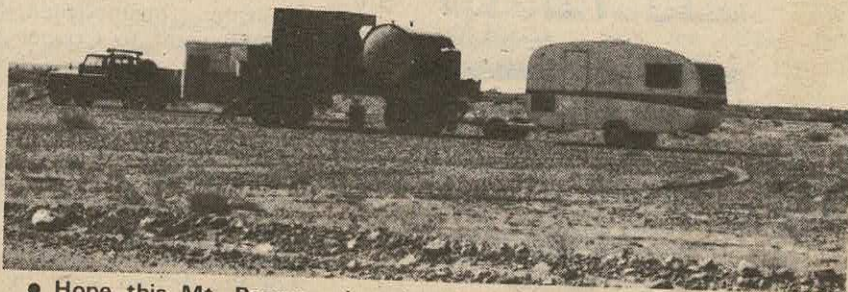
## Nicola is our baby

• Isn't she just gorgeous? Nicola Van Brugge has been judged the Baby of the Week, because she typifies a bonny-bouncing-babe. Nicola is the five-month-old daughter of Tom and Lyn Van Brugge, who have a business in Coober Pedy.

Among other things, Tom is an opal buyer.



European chef specialising in Continental dishes — Bill and Inga provide the finest cuisine in Coober Pedy at the DESERT CAVE, fully licensed restaurant.



• Hope this Mt. Penryn miner has his transceiver, otherwise a nasty little man from the Commonwealth might drop in and charge him with a "criminal" offence.



# WATCHDOG FOR THE OPAL MINER



## MEET THE EDITOR

THE national editor . . . Noel Harley . . . an old hand in journalism, although for years he milked cows for his dairy-farmer father in Gippsland, Vic.

Worked on newspapers overseas and with such papers in Melbourne as The Sun (chief crime reporter), The Herald, and a television interviewer with the ABC-Channel Two.

A features writer and sub-editor with Truth for five years, and a reporter with the Sydney Daily Mirror.

Only a little bloke, but has been a successful Aussie Rules football coach.

Has a lovely wife and three "swinging" teenagers — twin boys, 17, and a daughter, 14.

Is absorbed in the Opal Miners' Weekly, and regards it as the most important publication within the company which employs him — Gold Star Publications Pty. Ltd.

Loves a beer and hopes to have one with you in the near future.

**OPAL MINERS' Weekly**

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

Published by Noel Harley for Gold Star Pty. Ltd., 6 Montrose Street, Hawthorn, Vic., and printed by Victor Castle, 3 Clifton Rd., Hawthorn, for and on behalf of Mulweb Litho Pty. Ltd., Geddes St., Mulgrave, Vic.  
National editor: Noel Harley.  
Coober Pedy representative: Kevin Allchurch.  
Canberra representative: John Somerville Smith.  
Lightning Ridge: Robina Boardman.

THE Opal Miners' Weekly, understandably, is all about people in the opal industry.

It is FOR the Opal People.

It is, we say modestly, their mouthpiece.

'As anybody who has ever dug up an opal knows, it is the first paper of its kind.

And it will stick like vise where not to inhale behind the opal vest.

In the past, the only news to come from the opal mining fields has been derogatory; scandal that has painted a picture of the miner being a degenerate thug and scoundrel.

We aim to change that. We aim to show the misguided public that the opal miner is as good a bloke as in any walk of life; that he is interested only in making an honest dollar for his wife and kids.

### Coverage

The paper will be blunt, when necessary, but it will always be designed to push for the miners' rights. It will be sold on a national basis, and will be bandied about Federal and State Government departments.

In addition, there will be a regular coverage of general mining news, supplied by top authorities in the field. This will include a cut-and-dried guide for investments and will ad-

### Planning

It would be folly to claim there were no undesirables in the opal industry. But who can classify a sphere where this does not exist?

Several people have put a lot of time and planning into this publication.

Hope you like it!

## PAPER WILL INFORM THE OUTBACK

THE LEADER of the South Australian Opposition, Dr. Bruce Eastick, has joined his Parliamentary colleagues who represent the opal mining centres of Coober Pedy and Andamooka in praising the establishment of the Opal Miners' Weekly.

"This new publication will provide valuable information for people in the remote opal digging areas," he said.

### Provide

"In the past there has been a difficulty in communicating to all people concerned the results of approaches to Members of Parliament by groups or individuals seeking assistance on behalf of their communities.

"Opal Miners' Weekly will not only be able to provide this information quickly and efficiently to people in our own opal fields, but it will also supply an interchange of news and information from mining areas throughout Aus-

tralia," said Dr. Eastick. Speaking on behalf of the Legislative Council members for Northern, Mr. Arthur Whyte said he was delighted with the decision to produce a newspaper specifically for people in the remote outback opal gougings.

### Schooling

"I have watched the field of Coober Pedy grow from a few goug-ers to the present boom, and am pleased to have assisted with such matters as schooling, the sealed main street and a better land tenure," he said.

"I know they will welcome this publishing venture as it will enable them to remain informed about all



## 'ALL THE BEST'

matters associated with their industry.

"It will make a wonderful contribution to their life, and will enable my colleagues and me to pass on information quickly, and to all miners the results of the various representations we have made and will continue to make on their behalf.

"I congratulate the proprietors and wish them well in this venture," said Mr. Whyte.

The Member for Eyre, Mr. Graham Gunn, said he believed miners in the remote areas of the country faced enough difficulties without being denied efficient communication of news and events, particularly those related to their own industry.

## HOW HE'S WORKED!

OUR man in Coober Pedy . . . Kevin Allchurch. Nobody has worked harder to get the Opal Miners' Weekly off the ground than Kevin.

A former Melbourne businessman, Kevin went to Coober Pedy for the purpose of starting the paper. He put everything into the task, not only because he saw a future for the publication, but because he quickly realised the people of the district were in a wilderness without a voice.

They had genuine causes, but there was no avenue for them to express their feelings or emotions.

Apart from that, the people of Coober Pedy soon "grew" on Kevin, and it would be a brave man who would make a derogatory remark about them in his presence.

He is your champion and our editorial and advertising manager. The management appeals to everybody to give him every assistance.

He's on your side!



Our boy Kevin has been quick to make friends in his new domicile, such as Gwen McArdle, who does the office work at Bull's caravan park. Read Kevin's sincere comments about Coober Pedy in a special article on Page 12.



# THEY WANT A DOCTOR -OR DO THEY?

**Coober Pedy is faced with an unusual medical problem.**

**It wants a resident doctor — and then again, it doesn't.**

**The Medical Centre Committee is not against strong feeling among some residents who want a doctor, but it is faced with a number of problems.**

The biggest question is: How do you lure a qualified man to the opal fields?

He would be one-out in his profession, with no second opinion to fall back on.

He would have no help in performing operations.

If a doctor was appointed, the town would be faced with other problems, such as:

- How would townspeople know he was suitable?

- How long would he stay?

- Would it mean the end of the Flying Doctor Service?

- Without the Flying Doctor, how would seriously ill patients be evacuated?

The threat of losing the air medical service would be very real, because it would probably be believed that the district could look after itself from a medical point of view.

■■■■■

Mr. Bill McDougall, who has been secretary of the Medical Centre Committee since its inception eight years ago, says any doctor appointed would have to give an assurance that he would stay for a period to be agreed upon.

"It would be too risky, otherwise," he says. "The town could be left high and dry."

The centre runs the three-ward hospital in conjunction with the numbers.

Bush Church Aid Society, a Church of England organisation.

Mr. McDougall is the only member of the original executive still on the committee.

It came about after a meeting of the Progress Association decided to build a hospital for Coober Pedy.

The Bush Church Aid Society had assured the association that it would provide staff.

■■■■■

Until 1963, Coober Pedy relied only on a medical kit, which was given to Mrs. Gertrude Linderman by the association.

She had only a general knowledge of first-aid, but adapted herself well. She had to, because she was treating 20 or more patients daily in a caravan outside her home.

It was too much to ask of one woman who, at the same time, was trying to look after her family.

The contents of the kit were numbered, which meant that Mrs. Linderman could contact a doctor by transceiver, describe the symptoms, and then give treatment according to the number on the bottle suggested by the doctor.

Naturally, the doc-

tor also had a corresponding set of numbers.

If necessary, the Flying Medical Service — also run by the Church of England — would fly the patient out.

The Flying Doctor service did not, at that time, cover this part of South Australia.

A start on the building was made in October, 1964, and it was completed in December. It was officially opened on February 24 the next year by the then Chief Secretary, Sir Lyell McEwen.

■■■■■

All furniture and equipment, and the car used by the sisters, was provided by the BCA.

Cost was the ruling factor in limiting the original building to two wards of two beds each. The committee could not afford air-conditioning, but put up a pre-fabricated building, which cools quicker than a brick building at night.

A lot of assistance came from outside Coober Pedy. By chance, the committee met the chief country architect for the Housing Trust, Mr. Len Rush, who was building a residence at the aboriginal reserve.

• Cont. Page 14



Bill McDougall, the backbone of the Medical Centre Committee, since its inception. The resident doctor Mrs. Gertrude Linderman—very handy but much overworked with her first-aid kit.



## Teacher's plea to parents:

# TAKE MORE INTEREST

**HEADMASTER of the Coober Pedy Area School, Mr. Craig Cameron, has urged parents to take a greater interest in the school and the work of the pupils.**

He has offered an open invitation to parents to visit the school and watch study classes.

The invitation has been made before, but few have taken advantage of it.

"This is the parents' school, and without their interest and support, it cannot function properly," says Mr. Cameron.

He asks, however, that parents observe three simple courtesies:

- Advise him or the deputy headmaster, Mr. Lange, of their intention to visit;

- Not to expect the teacher to stop immediately to discuss a child's progress while a class is in session, and

- Advise whether children are likely to be embarrassed by the parents' presence, so that arrangements can be made to overcome this.

Mr. Cameron adds that in return for the invitation, parents could help by taking a class, or marking a spelling test.

In this way, parents could discover for themselves how their child is progressing. Infant teachers would welcome this form of help.

In the infant and primary sections, the day is divided roughly as follows: 9 to 11, language; 11.30 to 12.30, mathematics, and 1.30 to 3.40, environmental and creative studies.



CRAIG CAMERON — wants more interest taken in his school.

States last month, and Mrs. Louisa Sekulic, who taught at the school last year.

Mr. and Mrs. Compton have been holidaying at Ernabella, Ayers Rock and Alice Springs. He is teaching in the lower primary open area, allowing Mr. Lange more time to work in the upper primary open area.

Mrs. Compton is a much-needed replacement in the infant section. After she has gone through a familiarisation period, the infant children will be separated into three groups.

It's hoped that an additional primary assistant will be appointed in the first two to three weeks of the term.



A view of the hospital, which will take on a bigger and better appearance, when additional building works are completed.



# The Opal people pray together

From a religion point of view, people elsewhere could well follow the lead of Coober Pedy Christians — Roman Catholics and those of the Church of England faith all pray in the same church.

The Church of England uses the dugout Catholic church.

It is now two years since the first resident Church of England minister, the Rev. Barry Rainsford, was appointed to Coober Pedy.

It was a new move in opal fields on their northern work of the Bush Aid Society, which is sponsored by the Church of England. The B.C.A. is really a home missionary society which sends personnel to outlying areas of Australia. They work in three categories — as ministers, nursing sisters and superintendents of children's hostels, the nearest being at Broken Hill.

## Missioners

B.C.A. has had contact with Coober Pedy for more than 30 years. From 1938 to 1968 the Flying Medical Service was operated from Ceduna, where B.C.A. provided the doctor, nurses, chemist and pilot. During this period, B.C.A. missionaries from the south called at the

to become self-supporting. The work in Coober Pedy is centred around church services in the Catholic dugout on Sunday mornings, preceded by Sunday School, which meets in the Hospital and Rectory. These are augmented by an adult Bible Study Group on Sunday evenings, and a women's Discussion Group during the week. Children are taught religious instruction at the school on Wednesday mornings.

## Travels

Between the Northern Territory border and the Trans-Australian Railway there are numerous

Plans were drawn up in 1970 to build an underground rectory in hospital hill, but were abandoned when the present above-ground building was offered for sale.

Having obtained a house, B.C.A. then invited Barry and Jenny Rainsford and family to occupy it. They left their parish work in an outer suburb of Sydney and flew to the centre of South Aus-

sheep and cattle stations, mostly near the Stuart Highway, which connects Adelaide and Darwin. B.C.A. also provides the nursing sisters for the small hospitals at Tarcoola and Cook.

Mr. Rainsford travels this area by car, train, bus and plane, whichever is most convenient at the time. He tries to visit the other towns monthly or quarterly and the homesteads annually, but the actual frequency depends on many circumstances.

## Services

The cost of maintaining this ministry is met from three sources — gifts from interested Christians throughout Australia, contributions from local people, and a small grant from the Home Mission Fund of the diocese (Willochra). The aim is

to become self-supporting.

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THE REV. BARRY RAINSFORD — teaches the gospel in the outback in an area covering 10,000 square miles.

in personal need. He is greatly helped by his wife and a group of dedicated volunteers who assist in all the church activities.

## Precious

A small paper has been produced at the rectory as a means of contact with the outlying areas. It is called "Opal Chips", as it contains small pieces of precious material. This supplements the personal visits, when people appreciate a friendly chat, or wish to discuss a problem. Coober Pedy is not a

The members are grateful to the Catholic priest and his congregation for allowing them to hold services in the dugout heat, but with a double church each Sunday. However, accommodation is limited. High prices of goods are offset to some extent by a simpler way of living than in the city.

## Sadness

Mr. Rainsford feels that the people of Coober Pedy are a fairly easy-going lot and there are not too many complaints about the conditions

## Water scarce, expensive

and dust, as people have learnt to accept the times and convenience of using the building, which is a lonely spot, despite its isolation, for not only does it have a population of two or three thousand, but also many thousands of tourists call continually. Quite a few tell of their interest in B.C.A.

However, under the happy exterior of Distance between many people there is a lot of sadness, he says. This was largely due to the fact that people trying to avoid the laws of God.

The Rainsfords have two children, Anne, six, who is in Grade Two at the Coober Pedy Area School, and David, four, who attends the pre-school kindergarten.

The Anglican church hopes to build a dugout hall in the near future.

## BIG PARTY NIGHT

People will come from a thousand miles around for the annual Coober Pedy race meeting next Saturday.

Most will start off the big weekend by joining in the fun at the Pre-Race Cocktail Party on Friday night.

It has been organised by the Coober Pedy Women's Hospital Auxiliary. The venue is the shed of the South Australia Tractor Co.

Those wanting to attend are urged to buy tickets early, because they are only \$2, and will sell like hot cakes.

They are on sale at the chemist shop and the Opal Hotel.

# DESERT CAVE MOTEL

ACCOMMODATION FROM \$10 PER NIGHT

Dust-free, air-conditioned rooms with toilets and showers.



# BEPi RIDES THE HUMP TO COOBER COMMERCE

The word "Bepi" is a term of endearment in aborigine.

Whether its derivation is a result of a fellow named Giuseppe Coro is not really known, but that's what the aborigines tagged him with when he moved to Coober Pedy 12 years ago.

When the friendly Bepi took over the old store at Coober Pedy, he used to give the aboriginal children sweets, and their parents insisted that they "thank Uncle Bepi".

**THERE** are many people in the district who swear by Bepi Coro; aborigines and miners by the score can tell many a story of how he has helped the needy.

And how they have stuck!

The people of the opal country have long memories, and they have never discarded the humble storekeeper who has built up a big business as an opal exporter, shop-keeper, garage, hotel and motel proprietor.

Not bad going, considering Bepi came to Australia only 23 years ago, and kicked off in a most foreign occupation — a camel driver (a job which required a special licence).

He was born in the Italian village of Padova, near Venice, one of seven girls and five boys.

He made enough from the camel driving caper to buy an old

Chev. truck, and he put it to good use. His Italian instinct told him there was money to be made in the green-grocery business.

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Fresh vegetables were almost unheard of in that part of the country at the time, so Bepi started his own garden, where there was a plentiful supply of water.

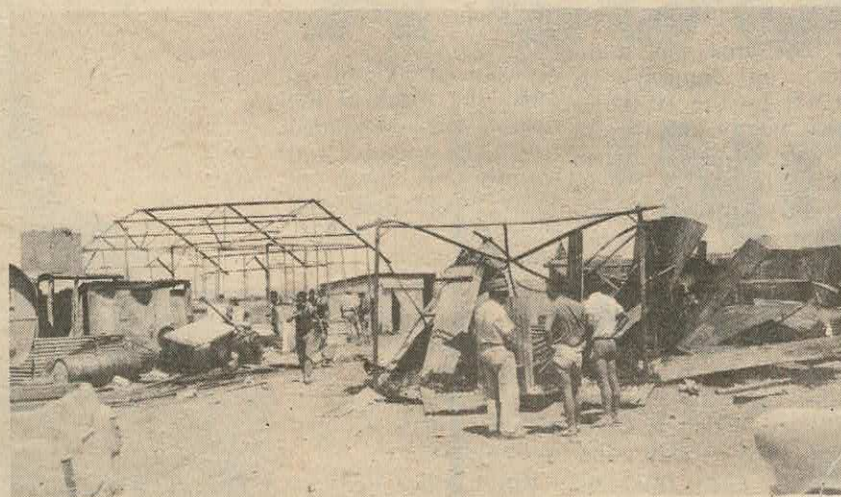
He travelled many miles on his deliveries, but was doing quite well. He really started to enjoy life when he saved enough for a car.

In 1960, Bepi was all set to return to Italy for a holiday, but a friend enticed him to the opal fields at Coober Pedy.

But he was dead-set homesick, and was determined to return to his old country,

after finding a reasonable amount of opal.

He joined in the



The burnt-out store. It hasn't always been a piece of cake for Bepi. In fact, it's been a hard, slogging 23 years in his adopted country.



From that burnt-out shell has risen the modern store, service station and hotel (above).

search with his brother, Attilio, and bingo — vegetables. That was not good enough for Bepi; he installed refrigeration, and the residents got a weekly supply of fresh fruit and vegies for the first time.

The fact that the population was only 180 did not daunt Bepi's enthusiasm. He saw a future in the town.

He built a new front on the store and extended it a little.

With Attilio, he bought a truck, and started the Miners' Transport, operating on a basis of three trips a week between Coober Pedy and Kingoonya.

This brought a mighty cheer from the miners, because there was no hotel, and their beer supplies were de-

livered much more readily.

There would be a line of 30 to 40 miners waiting for their quota when the truck trundled into town. At times they waited thirstily for up to an hour while the amber ale was unloaded and sorted.

In his first three years as a trader, Bepi's main customers were aborigines and miners, most of whom had reliable credit accounts.

While he sometimes gave credit when not advisable, he had an astute business brain.

Ten years ago he almost caused a revolution by installing a juke box in the store, which was an instant success with aboriginal youngsters.

They "thrashed" it from 6.30 in the morning until late at night — and there lies a



Bepi the camel driver... he's come a long way since those days. He would be possibly the only migrant to take a job as a licensed camel driver on his arrival in Australia.

story. There was no room to stack the supplies, so they were left on the verandah, and Bepi never once lost anything through theft or vandalism.

He had won the hearts of everyone, and they were sad when, in 1962, his old store burned to the ground.

Some, however, underrated the fortitude of Bepi. The blaze was at 11.30 on a Friday night, but the business was re-opened on the Sunday afternoon.

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Attilio was willing to abandon the store, but Bepi was confident they would get back into operation, and pick up their losses.

The locals watched amazed.

They saw the old frame carted away, and another brought in from a miner's shed. The brothers borrowed old galvanised iron from friends and up went a shed. They had a truck sent up from Port Augusta with a variety of stock, including groceries and bread.

They were back in business.

Another brother, Bob — a builder — helped them build a new store double the original size. At first he was not keen on Coober, but the town "grew" on him too, and he decided to stay.

Bob's efforts brought better refrigeration, and this meant such luxuries as ice-cream and milk. Soon after, the Coros bought a new, refrigerated semi-trailer, and cut the price of transporting perishable goods from Adelaide.

Previously, they had been sent up by a costly air service.

Bepi is constantly looking to the future and improvements to his business. For instance, he is planning a hardware shop alongside the store, and a new home for his family.

Next year, he intends to take the family back to Italy for an eight-month holiday.

That trip is well-earned. The store is open seven days a week, from early morning until 9 p.m. And if a tourist bus is running late, the store stays open.

In addition, the Coros built the fashionable Opal Motel in 1966, and opened an hotel in 1969. A new bar will soon be built on the site of the old miners' store, and the lounge is being extended by 40ft.

■■■■■

At first, Bepi wanted to renovate the old miners' store, but he and his brothers finally decided to erect a new store across the road, which allowed for the expansions to the hotel.

After the store closes on Saturday nights, the Coros relax at the hotel.

On Sundays it's a family night at the drive-in.

In the oasis of the opal country, Bepi has made a good life for himself.

He has shown his counterparts in the big cities the way to start a business from nothing and build it into a flourishing concern.

Maybe the secret lies in the way you treat people!



Bepi and his charming wife, Hanika, are fair-dinkum Aussies. They are pictured at their naturalisation ceremony.



Whatsits name...would you believe...

# 'KUPIPITI'?

Maybe you should be calling Coober Pedy "Kupipiti".

If you can't pronounce that, perhaps it's "Coopeepeeetee", or "Cupiepitie", or "Cupeepity".

Whatever the dale and Lindsay, it Coober Pedy are en-ignated the finding of pronunciation the was here that young tirely self-supporting. the Stuart Range opal aborigines gave the Arabanas were kept The area was found. From 750-pounds in town, it does sound separate, while await- ded on January 21, 1915, by the Hutchin- 1916, the value of the something like Coober ing manhool initia- son family, who were on an exploration trip opals was expanded Pedy. tion rites. 1920 production had increased to 53,425-pounds.

The big problem is finding an aborigine who can clearly define the title — and why anybody would hang a name like that on any place!

## Initiation

Australian anthropologists, T. S. Tinsdale and Bill Lindsay, believe the derivation comes from the Arab- ana dialect. This tribe roamed the Stuart Ranges, and referred to water holes in the Coober Pedy district as "Kupipitis".

According to Tins-

A broad translation of "Kupipiti" is "the place of little boys' initiation water holes."

A second school of thought is that Coober Pedy is aborigine for "White fellow under-ground," or "White fellows holes in the ground."

It was simply a misunderstanding of phonetics that the white man called it Coober Pedy and not Kupipiti when the time came that he could understand the aborigine dialect.

Natives today

## Floaters

While in the foothills of the Stuart Ranges, which is Coober Pedy today, the family ran out of water, and located a base at a fast-drying-out waterhole.

During the search for further water, the young Will. Hutchinson, 14, picked up the opal floaters that des-

Little work was done until the end of the First World War, and during this time, only about six-thousand pounds worth of opal was produced.

But Coober Pedy is now the largest opal field in the world, producing about 55 per cent of the Australian supply.

Anyway — apart from all that — what's in a name!



Lisa Grey, a lovely Melbourne lass, is our first Miss Opal of the Week. We thought we would run a series of pics of beautiful girls to brighten up the days a little for the hard-working miners. Never know, we might bring them all up for a weekend!

# OPAL INN HOTEL AND OPAL MOTEL

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# DOES COOBER NEED A COUNCIL?

Want a say about the life around you? The Page Seven Forum is designed to let you do exactly that. It will be a regular feature on controversial matters.

The bigger the noise you make, the more you are likely to achieve.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of The Opal Miners' Weekly.

The question-of-the-moment is:

## 'YES'

**-says Ken Jones**



KEN JONES — "Let us unite to govern ourselves."

The last meeting of the Coober Pedy Progress Association had the best attendance in the hall for years.

There were glimpses of the willing spirit that got Coober off the ground in the early 60s.

To those who remember, what were you working for? Wasn't it a determined bid to provide better living conditions for yourselves, families and fellow miners?

You formed the Progress Association to have a body responsible for the development of Coober Pedy. They have done the job well, despite limited powers.

The subject of local government is on all our lips. Why did the majority vote against it? I believe that many who did so didn't realise just what local govt. means. Obviously, some were influenced by several of the misinformed and biased statements made by speakers against its establishment.

What should be understood is that local government is not going to hand over the affairs of the town and its control to Adelaide. It's the opposite! Forget the word "government".

Self-representation is a better word, and is exactly what it means; the power to develop and run Coober Pedy as we, the residents, want it to be run.

At present, we are under the complete control of the govt. depts. in Adelaide. As I tried to explain at the meeting, several moves are afoot by different departments, that we as a community know little about.

Is this fair? Aren't we entitled to know what is going on in our own town? Why should we be dictated to by Adelaide? Why shouldn't we be allowed to have our say in anything and everything that happens in Coober?

As we stated at the meeting, the Progress Committee believes that every occupier or owner of land in Coober should be able to have his say and vote, regardless of whether he is naturalised or not. Coober is unique in its varied population, and there is a good chance that the Local Government Department may alter the Act to allow everyone the right to vote.

**What worries most of us?**

Wild, unrealistic figures were quoted at the meeting about rates. In discussions with the dept's committee, we agreed that the rates for residential sites should be no more than \$20 a year.

I know a lot do not look upon Coober as their home. Some spend only half the year here. What about the growing number of families who have settled on a more permanent basis? Haven't they the right to want to govern themselves? To improve their living conditions? To see the town become a fitter place in which to raise their children?

To those who don't consider Coober "home", I ask they consider those who do? We all have one thing in common — our search for opal.

## 'NO'

**-says Eric D. Smith**



ERIC SMITH (right) — "Let us support the 400 who voted against a town council."

The large bulk of Coober Pedy's population comprises prospectors struggling for the freedom and independence that an opal strike could give them.

Present thought of local government is immature.

Most of the population lives on hope. Many live in neat, tidy homes sufficient for their needs, but they might not be up to the standards accepted by a town council.

When members of the Local Government Committee visited Coober Pedy and a vote on local govt. was taken, less than 40 people were present to vote, and a large number of these were public servants, and bank staff, who have no permanent stake in the town.

The meeting was assured that the South Australian Government would not interfere in the running of the town if we accepted local government. Then we were told that the first council would be wholly appointed by the government.

As the first council would have the task of setting up by-laws, fixing valuations and rates, and generally laying down the policies for future councils, I consider it the most important council of all, and one that should be elected by the future rate-payers, not appointed by the government.

In answer to a question I put, the meeting was told that it could be arranged for the landholders who would become rateable, to elect their council. Now a meeting has been held to accept nominations, from which the Govt. will select a council. We still don't have the right to vote.

Naturally, the names the government want would be among the nominees, and these men will be appointed, whether the majority of the townspeople want them or not. We can nominate one member or a thousand, it makes no difference.

Is this the way the South Australian Government is going to keep its promise not to interfere? I personally consider that Coober Pedy has seen enough of both sides of the House to know that the government is not prepared to do anything to benefit the opal miner.

With or without government interference, the benefits of local government are far outweighed by the disadvantages.

It is my honest opinion that we must support the 400 people who refused to give any nominations, but voted overwhelmingly against the imposition of a town council on the community.

Let the teachers, bank staff and civil servants become residents, before they vote for a council.



## THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

People everywhere are searching, and in Coober Pedy the search which most people appear to be interested in, is the search for opal.

Yet at the same time, I wonder how many people are also searching for something, which they feel is even harder to find than the elusive opal? The way to a life of satisfaction; a life of happiness and life eternal.

The way to a life of satisfaction and to life eternal are really one and the same; and is really so very easy to find.

Jesus Christ himself said: "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life". (John 14:6)

If people would only spend some of their precious time searching; firstly, their hearts, to see that they are in need of "Someone" to lead them on the way to a life with meaning and, secondly, the Word of God in the Bible to find who that "Someone" is, namely Jesus the Son of God.

Anyone who does make the effort to find Christ and His way for their life can search in the confident knowledge that they have the guarantee that they will find Him.

"Ask, and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you". (Matthew 7:7)

Search for Christ and the sure knowledge that your sins have been cleaned away, and your search for the meaning of life will have not been, a search for nothing.

KEVIN SCHRAPEL,  
Lutheran Lay-Missionary.

## GEM MERCHANT

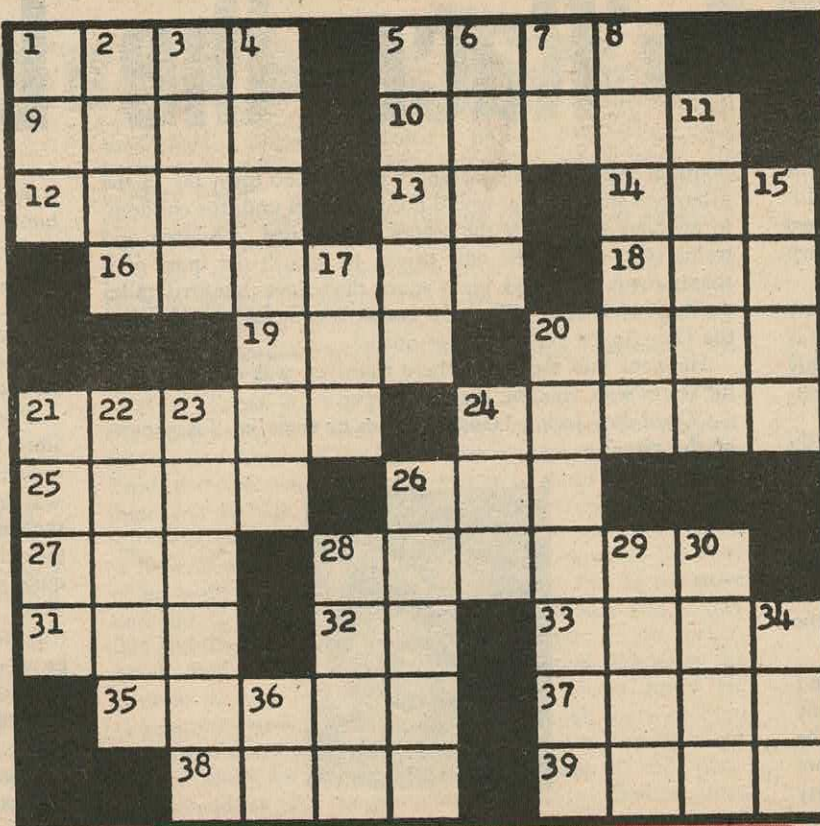
Exporter  
of  
all kinds  
of  
rough opal

ELI CHRISTIANOS

PHONE: ADELAIDE 51 1808

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## OPAL MINER CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Fragrance
  - 5 Blot
  - 9 Roman V
  - 10 Gem weight
  - 12 Yard parts
  - 13 During
  - 14 Fabulous bird
  - 16 Small amount
  - 18 Also
  - 19 Crimson
  - 20 Food seasoning
  - 21 Frolic
  - 24 Intelligence
  - 25 Dry
  - 26 Against
  - 27 Sign of assent
  - 28 Console
  - 31 Conclusion
  - 32 Exist
  - 33 Lofty
  - 35 Glitter
  - 37 Capital of Norway
  - 38 Egress
  - 39 Harvest

- 23 Mystery
- 24 Music note
- 26 Heavenly body
- 28 Hindu garment
- 29 Instance
- 30 Girl's name
- 34 Cut off
- 36 Cutting tool

- DOWN**
- 1 Away from
  - 2 Eat carefully
  - 3 Above
  - 4 Went to bed
  - 5 Berate
  - 6 Window glass
  - 7 Otherwise
  - 8 Scottish plaid
  - 11 Implements
  - 15 Animal shed
  - 17 Fixed charge
  - 20 Member of Congress
  - 21 Mentally sound
  - 22 Fork tine

## KNOW YOUR STARS

### YOU AND YOUR STARS

**VIRGO** (Aug. 24 to Sept. 22): Some gains are probable but you will have to work for success. Not a week when good fortune will simply fall into your lap.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23 to Oct. 23): You will be working hard, but the rewards will be better than usual. Keep at it as this is an important phase you are entering into.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24 to Nov. 22): You may find yourself in two minds re your personal loyalties. Take no action this week: hesitation is your best protector.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 23 to Dec. 22): Both work and social interests will take up most of your time, but beware of neglecting one for the other.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 23 to Jan. 20): Exceptionally good prospects and at least one outing where you will be the focus of interest. You could also collect some extra cash.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 21 to Feb. 19): A good week. Financial problems, given immediate attention, will diminish and there will be chances to develop new situations to your advantage.

**PISCES** (Feb. 20 to March 20): Romance is in the air for the young and some great opportunities to make new social contacts.

**ARIES** (March 21 to April 20): Things will have the knack of turning out much better than you anticipate. A question will arise over a former friendship, but don't take this too seriously.

**TAURUS** (April 21 to May 21): Life should be quite enjoyable, but at work things could be tricky. Check where money is involved. Errors could be costly both in cash and prestige.

**GEMINI** (May 22 to June 21): A sequence of exciting situations is due, romantically wise. But don't worry or set too much store by them. You can bypass them if you don't like them.

**CANCER** (June 22 to July 22): If those around you are hard to please, don't be distressed. Things will pick up, easing tension.

**LEO** (July 23 to Aug. 23): Avoid speculation, even where you believe you have special knowledge. The unexpected is likely to dash your hopes.

## 'The Office' is again for sale

The Diggers' Rest Hotel at Lightning Ridge is about to change hands again.

Speculation as to who the new owners will be is widespread, but some say "The Greek and Jacobie" are behind a syndicate.

After a 12 months' trial, Lyle and Gloria Dorrington are foregoing the pub.

Head-shaking locals are saying its spirit is dying, if not dead already.

"Things can never be the same as in the good old days," is their wail.

The Diggers' Rest is more of a meeting place than a drinking house, and miners refer to it as "The Office."

A great deal of business is done in the hotel, such as borrowing trucks, Jack-hammers, diff. hoists and so on.

For instance, Peter Rosso, who owns The Ridge Drilling Co., has a notice on the wall, which reads: "Office hours 5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m."

Sure enough, he is found standing under the notice during these times, six days a week.

Some fellows spend all day selling in the pub; the wheeling and dealing is enormous. So fast and furious is the trading, that one chap bought back his own stone — and almost fell through the floor from embarrassment.

But amazing deals have transpired. A Ridge resident bought a stone in the rough for \$100 and it cut into a \$1000 gem.

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# LANDS DEPT. MOVES IN ON COOBER PEDY

**Paper will  
promote  
awareness**

Sharp reaction is certain from Coober Pedy's civic leaders, following a move by the Lands Department to sell up 20 town blocks and a site for a caravan park.

It is the first stage of a departmental plan to limit land for residential purposes in the town.

The entire district is being surveyed, with this in mind.

The first lot has already gone under the hammer in the Progress Association hall.

Previously, surveying had been limited to commercial sites in the main street, and to a few allotments near the police station, and to a few allotments near the police station, most of which were to be used for government purposes.

Acting Minister of Lands, Mr. Casey, has outlined a departmental policy for Coober Pedy. The surveying program, he said, was undertaken to:

- Fix the boundaries of existing occupation;

- provide properly surveyed roads so that boundaries of licensed sites to satisfy requirements;

- enable the department to issue freehold titles to occupiers who comply with conditions of their licences, and who are using the land satisfactorily.

## Thinking

Many people in Coober Pedy believe the department is setting itself up as a town planner, and unjustly trying to take over the town.

There is strong thinking about the need for all this activity by the department.

Mr. Casey says as many sites as possible will be surveyed, and that "it may be neces-

sary to slightly alter the boundaries of licensed sites to satisfy requirements."

He stresses, however, that those using sites to the satisfaction of the department will be allowed to stay there. The procedure in dealing with all blocks is:

## Adopted

There is a real chance that the department will not renew the licence if the site is unimproved.

The department clearly appears to have adopted a "clean up Coober Pedy" campaign.

On the surface, it appears to be a dictatorial attitude, without considering the thoughts of townspeople.

Mr. Casey says that

occupiers of commercial allotments are required to built improvements to a certain value within a prescribed time.

He adds bluntly: "Irrespective of whether these allotments are held under a licence or agreement to purchase, applications to transfer will not be considered until the building requirements have been satisfied."

"Furthermore, licensees will not be offered agreements until the allotments have been improved, or until I am satisfied that permanent improvements will be carried out following the issue of the agreement."

I WOULD like to take a paper publicising this opportunity of community efforts being extended best wishes for the success of your enterprise in establishing a paper to serve the opal mining areas of South Australia.

In the past, the only times these areas became news was when there had been some incident subject to sensationalism in reporting. Nobody reads of the activities of the Progress Associations, Medical Centre committees and other organisations working in the interests of the community.

The contribution of

A newspaper such as yours would also give the populace generally a means of expressing opinions on a variety of subjects, controversial or otherwise, and would assist in creating an atmosphere where democratic freedom can flourish.

I wish your paper every success.

L. G. Wallis,  
M. H. R. for Grey.

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# What a town! Coober tops

● Says Kevin Allchurch, our editor and manager in Coober Pedy.

When Gold Star Publications suggested I go to Coober Pedy to establish a weekly paper, I thought they were out of their minds.

I visualised a township of two men and a dog living in a cave.

The Tourist Bureau and other sources of information are so devoid of material on the district, that I set out, convinced I was headed for a hick town in the middle of the desert.

Somebody must have planted me in the wrong place! No country town with country people, Coober Pedy is a mushrooming cosmopolitan centre, unique in the world. It lives and breathes with a fantastic personality all its own.

Where else could you find a town, hundreds of miles from anywhere, where the vast majority of the adult population have travelled overseas?

The work force is almost entirely self-employed, money flows like water, and the hospitality of the locals is out of this world.

## Battling

Although the people of Coober Pedy are their own greatest knockers, they have created a township of which they can be proud. Its most striking feature is the way in which the people of so many different nationalities have welded together to form a happy, friendly Australian outback town.

All things are judged through the eye of the beholder and for these people battling out an

existence, living in sheds, while facing the tremendous hardships of opal mining in raging dust storms and temperatures of 130 degrees Coober Pedy does not present a pretty picture.

But it is the sharing of these severe conditions which has been responsible for building the character of the town, and weeding out those who are less able to measure up to the demands of the desert.

## Association

The men deserve the highest praise, but for the women a special medal should be struck for courage.

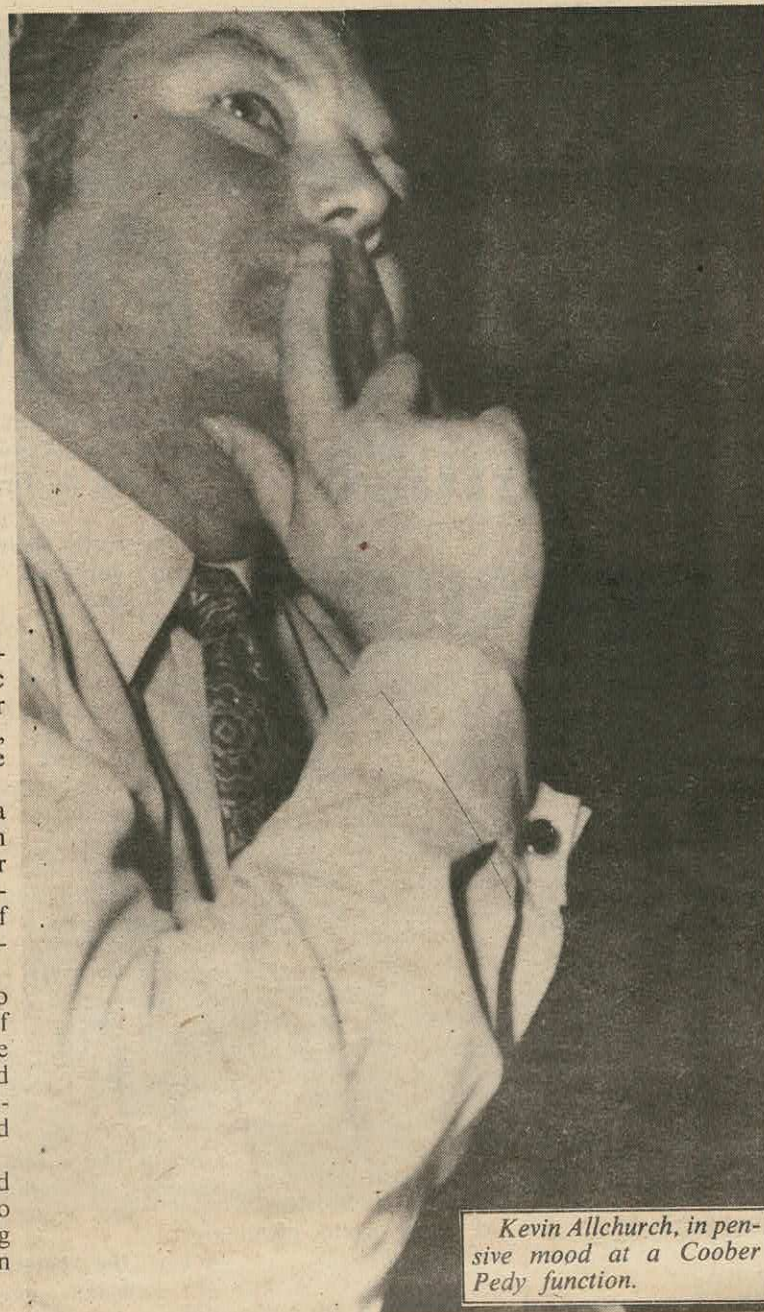
The driving force over-

riding all other considerations is the magic of the elusive opal; for today you're broke, tomorrow you may be rich.

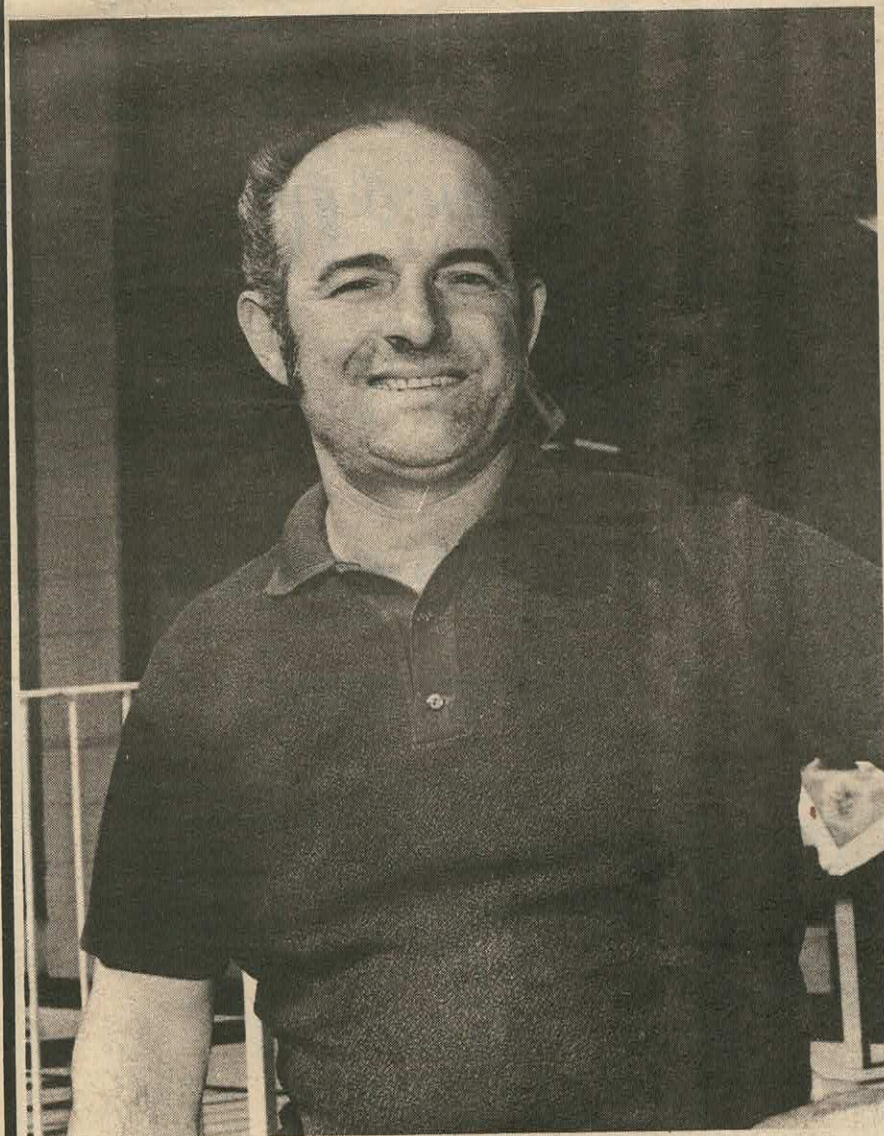
I look forward to a long association with the people of Coober Pedy and I am keenly anticipating the first of many trips to Andamooka.

It is also pleasing to have the prospect of joining with the people of Lightning Ridge and Walgett for an exchange of news and views.

I feel both proud and humble to be able to share in the continuing saga of the Australian opal fields.



Kevin Allchurch, in pensive mood at a Coober Pedy function.



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# BULL'S PARK GETS BOOST

In an endeavour to meet the ever-growing accommodation demands of Coober Pedy, Bulls' Tourist Services have opened a new caravan park and dormitory block.

The park has electric power points and other amenities for 24 caravans.

The dormitory block is divided in the middle, providing separate accommodation for boys and girls.

It is 70 ft. by 20 ft. with 50 beds, table facilities for 50 people, two four-plate electric stoves, and an electric refrigerator.

To service this accommodation, Bulls have erected a 40,000-gallon water tank, and

have installed a block of eight showers and eight toilets.

This unit was built and installed by Atlas

Industrial Housing Pty. Ltd. to the specifications of Bulls. The expansion to the park is typical of the development of the town. The population is expected to increase several more thousand in the next few years.



Above is a wide shot of the caravan park, with the new unit in the centre.

The second picture shows Ross McArdle (left), Coober Pedy manager of Bulls, with Arthur Turner, the company's State manager, alongside the new shower unit.

The bottom picture shows the shower and toilet block being installed, with the 40,000 gallon water tank in the foreground.

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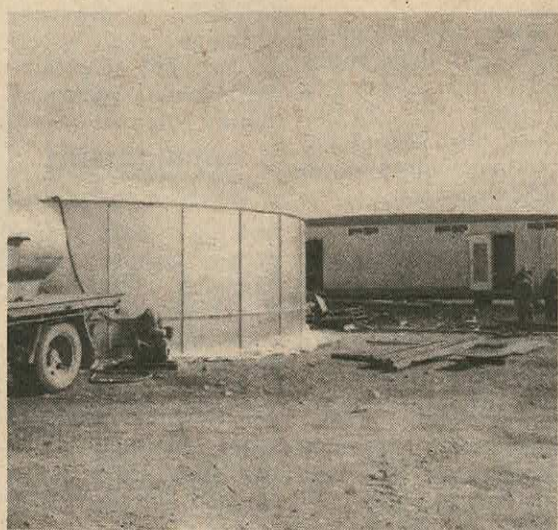
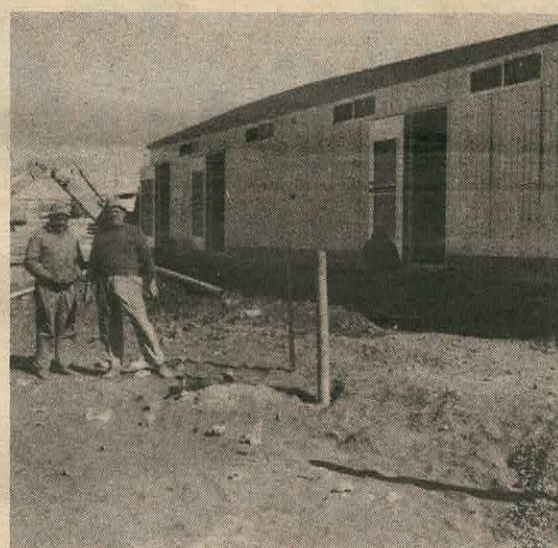
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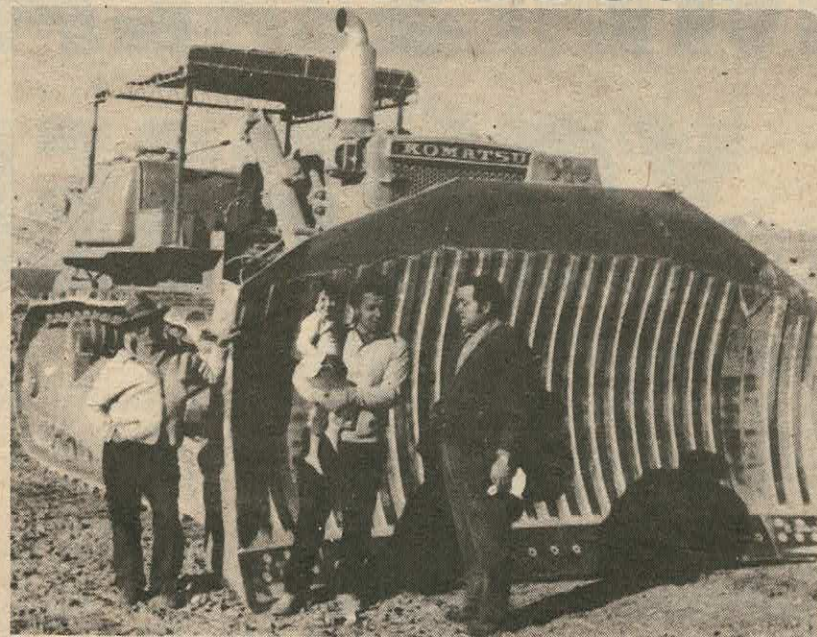
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## It's blessed!



A party and a Blessing by the Rev. Father Hackett marked the arrival to Coober Pedy of the largest bulldozer ever in South Australia.

It weighs 50 tons and is powered by a diesel engine which develops 410 fly-wheel horsepower. The blade is eight feet high and 14 feet long.

It's a mammoth Komatsu D355A and is proudly owned by Bob Amorosi, Ted Regan and Mick Marinelli.

They celebrated its arrival with a shindig in the large shed recently acquired by Bob Amorosi, of the South Australian Tractor Co.

The 'dozer was too big to fit in the shed, so it was parked outside, with the blade taking up the whole entrance.

A crowd of 350 turned up for the event.

The 'dozer was christened with champagne by Ted Comacchio while the guests dined on three pigs and a steer roasted on a spit.

Ted's christening speech went like this:

Friends, thank you for giving me the honor of welcoming the biggest machine in Coober Pedy, and South Australia.

This is the symbol of Coober Pedy's progress.

I would like to pay a tribute to the people who show so much confidence in the future of the town.

To them and the performance of the machine, I wish the very best of luck.

During the Blessing, Father Hackett said:

Some may think it strange to call God's blessing on this huge metal object. It is not so much objects, but people that we bless.

So the blessing is for the people involved in the ownership and operation of the bulldozer.

Let us see in this machine a symbol of all the machinery on the opal fields. Let us see it, too, as a work symbol — a sign of the endeavour of the people who serve the Coober Pedy community; the nurses, teachers, barmen, mechanics, shopkeepers, shop assistants and the cooks.

And this was the specially-prepared prayer from Father Hackett:

Lord, send a mighty blessing on this mighty machine.

Protect it and all those who work on it from all harm.

The "monster" of Coober Pedy and its proud owners, from left: Ted Regan, Bob Amorosi (holding daughter, Lucy) and Mick Marinelli.

May those who own it, and those who operate it, enjoy the benefits they hope for.

Send your blessing upon us who are here tonight, and to all those who look to you for help on the opal fields.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

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# MP's: LAUNCH YOURSELVES!

Cont. from P. 1

10,000 tourists went through the area.

A section of the red-tape screed demands: "I will leave the Woomera area when directed."

This means that a miner who has been digging out opal in the prohibited area has to disband his claim, and anybody else can move in and scrape out the opal, after restrictions have been lifted.

Section Five D of the regulations also issues an astounding demand: "I will maintain outward radio silence."

## Document

What happens if, while stuck out in the oasis, he breaks a leg and can't call for help? He can't say anything, because he has signed a lethal document regarding secrecy, and allegiance to his country.

The application forms are supposed to be for the miners, but in effect, they apply to anybody wanting to enter the prohibited area.

The incredible application form rambles on with such bureaucratic stipulations as:

- I will keep such mining area in a clean, tidy and safe condition to the satisfaction of the area administrator, or his authorised representative;

- I will properly fill in open cuts and mines on completing any mining activities or, if the entry permit is withdrawn or cancelled, I will leave the area in a clean condition.

## Declared

All this — and more — despite the fact that the area is legally DECLARED an opal field. Previously, miners had been assured that backfilling would not be enforced apart from big enterprise, unless the shaft was close to the road or causing a danger.

Coober Pedy was established in 1915 and Woomera even-tuated in 1947, which means that mining has been carried out in a prohibited area for 22 years.

There appears to be a little delay in drawing up the new legislation!

## Clauses

Mr. Garland has issued a statement saying that the updated regulations are in the interests of the miners' safety.

But there are clauses which conveniently exonerate the Government from any possible damages claims. They are clauses which have always applied to anybody entering Woomera, but never to an area outside the range.

One miner snorted last week: "All this business about protection for the miner is so much garbage!"

Unless a miner has signed one of the forms, he cannot work four and a half miles south of Coober Pedy, although previously he could go just about anywhere but Mt. Penryn.

## Sensible

Permits were not required in the past to mine south or north, although the areas were prohibited.

What the miner wants is for the Commonwealth and State Governments to get together and come up with a sensible solution for him to dig for opal in peace.

He does care about security, but he objects to departmental bungling.

Hardly any mining has been done in the southern area, but the miners believe there are good chances there now. They want to start a new field without going outside the boundaries of the declared opal mining area.

Black opal has been found in the Mt. Penryn district and they want to exploit the possibilities of finding more.

In the present declared field there are five known diggings where opal has been found.

If the hierarchy relaxed its stringent and unnecessary impositions, the miners would have a much better chance to tap this prospective source.

The miners are not greedy; they are simply asking the Government to be a little logical.

Their present feeling is not unjust.

They would like certain government Members, piloted by Mr. Garland, to launch themselves and their infamous permit papers into eternity — preferably from a Woomera rocket!



Lorraine Grenville, of Melbourne, the miners' friend. She's a gem.

# Nursing staff is dedicated

Cont. from P. 3

When Mr. Rush heard about the hospital plans, he contacted his department, which agreed to submit a tender. Its quote was 8,200 pounds, which was a saving of 5,000 pounds on two other tenders received from private firms.

## Revenue

From 1965 until this year, the hospital staff consisted of two sisters, but the population bulge has meant the future appointment of an additional sister. Next year, there will probably be four.

In those early years, the sisters were all-rounders — treating the sick and doing the cooking, cleaning and laundry duties.

Now the hospital engages two domestics and a secretary.

The staff is paid by the BCA, which is in charge of all medical work. The society takes all revenue from the hospital, and buys equipment on a \$2 for \$1 Government subsidy basis.

In addition to the

female and male wards, a children's ward has been added, as a result of the efforts of the Coober Pedy branch of the Country Women's Association.

Their fund-raising campaign last year set a target of \$500 to \$600, with the intention of a Government subsidy meeting the balance.

But the women really put their shoulder to the wheel, and brought in \$1100, which also helped pay for the children's beds and equipment.

## Saved

It took 4½ years to raise the money for the hospital, and much of it came from holding picture nights in the community hall. Donations from residents also brought in a considerable amount.

The finance for the hospital was raised before the doors actually opened.

Voluntary workers also saved a large slice of the original cost.

Sewerage presented a problem, but a septic tank was included in the builder's contract. The overflow septic water runs into a tank, and is put to

good use by watering young trees and plants that surround the hospital.

Although the hospital is run by the church, religion is not involved. People from all denominations are welcomed.

On Sundays, the hospital is the venue for a couple of Sunday School classes. Although the sisters are not full-time Sunday School teachers, they do help out.

## Appointment

The dedicated nursing staff comprises Sisters Dau, Manning, Watt and Kennaugh. Sister Watt and Sister Kennaugh are new to the hospital, and are taking over from Sister Dau and Sister Manning, who will soon leave for a round-Australia trip.

The staff will be brought up to three by the committee to bud- the appointment of another sister later in the year. never envisaged that so many people would settle in Coober Pedy.

The purchase of a fully-equipped, \$4,500 ambulance has been a big asset. Apart from attending accident scenes, it is used to transport patients to the airport to meet the Flying Doctor's plane.

Ambulance drivers and the hospital rescue squad work "hand in glove", particularly when emergency medical work has to be carried out.

Future plans include new staff accommodation, because at present there are facilities for only two sisters. The cramped conditions of the hospital are largely due to the need for a new out-patients' block to meet the rapidly increasing demands. The finan-

Ward space will be increased slightly, and laundry and domestic amenities will be upgraded. Proper heating and air-conditioning is also envisaged.

The most urgent need is a new out-patients' block to meet the rapidly increasing demands. The finan-

WITH A  
HUFF  
AND A  
PUFF!

LIGHTNING Ridge has had one of its worst-ever dust storms.

Gale-force winds forced many in caravans to fasten down annexes.

People scattered for cover as the howling winds raged through the town. Surprisingly, damage was slight.

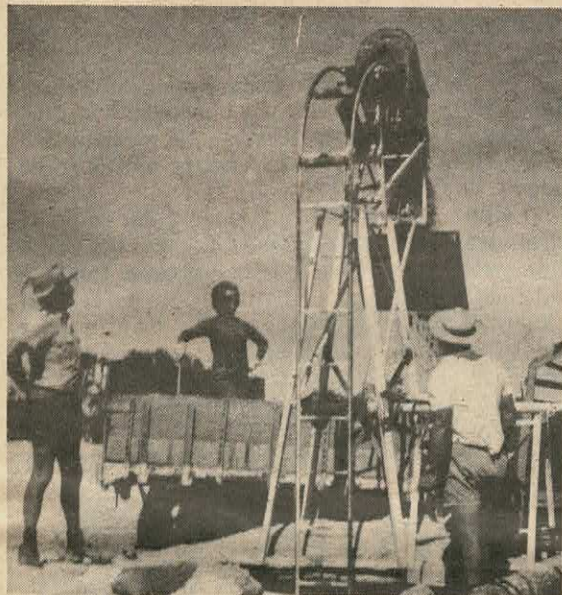
But an old resident described the winds as "nothing, mate; you should have been here when a government official arrived to open a building which had been put up in only one day."

"The caretaker was a Bert Smith. But he didn't have a job long, though, because the winds came a couple of days later and blew the hall away!"



# PUDDLING

## HERE'S HOW IT'S DONE



A truck load of opal clay is delivered to the automatic hoist for the puddling process. . . .



. . . a woman miner pushes dirt through a chute into the puddler. . . .



. . . the tractor operates the puddler. . . .

These pictures tell a simple story . . . it's a routine day in the life of an opal miner at Lightning Ridge.

The miners involved are puddling. It's a long, tedious process which separates the clay from the stones, and then the good opals from the bad stones.

Naturally, there are many more bad stones than good ones; and often, after the truck load has been reduced to a sprinkling, the lot is thrown away.

And so the process goes on, in the hope that some day, somewhere, that glittering opal worth a "mint", will pop up.

There are a lot of expenses for the miner who prefers to puddle. It's now a far cry from the days of horse-puddling, which was done by a horse on a circular path.

Miners now have to have an automatic hoist, tipping truck, puddler, pump and hose and a collection of other items to make the job easier and quicker.

As recent as six years ago, the miners used little trailers to carry their dirt to the puddling tank at the government dam.

A new chum at The Ridge watched the miner making these numerous trips daily. He sank all of his money into a flat-top truck, and others soon followed his lead.

Some went even further by buying tip trucks, eliminating the double-shovelling of opal clay.

From then on, puddling at The Ridge became big business. It is usually carried out twice a day, but this depends on the number of breakdowns.

They are the curse of the miner's life at Lightning Ridge, because he has to be his own mechanic. These self-taught bush mechanics are incredibly competent, and many visiting mechanics shake their heads in amazement.

Puddling dams at The Ridge have been described as a graveyard for cars converted into puddlers. One wonders what the posh owners of some V8 vehicles would think if they saw how their "pride and joy" had finished up.

Unnecessary parts have been removed, and most of the vehicles are sunk deep in silt and dust. An

aborigine has an old, black hearse which runs really well, and its wide running boards make it easy to get to the front of the vehicle to adjust the accelerator.

Cars which fail re-registration tests are easily converted into puddlers without any financial loss.

A shaft runs from the car engine to a shortened heavy-weight differential. One end is cut off and the other is shortened, giving a lower gear ratio, and more power.

A heavy plate is bolted on top of the axle, and to this is attached three or four beaters, which have an action similar to a washing machine.

On the outside — which remains stationary — there is a 1/2th or 1/4 mesh, depending on the size of stones to be found in the area being worked.

A one and a half-in. to two-in. hose is used to carry the water up from the puddling dam, and this flows into the mesh basket. Opal clay is fed into the basket and, when the water also runs into it, the puddler is set in its revolving motion.

Water forced through the mesh washes away the opal clay. All that's left of a full truck load is only nobbies, potch and color, or sundry other stones which have not broken down and been washed away.

After a five-ton load, there would be only about two gallons of tailings to sort through. Most miners take the tailings away for further sorting, as it is easy to miss a valuable stone.

The Aborigines are expert at specking and, with their keen eyes, make a living from what has been missed.

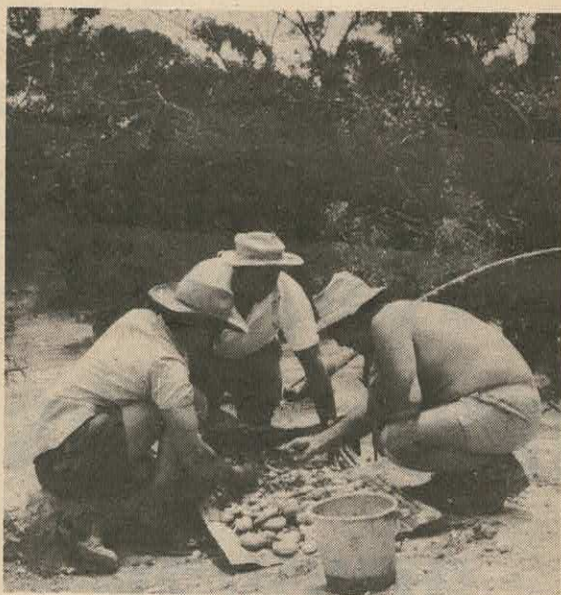
Only a fortnight ago, two miners from the Cantfell area missed a stone, which was found by a local fellow who drove a second-hand car.

This week he drives a new Holden!

## LOOK AT THE RIDGE



. . . these are the tailings — all that's left from the load. . . .



. . . the tailings are sorted, and then . . .



. . . this is the end result which, money-wise, amounts to exactly nothing. But tomorrow they try again.

## Rough ride for Rudi

**LIGHTNING** Ridge miner Rudi Hagge narrowly missed death when he recently plunged 50 feet down a mine shaft.

He will be off work for several weeks, because of serious injuries.

Rudi, an experienced miner, was carrying a bucket over his arm, while climbing down the shaft. The hoist bucket was down the bottom and the motor on the hoist was running.

He does not know how he fell; all he can remember is crashing to the bottom, apparently pulling the pulley rope on the hoist at the same time.

The bucket started up the shaft with Rudi dangling from it. He scrambled out of it at about 18-feet from the top,

and some-how climbed the rest of the ladder.

He was found dazed and shaken at the top and was taken to the Bush Nursing Aid, where he was treated by Sister Wakefield.

The international signal for help in mining accidents is three loud blasts on the horn or three quick rifle shots.



# FESTIVAL FEVER AT THE RIDGE

**OPAL MINERS' Weekly**

Lightning Ridge has celebrated its second Opal Festival with an amazing range of attractions.

It was highlighted by the Opal Queen Ball, at which the festival was opened by Mr. Kelly, MLA.

## Pub with no dogs

Everybody owns a dog in Lightning Ridge. The new hotel owners objected to the dog fights and other canine capers, which nobody else appeared to have noticed. A sign erected on a shelf read: "No dogs allowed."

But the miners disregarded it, shrugging off the order with the excuse that "the dogs couldn't read the sign way up there, anyway!" However, the "dogmatic" owners now have the sign standing on the floor, so there's no excuse for dog or owner.

## BLACK OPAL HITS NEW PEAK

### STOP PRESS

SINCE the front-page story about mining permits was compiled, 300 members of the Coorber Pedy Miners' Union have voted in favor of sending a deputation to the Woomera rocket range.

The union's executive will make a direct attempt to seek the right to mine declared opal fields, free of encumbrances.

They will ask that security permits be required only when they wish to mine outside the declared areas.

THE present price of Lightning Ridge black opal is the highest on record.

The top price received so far is \$1500 for a Glengarry carat sold in America.

But prices vary greatly — from \$1 a carat to "whatever you can get for it."

Tourists buy Lightning Ridge stones from as low as 50c. They are called muggies or tourist stones. The better quality stones go direct to the buyers, which means that the tourists never see the top grade opal.

An air of secrecy surrounds a miner with a good stone; there is always the Taxation Department to consider. There are six resident opal buyers at The Ridge. Numerous fringe buyers trade with each other, or through tourists willing to spend money.

There are six resident opal buyers at The Ridge. Numerous fringe buyers trade with each other, or through tourists willing to spend money.

Dave Caplan, of Japan, has been buying at The Ridge for years, and there are many others from Sydney and Melbourne.

Unlike other opal fields, the miners do not know when visiting buyers will arrive, but the bush telegraph slips into action to pass the word around.

The locals have their chance to make the odd dollar at the hotel on Saturday mornings. Opals are sold or exchanged at such a rate it would not be unusual for one person to buy and sell the same stone twice.

### LIGHTNING HAS A LIBRARY

Lightning Ridge will soon have its own library — and there will be no shortage of books.

There will be about 5,000 publications in a garage-type building which Walgett Shire Council has decided to erect on land adjacent to the memorial hall.

It will be 24 feet by 14 feet. The move for the library started two years ago, when members of a library committee started giving books from their private collections.

There were 12 contestants for the title of Opal Queen, and Mrs. Lydi Pardey, of The Three Mile, was the winner.

Lydi, sponsored by the Lightning Ridge Miners' Association, received a trophy donated by Mrs. Hazel Foster, a cheque, and a pendant stone provided by Mr. Michael Sule.

The stone had been cut and polished by Mr. George Hanson.

The original tiara from the first festival could not be found, and there was a last-minute panic to find another one. It arrived just on time and saved a lot of embarrassment.

The ball continued into the early hours without any of the usual scuffles that people of the district have come to live with.

There was also an Opal Princess section involving several smartly-dressed girls.

One woman commented: "To see them

It's a 'HIC' town

If you didn't drink before you went to Lightning Ridge, you certainly would once you got there.

If you were a light drinker, the chances of becoming an alcoholic, are indeed great.

This is the general feeling at The Ridge, where nobody appears to worry about who gets drunk and where.

There's the case of David and Margaret talking to Margaret and John at the hotel one Saturday night.

The two Margarets were talking incessantly, with John politely listening. David, as "full as the proverbial boot," slid off his chair and under the table.

He lay there undisturbed for two hours before anybody paid him the slightest attention!

## Housing standard improving

THE standard of housing in Lightning Ridge is improving as the town expands.

Each house is completely different, because some builders are using brick. In the past, homes had been built mainly from fibro, and looked little more than shacks.

The standard of the house depends whether the owner has been "on town or not"; one chap got only as far as the concrete blocks, which indicates he struck tough times.

Town blocks are leased by the Western Lands Commission.

Applicants must attend the Lands Court and prove they are sufficiently financial to build a house within 12 months of the lease being granted.

If the applicant defaults, the commission takes the land back.

Some people are living in converted trams, which have been made most comfortable, and caravans are also popular.

The caravan park has become so congested with tourists, that "permanents" are moving into backyards of houses, and even heading into the bush.

Electricity is provided by generators of 12 or 240 volts. Most refrigerators run on gas or kerosene and some washing machines are driven by petrol motors.

However, those living out of town are frowned on by Walgett Shire Council, because they do not pay rates or taxes.

## Well, the hose works anyway

Lightning Ridge would be one of few places which boasts a blushing-pink fire engine.

It's nothing like the smart, red engines seen elsewhere. It's an Army bomb which is always in need of mechanical work.

And it is not known if it has ever reached the scene of a fire under its own steam.

For instance, when Huck's place on The Nobby's was burning, the engine broke down on the way, and was towed by tractor to the fire.

The pumping system does work apparently,

**C. P. Aviation & Hire Car SERVICE**  
congratulate the management of  
**THE OPAL MINERS WEEKLY**  
on publication of its paper.