

Chapter 14 -- Diggers Dead and Dirty

We were expecting our fifth child in 1881 when Ann and I made plans, even after a decade of informal marital fecundity, to retie our matrimonial knot. We had entered our common law marriage in Armidale in 1869,¹ Increasingly engaged in a growing community, we were progressively inclined to regularise our relationship of ten years. Thus in 1881, a dozen years later we took steps to formalised our love by officially tying the knot. This was mainly at the instigation of a certain Rev. P J Mac Guinness pastor of the Glen Innes Catholic Church. He was keen to regularise our union in the eyes of the Church of Rome preceded by an indoctrination course designed to ensure our understanding of the beliefs of 'Mother Church'. If we survived that maybe we could face the ceremony later

Ann and I relished the greening of our love life this romance dance was generating. However some of my long held attitudes were under challenge. Reluctantly we modified our conviction that each and every human being is born a child of God with a divine spark within. We found ourselves being 'educated' by the reverend to consider a creed that restricts such connection with Creator to only 'true' believers, and only baptised ones at that. Exclusively church members alone could be saved. In the face of such divisive dogma even other Christian denominations were disconnected from the Creator of our earth and its single human family. A bridge across Rocky Pond Creek linking the Church of Mother England to town did little according to Catholic doctrine to connect even C of E Christians to humanities common origin the God of Creation. According to Papal dogma only those can be saved in the afterlife who remain 'in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church'.²



First Bridge across Rocky Pond Ck connecting town and Church of England³

Blind faith in such narrow human thinking tends to trammel the birth right of every human and tramples underfoot the dignity of people of any other persuasion. 'None of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, none can have a share in life eternal; ... they will go into the eternal fire.'⁴ I came to understand a little of why the Irish clung so blindly to the Pope. His pronouncements purported to damn to eternal hell fire the heretical Irish church and the Church of England that spawned it. Reward in the next life, for accepting such dogma is a share of promised 'pie in the sky'. Yet on this side of the grave such stubborn self-righteous bloody-minded insistence on such an isolationist point of view provoked extremes of death dealing division as exemplified in Irish history. More to the point and closer to home, colonials used such warped thinking to justify the treatment of our local aborigines. Needless to say I tended to take his instructions with a grain of salt. Anyway the proposed church wedding was a long six months away.

'By their fruits you shall know them'.⁵ And my mother had made sure I was well aware

of the fruits of sectarian division in her homeland. My way of life centred on creation and humans single Creator, a focus that could unite all humans. I found difficulty in replacing a living unity with Papal decrees on who could and could not be saved. Repetition down through the centuries appeared to be just an effort to turn them into articles of faith. Simply a promise of the opportunity to be only adopted by God was offered as reward for Popish faith. And this blessing, according to our instructor, was bestowed only and exclusively according to the rights of the Church of Rome. For the most part, I held my tongue, if only to avoid any dispute that would derail us from this marriage project so dear to Annie's heart. How could he not see that such attitudes maintain an unbridgeable chasm even between other so called Christian sects C of E included. How could our Creator not be moved to judgement with so many souls lost: heretics, pagans, apostates all marching to hell damned to perdition at the desire of a Papal decree.

Such dogma divides society and simultaneously denigrates fellow travellers of any different persuasion. It denies the one and only Creator and flies in the face of any concept of a single human family. Such dogma supplants with blind belief, the fact that all humans are born as God's children. 'Human beings are by nature children of God'.⁶ Why should a universal birthright namely our relationship with Creator God depend on the dictates of an obviously biased decision. I believed in simply directing my faith towards God looking to a world shared by all of God's children.

As my misgivings could not be clarified this side of the grave I kept them to myself. Far be it from me to blab about my beliefs. I mistrusted his reduction of our universal birthright, freely granted to all as children of God. As I saw things, such attitudes were at the heart of deep prejudice, gathering momentum in the colony, a bias that would soon surface as the racist White Australia Policy of the coming century. History screamed 'To hell with heathens, pagans and apostates for they matter much less than we baptised, the adopted ones of God'. Sadly this attitude conveniently forgets that 'If people fail to love and respect others as they do themselves, they are violating the dignity of God's children and at the same time disrespecting God, their Creator and Parent'.⁷



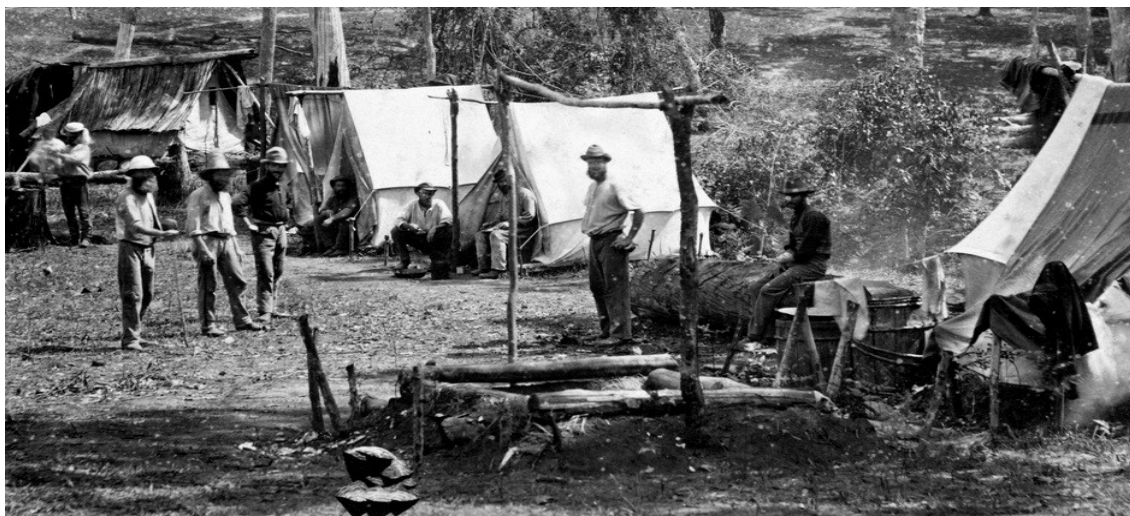
Old Vegetable Ck diggings Emmaville

Life was becoming busy in The Glen, as our growing family became increasingly more connected to our thriving regional community. In the lead up to Federation Glen

Innes was to be promoted by our newly formed municipal council not only as a transport centre on the main north line connecting Sydney and Brisbane but also as the hub of a railway link to the coastal port of Grafton in the East. As the separate states of the colony moved towards forming the nation of Australia our civic leaders even promoted The Glenn as a suitable site for Australia's Federal Capital. This town was ambitious and I found myself at the focus of a number of notable initiatives as will be seen as my story unfolds.

Since the 1872 discovery by Thomas Carlean, of fluvial tin deposits in the soil found in the fields around Vegetable Creek⁸ tin miners began to dig their way to fortune with pick and shovel. As already noted The Creek was renamed Emmaville in 1882 after the wife of the then state Governor Lord Augustus Loftus.⁹ Digging down through a couple of yards of soil overburden was all that was needed to expose ancient stream beds loaded with pebbles of tin ore. The paydirt formed aeons ago when alluvial tin pebbles deposited in ancient riverbeds as concentrated sedimentary ore. Then during millions of years of 'recent' overlying sedimentation the ore in those archaic streams were buried beneath the peneplain soil of the existing flat land surface of the Beardy plains.

Vegetable Creek provided water for the Chinese treasure seekers to cultivate their veggie gardens. Their rather healthy oriental diet included fresh vegetables as an essential component. In the search for underground leads these gardens were often excavated and turned over into what resembled a bombed out war zone. Years later, at the time I was hospitalised in 1915 our newspapers carried censored reports of valorous exploits of Aussie diggers at Gallipoli. Their ability to dig into the rugged slopes below Jonny Turk on the heights above them provided partial respite from the annihilating rigours of that ill fated future invasion at least until the lads left their dugouts to go over the top. Coincidentally it secured for them the name 'Digger' that history awards them.¹⁰



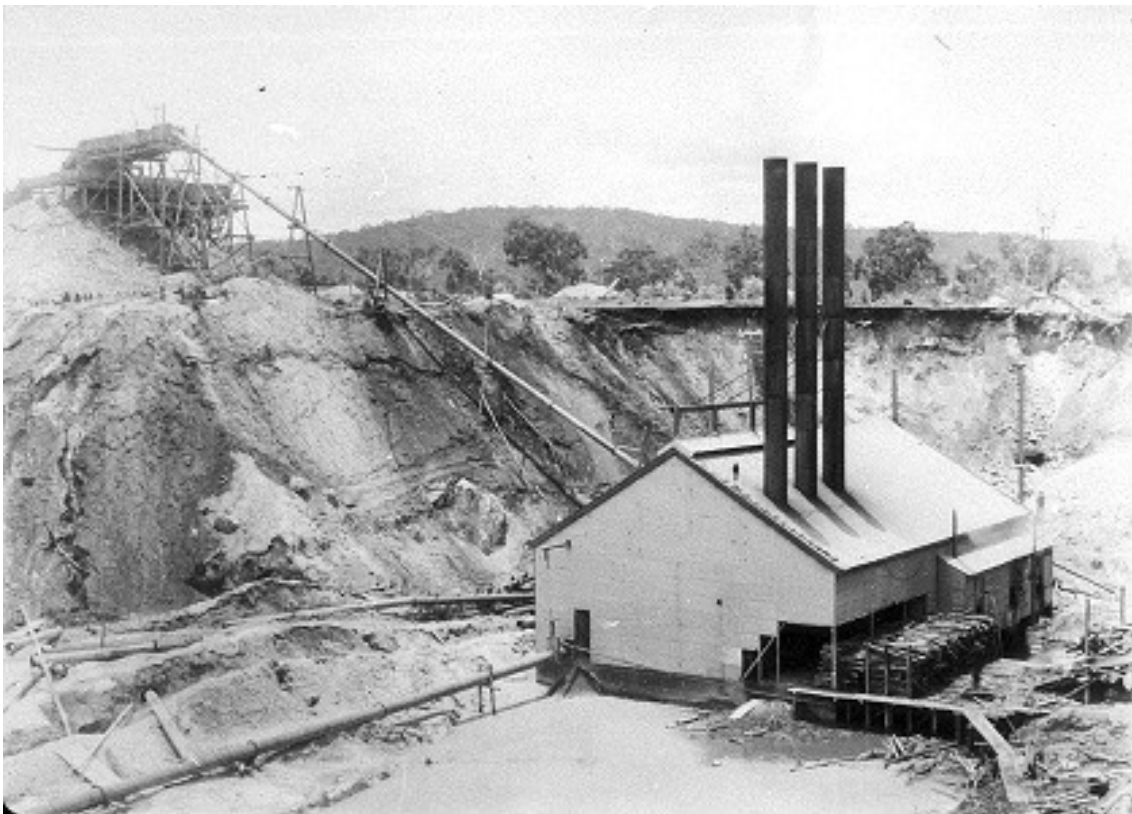
Life on the diggings was very much a male domain with the miners establishing their temporary tent township to suit themselves and their desire to spend as much time as possible working their claims. It really was no place to raise a family. In the early days of the '72 rush Ann and our growing family stayed in Glenn Innes with Dad, Patrick and Rosanna. They were a great help to Ann who delivered our first born, Hugh Albert in the year the rush started followed by Selina a year later. My family sometimes joined me at Skeleton Creek out Bald Nob way where Ann bore two more sons, John James in '76 and Herbert in '79. As you already know, my sister Rosanna, married in 1876 and was living on the Doolan property near Wellingrove. By 1881 when we were arranging to register our common law marriage at the instigation of the RC priest in Glen Innes, our fifth baby, Lavinia was due. At our remarriage the Doolans already had two children of their own John J and William Henry, born 1877 and 1880. When I was working at Emmaville, I would often drop in to visit them on my regular rides between there and Dad's home in Glen Innes.

Inexorably over the half century following the first find in 1872 big money interests

replaced small individual diggings. Mining companies increasingly moved in to work the richer deeper deposits in the area exploiting the land on a massive scale. Their extensive resources enabled the regions extensive deeper underground alluvial tin leads to be excavated from where they deposited aeons ago in ancient streams that then used to drain the region. Eventually erosion covered the ore bodies with layers of sediment and soil. These bigger deeper deposits were to be found at a depth way beyond the resources of individuals or even teams of diggers to remove. Companies went to great expense to remove the millions of years of eroded sedimentary cover. Enormous craters were excavated in the overburden to extract deposited treasure buried in the ancient river beds yards below the surface of the Beardy plains. Never would our region that both settlers and aboriginals lived on and loved be the same.

A rapid river carries all sized rock fragments before it as it tumbles and pummels larger bedrock to smaller and smaller particles. Then as it slows the heavier tin particles first drop out together forming concentrated leads. Lighter sand and muds flow on to drop out of suspension further down the river in quieter water. River transport thus concentrates heavy grains of tin ore due to gravity settling. Heavier tin particles in the alluvial load separated sooner than lighter sand and mud particles.

The minerals originated from molten fluids injected in bedrock now eroded away. Weathering of bedrock dislodged boulders into ancient rivers where rocks were ground down to smaller and smaller particles. Gravity and river transport sorted the particles by weight and size. Depending on their size and the strength of the stream they dropped out of suspension. Following ages of erosion these accumulated rich leads originally formed in ancient streams were being exposed where they lay buried yards below the land surface and the streams we knew.

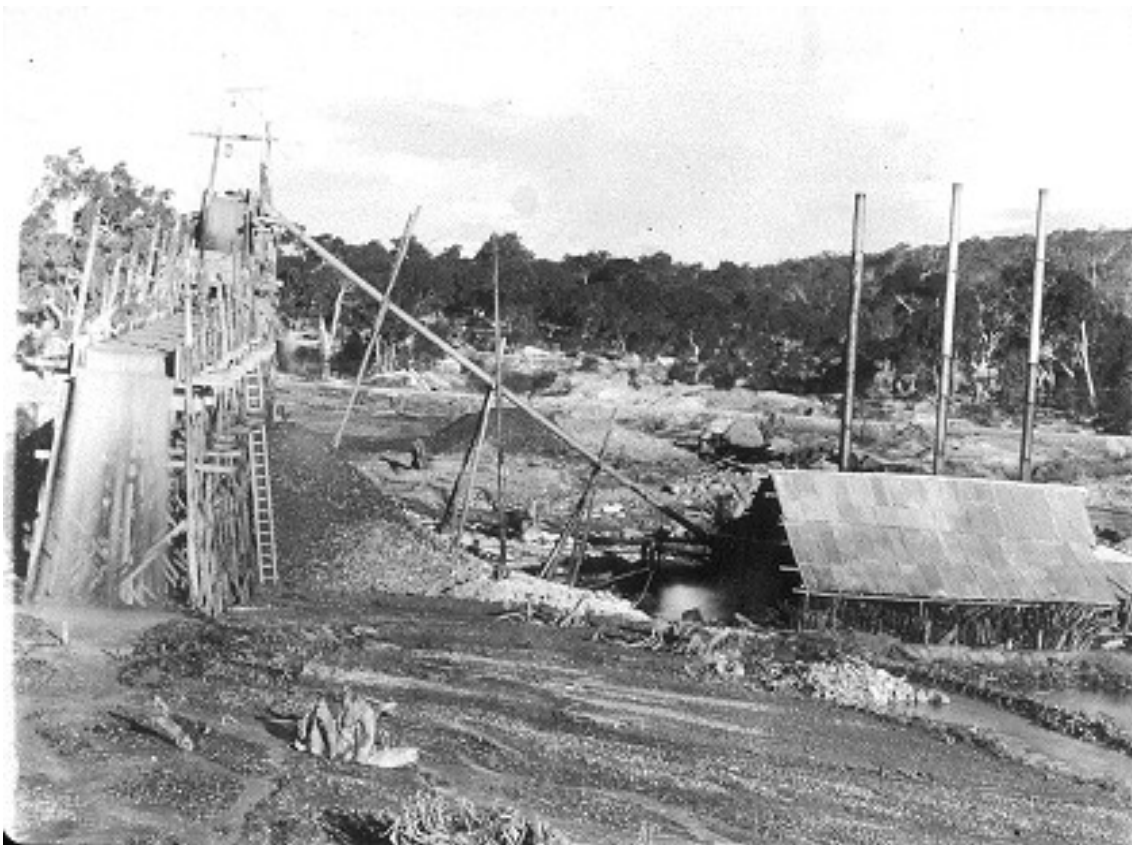


Emmaville Tin Mine "Y" waterhole dredge

Big business created big craters, often as deep as half a footy field is long and sometimes covering an area the size of any race track. With the overburden stripped away, lenses of mineral rich sediments were exposed to massive dredges that flushed heavy minerals from the encasing sandy dross. A dredge as huge as a shearing shed could be floated on rain water pooling in the bottom of such massive cavities. Enormous

quantities of water were used to refine the role of river transport and further concentrate the stannous ore and other precious minerals as the dredge sluiced its way along, following the deep tin leads deposited millions of years before the present.¹¹

Aboriginals had gathered seeds from these abundant grasslands for untold ages until the invaders flocks destroyed them. Early squatters importing sheep and cattle had found wealth on the rich flat plains of the tableland. Wealth was now to be found under the ground. Buried beneath those rich plains were river beds of ancient streams in which fluvial deposits of heavy minerals had accumulated millions of years before. Who would have thought that between Glen Innes and the Queensland border bed rock granites of the tableland had been eroded to grains that had subsequently been concentrated in river lenses of rich ore. Ancient buried rivers transported the eroded bedrock as rubble and sand. Gravity sorted and concentrated the heavy ore particles into sedimentary gravel lenses often around bends in the primordial rivers. Aeons of further erosion of the granite and its associated mineral rich veins produced the flat plains that characterised the the landscape we knew. These buried fossil rivers with their mineral rich treasure were being exposed and exploited even though they lay buried under yards of over burden and topsoil.



Tin mining dredge - Emmaville, NSW

I came to understand that tin and other alluvial minerals came originally from the even more ancient granitic bedrock of our region. Aeons before even the now subsurface ancient rivers drained antediluvian plains. These granites had formed from a liquefied plutonic melt that slowly cooled deep inside the earth. Slow cooling fostered the growth of visibly large massive interlocking crystals that characterise the grainy texture of granites, a texture that gives this rock its name. The last portion of a plutonic melt to solidify can be mineral rich. Such ore-bearing fluids injected into the edges of the now hardening granite and its encasing rock. Mineral-rich fluids penetrated the edge of the granite and its overlying rocks and solidified as highly mineralised intrusions like the pipes at Quinn's at Kingsgate. Minerals precipitated during the final cooling stage of molten fire rocks formed a variety of shapes such as pipes and veins plugs and dykes. I had even fossicked out my

own hardrock deposit, Quinn's Hole, Pipe #1 in the hills on the edge of the escarpment to the east of Glen Innes. But the igneous ore ran out on my lease so I spent most of my working life mining tin.

Treasures buried in these ancient streams were won from the earth by removing the overburden of further aeons of soil formation that had produced the present day plains of the tableland. They in turn were undergoing another cycle of erosion, river transport and deposition that had formed the gold deposits Dad and I panned for at Rocky River back in '52. My mind could scarcely contain the almost unimaginable aeons and aeons and aeons of time for these processes to occur. Fire and water and gravity combined to produce such alluvial riches during uncounted ages.

The tin and treasure we first rush diggers extracted from the buried creeks just below ground level around Emmaville was not mined from solid rock lodes but found as fragmental grains in ancient river sediments close to the surface. Removal of shallow dirt overburden exposed ancient lens shaped clastic sediments containing concentrated fragments of tin ore. The treasured heavier minerals could be washed from the ancient river sands by gravity separation with a strong hose jet of water or the traditional panning and rocker boxes used in alluvial gold mining. These shallow deposits pointed the way to deeper lenses and larger fabulous profits that led to the introduction of dredging. It was a messy operation as the dredges worked their way along the ancient fluvial deposits leaving behind enormous craters in the flat landscape.¹²



Great Britain dredge - Emmaville, NSW ¹³

Big profits as could be expected attracted big business. Large consortiums moved in to take over enormous leases on prime flat farming land. As part proprietor of the Skeleton Creek Mines I worked the deposit as manager.¹⁴ Considerable capital investment was required to work these deeply buried sedimentary lenses of accumulated treasure. Buried deep as they were by aeons of erosion a thick overburden needed to be excavated and removed to reach the ore deposits.

Large tracts of good grazing land were subjected to wholesale degradation. What price we pay for progress either down the coast with forests felled and burnt or in the rich plains of the tableland. Buried ancient river lenses were flushed out from yards below the land surface and their treasure separated from encasing dross. Such mud, sand and other

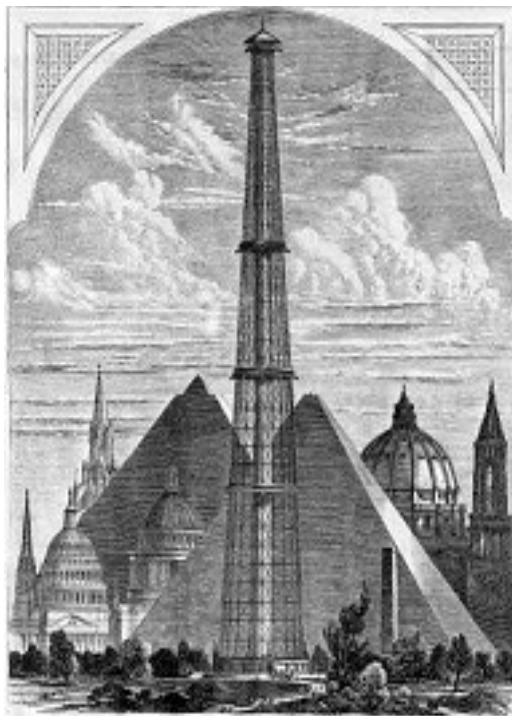
sediments had been deposited together in the waters of prehistoric streams now buried deep under ground. Dredging water often pooled in each crater floating an enormous dredge as it progressed its way along the ancient placer beds. So water used to wash the placer deposits to separate minerals from muddy gravels did not always pollute downstream. Destruction caused by progress was overlooked in a greedy rush for profit.

What price we pay for progress! Could nature ever be restored after the ravages of human desire have abated? Would the land be ever in any sort of working order again ever? Could fertility be restored to a soil so abused? Are not craters on the moon, in their own way, the price of progress from big bang to the present day? And is not war a price we have to pay for peace and prosperity? Maybe human choice that can so mishandle nature, is missing what really matters. What results from our overriding goal of material prosperity? Must we 'put Nature on the rack and extract its secrets'.¹⁵ Could we who devastate nature so wantonly decline to destroy each other with equal abandon? Looking back from my Glen Innes Hospital bed as my death approached in 1915, I see in guarded newspaper despatches from Gallipoli, destruction on a grand scale that mirrors destruction of great nature. 'How terrible it is that humanity may end up destroying itself!'¹⁶ It seems our society needs to retreat from our madly materialistic rush to exploit earth's treasures. Step back indeed before we hasten headlong to our self inflicted destruction. But what was there to gain from the mayhem and destruction of the Dardanelles. Relatives close to the massive misadventure mourned alone their loved ones lost overseas. War could be seen for what it was, a futile waste of happiness and human life.

I return to the boom days of mining in New England They were boom days also for our growing family and the Glen Innes region. My world was like an oyster waiting to be opened to reveal possibly a pearl. Nearing forty years of age in the '80s with a growing family to support, the mining game to me was a thrilling way to make a living despite the dirt and drudgery involved. No time then for thoughts of doom and destruction. As we focused on the wealth that could be gained day by daily toil there was little time then to dwell on the destruction of nature.

As already indicated, my sister Rosanna married John Doolan a Furracabad Farmer¹⁷ in 1876. Festivities were held on his property near the settlement of Wellingrove close to half way between Glen Innes and Emmaville. Her family started the following year with the birth at Wellingrove of John Joseph Doolan followed by William Henry at the start of 1880 Over the years the family grew to six and were favourites of both their grandfather Patrick, uncle Paddy and of course Uncle me. I would often drop in at the Doolan's Wellingrove property. It was always a homely visit and it broke the ride between town, where dad lived with Paddy, and Emmaville or Tingha or Skeleton Creek depending on where the mining took me.

Things were really looking up for our family as we approached our upcoming marriage in 1881. Around the globe 'up' was where many were looking. One building designed to get crowds looking up was the planned icon for the 1874 International Exhibition in Philadelphia USA.¹⁹ This 1000 foot Centennial Tower was never built but it may have provoked the French engineer Eiffel to construct a more elegant tower for the 1889 Paris World Fair²⁰.



Planned Centennial Tower 1874 ¹⁸

Chapter 14 Endnotes

- 1 NSW BDM Death of Hugh Quinn Ref # 13413 /1915 http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/bdm_fh/bdm_msch.html
- 2 Pope Eugene IV Papal bull 1441 Cantate Domino, quoted at, http://wChapter 14 Endnotesww.religioustolerance.org/rcc_salv.htm
- 3 Sommerlad, E. C. & Glen Innes, Council. Jubilee 1922 The land of 'the Beardies' history of Glen Innes district. N.S.W Examiner p 100 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn1652156>
- 4 Wikipedia Pope Eugene IV, Cantate Domino (1441) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extra_Ecclesiam_nulla_salus
- 5 Douay-Rheims Bible Matthew 7:16, <http://biblehub.com/drb/matthew/7.htm>
- 6 Sukyo Mahikari International Journal No 147 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/178786980>
- 7 Ibid SMIJ#125 Okada, Yoshikazu 1974 Holy words = Goseigen p 90 2nd Eng.ed <http://lcn.loc.gov/2001126790>
- 8 Facer, R A, Henley, H F, & GS NSW 2001 *Grafton-Maclean map*. p 41-42 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/39534199>
- 9 Wikipedia, Emmaville NSW, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmaville,_New_South_Wales
- 10 Wikipedia ANZAC slang Digger (soldier/miner), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digger_\(soldier\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digger_(soldier))
- 11 NSW State Library/ANL Emmaville Tin Mining <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemPopLarger.aspx?itemid=390701>
- 12 NSW State Library/ANL Emmaville Tin Mining <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemPopLarger.aspx?itemid=390700>
- 13 NSW SL via ANL Gt Britain dredge Emmaville, <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemPopLarger.aspx?itemid=390702>
- 14 Glen Innes Examiner, L O B History Museum, Hugh Quinn obituary. August 1915
- 15 Falsely attributed to Francis Bacon, <http://www.sirbacon.org/mathewsessay.htm>
- 16 Op Cit Sukyo Mahikari International Journal No 124 p15 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/178786980>
- 17 NSW BDM Doolan Marriage Registration, 4470/1876, http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/bdm_fh/bdm_msch.html
- 18 Wikipedia, Centennial International Exhibition, 1876, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centennial_Exposition
- 19 AT&CJ May 23 1874, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4767850>
- 20 Wikipedia, Eiffel Tower, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eiffel_Tower
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