

## Archibald Sanderson, 1895



### Description

This is a black-and-white photograph of Archibald Sanderson equipped for his trip to Coolgardie, Western Australia, in 1895. It is a studio portrait, with Sanderson dressed in a shirt, bow tie, waistcoat and jacket. He is also wearing what appears to be a pith helmet with an attached net. He has a waterbag on the crossbar of his bike, a puncture repair kit on the back and a package, possibly a swag roll, on the front. The photograph measures 8 cm x 10 cm.

### Educational value

- This asset features one of the many people who travelled to Western Australia from overseas during the gold rush - Archibald Sanderson was born in Victoria in 1870, but grew up in Kent, England; he went to the Western Australian gold fields from New Zealand, where he had worked as a press apprentice; Sanderson joined the brother of a Melbourne friend on a mining claim in Coolgardie but this ended when his partner died of typhoid.
- It indicates there was international interest shown in the Coolgardie gold fields - Sanderson was acting as special correspondent for several New Zealand publications, possibly because of his previous connections there; the news of the discoveries at Coolgardie, dubbed the 'New Eldorado' by the press, made world headlines.
- It portrays a 'gentleman' of the late 19th century who travelled to the gold fields in search of a fortune - Archibald Sanderson was the son of John Sanderson who had extensive pastoral, wool-broking and banking interests in both Australia and England; Archibald had three older brothers, and therefore no immediate prospects in the family business; he cycled to the gold fields with a camera and notebook in 1895 to provide a valuable record of the region at that time; there are many records of other sons of British aristocrats making similar journeys in the hope of securing their futures.



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- It is an example of a digger who left gold mining and succeeded in another career - after his partner died, Sanderson moved to Kalgoorlie but, although the new claim was promising, his father refused to advance him the couple of hundred pounds needed to develop a mine; Sanderson returned to Perth to work as a journalist and later became a lawyer and state politician; he prospered and lived in the hills outside Perth in an area known today as Lesmurdie, after the name of his home there.
- It shows a water container slung below the crossbar of the bicycle - the container appears very small for the journey that Sanderson was about to go on, but was probably only used for the photograph; in reality, travellers would have had to carry large amounts of water (a story is told of one cyclist who was so desperate with thirst that he drank the oil he was carrying for his bicycle); some four years later, much of the Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme would be laid alongside the waterless track used by most travellers.
- It shows a common mode of transport to and within the gold fields for prospectors and miners who did not have the means to buy or feed horses or to pay for other transport - the mass production in the 1880s of the new, modern 'Safety Cycle' with pneumatic tyres benefited prospectors who could ride along the 'camel pads', tracks hardened by camel trains; even though tyres would have punctured frequently, bicycles, unlike horses and camels, needed neither food nor water.

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