

Paddy Hannan, 'Kalgoorlie's Pioneer', 1899



Description

This is a black-and-white photograph of an illuminated presentation showing images of Paddy Hannan, who found gold at Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, in 1893. The presentation includes Paddy Hannan's Miner's Right surrounded by illustrations of Paddy Hannan and life on the gold fields. An inscription on the presentation reads 'Presented to the Municipality of Kalgoorlie By J.W. Fimister Esq J.P. Mayor, 18th September 1899'. The signature of the artist, N H Hawkins, is in the bottom-right corner. The image measures 19 cm x 15 cm.

Educational value

- This asset includes an image of one of Kalgoorlie's pioneers, Paddy Hannan - Hannan is recognised as the first person to find gold in the region in June 1893; Irishmen Tom Flanagan, Dan Shea and Hannan found 3 kg of gold in one day, the equivalent of an average year's wages, at a site originally named Hannan's, close to what was later named Mount Charlotte; despite the wealth they found, Flanagan died far from wealthy in Bendigo in 1900, Shea lived until 1908 but was no wealthier than Flanagan, and Hannan died in Victoria in 1925 in his 80s, having received a pension from the government of £100 in 1904; his grave in Melbourne's General Cemetery was restored by Western Australians.
- It depicts four scenes from Hannan's prospecting days, which contain useful images of the conditions of the early gold fields and the equipment used - Hannan is shown walking through the desert with his swag, water container and prospecting tools, setting up camp, searching for gold using a dry-blowing technique and camping with his tent and billy; Hawkins, the illustrator, was a local architect and amateur artist, and became a Kalgoorlie town councillor; some of his sketches of the gold fields still survive.
- It includes the inscription 'Gold discovered 15th June 1893', an erroneous date that is often reproduced on plaques and souvenirs - various accounts of the actual date of the first discovery give 13 June and 14 June, while Hannan himself mentioned 10 June as the date on which the first gold was found; although the exact day of the first discovery at Kalgoorlie is unclear, Hannan and his partners



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would not have waited long before registering their claim because there were other prospectors in the area.

- It suggests by the heading 'Kalgoorlie's Pioneer' that Paddy Hannan discovered the first gold - this is not necessarily true but the discovery does mark the birth of Kalgoorlie; there are differing accounts of who of the three found the first gold, but it was definitely Hannan who registered it; Hannan applied in Coolgardie for a claim for what was then still included in the Yilgarn Goldfield at a point 30 miles north-east of Coolgardie on the 17 June; with two friends he had picked up more than 70 ounces (about 2 kg) of small gold in two days; within a week of the first find, 750 diggers were scouring the surface of the area for gold; within two weeks there were 1,000.
- It includes a comment about the date of Hannan's Miner's Right - an explanation at the base of the presentation states that 'It will be noticed that the date of the above Miner's Right is subsequent to the discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie (Hannans). This is explained by Mr Hannan who states that the Right held by him when pegging out the reward claim was lost'; the Western Australian Goldfields Act of 1886 required prospectors to hold a current Miner's Right when prospecting so this information is probably included to prevent any accusations of impropriety; a Mines Department Register confirms that both Hannan and Flanagan held current Miner's Rights when the claim was registered on 17 June 1893.
- It includes a Miner's Right, which was introduced to assert the rights of the Crown on the gold fields - according to the Western Australian Goldfields Act of 1886, prospectors were required by law to hold a current Miner's Right, which was issued for a year on payment of £1; WA copied this system of Miner's Rights from Victoria, but thanks to the low cost of their version and poor conditions on the fields, WA did not experience the unrest that occurred in that colony; the Victorian Government had to modify its original licensing system because of an uprising; the high cost and harsh enforcement on Victorian gold fields contributed to the rebellion at the Eureka Stockade in 1854.
- It shows a type of document, the illuminated presentation, popular in the Victorian era - this document was presented to the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council on 18 September 1899; the Miner's Right is mounted as a centrepiece to a display of mining scenes with a background of native plants, miners' implements and Aboriginal weapons; a border of intertwined long-tailed lizards surrounds the Miner's Right and underneath is a picture of a horseman on a rock with the inscription 'Gold discovered 15th June 1893'.
- It shows that by September 1899 the site now known as Kalgoorlie had been declared the Municipality of Kalgoorlie - it had been known as Hannan's, and briefly the 30-Mile before that; the discovery of gold by Hannan, Flanagan and Shea had led to an explosion of population in the area over the ensuing ten years to more than 30,000 people, leading to this upgrade in status; interestingly, the population was almost the same in the year 2000.

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