

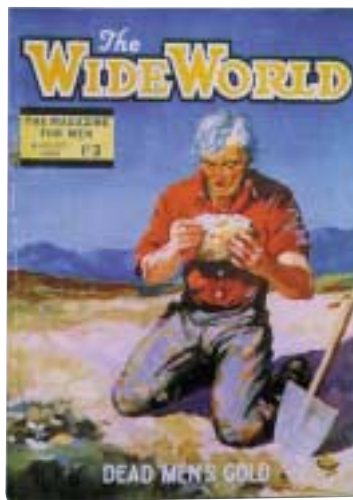
GOLD FROM THE WIDE WORLD

Dick Turner

Man has sought the precious metal gold since the dawn of time, but even more so since the Industrial Revolution. One publication that consistently helped to keep up the spirits of gold seekers was *Wide World* magazine. In its 67 years of existence it contained a regular supply of the true adventures of prospectors in all parts of the world. Thus here is a small selection of stories from that publication, which I hope readers will find of interest.

Australian Gold Fields

Reports from Australian gold fields were documented by John Marshall, Secretary of the Western Australian Gold Diggers Association. A well-known international adventurer, Alexander Macdonald, described his many exploits including, a terrifying battle with aborigines who prevented his access to a water hole. "How we found our water hole", "The horror of thirst" and other such-like articles by these authors were illustrated with real photographs to prove that prospecting in the great Australian outback is just as hazardous as in the frozen north of Alaska. An article "Dead man's gold" in the August 1945 issue, described the



lost gold-reefs and how many prospectors had lost their lives in the Gregory Ranges, Cape York Peninsula, the Palmer River area, the McIlwraith Range, the Innisfail District and other lesser known gold locations.

Lassetter's Reef is one of the great gold legends of Australia. Harry Lassetter discovered the richest ever gold reef, but on a return visit to it was captured by hostile Mayall tribesmen and died in 1930 while in their captivity. The reef remained "lost" until 1951 when it was re-located by Neville Harding - a former Lord Mayor of Sidney who had turned prospector - and his partner B.B. Brown. The find was reported by many newspapers, and *Wide World* in July 1951. Kalgoorie District has been, and is still producing precious metal and modern detectorists are experiencing a bonanza of spectacular finds.

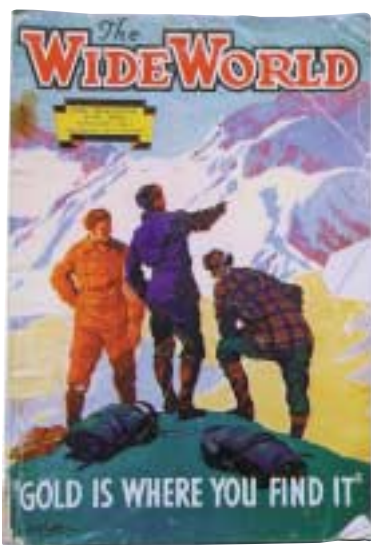
Russia

Although Russia is very secretive about its gold production from the frozen Siberian territory, a very rich gold-strike was reported in the 1960s. Kamchatka Peninsula lies near the Arctic Circle and is one of the great natural wonders of the world. It is a volcanic region, and when the earth is angry its Velikan (Great) geyser spurts water at

212 degrees Fahrenheit to a height of 1000ft. Flowing lava melts ice, and it was on such an occasion that this rich gold field was discovered. A town was soon set up and giant excavators brought in for open cast mining. "The hunt for red riches" described the activities there and was published in *World Wide* in December 1963.

African Gold

There were many stories of gold in Africa, but they were all surpassed by a two part article illustrated with 17 fine and very interesting photographs. R.G. Hall F.R.G.S. spent two years excavating the "forgotten" city of Great Zimbabwe, which lies 250 miles inland from the port of Sofala. The city itself has been dated to 3000 years old, and was re-discovered in the jungle in 1866. Mr. Hall employed 50 Makalanga tribesmen who were all over 6ft tall and of very fine physique. As the ruins were surrounded by jungle, many hazards were encountered during the excavations. Poisonous snakes and wild animals were a problem in daytime. At night it was difficult to sleep with hyenas and jackals making hideous noises, and baboons making raids to steal food and other things. There were many



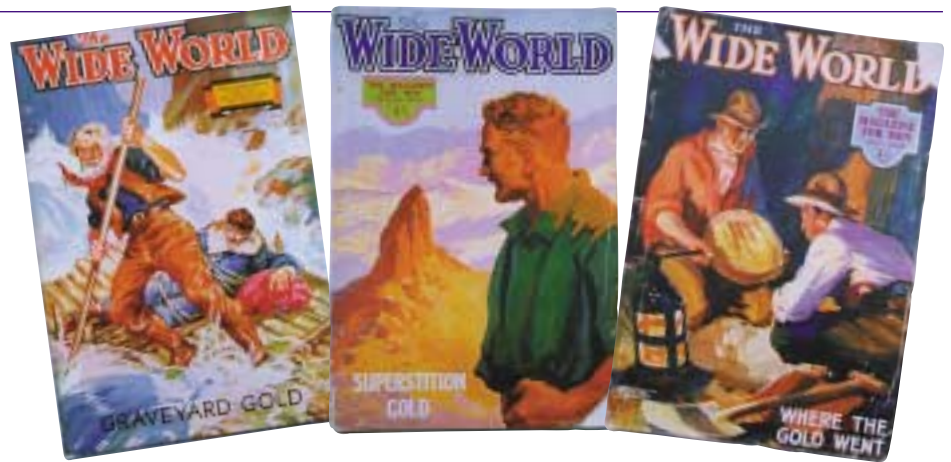
finds of gold ornaments and plates, and crucibles were uncovered still containing traces of precious metals. On large boulders there were scenes of ancient craftsmen fashioning gold, which was smelted in the cliffside caves. The ancient gold road to the port can be traced by ruins of Mapaki (Little Zimbabwe), Rumeni and Chenga. There was no doubt that this was the manufacturing centre for the gold recovered from the legendary "King Solomon's Mines".

A British prospector, J.G. Jacobson, after a period in the African gold fields went "After gold in Guiana", but found many obstructions to his plans. On arrival he was advised to "acclimatise" for three months before entering the jungle due to a yellow fever epidemic. Eventually, he employed 18 men from the Ukas tribe. These consisted of former slaves who had escaped from sugar and other plantations, and preferred the hazards of living in the jungle to slavery.

On arrival in the prospecting area and far from civilization they were plagued by vampire bats. These creatures suck the blood of people while they are asleep, making them weak and unable to work next day. River Maroni, the gold prospecting area, was infested by electric eels. When a person was struck by one of these he was unable to work for several days. Hence this expedition was not a profitable venture. So little gold was recovered that Jacobson showed hardly any profit after paying off the workers and other expenses.

South America

Adelphus Hyatt Verrill (1871-1954) was a professional scientist who led many archaeological, ethnological and treasure hunting expeditions between 1920 and 1953. He was also an accomplished artist who illustrated the Natural History section of the 1896 edition of Webster's International Dictionary. He also wrote over 100 books on varying subjects including treasure hunting. "Secret treasure, hidden riches of the British Isles" is the best-known work to us and he was a regular contributor to *Wide World*. His search for the world's richest gold mine was described in a two-part article under the title "The lost mine". This relates to Tisignal, a location disclosed by natives to the Conquistadors soon after the Spanish conquest of Central America. The Spanish soon discovered that it yielded more gold than any other known mine. A road was built to it, and a great dam and water wheels were erected to operate the mills. A town sprung up about it, a chapel was built,



and a bronze bell was especially imported from Spain. A fort was erected to guard the only road to the mine and great bronze guns were mounted behind the stockade. For many years the Spaniards drew vast fortunes from this mine. Thousands of Indian slaves toiled in it, and the more gold that was produced the harsher became the regime to produce even more gold. Without warning the natives revolted, massacred all the Spaniards, destroyed all the buildings, and concealed the entrance to the mine. They even ripped up the road. By the time the authorities became concerned as to why no gold was being delivered the quick-growing jungle had concealed all traces of the mine. Each search expedition sent to find it again was slaughtered by the natives and thus the mine was "lost". In his fascinating articles published in August and September 1929 issues of *Wide World* the author gives a superb account of his search. This was illustrated with photographs of his exploration in the vast jungle that stretches for hundreds of miles throughout North-West Panama and into Costa Rica.

American South-West

In the American South-West there were many gold locations that by being "lost" became great folk legends. Probably the most famous of such locations was in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona, and is known as the Lost Dutchman Mine. A well-known historian, Oren Arnold, contributed a superb history of it to "Wide World" illustrated with grizzly photographs of the corpses of lost prospectors. These included the skull of Adolf Ruth which had a bullet hole in it resulting from his murder by his partner in a quarrel over the precious stuff. "Superstition gold" was published in a two-part article in the March and April 1933 issues of *Wide World*.

In 1858 a party of 22 prospectors made an extremely rich gold strike in

the Mologon Mountains. They set up camp and recovered gold to the value of \$40,000. As the winter was drawing near, they made their way back to civilization but were attacked by hostile Apaches. When the prospectors failed to return at a pre-arranged time a US Cavalry detachment was dispatched from Fort Bliss to carry out a search. They found two men who were nearly naked and delirious from exposure and lack of food, but the men did have several hundred dollars worth of gold. They were the only survivors of the Apache massacre. One prospector failed to recover from his ordeal and died soon afterwards. However, the other man called Adams survived and was the only person who knew the location of the extremely rich gold reef. In 1883, after the Apaches were subdued, Adams organized another expedition to the gold mine, but the terrain in the intervening years had changed so much that he failed to re-locate the mine. It therefore became another great gold legend, known as the "Lost Adams Diggings".

A rather interesting story was contributed to *Wide World* by a Mrs. Rose Burcham who was a doctor by profession, and her husband was a cattle rancher. When cattle prices fell Mr. Burcham became bankrupt. Grubstaked by his wife's savings he went in search of gold with such satisfactory results that his find became known as Yellow Aster Mine. Rose Burcham gave up her profession to become secretary and director of the mine and gave a most interesting write up under the title "A woman gold miner".

One tragic story included in the magazine is of Johan August Suter. He was a Swiss immigrant, but worked his way from New York across the land to California by which time he had amassed considerable funds. At that time California belonged to Mexico, and its population was only about 30,000 consisting largely of poor Indians. He was able to purchase large

tracts of land very cheaply, including what is now San Francisco, Venecia, Sacramento, Fairfield and Riovista. He built mills, and developed farms and other profitable ventures. He resided in a fort and had a private army to protect him from bandits.

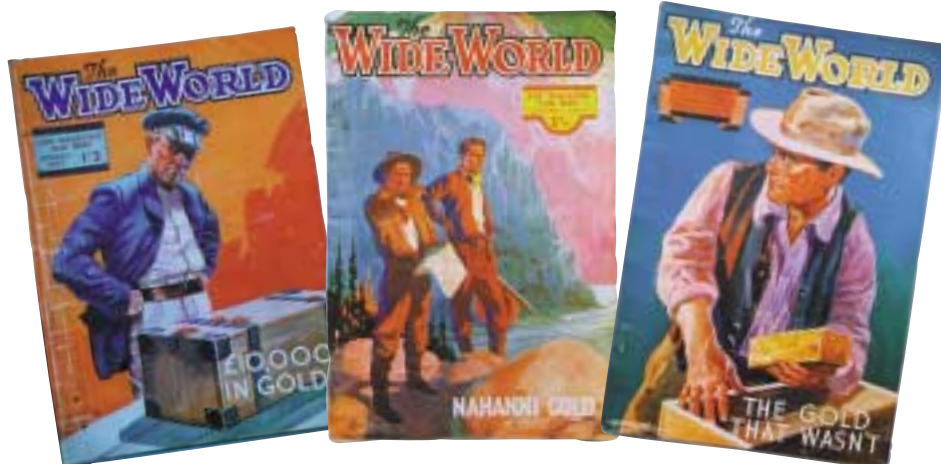
When USA acquired California he changed his name to John A. Sutter. All went well until 24 January 1848 when gold was discovered on one of his properties. Instead of making him even richer it had the opposite effect. All of his soldiers, servants and labourers deserted him to mine the gold, and news spread so fast that the countryside was flooded with incomers. They had complete disregard for private property (ie Sutter's) and staked claims and dug indiscriminately in search for the pay dirt. Sutter went to court to obtain eviction proceedings. Although he won his case, the gold seekers rioted, and burnt down the San Francisco court house and properties belonging to Sutter. Even the judge who gave the verdict had to go into hiding as the angry mob wanted to lynch him!

Sutter was reduced to sleeping under the open sky and had to survive by begging. "The man who owned California" eventually had an apoplectic seizure and died a broken and destitute man on 17 June 1880.

Canada

"Nahanni gold is not for white men. Death comes to all white men who touch it." Such is the translation of a warning repeated by many generations of Nahanni Indians who right up to modern times did not tolerate the intrusion of "palefaces" into their territory. Three brothers, Charles, William and Frank McLeod had lived from their earliest childhood in the far north of Canada at the fringe of Nahanni country, and learned the language and customs of the Nahanni. They eventually established a close bond with the Indians. In this way they learned of the approximate location of gold, but when they requested some natives to guide them to where it was they were refused and reminded of the curse. The friendly natives did not want to be participants in the deaths of their white friends.

However, William and Frank decided to go in search of the gold and met their deaths in the frozen north. Charles, who met with a serious accident prior to the expedition, was hospitalised and this saved his life. The fascinating story was written by C.V. Trench who obtained the facts from Charles McLeod and was a regular contributor



to *Wide World* with stories from that part of the world.

Another Canadian gold story with a curse refers to the gold digging of white prospectors in an Indian graveyard. Octave Lamar and Gus Grimpert in their greed for gold decided to ignore the warnings and dug a mineshaft in the graveyard. The first bad omen soon appeared in the form of an albino wolf (Indians credit albino animals as reincarnations of their ancestors).

Gimpert emptied his rifle trying to kill the animal, but all he achieved was to bring down an avalanche of rocks from above in which he was seriously hurt. Lamar built a raft and, in an attempt to save his partner, sailed it down the treacherous rapids of Bonnet Plume River. Disaster soon struck when the raft capsized and it was a miracle that both men survived the freezing waters after being rescued by natives. The account of this "Graveyard gold" was published in the November 1939 issue of *Wide World*.

Klondike

Wide World commenced publication in 1898 during what was called "the last great gold rush" was taking place at Klondike. Thus, in its very first issue a newsworthy article "A new route to Klondike" was published, supported by magnificent photographs of outstanding quality (considering that both photography and the printing methods of such material was still in its infancy). This was followed up with more spectacular photos in January 1898.

The White Pass route to the gold fields was discovered by Captain William Moore and was open all the year round (unlike the Chilkot Pass which was open only during summer months). This new route started at the foot of the mountains on a small plain of deposits of the River Skaguay and covered an area of about 160 acres. There were music halls, many saloons, and a large number of restaurants

where a good meal could be had for 50 cents. The main thoroughfares were named Bond, Regent and Trail Steets. Paradise Alley, and like all other side streets, were very narrow in order to utilise the available land. Ponies were imported from Oregon and were the main beasts of burden; as many as 3000 were recorded in the autumn of 1897. Each one could carry 200lbs. However, what must be taken into account is that one year's food supply for each prospector came to 1000lbs, plus 500lbs of prospecting equipment, clothes and other domestic necessities. In the first year over 3000 prospectors had gone into the gold fields by this route thus it was a profitable business for the carriers who charged 50 cents per pound of weight.

But it was not only men who braved the hazards of gold mining. Lillian Oliver was a devoted wife whose only ambition was to obtain enough money to support an invalid husband. Her very moving diary of prospecting was documented in a 12-page article "My Klondike mission". Alice Rollins also gave account of her profitable venture into gold mining in "Our Klondike success". Both articles were illustrated with their photos to prove that they been there and done it.

Gold rushes attracted all sorts of people: the adventurers who actually dug for gold, the store and hotel keepers, blacksmiths, porters, doctors and the less savoury get-rich-quick characters who were only too willing to obtain gold the easy way. One such man was named Smith, but soon came to be known as "Soapy" as he was very slippery in all his dealings with the gold seekers. He was behind every scam imaginable in which easy money could be obtained. But like all types of this sort, his reign did not last long - he was killed in a shoot-out. Such was his "fame" that his body was laid out in "state" and admission charged to see his corpse! **TH**