Memory is all we have

- by: *Nicolas Rothwell explores a vanished Australia Would you like to comment on this article? Click here*
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English: A view looking westward of iron ore outcrops on the top of Mount Goldsworthy before mining commenced. Goldsworthy town was established in the middle right and would not visible in this photograph when it was constructed. The original exploration and drilling camp is to the right of the photograph at the foot of the range. Corrected orientation (around May 1964) Author : Philipist

THERE was a town named Goldsworthy. It lay in the deep red ranges of the north Pilbara, near where the fitful watercourses of the De Grey and Coongan rivers meet. Behind these mountains, the long, strait dune-corridors of the Great Sandy Desert begin: snake country, full of bloodwood trees and combustible, lemon-yellow spinifex. But where the peaks reach highest, almost within view of the Indian Ocean's shoreline, unusual geological markers can be seen. Even the most cursory of explorers pushing through this country long ago picked up the telltale signs: many of the outcrops they rode past were jet black, looked like fused magma and gave off a metallic sound when struck by horses' hoofs.

As soon as mineral exploration began in earnest in the far northwest, it became plain that Mt Goldsworthy held the world's richest deposits of ferrous ore: the veins ran deep and they were graded as high as 68 per cent. This decided the landscape's fate. In the 1960s, the Pilbara was opened up to mining; Goldsworthy was the first large-scale project. For two decades, 4000 men and women lived there, in a realm of cyclones, flash floods and blazing summer skies -- and many of them, in their imaginings, seem resident there still.

But Goldsworthy no longer exists. It is not a ghost town, or a ruin or even a post-industrial wasteland. It is an ex-place. Great efforts have been devoted to removing all signs of the past. Indeed, a mere handful of out-of-date maps still mark the spot where the town stood and only old-timers can sense the curve in the iron-ore railroad as it passes Goldsworthy on the way out to the mining centre at Shay Gap. So thorough has this act of disappearing been that across the Pilbara, a region where the working population churns at high speed, the majority of today's residents are quite unaware that a large, vivid township once broke the line of the spinifex on the flood plain of the De Grey.

When I began travelling through this country almost a decade ago, I quickly found that it answered to some need in me: its emptiness, its antiquity, its air of tranquil waiting. Its colours, too: the red rock platforms, the mauve horizons and the sky that radiated chill hostility inside its heat. The Pilbara was precious to me, and because of this it became important to me to seem to know it. Often, as I drove through its backblocks or fell into conversations in roadhouses or survey camps, the people I met would lean forward. "Goldsworthy," they would ask, with an edge in their voice: "Did you ever go there?" And I would search my memory and find next to nothing. Had I seen a sign once? On the highway, near the Pardoo turn-off: "Goldsworthy access -- loose sand and corrugations"?

"Of course," I would answer in the vaguest terms, "I know that country" or "Close by, yes, to Shay Gap" or even, more truthfully, "I've heard about it -- the name comes up every now and then".

So it was with a slight sense of relief, as much as with anticipation, that I drove out one dry season morning with my friend Kelvin McCann, a veteran of Goldsworthy, on a pilgrimage of sorts, and even before we passed Hedland truckstop, now transformed into a BP supermarket, his reminiscences began. He had walked that flat landscape between the port and the saltponds many years ago with Don McLeod, organiser of the first indigenous strikes in the Pilbara. McLeod had even shown him the waterholes where the Aboriginal people hid from the police.

"Those places are still out there," Kelvin said. "It all still seems very raw to me, that past, not like anything one can forget. The more you leave it alone, the more consolidated and stable it becomes."

He told me how he would quarter the landscape during those first years, when he was determined to find every remote waterhole and hideaway, and he would take this obsession with hidden history and lost places to extreme lengths. Once, he pushed his old Land Rover through into Windjana Gorge, where the outlaw Jandamarra had made his last stand, and found his hide-out cave. "I went in, and all the old stuff was still there. I had read all about his exploits in the books of Ion Idriess when I was a boy, I knew the whole story, and there on the cave floor were the 44.40 shells bound up with kangaroo hide, and the blood and wreckage from that time. Of course, it's all been prettified up, now that it's a national park you wouldn't have a clue to what was once there. That's what people love to do with memories: tidy them into an attractive state."

During those first few days, our trip fell into a simple rhythm: we would drive and talk, and camp at nightfall beside rocks or river pools close to the maintenance roads that run beside the iron-ore rail lines, and Kelvin's stories turned more and more to Goldsworthy and the layout and rhythms of the vanished town. Its people came to life, its streetscape and topography seemed to hang before my eyes, and this effect owed a great deal to Kelvin's descriptive technique. He would run on, his voice level, adding fresh clauses to his picture like little, emphatic dabs of paint, refining the verbal landscape before us, rendering it almost unbearably precise. Then the different pieces of his tales would come together,

would support each other, no matter how far-flung and arbitrary they had seemed at the moment of their introduction, until one had the sense of a set of events not just recalled but relived, analysed down to the finest grain of their constituent parts.

He would pause every now and then, as if surprised by what was coming back to him, as he did one morning when we steered our troop-carrier up a rocky slope to the crest of a ridge. Before us was the opening of a small cave that Kelvin used to come to on his free days when he first worked as a driver at the mine. From that point you looked out across the whole country; you could survey the river channel and its twisting line of paperbarks. The hills opposite us had an odd, disquieting regularity: and gradually I realised that they were old spoil dumps, elaborately recontoured to mimic the natural lie of the land, for almost everything about the environs of Goldsworthy had been the subject of costly camouflage, much like the town itself.

"How much effort went into it!" Kelvin shook his head. "All the houses that were easily transportable went to Shay. The others were auctioned off to other mining companies or to pastoralists. They disassembled everything, ripped up the roads, hired an environmental company to cut out all the non-indigenous trees. The stockpiles were even heaped up so they would look like hills and planted with those white-trunked gums, and these days the side-pits we excavated are only visible from the air. I must say it's hard not to regret the old place, now we're so close by. It was over that way, just there, near the radio mast, in that notch in the range."

He pointed, and moved his hand before us, as if stroking the line made by the rock and the sky: "All the streets were named after the rivers of the area: there was Coongan Street, and Pardoo and Shaw, and they were beautiful and green. There were near to 1000 houses, and they were good: three-bedroom fibro and gyprock plaster. We had three kinds, the old ones from the early days, the 1970s models and then the Jackson-Watson houses, replacements for the buildings destroyed by Cyclone Amy, which largely obliterated the town.

"All of them had gardens with paperbarks or coral trees or red gums and lots of bougainvilleas. Water was no problem at all, because of the deep mining, so we had a lush green oval, too, and tall shade trees round the office and the shopping centre, where the Aborigines from the communities nearby would pull up in their convoys of old, clapped-out cars. It was a real oasis.

"Unfortunately, though, the town had been built too close to the mine, so red dust would tend to drift over and stain everything. Later, of course, it changed, when the pit was deep, and that didn't happen any more. Sports was a big deal too: we had tennis courts, floodlit, and we had a very well-maintained bowling green."

"It sounds like paradise," I said. Kelvin gave me a sardonic look. Goldsworthy, which he had not revisited since his departure 20 years ago, had been in his thoughts increasingly in the wake of a reunion at the Ascot Hotel in Perth a few months before. He had gone along with some misgivings, only to find the old town's spirit still magically intact: "There were 400 people there. It was like time had stood still. Everyone's memories were fresh. You talk to anyone from the old days, even people who have moved on in the Pilbara, who have lived for years in other mining towns, and they'll tell you that in their hearts they're still loyal Goldsworthy people. The old GML T-shirts are still handed around like war-time medals. I remember when I first pulled into Hedland, on my way up here, and climbed off my motorbike. A woman asked me where I was headed: I told her I was driving on to Goldsworthy. `Oh, the family company,' she said. I never forgot that."

In fact, Goldsworthy was run by Utah International, a large US mining corporation with extensive further leases in the Pilbara, and a peculiar mid-term strategy. Utah hoped to develop the vast ore bodies known collectively as Area C, and was waiting for a market upturn; during the wait, it kept Goldsworthy running, driving the open pit ever deeper, even while struggling to contain costs and pleading with its workforce for help in this quixotic scheme.

Kelvin was just beginning his long career as an Australian Workers Union organiser: he found himself thrown into the heart of this co-operative arrangement, which was hardly typical of the Pilbara iron ore mines in those days of union strength. During the hardest times at Goldsworthy, mass meetings would be held and workers would put forward their best ideas for saving money. One heavy machinery driver came up with the idea of using the blade tips on graders and bulldozers for longer periods before replacing them: the savings to the company ran into the millions of dollars from this suggestion alone.

"That way of doing things all depended on the managers," said Kelvin, "and they were remarkable men. I look back now and I see Goldsworthy as a kind of university, which prepared me for many things in later life. On paper, the place was under the control of the best engineer in the Pilbara, Derek Miller. He was the Quasimodo who made the mine run: but the show was really in the hands of an old German, Alfred Kober. I studied him for a long while, and I came to the conclusion that he was quietly implementing Albert Speer's late Third Reich philosophy of devolving industrial power back to the shop floor. He was like a grumpy father; he instilled great loyalty in people. Besides, he was a well-known fanatic for high-speed driving and could set records on the Hedland-Goldsworthy run. You can imagine how that impressed us young bucks!

"And then there was the town manager, a wonderful old man named Jack O'Farrell: he was hugely experienced in life, very generous, and fascinated by people's personalities. He'd been an alcoholic and then joined AA, and he treated all the problem drinkers with great tenderness. He was on the railways in Queensland before, and he fought the war in Egypt. You were never short of stories with him. And you had all the other

odd-balls in authority positions: there was the shaggy-haired dentist who had a penchant for marijuana, and who would slip outside in mid-filling for a steadying joint; and Dr Ted, who looked very much like Jack Hawkins in the role of the fraught priest in Zulu, and prescribed salt tablets as the remedy for everything."

"It's amazing, really," I said, "with such a rich social fabric, that you had any time left for mining at all."

"It's true, there was a lot of life and adventure in those days," Kelvin said, and began piloting us across the flat, over half-eroded station tracks, past the remains of old fence-lines, towards the De Grey. "But that's my point. Things were different then in mining towns, and very different in Goldsworthy. Even when we were living through it, we knew that kind of life would never come again. It wasn't just being young, it was more that Goldsworthy was an ideal: it was the remotest mine, the richest ore. We almost felt that we were heroes, living a magic life, especially when we came out here."

He slipped the vehicle back into four-wheel drive: down we plunged, tilted forward, into a sandy hairpin, and out on to a wide stone ledge above the river bank.

"Here?"

"Mulyie Pool," he said, with a little note of reverence. "This was a very important place, in the mining times. This is the side of the inland outsiders never know. Look: a green cave beneath the sun, broad, deep waterholes. They reach on, up the De Grey, for kilometres at a stretch. In fact, this is unique in all the Pilbara, this wide, sandy, riverbed world. There's everything here: emus, pigs, goats, pythons, hundreds of them. It's their world: you expect to see them here."

I gazed out, obediently, scanning the far bank, then watching the water flies on the river's surface, and the patterns the breeze was making, until I felt myself slip into one of those bush reveries, when words, thoughts, sights, pour freely in. I listened to the sounds from the river, and to Kelvin's voice, until his stories fused with the light and the play of the leaves and shadows. Long before, he said, when the country was being opened up, Afghan cameleers had travelled the watercourses like the De Grey or Shaw rivers, that ran from the coastline in towards Nullagine and Marble Bar, and they had even hit on their own terminology for the different landscapes they traversed. Kelvin had been following up their paths for years, and had found an Afghan rock road, cut straight through the peaks behind Roebourne. The cameleers knew the Hamersley Ranges, which are dissected by dark, narrow gorge systems, as "the Underworld", while the plains round the Chichesters, where Millstream park's boundaries run today, were "Middle Earth" and the landscape closer to the sea, where we were, was "the Low Land".

"And do you feel them," I asked, "the Afghans, in the country, when you're driving round?"

"The country's full of presences, of course," Kelvin said softly. "Everywhere you turn. The spot that looks most empty is heaviest in memories -- memories clinging on."

"It's pretty quiet in here now," I said.

"Quiet now, but in the mining times this place would have been full. The whole bank was full of vehicles, and families camping down that end, and there'd be mad drivers careering about across the bank. Up this way, though, it was a different zone. This was where you'd come for romance. The venturesome women, they were all here. I remember an aerobics instructor, from Hedland" -- his voice became distinctly appreciative -- "I used to come out to the river with her, for a while, but eventually we lost touch, of course. Life out here was exactly like that: scenes from a movie, no beginnings, no real endings, just fade-outs."

Soon the sun sank and cold evening came: around the fire, our picture of Goldsworthy, like some old photographic negative, took on ever greater definition. I felt almost as if my listening was some vital part of the whole exercise, and by my presence I was helping Kelvin reach into and frame his recollections. There was a common flavour to the stories that he told me in those night-time hours: they would be full of life's immediacy and jump, yet backlit by the sadness of his retrospect. Things he had not glimpsed seemed plain now; and patterns that meant everything to him when they were lived out were all but gone. His union days, the struggles at Robe River, the changes of his later years: he touched on them all, but he was drawn back repeatedly to Goldsworthy, the town, its tribes, their habits and affiliations, as if he had become an anthropologist of his own experiences and wished to reach into the hidden wellsprings of his restlessness.

And the place did submit to this kind of classifying operation, much as if there really had been clan groups or subsections in the workforce, and I found myself half-wondering if the elaborate divisions of desert Aboriginal society were triggered in the first place by some need for differentiation against the landscape's relentless backdrop. At Goldsworthy, where labour was regimented, leisure had been the vital indicator of type: there were river people at the mine, and ocean people, too, and the ocean crowd had special needs and inclinations, so much so that the mining company had graded them a back road out to Cape Keraudren and built a dedicated boat ramp for their cabin cruisers. They could sail out from there to Bedout Island and dive into the clear water and pick up battalions of large, unresisting crayfish.

The boat people tended to take their wives and families on these weekend trips, and fill vast freezers full of marine plunder, which was transported back to town and divided among friends. Or if the journeys out were all-male affairs, they involved extreme drinking: the Keraudren

road was littered with crash sites where boat-trailers had been tipped over and wrecked. But for the river people, the totemic transportation object was the four-wheel drive, and a crucial day in the history of Goldsworthy dawned when the first Honda Odyssey was brought out to the mine. This was a light, low-slung vehicle, a kind of distant cousin of the go-kart, which could hurtle at high speed up near-vertical sandy banks, or zip and twist between the paperbarks, and during the brief space of years that the Odyssey remained in production, the sand country of the De Grey was alive each weekend with the sound of its engines hurtling here and there.

Movement, velocity, escape: this was a shared obsession for many at the mine. The freedom to move, the sense that one could elude the landscape's still monotony: these became goals in themselves. One would drive out not just to go to Hedland, but for the sheer pleasure of momentum. This particular appetite was strong in Kelvin, who regarded the mine's vehicle repair workshops, where the giant HaulPak trucks were maintained, as a holy shrine to high-speed transport. Distance served only as a challenge to him: an open road almost demanded acceleration to an engine's limits, and as a consequence, many of his most striking Pilbara exploits involved chases, highway crashes or long journeys undertaken at a whim.

One of these stood out for its neat combining of disparate themes as much as for its tone of recklessness. He had come into possession of an early-model Commodore, a vehicle more spaceship than sedan: it had seats of soft velour and was the first Australian-made car with push-button controls. Its presence in the Pilbara naturally spurred thoughts of transcontinental driving, so one morning Kelvin set off from Goldsworthy bound for Adelaide, down the back dirt tracks through Marble Bar and Nullagine and onwards to the goldfields on the inland road, which was still in those days a rough gravel ride.

His first stop came only at Kalgoorlie. He parked in Hannan Street: eyes turned to gaze at the Commodore, which was now suspended between states of being, a smooth-lined cruiser, covered in thick red mud and dust. There was a little throng clustered around a stand opposite the main hotel. He wandered over. There was Albert Facey, by then a man of great age, seated behind a desk with his daughter alongside him, selling copies of his masterpiece, A Fortunate Life, which had only just appeared in print.

"I bought the book, of course," Kelvin said. "I would read anything that I could get my hands on in those days: I had it signed by him. But old Facey barely even knew he'd written a book by then: his hand was trembling as it moved across the page."

Onwards the Commodore plunged, across the Nullarbor. Kelvin drove at 200km/h, as was customary in those days, "pissed as a cricket" and reading his way at the wheel through A Fortunate Life, which seized hold of him. He turned the last page just as he was pulling into Ceduna, the little town that marks the approach of South Australian civilisation. His return trip had a slightly less literary flavour. He drove the whole

journey in a single hit, very much under the influence of various savage forms of alcohol, until he drew near to Nullagine: then the car began to vibrate and shudder, just where the track crosses bands of sharp, protruding basalt.

He stopped outside the Conglomerate Hotel, his body shaking, his mind quite blurred by days of motion. It was sunset. An Aboriginal woman was leaning against the doorway. She beckoned Kelvin with her finger.

"Do you want a f--k?"

He gazed back, scarcely able to form a word. "Well, you might as well," she drawled, and pointed at the Commodore. "You're not going anywhere in that thing!"

Kelvin glanced behind him. The car had been so systematically shaken and pulverised that its lines had altered. A flow of blackened, oily liquid was pouring from below the radiator; the shadow of its drooping transmission loomed between the wheels. His mind filled with bleak thoughts about the distance that still separated him from the nearest service centre. He went into the saloon: it was empty except for an enormous barman, heavily tattooed. Might there be a possibility of stop-gap repairs, Kelvin wondered. "But of course," said the barman. "I'm a qualified mechanic. Just bring the car round to the back entrance. I always keep my oxy torches beside the drinks refrigerators, right here."

I slept uneasily that night, pursued by dreams of high-speed chases involving Afghan cameleers. When morning came, I suggested, tentatively, that we might, since we were so close, think of taking a look at Goldsworthy itself.

"Maybe," said Kelvin, sighing heavily. "Of course, that's really why we're here: to see the old place. But it's just an old mining town, you know. Not even that. Don't get your hopes up."

And we set off. Kelvin was quiet. "When were you last here?" I asked him, after some while, to break the tension.

"I haven't been here for 20 years," he said: "I never came back. I came nearby, on union business, to Shay: but never here. I see it all still: why would I need to? I suppose I'm about to findout."

Then, abruptly, even as he was speaking, the feel of the landscape around us changed. There had been no shift in the texture of the bush, but I knew. We had reached Goldsworthy, or where it once was: that, there, must be the water tank where the men played two-up on the Marble Bar Road; there was the entrance driveway, with its tall line of trees, which Kelvin had described to me with such pride a day or two before.

"That's it," he breathed. "De Grey Avenue, right there, that's where they used to start off the Black Rock Stakes, and we'd hang up a banner stretching all the length of the avenue. You'd have the crews of competitors setting off into the night-time on the way to Hedland, and the street would be full of men and women cheering and waving their torches in the dark."

"The Black Rock Stakes: you mean that odd relay race they run each year from Whim Creek to Hedland?"

"Don't you know anything? It began here, as a race from Goldsworthy. It was a Goldsworthy tradition. With teams of miners pushing a barrow of Goldsworthy ore. Of course, now it's gone elsewhere and it's become famous: there's a song about it on that John Williamson CD Mallee Boy and sometimes they even cover the start on the local TV news."

We pushed our way through the scrub, and the farther we went the more cut-up the avenue became, until it turned into a set of ditches, scars and piled-up rocks. This had been deliberately done. Under the terms of its lease, the mining company was obliged not just to remove all Goldsworthy's infrastructure, but to tilt the landscape against any simple recollection of the past. The street grid of the town, accordingly, had been planted with elegant acacia saplings, which were now in bright yellow flower, with the anomalous result that, all through the winter months, Goldsworthy's ghost stood clearly out, delineated by an arboreal colour code.

Kelvin began following these sapling lines. "See?" he said. "Over there: that was the post office, the real centre of everything. The women would sit there together and gossip, and if someone was having an affair, they'd hiss at him when he came up. Now we're just near where the shops and the mine office used to be. In front was the single men's quarters, up on stilts. And ahead, yes, this must be the oval." A sea of lemony grass as high as the windows of the troop-carrier stretched in front of us. "It hasn't been destroyed, at least. And that was the pub, and shopping centre, and over there, that line of red boulders, that was the main mess. In the evenings, it became the heart of town. Everyone went there: the pit workers, their families. There would be a smorgasbord on weekends, all seafood. It was really something."

I listened to him for some minutes with a distanced sensation and imagined how I might react, if I were ever able to inspect some landscape from my own vanished years for, like Kelvin, I have always feared the danger of return, and preferred to linger in the climate of memory. We walked about the emptiness; I had a mounting sense of my trespass in his world.

"Do you want to go up?" he asked, then, pointing. His eyes were fixed on the bare rock-face in front of us. "It's up there, where you can see that track: that's the way in to the pit."

"But aren't all mining pits pretty much the same?" I asked a bit too casually.

"Not at all: of course not. This one's special. It's not just that this was the deepest hole in the west, or even that it was the first great iron venture: this was about people."

"It would be an act of homage to go up?"

"That kind of thing."

Almost at once we came to a high, locked gate, and a set of fearsome warning signs: "Abandoned mine", "Keep out", "Access prohibited".

"Well, that's it, then," I said.

"Not at all. That's just for passers-by. Don't worry, there's a way round. We'll find it. Mining engineers can't help themselves, they always leave a side door open to get back in to their treasure chest. There: see those track marks between the trees."

Soon we were following a fence of razor wire: it led upwards, along a steep incline, out to a no-man's-land of purple rock. A few more steps, and the land fell away. Before us was only space, wind and light: the dazzle of the sun on a stretch of water far below. The walls of the open cut were black and purple, broken by neat, stepped banks. Opposite, the green texture of the Pilbara bush resumed and reached off to a low, smoke-stained horizon. There were little flecks of shadow, beneath us, circling in the air: they were eagles, aloft on thermals, high above the lake.

"There she is," Kelvin said, in a gentle voice. "But you can't really see her now. The water's come up high. The pit goes down, much deeper: a good 250m more. When we were at the lowest level, on the pit floor, it would be like night-time there: we'd look up, and see nothing but a little ring of light, far above."

"And it was like a canyon, always cold?"

"Not at all. One time, when the company and the union reps pulled the HaulPak drivers off their shift, people were almost passing out, the temperature down at the bottom had touched 56C. I used to love working down there, though. We would dislodge the rubble after blasting by driving the dozers at full speed against the pit wall. Those machines tended not to last much longer than three months before they gave up the ghost."

He turned away after a few more moments, and walked off. I let him go. I felt that silence that comes over places where men have been, and are no more: you tune yourself, in vain, to what they might have imagined, or thought, your mind empties, scale and distance force themselves upon you until you almost seem to sense the progress of the earth through space. I listened to the breeze rising and falling for several minutes; we joined up again.

"Being here again, after so long," Kelvin said, "reminds me of the time when I was a boy, and I went with my father to see the air base in country Victoria where he trained for World War II. He took us round, but it had all been dismantled; there were just the concrete foundations and emptiness, but it meant a great deal to him, and now I look back on it, it was as though the effacement had deepened the effect: the past confessed itself. The symmetry between the two events is very striking."

He smiled, and shook his head: "This was my youth, that pit. Even if I never really felt like a fair-dinkum, hard-rock miner, all the time I was here at Goldsworthy, when push came to shove that's what I was: and looking at it now, I actually feel very much a part of that pit. I know all the nuances of it: its textures, the grades of ore. I may have liked to think I was a little different from the others, the way I went running around the bush by myself in my spare time, looking through all the ranges and the river valleys and the station country, but in the end I wasn't, and it was really here that was the centre of my world."

WE made our way back to the Toyota, and drove on, Kelvin still telling me various striking Goldsworthy tales, in a mazy progression, each called forth, in a way reminiscent of Aboriginal narratives, by some feature of the mine-site's landscape: the charms of the old roadhouse, and its sophisticated ice machines, that drew all the tourists travelling up and down the coastal highway to Broome; the tale of the dedicated airconditioning plant and how it was destroyed one night when a miner drove his truck clean into it; the saga of the special block of cyclone-proof houses built to a NASA design, with a vacuum flushing system through which, with predictably chaotic consequences, one could easily hear each word the neighbours said.

But one of his stories above all stayed with me; it seemed to stand for all the grace and life that had been at Goldsworthy and were now gone. It was the habit of the teenagers in the town to amuse themselves on weekends by driving at speed up the sharp-curved mine access road, which

offered the only bitumen surface within easy reach, and one Saturday night a group of them had set off in a V8 panel van to practise revving up and down the slope. It was a familiar, noisy ritual, but this time the young driver failed to make the curve: the car turned over, the passengers were flung out. One of them was a young girl named Anna Ferntorp, an apprentice jockey who had only just graduated from school, and was back in the Pilbara with her parents for a short holiday.

Anna was the loveliest girl who had ever spent time at Goldsworthy, she was so beautiful that wherever she went she left a strange calm of happiness. Her father, Carl, who was of Swedish background, ran the warehouse, and was engaged in a constant struggle there to balance the stocks, but it was an ineffectual struggle: his supplies would be routinely plundered by miners prone to absconding with whole cartons of CRC lubricant or Aerogard.

When the first rescuers arrived at the crash scene that night, they saw Anna lying prone on the ground, pinned under the front of the overturned car. A young man rushed up and lifted up the vehicle for a split second, single-handed. It must have been one of those moments when people are given extraordinary strength. Anna was pulled away, barely breathing. Talk of the accident had already begun to spread through the town. Kelvin went around to the Ferntorp house: "I found the father. I told him his daughter was not well, and he should come at once. We got to the medical centre. Nature was already taking its course. The father was magnificent: I'd always felt he was an angelic, rather insubstantial kind of man, but he was transformed that evening into a giant of dignity. He cradled her in his arms, he held her, he spoke to her, softly, he was saying to her, `You aren't well, my darling.' He was bent over, whispering, hugging her, not scaring her, but allowing her to go gentle into the night. I drew back. The child died. With great restraint, the father kissed her again, and stepped away, the peak of grief and dignity, thanked everyone at the medical centre, and went home.

"It was a dark moment for Goldsworthy: it stopped the town for days. In many ways, it was the saddest of the many things I saw there. And I'm conscious, even as I tell you this story, that things pass away, and memory is all we have. It's all we have to bring them back; that no one speaks her name any more, and I'm describing to you a death that took place in a town that's nowhere, on a mine road that no longer exists."

The Mt Goldsworthy Mine (Goldsworthy) is a mine in north Western Australia, Australia situated about 1340km north-northeast of Perth (show me). The Mt Goldsworthy Mine (Goldsworthy) is at an elevation of approximately -1m above sea level.

The Mt Goldsworthy Mine (Goldsworthy) is (or was) a iron ore mine. Do you know what else was or is being mined at the Mt Goldsworthy

Mine (Goldsworthy)? If you do, why not contribute your knowledge by clicking here.

The nearest populated place is the village of Marble Bar which is 93km away with a population of around 240 (show me a map with Mt Goldsworthy Mine (Goldsworthy) and Marble Bar).

The nearest sealed road to Mt Goldsworthy Mine (Goldsworthy) is the Great Northern Highway (8.51km away).

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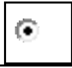

Goldsworthy, Western Australia

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Goldsworthy
Western Australia

1964 photograph showing iron ore outcrops on the top of Mount Goldsworthy before mining commenced

Established:	1965
Elevation:	46 m (151 ft)
Location:	• 96 km (60 mi) E of Port Hedland • 1340 km (833 mi) NNE of Perth
LGA:	Shire of East Pilbara
State electorate:	Pilbara
Federal Division:	Durack

Goldsworthy (named after the geographical feature **Mount Goldsworthy**) is a former mining town in Western Australia east of Port Hedland and located in the Shire of East Pilbara. It was the first[1] iron ore mine in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia.

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[edit] Early discoveries

The explorer Francis Thomas Gregory reported seeing iron ore in the region during his Pilbara explorations in late 1861[2] and the Government Geologist H.P. Woodward confirmed the discovery of iron ore there in 1890.[3] In 1919 Government Geologist Gibb Maitland confirmed these deposits but at the time mining them was not an economically viable proposition.[2]

In 1938 Government surveyors, Finucane and Telford, surveyed Mount Goldsworthy and reported the iron content of the ore at 65.66% with estimated reserves of more than 6,000,000 tons.[2] In the lead up to the Second World War, due to the classification of iron as a strategic material the Commonwealth of Australia placed an embargo on the export of ore. The export embargo was lifted in December 1960 and competition to develop the mine commenced in earnest with the government intending to issue an export license for ore mined at the site.

Frank Thompson Jr., owner of Pardoo Station had established wells, windmills and paddocks in the area and also pegged mining leases there as they were on the southern end of the station, but he allowed these leases to lapse because of this embargo.

The granting of the export license did not go without controversy. Ernie Mitchell, Chairman of Directors of an indigenous corporation known as the Pindan Group, called for an iron ore export licence to be issued to his organisation. Mitchell argued in a pamphlet issued in the early 1960s that:[4]

The granting of an export licence [for iron ore from Mount Goldsworthy] to us, the only successful self-contained Aboriginal group in Australia, would go a long way towards silencing the many critics of Australia's policy towards the original Australians.

Furthermore: We do not ask for an export licence on terms different from those that would be applied to other persons or groups. We do ask that the following facts be considered:

1. We are lifetime residents of the district.
2. We have the mining skills, and the workforce necessary to handle the project.
3. We are familiar with the problems that may arise, and have experience of solving such problems in recent years. We have been basically responsible for producing many thousands of tons of valuable minerals.
4. We can make arrangements equivalent to those of any other sound business concern, and we have a pool of labour, resident in the district, and accustomed to working in the climactic and other arduous conditions of the Mount Goldsworthy area.
5. We are aware, as all Australians should be, that our country's policy in New Guinea towards the natives, and in Australia towards us, has been vigorously attacked in the councils of the United Nations Organisation ... We feel to grant us, the Aboriginal people of the Pindan Group, an iron ore export licence, would go a long way towards convincing such critics of our Government's sincerity and goodwill towards us, and would be a major contribution to the realisation of our plans to raise our standards to the level of our white fellow Australians by enterprise and hard work. We do not seek charity.

[edit] Early development of the mine

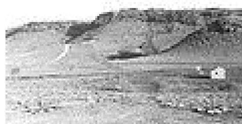
In February 1962, three international mining companies: Consolidated Goldfields (Aust) Pty Ltd of Sydney, Cyprus Mines Corporation of Los Angeles and Utah Mining Company of San Francisco formed **Mount Goldsworthy Mining Associates** (GML). The consortium was granted an export licence in early 1963 to ship 4 million tonnes of iron ore per year from a port to be built at Finucane Island at Port Hedland, 100 km west.

The consortium signed a contract with Japanese steel mills in February 1965 with a stipulation that the first shipment of ore had to me made within 15 months.

Construction of the port and town commenced in February 1965 and the first rail-delivery of iron ore was made to Finucane Island on 1 December 1965, and the first of 24,900 tonnes of ore was loaded at Finucane island onto the *Harvey S. Mudd* on was 26 June 1966.[5]

700 people lived at Goldsworthy at its peak. The town was abandoned when the iron ore deposit was depleted and the mine it served closed in 1994.[*citation needed*] Upon closure, all buildings were removed, all vegetation not indigenous to the local area was burnt and the roads torn up. This was done in accordance with the government's policy of regrowth to avoid the occurrence of ghost towns.

Today, very little remains on the site to indicate that the town ever existed. The pit that was the mine still exists, but is flooded. The railway to other mines passes nearby, and there is a (solar powered) radio repeater site to service the railway. The street layout can still be seen from the air.

- 

  Mount Goldsworthy from the GML exploration camp - Christmas 1963

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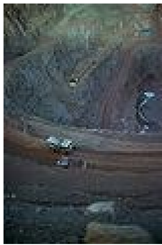
  Original exploration camp. Note the addition of "Dongas" to accommodate extra staff during the "proving of reserves stage" in 1964

- 

  The pit looking eastwards in 1978

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  The abandoned pit at Mount Goldsworthy in 2008.

[edit] References

1. ^ Schubert, Leslie A.(1994), *Wiping Out the Tracks - The Northern Odyssey*: A Family Biography & Social Commentary, ISBN 0 953 57501 6
2. ^ a b c Hardie, J 1981: NOR'WESTERS of the Pilbara breed, Shire of Port Hedland, ISBN 0 9594155 0 5, P235
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4. ^ INDIGENOUS ACCUMULATION AND THE QUESTION OF LAND IN THE KIMBERLEY REGION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA: PRE 1968-1975 by: Tony Smith, University of Western Sydney, accessed: 27 May 2010
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[edit] External links

- Nicolas Rothwell, Memory is all we have, The Australian, 7 October 2006
- "Goldsworthy". *Gazetteer of Australia online*. Geoscience Australia, Australian Government. http://www.ga.gov.au/bin/gazd01?rec=286254.
- Bonzle map of Goldsworthy